

PSP2.0

Bendigo

REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT PRECINCT

Pitching Sessions Summary Report

March 2023



Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

The land, skies and waters that make up the Bendigo Regional Employment Precinct and its surrounds are Dja Dja Wurrung. The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges Victoria's Aboriginal communities and their rich cultures and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's First People and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely. We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life and how this enriches us. We embrace the spirit of reconciliation and ensuring that Aboriginal voices are heard.



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Victorian Planning Authority's commitment

The Victorian Planning Authority commits to continuing to improve our practices, to better protect and acknowledge Aboriginal values and heritage in our plans, precinct structure plans and strategic documents.

The protection of tangible and intangible Aboriginal cultural heritage is an important part of continuing cultural practice, understanding history and recognition of the Traditional Owners of Victoria. Commonwealth and State Acts and Regulations provide protection of places and areas of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance.

The ultimate custodians of Aboriginal cultural heritage are Traditional Owners, including groups formally recognised as Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) which are appointed by the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006. In 2021 there were 11 RAPs with decision-making responsibilities for approximately 74 per cent of Victoria. Traditional Owner Groups without formal recognition also have a vital role to play as key partners and stakeholders.

Strategic planning for Aboriginal cultural heritage involves a range of different stakeholders including State Government agencies, local government, developers, landowners and community groups.

Any information herein is based on reasonable assumptions at the time of publication but should not be relied upon without first seeking appropriate expert advice. Although every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this document is factually correct at the time of publication, the VPA does not warrant the accuracy, completeness or relevance of the information. Any person using or relying upon this document does so on the basis that the State of Victoria shall bear no responsibility or liability whatsoever for any errors, faults, defects or omissions in the information.

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Introduction

What is Pitching?

The purpose of pitching is to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to discuss opportunities, challenges and aspirations for the precinct. For government agencies, pitching sessions are an opportunity to present relevant background information and policy that will need to be considered when preparing the PSP.

VPA would like to thank all stakeholders who attended and participated at the Bendigo Regional Employment Precinct (BREP) pitching sessions which were held in November and December 2022.

These pitching sessions marked the beginning of the precinct planning process for BREP.

The purpose of the pitching sessions was to:

WHAT:	HOW:
Understand core issues early in the planning process	Invite stakeholders to present their ideas and concerns
Foster a collaborative working group of stakeholders	Provide a clear, transparent, and inclusive consultation program
Develop a vision and objectives for the site	Encourage discussion of innovative ideas and alternative processes

Ultimately, the pitching sessions will inform the BREP vision and purpose and development of a future plan.

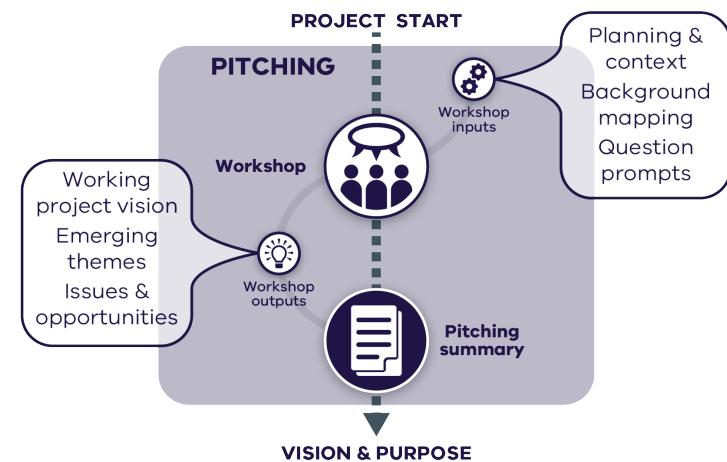
Purpose of this document

This document is a summary of the information captured during the pitching sessions for BREP.

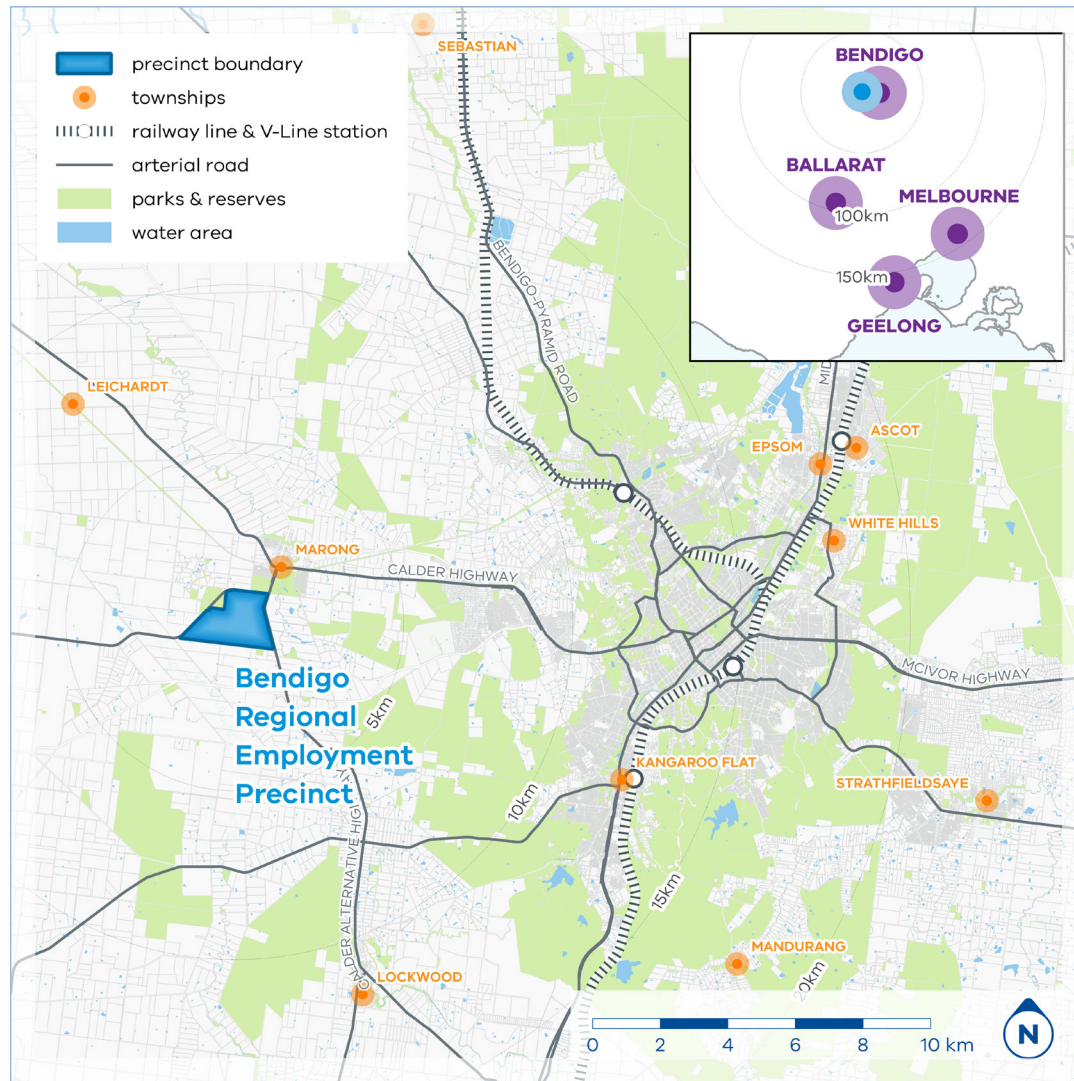
This summary document outlines the key issues and opportunities raised at the pitching sessions in both a written and spatial format and provides attendees with further information regarding what to expect at the upcoming BREP Vision and Purpose Workshop anticipated for March/April 2023.

The information gathered in the pitching sessions helped identify the issues, challenges, opportunities, and innovations for BREP. This document provides a summary of key themes raised during the pitching sessions.

Figure 1 Pitching process



Map 1 Regional context plan



Who attended the sessions?

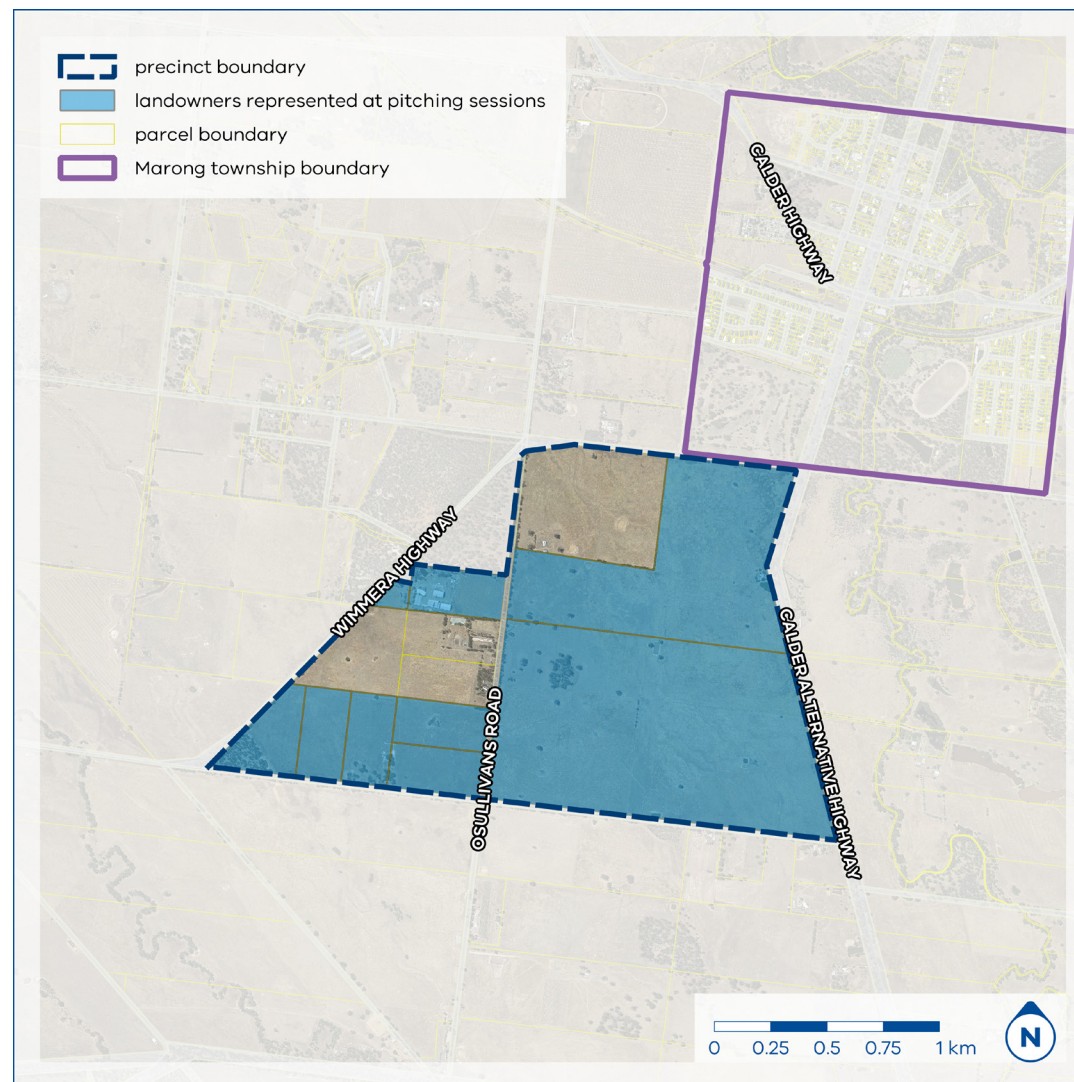
Pitching sessions were held with representatives from state and local government agencies, key stakeholder, community and industry groups and infrastructure providers. All precinct landowners were contacted to participate.

These were held online as individual meetings with the VPA project team.

Attendees included:

- Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal Corporation
- City of Greater Bendigo (municipal authority)
- City of Greater Bendigo (landowner)
- Former Department of Environment, Land, Water, Land and Planning - Planning Loddon Mallee
- Former Department of Environment, Land, Water, Land and Planning - Forest Fire Region
- Former Department of Transport - Transport Loddon Mallee
- North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA)
- Environment Protection Authority (EPA)
- Marong Community Action Group
- Bendigo Regional Manufacturing Group (BRMG)
- Be.Bendigo
- Coliban Water
- NBN Co
- Private landowners and developers

Map 2 Landowners represented at pitching sessions



Background

BREP is a significant strategic project for the Victorian Planning Authority. It presents a unique opportunity to lead the delivery of new, large scale, industrial/employment precinct. The ultimate land use designation for the precinct is yet to be determined as there are many technical considerations, including freight corridor impacts and the Marong Township Structure Plan.

Why BREP?

The City of Greater Bendigo has low levels of zoned and accessible industrial land available. Council estimates there is currently less than 100ha of vacant and available industrial land (less than 11 years supply).

Bendigo has 4x less zoned industrial land than Ballarat and Geelong.

The need for more industrial land in Bendigo was identified via the *Greater Bendigo Industrial Land Development Strategy* (adopted by council in 2020).

The strategy anticipated:

- demand for 170ha and 3,300 industrial jobs in Bendigo to 2036.
- available 1-5ha sites be fully exhausted by 2027.
- loss of 1,081 jobs by 2036 if new land is not released.

Council identified land for BREP as part of an EOI process for available sites associated with the *Greater Bendigo Industrial Land Development Strategy*.

BREP is currently zoned Farming Zone (FZ) and is subject to a Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) associated with the Wilsons Hill Bushland Reserve.

Precinct features

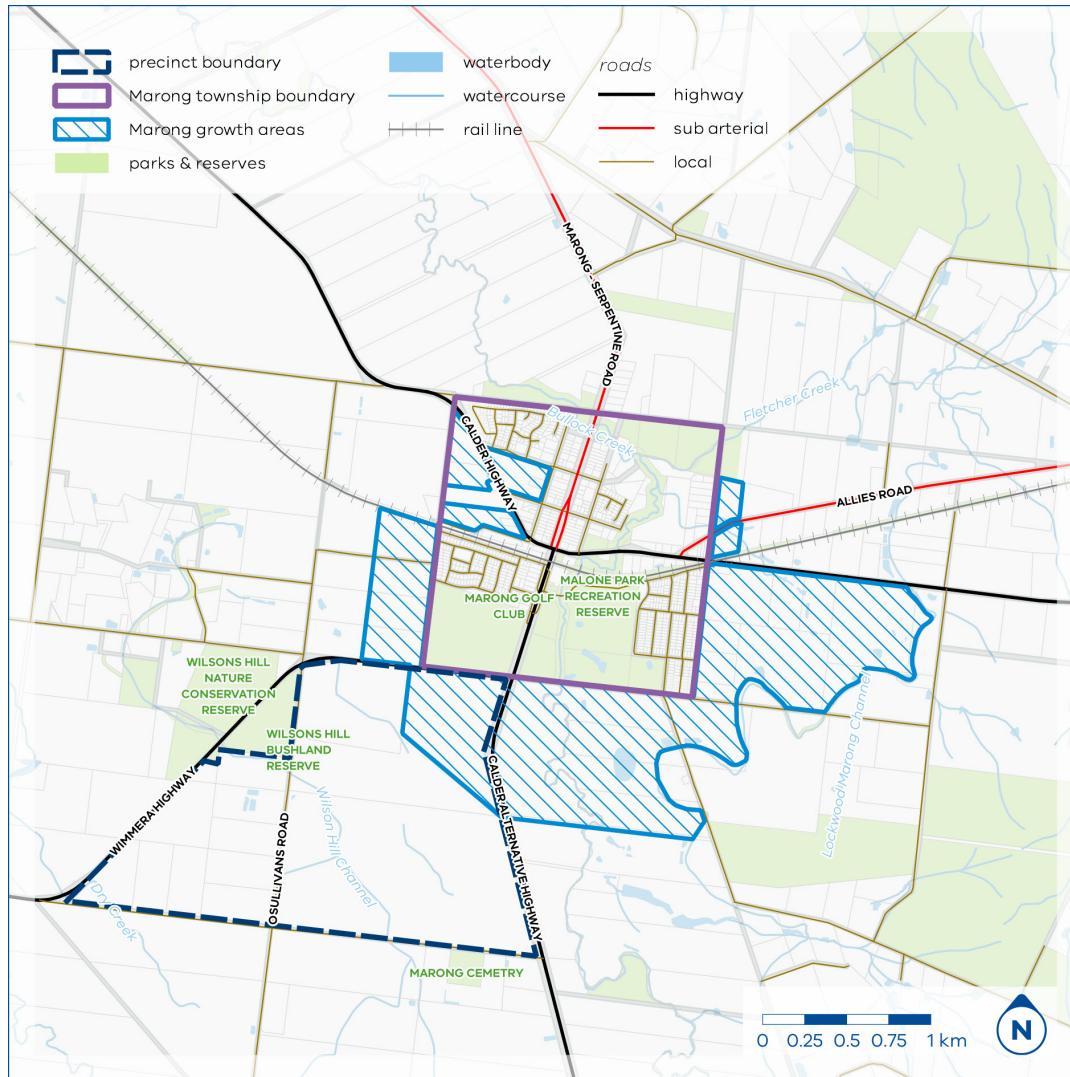
BREP is approximately 294ha in size (refer to Map 2 for the regional context and Map 4 for the study area.) It contains the following key features:

- 13 titles, across both council and private ownership.
- Small number of existing businesses and dwellings associated with low intensity agriculturally based activities such as grazing.
- A gently undulating landscape within scattered trees and extensive roadside vegetation. The land slopes to the north and west with a high point through the centre of the site.
- An area of cultural heritage sensitivity within the southern western corner associated with a historic creek alignment.
- High quality access to arterial roads with frontages to two main highways and national freight routes.
- Native vegetation and potential habitat for native species listed for protected either under state or federal legislation.
- No known encumbrances associated with existing major utility easements.

Land interfacing the precinct features:

- The Marong Golf Course sits immediately north with agriculture land to the west and south. There is proposed future residential land to the north-west and east as identified by the Marong Township Structure Plan.
- The Wilsons Hill Bushland Reserve.
- A small number of dwellings south of Cemetery Road.
- The Marong Cemetery.

Map 3 BREP study area



Note: Marong growth areas as shown are based upon the Draft Marong township structure Plan which is subject to change following exhibition of the document by City of Greater Bendigo.



Emerging themes

The information gathered at the pitching sessions has been analysed and sorted into five emerging themes.

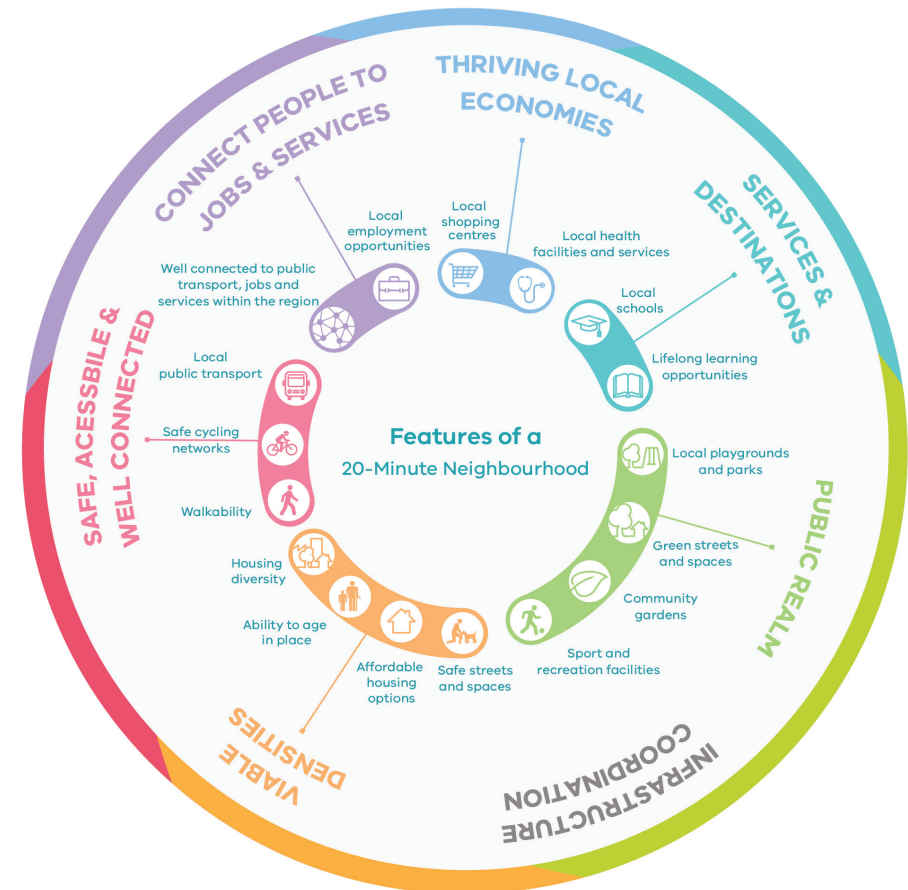
The emerging themes shape the development of the vision and objectives for the precinct. They connect to the eventual land use plan as part of the co-design process.

In addition, BREP will consider (where relevant) the PSP Guidelines and the seven hallmarks of the 20-minute neighbourhood to understand initial opportunities/constraints and to ensure key metrics are achieved (refer to Figure 2).

Table 1 demonstrates how each emerging theme relates to the PSP Guidelines and the 20-minute neighbourhood hallmarks.

The *Key Issues and Constraints* and *Key Opportunities and Innovations* plans in the following pages spatially map matters raised as part of the Pitching Sessions and that have informed the key theme analysis.

Figure 2 PSP Guidelines and the 20-minute neighbourhood hallmarks

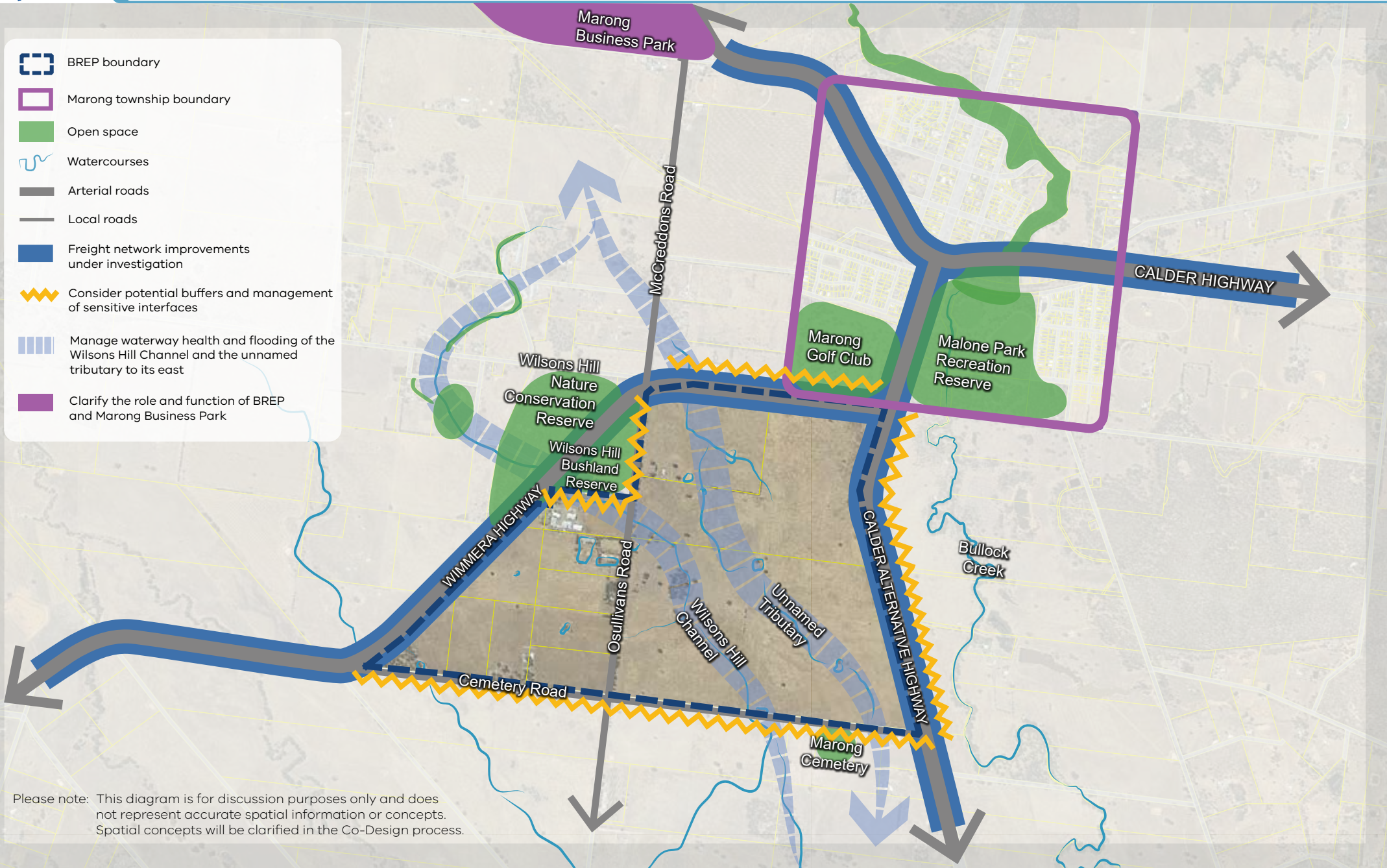


How the emerging themes relate to the PSP Guidelines and the 20-minute neighbourhood

Emerging themes	PSP Guidelines and the 20 minute neighbourhood hallmarks	
Emerging theme 1 Support development of a leading edge employment precinct that will attract a wide range of economic development opportunities, industry and jobs to the region	<div>CONNECT PEOPLE TO JOBS AND SERVICES</div> <div>SERVICES AND DESTINATIONS</div>	<div>THRIVING LOCAL ECONOMIES</div>
Emerging theme 2 Create a transport network that connects people to jobs and services, safely and efficiently	<div>SAFE ACCESSIBLE AND WELL CONNECTED</div>	<div>INFRASTRUCTURE COORDINATION</div>
Emerging theme 3 Holistically manage water and drainage solutions on site and protect natural systems	<div>HIGH-QUALITY PUBLIC REALM</div>	<div>INFRASTRUCTURE COORDINATION</div>
Emerging theme 4 Consider the important role of amenity and the need for coordinated infrastructure and service delivery	<div>HIGH-QUALITY PUBLIC REALM</div> <div>VIABLE DENSITIES</div>	<div>INFRASTRUCTURE COORDINATION</div>
Emerging theme 5 Protect and enhance the existing character, landscape and heritage values of the area	<div>HIGH-QUALITY PUBLIC REALM</div>	

Table 1 Emerging Themes

- BREP boundary
- Marong township boundary
- Open space
- Watercourses
- Arterial roads
- Local roads
- Freight network improvements under investigation
- Consider potential buffers and management of sensitive interfaces
- Manage waterway health and flooding of the Wilsons Hill Channel and the unnamed tributary to its east
- Clarify the role and function of BREP and Marong Business Park

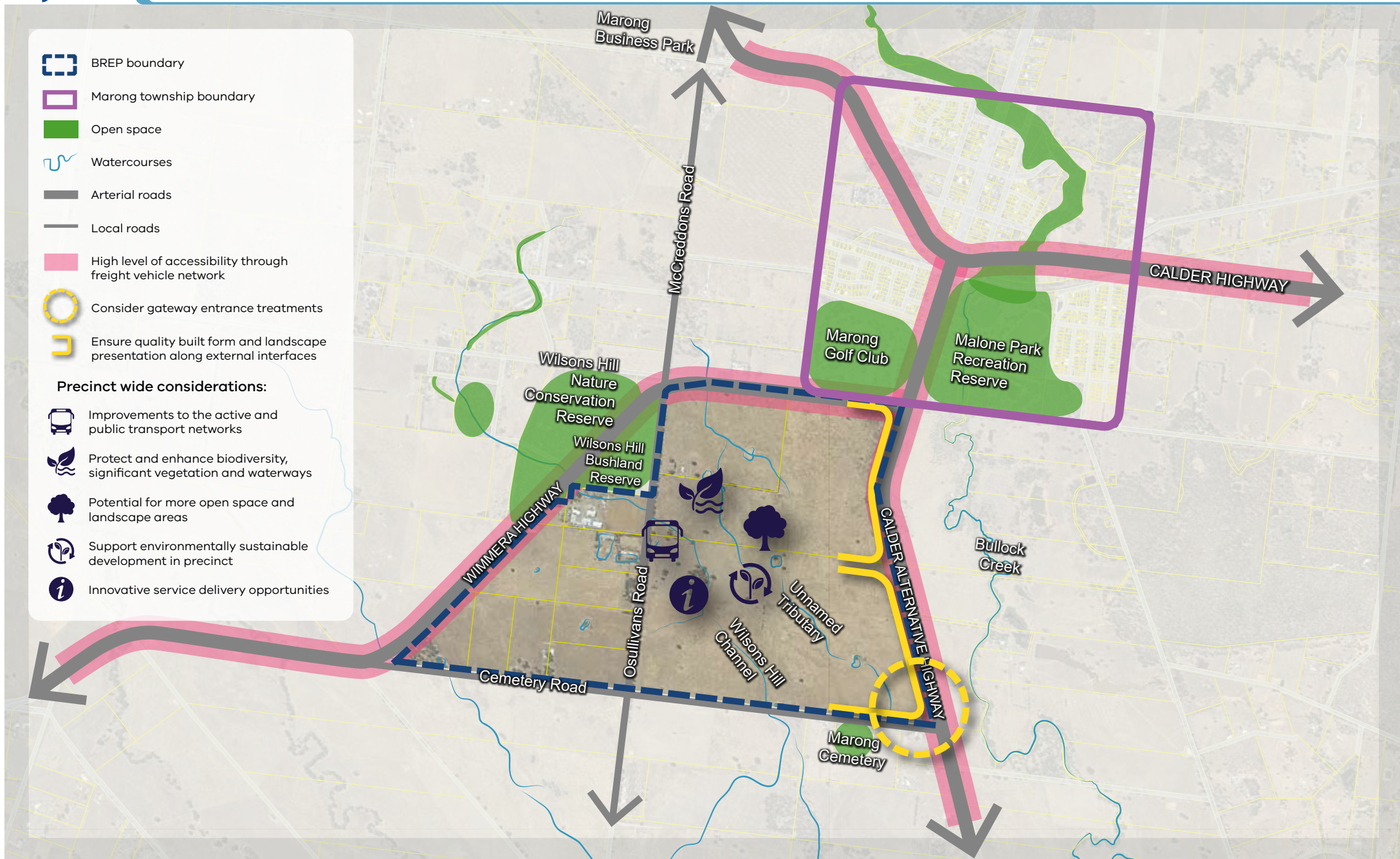


Please note: This diagram is for discussion purposes only and does not represent accurate spatial information or concepts. Spatial concepts will be clarified in the Co-Design process.

- BREP boundary
- Marong township boundary
- Open space
- Watercourses
- Arterial roads
- Local roads
- High level of accessibility through freight vehicle network
- Consider gateway entrance treatments
- Ensure quality built form and landscape presentation along external interfaces

Precinct wide considerations:

- Improvements to the active and public transport networks
- Protect and enhance biodiversity, significant vegetation and waterways
- Potential for more open space and landscape areas
- Support environmentally sustainable development in precinct
- Innovative service delivery opportunities



Emerging theme 1

Support development of a **leading edge employment precinct** that will attract a range of economic development opportunities, industry and jobs to the region

Existing strategic documents (including the *Greater Bendigo Industrial Land Development Strategy*) support the need for a new industrial and employment precinct near Marong, which has been identified by council as the BREP. The intent of BREP is to provide an opportunity to meet industrial land needs and boost the economic development opportunities of Greater Bendigo and the broader region.

BREP will unlock zoned land for employment and industrial uses, which responds to the current industrial zone land shortage in Greater Bendigo. It is estimated that BREP will deliver 3,000 direct and 3,000 indirect jobs for the region once fully developed.

Ideas and opportunities discussed:

- The population growth of the municipality is estimated to reach more than 200,000 people by 2050, which poses significant challenges to ensure there is enough land for jobs to meet population demands.
- BREP will develop over many years, and therefore will need to respond to evolving market needs (i.e. provide opportunities for a mix of land uses, retain flexibility via a range of lot sizes and be delivered in a strategic manner to support population growth and jobs demand).
- BREP will enable more local job opportunities to be created closer to where people live.
- BREP has the opportunity to become a “showcase/leading edge development” in terms of attractiveness and integrated Environmentally Sustainable Development outcomes (i.e. ‘pushing the development envelope’ to see what can be achieved and reset benchmarks to attract companies to the area). However, the question of cost and who is responsible is a key challenge. A balance between innovation and cost-effective development is crucial.
- BREP provides opportunity to embed sustainable transport options, City of Greater Bendigo’s net zero aspirations, circular economy outcomes and Environmentally Sustainable Development in new development.
- Opportunity exists to provide for state-of-the-art facilities such as automation, digitisation and clean energy to meet the needs of manufacturing and businesses of the future.
- There are many opportunities for BREP related to its accessibility (i.e. being located near Bendigo, adjacent the new residential growth area of Marong and on the state freight arterial network).
- BREP could provide a location for new types of enterprise to establish such as cultural tourism opportunities for the Dja Dja Wurrung.
- Other key industrial land use opportunities include supporting advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, freight and logistics and connections with the tertiary sector.
- There is a need to understand the relationship between BREP, the Marong Business Park and the Marong township and where to locate key land uses to ensure all areas can harmoniously develop and integrate within the existing context.
- Need to ensure that there is sufficient justification in the Planning Scheme for rezoning more land, given the Marong Business Park is already zoned for employment purposes (i.e. there is need to provide clarity on the role of Marong Business Park).

Other considerations:

VPA is currently undertaking a *Sustainable Development Opportunities Report* to uncover sustainable options to reduce reliance upon conventional infrastructure that can be implemented into the BREP. VPA will also collaborate with council as the municipal authority to explore net zero emissions development opportunities that can be embedded.

VPA will continue to work with council and key industry representatives to understand the needs of industry to deliver a future plan for BREP.

Future employment and industrial land uses, their locations, staging of land release and potential lot sizes will be determined after technical assessments have been completed and will be tested with relevant stakeholders and landowners at the upcoming co-design workshop.

Emerging theme 2

Create a **transport network** that connects people to jobs and services, safely and efficiently

BREP is strategically located on the state's freight arterial road network, bound by the Wimmera and Calder Alternative/Calder Highways. The need for potential alignment options of a new freight connection is being explored by the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) (previously Department of Transport). Improvements to the freight network in the area would improve safety, efficiency and connectivity of the freight network. This has the potential to become a catalyst for development within BREP, while also removing freight and heavy vehicles from the centre of the Marong Township.

There is also the need to create safe and accessible transportation options between BREP and the Marong Township such as a walking and cycling links and public transport connections.

Ideas and opportunities discussed:

- Improvement the freight connection could act as a catalyst for development that has the potential to boost economic productivity and improve safety for residents of Marong and the wider Bendigo region.
- There is a need to further understand the employment catchments of the precinct and surrounds (i.e. the relationship between BREP, Marong Business Park and the Marong Township) as this will have implications for BREP including transport links and movement network needs (i.e. walking, cycling and public transport).
- Questions were raised around the medium and long-term need for separation and integration of road and rail movements for the area.
- There are no existing footpaths and bike paths connecting Marong to BREP currently, which is causing safety issues.
- Dja Dja Wurrung traditional trade routes and connections through the area could assist in understanding options and establishing new connections in and around the precinct.

- There is a need to consider infrastructure required to support freight usage and accessibility within BREP (i.e. highway upgrades and a new truck facility such as service centre incl. truck parking, washing and driver resting areas).
- There is a need to consider alternative transportation modes that align with future industry needs (i.e. increased public transportation and additional car parking).

Other considerations:

VPA will be working closely with DTP to understand the need for and possibility of potential alignment options that will be explored as part of investigations into freight connection improvements of the area.

In addition, VPA will be undertaking an Integrated Transport Assessment (Phase 2 Study), which will consider truck movement/ freight logistics, how to manage existing network issues and determine active and public transport options for BREP.

Emerging theme 3

Holistically manage water and drainage solutions on site and protect natural systems

Areas of BREP are flood prone, particularly in the vicinity of the Bullock Creek and Wilsons Hill Channel. High quality drainage infrastructure is required to manage stormwater, increase water quality and to reduce flooding risk in the area to support development in BREP.

Biodiversity, native vegetation, and ecological values are present within BREP and will continue to be valued and celebrated as defining elements as the precinct develops.

Ideas and opportunities discussed:

- There are known flooding constraints associated with the Bullock Creek and Wilson Hill Channel. Flood modelling has not been completed for the BREP area and will need to be undertaken as part of this project to explore the matter.
- Managing water and drainage will be critical for BREP. Drainage solutions cannot increase flows downstream or create offsite impacts.
- Opportunities exist for BREP to maximise onsite capture, storage and reuse of water. Integrated Water Management (IWM) will be key to solve a range of water and drainage challenges i.e. a combination of stormwater harvesting/recycled water and water capture and storage.
- Two bioregions straddle BREP – the Great Dividing Range and the Murray Plains. These include different vegetation types and geomorphology. It is important to consider various biodiversity protections and physical barriers to retain biodiversity and ongoing maintenance of native vegetation.
- The majority of the precinct's native vegetation has been cleared due to historical grazing practices. Remnant isolated patches of native vegetation are present within periphery areas of the precinct and along existing roadways that will require assessment.

- As native vegetation is present there will likely be areas of habitat for some native species.
- It was noted that the community should be made aware of outcomes of any flooding assessment, particularly long-term residents, due to their understanding of existing water conditions and how it has changed over time. This is best placed to occur following completion of a flooding assessment.
- North Central Catchment Management Authority noted that any development must be set back 30m from the top of the bank of any waterway. This is a standard requirement. Goulburn-Murray Water should also be consulted regarding key development requirements.
- Engagement with the Dja Dja Wurrung upon water and native vegetation management practices and opportunities should be explored through the technical assessments.

Other considerations:

VPA is undertaking a Drainage Assessment and Integrated Water Management Assessment to support development within BREP this will provide an understanding of current and future conditions and include flood modelling.

VPA is also undertaking a Flora and Fauna Assessment and Arboriculture Assessment to understand what native vegetation, exotic vegetation and species exist in the area and which areas will need to be protected.

Emerging theme 4

Consider the important role of amenity and the need for **coordinated infrastructure and service delivery**

To incentivise key industries, BREP must be attractive and serviced in line with land release (i.e. telecommunications, power and sewerage). This will provide an advantage to businesses and potentially be a catalyst for private investment and development within BREP.

Ideas and opportunities discussed:

- Any development within BREP must be clean, green and tidy, not smelly or noisy.
- Reverse amenity impacts are a key consideration that need to be explored and managed within the precinct.
- There is a need to consider interface issues – particularly existing dwellings south of Cemetery Road and new residential areas proposed by the Marong Township Structure Plan.
- Opportunity exists to consider “cleaner” industrial land uses near residential areas and dirtier/heavier industrial land uses located further away within the precinct.
- Landscaping and gateway treatments are seen as important elements for the project to consider.
- Include design guidelines and landscape treatments to manage interfaces in the future plan.
- Engage with the Dja Dja Wurrung on design guidelines and landscape treatments.
- There is a need to understand servicing requirements early to enable service and utility providers and authorities to factor required works into their forthcoming programs and budgets.
- Marong is at the end of the grid with water supply coming from Sandhurst Reservoir (20km from Marong). The nearest sewage treatment plant is 17km away. This could limit existing facilities to meet the needs of BREP in addition to the Marong Township at full development.

- The Marong Community Action Group noted that the township already faced issues with existing sewerage and water servicing.
- Coliban Water noted that large investment is required to upgrade pipes and the treatment facilities for sewer and recycled water infrastructure to service BREP.
- If required, a potential new sewer treatment plant is preferable in a location closer to Marong. However this brings many challenges such as land requirements, cost, aesthetics issues and meeting EPA regulations.
- There is a need to ‘future-proof’ BREP with high-speed broadband. It was recommended by NBN Co that a business fibre zone is the best marketable solution and best connectivity for new businesses in the precinct.
- Further discussions should occur with Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) throughout the BREP process.
- There is a need to plan BREP holistically in relation to staging, (timing is critical to ensure sufficient industrial land is available). Development contributions need to be considered to ensure infrastructure can be funded in line with development needs.

Other considerations:

The VPA will explore reverse amenity/land use compatibility as the proposed land uses and planning controls are developed. Additional technical studies may be required to inform this. It is important to note that BREP is a long-term development; staging is typically based on demand and where areas can be serviced. The BREP process will consider logical staging, which will be informed by outcomes of the technical investigations currently underway.

In addition, VPA has a Utility Servicing Assessment underway and will consult various utility providers to understand existing services and the types of servicing required. This will include upgrades for BREP including solutions to the sewerage system.

Emerging theme 5

Respect and enhance the existing character, landscape and heritage values of the area

The local heritage, rural landscape and visual character of Marong is highly valued by the community. It is important to maintain and reinforce the 'country feel' and landscape attributes of the area as BREP develops.

BREP provides an important opportunity to explore and embed Aboriginal cultural heritage outcomes and value as part of the future precinct.

Ideas and opportunities discussed:

- Ongoing engagement is needed with the community and key stakeholders as BREP will be a large employment precinct that shapes the future of the town and surrounding areas.
- It was noted that Dja Dja Wurrung will play a critical role in the planning for BREP and ongoing engagement is key.
- The Marong Community Action Group noted that from past surveys (i.e. surveys for council's community plans), a key point from residents is that they want a country town 'feel' and trees maintained. One comment was "about a pleasant environment". Any improvements in terms of landscaping must be aesthetically pleasing and encourage environmental connectedness.
- It was acknowledged that the Wilsons Hill Bushland Reserve has a history of mining including mine shafts and open cut areas; additional input from a colonial heritage perspective is required.

Other considerations:

VPA is engaging with key community groups and the Dja Dja Wurrung in an ongoing manner to inform development of a future plan for BREP.

The VPA will consider how to capture the 'country feel' of Marong and landscape attributes in BREP, and to continue engaging with relevant stakeholders and key community groups on this.

A Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment, Cultural Values Assessment and Historical Heritage Assessment are currently being undertaken to identify cultural and historic heritage sites and any particular elements of value. This information will be used to determine the future land use and help inform future arrangements and development of the precinct.

In addition, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is in progress. This will identify landscape and visual characteristics within BREP that should be considered to help influence future planning policy and subsequent development of the precinct to maintain visual amenity and a sense of place as the land transforms.

Next steps

Vision and purpose workshop

The next step in the BREP process is the vision and purpose workshop (refer to Figure 3). The workshop will be held either online or in-person and will run for approximately 2–3 hours. All stakeholders that participated in the pitching sessions and precinct landowners are invited to attend.

The purpose of the workshop is to discuss and provide feedback on the initial themes presented at the pitching sessions. The workshop will include interactive activities to validate and develop the BREP vision and emerging themes.

Further information on these sessions will be provided to participants in the coming weeks.

Technical reports

Various technical studies have been commissioned to support early planning for BREP to identify land capability constraints and support early planning decisions.

Phase 1 technical reports include:

- Land Capability Assessment (i.e. contamination, geology, hydrology)
- Arboriculture Assessment
- Flora and Fauna Assessment (i.e. biodiversity)
- Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment and Cultural Values Assessment
- Historical Heritage Assessment
- Sustainable Precinct Assessment
- Utility Servicing Assessment
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Two phases of technical reports will be completed for BREP. Phase 2 technical reports will be undertaken during the co-design process in mid-late 2023. These will be informed by outcomes of the phase 1 technical reports and the co-design process.

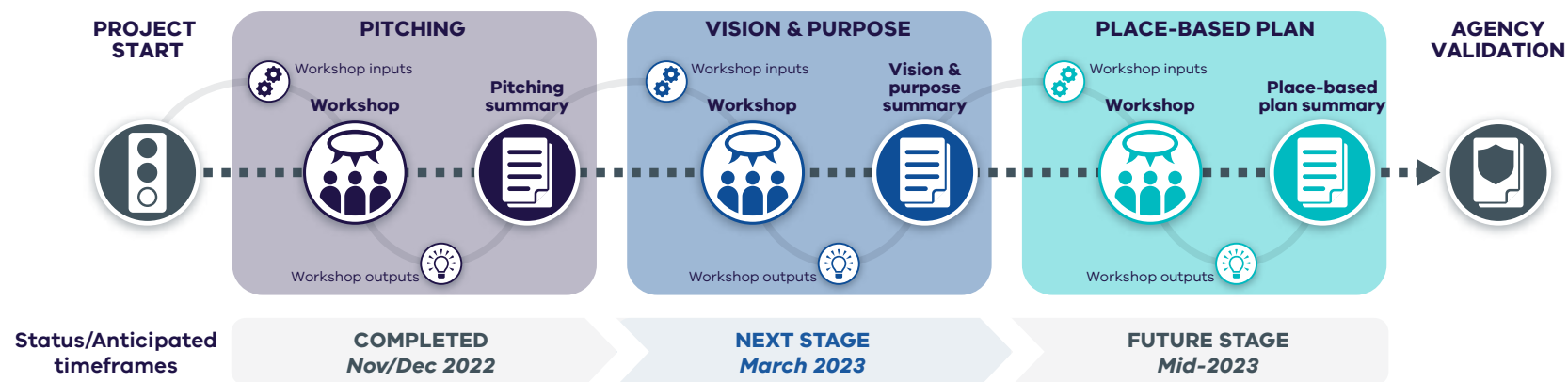


Figure 3 BREP planning process overview and anticipated timeframes

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