

A detailed topographic map of Ballarat West, showing contour lines, roads, and buildings. The map is rendered in shades of gray and black, with white text overlaid.

Ballarat West Local Structure Plan

Ballarat Planning Scheme Amendment C117

Evidence Statement -Greg Wood

Tract Consultants

May, 2008

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Landscape Architects
Urban Designers
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1 Instructions

My name is Gregory Wood and I am a Principal of Tract Consultants Pty Ltd, which is a Town Planning, Urban Design and Landscape Architecture business located at 195 Lennox Street, Richmond. A statement of my experience, qualifications and areas of expertise is appended to this statement.

At the request of Maddocks, I have been asked to prepare and present planning evidence with respect to Amendment C117 – Ballarat Planning Scheme.

Area of Expertise

- Strategic and statutory planning on a range of growth area and urban planning issues.
- Advice to commercial State Government and Local Government on growth area and greenfields planning.

Instructions

My instructions required me to present on the process of the preparation of the Local Structure Plan to exhibition and to summarise the outcomes described in the Draft Local Structure Plan.

Matters Relied Upon

- Inspection of the area covered by the plan.
- Documentation retained from the preparation of the Ballarat West Local Structure Plan.
- Inputs by sub-consultants and agencies contributing to the process.
- My role in drafting the “Structure Plan” following the “Inquiry by Design”.

As the Ballarat West Local Structure Plan is essentially a document that stands on its own. This statement presents a summary of that primary document. In the course of my evidence, I will make reference to the primary document.

I declare that I have made all the inquiries that I believe are desirable and appropriate and that no matters of significance which I regard as relevant have to my knowledge been withheld from the panel.

2 Background

2.1 Ballarat – A Context

Geographically, Ballarat is located at the top of a plateau which incorporates low hills and a ridgeline, essentially running north-south. The existing urban area of Ballarat occupies the head waters of a number of streams and shallow an ephemeral wetlands.

Geographically, urban development is constrained to the north and the east by low hills (including Black Hill and Brown's Hill) and high quality agricultural land further to the east. These elevated locations are more difficult to develop having significant environmental impacts as well as high cost associated with the provision of urban services.

As recognised by the Ballarat Municipal Strategic Statement, the extensive plains and shallow creek lines to the west of the existing urban area presents the least constrained and most cost effective area to service which also provides an ability to build upon the existing urban fabric.

Ballarat's growth rate has increased in recent years, averaging between 500 to 600 new dwellings per annum (ID Consulting, Ballarat Demographic Forecast, 2008). The possibility exists for growth rates to increase, as is occurring in many regional municipalities close to Melbourne (eg. Mitchell Shire, Macedon Ranges and Greater Geelong) due to improved transport and access to jobs on the expanding metropolitan fringe.

2.2 Existing Planning Scheme Provisions

Clause 21.05-3 of the Ballarat Planning Scheme supports the growth of Ballarat to the west. This is further supported by the Ballarat West Strategy Plan 1998, the overall framework plan for Ballarat at Clause 21.05.3.

2.3 The Ballarat West Amendment

The Amendment C117 proposes to change the Scheme by introducing changes to the following provisions of the Ballarat Planning Scheme:

- Modify the map to Clause 21.03, and text in Clause 21.03, 21.05, 21.06 to identify growth areas in Ballarat West in accordance with the Ballarat Local Structure Plan and relevant textural changes to Clause 21.
- Inclusion of the Ballarat West Local Structure Plan as a reference document by changes to Clause 21.05, 21.06 and 21.08.
- Deleting Clause 22.12.

3 Summary of the Amendment Process

3.1 Overview: The Place of the LSP in the Planning Hierarchy

Unlike metropolitan Melbourne, regional Victoria does not have a rigorous history of planning for urban growth by agencies and State and Local Government. Much of the base information that is taken for granted within Melbourne's Growth Areas and established urban areas is not available to the same level of detail in regional Victoria. In responding to future growth, Ballarat City Council is in the process of undertaking investigations into policy development into a wide range of planning related matters including industrial and employment growth, retail facility planning, community services and recreation facilities. The Local Structure Plan is in effect one of these longer term strategies.

As is indicated in the introduction to the Local Structure Plan, *"the Ballarat West Local Structure Plan provides the framework for further planning of the key growth area west of Ballarat, the plan is informed by the most recent available data and accepted standards where they exist....."*

The introduction to the plan clearly puts the Structure Plan in context; it is as much a plan for future growth as it is a basis for planning for future growth for the next 40 years. The Local Structure Plan:

- Is a plan for future development providing a basis for planning by agencies and Council;
- provides the basis for service delivery plans and the development of further policy and standards;
- the basis for detailed planning at Development Plan stage.

For this reason, the plan is a guide to future development and as a reference document, it will inform future policy development and detailed land use planning.

The Structure Plan performs a role not dissimilar to a Growth Area Plan in Melbourne's growth areas.

In the planning hierarchy, the Structure Plan is the second step in a four stage planning process being; Municipal Strategic Statement, Local Structure Plan, Development Plan (under a Development Plan Overlay) and planning permit (Attachment 1).

3.2 Process of Developing the Plan

Inquiry by Design

The Ballarat LSP was commenced through an "Inquiry By Design" process, similar to the process used in the development of Melbourne's Growth Area Plans.

The process commenced in May 2005 with an "Inquiry by Design" process facilitated by "Ecologically Sustainable Development" (ESD) Urban Design Consultants. It involved VicRoads, Central Highlands Water, State Planning agencies and Council departments as key service facility providers. Additional expert input occurred using TTM Consultants (Transport), Urban Enterprises (Economics) and Beveridge Williams (Planning).

The process sought to draw from a background of what information was available. Unlike Melbourne's Growth Areas, with a history of several decades of infrastructure planning, the overall base data for Ballarat is more limited.

As a background to the structure and content of the LSP, the following summarises the status of information and policy informing the plan during its preparation.

Hydraulic Infrastructure

Central Highlands Water did not have a detailed Distribution Plan for Ballarat West at the time of the "Inquiry". An understanding of the capacity to service the area and the geographical implications for servicing exist. While the plan area can be serviced the detailed design and cost of servicing is not yet known. The LSP will inform more detailed planning.

Biodiversity

Only broad level biodiversity assessment has occurred for the plan area. Overall, the LSP area is a modified environment with only isolated occurrences of remnant vegetation. Continued cultivation and stocking of properties appears to limit reoccurrence.

The level of assessment is limited and detailed biodiversity studies will be required prior to commencement of development, probably at Development Plan stage.

Heritage

The LSP was drafted prior to amendments to the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006, in May 2007. The Act now provides that a planning permit must not be granted for the subdivision or development of land for an activity which requires a Cultural Heritage Management Plan to be prepared and approved, unless a plan has been approved and the activity is not inconsistent with the plan.

No sites of cultural significance are known.

The Development Plan phase will require a more detailed archaeological assessment to be undertaken, forming part of any rezoning request.

European heritage has been well documented in successive heritage studies. Apart from the key feature of the avenue of honour and limited mining relics in the Sebastopol area, little of significance impacts on the plan area.

Transport

TTM Consulting provided input into the development of a transport network through the Inquiry by Design process. Direct input by VicRoads and Council completed the initial road network. The inquiry outputs were further supplemented by input from Grogan Richards relating to Alfredton.

Activity Centres

Ballarat has no comprehensive retail centres policy for the city. Key inputs to the development of the Structure Plan was through Urban Enterprises and input into the Inquiry by Design and Essential Economics assessment for Alfredton.

Industry and Employment

Parallel to the preparation of the Structure Plan was the development of an industrial strategy for Ballarat. The progressive development of this policy has influenced the way in which the LSP has responded to demand for employment land and the need to further preserve options for growth.

Social Infrastructure

Department of Education and Training contributed directly to the planning process at each key step of draft plan preparation and the Inquiry by Design process.

Council officers informed the process for siting and standards of community centre sites following the Inquiry by Design.

Open Space

There is no comprehensive open space strategy or standards for open space provision within Ballarat. Council officers input directly into the planning process. A strong influence on active open space provision was the presence of Victoria Park and the desire to optimise its use as a “higher order” location for provision of sporting facilities to population.

3.3 Informal Exhibition

Two options for the plan were informally exhibited in July/August of 2005 with a period of public comment and review.

A second “informal” exhibition of a final option for the plan occurred in mid 2006.

Submissions were received and the review process undertaken for the draft plan. The principle issues addressed as a result of the informal exhibition was to seek clarification on industrial buffers, to further assess the road network and to review the proposed staging plan.

One of the areas highlighted was the poor level of retail and private service delivery in Alfredton. As a result, an emphasis was placed on the need to provide a better serviced community in Alfredton and importantly, to provide a stimulus for that service provision.

The result of both exhibitions resulted in a review of the original Inquiry by Design outcomes, an opportunity to the outcomes of the Ballarat Industrial Strategy and progress in road planning.

The final Draft Local Structure Plan was exhibited with amendment documentation in September 2007.

4 Overview of the Plan

The elements of the plan as described in the Executive Summary include planning for:

- Approximately 14,000 residential lots accommodating a population of 35,000 – 40,000
- Two new activity centres/town centres to serve the key growth areas
- Limited expansion of the Carngham Road industrial area
- An enhancement of the existing road network and retention of an existing rail corridor

The plan presents a concept for the growth of Ballarat through self-sustaining urban townships or urban communities. In this sense, it proposes residential development to a critical mass and population size to justify the creation of new retail and service based town centres, central to the new urban communities. The objective is for each new urban community to be able to grow to a size that is realistically achievable in the medium term and which will provide the critical mass to deliver a range of local services that will minimise the need to travel outside that community and to do so within as best as possible, walkable or short travel distance catchments.

The plan recognises “building blocks” of residential communities of approximately 3,000 residential lots or 10,000 population. This is the minimum population required for a State Primary School, multi-function local community centre and the minimum catchment required for a supermarket based retail centre. The plan seeks to identify a linear trail network based on overland flow paths and water courses, linking local parks and collocating major sports reserves with schools to create an integrated open space network.

A key element of the plan is the provision of a minimal amount of active open space and sporting facilities to serve the community recognising the proximity of Victoria Park and Council’s desire to further develop that park to provide the higher order active open space. The proximity of Victoria Park to the plan area enhances its role to provide for some of the active open space needs over time of the plan area.

The Structure Plan is best presented in detail by discussing each new urban community in turn (Attachment 2).

4.1 Alfredton

This area consists of the existing urban area of Alfredton which is largely developed except for a small section in the south west. The existing Alfredton community contains approximately 7,000 population with the capacity to grow in excess of a further 1,000. While reasonably well serviced with public infrastructure (primary school, community centre and sports ground) the community lacks retail services and private community and recreational facilities. The existing road network within Alfredton has limitations because of its design, limiting the capacity to provide an enhanced public transport service. Alfredton is a relatively isolated dormitory suburb of Ballarat, separated from the main urban area by an industrial area and the large open space reserve of Victoria Park. There is little opportunity for Alfredton to grow to a sustainable community within its current boundaries.

4.2 Alfredton West

Alfredton West has been considered as a potential growth front since the Inquiry by Design and early draft versions of the plan.

The inclusion of Alfredton West in the Structure Plan provides an opportunity to grow Alfredton by at least a further 8,000 population but probably more by providing an ultimate combined Alfredton community size of 16,000 – 18,000 population for both Alfredton East and West. The Structure Plan presents a plan for Alfredton which identifies:

- A town centre with the capacity to provide retail, recreation and community services central to the population on the major road network (both north-south and east-west). Given the urgent need to provide retail services to the existing community in Alfredton, the location of the town centre site provides the best opportunity for early provision of this service.
- A residential community of a size able to justify a second primary school and provision of a state secondary school.
- A five hectare sports ground co-located with the primary school on the basis of integrating broader open active space provision both on the primary school site and on the sports ground reserve.
- An integrated community centre site servicing the whole community of Alfredton and Alfredton West.
- The ability to provide a road network with connector roads designed to provide relatively unrestricted bus routes at 800 metre separations.
- Alfredton is a higher cost area to provide with hydraulic infrastructure due to the need to provide rising mains for the sewerage network. While this may be viewed as a constraint to potential development, it is not dissimilar to many of Melbourne's growth areas and the overall cumulative cost of such facilities on land construction costs is relatively minor.

Overall, the housing market in Alfredton forms a point of difference in the Ballarat market. The expansion of Alfredton is desirable in:

- Maintaining diversity in location for new housing supply
- Enhancing the existing community by growing Alfredton to a size that sustains better service provision.
- Providing centrally located services to catchments and a better transport network.
- Placing new residents close to services and expanding employment opportunities to the north and south.

4.3 Alfredton South

This is the name that has been given to the area south of the existing Alfredton area approximately 800 metres to the north and south of Carngham Road. Often referred to as the Carngham Road precinct, it consists of the existing Carngham Road industrial area and farmland west of the industrial area. This area is affected, in part, by buffers to existing industry which precludes residential development. Of particular note is Icon industries at the western edge of existing zoned industrial land and the requirement for a 500 metre buffer to existing operations.

This area has been precluded from a specific recommendation in the plan due to the need by planning authorities to fully assess and plan for its future, particularly in response to the recommendations of the C88 Panel and the need for additional industrial land. It is proposed to expand industrial area by approximately 400 metres to include the buffer areas to Icon Industries and to allow for some expansion of the

Carngham Road industrial area in the short term. The balance of the plan area should be planned for as a separate exercise to this Structure Plan following resolution of some of the uncertainties on industrial land supply and the need to plan for industrial buffers and a fuller understanding of longer term residential needs.

Page 42 of the LSP report discusses the potential for the future of the area as both future industrial or residential subject to a better understanding of long term needs.

4.4 Delacombe North

This area represents a relatively unconstrained development area of over 300 hectares with a potential to accommodate at least 10,000 population. Partly affected by fragmented land holdings in the south, this area has few other significant constraints. Delacombe North is to form part of an integrated community of Delacombe North and Delacombe South focussing on a proposed new town centre on the Glenelg Highway, central to both communities. Central to this plan area is the co-location of the primary school and five hectare sports facility provided as an integrated facility as proposed in Alfredton. While potential exists to integrate a Council provided community centre with the school and sports ground, the plan has nominated a larger integrated community facility to serve both communities north and south. Ultimately, the decision on service delivery will be resolved by Council closer to provision.

4.5 Delacombe South

Delacombe South is a large urban community with potential to provide housing for at least 12,000 population. This necessitates the provision of a primary school co-located with a minimum 10 hectare sports oval to meet the enhanced demand from such a community. Delacombe South, because of its size also provides the opportunity to locate the secondary school central to both north and south but within the Delacombe South area as it will ultimately contain the bulk of population.

Delacombe South is characterised by fragmented land holdings which has the potential to result in slower development rates due to the need for land assembly. Clearly, however in the long term, this area will have the largest influence on demand for services and the ability to provide those services. The proposed road network for Delacombe South seeks to build on the existing road network where this is achievable. The main arterial and connector road separation varies from 400 – 800 metres and subject to careful bus route provision, should be able to accommodate a direct bus service within 400 metres of all residents and incorporating the proposed township.

4.6 Sebastopol

Sebastopol is an existing community of 8,000 population with the plan presenting an opportunity to provide a potential 1,600 additional residential lots or more than 4,000 population is effectively an enhancement to the existing Sebastopol community. This part of Ballarat consists of relatively fragmented land holdings and geographically is one of the more constrained areas within the Structure Plan. Development rates are relatively slow in Sebastopol although the community overall is well serviced with both public and private schools and a range of Council community services.

A large reserve, the “MP Power Reserve” exists in this community. Essentially undeveloped, this reserve has the capacity to not only provide enhanced district open space facilities for Delacombe but also serve the existing Sebastopol and proposed extension to Sebastopol.

4.7 Early Service Provision as a Driver for the LSP

While the Staging Plan for the LSP places a strong emphasis on flexible interpretation, it focuses upon the town centres/activity centres functioning as the key hubs of the future communities. They are located on the basis of the ability to develop them early in the staging of development.

Due to the slow growth rates and the long-term nature of the Structure Plan (accommodating approximately 40 years growth) it is important that as the communities grow, the services are provided early. For this reason, both the Delacombe and Alfredton town centres have been located at sites which will form the next logical stage of development (ie. within the next 5 years). Each township will require a critical mass of population to justify the provision of retail community and other services, however, given the nearby established residential populations in both locations, part of their catchments already exist (ie. the provision of these townships is not solely dependent on population growth within the plan area).

The likely staging of development will see town centres and their immediate environs as the first stages of development within the plan area. Therefore, even if development rates are slow, each community only partially developed will still have the essential urban services available. This has been an important underlying factor in the siting of town centres. At only 50% development, it is likely that half of each community will be developed, but the combined Delacombe North and South community will be centred round the township and Alfredton West will have grown from the township site.

5 Implementation

As stated early in this statement and under the implementation section of the Structure Plan, this plan must be applied flexibly. It performs essentially the role of the Growth Area Plan in Melbourne's metropolitan area.

Its purpose is to provide a framework from which to prepare more detailed plans (Development Plans) and to provide a basis for detailed infrastructure and servicing plans to be prepared.

The Local Structure Plan will now form the basis for more detailed planning for key service providers and agencies. It will also form the basis for Council's policy development and for Council to develop a more detailed strategy of the delivery of services and open space to the plan area.

Therefore, a strong emphasis is placed on the next step in the planning process for addressing such detail.

Consistent with Clause 14 of the Ballarat Planning Scheme development plan process will need to confirm the key elements of land use and clarify all known constraints with a degree of certainty. Much of the information that is necessary to bed down this level of detail will come from the responses by agencies to this plan (Attachment 2).

It can be anticipated that the ability to plan in detail with certainty will not occur uniformly for the whole plan area. It is likely that efforts will be concentrated on bedding down the detail in those areas that are likely to develop in the next 10 - 20 years. The areas on the periphery of the plan may only be resolved with certainty further into the future.

It is therefore essential that the Development Plan phase of planning for the Structure Plan area be the basis for rezoning of land. This is a process that can commence immediately, but ultimately can only be completed when the essential information from agencies and Council is confirmed and available.

This is an appropriate process for progressing greenfields development. It also enables the land developer to influence the outcome through more detailed design but also seek additional information to respond to in detailed planning.

The Local Structure Plan establishes a framework for more detailed infrastructure and service planning. This in turn will inform the preparation of more detailed Development Plans at neighbourhood level. Development Plans will incorporate new and changing standards of infrastructure provision relevant to the time of their preparation and approval.

Development Plans should be the basis for a rezoning and the implementation of a Development Plan Overlay. Effectively, a Draft Development Plan should inform the rezoning amendment which I expect would also introduce a Development Plan Overlay concurrently.

Upon rezoning, the planning permit applications can be considered for subdivision and urban development.

6 Conclusion

Clearly the plan exists to inform future planning at a more detailed level. Much of the plans content informs more detailed issues specific planning such as hydraulic services, recreational and open space planning, etc. It therefore functions as an umbrella document for more detailed planning at all levels.

The plan needs to be recognised by the planning scheme and flexibility applied to its interpretation. The incorporation of the plan into the planning scheme would be inappropriate. The plan clearly functions as a basis for future planning as much as it is a direction for planning. An incorporated document requires a degree of rigor that affectively infers its application as a form of regulation. That is not the intention of the Local Structure Plan.

The most appropriate mechanism for implementation is to have the plan recognised by the planning scheme and the key principles and direction for its application addressed as part of that planning scheme recognition.

Such an approach has the effect of giving the Structure Plan the relevant level of planning scheme recognition to ensure its use or reference to areas where policy is being developed and formulating more detailed Plans. This also gives the LSP a degree of longevity through such flexibility.

As the plan recognises the need for policy development and more detailed planning, its status as a reference document enables such additional work to be added to the Structure Plan as a source of information when Development Plans are being prepared. The relevancy of the document remains for a longer period into the anticipated life.

This does not mean that the plan will not need regular review; such review need only occur over an extended period of time (of say every 10 years) rather than regular modification in response to policy change.

The plans' "function" as effectively a Growth Area Plan for Ballarat is maintained.

Greg Wood
Principal
Tract Consultants Pty Ltd

Greg Wood

Principal, Tract Consultants

Education

Bachelor of Arts (Urban Studies), Victoria University of Technology

Diploma, Frontline Management, Chisholm Institute

Membership

Victorian Planning and Environmental law association

Employment

2005 – present	Tract consultants
1993 – 2005	Wyndham City Council
1987 – 1983	Whittlesea City Council
1985 – 1987	City of St Kilda

Experience

Greg is a town planner with almost 20 years experience in statutory and strategic planning. Whilst experiences predominantly in local government it encompasses wide range of expertise including inner metropolitan planning (including heritage planning) and the last four years at Wyndham as Manager Strategy and Tourism.

Concentrating primarily on strategic land use planning since the early 1990's, Greg has developed experience in Greenfields Urban Planning, New Town Development and Rural Land Use Planning. This extends to policy development, strategic plan development, planning Scheme amendments and whole of project management through to implementation. Greg's extensive experience in local government has enabled him to implement on the ground, policy that he has been involved in developing giving a unique insight into effective planning for implementation.

Greg has particular experience in preparation and implementation of development contribution plans having developed Wyndham's policy in the mid 1990's, implementing the scheme including developing management mechanisms, monitoring development contributions income and expenditure and assisting in overseeing the expenditure on infrastructure development. Greg was invited to and participated in an advisory committee informing the recent State Government review of development contribution legislation.

Projects

- Whittlesea Township Local Structure Plan (1992)
- Concept plans for the three growth fronts in the Werribee Growth Area Plan (1995)
- Wyndham city Council Framework Policy Development Contributions (1996)
- Wyndham City Council Community Centre Policy (1999)
- Point Cook Local Structure Plan (2000)
- Werribee South Coastal Preserve Management Plan (including boat shed precinct policy and licensing system) (2003)
- Ballarat West Local Structure Plan (2005)
- Werribee South Green Wedge Management Plan (draft) (2005)
- Numerous rezonings and planning scheme amendments including:
 - > Eynesbury Station
 - > Manor Lakes and
 - > Tarneit Retail Centre Rezonings
 - > Former Laverton RAAF Comprehensive Development Zone