

Prepared by MGS Architects
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Hopetoun Former School Site Re-imagined

mgs

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1.1 Introduction

MGS have been engaged by the Yarriambiack Shire Council to prepare a high level masterplan for the site currently owned by the Department of Education at the corner of Austin and Garrard Streets in Hopetoun, north-west Victoria.

Masterplan Process

As part of our engagement, MGS have undertaken an extensive visit to the town and taken part in a community consultation meeting to hear from the local community about their thoughts, wishes and concerns for the site and to confirm the predominant ideas about the direction of the masterplan.

What this document will be used for

This document will be used by Council to communicate and advocate the key ideas that have resulted from the various workshops and consultation between Council, the community and MGS, exploring different strategies and ideas to shape the future of this crucial community resource.

Project Brief

Yarriambiack Shire have told that they would like to achieve the following in the masterplan visioning process:

- Preserve and enhance the existing community uses on site
- Refurbish and restore the heritage primary school
- Create 'Independent Living Units' (ILU) for retired locals
- Create 'Key Worker Housing' homes
- Develop tourism within the town
- Celebrate Indigenous and settler history of the town
- Explore an educational and leadership camp for students
- Explore a community hub offering



Lake Lascelles

1.2 Community attributes

Well known for its excellent agricultural credentials and beautiful Lake Lascelles, this Victorian town has a wonderful history and unique natural beauty which should be shared, in the heart of the Victorian Silo trail.

Situated in Victoria's wheat-belt, Hopetoun is a service centre in the southern Mallee in a region known for its grain production, prime lambs, gypsum, goats, poultry and pigs, at a crossroads along the Silo Art Trail which attracts many tourists each year.

The Hopetoun train station still operates a limited service transporting grain to other regional centres. Wheat silos remain adjacent to the railway line and station, however, they are not yet a feature on the Silo Art Trail.

Demographic statistics

Hopetoun has a current population of around 586 people which has decreased from 739 in 2016 and 388 dwellings.

The median age is 53 with predominant ancestry being Australian and English.

Geographic assets

Hopetoun is located along the Yarriambiack Creek with several geographic attractions within the region including Lake Lascelles which is just 400m from the town centre and Lake Corrong which is 1.3km from the centre, both widely used for water sports. The wider region is also home to several national parks including the wider Lake Corrong region and the Cambacanya Nature Conservation Reserve.



Accommodation at Lake Lascelles

Location map of Hopetoun, Victoria





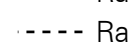










Lascelles Street

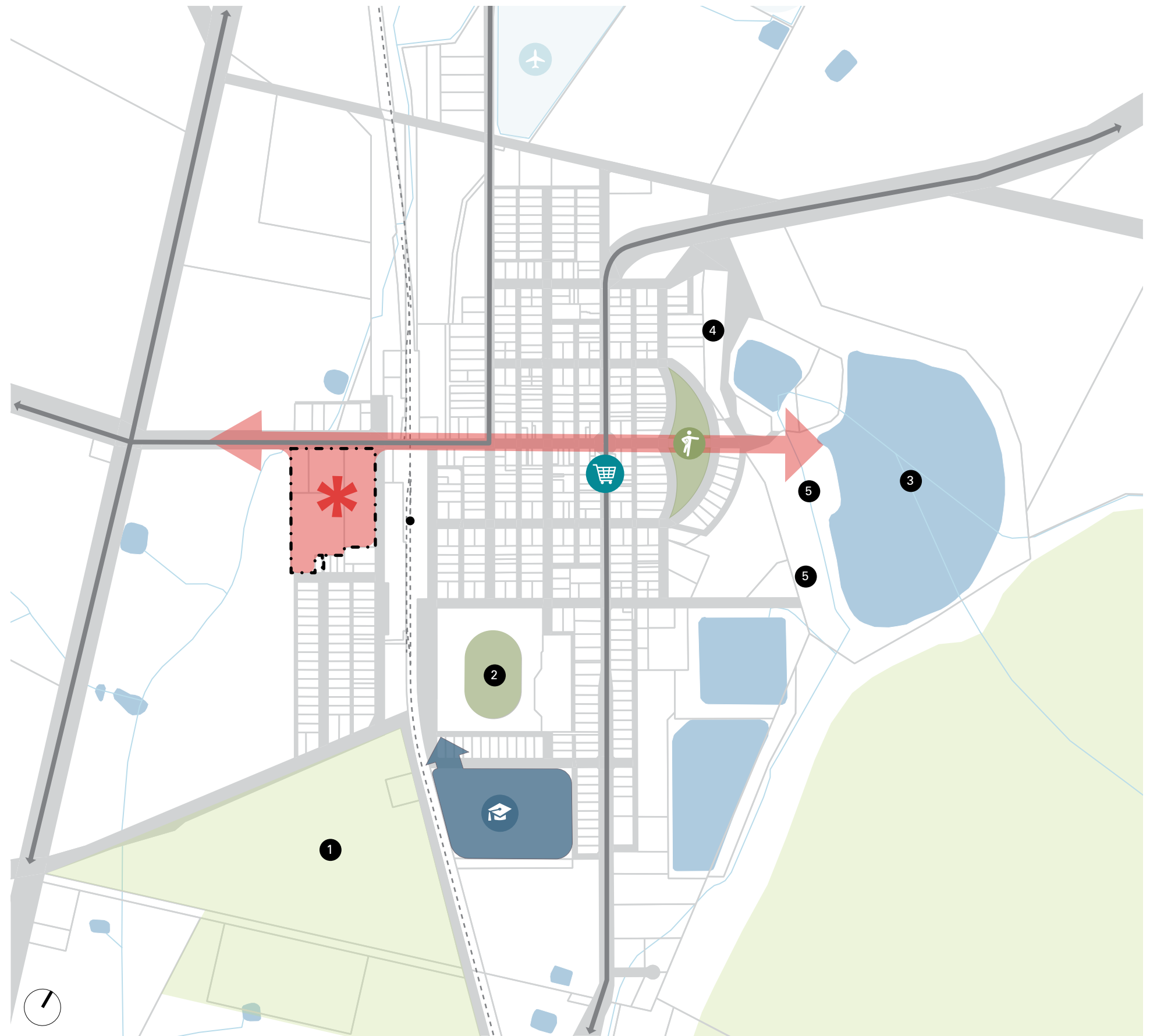
1.3 Context map

Situated just 500m from the town centre and 1km from Lake Lascelles, the former school site anchors the western edge of Hopetoun.

Legend

-  Site
-  Recreation precinct: pool, tennis courts, bowling green
-  P-12 College
-  Airport
-  Railway station
-  Railway tracks
-  Main vehicle access
-  Town centre
-  Golf course
-  Hopetoun recreation reserve
-  Lake Lascelles
-  Caravan park
-  Mallee Bush Retreat

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1.4 Site analysis & opportunities











Situated 500m from the town centre and 1km from Lake Lascelles, the former school site anchors the western edge of Hopetoun.

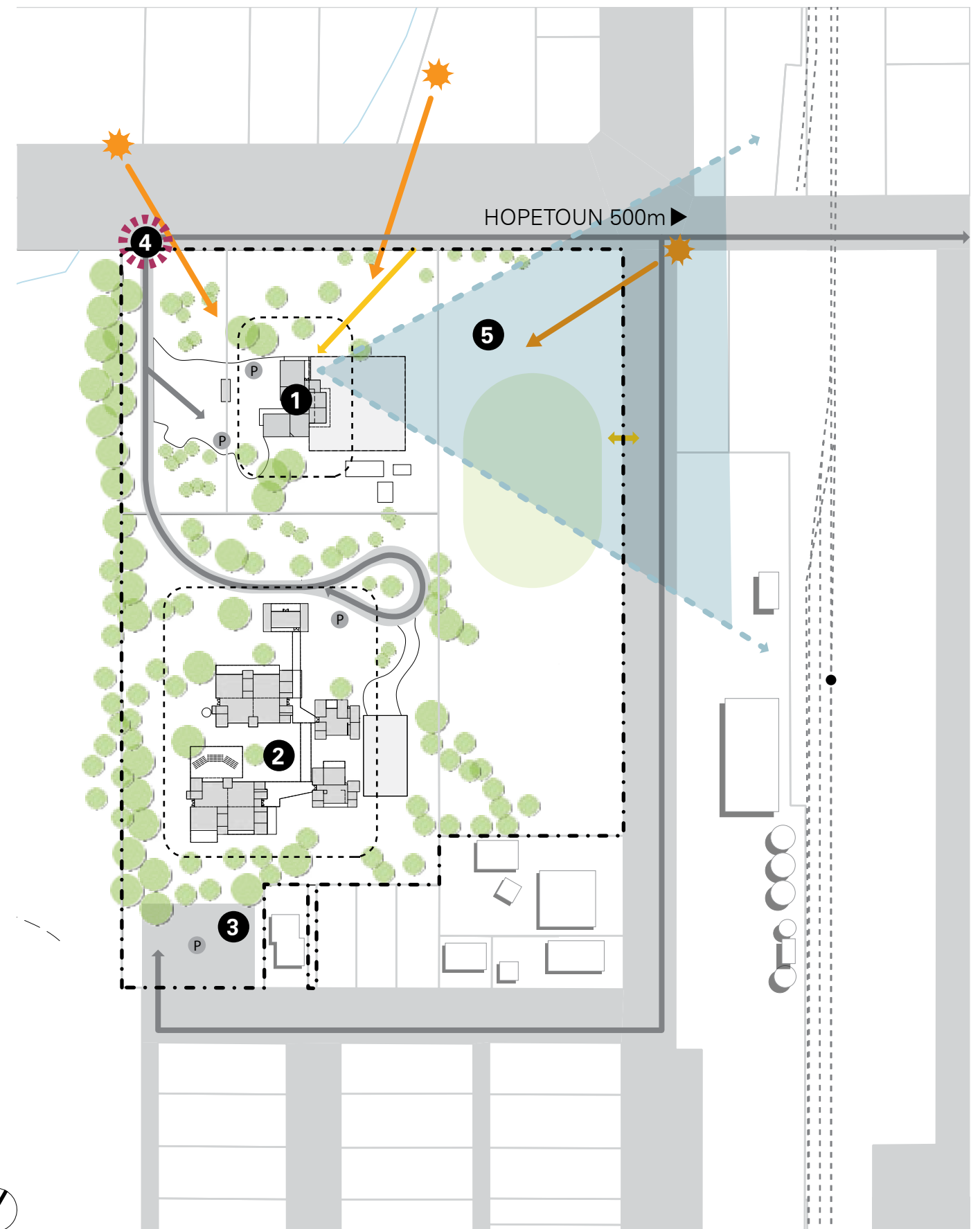
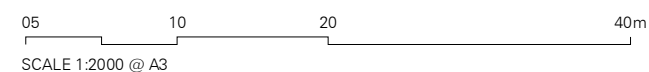
The re-invention of the site will bring jobs and economic growth to Hopetoun, it will establish the precinct as the hub for community activity, leadership and training, and create an exciting destination for tourists exploring the Silo Art Trail.

Opportunities

- 1 The original school building is of local historical significance. With careful renovation and adaptation this building could become a local hub where Hopetoun's history is celebrated. See pages 18 and 19 for internal plans of the old school building. Further information on the condition of these buildings is required to help inform renovation strategies.
- 2 The five distinct buildings of the former primary school appear to be in good condition. The five buildings present opportunities for a mixed redevelopment and gradual occupation of the various spaces. The solid brick construction and clerestory windows create pleasant spaces which could be adapted to suit a range of uses.
- 3 The southern carpark creates an opportunity for an alternative entry to the site, allowing different uses and user groups separated access.
- 4 The main arrival to the site could be enhanced and celebrated.
- 5 Retain views between the town and the former state school along Hopetoun-Yaapeet Road to celebrate the historic importance of the original school building, ensuring this landmark is visible as visitors approach the site.
- 6 The native vegetation on site should be retained and enhanced, while leaving major views unobstructed, to create distinct zones and improve biodiversity.

Legend

-  Site
-  Neighbourhood house
-  Views from the site
-  Pedestrian access to site
-  Railway station
-  Railway tracks
-  Main vehicle access
-  Asphalt/paved area
-  Existing buildings - silos and warehouses
-  Former oval





HOPETOWN & DISTRICT NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE →

1.5 Overall site conditions

Background historical information

Initially founded as a large agricultural holding, this town was owned by Edward Harewood Lascelles who slowly subdivided the town into saleable plots of land. Lascelles is renowned in the local town and still held in high esteem today for his philanthropy and good will.

The site of the masterplan was first built on by Lascelles, constructing the Town's first primary school in 1894.

This school was subsequently replaced by a new primary school building in 1975 with clerestory windows and a four-quad plan.

In the early 2000's this school was retired and the primary school was absorbed into the existing Hopetoun High School which became known as the P-12 school.

Of the two primary schools on the site, the original school has been re-purposed to house the local historical society and neighbourhood house.

The current site

On inspection, the current site is sparsely arranged around the two primary school buildings. There is a bitumen road providing access from the Hopetoun-Yapeet Road, past the rear of the historic school and curves east providing a loop near the 1975 primary school buildings.

There are a row of generously sized trees running down the south-west property boarder, adjacent to the Quandong Channel flow path. Throughout the site, there are patchy arrangements of vegetation, ranging in scale from small to medium in both density and height.

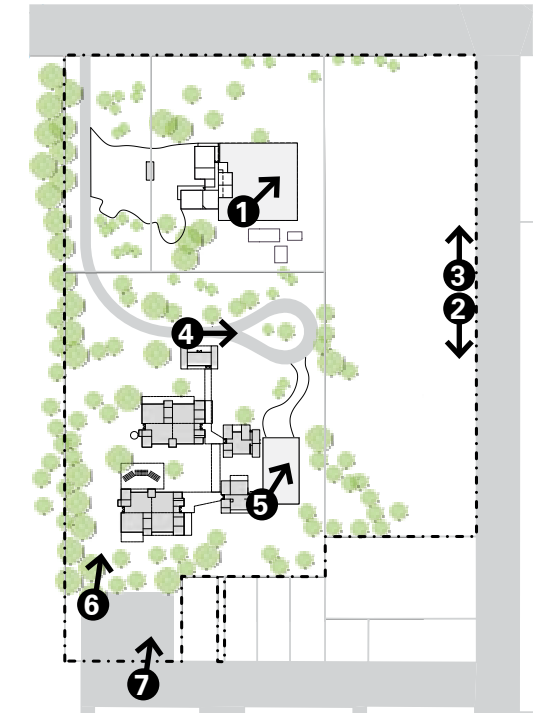
On the northern corner of Hopetoun-Yapeet Road and Garrard Streets is an original oval with football goal posts however the grass coverage is sparse and hasn't been maintained in several years.

Adjoining the front of the original building is an asphalt hard-court for various sports as well as providing a level open space for farmers markets and various other community gatherings and activities.

The site overlooks the railway to the east of the site across Garrard Street. The original station is located directly opposite the site as well as several grain silo's to the south east of the site.



Key Map



1.6 Original School Building (1893)

Historic School 1894

This building is clearly a critical civic asset to the town, carrying significant meaning for many locals as well as currently hosting several local group meetings and events.

The Hopetoun and District Neighbourhood House is a tenant of the space with an office and two activity rooms. This organisation plays a key role in running several community programs and is keen to expand it's offering in the masterplan proposal, ensuring it provides a safe space for local connection, shared information or news and providing space for key local initiatives.

Activities run by the Neighbourhood House include:

- An annual local market
- Community gym classes including pilates in the ex CFA shed
- Children's playgroup
- Specialist courses such as CPR, or art classes
- Men's shed in Austin Street

The Hopetoun Historical Association currently occupies a room within the historic school which is currently over-crowded. A large collection of historical items and records are in need of proper care, and display for public enjoyment. It is hoped that this organisation will be able to expand beyond it's current room to ensure the proper display and perusal environment for its various exhibits in a small museum space. The association will also require additional storage of the appropriate size and condition to properly store the various items whilst not on display.

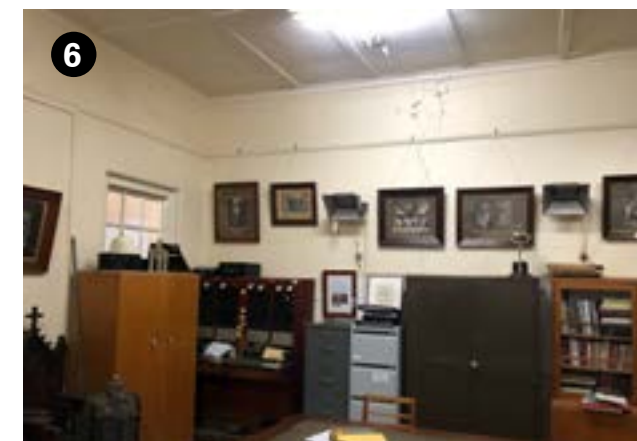
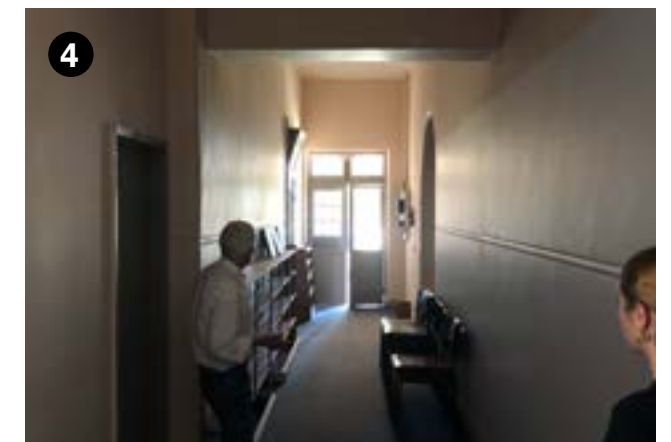
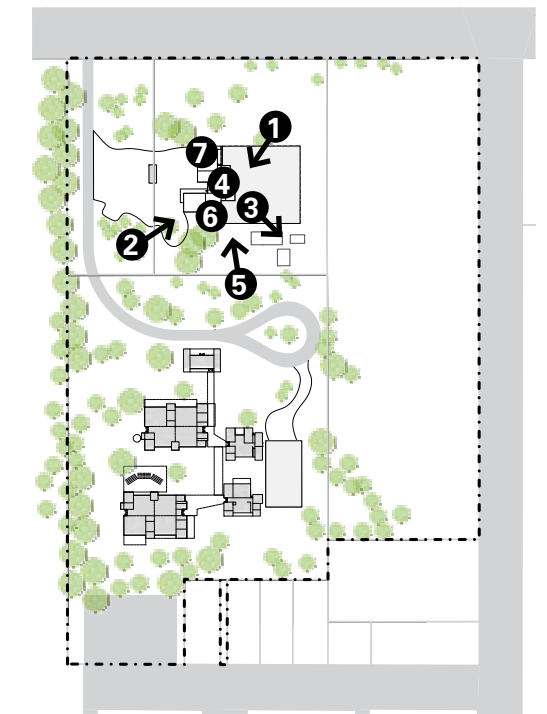
The local Patchwork Quilting group also occupy a room within the building which is used for their regular meetings. This group also utilise some storage within the building as well as the shared use of the kitchen and bathrooms.

There are four 'out buildings' to the original primary school. The first is in the carpark, which is small and in poor condition. The other three are in a cluster to the north-east of the school, which houses the community gym in the largest building, and the other two are used as general storage for various community functions.

Generally, the original school building is in reasonable condition given its significant age with some evidence of cracking in the wall structure throughout and occupant advice suggesting there is a white ant infestation in the structure. The flooring presented as patchy with weakened supports in certain sections.



Key Map



1.7 New School Building (1978)

Primary School 1979

Upon being vacated and closed in 2015, this school site was boarded up with metal cladding to the windows to protect them from potential damage.

The condition of the buildings is relatively good, considering they have been boarded up for several years. On face value, the buildings appear structurally sound with solid brickwork throughout. There is some evidence of water leaks which suggests some roof damage, and there is also evidence of some minor wood rot in certain areas of the building.

The school is a conglomeration of four buildings, this provides the opportunity for the building to be re-developed in stages, giving the option of staged or progressive development options to occur at different stages.

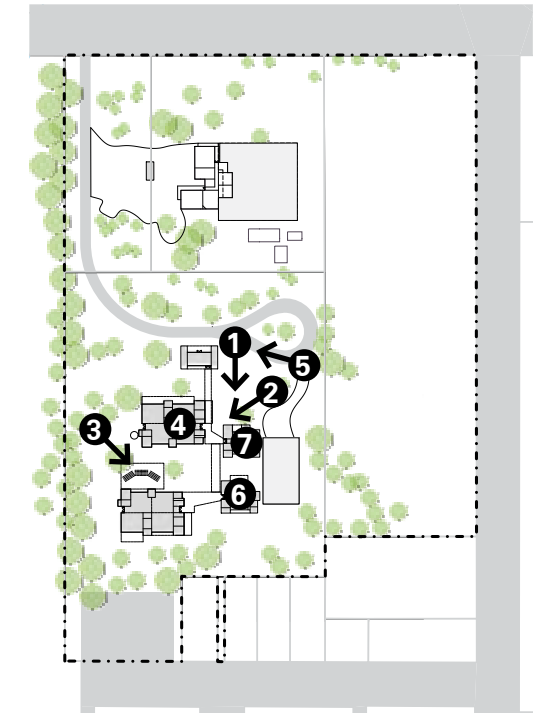
The existing carpark to the south of this site provides convenient access for ample parking and connection through to Bruce Street.

There is a multi-purpose basketball / netball court at the front of the school to the north east, however since a covering structure was relocated to the new school, it has deteriorated and has significant cracking and an uneven surface.

There is also a small concrete auditorium between the rear blocks which is covered and would provide a useful space for future gatherings.



Key Map





2.1 Summary of community consultation findings

The opportunity to travel to Hopetoun and not only visit the site but to gain extensive knowledge about the town, its history, people, industry and economy was a wonderful experience. We spent the first of two days travelling around Hopetoun, visiting several sites of interest around the town. In the afternoon we spent time on the site doing various site walks, measurements and a tour of the original school building.

On the second day we performed a site visit of the 1975 primary school before attending the community consultation meeting. This meeting was chaired Russell Hilton and attended by around 20 local residents.

As part of the meeting, MGS gave a brief introduction and introduced the main activity for the meeting which split residents into two groups and asked them to discuss and prioritise a series of 'wish list' items that could form part of the masterplan process. MGS brought a series of pre-prepared cards as well as blank cards which could be used for any additional ideas, thoughts and discussions that were had.

Both groups discussed various ideas to be designed into the masterplan as well as practical ideas to inspire growth and success for the town's future.

The following list is a high level summary of the key themes and ideas which resonated across both groups at the consultation.

Vision

- Retain and enhance existing community uses
- Explore opportunities for a new industry for Hopetoun to attract and retain young people
- Ensure transparency throughout the masterplanning process

New industry opportunities

- Tourism / eco-tourism
- Artist-in-residence and other art collaborations and programs
- Wildlife tourism (birds)
- Heritage museum
- Ability to accommodate large groups (buses)
- Agricultural and learning / training experiences
- Remote working opportunities
- School / leadership camp

Community programs and spaces

- Enhance the built facilities and spaces to provide a central hub for community activity
- Flexible learning spaces
- Patchwork group – would like their own (non-shared) space
- Historical society – requires additional storage and display areas

Accommodation

- Short-term housing for key workers / traineeships
- Independent Living Units providing transitional housing for retirees (queries raised regarding the cohort, design and management of these units)
- 'Salt and pepper housing' with a focus on quality and sustainability

General

- Integrate the site with other existing popular locations, e.g. paths, landscaping, public spaces and sight lines
- Landscaping should be sympathetic to the Mallee environment
- 1970's primary school buildings seen as an underutilised asset and could be relatively easily transformed into useable space
- Potential for staged development i.e. renovate two existing buildings initially to stagger costs of redevelopment



2.2 Implementation

Provide much needed residential and key worker housing associated with local employment and retirement

Residential housing

- ‘Transitional’, independent living units for retired farmers and others wishing to downsize within the local community.
- Opportunity to partner with Haven Homes to deliver and manage dwellings.
- Opportunity for key worker housing to support younger educational/health workers in the town, dependent on land zoning at sale.

Ensure dwellings meet the desires and requirements of the local community with natural light, ventilation, sustainable heating and cooling and adequate storage. Homes should take advantage of the natural views from the site and ensure each dwelling is DDA compliant and designed in line with best-practice housing guidelines.



Living Places Suburban Revival, *Bent Architecture*

Create new opportunities for leadership, local business and agricultural education

Leadership and youth camp

An educational camp facility provided to host school students from various ages, locations and purposes. This opportunity is flexible and could range from:

- Year 9 development camps
- Agricultural courses
- Leadership Courses
- Other youth / exchange groups

Depending on the nature of the camp, this would give the opportunity for a broadening ‘roughing it’ experience within a safe and supportive community environment. This camp could introduce students to various aspects of rural life including broad acre farming and agriculture, practical skills, local retail and associations with various hospitality, health and education providers.

Other geographic assets would provide a well-rounded educational experience including the national parks, deserts, skiing, canoeing, water safety, fishing walking and camping.

A detailed Business Plan titled ‘The Sky’s The Limit’ (2019) created for year 9 education camps within the refurbished primary school building provides a wonderful exemplar.



Camp Praire Schooner (USA), *El Dorado*

Showcase the region’s rich and engaging history to build tourism within the town

Indigenous and settler history

The opportunity to celebrate and display the community’s rich local history should be prioritised by this masterplan in order to not only properly store and preserve the items but also to educate and inspire locals and visitors about the township and region.

There is a noted opportunity to include geographic and natural history elements to broaden the offering.

In particular, settler history and genealogy are large areas of interest for locals and visitors researching their personal histories and this represents an excellent opportunity to make it a focus for the development.

This masterplan also supports the refurbishment of the original limestone school building as it is historic to the local architectural landscape and a focal point of the town.

The masterplan also supports greater recognition and awareness of Indigenous people of the region and Mallee Country.



Hopetoun Historical Archives

Support the neighbourhood house with upgraded facilities and promote tourism opportunities for the town

Community Hub and Gardens

This development also provides the opportunity to develop much needed community space and gardens for locals and visitors alike.

A new community hub building could provide a variety of uses for locals including:

- A small public library
- Computer and internet access
- Tourism and promotional information
- Toilets and cafe for travellers
(Cafe could be run for customer service and business training experiences)

A series of ‘pocket’ parks are proposed which can serve a variety of functions including a BBQ and outdoor seating area for meals and entertaining as well as general recreation and exercise.

Each of these offerings provide a valuable resource for locals and visitors alike who could use the resource as a base for their daily activities and visits to the town.



Legacy Park Community Hub, TAS, *Field Labs*

2.3 Key projects



1. Independent Living Units

Proposed to give local retirees the opportunity to stay connected to their local community. This could either be in the form of retro-fitted units or new purpose built accommodation.

2. Key worker housing

This housing would provide short to medium term accommodation options for singles, couples and families moving to the town for a period of time in their professional capacity associated primarily with the health and education industries.



3. Nature based playground

Invest in the usage, appearance and offering of the site by creating a series of nature-based playgrounds facing Hopetoun-Yaapect Road.



4. Community Hub

A new single-storey building could be introduced, with a potential cafe, lending library and bookable rooms serving the community. This flexible space could also be used for such community activities as computer and internet usage and classes, group meeting and activity rooms as well as the potential for a tourism desk etc.



5. Educational Camp

The potential to renovate part of the existing (1975) school to convert it into a camping centre for school age children or adult education would allow the site to host a variety of potential students to the town and facilitate a variety of educational experiences including agricultural, business and outdoor education.



6. Hobby farm

Given the rural location, many residents have a farming background. Older and younger visitors can meet and look after sheep, goats and cows in the hobby farm.



7. BBQ and recreation area

Opportunity to provide a purpose built recreational area with appropriate sheltering and facilities to provide a useable and loved community space for various formal and informal gatherings.

8. Revitalised heritage centre

This space would allow for the proper storage and display of significant items of local history for the enjoyment and interest of both locals and visitors alike.

9. Allied health and gym

Opportunity to upgrade the community gym to provide more generous and flexible spaces to allow classes and potential allied health practitioners consultation spaces.



10. Creative arts offering

Opportunity to link in with the new artists residence studio in town and create a 'working' space to hold classes and display various pieces.

3.1 Masterplan Option 1

Revitalising the site will bring much needed economic development, tourism and jobs to Hopetoun. This can be achieved by the addition of transitional housing, education as a new industry, the re-imagining of the state school as a valuable cultural and heritage museum and Mallee conservation hub. The development of a new community hub to service local residents and create a social and cultural attraction to tie in with the Silo Art Trail.

Key projects and opportunities:

1 Renovate and transition the state school into a historical hub exploring the rich, unique history of Hopetoun and the surrounding region.

Explore opportunities for artefact storage, a museum, conservation hub, genealogical study room and visitors reception area.

Benefits:

- Adds to the tourist appeal of Hopetoun
- Complements the Bush Retreat
- Supplements the historic experience of the Corrong Homestead
- Recognises the historic significance of the state school in its transformation into a museum

2 A new community, arts and social hub will anchor the western edge of Hopetoun increasing activation and providing a valuable community asset.

Benefits:

- Creates an art and cultural attraction to supplement the local Powerhouse Studio programming and the Silo Art Trail
- Provides social and community programming to local residents

3 Explore opportunities to renovate the primary school buildings into a mixed use precinct, or a single-use facility. While the primary school buildings appear to be in good condition, their renovation should occur in the short-term to prevent any long-term damage to the spaces.

Potential uses for the primary school zone include:

- Bush experience camp

- Dedicated facilities for the neighbourhood house
- Short-term accommodation for large groups
- Long-term accommodation for key workers or retirees

A proposal has previously been put forward for a leadership camp aimed at high-school students. Under such a proposal the primary school buildings would be renovated to include: female and male accommodation, teachers accommodation, staff offices, reception, common area and teaching rooms. Education themes would include settler and Indigenous history, flora and fauna, water conservation, farming, sport and community enterprise training.

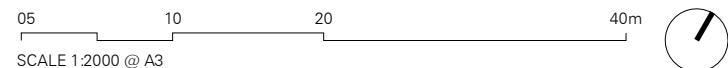
Benefits of a leadership camp:

- Creates a new industry and brings permanent jobs to Hopetoun
- Showcases the region to a new audience and demographic
- Doubles as short term group accommodation during school holidays which addresses accommodation shortages in Hopetoun

4 Transitional and key worker housing will address housing shortages in town, creating jobs in building and administration of housing in the short and long term.

5

- Site
- BBQ shelters
- Pedestrian connections
- Railway station
- Railway tracks
- Main vehicle access
- Heritage hub and museum
- Potential site for a new community hub and Neighbourhood House
- Primary school for redevelopment
- Transitional or key worker dwellings
- Potential transitional or key worker dwellings
- New recreation zones
- New vegetation opportunities



3.1 Masterplan Option 2

Working with the current occupants of the State School, including the Neighbourhood House, Patchwork Quilters and the Historical Society to facilitate, develop and grow the precinct to contribute to Hopetoun's amenity.

Key projects and opportunities:

- 1** Renovate and transition the state school into a historical hub exploring the rich, unique history of Hopetoun and the surrounding region.

Explore opportunities for artefact storage, a museum, conservation hub, genealogical study room and visitors reception area.

Benefits:

- Adds to the tourist appeal of Hopetoun
- Complements the Bush Retreat
- Supplements the historic experience of the Corrong Homestead
- Recognises the historic significance of the state school in its transformation into a museum












- 2** Explore opportunities to renovate the primary school buildings into a mixed use precinct, or a single-use facility. While the primary school buildings appear to be in good condition, their renovation should occur in the short-term to prevent any long-term damage to the spaces.

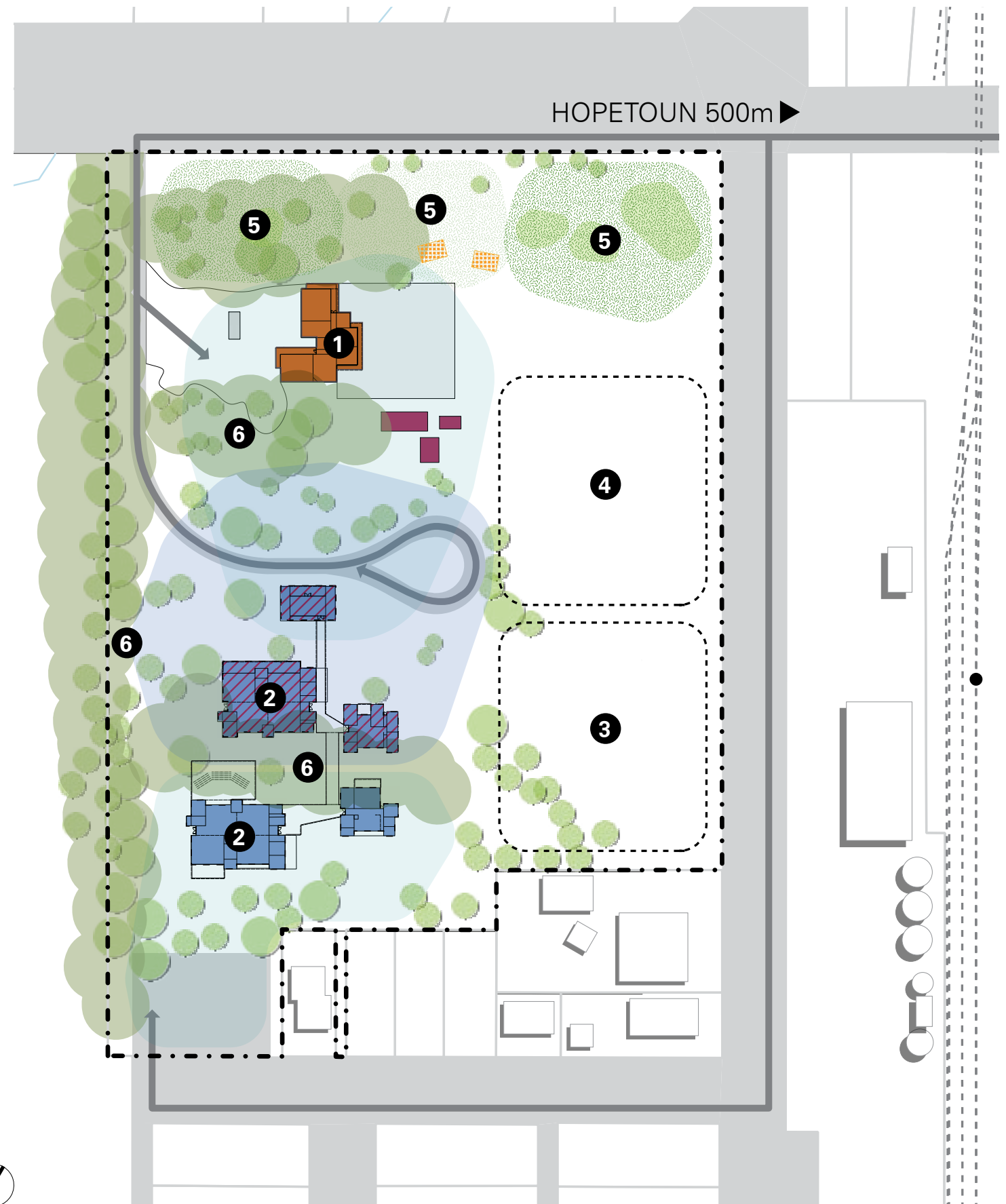
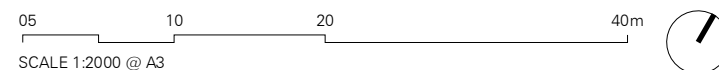
The primary school could also become the location for the Neighbourhood House allowing them to expand their program with larger, dedicated spaces.

- 3** Explore opportunities for housing along Garrard Street in order to transition the site toward the residential character to the south.
- 4**

- 5** New landscapes can be provided along Hopetoun-Yaapect Road to create a pleasant playscape as an entrance to the site. These new landscapes for play and recreation can be developed incrementally, informed by community ideas and wishes.

- 6** Opportunity to increase shade cover and native planting at key locations to preserve key views and help maintain privacy between uses.

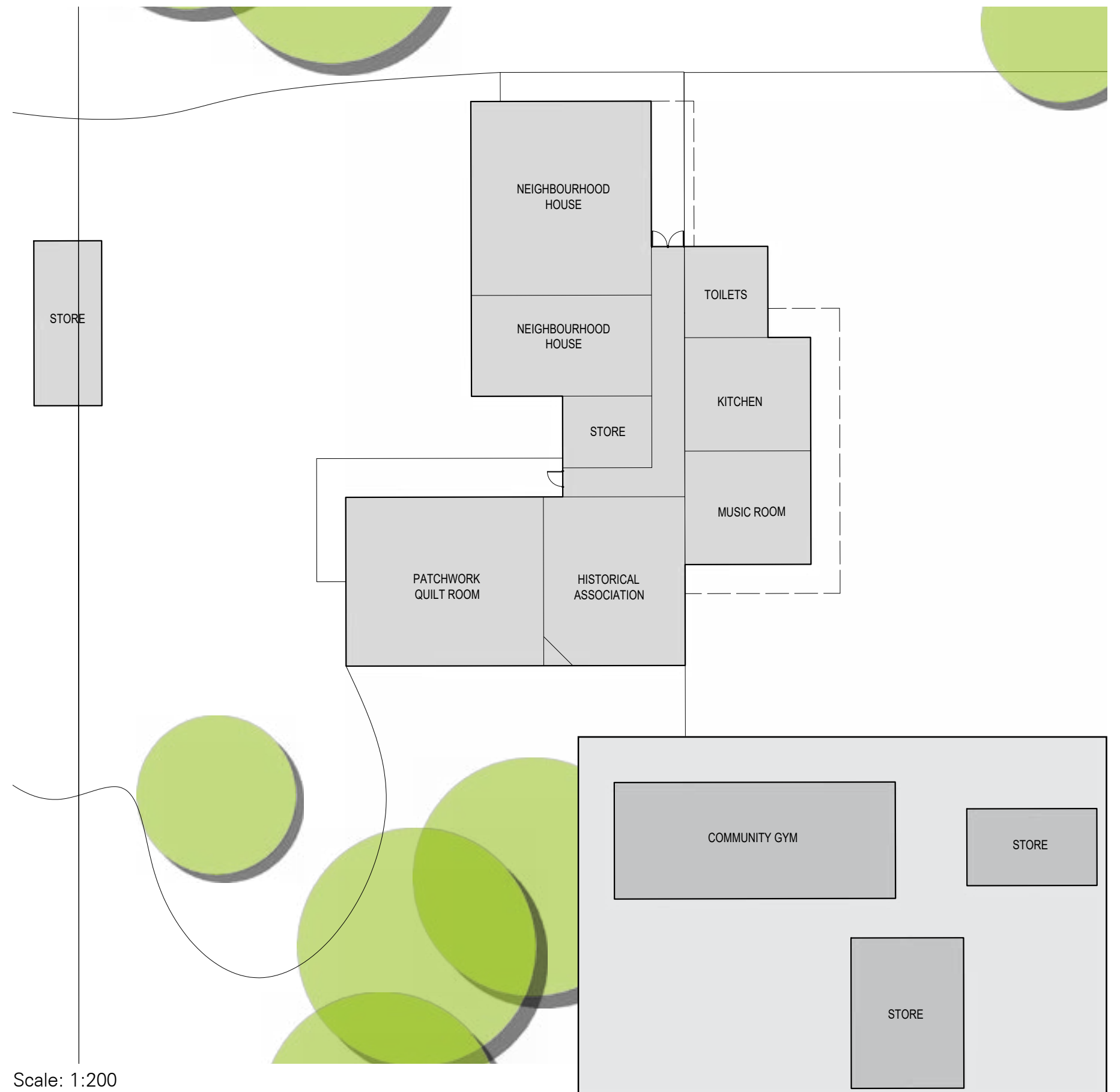
-  BBQ shelters
-  Pedestrian connections
-  Railway station
-  Railway tracks
-  Main vehicle access
-  Heritage hub and museum
-  Primary school for redevelopment
-  Potential relocation of neighbourhood house into tailored, renovated facilities
-  Potential housing development site for transitional or key worker units
-  New recreation zones
-  New vegetation opportunities



3.2 Masterplan Original school building

The original school rooms are currently programmed as shown in the plan including the Neighbourhood House services which includes an office space, a music room, the room used by the patchwork quilting group and the current historical society room. This building currently measures 430SQM, in addition to several outbuildings as shown in the plan opposite.

The plan to restore this heritage building should be undertaken to ensure its long term condition and ensure it is still loved and used by various members of the community in the long term.



3.2 Masterplan Potential school renovation

The former school can be reconfigured in flexible ways to support a variety of functions.

The plan to the right of the page shows how the five buildings that make up this school site are configured and display their adaptability for a range of uses, demonstrating the value in retaining the former school as an asset for redevelopment and reuse.



Scale: 1:500

4.1 Consultation feedback summary

	Issue raised	Response
1	Request to accommodate various tourism & accommodation typologies including groups of up to 40	Options to accommodate larger groups has been considered, with the notion that the camp facilities could generate additional income by hosting tour groups outside of the camp schedule, if this option is pursued.
2	New Community / Central Hub to be included in the masterplan design	Potential for a new community Hub is designed into Masterplan option 1.
3	All buildings to achieve disability access as a priority	This will be the responsibility of the appointed Architect on the project/s.
4	To include transitional housing for retirees in the form of ILU's	Both Masterplan options include possibilities for independent living units.
5	Request to include a dedicated heritage museum to house and display the community's collection	The Masterplan options include a new community space which would provide more space for the heritage museum within the existing heritage school building.
6	Recognition and representation of Indigenous heritage and art to be included	This is a priority, however, will rely on future implementation.
7	Request to include flexible learning spaces including within the leadership school and accommodation	The spaces designated for the camp include adequate space to provide both accommodation and flexible learning spaces, should this option be pursued.
8	Cultural and creative activities to be prioritised including the patchwork group to remain in existing room	Noted; cultural and creative activities are prioritised in each of the options presented. Refer to point 12 below for Patchwork Group.
9	Tourism should be a focus of the Masterplan; akin to 'The Dry' movie being filmed in town	Noted; this Masterplan process has several tourism opportunities at the centre of its design aspirations.
10	Potential to include Eco Tourism accommodation on the site	Noted; however we are conscious not to detract from the existing accommodation offering at Lake Lascelles.
11	Idea raised to showcase wildlife and bird-life at the site. Suggestion that tours could be run to show the 274 bird species identified in area.	Noted; attracting locals and tourists to the site is a clear aim however the specific bird-life idea could represent a specific and future opportunity.
12	Request for a dedicated room for the Hopetoun Patchwork Group which can remain set up with proper kitchen and toilet facilities	Noted; although this Masterplan doesn't cover the detail of room allocations and shared spaces we hope that the patchwork group is provided with dedicated facilities.
13	Suggestion of a heated therapy pool for community use as the current outdoor pool is not heated.	Noted; while this has not been reflected in the current Masterplans, there is always the potential for future projects of this kind.
14	5 Star Greenstar rating (energy efficiency of buildings)	Working with sustainability-minded architects on specific projects will be key to implementing this vision.
15	Masterplan should propose landscaping sympathetic to the Mallee Environment	Noted; working with a landscape architect will help facilitate a native planting palette and ensure appropriate landscape environments to reflect the region's unique biosphere.
16	Focus on integrating the site with the other existing popular sites i.e. paths, landscaping, public spaces, sight lines	The Masterplan maintains the visual connection to the town and enhanced the arrival points.
17	A request to ensure public transparency is designed into the masterplan	This site does not present large issues in terms of public transparency and the proposals do factor this into the design.
18	Request for remote working locations (Digital technology) due to increased demand	Noted.
19	To build in money making opportunities (Self Funding) such as visiting camps, school camps and guided tours run by locals	This is a priority for which we have created options to pursue for the long term sustainability of the various ventures.
20	Request for flexible and bookable spaces	There is adequate space within each proposal for flexible spaces.
21	Priority given to a visitor information centre	Masterplan option 1 provides a space for a visitor information space as part of the new community hub.
22	Request to include a café for tourism and employment opportunities	Masterplan option 1 provides a space for a cafe as part of the new community hub.
23	A community garden was requested to be included	Both Masterplan options signify space for a community garden to the north of the site.

