

150 CAMBRIDGE ROAD KILSYTH MASTER PLAN - CONSIDERATION FOR ADOPTION

Report Author: Coordinator Open Space Strategy and Planning
Responsible Officer: Director Planning & Sustainable Futures
Ward(s) affected: Walling;

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

Following Council's purchase of 150 Cambridge Road Kilsyth and initial community engagement, a concept plan was prepared and presented to community for feedback from May to June 2024.

In tandem with the community engagement process, a draft Master Plan has been prepared that provides the history, context and background information underpinning the concept plan.

The Master Plan responds to the initial engagement through provision of an urban woodland and grasslands, complemented by meandering paths connecting to Elizabeth Bridge Reserve, with shelter, picnic tables and seats, and a bike jump park. The feature Manna Gum tree offers a focal point for Indigenous cultural elements such as gathering, planting, education and views to the Dandenongs. The community also identified a need for a 'quiet activity area' to take a break from the more active pursuits.

This report informs Council of the findings of the community engagement for the draft Concept Plan and seeks Council adoption of the proposed final 150 Cambridge Road Kilsyth Master Plan that incorporates the Concept Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council

- 1. Notes the findings of community consultation undertaken.***
- 2. Adopts the 150 Cambridge Road Kilsyth Master Plan including Concept Plan generally in accordance with Attachment 2.***

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

On 8 March 2022, Council resolved to:

1. *Note feedback received during the recent community consultation period for the proposed purchase of land at 150 Cambridge Road, Kilsyth.*
2. *In accordance with Section 112 of the Local Government act 2020, agree to the formal offer from the Department of Treasury and Finance to acquire the northern 3.581ha of land at 150 Cambridge Road, Kilsyth for its ongoing use as public open space at a cost of \$6.44 million (exclusive of GST).*
3. *Approve that the funding of the purchase of 150 Cambridge, Kilsyth be undertaken utilising the current balance of Public Open Space Funding available to Walling Ward of \$2.97 million in combination with funding from cash reserves of \$3.47 million.*
4. *Seek reimbursement of the cash reserves within a maximum of four years and the six-monthly updates be provided to Council on the proposed sale of land parcels and financial reimbursement of the cash reserve.*

The remaining Recommendations 5, 6 and 7 relate to the associated land disposals.

On 23 August 2022 in accordance with the above, Council supported the following position:

Following purchase of the 150 Cambridge Road site, minor landscaping works will initially be carried out to allow the area to be generally maintained as open parkland, at a cost estimated at around \$200,000, which would need to be referred to Council's Capital Expenditure Program for consideration of its allocation. Any funds realised from land sales over and above the amount required to purchase the site would be directed to the Walling Ward Public Open Space Fund balance or for master planning and/or further improvements to the site purchased at 150 Cambridge Road.

At the 11 June 2024 Council meeting, Council endorsed seeking authorisation for Amendment C223 (Anomalies and Corrections) to the Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme that includes, amongst other items, rezoning 150 Cambridge Road from the Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ) to a Public Park and Recreation Zone (PPRZ) and removing the Development Plan Overlay (DDO) Schedule 10 (Former Yarra Hills Secondary College, Kilsyth) from the site. Authorisation has yet to be issued by the Minister for Planning and the land remains in NRZ.

DISCUSSION

Purpose and Background

Concept Plan and Master Plan Preparation

The Master Plan site is located at 150 Cambridge Road, Kilsyth on the south side of Cambridge Road, and is bound by Mountfield Road to the west, Morrison Crescent to the east, and Elizabeth Bridge Reserve to the south. There are residential properties on both the east and west boundaries of the Park.

The Park also contains a sports oval, currently used as a competition and training ground for local football and cricket clubs. The oval is also subject to a timeshare arrangement for use as a “dog off leash area”. The oval is owned by the Department of Education on long term lease to Council.

In 2022, Council resolved to purchase the former Yarra Hills Secondary College site at 150 Cambridge Road from the Department of Education, following a community campaign advocating for Council to acquire the site for the purposes of public open space.

Following the land purchase, community engagement was undertaken in late 2023 identifying opportunities and themes for the site, and a draft Concept Plan subsequently prepared. The Concept Plan was based on the principles of an Urban Forest which has been translated into a site-appropriate native woodland and grasslands that references the pre-contact landscape through a significant concentration of Indigenous vegetation. The Plan has been informed by early conversations with Council’s Indigenous Development team.

Community engagement on the draft Concept Plan was undertaken in May – June 2024 seeking feedback. The draft Concept Plan resonated well with the community, delivering on the vision and ideas gathered in the initial round of consultation. No significant amendments were required to finalise the concept design in the Master Plan for this site, at Attachment 1.

Aligned with community feedback and support, detailed design planning was undertaken to progress the ‘minor landscaping works’ that Council supported in 2022. Concurrent to the Concept Plan engagement process, additional project documentation has been prepared including the draft Master Plan, Gender Impact Assessment and early landscape works documentation.

The draft Master Plan (Attachment 2) aims to maximise future use of the Park by the local and visiting community through implementation of facilities and offerings at the Park, and increased connectivity to the surrounding area. The projects recommended in the Master Plan are supported through the multiple rounds of community feedback, Council’s Advisory Groups and internal stakeholder consultation with Council officers from relevant teams. The Plan puts strong emphasis on the passive recreation outcomes envisaged by the Council resolution, whilst also recognising the current local community’s opportunistic use of the space for bike jumps through a moderate and carefully sited permanent solution. The plan also embraces the way community have activated the site since the closure of the

school, by embedding a walking and exercise circuit and an active youth (bike jumps) space. The balance of past, present and future has been carefully blended into the draft 150 Cambridge Road, Kilsyth Concept Plan.

Early Minor Landscape Works

In accordance with the August 2022 Council resolution, early minor landscaping works are proposed for the 'Quiet Activity Space', a small, focused area at the northwestern corner of the site. This will enable some simple landscape elements and tree planting that would be consistent with community feedback and the overall longer term plan for the whole reserve.

The minor landscape works have been planned to avoid future rework and will aim to create a destination point. The 'quiet activity area' will connect local community with the popular mobile food vans and existing walking circuit, creating greater interest for the community to be involved in the broader project. The location of the early works area is shown at page 17 of the Master Plan (Attachment 2).

The minor early landscape works will involve soft landscaping including paths, seating, trees and other indigenous/sensory planting. Accessible parking bays (2) and a new post and rail fence will be installed on the Cambridge Road interface in this section.

Detailed plans have been developed, and early removal of weed species has been undertaken for the quiet area in the northwest corner abutting Cambridge Road. The community will be invited to participate in a community planting day to acknowledge their role in this site acquisition and redevelopment initiative, proposed for 14 September 2024. Following initial discussion with Council's Indigenous Advisory Committee, an 'On Country Walk' is to be undertaken as soon as possible and ongoing detailed design reviews anticipated as future projects progress.

Options considered

Option 1 - Embed the draft Concept Plan in a Master Plan for the site

In response to feedback and resounding support from community and observed issues and opportunities at the site, a Master Plan based on the Concept Plan will offer a coordinated suite of projects to improve amenity and value for community and responds to existing and anticipated usage of the park. The Master Plan will provide the strategic justification to support future implementation and strengthen any external funding applications.

Option 2 - Deliver projects on demand

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

Option 3 – Cease further upgrades at 150 Cambridge Road, Kilsyth

This option is not aligned with the Council resolution and is considered contrary to community feedback and sentiment, with the community advocating for the site to be purchased and provide a public open space function. The Master Plan and recommended outputs seek to rehabilitate and enhance the site in accordance with community vision and Council strategic planning and standards. This option is not recommended.

Recommended option and justification

Option 1 - The Draft 150 Cambridge Road, Kilsyth Master Plan (Attachment 2) is recommended for adoption by Council. It articulates the shared community and Council vision for this public open space asset. It sets out the strategic justification for the Park and outlines a prioritised program of projects over a long term period. It has been informed by current and future demographics of the area, site investigations, community feedback and internal officer recommendations.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

In Council's 2023-2024 Capital Expenditure Program, \$50,000 was allocated towards the development of a plan for 150 Cambridge Road, Kilsyth, including funding for early investigative studies, and early landscaping works in a small portion of the park (\$38,000 remaining). Additional Public Open Space Funds (up to \$200,000, pending review and acceptance of quotes received) will be required for the early landscaping works proposed. The Walling Ward Public Open Space Fund currently shows a budget of \$225,556 at the end of the 2023/24 financial year, subject to change as property disposal activities are completed and the balance updated.

The four surplus properties identified for disposal are pending sale, as pre-sale activities relating to property titles and utilities take place. All properties except one are anticipated to be sold before June 2025 with proceeds anticipated to fully replenish the cash reserves drawn down for the original land purchase. The initial land purchase was funded by \$2.97 million of Public Open Space Funds (available to Walling ward) and \$3.47 million in cash reserves.

The draft Master Plan recommends a future program of works, to be delivered over a long-term period (15 years). Master Plan outputs will be referred to Council's Capital Expenditure Program for prioritisation and consideration in future annual reviews of the Council Budget and grant opportunities.

APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

Council Plan 2021-2025

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.

The provision of improved facilities at 150 Cambridge Road will deliver outcomes that meet the growing and diverse needs of our expanding urban population.

Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025

Priorities and goals of Council's Health and Wellbeing Plan include:

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

The proposed new and improved open space facilities will contribute to improved health and wellbeing and increased opportunities for community to connect, 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 150 Cambridge Road, Kilsyth.

Active Recreation Plan 2023

The Active Recreation Plan 2023 sets out a guide for Council's efforts to encourage residents to be healthy and active through the design of active recreation infrastructure and the provision of programs that remove barriers to participation and respond to preferences over the next 10 years.

Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023

Through the Equity, Access and Inclusion 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.

Provision of accessible paths, trails, park features including sensory gardens and accessible park furniture are key deliverables of this project. They will promote broader use by people of all ages living with disability.

Child and Youth Strategy 2014-2024

The Child and Youth 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.

The observed historical use of the space by youth to design and build challenging bike activities will be recognised through the creation of engineered bike park that is more strategically placed and sensitive to the environment. Opportunity exists to involve the local youth in trail design development workshops.

New features proposed for 150 Cambridge Road, Kilsyth will complement the existing or proposed youth-focused elements in the adjacent Elizabeth Bridge Reserve.

Nature Plan 2024 – 2034

The Nature Plan's targets, objectives and actions will be realised through a more connected landscape, featuring higher quality and more resilient ecosystems and habitat for native plants and animals and strongly Indigenous oriented landscape palette.

The extensive revegetation of 150 Cambridge Road, Kilsyth with a diverse array of native and Indigenous trees and lower vegetation will assist in the delivery of actions to create habitat corridors, protect and restore biodiversity assets, including consideration of regenerative burning and regenerative land management practices to support healthy and functional ecosystems.

Tree Canopy Strategy 2024 – 2044

The Tree Canopy Strategy sets the vision that Yarra Ranges Council will conserve and enhance our leafy character, culturally significant landscapes and unique biodiversity through the protection, management and planting of trees. Our tree canopy will improve liveability, support community health and wellbeing, maintain ecosystems and enhance local tourism.

The Master Plan for 150 Cambridge Road responds to the objectives of the Strategy:

1. Value, protect and manage trees.
2. Grow a healthy tree canopy.
3. Conserve culturally significant trees and enhance local tourism.
4. Improve tree canopy resilience to climate change.
5. Support and enhance community health and wellbeing.
6. Apply best practice tree management.

RELEVANT LAW

This project is considered to have a direct and significant impact on the Yarra Ranges community, so a Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) has been undertaken in accordance with Council's legislative requirements.

The GIA has been undertaken in collaboration with Council's Gender Equity team, in parallel with the community consultation process. The feedback received informs the findings of the Assessment and helped shape the Concept Plan prior to consideration by Council.

The draft Concept Plan has been developed from a whole of community perspective, including consideration of equitable opportunities for use by women, men, and gender diverse people. Underpinning the recommendations is the objective to provide an urban 'woodland' and grasslands that engages people of all ages, abilities, gender preference and cultural background in a space that is safe, welcoming and has the potential to improve individual health and wellbeing.

Careful consideration has been given to the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), especially for women and girls and others using the area. The design has focused on a palette of trees and planting that achieves high level canopy cover and low level vegetation, while maintaining good sight lines through the mid-level.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic Implications

Through future development, the 150 Cambridge Road site will become a local community activity hub. The anticipated increased use will have a flow on effect for the local roadside traders (such as the current coffee van located on Cambridge Road) and to a lesser extent, nearby shops off Durham Road to the south. A second food van has recently commenced operation at this roadside site.

The operation of mobile food vans at this site is subject to permit approval and will be influenced by the recommendations of the Footpath and Roadside Traders Policy which is currently in development. This will be monitored over time as needed to ensure compliance.

The construction phase of the Masterplan actions is expected to contribute to the local economy through employment opportunities, and as a source of materials and equipment.

Social Implications

Kilsyth has a population of 9,956 (ABS 2020). Compared with the Yarra Ranges average, there is a high percentage of older adults over 60 years (26.3%) and the young workforce group aged 25 to 34 (15.1%). The under 17-year age group (20.6%) is slightly lower than the Yarra Ranges average, however growth is shown in the babies and under 11 years cohorts.

The draft Concept Plan aims to provide experiences and activity options that compliment those at Elizabeth Bridge Reserve, to ensure that older residents and the emerging young people in the community are catered for.

There are strong links to social and community impacts resulting from the development and improvement of local reserves such as 150 Cambridge Road, including enhanced community access to infrastructure that encourages alternative health and wellbeing outcomes:

- Revitalisation of local communities.
- Reduction of social isolation.
- Increased visitor footprint.
- Increased active recreation opportunities for older children and teenagers, who often feel overlooked.
- Increased tree canopy cover, offering connection with nature and reduced urban heat island effect.
- Increased connection with Indigenous culture.

The Health and Wellbeing Plan identifies elevated levels of obesity, dementia, and poor mental health as significant issues for our community. Provision of walking and cycling opportunities are important contributors to improved health.

The inclusion of a multi-purpose court will encourage a variety of social ball games for children and youth, particularly for those not interested in bike-related activities.

Nature-based play opportunities will enhance family integration and provide interactive opportunities that are immersive in the natural landscape of the park.

Environmental Implications

The retention of the site as public open space, and plan to revegetate the Park will improve environmental sustainability, biodiversity and opportunities for the community to connect with nature.

As well as planting, vegetation will be permitted to self-seed to further augment the landscaped nature of the site. This will also create habitats for fauna, and a range of other benefits such as increased shade and carbon sequestration.

A highly valued aspect of the 150 Cambridge Road area is the ability to walk, exercise or just take in the view. The concept design takes this to a new level, embracing the natural environment, enhancing and featuring the natural attributes, and framing strong viewsheds on the site.

The preservation, enhancement, and accessibility for people of all ages and abilities is a key driver for improvement underpinning recommendations, particularly through

the Park. Consideration has been given to turning the waterlogged area on the lower level into an ephemeral water sensitive urban design feature.

A quiet activity area has also been recommended to enable people to take time out to enjoy the space and views, or in the morning wait for the school bus.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Extensive community consultation seeking feedback on the draft 150 Cambridge Road, Kilsyth Concept Plan took place between 14 May – 11 June 2024. The following methods of engagement were employed to ensure opportunities for the broadest range of ages, genders and cultural backgrounds typical of the Kilsyth population:

- Online survey (152 contributors)
- Letterbox drop (600 residents)
- Email information for further distribution via the local sports clubs (2), schools (2), preschools and early learning centres (3), bike riding groups (4)
- Drop-in sessions (6): 150 Cambridge Road (3), Elizabeth Bridge Reserve playspace (2) and sports oval (1)
- Kilsyth Community Action Group / Friends of Elizabeth Bridge Reserve / Save 150 / Japara House combined meeting (12 attendees)
- Indigenous Advisory Group
- Disability Advisory Committee
- Health and Wellbeing Advisory Group
- Youth Ambassadors, Youth Advisory Group
- Project Reference Group (approximately 30 officers representing numerous Council departments).

The community was asked to rate the draft Concept Plan and the key elements (refer Attachment 1). Overwhelming community support for the draft Concept Plan was received during community consultation, with the community reporting that the plan delivered on the elements proposed in the initial visioning consultation (Attachment 3).

The overall Concept Plan received a weighted average of four stars out of five from the 152 contributors. This feedback was also reflected during face-to-face conversations (100 approximately) during the six pop-up sessions and in advisory and community group sessions. The survey results are summarised below with more detail in Attachment 3.

Draft Concept Plan Element	Weighted Average (out of 5 stars)
Overall Concept Plan	4.0
Meandering paths	3.9
Gathering and education space	3.7
Native Grasslands with view	3.9
Seasonal water feature	3.9
Bike jump park	4.3
Nature play areas	4.0
Upgrade the carpark areas	4.0
Picnic area	4.0
Multi-purpose half court	3.8
Public toilet	4.6

COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Early in the project planning, background information on the history of the site was sought from the following key stakeholders:

- Friends of Elizabeth Bridge Reserve
- Kilsyth Action Group
- Save 150 Cambridge.

Feedback and documentation provided confirmed the community interest and willingness to work with Council on this project.

Internal collaboration has been ongoing throughout the research and development of the Concept Plan. Officers from across Council were involved in the Project Reference Group (PRG) and asked for their input into the issues and opportunities for the site. On-site workshops were then conducted to enable officers to share ideas and start to formulate a vision for the site. A concept design was developed, reviewed by the PRG and improved for presentation to the community.

During the consultation, contact was made with a local indigenous resident who also contributed valuable knowledge from her long association with the area and the school. Aligned with the community consultations have been the sessions with Council's Advisory Groups, in particular the Indigenous Advisory Group, to further inform the content and layout of the concept design.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Consideration has been given to the proximity and elevation of the proposed bike activity areas, in relation to the neighbouring residents whose properties back on to the park. The addition of strategic planting of trees and bushes will be important in maintaining privacy to surrounding residential development.

Within the community comments, the greatest concern was connected to the grasslands and the fear of snakes (by 10 people), especially if the areas were not maintained. The width of paths and mowing/slashing regimes will take this feedback into consideration. Lighting of the main circuit path will increase hours of use and improve perception of safety particularly during early morning and twilight times when light levels are low.

Whilst the prior school facility generated visitations, the changed function of the site will also attract new visitors and alternative uses. Prioritisation of wayfinding and active transport opportunities, as well as continuing to cater for some vehicle access, will be critical in ensuring appropriate use of the site and surrounding street and path network.

The community advocacy campaign used a motif of ribbons tied to the fence of the previous school site along Cambridge Road. There is a desire to acknowledge the community's advocacy through a design element in the new reserve, however it is noted that the ribbon motif has become recognised in Australian society as a protest gesture against institutional child sexual abuse arising during the Royal Commission hearings. A careful reinterpretation of the concept will need to be explored with the community, to ensure a positive message is conveyed in the project, that differs sufficiently from the more well known ribbon elements.

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. Draft Concept Plan
2. Draft Master Plan
3. Community Engagement June 2024