

07 October 2019

Victorian Planning Authority
c/-Amendment C106
Level 25, 35 Collins Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Sir / Madam,

**RE: PROPOSED AMENDMENT C106 TO MITCHELL SHIRE PLANNING SCHEME
BEVERIDGE NORTH WEST PRECINCT STRUCTURE PLAN
AKRON BEVERIDGE PTY LTD SUBMISSION**

Introduction

Akron Beveridge Pty Ltd (“Akron”) makes the following submission in response to proposed Amendment C106 to the Mitchell Shire Planning Scheme, being the Beveridge North West Precinct Structure Plan (BNWPSP).

Akron generally supports the vision, objectives and overall content of the BNWPSP. This submission takes the opportunity to express this support whilst also raising matters relevant to the PSP, including the broader potential of the Northern Growth Corridor, and providing commentary on elements of the PSP that we believe could be reviewed to enhance the functionality and effectiveness of the BNWPSP.

Relevance of the BNWPSP to the Submitter

Akron’s landholding comprises nearly 600 hectares of future residential land within the Urban Growth Boundary at Mt Fraser (500 Old Hume Highway) to the east, on the opposite side of the Hume Freeway. Akron is the majority owner of land encompassed within the future Beveridge North East Precinct Structure Plan (BNEPSP), where structure planning is yet to commence. The Beveridge North West precinct occupies a substantial component of the Northern Growth Corridor and its planning and ultimate delivery will have a significant influence on surrounding precincts.

Planning for the Beveridge NW PSP is understood to have commenced in 2013, in the absence at that time of a developer for the adjacent BNEPSP. The BNWPSP responds to the constraint imposed by the Hume Freeway, and appears focused on north-south connections. Since Akron’s purchase of the Mt Fraser property in 2018, Akron has engaged with a range of surrounding landowners, to seek to plan for an holistic and connected approach to integrating development across several adjacent PSP areas.

At a high level, Akron has formed the view that the sub-corridor, particularly north of the Outer Metropolitan Ring Road could be conceived as being part of a broader “Wallan city” and that surrounding PSPs could contribute to a Wallan centric philosophy to incentivise local connections, rather than being designed as a fringe metropolitan dormitory suburb. Central to this is the concept that local connections need to be facilitated.

In this light, Akron believes that the proposed BNWPSP does not adequately capitalise upon the opportunity to integrate boundaries, particularly across the Hume Freeway other than at the proposed future Camerons Lane interchange. Both the GAA’s 2012 North Growth Corridor Plan and earlier BNWPSP concepts publicly circulated in 2014 included an additional eastern arterial crossing the freeway, which is not now represented. Akron believes

that this is a key missing element that should be reviewed. We believe that the sub-corridor will benefit by overcoming the discontinuities presented by the Freeway, in a pursuit to ensure the sub-corridor provides for local access to public transport, education, employment and community facilities, which in turn will minimise duplication of facilities. Flow on benefits in terms of decreased motor vehicle reliance, decreased isolation and social marginalisation are amongst the benefits which will be counted.

Akron has been clear to a variety of agencies and developers that we intend to advocate for a potential future railway station in our BNEPSP, to service the BNEPSP and the Northern Freight PSP (for easy reference, a “Mt Fraser railway station”). Notionally a station which splits the 6 kilometre gap half way between Wallan and the proposed Beveridge railway station would coincide with the previous North Growth Corridor and BNWPSP concepts for an additional eastern arterial crossing the freeway to facilitate public transport feeders to a future Mt Fraser station, which would increase transport accessibility for several PSPs including BNWPSP, BNEPSP, Beveridge South West PSP, Northern Freight PSP and Wallan South PSP,

Northern Growth Corridor

The Northern Growth Corridor encompasses a number of future PSPs which we believe must be considered in a cohesive manner in order to truly realise the potential of the corridor, and to address some of the social and equity issues currently facing it. Together, the BNWPSP, BNEPSP, Beveridge South West PSP, Northern Freight PSP and Wallan South PSP present a huge opportunity for an holistic approach to the conception and delivery of Melbourne’s newest urban increment.

These areas are to accommodate significant populations, and there is a need to create successful, integrated and resilient new communities. In our view, this requires PSPs to be considered in a comprehensive manner, particularly around ideas of enhanced densities, connections to heavy rail corridors to deliver people to jobs, supporting a high frequency public transit network and provision of connected pathway networks linking key future recreational and tourism nodes within 20 minute walkable neighbourhoods.

The consideration of these future adjoining PSPs together, will allow for the creation of a holistic new community at the sub-corridor scale. The northernmost part of the corridor has the capacity to achieve consistently higher densities around local town centres and public transportation networks. Potential future heavy rail stations and alternative transit options have the potential to connect high numbers of residents to local employment, education, health and retail destinations within the broader precinct and beyond. There is the ability to enhance the natural features of this area, creating recreational and tourism opportunities, with new communities benefiting from these integrated open space networks. There is immense opportunity to create an exemplar sub-corridor precinct, which demonstrates best practice around notions of density, public transportation and multi-modal connectivity, including between the unique natural features that exist here.

Supporting Density

Requirement 3 (R3) at Clause 3.1.2 of the BNWPSP calls for “*subdivision of residential land within the walkable catchment and mixed use areas...must achieve an overall average minimum density of 30 dwellings per net developable hectare*”. Akron supports these density aspirations as they will allow for increased housing within the most accessible locations, in proximity to the facilities and services to be located in mixed use areas and within the walkable catchment areas identified in Plan 3. It is envisaged that a high degree of diversity in housing product will be employed to meet the average minimum density, which in turn will lead to greater housing affordability and choice for purchasers.

In turn, such densities will encourage and support active travel use for local trips as well as the delivery of higher frequency public transport services for longer trips, in lieu of private motor vehicle reliance.

The Guidelines and Requirements at Clause 3.1 surrounding Image, Character, Heritage and Housing, will support the achievement of this density. Further, the Public Transport and Path Network (Map 9) has designated a road network capable of providing a comprehensive bus network throughout the precinct. It is recommended that the Principal Public Transport Network (PPTN), and/or where higher frequency public transport services will be provided, should also be indicated on Plan 9. This will help identify where the highest residential densities should be provided and help achieve a true diversity in dwelling and lot sizes. Moreover, the PPTN should be identified to ensure opportunities are captured to provide logical connections to other properties as they are developed including Mt Fraser and surrounds.

Further, whilst the bus network is comprehensive, we believe other transit modes should be considered, which would provide additional incentivisation for development at the densities proposed within mixed use and walkable catchment areas. Akron through VPA workshops and other forums, believes that various agencies and developers recognise the rapid evolution in the transport space, and that the increase in ridership in a multiplicity of non-motor car modes (e-bikes, e-scooters, ridesharing, Mobility As A Service (MAAS), autonomous electric vehicles, trackless trams) is likely. A flexible approach to ensuring network connectedness and permeability of PSPs is required at this stage.

In order to further support the achievement of the desired densities, the 2012 GAA North Growth Corridor plan proposed a High Capacity Public Transport route parallel to and west of the Hume Freeway. Along with a notional link across the Hume Freeway to the proposed Mt Fraser railway station in the BNEPSP, we believe that flexibility should be retained at this stage to extend that High Capacity Public Transport route north into the BNWPSP and extend across the Hume Freeway east to the Mt Fraser station.

A high frequency, high capacity transit mode, such as a trackless tram, could be explored as an alternative to buses which have a lower passenger carrying capacity. Research by Peter Newman, Professor of Sustainability at Curtin University, has identified the benefits of trackless trams finding that it is a 'connecting service', joining up corridors and linking heavy rail train stations to surrounding areas. Whilst traditionally buses have performed this function in cities, Professor Newman's research has found that buses do not encourage higher densities of development. Dedicated high frequency, high capacity modes such as trackless trams, with a network of supporting infrastructure at points along their routes, are more likely to provide the development sector with confidence and in turn, support greater densities. Like a bus network, trackless trams would provide efficient connections within the precinct and into adjoining precincts, and ultimately connect into the heavy rail network to the east and major employment destinations such as the Cloverton Town Centre, Merrifield and the future Beveridge Interstate Freight Terminal. We provide further comment below on the potential for connective public transit connectivity over the Hume Highway to future planned heavy rail stations in the east.

Connecting Natural Features

Spring Hill Cone is a notable natural feature of the BNWPSP area. This high point defines the north-east corner of the BNWPSP, has an interface with the Hume Highway and has 360-degree views of the surrounding area. For these reasons, it is anticipated that Spring Hill Cone and its immediate surrounding area will attract a range of recreational and tourism related activities, particularly people exploring the landscape value of the area by foot and by bike.

Mt Fraser, located within the Beveridge North-East precinct to the south east of Spring Hill Cone, is another very prominent natural feature within the landscape and is visible from the majority of the BNWPSP area. A view line currently exists between the hill forms of Mt Fraser and Spring Hill Cone. The presence of these two hill forms assists in identifying the area from the surrounding landscape.

With a strong visual connection present between the two natural features, and the likelihood of recreational and tourism activities occurring within both areas, it is suggested that a physical connection be created between the two hill forms. This could take the form of a connected pathway network, allowing safe and efficient pedestrian and cyclist access across the Hume Highway. This would unlock and capitalise on the current visual relationship between the two hill forms, creating a new, strong physical link.

Open Space and Community Facilities

Plan 7 sets out the open space strategy for the BNWPSP. The majority of open space is located adjacent to and/or connects with the proposed off-road bike bath network as shown in Plan 9, except for some small local parks. To improve accessibility by active transport modes to these local parks, it is recommended that they be located adjacent to the proposed bicycle network. Specific to the BNEPSP, the following recommendations are made:

- Include at least one (preferably two) active travel connections, across the Hume Freeway, at a mid-block location, to provide convenient and logical active travel links between the two PSP areas.
- Include an off-road bike path (or similar) on Hadfield Road along the BNWPSP northern boundary, to provide convenient and logical active travel links between the two PSP areas.

Public Transport and Path Network

Plan 9 provides an overview of the proposed Public Transport and Path Network within the PSP, including bus capable roads, cycling routes and pedestrian links.

Camerons Lane, located along the BNWPSP southern boundary, is proposed to be bus capable and will contain an off-road bike path. This will provide an east-west connection to Mt Fraser and other developable areas to the east of the Hume Freeway. The timely delivery of Camerons Lane is supported, to ensure adequate capacity for anticipated traffic movements to the BNWPSP, but also to the Northern Freight PSP and for BNEPSP.

No details are provided in regard to how active travel and public transport services will utilise Hadfield Road (along the BNWPSP northern boundary) or how they could connect to and/or crossover the Northern Highway and Hume Freeway to reach the BNEPSP. It is recommended that Hadfield Road be designed to accommodate public transport services and active travel provisions.

No active travel and public transport services that would provide direct access into BNEPSP are proposed at any location along the BNWPSP eastern boundary. Notwithstanding, Plan 9 includes an annotation nominating a “potential east-west connector” over the Hume Freeway in the south east portion of the BNWPSP (potentially a reflection of the now deleted link from the earlier GAA North Growth Corridor Plan). Whilst not confirmed, it is assumed that this will be a vehicular link. It is noted that this specific annotation is not included on Plan 10 – Street Network. This potential east-west connection is supported and considered crucial to the successful development of the precinct and integration with the heavy rail corridor via the BNEPSP. In terms of location, it should be slightly further north on the northern shoulder of the Mt Fraser contours, in order that a direct route east to the proposed Mt Fraser railway station can be facilitated.

The BNWPSP identifies a number of bus capable roads, providing a significant level of public transport coverage. However, no commentary is available as to which of these links will, or could, form part of the broader and higher frequency PPTN. This information should be provided to assist with land use integration within the PSP (i.e. higher density residential areas), as well as broader network planning of key public transport services, including connections to the BNEPSP area. It is recommended that at least two PPTN routes be incorporated within the BNWPSP, with one of these links providing a connection across the Hume Freeway.

Street Network

Plan 10 provides an overview of the proposed street network within the BNWPSP, including key intersection types along the arterial road network and connections to adjacent PSP areas.

Camerons Lane, located along the southern boundary, will provide an arterial road connection to the BNEPSP, via the construction of the new Camerons Lane/Hume Freeway interchange. The timing and design of this interchange is unknown. It is not included within the Infrastructure Contribution Plan (ICP) and will be delivered by the State Government following the allocation of funding. This road link and interchange are supported, particularly on the basis that the strategic modelling indicates sections of Camerons Lane will experience traffic congestion until the road is upgraded and interchange provided.

No details are provided as to how Hadfield Road along the northern boundary, will connect to and/or crossover the Northern Highway and Hume Freeway. It is understood that the future upgrade of Northern Highway will form a signalised intersection in the north-east corner of the PSP. Details of this intersection should be included within the BNWPSP, noting the use of signalised intersections tend to be on roads with posted speed limits of 60km/h and lower.

Plan 10 does not identify any direct vehicle access over the Hume Freeway into the BNEPSP at any location along the eastern boundary.

As outlined within GTA’s Strategic Modelling Assessment (report dated 10/12/18), the North Growth Corridor model (reference case) identifies a road link cross the Hume Freeway at a mid-block location. This link across the Hume Freeway has not been included within the modelled scenarios for the BNWPSP. It is recommended that the BNWPSP reintroduce this link. Refer Figures 1 and 2 below.

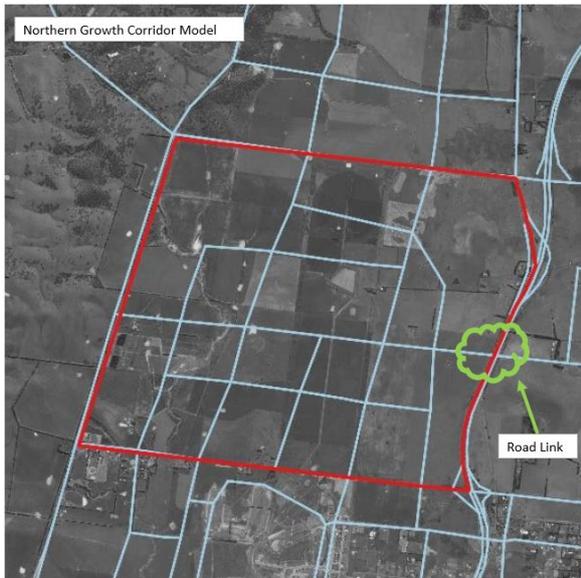


Figure 1 – Northern Growth Corridor Model

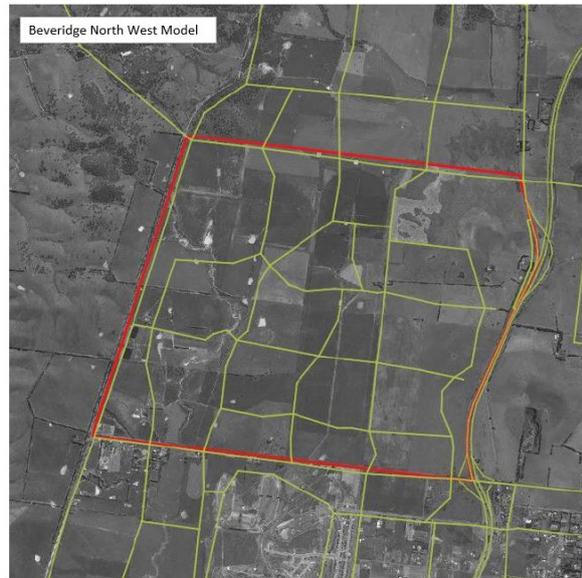


Figure 2 – Beveridge North West Model

The lack of multiple east-west road-based links across the Hume Freeway will limit the ability to provide convenient connections between and integration across the BNWPSP and BNEPSP, and in turn limit the ability for potential high frequency public transport and active travel links between these significant new communities that will emerge to serve the broader corridor, to be realised. Additional east-west connections (i.e. Hadfield Road and mid-block location) are also likely to be required to ensure traffic volume capacity thresholds are not exceeded in the BNWPSP at individual locations (i.e. Camerons Lane). These additional road connections will also assist in minimising the amount of convoluted and/or indirect internal trips for those drivers seeking to travel from within the BNWPSP to the east.

Having regard to the above, it is recommended that at least one mid-block vehicle link across the Hume Freeway be provided. Akron would be pleased to engage further with VPA, DOT and Council to discuss what any potential ultimate and/or interim vehicle links could entail, including cross section and active travel requirements.

Servicing Connectivity

Due to the topography generally sloping away from the Beveridge North East PSP and a defined demarcation set by the discontinuity of the Hume Freeway, it is noted that there is minimal direct interface from a servicing and drainage perspective. The exception however is the requirement for substantial water and class A infrastructure to be supplied to the Beveridge North East and Beveridge North West PSPs via the proposed potable water tanks on Mt Fraser.

Recent meetings between Yarra Valley Water (YVW) and Akron indicate that the VPA was unable to secure the required pipe-track corridors as part of the Lockerbie and Lockerbie North PSP process to provide the necessary connection route between the proposed tanks on Bald Hill and Mt Fraser. Subsequently YVW is now negotiating directly with the landowners to secure access to locate 10m wide pipe track corridors. Proposed routes will adversely impact the developers at Lockerbie North, as well as Akron and other parties from both a Net Developable Area perspective and urban design framework. Had this been coordinated as part of the PSP processes, outcomes are reasonably expected to have included the ability to achieve optimised utility and transit corridors and linear open space amenity benefits.

Acron notes that the Mt Fraser tanks and associated transfer mains and distribution mains need to be delivered in the next 4-5 years and are essential for supply and development within the BNWPSP. In order to provide a coordinated approach to infrastructure planning and provision, and to ensure that Akron is not unreasonably disadvantaged, precinct structure planning should be commenced in Beveridge North East imminently to resolve the planning framework for the Beveridge North East PSP. This will ensure a coordinated response is established early to agree pipe alignments and tank locations within the Mt Fraser area, as the delays and rework from an

uncoordinated approach will unreasonably adversely impact future development for several State agencies and development partners.

We also note that the advertised Infrastructure Reports are more than five years old and likely outdated. Due to advances in sustainable water management, it is possible that the PSP has not captured the latest thinking around innovations that can be coordinated across the North Growth Corridor to optimise opportunities for efficient scaled Integrated Water Management (IWM) strategies. We understand that YVW is in consultation with both Mitchell Shire Council and Melbourne Water on IWM. An early commencement of Beveridge North East Precinct Structure Planning is likely to create earlier opportunities for the design and execution of joint Authority innovations to be delivered at both the strategic and statutory level.

Conclusion

We believe it vital that consideration is given to the above-mentioned items within the BNWPSP. Consideration of these items is integral to the achievement of a highly functioning and attractive place for people to live, work and visit. Incorporation of the ideas raised in this submission will benefit not only the BNWPSP area but will work to ensure an integrated and holistic community across all adjoining PSPs in this sub-corridor precinct.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Akron would be pleased to elaborate on any of the issues raised herein as required. Please contact the undersigned at andrewh@akrongroup.com.au.

Yours faithfully

AKRON BEVERIDGE PTY LTD

ANDREW HARVEY
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR