

Hill Top Playground & Splash Park Phase 2 Engagement Summary May 2024



Introduction

Council is proposing to upgrade Hilltop Park's reserve and playground in Doreen to include a splashpad and supporting facilities. This will be one of two free public access splashpads in the City of Whittlesea along with a water play area at Norris Bank Reserve, providing a new type of outdoor recreation facility for the residents of Doreen and surrounds. In addition, the project will improve the play provision in the park to address the changing demographic of the area, bringing the play experiences in line with current best practice and introducing nature play elements.

The project will be delivered by the City of Whittlesea and supported by the Federal Government through the Investing in *Our Communities Program*, and the Victorian Government through the Better Parks and Playgrounds Program and the Community Support Fund.

The upgraded play space and new splashpad will provide the following benefits to the community including:

- a safe area for structured and unstructured play
- a safe social gathering space for both active and passive recreation
- promote local ownership of assets in public open space
- promote a healthy lifestyle to residents within the catchment of the playground
- promote a sense of community by developing play spaces with the community, places residents can go to meet, socialise, and interact
- enable a stronger connection between the playground and the park
- improve accessibility to play equipment for mobility impaired members of the community, such as the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant paths and surfaces
- improve play provision for children with sensory impairment, such as quiet spaces for autism, and high contrast colours for vision impairments.

How we engaged you

This report summarises the community engagement undertaken as part of phase 2, following the first phase undertaken in late 2023 and summarised below.

Phase 1: Gathering Ideas – Monday 13 November to Monday 18 December 2023

The Doreen Splash Park Phase 1 consultation was open for community comment from Monday 13 November to Monday 18 December 2023.

The purpose of this engagement was to assist Council to identify the type of play equipment and splash park features that community would like to see in the park and to identify any concerns they may have with the proposed site and plan.

A total of 735 contributions were made to the consultation, 156 of which were captured at community-based pop-ups, 559 online through the [project Engage Whittlesea page](#) and 23 (of 175 who were invited to attend) at an information sessions for residents living near the reserve. A total of 3293 people visited the project Engage page, 103 of whom opted to follow the page to receive project updates.

Feedback captured from the community and stakeholders in phase 1 informed the draft Hill Top Playground and Splash Park concept plan that was presented in phase 2.

Phase 2: Sharing the draft concept plan for community feedback – 20 March to 24 April 2024

During this phase we shared the Hill Top Playground and Splash Park draft concept plan with key stakeholders previously consulted in Phase 1 as well as the wider community. The purpose of this phase was to understand if the proposed draft plan meets community expectations and the current and future needs of groups currently using the space.

The community was able to view the draft concept plan and have their say online via the project Engage Whittlesea page or at an in-person community-based pop-up. Residents living adjacent to the reserve were invited to attend a follow up information session to view the plan and make any further comments.

The project Engage Whittlesea page presented a summary of opportunities captured from the community through the Phase 1 consultation period and offered visitors a chance to learn more about the key actions for the plan on an interactive map. Visitors to the page were also encouraged to complete a short survey to let us know if they liked what was being proposed.

During the Phase 2 consultation, the project team hosted two staffed community consultation opportunities, the first a pop-up on Tuesday 16 April, 2.30pm – 4.30pm at Laurimar Shops in Doreen and the second, an information session hosted by the project team for adjacent residents, on Thursday 18 April, 7.45pm at Laurimar Community Centre. The format of the session is outlined further on page six of this report.



Left: interactive map from proposed Hill Top Playground & Splash Park draft concept plan on Whittlesea Engage platform

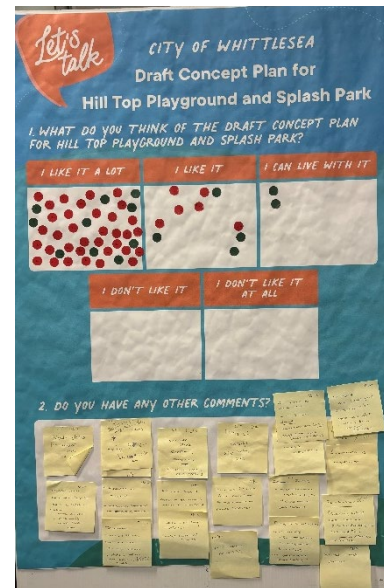


Above: Project Team member, Andrew speaking to community at Laurimar Shops on 16 April 2024

Participants at the in-person community pop-up were invited to view the draft concept plan, then let us know how they felt about the proposed plan on the dot board activity pictured left. Participants could choose from the following:

- *I like it a lot*
- *I like it*
- *I can live with it*
- *I don't like it*
- *I don't like it at all*

There was also an opportunity to provide additional comments about the proposed plan.



Above: dot board used at the community-based pop-up

During Phase 2, residents within 400m of the reserve received a letter to update them on the project status and invite them to view the draft concept plan and share their feedback through the project Engage Whittlesea page or at one of the community-based pop-ups.

Visitors to the reserve were alerted to the consultation through large corflute signage installed at the main entry point. The signage featured the QR code directing them to the project Engage page.

The opportunity to participate in Phase 2 community engagement and community-based pop-ups was shared on Council's social media channels including Facebook and Instagram.

The Engage Whittlesea platform utilises an accessibility add-on which enables users to easily switch to screen reader mode or easily adjust settings such as font size, contrast, dyslexia friendly options to improve the overall accessibility of the site. The platform also has an in-built translation tool to reduce language barriers to participation, allowing the page to be translated into the top ten languages spoken within the municipality.

Subscribers to the Engage Whittlesea platform that had previously indicated an interest in parks and/or the Doreen area were sent a project update by email and encouraged to visit the project page and share their feedback.

Participation

During Phase 2, a total 234 contributions were received, 57 of which were captured at the community-based pop-up, 9 at the information session for adjacent residents and the remaining 168 contributions made on the Whittlesea Engage Platform.

There was a total of 1105 unique visitors to the project Engage page, 16 of which opted to follow the page to receive project updates.

Below is a snapshot of community participation in Phase 2 of community consultation.



Four organic social media posts reached over 11,000 people and were engaged with 467 times (liked, shared and/or clicked through to the Engage page).



One community-based pop-up was held and saw 57 people share their feedback. Nine residents (of 175 invited) attended an information session hosted by the Council project team.



The project Engage page was viewed 1435 times during the consultation period, with 183 people participating in the online survey.

Below is a snapshot of Phase 2 in-person community participation demographics. Consultation activities targeted youth and as such there is an overrepresentation of this cohort in the engagement when compared to the local area demographics.



A total of 54% identified as female and 45% as male.



A total of 55% of in-person participants were 15 years of age and under.



Most in-person participants (98%) live in Doreen.

What we heard

When participants at the in-person community-based pop-up and participants of the online poll (232 in total) were asked what they thought about the proposed concept plan for Hill Top Playground and Splash Park, 78% liked or liked the concept plan a lot with 14% conveying that they do not like the draft plan.

78%



I like it a lot/I don't like it

7%



Neutral

14%



I don't like it

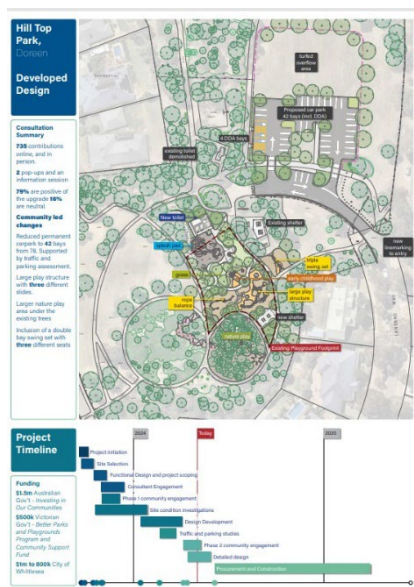
Some of the reasons given for not liking the draft concept plan (14%) included they like the existing playground and the quietness of it and expressed concerns that an upgrade will increase the traffic flow and noise in the area.

In-person Information session for adjacent residents

175 adjacent residents were invited to attend a follow up information session, with 9 residents attending on the night.

During the hour and a half session, Council shared the project timeline with attendees and a summary from the Phase 1 consultation period, including changes made to the concept plan following feedback from the community. Some of these changes are:

- Reducing the carpark from 78 bays to 42
- Slight rearrangement of the functional spaces to allow for a variety of play experiences
- A larger nature play area
- Inclusion of play tower with multiple slides
- Inclusion of swings with multiple seat types



Council answered further questions and concerns from residents about materials used in the upgrade, maintenance issues, safety and flooding concerns, and additional facility requests.

A Brookwood Avenue resident who attended both information sessions thanked the project team for taking the time to listen to their feedback and appreciated that some of the feedback was reflected in the draft concept plan.

Left: Design and project timeline shared with residents at the Information session

Key messages from community feedback

Participants were invited to share their thoughts on the proposed draft concept plan and offered potential future opportunities for Hill Top Park and Splash Park, 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. Some new suggestions included a nature play area, swings for all ages and slides. The resources used in upgrading the park was also suggested, such as surface padding and recycled materials.

“When upgrading the playground, use materials that are safe for children, such as no metal on slides”

“Use natural materials to upgrade the playground, wood not plastic”

“A shade cloth over the splash pad”

“Plenty of swings, especially baby ones”

“A toddler’s area in the Splash Pad”

“Specifically multiple swings. The last time I visited Hilltop Park there was a standard swing, broken all abilities swing and toddler/baby swing. For mothers with two young children could we potentially add two small swings (with the buckle and back support) or even the one that’s available at Mernda or mill park playgrounds where you can pop a baby and adult on the swing”.

“It looks like there are lots of activities for young kids. but would be great if there is also a skate ramp and flying fox like Norris Bank reserve”

“My childcare centre uses this park for bush kinder twice a week. We absolutely love it we explore everywhere”

“It would be good to include a mud kitchen area where we could include natural resources explore in”

“Aboriginal artwork/play integrated into the design would be great”

Technical response:

The play equipment and experiences has been selected based on the feedback from community engagement. Timber structures are proposed with a mixture of equipment to suit children of different ages. A separate toddler play area has been included to allow for the different play styles of younger children. Elements such as a skate ramp and flying fox cannot be included due to the space limitation of the park.



Accessible – upgrading paths and adding additional all ability car parks and equipment to make the playground accessible to all is a priority for respondents

*“Can the park be available for all abilities & wheelchair friendly?
My daughter requires a wheelchair when fatigued which is anything from 50-100m of walking etc. She desperately just wants to be a kid & use equipment independently but most often the equipment is not safe for her”*

“Can the new toilet block have a disabled change facility with hoist for wheelchair bound adolescents?”

Technical response:

Car parking, paths, lighting, and public toilet improvements will make Hill Top Park much more accessible and inclusive. The park will also have a certified changes places facility.



Sustainability-community would like to see recycled materials used in the upgrade and the existing grassed area maintained.

“Reuse timber for nature playground”

“There is nothing in the plan that has any climate change overlay with qualitative and quantitative targets for the whole park”

Technical response:

The existing timber sculptures and any salvageable timber from the existing equipment will be reused in the nature play areas as balance beams and steppers. Existing playground mulch will be reused in garden beds. Planting in the park will include trees that contribute to Council’s canopy cover targets and low planting contributing to Council’s biodiversity targets.



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

“We should keep the existing toilets”

“Shade cloth for shades areas to sit/picnic”

“As older people we currently use the walking paths as a walking track, it would be great if there were exercise stations around the current paths and have the paths marked for distance. The plan is good as is but there could be more water areas. So happy to see some progress in our area”

“Need more picnic and BBQ areas. Also, more shelters with seating around so families can watch from all angles”

“The all-ages playground sounds great and sorely needed! Just don't forget about us teenagers and young adults; we like playing on playgrounds and with water without judgement”

Technical response:

Additional seating and shelter is proposed in the plan.



Safety - introducing additional lighting, new fencing, safe playground equipment and car park improvements to make users feel safe and help to prevent anti-social behaviour.

“Branches currently fall in the area where playground will be. This needs to be maintained regularly”

“A new gate near the Landano Way entrance”

“Sensor lighting”

“Can the toilets be locked at night?”

“A fence around the splash pad/playground area”

Technical response:

Public lighting and designs compliant with Australian Standards will improve the perception of safety in the park. The car park and toilets will be locked at night as is standard with all Council toilets and car parks in parks.

Next steps

Thank you to everyone that visited the project Engage page and contributed through the online survey or at in-person community engagement opportunities.

The project team will review the feedback received and develop a revised concept plan with amendments that where possible address concerns raised by the community.

Construction is planned to commence in October 2024, with the opening expected for July 2025. The community will be kept updated on further developments via the [Doreen Splash Park Project Engage page](#)