CM13.6. Draft Cultural Precinct Master Plan

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CONFIDENTIAL	No		
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Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present the draft Cultural Precinct Master Plan and seek endorsement to proceed to public exhibition.

Background

The Cultural Precinct is in the heart of Albury, encompassing the city block between Dean, Olive, Swift and Kiewa Streets. The civic parkland of QEII Square is at the centre of the precinct and surrounded by a family of notable cultural institutions and buildings of architectural significance such as (but not limited to) St Matthews Anglican Church, Albury Library Museum, Albury Entertainment Centre, Murray Art Museum Albury (MAMA), Retro Lane Café, Albury Post Office, Albury Court House and Murray Conservatorium.

A report to Council on 24 August 2020 (refer attachment 1) presented the proposed scope, timeframes and Stakeholder Engagement Plan for the review of the Cultural Precinct Master Plan.

The preparation of the draft Master Plan was guided by two stages of consultation. Stage One consultation in October and November 2020 provided an early opportunity to share any issues or ideas regarding the precinct. Throughout this consultation period 273 survey responses, 158 comments on the interactive map, and seven written submissions were received. 16 stakeholder meetings were also held, as well as an online community meeting with 10 participants. A summary of Stage One 'Have Your Say' consultation is included in attachment 2.

Based on this feedback, preliminary sketch plans were developed and presented to key precinct property stakeholders and Councillors for consideration, as part of Stage Two consultation in February 2021.

Councillor sessions have been held on:

- 17 August 2020 (seeking input on proposed scope and draft Stakeholder Engagement Plan);
- 13 October 2020 (Stage One providing an early opportunity to share any issues or ideas); and
- 1 February 2021 (Stage Two presenting and seeking feedback on preliminary sketch plans).

The feedback from these various consultation activities informed the draft Cultural Precinct Master Plan (refer attachment 3).

Issues

The Cultural Precinct Master Plan review aligns to the following Albury2030 outcomes:

- *1.2.4 – Continue to enhance Albury and Lavington CBDs; and*
- *3.7.1 – Activate the cultural precinct and create connections between stakeholder facilities.*

The Cultural Precinct Master Plan review also relates to other Council strategies such as:

- *Albury CBD Master Plan 2009 (review scheduled for 2021/22);*
- *Albury Creative Economy Strategy 2017 – 2021;*
- *Cultural Plan 2012 – 2016; and*
- *Heritage Study 2003 (review commencing later in 2021).*

Taylor Culity Lethlean (TCL) was engaged to prepare an updated Master Plan for the Cultural Precinct. The objective of this project was to review the 2015 Master Plan in order to provide a collective vision and long-term strategy (10-30 years). This process involved numerous stakeholder engagements, including key property stakeholders and the wider community. The Master Plan review process also included background document review, research and detailed site analysis. The Master Plan design has also considered and aligned with related projects such as the Albury Entertainment Centre Convention Wing Redevelopment design process which is occurring concurrently.

The draft Cultural Precinct Master Plan includes an urban design framework that establishes a preferred structure for the precinct and relates to a set of 'key moves' for transforming the precinct to a contemporary civic and community destination. Three design options were explored as part of the Master Plan process, of which 'The Square' was identified as the preferred design to unite the space, providing a central lawn at the heart of the precinct, generous tree-lined promenades and a significant interactive water element.

Preliminary cost estimates based on the high-level draft Master Plan estimate works in the order of $20.3 million. This includes full upgrade to the QEII Square space (central lawn area, northern plaza, amphitheatre, lighting, landscaping and furniture, water feature, east and west promenades, tree planting and gardens, Retro Café arbour, art play area and Dean Street entry and decking). It also includes upgrades to some areas around QEII Square such as the plaza to the east of the State Government offices, the Olive Street laneway link to the south of the Court House and renovation to the ground floor of the NSW Government Building (subject to discussions and long-term lease arrangements) to accommodate new amenities (such as public toilets, parent's room and change facilities) and other uses to activate the ground floor, such as a café.

The above estimate excludes any upgrades to surrounding streetscapes, such as potential paved shared zones in Dean, Swift or Olive Streets, Retro Laneway paving upgrade, or any works within external sites such as the Church, Police or Courts sites.

It is anticipated that opportunities would be explored in relation to potential State and Federal Government grant funding. Implementation would also require collaboration with other precinct land

owners such as the NSW Government. Staging of works would also be explored to align with potential funding and to allow for efficient implementation and potential to align works with other projects (eg. Albury Entertainment Centre Convention Wing Redevelopment) to minimise disruptions.

Risk

- **Business Risk** – An external consultant (TCL) was engaged to prepare the draft Master Plan through current budget funding. Subject to feedback from public exhibition, implementation of the draft Master Plan will require resourcing that can be considered through Council's planning and capital works programs and budgeting processes, as well as potential external grant funding opportunities.
- **Corporate Risk** – This project has considerable public interest and has been guided by a Stakeholder Engagement Plan. The Background section above outlines Stage One and Two consultation activities that have occurred to date. The Community Engagement section below outlines the anticipated consultation activities proposed as part of public exhibition (Stage Three).
- **WHS and Public Risk** – Community and Stakeholder engagement activities will need to comply with any COVID-19 restrictions and social distancing requirements.
- **Environmental Risk** – The precinct includes several heritage items that have been considered in the draft Master Plan. The draft Master Plan also outlines several sustainability initiatives relating to water, energy, materials and biodiversity. Implementation phases of the Master Plan may require further investigation on matters such as land contamination and Archaeological Assessment.
- **Delivery Program Risk** – The original project timeline anticipated exhibition of the draft Master Plan in March 2021, which is now expected to occur in May 2021. The timeframes were extended due to delays in the consultant being able to visit the site due to COVID-19 related border restrictions and to allow for additional stakeholder consultation activities. There is minimal risk from this delay as the project is still expected to be substantially complete by the end of this financial year. This will allow the Master Plan outcomes to be considered as part of related projects such as the Albury Entertainment Centre Convention Wing Redevelopment design currently being undertaken, and as part the overall Albury and Lavington CBD Master Plan reviews scheduled for 2021/2022.

Community Engagement

Community and stakeholder input has been a key component in developing the draft Master Plan. A Stakeholder Engagement Plan has guided the various consultation methods and stages.

- Stage One: Have a Say (Community & Stakeholders) - Opportunity to share any issues or ideas and help develop a collective vision and key design principles guiding the precinct. (Completed in October – November 2020).
- Stage Two: Testing sketch plan (Key precinct property stakeholders) - Discuss sketch Master Plan concepts and ideas with the key precinct property stakeholders. (Completed in February 2021).
- Stage Three: Exhibition (Community & Stakeholders) - Opportunity for formal feedback on the draft Master Plan and report. (Anticipated for May 2021.)

The following community engagement activities are proposed as part of public exhibition on the draft Master Plan:

- public exhibition for a minimum of 28 days;
- public notice in the Border Mail newspaper;
- exhibition material placed on the AlburyCity website;
- notification via Council's social media;
- notification to participants of previous consultation rounds and community engagement mailing list;
- media release and/or promotion via News from AlburyCity;
- community drop-in session providing opportunity to view the draft plans and discuss with the Council project team members and design consultants;
- meeting with Precinct Property Stakeholders; and
- draft Master Plan posters displays at Retro Café, Library Museum, Lavington Library and Council offices.

Further engagement with other key stakeholders such as NSW Government will also be undertaken.

Future implementation phases of the draft Master Plan will also include further community and stakeholder consultation.

Options

1. Endorse the draft Cultural Precinct Master Plan and place on public exhibition; or
2. Seek amendments to the draft Cultural Precinct Master Plan; or
3. Not endorse the draft Cultural Precinct Master Plan.

With consideration to the information outlined in this report, it is recommended that Council proceed with Option One.

Conclusion

Following consultation, the draft Cultural Precinct Master Plan has been prepared for public exhibition. It provides an aspirational vision and long-term strategy for the Precinct, including public realm improvements for QEII Square and potential future opportunities for new building developments or renovations to enhance the Cultural Precinct as an integrated cultural campus and significant draw card for Albury, and a much-loved place for our community.

Should Council proceed to public exhibition on the draft Cultural Precinct Master Plan, any submissions received will be considered in finalising the Master Plan prior to presenting to Council for adoption.

Recommendation

That Council:

a. Receives and endorses the draft Cultural Precinct Master Plan;

b. Places the draft Cultural Precinct Master Plan on public exhibition for a minimum of 28 days; and

c. If no objections are received that the draft Cultural Precinct Master Plan be adopted.

Attachments

1. Previous Council Report (excluding attachments) from 24 August 2020 (DOC21/82617).
2. Have Your Say Consultation Summary (DOC21/25730).
3. Draft Cultural Precinct Master Plan (DOC21/85059).