

5 May 2017

City of Greater Bendigo
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To whom it may concern,

Plan Bendigo Discussion Paper

The Victorian Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA) would like to thank the City of Greater Bendigo (CoGB) for the opportunity to provide comment on the draft *Plan Bendigo Discussion Paper*.

The UDIA is the peak industry body for the urban development sector. In Victoria, we provide over 320 member companies with the benefits of policy and advocacy, industry intelligence, networking and business building.

The UDIA's Northern Chapter is established as a way members within the region can focus on the strategic direction and development outcomes in their locality. As such, it has been set up to give new home buyers and future residents of Bendigo a voice on issues such as affordability, choice, accessibility and liveability.

In regard to the CoGB's *Plan Bendigo Discussion Paper*, the UDIA would like to address the following overarching issues:

- The need to link with the endorsed Housing Strategy;
- Understand costs associated with providing infrastructure;
- Creating facilitative and enabling systems; and
- Leading change through strong engagement.

We also provide our recommendations for projects to be prioritised.

Overarching concerns

Linking with the Housing Strategy

A stronger link is required between Plan Regional Bendigo and CoGB's endorsed Housing Strategy, to assist in the facilitation of housing that meets Bendigo's population demands. As such, the infrastructure wish list identified through Plan Bendigo and the primary provision of major housing infrastructure must be interlinked and mutually reliant.

In identifying and prioritising the list of infrastructure investment, the evaluation criteria should better align with the Housing Strategy. For example, the criteria should address the following:

- Would this infrastructure investment make increased housing/ density more attractive;
- Would the infrastructure investment assist in managing population growth as per the requirements of the housing strategy;
- Would this infrastructure investment enable 200,000+ people to live in Greater Bendigo by 2050 with high levels of amenity and liveability;
- What is the implementation plan for infrastructure and housing? Funding, time frame, priorities;
- In what capacity can the private sector be involved?

Understanding the costs

Ambiguity will create frictions in the community and risk towards investment. As such is critical that items included in the infrastructure list are not only supported by planning policy but funding sources can be clearly identified and quantified.

Facilitating and Enabling Growth - implementation

In the sequence of land and housing supply, there are processes that are necessary to create a platform of enablement. Part of this includes removing provisions and overlays of unnecessary constraint and to ensure all stakeholders – residents, investors, policy makers, responsible authorities – are properly engaged and are familiar with the opportunities and challenges that exist with the vision to double the population of the city within a defined footprint.

Regulatory changes and simplification of the planning approval process is a cost-effective measure to ensuring the delivery of housing supply aligned with the strategy objectives.

Furthermore, investing in a broad assessment of development supply to enable changes from traditional growth patterns is necessary establish a balanced relationship between the community and development industry. Establishing a balanced relationship between developers and the community will assist in developing a more stable investment climate that will continue to drive the supply of housing.

Understanding the early planning of what, when and where infrastructure is to be invested to support residential development is critical in establishing that balance.

Change leadership strategy

In implementing its Housing Strategy and Plan Greater Bendigo, the CoGB needs to lead the community discussion, not be led by it.

As such, it is important that throughout the consultation process, the CoGB engages with the community with a clear intent, uses non-planning jargon, and explains the need for processes and concepts in a manner that is easy to digest. Regular and clear links back to the Housing Strategy throughout the document and website should assist in leading discussions towards delivering the intended outcomes within the strategy.

If the CoGB is unsuccessful in leading the discussion on Bendigo's growth, the development industry will become the unfortunate lightning rod for negative community sentiment. This will lead to further risk, costs and delays for individual projects in the future.

Support for projects

The 70 possible projects are listed by page numbers, which we will include as reference here.

Our overall comment on the listed projects is that funding, impetus and responsibility for those projects requires more clarity. Only four projects are listed as 'privately led', and yet we consider that many of the projects are potentially private, only requiring clear policy support and commitment on behalf of state and local government. We also consider that many of the projects listed are the responsibility of various other agencies and service authorities, and that this delineation of 'ownership' is not made clear enough.

Of the projects listed, the following categories are those our members consider to be the most urgent and to have the highest impact in successfully planning for Bendigo's future population growth:

42 Facilitating development of government land

The facilitation of the sale and/or development of State Government land to create a variety of housing opportunities, and to explore housing diversity and innovation is crucial to housing supply within a fixed Urban Growth Boundary. Government owned land is accessible in terms of location and existing services, and will be a key contributor to housing growth and development. Policy support and funding to achieve suitable zoning is vital to the viability of these land parcels.

55 Securing Greater Bendigo's long term water supply

The provision of an adequate water supply to support a population of 200,000+ people is crucial to the future growth and development of the region. Other listed projects that should be included in this category are:

46 Managing groundwater, 48 new water to communities west of Bendigo, 51 pumped hydro storage system and 61 alternative cost model for reticulated sewerage. An integrated approach is recommended.

38 Bendigo Creek improvement also ties in with future water supply consideration, and is strongly supported by UDIA members.

34 and 35 Bendigo Airport business precinct and terminal building

We recommend that these two listings should be approached strategically as one overall project. The development of a new airport terminal and business precinct will be fundamental to the region's ability to attract business and jobs growth into the future. Comparisons with Albury and Mildura airport development should be considered in the process. Airport, terminal and a carrier have the potential to underpin business and enhance opportunities between regional areas, rather than relying on the current Bendigo/Melbourne transport links.

Active Transport links

Adequate transport connectivity in and around the city, for passengers and freight, will be vital to maintain accessibility as population grows and transport needs increase. These projects are best considered collectively, an approach already established with the adoption of CoGB's Integrated Transport and Land Use Study.

39 Bendigo metro rail & 40 Bendigo Railway Station activity centre should be combined with the metro rail project, and additionally a station activity centre approach should be incorporated for all stations that are part of the metro rail. Transport oriented development strategies will be useful in establishing a metro rail and educating local communities to explore and embrace the positive changes that become viable with increased density around transport nodes.

43 Improve Bendigo Marong link, 41 freight transport hub, 44 outer arterial road, 95 smart transport, 96 smart train transport: These projects are collectively important to the entire transport links element of addressing and managing population and housing growth. Policy approach will be more effective if it is integrated rather than isolated.

Accessibility through value-adding

62 regional bicycle capital, 65 low line walk/cycle corridor, 67 bike path between Latrobe and city centre:

These projects all present opportunity for adaptive land re-use, and have capacity to support and enhance the increased residential densities required to achieve a population of 200,000+. An integrated approach to accessibility, using and building on existing infrastructure, is required to make the most of established infrastructure, with encouragement and support for creative and adaptive re-use.

50 Plan for increased growth in the city centre

56 Student housing in the city centre, 70 city laneway rejuvenation, 72 co-working space, 78 improve Pall Mall, 83 Mitchell/View St corridor, 94 smart parking and the already established 91 Rosalind Park recreation reserve masterplan:

Many of the listed 'major projects' can be considered alongside the transformational 'plan for increased growth in the city centre' project. All of them supplement and complement the overall strategic direction of accommodating higher residential and commercial density/activity in the existing central city framework.

All of the projects will require a fundamental change of policy approach, giving economic, employment and housing development priority, and encouraging creative and adaptive solutions.

Privately led

We believe that the draft Plan does not adequately consider or embrace the opportunity presented by private investment, and that in fact many of the Major Projects listed will ultimately be privately led. Their viability will depend on state and local government support for innovative change that will disrupt the status quo, but will also lead to improved infrastructure efficiency and feasible housing outcomes to support population growth without resorting to urban sprawl.

Additional projects

UDIA Northern Chapter would like to suggest the following additional projects that might be considered part of Plan Greater Bendigo:

1. Establish a 50+ year linear growth corridor, of targeted non-sensitive land, between Bendigo and Castlemaine, focussing on the rail and freeway corridor
2. Adopt policies that actively secure and redirect population growth away from outer fringes of Melbourne, and to regional areas through decentralisation
3. Identification and establishment of urban renewal areas inside the UGB, with private developer lead consortiums and or public/private funding
4. Release of additional land with viable infrastructure schemes
5. Closer involvement of the private sector in Plan Greater Bendigo, including facilitation of 50+ private sector short and long term projects that should be supported by appropriate policy

We commend Council and the VPA for beginning the process of developing a long-term plan for achieving sustainable and enjoyable population growth in the region, and we look forward to further opportunity to collaborate and contribute.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me for further information.

Yours sincerely,



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