

## 2.4 **FREEWAY RESERVE MASTERPLAN** (JS: REC55)

Responsible Director: Julie Salomon

### **RECOMMENDATION**

*That Council endorses the Freeway Reserve Masterplan and considers progressing this plan through future Council budgets allocations.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This report provides an overview of the Freeway Reserve masterplanning process and seeks Council's endorsement of the Freeway Reserve Masterplan.

### **BACKGROUND**

Freeway Reserve is located at 361-415 Wellington Road, Mulgrave. The perimeter of the reserve is bounded by major roads including the Monash Freeway and Wellington Road and is also referred to as the Mile Creek East Retarding Basin (Melbourne Water).

The reserve is zoned public park and recreation zone (PPRZ) and is impacted by a planning overlay (Significant Building Overlay or SBO). The park is currently designated as a 'dog off-leash' park and is popular with dog owners. Within the Reserve there are three soccer pitches, two cricket pitches, cricket practice nets, an archery range, and a circuit walking track with ten fitness stations located along it. The reserve is currently used by the following sporting clubs:

- a) Waverley City Archers;
- b) Brandon Park Soccer Club;
- c) Sahagian Sporting and Community Club;
- d) Mt Waverley Mulgrave Cricket Club;
- e) Wheelers Hill Cricket Club;
- f) Nottingham Brandon Park Cricket Club;
- g) Glen Waverley Cougars Cricket Club; and
- h) Monash Warriors Grid Iron (Juniors).

Melbourne Water and Yarra Valley Water are also a key stakeholder due to the location of the Mile Creek East Retarding Basin within the Reserve.

Council funded the development of the Freeway Reserve Masterplan as part of the 2015/16 Capital Works program. Simon Leisure Consulting were subsequently engaged to develop the masterplan for Council following a competitive quotation process.

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**DISCUSSION**

Freeway Reserve is an important sports reserve and recreational open space serving a catchment that primarily includes the western section of Mulgrave and the southwestern section of Wheelers Hill. The reserve is used predominantly for soccer, cricket and archery activities, but has an important role as a destination open space for personal fitness and for exercising dogs (off leash).

The Freeway Reserve Masterplan was developed through consideration and analysis of information collected during the project from the following sources:

- a) Local influences, including the demographic profile of Mulgrave and relevant directions contained in Council planning reports;
- b) Site analysis and research by the consultant team;
- c) Consultation with reserve user groups, potential new user groups, local residents and visitors to the reserve, other stakeholder groups, and Council staff;
- d) Assessment of various options and scenarios for the future use and improvement of the reserve; and
- e) Feedback from stakeholders and Council staff on the preliminary concept plans and master plan for the reserve layout.

***Masterplan Opportunities***

The masterplanning process identified various opportunities to improve Freeway Reserve across a range of uses, experiences and settings, and these are described below and visually represented in the illustrated masterplan (refer Attachment 3).

***1. Sporting and recreational***

There is an opportunity to reconfigure the existing sports fields to have them comply with current standards and guidelines for senior sized cricket and soccer fields. Relocating the two concrete wickets approximately five metres south of their present sites will enable three soccer fields of dimensions 100m x 68m (and 3m run-offs) to be achieved in a similar layout as present, and the two cricket ovals will have a radius of in excess of 60m. The latter is important as it increases the distance between the pitch and the western Melbourne Water inlet drain.

The replacement of the northern swale with an underground stormwater connection and the removal of the existing cricket practice nets creates an opportunity for the underutilised northern area of the reserve to become a new sports training area. Both soccer clubs have identified the need for access to additional training space. The space will also provide a good quality multipurpose area for recreational ball games, personal training groups, and other activities during summer, and will not interrupt the use of the reserve for cricket.

There is available space to potentially relocate the archery range 10 metres to the east, thereby opening up the target area to permit up to two more targets. The access between the archery clubhouse and the shooting line can be properly formed to provide improved access for all archers. There is sufficient space to potentially expand the clubrooms and to also consider the construction of adjoining indoor archery range. Whilst a more detailed feasibility assessment will be required to be undertaken, there is potential for any new indoor archery range to also accommodate an 8 piste fencing facility for the Fioretto Fencing Club in a joint-use and shared arrangement. The impact of the bulk of the proposed indoor facility is somewhat mitigated by the remote location of the reserve and the existing vegetation. These options would require a significant capital costs and external funding would need to be secured for such facilities.

## 2. *Pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles*

The main perimeter path will be retained in its current location, with upgrades following Melbourne Water works to strengthen the embankment.

In response to the number of goat tracks identified on site, particularly along the Wellington Road boundary, additional formed pedestrian connections should be made to increase accessibility into the reserve. Melbourne Water has expressed in principle agreement to the provision of access points on the embankment. Possible new connection points proposed include:

- a) southwest corner connections up to the embankment path, to align with existing footpath crossovers. One connection could be an accessible ramp, with the other two connections being stair access, incorporating a side channel for bicycles. A stair connection from the embankment path down into the reserve should also be provided;
- b) an access point off Wellington Road, designed for use by emergency vehicles;
- c) provide a path connection from the Wellington Road bus stop;
- d) upgrade the existing western ramp access adjacent to the Monash Gardens aged care facility to make it fully accessible, including provision for landings; and
- e) at the north end, provide an alternative path connection through the reserve, for users who do not want to go via the vegetated zone and underpass area adjacent to the Monash Freeway.

A potential terraced access point onto the playing fields midway along the western embankment could provides multiple benefits such as:

- a) access to the playing fields.
- b) terraced seating for spectators.
- c) shelter for spectators and players using the western fields.

If through development of new facilities and sporting infrastructure there is increased demand for car parking, this could be accommodated by extending existing car parks and realigning sections of the access road.

### 3. *Landscape*

The existing vegetation gives the reserve a strong landscape character. Although all canopy trees will be removed along the Melbourne Water embankment, replacement planting will occur along Wellington Road, which eventually will strengthen screening and buffer benefits.

There is an opportunity for new planting outside the sports fields / retarding basin zone, particularly along the Mazonod College boundary, as a continuation of the planting character along the western embankment.

Any proposals for new works will need to include an assessment of existing vegetation to review potential impacts and importantly, consider how new vegetation can be introduced.

The northern triangle is a known wet zone, thought to be fed by groundwater springs. There is potential to develop this as a wetland that can be accessed via a boardwalk will make this area accessible and enhance the experience for people using the perimeter path. The design of the wetland will be subject to future detailed design and funding, but could be carried out in conjunction with the any new car parking along the roadway, and could provide additional stormwater to feed the wetland.

### 4. *Amenities*

To support increased activities at the reserve, new amenities and infrastructure are proposed including:

- a) drinking fountains with dog bowls and/or water bottle refill stations at fitness stations and picnic areas. Note: The installation of a drinking fountain with a dog bowl and a dog poo bag dispenser is at Freeway Reserve will be delivered as part of the 2016/17 capital works program;
- b) park furniture: seating, picnic tables, bicycle rails, rubbish and recycle bins; and
- c) new shelters: one on the western embankment for spectators / teams using the western fields, and two shelters associated with picnic areas, with a dual role as spectator zones.

New and upgraded signage will be undertaken by Council as a separate project.

New fitness stations are also currently being installed by Council as part of the 2015/16 capital works program (as a separate project).

A playground will not be provided within the reserve as there is no strategic demand identified for this area. However, there is potential

to provide an exploration space / natural play zone as part of a picnic space, or spectator zone at the northern end of the playing fields. This will create a new family recreation hub that can be utilised by local residents or visitors to the reserve for sporting commitments.

The opportunity also exists to advocate for the upgrade the Melbourne Water inflow and outflow drainage openings to improve safety and to minimise the incidences of lost balls from sporting activities.

### ***POLICY IMPLICATIONS***

The Freeway Reserve Masterplan is consistent with relevant Council policy, strategy and plans including the Council Plan 2013-2017; Health and Wellbeing Partnership Plan 2013-17; Active Reserves Strategy; Playground and Playspaces Strategy 2010-2015; Walking and Cycling Strategy 2011-15; Sport and Recreation in Monash 2010-2015; and Physical Activity Plan 2010-2015.

Council's Active Reserves Strategy (2009, p. 4-6) in particular identifies the north oval of Freeway Reserve is underutilized and the Masterplan recommends a number of development opportunities aimed at activating this space within the reserve.

### ***SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS***

The recommendations in the masterplan, when implemented, will enhance social connectiveness and community wellbeing by providing improved and accessible amenities and facilities at the reserve.

### ***HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS***

No human rights implications inform this proposal.

### ***CONSULTATION***

The masterplanning process involved extensive consultation with the community and a range of stakeholders. A combination of meetings, interviews and site inspections were carried out with various stakeholders during the study, including user groups, potential new user groups, residents and visitors to the reserve, Melbourne Water, other groups and Council staff. Some of the consultation was undertaken during the research phase of the study, whilst other meetings and interviews were designed to receive feedback on the concept plans prepared for the reserve.

The final Masterplan incorporates the broad interests and needs of the community. Where improvements have been assessed as appropriate, they have been included in the Masterplan.

A summary of the community consultation engagement process and findings to inform the Masterplan are detailed in the Attachment 1 and 2.

### ***FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS***

The development of the Freeway Reserve Masterplan was funded through the 2015/16 Capital Works program. Any subsequent work to progress any potential improvements identified in the masterplan would be subject to funding through the annual Council budget process.

It is proposed that Council may consider undertaking a range of initial improvements/design projects supported by the Freeway Reserve Masterplan requiring additional budget allocation of between \$85,000 (Stage 1A – Year 1) to \$350,000 (Stage 1B – Year 2).

### ***CONCLUSION***

Masterplans are aspirational in nature and this plan highlights some long term opportunities for the reserve. However, there are a range of opportunities to increase the functionality and usability of the reserve that are practical in nature. These works can be undertaken in a staged approach that are mindful of the current fiscal constraints.

### ***ATTACHMENTS***

- Attachment 1** – Freeway Reserve Masterplan Consultation Process
- Attachment 2** – Freeway Reserve – Resident Survey Results  
Infographic
- Attachment 3** – Freeway Reserve Masterplan