



Background Report.

Master Plan for 3-5 Rollo Street, Yarragon – Former home of the Yarragon Primary School

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of this land, the Gunaikurnai People. Council pays respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

A number of groups and individuals have contributed to the information contained in this document, including the project reference group which has representatives from the Yarragon and District Community Association, Yarragon Business Association, Baw Baw Sustainability Network, Yarragon Country Fire Authority, staff of Baw Baw Shire Council from Recreation and Infrastructure Delivery and Councillors.

Special thanks to Tini Cook for her contribution to the section on the history of settlement.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CoM	Committee of Management
CPTED	Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
DELWP	Department of Environment Land Water and Planning
ESD	Ecologically Sustainable Development
PUZ2	Public Use Zone - Education (PUZ2)
LTIP	Long Term Infrastructure Plan
WCC	Baw Baw Shire Council

Part 1 Background and Site Context.

1. Introduction

The former Yarragon Primary School Site at 3-5 Rollo Street is approximately 0.9 Hectares in size. The site was utilised by the Yarragon Primary School and Yarragon Kindergarten, until recently when the School and Kindergarten relocated to their new site in Loch Street. The existing buildings were later removed and the site now sits vacant, with only trees, grass and boundary fence remaining. Figure 1 shows the location of the site.

2. Background

In 2015, the State Government approved the sale of this land. In October 2019, Baw Baw Shire Council resolved to purchase the land. This resolution by Council was in response to community consultation conducted in December 2017 to January 2018, which revealed that *'98 per cent of respondents (nearly 90 per cent of which were residents of Yarragon) supported Council investment to retain the site. Two further petitions calling for Council to retain the site for community use were tabled at a Council meeting on 25 September 2019, comprising 584 and 244 signatories respectively.'* (Baw Baw Shire Council, 2019)

The Site provides an excellent opportunity for community-led activation.

Figure 1: Site Locality Plan



3.The Study Area

The Former Yarragon Primary School Site is located at the eastern edge of Yarragon. The Site has a frontage of approximately 130 metres along Rollo Street and 60 metres along Murray Street. The Site and is less than 100 metres walking distance to nearby shops on the Princes Highway.

The Former Yarragon Primary School Site Master Plan applies to the Crown Land areas known as Lot 2001 on Plan PP5898.

The Site is surrounded by laneways along the northern and southern boundaries and roads along the eastern and western boundaries.

The site is currently zoned Public Use Zone – Schedule 2 (Education) and is surrounded by commercial land uses to the north and residential land uses to the east, south and west.

The subject site is shown on Figure 2.

Figure 2: Subject Site



4. Development of a Master Plan

4.1 Project Approach

A Master Plan has been initiated by Council to help guide the future development of the site.

The principles, objectives and recommendations of the Master Plan will be based on findings from site visits and site analysis, findings and recommendations of Council’s relevant studies and plans regarding open space, recreation and community hubs and insights and suggestions from the community and stakeholders.

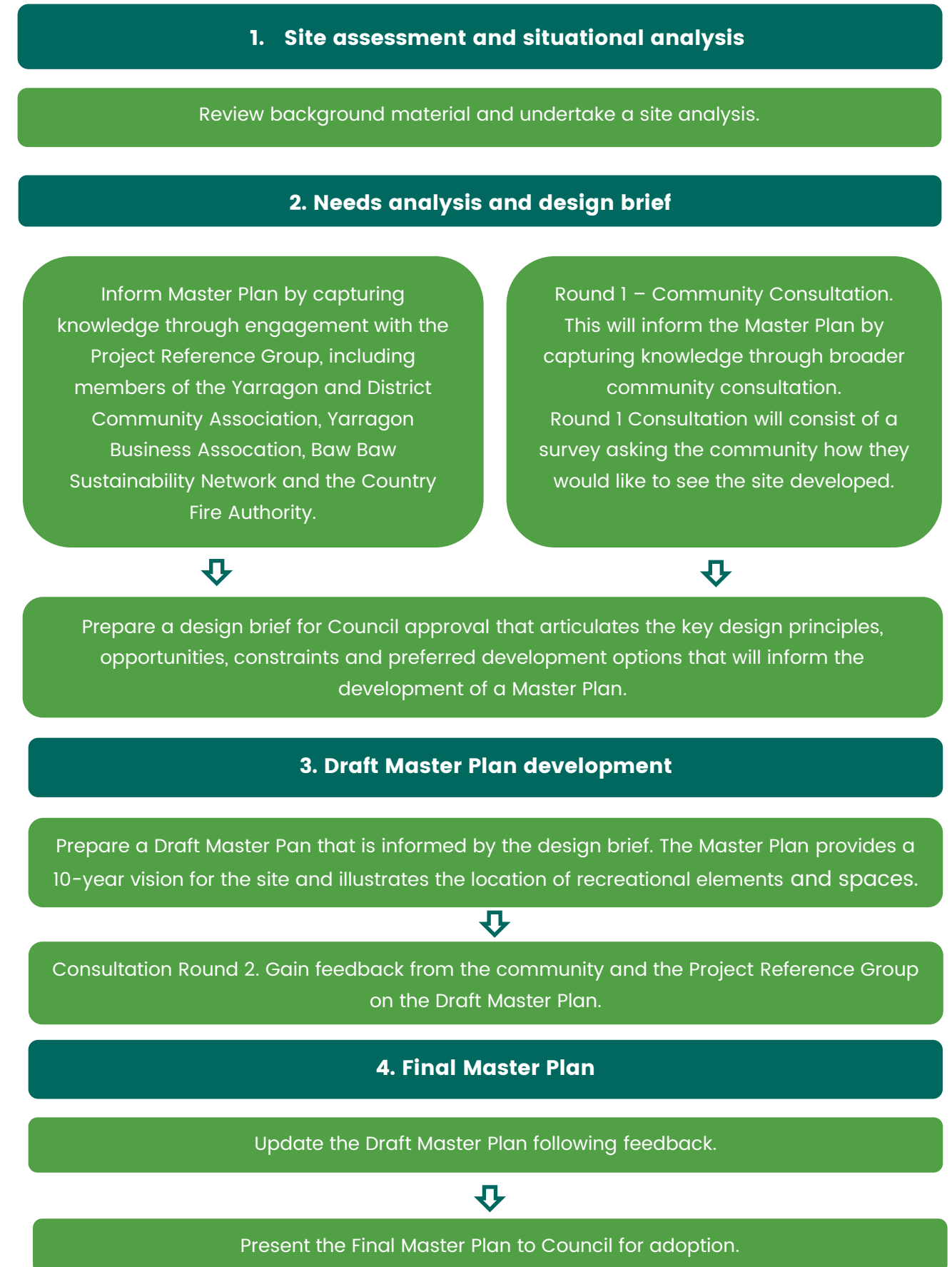
The recommendations of the Master Plan will provide guidance for the development of the site over a 10-year timeframe. It is anticipated that the development of the park will take a number of years to be realised, as it is a newly acquired reserve and significant financial resources are required to purchase and develop the land. It is anticipated that the development of the reserve will be subject to funding through a combination of Council’s long term infrastructure program and State and Federal grants and funding programs when such opportunities arise.

The Master Plan will provide recommendations for the staged development of the reserve to see it become a well-used and loved feature of the Yarragon township.

This background report is the first step in the Master Planning process, providing a summary of the site context, relevant strategies and plans, a site assessment and analysis and possible opportunities for community and stakeholders to consider.

Details of the project approach for the preparation of the Master Plan are provided at Figure 3.

FIGURE 3: Project Approach



5. Site Context

5.1 Zoning and Land Use

The former Yarragon Primary School and Kindergarten Site is located in the township of Yarragon.

Yarragon is located approximately 120 kilometres from Melbourne and is located on the Princes Highway between the towns of Darnum and Trafalgar. Yarragon is the first town east of Melbourne that travellers reach with direct access from the Princes Highway. It is a popular place for visitors to stop to eat, shop and rest.

In 2012, the Yarragon Primary School at Rollo Street was closed and the new Yarragon Primary School at Loch Street was opened. The construction of the Yarragon Kinder next to the new school soon followed. The school and kinder buildings at 3-5 Rollo Street were decommissioned and removed. This resulted in the land at 3-5 Rollo Street becoming vacant.

There was strong support from the community for the site to be utilised for a community purpose. Following the requests by the community to retain the site in public ownership Baw Baw Shire Council resolved in 2019 to acquire the former Yarragon Primary School site.

The Site is currently zoned Public Use Zone for education purposes. However, the site will progress through a rezoning process to allow for its development.

The population of Yarragon has seen steady residential growth in recent years. The 2011 showed Yarragon's population as 1,525 and the 2016 census showed Yarragon's population as 1,650, an increase of approximately 25 people per annum. There has been limited residential land available to purchase in Yarragon in recent years, and it is likely there will be more significant population growth per annum following the development and release of additional residential land.

The town is anticipated to see future residential growth, subject to rezoning, of land to the south, east and west of the existing town boundary. These planned areas of residential growth are detailed in the Yarragon Structure Plan contained in the Baw Baw Planning Scheme.

5.2 Strategic Planning Framework

The Site is zoned Public Use Zone Schedule 2 (PUZ2) for the purposes of education. The Site is covered by the Development Contributions Overlay. A development contribution will not be required for the development of the Site as a public open space reserve. Refer to Figure 4. No other planning overlays apply to the land. The site is not within a Bushfire Management Overlay and is not prone to flooding.

Figure 4: Zoning Map

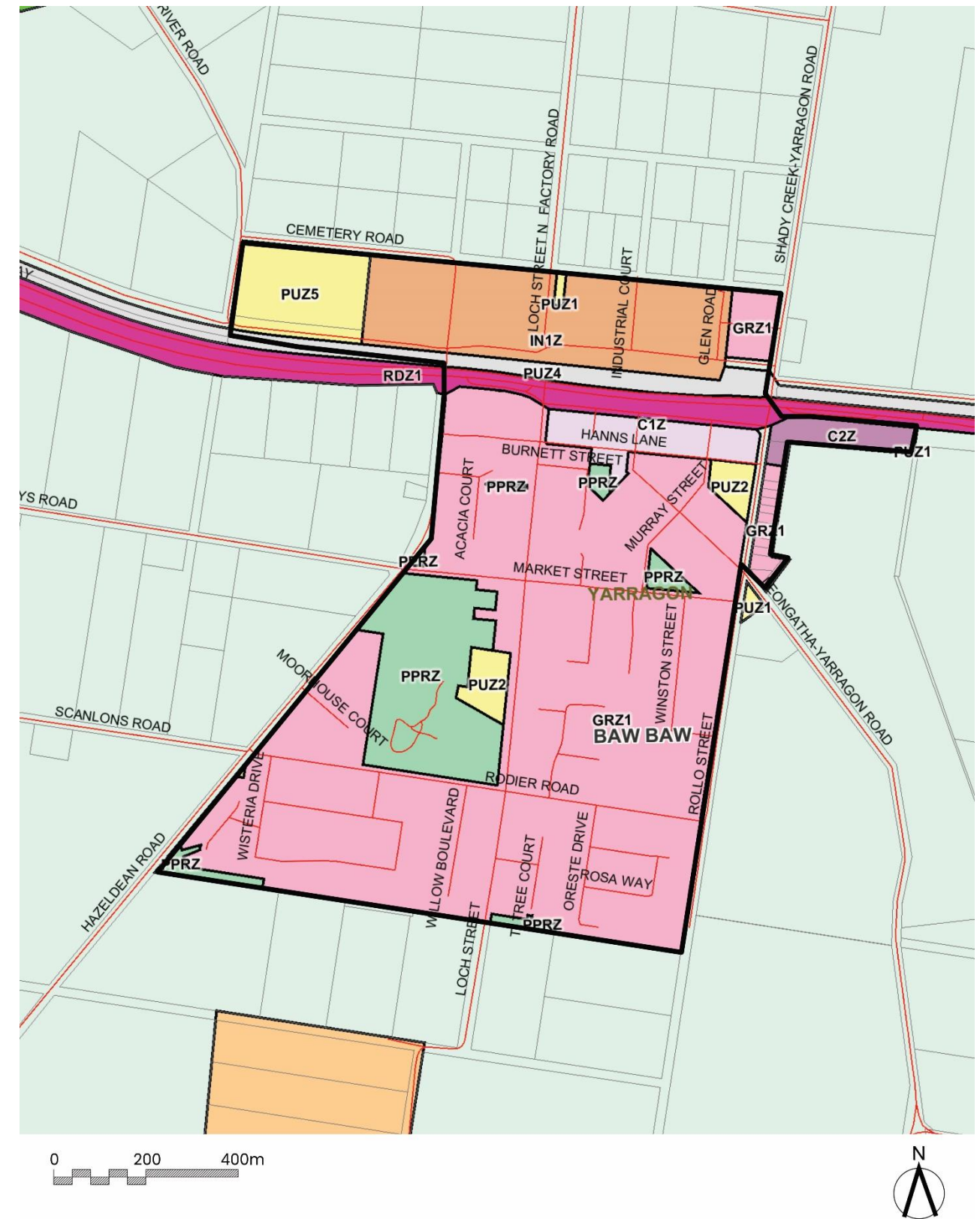


Image source: <http://services.land.vic.gov.au/>

5.3 Local Strategic Plans, Policies and Strategies

There are a number of relevant strategic plans relevant to the master planning of the Site. These plans include:

1. Connecting Communities Through Spaces - Community Hubs Action Plan 2019 – 2024, Baw Baw Shire Council

The Action Plan identifies the need to ‘Consider opportunities to support community-led activation of the old Yarragon Primary School site.’ Indicates \$50,000 will be spent in 2020/21 on the space, subject to Long-term Infrastructure Plan (LTIP) review.

2. Community Planning Framework, Baw Baw Shire Council

The Framework describes Community Planning as ‘an activity that enables a community to identify its values, vision and aspirations and develop an action plan that describes the priorities the community are committed to working towards. Plans can be specific to one community or represent a number of communities that want to work together. Community Plans help promote a more connected, vibrant, sustainable, liveable and healthy community.’

Community Planning for the Site has already been instigated by the Yarragon Community. A reference group has been established for the project, with members from the Yarragon and District Community Association, Yarragon Business Association, Baw Baw Sustainability Network, the Country Fire Authority and Baw Baw Shire Council staff and Councillors. Council’s role in planning for this site will be to support the reference group and assist them in conducting consultation with the community and stakeholders as well as developing the Master Plan.

3. Public Open Space Strategy, Baw Baw Shire 2014

The Public Open Space Strategy provides guidance for the different types of park and their functions, where they should be located and how they should be developed, in terms of standards.

In residential areas the aim is to provide a local neighbourhood park within 400 metres walking distance of 95 percent of new dwellings. This aim is easily achieved within the Yarragon township, due to the number and location of neighbourhood parks in the town.

Key principles of the Strategy include:

- To provide adequate public open space in the right places
- To use high quality land that will be suitable for intended public recreation use
- To design and develop the public open space in a way that maximises community benefit from the place

4. Recreation Strategy 2017–2027, Baw Baw Shire Council

The Recreation Strategy provides directions for Baw Baw Shire’s recreation facilities. The strategy reviewed current supply across the Shire including main towns such as Yarragon and smaller towns. The Strategy reviewed recreation trends and demand for recreation and provides a vision and action plan for recreation in the future. A map showing the existing recreation facilities in Yarragon is provided at Figure 5.

Some of the trends and recommendations mentioned in the strategy which may be of relevance to master planning of the site include:

- Open space is taking a new direction and isn’t just about formal playgrounds and organised sport.
- There are opportunities for play in various forms and different age groups should be accommodated for. Play opportunities may include items such as ‘gardens, water play areas and lagoons, large open grassy areas, shady picnic spots with quality facilities, ponds and water features, areas of natural woodland and vegetation and kilometres of shared paths and boardwalks to explore (BBSC, 2017, p. 36)’
- There is a high level of demand for walk/cycle paths and better connectivity within towns.
- The need to rationalise facilities across the shire, including playgrounds.
- ‘Council should consider greater nature-play options within their parks such as climbing trees, rocks, landscaping and sensory play (BBSC 2017, p. 46).’

Figure 5: Yarragon Recreation Map (Source: BBSC, 2017)



The Recreation Strategy includes the following guiding principles for the direction of sport and recreation facilities:

- *Encourage community participation in recreation for wide benefits to health, wellbeing and social cohesion.*
- *Support a range of recreation opportunities, including through partnering with recreation service providers.*
- *Support the development of shared multi-use facilities that comply with relevant sporting design standards.*
- *Maximise opportunities for shared use of sport facilities by clubs, community groups and individuals.*
- *Maximise opportunities for broader community use of recreation reserves by incorporating passive leisure facilities.*
- *Where appropriate, develop multi-sport community facilities and recreation areas at the one location (i.e. precincts, rather than developing single use or stand alone facilities)*
- *Ensure universal design (including female friendly), ESD and CPTED principles are followed in development of new facilities and redevelopment of existing facilities.*
- *Buildings will:*
 - *be developed reflecting evidence based research and with service levels defined;*
 - *be developed only after existing facilities are optimised;*
 - *be focused on local and municipal level needs;*
 - *be planned and designed for use by a number of groups.*
- *Minimise barriers and encourage participation in recreation for women, girls, cultures and people of all abilities.*
- *Support a hierarchy approach to provision (municipal, district and local level facilities).*
- *Seek grants and partnerships in order to help fund facility developments.*

Part 2 Site Analysis and Opportunities.

6. Site Analysis & Opportunities

This site analysis and opportunities section describes the existing conditions of the site, drawing on information collected during the site visit and obtained from the reference group and Council staff. The opportunities are intended to provide ideas and thoughts about potential uses and future development of the site and form the basis for further discussion and consultation with the community.

6.1 Access & Journeys

The Site is accessible by foot, bicycle and vehicle. Rollo Street, Murray Street and Hanns Lane provides vehicle access along three sides of the Site, with Rollo Street and Murray Street providing on street vehicle parking. Hanns Lane, which provides access to the back of the commercial properties fronting the Highway, is currently too narrow to accommodate vehicle parking. The laneway along the southern edge of the site is unconstructed and unnamed, but still provides access to the back of the residential properties fronting Market Street.

Pedestrians can access the site from concrete paths provided along Murray Street and Rollo Street. These paths provide links to and from the town centre and recreation spaces, such as the nearby Market Street Reserve.

There are two access gates into the site, one from Murray Street and one from Rollo Street. There is currently no formalised access paths through the site for cyclists, pedestrians or vehicles.

Opportunities for Consideration

- Potential to improve access through the site with the provision of shared paths providing access for pedestrians, cyclists, scooters, wheelchairs, prams and other modes of travel.
- Potential to provide for additional car parking along Hanns Lane, either for visitors to the site, or overflow for visitors to the Yarragon shops and businesses. This would require widening the laneway to ensure no detrimental impacts on access for adjoining businesses.
- The entry points to the site are unremarkable. Access points could be located at points that are highly visible to visitors, such as near the corner of the site where Hanns Lane and Murray Street intersect, and be designed to provide an attractive and welcoming entrance to the space.

6.2 Infrastructure

There is no furniture or built structures on the site. There are a range of services accessible to the site, including water, sewerage and electricity, which were all connected to the former school.

There are no toilet facilities on this site. However, there are public toilets located at the end of Campbell Street near the Princes Highway, approximately 250 metres walking distance from the site, and another toilet at Market Street, approximately 300 metres walking distance from the site.

Whilst the site is not within a flood overlay, there is limited drainage infrastructure on site, which results in some parts of the site becoming wet and muddy following heavy/constant rainfall.

Opportunities for Consideration

- To provide high quality infrastructure in the form of public furniture and structures. Infrastructure may include seating areas, picnic tables, drinking fountain, paths and paved areas, structures such as a shelter and possibly a tourism information kiosk.
- To improve drainage through minor earthworks and installation of drainage infrastructure.

6.3 Recreation

Existing recreation experiences in the town include the football oval and tennis/netball courts at Downton Park, playgrounds, exercise equipment, dog off-lead park and skatepark. Recreational use of the site in the future is likely to be popular given its location in close proximity to the town centre, residential houses and its convenient distance from the Highway.

Opportunities for Consideration

- There is an opportunity to ensure the site is enhanced to meet the needs of current and future residents and visitors, and provide a different recreation offering and experience to other parks in Yarragon.
- Possible recreation features for consideration: large open grassy areas, shady picnic spots, areas for informal nature play, landscaped gardens, specimen shade trees, informal areas for relaxation and quiet contemplation or other recreation use.
- Opportunity to encourage active participation and positive health and wellbeing, by providing infrastructure and facilities for all age groups.

6.4 Visitor Experience: Wayfinding and Information

There is currently no information at the edge of, or within the site in the form of signage or wayfinding.

Opportunities for Consideration

- There are opportunities to provide signage within the Site. Depending on the uses and offerings the site provides, this could potentially include information such as: cultural heritage, history of the site, Yarragon, tourism information and/or wayfinding signage to and from the main street to make pedestrian and cycling routes easier to locate and navigate.

6.5 Tourism

There are limited sites within the town which provide visitor information.

There are limited sites within the town which provide a sizeable open space suitable for larger gatherings and events.

Opportunities for Consideration

- Most of the existing parks within the town are focused on active recreation, whether that be a playground, skatepark or formal sporting activities. There is an opportunity to differentiate this space to celebrate arts and culture which are important to the town, particularly in terms of tourism.
- Parks and green open spaces can be a driver of tourism and encourage visitation to a town. This site presents an opportunity to achieve this by providing a unique visitor experience.
- The site is spacious and would make an ideal space for community gatherings, events, markets, etc. This use could be considered in the future design of the park.

6.6 Cultural Heritage

The Gunaikurnai are acknowledged as the original custodians of the lands of this area.

The site does not have any recorded archaeological sites located on it and is not within a mapped area of cultural heritage sensitivity (Aboriginal Victoria, 2020). However, there is potential for this site and surrounding area to have aboriginal cultural heritage.

Opportunities for Consideration

- To improve knowledge surrounding the cultural landscape within which the site sits through discussions with the Traditional Owners. Any learnings or discoveries which relate to the cultural heritage of Yarragon could be incorporated into the future development of the site.

6.7 European History

Settlement

'Yarragon came into existence in 1877 when construction work on the Gippsland Railway reached the swampy flats that marked the flood plain of the Moe River (Yarragon Community Newsletter, 2010, p.3).'

The following historic information was provided courtesy of Tini Cook, a resident of Yarragon (personal correspondence, dated 4 November 2020):

Short history of the settlement of Yarragon and its industries – Timber – Dairying – Tourism

The railway cut through primeval forest with trees many metres in diameter closely packed together and reaching up to 100 metres in height with undergrowth of scrub including sword grass creating an impenetrable barrier 10 metres high. To the north was another barrier – extensive swamps.

Early settlers set to felling the trees with axes and saws and this created Yarragon's first industry – TIMBER.

Yarragon was the busiest town in the area in the 1880s with many sawmills, numerous piling splitters and bullock drivers to haul the timber to the station. By 1893 the town had 5 hotels.

Once the land was cleared of these massive trees, pasture was put down and a DAIRYING industry developed with farmers taking milk and butter by horse and cart to catch the twice daily 'milk train' to Melbourne.

In 1903 there were 306 dairy farms in the Narracan Shire with the average farm milking less than 20 cows. Butter factories and Creameries sprung up every 5kms until transport improvements meant milk trucks could pick up milk cans at farms and a larger factory in Yarragon could process it all..

The Yarragon butter factory employed most of the townsfolk until the late 1960s. However by 1975 the factory closed with milk tankers transporting to larger regional factories or Melbourne. Many of the small farm dairies around our town are no longer operational, being absorbed and amalgamated into bigger dairy farms or into beef grazing farms.

With the loss of the butter factory and the demolition of all the businesses on the north side of the highway for dual carriageway around the same time, Yarragon went into a state of decline. With the town's main street a string of struggling shops that could not compete with what the bigger towns could offer, many became empty. For a decade or more the town was in a state of stagnation that many didn't even notice as they drove through.

But slowly that changed with the establishment of Gippsland Food and Wine in 1984, then an antique shop, more new shops were built where derelict old ones stood, cafes, a wonderful gallery, gift shops, great public toilets, trees, flowerbeds, parkland and Viola! people noticed and stopped – we had become a TOURIST TOWN!

It sounds simple and easy but it was a gradual upgrade with many battles with Vic Roads when in 1992 highway redevelopment hampered access to businesses behind mounds of rocks and rubble with no greenery to be seen. It took some time for the local Shire to recognise and support tourism.

All the businesses in Yarragon have been established by local people and employ at least 150+ local people. There are no multi-national or chain stores of any description, just individual family businesses offering a unique range of products and eating experiences and that is what makes our town unique and a sought out venue for travellers from far and wide.

Until recent times all facilities and services were established by the hard work of the townspeople. It is through this strong community spirit and initiative that Yarragon is what it is today.

Naming of the Town

Yarragon was first known as 'Little Moe' and was changed to 'Waterloo' after the battle of 1815 to complement the neighbouring town named after the Battle of Trafalgar. In 1884, the name was changed from Waterloo to the aboriginal name 'Yarragon' because of mail going to another Waterloo near Beaufort. (Yarragon Community Newsletter, 2010, p.3)

The School at Rollo Street

'On 21 November 1878 a petition signed by 16 new settlers, who had 55 children between them, requested a school be established at Waterloo (Yarragon Community Newsletter, 2010, p.3).'

'School # 2178 commenced in the Mechanic's Institute (Hall) on 15 August 1879 (Yarragon Community Newsletter, 2010, p.3).'

'Two years later on 2 June 1881 the school moved into its new building on the present day site in Rollo St. By the end of 1898, there were 173 children on the roll and it was rebuilt and enlarged (Yarragon Community Newsletter, 2010, p.3).'

'The beautiful old weatherboard building, with its lovely garden, was demolished when a new school was built and opened in 1968 (Yarragon Community Newsletter, 2010, p.3).'

Opportunities for Consideration

- To celebrate the history of Yarragon and provide information about the settlement of the town and the past use of the site at Rollo Street for a primary school, dating back to 1881.

6.8 Vegetation

The site is located within the Gippsland Plain Bioregion. This bioregion is *'located in the south east of Victoria, includes flat low lying coastal and alluvial plains with a gently undulating terrain dominated by barrier dunes and floodplains and swampy flats. ... The fertile floodplains and swamps are earths and pale yellow and grey texture contrast soils (Hydrosols) and support Swamp Scrub, Plains Grassy Woodland, Plains Grassy Forest, Plains Grassland and Gilgai Wetland ecosystems (DELWP, 2020).'*

The Pre-1750's modelled Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) for this site was likely to have been Swamp Scrub (EVC53). However, the soil conditions have been altered significantly as a result of settlement and most of the township has been completely cleared of native vegetation. There is no remnant native vegetation existing on site.

The site has a number of established trees around the perimeter and few scattered through the site. A large portion of the space is open grassed area. The planted vegetation are mostly exotic species, but there are some native species as well. Tree species include, but are not limited to, Oak (*Quercus sp.*), Ash (*Fraxinus sp.*), Cypress (*Cupressus sp.*), Eucalypts (*Eucalyptus sp.*) and *Acacia melanoxylon* (Blackwood).

Opportunities for Consideration

- The site has many established, specimen trees that are attractive, provide shade, a sense of place and provide a link to the history of the site as a primary school. Subject to further review of the trees by an arborist to assess condition and safety, many of these trees could be retained and incorporated into the landscape design for the space.

Figure 6: Site Analysis Plan



Photograph 1: View looking east towards Rollo Street



Photograph 3: View looking north-east towards Rollo Street and Hanns Lane



Photograph 2: View looking north towards Hanns Lane & commercial properties



Photograph 4: View looking north-west towards Murray Street and Hanns Lane



Photograph 5: View looking south-east towards unnamed laneway and houses



Photograph 6: View looking south-west towards Murray Street and laneway



Photograph 7: View looking south along Rollo Street frontage



Photograph 8: View looking east along Hanns Lane frontage



7. References

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