

LAND SWAP PROPOSAL

ADVICE CONCERNING A SITE FOR A PUBLIC PARK



MELBOURNE
RACING CLUB

Introduction

Melbourne Racing Club (MRC) currently uses and manages crown land located on Station Street and bordered by Normanby Rd, currently known as the Tabaret car park.

MRC would like to take ownership of this land through a land swap of a separate parcel of MRC owned land located between Glen Eira Road, Booran Road and the racecourse that could be turned into a public park by the MRC prior to the proposed land transfer.

Project scope

MRC has sought @leisure's advice concerning the suitability of the proposed site as a park.

The scope of this advice was to provide a quick overview related to the particular items raised by Council concerning the proposed public parkland namely:

1. Its location on the busy five way intersection
2. Little on site parking
3. No access from the land to any other public land
4. It would not meet the established Victorian Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles (Vic Safer by Design Guidelines)

The site

The site proposed for the park is a parcel of land approximately 7000m² in area. It fronts onto Booran Road, adjacent to the tunnel entry under the racecourse, and directly adjacent to the main intersection with Kambrook and Glen Eira Roads. See image below.

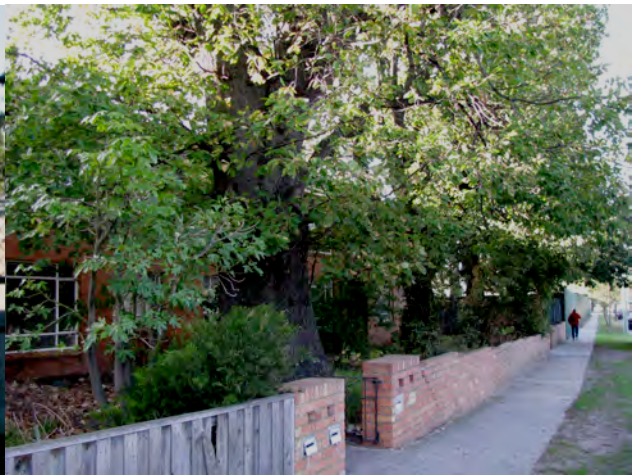


The site is largely flat, gently rising to the edge of the course over the tunnel.

There is a small on-site car park adjacent to the proposed park boundary and tunnel entry.

The site has a number of mature exotic and native species of tree growing on it, including a very large fig and large oaks along the road frontage. Closer to the course the area is open, grassed, and has mostly immature specimen trees planted in this area. There is a large two storey building on the road frontage and other buildings on site.

The following images indicate boundaries and key characteristics of the site.



The proposal is to demolish all structures on the site and replace the brick fence with a wire mesh fence at the road frontage. The existing solid fence along the site boundary would be demolished. Where the park abuts the tunnel area there would need to be screening of the boundary to prevent horses entering the course shying. Once the buildings are removed there would be clear site lines through the park to the racecourse edge.

Preliminary Comments

There are some significant benefits of the nominated site as a park:

- There is limited public space available in the neighbourhood. Existing spaces are principally of a sporting nature.
- Significant character is provided by the mature oaks, palms, eucalypts etc, on the site, all characteristic of the era in which the racecourse was established.
- Large shady trees are the most desired characteristic that park users request in a park. These will provide shade, wind protections, aesthetic qualities and connections to seasons, inspiration and collectable treasures for children (acorns etc).
- The site provides a fantastic opportunity as a green cue and gateway at the end of Glen Eira Road – to flag the entry to the racecourse and public open space

1. Location on the busy five-way intersection

There are some significant positives of such a location.

- a) This location means the site will be highly prominent to passing traffic and provide visual benefit and relief to the other wise suburban streetscape.
- b) The parkland will also provide a green cue to the racecourse and Public Park within for drivers and pedestrians.
- c) Location is but one characteristic that makes a successful park.

Design of the parkland can compensate for the sights and sounds generated by the intersection through positioning and choice of elements

There are many highly valued open spaces positioned in such locations. One example is the Flemington Racecourse and Recreation Reserve opposite the Epsom, Ascot vale and Racecourse road roundabout. See below



Looking south east onto Flemington Recreation Reserve from the roundabout



Looking west onto the racecourse from the roundabout

- d) In future high-density environments it may not be possible to locate parks away from busy roads and transport routes. That is not a reason not to have them.
- e) This site has the greatest leisure and environmental potential of any associated with the racecourse at this time as due to the size and age of vegetation and the future of the vegetation is dependant on the site being retained as a park in public ownership.

2. Little parking

For a park of this size parking would typically not be recommended. This is due to:

- a) The need to encourage local people to walk or cycle to the park to be used incidentally on the way to or from the racecourse
- b) The competitive strength of this site is its potential green in nature complementing the man made structure with the racecourse such as the tunnel entry. Hence any substantial car parking would detract from that main competitive strength.
- c) Typically for a park of this size (less than 1 ha) giving up parkland for car parking would be seen as disproportion to the amount of opportunity that could be provided in the rest of the space.
- d) Parking is currently provided on both side of Booran Rd and this appears to have space for a bicycle lane on both sides also.
- e) If the catchment were determined as being local (typically drawing from the immediate neighbourhood and within 400-500m) then there would be limited demand to travel to the site by car. People using it incidentally associated with the racecourse, would be likely to have travelled to the racecourse and parked in another location, or have taken the train or a special transport service.
- f) This will be a local park and its value will be as much about environmental amenity as the numbers of users.

3. No access from the land to any other public land

- a) This area of parkland has a clear connection to the main racecourse and the internal park being developed by MRC. It is strategically positioned at the gateway for public recreation entry at the tunnel. It could well develop as a meeting point.
- b) Very few public parks in established residential areas have opportunities to link with existing open space unless they are connected to a waterway or other green corridor.
- c) The site is not large enough for lack of off-road access or connection to another neighbourhood park to be a limiting factor.

4. CPTED and Safer by Design Guidelines

A key point on this issue is that it is not just location and design that enhances community safety; it is a combination of these with good management and community involvement.

The Victorian Safer by Design Guidelines suggest the aims are to:

- a) Increase community usage of public places, in the daytime and evening
- b) Achieve connection and integration of streets and public places
- c) Reduce opportunities for crime and anti-social behavior
- d) Improve the quality of life for the community by improving perceptions of public places
- e) Create more liveable and sustainable environments

a) Increase community usage of public places, in the daytime and evening

A public park here will bring additional people onto the street. Most likely these will be children, older folk wandering about and people walking dogs, as well as race/ event goers stopping by or waiting to meet people. With the exception of children this is likely to occur at all hours.

Creating the public park and opening up vistas and removing brick fences and structures will also open up a streetscape currently dark and not activated due to the building bulk, and high private fencing on residential properties on the other on the western side of Booran Rd.

b) Achieve connection and integration of streets and public places

The proposed park is at the gateway to the racecourse; a very significant entertainment and recreational venue. It is also at the entry to the internal park.

The vegetation on the street front standing out from the built environment will add to the **legibility** of the neighbourhood in directing pedestrians to the entry point. It may become the cue to motorists passing by.

c) Reduce opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour

The inherent characteristics of the site are likely to reduce opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour (as compared to the current situation with high non transparent fences and a corridor effect in the street).

The design concept can be directed at keeping users including unwanted users easily observable. Features that maximize visibility of people, parking areas and building entrances, can promote this: positioning of any seating areas and pathways and adequate night time lighting.

Physical design can create or extend a sphere of influence. Design can use features that define property lines and distinguish private spaces from the public realm, using plantings, pavement design, gateway treatments, and transparent fences.

Design of a new park can address the key principles of CPTED here:

- **Natural Surveillance**

The proposed park will back onto stables which will have people present 24 hours a day, seven days a week, year round. This area is particularly busy between 3.00am - 9.00am and 2.00pm – 4.00pm as 500 horses are trained daily. Security also currently sweeps the area and the MRC is happy for this to continue ongoing.

- **Territorial Reinforcement**

- **Natural Access Control**, and where necessary management and

- **Target Hardening** can be introduced.

It is not envisaged that the site will need hardening i.e. areas fenced off during non-daylight areas.

d) Improve the quality of life for the community by improving perceptions of public places

The parkland will open up and allow views through the significant vegetation, which can be enhanced in the design. It will provide a welcome relief from the urban sights and sounds in this busy location.

e) Create more liveable and sustainable environments

Additional parkland and the protection of large mature trees in public land, will contribute to liveability and sustainability especially in a suburb where population and building density is increasing, and where there is limited incidental open space close to residents.

The following table outlines the objectives and design suggestions in the Safer by Design Guidelines. @leisure has assessed the site against each and determined whether in their view the site meets those criteria. The outcome of this assessment is provided over leaf.

DESIGN GUIDELINE ¹	GUIDELINE CAN BE MET?	COMMENT
OBJECTIVE 4.1 To maximise natural surveillance of parks and open spaces to encourage use and support people's perceptions of safety.		
DESIGN SUGGESTION 4.1.1 – Ensure that parks, public open spaces or play areas are visible from neighbouring streets, houses, schools and other buildings.	✓	
DESIGN SUGGESTION 4.1.2 – Buildings with active frontages should be located and designed to overlook public open spaces and parks.	✓	
DESIGN SUGGESTION 4.1.3 – Public open spaces, parks and playgrounds should have active frontages on at least three sides to provide natural surveillance.	✓	
Parks and other public open spaces should be bounded on at least three sides, and preferably four sides, by streets with active building frontages that provide good surveillance and sightlines deep into the park.	✓	
DESIGN SUGGESTION 4.1.4 – New subdivision layouts should avoid rear fences backing onto public open space and parks.	N A	
DESIGN SUGGESTION 4.1.5 – Avoid cut-off dead spaces or isolated pockets of land within a park that cannot be overlooked.	✓	
DESIGN SUGGESTION 4.1.6 – Locate children's play areas where they are clearly visible from surrounding properties and streets. Install see-through fencing to control access and prevent children from roaming while still providing visibility from the street and surrounding areas.	NA	
OBJECTIVE 4.2 To encourage the use of parks and open space by a range of users at all times of the day to improve the quality of life for the community and improve perceptions of safety in public places.	✓	
DESIGN SUGGESTION 4.2.1 – Provide comfortable places with well-placed seating, good shade and interesting views. These areas are important for encouraging people, particularly the elderly, to use and enjoy public spaces.	✓	Design can ensure this is the case
DESIGN SUGGESTION 4.2.2 – Design and position elements such as public furniture, lighting, drinking fountains, public information, public toilets, and play equipment to encourage the informal use of parks		Design can ensure this is the case
DESIGN SUGGESTION 4.2.3 – Provide generous seating opportunities throughout all public open space that is carefully positioned to attract and support its use.		Design can ensure this is the case
LIGHTING		
OBJECTIVE 4.3 To ensure lighting is carefully integrated to further enhance visibility and natural surveillance of parks and open spaces.	✓	Design can ensure this is the case
LANDSCAPING OBJECTIVE 4.4		
To ensure landscaping maintains sightlines of paths in parks and open spaces and allows for natural surveillance.	✓	
DESIGN SUGGESTION 4.4.1 – Where possible, park planting and topography should not block views of paths and open spaces from surrounding streets and houses.	✓	
DESIGN SUGGESTION 4.4.2 – Where landscaping is provided in public open spaces, or in adjacent streets or parks ensure trees or vegetation do not block the field of vision between 0.7 metres and 2.4 metres above ground level.	✓	Some garden shrub species along the front boundary can be removed
DESIGN SUGGESTION 4.4.3 – There should be at least one safe through-route in all parks, with frequent 'escape routes' linking the through-route to surrounding streets and car parks.	✓	The park will be open to the street. Access via pedestrian gate and tunnel will be available from the side boundary to the racecourse reserve. A rear managed entry may be designed.
DESIGN SUGGESTION 4.4.4 – Tall shrubs can provide hiding places and should not be planted close to paths or fences.	✓	
DESIGN SUGGESTION 4.4.5 – Ensure vegetation does not obscure lighting, either during its growth phase or at maturity.	✓	Design can ensure this is the case

¹ SAFER DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR VICTORIA Department of Sustainability and Environment, Crime Prevention Victoria 2005

