

REPORT TO	Special Council Meeting	ITEM NO. 2.9
MEETING DATE	Monday, 12 December, 2011	
SUBJECT	Flinders Village Streetscape Design Framework	
PREPARED BY	Russell Smith – Strategic Planner	
AUTHORISED BY	Manager – Strategic Planning	
FILE NO.	fA145090	
ATTACHMENT(S)	YES	

PURPOSE

This report recommends that Council adopts the Flinders Village Streetscape Design Framework (the Design Framework) as shown in Attachment 1.

Flinders has witnessed over the past years an increase in growth and development pressures.

In response, Council has previously:

- Introduced a Heritage Overlay (HO) and a Design and Development Overlay (DDO) to protect the heritage values and character of Flinders Village; and
- Prepared the Flinders Village Centre Design Guidelines for New Development, a reference document for the DDO.

To complement the above measures, the attached Design Framework has been prepared to address concerns about the impact of growth pressures on public spaces in the Flinders Village Centre.

The scope of the Design Framework covers landscape and streetscape works and includes:

- Pedestrian paths and pedestrian amenity and safety;
- Road and intersection works;
- Car parking; and
- A range of more detailed streetscape elements.

The preparation of the Design Framework has involved two rounds of public consultation. These were undertaken by Council in conjunction with Michael Smith and Associates Landscape Architects and were well attended.

Overall, the Design Framework has received a high level of community support. It addresses the Cook Street/Norman Street intersection and establishes a clear pedestrian network that provides better links across Cook Street.

The Design Framework will guide decisions on future use, design, investment and capital works for public spaces within the area.

The approval of the Design Framework does not involve any commitment to future capital works by Council. Decisions on Capital Works Projects are subject to Council's normal Budget and capital works assessment process.

BACKGROUND

Flinders is a village of approximately 900 people, located at the south-eastern extremity of the Mornington Peninsula. Its commercial centre includes a general store, hotel, post office, and a number of relatively small retail stores, galleries and restaurants. These are primarily concentrated along Cook Street, in the block between Norman Avenue and Wood Street.

The relative remoteness of Flinders has been a significant influence on its development. The restricted provision of services such as water, electricity and sewerage has historically limited growth and development of its commercial precinct.

The recent increase in the provision of services, as well as the growth of regional tourism in recent years has witnessed a corresponding increase in growth and development pressures on the Flinders Village Centre.

In response to these growth pressures, Council has previously:

1. Undertaken the preparation of Planning Scheme Amendment to introduce and apply HO Schedule 333 and DDO Schedule 14 to certain areas of the Flinders Village.
2. Prepared the Flinders Village Centre Design Guidelines for New Development. These guidelines aim to supplement the DD014 to ensure sensitive and site responsive design and development within the Flinders Village.

However, increases in the permanent resident population, greater visitor numbers in peak periods, and new intensive commercial and residential developments have also prompted concerns regarding the future of the public spaces with the village centre. These concerns include:

- Loss of local character and identity;
- Threats to heritage places;
- Dangers to pedestrians due to increased traffic;
- Inadequacy of car parking in peak periods;
- Perceived low quality of public spaces and lack of public facilities; and
- Need for improved presentation of the village centre.

In this context, Council has undertaken the preparation of the Flinders Village Streetscape Design Framework, a third measure to protect the character and amenity of the Flinders Village, this time dealing with public spaces. The express purpose of the Design Framework is to:

1. Provide ‘in principle’ concept designs for future works to improve traffic management and parking in the village centre.
2. Provide Streetscape Design Strategies and Concept Plans for future works to improve the quality and amenity of public open spaces, as well as pedestrian amenity and safety.
3. Present Design Strategies for the improved amenity and presentation of key public assets within the village centre.
4. Provide a unified design language to guide streetscape works, which may be implemented over many years.

PROCESS

The preparation of the Design Framework has included the following steps:

- Background research – identification of issues and opportunities;
- Community consultation and engagement – Stage 1;
- Public exhibition of the draft Design Framework;
- Community consultation and engagement – Stage 2;
- Consideration of public submissions and comment arising from consultation, engagement and exhibition; and
- Completion of the Design Framework and its presentation to Council.

Importantly, the preparation of the draft Design Framework has occurred in consultation with the Flinders community, key stakeholders and local interest groups. Accordingly, community views and opinions have played an important role in the development of the Design Framework.

POLICY CONTEXT

The Design Framework is consistent with and supported by a number of key State and Council Strategies.

It complements the Flinders Village Centre Design Guidelines for New Development adopted by Council.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The second round of community consultation involved exhibition of the draft Flinders Village Streetscape Design Framework (the draft Design Framework). The exhibition occurred for a period of six weeks and submissions closed on 15 February, 2011.

A total of 46 submissions were received, including eight submissions from relevant authorities (see Confidential Attachment 2). Attachment 3 includes a summary of submissions.

Main issues raised in submissions include:

- Objection to making the Cook Street service lane the eastbound thoroughfare;
- Need to increase the safety of Cook Street, with many suggesting a lowering of the speed limit, pedestrian access (wheelchair friendly) and clearer demarcation;
- Suggestions for a roundabout at the Cook and Norman Street intersection; and
- Objection to the reduction in the size of the nature strips.

Following on from the comments received from the community and the Referral Authorities, a range of adjustments have been made to the draft Design Framework. These are detailed in Attachment 4, with the main issues outlined below.

DISCUSSION

Cook Street Configuration

Reviewing the Cook Street carriageway configuration is one of the key drivers for the Design Framework.

A number of carriageway changes have been considered. Some of these included roundabouts at the intersection of Cook and Norman Streets and the intersection of Cook and Stokes Streets. These were not warranted from a traffic management/road safety point of view. They would also significantly add to the cost of implementation.

However, an improvement to the Cook and Norman Street intersection is considered important and it forms a major element of the Design Framework.

Strong community opposition was received to the proposal in the draft Framework to change the southern service road into a lane for through traffic. VicRoads also expressed concerns about this element.

The Design Framework therefore generally maintains the existing carriageway layout of and the service road along Cook Street, but provides for the clear definition of the service lane in front of the civic hall.

The advantage of this is that it provides a more affordable and unobtrusive solution to the current traffic/pedestrian conflict along Cook Street.

A major objective of the proposed changes to the carriageway in the draft Plan was to achieve improved pedestrian safety. This remains an important objective, which is pursued by including improved pedestrian crossings and refuge points in Cook Street. This is to be combined with lowering the speed limit in this section of the street.

Pedestrian Improvements

Both the draft Design Framework and the Design Framework recommend a reduction of the speed limit through the core township area to 50 kilometre per hour (subject to VicRoads approval) and incorporating associated signage.

The draft Design Framework provided for raised and conventional pedestrian crossing points at various locations along Cook Street. VicRoads objects to the raised crossings. The Design Framework therefore provides for conventional style pedestrian crossings. Signage and/or markings on the road to alert pedestrians to the direction that the traffic is coming from will be an important aspect of the crossings.

Additional pedestrian linkages are proposed between civic spaces, open spaces and surrounding residential areas. The establishment of a pathway system leading to key destinations within the village is proposed. In response to comments received by residents, the Design Framework includes an additional pathway through Flinders Park to the Flinders Pre-school.

Car Parking

The Design Framework identifies where car parking should be located when the need for car parking arises.

Two areas suitable for additional car parking were proposed under the draft Design Framework, one along Norman Street and the other at 42 and 44 Cook Street (see below).

DISCUSSION (CONT'D)

Car Parking (Cont'd)

The Design Framework amends the Norman Street option by removing the angled bays, which adjoin facing residences and changes the angle of the bays from 60 degrees to 90 degrees. Parallel parking will still be permitted on the road adjacent to the residential properties.

Overall, it is considered that Norman Street has the potential for an adequate number of additional car parking spaces to service the village centre in the future. Additional spaces would be provided in line with (and where possible with contributions from) additional commercial development.

Flinders Park

The Design Framework identifies that a separate Management Plan is required for Flinders Park. It specifies elements and features that should be included in any future Management Plan. Community groups within Flinders have expressed a strong interest in putting forward design concepts for the Park and it is envisaged that a highly consultative process will be required.

Land at 42-44 Cook Street

The land at 42-44 Cook Street is owned by Council and is in a Business 1 Zone (B1Z).

There is great potential to improve the contribution of this land to the village centre (possibly in combination with some of the land at the rear) by:

- Creating a high quality open space area (playground, community market space, car parking); and
- Contributing to the level of activity along this section of Cook Street.

The draft Design Framework indicated this land for dual purposes of car parking and public use. The existing toilet facility was to be replaced with a modern facility in a better location, with higher levels of passive surveillance. While the relocation of the toilet block is still proposed the revised Design Framework removes the reference to car parking. VicRoads flagged potential issues with access to the car park from the Cook Street service lane and the creation of midblock parking would tend to disrupt pedestrian movement along this section of the street. In addition, it has become apparent that access to Wood Street is not feasible.

Importantly, the Design Framework identifies that any future development on the land should maintain a substantial setback from the road, to create a high quality public open space area. A recent development proposal on the corner of Cook Street and Wood Street highlights the potential changes to the eastern end of Cook Street, and the future use and development of the Council land needs to be considered in this context.

Civic Hall

The draft Design Framework identified that the Civic Hall and its surrounds should be upgraded through various architectural and landscaping treatments.

Taking into account community feedback, it was concluded that the actual re-development of the hall was beyond the scope of the Design Framework. However, the setting of the hall remains an important element of the streetscape. The Design Framework therefore includes suggestions for the integration of the forecourt of the hall, as a public open space, with the streetscape.

DISCUSSION (CONT'D)

Vegetation

The draft Design Framework included the retention of the majority of existing trees along Cook Street. A total of 13 trees were proposed for removal (including three *Lagunaria patersonii* – Norfolk Island Hibiscus and two *Corymbia ficifolia* – Red Flowering Gum). The draft Design Framework includes the provision of 36 trees, a net gain of 23 street trees.

The Design Framework includes the proposed removal of six trees and replanting of approximately 30 trees, a net gain of 24 trees.

Other features of both the draft Design Framework and the Design Framework include the following:

- Providing additional ground cover planting on the roundabout at the intersection of Cook Street and Wood Street; and
- Undertaking additional street tree planting at desirable locations.

Township Entry Points

The Design Framework identifies the need for a landscaping treatment and gateway signage and/or sculpture at the approaches to Flinders Village Centre.

Other Measures

These include:

- Undergrounding of power lines and upgrade streetscape lighting throughout the core precinct along Cook Street; and
- Provision of additional street furniture throughout the core precinct.

COMMUNITY PLAN

The Design Framework implements the following outcomes:

“ *Outcome 1.2: Townships and villages with a distinct sense of place:*

1.2.1 To recognise the diversity of townships and the individual form and function of each settlement.

1.2.2 To develop and implement design frameworks which reflect the current values and preferred future character of each settlement.

1.2.3 To enhance the character of settlements in the design of public spaces and places.

Outcome 3.6: A safe and supportive community:

3.6.1 To provide, protect and enhance Shire amenity for community enjoyment.

3.6.2 To provide a safe and protective environment for the community.”

FINANCIAL ISSUES

The approval of the Design Framework does involve any commitment to future capital works by Council. Decisions on Capital Works Projects are subject to Council's normal Budget and capital works assessment process.

OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a direct or indirect interest requiring disclosure.

CONCLUSION

The Flinders Village Streetscape Design Framework provides a strategic basis for improving the streetscape and landscape values of the Flinders Village Centre. The Design Framework follows on from the Flinders Village Centre Design Guidelines for New Development, which addresses the character of buildings and land under private ownership. The Design Framework also provides for safer traffic conditions within the Flinders Village Centre and improved pedestrian amenity and safety.

The Design Framework is substantially more affordable to implement than the exhibited draft Design Framework and is more consistent with the community's views. As such, it is recommended that the revised Design Framework be adopted.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That Council adopts the Flinders Village Centre Streetscape Design Framework (as shown in Attachment 1) as a strategic document that will serve to guide the design of streetscape works, landscaping, public lighting, street furniture provision and maintenance works, as well as to guide traffic management measures and the development of public footpaths within the Flinders Village.**
- 2. That Council formally requests VicRoads to reduce the speed limit in Cook Street, Flinders to 50 kilometre per hour, within the vicinity of the core township.**
- 3. That it be noted that funding for Capital Works Projects, resulting from the Flinders Village Centre Design Framework, will be considered by Council through the normal Budget and capital works assessment processes.**
- 4. That Council resolves that Attachment 2 to this report passed in camera be retained as a confidential item pursuant to Section 77(2)(a) and (b) of the *Local Government Act 1989* and be placed in a separate minute book for confidential items.**