

Olympic Leisure Centre

Site Investigation Report

“You can neither lie to a neighbourhood park, nor reason with it. ‘Artist’s conceptions’ and persuasive renderings can put pictures of life into proposed neighbourhood(s)...and verbal rationalisations can conjure up users who ought to appreciate them, but in real life only diverse surroundings have the practical power of inducing a natural, continuing flow of life and use.”

-Jane Jacobs

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Architecture Associates

77 Gertrude Street
Fitzroy VIC 3067
p: +61 3 8412 9751

rush\wright associates

Lvl 5, 105 Queen Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
p: +61 3 9600 4255

1.0 Introduction		4.0 Planning Framework	
1.1 Executive Summary	03	4.1 Zones	27
1.2 Project Introduction	04	4.2 Heritage Overlay	28
1.3 Terms of Reference	05	4.3 Banyule’s Social Infrastructure	29
		4.4 Community-led Design Process	30
2.0 Context		5.0 Summary	31
2.1 Heidelberg West Community	06	5.1 Where to Next?	31
2.2 Local History	07		
2.2.1 Pre-Colonial Cultural Heritage	07	6.0 Appendices	32
2.2.2 European Colonisation	08	6.1 Arboricultural Report	33
2.2.3 The Olympic Games	09	6.2 Site Survey TBC	xx
2.3 Existing Neighbourhood Conditions	11		
2.4 Site Location in Context	13		
2.5 Surrounding Zones & Character	14		
2.6 Existing Green Open Space	15		
2.7 Environment	16		
3.0 The Site			
3.1 The Heart of a Village	17		
3.2 Olympic Leisure Centre	18		
3.3 The Village Green	19		
3.4 Existing Trees and Vegetation	20		
3.5 Access and Road Alignments	21		
3.6 Edges and Interfaces	22		
3.7 Materials and Furniture	23		
3.8 Olympic Legacy and Icons	24		
3.9 The Shops	25		
3.10 Housing	26		



We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Willam peoples as the Traditional custodians of the area and pay respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Executive Summary

Banyule City Council have recognised the need to upgrade the Olympic Leisure Centre building in Olympic Village. This report has been commissioned in order to understand the current project and site context and will outline key observations.

There are existing studies that have been undertaken in the Heidelberg West area and broader City of Banyule Council for a variety of projects that this report has taken into consideration. A community consultation and co-design process has been designed and implemented by Council and has included a diverse range of activities. This process is currently ongoing.

This report comments on the broader suburb context and investigates how the Olympic Leisure Centre facility fits within this context. It positions the project within the context of history, analyses the current and projected population and studies physical and social qualities of both the immediate site and broader urban fabric.

The area now known as Heidelberg has been inhabited by First Nation people for tens of thousands of years and has a rich cultural heritage. It is also evident that the Heidelberg West people form a diverse multicultural neighbourhood with a strong sense of community.

The 1956 Summer Olympics, commonly known as Melbourne 1956, were an international multi-sport event held in Melbourne. Heidelberg West was the ultimate location for the athletes village. It is clear that this heritage is important to the community and maintaining the ability to recognise and celebrate this legacy is a source of community pride.

In general, Heidelberg West is composed of a large residential landscape with limited civic architecture. There is a clear need to invest in quality community facilities in the area.

Heidelberg West is situated close to multiple significant water sources, such as Darebin Creek and the Yarra and Plenty Rivers providing many opportunities to enjoy, appreciate and care for our environment. There are opportunities to connect with natural systems on the Olympic Village site.

The current Leisure Centre building is an austere monolith, largely uninviting in nature. The building includes the original Olympic Village hall to which a medley of interventions have been added over time. As a sprawling single-storey structure, it has no distinguishing features. The facades are creme brick with small openings. The heritage value lies predominantly in the village as a whole, and the social and cultural significance of past events.

The Village Green and Leisure Centre should be considered intrinsically connected. They are part of the same historical urban fabric, and this area has potential to support activities relating to the Leisure Centre both passively and actively.

The Olympic Village shops are part of the estate developed by the Housing Commission of Victoria for the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games. They are now privately owned. Very few of the shops are presently occupied and many are in disrepair. Opportunities to encourage their activation should be considered while undertaking this project.

Although the Olympic Leisure Centre has various neighbouring conditions, the building and its landscape have limited design responses to them and there are areas surrounding the facility that are poorly activated. Improvements to these connections and the landscape and urban spaces between various built form can be addressed as part of the development of this project. In particular, the area directly north of the Leisure Centre and the connection to Banyule Community Health Service is an important consideration.

The Olympic Leisure Centre site is zoned as ‘Public Use - Local Government Zone (PUZ6)’. This distinguishes it from other Public Use Zones for Education or Health.

These investigations will inform the design and community-collaboration process moving forward and help to recognise opportunities that may present themselves to this project.

Issue Register:

Issue	Issued By	Issue Date
Draft Report to City of Banyule	Danielle Peck	16.12.2021
Draft Report to City of Banyule	Danielle Peck	04.02.2022

1.2 Project Introduction

Banyule City Council have recognised the need to upgrade the Olympic Leisure Centre building in Olympic Village, Heidelberg West to meet the communities needs and to cater for its future needs.

The current facilities are run-down and at present focused only on delivering aquatic services. It has been recognised that the growing diverse local community may have a desire for a more diverse facility that can offer additional, complimentary and new services and at the same time improve the facilities to align with best practice sustainable design.

Council have committed to a community-led design proposal that will undertake a series of consultation phases and activities. This public process will inform the re-design of this important community asset.



Photograph of existing signage from Olympic Leisure Centre, 2021.

1.3 Terms of Reference

The Olympic Leisure Centre project in Heidelberg West ‘Site Investigations’ phase has examined the following Terms of Reference:

- Heidelberg Structure Plan, Draft September 2021
- Sustainable Building Guidelines; Environmentally Sustainable Design Guidelines for Capital Works, Banyule City Council, September 2021
- Banyule’s Social Infrastructure; Our Framework for a Sustainable Future, City of Banyule, Draft December 2021
- Olympic Leisure Centre Concept Design Brief, City of Banyule, October 2021
- Shaping Banyule, Re-imaging Olympic Leisure Centre Website with community comments
- Community Co-Design Workshops and Feedback, December 2021
- Needs Analysis, Heidelberg West and Olympic Leisure Centre, Michelle Read, May 2020
- Heidelberg West Housing, Masterplan, Revision 02, NH Architecture, Bird de la Coeur Architects, Openwork, June 2020
- Postcode 3081, Urban Design Framework, David Lock Associates, August 2018
- Victorian Heritage Database Report, Olympic Village

In addition to reviewing existing reports, documentation and attending meetings, independent site observations and research has been undertaken to inform this analysis. Specialist consultants have also been engaged to contribute to our findings, including:

- Rush Wright Associates- Landscape & Urban Planning
- Adept Surveys- Land Surveyor
- Xylem TreeCare- Arboroculturalist



Photograph of detail from mural painted on existing Olympic Leisure Centre, 2021.

2.0 Context

2.1 Heidelberg West Community

It is evident that the Heidelberg West people form a diverse multicultural neighbourhood with a strong sense of community.

Cultural diversity and expanding populations bring many economic, social and cultural benefits, creating opportunities and challenges for the public sector in providing policies, programs and services that successfully meet the needs of all community members.

According to 2016 Census data, Heidelberg West had a population of 5,545 people. The Heidelberg West - Bellfield community had a combined population of 7,677 with a predicted growth rate of 17.7 percent by 2036. Until the next Census data is released, it would be reasonable to assume the current Heidelberg West population to be approximately 5,800 people based on a yearly increase of 4.5 percent.

In comparison to Victoria as a whole, Heidelberg West's population has a larger percentage of age groups between 0-4, 20-34 and 85 years and older, and a smaller percentage of age groups between 40-84 years. For age groups 5-9, 10-19, 35-39 the percentage was more or less the same when compared to the State of Victoria.

Predicted population growth across most age groups is expected, with proportionately the highest growth projected to occur in those aged 70 years and older. Aging populations are more likely to experience social isolation, loneliness and need increased care. Conversely, the Heidelberg West area is also experiencing significant growth in young adults and families, increasing the need for diverse community centres, childcare and education and leisure infrastructure.

Within Banyule, Heidelberg West has the highest proportion of people born overseas, and a high proportion of the community speak a language other than English at home and are not fluent in English. The community has significant Somalian, Chinese, Indian, United Kingdom, Vietnamese and New Zealand born community members as well as a higher than average percentage, when compared to greater Banyule of people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This data suggests a diverse community that would benefit from services that support culturally diverse backgrounds and practices.

The Olympic Village precinct in particular also indicates high levels of unemployment, high levels of households experiencing housing stress, high proportions of households renting social housing, high proportion of low income households and a high proportion of households with no access to the internet, a car or education. There is also indication the Heidelberg West community is becoming more affluent, however significant disadvantage remains evident.

The Heidelberg West community attributes a change in affluence generally to an increase in private housing stock and relative affordability of the area, combined with its proximity to Melbourne CBD and health and university precincts. There is community concern that the rise in affluence and change in demographic will conceal and obscure the disadvantage still found within a high proportion of the population.

The Northern Horizons Report 2020 identified health issues in the Heidelberg West community. This is echoed in the Australia Early Development Census (AEDC) and the recently completed Needs Analysis report that suggests a high proportion of people identify as needing assistance in their daily life and high proportions of children from the Heidelberg West - Bellfield community were vulnerable to two out of the five measure of developmental health and well-being, according to the AEDC.

Understanding the specific needs of this diverse and changing community will further inform the re-development of the Olympic Leisure Centre and Olympic precinct into a community hub that can deliver vital support and social spaces equitably to the Heidelberg West community.



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1 Attendees of Malahang Festival, 2015;

2 Children in the Olympic Village School garden, 2013.

2.2 Local History

2.2.1 Pre-Colonial Cultural Heritage

The area now known as Heidelberg has been inhabited by First Nation people for tens of thousands of years and has a rich cultural heritage.

It is the physical and spiritual country of the Wurundjeri people for whom British colonisation had catastrophic consequences. Wurundjeri continue to live in Banyule today.

Heidelberg West and surrounds are situated close to significant water sources, including Darebin Creek, the Yarra and Plenty Rivers, rich river flats and open grasslands. These provided habitat for a wide range of animal and birdlife and rich vegetation. For the local population, the watercourses were a hub of activity for trade, fishing, cultural practice and recreation. Fishing was an important food source and traps were placed in the watercourses and billabongs. The River Red Gums provided bark for canoes, tools and weapons while native grasses were used in a variety of applications.

The Banyule Thematic Environmental History report (Banyule City Council, 2018) lists several indigenous heritage places, including scarred trees in Eaglemont and Lower Plenty, Banyule Flats, Warringal Parklands and Yarra Flats reserve. The name 'Warringal' means 'eagle nest' and was recorded by colonial surveyors, presumably when questioning Aboriginal informants on the local place name for the Heidelberg area.

Nangak Tamboree means respecting/ sharing/ looking after the waterway in Woiwurrung language of the Wurundjeri people. It is a bio-diverse waterway corridor which links La Trobe University Bundoora campus to the wider environment. As an 'eco-corridor' it connects with local creeks, creates habitat for wildlife and local flora. It is situated north of the project site. The Darebin Creek is a short walk away to the west of the site.

Bolin Bolin Billabong is one of the few remaining billabongs in Melbourne and is located next to the Yarra River in Bulleen, just a short distance from the Heidelberg West Olympic Village site. It has a high ecological, cultural value as part of a significant cultural riverscape and place of gathering.



1 Darebin Creek Trail; 2 Banyule Flats Reserve; 3 Bolin Bolin Billabong; 4 Scarred tree at Heide

2.2.2 European Colonisation

European colonisation began at around 1835 with catastrophic consequences to the traditional way of life and largely focused on significant transformation of the natural environment into pastoral land.

Every aspect of Wurundjeri life was damaged: access to food, water and habitations, the means of practicing their culture, recreation, trade and all aspects of social organisation. Within 30 years of settlement, the Aboriginal population was drastically reduced by introduced diseases, frontier violence, cultural disintegration and loss of Country, while most were moved to reserves. The colonisers used the land for dairy farming, grazing and market gardens.

This land well-watered by creeks and rivers was particularly fertile country. From the 1840s, settlers used it for dairy farming, grazing, fruit orchards and market gardens. The name 'Heidelberg' is claimed to have been given by one gentleman settler who believed the district was reminiscent of the town Heidelberg in Germany. The Victorian Agricultural Society ran its annual show in Heidelberg from the 1850s to at least the 1870s (when it was moved to Ascot Vale). As the demand for housing grew in the twentieth century, suburban development slowly encroached and the number of farms diminished.

Heidelberg Road (completed in 1842) is one of the first public roads built by the Colony of Victoria and is believed to follow a traditional Aboriginal route. (Along with roads,) masonry bridges were built over the rivers and a railway connection from Heidelberg to the city was made in the 1880s. Other than agriculture, some of the early industries in the area included quarrying (the plentiful basalt was favoured for public buildings and infrastructure) timber-cutting, flour mills and cheese production. With the decentralising of industry post WW2, the industrial area designated for light manufacturing was established in West Heidelberg. Here in a West Heidelberg factory, a French company assembled motor Renault and Peugeot cars from 1966 until the 1990s.



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1 Winter morning near Heidelberg 1866, by Louis Buvelot; 2 Golden Summer, Eaglemont 1889 by Arthur Streeton; 3 Map showing the main road and railway line from Melbourne to Heidelberg 1880s; 4 Detail from military survey plan Ringwood 1915 (source: State Library of Victoria Map Collection)

2.2.3 The Olympic Games

The 1956 Summer Olympics, officially known as the Games of the XVI Olympiad and commonly known as Melbourne 1956, were an international multi-sport event held in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, from 22 November to 8 December 1956. Heidelberg West was the ultimate location for the athletes village.

When remembering the past we often take for granted historical events while forgetting the contingency of their occurrence or how they came about. This is the case with the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. Melbourne was selected to host the Games by a one vote margin in 1949, the first city outside Europe and North America to do so. At an international level there was much skepticism at the time about the suitability of Melbourne as a site and, later on, its ability to deliver the necessary facilities on time. Its location in the southern hemisphere would require the event to take place during the northern hemisphere winter when athletes would normally rest. Australian quarantine restrictions prevented the equestrian events from being held here and those events would end up taking place in Stockholm half a year prior to the Olympiad proper. Adding to this were disagreements between Australian politicians over allocation of funds and the selection of venue sites, setting back the construction program.

The Olympic Village was the first of its kind. In previous games athletes had been housed in university accommodation or barracks as opposed to a self-contained estate. The idea was that this would simplify the logistics of catering and services while allowing the athletes 'to mingle freely on terms of equality and friendship, thus advancing the purpose of international understanding through sport. Also, due to a severe shortage of housing in Melbourne at the time, it was decided that an estate consisting of individual houses would be built for the athletes which would be re-purposed later as public housing under the Victorian State Housing Scheme. After a lengthy selection process in which several sites were considered, Heidelberg West was chosen and the estate was developed by the Housing Commission.

In addition to hundreds of dwellings, the Olympic Village included a shopping strip, hall, flag court and temporary dining facilities (later demolished).

In an era of seemingly limitless possibilities for communication it is difficult to imagine life without a single household screen. And yet, prior to 1956 this was the reality for all Australian families. Mainstream television was introduced in Australia just in time for the 1956 Olympic Games, literally weeks before the opening ceremony. Even then, it was only available in Melbourne and Sydney. The BBC had started television broadcasts 20 years earlier.

While several countries boycotted due to global tensions around the Cold War, Suez Crisis and Hungarian Uprising, the 1956 Melbourne Olympics came to be known as 'The Friendly Games'.

John Ian Wing, a 17-year old Chinese-Australian student from Melbourne wrote an anonymous letter to the International Olympic Committee with a new idea for the closing ceremony. His suggestion was that instead of athletes marching as national teams, they would mingle together freely - in his words *'during the march there will be only one Nation. War, politics and nationality will be forgotten. What more could anyone want, if the whole world could be made as one Nation.'* The suggestion was adopted and remains an Olympic Games tradition to this day.

The Olympic Village represents the spirit of international friendship and equality. It also represents a commitment to local families and their future; values that the proposed re-imagined Leisure Centre will also embody.



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1 Entrance to the Olympic Village 1956; 2 The location of the Olympic Village as presented in a booklet by The Housing Commission, Victoria.

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1 Official Melbourne 1956 Olympic Games poster; 2-3 Village life during the Games; 4 Scene at Olympic Village; 5 Pakistan team members demonstrate the length of a turban for a curious Australian public at the Olympic Village; 6 Pakistani family at the Olympic Village; 7 Architectural plan of the Olympic Village by Leith & Bartlett; 8 Practicing pole vault; 9 ABC broadcast vans outside an Olympic venue; 10 Taiwanese family at the Olympic Village

2.3 Existing Neighbourhood Conditions

West Heidelberg is composed of a large residential landscape with limited civic architecture, and some small dispersed open green spaces. It is flanked to the west by the Darebin Creek and bound to the north by a light-industrial zone. Bell Street Mall precinct is the main concentration of retail, with some smaller retail located at Olympic Village.

Modest cottages and two-storey flats mostly comprise the residential area in the immediate vicinity of the Olympic Leisure Centre site. There is a mix of public and private housing supply. There is evidence of poor quality housing in the area and streetscapes north of Southern Road are bordered by mostly overgrown verges.

There are proposals for investment in the area of new public housing.

The Darebin Creeks green corridor is visible along the west suburban boundary and provides a pleasant backdrop to the quiet backstreets.

The light-industrial zone to the north of the suburb is mostly well-kept and during normal work hours is vibrant and active. There is evidence of new industry and amenity moving into this area, most likely due to affordability and availability of suitable warehouse stock.

The area is generally well trees with large specimens of eucalyptus among other species present throughout streetscapes.



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1 original Olympic village housing blocks; 2 community street art; 3-4 light-industrial to north of suburb

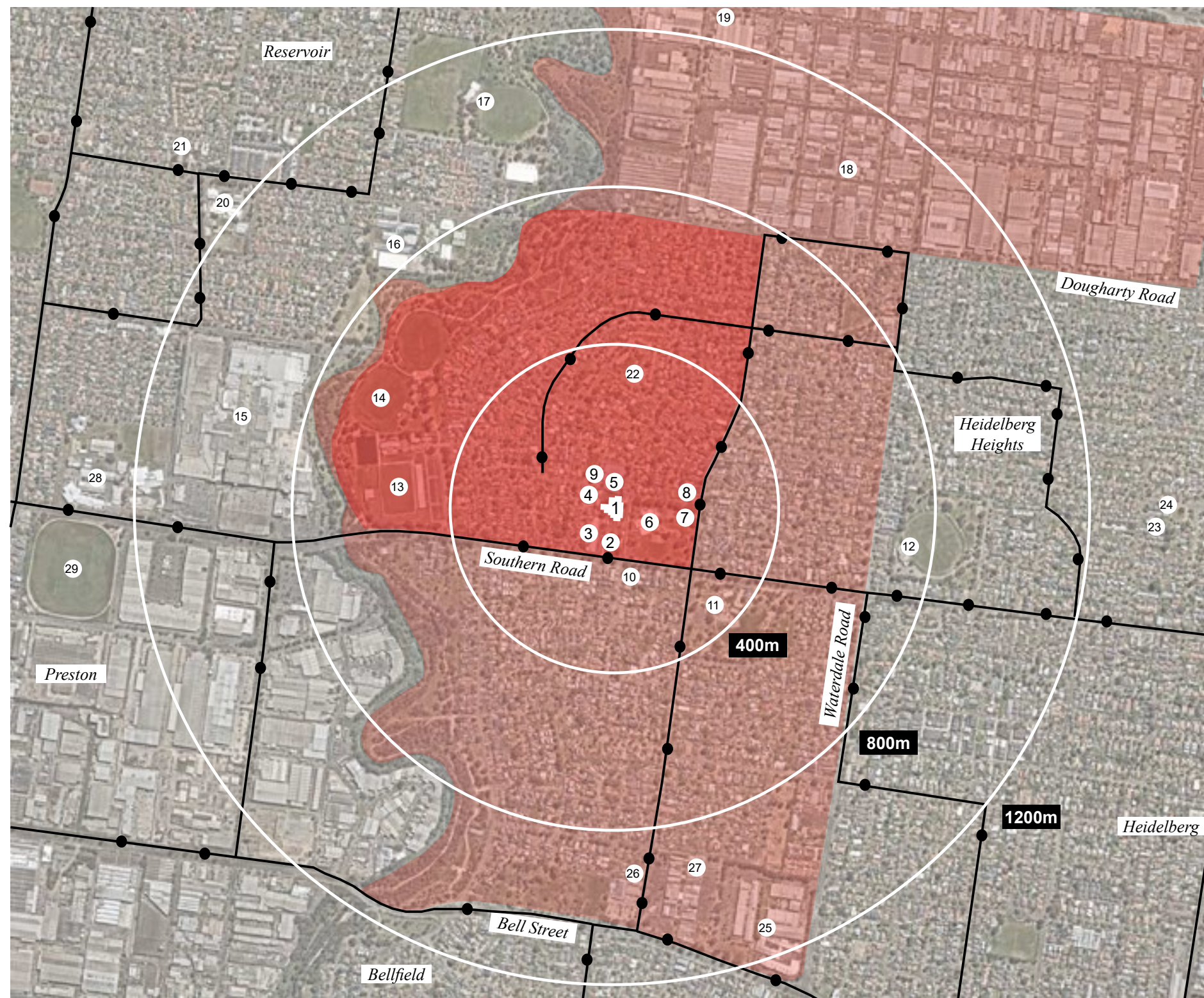


1 Buna Reserve Community Garden; 2 new development; 3 Buna Reserve playground; 4 Empire Music Studios; existing warehouse in West Heidelberg

2.4 Site Location in Context

The Olympic Leisure Centre sits amongst a small group of community buildings to the south of the Olympic Village precinct, along Southern Road. The site sits roughly 15km's (by vehicle) from Melbourne's CBD and is serviced mostly by bus routes. The closest trains stations are Rosanna (35 minute walk), and Heidelberg (45 minutes walk). The local authority is City of Banyule. The precinct is made up of largely residential dwellings with a mix of social and private housing. To the north of the precinct is a large industrial and commercial area, and within the precinct is a small commercial shopping strip that is largely unactivated. The precinct is bordered to the west by Darebin Creek, to the south by Southern Road, to the East by Oriel Road and to the North by Dougharty Road. There is a mix of facilities located within the surrounding context however there is an evident lack of well-utilised community infrastructure close to the site, in particular for leisure and community general purpose.

- 1 Subject Site
 - 2 Olympic Village Green
 - 3 Olympic Village Shops
 - 4 Social Housing adjacent to site
 - 5 Banyule Community Health Service
 - 6 Olympic Village Primary School
 - 7 Olympic Village Child and Family Centre
 - 8 Morobe Street Children's Centre
 - 9 Vacant Land Parcel
 - 10 Early Learning
 - 11 Malahang Reserve
 - 12 North Heidelberg Sports Club
 - 13 Olympic Park
 - 14 Olympic Colts Cricket Club
 - 15 Northland Shopping Centre
 - 16 East Preston Islamic College
 - 17 Cricket Club
 - 18 Textile Community Art Space
 - 19 Empire Music Studios
 - 20 Preston North-East Primary School
 - 21 East Preston Community Centre
 - 22 Buna Reserve Community Garden
 - 23 Murundaka Cohousing Community
 - 24 Heidelberg Scouts
 - 25 Melbourne Polytechnic Heidelberg
 - 26 Heidelberg West Community Hub
 - 27 Shop 48 The Harmony Centre
 - 28 Northern College of the Arts
 - 29 T.W. Blake Park
- Bus Route and Stop
- Heidelberg West
- Olympic Village Precinct



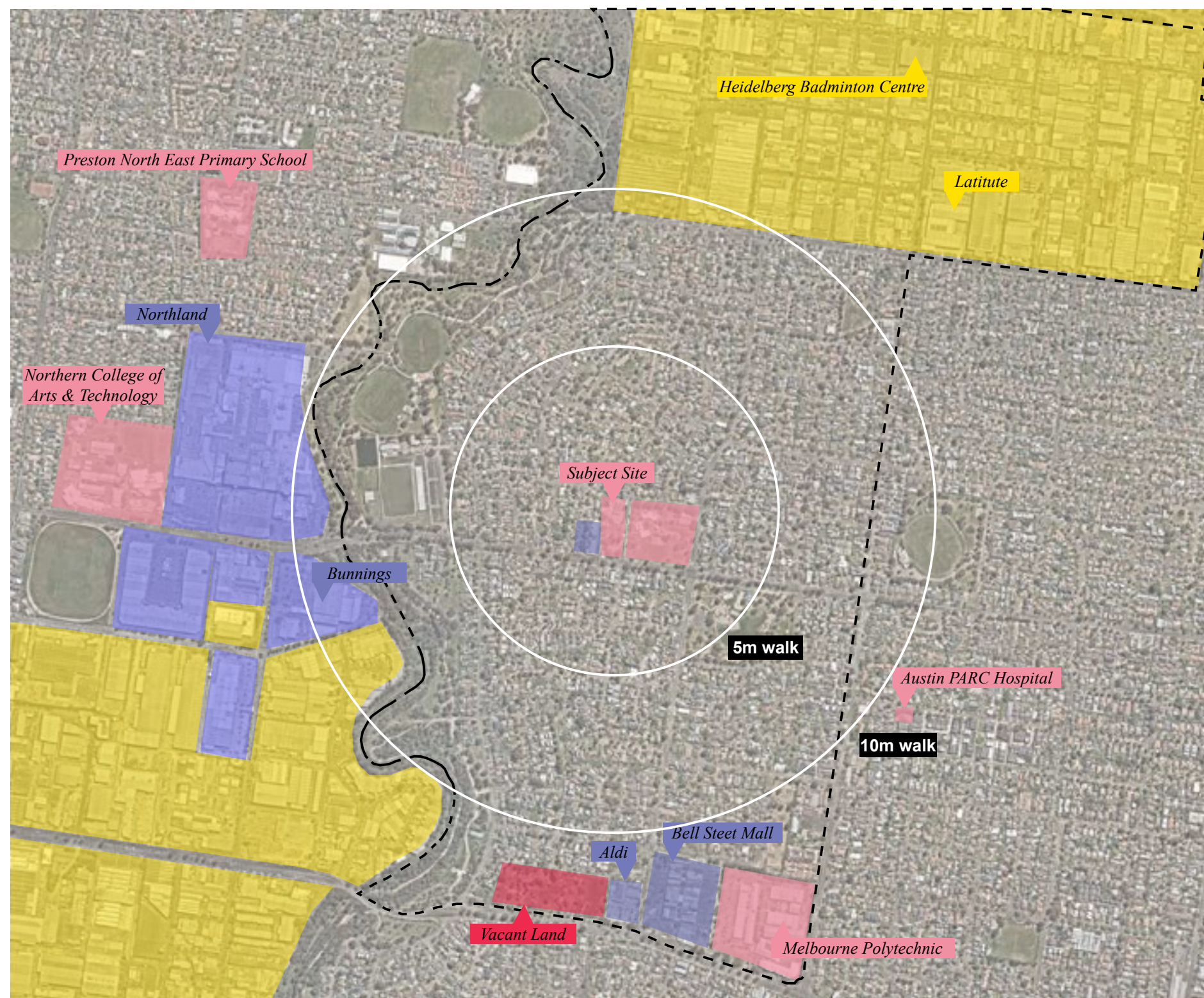
2.5 Surrounding Zones & Character

Looking at nearby zones and key uses within these zones, other than residential, we can see that within the centre of Heidelberg West there is very little built public amenity. The subject site sits within an island of residential zoning making walking between surrounding amenity unlikely.

Immediately adjacent to the subject site is a commercially zoned land parcel. This small group of shops is largely unactivated and does not seem to offer the community the basic supply needs that would be sought in an easily accessible, central location.

This signals that many Heidelberg West residents would travel outside of the walking zones for essentials, most likely either to the Bell Street commercial area, or to Northland. The suburb as a whole is not well serviced by public transport, so this indicates a vehicle would be necessitated to make this trip convenient.

There also lacks a diversity of leisure activities, other than the current Olympic Leisure Centre, which seems to suggest the redevelopment of the Leisure Centre should aim to capture and encourage a wider range of activities suitable for both public use and commercial purposes.



2.6 Existing Green Open Space

Unlike the commercial and industrial areas on Darebin Creek's western side, the eastern side of the creek near the project site is mainly occupied by residential houses together with a few parks.

The parks in the neighbourhood include Malahang Reserve across the Southern Road. The close proximity of Darebin Creek provides an opportunity to enhance an ecological link through the site.



Map of existing green open spaces in the surrounding context to Heidelberg West

2.7 Environment

Heidelberg West is situated close to multiple significant water sources, such as Darebin Creek and the Yarra and Plenty Rivers providing many opportunities to enjoy, appreciate and care for our environment.

The Banyule Thematic Environmental History Report states that *'at the time of British settlement...the river flats were characterised by rich wetlands, with a network of swamps or billabongs that were teeming with life. The broad river valley and river delta area was an important food bowl for the Aboriginal people, attracting animals, fish and bird life.'* Unfortunately, European settlers took an unfavourable view of the wetlands, other than their rich offering of birdlife for recreational shooters. Large scale draining took place and swampy ground was turned into agricultural land. Despite this, an appreciation of the Australian landscape began to emerge from the 1890s onwards and the Heidelberg school of artists played an important role in promoting its beauty.

From the start of the twentieth century, various local conservation groups fought campaigns to protect the natural environment - examples being the successful campaign in the 1970s to save Banyule Flats and in the 1990s to protect the Darebin Parklands from being used as a tip. Today the imperative to preserve bushland and biodiversity is greater than ever and wildlife corridors are understood to play a crucial role.

Heidelberg West has rich environmental surrounds: the Darebin Creek is a short walk away from the site to the west and to the east is the Yarra River and Banyule Flats Reserve, which is one of the top birdwatching hotspots in the state. The Bolin Bolin Billabong in Bulleen is one of the five remaining billabongs Melbourne. It has a high ecological and cultural value as part of a significant cultural riverscape and place of gathering.

To the north is Nangak Tamboree - a bio-diverse waterway corridor which links La Trobe University Bundoora campus to the wider environment. As an 'eco-corridor' it connects with local creeks, creates habitat for wildlife and local flora. The name means respecting/ sharing/ looking after the waterway in Woiwurrung language of the Wurundjeri people.



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1 Darebin Creek; 2 Billabong;
3 Eucalypt; 4 local birdlife;
5 Darebin Creek


3.0 The Site

3.1 The Heart of a Village

The Olympic Village precinct site was developed to host athletes for the Melbourne 1956 Olympic Games.

Along Southern Road there is a concentration of community use buildings that form the 'heart' of the larger precinct. The project to develop the Olympic Leisure Centre will also consider some of this surrounding context, in particular the adjacent Village Green. The current Olympic Leisure Centre building occupies most of the land within its title boundary except a lawn area on the northwestern corner.



- 1 Subject Site
 - 2 Olympic Village Green
 - 3 Olympic Village Shops
 - 4 Housing
 - 5 Banyule Community Health Service
 - 6 Olympic Village Primary School
 - 7 Olympic Village Child and Family Centre
 - 8 Morobe Street Children's Centre
 - 9 DHHS owned vacant land
-  Olympic Leisure Centre and Village Green Site

3.2 Olympic Leisure Centre

The current Leisure Centre building is an austere monolith, largely uninviting in nature. The building includes the original Olympic Village hall to which a medley of interventions have been added over time. As a sprawling single-storey structure, it has no distinguishing features. The facades are creme brick with small openings.

The original hall was designed by Leith Bartlett for the 1956 Olympics and was the social and spiritual centre of the village. It was re-purposed as a community youth centre after the Games and is now a basketball court. A swimming pool was added in the early 1970s and further development works took place in the early 1990s.

The buildings facades with little articulation do not embody openness and inclusivity. The exterior spaces are unactivated and invite antisocial behaviour. The building's siting to the north of the site limits opportunities for outdoor spaces by reducing the amount of optimum solar access. The interface with the Banyule Community Health Service could be improved by activating this northern aspect.

A mural facing the entrance and Village Green displays the pride and creativity of the community and the potential for the community to embrace and make their own future development of this centre.

The building lacks architectural merit, does not meet current day expectations, is uninviting and has fallen into disrepair. Considering the history of the site, cultural legacy and energy of the community, however, the opportunities for re-imagining this centre are rich.

Today, the Olympic Leisure Centre has an indoor 25m swimming pool, spa and sauna, gym and multi-purpose court stadium with changing facilities. Services offered include personal training, group fitness and learn to swim.

Due to the building's limitations, patron numbers are currently very low. According to one report provided by Banyule City Council, it is one of the poorest performing leisure centres in the country. In contrast to this low usage, it would appear from other various reports and analysis that there is great need for an increase of good-quality community services and centres.



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1 Olympic Village hall, 1982 by Graeme Butler; 2-5 existing leisure centre with alterations and additions

3.3 The Village Green

The Village Green and Leisure Centre are part of the same Olympic Village precinct and should be considered intrinsically connected. They are part of the same historical urban fabric, and this area has potential to support any new additions to the Leisure Centre both passively and actively.

Car-parking has widened the space between the two and results in a Village Green 'island' whereby connections with the Leisure Centre are limited to being of a visual nature only. Several mature trees provide shade and basic amenities include a playground, BBQ and outdoor seating are found within the village green. Presently under-utilised, a re-imagined Village Green has immense capacity as a gathering space and for spillover activity from the Leisure Centre if these physical connections can be re-established and uses can be well-positioned and protected. The Village Green's location along busy Southern Road and the bus stop is a challenge in relation to traffic management, safety and noise.



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1 Road and carpark between Village Green and Leisure Centre; 2 Looking east towards the school; 3 Looking north from Southern Road; 4 Looking south from Leisure Centre.

3.4 Existing Trees and Vegetation

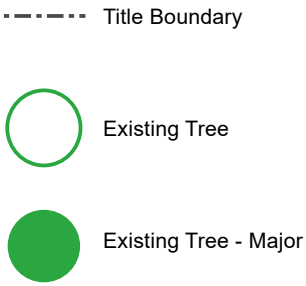
A limited number of significant site trees are present along the perimeter of the Olympic Leisure Centre building. The Olympic Village Green has a greater intensity of existing trees to consider.

Among them, two major trees that are about 15 metres in height grow on the northeast corner and the southwest corner of the property. Retention or removal of these trees and the extent and manner of new works within the tree protection zones of these trees are to be determined by Council arborists.

As the tree on the southwest corner grows around 500mm above the level of the surrounding pedestrian pavement, the proposed building and new external works shall carefully incorporate existing ground levels of the tree's TPZ into a future design.

In the surrounding area, several established native trees are present in the Olympic Village Green. This includes a Victorian Blue Gum. Alamein Road lacks of street trees along the Leisure Centre.

Apart from these trees, little understorey planting occurs, only a few grass and hedges are present. The general character of site's planting is native while lawn is predominant as a ground treatment around the Leisure Centre and the Village Green.



01 large tree on north east corner



02 large tree on south west corner



03 Victorian Blue Gum in Village Green



Leaves and nuts of Victorian Blue Gum in the Village Green

3.5 Access and Road Alignments

The current road network and access to the Olympic Leisure Centre dissects the site and brings vehicular traffic in between this key community facility and public open space.

Vehicular access to the site is through Alamein Road or Moresby Crescent off Southern Road. There is parallel street parking on Alamein Road and approximately 52 parking spaces along Moresby Crescent that include two disabled parking spots.

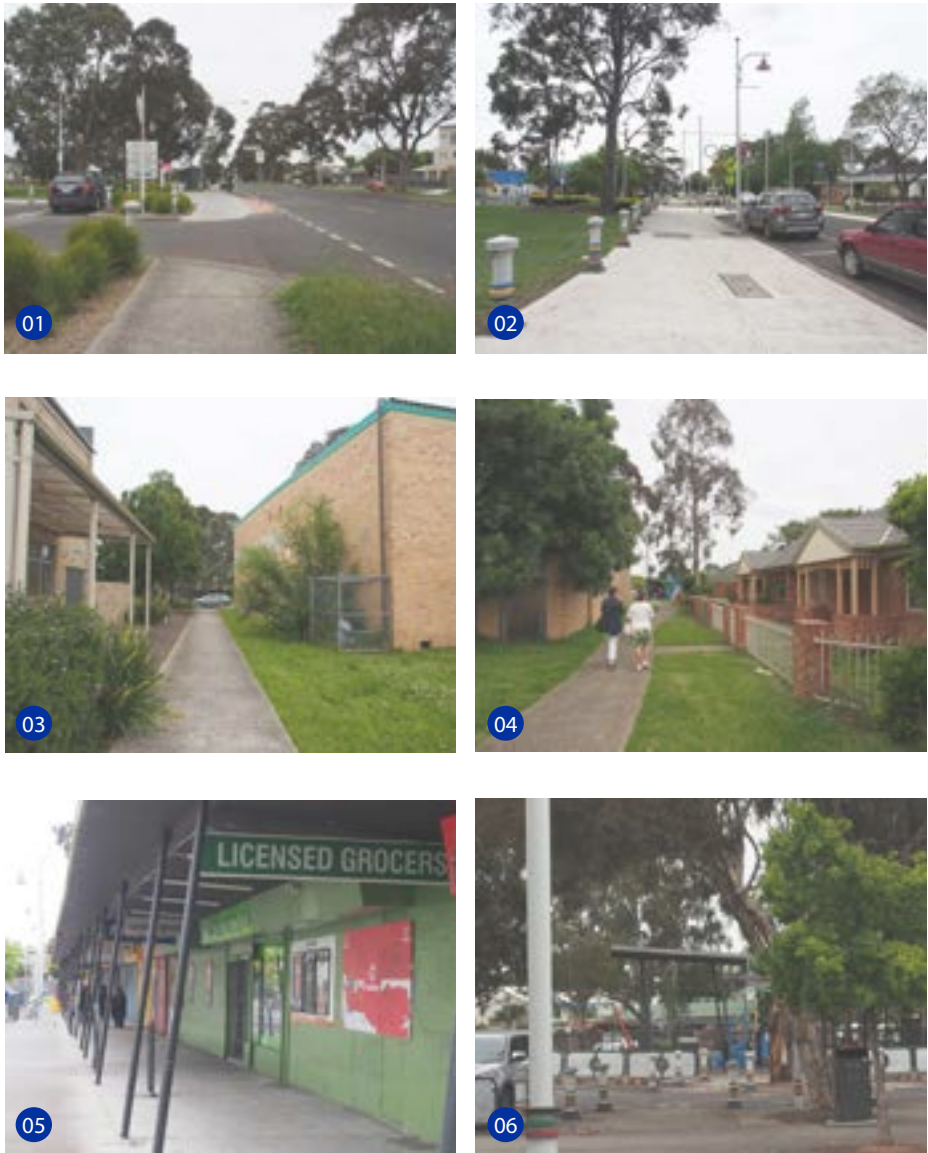
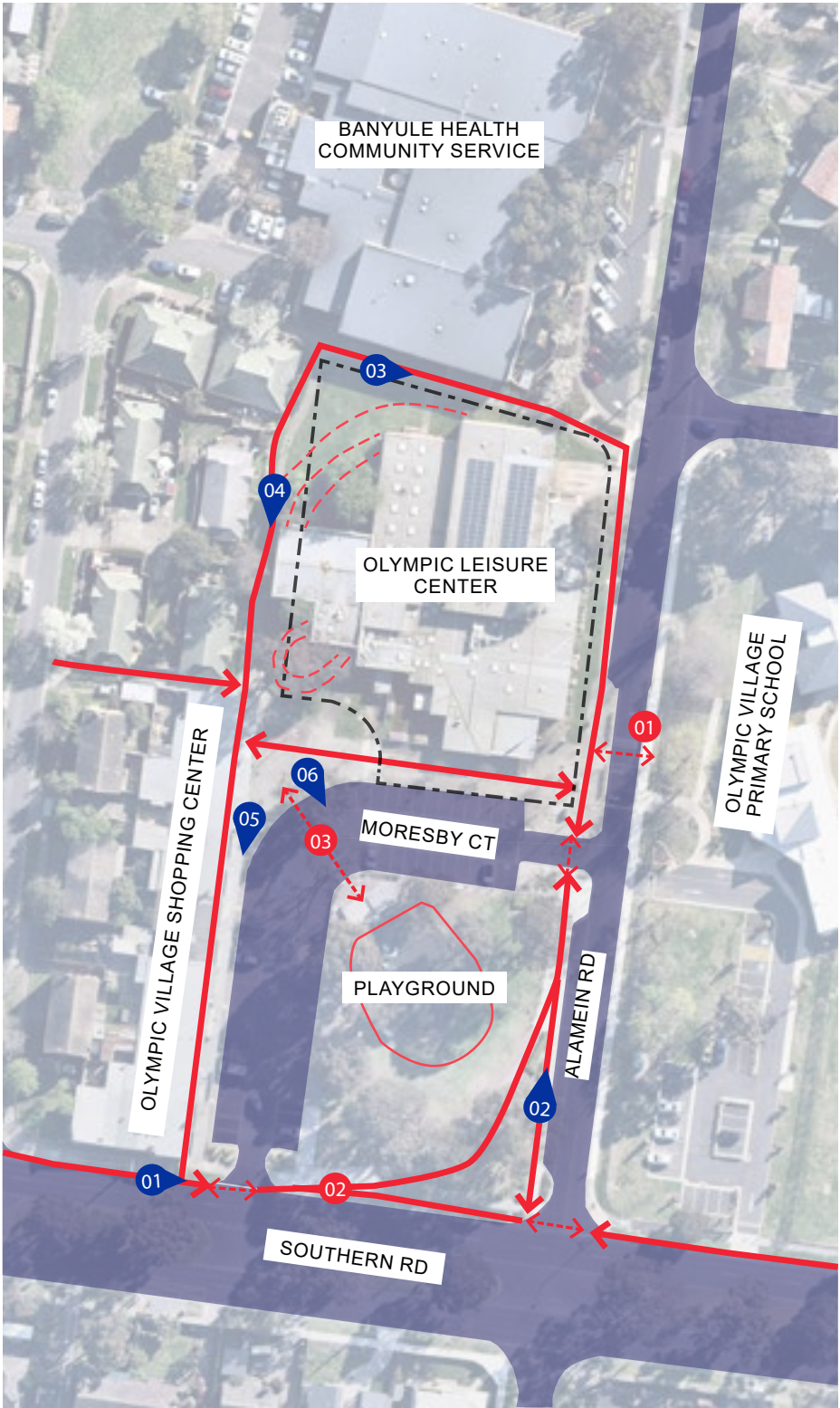
Pedestrian access around the Olympic Leisure Centre completes as a circular footpath without being disrupted by roads. The area is flat, in general, and easy to access to and from all directions.

Nevertheless, visiting the Village Green is not convenient either from the Village Centre or Village Shopping Centre. This is because the Village Green is isolated and surrounded by roads in all directions.

Although designed access is installed between the playground in the Village Green and the Leisure Centre with bollards and road graphics, the treatment limits free pedestrian access and pushes pedestrians to the narrow crossing point.

The access to the Leisure Centre across Alamein Road does not provide a pedestrian crossing and has a speed hump only.

- 01 Speed hump
- 02 Bus stop / shelter
- 03 Road graphic
- Indicative contour lines (500mm)
- - - Title Boundary
- ← - - - - - Pedestrian access across road
- ↔ Pedestrian access on footpath



1 Pedestrian access along Southern Road; 2 Pedestrian access along Alamein Road; 3 Narrow access through northern side of the Centre; 4 Narrow access next to housing units; 5 Access through an arcade of the Olympic Shopping Centre; 6 Access to a playground in the Village Green

3.6 Edges and Interfaces

Although the Olympic Leisure Centre has various neighbouring conditions, the building and its landscape have limited design responses to them. The conditions of each interface are as follows.

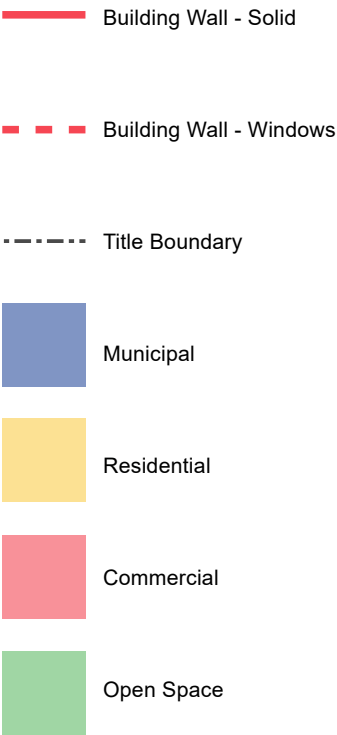
The southern interface has an entrance to the Leisure Centre and faces to the Village Green. From Southern RD, the building is currently not visible due to its compact building scale and the large trees in the Village Green.

The eastern interface is the only side to have a street frontage. Across Alamein Road is a primary school with green open space around.

The northern interface has a council building and the current building does not provide any visual interaction or physical access. As a result, a part of the interface has become a rubbish dump.

The western interface has residential units of a social housing complex with a meandering footpath. Its proximity to residential doors and windows provides an awkward feeling, especially without screening plants.

With the current building design, there are limited window openings except for the eastern side. The situation does not provide passive surveillance or visual interactions between inside and outside.



1 Window openings to Alamein Road; 2 no windows on north facing walls; 3 Western interface to social housing; 4 Southern interface to Moresby Court

3.7 Materials and Furniture

Materials in the pedestrian realm are basic and aged. There are many bollards but few benches provided around the Leisure Centre.

Most footpath materials are concrete including the entrance area of the Olympic Leisure Centre. A limited extent of colour concrete block pavement is installed along Alamein RD and a coloured concrete pavement is present at a lane accessing Midway Street. Drain pits on footpaths, in general, have civil/vehicular grade steel grates with non compliant large openings.

The locations of shelters are not well considered. A picnic shelter obstructs views from the Leisure Centre to the playground entry. A bus shelter disrupts the pedestrian access from the footpath along Southern RD to the Village Green and views into the open space.

There is a lack of wayfinding signage along Southern RD to assist visitors to navigate around the Olympic Leisure Centre and surrounding facilities.

01 Picnic shelter

02 Bus shelter

03 Playground

Low Fence

Title Boundary

Concrete Footpath

Coloured Concrete Footpath

Concrete Block Pavement

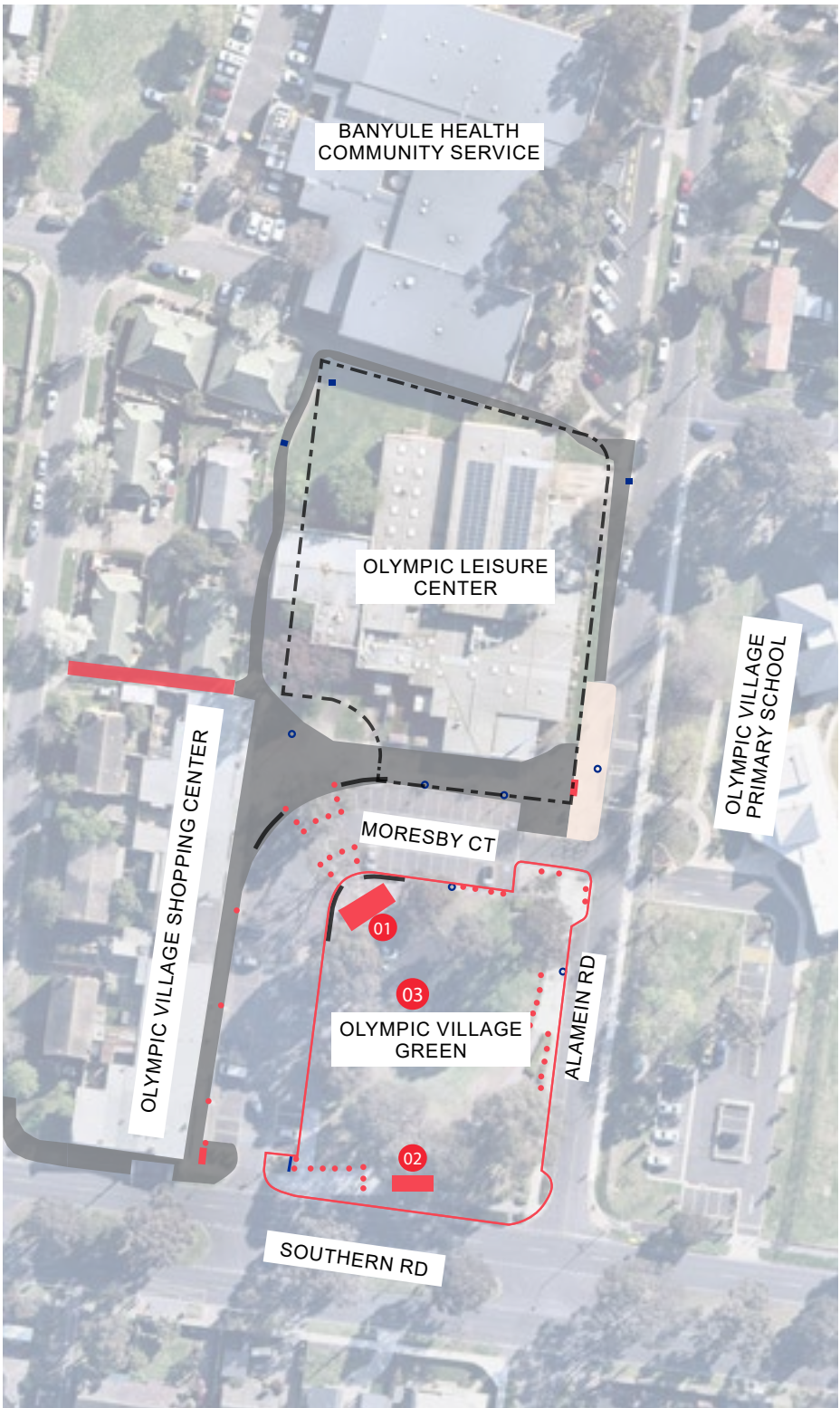
Bench

Sign Board

Light pole

Bollard

Drain pit



1 Basic concrete pavement to the entrance area; Aged concrete block pavement and coloured concrete; Olympic Shopping Village signage along Southern Road; Olympic custom design bollard and steel bench; Vehicular grade drain pit to pedestrian footpath; Low fence.

3.8 Olympic Legacy and Icons

Setting foot in Alamein Road, one knows one has entered the Olympic Village. With the rings today hanging just as proudly as they did in 1956, Alamein Road is the heart of the village, presenting both a tangible link to West Heidelberg’s Olympic history and access to key community services and organisations. It is a gateway to a community.

During the Olympics, Alamein Road contained the ‘Flag Court’ - flags of each competing nation lined the entrance to the precinct. Much has changed over time, with trees and street lamps now taking their place.

A series of Olympic related items are still present on the site (see a list below), but most items are rundown and dated. Recent items added include the signage panels near the entrance of the Leisure Centre which interpret some of the history of the site.

Memory of the Olympic Games has been signified by the use of the Olympic Rings, colours on street furniture, plaques and emblematic bespoke park installations like the rock seat incorporating the Olympic Torch. These actions suggest that the community maintains local pride and memories associated with the event.

New and contemporary ways of honouring the site’s heritage are urgently required to provide hope and further empower the community.

Olympic related items on site:

- 01 Olympic Rings, hung over Alamein Road (not original)
- 02 Rock seat with Olympic torch
- 03 Memorial plaque
- 04 Custom design paving and brick edges
- 05 Custom design bollards and light poles
- 06 New signage by the City of Banyule

Olympic rings

Rock seat

Memorial plaque

Custom design paving

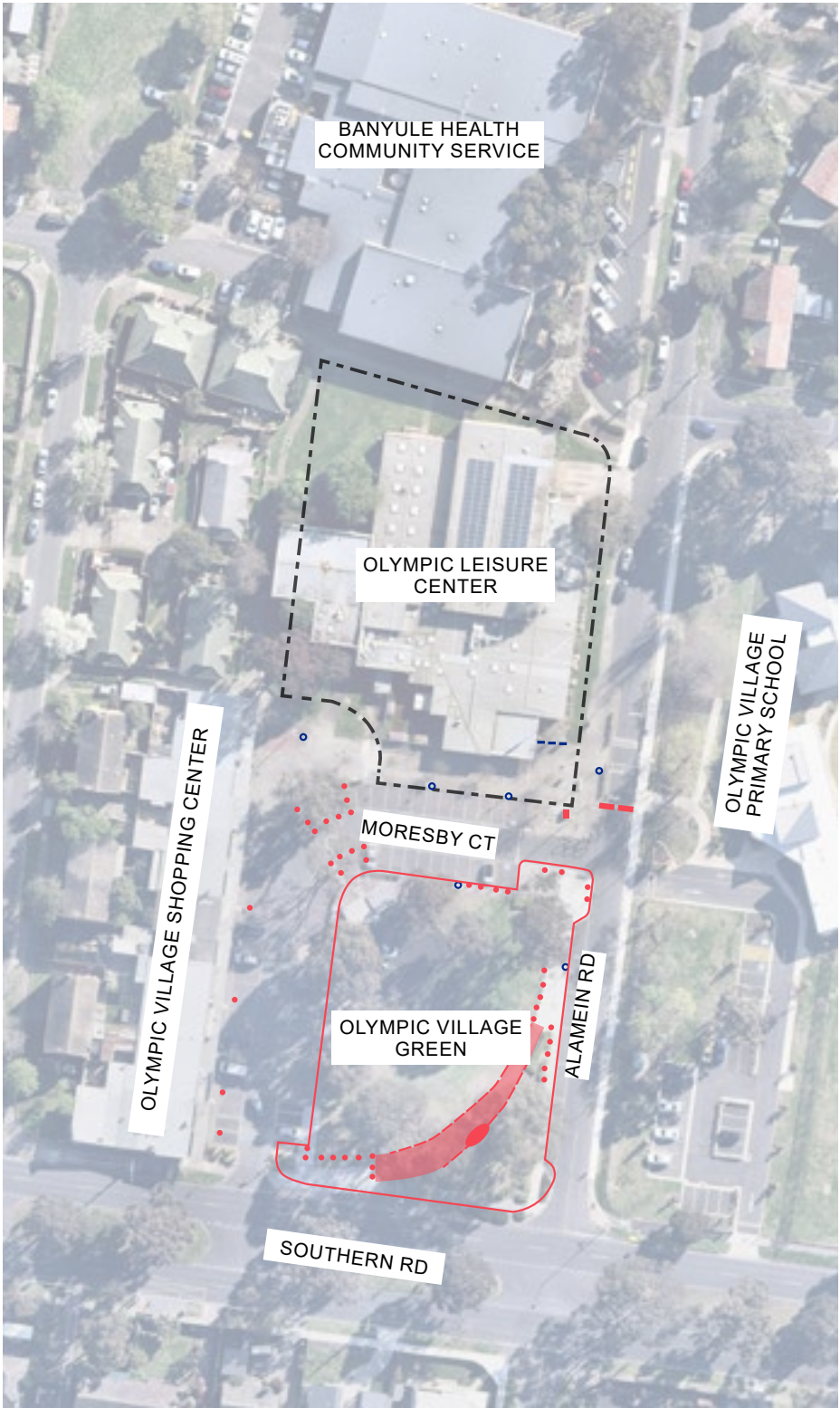
Custom design brick edge

Custom design light pole (indicative locations)

Custom design bollard (indicative locations)

New signage

Title Boundary



3.9 The Shops

The Olympic Village shops are part of the estate developed by the Housing Commission of Victoria for the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games. They are now privately owned. Very few of the shops are presently occupied and many are in disrepair.

Re-activation of these shops would greatly assist to improve the overall site's usefulness. The presence of active small business and services outlets would enhance the function and feel of the Village. As they face the Village Green and are adjacent to the Leisure Centre there is an opportunity for these to house affiliated and complimentary functions.

There is a general consensus around the benefit of walkable neighbourhoods. By encouraging this small group of shops to re-engage it would enhance the likelihood that community from Heidelberg West would use these shops as they are a short walk from the largely residential suburb.

The shops are an integral part of the historic urban fabric dating back to the Olympic Games and could be revived as core community assets.



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1 the shops in 1977; 2-3 the shops in 2021, which are a direct link to Southern Road; 4 mural in lane along the north-facing shops end facade

3.10 Housing

The Heidelberg West area is largely of residential nature, supports a high proportion of social housing, and is concurrently experiencing demographic shifts as a consequence of relative affordability.

The Leisure Centre site itself is flanked by public housing to the west. Several dwellings presently face the Leisure Centre. A footpath between this housing and the Centre connects Olympic Adult Education and Banyule Community Health to the north with the shopping centre and Village Green.

Population and economic growth in the 1920s saw suburban expansion throughout Melbourne, including Heidelberg, however the Heidelberg West area remained open paddocks.

Large scale immigration, combined with the return of soldiers following WW2, saw an acute shortage of housing in Melbourne. A spike in births and marriages meant the number of households far exceeded the available homes. The Housing Commission of Victoria (HCV) built a large housing estate in Heidelberg West in the early 1940s – it was the largest estate built by HCV at the time and houses were built ‘pre-fab’ concrete or brick.

Following the 1956 Games, the Olympic Village estate was also adopted by the HCV for use as public housing. The 1950s and 1960s was a period of unprecedented housing affordability and outer-ring areas in Banyule such as Rosanna and Lower Plenty (formerly paddocks and orchards) were transformed to suburbia.

Heidelberg West now has a mixture of public and private housing. The Heidelberg West Housing masterplan, undertaken in 2020, focused on two key housing estates of Bell/Bardia and Tarakan. Sustainable objectives are at the core of future planning with a focus on minimising environmental impacts and resource consumption and protecting health and wellbeing of residents. Key principles are high quality design and a landscape-led public realm approach. Universal Design principles are paramount with equitable, accessible and flexible use of spaces. An expanded ecology is identified as an opportunity for further engagement with the Darebin Creek.

It is vital to understand and analysis current and future housing shifts to ensure the Olympic Leisure Centre caters appropriately to needs of both current and future residents.



Photograph of nearby social housing adjacent to the Olympic Leisure Centre site, 2021.

4.0 Planning & Consultation

4.1 Planning Framework

The Olympic Leisure Centre site is zoned as ‘Public Use - Local Government Zone (PUZ6)’. This distinguishes it from other Public Use Zones for Education or Health.

The zones purpose is stated as: ‘To implement the Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework. To recognise public land use for public utility and community services and facilities. To provide for associated uses that are consistent with the intent of the public land reservation or purpose.’

- Property
- Properties
- Parcel
- Properties proposed
- Parcel proposed
- All Zones
- Planning Scheme Zones
- Residential Zones
- MUZ - Mixed Use Zone
- RGZ - Residential Growth Zone
- NRZ - Neighbourhood Residential Zone
- GRZ - General Residential Zone
- Industrial Zones
- IN1Z - Industrial 1 Zone
- IN3Z - Industrial 3 Zone
- Commercial Zones
- C1Z - Commercial 1 Zone
- C2Z - Commercial 2 Zone
- Public Land Zones
- PUZ1 - Public Use Zone-Service and Utility
- PUZ2 - Public Use Zone-Education
- PUZ6 - Public Use Zone-Local Government
- PUZ7 - Public Use Zone-Other Public Use
- PPRZ - Public Park and Recreation Zone
- PCRZ - Public Conservation and Resource Zone
- TR22 - Principal Road Network
- TR23 - Significant Municipal Road
- Special Purpose Zones
- UFZ - Urban Floodway Zone



Excerpt from Vicplan showing site zones and adjacent zones and overlays

4.2 Heritage Overlay

The Olympic Village Green is included in the local government heritage overlay (number HO184) and is protected under the local planning scheme (Banyule). The addresses included in the Heritage Place listing are 15 Alamein Road, 1-17 Moresby Court and 180 Southern Road, Heidelberg West.

The overlay applies to associated buildings, fences, roadworks and street furniture. A permit is required to demolish, construct a building or carry out works to the site.

The purpose of the heritage overlay is to conserve and enhance those elements that contribute to the significance of heritage places. As per the Statement of Significance these elements are 'historical, social and aesthetic'. The predominant elements considered significant to this overlay are the history and cultural association with the Olympic Games.

The Olympic Leisure Centre and Village Green are not listed in the Victorian Heritage Register, as such Heritage Victoria does not make decisions about this site. There are no specific height limits for this zone under the Banyule Planning Scheme.



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1 aerial photograph looking down towards Olympic Village, 1956; 2 Entry to Olympic Village; 3 Olympic Village plan; 4 Olympic Village Green showing Olympic Rings

4.3 Banyule’s Social Infrastructure & Sustainability

This framework supports the social, economic and environmental goals of the Banyule Community Vision 2041. With people at the centre of this vision, a network of built, social and environmental infrastructure are identified as being the key pillars that make up healthy neighbourhoods. Detailed local investigations are necessary to understand the needs and aspirations of a community.

The term social infrastructure is broadly used for hard and soft elements. Hard infrastructure refers to the physical elements of the built environment, including an array of community facilities. Soft infrastructure refers to the services, programs and activities that support better outcomes for all.

Facilities should be accessible, culturally safe and flexible (able to support diverse uses over time). They should support the needs of the local service providers and the community participation in social and creative enterprises. Buildings should make strong connections with the broader public realm and meet sustainability targets.

The sustainability principles supported by the Council are:

- To improve energy, water & waste performance of building
- Energy efficiency
- To promote low energy forms of transport eg. cycling
- To reduce urban height island effect by greening urban areas
- Support biodiversity

We understand that the local community wishes to exceed expectations and support a Leisure Centre that promotes exemplary and visible sustainable features.



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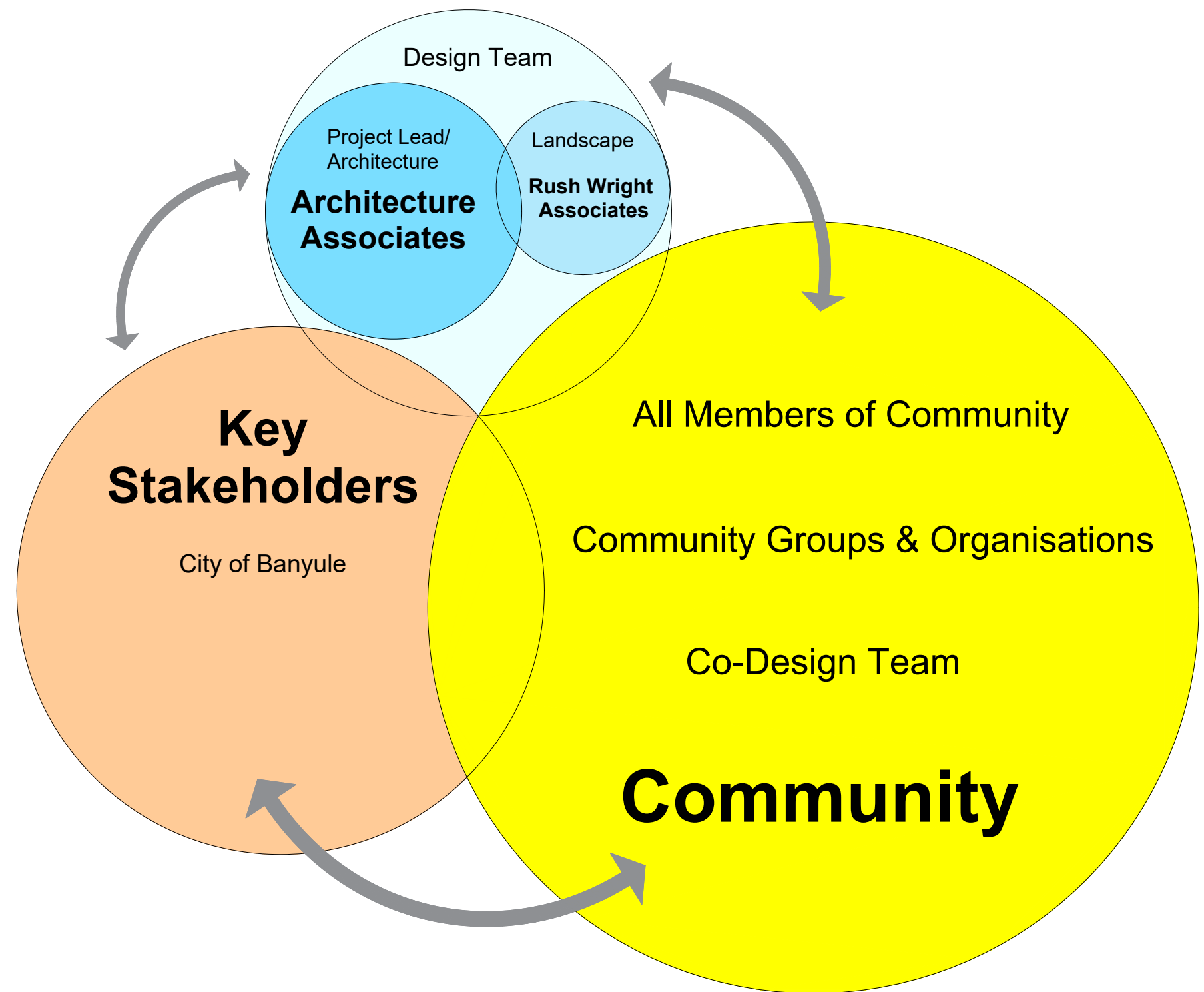
1 children playing at Malahang Reserve festival, 2015; 2 Malahang Reserve Festival, 2015; 3 community legal

4.4 Community-led Design

City of Banyule are seeking to understand the needs and aspirations of people when delivering social infrastructure. The Olympic Leisure Centre is being re-imagined via a co-design process with the Heidelberg West community.

A series of workshops with representatives of local organisations and members of the public will examine the wants and needs of the community. An online portal will gather thoughts and responses from the broad public and a series of activation and engagement activities have further consulted and tested the communities thoughts. The principal aim of the project is to serve the needs of the local community. This is a project led by community.

The role of the design team is to listen carefully to the community feedback in various forms, examine the existing context and references and to provide the community with design responses that capture their thoughts and needs.



5.0 Summary

5.1 Where to Next?

This site investigations report will inform the process moving forward, along side the community co-design process.

The next phase will see an Opportunities and Analysis Study delivered that captures responses to the various community activities that have been taking place in recent months. An iterative design process will test community feedback on the subject site and within its context. Key observations made in this report will be discussed and highlighted with the community through the co-design process for further comment.

There will be additional detailed site investigations required once a preferred design response is selected and developed that might include, but not limited to the following:

- Site Services Audit
- Dial Before You Dig
- Arborocultural Assessment of village green if works are contemplated in this location
- Geotechnical/ Soil Testing
- Division 6 Survey
- Traffic Assessment
- Heritage Assessment

The project present an exciting opportunity for the Heidelberg West community and evidenced in this report are some key areas in which this project could have lasting and effectual positive change an influence.



Olympic Rings displayed along Alamein Road in Heidelberg West.

6.0 Appendices

Appendix A	Arboricultural Assessment
Appendix B	Site Survey (TBC- pending)