



Barwon Heads Association Submission – Draft Village Park Master Plan 2021

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16th June 2021

To the City of Greater Geelong
Cr Stephanie Asher, Cr Trent Sullivan, Cr Jim Mason

Barwon Heads Association submission Barwon Heads Village Park Master Plan

Dear Mayor & Councillors,

Please find attached the submission from the Barwon Heads Association Inc. (The Association), which requests much stronger protections for the Village Park (54 Acres) in the form of Significant Landscape Overlay & Building Design Principles or an equivalent set of protections. This request is supported by; our members and 548 signatories to a petition as well as by community organisations, the Barwon Heads Fire Brigade, Barwon Heads Scout Group and Barwon Heads Arts Council (*please see petition and signatures attached*).

The Association represents over 200 members who are residents and ratepayers of Barwon Heads. Its principal purposes include “promoting the conservation, protection and maintenance of the natural environment and the retention of the character of Barwon Heads”.

The Draft Barwon Heads Village Park Master Plan (DBHVPMP) has been reported on and discussed at our meetings over the past 6 months, including with the 3 Bellarine Ward Councillors in March and in our regular newsletters to members and in the local paper “Talking Heads”. The Association has played a key role in informing the community about the draft master plan. The Association has been consistent in requesting that there are protections to ensure that new designs are constructed in a way that is “soft, creative, sustainable and responsive to character and scale of the coastal village setting” and that open space is protected - “Built form will not exceed current proportion of land use versus open space and where possible will incorporate multi-use and enhanced access for the whole community.” (Libby Darcy, BHA committee member, quoted in the Bellarine Times 18 February 2021).

In its current form the plan fails to balance diverse needs across a range of, often conflicting, interests with the protection of open space and character.

At our most recent meeting of members in May 2021, it was agreed that:

- The DBHVPMP fails to provide adequate detail to give our members assurance that the future of the village park as a passive recreation area is protected and the community will be consulted if development is planned.
- The 54 Acres are a precious and important part of the Barwon Heads landscape and heritage.
- There are inadequate protections in relation to future social infrastructure erected in the park.
- A location on a map is not an adequate development approval process.



- All new buildings are expected to go through a proper planning and community consultation process.
- Community groups seeking a new location should only be permitted to occupy the park if they have a specific connection and need to be in the park.
- New developments should encourage the sharing of facilities.
- There is strong support for the Scouts and encouragement for them to continue in their current location provided satisfactory arrangements are made with the Wadawurrung people, the Traditional Owners of the land. We acknowledge the history of the Scouts in the 54 Acres and its right to be in its current location. The plan refers to the potential impacts on cultural heritage values without any factual information, and analysis of potential impacts. It fails the Scouts and leaves them potentially homeless with the proposal of a new but unfunded building.

We support the CoGG Vision: “By 2047, Greater Geelong will be internationally recognised as a clever and creative city-region that is forward looking, enterprising and adaptive and cares for its people and environment”. A clever and creative future recognizes the uniqueness and significance of its natural environments. This is now the perfect opportunity for CoGG to prove its capacity to be adaptive and creative with strong environment and design protections for our Village Park. Please add greater planning protections to the Master Plan.

We thank the City of Greater Geelong (CoGG) for the opportunity to participate in the Park Reference Group (PRG).

Yours in anticipation

Sandra Gatehouse
President
Barwon Heads Association



2.0 Request for recognition & greater planning protection for BHVP as a significant landscape for Barwon Heads and the Bellarine.

The Barwon Heads Association is seeking recognition of the Barwon Heads Village Park as a Significant Landscape for Barwon Heads and the Bellarine Peninsula and are requesting that COGG include greater planning protection (such as a Significant Landscape Overlay, Building / Development Design Principles) in the Village Park Master Plan to address the following issues:

- The potential loss of open un-developed green space and views, needs protection to ensure that they are not eroded over time or the character of the 54 acres will be compromised
- Risk of over development, particularly in the Active Sport & Recreation Zone and the Community Service & Use Zone which has no development limits set
- Risk of inappropriate development which erode park character

We understand that the purpose of an SLO is to identify significant landscapes, and conserve and enhance their character. It can require permits for works. The current DBHVPMP has not recognized the significance of the 54 Acres as a unified whole and fails to provide adequate management principles to protect the significance of the park. Instead it divides the 54 acres into zones, and enables new development with no transparency or requirement for community consultation. Please see the attached the ***Statement of Landscape Significance***, which outlines the park's level of significance (p.7).

While an SLO & Building Design Principles may not be considered usual for a Public Park & Recreational Zone (PPRZ) we understand that such an overlay is possible. The PPRZ provides the park with very weak planning protection and there is no requirement for proposed new developments to obtain planning approval with community consultation.

The following omissions significantly weaken the DBHVPMP, highlight our reasons for concern and strengthen our belief that stronger planning protections are needed.

1. **Open Space (Section 3.6) Description Needs to Recognize and Quantify Open Space so it can be protected** - The DBHVPMP description of open space fails to quantify the park's significant informal green spaces which are located between clubhouses, sports grounds and around its perimeter. These are intrinsic to the village park character. The description also fails to include the 15 acres (approx.) of Pony Club area, which is an area of shared use with a number of passive recreation users. Instead, the DBHVPMP defines open space to include built recreational infrastructure: the concrete Skate Park, the children's playground and the half basketball court near the Tin Shed.

Since the last Master Plan in 2012, 3250 m2 approx. of open space, has changed from natural permeable surfaces to an impermeable built form. These may be valid uses, but if the DBHVPMP fails to prioritize and better protect open green space, one day it may be sacrificed to even more 'valid' uses. The proposed Active Sport & Recreation and Community Service Zones could very easily become over-developed if these zones aren't carefully managed by strong guiding criteria.



2. **The Demand Analysis (Section 2.2.5) for the Park underestimates demand and fails to accurately reflect use.**

No data has been included to show the growth of the sporting or community clubs, which has largely been driven by the increasing permanent population growth and the inclusion of girls. For example, the BH Soccer Club does not have 6 teams as reported in the Master Plan, but in fact has 3 senior teams and 17 junior teams with over 90 female players. Many of the Park's other traditionally male clubs, including cricket, football and Scouts have also experienced significant growth and the significant impact of female participation.

Barwon Heads is a domestic tourism destination and yet no current visitor projections have been included in the demand analysis for park users. Pre-Covid, *Geelong and the Bellarine* attracted 5.8 million visitors each year with 5% growth annually for the past 5 years. In the Covid climate Barwon Heads is likely to experience significant growth in domestic visitor numbers and increased demand for open recreational space. There is also growing daytrip visitation from the rapidly expanding population of Armstrong Creek, who are already enjoying the use of Barwon Head's park and beaches as an extension of their own back yard.

3. **The purpose of the Master Plan (Section 1.2) is to guide development and balance needs but the stated purpose does not include protection of parkland character and open space.**

The DBHVPMP doesn't include any recommendations or mechanisms that enable it to support its Vision and Goals to specifically protect the park's "informal village parkland character" and preserve its heritage and precious open space. The current recommendations are overwhelmingly related to sporting clubs and are not balanced to reflect other passive recreational uses or protection of the park's character.

The current draft also states that the Master Plan's purpose is **to guide the future funding** of the village park over the next decade. It proposes some key initiatives including:

- A new bowls pavilion and new home for the Barwon Heads Scouts Group;
- Redevelopment of the tennis pavilion and shared cricket, soccer and football pavilion;
- Greater protection of the Moonah woodlands and additional plantings;
- Opportunities to improve awareness and understanding of Wadawurrung cultural values;
- A new bike discovery area for children;
- A combination of dog on and off lead areas and areas where dogs are prohibited.

The Association believes that it should guide not only funding but the Master Plan's purpose should also be to guide proposed and potential developments occurring in the park.

The DBHVPMP does not accurately reflect demand; recognize or quantify open space; or provide specific recommendations to protect park character or open space. In its current form it cannot be used as an effective management guide or a mechanism for the community to assess decisions transparently.



Conclusion

The Association strongly requests that CoGG recognise the historical and environmental significance of the Barwon Heads Village Park, as a Significant Landscape for the Barwon Heads Community and the Bellarine Peninsula region. We also seek inclusion in the plan of a transparent process for approval of any new developments or intrusion into the current open space.

As acknowledged in the Master Plan it is “not a typical district level park” (p.11) Our Village Park is unusual for its large open spaces, its views, history and culture and diverse uses – *name another park in the City of Greater Geelong that has a Golf Club without a Golf Course, a Pony Club jumps course, a walking trail of local art, multiple collated sports facilities and protected Moonah and dune woodlands.*

The park now deserves better and stronger planning protection as a unified landscape in the face of increasing and diversifying community and visitor use so that this Significant Landscape for Barwon Heads and the Bellarine can continue to be enjoyed, not just for the life of this plan, but forever.

Community Comment

“Passive Space is so important. Protect it.

– **Inga Tribe, Ocean Grove 25/05/2021**

"It is so important to maintain this wonderful green space & its ancient trees."

- **Anne Harvey, Barwon Heads 11/06/2021**

"This park was gifted to the people of Barwon Heads for recreational use. The council has allowed the township to change so much with development, why can't they leave the park as it is and respect the purpose and vision for which it was donated."

- **Tara Gorman, Barwon Heads 10/06/2021**

"I want planning protection for the Barwon Heads Village Park!"

– **Shannon Walsh, 27/05/2021**

"I believe the Village Park is a park and should be properly protected from future development and increased building footprints."

- **Philip Bade, Barwon Heads, 26/05/2021**

"Please retain the natural flow the park provides! Adults and kids alike love the park because of its informal nature. We need to do everything we can to retain its authenticity."

– **Jenny Ryan, Barwon Heads 25/05/2021**



3.0 Statement of Landscape Significance - The 54 Acres - Barwon Heads Village Park

The Barwon Heads Village Park, known locally as The 54 Acres, is of regional significance to the Bellarine Peninsula for its high visual value at the Barwon Heads town entry on the Geelong Road and as an extension of the main street, Hitchcock Ave. Located at its entry and urban centre, the park substantially contributes to the landscape character of Barwon Heads. The Village Park includes a diverse landscape of open space and areas of environmental significance including protected Moonah and Dune Woodlands. Its cultural and heritage values include Aboriginal cultural significance. It is also significant for its history and cultural function as a community park with diverse use reflecting the origins of its establishment as a place of recreation for a small coastal holiday town.

The significance of the Village Park Landscape should be recognised and protected as a unified whole for its value as a landscape but also for the significant value this landscape provides to the character of Barwon Heads and the Bellarine Peninsula.

Significant Views & Visual Values

The Village Park contributes significantly to the landscape character of Barwon Heads. The Park frames the main entrance to town from Barwon Heads Road with views of open space and Moonahs. Views to the threatened Moonah population are clearly visible from the street frontages along Sheepwash Road and Geelong Road, while the avenue of Tuart Gums establishes a visual link to the main street, Hitchcock Avenue.

Environmental Value

The Village Park contains sites of vegetation and landscape significance including a large population of Moonah Woodland which is listed and protected on Schedule 2 of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988. It also includes Dune Woodland with remnant vegetation including the rare Coastal Wirilda, and an Avenue of Tuart Gums on the Hitchcock Avenue entrance to the park, which though indigenous to Western Australia, contribute significantly to the landscape character of the park.

Cultural / Heritage Values

The Village Park has significant cultural and heritage value pre and postcolonial settlement. An archaeological assessment of the park completed for the City of Greater Geelong by Terraculture in 2001 identified Aboriginal midden shells and stone artefacts, which have now been listed with Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and the entire dune system is culturally sensitive.

Originally part of the Challis farm the land was leased and made into a golf course by families who had holiday cottages on the river in the late 1800s. The park officially began its sporting life as a golf course in 1909 when members purchased the land and the Challis farmhouse became the first clubhouse on site. The park is now crown land but retains its historical links to the original Golf Club via The Tin Shed – Barwon Grove Golf Club (no course on site) and is home to an incredibly diverse range of passive, recreational and community uses and clubs which have developed over the park's history. In addition to sporting uses, the Village Park is also a cultural hub for music and arts events, run through the shared use of the park's clubhouses and is the site for the original bollard artwork of local Artist Jan Mitchell



4.0 Community Support for Greater Planning Protection

There is strong community support for the Draft Master Plan's stated vision for protection of the Barwon Heads Village Park's environment, open space and informal village parkland character but the community is seeking greater planning protections in the Draft Master Plan to back up this vision.

4.1 BHA Petition – Planning Protection for Barwon Heads Village Park

As at the 16th June 2021 the BHA had **548 signatures** from the Barwon Heads and visitor community on its petition on www.change.org The link to the petition is <http://chnng.it/YVBbTzkKNp> The Barwon Heads Association will be lodging the petition with CoGG and will provide a full copy of all Petition Signatures.



Planning Protection for Barwon Heads Village Park



 Libby Darcy started this petition to [City Of Greater Geelong](#)


We're seeking recognition of the Barwon Heads Village Park as a Significant Landscape for our community. The BHA is asking COGG to include an action for a planning Overlay and Building Design Principles in the new Barwon Heads Village Park Master Plan.

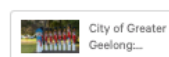
The Draft plan has a great Vision to protect the park's unique character and balance use but there is no action in the plan dedicated to realising the Vision and without an action to back it up, a Vision is just words. Over time, buildings and infrastructure in the park will be updated or replaced and a Significant Landscape Overlay and Design Principles will guide how this happens so that new things fit in with rather than erode the park's "informal village parkland character."

Our 54 Acres is not an urban recreational reserve it is also a PARK and it deserves a different kind of plan and a different planning approach. Without planning requirements specific to our park it will be managed just like any reserve. Don't let it become 'any reserve.'

On behalf of the walking, jogging, playing, scouting, picnic taking, Moonah gazing, riding, bowling, cricketing, tennis, football, soccer playing, skating, tree climbing, music making community and much, much more, who use and enjoy the Barwon Head Village Park and want others to enjoy what it is, for years to come, PLEASE support this petition and take the time to provide your feedback to COGG on the Draft Village Park Master Plan 2021.


548 have signed. Let's get to 1,000!

 At 1,000 signatures, this petition is more likely to be featured in recommendations!



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4.2 Barwon Heads Community Organisations' Support

The following community organisations: Barwon Heads Fire Brigade, Barwon Heads Scouts Group and the Barwon Heads Arts Council have significant memberships within the Barwon Heads and Bellarine community. They also have an interest in the park and support greater planning protection for this significant landscape. Each of these organisations has signed in support of BHA for the inclusion of a recommendation for a *Significant Landscape Overlay and Building Design Principles* in the Village Park Master Plan 2021.

Barwon Heads Association Inc.
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As a member of the Village Park Reference Group, we support the BHA in their request for the inclusion of a recommendation for a *Significant Landscape Overlay and Building Design Principles* in the Village Park Master Plan 2021.

Club/Organisation: BARWON HEADS FIRE BRIGADE

Name: HELEN WOOD Position: CAPTAIN

Signature: [Signature] Date: 6/6/2021

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As a significant local arts community organisation, we support the BHA in their request for the inclusion of a recommendation for a *Significant Landscape Overlay and Building Design Principles* in the Village Park Master Plan 2021.

Club/Organisation: Barwon Heads Arts Council Inc

Name: Victoria Strachan Position: President

Signature: [Signature] Date: 17 June 2021

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As a member of the Village Park Reference Group, we support the BHA in their request for the inclusion of a recommendation for a *Significant Landscape Overlay and Building Design Principles* in the Village Park Master Plan 2021.

Club/Organisation: 1st Barwon Heads Scout Group

Name: Bryan Cook Position: Group Leader

Signature: [Signature] Date: 10 June 2021



5.0 The Barwon Heads Association (the Association)

The Association was registered in 1994 and has been an active community group ever since, with a regular membership base of at least 200 members, which are residents or ratepayers of Barwon Heads. The Association's objectives are:

- To advance the progress, welfare, and development of the community residing within Barwon Heads and District;
- To provide a forum for discussion of matters affecting the community;
- to represent the community in discussions with Federal, State and Municipal Governments relating to its progress, welfare and development.

The Association communicates with its members via regular newsletters and with the Barwon Heads community with a full page in the monthly publication Talking Heads, which is distributed free to every household in Barwon Heads. It has regular meetings and seeks input and support from its members on all matters

The Association's goal is to ensure our members are informed and not caught by surprise. It invites guests to each meeting. We have close relationships with other groups in Barwon Heads including the Friends of the Barwon Heads Library, the Barwon Heads Senior Citizens, the Barwon Heads Arts Council, and the Save Barwon Heads Alliance. Since the demise of the Barwon Heads Traders group, the Association has encouraged membership from traders and local businesses and our Parking and Traffic sub-committee reflects diverse representation.

The Association initiated the establishment of and are members of the Combined Bellarine Community Association, which comprises 9 groups from across the Bellarine Peninsula that work together to identify common issues and communicate together with elected representatives. Planning and traffic are key topics. The Association also regularly meets with our representatives on the Council and in State and Federal Parliament.

We have over **580 Followers** on our Social Media with whom we regularly communicate and receive support. These followers are community members from a younger demographic than our typical membership base – **the majority are women 35-54 years of age.**

