

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION ONLY



Coburg North Sports Hub Master Plan

December Draft 2024

PREPARED BY:



URBAN / MASTER PLANNING / DESIGN

theo.cd.com.au



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Wurunjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional custodians of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Merri-bek, and pay respect to their Elders past and present, as well as to all First Nation' communities who significantly contribute to the life of the area

Merri Creek is one of the most significant gathering spaces for the Kulin Nation in southeast Australia. Prior to colonisation, Edgars Creek was also an important location for resource harvesting given the marine life presence, and as a campground.

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Project overview & context

Merri-bek City Council is developing a Masterplan for an area labelled the “Coburg North Sports Hub” and has appointed independent consultants Solucio and The Office for Collective Design (The OCD) to lead this process.

The Coburg North Sports Hub is an area that has not previously been considered as an all-encompassing precinct until this project. It includes five key sporting facilities – the Harold Stevens Athletics Track, Jackson Reserve, Coburg Basketball Stadium, Coburg Olympic Swimming Pool, and the Ray Kibby Table Tennis Centre – as well as the surrounding trails, open spaces, Merri Creek and Edgars Creek. It is a highly utilised area for community sport and active recreation, and is home to several sport and recreation user groups.

Each of the facilities on site were developed prior to 2000 and have received minimal upgrades since. This Masterplan aims to strategically guide planning and developments on the site, ensuring it can sustainably meet the needs of the community. Developing the Masterplan has involved a robust process of background research, substantial site analysis and urban design, extensive stakeholder consultation, broad community consultation, workshops with Council and a designated Sporting Reference Group, and technical reports conducted for the site’s facilities.

The draft Masterplan (this document) provides a summary of all research processes conducted, and has been developed for formal review by Council and the Sporting Reference Group. Following review and approval by these groups, the Masterplan will be showcased to the community to gather community sentiment and understand their level of support for the draft Masterplan and recommendations.

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Site history

Site Evolution

1951

At the time the aerial image was taken the site is relatively cleared of all vegetation and is predominately used for agricultural purposes. Both creeks sustain limited growth along the edges of the creek banks.

1966

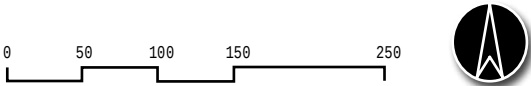
The Newlands Road bridge is replaced by a new bridge and alignment and the farm has been replaced with a new outdoor swimming pool facility.

1979

The athletics track, indoors sports centre, cricket and football ovals are now evident after significant earthworks to level the areas. Vegetation is developing along the creeks corridors.

1989

The key significant changes to the precinct since the 1980s is the level of regrowth and re-vegetation along the creek corridors and the introduction of the pedestrian and bicycle pathways.



**Research &
Strategic Direction**



Community overview & Council alignment

A background research and analysis process of the Merri-bek community and planning context has been undertaken to provide an understanding of the municipality's profile and relevant trends. This process involved:

- An in-depth comparison of ABS statistics against the Greater Melbourne region and Australia.
- An analysis and forecasting exercise of Merri-bek's population.
- A comprehensive literature review of more than 30 Council plans, strategies and relevant documents.

Six unique characteristics were identified from this process:

1. **Council and the community have a strong ongoing commitment to working together with Traditional Owners across all of areas of Council activities and this Masterplan will be no exception.**

The site holds significant cultural and heritage value as a major gathering area for the Kulin Nation, featuring the historically important Merri Creek and Edgars Creek. These creeks are integral to the site's unique heritage qualities, underscoring its cultural importance and distinguishing it within the region.

2. **Merri-bek's population increased by 31% over 2001-2021, and is forecasted to grow by at least 23% by 2036.**

Furthermore, 11/12 of Merri-bek's suburbs can expect growth of at least 17% by 2036. There will continue to be a high demand on open spaces and facilities for physical activity.

3. **In Merri-bek there is a high proportion of young adults, and a low proportion of families/family-sized households.**

Merri-bek's median age is 35 – which is less than Greater Melbourne's (37)

and Australia's (38). It's proportion of the population aged between 25-39 is also 31.1%, which is more than Greater Melbourne's (24.0%) and Australia's (21.5%).

This suggests a significant proportion of the community are first homeowners and/or renters – which is generally a physically active demographic, both for organised and unorganised activity.

4. **Merri-bek residents exhibit lower car ownership and higher rates of remote work.**

37.8% of Merri-bek residents travelled to work by car on the day of the last census, which is less than the averages of Greater Melbourne (50.9%) and Australia (57.8%). 36.1% of the population also worked from home on the day of the last census, which is more than Greater Melbourne (28.8%) and Australia (21.0%).

This indicates residents have a greater reliance on active transport and utilising open spaces close to home.

5. **Council is committed to delivering inclusive, accessible, high-quality, and adaptable facilities that serve the entire community – with a particular focus on women/girls, and people with disabilities.**

This Sports Hub must provide facilities that are universally accessible, by all – aligning with Council's direction for its facility provision in the sustainable future.

6. **Merri-bek's community is culturally diverse, with higher rates of non-English ancestry and languages spoken.**

44.8% have English/Australian ancestry – compared to the averages of Greater Melbourne (49.0%) and Australia (62.9%). The Sports Hub must accommodate the diverse needs of these groups.



Stakeholder & user group priorities

An extensive stakeholder engagement process was undertaken as part of this project. This commenced with developing, refining and finalising a robust engagement plan, in collaboration with the PWG. The plan is aligned with the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum and includes stakeholder segments and targeted engagement activities, including:

- Council Officer project workshops with over 20 attendees from a cross-section of business units.
- Sporting Reference Group project workshops with official representatives from the current user groups.
- Seven interviews with Council officers from a broad cross-section of business units including:
 - Community Engagement
 - Community Wellbeing, including Aquatic and Leisure
 - Cultural Development
 - Sustainability and Climate
 - Property, Place and Design/Building Projects/Maintenance
 - Sport and Recreation
 - Open Space and Planning
- 24 interviews with external stakeholders including:
 - Friends of Coburg Olympic Pool x 2
 - Murray Road Advocacy Group
 - Merri-bek Bicycle Users Group
 - Merri-bek First Nations Advisory Group
 - Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
 - State Stadiums Victoria
 - Athletics Victoria x 2
 - Cricket Victoria
 - Table Tennis Victoria
 - Basketball Victoria

- YMCA
- AFL
- Merri Creek Management Committee
- Friends of Merri Creek
- Friends of Edgars Creek
- Coburg High School
- SCOPE Disability Services
- Sport and Recreation Victoria (SRV)
- Darebin City Council
- Coburg Basketball Association
- Merri Health
- Melbourne Water

Six key themes were identified from this process, which are outlined below:

- Be bold and identify aspirational projects that will create meaningful outcomes.
- Improve safety and increased activation of pathways, connections, sporting facilities and open space.
- Enhance the environmental conditions, habitats and connection to the community.
- Prioritise sustainable renewal and development for all major projects.
- Develop the physical and cultural connectivity of the sporting zones, user groups and Hub visitors.
- Engage and empower the community to shape the outcomes of the project.



Community engagement & priorities

A broad community consultation process was also undertaken as part of this project. This enabled the voices of the community and the casual users or non-users of the site to be captured. This involved:

- An online community survey that received 441 responses.
- An interactive map for the site that received 361 contributions from 194 contributors.
- A community pop-up session on Saturday 2nd November 2024 at the Coburg Farmer's Market.
- A community pop-up session on Sunday 17th November 2024 at the Fawcner Festa.

The survey respondents (n=441) comprised:

- 60% Women, 40% Men/Other.
- 84% aged between 35-64.
- 56% live in Coburg or Coburg North.
- 87% use the Sports Hub area at least once per week.
- 53% of people travel to the Hub by car, with 33% by walking/jogging/running.

The most popular reasons for using the area were:

- Walking – 62%.
- To swim / visit the pool – 60%.
- For basketball – 48%.
- Cycling – 37%.
- Jogging/running – 36%.
- To sit and relax, or just to be outside – 36%.
- To meet friends or socialize – 36%.
- Dog walking and play – 34%.
- To pass through on the way elsewhere – 31%.

The facilities/areas within the Sports Hub that had majority satisfaction were:

- Creeks and vegetation – 93% satisfied or neutral.
- Open space – 92% satisfied or neutral.
- Walking/cycle paths – 84% satisfied or neutral.
- Ray Kibby Table Tennis – 78% satisfied or neutral.
- Jackson Reserve Oval – 77% satisfied or neutral.

The facilities/areas within the Sports Hub that had majority dissatisfaction were:

- Public amenities – 86% dissatisfied or neutral.
- Jackson Reserve amenities – 80% dissatisfied or neutral.
- Basketball/Athletics car parking – 79% dissatisfied or neutral.
- Jackson Reserve Oval – 77% dissatisfied or neutral.
- Coburg Olympic Pool amenities – 75% dissatisfied or neutral.
- Basketball stadium – 73% dissatisfied or neutral.



Current sporting assets, Benchmarking & Best practice

To understand the Sports Hub's current state and future potential for Merri-bek, several research processes were conducted, including:

- Multiple in-person site visits (approximately 25 from the core project team) and guided walkthroughs of the Sports Hub.
- An analysis of AusPlay data, as well as findings and data from Council's Sport and Active Recreation Strategy (2020).
- Mapping process of Council sporting spaces for its 10 most-provided sports.
- Provision analysis of Council sporting spaces using, Merri-bek and other LGA documentation.
- Review of Council-identified facility improvements and proposed site works.
- A high-level desktop analysis of nine multi-sport and recreation precincts in Melbourne.
- Isochrone catchment analysis to measure the Sports Hub's accessibility by residents.
- Technical audits including a site feature survey, planning report, condition assessments and DDA and general access reports for all facilities, and energy efficiency audits for the Basketball Stadium and Table Tennis Centre.

Facilities are ageing and showing signs of wear, and there are many areas that require upgrading.

27% of the site's measured facilities are in 'Fair to poor' or 'Poor' condition, including the Swimming Pool's kiosk and plant room, the SCOPE facility, and the Athletic Track surface.

Upgrades throughout the site will likely require CHMP preparation, planning permits, and careful facility placement to address heritage, environmental, and LSIO overlay constraints.

Enhancing energy efficiency at the Basketball Stadium and Table Tennis Centre presents a strategic opportunity to optimise facility performance and sustainability

There are non-compliances and facility shortfalls present throughout the Sports Hub.

The DDA and general access audit found that the Swimming Pool and Basketball Stadium each have over 20 individual areas for improvement. Additionally, the Basketball Stadium's courts have noticeably short run-offs.

Jackson Reserve's cricket pitch is narrower than Cricket Australia's minimum standard, and boundary distances are insufficient for certain junior and senior matches.

There are visible safety risks (several large height drops at Jackson Reserve) and design inefficiencies (incorrect configuration of entrance/exit lanes outside the Swimming Pool/ Table Tennis Centre).

Several sports and activities have been identified as high priorities for Merri-bek, necessitating strategic investment in facility provision to meet the evolving needs of the community.

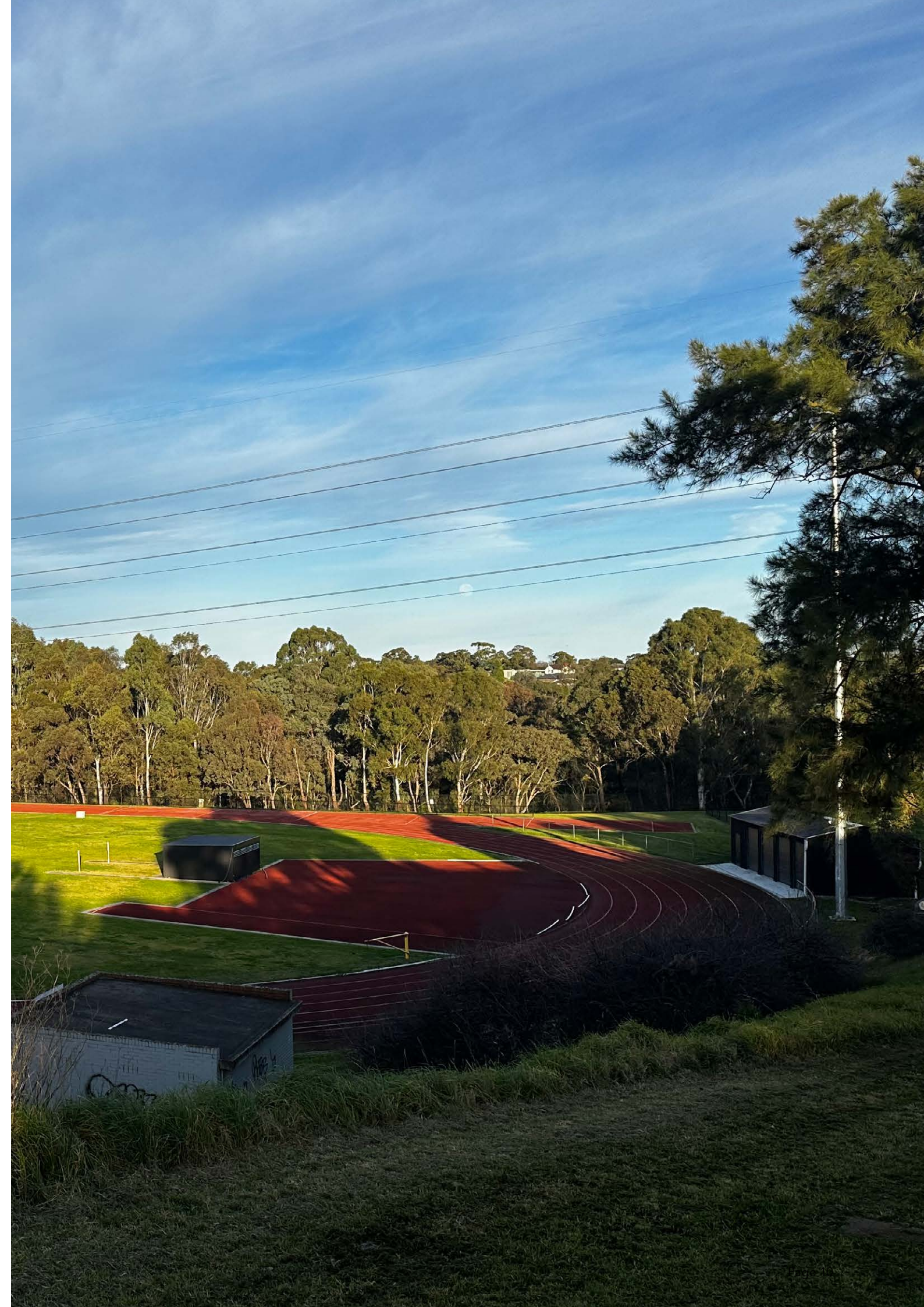
Council faces a shortfall in indoor multi-purpose spaces, courts, and basketball facilities, while enhanced infrastructure for recreational walking is essential to support the most popular activity among residents.

The Sports Hub generally falls short of a benchmark Sport and Recreation Precinct.

Benchmark precincts typically have defined entrances, multiple modernised play spaces, optimise space usage, provide well-designed car parking and promote traffic flow, are well-maintained and updated, and provide ample shading and seating.

The Sports Hub is a highly accessible facility that serves a broad catchment area.

18,916 residents are within a walking distance of 1.6km of the Sports Hub, and 352,947 are within a 15-minute drive time catchment



Site Analysis & Context



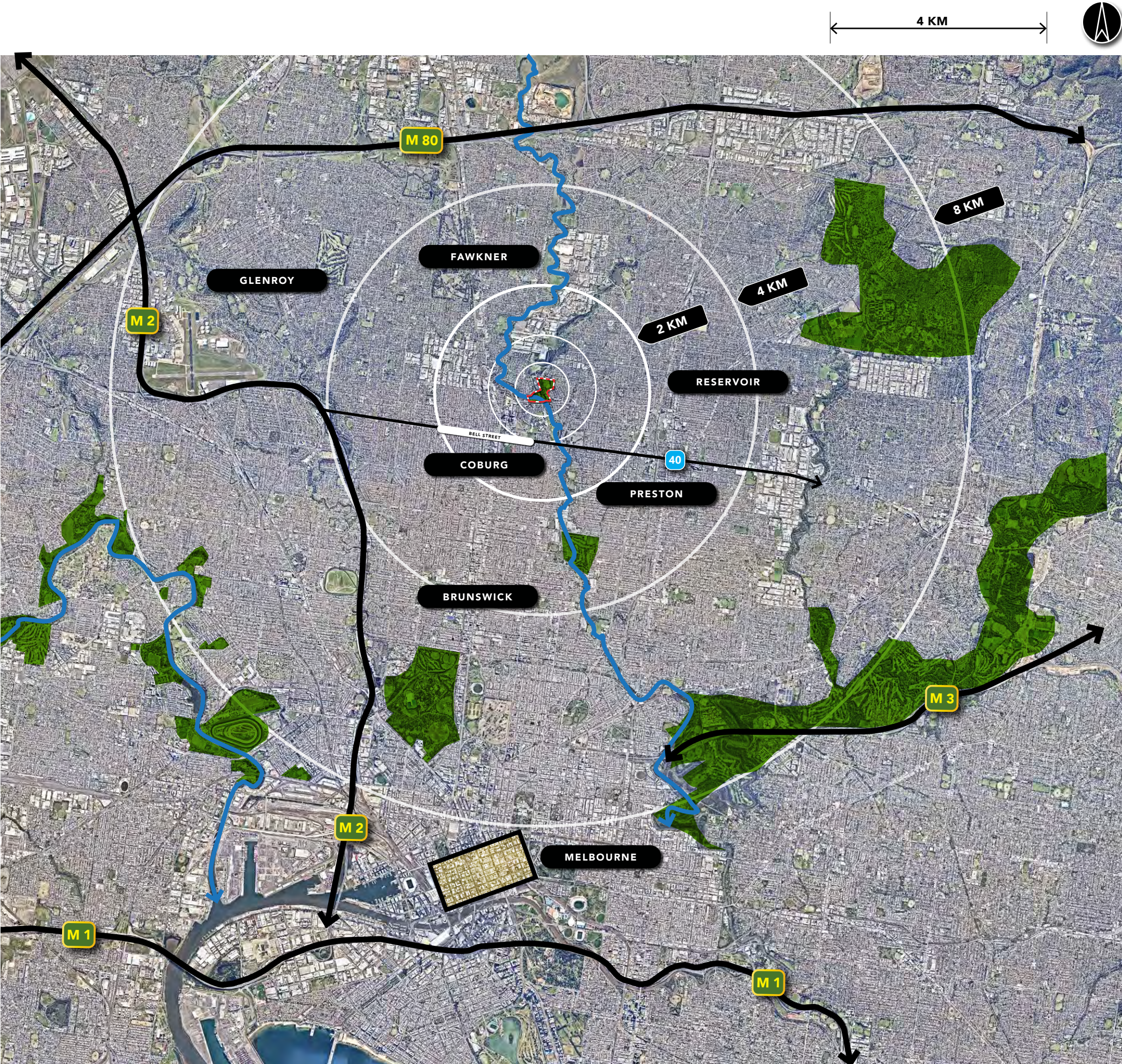
Site Analysis & Context

Regional Context

The Coburg North Sports Hub is located approximately 8km North of the centre of Melbourne and within 2km of Coburg, Fawkner and Preston.

LEGEND

-  SUBJECT SITE BOUNDARY
-  OPEN SPACE
-  MERRI CREEK



Site Analysis & Context

Urban Context

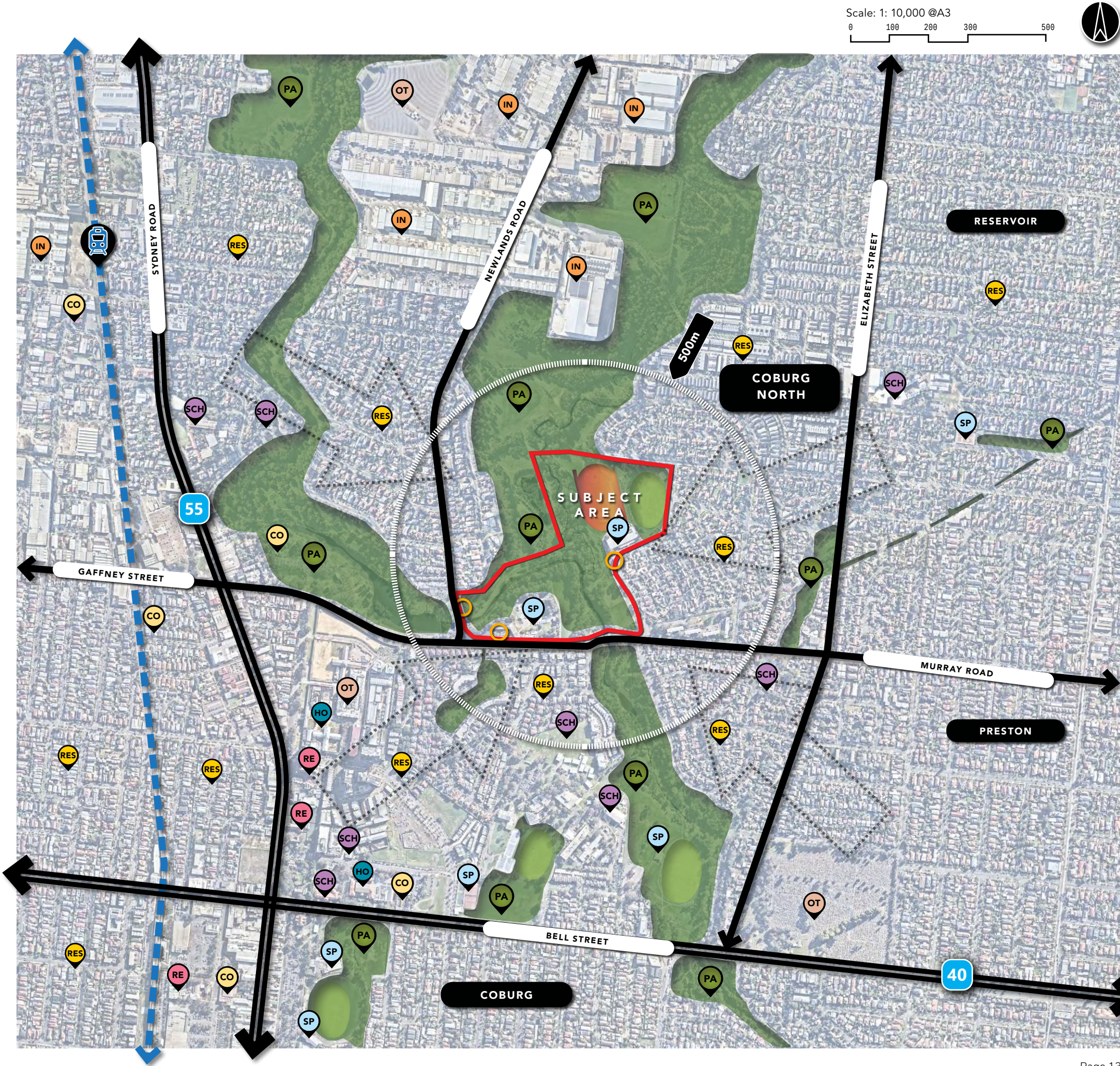
The subject site is located on the confluence of Merri Creek and Edgars Creek and is a key central location to the surrounding areas.

The site area is readily accessible along the shared pathways that run along the creeks from the South, West and North.

LEGEND

- SITE BOUNDARY
- PRECINCT ENTRY
- GENERAL OPEN SPACE
RESERVE/ SPORTS PRECINCTS
CREEK CORRIDER

- RESIDENTIAL
- CLUB SPORTS & OTHER
- PARKLAND & RESERVE
- COMMUNITY
- CHURCH/RELIGION
- OTHER USE & NOTABLE
- EDUCATION & OTHER
- HERITAGE FEATURES
- INDUSTRY & COMMERCIAL



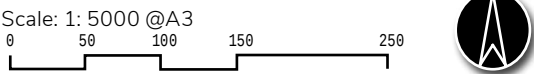
Site Analysis & Context

Street Networks

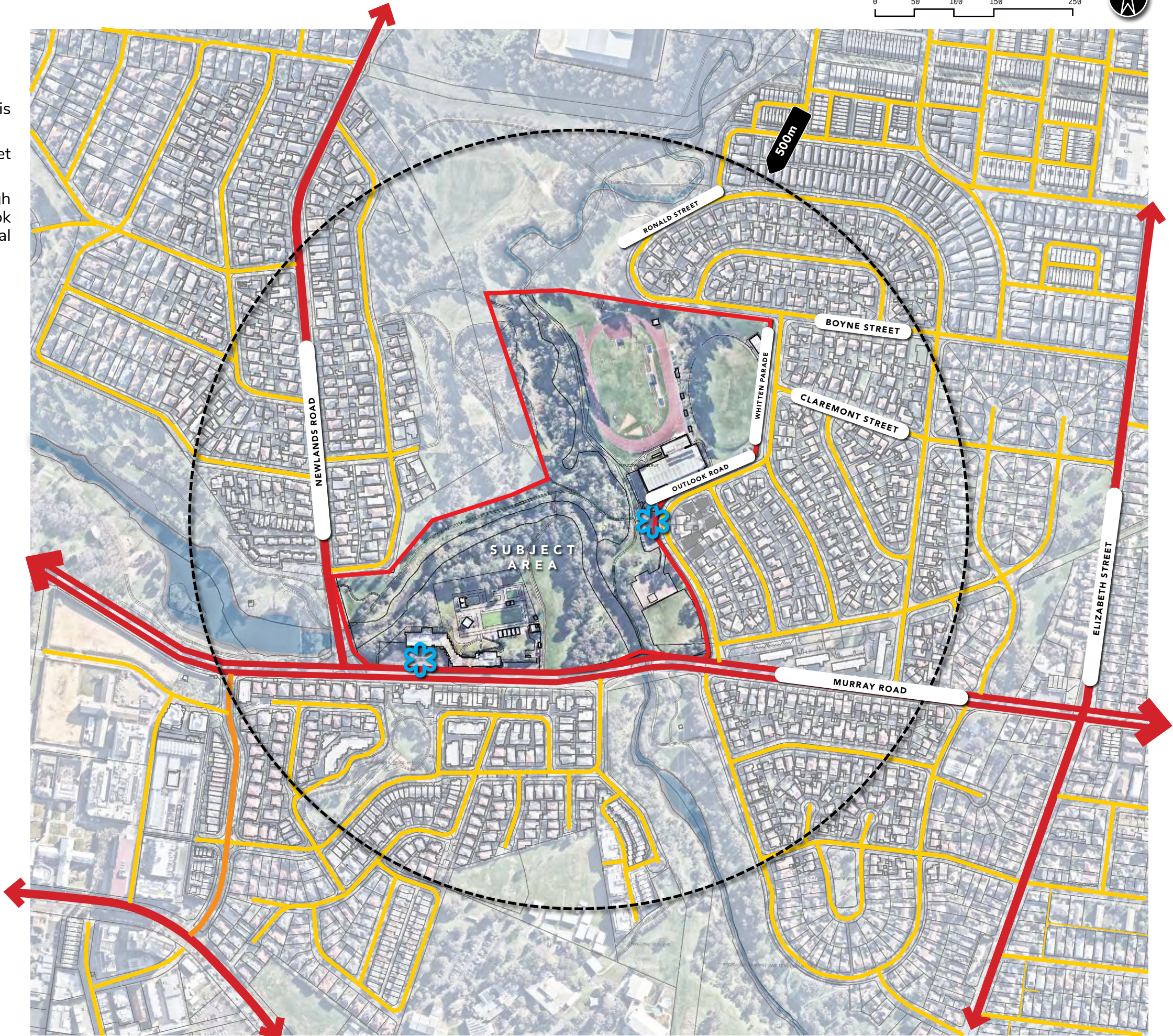
The primary traffic access to the subject area is via Murray Road or Outlook Road.

Secondary access for pedestrians and on-street parking is via Boyne Street or Whitten parade.

Murray Road is a primary road route with a high level of activity and capacity. However, Outlook Road is a small, constrained local residential street with limited capacity for larger vehicles.



- LEGEND**
- SITE AREA
 - KEY PRECINCT AND RESERVE ENTRY
 - PRIMARY ROADS
 - SECONDARY AND CONNECTOR ROADS
 - LOCAL ROADS



Site Analysis & Context

Surrounding Use

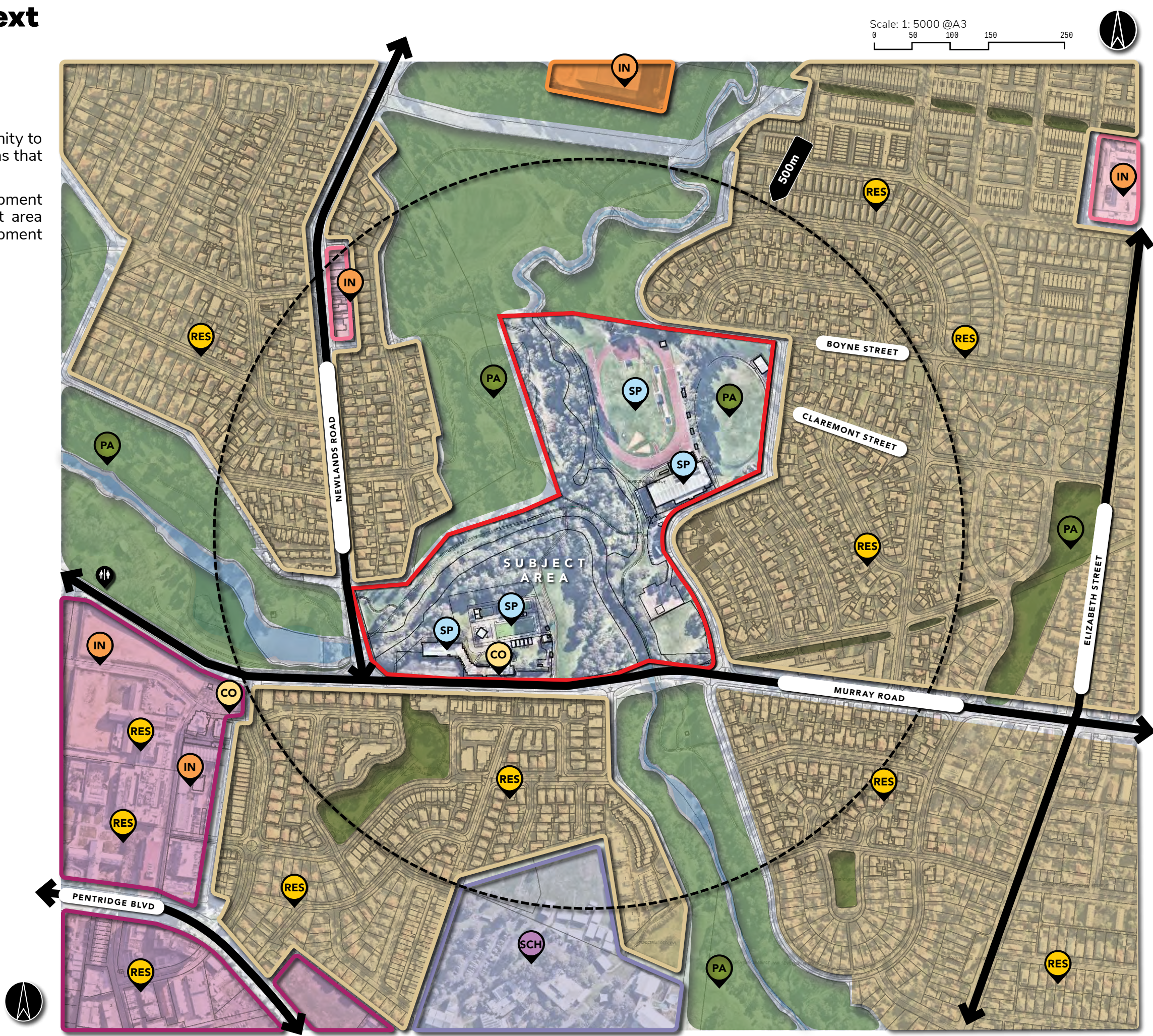
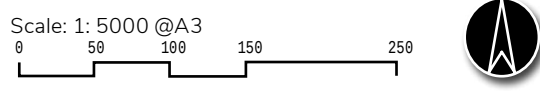
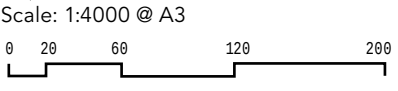
The subject site provides open space amenity to the immediate surrounding residential areas that are predominantly lowrise.

There is a higher density area of development located to the South-west of the subject area within the Pentridge Prison development precinct.

LEGEND

- SITE BOUNDARY
- GENERAL OPEN SPACE
RESERVE/ SPORTS PRECINCTS
- TOWN CENTRE
- URBAN DEVELOPMENT
- CONTRIBUTORY / RESIDENTIAL
- SCHOOL

- RES RESIDENTIAL
- SP CLUB SPORTS & OTHER
- PA PARKLAND & RESERVE
- CO COMMUNITY
- RE CHURCH/RELIGION
- OT OTHER USE & NOTABLE
- SCH EDUCATION & OTHER
- HO HERITAGE FEATURES
- IN INDUSTRY & COMMERCIAL



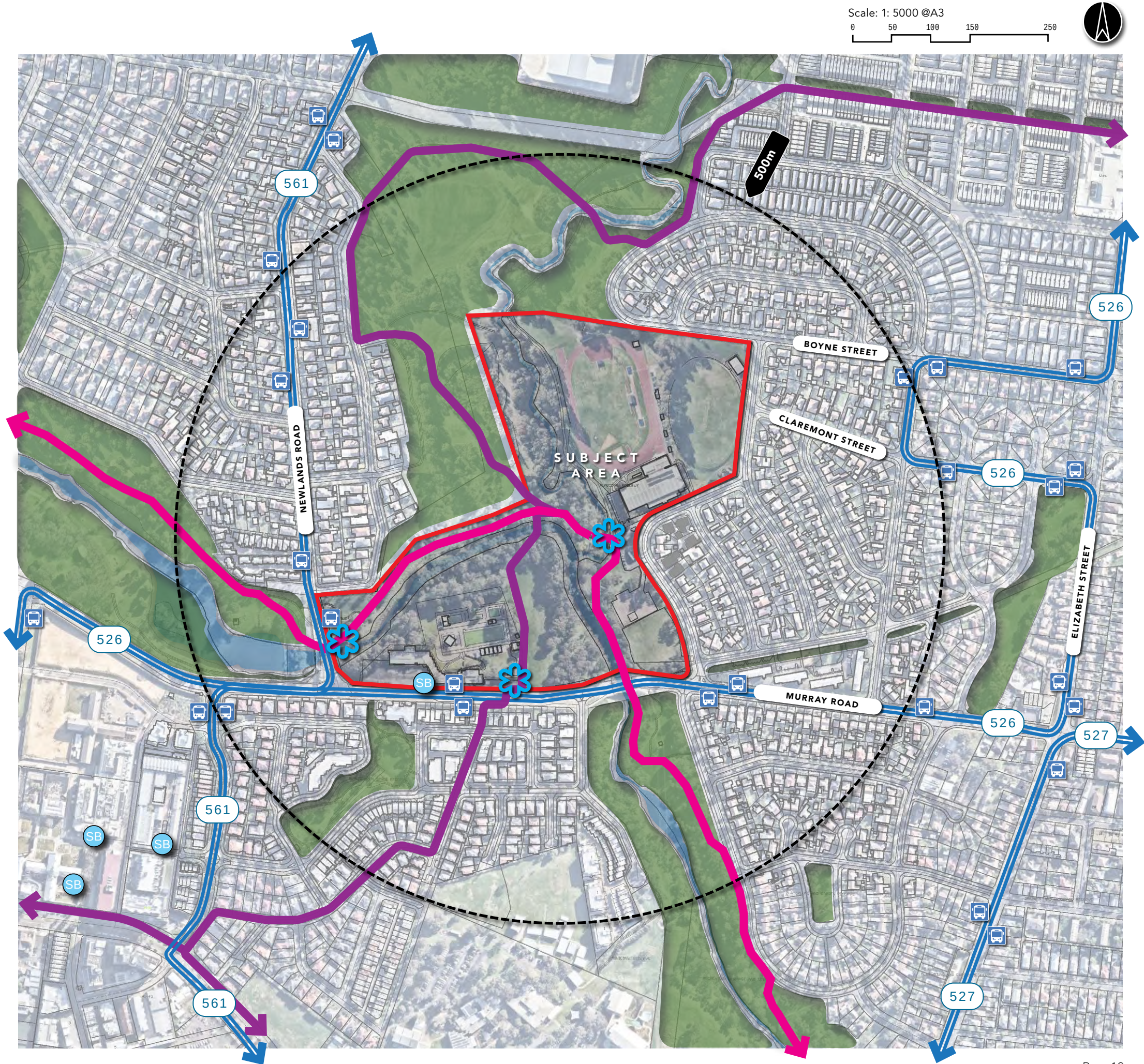
Site Analysis & Context

Traffic & Transport

The subject area is generally well serviced by public bus on Murray Road, however there is a 250m walk from public transport access to Jackson Reserve, Basketball stadium and Athletics track area. There is also additional access to Jackson Reserve from a bus stop located on Boyne and Claremont Streets.

Two Bicycle and pedestrian networks pass the main sporting areas providing access to the surrounding community.

The Merri Creek Trail also passes through the site heading South.



- LEGEND**
- SITE AREA
 - KEY PRECINCT AND RESERVE ENTRY
 - BUS DROP-OFF / PICK-UP
 - SMALL BICYCLE PARKING
 - BUS ROUTE
 - REGIONAL CYCLEWAY / SHARED PATHWAY
 - LOCAL CYCLEWAY

Site Analysis & Context

Site Plan

The subject area for the master plan consists of two key activity areas separated by the bifurcation of the waterway into Merri and Edgars Creeks.

Natural landscape and vegetation form a key significant area of the site with development focused on Murray Road and Outlook Road in open areas.

LEGEND

- SUBJECT AREA
- MAIN ENTRY
- SENSITIVE INTERFACES
- EXISTING CAR PARK
- BUS STOP
- SENSITIVE VIEWS/VISTAS
- PRECINCT KEY ACTIVITY FOCUS
- EXISTING PUBLIC TOILETS
- IDENTIFIED OPEN SPACE

LEGEND

- 1 COBURG TABLE TENNIS CLUB
- 2 COBURG OLYMPIC SWIMMING POOL
- 3 COMMUNITY CENTRE
- 4 MERRI CREEK TRAIL
- 5 ATHLETICS TRACK ACCESS
- 6 COBURG BASKETBALL
- 7 HAROLD STEVENS ATHLETICS TRACK
- 8 JACKSON RESERVE PLAYGROUND
- 9 JACKSON RESERVE
- 10 PAVILION
- 11 WETLANDS



Site Analysis & Context

Infrastructure

The predominant activity and sporting infrastructure within the precinct are confined to two key areas.

A consolidation of different sporting activities is evident on the Eastern area with multiple user groups contained within a relatively tight area that is serviced via a main car park from Outlook Road.

The swimming pool and Table Tennis facility are accessed via Murray road. The outdoor pool deck is located several metres below the entry and changerooms and is accessed via a pathway and steps.

LEGEND

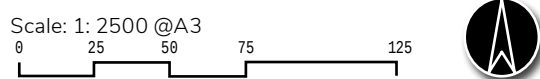
- JACKSON RESERVE
- ATHLETICS TRACK
- PLAY GROUND
- INDOOR BASKETBALL COURTS
- ATHLETICS CLUB CHANGE
- PROPOSED GYM
- TABLE TENNIS
- SWIMMING POOL
- COMMUNITY SERVICES
- EXISTING CAR PARK



Site Analysis & Context

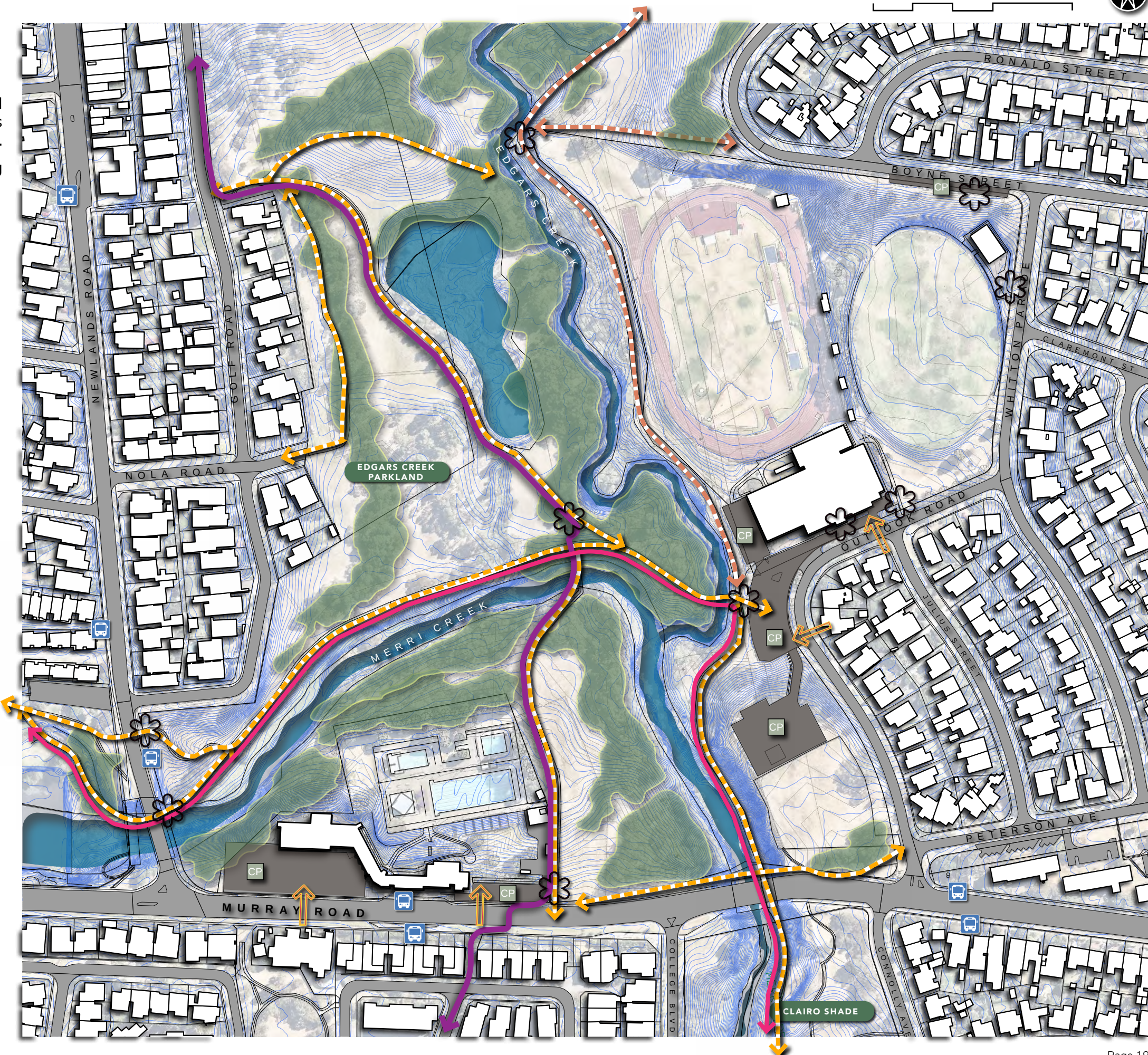
Activity

The subject area is well serviced with formal and informal pedestrian and bicycle pathways connecting across Merri Creek and Edgars Creek. However pedestrian access on the surrounding streets is limited.



LEGEND

- SITE AREA
- KEY PRECINCT AND RESERVE ENTRY
- BUS DROP-OFF / PICK-UP
- EXISTING CAR PARK
- CAR PARK ENTRY
- PEDESTRIAN PATHWAY
- INFORMAL PATHWAY
- LOCAL BICYCLE NETWORK
- REGIONAL CYCLEWAY



Site Analysis & Context

Environmental Overlays

Three key environmental overlays apply to the subject area for the masterplan.

The overlays characterise the predominant site condition of undulating land, bushland vegetation and the confluence of two waterways with a flood overlay.

These site conditions create exceptional opportunity for further enhancement of the natural landscape values as well as the amenity of the local community for passive recreational purposes.

They will however constrain future development of active use to the two existing sports facility locations.

LEGEND

- VEGETATION
- FLOODING OVERLAY
- EROSION MANAGEMENT OVERLAY



Site Analysis & Context

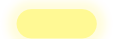
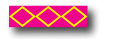
Site challenges and Constraints

As well as the natural site constraints, there are several other key factors that constrain the subject area.

These are:

- Topography.
- An overhead power line easement and associated structures.
- Scale of the streets accessing the site.
- Fences and barriers restricting pedestrian and passive access and;
- Also the disconnect between activities due to level change of ground and access to pathways and parking.

LEGEND

-  AREAS OF HIGH TRAFFIC NOISE / ACTIVITY
-  SMALL LOCAL STREET
-  HIGH VOLTAGE OVERHEAD POWER LINES
-  BARRIERS
-  TOPOGRAPHIC BARRIERS / SLOPING
-  FLOODING RISK
-  CREEK CORRIDOR VEGETATION





PREPARED FOR:

