

21.02 KEY ISSUES AND INFLUENCES

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21.02-1 Compact Greater Bendigo

24/03/2016
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Population and housing needs

As at 30 June 2014, the City of Greater Bendigo had an estimated residential population of 106,971 people. The city has experienced strong population growth and this is forecast to continue into the future and is supported by State Government strategies such as the *Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan* (2014) and *Plan Melbourne* (2014). Housing construction is now a major component of the economy and every year at least 1,000 new dwellings are required to be built to meet the projected demand.

There is currently a mismatch between household structure and the type of dwellings being built. The 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census indicated that one and two person households represented 55 per cent of all households in the city. However, the current stock of housing is dominated by large family houses and in recent years approximately 90 per cent of new dwellings have been three plus bedrooms. The lack of diversity in housing stock needs to be addressed.

Liveability

The council vision is for Greater Bendigo to be Australia's most liveable regional city. The McCaughey Centre at Melbourne University defines liveability as reflecting "*the wellbeing of a community and comprises many characteristics that make a location a place where people want to live now and in the future.*"

The *Greater Bendigo Residential Strategy* (2014) has a key role to play in improving the liveability of the municipality in terms of where and how people live and work and how they access services and move around.

How we grow

Traditionally Greater Bendigo's residential growth has been outward into greenfield areas. This form of development has created sprawling car dependent communities that are not sustainable in the long term and make limited contribution to the liveability agenda. It is often argued that greenfield locations provide for affordable housing. However, in the longer term household costs, particularly transport related costs and infrastructure service costs, are significantly higher in greenfield locations compared to more accessible locations.

The *Greater Bendigo Residential Strategy* (2014) promotes a compact urban form, with a strengthened urban growth boundary, and a network of well-connected small towns where there is greater choice in housing and transport options and where people can readily access their daily needs.

Transport integration

The majority of Greater Bendigo is car dependent. According to the 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census, 55 per cent of all households in Greater Bendigo have two or more motor vehicles and this is reflected in the journey to work data that states that only 6 per cent of journeys to work were by walking, cycling or public transport.

The integration of land use and transport planning is a critical issue for Greater Bendigo. Whether it be residential, commercial or industrial growth it is important to consider the

impacts of land use planning on the transport network and ensure there are transport options.

Planning for health

The built environment impacts on people's health and wellbeing and often in Greater Bendigo the built environment does not encourage active lifestyles. This inactivity is causing a rise in the incidence of diabetes, obesity and cardio-vascular disease and costs the national economy millions of dollars each year. Greater Bendigo has one of Australia's highest obesity rates and lowest levels of regular participation in active recreation.

Managing risk

Managing environmental risk is a challenge when planning for growth in Greater Bendigo. Key risks are predominantly around bushfire, flooding and public health issues such as on-site wastewater management, which have the potential to cause harm to people and property.

Native vegetation management

Native vegetation in and around Bendigo and across the municipality is a key contributor to the character of the city. The management of this vegetation, particularly at the interface with residential development is a key challenge.

From a strategic perspective, it is important that significant vegetation not be included in a zone that would place the vegetation under threat. At a statutory level, the *Development at the Urban Forest Interface Policy* and *Design and Development Overlay, Schedule 6* address the issue of managing the interface and by default are used to manage fire risk in these locations.

The *Greater Bendigo Residential Strategy* (2014) identifies the need to investigate tools that could be used within the urban growth boundary to protect biolinks and connect areas of environmental significance.

Open space

Greater Bendigo contains numerous areas and corridors of open space, which is managed by various land managers. Council is developing a comprehensive open space strategy to provide a network of open space for a variety of recreational uses across the municipality.

Neighbourhood character

The residential areas of Greater Bendigo represent a diverse and somewhat disconnected collection of neighbourhoods. This disconnected pattern of settlements, combined with a varied topography, has resulted in a wide variety of lot shapes and sizes in some areas. Despite this, there seems to be a general consistency of position of dwellings with most located centrally on their sites.

Another relatively consistent characteristic is the apparent closeness of the 'rural' environment to many suburbs. This is usually manifested in a backdrop of trees visible behind and between dwellings, on the skyline or at the end of the street. It is an important characteristic of Greater Bendigo, one that is emphasised by the generous side setbacks between dwellings in most areas. Without these gaps, these neighbourhoods would have a much more 'urban' feel.

The residents of Greater Bendigo value the neighbourhood character and as a consequence council is committed to ensuring the neighbourhood character of Greater Bendigo is both protected and enhanced through new residential developments while furthering the objectives of the *Greater Bendigo Residential Strategy* (2014). Council has undertaken a

comprehensive *City of Greater Bendigo Residential Character Study* (2001) that assesses the urban areas of Greater Bendigo including the developing township of Strathfieldsaye and the township of Heathcote. The study sets out the means by which to protect and enhance the valued characteristics of Greater Bendigo.

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Environment

Natural resource management

The Box Ironbark region is a distinctive natural area of Victoria. It contains extremely diverse and distinctive flora and fauna. The need to manage this resource has been recognised by the Environment Conservation Council in the 'Box-Ironbark Forests and Woodlands Investigation – Final Report'. This has led to the creation of the Greater Bendigo and Heathcote-Graytown National Parks and other state, regional parks and conservation reserves.

Bendigo is very different from most other Australian centres in that it wasn't located next to a major water source. Instead of being deliberately sited along major rivers to provide ample water for residents, Bendigo grew up around the 1850's goldrushes. Management of the quality and quantity of source water, which is a limited resource, is a critical issue. In particular, the catchment areas, such as the Lake Eppalock Declared Water Supply Catchment within Greater Bendigo, that supply domestic water need to be protected from inappropriate development. The challenge of supplying quality water and wastewater services highlights the need for land use and development planning to address the regional issues of maintenance and improvement of water security and supply. Securing long-term water supplies for the towns within the municipal boundaries is required for future growth and development, as is managing and monitoring wastewater in over 10,000 households throughout the municipality where reticulated sewerage is not available.

Dryland salinity is an increasingly important issue to agricultural productivity, urban and recreational areas and aquatic ecosystems. Council is committed to addressing processes that contribute to increased salinity.

The projected substantial population growth presents an urban design opportunity and responsibility to incorporate sustainable resource utilisation into the fabric of our city. The water supply for Bendigo comprises large reservoirs that store surface water runoff in wet years to supply demand during dry times. The best strategy to improve the security of this supply would be to instil a conservation ethic into all members of the community. A community that values water highly and uses it wisely will be better placed to cope with the extreme variability of the climate.

Managing heritage sites and places

The heritage places of Greater Bendigo can be considered as some of the region's most valuable assets which set the City apart. The municipality has one of the highest numbers of State significant buildings, with some assets of potential international significance. These assets reflect the major role that Bendigo played in one of the biggest gold rushes and migrations in the world. Heritage places in Greater Bendigo encompass buildings, structures, gardens and vegetation, landscapes and other items associated with the history and settlement of the area. These places are located on private and public land, including sites in parks, conservation reserves and forests. Some of these may be indigenous sites, or ruins such as historical archaeological sites. Sites of natural significance, specifically of geological value, are also within the Greater Bendigo area.

The land use and settlement patterns of the Greater Bendigo municipality have been analysed using the thematic framework developed by Heritage Victoria in order to distinguish the heritage characteristics of the municipality. The principal historical themes in the development of Greater Bendigo, as identified in the *Greater Bendigo Thematic Environmental History*, 2013 are:

- Shaping Greater Bendigo's environment
- Peopling Greater Bendigo's places and landscape
- Connecting Greater Bendigo by transport and communications
- Transforming and managing Greater Bendigo's land and natural resources
- Building Greater Bendigo's industries and workforce
- Building towns, cities and the Greater Bendigo area
- Governing Greater Bendigo area
- Building Greater Bendigo's community life
- Shaping Greater Bendigo's cultural and creative life

These themes assist with the management and protection of our cultural heritage and can be used as a resource for the comparative assessment and understanding of heritage places and their relative significance to the municipality.

Council also recognises that pre-European history is significant to the cultural fabric of the municipality. Council will work with the local indigenous people in identifying and protecting places of significance.

Greater Bendigo's significant historical development has left a superb array of heritage buildings and places for today's residents. The management of this resource is vital to ensure its retention for future generations.

Cultural heritage challenges

The municipality faces a number of land use and development challenges in relation to cultural heritage. Our heritage assets are a major attractor to new residents, however they are also under threat with a significant proportion of new residential development occurring within existing suburbs and heritage areas. A key challenge facing the municipality in regards to cultural heritage is differing community attitudes, with some considering heritage as a value that adds uniqueness and character to the region, while others see cultural heritage as a potential obstruction to growth and development.

A major challenge in managing growth in heritage areas is that not all of the municipality's heritage assets have been identified and protected in the planning scheme and are therefore being lost to demolition. Another heritage challenge is that many lots with heritage significant assets are being more intensively developed and at risk of potential detrimental impacts on heritage values, including poor design of new buildings, loss of views of heritage places and loss of historic gardens. The Heritage Design Guidelines prepared for the City will provide assistance to owners, designers and planners when developing heritage places in order to protect these valuable heritage assets.

Council also seeks to encourage opportunities for new development including re-use of historic buildings, such as churches, halls and factories; which has the potential to give these buildings a new lease of life whilst encouraging sensitive modern design.

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Economic Development

Industrial diversification

Traditionally industry in Greater Bendigo has been located within the Bendigo urban area and focussed on manufacturing and engineering. These sectors remain important to the economy however, new growth industries such as food manufacturing and information technologies, have experienced growth. Employment in these areas is strong. Council has completed the *Bendigo Industrial Land Strategy (2002)* to provide strategic direction for new and existing industrial areas. The Strategy makes a number of recommendations

regarding the future management and development of industrial sites. Future industrial development will be promoted within the East Bendigo industrial precinct. This precinct will be developed to ensure industrial land availability is maximised and industrial expansion will be encouraged and promoted. A number of other sites within the municipality offer further development potential, and this will be encouraged in areas such as the Deborah Triangle precinct. Rural-based industries will be encouraged to locate in the Goornong industrial precinct. Council acknowledges that there is a need to promote effective use of land, services and resources to maximise the benefits of existing sites identified for industrial development.

Commercial expansion

Greater Bendigo's population is growing and this means that more employment and services will be required to meet this demand. The *Commercial Land and Activity Centre Strategy, 2015* has been prepared by council to address this growth and to provide a framework for how the activity centres are planned and developed over the next two decades. Activity centres provide a range of functions including retail, commercial, community, health, cultural, transport, education, social, entertainment, leisure and civic services. These roles are vital to community and business development and to growth and diversification of local employment.

The strategy will assist council in managing the significant demand for new commercial floor space anticipated over the next 20 years. The business sector continues to evolve and Bendigo is now a significant hub for innovative financial services. Together with the new Bendigo Hospital there will be continued growth in the health care sector and in businesses supporting that sector. There has also been continued investment in community assets such as the Bendigo Library, Bendigo Art Gallery and Ulumbarra Theatre. These facilities are non-retail anchors that are driving a new wave of visitation and contribute to the lifestyle and opportunities that are now available to residents and visitors alike.

Tourism

Bendigo is an important visitor destination in the heart of Victoria's Goldfields region. The City of Greater Bendigo is one of Victoria's largest and most progressive regional centres. Bendigo has a mild climate, heritage buildings, parks and gardens, impressive streetscapes and National, State and Regional Parks. Bendigo forms part of the Goldfields campaign region as defined by the Victorian State Government. This region is recognised for its significant heritage value and as Victoria's regional events capital.

Agriculture

Greater Bendigo is part of the Murray-Darling Basin and the Loddon Campaspe river catchments. The traditional farming activities of cropping and grazing remain important however more intensive uses such as piggeries and poultry and irrigation businesses are increasingly important. The new Bendigo Livestock Exchange has consolidated Bendigo as the key regional centre in northern Victoria for the sale of livestock.

Mining

The history of Bendigo and its wealth of heritage buildings are based around the development of gold mining in the 1800's. This continues today with Bendigo Mining and Perseverance operating two significant mines. Improved technologies has improved yields and enabled some former mine sites to be re-mined. Following environmental audit, many former mine sites are now considered appropriate for residential development.

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Infrastructure

Transport links

The duplication of the Calder Highway and the enhancements to the Bendigo line as part of the Regional Fast Rail Project will improve user safety and increase the accessibility of the Melbourne employment market for residents and have flow-on impacts for other parts of the economy such as tourism, industry and recreation. The 'inner' and 'outer' box road network lies within the urban areas and provides a system of road bypasses of the inner urban area of Bendigo, allowing vehicles to pass through the urban area with greater safety and efficiency. While motor vehicles will remain the primary mode of transport, it is important for new urban development to have better integration of land use and road based planning, including better access to public transport. As Bendigo grows, an outer arterial distributor road may be required.

The Bendigo Airport plays an important role not only for commercial and private aviation activities, but also for emergency services and as a training facility. The City is committed to redevelopment of the Bendigo Airport, including the construction of a new runway and a business park to accommodate aviation related uses and a wide range of other commercial uses that are compatible with the operation of the airport.

Water and sewerage

The ability to provide reticulated servicing infrastructure, such as water and sewerage, plays a key role in the development of communities. Urban growth and greater levels of density will have potential to impact these forms of service infrastructure.