

7.10 North East Link: Koonung Creek Reserve master plan

Executive Summary

Purpose

This report is presented to Council to:

- share the outcomes of the September and October 2023 Koonung Creek Reserve (KCR) master plan draft concept design (**Attachment 1**) community engagement and consultation (**Attachment 2**)
- present the KCR master plan design (**Attachment 3**) for consideration, endorsement and adoption.

Background

The North East Link Program (NELP) will occupy approximately 65% of the KCR for construction purposes from mid-2024 to sometime in 2028. They will formally acquire approximately 25% of the KCR for permanent project infrastructure sometime in 2028. The NELP has indicated they will not formally acquire land required for their proposed new stormwater management infrastructure in the KCR, which could leave as little as 37.5% of the current total area for the community post construction.

The North East Link (NEL) must be developed in accordance with the January 2020 NELP Environmental Management Framework (EMF) and Environmental Performance Requirements (EPRs). The Social and Community EPRs are relevant to the KCR, with EPR SC2 stating:

“Where public land is to be permanently acquired or temporarily occupied, the project will:

- *Return public land not required for permanent project infrastructure to its pre-existing use post construction as soon as practicable, including with all relevant reinstatement works, unless otherwise agreed with the land manager...”*

The KCR is land owned solely by Council, with the exception of a small number of very small parcels, and we are the land manager.

The July 2020 settlement agreement between Council and the State of Victoria requires the NELP to work with Council on the development of the Koonung Creek Reserve master plan.

In May 2022, Council officers completed community consultation and engagement about the KCR. The feedback gathered during this exercise informed Council's submission to the Spark Tunnels/Central Urban Design and Landscape Plan (UDLP), which included a design for the western half of the KCR ahead of the master plan process. The submission was considered and endorsed at the 20 June 2022 Services Delegated Committee meeting. Key community opinions shared include:

- opposition to the Koonung Creek Trail being reinstated as a shared use path.

- support for a mode separated Koonung Creek Trail.
- desire to retain as much contiguous green open space as possible.

In mid-2022, NELP and Council officers commenced work on the KCR master plan. The feedback from the May 2022 consultation and engagement was shared with the NELP to inform the master plan. We asked the NELP to honour the requests of the community.

From mid-2022 to September 2023, workshops and meetings were held to discuss and further the master plan. Multiple iterations of the NELP authored documents were presented to Council officers for review and comment. Despite continuous opposition through this process to the shared use path and new stormwater management infrastructure, the NELP included both in their master plan and their draft concept design (**Attachment 1**).

These inclusions are at odds with the NELP's very strong preference for the master plan to be a Council owned and led document.

The joint work culminated in a 3.5 week long Council organised and led community consultation and engagement about the NELP authored KCR master plan draft concept design (**Attachment 1**) from Wednesday 27 September 2023 to Sunday 22 October 2023.

Where Council officers disagreed with a design element included by the NELP (i.e. the shared use path and stormwater management infrastructure), this was highlighted to ensure the community was aware of this opposition and the reasons for it. Capire Consulting Group (Capire) was engaged by Council at NELP's cost to assist with and prepare the report about the exercise (**Attachment 2**).

The community feedback gathered during this engagement and consultation informed Council's submission to the North East Link Eastern Freeway Upgrades - Burke Road to Tram Road - UDLP and the KCR master plan design (**Attachment 3**). The UDLP submission was considered and endorsed at the 27 November 2023 Council meeting.

Key consultation findings include:

- very strong support for the inclusion of mode separate paths instead of a shared use path, with the level of support consistent with the findings of the May 2022 engagement and consultation.
- strong opposition to the inclusion of the stormwater management infrastructure that impacts on the open space in the reserve.
- support for:
 - a 5km parkrun and 2km junior parkrun route (to be managed by others).
 - a fenced dog park.
 - relaxation area near the wetland with a new purpose designed gazebo to support existing community activities (i.e. daily tai chi).
 - a new playground at the western end of the reserve.

Key Issues

Council has owned the KCR for decades. It has been an open space reserve, as well as a part of a critical east-west linear trail network for commuter and recreational cyclists, pedestrians and runners for as long. It is a cherished community asset.

The anticipated permanent and formal acquisition of approximately 25% of the KCR and loss of open space land within the nearby Freeway Golf Course are issues of significant concern for Council. To the extent some offset land was identified in the early planning phase of the NEL. Consistent with this approach by the NELP, and the community consultation findings, the protection of open space for community use has been at the forefront of Council officer engagement throughout the KCR master plan process.

The inclusion of the shared use path and the stormwater management infrastructure in the NELP authored KCR master plan draft concept design (**Attachment 1**) provided Council officers the opportunity to test these two design elements with the community. The outcomes of the consultation revealed the community and Council are in agreement with how we want the KCR to look and feel once the North East Link (NEL) construction is finished and the land is reinstated and rehabilitated.

The Council prepared KCR master plan design (**Attachment 3**) incorporates the feedback received from the community in May 2022, as well as September and October 2023. The design excludes a shared use path and the new stormwater management infrastructure.

In late January 2024, the Burke to Tram Alliance (BTA), the NELP's contractor delivering the Burke Road to Tram Road section of the NEL, provided Council officers an undated letter addressed to 'Boroondara City Council' from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC). The letter expresses their disappointment in Council's "rejection" of the reimagining of the Koonung Creek and their support for the same. The letter highlights the educational opportunities the reimagining provides, along with the enhancement of inclusivity it will bring all people.

Neither NELP nor BTA has shared, despite requests, the information they provided to the WWCHAC to inform their letter. The NELP has not included Council officers in any meetings with the WWCHAC about the KCR master plan for this Council owned land.

The Council authored KCR master plan design (**Attachment 3**) presents opportunities to introduce initiatives to recognise the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and the Aboriginal histories and culture of the area. Re-imagining a former water body does not have to be as literal as the NELP has proposed.

Next Steps

Should Council agree with the officers' recommendation, next steps are to:

- present the Council prepared KCR master plan design to NELP and other listed in the recommendation.
- work with NELP to finalise the design for implementation.

Officers' recommendation

That Council resolve to:

1. Thank the community for, and acknowledge, their input to the September and October 2023 community engagement and consultation about the Koonung Creek Reserve master plan draft concept design.
2. Endorse and adopt the Koonung Creek Reserve master plan design, as annexed to the minutes.
3. Object to the inclusion of any new stormwater management infrastructure within the Koonung Creek Reserve.
4. Endorse and support the concept of re-imagining the Koonung Creek through the Koonung Creek Reserve through creative, inclusive and holistic design.
5. Write to the following to advise of this resolution:
 - a. The Hon. Jacinta Allan, MP, Premier of Victoria.
 - b. The Hon. Sonya Kilkenney, MP, Minister for Planning.
 - c. The Hon. Danny Pearson, MP, Minister for Transport Infrastructure.
 - d. Mr Duncan Elliott, CEO, Major Road Projects Victoria.
 - e. Mr Jim Waller, Executive Program Director, North East Link Program.
 - f. Members of Victorian and Federal Parliaments with seats representing Boroondara.

Responsible director: Daniel Freer, Director Places and Spaces

1. Purpose

The purposes of this report are to:

- share the outcomes of the September and October 2023 Koonung Creek Reserve (KCR) master plan draft concept design (**Attachment 1**) community engagement and consultation (**Attachment 2**) with Council.
- present the KCR master plan design (**Attachment 3**) for consideration, endorsement and adoption.

2. Policy implications and relevance to community plan and council plan

This report is consistent with the Council Plan 2021-2025 and the Boroondara Community Plan 2021-2031, in particular the following themes:

- Community, services and facilities.
- Parks and green spaces.
- The environment.
- Moving around.
- Leadership and governance.

3. Background

General

NELP will occupy approximately 65% of the KCR for construction compounds, Eastern Freeway construction access roads and materials laydown from mid-2024 to sometime in 2028.

NELP will formally acquire approximately 25% of the KCR for permanent project infrastructure, with the acquisition expected to take place in 2028 when the land requirements of the project are known.

NELP has indicated they will not formally acquire land required for their proposed new stormwater management infrastructure in the KCR. From publicly available designs it is understood the new stormwater management infrastructure would effectively occupy or render inaccessible approximately half of the returned KCR area or 37.5% of the current total area.

January 2020: Environmental Performance Requirements

The January 2020 North East Link Project Environmental Management Framework (EMF) includes the Environmental Performance Requirements (EPRs).

The EMF states:

“The Project must be developed in accordance with the EPRs in Table 8-1.”

The Social and Community EPRs are relevant to the KCR, with EPR SC2 stating:

“Where public land is to be permanently acquired or temporarily occupied, the project will:

- *Minimise the extent of the acquisition or the extent or duration of the occupation...*
- *Return public land not required for permanent project infrastructure to its pre-existing use post construction as soon as practicable, including with all relevant reinstatement works, unless otherwise agreed with the land manager...”*

EPR SC2 applies to the KCR. The KCR is land owned solely by Council, with the exception of a small number of very small parcels, and we are the land manager.

July 2020: Settlement agreement

The July 2020 settlement agreement between Council and the State of Victoria requires the North East Link Program (NELP) to work with Council on the development of the KCR master plan.

May 2022: Spark Tunnels/Central Urban Design and Landscape Plan

The Spark Tunnels/Central Urban Design and Landscape Plan (UDLP) was on public exhibition from 11 May 2022 to 31 May 2022. It included a design for the western half of the Koonung Creek Reserve, pre-empting the master plan process.

To inform Council's submission to the Spark Tunnels/Central Urban Design and Landscape Plan (UDLP) Council officers completed community consultation and engagement about the KCR in May 2022. The submission was considered and endorsed at the 20 June 2022 Services Delegated Committee meeting.

Key community opinions from the May 2022 consultation and engagement include:

- opposition to a shared use path.
- support for mode separated paths.
- desire to retain as much contiguous green open space as possible.
- retention and improvement of existing community assets such as the playground, gazebos and outdoor exercise equipment.

The outcomes of the consultation and engagement also informed the future work on the KCR master plan and NELP prepared draft concept design (**Attachment 1**).

Mid-2022 onwards: Koonung Creek Reserve master plan

In mid-2022, NELP and Council officers commenced work on the KCR master plan. The feedback received from the community in May 2022 was shared with the NELP team to inform the KCR master plan. In sharing the feedback, we asked the NELP to honour the requests of the community.

From mid-2022 to September 2023, workshops and meetings were held to discuss and further the master plan. Multiple iterations of the NELP authored master plan were presented to Council officers, with comments made, feedback shared and design changes requested to better reflect what the community wants their public open space to look and feel like.

Despite continuous opposition to the shared use path and stormwater management infrastructure from Council officers and the community, the NELP has included both in the master plan and the draft concept design (**Attachment 1**).

The inclusion of the two design elements is at odds with the NELP's very strong preference for the master plan to be a Council owned and led document. Nonetheless, Council officers continued to work with the NELP on the master plan as it is a critically important document for Council and the community.

The joint work culminated in the Council organised and led community consultation and engagement on the NELP prepared KCR master plan draft concept design (**Attachment 1**) in September and October 2023.

Where Council officers disagreed with a design element included by NELP (i.e. the shared use path and stormwater management infrastructure), this was highlighted and called out to ensure the community was aware of this opposition and the reasons for the opposition.

September and October 2023: Council led community engagement and consultation.

For a period of 3.5 weeks, from Wednesday 27 September 2023 to Sunday 22 October 2023, Council ran a community engagement and consultation process about the NELP prepared KCR master plan draft concept design (**Attachment 1**). Capire Consulting Group (Capire) was engaged by Council at NELP's cost to assist with the engagement and consultation.

See Section 5 (Consultation/communication) of this report for details of the engagement and consultation, including the Capire authored report (**Attachment 2**) about the exercise.

The feedback gathered during this engagement and consultation informed Council's submission to the North East Link Eastern Freeway Upgrades - Burke Road to Tram Road - UDLP. The submission was considered and endorsed at the 27 November 2023 Council meeting.

The feedback has also informed the Council prepared KCR master plan design (**Attachment 3**).

4. Outline of key issues/options

Council has owned the KCR for decades. It has been an open space reserve for the nearby and wider regional community for as long. It has provided a section of a critical east-west linear trail network for commuter and recreational cyclists, pedestrians and runners for as long. It is a cherished community asset.

The anticipated permanent and formal acquisition of approximately 25% of the KCR for noise walls along the northern boundary and other road infrastructure (e.g. gantries, traffic lanes, roadside shoulders) and loss of open space land within the nearby Freeway Golf Course are issues of significant concern for Council. To the extent some offset land was identified in the early planning phase of the NEL.

Consistent with this approach by the NELP, and the May 2022 and September and October 2023 consultation findings, the protection of open space for community use has been at the forefront of Council officer engagement throughout the KCR master plan process.

The inclusion of the shared use path and the stormwater management infrastructure in the NELP authored KCR master plan draft concept design (**Attachment 1**) provided Council officers the opportunity to test the opinion of the community about these two design elements. It allowed Council to understand if we had properly understood and interpreted the community's opinions and sentiments from the May 2022 consultation and engagement exercise.

The feedback provided by the community who responded to the online survey and/or attended an in-person session was consistent with that gathered during May 2022. It was also consistent with the feedback Council officers had shared and continue to share with the NELP about the KCR master plan and associated design.

The community and Council are in agreement with how we want the KCR to look and feel once the North East Link (NEL) construction is finished and the land is reinstated and rehabilitated.

The Council prepared KCR master plan design (**Attachment 3**) incorporates the feedback received from the community in May 2022, as well as September and October 2023. The design includes:

- a mode separated Koonung Creek Trail through the KCR where width allows.
- a 5km parkrun and 2km junior parkrun route (to be managed by others).
- an area for a fenced dog park.
- bird hide and relaxation area near the wetland with a new purpose designed gazebo to support existing community activities (i.e. daily tai chi).
- a new playground and facilities at the western end of the reserve
- upgrades to the existing playground and visitor facilities at Wandeen Street.
- relocation of the existing BMX and mountain bike skills track.
- a second public toilet at the western end of the reserve.
- additional seating throughout.
- co-located community assets including exercise equipment, drinking fountains, bins and bike hoops.
- new gateway entrances to the reserve with seating and landscaping at Doncaster Road, Mountain View Road and Wilburton Road.

The design excludes a shared use path and the new stormwater management infrastructure, including:

- representation of past watercourse/dry creek bed/WSUD swale/planted swale.
- temporary water retention areas.
- land subject to temporary inundation.
- bioretention ponds.
- sediment basins/ponds.

Community feedback indicated some support for the retention of the existing dog beach at the wetland, which is at odds with Council endeavours to protect and enhance native fauna habitat.

In late January 2024, the Burke to Tram Alliance (BTA), the NELP's contractor delivering the Burke Road to Tram Road section of the NEL which includes the KCR, provided Council officers an undated letter addressed to 'Boroondara City Council' from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC). The letter notes the WWCHAC:

- support for the re-imagining of the Koonung Creek/Koonung Koonung.
- disappointment in their perceived position of Council in relation to the re-imagining of the Koonung Creek/Koonung Koonung (i.e. our rejection of the new stormwater management infrastructure).

The letter highlights the educational opportunities the reimagining provides, along with the enhancement of inclusivity it will bring all people.

Council officers have asked NELP and BTA to share the information provided to the WWCHAC that led to their letter. At the time of writing, Council is yet to receive any information from NELP or BTA. It is worth noting, the NELP has not included Council in any meetings or workshops with the WWCHAC about the KCR master plan.

The Council authored KCR master plan design (**Attachment 3**) presents opportunities to introduce initiatives to recognise the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and the Aboriginal histories and culture of the area. Practising a creative, inclusive and holistic design philosophy centred on the core tenant of people, purpose and place will ensure these opportunities are realised.

Re-imagining a water body does not have to be as literal as the NELP has proposed given the alignment of the former Koonung Creek is, for the most part, under the Eastern Freeway.

5. Consultation/communication

For a period of 3.5 weeks, from Wednesday 27 September 2023 to Sunday 22 October 2023, Council ran a community engagement and consultation process about the NELP prepared KCR draft concept design (**Attachment 1**).

The Capire Consulting Group (Capire) was engaged to assist Council with the development and implementation of the engagement and consultation. The costs Council incurred engaging Capire were reimbursed by the NELP.

The engagement and consultation consisted of the following available in English and Simplified Chinese, with Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese) speaking staff in attendance at the three in person sessions.

- an online survey, which received 153 responses.
- 2-hour pop-up session on Saturday 7 October 2023 at the Boroondara Shopping Centre on Balwyn Road attended by 30 community members.
- 1-hour drop-in session on Saturday 14 October 2023 from 10am to 11am at the Greythorn Community Centre attended by 6 community members.
- 1-hour facilitated community workshop on Saturday 14 October 2023 from 11am to 12pm at the Greythorn Community Centre attended by 12 community members.

The engagement and consultation were advertised through the following channels in both English and Simplified Chinese:

- Engage Boroondara page.
- postcards sent to 4,600 households in Balwyn North and Kew East.
- signage in the KCR, as well as signage and postcards at local shops and schools.
- social media posts on Council's Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly known as Twitter) and LinkedIn pages.
- emails to local trader groups, education facilities, Boroondara's cultural champions and others.

See **Attachment 2** for the Capire authored report about the engagement and consultation and findings.

Key consultation findings include:

- very strong support for the inclusion of mode separate Koonung Creek Trail instead of a shared use path, with the level of support consistent with the findings of the May 2022 engagement and consultation
- strong opposition to the inclusion of the stormwater management infrastructure in the reserve
- support for:
 - a 5km parkrun and 2km junior parkrun route (to be managed by others)
 - a fenced dog park
 - relaxation area near the wetland with a new purpose designed gazebo to support existing community activities (i.e. daily tai chi)
 - a new playground at the western end of the reserve
 - inclusion of natureplay areas
 - relocation of the BMX and mountain bike skills track
 - lighting along the Koonung Creek Trail.

At the pop-up, drop-in and workshop sessions, community members shared detailed feedback including requests for:

- additional seats in particular locations

- additional bike repair stations at key locations including path intersections
- improved location and colocation of complementary assets such as bike hoops, seats, drinking fountains and outdoor exercise equipment.

Feedback from Council officers during the 3.5 week period included:

- provision of 120L Big Belly bins in pairs (1 x recycling, 1 x rubbish) throughout the reserve.

The feedback gathered during this engagement and consultation informed Council's submission to the North East Link Eastern Freeway Upgrades - Burke Road to Tram Road - UDLP. The submission was considered and endorsed at the 27 November 2023 Council meeting.

The feedback has also informed the Council authored KCR master plan design (**Attachment 3**).

6. Financial and resource implications

The financial and resource implications associated with the Council officer recommendation are not clear.

As noted in Section 3 of this report, the project must be developed in accordance with the EPRs, including EPR SC2. EPR SC2 states:

“Where public land is to be permanently acquired or temporarily occupied, the project will:

- *Minimise the extent of the acquisition of the extent or duration of the occupation...*
- *Return public land not required for permanent project infrastructure to its pre-existing use post construction as soon as practicable, including with all relevant reinstatement works, unless otherwise agreed with the land manager...”*

EPR SC2 very clearly requires public land, in this case the KCR, be reinstated to its pre-existing use unless otherwise agreed with the land owner, being Council.

NELP are also required to develop the project in accordance with the Minister for Planning approved UDLPs. The KCR is included in the Spark/Tunnels UDLP as well as the North East Link Eastern Freeway Upgrades - Burke Road to Tram Road - UDLP. The former has been approved by the Minister. The latter has yet to be approved by the Minister.

The UDLPs contradict EPR SC2 as the UDLPs, both the approved and yet to be approved, do not return the KCR to its pre-existing condition nor to a condition agreed with the land manager. It is not clear which document, the EMF which contains the EPRs or the UDLP, is subordinate to the other.

This contradiction leads to uncertainty about the financial implications of the Council officer recommendation as there is no clear course of action for NELP to implement and fund. This uncertainty will not be resolved for sometime, however it should not be the barrier to endorsing and adopting the Council prepared KCR master plan design (**Attachment 3**). Endorsement and adoption will provide Council with a formal position on an important strategic matter for the community.

7. Governance issues

No officers involved in the preparation of this report have a general or material conflict of interest requiring disclosure under chapter 5 of the Governance Rules of Boroondara City Council.

The recommendation contained in this report is compatible with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 as it does not raise any human rights issues.

8. Social and environmental issues

The social and environmental issues associated with this report are generally positive.

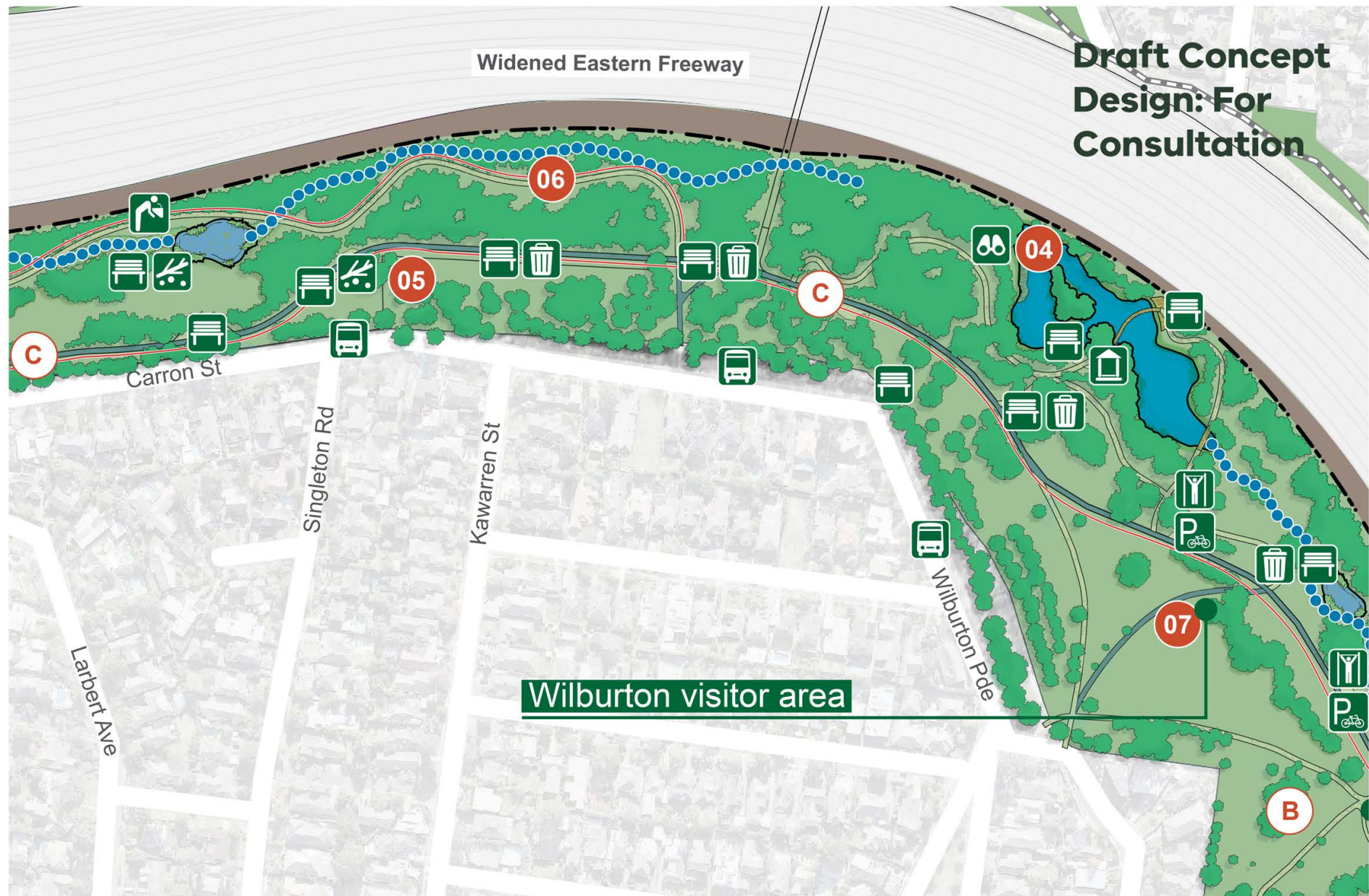
The report seeks to inform councillors of the feedback received from the community about the NELP prepared KCR master plan draft concept design (**Attachment 1**) and demonstrate how it has been incorporated into the Council authored KCR master plan design (**Attachment 3**) for endorsement and adoption.

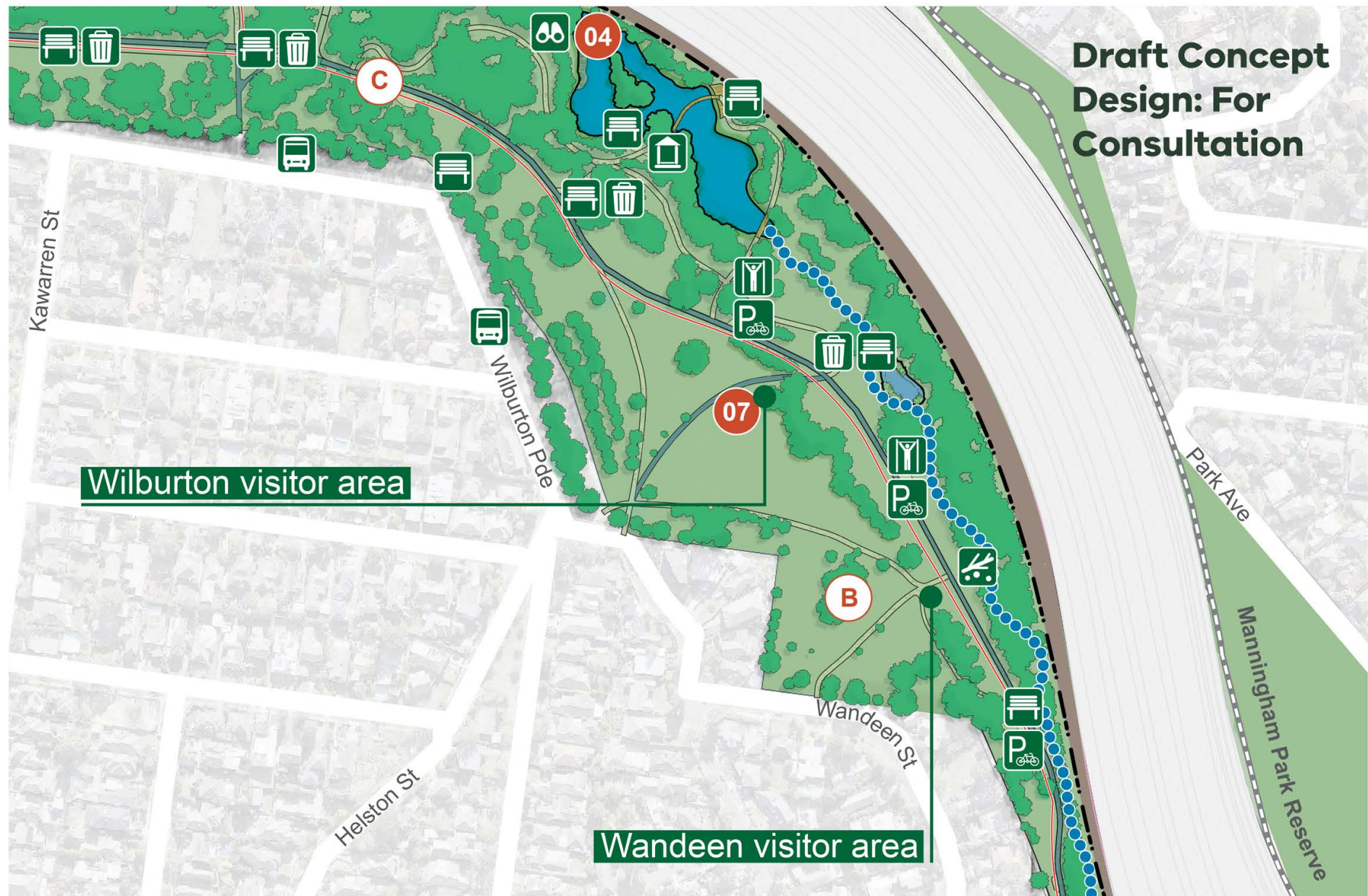
Manager: Clare Davey, Lead Major Project Interface
Fiona Brown, Manager Community Planning and Development

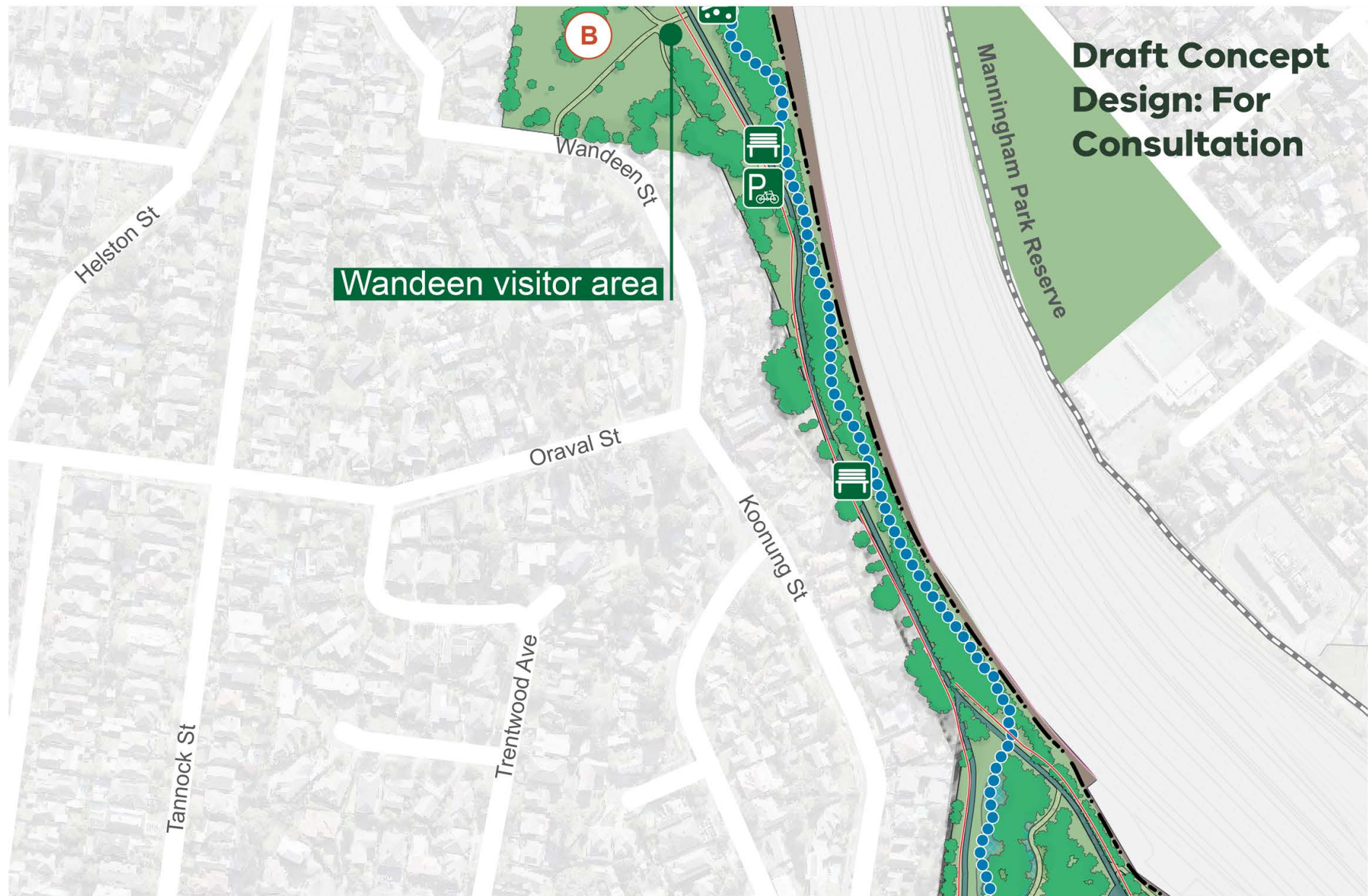
Report officer: Andrea Lomdahl, Principal Project Manager
Liz O'Loughlin, Social Inclusion Policy & Project Officer











Draft Concept Design: For Consultation

Legend

Connectivity

- Main Koonung Creek Trail
- Secondary Paths
- Parkrun Loop - 5 km

Existing & Proposed Facilities & Access

- Shelter
- BBQ
- BMX & mountain bike dirt jumps & skills tracks (beginner & intermediate)
- Toilet
- Seating
- Playground
- Bird hide
- Bus stop
- Parking
- Water fountain
- Bike parking
- Outdoor gym
- Bike repair station

- Possible Nature Play and eco-learning locations

Landscape character

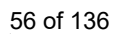
- Trees and understorey - biodiversity corridor planting
- Grassland/Open space
- Granitic sand/ paving
- Road shoulder

- Existing wetland
- Fence
- Representation of past water course

- Temporary water retention area
- Noise wall alignment
- Land subject to temporary inundation

0 20m

Draft Concept Design for Koonung Creek Reserve
September 2023 – Zone 4
 Scale 1:2000 at A3



Koonung Creek Reserve

Draft Concept Design Engagement

City of Boroondara

09.11.23

capire

Giving every person a voice.

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Capire acknowledges
and deeply respects the Wurundjeri
people and
the Traditional Owners
of the Victorian land.



capire

Privacy

Capire Consulting Group and any person(s) acting on our behalf is committed to protecting privacy and personally identifiable information by meeting our responsibilities under the Victorian Privacy Act 1988 and the Australian Privacy Principles 2014 as well as relevant industry codes of ethics and conduct.

For the purpose of program delivery, and on behalf of our clients, we collect personal information from individuals, such as e-mail addresses, contact details, demographic data and program feedback to enable us to facilitate participation in consultation activities. We follow a strict procedure for the collection, use, disclosure, storage and destruction of personal information. Any information we collect is stored securely on our server for the duration of the program and only disclosed to our client or the program team. Written notes from consultation activities are manually transferred to our server and disposed of securely.

Comments recorded during any consultation activities are faithfully transcribed however not attributed to individuals. Diligence is taken to ensure that any comments or sensitive information does not become personally identifiable in our reporting, or at any stage of the program.

Capire operates an in-office server with security measures that include, but are not limited to, password protected access, restrictions to sensitive data and the encrypted transfer of data.

For more information about the way we collect information, how we use, store and disclose information as well as our complaints procedure, please see www.capire.com.au or telephone (03) 9285 9000.

Consultation

Unless otherwise stated, all feedback documented by Capire Consulting Group and any person(s) acting on our behalf is written and/or recorded during our program/consultation activities.

Capire staff and associates take great care while transcribing participant feedback but unfortunately cannot guarantee the accuracy of all notes. We are however confident that we capture the full range of ideas, concerns and views expressed during our consultation activities.

Unless otherwise noted, the views expressed in our work represent those of the participants and not necessarily those of our consultants or our clients.

Definition

Community

An individual or a group of people united by at least one common characteristic such as geography, shared interests, values, experiences, or tradition.

Community engagement/ Consultation

A process in which the community has a role in Council's decision-making process.

Stakeholder

An individual or group that has an interest in any Council decision or activity, including Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal communities, other tiers of government and government agencies, businesses, educational institutes, not-for-profits and philanthropic organisations, visitors, residents, advocacy groups, children, ratepayers and renters, emergency services, culturally and linguistically diverse people and many more.

Acronyms

CoB City of Boroondara

NELP North East Link Project

UDLP Urban Design and Landscape Plan

VERSION	AUTHOR	AUTHORISED	DATE
1	Bec Yandell	Tiffany Tang	27/10/2023
2	Bec Yandell	Tiffany Tang	09/11/2023

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Executive summary

The Victorian Government's North East Link Project (NELP) is developing a master plan and a concept design for the Koonung Creek Reserve (KCR) to address the impacts of the North East Link (NEL) project. Building on past consultations with the community and Council's internal stakeholders, Capire Consulting Group (Capire) was engaged by Council to seek feedback on the draft concept design.

Between 27 September and 22 October 2023 (3.5 weeks), the City of Boroondara conducted a series of consultation activities to build community understanding of the Koonung Creek Reserve Draft Concept Design and seek community feedback through a range of online and in-person activities.

Over 3,200 people were reached through the project website (available in English and Simplified Chinese), 153 completed a survey, 36 people participated in a pop-up or drop-in session, and 12 participated in a community workshop to provide detailed responses.

Features that received about 80% support:

- Council's position to advocate for mode separated path in the Reserve (81% support)
- The inclusion of a relaxation and quiet activity zone by the wetland, including a deck and new gazebo (79% support)

Features that received over 50% support:

- Provide a park run route (71% support)
- Include a relaxation and quiet activity zone by the wetland, including a deck and new gazebo (79% support)
- Include a new fenced dog park (67% support)
- Council's position to oppose the past water course feature (66% support)
- Include a new nature play area (63% support) and a new second playground at the western end of the reserve (60%)
- Include a beginner BMX track in the reserve (64% support)
- Include a bird hide at the wetlands (58% support)
- Include an intermediate BMX track in the reserve (55% support)

Features that received mixed views / no clear majority were:

- The removal of the dog beach at the wetlands (40% support; 36% oppose)
- Include two fenced dog parks (40% support; 33% oppose).

Council may consider undertaking further consultation on dog-related features. In relation to the water retention feature, one-fourth of the respondents did not understand the proposed feature. Further information and education could be provided to build community understanding.

Throughout the consultation, comments were made about the North East Link Project in general, the noise walls, and concerns about air pollution, ventilation, and disruption during construction.

This report will be used to inform Council's feedback to NELP to refine the Koonung Creek Reserve concept design and master plan and also support Council's submission on the Eastern Freeway widening UDLP.

1.3. Report purpose

This report summarises the key findings from the community consultation on the draft concept design of the Koonung Creek Reserve. This report will be shared with Council to inform Council's feedback to NELP to refine the Koonung Creek Reserve concept design and master plan.

1.4. Report limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged when reading this report:

- Capire has reported on information submitted by participants and interpreted the information to represent the views of participants as closely as possible.
- The consultation included multiple opportunities for participants to contribute. Some people may have taken part in multiple engagement activities, for example completed the survey and participated in a workshop. Their views may have been captured more than once.
- In some instances, participants did not respond to all survey questions, this meant that some questions received fewer responses than others.
- People who participated in the engagement self-selected to take part. As such, whilst every effort has been made to gather the views of stakeholders and the community, the information in this report may not reflect a statistically representative sample across all age groups and genders.
- Demographic data was captured through the survey, but not other engagement activities.
- Participants' feedback has been summarised. Qualitative data (comments and discussions) has been summarised under key themes reflecting issues that were frequently raised.
- Quantitative survey findings have been supported by qualitative findings from other engagement activities where relevant. Some workshops provided quantitative data. Due to smaller numbers of responses in comparison to the survey, these have not been included in the graphs.
- There were more registrations received for community workshops than the actual number of participants.

2. Consultation approach

This section provides an overview of the objectives, methodologies, and participation in the consultation process. The consultation activities occurred over three and a half weeks, commencing on 27 September 2023 and ending on 22 October 2023.

2.1. Objectives

The consultation was designed to meet a set of objectives. The objectives guided the planning and design of the engagement program and allowed for effective monitoring and evaluation. The objectives are:

1. To build community understanding of how their feedback from previous consultation was used to inform the concept design.
2. To build community awareness of the impacts of the NEL on KCR; and that concerns about the impact and the NEL should be directed to NELP.
3. To seek community feedback on the draft concept design.
4. To build awareness of the separate UDLP consultation process being run by NELP.
5. To develop new relationships and strengthen existing relationships between Council and its community.

2.2. Communications tools

Throughout the consultation, the Council sought to reach as many people as possible to alert them to the opportunity to review the concept plan and give feedback. Various tools and channels were used to provide information about the draft concept plan and to promote the consultation opportunities.

Table 1 outlines the tools to promote the consultation.

Table 1 Communications tools

Tools	Results / views / distribution
Printed collateral Postcards Letters Posters On-site signage	Printed collateral (postcards, posters and on-site signage) were displayed at Council libraries, local shopping strips. Corflute signage was installed in 7 locations within KCR. Postcards were sent to 4,600 Balwyn North and Kew East households letter-boxes.
Engage Boroondara consultation page	A consultation page for the KCR concept design was established on Engage Boroondara. This page serves as a comprehensive resource, providing information about the proposed changes to KCR, a summary of community feedback from the 2022 consultation links to the NEL project page, as well as the consultation timeline and updates. The page also hosted the consultation survey and an Expression of Interest form for the community workshop.
Social media posts and advertisements	Council promoted the consultation through social media channels Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram. Promotional posts encouraged viewers to complete the survey online.
Email promotion	Emails were directly sent to stakeholders to promote and extend personal invitations to engage in various opportunities. A total of 34 emails were sent, including local interest groups, nearby schools and kindergartens, traders and Boroondara's cultural champions etc.
Staff weekly newsletter Councillor Information Bulletin	An article was included in Council's internal newsletter Connect. There were 98 clicks through to the KCR consultation page.
eDM to respondents from previous consultation	Emails were sent to community members who had registered their interest on Engage Boroondara. A total of 265 emails were sent.
Translation of communications collateral and online	Materials promoting the consultation were printed in Simplified Chinese to reach community members who prefer to read in their first language. The consultation page on Engage Boroondara was replicated on a stand-alone Simplified Chinese page The Simplified Chinese consultation page was reviewed and edited by native speakers.

survey into Simplified
Chinese

2.3. Consultation tools

Error! Reference source not found. outlines the tools to seek feedback from the community about the concept design.

Table 2 Engagement tools

Engagement tools	Description
Online survey Survey opened from 27 September to 22 October 2023.	The online survey was the principal method for gathering community feedback. The survey was accessible via Engage Boroondara page. The objective of the survey was to provide a wide-reaching opportunity for community members to review the concept design and share their feedback and ideas for Koonung Creek Reserve. The survey asked 8 questions and 6 demographic questions. The full list of questions asked in the survey can be found in Appendix 1.
Interactive Map	To effectively show the changes proposed in KCR, an online interactive map was made available on the Engage Boroondara page. The interactive map enabled participants to see the 'before' and 'after' images of the KCR. The interactive map also allowed participants to zoom into different zones of the KCR for detailed observation.
Children's colouring activity	To raise awareness and engage with the younger cohort, an A4-size colouring-in activity for primary school aged children. These colouring-in sheet were available at pop-ups and at Council libraries.
Pop-ups A two-hour pop-up at Boroondara Shopping Strip Saturday 7 October 2023.	The pop-ups aim to raise awareness within the community about the concept design and encourage people to get involved in engagement activities. Large print outs of the concept design were on display.
Drop-in session A one-hour community drop-in session Saturday 14 th October 10am-11am	The drop-in session provided an opportunity for the community to ask questions about the concept design. Large print outs of the concept design were on display. Three council staff members were there to answer questions and support participation.
Community workshop A one-hour community workshop Saturday 14 th October 11am-12pm	This community workshop provided an opportunity for members of the community who submitted an Expression of Interest to participate in some activities in a workshop style format, alongside members of the general community. Participants spent 20 minutes to listen to Council's presentation; followed by small group discussions by activity zones. Participants spent a lot of time and effort to understand and review the draft concept design and existing conditions plans before they provided feedback.



Figure 2 Image from pop-up on Saturday 7th October



Figure 3 Image from pop-up on Saturday 7th October

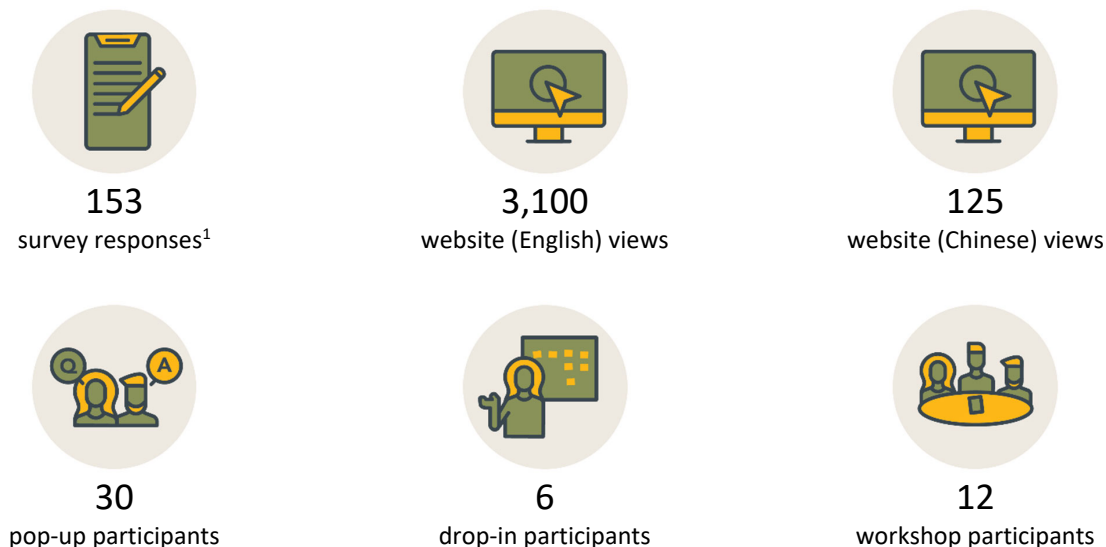
9 KOONUNG CREEK RESERVE, CITY OF BOROONDARA

capire

3. Participation

3.1. Participation

Over 3,000 people were reached or participated in this consultation. An overview of participation and reach of each engagement tool is summarised below.



3.2. Demographic information

Demographic information was collected through the survey. Survey respondents were asked to provide their age, gender, connection to Koonung Creek Reserve, suburb they live in, and how they heard about the consultation. This section provides an overview of the demographic data of all survey respondents.

3.2.1. Age

As shown in Figure 4, there was a spread of age groups across the survey respondents. The most represented age groups were 35-49 (27%) and 50-59 (26%), followed by 60-69 (16%). The least represented age groups were those who were 85 or above (1%), and under 18 (2%).

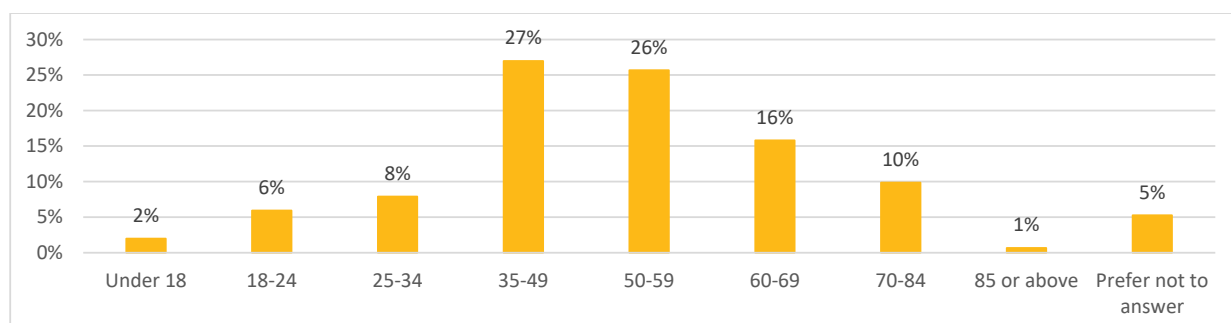


Figure 4 Age of survey respondents (n=153)

¹ 151 surveys were completed in English, and two were completed in Simplified Chinese. The Simplified Chinese responses have been translated and collated with the English survey responses

3.2.2. Gender

As shown in Figure 5, there was a balanced representation of gender in the survey. Half of the respondents identified as man (50%). A little under half of the respondents identified as woman (43%). 7% of respondents chose not to indicate their gender. No respondent used a different term to describe their gender.

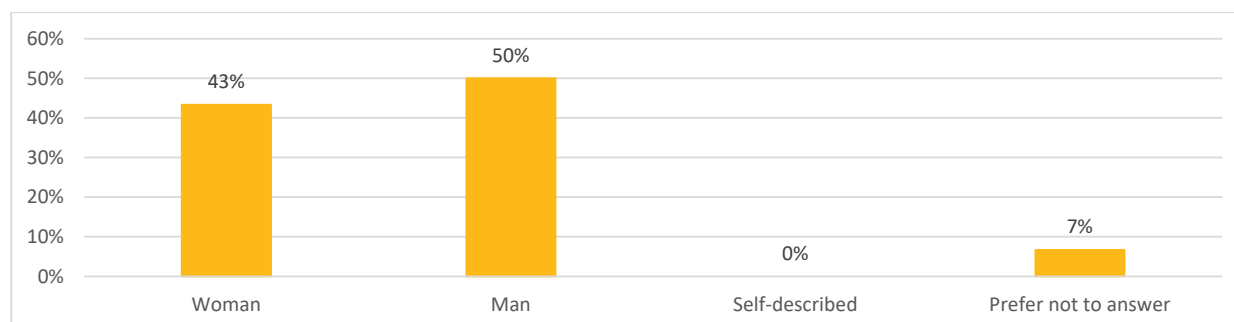


Figure 5 Gender of survey respondents (n=153)

3.2.3. Connection

As shown in Figure 6, the majority of respondents indicated that they use the walking or bike paths in the Koonung Creek Reserve (79%), followed by those who live near the site (77%). Half of the survey respondents exercise in the reserve. Comparatively, there were fewer people who go to school near the reserve (6%) or are a member of a community group that uses the reserve. Community groups represented by respondents included the Thursday Cycling Group and Whitehorse Cyclers. A few respondents (3%) shared other connections they had to the Reserve, including to meet up with friends, enjoy passive recreation, and organise activities near the Reserve. Respondents were able to select multiple answers in response to this question.

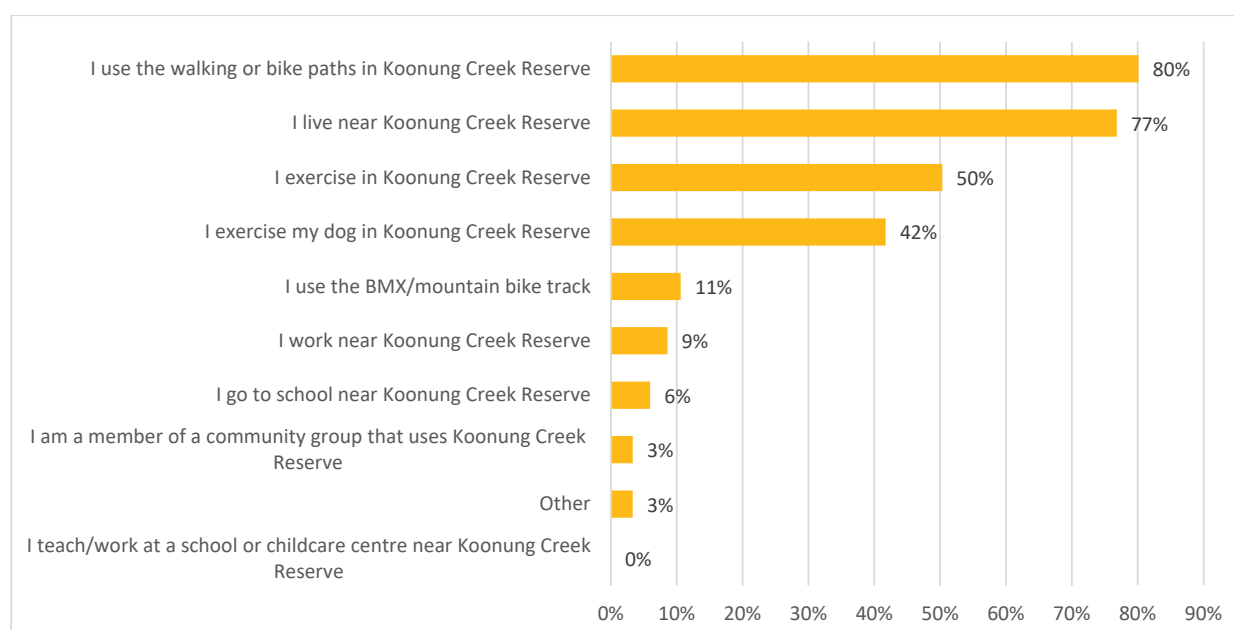


Figure 6 Connection to Koonung Creek Reserve (n=153)

3.2.4. Suburb

As shown in Figure 7, more than half survey respondents live in Balwyn North (64%), this was followed by those who reside in Balwyn (4%). There was less representation of respondents who live in other suburbs in the City of Boroondara. There were 11% of respondents resided in other suburbs beyond Boroondara such as Bulleen, Templestowe Lower, Box Hill, Doncaster, Caulfield North, and South Yarra.

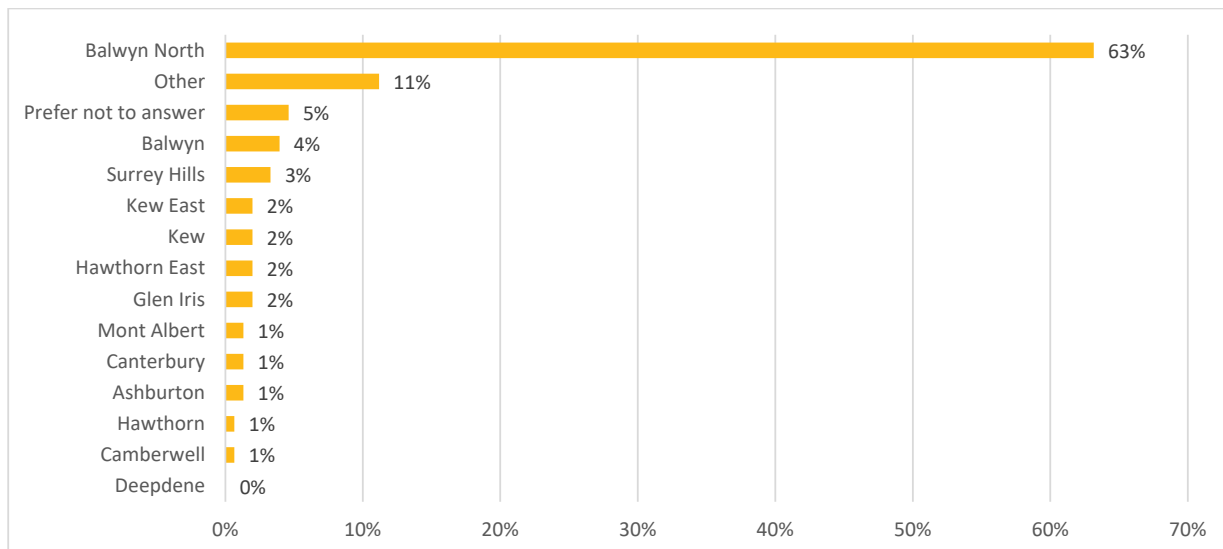


Figure 7 Suburbs that participants live in (n=153)

3.2.5. How respondents heard about the consultation

As shown in Figure 8, respondents reported how they heard about the consultation, reflecting the various channels used by Council to promote the consultation. Respondents reported hearing about the consultation through social media (27%) and the Engagement Boroondara (21%).

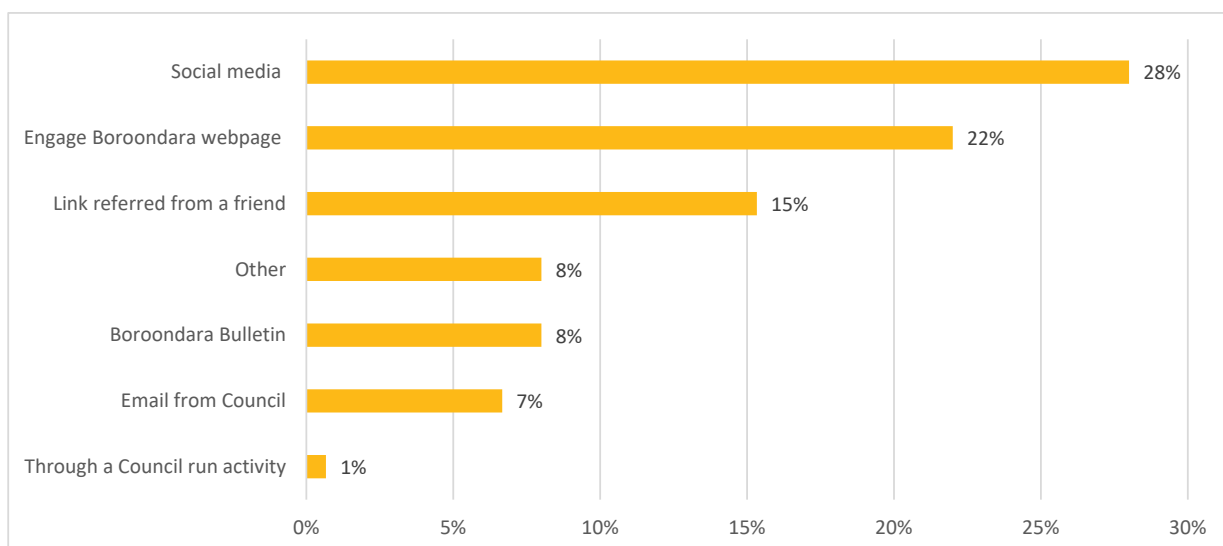


Figure 8 'How did you hear about the project'?(n = 153)

3.3. Gender impact assessment

Gender can affect people's needs and experiences. This means that policies, programs and services can affect people of different genders in different ways. The Gender Equality Act 2020 requires local governments to conduct gender impact assessments so that all their new services, which directly and significantly impact the public, benefit all Victorians. Capire conducted a gender impact analysis on the survey results.

Overall, there was no significant gender difference in the sentiment across most survey questions.

Overall, both men and women provided similar reasons for improving safety, amenities and had similar concerns about the reduction of green open space.

Some slight differences can be observed in the following survey responses:

- Women were more likely than men to oppose to Council's position on **Paths Design** (17% of women compared to 10% of men).

- Women (35%) were more likely than Men (23%) to support Council's position on the **new nature play areas in the reserve**.
- Women were more opposed (23%) to Council's position on the **intermediate BMX track**, than men (15%)
- Men were more supportive or strongly supportive (80%) of Council's position on the **five km Parkrun route through the reserve** than Women (63%)
- Women were more supportive (46%) of the **removal of the dog beach at the wetland**, than men (37%)
- In the open-ended responses, men were more likely to comment on all-ability or age range play equipment or play areas. Women were more likely to comment on safety and natural features as well as water, shade, etc.
- In the open-ended responses, men were more likely to comment on features to minimise the impact of the freeway.
- In the open-ended responses, women were more likely to comment on additional comfort amenities such as water taps, seating and shading. and safety features such as lighting.

4. Community responses to proposed key features

This section reports on survey results and discussions at the pop-up and drop-in sessions in relation to the key features proposed in the concept design:

4.1 Mode separation

4.2 Water retention

4.3 Playgrounds and nature play

4.4 BMX tracks

4.5 Dog off-leash zones

4.6 Park run

4.7 Wetlands

4.8 Landscape and amenities

4.1. Mode separation

The survey asked people if they supported Council's position: **'Council does not support the inclusion of a shared user path. Council is advocating for a mode separated path to be included, even with the reduction of open space.'** The image (Figure 9) below was used to illustrate what a mode separated path looks like.



Figure 9 An image included in the survey to show what mode separated path look like.

Most of the respondents were supportive of Council's position to advocate for a mode separated path in the Reserve, with more than 81% respondents indicating strongly support (59%) or support (23%). Around 14% were not supportive of Council's position, indicating they strongly oppose (8%) or oppose (6%), while 5% of respondents were neutral. Figure 10 shows the survey results.

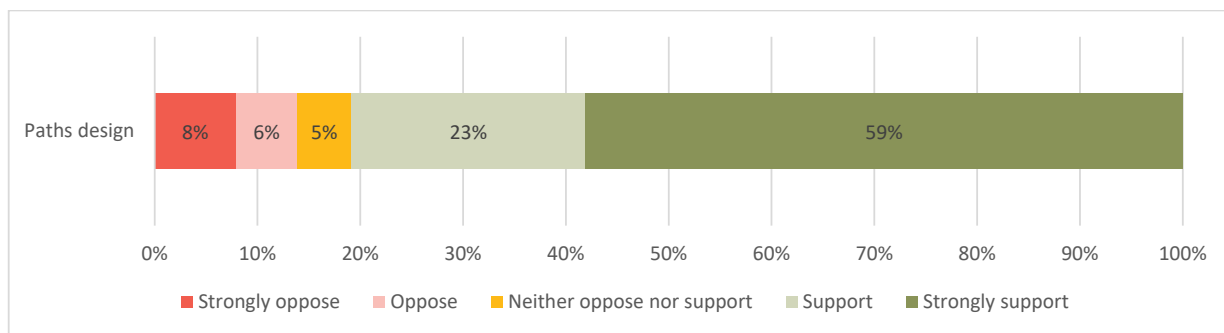


Figure 10 Do you support Council's position on mode separation? (n =152)

A total of 141 respondents provided reasons to their answers.

Reasons shared by respondents are summarised below:

REASONS FOR SUPPORT (114 RESPONSES)	REASONS FOR OPPOSITION (20 RESPONSES)	NEITHER SUPPORT NOR OPPOSE (7 RESPONSES)
- The most frequently mentioned reason was that mode separated paths would create a safer experience for all users, especially young children, elderly, and dog walkers. - The existing mode separated paths in other areas work well. - There is already a high volume of users on existing paths in the Reserve especially during peak hours and weekends. - Mode separated paths would avoid risks of user conflict between cyclists and pedestrians.	- The most frequently mentioned reason was that mode separated paths would take up more space and use for concrete paving. - One respondent was concerned that if they walk their dog with their children on the bike, their children will need to cycle 30 meters away unsupervised. - Some respondents highlighted that this may reduce activity space or greening opportunities.	- They can see both sides of the argument (taking up spaces vs safety). - They felt that current path in the Reserve works well and may not need to change.

Feedback received from in-person sessions:

Participants at the in-person activities were supportive of council's position on mode separation. Many who attended the first pop up were part of a regular dog walking group who described experiences of conflict with cyclists on current shared paths.

Several cyclists attended the drop-in session shared that the current shared paths did not provide adequate room for them to avoid pedestrians and dogs. This was particularly raised by cyclists who used the path for commuting to and from work. It was noted that they then to go at higher speeds than the average recreational rider.

4.2. Water retention

Prior to asking questions about the water retention feature, an explanation of the 'past water course feature' was given. The survey then asked people if they supported Council's position: ***'Council does not support the occupation of the Koonung Creek Reserve for the purposes of retaining and treating water runoff from the Eastern Freeway and other roads. These features will occupy valuable open space and water could flow through an existing underground pipe with treatment and retention occurring further downstream.'***

Survey respondents were supportive of Council's view to not occupy the reserve for the purposes of retaining and treating water runoff from the Eastern Freeway and other roads. Two-thirds of respondents (66%) indicated strong support (44%) or support (22%) for Council's position. A total of 16% of respondents either strongly opposed (9%) or opposed (7%) Council's position. 19% of respondents neither oppose nor support. Figure 11 shows the survey results.

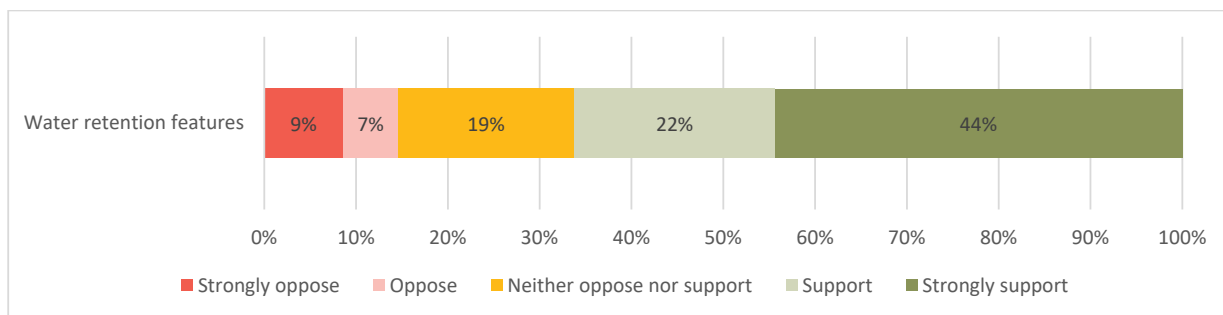


Figure 11 'Do you support Council's position on water retention in Koonung Creek Reserve?' (n = 153)

A total of 126 respondents provided reasons to their answers.

It was noted that a handful of respondents may have misunderstood the question, as their response to 'oppose' was indeed to 'oppose the past water course feature'.

Reasons shared by respondents are summarised below:

REASONS FOR SUPPORT (82 RESPONSES)	REASONS FOR OPPOSITION (20 RESPONSES)	NEITHER SUPPORT NOR OPPOSE (25 RESPONSES)
- Water retention features would take up valuable space of the Reserve, reducing opportunities to install other amenities and increase greening. - Water runoff from the Eastern Freeway may be polluted and impact ecology of the park. - Standing water may become breeding ground for mosquitos. - Water runoff should be captured in existing stormwater management system. - Water runoff may cause inundation of surrounding areas during high volume of rain	- Water retention features may provide potential new habitat for animals in the Reserve with appropriate design. - Water retention features would help reduce speed of water runoff. - Water retention features would be a new feature for the Reserve with natural landscaping.	Most of them felt they do not have enough information / knowledge to provide an answer.

Feedback received from in-person sessions:

The majority of participants at the pop-up and drop-in sessions agreed with Council's position and did not want to have the proposed water retention present in Koonung Creek Reserve. More than five of the dog walkers shared concerns about the safety and potential pollution in the water run-off and the danger that may pose to their dogs or children. Others discussed the reduction of open space as a key reason for not supporting the water retention. Three participants at the pop-up lived in an area adjacent to the water retention ponds on the western end of the reserve and shared concerns that heavy rain may cause a flooding event that could affect their properties.

4.3. Playgrounds and nature play

A total of 60% of survey respondents were supportive of the addition of another playground at the western end of the reserve. There was also support for BBQ, picnic facilities and toilets adjacent to the playground areas. While 63% of survey respondent were supportive of the inclusion of nature play areas in the reserve. Figure 12 shows the survey results.

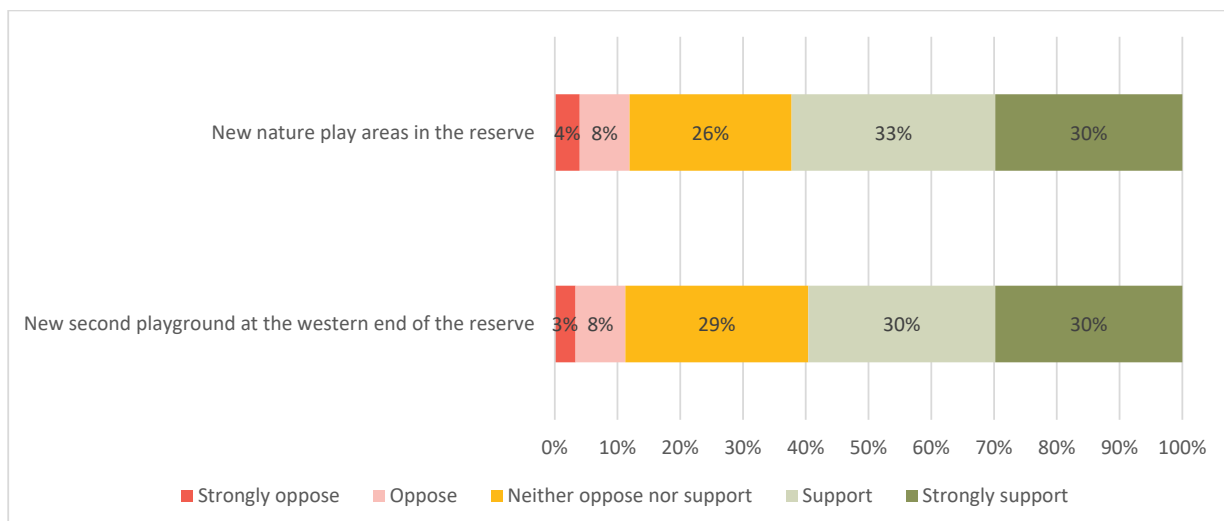


Figure 12 Support for new nature play and second playground (n=153)

Other features that participants desired to see in the playground or nature play areas include:

- slides
- swings (including an all-ability swing for people in wheelchairs)
- monkey bars
- climbing spider frames
- sufficient shelter and shade

"A wide range of play equipment for all age groups. Good climbing equipment for a wide range of ages, slides and swings are important. As noted elsewhere, toilets are essential. Also a BBQ area to replace the existing area." – Survey respondent

"Playground equipment targeted to children of different ages - toddler, preschool, primary school, challenging for pre-teens and young teens." – Survey respondent

Feedback received from in-person sessions:

Participants at the pop-up session did not share many views about the inclusion of playgrounds or nature play in the reserve. The audience at this event were older and potentially would not be as impacted by this change as some other proposed changes. Less than five participants mentioned that they hoped to see more children and families using the park to encourage them to be active.

4.4. BMX Tracks

Majority of the survey respondents supported the inclusion of both a beginner (64%) and intermediate (55%) BMX track in the Koonung Creek Reserve. Those who are supportive of the inclusion of the BMX track would like to encourage children and teenagers to be more active, and believe the track needs to be well designed for it to attract users.

A small number of respondents who did not support the BMX track design were concerned that the BMX track may negatively impact the natural environment and biodiversity of the reserve. Figure 13 shows the survey results.

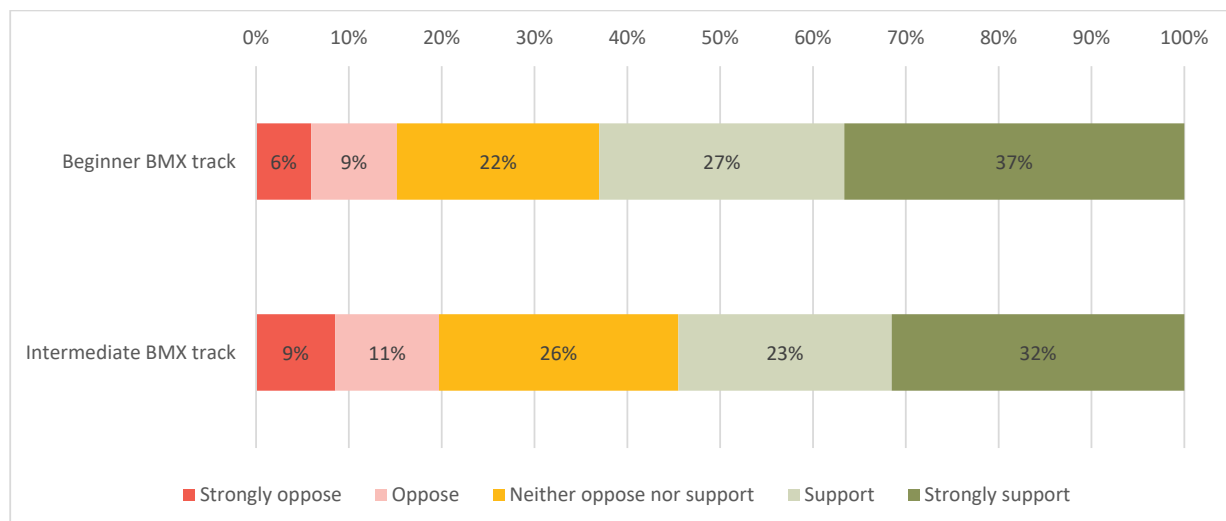


Figure 13 Support for inclusion of a beginner and intermediate BMX track (n=153)

"Kids will build jumps as they have done in the area unless a properly maintained or sculpted facility is provided. Look at Hill n Dale in Glen Iris for a reference point to a previous Boroondara Council success story. This stops kids digging up the park in other areas, it would be great addition." – Survey respondent

"BMX track if done needs to be done well with good consultation taking on board and implementing feedback from users. If design is poor it will not be used and become an eyesore. If done well it would be a terrific addition to a great parkland." – Survey respondent

"The BMX tracks if well designed would hopefully mean that BMX riders would stop creating their own jumps in the treed area... and provide teenagers and others somewhere to be active."- Survey respondent

There was no specific feedback made about the BMX tracks at the in-person sessions.

4.5. Dog off-leash zones

Less than half (40%), supported the inclusion of two fenced dog parks (one for small and one for large dogs). This is consistent with discussion at the pop-up. In contrast, 33% do not support the inclusion of two dog parks. A relatively high proportion of people (29%) neither oppose nor support. The survey did not ask participants to provide further comments.

More than half of survey respondents support the inclusion of a new fenced dog park (67%).

40% of respondents indicated they supported or strongly supported the removal of the dog beach at the wetlands, while 36% strongly oppose or oppose the removal. Figure 14 shows the survey results.

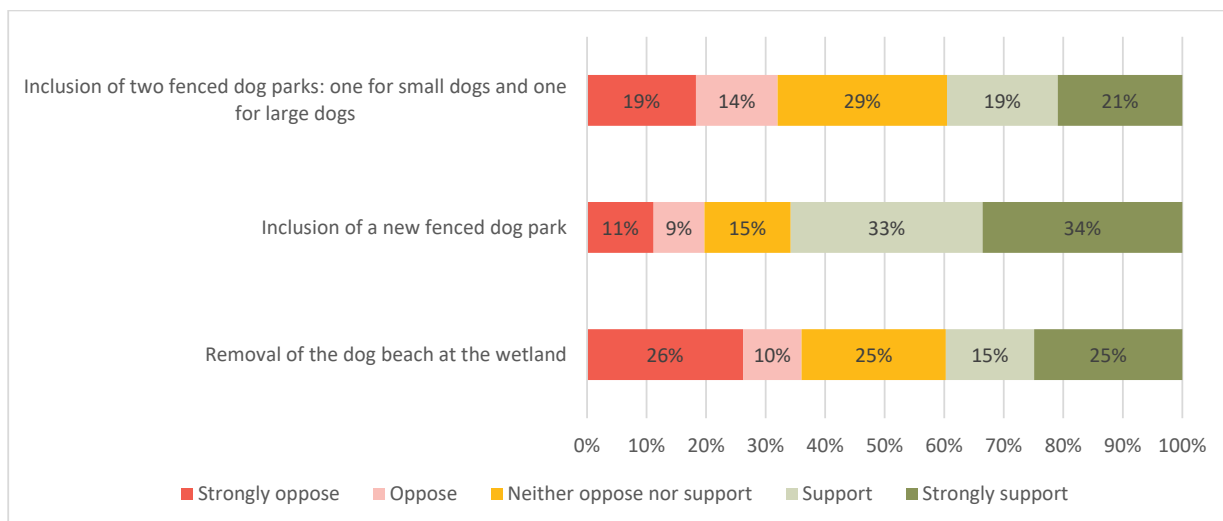


Figure 14 Questions relating to dog off-leash zones at Koonung Creek Reserve (n=153)

Feedback received from in-person sessions:

The feedback from the survey and the in-person events indicated this is a divisive issue for those who are regular users of Koonung Creek Reserve. Further clarity is needed on whether the removal of the dog beach at the wetland will also mean the removal of the dog off-leash zones in the rest of Koonung Creek Reserve. Capire suggests that further consultation is needed on this issue.

4.6. Park run

A total of 71% of survey respondents were supportive of the inclusion of a parkrun track in Koonung Creek Reserve, with 22% neither supporting nor opposing the inclusion. Figure 15 shows the survey results.

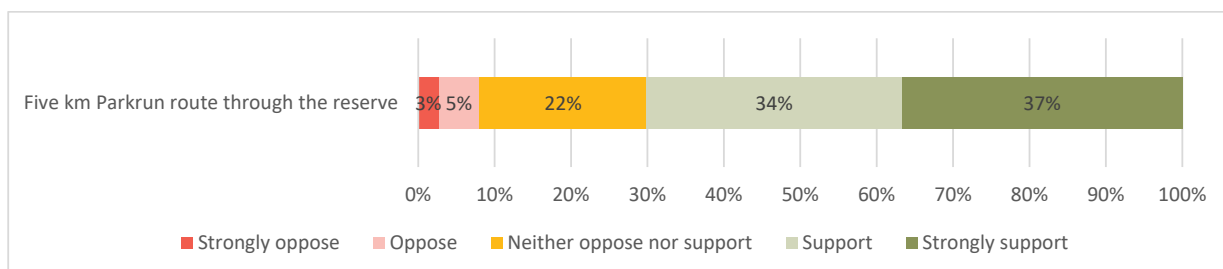


Figure 15 Support for 5km Parkrun route through the reserve (n=153)

Feedback relating to the Parkrun route includes:

"This area is popular for runners, this route could be popular between Studley Park and Westerfolds Park if sufficient volunteers and participants." – Survey respondent

"To support a 5 km track for Parkrun, the design requires a shelter, access to water, toilets and a loop or out and back track ending back at the shelter." – Survey respondent

"I oppose a Parkrun route. The park should be primarily for passive recreation, not organised sports/businesses using public space to make a profit." – Survey respondent

Feedback received from in-person sessions:

At the pop-up and drop-in session, participants were generally supportive of the park run idea. One participant mentioned that the mode-separation on the paths would assist in making this safer if it was to go ahead.

4.7. Wetlands

BIRD HIDE

More than half (58%) of the respondents were supportive of the inclusion of the bird hide at the wetlands. 28% neither opposed nor supported it, and 15% opposed or strongly opposed. Figure 16 shows the survey results.

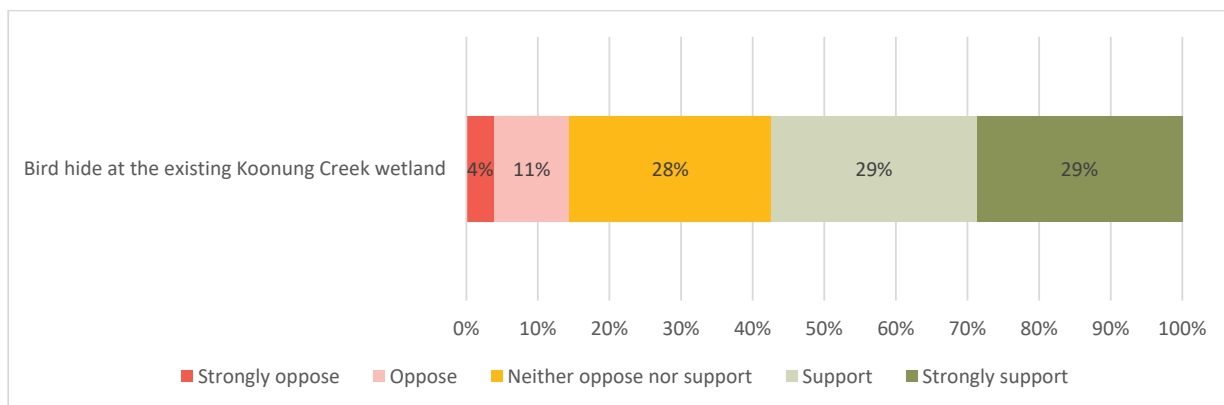


Figure 16 Support for a bird hide at the existing Koonung Creek wetland (n=153)

Considerations shared at the in-person events and in free-text survey comments include:

- a few participants were concerned a bird hide could attract anti-social behaviour, as it will be in a secluded part of the park.
- a few participants felt that the bird hide will be unnecessary as it will take years for the birds to return to the area after widening of the Eastern Freeway and it does not seem to be good use of public funding.
- there were participants that supported the bird hide, as long as it did not require the removal of the dog beach at the wetlands.

"Like the idea of giving bird lovers the option to observe birds without disturbing them." – survey respondent

"Low-key facilities such as bird hides are useful and provide opportunities for the community to observe birds and other wildlife." – survey respondent

"Bird hide doesn't seem like a good use of funding - not enough people will use it." – survey respondent

"A bird hide is unnecessary when there are and will be seats around the wetlands." – survey respondent.

RELAXATION AND QUIET ZONE

The majority of survey respondents (79%) are supportive of the inclusion of a relaxation and quiet activity zone by the wetland, including a deck and new gazebo. Figure 17 shows the survey results.

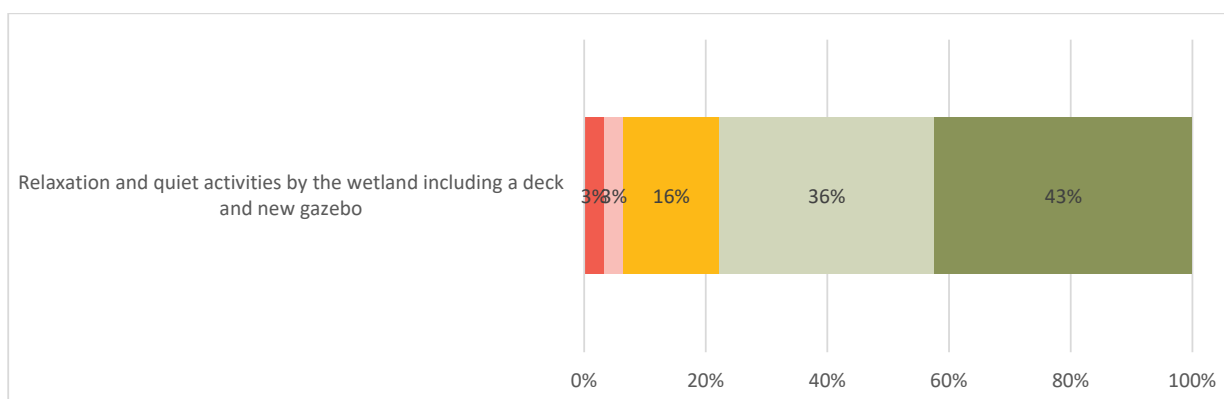


Figure 17 Support for relaxation and quiet activities by the wetland (n=153)

4.8. Landscape and amenities

The survey did not ask directly about the landscape features nor amenities at the Koonung Creek Reserve, however many respondents shared views about trees, biodiversity corridors, seating, toilets, lighting, water/drinking fountains, exercise equipment in their free-text comments. Their views, and the views of participants at the pop-up and drop-in discussions have been included below.

Unstructured nature

A few participants at the pop-up and drop-in session shared their desire for the Koonung Creek Reserve to remain 'untouched' and not become too 'manicured' or 'artificial'. Many participants shared that the relatively 'wild' or unstructured nature of the reserve is what makes the reserve special, and that they did not desire for this to change. This was a common sentiment from those who attended in-person events and in the open-ended survey responses.

"What is missing is natural bushland that strengthens reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait First Nation peoples." – Survey respondent

Removal of mature trees

Some expressed concerns about the removal of the mature trees during the construction period, and that replacing these with saplings would mean that the Reserve would take years to return to its current state.

"Mature trees will be removed for the freeway extension. It is only fair to have mature trees planted at the beginning. Otherwise, it will take decades for the young trees to grow back. The mature trees will act as natural noise dampeners too." – Survey respondent

Noise walls impacting vegetation growth

Another concern shared by pop-up participants was the height of the noise walls through the reserve, and the impact this may have on the vegetation growing underneath due to a shadowing effect. The type of planting that will occur along the noise walls will need to take this into account, considering both the impact of shading as well as the impact of a rain shadow which may mean those plants receive less water.

Biodiversity corridor

Participants felt that the role of the reserve as a biodiversity corridor was important. A few residents raised concerns about the displacement of wildlife during construction.

"We already have ducks coming to our swimming pool. We wonder what would happen to the wildlife during construction; they have nowhere to go." – Drop-in session participant

Lighting

Many participants shared that they would like better lighting throughout, particularly along the main Koonung Creek Trail.

E-bike charging stations

Some participants shared that they would like a solar-powered charging station that could be used for e-bikes.

Bins

Participants suggested the inclusion of more bins along the pathway and at key intersections to allow people to drop off dog litter bags given the Reserve's popularity as a dog walking area.

Exercise equipment

There was clear support for exercise equipment to be retained in the park and that this equipment is currently used by many.

"I'd like more adult exercise equipment...I use these, as do many of us, every day and it's my main fitness routine, as it is for many." – Survey respondent

Flexi-space

One person suggested to remove the fixed seating from the current shelter/gazebo design to increase the flexibility of this space. For example, this could suit the use of a Tai Chi group that regularly uses the park, and may need a sheltered open space. It was noted by some participants that the Tai Chi Group uses the gazebo at the wetland every morning between 9am and 10am.

Seats

A few participants desired for more seats and benches in the reserve.

"I would also like to see a lot more benches and benches/tables for picnics and some seats in shaded areas. Not everyone who uses the trail is fit and can walk for long periods without a rest." – Survey respondent

“Ensure there are lots of benches, including some in shaded spots. There are too few benches now and some are unshaded. Also, water stations would be ideal for people to fill drink bottles, rehydrate and water their pets. It would be beneficial to have lighting along the path to increase usability in the evening - particularly when the days are shorter.” – Survey respondent

Further feedback on these features in each zone are included in Section 5 of this report.

5. Community workshop responses to the five zones

A total of 12 people participated in a one-hour community workshop. During the workshop, participants were guided to review the existing conditions plans and the draft concept design. They were then divided into smaller groups to share their feedback on the draft concept design by zones. This section summarises their feedback by zone.

5.1.1. Overall comments

Participants made general comments on the overall concept design. These comments were not related to a particular zone:

- Participants were generally concerned that 20% of the park will be taken by NELP.
- General agreement that mode separation makes it safer for cyclists and pedestrians. However participants noted that pedestrians will not walk closer to the road, have them be on the inside of the reserve.
- General acceptance of the inclusion of the BMX track but noting that it would compromise open space. There were suggestions to fence in the BMX track area.
- There were suggestions to fenced off the playgrounds to ensure safety of children.
- There was preference for an extra path along the top northern edge to replace the water retention feature.
- Participants noted that there is a reduction in utility in this design with no access behind the wetland. They suggested there should still be a path access behind this area (with a gravel path).
- Participants noted that the Tai Chi group use the gazebo every morning and suggested that it should be a sheltered space for Tai Chi users.
- Desire for the dog beach, exercise equipment and the Bee Hotel to be retained.
- Suggestion to include interpretive signage in the reserve.
- Regarding dog activities, there were suggestions to separate path for dog walkers in the northern part of the reserve; and a general comment that separating small and big dogs may not be worthwhile.

5.1.2. Zone 1 and 2



1. Seat should be placed here at the western area, near Mountain View Rd entrance facing east
2. Exercise equipment should be placed here in the west near the playground
3. Add in bike racks here near the BMX area

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Figure 19 Image of Zone 2 of Koonung Creek Reserve Concept Design

General comments provided on Zone 1 and 2:

- Concerns about inundation area and if modelling has been done including the increased impermeability of the freeway and impacts of climate change.
- Desire for the exercise equipment to be retained.
- Seating should be close to the playground.
- Secondary path is good as it will provide an alternative for dog walkers than the main path.
- Supportive of the fenced off-leash dog park but concerned that this would change the off-leash status of the rest of the park.
- A participants suggested that a big and small dog parks would not work, but having some small fenced areas that dogs can use if they are overwhelmed ('dog escape rooms') would be good.
- Supportive of public toilet at Balwyn Rd.
- Some participants felt they do not need as many nature play areas plotted along the reserve; and emphasised that they should not be placed the dog park.

5.1.3. Zone 3

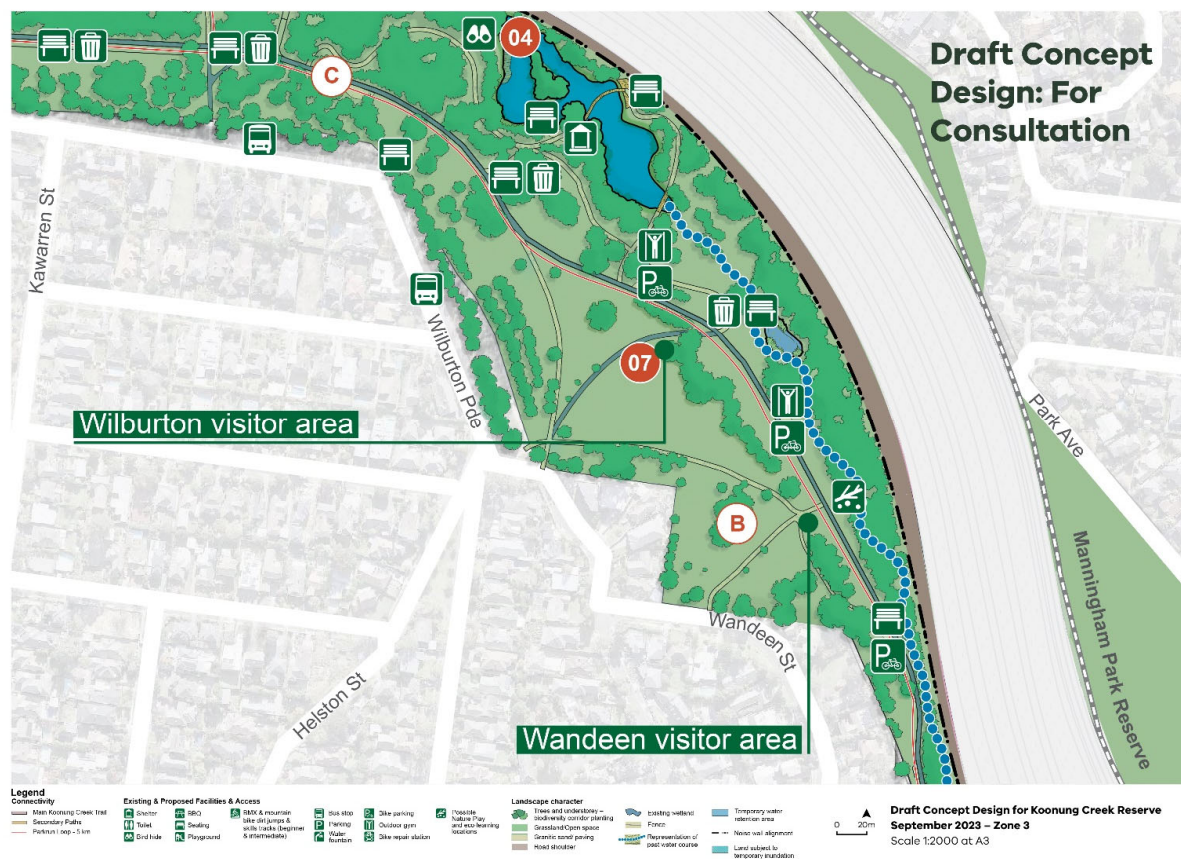


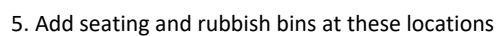
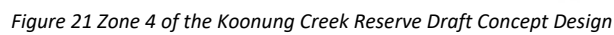
Figure 20 Zone 3 of the Koonung Creek Reserve Concept Design

The below represents the feedback received on Zone 3:

- There were mixed views from the group regarding the number of play areas and playgrounds in the Reserve. Some participants were concerned that if the Reserve is allowing dog off-leash, the high number of play areas may increase interaction between off-leash dog users and children. However, other participants flagged that they liked the smaller more spaced playgrounds.
- Around five participants suggested that the playgrounds should be fenced to increase separation from dogs.
- It was suggested that if the noise wall is not effective, then people won't use this part of the park because it gets too close to the freeway at the end bit.
- Participants felt that the bird watch hide is a good idea but it could become an area for anti-social behaviour.
- Picnic and BBQ facilities in this zone are well suited to be in proximity to playgrounds.
- Participants desired to keep the dog beach as this is very popular.
- There should be at least one picnic and BBQ area not near playground, but in a more open area for people who don't have children.
- Some participants were keen to retain a path right around the wetland.

5.1.4. Zone 4 and 5

There were annotated comments on Zone 4 and Zone 5. Where comments are specific to a location, they are numbered on the map, with a 'key' to detail their comments.



capire

General comments for consideration:

- Increase the size of the concrete pads for furniture including space for a pram or bike to sit next to the bench.
- There is a lack of drinking fountains in the plans for this zone – people are coming into the park, or leaving it here so there needs to be water. Participants suggested this be located at node intersections.
- Signage and wayfinding for facilities needs to be included in the design.
- Consider secondary gravel paths for dog walkers instead of the water retention creek bed.
- Encourage pollinators with wildflowers. Support the opportunity to revegetate Zone 5, towards the Doncaster Rd end, as it is a throughfare and would not require much open space.
- Suggestion to relocate the bin to entrances (eg Wandeen Street entrance)
- Preference for open space over dry creek bed/water retention.

5.2. Feedback relating to NELP overall / out of scope feedback

During the consultation the community offered feedback not within the scope of Koonung Creek Reserve concept design or related to the NELP in general. This section summarises these comments.

Noise walls

Community members at the in-person events raised concerns about the height of the noise walls and the construction materials. A concern is that without adequate lighting, the noise walls may make the park feel unsafe or unfriendly, particularly at night. Some were also concerned the noise walls would create a light and rain shadow, affecting vegetation planted closer to it. A handful of survey participants strongly emphasised the need for the noise wall to extend along the freeway, with particular mention that that the noise wall design according to VicRoads' standard is inadequate for residents and park users.

Cycling connections

The bicycle freeway being built between Hoddle St and the Chandler Highway means that there will be more commuters using this route to travel in/out of the city. Several participants shared a desire for better future proofing of the bike trail and connections to ensure that it can meet the demand, including the bike path meeting a width of 4m wide to ensure there is room for faster riders to overtake novice riders.

Future pollution and ventilation shaft

Concerns were shared in the survey comments and in-person at events about the level of pollution that will result from the widening of the Eastern Freeway. Several community members also shared concern about the design of the 'ventilation stack' that will be built as part of the widening.

"My concern is encouraging exercise in the parkland when NELP Air Pollution from PM2.5 and NO2 are predicted in the NELP EES to breach the "project" PM2.5 safe limits. This is a serious health concern, particularly near schools like Marcellin, Carey, Trinity & Belle Vue PS." – Survey respondent

6. Conclusion

During this consultation period, over 3,200 people were reached through the project website (available in English and Simplified Chinese), 153 completed a survey, 36 people participated in a pop-up or drop-in session, and 12 participated in a community workshop to provide detailed responses.

Features that received over 80% support:

- Council's position to advocate for a mode separated path in the Reserve (81% support)
- The inclusion of a relaxation and quiet activity zone by the wetland, including a deck and new gazebo (79% support)

Features that received over 50% support:

- Provide a park run route (71% support)
- Include a relaxation and quiet activity zone by the wetland, including a deck and new gazebo (79% support)
- Include a new fenced dog park (67% support)
- Council's position to oppose the past water course feature (66% support)
- Include a new nature play area (63% support) and a new second playground at the western end of the reserve (60%)
- Include a beginner BMX track in the reserve (64% support)
- Include a bird hide at the wetlands (58% support)
- Include an intermediate BMX track in the reserve (55% support)

Features that received mixed views / no clear majority were:

- The removal of the dog beach at the wetlands (40% support; 36% oppose)
- Include two fenced dog parks (40% support; 33% oppose).

Council may consider undertaking further consultation on dog-related features. In relation to the water retention feature, one-fourth of the respondents did not understand the proposed feature. Further information and education could be provided to build community understanding.

Throughout the consultation, comments were made about the North East Link Project in general, the noise walls, and concerns about air pollution, ventilation, and disruption during construction.

Appendix – Survey questions

Section 1: Open space and connecting pathways

Paths design

The current design from NELP features the Koonung Creek Trail as a shared user path. This is the same set-up as existing and means that walkers, dog walkers and cyclists will share the path. This is not currently aligned with Boroondara's Bicycle Strategy, which advocates for mode separated paths where possible to improve the walking and cycling experience, as well as safety for all pedestrians, dog walkers and cyclists.

Over 80% of those who answered our previous survey in May 2022 told us they prefer mode separated walking and cycling paths instead of shared paths. Including mode separated paths will mean a reduction in the amount of open space available.

1. **Rate your level of support for Council's position:** *'Council does not support the inclusion of a shared user path. Council is advocating for a mode separated path to be included, even with the reduction of open space.'*

Likert scale from 1-5: strongly oppose, oppose, neither support nor oppose, support, strongly support

2. **Tell us why you chose that answer.**

Section 2: Water retention features

Koonung Creek Reserve features an existing wetland which is highly valued by the community. You can see this wetland in the existing conditions plan and the concept design.

NELP's concept design proposes additional and permanent water retention ponds and a 'representation of the past water course' to treat water from the surrounding road catchment and the Eastern Freeway. The 'representation of past water course' is a wide rock-lined 1.5m drain through most of the reserve with minimal planting and likely with stagnant water. The water features will occupy useable public open space as well as areas that could be planted with trees adjacent to the freeway and noise walls.

3. **Rate your level of support for Council's position:**

'Council does not support the occupation of the Koonung Creek Reserve for the purposes of retaining and treating water runoff from the Eastern Freeway and other roads. These features will occupy valuable open space and water could flow through an existing underground pipe with treatment and retention occurring further downstream.'

Likert scale from 1-5: strongly oppose, oppose, neither support nor oppose, support, strongly support

4. **Tell us why you chose that answer (open-ended)**

Section 3: Features and community facilities by zone

The following features have been proposed to be included in the concept design. Please indicate your level of support for each one. Please note seating, picnic tables, water fountains, bicycle repair stations and exercise equipment will also be featured in the reserve.

	Strongly oppose	Somewhat oppose	Neither support nor oppose	Somewhat support	Strongly support
A new second playground at the western end of the reserve					
New nature play areas in the reserve					
A new public toilet at the western end of the reserve					
A beginner BMX track					
An intermediate BMX track					
An area for relaxation and quiet activities by the wetland					

including a deck and new gazebo					
A 5-km park run route through the reserve					
A bird hide at the existing Koonung Creek wetland.					

5. **Do you want to provide any further information as to why you chose your answers above? (open-ended)**
6. **What equipment or features would you like to see in the new playground and nature play area? (open-ended)**
7. **Have we missed any features or amenities you'd like to see in the Reserve? (open-ended)**

Section 3: Dog activity areas

8. The concept design proposes that the dog beach at the wetland is removed to provide improved habitat for native birds and create a quiet area for birdwatching and relaxation. A new fenced dog park will be added for puppies and dogs not yet under effective voice control so they can play off leash.

Please indicate your level of support for the following (strongly oppose to strongly support)

- a. Removal of dog beach at the wetland
- b. Inclusion of a new fenced dog park
- c. Inclusion of two fenced dog parks – one for small dogs and one for large dogs

–

Part 2: About you

1. What is your age?

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-49
- ☐ 50-59
- ☐ 60-69
- ☐ 70-84
- ☐ 85 or above
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

2. What is your gender?

- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Man
- ☐ Self-described, please specify:
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

3. Please select the option(s) which best describes you. You may select more than one.

- ☐ I live near Koonung Creek Reserve
- ☐ I work near Koonung Creek Reserve
- ☐ I go to school near Koonung Creek Reserve
- ☐ I use the walking or bike paths in Koonung Creek Reserve
- ☐ I exercise in Koonung Creek Reserve
- ☐ I use the BMX/mountain bike track
- ☐ I exercise my dog in Koonung Creek Reserve
- ☐ I teach/work at a school or childcare centre near Koonung Creek Reserve
- ☐ I am a member of a community group that uses Koonung Creek Reserve (please share the group's name: ____)
- ☐ Other: Please tell us how you use Koonung Creek Reserve

4. What suburb do you live in?

- ☐ Ashburton
- ☐ Balwyn

- Balwyn North
- Camberwell
- Canterbury
- Deepdene
- Glen Iris
- Hawthorn
- Hawthorn East
- Kew
- Kew East
- Mont Albert
- Surrey Hills
- Other:
- Prefer not to answer

5. How did you hear about the consultation?

- a. Engage Boroondara webpage
- b. Boroondara Bulletin
- c. Email from Council
- d. Link referred from a friend
- e. Social media
- f. Through a Council run activity
- g. Other

6. Would you like to be contacted with the results of the survey, next steps and any further information on the Koonung Creek Reserve? If yes, please provide your email address (open-ended)

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Capire acknowledges
and deeply respects the Wurundjeri
people and
the Traditional Owners
of the Victorian land.



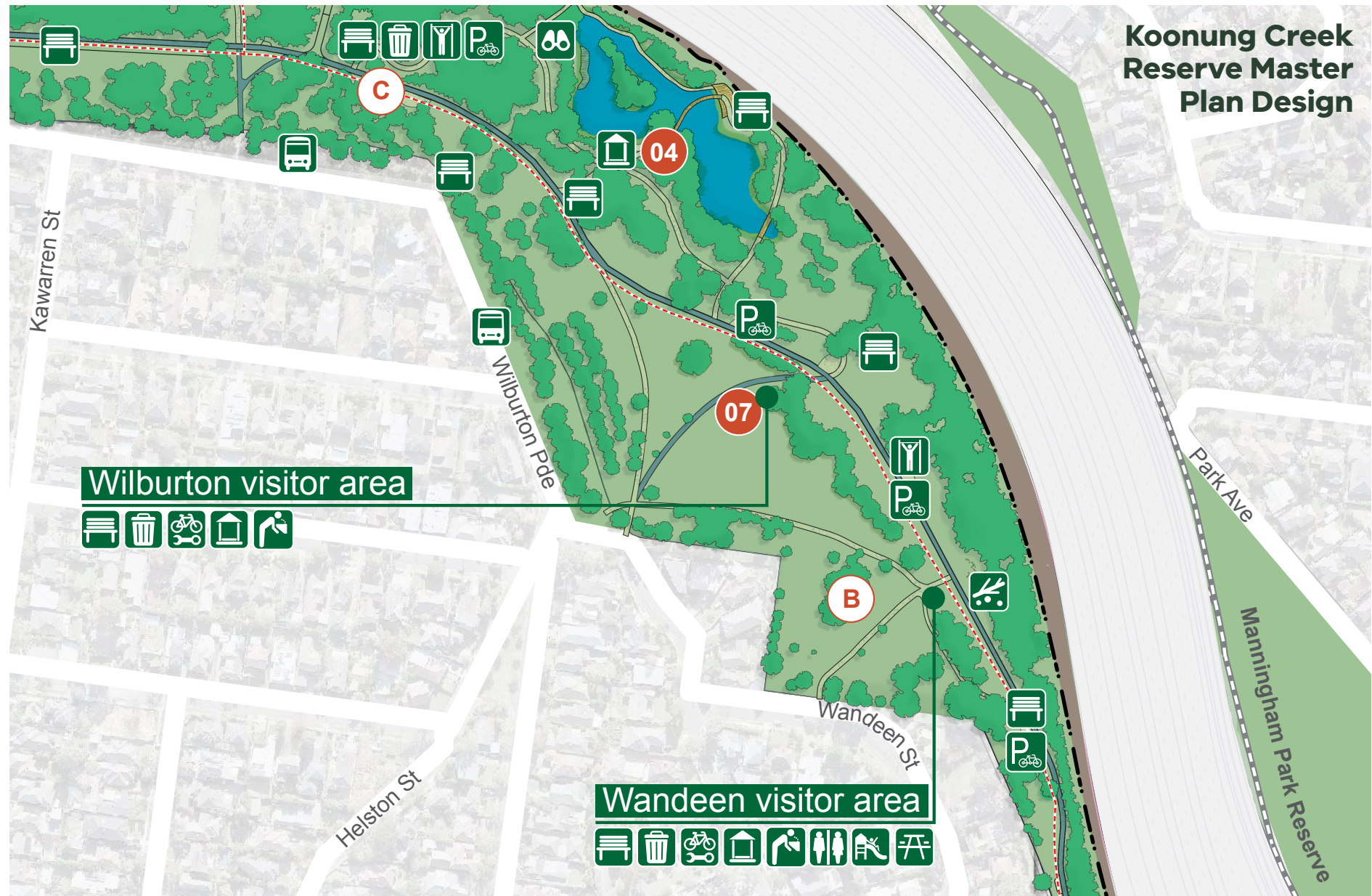
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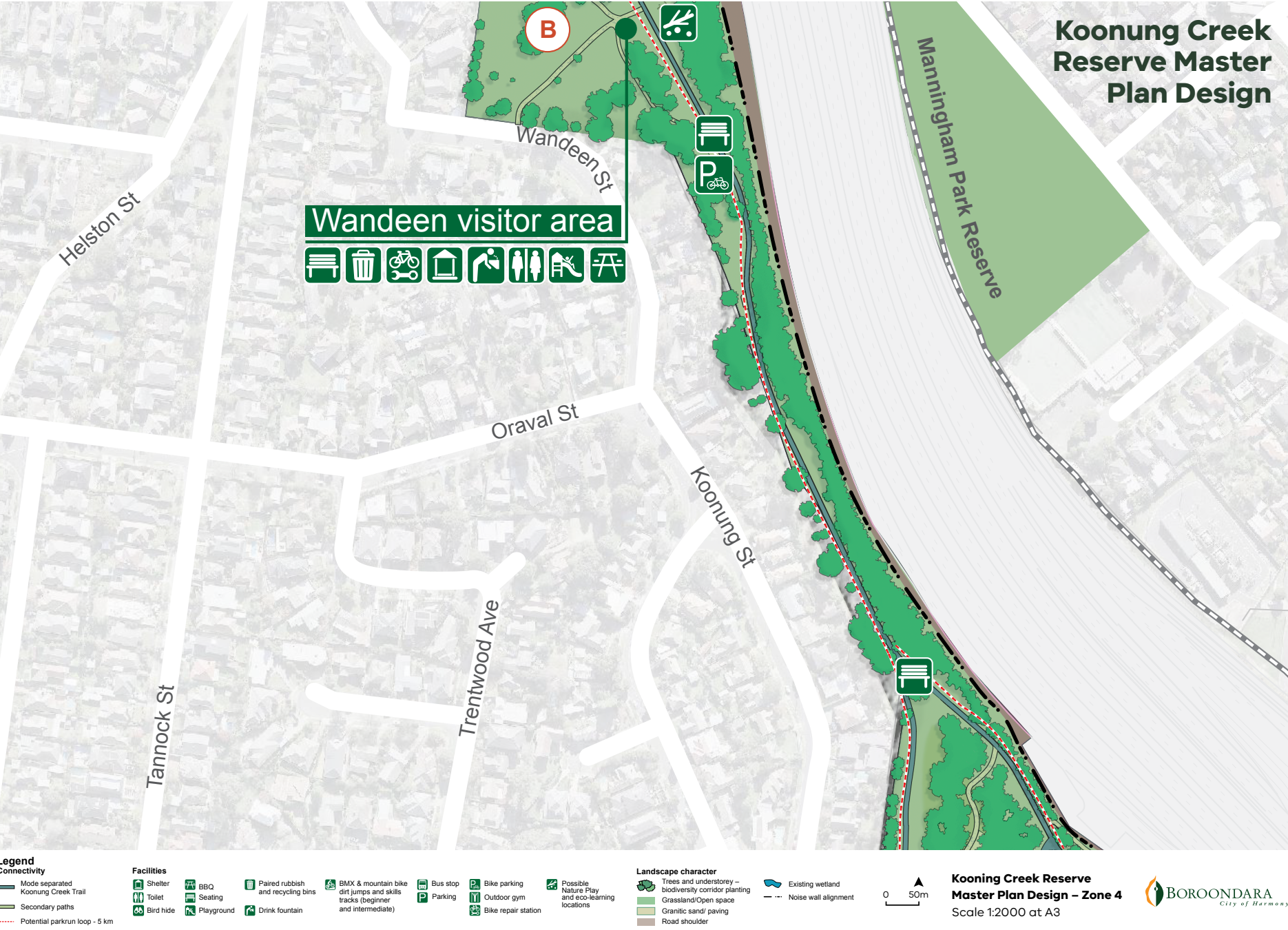


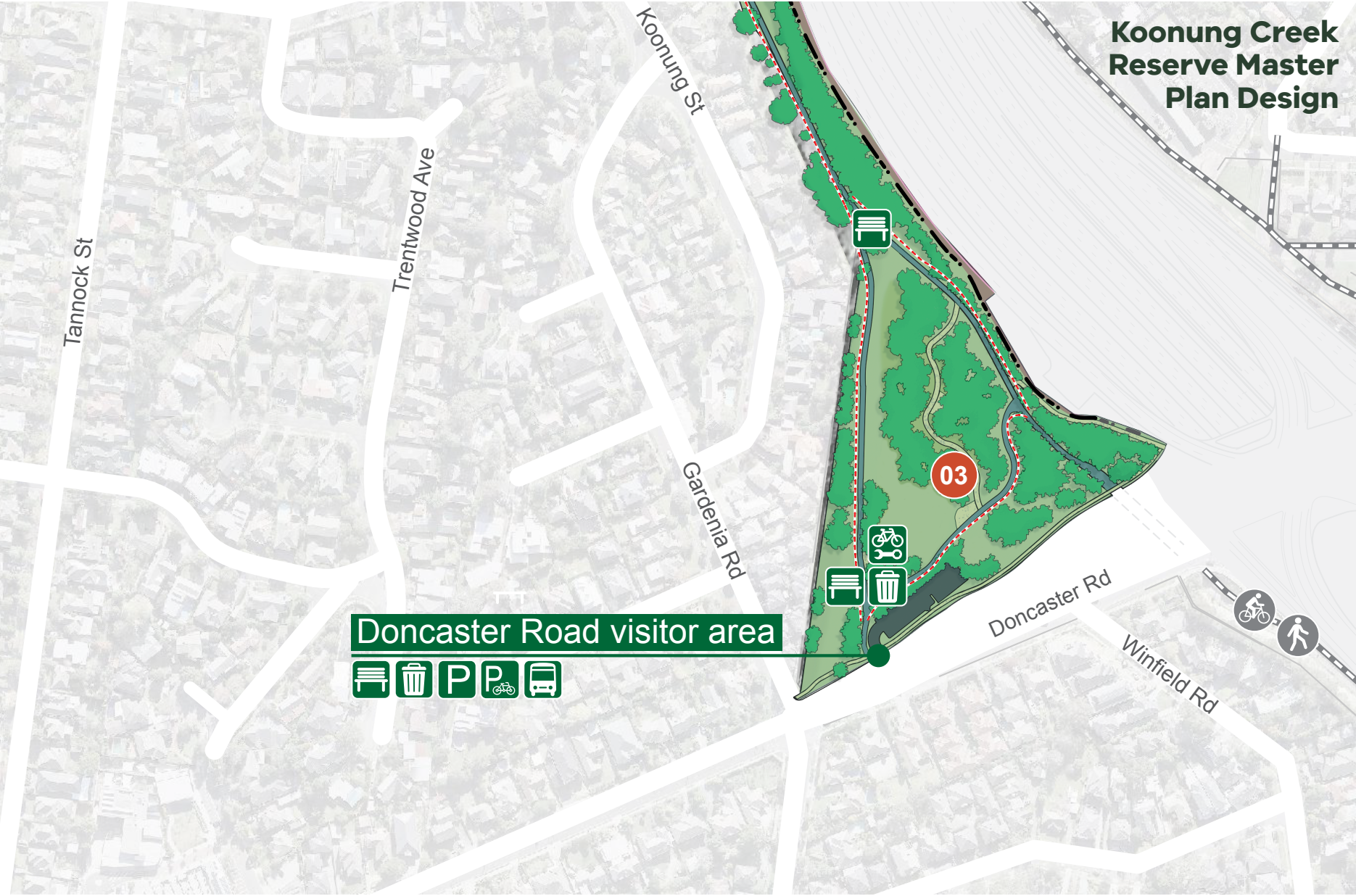




Koonung Creek Reserve Master Plan Design







Legend

Connectivity

- Mode separated Koonung Creek Trail
- Secondary paths
- Potential parkrun loop - 5 km

Facilities

- Shelter
- BBQ
- Seating
- Playground
- Paired rubbish and recycling bins
- Drink fountain

- BMX & mountain bike dirt jumps and skills tracks (beginner and intermediate)

- Bus stop
- Parking
- Bike parking
- Outdoor gym
- Bike repair station

- Possible Nature Play and eco-learning locations

Landscape character

- Trees and understorey – biodiversity corridor planting
- Grassland/Open space
- Granitic sand/ paving
- Road shoulder

- Existing wetland
- Noise wall alignment

0 50m

Koonung Creek Reserve Master Plan Design – Zone 5
Scale 1:2000 at A3

