

## Darebin Stadium Site Assessment Process :

### Overview

Mantric Architecture was appointed by the City of Darebin to participate in a site assessment process focussed on identifying potential locations that could accommodate;

- a three court indoor highball stadium
- associated administration, change facilities and other expected amenity.
- four outdoor netball courts
- adequate car parking to service the proposed facility

Working closely with Council officers, our role included the establishment of the assessment process and evaluation criteria. To assist with these tasks we invited Sport & Leisure Solutions, a special leisure consultant, to provide collaborative input and expert advice on critical facility 'success drivers'.

A key outcome of the process, as briefed by Council Officers, was to produce an independent assessment supported by an evidence based investigation.

Importantly, the process was intended to be a preliminary high level investigation that could provide an informed short list of sites worthy of more detailed investigations and possible site master planning to better test their respective strengths and weaknesses.

### Physical assessment

At the commencement of the process Council provided a list of approximately 35 sites that may be able to accommodate the required facilities. These sites included a range of Council owned properties, Brownfield, private and Industrial land available for purchase.

Given the nature of the facilities planned for the sites, our first task was to test the sites for physical capacity. To inform this process we prepared an indicative areas schedule and a generic facility foot print, including outdoor courts and car parking.

Each nominated site was then tested for capacity using high resolution aerial photographs. These photos were acquired from 'Near Maps' and verified for scale accuracy using the available on-line tools. We note that the capacity testing was not undertaken using survey information due to the high cost and time period needed. It was also considered inappropriate due to the high level nature of these early investigations.

Using the aerial photographs, a generic foot print was superimposed over each site to identify the physical impact a facility of this type would have on the site.

From this 'over-lay exercise' we were able to show that many of the sites were too small, others were surrounded by residential areas and some had obvious site sensitivities that would create unreasonable negative impacts. To track this process a schedule was created and the evaluation assumptions listed against each site.

At the conclusion of the capacity assessment the starting 35 sites were reduced to just six sites. These sites had the physical capacity, were located appropriately in relation to residential areas and offered either expansion zones or buffer zones to the large stadium volume. Out of all the brownfield or privately owned sites identified, only a few were of sufficient size for this development. The cost of purchase, remediation and construction of this facility on a privately owned or brown field site, would see the total project cost exceed \$45million - over 300% the cost of constructing it on a Council owned site.

From this point the evaluation shifted to a more expansive site ranking approach. The purpose of this part of the process was to identify the most appropriate site for development.

### Site Assessment

To facilitate the ranking of each site seven key factors were identified as being crucial to the decision making process. Each of the factors (site assessment criteria) were accompanied by descriptive text to assist understanding an implementing the assessment process. The criteria were established based on the consulting team's experience, results gathered from the community consultation process and due levels of consultation with operators of existing facilities. The assessment at this stage was both quantitative and qualitative.

The key criteria for the site assessment are:

- 1) Land size - is the land of sufficient to meet the facility and parking requirements?
- 2) Accessibility - will access be relatively easy via car, bike, walking or public transport?
- 3) Site encumbrance – are there factors associated with the site that will act as impediments to the cost effective the development of the site?
- 4) Site Opportunities – does the configuration and size of the site facilitate good design and potential future expansion?
- 5) Impact on the local community - will the buildings negatively impact on the local landscape?
- 6) Strategic Alignment – is the proposal aligned with priorities identify by Council in strategies and policies?
- 7) Proximity to Darebin Community Sports Stadium DCSS- will the proposal serve people in suburbs that do not have ease of access to the DCSS?

### Priority Ranking

To facilitate further flexibility in the ranking process the assessment table below was developed to provide the opportunity to rank in percentage terms, each of criteria. This enables users of the table to apply different priorities and test the impact on site selection.

The consulting team's ranking of priorities is in the table below. The criteria can be adjusted based on strategic priority as required.

Table 1

Priority Ranking Table	
Criteria	Priority Ranking
Land size - is the land of sufficient to meet the facility and parking requirements?	20%
Accessibility - will access be relatively easy via car, bike, walking or public transport?	15%
Site Incumbrancers – are there factors associated with the site that will prevent or prohibit due to high cost, the development of the site?	10%
Site Opportunities – does the configuration and size of the site facilitate good design and potential future expansion?	5%
Impact on the local community - will the buildings negatively impact on the local landscape?	20%
Strategic Alignment – is the proposal aligned with priorities identify by Council in strategies and policies?	15%
Proximity to Darebin Community Sports Stadium DCSS- will the proposal serve communities not that do not have ease of access to the DCSS	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

### Key issues of the assessment

John Cain Memorial Park met or exceeded all criteria with the exception of accessibility. It current use for sporting activities provides synergies for future the development of sports courts at the site. John Cain is also sufficient distance from the DCSS to allow it to service new sectors of the Darebin community. John Cain Memorial Park is the Consulting Team's preferred site.

The NARC site offers limited expansion opportunities due the existence and current footprint of the aquatic and leisure facility. This combined with the site configuration will make efficient and effective design outcomes in terms of operational functionality unlikely. Further, the site is encumbered by a major storm water drain which will need to be redirected. Construction at this site would require the development of a full precinct masterplan, as well as probable funding for the aquatic and leisure centre development to take place

TW Blake Park is relatively close to the DCSS and in the future will be adjacent to a major residential development. Development of the courts at this site is likely to have a negative impact on future residents in terms of traffic and parking. This site plays a key role in the future strategic growth of the Darebin population.

The size and configuration of the Darebin Enterprise Centre will not facilitate good design outcomes in terms of operational functionality and there will be no opportunity for future development. This resulted the site achieving a 0 score against the area of "Site Opportunities". Consequently this site is not recommended for development.

Similarly Mayer Park does not provide for site expansion in the current configuration and will not facilitate effective design due to the requirement to maintain existing sporting fields and adjacent parkland. This resulted in the site achieving a 0 score against the area of "Site Opportunities". Consequently this site is not recommended for development.

The Thornbury High School scored the lowest of all sites. It only partially meets all criteria with the exception of Site Encumbrances for which is scored a 0. It is operated by the Education Department and owned by the State Government. Negotiating the development, management and shared use arrangements for the site is likely to be extremely time consuming and costly. This is a major encumbrance to the site and will negatively impact on the timely the site. . This resulted in the site achieving a 0 score against the area of "Site Encumbrances". Consequently this site is not recommended for development.

Note: All sites achieved the same scores for accessibility. Each is quite accessible by the majority of methods identified but not all.

Table 2

Assessment ranking	Site	Score (/100)
1	John Cain Memorial Park	94%
2	NARC/McDonnell Reserve	77%
3	TW Blake Park	74%
4	Darebin Enterprise Centre	73%
5	Mayer Park	69%
6	Thornbury High School	54%