

What we  
heard

## Urban Design and Landscape Plan





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## About this report

North East Link will fix the missing link between the M80 Ring Road and an upgraded Eastern Freeway, cutting travel times by up to 35 minutes and taking 15,000 trucks off local roads a day.

From 11 to 31 May 2022, we asked the local community to share their thoughts on the Urban Design and Landscape Plan (UDLP) for the North East Link Tunnels from Watsonia to Bulleen.

We asked for feedback on new parklands, wetlands, walking and cycling paths, improvements to local roads, and connecting Eastern Freeway upgrades in Bulleen and Balwyn North.

The plan also included information about designs for bridges, noise walls, tunnel ventilation structures and buildings, and how the UDLP meets North East Link's approved Urban Design Strategy and Environmental Performance Requirements.

This report includes a summary of what we heard, and how it has helped to refine the project design.

### Collaboration with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people

We're working closely with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people to create a project design that recognises and celebrates Aboriginal knowledge and culture.

This includes finding ways to incorporate Indigenous storytelling, sustainability, and creating spaces to bring people together.

During workshops for the Urban Design and Landscape Plan, more than 30 opportunities were identified for design collaboration with Wurundjeri across architecture, landscape design, urban design (water) and wayfinding. You can find these in the plan by looking for these symbols.



Architecture



Landscape



Urban design



Wayfinding

You can see the Urban Design and Landscape Plan at [northeastlink.vic.gov.au](http://northeastlink.vic.gov.au)

### Community consultation timeline

2017

**10,000+**

pieces of feedback

### Deciding where to build North East Link

Understanding the traffic and transport problems North East Link needs to solve, and what else the project design could and should achieve for Melbourne and the local community.

2018/19

**3500+**

pieces of feedback

**870+**

submissions

### Environment Effects Statement

Setting the requirements and standards the project design needs to meet by developing Environmental Performance Requirements and an Urban Design Strategy.

2022

**250+**

submissions

### Urban Design and Landscape Plan (UDLP) for the North East Link Tunnels

Refining the project design, ready for construction.

2023–2024

### UDLPs for other elements of the North East Link Program

We'll be preparing and exhibiting UDLPs for the Ring Road Completion, Eastern Freeway Upgrades and Eastern Express Busway as we progressively bring builders on board.

Cover image: Artist's impression of new cultural wetlands, Bulleen  
This page: Artist's impression of new Borlase Reserve parklands, Yallambie



# Engagement

## Communication

How we let people know the UDLP was on exhibition

**1.1+ million**

people reached through social media

**56,000+**

postcards sent to wider north east community

**11,000+**

subscribers received two project emails

**5500+**

letters to nearby stakeholders, residents, and businesses

**3**

newspaper advertisements

## Engagement

Who was interested to know more about the project design and UDLP

**37,500+**

visits to the UDLP online

**9350+**

visits to the interactive online map

**525**

people came to 21 community information sessions

## Submissions

Who made a submission

**229**

local residents

**4**

local councils

**4**

government agencies and utility providers

**9**

community groups

**5**

local businesses and trader groups (8 submissions)

**2**

local schools

# Key changes made

## In response to what we heard in submissions, the UDLP now includes

### Improved walking and cycling connections

To and through Borlase Reserve along Greensborough Road in Yallambie.

To and through the new cultural wetlands along the Yarra River in Bulleen.

Along Bulleen Road in Bulleen.

Across the Eastern Freeway interchange in Balwyn North.

### More trees and plants

More trees and plants around the northern tunnel ventilation structure in Yallambie.

More opportunities for more trees and shrubs to be planted to improve community spaces, enhance wildlife habitat and help screen noise walls, bridges and buildings.

A new wildlife crossing under Lower Plenty Road from Borlase Reserve in Yallambie to Banyule Flats in Viewbank.

### More privacy and better views for residents

A new high-quality fence and extra planting to improve privacy for residents near Borlase Reserve in Yallambie.

More space for trees and plants near noise walls for residents on Estelle Street in Bulleen.

Keeping existing trees in Koonung Creek Reserve to give residents on Leonis Avenue in Balwyn North a greener outlook.

### Better information for Bulleen Art & Garden

To more clearly show how we're supporting Bulleen Art & Garden to stay open for business while we build North East Link.



Artist's impression of Yarra Link green bridge, Bulleen





Please plant as many big trees as possible in front of the tunnel ventilation structure on the Greensborough Road side in Yallambie.

Macleod resident

## Watsonia to Rosanna

### Longer North East Link Tunnels, Greensborough Road boulevard and Borlase Reserve

In response to community feedback received through the project’s planning approvals process, including submissions to the Environment Effects Statement, the UDLP included:

Longer tunnels to Watsonia, with an additional 1.9km built using tunnel boring machines.

A simpler Lower Plenty Road interchange.

A new tree-lined boulevard for Greensborough Road.

10 hectares of parklands along a revitalised Banyule Creek at Borlase Reserve.

Overall, people let us know the longer tunnel, new boulevard and parklands were a positive outcome for the local area. The new walking and cycling paths, green spaces and play areas received the most positive comments.

People raised concerns about, or gave ideas on how to improve, some of the new walking and cycling connections, the type and location of new play and exercise areas, the tunnel ventilation structures, and changes to local roads.



Love the inclusion of playgrounds and amenities at the Borlase Reserve. These are essential.

Rosanna resident

Artist's impression of new Borlase Reserve parklands and revitalised Banyule Creek, Yallambie



## What you asked us to consider

Changes to Borlase Reserve including removing the play and exercise equipment, walking paths, BBQ area and public toilet (or moving them further away from homes), and reinstating Borlase Reserve as bushland after construction. Others asked us to consider how more people could visit and use the reserve including a different mix of activities and equipment for teenagers, people over 65, a café and car parking.

Avoiding, or minimising, removing trees and vegetation along Greensborough Road and supporting habitat for local wildlife.

A better visual outcome for the tunnel ventilation structure, including planting more trees near it.

Extra walking and cycling paths along and across Greensborough Road in Yallambie, including around Lower Plenty Road and the Lower Plenty Road interchange ramps – including more bridge crossings.

Keeping Coleen Street connected to Drysdale Street in Yallambie for residents to use.

Extending the service road on the west side of Greensborough Road near Erskine Road and Fairlie Avenue in Macleod to improve access to homes nearby.

## Other concerns we heard from you

Whether the upgrades to Greensborough Road will be a more attractive route for through traffic than the North East Link Tunnels.

Air quality near the tunnel ventilation structures.

“  
Borlase Reserve will be over developed and lose the existing natural bush environment.”

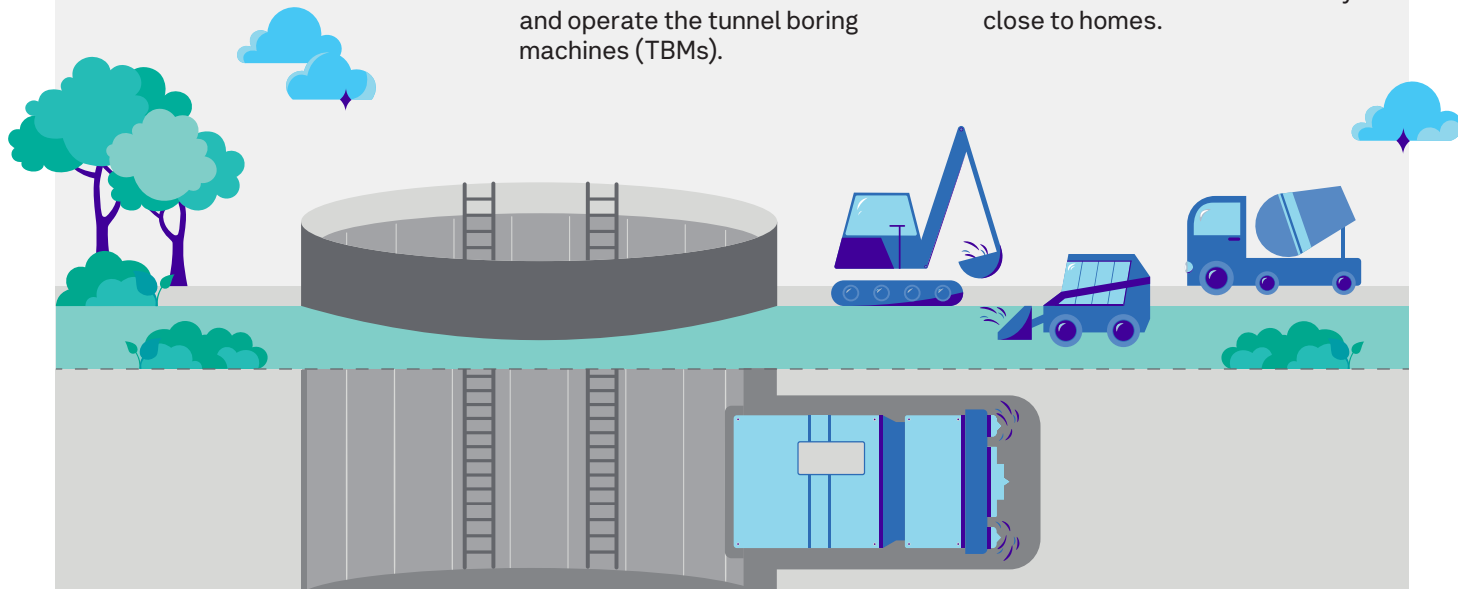
Macleod resident

## Longer tunnels

While most submissions about the longer tunnels to Watsonia were positive, some people asked for the tunnels to be extended even further north.

The tunnel length has been carefully designed to minimise construction impacts and keep views of the ventilation structure as far away from homes as possible. While construction to build the longer tunnels will happen deep underground, major works are still needed at the surface to launch and operate the tunnel boring machines (TBMs).

Extending the tunnels further north where an equivalent area of space is not available for the required surface works, would significantly increase construction impacts in the area. It would also likely require acquisition of more homes and a third ventilation structure very close to homes.



## What we're doing as a result

### More privacy for residents

1 Installing a high-quality fence to provide more privacy for residents on the east side of Borlase Reserve.

### More trees, plants and wildlife habitat

2 Looking at where we can include more trees and plants at Borlase Reserve to provide additional privacy for residents and habitat for wildlife – keeping the reserve as a space the surrounding community can use and enhancing this important bushland corridor. More detailed designs for play and exercise areas will also be developed.

3 Keeping a short section of Banyule Creek underground where it passes behind the tunnel ventilation structure and space is limited. This delivers a better outcome for the overall health of the creek and creates more space for trees and plants.

4 Building a new wildlife crossing under Lower Plenty Road to connect Borlase Reserve and Banyule Flats.

### Better bike and walking connections

5 Building better connections to Borlase Reserve by bike and on foot using the Iuk (eel) bridge over Lower Plenty Road with wider paths on the north side, and a better landing point on the south side.

🔍 We looked at whether it was possible to build a bridge over the Lower Plenty Road interchange ramps near Edward Street, or a path around them, but found there would be impacts on Banyule Creek and less space for trees and plants.

### Tunnel ventilation structure

6 Planting more trees and plants to help screen views of the tunnel ventilation structure.

7 Providing the local community with more information about how the tunnel ventilation structures will be designed, safely maintained, and operated to meet strict air quality requirements.

### Local road connections

8 Exploring options to improve access for homes on Greensborough Road near Erskine Road, Fairlie Avenue and Cooley Avenue as part of more detailed design work.

🔍 We looked at whether it was possible to keep Coleen Street connected to Drysdale Street, but it's not possible to keep this connection and have space for Banyule Creek, surrounding wetlands and parklands.

## Better options for travel

The upgrades to Greensborough Road will improve local trips by car, bike and on foot. The North East Link Tunnels will still offer a much faster trip for people who want to travel through local suburbs without stopping.







“

Walking tracks and bushlands are great. The Motorway Control Centre itself is fine. It just needs to be moved 100 metres along opposite the shops. Thank you.

Bulleen resident

Artist's impression of Cultural wetlands along the Yarra River, Bulleen

“

On-road cycling infrastructure must be protected on Bulleen and Greensborough Roads, particularly on the north bound Bulleen Road bike lanes where there is no immediate off-road alternative.

Community group submission

## Bulleen

### Manningham Road interchange and Bulleen Road upgrades

In response to community feedback received through the project's planning approvals process, including submissions to the Environment Effects Statement, the UDLP included:

Extending the tunnel boring machines further south under Manningham Road to help avoid works in Banksia Park and keep them away from Heide Museum of Modern Art.

Moving 14,700 cars and trucks a day off Bulleen Road and into the tunnels by moving the interchange ramps for trips to and from the Ring Road further south to Eastern Freeway interchange.

Creating more space for new wetlands and an Indigenous Cultural Landscape Precinct along the Yarra River (Birrarung), keep Bulleen Art & Garden (BAAG) open and avoid the historic River Red Gum tree on Bridge Street.

Overall, people felt most positive about the new wetlands, green spaces and walking and cycling connections. People told us they are concerned some of the land BAAG uses for parking and landscape supplies is still needed to build the North East Link Tunnels and how this might impact their operations. People also suggested ideas to improve walking and cycling connections and about how they would like the land available for future development opportunities to be used.



## What you asked us to consider

Avoiding construction on any land Bulleen Art & Garden uses for its business, or to give BAAG some of the land put aside for future development opportunities to make sure they can continue to run their business well.

Improving walking and cycling connections to Yarra River trails, Heide Museum of Modern Art and the Indigenous Cultural Landscape Precinct, including a new bridge over Manningham Road.

Moving the Motorway Control Centre further north away from the new wetlands and nearby homes.

Improving walking and cycling access along Bulleen Road. This included shared use paths on both sides (instead of a walking path on the west and a wider shared use path on the east) and extending paths and on-road cycle lanes further north.

Providing a physical barrier for the on-road cycle lanes.

Extending Ilma Court in Bulleen further north so residents can use the traffic lights at Golden Way.

## Other concerns we heard from you

How the River Red Gum on Bridge Street will be protected during construction.

### The River Red Gum

The improvements to the Manningham Road interchange design avoid the River Red Gum tree on Bridge Street by pushing the tunnels deeper and shifting ramps further away. We're making every effort to protect the tree during construction. We'll be doing more studies to understand its age and health, setting up a no-go zone around the tree and putting a management plan in place as we start working around it.



### Veneto Club parking

We heard from Veneto Club how important car parking is for their members.

The UDLP includes changes to the project area so there will be no overall loss of car parking for the club. This change was made through a Planning Scheme Amendment, which was approved by the Minister for Planning while the UDLP was being developed.

### Future development

The design for the North East Link Tunnels and interchange at Manningham Road creates space that can be used for future development opportunities once the tunnels underneath are built.

How the land is used once construction for North East Link is finished, including what opportunities are considered, will be decided through a separate planning and approvals process and involve consultation.



## What we're doing

### Better bike and walking connections

- 1 Adding three wider walking and cycling paths through the Manningham Road interchange area and a new footpath along Bulleen Road for better connections to the Cultural Landscape Precinct, Heide Museum of Modern Art and the surrounding path network.
  - 2 Adding a new walking and cycling path on the west side of Bulleen Road to better connect the on-road cycle lanes through to the shared use path network further north.
  - 3 Extending the shared use path on the east side of Bulleen Road further north to Avon Street.
  - 4 Considering physical road barriers for on-road cycle lanes during detailed design, including taking into account road safety audits and traffic assessments.
- We looked at building a bridge over Manningham Road, but found this would have used some of the land for future development. How this land is used will be decided later on and consider the future of the entire precinct.
- We also looked at widening the footpath on the west side of Bulleen Road to a shared use path, but there isn't enough space, including getting too close to the no-go zone for Bolin Bolin Billabong. The design has a footpath on the west side, on-road cycle lanes in both directions, and a shared use path on the east side of the road.

### Motorway Control Centre

- 5 Investigating where we can include more trees and plants to provide more screening. The building will also be well-designed, use high-quality materials and carefully consider the surrounding area.
- We looked at moving the control centre further north, but the current location provides the best connection to the tunnels below. It also allows all the buildings to be kept in the one area, keeping the control centre as small as possible.

### Supporting Bulleen Art & Garden

- 6 Continuing to work closely with BAAG to support them through construction and providing clearer information in the UDLP for land.

### Local road connections

- 7 Maintaining the same road access for residents at Ilma Court. Taking 14,700 cars and trucks off Bulleen Road a day and other upgrades will make turning in and out significantly safer and easier. Extending Ilma Court further north would also impact open space and walking and cycling connections into the new Cultural Landscape Precinct.

Future development areas







The curve in the proposed shared path bridge over Bulleen Road seems sharp. This makes it very difficult and unsafe for people riding bikes.

Community group submission

## Balwyn North

### Eastern Freeway interchange and upgrades

In response to community feedback received through the project's planning approvals process, including submissions to the Environment Effects Statement, the UDLP included:

A two-hectare green bridge over Bulleen Road to connect Koonung Creek Trail to Bulleen Park and Yarra River trails.

Reducing the number of raised ramps at the Eastern Freeway interchange from four to three and avoiding raising Bulleen Road over ramps on the east side.

New wetlands for Koonung Creek on the north side of the freeway, upgrades to Koonung Creek Reserve on the south, and new noise walls to meet the project's stringent day and night time noise standards.

Overall, people felt most positive about the new Yarra Link green bridge and improvements to Koonung Creek Reserve. People told us they are concerned about noise from the freeway and ramps, loss of open space and trees in Koonung Creek Reserve and how pedestrians and cyclists would make trips through the Eastern Freeway interchange.



Upgraded Koonung Creek Trail and Koonung Creek Reserve, Balwyn North



## What you asked us to consider

Reducing the tight curves and steepness on the walking and cycling path on the Bulleen Park side of the Yarra Link green bridge and providing safer access to Marcellin College for students on the other side.

A better design for the entry road into Bulleen Park and Carey Grammar School from Bulleen Road.

Making the Eastern Freeway interchange easier for pedestrians, bike riders and drivers to use and navigate.

Improving views of noise walls and freeway ramps for residents and park users, including planting more trees and plants.

Avoiding, or minimising, tree removal at Koonung Creek Reserve and keeping as much of the parklands as possible.

Building 10-metre-high noise walls around Belle Vue Primary School in Balwyn North to provide better noise protection.

Providing more space for more trees and plants along Estelle Street in Bulleen.

Building an extra walking and cycling connection over, or under, the Eastern Freeway from Koonung Creek Reserve to Bulleen Park & Ride.

## Other concerns we heard from you

Air quality near the freeway ramps and tunnel ventilation structures.

**“** I think the green bridge is an excellent idea, but am cautious about its gradient ... I suspect it will be quite steep.

Doncaster resident

I see and support the importance of the work which promises to have a benefit over time. My main concerns are the sound from the freeway, the destruction of part of the Koonung Creek Reserve, and access to park and ride and transportation.

Balwyn North resident

The project's daytime noise standard is consistent with the highest level of traffic noise protection in Victoria. North East Link is the only road project in Victoria to specifically address night-time noise.

## Koonung Creek Reserve

The design for the Eastern Freeway Upgrades in the UDLP includes upgrades to Koonung Creek Reserve, with a renewed Koonung Creek Trail, new BBQ area, shelters and picnic tables.



## Noise

Noise walls for North East Link, including Eastern Freeway ramps, will meet the project's strict noise standard of 63 decibels during the day and 58 decibels at night – providing improved noise outcomes for many residents along the Eastern Freeway.

Further detailed design work will determine the exact height for noise walls needed at Belle Vue Primary School to meet the project's stringent noise standard, but studies so far have found they are likely to be between 8–9 metres.

## What we're doing

### Better bike and walking connections

- 1 Improving the walking and cycling path on the Bulleen Park side of the green bridge as part of more detailed design work.
- 2 Adding two raised pedestrian crossings near the entry to Marcellin College.
- 3 Building an easier to use Bulleen Road bridge over the freeway for pedestrians and bike riders.
- 4 Developing a plan for wayfinding that will make the interchange easy and intuitive to navigate for all users.
- 5 Looking for opportunities to improve sight lines into and through the new Koonung Creek Trail underpasses.

**🔍** We looked at providing an extra freeway crossing from Koonung Creek Reserve to Bulleen Park & Ride, but consistent with previous studies done when designing the new park and ride this isn't possible. A bridge would need to be very high to pass over the freeway ramps and an area of Koonung Creek Reserve would be required.

### More trees and plants

- 6 Keeping existing trees and plants in Koonung Creek Reserve near Leonis Avenue in Balwyn North and looking at where we can use more trees and plants to help screen noise walls along Koonung Creek Reserve.
- 7 Creating space for more trees and plants along Estelle Street in Bulleen by moving the walking and cycling path further away from the noise wall.
- 8 Considering views of the freeway interchange for people nearby by building a simpler walking and cycling bridge on the north side and keeping designs simple, consistent and uncluttered for other elements including noise walls, barriers and overhead signs.

### Tunnel ventilation structure

- 9 Providing the local community with more information about the project's stringent air quality modelling and monitoring requirements and how the tunnel ventilation structures will be designed, safely maintained and operated to meet air quality standards.

### Local road connections

- 10 Working closely with Manningham Council and Carey Grammar to improve the entry road for Bulleen Park and the school sports fields as part of more detailed design work.





# Construction

While most of the submissions we received were about the project design, we also received comments about construction.

These included questions and concerns about how traffic and transport disruptions, noise, dust, vibration and worker parking will be managed, as well as any light spill into homes from night works.

We also heard you want early information about what's planned in your area, regular updates from us and more information about support available to residents closest to major work sites.

With any major project like North East Link, construction disruptions are unavoidable, but with good planning and consultation with the local community, these can be managed well. For North East Link, strict Environmental Performance Requirements (EPRs) are in place to avoid some impacts, and minimise and manage others, while we deliver this massive program of work.

## Minimising disruptions

Some of the ways we're planning and building North East Link to minimise disruptions for residents, drivers, pedestrians, cyclists and the broader community include:

### Noise

Building acoustic sheds and installing hoarding around compounds to contain some of the noisiest works.

Using noise control equipment on machinery and tools.

Scheduling noisy works when they will have the least impact, where possible.

Where night or out of hours work is required, letting residents know in advance and discussing support available.

### Dust

Preventing dust and water runoff by using water carts and street sweepers.

### Traffic

Building dedicated access points for construction sites off Greensborough Road and Bulleen Road, avoiding disruption to residential streets where possible.

When lane closures, speed reductions and detours are needed, we'll provide plenty of notice and have traffic management plans in place to minimise disruptions as best we can.

### Light

Using shields to minimise light spill into homes.

### Parking

Building dedicated worker car parking for each construction area.

### Find out more

For more information about how we're building North East Link and managing construction works near you, or to sign up for construction updates visit [northeastlink.vic.gov.au](http://northeastlink.vic.gov.au)

### To talk to us

Drop in to our Community Information Hub at 17 Watsonia Road, Watsonia Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm

Write to us at [community@northeastlink.vic.gov.au](mailto:community@northeastlink.vic.gov.au)

Call us on 1800 105 105. Our phone line is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

## Next steps

Thank you to everyone who made a submission to the North East Link Tunnels Urban Design and Landscape Plan.

The final UDLP was approved by the Minister for Planning on 3 February 2023, ready for major construction works for above ground elements to begin.

Urban Design and Landscape Plans for the other big pieces of North East Link, including the Ring Road Completion, Eastern Freeway Upgrades and Eastern Express Busway will be developed and exhibited for comment starting from 2023.



Artist's impression of tunnel portal and Yarra Link green bridge, Bulleen





Artist's impression of Borlase Reserve parklands, Yallambie

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