

RURAL RESIDENTIAL
AND
LAND USE STRATEGY
AND
URBAN GROWTH
STRATEGY

Engagement Approach

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1. Background

Strathbogrie Shire covers around 3,300 square kilometres and is located 125 kilometres north of Melbourne's CBD.

Strathbogrie is positioned toward the centre of the state and is proximate to the key regional centres of Bendigo, Shepparton and Wangaratta. These centres, as well as Melbourne, are accessible to Strathbogrie via major transport routes, including the Hume and Goulburn Valley Freeways and V/line train services connecting the Shire to surrounding towns and urban centres.

The Shire currently attracts a large number of older age cohorts, including retirees, seeking a lifestyle change. This has contributed to an ongoing ageing of the population, which will have implications for aged care, health and social assistance. In addition, the Shire has experienced growth in household income, educational qualifications and employment, which has improved its socio-economic status. The continuation of this growth will be crucial in supporting sustainable economic development for the Strathbogrie municipality.

Strathbogrie Shire incorporates a diverse rural community served by four main townships including Euroa, Nagambie, Violet Town and Avenel. The Shire's population of around 11,455 people includes approximately 3,750 residents in rural areas and smaller towns such as Longwood, Ruffy, Strathbogrie and Graytown.

Strathbogrie Shire has a rural economic base of wool, grain and cattle production, extensive vineyards at Nagambie and throughout the Strathbogrie Ranges and a wide range of intensive cool climate horticultural enterprises. The Shire is home to a strong and growing equine industry and markets itself as the "Horse Capital of Victoria". The Shire is now becoming renowned for tourism.

Covid-19 has seen significant interest from metropolitan buyers for rural land and existing housing within the townships across the Strathbogrie municipality, which has led to an increased demand for housing within the municipality and has placed additional pressure on the future directions of growth.

The Strathbogrie Shire Community has expressed the need for the creation of overarching direction for the growth of the municipality into the future for townships as well as rural areas. This need has been expressed during consultation of the recent planning scheme review and the updating of key township strategies. This is also an action in the Council Plan 2021-25.

As a result, Strathbogrie Shire Council is developing a new Rural Residential and Land Use Strategy (RRLUS) and Urban Growth Strategy (UGS).

1.1. Rural Residential and Land Use Strategy

The overarching aim of the RRLUS is to ensure Council has formal and strategic justification to direct and allow residential type developments in areas that minimise impacts and provides protection to productive agricultural land and other associated non-residential uses. The RRLUS is being developed by RMCG and SGS Economics and Planning (SGS).

1.2. Urban Growth Strategy

The UGS provides a framework to assist decision making on areas of potential future residential expansion and any potential rezoning in a coordinated municipal wide approach. The UGS is being developed by SD Planning.

The Victorian Planning Policy Framework (PPF) requires Council to:

- Ensure that sufficient land is available to meet forecast demand.
- Plan to accommodate projected population growth over at least a 15-year period and provide clear direction on locations where growth should occur. Residential land supply will be considered on a municipal basis, rather than a town-by-town basis.

Council has also done significant work in the development of the specific Township Strategies (Avenel, Nagambie, Euroa and Violet Town) that will identify and implement the outcomes of the RRLUS and UGS, on local scales. During the engagement of the draft RRLUS and UGS Council will also have each of the four township strategies on public engagement.

The RRLUS and UGS will guide land use planning decisions within the Strathbogie municipality for the next 15-30 years. These strategies will work together in directing development across the municipality with the aim of maximising amenity for residential uses while not compromising the ongoing viability of agricultural, industrial, commercial businesses or future opportunities.

1.3. Township Strategies

In addition to the two strategies outlined above, Council has developed draft township strategies for:

- Avenel;
- Euroa;
- Nagambie; and
- Violet Town

The township strategies will sit one level below the RRLUS and the UGS in the hierarchy of council strategic land use documents. The township strategies will reflect the findings and direction of the RRLUS and UGS strategies on a town by town and site by site basis. The directions will include more specific direction in terms of where growth will be directed to and specific instruction on the timings of future development such as rezonings or other changes to the Strathbogie Planning Scheme.

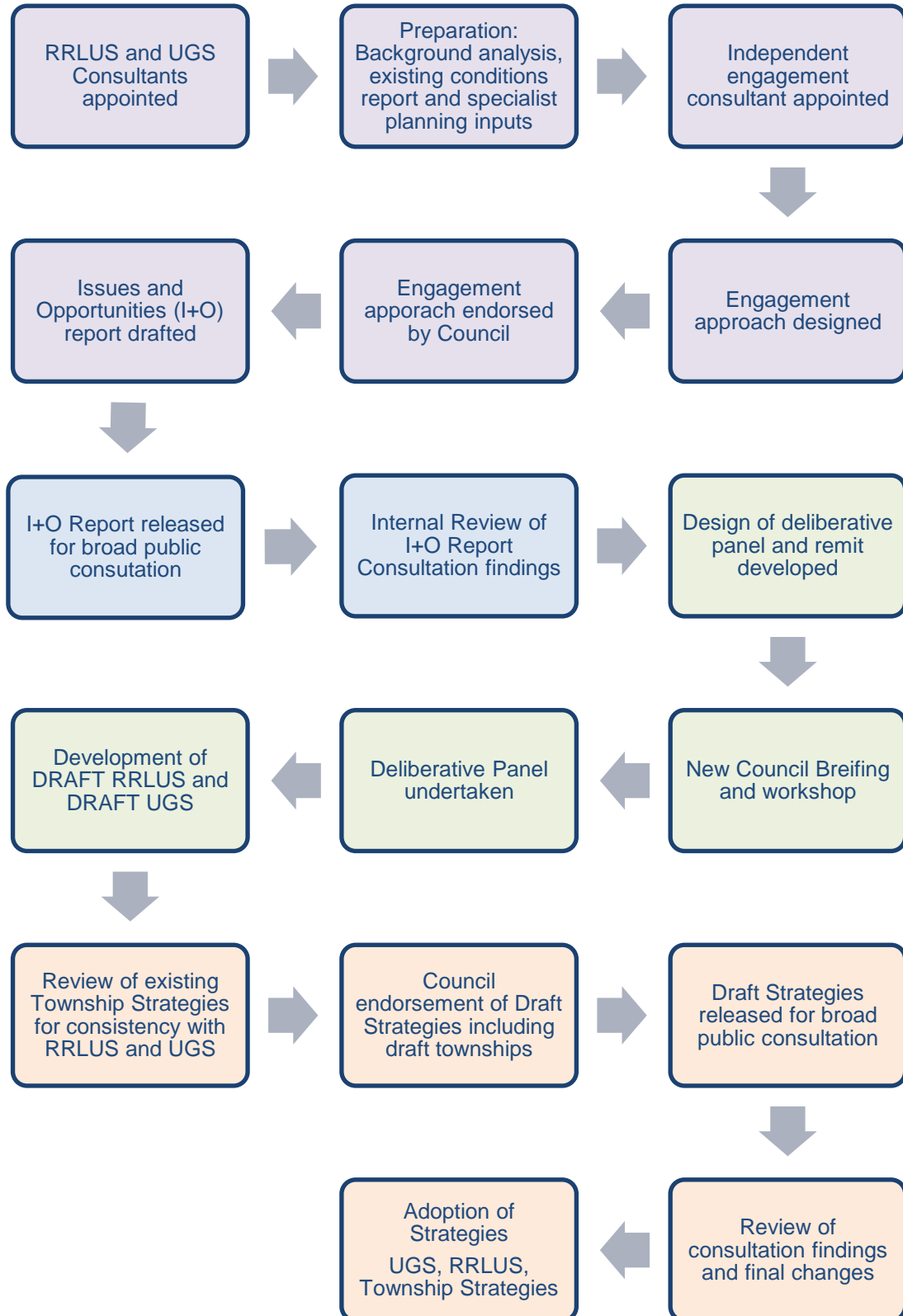
In the last few years Council has undertaken consultation on the four draft township strategies to refresh their direction from when they were originally endorsed by Council in 2008 and 2009. As part of the development of the RRLUS and the UGS, the progression of the township strategy updates will continue. This has been done to ensure that the township strategies are endorsed using the most up to date information available from the RRLUS and the UGS and so that they are not contrary to the findings of the two strategies.

Council will review the township strategies having regard to the consultation, engagement findings and the themes and directions outlined in the draft RRLUS and UGS to ensure consistency and alignment across all strategic land use strategies. The four draft Township Strategies will be open for broad public consultation during Stage 4.

2. Process to develop RRLUS and UGS

The high-level overview of Council's process to develop these strategic documents is outlined below in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1.



3. Engagement Approach

Capire Consulting Group have been engaged to assist Council to prepare and deliver an engagement plan for Council's new Rural Residential and Land Use Strategy (RRLUS) and Urban Growth Strategy (UGS). The engagement plan sets the process in which Council will engage with the community throughout the life of the actions of the engagement plan.

Council will engage with the community throughout several key parts of the timeline of drafting the two strategies.

Stage 1 engagement is well underway with the community informed of Council's intention to develop the Strategies.

Stage 2 engagement will focus on the Issues and Opportunities Report that collates the relevant information from background analysis undertaken on the municipality. The Issues and Opportunities Report is informed by background reports undertaken by subject matter experts which have reviewed the existing trends that the municipality is experiencing and scenarios into the future. The conclusions of these reports inform the issues and opportunities report that will be released to the community for consultation. Council will be mostly responsible for the delivery of this stage of engagement with the broader community.

Stage 3 engagement will include consultation with Council and deliberation with a Community panel.

Capire Consulting Group will design and facilitate a deliberative Community Panel (Panel) process to inform the directions and design of the draft RRLUS and UGS in early 2025.

The Panel will consider the evidence collected from subject matter experts, the Background Assessment and Existing Conditions Report, broad engagement, and Issues and Opportunities Report to develop recommendations for preparation of the Draft RRLUS and UGS.

The draft strategies will be written based on feedback from the engagement undertaken during all stages of consultation and following the deliberative panel and will be led by Capire Consulting Group.

Stage 4 engagement will be the final stage with the draft Strategies being presented to Council for release to the public for broad consultation and final review, before being adopted by Council.

3.1. What is deliberative engagement?

Deliberative engagement is a method of community engagement that aims to provide the community with sufficient time and information to enable the community to work together to develop recommendations as part of a decision-making process.

The principles of deliberative engagement are outlined in Figure 1. There are specific elements to consider when planning and delivering a deliberative process. Providing the panel with a clear remit to guide deliberations is important. The remit is the driver for planning sessions and provides the direction for panellists to refer to. This plan includes content related to these principles and will be referred to throughout the project.



Figure 1. Principles of deliberative engagement

A deliberative Panel, also known as a community panel, may be used to support a deliberative engagement process. A Community panel is a group process where community representatives come together to learn and discuss key themes of the RRLUS and UGS in detail across sessions. The level of promise is always made clear to the panel at the very beginning of the process. This indicates to the panel their level of influence over the final decision or product. This is likely to be set at the Involve-Collaborate level on the IAP2 spectrum, but is subject to further planning between Council and the consultant.

3.2. Purpose and objectives of the Panel

The purpose of the Panel is to undertake a deliberative process in which the Panel influences decisions by providing recommendations.

The objectives of the Panel are to:

- Recruit a panel of community members reflective of the diversity of the Strathbogie Shire community.
- Design with the panel, core elements of the RRLUS and UGS that is understood and supported.
- Understand community aspirations and concerns regarding the RRLUS and UGS and future developments.
- Ensure an open, transparent engagement process that the Panel, community members and stakeholders are confident is informing the RRLUS and UGS.
- Increase the Panel and community understanding of the planning process and how the RRLUS and UGS will facilitate sustainable development through dialogue and deliberation.

3.3. Depth of engagement

Stage	Depth	Public participation goal	Promise to the public
One - Underway	Inform	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	We will keep you informed.
Two	Involve	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
Three	Collaborate	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of the alternatives and identification of preferred solution(s).	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations in the decisions to the maximum extent possible.
Four	Inform	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision

3.4. Engagement Plan *

Project stage	Engagement purpose	Engagement goals	Tools and methods **	Success criteria
One	To inform the community of the relevant evidence.	To inform the community of growth data, constraints and identified opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning specialists to undertake Background Assessment and Existing Conditions Report • Desktop review of previous and existing engagement with stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased community understanding of growth data, constraints and identified opportunities.
Two	Community insights improve evidence-based assessment.	To seek community input into the draft issues and opportunities report for the RRLUS and UGS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project information on Share Strathbogie • Online survey on Share Strathbogie • Survey stations • Drop in and pop-up sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community participation to refine issues and opportunities.
Three	Community Panel formulate recommendations for RRLUS and UGS development.	To facilitate the development of directions and recommendations to guide the development and content of the Draft RRLUS and UGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert presentations • Fact files • Feedback during the presentations, through Q&A sessions with subject matter experts • Group discussions and brainstorming recommendations • Level of comfort for drafted and final recommendations and draft RRLUS and UGS • Interactive tools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation is representative of the Strathbogie community. • Increase understanding of growth data, constraints, issues and opportunities • High level of agreement on key elements of the RRLUS and UGS • Stakeholders and communities say they are confident in the process
Four	To seek community feedback on Draft RRLUS and UGS	To seek community feedback on the Draft RRLUS and UGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project information on Share Strathbogie • Online survey on Share Strathbogie • Survey stations • Written communication to all residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider community satisfaction with the draft strategies • Stakeholders and communities say they are confident in the process

*This Plan may change subject to sentiments received throughout the Strategy development process.

**This is not an exhaustive list of tools and methods but is intended to provide a guide to the community

