



# South of Merri Open Space Precinct Plan



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## ACRONYMS

AEP	Annual Exceedance Probability (used in definition of flood)
DELWP	Department Environment, Land, Water and Planning
EVC	Ecological Vegetation Class
FO	Floodway Overlay
GHCMA	Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority
GRZ1	General Residential Zone – Schedule 1
HO	Heritage Overlay
PCRZ	Public Conservation and Resource Zone
PPRZ	Public Park and Recreation Zone
UFZ	Urban Floodway Zone
WCC	Warrnambool City Council
WSUD	Water Sensitive Urban Design

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A number of groups and individuals have contributed to the information contained in this document, including staff of Warrnambool City Council from Recreation and Culture, Asset Management, Parks and Gardens, City Sustainability and Environment, City Strategy, and the Warrnambool Art Gallery, including the Eastern Maar Gallery.

Thank you to all community members who provided feedback through the community survey, submissions, and other meetings and workshops. Of particular note are the members and groups represented in the Merri Alliance (Glenelg Hopkins CMA, Wannon Water, Fishcare Victoria, OzFish, MAD for the Merri, Warrnambool Coastcare Landcare Network, Friends of Wollaston Bridge, Friends of Platypus Park, Eastern Maar, and Volunteer Connect). Special thanks for Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation for their contribution to this plan.

Warrnambool City Council is honoured to have an important custodian role in partnership with Eastern Maar Citizens in looking after Country. Warrnambool City Council is proud of our Maar heritage and story. We acknowledge the Maar people and celebrate their rich, diverse and ongoing contribution to us all.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... 2

PART A..... 9

BACKGROUND, PRECINCT CONTEXT & COMMUNITY CONSULTATION OUTCOMES ..... 9

1. BACKGROUND..... 10

2. PHYSICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT..... 12

3. SOCIAL CONTEXT..... 15

4. CONSULTATION OUTCOMES – ROUND 1 ..... 16

5. CONSULTATION OUTCOMES – ROUND 2 ..... 17

PART B..... 19

PRECINCT ANALYSIS & OPPORTUNITIES..... 19

6. ACCESS AND CONNECTIONS..... 20

7. ENVIRONMENT ..... 22

8. FLOODING AND DRAINAGE ..... 23

9. CULTURE..... 24

10. HERITAGE..... 24

11. VIEWS ..... 25

12. RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ..... 26

PART C..... 27

PRECINCT RECOMMENDATIONS ..... 27

13. SOUTH OF MERRI OPEN SPACE PRECINCT PLAN KEY OBJECTIVES..... 28

14. PRECINCT DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS..... 28

15. PRECINCT DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS – ILLUSTRATED EXAMPLES..... 36

16. PARK DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS - MANUKA DRIVE RESERVE ..... 37

17. PARK DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS - WOODEND ROAD RESERVE ..... 39

18. PARK DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS - PLATYPUS PARK..... 42

19. PARK DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS - RUSSELL’S CREEK RESERVE ..... 43

20. PARK DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS - BROMFIELD STREET WEIR..... 44

21. PARK DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS - QUEENS ROAD RESERVE..... 45

22. PARK DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS - ST JAMES PARK..... 48

23. REFERENCES..... 50

LIST OF PLANS

- Plan 1 – South of Merri Open Space Precinct Subject Area
- Plan 2 – South of Merri Open Space Precinct Locality Plan
- Plan 3 – Projected population of Warrnambool Planning Precincts by 2036
- Plan 4 – South of Merri Open Space Precinct Access
- Plan 5 – South of Merri Open Space Precinct Broader Access
- Plan 6 – South of Merri Open Space Precinct Environment
- Plan 7 – South of Merri Open Space Precinct Flooding
- Plan 8 – South of Merri Open Space Precinct Heritage
- Plan 9 – South of Merri Open Space Precinct Views
- Plan 10 – South of Merri Open Space Recreation
- Plan 11 – South of Merri Open Space Precinct Plan
- Plan 12 – Manuka Drive Design Recommendations
- Plan 13 – Woodend Road Reserve Drive Design Recommendations
- Plan 14 – Platypus Park Design Recommendations
- Plan 15 – Russell’s Creek Reserve Design Recommendations
- Plan 16 – Bromfield Weir Reserve Design Recommendations
- Plan 17 – Queens Road Reserve Design Recommendations
- Plan 18 – St James Park Design Recommendations



## MAYOR'S FOREWORD

*The Merri River offers enormous potential as a major open space corridor for Warrnambool.*

*It's a much-loved river but in some ways the river and the parks beside it are a hidden gem.*

*We can do more to make most of the Merri River in terms of conservation and in the provision of access to allow residents and visitors to enjoy more of the Merri as it winds its way through Warrnambool.*

*The South of Merri Open Space Precinct Plan aims to address these challenges.*

*The aims of the South of Merri Open Space Precinct Plan align with the goals outlined in Warrnambool's key strategic planning documents – the Council Plan, Warrnambool 2040 and Green Warrnambool Plan.*

*Each of these plans identify a goal for the Merri River corridor to become a "connected series of parklands that support active transport, nature-based recreation and wildlife movement" by 2040.*

*The precinct to the south of the Merri River also has an underdeveloped connection between future trails north of the Merri and the current Russell's Creek Walking Trail.*

*Late last year a survey asking people about their priorities for south of the Merri River drew more than 200 responses.*

*That feedback was used to inform a draft precinct plan.*

*A second consultation on the draft drew a positive response, with 60 submissions and strong support for the overall plan.*

*Warrnambool City Council is pleased to present the final South of Merri Open Space Precinct Plan, which sets the vision for a connected parklands trail in a restored, natural environment. We look forward to working with the community and partners in progressing this vision.*

Cr. Tony Herbert, Mayor





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Merri River is one of Warrnambool's best natural assets. Nearly one third of Warrnambool's population lives within a ten minute walk of the river, which is expected to increase with future developments. Alongside the foreshore and Lake Pertobe precinct, the Merri River has the potential to become an important open space corridor for the city. The river will play an increasingly important future role in the liveability of Warrnambool, as a corridor for leisure, social meeting places, events, recreation, a place for reflection, and nature.

The Merri River is a valued part the cultural landscape of the Eastern Maar Nation. A principle of the Eastern Maar is 'treading lightly on Country', with a focus the protection and restoration of the natural and cultural landscape.

The seven parklands between Manuka Drive Reserve and St James Park on the South side of the Merri River (the 'South of Merri Precinct') represent an important opportunity for improving access to the Merri River within the established residential area of Warrnambool. With development occurring to the north, the precinct represents an important connection between new and established communities north and south of the river, and to the Russell's Creek shared trail.

The South of Merri Precinct Plan (the 'Precinct Plan') has been developed to guide the development of the precinct over the next 10 to 15 years. It helps implement recommendations of the Warrnambool Open Space Strategy (2014), Green Warrnambool Plan (2018), Active Warrnambool Strategy (2019) and Warrnambool 2040 Community Plan (2019), as well as being consistent with the Warrnambool Planning Scheme and State government policy.

A comprehensive community consultation was undertaken by Council in 2019 to inform the Plan (summarised in the Community Consultation Background Report). It resulted in 208 survey responses and email submissions, over 50 comments through social media, 2,906 through-plays of the project video, 5 newsletter mentions, 11 workshops and meeting discussions, and a media article in the Warrnambool Standard.

The key messages from the consultation were that the community value the natural assets of the precinct and being able to access the river, and would like to see improvements in connected walking and cycling paths/trails, restoration of the natural environment, protection of important views, infrastructure to support passive recreation on and beside the river, and better recognition of the culture of the area. Survey respondents indicated they would visit the precinct more if improvements were made.

A second round of consultation was undertaken by Council in 2020, to seek feedback on the draft Plan. It resulted in 60 submissions. The majority of submissions supported the plan and wanted the overall concept to be retained. There was overwhelming support for the environmental focus, wetland restoration and support for the shared path. There were also suggestions to modify some details of the plan and in response, some changes have been made in this final version. Some of the suggestions included more consideration and discussion around universal access, prioritisation of pedestrian links to and from the South of Merri Precinct and opportunities for the Precinct to connect into the broader path and path network.

The Precinct Plan produced four documents throughout the planning process, the final precinct plan document, and three background reports that informed the final plan:

**PART 1: The Precinct Plan (this document)**, which summarises the objectives and recommendations of the plan. It can be read as a stand-alone document.

**PART 2: Existing Conditions – Background Report 1.** The first background report that informed the Precinct Plan. The report considers existing recreation assets, environment, flooding, cultural values, post-European settlement heritage, access, and key views.

**PART 3: Community Consultation Summary – Background Report 2.** The second background report informing the Precinct Plan, based on the first and second round of community consultation undertaken in 2019 and 2020 (summarised in the Precinct Plan at sections 4 and 5).

**PART 4: Issues, Opportunities and Constraints Report – Background Report 3.** The final background report informing the precinct plan, including a demographic analysis, policy review, constraints assessment, and identification of key issues and opportunities. Key issues and opportunities are themed into: Connecting Place, Connecting Culture, Connectivity Community, Connecting Nature, Connecting Trails, and Connecting Partners. The issues and opportunities report also takes into consideration the Existing Conditions and Community Consultation Summary and forms the basis for the final Precinct Plan in Part 1.

### OBJECTIVES

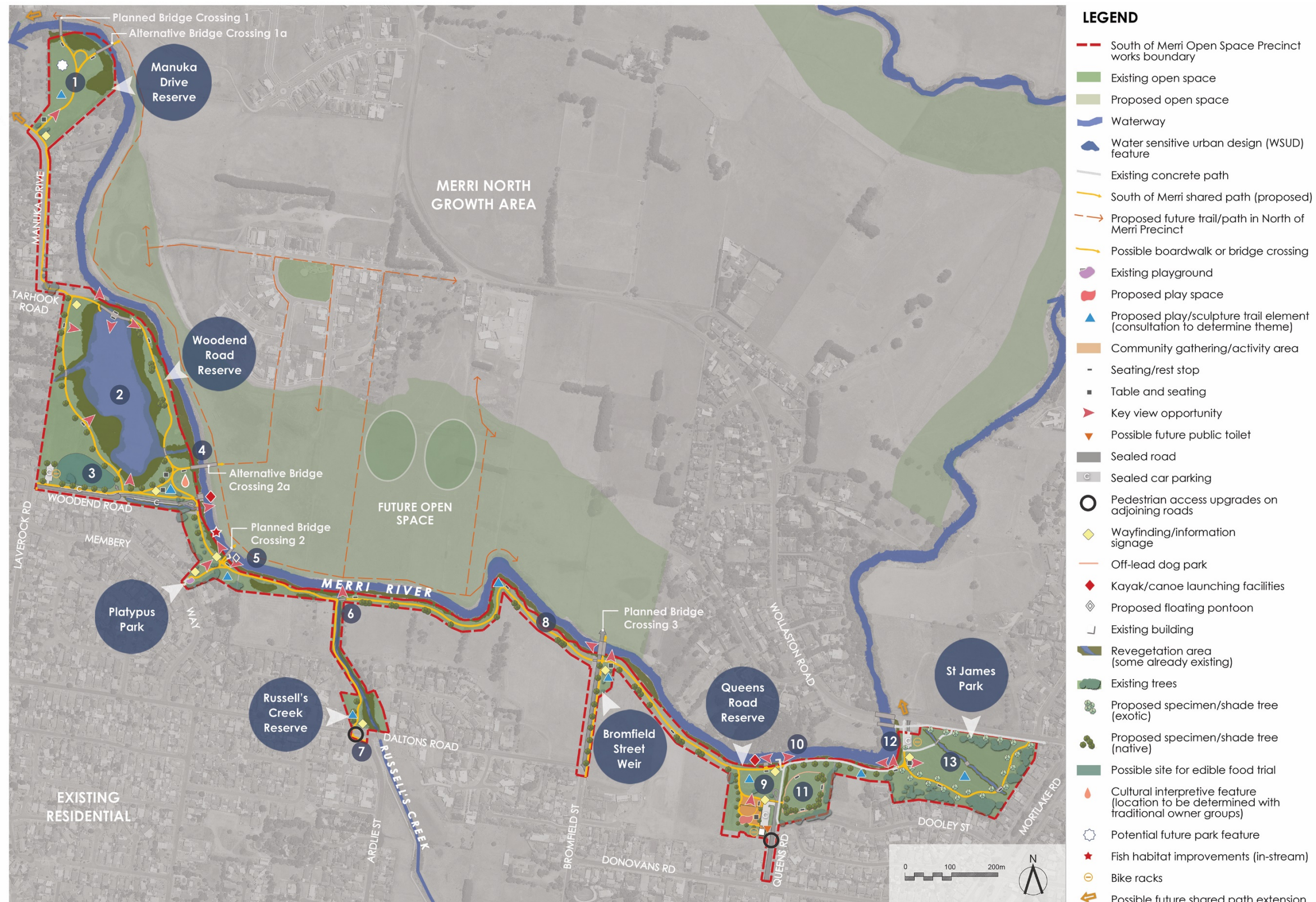
The objectives of the Precinct Plan were developed based on community feedback and the issues and opportunities report. They are:

1. *To improve pedestrian access to the Merri River and provide a pleasant and safe shared path network connecting existing and future open spaces.*
2. *To respect and promote the Precinct's cultural values and connection to the river by the Eastern Maar Nation.*
3. *To increase utilisation of open space areas and encourage active participation and positive health and wellbeing.*
4. *To support an expanded range of informal recreational activities including play and access to nature opportunities.*
5. *To provide accessible entry points ensuring convenient access for all users and transport modes at strategic locations throughout the Precinct.*
6. *To promote a sense of place and protect key view lines within the Precinct and along the Merri River, and allow space for reflection.*
7. *To respect the flood function, cultural flows, and waterway health values of the Merri River.*
8. *To enhance and restore native habitat for biodiversity.*
9. *To encourage climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.*
10. *To work in collaboration and support partnerships to see the plan implemented*

Key recommendations of the Precinct Plan are shown in the adjoining map and descriptions.



## SOUTH OF MERRI OPEN SPACE PRECINCT PLAN



NUMBER KEY (refer over page for further details in expanded key): 1. South of Merri Shared Path, 2. Wetland Restoration, 3. Indigenous Food Growing Trial Site, 4. Merri River Bridge Crossings, 5. Floating Pontoon, 6. Russell's Creek Bridge Crossing, 7. Improved pedestrian safety upgrades to and from surrounding roads, 8. Linear connections and riverside revegetation, 9. Community activity area/gathering space, 10. Kayak and canoe launching facilities, 11. Dog off-lead park, 12. Car park, 13. WSUD opportunities.



## EXPANDED KEY FOR PRECINCT PLAN:

### 1 SOUTH OF MERRI SHARED PATH

Establish a new South of Merri shared path from Manuka Drive Reserve to St James Park, with connections to the Russell's Creek Trail and future shared paths north of the Merri River. The shared path will loop around St James Park taking in views of Wollaston Bridge, travel west along the edge of the Merri River and loop around the rehabilitated wetland at Woodend Road Reserve, ultimately ending at Manuka Drive where it will cross the river to provide access to the North of Merri residential area.

The South of Merri shared path will provide interesting and interactive experiences with the natural environment as well as new infrastructure and a play/interactive sculpture trail along the way.

### 2 WETLAND RESTORATION

Rehabilitate the wetland in the reserve at the end of Woodend and Tarhook roads. New vegetation will be planted around the wetland to improve habitat and water quality. The new South of Merri shared path will loop around the wetland with rest stops at key viewing points. There are also opportunities near the wetland to reflect on Eastern Maar values through art/sculpture, infrastructure, and/or culturally informed landscape planting.

### 3 FOOD GROWING TRIAL SITE

A site of approximately 0.66Ha in size has been set aside for a trial nursery growing indigenous food plants. The proposal is to relocate the site from the end of Woodend Road further west onto higher ground which is less prone to flooding. The site can be accessed from Woodend Road. In the event that the trial site is not required, the land can be converted to public park space.

### 4 MERRI RIVER CROSSINGS

There are three planned Merri River crossings connecting to the North of Merri Precinct, to be provided through the development process. In the North of the Merri Structure Plan, pedestrian crossings are nominated at Manuka Drive Reserve and Platypus Park with one combined vehicle and pedestrian crossing at Bromfield Street Weir. The Precinct Plan shows a potential alternative location for the Platypus Park and Manuka Drive crossing. The alternative location for Platypus Park is located a short distance away from Woodend Road. The benefit of this alternate location would be closer proximity to the car parking at Woodend Road and improved visibility to and from the crossing for users. It would also connect with one of the future planned access paths in the North of Merri Precinct which links to the existing Witham playground reserve. The alternative crossing at Manuka Drive would provide a more direct link to the playground and planned open space areas north of the river.

### 5 FLOATING PONTOON

Establish a small floating pontoon at Platypus Park, with consideration given to any potential platypus habitat in the vicinity. This fishing pontoon is positioned near the instream fish habitat improvements in a location that is well-suited for fishing. The proposed pontoon at Platypus Park will complement the existing pontoon at Queen's Road reserve and will provide an alternative fishing place for anglers downstream of the Bromfield Weir. Education signs on fishing practices that minimise impacts on the platypus should be associated with the pontoon.

### 6 RUSSELL'S CREEK CROSSING

A new footbridge across Russell's Creek will form a key pedestrian link, connecting the eastern and western ends of the South of Merri shared path.

### 7 IMPROVED PEDESTRIAN SAFETY UPGRADES TO AND FROM SURROUNDING ROADS

Pedestrian safety will be enhanced in the Precinct by ensuring safe crossing points near park entries and access to and from adjoining streets is provided. Improvements are proposed at Queens Road (new path/pedestrian access improvements and crossing point), Daltons Road (crossing point and new path) and Manuka Drive (new path).

### 8 LINEAR CONNECTIONS & RIVERSIDE REVEGETATION

The linear spaces provide important connections between the parks within the precincts. It is proposed that these linear connections will provide passive recreation opportunities, with revegetation works, shared path and shade trees. There will be rest stops provided at regular intervals, and some linear spaces will incorporate play/art elements for added interest.

Extensive lengths of the Merri River have already been revegetated. The Plan shows the full length of the river being revegetated on the south side. This revegetation is important in providing a continuous wildlife corridor as well as improving water quality health and minimising erosion. It is important that the revegetation works also consider the recreational use of the Precinct and are designed appropriately with park users in mind. This means providing gaps in tall vegetation to retain key views of the river, ensuring any trees will not create limb-drop issues for users of the shared path and ensuring there is sufficient space between the shared path and the revegetation works areas for maintenance vehicle access.

Merri River Landscaping Guidelines have also been developed alongside this plan, and can be used to further guide revegetation works.



## 9 COMMUNITY GATHERING SPACE

Queens Road Reserve is ideally suited to a community gathering space and potential events space, offering a range of experiences. This Reserve also contains an area of land which sits higher than the remainder of the reserve above the 1 in 100 year flood extent. This makes it an ideal location for constructed infrastructure, such as a play space, as the infrastructure will not impede water flows and the infrastructure will not be subject to flood damage as regularly as other locations in the Precinct. A playspace and scooter/pump park are proposed. Features of the activity area/community gathering space could include a seating area, bocce/petanque courts/basketball half court and shade trees. There is an existing building which could possibly be repurposed in the future to provide tourism opportunities, such as kayak/canoe hire, bicycle hire and/or café, and to support events. This space would also be an appropriate site for public toilets due to the existing service infrastructure in place and access from the car park. Opportunities to reflect the values of the precinct in the design of the space can be explored further, such as Eastern Maar values, and the history of the site.

## 10 KAYAK AND CANOE LAUNCHING FACILITIES

There are two proposed non-motorised sport launching sites for kayaks, canoes, paddle boards, etc. One is proposed at the end of Woodend Road, which is currently used informally, and one at Queens Road Reserve. A transfer point would need to be provided at Bromfield Weir to allow non-motorised water sport users to get out of the river and put their craft back in the water above or below the weir. Woodend Road and Queens Road reserve will have car parking provided for those transporting their kayaks/canoes in vehicles. It is intended that the launching facilities would be low-key ramps, with a non-slip surface positioned at the water's edge.

## 11 DOG PARK

Dogs off-lead present a threat to local fauna, including Platypus. It is important that dog on-lead and dog off-lead areas throughout the precinct are clearly identified. The Plan identifies one large off-lead area in Queens Road Reserve. This site is ideally suited to a dog park as it is located opposite the car park and activity area/community gathering space and is located well away from riverside habitat and revegetation areas.

## 12 CARPARK UPGRADES

Visitor car parking locations include:

1. Woodend Road Reserve. This reserve is likely to become a destination for many visitors due to the location of the wetlands and fishing pontoon. There are opportunities at Woodend Road to provide formalised on-street car parking as well as off-street car parking.
2. Queens Road Reserve. It is proposed to retain the existing off-street car park.
3. St James Park. There is an informal gravel car park near Wollaston Bridge where visitors currently park. It is proposed that this parking site near the bridge be formalised and sealed, as was originally proposed in the St James Landscape Masterplan.
4. Bromfield Street. Opportunity to provide on-street car parking when the road is sealed and a vehicle connection across the river is provided in the future. In the longer-term there is opportunity for off-street parking if the need arises.

## 13 WATER SENSITIVE URBAN DESIGN (WSUD) OPPORTUNITIES

There are numerous opportunities throughout the Precinct to provide water sensitive urban design features at a local scale. The following opportunities are identified throughout the Precinct:

1. Woodend Road wetland
2. Woodend Road swale
3. Queens Road swale
4. St James park swale

The three swales are intended to be small open drainage swales planted with tussocks and rushes and other low-growing plants that have good water-filtering qualities. Where possible, these will be realigned slightly to provide a more natural appearance. They are currently straight, open drains at present.



# PART A

BACKGROUND, PRECINCT CONTEXT & COMMUNITY CONSULTATION OUTCOMES



## 1. BACKGROUND

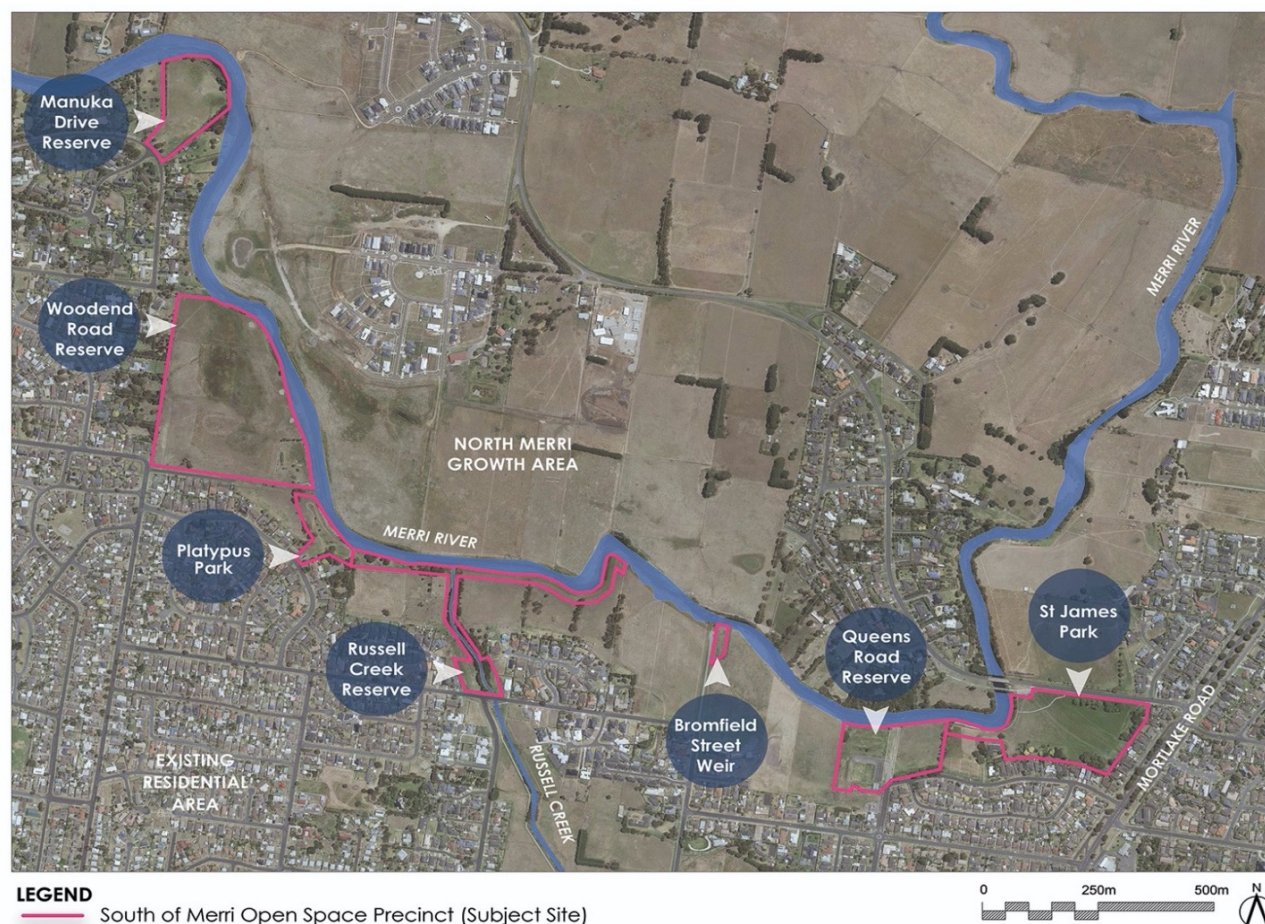
### SUBJECT SITE

The South of Merri Open Space Precinct is located on the south side of the Merri River 1.7 kilometres north-west of the Warrnambool City centre. The Precinct contains approximately 23 hectares of public land along the edge of the Merri River. The Precinct is mostly undeveloped and has a series of informal walking paths along some sections of river edge. The Precinct consists of seven public open space reserves:

- Manuka Drive Reserve – 2.7Ha
- Woodend Road Reserve – 10.8Ha
- Platypus Park – 1.1Ha
- Russell's Creek Reserve – 2.4Ha
- Bromfield Street Weir – 0.2Ha
- Queens Road Reserve – 2.7Ha
- St James Park – 4.8Ha

Plan 1 shows the location of the South of Merri Open Space Precinct subject area.

**Plan 1** – South Merri Open Space Precinct Subject Area (public open space reserves)



### PURPOSE

Open space plays an important role in the health and well-being of Warrnambool residents and visitors. The South of Merri Precinct is underdeveloped at the moment, yet has great potential to become a popular recreational asset forming a major open space corridor for the city.

Development of the South of Merri Open Space Precinct Plan was a recommendation of the Warrnambool Open Space Strategy (2014). In this Strategy, the Warrnambool Open Space Framework Plan (2014, p 7) recommends preparation of a plan:

*‘for improving connectivity and activating the waterway open space between Manuka Drive Reserve and the Queens Road Reserve including upgrading Woodend Road Reserve with an environmental/passive recreation focus, and creating a continuous trail between open space north and south of the Merri River.’*

The Green Warrnambool Plan 2018 and Warrnambool 2040 Community Plan also provide recommendations for the Merri River corridor. The Merri River corridor will be:

*‘a connected series of parklands that support active transport, nature-based recreation and wildlife movement’ by 2040.*

The South of Merri Open Space Precinct has many amazing features and natural assets. The features and assets of the Precinct and opportunities and constraints are summarised in the South of Merri Open Space Precinct Existing Conditions background report and the South of Merri Open Space Precinct Plan Issues, Opportunities and Constraints Background Report .

The natural beauty of the Merri River, surrounding landscape and peacefulness of the Precinct draw many visitors to it - whether it be for walking, dog walking, bird watching, informal play, fishing or other activities. However at present, the Precinct contains minimal infrastructure which limits its use for recreational activities.

There is great potential to upgrade and connect all seven open space reserves to make effective use of the open space and ensure the Precinct becomes a highly valued recreational asset for local residents. There is also an opportunity to create better linkages between the Precinct and nearby residential areas and existing recreational facilities to provide more accessible recreation opportunities for all users.

Planning for the South of Merri Open Space Precinct Plan is an important step in ensuring the space becomes a highly-valued open space corridor in the future. The development of the Precinct Plan provides an opportunity to create an open space corridor that:

- Provides passive recreation opportunities that respond to the community’s needs.
- Respects and promotes the Merri River cultural landscape and connection for the Eastern Maar people.
- Provides infrastructure that is well-integrated with Council’s other assets in the area.
- Respects and enhances the site’s natural features, including flora and fauna habitat.
- Balances recreational uses with flood function.



## South of Merri Open Space Precinct Plan

- Improves visual and physical connectivity to and within the Precinct.
- Responds to the opportunities and constraints of the Precinct; and
- Draws on previously completed plans relevant to the area, including:
  - Warrnambool 2040 Community Plan – Warrnambool City Council
  - Warrnambool Open Space Strategy 2014 – Warrnambool City Council
  - Green Warrnambool Plan 2018 – Warrnambool City Council
  - Connecting the Merri – Merri River Parklands Framework (Draft) – Warrnambool City Council
  - Water for Victoria Water Plan – Victorian State Government
  - Glenelg Hopkins CMA Regional Waterway Strategy – Victorian State Government
  - Warrnambool Planning Scheme
  - Warrnambool Council Plan 2017-2021 – Warrnambool City Council
  - North of Merri Structure Plan 2011 – MESH
  - Merri River Restoration Strategy – Warrnambool City Council
  - St James Park Master Plan 2010 – Warrnambool City Council
  - Queens Road Reserve Management Plan – Community project
  - Merri Alliance Network Vision and Direction 2017/18 – Merri Alliance

The South of Merri Open Space Precinct Plan Issues, Opportunities and Constraints background report, details how these plans and policies relate to future planning for the Precinct.

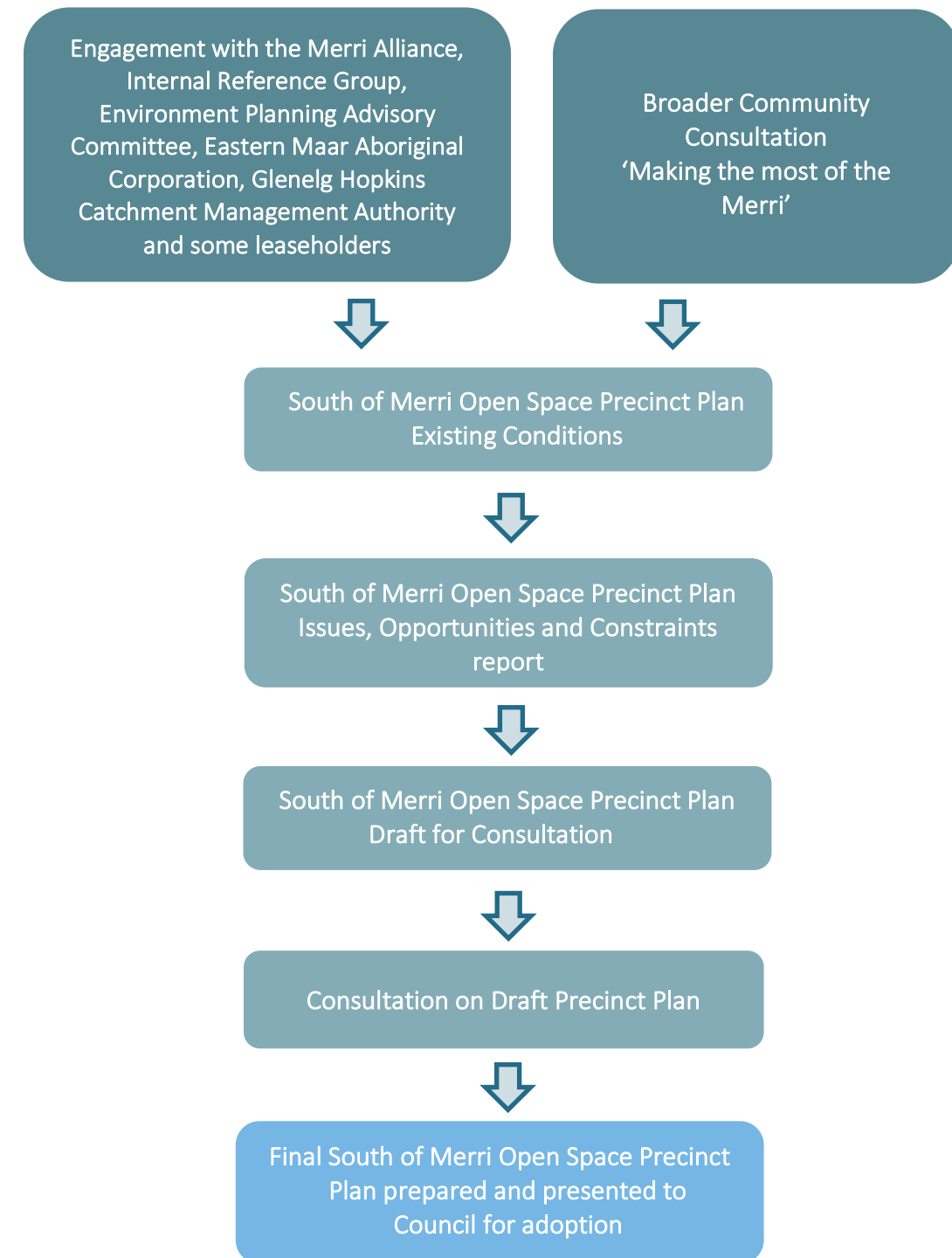
### THE PRECINCT PLAN PROCESS

This Plan outlines a future vision for the South of Merri Open Space Precinct to establish it as an important recreation destination for Warrnambool. Figure 1 shows the stages in the development of the South of Merri Open Space Precinct Plan.

Council sought community feedback during consultation on the South of Merri Open Space Precinct Plan in September and October 2019. The 'Making the most of the Merri' consultation asked residents how the South of Merri Open Space Precinct should be developed in the future. Section 4 provides a snap-shot of the consultation feedback from the Community Consultation Summary background report. Common themes and popular ideas raised during consultation have informed the objectives and recommendations for the Precinct Plan.

The draft Precinct Plan was placed on public exhibition through Council's Yoursay website in April and May 2020. This consultation gave the community the opportunity to review and provide comment on the Plan's recommendations and design, and test community support for the Precinct Plan. Workshops were undertaken with an internal reference group, Council's Environment and Planning Advisory group, and Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation. However a planned community drop-in session and workshop with the Merri Alliance had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Community consultation instead relied on letters to residents, magazine publication, social media, emails to key stakeholders, and the Yoursay Warrnambool page. Final changes were then made to the Plan. Once adopted, implementation and sourcing of funding for the Plan can commence.

**Figure 1 – South of Merri Open Space Precinct Plan Development Process**





## 2. PHYSICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

The Merri River has important environmental values, providing habitat for local flora and fauna. The natural environment within and adjoining the river has been severely modified, resulting in a 'poor' to 'very poor' environmental rating in the 2010 Index of Stream Condition (Victorian Government 2010). Since 2010, a significant amount of weed removal and revegetation works have been carried out along the banks of the Merri River by local community groups, individuals and the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority. (GHCMA, 2019) In 2018 the 'Merri Alliance' was formed to help support a collaborative approach to restoration of the river corridor.

It is important that revegetation works are extended along the banks of the Merri River, in both urban and rural areas. Additional revegetation will help to help mitigate the impacts of urban development, population growth, and agricultural activities and improve the short and long-term ecological health of the River, increase biodiversity and create a healthy river suitable for recreational use.

There is a major flood path alongside the Merri River and a number of parks within the precinct are low-lying and subject to flooding on a regular basis. The Woodend Road Reserve also contains a wetland, which provides an important flood storage function. Much of the land within the precinct is recognised as being a high hazard flood area and is zoned Urban Floodway. The Flood Overlay also applies to a large portion of land within the precinct.

Flood resilient design is critical in urban locations subject to inundation. It is important that recreation uses and flood function are balanced to ensure the Precinct becomes a functional recreation space. The use of the space for recreation also needs to be balanced against the need to maintain and enhance flora along the Merri River and management of the Precinct's significant fauna.

There is an existing playground and seating area provided at Platypus Park, but generally, there is limited infrastructure and paths throughout the seven open space reserves. According to the recent community survey, informal recreation uses that are popular in the Precinct include walking, dog-walking, fishing and kayaking. Due to the limited recreational facilities and infrastructure the Precinct is generally underutilised as a recreation asset.

Enhancements to this Precinct will ensure this open space provides important connections for residents in the north-west, north and north-east of Warrnambool, including improved access to existing and future sporting assets and extension of the popular Russell's Creek Trail.

It is envisaged that with some improvements, the South of Merri Open Space Precinct will become a highly valued open space corridor by residents and visitors.

Plan 2 shows the location of the Precinct study area in relation to the City centre and the four public open space precincts. The location of the seven open space reserves are shown on Plan 2. They include:

1. Manuka Drive Reserve
2. Woodend Road Reserve
3. Platypus Park
4. Russell's Creek Reserve
5. Bromfield Street Weir
6. Queens Road Reserve
7. St James Park

There are other important sites adjoining the public open space reserves within the Precinct. These sites are crucial in order to form path links between the seven reserves. They include:

- Manuka Drive  
(on-road path required to form a connection between Reserves 1 & 2)
- A & B - Privately owned land  
(required to form a connection between Reserves 4 & 5)
- C & D - Privately Owned Land  
(required to form a connection between Reserves 5 & 6)

Figures 2 to 8 shows drone photographs of each public open space reserve in the Precinct.



Plan 2 – South Merri Open Space Precinct Locality Plan  
(Precinct names are taken from the Warrnambool Open Space Strategy 2014)

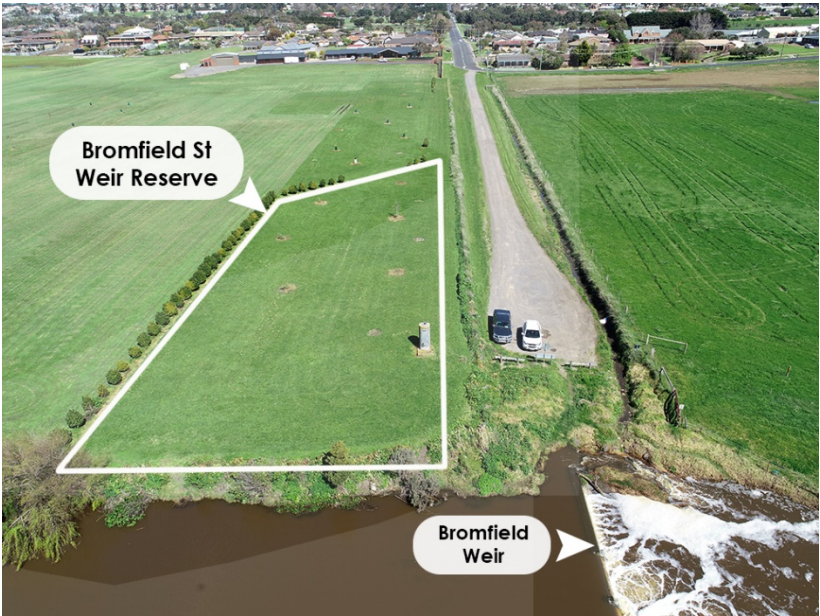
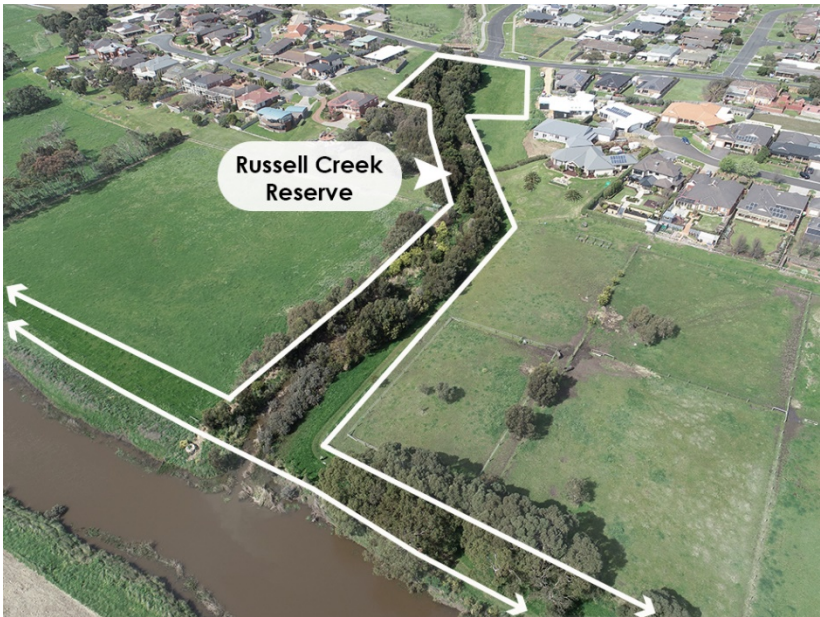


Figures 2 - 4 – South of Merri Open Space Precinct Reserve Locations (Drone Views)





Figures 5 - 8 – South of Merri Open Space Precinct Reserve Locations (Drone Views)





### 3. SOCIAL CONTEXT

*'Warrnambool is Victoria's largest coastal City outside Port Phillip Bay and is the fastest growing economy and population centre in the Great South Coast (WCC<sup>2</sup>, 2019).'*

The planning precincts surrounding the South of Merri Open Space Precinct include North of Merri, West, Botanic and North (refer to Plan 3). The West, Botanic and North are well established residential areas which will see some population growth in the next 20+ years, but it will be the new growth area of North of Merri which will see the most growth with an expected population increase of 2,755 residents.

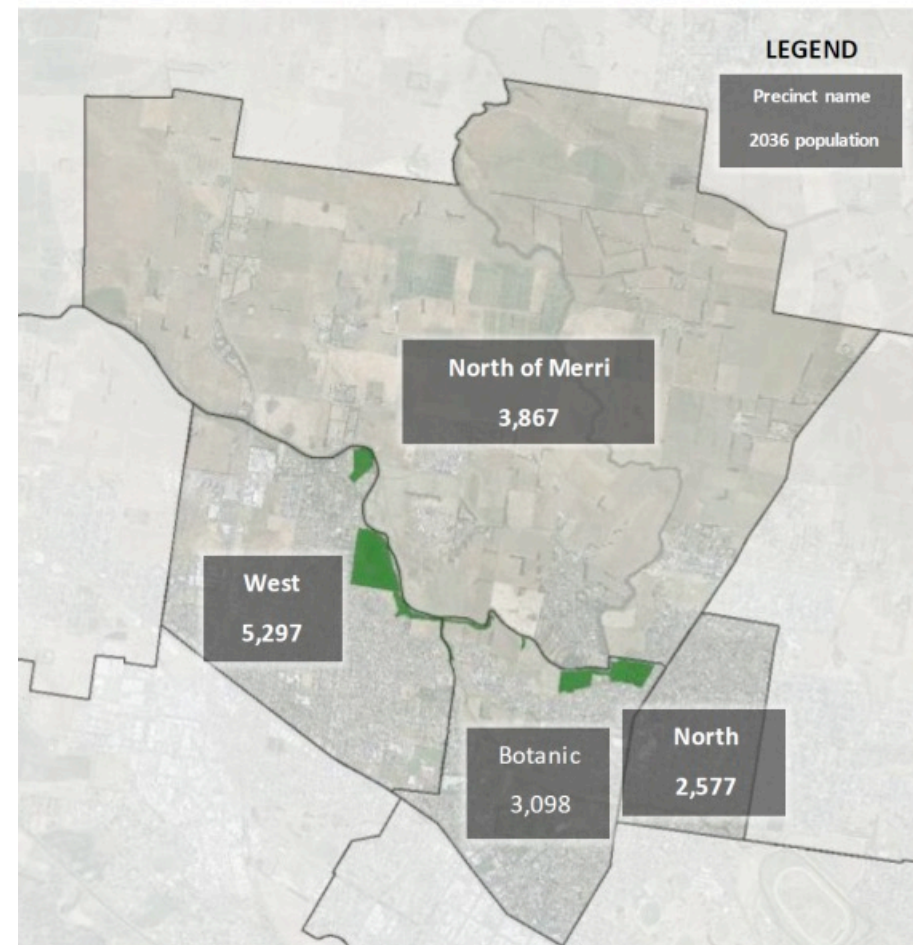
Summary of population forecasts (Profile id, 2019):

- 2017 Warrnambool Population – 34,571
- 2036 Warrnambool Population – 46,210
- Growth is forecast in all age categories (refer Figure 9).
- The forecast age structure of Warrnambool shows an increase in an ageing population, but it is not as pronounced as the regional average.
- *'The combined projected population for the four precincts is 15,085 by 2036, an increase of 3,698 or 32% on the 2019 population.'*

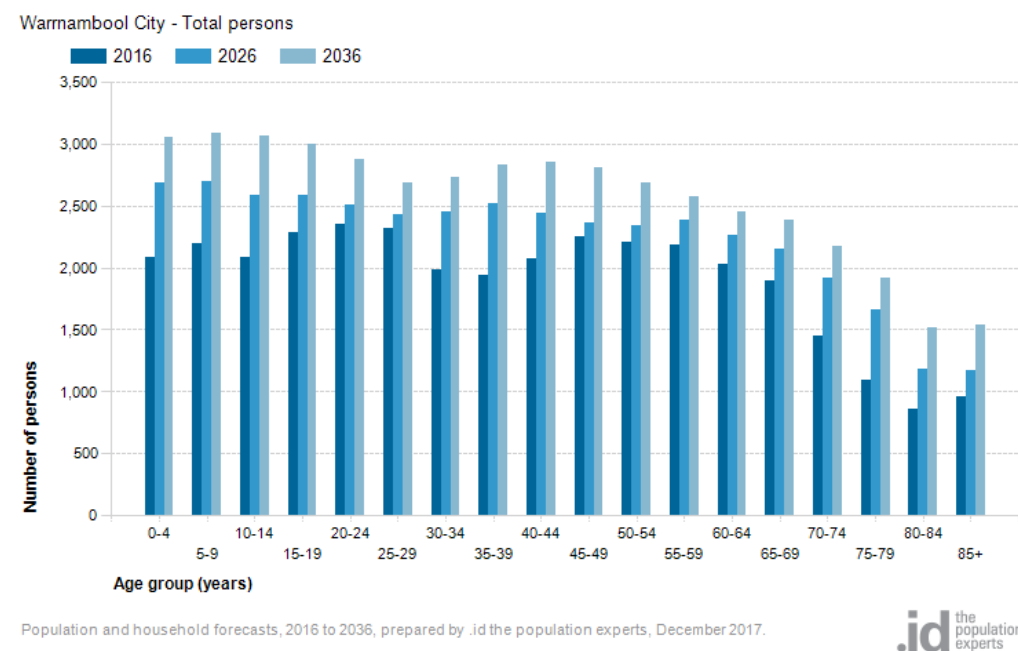
As described in the South of Merri Open Space Precinct Plan Issues, Opportunities and Constraints Background Report, the following key demographic considerations apply to the South of Merri Open Space Precinct:

- *A large proportion of Warrnambool's current and future population will live close to the precinct, so it could attract high levels of use.*
- *The precinct will need to cater for a range of age groups.*
- *The precinct needs to be accessible to everyone.*

**Plan 3 – Projected Population of Warrnambool Planning Precincts by 2036**  
Source: profile.id, modified by WCC



**Figure 9 – Forecast age structure – 5 year groups (WCC<sup>3</sup>, 2019)**





## 4. CONSULTATION OUTCOMES – ROUND 1

Community consultation on the South of Merri Open Space Precinct Plan was carried out by Warrnambool City Council during September and October 2019. The ‘Making the Most of the Merri’ consultation received a strong response from the community with over 200 responses. There was good representation of local residents, with well over 100 responses from North Warrnambool and West Warrnambool residents.

The purpose of the consultation was to find out how visitors currently utilise the space, barriers or reasons why people don’t visit the space and how the community would like to see the Precinct developed in the future.

A media article about the project and consultation was printed in the Saturday Warrnambool Standard and Council published a webpage on their website with a link to the survey. The ‘Making the Most of the Merri’ consultation received:

- 205 survey responses and 3 email submissions
- 54 Facebook comments on 16 Facebook posts
- 2,906 through-plays of online video

Council also held 11 workshops/meetings with key stakeholders and partners. Key stakeholders and partners included Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, the Merri Alliance and its member groups (including the Glenelg Hopkins CMA, OzFish, Wannon Water, Council, Warrnambool Coastcare Landcare Network, MAD for the Merri, Fishcare), Warrnambool Art Gallery (including Eastern Maar Gallery), internal Council staff and Councillors, Council’s Environment and Planning Advisory Committee, and leaseholders (Worn Gundidj).

Figure 10 lists the key issues and opportunities identified during the consultation. Further detail is found in the ‘Making the Most of the Merri’ Community Consultation Summary, which was used to inform this plan. The following provides a brief summary of some of the key findings and themes raised during the consultation:

### Visitation

Current visitation to the Precinct ranged from ‘never’ through to ‘daily’, with ‘a few times a year’ being the most

common. The three main reasons for not visiting the Precinct were ‘walking trail stops’, ‘no formed walking trails’ and ‘no reason to visit’.

Many residents said they would use the precinct more if improvements were made to the space, with many saying they would use the space weekly, two to three times per week or even daily, which is a substantial increase compared with current use.

### Values

Multiple values were mentioned by respondents. The number one value listed was ‘natural environment’, with 128 respondents nominating this as what they valued most in the Precinct.

Other values, included pleasant scenery, open space, somewhere to walk/run, access to the river for recreation, fresh air, wildlife, space to walk the dogs, Wollaston Bridge, the playground at Platypus Park and cultural connection.

When asked ‘what you wouldn’t change’ about the Precinct, the number one response was access. The top seven responses were that people don’t want to lose access, open space, natural character, native vegetation, walking access, access for dogs, habitat or views in the Precinct.

### Activities

The most popular current activities carried out in the Precinct are walking and dog walking, followed by appreciating the amenity and bird watching. Walking was mentioned nearly twice as much as the next closest response.

### Requested Changes and Prioritisation of Improvements

The number one request for change was for ‘connectivity’ (ie. formed trails, loop trails, river crossings, wayfinding), with over 100 responses citing this as the issue that most requires improvement. The next most frequently mentioned improvements were environment (i.e. revegetation, wetland restoration, stormwater management), river access (i.e. fishing pontoon, improved fish habitat, kayak launching facilities) and facilities (i.e. for recreation, picnic areas, seating, basketball, toilets, playgrounds).

**Figure 10** – Key issues and opportunities identified in Making the Most of the Merri consultation





## 5. CONSULTATION OUTCOMES – ROUND 2

Community consultation on the draft South of Merri Open Space Precinct Plan was carried out by Warrnambool City Council during April and May 2020. The consultation on the draft received a strong response from the community with 60 written responses plus additional social media feedback.

The purpose of the consultation was to find out if the draft plan aligns with the community's vision for the Precinct, as identified during the 'Making the Most of the Merri' consultation.

The COVID-19 situation impacted a number of planned face-to-face activities which had to be cancelled in the interest of community safety. The consultation still reached a broad audience via promotion in the Promenade magazine, letters to over 2000 residential properties within proximity to the precinct, an extended Yoursay Warrnambool consultation period including availability of the draft plan and a feedback question, emails to Merri Alliance members, emails to residents requesting contact from phase 1, phone consultation, and a social media campaign. Promotion was undertaken in a way that was sensitive to the challenging time during early COVID lockdown.

Despite the impact of COVID on the consultation, a strong and positive response was still received, comparable to similar previous open space plans:

- 50 Yoursay submissions and 10 written submissions
- 47 Facebook shares, 28 comments, 340 positive responses
- Workshops with internal reference group and external council Environment and Planning Advisory Group

Prior to the consultation, a meeting was also held with Eastern Maar who made contributions and wording suggestions. Additional contributions were made to the final plan.

Figure 11 lists the items which were supported and some of the requested changes. There was strong support for the plan, including 37 submissions indicating overall support for the plan. Strongly supported elements included the balance between natural values and recreation use, walking trails,

cross-river trail connectivity, the dog off lead enclosure, watercraft/fishing access points, and wetland restoration.

The following provides a brief summary of some of the concerns raised during the consultation and how they were addressed:

### Path material

A variety of views came through in the consultation relating to path materials, including concrete, asphalt and gravel/sand. There are positives and negatives to using each of these path materials in terms of economic, social and environmental impacts.

Following further discussion, the shared path material is proposed to be concrete throughout the precinct. Due to the relatively regular flooding in the Precinct gravel/sand is not considered to be a suitable surface as it washes during heavy downpours and floods and requires a significant level of maintenance to keep it at an appropriate standard for high levels of use.

Concrete is the preferred material for longevity and requires less maintenance than gravel or asphalt over its lifespan. A concrete path surface also provides a smooth surface that is accessible to the widest range of users, including those using wheelchairs and walking frames, and is a material that meets universal access design requirements.

Concrete paths are not suitable for horse riding. Therefore, horse riders will need to find another location for riding outside of the Precinct.

### Dogs off leash/on leash

There were multiple comments regarding dogs off-leash and dogs on-leash in the precinct. Comments included no need for any dog off-leash area as there are others in the town, off-lead dog areas should be provided near the river so that dogs can swim, the river is dangerous for dogs as it is difficult for them to get out in some sections, and dogs should not be allowed near the river as they can cause harm to fauna and habitat.

The recommendation is that the South of Merri Open Space Precinct incrementally transitions to a dog on-lead area along the length of the shared path network, except in the proposed designated dog off-lead area at Queens Road Reserve.

### Bromfield Weir

There were a number of comments regarding the future of the Bromfield Weir, with some supporting its removal and others wanting it retained. The scope of the South of Merri Open Space Precinct Plan does not include recommendations for the future of the Bromfield Weir. The North of the Merri Structure Plan shows a future vehicle crossing point over the river at the site of the weir. The Precinct Plan shows the crossing point in this same location.

The recommendations of the Precinct Structure Plan for Bromfield Weir Reserve will be achievable in all scenarios, whether the weir remains or is removed.

### Queens Road Reserve Kayak/Canoe launching facility

There was a request that the kayak/canoe launching facility at Queens Road be moved closer to Wollaston Bridge near the bend in the river. The placement of the launching facility is discussed in further detail at Section 21. Park Design Recommendations – Queens Road Reserve.

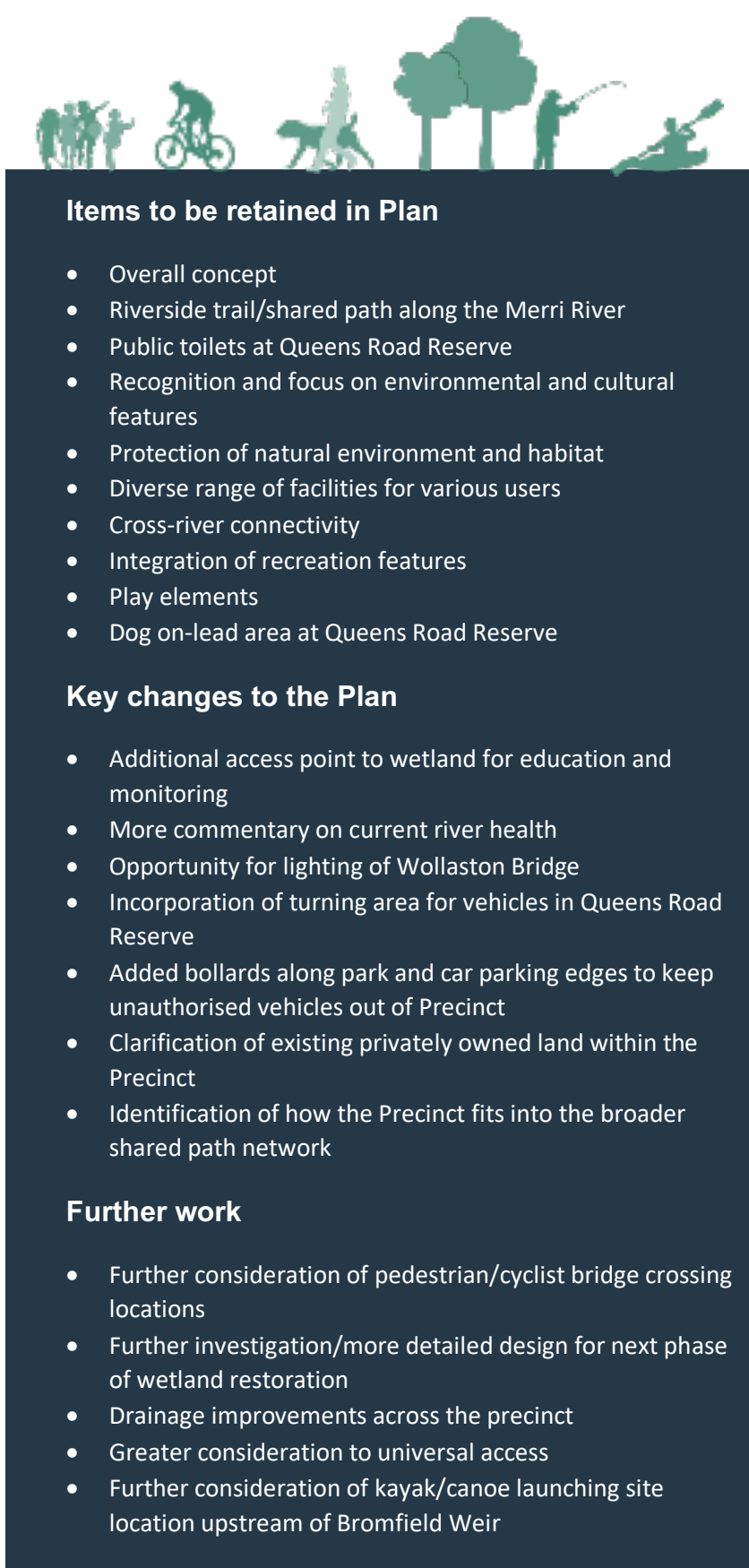
### Wetland access

It was suggested that access to the wetland be provided for taking in views and in order to undertake monitoring and other activities.

The plan has been amended to include a wider boardwalk area with seating, as well as two additional access points to the restored wetland.



**Figure 11** – Response to comments and requests identified in feedback on draft Open Space Precinct Plan





# PART B

## PRECINCT ANALYSIS & OPPORTUNITIES



## 6. ACCESS AND CONNECTIONS

The South of Merri Open Space Precinct represents the best opportunity for north and west Warrnambool residents to access the Merri River and is a key area for improved connectivity along the waterway. It is the connection between future paths north of the Merri and the current Russell's Creek trail.

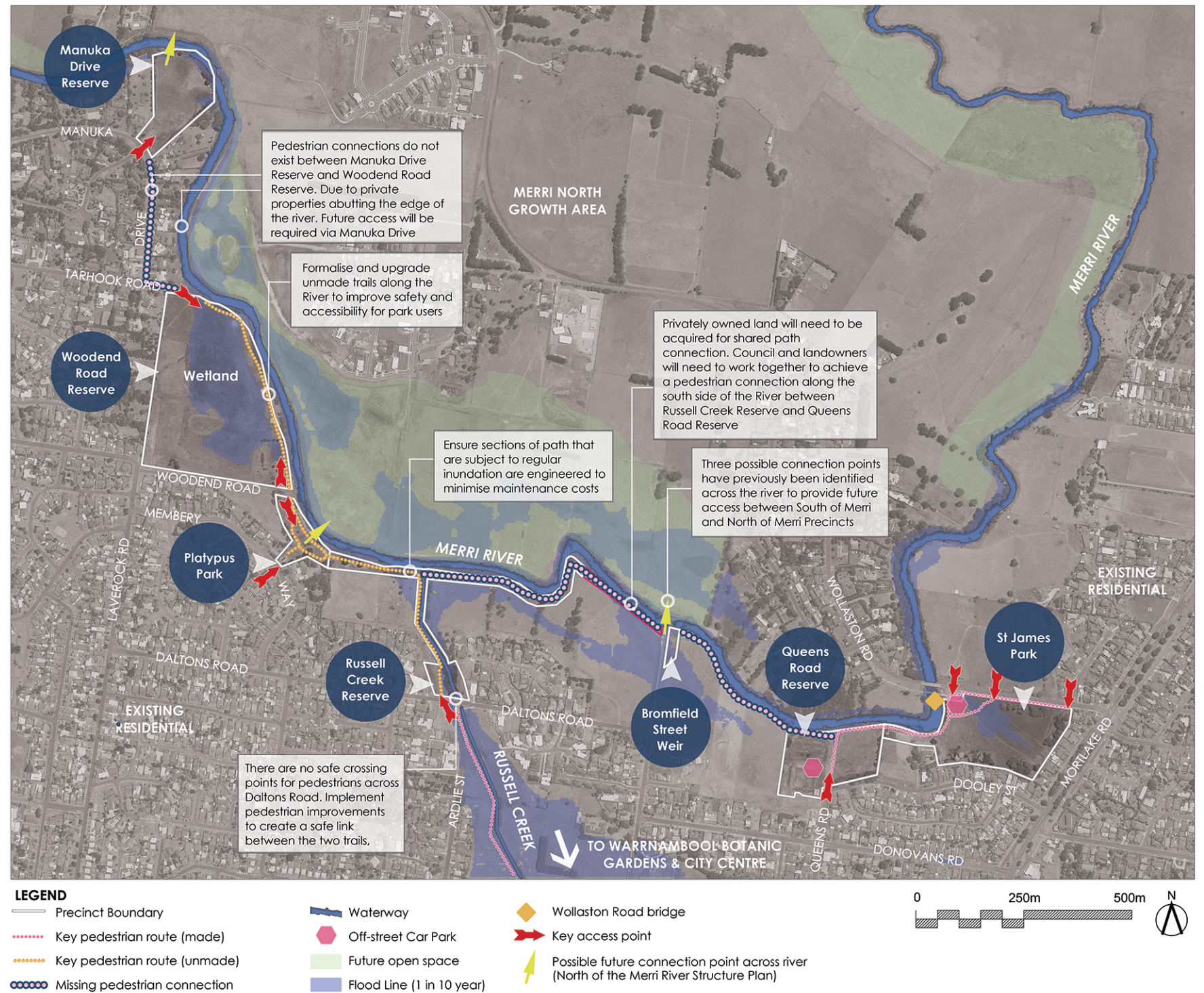
Limited pedestrian and bicycle ('shared') access throughout the seven reserves is currently one of the biggest constraints of the Precinct. The limited access and connectivity was mentioned on numerous occasions in the consultation feedback. Key points to note regarding shared access include:

- There is an existing concrete shared path network in St James Park and Queens Road Reserve and a small section of path at Platypus Park near the playground. Apart from these, there are no other constructed paths.
- There is an opportunity to create a linear shared path network in the South of Merri Precinct which extends the full length of the Precinct. This would need to be a combination of on-road and off-road paths and requires acquisition of some private land.
- There is an existing trail along Russell's Creek to the south of Daltons Road. A safe pedestrian and cyclist crossing point is required at Daltons Road in order to connect the Russell's Creek and South of Merri shared path.
- Passive surveillance of the Precinct is important to ensure visitors feel safe. There are some areas in the Precinct which currently have poor surveillance, including a section of shared path in St James Park between the River and residential lots and along the edge of Russell's Creek.
- New river crossings will be built through the development process for the North of Merri growth area. These will create important physical connections for residents on the south side of the river to access existing and future open space on the north side.
- There is an opportunity to incorporate universal design principles in the development of the Precinct to provide safe and equitable access for all community members regardless of the user's ability.

There are informal parking areas at the end of Woodend Road, Bromfield Street and in the north-west corner of St James Park. The only constructed car park is located at Queens Road Reserve. If the Precinct is to become a popular recreation destination, including river access for kayaking, car parking arrangements need to be reviewed to ensure convenient parking is provided at both ends of the Precinct.

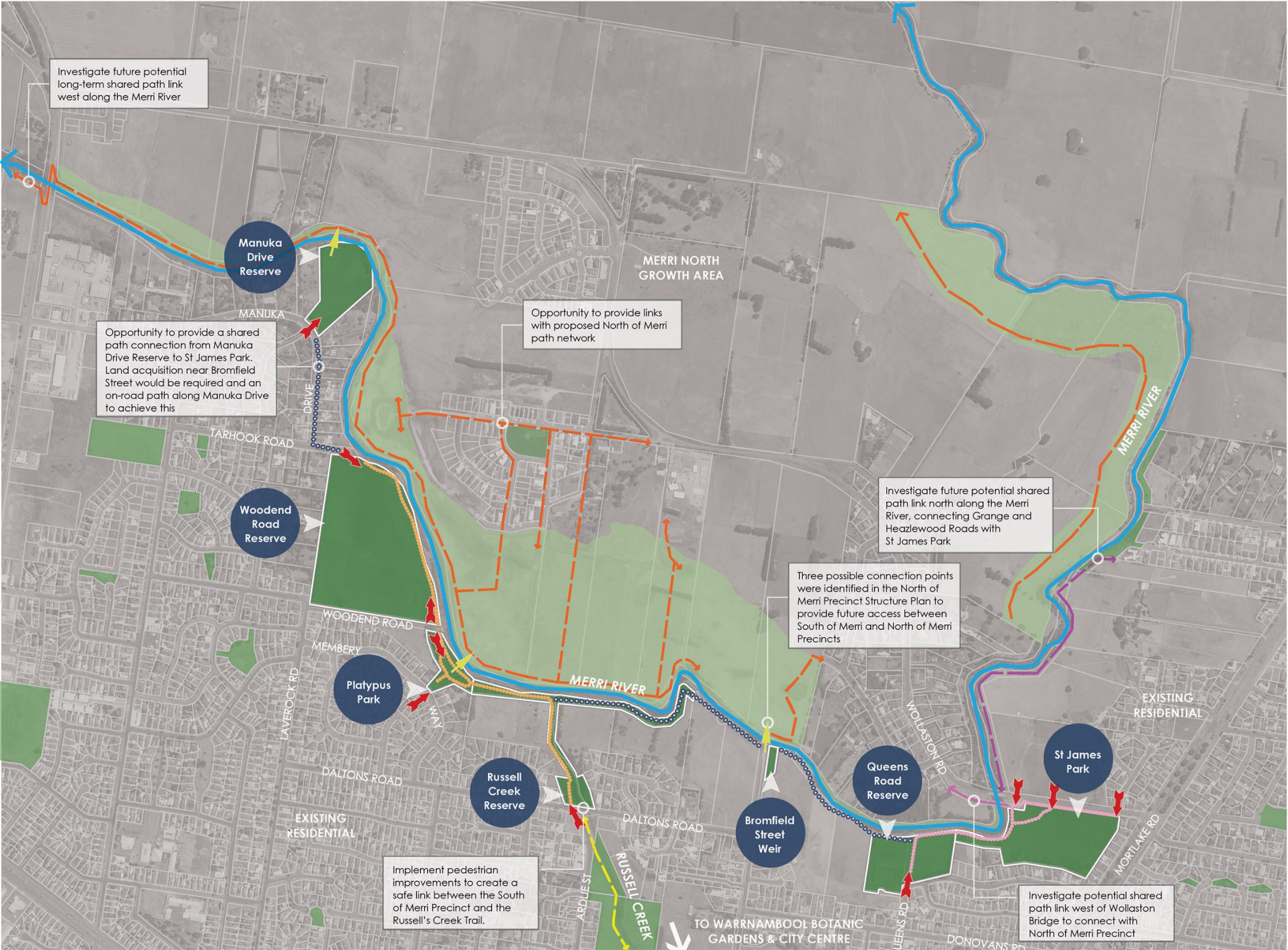
Plan 4 shows existing access to, from and within the Precinct and Plan 5 shows the Precinct in the context of the broader shared path network.

Plan 4 – South of Merri Open Space Precinct Access





Plan 5 – South of Merri Open Space Precinct – Broader Shared Path Network



LEGEND

- South of Merri Open Space Precinct (existing public open space reserve)
- Existing public open space (outside the Precinct)
- Future open space (North of Merri Structure Plan)

- Merri River
- Key pedestrian route in Precinct (made)
- Key pedestrian route in Precinct (unmade)
- Missing pedestrian connection

- Key access point to Precinct
- Possible future connection point across river (North of the Merri River Structure Plan)
- Future path (North of Merri Structure Plan and Open Space Strategy)

- Existing Russell's Creek Trail
- Potential future northern path link along the Merri River
- Potential future path link west of Wollaston Bridge



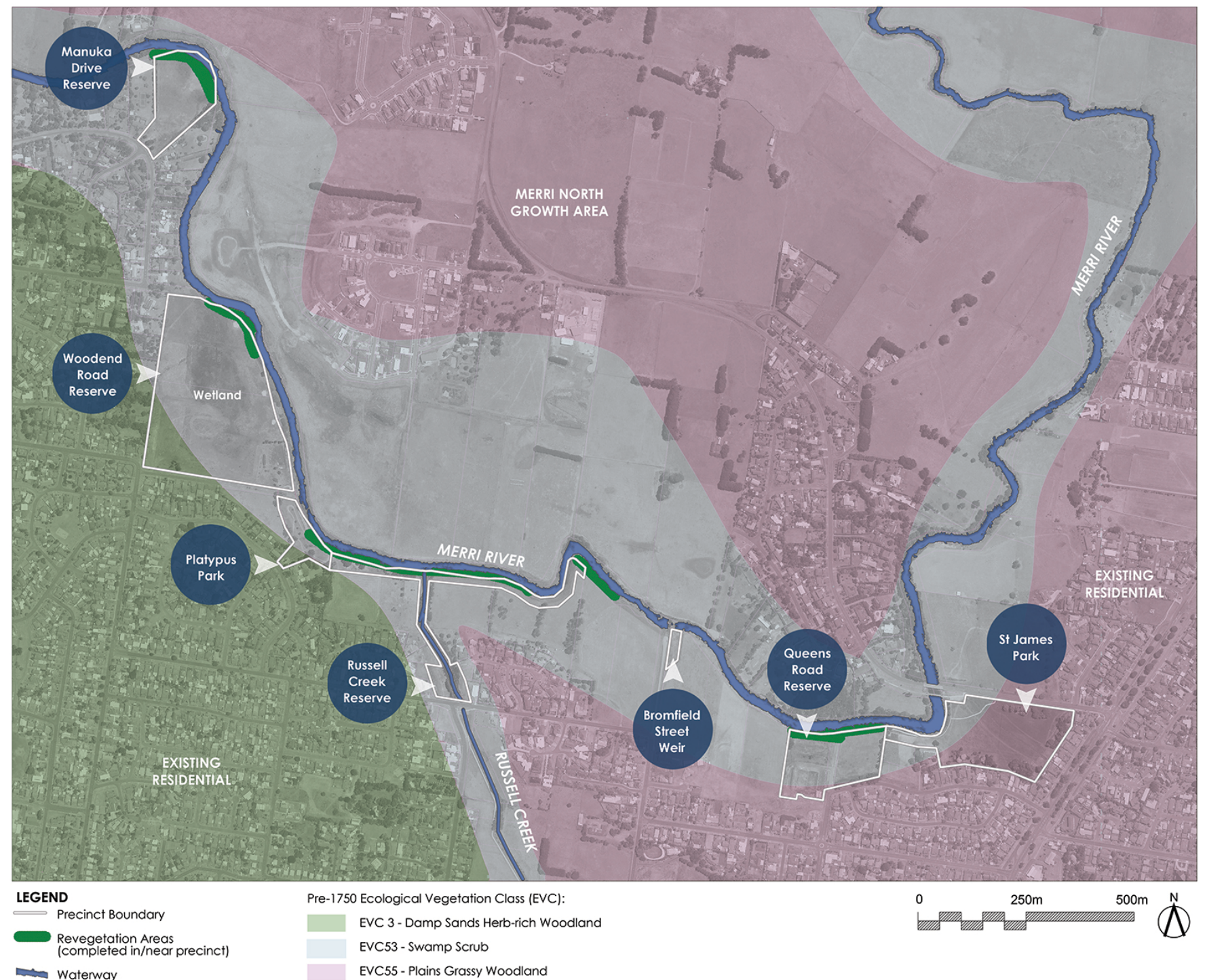


## 7. ENVIRONMENT

The Merri River and its tributaries are highly valued by the community. They support a range of flora and fauna and include important wildlife corridors. Key points to note include:

- The Precinct supports a diverse range of fauna, including Platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*), Rakali or Native Water-rat (*Hydromys chrysogaster*) and the Hairy Burrowing Crayfish (*Engaeus sericatus*) (GHCMA, 2019). Residents report seeing a wide range of bird species, and Latham's Snipe have been recorded in the precinct. Recent in-stream and revegetation works by the Glenelg Hopkins CMA and their partners have significantly improved Black Bream (*Acanthopagrus butcheri*) and Estuary Perch (*Macquaria colonorum*) habitat.
- There is a mixture of grasslands and more densely vegetated areas along the waterway, which play an important role in floodplain maintenance by stabilising the river bank.
- Modelled vegetation prior to 1750 in the precinct include Damp Sands Herb-rich Woodland (EVC3), Swamp Scrub (EVC53) and Plains Grassy Woodland (EVC55). Refer to Plan 6.
- Since European settlement, vegetation has been substantially modified, with limited remnant vegetation remaining. In 2005, EVC modelled mapping showed only Swamp Scrub (EVC53) present in the Precinct. It is important that local indigenous vegetation is selected when planting in the Merri River and Russell's Creek riparian zones. Species selection can be further informed as new information comes to light.
- Substantial areas of weed removal and revegetation has occurred. Plan 6 shows some of these revegetation locations. There is an opportunity to continue weed removal and revegetation activities along the river throughout the Precinct.
- Weeds are a constant threat, coming from neighbouring properties and further afield (airborne or introduced by animals). Weeds compete with native vegetation and reduce success of seedling growth in revegetation areas. Working in partnership with local community groups and educating local residents about ways to minimise weed spread may help to combat the weed problem.
- The condition and health of the river is closely connected to the value of the Precinct for public use and recreation and is a key driver to protect and restore its natural values. Threats to river health include poor water quality, invasive fauna and flora, urban development and subsequent increases in stormwater. (Estuary Watch, 2015)
- The placement and design of assets and park infrastructure must be carefully considered to ensure river health and habitat for flora and fauna is maintained and, where possible, improved.

Plan 6 – South of Merri Open Space Precinct Environment showing modelled EVCs



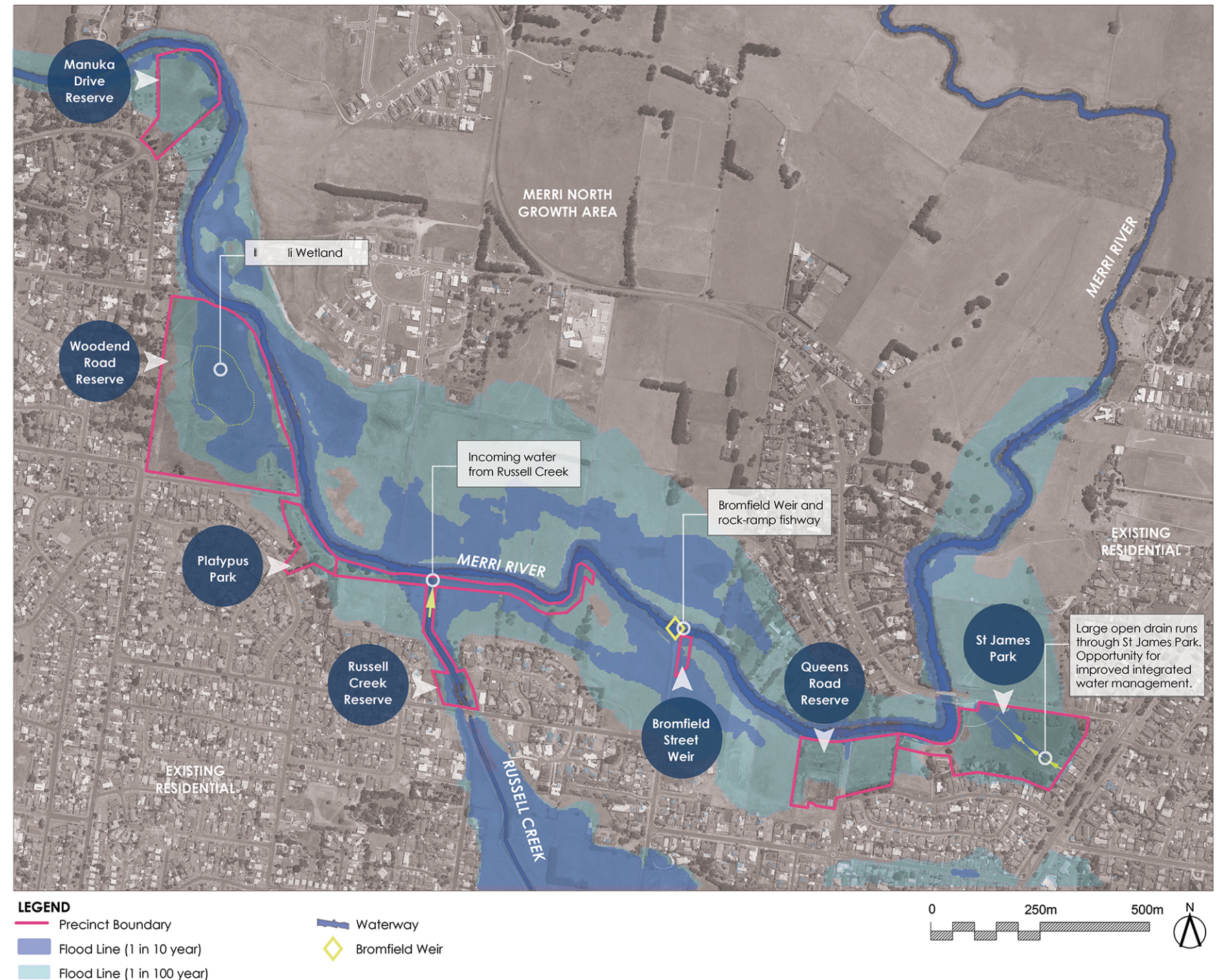


## 8. FLOODING AND DRAINAGE

The Merri River floodplain through Warrnambool is well defined through the Precinct area. The Precinct areas are regularly inundated and even minor events can cause disruption. Key points to note include:

- The Merri River and Russell's Creek waterways often flood simultaneously which causes road and open space path closures. It is not unusual for flooding to inundate the precinct areas for up to two days as the flood peak passes through.
- There is currently no formal flood warning service for the Merri River at Warrnambool. Weather Warnings and Flood Watches are issued by the Bureau of Meteorology, which provides some information about when flooding may occur.
- The 10% AEP (or 1 in 10 year) flood event is generally considered a minor flood event causing minor damage and disruptions to the Precinct areas. The 1% AEP (or 1 in 100 year) event is considered a major flood scenario that can cause major damage and disruption. The 10% AEP and 1% AEP are shown in Plan 7.
- A flood regime remains an important environmental consideration within the Precinct areas.
- Woodend Road Reserve shows signs of environmental value that may form an important consideration in the overall Precinct Plan.
- The post-flood environment has some positive aspects. While floods can be disruptive, they also promote growth of vegetation and can provide a positive overall input to waterway health. A healthy waterway creates an amenity that attracts passive and active users including walkers, anglers and a range of other users.
- A healthy waterway has positive economic benefits due to its attraction of not only users, but also through land values. However, flooding causes widespread damage to roads and other infrastructure and is estimated to cost Warrnambool on average \$500,000 per annum (Cardno, 2010).
- Any future works in the precinct, including paths, require careful engineering consideration to ensure erosion risks are minimised, floodwaters are not impeded, new maintenance issues are avoided and Precinct users are safe.

Plan 7 – South of Merri Open Space Precinct Flooding





## 9. CULTURE

The Merri River is a valued part of the cultural landscape of the Eastern Maar Nation. The Eastern Maar people are the traditional custodians of the lands of this general area. Key points to note include:

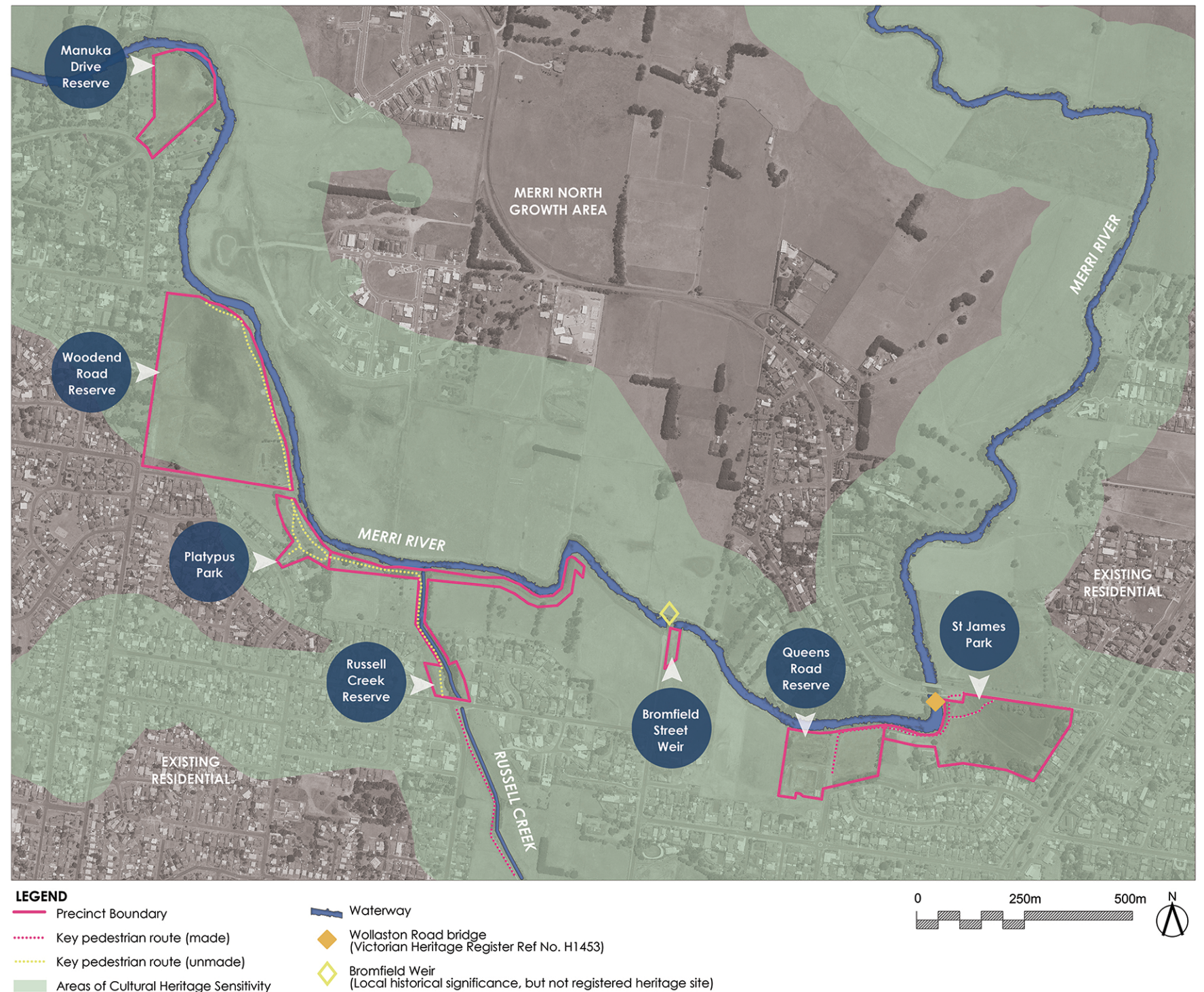
- Knowledge surrounding the cultural landscape within which the precinct sits continues to be revealed through discussions with Eastern Maar and grounds surveys.
- There is an opportunity to reflect on Eastern Maar values by incorporating references through infrastructure, such as art/sculpture and cultural landscaping work.
- Many of the public open space reserves in the precinct are officially unnamed and there is an opportunity to name public open space reserves and/or park features using Maar language.
- The Rakali is an important species associated with this part of the cultural landscape.

## 10. HERITAGE

Heritage considerations within the precinct include:

- All land within the Precinct is identified within the Cultural Heritage Sensitivity mapping area (ACHRS, 2019), as shown on Plan 8.
- Any future development of land considered to be a high impact activity and likely to have a significant impact on any Aboriginal cultural heritage will require the preparation and approval of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP).
- The Wollaston Bridge adjacent to St James Park is a well-known suspension bridge which is covered by a Heritage Overlay and is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register (Ref No. H1453) and the National Trust (DELWP 2019).
- The bluestone weir at the end of Bromfield Street is noted as having historical significance, although it does not have a heritage overlay applying to it. (MESH, 2011)
- Queens Road Reserve has a varied history since European settlement, including as part of the City's water supply, the YMCA facility, market garden, and BMX track. Remnants of these uses still exist on site, including a retaining wall and the pump shed.
- Remnants of agricultural use of the precinct at the Russell's Creek junction, including a windmill and milk cans(also used contemporarily as a geocache).

Plan 8 – South of Merri Open Space Precinct Heritage





## 11. VIEWS

The land rises up away from the Merri River towards the residential houses and surrounding streets. There are many good viewing points from within the Precinct and there are a number of short and long-range vistas. Some of the best views are at bends in the river, where the views of the river and landscape beyond can be viewed in both directions.

The pleasant scenery in the Precinct is considered an important value by visitors and a number of respondents noted that they would not want to see views from the Precinct impacted as a result of improvements. The South of Merri Open Space Precinct Views plan (Plan 9) shows the key viewing points in the precinct. These key views are discussed in detail in the South of Merri Open Space Precinct Existing Conditions background report. Figures 12 and 13 show two key views of the Merri River.

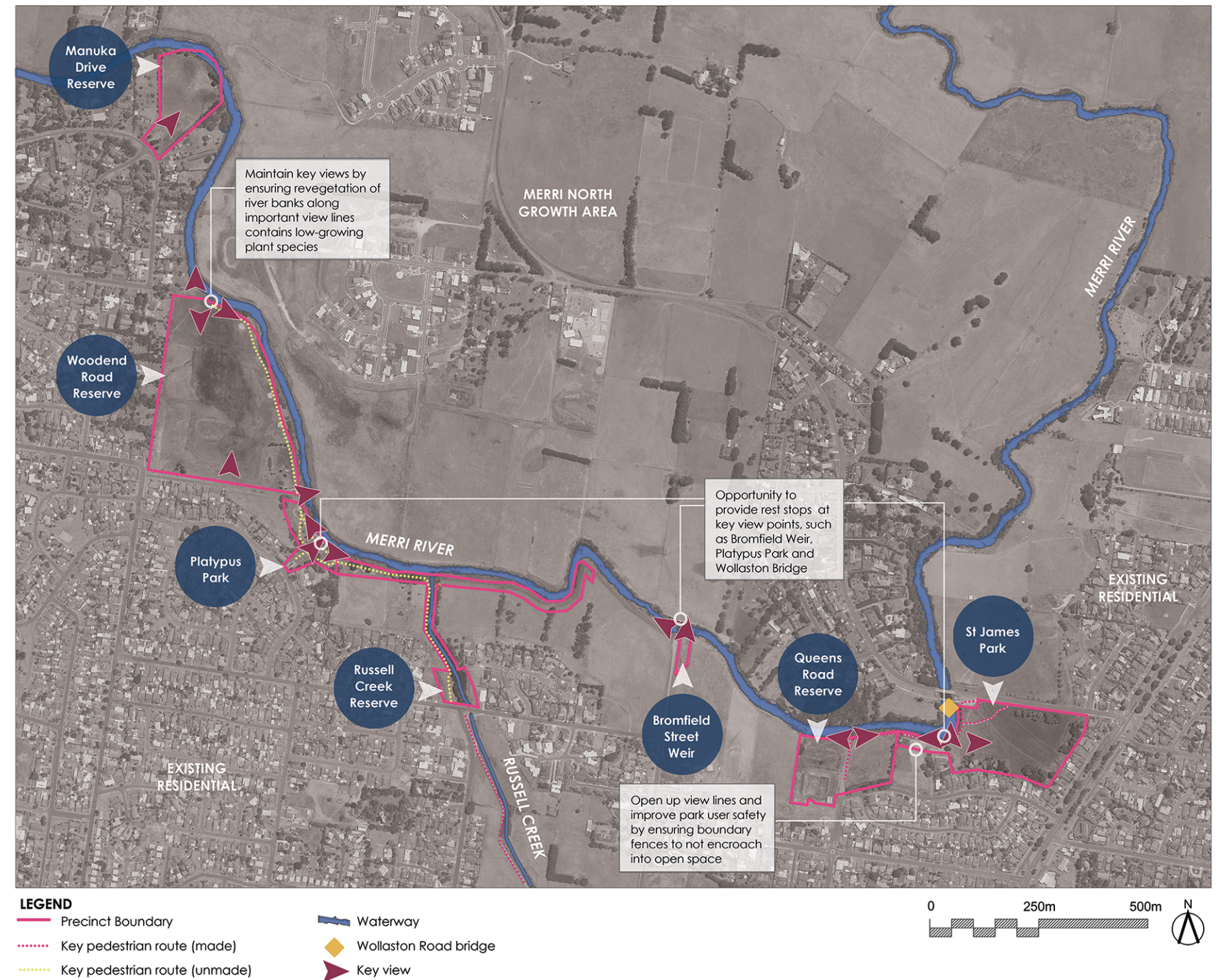
**Figure 12** – A key view of the Merri River looking east from the end of Woodend Road



**Figure 13** – A key view of the Merri River looking east from the walking path in Queens Road Reserve.



**Plan 9** – South of Merri Open Space Precinct Views



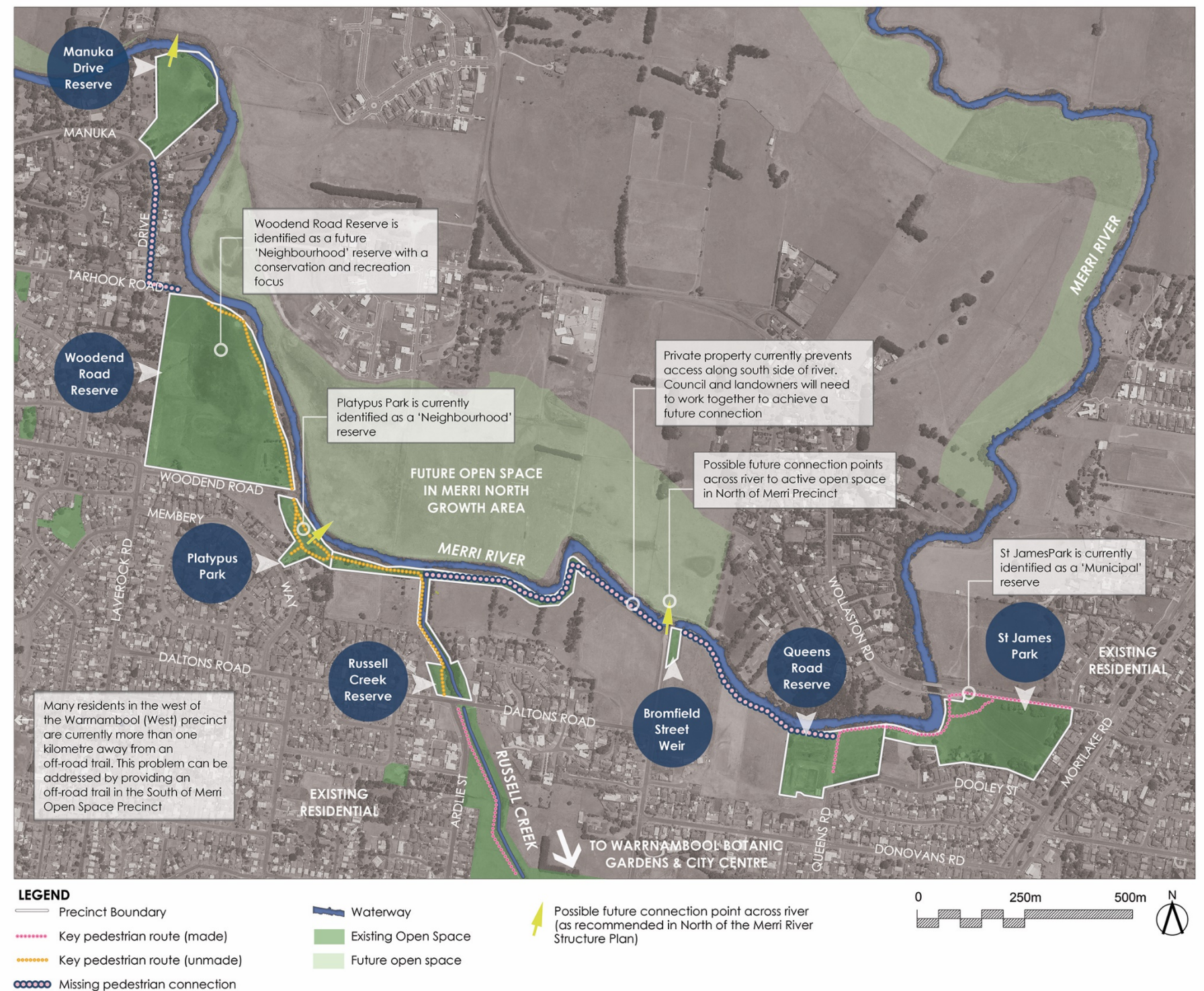


## 12. RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

The South of Merri Open Space Precinct currently offers a range of informal recreational experiences (Plan 10). Key points to note include:

- There are few constructed paths within the seven open space reserves. The inadequate access to and throughout the Precinct areas, combined with the lack of park infrastructure, results in the Precinct being underutilised as a recreational space.
- The Precinct has great potential to provide linkages and recreation opportunities for surrounding residents and visitors as well as providing important connections with the recreation facilities and future sporting facilities that will be provided in the North of Merri Growth Area.
- The community consultation revealed that a range of recreational experiences are had by visitors including walking, dog walking, appreciating the amenity, fishing, playing, kayaking and bird watching. Walking was the most common activity.
- The Warrnambool Open Space Strategy 2014 (pp. 58-68) has a park classification system with four classifications, being Regional, Municipal, Neighbourhood and Local. Not all reserves within the precinct are included in the classification table, possibly because they are undeveloped. St James Park is identified as a higher level 'Municipal' reserve, Platypus Park (also referred to as Membery Way Reserve) is identified as a 'Neighbourhood' reserve and Woodend Road Reserve is nominated as a 'Neighbourhood' park once improvements are made. The remaining public open space reserves are most likely to fall into the classification of 'Local' reserve. However, there is an opportunity for municipal reserve facilities to be shared across St James Park and Queens Road Reserve due to their neighbouring location.
- The open space strategy focuses on eight key principles, including **Accessible, Adaptable, Connected, Diverse, Efficient, Equitable and Protective of the Environment**. This Open Space Precinct Plan provides an opportunity to create a Precinct which better achieves these principles. The Precinct is located within the Warrnambool (West) and Warrnambool (Botanic) open space precincts. The South of Merri Open Space Precinct currently falls short in achieving some open space principles.

Plan 10 – South of Merri Open Space Precinct Recreation and Open Space





# PART C

## PRECINCT RECOMMENDATIONS



## 13. SOUTH OF MERRI OPEN SPACE PRECINCT PLAN KEY OBJECTIVES

The Precinct Plan seeks to guide the development of the Precinct to create a space with a local theme that reflects the vision of the surrounding community and that of the City. The Plan seeks to enhance the natural beauty of the Precinct, respect the cultural landscape and natural environment and encourage increased participation and use of all seven public open space reserves.

The Precinct Plan recommendations seek to achieve nine key objectives. These objectives are detailed in Figure 14. The objectives have been developed following site visits and site analysis, input from Council, and feedback from the community and partners about how the Precinct should be developed in the future.

**Figure 14:** Key Objectives of the Precinct Plan



## 14. PRECINCT DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Each of the design recommendations discussed below are illustrated as an overall concept plan – refer Plan 11.

### 1. IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS

There are opportunities in all seven parks to significantly improve pedestrian access. According to the community consultation feedback, the primary reasons for underutilisation of the Precinct are that the existing shared path terminates at Queens Road Reserve and that there are no formed paths in the other sections of the Precinct.

Some of the key improvements to access through the Precinct will include:

- South of Merri Shared Path - a new shared path extending throughout the Precinct designed to allow visitors to walk from St James Park to Manuka Drive Reserve.
- Loop paths, providing circuits for walking and cycling at the wetlands in Woodend Road reserve and St James Park, and across the Merri River incorporating planned paths to the north.
- Three new pedestrian crossings providing access over the Merri River to the north side will be provided through the North of Merri development process. The requirement for these crossings was determined during preparation of the North of the Merri Structure Plan. Crossing points were identified in the North of the Merri Structure Plan at Manuka Drive, Platypus Park and Bromfield Weir. The Open Space Precinct Plan proposes an alternative option at Woodend Road reserve to the Platypus Park crossing and an alternative crossing point in Manuka Drive. These alternative locations are shown on Plan 11.
- Safety improvements to pedestrian access in Queens Road, and near the intersection of Daltons Road and Ardlie Street to provide a safer pedestrian access.

Once implemented, the shared path network in the South of Merri Precinct will provide approximately 5.5 kilometres of shared path within the precinct, as well as the potential to connect up to 25km of future off-road shared paths/trails across the City. In accordance with Council's path standards, concrete is recommended as the construction material due to its longevity and minimal maintenance requirements.

### 2. RESPECT AND PROMOTE CULTURAL VALUES

The Eastern Maar are the traditional custodians of the lands in the Precinct. There is a strong connection of the Eastern Maar and the Merri River. Works to improve the South of Merri Open Space Precinct will involve ongoing collaboration with Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation to ensure works are sensitive to the cultural values of the area. The following opportunities have been identified for the Precinct:

- There is an opportunity to promote Eastern Maar values by incorporating references through infrastructure, art/sculpture and/or cultural landscaping work
- Consideration of 'treading softly' to works occurring in the precinct, where possible. For example, low intervention works and natural materials should be used where possible.
- Utilise native vegetation along all sections of the Merri River bank and in most plantings throughout the precinct. Native vegetation is proposed in all of the seven public open space



reserves. The only public open space reserve where exotic vegetation is proposed to be retained is in St James Park. Further investigative work may help inform suitable species.

- Many of the reserves in the precinct are officially unnamed and there is an opportunity to name parks and/or park features using Maar language.
- There may be potential for the Precinct to play a role in employment opportunities for Aboriginal people, such as management of the natural environment, the incorporation of culture into infrastructure, and tourism.

### 3. ENCOURAGE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

There are numerous opportunities to incorporate healthier design considerations into planning for the Precinct. Some of the key changes which will help to encourage active participation with positive health and wellbeing outcomes include:

- Support active living by providing a connected network of shared paths, particularly for walking and cycling.
- Support active living by providing a range of recreational opportunities including play and water sports, such as kayaking, canoeing and paddle-boarding. There is potential for the Precinct to become part of a broader kayak/canoe trail for recreation and tourism.
- Create stimulating and attractive routes, providing shade trees and convenient rest stops throughout the Precinct to make it a comfortable experience for users as well as plenty of interesting play opportunities and landmarks.
- Safety can be a barrier to participation and use of recreation facilities (Heart Foundation, 2004). Pedestrian safety can be enhanced in the Precinct by ensuring new development proposals adjacent the Precinct provide good surveillance of the Precinct through appropriate orientation of buildings and windows and discouraging high, solid fencing along reserve edges. Paths should also have good clearance on each side to improve surveillance to and from the path and of the path ahead. And, safe crossing points should be provided at park entries, including the southern entry to Russell's Creek Reserve which links to the Russell's Creek trail.
- To provide a range of possible shared path/trail distances to support different abilities, build fitness and provide the potential to host future running/walking/cycling events.

### 4. EXPAND THE RANGE OF RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Improvements to the infrastructure provided in the Precinct is required in order to encourage participation and use of the Precinct.

In deciding on what facilities to provide in the Precinct it is important to recognise the nearby recreational experiences on offer, including existing and planned activities. The future recreation facilities on the north side of the Merri River in the new growth area will offer both passive and active open recreation opportunities, likely including sporting grounds. There is no need to replicate formalised sporting activities on the south side. The focus of the South of Merri Open Space Precinct will instead be on experiencing the natural environment and encouraging informal recreation and opportunities for play and access to nature.

Feedback during community consultation in response to the question 'why don't people currently visit' included varied responses, with comments such as; 'no facilities', 'no formed walking trails',

'no reason to visit', 'nothing for kids to do' and 'there are better places to visit' relating to infrastructure and activities within the Precinct. With these responses in mind, the Precinct Plan identifies a number of new infrastructure items which will seek to resolve the lack of facilities and make it a place people want to visit. Through the proposed upgrades to the Precinct, a range of land and water-based activities will be available, including walking, dog-walking, cycling, running, play, bird and fauna observing, fishing, kayaking, canoeing and paddle-boarding. In order to encourage these uses, the following changes are recommended to park facilities and infrastructure within the Precinct:

- New paths with sufficient width to provide for the shared use of walkers, runners, dog-walkers and cyclists. These shared paths will provide a diverse range of experiences, passing along the river's edge, looping around St James Park and the wetland and providing access to the various features, such as play spaces and river crossings, throughout the precinct.
- Designated off-leash dog walking/playing area away from fauna habitat locations.
- New playspace and community activity area/gathering space provided at Queens Road Reserve.
- A 'Nature Play or Sculpture Trail' with a local theme, e.g. reflecting the natural environment and/or references to the cultural landscape
- Scooter area/pump track. Upgrading the existing hard-stand area (disused car park) at Queens Road Reserve for children to use their scooters and bikes
- Kayak, canoe and paddle-board launching facilities. These non-motorised water-craft launching facilities are proposed in two locations along the Precinct, with one above the Bromfield Weir at Queens Road Reserve and one below the Bromfield Weir at Woodend Road Reserve. There will need to be a place at Bromfield Weir where kayakers and canoeists can get out of the water and relaunch on the other side of the weir.
- Increased habitat by extending revegetation areas. Ensuring a diverse mix of native vegetation is provided to encourage birdlife and other local fauna.
- New wayfinding signage, to make it clear what recreational facilities are provided and where they can be found in the Precinct.

### 5. IMPROVE ACCESS FOR ALL USERS AND MODES OF TRANSPORT

#### Universal Access

There is a need to provide safe and equitable access to all infrastructure for all community members. Universal design should be considered at project initiation, design and delivery phases for all aspects of infrastructure, including, but not limited to: car parking, paths, public toilet facilities, playspace, activity areas, the pontoon, seating, road crossing points, signage, etc.

#### Bicycle Parking

Bicycle parking facilities, including places for people to lock their bikes, should also be provided for those wanting to ride to the shared path and walk sections of it, or those wanting to stay and play or utilise community facilities. Bicycle parking facilities are proposed at Woodend Road Reserve, Queens Road Reserve and St James Park near the proposed car parking areas.



### Vehicle Parking

There is currently one constructed car park existing at Queens Road Reserve and one small informal car park at St James Park. The Precinct Plan identifies four opportunities to incorporate car parking in the Precinct. The proposed changes are to formalise the parking that exists and to expand the number of spaces to accommodate the anticipated increase in visitor numbers as the Precinct develops and becomes a more popular place to visit. The four parking locations include:

#### Queens Road Reserve and Woodend Reserve

The existing Queens Road Reserve car park, which provides 30 spaces, including 2 disabled bays, has an all-weather surface and is positioned mostly outside the 1 in 100 year flood line, making it an ideal site for parking. The Plan shows this car park as being retained in its current location and configuration, with a few additional spaces.

Kayak, canoe and paddle-board launching sites are proposed at both Queens Road Reserve and Woodend Road Reserve. It is important to provide convenient car parking near these launching facilities. There is space at Woodend Road Reserve to provide a few spaces for car and trailer parking for those with watercraft on trailers.

It is recommended that Woodend Road Reserve be upgraded to a sealed surface along its full extent towards the river and the turning area and sealed indented car parking spaces provided for visitors to the wetlands, shared path users and kayakers and canoeists.

#### St James Park

Car parking is a desirable feature in Municipal parks, such as St James park, and in accordance with the adopted St James Concept Plan, a formalised car park could be provided here at the eastern end of the precinct as the starting place for those wanting to walk on the shared path and for visitors to the Wollaston Bridge. The entry point near Wollaston Bridge and the exact location of the car park will be determined during detailed design.

#### Bromfield Street

Another opportunity to provide some formalised car parking is at Bromfield Weir. In the event that a vehicle bridge is constructed at the end of Bromfield Street to connect with the North of Merri residential growth area, some car parking could be provided at the edge of the road, in the form of indented or angled parking.

### 6. RETAIN KEY VIEWS

As described in section 9 and the Existing Conditions report, there are many key views through the Precinct. The pleasant scenery is considered an important value by residents and a number of respondents noted that they would not want to see views impacted on as a result of improvements. There are a number of recommendations in the Plan which seek to ensure key views are retained and there are plenty of opportunities to enjoy these key views. They include:

- Providing rest stops and seating areas that allow visitors to enjoy the views.
- Ensuring revegetation works involve the selection of low growing species in the key view areas to maintain views for visitors.

- Enhancing key view lines by improving the appearance of the landscape within the viewline. Weed management will also assist in improving viewlines, as will providing path access to areas that are currently inaccessible, such as Russell's Creek Reserve, where new views of the river may be provided. One major improvement to key views in the Woodend Road Reserve will be the removal of agricultural fencing and rehabilitation of the wetlands, including new planting.

### 7. RESPECT FLOOD FUNCTION AND PROVIDE FLOOD-RESILIENT DESIGN

The Precinct is regularly inundated in several sections during minor and major flood events, sometimes resulting in the closure of sections of open space paths and roads. Recognising the Precinct plays an essential flood plain and flood storage function in Warrnambool is important in planning for the future of the Precinct. Flood risk management in the Precinct will involve working with natural processes. The Plan makes the following recommendations in relation to flooding:

- Rehabilitating the existing wetland in Woodend Road Reserve (Figure 15). This wetland is currently fenced-off from public access and used as a grazing paddock. Through rehabilitation and revegetation of the wetland, there is scope to provide additional habitat, food and breeding grounds for local fauna and provide a unique environmental feature along the South of Merri shared path for people to visit. The wetland will also help to improve stormwater quality before entering the Merri River. This wetland will be temporarily covered by water, and is not intended to be a permanent water body year-round.
- Integration of signage and features that educate visitors on flooding and integrated water management within the Precinct.
- Incorporate new integrated water management features, by redesigning some open drains, such as Woodend Road Reserve, Queens Road Reserve and St James Park (Figure 16). Water-holding capacity of these drains could be increased slightly through the design of more naturally aligned, vegetated swale drains. The aim of redesigning these drains to vegetated swales is to improve the appearance, improve stormwater quality before it enters the Merri River and slow the rate of flow of stormwater into the river to help reduce scouring and erosion at the river outlet. Integrated water management options regarding stormwater will be investigated during the next phase of wetland restoration and works related to drainage in each reserve.
- Paths and infrastructure will be designed to suit their location. For example, where possible large infrastructure items, including the playspace and activity area/community gathering space are located above the 1 in 10 AEP flood level.
- Surfaces and finishes will be selected to be flood-resilient.
- Reduce erosion of the river banks by extending rehabilitation of the riparian zone along the river.



Figure 15 – The wetland at Woodend Road Reserve (drone view)



Figure 16 – Constructed, open drainage channel in St James Park



## 8. ENHANCE HABITAT FOR FLORA AND FAUNA AND BIODIVERSITY CORRIDORS

The Merri River and Russell's Creek support a range of flora and fauna and some sections function as important wildlife corridors. The following opportunities have been identified to help improve habitat and biodiversity in the Precinct:

- Continue rehabilitation of the Merri River riparian zone. This will provide an important continuous biodiversity corridor along the south side of the river.
- Rehabilitate the wetland in Woodend Road Reserve. The rehabilitation of this wetland will significantly improve habitat for flora and fauna and will extend the biodiversity corridor into the park. Careful design of shared paths to provide set back and buffers for particular species (e.g. snakes) is required.
- Plant local indigenous vegetation when planting in the Merri River and Russell's Creek riparian zones to provide habitat and food for local fauna.
- All revegetation activities can be designed to ensure that other key objectives of the Precinct are still achieved. ie. ensuring tall vegetation is not planted along the full extent of the river. It is possible to alternative higher and lower vegetation to retain key views and allow visitors many opportunities to appreciate the beauty of the river and wetlands and to create an open and safe environment for park users.
- Incorporate environmental education such as information about Rakali, Platypus, native fish and importance of revegetation works. Education will help visitors to gain a better appreciation of the local habitat and biodiversity corridors. Signage should also mention the importance of keeping dogs on leads along the shared path for the protection of local fauna, including platypus. Signs to inform appropriate fishing behavior to minimise impacts on the platypus are also recommended.
- Incorporate interpretive signage/sculpture/interactive features which provide information and/or reminders and links to the natural environment features of the Precinct.



## 9. ENCOURAGE CLIMATE-CHANGE RESILIENT DESIGN AND CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION MEASURES

In the Southern Slopes (Victoria West), including Warrnambool, climate change projections include: increasing average temperatures, more hot days and warm spells, generally less rainfall in the cool season and increased intensity of extreme rainfall events, mean sea level will continue to rise and it is likely there will be a harsher fire-weather climate (CSIRO, 2016).

These climatic changes and associated alterations to meteorological cycles may result in plant deaths and changes in plant communities, encourage invasive weed species and change habitats for native fauna. The risks associated with climate change should be mitigated through careful planning and design. Many of the recommendations which will help to achieve other objectives of the Plan will also help to mitigate against the impacts of climate change. They include:

- ‘Greening’ the precinct with new tree planting will help to enhance the cooling effects (i.e. micro-climates) of green spaces and increase carbon storage.
- Selecting local indigenous plants suited to the local environment will ensure habitat for native fauna exists in the future.
- The South of Merri shared path provides important links for residents using non-motorised vehicles which helps to reduce fuel consumption. For example, North of Merri Residents will be able to cross the river on bicycles or by foot to travel into the Warrnambool City centre for work.
- Utilising natural materials, where possible, such as timber.
- Incorporation of WSUD features for the wetland and revegetation works along the Merri River will help to minimise the detrimental impacts of flooding.

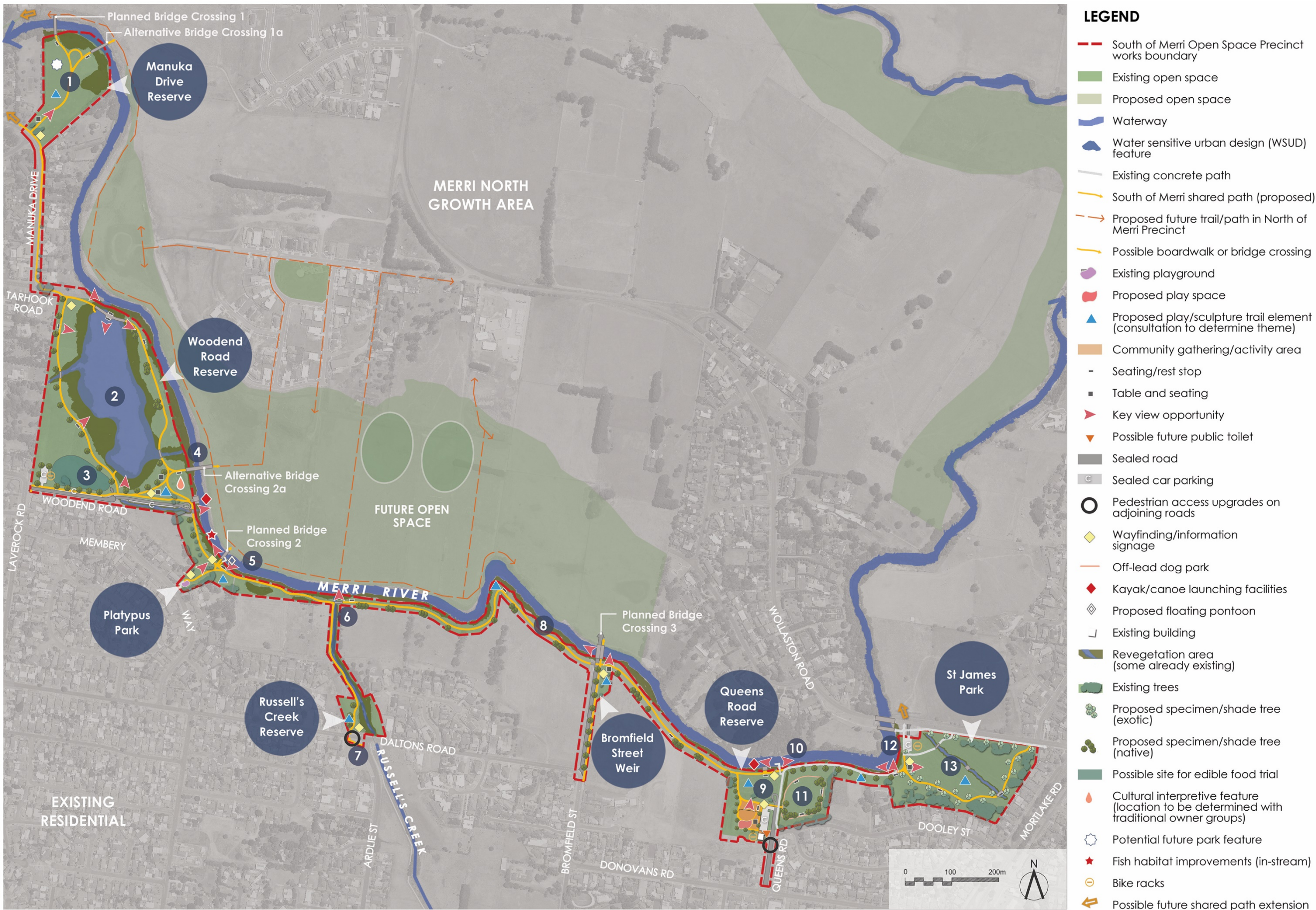
## 10. TO WORK IN COLLABORATION AND SUPPORT PARTNERSHIPS TO SEE THE PLAN IMPLEMENTED

The formation of partnerships will support positive changes in the Precinct and neighbourhood. Partnerships may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Traditional owners, represented by the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation. Council will continue to collaborate with Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation
- Groups within the Merri River Alliance, such as Friends of Platypus Park, MAD for the Merri, Warrnambool Coastcare Landcare Network, Friends of St James Park, Fishcare Victoria, Ozfish, Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority and Wannon Water.
- Local residents, local developers and local landowners.
- Other partners as opportunities arise.



Plan 11 – South of Merri Open Space Precinct Plan





## SOUTH OF MERRI OPEN SPACE PRECINCT PLAN – PLAN 11 KEY ELEMENTS

### 1 SOUTH OF MERRI SHARED PATH

Establish a new South of Merri shared path from Manuka Drive Reserve to St James Park, with connections to the Russell's Creek Trail and future shared paths north of the Merri River. The shared path will loop around St James Park taking in views of Wollaston Bridge, travel west along the edge of the Merri River and loop around the rehabilitated wetland at Woodend Road Reserve, ultimately ending at Manuka Drive where it will cross the river to provide access to the North of Merri residential area.

The South of Merri shared path will provide interesting and interactive experiences with the natural environment as well as new infrastructure and a play/interactive sculpture trail along the way.

### 2 WETLAND RESTORATION

Rehabilitate the wetland in the reserve at the end of Woodend and Tarhook roads. New vegetation will be planted around the wetland to improve habitat and water quality. The new South of Merri shared path will loop around the wetland with rest stops at key viewing points. There are also opportunities near the wetland to reflect on Eastern Maar values through art/sculpture, infrastructure, and/or culturally informed landscape planting.

### 3 FOOD GROWING TRIAL SITE

A site of approximately 0.66Ha in size has been set aside for a trial nursery growing indigenous food plants. The proposal is to relocate the site from the end of Woodend Road further west onto higher ground which is less prone to flooding. The site can be accessed from Woodend Road. In the event that the trial site is not required, the land can be converted to public park space.

### 4 MERRI RIVER CROSSINGS

There are three planned Merri River crossings connecting to the North of Merri Precinct, to be provided through the development process. In the North of the Merri Structure Plan, pedestrian crossings are nominated at Manuka Drive Reserve and Platypus Park with one combined vehicle and pedestrian crossing at Bromfield Street Weir. The Precinct Plan shows a potential alternative location for the Platypus Park and Manuka Drive crossing. The alternative location for Platypus Park is located a short distance away from Woodend Road. The benefit of this alternate location would be closer proximity to the car parking at Woodend Road and improved visibility to and from the crossing for users. It would also connect with one of the future planned access paths in the North of Merri Precinct which links to the existing Witham playground reserve. The alternative crossing at Manuka Drive would provide a more direct link to the playground and planned open space areas north of the river.

### 5 FLOATING PONTOON

Establish a small floating pontoon at Platypus Park, with consideration given to any potential platypus habitat in the vicinity. This fishing pontoon is positioned near the instream fish habitat improvements in a location that is well-suited for fishing. The proposed pontoon at Platypus Park will complement the existing pontoon at Queen's Road reserve and will provide an alternative fishing place for anglers downstream of the Bromfield Weir. Education signs on fishing practices that minimise impacts on the platypus should be associated with the pontoon.

### 6 RUSSELL'S CREEK CROSSING

A new footbridge across Russell's Creek will form a key pedestrian link, connecting the eastern and western ends of the South of Merri shared path.

### 7 IMPROVED PEDESTRIAN SAFETY UPGRADES TO AND FROM SURROUNDING ROADS

Pedestrian safety will be enhanced in the Precinct by ensuring safe crossing points near park entries and access to and from adjoining streets is provided. Improvements are proposed at Queens Road (new path/pedestrian access improvements and crossing point), Daltons Road (crossing point and new path) and Manuka Drive (new path).

### 8 LINEAR CONNECTIONS & RIVERSIDE REVEGETATION

The linear spaces provide important connections between the parks within the precincts. It is proposed that these linear connections will provide passive recreation opportunities, with revegetation works, shared path and shade trees. There will be rest stops provided at regular intervals, and some linear spaces will incorporate play/art elements for added interest.

Extensive lengths of the Merri River have already been revegetated. The Plan shows the full length of the river being revegetated on the south side. This revegetation is important in providing a continuous wildlife corridor as well as improving water quality health and minimising erosion. It is important that the revegetation works also consider the recreational use of the Precinct and are designed appropriately with park users in mind. This means providing gaps in tall vegetation to retain key views of the river, ensuring any trees will not create limb-drop issues for users of the shared path and ensuring there is sufficient space between the shared path and the revegetation works areas for maintenance vehicle access.



## 9 COMMUNITY GATHERING SPACE

Queens Road Reserve is ideally suited to a community gathering space and potential events space, offering a range of experiences. This Reserve also contains an area of land which sits higher than the remainder of the reserve above the 1 in 100 year flood extent. This makes it an ideal location for constructed infrastructure, such as a play space, as the infrastructure will not impede water flows and the infrastructure will not be subject to flood damage as regularly as other locations in the Precinct. A playspace and scooter/pump park are proposed. Features of the activity area/community gathering space could include a seating area, bocce/petanque courts/basketball half court and shade trees. There is an existing building which could possibly be repurposed in the future to provide tourism opportunities, such as kayak/canoe hire, bicycle hire and/or café, and to support events. This space would also be an appropriate site for public toilets due to the existing service infrastructure in place and access from the car park. Opportunities to reflect the values of the precinct in the design of the space can be explored further, such as Eastern Maar values, and the history of the site.

## 10 KAYAK AND CANOE LAUNCHING FACILITIES

There are two proposed non-motorised sport launching sites for kayaks, canoes, paddle boards, etc. One is proposed at the end of Woodend Road, which is currently used informally, and one at Queens Road Reserve. A transfer point would need to be provided at Bromfield Weir to allow non-motorised water sport users to get out of the river and put their craft back in the water above or below the weir. Woodend Road and Queens Road reserve will have car parking provided for those transporting their kayaks/canoes in vehicles. It is intended that the launching facilities would be low-key ramps, with a non-slip surface positioned at the water's edge.

## 11 DOG PARK

Dogs off-lead present a threat to local fauna, including Platypus. It is important that dog on-lead and dog off-lead areas throughout the precinct are clearly identified. The Plan identifies one large off-lead area in Queens Road Reserve. This site is ideally suited to a dog park as it is located opposite the car park and activity area/community gathering space and is located well away from riverside habitat and revegetation areas.

## 12 CARPARK UPGRADES

Visitor car parking locations include:

5. Woodend Road Reserve. This reserve is likely to become a destination for many visitors due to the location of the wetlands and fishing pontoon. There are opportunities at Woodend Road to provide formalised on-street car parking as well as off-street car parking.
6. Queens Road Reserve. It is proposed to retain the existing off-street car park.
7. St James Park. There is an informal gravel car park near Wollaston Bridge where visitors currently park. It is proposed that this parking site near the bridge be formalised and sealed, as was originally proposed in the St James Landscape Masterplan.
8. Bromfield Street. Opportunity to provide on-street car parking when the road is sealed and a vehicle connection across the river is provided in the future. In the longer-term there is opportunity for off-street parking if the need arises.

## 13 WATER SENSITIVE URBAN DESIGN (WSUD) OPPORTUNITIES

There are numerous opportunities throughout the Precinct to provide water sensitive urban design features at a local scale. The following opportunities are identified throughout the Precinct:

5. Woodend Road wetland
6. Woodend Road swale
7. Queens Road swale
8. St James park swale

The three swales are intended to be small open drainage swales planted with tussocks and rushes and other low-growing plants that have good water-filtering qualities. Where possible, these will be realigned slightly to provide a more natural appearance. They are currently straight, open drains at present.



15. PRECINCT DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS – ILLUSTRATED EXAMPLES

CULTURE  
▼



ART  
▼



PLAY  
▼



NATURE & RECREATION  
▼



BIODIVERSITY  
▼



INFRASTRUCTURE  
▼



Rakali Photo Credit: Con Boekel



## 16. PARK DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS - MANUKA DRIVE RESERVE

Manuka Drive Reserve is a medium-sized park of 2.7Ha in size. This reserve is the western-most park in the Precinct.

A number of design opportunities were identified during the site visit and preparation of existing conditions plan. The feedback from the community reaffirmed the following recommendations:

- New shared path in the centre of the reserve with a loop in the lower portion of the reserve.
- New directional signage at the reserve entry.
- Installation of nature play trail/interpretive sculpture feature.
- Potential to incorporate a new park feature, the design of which is to be determined following additional consultation as the park design implementation progresses.
- Additional revegetation opportunities along Merri River riparian zone, extending into the reserve.
- New seating and picnic table to take in views and provide rest stops along the shared path.
- Install 'management only' bollards along the park edge with Manuka Drive to stop unauthorised vehicles from entering.
- New shared path on the north side of Manuka Drive extending to Tarhook Road. This will provide an important connection between Manuka Drive Reserve and Woodend Road Reserve.
- New shared pedestrian/cycling bridge across the Merri River, providing access to future paths and open space in the North Merri precinct. This is to occur via the North of Merri development process.

Note: A pedestrian bridge crossing over the Merri River was identified in the North of the Merri Structure Plan (Option 1). An alternative crossing point was identified during the preparation of the Precinct Plan (Option 1a). The alternative link provides a more direct connection with the proposed residential neighbourhood and open space reserves provided within the new development area north of the river. It is recommended that the final location of the bridge be determined pending further discussion with the development community and more detailed studies to inform the bridge design. The provision of the loop park will ensure that either of the bridge options can be connected to the shared path via a link with the shared path loop.

Plan 12 - Manuka Drive Design Recommendations





Figure 17 – Shared path concept for Manuka Drive





## 17. PARK DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS - WOODEND ROAD RESERVE

Woodend Road Reserve is a large reserve of 10.8Ha located towards the western end of the South of Merri Open Space Precinct. Much of the area is privately leased.

A number of design opportunities were identified during the site visit and preparation of existing conditions plan. The feedback from the community reaffirmed the following recommendations:

- Formalise the existing unmade path along the river between Tarhook Road and Woodend Road into a constructed shared path.
- Restore the wetland and provide a new circuit or 'loop' path around the wetland.
- Provide access points to the wetland for water quality testing, water bug monitoring and education.
- Revegetation opportunity along the riverbank and wetland. Provide low-growing planting in key view lines.
- New seating positioned to take in views.
- Incorporate nature play trail/interpretive sculpture.
- Pipe small section of open drain at end of Tarhook Road (approx. 90 metres length) and connect into wetland to minimise maintenance and improve water quality before entering the river.
- A site of approximately 0.66Ha in size is set aside for an edible food trial nursery (current size is 0.64Ha) leased by the Worn Gundidj enterprises. The proposal is to relocate the site from the end of Woodend Road further west onto higher ground which is less prone to flooding and better suited for the species being trialled. The site can be accessed from Woodend Road. In the event that the trial site is not required, the land can be converted to public park space, or potentially another community use such as a community garden, if there was demonstrated demand.
- Formalised on-street car parking along Woodend Road and potential future off-street parking at the top end of Woodend Road. Ensure some spaces are provided for vehicles with kayak/canoe trailers along the edge of Woodend Road.
- New kayak and canoe launching facilities near the end of Woodend Road.
- WSUD – swale drain with planting along the existing open drain next to Woodend Road. Continued overpage...

Plan 13 - Woodend Road Reserve Design Recommendations



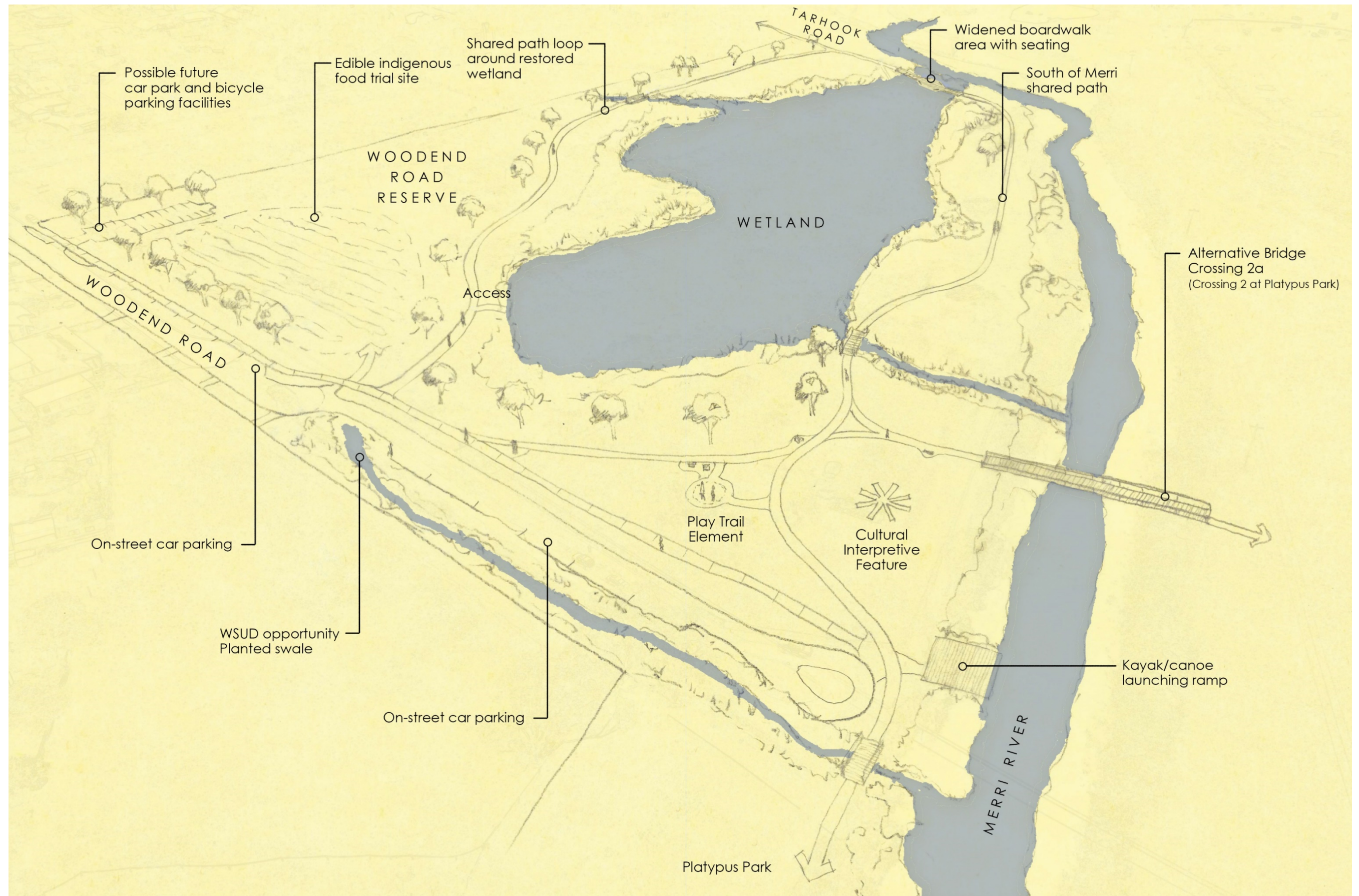


- Install ‘management-only’ bollards at Tarhook Road entry around the car park and along the edge of Woodend Road and the proposed turning area to deter unauthorised vehicles from entering park.
- New shared pedestrian/cycling bridge across the Merri River, providing access to future paths and open space in the North Merri precinct. This is to occur via the North of Merri development process.

Note: The North of Merri Precinct Structure Plan identified a pedestrian/cyclist bridge crossing point in Platypus Park (Option 2). However, with the proposed changes to Woodend Road Reserve as part of this Open Space Precinct Plan, an alternative option to Platypus Park bridge crossing has been identified at Woodend Road (Option 2a). The bridge crossing point at Woodend Road has better passive surveillance and a more direct link to the proposed path network leading up to the playground in the North of Merri Precinct. It is recommended that the final location of the bridge is determined pending further discussion with the development community and more detailed studies to inform the bridge design. The shared path network has been designed so that either of the bridge options will be able to connect in with the path network.



Figure 18 – Woodend Road Reserve Concept Sketch





## 18. PARK DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS - PLATYPUS PARK

Platypus Park is a small park of 1.1 hectares in size. It is located on the north side of Membery Way.

A number of design opportunities were identified during the site visit and preparation of existing conditions plan. The feedback from the community reaffirmed the following recommendations:

- Retain formal playground near the Membery Way entrance.
- New shared path extending from Membery Way to the main path along the edge of the river.
- New directional signage near the playground to provide information about the South of Merri shared path.
- New fishing pontoon upstream of the in-stream fish habitat improvements.
- Provide information signage near the pontoon about fish hotels and snags which have been placed in the Merri River adjacent to Platypus Park. Provide information about Platypus habitat and importance of keeping dogs on leads near the river to avoid disturbing platypus and other fauna.
- Platypus Park has a number of residential properties adjoining its boundary. Ensure any future development requiring a planning permit provides good passive surveillance of the reserve (ie. through low and/or transparent fencing and building windows orientated towards the reserve).
- Incorporate nature play/sculptural trail feature in the Park, possibly relating to the platypus.
- Extend riverside vegetation into areas that have not yet been revegetated.
- The North of Merri Precinct Structure Plan identified a pedestrian/cyclist bridge crossing point in Platypus Park (Option 2). However, with the proposed changes to Woodend Road Reserve as part of this Open Space Precinct Plan, an alternative option to Platypus Park bridge crossing has been identified at Woodend Road (Option 2a). Refer to Design Recommendations for Woodend Road (Section 17).

Plan 14 - Platypus Park Design Recommendations





## 19. PARK DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS - RUSSELL'S CREEK RESERVE

Russell's Creek Reserve is a T-shaped reserve which follows both the Merri River and Russell's Creek. It is located on the north side of Daltons Road and has a size of 2.4 hectares.

A number of design opportunities were identified during the site visit and preparation of existing conditions plan. The feedback from the community reaffirmed the following recommendations:

- New shared path along the edge of the river, and extending to Daltons Road along the western side of Russell's Creek.
- Council to negotiate land acquisition with neighbouring property owner to ensure future link can be provided with Bromfield Weir Reserve.
- The narrow section of reserve on the western side of Russell's Creek has an enclosed feeling due to vegetation and close proximity of residential properties. Lower branches of existing trees along Russell's Creek should be pruned where possible to improve surveillance from one side of the creek to the other.
- A new boardwalk and bridge is to be constructed over Russell's Creek to provide east-west connection for the South of Merri shared path.
- Russell's Creek has a number of residential properties adjoining its boundary. Ensure any future development requiring a planning permit provides good passive surveillance of the reserve (ie. through low and/or transparent fencing and building windows orientated towards the reserve).
- New directional signage near the entry to the reserve from Daltons Road.
- Incorporate nature play/sculptural trail feature near the entry to the Reserve.
- Investigate options to improve the Daltons/Ardlie Street intersection to achieve pedestrian/cyclist priority and safety improvements.

Note: The location of the crossing point at Daltons Road on Plan 15 is indicative only. The final location and design of the crossing upgrade and the safety measures to be implemented will be determined through further engineering and detailed design looking at site lines, vehicle turning movements, speed limits, etc.

Plan 15 - Russell's Creek Reserve Design Recommendations





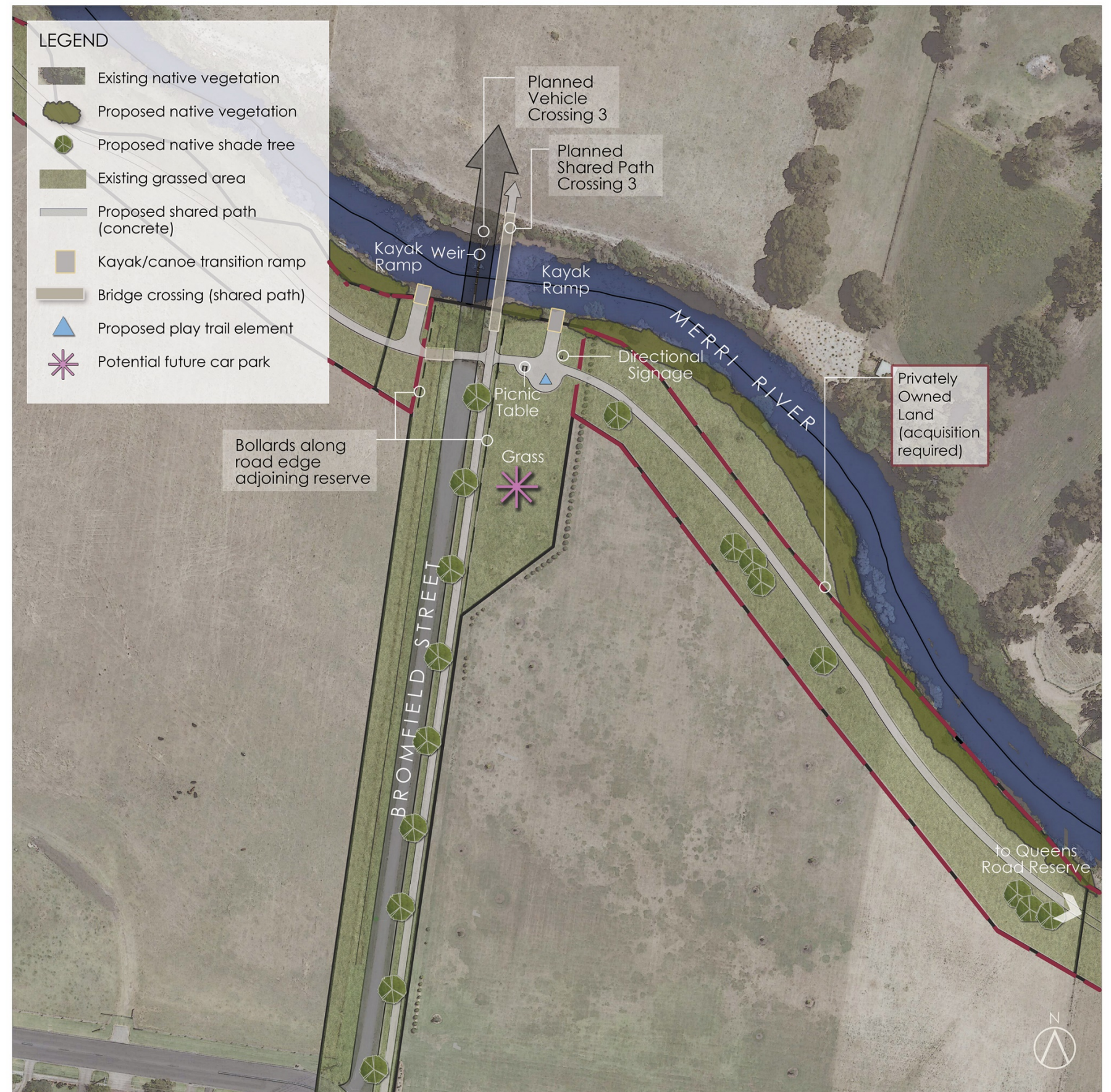
## 20. PARK DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS - BROMFIELD STREET WEIR

The reserve at Bromfield Street Weir is located at the end of Bromfield Street. It is a small, narrow reserve with a total area of approximately 2,030 square metres (0.20ha).

A number of design opportunities were identified during the site visit and preparation of existing conditions plan. The feedback from the community reaffirmed the following recommendations:

- New shared path along the edge of the river.
- There are no direct path connections from Bromfield Street Weir Reserve to Russell's Creek Reserve or Queens Road. Council will need to engage with property owners of private land on the south side of the Merri River in order to acquire land for incorporation into the Precinct. This could potentially occur via the development process as the opportunity arises.
- New directional signage in the reserve to provide information about the South of Merri shared path.
- Incorporate nature play trail/interpretive sculpture feature in the Reserve.
- Construct infrastructure at edge of river to allow kayakers and canoeists to get out of the water and transfer their watercraft to the other side of the weir.
- Potential for small off-street car park if the bridge is constructed over the river and there is sufficient demand for car parking.
- Install 'management-only' bollards to deter unauthorised vehicles from entering park.
- Provide new pedestrian connection across the Merri River from the end of Bromfield Street or reserve. The North of the Merri Structure Plan 2011, identified a possible future road connection across the Merri River from the end of Bromfield Street. If the proposed bridge and road connection remains a planned infrastructure item for the City, there is scope to incorporate the pedestrian crossing along with the vehicle bridge. This vehicle connection would require Bromfield Street to be upgraded and sealed. There would be an opportunity to provide on-street parking along the newly sealed section of Bromfield Street as there is currently no formal car parking at this reserve. Note: In the event that a vehicle crossing is not provided, there is an opportunity for Bromfield Street to be upgraded and terminate with a vehicle turning area at the end, with the provision of a shared path crossing over the river.

Plan 16 - Bromfield Weir Reserve Design Recommendations





## 21. PARK DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS - QUEENS ROAD RESERVE

Queens Road Reserve is a medium-sized reserve. It is bounded by vacant land and St James Park to the east, vacant land to the west, the Merri River to the north and vacant land and Dooley Street to the south. The total area of the park including the road reserve is approximately 2.7 hectares.

A number of design opportunities were identified during the site visit and preparation of existing conditions plan. The feedback from the community reaffirmed the following recommendations:

- Community gathering space/activity area offering a range of experiences for a range of age groups. Future use to be determined pending further consultation and design. Potential uses may include: bocce/petanque courts, seating area, basketball half court, etc.
- Design and construct new playspace for a range of ages.
- Construct a flat sealed area with a scooter track/pump park for younger children next to the activity area.
- Potential reuse of the existing building. The building could be repurposed as a community gathering place, café, kayak/canoe/bicycle hire venue, etc.
- Construct a kayak and canoe launching ramp. The plan identifies the launching ramp at the end of Queens Road reserve. At this location there is good surveillance, relatively low river embankment and it is in close proximity to the proposed car park at Queens Road Reserve. Through the Round 2 consultation, there were requests for this launching facility to be provided further east of Queens Road Reserve closer to the bend in the river at St James Park. In response to community consultation feedback, it is recommended that the final location of the kayak and canoe launching facilities should be determined following further investigation and consultation. The following matters should be taken into consideration when determining the location: flooding and potential impact on infrastructure, accessibility from car parking facilities where kayaks/canoes will need to be carried from, cost of construction (ie. steepness of embankment, ramp design requirements, etc) and potential impacts on habitat, including platypus. Continued overpage...

Plan 17 - Queens Road Design Recommendations

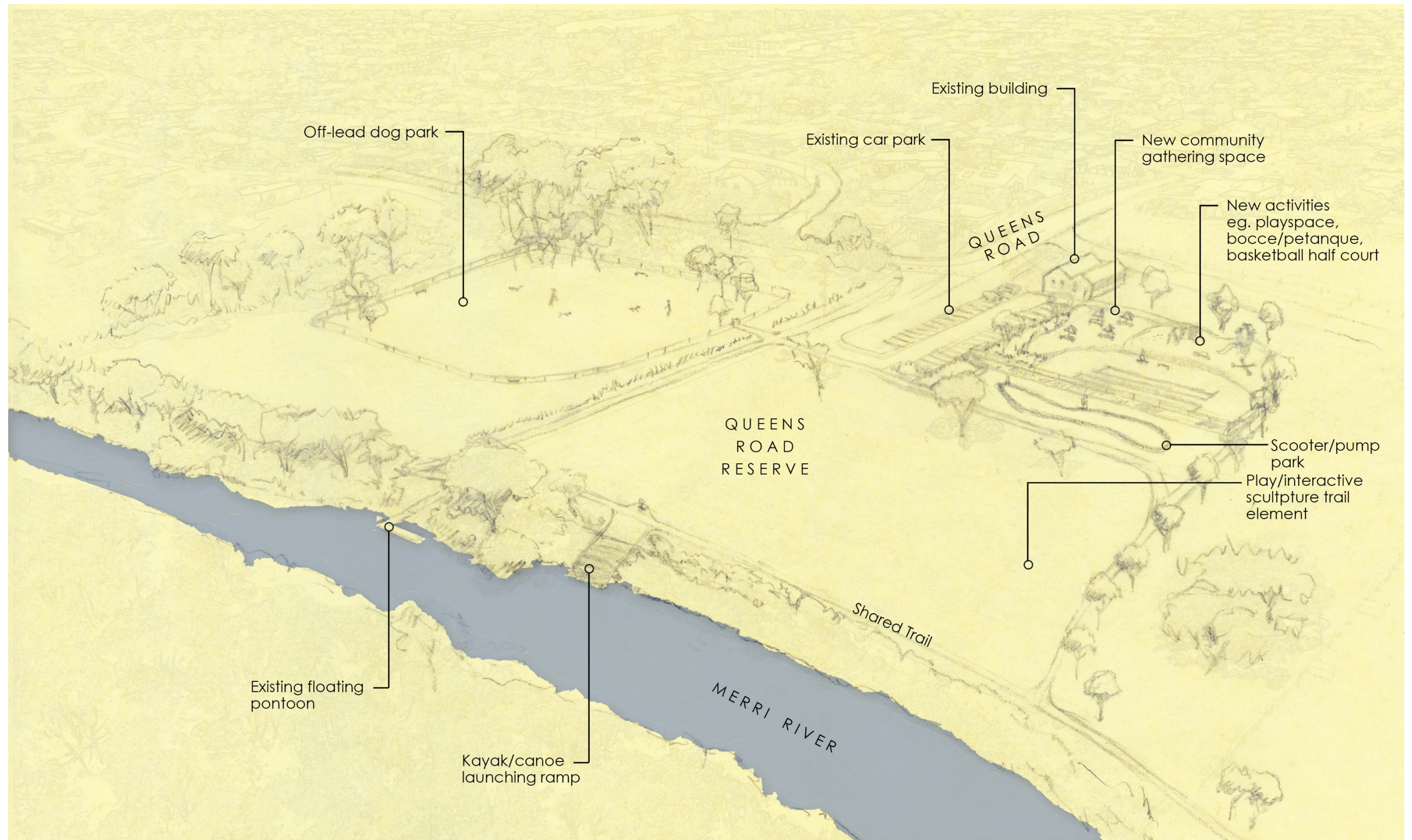




- Incorporate indigenous shade trees throughout park.
- Investigate integrity of existing retaining wall and undertake works to rectify any identified structural issues. There is potential for the retaining wall to become a blank canvas for artwork.
- Public toilet facilities could be provided near the existing building, where there is good access from the car park.
- WSUD opportunity. Redesign open drain along the edge of Queens Road reserve to have a more natural appearance and indigenous planting each side.
- A safe pedestrian connection will need to be provided on Queens Road between Dooley Street and Donovans Road.
- New directional signage in the reserve to provide information about the South of Merri shared path.
- Provide information signage near the existing pontoon about Platypus habitat and importance of keeping dogs on-lead to avoid disturbing Platypus and other fauna.
- Leave an open grassed area for picnicking and to provide an events space
- Incorporate nature play/sculptural trail feature to the north of the community gathering space, but not impeding the open grassed area.
- Retain car park, which provides 30 spaces including two disabled bays. Potential for at least two extra spaces.
- Provide a vehicle turning area.
- Inclusion of an off-lead dog park. Dogs off-lead present a threat to local fauna, including Platypus. This site in Queens Road reserve is ideally suited to a dog park as it is located opposite the car park and activity area/community gathering space and is located away from riverside habitat and revegetation areas.
- Extend revegetation works along river edge and other areas.
- Install 'management-only' bollards around car park and along edge of Queens Road and the proposed turning area to deter unauthorised vehicles from entering park.



Figure 19 – Queens Road Concept Sketch





## 22. PARK DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS - ST JAMES PARK

St James Park is a medium-sized park of approximately 4.8 hectares in size. It is located at the eastern end of Wollaston Road near the intersection with Mortlake Road.

A number of design opportunities were identified during the site visit and preparation of existing conditions plan. The feedback from the community reaffirmed the following recommendations:

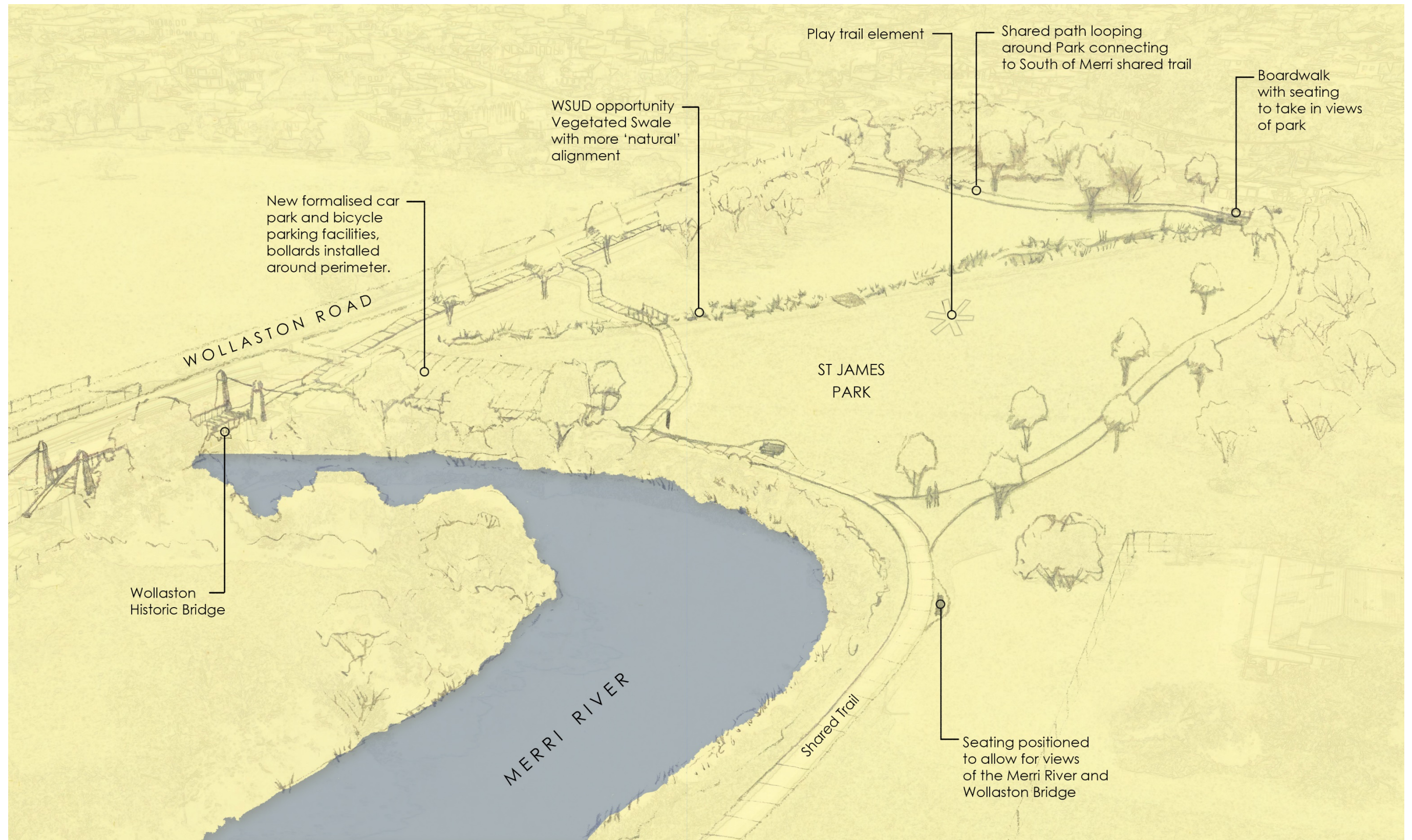
- Construct a new 'loop' path around the park to improve access and increase functionality of the space.
- Plant colourful deciduous shade trees along the shared path to complement existing exotic vegetation.
- Opportunity for Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD). Redesign open drain through the centre of the reserve to have a more natural appearance with indigenous planting each side.
- Incorporate nature play trail/interpretive sculpture feature on the south side of the WSUD swale.
- Construct a new car park for visitors to the park and Wollaston Bridge, accessed from Wollaston Road. Include bicycle parking facilities. Exact location and design of car park to be determined during detailed design phase.
- Install new directional signage in the reserve near the car park to provide information about the South of Merri shared path.
- Install new seating along the shared path, providing convenient rest stops. Position seats to take in views of the park, Merri River and Wollaston Bridge.
- Extend revegetation works along the edge of the river.
- Install 'management-only' bollards around car park and along park perimeter to deter unauthorised vehicles from entering park.
- Investigate future opportunity for shared path connection to the north of Wollaston Road.
- Opportunity for feature uplighting and/or overhead lighting to highlight the historic Wollaston Bridge.

Plan 18 – St James Park Design Recommendations





Figure 20 – St James Park Concept Sketch





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