NATURE ON YOUR DOORSTEP
Planning for the Wodonga Hills
ENGAGEMENT REPORT

OCTOBER 2017
Wodonga Council acknowledges the traditional owners of this land on which we stand and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future, for they hold the memories, the tradition and the culture of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.
The Wodonga Council commenced the preparation of a strategy to outline a considered and co-ordinated plan to realise the long term potential of the Wodonga hills for both their environmental and community significance.

The Wodonga hills are an intrinsic part of the city’s character and sense of place, setting it apart from other regional centres. They are a wonderful scenic, environmental and community asset to the city, offering a key lifestyle element, with significant potential to protect and support environmental and recreational outcomes.

Much of the land that makes up the Wodonga hills was transferred into public ownership in 2000. Since then council has moved to implement planning controls that prevent and discourage encroachment of residential development into the hills.

This ensures that these valuable assets are protected from urban development for current and future generations.

Since 2000, as the population of the city has increased, so too has the demand for recreation and access to these hills. A variety of activities currently occur across the hills including walking, running, cycling and mountain bike riding, sightseeing and athletics and fitness training events. There is unfortunately also an element of misuse, with antisocial behaviour and vandalism common across most sites.

The council is responsible for maintaining and protecting some of these hilltops.

Currently many of the areas of significant use are on land not owned or managed by council. Overall policy, planning and strategic direction for the future use and collective management of the hilltops has not occurred.

The aim of the strategy is to manage and encourage enjoyment by the community of the Wodonga hills in a manner that is sustainable, accessible and protects and enhances their recognised biodiversity, cultural heritage, scenic and recreational values.

Eight objectives are well articulated within the strategy at Chapter 2, and the council will continue to engage with hill users, neighbours, stakeholders, other land managers, and the wider communities to ensure in the planning for these hills, these objectives are met.

The revised objectives are:

1. Sustainable management and enjoyment;
2. Biodiversity and habitat;
3. Aboriginal cultural heritage values;
4. User, neighbour and community safety;
5. Landscape scenic values;
6. Accessibility, connection and integration;
7. Leisure, recreation and tourism; and,
8. Awareness, appreciation and understanding.
Following a resolution at the July 2016 council meeting, the Planning for the Wodonga Hills documents were placed on public exhibition for 21 days. The council undertook a three-week consultation with the community to gauge their views on the information provided in the draft strategy and masterplans.

Online consultations commenced on July 18, 2016 via the makewodongayours.com.au and oursay.org websites. Drop-in sessions were held on three consecutive Saturdays at Federation, Huon and Hunchback hills.

Following feedback from residents - both websites were reopened for an additional two week period, until Friday September 2, 2016.

A community meeting was also held on Monday August 22, 2016 at The Cube, to provide further information regarding the draft strategy. It is estimated that more than 100 community members participated in this event.

Feedback was received through several channels including:
- 9 comments on the makewodongayours.com.au website;
- 23 hard copy surveys made available at drop in sessions or at the council office;
- 69 emails, phone calls and written submissions to council officers;
- 84 individual contributors on the Our Say website provided 31 ideas, 67 comments and 370 votes;
- More than 80 attendees at the three Saturday morning drop in sessions; and,
- Approximately 100 attendees at the information session at The Cube
- Petition against with 523 signatures presented at the September 2016 meeting

Following a resolution at the September council meeting a further stage of consultation was planned and outlined to take place in the first quarter of 2017. Following the election period last year, the council opened and started promoting registrations for the hills workshops to be held early this year. There were more than 75 registrations received with registrants indicating their interest in particular sites.

Workshops were held in March 2017. There was also the opportunity for the community to provide further feedback during the council’s drop-in Community Forum. The workshops were hosted by the council and run by an independent facilitator. They included a brief overview of the revised documents, group discussion and an open feedback session. The council also received 17 submissions on the revised documents.

A draft was then put out in August 2017 for public exhibition for a four-week period. There were 206 submissions from 196 submitters.

The submissions received can be broadly classified into the following categories.
- 49 clear objections to the strategy and/or masterplans.
- 134 clearly support the overall strategy and/or masterplans.
- 11 indicate support for the overall strategy but raise concerns about specific elements (usually one specific action, such as a car park)
- 13 provide feedback relating to a specific action or issue, generally concern, without clearly expressing support or opposition to the overall strategy or masterplans.
- 1 other submission not directly relating to the current project.
- One petition against with 183 signatures received prior to the exhibition period at the August council meeting.
- One petition against received prior to the October meeting with 198 signatures.

A poll on The Border Mail website asking “Do you support Wodonga Council’s hilltop strategy?” had 477 votes with 64 per cent in favour and 36 per cent against (as at October 6, 2017).

Throughout the process, council staff have also met with key stakeholders, including residents, community groups, user groups and a local Wodonga Aboriginal reference group.

Regular meetings were held with CFA, Parklands Albury Wodonga, Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP), and will be ongoing to guide finalisation of the plans.
8 - Officers reports for determination

Item 8.2 - Document A

Council Plan, Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan, Municipal Strategic Statement, Planning Scheme
Physical Activity Strategy
Municipal Emergency Management Plan, Fire management plans
Physical Activity Strategy
Sport and Recreation Strategy
Sustainable Wodonga

PLANNING FOR THE WODONGA HILLS STRATEGY AND MASTERPLANS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES
- Sustainable use and management
- Biodiversity and habitat values
- Aboriginal cultural heritage values
- User, neighbour and community safety
- Landscape and scenic values
- Accessibility, connection and integration
- Leisure, recreation and tourism
- Awareness, appreciation and understanding

OVERALL STRATEGY AREAS
- General
- Biodiversity and bushland management
- Fire hazard management and user safety
- Access, information and orientation
- Track and trail planning and management
- Managing for users
- Events and tourism

Final draft

Presented to October council meeting

If adopted
Commence implementation plan (assessments)
Informs

Annual budget process
Informs

Implementation of individual and specific projects. Each project would be subject to the relevant regulatory planning, environmental and cultural controls

CONSULTATION POINTS

July-September 2016
- Online forums
- 4 x information sessions

March 2017
- Online forum
- 8 x workshops
- Community forum

August-September 2017
- 4-week exhibition period

Community and stakeholder consultation

Community and stakeholder consultation

Community and stakeholder consultation
Assessment and approval process

Chapter 5 of the strategy sets out a process for the implementation of new initiatives that includes undertaking any necessary environmental assessments and approvals.

Such assessments and approvals will inform the final design and layout of any new initiatives and will further assist in building up biodiversity knowledge to inform management.

The final section within the main Planning for the Wodonga Hills document sets out an indicative assessment and approval process for major projects.

This diagram (on page 7) clearly represents the steps to be followed in scoping and prioritising new projects, consulting with the community, seeking all necessary approvals and funding for these projects.

This would typically apply to actions involving construction or works to create significant new features (such as a new car park or lookout platform, or larger facilities). It would generally not apply to routine management actions, the maintenance or minor upgrade of existing features, or the installation of minor new features (such as seating or a low-key picnic site).

It is proposed this strategy, and the individual masterplans for each hill, will be revised periodically as required by changing circumstances having implications for the hill’s enjoyment, protection and management. These reviews would also provide the chance to review the effectiveness of strategies already implemented. Importantly, the review and preparation of these documents would enable further opportunities for user, neighbour and community involvement and input into the future of the Wodonga Hills.

Proposed advisory group

It is proposed that a Wodonga Hilltops Advisory Group be established that comprises stakeholders (DEWLP, Parklands Albury Wodonga, and CPA), representatives from Aboriginal registered parties, community and skilled professionals – to advise the council on the progress and implementation of the hilltops strategy.

The advisory group could be established for the term of this council and ensure council continues to engage and consult with both the community and stakeholders on the progress of the strategy.

Draft objectives

The objectives of the Wodonga Hilltops Advisory Group shall be to act as an advisory Group for the implementation of the Wodonga Hilltops strategy, and in particular to:

- Act as an advisory group between the Council and the Wodonga community.
- Encourage public interest and maximize involvement and participation of the community in the preservation and management of Wodonga Hilltops.
- To reflect on the work done to date and to develop and enhance current strategies and actions.
- To reflect the views of key stakeholder groups in relation to the Wodonga hilltops strategy.
- Contribute to the review and development of the strategy and associated masterplans:

If adopted, the council will look to work on a priority implementation plan with the advisory group.
ASSESSMENT AND APPROVAL

PROCESS FOR MAJOR WORKS

- Action identified as a priority in the Planning for Wodonga Hills Strategy or specific masterplan, or acknowledged as an opportunity or option of a new initiative warranting implementation

- Project justification and preliminary design and cost estimates

- Identification of required approvals (e.g., council approval, planning permit, cultural heritage assessments, external agency concurrence or approval). Liaison with affected land managers as required.

- Confirm funding - internal and/or external

- Undertake required site, environmental and planning assessments

- Obtain any formal approvals. (If internal council approval only, ensure evaluation against the guiding principles set out in the strategy)

- Obtain external agency concurrence or approvals as required (e.g., Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning or Aboriginal Victoria)

- Undertake detailed design, including requirements or conditions arising from approvals.

- Implementation
WHAT WE HEARD
SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

In the lead-up to and through the exhibition period, 208 submissions from 196 individual submitters (single submissions signed by multiple persons, i.e. families, have been counted as one submitter for the purposes of this summary) were received.

A petition was received in August 2017, prior to exhibition of the current draft, containing 183 signatures. In accordance with the resolution of the August 2017 Council meeting this petition has been considered as part of the feedback.

The 208 submissions received can be broadly classified into the following categories:

• 43 clear objections to the strategy and/or master plans.
• 138 clearly support the overall strategy and/or master plans.
• 11 indicate support for the overall strategy but raise concerns about specific elements (usually one specific action, such as a car park)
• 13 provide feedback relating to a specific action or issue without clearly expressing support or opposition to the overall strategy or master plans.
• 2 submissions do not relate directly to the project.
• 1 petition requesting the project cease.

Submissions from the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP), the CFA and Aboriginal Victoria were also received.

PETITIONS

August 2017

DISCUSSION

The petition received at the August council meeting opposed the strategy due to impacts and increased risks on residents and their properties at the interfaces of the hills and asked for the removal from the strategy of hills whether there is a high level of existing direct residential interface.

October 2017

DISCUSSION

The petition received ahead of the October council meeting opposed the strategy, stating there was not effective consultation, feedback was not acted upon as well as due to amenity impacts, risks and hazards and biodiversity.

PROPOSED CHANGES

The hills that ring the city either have residential interface now or there is planned residential interface into the future. The hills are also highly utilised by the community through a range of activities. The strategy aims to put in place a co-ordinated and planned approach to the ongoing management and enjoyment of the hills by all the community. The proposed changes detailed elsewhere in this document also take into account feedback regarding amenity and usage near residential areas. The implementation process set out in the strategy and the establishment of an advisory group for the implementation of the strategy will see ongoing engagement ahead of any proposed works being carried out.
FEEDBACK BY SITE

When grouped by site the feedback can be summarised as follows (individual strategies that have attracted commentary have been indicated):

• 128 relate to all sites collectively or don’t specify a single site of interest

These submissions are best summarised according to key themes and issues discussed later in this report.

• 9 relate specifically to Bears Hill

Two of these support improvements or additional trails on the site. Six express concern or objection to the proposal for car parking (Strategy 9), although four of these indicate overall support for the masterplan. One objects to the proposals for the site.

• 13 relate specifically to Federation Hill

One submission is fully supportive, one is supportive with concern about vehicle access, seven are outright objections and four raise concerns about specific proposals (car park and entrance facility strategies 5 and 9 and vehicle access that is not part of the exhibited draft).

• 54 relate specifically to Klings Hill (and the Hunchback Hill Complex as a whole)

Very few of these submissions distinguish between the Crown and council managed land in this location. 49 of these are supportive submissions, three indicate overall support but raise concerns about car parking or vehicle access proposals (Ref: Klings Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Strategy 4, p6, 10; Strategy 20, p9, 11; Opportunity B, p13-14). Two are outright objections to the project. Commentary relating to this site is further summarised according to key themes and issues discussed later in this report.

• 3 relate specifically to Huon Hill

One submission raises concerns about Strategy 8 (sealing of access road) and two are outright objections to the project based on the current poor state of facilities at this site. It is noted a number of other submissions also reference Huon Hill in a similar way, this is discussed further later in this report.

• One related specifically to Maher’s Hill.

This submission indicated support for the master plan in particular proposals for improved equestrian access and revegetation.
Many submissions received are detailed and make reference to multiple sites or matters. As such submissions have been further broken down into 305 individual comments relating to a single site, proposal or matter. This then allows more detailed analysis of the feedback.

There are several key themes that have emerged from this analysis, as outlined below. A summary of the commentary related to each theme is provided, using extracts from the actual submissions that typify the commentary on a particular matter.

ACCESS

This theme relates to both physical access to and from the sites (i.e. vehicle access or connectivity of pathways) and the nature of access to the relevant sites (the type of use permitted or excluded).

34 per cent of comments related to this theme.

This theme was dominated by supportive submissions and much of the commentary related directly to mountain bike trails and access. Many submissions mention how much existing mountain bike access at the Hunchback Hill Complex is valued, particularly the unique quality of the trails and the close proximity of the trails to people’s homes and the lifestyle benefits this presents. Many submitters expressed concern that the future of the activity in this area is under threat and several noted that the trails were part of what attracted them to Wodonga.

Submitter 6 notes ‘concern that riding mountain bikes at Hunchback Hill area may be under threat’, submitter 8 notes ‘most of this can all be done within 5 minutes ride from my house. This is a part of why I remained locally’ and submitter 167 ‘one of the main reasons my wife and I moved to the area from Melbourne is because of the excellent mountain bike trails’.

Submissions relating to mountain biking all support the continuation or expansion of mountain bike trails, predominately at the Hunchback Hill Complex.

Many discuss the potential economic benefits for Wodonga and the region from growth of the activity, often citing perceived positive examples from other locations.

Commentary was not limited to mountain biking, with at least 10 submitters within in this theme indicating support for increased or improved access for the entire community, particularly walkers. Submitter 71 indicates support because ‘The strategy provides options for all ranges, from children, families, young adults, middle age and the elderly’. Submitter 119 ‘I would love more accessible sustainable recreational development in the hills around wodonga so the community can actually enjoy them.’

Submitter 96 comments is ‘of the opinion that we can share these hills as a whole community’. Approximately 10 per cent of all submissions comment in support of ‘shared use’ of the hills. Several raise concerns about potential conflicts between users.

Submissions also suggest there is no need to change to improve existing access. Submitter 69 expressed desire that the landscape remains as it is and provides only ‘what it currently is able to provide’ and submitter 18 notes ‘Red Hill can already be thoroughly enjoyed, as it is.’

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY

This theme relates to bushfire and emergency response and management and the safety of users and neighbouring residents.

5 per cent of feedback related to this theme, which is dominated by objections.

Most of which relate to concerns regarding the potential for antisocial behaviour and impacts on the security of adjoining residents that may result from increased vehicle access within/to the hills and increased usage of tracks and trails in area adjoining residential properties. The petition cited similar
concerns as the basis for their objections to the Strategy.

Several submissions note objections to the proposed vehicle access at Federation that was part of earlier drafts but not the current exhibited draft.

Concerns about the potential impact on frequency of bushfires arising from increased usage or changes in land management practices was also noted by a number of submissions. Submitter 2 summarises the concerns: ‘I understood that I would live in a place of peace, privacy and security. I am worried about the noise, dumped rubbish, and the influx of undesirable who will inevitably increase the threat of bushfire and burglary.’

Within this category several submissions make recommendations for managing the safety of users, such as ways to avoid conflict between cyclists and vehicles at Huon Hill.

ENVIRONMENT

This theme relates to the natural environment and the landscape/scenic values of the hills.

6 per cent of feedback related to the environment, where discussion was divided between concern or objections based on the potential negative impacts on the environment and support for the coexistence of recreation and the environment.

There was consensus amongst submitters of all positions that the fundamental nature of the hills should not be altered and if that was to occur what a great loss that would be. Submitter 1, a mountain bike rider, notes that ‘Sustainability & protection of our lands and assets is obviously at utmost priority’. Submitter 78 comments that the hills ‘are the backdrop to our liveable, quiet neighbourhoods and what we love about Wodonga.’ Submitter 48 notes ‘There are only very limited preservation landmarks in Victoria and disrupting these for human leisure is selfish’ and Submitter 185 notes ‘Hunchback Hill is fragile; it needs to be preserved for the eco tourist; walkers, bird watchers and nature lovers who will treat its paths lightly.’

There was equal amount of discussion on the merits of encouraging access into the natural areas and the belief that impacts can be managed. Submitter 15 says we need to create a balance between conservation and recreation for members of our local Wodonga community and 186 believes ‘Through good planning, we have a real opportunity to avoid potential future conflicts.’

AMENITY

This relates to impacts on views and lifestyle of residents, particularly those immediately adjoining the hills.

11 per cent of feedback related to amenity, and discussion here comes from adjoining residents who raise concerns or objections.

Many submissions note a fear that the lifestyle they currently enjoy will be negatively affected, particularly by increased vehicle and user’s traffic to and within the hills. Concerns about impacts on visual amenity were also raised. The petition requests that the project cease because it will ‘significantly and unduly impact the amenity of residents’. Submitter 20 notes there are ‘people who are very distressed that their quality of living and amenity is proposed to be altered’.

Car parking proposals in particular, as outlined earlier by site, attracted concern from adjoining residents.

CONSULTATION

9 per cent of submissions related to the consultation process for the project. Feedback here is divided between concerns or objections and positive feedback.

Strong objections and concerns are raised by people who identify themselves as adjoining residents who
don't feel they have been adequately informed or involved in the project and several raise concerns that their previous feedback has not been adequately addressed.

Submitter 17 requests 'a complete halt to all planning for Wodonga Hills pending review of the process to date and appropriate and effective consultation with the community, especially those identified by council as being key stakeholders, namely directly impacted residents.' The petition makes a similar request.

Submitter 141 set 'I'm not against the concept, only the process and lack of information on the project.'

There was also feedback from submitters acknowledging the consultation process and the response to feedback. Submitter 106 says 'I have found the process for feedback to be detailed, straightforward and effective. I am pleased to see all the comments I have made during previous engagement opportunities have been incorporated.'

HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

This theme relates to the health and wellbeing benefits or potential of the hills, particularly resulting from the ability to access them.

21 per cent of feedback made comment on this theme, much of which focussed on the opportunities the hills present for families and children in particular to spend time together, to get active and out of the house and the positive physical and mental wellbeing benefits that arise from that. These submissions support continued or improved access to the hills for recreational purposes.

Submitter 77 says 'These areas provide a safe but challenging environment where the young people can develop all the qualities we want them to have as adults, (independence, resilience, initiative etc.).'

Again there was feedback here about the value of local facilities. There was also commentary around the positive environmental outcomes that might arise from providing access into natural areas. Submitters 65 notes of their children ‘As, they enjoy the beauty of the hills, the views and they take an ownership in looking after them.’

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

This theme includes feedback related to the costs and benefits of implementing the draft plans and the long term maintenance of assets in the hills.

13 per cent of feedback related to this theme.

Many of these submissions raise concerns about how the proposals will be funded and whether it is realistic that land managers can maintain them. With many commenting that the current assets are poorly maintained and a preference that this maintenance be prioritised ahead of any further development. The petition raised similar concerns.

A number of submissions comment on the poor state of facilities evidence of vandalism at Huon Hill suggesting this is evidence council cannot or should not implement the hills Strategy. Submitter 46 says 'Sort out existing problems on hills first'.

Submitter 160 requests ‘costings for all proposed design, development and implementation actions, and any ongoing costs relevant to such a strategy’.

A number also highlight the existence of groups or individuals who are willing to contribute to the ongoing management of the reserves and their assets.

Submitter 188 notes ‘the importance on investing in community and community stewardship into the future’ and submitter 187 says it is ‘the responsibility of the community as a whole to ensure these assets are managed for the benefit of all.’

OTHER

The remaining 1 per cent of submissions were not related directly to the project.
PROPOSED CHANGES

AS A RESULT OF THE RECENT ENGAGEMENT PROCESS
1. ACCESS

DISCUSSION

The feedback indicates support for continued or improved access to the hills. The Objectives and Guiding Principles set out a framework to ensure any potential impacts arising from access on residents, the environment, and council’s budget are considered and addressed. Some further consideration of all-abilities access has been undertaken.

PROPOSED CHANGES

1.1 The potential to improve all-abilities access to parameter fire trail between urban path network and proposed Wattle Park entry node at Federation Hill will be recognised.

1.2 It is proposed a new action is added regarding all-abilities access, to undertake an investigation of suitable locations for provision of all-abilities access beyond the margins of the hills.

1.3 As per the Implementation Plan (Ref: Planning for the Wodonga Hills Strategy, SS, p78), all major works and significant new features require detailed assessments, community engagement with nearby residents and appropriate approvals before proceeding.

2. ENVIRONMENT

DISCUSSION

The Strategy recognises the environmental values that are contained within the hills and takes the view that recreational objectives can be achieved within the context of these values, subject to careful assessment, siting, design and management as outlined in the Objectives and Guiding Principles. Further the Strategy takes the view that by inviting the community into these hills and supporting their use with appropriate facilities there will be long term environmental benefits by fostering community appreciation of the hills and by directing activity to the areas where it can be sustainably managed.

The Strategy specifically sets out a series of actions that seek to ensure the expansion of council’s existing environmental management program in response to changing use of the sites, to improve the extent and quality of habitat within the hills and to develop programs to increase our understanding of the values of the sites to better inform management. Feedback indicates strong interest among the community to be involved in management of the hills. Should the strategy be implemented there is much potential for community participation in these programs.

PROPOSED CHANGES

2.1 Protected vegetation offset sites and Wodonga Retained Environment Network (WREN) will be added to master plan maps to ensure recognition of their presence and protected status. Some detail regarding what the future management of these sites will look like has been included in the relevant master plan documents.

3. FEDERATION AND KLINGS HILL

MASTER PLANS

DISCUSSION

These two sites have consistently generated the most interest from the community and concern from the residents who directly adjoin them. All commentary relating to these sites, whether from supporters or objectors, highlights how highly valued the natural setting of the area is.

PROPOSED CHANGES

3.1 It is proposed the number of overall proposals for each Kings and Federation hills is reduced by removing the opportunities plan component of each master plan.

These changes will simplify the documentation for the two sites generating the most interest and remove some of the confusion the longer-term and less detailed opportunities plans have created.

The opportunities plans for Huon and Bears Hill are retained in recognition of the anticipated significant population growth interfacing with these sites.

KLINGS HILL

3.2 For Klings Hill it is proposed the future mountain biking opportunities (Ref: Klings Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Opportunity D, p13-14) is retained within the masterplan document. This is in recognition of the significant support for continuation of the sport in the area. Implementation of any further mountain biking in this location will still be subject to the demand assessments, consultation and approvals as set out in the implementation section of this Strategy.
3.3 All other opportunities (Ref: Kings Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Opportunities A B C E and F, p12-14) relating to vehicle access, access via Dansons Road and a walking trail link from Dansons Road would be deleted from the plans.

Public vehicle access to the hills is clearly not supported by the community. Removal of these proposals responds to concerns about potential environmental, safety and security impacts that vehicles present. This change will result in the north eastern corner and upper parts of the site remaining largely inaccessible to the public, where environmental management can be the focus. Emergency and management access will remain unchanged.

Federation Hill

3.4 For Federation Hill it is proposed the 'bush activities' proposal (Ref: Federation Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Opportunity A, p11-12), a proposed walking track link to the future Cambourne Park development area (Ref: Federation Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Opportunity F, p11-12) and proposed access from Wilsons Road (Ref: Federation Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Opportunity C, p11-12) remain within the master plan.

3.5 All other walking trails (Ref: Federation Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Opportunities B, D, E, G and H, p11-13) are removed. This is in response to concerns the natural bushland setting of the site will be altered and concerns about how increased user access to the western end of the site will impact on adjoining residents. This will leave the western half of the hill with minimal user access, allowing greater focus on environmental management and improved maintenance of existing trails.

4. CAR PARKING PROPOSALS

DISCUSSION

All proposals that include car parking have been reviewed in response to the concerns raised by adjoining residents.

Bears Hill

Residents adjoining Bears Hill raised concerns about a proposed car park at the end of Donnington Drive (Ref: Bears Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Strategy 9, p7, 8). The master plan recognises the limited recreational opportunities available within the relatively small landholding at Bears Hill and that the site is unlikely to be a destination for anyone beyond the immediate residential area.

3.6 It is proposed that creation of car parking is removed (Ref: Bears Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Strategy 9, p7, 8). Improvements to the access point, including signage, will remain.

3.7 Opportunities for future access on the still developing southern side of the hill will be identified.

Federation Hill

There are three proposals for new or expanded car parking at Federation Hill: McCulloch Cres (Strategy 5), McCaffins Rd (Strategy 9) and Wilsons Rd (Opportunity C).

McCulloch Crescent

The proposal for expanded car parking at McCulloch Cres is central to the entire plan for the hill. Unlike Bears Hill there is potential for extended stays (>1hr) by users within this large reserve with a diversity of trails and it is anticipated users will arrive from areas beyond the immediate residential catchment (community members not tourists).

In order to cater for local users who may arrive at the site by car formalisation of car parking is considered essential. This will reduce the current occurrence of users parking on nature strips and on residential streets by directing them to formalised facilities that support their use of the hill, and encouraging patronage in the places that can be managed (and away from the places that can’t).

4.1 No changes to this proposal (Ref: Federation Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Strategy 5, p6, 9) are recommended, however, the explanation of the proposal will be amended to clarify the proposed capacity of the car parking at less than 20 spaces (subject to demand).

The concerns of adjoining residents in this location relate largely to matters that can be addressed in the implementation stage, for example what degree of earthworks might be required and how will drainage be addressed. The Strategy establishes a framework for decision making that requires consideration of impacts on resident’s amenity and security, these are set out in the Objectives and Guiding Principles. These will guide the implementation of the proposal, should it go ahead, which will include further consultation with residents – allowing matters of concern to be addressed through the detailed design process.

4.2. As per the Implementation Plan (Ref: Planning for the Wodonga Hills Strategy, SS, p78), all major works and significant new features require
detailed assessments, community engagement with nearby residents and appropriate approvals before proceeding.

McGaffins Road

4.3 Given the proposed removal of the walking trails (Ref: This document, change 3.5 for Federation Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Opportunities B, D, E, G and H’p.11-13) there will be very little user infrastructure in the western part of Federation Hill. Therefore the McGaffins Rd car parking proposal (Ref: Federation Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Strategy 9, p7, 6) is no longer justified, as no increase in user demand can be expected.

4.4 The proposal to improve the existing pedestrian access with wayfinding signage at the site referred to in 4.3 (Ref: Federation Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Strategy 9, p7, 6).

Wilson Road

4.5 It is proposed that the upgrade of the Wilson Rd entrance (Ref: Federation Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Opportunity C, p11, 12) be retained in the master plan. It is not considered feasible or practical to close or remove this entrance to the hill, it is existing and is the only opportunity for access from the south. However, given the track into the hill from this point is very steep, even with some population growth on the south of the hill, the demand for use of this site will remain small and local. As such it is suggested the proposal is revised to emphasise improved, more active management of the existing access, rather than upgrading it. The management focus would therefore be on providing safe access for users and avoiding potential for antisocial behaviour and negative impacts on adjoining residents.

Klings Hill

There are three car parking proposals in the Klings Hill master plan.

• Improve existing access and parking at Felltimber Creek Rd (Ref: Klings Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Strategy 4, p6, 10)

• Upgrade existing access at Coyles Rd (Ref: Klings Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Strategy 20, p9, 11)

• Roadside parking area within the reserve (Ref: Klings Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Opportunity B, p13-14)

As discussed above (3.3) it is proposed the opportunities relating to vehicle access are removed, including parking within the reserve (Ref: Klings Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Opportunity B, p13-14).

Felltimber Creek Rd

4.6 The Felltimber Creek Rd proposal (Ref: Klings Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Strategy 4, p6, 10) is essential to ensure safe and practical access to the site as a whole, including the Crown land, and as such no changes to this proposal are suggested.

Coyles Rd

4.7 It is proposed that the Coyles Rd entrance and car park (Ref: Klings Hill Masterplan, August 2017, Strategy 20, p9, 11) remain in the masterplan. It is not considered feasible or practical to close or remove this entrance to the hill, it is existing and is the only opportunity for access from the north. Given the low density nature of the settlement on this side of the hill any users are likely to arrive at the site by car. However, given the track into the hill from this point is very steep the demand for use of this site will remain small and local. As such it is suggested the proposal is revised to emphasise improved, more active management of the existing access, rather than upgrading it. The management focus would therefore be on providing safe access for users and avoiding potential for antisocial behaviour and negative impacts on adjoining residents.

5. CROWN LAND

DISCUSSION

As discussed above many submissions were received in relation to Klings Hill and the Crown land adjoining known as Hunchback Hill. Very few submissions made any distinction between the Crown and council land and the different land managers. This, along with feedback from DEWLP (land owner of the Crown land), highlight that it is not possible to plan for either site in isolation. The explanation of councils Strategy excluding Crown land has created some confusion and in reality is not feasible in some circumstances.

PROPOSED CHANGES

5.1 It is proposed that the explanation of Crown land in the Strategy be amended to reflect that...
Ordinary meeting – October 16, 2017

8 - Officers reports for determination

Item 8.2 - Document A

in some locations Crown and council land are
inextricably linked and emphasise the need for a
collective approach to resolving certain issues and
achieving certain outcomes, particularly at Huon
and Kings hills.

This revision should also be very clear that Council
is not seeking to prescribe any particular outcome
on Crown land, recognising the status and processes
of Parklands Albury Wodonga and DELWP. DELWP
and Parklands Albury Wodonga have indicated their
support of the objectives and principles of the
Strategy.

As such continued emphasis on collaboration with
these parties is considered appropriate and will be
critical should the Strategy be adopted.

6. CULTURAL HERITAGE

DISCUSSION
Feedback was received from Aboriginal Victoria
and through a local Wodonga Aboriginal reference
group. This feedback centred on the need to ensure
heritage constraints are addressed prior to any
activities proceeding and part of a formal assessment
of the land covered by the strategy and to include
information of regional Aboriginal history and the
value of working together.

PROPOSED CHANGES

6.1 It is proposed the Objectives are expanded to
eight to give Aboriginal cultural heritage stand-
one recognition. A number of additions to the
text throughout the document will flow from
this, seeking to give greater emphasis to
protection of cultural heritage sites and broader
recognition of Aboriginal culture.

7. SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

DISCUSSION
The strategy makes use of existing infrastructure,
notably existing management trails, to support
community use of the hills. This will assist in
minimising costs and potential impacts on
environmental and cultural assets. However,
the Strategy takes the view that in some places
significant improvements or entirely new facilities
are warranted in order to provide access to a broader
cross section of the community and a greater
diversity of users.

PROPOSED CHANGES
As set out in the Objectives and Guiding Principles
preference will be given to maintenance of existing
infrastructure and new proposals must consider the
ongoing cost and resources required to maintain
facilities to the desired standard. Should the Strategy
be adopted the proposals should be prioritised
based on community need and available funding and
resources.

The Strategy also acknowledges the valuable
contributions of existing community groups in
maintaining open space. Should the Strategy be
adopted there is a clear role for community and user
groups to inform and participate in the process and
management.

Regarding Huon Hill, the current challenges and
impacts here are considered a key example of the
need for a planned and coordinated approach to
management. Should the Strategy be adopted council
should consider addressing these issues as a high
priority.

8. ADVISORY GROUP

DISCUSSION
Ongoing engagement and implementation will be
addressed through an advisory group to work with
the council on matters pertaining to the hills and the
implementation of the strategy.

PROPOSED CHANGES

8.1 Explore the establishment of an advisory group for
the hills strategy with a further report on the criteria,
terms of reference and way forward to a future council
meeting.