



**JR Parsons Reserve:
Draft Concept**

March 2026

Acknowledgement of Country

We are grateful for the privilege to learn and grow from First Nations peoples in our practice as Landscape Architects. We are in awe of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Peoples sharing their knowledge of lands, waterways, oceans, skies, stories, culture, and the hard truths of colonisation.

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples as the Traditional Owners of the lands in Sunshine where this project takes place. We extend this acknowledgment to all Traditional Custodians across Australia where we practice. We are grateful to use the name 'Merri' with permission from Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, honouring the significance of Merri Creek in our local landscape. We pay respect to Ancestors and Elders, past and present, and affirm this always was and always will be Aboriginal Land.

We commit to embedding First Nations knowledge in our work with respect, supporting Indigenous-led design and stewardship, and advancing reconciliation through meaningful partnerships.

This is not passive acknowledgement, but an ongoing responsibility with dedication to tangible action.



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Studio contact Nick Griffin

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Project Context

About This Project

JR Parsons Reserve is located at 24 Stanford Street, Sunshine, on the Traditional lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people. The reserve covers around 8 hectares and is bordered by Stanford Street to the west, Wright Street to the south, the heritage-listed Sunshine Silos and Williamstown Railway Line to the east and the nationally significant rail reserve grassland beyond. It is home to the Albion Football Club, Grand United Cricket Club, and Sunshine Park Tennis Club, and is one of Sunshine's most well-used community parks.

The playground upgrade will take place along the western edge of the reserve, between Stanford Street and the internal access road. In 2019, Brimbank City Council adopted the JR Parsons Reserve Community Vision and Site Plan, following consultation with the local community. This identified the area as the location for a new Suburban Park-level playground. The current playground is ageing and mainly caters to younger children. The upgrade will create a much better experience for people of all ages and abilities — from toddlers to teenagers, and everyone in between.

Sunshine is a diverse community, with around 40% of residents speaking a language other than English at home. The design responds to this diversity, creating a welcoming space for families of all backgrounds. The heritage silos to the east are a well-known local landmark and will remain a visible backdrop to the new playground, connecting the space to the history of the area. A new sports pavilion is currently under construction nearby, and the playground upgrade has been designed to sit comfortably alongside it.

The reserve is named after Joseph Robert "Joe" Parsons — a local businessperson and community

leader who served as both Shire of Braybrook President and City of Sunshine Mayor. The land was once the site of the Wright & Edwards Railway Carriage Works in the late 1800s. Its transformation into a public park represents one of Sunshine's longest-serving community spaces, and this upgrade continues that story.

Merri Studio was appointed by Brimbank City Council in November 2025 to develop the concept design for the playground upgrade. To understand the site thoroughly, the team completed a detailed site analysis report, drawing on specialist tree assessments and working closely with Council officers. This draft concept is the result of that work — translating the community's vision from 2019 into a Draft Concept Design.



Heritage silos backdrop to the east of the site



Pollinators Playground

An invitation into the pollinator’s world, connecting play to Sunshine’s grassland ecology and industrial heritage through wonder, discovery, and environmental stewardship.

A Playground Inspired by Nature and Place



Built Form & Heritage

The heritage-listed Sunshine Silos’ bold vertical forms inspire play structures celebrating height and views toward these iconic industrial landmarks.

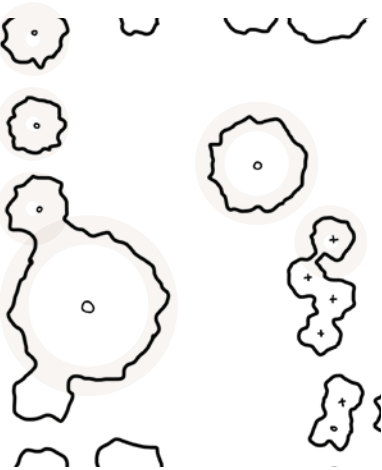


Pollinator Perspectives

Victorian Volcanic Plains grasslands sustain native bees, butterflies, and birds through diverse flowering species. Children are invited to imagine the pollinator’s world – hovering above wildflowers, discovering nectar pathways, exploring landscapes from a tiny creature’s perspective.

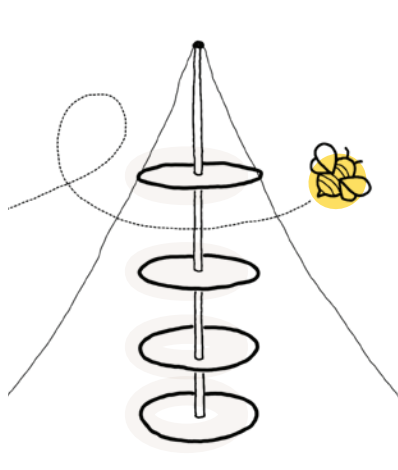
Key Design Moves

Balancing Comfort, Views and Ecological Play



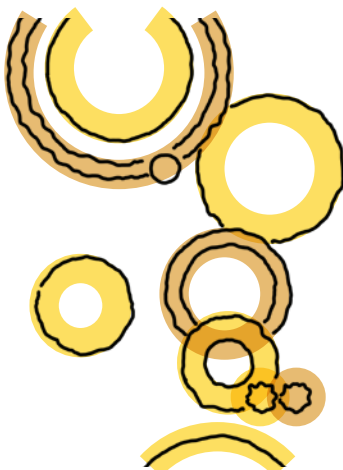
Protect & Enhance Canopy

Maximise retention of existing trees for natural shade and calming presence. Augment with flowering groundcovers and shrubs supporting pollinators.



Celebrate Height & Views

Vertical play structures frame views to heritage silos while inviting children to imagine being a bee hovering above flowers, a bird surveying grasslands, or simply experience the thrill of climbing high.



Flowers at Play

Ground-level plantings and flower-inspired graphics create scale-shift where children become pollinators surveying giant blooms, discovering patterns connecting flowers and their dependent creatures.



Landscape Plan

How the Space Comes Together

The playground is organised around a central path connecting the two new main entries, with three distinct zones linked along it. A picnic and gathering space sits near the car park and the new sports pavilion, a primary play zone occupies the centre of the site, and a teen and adult play area is nestled between the tennis courts and Stanford Street. Taller play elements are positioned to frame views to the heritage silos to the east, visible between the existing tree canopies. Lawn areas are defined with concrete edging and buffer planting with fencing runs along the access road edge.

The site is relatively flat, with subtle changes in level used to add interest and variety. Rubber softfall is gently mounded where possible while maintaining inclusive access. Boulders hold back the upper edge of the teen play area, creating an informal boundary. The ball court slopes gently and evenly to drain water away, with the surface sitting slightly higher along one side.

Existing trees are central to the design and are largely protected throughout. Mulch is used beneath trees with heavy shade to support their health and root systems. 5 large shrubs (weed species and poorly structured specimens) and 1 tree (affected by access road improvements) are proposed for removal. New trees are shown on the plan to extend and supplement the existing canopy.

Sculptural, pollinator hotels and interpretive elements are woven through the space, connecting the playground to the ecology and heritage of the area. These are shown on the plan and described in more detail in the following sections.

Legend

Concrete path

200mm wide flush concrete edge

8x4m Shelter

BBQ

Bins

Drinking Fountain

Picnic tables

Seats

Cycle stands

Circular platforms

Sculpture elements

Pollinator hotels with information signage

Post and rail fencing (existing)

Post and chain mesh fencing 1.1m high

Steel hoop edge

Rubber softfall

Mulch softfall

Garden bed mulch

Garden bed

Lawn

Logs

Bluestone boulders

Existing Tree

Proposed Tree

Large shrubs & tree for removal.

3x Photinia robusta

2x Cotoneaster glaucophyllus

1x Corymbia maculata



Access & Circulation

Getting To and Around the Playground

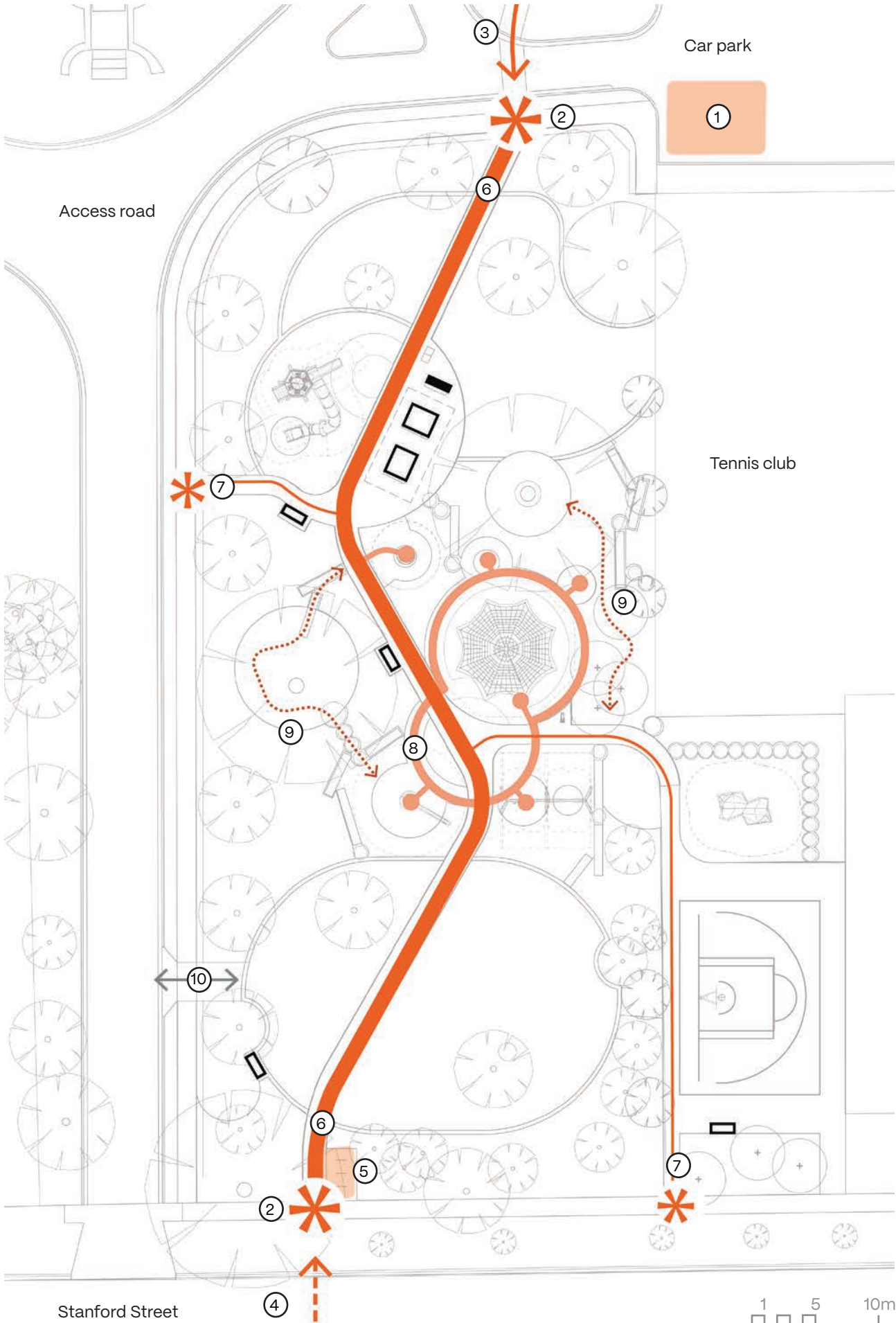
The design creates clear and comfortable ways to arrive at and move through the playground. Two main entries connect the space to Stanford Street and the car park, with a continuous 1.8 metre wide path linking them through the heart of the site. Inclusive access has been a central focus, dedicated paths reach several play elements, allowing carers and users of all abilities to move alongside each other and participate together.

Narrower discovery paths wind through the natural and planted areas, encouraging exploration at a slower pace. Secondary entries respond to natural desire lines.

Cycle parking is provided close to the Stanford Street entry.

Two pedestrian crossings are identified on the plan, one to connect the playground to the new toilet facilities in the sports pavilion, and one potential crossing to improve connections across Stanford Street.

- ① New DDA car spaces located immediately adjacent to the playground
- ② Main entries off Stanford Street and the car park
- ③ Pedestrian crossing to new toilet facilities in the sports pavilion
- ④ Potential future pedestrian crossing across Stanford Street
- ⑤ Cycle parking close to the Stanford Street entry
- ⑥ Primary path through the playground (1.8m wide)
- ⑦ Secondary entries and paths responding to desire lines.
- ⑧ Inclusive paths providing access to all play elements for users and carers
- ⑨ Informal discovery paths through planted areas
- ⑩ Maintenance vehicle access with gate



Play Experience

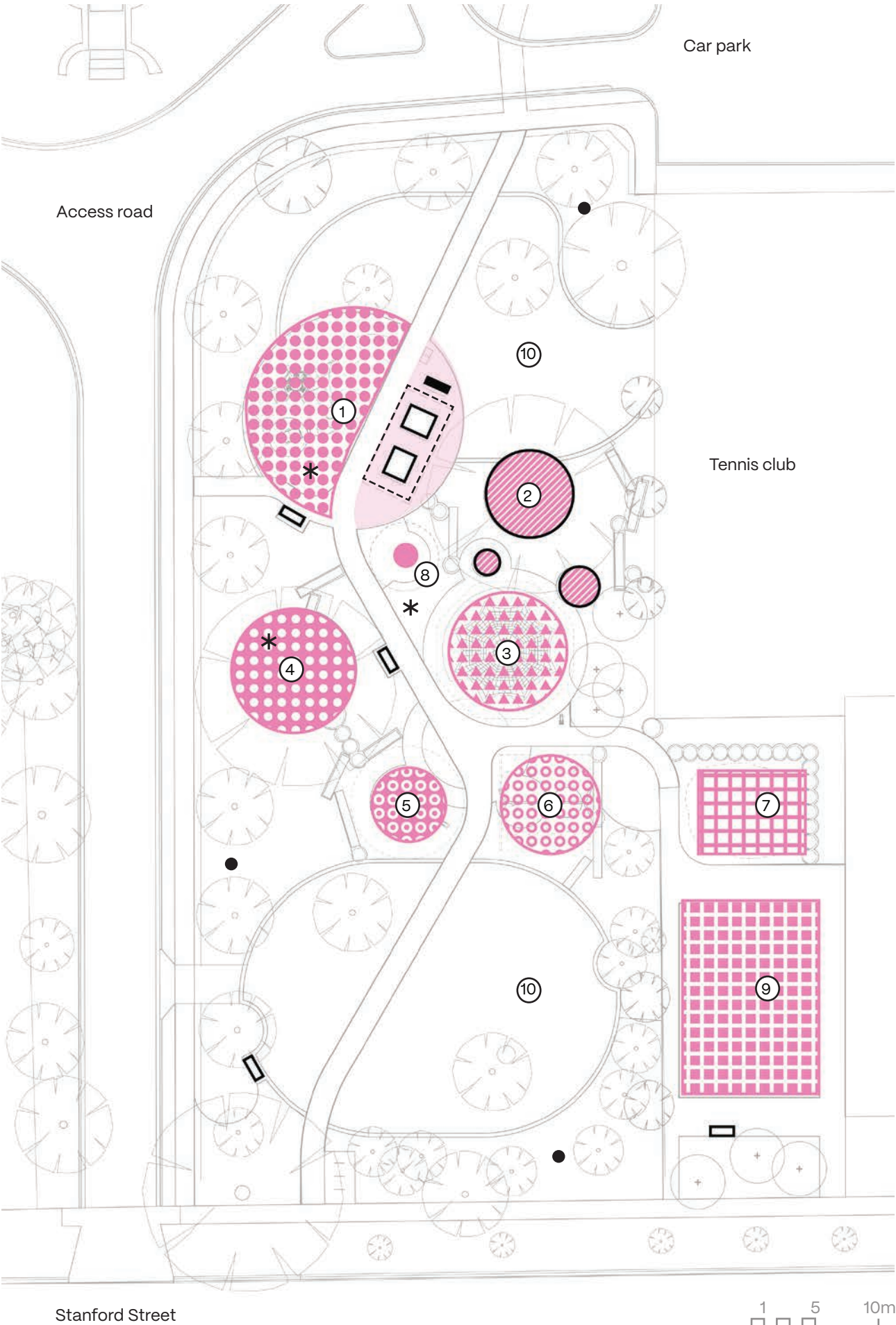
Play for Every Age and Ability

The playground has been designed to offer something for everyone, from toddlers taking their first steps to teenagers looking for a challenge, and adults who want to join in or simply sit and watch. Play elements are spread across the site to encourage movement and exploration, with inclusive paths connecting play zones so that carers and users of all abilities can experience the space together.

At the heart of the playground, circular platforms wrap around the existing Elm tree, creating a natural gathering point for all ages. For teenagers, particularly those seeking social connection over physical activity, these platforms offer an important unstructured space to hang out, socialise, and simply be in the park. The junior play zone offers climbing, sliding, and spinning, while the nature play garden invites imaginative and sensory play among plants and natural materials. A four-bay swing set caters to children of all abilities, including a you-and-me seat for carers and children to swing together. Older children and teenagers are also catered for with a bouldering element and a basketball half court. A new shelter with BBQ and picnic tables provides a comfortable base for families, overlooking a picnic lawn and kick-about space.

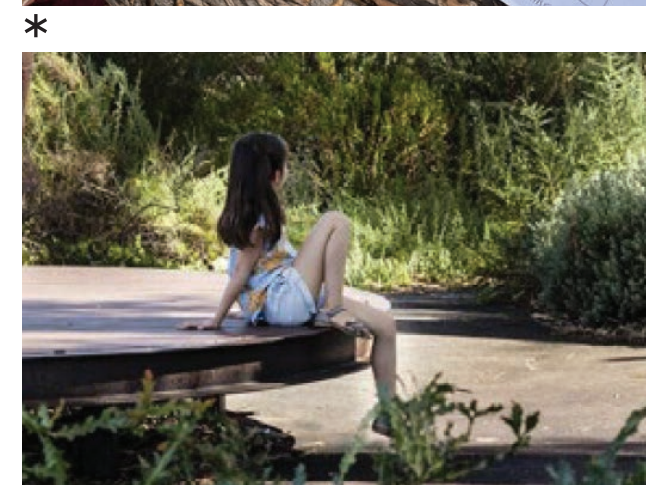
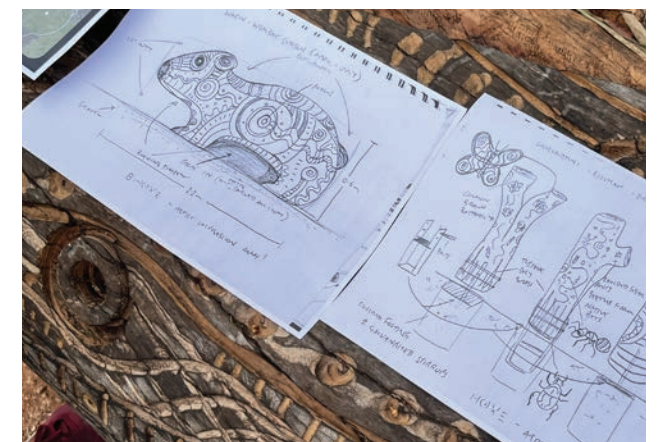
Pollinator hotels and sculptures by a local artist, inspired by local pollinators and the seasons of Country, are woven through the space, connecting the playground to Sunshine’s grassland ecology and cultural landscape.

- ① Junior play zone with tower and slides
- ② Circular platforms around the Elm tree, social gathering and home base for play
- ③ Climbing net
- ④ Nature play garden for imaginative and sensory play
- ⑤ Birds nest swing
- ⑥ Four-bay swing set with standard, toddler, you-and-me, and inclusive seats
- ⑦ Bouldering element
- ⑧ Inclusive spinner
- ⑨ Half court
- ⑩ Picnic / kick about lawns
- Pollinator hotels with information signage
- * Sculptural elements inspired by local pollinators and the seasons of Country, by a local artist





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- * Sculptural elements inspired by local pollinators and the seasons of Country, by a local artist. Image shown is an example of concept ideation and carved sample by artist Phillip HOWe depicting seasonal indicators.



Materials and Furniture

Materials of Place, Built to Last

The materials used in this playground design have been chosen to be durable, low maintenance, and connected to the local character of Sunshine and the wider region. Bluestone boulders reference the volcanic plains landscape that surrounds the area, while large timber logs, sourced locally or from decommissioned power poles where local timber is not available, bring a natural quality to the play and nature garden areas.

Seating, picnic tables, bin enclosures, drink fountains, and fencing are all drawn from Brimbank City Council's standard furniture range, ensuring the new playground fits comfortably within the wider reserve.

Rubber softfall is used beneath and between play elements to support inclusive access throughout the playground. It is also used as a design feature, with abstracted flower graphics laid into the surface, connecting the ground plane to the Pollinators Playground theme. Mulch softfall is used throughout the remaining fall and impact zones, keeping the space feeling natural and grounded.

Pollinator hotels are custom-designed cylindrical structures referencing the iconic silos to the east of the reserve, creating a playful and place-specific ecological feature that invites children to learn about the insects that support our local grassland environment.



Shelter, picnic tables & BBQ



Brimbank furniture suite



Concrete & mulch softfall



Bluestone boulders



Rubber softfall



Steel hoop fencing



Logs & boulders



Pollinator hotels

Planting

Drought Hardy, Native, and Full of Colour

The planting palette for JR Parsons Reserve has been carefully selected to support the Pollinators Playground theme while being practical and long-lasting. All species are hardy, drought tolerant, and suited to their position on site, with many chosen specifically for their flowering qualities to attract native bees, butterflies, and birds.

Existing canopy trees are retained and celebrated wherever possible, with a new *Eucalyptus sideroxylon* extending the established planting. Beneath the canopies, shade-tolerant species including *Acacia* and *Dianella* create a layered understorey. *Acacia* is a particularly meaningful inclusion, its bright yellow flowers signalling the arrival of wattle season and connecting the playground to the rhythms of Country.

At ground level, a mix of native grasses, saltbush, *Correa*, and local wildflowers and flowering herbs fill the garden beds. These species are low maintenance, well suited to Sunshine’s dry summers, and provide year-round colour and habitat. Along the access road boundary, buffer planting with chain mesh fencing provides screening and a sense of enclosure for the playground.

The images shown here represent a selection of key species from the palette, illustrating the range of form, texture, and colour that the finished planting will bring to the space.



Acacia acinacea



Eucalyptus sideroxylon



Atriplex semibaccata



Correa reflexa



Dianella revoluta



Poa sieberiana



Wahlenbergia stricta



Chrusocephalum apiculatum



Goodenia ovata

