

CM13.6. Thurgoona Wirlinga Precinct Structure Plan Review Project Overview

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Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement of the project scope and Stakeholder Engagement Plan for the upcoming review of the Thurgoona Wirlinga Precinct Structure Plan (PSP).

Background

The Thurgoona Wirlinga area has been identified as a key growth area since the late 1970s following Albury Wodonga being designated as a National Growth Centre. Forward planning undertaken in the mid to late 2000s (under State planning reforms) identified land for 40-70 years of residential growth that was subsequently rezoned in the Albury Local Environmental Plan 2010 (Albury LEP 2010).

The precinct continues as the primary growth area for Albury, accounting for more than half of the Albury LGA's population growth in recent years. In 2011, the estimated residential population of the Thurgoona Growth Area was 6,500, which increased to 11,282 at the 2021 Census. The population is growing at roughly 5% per annum, equating to approximately 550 additional residents and 250 new dwellings each year.

The existing Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP was adopted in late 2012 and became effective in March 2013. It covers an area of 4,590 hectares and will accommodate a forecasted community of 50,000 by 2060. The Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP was prepared with community and stakeholder input and provides a long-term plan to coordinate land use, built form and infrastructure needs.

The Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP:

- sets the vision, framework and indicative high-level spatial layouts;
- integrates disciplines identifying future residential areas, environmental land, open space (recreation and sport), commercial centres, community facilities and infrastructure needs;
- guides decision making (with other planning provisions in the Albury LEP and DCP);
- informs state and local infrastructure funding; and
- is implemented via development applications and state/local government projects.

A review of the Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP is required to respond to various changes and opportunities that have occurred in the last 10 years, including revised planning policies, relevant AlburyCity projects and strategies, evolving growth challenges and community and stakeholder aspirations.

Issues

Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041 (in draft)

This Plan is undergoing a five yearly review and is structured into three parts under the headings Environment, Communities and Places, and Economy and a collective 18 objectives. The following objectives are most relevant to the review of the Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP.

- Part 1 – Environment, Objectives 1 and 3:
 1. *Protect, connect, and enhance biodiversity throughout the region; and*
 3. *Increase natural hazard resilience.*
- Part 2 – Communities and Places, Objectives 5 – 7 and 9:
 5. *Ensure housing supply, diversity, affordability, and resilience;*
 6. *Support housing in regional cities and their sub-regions;*
 7. *Provide for appropriate rural residential development; and*
 9. *Plan for resilient places that respect local character.*
- Part 3 – Economy, Objectives 17 and 18:
 17. *Strategically plan for health and education precincts; and*
 18. *Value the integration of transport and land use planning.*

The Regional Plan also notes the following in the narrative for Albury: *Albury is the fastest growing centre in the Riverina Murray Region, and this will continue with the Thurgoona/Wirringa Growth Area in the north-east expected to provide more than 22,000 new homes (approximately 40 years supply). Growth is supported by comprehensive structure planning.*

Towards Albury 2050

Our community strategic plan has four themes of A Growing Sustainable Economy, An Enhanced Natural Environment, A Caring Community and A Leading Community. The community has identified the following outcomes relevant to the review of the Thurgoona Wirringa PSP:

- *Outcome 1.1 – Albury is a liveable city supporting sustainable population growth through the provision of high-quality infrastructure, industry-leading services, and high levels of amenity.*
- *Outcome 1.2 – Albury has an accessible, integrated transport network that connects our city through safe and efficient travel options.*
- *Outcome 1.5 – Albury has a secure, integrated water and natural asset supply to support a circular economy.*
- *Outcome 2.1 – Albury is a zero emission and climate resilient city.*
- *Outcome 2.2 – Albury embraces the cultural heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.*
- *Outcome 2.4 – Albury is a recognised leader in the protection, conservation, and management of our natural assets.*
- *Outcome 3.4 – Albury is a destination for young people that collaborates with them to increase education and is youth centric.*

- *Outcome 3.5 – Albury is a safe, inclusive, and accessible region for our entire community.*
- *Outcome 4.2 – Albury collaborates as a community to plan for the future and work towards a shared vision.*

Two Cities One Community (2C1C) initiatives

The Two Cities One Community Strategic Plan sets out long-term goals and actions to guide the collaboration of Albury City Council and the City of Wodonga, including development of the following relevant joint strategies:

- **Regional Natural Environment Strategy** – informs holistic decision making for the further protection and enhancement of the natural environment across Albury and Wodonga. It recognises the protection of native vegetation as a key community issue, particularly in the growth areas of Thurgoona Wirlinga.
- **Integrated Transport Strategy (in draft)** – Focuses on active and sustainable modes of transport and transport connections across the two cities.
- **Albury Wodonga Sport & Recreation Strategy (in draft)** – Explores supply and demand of sport and recreation facilities and needs across the two cities.

Albury Local Strategic Planning Statement (Albury LSPS) 2020

Our Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) was adopted in September 2020 and provides high-level land use directions across the LGA. It is aligned with our Community Strategic Plan (Albury 2030), Riverina Murray Regional Plan and the Two Cities One Community Plan. Of most relevance to this project is *Priority 7: Coordinated and well-planned growth precinct (Thurgoona Wirlinga)* and *Action 7.1* which identifies a review of the Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP. The subsequent actions under this priority (Actions 7.2 to 7.9) are considerations for this review.

Alignment with other Council strategies

The Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP review also aligns and will draw inputs from a range of other recent Council strategies and plans such as the City-Wide Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study (2021), Thurgoona Wirlinga Drainage Strategy, draft Local Housing Strategy and Borella Road and Riverina Highway Corridor Strategy.

Likewise, several current and upcoming Council strategies, most notably the Social Infrastructure and Open Space Strategies, closely relate to the Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP review and will be coordinated in their approach and community engagement.

Objectives of the Review

The Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP Review will:

- express a strengthened and sustainable vision for the Thurgoona Wirlinga precinct that reflects community and stakeholder aspirations;
- integrate disciplines and update planning directions relating to housing, utilities, environment, transport, open space, and community infrastructure to align with legislative changes, current strategies, and best practice planning;
- refine the high-level spatial layouts to provide a clear and coordinated framework that guides development in the right places at the right time, and accommodates growth, protects significant environmental values, and provides community and open space facilities; and
- determine if any new or revised planning controls or project initiatives are required, and refine infrastructure, funding and implementation plans to support precinct delivery.

Project Scope

The Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP is to be reviewed to help deliver a coordinated and well-planned growth precinct. This section outlines the high-level project scope of this review grouped under four key themes.

Heritage, Environment, and Interfaces

- Complete strategic Biodiversity Assessment of threatened species (Stage 1 BAM with NSW Biodiversity and Conservation Division).
- Integrate and adapt the recent Regional Natural Environment Strategy (2020), City-Wide Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study (2021) and Thurgoona Wirlinga Drainage Strategy 2020.
- Review environmental values, proposed land designation and zoning for land adjacent to Bells Travelling Stock Reserve (per Conservation Zoned Lands Review project directions).
- Review latest natural hazards mapping (bushfire, flood, urban heat), climate change impacts, and approaches for mitigation, adaptation, and recovery.

Transport and Movement

- Include outcomes of the Integrated Transport Strategy and Borella Road Corridor Strategy.
- Support active transport focus (pedestrian, cycle, public transport) and 15-minute neighbourhoods around the proposed urban centres.
- Enhance the street hierarchy and links between each subdivision.
- Accommodate a preferred alignment for the Thurgoona Link Road connecting to the Davey Road Freeway interchange.
- Review proposed residential densities around future urban centres that will support public transport.
- Work with Transport for NSW on improving and expanding bus routes.

Community Infrastructure and Urban Centres

- Review open space distribution, access, and design criteria with the city-wide Open Space Strategy.
- Confirm the locations of identified future centres and employment areas for subsequent rezoning processes.
- Revise urban centre concepts and built form guidance.
- Review community infrastructure needs with the city-wide Social Infrastructure Strategy.
- Work with Schools Infrastructure NSW for future school locations.
- Revise staging and costing as part of updating the Infrastructure Plan.

Housing Densities and Character

- Review proposed residential densities, particularly around the planned urban centres and open spaces.
- Consider specific area planning controls for built form, dwelling size, and variety (suitable for incorporating into Albury LEP and DCP reviews).
- Explore opportunities for the provision of social and affordable housing.
- Further define Thurgoona Wirlinga's sense of place and local character.
- Capitalise on the large and centrally located Thurgoona Education Precinct, working with Charles Sturt University, TAFE NSW and the Department of Education.
- Refine planning provisions for the R5 Zone Large Lot Residential zone, considering the attractive landscape setting and transition between adjoining zones.
- Evaluate the growth capacity of the Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP area in relation to the adjoining area marked as "prime urban" land in '*Rural Lands Strategy for Table Top and Splitters Creek 2015*'.

Stages and Timing

The aim is to complete the review as soon as possible, while also providing suitable opportunity for community and stakeholder input and appropriate consideration of options and directions of the revised Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP. The proposed timeframes also seek to align other relevant strategies being prepared that will inform the Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP outcomes (e.g. Social Infrastructure and Open Space Strategies).

The proposed key project stages and anticipated timeframes are:

Stage 1: Background, technical studies and initial consultation – early 2023 to mid 2023

- Invite community and stakeholder feedback on the '*What We've Heard (so far) Report*'.
- Procurement and appointment of multi-disciplinary consultant team.
- Prepare technical studies (e.g. Biodiversity Assessment, Water and Sewer Master Plan, Social Infrastructure Study and Integrated Transport Assessment).
- Explore issues and opportunities.

Stage 2: Testing ideas and directions – mid-late 2023

- Test proposals, options, and sketch directions for revised Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP.
- Draft spatial amendments for discussion.

Stage 3: Public Exhibition of the Draft Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP – early 2024

- Invite feedback on the revised draft Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP.
- Review submissions, revise and finalise the Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP.
- Seek Council endorsement.

Community Engagement

A *'What've Heard (so far) Report'* has been prepared, and is included in attachment 1. This summarises the feedback received from relevant community engagement activities undertaken in recent years (eg. Towards Albury 2050 engagement in 2022 and *'Thurgoona Community Conversations'* in 2018). This feedback has been used to inform the project scope for the review of the Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP.

A Stakeholder Engagement Plan has also been prepared (refer attachment 2) to guide consultation approaches and opportunities for community input into the review of the Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP. This proposes three key stages of consultation summarised outlined below.

Also, as noted in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan, where possible community engagement activities will be coordinated with other relevant Council projects, notably the Social Infrastructure Strategy and Open Space Strategy projects.

Stage 1 – Have your Say 'What We've Heard (so far) Report'

- Share and invite feedback on the *'What We've Heard (so far) Report'*.
- Seek further input on ideas, opportunities, priorities.

This stage provides opportunity for early and informal feedback to be considered. Our community will be invited to review the *'What We've Heard (so far) Report'* that provides a summary of recent community engagement outcomes relevant to Thurgoona Wirlinga. Consultation activities will include short online surveys and opinion polls designed to confirm feedback previously received, identify key areas that are missing and provide insight into areas of community importance and priority.

Stage 2 – Have your Say

- Test ideas, proposals, and directions of revised Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP.

This stage provides an additional opportunity for informal feedback on preliminary ideas and sketches during development of the revised draft Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP. Activities will include further surveys, workshops or drop-in sessions and interactive mapping. The aim is to test and refine directions prior to the formal public exhibition process.

Stage 3 – Public Exhibition

- Seek comment on the revised draft Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP.

This stage provides opportunity for formal feedback via submissions on the revised draft Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP. Notification will be provided via Council's webpage, social media, media releases and newspaper advertisement.

Risk

- **Business Risk** – it is proposed to appoint a multi-disciplinary external consultant team to lead the preparation of the Review of the Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP. Funding to deliver the Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP is included in the current budget and Year 2 budget forecast. State Government grant funding has also been sought to assist in funding technical studies relating to environmental assessment and water and sewer planning, which may require revised scope or additional Council funding should grant funding not be available. Delivery of the Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP requires significant investment in infrastructure provision and augmentation (e.g. utilities, transport, open space, social infrastructure, etc). Part of the review scope is to revise and re-cost requirements for future infrastructure to inform forward works programs, financial plans, and upcoming review of our Contributions Plan.
- **Corporate Risk** – this project is anticipated to invite considerable public interest and be welcomed by the local community. This may also include some resistance to changes to the Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP, in particular where changes do not align with an individual's, stakeholder's or landowner's expectations or aspirations. The review is guided by a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (refer Community Engagement section).
- **WHS and Public Risk** – Community and Stakeholder engagement methods will need to comply with any COVID-19 restrictions and social distancing requirements at the time. Engagement approaches will include online meeting arrangements as needed.
- **Environmental Risk** – the Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP project scope above (under the heading Heritage, Environment, and Interfaces) includes various activities relating to the environment to minimise risks and improve environmental outcomes.
- **Delivery Program Risk** – as outlined above, the aim is to complete the review as soon as possible, while also providing suitable opportunity for community and stakeholder input. Timing also needs to suitably align with other related strategies currently being prepared (e.g. Social Infrastructure and Open Space Strategies) including consolidated community engagement phases. Any changes to the scope or additional consultation phases may require an extension to the project delivery timeframes and would need to be appropriately coordinated to minimise risks of delays. The completion of the Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP review is a key requirement prior to review of Council's Infrastructure Contribution Plan.

Options

That Council:

1. Endorse the Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP Review project scope and Stakeholder Engagement Plan. **Recommended**; or
2. Amend the Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP Review project scope and/or Stakeholder Engagement Plan. **Not Recommended**; or
3. Not proceed with the Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP Review and continue to rely on the existing Thurgoona Wirlinga PSP, which is now almost 10 years old and would benefit from a review. **Not Recommended**.

Conclusion

This report outlines the proposed scope and Stakeholder Engagement Plan for undertaking the review of the Thurgoona Wirlinga Precinct Structure Plan. The review will update the Thurgoona Wirlinga Precinct Structure Plan to respond to various changes and opportunities that have occurred in the last 10 years, to help to ensure a coordinated and well-planned growth precinct.

The Thurgoona Wirlinga Precinct Structure Plan review will be guided by two phases of community engagement prior to public exhibition of the draft Precinct Structure Plan (forming the third phase of consultation). Engagement phases will be coordinated with other key Council strategies being prepared concurrently.

The result will be a revised Thurgoona Wirlinga Precinct Structure Plan that addresses and integrates various disciplines, providing updated planning directions relating to housing, utilities, environment, transport, open space, and community infrastructure for the Thurgoona Wirlinga Precinct. This will lead to refined spatial layouts and implementation plans that provide a clear and coordinated framework to guide development in the right places at the right time.

Recommendation

That Council endorses the project scope and Stakeholder Engagement Plan for the upcoming Thurgoona Wirlinga Precinct Structure Plan Review.

Attachments

1. Stakeholder Engagement Summary – What We’ve Heard (so far) Report (DOC22/257121)
2. Stakeholder Engagement Plan (DOC22/228122).