

# KILSYTH RECREATION RESERVE MASTER PLAN CONSIDERATION FOR ADOPTION

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Responsible Officer: Director Planning & Sustainable Futures  
Ward(s) affected: Walling;

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*The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.*

## CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

## SUMMARY

This report seeks to inform Councillors of the community response to the draft Kilsyth Recreation Reserve Master Plan (the draft Master Plan) that has been developed following extensive consultation with the local Kilsyth residents, Kilsyth Community Action Group, sports clubs and the broader Yarra Ranges community. The Master Plan provides a 10+ year strategic approach to improve sport and recreation facilities at the reserve in response to identified community needs, including repurposing of aged infrastructure.

A program of community consultation on the draft Master Plan was undertaken in February and March 2023, reaching out to over 2000 local residents and key stakeholders, receiving strong support. Proposed improvements include the removal of the redundant tennis courts to provide a multi-generational playspace, multi-purpose court and junior pump track. An upgrade to the oval irrigation and lights is proposed plus the inclusion of a community plaza and oval viewing space. The community will also benefit from an improved path network and 'chillout' spaces. The Master Plan is now ready for Council to consider for adoption.

## RECOMMENDATION

### *That Council*

- 1. Consider the findings of the community consultation on the Draft Kilsyth Recreation Reserve Master Plan and community support.***
- 2. Note the change in funding source for the demolition of the old tennis infrastructure to Council funding and addition of court lighting.***
- 3. Adopts the Kilsyth Recreation Reserve Master Plan, including edits to funding and costs.***

## **RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS**

On 14 February 2023 Council approved the release of the draft Kilsyth Recreation Reserve Master Plan for community consultation. This report provides a summary of the feedback received and community support that underpins the request for consideration by Council to adopt the master plan.

The phasing of the Master Plan implementation has taken into consideration the purchase of 150 Cambridge Road, Kilsyth. It is understood that the purchase of this land will constrain the amount of public open space funding attributable to the Walling Ward for several years. Hence, most proposed upgrades commence planning and construction in 2026-35.

## **DISCUSSION**

### ***Purpose and Background***

Kilsyth Recreation Reserve is located on the eastern side of Colchester Road, which forms the boundary between Yarra Ranges Walling Ward and Maroondah City Council. To the north, the Reserve connects with the Kilsyth Memorial Hall and abuts four disjointed clusters of shops, primarily the Churinga Shopping Centre to the east and the adjacent collection of independently owned shops which has a Dan Murphy's outlet (formerly Coles). On the eastern boundary of the reserve are residential properties and a large retirement village connects to the south of the Reserve.

The Kilsyth Recreation Reserve is the base and offices for the Eastern Rangers and the Kilsyth AFL Centre of Excellence, that plays an important part in the development of talented male and female AFL football players in the region. The venue is host to the Yarra Ranges female football finals competition, however the broader Reserve is underutilised with little to attract community usage.

Several years ago, the former tenant tennis club merged with another and now plays at the Kiloran Park facility. The five en-tous-cas courts are at end of life, in a state of disrepair and are destined for removal in 2023/24. The two synthetic courts have a limited life before they too become unplayable. Current community use is limited to general walking, dog walking and use of the oval when not being used for football purposes.

Other than football, the predominant use of the reserve is as a thoroughfare to the shops from the adjacent retirement village and some usage of two tennis courts for coaching. Overall, the Reserve fails to deliver modern day expectations that open space offers opportunities for a broad range of the community, and that it goes beyond simple playing surfaces and instead also acts as a desirable place to meet, relax and take part in or watch recreation activities.

The Master Plan aims to maximise future use of the reserve by sporting clubs and the community through upgrades to existing facilities and offerings at the reserve. Actions of the master plan are supported through the recent community and key stakeholder group feedback.

### ***Options considered***

The Background Report, which was previously included in the consultation documents and presented to Council, provides details of the site analysis study, issues and opportunities identified through research and extensive internal and external consultation undertaken earlier in the planning. Issues and opportunities identified have underpinned the development of the Kilsyth Recreation Reserve Master Plan (Attachment 1) that address the current needs and support increased participation and usability of the Reserve and its infrastructure. The support for the recommendations was confirmed in recent consultation on the draft Master Plan.

#### ***Option 1 – Adopt the proposed final Masterplan***

This option is recommended by Officers as there has been clear strong community support for the Masterplan and expectations have been managed regarding timing of delivery.

#### ***Option 2 – Defer finalisation of the Masterplan***

Deferring adoption of the Masterplan until funding streams are improved would likely attract negative response from community who have been instrumental in providing insights and developing the concepts and projects. This option would also mean Council would not have an agreed position to bid for external funding for projects. This is not recommended.

#### ***Option 3 – Deliver ad-hoc projects on demand***

While this brings some value to community, it can result in lost opportunities and inefficiencies through lack of coordination. This option is not recommended.

#### ***Option 4 – Abandon the Masterplan***

Abandonment of the Masterplan would attract a strong negative response from community who have been instrumental in providing insights and developing the concepts and projects. This option would also mean Council would not have an agreed position to bid for external funding for projects. This is not recommended.

### ***Recommended option and justification***

It is recommended that Council proceeds with Option 1. The Kilsyth Recreation Reserve Master Plan (Attachment 1) considers the current and future demographics of the area, community feedback and internal recommendations informing the development of the Master Plan.

Proposed improvements identified in the Master Plan for the Reserve include, but not limited to:

- Sport Precinct
  - Ground and lighting upgrade (irrigation, LED sports lighting)

- Coach/player and timekeeper boxes
  - removal of redundant buildings
  - extending access to the public toilet at the sports pavilion, and
  - improved traffic flow, parking and path network.
- Plaza precinct
    - Multi-use plaza space with landscaping and terrace seating area, and
    - Improved interface with the Kilsyth Memorial Hall.
- Recreation Precinct
    - Removal of redundant (5) en-tous-cas tennis courts, and
    - Installation of a recreation hub, to include:
      - local level playspace with picnic shelters
      - netball sized court, multi-lined for various ball sports and suitable for netball finals matches
      - pump track
      - additional landscaping and a nature play area
      - public art/sculpture feature at the interface with the shopping centre, and
      - seating and path connections through the Reserve.

The recent draft Master Plan community consultation feedback and Gender Impact Assessment has supported the recommendations of the Master Plan and application to all genders, age and cultural backgrounds.

Subsequent to the recent consultation, the only change has been to include (timed) LED lighting as part of the multi-purpose court development. This will enable extended use especially on winter evenings when it gets dark early and promote a safe environment for additional participation.

## **FINANCIAL ANALYSIS**

The actions outlined in the Master Plan are an indication of Council's desired outcomes for the space, and the timing of delivery reflects Council's intent, but this does not pre-commit these actions for delivery. As with all masterplans, each action must be considered in the context of the full Council program of projects and will be assessed against available funds and priorities.

The implementation of the Master Plan does not have any allocated budget for individual projects other than:

- the demolition of the tennis clubhouse and en-tous-cas courts in 2023/24 (Federal Government funding).

All other recommended improvements are reliant on competitive funding bids from Public Open Space funding, renewal and co-funding sourced via State and Federal Government grant applications and contributions from community groups and organisations that would have direct benefit from the improvements.

Opportunity to advocate for and receive external funding will be strengthened by the evidence-based research and consultation undertaken to develop the Masterplan, especially given the proposed final version has been informed by strong community input and, if adopted by Council, has reached an agreed outcome.

The Cost Plan (Attachment 2) has been developed to show estimated costs and a potential funding model, summarised in the Table below. The current cost estimates have included a 15 per cent premium from the original (2021) Quantity Surveyor Opinion of Probable Costs to factor in the recent construction industry cost escalations and supply chain issues. The cost estimates included in the implementation plan do not allow for further unknown escalations over the duration of the master plan.

The proposed final Master Plan includes three minor budget changes:

- demolition of the tennis infrastructure (\$230,000) has been brought forward to 2023/24 in Council's current budget. The Local Roads and Community Infrastructure funding that was earmarked for this project has been rejected by the Federal Government funding program and will now be fully funded by Council. There will be no net loss to Council as the grant amount will supplement a different project. The subsequent changes to funding contributions have been reflected in the table below and Attachments 2 and 3.
- the grant application for conversion of the oval lights to LED in 2023/24 was unsuccessful. This project has been moved out to 2025/26 subject to further application consideration.
- The inclusion of lighting to the multi-purposed court, suggested through consultation, has good merit and would extend usage. An allowance of \$100,000 has been added to the Recreation Precinct recommendation (C4).

Budget changes have been reflected in the following table and revised Cost Plan and Implementation Plan documents (Attachments 2 and 3).

		<b>Potential Funding Contributions</b>			
Activity Area	<b>Estimated Cost</b>	Council	State / Federal Government Grant	Yarra Ranges Community Grant	Outer East FNL / Eastern Ranges
Sports Precinct	<b>\$1,079,350</b>	\$563,275	\$436,075	\$15,000	\$65,000
Plaza Precinct	<b>\$400,300</b>	\$205,900	\$194,400		
Recreation Precinct	<b>\$2,510,975</b>	\$1,622,900	\$882,825	\$5,250	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,990,625</b>	<b>\$2,392,075</b>	<b>\$1,513,300</b>	<b>\$20,250</b>	<b>\$65,000</b>

Through recent consultation, the tenant groups at Kilsyth (Outer East Football Netball League and Eastern Ranges) have reiterated that there is a strong likelihood that they/AFL could assist with funding of the sport related items. Based on required contribution from sports clubs to timekeeper's room/scoreboard and coach boxes, an AFL contribution of \$45,000 is expected. A further \$20,000 contribution towards a new storage shed and nets behind goals would be sought. These contributions would be consistent with the established club contribution framework that guides co-contributions expected of other Yarra Ranges based clubs. It is likely in the short term, external funding streams will be limited and more competitive, placing greater pressure on clubs to contribute to sports infrastructure projects.

The Kilsyth 'Centre of Excellence' is the pinnacle in development for local rising football stars in the region, especially young females. Of the 90 girls and 120 boys based at Kilsyth Recreation Reserve, approximately 60 per cent are Yarra Ranges residents. In addition to the unique role the centre plays in local football development, the reserve serves as a community football backup venue when other grounds are out of action or being redeveloped. Most recently Kilsyth Recreation Reserve was used by the Mt Evelyn and Powelltown football/netball clubs during renovations. Therefore, due to the community usage that occurs at the reserve, it is appropriate that a community contribution approach be applied to the regular tenant groups for the oval based improvements recommended in the Master Plan.

The funding contribution split for the Plaza and Recreation Precinct is premised on applications for external Victorian Government funding streams through Sport and Recreation Victoria and Growing Suburbs Funds. These are competitive and not assured of funding. In the detailed phasing of projects (Attachment 4), elements have been grouped to support a funding application(s) approach.

Of Council funds, the majority is anticipated to come from Public Open Space funding, (\$1.5 million) or Asset New & Improved Reserve (\$610,000), with approximately \$37,000 from Asset Renewal Revenue (ARR), attributable to the demolition of the public toilet block, old youth hall and the tennis clubhouse.

An Asset Maintenance Plan was developed to identify maintenance costs attributable to the improvements proposed in the Master Plan. It is anticipated that there will be a total maintenance cost to Council of \$375,000 and the AFL Outer East \$88,500 over the 15 years. Transfer of 67 per cent of toilet cleaning responsibility to Council to increase community access to the pavilion public toilets, in lieu of building an additional facility, means an estimated savings for the AFL Outer East of over \$100,000 over the 15 years.

## **APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES**

This report contributes to the following strategic objective(s) in the Council Plan: This report contributes to the following strategic objective(s) in the Council Plan:

- Connected and Healthy Communities
- Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places

The provision of improved facilities at Kilsyth Recreation Reserve, through careful community consultation and master planning, will deliver facilities and infrastructure that meets the growing and diverse needs of our community.

### ***Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025***

- increase active living
- improve mental wellbeing and social connection

New and improved facilities will contribute to improved health and wellbeing with increased opportunities to socialise and exercise.

### ***Recreation and Open Space Strategy 2013 - 2023***

The Recreation and Open Space Strategy 2013-2023 sets out directions for creating healthy and active environments and services in Yarra Ranges and provides a framework to guide future development and management of Council's recreation reserves, parks and community spaces, including Kilsyth Recreation Reserve.

### ***Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023***

Through this Strategy, Council recognises that inclusion for people with a disability in all aspects of community life is a human right that also brings many social, cultural and economic benefits for the wider community. It further states as one of the goals that Council buildings and infrastructure are accessible to everyone in our community. Improvements to the amenities and increased ease of mobility through the Kilsyth Recreation Reserve is a key deliverable of this Master Plan and will

promote broader Reserve use by the residents of the 198 units of Walmsley Retirement Village, abutting the Reserve.

### ***Child and Youth Strategy 2014-2024***

This Strategy has the vision that Yarra Ranges will be a place where every child and young person will be able to thrive, reach their potential and actively participate in decision making. Outcome two has the most relevance to this Master Plan, recommending that “Adequate Infrastructure exists to meet the needs of children, young people and their families.” The re-establishment of a playspace at Kilsyth Recreation Reserve was a dominant request from the long-term residents and the new family groups that officers spoke to at the pop-up sessions and in survey responses. The inclusion of a playspace at this location has been added to the revised Playspace Strategy for construction in 2025/26.

## **RELEVANT LAW**

### ***Gender Impact Assessment***

This masterplan is considered to have a direct and significant impact on the Yarra Ranges community, so a gender impact assessment will be undertaken as part of this work.

A Gender Impact Assessment was undertaken in collaboration with Council’s Gender Equity Team, in parallel with the community consultation process in March 2023. The assessment has been included in Attachment 4. While there were options in the study for a range of diverse gender identities all respondents selected either male or female.

The Master Plan was developed from a whole of community perspective, including consideration of equitable opportunities for use of the reserve by women, men, and gender diverse people. Underpinning the recommendations is the objective to provide a reserve that encourages people of all ages, abilities, gender preference and cultural background with a space that is safe, welcoming and has the potential to improve individual health and wellbeing.

Older adults use the reserve to access the shopping complex and stop briefly to rest as required. There is little to attract general community usage.

Current use of reserve football facilities is recorded as 57 per cent ‘male’ and shows strong growth of ‘female’ participation reflecting industry trends in participation. AFL Victoria has a suite of Gender Diversity Policies that espouse commitment to the inclusion of gender diverse players and the provision of a safe and inclusive environment.

Refer to the following Table for a summary of the proposed improvements and the target groups that will benefit most.

Proposed improvement	Target age group	Benefit
Playspace	Young children	New facility for young people and families
Picnic area with shelters	Everyone, especially families and older adults	New plaza area suitable for older community members, families, and youth to meet and socialise.
Plaza and seating	Girls, general community, spectators	These social spaces respond to current research into spaces and activities preferred by girls, however, is attractive to all community segments.
Multipurpose court	Children, youth, adults, families	New multi-lined court for local youth to play (at no cost) a range of social sports.
Pump track	Children, largely boys	New pump track for children starting out, learning the skills before advancing to more challenging facilities elsewhere.
Path network	Everyone	New path network and open space area for walking, dog walking and exercise suited to all ages. Where possible paths will be fully accessible and provide a safer path of travel within the reserve and to the shops.
Sports	Male and female AFL football participants, officials, and spectators	Improvements to lighting quality, ground improvements, coach's boxes, etc to increase the quality of facilities to further support the development of highly skilled footballers in Yarra Ranges.  Provision of a terraced viewing area will improve the viewing experience for AFL spectators and general community.
Car park	Reserve users	Realignment and formalisation of the car park to support the anticipated increased usage of the reserve.

On review, the Master Plan does not show gender bias, and the actions assist in levelling any existing inequity. Recommendations cover activities and infrastructure suited to all genders, age and abilities. The Master Plan will provide facilities and social spaces that are welcoming for current and emerging cultural groups.

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

### ***Economic Implications***

Through future development the Kilsyth Recreation Reserve will become a local community activity hub and the anticipated increased use will have a flow on effect for the abutting shops. Families will couple shopping with a visit to the playspace, pump track or other options proposed. Similarly, the additional visitations the Reserve will attract has the potential for increased sales for the local businesses.

The construction phase of the Reserve improvement delivery is expected to contribute to the local economy through employment opportunities and as a source of materials and equipment.

### ***Social Implications***

Kilsyth has a population of 9,956 (ABS 2020). Compared with the Yarra Ranges average, there is a high percentage of older adults over 60 years (26.3%) and the young workforce group aged 25 to 34 (15.1%). The under 17-year age group (20.6%) is slightly lower than the Yarra Ranges average, however growth is shown in the babies and under 11 years cohorts. Hence this Master Plan has a focus to ensure that older residents and the emerging young people in the community are catered for.

There are strong links to social and community impacts resulting from the development and improvement of local reserves such as Kilsyth Recreation Reserve, which include:

1. Enhanced community access to infrastructure that encourages alternative health and wellbeing outcomes
2. Revitalisation of local communities
3. Reduction of social isolation
4. Increased visitor footprint, and
5. Increased female participation in sports.

Other than elite football training, the Kilsyth Recreation Reserve lacks elements to attract people to socialise or be active. The focus of the Master Plan has been to provide a plan that will invigorate the area and make it a desirable destination that people of all ages will want to spend time. Older people that we spoke to reminisced about the old playspace and having somewhere to walk, sit and interact with others. Young families craved a local playspace and somewhere for their children to ride bikes and play with friends. For local residents, the closest playspace is located over a kilometre away on the northern side of busy Mt Dandenong Road, at either Kiloran Park or Elizabeth Bridge Reserve.

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy identifies high levels of obesity, dementia and poor mental health as significant issues for our community. Provision of walking and cycling opportunities are important contributors to improved health.

The inclusion of a multi-purpose court will encourage a variety of social ball games for children and youth, plus provide a competition netball court for finals of the football/netball competitions.

A multi-generational playspace will enhance family integration and provide exercise opportunities for older adults that will complement the active recreation activities to be delivered for Retirement Village residents in the new Walmsley Community Centre currently under construction (to include bocce, table tennis, carpet bowls).

### ***Environmental Implications***

A highly valued aspect of the Kilsyth Recreation Reserve is the opportunity to walk, exercise or just sit and take in the view, watch the children play or a game of football. A consistent message through the consultation was the condition of the old tennis courts and how they detract from the ambiance of the Reserve.

The preservation, enhancement and accessibility for people of all ages and abilities is a key driver for improvement underpinning recommendations, particularly through the Reserve. Opportunity exists to turn the boggy south-east corner into a water sensitive urban design area with a focus on nature play for local children. This will be complimented by a sensory garden walk.

Conscious of the proximity and elevation of the proposed pump track to the neighbouring Walmsley Village residents, the addition of strategic planting of trees and bushes will be important. A sensory walk has also been recommended.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The Master Plan is based on issues and opportunities identified by the community, user groups, key stakeholder groups and Council officers. To confirm support for the master plan, extensive consultation was undertaken on a draft version over a five-week period in late February through to end of March 2023.

The feedback received has been summarised in Attachment 5 showing very strong support for the Masterplan with more detail captured in the updated Background Report (available on request).

The community were engaged, utilising:

- an online survey (563 visitors, 41 contributions),
- letterbox drop to 400 residents,
- QR code and Shaping Pages link
- pop-up sessions (3) at the Kilsyth shops and oval, (conversations with approximately 250 people),
- email campaign to 1,620 recipients,
- Shaping Pages link distribution by AFL user groups,
- presentations to:
  - Council's Disability Advisory Group
  - Kilsyth Community Action Group
  - Walmsley Village residents
- internal officer feedback.

Key points to note from the survey (41 respondents):

- 69% of respondents identified as female.
- Spread across 25 to 84 age range.
- 75% of survey respondents currently use the reserve.
- For adults, 84% supported the proposed changes, only one person did not and five unsure.
- For children, 78% (18) respondents caring for children supported the changes, five people unsure.
- Of the proposed improvements the ones that gained most survey support and identified future use:

FOR ADULTS	FOR CHILDREN
Walking paths and seating (32)	Playspace (14)
Picnic shelters & BBQ facilities (23)	Access to the public toilet (12)
Sensory garden (22)	Pump track (11), Walking paths & seating (11)
Access to the public toilet (20)	Picnic shelters & BBQ facilities (10)

The above community priorities for future use were echoed in the survey comments and conversations with general community members at the shops, advisory groups, and the retirement village.

Members and spectators at the football oval recognised the benefits of alternate activities at the site for their families but strongly supported the recommendations to improve lighting, ground condition and reduce car parking issues. The issue of the short oval length was raised, restricting the level of competition to under 18's. Due to the pavilion location and constrained site, a lengthening of the oval is not possible without stopping vehicle access and parking on the east side of the oval.

## **COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

Internal collaboration has been ongoing throughout the research and development phases of the Master Plan development. Officers from across Council were asked for their input on the issues and opportunities they saw for the site. Additional comment was sought from the Kilsyth Community Action Group and the Disability Advisory Committee to help shape the early concept design, refine the content and review the draft Master Plan. The strong support from the community to the draft master plan confirms that the issues and opportunities identified in development have been addressed in the Kilsyth Recreation Reserve Master Plan.

The relationship of the Kilsyth Memorial Hall and Town Centre shopping centres to the Kilsyth Recreation Reserve was discussed during the Master Plan development. It was, however, considered beyond the scope of the Reserve Master Plan but identified for future town planning, with an emphasis on improving sense of presence

and connectivity between the shopping, community and recreation spaces in the future. With recent improvements to open space planning approaches and internal design capabilities any future planning for open space and activity centres would take a more integrated and wholistic approach.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

On major game days sufficient parking and congestion due to constrained access are significant issues, resulting in (observed) spectator conflict. The removal of aged, redundant buildings will free up space to improve traffic flow and provide additional parking to cater for increased usage of the Reserve.

Limited access to Council's Public Open Space Fund (POSF) and external funding in the timeframe proposed is the greatest risk to delivery of actions and some flexibility in the implementation may be required.

Frequent requests from unhappy community members supports the early delivery of access to the pavilion public toilet and the removal of the redundant tennis clubroom and courts to usable grassed open space. Officers are investigating opportunities to open the public toilet as soon as possible. The tennis infrastructure is funded for demolition on 2023-24. Asbestos removal has been identified as a manageable project risk. The remaining two courts could be opened for community no-cost casual usage as funds become available.

These short term/low-cost items would enable early implementation of master plan initiatives. Construction of major cost elements have been delayed in the implementation plan to allow for the purchase of 150 Cambridge Road, Kilsyth. This provides time to rebuild funds in the Walling POSF and position for external funding co-contributions.

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

## **ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT**

1. Kilsyth Recreation Reserve Master Plan
2. Cost Plan Aug 2023
3. Implementation Plan Aug 2023
4. Gender Impact Assessment
5. Community Engagement Report