

VICTORIA PARK
FINAL DRAFT MASTER PLAN
OCTOBER, 2015

Volume 1



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1 Executive Summary



Victoria Park is one of Ballarat's most significant and iconic parks. It has a rich history of recreational and cultural use and is highly valued by the Ballarat Community. It was once extensively mined for gold and in 1890 was the site of Victoria's first Arbor Day planting; providing the foundation for what has become one of the best examples of a large European style parkland in Australia today.

Amongst 130 hectares of parklands separated by gently curving tree lined avenues are a diverse range of landscape features and recreation facilities including: 13 ovals, clubrooms, equestrian grounds, walking trails, lakes, playgrounds, picnic and BBQ shelters, groups of established trees, a mullock heap and large areas of remnant native grasslands and open spaces. All of these features and facilities are well used by the community for a variety of recreational activities and leisure purposes.

Victoria Park also has a history of hosting significant events. During World War Two it was used as a military base. Through the 1940's to 1960's it was used for car rallying and motorcycle racing events and in 1992 it was the site of the 16th Australian Scout Jamboree.

Originally located on the western fringe of Ballarat, Victoria Park is now located centrally between the CBD and the western growth corridor of the City. In recent years Ballarat's population and urban growth has increased pressure upon Victoria Park and further highlighted the need to address a number of development challenges and opportunities including:

Preserving and enhancing the Park's historical plantings, open parkland character and native grasslands and environmental values.

Increasing demand for improved sport and recreation facilities to support shared and multi-functional use.

Increasing demand for community use for a range of leisure activities and events supported by improved access, connections, parkland amenity and community safety.

Increasing traffic, flooding and infrastructure maintenance issues. Identifying a suitable location for a major events facility with large outdoor open lawns within the Ballarat region.

Despite these challenges Victoria Park has never had a Master Plan however a Vision developed in 2012 following an extensive community engagement process identified Victoria Park as:

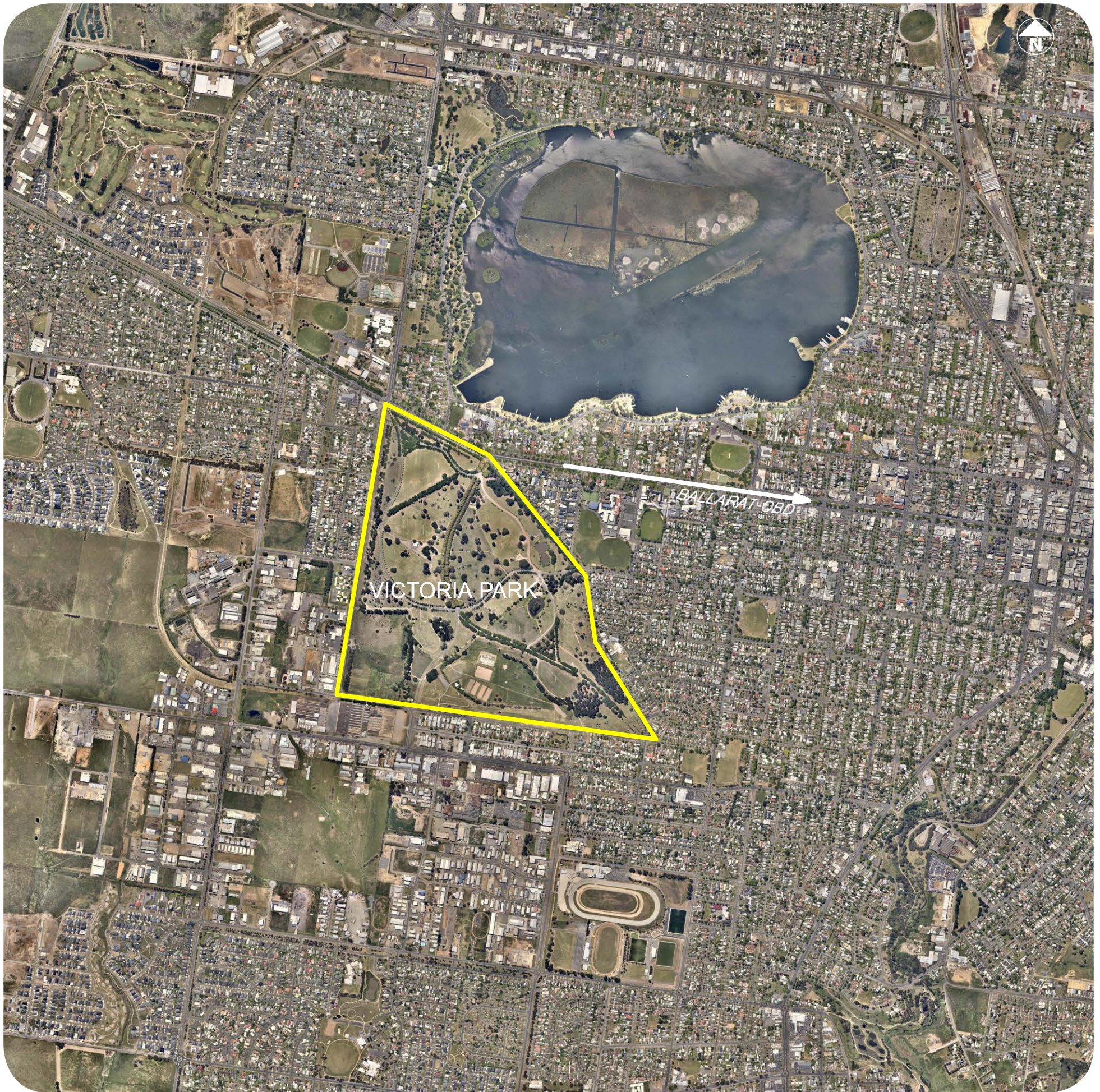
The Lungs of the City – A Park for People: the City of Ballarat will preserve and enhance the historic features of Victoria Park while encouraging the community's use and enjoyment of the Park's diverse range of facilities and landscapes.

The Victoria Park Vision was further recognised in the Ballarat Strategy (2015) which identified Victoria Park as a recreational icon. The Strategy also recommended that a Master Plan be developed to provide guidance on Victoria Park's long term future and for the Ballarat community to own a shared vision of what the Park can provide to future generations.

Development of the Victoria Park Master Plan commenced in April 2015 with a community engagement process including an Open House, surveys, submissions and interviews with key stakeholders. The feedback from this process was then considered and reflected in the development of the Preliminary Draft Master Plan which was placed on exhibition during August to September 2015 to seek further community feedback. Over 200 survey responses and submissions were received during this period, generally indicating broad community and stakeholder support for a range of key recommendations in the Preliminary Draft Master Plan including:

- Increased tree planting, enlarged native grassland areas and improved vegetation management.
- Increased events capacity with an open lawn events space in the south-west corner and water and power services throughout the Park.
- Improved recreation facilities including: clubrooms with publicly accessible toilets, oval resurfacing, criterium course upgrades, and equestrian precinct improvements.
- Improved parkland amenity and leisure facilities including: dog off leash areas, playgrounds, BBQ's, seating, drinking fountains, and wayfinding and interpretive signage.
- Additional and improved walking paths and pedestrian and cycling access and connections.
- Improved entrances, traffic management, vehicle control and car parking.
- Additional and improved water bodies and drainage works to reduce flooding, increase park amenity and provide opportunities for stormwater harvesting for irrigation.

It is envisioned that the progressive implementation of the Master Plan will protect and further enhance Victoria Park's unique landscape qualities and features, whilst providing for increased demand for a broad range of recreational facilities, leisure opportunities and spaces for community events; ensuring that Victoria Park continues to be highly valued by the Ballarat community into the foreseeable future.



2 Introduction

2.1 Victoria Park

Victoria Park is 131 Ha in size and located at the heart of the city's existing urban areas and major growth areas to the west. The Park fronts onto Ballarat's principal avenue, Sturt Street, to the north which provides connection to Lake Wendoree and the Gardens Precinct. Russell Street bounds it to the east, Winter Street to the south and Gillies Street to the west. The immediate surrounds include a number of schools - Ballarat High School, Loretto College, St Patricks College, Urquhart Park Primary School - and commercial/industrial areas (including the Sale Yards) and residential properties.

The Park is a significant asset that provides numerous recreational opportunities. It is heavily utilised for both passive and active recreation and is equipped with a range of facilities including playing fields and club rooms. A portion of the southern part of the Park is used for equestrian events and the numerous ovals and existing clubrooms currently service junior cricket, school sports and the Ballarat Dog Obedience Club. The Park is also heavily used for dog walking, cycling, picnics, children's playgrounds and various other pastimes.

It is a culturally and historically rich landscape and a notable example of European style parkland in Australia with significant exotic tree plantings as well as indigenous grasslands. The landscape is predominantly flat and open with curving avenues of established European trees and open grassed areas and clumped plantings of large tree species. The Park was the site of Victoria's first Arbor Day planting which took place in 1890. Historically the Park has accommodated a variety of activities including gold mining, motor racing events and the 16th Australian Scout Jamboree, as well as operating as a base for the military during World War Two.

Council managed the Park under a restricted Crown Grant from 1888 to 2006. It is now under a Committee of Management arrangement which allows a greater degree of flexibility in terms of leasing arrangements and funding opportunities. It is classified as a regional open space asset in the Ballarat Open Space Strategy due to its size, location and the diversity of recreational opportunities it presents. It is currently zoned Public Park and Recreation Zone and is a designated heritage precinct.



2.2 Master Plan Background

Numerous reports have been prepared over the years detailing proposed future directions and management strategies for the Park. Proposals have raised issues around competing interests that require further resolution, and strategies for management including traffic and vegetation require updating.

The City of Ballarat has carried out extensive consultation with stakeholders and the community including a comprehensive visioning exercise in 2012 which developed a community backed vision for the future of the Park. Issues have arisen about the appropriate type, scope and scale of improvements, and the desire to preserve and enhance the existing landscape character. The Master Plan aims to clearly articulate how these issues can be resolved to achieve the best possible outcome for all users.

In recent years Victoria Park has been subject to increasing and often competing infrastructure development challenges and opportunities including:

- Preserving and enhancing the Parks historical plantings, landscape character, native grasslands and environmental and historical values.

- Addressing increasing traffic issues and flooding issues throughout the Park.
- Existing user group and stakeholder desires for improved ovals, upgraded or new clubrooms, lighting, improved road surfaces and car parking.
- Community desires for improved access, connections, passive leisure opportunities and improved amenity and safety.
- The need for a venue for a major events facility within the Ballarat region.
- Community demand for new and improved facilities for shared and multi -functional use to cater to Ballarat's growing population.

The Victoria Park Master Plan considers these challenges and opportunities and provides the next level of detail required to move the project forward and consolidate the prior work into a cohesive plan for the Park. It will be used to guide Council in the prioritisation and provision of funding for upgrades and on going maintenance to the Park. It will also equip Council and stakeholders with visual material that clearly illustrates the potential to achieve the multiple aspirations for the Park without compromising its character.

2.3 Master Plan Format

The Master Plan consists of two parts:

Volume 1

The Master Plan report which provides summaries of issues, consultation process, vision, principles, objectives, directions, recommendations and drawings.

Volume 2

The supporting documents and reports.

2.4 Site History

European Settlement

Prior to European settlement, the site of Victoria Park is thought to have been Plains Grassy Woodland and was occupied by the Wathaurong (Wadda-Warrung) people. While the site has been significantly altered in both character and land management since European settlement, indigenous grasslands and trees (including River Red Gums, Blackwood and Drooping She-oaks) exist on site as an indication of that history.

Park Designation

In 1858 the Chairman of Ballarat Council appealed to the President of the Crown Lands and Survey to have the area ‘specifically reserved for a park and Gazetted as such’. As part of process, Council agreed to compensate owners of small tenements located within the park area and the land was temporarily gazetted on August 12. The Park was known and referred to as ‘Royal Park’ during this period.

Mining

In 1866 the largest mining companies of the time - United Hand-in-Hand and Band of Hope (who later jointly became Park Company) - sunk a shaft within the Park as part of exploration of the Inkerman Lead. The value of gold obtained from this area was 4517 pounds. By 1898 the site had been mined intensively by Park Company. The mullock heap known as Mt Holled Smith was formed during this time from the dumping of mining spoil.

Crown Grant

On August 6th 1888 the Governor in Council approved the Crown Grant for permanent reservation of the park and the name was changed to Victoria Park. The Crown Grant was ‘for the purpose of a public park and offices and convenience connected therewith and for no other purpose whatsoever’. In 2006 the City of Ballarat surrendered the Crown Grant and was appointed ‘Committee of Management’ of Victoria Park as a ‘Permanent Public Park Reserve’ by the Minister for Planning.

Park Design and Planting

The original design layout of the parkland was modelled on popular English country estates and London parks. It was designed by Messrs Clegg and Nicholls and modified by William Guilfoyle (curator of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne).

On 23 May 1890 Victoria Park was the site of Victoria’s first Arbor Day Planting, a large-scale event initiated by William Little (mayor

at time). Citizens were invited to share the planting of 3000 trees, including species such as elm, plane, cedar, oak, poplar, eucalyptus and indigenous trees. The planting commenced at the sound of a bugle and within ten minutes many of the avenues and clumps of trees which characterise the Park today were planted.

By 1914 considerable public works and improvements had been carried out within northern sections of the Park. Established tree lined avenues were interspersed with flowers, paths and roadways that provided public access through the Park and to playing fields (three grounds for football and cricket). Two shelters, fencing, hedges and a curator’s residence had also been installed. Cedars in the central drive were in poor condition, so Golden Cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) were planted in-between them with the aim of eventually replacing them.

The original park plan did not include the southern part of the Park that now incorporates the equestrian precinct and Winter Street frontage. Southern portions of the Park were given to commercial plantations of *Pinus radiata* until 1929, a remnant of which exists today as a dense forest of pines in the southeast corner.

A specimen tree was planted in 1944 in memory of W.O Allen, a curator who faithfully served the Ballarat community for 60 years, marking his death. The Victorian Tree Planters Association planted the tree.

Local printing company F W Niven & Co. produced a souvenir plan of Victoria Park to commemorate Arbor Day (See page 6).

Military Use

The mullock is known locally as ‘Mount Holled-Smith’ and was named in honour of Major General Sir Charles Holled-Smith (British commander of the Victorian Defence Force) who supervised military exercises involving 3000 men at the Park during Easter 1898.

During the Second World War part of the Park facing Sturt Street and extending south towards Eyre Street became occupied by ‘Military Authorities’; this served as an army base to house United States servicemen, home to 8000 US troops until May 1943. A military hospital was also established.

Events

Over the years the Park has been used for various large-scale events including:

- Car rallying and motor cycle racing (1940’s - 60’s)
- 16th Australian Scout Jamboree (1992)
- International Equestrian Events (present)

Site History sources include:

- Ballarat Historic Trees and Gardens Part 1 Department of Crown Lands and Survey, 1983.
- Victorian Heritage Database Report - Victoria Park Precinct, City of Ballarat, 2015.



Aerial Photo 1930 - The white areas show where mining spoil was dumped.



Commemorative Tree 1944

3 Background Documents

3.1 City of Ballarat Strategic Documents

City of Ballarat Open Space Strategy (2008)

The Ballarat Open Space Strategy identifies Victoria Park as Recreation Parkland and categorises it as a Regional Park. It recommends that Master Plans be developed for all parks and reserves in this category and that they be developed with facilities, features and amenities to a standard consistent with a Regional Park category.

City of Ballarat Recreation Strategy (2014)

The City of Ballarat Recreation Strategies and principles support the following:

- The capacity for multi-functional and shared use of all buildings and recreational facilities in parks and reserves.
- Accessible and equitable access to all recreational infrastructure, buildings and facilities.
- The implementation of significant recreational projects in accordance with approved recreation budgets and works programs.

The Ballarat Strategy (2015)

The Ballarat Strategy – A Greener, More Vibrant and Connected Ballarat supports Victoria Park becoming a more activated and well-loved icon of the City and recommends the development of a Master Plan to provide guidance on Victoria Park's long term future as a recreational icon.

3.2 Victoria Park Documents

Victoria Park – A Vision Sharon Sykes (2012)

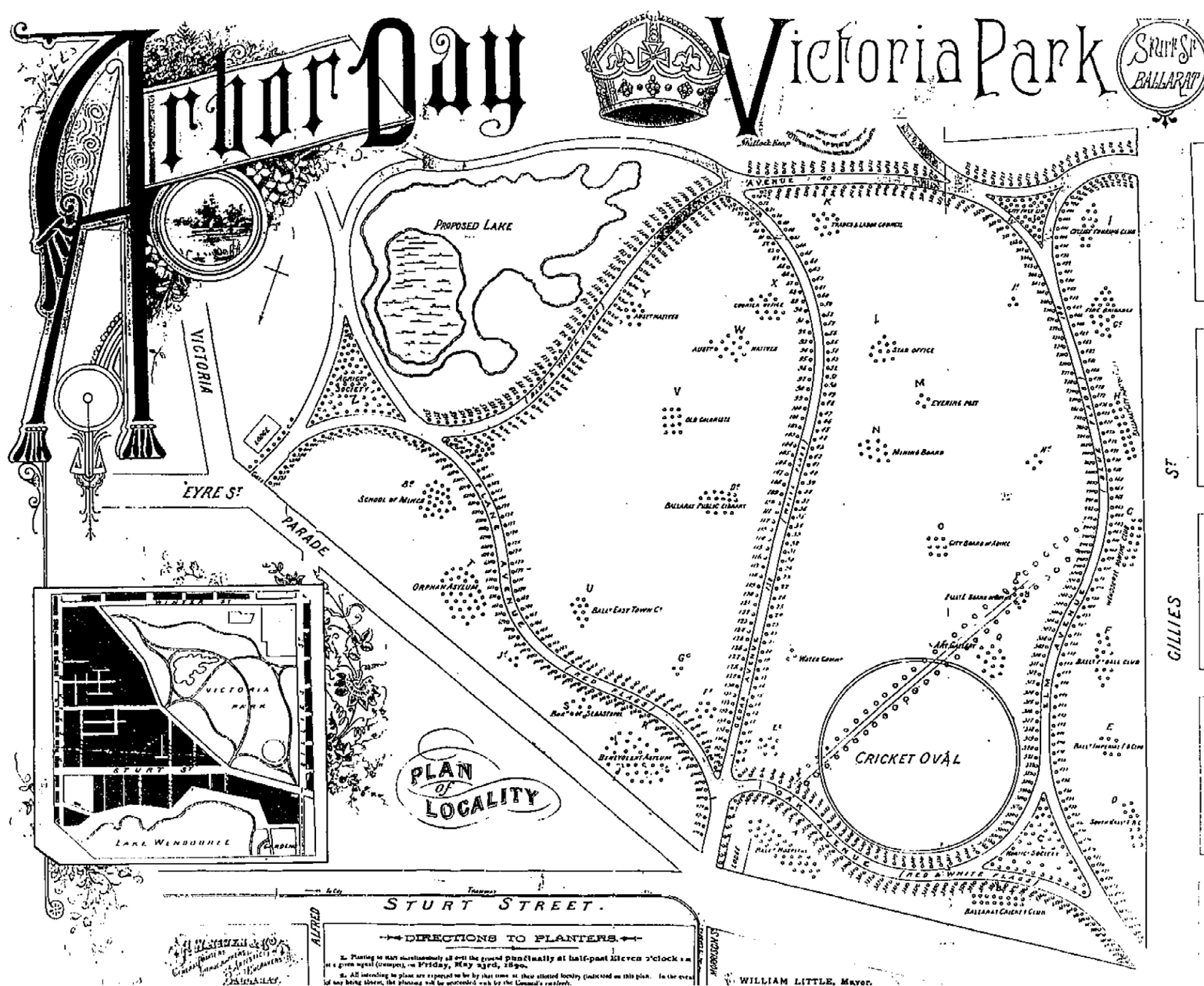
Summary of document given in Chapter 4.1 Prior Consultation.

Victoria Park Inclusive Regional Play Space Jeavons Landscape Architects and City of Ballarat (2015)

A new inclusive play space is currently being developed in the northwest corner of Victoria Park. The works will include a large fenced play space with a broad range of inclusive play equipment and design features including: water play areas, musical interactive zones, a flying fox and swing complex, and a main play structure. Supporting infrastructure will include shelters, BBQ's, toilets, paths, open lawn areas, tree planting and car parking.

Victoria Park, Ballarat Equestrian Precinct - Master Plan Report Planisphere (2007)

The Equestrian Precinct Master Plan was developed in consultation with the Ballarat Pony Club, other Ballarat based equine groups, and representatives of the City of Ballarat and the Crown. The Master Plan provides strategic guidance for the ongoing management and development of facilities and landscaping within the southern portion of Victoria Park informally occupied by the Ballarat Pony Club since 1956, otherwise known as the Equestrian Precinct. Council adopted it in 2007.



Arbor Day Plan 1890 - This plan shows the original layout of avenue trees and specimen clumps. This design is largely intact today with many of the original trees in place.

Victoria Park - Vegetation Management Plan- Remnant Grassland Site Practical Ecology Pty Ltd (2006)

This document was prepared to identify the ecological values of the native grasslands found in sections of Victoria Park and to assist the City of Ballarat to appropriately and effectively manage those ecological values.

Council’s Park’s department believe that the document provides a good guidance for management of the grasslands but would now like to see it refreshed so that it provides a concise program of works to ‘improve’ the management of grasslands ecology.

Victoria Park Management, Use and Development Framework City of Ballarat (2004)

The Victoria Park Management, Use and Development (MUD) Framework was developed by the City of Ballarat to ensure that the integrity of Victoria Park, and particularly is historical, environmental and cultural values would be protected and enhanced for the public’s use and enjoyment. The MUD Framework was considered to be an appropriate tool to achieve this objective at the time given that a number of significant development proposals had been proposed for Victoria Park in the preceding years.

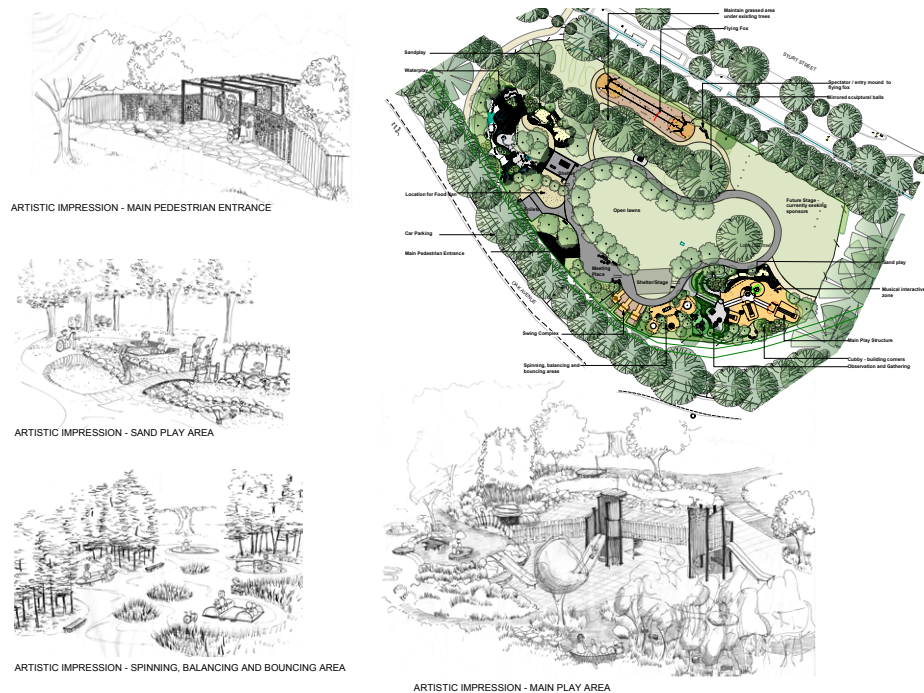
The MUD Framework included some detailed policy recommendations, some of which have since been implemented including the change of land status from a Crown Grant to Committee of Management. The Framework was undertaken with stakeholder and community input and was adopted by the City of Ballarat in 2004.

Victoria Park Community Pavilion – Feasibility Study Morton Dunn Architects (2009)

The Community Pavilion Study and design concepts were undertaken for the brick clubroom building located in the central west side of Victoria Park. The Ballarat Dog Obedience Club, the Lucas Cricket Club, and the Victoria Park Soccer Club currently occupy the building. Each tenant has their own facilities (e.g. meeting room, kitchen and toilets) within the building and each have desires to expand or modify those facilities.

The Study was undertaken in consultation with the tenants and identified that the current building has poor connectivity, is dysfunctional, and is in relatively poor condition. The Study concluded that a new purpose built facility would be more economically viable and would not only be capable of providing the growing needs of the current tenants, but could also have a broader public use for meetings, public functions and as a base for community events in Victoria Park.

The estimated cost for building the Community Pavilion, excluding car parking and associated road works, was approximately \$2 million.



Ballarat City Council Reports

3.3 Showgrounds Relocation Documents

A number of reports have been prepared for the City of Ballarat in relation to the Proposal to relocate the Showground’s proposals for future developments within the Park and these have been reviewed in the preparation of the Master Plan. These include:

Ballarat Showground’s Preliminary Business Plan Birru Pty Ltd (2015)

The Ballarat Showgrounds Preliminary Business Plan was developed for the Ballarat Agricultural and Pastoral Society (BAPS) in recognition that the current Showgrounds facilities are in poor condition, that the current site is no longer suited to their present use, and that there are significant strategic opportunities for consideration of relocation and redevelopment of the Showgrounds and events facility in the southern end of Victoria Park, near and potentially including the existing Ballarat Saleyards.

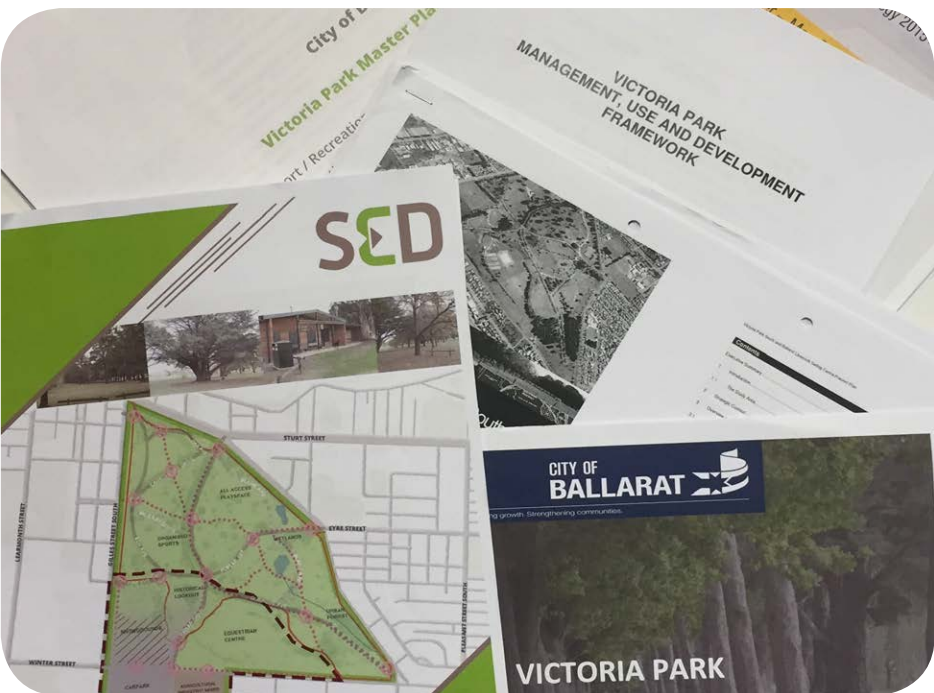
This Business Plan builds upon and reviews a 2004 Master Plan for the Showgrounds in the context of the current strategic and issues opportunities, and will be subject to further detail pending community consultation as part of the Victoria Park Master Plan process.

Victoria Park South and Ballarat Livestock Selling Centre Precinct Plan and Draft Victoria Park Precinct Volume 2: Background Report Planisphere (2007)

This Plan was commissioned by the City of Ballarat and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) to build on the directions of Council’s Management Use and Development Framework (MUD Framework) and to provide guidance in relation to development pressures affecting the southern end of Victoria Park and the adjoining Ballarat Livestock Selling Centre (BLSC) site.

It was prepared through 2006 at a time when Council has resolved to relocate the BLSC and considering the potential use of that site, and a southern portion of Victoria Park for the relocation and redevelopment of the Ballarat Showgrounds. The latter was subsequently withdrawn.

The Plan included comprehensive community consultation and identified guiding principles, and detailed strategies and actions for the future development and use of the southern precinct of Victoria Park. It was presented to Council in 2010 with the recommendation that it be used to inform further strategic planning work in Ballarat West and the Delacombe Industrial Area.



Ballarat Showgrounds Master Plan Stratcorp (2004)

The Ballarat Showgrounds Master Plan provided a detailed analysis of the condition of the Ballarat Showgrounds and reviewed opportunities for redevelopment of the Showgrounds facilities, both on the existing site and at a number of other potential sites in the Ballarat area.

It helped to inform the preferred option to relocate and re-develop the Showgrounds facility in Victoria Park however it was not adopted by Council, and due to a number of other issues the Ballarat Agricultural and Pastoral Society (BAPS) withdrew their proposal to relocate to Victoria Park at that time.

4 Community & Stakeholder Consultation

4.1 Victoria Park Vision (2012)

Victoria Park – A Vision (2012) - Sharon Sykes

The Victoria Park Vision was the culmination of an extensive community engagement process with Victoria Park users, stakeholder groups, students, neighbours and residents.

The engagement process was undertaken over a 6-month period with the key focus on the park features, values, opportunities, and challenges. It included discussion papers, stakeholder interviews, walk and talk sessions, questionnaires, park surveys and 3 separate 'spaceshaper' workshops.

This represented the most extensive community engagement process undertaken in Ballarat for a public park and resulted in a series of statements around:

- Access
- Activation and use
- Circulation and Entrances
- Connections
- Information and Promotion
- Infrastructure
- Landscape
- Safety

It also validated the previously adopted Management Use and Development Framework resulting in the Vision statement:

- **The Lungs of the City - A Park for the People**

'The City of Ballarat will preserve and enhance the historic features of Victoria Park while encouraging the community's use and enjoyment of the parks diverse range of facilities and landscapes'

Council adopted the Victoria Park Vision in September 2012 as a document for the future development of Victoria Park. Council also adopted recommendations to undertake supporting strategies for a:

- Tree Replacement Management Plan
- Traffic and Access Management Plan
- Drainage and Storm Water Management Plan

The following principles were established and approved by Council as part of the vision.

Landscape and Vegetation

- Preserve the Park as environmental and sustainable green space.
- Preserve and enhance trees and avenues to maximise shade, amenity, windbreak, and separation of Park areas.
- Native grasslands to be preserved, well maintained and interpreted.

Access

- Access to and within the Park to be suitable for people of all ages and abilities.
- At some times access may be restricted to allow for specific activities and events.

Circulation and Entrances

- Traffic management measures will minimise vehicle impacts for pedestrians, cyclists and park users.
- Safe and good quality pathways will improve circulation and movement through the Park.
- Entrances to the Park will be standardised to create a park identity and sense of arrival.
- Provision of appropriate car parking areas.

Connections

- Victoria Park will be well connected to Lake Wendoree and other local open space in central Ballarat.
- Linkages for walking and cycling will connect with Victoria Park where possible.
- Safe road crossings will improve the connection to Victoria Park for the local community.

Information and Promotion

- The Park will be well promoted to the community through signage and media.
- The heritage and environmental significance of the Park will be interpreted for all park users and the community to learn and understand the qualities of Victoria Park



Photo from within Victoria Park, Ballarat

Activation and use

- Families, individuals and groups will be encouraged to use the Park year round for a wide range of activities.
- Multiple activities take place in shared spaces at all times, days and seasons.
- The Park will be able to host major events in a natural open space setting.

Safety

- The Park will be a safe and comfortable space that people want to spend time in.
- Minimising vehicle impacts and seeking to improve visibility and passive surveillance will improve public safety.
- Activation of spaces in the Park will improve confidence in the safety of Victoria Park

Infrastructure

- High quality facilities to be provided to support open space activities.
- Built development to be minimised to ensure open space qualities are preserved.

4.2 Master Plan Development

The Master Plan was developed by Urban Initiatives under guidance from the City of Ballarat. A Project Control Group (PCG) was integral to the development of this report. The following City of Ballarat Staff formed the PCG for this project:

Adam Parrott - Senior Landscape Architect (Project Manager)
Terry Demeo – Manager Planning Implementation
David Grant – Vegetation Planning Officer
Jim Leonard – Coordinator Traffic and Transport
Chris Gardner – Senior Recreation Planning Advisor
Daryl Wallis – Coordinator Parks and Gardens
James Guy – Acting Manager Planning Implementation
Jeff Johnson – Manager Community Events

4.3 Master Plan Consultation 2015

Pre Master Plan Consultation

Community consultation was undertaken from April to May 2015 to seek the community's and stakeholders ideas and comments prior to the development of a Draft Master Plan. The consultation process included an Open House which was attended by approximately 250 people, a detailed survey which received 190 formal responses, meetings and interviews with key recreational and stakeholder groups, and six written submissions.

The consultation process assisted Council to consider the community's responses to a number of development challenges and proposals prior to the preparation of the Preliminary Draft Master Plan. The consultation process and outcomes are summarised in detail in Appendix 8.1.

Preliminary Master Plan Consultation

Community consultation on the Preliminary Draft of the Master Plan was conducted for a month through August to September 2015. The consultation process included exhibition of the Preliminary Draft Master Plan and a survey that allowed respondents to indicate to what extent they supported key recommendations across eight different themes within the Master Plan. 201 survey responses and submissions were received; providing further guidance to assist in the preparation of the Final Draft. The community feedback and outcomes are summarised in detail in Appendix 8.4.

Final Draft Master Plan Consultation

To be provided following completion of the community consultation on the Final Draft of the Master Plan.

4.4 Sport & Recreation Stakeholder Consultation

In 2012 Sharon Sykes interviewed numerous stakeholders with regard to their existing and future sport and recreation requirements. In 2015 SED conducted follow up interviews with many of these stakeholder to confirm their requirements for the preparation of the Master Plan. The results of these interviews are summarised in the Victoria Park Master Plan - summary of Sport / Recreation Considerations for the Victoria Park Master Plan SED May 2015 (refer Volume 2).

The following stakeholders were interviewed in 2012 and 2015:

- Ballarat Association of Schools
- Ballarat Cricket Association
- Ballarat Dog Obedience Club
- Ballarat Fly Fishers
- Ballarat Football League
- Ballarat Pony Club and Friends of Ballarat Eventing Association
- Ballarat Regional Athletics Centre
- Ballarat Sebastapol Cycling Club
- Ballarat Triathlon Club
- Lucas Cricket Club
- Sport Climbing Victoria
- St Patrick's School
- Victoria Park Soccer Club
- Wendoree Archery Club

The following stakeholders were interviewed in 2012 only:

- Loreto College
- Ballarat Adult Riding Club
- Eureka Orienteers
- Ballarat Environmental Network (BEN)

- Ballarat Race Walkers
- Ballarat Triathlon Club
- Ballarat Bicycle User Group
- Urquhart Park Primary School
- Weekly Park Run
- Ballarat Agricultural and Pastoral Society

Consideration was given to the suitability of each request in relation to the Park history and character and whether the desired facilities / activities were in alignment with the Park vision and directions. Council approved the following directions for consideration in the Master Plan:

- Establishment of multi-use playing fields (2-3 ovals), serviced by a new pavilion/change rooms and public toilets.
- Upgrading road surfaces, primarily for cycling and installation of traffic management measures.
- Improve the condition of playing surfaces - i.e. primarily irrigation for summer cricket use.
- Install seasonal soccer goals and additional pitch.
- Improving path networks, connections and standards.
- Upgrading (potentially replacing) the existing 'soccer' pavilion (more change rooms, public toilets, shelter, etc.).
- Upgrading fencing and pony club pavilion.
- Establishment of a 'feature' cricket ground.
- Installation of training lights for soccer ground and possible new multi-use oval.
- Improve signage and interpretive info (including distance markers).
- Establish a bus drop off zone.



4.5 Summary of Design Themes and Objectives

The following design themes and objectives have been developed based on Community & Stakeholder Consultation Material, City of Ballarat directions and background reports. These objectives underpin the Master Plan and enable the clear communication of broad issues and directions proposed in the Victoria Park Master Plan.



Landscape & Vegetation

Ensure the existing historic landscape character, including native and exotic trees and indigenous grassland, is preserved and enhanced. New landscape elements should be sustainable and in keeping with the Park character.



Event Infrastructure and Social Amenity

Build on the social and cultural heritage of the Park in providing for varied activities, events and healthy outdoor recreation for the whole community.



Facility Development

Provide equitable use of Park space, maximise use and improve safety and access to facilities for all users.



Organised Sports and Clubs

Provide improved facilities (including sports pavilions) that balance the needs of various organised user groups, schools and clubs at different times so as to maximise use and minimise the park space required.



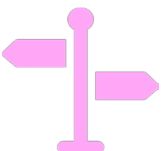
Traffic and Vehicle Management

Improve safety and amenity for all Park users including pedestrians, cyclists, drivers and all other recreational users by reducing the impacts of vehicles and traffic congestion both within and around the Park.



Access, Circulation and Connections

Improve access, circulation and connections, both within the Park and to surrounding landscapes, to improve safety and amenity for pedestrians and cyclists.



Public Appreciation and Signage

Enhance public knowledge about the Park, its character, vegetation, points of interest and history through improved interpretative and way finding signage.



Hydrology & Lake Improvements

Enhance the amenity and sustainability of the Park waterbodies to improve the landscape experience, mitigate flooding and increase water capture and storage for re-use. Consolidate the lakes precinct into an improved area that reflects the design intent of the original plans.

5 Site Analysis and Existing Conditions

5.1 Existing Precincts

The existing landscape can be divided into various precincts based on character and use. These include:

Sturt Street Frontage - The Active Edge

This edge is the most prominent frontage of the Park and currently incorporates the only publicly accessible toilets in the Park, along with a playground, picnic shelter, BBQ area with tables, seating, rubbish bins and Park signage.

Sports Grounds

The existing Park signage identifies 13 ovals within the Park however only 11 of these are currently in use. The ovals closest to the southeast corner of the Park (Ovals 12 and 13) are currently not maintained as such and native grassland species are returning.

Grasslands

Significant indigenous grasslands exist across the site and require strategic management and interpretive signage.

Lakes and Arboretum

The two small lakes have potential to provide greater amenity and more sustainable water storage and filtration. The area to the west is relatively open with plantings of rare oaks in the 1990's.

South-East Entry

This area has a strong character with established deciduous avenue trees and a forest of pines however there is a lack of defined pedestrian paths into the Park at this corner.

Equestrian Precinct

Access to this precinct is currently restricted however there is potential for greater synergy with adjacent parkland and opportunities for additional tree planting to be explored.

South-West Corner

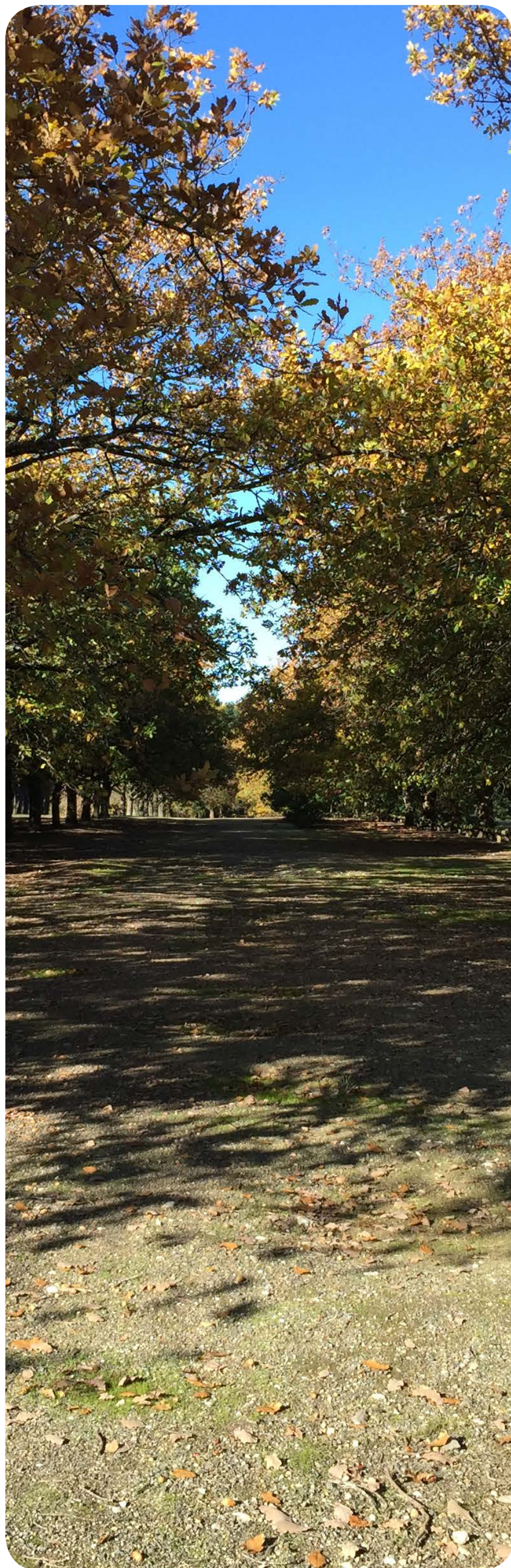
Currently an under-utilised paddock and dumping ground for lakeweed from Lake Wendoree this area could be improved to cater for large-scale events and increase park amenity for everyday users.

Mullock Heap and Velodrome

These two features are the only significant areas of topographic variation in the Park and are interesting historical relics that add interest and varied spatial experiences from the rest of the Park.

Historic Groves

These triangular groves of trees are strong design elements from the 1890 Arbor Day Plan, some of which are no longer legible on site and could be re-established.



Existing Precincts Plan



KEY

VICTORIA PARK PRECINCTS
(WITH PRECINCT PERCENTAGE OF ENTIRE PARK SHOWN)

- ACTIVE EDGE (6%)
- SPORTS GROUNDS (23%)
- GRASSLANDS (20%)
- LAKES/WETLANDS AND ARBORETUM (10%)
- SOUTH EAST ENTRY (8%)
- EQUESTRIAN (14%)
- SOUTH WEST CORNER (11%)
- MULLOCK HEAP AND VELODROME (6%)
- HISTORIC GROVE PLANTING (2%)

5.2 Landscape and Vegetation

Victoria Park is highly valued for its landscape character as it is one of Australia's best examples of a large European style parkland. It provides for varied recreational activities in a carefully planned landscape setting that incorporates significant historic trees and remnant indigenous grasslands.

The northern half of the Park retains the original design layout and most of the planting that occurred between 1890 and 1910. This part of the Park is expansive, relatively flat and contrasts large open areas with multiple grassed sports fields and grasslands with areas of densely planted trees, including sweeping tree lined avenues and woodland clumps and groves. The layout of the Park and particularly the tree-lined avenues make up a large part of the Park's character and are a significant landscape feature. Original tree species include a mix of large exotic deciduous trees (Elms, Planes, Oaks and Poplars), evergreen conifers (Cedars, Pines and Cypress) and some re-established indigenous species including River Red Gums.

In recent years Council has lifted the canopies of many of the established trees and this has greatly improved visibility in treed areas which were previously felt to be unsafe. The lack of shrub layer plants in the Park is a distinctive part of its character in that it enhances the vistas of open grassland framed by trees.

The southern areas of the Park are quite different in character to the north as they were not part of the original European style park. The most distinctive aspect of this area is Mt. Holled-Smith, a large mullock heap (formed by the dumping of mining spoil) now covered in mature pines. Adjacent to this is a grassed depression, the remnant trace of an old velodrome. The less developed areas include a flat open partially fenced paddock on the corner of Gillies and Winter Streets that is currently under utilised and used as a dump for lakeweed from Lake Wendouree. The fenced equestrian precinct has post and wire fencing around the perimeter and, although not accessible to the general public, it is visually open and the landscape character with grass, clumped trees and horse jumps generally in keeping with the Park surrounds. The street frontages on Gillies and Winter Streets do not have the consistency of large avenue trees of Sturt and Russell Streets though some tree planting has been undertaken in recent years.

Council is aiming to increase tree cover to approximately 40% across the municipality. Victoria Park currently has a tree cover of 21% with room to increase this. The large areas of grassland also perform carbon uptake and contribute significantly to the environmental value of the Park.

Key Issues:

- Senescing trees (esp. Cypress, Pine and Poplar) require a replacement plan.
- Parts of the Park are perceived as unsafe due to enclosed trees. Established trees in high use areas should continue to have canopies lifted for visibility, particularly on Quercus Ave.
- Native grasslands require management improvements and interpretation.
- Some recent plantings of avenue trees (esp. Planes and Poplars) are not doing well and need remedial work or to be replaced with another species.
- Park edge condition is not consistent in terms of vegetation - Winter and Gillies Street frontages need further tree planting for shade and improved amenity.
- Additional tree plantings will be required throughout the Park, where appropriate, to achieve an increased canopy cover.



Existing Open Grassland



Existing Cypress on Cedar Ave



Existing Group of Pines

Trees of particular significance include:

Trust Significant Trees List

- Two small groups of *Pinus contorta* var. *contorta* listed on the Northern Territory Significant Tree List) located between Gillies Street and Elm Avenue north of Military Drive.
- Three *Halocarpus biformis*, Yellow Pine, between the southwest edge of Oval 9 and Cedar Avenue
- Two groups of *Quercus robur* ‘*Fastigiata*’ between Plane Avenue and Cedar Avenue, west of Oval 10.

National Register of Big Trees

- One very large *Quercus michauxii* near the Sturt and Russell Street Entrance (Entrance 2).

Commemorative Trees

- Victorian Tree Planters Assoc. planted one *Cedrus atlantica* to commemorate W O Allen in 1944. This tree is marked with a plaque at its base.

Rare Trees

- One very rare *Quercus* ‘Mt Macedon’ Tree that is healthy but has poor structure is located just east of Cedar Avenue south of Oval 9.
- One very rare *Pinus coulteri* which is in quite poor condition is located between Cedar Avenue and Oval 10.
- A large area on the Russell Street edge south of Eyre Street is planted with small groups of a variety of rare *Quercus* sp. obtained from an Oak enthusiast in Warragul in the 1990’s.x
- One unidentified *Quercus* sp. just west of Cedar Avenue at the intersection of Oak Avenue. The tree is small and stunted.

Existing Tree Species

The tree list below is sourced from the Ballarat Historic Trees and Gardens Part 1, Department of Crown Lands and Survey, 1983. This is the latest and most up to date tree inventory. A more recent and detailed inventory is recommended.

Exotic

Castanea sativa
Cedrus atlantica f. *glauca*
Cedrus deodara
Crataegus monogyna (weed sp)
Cupressus macrocarpa
Cupressus torulosa
Fraxinus excelsior
Laurus nobilis
Pinus contorta
Pinus coulteri
Pinus halepensis
Pinus pinaster
Pinus radiata
Pinus sabiniana
Platinus x acerifolia
Populus alba
Populus x canadensis
Populus nigra ‘*Italica*’
Prunus sp.
Quercus acutissima
Quercus canariensis
Quercus cerris
Quercis ilex
Quercus palustris
Quercus robur ‘*Fastigiata*’
Quercus robur
Quercus suber
Salix sp.
Sequoia sempervirens
Ulmus carpinifolia ‘*Variegata*’
Elm
Ulmus cornubiensis x *U.glabra*

Sweet Chestnut
Blue Cedar
Himalayan Cedar
Common Hawthorn
Monterey Cypress
Himalayan Cypress
Golden Ash
Portugal Laurel
Shore Pine
Big Cone Pine
Aleppo Pine
Cluster Pine
Monterey Pine
Grey Pine
London Plane
White Poplar
Canadian Poplar
Lombardy Poplar

Sawtooth Oak
Algerian Oak
Turkey Oak
Evergreen Oak
Pin Oak
Columnar English Oak
English Oak
Cork Oak
Willow
Californian Redwood
Smooth Leaf Variagated

Ulmus glabra
Ulmus glabra ‘*Camperdownii*’
Ulmus glabra ‘*Lutescens*’
Ulmus x hollandica

Wych Elm
Camperdown Elm
Golden Wych Elm
Dutch Elm

Native

Araucaria bidwillii
Banksia integrifolia
Callitris sp.
Casuarina sp.
Eucalyptus botriodes
Eucalyptus globulus ssp. *globulus*
Eucalyptus leucoxylon
Eucalyptus sideroxylon
Grevillea robusta

Bunya Pine
Coast Banksia
Native Pine
She-oak
Southern Mahogany
Tasmanian Blue Gum
Yellow Gum
Red Ironbark
Silky Oak

Indigenous

Acacia dealbata
Acacia melanoxylon
Eucalyptus camaldulensis
Eucalyptus ovata
Eucalyptus viminalis

Silver Wattle
Blackwood
River Red Gum
Swamp Gum
Manna Gum



Above view looking east of Victoria Park with Cedar Avenue running through



Above view looking north of Oak trees along Oak Avenue



Above view looking south west of Caretakers Drive and Cedar Avenue

Existing Vegetation Plan



- SIGNIFICANT TREES
- ① *Pinus contorta* var. *contorta*
 - ② *Quercus* sp.
 - ③ *Quercus michauxii*
 - ④ *Cedrus deodora*
 - ⑤ *Halocarpus biformis*
 - ⑥ *Quercus* 'Mt. Macedon'
 - ⑦ *Quercus robur* 'Fastigiata'
 - ⑧ *Pinus coulteri*
 - ⑨ RARE QUERCUS SPECIES PLANTING IN AREA

KEY

EXISTING VEGETATION

- NATIVE GRASSLANDS REQUIRING MANAGEMENT
- TREES REQUIRING MANAGEMENT PLAN
- CANOPY ZONE REQUIRING LIFTING
- RECENTLY PLANTED/REPLANTED AVENUES
- PARK EDGE REQUIRING IMPROVEMENT
- HERITAGE SIGNIFICANT TREE, REFER TABLE

5.3 Event Infrastructure and Social Amenity

The Ballarat Open Space Strategy classified Victoria Park as a Regional Park however it is currently lacking the facilities and infrastructure to cater for large-scale events. Most of the existing facilities have been provided to service specific local users, such as sports groups, or low volumes of passing visitors and do not have the capability or flexibility required for larger events. There is limited water and power supply throughout the Park, further reducing the Parks' capacity to stage a variety of events.

The southwest corner of the Park is under-utilised, publicly inaccessible and a number of reports have been prepared detailing and assessing proposals for the Ballarat Agricultural and Pastoral Society to relocate the showgrounds to the Park. Community responses to this possibility have been varied and there is a need for more exploration as to how this might be incorporated into a multi-purpose event space for the Park that is available for local community use when not in use for a major event. Issues requiring further resolution include traffic management, fencing and integration with surrounding parkland.

Dog Use

The Ballarat Dog Obedience Club has been operating in Victoria Park, utilising the clubrooms and Oval 6 and 7 surrounds since 1977. During this time the Club has helped to educate over 4000 members in the proper care and control of their dogs and to promote a more responsible dog owning community. The existing clubrooms no longer meet the needs of the Club and are in poor condition. Plans for redevelopment of the clubrooms have been developed but require further development in liaison with the Club before being finalised.

Dog owners have traditionally used the area around Oval 11 and Lake No 2 as a 'dog off leash area' for many years. It is still well used by dog owners to regularly socialise with other dog owners and let their dogs run around off a leash. Unfortunately this has the potential to conflict and cause safety concerns with bike riders using the criterion circuit which adjoins and surrounds this area.

In 2014 all of Victoria Park was designated as a 'dogs off leash' park, with conditions and exemptions identified on signage at all major vehicle entry points. Further public education is still required to ensure responsible dog owners comply with their requirements in designated 'dogs off leash' Ballarat Parks.

The concept of providing a fenced dog park area within Victoria Park was raised during the community consultation process and considered in preparing the Master Plan. Although the concept received limited support, a fenced dog park area could potentially be incorporated into the Events area in the southern part of the Park where support infrastructure could be available, and where the visual impact of the fencing would not impact on the historically significant open parkland areas.

Key Issues:

- Existing facilities do not accommodate large-scale events.
- Lack of water and power supply reduces the Park's capacity to accommodate a variety of events and activities.
- Community concerns about access to designated events space and loss of park space.
- South-west corner of Park is currently degraded, under utilised and inaccessible.
- Facilities need to be improved and provided to a suitable level to service a regional scale park.
- Small scale events such as cycling criterion should be facilitated in such a way that part of the Park can be closed off with minimal disruption to other users.
- Traffic changes for events must be safe for other users and free of conflicts.



Photo of under utilised southwest corner

5.4 Facility Development

Most of the existing publicly accessible facilities are concentrated in the Lakes Precinct and the Sturt Street frontage on the northern boundary of the Park. These include picnic areas with picnic tables, BBQ's and shelters, play equipment, seating, and information signs. The amenities block on Sturt Street houses the only publicly accessible toilets in the Park and there is a need for the provision of more toilets, particularly to service the playing fields, picnic area and lakes further east (toward Eyre St). The existing clubrooms currently service the northeastern sports fields but are only able to be accessed by the three clubs using the building - the Dog Obedience Club, Soccer Club and Lucas Cricket Club.

The running circuit Vic Track is a well used, good quality path surface, however, there is a need for shorter loops to supplement this as the 5km track is too long for less able-bodied users. There is also a need for more frequent directional signage, drinking fountains and seating along this track. In general there is a lack of DDA compliant path connections within the Park (this is addressed in more detail later in this report).

An all abilities playground has been designed and approved for construction on the corner of Sturt Street and Cedar Avenue (west of entrance 3).

The central and southern parts of the Park has very little in the way of facilities (toilets and BBQ's) and this should be addressed through the development of the Master Plan.

Key Issues:

- Minimal co-use of facilities between clubs promotes unnecessary facility duplication.
- Current facilities do not cater for all users.
- There is a need for more toilets that are accessible to the general public.
- More furniture and shelter is required throughout the Park - seating, drinking fountains, BBQ etc.
- Existing clubroom facilities are in poor condition, not accessible to the general public and have poor functionality and amenity.



Existing public toilets on Sturt Street frontage



Existing club rooms



Existing playground and picnic area near lakes



Existing picnic shelter on Sturt Street frontage

5.5 Organised Sports and Clubs

Sports Ovals

The SED report identified the needs of all user groups in relation to current and potential organised sports and recreation within Victoria Park. The existing sports ovals (1-11) are currently primarily used for cricket and soccer by associated clubs and neighbouring schools. South of the clubrooms, ovals 6, 7 and 8 are also used by The Ballarat Dog Obedience Club for their activities. Ovals 12 and 13 are not currently used for regular sporting events.

Stakeholders have identified the poor condition of playing surfaces as a major issue. None of the ovals are currently irrigated. Cycling and walking groups require that paths and road surfaces be improved. The shared clubrooms are not flexible enough to accommodate varied user groups, do not have public toilets and are without female change rooms. Generally the sports activities are spread over a large area with a lack of provision of associated facilities. In addition, the sports fields cannot be utilised to their maximum potential due to both the physical limitations and management issues.

Criterion

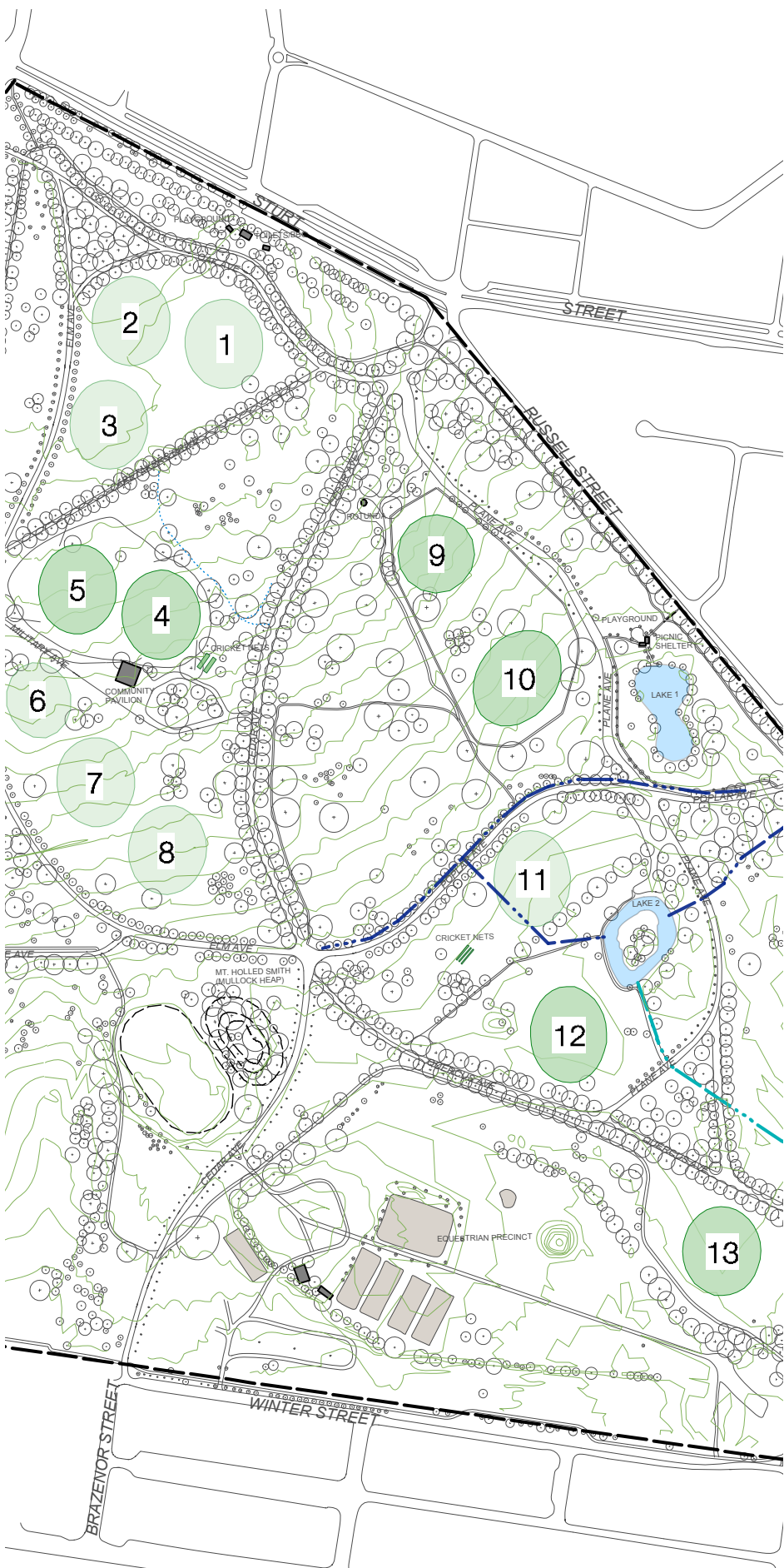
The Ballarat Sebastopol Cycling Club currently utilise a road circuit bordered by Plane Avenue to the west, Quercus Avenue to the south and Poplar Avenue to the north for criterium training and events through summer. Although the course is closed to vehicle traffic during use, it is in poor condition and has the potential to conflict with vehicle use and dog off leash areas adjoining the circuit near Poplar Avenue. There is also a lack of toilet and change facilities near the circuit which inhibits the clubs capacity to grow and promote both junior and women's programmes.

Alternative sites for a purpose built criterium circuit and associated infrastructure within Ballarat are also currently being investigated. If an alternative site is identified and supported the criterium circuit may no longer be required in Victoria Park in the longer term.

Key Issues:

- Oval surfaces in poor condition and not irrigated.
- Not all of the ovals are in use despite heavy demand.
- Demand for upgrades to cricket and soccer ovals.
- Schools would invest in upgrades to sports ovals and associated facilities.
- Existing sports pavilion does not have female change rooms.
- Existing pavilion toilets are not publicly accessible.
- Cricket nets located in grasslands and near the clubrooms are in poor condition and not well located for practical use.
- Public toilets are required closer to ovals and lakes for practical use.
- Amenities building required closer to Eyre St.
- Criterium course in poor condition and conflicts with dog off leash area.
- Poor traffic conditions where criterium course intersects with roads and paths of movement.

Existing Ovals Plans



Existing sportsfield used for cricket



Existing cricket nets near club rooms

5.6 Traffic and Vehicle Management

Sealed Roads

The Park currently has a number of vehicular roads running through it, the majority of which are asphalt sealed. Most of the roads were part of the original park plan and are two way curved avenues with a gravel shoulder and avenue tree plantings, some of which are significant established trees and others which have been more recently replanted. Pine Avenue, Military Drive and the southern extension of Cedar Avenue are more recent additions to the road network.

Unsealed Roads

The section of Plane Avenue between Cedar Ave and Poplar Avenue is unsealed gravel as are the Lake 2 car park and access roads, the car park and loop access at the clubrooms on Military Drive, and smaller loops at the rotunda and opposite Lake 1. The gravel areas lack clearly defined edges and are uneven with potholes and puddles.

Entrances

There are five vehicular entrances to the Park; Gate 1 at Gillies Street and Oak Avenue, Gate 2 at the intersection of Sturt and Russell Streets, Gate 3 at Russell and Eyre St, Gate 4 at Winter St and Cedar Avenue and 5 at Gillies Street and Pine Avenue. Each entry has way-finding signage and gates that are generally open day and night and are used to restrict entry when required for events. There is currently no vehicle access to the south-east and south-west corners of the Park and the Equestrian Area on Winter St is fenced and only accessible to Pony Club users.

Intersections, Traffic Controls & Safety

There are no speed signs or traffic slowing measures within the Park and vehicle speeds within the Park present a safety risk to both pedestrians and drivers. Intersections within the Park are unsigned and there is a lack of delineation between vehicle and pedestrian paths which increases the risk to safety.

Car Parking

Generally there is sufficient car parking opportunities throughout the Park, conveniently located to service the higher use areas such as the active edge along Sturt Street and the clubrooms and sports ovals either side of Military Drive.

In other areas throughout the Park where sufficient parking is not provided, parkland has been co-opted causing significant degradation to the land. Most notable instances of this occur near the rotunda at the parks north, behind the clubrooms at the end of Military Drive and throughout the lakes precinct.

The provision of suitable car parking should be included when considering future works that will encourage greater levels of use. This must be a considered approach which does not jeopardise the Park's character.

Key Issues:

- Unsafe entry / problem points for traffic flow - Gillies / Oak Ave entry (Gate 1), Sturt / Russell St Entry (Gate 2), Gillies St / Pine Avenue Entry (Gate 5).
- Unsafe intersections within Park particularly the central intersection - Oak Ave / Cedar Ave / Elm Ave / Poplar Ave.
- Condition of road surfaces and shoulders in need of improvement, including sealing gravel roads and car parks which are currently very uneven.
- Traffic speeds are a problem and measures to slow traffic need to be undertaken to increase safety of pedestrians and drivers.
- Unrestricted vehicle access to grassed areas needs to be reduced and Council is currently implementing timber post and rail barriers.
- Safer pedestrian crossing points are required and the interface between pedestrians and cars improved.
- Insufficient car parking in areas and vehicle access to the Parks interior.



Roadside marker that has been hit by vehicle

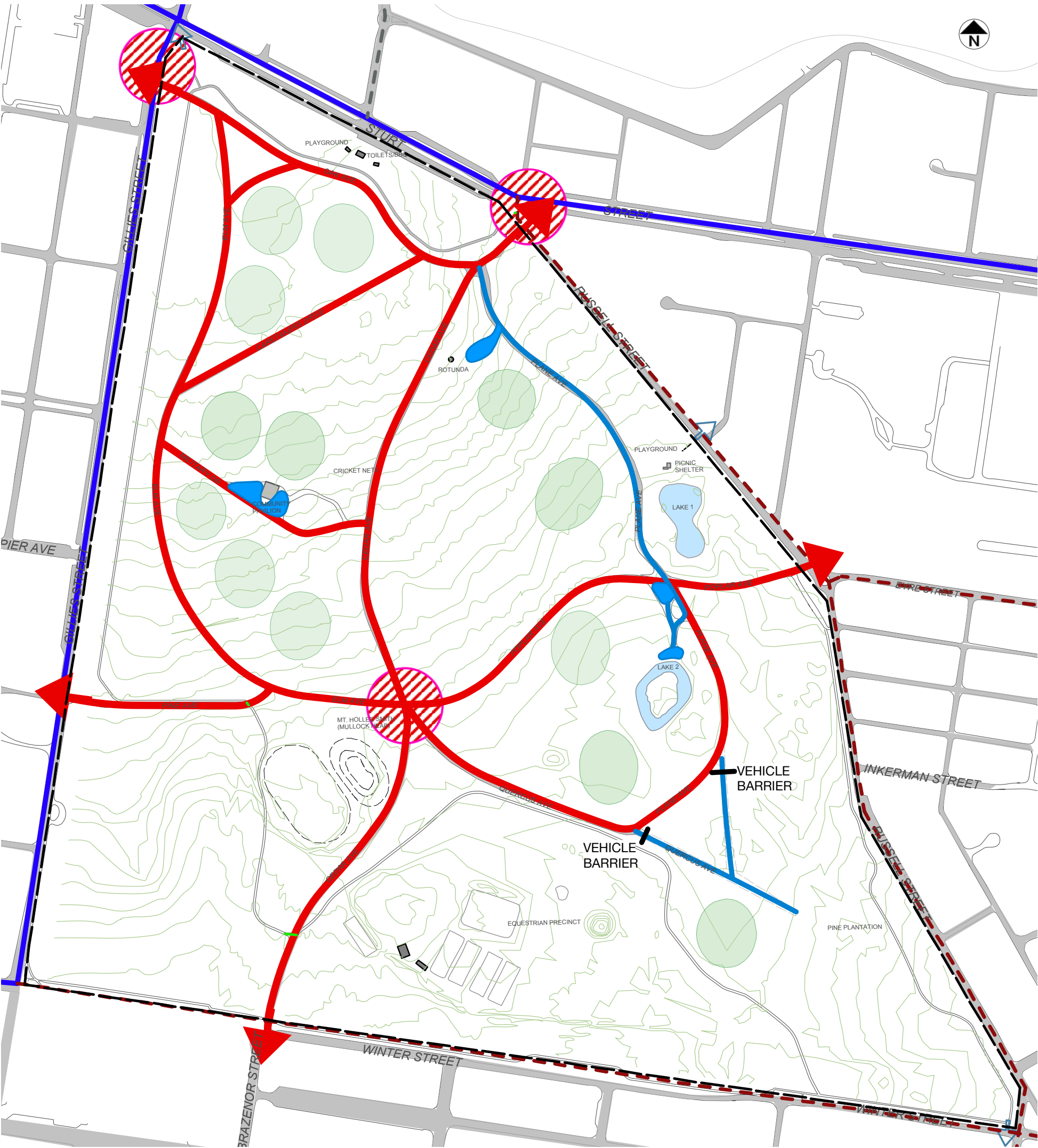


Example of uncontrolled vehicle movement



Unsealed car park

Existing Traffic Conditions Plan



KEY

VEHICLE CIRCULATION

- INTERNAL ROAD - PAVED
- INTERNAL ROAD - GRAVEL
- GRAVEL CAR PARK
- COLLECTOR ROAD
- ARTERIAL ROAD
- PROBLEM INTERSECTION



5.7 Access, Circulation and Connections

Internal Paths

The main clearly defined and complaint pedestrian path within the Park is the 5km circuit track known as Vic-Track. The path is gravel surface with sections of bitumen and has steel distance markers every 500m. There is minimal seating and one drinking fountain along the length of the track. Other paths within the Park do not provide sufficient connections, particularly for less able bodied users. The lack of dedicated pedestrian/cycle paths within the Park means the choice for users is to share the road with cars, walk along the road verge, rough tracks or on the grass. There is a need for improvements to road and path surfaces and the provision of better connections and shorter loop walks. Generally there is a lack of way finding signage for pedestrians throughout the Park.

Perimeter Paths and Connections

There are a limited number of pedestrian entry points to the Park from surrounds, particularly at the western and southern interfaces which are relatively under developed. Pedestrian entries need to be improved, particularly to cater for children riding to and from school, and the safety of road crossings needs to be improved, particularly for older and disabled users. Sturt Street has the most clearly defined pedestrian entries with arched metal park name signage. Other pedestrian entries have limited or no signage, except in the case where the signage is shared with road entries.

The pedestrian conditions along the perimeter of the Park vary and there is no consistent path link around the perimeter. There is a dedicated pedestrian path along the Park perimeter at Winter Street from Gillies to Russell Streets. Typically entry paths aligned with road crossings connect with VicTrack where it runs close to the Park edge. Otherwise they connect with road/verges that double as path connections.

Key Issues:

- Lack of designated pedestrian path connections to existing network, facilities and surrounds.
- Risk to safety for pedestrians using roads as walking paths.
- Quality of path and road surfaces needs improving.
- Shorter loop walks required and increased seating and drinking fountains along pathways.
- Lack of way finding signage for pedestrians.
- More DDA compliant paths to improve access for the elderly and disabled.



South east corner - no path



Goat track connection to Russell St



Victrack



Permeable boundary to Russell St