

28th September 2007

David Klingberg
Director
DLA

Dear David

RE: Shepparton Housing Strategy – Technical Workshop Notes (DRAFT)


Please find attached a draft set of notes, comments, workshop evaluation comments for the Technical Workshops we recently held for the Housing Strategy for Greater Shepparton.

The following notes are a combination of direct transcripts from working sheets drafted by the participants and notes taken on whiteboards during group discussions. Additional comments have been added to clarify the points.

Vanessa over the next couple of days, our Vanessa Peters will finalise these notes and issue these to you. We will now prepare for the Focus Groups and will talk with you soon about the key themes you would like explored.

Yours sincerely,

Capire Consulting Group Pty Ltd



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WORKSHOP # 1: DEVELOPER INDUSTRIAL SECTOR FORUM

4pm -6.30 pm, Wednesday 26th September 2007

Attendees

- Kathleen McB...COGS
- Greg Hughes COGS
- Ron Mildren – LSD
- Pat Long – Settlers Shepparton
- Ally Lonse – Kevin Hicks Real Estate
- Rocky Gagliach – Kevin Hicks Real Estate
- Ray Dobson – Ray Dobson Real Estate
- Geoff Keap – Ray Dobson Real Estate
- Donna Clarke – Settlers Shepparton
- Mick Toll – LMS (Shepparton) Pty Ltd
- Gary Steinberger – Chris Smith & Associates
- Les Young – Young and Co
- Helen Sheedy – Rossignole / REIV
- Frank Dawson, Dawson Planing Services
- Ken Nomara – Settlers Shepparton
- Kerryn Mountain – Kevin Hicks
- Alan Rosignol – Rosignol Real Estate
- Sam Sali – S.Sali and Sons
- Tony Onley – Onley Consulting
- Andrew Noren – Chris Smith & Associates
- Chris Robinson – Capire Consulting Group (Facilitator)
- Vanessa Peters - Capire Consulting Group

Location / Venue

The Shepparton Club

General Issues Raised through our group discussion.

- Zoning anomalies are historical and need fixing e.g. orchards located next to development sites;
- There has been a peace-meal approach to re-zoning and has been often inappropriate;
- Housing development is continuing along-side the issue of irrigation rationalisation and review;
- Will this project be integrated with the current rural review strategy? – there needs to be careful integration across both strategies;
- The study needs to resolve questions like what, and why is the Rural Living zone doing within the Urban Growth Boundary? It appears to be serving the function of a “holding zone” until a more appropriate urban zone might be introduced;
- Clear direction is required within the strategy for the application and use of the Rural Living Zone;

- Will this study explore and test the boundaries and principles set in Shepparton 2030?;
- Seniors Living needs to be included in consideration of the Strategy – but what will be the most appropriate tools to use? Should we nominate specific sites with better location attributes or should consider general application in all residential areas and leave it to the market;
- Overall population growth in rural regions needs to be integrated into servicing planning and strategies by agencies like Dept of Education, VicRoads;
- Can we as a society really afford the amount and servicing the amount of Rural Living lots? – water, Servicing costs etc;
- There is a strong level of demand for rural living lots, but we need to have dedicated areas for lots between 0.4 – 2.5 ha;
- The strategy should consider dividing rural living consideration into two main segments (i) Rural Living (ii) Low Density, as there are clear demarcations in their needs and markets;
- We need to carefully consider the physical limits and constraints to development such as flooding, infrastructure, sewer etc; therefore this will drive the overall densities locations and type of housing;
- Council decision making has been ad-hoc to date;
- The strategy must not forget the smaller towns and how these must and will contribute to housing issues;
- Industrial land will need to be included as a matter for consideration;
- The use of the freeway alignment as the definitive edge to urban boundaries will not capitalise on the land use opportunities arising on the “other side” – the 2030 strategy did not adequately cover this;
- Medium Density (MD) housing and higher density developments need to be included in the overall strategy – has MD really been delivered as it should;
- The selected locations of MD has often not made best use access to services, shopping, recreation and transport options;
- The market is seeking genuine medium and higher density products, but the developers seem not willing to provide;
- MD examples such as Tower Hill (VicUrban) in Swan Hill and in Albury are good examples where it is possible;
- Affordability is critical and will be advanced if we ensure that there is sufficient supply of serviceable land;
- How will rental accommodation be treated in the strategy?.
- Brownfield sites need to be actively considered for the location of medium density development;
- The housing products on offer in Shepparton is resulting in a lot of “empty bedrooms” - bigger houses are not necessarily better;
- We should not leave it only up to the planners – the market must drive the solution;
- Shepparton is in competition with other cities for migrants and money;
- Flooding and changes to the hydrological processes are starting to impact on the development opportunities;
- Migrant communities tend to keep to isolated / preferred and existing areas of 20-30 year old dwelling stock – such accommodation can be up to 50% cheaper than new estates;
- Accommodation needs for migrant communities has not appeared to make it into the property (purchaser) market;

- Heritage is emerging as an increasing issue;
- ESD / Sustainability do has good opportunities for implementation within Shepparton. Big questions still exist around how far we will be able to push the requirements as this will add costs to subdivision;
- Heath issues and Health officers still do not seem to be support innovation in water treatment;
- Stormwater is now a requirement of the planning schemes, however there does not seem to be a requirement for designers to include water harvesting and capture – can the Housing Strategy do this?
- GVW appear to be a barrier to the adoption of on-site treatment of waste water and innovative neighbourhood based techniques – land capability will probably still drive the issue;
- Technology does now exist to allow on-site treatment, by GVW seem unwilling to consider it;
- There remains a long lead time between the big planning level (2030), the housing strategy, the PSA and finally the release of land;
- Council needs to provide more resources to the planning department so that staff can consider the issues and applications;
- There are rapid changes to Shepparton's demographics and family types – single and smaller families are increasingly important;

The main topics for detailed consideration by the workshop included:

- 1.Zoning anomalies
- 2.Rural Living and Low Density
- 3.Affordability and medium density
- 4.Flooding, drainage and services

Specific Recommendations and comments on these issues included:

(i) Zoning Anomalies

- Council and Consultants could fix 90% of the current anomalies in the PS with a concerted effort - Includes farm zone land that should be in RL, LDR, RLS;
- Floodway properties - Mooroopna, Shepparton, Tatura need attention to allow future redevelopment as the infrastructure is in place, so higher density should be allowed;
- The current policy “clings” to keenly to the right to farm – sensitive uses adjacent to orchards;
- Need to tidy up inappropriate lots that remain in FZ;
- Investigate application of Rural Activity Zone for long term future residential. RLZ is inappropriate for future Res;
- Competing policy in various agencies (i) CVW (ii) Health
- Inability to explore innovation and utilisation of new technologies w.r.t stormwater treatment on-site effluent disposal;
- We need a Regional Planning Authority – as current state planning to too Melbourne Metro centric

2. Rural Living and Low Density

- The Housing Strategy should provide clear direction for both traditional residential growth (the corridors) and rural living;
- Current approach is to have RLZ as part of growth corridors. The effect of this is that the RLZ supply is dominated by a high degree of perceived supply – not actual supply.
- Low density should provide for fully serviced lots at less than 0.4 ha (target 0.2ha)
- The Strategy needs to identify areas around Shepparton, Mooroopna and Tatura for genuine RL Zones: South East and North West and LDR around smaller townships with schools.
- Leave North South for residential extension

3. Affordability and medium density

- There is a need to curb the markets perception of different housing options – too much focus on detached house on an 800m² plus site;
- Promote opportunities for urban renewal – particularly for former (housing) ministry estates;
- Council (and others) need to secure larger sites for meaningful development;
- Greater accountability for ESD on home owner is required. Better coordination between (land) urban designers and home designers / retailers;
- There is a need for MD to maximise utilisation of existing infrastructure (shops, services etc) close to town centres;
- Innovative design needs to be incorporated into MD developments;
- Mixed development including residential top / commercial and retail bottom needs to be promoted and supported; and
- Detached housing is being sold by large companies.

4. Flooding, drainage and services

- We need to review all the flood overlays and land subject to inundation – 1:100 year flood events are too high – there is not the justification, give that sufficient warnings exist to protect human health;
- Drainage dictated by GMW – rural runoff rates – 1:100 year storm event needs to be re-considered;
- Services and service providers, eg Council (Roads, drains, public transport) GVW sewer – we need to really consider recycling of treated waste water back into Shepparton, Mooroopna, Tatura.

Additional comments made during break out discussions:

ESD / Sustainability

- Promote greywater
- Rainwater collection – 30% of domestic water use is toilet flushing!
- Plumb it in – get serious, and make it mandatory
- Council and other architects should establish a sustainable house – as an example of on the ground – Greater Bendigo have done this

Flood Strategy Implications

- “Town planning should liaise with the catchment management authority in implementing schemes whereby if a particular lot or area of land is below a flood level, a permit can be granted for development subject to a criteria for the developer or future owner that they will indemnify Council and public authority against any litigation and the like, should the occasion arise”.
- “Planning schemes – Thought must be given that residential areas will not be encroached by future industrial areas”
- “Provision to be made in future town planning for public utilities – ie schools, sporting fields etc”
- “There are vacant blocks in the central residential areas of Mooropnah where permits have been refused for duplex configuration because of the land being subject to inundation!”

Workshop # 1 : Evaluation

Participants were invited complete an evaluation form at the end of the workshop. A summary is presented below.

Poor	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Quality of information: How well did we describe what we needed to?				
0	0	0	7	2
Use of time: How well did we use our time?				
0	0	0	8	1
Participation: How well did we do on making sure everyone was involved?				
0	0	0	5	4
Decision Making: How well thought-out were our decisions?				
0	0	1	7	0
Facilitation: How well was the workshop managed?				
0	0	0	6	3
Organisation: How well was the workshop run?				
0	0	0	5	4

General Comments (Direct Quotes)

- *Allowed plenty of time for participants to express opinions – Mick Tolf*
- *This session was information seeking rather than decision making. That will come later. – Alan Rossignol*
- *Could have had some planning maps available. You possibly should have invited major developers to get their points of views. (anonymous) [Note: Council organised all invites, and were extended to major developers]*
- *Was most interesting and look forward to more. The facilitator was very good. – Helen Sheedy*

WORKSHOP # 2: PHYSICAL SERVICES / INFRASTRUCTURE

10am – 12.00 am, Thursday 27th September 2007

Attendees

- Kathleen McB...- COGS
- Greg Hughes - COGS
- Colin James – Goulburn Murray Water
- Steven Nash – Goulburn Valley Water
- David Hedley – Powercorp
- Leeanne Higgins – COGS
- John..... – COGS
- Chris Robinson – Capire Consulting Group (Facilitator)
- Vanessa Peters - Capire Consulting Group

Location / Venue

The Shepparton Club

General Issues Raised through our group discussion

- The GHD team has made many technical requests to GVW – we need to be careful with the amount of data requests;
- A key issue broadly is addressing how irrigation infrastructure can, and should, pay for itself;
- GMW is currently reviewing all irrigation services, with particular reference to existing irrigation channels that are in close proximity to potential or existing residential areas – there is a real need to integrate this review into the Housing Strategy;
- GVW is also undertaking a Serving Strategy that will look into the future designation of water and sewer districts and will define the boundaries of service. This process is running a bit behind for Shepparton, but is expected to be completed in around 6 months. Tatura has been finalised;
- GVW would prefer that they did not have to use implementation tools like S.173 agreements or Clause 17.2 (c) provisions for the delivery of water services, as they would prefer developers to deliver the infrastructure in a timely manner; and
- GMW is currently investigating how they can link the existing or proposed land use zones (planning scheme) to the service charges, the delivery of infrastructure and the sources of water. Future investment in water assets must be targeted to areas best suited and have regard to the extent of the existing network.

Development staging and costs

- Development on the fringes of urban areas is increasingly complex and inefficient. As land is generally in separate ownerships, there does not appear to be coordination between owners as to the sequencing and timing of development and release – the first developer often has to pay for the upfront capital costs of the whole network, and following developers can actually connect onto the system at virtually no cost.

- If the distribution asset is greater than 150mm (water) or 225 mm (sewer), GVW will contribute the costs. If extra depth is required for network reasons, GVW will contribute again;
- Very few developers are working together to share costs and resolve this – there are a few commercial examples (Shepparton Business Park) but very few residential;
- How can Council and the Strategy encourage / ensure that fringe development is order and efficient; that developers integrate their developments and share costs?;
- The “policy settings” via the Essential Services Commission are still very Melbourne centric and not as appropriate to rural environments;
- Under ESC rules “Headworks” charges have reduced from \$2,000 / lot to \$500. GVW now looking at volumetric charging system for sewer costs;
- There are incremental development expectations by developers. Tactics include back loading the major water development initiatives (eg WSUD wetlands) to latter stages of a development, and not ever reaching that stage of the ultimate stage; also, there is a common view that Farm zones that turn to Rural Res will eventually be candidates for conventional residential development;
- Councils really need a bigger stick to ensure that WSUD initiatives are introduced into developments at the most appropriate sequence, not just when the developer wants to;
- Treatment of waste water onsite is an issue that Council’s Environmental Health officers are required to approve.
- Council officers typically take a conservative approach to the approval of onsite waste management technology – experience has shown that ongoing maintenance of septic, setbacks from boundaries, interface with channels and site land capability constraints all key issues when considering on-site treatment;
- We should be more open to the consideration and application of new technology in this regard;
- GVW and GMW are not as reactive as they were in the past to technical issues or strategy, but there is probably a gap between the expectations that the community / industry might have, and the reality of what can be realistically achieved – better communication might be a way forward;
- Community expectations of water supply are very high (costs to a minimum, high quality and reliability), and sometimes beyond the ability to provide efficiently (remote or rural settlements); and
- GMW is changing its culture toward a regional development focus, from being reactive to proactive.

Power

- PowerCorp have a High Voltage Charge – effectively a headwork’s charge that is levied on developers for new infrastructure;
- To adequately service the southern growth corridor of Shepparton, Powercorp require a new 66KV sub transmission line (overhead) – preferably along a road easement (Zurcus Lane?), with minimal clearance issues over other power line assets. A substation site has already been nominated;
- There is a gradual and “loose” policy for undergrounding lines in existing areas (CBD), but generally all O/H assets will remain O/H. The distribution network in housing estates is typically underground;
- All new subdivisions of up to 3ha must be connected to the power grid at full capacity;
- Powercorp has observed a gradual uptake of Photovoltaic (PV) cells, which are supported by the Company – it is possible to make mandatory PV on all new dwellings? This would be good, but under the current policy requirements, a full capacity power supply will still be required;

Water reuse / Recycling

- Rural Residential lots are very high users of water – especially when gardens are a key feature of the lifestyle attraction;
- “Third Pipe” water supply in Shepparton means the consideration of two broad options (i) a new supply to lots using stock and agricultural quality water (ii) the treatment of domestic grey water. Both options would use the supply for outside (irrigation, garden, viticulture, tree plantations) use and be of different water quality level;
- Fire fighting water pressure / capacity is required in all estates, therefore the service levels might be set;
- Examples of large developers like VicUrban (Aurora) show that treated storm water and greywater can be integrated in large sites. An GVW example of a Mansfield proposal that is not so successful, was a cautionary note;
- Shepparton’s trade / grey water waste has a very different composition due to the high level of fruit remnants from the manufacturing and cannery operations in the region. This changes the chemistry of the water and business / financial case for recycling;
- Drainage and rural runoff needs to be very carefully considered in the final strategy;
- The Catchment Management Authority regional strategies need to be completely integrated into the Housing Strategy – especially around flooding. Will the CMA be a Referral Authority in the future?
- There is probably sufficient water for the modest growth of Shepparton, so we need to know the details and yield so as to better understand the total capacity of the reticulated network; Liveability and Strategy

Key issues as raised:

1. Coordination and planning / integration with the infrastructure service districts review and the channel rationalisation review especially surrounding fringe areas and townships;
2. An understanding of how and who should be providing infrastructure and who is eligible for what levels of service – clarifying the tools and processes for integration and delivery of capital works by developers on fringe areas;
3. Sustainability and Affordability – not just of housing, but the affordability of the long term water infrastructure and the apportionment of costs; and
4. Securing the best easement for the 66KV substation and transmission line in the southern corridor.

Workshop # 2: Evaluation

No formal workshop evaluation process was initiated for this meeting.

WORKSHOP # 3: COMMUNITY AND HUMAN SERVICES

2pm -4.30 pm, Thursday 27th September 2007

Attendees

- Kathleen McB...COGS
- Greg Hughes COGS
- Catherine Upcher – Rural Housing Network Limited
- Wayne Overall – Koorie Employment Enterprises
- Craig Kelly – Salvation Army Pathways
- Max Fleming – Dept of Human Services Community Housing
- Sue Medson – Family Care
- Teri Bennet-Meyer - COGS
- Chris Robinson – Capire Consulting Group (Facilitator)
- Vanessa Peters - Capire Consulting Group

Location / Venue

The Shepparton Club

General Issues Raised through our group discussion

- Council needs to recognise the diversity of the community and plan effectively for them – it is not about monochrome planning for high earners;
- There is a chronic shortage of public housing stock – around 243 people are on the low income waiting lists for rental accommodation. The type and structure of these are also very diverse;
- Given the very high cultural needs of the Shepparton community the Housing Strategy need to carefully consider the design implications for new estates or development;
- Increased coordination between Council approvals processes and community and support agencies is required because some of the newer estates are harder to service with social support services – example is cluster housing that in the past has facilitated anti social behaviour; poor 2 story design with over looking and little private space;
- Cluster housing can provide a leg up into accommodation but the overall housing pathway or “stepping stones” are not clear in Shepparton – the gap from assisted living to a private rental are too great for many;
- It is critical that all new development in Shepparton be based around a neighbourhood model – where nodes of cultural activities, social services, shopping, transport options and recreation are provided within walking distance;
- It is essential that these type of discussions are maintained not just about the Housing Strategy;
- Is it possible to document the real role and function of Council in the affordable / social housing agenda so that we all know who does what?
- Clearly, any work during the “Supply and Demand” stages of the Housing Strategy need to include

close discussion with the community and human services sector – as their “demands” will significantly influence the overall modelling;

- How do we actively reshape our settlements for more intensive living, European style?
- Do we have examples where Housing Strategies in rural communities have actually reshaped how we live – what are the exemplars, projects etc where we can draw inspiration?

Affordability

- Shepparton is experiencing many aspects of the national affordability crisis – the Strategy need to ensure that affordability is for everybody;
- Affordability & housing stress occurs when housing costs are in excess of 30% of gross family income;
- Council needs to ensure there is a diversity of stock supplied by the market – Council needs to adopt a patchwork approach of each neighbourhood providing a genuine diversity of choice;
- A wide range of supply “tools” or levers need to be considered when developing the Strategy including:
 - Inclusionary Zoning policy and planning tools to nominate a suitable mix of social / affordable housing stock;
 - Development plans mandating a range of lot sizes in new developments;
 - Covenants controlling housing style, size and types of dwellings etc
 - Development Contributions for social outcomes
- What is the role of the private sector in facilitating and delivering affordable housing and housing choices? – Council need to explore how incentives, fees and charges and the like might also be used;
- Underutilised housing stock in townships and rural areas need to be considered for housing needs;
- How can Council be convinced to facilitate and broker better affordability and housing options without exposing itself to unnecessary risks? There is an apparent “gap” between the community services provided by Council and the needs for a leadership role in the housing and accommodation sector;
- There is Diversity within Diversity – this must always remember. Not one size fits all.

Migration trends

- Some early migrant groups arriving in Shepparton brought sufficient money to enter the property market either as owner occupier or renter; many other segments have relied on social welfare, philanthropic and /or church groups for assistance;
- Examples are common in Shepparton where migrant families have pooled financial resources and secured rental property in established and good quality housing stock;
- However, racial tensions are always present in Shepparton and discrimination is common.
- There are examples of housing areas within Shepparton that are perceived as unsafe and not a place to be on the streets at night;
- There is a observable simultaneous migration process occurring at present under the present drought and water crisis:
 - A move of farm families / individuals into the CBD / Townships caused by economic downturn and loss of farm income; and
 - A migration from the CBD to rural and township areas drawn by lower rents.
- There is a need to ensure the Rural Res, townships and Fringes are very clearly included in the Strategy consideration;

Seasonal accommodation

- The significant influx of seasonal workers during the harvest months create housing and accommodation stresses in Shepparton. There appears to be a general decline of on-farm accommodation provided during the season – further placing pressures on limited temporary accommodation in Shepparton or townships;
- Previously there has been a history of backpackers coming to Shepparton for harvest and causing anti social behaviour – this is improving as there has been better management and marketing;
- Caravan parks have been a important part of the accommodation mix for this segment;
- As caravans parks are prohibited in Rural Zones, it is increasingly difficult to provide this option – especially as rates / land prices in the townships will limit opportunities. Council need to retail flexibility to allow such uses for seasonally purposes?

Indigenous accommodation needs

- Special housing loans for indigenous communities are still available, but they are difficult to get and there is a long lead time for approvals;
- Discrimination based on race is often reported, especially when applications are made for good quality accommodation “...no aboriginals need apply...”;
- Rumbalama is seen as a positive and effective cooperative model for housing and community development activities and would deserve a discussion. They have over 60 houses under management;
- It is common to have 3-4 blended or extended families share accommodation, so how do we ensure the most appropriate housing stock is provided for these types of families?
- Co-oP and equity rental properties require additional investigation; and
- The Aboriginal Housing Board (Office of Housing) are presently being separated into a new management and maintenance regime. Additional information might be beneficial here.

Disability and Aged services

- Expect pressures on the “aged” end of the mature-aged spectrum and pressures for new specialist accommodation facilities with increased levels of care;
- However, there is also an issue with those aging on properties – and their need to release equity to access city based higher level care. All this is occurring when rural land property prices are under stress from structural changes to the rural economy, prolonged drought, uncertainly around water rights;
- Typically, aged and disability accommodation are either provided by Family or Disability service agencies in State Government and are often provided with purpose built housing. There are no really unique Shepparton issues in this matter;
- There is a clear need to allow residents the opportunity to “age-in-place”; where with minimal disruption, families have clear housing choices that suit their specific lifestyle needs at all stages of the lifecycle;

Environment & Safety etc

- There are significant environmental and social outcomes that can be generated from the integrated housing and development and community sustainability initiatives – the neighbourhood based planning approach is critical;
- It is critical that safety is designed into the housing strategy and that it is not a bolt-on after – this will need to include lights, surveillance, legibility, compatibility of uses, access and mobility etc

Key issues as raised:

1. Sustainable community neighbourhood based planning must be the corner stone of the planning approach for the Housing Strategy;
2. Council must use all tools at its disposal to ensure that a diversity of housing stock is provided across Shepparton, townships and rural areas to enable affordability;
3. Housing and accommodation “pathways” or stepping stones, are a key basis for strategy development;
4. There is diversity within diversity; and
5. We need strong sustainable partnerships to deliver on the affordable housing agenda for Shepparton.

Workshop # 3 : Evaluation

Participants were invited complete an evaluation form at the end of the workshop. A summary is presented below.

Poor	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Quality of information: How well did we describe what we needed to?				
0	0	0	4	2
Use of time: How well did we use our time?				
0	0	0	4	2
Participation: How well did we do on making sure everyone was involved?				
0	0	0	1	5
Decision Making: How well thought-out were our decisions?				
0	0	0	6	0
Facilitation: How well was the workshop managed?				
0	0	0	3	3
Organisation: How well was the workshop run?				
0	0	0	2	4

General Comments (Direct Quotes)

- *Good Start – Anonymous*
- *Very good meeting – Catherine Upcher*
- *Excellent facilitation, well paced – Craig Kelly*
- *Felt that my time was not wasted. Well done – Anonymous*
- *Interesting session. Look forward to seeing some compilations of the consultation - Anonymous*

