LAURIES FIELD MASTER PLAN

Engagement Summary

Phase 1 Community Consultation July 2024

Introduction

The City of Whittlesea is developing a draft master plan for Lauries Field, one of Council's open spaces in Doreen, an established area of the municipality. The reserve has an area of approximately 4.90 hectares made up of an open grassed area, lake, and conservation area.

The master plan is a high-level document providing a broad vision for the reserve. The master plan endeavours to:

- **Improve Park Infrastructure** to ensure the safety and accessibility of all users, including children, the elderly, and people with disabilities.
- **Enhance Environmental Sustainability** by addressing the water quality of lake and restoring the natural habitat for aquatic life, as well as protecting and preserving natural features of the park by implementing measures to mitigate the damage to conservation area.
- **Foster Community Engagement and Recreation** by creating opportunities such as walking paths and leisure areas to promote healthy lifestyle and community interaction.
- **Promote Connectivity and Accessibility** by improving pedestrian pathways and connectivity within the park to enhance accessibility for all users and to establish linkages with surrounding areas and transportation networks to facilitate easy access for residents and visitors.
- **Enhancement of Play Experience** by Improving the quality and variety of play experiences offered at the recreation reserve by introducing new and innovative play equipment, features, and layouts. Create a dynamic and engaging environment that caters to the diverse needs and preferences of children and families.

Feedback from the community and stakeholders will inform the Lauries Field Master plan. The engagement includes two phases:

- Phase One, Information Gathering - Completed
- Phase Two, Draft Master Plan Exhibition – Scheduled for February 2025

This report summarises the community engagement undertaken as part of phase 1, Gathering Ideas which was open for community comment from Tuesday 18 June to Tuesday 16 July 2024.

How we engaged you

We consulted with our community to inform the development of the Lauries Field Master Plan by identifying key issues, challenges and opportunities of the site and capturing the key ideas for improvement. To do this we asked the community how they feel about the park, what they value and if they had any ideas to improve the area.

Community feedback was sought online through Council's Engage Whittlesea platform and through direct conversation and activities at two community-based pop-ups.

The Engage Whittlesea platform utilises an accessibility add-on ensuring that it is as accessible as possible for all users. The platform also has an in-built translation tool to mitigate any language barriers to participation, allowing the page to be translated into the top ten languages spoken within the municipality.

Engage page

On the project's Engage page, community were invited to participate in two engagement activities.

They first activity involved them dropping a pin on a map of the park and sharing what they like, any issues they have and sharing ideas for improvement. The second activity they were encouraged to complete was a survey to determine the current use of the park, how community travel to the park, any site issues and top priorities for improvement. The survey questions were designed to help Council understand what is most important to the community when creating the draft master plan for Lauries Field. The questions included in the survey were:

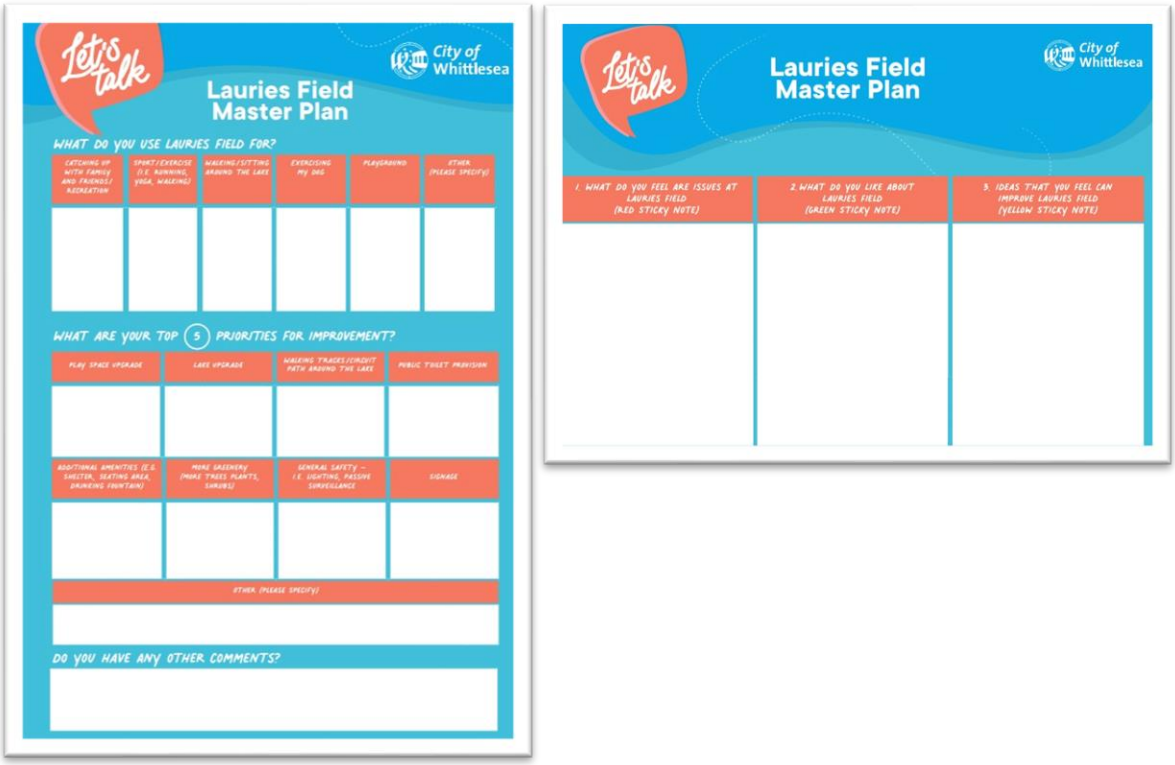
- *Have you ever been to Lauries Field?*
- *How often do you visit Lauries Field?*
- *What do you use Lauries Field for?*
- *How do you get to Lauries Field?*
- *What do you like about the site?*
- *What are the site's issues?*
- *What would make you visit the site more?*
- *What are your top priorities for improvement?*
    - *Play space upgrade*
    - *Lake upgrade*
    - *Walking track/circuit path around the lake*
    - *Public toilet provision*
    - *Additional amenities (eg. Shelter, seating area, drinking fountain)*
    - *More greenery (more trees, plants, shrubs)*
    - *General safety (lighting, passive surveillance)*
    - *Signage*
    - *No improvements needed*
- *How would you rate Louries Field overall?*

Community-based pop-ups

The project team co-facilitated two community-based pop-ups in Doreen. The in-person consultation allowed deeper discussion with project team members and an opportunity to add additional suggestions.

Above: 1 Lauries Field pop-up at Hazel Glen Shops on Friday 21 June

Activities presented at the community- based pop-up mirrored the online engagement activities, where community had a choice to participate in the dot board activity below or fill out a survey.



Above: Dot boards used at Community based pop-up for Lauries Field

The community-based pop-ups were held on the following dates in the following locations:

- 2.30-4.30pm on Friday 21 June at Hazel Glen shops in Doreen
- 10.30am-12.30pm on Thursday 4 July at Lauries Field in Doreen.

Left: Council Project Staff and members of the Doreen Senior Group at Lauries Field pop-up at Lauries Field play area in Doreen on Thursday 4 July

Project promotion

The opportunity to participate in the community engagement was promoted through a range of channels to have a widespread reach across the municipality including:

- Council's digital engagement platform *Engage Whittlesea*
- Social media – we shared two posts across Council's social media channels (Facebook and Instagram)
- Doreen Area Newsletter
- Letterbox drop to residents within 400m of the site advising them of the project and inviting them to share their feedback through the project Engage Whittlesea page or by visiting one of the community-based pop-ups
- Large corflute signage installed at the main entry point to the site and at the entrance of Brookwood Community Centre
- Flyers and posters displayed at Council facilities and libraries.
- Media articles
  - *Help Shape Future of Lauries Field | Mirage News*
  - *Help shape the future of Lauries Field - The North Central Review (ncreview.com.au)*
  - *Improvements to Lauries Field | Northern (starweekly.com.au)*
  - *Help Shape Future of Lauries Field | The National Tribune*
  - *Laurie's field Archives - The North Central Review (ncreview.com.au)*

Above: Facebook Lauries Field social post, large corflute signage, and flyer promoting the consultation

Participation

A total of 144 community members participated in phase 1 consultation. Participants were given the opportunity to contribute in two ways; 77 community members attended in person at community-based pop-ups and 67 community members contributed online via the Engage Whittlesea platform including social pinpoint map activity and an online survey.

Community participation

A total of 57% identified as female and 42% as male. 1% of participants identified as non-binary.

Equally 36% of participants were under the age of 18 and 36% between 36 -55 years of age.

- Under 18 years of age – 36.4%
- 18 -35 years of age – 6.7%
- 36-55 years of age – 36.3%
- Over 56 years of age – 20.7%

A total of 97% of participants reside in Doreen with 2% living in Mernda and 1% not specifying where they live.

Organic social media posts reached 9,200 people and were engaged with 447 times, generating 40% of traffic to the online Engage page. The campaign received 532 direct views from our community generating 35% of contributions.

We hosted two community-based pop-ups in Doreen with 77 people sharing their feedback through surveys, dot boards and conversations with Council staff.

- 29 completed a dot board activity
- 25 completed a survey
- 23 provided additional comments on how we can improve Lauries Field

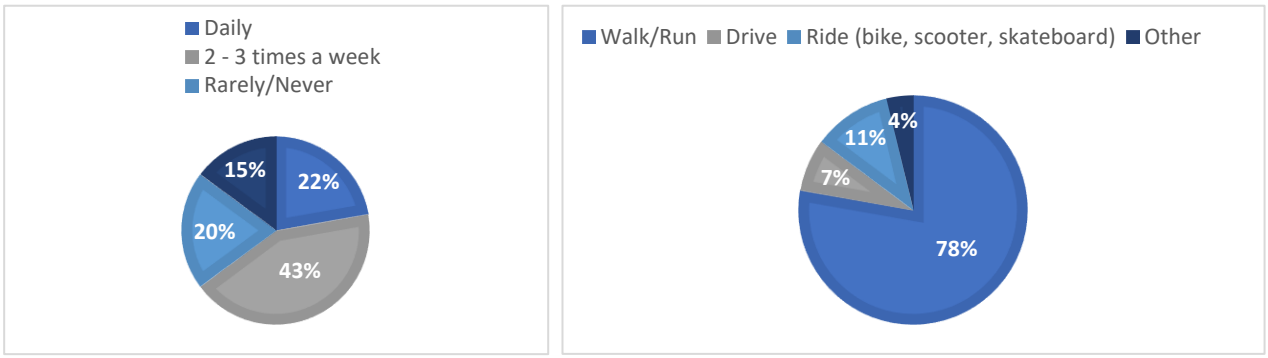
The Engage Whittlesea page was viewed 524 times during the consultation period, with 39 people participating in the online survey and 28 participants sharing their feedback via the social map activity. 12 people opted to follow the page to receive project updates.

What we heard

Survey Results

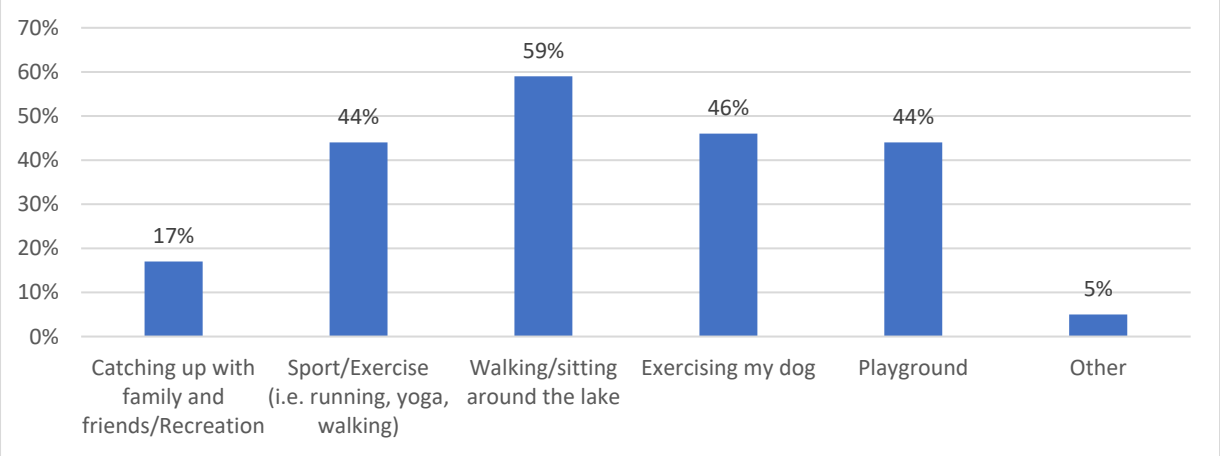
Of the 64 who completed an online or in person survey, 16% have never visited Lauries Field before with 20% of these expressing that a lack of age-appropriate facilities as the reason.

Majority of participants (84%) have visited previously Lauries Field and 65% indicated that they visit the park daily or two to three times a week. Active transport is important to nearby residents of Lauries Field, with 78% of participants getting to the park on foot and 11% riding a scooter, bike, or skateboard to the park. See charts below for full breakdown of figures.



Above: Charts for getting to Lauries Field and the frequency of use

When asked ***how they use Lauries Field,*** over half (59%) of participants use the area to walk and sit around the lake and 46% use the area to walk their dogs. A total of 44% of parents and grandparents indicated they take children to use the playground. See breakdown below of what community use Lauries Field for.



Above: Breakdown of what community use Lauries Field for.

When asked ***what they like about the Lauries Field***, the overwhelming response was community liked the lake and natural surroundings of the lake "*It feels like we are not in the suburbs when walking around the lake". Four teenage participants and immediate residents to Lauries Field, like the park because it is quiet, peaceful, and calm.* See what others like about Lauries Field below:

Above: Positive sentiments for Lauries Field

Below are a selection of comments from participants who visit the park regularly.

> *"Great natural open space with lovely wildlife around the water. One of the few open spaces that has adequate bins- which is a huge problem in the Whittlesea shire. The large trees provide protection and kids love to climb in them. Has a good pathway around the water"*
>
> *"Walk around the lake, watch the swans, walk through the row of trees. Kids climb the row of trees. Beautiful gum trees"*
>
> *"I have been living next to it for 20 years and just love it the way it is. It is kept natural, tracks are great. I think to myself every day as I walk around it, how lucky we are to have it there. Please keep it as natural as possible"*
>
> *"The nature oasis of the site is great. I like the different target users of the playground. The smaller area is great for my toddler, and the larger area will be great when he's bigger"*

Regular users of Lauries Field shared their feedback via the survey and in-person conversations with Council Officers on ***issues that they feel need to be addressed at the reserve and what would make them visit the park more***. An upgrade to the existing playground to include an area for older children and teenagers, grounds maintenance, lighting and cleaning the lake were common themes heard from community. Below are some of the issues shared by community:

- ***Lack of play equipment for older children and teenagers***
  "No basketball court for the kids"

- ***Deteriorating playground***
  "Playground needs a serious update, the playground and infrastructure need attention and renewal"
  "The playground gets too hot in summer due to no shade"

- ***Lack of regular maintenance***
  "The path around the lake is not clean and safe to use"
  "The grass needs to be mowed more in summer because of how close the park is to the lake for snake safety"
  "Walking track around the water is uneven"
  "Grass not always maintained"

- ***Safety concerns***
  "Better and more lighting"
  Old play equipment. No fence around playground

- ***Unhealthy lake***
  "There has been a loss of bird life and frogs"
  "Lake needs cleaning dredging"
  "Blackberries in the lake shore"
  "Improve the clean-up of the water coming into the lake off the street. Reinvigorate the irrigation"

- ***Lack of facilities***
  "Comfortable seating for parents"
  "The playground gets too hot in summer due to no shade"
  "Water fountains don't always work

- ***More parking needed***
  "There is no designated parking near the playground"

- ***Lack of off lead dog area and dog bins***
  "The biggest issue for me in the closest off leash dog park is over a 7km round trip"
  "Dogs are off lead in the area and owners don't clean up after them"
  "Lots of dog poop not being picked up - maybe have some additional bins and bag dispensers and issue fines to those not picking up poop"

*W*hen asked if there *are* ***any programs that community would like to see offered at the reserve***, a mixed response was received. Some people would like the area to remain quiet so they can enjoy the natural ambience of the area, while others would like to see programs held to strengthen community connections.

"Dog training/ play dates and outdoor exercise classes - yoga or Pilates"

"Bush kinder/community play events. Exercise in the park. Nature craft like basket weaving with local grasses. Art in the park sculpture event. Summer movie nights"

"Please don't make it more as an event space. It has been kept very natural and that is what is so beautiful about it"

"No, I like that it is quiet and peaceful. I don't want events at the park. Not adequate parking for this anyway"

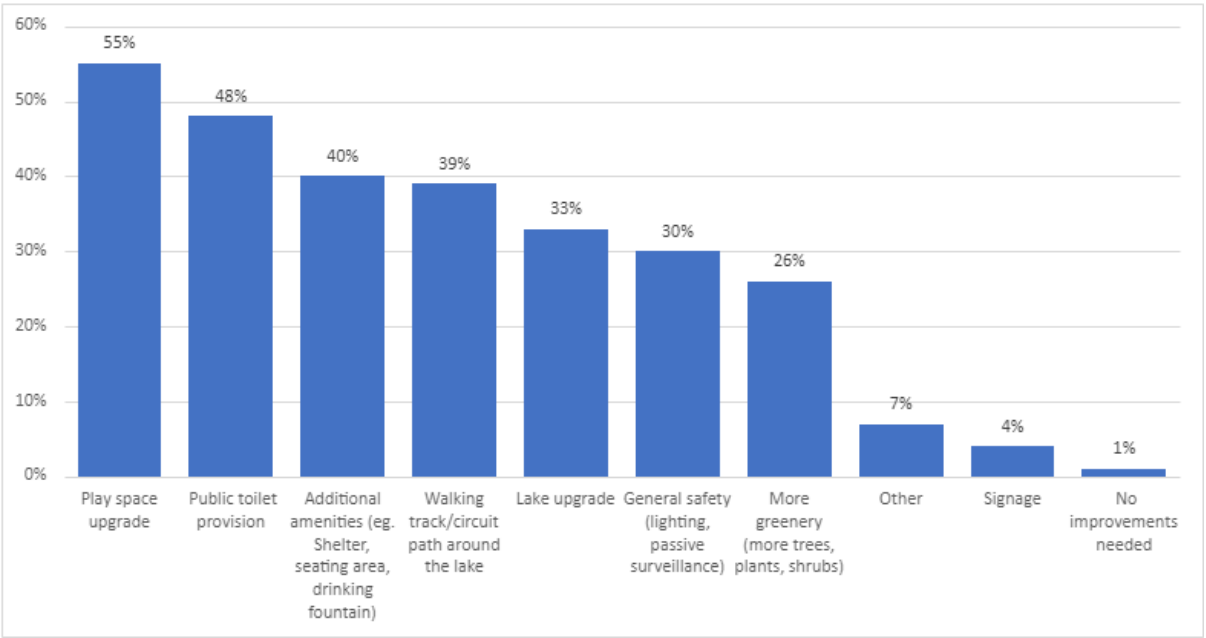
Participants were asked to rate Lauries Field, indicating if they think the current state of the park, lake and facilities are ***very good, good, ok, poor, or very poor***, what we heard is highlighted below:

50%	37%	13%
Very good/good	Ok	Very poor/poor

When asked to ***choose their top priorities for improving Lauries Field*****,** participants told us their top five priorities for improvement are:

1. ***Play space upgrade (55%)***
2. ***A public toilet provision (48%)***
3. ***Additional amenities*** *such as a shelter and additional seating areas (40%)*
4. ***Walking track/circuit path around the lake (39%)***
5. ***Lake upgrade (33%).***

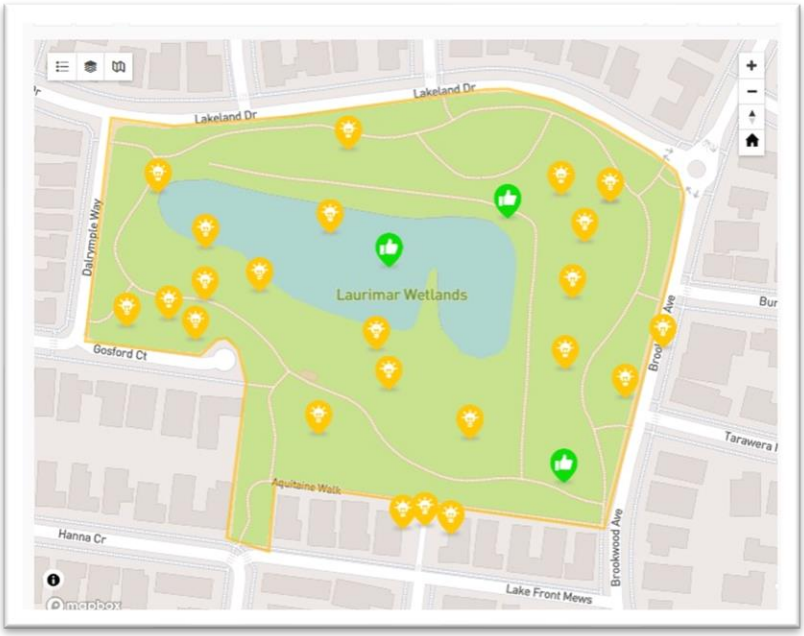
See breakdown of priorities for improvement at Lauries Field below:



Above: Breakdown of Community Priorities for improvement of Lauries Field

Social Pinpoint Results

Twenty-seven people participates in the digital social map activity below. Participants could add a marker to the map to comment on things that they like about the site, any issues, and any ideas for improvement.



Seven percent of participants left a marker to share that they *like* the area with a selection of the comments made below:

> *"Love our wetlands, we're so lucky"*
>
> *"Love the dirt/gravel walkway around the lake. I love walking on the track more than the concrete path"*

The remaining 93% of participants offered ideas for improving Lauries Field. Some of these ideas include:

- Adding additional lighting to improve safety and deter anti-social behaviour
- Improve maintenance across the reserve
- Improving facilities at the reserve by, developing a public toilet, adding more seating, shelter and additional barbecues for family and friend gatherings
- Update the playground area to include more equipment and a nature play and water play area
- Add more add more play equipment for teens, such as flying foxes, netball and basketball court and skateboard area.

Key messages from community feedback

Participants were invited to share what they like, any issues and any potential future opportunities for Lauries Field, some of which may be out of scope of this project. Below are the themed comments received through both online and in-person engagement activities.

Playground–Upgrading the existing playground with a play space for all ages and abilities was a priority for respondents.

"An area for creative/unstructured bush play. Could include large logs/dry creek beds/lots of plants/native flowers/places to hide. Nearby shelters and seating. Norris Bank Reserve in Bundoora is a great example"

"The addition of basketball/netball courts for older kids. There are a lot of teenagers in the area around this park and these 2 sports are popular. Should include netball option as this is often neglected"

"A better playground and recreational space"

"A better playground suited for older kids"

"Basketball and netball courts and upgrade to the playground"

"For it to be more attractive have more table space and toilets"

"Upgraded play equipment, in ground trampolines, potentially a fenced play space for small toddlers"

"Playground upgrade with more shade around. Possibly sand pit and nature play area as we don't have sand pit close by. Again, preferably under cover for summer play. Some water play would be great too"

"The playground is pretty lack lustre. No toilets. Maybe some other interactive play sculptural features would be nice"

"The playground is very old and lacks diversity"

"Older teens in Mernda and Doreen are bored with nothing to do they need more fun things to do in the parks in both areas for all age groups including older teens and include a youth hub as well. Musician's facilities as well etc"

Sports/Exercise – upgrading the area to include sports and exercise equipment to cater for the older teenage demographic in the area as well as Seniors.

"You could add more fun things for youth here. Like a BMX track, Skateboard area, Roller skating concreted area. Flying foxes for kids and a big one for older teenagers. Wall for balls to be thrown at and parkour. Basketball/tennis/badminton court. Play equipment for toddlers, kids, and teens. Outdoor workout area with bars to hang from and do pull-ups for teenagers and adults"

"Our kids get bored quickly at Laurie fields playground maybe a 1/2 basketball court would be better for older kids"

"It would be nice to have a second play area near the other BBQ space, a basketball court, a skate or bike park as the kids want to build and go over bike jumps"

"The playground is very outdated and needs a revamp to re-engage neighbourhood children. Would also love to see a basketball hoop and activities for older kids"

"The addition of basketball/netball courts for older kids. There are a lot of teenagers in the area around this park and these 2 sports are popular. Should include netball option as this is often neglected"

"Ball sports area - improved/flattened grassed surface for ball sports"

"A full set of outdoor exercise equipment"

"Outdoor workout area with bars to hang from and do pull-ups for teenagers and adults"

Accessible – upgrading paths, including adding a Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant ramp leading to the lake and path around the lake.

"All ability play equipment"

"Walking track around the lake for the elderly and others"

Lake Upgrade and Landscape Enhancement–*improvement to the lake area and enhancement of the surrounding landscape*

"Rustic paths without holes and jumps, less rubbish, cleaner lake for wildlife"

"More fish in the lake and clean up water"

"Clean up the lakeside area"

"Lakes need to be tidied up, grassed areas need to be mowed and edged properly. Trees need to be tended to on a regular basis"

"The lake is not clean; rubbish needs to be cleared. There are areas that have needed attention for some time which appear like they are under construction, but nothing is happening. It could be a more beautiful space but has lacked attention with upkeep".

"That huge tree is beautiful. Was decorated when they killed the bees. It should be protected and made into more of a feature"

"I love walking on this track more than the concrete path. A little extra gravel would help to refine it and make it safer when it's wet and muddy"

"Need to replace the trees that have been removed over the years"

"Water lake renewal to entice more wildlife"

"Improve on natural tracks"

"More native trees also water plants, e.g., water lilies to keep water clean and oxygenated and to rehash fish life and bring ducks and swans back"

"Would be great to have a larger open deck/jetty into the water"

Facilities – Respondents highlighted the need for additional shade, seating areas and drinking fountains to encourage family and friend gatherings at the park.

"Speaking for Doreen Seniors Club would use it weekly if BBQ's/Undercover, lights, pathways & car parking existed"

"Park benches and shaded pergola"

"More park benches. A full set of outdoor exercise equipment"

"Better quality grassed area for ball sports"

"More Facilities overlooking the lake, to sit and enjoy"

"Fishing spot, basketball court, upgrade picnic tables, regular maintenance, more bins"

"Would be great to have a larger open deck/jetty into the water. "Improve on natural tracks"

"The existing shelter does not need replacing, it just needs to be restored"

"Fishing platform with rod holders"

"A bridge to walk across the lake"

"Youth hang out with a public soundproof room for bands to practice in, a couch area to meet up with other youth"

Public Toilet – Some participants highlighted the need for a public toilet in the area while others are concerned that an introduction of a toilet in the area will encourage anti-social behaviour.

"Public toilets, very annoying taking kids out where there are no toilets"

"Don't put toilets in the park. Toilets attract anti-social behaviour. Regular visitors of the park know that they can use the toilets at the Brookwood Community Centre"

"If toilets, BBQ's & undercover would greatly increase Public & Group use"

Safety and lighting – introducing additional lighting, a lockable toilet block, new fencing, safe playground equipment and car park improvements to make users feel safe and help to deter anti-social behaviour.

"Better lighting and security to deter antisocial behaviour"

"Not enough lighting to walk in winter"

"Lighting for the south side of the park"

"Please find a way to make this area of green space more appealing and safer with lighting and facilities"

Dog park and dog related facilities – respondents highlighted the need for a dog park in the area and more bins and doggy bags to help mitigate the mess that some dog owners are leaving in Lauries Field.

"There would be enough space for an enclosed dog park. Doggy bags at the bin sites may encourage other dog owners to pick up after their dogs".

"Additional bins and bag dispensers and issue fines to those not picking up poop. Have the ability to let dogs off leash brings more people to the park and creates a social environment, which is great for pet owners' wellbeing as well as the dogs"

"Some people like to let dog off lead. It's quite far to walk to Downey Drive Dog Park. Maybe build one on this side of Doreen"

"Dog bin and bags"

"I would definitely spend more time at Laurie's Field if there was an off-leash dog park"

"The biggest issue for me in the closest off leash dog park is over a 7 k round trip"

Parking – residents highlighted the need for additional parking near Lauries Field.

"Parking is already an issue due to the changing demographics in the area. Many families now have children who are driving and have their own cars"

"There is no designated parking near the playground"

"Open up car park to enable visitors to park in a designated space rather than clogging up Lakeland Dr and Brookwood Ave"

"Add a parking area for cars".

"No carpark near Brookwood Ave and Lakeland Drive. The area is a high traffic one and we don't need a carpark that end. The other end would be safer"

Other opportunities identified through the consultation included:

- Additional signage
- A good walking track around the lake
- Additional play space next to the BBQ area in north side of the site
- Covered stage with seats
- more seats around the lake
- Community garden
- An area for creative/unstructured bush play
- Arts, event, and programs such as dog training/play dates, outdoor exercise classes, community play events, kids play day, market day, sculpture event, summer movie nights and community fair.

Next steps

The information captured through phase 1 consultation will inform the development of the draft *Lauries Field Master plan* which is expected to be considered by Council in February 2025. The feedback captured will also help to inform the development of other key plans and strategies Council are working on to make Whittlesea *A Place for All*.

Council will endorse the draft master plan for phase two of community consultation, providing the community with an opportunity to see how their feedback has helped shape the master plan and to provide any further feedback.

Thank you again to everyone who participated in phase 1 of the community engagement by sharing comments, feedback and participating in online activities and community-based pop-up sessions. The community will be updated on further developments via the Lauries Field project page.