



# OPEN SPACE & LANDSCAPE REPORT

HOPETOUN PARK NORTH WEST

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AUGUST 2023

PREPARED FOR:

**BACCHUS MARSH PROPERTY GROUP  
PTY LTD**

SUBMISSION TO:

**MOORABOOL SHIRE COUNCIL**



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# DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

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| 1       | Initial advice  |
| 2       | Amended road widths and increased Conservation Zone extents |
| 3       | Amended for revised bushfire advice                         |
| 4       | Amended with revised project scope                          |

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01.

# INTRODUCTION

This Open Space and Landscape report has been prepared on behalf of Bacchus Marsh Property Group Pty Ltd (BMPG) who propose the rezoning of land included within the Hopetoun Park North West precinct as identified in the Bacchus Marsh Urban Growth Framework Plan. It is accompanied by an Open Space Network Plan for the Hopetoun Park North West growth area.

To date, BMPG and their consultants have engaged in extensive consultation with Moorabool Shire Council regarding the nature and location of the proposed open space network. Much of this occurred prior to lodging the Planning Scheme Amendment in September 2021 which proposed to include the entirety of the Hopetoun Park North growth area as part of the rezoning. As a result of sensitive ecological assets being identified in the eastern precinct, as well as other challenges associated with the rezoning of that area, it was determined that only the western precinct would proceed at this stage. Additional feedback from Council and other Referral Authorities has refined the open space elements that have enhanced ecological, aesthetic and practical outcomes for future communities.

The following report provides an explanation and an assessment of the proposed open space provision in the Hopetoun Park North West Precinct in the context of strategic planning directions and open space requirements as relevant to the unique circumstances of Hopetoun Park North West. In preparing this report consideration has also been given to the range of other consultant reports that have been prepared in support of the Hopetoun Park North West rezoning. The reports are examined in detail in Section 4.



Fig. 1 Views west from top of escarpment





Fig. 2 Context Plan



02.

# SITE & LOCATION

Hopetoun Park North West is situated on an elevated plateau between the Western Freeway road reserve to the north, the top of the Pyrites Creek escarpment to the west, Hopetoun Park Road to the east and existing low density residential development to the south. The subject site and land to the south and east is generally flat. The Western Freeway interface is a cutting, and the escarpment to the west falls approximately 40-50 metres to farming land in the Werribee River valley. The Hopetoun Park North West precinct has an overall site area of approximately 62 hectares, of which BMPG has an interest in has an area of approximately 58 hectares and is located to the west of Hopetoun Park Road, which runs north-south through adjacent to the site. Refer to Property 1 in Figure 3 below.

The public open space in the existing low density development of Hopetoun Park to the south is generally of poor quality with minimal formal amenity, and appears to be mainly utilised for ecological or drainage purposes. An unsealed track has been formed on top of the escarpment around the perimeter of the existing development. This track is approximately 6km in length and appears to be used by local walkers, cyclists, motorcyclists and off-road vehicles. There are several existing informal vehicle tracks traversing the extreme grades of the escarpment. There is no pedestrian or cycling connection to the west (to Bacchus Marsh) or to the east (to Melton) due to the topography of the site and its surrounds, as well as the distance to these two settlements.

The location and topography of Hopetoun Park North West is unique in the context of more 'typical' greenfield sites and has been carefully considered in the context of open space provision for the precinct. The majority of the subject land is currently utilised for cropping purposes noting that there are however some small areas of ecological significance planned to be retained in conservation reserves.



Fig. 3 Property ID Plan





03.

# RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

There are a range of relevant documents that have been considered by the consulting team in preparing the broader Concept Plan for the site, along with the more detailed work that has been undertaken in designing the open space network. These documents include the following:

- Bacchus Marsh Urban Growth Framework, Moorabool Shire Council August 2018;
- Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines: New Communities in Victoria (October 2021);
- Moorabool Planning Scheme;
- Bacchus Marsh and Ballan Open Space Framework, Moorabool Shire Council, December 2019.

In preparing this report particular consideration has been given to the Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines which provide a crucial framework when considering open space provision at Hopetoun Park North West, and what BMPG is seeking to achieve for future residents of the precinct (noting that the document's focus is metropolitan Melbourne growth areas rather than regional development and so not all recommendations are appropriate/relevant to Hopetoun Park North West).

Included in the Guidelines are a series of outcomes that are sought for the public realm which are of relevance when considering the proposed Hopetoun Park North West open space network.

These include:

- F.10 Local recreational spaces and facilities - Networks of open space and facilities that provide equitable access to sport and recreation, leisure, environmental benefits, cultural benefits and visual amenity.
- F.11 Green streets and spaces - Treatment of the public realm (including public infrastructure) that creates a safe, comfortable, high amenity and resilient environment.
- F.12 Environmental and biodiversity value - Protected and enhanced areas of significant environmental and biodiversity value, such as native vegetation, waterway corridors, natural wetlands and grasslands.

These directions have been considered in the preparation of an Open Space Network Plan for Hopetoun Park North West.

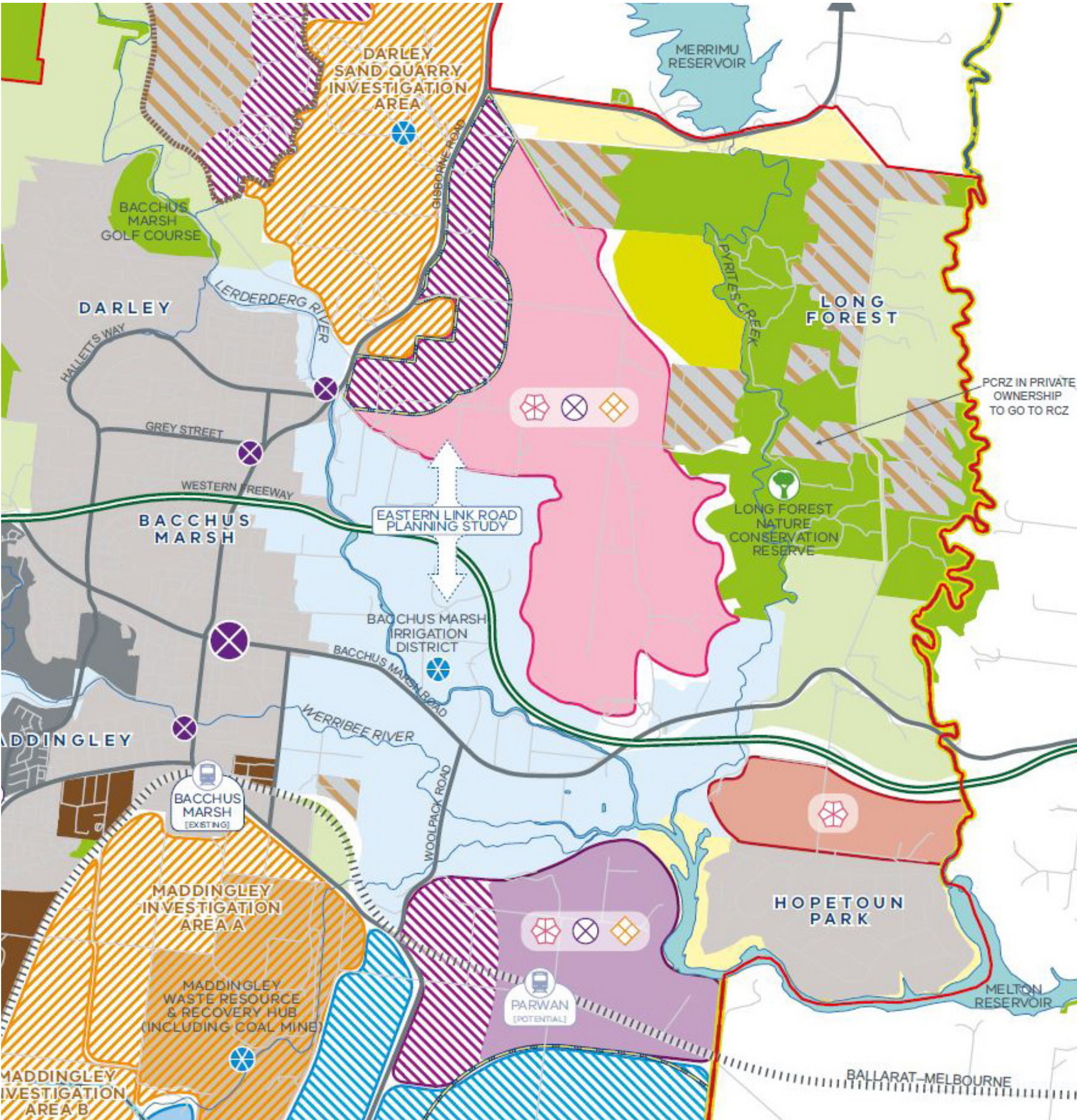


Fig. 4 Extract from Bacchus Marsh Urban Growth Framework Plan



04.

# CONSULTANT REPORTS

Ecology

Nature Advisory were engaged to prepare a flora and fauna assessment of the study area. Previously vegetation assessments have been undertaken by Mark Trengove Ecological Services (2019) and a fauna overview, Golden Sun Moth surveys and an assessment of Grey Box woodland within the study area was undertaken by Nature Advisory (2019).

The current flora and fauna assessment (June 2023) addresses the request for further information by Moorabool Shire Council and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP, now Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)) regarding more detailed native vegetation assessments, including listed communities and addressing the potential for threatened species. Additional Golden Sun Moth surveys were also undertaken during the flying season in December 2022 and January 2023 within areas of suitable habitat (Nature Advisory 2023) and are included in the flora and fauna assessment.

Native vegetation in the study area comprised Grey Box woodland (2.6 hectares) in the east of properties 1 and 2 and on the adjoining Hopetoun Park Road reserve, shrubland on the rocky escarpment in the west, and small patches of native grassland and shrubland in property 9. This vegetation was recorded as:

- 23 patches of native vegetation, totalling an area of 4.787 hectares (including 16 large trees in patches), and
- 16 scattered trees (four large and 12 small scattered trees).

The assessment notes that the proposed rezoning and subsequent development is designed to retain almost all native vegetation. The flora and fauna assessment had the following recommendations:

- Retain all existing Grey Box trees and Grey Box woodland areas in the east of the study area within a reserve. Site development a minimum of 15m from the trunks of any treed native vegetation to avoid consequential impacts.
- Site entrances to the proposed subdivision to avoid impacts to native vegetation recorded in the road reserve of Hopetoun Park Road.
- Retaining a minimum 20m buffer adjoining the edge of the escarpment in the west of the study area as a reserve and a 5m buffer around retained grasslands to prevent impacts to remnant vegetation, namely the area of EPBC-Act listed NTGVVP in HZ 1E and FFG-Act listed Melbourne Yellow Gum and Buloke.

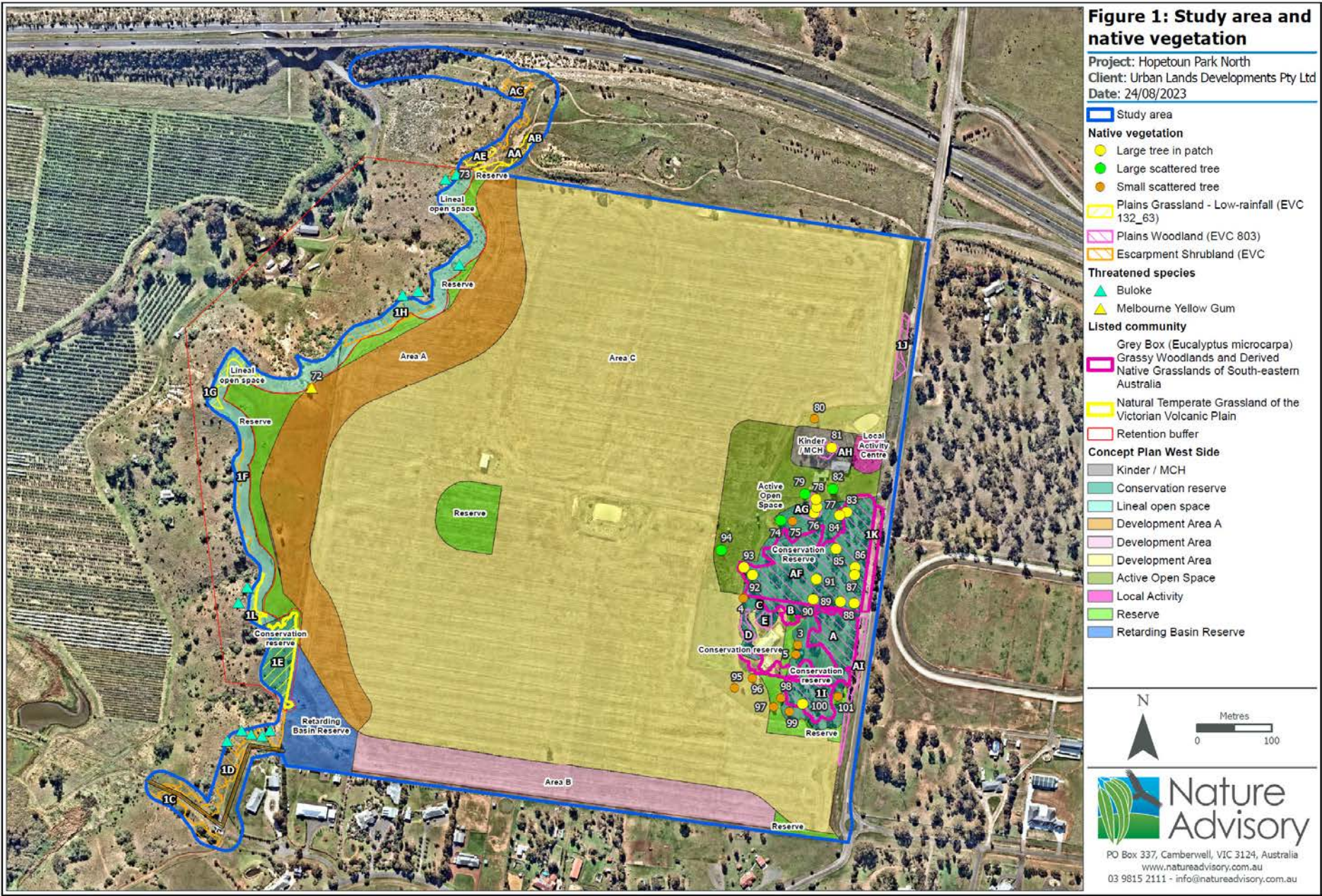
The assessment also notes that any development near the western edge of the Pyrites Creek escarpment on the west edge of the study area should be designed to minimise erosion and potential damage to vegetation through water runoff.

The implications for open space provision and design largely revolve around the preparation of a land management plan that will seek to

- avoid and minimise impacts to existing flora and fauna, including:
- Restricting access to ecologically sensitive areas with fencing to avoid impacts to the ground layer of the understorey vegetation,
  - Implementing recommended buffers from existing vegetation,
  - Comprehensive weed management programs,
  - Selecting and planting EVC-appropriate trees throughout the development, and
  - Implementing the recommendations of the Stormwater Management Plan (Afflux 2023) with regard to water quality and erosion management through vegetation.

- Signage to inform future residents of the ecological importance of these three woodland patches as habitat is recommended.

The findings of these various ecology reports, including the location of potentially sensitive vegetation and the recommendations associated with the area of Grey Box Grassy Woodlands and Derived Native Grasslands of South Eastern Australia, informed the Open Space Network Plan that has been prepared.





STORM WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN

A storm water management plan has been prepared by Afflux Consulting. The stormwater management plan concludes that the following elements will be required for the site to meet contemporary drainage outcomes:

- Around 12,000m3 of retention storage required at the south-west outfall (refer to Figure 6)
- All assets constructed within range of Melton Reservoir to be built above peak reservoir level of 82.56m AHD;
- Steep outfall conditions to be considered for individual asset design.
- ZAM (Zero Additional Maintenance) treatments for minor sediment and nutrient controls on the north west catchment.

The design of any ZAM treatments should be carefully planned with all stakeholders to better ensure successful implementation of these assets. The findings of this report, including the nominated size and location of the water quality treatment assets also informed the Open Space Network Plan that has been prepared.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER

A detailed Neighbourhood Character Assessment was prepared by Hansen Partnership at the commencement of the planning process for the Hopetoun Park North West rezoning. The Assessment considers a range of issues but of particular relevance when preparing the Open Space Network Plan are the recommendations in relation to the interface of future development with the escarpment areas. These recommendations include the provision of a 10 metres wide linear open space along the edge of the escarpment area, comprising a shared path and associated planting. However, a minimum 20m buffer has been adopted following a request from DEECA (then DELWP) which will satisfy this open space link and amenity.

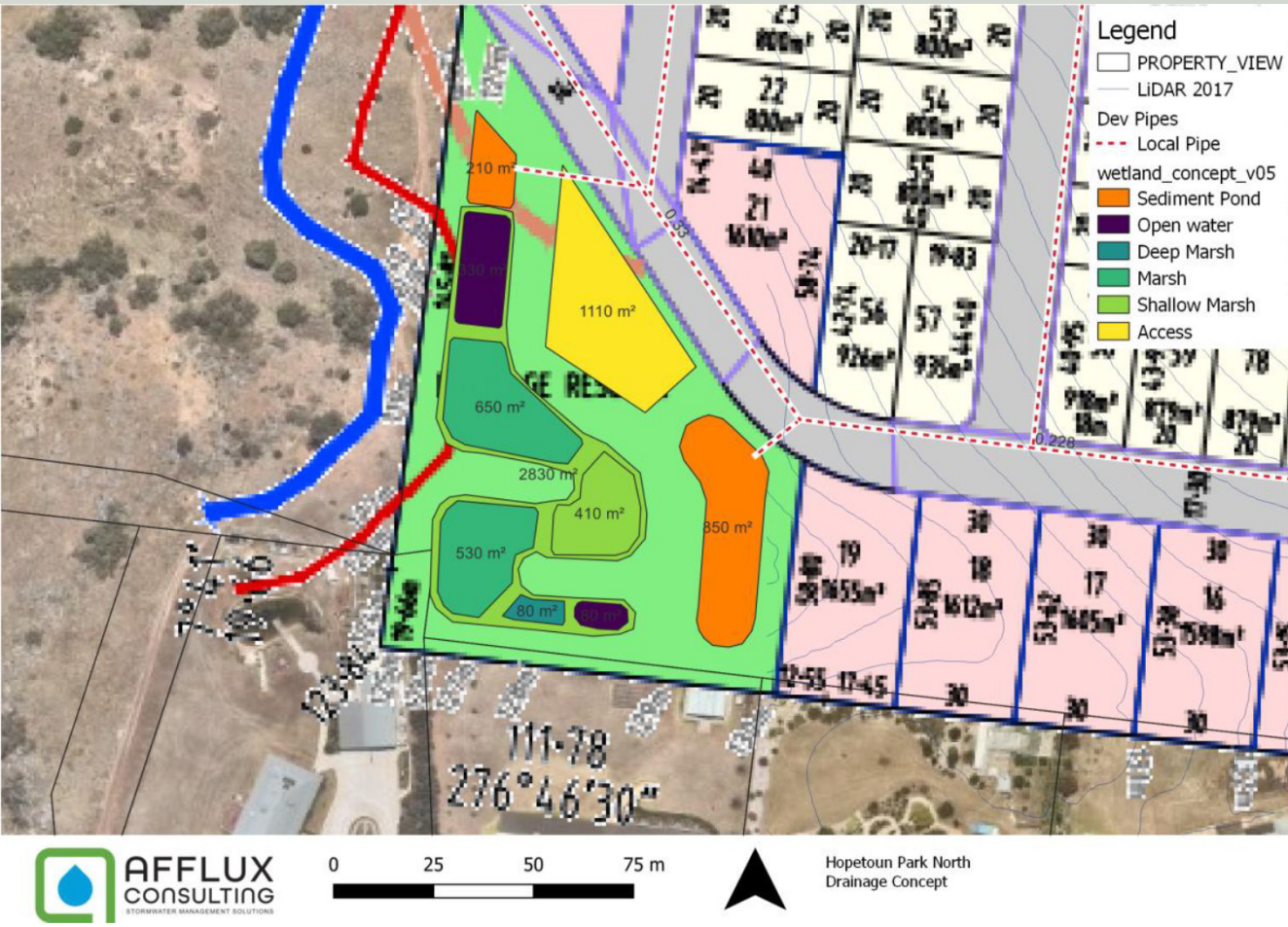


Fig. 6 Western Wetland Concept



Fig. 7 Example ZAM sediment treatment system



BUSHFIRE

A Bushfire Risk Assessment has been prepared by South Coast Bushfire Consultants (13 June 2023) to ensure the development meets the objectives of Clause 13.02 Bushfire Planning ‘to strengthen the resilience of settlements and communities to bushfire through risk-based planning that prioritises the protection of human life.’

The assessment determines the extent of bushfire hazards in the landscapes surrounding the subject site and details the mitigation measures required to ensure future development is not exposed to radiant heat loads in excess of a BAL of 12.5 from Australian Standard AS 3959-2018 Construction of buildings in bushfire-prone areas.

The Open Space Strategy responds to the Bushfire Risk Assessment by demonstrating how the landscape can be managed to achieve the objectives of Clause 13.02, specifically by designing for defensible space inside the setback distances from future dwellings set out in Figure 8 and Figure 9. The Bushfire Hazard Site Assessment mapping (Figure 10) demonstrates how an indicative development plan can utilise open spaces to respond appropriately to the assessed bushfire risks.

IMPLICATIONS

The typical section detailing the escarpment interface at Figure 13 of this report demonstrates how a 32m setback distance to Grassland vegetation can be achieved with a 10m front building setback. This exceeds the requirement noted in Figure 8 for a 32m setback from the western downslope grassland bushfire threat. All vegetation within the setback must be managed in accordance with defensible space requirements as defined in the Moorabool Planning Scheme.

The planning and design of all neighbourhood parks and reserves must also achieve the required setback distances from classifiable vegetation to future dwellings. By considering an offset from the existing vegetation to be retained, as well as a speculative offset from future dwellings we can define which areas of the reserve must be designed for defensible space management, and which areas can be planted more densely.

| Orientation | Highest threat vegetation | Slope under classifiable vegetation | Setback Distance from future dwellings | Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) |
|-------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| North       | Grassland                 | Downslope 0-5°                      | 22m                                    | 12.5                        |
| East        | Woodland                  | Flat                                | 33m                                    | 12.5                        |
| East        | Grassland                 | Flat                                | 19m                                    | 12.5                        |
| West        | Grassland                 | Downslope 15-20°                    | 32m                                    | 12.5                        |

Fig. 8 - BAL for Grassland to the North, East and West of the site.

| Orientation | Highest threat vegetation | Slope under classifiable vegetation | Setback Distance from the woodland vegetation to future dwellings. | Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) |
|-------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| All Aspects | Woodland                  | Flat                                | 33m  | 12.5                        |

Fig. 9 - BAL for Woodland vegetation within the site.



Fig. 10 - Bushfire Hazard Site Assessment (100m)



05.

# OPEN SPACE NETWORK PLAN

Configuration

The arrangement and quantity of designated public open space in the Hopetoun Park North West precinct has been developed with reference to the relevant guiding documents outlined above, in addition to the range of locational and site specific constraints and opportunities, including those related to ecology, drainage and neighbourhood character as outlined above.

Given the site constraints that limit pedestrian and cycling access beyond the Hopetoun Park locality, the need for a comprehensive network of neighbourhood parks linked via a network of pedestrian and cycle connections, was identified as the key design objective for open space on the site.

In considering where best to locate the neighbourhood parks, the distribution of unencumbered open space was determined taking into account the recommendation of both the various PSP Guidelines and the Moorabool Planning Scheme, including identifying the importance of delivering a neighbourhood park within a 400m walkable catchment of at least 95 per cent of all dwellings (without the need to negotiate significant barriers).

An Open Space Network Plan is included at Figure 11 on the following page. The key elements of the Plan are discussed in the following sections.

Connectivity – Walking and Cycling Network

A comprehensive on and off-road path network is proposed and shown on the Open Space Network plan. Integration with the existing informal escarpment tracks and open spaces will result in a perimeter track circuit of approximately 7km in length. On-road shared paths are proposed to complement this circuit and provide for a broad range of experiences for the community. The completed network offers an extensive and varied sequence of experiences – at once servicing the Hopetoun Park North West population and enriching the neighbourhood for the existing development to the south.

Refer to the Connectivity Analysis Plan at Figure 12 for a conceptual overview of the integration between existing and proposed amenity.

Public Open Space Network – Unencumbered Open Space

The Open Space Network Plan provides for a diverse and engaging network of public open space which seeks to provide a range of amenities and leisure experiences. The Hopetoun Park plateau is a unique and challenging landscape, and all landscape features must be designed to be hardy and tolerant of harsh environmental conditions.

Each of the unencumbered open space reserves are described briefly below.

District Park

NP-01 is a 2.2 hectare open space reserve proposed to be co-located centrally in the precinct with the local activity centre, as well as a kinder/Maternal Child Health/Community Centre and a two hectare conservation reserve (discussed further below). It will provide a broad range of amenity including a multipurpose unobstructed kick-a-bout area (nominally dimensioned 108 x 71m), sporting goals, tennis court and half basketball court, pump track facilities, a distric level playground and adequate shelter. Paired with the local activity centre, this reserve will serve as an inclusive and engaging hub for the precinct and existing Hopetoun Park community. With the level of amenity provided, community expectations will necessitate a greater ongoing maintenance commitment than the other neighbourhood parks.

It has been established that the size and shape of the District Park is sufficient to cater for the above facilities with ample flexibility for a variety of configurations. However the ultimate layout and configuration for this space will be subject to a detailed site analysis and design process as part of a landscape masterplanning process as required by the DPO Schedule.

Neighbourhood Park

NP-02 is placed strategically to deliver unencumbered open space to the proposed community within a 400m walkable catchment, and will supplement NP-01 with a narrower focus on passive recreation and play amenity. The emphasis in these parks will be provision of junior play equipment with recreational and social amenity suitable for local activities and events.

Escarpment Linear Reserves

NP-03 is located on the western escarpment bounding the precinct. This generally linear reserve offers spectacular views to surrounding valleys, settlements and landscape formations and the rich geological history of the plateau is evident in the rocky outcrops and dramatic embankments visible in these areas. Whilst this linear reserve has a minimum width of 20m metres, in many places the reserve widens significantly to approximately 110 metres in some instances. The areas of passive open space within this reserve that are additional to the 20 metres recommended by DELWP (now DEECA) are shown clearly in Figure 14 where the passive open space is identified as light green.

Any landscape treatment of these reserves will be required to be sympathetic of views to and from the site as well as the potential for any works to exacerbate erosion of the escarpments. A 5 metre wide revegetation strip consisting of EVC appropriate species is intended to protect the top of the escarpment by stabilising soils and limiting access to these areas. An escarpment landscape treatment concept has been prepared, outlining an approach that is sympathetic to existing conditions, whilst completing the perimeter walking and cycling track and creating opportunities for lookouts and other passive experiences. Refer Figure 13.



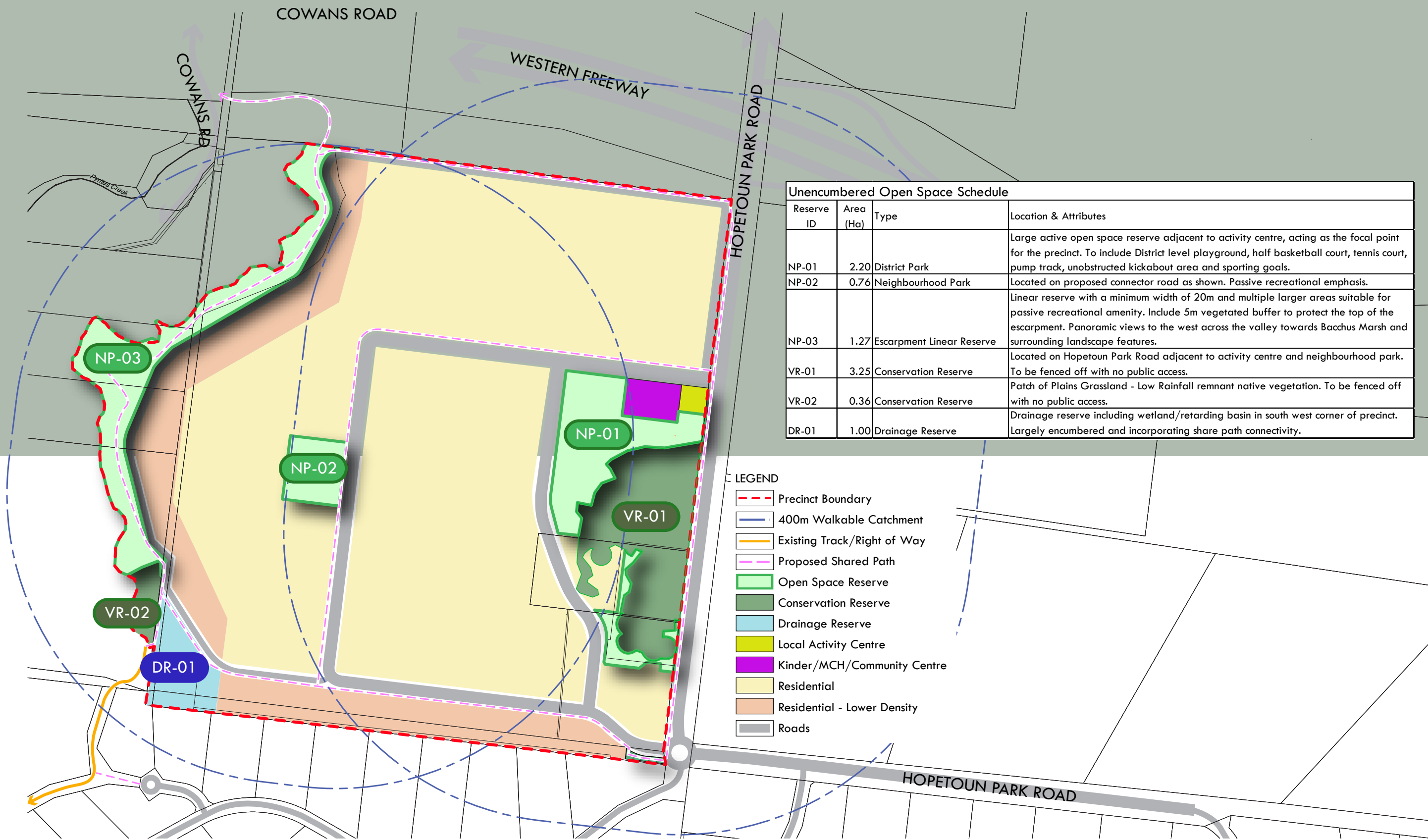
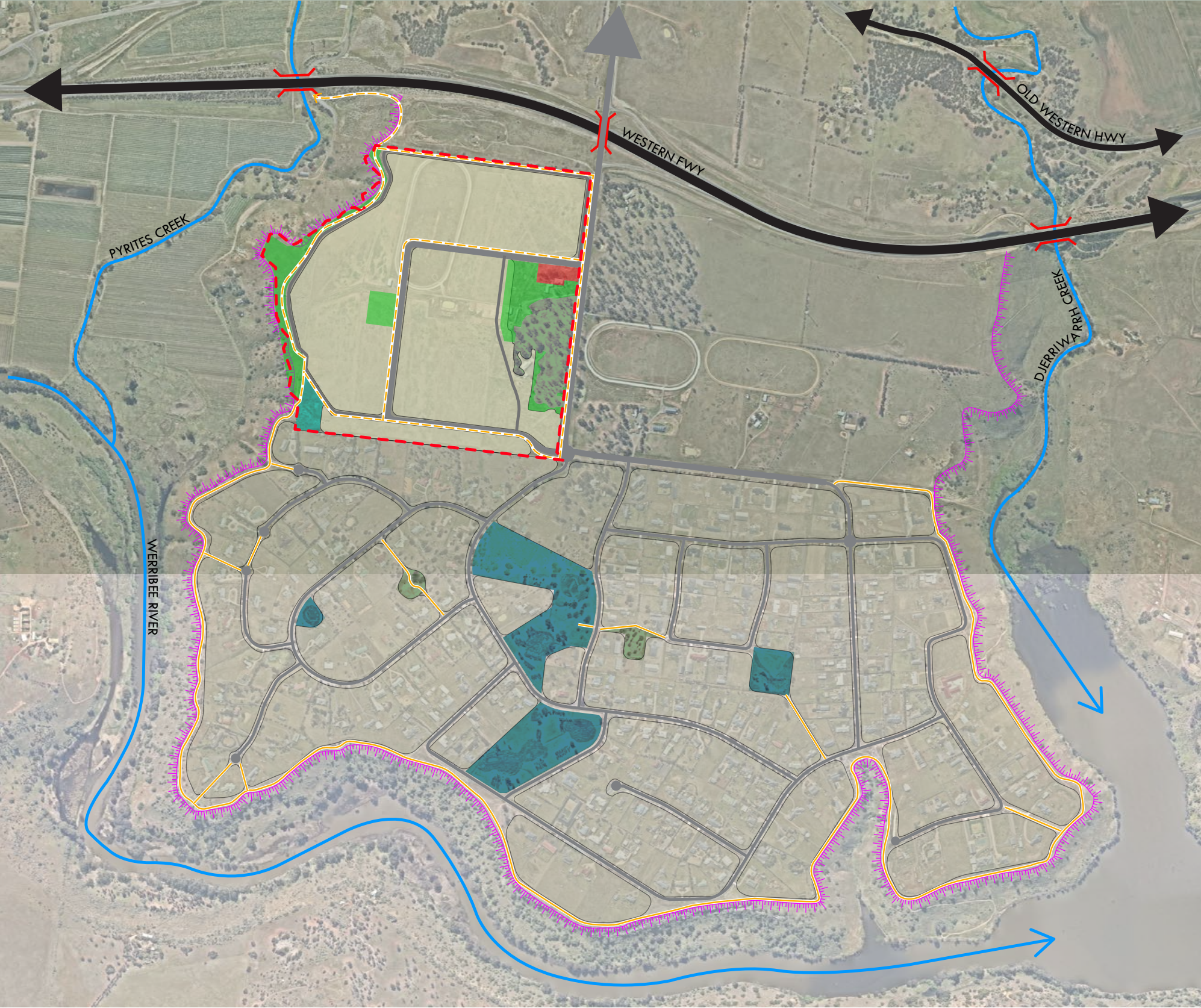


Fig. 11 Open Space Network Plan





LEGEND

- Subject Site
- Existing Residential
- Proposed Residential
- Existing Drainage Reserve
- Proposed Drainage Reserve
- Encumbered Open Space
- Unencumbered Open Space
- Escarpment Edge
- Existing Track/Right of Way
- Proposed Pedestrian Connectivity
- Activity Centre
- Waterway

|                          |        |
|--------------------------|--------|
| Existing Perimeter Track | 5.93km |
| Proposed Perimeter Track | 0.98km |
| Total Perimeter Track    | 6.91km |

# Connectivity Analysis

## Hopetoun Park North

ref: WC201909  
rev: C  
date: 16 August 2023  
drawn: HW

NTS @ A3



LANDSCAPE & URBAN DESIGN  
abn: 22 634 500 351

please note:  
This plan is based on preliminary information only and may be subject to change as a result of formal Council/Authority advice, detailed site investigations and confirmation by survey



Fig. 12 Connectivity Analysis Plan



**Conservation Reserves**

The precinct includes 3.88Ha of land nominated as conservation reserves (VR-01 & VR-02). These reserves will be fenced off with no public access.

The area that has been identified as Grey Box Woodlands (as previously discussed in Section 4, refer Figure 5) is recommended by Nature Advisory that it be fenced with no public access to be available to avoid any impacts on the ground layer of the understorey vegetation.

It is noted that the (then DELWP) comments recommended the application of the Environmental Significance Overlay Schedule 7 to the VR01 and this is what is proposed as part of the this proposed Amendment. It is also noted that the proposed Development Plan overlay schedule requires management plans to be established to guide the future management and maintenance of the conservation areas. Both of these tools will ensure the appropriate protection and management of these areas in perpetuity.

**Water Management**

The drainage reserve adjacent to developable land (DR-01) will integrate with the open space network where appropriate by co-locating with the lineal reserve and path networks. Limited amenity (such as seating) can be provided where appropriate.

It is noted that stormwater management has been considered with an emphasis on minimising escarpment erosion and providing a best practice water quality outcome. Revegetation works and ongoing management in drainage reserves will also provide a valuable boost to biodiversity on the plateau.

**Street Tree Considerations**

Analysis of local soil types and environmental conditions must be a guiding consideration for appropriate street tree selection and effective establishment. Strong prevailing winds and minimal existing canopy cover in the developable land will mean the future community stand to benefit greatly from a reliable street tree selection, encouraging walking, cycling and activation of streetscapes throughout the precinct.

Where the bushfire risk assessment identifies a streetscape as part of a Defendable Space setback, street trees must be set out and spaced such that the mature canopy of each tree is separated by at least five metres (5m). See the street tree spacing diagram (page 11).



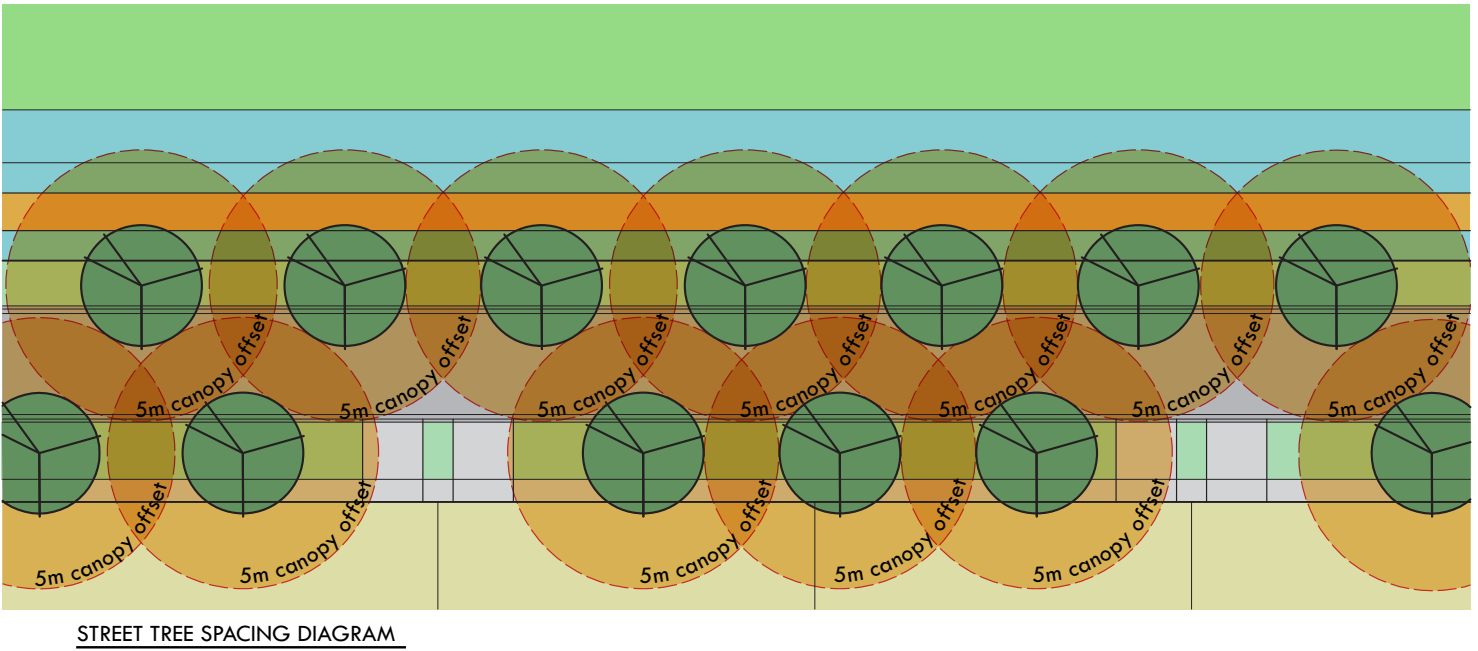
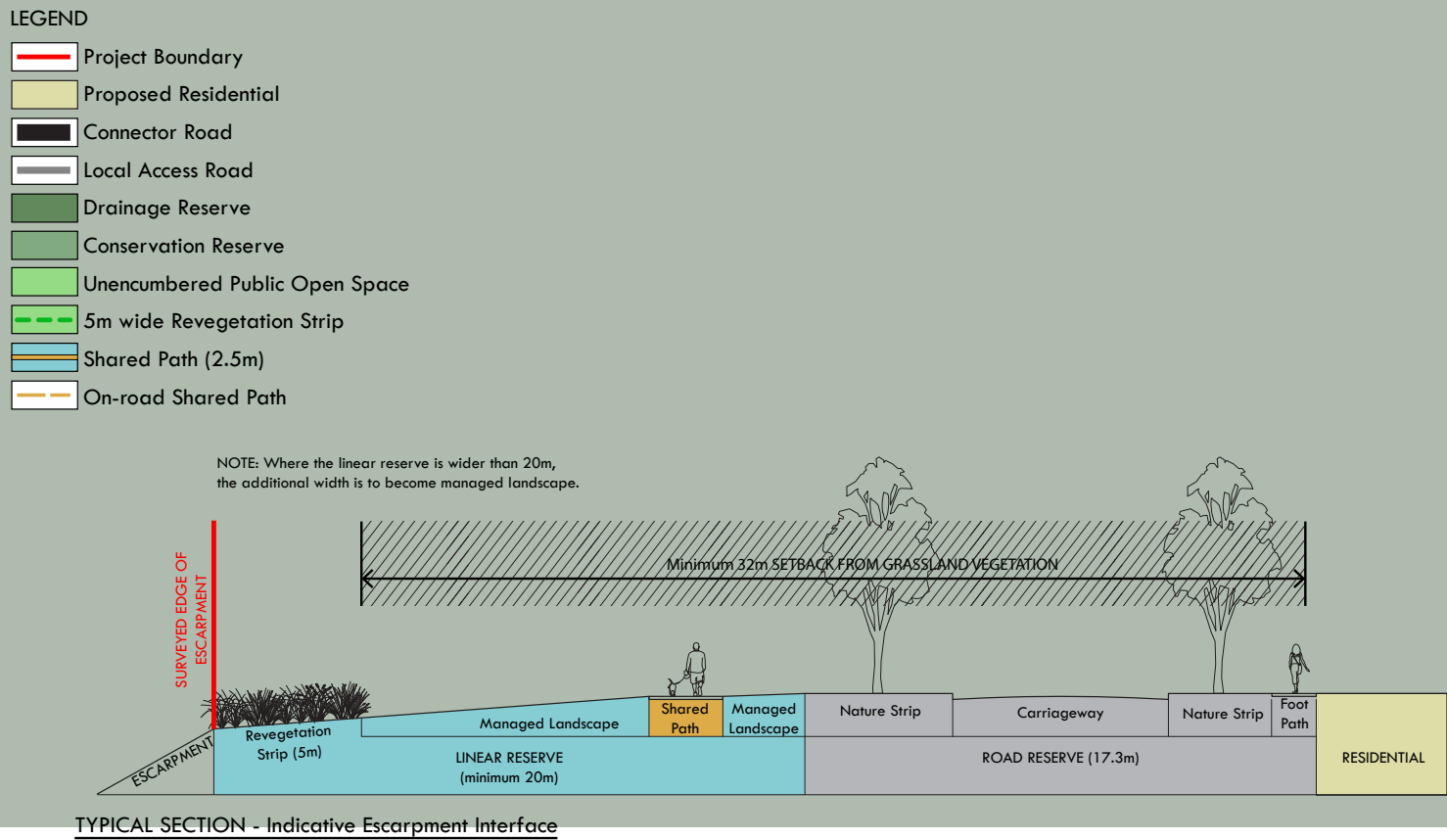


Fig. 13 Western Escarpment Landscape Treatment



06.

# KEY ISSUES

## Appropriateness of Open Space Provision – Quantity

An Indicative Land Budget Plan has been prepared by Millar Merrigan to demonstrate that the level of open space provision is contextually sufficient and appropriate. It should be acknowledged that the adjoining plan is indicative with final layouts and detailed open space calculations subject to Development Plan and permit processes. Based on this plan, the overall land budget in terms of unencumbered and encumbered open space is expected to be as shown on the Open Space Network Plan, and as follows.

It can be seen that 6.8 percent of the Site Area is proposed to be unencumbered open space in the form of the District Park, the neighbourhood parks and linear reserves. BMPPG considers that the minimum 20m linear open space along the excarpment should be counted as creditable open space as the design intent shown in Figure 13 is to landscape these areas as open space. To comply with the recommendations of the bushfire risk assessment it will be necessary to deliver managed landscape conditions in the majority of this linear reserve, which is an excellent opportunity for passive recreational landscape amenity. Whilst adding the 20m lineal reserve to unencumbered public open space would add another 4% this is a moot point as even without counting it the statutory minimum 5% is far exceeded and in any event, it is a theoretical exercise which doesn't change the practical delivery and future use of this reserve area.

The open space areas are evenly distributed throughout the precinct. As outlined in Section 5, these parks have been located to provide an accessible diversity of amenity experiences tailored to community needs that will be distinctive and responsive to local character and surrounding land use, within 400 metres walkable catchment of the majority of future dwellings. The quantity and diversity of open space is considered to meet and exceed the anticipated needs of the future population of the precinct. Further analysis of the amenities proposed for these open space areas is discussed further below.

Encumbered open space comprises an additional 11.4 percent of the Site Area encompassing the lineal reserve, drainage reserves and identified conservation reserves. The pedestrian/cycle linkages shown on the Open Space Network Plan will provide a sensitive interface to the encumbered open space areas and incorporate them into the broader open space network where appropriate.

The location, quantity and diversity of open space areas proposed ensures any subsequent development will retain the 'open feel' character of the surrounding landscape and settlement.

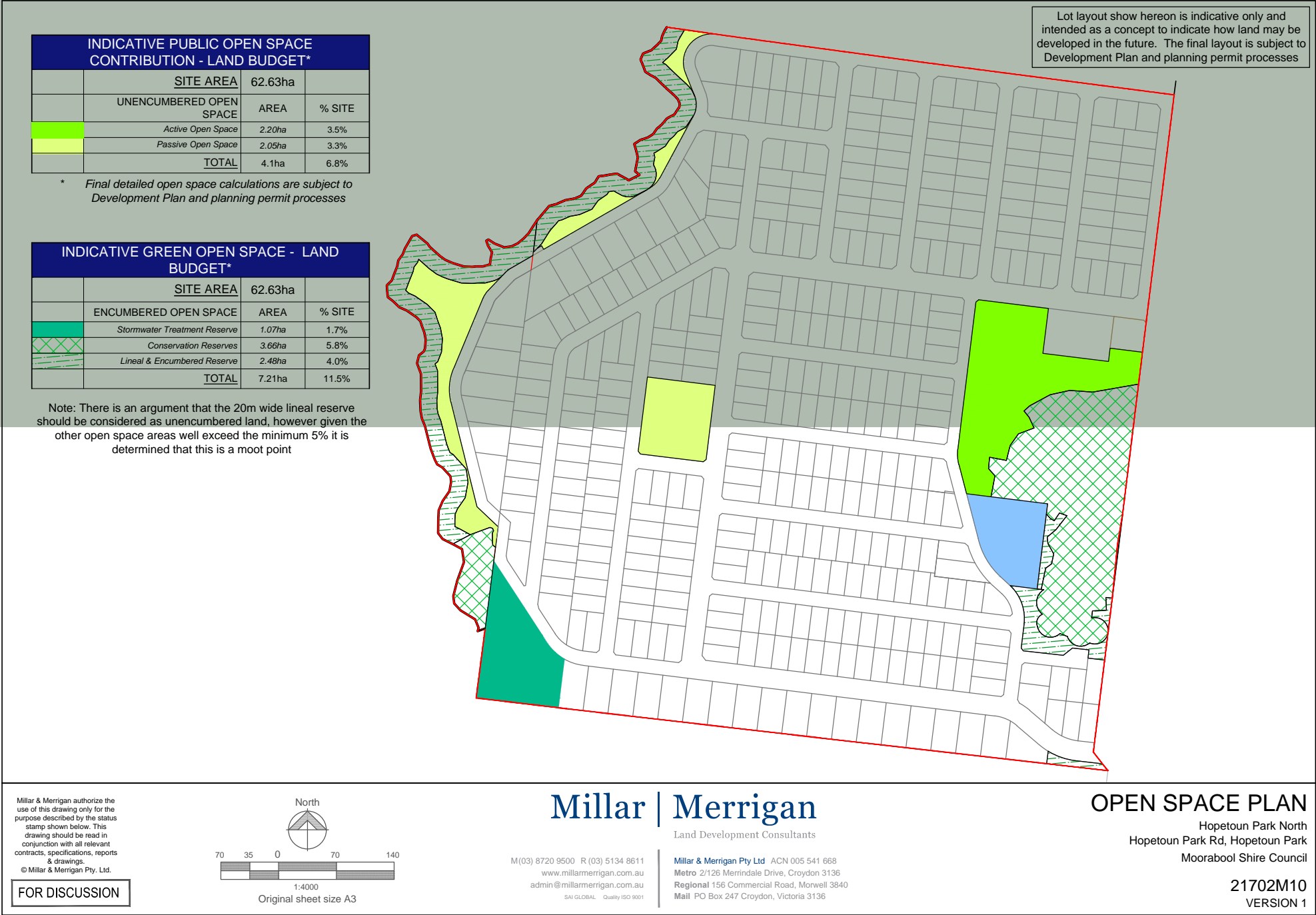


Fig. 14 Draft Land Budget Plan



**Appropriateness of Open Space – Quality**

Section 5 outlined the facilities and amenities that are proposed for the various open space areas in the Hopetoun Park North West Precinct. As previously outlined, the District Park is to be the focal point of the open space network and will include the following key features:

- An unobstructed multipurpose space of a minimum dimension of 108 x 71m;
- Tennis Court;
- District level playground;
- BBQ facility with shelter and toilets
- Basketball half-court;
- BMX pump track;
- Path network connecting to the broader circulation network.

These facilities respond directly to those that been negotiated and agreed to between Urban Enterprise (on behalf of BMPG) and Council. The District Park, in conjunction with the neighbourhood parks and the walking and cycling paths that are proposed, meet the open space needs assessment that has been undertaken for Hopetoun Park North West. The exact location and distribution of the District open space facilities will be developed as part of the Landscape Masterplan process as required by the Development Plan taking into account relevant interface treatments.

**Cycle/Pedestrian Links**

Careful consideration has been given to the internal cycle and pedestrian links for the Hopetoun Park North West precinct to ensure non-car travel is supported and encouraged for local journeys. As detailed in Section 5 of this report and shown on the Open Space Network Plan, a significant internal shared path network is proposed. The combination of on and off-road paths will link all future open space and conservation areas within Hopetoun Park North West (in addition to connecting to the proposed central Local Activity Centre).

The proposed shared path along the escarpment areas also provides external connections to the existing tracks further south in the established Hopetoun Park development. The new shared path connections to be provided in the Hopetoun Park North West growth area will add to an approximately 7km circuit for cyclists and pedestrians who wish to traverse the picturesque perimeter of the Hopetoun Park plateau.

The Connectivity Analysis Plan (Figure 12) best illustrates the extent of the challenge of providing connections external to the existing and proposed Hopetoun Park communities. The geographical, infrastructural and topographical barriers on every side of this area define the nature of the issues.

It is acknowledged that one of the precinct planning principles for Hopetoun Park North West contained in the Bacchus Marsh UGF at page 80 is to “Identify new public open space networks (incorporating environmental values/features, biolinks and cycling/walking trail networks), and show how these integrate with existing and proposed networks beyond the precinct”.

As noted above, given Hopetoun Park's relative geographic isolation and steep surrounding topography it was considered that the most important 'external links beyond the precinct' was the existing Hopetoun Park community to the south. Notwithstanding this, it has been agreed with Council that the subject land will also provide for a future shared path to Cowans Road north west of the site in the general location identified on the Connectivity Analysis.



07.

# CONCLUSION

It is considered that, from both a quantity (total area) and quality (nature of facilities/amenities proposed for the open space areas) perspective, the Open Space Network Plan responds appropriately to the guiding principles outlined in relevant strategic documents and guidelines, taking into account the unique locational context of Hopetoun Park North West.

The proposed provision of unencumbered open space in the Hopetoun Park North West Development Plan is more than adequate to accommodate a broad range of amenities for the existing and future community, consistent with anticipated future needs. Extensive areas of encumbered open space will be integrated with unencumbered reserves to create a diverse and experientially rich network of open space for the future community. The encumbered land includes significant areas proposed to be retained for conservation purposes to ensure that existing vegetation and biodiversity values are protected and enhanced, and with appropriate consideration given to management of those areas.





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