

BAAG UDLP Submission May 22

Bulleen Art & Garden (BAAG) appreciates the opportunity to be involved in the development of SPARK - NELP plans for the precinct in which BAAG operates. We hope that our comments, questions and ideas will be useful for the community and project outcomes, Spark and BAAG.

BAAG welcomes many of the improvements Spark has made to the reference design such as the reduction in the size of the Manningham interchange, which enables BAAG to remain and the increased length of tunnels. However, detailed planning is still not complete. The successful outcome of many aspects of the project described in the UDLP will depend on these details.

BAAG has commented on areas which have been part of our daily lives for years and in which we have experience and expertise. BAAG has been fortunate to have been given regular feedback from Spark and NELP, and discussions are ongoing. We are drawing attention to issues where the detail or outcomes are still not clear, or which are particularly important to BAAG and/or the local community. We assume that Spark will follow the spirit and letter of aspects we have not addressed.

These comments, queries and suggestions relate primarily to the section of NELP from Heide to the Bulleen Drive-in site, although some are also relevant for the project as a whole. Our input is informed by feedback from Spark as well as the UDLP and decades of on ground involvement.

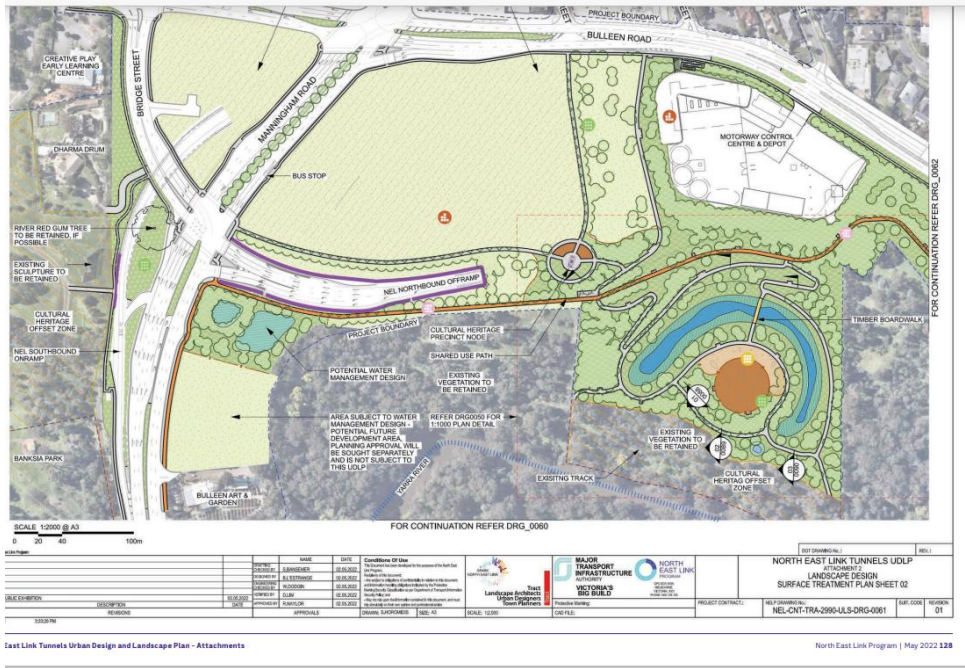
We understand that the objectives and principles underpinning the UDS approved by the minister (https://bigbuild.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/525593/NEL-Urban-Design-Strategy-Approved.pdf) will be followed in developing plans for the area

General UDLP Comments on Community, Cultural and Environmental aspects

BAAG recognises general positive outcomes for our area in the update NEL design, including:

- *Increased area of parklands and conservation areas, at least partly due to the simplification of the Manningham Interchange and the increased length of the tunnel.*
- *The new Cultural Wetlands Area.*
- *Measures taken to save the River Red Gum. This is a fantastic outcome.*
- *25 year time frame of responsibility for the project, including revegetation projects.*
- *The architectural design of the project infrastructure is distinctive and a positive addition to the area.*
- *The land bridge further south from our area.*

Green space between potential redevelopment, or BAAG offset land and the North East Link exit ramp



BAAG supports the response for 5b (which indicates this section of open space) p143 UDLP that: *Natural elements and Indigenous plantings will be used to manage overland flows through creation of billabongs and waterways, ensuring hydrological expertise informs decision, while making incorporating strategies to improve water quality. This Water Sensitive Urban Design approach in at the Manningham Road Interchange will showcase and improve biodiversity through treating stormwater, enhancing, and protecting habitat of the Birrarung*

The map on p 128 of the UDLP Landscape design document shows a potential water management design for this land

It would also help would help fulfill the connectivity directive in the UDS(p145) KEY PLACE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS and comply with the Bulleen Precinct Land use Framework: *“Improve the interface of the Yarra Valley Parklands with the interchange and transport infrastructure. Use landscaping to reveal scenic views and reinforce visual links to the natural environment, and filter views towards infrastructure. Plant indigenous vegetation to support local biodiversity and habitat”.*

Parking and Access to open space

We note that there is no provision for parking or vehicle access to open space, including the new cultural wetlands. The cultural wetlands are an area where the significant new works are hoped to encourage significant visitation to take the pressure off the Bolin Bolin Billabong area. It is also planned to increase visitation to other sections of the river

Cultural Wetlands

Wetlands at the former Bulleen Drive-in site are a great idea and gives continuity to the visitor experience and to some extent returns the site to what it was pre- white settlement when the area boasted a series of billabongs. This proposal should be beneficial for revegetation and regeneration of the area, water treatment as well as an expression of Wurrundjeri culture.

We are pleased to note Spark comments that: *The wetland area is both a key feature and part of the Water Sensitive Urban Design, which means it plays a functional role in managing water run-off. Spark is committed to providing*

more information about flood and water sensitive urban design during the detailed design process in ongoing consultation with BAAG.

We have some suggestions for the more detailed design phase.

- Water may need to be treated before it enters the main wetland, and water flow regulated.
- **Previous planning for the area.** BAAG has been consulting Gary French, the ex Parks Victoria senior planner who was responsible for previous plans for wetlands in the old drive-in site. Would it be useful for him to share his extensive experience with the Spark team?.
- Garry French has advised that if the design of the proposed cultural wetlands delivered treated environmental water to the remnant billabong at the rear of Ilma Court it would go some way to rehabilitating it as well as providing long term protection to the ancient River Red Gums that line its banks. This billabong once extended across that former Bulleen Drive-in site. The ecology of this billabong would be enhanced if treated water is provided to the billabong from June to September (typical natural cycle) then for the remainder of the year be discharge into the Yarra River.
- There has been a previous Planning Panel for the former Bulleen drive-in site. The footprint of the proposed cultural wetlands appears smaller than that previously proposed at this location to treat a proposed redeveloped on the former Bulleen Drive-in site and the stormwater generated from the wider Bulleen area that is currently piped through this site.

Revegetation

The UDLP shows:

there will be more than 4,500 planted across the North East Link Tunnels package. Diversity of species is important to ensure biodiversity and habitat conservation. The species list contains more than 11 different indigenous Eucalypt species. There will also be a net gain in tree canopy by 2045. Tree replacement is proposed to be a mixture of indigenous and non-indigenous species and will be addressed through Spark's Tree Replacement Plan under EPR AR3

BAAG supports these measures and is pleased to see that there is a long term requirement for revegetation outcomes which guarantees a net gain in tree canopy by 2045 as outlined in:

- the Yarra_Strategic_Plan_Final_2022_Part2B.pdf (water.vic.gov.au) (p113).
- EPR AR3 - Implement a Tree Canopy Replacement Plan “Develop and implement a Tree Canopy Replacement Plan to replace the canopy of native vegetation and amenity plantings removed as a result of the project and achieve a net gain in tree canopy cover by 2045.....” This is important due to the possibility that a large number of trees planted may not survive to maturity

We would also assume that there are also requirements for a functional ecosystem with understory as required, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas.

Revegetation maintenance program

Objective 4.1 Enduring & durable also needs to extend to include the environmental and ecological elements.

A 25-year period looking after revegetation projects is excellent, however, maintenance and how revegetation is carried out is extremely important.

Maintenance of revegetated areas needs to be overseen by a qualified, professional contractor experienced in revegetation. We have been receiving advice from Alan Noy, a revegetation expert with extensive experience, including helping us with our works around the BAAG perimeter as well as much larger projects. He suggests that revegetation works should be seen as a long-term undertaking – not all done two years under capital works and then handover to the maintenance company that often has no real experience in running the revegetation maintenance. Also, if the handover is to an entity such as Parks Victoria then a guaranteed realistic long-term budget needs to be established. We will attach a document sourced from Alan Noy which gives an example of a well thought out and monitored revegetation program.

There needs to be a strategic staged implementation program with clear goals to be reached and which is monitored. Guidelines can be found in SERA National Standards for the Practice of Ecological Restoration in Australia. Yarra Riverkeepers are among the many organisations which follow these guidelines. Alan Noy would share these principles with Spark staff.

There are local conservation groups and organisations which could have a valuable contribution to the NELP area and surrounds. Support of such organisations could be a cost effective way to deliver benefits to the area. BAAG has worked closely with the Friends of the Yarra Valley Parks over many years, including community planting days and revegetation projects around BAAG and the Bolin Bolin billabong. BAAG is also supporting the Riverkeepers with a current revegetation project in the Banyule Wetlands. There are also other groups active in the area including the Riverlands and Warringal Conservation

BAAG Revegetation Program

- The BAAG has run a revegetation program along Yarra from the Manningham Bridge to Kim Close since 1996. This area is essential for the continuation of fauna corridors as specified in the UDS and should be supported.
- Rehabilitation of Little Bolin and help with BAAG revegetation could fulfil UDS Resilience and sustainability principles (UDS Page 53 5A and 5B) and [Yarra Strategic Plan Final 2022 Part2B.pdf \(water.vic.gov.au\)](#) p113 *“Works associated with the North East Link will include landscaping within the project area that will seek to **maximise habitat value and connectivity** for native fauna where suitable to the landscape and location. Tree planting may also be required outside the project boundary as part of the project’s strategy to achieve a net gain in tree canopy by 2045”*
- Sparks commitment - *We wish to work with BAAG throughout delivery to identify how we may support ongoing landscape revitalisation work, although There is currently no intention to conduct specific rehabilitation of areas outside the project boundary. Spark will work with BAAG and other stakeholders to identify opportunities where supporting such work may be possible.*

Environmental centre

This project is an opportunity to set aside land for an environment centre to promote the values of the precinct.

Such a centre could:

- Provide a long term home for **Sustainable Gardening Australia (SGA)**
- Include other environmental groups, including those with an interest in indigenous plants and bush foods.
- Be surrounded by gardens, including indigenous plants and bush foods.

- Provide education activities and carrying out its work on-line connecting gardeners of all types,
- Promote community connection with nature.
- Make a valuable contribution to a cultural precinct
- Act as a meeting point for volunteers interested in starting and maintaining revegetation projects.
- Be associated with an arts space (shared meeting place, exhibition, or studio space,

The scale of such a centre could range from a small building with an office and meeting room surrounded by gardens and bushland to a larger centre, possibly including arts activities depending on space and funds.

Sustainable Gardening Australia (SGA) has proposed such a centre. It is an independent not-for-profit organisation. SGA works towards creating vibrant and sustainable communities and a healthy, biodiverse planet, by:

- encouraging, educating and enabling home and professional gardeners to adopt sustainable gardening practices to protect and enhance the natural environment;
- and providing information and education, and carrying on research about, the natural environment.

SGA is completely independent from BAAG but since its inception more than 20 years ago BAAG has provided offices and support for its activities. It would be beneficial for SGA to gain a long term, independent space for its operations, and this project may provide an opportunity for this to happen.

We have been told that:

Spark wishes to explore this opportunity with Sustainable Gardening Australia outside the UDLP process.

We consider that designating some land, possibly adjacent to BAAG or the cultural wetlands, would be a valid part of the UDLP as it would fulfil so many of the UDS objectives including:

- Objective 1.5 Architectural contribution
- Objective 4.3 Environmental sustainability
- Objective 5.1 Improved amenity
- Objective 6.1 Putting people first
- Objective 6.2 Places for people

Cultural

Bulleen Precinct Framework Plan

The Bulleen Precinct has an extremely rich cultural heritage, as has been recognised by focussing on this area with the proposed Bulleen Precinct Land Use Framework Plan and the proposed Cultural Precinct. These principles are reinforced on page 151 of the North East Link Urban Design Strategy. Spark has engaged with Wurundjeri to develop a solution that:

- *Re-establishes a significant natural wetland and parkland of cultural and spiritual significance to the Wurundjeri people and provides an important community and learning asset with Shared Use Paths to existing connections.*
- *Connects Heide Museum of Modern Art, one of Australia's leading public art institutions, with this renewed natural amenity by way of a walking and cycling trail.*

- Creates more recreation and open space at Yarra River Parklands.
- Creates the opportunity for future development sites, and opens up previously concealed view line corridors to the Yarra River (Birrarung). (from written responses to previous questions)

Post settlement arts heritage

This precinct, including the Bolin Bolin Billabong and surrounding area which once had an extensive system of billabongs and wetlands is an extremely important area for the Kulin Nation. This important cultural heritage is being rightly recognised. BAAG welcomes all these measures but suggests there is also room for recognising post settlement culture, and for improving connections, as discussed elsewhere.

However, this precinct has other cultural heritage. It is the birthplace of the 2 most important art movements in Australia, being the Heidelberg School and the Angry Penguins at Heide, as well as continuing to nurture thriving multicultural and contemporary arts, which should also be recognised by more than a physical SUP connection to Heide.

Support for this can be found in The NELP Urban Design Strategy pages 18 and 145:

The Bulleen Precinct Draft Framework p47 Deliver an expanded cultural precinct centred on the relationship between the arts, nature and Traditional Owner heritage and anchored by Heide Museum of Modern Art.

And within the Vision for Advisory Committee Draft Framework Plan Feb21 p36:

*This is a place of spiritual connection where layered stories – **Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, colonial and modern** – are celebrated and kept alive.
This is where people and places connect - to a destination of international significance.*

Art, Community, Place. BAAG considers there are many opportunities to develop an ongoing dynamic public art program which engages local artists and the community as suggested in the document “Art, Community, Place - A vision for a dynamic public art program for North East Link responsive to local heritage and community” developed by Sanctum Theatre under the auspices of Bulleen Art & Garden (BAAG). It advocates for an interesting and authentic inclusion of art into the Project. Such local art would complement international aspirations anchored by Heide.

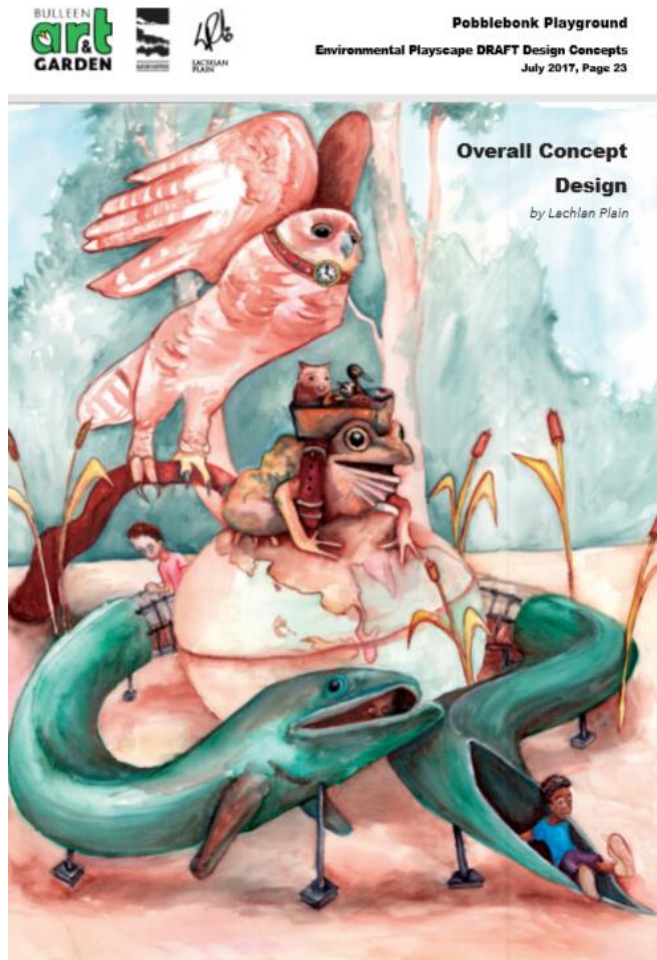
We welcome the Spark response to this proposal as follows:

Spark notes BAAG has provided an art, community and place proposal. Wherever we can, we are committed to helping realise this vision through involving BAAG in artwork development for construction compound hoardings and screens. We will also develop our wayfinding and interpretive signage strategy with BAAG to support recognition of pre- and post-settlement arts heritage.

Although BAAG would like to see a further emphasis on arts in the precinct

Pobblebonk Playground

One example of a community focussed art project is a proposal by BAAG to build The Pobblebonk Playground, a large-scale sculptural playspace which invokes a magical dreamscape populated by local fauna. It uses art promote environmental values and has the potential to become a landmark for the area near the Yarra and BAAG. BAAG has undertaken planning for this project, but not determined a location, but anticipates it would be close to BAAG.



The Cultural Landscape Trail



The Cultural Landscape Trail was an initiative worked on by BAAG, Parks Victoria, Heide and the City of Manningham in the late 1990s and early 2000s which promoted the local environment, Wurrundjeri and post settlement arts heritage and linked Heide and Bulleen Park by a trail beside the Yarra River. It is a similar concept to the cultural precinct outlined in the recent Land Use Framework. It also includes the trail referred to as “existing connection” in the UDLP maps, (although it is no longer a functional link).

Achievements of this group included the development of a map showing significant cultural and environmental highlights; revegetation works; the installation of 3 sculptures and a large scale map of the precinct in Bulleen Park; works on the first part of a shared path along this link. Projects were mainly funded by the City of Manningham and BAAG. “Manna Gum” and “Eel” are sculptures commissioned by this project which are located in Bulleen Park, and are examples of relatively small-scale artworks by local artists

The Cultural Landscape map will not be relevant after NELP construction, and there are also gaps in the trail, but could be updated. A large map of the Cultural Landscape Precinct is currently situated at Bulleen Park where the trail leads to the Veneto Club. An updated map of the area could also be accessed using phone technology such as QR codes

Wayfinding

BAAG supports wayfinding and opportunities to educate people about the local area and the natural environment. BAAG has raised this with Spark and it has been suggested as one way the arts heritage of the area, post European settlement as well as Wurundjeri culture, can be recognised.

- This could be done using signage at appropriate sites along the river environment.
- Topics/themes could include
 - Maps with important features of the precinct
 - Wurrundjeri culture
 - Post settlement and current arts
 - Appreciation of nature
 - How to create a bush garden at home

- Directional
- Signage could incorporate artworks by local artists. BAAG incorporates work by local artists in signage and infrastructure.
- Sculpture or other artworks by local artists. Examples are “Eel” and “Manna Gum” in Bulleen Park. This could also include functional items such as seating, fencing.
- *The UDLP* refers to wayfinding and signage in section 13.1 p179

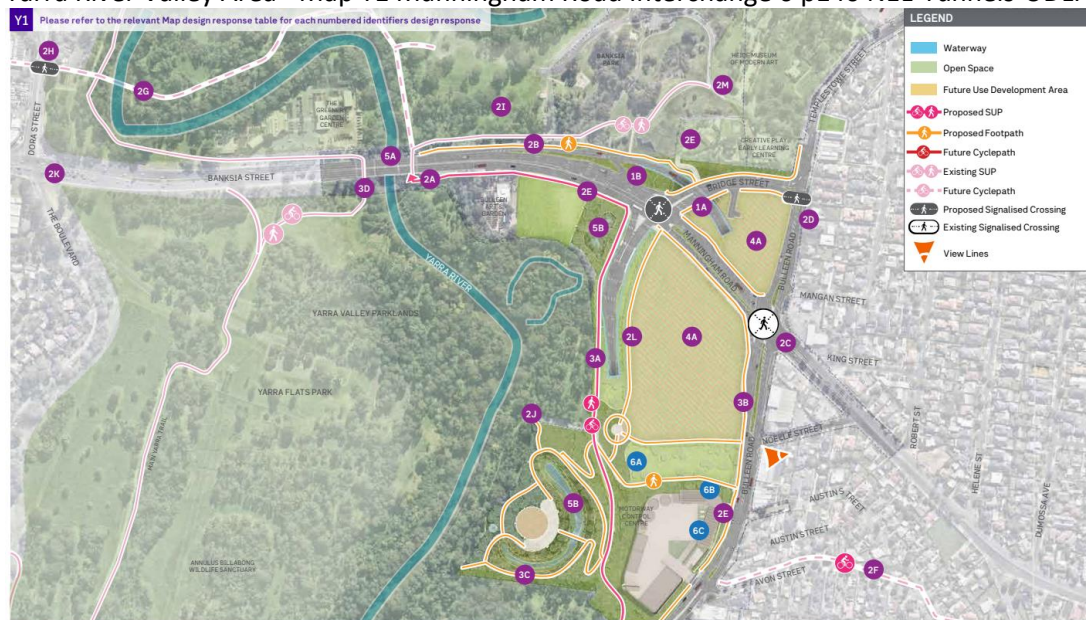
Linkages & Connections

“A key feature of the Spark design is connectivity around the Manningham Interchange precinct.”

BAAG supports this positive objective, but can see some problems.

The increased public open space area provides both a visual and physical connection for pedestrians and cyclists to the Yarra (Birrarung) River environs from Bulleen Road and reduces the visual impact on the river environs, which is a positive outcome.

Most of these connections are shown in Figure 95: Consistency with Urban Design Strategic Place - Yarra River Valley Area - Map Y1 Manningham Road Interchange 6 p140 NEL-Tunnels-UDLP



Shared path connections from Heide to the River – the new cultural wetlands and the Bolin Bolin Billabong.

Advisory committee draft Framework Feb21 p44 Objective 2

Deliver a new cultural trail connecting Bolin Bolin in the south to the Plenty River confluence with the Yarra River in the north, via Heide Museum of Modern Art, the cultural gateway and the new cultural place at the Bulleen Industrial Precinct.

The City of Manningham supports a grade separated connection along the river from Finns Reserve to Bulleen Park.

The proposed connections between Heide and the river are shown in the MapY1, but are not optimal. It is not direct or scenic, so would not be suitable for recreation or commuting.

The suggested indirect SUP connection from Heide to goes through Banksia Park to the Manningham Bridge, under the bridge, up to Manningham Rd, past BAAG, alongside the tunnel exit then through the cultural wetlands and on to Bulleen Rd.

Some problems with this are

- The need to cross the BAAG entrance, with customer and truck traffic is a significant safety concern.
- The detour to the Manningham Road Bridge, half of which is along a busy road and behind BAAG. Most pedestrians and many cyclists would use shorter options. This does not fit with requirement 13.3 P178 UDLP *Pathways are direct and convenient*.
- The Manningham Road Bridge underpass is subject to flooding.
- Most of the SUP is not grade separated.

An additional overpass crossing Manningham Road next to the Helmet Sculpture may resolve some of the issues highlighted above.

Alternative pedestrian routes are not direct either.

River Connection.

The “SPARK Design & Development Solution” document identifies existing trail infrastructure within the adjacent Yarra Valley Parklands which follows the river. It identifies the path which follows the river from the Manningham Rd Bridge to Banksia Park. This trail was the link for the Cultural Landscape Trail.

The Urban Design Strategy (UDS Page 53 2J) suggests that this, currently informal (and unusable) path be reinstated

Parks Victoria have long planned and approved (1975) the updating of this informal trail which runs from Bulleen Park to Banksia Park and connects people with the Yarra River and the natural environment alongside it. It has not been completed it due to gaps in the Crown land reserve (see attached photos).

The City of Manningham upgraded the section of the trail from Bulleen Park to the back of the Bolin Bolin Billabong as a bike path in about 2002.

It has been in use, but has become unusable and needs maintenance. It is impassable in many sections - the bridges have been removed and much of the trail is overgrown. This image was taken in February 2022 and show remains of where there was a bridge. Path is now more overgrown after recent rains



"Shared Use Trail" through the Little Bolin Billabong area

Connections and linkages to Birrarung from the cultural wetlands would be impossible with the trail in its current condition.

BAAG would like to see improvements to this trail in conjunction with the NELP, although Spark has said that paths outside the project area are not in their scope.