



Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee

Inquiry: Inquiry into Climate Resilience

Hearing Date: 3 December 2024

Question[s] taken on notice

Directed to: City of Greater Bendigo

Received Date: 16 January 2025

1. **Melina BATH, page 14**

Question Asked:

I have got two more questions so I will have to divide, because I am sure my time is running out. You mentioned maximising infill project housing developments; it is difficult and more challenging for developers so they want to go to greenfield sites. If we are looking at the value of land and the importance of safety and mitigation of climate change, what sorts of incentives could be done? Could you workshop some of those impediments to infill and how they could be overcome?

Frances FORD: I might have to take some of that on notice –

Melina BATH: That is fine. Please do.

Frances FORD: because I know that our manager of strategic planning is working closely with a number of fairly big developers on exactly that issue: what can we do at the council level to make this as easy as possible for you to progress projects within the urban boundary?

Melina BATH: And/or in your response, the state government level, since we are making recommendations to state government on removing those impediments without diminishing any necessity for safety, protection, all of those.

Response:

As mentioned in the Inquiry, the City is very mindful of the importance of greater levels of infill development and its relationship to improving climate resilience. This is one of the reasons why the City has set an ambitious target of delivering 70% of housing growth in infill areas in the Managed Growth Strategy. Access the [Managed Growth Strategy](#) here. Currently about 50% of Greater Bendigo's housing is in infill areas.

The City's position aligns with State direction and policy in two aspects:

- The Managed Growth Strategy identifies the need to provide for our future population of 200,000 by 2056, and to do this, 38,000 additional dwellings are required. The Managed Growth Strategy's residential framework plan was designed to accommodate these additional dwellings. The State's Housing Target for the City of Greater Bendigo identifies that 37,500 additional dwellings will be required by 2051, which is very similar to what the City has planned for.
- The Managed Growth Strategy also aligns with the State government's target for '70 per cent of new homes to be built in established areas, while making sure growth areas deliver 30 per cent of new homes'.

When preparing the Managed Growth Strategy, City officers received feedback from the private development sector that delivering 70% of dwellings in infill areas is problematic and unlikely. This was primarily due to the financial costs associated with delivering infill development, and market unviability. The City's response was that a 70%-30% split is not expected to be achieved in the short term of the Managed Growth Strategy, but that we need to shift to 70% infill development over the lifespan of the Strategy (30 years). Other private development sector feedback is that the key financial limitations relate to infrastructure and servicing costs, as well as the costs associated with the approvals processes.

Withing the Managed Growth Strategy, the following actions were included that relate to infill development:

- Facilitate privately led rezonings of key development sites as identified in the Managed Growth Strategy.
- Make changes to the Neighbourhood Character Overlay and Significant Landscape Overlay as informed by the Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategy (this includes removing redundant overlays and facilitating an easier planning permit application process)
- Prepare a new Planning Delegations Policy to provide greater clarity around the assessment of planning applications
- Prepare a report which provides a breakdown of where and types of development occurring

- Prepare a report which investigate options to improve development facilitation in the City Centre and in other large activity centres
- Meet with State Government representatives to discuss the release of identified surplus state government land sites to release for residential development purposes
- Prepare a list of State Government surplus sites and send correspondence to relevant Ministers requesting a meeting to progress their declaration
- Explore advocacy and funding opportunities to facilitate infrastructure upgrades in established areas that will reduce the cost of infill development.

In addition to the Managed Growth Strategy, the City prepared a one-year action plan to focus the key actions and to send a clear message to our community about housing growth. There has been some progress towards these actions, as follows:

- The City will, within weeks, lodge its planning scheme amendment to introduce the Managed Growth Strategy into the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme with the Department of Transport and Planning. This is critical to ensure that the residential framework plan is embedded in the Planning Scheme as a decision making tool, but it will be a 1-2 year process.
- The City's Statutory and Strategic Planning Units ran an information session in November 2024, titled *Building a Secondary Dwelling*, and over 75 people were in attendance. More information sessions on a range of topics will be provided in 2025. The next session, scheduled for 19 February 2025, is titled *Building for Environmentally Sustainable Design*.
- Residential design guidelines are close to being finalised.
- A project brief has been prepared to engage a consultant to research development trends and opportunities in infill areas to better target industry engagement. The City is aiming to appoint a consultant in February 2025 to undertake this work.

In summary, the City would note that infrastructure costs, together with rising construction costs, will continue to make infill development difficult in the short term in regional locations and many metropolitan suburban locations.

To help facilitate infill development, the City of Greater Bendigo suggests the state government

- Provide funding support for:
- Upgrades to Bendigo's aging water supply – e.g. for developers, upgrading the water infrastructure required to create the water pressure necessary for fire suppressant systems in apartment buildings can be cost prohibitive.
- Upgrades to Bendigo's electrical distribution network to enable the supply necessary for higher density development
- Remediation of contaminated land given the City's gold mining legacy
- Walking and cycling infrastructure in established areas
- Expand the role of the Victorian Planning Authority to provide development facilitation functions for infill development. To date it has mainly focused on greenfield development.
- Redesign the bus services in Bendigo to improve accessibility within established areas without increasing road infrastructure which undermines liveability