



Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek Inc
PO Box 54, ESSENDON, Victoria, 3040

To ensure the preservation, restoration, environment protection and ecologically sensitive development and maintenance of the Moonee Ponds Creek and adjoining catchment areas.

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SUBMISSION TO HUME CITY COUNCIL

PROPOSED HUME PLANNING SCHEME AMENDMENT C202

INTRODUCTION:

The Moonee Ponds Creek

The Moonee Ponds Creek rises near Oaklands Junction and travels through Woodlands Historic Park and northern and inner suburbs to its junction with the Yarra River at Docklands.

The upper section of the Moonee Ponds Creek ('the Creek'), including the section adjacent to the area of the proposed Hume Amendment C202 retains the original 'Chain of Ponds' form, unlike most of the remainder of the Creek. Importantly also, this section of the Creek retains its remnant River Red Gum vegetation, forming an important biolink between Woodlands State Park and the extensive, enhanced revegetated area of the Tarnuk. There is significant evidence of Aboriginal occupation in this area, including early settler accounts of corroborees along the Creek below the Woodlands homestead as well as numerous scar trees, stone tools and middens.

The Creek also reveals some of its geological history here with bedrock and more recent volcanic flows evident. This waterway and adjacent natural open space is highly valued by the local community, as evidenced by the ongoing community plantings and care for the area over a long period. A shared path follows the Creek

for most of its length from Woodlands to Docklands and the area near this site (the Tarnuk) is popular with locals and other users.

Despite issues of illegal vehicle access and dumping in the area further upstream on the northern side of the Creek (which are being countered by the authorities) as well as previous destructive land uses, the general area has great potential to be reinstated as part of a widened creek corridor.

This Amendment presents a golden opportunity to protect and enhance (not detract from) the biodiversity and habitat values of the Creek by widening the Creek corridor on the southern side – to create a natural open space buffer between the built development and associated infrastructure.

The importance of the area in which the subject area is situated is widely recognised; for example:

‘.....Tarnuk parkland reserve, which is owned and managed by Melbourne Water and is a Site of Biodiversity Significance, It is also covered by an Environmental Significance Overlay — Schedule 2 in the Hume Planning Scheme in recognition of the values associated with the environs of the Merri and Moonee Ponds Creeks. The Tarnuk site represents intact, remnant Moonee Ponds Creek landscape, with its specific threatened ecological vegetation class. The Moonee Ponds Creek and its environs provide an important regional open space and habitat link and contain many Aboriginal cultural heritage sites of significance. Previous urban development has impacted upon the landscape character, catchment functions and water quality of parts of the Creek, however there is still enormous potential that exists for the recreational, aesthetic and ecological functions of these areas to be improved and restored.’ (Andrew Kleinig, Acting Manager Melbourne Water, Regional Delivery West, in Hume Planning Scheme Amendment C202 — Pre-application advice to TPI October 14th 2014)

Refer to APPENDIX 1 for a selection of images of the Moonee Ponds Creek to the north of the subject area.

With increasing urbanization in the surrounding area, the Creek corridor will become even more important for habitat and biodiversity as well as for the recreation, education, mental health and enjoyment of locals and other users. Every opportunity needs to be taken to ensure that the Creek corridor’s environmental values are protected and that inappropriate development of land close to the Creek is not allowed to occur, as we shall set out in our submission.

Friends of the Moonee Ponds Creek

The Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek is a long-established organisation (since 1989) whose objectives are: *to ensure the preservation, restoration, environment protection and ecologically sensitive development and maintenance of the Moonee Ponds Creek and adjoining catchment areas.*

The group has a long history of active community involvement and working in collaboration with municipal and statutory authorities in pursuing these objectives,

through many activities and projects along the length of the Creek corridor, as well as participation in statutory and strategic planning.

COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT C202

The areas to be commented on are as follows:

1. Transfer of Environment Significance Overlay ESO2 land to Melbourne Water
2. Rezoning of land to Public Use Zone 1
3. Removal of Environment Audit Overlay
4. Proposed pathways along the southern side of the Creek
5. Possible future road connection between Aitken Boulevard and Melbourne Airport across the Creek.
6. Stormwater/drainage systems.

TRANSFER OF ESO2 LAND TO MELBOURNE WATER

The transfer of the sliver of Environment Significance Overlay ESO2 land to Melbourne Water adjacent to the Moonee Ponds Creek is strongly supported.

“The proposed amendment would facilitate the transfer of land already zoned as Public Use Zone-Utilities immediately north of the subject land (the balance of 140-204 Western Avenue

Our reasons relate to the importance of maintaining a biodiverse Creek corridor linked to the Woodlands Historic Park and to the Tarnuk.

REZONING OF LAND TO PUBLIC USE ZONE 1

The Friends of the Moonee Ponds Creek strongly reject the proposed zoning to Comprehensive Development Zone taking in the land almost down to the Creek.

Allowing for built development to occur so close to the Creek will significantly detract from its existing important environmental values, threaten any future enhancement measures and downgrade any contribution to a wider ecological Creek corridor. We reiterate that this section of the Creek retains its natural form, remnant vegetation and archaeological and geological importance.

We call for the rezoning to Public Use Zone 1 (PUZ1) of the paddocks between the Heritage Boxthorn Hedge and Interface Controls boundary at the northern edge of the proposed industrial estate, up to the subject land boundary. This is to ensure the protection of this important Creek area, both now and into the future, as part of a wider Creek and public open space corridor.

Refer to APPENDIX 2 showing the area to be rezoned as PUZ1 marked with diagonal lines.

[It is noted that these areas are depicted on the Development Plan as revegetated areas which seems misleading if this area is to be in a zone for Comprehensive Development.]

We consider it a false/deceptive planning argument that public open space/parkland could be formed in a Comprehensive Development Zone. The zoning, economics and land prices would make this highly unlikely.

REMOVAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT OVERLAY

We oppose the removal of the Environmental Audit Overlay EAO. Retaining the EAO means an audit has to be conducted prior to any construction/works to ensure the area is not polluted – critical if the Creek is not to be polluted by what already exists on the site or might arise during construction of roads and buildings and flows through the drainage system into the new wetlands and Creek. Maintaining the EAO would surely be environmentally responsible, given the Transpacific Waste site next door which will remain toxic for a very long time and unforeseen changes in containment/leakage into the surrounding areas need to be considered.

PROPOSED PATHWAYS ALONG THE SOUTHERN SIDE OF THE CREEK

The construction of sealed pathways along the southern side of the Creek through the corridor land, as shown on the Amendment map, is not supported. Due to the proximity of the steep embankment of the Creek along this section, the sensitive natural land features and vegetation would likely be detrimentally threatened and unsightly safety infrastructure would be required. This outcome would detract from the natural state of the Creek and detrimentally impact on the views of the landscape from the northern side. There is already a shared path on the northern side of the Creek. Access for checking the Transpacific monitoring bores should be achieved without a wide sealed path along the southern side of the Creek. We are strongly of the view that we must guard against development that compromises the environmental values along this section of the Creek corridor and that it should be managed into the future with these values protected in an increasingly urbanised area.

POSSIBLE FUTURE ROAD CONNECTION/RESERVATION

The Friends of the Moonee Ponds Creek absolutely reject the idea of a (future) road connection from the Melbourne Airport through the proposed industrial development across the Creek and through the creek corridor and reserve to the proposed arterial road, Aitken Boulevard. Whilst this may increase the economic value of the industrial sites and benefit Melbourne Airport, to have a major arterial road (and bridge) cutting across this significant natural area, where the original 'Chain of Ponds' form of the Moonee Ponds Creek still exists, would be totally irresponsible. This area is highly valued by the community for its natural features and is an increasingly crucial area for wildlife; forming part of the biolink to Woodlands Historic Park. Traffic, day and

night, noise, lighting, and polluted water run-off from such a road as well as the severe impact on the peaceful natural setting would constitute environmental vandalism. It would significantly compromise the wider Creek corridor.

STORMWATER / DRAINAGE SYSTEMS

The Comprehensive Development Plan shows drainage lines running from the industrial estate across the open paddocks into a new wetland in the Tarnuk area. Our preferred method for disposal of stormwater is for it to be treated and reused on-site, in keeping with ecological sustainability design principles for the estate. However, the Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek call for a better, more environmentally responsible solution for the stormwater drainage system. This would include long swales from the estate leading through the rezoned PUZ1 paddocks into the proposed new Tarnuk wetland. As well as this, an underground litter trap should be constructed at the edge of the estate.

The Drainage Strategy document shows the proposed wetland has treatment cells, but the swales would be key additional treatment measures, particularly in making a positive contribution to enhancement of the Creek's ecological values and reinforcing the Environmental Significance Overlay.

CONCLUSION

The Amendment C202 provides an opportunity to enhance employment opportunities and the quality of life for locals and visitors, provided that the zoning decisions reflect appropriate attention to the important and significant environmental values of the subject area, particularly the wider Creek corridor, and that steps are taken to ensure development does not negatively impact on the physical and visual landscapes.

In closing, the Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek would be willing to discuss our submission with the Council should the opportunity arise and we would ask to be heard should the Amendment be considered by a Planning Panel.

Yours sincerely,

Carolyn Layton

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APPENDIX 1: SOME IMAGES OF THE AREA NORTH OF THE SUBJECT AREA ALONG THE MOONEE PONDS September 2015

Part of the 'Rock Pool' pond adjacent to subject site.



View upstream near eastern end of subject site looking west. Old river Red and recent plantings to the north.



Old River Red at the head of the 'Rock Pool' pond site adjacent to subject area. Site of 'proposed' road across the Creek can be seen near trees in the background.





The 'Rock Pool' pond in a section of creek adjacent to subject area and looking north towards previous National Tree Day plantings.



Looking up stream towards the TPI waste fill site. Old River Red gum and pond. Towards western end of subject site.

APPENDIX 2: AREA TO BE ZONED PUBLIC USE ZONE 1 (diagonal stripes). Area between striped area and the Creek to be 'gifted' to Melbourne Water already has PUZ1 zoning.

