

**Golden Plains Shire**

**Vol 1 – Open Space Strategy 2013-2017**

**Final Report**

ASR Research Pty Ltd  
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## SECTION ONE – INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Purpose and Objectives of Study

The purpose of the Study is to develop a strategy which will guide the future provision of open space across the Golden Plains Shire. The objectives of the Study are to:

- Develop an inventory of open space provision.
- Identify gaps, deficiencies or oversupply in provision.
- Provide directions to Council regarding the future provision of open space.
- Develop a prioritised set of recommendations for future provision.

### 1.2 Methodology

The Study methodology involved the following steps:

- A review of relevant literature.
- Inspection of open space areas.
- Community consultation:
  - 8 township forums
  - Surveys of reserve committees and schools
  - Written submissions from residents and groups
  - 3 meetings with the community reference committee.
- Council consultation:
  - Interviews/meetings/workshops with Council staff involved in the planning, development, management and maintenance of open space areas
  - Meetings with the internal Council reference committee
  - Workshop with Golden Plains Shire Councillors.
- Meetings and interviews with open space managers (other than Council) – Ballarat Environment Network (BEN), Parks Victoria (Parks Victoria) and the State Department of Sustainability and Environment.
- Interviews with land care/environment groups.

### 1.3 Definitions

For the purpose of this study:

- Open space includes:
  - Passive areas within active recreation reserves
  - Local parks, playgrounds, picnic areas and public outdoor gathering spaces
  - Linear parks, waterways and lakes
  - Bushland/conservation areas.
- Family social areas refers to outdoor areas in reserves where groups can gather to have picnics etc.
- Open space does **not** include playing fields and courts, pavilions and other infrastructure associated with formal sports and recreation.

The Study has considered open space areas that are publicly owned by Council or State Agencies such as DSE and Parks Victoria.

## SECTION TWO – OPEN SPACE STRATEGY

### 2.1 Introduction

This section contains the following:

- A statement about the role that open space plays in achieving the Shire's vision.
- Council's strategic objectives for the future provision of open space.
- Planning and management principles which will guide the Shire's decision making with respect to the future provision of open space.
- Provision standards for open space.
- A plan which identifies the cost and suggested timelines for developing, upgrading and redeveloping open space across the Shire.

The Strategy responds to the findings and issues detailed in Volume 3 to this report - Township Analyses, Key Findings and Major Issues.

### 2.2 Vision

The Council's vision for Golden Plains Shire is that:

*'it will offer a lifestyle and opportunities that foster social, economic and environmental well-being. In partnership with the community, it will provide strong leadership, encourage sustainable development and ensure quality services to continue to improve the quality of life of residents'*

Open space plays a vital role in realising this vision. Open space areas:

- Enhance community well-being through:
  - Encouraging recreational activity: informal play, walking, cycling, riding, climbing etc
  - Encouraging social interaction: family groups picnicking, groups walking along trails, social groups playing casual games
  - Providing public places for residents to rest and relax.
- Play an integral role in linking communities internally and externally.
- Provide access to community facilities and other important destinations.
- Help to conserve nature and protect and enhance biodiversity.
- Provide opportunities for people to view, access, experience and understand the natural environment and public spaces that have conservation, heritage and/or cultural significance.
- Create economic activity by offering recreation and tourism experiences.

### 2.3 Objectives

The Open Space Strategy Plan is aimed at achieving the following strategic objectives:

- An active, vibrant healthy and connected community.
- A profile of open space that Council and the community have the capacity to deliver, properly maintain and effectively manage.

- A range of suitably designed and accessible open space areas that are optimally used and adequately satisfy the various needs of the Golden Plains' community, now and into the future.
- An equitable distribution of open space across the municipality.
- The protection, conservation and enhancement of open space areas with environmental and heritage values.

## 2.4 Guiding principles

The following principles underpin the Open Space Strategy:

- The Golden Plains community will have good access to a diverse mix of high quality and safe open space.
- Open space area will be accessible, where feasible, to people of all ages and abilities.
- Local communities will be involved in the planning and management of open space.
- Open space areas that have environmental and/or heritage values will, where feasible, be protected and conserved.
- Adequate resources will be allocated to maintain existing and develop and maintain future open space areas. The allocation of these resources will be based on equity and need.
- A proactive and planned approach will be taken to the maintenance of open space areas.
- Land acquired for open space will have leisure, environmental, heritage and/or aesthetic value.
- The Shire's demographic and social trends will be taken into consideration in the planning of open space.
- Neighbouring municipalities, Government agencies, community organisations, developers and private service providers will be consulted, where appropriate, to ensure that open space areas are planned and developed in an integrated manner.
- Open space will be managed and developed in a manner that is financially responsible and provides best value to the Council and community.

## 2.5 Strategic priorities

The Open Space Strategy is aimed at achieving the following strategic priorities:

- Improving the safety of open space areas.
- Addressing deficits in the provision of open space.
- Addressing deficiencies in the quality of existing open space.
- Improving the community's access to and experience of open space.
- Continuing to place a significant emphasis on protecting and enhancing the natural environment and places of heritage significance.
- Encouraging the community to enjoy the natural environment.
- Providing accessible and high quality open space in new development areas.
- Developing water bodies as community assets.
- Developing artistic features in open space.
- Properly signing open spaces areas.
- Improving the standard and availability of information on open space opportunities in the Shire.
- Continuing to involve and support local communities in the management of open space.
- Developing strong relationships with Government agencies involved in the management of open space in the Shire.

## 2.6 Classification systems

Open space will be classified according to the catchment areas it serves and its primary function.

The catchment area hierarchy will have four levels:

- State/Regional – catering for an area larger than the Shire or having heritage or environmental significance that is beyond the Shire level e.g. Enfield State Park, Ballarat-Skipton Rail Trail.
- Shire – catering for the Shire or having Shire level significance.
- District – catering for a number of townships or having district level significance.
- Township - catering for a township or having township level significance.
- Local – catering for a local neighbourhood or having neighbourhood level significance.

The primary functions will include:

- Active recreation – used for active sports like team sports, golf, tennis etc.
- Passive recreation/informal play – used for non-sport recreation activities such as walking, relaxing, playing games, climbing etc.
- Family social – used for social activities such as family gatherings, picnics etc.
- Conservation-environment – areas that have environmental value e.g. bushlands, woodlands.
- Conservation-historic – land which accommodates facilities or features that have heritage values.
- Linear reserve – land that stretches along a creek/river, railway line, trail or ridge line.
- Recreational trail – land on which a major trail is located.

## 2.7 Provision standards

The provision standards for open space are as follows:

- All residents will have reasonable access to a mix of open space types and facilities – active reserves, informal play areas, family social facilities, bushland, trails etc.
- Publicly accessible open space areas will be safe and well maintained.
- Informal play areas will be accessibly located and contain areas of cleared flat ground, shaded area/s, playspaces with fabricated and natural elements, seating/tables, toilets (where they can be justified) and nearby carparking.
- Family social areas will be accessibly located and contain sheltered areas, picnic facilities, seating/tables, toilets (where they can be justified) and nearby carparking.
- Open space areas will be adequately signed, where feasible and relevant. The signage may comprise:
  - Information signage - e.g. to identify facilities and features of interest in parks that may be of interest to passers-by to encourage them to stop).
  - Rules signage - e.g. to encourage users, particularly horse and motor bike riders, to keep to designated tracks.
  - Directional signage – e.g. to assist people using trails with way-finding or direct people to heritage features.
  - Interpretive signage – e.g. to highlight natural and historical features of interest along paths/trail and in parks).

## **2.8 Policies and Practice**

### **2.8.1 Acquisition of space in new development areas**

With the residential growth that is occurring in the Shire, it is important that Council develop formal policy guidelines with respect to the acquisition of open space in new development areas. The guidelines should indicate:

- The criteria to be used in deciding whether cash or land should be obtained as a subdivision contribution.
- The amount of land or cash to be taken.
- The general characteristics of the land that will be sought.
- The requirements that the developer must meet with respect to the condition of the land being handed over to Council.

A proposed policy is presented in Appendix A to this report.

### **2.8.2 Development and maintenance of new open space areas**

New parks are being created without a commitment being made to adequately fund their development and on-going maintenance. Council should adopt a policy that no new park will be created without management and maintenance regimes being developed for the park and a formal commitment being made to adequately fund these regimes.

### **2.8.3 Management of passive recreation reserves by S86 and DSE committee**

Some Section 86 and DSE committees do not have the capacity to maintain their reserves. These committees may, in time, discontinue their operation. This would leave the reserves unmanaged and pressure may be put on Council to take on their management and maintenance. Council should identify what actions it could take to support the committees or examine other management options.

### **2.8.4 Camping**

The issue of camping was raised at a number of the forums conducted for this study and at previous township community planning sessions. Council does not currently have a policy position on camping. It should develop a formal position based on a consideration of the legal and other obligations of camp owners, the demand for camping, the disadvantages and benefits of camping sites and the cost of developing and maintaining the sites.

### **2.8.5 Community gardens**

The concept of developing community gardens was also raised at the forums. It is not recommended that Council become involved in establishing and funding gardens. However, it should not rule out gardens being sited on Council land if the following criteria can be met:

- A suitable location is available.
- The gardens will provide a demonstrable benefit for the community.
- The group proposing the garden can fully fund the development and operation of the garden and demonstrate a capacity to manage the garden on a sustainable basis.

### 2.8.6 Schools

Schools across the Shire contain outdoor facilities that have the potential to be more widely used by the community – playgrounds, BBQ areas, outdoor netball/basketball courts etc. There may be value to the community in Council promoting the use of school facilities and assisting the schools with their upgrade and development. This should be further explored. There also may be further opportunities to jointly develop open space areas with schools.

## 2.9 Strategy Plan

The Open Space Strategy Plan is presented in table 1. The Plan is broken down by geographical area – the Shire and townships. The actions in the table relate to:

- The management, operation and planning of open space across the Shire.
- The development, redevelopment or upgrade of specific open space areas.
- Further research and planning.

The actions listed under the Shire have relevance to the whole municipality. The actions listed under townships relate specifically to those townships. Priorities and estimated costs have been assigned to each recommendation, where relevant. The priorities have been determined by considering the strategic priorities listed in Section 2.5 of this document and applying them to each action. The priorities are expressed as 1-6 with one being high and 6 being low. It should be noted that a high priority has been given to recommendations which relate to policy development and strategic planning, addressing significant quality issues and rectifying deficiencies in the provision of open space.

The cost estimates are very ‘preliminary’ and will need to be firmed up through more detailed design and costing processes. Organisations external to Council should be involved in the implementation of some of the actions. These organisations include Government departments and agencies such as DEECD, DPCD, DSE, Parks Victoria, community groups and community committees.

### 2.10 Funding/budget allocations

Council currently allocates \$90000 for playground development/upgrade/maintenance (including skate parks). This amount is supplemented by external grants, developer contributions and in-kind labour and financial contributions by community groups.

Council’s allocation only provides for a modest quantity of works. It allows for the repair and replacement of a small number of playground elements but does not fund a routine replacement/upgrade program. It is recommended that Council give consideration to increasing the allocation. A suggested figure is \$110000 with CPI thereafter.

The Open Space Strategy Plan also recommends new annual allocations for specific items. These include:

- \$5000pa for public art works in open space areas.
- \$50000 for seating/tables in open space areas.
- \$5000pa for promotional literature about open space areas.
- \$30000pa for signage of open space.
- \$10000pa to upgrade the maintenance of Bruce’s Creek Reserve.

## **2.11 Monitoring and evaluation**

The Open Space Strategy Plan should be treated as a 'living document' and as such, should be amended or updated when:

- Relevant planning documents are completed that impact on the plan.
- More advanced information is produced about the individual recommendations.
- More is known about likely potential funding sources and mechanisms for the development of open space.
- Formal decisions are made to amend or not pursue an action in the Plan.
- Individual works are completed.

A formal review of the Plan should be undertaken each year. The outcomes of the review should be communicated to the Shire's local communities.

Table 1 – Action Plan: Open Space Strategy

No	Action	Est. cost \$	Priority	Involved Organisations
<b>Shire/General</b>				
1	Adopt the principles, strategic priorities and classification system for open space provision as outlined in Section 2 of this document.	-	1	GPS
2	Adopt the guidelines for the acquisition of open space as outlined in Appendix A to this document.	-	1	GPS
3	Adopt the policy that new open space areas will only be developed if there is an adequate maintenance and management regime in place and funding committed to implement the maintenance regime.	-	1	GPS
4	Conduct a biodiversity audit of Council owned and managed land. Provide interpretive signage of areas with biodiversity values. Work with managers of environmentally significant land to enhance diversity values of the land.	10000	2	GPS
5	Develop an asset management plan for Council managed/controlled open space areas.	-	2	GPS
6	Develop promotional literature for the major open space areas in the Shire.	5000 pa		GPS
7	Review the management of passive recreation reserves currently managed by S86 and DSE community committees. This review should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify the tasks/responsibilities involved in managing each reserve</li> <li>- Examine the capacity of the current committees to perform these tasks/responsibilities</li> <li>- Identify the actions needed to enhance the capacity of the committees (if required)</li> <li>- Examine alternative management options for the S86 committee, e.g. BEN, and settle on a management approach</li> <li>- Review the support it provides to DSE committees.</li> </ul>	-	1	GPS S86 committees DSE committees BEN
8	Develop a playground facilities plan which contains the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An inventory of the publicly accessible play facilities in the Shire – location, owner/manager, pieces, age, condition, age group provided for, scope for redevelopment/expansion etc</li> <li>- An assessment of trends in play facility design and use and future demand for play facilities</li> <li>- Council's vision and objectives for play facilities</li> <li>- Principles and standards for play facility provision (including design standards)</li> <li>- An assessment of existing provision based on the principles and standards. Identification of gaps, deficiencies and oversupply</li> <li>- Strategies for addressing gaps, deficiencies and oversupply</li> <li>- Opportunities for rationalisation and partnerships e.g. with schools.</li> </ul>	20000	1	GPS Local schools
9	Identify locations in open space areas for the provision of public art. Install and maintain pieces at these locations.	5000 pa	2	GPS
10	Identify locations in open space areas for the provision of seating, shelters, water fountains and bicycle racks. Install and maintain seating etc at these locations.	5000 pa	2	GPS S86 committees DSE committees BEN Parks Vic
11	Explore opportunities for community use of outdoor facilities at schools and the joint development of outdoor facilities by schools and Council.	-	2	GPS Local schools
12	Develop an inventory of public open space areas in the Shire that have heritage significance.	-	2	GPS

No	Action	Est. cost \$	Priority	Involved Organisations
13	Assess proposals from community groups to develop community gardens on a case by case basis. The assessment process should consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The availability of a suitable location and the benefit of the garden to the local community</li> <li>- The capacity of the group to fully fund the development and operation of the garden</li> <li>- The capacity of the group to manage the garden on a sustainable basis.</li> </ul>	-	When raised by a group	GPS Community groups
14	Develop a position paper on the provision of camping facilities in the Shire. This process should involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An audit of the legislation relating to camping and the obligations of Council as a potential owner</li> <li>- An audit of formal and informal camping areas in the Shire – location, facilities, extent of use, why they are being used etc.</li> <li>- An assessment of the suitability of the location of the camping areas and the use made of these areas, including the damage or potential damage to the environment caused by camping activity.</li> <li>- An assessment of the community benefit of the camping areas – social, economic etc</li> <li>- An assessment of the needs for and feasibility of formalising some of the existing camping areas and providing new areas - facilities required, cost, environmental implications, community/economic benefit, management and maintenance arrangements.</li> </ul>	10000	1	GPS DSE S86 committees DSE committees BEN Parks Vic
15	Develop and implement a signage policy/program based on the following elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information signage - e.g. to identify facilities and features of interest in parks that may be of interest to passers-by</li> <li>- Rules signage - e.g. to encourage users, particularly horse and motor bike riders, to keep to designated tracks</li> <li>- Directional signage – e.g. to direct people to heritage features</li> <li>- Interpretive signage – e.g. to highlight natural and historical features of interest in parks.</li> </ul>	30000 pa	Ongoing	GPS DSE committees S86 committees BEN
<b>Bannockburn</b>				
16	Continue to develop the open space network consistent with the Bannockburn UDF and Bannockburn Infrastructure Development Plan.	-	Ongoing	GPS Developers
17	Continue to implement the Bruce's Creek Reserve Masterplan.	-	Ongoing	GPS
18	Enhance the maintenance regime for Bruce's Creek Reserve.	10000 pa	Ongoing	GPS
19	Renew and progressively implement the landscape plan for Victoria Park.	-	Ongoing	GPS
20	Review the provision of carparking areas and public toilets at the parks in Bannockburn and the main access points to the trail along Bruce's Creek.	-	2	GPS S86 committees DSE committees BEN
21	Give consideration to developing family social areas at the Bannockburn Lock-Up Park and Victoria Park.	50000	3	GPS
22	Develop informal play and family social areas at the Education/Recreation Precinct.	TBD	3	GPS DEECD
23	Give consideration to designating a dog off lead area in one of the parks in the town.	-	2	GPS
<b>Batesford</b>				
24	Enhance Red Gum Reserve.	50000	1	GPS

No	Action	Est. cost \$	Priority	Involved Organisations
<b>Berringa</b>				
26	Investigate the feasibility of developing camping areas along or near the Rainbow Bird Trail.	See action 14	3	GPS Comm committees
<b>Dereel</b>				
27	Liaise with the Dereel Campfire Conservation Group to develop the Dereel Swamp area.	-	1	GPS Parks Vic
28	Investigate the feasibility of establishing a formal camping area near the Dereel Swamp.	See action 14	3	GPS Parks Vic
29	Continue to enhance the Dereel Recreation Reserve. Investigate the feasibility of developing a community garden in the reserve.	20000	Ongoing	GPS Comm committee
<b>Enfield</b>				
30	Enhance the play areas and other infrastructure at Harrison Reserve – public toilet, natural elements in play space, water fountain.	20000	2	GPS
<b>Grenville/Garibaldi</b>				
31	Continue to implement the masterplan for Garibaldi Reserve.	20000	Ongoing	GPS Comm committee
32	Create a wildlife sculpture in Grenville or Garibaldi.	5000	2	GPS Comm committee
<b>Haddon</b>				
33	Upgrade the camping ground at the Lions Park.	See action 14	3	GPS Comm committee
<b>Inverleigh</b>				
34	Replace the tables in the parkland at the meeting of the Barwon and Leigh Rivers.	500	1	GPS
35	Provide picnic facilities near the native garden on the river near the swing bridge.	5000	2	GPS
36	Re-instate the areas at the skate park that were damaged by flood.	5000	1	GPS
<b>Lethbridge</b>				
37	Update the facilities and enhance the maintenance of Lethbridge Lake.	15000	1	GPS Comm committee
<b>Linton</b>				
38	Improve Edinburgh Park.	20000	2	GPS
39	Provide sufficient parking at the key parks and other outdoor destinations in Linton.	10000	3	GPS
40	Provide directional signage to the bush trails in Linton.	See action 15	3	GPS
41	Provide promotional literature about the interesting areas to visit around Linton.	1000	2	GPS
42	Explore the feasibility of developing the Mortchup Rd Reservoir as a recreation asset.	TBD	2	GPS

No	Action	Est. cost \$	Priority	Involved Organisations
<b>Maude/Steiglitz</b>				
43	Continue to enhance the Maude Recreation Reserve. Provide a viewing platform, skate park, climbing wall and improved lighting in the reserve.	30000	Ongoing	GPS Comm committee
44	Give consideration to developing a community garden in the Maude Recreation Reserve.	-	1	GPS Comm committee
<b>Meredith</b>				
45	Develop the Police Paddocks.	30000	Ongoing	GPS Comm committee
46	Continue to enhance Pioneer Park.	20000	Ongoing	GPS Comm committee
<b>Napoleons</b>				
47	Consider the development of skate park at the Napoleons Recreation Reserve.	50000	3	GPS Comm committee
<b>Rokewood/Corindhap</b>				
48	Provide camping areas and facilities at strategic locations throughout the Rokewood district.	See action 14	3	GPS Comm committees
49	Upgrade the play spaces at Rokewood Recreation Reserve and the Lagoon.	20000	2	GPS Comm committees
<b>Ross Creek/Smythes Creek</b>				
50	Develop wetlands at the Ross Creek Recreation Reserve.	30000	2	GPS Comm committee
51	Implement the recommendations of the Ross Creek Recreation Reserve Masterplan.	20000	Ongoing	GPS Comm committee
<b>Smythesdale/Scarsdale</b>				
52	Provide clarity around the availability of camping along the trail. If available, promote the camping facilities with the Rail Trail.	See action 14	1	GPS
53	Consider alignment of the Rail Trail in the development of the wetlands in Smythesdale (area on the Snake valley Rd along the Woody Yaloak River). Promote access from the Rail Trail to the wetlands. Include picnic facilities at the wetlands.	25000	1	GPS Comm committee
54	Give consideration to developing camping facilities in the masterplan for the Woody Yaloak Equestrian Centre.	See action 14	3	GPS Comm committee
55	Make the following improvements to the skate park area at Woody Yaloak Recreation Reserve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expand the car park to service the skate park</li> <li>- Expand the skate park (it is well used)</li> <li>- Providing more undercover area</li> <li>- Providing access to toilets for skate park users.</li> </ul>	80000	3	GPS Comm committee

No	Action	Est. cost \$	Priority	Involved Organisations
56	Make improvements at Brewery Dam Reserve including information and signage and management of trail bikes.	1000	3	GPS
57	Continue to enhance the Woody Yaloak River Reserve (the land parcels managed by Council near the recreation reserve).	20000	2	GPS
<b>Teesdale</b>				
58	Undertake the following works at Turtle Bend Reserve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Upgrade the public toilets</li> <li>- Provide a drinking tap</li> <li>- Add small junior equipment to the playground</li> <li>- Provide seats along the path for older people to rest</li> <li>- Potentially enclose the playground with fencing (following consultation with the community).</li> </ul>	100000	2 2 2 2 2	GPS Comm committee

## APPENDICES

## Appendix A – Proposed policy for the acquisition of land in new development areas

### Application

This policy is to be applied by Council when making a determination about the provision of open space in a new development area. The policy outlines:

- The criteria to be used to decide whether cash or land should be obtained as a subdivision contribution.
- The amount of land or cash to be taken.
- The general characteristics of the land that will be sought.

### Criteria

Criteria for determining whether land or cash should be taken are as follows:

#### *Land*

- The development area is large.
- The anticipated population increase is significant.
- There is a lack of open space in adjoining areas.
- Existing open space is poorly accessible.
- The development area has land that has environmental or conservation value or is needed to protect amenity.
- The land will provide for the establishment or the linking of a bicycle/pedestrian path.
- The land could help to link open space and/or community facilities: and/or
- The Council/community will have the capacity to maintain the land.

#### *Cash*

- The land in the development area is not suitable as public open space – unsafe, poor condition, inaccessible, unsightly.
- The land would be too small to be of any value.
- Purchase and/or development of land in an adjoining area would be of greater benefit.
- Upgrading existing open space would be of greater value: and/or
- The cost of maintaining the land would be unacceptably high.

### Amount and characteristics

Council should seek at least the 5% contribution permissible by legislation. The land it obtains should be functional, attractive and suitable for the purpose for which the land will be used. The land should be transferred to Council in a clean and tidy condition and appropriately landscaped (if required by Council).