

# GOORNONG

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES  
PAPER MAY 2022



CITY OF GREATER  
**BENDIGO**



## ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

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



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The City of Greater Bendigo respectfully acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which Goornong 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.



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

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

## 1.2 PURPOSE

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

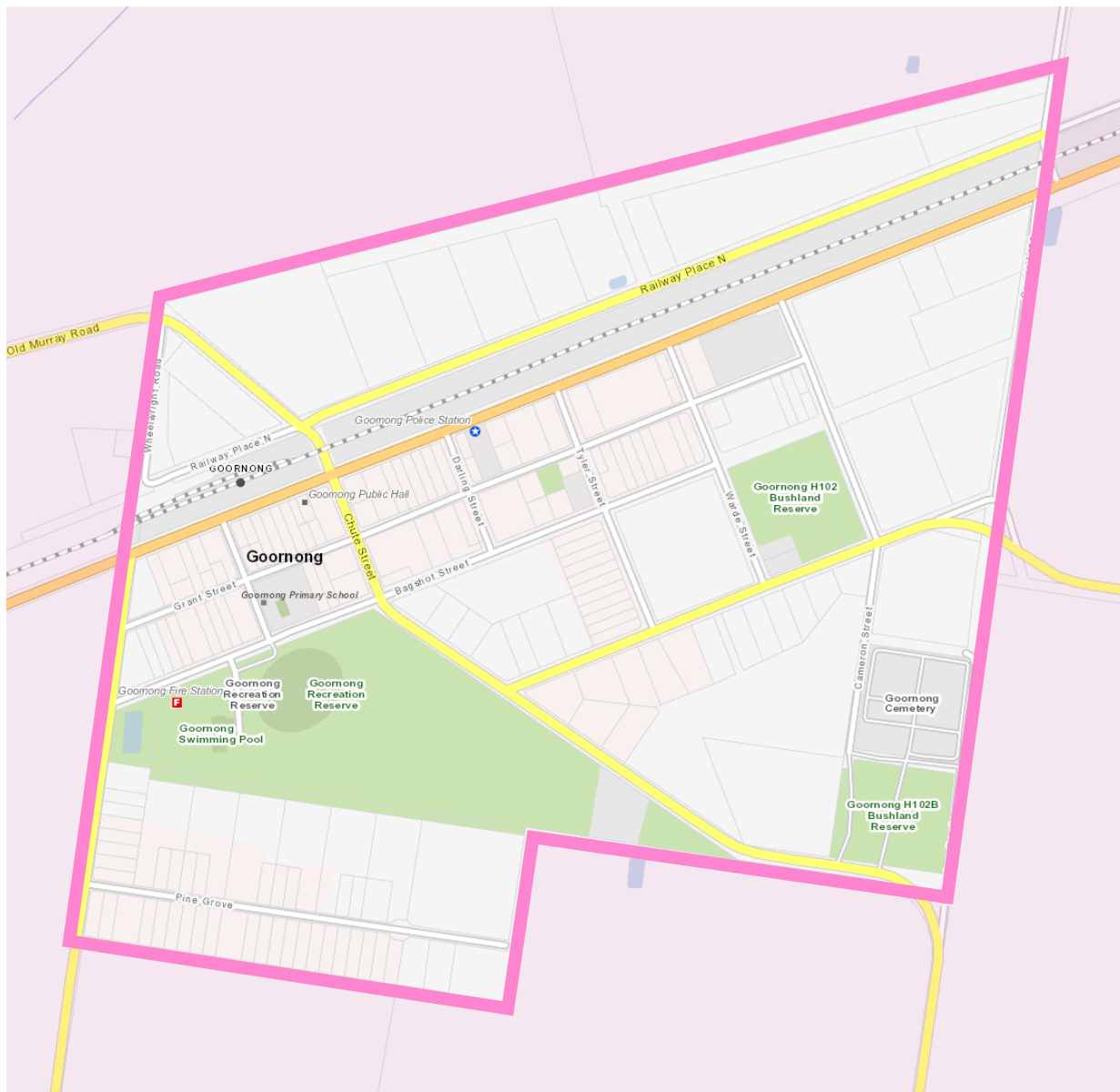
During the early research phase, it was suggested that this scope be expanded to create a more integrated plan that would become a one stop reference document for local communities, City staff and other agencies – picking up the integrated streetscape designs, future street hierarchy, future drainage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

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

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







Map 1: Goornong study area.

### 1.3 STUDY AREA

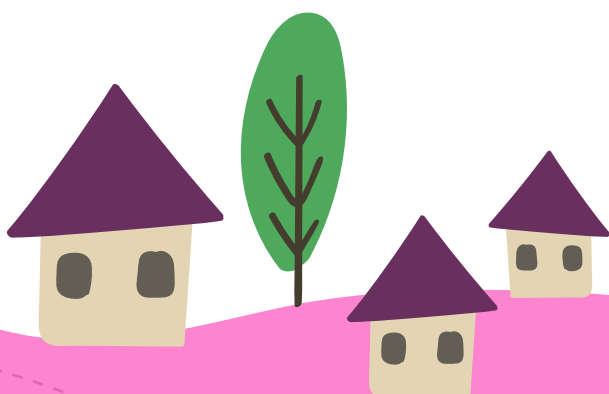
The study area for the project includes the area generally indicated on the map above. However, it is acknowledged that the surrounding rural areas play a key role in the life of the town and that this needs to be considered in the development of the plan.

### 1.4 STRATEGY AND POLICY CONTEXT

There is strong planning policy support for promoting growth and investment in Goornong and the development of the project.

These policy documents include the *Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan (RGP)* 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 Goornong with works, including the opening of Goornong Station in December 2021 and upgrades to track and signalling/technology improvements.



The *Greater Bendigo Residential Strategy* 2014 recognises that Goornong plays a small but vital 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 Goornong are the need to improve housing diversity, encourage housing in accessible locations and protect environmental values.

The *Commercial Land and Activity Centre Strategy* 2015 classifies Goornong 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 expand, and contract 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 the Public Space Plan for Goornong include upgrades to the town centre, community developed masterplan for the recreation reserve, regional cycling connections and improving the link between town and the Campaspe River.

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 Goornong, 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* is essentially 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 Goornong 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 planning process.



## 2 CONTEXT

### 2.1 TOWN PROFILE/BRIEF HISTORY

Goornong lies on the traditional land of the Dja Dja Wurrung People.

It was surveyed in 1863 by Richard Larritt and was originally established to service the surrounding rural areas. The railway line came through in 1865 and a town soon started to develop, including shops, a church, two hotels and a school.

Over time the shops in Goornong have closed, including the post office which relocated to the hotel. With the recent reopening of the train station and the desire for the town to grow this provides a rare opportunity to plan for a town with a clean slate – including shops, infrastructure and services.

### 2.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The most recent census data available is from the 2016. The data from the 2021 Census will not 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.

### 2.3 ECONOMIC PROFILE

There are limited small businesses in Goornong, with a number having closed in recent years, including the general store. The economy is very much focused on supporting the surrounding rural areas.

Major sectors of employment as at the 2016 Census were hospital (4.5 per cent of all employment), grain growing (4.5 per cent), primary education (4.5 per cent and gold mining (4.2 per cent).

### 2.4 PUBLIC SPACE

Goornong benefits from access to three bushland reserves within the town boundary.

The railway reserve is reasonably well vegetated but in need of weed management.

The Goornong Recreation Reserve also has some patches of native vegetation, and the Reserve Committee are keen to explore opportunities to activate the reserve.

The Campaspe River is near to town and there are opportunities to strengthen the connection between town and the river.



Key statistics for Goornong from the 2016 Census were:

#### GOORNONG

(2016 Census snapshot)

<b>Total population</b>	654	<b>Number of bedrooms</b>	
<b>Median age</b>	39	1 bedroom	1.8%
<b>Total private dwellings</b>	270	2 bedrooms	8.5%
<b>Household composition</b>		3 bedrooms	47.3%
Family	76.9%	4+ bedrooms	41.1%
Lone person	19.9%	Not stated	1.3%
Other	3.2%	<b>Number of vehicles</b>	
<b>Dwelling structure</b>		None	1.8%
Separate house	98.6%	1	16.7%
Semi-detached	1.4%	2	41.2%
Flat or apartment	0.0%	3+	38.5%
Other	0.0%	Not stated	1.8%
<b>Top industries of employment</b>			
Hospitals			5.3%
Other grain growing			4.5%
Primary education			4.5%
Gold ore mining			4.2%
Supermarket and grocery stores			3.8%





## 2.5 HERITAGE

Goornong has retained many of its historic buildings and these are important contributors 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 picks up 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 Goornong the Stage 1 Study identified:

- One potential heritage precinct in Goornong
- 45 places of potential individual heritage significance including houses, shops, civic building, and infrastructure

It was also recommended that a tree survey be undertaken.

A copy of the Stage 1 Study can be found here:  
[www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/huntlyheritagestudy](http://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/huntlyheritagestudy)

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

## 2.6 PLANNING SCHEME

The zoning in Goornong is unusual. Most small towns would typically be almost entirely zoned Township; however, Goornong has land zoned Low Density Residential and Rural Living.

Due to the lack of sewerage the minimum lot size would generally be 4,000m<sup>2</sup> or one acre to allow for a septic tank system to be installed.

The land zoned Rural Living is not able to be subdivided further.







### 3 COMMUNITY SURVEY AND ENGAGEMENT

There was a strong response rate to the community survey completed earlier this year with 70 people completing the survey.

Of the respondents, 37 per cent had moved to Goornong in the past five years. The three most common reasons that attracted people to Goornong were the lifestyle, affordability and proximity to Bendigo.

Over 90 per cent of respondents currently do the bulk of their shopping in Bendigo with the need for shopping opportunities came out strongly in the surveys.

Respondents were asked what they liked most about living in Goornong and were able to select three options from a list or add their own. All respondents said the country town living in proximity to a regional centre was a key consideration. Other responses included the natural environment, peaceful lifestyle and family and friends.

The next question related to what would make it better to live in Goornong. The top three responses were more shopping options, more footpaths/cycle paths and drainage improvements. This question also had an option for people to add an item. Availability of reticulated sewerage came out strongly and this was a recurring theme in the survey responses.

There were two questions that had a considerable amount of overlap in the responses. Both were open ended questions and one asked for people's ideas about improvements to the town centre and the other about ideas or suggestions for Goornong's future growth.

Two matters came out very strongly – the need for shops and/or a service station in Goornong and the other related to the need for reticulated sewerage.

In one sense these two matters are related. Sewerage is needed to drive population growth and without population growth it will be difficult to provide any level of retail service.

Support for sewerage Goornong came out very strongly – although it was not universal as some questioned the benefit/need for the infrastructure. Some also indicated that any costs should be minimal.

For more than 20 years the State Government funded sewerage upgrades to a number of small towns across Victoria – Elmore was one of these towns. However, under current funding arrangements such as infrastructure investment is subject to a cost benefit analysis and would also be user pays.

Other suggested improvements included:

- More footpaths
- Drainage upgrades
- Streetscape improvements
- A number of suggested improvements at the recreation reserve
- Road maintenance and construction
- Having a permanent police presence
- Support for business
- Public transport frequency
- Potential for silo art



## 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 while others are important policy and planning considerations.

### Infrastructure and future growth

- Ensure the right infrastructure is available to support Goornong's growth
- Ensure there is enough land for new housing and that housing responds to the needs to the future community
- Provide facilities and services in line with future population growth
- Improve the streetscape over time to create a more pedestrian friendly environment

### Town centre and employment

- Promote and support the development of the town centre
- Support new and existing businesses
- Promote Goornong as a tourist destination

### Public space and environment

- Improve Goornong's public spaces and streetscapes
- Protect and enhance Goornong's natural setting

### Bushfire

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

### Movement

- Improve walking and cycling infrastructure in Goornong and to enable greater transport choice
- Improve public transport connections

### QUESTIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY:

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





## 5 ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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

- Infrastructure
- Future Growth
- Town Centre
- Public Space and Environment
- Bushfire
- Movement

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 City should be considering?



## 5.1 INFRASTRUCTURE AND FUTURE GROWTH

### Background

Goornong is a town that has potential to grow. It has a new train station, is within easy commutable distance to Bendigo and other centres and has a significant amount of land potentially available for development. Goornong could take advantage of the regional 'tree change' and provide lifestyle opportunities to residents moving from Melbourne and other larger centres.

According to the 2016 Census there were 270 private dwellings in Goornong that accommodated a population of 654. 99 per cent of all dwellings were traditional detached dwellings.

However, there are currently various infrastructure constraints that restrict the towns potential for growth and

will be challenging to overcome. The constraints primarily relate to sewerage and drainage.

Much of Goornong's future growth potential is dependent on it being seweraged. Without sewerage the town can only develop at a density of four dwellings per hectare due to the need to accommodate a septic system.

Goornong also has a waste transfer station at 55-59 Englishs Road (that has a 500m buffer) and is located on land formerly used as a landfill.

Note: Issues around the road network, maintenance came through strongly in the community survey response and this is addressed in Section 5.5.

### ISSUES

There appears to be strong community support for the provision of sewerage infrastructure in Goornong, however concern has been raised about the cost to residents. Preliminary calculations estimate that with access to sewerage infrastructure the existing township could accommodate almost three times the current population and this level of development could support a range of businesses. It would also help to encourage a greater variety of housing stock for existing and new residents

The need for improved drainage infrastructure was a consistent theme coming from the community surveys, the challenge being that Goornong's topography is very flat, making outfall drainage challenging

A lack of a defined boundary around the township may impact on the ability to ensure the retention of the good quality agricultural land surrounding the township

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

The waste transfer station site does present a number of challenges. As a former landfill it is very likely that the site is contaminated, and the exact nature of the contaminants needs to be understood. The 500m buffer around the site also limits growth opportunities in the area immediately surrounding the site

### OPPORTUNITIES

Sewerage infrastructure would potentially enable greater growth in Goornong. There would need to be an assessment of the costs and benefits and what the long-term financial and asset management impacts would be on Coliban Water. For sewerage to be viable for Goornong it would require assistance and funding through State government

Identify sites, ideally near the town centre, where a greater diversity in housing stock is encouraged

Clearly delineate in the planning scheme a settlement boundary around Goornong to better protect the surrounding farmland from residential encroachment in the longer term

Prepare a drainage strategy for Goornong once the longer-term growth opportunities have been identified

Discuss with NBN Co the potential/opportunities to improve broadband infrastructure

The City to continue the monitoring and evaluation of transfer station site to better understand the longer-term impacts of the previous use of the site as a landfill



## 5.2 TOWN CENTRE AND EMPLOYMENT

### Background

The Drovers Arms plays an important social role within town, as well as doubling as the post office. Other than that, there is little in the way of commercial activity in Goornong, with Bendigo fulfilling the bulk of residents daily shopping needs.

With the newly opened train station there is an exciting prospect of being able to plan, layout and invest in a new town centre that will meet the future needs of the Goornong community.

### ISSUES

There is no clearly defined town centre

The need for shopping options came through very strongly in the survey. The challenge being that for a shop to be sustainable there needs to be a sufficient population catchment and passing trade to make the business economically viable

Concern has been raised about the number of vacant shops in the town centre which are in some instances in a state of disrepair. This does not create an environment that would be attractive to new businesses

### OPPORTUNITIES

A clearly defined town centre will not only assist in making planning decisions but will also inform investment by commercial developers and government agencies

Develop a long-term plan to improve amenity and encourage re-development and re-use of existing commercial buildings

While Goornong is fortunate to have generous street widths it can encourage people to drive quicker than they should. A range of traffic calming 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](http://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/golden-square-urban-design-framework)

Goornong may also benefit from the North Central Victorian Goldfields Release project (<https://earthresources.vic.gov.au/projects/north-central-victorian-goldfields-ground-release>) which is proposing to open a significant amount of land in the Goornong area for mineral exploration. While this project is in the preliminary stages, it may impact on the town in terms of people potentially relocating for work purposes



## 5.3 PUBLIC SPACE AND ENVIRONMENT

### Background

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

#### ISSUES

A lack of consistency in streetscapes in Goornong in terms of landscaping, pedestrian and cyclist amenity and general design/construction

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 ensure that the facilities and services at the reserve respond to community needs

The town centre currently lacks formalised gathering spaces



#### OPPORTUNITIES

Improve the connection between the Goornong and the Campaspe River via Englishs Road

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 below 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 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

There are three bushland reserves within Goornong and opportunities exist to enhance the environmental values of the area, through tree planting and other improvements. Opportunities also exist along several road reserves and the railway reserve

Improve the connection between the town centre and the river - Opportunities may include signage and improved amenities

The City will continue to support the Recreation Reserve Committee with master planning for the reserve and funding on an “as required” basis and to explore new opportunities to activate the reserve

The potential for Goornong to have a public art program to highlight local artists as well as the potential for painted silos should be explored as this would encourage visitors to stop in town and have positive economic benefits



## 5.4 BUSHFIRE

### Background

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

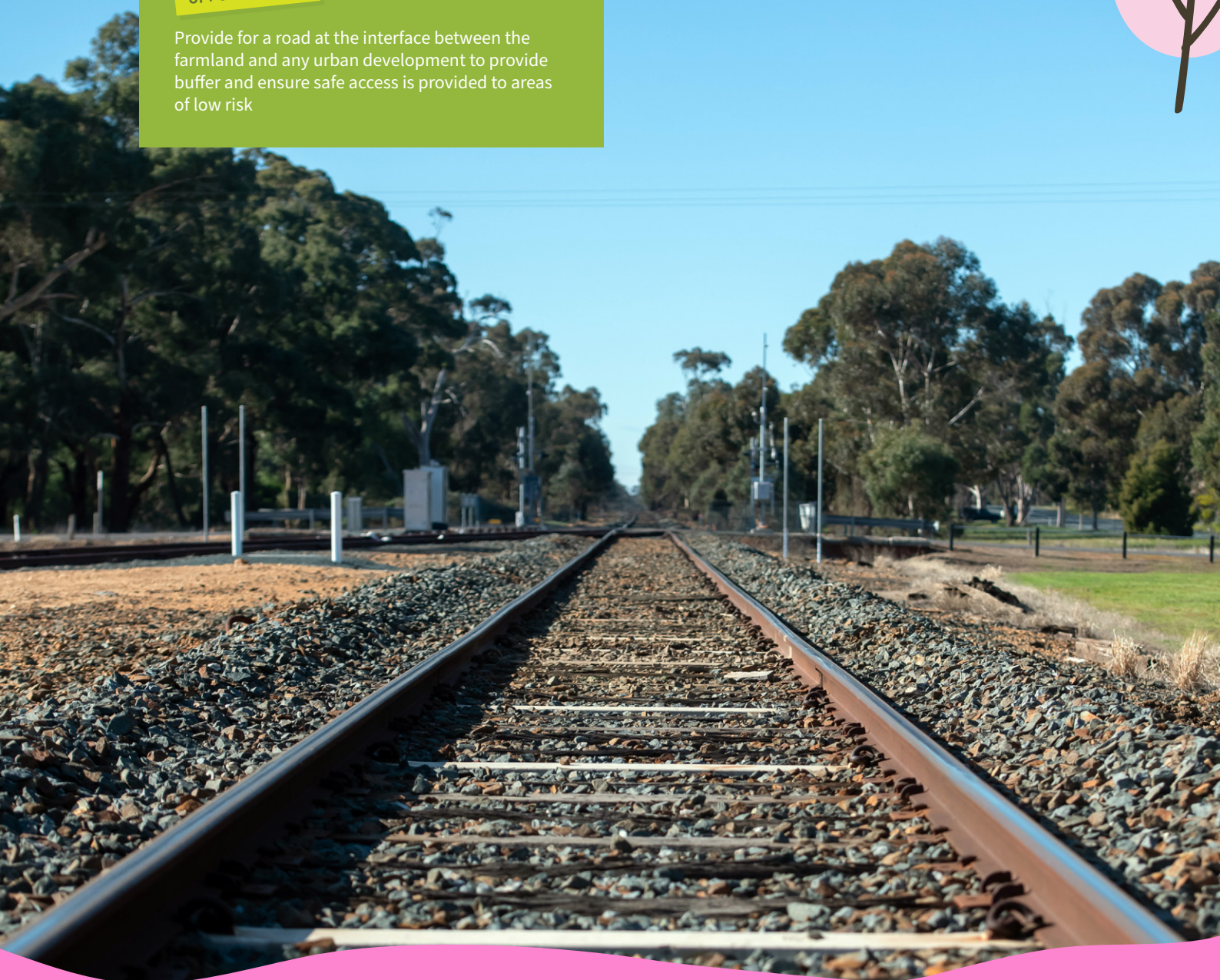
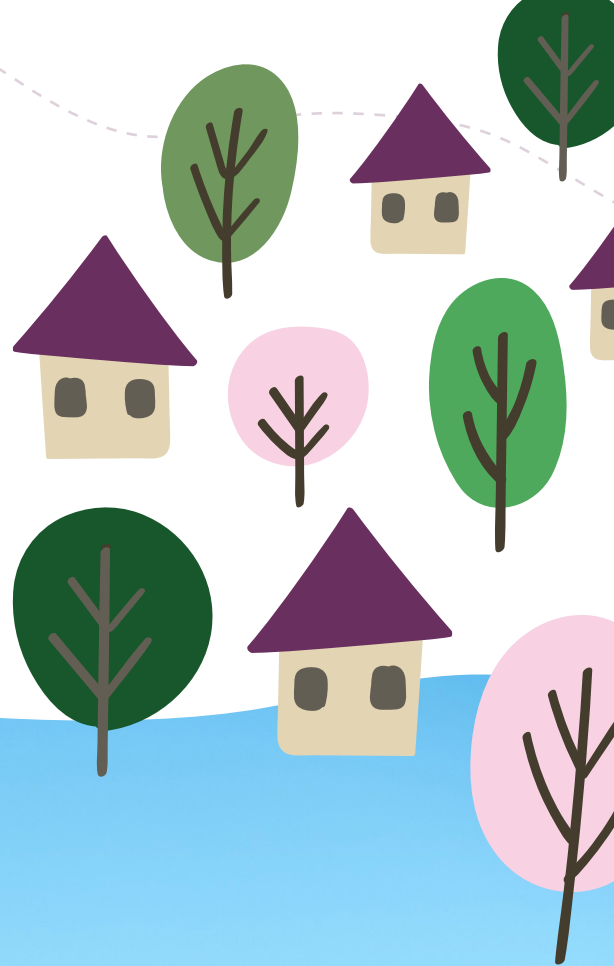
Goornong does have the potential for a grassfire to spread from the surrounding farmland, however the chance of an ember attack is low given the towns isolation from heavily vegetated areas.

#### 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

#### 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



## 5.5 MOVEMENT

### Background

Goornong is reasonably well placed in relation to transport and infrastructure. It has a new train station and upgraded train line connecting it to Bendigo and Echuca, however there is room for improvement in terms of frequency of the service.

Goornong is fortunate to have a traditional grid street layout with a combination of 20 and 30 metre road reserves that have potential to accommodate pedestrians, cyclists and drivers.

The Midland Highway plays a key role in the movement of people and goods in the region, and this will continue. A traffic count from 2020 identified that the Midland Highway carries 4,000 vehicles per day, of which 1,560 were trucks.

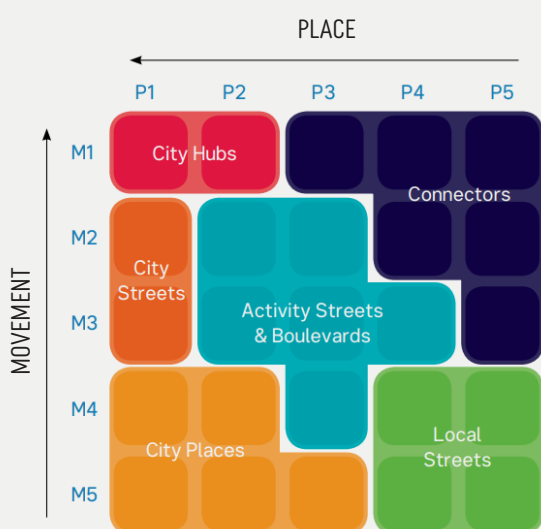
### Movement and Place framework

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 Framework can be found here: <https://transport.vic.gov.au/about/planning/transport-strategies-and-plans/movement-and-place-in-victoria>

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 Goornong. 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.



### ISSUES

An issue that came out very strongly in the community surveys was the lack of footpaths and pedestrian safety generally

Goornong has both bus and train connections to the broader region. Concern was raised around the timetabling and frequency of the services not meeting community needs

Movement around town generally was an issue that came out strongly in the community surveys. There is a need to provide a safe way for all users (cars, trucks, pedestrians and cyclists) to move around town

Concerns have been expressed about specific intersections, speed zones, construction standards and the like of various roads in Goornong

### OPPORTUNITIES

Use the Movement and Place Framework to establish a street hierarchy for Goornong that will guide decisions and investment on works streets including footpaths, road widths, pedestrian and cyclist safety and vehicle movement

Particular attention needs to give to pedestrian and cyclist access to the primary school

With the growing popularity of cycling trails, Goornong is well placed to capitalise on being part of a regional cycling trail link

For example, Local Streets, which is likely to be the most common category in Goornong, 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”.*



## 6 NEXT STEPS

The Issue 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 Goornong's growth.

During this time there will be a listening post and 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 document will have a schedule that will set out when and how the recommendations of the plan will be implemented. Ultimately Council will review and potentially adopt the plan.

### 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](mailto:strategic.planning@bendigo.vic.gov.au)



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