

WANDIN NORTH MASTER PLAN – POST CONSULTATION & CONSIDERATION

Report Author: Executive Officer Urban Design and Landscape Architecture

Responsible Officer: Director Planning & Sustainable Futures

Ward(s) affected: Billanook; Chandler;

The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

SUMMARY

The Wandin North Town Centre Masterplan project is a priority centre for planning, having no adopted Council-led plan/s, and no Community Plan. There are known existing risk factors in the centre due to unmanaged pedestrian movements across Warburton Highway at both the main activity centre as well as the Warburton Rail Trail. There has also been community advocacy, which has aligned with Council's efforts, to see town centres impacted by COVID become thriving hubs, providing further support for local businesses.

A Draft Masterplan was exhibited between November and December 2022, and feedback was sought on the proposed actions through extensive community and trader engagement on the Draft Masterplan. This feedback has been reviewed (see Attachment 3) and proposed updates are documented in a 'marked up' version of the original Draft Masterplan (see Attachment 2) which has formed the basis of the proposed final Wandin North Town Centre Masterplan (see Attachment 1). If adopted, the Masterplan will guide Council's decision-making for public realm (including streetscape) improvements and support advocacy with government agencies, helping us maximise opportunities that reflect our community's values.

The Masterplan is now ready for Council to consider for adoption.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council

- 1. Note the findings from the community feedback and proposed updates to the Wandin North Town Centre Masterplan.***
- 2. Adopt the final Wandin North Town Centre Masterplan.***

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

There are no previous related Council decisions.

DISCUSSION

Purpose

This report provides an overview of community and trader feedback on the exhibition of the Draft Wandin North Town Centre Masterplan, presenting proposed updates and a finalised version of the Wandin North Town Centre Masterplan based on analysis of that feedback. The report seeks Council consideration for adoption of the final Wandin North Town Centre Masterplan to guide future development of Wandin North's Town Centre public realm.

Background

Wandin North is the only Small Activity Centre that has not previously been subject to any place planning, including Community Plan, Place Plan, Structure Plan, Urban Design Framework, or Masterplan.

There are several known existing risk factors within the centre including unmanaged informal pedestrian movement in the Warburton Highway corridor and complex high risk activities during ceremonial functions around the existing cenotaph.

In March and April 2022, Council undertook community and trader engagement to develop the Draft Wandin North Town Centre Masterplan. The subject site area for the Masterplan encompassed the shopping precinct, PJ Mould Reserve, the Greenglades Court Reserve, the connections to the Warburton Rail Trail, and the vacant parcel of land next to the Warburton Rail Trail.

The final Masterplan includes updates drawn from community feedback received on the draft version of the Masterplan through a second round of engagement from 7 November 2022 and 4 December 2022. The community was invited to review the Draft Masterplan and provide feedback on the actions proposed to improve the town centre's public realm. In addition to the comments and feedback received throughout the consultation there was also a comprehensive submission of collated ideas and observations received from a group of community representatives which informed early development of the Draft Masterplan. Many of these ideas have been included in the proposed final Masterplan scope and vision.

Community consultation was undertaken through one-on-one consultation with local traders and community members, an online community workshop and a project webpage to collect community ideas and suggestions.

There was a consistent theme from the consultation, with a desire to see Wandin North improved to become a thriving heart for the local community, improving the connection between the town centre and the rail trail, and providing better support for local businesses. The Masterplan provides a commitment from Council towards these outcomes and sets out a solid foundation from which to advocate for future projects and associated funding for delivery.

The community have been directly involved in developing and shaping this shared vision and blueprint for improving their town, and the feedback from the exhibition of

the Masterplan ensures the directions and projects align with those aspirations. The proposed final document provides guidance on Council priorities for capital works projects, and funding sourcing. It focuses on public realm elements including:

- Street trees and landscaping
- Footpaths
- Street furniture
- Signage directing people to town facilities
- Car parking
- Public open space.

It aims to provide improved accessibility and public realm amenity, creating a vibrant and welcoming space for the community to thrive in.

Draft Masterplan Structure

The Draft Wandin North Town Centre Masterplan considers the town centre as three separate areas that have their own similar characteristics, referred to as precincts. These precincts are:

1. *Town Centre Precinct* - with shops, cafes, and other retail, this is the commercial and social heart of the township. This also includes PJ Mould and Greenglades Court Reserves.
2. *Link Precinct* - the link provides an opportunity for connection between the town centre and the Warburton Rail Trail and adjoining Field precinct.
3. *Field Precinct* – a vacant Council-owned open space adjacent to the Warburton Rail Trail.

Each of the precinct concepts provide solutions to the key issues and opportunities, as described in the following sections.

Town Centre Precinct

- Advocacy for a signalised pedestrian crossing at either the corner of Warburton Highway and George Street or Warburton Highway and Union Road.
- Proposed speed limit reduction to 40~50km/h.
- Increase angle of on-street highway parking to 45 degrees in order to increase safety when reversing from spaces and improve the width of the footpath to accommodate al fresco dining and footpath trading creating activation of shop fronts.
- Extended and new footpaths to improve local walking access into the centre.
- High character tree planting for both sides of the highway to create an entrance statement for the town centre.
- Consistent and age-friendly street furniture throughout town centre.
- Provision of more summer shade, winter sun and greenery including an arbour/shade structure with vine planting at corner of Union Road, adjacent to the existing sculpture.

- New high character large canopy trees to replace poor quality existing trees around car park areas.
- Opportunity for public art and place identity signage wall at the corner of Union Road.
- Improvement of PJ Mould Reserve including provision of a gathering and ceremonial space for a relocated war memorial / cenotaph, re-plant shrubs and groundcovers where missing and improve existing pavement areas.
- Investigate improved provision of public toilet, with better safety considerations.
- Enhance connectivity to Greenglades Court play space by activation of the laneway connection by providing outdoor dining space and landscape improvements.
- Provide improved amenity through seating and shade structures in Greenglades Court Reserve.

Field Precinct

- Advocate for a signalised pedestrian crossing at the intersection of Warburton Rail Trail.
- Adjust bus stop location for accommodating a new signalised pedestrian crossing and improve amenity through providing shelters.
- High character streetscape treatment on both sides of the highway including providing avenue tree planting to create a strong sense of arrival, a shared footpath on the west and a new footpath on the east.
- Provide connections to the Warburton Rail Trail corridor.
- Investigate an Indigenous Co-Design approach to create a stronger connection to Country and celebrate the Wandin family heritage.

Link Precinct

- Provide streetscape treatments on both sides of the highway including a shared footpath on the west, a new footpath on the east and high character street trees on both sides of the highway.
- Improve road infrastructure through sealed shoulder and replacement of swale drainage with stormwater pipes.

Changes in the final Wandin North Masterplan

The details below outline the community feedback received on the actions of the Masterplan that generated the majority of responses, the number of responses including the level of support and our responses to the feedback received including any changes subject to feedback received. Feedback received on actions for each of the precincts is as follows:

1. Town Centre Precinct

1.1 Tree Planting and Landscaping

Key comments	Response
<p>There were twenty-four comments for streetscape improvements to the town centre through planting new high character canopy trees and creating more usable and inviting open space and landscaping.</p> <p>The mix of comments were nine positive, four negative and eleven neutral.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wandin North is renowned for its trees that create a seasonal flourish of red. The trees chosen for the main shops frontages reflect this character.• The decision to plant deciduous trees was made to provide shade during the warmer months and to maximise natural light gain during winter.• It should be noted that all trees drop leaves, though deciduous trees that shed leaves in Autumn tend to drop fewer leaves at other times of the year. Leaf litter in town centres is cleaned regularly by Council, typically occurring weekly. Species are selected for small leaf sizes which break down easily.• Leaves dropped by evergreen trees can be tougher and do not easily break down, especially native Eucalypt species.

1.2 Signalised Pedestrian Crossings

Key comments	Response
<p>There were seventeen comments which sought to improve pedestrian safety and connectivity in the town centre by proposing a signalised pedestrian crossing in the town centre and advocating for a reduced speed limit (currently 60km/h) through the town centre.</p> <p>The mix of comments were four positive, three negative and ten neutral.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multiple locations for the pedestrian crossing were considered. The proposed crossing near George Street was based on traffic safety, straight road alignment and its relative closeness to the town centre. Placement at George Street allows safe passage across the highway for pedestrians while slowing the traffic flow through the town centre (though we are also advocating amending speed limit to 40-50km/h). The George Street crossing will connect directly to the local bus stop and link the North side footpath for patrons coming from the rail trail and Rue De Gare.• A crossing at Union Road has also been considered and would have similar pedestrian benefits as George Street but would also have the additional benefit of supporting safer and easier vehicle movement in and out of the centre's main carpark and reduce visitor wait times during peak traffic periods. This option is more complex and hence more expensive to deliver.• Both options require further investigation with Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) and their subsequent approval. In response the

	Masterplan has been updated to show both locations as potential crossing points.
1.3 <u>Car Parking</u>	
Key comments	Response
<p>There were fifteen comments received relating to the removal of a small number of parking spaces to improve safety for on-street car parking, accessibility to the shops and improve bus stop amenity.</p> <p>The mix of comments were three positive, four negative and eight neutral comments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies (led by Council's Traffic Engineering Team) to ascertain the demand for parking were undertaken across weekday periods to inform the project regarding parking redesign to facilitate public realm improvements. • Post the consultation period a weekend survey was also undertaken. • The weekday survey identified that parking demand peaked at 50 per cent on the Wednesday surveyed at 10:00am, when there were 54 vehicles recorded. There were 55 vacant spaces available. • While originally five parking spaces were proposed to be removed, two have been reinstated in response to consultation responses and a further five additional parking spaces have been proposed at nearby locations along Warburton Highway. The proposed final Masterplan would achieve a net gain of two parking spaces within the precinct. • This redesign has secured the desired public realm improvements, pending future Planning Permit requirements. • Additional support for active transport measures are being implemented to encourage cycling and walking as attractive transport options.
1.4 <u>Footpath Improvements</u>	
Key comments	Response
<p>There were nine comments relating to improvements to the footpath streetscape in the town centre. This action sought to support local traders by providing more usable and inviting open space areas and create more functional and attractive outdoor dining spaces or outdoor space for product display as well as the potential for creating a space that could accommodate a small market or community event.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extension of footpaths is one of the key aspects of this Masterplan. The extended footpaths will provide more space for pedestrian movement, improve access to shop fronts and provide new opportunities for additional outdoor dining, retail display and landscaping.

The mix of comments were three positive, one negative and five neutral.	
1.5 <u>Street Furniture</u>	
Key comments	Response
<p>There were six comments received regarding an increased number and improved seats along with shade and other landscaping improvements. The purpose of the action was to create a more usable and inviting public realm.</p> <p>The mix of comments were two positives, no negative and four neutral.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Masterplan includes the provision of new street furniture as well as other public realm improvements throughout the town centre including bins.

2. Link Precinct

2.1 <u>Footpath Improvements</u>	
Key comments	Response
<p>There were six comments regarding improved physical connection between the town centre and the Warburton Rail Trail.</p> <p>The mix of comments were three positives, none negative and three neutral.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current action in the Masterplan will remain. This action involves the 2.5m wide shared path being improved on the Western side of Warburton Highway. In addition, the Masterplan will provide a new 1.5m wide footpath on the Eastern side of Warburton Highway to provide greater access and choice for pedestrians.
2.2 <u>Tree Planting</u>	
Key comments	Response
<p>There were three comments relating to increased number of street trees along the Warburton Highway to provide a sense of entry to the town centre and consistency in the streetscape.</p> <p>The mix of comments were one positive, one negative and one neutral.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planting trees both sides of the street will enhance visual amenity of the town centre including creating a sense of arrival, traffic calming and making a formal gateway to the Wandin North Town Centre. Exact tree locations will be decided at the detailed design stage to ensure required sightlines are achieved and distances from services maintained.

3. Field Precinct

3.1 Signalised Pedestrian Crossing

Key comments	Response
<p>There were nine comments received which sought to add to improve pedestrian safety and connectivity for the Warburton Rail Trail through proposing a signalised pedestrian crossing.</p> <p>The mix of comments were three positives, none negative and six neutral.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A signalised crossing in this location will provide significantly increased safety for pedestrians and cyclists and improve walkability in the town centre area. Council commissioned a study by traffic engineering consultants to study of all Warburton Rail Trail road crossings and provided recommendations on upgrades to these crossing points. The study identified the crossing at Warburton Highway in Wandin North as the number one priority, and it recommended the introduction of a signalised pedestrian crossing there. Analysis for a bridge or underpass were considered for their feasibility. However, these structures can be significantly more expensive and require significant lengths of ramps which often render it undesirable to users. The crossing location is subject to DTP's approval. • Feedback identified the need to expand the area of consideration around the Rail Trail crossing given the converging and conflicting road intersections and complex vehicle movements. Any design at this location will include a whole of node solution as per Councillor feedback.

3.2 Open Space Design

Key comments	Response
<p>There were five comments received which proposed to provide improved landscaping in this open space area as well as new connections between the town centre and the Warburton Rail Trail.</p> <p>The mix of comments were three positive, one negative and one neutral.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council is seeking to include an Indigenous cultural perspective to inform the detailed design of the Field Precinct which will involve engaging with indigenous cultural advisers to create appropriate design outcomes.

3.3 Car Parking

Key comments	Response
<p>There was commentary around reduction in parking spaces across the precincts. The comments were concerned with access to the centre.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An additional 14 car parking spaces have been included on the eastern side, within the open space to create additional parking options for users of the open space.

Details of this consultation are provided in the Wandin North Town Centre Masterplan Community Engagement Report (Attachment 2) and in the Background section of this report.

Options considered

1. Adopt the Wandin North Masterplan updated with changes as proposed.

The community engagement has supported the projects and concepts within the Master Plan with updates included in the final Masterplan that reflect feedback. Adopting the Masterplan will enable commencement of advocacy for projects and funding in line with community aspirations for Wandin North.

2. Abandon the Masterplan

This option would be contrary to the strong community feedback, and make delivering any project very difficult in the absence of an agreed and consulted plan.

Recommended option and justification

Option 1 is recommended, to adopt the Wandin North Masterplan with changes proposed, that reflect community feedback.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

The Wandin North Town Centre Masterplan has been developed in-house utilising existing organisational resources.

A schedule of the Masterplan projects and estimated costs is on page 20 of the Masterplan document (Attachment 1). The actions and concept designs proposed by the Masterplan are estimated to cost around \$3 million over a period of around 5-10 years depending on organisational priorities, available funds and effectiveness of advocacy. A collection of these actions and design projects can be undertaken within existing resources achieving cost savings from reduced external consultant fees, however delivery of projects through construction would all require funding.

The larger value projects such as the signalised pedestrian crossings (\$600k), the Link Precinct civil works (\$400k) and the Northern portion of the Warburton Highway roadside treatments (part of \$700k) would all qualify as advocacy projects for State funding due to this being a Department of DTP arterial corridor. These projects could be bundled into a single advocacy ask of nominally \$1.4million.

The remainder of works identified would seek funding through normal project bids in the annual Capital Works Program cycle.

The timing of some projects may require significant pre-planning, authority approvals and complex documentation, such as the arterial corridor works and the cenotaph relocation. This would mean delivery would not be possible for at least two to three years. The Indigenous co-design process for the Field Precinct would require a longer design period to enable deeper engagement and early cultural heritage research, which would also result in a later delivery and construction. The remainder of projects are simpler and would be able to be scheduled once funds are available.

APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

This report contributes to the following strategic objective(s) in the Council Plan:

- Connected and healthy communities — Communities that are safe, resilient, healthy, inclusive, and socially well connected and where quality services are accessible to everyone – by providing a town centre Masterplan that enhance pedestrian accessibility and activation of public realm areas for the Wandin North Town Centre.
- Quality community infrastructure and liveable places — Quality facilities and infrastructure that meet current and future needs. Places are well planned hubs of activity that foster well-being, creativity and innovation – by identifying priorities needed within Wandin North to help meet demand for infrastructure and facilities from residents and visitors.
- Connected – Integrated Transport Strategy – supporting active transport modes and improved public transport experiences.
- Regenerative – Economic Development Strategy – supporting local business and activity centres, promoting investment and enhancing community value for local activity centres.
- Liveable Climate – Increasing tree canopy cover, fostering zero emissions active transport modes, improving stormwater quality.

RELEVANT LAW

Some actions of the Masterplan are located within the Warburton Highway road reserve. The Warburton Highway is a state-controlled road. Any work within the road reserve boundaries such as a pedestrian crossing, footpath widening, and street tree planting requires the approval of the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) as per the legislative requirements of the *Road Management Act 2004* and the *Transport Integration Act 2010*.

The *Road Management Act 2004* establishes a new statutory framework for the management of the road network which facilitates the coordination of the various uses of road reserves for roadways, pathways, infrastructure and similar purposes.

The *Transport Integration Act 2010* establishes a new framework for the provision of an integrated and sustainable transport system in Victoria. Its objectives include clauses relating to social and economic inclusion, integration of transport and land use, economic prosperity and environmental sustainability.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic Implications

The Masterplan provides Council with a thorough evidence-based document to help prioritise and justify the delivery of remaining key capital works projects. The Masterplan also provides Council with the opportunity to present shovel ready projects as candidates for any external funding grants that might be on offer, including those with short application timeframes.

Social Implications

The proposed design solutions, include outdoor dining areas, potential outdoor gathering spaces in the town centre, as well as those within the PJ Mould Reserve. Additionally, enhanced connections between Warburton Rail Trail and the town centre, are proposed to improve the accessibility of the services provided, thus fostering better community connections and overall improved community health outcomes. The enhanced accessibility outcomes promote participation for community members with mobility issues as well as promoting healthy active transport modes.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Actions of the Wandin North Town Centre Masterplan offer a strong contribution to improved environmental outcomes within the centre. This includes improved accessible streetscapes, and outdoor dining opportunities have taken into consideration the high quality natural and landscape features of the Wandin North area into the development of actions and proposed design solutions. This includes significant views and vistas, drainage and water runoff, and vegetation types.

The additional tree planting and improved canopy cover alleviates localised Urban Heat Island effects while offering improved biodiversity and habitat values as well as increased carbon capture.

The landscape treatments will improve capture and treatment of stormwater runoff through Water Sensitive Urban Design solutions and garden beds thereby reducing runoff, replenishing water tables, maximising tree health and increasing water quality in the network.

The improved path network and support for active transport facilitates zero emissions modes of transport and reduces car dependency.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

An initial community engagement was held in March and April 2022 to seek community insights into the issues and opportunities for the centre, and from this Council have developed the Draft Wandin North Town Centre Masterplan.

This Draft Masterplan was taken back to the community for their review and to seek any additional comments prior to finalisation. Community consultation was carried out between 7 November 2022 and 4 December 2022. Details of this consultation are provided in the Wandin North Town Centre Masterplan Final Community Engagement Report (Attachment 3) and in the Background section of this report.

In line with Council's Community Engagement Framework, the engagement activities included:

- Media - Media release
- Website – Webpage, Hive, and E-news
- Social Media – Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter
- Posters and flyers

- Direct mail – letter and project brochure drop offs to businesses
- Webinar – online webinar for community members
- Drop-in Session – question & answer session
- Pop Up – stall in the town centre.

Following the close of the consultation period an Engagement Report was developed to capture details of the engagement and the feedback received. This report has been provided to the community via the project's webpage.

COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Wandin North Town Centre Masterplan has been guided internally by a Project Reference Group which included input from:

- Community Development
- Economic Development
- Development Engineering
- Transport Engineering
- Recreation & Active Living (formerly)
- Parks & Bushlands (formerly)
- Indigenous Development
- Disability Inclusion
- Resource Recovery
- Communications and Engagement.

The Project Team has also been meeting regularly with representatives from local community groups.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The Wandin North Town Centre Masterplan provides necessary evidence-based context to decision making by identifying key areas and projects for upgrade and construction. The Masterplan's holistic approach will assist in informing a wide range of Council service delivery areas of the specific opportunities and challenges to consider in the Wandin North Town Centre and maximise Council's response to community expectations.

Some design elements address current risks, such as the proposed pedestrian crossings and improved siting of the cenotaph, while others reduce the likelihood of future risks, such as trip hazards from current poor tree plantings and heat exposure from lack of summer shade.

The Masterplan contains Warburton Highway which is controlled by DTP. Approval processes with external authorities such as DTP may generally take more time, hence there may be a risk of delay to delivery. The Masterplan will seek feedback

from DTP in early phase/s. This may also be an opportunity to discuss with DTP if any parts can be constructed by the Department.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT

1. Wandin North Town Centre Masterplan 2023
2. Marked Up Draft Wandin North Town Centre Masterplan
3. Wandin North Town Centre Masterplan Final Community Engagement Report