Summerbank Reserve

Park upgrade

Consultation summary report

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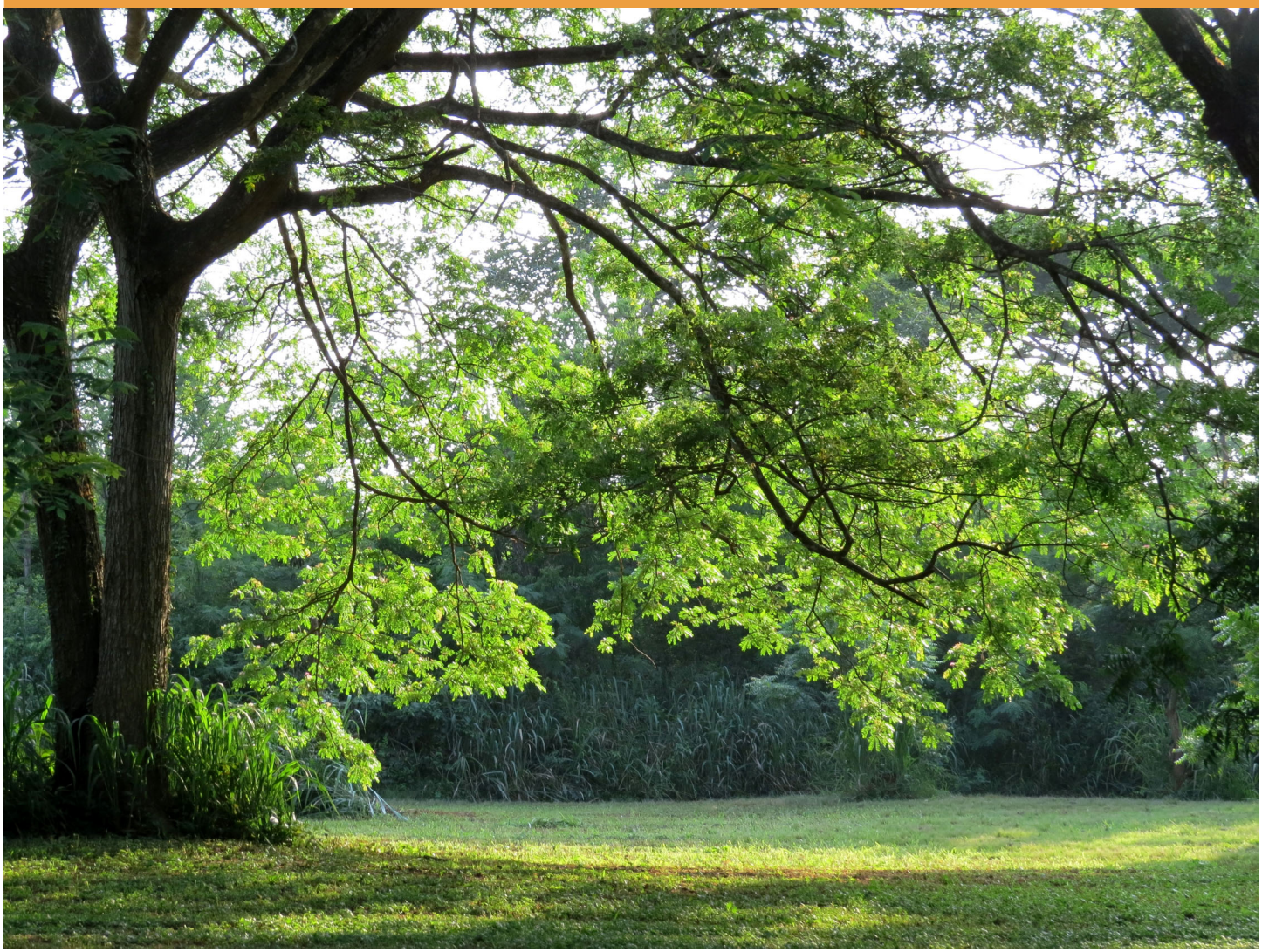
Open Space Design & Development Unit
February 2024

Revision B

Revision A: initial consultation summary: November 2023
Revision B: draft concept consultation summary: February 2024



Summerbank Reserve – park upgrade

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Summerbank Reserve (also known as Dowding Close Reserve) off Dowding Close/Stanford Close in Fawkner is a small-medium-sized reserve, comprising of a playspace, trees and open lawn areas. It has been determined ready for a park upgrade according to Merri-bek City Council's Open Space and Playspace strategies.

This report provides a summary of the Summerbank Reserve consultation.

1. Background

This report covers a summary of each consultation stage for the Summerbank Reserve park upgrade.

As mentioned on Conversations Merri-Bek webpage, the following elements of the reserve are not negotiable as part of this upgrade:

- The upgrade will only cover the reserve and playspace area, not the surrounding areas (e.g. roads, car parking, lighting, services etc)
- The playspace footprint cannot be enlarged owing to its surrounding footpaths. Large-sized play elements (e.g. a flying fox or tower combination unit etc) cannot be included as there is insufficient space for this and there are neighbouring properties close by
- Sports grounds and their facilities will not be included
- A public toilet will not be included
- Unless trees are dead or in decline, they will not be removed as part of the works
- Some park infrastructure elements need to be upgraded (e.g. bollards and some park fencing)
- All the works must fit into the available budget.

Council's Open Space Design and Development unit are conducting three consultation phases with the local community for the Fisher Reserve park upgrade, these being:

- Initial consultation

Council have asked the local community what they would like to see included in the upgrade of this park. This information can be used as inputs to developing the draft concept plan. This stage has now closed.

- Draft Concept Plan Consultation

Using results from the initial consultation, Council has developed a draft concept plan using the local community's initial input.

- Revised/Final Concept Plan Consultation

This revised concept plan reflects changes from the draft concept plan, incorporating the community's feedback where possible. After receiving feedback, a final concept plan will be produced including any final changes to the design where possible. This will close the consultation process, prior to the team proceeding to detailed design.

Consultation timings

Initial consultation: 6 September – 6 October 2023 (completed)

Draft concept plan consultation: 25 January – 16 February 2024 (completed)

Revised/final concept plan issued: March 2024 (date to be confirmed).

For both the initial and draft concept plan consultation, postcards are distributed to households within 0.5km of Summerbank Reserve, advising residents that they can provide feedback using Council's website, https://conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/summerbank-reserve. Posters are also to be displayed near the playspace.

A similar poster approach will be undertaken for the revised/final concept plan. The final concept plan will be displayed on the website along with posters at site. Thereafter the Open Space Design and Development team can proceed to detailed design. We will advise when construction will be starting and finishing once known.

2. Initial Consultation Feedback Findings

Council received 21 feedback responses to the initial consultation, one of these being a collation from various local residents.

This feedback has been organised into the following categories (not in order):

- Playspace upgrade and flying fox

Many agreed that the playspace is outdated and could do with a refresh. Several asked for larger sized play equipment including flying fox and spinning swings. As mentioned on the Conversations webpage, there is insufficient budget and space for a flying fox or similar large-sized equipment in the playspace. Even if there were more budget available, a flying fox requires a very large footprint and to install would require removal of existing trees and much of the open grass areas. We typically only include these in our larger sized playspaces and where there is sufficient space as we would not remove healthy trees to accommodate large elements.

We will look at various play equipment options that will fit into the available space, maximising the footprint space as much as possible. We are also considering including a nature-based play area in addition that children can enjoy.

- Shelter and shade sail

A few people asked for a BBQ/picnic area with shelter and for a shade sail over the playspace.

We can assess if a shelter can be included with this upgrade (budget depending) though unlikely we can include a shade sail over the playspace. The playspace footprint is already quite small (enclosed with the existing footpath) and is unlikely to allow for sufficient space for shade sail footings as well as required clearance from play equipment. We will assess if further shade trees can be included to provide natural shade and consider play equipment items that include some shade in their design.

- BBQ area

Some respondents asked for a BBQ and others stated that they do not wish for BBQs as it would be too close to private properties and there are insufficient car park areas to support BBQ gatherings.

As neighbouring properties are close by and there is very limited parking, we can instead provide picnic setting areas, with a shelter if budget allows.

- Water play

One individual asked for water play. There is insufficient budget to include water play in this small reserve. We can however include nature-based play using different materials to make the area engaging.

- Improved bicycle/pram access

A few people flagged that the access path restricts access for bicycles, owing to the existing chicanes. We agree with this comment and it also makes access around the reserve difficult for those with prams, in wheelchairs and also hard for maintenance access. We propose to remove the chicanes and install instead hinged bollards which will improve access for all, whilst preventing vehicle access on the paths.

One individual asked for a small bike track for young children to learn how to ride. We can look at this option if we can determine where to position it without loss of green space.

- Fitness equipment

Several people said they would like some fitness equipment. We agree that this would add benefit to this reserve and will look at possible fitness equipment options.

- Gathering space

Several respondents asked for more seating, preferably shaded. We will look at providing a gathering space with several types of seats provided together to encourage socialisation as well as occasional seating.

- Public toilet

A few respondents asked for a toilet, others that it could encourage anti-social issues and they prefer not. We cannot include a toilet in this upgrade. Inclusion of public toilets in public open space are subject to Council's public toilet policy and do not generally form part of a small park upgrade. Where they are included, it is where there are insufficient public toilets in the vicinity.

The nearest public toilet can be found at 115 Jukes Road which is approximately 500m distance from this reserve.

- Tree damage

Several people mentioned that the trees in the reserve often get vandalised and asked for tree guards around them. We will look at possible options together with our arborist teams, though not an easy issue to address as tree guards cannot support large mature trees.

- Drinking fountain

One individual expressed concern over the drinking fountain water quality. We do not believe there are any issues with the water quality but are planning to install a new accessible drinking fountain adjacent to the path as the location for the current one is not suitable for those in wheelchairs.

- Rubbish collection

One respondent has asked for an additional bin on Dowding Close as other bins are often over-flowing. We will look at bin positioning and rubbish collection frequency with our waste teams.

- Lighting through the reserve

One individual asked for improved lighting around the park. It is doubtful we can include additional lighting along the paths in the reserve as there would not be sufficient budget. There are light poles installed at intervals along the paths and these should be working. We will ask our lighting officer to inspect the lights in the evening to ensure that they are working correctly.

- Native garden bed

One individual asked for a native garden bed or rock garden to be included. We are planning to include native shrubs and trees as part of the design.

- Book swap library

We will look into this option though not sure it is something that council would set up, often community-driven?

We will endeavour to address as many of these requirements as possible in the Summerbank Reserve design.

3. Draft Concept Plan Consultation Feedback Findings

Council received 13 feedback responses to the draft concept plan consultation. Overall many were supportive of the design with some requests for additional elements or modifications.

This feedback has been organised into the following categories (not in order):

- Open lawn areas

A few respondents asked for the area south of the playspace to kept as an open lawn area for a kickabout/frisbee space. We will relocate proposed items in this area to keep this space clear as lawn.

- Table tennis

Some respondents liked the idea of a table tennis table, others did not, owing to concerns over vandalism/anti-social issues and whether it would receive enough use. As a result we will remove the proposed table tennis table from this upgrade.

- Fitness equipment

Generally respondents supported the idea of fitness equipment offering a mixture of cardio and upper body strength. We will look at co-locating these stations together away from the open lawn area.

- Play equipment

Several respondents mentioned that play equipment should be focused predominately on toddlers and up to 12 years old. We have proposed equipment aiming at this age range and will assess if any other changes can be made to the design to support toddlers more.

The nominated play equipment will need to fit into the available playspace footprint and to avoid having to remove existing trees and open lawn areas to accommodate more. We will also be adding a nature-based play area near the playspace which is aimed at younger children.

- Shade over playspace

A few people mentioned the need for shade over the playspace. Although we cannot accommodate a shade sail over the whole playspace, we have worked out that we can provide one over the toddler/junior area.

- Water play

One individual asked for water play. There is insufficient budget to include water play in this small reserve. We are however including a nature-based play using different materials to make the area more engaging for younger children.

- BBQ area

One respondent asked for a BBQ, others stated that they do not wish for BBQs as it would be too close to private properties and there are insufficient car park areas to support BBQ gatherings. As a result we won't include a BBQ but will look instead at providing an extra picnic setting.

- Anti-social behaviour

A few respondents have flagged up that there are occasional anti-social behaviour occurring in the reserve, especially at night and that previous planted trees and furniture have been damaged.

This is a difficult issue for council to address as often requires police intervention, beyond what council can do. We have notified our Local Laws team if they can increase patrols especially in evening. We advise local residents to continue to contact the local Fawkner police station should such issues occur.

We will focus on using more robust materials for this project as well as alternative methods for securing newly installed trees that do not require above-ground stakes. Installing larger sized tree stock may also deter vandalism if harder to remove.

- Public toilet

One individual asked for a public toilet, several others requested not to have one provided.

We cannot include a toilet as part of this upgrade. Inclusion of public toilets in public open space are subject to Council's public toilet policy and do not generally form part of a small park upgrade. Where they are included, it is where there are insufficient public toilets in the vicinity.

The nearest public toilet can be found at 115 Jukes Road which is approximately 500m distance from this reserve.

4. Revised/final Concept Plan

A summary of the final concept plan will be provided here when this stage of consultation has been reached.

5. Next Steps

The Open Space Design and Development team are currently preparing the revised/final concept plan, using feedback received from the draft and initial consultation stages. Once ready this plan will be displayed to the community on posters at site and on council's Conversations Merri-bek webpage. This completes consultation and the team will then be proceeding to detailed design.

6. Further information

Any questions can be directed to Council's Open Space Design & Development Unit via email openspace@merri-bek.vic.gov.au or by phoning 9240 111.

7. Appendix

Below are all feedback received from the community for each stage of consultation for the Summerbank Reserve and images of the posters and postcards issued.

8a Initial Consultation

Figure 1: Postcards were issued to households within 0.5km of the reserve.

Below is feedback received for the Summerbank Reserve:

Date Submitted	Screen Name	Description
2 Oct 2023	Merhi3	Have seen lots of new parks add an element of water play which kids always LOVE. That would be amazing. That with a canopy over the playground, an undercover BBQ with seats would be amazing! Wouldn't have to go to other suburbs for parks.
30 Sept 2023	Katie	Extra shaded seating, or ways to shade the existing seating would be great. Agree that the play equipment is a bit outdated and could definitely do with an upgrade. Perhaps even having a canopy over the playground so that the playground itself is shaded would be great. Perhaps also look at replacing the water fountain. Not sure how long it's been there and if the water is properly filtered.
29 Sept 2023	Maria	Can we please have spinning swings and a flying fox for bigger kids? I don't think the area is big enough and has enough parking for BBQ gatherings. It would also create too much noise so close to people's houses. Also worried that toilets would attract the wrong people so close to homes and young families with kids.
29 Sept 2023	Michael	It would be nice to see more fun equipment like a flying fox and spinning swings like the ones at Parker Reserve in Coburg.
29 Sept 2023	Irene	The play equipment needs updating, everyone loves swings and a flying Fox for teens too, like the one on Mathieson St Coburg. I'm concerned that toilets and a BBQ would attract people who like to leave their mess behind. There are other areas for BBQ gatherings around Fawkner which are not so close to private homes.
28 Sept 2023	GatensG	I would love to see a BBQ area covered by shade. We have moved to this area two years ago and are looking forward to growing our family, this is the closest park to us. Would also like to see a small bike track for future kids to learn how to ride a bike. Would love to be able to have parties there, and in that case an accessible toilet.
23 Sept 2023	Mrs Pawley	I live around the corner with three pre-schoolers, we've had birthday parties held there with our own gazebo, so perhaps a BBQ area with a shade sail would be great as we've noticed other families use this park for parties and play dates for the nearby school kids. We need a second bin down by Dowding Close for dog poos, it's always overflowing by Friday. Please do more to protect the new trees growing there, they are always being torn out by vandals which upsets me. Perhaps a lovely mural on that powerbox on the north side of the playground (which seems to have turned into a popular make out/drinking spot for teens!). Lastly, a book swap library would be great, especially as it's a thoroughfare for kids getting walked to school.
21 Sept 2023	Leanda	This is our local and we like it and it's secluded internal location. The play equipment needs to have activities for a wider range of ages. The path is terrible for bikes, as you have to dismount to navigate the chicanes. The grass area condition could be improved for ball games. The trees are commonly vandalized so when replacing damaged trees, heavy duty tree guards would be well worth the effort.
14 Sept 2023	Emma	More trees and gathering spaces- encourages us to deepen our bonds with this place and our desire to care for it. And yes agree- toilets are pretty essential.

Date Submitted	Screen Name	Description
13 Sept 2023	Laila	Great park that brings community together. In need of sandpit with water sensory play equipment. A waterplay area during the summer season. Seating with shade canopy.
13 Sept 2023	Kim	We would love to see some exercise equipment added during these works. They seem very popular at other local parks. Also some play equipment designed for older children as well as the current play equipment for younger users. Some musical equipment would be interesting. Also shade across the play equipment is a must please. Thank you
12 Sept 2023	Toilet	Whenever my kids come to the park they looking for toilet,
12 Sept 2023	Reeta	I am residence near to this park my kids normally come to play here. While they playing in this park they want to go toilet and we can't find any so can you please provide one toilet please
12 Sept 2023	RG	I believe that having accessible and clean toilets in the park would greatly enhance the visitor experience, especially for families with young children.
12 Sept 2023	Manisha	Toilet, BBQ , picnic table ,trampoline
11 Sept 2023	cmb	Toilets and water play please
11 Sept 2023	Stevie	A flying fox , toilet, BBQ, ground trampolines and picnic table
9 Sept 2023	Brendon Agpasa	There's new look Gathering space area with large platform seat and backed seat on gravel paved area in its improved park was located in Summerbank Reserve at Fawkner, plus some BBQ and picnic facilities, Timber carved rocking units, new garden beds and additional trees, bushwalking, upgrade to playspace equipment, Bench seat, Picnic setting, Accessible drinking fountain, mew fitness equipment, table tennis, play cricket, play football, play soccer, existing playspace equipment, Platform seat, Accessible playspace and its natural scenery to be retained, that would be great park had been improved with a popular spot for kids, babies and families too.
9 Sept 2023	Ursula	The playground could be larger & updated. It's a popular spot for families & the playground gets a lot of use. The little field space isn't really used for much - I hardly even see dogs there. A rock garden/native species garden would be a good idea to make the space more usable. Some lighting in the park would be a good idea too - currently there is nothing. A water feature/play zone would be fantastic too.

Date Submitted	Screen Name	Description
9 Sept 2023	laila_christie	We like this park but think the play equipment needs updating and to have parts that are good for big kids and little kids. More trees would be great, and some BBQ /picnic facilities. Please make it easier to ride bikes, the current fence-chicanes mean you have to stop and get off rather than just slow down.
6 Sept 2023	Jeanette	I live very close to this park. It is really popular for a space that is so tucked away in a quiet part of Fawkner. Some exercise equipment would be a great addition, as would a covered picnic area, maybe even BBQs. I am concerned about how many trees seem to get vandalised/destroyed in this park. A number of times, I've seen someone steal(!) wooden stakes and those border rings around trees. It's unfortunate that plants aren't safe in this park, because it's otherwise a beautiful little spot.

8b Draft Concept Plan Consultation

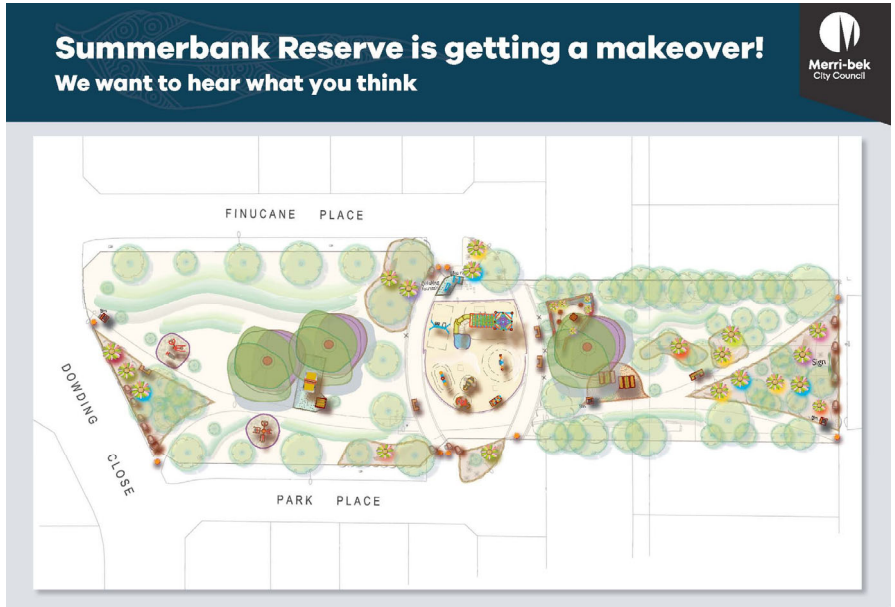

Figure 2: Postcards were issued to households within 0.5km of the reserve.

8c Draft Concept Plan Consultation Responses

Below is feedback received for Summerbank Reserve during the Draft Concept Plan consultation:

Date Submitted	Description
9 February 2024	I like this with one big exception. Please retain the existing green space to the south of the existing playground. It is a wonderful space - many people use it for kick to kick / frisbee and other free flow activities that require space. The proposed design puts the table tennis tables and also gym equipment..... I beg you to leave that space open. Install any infrastructure to the east side of the path. That could maybe accommodate the table tennis table? Please retain the open space to provide that free flow flexibility in the broad area.
6 February 2024	Currently the highest usage for this reserve is toddlers playing on the play equipment. Investing and upgrading the play equipment for toddlers should be the highest priority. The play equipment at both Mutton Reserve and Moomba Park are excellent. My toddler absolutely loves these parks and the main attractions are: - Multiple swings so you don't have to wait - Big and Small slides for all ages - some shade above the slide, nothing worse than a hit slide on a sunny day which makes it unusable

Date Submitted	Description
	- fun bridges between slides Please expand summerbank playground footprint and copy and paste these parks onto summerbank reserve. No need to reinvent the wheel or get cute, you nailed these other parks. I have never seen anyone bring ping pong equipment to a park, please don't spend money on this. I also have not seen a single picnic held at the park. Again the park is mostly used for the playground and this should be the focus. Any budget should be funnelled toward the playground.
5 February 2024	The table tennis tables never get used and are pretty unnecessary. Nobody ever takes balls and bats to a park. Also, almost everyone asked for a toilet and yet, no toilet. Finally, a BBQ was requested and none has been added?
2 February 2024	Council should leave some open space for people to kick a football or a soccer ball. by placing a table tennis table and fitness equipment they are limiting the space that is open for children to play ball sports with each other. additionally the new nature based play equipment is too close to people's property its essentially up against someone's fence, not great.
2 February 2024	I am a regular user of this park, as I live in the estate. My children are aged 7months, 5 years and 9 years so we would like to ensure that there is a play space that would suit all children sizes. with many park upgrades I see that there is focus on one particular age group and not enough for the smaller children. Please ensure there is enough play equipment for toddlers and children up to 12 years old as these are the ages that are using the park the most. Please ensure swings for the young ones as well as older children. In the draught it looks as though we are losing the big open grass area and we as a community (I have had conversations with many and we all agree) find this space find this space very important as we all gather for ball sports, so we would need sufficient space for ball games and picnics. The seating would need at least two or three. and all though seating is good nothing beats sitting in the grass for a picnic and shaded trees. some shaded areas would be good
29 January 2024	this design is looking great however more shade is required, the play area never gets natural shade and gets very hot for parents and children alike. Also some water play would be loved by the kids the kids often end up playing with the dog water/ water fountain so making this and official play area would make sense. Kids do like to play soccer on the open field so striking a balance between fitness equipment, seating and a space for ball games would be ideal.
28 January 2024	Dislikes -don't think enough gathering space - would like to see another near the Dowding close side -don't think there is enough shade including in the playground area -no toilet Likes -great adding exercise equipment to the area -adding more greenery
27 January 2024	Good
26 January 2024	Yes, I have a new plan for an existing park were improved, near the house is located here at 8 Dowding Close in Fawkner, Victoria. We have the fresh new look Gathering space area in the new concept plan, including large platform seat and backed seat on gravel paved area, BBQ and picnic facilities, Timber carved rocking units, new garden beds and additional trees, bushwalking, playspace equipment, Bench seat, Picnic setting, Accessible drinking fountain, new fitness equipment, table tennis, cricket, rugby league, rugby union, Australian rules football, soccer, Platform seat, Accessible playspace and natural scenery was included in our old park had been improved with a most popular spot were all featured for the kids, babies and families too. This is your new feedback of response from your local park was Summerbank Reserve Fawkner in the draft concept plan to the local council from Melbourne as well.
26 January 2024	Our family thinks this looks great, good to have picnic area/table, and more seating. Better and more play equipment and exercise equipment will be very appreciated.

Date Submitted	Description
26 January 2024	This looks great!
26 January 2024	I like the overall concept of this plan and I'm also very pleased we do not include toilets in the concept plan … this park doesn't need one. My only concern is the proposed timing of it all; more specifically how long the park will become a construction site. For example, there is current/minor works underway (to replace the drinking fountain) which only ever has intermittent progress and it feels like a three day job has become a four month project (distraction).
25 January 2024	Please provide adequate shade coverage for both the playground areas and seated areas for parents watching/waiting for their children. Australia's harsh sun contributes to 95% of skin cancer instances. We have never seen people using the gym equipment at nearby designated areas in Fawkner and surrounding Merri-bek area(this could have something to do with the current demographic) and would prefer to see the money spent on interesting and exciting facilities for kids. Such as extending the playground area, having a water play area, trampoline, flying fox, scooter track (please refer to Norris Bank Reserve in Bundoora), etc Having a toilet facility would be great too.

8d Revised/final Concept Plan

Below shows the revised/final concept plan. This will also be displayed at the reserve and on Conversations Merri-bek webpage.

FINAL CONCEPT PLAN

Council is upgrading the playspace and park infrastructure at Summerbank Reserve (Dowding Street), Fawkner. We have listened to your feedback on the draft concept plan and used this to develop this final concept plan.

This concludes consultation, we are now working on the detailed design.

This final plan is also shown on: **https://conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/summerbank-reserve**

Proposed upgrades:

- New gathering space areas with picnic settings. Additional waste bins at each reserve entry. Additional seating around reserve. New accessible drinking fountain and bike racks already installed
- Staggered fence entries have been replaced with padlocked hinged bollards to improve accessibility
- New playspace aimed at toddler and junior children (climbing unit with tube swing and junior slide, double swing with sling seat/joey seat, four-way see saw, slide, rockers and cubby). Existing surrounding concrete paths and seating retained
- New shade sail over toddler/more junior area with post protectors
- New nature-based play area (fun tyres, logs/steppers and planting)
- Additional shade trees and colourful garden beds (mostly natives)
- A new fitness equipment station (focused on cardio and flexibility).

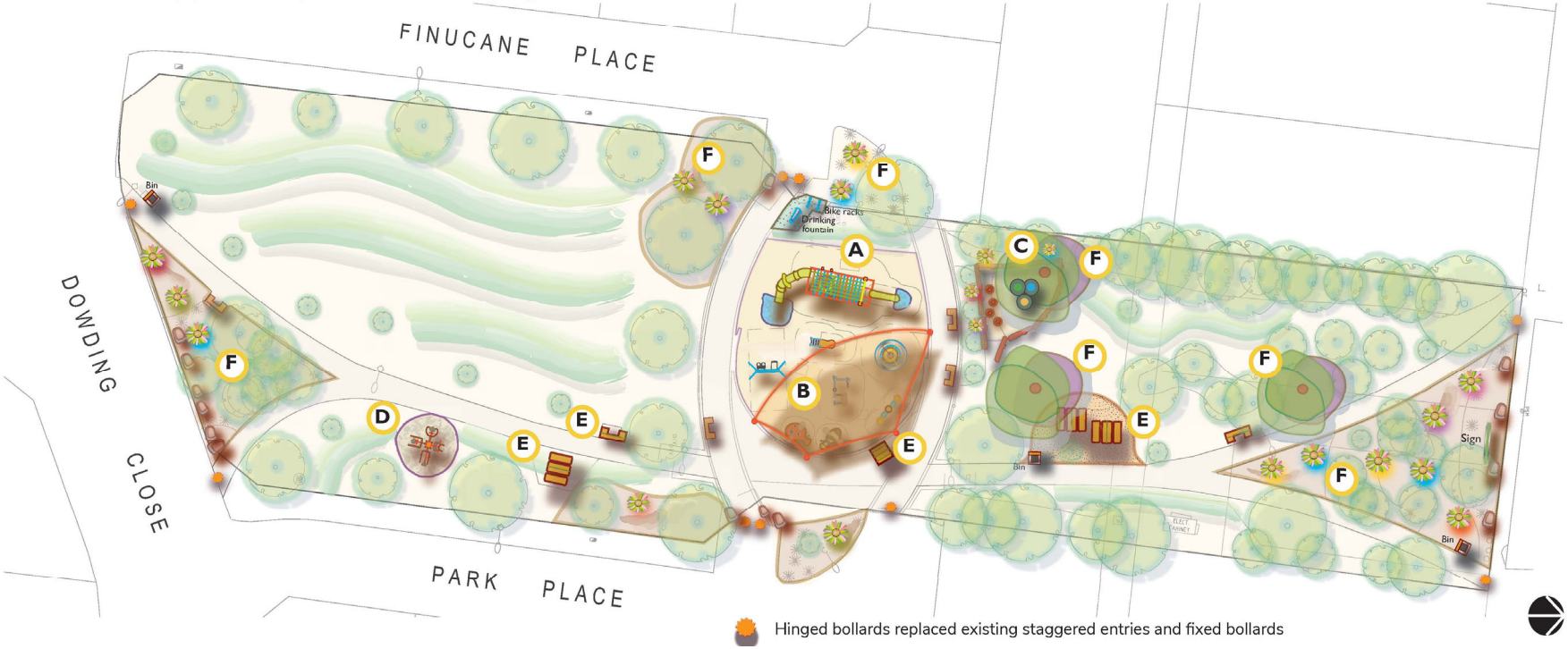

Figure 3: Final concept plan for Summerbank Reserve.