

# WIMMERA REGIONAL MULTI-SPORT PRECINCT FEASIBILITY



Summary report  
June 2023

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**Horsham Rural City Council acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government**



# 1. INTRODUCTION

Horsham Rural City Council has conducted a feasibility study to inform decisions for upgrades to existing or the development of new sporting infrastructure in Horsham.

The feasibility study commenced as an investigation into the viability and location of a single, multi-sport precinct of regional facilities.

Through detailed investigation and analysis of options, the feasibility study has identified a distributed model of facility improvements that are affordable, where upgrades and new facilities can be staged to reflect funding opportunities and where facility improvements are strategically aligned with the priorities of State Sporting Associations.

Sport and Recreation Victoria was a funding partner in the development of the feasibility study.

THE VISION FOR THE PRECINCT IS TO ENHANCE THE PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS A RANGE OF SPORTS AND DELIVER SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO HORSHAM AND THE BROADER WIMMERA-SOUTHERN MALLEE REGION.

The feasibility study builds on previous reviews of current sporting facility provision across Horsham and the identification of sporting infrastructure needs for the community.

The study considered previous reviews, plans and strategies to understand the history, issues, challenges and opportunities in providing regional multi-sport facilities.

The feasibility study was underpinned by an extensive engagement process with State Sports Associations, local sporting user groups and other key stakeholders in determining the current and future demand for new and upgraded sporting facilities.

The study identifies the development priorities that Council will need to consider over the next 10-20 years based on the current sports participation trends, population demographic shifts and ageing infrastructure across the Horsham community.



## 2. BACKGROUND

### Wimmera Regional Multi-Sport Precinct Purpose

The purpose of the Horsham Rural City Council's Wimmera Regional Multi-Sport Precinct Feasibility Study was to:

- Identify the functional requirements of a regional multi-sport precinct consistent with State Sporting Association planning.
- Determine the feasibility of a multi-sports precinct that can meet the needs of the users and provide a facility that can cater for regional sporting activities and events.
- Determine the most suitable location for a multi-sports precinct, referencing previous work undertaken by Horsham Rural City Council and considering all other factors, including new information.

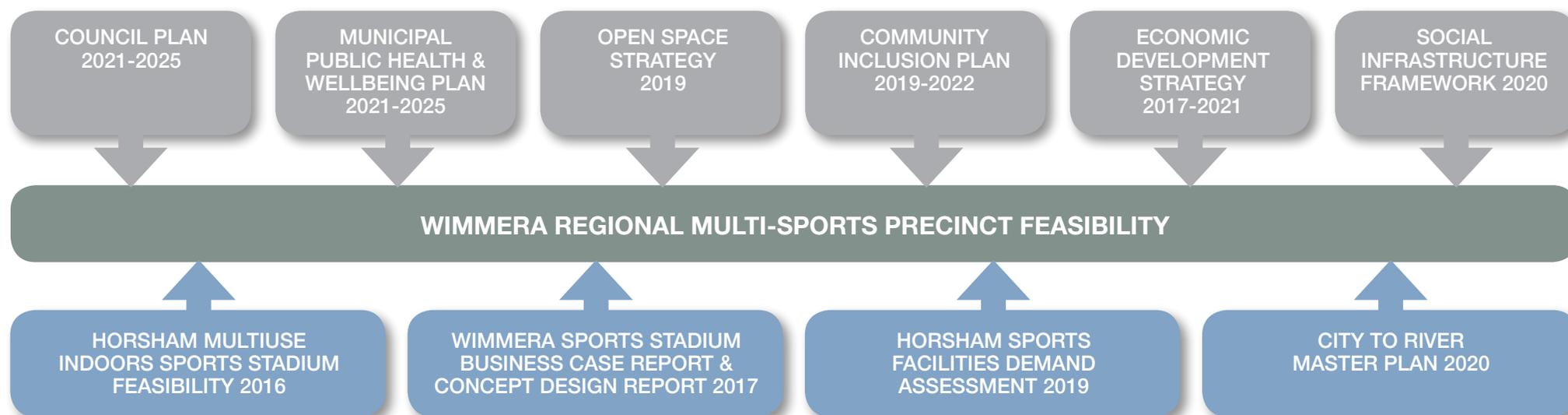
### Key Planning Principles for the Project

Key principles underpinning the study were the importance of:

- Enhanced programming across a range of sports to increase access by under-represented groups.
- Increased participation outcomes supported by access to high-quality sports facilities that incorporate principles of universal design and environmental and economic sustainability.
- Increased liveability of Horsham and the wider Wimmera-Southern Mallee region through the provision of high-quality sports and recreation facilities.
- Economic benefits for Horsham and the wider Wimmera-Southern Mallee region from activities and events held at the multi-sport precinct.

### Strategic Links

The following Council documents helped to inform the requirements of the Wimmera Regional Multi-Sports Precinct Feasibility Study.



# 3. DEMAND ASSESSMENT

## Who are we planning for?

Horsham Rural City is a vibrant and diverse community situated approximately 300 kilometres north-west of Melbourne and north of the Grampians National Park, in the heart of the Wimmera region of Victoria.

The municipality has a population of 19,691 and covers an area of 4,267 square kilometres. Nearly three-quarters of residents live in the urban area of Horsham.

## Demographic Review



**19,642**

Population of the Horsham Rural City Council area

The median age is

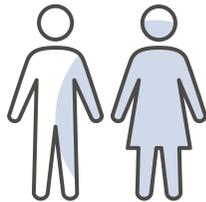
**42 years**



The 0 -15 years age groups represent 19% of the population.

**20-29**

There is a larger percentage of residents 20 – 29 years (5.9%) compared to Regional Victoria (5.4%).



**20.2%**

There is a similar proportion of older age residents 65 and over compared to Regional Victoria (20.4%).



Mining and alternative energy companies are emerging industries projected to attract additional population growth across specific age groups over the next ten years.

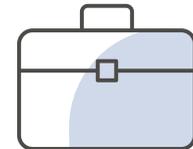
**1.5%**

indigenous population, compared to 0.8% in Victoria.



Household income levels in 2016 compared to regional Victoria reveals there was a smaller proportion of high-income households and a higher proportion of low-income households.

Analysis of the labour force participation rate of the population in 2016 reveals there was a higher proportion in the labour force (60.3%) compared with regional Victoria (56.1%).



The SEIFA Index of Disadvantage in 2016 was 980 (34th percentile) - slightly higher than regional Victoria (959). Horsham North has a significantly lower SEIFA score of 848.



## Local Sporting Participation Trends

The table below shows the current memberships of various local Horsham sport clubs and associations. Eleven clubs provided participation data through the engagement survey and other data was sourced from State Sports Associations.

### Participation

Table 1: Current Local Participation Membership Data

User group	Members
AFL (Football)	1,210
AFL (Netball)	955
Central Park Tennis Club	84
Colts Cricket Club	48
Haven Tennis Club	90
Horsham Badminton Club	85
Horsham Amateur Basketball Association	588
Horsham City Netball Association	98
Horsham Croquet Club	48
Horsham Falcons Football Club (Soccer)	55
Horsham Hockey Club	55
Wimmera Hockey Association (includes clubs from Horsham, Dimboola, Nhill, Kaniva, Warracknabeal and Yanac)	289
Horsham Lawn Tennis Club	195
Horsham Little Athletics Centre	140
Horsham Squash Club	100
Horsham Table Tennis Association	80
Horsham Volleyball Club	257
Kalimna Park Croquet Club	11
Natimuk Gymnastics Club	260
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,648</b>

## Key Findings of Demand Assessment – Sport and Recreation

### Participation

There is a total of 40 different clubs, associations or user groups utilising existing sporting facilities across the Horsham Local Government Area. Participation data (2021) indicates that over 4,600 people participate each year in organised sport.

### Population

Sporting participation is expected to remain consistent with the population forecasted to remain relatively stable over the next 10 - 15 years. Over 53% of the population are aged within the 'active years' age groups, between 5-49 years. Otium Planning Group research suggests this age group is the most active in organised sport and recreation participation. Therefore, there is a significant market for future participation growth in sports and recreation activities across Horsham. Facility improvements and development of juniors, social and female programs will support increased participation outcomes.

### Accessibility

With an ageing community, there is an increased requirement to provide accessible social recreation and therapy-based activities. The high level of disadvantage in the Horsham Local Government area indicates that sport and recreation participation opportunities must be provided in an affordable way.

### Physical Activity

Horsham residents were rated consistently below the Victorian average across most physical activity health indicators. It is important that proposed improvements in the provision of sporting infrastructure encourage an increased uptake in physical activity to reverse this trend.

### Trends

State and national trends reveal a continued increase in the demand for informal, social and other recreation opportunities, such as walking, cycling and gym/fitness. Although there has been an increase in alternate recreation activities, many of the organised activities currently being conducted in Horsham should remain stable if clubs and associations are well managed, sustainable and have access to fit-for-purpose sporting facilities and supporting infrastructure.

## Key Findings – Community Benefits and Value

Improvements to existing and the provision of new sporting infrastructure will provide opportunities that offer physical and mental health, social, environmental, and economic benefits to the Horsham region.

To optimise use by the community, upgrades to sporting infrastructure and the provision of new facilities need to be designed in a way that can adapt to changing sport and recreation participation trends, leisure patterns and community expectations.

Key trends influencing the provision and design of sport and recreation facilities and services are:

- Participation in physical activity in Victoria has increased, however, the majority of the growth has been in unstructured activities such as walking and cycling and gym/fitness.
- Facilities must be multi-use in design, not place unnecessary financial pressure on Council and not duplicate existing facilities with available capacity.
- New facilities should be developed in multi-use hub precincts to ensure the maximum value of the investment is achieved.
- Facilities in neighbouring councils should not be duplicated.
- Insights from the Covid-19 pandemic highlight the importance of local recreation facilities and increased expectations from the community regarding the quality of open spaces and sporting facilities.
- Sports precincts need to include opportunities for co-location of active recreation opportunities, including walking/running paths and trails, as this is the highest participation activity undertaken by the community.
- The growth in female participation within traditionally male-oriented sports is increasing pressures on playing facilities and increasing the need to diversify amenities to be universally accessible.
- Although the nature and intensity of participation in sport may change over time, the need for suitable spaces to accommodate community demand will remain. Facility provision and design need to ensure spaces are adaptable to accommodate changing participation trends.
- The location of sport and recreation facilities needs to be accessible to the majority of the community in order to encourage maximised use.



# 4. WHO DID WE CONSULT?

There were two phases of engagement undertaken for this project.

The first phase involved initial consultation and feedback on the needs and demands of each sport. This included strategic advice and recommendations regarding participation patterns and trends. Based on emerging trends and state-wide planning, the level (local, municipal or regional) of facility provision was identified.

The second phase of engagement involved in-person meetings to present the proposed site concept plans and recommendations and gain feedback.

## Phase One Engagement

All local sporting clubs were contacted with details of the feasibility study and invited to contribute to the study. Local schools were invited to participate via a survey.

The following local sporting clubs and user groups participated in a survey during the first engagement phase:

- Central Park Tennis Club
- Haven Tennis Club
- Horsham Croquet Club
- Horsham Hockey Club
- Horsham Lawn Tennis Club
- Horsham Table Tennis Club
- Kalimna Park Croquet Club
- Natimuk Gymnastics Club
- Volleyball Horsham

State Sporting Associations were consulted during both Phase One and Phase Two of the study:

- AFL Victoria
- Badminton Victoria
- Basketball Victoria
- Cricket Victoria
- Croquet Victoria
- Football Victoria
- Gymnastics Victoria
- Hockey Victoria
- Little Athletics Victoria
- Netball Victoria
- Squash Victoria
- Table Tennis Victoria
- Tennis Victoria
- Volleyball Victoria

## Phase One - Key Issues and Opportunities

There was strong interest from the State Sports Associations and some local clubs and associations eager for investment in new fit-for-purpose indoor and/or outdoor facilities that would assist their sport to grow and be sustainable into the future.

Some local clubs indicated they are happy with their current site, wish to remain at their current location and were not interested in being included as part of the multi-sport precinct development.

The following issues and development opportunities were identified through the market research, demand analysis and stakeholder engagement that occurred during Phase One of the study:

### Issues

- Current sporting infrastructure is aging and only caters for local or municipal-level participation.
- Difficulty in identifying one site with the capacity to meet the regional-level land area criteria and facility needs.
- Accessibility is a key requirement in new facilities to remove barriers to participation.
- Affordable programs and services are critical for whole of community access.

### Opportunities

- There is strategic support for the development of multi-use, regional-level facilities in Horsham.
- There is capacity for some existing sporting infrastructure to be upgraded to municipal or regional standard facilities.
- Local participation demand will be maintained and has the potential to grow if modern, contemporary facilities are provided.
- There is a demand for equitable, accessible, and affordable sport and active recreation participation opportunities.

## Phase Two Engagement

To gather feedback on the site concept plans, State Sporting Associations and the following local sporting clubs, groups and associations were involved in the second engagement phase of the study:

- Central Park Tennis Club
- Colts Cricket Club
- Haven Community Enterprise Inc
- Haven Tennis Club
- Horsham Amateur Basketball Association
- Horsham Badminton Club
- Horsham City Netball Association
- Horsham Cricket Association
- Horsham Dog Obedience Club
- Horsham Hockey Club
- Horsham Little Athletics Centre
- Horsham Squash Club
- Horsham Volleyball Club
- Horsham West Primary School – Haven campus
- Jung Tigers Cricket Club
- State Titles' Officer - Netball
- Wimmera Central Tennis Association
- Wimmera Regional Sporting Assembly

## Letters of Support

Letters of support for the site options and concept plans have been received from the following nine State Sporting Associations:

- Badminton Victoria
- Basketball Victoria
- Cricket Victoria
- Football Victoria
- Hockey Victoria
- Little Athletics Victoria
- Netball Victoria
- Tennis Victoria
- Volleyball Victoria

### Key outcomes

The Phase Two engagement indicated strong support from local and state sporting organisations. The feedback resulted in some changes to the proposed facility configurations which was then reflected in the final design solutions.

Sport and Recreation Victoria was also fully supportive of the proposed strategy and facility outcomes.

Discussions with the Horsham College School Council and the Department of Education and Training indicated support for the development of a proposed multi purpose indoor / outdoor sports facility on the site of the college.



# 5. CURRENT FACILITY PROVISION

The table lists the current sports facilities and infrastructure within the Horsham municipality that caters for school and/or community use. The plan on the following page details the location of these facilities

Sports	Recommended Level required	Locations	Comment
AFL	Regional	City Oval Horsham College (Dimboola Road) Coughlin Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposed Sawyer Park City Oval works will achieve regional standard</li> <li>Education Department</li> <li>Privately owned – land constrained by size</li> </ul>
Athletics	Municipal	Dudley Cornell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oval is grassed and shared with other sports</li> <li>There is capacity to upgrade to regional level</li> </ul>
Badminton	Local	Horsham College (Baillie St) - Gym	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education Department</li> </ul>
Basketball	Regional	Horsham Basketball Stadium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crown land, Council is Committee of Management – two courts</li> </ul>
Cricket	Regional	City Oval Dudley Cornell Horsham College (Dimboola Road) Sunnyside Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposed Sawyer Park City Oval works will achieve regional standard</li> <li>Land constrained – local-level facility</li> <li>Education Department</li> <li>Land constrained – local-level facility</li> </ul>
Gymnastics	Municipal	Natimuk Gymnastics Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land owned by the Club and reaching capacity at the venue</li> </ul>
Hockey	Municipal	Horsham College (Dimboola Road)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current playing surface is not fit for purpose for hockey</li> </ul>
Netball	Regional	City Oval Park Drive St Brigid's College – Gym	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land constrained. Plans to improve facilities to municipal standard</li> <li>Crown land, poor condition Council is Committee of Management</li> <li>Privately owned (Indoor playing areas)</li> </ul>
Soccer	Municipal	Dudley Cornell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oval is grassed and shared with other sports</li> <li>Limited capacity to upgrade to regional level for soccer</li> </ul>
Squash	Local	Horsham Squash Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Privately owned, ageing infrastructure</li> </ul>
Table Tennis	Local	Table Tennis Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Privately owned, growth constrained by size of the venue</li> </ul>
Tennis	Regional	Horsham Lawn Tennis Central Park Haven Recreation Reserve Sunnyside Park St Brigid's College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grass surface is not part of Tennis Vic strategy for regional facilities</li> <li>Limited capacity to upgrade to regional level</li> <li>Capacity to upgrade to regional level</li> <li>Land constrained – local level facility</li> <li>Privately owned</li> </ul>
Volleyball	Regional	Horsham Basketball Stadium St Brigid's College Horsham College (Baillie St) - Gym	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crown land – Issues with access</li> <li>Privately owned</li> <li>Education Department</li> </ul>

**Legend:  
Facility Hierarchy  
Categories**

Regional	
Municipal	
Local	

Table 2: Existing and Recommended Sporting Infrastructure Summary



Figure 2: Location and distribution of existing sporting facilities within the Horsham area

# 6. SITE ANALYSIS

## Regional Sports Facility Delivery Model Options

The following two possible facility provision models were explored to support the future sporting needs of the Horsham area:

- **Consolidated Model**  
Involves locating all the identified priority sporting facilities on one site. This model requires a site of approximately 15ha to accommodate the facilities and other support infrastructure, such as car parking, walkways, pavilions and shelters. After extensive consultation with numerous landowners / land managers, it was identified the required land size is not available because either owners did not wish to sell their land or development costs would be prohibitive.
- **Distributed Model**  
Involves the identification of multiple strategic sites, where either existing facilities can be upgraded or extended and/or where new sporting facilities can be developed.

## Sites Investigation

### Site Locations

Initially, six sites were identified by Council for investigation for the development of a regional sports hub.

The sites were:

- Jenkinson Avenue
- Remlaw & Natimuk Road
- Racecourse Reserve
- South of Police Paddock
- South of the River
- Showgrounds

During the course of the study, the following additional four sites were considered:

- Horsham Velodrome site
- Haven Recreation Reserve
- Dudley W Cornell Park
- Dimboola Road Oval (Horsham College)

The adjacent map provides details of the location of all sites assessed.

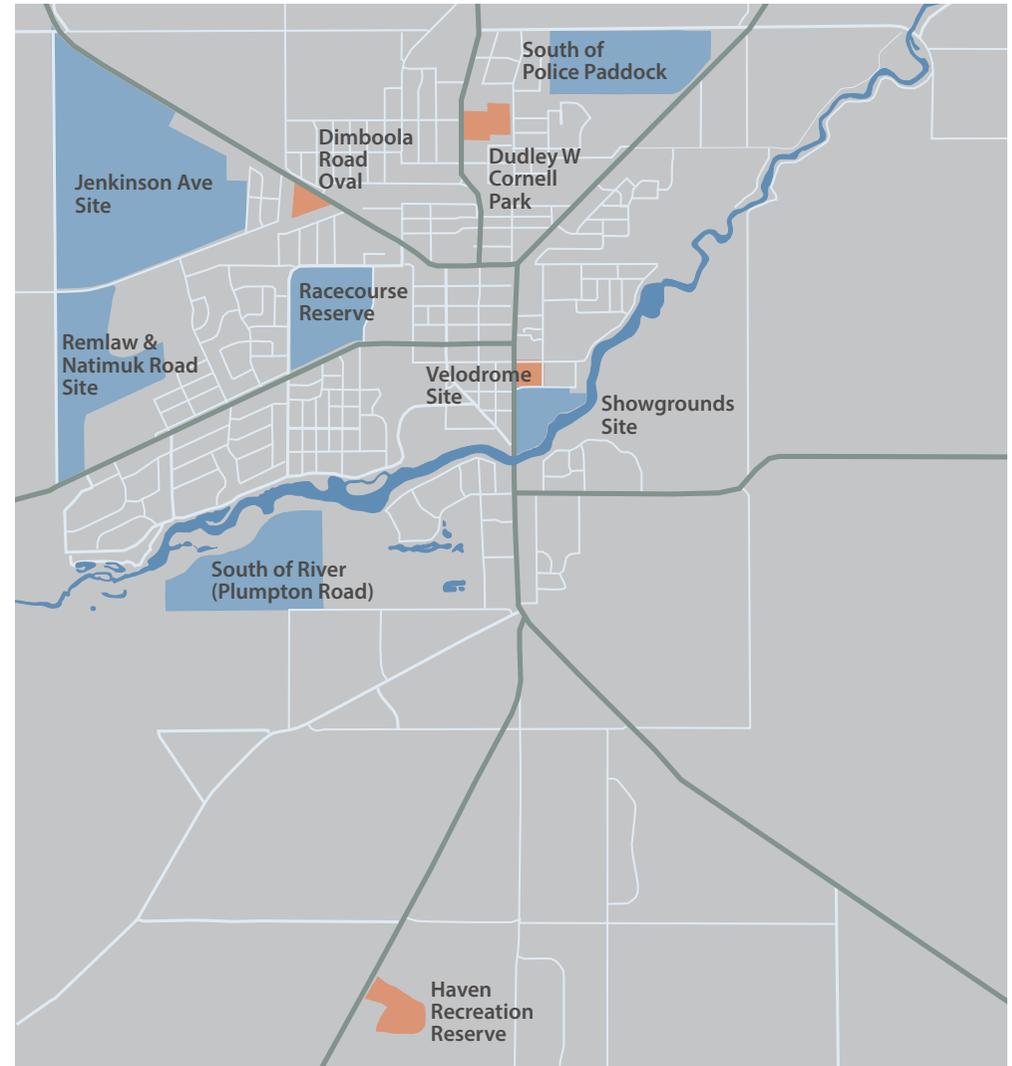


Figure 3: Proposed sites identified for investigation

## Site Review

A two-stage process was used to review and assess the sites.

- **Stage one - Primary selection criteria** - shortlisted the sites into potential and non-potential sites based on:
  - Location to catchment population
  - Size of site to meet development requirements
  - Public and active transport access
  - High visibility of site
  - Land suitability
  - Place (Transformative place making Criteria 1)
  - People (Transformative place making Criteria 2)
  - Access to land and timing of development.
- **Stage two - Secondary selection criteria** – shortlisted sites were assessed against the following criteria to determine final priority site(s) for more detailed investigation:
  - Planning/Zoning
  - Site services
  - Site geology
  - Site access and traffic impacts
  - Impact on current users
  - Neighbourhood effects
  - Compatibility of site
  - Site image
  - Shared development opportunities
  - Commercial potential of site
  - Future facility expansion capability
  - Environmental impact
  - Value of site
  - Potential of part land sale or lease
  - Capital cost of development.



# 7. PREFERRED SITES AND DELIVERY MODEL

## Preferred Sites and Delivery Model

The distributed model was determined to be a more sustainable option for Council.

The consolidated model of facility infrastructure was not viable because of the lack of available land of sufficient size and the high capital cost of developing a green-field site.

Three sites are recommended for development as multi-sport precincts. Two of the sites are Council owned and involve improvement to existing infrastructure to meet local, municipal or regional facility requirements.

The distributed model delivers sports precincts across the north, west and south of Horsham. The sites and proposed facilities are:

**Dimboola Road site** – Regional Indoor Stadium (including four high ball courts) and outdoor netball courts, and a municipal hockey pitch.

**Haven Recreation Reserve site** – Regional tennis, two municipal soccer pitches, local cricket oval, community Hub and open space.

**Dudley W Cornell Park site** – Municipal athletics facility and two local cricket ovals with an expanded main oval and additional car parking.

The following pages details each proposed site and facility layouts.



# 8. PREFERRED LAYOUTS/CONCEPTS



Figure 4: Concept Plan for Dimboola Road Site

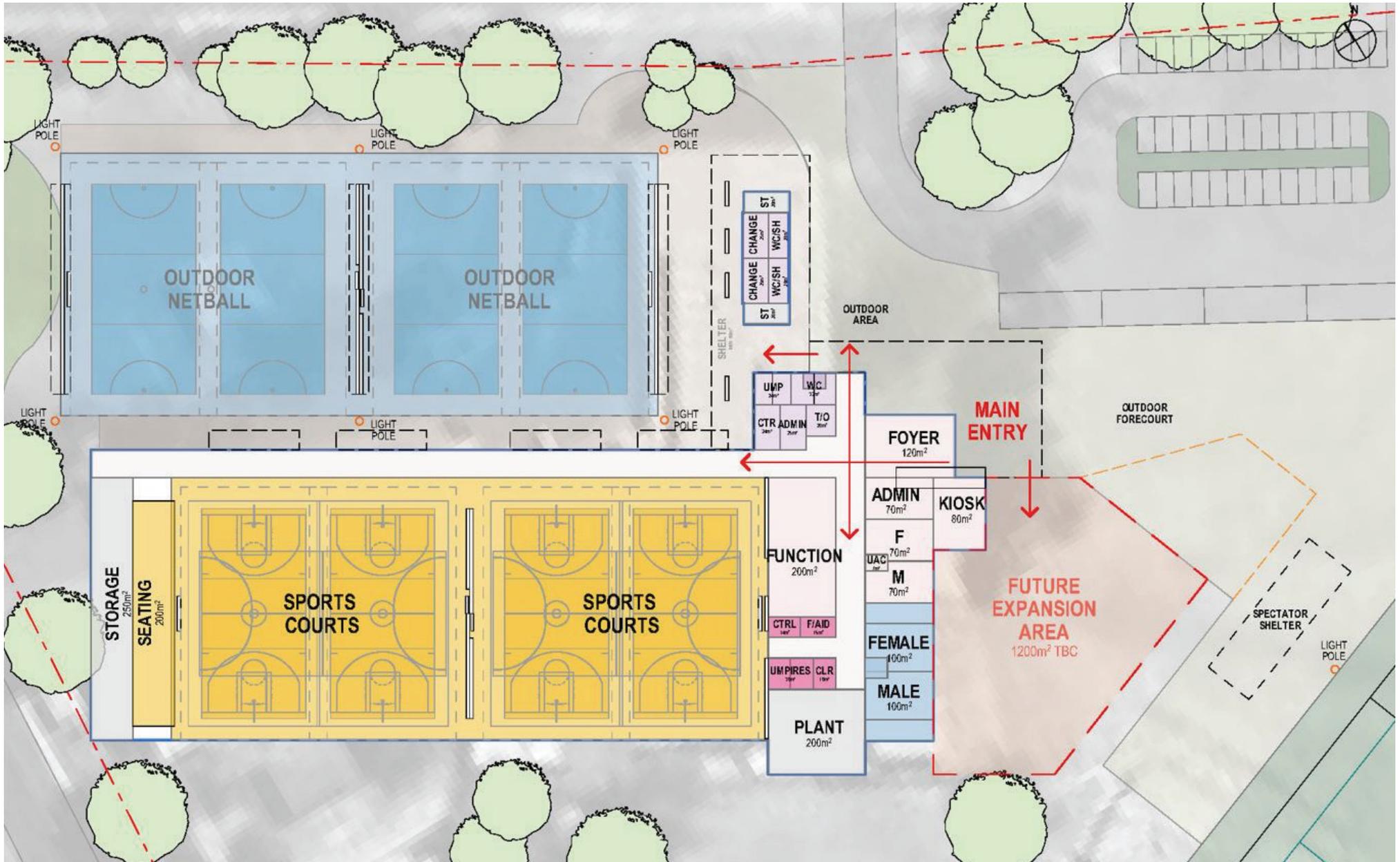


Figure 5: Concept Plan for Dimboola Road Site



Figure 6: Concept Plan for Haven Recreation Reserve Site

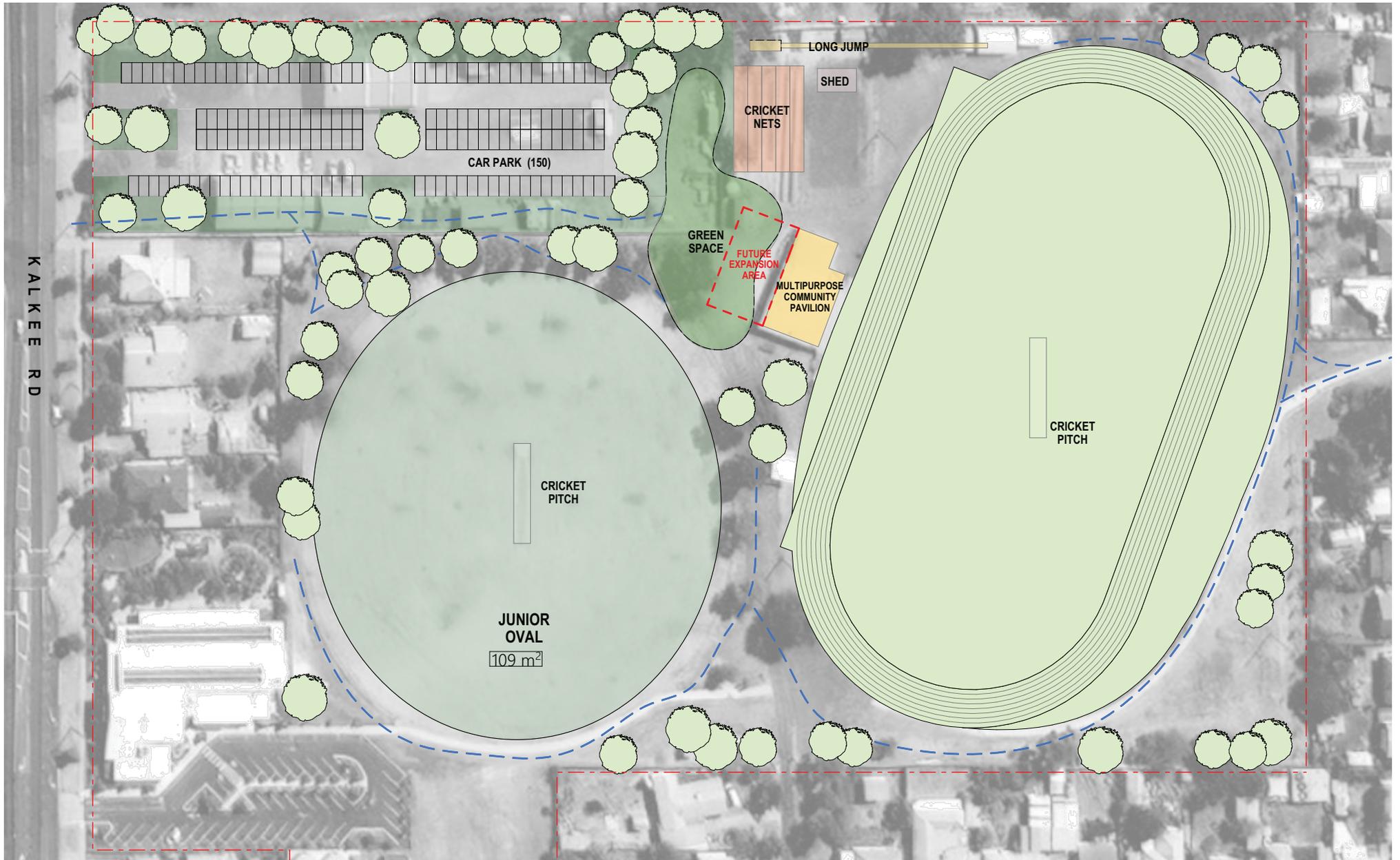


Figure 7: Concept Plan for Dudley W Connell site

# 9. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The social and economic benefits of the proposed Regional indoor/outdoor stadium facility were analysed through financial modelling.

The modelling shows an increase in activity and employment generated by the facility that will provide a boost to regional income.

## Social Impacts

The new facility will provide for indoor sports participation growth in competition, programming, athlete pathways from grass root to elite teams, regional tournaments and other sports events.

The facility will provide an annual average visitation of 122,261 visits, a total of 1,122,606 visits over a 10-year period.

There are several additional social and productivity benefits that are difficult to quantify and were not included in this assessment:

- Lower workforce absentee rates from a fitter and more active workforce.
- Career and training opportunities in sports and recreational services.
- Volunteering benefits and urban consolidation benefits (including transport benefits) associated with the clustering of sports facilities in proximity to community services, schools, and major residential and activity centres.

## Construction Phase Impact

Local jobs and an increase in regional income will be generated during the construction phase of the project.

- A total of 76 full-time equivalent jobs (61 direct jobs and 15 indirect jobs) would be generated during the construction period.
- During construction, a total of \$8.78 million in regional income would be generated. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This assumes the construction workforce would come from the Horsham LGA and adjacent areas

## Operational Phase Impact

The ongoing growth in user numbers will support an increasing number of jobs in the region:

- The operation of the facility would generate a total of 3.2 full-time equivalent jobs during operations.
- On a sector basis, the jobs (full-time equivalent jobs -direct and indirect) generated by facility users are mainly concentrated in recreational services, event services, food service and other retail.

## Benefit Cost Analysis

The project is estimated to deliver a Benefit Cost Ratio of 0.51 (7% discount rate).

- The net present value of total benefits generated by the investment is estimated at \$18.57 million (7% discount) over a 10-year period.



# 10. WARRANTIES AND DISCLAIMERS

The information contained in this report is provided in good faith. While Otium Planning Group has applied their experience to the task, they have relied upon information supplied to them by other persons and organisations.

We have not conducted an audit of the information provided by others but have accepted it in good faith. Some of the information may have been provided 'commercial in confidence', and these venues or sources of information are not specifically identified. Readers should be aware that the preparation of this report may have necessitated projections of the future that are inherently uncertain and that our opinion is based on the underlying representations, assumptions and projections detailed in this report.

Otium Planning Group's advice does not extend to, or imply, professional expertise in the disciplines of economics, quantity surveying, engineering or architecture. External advice in one or more of these disciplines may have been sought, where necessary to address the requirements of the project objectives. There will be differences between projected and actual results because events and circumstances frequently do not occur as expected, and those differences may be material. We do not express an opinion as to whether actual results will approximate projected results, nor can we confirm, underwrite, or guarantee the projections' achievability as it is impossible to substantiate assumptions based on future events.

This report does not constitute advice, investment advice, or opinion and must not be relied on for funding or investment decisions. Independent advice should be obtained in relation to investment decisions.

Accordingly, neither Otium Planning Group, nor any member or employee of Otium Planning Group, undertakes responsibility arising in any way whatsoever to any persons other than the client in respect of this report, for any errors or omissions herein, arising through negligence or otherwise however caused.

