



Elmore

Issues and Opportunities Paper



CITY OF GREATER
BENDIGO

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About this document

The Issues and Opportunities Paper summarises the policy context for the town, presents the background research, the findings of the community survey and sets out the issues and opportunities that need to be addressed to help plan Elmore's future growth.

Acknowledgement of Country

The City of Greater Bendigo respectfully acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which Elmore lies, the Dja Dja Wurrung Peoples.

The City acknowledges and extends our appreciation to the Traditional Owners, and we pay respects to Leaders Elders past, present and emerging for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and the hopes of all Dja Dja Wurrung People.

We express our gratitude in the sharing of this land, our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing and our hope that we may walk forward together in harmony and in the spirit of healing.



1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The *Greater Bendigo Residential Strategy (2014)* identifies that Elmore has the potential to accommodate additional population growth given its proximity to a major regional centre, while still offering a small-town lifestyle.

An implementation action of the Residential Strategy was that a plan be prepared to provide an overarching framework to guide the future growth while at the same time ensuring the character of the town is protected. The first stage in the planning process was to undertake background research and analysis, and a community survey to identify what are the growth issues confronting the town and what are the opportunities moving forward.

1.2 Purpose

The original scope of the project was to identify how Elmore could grow into the future and what services, facilities and infrastructure are required to support that growth.

During the early research phase, it was suggested that this scope be expanded to create a more integrated plan that would become a one stop reference document for local communities, City staff and other agencies – picking up the integrated streets and public spaces designs, future street hierarchy, future drainage needs, movement networks, open space, and environmental improvements.

While this approach would create additional complexities in the development of the plan it would result in longer term efficiencies through coordinated strategic planning and design.

The following is the process and draft timelines for the project.



1.3 Study area

The study area for the project includes the area indicated on the map opposite. However, it is acknowledged that the surrounding rural areas play a key role in the life of the town and that this needs to be considered in the development of the plan.

1.4 Strategy and policy context

There is strong planning policy support for promoting growth and investment in Elmore.

These policy documents include the *Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan (RGP)* (2014) which discusses supporting the role of small towns, investing in liveability and infrastructure, improving community connectedness, protecting the environment and jobs creation.

While not a “strategy” as such, the Bendigo Metro project will have a significant impact on Elmore with works including track upgrades to increase the speed of trains on the line and signalling/technology improvements to increase service frequency.

The *Greater Bendigo Residential Strategy* (2014) recognises that Elmore plays a small but significant role in the settlement hierarchy of Greater Bendigo.

The *Greater Bendigo Housing Strategy* (2017) builds upon the Residential Strategy and provides guidance on the location, type and form of future housing. Among the recommendations and directions from the Housing Strategy that are relevant to Elmore are the need to improve housing diversity, encourage housing in accessible locations and the need to protect environmental values.

The *Commercial Land and Activity Centre Strategy* (2015) classifies Elmore as a “Township/Rural Centre” in the Activity Centre Hierarchy. It notes that these towns operate on a neighbourhood scale but service a larger rural catchment as well as passing trade. There are no recommendations or caps on future commercial floorspace identified and the strategy notes that the centres will grow based on the needs of the population that supports them.

Connecting Greater Bendigo – Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy (ITLUS) (2015) recommends that as part of the planning process emphasis should be given to improving walking, cycling and public transport. Improved connections into Bendigo are also a key consideration.

The *Greater Bendigo Public Space Plan* (2019) sets the long-term vision for the management of public spaces across Greater Bendigo (not just recreation reserves). The holistic plan is about improving health outcomes, making public spaces accessible and guiding investment.

Specific projects and recommendations identified within Public Space Plan for Elmore include upgrades to the town centre, continue to improve amenities along the Campaspe River, improve linkages between the town and the river, improvements to the town entrances and improvements to the recreation reserve.



Map 1: Elmore Study Area

The *Climate Change and Environment Strategy* (2021–26) is focused on improving community health, decreasing emissions, saving money, improving landscapes, food security and lessening our impact on the environment. While there are no specific projects related to Elmore, some of the recommendations will potentially impact on the community. This includes regenerating landscapes and ecosystems and provision of a safe and well-connected transport network.

Greening Greater Bendigo (2020) is an urban forest strategy that is aimed at increasing the tree coverage in urban areas. There are numerous well documented benefits to this including helping cool the urban environment, health benefits and improvements to amenity. For Elmore, this means preparation of a precinct plan to guide local tree planting.

Walk, Cycle Greater Bendigo (2019) guides future decision making and investment in walking and cycling infrastructure and aims to make it easier for people to walk and cycle. It notes that in relation to small towns that walking and cycling plans will be developed through the township planning process.

2. Context

2.1 Town profile/brief history

Elmore lies on the traditional land of the Dja Dja Wurrung People. In 1840 it was part of the Burnewang Pastoral Run, but a section was sold in 1857 and became known as Elmore Estate. The land was surveyed in 1857 and lots started to be sold shortly after. Schools, civic buildings, the railway station and houses were established in those early years and many of the early buildings still exist.¹

From those early days Elmore acted as a service centre for the surrounding rural area as well as a stopping point for travellers – a role it still fills today.

Elmore is fortunate to have a good range of shops and employment opportunities, recreational facilities and other services, as well transport connections to major centres such as Bendigo, Echuca and Shepparton that make it well placed to accommodate future growth.

1. <https://www.victorianplaces.com.au/elmore>

2.2 Demographic profile

The most recent census data available is from the 2016 census. The data from the 2021 Census won't be released until June 2022.

Please note that the census data relates to an area larger than the township area and includes some of the surrounding rural land.

Key statistics for Elmore from the 2016 Census were:

Total population	776	Number of bedrooms	
Median age	51	1 bedroom	7.5%
Total private dwellings	417	2 bedrooms	17.6%
Household Composition		3 bedrooms	45.7%
Family	57.5%	4+ bedrooms	23.6%
Lone person	41.6%	Not stated	4.5%
Other	0.9%	Number of vehicles	
Dwelling Structure		None	6.8%
Separate house	93.2%	1	35.4%
Semi-detached	0.0%	2	30.4%
Flat or apartment	0.9%	3+	20.1%
Other	5.9%	Not stated	7.4%





2.3 Economic profile

Elmore's economy is very much focussed on supporting the surrounding rural areas.

Major sectors of employment as at the 2016 Census were road freight transport (4.9 per cent of all employment), hospital (4.9 per cent), grain growing (4.5 per cent), horse and dog racing activities (4.1 per cent), and dairy farming (3.7 per cent).

Another important part of Elmore's economy is the passing traffic that stops for rest and refreshments, which supports several small businesses.

In terms of major economic activities, the premier event is the annual Elmore Field Days that is held at the Elmore Events Centre and is a major economic boost for the Elmore and the broader region.

2.4 Environment and public space

One of Elmore's key environmental assets is the Campaspe River that demarcates the eastern boundary of town. As well as being significant to the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung people it continues to play a key role to the community. There are opportunities that will be discussed in this paper to strengthen the connection between town and the river.

Key areas of public space include the recreation reserve, the train corridor, various "pocket parks" and play spaces, and generous road corridors that play a key role in the movement of people.

2.5 Heritage

Elmore has retained many of its historic buildings and these are an important contributor to the character of the town.

A Stage 1 heritage study was completed for the former Shire of Huntly Heritage Study in June 2020. This study includes both Elmore and Goornong and has identified potential heritage precincts and places of individual heritage significance that would require further detailed assessment as part of a Stage 2 Heritage Study.

In relation to Elmore the Stage 1 Study identified:

- Four potential heritage precincts in Elmore
- 212 places of potential individual heritage significance including houses, shops, trees, and bridges.

A copy of the Stage 1 Study can be found at www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/huntlyheritagestudy

The next stage of the heritage study will be commencing soon.

3. Community survey and engagement

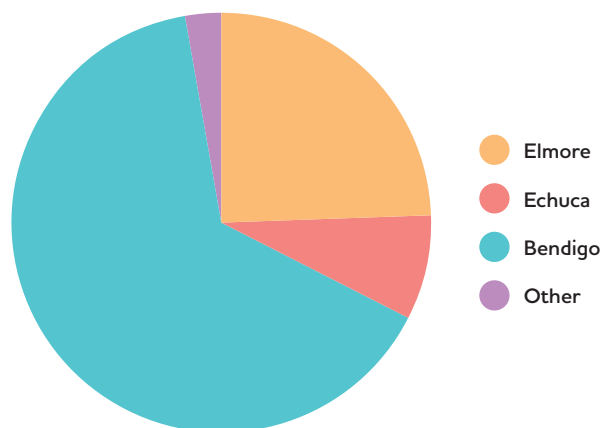
A community survey was undertaken in the early stage of the development of the Township Plan. While the response rate was low (37 respondents), it did highlight several emerging themes that will be discussed below.

The first question asked whether the respondent had moved to Elmore in last five years. 16 people answered yes and the follow up was what attracted them to town. The most common responses were:

- Small town lifestyle
- Proximity to larger centres
- Affordability
- Family reasons

Other responses included work and retirement.

The question asked where people did most of their shopping, with nearly two thirds travelling to Bendigo.



The next questions in the survey asked about what people liked most about living in Elmore and what would make it better. In each question respondents were able to make three selections from a list of options or to add a different answer.

In relation to what people like about living in Elmore the most popular response was country living (92 per cent), followed by town services and infrastructure (68 per cent), natural features (62 per cent) and community pride and spirit (38 per cent).

In terms what would make Elmore a better place to live, the most popular responses were footpaths and cycle paths (68 per cent), better public transport (57 per cent), more shopping options (49 per cent) and more activities for young people (38 per cent). Other responses included more community facilities, better access to the Campaspe River, a community market and having informal meeting spaces.

The proximity of the Campaspe River is a major asset and opportunity for Elmore. The community were asked about potential improvements to this precinct. Popular responses were picnic and toilet facilities (59 per cent), extending the walking and cycling network (51 per cent), water access and/or platform (43 per cent) and revegetation (38 per cent).

The next two questions were open ended and asked what improvements residents would like to see in the town centre and the ideas they had for the future growth of town. There were some common ideas raised among the respondents. A number of ideas were raised in the previous survey including more footpaths and better public transport. New ideas for potential improvements to the town centre include:

- More support for small businesses
- Fill vacant shops
- Public art program/murals
- Maintenance of gardens/streetscapes
- Signage to promote Elmore's history
- After hours shopping/dining options
- Drainage improvements
- Electric vehicle charging stations

The question on whether there are ideas or suggestions for the future growth of Elmore among the responses were:

- Keep the small-town feel
- More street tree planting
- Internet speeds
- Need to create more employment opportunities
- Community garden
- Need for more housing

In early 2020 (pre-Covid) there was a previous community survey undertaken. The survey questions were largely the same questions as the current survey. This survey received 71 responses. Similar responses were provided to both surveys.

The 2020 survey also included the question around ideas for the future growth of Elmore. Some suggestions from the previous survey included:

- To have a truck bypass to reduce after hours noise
- Improve connections between the town and the Campaspe River
- Create an industrial precinct
- More long vehicle parking for caravanners
- Improve housing options
- More events for locals and to attract visitors

Walking tour

The other community engagement action that has taken place to date is that the Grade 6 students at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Primary School led a walking tour of Elmore. The students decided where the tour would go and what would be seen.

Sites visited include the Recreation Reserve, Railway Station, a walk through the town centre and then along the Campaspe River. The students had a number of suggestions, some of which were quite specific, that would improve Elmore from a young person's perspective. These include:

- A pump (BMX) track at the recreation reserve
- A net behind the goals at the north end of the football ground
- More play equipment at the recreation reserve designed for older children
- Silo art
- More seating and a BBQ along the river
- A pontoon for fishing/launching kayaks

The City would like to extend a special thanks to the students and staff at the school for helping with this project.



4. Emerging themes

There are a number of themes emerging that will guide the development of the plan. Some of these have arisen from the community engagement undertaken to date and others are important policy and planning considerations.

Housing, character and heritage

- Ensure there is enough land for new housing and that housing responds to the needs to the future community
- Improve built form standards
- Ensure new dwellings and extensions incorporate Environmentally Sustainable Design
- Ensure that new development and public space improvement respects the character and heritage values of the town

Town centre and employment

- Promote and support the development of the town centre
- Promote employment opportunities to make Elmore more self-contained
- Improve the range of shops

Public space and environment

- Improve Elmore's public spaces and streetscapes
- Protect and enhance Elmore's natural setting
- Improve connections between the town centre and the Campaspe River

Bushfire

- Prioritise the protection of the human life and build community resilience to the impacts of bushfire

Movement and infrastructure

- Improve walking and cycling infrastructure in Elmore and improve to enable greater transport choice
- Improve public transport connections
- Improve the management of infrastructure including integrated water management

Community

- Encourage the right mix of community services to meet local needs
- Promote and support active living

Questions for the community:

- *Do these themes cover the growth issues/challenges confronting the Elmore community?*
- *Are there gaps in the themes or suggested improvements?*

5. Issues and opportunities

The following chapter discusses the issues and opportunities in Elmore that are framed around the emerging themes in Section 4:

- Housing, Character and Heritage
- Town Centre and Employment
- Public Space and Environment
- Bushfire
- Movement and Infrastructure
- Community

Each subsection will provide a background/overview and then discuss the issues and what the opportunities are.

Questions for the community:

- Are there gaps in the identified issues and opportunities?
- Are there additional opportunities that the community should be considering?

5.1 Housing, character and heritage

Background

According to the 2016 Census there were 417 private dwellings in Elmore of which 53 were unoccupied on census night. 93 per cent of all dwellings were traditional detached dwellings and apartments or flats were only 1 per cent of the housing stock.

Recent subdivisions in the northern end of town (off Smith Street and Hervey Street) have proved extremely popular so there is demand for new housing. This may in part be due

to the impact of COVID with people moving from metropolitan areas to take advantage of new lifestyle opportunities due to greater workplace flexibility.

A theme that came out strongly in the community surveys was that while new housing was supported it needed to be respectful of the existing character of Elmore.

ISSUES

- With an ageing population there needs to be a greater diversity of housing stock particularly smaller dwellings to enable people to downsize and remain in their local community
- There is potentially 15 hectares of land zoned for housing that is vacant or under-developed that could potentially provide for up to 150 new houses
- The area immediately surrounding the town is good quality agricultural land. As well as playing an important rural function it also provides a noticeably clear boundary around Elmore
- The Stage 1 Heritage Study that has been undertaken in Elmore identified a number of sites and areas potentially worthy of heritage protection in the planning scheme but require further detailed assessments as part of what is known as a Stage 2 Heritage Study. This work will commence in the coming months

OPPORTUNITIES

- The potential to introduce planning controls or other mechanisms to encourage a broader range of housing types to meet the varying needs of the community including affordable options, accessible housing and housing for people to age in place
- Clearly delineate in the planning scheme a settlement boundary around Elmore that will protect the surrounding farmland from residential encroachment in the long term
- Continue to progress the Stage 2 Heritage Study and have planning scheme protection for Elmore's important heritage sites
- The opportunity for interpretative signage as part of the Explore Elmore heritage walk

5.2 Town centre and employment

Background

Elmore has a busy town centre with a good range of shops, heritage streetscapes, strong passing trade and convenient parking.

Cardwell Street was the traditional “main street” of Elmore where most businesses were originally located. This has transitioned over time so that now Railway Place (Northern Highway) fulfils that function. The result in this shift is that there are several vacant store fronts in Cardwell Street.

ISSUES

- The extent of the town centre is not defined by a planning zone or other statutory control, rather it has evolved over time in its present location. There is the potential that new businesses could establish outside the town centre and orderly planning suggests that these uses should be located near each other.
- A current lack of local employment opportunities.
- There are a number of vacant shops in the town centre and in some instances in a state of disrepair.



OPPORTUNITIES

- Invest in streetscape works to improve amenity and encourage re-development and re-use of existing commercial buildings. The following example of what this might look like for Cardwell Street can be seen below.
- Having a clearly defined town centre will not only assist in making planning decisions but will also inform investment by commercial developers and government agencies.
- While Elmore is fortunate to have generous street widths it can encourage people to drive quicker than walk. A range of traffic calming measures could be considered through the town centre to slow vehicle speeds and create a safer and more pleasant environment.
- Scope exists to prepare an Urban Design Framework (UDF) for the town centre that will build upon its existing strengths and consider guidelines around the design of new buildings, pedestrian movements, landscaping and public spaces. An example of a recent UDF can be found at www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/golden-square-urban-design-framework.
- Investigate opportunities to improve employment across a range of sectors and making the town more self-contained.
- Investigate opportunities to support existing and new businesses.
- Because of the Elmore Events Centre, its central location, heritage and small-town character, Elmore is well placed to promote itself as a tourist and event destination.
- Elmore has a number of semi-industrial uses spread throughout town. An opportunity exists to identify an industrial area in which to encourage new and existing industrial uses.
- Another opportunity would be the rollout of wayfinding signage which would help direct visitors to key locations around town.

5.3 Public space and environment

Background

The *Greater Bendigo Public Space Plan* (2019) recommends a number of public space improvements for Elmore. These relate to maintaining the character of the town centre, improvements to the recreation reserve, linkages to and amenities along the Campaspe River and other public realm improvements.

ISSUES

- A lack of connection between the town centre and the Campaspe River as well as a lack of amenities along the river
- There is a lack of consistency in the streetscapes throughout Elmore in terms of landscaping, pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure/safety and general design/construction
- The need for a public art program came through strongly in the community surveys
- The City is not the Committee of Management for the Recreation Reserve and is not involved in its day to day operation, however the City does want to assist the Committee of Management where it can to ensure that the facilities and services at the reserve respond to community needs

OPPORTUNITIES

- There are a number of ways that the connection between the town centre and the river could be improved. One option is using landscaping as shown in the illustrations opposite. Other opportunities may include signage and improved amenities. These should be explored further
- The City is at the stage of implementing the Greening Greater Bendigo plan that is seeking to increase the tree cover across the built-up areas of Bendigo and small towns. The image opposite is a before and after illustration taken from Greening Greater Bendigo and demonstrates what is trying to be achieved. For each suburb a precinct plan will be prepared that sets out how this can be achieved. While recommendations about landscaping is usually part of the implementation for a Township Plan, an opportunity exists to bring this forward and build upon the community consultation that will be undertaken as part of the township planning process
- The potential for Elmore to have a painted silo was raised as an as part of the community survey. These have proven to be popular and an opportunity exists to explore this and other public art programs that would encourage visitors to stop in town and have positive economic benefits
- The City will continue to support the Recreation Reserve Committee of Management with planning and funding on an “as required” basis

Current



Future



5.4 Bushfire

Background

While the Bushfire Management Overlay does not apply to any land in Elmore (or any surrounding land) it is a State Government requirement that bushfire impacts still be considered.

Elmore does have the potential for a grassfire to spread from the surrounding farmland, however the chance of an ember attack is low given the towns isolation from heavily vegetated areas.

ISSUES

- Need to ensure that new development is protected from the risk of fire and that new development can achieve a Bushfire Attack Level rating of 12.5 (low risk)

OPPORTUNITIES

- Provide for a road at the interface between the farmland and any urban development to provide buffer and ensure safe access is provided to areas of low risk. This can re-inforce Elmore's rural character

5.5 Movement and infrastructure

Background

While there is always room for improvement, Elmore is reasonably well placed in terms of infrastructure provision compared to most small towns.

Elmore is fortunate to have a traditional grid street layout with generous 30 metre road reserves that allows room for cars, pedestrians, cyclists and street trees.

It has somewhat limited train and road coach services connecting it to Bendigo and Echuca with recent track improvements making the trip quicker.

The Northern and Midland Highways play a vital role in the movement of people and goods in the region and this will continue.

A traffic count from 2020 identified that the Northern Highway carries 4,600 vehicles per day, of which 960 were trucks.

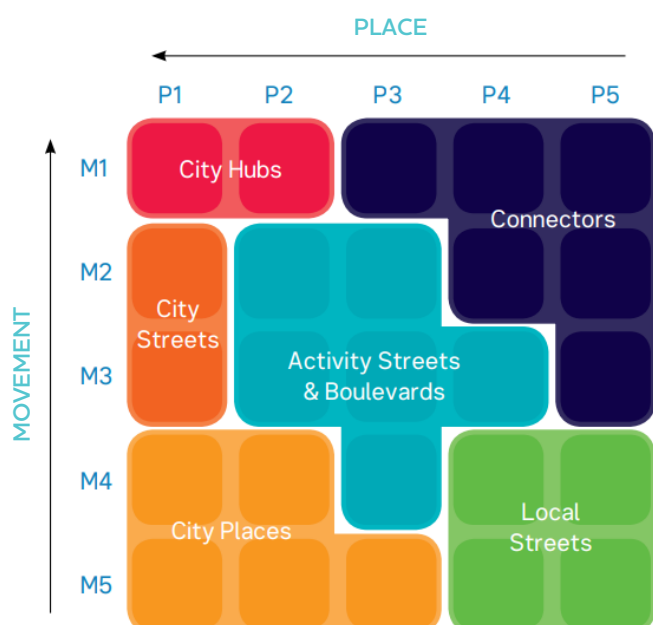
Movement and Place framework

The State Government has a 'Movement and Place' framework that recognises that streets are not only used for vehicle movement but are also places where people live, shop, relax and can be destinations in themselves. 'Movement' refers to more than cars – it includes pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and freight.

The framework can be used to identify a road hierarchy, guide decisions on landscaping, roadworks, walking (footpaths) and cycling and connecting key areas of activity.

A copy of the full framework can be found [here](#).*

While the framework uses a grid system it is quite complex and was developed for larger centres but can still be applied to a town like Elmore. The Framework sets out a methodology for categorising movement and place and then allocates the street into one of the categories in the image below.



For example, Local Streets, which is likely to be the most common category in Elmore, is described as "Successful Local Streets should provide quiet, safe and desirable residential access for all ages and abilities to foster community spirit and local pride. They are part of the fabric of our neighbourhoods, where we live our lives and facilitate local community access."

ISSUES

- An issue that came out very strongly in the community surveys was the lack of footpaths and pedestrian safety generally.
- Elmore has both bus and train connections to the broader region. The issues relate to the timetabling and frequency of the services not meeting community needs
- Movement around town was an issue that came out strongly in the community surveys. There is a need to provide a safe way for all users (motorists, freight operators, pedestrians and cyclists) to move around town. Particular attention needs to give to pedestrian and cyclist access to the two primary schools
- Elmore's location on the Northern and Midland Highways and its connections through to a number of regional centres means that a lot of caravans and recreational vehicle users stop. An issue that arose in the surveys was the need for a clearly designated and signed long vehicle parking area.
- The need for improved broadband speed and reliability came through as an issue, especially given the increase in the number of people working from home
- A further issue that came out during the surveys related to poor water pressure. Coliban Water have plans in place to address this issue

OPPORTUNITIES

- Use the Movement and Place framework to establish a street hierarchy for Elmore that will guide decisions and investment on works streets including footpaths, road widths, pedestrian and cyclist safety and vehicle movement
- Work with NBN Co to investigate the potential opportunities to improve broadband infrastructure
- Determine need/demand for long vehicle parking and discuss with Department of Transport. A potential location might be on the western side of the Northern Highway, north of the Raywood Road intersection which is currently informally used
- With the growing popularity of cycling trails, Elmore is well placed to capitalise on being part of a regional cycling trail link

*<https://transport.vic.gov.au/about/planning/transport-strategies-and-plans/movement-and-place-in-victoria>

5.6 Community

Background

The residents of Elmore have a strong sense of belonging and are proud of their town.

The Elmore community have also been active over several years in preparing and implementing the *Elmore and District Community Plan* (2015–2020). This plan is now due for renewal.

While the township of Elmore is within the traditional land of the Dja Dja Wurrung, the Campaspe River is the recognised boundary with the Taungurung who would also have traditional interests in the area.

ISSUES

- The role of Traditional Owners is not well recognised in the Elmore community
- A common issue to arise in many communities, often regardless of size, is that there are not enough activities for young people to do and this came through strongly in the community surveys
- Elmore is fortunate to have a number of community halls and facilities; however, some need investment, maintenance and the like. The level of usage of these facilities also needs to be understood
- There was a strong theme in the community surveys about the need for more community-based events and activities

OPPORTUNITIES

- There is an opportunity to explore ways to better recognise the role that the Traditional Owners have in the Elmore area. Discussions should take place with the Dja Dja Wurrung as to the best way to achieve this
- Review the Community Plan in line with the development of the plan. This will create efficiencies in terms of consultation and ensure there are strong linkages between the documents. It will be important to clearly explain the role and differences of both documents
- Develop a clear understanding of the community halls in relation to usage, condition, growth opportunities and the like which will help inform future investment and upgrades in these facilities
- Other community-based opportunities that came up as part of the surveys were:
 - Establish a community garden
 - Public art/silo art program
 - Promote volunteering
 - Community market

6. Next steps

The Issues and Opportunities Paper will be exhibited for a period of four weeks. During this time the community will be asked to review the paper and tell the City if it identifies the issues that affect the town's future, whether something has been missed and if there are other opportunities to support Elmore's growth.

During this time there will be a listening post and a workshop where the community can ask questions and have direct input into the project.

Also, at this stage work will commence on advancing some of the opportunities that have been identified.

Once the community feedback has been received this will feed into the draft plan that will also go through a community consultation process.

The plan will have a schedule that will set out when and how the recommendations will be implemented. Ultimately Council will consider and potentially adopt the plan, and a Planning Scheme Amendment will be required to implement it.

Contact us

Should you require more information or wish to discuss this project further, please call Strategic Planner Leah Morris on 1300 002 642 or email strategic.planning@bendigo.vic.gov.au

