Birregurra and Forrest Township Community Infrastructure Plans

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Birregurra and Forrest Community Infrastructure Plans

An initiative of the State Government
in conjunction with
the communities of Birregurra and Forrest
and the Colac Otway Shire

1 Introduction

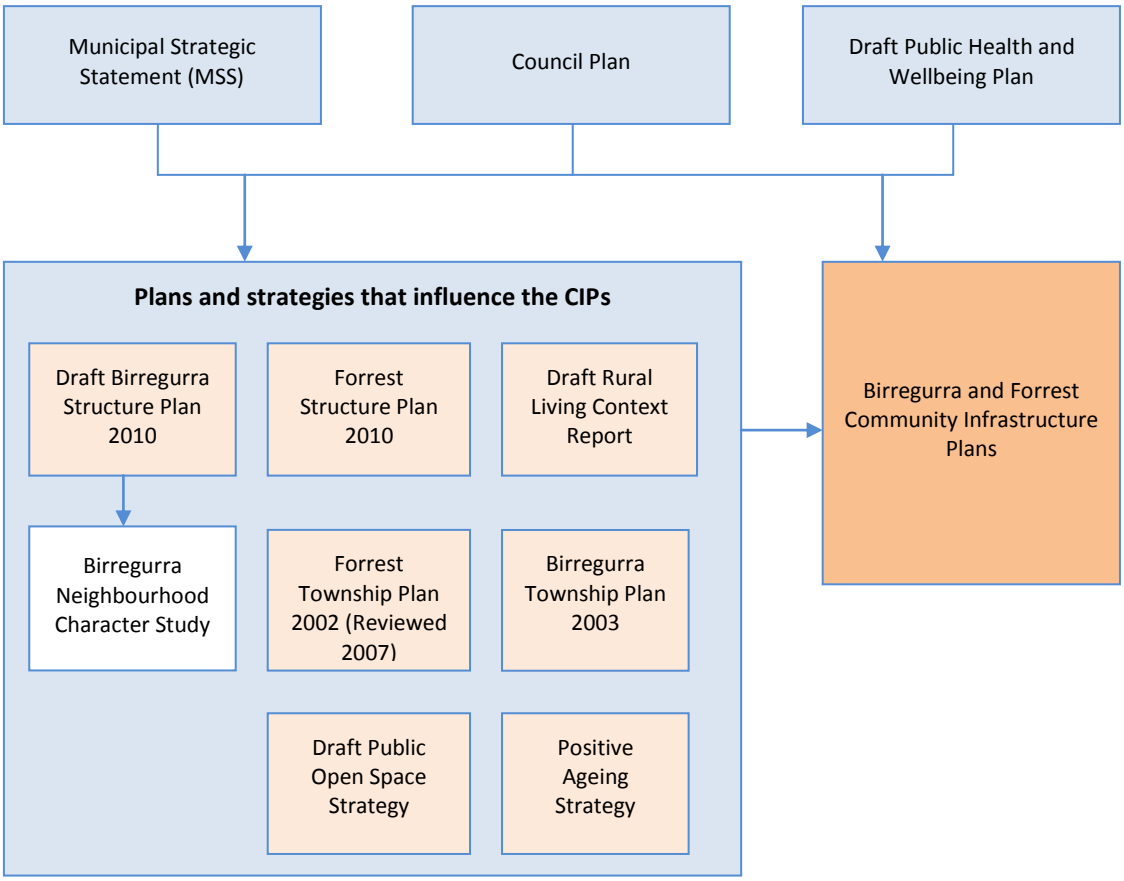
This report outlines the development of Community Infrastructure Plans (CIPs) for the Birregurra and Forrest townships. The two CIPs identify community infrastructure requirements and provide concepts plans for the delivery of the identified infrastructure over the short, medium and long term in both townships.

The development of the CIPs has been informed by local community engagement, consideration of the planning and policy context and the demographic profile and future growth of Birregurra and Forrest.

This study has considered the overall planning and policy context within the Colac-Otway Shire, including existing and draft plans being undertaken by Council. **Figure 1** outlines how the Birregurra and Forrest CIP report fits within this context.

The study areas for both towns were limited to the town centre as detailed in **Section 1.3.** The provision of community infrastructure in the town centre focuses on facilities that improve people's ability to enjoy and engage in the town centre area (such as community halls, kindergartens, footpaths, tree plantings and gardens, lighting, barbeque areas, recreation facilities and parks. The CIPs do not address private development, expanding the town, or the character of new houses and commercial premises.

Figure 1: Current plans and policies that influence the Birregurra and Forrest CIP report



1.1 Methodology

The development of the Birregurra and Forrest CIPs is based on the following steps:

- Site visits to understand the:
    - Broad context of the townships.
    - Location and condition of existing infrastructure.
    - Potential sites for additional infrastructure.
- Strategic review of:
    - Existing and future planning projects within the two communities.
    - Consultation previously undertaken on community infrastructure needs.
    - State and government priorities for infrastructure funding and provision in the two communities.
    - Service and facility demand data.
    - Demographic information to indicate potential changes to service and infrastructure demand.
- Stakeholder consultation activities including:
    - One on one consultation with key stakeholders.
    - Community drop-in sessions and surveys to identify the community infrastructure needs, priorities and potential locations of required infrastructure.
- Development and review of draft concept plans through:
    - Community drop-in sessions.

1.2 Strategic context

1.2.1 State and local policy review

The following State Government policies and plans were reviewed for this report:

- Barwon South West Regional Strategic Plan 2010.
- Regional Growth Fund Application Guidelines: Putting Locals First, 2011

A strategic review of local plans, policies and strategies has been undertaken with focus on community infrastructure, open space, recreation and accessibility. An overview of the local policy strategic review is presented below.

The following plans were reviewed as part of this report:

- Birregurra Structure Plan Report, October 2010 – Colac Otway Shire and CPG.
- Birregurra Structure Plan Context Report, October 2010 – Colac Otway Shire and CPG.
- Birregurra Township Plan 2003.
- Forrest Structure Plan Report, October 2010 – Colac Otway Shire and CPG.
- Forrest Structure Plan Context Report, September 2010 – Colac Otway Shire and CPG.
- Forrest Township Plan 2002 (Reviewed 2007).
- DRAFT Rural Living Strategy, January 2011 – Colac Otway Shire and CPG.
- DRAFT Rural Living Strategy Context Report, December 2010 – Colac Otway Shire and CPG.
- DRAFT Colac Otway Public Open Space Strategy, July 2011, Colac Otway Shire and Sykes Consulting/Urbis.

- Positive Ageing Strategy Plan 2008-2012, May 2008 – Colac Otway Shire and ASR Research.
- DRAFT Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2010-2013 – Colac Otway Shire and Judy Nichols and Associates.
- Municipal Early Years Plan, 2005-2008, Colac Otway Shire.
- Colac Otway Shire Council Plan, 2009-2013.
- Birregurra Neighbourhood Character Study: Issues Analysis Paper.

1.2.2 Policy review findings

The key findings from the policy review are:

1.2.2.1 State Government

- The Putting Locals First Program (PLFP) is a component of the Victorian State Government's Regional Growth Fund. The PLFP is a $100m initiative which helps regional communities respond to local priorities through:
    - Improved infrastructure, facilities and services (including town revitalisation, upgraded community facilities, heritage, pathway and innovation initiatives and projects).
    - Increased business and employment (including economic planning, tourism and event promotion, business support and climate change response).
    - Improved community connections (supporting local leadership, service coordination, innovative community projects and mentoring).
    - Empowering communities to respond to their own challenges.
- Small towns face different challenges as a result of isolation, major changes in agricultural production, the consolidation of services to larger centres and limited employment options.

1.2.2.2 Colac Otway Shire

- Birregurra and Forrest are identified as 'Rural Towns'. Rural Town settlements account for 6% of the Shire's population.
- Lifestyle opportunities in Rural Towns are based around the amenity and community values of rural township living with the provision of a reasonable level of services.
- Council promotes community health and wellbeing in partnership with other health services. Council provides a broad range of customer focused health, recreational, cultural and community amenities, services and facilities.
- Key issues within the region include:
    - Limited access to health and recreation facilities due to lack of transport options. Council notes that home-based health and community services are provided throughout the Shire through home care and in locations close to where people live.
    - As the population is ageing, the Colac Otway Shire needs responsive planning and urban design responses to both the urban landscapes and community's housing and service delivery needs.
    - An increase in single person households, highlighting importance of building strong communities that provide support networks outside the home.

1.2.2.3 Birregurra

- Birregurra has a regional role as a residential location for larger employment generating towns such as Colac and Geelong. It contains a range of community infrastructure, including health, civic and community activities.

- Improved road infrastructure, including the duplication of the Princes Highway from Geelong to Winchelsea, with a further stage onto Colac, will improve access to Birregurra, potentially increasing the desirability of Birregurra as a commuter town and leading to population growth. The expansion of some facilities may be required to respond to the growing needs of the population.
- Medium density housing is proposed on the vacant lot of Main and Strachan Streets to encourage population density near key community facilities.
- A retirement village or assisted living development is proposed, however the exact site it yet to be confirmed.
- Council recommends that opportunities for development of community infrastructure (i.e. expanded library and health services) be considered for young families and the ageing, including expanded library services and health facilities. These facilities should be located near existing community infrastructure in the civic centre of Birregurra.
- Council is encouraging the expansion of the community node, in line with the Structure Plan, to consolidate community health services requirements for the town.
- The reuse of the Masonic Hall is encouraged as a community meeting or civic space.
- The *Birregurra Township Plan* proposed the following community infrastructure recommendations for the Town Centre:
    - Proposed enhancements at the northern, eastern and western entry to the township, including plantings, paths and fencing.
    - Explore opportunities to restore the Birregurra Public Hall.
    - Improve existing public toilets, with construction of new public toilets in Birregurra Park once sewerage infrastructure is installed.
    - Improve the heritage walk, through plantings, seating, handrails on steep sections and providing ongoing maintenance.
    - Construct a footpath from Main Street to the Birregurra Railway Station.
    - Install street lighting, street furniture and signage on Main Street which reflects a style selected by the Birregurra and District Action Group.
    - Investigate opportunities to extend Birregurra Park across Main Street to the public land to the south-east.
- The *Birregurra Neighbourhood Character Study Issues Analysis Paper* noted the importance of the heritage streetscaping and improving the three township entrances.
- The *Draft Public Open Space Strategy* identified the potential need to expand open space to meet population growth through:
    - Improving the playing and other facilities on the recreation reserve to meet the requirements of sports users/visitors.
    - Improving links between the town, Main Street, the school and open space.
    - Investigate further development of the Tiger Rail Trail from Birregurra to Barwon Downs and Forrest.

1.2.2.4 Forrest

- Issues identified through the community consultation for the *Forrest Structure Plan* included:
    - The lack of visitor information services.
    - Need to improve community facilities.
    - Ensure the school stays open.

- There is a need to provide ongoing support for the community use of equipment and services at the primary school including computers, library and sporting equipment.
- Medical and health services provision is based on population demographic thresholds; existing service provision is expected to remain at the current level.
- There is a need to advocate for the ongoing provision of quality, accessible health, community and education services in Forrest as relevant to the needs of the resident population.
- The community hall was recently upgraded to include a commercial kitchen, the hall is a local asset used by different community groups for events and activities.
- Forrest is identified as having low growth potential for rural living development.
- The *Forrest Township Plan 2002, reviewed 2007* outlined the following community infrastructure priorities within the Town Centre:
    - Development of internal and external facilities at Forrest Hall, including: kitchen upgrades, sound proofing, paving and insulation, septic and toilet upgrade and an extension to include storage and art space.
    - Development of Grant Street, including street tree plantings and safe crossing points and lighting for pedestrians.
    - Proposed club rooms at Forrest Tennis Club and Forrest Mountain Bike Club.
    - Resurfacing and upgrades of Forrest Recreation Reserve, including drainage and new canteen extension.
- The *Draft Public Open Space Strategy* identified the following improvements:
    - Improve the Forrest walking track network, including provision of seats and shelters.
    - Work with the DSE to develop an integrated strategy for development and investment in the Forrest mountain bike riding area, e.g. change/toilet facilities.
    - Develop the community park with a range of high standard user facilities.
    - Investigate further development of the Tiger Rail Trail from Birregurra to Barwon Downs and Forrest.

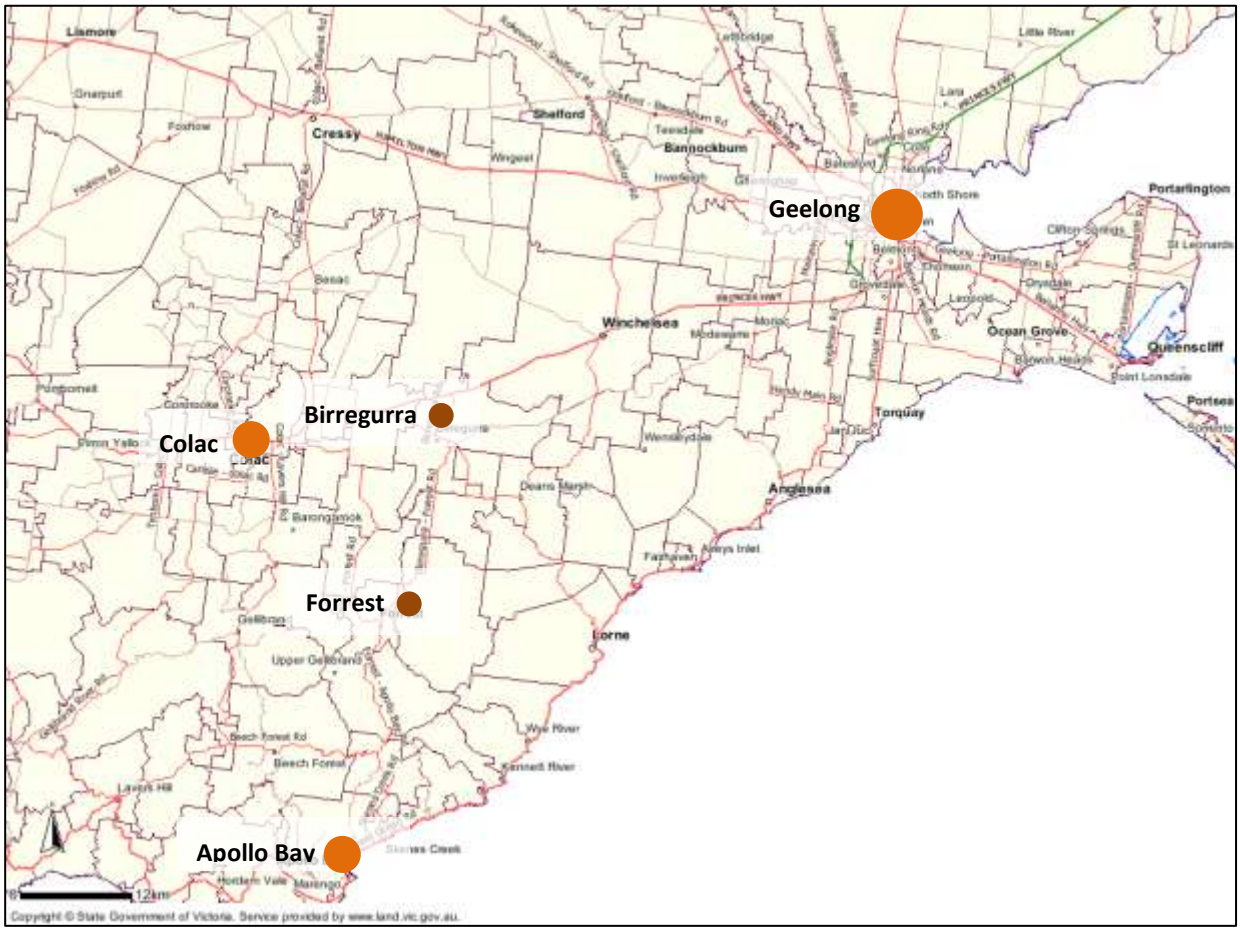
1.3 Site context

1.3.1 Regional context

Birregurra and Forrest Townships are located in the Colac Otway Shire in southern Victoria.

Birregurra is located approximately 60 kilometres from Geelong, 63 kilometres from Apollo Bay and 19 kilometres from Colac. Forrest is located approximately 33 kilometres south of Colac, 36 kilometres north of Apollo Bay and 83 kilometres from Geelong. **Figure 1** shows the location of both townships within the region.

Figure 2 Regional Context Map



Source: www.land.vic.gov.au

1.3.2 Birregurra

Birregurra is a small district township with a residential population of 463 persons (ABS 2006). The township provides key commercial services to support the needs of the residential population and surrounding farms. Birregurra is a key tourist destination enhanced by its location along the tourist route to the Otways and its existing natural surrounds.

Birregurra is identified as a strategic location for growth within the Colac Otway Shire. It is anticipated that the completion of the Princes Highway duplication and installation of reticulated sewerage will increase pressure for more residential development within the township.

The Birregurra CIP study area focuses on the township centre, including Main Street, Birregurra Park, the skate park. Key township linkages, including the Birregurra Train Station and the township entrances are also taken into consideration.

A map of the study area is shown in **Figure 3** below:

Figure 3: Birregurra Study Area

1.3.1 Forrest

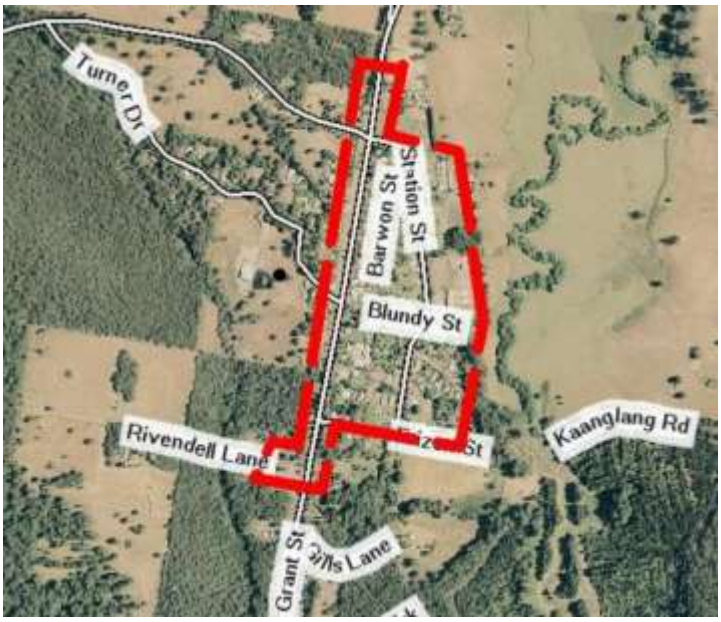
Forrest is a small community with around 170 residents (ABS 2006). The town is currently going through a transition as it moves away from its reliance on the timber industry and grows as a tourism destination focused around mountain biking. It has limited capacity for growth, with constraints placed on development from the surrounding natural environment.

Due to the limited community facilities, services and retail options available in Forrest, residents rely on Colac as a regional service centre. Given the relatively small size of the existing population, services are likely to continue to operate at their current level of service provision, with residents continuing to rely on sourcing goods and services from nearby regional centres.

The Forrest CIP study area focuses on central areas of the township, including Grant Street and Station Street. Key sites that link to the township, including the Forrest Recreation Reserve, and mountain bike trail heads are also taken into consideration.

A map of the study area is shown in **Figure 4** below:

Figure 4: Forrest Study Area



1.4 Population

1.4.1 Birregurra

A summary demographic profile of Birregurra is shown in **Table 1**. Key observations for Birregurra in comparison to the Colac Otway Shire and G21 region are:

- Lower proportion of infants and mature adults aged 65-85 and higher proportion of school aged children and work aged adults.
- Higher proportion of primary education attendance, but lower proportion of secondary and tertiary attendance.
- Higher rate of one parent families and similar rates of families with and without children.
- Higher rates of home purchasing, similar rate of home ownership and lower rate of renting.
- Lower proportion of non-English speaking background (NESB residents) and Indigenous persons.

Birregurra is designated as a centre for new growth within *the Draft Rural Living Strategy* as a result of the new sewerage system and improved road access to Geelong. Future growth scenarios for Birregurra are currently being reviewed as part of *Draft Birregurra Structure Plan,* with findings due in mid 2012.

While specific population forecasts are not available for Birregurra, Informed Decisions (.id)[1] projections for the Rural South area (which includes Birregurra) predicts an average annual growth rate of 0.76% per annum between 2006 and 2021. Over this period, the average persons per household rate is predicted to fall from 2.68 to 2.49 for the area.

1.4.2 Forrest

A summary demographic profile for Forrest is shown in **Table 1**. Key observations for Forrest in comparison to the Colac Otway Shire and G21 region are:

- Higher proportion of school aged children and work aged adults and lower proportion of infants and mature aged adults (65-85 years).
- Higher proportion of primary and secondary attendance but approximately half the rate of tertiary attendance.
- Significantly higher proportion of one parent families.
- Higher proportion of home purchasing but lower proportion of home ownership and renting.
- Higher proportion of NESB than the Shire but lower than G21 region.
- No recorded Indigenous population.

As with Birregurra, population forecasts are based on the broader region, in this case, the Rural North area. The Rural North Area is predicted to grow by 0.06% per annum between 2006- 2021. Over this period, the average persons per household rate is predicted to fall from 2.55 to 2.41.

[1] .id, 2011. Summary & Key Results. Online. http://forecast2.id.com.au/Default.aspx?id=242&pg=5110

Table 1: Demographic Profile - Birregurra and Forrest

Indicator		Birregurra		Forrest		Colac Otway Shire (%)	G21 (%)
		No.	%	No.	%		
Age	Infants 0-4 years	23	4.9	9	5.3	5.9	6.1
	Children 5-17 years	93	20.0	38	22.4	18.9	18.0
	Adults 18-64 years	289	62.0	105	61.8	58.1	60.1
	Mature adults 65-84	57	12.2	18	10.6	14.8	13.8
	Senior citizens 85 years and over	4	0.9	0	0	2.2	2.0
Education	Attending pre-school or primary school	56	42.4	28	45.9	37.4	34.4
	Attending secondary school	27	20.5	19	31.1	27.7	24.1
	Attending a tertiary institution	16	12.1	3	4.9	9.5	15.9
Families	Couples without children	49	39.8	10	31.3	41.1	39.1
	Couples with children	53	43.1	14	43.8	42.3	43.8
	One parent families	21	17.1	8	25.0	15.1	15.8
Culture	Non-English Speaking Background	6	1.3	9	5.4	2.7	7.8
	Indigenous Population	3	0.6	0	0	0.7	0.7
Tenure	Owned a home	84	41.2	25	37.3	42.9	38.3
	Purchasing a home	75	36.8	25	37.3	29.9	33.6
	Renting	32	15.7	12	17.9	21.3	22.1

Source: Summary Profile, .id, 2006

1.4.3 Demographic considerations for CIPs

The demographic profile for both Forrest and Birregurra shows that there is a need to consider the following population indicators when developing the community infrastructure plans:

- Facilities and activities for school aged children (primary and secondary).
- Support activities and services for one parent families, particularly in Forrest.
- Opportunities to promote social interaction for the small proportions of elderly residents in both towns.

1.6 Desktop audit of existing infrastructure

An audit of community infrastructure facilities, including recreation and open space, has been undertaken for Birregurra and Forrest (**Table 2**).

Table 2: Existing Infrastructure Audit - Birregurra and Forrest

	Birregurra	Forrest
Open Space and Recreation	• Birregurra Bowls Club • Football Oval/Reserve • Netball Courts • Birregurra Park • Birregurra Recreation Reserve • Skateboard Park • Birregurra Golf Club • Barwon River Reserve	• Tennis Courts and BBQ facilities • Mountain Bike Shelter • Forrest Park • Forrest Recreation Reserve • Various bike trails
Community and Cultural Facilities	• Birregurra Public Hall • Birregurra Community Health Centre (includes yoga, craft, exercise and tai chi classes) • Masonic Lodge • Senior Citizen Centre	• Community Hall • Medical Centre
Early Years	• Birregurra and District Preschool	• Forrest Pre-school
Primary Schools	• Birregurra Primary School	• Forrest Primary School
Emergency Services	• Country Fire Association • Police Station	• Country Fire Association • Police Station

2 Community engagement

A series of community engagement activities were held between May and October 2011 in Forrest and Birregurra to inform the development of the CIPs.

This section provides outlines the five steps taken in the development of the CIP:

1. Introductory drop-in sessions.
2. Design agenda and social landscape development.
3. Follow up drop-in session and community survey.
4. Development of Draft CIPs.
5. Presentation of draft CIP for feedback.

Table 3 below provides details of the three consultation sessions, including dates, location and participant numbers.

Table 3: Summary of consultation activities

Consultation	Dates	Attendance
Introductory drop-in session	Birregurra: 23 May 2011 Forrest: 24 May 2011	Birregurra: 16 Forrest: 20
Community survey and follow-up drop-in session	Birregurra: 13 July 2011 Forrest: 12 July 2011	Birregurra: 8 participants at the drop-in session, 30 mailed surveys and 1 online survey completed Forrest: 9 participants at the drop-in session, 18 mailed surveys and 1 online survey completed
Community presentation of draft CIPs	Birregurra: 18 October 2011 Forrest: 17 October 2011	Birregurra: 5 Forrest: 14

2.1 Introductory drop-in session

2.1.1 Overview

The introductory drop-in sessions were designed to provide an informal setting to identify and explore existing community values, character and needs in both Birregurra and Forrest.

The three hour workshops included the following four activities:

- Existing community infrastructure values and needs.
- Current use of community infrastructure.
- Community infrastructure priorities.
- Personality of the town.

Photographs from the Birregurra and Forrest sessions are shown below:

Photo 1 Birregurra Drop-in Session

Photo 2 Forrest Drop-in Session

2.1.2 Feedback

A summary of findings from the introductory round of consultation are shown below:

Table 4: Birregurra summary of introductory drop-in session

Birregurra		
Local Character	**Existing Values**	**Local Needs**
• A relaxed, welcoming town with strong heritage values • The desire to retain heritage values through sensible town improvements • A small town with good access to larger regional centres	• Public transport, particularly the V-Line train service to Geelong and Colac • Streetscapes, including the heritage values of the shopfronts on Birregurra Road • Community and health services provided by the Community Health Centre • Open space and recreation, including parks, exercise trails and active recreation facilities	• Improve and maintain the heritage walk • Improve footpaths and streetscapes in line with the existing heritage character of the town • Increase public transport, particularly the number of train services to the town • Improve open space and recreation facilities, including: o upgraded exercise trails surrounding the town o a new community garden/orchard o improved local parks

Table 5: Forrest summary of introductory drop-in session

Forrest		
Local Character	**Existing Values**	**Local Needs**
• A friendly, tight-knit, active community, involved in a range of activities focused around Grant Street and the natural surrounds • A walkable, heritage town with quiet and leafy streets and historic heritage trails • An active, nature-based town, with residents and visitors involved in bush walking, mountain biking and fishing	• Community services, including existing activities at the Neighbourhood House • National parks and reserves, particularly the extensive bush walking trails and active recreation facilities (e.g. mountain biking paths)	• Footpath and streetscape improvements for visual and safety reasons, particularly on the left-side of Grant Street • New mixed-use community hub (including shared meeting spaces, a men's shed, historical museum and fire refuge) • New sheltered children's play area/park • Improve drainage infrastructure on the main street for both visual and safety reasons • Introduce regular bus services for local residents and visitors

2.2 Design agenda and social landscape

The findings from the first round of consultation were consolidated into a design agenda and social landscape.

The design agenda outlined the community infrastructure that was valued in both towns and set priorities for the CIP. In addition, the design agenda identified complementary suggestions and listed community ideas that, while important, were outside the scope of the project.

The social landscape mapped community priorities identified in the first drop-in consultation session. Community features were shown on a colour scale. The darker the colour red, the more significance the community placed on this feature.

The Birregurra and Forrest social landscape and design agenda posters, which were presented at the follow-up drop-in sessions, are shown in **Figure 5** through **Figure 8**.

Figure 5: Birregurra social landscape

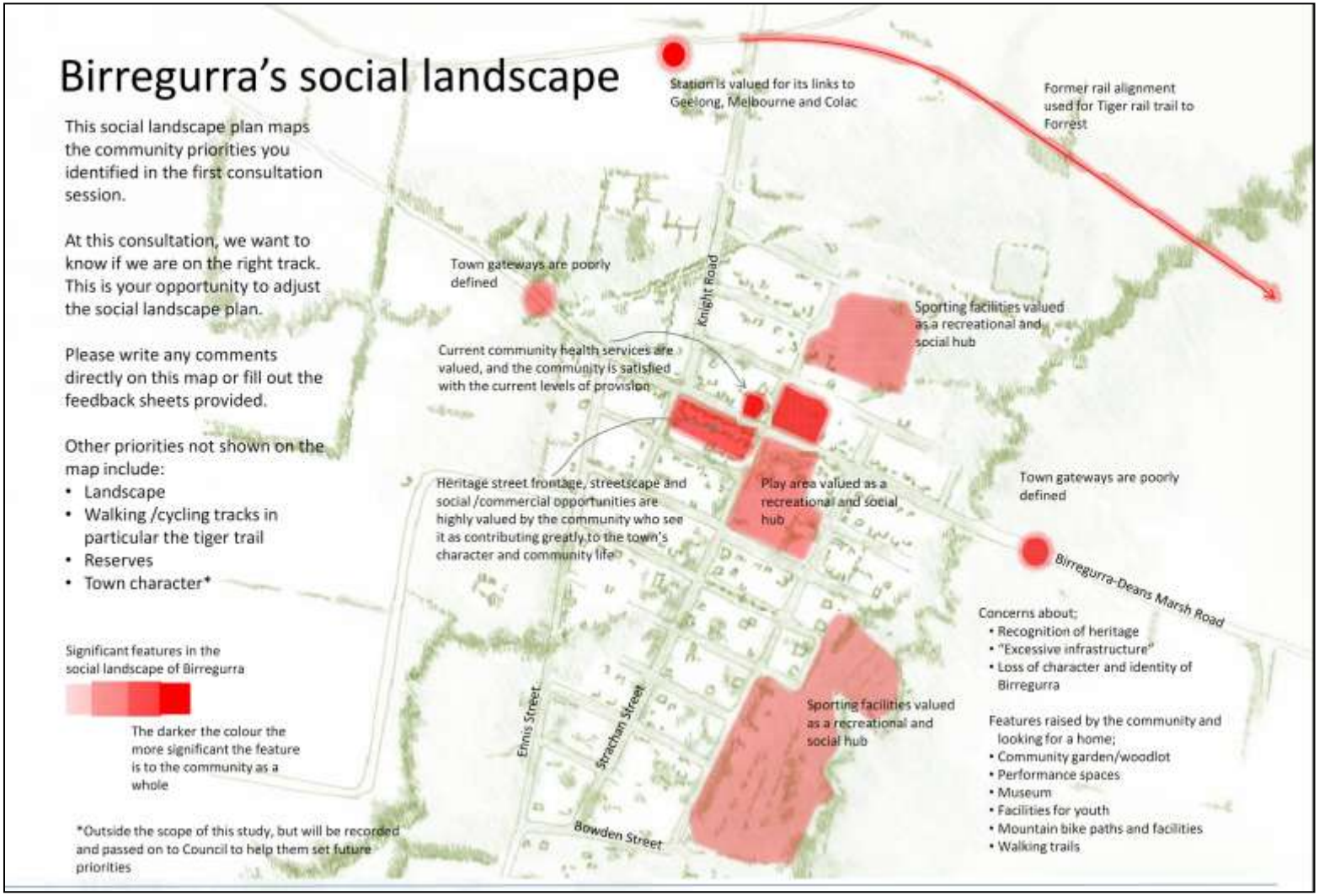


Figure 6: Birregurra design agenda

Figure 7: Forrest social landscape

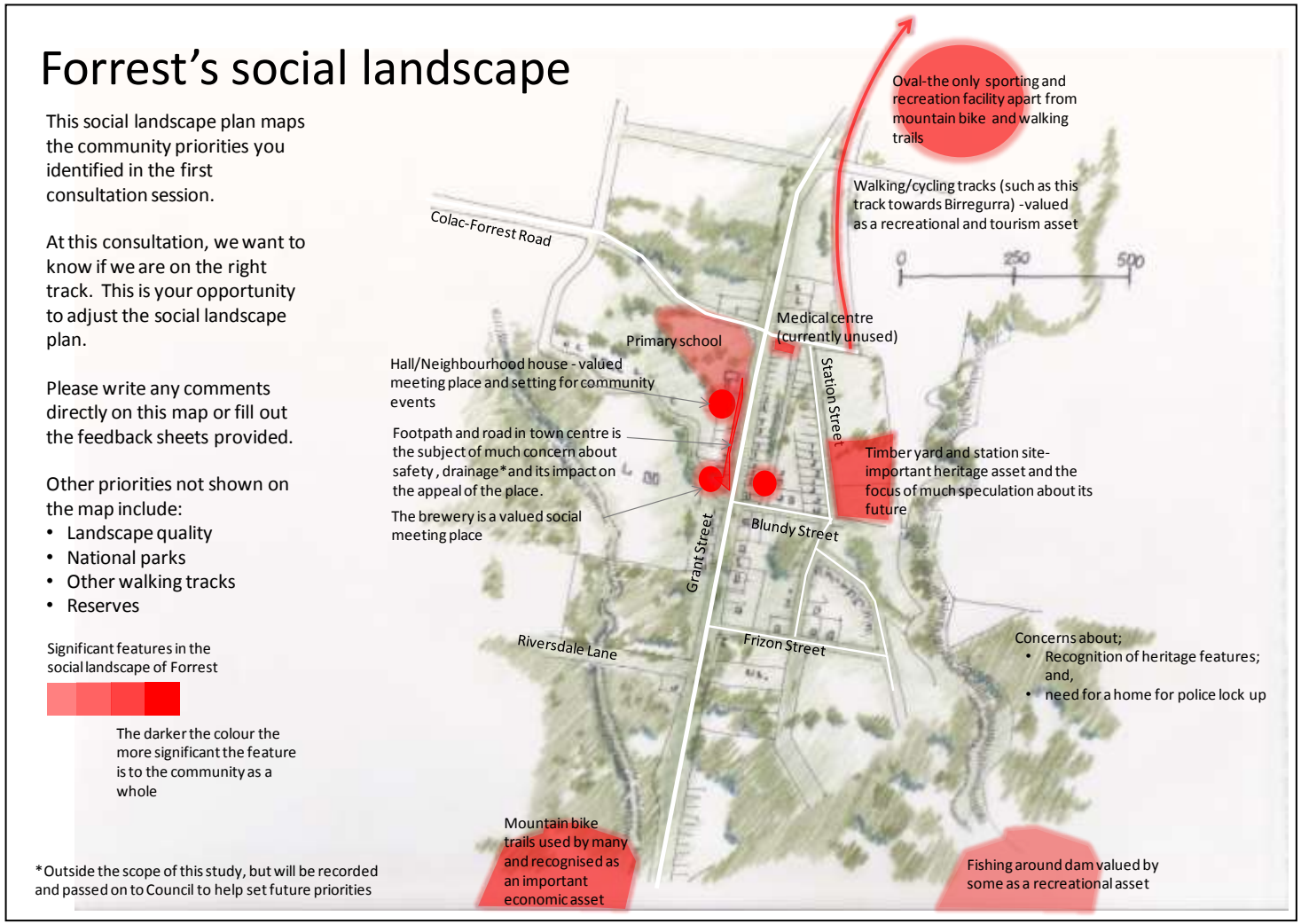


Figure 8: Forrest design agenda

2.3 Community survey and follow-up drop-in session

2.3.1 Overview

The second round of consultation sought feedback on the design agenda and social landscape.

Community members were asked four feedback questions during the sessions:

1. Are the social landscape features correct? Are there any items we should add or remove from the map?
2. Have we got the infrastructure priorities right? Are there any items that should be added or removed from the design agenda?
3. What are your ideas about how the community infrastructure priorities can be achieved?

Feedback was requested either through a feedback sheet (available in Appendix A) or by writing comments on post-it notes and attaching them to the social landscape and design agenda posters (as shown in **Photo 2**).

The survey was mailed to all residential dwellings within the Birregurra and Forrest townships. The same feedback questions were used for the community survey and the follow-up drop-in session. A copy of the design agenda and social landscape maps were enclosed in the survey mail out. An online version of the survey was also available.

Photographs from the Birregurra and Forrest follow-up drop-in sessions are shown in **Tables 4 and 5** below.

Photo 1 – Birregurra follow-up drop-in session

Photo 2 – Birregurra follow-up drop-in session

2.3.2 Feedback

Table 6: Birregurra summary of community survey and follow-up drop-in session

Birregurra	
Support for:	**Opposition to:**
• Retaining the town character, including wide main streets and heritage look • Streetscape improvements and beautification, including street furniture, bike racks and lighting • Heritage Walk improvements, particularly cleaning up and sealing the walk to improve usability and safety • Improved pedestrian access and safety in town, including a new footpath to the Train Station • Improvements to open space and recreation	• The use of the Masonic Hall, as it belongs to the Freemasons and is therefore not a community asset • Some respondents said that the social landscape did not need improvements, particularly the streetscape and shopfronts • Disagreement over the provision of town entrance improvements, with some respondents wanting low-key improvements (e.g. plantings, signage) while others did not want any changes

facilities, including a community garden that links with the primary school • Provision of public toilets in a central location

Table 7: Forrest summary of community survey and follow-up drop-in session

Forrest	
Support for:	**Opposition to:**
• Improvements to footpaths and curbing along Grant Street to improve pedestrian safety • A men's shed • A safe place/fire refuge for the community • Provision of a tourism information centre - with a place for the old Police Station lockup and historical society • Improvements to the children's play area	• Disagreement over improving mountain biking support facilities (e.g. bike wash, change rooms/showers). Some supported mountain biking as it brings tourists, while others said it would only benefit a proportion of the community • Disagreement over a new botanic garden because of the need for regular upkeep and maintenance

3 Summary of community infrastructure ideas and responses

This section consolidates all community feedback into a comprehensive table for both townships. **Table 8** and **Table 9** shows how each suggestion was responded to within the CIP process.

Community feedback and suggestions fell under eight categories:

1. The suggestion was incorporated in the CIP.
2. The CIP recommends that further Council investigations are taken into the suggestion (see **Section 5**).
3. The suggestion is outside of Council's control (e.g. Council does not own the land).
4. The suggestion may be possible in the future but requires support and/or agreement from external parties or a feasibility study.
5. The suggestion is outside the scope of the CIP study. All suggestions have been noted and passed on to Council but outside the scope of this study.
6. The suggestion needs to be community supported and led.
7. The suggestion was not a priority for the majority of participants during community engagement activities that informed the CIP.
8. Council is already undertaking work on the suggestion through other projects or studies.

Table 8: Birregurra - summary of ideas and responses

Idea	Response							
	Incorporated into the CIP	**CIP recommends that further work is undertaken to progress this idea**	**Outside of Council's control**	**Possible in the future but requires support/agreement from other parties and/or feasibility assessment**	**Will be noted in the CIP & passed on to Council but outside the scope of this study**	**This idea will need to be community-led**	**Idea was not a priority for majority of participants**	**Council is already undertaking work on this in other projects**
New community infrastructure								
Community garden	■							
More cafes and shops					■			
Footpath/cycle-way to train station	■							
Activities for teenagers		■						
Tiger Trail to Forrest								Identified in the Public Open Space Strategy
Facilities for older people	■	■						Identified as a priority in the Draft Birregurra Structure Plan
Community artist co-op				■		■		
Bike racks in main shopping area	■							
Bicycle path	■	■						
Petrol outlet					■			
Indigenous museum				■				
Town entry board with organisations listed	■							
Retirement village					■			
Improvements to existing community infrastructure								
Maintenance and further development of heritage walk		■						
Streetscapes – footpaths, lighting and sealed roads	■							
Improve public hall				■				
Improve playground and recreation facilities								The playground was recently upgraded, future improvements to the recreation reserve facilities are identified in

								the Public Open Space Strategy
Clean up creeks and green spaces								
Increased public transport services								
Better library facilities								
Upgrade primary school								
Walking and bicycle trails								Council is proposing to undertake an Active Transport Strategy in 2012/13 depending on budget. This strategy will address walking and cycling trails
Improve road surfaces								
Improve Main Street – more street furniture/streetscape								
Underground power								
Addition of street furniture								
Traffic calming								
Continue to improve park/skate park area								
Other								
Development must be sensitive to the town								
Investigate future use of Masonic Hall								
Uniformity of street assets								

Table 9: Forrest - summary of ideas and responses

Idea	Response							
	Incorporated into the CIP	**CIP recommends that further work is undertaken to progress this idea**	**Outside of Council's control**	**Possible in the future but requires support/agreement from other parties and/or feasibility assessment**	**Will be noted in the CIP & passed on to Council but outside the scope of this study**	**This idea would need to be community-led**	**Idea was not a priority for majority of participants**	**Council is already undertaking work on this idea through other projects**
New community infrastructure								
Fire refuge/ safe place								Ongoing Council investigations to identify a suitable Fire Refuge site
History trail		The history trail is operational but upgrades are required						
Botanic gardens								
Pedestrian crossing on Grant Street								
Cultural activities								
Sealed service road								
Museum/history centre								
Interpretive centre								
Community hub								
Men's Shed								Council has identified the Colac Otway Shire works depot on Blundy Street as the future site for the Men's Shed
Bus connection and shelter								
New public toilet and amenity block with showers and drinking water facilities								Identified as a priority in the Public Open Space Strategy
Skate park								
Community garden								
Environmental and sculpture walk								
Use the former mill site for community purposes								
Otway Fine Wood Centre								
Multi-use paths (not just mountain biking)								Identified as a priority in the Public Open Space Strategy

Cemetery								
Overnight truck stop								
Markets for selling local produce								
Australian native themed pedestrian area								
Swimming pool								
Improvements to existing community infrastructure								
Undercover playground and increased activities for children								Identified as a priority in the Public Open Space Strategy
More mountain-biking facilities and trails								Identified as a priority in the Public Open Space Strategy
Improved footpaths along Grant Street								
Improved lighting along Grant Street								
Improved tourist facilities e.g. signage								
Improved insulation and painting of the Hall								
Drainage								
Expand the use of the Hall								
Improve entrance tree plantings								
Traffic calming on Grant Street								
Find a place for the old Police Station and lockup								
Other								
Design guidelines for new developments								
Increase usage of the recreation reserve								Identified in the Public Open Space Strategy

4 Community infrastructure plans

As a result of community engagement activities, site analysis, and understanding of the planning context and Council's resources, the following community infrastructure changes are proposed for the Birregurra and Forrest townships:

4.1 Birregurra

1. Construction of a paved footpath to the train station.
2. Landscaping enhancements at the thresholds to the township.
3. Pause place to define the western threshold to the town centre.
4. Streetscape enhancements in front of shops to include seating, bicycle racks and landscaping.
5. Part of school site utilised for a community garden.[2]

4.2 Forrest

1. Northern threshold to the town centre defined by a village green incorporating landscaping, seating and sculptural play feature.
2. Linear botanic garden showcasing the area's native landscape character. Incorporate improvements to footpaths and the road edge, landscaping, seating, sculptural features and information about the plants growing there. This proposal would need to be undertaken in conjunction with the future drainage review[3].
3. Southern threshold to town centre to incorporate improvements to parking adjacent to the Forrest Brewery and Café, traffic calming to facilitate safe pedestrian crossing (subject to VicRoads agreement) and sculptural gateway feature.
4. Signage strategy.

Detailed information, including the purpose, location and illustrative sketches for the proposals are presented in **Section 4.4** and **Section 4.5**. It is important to note that all proposal visualisations are indicative only. The future design and location of any structures, paths or plantings would be determined during detailed design.

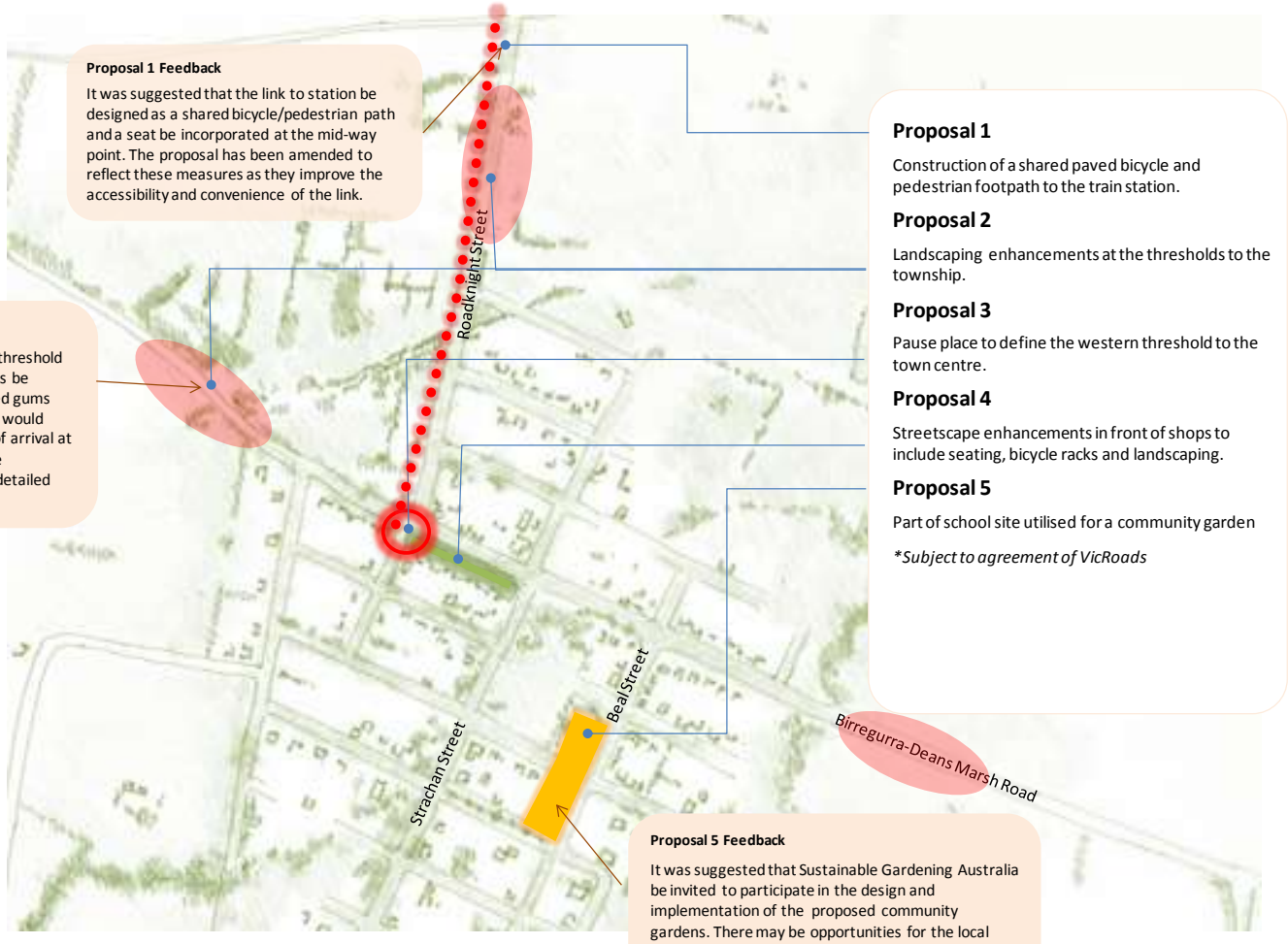
4.3 Community presentation of draft CIPs

A third round of consultation was held in both townships. The draft CIPs were presented to the Forrest and Birregurra communities who were asked to review the proposals and provide feedback. A summary of community suggestions and proposal changes are shown in **Section 4.4** and **Section 4.5**.

[2] The community garden was identified as a priority during the community engagement process. However, it is not supported by the Public Open Space Strategy and other Council strategies and plans.

[3] A drainage review was identified as a priority in Section 8.1 of the Forrest Structure Plan 2010.

4.4 Birregurra CIP proposals



Proposal 1 Feedback

It was suggested that the link to station be designed as a shared bicycle/pedestrian path and a seat be incorporated at the mid-way point. The proposal has been amended to reflect these measures as they improve the accessibility and convenience of the link.

Proposal 2 Feedback

It was suggested that the threshold landscaping enhancements be planted with lemon scented gums (Corymbia citradora). This would provide a dramatic sense of arrival at the gateway and should be considered at the time of detailed design.

Proposal 1

Construction of a shared paved bicycle and pedestrian footpath to the train station.

Proposal 2

Landscaping enhancements at the thresholds to the township.

Proposal 3

Pause place to define the western threshold to the town centre.

Proposal 4

Streetscape enhancements in front of shops to include seating, bicycle racks and landscaping.

Proposal 5

Part of school site utilised for a community garden

**Subject to agreement of VicRoads*

Proposal 5 Feedback

It was suggested that Sustainable Gardening Australia be invited to participate in the design and implementation of the proposed community gardens. There may be opportunities for the local community to partner with Sustainable Gardening Australia or other not-for-profit providers to help plan and deliver the community garden.

4.4.1 Proposal 1: Construction of a footpath from the town centre to the train station

The Birregurra Train Station is an important and valued destination that is envisaged to get busier. In order to minimise traffic and car parking congestion it is proposed that the entire length of the pedestrian route to the town centre be hard paved with a three-metre wide shared pedestrian/bicycle path to encourage people to walk and cycle. Improvements are to also include seats at either end.

In response to a community suggestion, a seat is also proposed half-way along the path to "break the journey" and provide a rest for those with limited mobility.

4.4.2 Proposal 2: Township entry enhancements

At present, people entering the town are not presented with clear signage when they arrive in Birregurra. This proposal seeks to create an attractive sense of arrival in the township that reflects the area's character as a rural community with a high degree of civic pride.

This can be achieved through improvements to landscaping to create short avenues of trees at the northern and eastern entry (to match the existing avenue to the west) that are uplit at night. This will diminish the visual dominance of the signs and create a striking image for the township, telling people they are arriving somewhere special.

In response to a community suggestion, we agree that lemon scented gums (Corymbia citadoria) should be considered for planting as they provide the necessary visual impact .

4.4.3 Proposal 3: Construction of a pause place and western threshold to the town centre

This is the point where people feel they have arrived at the town centre. This proposal seeks to create an attractive sense of arrival in the township that reflects the area's character as a rural township with civic pride.

This is achieved by improvements to landscaping to create a pause place with seating and discreet signage that will add to the memorable places in the township and offer a range of opportunities to rest and socialise.

4.4.4 Proposal 4: Construction of landscape improvements in the town centre

This area is the centrepiece of the township, with attractive heritage buildings, interesting shops and valued community services. However, it is also considered to have inadequate seating, bike parking facilities and some people consider that the landscape could be improved. The width of the footpath precludes much additional seating, but the area near the trees is underutilised and cannot be used for parking.

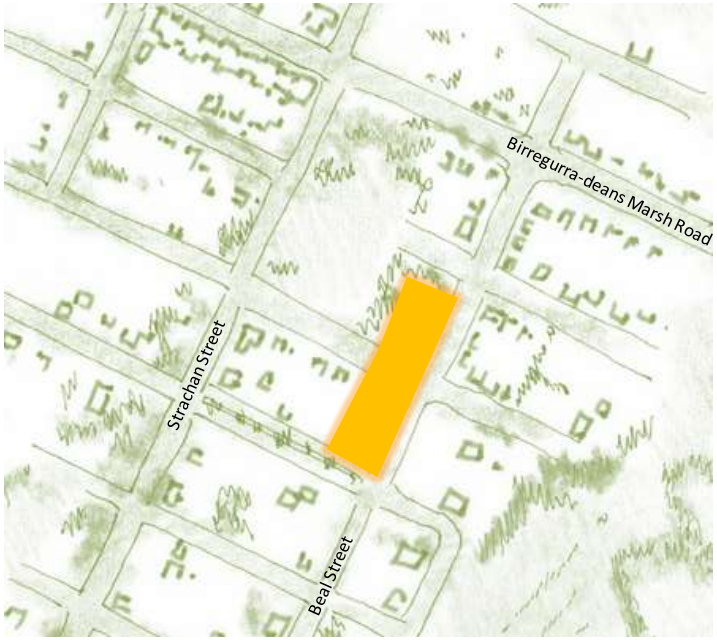
For this reason, this proposal recommends co-ordinated alternating clusters of seating, bicycle parking, landscape improvements and lighting near the trees and installation of additional trees at regular intervals.

Perspectives of bicycle parking cluster (above) and seating cluster (below).

These are based around alternating trees in the town centre together with landscape enhancements and a masonry curved barrier wall.

In both instances, fixed installations are set back at least 2.5m from the kerb to allow for mechanical street cleaning.

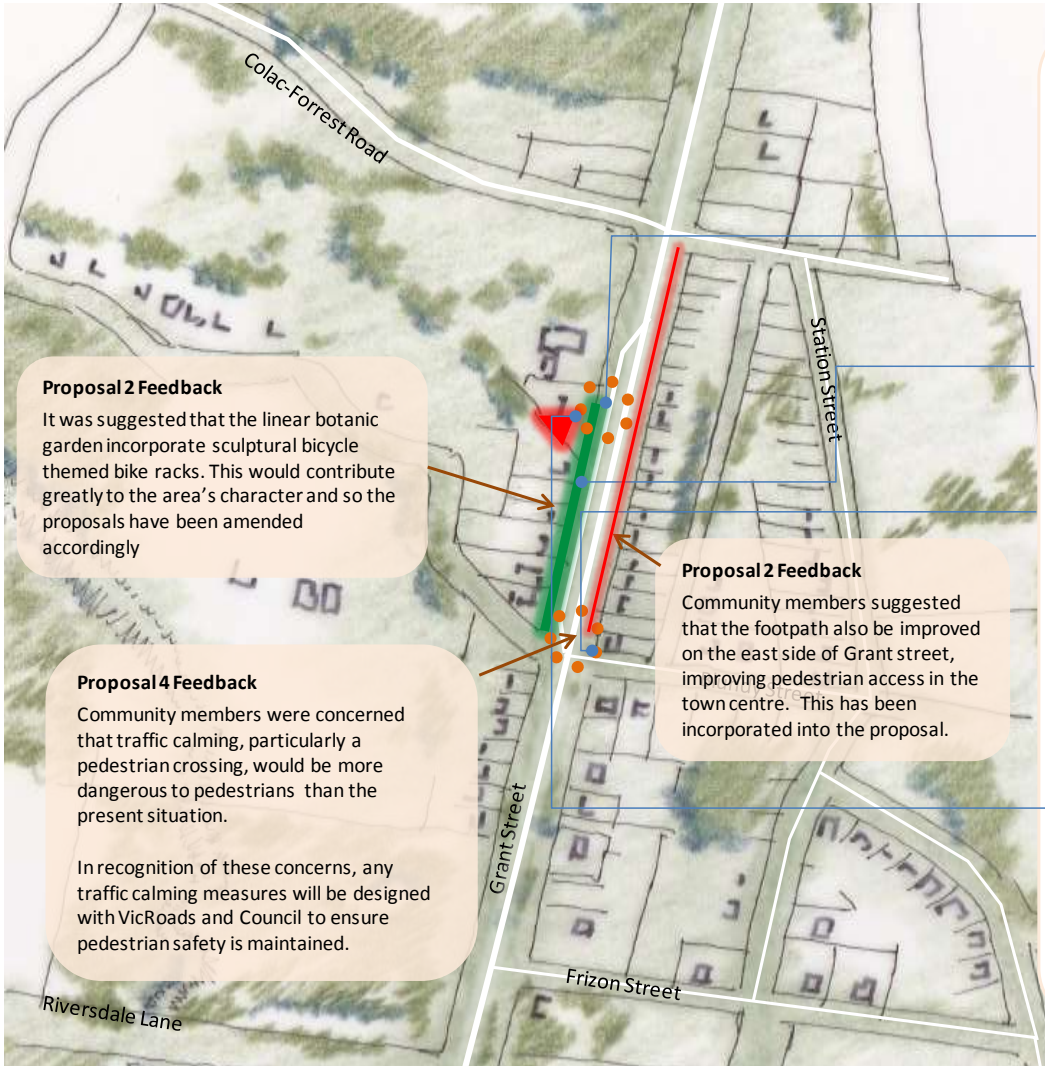
4.4.5 Proposal 5: Explore the feasibility of a community garden, woodlot and community gardening educational facility on part of school grounds



Birregurra has a strong interest in local produce and there is a degree of support for a community garden. The school has expressed an interest in the garden being located on its site, where it can form part of the curriculum and facilitate members of the community to pass on their gardening skills to the children, and the children to pass on skills to their parents.

It is envisaged that the garden will include a woodlot for wood harvesting/coppicing, community garden beds, storage sheds and a shelter with a notice board to facilitate the development of a sense of community and the exchange of information.

4.5 Forrest CIP proposals



Proposal 1
Northern threshold to the town centre defined by village green incorporating landscaping, seating and sculptural play feature.

Proposal 2
Linear botanic garden showcasing the area's native landscape character. Incorporate improvements to footpaths and the road edge*, landscaping, seating, sculptural features and information about the plants growing there.

Proposal 3
Southern threshold to town centre to incorporate improvements to parking adjacent to the Forrest Brewery and Café, traffic calming to facilitate safe pedestrian crossing and sculptural gateway feature.**

Proposal 4
A co-ordinated signage strategy to present the area's heritage, recreational assets and to showcase commercial services effectively.

Recommendation 1
Multi-purpose community facility and information point.***

During consultation, a number of community members did not agree with the proposed location for the for the multi-purpose facility as it would remove the grassed area currently used for events. While constrained, it is the only available location within the study area.

Consequently, the multi-purpose facility is included as a recommendation in recognition of the community need for an additional facility. However, if a less constrained site becomes available it is advised that it is pursued.

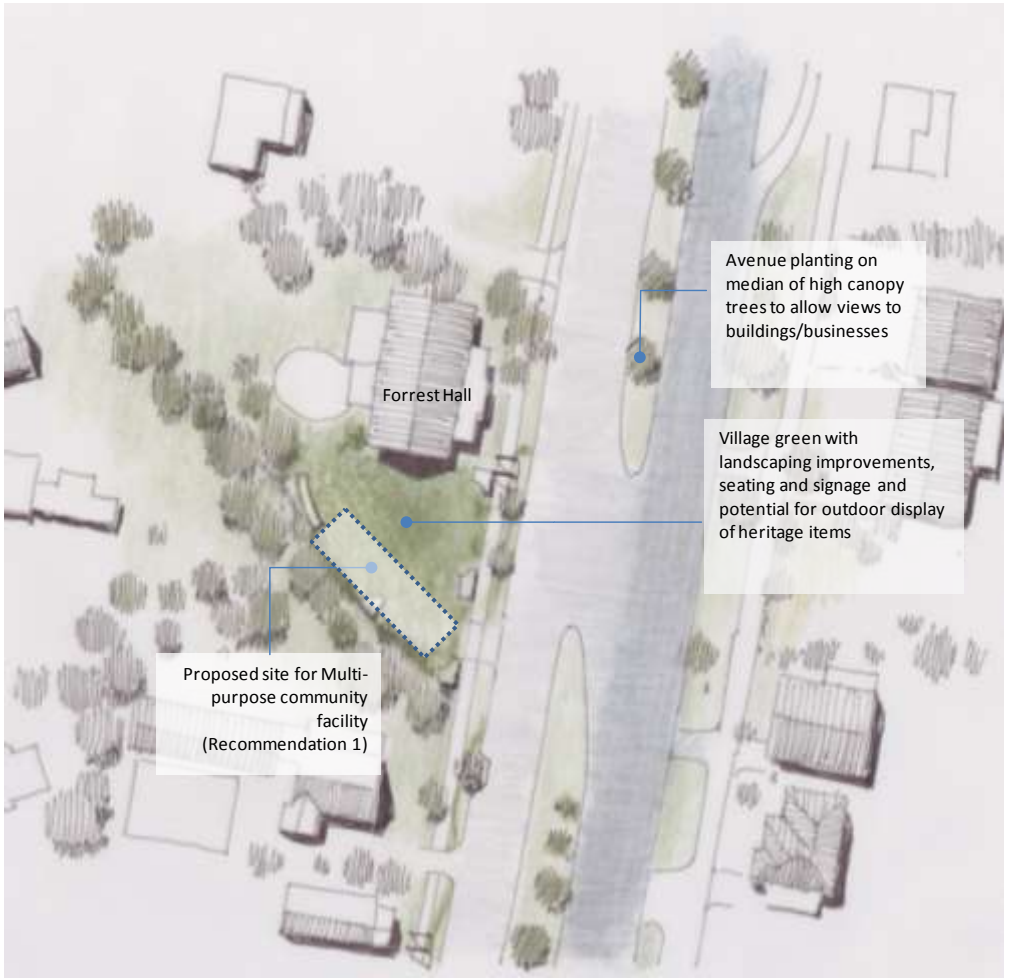
**In conjunction with the recommended future drainage study*
***Subject to agreement with VicRoads*
****Subject to DSE agreement*

4.5.1 Proposal 1: Northern threshold

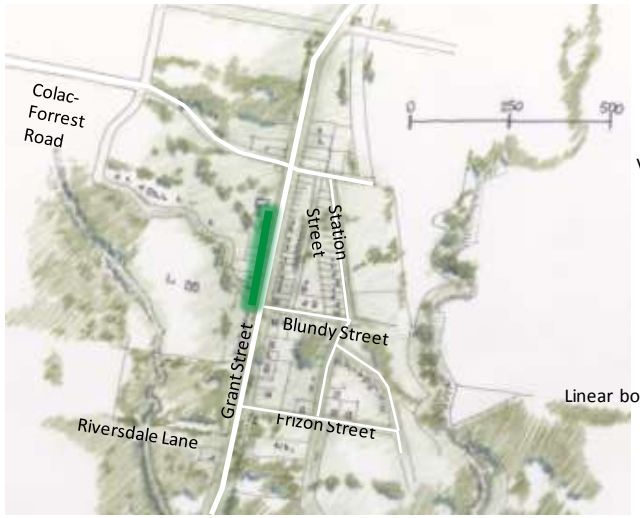
These proposals seek to create an attractive sense of arrival in the town at the northern threshold that reflects the area's character as a community located within a forest.

This is achieved by landscaping improvements to create a village green that will add to the memorable places in the township and offer a range of opportunities to rest, play and socialise. This village green will be defined by publically important buildings including the existing Forrest Hall and recommended multi-purpose facility. The village green also bookends the linear botanic garden that runs south to the Forrest Brewery and Café (see Proposal 3)

The entry signage will establish a theme that is consistent with the linear botanic garden theme.



4.5.2 Proposal 2: Linear botanic garden



Village green
Pause place
Pergola
Signage
Bike racks
Linear botanic garden

This links the two ends of the town centre, tying it together. It will incorporate pause places which will be attractive combinations of seating and planting and information about the plants in the garden, including where they came from and their uses.

It is noted that there are overhead powerlines. These are costly and disruptive to underground, therefore, the landscaping may be restricted to low/understorey plants.

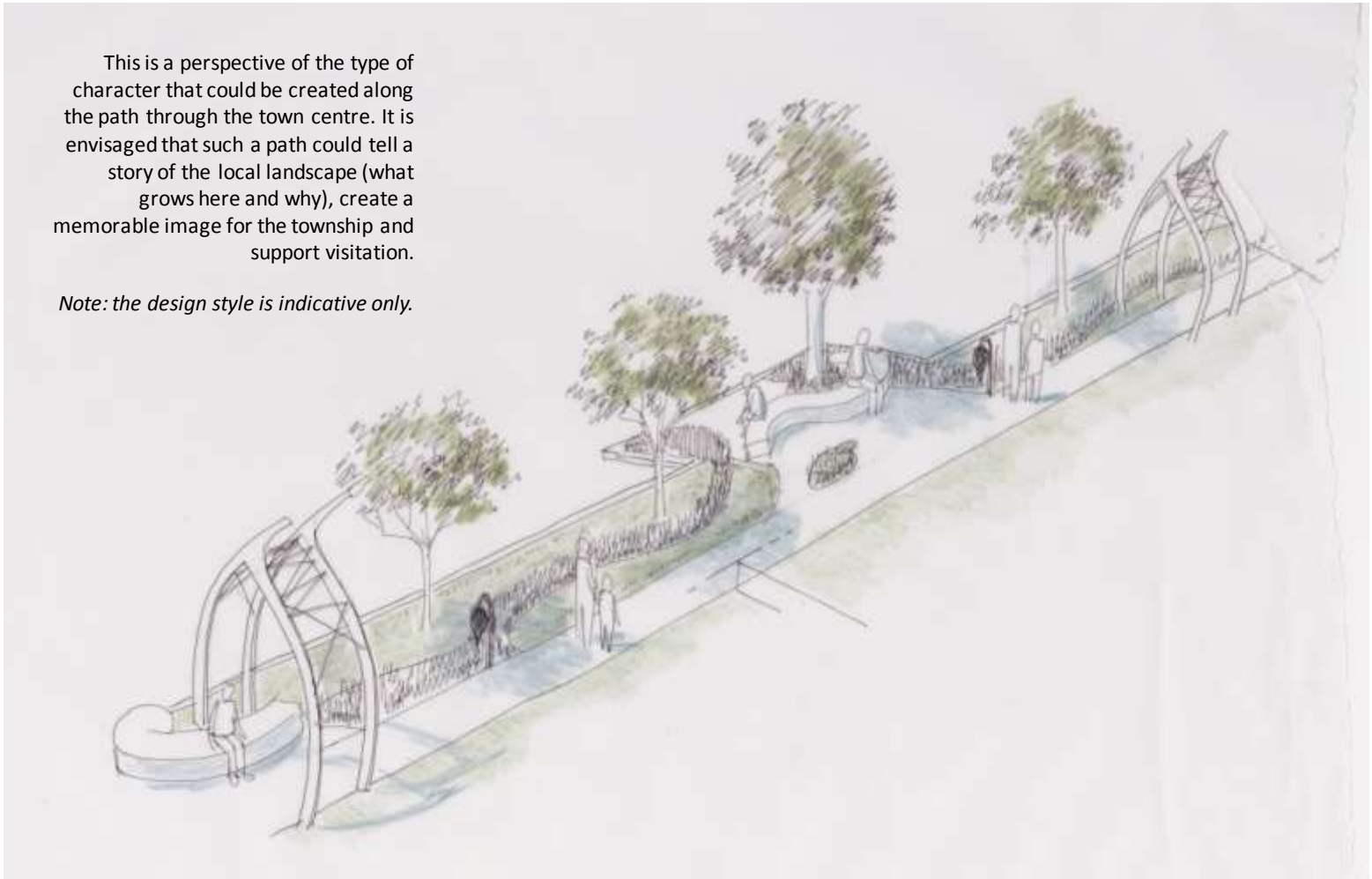
Canopy tree planting along the median will provide filtered views through the trees to the town centre.

The proposal incorporates improvements to footpaths and kerbs on both sides of Grant Street, however this will need to occur in conjunction with works to improve drainage in the area. The footpath is to be hard paved, at least 1.5m in width and level with drop kerbs at intersections. Care should be taken to avoid removal of trees.

Sculptural bicycle racks, as per those being installed in town, are to be incorporated at either end of the linear botanic garden.

This is a perspective of the type of character that could be created along the path through the town centre. It is envisaged that such a path could tell a story of the local landscape (what grows here and why), create a memorable image for the township and support visitation.

Note: the design style is indicative only.



4.5.3 Proposal 3: Southern threshold

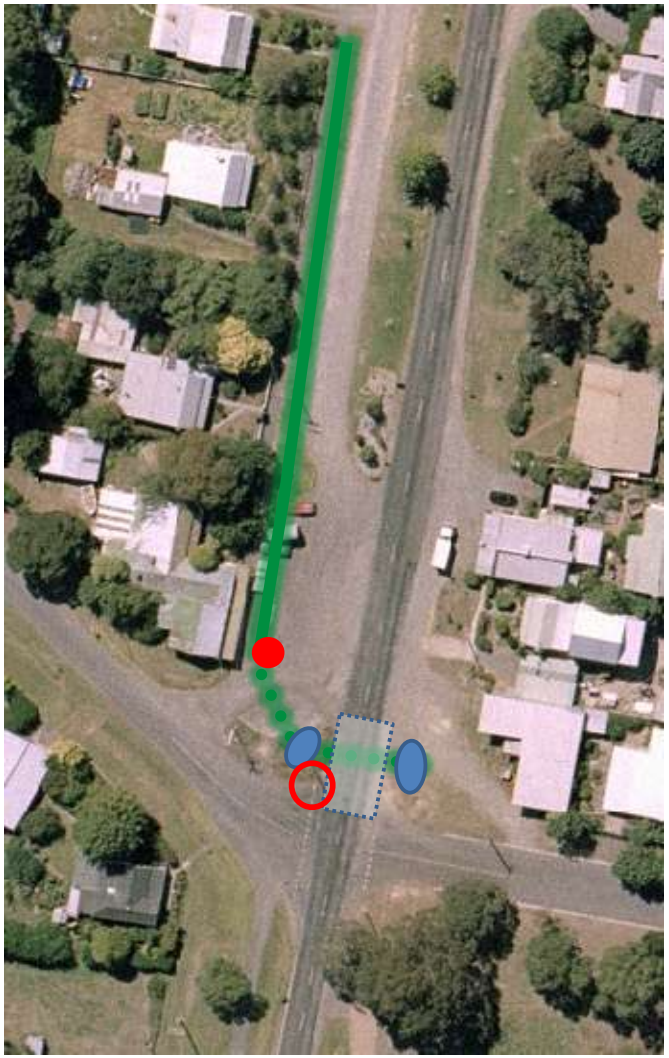
Linear botanic garden and path (refer to Proposal 2)

Pergola

Information signage aimed at pedestrians

Sculptural threshold signage aimed at vehicle users (refer Proposal 4)

Traffic calming measure (exact nature to be determined)



This is the point where people feel they have arrived at the town centre and is also the point connecting General Store to the Forrest Brewery and Café (two important assets noted by the community). The southern threshold will connect with the proposed linear botanic garden and footpath improvements.

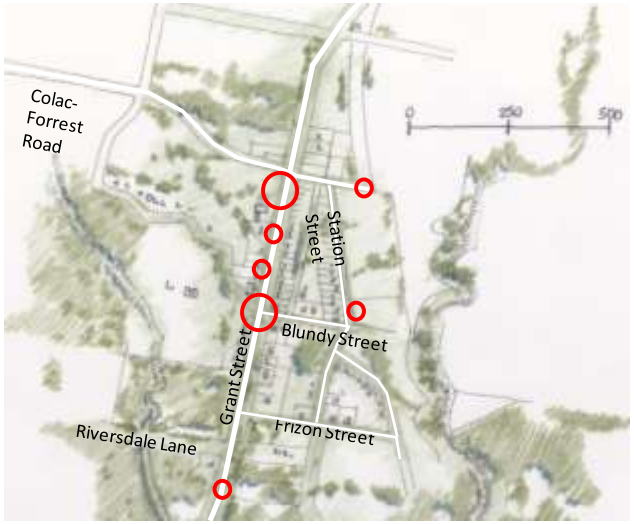
These proposals seek to make crossing the road easier and create an attractive sense of arrival in the township that reflects the area's character as a community set within a forest. This is achieved by improvements to landscaping and traffic calming to change the balance between pedestrians, cyclists and cars.

In response to community concerns raised during consultation, the nature of the traffic calming measures will be designed in consultation with VicRoads and Colac Otway Shire Council to ensure that they help slow traffic, improve access and are safe for residents.

This is a perspective of the type of character that could be created at the southern entry to the township. The pergolas (indicative design only) would serve the twin purposes of emphasising the crossing point (minimising the perceived width of the road) and therefore slowing down traffic and providing a memorable image for the community.

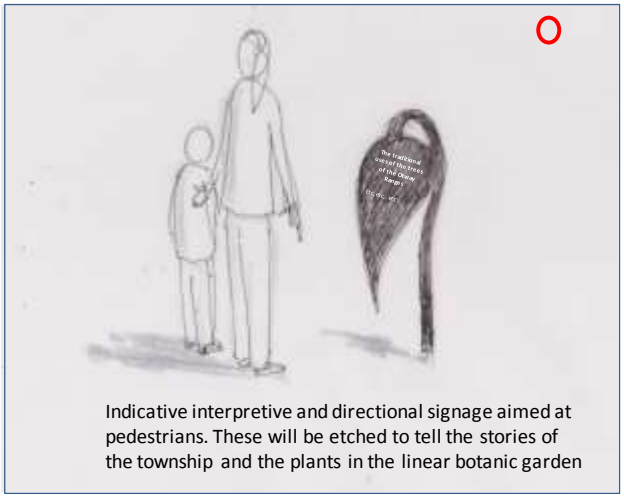
(Note: exact design of road treatment will be subject to further study)

4.5.4 Proposal 4: Signage strategy

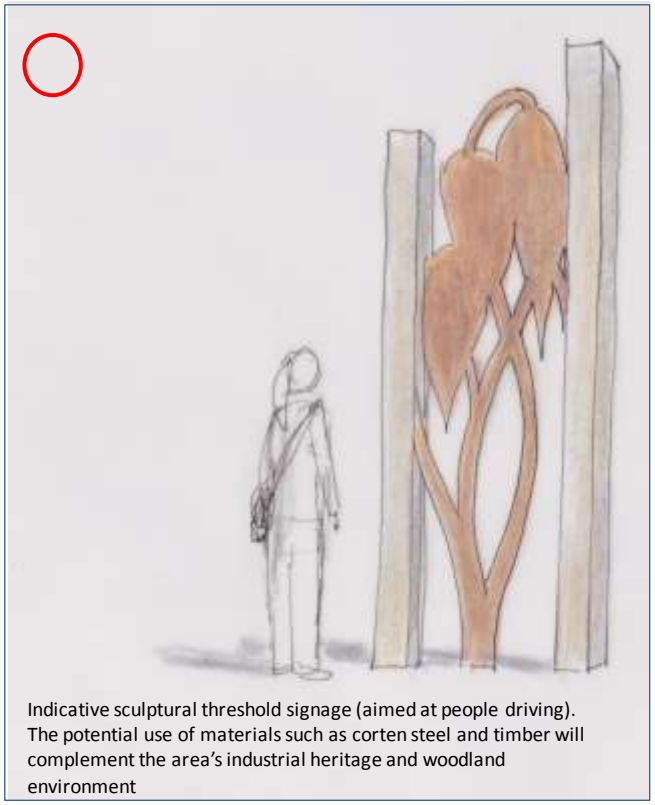


It is recommended that a co-ordinated signage strategy is commissioned to present the area's heritage, recreational assets and to showcase commercial services effectively.

Future designs will be in line with the current DSE branding, ensuring consistency throughout the town.



Indicative interpretive and directional signage aimed at pedestrians. These will be etched to tell the stories of the township and the plants in the linear botanic garden



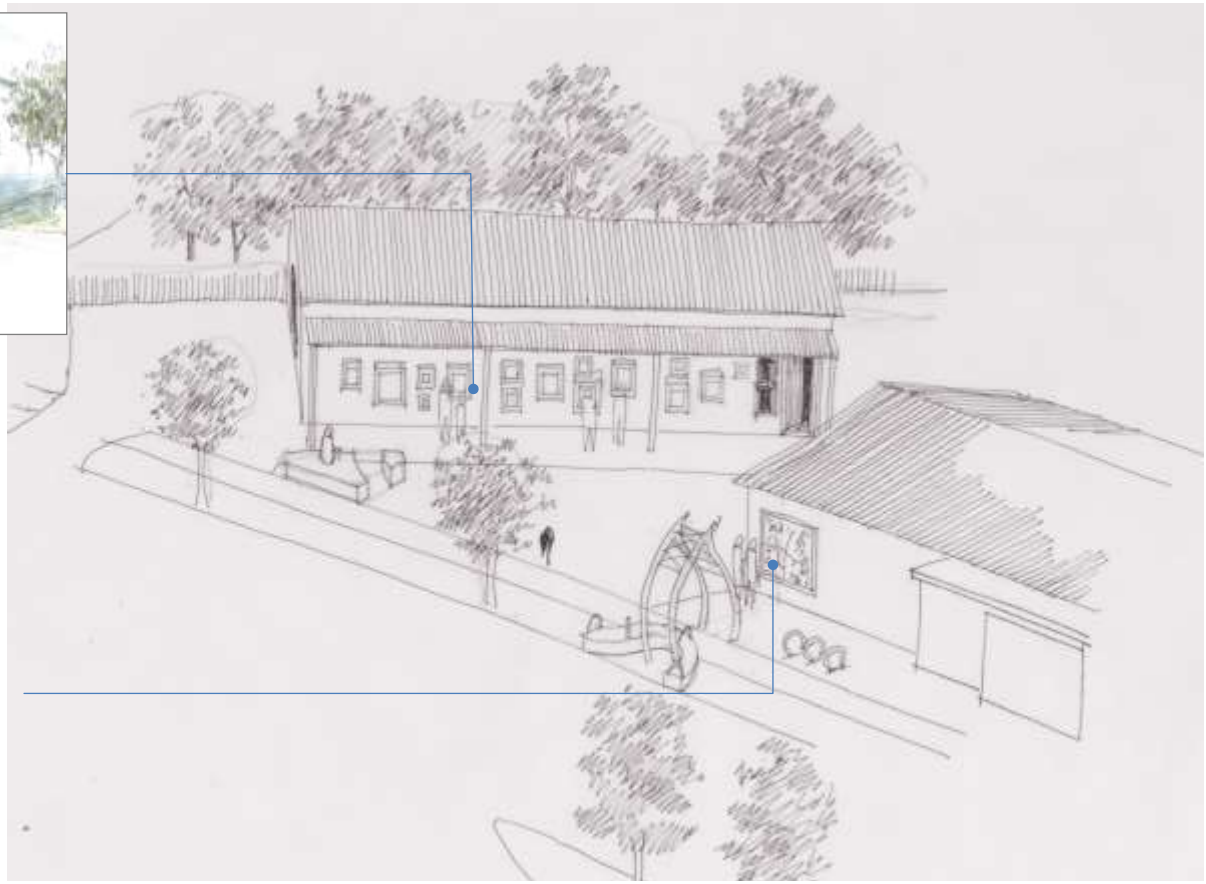
Indicative sculptural threshold signage (aimed at people driving). The potential use of materials such as corten steel and timber will complement the area's industrial heritage and woodland environment

4.5.5 Recommendation 1: Multi-purpose community facility

The multi-purpose community facility could potentially provide additional space for the Neighbourhood House and/or other complementary community uses. The outside of the facility, facing the village green will include a historical display and information about the area's history and show visitors what Forrest has to offer in the present.

As previously mentioned, this proposed location for the facility is constrained. Council should explore alternative sites if they become available.

Illustrative perspective of the multi-purpose community facility and village green



"Artistic" map of area showcasing local businesses and points of interest in prominent location on the side of the Forrest Hall

5 Recommendations

As part of the CIP development for the Birregurra and Forrest townships we identified a number of future proposals, opportunities and additional studies that would be beneficial for future community infrastructure development.

The following section outlines recommendations for both Forrest and Birregurra.

5.1 Birregurra recommendations

1. **Improvements to the heritage trail**

   The heritage trail was raised on several occasions during consultation as being an important feature for the community. However, the condition of the footpath is variable and may well be a deterrent for some. For this reason, we recommend a staged program of improvements to the footpath as well as ensuring that the interpretive material is kept in good condition.

2. **Activities for teenagers**

   During consultation we heard that there is a need to increase activities for young people in the town. We recommend Council investigates potential activities for young people to build on the existing Birregurra skate-park facility.

3. **Facilities for older people**

   Birregurra's residents are getting older. During the consultation sessions, community members noted that improved aged care facilities and services should be provided so residents do not have to move to a larger town as they get older. Specific facility requirement will be dependent on the projected growth figures from the revised *Birregurra Structure Plan* to be released in mid-2012.

4. **Tiger Trail**

   The re-establishment of the Tiger Rail Trail provides an opportunity to expand bicycle tourism opportunities in Birregurra.

5.2 Forrest recommendations

It is suggested that further studies are undertaken to resolve the following issues:

1. **Social history study**

   Like all rural communities Forrest has a rich history of "little stories" surrounding how people lived in the past. Compiling these stories will provide much of the information for the interpretive signage and preserve them for posterity.

2. **Forrest Community Hall management**

   During consultation we heard ongoing concerns from community members about the DSE owned Community Hall leasing arrangement with local community groups.

   Community members noted that limited funds were available for the ongoing maintenance and improvement of the hall. It is our recommendation that Council works with the Forrest Community and DSE to identify alternative leasing arrangements which maximise the potential use and enjoyment of this important shared facility.

3. **Playground improvements**

   The playground is socially significant but is the focus of some dissatisfaction. We recommend that a detailed study is undertaken to improve facilities, in particular relating to seating, landscaping and upgrading play equipment.

4. **Safe place access**

   It is recognised that bushfires are a major issue for Forrest. An initial reading of the CFA's Safer Place Guidelines suggests that because of the relationship of the township to the surrounding bush and the nature of the subdivision and development in the centre means that there are no obvious candidate sites for "safer places".

   However, these are not the only elements of bushfire protection and it is recommended a further study is undertaken.

5. **Heritage study**

   The police lock-up and industrial heritage machinery are valuable historical assets that would add to the appeal of the area if attractively presented. It is recommended that a further heritage study is undertaken to gather information on how to best present these assets and how to incorporate this presentation into the signage strategy proposal.

6. **Design guidelines**

   It is recommended that Council prepares design guidelines to ensure new development retains and enhances the areas character of a rural township located within a national park.

7. **Management actions**

   The Committee of Management at the recreation reserve is a standard DSE agreement. However, it was suggested during consultation that Council help facilitate changes that enable increased community access outside of scheduled games and events.

Appendix A – Follow-up drop-in session - feedback sheets

Design Agenda

Have we got the infrastructure priorities right? Are there any items we should add or remove from the design agenda?

Please write your comments below or annotate the social landscape map provided.

…….

…….

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Social Landscape

Are the social landscape features correct? Are there any items we should add or remove from the map?

Please write your comments below or annotate the social landscape map provided.

…….

…….

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Where to from here?

What are your ideas about how the infrastructure priorities should be achieved? Where should things be located? What should they look like?

Are there any examples from other places that you would like us to refer to?

Please write your comments below or annotate the social landscape map provided.

…….

…….

…….

…….

…….

Appendix B – Community survey

Forrest and Birregurra Community Infrastructure Plans

Feedback Form

1. Social Landscape

Are the social landscape features correct? Are there any items that we should add or remove from the map?

2. Design Agenda

Have we got the infrastructure priorities right? Are there any items that should be added or removed from the design agenda?

3. Achieving the priorities

What are your ideas about how the community infrastructure priorities can be achieved? Where should things be located? What should they look like? Are there any examples that you have seen in other places that you would like us to refer to?