



# Gorge Road Shops Streetscape Upgrade

DRAFT Concept Design - October 2022



# The Project overview

The City of Whittlesea established the Town Centre Revitalisation Program 2021-2025 to have a structured approach to revitalising local and neighbourhood centres; the program addressed a key action in the Council Action Plan.

Gorge Road Shops is a high priority site in the Town Centre Revitalisation Program, with identified opportunities to improve social spaces, walkability and connectivity, safety, and greening.

The project study area is the immediate streetscape around the shopping strip, encompassing the car parks, pedestrian footpaths, landscape, and park interface. The study area, at inception, does not include the entirety of Reid Street Park and is only addressing the car parks within the park.

Following pre design consultation, Council has secured additional funding to upgrade Reid Street Park and Playground. This project will commence in the next financial year and will be staged with the Gorge Road works.



## Pre Design Consultation Summary

Phase 1 community consultation for the Gorge Road Shopping Strip gathered insights and impressions of the existing Shopping strip.

This information has informed the designers, in developing the concept, of the issues and opportunities recognised by the community, traders, and business owners.

A wide spectrum of the community was involved in the consultation, providing comments on Facebook, in person, and through the Engage Whittlesea webpage.

Most respondents indicated a desire to change the shopping strip to improve convenience, safety, and aesthetics. Traders and business owners recognised the need to upgrade the streetscape, resolve car parking issues in the area, and the potential for increased exposure; however, they are understandably concerned with the potential disruption to trading during construction

### How we engaged you



Online platform with survey and social pinpoint map



In person drop-ins to businesses



3 pop-ups at the Gorge Road shops and 2 online workshops

### Who contributed and why they visit



Over 600 people informed and aware of the project.



122 submissions through a survey or social pinpoint



1 in 1.5 people were from South Morang



62% of people visit the shops for take away or to dine in.

### What we heard from the community



Traffic and car parking is a major safety issue



The shops and precinct are outdated and unappealing



The park and rear car park has poor connectivity to the shops



More outdoor dining in a pleasant pedestrian environment

### What we heard from traders



Car parking at the back is poorly connected to the shops and is dark at night



The streetscape and shops are old, shabby and need a facelift



There isn't much space for outdoor seating and dining



Construction disruption and timing is of high concern

# Traffic, Parking and Pedestrians

Council engaged a traffic consultant to collect data on the Gorge Road traffic volumes, where people parked, and how pedestrians navigated around the shops.

Observations were taken on weekdays and weekend. Observations were taken during a period with no COVID restrictions and not during the school holiday periods.

From the report:

*Observations of vehicles using the Gorge Road angled parking spaces were that they can have difficulty exiting them at peak times as there is only limited space between the rear of the parking bays and the westbound traffic lane on Gorge Road. Regular traffic queues back from the traffic signals at Plenty Road further increase the difficulty for exiting traffic.*

*Utilisation of the remaining parking areas was generally lower than the front angle parking and main rear car park, particularly the informal gravel car park which only had low utilisation, presumably due to the condition of the car park.*

*The preschool car park did have high utilisation on occasions but was not used at all on the weekday evenings or on the Saturday.*



Average of 5 illegal turns into the parking bays per hour over the observation period

- Most parked cars observed was on Friday midday. 66 cars in total at the front and back.
- Car parking always available over the observation period.
- Parking at the front peaked at 16 cars, leaving 6 empty spaces.
- 30% of people walked through the laneway to access the shops.
- 50% of people walked on the footpath on Reid St.
- 20% of people accessed the shops through the Coin Laundry.

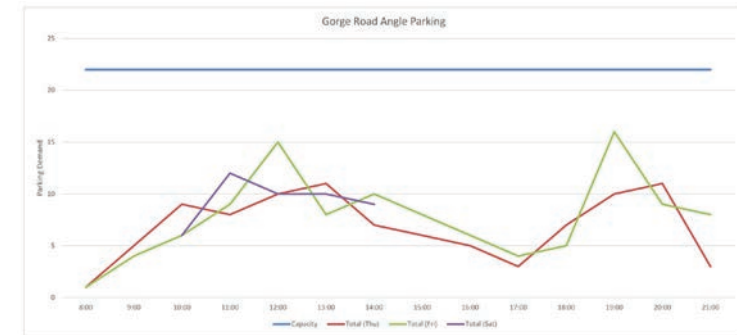


Figure 6: Gorge Road Angle Parking Spaces - Parking Demand

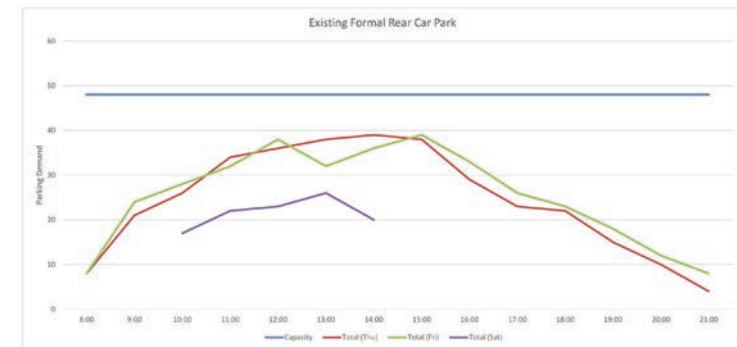


Figure 7: Formal Rear Car Park - Parking Demand

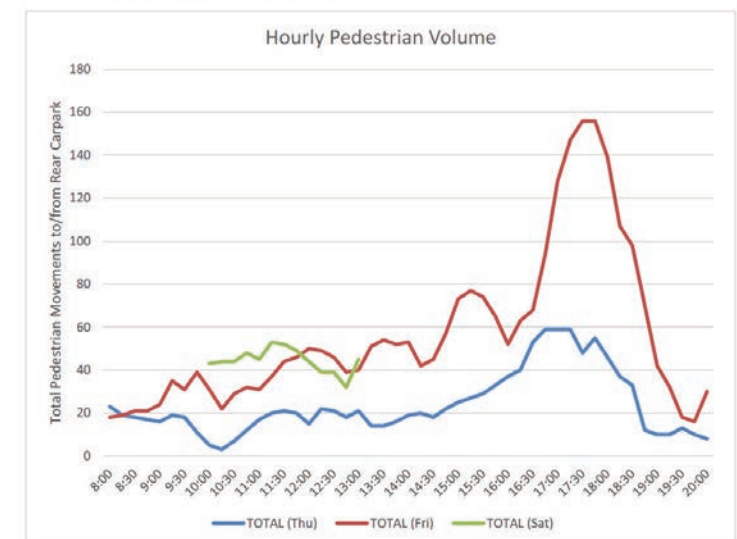


Figure 5: Pedestrian Demand Between Gorge Road and Rear Carparks - Hourly Profile

# Key ideas and opportunities

Desire to address fundamental issues that will make Gorge Road a better place in the longer term. Our response after visiting the site made it very clear to us that improvements to Gorge Road need to be structural rather than cosmetic, and that expenditure on items that may have limited benefits is not necessarily a good use of money. This design response has also been informed by our ongoing interest in developing more rigorous and urgent design responses to ongoing rapid climate change, particularly relating to the necessary adaptation of our cities.

In recent years, Site Office has become more and more focused on providing solutions much more grounded in the reality (and complications) of climate change, including the need to reduce emissions. We focus on the intersection between people and natural systems in the city, and how we can re-design / re-tool our cities to better deal with the realities and urgencies of climate change. Like so many of the places within the city, Gorge Road has been designed for vehicles and not humans, resulting in poor amenity. The development of Plenty Road from a country road to a highway has been rapid. The reinvention of Gorge Road relies on placing humans and natural systems at the front and centre of any design.

**Idea 01 - Convert Angled Parking to Parallel Parking**  
Converting the angled parking to parallel parking along Gorge Road resolves many of the existing traffic and parking issues, as well as liberating substantial space for public realm upgrades. Initial investigation suggest the loss of 11 car parks along the frontage (22 existing, 11 proposed). This will be offset by additional and safer carparking at the rear of the site.

**Idea 02 - Create Linear Garden Bed with Trees**  
The conversion of parking from angled to parallel will provide greater public realm space along the Gorge Road frontage that will allow for substantial tree planting. A linear garden bed will provide soil volumes free from compaction. The trees will provide shade and amenity in this north facing landscape.

**Idea 03 - Consolidated Carpark Upgrade**  
The existing carparks at the rear of the site (including the informal gravel parking and kindergarten carpark) are consolidated into a more spatially efficient carpark that provides additional carparking within a smaller footprint. Any car parks lost from Gorge Road are replaced at the rear. Total public carparks = 80 (11 Front + 69 Rear).  
Carpark Area = 2,304m<sup>2</sup> (rear) + 184m<sup>2</sup> (front) = 2,488m<sup>2</sup>

**Idea 04 - ATSS Mini Bus Drop Off**  
Improvements to the carpark layout will allow for a formal mini-bus drop off for ATSS., as well as additional waiting and movement space for pedestrians between the carpark and the western boundary.

**Idea 05 - WSUD Raingarden**  
Because the site slopes to the south, the new portion of the consolidated car park can drain to a water sensitive urban design raingarden, which will filter any contaminants from the stormwater and slow runoff into the stormwater system. The location of the raingarden adjacent to the existing trees will improve water infiltration to the root zone.

**Idea 06 - Decommission Kindergarten Carpark**  
The consolidation of carparking allows for the removal of the existing kindergarten carpark (7 spaces) access from Reid Street. This car park becomes park frontage to the kindergarten.

**Idea 07 - New Linear Path Access**  
The consolidation of carparking allows for a more direct north south connection between the existing shops, the carparking, the kindergarten and the existing playground.

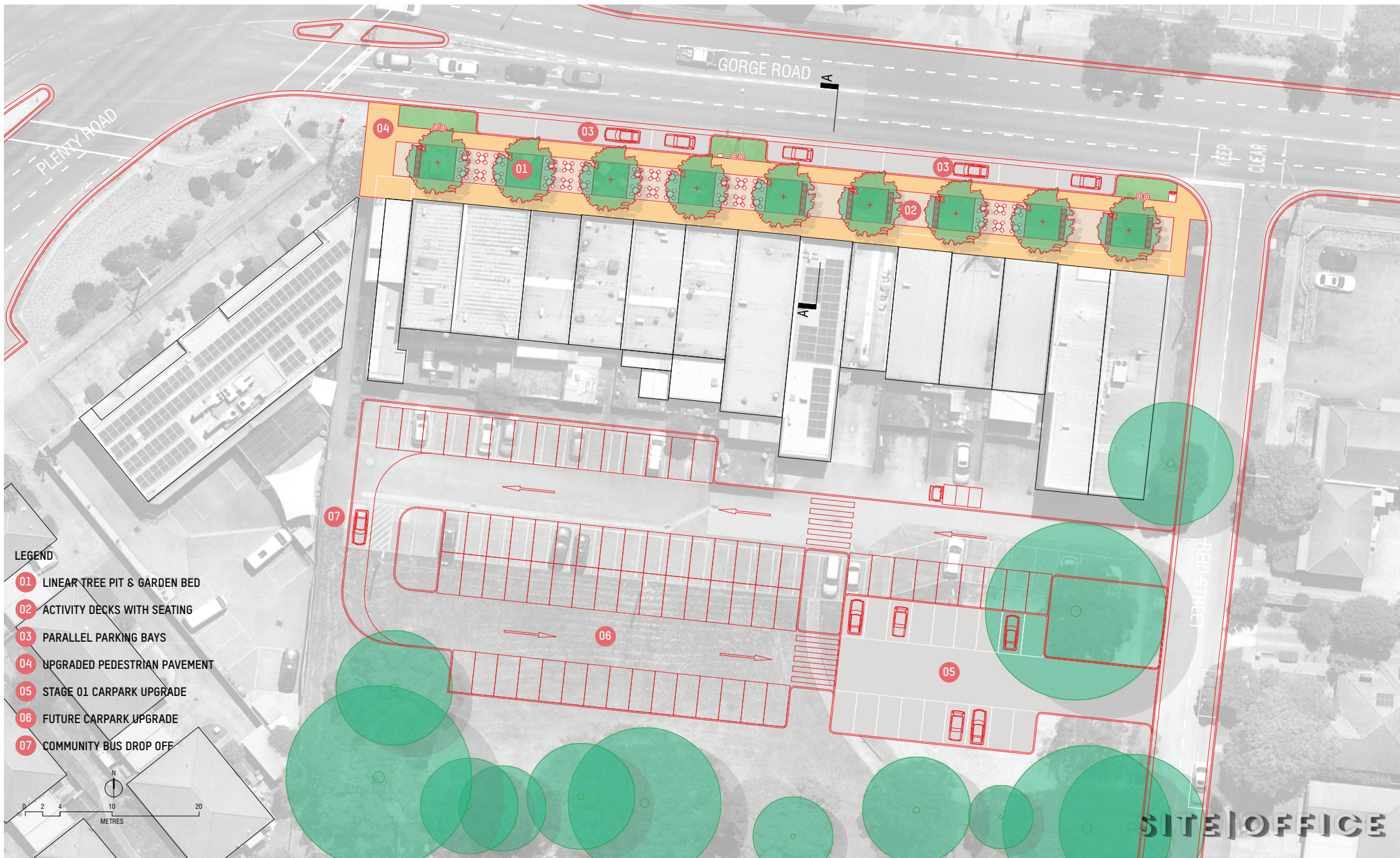
**Idea 08 - Retain & Protect Existing Trees**  
All works are kept outside the existing tree protection zones, ensuring the health of all existing trees of value. These trees provide significant amenity to the site.

CARPARK FOOTPRINT COMPARISON

	AREA	QUANTITY REAR	QUANTITY FRONT	INFORMAL	TOTAL
EXISTING	2,842m <sup>2</sup>	40	22	10	72
PROPOSED	2,488m <sup>2</sup>	69	11		80



# Indicative Draft Concept Plan





Indicative staging plan





Indicative materials palette





Artist's impression looking towards Plenty Rd





Artist's impression of the Gorge Road streetscape

