

Bannockburn Growth Plan

Public consultation report

Final



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Prepared by	Naomi Oosting
Date	30/11/2020
Reviewed by	Emily Killin
Date	8/12/2020
Reviewed by	Marco Bass
Date	9/12/2020
Authorised by	Mat Garner
Date	9/12/2020

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bannockburn Growth Plan (Growth Plan) will guide the sustainable growth of Bannockburn to the year 2050. The Bannockburn Growth Plan will identify where and when future housing may be developed. It will also identify what infrastructure is needed to support the growing community, such as roads and community facilities, and land for employment and retail.

The Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) has worked with Golden Plains Shire Council to prepare a draft planning scheme amendment (amendment) to the Golden Plains Planning Scheme, which proposes to include the Growth Plan as a Background Document and make changes to the Planning Policy Framework. The draft amendment will enable future decisions about the town's growth to be guided by the Growth Plan.

This consultation report summarises the public consultation process for the Bannockburn Growth Plan and supporting draft amendment to the Golden Plains Planning Scheme. The consultation ran for four weeks from Monday 26 October until Monday 23 November 2020. The report also provides a thematic overview of feedback heard during this time.

The VPA's approach to community consultation for this project mirrored the key elements of the planning scheme amendment notice and submission process required under Section 19 of the *Planning and Environment Act*. It ensured that the Bannockburn community, local businesses, key stakeholders, government agencies and site landowners had ample opportunity to understand the proposed planning changes for the Bannockburn township; discuss the planning concepts with the VPA planning team and make a written submission to the plan and associated draft amendment.

The VPA collected 36 comments and/or questions across its public events, with 13 people contacting the team over the phone and a further 11 people attending the online session. Golden Plains Shire Council also received 5 calls from interested parties in the engagement period. The key topics of interest were; the extent of the growth boundary, transport and traffic, expansion of the industrial area, bushfire risk, water management and conservation, and process and timing.

39 written submissions were received to the draft amendment, which the VPA has acknowledged and is working to resolve where possible in the time available.

A detailed outline of the consultation process is contained in this report including council, landowner and agency consultation ensuring that all views are known.

2 OVERVIEW

2.1 Project background

Bannockburn is one of the fastest growing towns in regional Victoria. The population is expected to reach more than 13,000 people by 2036, but there's a shortage of land available to develop for new houses. The growth plan identifies the most appropriate land for houses and ensures the infrastructure is provided to support these new homes.

Bannockburn is the largest town in Golden Plains Shire. The Victorian Government and Council see it as an ideal place to support Golden Plains' growing population, thanks to its existing infrastructure and amenity.

In addition to identifying land that is suitable for new homes, the Bannockburn Growth Plan identifies land for jobs and ensures that land with environmental values is protected. This will ensure that Bannockburn develops in a sustainable way.

The proposed changes to the area will be implemented through a draft amendment to the *Golden Plains Planning Scheme* to include the Growth Plan as a Background Document and make changes to the Planning Policy Framework. The Bannockburn Growth Plan will guide how the town will develop over the next 30 years.

2.2 The VPA's Fast Track Program

The Bannockburn Growth Plan is part of the VPA – Fast-Track Program, an element of the Victorian Government's response to support a post-COVID economic recovery. This accelerated work program will provide certainty for communities and a pipeline of development that will assist in delivering future jobs and homes for Victorians as the economy recovers from the impact of the pandemic.

As part of the VPA – Fast-Track Program, if required, the Bannockburn Growth Plan project will be subject to the VPA Projects Standing Advisory Committee (VPA SAC). The VPA SAC has been established to provide independent advice on draft planning scheme amendments to the VPA and the Minister for Planning. More information on this process is available in Section 5.

2.3 Public consultation overview

The Bannockburn Growth Plan and associated draft planning scheme amendment were released for public comment on Monday 26 October until Monday 23 November 2020. The identified stakeholders include the Bannockburn community, local council, state government agencies and services providers, landowners and the general public. The consultation consisted of a project letter, project brochure, telephone conversations both within and outside of normal business hours, a virtual-drop-in session and a live 'Question and Answer' forum, as well as virtual meetings with local and state government authorities. Council also promoted the consultation through their media and social media channels.

These engagement activities were designed to reflect the relevant public health restrictions at the time of consultation and closely followed the elements of the planning scheme amendment notice and submission process under section 19 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

A complete suite of the planning documentation was made accessible on the VPA's *Have your Say* platform as well as the project *Engage Victoria* page and hardcopy versions were offered to any person with limited access to the website. Formal feedback was collected in the form of written submissions.

2.3.1 Purpose

The key purpose of this consultation process was to provide an opportunity for the local community and key stakeholders to write a submission to the draft Growth Plan and planning scheme amendment before it is progressed through the planning system. The consultation also provided an opportunity to 'close the loop' with local residents who have been involved in the first phase of engagement for the Bannockburn Growth Plan; and to clarify any matters to assist community members who wished to make a submission to the draft amendment.

2.3.2 Promotion and reach

The opportunity to get involved was promoted through direct mail to the entire town of Bannockburn approximately 2,720 addresses. A map showing the boundary of the mailout area is shown in Appendix 6.1 to this report.

The mailout included a letter and project brochure which outlined the key features of the plan and planning process. It included background information on the VPA's Fast Track program; details for making a submission and information about upcoming community events.

A further 204 community subscribers on the Bannockburn Growth Plan digital database received a project update regarding the consultation opportunity. The Bannockburn webpage on the VPA site was visited 472 times during the consultation period. The Engage Victoria page on the Bannockburn Growth Plan received 1346 views during the same period.

2.4 Previous community consultation

A previous phase of engagement was conducted by the VPA between 2 March and 30 March 2020. The purpose of this engagement was to understand the community's priorities on issues and opportunities associated with the town's growth. This was promoted through direct mail to the entire township of Bannockburn of a project newsletter and survey, and geotargeted social media advertising. Engagement activities included; an online survey, community pop-up session, and engagement with secondary school students. Due to restrictions of the Covid 19 pandemic, a second community pop up session was cancelled.

A complete summary of the activities and outcomes of these previous consultation processes can be found in Appendix 6.2 of this report.

2.5 Government agency and service provider consultation

Throughout the planning process for Bannockburn Growth Plan, the VPA project manager and planning team met with the necessary government and delivery agencies to ensure a coordinated whole-of-government approach was being applied.

Government agencies were offered the opportunity to review and provide informal comments on the proposed plan and planning scheme amendment documentation prior to the broader public consultation in August 2020. As a result, several improvements were made to the planning documentation before it was made publicly available.

A further 7 government agency and service provider submissions were received during the public consultation period.

2.6 Local council consultation

The VPA worked closely with Golden Plains Shire Council to prepare the plan and associated planning materials for the Bannockburn Growth Plan to ensure the project aligns with local planning policy. Golden Plains Shire Council was invited to make a submission to the draft amendment during public consultation and did so.

The VPA also engaged with the City of Greater Geelong as part of the Growth Plan process, a submission was made as part of informal agency engagement.

2.7 Landowner consultation

As the land covered by the Bannockburn Growth Plan is privately owned, the VPA consulted with its landowners while preparing the plan to ensure the views of this stakeholder group were known. The landowners were also invited to prepare a written submission during this final public consultation process. The VPA received 6 submissions from landowners within the proposed growth area.

3 CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Consultation program

The consultation period of the draft amendment to the Golden Plains Planning Scheme ran from Monday 26 October until Monday 23 November 2020. The activities and responses are summarised below.

Frequency and date	Public consultation activity	Audience	Outcomes
26 October 2020	Letters and project brochure sent to the township of Bannockburn	Community & landowners	2,715 delivered
26 October 2020	Update to project webpage	Community, landowners & agencies	472 unique page views
26 October	Consultation page open on Engage Victoria	Community	1346 unique page views
Various times	Hardcopy documents delivered on request	Community	1 set delivered
Throughout consultation within business hours; also outside business hours on 10 November 2020	Telephone calls	Community, landowners and agencies	13 calls
18 November 2020 (evening)	Virtual drop-in	Community & landowners	11 participants
Offered on an as-needed basis	Additional community meetings	Community only	1 meeting
26 October until Monday 23 November 2020	Written submissions	All	39 submissions in total <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government agency and service providers (7) • Local council (1) • Landowners within proposed growth areas (6) • Local community or community group (25)

4 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

A total of 39 written submissions and an additional 36 questions/comments through phone/ email/ Zoom were made to the Bannockburn Growth Plan project during the consultation period.

All submitters received an immediate acknowledgement of receipt and the submissions are available (with personal details redacted) on the VPA's website.

The VPA will continue to respond to and resolve the key issues raised in the written feedback where possible. Any unresolved submissions will be reported to the Minister for Planning, who will consider whether to refer matters to the VPA SAC for independent advice and the manner in which they may be heard.

An overview of the key themes raised through feedback heard over the phone, at the virtual drop-in session and via written submissions is outlined below.

4.1 Protection of the Natural Environment and Bushfire Management

We heard that a lot of people were concerned about ensuring that the Bannockburn Flora and Fauna Reserve was well protected. Particular concerns included;

- users of the reserve,
- habitat protection,
- recreational activities,
- invasive weeds and pests,
- bushfire risk,
- rubbish, and
- street lighting.

People were keen to ensure that the development of the area does not negatively impact, the environment or flora and fauna. This included the Bannockburn Flora and Fauna Reserve but also extended to surrounding areas. It was also suggested that more investigation needs to be done into the flora and fauna within the growth plan area.

Many comments also dealt with the setbacks that are required from land uses such as poultry farms and composting facilities to ensure the protection of agricultural uses in the area. While some expressed concern about the effects that buffers for the proposed industrial land would have on surrounding properties and sought flexibility on separation distances.

Fire management was a concern for some, with comments reflecting that it is vital that the Growth Plan provide appropriate setbacks to ensure that CFA has the space needed to adequately defend the area, including the Bannockburn Flora and Fauna Reserve, from the threat of fire.

4.2 Transport and Road alignments

The VPA project team heard that there was support for rail travel, but concern about the provision of only one rail crossing. It was suggested that additional crossings should be considered to improve traffic flow.

The location of the proposed arterial road was a key issue with some feeling that its suggested location would split the town in half and impact on connectivity and safety. There was also

significant concern about the aesthetic impact the arterial road would have on existing residential areas, with suggestions that there should be a buffer between the road and residential areas.

There was interest in reconsidering the alternative routes for the arterial road, with some suggesting that heavy vehicle numbers through the town would increase with the proposed route. Others thought that the location of the arterial road next to the transmission easement required further scrutiny.

Another key point was that it was important that roads were improved prior to a significant increase in the population of Bannockburn.

It was also suggested that more needed to be done to acknowledge the large amount of people who commute between Bannockburn and Geelong, and to work on better connectivity between these centres.

Landowners expressed a desire for flexibility around the location, and timing of road infrastructure delivery, and many sought clarity around road alignments and property boundaries.

4.3 Education and Community Facilities

A strong theme coming out of the questions and comments received was that the existing community infrastructure is inadequate for existing and future residents. Specifically, there was mention of the need for:

- more schools;
- a larger police station;
- larger multipurpose community spaces; and
- increasing the size of the current cemetery.

There was concern over the proposed movement of the CFA fire station with submission suggesting more consultation with the CFA is warranted.

Landowners were interested in the staging and funding mechanisms for various community assets and sought flexibility on how these are delivered.

4.4 Industrial Expansion

The VPA heard that there were objections to the planned industrial expansion based on impact on existing residents, including noise pollution, air pollution and increased heavy vehicle traffic. It was also stated that the current industrial estate is currently underutilised, so an expansion of this estate was not necessary. Several submissions suggested alternative locations for the industrial area.

4.5 Future Retail

There was a diversity of views regarding the future retail areas in Bannockburn, some thought a new or expanded shopping centre/hub in Bannockburn was essential, saying there was currently not enough retail for the current population and suggesting that the current retail needed to be upgraded prior to new housing developments being constructed. Others questioned whether additional retail would be viable suggesting that current retail and commercial businesses should be consulted.

Landowners suggested that there should be flexibility around the size and location of the second retail centre to ensure that it was viable.

4.6 Growth Plan Boundary

Comments received that related to the Growth Plan boundary related primarily to the interface between agricultural and urban land, with a strong emphasis on ensuring that agricultural businesses were not negatively affected by encroachment of housing. Some submitters also sought a change to the boundary, to either include additional land as well as a suggestion to remove an area.

4.7 Neighbourhood character

Several comments focused on the existing rural/agricultural character of Bannockburn and measures to ensure that the character of Bannockburn is not lost in future development.

4.8 Planning Process

Several comments were also received regarding the planning process itself and sought clarity on the next steps in the process. Several landowners were keen to see the next levels of detail that will follow the Growth Plan and give more specific requirements.

There was also interest the degree of flexibility in aspects of the plan and how these would play out in the implementation of the Growth Plan.

5 POST CONSULTATION & NEXT STEPS

5.1 Resolution of submissions

As part of the VPA – Fast-Track Program, the Bannockburn Growth Plan project will be subject to the VPA Projects Standing Advisory Committee (VPA SAC). The VPA SAC has been established to provide independent advice on draft planning scheme amendments to the VPA and the Minister for Planning.

While the VPA will seek to resolve issues raised by submitters within the time available, unresolved issues requiring further consideration may be referred to the VPA SAC. Should the Minister for Planning seek to refer these matters to the VPA SAC, Planning Panels Victoria will contact affected submitters regarding next steps, process and timings.

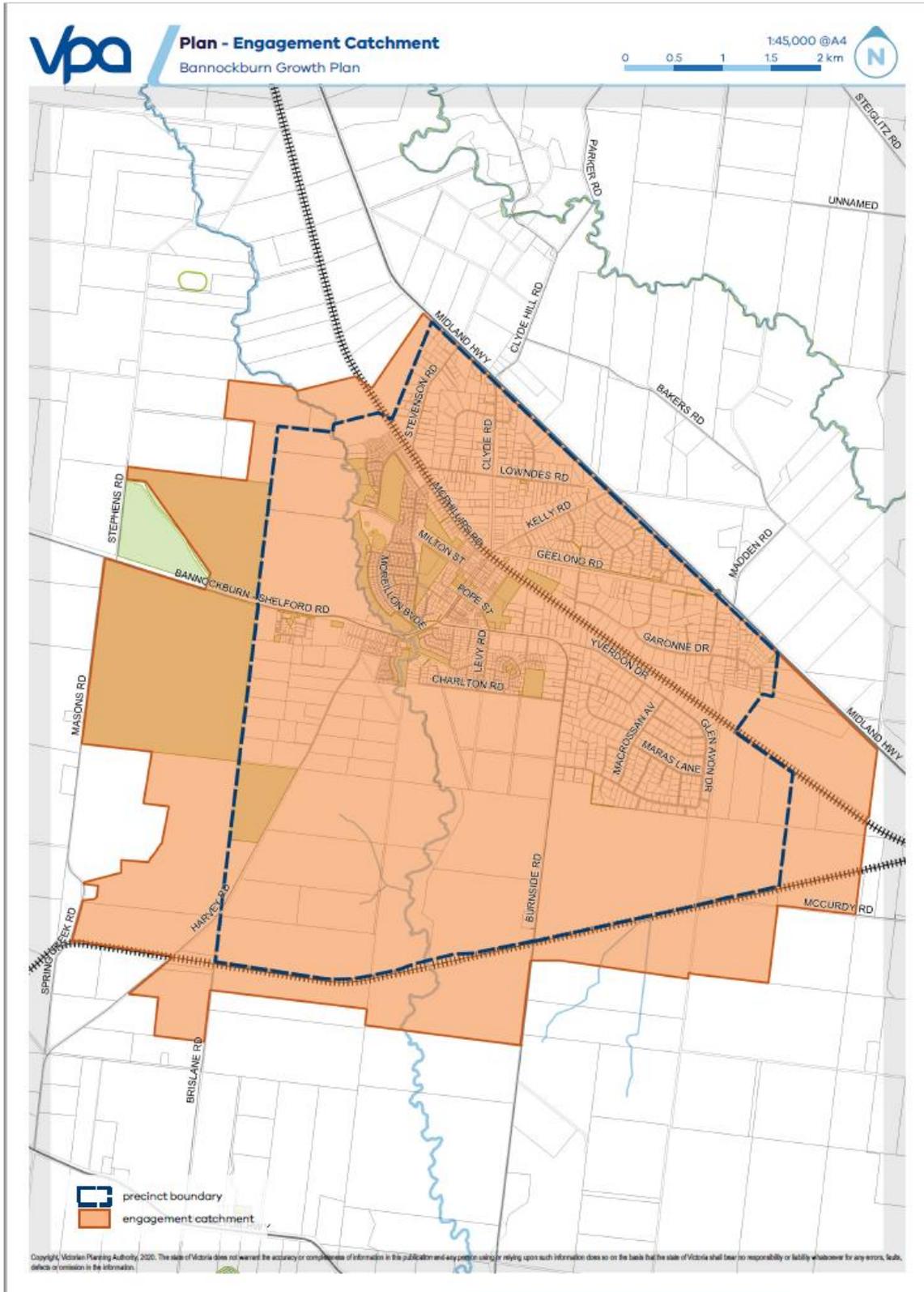
The VPA will provide a written response to submitters whose submissions are not referred to the VPA SAC to ensure they are aware of the outcome of their submission.

5.2 Pathway to approval

The VPA SAC will provide advice on the draft amendment to the VPA and the Minister for Planning. The VPA will then make recommendations to the Minister for Planning, who will consider the appropriate approval pathway for an amendment to the *Golden Plains Planning Scheme*.

6 APPENDICES

6.1 Mail out boundary map



6.2 Previous consultation reports

- [Phase 1 community engagement report](#) (June 2020)

6.3 Project brochure

- [Bannockburn Growth Plan Project Brochure](#) (October 2020)