



Draft Walker Park Master Plan Study Report

October 2025



simon Leisure

Walker Park Master Plan

About this document

This report describes the process undertaken to prepare the Walker Park Master Plan, including background information about the park, outcomes from research undertaken, the key findings from consultation carried out, and a description of the proposed improvement projects for the park.

The master plan will become the 'road map' to guide the future development of Walker Park. Further investigation and feasibility of some of the proposed projects may be required depending upon their scale, likely impact and estimated cost.

It is important to note that projects proposed in the Walker Park Master Plan do not directly commit the Whitehorse City Council, user groups, or any other organisations to a responsibility for their funding and implementation. Projects identified in the master plan will need to be considered against other Council priorities.

This study report is one of three reports prepared during the study period. The information contained in the following accompanying reports has not been repeated in this study report, however, information summaries from the reports and references to them are noted, as required.

- Walker Park Master Plan Stakeholder Engagement Report.
- Draft Walker Park Gymnastics Centre Development Functional Design Brief.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Whitehorse City Council officers who guided and supported the consultant team, and also provided information and input, as required.

We are also grateful for the involvement and input provided by the Walker Park user groups, and for contributions received from residents and community groups via the community survey and pop-up sessions conducted during the period November 2023 to January 2024.

Study Consultant Team

Richard Simon
Director, Simon Leisure Consulting and Project Leader
Lindsay Fraser
Director, Fraser Design Collaborative (landscape architect)



Simon Leisure Consulting Pty Ltd
Office 1, 655 Nepean Highway, Brighton East VIC 3187
M 0458 957 824
E richard@simonleisure.com
W www.simonleisure.com

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY..... | 4 |
| 2. INTRODUCTION | 7 |
| 2.1 Study Purpose and Objectives..... | 7 |
| 2.2 Study Approach | 8 |
| 3. PLANNING CONTEXT..... | 9 |
| 3.1 Policy Context | 9 |
| 3.2 Demographic Characteristics..... | 9 |
| 3.3 Neighbourhood Sport and Recreation Context | 11 |
| 4. SITE CONTEXT..... | 13 |
| 4.1 Ownership and Planning | 13 |
| 4.2 Existing Conditions | 13 |
| 4.3 Tenant Groups and Other Uses..... | 17 |
| 4.4 History of Walker Park | 18 |
| 5. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT..... | 19 |
| 5.1 First Round Stakeholder Engagement..... | 19 |
| 5.1.1 Community Engagement | 19 |
| 5.1.2 User Group Engagement..... | 20 |
| 5.2 Second Round Stakeholder Engagement..... | 21 |
| 6. ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES | 22 |
| 6.1 Viability of the Mitcham Tennis Club..... | 22 |
| 6.2 Replacement of the Indoor Sports Complex | 25 |
| 7. MASTER PLAN DIRECTIONS..... | 28 |
| 7.1 Access and Movement..... | 28 |
| 7.2 Sporting Facilities..... | 30 |
| 7.3 Recreation Facilities..... | 31 |
| 7.4 Open Space and Environment..... | 32 |
| 7.5 Wayfinding/ Interpretation | 32 |
| 7.6 Other Recommendations | 32 |
| 8. MASTER PLAN COSTINGS..... | 33 |

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Policy Context - review of background reports

Appendix 2 – Draft Walker Park Master Plan

Appendix 3 – Quantity Surveyor Report (Harlock Consulting)

Acknowledgement of Country

Whitehorse City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. Wurundjeri connection to this land dates back more than 40,000 years, and evidence of this connection still exists today.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Walker Park is one the City of Whitehorse's major sporting reserves. It is located in Nunawading and offers a range of sporting and recreation facilities and open spaces. Currently, 5 community sporting clubs are based at Walker Park and their estimated 1,830 members participate in cricket, football, gymnastics, netball and tennis activities.

Whilst the park currently offers only limited recreational infrastructure (a Local level playground), it is a popular location for residents for passive recreation and dog walking. Walker Park has a regional role for football with it being used annually by the Eastern Football Netball League as a venue for football finals.

Council commissioned the master plan study to develop a new vision for Walker Park to ensure it continues to meet the needs of user groups by providing fit for purpose facilities, and to also improve the offerings for the broader community to enjoy the reserve for passive and active recreation pursuits.

The process to develop the draft master plan has been comprehensive and inclusive; input has been provided by the user groups and other community organisations, local residents, Council staff and Councillors.

The study required the following to be investigated and assessed during the master plan development process:

- Options to expand the Indoor Sports Complex to better service the current and future needs of the Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club.
- The operationally constrained layout of tennis facilities (courts in 2 locations) and the need to consolidate the tennis courts or whether to relocate the tennis club.
- Options for the future use of the former Bayswater & Nunawading Homing Pigeon Club building and/or the land on which the building is located.

- Opportunities to improve connections within the park and links with external paths and trails, particularly linkages to The Round and Nangnak Garden.
- Opportunities to increase the activation of the park beyond the formal sporting uses to ensure it is a welcoming place for people of all genders, ages and abilities.
- Options and opportunities to enhance and strengthen the landscape amenity of the park.
- Opportunities to enhance environmental values and to incorporate environmentally sustainable design initiatives.

Three key issues and opportunities emerged during the study.

1. The ongoing viability of the Mitcham Tennis Club,
2. The replacement of the Indoor Sports Complex, and
3. The opportunity to introduce additional active recreation.

Mitcham Tennis Club

The Mitcham Tennis Club currently utilises 5 tennis courts and a clubhouse. Whilst the facilities are generally in good condition, a key constraint is that the 5 courts are divided into 2 banks of courts approximately 100 metres apart. This creates operational constraints for the club when hosting competitions, members' practice days and tennis coaching, as players and spectators using the 2 standalone courts are required to walk through the main car park to access toilets and other amenities in the clubhouse.

During the master plan study, several club operation issues were identified that collectively suggest that the Mitcham Tennis Club is underperforming and that the space currently occupied by the courts and clubhouse could be better utilised for other community activation initiatives and benefit. Issues include a trend of low and declining membership, limited promotional and club activity, low facility investment and irregular fulfillment of lease obligations. Tennis Victoria acknowledges that some of the issues and constraints are not traits of a thriving tennis club.

It is not possible with the current layout of Walker Park to consolidate the 5 courts into the one location, or in fact to add a 4th tennis court to the current 3 courts and clubhouse. Tennis Australia's *Facility Development & Management Framework* notes that 4 courts is the minimum size tennis facility suitable for interclub tournaments, high performance training, and to achieve sustainable tennis development objectives.

It is the view of the study consultant team that the Mitcham Tennis Club is not providing the local community with sufficient return on Council's investment in tennis infrastructure at Walker Park, and the master plan is recommending:

1. That the Mitcham Tennis Club either amalgamate with another tennis club or disband.
2. That the club-based tennis facility in Walker Park be removed, and that the space be re-purposed for other community benefit.
3. That Council investigate options to minimise the net loss of 5 tennis courts within the municipality by either constructing additional courts at other clubs where demand exists, or providing publicly accessible tennis courts with a fee for access arrangement.

Replacement of the Indoor Sports Complex

The Indoor Sports Complex has significant building and accessibility issues that do not comply with current standards, and is no longer fit for purpose or meeting the needs of the Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club. The club has nearly 550 members and a waiting list that continues to grow due to the restricted space and inability to increase class sizes.

The redevelopment or replacement of the Indoor Sports Complex on the current footprint are not feasible options. With the recommendation to cease club tennis at Walker Park, the consultant team considered two options for the location for a new gymnastics centre:

- The southwest corner of Walker Park
- The southeast corner of Walker Park



Both options would enable the club to continue to operate during construction without any significant interruption to business, and to then seamlessly transfer the operations from the Indoor Sports Complex into the new gymnastics centre.

After considering the strengths and constraints of both location options, the PWG agreed with the consultant team's recommendation to site a new gymnastics centre in the southeast corner of Walker Park. To 'test' the feasibility of this proposal, Council commissioned the development of a concept floor plan for a district level gymnastics centre, and the plan shows that a two storey gymnastics centre of approximately 1,800m² is possible at this site.

Additional Active Recreation

The master plan is supporting additional pedestrian paths within Walker Park to increase the 'walkability' of the park and to enhance connections with the Civic precinct and The Round. This will further encourage local residents to access Walker Park as a destination for personal exercise and/or to use the park as a means of access to other open space areas within the vicinity.

With the removal of the Indoor Sports Complex, an opportunity arises to repurpose the site by constructing 2 dual use netball-tennis courts with floodlights. These will give local residents access to recreational netball and tennis at Walker Park, and allow the netball section of the Mitcham Football Netball Club to train at Walker Park, which will enhance the unification of the club.

A third active recreation offering for residents that the master plan is supporting is the installation of an outdoor fitness gym adjacent to the new playspace area (see precedent image below).



Recommended Projects

The Walker Park Master Plan recommends more than 25 projects with an estimated total value of \$17.4 million (ex-GST) – see the master plan in Appendix 2. Some of the key improvement projects not already mentioned above include:

1. Remove the Pigeon Club building and re-purpose the site as a quality passive recreation area to support rest and relaxation.
2. Cease vehicle access between the grandstand/ pavilion and the oval.
3. Complete the fit-out of the change rooms within the main sports pavilion, and investigate options to provide two female change rooms.
4. Install behind goal netting at the southern goals.
5. Upgrade the open space area in the northwest corner of the park as an informal gathering area by installing seating and picnic tables.
6. Seal the surface of the spectator terraces to eliminate gravel being kicked/ thrown onto the oval playing surface.
7. Increase the tree canopy in the reserve to improve amenity and to create a strong park setting.
8. Provide heritage interpretive signage and wayfinding signage throughout the park.

2. INTRODUCTION

Walker Park is located in Whitehorse Road, Nunawading within the municipal ward of Walker. The park is 3.57 hectares in size and is owned and managed by the City of Whitehorse.

Walker Park is classified as a 'Municipal' open space¹ and offers a range of sporting and recreation facilities and open space areas; it is strategically located just east of the Civic precinct.

The following sporting clubs and groups are based at Walker Park:

- Mitcham Cricket Club
- Mitcham Football Netball Club
- Mitcham Junior Football Club
- Mitcham Tennis Club
- Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club

The park has a Local level playground and areas of bushland that attract local residents for passive recreation and dog walking. It has a regional role for football with it being used annually by the Eastern Football Netball League as a venue for football finals.

The purpose of the master plan is to set the vision and direction for the ongoing development of Walker Park to continue to meet the needs of Whitehorse's changing and growing community.

The process to develop the master plan was comprehensive and inclusive; input provided by user groups and other community organisations, residents, and Council staff and Councillors helped identify the new vision for Walker Park.

2.1 Study Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the master plan is to set a new vision for the ongoing development of the park. The study required the following items to be investigated and assessed during the master planning process:

1. Options to expand the Indoor Sports Complex to better service the current and future needs of the Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club.
2. The operationally constrained layout of tennis facilities (courts in 2 locations) and the need to consolidate the tennis courts or whether to relocate the tennis club.
3. Options for the future use of the former Bayswater & Nunawading Homing Pigeon Club building and/or the land on which the building is located.
4. Opportunities to improve connections within the park and links with external paths and trails, particularly linkages to The Round and Nangnak Garden.
5. Opportunities to increase the activation of the park beyond the formal sporting uses to ensure it is a welcoming place for people of all genders, ages and abilities.
6. Options and opportunities to enhance and strengthen the landscape amenity of the park.
7. Opportunities to enhance environmental values wherever possible, and promote biodiversity within the park.
8. Incorporate environmentally sustainable design initiatives.

The development of the master plan provides a timely opportunity to integrate all potential improvement projects and to increase the use of Walker Park by local residents and other visitors.

¹ Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2025

2.2 Study Approach

Project Establishment

- Project inception meeting
- Confirm project scope and collate project resources

Strategic Context

- Site review of Walker Park
- Formulate preliminary issues and opportunities
- Review background reports
- Demographic analysis
- Geographical review of the project area

Issues and Opportunities

- Review the community engagement findings (completed by Council)
- Conduct user group and internal Council engagement
- Prepare Background Report (includes Issues & Opportunities identification)
- PWG Workshop to review Background Report
- Formulate key directions for the future development of Walker Park
- ELT to consider Background Report

Draft Master Plan

- Prepare 1st draft master plan
- PWG Meeting to review draft master plan
- ELT review of draft master plan
- Additional investigation of key issues and opportunities relating to tennis and gymnastics facilities
- Prepare final draft master plan and draft study report
- ELT review of final draft master plan
- Councillor Briefing to review final draft master plan and endorse to place on public exhibition

Final Master Plan

December 2025

- Public exhibition of final draft master plan
- Update the master plan and study report based on community feedback
- Internal review final master plan and study report
- Councillor Briefing to review final master plan and study report
- Update draft master plan and study report as may be required
- Council adoption of final master plan and study report



3. PLANNING CONTEXT

This section provides an overview of the planning context for the Walker Park Master Plan.

1. Policy context
2. Demographic characteristics
3. Neighbourhood sport and recreation context

3.1 Policy Context

The following background reports are important references to inform the future planning for Walker Park.

State Plans

- Active Victoria 2022-2026, Sport and Recreation Victoria.
- Fair Access Policy Roadmap, Victorian Government (2022).
- Value of Community Sport & Active Recreation Infrastructure, Sport and Recreation Victoria (2020).

Council Plans and Strategies

- Whitehorse Council Plan 2021-2025 Year Three.
- Whitehorse Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025.
- Whitehorse Recreation Strategy 2015-2024.
- *Draft* Whitehorse Indoor Sports Plan (2025).
- Whitehorse Sports Field Activity Audit 2022.
- Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2025.
- Whitehorse Pavilion Development Policy (2019).
- Whitehorse Cycling Strategy 2016.
- Whitehorse Urban Forest Strategy 2021-2031.
- Whitehorse Climate Response Strategy & Plan 2023-2026.

State Sporting Association Strategies

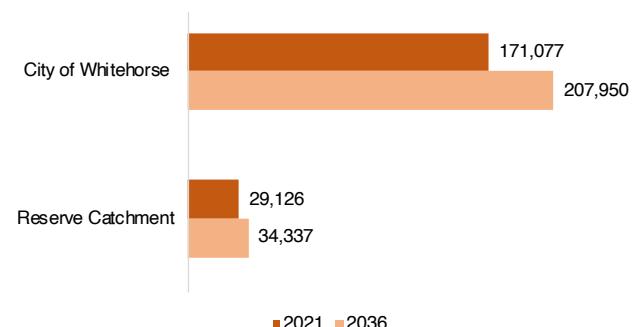
- Cricket Victoria Strategic Plan FY 24-27.
- Tennis Victoria Strategy 2024.
- AFL Victoria Growing the Heartland Football Facilities Development Strategy 2022-2027.
- Eastern Football Netball League 5 year Strategic Business Plan 2019-2023.
- Gymnastics Victoria Facility Guide and Strategy Plan (2015).
- State Sporting Association facility standards and guidelines.

A full review of each report is provided in Appendix 1, including where directions might influence the park master planning.

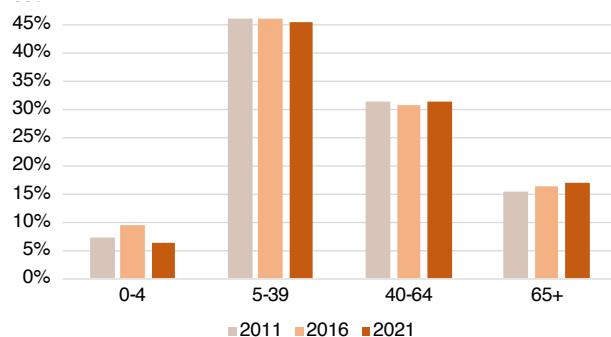
3.2 Demographic Characteristics

Walker Park is located in Nunawading on the border with Mitcham. The park serves a large catchment, therefore for the purpose of this demographic analysis the data for the combined suburbs of Nunawading and Mitcham have been used to define the park catchment.

PROJECTED POPULATION



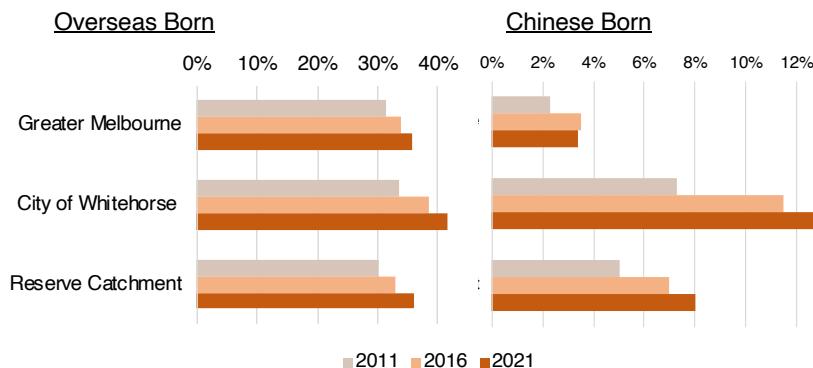
POPULATION COHORTS



PROJECTED ACTIVE AGE COHORT 5-39 years

| 2021 | 2036 | Increase |
|--------|--------|-------------|
| 13,188 | 15,919 | 2,731 (21%) |

CULTURAL DIVERSITY



IMPLICATIONS

Whilst the park's catchment population rate of growth to 2036 is less than all of Whitehorse (17.9% compared to 21.6%) there will still be an additional estimated 5,200 residents in the catchment by 2036; this indicates that there will continue to be **demand for sport and for active recreation** during the forecast period.

The gradual ageing of the population since 2011 (evidenced by a lower proportion of 0-39 year olds and a higher proportion of people over 40 years between 2011 and 2021) makes it important that **sport and recreation offerings suitable for older adults** are considered, such as walking paths and outdoor fitness equipment.

The age cohort of 5-39 years is important for sports facility planning, as the highest proportion of people who participate in organised (club) sport fall within this age cohort². It is estimated that more than 2,700 additional people within this age cohort will be residing within the park catchment by 2036. This again confirms that there will continue to be strong demand for sport at Walker Park throughout the forecast period and beyond.

The **cultural diversity of the park catchment** increased between 2011 and 2021, with Chinese born residents making up the highest proportion of overseas born people. In 2011, the park catchment comprised 5% Chinese born residents, and by 2021 this had increased to 8%. It is important that **sport and recreation offerings suitable for a culturally diverse community** are considered, such as gymnastics, outdoor ping pong tables, and basketball.

The demographic characteristics of the park catchment confirms the importance for Walker Park to continue to be a welcoming place with facilities and open spaces that are intergenerational, suitable for people from diverse backgrounds and interests, and that encourages residents to be physically active.

² AusPlay 2025 (AusPlay is a national sport and physical activity participation tracking tool funded and coordinated by Sport Australia)

3.3 Neighbourhood Sport and Recreation Context

Figure 1 shows the location of community sporting and recreation facilities, open space, and active transport links within the neighbourhood catchment of Walker Park. Mitcham Bowls Club is the only other Council owned sporting facility within the neighbourhood catchment.

Non-Council owned sporting facilities located within the neighbourhood catchment available to community sporting clubs include three floodlit outdoor netball courts at Mitcham Primary School, and the oval (cricket) and double court stadium (basketball and table tennis) at MullaUna College.

Including Walker Park, which is classified 'Municipal' level open space, there are another 11 parks within the neighbourhood catchment.

- 2 are classified 'Municipal' level open space (Tunstall Park and Halliday Park).
- 2 are classified 'Local' (Junction Road Corner and Linvale Walk).
- 4 are classified 'Small Local' (Feiglin Park, Yarrando Park, Ormond Avenue Reserve, Wirilda Park).
- 2 are classified as 'Local Link' (Cherrybrook Close Walkway and Peel Street Reserve).
- Nangnak Park has not been classified.

As well as the playspace at Walker Park, which is classified as a 'Local' level playspace, there are another 3 play spaces.

- Feiglin Park ('Small Local').
- Tunstall Park ('Neighbourhood').
- Halliday Park ('Municipal').

On this basis, the overall catchment appears to be well serviced by larger play spaces and additional sporting facilities, however, all of these facilities are located beyond the direct local catchment of

Walker Park which is bound by Springvale Road, Springfield Road, Whitehorse Road and Dunlavin Road.

Active transport (cycling & walking) links available within the neighbourhood catchment are:

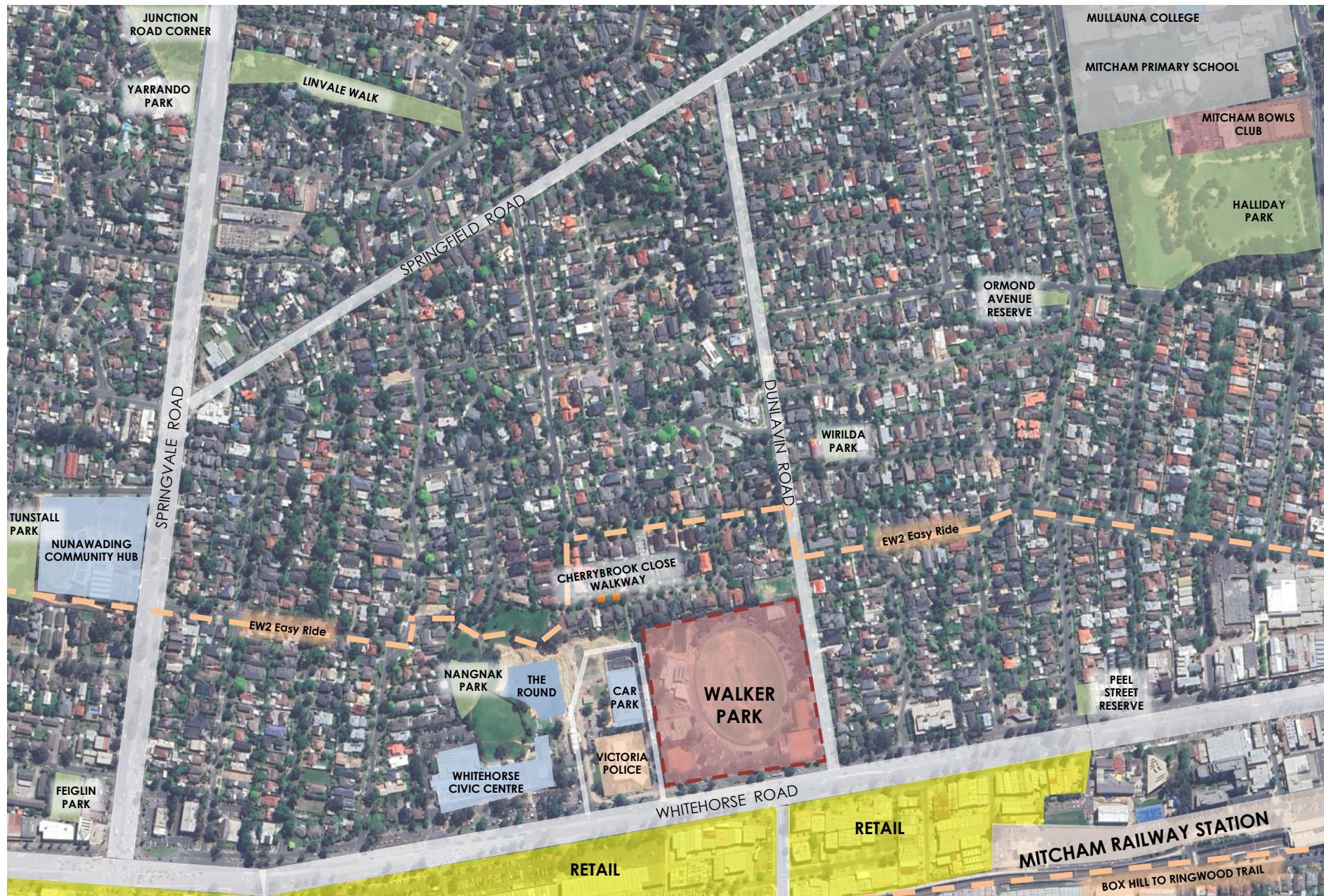
- Box Hill to Ringwood Trail ('Regional' level, off-road).
- EW2 ('Easy Ride Route', on-road).

Council could consider a minor realignment of the EW2 easy ride route to bring it closer to Walker Park. As the route heads west from Dunlavin Road along Knightsbridge Avenue, it could turn left into Cherrybrook Close. This would have the EW2 passing a pedestrian path link directly to Walker Park (see below) just before the 'safe cycling' Cherrybrook Close Walkway, before continuing to the route around the Civic precinct and The Round.

There is no active/ social recreation infrastructure within the neighbourhood catchment of Walker Park, such as skate parks, half-courts, and tennis rebound walls.



Figure 1 – Walker Park Neighbourhood Catchment Sport and Recreation Facility Context



4. SITE CONTEXT

This section provides an overview of the site context for Walker Park, including:

1. Ownership and planning
2. Existing conditions
3. Tenant groups and other uses
4. History of Walker Park

4.1 Ownership and Planning

Walker Park is located at 407-425 Whitehorse Road, Nunawading and is 3.57 hectares in size. It comprises one land parcel owned by the City of Whitehorse.

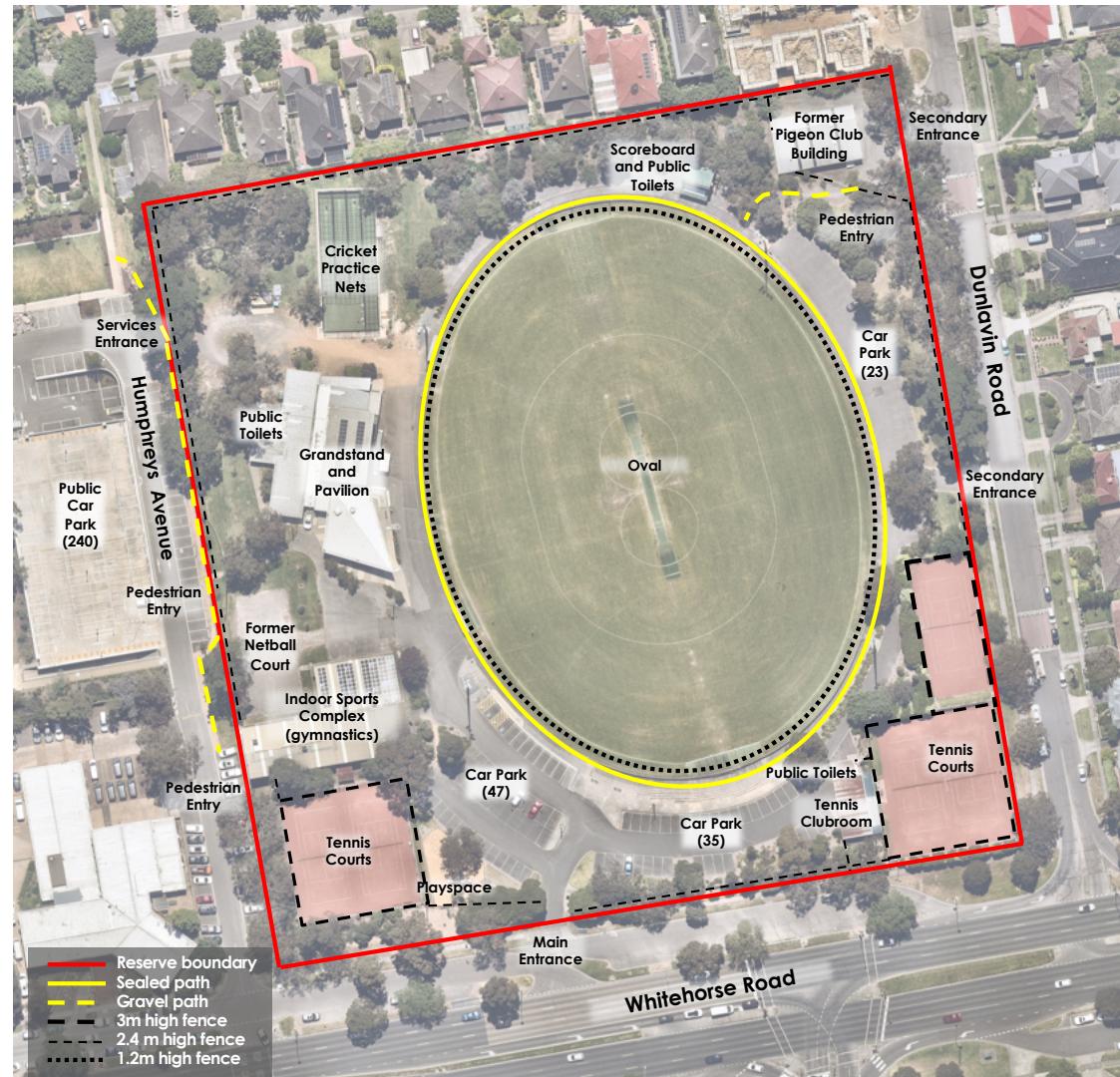
The park is zoned *Public Park and Recreation Zone (PPRZ)*, which is consistent with the primary function and use of the park as a site for community sport and recreation. It is classified in the Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2025 as 'Municipal' open space with a primary character classification as 'Sporting' and a secondary character classification as 'Restricted Sporting' and 'Passive'.

Walker Park is not subject to any planning overlays, but is classified by Council as one of its 'major sports and recreation facilities', and as such receives a higher maintenance program and the user groups are afforded certain concessions compared to groups based at facilities without this classification.

4.2 Existing Conditions

Figure 2 shows existing facilities and spaces in Walker Park.

Figure 2 – Walker Park Existing Conditions



Access and Movement

The path network throughout the park is restricted to the 1.5m – 2.0m wide asphalt path around the oval (see right). The lack of more paths has two main consequences:

1. It creates pedestrian safety risks for people seeking to access the Main Pavilion, the Indoor Sports Complex and the Tennis Clubhouse through the car parks.
2. It serves as a disincentive for people who may wish to utilise Walker Park for personal exercise, such as walking, jogging or walking a dog.



There is a short gravel path with a steep gradient between the former Pigeon Club Building and the oval perimeter path, and a gravel path between Walker Park and the sealed path to the Civic precinct.

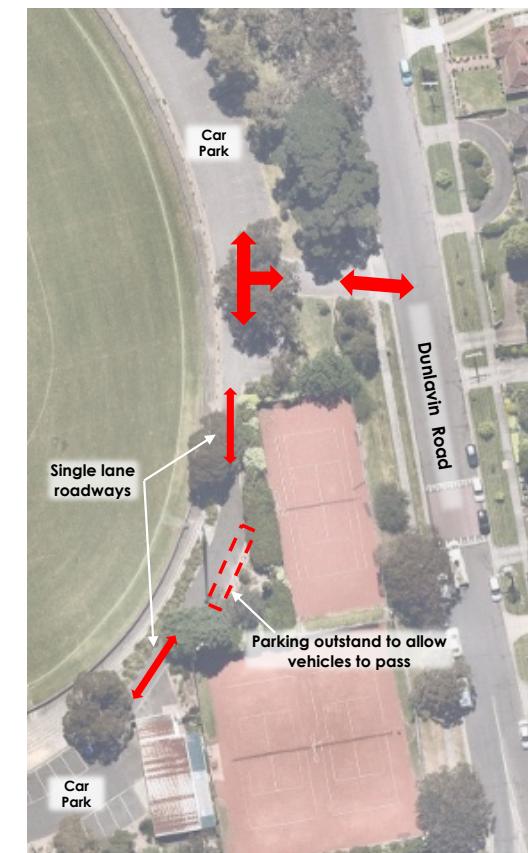
Walker Park is enclosed with a 2.4m high chain-mesh fence, which enables the Mitcham Football Club to charge an admission fee on match days and also meets an eligibility criteria by the Eastern Football Netball League for the park to host finals matches. The disbenefit of the perimeter fence is that it is a physical barrier to community access on non-football match days and detracts from the overall visual amenity of the park from within and outside the park.

There are three vehicle entries into the park. The primary entry is off the Whitehorse Road service lane, which significantly reduces the risk of accidents for drivers entering and leaving the park from this entrance. The secondary park entry is off Dunlavin Road. The third entry off Humphreys Avenue is used mainly by service vehicles.

There are 105 sealed car parks within Walker Park and several locations for additional informal car parking. In addition, the new

public car park located immediately west of Walker Park in Humphreys Avenue has 203 car parking spaces.

The road connection between the Dunlavin Road entrance and the southern park car park is via a single lane road. The road has a double park outstand halfway along its length to enable cars travelling in opposite directions to negotiate each other by one pulling into the outstand (see plan below). The user groups advised that this arrangement doesn't cause any problems or conflicts.



Sporting Facilities

Walker Park comprises the following sporting facilities:

1. Football/ Cricket oval
2. Main pavilion and grandstand
3. Cricket practice nets (4 lanes)
4. Indoor Sports Complex servicing gymnastics
5. 5 tennis courts in two locations, and a clubhouse
6. Former netball court

The other key facility is the former Pigeon Club building.

The Walker Park Oval is a Class AA oval (Whitehorse oval classification framework) and is used for senior and junior cricket and football. The oval perimeter is fenced, and its radius of 57m exceeds the recommended minimum radius for community open age cricket (50m). The oval dimensions of 141m x 105m meet the required dimensions for junior football but are below the recommended width for senior football. The AFL Victoria accepted range for the width of a senior football oval is 110m-155m (boundary to boundary), and length is 135m-185m. As well as being below the recommended width for senior football, the oval only just exceeds the AFL preferred minimum length. Notwithstanding these size constraints, it is not feasible to increase the size of the oval due to the extent of existing built infrastructure surrounding it.

The floodlights were upgraded in 2020 to LED 200 lux, and there is an electronic scoreboard. The oval surface has an excellent cover of grass, and the irrigation and drainage systems are working well. There is behind the goal netting at the northern end of the oval to protect adjoining residences, and there are terraced spectator standing areas at the northern and southern ends of the oval.

The Main Pavilion and Grandstand is used by the football and cricket clubs. A major redevelopment was completed in 2020 to upgrade the change rooms, social areas, kitchen spaces, and equipment storage rooms, and to generally achieve building compliance throughout. It is in excellent overall condition.

The grandstand is a feature of the park; it comprises 20 aluminium bench seats, and is in good condition . It was built in 1957 and replaced the original wooden grandstand which opened in 1910.



The Cricket Practice Nets are located north of the pavilion and are in excellent condition. They are fully enclosed and comprise 4 lanes. The nets are located east of a group of large trees which is not ideal as the trees cast shadows across the nets when being used for late afternoon training sessions (as noted in Council's Sport Field Activity Audit 2022). However, site constraints prevented the nets being located elsewhere in the park when constructed in 2021.

The Indoor Sports Complex is used by the Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club primarily for gymnastics. Brand Architects assessed the condition of the facility, the building fabric and infrastructure, as being in a dilapidated state. The building was constructed many years ago and does not conform with a range of current building codes and standards.



The Tennis Facility is located at the front of Walker Park and is divided across two sites; there is one bank of 3 courts plus the clubhouse; and a second bank of 2 courts. They are separated by the main car park and area approximately 100m apart. All courts are a porous surface and are in good condition, and 4 courts are floodlit.

The tennis clubhouse is in good condition and comprises an open plan clubhouse/ kitchen area, separate male and female toilet/ change rooms, and a secure store.

A former asphalt Netball Court is sited just north of the Indoor Sports Complex. The surface is in poor condition with no line marking and there are no goals currently installed. The court area is currently being used for informal car parking.

The former Pigeon Club Building is disconnected from Walker Park, being over the embankment surrounding the northern perimeter of the oval. It has its own vehicle access and gravel car park off Dunlavin Road. The Bayswater & Nunawading Homing Pigeon Club disbanded during the COVID pandemic and vacated the building. The building's interior is in disrepair and there are several building code and accessibility non-compliances given its age. Council has estimated that it will cost in excess of \$500,000 to make good the internal spaces to become fit for use.

Given the poor condition of the building, its disconnect from Walker Park proper, and the difficulty in finding a permanent tenant, consideration should be given to removing the building and returning it to open space for other community benefit.



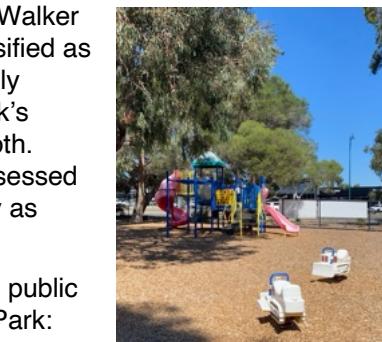
Visual disconnect between the Pigeon Club Building and Walker Park oval precinct

Recreation Facilities

The only social recreation facility in Walker Park is the playspace, which is classified as 'Local' level. It is located immediately adjacent to the car park and the park's main entrance, with little buffer to both. Council's recent playspace audit assessed its overall condition and functionality as 'Poor'.

There are three externally accessed public toilets available throughout Walker Park:

- Standalone building behind the Main Pavilion and Grandstand, includes an accessible facility (weekend access only).
- Northern end of the Tennis Clubhouse – see right (weekend access only).
- Under the old scoreboard (opening/ closing controlled by the Mitcham Football Club and the Mitcham Junior Football Club).



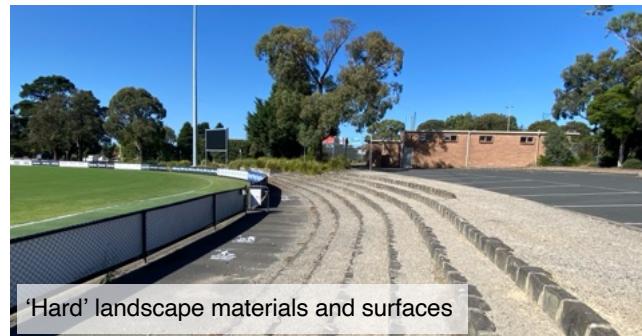
All facilities are old and dated.

Open Space and Landscape Character

The landscape character of Walker Park is dominated by the main oval and its associated fences, buildings and sports infrastructure (goal posts, coaches' boxes, scoreboards, etc.). Apart from the oval, the landscape spaces are inconsistent in materiality and form, and lack a unifying character.

The outer perimeters of the oval along the northern and eastern sides are dominated by the batters created when forming the oval, and as a result the sightlines into the park from Dunlavin Road are compromised at this point. To the north of the oval, the landform creates a confined and 'hidden' space between the oval and the rear boundaries of the residential properties in Cherrybrook Close.

The western and southern perimeters of the oval (from the north-western pocket to the south eastern pocket) displays a range of formal and informal ‘hard and soft’ landscape materials and surfaces, including steps, pavements, gravel surfaces, bollards and fences. Currently, there is little definition or direction of pedestrian and vehicle movement that is distinct from general landscape areas.



The vegetation across the park is largely a mix of native and indigenous trees and low ground covers/ shrubs. Exotic trees consist mainly of a small number of old and potentially senescent *Pinus radiata*. While there is little consistency in the tree population, it does contribute to a canopy which provides shade and a sense of enclosure around the park as a whole.

4.3 Tenant Groups and Other Uses

The following groups are based at Walker Park:

- Mitcham Cricket Club
- Mitcham Football Netball Club
- Mitcham Junior Football Club
- Mitcham Tennis Club
- Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club

Table 1 shows a detailed breakdown of the active club membership of all Walker Park sporting clubs in 2025. An estimated 1,827 people are active participants with the clubs, and all clubs have experienced an increase in participation numbers during the past few years, except the Mitcham Tennis Club.

Of note is the high proportion of female sports participants (45%) to males (55%) at Walker Park. Whilst the Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club contributes a majority of the female participants, it is noteworthy that all other clubs also have high numbers of females amongst their memberships.

Table 1 - Active Membership of the Walker Park Sporting Clubs (2025)

| Club | No. of Teams | | | | | | No. of Players | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|----------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| | Senior Men | Senior Women | Junior Boys | Junior Girls | Junior Mixed | Total | Male | Female | Senior | Junior | Intro | Total |
| Mitcham Football Netball Club (football) | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 120 | 35 | 155 | 0 | 0 | 155 |
| Mitcham Football Netball Club (netball) | 0 | 10 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 95 | 80 | 15 | 0 | 95 |
| Mitcham Junior Football Club | 0 | 0 | 14 | 5 | 0 | 19 | 461 | 177 | 0 | 526 | 112 | 638 |
| Mitcham Cricket Club | 7 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 0 | 19 | 306 | 42 | 118 | 188 | 42 | 348 |
| Mitcham Tennis Club * | - | - | - | - | - | 9 | - | - | - | - | 0 | 78 |
| Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club | - | - | - | - | - | 0 | 79 | 452 | 6 | 525 | 0 | 531 |
| TOTAL | 13 | 13 | 22 | 11 | 5 | 64 | 1006 | 821 | 384 | 1289 | 154 | 1827 |

Table 2 shows the typical profile of use of Walker Park by the tenant clubs. The oval is being used at close to 100% capacity most evenings during both the winter and summer seasons by the football and cricket clubs, and mornings and afternoons on Saturday and Sunday.

The Indoor Sports Complex is also being used at close to capacity all year round by the Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club, with usage mornings and evenings every weekday, and mornings and afternoons on Saturday and Sunday.

The bank of 3 tennis courts are the courts mainly used by tennis club members for club competition and social play, whilst tennis coaching on Friday afternoons/ evenings and Saturday mornings often utilises all 5 courts. There is little casual hire of the courts. Whilst Table 1 might suggest high usage of the tennis courts, the actual use by club members is low. A majority of the tennis court use is for coaching, and most of the players being coached are not members of the club.

The community survey suggests that Walker Park is also a popular venue for personal exercise (walking and jogging), play, and for meeting up with friends.

Table 2 – Profile of Use of Walker Park by Tenant Groups

Winter Season

| Facility | Monday | | | Tuesday | | | Wednesday | | | Thursday | | | Friday | | | Saturday | | | Sunday | | |
|-------------------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|-----------|---------|----------|-----------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|----------|-----------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | Morning | Afternoon | Evening | Morning | Afternoon | Evening | Morning | Afternoon | Evening | Morning | Afternoon | Evening | Morning | Afternoon | Evening | Morning | Afternoon | Evening | Morning | Afternoon | Evening |
| Oval | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tennis Courts | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gymnastics Centre | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Summer Season

| Facility | Monday | | | Tuesday | | | Wednesday | | | Thursday | | | Friday | | | Saturday | | | Sunday | | |
|-------------------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|-----------|---------|----------|-----------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|----------|-----------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | Morning | Afternoon | Evening | Morning | Afternoon | Evening | Morning | Afternoon | Evening | Morning | Afternoon | Evening | Morning | Afternoon | Evening | Morning | Afternoon | Evening | Morning | Afternoon | Evening |
| Oval | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tennis Courts | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gymnastics Centre | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |



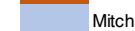
Mitcham Cricket Club



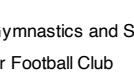
Mitcham Football Netball Club



Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club



Mitcham Junior Football Club

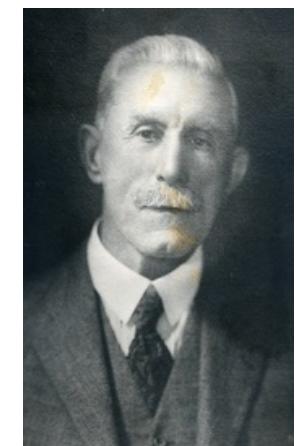


Mitcham Tennis Club

4.4 History of Walker Park

Walker Park is named after Edgar Walker (1862-1936), a significant former community leader, and councillor for the Shire of Nunawading (1892-1899 and 1902-1916), including serving two terms as mayor.

Walker owned the Australian Tessellated Company, which was founded in 1886 on land approximately 300m from the present site of Walker Park. An oval was established on his private land, mainly for use by the Mitcham Football Club which was founded in 1888. When the Victorian Government compulsorily acquired part of Walker's private land (including the oval) to build the Mitcham Reservoir, Walker purchased a 10 acre parcel of land on which Walker Park is now situated to ensure his much-loved Mitcham Football Club could continue.



5. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

An important component of the study was the comprehensive stakeholder engagement carried out with Walker Park user groups, Council officers and Councillors, local residents, and other stakeholders, including local and state sporting associations.

The stakeholder engagement to develop the current draft master plan comprised two rounds of engagement:

| | |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| First Round | information gathering, assessment of the adequacy of existing facilities and outdoor spaces, suggestions for improvements |
| Second Round | meetings with Council officers to review preliminary concept plans, and meetings with the user groups and sport peak bodies to investigate options and scenarios identified as potential improvement projects |

A third round of stakeholder engagement will take place when a final draft master plan is available for review and feedback by user groups, the broad community, and other stakeholders (the 'Public Exhibition' period).

5.1 First Round Stakeholder Engagement

The first round of engagement focused on the following:

1. Collecting information about the Walker Park user groups, including size of clubs and profile of use of Walker Park.
2. Are existing facilities and open spaces meeting needs?
3. Who else is using Walker Park and for what purposes?
4. Suggestions for improving Walker Park.

| Date | Engagement |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 28 November 2023 – 21 January 2024 | Online community survey via Council's 'Have Your Say' page (491 responses) |
| 6 & 7 December 2023 | Community pop-up sessions at The Round (20 attendees) |
| 13 January 2024 | Community pop-up session at Walker Park (70 attendees) |
| 5 & 19 March 2024 | Meetings with Walker Park user groups |
| 19 & 20 March 2024 | 3 workshops with different Council staff teams |

The following is a summary of the findings and outcome of the first round stakeholder engagement. See the Walker Park Stakeholder Engagement Report for a full report on all stakeholder engagement activities carried out.

5.1.1 Community Engagement

The key findings from the **community survey** include:

1. There is high frequency of use of Walker Park, with 65% of respondents visiting the park daily or a few times a week.
2. Most respondents either drive to the park (64%) or walk (32%).
3. A large proportion of respondents (48%) use Walker Park to exercise (play sport, jog, and walk), followed by play (10%), and meet family and friends (9%).
4. Most respondents typically stay 'an hour or two', and the peak periods of use by visitors are weekday evenings (after 5pm) and weekend daytime (9am-5pm).

5. A majority of respondents (84%) expressed feeling 'safe' in the park and 15% expressed feeling 'somewhat safe'.
6. The top seven improvements suggested by respondents that would encourage them to use Walker Park more frequently are:
 - Public toilets upgrade (42%)
 - Playspace upgrade (38%)
 - Install a multipurpose hard court for public use (34%)
 - Circuit path with connections to The Round parkland (26%)
 - Additional lighting to improve safety (25%)
 - Additional seating (25%)
 - Install outdoor fitness equipment (25%)

To supplement the online community survey, **3 pop-up sessions** were held. The aim of the sessions was to provide information on the master plan process, discuss opportunities to improve the park, and to encourage residents to complete the community survey.



Pop-Up Session at Walker Park

An email submission from the Mitcham Thunder Basketball Club was received and advocated for indoor basketball courts to be provided at Walker Park.

5.1.2 User Group Engagement

In-person meetings were conducted with the Walker Park user groups:

- Separate meetings were held with the Mitcham Tennis Club and the Nunawading Gymnastic and Sports Club.
- A combined meeting was held with the Mitcham Football Netball Club, the Mitcham Junior Football Club, the Mitcham Cricket Club.

The key findings from the user group meetings include:

1. There is high usage of the oval and the Indoor Sports Complex most evenings during the winter and summer seasons, and by the clubs on the weekend, whilst the tennis courts have lesser regular usage.
2. The Mitcham Tennis Club is generally satisfied with the tennis facilities, and noted that the key issues for the club presently are its ageing committee and membership.
3. Key issues identified by the Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club include:
 - The Indoor Sports Complex is ageing, there are ongoing maintenance issues, it is not fit-for-purpose, and the club's growth is limited by the size of the centre.
 - It is critical that the club is able to continue to operate during any project for a new/ upgraded gymnastics facility, as any disruption to business over an extended time would have a major impact on the future viability of the club, as gymnasts and coaches would seek alternate clubs.
4. The Mitcham football and cricket clubs are generally satisfied with the oval and the recently redeveloped pavilion, however, identified the following issues:
 - The need for floodlights to be installed on the cricket practice nets to mitigate the shadowing impact from the trees, and which will allow training sessions to be extended.

- Female change rooms are required due to the large number of women and girls in both the football and cricket programs, and because men's/ boys matches and women's/ girls matches are scheduled to follow each other on match days.
- Clubs require additional onsite storage capacity.
- Additional sheltered seating around the oval, especially on the eastern and southern sides.

5.2 Second Round Stakeholder Engagement

The following table summarises the second round engagement.

| Date | Engagement |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 August 2024 | Ward Councillor meeting to discuss potential key directions for Walker Park |
| 13 November 2024 | Project Working Group (PWG) Meeting to review preliminary park concept plans |
| 25 November 2024 | Project Control Group (PCG) Meeting to review preliminary reserve plans |
| 16 December 2024 | Meeting with Tennis Victoria to discuss Mitcham Tennis Club |
| 20 December 2024 | Project Control Group (PCG) Meeting to review preliminary park concept plans |
| 19 March 2025 | Meeting with Tennis Victoria to discuss Mitcham Tennis Club |
| 23 June 2025 | Workshop with Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club to scope components for a proposed new gymnastics centre |
| June to August 2025 | Meeting with Mitcham Football Netball Club, Mitcham Junior Football Club and |

| Date | Engagement |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3 September 2025 | Mitcham Cricket Club to update the clubs on the master plan directions |
| 4 September 2025 | Meeting with Mitcham Tennis Club to update the club on the master plan directions |
| | Meeting with Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club to review concept plan for a proposed new gymnastics centre |

All of these meetings had the primary purpose of either reviewing preliminary concept plans for the upgrade of Walker Park or receiving feedback on proposed key improvement projects, and as such their outcomes are reflected in the current draft Walker Park Master Plan.

6. ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The project consultant team completed an analysis of the issues and opportunities for Walker Park that were identified from the review of park assets and open space areas throughout Walker Park, the review of background reports and other planning inputs, and the information and insights collected during the community engagement and user group meetings.

Issues and opportunities were grouped into the following themes:

1. Access and Movement
2. Sporting Facilities
3. Recreation Facilities
4. Open Space/ Landscape Character
5. Wayfinding/ Interpretation

Figure 3 visually represents the issues and opportunities considered.

The following two items emerged from the analysis as key issues.

- Viability of the Mitcham Tennis Club
- Replacement of the Indoor Sports Complex

A discussion follows for each item above and the rationale that underpins the subsequent proposed directions relating to each item has been informed by input and feedback from Council officers, and where required, by reserve user groups and relevant state sporting associations.

For all other proposed directions in the draft master plan, a rationale has been included in Section 7 Master Plan Directions.

6.1 Viability of the Mitcham Tennis Club

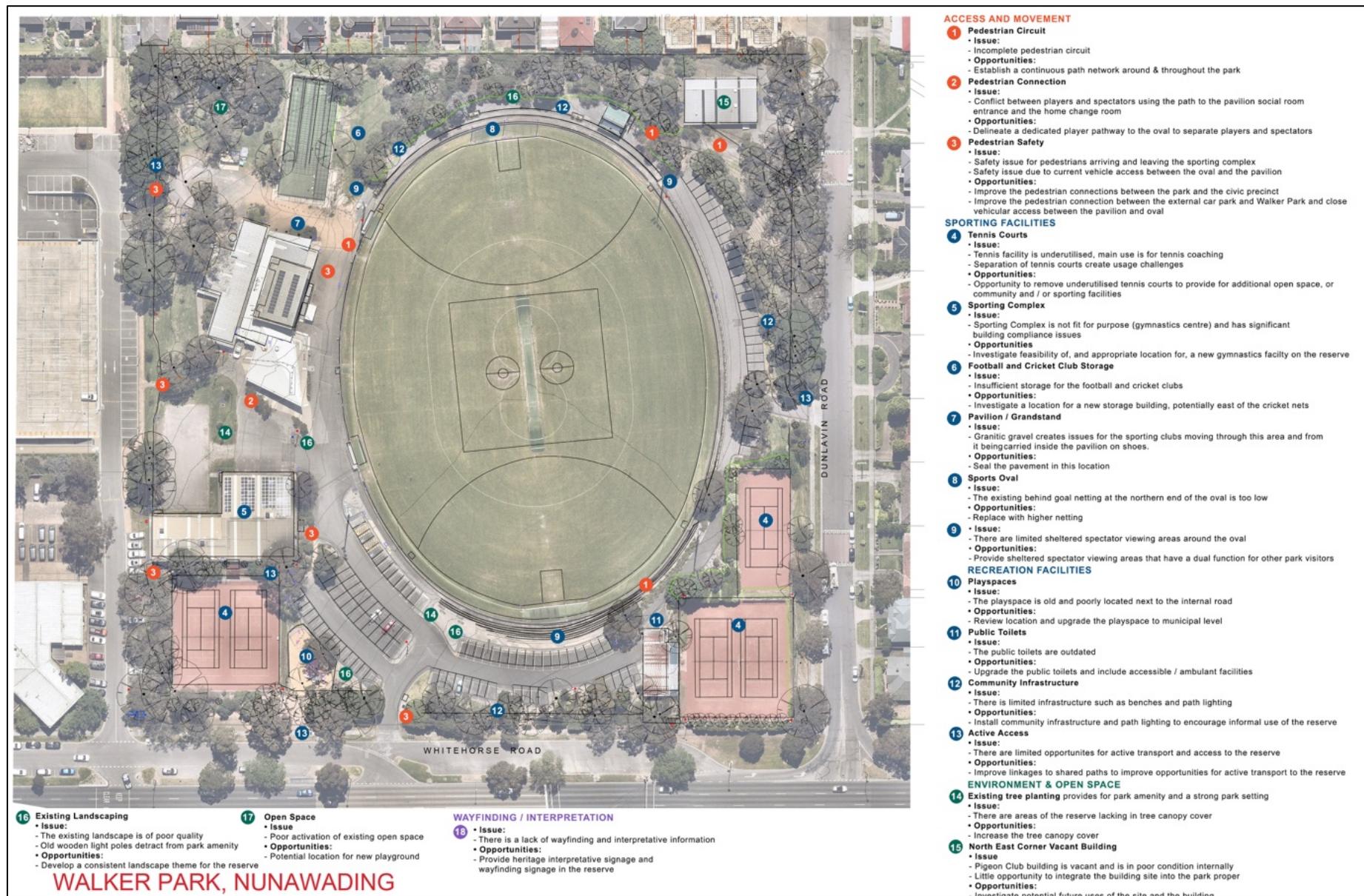
There is substantial evidence to conclude that the Mitcham Tennis Club is an underperforming club and that the space currently occupied by the courts and clubhouse could be better utilised for other community activation initiatives and benefit.

In the absence of a municipal tennis strategy, the master plan study has had to rely on research undertaken during the study period to inform the recommended direction for tennis at Walker Park. This research has included collecting and assessing information about the club's current operations from meetings with the club, reviewing background information supplied by Council's Active Community team about the club and its use of the Walker Park tennis facilities, and other miscellaneous input from Tennis Victoria, the sport's peak body in Victoria.

When investigated in mid-2024, the club operations could be summarised as follows:

- Low and declining membership; estimated at 66 by the club but unable to be verified by Tennis Victoria.
- Poor membership age diversity; there are little or no members aged 15-40 years.
- Inactive social media; the club website is out of date, no Facebook or Instagram posts.
- Unfulfilled lease obligations (the club's current lease with Council commenced 2020 and is for an 11 year term):
 - Past and current Annual Reports and Annual Financial Statements submitted irregularly.
 - Past and current AGM Minutes and lists of Office Bearers submitted irregularly.
 - There has been only a minor level of investment into the facility by the club over time to finance the upkeep of the tennis infrastructure at Walker Park; a requirement under

Figure 3 – Walker Park – Issues and Opportunities



the terms of its lease, and Council is unaware of any upcoming major proposed projects to be funded by the club.

The current club coach is Pro Tennis Academy, a commercial provider who has used the site for well over a decade as one of several venues across the eastern suburbs. During this period, there appears to have been limited membership growth attributed to the club's tennis coaching program, which for most tennis clubs is one of the benefits of appointing a coach and permitting them to use the courts and other facilities for a reduced (or no) hire fee. This arrangement and court capacity unused by members of the Mitcham Tennis Club has resulted in the allocation of Mitcham court bookings to members of the Donvale Tennis Club in Manningham for use of the venue as an overflow.

Recently, the club has provided a breakdown of their typical weekly activities for Council's information. In the breakdown, it indicates the club provides a modest social tennis and pathway program to support junior development as well as a small competition team offering.



Tennis Victoria, through its Manager Places to Play, confirmed that Mitcham Tennis Club has not yet volunteered to participate in Tennis Victoria's *Thriving Tennis Communities* project for the City of Whitehorse, a national program that measures performance of a club in the areas of management, usage and financial sustainability.

Another key constraint for the Walker Park tennis facility is that the 5 courts are divided into 2 banks of courts approximately 100 metres apart. Notwithstanding the operational constraints for the club when hosting competitions, members' practice days and tennis coaching, the two courts separated from the clubhouse have no access to toilets and other amenities, with players, coaches, officials and spectators being required to walk through the main car park to access the courts.

Tennis Victoria has acknowledged that this scenario is not ideal and will impact the long-term sustainability of club operations, particularly with the strengthening of protocols for child safety and supervision. It is not possible with the current layout of Walker Park to construct a 4th tennis court adjacent to the 3 courts and clubhouse, let alone an additional 2 or more courts. Tennis Australia's *Facility Development & Management Framework* notes that 4 courts is the minimum size tennis facility suitable for interclub tournaments, high performance training, and to achieve sustainable tennis development objectives.

Tennis Victoria reported in March 2025 that the club has been more actively engaged in the previous six months, but that the membership number has not increased significantly beyond what was reported in the Walker Park Background Report (July 2024); an estimated 60 people. It also reported that tennis participation in the City of Whitehorse at 48% is greater than the state average of 33%, and that total visits per court per annum averages 2,729 which is much greater than the state average of 1,770.

Tennis Victoria has the current view that there should be no net loss of tennis courts in the municipality.

What has been reported above is a prolonged history of what appears to be an unsustainable sporting club, and one that may be substantially driven by a professional coaching business presumably for commercial gain. It is clear to the consultant team that this club is not providing the local community with anywhere near the return on Council's investment in tennis infrastructure at Walker Park. The master plan study recommends:

1. That the Mitcham Tennis Club either amalgamate with another tennis club or disband.
2. That the club-based tennis facility in Walker Park be removed, and that the space be re-purposed for other community benefit.
3. That Council investigate options to minimise the net loss of 5 tennis courts within the municipality by either constructing additional courts at other clubs where demand exists, or providing publicly accessible tennis courts under a fee for access arrangement.

The master plan is supporting the construction of 2 new dual netball-tennis courts on the site of the Indoor Sports Complex, which could be managed by Council as public hire courts. Tennis Victoria reports that there has been significant growth throughout the Melbourne Metropolitan area in the use of tennis courts available for public hire under Tennis Australia's 'book-a-court' system due to its convenience and ease of access.

This system allows the public to book and pay for court hire via a webpage which shows the booking schedule and available times for hire. Once paid for a court access code is then texted to the hirer to allow access to the court on the day and time of paid use. Court hire revenue is then transferred to the organisation managing the court, which can be a tennis club, the local government authority in which the court is situated, or other managing entity.

The Walker Park netball-tennis courts will also enable the rapidly expanding netball section of the Mitcham Football Netball Club to

train at Walker Park, which will have the benefit of better unifying the football and netball sections of the club.

6.2 Replacement of the Indoor Sports Complex

The Indoor Sports Complex has significant building and accessibility issues that do not comply with current standards, and is no longer fit for purpose or meeting the needs of the Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club. This club is one of the oldest community-run, not-for-profit gymnastics clubs in Victoria, and is continuing to grow despite the building shortfalls. It has nearly 550 members and a waiting list due to the restricted space and inability to increase class sizes.

The redevelopment of the Indoor Sports Complex on the current footprint – either as an extension and upgrade or a rebuild – is not an option due to:

- The cost to upgrade and extend the current building will cost more than it will to build a new fit for purpose building.
- Construction disruption is likely to be 12-18 months with either an upgrade or a new build, which will require the club to either seek an alternate short-term use venue to continue its operations, or go into recess for the duration of the building period. This would challenge the sustainability of the club.

The Indoor Sports Complex has a total footprint of approx. 900m². In order to meet the standards of a 'Region-Community' level gymnastics centre³ the footprint is required to be expanded to an estimated 2000m². With the recommendation to cease club tennis at Walker Park, the consultant team considered two options for the location for a new gymnastics centre:

- The southwest corner of Walker Park.
- The southeast corner of Walker Park

³ National Facilities Guidelines, Gymnastics Australia (2021)

Both options would enable the club to operate during construction without any significant interruption to business, and to then seamlessly transfer the operations from the Indoor Sports Complex into the new gymnastics centre.

The southwest corner has the advantage of consolidating the building bulk of the new centre with the other large buildings to the west along Whitehorse Road, and will have close access to the public car park in Humphreys Avenue.



This location creates the opportunity for the southeast corner to potentially accommodate a new playground and will retain open views into the park from this side. The constraints with the southwest option are:

- The available space of the 2 courts and the playground (see above) is insufficient to accommodate a building of 1,600m² and will require the overall facility mix of the new gymnastics centre to either be reduced or for adjacent in-reserve car parking to be utilised.

- In order to maximise the use of the available space, most of the mature trees around the southwest corner of the park would need to be removed.
- This location requires the entrance into the gymnastic centre to be retained inside Walker Park, which will continue the requirement for gymnasts, parents and coaches to have to 'compete' with football match day crowds for car parking on the weekends during winter.

The southeast option has the following advantages:

- The available space of the 3 courts and the tennis clubhouse is sufficient to accommodate a building of 1,600m² plus an outdoor waiting area adjacent to the centre entrance. This has been verified with the development of a concept floor plan for a new gymnastic centre on this site.
- The gymnastics centre entrance can be accessed from Dunlavin Road, which will create efficiencies and convenience for gymnasts, parents and coaches arriving and leaving the centre, particularly during weekend football matches.
- The day to day operations of the football and cricket clubs, and the gymnastics club are separated, that is, traffic entering Walker Park from Whitehorse Road and the use of the car parking on the western and southwestern sides of the park will generally be restricted to football and cricket players and officials during the week for training, with the gymnastic vehicle and pedestrian 'traffic' being largely contained to Dunlavin Road and the in-reserve car parking along the east side of the oval and accessed from Dunlavin Road.
- The proposed new netball-tennis courts and playground with picnic and BBQ facilities can be consolidated in the southwest area of the park, which will enable them to be better utilised as complementary facilities compared to the scenario of the playspace being located in the southeast corner. Having the playground in the southwest corner also locates it more than 100 metres closer to the existing public toilet behind the grandstand.

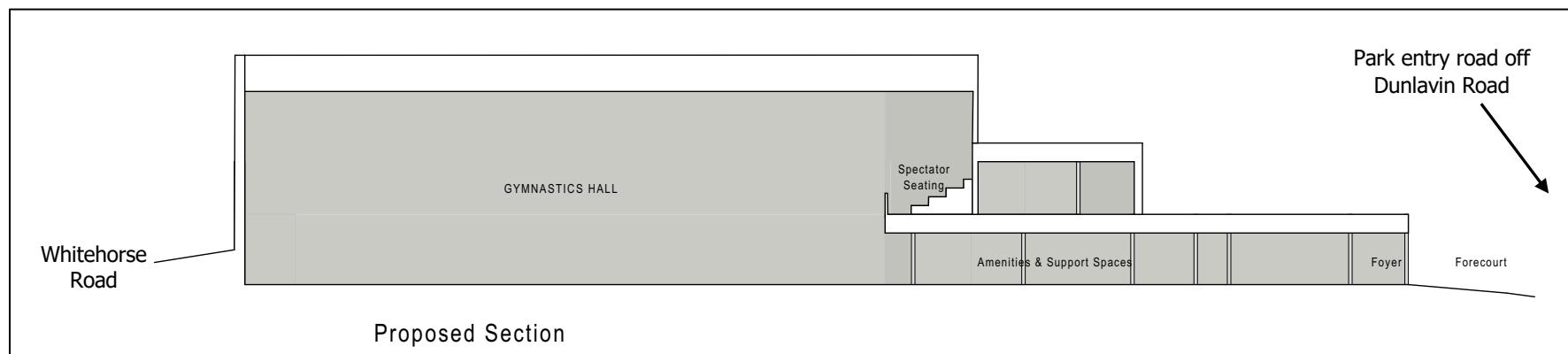
- An opportunity through quality architectural design of the gymnastics centre to ‘sign post’ Walker Park in the urban landscape.

The constraints with the southeast option are:

- The potential for the building’s bulk to overwhelm this corner of Walker Park. This can be offset by the ground floor level of the centre being at grade with the northern end of the building, which preliminary planning shows will have up to 1.5m of the southern end of the building underground (see Section below). In addition, architectural form and landscaping at the southern end of the building can reduce the impact of the building mass.
- There will be increased car parking along Dunlavin Road with the arrival and collection of gymnasts. However, during the week and on weekends in summer the in-reserve car parking on the east side of the oval (23 spaces) and behind the southern goals (35 spaces) will be available for gymnastics patron use.
- The likely removal of 2 mature trees and another 10 semi-mature trees, which is a more favourable scenario compared to the southwest corner.

After considering the strengths and constraints of both location options, the PWG agreed with the consultant team’s recommendation to site a new gymnastics centre in the southeast corner of Walker Park. To ‘test’ the feasibility of this proposal, Council commissioned the development of a concept floor plan for a district level gymnastics centre, and the plan shows that a two storey gymnastics centre of approximately 1,800 m² is possible at this site.

During the review of the gymnastic centre concept floor plan, the PWG and PCG identified the potential for several design modifications, including locating the main entrance and amenities and support spaces west of the gymnastics activity area, ie. to a location behind the oval’s southern goals. This scenario will significantly alter traffic and pedestrian flow to the centre, particularly during football match days. It will also likely require the building to be constructed at grade with the southern car park meaning that the height of the building along Whitehorse Road will increase up to 1.5 metres compared to the height of the building shown in the current concept plan, and will likely impact more mature trees. Pending Council endorsement of the Walker Park master plan, the design development phase of the gymnastics centre can explore both possibilities for the location and layout of the new gymnastics centre.



7. MASTER PLAN DIRECTIONS

This section describes the key directions of the draft Walker Park Master Plan, which have been grouped into five themes.

- Access and Movement
- Sporting Facilities
- Recreation Facilities
- Open Space and Environment
- Wayfinding/ Interpretation

Each numbered item below corresponds with the number on the master plan and should be read in conjunction with the master plan attached in Appendix 2. A description and rationale have been prepared for each masterplan direction listed below.

7.1 Access and Movement



1. New path to enhance the walkability of the park and to create better access westward for residents east of the park

The pedestrian access into Walker Park from Dunlavin Road is currently possible from the gravel car park at the former Pigeon Club Building and the park access road from Dunlavin Road. Both entries lead pedestrians to the oval perimeter path, and for pedestrians en route to the Civic precinct and The Round they need to follow the path around the oval to the gates on Humphreys Avenue.

The master plan is supporting a more direct path from Dunlavin Road to the Civic precinct and The Round across the northern edge of the park. This proposed new sealed path will activate the northern bushland area of Walker Park, before transitioning into a gravel path behind the cricket practice nets and through the underutilised open space in the northwest corner of the park before exiting through a proposed new pedestrian gate (No. 2) to link up with the existing path to the Civic precinct and The Round.

2. Strengthen the pedestrian connection with the Civic precinct

The new pedestrian path across the northern bushland area will provide a more direct connection to the Civic precinct for residents living in Dunlavin Road and beyond. The existing gate from the park onto Humphreys Avenue opposite the external public car park is proposed to be relocated 15 metres south to align with the pedestrian path leading directly to the Civic precinct. This new gate will also provide a more direct entrance into the park from the external public car park and is at a location that will enable easy access to the public netball-tennis courts.

3. Relocate the bin store

The current bin store is located adjacent to the cricket practice nets and underutilised open space in the northwest corner of the park. Relocating the bin store to behind the pavilion and beside the public toilet block will remove it from the open space area and contribute to the upgrade and activation of this area as an informal gathering space (No. 16).



4. Contain service vehicle access into the park at this location by formalising the entry and a turnaround sequence and converting the unused section of the gravel road into grass

It is proposed that all maintenance vehicles and service vehicles entry into Walker Park be contained to the car park off Humphreys Avenue. Formalising the space to allow vehicles to turn around and returning any unrequired gravel areas to grassland will help to contribute to the upgrade of the open space in the northwest corner of the park into an informal gathering space (No. 16) and increased activation.

5. Cease vehicle access between the grandstand/ pavilion and the oval

The master plan supports the cessation of all vehicles between the grandstand/ pavilion and the oval to improve pedestrian safety and the walkability of the reserve. It will also enable this area to be upgraded as a spectator viewing space (some terracing) and could improve the overall amenity of the park in this area with the installation of some landscaping.



6. Retain the two main public vehicle entries to the park

The two existing public vehicle entries are to be retained to enable the current flexible and convenient access to the eastern and southern car parks to continue. This flexibility and separation of access to the respective car parks will enhance the future operations of the proposed new gymnastics centre (No. 14) and the football and cricket clubs on training nights.

7. New tandem car park (8 spaces) for exclusive use by staff and coaches from the Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club

The Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club has expressed a need for up to 10 car parks for staff and coaches that are located close to the entrance of the proposed new gymnastics centre for safety and convenience. The new gymnastics centre is to be located on the site of the 3 tennis courts and clubhouse (No. 14). Council's Transport team have provided in-principle approval for the potential expansion of the 4 car parks just south of the Dunlavin Road park entrance into tandem parking spaces for a total of 8 car parking spaces.

It has been suggested that the car parks be sign-posted as 'No Stopping' 'Gymnastics Staff exempt' and that the asphalt paving be painted with yellow line-marking (or similar) to further reinforce that the spaces are not available for the general public.

8. Current short-term car parking refuge to become a short stay gymnast drop-off zone

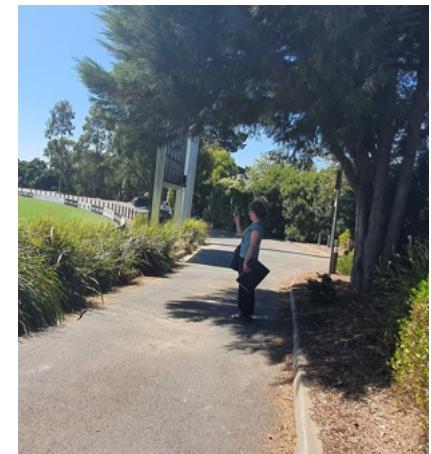
The Indoor Sports Complex entrance is currently well-serviced by close pick-up and drop-off car parking, which is required due to the high numbers of gymnasts accessing the centre and their predominantly young age (see below image). In fact, it is club policy that all gymnasts be dropped off and collected by a parent at the gymnastics centre door.



Two options were considered for the provision of short stay car parking to service the new gymnastics centre:

- along the west side of Dunlavin Road between Whitehorse Road and the first speed hump in Dunlavin Road; and
- utilising the current indented parking refuge within the single lane reserve road immediately west of the location proposed for the gymnastic centre (see image below).

The second option was supported, as it is utilising an existing asset in the reserve and retains the current car parking conditions along Dunlavin Road. In addition, there are the existing 23 car spaces inside the reserve to the north of the proposed location of the gymnastics centre which will be available at most times Monday to Friday for parent car parking, with some competition from senior and junior football match spectators from mid-morning on Saturdays and Sundays in winter. The same applies to the 35 spaces behind the southern goals.



Competition for car parking currently exists for the car parking spaces in Walker Park outside the existing gymnastics centre. The competition for car parking on match days is likely to ease as a result of the availability of the on-road parking along Dunlavin Road being close to the new location of the gymnastics centre.

9. New reserve pedestrian entry and path to enhance the walkability of the park

A key item for investigation during the Walker Park master plan study was to investigate opportunities to improve pedestrian connections within the park and links with external paths. The proposed new pedestrian entry from Whitehorse Road aligns with an existing pedestrian crossing across Whitehorse Road and also on-road car parking in the service lane. The entry and proposed new internal path not only provides an additional access to and through the park but also additional access to the proposed new gymnastics centre from the south.

7.2 Sporting Facilities



10. Complete the fit-out of the change rooms, and investigate options to provide two female change rooms and additional secure storage for each club within the building envelope

The major redevelopment of the pavilion and grandstand in 2020 has significantly improved the provision of change rooms and amenities, social areas, kitchen spaces, and equipment storage for players, officials and supporters of the football and cricket clubs.

However, with the continued increase in player numbers of all clubs, particularly girls and women, there is a need to consider the provision of an additional set of accessible and universally designed change rooms. This need is particularly important for the football clubs as men's/ boy's matches and girl's/ women's matches are regularly scheduled to follow each other, and with the proposed new netball courts (No. 12) and future possibility for netball training at Walker Park the need for separate female change rooms will be further compounded.

11. Continue to maintain the grandstand

The grandstand is a unique attribute for Walker Park and is one of the reasons the park is used annually as a venue for the Eastern Football Netball League finals. The grandstand also provides undercover seating which reduces the need for additional shelters to be provided around the oval that would have the potential to impact the overall amenity and presentation of Walker Park.



12. Remove the Indoor Sports Complex and replace it with two community netball-tennis courts with floodlights (250 lux). Include a small shelter and area on the western side where the roll-on/ roll-off tennis nets can be stored during netball use

The transformational projects to cease club tennis at Walker Park and construct a new gymnastics centre in the southeast corner creates the opportunity to introduce additional community recreation facilities to the park. The 2 dual use netball-tennis courts will give local residents access to netball training and recreational tennis. It is recommended that the courts be fenced and gated for security reasons, but be publicly available for hire via an online booking and court access system.

See below a similar installation at Donald McLean Reserve in Spotswood.



13. Install behind goal netting at the southern goals

There is a behind goal net installed at the northern end of the oval to protect adjoining residences. A similar net is required at the southern end to protect spectators and vehicles parked behind the goals on football match days, and also park visitors on training nights who might be using the park for walking and personal recreation.

14. Remove the tennis courts & clubhouse and the public toilets, and construct a new regional Gymnastics Centre for the Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club, with the main entry to the north of the building

A comprehensive review of the operation and future sustainability of the Mitcham Tennis Club was carried out by the consultant team and Council's Active Community team during the master plan study (refer Section 6.1). The review concluded that the Mitcham Tennis Club either amalgamate with another tennis club or disband, and that the current tennis facilities be removed and the space be re-purposed for other community benefit.

A new gymnastics centre is required to replace the Indoor Sports Complex to accommodate the continued growth of the Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club; the club has nearly 550 members and a waiting list.

The consultant team and the Project Working Group considered various options and scenarios for the provision of a new gymnastics centre. It was determined

that the most feasible location option is the southwest corner of Walker Park, an opportunity that becomes possible with the cessation of club tennis at Walker Park. This site has sufficient space to accommodate a 1,600m² - 1,700m² centre, and will allow the gymnastics centre to be accessed from Dunlavin Road. This design option is important as it does not require gymnasts, parents and coaches arriving and leaving the centre to enter Walker Park, which will be particularly advantageous during weekend football matches. Refer Section 6.2 for additional supporting information for this location.

7.3 Recreation Facilities



15. Develop a landscaped plaza to be used as the Gymnastics Centre arrival/ waiting area

The proposed landscape plaza outside the entrance of the proposed new gymnastics centre (No. 14) will create a safe area for older aged gymnasts to wait until collected by a parent/ carer. It will also function as a meeting/ gathering space for people accessing the centre entrance from Dunlavin Road, from the car parking north of the centre, from the short stay drop-off zone to the west, and from the car parking southwest of the centre.

16. Upgrade the space as an informal gathering area by installing seating and picnic tables

The open space in the northwest corner of the park is currently underutilised despite it being an attractive space with mature trees, shade, and an outlook to The Round and the open spaces of the Civic precinct. It is likely underutilised due to it being somewhat removed from other public areas within the park, and the lack of park furniture and path connections.



The master plan is supporting the introduction of park furniture into the space, a new path to connect the space to nearby Humphrey Avenue and to other areas of Walker Park (No. 1), and a new access gate onto Humphrey Avenue and to the pedestrian path leading directly to the Civic precinct (No. 2).

17. Upgrade the public toilets

There are currently three public toilets in Walker Park: behind the grandstand (managed by Council); attached to the tennis clubhouse (managed by Council); under the old scoreboard (managed by the two football clubs). With the removal of the public toilets adjacent to the tennis clubhouse building (No. 14), Council has determined that these toilets will not be replaced. The remaining two public toilets require upgrades.

18. Remove the Pigeon Club building, and re-purpose this space as a quality passive recreation area to support rest and relaxation

Since the Bayswater & Nunawading Homing Pigeon Club vacated the building in 2022, Council has been unable to identify a community group or Council-sponsored program to occupy the building, or identify a future use for the building if not occupied by a community group. Council has agreed that the building be removed and the space re-purposed.

The site is disconnected from the main oval area of Walker Park due to the embankment surrounding the northern perimeter of the oval. Due to its relative isolation but well treed setting, the master plan is supporting a redevelopment of the space as a passive recreation/ relaxation park.

19. Remove the tennis courts and existing play space, and develop the site into a new District level play space with seating, BBQ/ picnic facilities, and a shelter

The current playspace is classified as 'Local' level facility and its location immediately adjacent to the car park and the park's main entrance offers little amenity and appeal. A recent Council playspace audit assessed its overall condition and functionality as 'Poor'.

20. Install an outdoor fitness gym

The City of Whitehorse does not currently have any outdoor fitness gyms, however they continue to be popular additions to other local government authorities' suite of active recreation facilities when located in areas that attract high numbers of residents and are of a design configuration that meets local needs.

The master plan is supporting the installation of a pod of outdoor fitness equipment to add to the infrastructure associated with the District play space (see sample installation).



7.4 Open Space and Environment



21. Maintain the trees to reduce the impact of shadowing and leaf litter over the cricket practice nets

It is not ideal that the cricket practice nets experience shadowing and leaf litter from adjacent trees. Regular pruning of the trees and maintenance of the cricket nets (removing branches and leaves) will help mitigate these issues.

22. Seal the surface of the spectator terraces to eliminate gravel being kicked/ thrown onto the oval playing surface

The ongoing problem of gravel being thrown and kicked onto the field of play was identified as a major issue by the football and cricket clubs. This creates a safety issue for players and officials, and also increases the oval maintenance needs adjacent to the gravel areas which are mainly behind each set of goals.

Sealing these terraces with asphalt or concrete will eliminate the issue.



Reserve-Wide Directions

23. Enhance the landscape setting with the provision of consistent finishes to pavements and hard surfaces. Develop a suite of park furniture from which to select future furniture installations

This will add consistency to the look and feel of the park as well as unifying areas of similar infrastructure. Much of the existing park furniture requires updating, and the master plan is recommending several new installations of park furniture to enhance the park as a destination for non-sporting uses, therefore it is timely to determine a new palette of furniture to deliver a consistent theme.

24. Increase the tree canopy in the reserve to improve amenity and to create a strong park setting. Additional tree planting shall be consistent with existing plantings and selected from an approved tree list for the reserve

The vegetation throughout the park is largely a mix of native and indigenous trees and low ground covers/ shrubs. There are several spaces in the park where tree planting can be strengthened to support new paths, and in car parks to reduce the heat island effect.

7.5 Wayfinding/ Interpretation



25. Provide heritage interpretive signage and wayfinding signage in the park

Walker Park has a rich history and longstanding importance as a place of recreation for the residents of Nunawading and Mitcham, and the Mitcham Football Club is close to celebrating its 150th anniversary. Whilst there are a couple of interpretive signs within the park sharing the history of Walker Park, additional signs and sculptures could supplement the new social recreation infrastructure recommended for the park and build on the stories of its history.

The installation of strategically located wayfinding signage will assist visitors seeking out the Civic precinct and The Round, to locate public toilets, and to navigate themselves to the various points of interest within the park.

7.6 Other Recommendations

The following additional recommendations have emanated from the master planning study:

1. Council could consider a realignment of the EW2 easy ride route to bring it closer to Walker Park, by turning left into Cherrybrook Close off Knightsbridge Avenue when heading in a westerly direction.
2. Council could consider introducing an online booking system to manage the use of the proposed new netball-tennis courts and charge a small hire fee to contribute to facility maintenance costs.

8. MASTER PLAN COSTINGS

The Walker Park Master Plan recommends more than 25 improvement projects. The total estimated cost for full implementation of the master plan is \$17.4 million (ex-GST).

Table 3 shows the total estimated capital cost and suggested prioritisation for each improvement project. For a full breakdown of costs, refer to the quantity surveyor report in Appendix 3.

The practicality and order of implementation of most projects will be subject to a number of factors and criteria before proceeding, including:

- Availability of funding.
- Current and future priorities of Council, the user groups, and other stakeholders, and the broader needs of the community.
- Further investigation, research and consultation.

All projects have been grouped into the five themes used to describe the key master plan directions (refer Section 7), and all projects have been assigned one of three project prioritisation categories, which are colour-coded for quick reference.

| | | |
|--------|---------------|------------------------|
| High | Now – 7 years | Year 2025/26 – 2032/33 |
| Medium | 8 – 12 years | Year 2033/34 – 2037/38 |
| Low | 13+ years | Year 2038/39 onwards |

Notes about the Master Plan Costings

- **The directions contained in the master plan do not commit Council or other organisations to a responsibility for funding.**
- All capital cost estimates shown in the tables are based on works being undertaken by professional contractors, and have been determined by a quantity surveyor (Harlock Consulting). See Appendix 3 for the quantity surveyor report.
- Cost estimates include a design and construction contingency (15% of the construction budget).
- Cost exclusions include:
 - Professional fees.
 - Permit and authority fees.
 - Goods and Services Tax (GST).
 - Adverse ground conditions.
 - Security.
 - Major services infrastructure upgrades and diversions.
 - Cost escalation beyond October 2025.
 - Any costs/ loss of income, which may be incurred by user groups or Council during construction of projects.
- It should be noted that some capacity might exist for cost savings during the implementation of the capital improvement program by packaging multiple projects into one larger contract.

Table 3 - Master Plan Cost and Prioritisation

The item number assigned to a project corresponds with the same number on the master plan drawing (see Appendix 2).

| Item No. on Plan | Improvement Project | Priority | Opinion of Probable Cost |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|--------------------------|
| Access and Movement | | | |
| 1 | New path to enhance the walkability of the park and to create better access westward for residents east of the park | Low | \$124,800 |
| 2 | Strengthen the pedestrian connection with the Civic precinct | Low | \$37,400 |
| 3 | Relocate the bin store | High | \$78,000 |
| 4 | Contain service vehicle access into the park at this location by formalising the entry and a turnaround sequence and converting the unused section of the gravel road into grass | High | \$32,500 |
| 5 | Cease vehicle access between the grandstand/ pavilion and the oval | High | \$110,000 |
| 6 | Retain the two main public vehicle entries to the park | | - |
| 7 | New tandem car park (8 spaces) for exclusive use by staff and coaches from the Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club | Medium | \$117,000 |
| 8 | Current short-term car parking refuge to become a short stay gymnast drop-off zone | Medium | \$13,000 |
| 9 | New reserve pedestrian entry and path to enhance the walkability of the park | Medium | \$44,000 |
| Access and Movement Sub-Total | | | \$556,700 |
| Sporting Facilities | | | |
| 10 | Complete the fit-out of the change rooms, and investigate options to provide two female change rooms and additional secure storage for each club within the building envelope | High | \$1,300,000 |
| 11 | Continue to maintain the grandstand | | - |
| 12 | Remove the Indoor Sports Complex and replace it with two community netball-tennis courts with floodlights (250 lux). Include a small shelter and area on the western side where the roll-on/ roll-off tennis nets can be stored during netball use | Medium | \$780,000 |
| 13 | Install behind goal netting at the southern goals | Low | \$99,000 |
| 14 | Remove the tennis courts & clubroom and the public toilets, and construct a new district level Gymnastics Centre for the Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club, with the main entry to the north of the building | High | \$13,000,000 |
| Sporting Facilities Sub-Total | | | \$15,179,000 |

| Recreation Facilities | | | |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------------------|
| 15 | Develop a landscaped plaza to be used as the Gymnastics Centre arrival/ waiting area | Medium | \$260,000 |
| 16 | Upgrade the space as an informal gathering area by installing seating and picnic tables | Medium | \$44,000 |
| 17 | Upgrade the public toilets | High | \$650,000 |
| 18 | Remove the Pigeon Club building, and re-purpose this space as a quality passive recreation area to support rest and relaxation | Low | \$132,000 |
| 19 | Remove the tennis courts and existing play space, and develop the site into a new Local level play space with seating, BBQ/ picnic facilities, and a shelter | Medium | \$325,000 |
| 20 | Install an outdoor fitness gym | Medium | \$156,000 |
| Recreation Facilities Sub-Total | | | \$1,567,000 |

| Open Space and Environment | | | |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|------------------|
| 21 | Maintain the trees to reduce the impact of shadowing and leaf litter over the cricket practice nets | Low | - |
| 22 | Seal the surface of the spectator terraces to eliminate gravel being kicked/ thrown onto the oval playing surface | Low | \$162,500 |
| 23 | Enhance the landscape setting with the provision of consistent finishes to pavements and hard surfaces. Develop a suite of park furniture from which to select future furniture | Low | \$55,000 |
| 24 | Increase the tree canopy in the reserve to improve amenity and to create a strong park setting. Additional tree planting shall be consistent with existing plantings and selected from an approved tree list for the reserve | Ongoing | \$22,000 |
| Open Space and Environment Sub-Total | | | \$239,500 |

| Wayfinding/ Interpretation | | | |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------------|
| 25 | Provide heritage interpretive signage and wayfinding signage in the park | Medium | \$55,000 |
| Wayfinding/ Interpretation Sub-Total | | | \$55,000 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------|
| TOTAL MASTER PLAN COSTS (ex GST) | \$17,579,200 |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------|

| | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| High | \$15,170,500 |
| Medium | \$1,794,000 |
| Low | \$610,700 |

APPENDIX 1

Policy Context – review of background reports

State Plans

- Active Victoria 2022-2026, Sport and Recreation Victoria.
- Fair Access Policy Roadmap, Victorian Government (2022).
- Value of Community Sport & Active Recreation Infrastructure, Sport and Recreation Victoria (2020).

Council Plans and Strategies

- Whitehorse Council Plan 2021-2025 Year Three.
- Whitehorse Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025.
- Whitehorse Recreation Strategy 2015-2024.
- Whitehorse Indoor Sports Plan *Draft* (2025).
- Whitehorse Sports Field Activity Audit 2022.
- *Draft* Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2024.
- Whitehorse Pavilion Development Policy (2019).
- Whitehorse Cycling Strategy 2016.
- Whitehorse Urban Forest Strategy 2021-2031.
- Whitehorse Climate Response Strategy & Plan 2023-2026.

State Sporting Association Strategies

- Cricket Victoria Strategic Plan FY 24-27.
- Tennis Victoria Strategy 2024.
- Growing the Heartland Football Facilities Development Strategy 2022-2027 AFL Victoria.
- Eastern Football Netball League 5 year Strategic Business Plan 2019-2023.
- Gymnastics Victoria Facility Guide and Strategy Plan.
- State Sporting Association facility standards and guidelines.

State Plans

Active Victoria 2022-2026, Sport and Recreation Victoria

Active Victoria, is the State Government's strategic framework for sport and recreation in Victoria. Its vision is -



To build a thriving, inclusive and connected sport and active recreation sector that benefits all Victorians

Active Victoria is underpinned by three objectives and six outcomes to guide activities and investment in sport and active recreation. The first two objectives and their outcomes are relevant to this project.

Objective 1: Connecting Communities

All Victorians have access to high-quality environments and appropriate participation opportunities.

Outcomes

1. More Victorians Participate equitably in sport and active recreation.
2. Victoria has inclusive, accessible, and respectful places and spaces for sport and active recreation.

Objective 2: Building Value

The sport and active recreation workforce create positive experiences for people.

Outcomes

1. The sport and active recreation workforce is highly skilled and leads a strong, sustainable workforce.
2. Sport and active recreation is a safe, inclusive, and resilient sector.

Fair Access Policy Roadmap, Victorian Government (2022)

Fair Access Policy Roadmap has been developed by the Victorian Government in partnership with local governments, the state sport and active recreation sector, and other key stakeholders to improve gender equitable access and use of publicly owned community sports infrastructure across Victoria.



Six Fair Access Principles have been developed to provide clear and defined lanes for any organisation to build a gender equitable access and use policy. The relevant principles for master planning are:

- Community sports infrastructure and environments are genuinely welcoming, safe, and inclusive.
- Women and girls can fully participate in all aspects of community sport and active recreation.
- Women and girls will have equitable access to and use of community sport infrastructure.

Value of Community Sport & Active Recreation Infrastructure (2020)

This report considers the economic, health and social benefits that community sport and active recreation infrastructure can add to individuals, communities and society. These benefits are generated from the construction and operation of these facilities and spaces, and the activities that take place within them.



The annual value supported by community sport and active recreation infrastructure in Victoria is at least \$7.04 billion.

Economic Benefits

The construction and operation of community sport and active recreation infrastructure makes a direct impact on Victoria's economy through a number of different channels. These facilities create employment and generate economic activity both through

spend on the facilities and at the facilities. The economic benefits supported by community sport and active recreation infrastructure in Victoria have been estimated at \$2.1 billion on an average annual basis.

Health Benefits

The health benefits of community sport and active recreation infrastructure are driven by the physical activity this infrastructure supports. The many health benefits of being physically active are well documented. The health benefits supported by community sport and active recreation infrastructure has been estimated at \$2.3 billion annually.

Social Benefits

The social benefits of community sport and active recreation infrastructure can be driven by two factors: firstly, the social connections that this infrastructure creates through events, programs and activities; and secondly, the role that infrastructure plays in communities in which it is located. The social benefits supported by community sport and active recreation infrastructure have been estimated at \$2.6 billion on an average annual basis.

These findings make the case at a micro-level for Whitehorse City Council that community sport and active recreation infrastructure deliver outcomes that make people happier, healthier and more productive to improve social cohesion, and contribute directly and indirectly to a stronger local economy.

Council Planning Reports

Whitehorse Council Plan 2021-2025 Year Three

The Whitehorse 2040 Community Vision Statement was developed by the community and reflects the community's aspirations and priorities for the next 20 years.

The Vision statement is



Whitehorse is a resilient community where everyone belongs.

We are active citizens who value our natural environment, history and diversity.

We embrace sustainability and innovation.

We are dynamic. We learn, grow and thrive.

The Vision is underpinned by strategic directions for Council to focus on to achieve the Whitehorse 2040 Community Vision.

The directions most relevant to inform the Walker Park Master Plan study are:

Strategic Direction 4: A built environment that encourages movement with high quality public places

Strategic Actions: Deliver a capital works program that strengthens the inclusiveness and accessibility of our local neighbourhoods, assets, facilities and services.

Indicators:
Play spaces are less than 20 years old.
Number of playgrounds with accessible play opportunities.
Increased number of community groups using Council sports pavilions for community activities.

Strategic Direction 5: Sustainable climate and environmental care

Strategic Actions: Sustainably manage, enhance and increase trees and vegetation in Council's streetscapes, parks and gardens, with species that enhance neighbourhood character, support biodiversity and are adaptable to a changing climate

Strategic Direction 7: A safe and healthy community

Strategic Actions: promote community participation in sporting and recreational opportunities, especially by underrepresented groups.

Indicators:
Percentage of females participating in organised sport.

Whitehorse Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025

The plan outlines the role that Council will play in improving the health and wellbeing of people in Whitehorse. The plan directs the work over eleven domains towards achieving the Whitehorse Community Vision 2040. The domain and strategy that best informs the master plan study are:

Neighbourhood Liveability

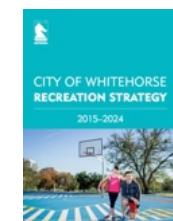
Strategies: Seek opportunities to open up and diversify use of Council spaces and facilities for multiuse, eg. on-demand lighting, casual use sports infrastructure, such as basketball/netball rings, oval walking tracks, picnic seats, community gardens; unlock athletics tracks, open toilet facilities.



Whitehorse Recreation Strategy 2015-2024

The strategy provides Council with a decision-making framework for recreation and sport for the period to 2024. The strategy developed 8 principles to guide the planning of recreation services and facilities:

1. Different needs
2. A range of opportunities
3. Addressing recreation and sport priorities
4. Integration and design of urban infrastructure
5. Universal design
6. Partnerships
7. Facilities
8. The natural environment



The strategy is underpinned by four Key Themes and related actions that respond to recreation objectives and identified needs of the community.

The Key Themes are:

Theme 1: Active communities.

Theme 2: Effective information and communication.

Theme 3: Flexible community facilities.

Theme 4: Deliverable partnerships.

Themes and Actions relevant to the master plan study are:

Theme 1 Active Communities

Increasing levels of physical activity

Action 1: Encourage an increase in walking through:

- consideration of infrastructure, as part of site specific park planning
- planning well connected and accessible trails and paths

Theme 3 Flexible Community Facilities

Park master plans

Action 16: Ensure planning of Council's parks and parks considers:

- pathways for casual/ local recreation and fitness activities for different age groups
- ancillary infrastructure, such as seating, bike racks, toilets, etc. as per Council's Open Space Strategy
- directional signage and distance markers
- spaces and infrastructure that optimise opportunities for local physical activity

Access to sports pavilions

Action 21 Enhance use of sports pavilions with a focus on:

- increasing the level of use by casual users
- optimising shared use of facilities by sporting clubs and other community groups
- design of facilities that optimise use by compatible activities and organisations

Potential upgrade of sports fields

Action 22 Consider/ identify existing sports fields that could have potential upgrades to accommodate additional usage.

Access to sports fields

Action 23 Enhance use of sports fields with a focus on:

- optimising use of grounds via field upgrades where appropriate
- increasing lighting of sports fields and training areas where appropriate
- design of sports fields that optimises use by compatible activities and organisations

Accessible facilities

Action 33 Apply universal design principles when planning new recreation facilities, or upgrading existing facilities, in order to optimise use by all ages and abilities.

Draft Whitehorse Indoor Sports Plan (2025)

The draft plan provides a road map to optimise the use and increase the capacity of existing indoor sports facilities across the City of Whitehorse; it also considers the development of new indoor sports facilities where required and appropriate.



The study notes that the Indoor Sports Complex at Walker Park is in poor condition, is not-fit-for purpose to support senior events and can only support beginner to intermediate levels, and has reached capacity.

The indoor sports demand analysis shows that there is currently a deficit of one gymnastics hall in Whitehorse, however, by 2046 this will have increased to a deficit of 3 gymnastics halls.

An *interim* strategic recommendation for gymnastics is to upgrade the Indoor Sports Complex at Walker Park to provide a fit-for-purpose district gymnastics facility in Whitehorse.

Whitehorse Sports Field Activity Audit 2022

The purpose of the audit was to assess the compliance of sports fields against relevant standards, and the suitability of venues to host different levels of community sport and casual recreation. The assessment of risk was also informed by previously acquired information by Council on known safety and risk issues, planned future capital works likely to reduce the level of risk, and non-sporting use, such as dog off leash areas.



Identified risks were allocated a priority action rating which included a priority action timeline. The priority action rating has four levels of risk: Extreme, High, Medium and Low.

Walker Park was identified as having items of Medium and Low risks only. The priority action timeline for Medium and Low risk items are:

| | |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Medium | actioned and/or reviewed within 12 months |
| Low | monitored on ongoing basis – risk status reviewed every 3 years |

The following table summarises the risks associated with each item.

| Risk Area | Issue | Priority | Mitigation Strategy |
|---------------|------------------|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Car parks | Ball escape | Medium | Erect signage advising risk to vehicles. Install 30m x 10m soft netting behind south end goals |
| Goal posts | On cricket field | Low | Consider goal post removal for summer sport or ensure goals are outside cricket boundary runoff area (>3m) |
| Tennis courts | Ball escape | Low | Monitor issue and extend height of tennis fence enclosure, if necessary |

Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2025 (and Technical Report)

The strategy outlines an overall framework and strategic direction for the future provision, planning, design and management of the public open space network in the City of Whitehorse for the next 15 years.



The strategy describes five overall directions for open space development in Whitehorse. The statements relevant to the development of Walker Park are included below.

Improve the quality of existing open space

Quality includes the surrounding urban context, the facilities, the character, and overall condition of the open space.

Increase the diversity of facilities in open space

The diversity of facilities will be increased so they appeal to different age groups and provide a wide range of structured sport and unstructured recreation facilities along with informal social facilities and spaces. This includes spaces that are natural in character to allow the community to relax and unwind.

The intent is to encourage broader participation in unstructured recreation activities and socialising in open space while balancing this with the ability to relax and enjoy the natural values in open space.

Provide open space within a safe and easy walk of everyone

This will be achieved by a number of actions including expanding existing open spaces with new entry points into them to increase their visibility and accessibility.

Protect and strengthen biodiversity values

The presence of remnant or mature indigenous trees and vegetation in the open space network is a key feature that is to be protected and strengthened. This includes planting additional indigenous vegetation to introduce mid-storey and ground layer species where

they increase diversity and do not impact on open and safe views into and within the open space.

Assist to mitigate urban heat island effect

Maximise permeable surfaces that will absorb moisture in combination with large broad spreading canopy trees that are effective at evapotranspiration and assists with urban cooling, along with incorporating sustainable water sources to support natural turf, garden beds and trees. The focus will also be on designs that allow winter sunlight and warmth and excellent shade and cooling in summer.

The following actions are included in the strategy and technical report and are specific to Walker Park:

Ref 7.14B-25 Minor upgrade to improve pedestrian connectivity between the Civic Centre and Walker Park, establish a circuit path around the park, and provide additional seating overlooking the oval.

Pavilion Development Policy (2019)

The aim of the policy is to provide facility standards to guide the development and/or refurbishment of pavilions, and a framework for the funding contributions towards pavilions.

Council has three types of capital works projects for Council's sporting pavilions.



1. 'Stay in Business (Renewal)' of Council's sporting pavilions will refer to those capital works that involve the refurbishment of existing pavilions to a condition that is compliant with current standards but excludes building extensions.
2. 'Refurbishment' extends the service potential or functionality of the existing facility giving the user a greater ability to offer a wider range of services or activities.
3. 'New Development' will refer to capital works projects which involve the creation of a new asset where there previously was

none, or where a pavilion cannot be refurbished due to its poor condition and requires demolition and a new development.

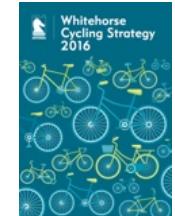
The policy notes that Council's priority is to renew and/or refurbish existing sports pavilions, before considering and planning for the development of new facilities.

The policy outlines pavilion components, standards and contributions, and contains the following universal design principles that any pavilion development needs to consider:

- Equitable Use
- Flexibility in Use
- Simple and Intuitive
- Perceptible information
- Tolerance for Error
- Low Physical Effort
- Size and Space for Approach and Use

Whitehorse Cycling Strategy 2016

The strategy aims to increase participation in cycling across the municipality while respecting the needs of others in the community. It has the Vision to increase cycling through creating a connected network of attractive, safe and inviting low-stress streets and paths which are accessible to all and respects the needs of all users.



There is nothing specific to Walker Park in the strategy.

Whitehorse Urban Forest Strategy 2021-2031

This strategy sets a vision for an urban forest that melds community aspirations and existing policies and strategies to guide Council to better protect, enhance and connect Whitehorse's natural assets.



The vision is for a '*diverse, healthy and resilient urban forest*'.

The strategy has 5 objectives and those relevant to the development of park master plans are:

Objective 1: Protect the urban forest - maximise the health, vigour and condition of Council-managed vegetation, while managing risks. Protect trees on private property.

Objective 2: Expand the urban forest and adapt to climate change - grow more trees and vegetation across both public and private realms and adapt to climate change.

Objective 3: Enhance biodiversity - protect native bushland, extend and connect habitat and improve connectivity.

Whitehorse Climate Response Strategy 2023-2030 (and Plan)

The strategy sets objectives and targets for Council's corporate operations, as well as how Council will support the community to reduce its emissions and adapt to climate change.

The plan outlines actions for Council to work towards, and those relevant to the master plan study are:

- Identify, prioritise and advocate for opportunities to improve connections between sustainable transport modes, including cycling routes and public transport hubs.
- Explore options for assets owned or operated by Council are powered by 100% renewable electricity.
- Support occupants of Council's leased buildings to improve energy and water efficiency, recover resources, and access State and Federal sustainability grants and rebates.
- Embed and implement the Environmentally Sustainable Design Policy for Council Buildings and Infrastructure.



State Sporting Association Strategies

Cricket Victoria Strategic Plan FY 24-27

The Cricket Victoria Strategic Plan sets the direction for the organisation 2027. The plan is a one page summary of what Cricket Victoria will focus on to achieve the plan, and there are only general references to guide the master plan development.



Tennis Victoria Strategy 2024

The Tennis Victoria purpose is to "*create safe, inclusive and thriving Victorian tennis communities, enabling more people to play more often*".



The strategy has four strategic pillars. Relevant pillars to the development of Walker Park are:

| Pillar | Strategic Projects |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Places | <u>Environmental Sustainability</u> Support venues to decrease energy usage <u>Community Access</u> Making it easier to participate at the local venue to increase usage |
| Play | <u>Attract</u> The playing opportunities that are offered at a venue reflect the needs of the local community |

Growing the Heartland Football Facilities Development Strategy 2022-2027 AFL Victoria

The strategy aims to create a clear framework to initiate, improve and deliver football infrastructure in the right locations to meet changing and growing community needs. The strategy focuses on three Goals and is supported by 16 Key Priorities. The Goals and Priorities relevant to this master plan are shown in the following table.



| Goal | Key Priorities |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Build the capacity of community football</i> | <p>Improve facilities to provide greater access and opportunity for the diverse football community (inclusive of players, officials, spectators and volunteers).</p> <p>Support inclusion through gender neutral facility and amenity provision and universally designed infrastructure.</p> <p>Maximise the carrying capacity of ovals (eg. drainage, surface conversions, synthetic surfaces) to better support and sustain use.</p> <p>Maximise the functionality of venue infrastructure (eg. pavilions, social spaces, spectator accommodation, digital technology) to support community access and club sustainability.</p> <p>Invest in the development and delivery of more AFL approved synthetic ovals (particularly in partnership with the education sector).</p> |
| <i>Create Australian football facilities that are fit-for-purpose, meet evolving local community needs and enhance the football experience for all</i> | <p>In partnership with government and the football community, continue to deliver regional football strategies across Victoria that identify the greatest areas of need and support solutions to alleviate identified challenges.</p> <p>Support Local Government to plan for and deliver new community facilities that support sustainable football clubs and activities.</p> |

| Goal | Key Priorities |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>venues that increase access to football for more people in more locations</i> | <p>Support the education sector to deliver new open spaces and sporting facilities that support football activities, in particular AFL approved synthetic surfaces.</p> <p>Investigate opportunities and potential partners to create indoor environments suitable for football to maximise year-round participation, skill development and inclusion programs.</p> <p>Connect with Melbourne's multi-cultural communities to explore opportunities for facility activation in new and diverse localities.</p> <p>Work with the football community and Local Government to explore flexible, equitable and innovative approaches to fixturing and facility use.</p> |

Eastern Football Netball League 5 Year Strategic Business Plan 2019-2023

The plan is an ongoing prosperity and development plan for the Eastern Football Netball League and the game of Australian Rules Football and Netball in the east of Metropolitan Melbourne



The plan has five strategic pillars, each with a set of priorities. The pillars and priorities relevant to the development of Walker Park are:

Participation By the end of the plan ensure all clubs have female representation by way of football and netball teams

Community & Partnerships Deliver a Regional Sporting Hub within the league footprint

Gymnastics Victoria Facility Guide & Strategy Plan (2015)

The purpose of the plan is to identify priority locations throughout Victoria for gymnastics facilities and to provide information that can assist organisations develop a business case for building and operating gymnastics facilities.

Key findings of the plan are:



Participation

- Massive growth in participation in the past decade, especially amongst younger age groups
- Majority of participants are relatively young compared to other sport and recreation activities, ie. average age of females participants is 7.5 years of age
- Predominantly a female sport
- GV membership continues to grow at a rapid rate with almost 100% growth in the past 10 years

Facilities

- Facility development is well behind growth
- There are few new facilities and/or expansion of existing centres planned as compared to current unmet and future demand
- Most clubs would need to either expand current facilities or develop new facilities to cater for the current unmet demand and/or projected growth in participation.

The strategy provides a municipality analysis on expected growth and additional program space requirements. The City of Whitehorse is projected to require an additional 281m² of program space in 2021 if the current participation level of 0.81% is maintained. Whitehorse will require an additional 909m² of program space if a minimum participation rate of 1% is achieved.

Other specific facility recommendations for Whitehorse are included in the summary of the Whitehorse Indoor Sports Facility Feasibility Study (2020) above.

State Sporting Association facility standards and guidelines

Where the development of the master plan recommends new/ upgraded sporting facilities at Walker Park, the following reports have been referred to, to ensure compliance with relevant standards and guidelines endorsed by respective state sporting associations.

- Community Cricket Facility Guidelines (2023)
- Tennis Australia – Facility Development & Management Framework (2008)
- Preferred AFL Community Facility Guidelines 2024
- National Gymnastics Facilities Guidelines (2021)

APPENDIX 2

Draft Walker Park Master Plan



LEGEND

- PROPOSED TREE
- EXISTING TREE TO BE REMOVED
- PROPOSED SEALED PATH
- PROPOSED GRAVEL PATH
- PROPOSED ASPHALT ROAD
- PROPOSED PLAY SPACE
- PROPOSED GRASS SPACE
- PROPOSED GARDEN BED
- PROPOSED TREE PIT
- PROPOSED SPORTS FLOODLIGHTS
- PROPOSED BLACK CHAIN MESH FENCE
- PROPOSED PARK FURNITURE
- PROPOSED DRINKING FOUNTAIN
- PROPOSED BICYCLE RAILS
- PROPOSED SHELTER

ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

- 1 New path to enhance the walkability of the park and to create better access westward for residents east of the park
- 2 Strengthen the pedestrian connection with the Civic precinct
- 3 Relocate the bin store
- 4 Contain service vehicle access into the park to this location by formalising the entry and a turnaround sequence and converting unused section of the gravel road into grass.
- 5 Cease vehicle access between the grandstand / pavilion and the oval
- 6 Retain the two main vehicular entries to the park
- 7 New tandem car park (8 spaces) for exclusive use by staff and coaches from the Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club
- 8 Current short term car parking refuge to become a short stay gymnast drop off zone
- 9 New reserve pedestrian entry and path to enhance the walkability of the park

SPORTING FACILITIES

Complete the fit-out of the change rooms, and investigate options to provide two female change rooms and additional secure storage for each club within the building envelope

Continue to maintain the grandstand

Remove the Indoor Sporting Complex and replace it with two community netball - tennis courts with floodlights (250 lux). Include a small shelter and space on the western side where roll on / roll off tennis nets can be stored during netball use.

Install behind goal netting at the southern goals

Remove the tennis courts and clubroom, and the public toilets, and construct a new District Level Gymnastics Centre for the Nunawading Gymnastics and Sports Club, with the main entry to the Gymnastics Centre to the north of the building

RECREATION FACILITIES

- 15 Develop a landscaped plaza to be used as the Gymnastic Centre arrival / waiting area
- 16 Upgrade the space as an informal gathering area by installing seating and picnic tables
- 17 Upgrade the public toilets
- 18 Remove the Pigeon Club building, and repurpose the space as a quality passive recreation space to support rest and relaxation
- 19 Remove the tennis courts and existing play space, and develop the site into a new Local level play space with seating, BBQ / picnic facilities, and a shelter
- 20 Install an outdoor fitness gym

OPEN SPACE AND ENVIRONMENT

- 21 Maintain the trees to reduce the impact of shadowing and leaf litter over the cricket practice nets
- 22 Seal the surface of the spectator terraces to control the gravel being kicked / thrown onto the oval playing surface

RESERVE - WIDE DIRECTIONS

Enhance the landscape setting with the provision of consistent finishes to pavements and hard surfaces. Develop a suite of park furniture from which to select future furniture installations.

Increase the tree canopy cover in the reserve to improve amenity and to create a strong park setting. Additional tree planting shall be consistent with existing plantings and selected from an approved tree list for the reserve

WAYFINDING / INTERPRETATION

- 25 Provide heritage interpretative signage and wayfinding signage throughout the reserve