

**ITEM 9.2            BENTLEIGH STRUCTURE PLAN**

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**File No:**            16/25193

**Attachments:**    1. *Bentleigh Structure Plan 2018-2031*  
                          2. *Bentleigh Draft Structure Plan Consultation Overview*

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**PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to seek Council adoption of the *Bentleigh Structure Plan* and to immediately commence statutory implementation of the *Plan*.

This report outlines how the *Bentleigh Structure Plan* addresses the key concerns raised over the final two rounds of community engagement, as well as the how the *Plan* aligns with the shared future vision for Bentleigh which was adopted by Council in July 2017.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

1. adopts the *Bentleigh Structure Plan 2018-2031* as Council policy;
2. requests Council officers to commence preparing the statutory documentation, and any further supporting documentation required, to implement the *Bentleigh Structure Plan 2018-2031* into the *Glen Eira Planning Scheme* through a future Planning Scheme Amendment;
3. requests Council officers to seek updated interim planning controls that implement all relevant built form measures as outlined in the *Bentleigh Structure Plan 2018-2031* and *Quality Design Guidelines* into the *Glen Eira Planning Scheme* through a Planning Scheme Amendment in accordance with Section 20(4) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*;
4. begins the development of a detailed implementation plan that will inform future Council capital budgets;
5. undertakes appropriate communications that:
  - a) acknowledges and thanks all submitters, stakeholders and members of the wider community for their significant contribution to the preparation of the *Bentleigh Structure Plan 2018-2031*;
  - b) outlines Council's resolution on the *Bentleigh Structure Plan 2018-2031*;
  - c) outlines how the adopted *Bentleigh Structure Plan 2018-2031* addresses the key concerns raised in consultation; and
  - d) outlines the next steps, in particular the future Planning Scheme Amendment timeframes.

## BACKGROUND

In July 2017, following three rounds of community engagement, Council adopted a shared, long-term vision for Bentleigh, which states that:

***'Bentleigh will be an accessible, local shopping destination with a vibrant cafe and restaurant culture.***

***It will maintain its community feel with open space, places for people to meet and gather and a broad range of local businesses, all of which will meet the needs of a diverse community.'***

This shared future vision has strongly guided the development of the *Bentleigh Structure Plan 2018-2031* (attachment 1).

The *Bentleigh Structure Plan* outlines a new plan for 2031 that guides future land use, buildings, public spaces, parking and movement in line with the community's shared future vision.

While the *Bentleigh Structure Plan* seeks to achieve many important objectives, at its core it achieves the following critical milestones for the current and future community:

1. Reducing development pressure in residential streets;
2. Creating a new 'eat street' to create a grid of public spaces instead of a strip; and
3. Addressing the future car parking needs.

### 1. Reducing development pressure in residential streets

Bentleigh is a major activity centre with a distinctly low-scale suburban character. The key aim of the *Bentleigh Structure Plan* is to manage growth in a way that is respectful of this context.

Community feedback has clearly shown that the Bentleigh community is seeking an alternative way of managing apartment development that does not conflict with the existing character of Bentleigh's long, quiet, residential streets.

The current zoning in Bentleigh applies an approximate 400 metre circle from the train station that allows 4 storey apartment developments. While this circle may make sense on a map, the transition of zones in the middle of residential streets has been an issue of community concern.

The *Bentleigh Structure Plan* seeks to significantly re-address the configuration of zoning in Bentleigh to remove, where possible, apartment development proposals in long residential streets and instead locate this development along Centre and Jasper Roads or in defined precincts close to the train station.

### 2. Creating a new 'eat street' to create a grid of public spaces instead of a strip

The Bentleigh retail 'centre' is defined by the very long, linear shopping strip along Centre Road. Bentleigh is a centre which has unique community feel and has traditionally preformed a strong retail role serving a large residential catchment. However the next 15 years presents significant challenges for retail across all traditional centres, as it is ever increasingly disrupted by online shopping and home delivery.

In the future, traditional retail centres will need to be adaptive and explore ways to address this change, mainly by:

- Moving towards a more 'experience' focused, rather than 'transactional' focused centre
- Retreating back to a strong retail core, surrounded by active but non-retail uses
- Identifying emerging precincts to co-locate like uses
- Look to community and cultural uses to act as new 'anchors' for visitation

Unlike similar sized centres which are a grid of urban streets, Bentleigh's layout as a very long, linear strip may prove challenging in responding to this future disruption.

The Bentleigh *Structure Plan* seeks to significantly address this concern, by creating a strong retail core defined by a new grid of streets. This grid is defined by a new 'Eat Street' and plaza space which is a pedestrian priority area.

The project will also involve a complete redesign of the existing rotunda and the closure of Vickery Street. By extending the plaza space across Centre Road to incorporate Vickery Street, this will add depth the linear retail strip.

This new 'eat street' will be an inviting green space with large canopy trees, outdoor seating and activated by cafes, restaurants and bars, with increased trading hours. The vision of 'eat street' is to be a catalyst for an emerging cafe and restaurant culture in Bentleigh, which in turn supports interweaved retail offerings, with improved larger retail anchors.

This type of space, responds to the community desire for Bentleigh to have new open space, places for people to meet and gather and a broad range of local businesses.

### 3. Addressing the future parking needs

Bentleigh is the primary shopping destination within the Glen Eira municipality, with more residents traveling to the Bentleigh centre to do their weekly shop than any of the other local shopping strips. As Bentleigh serves a large regional catchment, there is a strong need for car parking.

The *Bentleigh Structure Plan* outlines a plan to increase Bentleigh's provision of public car parking by an additional 264 spaces, which is an approximately 28% increase from current numbers. This future increase is expected to meet and exceed Bentleigh's future parking demands.

In order to meet half of this increase, the *Structure Plan* proposes to develop a new multi-level car park on Horsley Street to cater for the current and future supply of car parking. It is anticipated this multi-level car park will provide a total of 480 public car parking spaces. This redevelopment provides a significant opportunity for a new retail anchor at ground floor and to create a new open space on the Godfrey Street car park.

### State and Council Policy

Council has a responsibility to both implement the vision and objectives of the community as set out in the *Glen Eira Council and Community Plan 2017-2021* while also being required to align with strategies and directions set out in the State Government's planning strategy – *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*. In July 2017, Council adopted the *Activity Centre, Housing and Local Economy Strategy 2017* which seeks to create a strong link between the community's and the State's aspirations.

The *Glen Eira Council and Community Plan 2017-2021* outlines a clear direction for Glen Eira, in particular the *Liveable and well designed* theme states the following objectives:

- Create prosperous, accessible and vibrant urban places.
- Encourage development that benefits the community.
- Proactively plan for and manage change within our urban places.
- Invest sustainably in our infrastructure and community assets.

The State Government's *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* is the metropolitan planning strategy that sets the vision and policy direction for managing growth across Melbourne. Consistent with longstanding State policy, the revised *Plan Melbourne* shows a plan to accommodate population growth across the state, by focusing greater development opportunities in major centres within the inner and middle regions that are in close proximity to well-serviced public transport and employment areas.

*Plan Melbourne* identifies Bentleigh as a major activity centre that should accommodate increased housing and employment growth. This is due to its location in an established area with good access to public transport and other services.

The *Activity Centre, Housing and Local Economy Strategy* provides Council with an integrated plan to successfully accommodate this growth in a way that revitalises and strengthens our local neighbourhoods and their surrounding communities.

The *Strategy* establishes a new policy direction for the future planning of Glen Eira, in particular it separates major centres into two categories, major centres and major centres with urban renewal opportunities.

The *Activity Centre, Housing and Local Economy Strategy* identifies Caulfield Station, Carnegie, Elsternwick and East Village all as centres that have urban renewal opportunities and as such can accommodate greater development growth.

The *Strategy* identifies Bentleigh simply as a major centre, meaning it may have the same economic focus as these other centres but not the same development focus. This change in policy classification importantly recognises that Bentleigh is a long commercial strip surrounded by low scale suburban residential areas.

## ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

### Consultation on the Draft Concept and Draft Structure Plans

At the 25 July 2017 Council Meeting, Council endorsed the release of the *Draft Bentleigh Concept Plan* for two rounds of community engagement.

Subsequently, Council officers undertook two rounds of consultation, between July and December 2017, firstly on the *Draft Concept Plans* and then on an updated *Draft Structure Plan*.

The key issues raised by the community during these two rounds of consultation are further discussed below:

#### 1. **Building heights on Strategic Sites**

Community feedback:

Community feedback on the *Draft Concept Plan* which proposed up to 8 storeys on strategic sites, clearly showed that the idea of taller buildings is not supported in Bentleigh. The updated *Draft Structure Plan* outlined a 5 storey height limit across strategic sites and the central commercial area, which was largely supported in the feedback received.

Clarification of heights proposed along Centre Road was also sought.

Officer recommendation:

Following community feedback on the *Draft Concept Plan*, officers updated the *Draft Bentleigh Structure Plan* to show a maximum of 5 storeys in the centre. The lowered building heights recognised that community feedback was in line with Council's new policy position as outlined in the *Activity Centre, Housing and Local Economy Strategy*. The *Strategy* outlines that Bentleigh has a lower development focus than centres with urban renewal opportunity. This position was also informed by the consideration of overshadowing on public spaces, such as the new plaza.

## 2. **Building heights on Centre Road**

Community feedback:

The community sought further clarification of the heights proposed along Centre Road as the *Draft Structure Plan* described a range of 3 to 5 storeys.

Officer recommendation:

Officers have updated the plans to identify a maximum height for all commercial properties along Centre Road. The heights vary, largely depending on their immediate context including a maximum height of:

- 3 storeys where immediately abutting a residential heritage area;
- 4 storeys where abutting an established residential area; and
- 5 storeys where abutting a street or public space.

The allocation of these heights seeks to provide an appropriate transition along Centre Road.

While this methodology was generally followed, a number of exceptions must be noted:

- The residential heritage area between Burgess and Daley Streets is buffered by existing car parking land and as such 4 storeys was deemed acceptable.
- A number of sites identified as 5 storeys have some residential interface, including the eastern end of Centre Road, and southern end of Vickery and Oak streets. While these sites do have some sensitive interfaces, it was deemed that 5 storeys was appropriate due to their prominent location within the centre.

## 3. **Car parking**

Community feedback:

Many community members raised questions regarding the anticipated staging of future development and how it will affect car parking availability. Community concerns were also raised about managing the impact of traffic to access the future consolidated car parking locations.

Officer recommendation:

The key considerations for the existing Coles car park site have been updated to make the sequencing and interdependencies of the projects clearer to readers. That is, Coles car parking on Council land will not be removed without implementing measures to manage car parking in the area.

An objective has been added which states to *Minimise traffic impacts on surrounding residential streets, including Horsley Street.*

## FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

A more detailed implementation plan will be developed following adoption of the *Bentleigh Structure Plan*. The detailed implementation plan will guide future project bids as part of Council's budget processes and priority setting.

Council will need to work with a range of stakeholders, either through advocacy or partnership to deliver the identified projects. This will ensure that the streetscape and public space improvements outlined in the *Bentleigh Structure Plan* are carried out in an orderly and staged manner and in a way that is affordable for the community. Stakeholders and project partners include the local community, local traders, landowners, VicRoads, and Public Transport Victoria.

## POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

To ensure that the land use and development outcomes outlined in the *Plan* are delivered and enforceable, the objectives need to be translated into the *Glen Eira Planning Scheme*.

The *Scheme* guides decision-making on planning permit applications and governs issues such as design and development; land use; heritage; neighbourhood character; and amenity.

This statutory translation is achieved by undertaking a Planning Scheme Amendment, which involves 'statutory' community consultation. The Amendment process will commence following Council's adoption of the *Structure Plan*. As part of this translation process, the specific statutory tools and mechanisms will be developed to best translate the relevant objectives of the *Structure Plan*. Potential statutory implementation measures are listed in the relevant sections of the *Plan*.

## COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The development of the *Bentleigh Structure Plan* has been an iterative process, driven by community feedback and expert review, six rounds of consultation, with more than 941 submissions received for *Bentleigh*.

The comprehensive consultation process undertaken with the *Bentleigh* community is outlined below:

STAGE	DATES	FEEDBACK RECEIVED	SECTIONS OF THE STRUCTURE PLAN INFLUENCED
1 Tell us what you	28 November 2016 - 19 February 2017	Surveys: 443 Facebook comments: 80	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision</li> <li>• Public Spaces</li> </ul>

love about your shopping strip			
2 Transforming our neighbourhood together	10 March - 9 April 2017	Surveys: 122 Drop-in sessions: 77 Email/mail submissions: 6 Facebook comments: 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision</li> <li>• Public spaces</li> </ul>
3 Activity Centre, Housing and Local Economy Strategy and early Structure Plan exploration	24 May - 13 June 2017	Online feedback forms: 38 Email submissions: 26 Forum attendees: 39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision</li> <li>• Land use</li> </ul>
4 Quality Design Principles	26 July- 3 September 2017	Online forum: 82 Facebook comment: 5 Submissions: 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buildings</li> </ul>
5 Draft Concept Plan	26 July - 3 September 2017	Online surveys: 60 Online forum comments: 3 Concept plan document downloads: 569 Facebook comments: 28 Email/mail/phone submissions: 31 Community forum attendees: 58	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land use</li> <li>• Buildings</li> <li>• Public spaces</li> <li>• Parking and movement</li> <li>• Urban renewal</li> </ul>
6 Draft Structure Plan/Quality Design Guidelines	30 October - 11 December 2017	Email submissions: 28 Surveys: 42 Online forum comments: 5 Facebook comments: 10 Bentleigh forum attendees: 42 Drop-in sessions: 60 Quality Design Guidelines submissions: 46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land use</li> <li>• Buildings</li> <li>• Public spaces</li> <li>• Parking and movement</li> <li>• Urban renewal</li> </ul>

The *Bentleigh Draft Structure Plan Consultation Overview* (attachment 2) provides a concise summary of the six stage consultation process that informs the development of the *Bentleigh Structure Plan*.

Detailed reports of the six stages, including the community submissions received, have been made publicly available throughout the process and can be found online at [www.gleneira.vic.gov.au/Bentleigh](http://www.gleneira.vic.gov.au/Bentleigh)

Detailed consultation reports include:

- Stage one: *Tell us what you love about your shopping strip consultation summary*
- Stage two: *Transforming our neighbourhoods together consultation summary*
- Stage three: *Activity centre, housing and local economy strategy and early structure plan exploration consultation summary*
- Stage four: *Quality Design Principles consultation summary*
- Stage five: *Bentleigh draft concept plan consultation summary*
- Stage six: *Bentleigh draft structure plan consultation summary*

If Council adopts the *Bentleigh Structure Plan*, officers will undertake further communication to:

- acknowledge and thank all submitters;
- outline the Council decision and provide a link to the new *Structure Plan*;
- outline how the adopted *Structure Plan* addresses the key concerns raised in consultation; and
- outline the next steps, in particular the future Planning Scheme Amendment timeframes.

## **LINK TO COUNCIL AND COMMUNITY PLAN**

Theme one: *Liveable and well designed*

- Create prosperous, accessible and vibrant urban places.
- Encourage development that benefits the community.
- Proactively plan for and manage change within our urban places.
- Invest sustainably in our infrastructure and community assets.

## **OFFICER DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect interest in this matter.

## **CONCLUSION**

Council has the challenging task of accommodating future growth and new development, while protecting Bentleigh's low scale suburban character. The *Bentleigh Structure Plan* provides a shared future vision and robust plan that balances the current and future community needs, while also creating a vibrant and successful centre.