11.6 EXECUTIVE

11.6.1 <u>Civic Administration and Depot Operations – Design Options and Feasibility</u> Study

Responsible Director: Chief Executive Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Civic Administration and Depot Operations – Design Options and Feasibility Study has recommended an effective future operating model for civic, administrative and depot operations for Strathbogie Shire.

The project analysed a range of options and potential locations before recommending a distributed civic, administrative, and depot operating model that responds effectively to geographic attributes of the Shire, likely future settlement and growth patterns, and need for service and emergency response.

Local government plays an essential democratic and service role for its community and an important foundation are the assets and facilities to support quality outcomes for the community.

Existing buildings and facilities have attracted insufficient investment in maintenance and renewal due to higher priority competing demands in a financially constrained environment. Most civic, administrative, and depot assets are at the end of their economic life and are not considered fit-for-purpose to support delivery of quality services to the community or provide a safe and healthy work environment for councillors, employees, and visitors.

After analysing many alternative options, the study has recommended redevelopment of the civic and administrative facilities at Binney Street Euroa and upgrades of the existing depots at Nagambie and Euroa. The study found that the staff accommodation at Nagambie currently underway is complementary to and supportive of this strategy.

A key design principle was to ensure that the design reflected hybrid and flexible work arrangements. This introduced efficiencies in the design of the buildings and savings in floor space for employees and support services. This space has been reallocated to enhance civic, governance, and customer service functions.

Three (3) civic and administrative options have been developed for the Binney Street site; two (2) options include consideration of colocation of library services. Maternal Child Health and Visitor Information services are also incorporated.

All civic and administrative options retain the Public Hall (Cinema) and reinstate the original façade and foyer.

Masterplans have been developed for the two depots; these will be long term redevelopment proposals far beyond the scope of this project. Employee accommodation and safer travel routes at both sites are in urgent need of improvement and upgrade.

Included in this report are summaries of elements of the business case and the full design options report. Financial analysis and modelling will continue, including potential sources of funding for the project which is likely to include self-generated capital works, operational efficiencies and savings, loans to ensure intergenerational equity, and external grants.

It is recommended that Council receive and note the report and refer consideration to the incoming Council as part of its induction and strategic planning processes.

Council staff will continue to explore potential funding sources including development of an advocacy strategy to State and Federal governments.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Receive and note the Civic Administration and Depot Operations Design Options and Feasibility Study.
- 2. Note that further financial modelling and analysis of potential funding sources will be undertaken over the next three to six months.
- 3. Refer the Study for consideration by the incoming Council as part of its induction and strategic planning process to establish the Council Plan, Financial Plan, and Asset Plan for the next council term.

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The purpose of this report is for Council to note and receive the outcomes of a design options, feasibility study, and business case for future civic, administrative, and depot operations for the Strathbogie Shire.

Funded in the 2023-24 Council Budget, the project was initiated to explore the most appropriate operating model, develop design options, and investigate site and feasibility issues.

A decision on directions and financial implications will be referred for consideration to the new Council as part of its induction, long-term financial planning, and Council Plan process in early 2025.

ISSUES, OPTIONS AND DISCUSSION

Project background

Workshop Architecture and Mach2 Consulting were engaged to review multiple options for the development of a renewed civic presence to provide administrative, councillor and depot functions to support current and future community and economic conditions.

The project brief outlined that the project should:

- Consider civic office accommodation to deliver core local government services to the Shire from Euroa and Nagambie
- Outdoor operations delivery from either multiple sites or from a single consolidated site
- Incorporate sustainable design principles to minimise the environmental impact of the redevelopment

The project analysed a range of options to arrive at a preferred operating model for both civic and depot functions considering:

- Council and democratic functions of the council operating as a level of government
- A civic presence to support the east-west nature of the municipality with a staffing profile across both sites to deliver improved customer interface
- Depot operations delivery locations, including analysis of centralised options that might deliver operational efficiencies and the ongoing demands for emergency response across the municipality
- Staffing profiles and changes in the method of working (post-Covid)
- Location assessment and site analysis for council owned and leased facilities
- The cultural and civic heritage of existing buildings and facilities
- Regulatory and legal requirements for preferred options
- Size and optimal layouts of proposed office accommodation based on current and future service needs

Project methodology

The project methodology included:

- Collection of relevant information through a comprehensive Request for Information
- Conduct of more than 30 interviews with managers, key process owners and Executive members to determine design principles and explore operating parameters
- The project team conducted on-site and facility tours and face to face interviews over a 5-day period, this was supplemented by many online meetings and consultations
- Manager surveys to better understand individual departmental staffing and operating requirements
- An all-staff survey to understand existing staff sentiment and requirements
- A detailed market analysis document to analyse and assess land and economic factors relevant to the project
- Development of a comprehensive functional brief that outlines operating requirements, preferred space allocation, and relationships between business functions
- An iterative design development process that explored and refined more than a dozen options before selecting three civic and two depot options

Project context

Councils are area-based representative governments with a democratic, legislative, and electoral mandate to manage local issues, deliver services, and plan for community needs.

Council has a broad range of mandated responsibilities that it has an obligation to resource and deliver on behalf of the community, these include:

- Governance and civic functions supporting the democratic process
- Customer service to support effective relationships with the community
- Land use planning and building control
- Asset management and renewal roads, buildings, drains, bridges, etc.
- Engineering services, design, and stormwater and flood management
- Environmental health, food safety, and public safety
- Emergency management response, relief, and recovery
- Waste management and environment

Some functions of local government are discretionary but are an important response to local community need, these include:

- Open space and recreation design
- Arts, culture, and supporting a creative community
- Library services (funded by council and delivered through the Goulburn Valley Regional Library Corporation)
- Maternal and child health, immunisation, preschool, family, and youth services
- Tourism development and economic development
- Community development and support for different groups in the community

All functions and services delivered by local government require skilled and qualified people to support the delivery of outcomes to the community.

Council is a key employer in the shire and has a responsibility to provide a safe and appropriate workplace for all employees. This includes consideration of occupational health and safety matters, compliance with building standards and regulations, accessibility and hygiene and environmental standards. These considerations related also to access by councillors, community members, and contractors.

Project scope

The project focused on accommodation and operations associated with the following core local government functions:

- Civic and councillor functions meeting chamber and councillor meeting and work spaces
- Council service and administration facilities to provide accommodation for Council staff engaged in delivery of services and programs
- Depot administration and staff accommodation to support delivery of physical and outdoor maintenance and emergency services

Existing conditions

The business case has identified that investment in renewal or replacement of civic, administrative, and depot operations is justified because existing facilities are not fit-for-purpose, provide very poor working conditions, and do not support excellent customer service for the community.

Council has a legislated obligation to provide a safe and healthy workplace. The current facilities do not meet this standard.

All Councils need skilled and experienced staff to deliver services to their community. The quality of office accommodation is a key consideration in the attraction and retention of quality staff.

Council has not invested in asset maintenance and renewal of civic, administrative, and depot assets over many decades and most buildings are at the end of their useful and economic life. This is primarily due to issues related to the financial sustainability of small rural shires and the precedence given to competing priorities such as roads and other physical assets.

The business case has identified that civic and administrative buildings that provide councillor and staff accommodation and support for legitimate council operations at all locations are not fit for purpose and require significant renewal and upgrade investment.

The options outlined in this report provide a medium to long term solution for the identified issues. There is no 'do nothing' option available to Council in the short to medium term as the study identified that 'do nothing' is no longer a viable option.

An overview of existing conditions is outlined at Appendix 1.

Future civic operating model

A project priority was to determine an appropriate operating model for civic, administrative, and depot functions delivered by Strathbogie Shire Council.

The project considered and rejected, due to cost and impracticability, options that centralised civic, administrative and depot functions:

- Consolidation of administrative and/or depot operations to a single site to achieve organisational and systems efficiencies through economies of scale, including:
 - Centralisation of civic and administrative functions to either Euroa or Nagambie, either at the existing sites or a new site to be determined
 - Centralisation of civic and administrative functions (and potentially depot functions) to a new location (e.g., Longwood)

It was determined after consultation and review of costs that the centralised model would not suit the east-west nature of the municipality, the need for civic and depot operations presence in both Nagambie and Euroa, and the future growth pressures and service demand that is projected for Nagambie and Avenel in the south.

A further critical consideration was the number of emergency callouts that depot operations staff respond to each year, this appears to on the increase with more than 300 callouts in 2023/24. A distributed operating model is essential to ensure that plant, equipment, materials, and staff are located close to the emergency to ensure that response times are minimised and costs for the municipality contained.

The feasibility and business case has confirmed that the Strathbogie Shire community will be best served through the development of a distributed operating model:

- Civic and administration
 - o Euroa civic operations at the current site or a new site
 - Nagambie planned development to be an initial base
- Depot operations
 - o Euroa redesign and develop the existing Euroa Depot
 - Nagambie redesign and develop and existing Nagambie Depot
 - Violet Town maintain the existing sub-depot
 - Strathbogie maintain the existing sub-depot

The associated project to redevelop the former Goulburn Shire offices in Nagambie is deemed entirely consistent with this strategy. The initial redevelopment to be completed this year will provide an initial operating base for Council staff, with future civic and administrative expansion likely to be focused in Nagambie due to the housing, population, and economic growth being centred in the west and south of the municipality.

Design principles

Principles were developed to guide option analysis and design development.

Customer relationships

- Welcoming and spacious customer service area
- Access to appropriate meeting rooms for consultation and sensitive or confidential discussions
- Improved technology for online access to specialist staff
- Booking of appointments and encouraging onsite engagement to provide better service standards across the municipality
- Take advantage of new technology and systems to enable better customer service to community, service users, and applicants
- Consulting spaces for visiting specialist staff and community engagement

Productivity, attraction, and retention of staff

- A quality contemporary office environment with suitable meeting rooms, and the flexibility to work from home or other places as required
- Comfortable and inclusive work areas that enable collaboration and increased productivity
- Good natural light and fresh ventilation with access to outdoor spaces
- Shower and end-of-journey facilities to encourage active transport options for staff
- Flexibility with certainty for community and colleagues
- Adaptive spaces to support training and development, project management, and community meetings
- HYBRID+Flexible work supporting better customer and community outcomes, conditions for staff, and efficiencies in building design
 - Build for 70% capacity 70% workstations and 30% workplaces

Internal relationships

- HYBRID+Flexible model of work will support better adaptation to internal relationships
- Project and task teams will be able to collaborate in designated spaces
- Flexible workstations and workplaces will support changing needs of work and internal relationships
- Single workspace/building with open space will promote internal collaboration

Environmental standards

- A building with high environmental standards
- Solar generation maximise solar generation on available roof space
- Acoustic treatment to be explored through schematic design
- Rainwater harvesting and reuse for landscape and internal
- Waste management external space allocation for waste separation

Power and technical

- Energy independence including battery back-up and secondary generation capacity
- Standalone functionality for solar battery charging
- Battery and solar to provide UPS capacity for building

Functional brief – civic and administration

A functional brief (refer Attachment 3) was developed through discussions with all workgroups, a manager survey and a staff survey. This outlines the functional and spatial requirements of all council work areas and documents specialised requirements such as storage and relationships.

Strathbogie Shire has a total workforce of approximately 150 staff (125 FTE) spread across three main locations. Under the proposed operating model, it is assumed that the staff population at the main sites will be:

- Nagambie assumed initial baseline of 20 staff
- Euroa assumed baseline of 70 staff
- Euroa and Nagambie Depots assumed baseline of up to 18 administrative staff (plus outdoor crews)

The decision to design for between 70% and 80% capacity means that the space allocated for staff accommodation can be physically smaller, therefore saving on design, building, and operating costs.

In overall terms, the footprint of the proposed civic and administrative redevelopment at Euroa is equivalent to existing buildings planned for demolition. The space saved by compressing staff areas has been distributed to:

- Increased councillor and civic spaces to support good governance
- An enhanced customer service area to provide better service to the community
- Allowances for additional community services (maternal & child health and visitor information centre) at the site

Option analysis

The business case contemplated various options before settling on the design options outlined below, these included:

- Centralisation of all civic operations at a new site on the periphery of Euroa or Nagambie
- Centralisation of all depot operations to a single site in Euroa, Nagambie or separate location (discounted from consideration due to cost and community service outcomes)
- Centralisation of both civic and depot operations at a new site on the periphery of Euroa or Nagambie (discounted due to cost and inability to support effective emergency operations)
- Retain and refurbish the existing civic and administrative facilities in Euroa (discounted due to impracticability and potential cost)
- Demolish 1980s extension, refurbish remaining and extend (this is Option One referred to below)
- Demolish all original civic elements, retain the public hall and build new (Option Two below)

During May 2024, the project was asked to consider relocation of the library, maternal and child health service and Visitor Information Centre to the civic site in Euroa.

The library has been incorporated into Option One and Option Three.

The Maternal and Child Health service and Visitor Information Centre are included in all three civic options under consideration.

Design options - civic and administrative (Euroa)

An iterative analysis process reduced possibilities to three preferred options for civic and administrative functions at Binney Street Euroa. The Project Control Group and Executive endorsed the following options for further development:



Figure 1 - Option One - Civic and administrative plus library (Euroa)

Option One

- Demolish the 1980s civic extension and two additional buildings at the rear
- Preserve the Public Hall and reinstate Foyer
- Refurbish the original civic building for use as a library including raising the floor-level to achieve flood resilience, and
- Build a new two-storey civic and administrative hub at the rear

Option Two

- Demolish all original civic buildings, retain Public Hall and reinstate Foyer
- Build new single storey building adjacent to the Public Hall (no library included)
- Civic and administrative functions designed around a welcoming customer service foyer adjacent to the council chamber

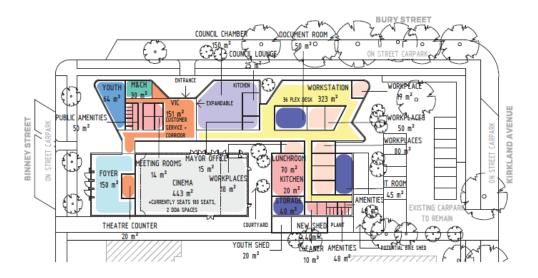


Figure 2 - Option Two - Civic and administrative - no library (Euroa)

Option Three

- Demolish all original civic buildings, retain Public Hall and reinstate Foyer
- Build new library adjacent to the Public Hall
- Build new two-storey civic and administrative hub to the rear

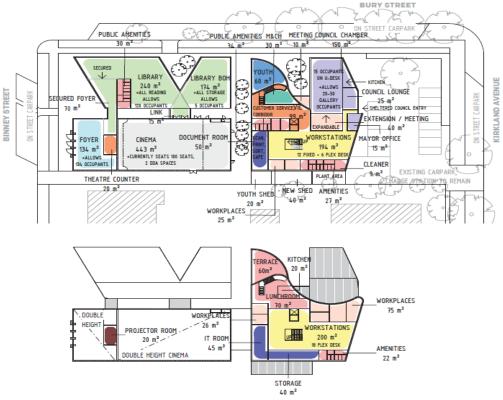


Figure 3 - Option Three - Civic and administrative plus library (Euroa)

A final design report providing details and 3D renderings of the proposed developments will be provided to Council for consideration.

Library options

Two (2) of the three (3) options developed include consideration of moving the Euroa library to the civic site in Binney Street.

No community consultation has occurred with the community as to whether this is a supported concept, and the Goulburn Valley Library Corporation has been advised and not engaged in detail about the possibility.

Any decision to relocate the library will be subject to a separate comprehensive engagement, design, and decision process.

Community uses

The civic and administrative options include a youth space, maternal and child health, and visitor information centre.

The existing buildings include a small youth space and associated storage, this has been replicated in the new schemes.

Additional space has been allocated for the following uses:

- Maternal & child health will be relocated from across Bury Street to allow expansion of pre-school services
- Visitor Information Centre will relocate from its current main street location to be close to the Travellers Rest service area on Sevens Creek

No final decision has been made on the transition of these services and further stakeholder consultation and engagement will occur before any final decision.

Depot options

Once the distributed depot operating model was confirmed a consultative process was used to develop a masterplan for the Euroa and Nagambie depots. The focus of this project is contained to the administrative and staff accommodation elements and the majority of the masterplan implementation will be a long-term project.

The Euroa depot masterplan (Figure 4 below) includes:

- Demolition of existing staff facilities and replacement with new administration building with staff amenities
- Significant upgrade to the layout, hardstand, buildings and associated infrastructure (e.g., bulk materials storage etc).
- Redesigned traffic flow to promote safety for staff and visitors

The Nagambie Depot masterplan (Figure 5 below) includes significant additional works beyond staff and administration that will be subject to its own feasibility study. Key aspects of the plan include:

- Demolition of existing staff facilities and replacement with new administration building with staff amenities
- Better control of traffic and separation of staff and visitor parking to improve safety
- Significant upgrade of hardstand and associated infrastructure

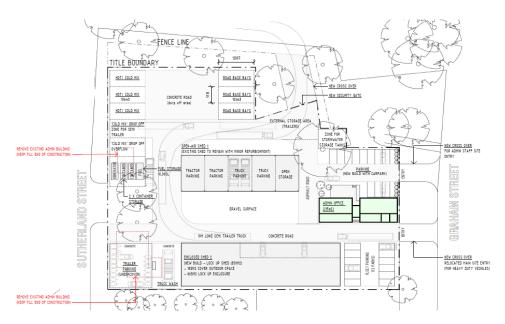


Figure 4 - Euroa Depot - Site Plan (proposed)

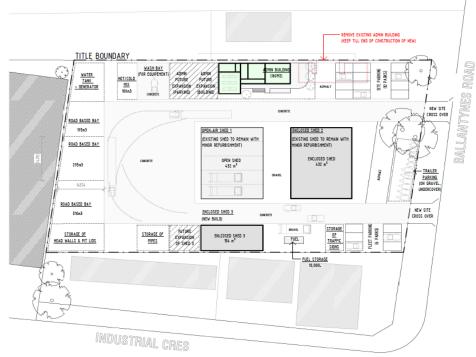


Figure 5 - Nagambie Depot - Site Plan (proposed)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A key governance principle of the *Local Government Act 2020* is that the municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making.

This project has been undertaken on the assumption that the findings will be referred to the incoming Council for decision and direction.

This will include community consultation as part of the development of the Council Plan, Financial Plan, Asset Plan and four-year budget.

Significant internal consultation and engagement has occurred to inform the development of the functional brief and ensure that design options will meet future operational requirements.

Engagement has also occurred with:

- the Catchment Management Authority and building surveyor on the issue of flood resilience
- Various technical sub-consultants to inform the design response and project cost assumptions

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Council Plans and Policies

Council Plan 2021/25

- Engage.Create.Unite
 - We create welcoming social spaces where people can connect
- Live.Access.Connect
 - We all have access to important services
 - Integrated service and infrastructure planning
 - o Ensure upgrades of council facilities are accessible and compliant

Asset Plan

- The renewal and replacement of assets and facilities is a core function of any local government
- Over decades limited funds have been spent on maintenance and upgrade of ciciv and administrative facilities and staff accommodation generally
- This project outlines a once in fifty years renewal of infrastructure required to support core civic and administrative functions

Financial Plan

- This project will be implemented over the medium to long term and will require careful planning in terms of its financial sources
- The new Financial Plan to be developed by the incoming Council in 2025 will need to consider how the elements of the project can be delivered

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

There are no state of national plans relevant to this project.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

This is a major project for Strathbogie Shire Council and implementation will include consideration and mitigation of significant risks.

Risk	Likelihood	Consequence	Mitigation
Refurbishment risk – upgrade of old buildings includes an inherent risk due to unknown conditions.	High	High	Include an appropriate project and design contingency in cost estimates. Advice from sub-consultants and invasive testing might be required to better understand conditions.
Flood resilience – Euroa is flood prone and any project will need to consider floodresilience standards.	High	High	Buildings and refurbishment to include flood resilience standard of 1:100 plus 150mm relative floor level.
Scope creep – uncontrolled changes or growth of project scope.	Medium	High	Additional functions and space requirements will add to cost and complexity.
Capital cost escalation – construction and civil costs have increased by ~40% since 2021. There is some evidence that the market is starting to cool with better prices being achieved.	Medium	Medium	Because the project is medium to long term the associated financial modelling includes appropriate contingency and cost escalation factors. The contingency allowances should be reviewed at each stage to ensure they are appropriate compared with level of risk.
Project management risks – Strathbogie Shire is a small rural shire and has limited experience with major projects of this scale and complexity.	Medium	High	Strathbogie Shire to review project management structures and ensure skilled and qualified project managers are engaged on major projects.
Environmental site conditions – it is very likely that the depots and possibly administrative buildings could be affected by contamination.	High	High	Commission site assessments to better understand conditions. Ensure project contingencies are reassessed at each stage of the project.
Regulatory compliance – failure to adhere to planning, environment, and other regulations.	Medium	Medium	This phase of the has assessed that regulatory compliance risk is relatively low. DDA and OH&S risk will be addressed by the project.
Stakeholder risk – the project has not been exposed to community consultation. This should be a priority through the next stage of development.	Medium	High	Briefing of the incoming Council through the induction period will be a priority. Community consultation on the project is essential during the next phase of development.

Financial constraints – Strathbogie Shire is a small rural shire operating within significant financial constraints.	Medium	High	Careful financial planning will be required to realise the project. This will include consideration of financial capacity and potentially loan borrowings to ensure intergenerational equity.
Access to grants – this project will require external funding from State of Federal governments.	Medium	High	Without external financial support in the form of grants it is unlikely that the core project scope can be implemented.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Council has a legislated obligation to provide a range of services and functions, it also provides a range of discretionary services that respond to needs within the community. It must employ staff to deliver these services and functions.

As an employer, Council has an obligation to ensure that it provides councillors, staff, and visitors with safe and healthy workplace.

Conflict of Interest Declaration

All officers and/or contractors involved in the preparation of this report have signed a written declaration that they do not have a conflict of interest in the subject matter of this report.

Transparency

This report provides the Council and community with an overview and summary of the design options, business case, and feasibility study.

The incoming Council will be provided with a comprehensive briefing on the outcomes of the project, the new Council will determine the form and style of community consultation during the next stage of the project.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Financial implications of the project are continuing to be developed and modelled in consultation with Council's Chief Financial Officer and other key staff.

This is considered a major project, and it is unlikely to be delivered without external financial support from the State or Federal government.

The estimated range of cost of works considered in the original scope for the three civic and two depot options is outlined in Table 1 below. These costs do not include library or Public Hall related expenses which would be developed through a separate project.

	Contract Sum	Contingency & Escalation	Total Project Cost
Option One	\$10,672,848	\$6,580,717	\$17,253,565
Option Two	\$11,074,567	\$6,770,744	\$17,845,311
Option Three	\$10,823,103	\$6,651,604	\$17,474,707
Euroa Depot	\$3,446,296	\$1,632,786	\$5,079,082
Nagambie Depot	\$1,768,104	\$837,693	\$2,605,797

Table 1 - Estimated range of costs - Civic and Depot options.

Contract sum in the table above is the likely baseline tendered cost for the project, this includes:

- Demolition
- New works
- External works and services
- Landscaping
- Locality allowance

Contingency and escalation includes allowances for the following factors, noting that these will be refined and reduced as the project moves through design development:

- Design contingency (10%) this allows for unknown factors at this early stage of development
- Cost escalation (5%) further modelling of cost escalation will occur to account for the project not commencing in the short term
- Construction contingency (10%) allowance for potential cost increases above inflation (i.e., construction costs increased 40% between 2021 and 2024)
- Consultant fees (10%) costs of consultants through schematic and detailed design phases
- Furniture and equipment (~3%) allowance for furniture and equipment for the proposed development
- Council costs (5%) Council costs related to project management and associated works
- Authority costs (1%) costs associated with referrals to authorities (i.e., Catchment Management Authority / network managers etc)

Cost estimates at this stage are always qualified with exclusions as on-ground and invasive tests and assessments have not been conducted. Another key variable is existing conditions when working with older buildings; it is at the demolition stage where confidence levels can increase.

The projects will have several sources of funding:

- Council's ongoing capital works program
- Savings and efficiencies in operational budgets
- Loan borrowings to achieve inter-generational equity
- Grants from State and/or Federal government

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Economic

The project has reflected the economic reality that most of the growth in the Shire is in the west and south of the municipality.

Future expansion of civic and administrative functions will likely be in Nagambie using the proposed redevelopment of the Goulburn Shire offices as a base.

A market and economic analysis was completed as a key input into the project.

Social

The project will deliver improved social and community outcomes in terms of better customer and service outcomes.

The integration of maternal and child health and consideration of including the library collocated with the Public Hall provides an opportunity for collaboration and development of a community hub.

The provision of improved working conditions for staff will support better service outcomes through improved staff morale and attraction and retention of skilled staff.

Environmental

All options consider and reflect high environmental design standards.

Flood resilience is a critical design factor for the civic and administrative facilities located in Euroa.

Climate change

There are no significant climate change implications arising from the report.

INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The project incorporates an innovative HYBRID+flexible approach to work design. This allows the staff accommodation element of the building to achieve significant space savings that are reinvested into civic, governance, and customer service outcomes.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

There are no significant human rights implications arising from this report.

CONCLUSION

This report presents the outcomes from an extension analysis and design process for the future of civic, administrative and depot operations for Strathbogie Shire.

It is recommended that Council note the report and refer it for consideration of the incoming Council as part of its induction and strategic planning process in 2025.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Existing Conditions
Attachment 2: Design Principles
Attachment 3: Functional Brief