02.03 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

11/03/2022
C256gben

02.03-1 Settlement

28/05/2026
C270gben

Greater Bendigo has experienced strong population growth. This growth is supported by State Government strategies and is forecast to continue.

The population is projected to increase by over 2000 per year over the next 20 years. An additional 1000 new dwellings per year will be required to accommodate this growth.

About 85 per cent of the population lives within the Bendigo Urban Growth Boundary, which is about 5 per cent of the total municipal area. The remaining 15 per cent of the population lives within rural townships and areas.

Within the urban area and around rural townships, the council promotes the development of 10 minute neighbourhoods.

Settlement in Bendigo is structured around a hierarchy of activity centres within the Bendigo Urban Growth Boundary, shown on the Urban strategic framework plan in Clause 02.04, and identified rural townships. There are a number of other smaller rural townships dispersed throughout the municipality.

The strategic directions for settlement are:

- Avoid development in bushfire and flood prone areas, unless risk can be managed.
- Protect agricultural land and high value environmental areas from development.
- Contain most of Greater Bendigo’s growth within the Bendigo Urban Growth Boundary.
- Facilitate 10 minute neighbourhoods that:
  - Enable people to spend less income on the combined cost of housing and transport.
  - Minimise environmental impacts associated with transport.
  - Promote a healthy lifestyle through active transport choices.
  - Increase neighbourhood safety through activation of the public realm.
  - Increase community interaction.
  - Support the local economy.
- Focus residential and commercial development outside the Bendigo Urban Growth Boundary in rural townships that are well serviced by infrastructure as shown on Rural strategic framework plan in Clause 02.04.
- Develop Marong as a satellite settlement in Bendigo's hinterland with a population of approximately 8,000 built around a large activity centre that protects significant vegetation and retains a semi-rural character.
- Protect forest values by providing a buffer between urban development and the public and private forests.
- Support development of the identified hierarchy of activity centres within the Bendigo Urban Growth Boundary shown on the Urban area activity centre hierarchy framework plan in Clause 02.04.
- Discourage rezoning proposals of land for urban purposes outside the urban growth boundary unless in an area marked future urban investigation area on the Urban strategic framework plan in Clause 02.04.

- Promote Bendigo City Centre as the highest order retail and commercial centre servicing northern and central Victoria recognising it is Greater Bendigo's primary employment area, providing a full range of higher order commercial, retail, visitor, social, civic, cultural, tourist and entertainment activities.
- Facilitate the urban renewal of underutilised land in Golden Square to create employment opportunities and new and diverse infill housing.
- Build up the specialised activity centres of La Trobe University, Bendigo Hospital, St John of God Hospital and Bendigo Airport.
- Support rehabilitation of former mining land for development, including residential development.

02.03-2 Environment and landscape values

11/03/2022
C256gben

The key environment and landscape values for Greater Bendigo are:

- Biodiversity.
- Native vegetation.
- Waterbodies.
- Significant landscapes.

Environment and landscape features in Greater Bendigo include:

- Extensive Box Ironbark and Whipstick forest areas across Greater Bendigo in national, state and regional parks and other conservation reserves.
- Tracts of privately owned-forested land that adjoin and link parks and conservation reserves.
- Areas of native vegetation on roadsides, waterways and gullies that create habitat and wildlife corridors surrounding Bendigo.
- Large old trees and an undisturbed ground layer.
- Distinctive fauna including birds, mammals, reptiles, frogs and invertebrates including the Swift Parrot, Grey-crowned Babbler and the Brush-tailed Phascogale.
- The Loddon and Campaspe River catchments that are part of the Murray-Darling basin catchment, Australia's largest and most productive agricultural area. This area is increasingly subject to a range of environmental pressures that impact on social and economic activities.
- The many streams and watercourses across the municipality that maintain clean water, soil stability, and habitat flora and fauna, and that feed Greater Bendigo's water supply sources.
- Lake Eppalock is a vital environmental resource and also provides an increasing proportion of Bendigo's domestic water supply.
- Groundwater recharge areas across the municipality, which are an important source of water that requires careful management.

The strategic directions for environment and landscape values are:

- Enhance the sense of the Bendigo urban area being 'A City in Forest' that is created by extensive forest areas and roadside vegetation.
- Develop biolinks and habitat corridors to connect areas of environmental significance.
- Protect and restore biodiversity and create new natural habitats.
- Improve the health of streams and watercourses and land adjacent to develop their role as important community assets.

- Protect gullies as an important part of the waterway network in providing habitat for flora and fauna.
- Protect significant landscapes such as Big Hill, Mount Camel Range and Coliban and Campaspe Rivers.

02.03-3 Environmental risks and amenity

06/06/2024
C242gben

The key environmental risks for Greater Bendigo are:

- Climate change.
- Bushfire.
- Flooding.
- Soil degradation.
- Land use compatibility.

Natural environmental risks

Greater Bendigo has committed to reaching net zero emissions by 2050, to contribute towards keeping global temperature rise to under two degrees Celsius. Responding to climate change includes:

- Taking a precautionary approach to managing climate change risks.
- Responding rapidly to enable climate change impacts to be minimised.
- Adapting to climate change that is already occurring.

Having a valuable network of public and private forests throughout the municipality also means that most of the municipality is bushfire prone. The extent of rural living uses throughout the rural areas and on the edges of the urban areas increases this vulnerability.

Bendigo Creek and its tributaries, and the McIvor Creek in Heathcote, have a long history of flooding that has historically caused damage to infrastructure and buildings. Some flooding is the result of old drainage systems that do not have sufficient capacity during large storm events, which are increasing in frequency.

Many of the soils in the municipality, particularly the granite and sedimentary slopes, are prone to erosion and salinity and need to be carefully managed.

Former mine sites have left a legacy of contaminated land across Bendigo. It is a challenge to remediate this land to be suitable for other uses, particularly residential development.

The strategic directions for natural environmental risks are:

- Contribute towards keeping global temperature rise to under two degrees Celsius by efficient use of land and other resources, reducing dependency on fossil fuels and supporting environmentally sustainable development.
- Respond to impacts of climate change on agricultural and urban areas through flexible application of planning tools and policies as change occurs.
- Strengthen the resilience of settlements and communities to bushfire through risk-based planning that prioritises the protection of human life.
- Manage flooding risks that have the potential to cause harm to people and property and damage environmental values.
- Reduce erosion causing activities and support development that improves soil quality and condition on agricultural and rural land.
- Minimise processes that contribute to salinity which occurs across the whole municipality.
- Ensure new development manages the risks from legacy mining contamination.

Land use compatibility

The interface between urban development and forested areas, waste and resource recovery infrastructure and active gold mines in the municipality needs to be managed to safeguard community amenity, protect forest values and support key services and industries. Landfill gas

and amenity buffers have been applied to the Eaglehawk Landfill and Transfer Station, which is a state waste and recovery hub, to manage the interface. There is further work to do in putting in place explicit buffers to manage other interfaces.

Licensed venues can have considerable social impact on communities and the amenity of areas surrounding venues and need to be appropriately managed. Problem gambling affects a small proportion of gamblers. By locating gaming venues appropriately, the incidence of "convenience gaming" should decrease.

The strategic directions for land use compatibility are:

- Manage the interface between urban development and incompatible uses including waste and resource recovery infrastructure, gold mines and other uses with off-site amenity impacts to support land use compatibility.
- Minimise land use compatibility issues through separating waste and resource recovery infrastructure, gold mines, and other uses with off-site amenity impacts.
- Protect critical infrastructure from incompatible adjoining uses.
- Direct licenced venues and gaming facilities to locations that minimise their impact on the amenity of surrounding areas and the wellbeing of community members affected by problem drinking and gambling.

02.03-4 Natural resource management

11/03/2022
C256gben

The key natural resource management issues for Greater Bendigo are:

- The protection of agricultural land and sustainable agricultural land use.
- Protection of water assets.
- Resource exploration and extraction.

Greater Bendigo's rural areas support a diverse agricultural base, which has traditionally been based on grazing in the southern areas of the municipality and mixed grazing and cropping in the northern half. The most productive agricultural land in the municipality is in the Campaspe River, Axe Creek, Bendigo Creek, and Bullock Creek areas. Rural Bendigo generates nearly $200 million of agricultural product each year.

Investment in grape production over the last three decades, particularly in the Heathcote region, has consolidated Greater Bendigo as a major wine region. Many other niche farming activities, especially associated with paddock to plate enterprise, have developed in recent years and are supported as a growth area.

There is continued growth in more intensive animal production such as poultry and pigs. Growth is also occurring in agricultural businesses that rely on irrigation and animal keeping and animal training facilities (including stables).

Major agricultural processing plants to the west of urban Bendigo and in Castlemaine (in the neighbouring Mount Alexander Shire) form a cluster of intensive rural industry and associated manufacturing.

There are areas where agricultural activities are potentially compromised by a fragmented subdivision pattern and isolated dwellings in rural areas have the potential to disrupt agricultural activities. Ongoing agricultural production depends, in part, upon maintaining a mass of productive land, which excludes concentrations of residential type uses that have the potential to restrict normal agricultural practices.

There are significant groundwater assets across the municipality. Both surface and groundwater require protection from high nutrient loads and from the impacts of dry land salinity and erosion.

Securing long term water supplies for the towns is key for future growth and development.

Mining is still a major industry for Greater Bendigo, with the current expansion of goldmines at Fosterville and Costerfield, and for this to be ongoing, these resources need to be protected from incompatible land uses. It is also critical that these industries are developed in an environmentally and socially responsible way.

The protection of future extractive resources, particularly potential clay and stone resources is significant to local industry. Potential sites need to be managed to protect their use, and to prevent pressures from other land uses, including residential development.

The strategic directions for natural resource management are:

- Protect agricultural land as a valuable and finite resource from fragmentation and encroachment by competing uses.
- Support the sustainable growth of agriculture by:
  - Assisting the sector to adapt to the impacts of climate change.
  - Continuing to invest in infrastructure, processing and value adding businesses.
  - Protecting from incompatible uses.
  - Broadening the range of agricultural businesses.
- Avoid subdivision of agricultural land to maintain it as a food and fibre resource to meet population growth demand.
- Manage competing land uses in order to facilitate the growth of agricultural uses while maintaining the amenity of more sensitive uses, particularly in the areas of a concentration of intensive animal industries as shown in the Rural strategic framework plan in Clause 02.04.
- Protect and restore the Lake Eppalock Special Water Supply Catchment, as shown in the Rural strategic framework plan in Clause 02.04, from urban encroachment and support innovation to ensure long term water supplies are secure.
- Protect existing and potential sites to enable resource exploration and extraction.

02.03-5 Built environment and heritage

11/03/2022
C256gben

The key built environment and heritage issues for Greater Bendigo are:

- Creating healthy environments.
- Protecting neighbourhood character and heritage assets while encouraging infill development.
- Supporting environmentally sustainable development.

Built environment

Greater Bendigo has one of Australia's highest obesity rates and lowest levels of regular participation in active recreation. In many parts of Greater Bendigo, the built environment does not encourage active lifestyles due to a lack of well-connected walking and cycling paths and the provision of neighbourhood services.

Many residents of Greater Bendigo highly value the existing neighbourhood character. Balancing the creation of a healthier city through more dense development with the desire to protect existing neighbourhood character is a key challenge for the council.

Council is committed to environmentally sustainable development and its principles, that aim to improve the health, comfort and affordability of buildings for occupants and reduce negative impacts on the environment. This includes energy conservation, water conservation, protecting human health, and protecting and enhancing the built, natural and cultural environments.

The strategic directions for built environment are:

- Balance the protection of neighbourhood character with the development of a more environmentally sustainable urban area based upon the principles of 10 minute neighbourhoods.
- Facilitate a built environment that allows for active transport and healthy lifestyle choices.
- Facilitate environmentally sustainable development to create a compact and sustainable urban form at the planning stage.
- Facilitate a safe, pleasant, comfortable and visually appealing urban environment.

Heritage

Greater Bendigo is set apart due to its extensive Victorian and Edwardian era heritage places - a legacy of its wealthy gold mining history. The municipality has many buildings, structures, archaeological sites, gardens and vegetation with international, state and local heritage significance, reflecting the major role Bendigo played in one of the biggest gold rushes and migrations in the world.

Further work is required to fully identify and protect some places of post contact heritage significance.

Important Aboriginal cultural heritage values exist in the City of Greater Bendigo. Further work is required to properly identify and protect these features and values in the planning scheme.

The strategic directions for heritage are:

- Protect the city's valuable sites, places and features of natural, archaeological, and cultural heritage significance.
- Balance the protection of heritage places with support for sensitive and innovative development to accommodate projected population growth.
- Support high quality sympathetic contemporary design when undertaking new development in heritage precincts and places.
- Encourage the restoration of heritage places and sympathetic development to support contemporary uses of heritage buildings.
- Protect sites of heritage and cultural significance to the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung people.

02.03-6 Housing

11/03/2022
C256gben

The key housing issues for Greater Bendigo are:

- The location of residential development.
- Housing diversity.
- Housing affordability.
- The management of rural residential development.

Greater Bendigo offers a wide range of housing options with its compact urban centre, well established suburbs, greenfield development areas, large and small rural townships, rural living in the township hinterlands, and more remote dwellings that support agricultural use on Farming Zone land.

There is currently a mismatch between household structure and the type of dwellings available and being built. The Australian Bureau of Statistics Census indicates that one and two person households make up more than half of all households, however, the current stock of housing is dominated by large family houses and in recent years almost all new houses have had three or more bedrooms. This is contributing to both housing affordability issues and unnecessary use of resources by limiting the offer of small dwellings.

Rural residential development requires careful management in Greater Bendigo in order to avoid the loss of agricultural land, adverse impacts on the biodiversity values, isolation of people from services and costs and poor standards of infrastructure such as roads and drainage. There is a large supply of land zoned Rural Living Zone in the Strathfieldsaye and Heathcote areas which provides opportunities for rural residential development for many years.

The strategic directions for housing are:

- Facilitate a wide diversity of housing typologies to suit all household types, needs and incomes and make best use of land and environmental resources.
- Increase the residential population of Bendigo City Centre and its immediate surrounds to create a more dynamic area, maximise the use of existing infrastructure and provide different housing choices for people.
- Avoid rezoning of additional land to Rural Living Zone while there is an adequate supply of rural living land around the south east side of Bendigo and near Heathcote.

02.03-7 Economic development

06/10/2026
C296gben

Greater Bendigo has the highest annual growth rate in gross regional product among Victoria's major regional cities, and the city's economy has outperformed the rest of Victoria in several key sectors. Bendigo is the key regional city and economic growth hub for the Loddon Mallee South Region.

As well as its significant retail and industrial base, other important elements of the economy include tourism, education, finance, agriculture, and earth and energy resources industries (mining). In recent years Bendigo has become a hub for many non-retail anchors including health facilities, tertiary education, regional sporting facilities, and arts and cultural facilities.

Significant demand for commercial floor space is expected until 2035. Where this should be located has been identified on the Urban strategic framework plan, Rural strategic framework plan and Urban area activity centre hierarchy plan in Clause 02.04.

Industry is a major employer in Greater Bendigo and the wide range of industries and businesses that make up the industrial sector provide a significant contribution to the local and regional economy. The Bendigo Livestock Exchange also plays an important role in supporting the agricultural sector regionally.

Existing industrial areas are dispersed and fragmented across the Bendigo urban area, often adjoining incompatible land uses. There is an increasing shortage of well-located industrial land with a range of suitable lot sizes to meet the forecasted demands of existing and emerging industries. In contrast to other large regional Victorian cities such as Ballarat and Geelong, Bendigo lacks a large, dedicated business park.

Greater Bendigo is an important visitor destination in the centre of Victoria's Goldfields region, recognised for its significant heritage value, as a City of Gastronomy, its contemporary and cultural offerings and as Victoria's regional events capital. Greater Bendigo's tourism industry is supported by a mild climate, heritage buildings, parks and gardens, impressive streetscapes, well established wineries and national, state and regional parks.

The Bendigo Library, the Bendigo Art Gallery, Ulumbarra Theatre, and the major performing arts venue The Capital Theatre provide Bendigo with non-retail anchors that are driving visitation and contributing to the lifestyle and opportunities that are available to residents and visitors alike.

The strategic directions for economic development are:

- Direct commercial growth to activity centres.
- Provide an adequate supply of suitably located industrial land to meet the forecasted demands of industry and to improve the regional competitiveness of Greater Bendigo.

- Retain and redevelop land in the existing industrial areas to meet industry needs in the short term.
- Improve the function, design and amenity of new and existing industrial areas.
- Direct industrial growth to appropriately zoned land, with the Bendigo Regional Employment Precinct as the preferred location for large or intensive industries with potential for adverse off-site amenity impacts, where it can be demonstrated that the amenity of future residential precincts can be protected.

02.03-8 Transport

11/03/2022
C256gben

Greater Bendigo is a significant transport and freight hub with well-developed road and public transport networks linking Bendigo with Melbourne and large regional towns in central and northern Victoria. Bendigo Airport, which has recently been upgraded to accommodate Qantas flights, is an important infrastructure asset for the region.

Major transport infrastructure investments in recent years include the duplication of the Calder Highway to Melbourne, and enhancements to the Bendigo railway line. The Bendigo Metro Rail is currently being developed and will reinforce the role of Bendigo as a major public transport hub.

An ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ box road network provides a system of road bypasses of the inner urban area of Bendigo, allowing vehicles to pass through the urban area with greater safety and efficiency.

As Greater Bendigo grows, an outer arterial distributor road may be required.

Most people in Greater Bendigo are car dependent with most households having two or more motor vehicles, and only a very small proportion of journeys to work by walking, cycling, or public transport. If the current pattern of car use continues, traffic volumes are likely to grow by up to 50 per cent by 2035.

Bendigo is an active ‘hub’ for freight activity. As Bendigo becomes an even more important economic centre of regional Victoria, it will further develop as the origin and destination for many freight movements.

More work is required to understand the freight industry, how it is using the road network, and potentially the rail network and how its efficiencies and productivity could be improved.

The strategic directions for transport are:

- Maximise access to goods, services and facilities for all people throughout the municipality by supporting a compact Greater Bendigo and 10 minute neighbourhoods.
- Move away from private motor vehicles as the dominant form of transport and prioritising active transport.
- Improve connections between walking and cycling paths, open spaces, activity centres and the city centre to enable safer and more comfortable travel through the municipality by walking or cycling.
- Support improved public transport to encourage greater use:
  - Within the urban growth boundary.
  - Between Melbourne, Echuca, and Swan Hill.
  - Connecting rural towns and communities.
- Support the expansion of Bendigo Metro Rail including new railway stations at Huntly, Lansell Square, Maiden Gully and Marong, and the reopening of the Golden Square railway station.
- Optimise the performance of the road network by shifting from providing for the movement of the maximum number of vehicles to providing for the movement of the maximum number of people and goods.

02.03-9 Infrastructure

11/03/2022
C256gben

Community infrastructure

The timely and coordinated development of the municipality's physical and social infrastructure networks is essential to manage population growth and to foster economic development and community wellbeing.

The education sector has grown in the municipality with recent expansions to La Trobe University, Monash University, TAFE and primary and secondary schools. Education is an important driver for the economy by attracting students and new residents and skilling the younger generations to support the economy into the future.

Within Greater Bendigo there are high quality community and arts facilities available, particularly in the Bendigo City Centre, such as the View Street Precinct and the Dai Gum Precinct. There is a demand for the range of creative and cultural industry, community arts and multicultural spaces to be expanded to cater for a wider cross section of the community, including local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, culturally and linguistically diverse people, rural communities and creative and cultural industry professionals.

Recreation and sporting facilities and activities are pursued at a wide range of venues including the Queen Elizabeth Oval, Bendigo Race course, Faith Leech Aquatic Centre, Lake Eppalock, Lake Weeroona, and various tennis courts, swimming pools and golf courses. It is important that recreational uses be developed to continue to serve residents well and to attract major regional and state events.

The strategic directions for community infrastructure are:

- Strengthen the availability and variety of educational, social, cultural and health infrastructure and promote an equitable distribution of facilities across the municipality.
- Facilitate opportunities for community gathering and social interaction.
- Provide opportunities for local community building by locating community infrastructure services in small towns where possible and feasible.

Open space

Twenty three per cent of the land in the municipality is open space reserve, either under Crown or council ownership, as shown on the Urban strategic framework plan and the Rural strategic framework plan in Clause 02.04. Bushland trails, such as the O'Keefe, Bendigo and Great Dividing trails, provide important linkages between these open spaces, for human access as well as wildlife corridors. Other public open spaces not identified on these plans remain important and have a current or longer term role or purpose as public open space.

Watercourse reserves, particularly along the Coliban and Campaspe Rivers, provide access for fishing and passive recreation. A major water resource is Lake Eppalock, which provides for active and passive recreation. The lake may have potential for greater recreational activity in the long term if it can be demonstrated it will not impact on urban water supply quality.

The strategic directions for open space are:

- Retain the existing amount of public space, but strategically consolidate it to improve its quality and achieve a network of public open space links between key destinations like schools and activity centres and open spaces.
- Support the various functions and values of the public space network, including space for natural areas and wildlife, biodiversity, managing water quality, active recreation and transport, cultural heritage and indigenous connections.
- Design public spaces to mitigate climate change impacts, including providing more trees and shade.

- Support recreational activities at Lake Eppalock where it can be demonstrated that water quality will not be negatively impacted.
- Maintain the special significance of the city's major urban area parklands shown on the Urban strategic framework plan and the Rural strategic framework plan in Clause 02.04.
  - Rosalind Park.
  - Lake Weeroona.
  - Bendigo Botanic Gardens White Hills.
  - Canterbury Gardens, Lake Neangar and Lake Tom Thumb.
  - Strathdale Park and Kennington Reservoir.
  - Crusoe Reservoir and No. 7 Reservoir.

Development infrastructure

Greater Bendigo works in partnership with multiple infrastructure providers of power, gas, water, sewerage, phone, internet, waste and resource recovery and road to upgrade or provide new infrastructure in line with the further development of the municipality.

Innovative approaches to infrastructure delivery are increasingly being implemented in Greater Bendigo, such as implementation of urban water systems that are multifunctional and provide a range of benefits that deliver the Greater Bendigo community's ecological, liveability and resource efficiency aspirations.

Greater Bendigo has over 10,000 households that manage domestic wastewater onsite as reticulated sewerage is not available. It is important to manage wastewater disposal on unsewered land sustainably and with minimal environmental impact.

The strategic directions for development infrastructure are:

- Provide timely, efficient and cost-effective development infrastructure that meets the needs of the community.
- Manage water supply, water resources, wastewater, drainage and stormwater sustainably through an integrated water management approach.
- Incorporate water sensitive urban design into residential and commercial development.
- Prepare development contribution plans for new growth areas.