

Greater Shepparton City Council

Toolamba Growth Plan

Conversation Report

Draft Consultation

December 2019-March 2020



About the Toolamba Growth Plan

The Toolamba Townships (Toolamba and Old Toolamba) are located approximately 12km south-west of Shepparton, adjacent to the Goulburn River and Shepparton Regional Park. At the 2016 Census, the district had a population of 349, with a median age of 38 years¹. The community is served by a local shop/post office, the Junction Hotel, the Toolamba primary school, the Colaura Gardens and Playground, and a recreational reserve that includes an oval and Community Hall.

Greater Shepparton is continuing to grow, and there has been substantial interest in larger scale development in Toolamba in recent years. Further, the proposed development of the Goulburn Valley Highway Shepparton Bypass is expected to have a significant impact on the townships, affecting access and potentially increasing demand for housing. Such demand could result in considerable change in a relatively short period, in contrast to previous patterns of expansion. Although timeframes for development of the Bypass are as yet unknown, it is important that this growth is strategically planned to ensure that the character of the townships is retained in the coming decades.

Greater Shepparton City Council (Council) is working with Ethos Urban to preparing the Toolamba Growth Plan (the Growth Plan) to integrate environmental, social and economic considerations, and provide a framework for appropriate and successful future development, balancing the needs of the community and the rights of landowners with the constraints of the locality.

Community Engagement

In April and May 2019, consultation activities were undertaken with referral agencies, landowners and the community to inform preparation of the Draft Toolamba Growth Plan, to ensure that all of the factors that may impact Toolamba's future were fully understood. A summary of the comments and insights received throughout the pre-draft engagement was released in the *Toolamba Growth Plan: Conversation Report – Pre-draft Engagement 2019*.

The Draft Toolamba Growth Plan was authorised for public exhibition following the Ordinary Council Meeting on 17 December 2019, for a period of eight weeks.

This report provides a summary of the submissions and comments received throughout this phase of the Plan's development.

Acknowledgements

We, Greater Shepparton City Council, acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land which now comprises Greater Shepparton. We pay respect to their tribal Elders, we celebrate their continuing culture and we acknowledge the memory of their ancestors.

Greater Shepparton City Council gratefully acknowledges the assistance of local government and service agencies, and the Toolamba community in the preparation of the Toolamba Growth Plan.

¹ Please note that data for Toolamba has been taken from the 'Urban Centre and Localities' (UCL) category of the 2016 Census in response to a submission request, rather than the 'State Suburb' (SSC) designation which was used in pre-draft stage, that takes in the surrounding district. The substitution is considered appropriate given that the impacts of the Plan are largely confined to the immediate area around the Toolamba township.

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About the Townships

Toolamba is located approximately 13km south-west of Shepparton, surrounded by a rich agricultural landscape that is complemented by the Goulburn River and the Shepparton Regional Park. Old Toolamba lies approximately 3 km to the south-west of Toolamba.

The townships' overall population (including surrounding farmland) was recorded as 769 persons in 2016. This was made up of 216 families and 295 private dwellings, equating to 2.8 persons per household.

Within the town of Toolamba itself, there was a total population of 332 people in 2016 and 123 separate dwellings¹.

Toolamba township offers a range of facilities for its residents, including a general store, hotel, primary and preschool, community gardens, a playground, and a recreation reserve including an oval, community centre, and tennis courts. It also hosts CFA, CWA, Lions Club, football, netball and fishing clubs.

Old Toolamba is largely residential, with no commercial centre or community facilities.

The townships can be accessed from the Goulburn Valley Highway via Bridge Road to the east, or the Midland Highway via Toolamba Road on the western side.

The Toolamba community is tightly-knit and has shown a keen and active interest in the future development of their townships.

The Toolamba Growth Plan seeks to frame the community's spirit and vision for their townships, providing important structural elements and guidelines to ensure appropriate and successful growth over the next 30 years.

Draft Consultation

Council authorised the Draft Toolamba Growth Plan for public exhibition at the Ordinary Council Meeting on 17 December 2019. Due to the Christmas season, the exhibition period was extended to eight weeks, from 20 December 2019 until 17 February 2020, and responses were received through to March 2020. A range of activities were scheduled to ensure that all stakeholders were provided with an opportunity to provide their input, as outlined in Table 1, below.

The submissions received are summarised in the following section.

Table 1. Draft Consultation Activities

Activity	Purpose	Timing	Notes
<i>Project Webpage</i>	Provide project information/updates and contact details for the duration of the project.	20 December – Ongoing	Council recognises that Toolamba’s progress may be of interest to the wider community of Greater Shepparton.
<i>Online submission form (on project webpage)</i>	To facilitate comments from the community.	20 December – 25 February	Comments were also received via email and post.
<i>Flyer (see Appendix A)</i>	To ensure all residents were aware of the opportunities to provide input into the finalisation of the Plan.	January 2020	Posted to all residents of Toolamba, Old Toolamba and the surrounding areas.
<i>Targeted email invitations to Referral Agencies</i>	To enable function specific feedback on specific technical aspects of the plan.	January 2020	A PDF copy of the Plan was provided to all agencies.
<i>Landowner and representative meetings</i>	To discuss implications of the Plan on development proposals.	December – February 2020	Supplemental to formal submissions
<i>Community Drop-in Session</i>	To enable community members to provide feedback on the draft Growth Plan. To enable discussion of issues between residents, Council and Ethos Urban.	6 February 2020	Advertised with media release and through Council’s social media. Held at the Toolamba Community Hall between 3pm and 7pm. Attended by approximately 30 people.

What we heard

Responses received

Council received 38 formal written submissions via email, post, or the online submission form, and 18 informal submissions at the Community Drop-in session via post-it notes and completed hard-copy forms.²

Six formal submissions were received from Referral Authorities, including Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA), the Department of Environment, Water, Land and Planning (DELWP), the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA), the Department of Transport (DoT), VicTrack, Goulburn-Murray Water (GM Water), and the Environmental Protection Authority Victoria (EPA).

Council officers conducted meetings with two of the landowners who have development proposals in progress and their representatives. Both landowners subsequently made formal submissions.

Many of the submissions addressed multiple and/or similar issues, so the following table provides Council officer's responses by theme. Due to the number of comments received (most submissions included feedback on multiple topics), the submission comments below are representative of those received.

Theme: Housing		
Topic	Submission Comment	Council Officers' Response
Block size	<p>I'm not opposed to growth or change, however I do believe that the block sizes within any new subdivision need to be a minimum of 4000m² to maintain the appeal of this town. If you bring in smaller blocks, our sense of community will be forever lost.</p> <p>I'm open to development but in 2000 m² + allotments.</p> <p>I think it would be great to see more lots released in the medium to low density category - it retains the towns charm and makes sense for a rural community.</p>	<p>The Growth Plan aims to provide a diversity of housing options to promote vibrance in the future 'lifestyles' offered in the township, and to accommodate changes in housing preferences and conditions. The community is expected to evolve over time; diversity of housing options will allow residents to remain part of the Toolamba community as their needs change over the life-course.</p> <p>While more recent planning regulations prohibit blocks under 4000m², 31% of the existing housing stock within Toolamba's Township Zone are less than 2000m² in area, and 47.7% are less than 4000m².</p>

² Note that informal comments did not include submitters' details. All comments received have been considered by Council officers.

	<p>Blocks under 2000m² are too small for the 'lifestyle' feel of the township. Keeping the larger blocks will continue the lifestyle of Toolamba and not changing it to be a small city.</p> <p>Adding 800 - 1200 m² blocks will ruin existing character and be a contradiction to the style of growth that is usual in rural towns. There would be excessive change to the landform to a more 'suburban' look in this proposed urban growth zone. Higher density housing will cheapen the town.</p> <p>The proposed high density areas could yield around 80-100 blocks. This would result in the Toolamba township almost doubling in the short term with the 80-85% rural residential population declining to less than 50%. This would represent a significant shift in the characteristics of Toolamba and place significant stress on social infrastructure.</p> <p>Higher density housing will ... tak[e] away from the safe secure feeling we love. Safe for our kids to ride around, and go about our lives.</p> <p>Another fact as well with the recently finished development, I don't think there is enough demand in Toolamba for three large developments and once being completed I feel it will hurt future growth in the value of my property if I were to sell.</p>	<p>Growth patterns in rural towns are influenced by a number of elements depending on the unique context of each. The barriers created by the river and the proposed bypass are unlikely to permit Toolamba to expand beyond the scale of a 'town' (population: 500-2000)³.</p> <p>The Growth Plan does not propose to redesign the existing features or style of the town, but rather seeks to guide its inevitable growth in ways that minimise negative impacts and mitigates issues that may arise in the future. The <i>Toolamba Streetscapes and Housing Typologies 2020</i> provides guidance for development at all densities to ensure a consistent and high-quality rural character is retained, reinforced by the implementation of a Development and Design Overlay.</p> <p>The Growth Plan provides an overarching view of the long-term aspiration to accommodate potential growth. Development is staged to accommodate gradual population increase over a period of up to 30 years. Council will continue to monitor growth rates and assess requirements for social infrastructure in concert with residents' needs, assisted by the 5-yearly Community Planning process.</p> <p>Higher density housing is not directly correlated with crime or anti-social behaviour, and may provide increased security through enlarged capacity for passive surveillance ('eyes on the street'). The plan stipulates housing should face streets and open spaces to promote this.</p> <p>Development will be staged to correlate with demand across the 30-year horizon of the Growth Plan. Property values fluctuate according to a wide variety of factors, including influences at the national and even global levels. Property values are a not a valid strategic planning consideration.</p>
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³ Department of Sustainability and Environment 2006, *Coastal Spaces Recommendations April 2006*.

Space	<p>If you're wanting to live in Toolamba, chances are you're after some space. The most recent approved development adjacent to the Toolamba Township was achieved without objection as the blocks are all more than 4000 m2 and blend beautifully.</p>	<p>Toolamba's location and amenities offer a sense of spaciousness and abundant open spaces in the public realm, which could be enjoyed by people who may not wish or be able to maintain private areas.</p> <p>Since residential offerings have been constrained by the absence of reticulated sewerage services, previous supply is not an accurate indicator of future demand, should alternatives become available on the market.</p>
Change	<p>Toolamba does need to grow and change with the times, but any such growth or change needs to occur within the values and ideals that are held by existing residents of this community and not imposed upon them by money hungry developers.</p> <p>Toolamba is well known as a small community and the proposed number of new residential blocks as part of the new development that are of a very small size does not fit with the towns image and what people enjoy about living here now.</p>	<p>A degree of growth and change is necessary and inevitable for the wellbeing of the town, and there are many factors and decisions which will affect future outcomes. Growth and change cannot always be controlled or managed, yet change does not always lead to poor outcomes.</p> <p>The Toolamba Growth Plan seeks to guide potential impacts to maximise communal benefit and minimise issues that may arise, balancing the rights and differing viewpoints of various landowners. The community will continue to be involved and consulted through the Statutory and Community Planning processes.</p> <p>In response to residents' concerns, Council commissioned the <i>Toolamba Streetscape and Housing Typologies 2020</i> to ensure that future development retains the existing rural character and atmosphere of the township.</p>

Theme: Open Space

Topic	Submission Comment	Council Officers' Response
Bushfire	<p>Recent bushfires in this country are very concerning and as more forests are locked up the fuel loads increase alarmingly. ... Toolamba is a beautiful little town and I would hate to see what might happen to it if something is not done about the fire hazard next door to it.</p>	<p>Council will continue to work with Parks Victoria and the Country Fire Authority to manage bushfire risk in Greater Shepparton.</p>

Rubbish dumping	We frequently pick up rubbish through the bushland that backs onto our bush block at Daunts Bend. This also stopped while the bridge was closed but now dumping is back as bad as it's ever been. Managing the bushland will need to be considered if the council wants to grow the population.	The illegal dumping of rubbish is an unfortunately common occurrence in publicly accessible bushland. Illegal dumping should be reported to Parks Victoria via: Telephone: 13 19 63 Email: info@parks.vic.gov.au Or to Council on (03)5832 9700.
Protecting trees	Protect remaining trees for their natural habitat and to maintain the character of Toolamba. Areas south of the town on Bridge Road near the proposed Bitcon Road are other areas of dense and scattered mature trees which will be impacted by rezoning and the bypass.	Council will undertake the preparation of a Planning Scheme Amendment to implement a Vegetation Protection Overlay to protect remaining trees within the area. <i>The Toolamba Streetscapes and Housing Typologies 2020</i> provides guidance to promote the retention and replacement of trees to ensure Toolamba's greenery is protected and regenerated.

Theme: Access & Transport

Topic	Submission Comment	Council Officers' Response
Timing of infrastructure delivery	Provision of infrastructure such as footpaths and public transport needs to be sequenced in line with development.	Infrastructure such as footpaths are generally included as part of development contributions, and delivered in concert with project staging. Council will monitor development to align budgeting and works programs for other required infrastructure with growth. Council will continue to advocate for increased public transport services to the area.
Connecting Old Toolamba	There is insufficient walking and cycling pathways, footpaths, kerb and gutters in the townships and also between Old Toolamba and Toolamba. These constrain safe travel and accessibility for current residents let alone accommodate future growth.	The Growth Plan includes provision for upgrades of local roads and the provision of walking/cycling paths between Toolamba and Old Toolamba.

Connecting Bridge Road and Bitcon Road	You talk about the bridge being replaced in 10 years. If this is the case then the plan should be for road going west from the bridge to go straight ahead and cross over the railway line and meet up with Bitcon Road and so divert passing traffic away from Wren street.	The connection of Bridge Road and Bitcon Road is expected to be undertaken as part of the construction of the southern section of the Bypass.
Restrictions imposed by Bypass	Parties should not rely on construction of the Shepparton Bypass. Despite many years in process, this project is not funded and no construction dates have been set. Relying on this could delay other projects by decades.	Although timelines for construction of the Bypass are unknown, as a project expected to have major impacts on the region, its implications must be considered. It would not be financially responsible of Council to undertake works which may be duplicated or removed when the project gets underway. Nor are Council able to permit a use which may impact the future development of the land by establishing existing use rights.
Loss of amenity due to Bypass	There is no doubt that the quiet amenity (one thing most people love about Toolamba) will change with delivery of the bypass. Noise will increase substantially because of the need for 3 train-line bridges, elevated interchange, elevated road to avoid flooding, as well as its close proximity to town. I urge Council to advocate for visually appealing sound barriers and earth hills and native vegetation in keeping with the existing character and in line with the future direction statement.	The timing of construction of the southern section of the Bypass is currently unknown. Council will advocate for appropriate measures to integrate the Bypass visually and minimise impacts on amenity in the district at the relevant planning stage.
Car parking	There is insufficient car parking which results in a significant overflow of cars for school assemblies, small community events or events where one or more sporting teams is playing	Future development will be required to incorporate assessment of car parking and traffic considerations, and provide appropriate improvements. The Growth Plan focuses on implementing the 20 minute neighbourhood concept to facilitate walking and cycling, which may alleviate demand for parking over time.

Theme: Employment		
Topic	Submission Comment	Council Officers' Response
Other locations	There are so many options like this available in the Kialla Lakes area which is closer to employment and services.	Kialla Lakes, like each locality within Greater Shepparton, has its own character and amenity which appeals to the segment of the population who choose to live there. Toolamba offers its own unique character, contributing to the diversity of lifestyle options available in the municipality.
Businesses	That the Community Planning Group identify which/or what businesses that might be appropriate and supported by the Community as it grows. An example might be a bakery, as part of the Hotel or as a separate free-standing business. Such businesses would serve to give members of the community a reason to use the shops locally rather than travel to other shopping precincts.	The development of additional retail or commercial ventures in Toolamba will depend on their economic feasibility, which would be assessed by the proponent. The Growth Plan has indicated an area to the west of Rutherford Road which may be considered for commercial use in the future, should population growth create demand.

Theme: Services		
Topic	Submission Comment	Council Officers' Response
Rezoning for commercial purposes	That any future land development immediately North of the Hotel - Fire Station precinct should have provision for low density shops and or offices to allow for location of businesses and perhaps even facilities such as a library or child minding.	Land to the north of Wren Street may be the subject of a future amendment to enable uses not permitted in the current Farming Zone. A request for amendment must demonstrate strategic justification for rezoning, which may include demand for the businesses and services indicated.
Development of a new park	That the park opposite the hotel be developed into a town square, similar to European piazza design as a larger expansion of Colaura Gardens. This could incorporate water feature, sculptures, perhaps even an open meeting space, providing a focus for the suggested pathways and walkways. The intention of this thought is not just	Council would welcome a proposal from the community to develop the park to provide additional amenity to the town. This may be actioned through the Community Planning process.

	to act as a focus for walkways, or “town centre” but also act as an attraction that gives Toolamba a unique identity.	
Facility upgrades	With such an increase in population, support from the council in extending the current community hall and sport precinct is so important, integral; will this happen organically or will the townspeople have to advocate for these upgrades?	Council relies on ongoing interaction and consultation with the community for information regarding community needs. A number of factors impact whether projects can be undertaken as part of Council’s capital expenditure program, or whether advocacy for external funding is required. Future projects will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
Water Supply	The report makes no mention of the need to upgrade the current reticulated water supply, particularly the main supply line to the town. Adding additional demand to the system requires additional capacity. Inadequate flow and pressure from the town system hydrant system already compromises fire-fighting. An upgrade of the main water supply line to Toolamba is urgently required.	Council will continue to work with Goulburn Valley Water to support provision of appropriate infrastructure to support essential services. Upgrades to supply infrastructure are expected to accompany future residential development.
Reticulated Sewerage Services	The cost of delivering reticulated sewerage from Tatura is not yet known and may be prohibitive for such a small population. However, if it is delivered will all residents be required to share the cost burden?	The delivery of reticulated sewerage services is expected to be delivered under the terms of the Section 173 Agreement that forms part of the Toolamba Precinct Structure Plan. As such, the cost of delivery will be borne by the developer.

Theme: Education		
Topic	Submission Comment	Council Officers’ Response
Primary School	Page 29 states that the school is “designed to serve a catchment of approximately 2000 houses and should provide adequate capacity for the local community into the future”. The school currently has 162 students and can cater for 200 without further expansion. The School is currently servicing a	The Growth Plan has been amended to reflect the feedback that school’s capacity is 200 students. In their submission, the Victorian School Building Authority indicated that there is unlikely to be a need for additional government schools in Toolamba over the next 10-15 years, however, they will work

	catchment of 295 houses according to your report. The school cannot cater for a catchment of 2000 houses without substantial planning, further investment and infrastructure.	with Council to monitor growth.
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Theme: On the Plan		
Topic	Submission Comment	Council Officers' Response
Timeframes	The Draft Plan touches on some components listed above such as Access and Transport and Education but not all. More critically all actions identified in the Draft Plan lack specificity and timeframes. This is disappointing particularly given the long passage of time since these issues have been identified either through pre-draft consultation with the Community or through the Council's consideration of large-scale development proposals.	The Growth Plan provides high-level guidance and strategic justification for further work to be undertaken. There are numerous factors that require consideration in undertaking the actions identified, which involve a variety of entities and are often subject to change, so specific timeframes cannot be confirmed at this stage. Council will continue to inform and consult with the community as works progress.
Information provided	Whilst the number of blocks would be subject to developer design and approval, the Draft Plan does not provide an estimate of the potential number of blocks at each stage based on the densities proposed. Accordingly the Draft Plan does not provide the Community with any indication of growth rates and how these growth rates could affect the characteristics of the town.	The Toolamba Growth Plan is a high-level strategic document; more detailed information on numbers of blocks at various stages of development is ascertained and considered when rezoning amendments and planning permit applications are assessed on a site-by-site basis. These processes include notifications to the community and opportunities to make submissions as required under the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

Next steps

All of the responses received during the draft consultation were considered as part of the finalisation of the *Toolamba Growth Plan 2020*.

The *Toolamba Growth Plan 2020* will be considered for adoption at an Ordinary Council Meeting, before being incorporated into the Greater Shepparton Planning Scheme through a Planning Scheme Amendment.