

1.3 HUNTINGDALE ACTIVITY CENTRE PRECINCT PLAN (FILE NO. W17-194)

Responsible Director: Peter Panagakos

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Receive and note the submissions in response to the community consultation for the Draft Huntingdale Activity Centre Precinct Plan.*
- 2. Note the Officers' response to submissions as outlined in Attachment 1 to this report.*
- 3. Adopt the Draft Huntingdale Activity Centre Precinct Plan as exhibited and in accordance with this report.*
- 4. Notes that a further report will be presented to a future Council meeting outlining an Implementation Plan to give effect to the Precinct Plan and its Vision.*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to outline the feedback received following the community consultation undertaken for the draft Huntingdale Activity Centre Precinct Plan (the draft Plan) and consider adopting the Huntingdale Precinct Plan in accordance with the officer recommendations.

The feedback (submissions) received and the Officers' response are summarised in **Attachment 1** to this report.

This report recommends that Council adopt the Huntingdale Precinct Plan in accordance with this report.

BACKGROUND

In June this year, Council resolved to release the draft Huntingdale Activity Centre Precinct Plan (the draft Plan) for community consultation in accordance with the consultation program set out in the Council report.

Prepared by PwC Consultants as lead consultants with specialist input from transport planners, economists, community infrastructure and urban design experts, the draft Plan sets out a clear framework to guide the growth of Huntingdale into the future.

The Plan identifies opportunities to transform Huntingdale into a vibrant centre contributing to the Monash NEIC including:

- Consolidating and expanding employment, innovation and residential activity

- Creating greater connectivity to and integration with the key tenants with the Monash NEIC that are driving innovation and knowledge intensive employment
- Improving the amenity and creating a better sense of place

The Huntingdale Activity Centre contains two distinct elements: a neighbourhood activity centre along Huntingdale Road adjacent to the Huntingdale train station, and surrounding employment areas to the south east, east and north-west – divided into precincts by North Road, the rail corridor and Huntingdale Road.

Huntingdale forms the western gateway to the Monash National Employment and Innovation Cluster (MNEIC) and is a common transfer point for students, staff and visitors to connect to Monash University via a dedicated bus service.

The study area for the draft Plan includes the small retail core, Jack Edwards Reserve, the surrounding industrial areas, and residential areas generally within 400m walking distance of the retail core. It also includes residential properties on the south side of Burlington Street.

DRAFT HUNTINGDALE ACTIVITY CENTRE PRECINCT PLAN

The draft Precinct Plan proposes a vision for Huntingdale as a premier location for knowledge intensive based businesses with an emphasis on education, health, technology and manufacturing. The Precinct will become a diverse village providing a range of employment, recreation and residential opportunities with well-connected transport linkages, cycling and pedestrian networks and public transport infrastructure.

In addressing the future of Huntingdale and to implement urban renewal, the draft Plan outlines three policy and action areas, or levers, that include:

- **Economic Mix** – industry and employment, retail core, residential areas
- **Access** – built form, streetscape design, public spaces, community infrastructure
- **Place** – public transport, walking and cycling, vehicles

The draft Plan proposes a series of objectives under each of these levers with specific strategies outlined for the Huntingdale as a whole, and for the nine individual Activity Areas that make up the Huntingdale Precinct Plan Area.

The draft Plan identifies five key principles for Huntingdale:

1. Fostering innovation as a cornerstone of the local economy:
 - Encourage/attract trade and investment in knowledge intensive and high value industry sectors such as advanced technology and biomedical industries that can compete in the national and international context

- Encourage/facilitate employment growth in high skilled, high wage jobs
 - Plan for economic resilience and transition to a digitised economy
2. The productive use of industrial land:
 - Recognise the changing land and site requirements necessary to attract knowledge intensive industrial sectors
 - Encourage less land intensive land uses with high employee per sqm ratio, improved amenity, reduced negative spill over and extended hours of operation to provide greater vitality
 3. The role of housing in supporting closer proximity to jobs and transport and in locations that support population growth:
 - Provide opportunities for housing in close proximity and accessible to activities that generate significant inward migration such as Monash NEIC and Clayton Medical Precinct
 - Increase mixed use developments in a manner which does not cause negative amenity impacts to adjoining and nearby sensitive interfaces
 - Increase housing density within the activity centre and around the Huntingdale Station
 4. Plan for 20 minute neighbourhoods:
 - Ensure the scale of retail and commercial activity is commensurate with the scale of the activities in the centre from both a residential and employment perspective
 - Provide transport networks that have capacity to accommodate all trips, including the provision of active transport networks (walking and cycling)
 5. Place through exemplary design
 - Mandate design excellence that is focused on creating amenity uplift and exemplary design in both the public and private realms

CONSULTATION

Community consultation on the draft Huntingdale Precinct Plan was undertaken over 8 weeks from mid-July through to the end of September 2019. The consultation included:

- Direct mail out to owners, occupiers, traders and business owners within the study area;
- Direct mail out to other interested stakeholders, Government agencies and authorities;
- Draft Precinct Plan on Council's web site with ability to make on-line comments;

- Hard copies of the Draft Precinct Plans at Libraries and customer service outlets;
- A Brochure summarising the draft precinct plan, with details of where to view the plan and how to comment. Copies of the brochure were included with the letters in the direct mail out and were available on Council's website, at Council offices, Libraries and at the drop-in session;
- Afternoon and evening drop-in session in Huntingdale;
- Notice in Monash leader
- Article in the Monash Bulletin

The background reports that informed the draft Precinct Plan were also available on Council's website.

The closing date for submissions was Thursday 26 September, and at the time of finalising this report, a total of 47 submissions had been received from residents, business and property owners, and consultants/developers on behalf of land owners. A summary of the submissions is included as **Attachment 1**.

Drop in session

A drop-in session was held on Wednesday 21 August from 2pm to 8pm at Carman's Space in Hume Street, Huntingdale. Representatives from the Consultants and Council Officers were in attendance and approximately 45 people dropped in to ask questions and discuss the draft Plan.

There was general support for the draft Plan and its aspirations to support employment and more innovative industries and commercial land uses in the centre. The need for streetscape and other public realm improvements was a strong theme on the night.

KEY ISSUES RAISED IN SUBMISSIONS

In general there was a great deal of support for the vision and directions in the draft Precinct Plan. The majority of submitters were pleased that Council had embarked upon this project, stating that Huntingdale had been neglected for too long and was in need of some attention.

Some of the submission have requested some fundamental changes to the draft Plan, with some submitters requesting the rezoning of their land. In determining on whether or not to support the changes requested, Officers have sought advice from the consultant team to ensure that submissions were considered in the context of the original intent of the draft Plan.

The Officers response to the issues raised in the submissions is included in **Attachment 1**.

The main issues raised in submissions were:

Support for Council’s vision for a transformed centre

Many submitters commented that they support the Vision for the centre and the progressive approach proposed by the Plan. Comments included: that Huntingdale needed attention, change and improvements were long overdue, and that any changes should support the distinctive character of Huntingdale.

Officer comments / recommendation

It is pleasing to note the high level of community support for the Plan. No changes are recommended to the vision or general direction of the Plan in response to submissions.

ECONOMIC MIX**Land Uses Precincts – Economic**

Submitters commented that factory areas are a wasteland in the evenings and weekends. There was concern that industry may be driven out of Huntingdale to make way for residential uses with increased Council rates. One submitter also stated that the industrial areas south of North Road have been ignored in the draft Plan.

The recent redevelopment of the former Pink Lady Chocolate factory in Hume Street as the new headquarters for Carman’s Kitchen was also seen as a great addition to the area. In addition to the use the redevelopment has brought with it great changes to the streetscape, through the undergrounding power lines and improvements to the building façade.

Other comments were that the current shops are run down and need incentives and investment to succeed, potentially a large supermarket and fewer restaurants in the centre.

Land Uses – Residential

A number of submissions raised concerns over increasing the density of residential areas in Huntingdale, and in particular 3 storey and higher medium density buildings in the surrounding residential areas.

Submitters thought that the proposal to double the residential population by 2051 was inappropriate and that residential areas should be left as they are. Submissions stating that there are many other options for increased residential density.

Submissions acknowledged that Huntingdale is a good location for quality student housing, however indicated that higher density residential uses should locate elsewhere, such as in the industrial areas.

Officer comments – Land use Precincts

The Draft Plan is a high level strategic document which seeks to articulate Council's vision for the Activity Centre for the next 25 to 30 years. The Plan does not propose, or recommend changes to the Planning Scheme or the existing pattern of commercial, industrial or residential zones in Huntingdale.

If in future Council determines to amend the planning scheme to implement any aspect of the plan, the planning scheme amendment process would require affected property owners to be notified and given the opportunity to make submissions to Council and to an Independent Planning Panel.

The industrial areas south of the railway are included in the draft Plan as Precinct 7 – an area proposed to remain as an industrial area with improved permeability, access and streetscapes.

With regard to concerns about the current mix of shops in Huntingdale, Council has little or no influence in the decisions supermarket operators and other retailers make in deciding where to locate their stores. Council can however create the conditions that will attract supermarket to Activity Centres such as Huntingdale. This is one of the objectives of the Precinct Plan. The Plan also describes a future environment for the Huntingdale Road shopping strip in line with the submitter's comments.

Officer comments – Residential land use

The draft Plan encourages well-designed medium density housing around the retail core providing additional life and activity to the Precinct's heart. The plan recommends heights of 3-4 storeys ensuring a low-medium rise built form with good access to natural light along all the streets and a reasonable response to existing residential neighbourhood character.

It should be noted that the adjacent residential properties are already in a General Residential Zone which permit buildings up to 3 storeys subject to a permit. Increasing the height 3 storey to 4 storeys is not considered to be a significant deviation from what is currently permitted under existing planning controls.

The draft Plan generally supports and encourages purpose built student accommodation around transport nodes.

Officer recommendations

No changes to the draft Precinct Plan are recommended in response to submissions.

Rezoning requests

A number of submitters have used the consultation process for the Draft Plan as an opportunity to argue for their properties to be rezoned from Industrial to Residential to facilitate a mixed use outcome, predominantly to encourage speculative residential development outcomes.

Officer comments

It is important to note that the Draft Plan was never intended as an invitation for property owners to argue for a change in zone particularly to a residential land use. In fact the Draft Precinct deliberately seeks to promote the retention and renewal of the existing industrial land as key employment areas for Huntingdale and the Monash Cluster.

The Plan does not propose, or recommend changes to fundamental zoning or land use pattern of the activity centre.

The Plan takes a long term view, with overall goal of the draft Plan designed to reconcile high value economic activity with community outcomes and ensure sustainable population and employment growth as the centre transitions from older style industrial uses and low density residential development.

The absence of a plan for Huntingdale has encouraged a small amount of property speculation in transitioning industrial areas, particularly to the south of North Road. As Monash and Melbourne have grown, there is increased need for the retention of industrial land to provide employment opportunities in well located, established areas. This is particularly the case for the eastern region of Melbourne as there has been a gradual loss of industrial and employment land in the region.

The draft Plan recognises the long term value in the retention and redevelopment of the industrial areas for employment uses. As noted earlier in the report, this transition is underway through uses such as Carman's Kitchen. The Precinct Plan will send a stronger signal to those looking to invest in employment generating uses that the industrial areas of Huntingdale are well placed for such investment and discourage speculative investment that also contributes to increases in land values.

Officer recommendations

No changes to the draft Precinct Plan, land use or zoning pattern are recommended in response to submissions.

ACCESS

Parking and Traffic

There were a number of comments made by submitters about parking and traffic issues related to the industrial land uses in the area and the inadequacy of the existing road network. A very comprehensive submission was made by Huntingdale Primary School commenting on traffic, access and movement issues throughout the precinct and the impacts on the school. The submission was accompanied by a traffic report outlining the school's concerns.

Submitters were also concerned about the lack of parking for the shopping centre and at the railway station, made worse by the increase in the number of restaurants and places of worship in the centre.

There was also the need for a taxi rank at the station, and to restrict commercial traffic in narrow streets.

Officer comments

Many of the issues raised by submitters on access and traffic relate to a range of existing operational issues, rather than to the directions of the Precinct Plan. Where they relate to operational issues such as parking, they have been referred on to the relevant Council department for further investigation and action.

Officer recommendations

No changes to the draft Precinct Plan are recommended in response to submissions.

Access and movement

Submitters indicated that there was a need to improve connectivity between Huntingdale, Monash University and Monash Medical Centre. Many bicycle paths were considered unsafe and it was thought that they should be located off-road. Zebra crossings were also needed at the shops.

A number of submissions stated that the five-way roundabout south of North Road near the school was dangerous and should be changed.

Submissions also supported a light rail service along North/Wellington Roads.

Some submissions also noted that the existing train line and North Road overpass was a major barrier to north/south movement in the activity centre and it should be undergrounded or elevated above the North Road.

Officer comments

Access and safety issues were noted across Huntingdale. As an older, more established area these issues are in part due to the original development of the industrial estates which traditionally did not require active transport infrastructure. Indeed the street layout, building stock and parking arrangements are similar to that found in Richmond, Burnley and Cremorne.

The Precinct Plan aims to address these issues through ensuring future design creates a sense of place and an urban form that allows for active transport infrastructure and supporting amenity. The widening of footpaths and provision of bicycle lanes will help to address the safety and amenity challenges that current cyclists and pedestrians face.

The Precinct Plan recognises that the existing grade separation of North Road and the railway line is a significant barrier to the functioning of the Huntingdale activity centre. The separation is causing safety issues for

pedestrians, visitors and drivers who are not familiar with the area or road network. It is recognised as a current and worsening bottle neck for traffic. The draft Plan recommends the reversal of the grade separation so that the North Road is reinstated at grade, allowing for greater connectivity in the Activity Centre. This would require the elevation or dropping of the existing rail line. This is a long term project that will require further investigation by Council to determine the best way to improve safety and accessibility across these key arterial roads.

Officer recommendations

No changes to the draft Precinct Plan are recommended in response to submissions.

PLACE

Built Form

A number of submissions were concerned about future development of residential areas, and particularly potential increases in building height. Some submitters wanted building heights to be a maximum of 8 metres and 2 storeys with increased density in commercial areas rather than residential areas.

Submitters were concerned about loss of amenity and were keen to see environmentally responsible and sustainable building and development initiatives implemented.

Officer comments

The draft Plan recommends heights of 3-4 storeys ensuring a low-medium rise built form with good access to natural light along all the streets and a reasonable response to existing residential neighbourhood character.

It should be noted that the adjacent residential properties are already in a General Residential Zone which permit buildings up to 3 storeys subject to a permit. Increasing the height 3 storey to 4 storeys is not considered to be a significant deviation from what is currently permitted under existing planning controls.

The draft Plan includes a series of design guidelines aimed at improving the quality of residential development and its integration with streetscape in Huntingdale.

Submitters' aspirations about sustainable development are supported by the draft Plan.

Officer recommendations

No changes to the draft Precinct Plan are recommended regarding built form issues in response to submissions.

Public Spaces & streetscapes

Submissions highlighted that there is currently a lack of facilities for young people such as playgrounds and community infrastructure. Open space areas are needed and should be identified on the plan.

Submissions also called out that there is a need for more seating, footpath upgrades, better lighting and general streetscape upgrades. The area along the railway and Haughton Road needs to be beautified. Also the areas around the station and overpass, a key route for students and visitors, needs more greenery and landscaping.

Officer comments

The draft Plan recognises that improved public spaces and streetscapes are an essential part of creating an attractive environment for residents, property owners and visitors, and to attract new investment to the area. The draft Plan includes conceptual streetscape design guidelines. If the draft Plan is adopted more detailed streetscape and open space planning program can be developed to assist in delivering streetscape improvements.

Officer recommendations

No changes to the draft Precinct Plan are recommended regarding public spaces and streetscapes in response to submissions.

Community Infrastructure

Submitters commented that upgrading of community facilities is needed to support the current and future population – facilities including Maternal and Child Health Centres, toy library, play-spaces.

Other submitters stated that new secondary school is needed in the area.

Officer comments

With the likely increase in both residential and worker population, the draft Plan makes broad recommendations with respect to the need to provide additional community facilities for the future community. There will be a need to undertake ongoing monitoring of the population of the area, in line with the overall monitoring of service provision across Monash.

Officer recommendations

No changes to the draft Precinct Plan are recommended in relation to community infrastructure in response to submissions.

Other comments

There were a range of other comments received including:

- Public drinking is an issue in the area
- Shared workspaces are needed in the area to support start-up businesses
- ESD principles should be followed
- Graffiti is a major issue in the shop and factory areas

Officer comments

Many of these additional issues raised are existing operational issues and have been referred to the relevant Council department for action.

Officer recommendations

No changes to the draft Precinct Plan are recommended in response to these matters.

FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRECINCT PLAN

Once the draft Huntingdale Activity Centre Precinct Plan is endorsed and adopted by Council, an implementation plan, based on the actions and proprieties outlined in the Plan will be prepared for further discussion and endorsement.

The implementation plan will identify where Council should focus its efforts. This could include nominating which of the Activity Areas should be prioritised for further investigation having regard to the submissions received, economic conditions and alignment with the aspirations and recommendations of the Plan.

Further, more targeted consultation with affected property owners would be required in the implementation of the Precinct Plan.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The preparation of the draft Plan is consistent with following Council and State Government Policies.

Consistency with Council Strategies and PoliciesMonash 2021: A Thriving Community (2010)

This long term strategy states (as relevant) that our community values convenience (we are in walking distance to all we need); a balance between residential, commercial and industrial development; good connections to bus and train services, and easy access by train/freeway; we have a friendly, community based atmosphere in shopping strips; and a safe place to live and bring up a family.

Monash Council Plan (2017-2021)

The following are relevant strategic objectives and strategies from the Council Plan:

A liveable sustainable city

- Strengthening our strategic policy and local planning framework
- Advocacy for enhancement of the National Employment Cluster

- Increasing our community engagement and education about town planning [...]
- *Inviting open and urban spaces*
- Ensuring the walkability of our city
- Improving our green open spaces and linking up our bicycle trails
- Enhancing our activity centres with an increased focus on the moveability and prioritisation of pedestrians
- *An inclusive community*
- Delivering integrated planning and community strengthening
- *Responsive and efficient services*
- Enhancing community consultation and involvement in our decision-making

The Council Plan identified the following relevant priority projects:

- Enhancing the Monash Planning Scheme by reviewing the scheme and by undertaking structure plans for Huntingdale and Mount Waverley. (Related strategic indicator: number of structure plans completed)
- Advocacy for the Rowville Rail and Huntingdale Station redevelopment.
- Improve our activity centres and pedestrian movements therein.

Monash Economic Development Strategy & Action Plan 2018

The recently adopted Economic Development Strategy has four Key Strategic Directions. The relevant directions are:

- *Direction 2 – Places for Business: connected, accessible, quality and diverse employment precincts*
This direction specifically actions the preparation of the Precinct Plans for Clayton and Huntingdale Activity Centres.
- *Direction 3. Diversity in Business: Facilitating economic growth and prosperity through diversity, collaboration and innovation.*
The Precinct Plans promote diverse business opportunities that build on the strengths of each of the Activity Centres.
- *Direction 4. Attracting business: Investment, industry leaders, innovators and emerging talent.*
The Precinct Plans propose action to attract infrastructure and employment investment in leading sectors such as health, education and research in Clayton. Huntingdale will be positioned for investment in collaboration, innovators and emerging talent.

Monash Housing Strategy (2014)

This strategy has formed the basis for Amendment C125 to the Monash Planning Scheme and identifies locations suitable for substantial residential growth, and areas suitable for limited and incremental growth. Amendment C125 has sought to implement Stage 1 of the housing strategy, which focussed growth around the Clayton activity centre and applying the Neighbourhood Residential Zone to sensitive areas around creeks.

The Precinct Plans identify increase residential density and diversity as key supporting roles for the Activity Centres bring housing and employment closer together.

Other relevant Draft Strategies

The following adopted strategies are also relevant to the Clayton and Huntingdale Precinct Plans. Recommendations within these strategies should align with future precinct plans:

- Monash Integrated Transport Strategy
- Monash Open Space Strategy
- Monash Urban Landscape and Canopy Vegetation Strategy

Monash Planning Scheme

Clauses from the Monash Planning Scheme that are relevant to Clayton include:

- Clause 11.06 – Metropolitan Melbourne
- Clause 17 – Economic Development
- Clause 21.05 (MSS) – Economic Development
- Clause 21.06 (MSS) – Activity Centres
- Clause 22.03 – Industry and Business Development and Character Policy

State Government Policy Context

Plan Melbourne

There are numerous references and policy directions throughout Plan Melbourne that highlight the importance of the MNEIC, specifically.

“Direction 1.1 Create a city structure that strengthens Melbourne’s competitiveness for jobs and investment”

“Policy 1.1.4 Support the significant employment and servicing role of Health and Education Precincts across Melbourne”

“Policy 1.17 Plan for adequate commercial land across Melbourne”

“Direction 2.2 Deliver more housing closer to jobs and public transport”

“Direction 2.4 Facilitate decision-making processes for housing in the right locations”

“Directions 3.1 Transform Melbourne’s transport system to support a productive city”

“Policy 3.1.2 Provide high quality public transport access to job rich areas”

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The implementation of the Plan will have many positive social impacts not only for the Huntingdale Activity Centre but for the broader area. However responding to demands for associated increased services will come at a cost.

Increased economic activity and population density will create greater demand for quality services for different groups such as children and families, young people, elderly people and people with disabilities. The challenges will be to ensure accessibility to these services is cost effective.

Implementation of the draft Plan will also create increased demand for recreation facilities, health services, walking and cycling amongst others.

Grade separation is a current issue in Huntingdale between Huntingdale Road and North Road. The separation is causing safety issues for pedestrians, cyclists and road users. This is an area that will require further investigation by Council to determine the best way to improve safety and accessibility across the whole precinct.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Precinct Plan is essentially an aspiration statement of Council’s intent to address the future pressures and needs of the Huntingdale Activity Centre, but in a financial sense the recommendations of the draft Plan is largely unfunded within Council’s current Strategic Resource Plan (SRP) and Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP).

While proposed projects have transformative potential for the Monash NEIC and the Study areas, the current level of project definition and large scale investment requirements mean that delivery and timings are uncertain.

Recommended public realm improvements and new Community Infrastructure will need to be assessed by Council as part of future budget consideration and in accordance with the LTFP.

CONCLUSION

The draft Plan for Huntingdale is a high level strategic document which seeks to articulate Council's vision for the Activity Centre for the next 25 to 30 years. The Plan does not propose, or recommend changes to fundamental pattern of zoning or land use activities of the activity centre.

The Plan sets out a transformative, long term vision assisting in the facilitation of:

- A greatly expanded employment, innovation and residential role for the Huntingdale Precinct;
- Greater connectivity to and integration with the Monash University Precinct and Monash Medical Centre Precinct;
- Improved transport and movement connections into the Huntingdale Precinct and between major employment, research and activity locations/destinations in the Precinct; and
- The creation of a new identity and sense of place across the Huntingdale Precinct that is reflective of its future role as a CBD level employment, research and residential Precinct.

The response from the community has been generally supportive of the directions and recommendations of the Plan and it is appropriate that Council adopt the draft Plan.