



Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek Inc

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

23 June, 2024

Participate Melbourne

City of Melbourne

Attention: Luke Raines, Senior Project Coordinator, Parks and City Greening

SUBMISSION - DRAFT CHELMSFORD STREET, KENSINGTON OPEN SPACE

The Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek welcomes and supports the development of the former warehouse site at 70-90 Chelmsford St, Kensington as a local open space reserve. We also welcome the proposal because it contributes to the Moonee Ponds Creek open space corridor, enhancing its environmental and social values, in keeping with our stated purpose:

To ensure the preservation, reservation, environment protection and ecologically sensitive development and maintenance of the Moonee Ponds Creek and adjoining catchment areas, with long term aim of securing a major regional park ... with significant recreation and conservation value.

We continue to support the project's Vision:

- Reflect Traditional Owner voices, culture and connection to Country.
- Acknowledge the evolving story of the creek, past and present and establish a new direction for the future by revealing and unpacking layers of time, landscape and community.
- Offer diverse experiences, providing opportunities for play, exploration, gathering and reflection.
- Provide refuge and respite for human and non-human communities and become a robust ecosystem that enables social and environmental resilience for the future.
- Become a new heart for the Kensington community.
- Create a place of belonging, learning and local custodianship to shift our relationship with the landscape to become one of care and connection to nature.

We feel, however, that the draft concept plan does not meet the Vision in a number of ways:

Connection to nature / provide a refuge and respite for human and non-human communities

This theme, put forward during the initial consultations last year, at which it was suggested the open space should be a green oasis of peace and amenity for relaxing and enjoying natural features for the local community.

Unfortunately the design presents not as a pleasurable local park, as a welcoming green oasis in its surrounding built form setting. Instead it presents as hard edged and exposed, a series of rectilinear spaces, excessive walling and concrete paving and insensitive placement of features. Apart from the informal children's play area, it is hard to see any aesthetic in its design – just straight lines enclosing lawn and gathering places and rectangular planted beds ... no curved walls or pathways, no informal, curved lawn areas or plant beds, no off-setting views through the site. And how could a toilet block be placed so prominently and insensitively! Why are there so many desolate paved areas?

An intention may have been to reflect some of the building's industrial history, but the retention and reuse of the two end walls of the warehouse is sufficient. The 'infill' should present a softer approach with greater natural, visual and physical amenity, indeed, presenting as a "refuge" and affording a sense of "respite" by encouraging relaxing and enjoyment of natural settings and in informal open space settings.

Ideally, the water feature/rock stream at the eastern side of the site should be extended to run through the whole site, connecting different parts ("experiences") of the site. As part of this (or separately), stormwater from the site could be collected to run through a meandering rock stream through the site, serving as a uniting/connecting feature. The sloping nature of the land would facilitate this.

[It is noted there is an existing stormwater outlet into the Moonee Ponds Creek almost directly opposite the Chelmsford St/Bent St intersection; this should be investigated for its connection to Chelmsford St/Bent St and the site and the proposed water features ... being cognisant of hydrological issues for Bent St.]

In regard to encouraging a robust ecosystem "for non-human" communities and "connection to nature", we would encourage the preparation of a site planting plan. We reiterate that the landscaping and plant selection should allow for light and shade with the use of indigenous plant species to enhance biodiversity. Thus trees, shrubs, low growing perennials, grasses, form and colour should be the criteria for the planting plan. To enhance the ecological connection to the adjacent Moonee Ponds Creek, reference can be made to "Moonee Ponds Creek Corridor Revegetation Guidelines" by David Chynoweth, Greening Australia 2000.

In providing the 'refuge' for non-human communities and 'connection to nature' it is important that lighting be appropriately addressed in the design. Solar-powered, downlighting, dimmable, no detrimental light spill and low lux to protect the wildlife corridor along the Creek. The standard City of Melbourne park lights are NOT appropriate.

Provide opportunities for play, exploration, gathering and reflection.

The draft concept plan for a small children's nature play area is supported – one that is integrated with a natural setting for the whole reserve. Also supported is provision of a BBQ/picnic area. And supported is a larger gathering space in an informal setting.

As noted above, we believe extending the water course through the site, as a meandering rock stream will be a 'positive'. It is well known that water enhances a sense of reflection. And it would increase exploration opportunities for children. It would enhance habitat and biodiversity through the rocks and appropriate plantings.

Instead of the seemingly purposeless blank paved spaces, why not create smaller informal gathering places, with more plantings, seating and featuring an art installation or special planting (e.g. a sensory garden)? Local artists/crafts people could be involved in creating appropriate art installations (+/- historical links?).... this would be in keeping with the project vision to link with the Kensington community.

Concern is expressed that the proposed rectangular lawn area could become a 'de facto' dog park and the ground surface polluted. This should be a dog-free area.

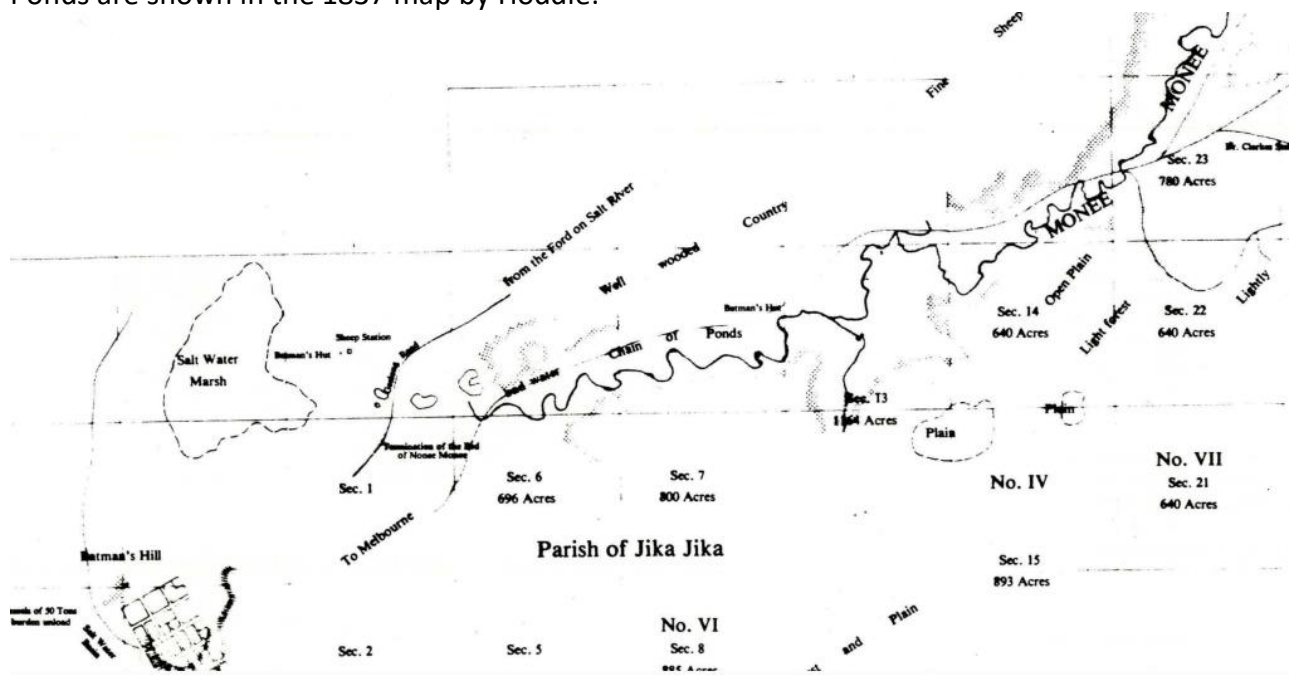
The proposed prominent location of the toilet block in the concept plan is opposed! And someone thought placing a gathering space behind the toilet block was a good idea??!! The toilet block should be placed against the retained western warehouse wall, closer to the BBQ area. Building it from reused warehouse bricks would make it blend in.

Reuse of the former warehouse bricks is encouraged, noting bricks can be formed into low and curving walls and paving. Consideration should be given to reusing timbers from the warehouse when demolished. Use of recycled warehouse materials would reflect the project aim to acknowledge previous use of the site.

Disabled access will be a part of the new open space – noting that a disabled parking space is provided on the opposite side of Chelmsford St. It is unclear whether the existing driveway at the northern side of the building will provide disabled access to the site or whether new disabled ramps will be from main Chelmsford St entry point.

Acknowledge the evolving story of the Creek, past and present ... revealing layers of time, landscape and community.

The story of the past very much involves the Traditional Owners with the adjoining Creek, named after Monee Monee (Moonee Moonee), an Aboriginal contemporary of Barak. The Creek was then a series of ponds. Both the name Monee Monee and reference to Chain of Ponds are shown in the 1837 map by Hoddle:



It is understood such ponds occurred in this section of Kensington/North Melbourne. They were incorporated into what is now a straightened Moonee Ponds Creek waterway in the early 20thC

The Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek reiterates suggestions from our earlier submission that:

1. The open space reserve be named Moonee Moonee Reserve after Monee Monee (Moonee Moonee), an obviously important Traditional Owner.
2. A mural be painted on the external side of the to-be-retained eastern wall of the warehouse building that depicts the original chain of ponds ... acknowledging the Creek's past geographical history.

We would highly recommend the artist Tom Civil <https://tomcivil.com/walls/>; <https://tomcivil.com/> who undertook the long Wominjeka mural along the Maribyrnong River, near Sims Street, West Melbourne in conjunction with Wurundjeri and also painted the murals on the CityLink pylons at Debney's Park, Flemington.

A secondary reason for suggesting Tom Civil be commissioned once again to work with Wurundjeri is that his murals are not graffitied, apparently because he pre-emptively contacts local graffitists. A strong argument for a Civil/Wurundjeri mural on the external eastern wall would be the alternative – a constantly graffitied eyesore and compromise of this segregated part of the new reserve.

3. We support the suggestion put forward at an information session for painting the internal side of the to-be-retained eastern wall of the warehouse with a copy of the poem 'Ripples of Life – Moonee Moonee'.

These three suggestions would very much support the project's vision to acknowledge the evolving story of the Creek, past and present to "reveal and unpack layers of time, landscape and community".

Redesigned levee wall and integrated path

It is clear that the Chelmsford St Open Space designers are totally ill-informed and lack any understanding in proposing paths along the Creek embankment. One has to question what research they undertook and whether they consulted Melbourne Water, who is the responsible authority for the hydrological requirements of the Creek corridor. It is obvious that there was no understanding or consideration of the impacts on the established vegetation along the embankment.

The existing flood wall is approx. 400mm high above the top of the earthen embankment. It is proposed a 1.8m-2m wide path would incorporate the flood wall and extend over the existing sloping embankment. The sloping embankment measures 5m in horizontal width, so the proposed path would take out 36% of the embankment's established plantings of trees, shrubs, lower storey vegetation – and effectively, take out a much greater percentage due to clearances required for construction and ongoing clearances from the path. The 'cantilevered' path would require a supporting retaining wall or pylons built into the embankment. The vertical drop from the path to the sloping embankment would be approx. 1m, therefore safety fencing would be required. The whole structure would have to meet strict engineering standards complying with Melbourne Water's flood/hydrological requirements.

It has been stated in other forums that climate change modelling could see the flood wall height increased by 600mm or more. Thus taller/larger retaining wall/pylons would be required with greater hydrological impact.

The Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek totally rejects the ill-thought out/unresearched proposed path along the upper Kensington Embankment because of the unacceptable destruction of its established vegetation along its 400m length. For information, the revegetation of the Kensington Embankment commenced 20 years ago in 2003, after construction of CityLink, and has continued since through community plantings and funding through Melbourne Water grants. The Kensington Embankment represents a key open space along the lower Moonee Ponds Creek, providing habitat and biodiversity and open space amenity enjoyed by local residents.

Also rejected are the two informal traversing paths through the Embankment – one 120m in length (north) and one 135m in length (south). These are designed to rise from the flat benched area adjacent to the waterway up to meet the new path at the top of the embankment. Such paths would be a minimum 1.2m wide; require construction clearances; and ongoing clearance of overhanging/encroaching vegetation. In effect destroying long transverse swathes of vegetation along the length of the Embankment. ;

It can be argued that it is not in the Chelmsford St project's remit to provide a DDA path along the Creek. Any such path is subject to much wider considerations as part of the Macaulay and Arden Structure Plans and their open space proposals for the Moonee Ponds Creek corridor, taking in both sides of the Creek.

The FoMPC does support providing a set of steps linking the Chelmsford St Open Space over the flood wall to access the Creek open space at the Bent St/Chelmsford St corner point. The design of the steps should incorporate natural features.

We also suggest that the existing access ramps: off Bent St close to Macaulay Rd and off Lloyd St close to Arden St should be utilised to provide improved informal access to the Creek open space at either end of this stretch of the Creek.

In closing, the Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek reiterates it will welcome the opportunity to be further involved in the evolving designs for the Chelmsford Street Open Space project.

Yours sincerely,



John Kavanagh
President