

## MORRISON RESERVE DRAFT MASTER PLAN RELEASE FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

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Ward(s) affected: Billanook;

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*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

This report seeks to provide an update on the draft Morrison Reserve Master Plan (the draft Master Plan) that has been developed following consultation with the community, user groups and broadly through Council departments. The intention is to seek broader community feedback on the draft Master Plan.

The draft Master Plan provides a 15-year strategic approach to improving community, sport and recreation facilities at Morrison Reserve, Mount Evelyn in response to identified community needs, opportunities and projected population demographics.

Improvements recommended for community consideration include an upgrade to soccer, athletics and court facilities, the path network and park furniture on Council land. The draft Master Plan also recommends an upgrade of the school oval, currently used by community clubs as a secondary ground, and advocacy for a future sports stadium at the Yarra Hills Secondary College.

The proposed upgrade of the playspace and inclusion of a bike park and social spaces recently received external and Council funding.

### RECOMMENDATION

#### ***That Council***

- 1. Consider the recommendations of the draft Morrison Reserve Master Plan.***
- 2. Support the release of the draft Morrison Reserve Master Plan for community consultation.***
- 3. Receive a further report considering submissions.***

## RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

During the development of the draft Master Plan the creation of a Youth Activation Space was identified as a new initiative for the area. The youth activation space will include an upgraded playspace, a new bike park offering a range of experiences and a series of inviting social and gathering spaces will be developed as part of the project.

An application to seek co-funding through the Growing Suburbs Fund for the Youth Activation Space was supported by Council (Council Meeting 12 July 2022). The \$3.4 million project application was successful, receiving a \$2.6million Growing Suburbs Fund grant and an \$800,000 contribution from Council.

## DISCUSSION

### *Purpose and Background*

The draft Master Plan (Attachment 1) has been developed to address a range of current and growing outdoor sport, recreation and indoor stadium court needs identified in the urban/hills area. The draft plan has a strong research basis, informed by the findings of many investigations with the following support documents available on request:

- Morrison Reserve Stadium Feasibility Study and Master Plan - Issues and Opportunities Report 2018.
- Morrison Reserve Synthetic Pitch Feasibility Study 2022.
- Mt Evelyn Bike Park Draft Master Plan 2022.
- Playspace Concept Design 2022.

### *Yarra Hills Secondary College – Sports Stadium*

Council was approached by the Yarra Hills Secondary College in 2018 seeking (financial) support to partner in the construction of a stadium on education land. Gymnastics Victoria were also supportive of the inclusion of a gymnastics centre at the school.

At the time there was an anecdotal shortage of court space across Yarra Ranges to meet the basketball, netball and volleyball demands. During 2018-2019, it was agreed that the school and Council co-fund a feasibility study to establish if there was evidence of demand and the associated level of development appropriate for school and community use at the school site. The identification of a viable business model not reliant on (significant) Council investment was a key factor. There are existing examples of effective school / basketball association stadium partnership models established at other schools.

A feasibility study was carried out for the stadium as part of the early reserve Master Plan development.

## Scope

A feasibility study was undertaken to determine what an appropriate stadium development to support school and community use might consist of. Several components of the reserve needing a coordinated approach and underutilised parts of the reserve offered opportunity for a unified vision, which became the catalyst for complementary feasibility studies and the development of a Masterplan for the Morrison Reserve site.

Improvements proposed in the draft Master Plan include, but are not limited to:

- Creation of a Youth Activation Space incorporating an upgraded district level playspace, social spaces and a bike park offering a range of skill development opportunities for beginner to advanced riders. Funding of \$3.4 million secured.
- Toilet, barbeque and shelter facilities to support the Youth Activation Space.
- Inclusion of social nodes for people to sit, relax or engage in other recreation activities e.g., informal performance space.
- Improvements to the path network across the site for walking, dog walking fitness and cross-country running activities.
- Upgrade of soccer facilities including the pavilion and conversion of the southern field to a synthetic surface.
- Netball/tennis court and clubroom improvements.
- Car park improvements to support additional reserve usage.
- Upgrade of the school oval to support community sport usage.
- Advocacy for the construction of a four-court stadium at the Yarra Hills Secondary College.

Concept designs developed for the playspace, bike park, soccer field and school sports stadium will be developed further as each project progresses and circulated at the appropriate time.

### *Soccer Infrastructure*

Increased demand for soccer facilities across Yarra Ranges, coupled with the aged soccer infrastructure at Morrison Reserve prompted feasibility investigations into the conversion of one of the soccer fields to synthetic to enable more intensive use of the pitch without increasing maintenance and damage to the surface, and the potential to bring the pavilion amenities up to industry standards for gender equity.

The soccer pitch feasibility study determined that a full-sized competition field with warm up area/training space and technical areas could be accommodated in the space available. Preliminary investigations by Council's Major Projects officers indicated that a pavilion upgrade with tiered spectator seating could be

accommodated to support the upgraded soccer field. Upgrading facilities and capacity at this site was considered more cost effective than the establishment of an additional facility elsewhere.

### *Youth Activation Space*

Provision of no/low-cost recreation activities for youth was a gap identified at Morrison Reserve. The recommendation for a bike park was supported by a separate municipal study into provision of bike facilities in Yarra Ranges and tested in the site-specific Draft Mt Evelyn Bike Park Master Plan drafted in 2022 to inform future development. Student workshops and community consultation informed the draft concept that was the basis of the successful State Government funding bid.

A broader Youth Activation lens has now been applied to this part of the reserve which takes a more holistic and gender inclusive approach to complement the bike elements. This includes a suite of landscape features and gathering areas that encourage social connection, capitalise on the strong views and celebrate the opportunities of the topography.

The Draft Bike Park Masterplan will require review and updating as detailed design of the overall space progresses, drainage studies are carried out, supporting parking and infrastructure is scoped and more refined cost estimates inform the scope capable of being delivered.

There is still significant design development required for the Youth Activation Space which will be progressed through the current Reserve Masterplan consultation and subsequent specific project design development throughout 2023/24.

The location and design for the upgraded playspace has already been tested through public consultation and project reference group meetings including the Disability Advisory Committee. Detailed design will be completed in 2023 ready for construction in 2023/24. Further feedback will not be sought for this component.

### *Traffic and Parking*

The intensification of activity in the precinct will require further traffic and parking studies. The draft Master Plan proposes investigation of opportunities around the old playground site and a careful assessment of vehicle movements and resident amenity at Mikado Road. Increased vehicle movements onto Old Hereford Road may require further improvements to increase safety and sightlines. Enhanced pedestrian linkages between the Youth Activation precinct and the existing main and southern carparks will maximise utilisation of current parking provisions.

### *Gymnastics*

The stadium feasibility study determined that the initial school concept of up to seven courts with a gymnastics hall was not feasible. A four-court concept with additional amenities underneath to support increased oval use was deemed a more financially sustainable model. The inclusion of a gymnastics hall was discounted as the likelihood of an external investor at this location was unlikely.

### ***Options considered***

Officers have considered the following options:

1. Develop a Master Plan

In response to feedback from community and observed issues and opportunities in the area, a masterplan will offer a coordinated suite of projects to improve amenity and value for community and respond to growing popularity of the park. Seeking community feedback on this draft Masterplan will provide confidence that the concepts meet community needs and aspirations for the reserve.

2. Deliver ad-hoc projects on demand

While this brings some value to community, it can result in lost opportunities and inefficiencies through lack of coordination. This option is not recommended.

3. No further upgrades at Morrison Reserve

Officers are aware of issues and accessibility concerns that would continue to create barriers for community. There are already significant funds committed to progressing projects for some areas of the site which have funding agreements and critical timelines that need to be met. Ceasing work would require the return of funding to the funding partners. Given the regional profile of the park this option is not recommended.

### ***Recommended option and justification***

It is recommended that Council progress with Option 1, seeking community feedback on the Draft Morrisons Reserve Masterplan in order to produce a unified vision for all aspects of the reserve and maximise community value.

## **FINANCIAL ANALYSIS**

The actions outlined in the draft Master Plan are an indication of Council's desired outcomes for the space, and the timing of delivery reflects Council's intent, but this does not pre-commit these actions for delivery. As with all masterplans, each action must be considered in the context of the full Council program of projects and will be assessed against available funds and priorities.

Delivery of the full recommendations of the draft Master Plan (based on Council owned land) is estimated to cost \$14,539,000 over the 15-year lifespan of the Master Plan. A further \$27,115,000 would be required to deliver the stadium and oval improvements on the Department of Education and Training land.

Other than the already funded Youth Activation Space (\$3.4 million), the implementation of the draft Master Plan does not have an allocated budget. All other recommended improvements are reliant on competitive funding bids from Public Open Space funding, renewal and co-funding sourced via State and Federal Government grant applications and contributions from community groups and organisations that would have direct benefit from the improvements.

Opportunity to advocate for and receive external funding will be strengthened by the evidence-based research and consultation undertaken to develop the master plan, especially if a final updated version is produced taking on board feedback and subsequently adopted by Council.

The Cost Plan (Attachment 2) provides an Opinion of Probable Costs and a potential funding model, summarised in the table below. It is noted that costs are escalating rapidly in the construction sector and estimates would need to be updated closer to delivery.

Full details of the projected financial implication over the 15-year period of the master plan are provided in Attachment 3.

<b>Draft Morrison Reserve Master Plan Cost Projections</b>		<b>Potential Funding Contributions</b>		
Activity Area	<b>Estimated Cost</b>	Council	State/Fed Gov. Grants*	Other**
Recreation Precinct	<b>4,841,000</b>	1,733,000	3,108,000	
Sport Precinct	<b>8,918,000</b>	3,438,000	4,795,000	685,000
Southwest Entrance and Carpark precinct	<b>780,000</b>	420,000	340,000	20,000
<b>Total Master Plan Implementation (Council Land)</b>	<b>14,539,000</b>	5,591,000	8,243,000	705,000
Less confirmed funding for the Youth Activity Space	<b>(3,400,000)</b>	(800,000)	(2,600,000)	
<b>TOTAL UNCONFIRMED COST COUNCIL LAND</b>	<b>11,139,000</b>	<b>4,791,000</b>	<b>5,643,000</b>	<b>705,000</b>
School Precinct (Education Land)	<b>27,115,000</b>	<b>865,000</b>	<b>16,250,000</b>	<b>10,000,000</b>

\* Government grants or education department allocations sought to co-fund projects.

\*\* Where applicable, contributions to be sought from the schools, community groups and organisations that would directly benefit from the improvements.

Council contribution is anticipated to come from Public Open Space funding mainly and the balance from Asset New and Improved Reserve funds. Council's proposed contribution to improvements on education land has been limited to path network linkages to Council assets and the redevelopment of the school oval for community use. The draft Master Plan recommendations are underpinned by a need to improve the condition of ageing assets and promote participation (for females and gender diverse participants), improved capacity and choice applicable to all members of the community.

An Asset Maintenance Plan will be developed to identify maintenance costs attributable to the new items proposed in the draft Master Plan, assuming they are supported by the community and Council.

## **APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES**

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

- *Connected and Healthy Communities.*

Communities are safe, resilient, healthy, inclusive and socially well connected. Quality services are accessible to everyone.

- *Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places.*

Quality facilities and infrastructure meets current and future needs. Places are well planned hubs of activity that foster wellbeing, creativity and innovation.

Action 2: Develop and implement a strategic approach for activating and providing functional and affordable community assets and spaces that are welcoming to all and support the wellbeing and connectedness of the community.

- *Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025.*

- Increase active living
- Improve mental wellbeing and social connection.

New and improved facilities will contribute to improved health and wellbeing with increased opportunities to socialise and exercise.

- *Recreation and Open Space Strategy 2013 – 2023.*

The Recreation and Open Space Strategy 2013-2023 sets out directions for creating healthy and active environments and services in Yarra Ranges and provides a framework to guide future development and management of Council's recreation reserves, parks and community spaces, including Morrison Reserve.

### ***Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023***

Through this Strategy, Council recognises that inclusion for people with a disability in all aspects of community life is a human right that also brings many social, cultural and economic benefits for the wider community. It further states as one of the goals that Council buildings and infrastructure are accessible to everyone in our community.

The topography of Morrison Reserve is challenging and the ideal 1:14 or better path gradient is not possible in all parts of the hilly terrain. However, all facilities existing and proposed will be assessed and upgraded to provide access for prams, wheelchairs etc wherever possible.

### ***Child and Youth Strategy 2014-2024***

This Strategy has the vision that Yarra Ranges will be a place where every child and young person will be able to thrive, reach their potential and actively participate in decision making. Outcome 2 has the most relevance to this draft Master Plan, recommending that “Adequate Infrastructure exists to meet the needs of children, young people and their families.”

### **RELEVANT LAW**

Gender Equity Act 2020 – The draft Master Plan is considered to have a direct and significant impact on the Yarra Ranges community, so a Gender Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of this work parallel to the community consultation in mid-2023. The feedback received will be combined with the findings of the Gender Impact Assessment and help shape any required modifications of the Master Plan prior to adoption by Council.

The draft Master Plan has however been developed from a whole of community perspective, including consideration of equitable opportunities for use of the reserve by women, men and gender diverse people. Underpinning the recommendations is the objective to provide a reserve that encourages people of all ages, abilities, gender and cultural background with a space that is safe, welcoming and has the potential to improve individual health and wellbeing.

During the development of the draft master plan, it was noted that other than formal sport, walking and path-based fitness, there was an absence of recreation activities for youth, in particular young females. To support and encourage girls to get involved and feel comfortable transitioning into bike activities, the inclusion of ‘funky’ seating and group social spaces is an important aspect of the youth activation space. Girls can have areas to meet, relax, watch and participate with their peers (all genders).



## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

### ***Economic Implications***

The construction of the Youth Activation Space is expected to create short term employment opportunities, supplier revenue and financial income for local businesses. Ongoing, local businesses will benefit from trade generated by the thousands of visitations anticipated each year.

In the longer term, the upgrade of the soccer facilities will attract increased membership, more spectators and generate extra income and economic sustainability for the clubs.

### ***Social Implications***

There are strong links to social and community impacts resulting from the development and improvement of local reserves such as Morrison Reserve in Mt Evelyn, which include:

- Enhanced community access to infrastructure that encourages alternative health and wellbeing outcomes
- Revitalisation of local communities
- Reduction of social isolation
- Increased visitor footprint
- Increased female participation in active recreation.

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy identifies high levels of obesity, dementia, and poor mental health as significant issues for our community. Provision of walking, play, sport, and bike skills opportunities are important contributors to improved health and intergenerational interactions. Coupled with multiple education and community service facilities, Morrison Reserve is a true 'active community destination'.

### ***Environmental Implications***

Climate Change has been a strong influencer throughout the draft Master Plan development. The increasing frequency of storm events, in particular rain events will need to be factored into all major improvements. A series of water retention and catchment facilities are already in place with a significant Water Sensitive Urban Design installation at the base of the Youth Activation Space.

All projects that impact on water flow must mitigate impacts on the drainage on-site and capacity to accommodate change in flow. The layout and landscaping of the bike park will need to direct increased flows to retention systems and prevent higher velocity overland flows through landscape treatments, soaker pits, tree planting and vegetation. This will seek to increase percolation of water while providing natural shading and landscape values on the hill.

Landscape treatments will draw on native and indigenous plant selections to improve habitat value, and existing trees are to be protected wherever possible, especially within existing roadside vegetation.

Background research noted high usage by the tenant clubs, especially for junior soccer on the two natural turf pitches and resultant wear and tear issues. Conversion of the standalone pitch to synthetic would improve the standard and capacity of the dedicated soccer pitch to support the growth of junior male and female teams at this site. It would also take pressure off the need to develop new sports facilities, including supporting infrastructure elsewhere, and has a life cycle of around 15 years before needing replacement. As a plastic material the end-of-life has been traditionally difficult to manage sustainably and previously would require disposing into landfill. Recent developments by Sustainability Victoria have established a new Synthetic Turf Recycling Hub which officers will investigate further as a more sustainable option.

During the feasibility study for the conversion of the southern soccer field to a synthetic surface, the impact of a new semi-permeable surface was investigated to mitigate potential environmental impact. The proposed subsurface is a vertical filtration/capture system that retains water for longer thereby easing immediate deluge pressure on the stormwater system.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The development of the draft Master Plan was informed by workshops and consultation with stakeholder groups utilising the reserve and associated facilities on a regular basis, including:

- Yarra Ranges Athletics Club
- Mooroolbark Baptist Soccer Club
- Lilydale Eagles Soccer Club
- Mt Evelyn Christian Soccer Club
- Mt Evelyn Netball Club
- Mt Evelyn Tennis Club
- Mt Evelyn Cricket Club
- Mt Evelyn Football/Netball Club
- Yarra Hills Secondary College – staff and student workshops
- Yarra Ranges Special Development School
- CIRE Services
- Fernhill Kindergarten
- Morrison House Mens' Shed
- Disability Advisory Committee
- Yarra Valley Water
- Local Community

Officers across Council were involved throughout the process, including initial workshops to identify issues and opportunities, site meetings and invitation to provide feedback on the concept plan and versions of the draft Master Plan.

Key stakeholders have been consulted during the various feasibility studies connected with the draft Master Plan development.

In May 2022 the community were invited to provide feedback to the Morrison Reserve upgrade priorities and specifically the playspace redevelopment. From the 75 responses received, retention of the farmyard theme, support for the bike park and the need for public toilets near the playspace were the dominant themes.

In June 2022 a series of workshops were held involving 60 students (10 girls) from Yarra Hills Secondary College to assist offices in the planning for the Youth Activation Space. For the girls: walking fitness, hangout spaces and music rated highly. The boys welcomed the challenge of a park that suited bikes, scooters and skateboards offering a variety of challenges. Students in general, wanted opportunity to walk, run and 'hang-out'. The masterplan has been updated to reflect these more gender inclusive elements.

In late June/July 2022, primarily through social media, the community were asked to provide feedback on the playspace, and bike park designs under consideration. There were 1026 visitors to the website and 275 contributions to the survey. Feedback has informed the playspace design development currently underway.

Subject to Council consideration and approval, the draft Master Plan will be presented to the community in August-September 2023 for consideration and feedback. Further consultation will be undertaken with the key stakeholders (schools, sports, and community groups) together with local community-based groups such as Council's Advisory Groups e.g., Disability Advisory Committee and Youth. Feedback received will confirm support for initiatives that directly involve and/or benefit these organisations. The consultation and engagement plan are provided in Attachment 4, with a summary flyer for promotion and mailouts in Attachment 5.

The draft Master Plan will be updated and refined as needed in response to community and Councillor feedback prior to being presented to Council for consideration of endorsement later in 2023.

## **COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

Council has an existing 'maintenance for community usage' arrangement with Yarra Hills Secondary College for the use of the school oval. A catalyst for the inclusion of stadium capacity in the master plan was the request from the school for Council to support the construction of a seven-court stadium and gymnastics centre. Officer experience indicated that the proposal was excessive for the site and needed further investigation. A feasibility study was undertaken in collaboration with the school and the resultant four-court stadium proposal developed to better respond to the school needs and potential local community demand. The benefit for Council was a review of existing stadium provision in the Yarra Ranges, including usage and projected deficit anticipated in the future. If adopted, the draft Master Plan will enable the school to advocate for delivery funding through Department of Education and Training Victoria.

While undertaking the feasibility study for the synthetic soccer surface conversion, council officers collaborated with Yarra Valley Water and consultants to workshop the issue of a stormwater inspection pit within the proposed playing area. Yarra Valley Water officers considered the possibility of relocation at an affordable rate. A

compromise position was established that would be acceptable to all parties, including Football Victoria, whereby the new layout of the field left the inspection pit in situ but in the field run-off zone with a synthetic carpet covering that could be removed. An innovative vertical draining sub-surface system has been designed to minimise impact on the local stormwater system in times of heavy rainfall.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

As identified earlier in this report, drainage and the impact on the water retention and storage system by major rainfall/storm events poses the greatest risk at Morrison Reserve. Council's drainage team have previously undertaken extensive works to mitigate the potential impact to residents on Mikado Road. A recommendation of the draft Master Plan is the inclusion of drainage studies and water sensitive design initiatives in all major projects proposed, especially where the topography and drainage may be impacted.

It is anticipated that the development of a bike park on the current open hill area may receive some negative response from the local residents, although this was not evident in consultation undertaken in 2022. The detailed design of the bike park will now be one part of a broader consideration of the area as a Youth Activation Space that is cognisant of the high value long range views, different needs and activities of community and youth, and more inclusive options for exercise beyond just bike infrastructure.

The bike park has the potential to attract many new visitors to the area. Improved wayfinding signage will be incorporated to encourage active transport via the nearby Warburton Rail trail and parking opportunities to the east and south of the bike park. Parking will be monitored and reviewed as part of the implementation plan. Increased traffic and parking pressures will need to be more adequately assessed through the consultation and design development stages.

## **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. Morrison Reserve Draft Master Plan
2. Cost Plan
3. 15 Year Implementation Plan
4. Consultation and Engagement Plan
5. Summary Consultation Flyer