

1.1 DRAFT MONASH OPEN SPACE STRATEGY CONSULTATION SUMMARY (AS: File No TPA429)

Responsible Director: Peter Panagakos

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. *Notes that the submissions received to the Open Space Strategy were generally supportive of the strategic directions of the Open Space Strategy and that the majority of submissions related specific issues or suggested specific improvements to Public Open Space Network.*
2. *Modifies the draft Monash Open Space Strategy in accordance with officer recommendations set out in this report.*
3. *Notes that officers will finalise the development of Monash Open Space Strategy including:*
 - *relevant planning scheme amendment documentation,*
 - *reviewing the funding mechanisms for new public open space and improvements to existing public open space;*
 - *an investigation of the options for Developer Contributions; and*
 - *the development of an assessment program to assist in the implementing the open space strategy and prioritising improvements to the open space network.*
4. *Notes that a further report to finalise the open space strategy and the implementation initiatives set out under point 4 will be presented to Council in June 2018.*

INTRODUCTION

To update Council on the key issues raised in the consultation on the Draft Monash Open Space Strategy (MOSS) and outline the process to finalise the Open Space Strategy for adoption.

BACKGROUND

The MOSS sets out a strategic overview of how to plan for the future needs of a growing community for the Monash open space network of sports reserves, local parks and trails over the next 10 years.

On 25 July 2017 Council endorsed the MOSS for public consultation. At the meeting Council also noted that a further report be presented to Council upon completion of the community consultation program.

Open Space Strategy Overview and Principles

The Open Space Strategy proposes six (6) Principles for open space in Monash:

- *Equitable access to open space.*
All residents regardless of where they live, their age, gender, income, ethnicity, education or ability, have the right to access at least a core suite of open spaces near where they live.

- *Diversity of opportunities and experiences.*
To ensure the widest range of residents can use and benefit from open space, a wide variety of open space functions and landscape setting types are needed. A diversity of activities, facilities and experiences is required within each park and suburb and across the open space network as a whole.
- *Quality (fit for purpose).*
Quality can only be sustained by consciously identifying the function of an open space and measuring how well each space meets the requirements and agreed core service levels for that function.
- *Sustainability.*
Sustainable design, development and management of open space require a balance of local and broader efforts to meet human needs for the long term without destroying or degrading the natural environment or the value of the resource.
- *Dependency*
Some people, activities and assets are by nature dependent on the inherent natural qualities of open space resources, where others are not. As a priority open space should support activities and users who are more dependent on it.
- *Environmental protection enhancement and appreciation*
As private space reduces, the protection of canopy trees, habitat, flora and fauna and waterways in public space, and the interpretation and appreciation of those values is central to the open space estate.

The Open Space Strategy proposes to implement these principles through three key open space functions based on the areas of:

- Social/Family Recreation,
- Sports Open Spaces; and
- Off road Trails.

This mixed approach will include:

Acquiring more land:

- In appropriate locations
- To close existing gaps
- To cater for population growth

Improving existing spaces:

- To increase the diversity of functions and users
- To increase accessibility to spaces for all
- To increase the carrying capacity through improvements and expansion

Community Consultation

Consultation on the MOSS was undertaken during September and October 2017; closing on Tuesday 31 October 2017.

Consultation involved an extensive range of techniques including:

- Advertisements were placed in the Leader Newspapers, which are delivered to most households in Monash.
- A full version of the MOSS was made available on the Council's website for download and review. Feedback could be provided on the survey response form or submitted by letter or email.

- A series of drop in information sessions in early October held at the Monash Civic Centre, Mount Waverly Youth Centre, Monash Gallery of Art, Clayton Community Centre and Oakleigh Seminar and Training Centre.
- An interactive map was available for the community to access and provide comments individually or as a group chat (via 'Social Pinpoint').
- Over 500 direct letters were sent to stakeholders, interest groups and members of the community.

DISCUSSION

Submissions were able to be lodged in writing, via email or on dedicated website Social Pinpoint.

Written responses

There were 23 submissions received directly via either letter or email.

Social Pinpoint Map

There were over 450 responses received via Social Pinpoint, including 50 group chats.

The majority of the submission (300) related to the Talbot Quarry residential development proposal – Planning Scheme Amendment C129, which is currently being considered by Planning Panels Victoria. 133 of the responses received relate to a petition for C129. These submissions called for the land to be purchased for a park.

Of the remaining 150 comments (15 discussion groups):

- Most of the comments relate to a specific issue such as a path or trail across the precincts set out in the MOSS; rather than being focussed on a specific area or topic.
- 27 responses related to the “something I like” about Monash.
- 53 relate to a request for other infrastructure.
- 40 related to maintenance issues to existing infrastructure.

The remainder of the comments related to overall themes of the draft Open Space Strategy.

A copy of the Social Pinpoint map showing numbers and locations of submission is provided at **Attachment 2**.

Summary of responses based on themes

The responses that were received can be grouped into the following themes.

- Strategy and principles
- Specific requests about parks including:
 - Requests for new or improved facilities or gaps in facilities.
 - The need for maintenance or minor infrastructure improvement.
 - What I like about a specific park or trail.

These are discussed in more detail below.

Strategy and principles

Comments were provided on the overall Open Space Strategy and principles of the MOSS along with comments on the content, structure and clarity of how the document is written. A summary of the submissions and an officer response is provided for each theme.

Principles and Vision.

10 submitters provided support for the 'Principles' and 'Vision', the comments can be summarised as:

- Achievable over 10 year timeframe.
- Addresses a need for growing and changing community and liveability.
- Results in the provision of quality, diverse functions and accessible open space.
- Develops open spaces for a range of ages.
- Critical for health and wellbeing of residents through increased activity.

Submitters also supported principles that reduce the loss of canopy trees and impacts on increasing built up space.

One submitter suggested that the vision in the draft Open Space Strategy was not worded in an inspirational way.

The submission from Knox Council supported the broader principles of the Open Space Strategy and the continued cooperation between the two municipalities for the planning, design of provision of open space.

Officer response

The support for the strategic directions and principles of the MOSS is welcome and noted. Officers will continue to work with adjoining municipalities to deliver actions of the MOSS.

It is proposed to review the vision of the Open Space Strategy to ensure that it functions as a visionary statement.

Officer Recommendation – Update Open Space Strategy

That the Vision contained in the MOSS vision to be reviewed to ensure that it adequately conveys the aspirational desire of the community and council for open space in Monash.

Municipal wide provision of open space

Some submitters noted that Monash is currently deficient in open space and this is supported by Victorian Environment Assessment Council (VEAC) Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation report, which highlights that Monash has one of lowest levels of public open space of 9.9%¹ (5th lowest). There is a need for Council to establish a target for the amount of land reserved, for instance a figure per 1,000 people or as a minimum of 10% of residential land.

Council should adopt a policy of no net loss of public open space and where relevant require developers to contribute financially to offsets. Council could also develop planning overlays to ensure open space is earmarked if redeveloped or rezoned (i.e. Riversdale Golf Course).

Officer response

Monash currently collects open space contributions through Clause 52.01 of the Monash Planning Scheme. A key implementation action of the Open Space Strategy will be the need to review Clause 52.01. The current rates for development are considered to be inadequate in terms of the amount of future open space required and contemporary State policy and guidance.

¹ The 9.9% figure includes all open space in Monash and not only unencumbered or useable open space.

Currently the contributions are set at a sliding scale dependant on the number of dwellings (3 lots: 2%; 4 lots: 3%; 5 lots: 4%; and 6 lots or more: 5%). Council also levies an open space contribution for mixed use and non-residential development in accordance with the Subdivision Act 1988. A set rate is not established in the Act, being up to 5 per cent of the land area or equivalent value.

Setting the levy for the open space strategy higher than the 5% requirement in the Subdivision Act must be supported by strategic work to justify it. This work can be completed once the Open Space Strategy directions are finalised.

Whilst on the face of it, setting a specific target of square metres of open space per person may seem an appropriate solution it is problematic and not an appropriate reflection of the many constraints and requirements for an adequate open space network.

Providing existing additional open space in existing (non-Greenfield) areas would predominantly require council to acquire additional land and that would be at market value. It is estimated that to meet a standard of 10% of Monash as open space would require Council to spend over \$1.3 billion just to acquire this land. Therefore setting a specific rate required for future open space provision is not feasible.

The MOSS does however set out a mix of policies to improve the provision of open space. This proposed through ensuring that new development provides an adequate open space contributions, ensuring existing open spaces maximise functionality and availability to the community their use and where feasible to expand or improve these spaces. The Open Space Strategy also proposes to seek opportunities to jointly use open space, for example at a state school or on Melbourne Water land.

The final Open Space Strategy should adopt a principle of no net loss of open space through development. This may be set out in a local planning policy for open space.

Officer recommendation – Update Open Space Strategy

The submission to include a municipal wide target of m2 open space per person for open space is not supported.

That the Open Space Strategy be revised to include the principle of no net loss of open space throughout the municipality.

Conservation and Street Trees

Conservation of the environment for wildlife and birds is needed. This should be a key or prominent strategy in the MOSS and there should be no loss of vegetation and significant trees.

Officer response.

Consideration of the environment and its protection is one of the 6 key principles underpinning the plan. Each of the principles are important when considering the future planning, provision and design and management of open space, having regard to other appropriate Council plans and policies.

Whilst open space can and does have a biodiversity role, this should not be to the detriment of the overall functionality and useability of the open space network, nor to the exclusion of other open space users. The draft Open Space Strategy provides an appropriate balance between uses and principles for open space in Monash.

Officer recommendation - No Change

The submission is not supported as it is not appropriate that the Open Space Strategy prioritise biodiversity principles over the others.

Uses of open space

Open space can be used in a number of multiple or complimentary uses. Open space also has 'passive value' in terms of ambience, amenity, biodiversity, grassed space for children's play, reduce heat island effect etc. Concern was raised that the Open Space Strategy assumes that open vegetated space needs to be physically used by residents to have relevance; if not it can be removed.

Officer response

One of the key strategies of the MOSS is the need to improve the diversity and range of open space and function. This is set out in the Vision and Principles. It is also a key component in the recommendation of the MOSS to prioritise social/ family recreation; and is inherent in its definition:

"Areas that provide opportunities for social and physical and play activities for people of all age groups and abilities, typically catering for play, picnics, casual ball games, social sports activities, trail activities as well as environmental elements."

The section of the MOSS for "Size and Viability of Open Spaces" (Pg 26) specifically notes that the disposal of small sites is not recommended and the best return for the community is the repurpose. A repurposed site could include a tree reserve for visual amenity, nature play or relaxation – 'passive provision'.

It is proposed that the MOSS will be clarified to strengthen this point.

Officer recommendation – Update Open Space Strategy

The MOSS will be clarified to reinforce the importance of social/family recreation as multiuse and complimentary open space and that the disposal of underdeveloped areas of open space is generally not supported.

Location of open space

A number of submitters considered the MOSS should focus on areas with the greatest need for open space, for example Oakleigh, South Oakleigh and Clayton.

Officer response:

A key principle for the MOSS is to focus future provision to those areas with the greatest need and demand and supports the submissions made. The gap analysis and maps in the MOSS will be clarified and strengthened to set this out more clearly.

Further more detailed work on the provision of open space and likely population (resident and worker) will commence shortly for Clayton and Huntingdale areas as part of the strategic work for the Monash Cluster.

Officer recommendation – Update Open Space Strategy

It is proposed to update the Open Space Strategy by the inclusion of maps that identify the gaps across Monash for open space and trails.

Paths and trail provision

Submitters highlighted that there are gaps in the cycle path networks and a lack of interconnecting off road trails.

There are were also concerns that more paths will replace nature strips and that vegetation and street trees will be removed.

Paths and circuits should be a smooth surface to cater for a range of accessibilities – although separate unsealed paths could be considered for low intensity uses. Some submissions highlighted that commuter cycle paths can often be dangerous for walkers.

Officer response

The MOSS recognises that there are gaps in path and trail provision. It promotes the need to improve path and trail connections and this is supported by submissions in terms of improving connectivity for shared paths for pedestrians and cyclists. A 2.5m path is the recommended service level. However, this will depend on site context and the local physical characteristics for each path.

Recommendation 43 (pg 36) seeks to be mindful of bushland reserves and that unsealed surfaces may be appropriate in certain settings. Further, the Section to “Extend, develop and market the potential flagship trails: Scotchman’s Creek, Gardiners Creek and Dandenong Creek Trail” (Pg 33) notes that care is needed to ensure that environmental integrity is not eroded.

The intention is not that street trees will be removed to install paths to the detriment to streetscape character. Installation of a path would need careful consideration in the context of the street and design. Paths will only be installed in key locations that provide the greatest connectivity for the community and to key facilities and services. This will be consulted with the surrounding community for individual paths at the design stage.

To improve the MOSS it is proposed to prepare a map in the final version that sets out the key cycle routes and gaps. Submissions that have been made (**Attachment 1- Table 1**) will assist with the preparation of this. Further information will be clarified in design service levels for trails in the MOSS.

Officer recommendation – Update Open Space Strategy

It is proposed to update the Open Space Strategy to clarify the balance of users and map the key trails and cycle routes along with gaps in provision.

Central Glen Waverley/ Central car parking area

Two submissions stated that the Glen Waverley Central area is lacking in open space and there is a need for a space for people to meet and congregate. It was suggested that the central car park should be converted into a fully landscaped park.

Officer response.

Whilst the desire for additional open space in the Glen Waverley Activity Centre is noted and valid, the provision of open space needs to be appropriate for the existing and future urban context and take into account the overall land use patterns of the centre.

The Open Space Strategy provides a policy framework for the provision of open space, types, functions and catchments. The detailed provision of open space, including design, access and infrastructure is determined through activity centre structure plans, neighbourhood plans or reserve masterplans.

In this instance Council has prepared the Glen Waverley Activity Centre Structure Plan (Adopted 2014; updated June 2016), which sets out the structure for the provision of open space in the Activity Centre. Specifically the Structure Plan states; "Additional public spaces will need to be provided to serve the increased residents and workers". The plan sets out a number of key opportunities for 'green' public and open space areas and pedestrian connections resulting from potential redevelopment of public sites and streetscape improvements. It includes the need to improve access to and broaden functions for Bogong Reserve and the potential for a major renewal opportunity for the central car park site with a public square, community hub and library, and a mixed use development.

Officer recommendation – No change

No change to the Open Space Strategy is proposed in response to the submissions. The provision of open space within Glen Waverley Activity Centre is guided by the Glen Waverley Structure Plan (June 2016).

Talbot Quarry

The Talbot Quarry submissions were noted in the 'Summary of consultation responses' section above. The submissions call for Council to purchase the former quarry and tip to convert it to open space.

Officer response

The land is a former sand quarry and tip. The purchase of this land is not recommended in the Open Space Strategy, particularly as it is not in an area of forecast high growth and the area is well served having Talbot Reserve and Davies Reserve immediately adjacent to it.

Additionally, as a former sand quarry and tip the site has significant, drainage, contamination and remediation issues and consequently is considered to be severely encumbered.

Planning Scheme Amendment C129 is currently being considered by Planning Panels Victoria, who will make a recommendation to Council on the proposed rezoning of the site.

Officer recommendation – No change

No change to the Open Space Strategy is proposed in response to the submissions to purchase the former Talbot Quarry.

Other agencies

Council received submissions from Parks Victoria and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Parks Victoria highlighted the need for Council to work with them and adjoining local authorities for strategic and regional open space and trails, and to continue to improve gaps in provision. Key parks include connectivity to Wattle Park, Dandenong Police Paddocks, Karkarook Park and the future sandbelt Chain of Parks, as well as a shared trail along the Melbourne Water pipe track from Mitcham to Notting Hill.

The EPA provided guidance on the environmental risk and legal framework associated with the use of formal landfills and contaminated sites as open space.

Officer response

The Parks Victoria and EPA comments are noted. In regards to the Parks Victoria submission, Council will update the MOSS to refer to and identify the context of regional open space parks and trails and major gaps and influences.

Officer recommendation – Update Open Space Strategy

The Open Space Strategy will be updated to identify the context and influences of regional open space and trails on open space in Monash.

General comments on structure and MOSS content

One submission stated that they found the draft confusing and there was a need to identify open space that is 'public', 'restricted public' or 'private'; there are maps missing that identify open space and trail gaps; the core service table is confusing; and the recommended actions are confusing with a need for strategic actions.

Table 1 in **Attachment 1** provides further detail on submissions regarding the content and structure of the MOSS.

Officer recommendation – Update Open Space Strategy.

A review of the structure of the Open Space Strategy is being undertaken to ensure that the final document is clear and easy to navigate. Further work will be undertaken to set out how the Open Space Strategy will be implemented.

Specific requests about parks

Many of the Social Pinpoint comments made suggestions or requests for new or improved facilities or gaps in facilities.

These are set out in **Attachment 1** – Table 2.

Officer recommendation

These submissions are noted and the requests for additional facilities are being used to assist in the preparation of the implementation plan and priorities as outlined in the 'Next steps' section below.

The need for maintenance or minor infrastructure improvement.

These are set out in **Attachment 1** – Table 2.

Officer recommendation

Requests have been forwarded to the relevant Council departments for consideration or action.

What I like about a specific park or trail.

The Social Pinpoint map also provided the community to “tag” something they liked about open space these responses are contained in **Attachment 1** - Table 3.

Next steps

The draft Monash Public Open Space Strategy provides the overall strategic direction to guide future public open space planning and provision in Monash. The Open Space Strategy also sets out a range of further strategic policy work to be undertaken to provide for the implementation of the Open Space Strategy.

A key aspect of the preparation of the final MOSS will be the finalisation of the implementation plan for the MOSS now that the community consultation on the draft Open Space Strategy has been completed.

This further strategic work will include:

- Reviewing the funding mechanisms for new public open space and capacity improvements to existing public open space. This will potentially include changes to the Public Open Space Contribution requirement of the Monash Planning Scheme. These changes would be the subject of a separate planning scheme amendment process, including community consultation.
- An investigation of the options for Developer Contributions. This is particularly relevant for uses, such as student accommodation, which increase the residential population but are not required to make a public open space contribution through the planning scheme.
- the development of an assessment program to assist in implementing the open space strategy and prioritising improvements to the open space network

Further work is also required on the MOSS to determine a prioritised and realistic program of actions outlining timeframes and indicative costs. Officers within Council departments will work together to develop priorities of outcomes.

Once completed the Open Space Strategy is revised and the further work completed a further report will be presented to Council for consideration and endorsement.

CONSULTATION

This report sets out the results of consultation that was undertaken for the MOSS during September and October of 2017.

There will be further opportunities for community consultation should Council propose changes to Public Open Space requirements or developer contributions.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Open Space Strategy sets out a framework for the provision of open space to meet existing and future needs. The Open Space Strategy is essentially an aspiration statement of Council's intent to address these needs, but in a financial sense the Open Space Strategy is largely unfunded within Council's current Strategic Resource Plan (SRP) and Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP).

Once adopted, the Open Space Strategy will be used to develop a prioritised public open space works program. This works program will support and guide future capital expenditure on open space. If individual actions are adopted as part of the Monash Open Space Strategy, they will be subject to future annual Council budgeting decisions.

The adopted Open Space Strategy will direct the review of potential changes to Clause 52.01 Public Open Space Contributions and Subdivision provision of the Monash Planning Scheme. This Clause allows Council to require a contribution (cash or land) towards the provision or improvement of public open space from subdivisions generally greater than 3 lots.

The Open Space Strategy will also assist in the review and potential development of other funding mechanisms to cater for future growth such as developer contributions, particularly for developments which, although they increase demand on open space, are not required to make Public Open Space Contribution under the Monash Planning Scheme.

The Open Space Strategy may also assist in pursuing external opportunities such as government grants or other alternative funding sources.

The objective of accumulating funds in an Open Space Reserve over time to enable strategic acquisitions of land for open space or other major open space capital works projects is predicated on these additional funding sources resulting in revenue beyond the levels contained in the current SRP and LTFP.

CONCLUSION

Community consultation on the Draft Monash Open Space Strategy was undertaken in September and October 2017. A total of 23 written submissions were received and there were 450 responses received on the online facility "Social Pinpoint", 300 of which related to the Talbot Quarry planning scheme Amendment C129.

The Open Space Strategy will guide the future planning, provision, design and management of open space in Monash for the next decade. The Open Space Strategy is a high level strategic document that seeks to identify the open space needs of existing and future residents of Monash, gaps in the provision of open space and opportunities to address those gaps.

The Open Space Strategy is aspirational, and it is acknowledged that not all of the recommendations will be able to be implemented in the life of the Open Space Strategy as implementation relies on a number of factors including budget, the pace of redevelopment and the availability of land to purchase in appropriate locations.

Officers are currently using the responses to assist in finalising the Monash Open Space Strategy and implementation assessment program for consideration later in the year.