

# BIRREGURRA STRUCTURE PLAN 2025

**FINAL VERSION**



**DECEMBER 2025**

## Acknowledgement

The Colac Otway Shire Council respectfully acknowledges the Gulidjan and Gadubanud peoples of the Maar Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the Colac Otway region, the land and waterways upon which the activities of the Colac Otway Shire Council are conducted.

We pay our respects to their ancestors and elders, past, present and emerging. We recognise and respect their unique cultural heritage, beliefs and uphold their continuing relationship to this land.

## Council adopted version

Colac Otway Shire Council adopted the Birregurra Structure Plan 2025 on 25 November 2025 with the following resolution:

That Council:

1. Considers all submissions received to the draft Birregurra Structure Plan 2025.
2. Considers the recommendations to modify the draft Birregurra Structure Plan as outlined in the Submissions Responses Table.
3. Adopts the Birregurra Structure Plan 2025, subject to the inclusion of the land north of Kettle Lane through to the railway line (inclusive of the following properties – 20, 24, 28 and 30 Roadknight Street, Birregurra and 462 Birregurra Road, Birregurra) as a residential growth investigation area.
4. Authorises officers to make the amendment detailed in point 3 to the Birregurra Structure Plan 2025 including explanatory commentary.
5. Expresses its appreciation to the Birregurra Community Reference Group, and the broader community and stakeholders for their participation in this project, and informs them of the outcome.

This version of the report has been amended in accordance with the above resolution.

### Disclaimer

This report has been prepared by Conway Planning for Colac Otway Shire Council. It was prepared using a wide range of inputs and advice from Colac Otway Shire Council officers, State government departments, Kevin Hazell Bushfire Planning, Town Matters P/L and through community consultation. Conway Planning and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

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## Executive Summary

Birregurra is a small, rural town in Colac Otway Shire located on the traditional lands of the Gulidjan people. With a population of around 650 people, Birregurra has a rural village character with a distinctive main street, popular with both residents and tourists to the town. Birregurra has several public, commercial and residential heritage places which form an integral part of its character.

The Barwon River flows along the eastern edge of the town, is home to platypus and is actively cared for by the Birregurra Landcare volunteer-based group. Land adjoining the Barwon River is subject to flooding, particularly to the east, as is land along Atkin Creek in the north of town and along an unnamed creek line running diagonally through town.

The regional Geelong-Warrnambool railway line is to the north and includes a stop at the Birregurra Railway Station.

The town has a good range of community facilities including a primary school, pre-school, police station, recreation reserve, golf course, bowling green, local parks, churches, a community health centre and the Birregurra Public Hall.

The Birregurra Structure Plan 2025 will guide the use and development of land in Birregurra for the next 10-15 years. It was developed following a review of the Birregurra Structure Plan 2013 and through community and stakeholder engagement.

Key directions and strategies are intended to ensure growth in Birregurra will achieve the preferred future for the town as expressed in the Vision statement.

Birregurra will continue to function as a small rural town offering village lifestyle opportunities. Growth will be modest and supported where it responds to landscape considerations, complements the neighbourhood character of its surrounds and makes efficient use of existing infrastructure.

The Birregurra Structure Plan is set out in three parts:

Part A – Introduction and Background

Part B – Birregurra Structure Plan 2025

Part C - Implementation

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## ***VISION STATEMENT***

**Birregurra – a thriving village built on its heritage character, providing a lifestyle for a creative and engaged community.**

In the year 2040, Birregurra will be a thriving small town, offering a village lifestyle in an attractive rural setting. It will have a creative and engaged community including people at all stages in life.

The long history of the Gulidjan people will continue to be respected with their values recognised and celebrated.

Birregurra will be a compact town with an attractive and connected grid network of tree-lined streets and open space links.

Housing will consist of a range of choices that meet the varied needs of residents, increasing diversity and providing for people to retire and age in place. The town will be characterised by low-rise buildings with generously sized gardens to complement the town's leafy and heritage setting. Larger rural lifestyle lots will be located on the higher elevations in the south. There is potential for some modest small-scale extension of the town to the west, which would add to the town's housing supply.

Birregurra's town centre will be prosperous, offering commercial and community services that cater for the local needs of residents and for the surrounding farming community.

Birregurra will be a magnet for tourists and will be renowned for the sale of local artisan and farm products that celebrate the Otway Ranges and nearby farmlands.

Birregurra's community will have access to plentiful open space. They will enjoy recreational opportunities along the Barwon River and quality community facilities will be available in the town.

Birregurra will be a resilient and adaptable town with an active and engaged community that supports each other to thrive.

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## Key Objectives

Key objectives for Birregurra as set out in Part B include:

### *Population and Housing*

- To facilitate a modest rate of population growth consistent with Birregurra's role in a regional context as a small, rural village.
- To provide opportunities for future residential growth by supporting continued infill development and through small scale urban expansion.
- To encourage a diversity of housing types and residential lot sizes to accommodate people of varying ages and life stages.
- To encourage new development that complements the rural village character and heritage of Birregurra.

### *Commerce and Industry*

- To support the Main Street commercial area as the retail heart of the town servicing the needs of local residents and tourists.
- To support the ongoing viability of Birregurra's industrial precinct.

### *Environment and Landscape*

- To improve the climate resilience of Birregurra township.
- To preserve and enhance the Barwon River corridor and connected waterways.
- To preserve and enhance the vegetated character of Birregurra without increasing risk from bushfire.
- To protect the landscape character and view lines of town entrances as defining elements of the north, east and west gateways.

### *Aboriginal Cultural Values*

- To adopt principles associated with the Bio-Cultural Landscape and Aboriginal Cultural Values as follows:
  - Respectful partnership and cultural leadership.
  - Cultural identity, wellbeing and intergenerational strength.
  - Caring for Country and creating a sustainable future.

### *Access and Movement*

- To ensure the Birregurra road network provides safe and continuous access for all road users.
- To encourage active transport modes of travel through an improved pathway and cycling network.
- To advocate for increased Public Transport services to meet the needs of a growing town.

### *Open Space, Recreation and Community Facilities*

- To provide a range of passive and active recreation opportunities within the township.
- To establish a connected network of accessible public open space and recreation facilities.
- To recognise the Birregurra Recreation Reserve as the primary recreation and sporting precinct in the township.
- To support a range of community services and facilities commensurate with the size of the population.

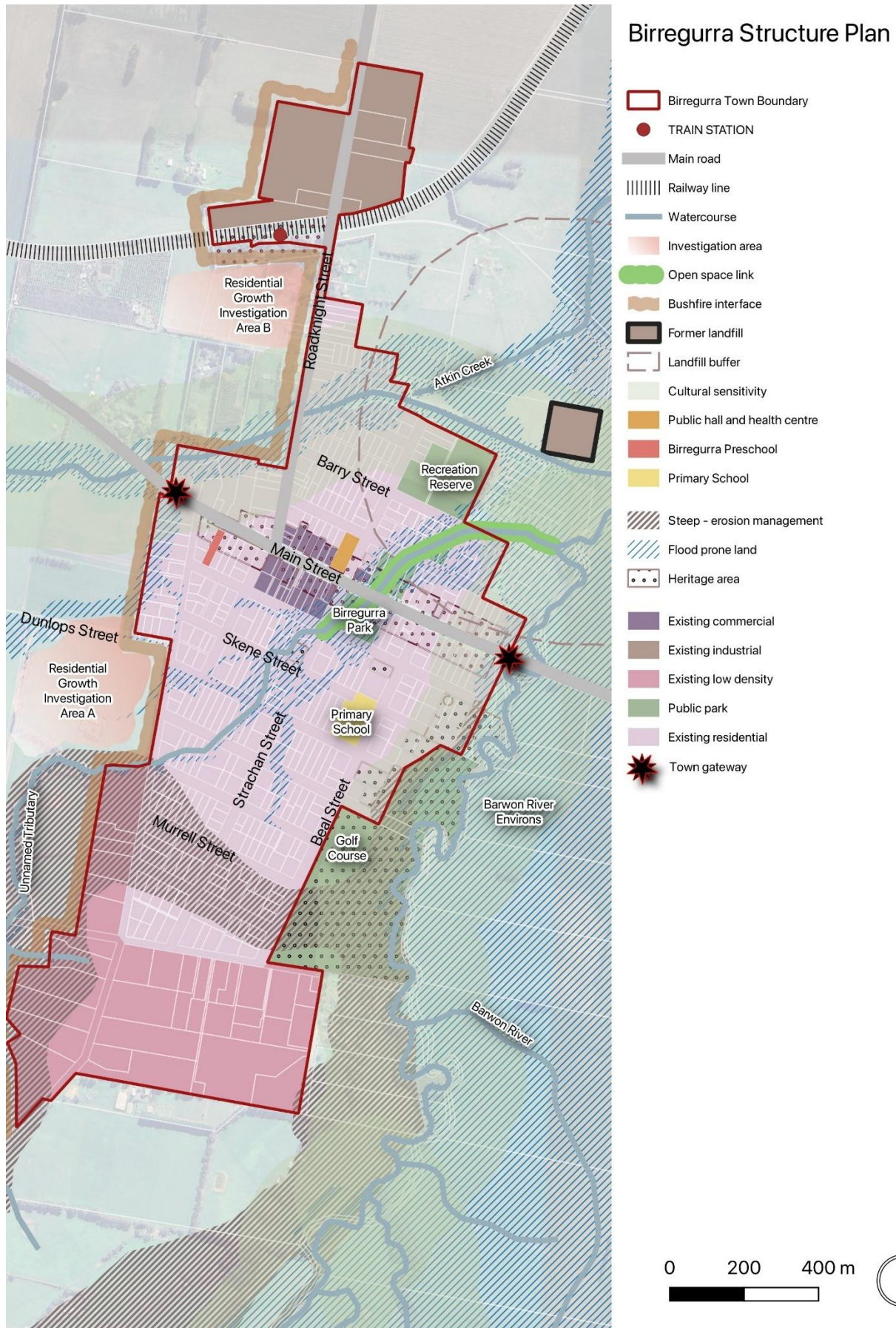
### *Utilities*

- To support the provision of physical infrastructure necessary to service the current and future needs of the community, in a manner that respects the character of the town and will add to its future resilience in a changing climate.

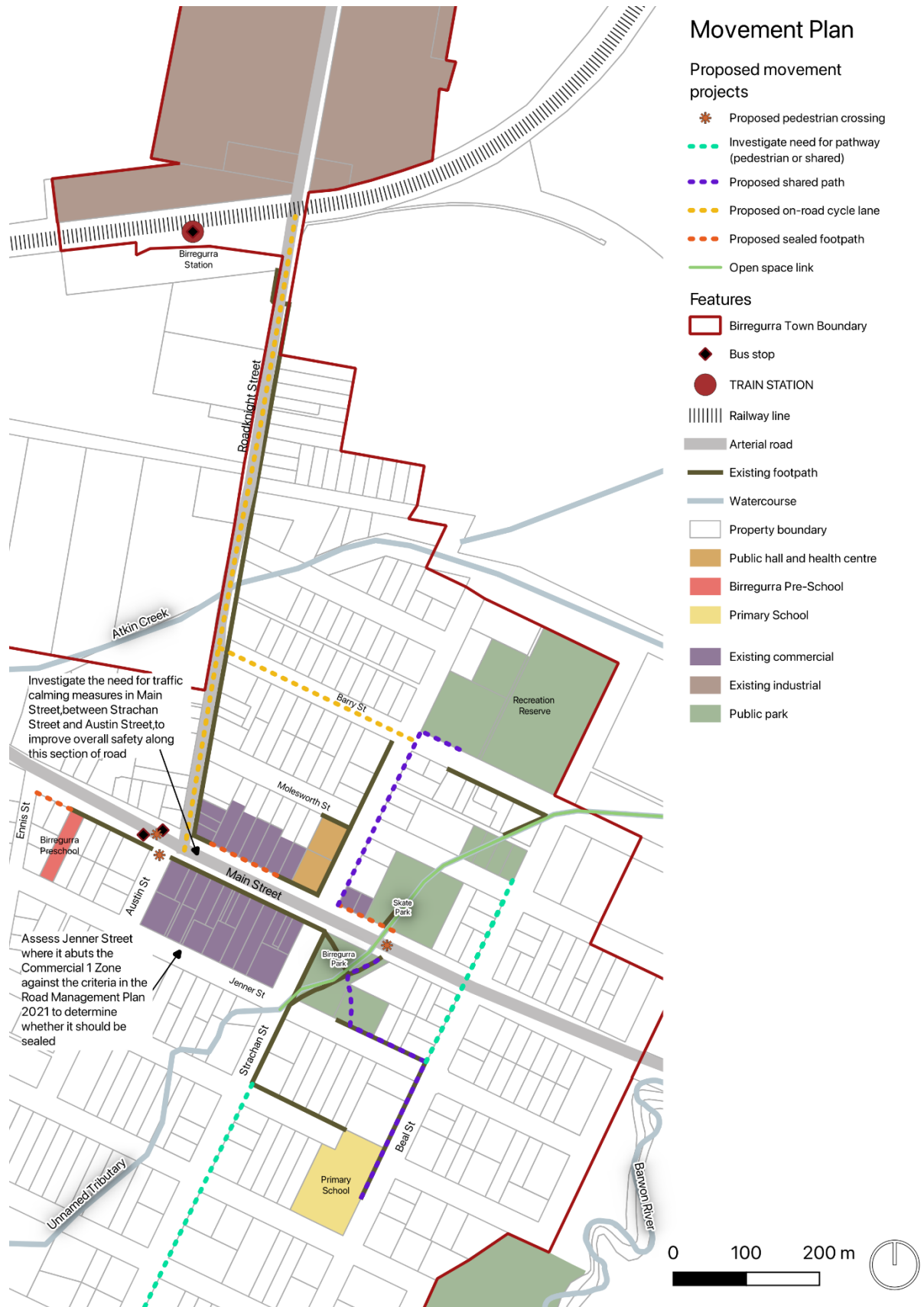
Implementation of the 2025 Structure Plan will require a range of actions, including a planning scheme amendment to introduce the new policy into legislation. Table 4 in Part C outlines the actions that will be required to deliver the Birregurra Structure Plan 2025, sets out Council's role and prioritises the actions in terms of short, medium or long-term delivery.



## Birregurra Structure Plan Map



## Birregurra Movement Map



## Part A - Introduction

### i. Birregurra Structure Plan Review Project

The *Birregurra Structure Plan 2025* (2025 Structure Plan) is the outcome of a review and update of the *Birregurra Structure Plan 2013* (2013 Structure Plan).

The Review project had a limited scope<sup>1</sup>, and its primary objectives were to:

- Deliver an updated analysis of land supply for future infill housing within the current town boundaries.
- Identify where future growth should occur if further land is required to meet anticipated demand, ensuring housing affordability.
- Review and provide recommendations on the effectiveness of planning controls over subdivision and development.
- Provide an up-to-date Structure Plan for Birregurra that reflects contemporary community needs.

Several background reports were prepared as part of the Review project.

1. Birregurra Structure Plan Review: Issues & Opportunities Report, 19 July 2024 (summary version available).
2. Birregurra Structure Plan Review: Review of Neighbourhood Planning Provisions, 19 July 2024.
3. Birregurra Bushfire Planning Assessment, 4 September 2024.
4. Birregurra Structure Plan Review: Consultation Report, 12 November 2024.

These reports outline the process and methodology undertaken for the Review project and provide the detailed analysis and feedback that underpins the 2025 Structure Plan.

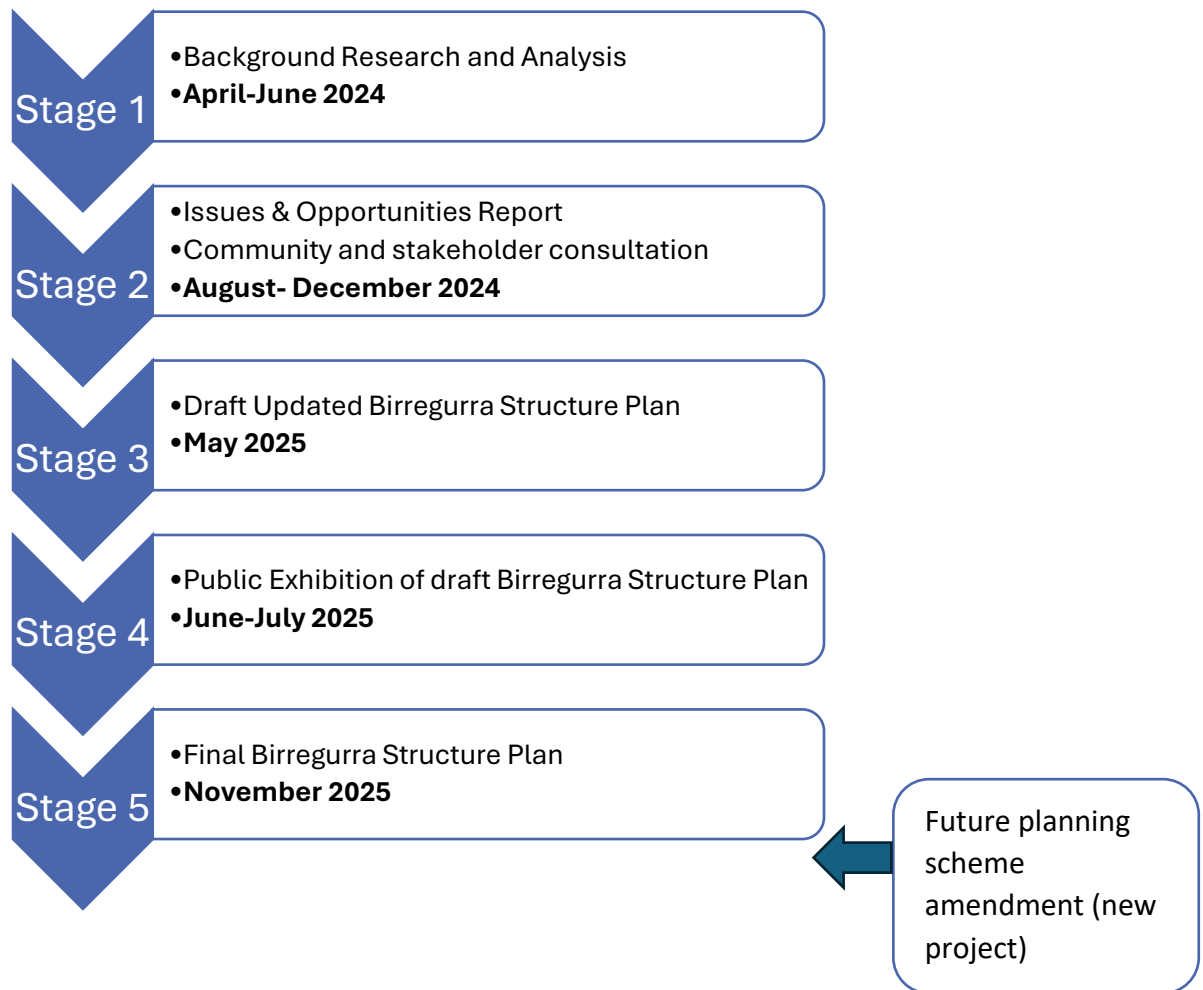
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<sup>1</sup> Refer to Chapter 1.5 of the Issues and Opportunities Report for details on the limitations of the project.



## ii. Process and Timelines

### Birregurra Structure Plan Review Project Timelines



### iii. Community and Stakeholder Consultation

Community and stakeholder engagement encompassed a range of activities and provided opportunities for input in developing the 2025 Structure Plan. Engagement activities included:

- A Community Reference Group, comprising 10 members, with a role to:
  - Provide feedback or commentary about matters related to the Birregurra Structure Plan Review project.
  - Promote awareness of the project within the broader Birregurra community.
- An agency workshop with several infrastructure agencies and State government departments, and individual follow up meetings.
- Meetings with the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation
- A community open house session
- An online survey
- Project webpage

Feedback was sought on development and change in the town that has occurred since the 2013 Structure Plan was introduced. People were also asked to identify what they value about Birregurra today and how they would like to see it evolve in the next 10-15 years. Extensive feedback was received and is outlined in the Birregurra Structure Plan Review Consultation Report #1 (12 November 2024).

While not every suggestion has been included in the 2025 Structure Plan, all comments and suggestions were considered alongside other inputs, such as State legislation, existing planning policy, and environmental risks and constraints.

## iv. Issues and Opportunities

The policy of urban containment adopted by the 2013 Structure Plan was very successful in promoting infill growth at a rate which has allowed the town to continue to grow in a modest, sustainable manner generally consistent with preferred neighbourhood character objectives.

This is consistent with the role of Birregurra as a smaller town with modest growth potential in the wider regional context.

High level challenges and strengths for the town are identified below, followed by a list of opportunities that have been explored in developing the 2025 Structure Plan.



### Challenges

- Population growth projections for Colac Otway Shire are low
- Limited and reducing land supply
- Increasing property prices, declining housing affordability
- Increasing rents
- Little housing diversity
- Climate change pressures: warmer, drier, more extreme events (floods/bushfires)
- Ageing road infrastructure
- Limited footpath provision and an absence of cycling paths
- Ageing community and recreation facilities



### Strengths

- Country town character protected by planning provisions
- Vegetated landscape and open space
- Barwon River environs
- Popular with families
- Strong demand for housing
- Reticulated sewerage and water provision
- Tailored approach to density
- Birregurra Railway Station
- Active and interested community



## Opportunities

- Update the Birregurra Structure Plan to outline an approach to future growth that improves housing supply, affordability and diversity using a climate action lens (e.g. improve resilience to flooding and grassfire)
- Explore opportunities to augment housing supply
- Refine neighbourhood character provisions to address issues identified in the background reports
- Explore active transport connections, particularly footpath provision, and develop an updated movement network plan

## Part B – Birregurra Structure Plan 2025

### 1. Strategic Context

The 2025 Structure Plan provides the strategic framework to guide the use and development of land in Birregurra for the next 10-15 years.

It accords with Council's Community Vision Statement:

*By 2050, Colac Otway Shire will be a destination where people come to appreciate our unique and diverse environment and friendly communities.*

*We value the wisdom of this land's first caretakers, the Gulidjan and Gadabanud peoples, and recognise all those who have cared for the land since.*

*We work to preserve what makes our place special. We focus on environmental sustainability to protect our precious natural assets.*

*We are a proud and resilient community that values our welcoming spirit. We embrace new people, new business, new ideas. Our region is a great place to learn, live, work and play.<sup>2</sup>*

It seeks to facilitate the following objectives from the Council Plan 2025-2029:

- Enliven and beautify our townships and natural environments.
- Enhance our community and social spaces and collaborate with communities to deliver healthy and climate resilient environments.
- Make it safe and easy to get around the Shire.
- Ensure our region offers a diversity of economic opportunities supported by an array of housing options.
- Build greater community connection through social, cultural and recreational opportunities.
- Promote and enable healthy behaviours.

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<sup>2</sup> Colac Otway Shire Community Vision 2050



The 2025 Structure Plan should be read alongside the following background reports.

1. Birregurra Structure Plan Review: Issues & Opportunities Report, 19 July 2024 (summary version available)
2. Birregurra Structure Plan Review: Review of Neighbourhood Planning Provisions, 19 July 2024
3. Birregurra Bushfire Planning Assessment, 4 September 2024
4. Birregurra Structure Plan Review: Consultation Report, 12 November 2024



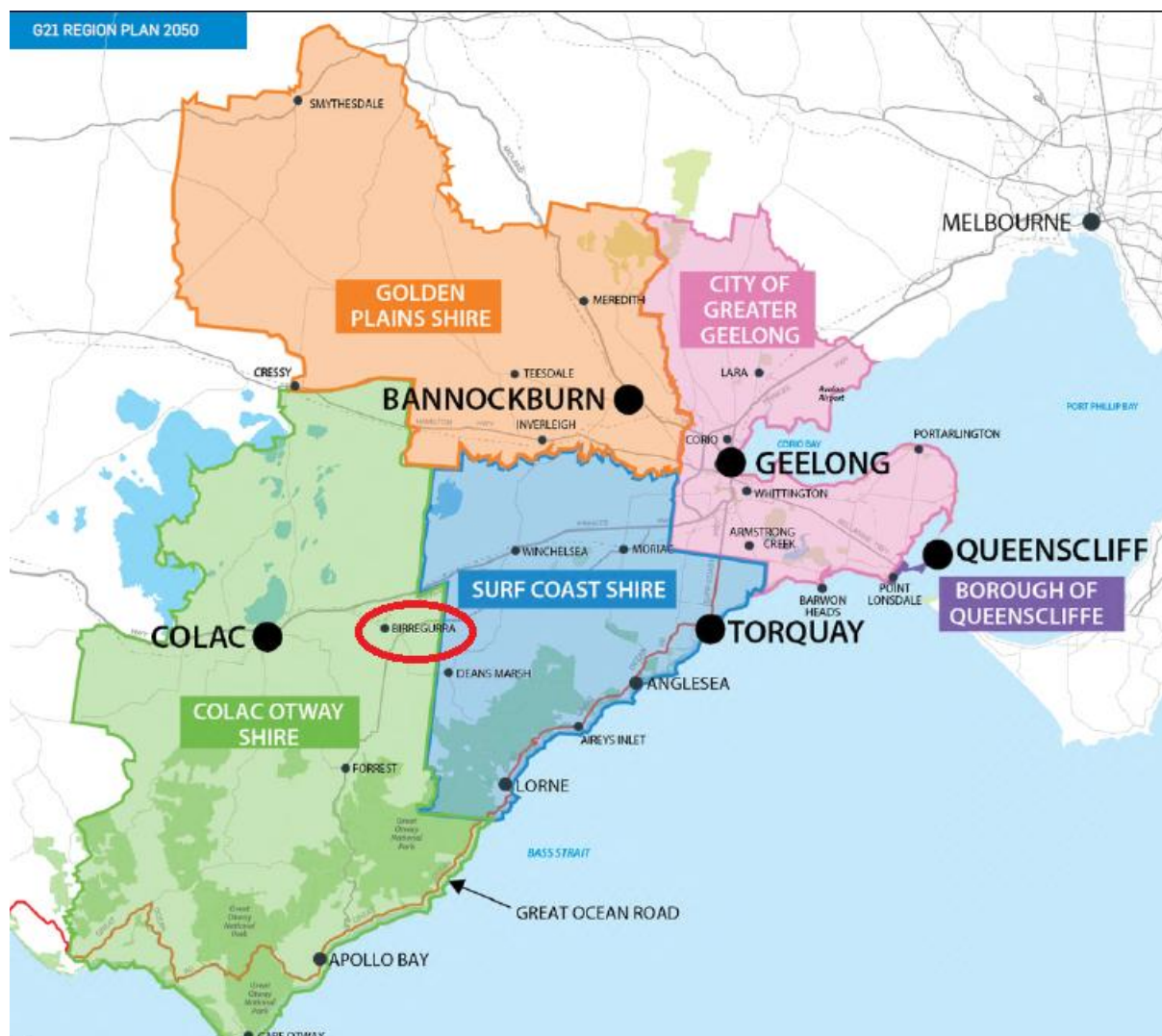
## 2. Profile

Birregurra is a small, rural town in Colac Otway Shire located on the traditional lands of the Gulidjan people. The Gulidjan have a long history of living in the region and caring for Country. Birregurra lies six kilometres south of the Princes Highway. Colac, the Shire's main administrative centre, is located 20 kilometres to the west and the regional city of Geelong is approximately 60 kilometres to the east.

Birregurra is part of the G21 region, an area which spans the five municipalities of Greater Geelong, Colac Otway, Golden Plains, Surf Coast and the Borough of Queenscliffe.

In 2013 the G21 Regional Growth Plan was developed and included Birregurra within the "Town, village, hamlet" classification with capacity for incremental infill.

**Figure 1 G21 Region – G21 Region Plan 2050**





More recently, the State government has released the Plan for Victoria 2025, which supersedes policy in the regional growth plans. It is a long-term strategic plan to guide growth in Victoria to 2050. While it does not specifically mention Birregurra, it sets out housing targets for every local government area required to achieve the objective for 2.24 million new homes in Victoria over the next 30 years. The target for Colac Otway is 3,700 new homes, most of which is expected to be provided in Colac.

Birregurra has a rural village character with a distinctive main street supporting a general store, cafes, a hotel, pharmacy and speciality stores. It is popular with both residents and tourists to the town. Main Street includes several public, commercial and residential heritage places which form the Birregurra Main Street Precinct. The precinct is of historic importance demonstrating the evolution of the town from simple timber buildings mainly at the eastern end, constructed at the time of European colonisation in the 1860s, through to more substantial buildings of the early twentieth century generally at the western end. It also reflects the community's commitment to their town through street plantings (Stone Pine Avenue) and a war memorial.

The Barwon River flows along the eastern edge of the town, is home to platypus and is actively cared for by the Birregurra Landcare volunteer-based group. Land adjoining the Barwon River is subject to flooding, particularly to the east, as is land along Atkin Creek in the north of town and along an unnamed creek line running diagonally from the south-west to the north-east through town.

The regional Geelong-Warrnambool railway line is to the north of the town, which includes a stop at the Birregurra Railway Station.

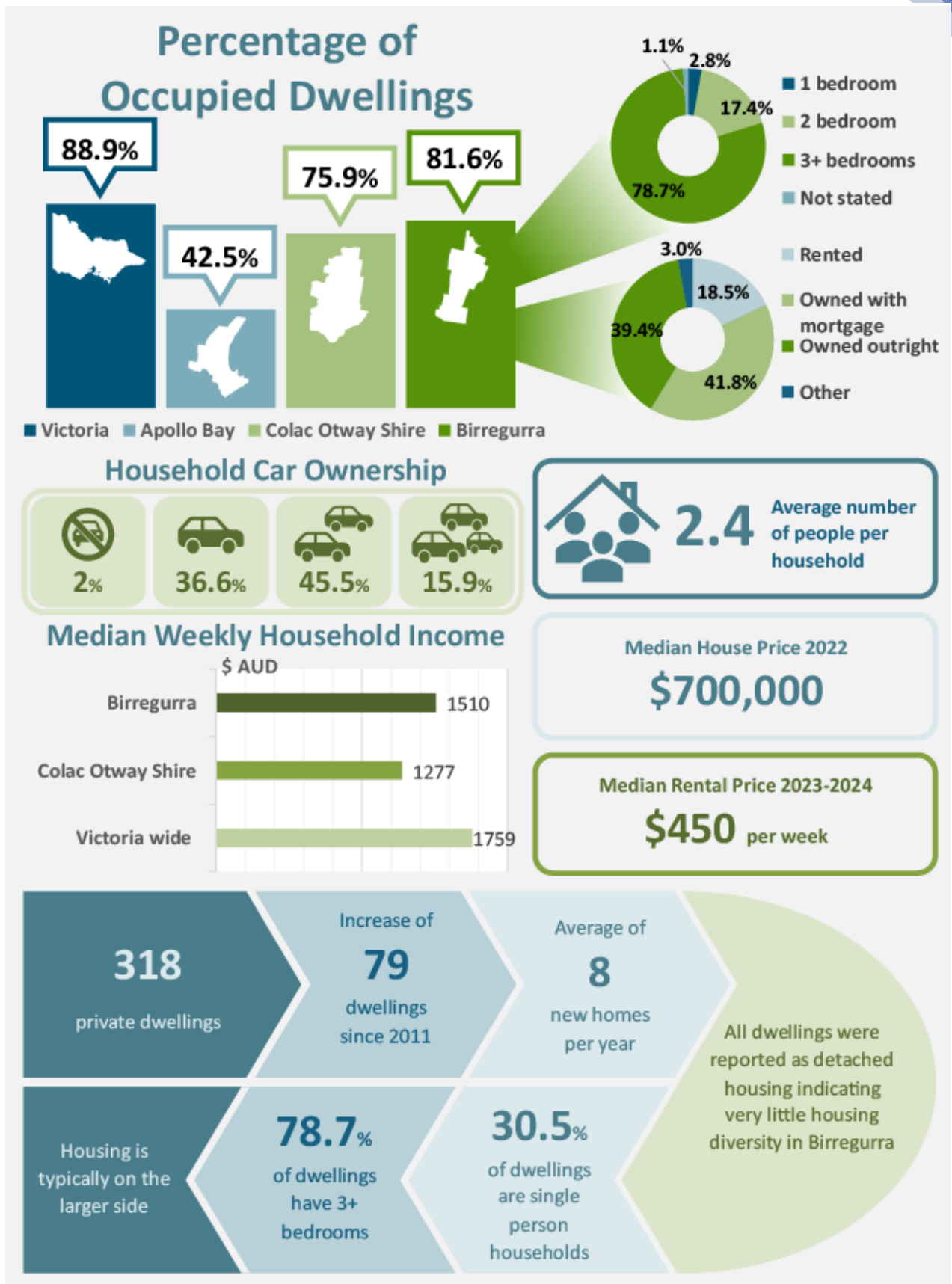
The town has a good range of community facilities including a primary school, pre-school, police station, recreation reserve, golf course, bowling green, local parks, churches, a community health centre and the Birregurra Town Hall.



### 3. Demographic Snapshot



**Note:** All statistics are based on the ABS Census Data, 2021 unless otherwise stated.



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## 4. Vision

The vision for Birregurra is a refinement and update of the vision set out in the 2013 Structure Plan. It is based on feedback and comments received through community and stakeholder consultation.

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### ***VISION STATEMENT***

**Birregurra – a thriving village built on its heritage character, providing a lifestyle for a creative and engaged community.**

In the year 2040, Birregurra will be a thriving small town, offering a village lifestyle in an attractive rural setting. It will have a creative and engaged community including people at all stages in life.

The long history of the Gulidjan people will continue to be respected with their values recognised and celebrated.

Birregurra will be a compact town with an attractive and connected grid network of tree-lined streets and open space links.

Housing will consist of a range of choices that meet the varied needs of residents, increasing diversity and providing for people to retire and age in place. The town will be characterised by low-rise buildings with generously sized gardens to complement the town's leafy and heritage setting. Larger rural lifestyle lots will be located on the higher elevations in the south. There is potential for some modest small-scale extension of the town to the west, which would add to the town's housing supply.

Birregurra's town centre will be prosperous, offering commercial and community services that cater for the local needs of residents and for the surrounding farming community.

Birregurra will be a magnet for tourists and will be renowned for the sale of local artisan and farm products that celebrate the Otway Ranges and nearby farmlands.

Birregurra's community will have access to plentiful open space. They will enjoy recreational opportunities along the Barwon River and quality community facilities will be available in the town.

Birregurra will be a resilient and adaptable town with an active and engaged community that supports each other to thrive.

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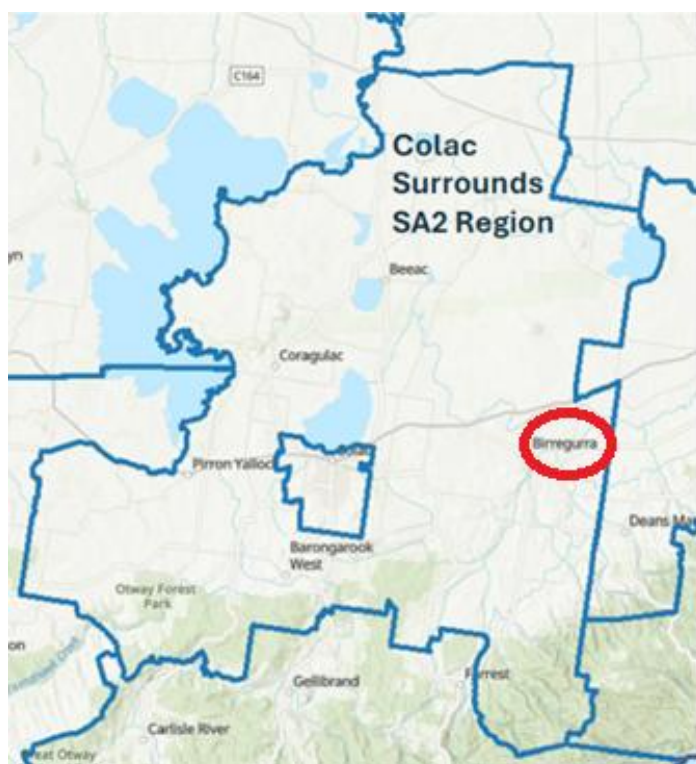
## 5. Population and Housing

### 5.1 Population Growth

Population growth in Birregurra is forecast to be modest over the next 10-15 years. Official estimates prepared by the State government are outlined in Victoria in Future 2023 (VIF2023). They provide an indication of what may happen if current demographic, social and economic trends continue.

Birregurra falls within the area known as the 'Colac surrounds' SA2 region shown in Figure 2. The population for 'Colac surrounds' has been forecast to grow from 5,645 people in 2021 to 5,678 people in 2036, an increase of just 33 people. This may mean an increase in population for some towns in this SA2 region but a decrease in other areas, due to more people moving away than moving in. Birregurra is the largest town in this region and supports a higher level of infrastructure and services than other towns. This is likely to mean that Birregurra will attract most of the growth forecast for this region.

**Figure 2 Colac Surrounds SA2 Region, Australian Bureau of Statistics**



The 2013 Birregurra Structure Plan forecast a considerably higher growth rate for Birregurra, anticipating a population of 845 people in 2031 (an increase of 217 people from the 2021 Census figure). This figure is very unlikely to be reached given the limited land supply and at the recent average growth rate of around 3.2% per year.

The G21 Region Plan 2050 anticipates strong growth for the wider G21 region, and planning is underway for significant growth to occur in Geelong, Colac and to a lesser extent Winchelsea.



It outlines key challenges for the region including:

- Pressure on transport and housing (including a lack of key worker housing in Colac).
- Rising inequity (widening economic and wellbeing gap in the region).
- A changing climate.

The level of growth Birregurra ultimately achieves will depend on a range of factors including the demand for, and supply of, housing both in Birregurra and nearby towns. In a regional context, Birregurra is not being promoted as a growth town. Growth in the Colac Otway Shire is predominantly being directed to Colac, where extensive infrastructure and a large range of goods and services are available to accommodate a growing population. This aligns with State policy which directs major new housing development to metropolitan activity centres, regional cities and larger towns.

However, Birregurra is a popular rural lifestyle choice as evidenced by population growth, new residential development and increasing house and land prices over the past 10 years. Supporting a modest rate of population growth can benefit the town in many ways, including:

- assisting the on-going viability of community facilities and services, e.g. enrolments in the primary school, members for community groups and sporting clubs and teams (youth and seniors), train services, health services, etc
- ensuring a sustainable customer base for existing retail and commercial trade
- attracting new commercial businesses and employees for existing businesses
- creating a more diverse population in both age and cultural experiences.

A modest rate of growth for Birregurra would be consistent with the goal of the Council Plan to grow the population of Colac Otway Shire at a moderate rate. A modest rate in the Birregurra context would be similar to the recent annual rate of around 3%.

There were mixed views about growth expressed during community consultation. Many comments supported modest growth provided it was consistent with the existing character of Birregurra. There was little support for large residential subdivision outside the existing town boundaries but some support for limited development if appropriately sized and sensitively designed.

It is recommended that Birregurra continue to function as a small rural town offering village lifestyle opportunities. Growth should be modest, and supported where it responds to landscape considerations, complements the neighbourhood character of its surrounds and supports the use of existing infrastructure and services.



**POPULATION GROWTH****Objective:**

To facilitate a modest rate of population growth consistent with Birregurra's role in a regional context as a small, rural village.

**Strategies**

- Identify a range of housing opportunities to support a modest rate of population growth that retains Birregurra's compact form and sits discreetly within its rural surrounds.

## 5.2 Residential Land

Current planning policy for Birregurra supports moderate population growth for the town within the existing defined township boundary.<sup>3</sup> Infill development and subdivision of larger lots within the town are encouraged, with higher densities supported within walking distance of Main Street (i.e. 400 metres).<sup>4</sup> This policy is based on the recommendations of the 2013 Structure Plan and findings at that time that there was significant potential for infill development.

Considerable infill has occurred over the past 10 years and a fresh assessment of land supply was undertaken in 2024 (refer to the Birregurra Structure Plan Review: Issues & Opportunities Report). This assessment factored in additional constraints on supply, including limitations on further subdivision in flood prone areas (based on updated mapping) or where landslip potential may be present.

The assessment found that the overall capacity for potential new residential lots was approximately 204 lots. It noted that while this potential exists, it is difficult to estimate the probable realisation rate, i.e. when land may become 'market ready' or available, particularly for small scale infill development where there are many different landowners and individual land parcels with different site constraints. An estimate was therefore made of potential development take up rates over the next 10-15 years to determine lot supply.

The 2013 Structure Plan estimated a development take up rate of 75% for vacant lots and 25% for developed land. These rates are quite high for small residential infill development. However, a policy of urban containment was recommended (i.e. no greenfield subdivision) and consequently it was considered there would be more pressure for infill.

Two scenarios are considered, one with the same development take up rate as the 2013 Structure Plan and one with a more conservative rate.

**Table 1 Estimated Residential Lot Supply**

<b>Greater release of residential lots</b>		
Vacant lots 75% development rate	Developed lots* 25% further development rate	Estimated potential residential lot supply – over 10-15 years
75	26	<b>101</b>
<b>More conservative release of residential lots</b>		
Vacant lots 50% development rate	Developed lots* 10% further development rate	
50	10	<b>60</b>

Source: Birregurra Structure Plan Review: Issues and Opportunities Report, 2024

Note: Developed lots\* = Residential lots already containing a dwelling which are capable of being further subdivided to support an additional dwelling/s

<sup>3</sup> Clause 11.03-6L Colac Otway Planning Scheme

<sup>4</sup> Design and Development Overlay, Schedules 12 and 13, Colac Otway Planning Scheme

On this basis, residential land capacity is estimated to be between 60 and 101 lots.

Combining these figures with estimates of demand for new housing gives an indication of the potential number of years supply of residential land available. Three growth scenarios were considered:

**Low Demand** – reduced growth based on a dwindling lot supply, continually increasing prices (both housing and general cost of living) and significant alternative residential options in the nearby region – 5 dwellings per year

**Medium Demand** – a modest rate of growth with a similar level of demand to the current rate – 10 dwellings per year

**High Demand** – higher demand – 15 dwellings per year (would require many landowners to release lots for sale each year)

**Table 2 Potential Years' Supply of Residential Land**

<b>GROWTH SCENARIOS – No. Years' Supply</b>	Low Demand 5 dwellings / year	Medium demand 10 dwellings / year	High Demand 15 dwellings / year
Scenario 1 – Greater supply: 101 lots	20.2 years	10.1 years	6.7 years
Scenario 2 – Lesser supply: 60 lots	12 years	6 years	4 years

Source: Birregurra Structure Plan Review: Issues and Opportunities Report, 2024

This analysis shows that at a medium or higher rate of population growth, infill residential land supply is likely to be exhausted within 10 years.

A modest rate of population growth is recommended, consistent with the medium growth scenario of demand for around 10 dwellings per year. While a policy of urban consolidation continues to be supported for Birregurra, some small-scale augmentation of land supply will also be required to enable a modest rate of growth to continue.

At a policy level, this can be done in two ways. The first is to rezone greenfield land for residential purposes and the second is to increase density within the existing town. Given that there has been negligible development of medium density housing in Birregurra to date despite it being encouraged in certain precincts, it is unlikely this will result in any substantial addition to supply in the short to medium term.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that a greater level of medium density development could benefit land supply. Medium density style development is discussed further under 'Diversity' at Chapter 5.4 below.

<sup>5</sup> Birregurra Structure Plan Review: Issues and Opportunities Report, 2024

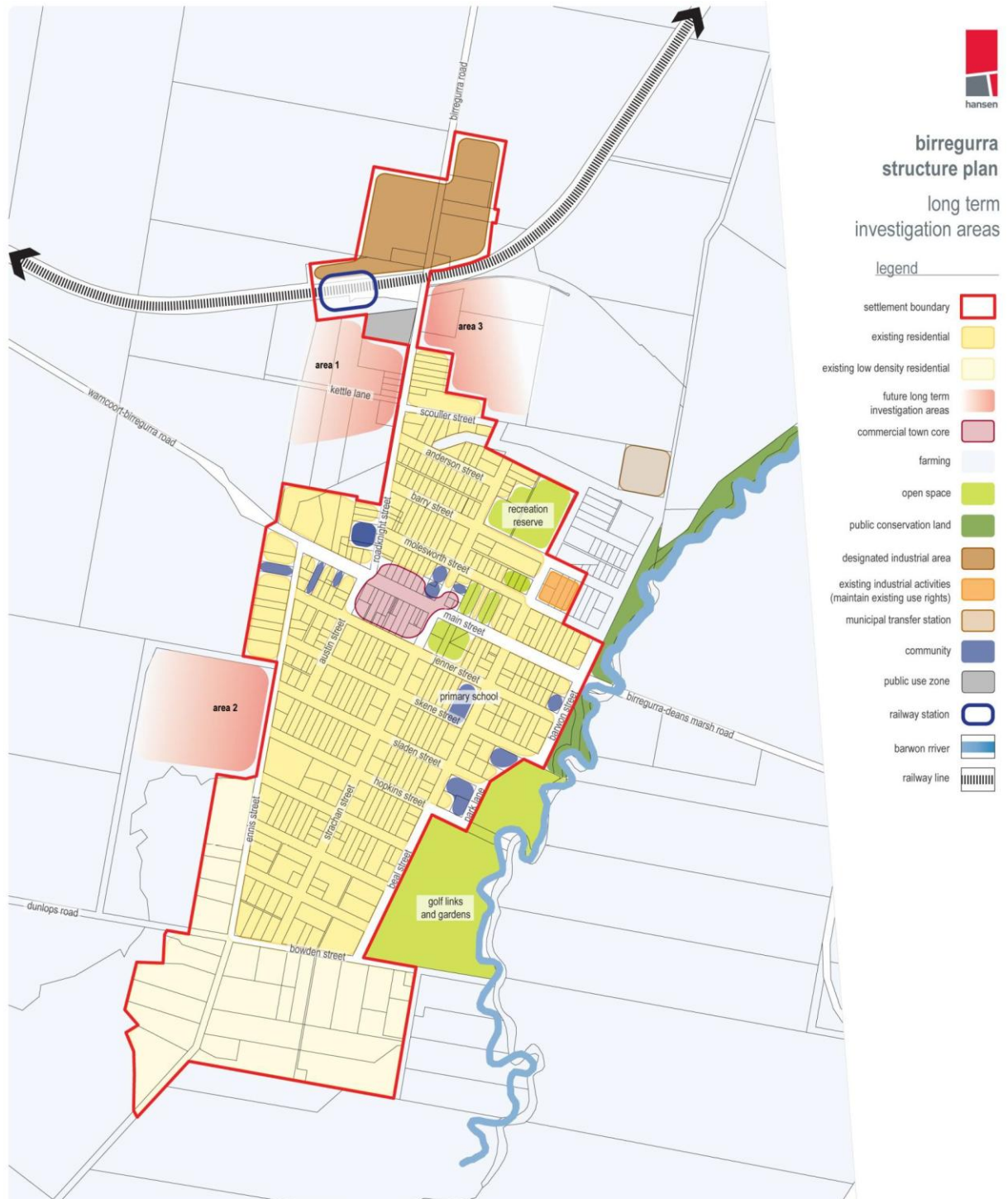
It is recommended that an area of land be identified for possible future urban development subject to further detailed investigation. Any area of land should not be of a size that would detract from efforts to facilitate infill development in appropriate locations.

### 5.3 Investigation Areas

Given the limited potential for infill development in Birregurra, it is appropriate to investigate whether any land adjoining the township might be appropriate for some small-scale expansion.

The 2013 Structure Plan identified three areas for investigation if, and when, the need for urban expansion was confirmed (**Figure 3**).

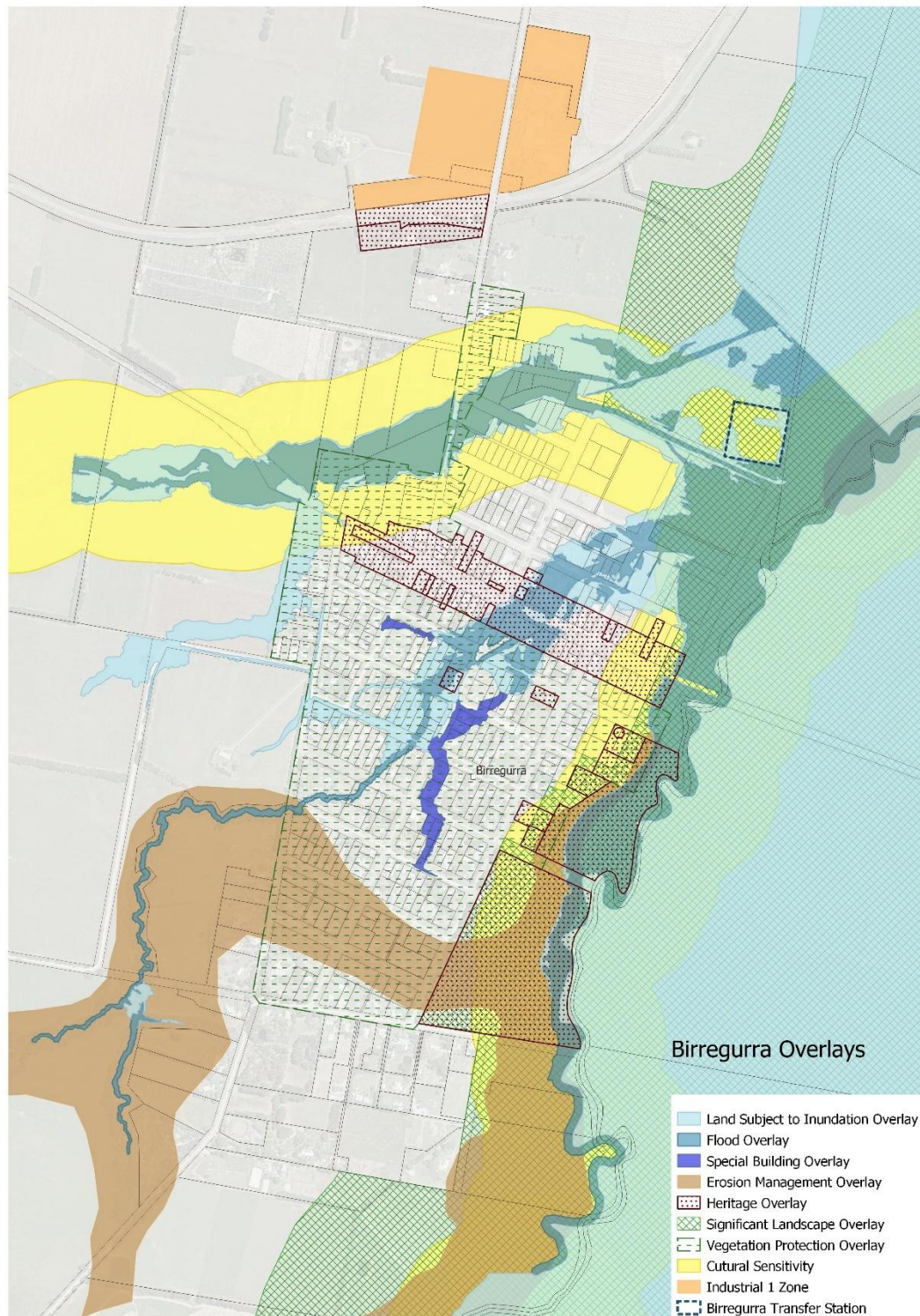
**Figure 3 2013 Investigation Areas for Residential Expansion, Birregurra Structure Plan 2013**





These areas were primarily selected due to being less constrained than other parts of the township, with land to the east being extensively affected by riverine flooding from the Barwon River and land to the south being constrained by the presence of the escarpment. These constraints still apply. **Figure 4** shows current mapping for flooding and erosion in Birregurra, areas where significant landscape or vegetation protection overlays apply and areas of cultural sensitivity.

**Figure 4 Current Planning Scheme Overlays, Colac Otway Planning Scheme, 2025**

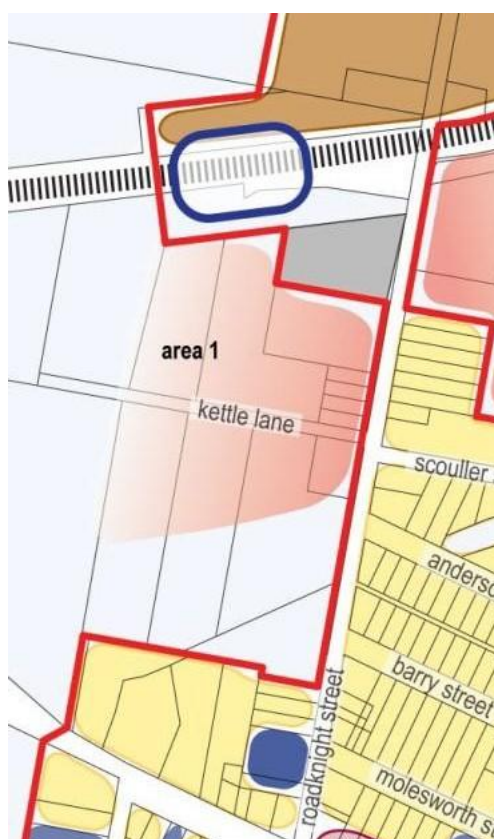


Given the presence of these constraints and valued landscapes, the three areas identified by the 2013 Structure Plan remain the preferred choices for further investigation.

***Area 1 – west of Roadknight Street, either side of Kettle Lane***

- This area of approximately 9 hectares excluded land developed with existing dwellings along Roadknight Street and land within the Aitkin Creek floodplain.
- The presence of existing dwellings and vegetation along Roadknight Street between the Railway Station and the town boundary were considered to give the impression that the area already forms part of the township.
- It could form a logical extension to the town to the north-west and allow for the integration of the Railway Station with the existing urban fabric of the town.
- The Aitkin Creek and associated floodplain could be used for environmental and passive open space purposes.
- Plans for a shared path along Roadknight Street, between the Railway Station and Main Street, were noted.

***Figure 5 Extract of Area 1 - Birregurra Structure Plan 2013***



### **Area 2 – west of Ennis Street<sup>6</sup>**

- This area of approximately 12 hectares was identified as having potential physical boundaries defining the possible extent of the area with a road to the north and west and a waterway to the south.
- Development would have little visual impact on the main road approaches.
- The opportunity to integrate the area with the existing street grid network was identified.

**Figure 6 Extract of Area 2 - Birregurra Structure Plan 2013**



### **Area 3 – east of Roadknight Street, south of the railway line<sup>7</sup>**

- This area of approximately 11 hectares was considered to provide an opportunity for the logical extension to the town, integrating the Railway Station with the existing urban fabric.
- It was identified as low lying, with less vegetation and therefore more open to views from Roadknight Street than Area 1.
- It was considered to have lower amenity than other areas due to the proximity of the municipal transfer station.

**Figure 7 Extract of Area 3 - Birregurra Structure Plan 2013**



<sup>6</sup> This area is incorrectly numbered in the 2013 Structure Plan as 'area 3'

<sup>7</sup> This area is incorrectly numbered in the 2013 Structure Plan as 'area 2'



The three areas have been reviewed having regard to the following considerations:

- Development which has occurred in the areas.
- New information or policy in relation to environmental risks or hazards in the context of a changing climate.
- Servicing factors and the costs of providing water and sewerage infrastructure.

It is emphasised that this review is at a high-level and further detailed investigation would be required to confirm whether land is suitable for rezoning for residential purposes. The purpose of this review is to establish whether any site is preferred for further investigation.

### New Development

Comparisons of aerial photography between 2010 and 2022 shows the extent of new development that has occurred in the three areas over the past approximately 10 years (refer to figures below).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> 2022 aerial photography is the most current available in Council's GIS.

**Figure 8 2010 Aerial Photo - Areas 1 and 3**



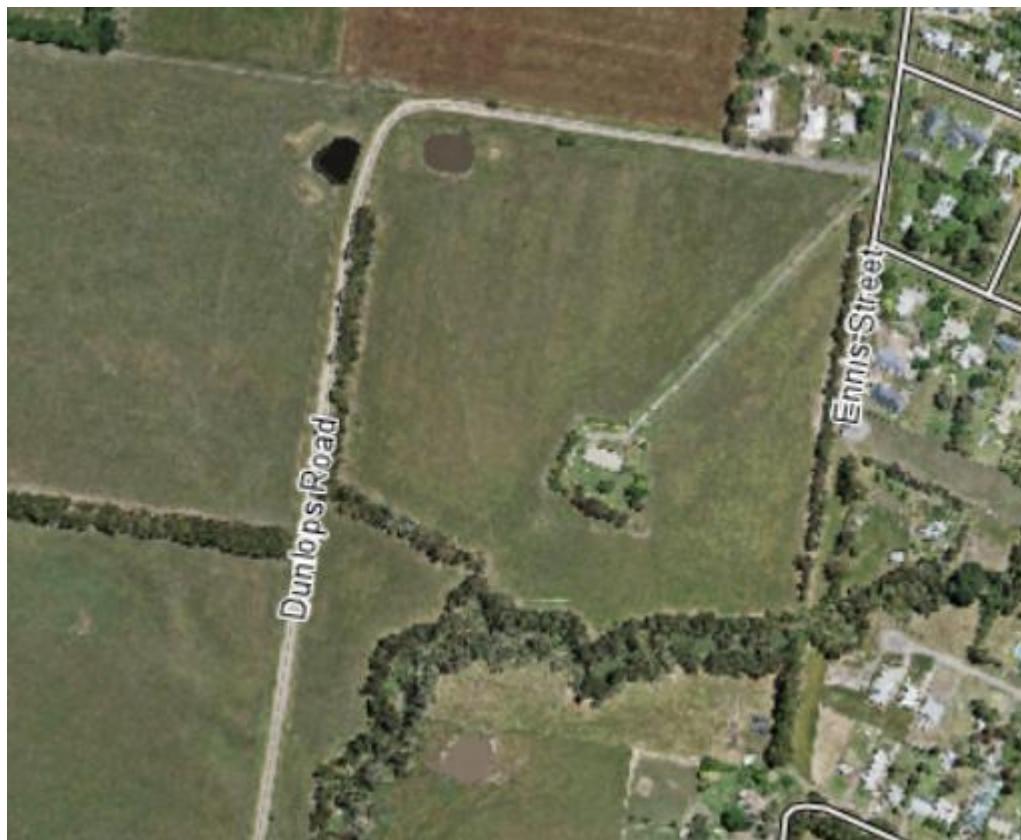
**Figure 9 2022 Aerial Photo – Areas 1 and 3**



**Figure 10 2010 Aerial Photo - Area 2**



**Figure 11 2022 Aerial Photo - Area 2**





There has been no significant change in any of the three investigation areas. The most substantial change has occurred adjacent to Area 3, with several new dwellings constructed along Roadknight Street and Scouller Street on land within the Township Zone

Area 1 comprises seven landholdings of various lot sizes, all developed with dwellings. The smallest lot is approximately 1,000sqm. Areas 2 and 3 contain a single dwelling and each forms part of a larger landholding.

A greater number of landholdings makes an area more complex to develop in a coordinated way. It is often difficult to get consensus from all landowners for a rezoning, it is more expensive to develop than land that is largely devoid of buildings and timing is more uncertain. However, this type of area may lend itself to a more incremental style of growth compared to a larger greenfield subdivision and can contribute to an increase in density over a longer period of time.

### Environmental Risks or Hazards in a Changing Climate

The changing climate of the Barwon region is discussed at Chapter 7.1. For the investigation areas, the following risks and potential hazards have been considered:

- Bushfire / grassfire
- Flooding
- Proximity to the Industrial 1 Zone and the Birregurra Municipal Transfer Station (former landfill)

#### **Bushfire / Grassfire**

A Strategic Bushfire Planning Assessment (Bushfire Assessment) was undertaken by Kevin Hazell Bushfire Planning to inform the preparation of the Birregurra Structure Plan 2025. The Bushfire Assessment outlines bushfire (and grassfire) hazard in Birregurra and considers where new residential development could occur having regard to State planning policy at Clause 13.02-1S of the Colac Otway Planning Scheme. The methodology for the Bushfire Assessment included:

- Background on the strategic and planning context of the study area (Birregurra township and adjacent rural land surrounding the township).
- An overview of bushfire content in the Planning Scheme.
- A bushfire hazard landscape assessment, similar to the approach for a bushfire hazard landscape assessment described in *Planning Permit Applications Bushfire Management Overlay Technical Guide* (DELWP 2017).
- A description of bushfire hazard at the neighbourhood and local scale, informed by the methodology for a bushfire hazard site assessment as described in *Planning Permit Applications Bushfire Management Overlay Technical Guide* (DELWP 2017) and *AS3959-2018 Construction of buildings in bushfire-prone areas* (Standards Australia).
- An assessment having regard to the *Design Guidelines: Settlement Planning at the Bushfire Interface* (DELWP 2020).
- An assessment in response to Clause 13.02-1S Bushfire Planning and other planning scheme bushfire provisions.
- Views of the relevant fire authority.

The Bushfire Assessment concluded that there is no bushfire planning factor that would warrant growth or development being directed away from Birregurra. Several recommendations are made to support improved bushfire resilience for Birregurra for new development or subdivision. It noted:

*“In fact, new development with contemporary bushfire protection measures applied can be low risk in completed development, much lower risk than the existing settlement interface, and likely deliver an overall risk reduction as sought by c13.02-1S Bushfire Planning.”*

The western edges of the town were identified as most at risk from grassfire due to prevailing bushfire weather. It was recommended that these interfaces should be a focus for improvements in bushfire resilience.

The Bushfire Assessment includes an emerging design response as input to the Structure Plan.

**Figure 12 Emerging Design Response - Bushfire Consideration, Strategic Bushfire Planning Assessment, 2024**



The design response identifies that growth is acceptable from a bushfire perspective to the north, west and south of the town. It recommends that priority should be given to creating new bushfire optimised interfaces to the west of town.

While growth is acceptable in many directions, from a bushfire mitigation perspective this lends a preference to development along the western edge of town, where improvements to the overall bushfire resilience for the town can be achieved.

Other recommendations for the revised Structure Plan are:

1. Structure planning should seek to provide at any new township interface lot sizes in line with the *Design Guidelines: Settlement Planning at the Bushfire Interface* (DELWP 2020), comprising lots no larger than 1,200sq.m. Where this not possible, any new township interface would be higher risk and would require vegetation management on new lots in completed development.
2. Development creating a new bushfire hazard interface will be required to be set back from bushfire hazards to ensure exposure is less than 12.5kw/sqm of radiant heat. This equates to Column A in Table 2 to *c53.02 Bushfire Planning* in the planning scheme.

For grasslands, this may comprise a setback of 19m-30m, with a 30m setback being an effective benchmark to use in township wide structure planning. Constructed (perimeter) roads must be used as part of the required setbacks on any new settlement / hazard interface.

3. *c53.02 Bushfire Planning, Table 6 Vegetation management requirements* should be applied to all new lots for accommodation which are more than 1,200sq.m. Alternative hazard management approaches can be developed to the satisfaction of the relevant fire authority in conjunction with future planning.
4. Structure planning should recognise the bushfire benefits of the existing no and low hazard character of Birregurra and generally not promote changes which would introduce new bushfire hazards into township areas.

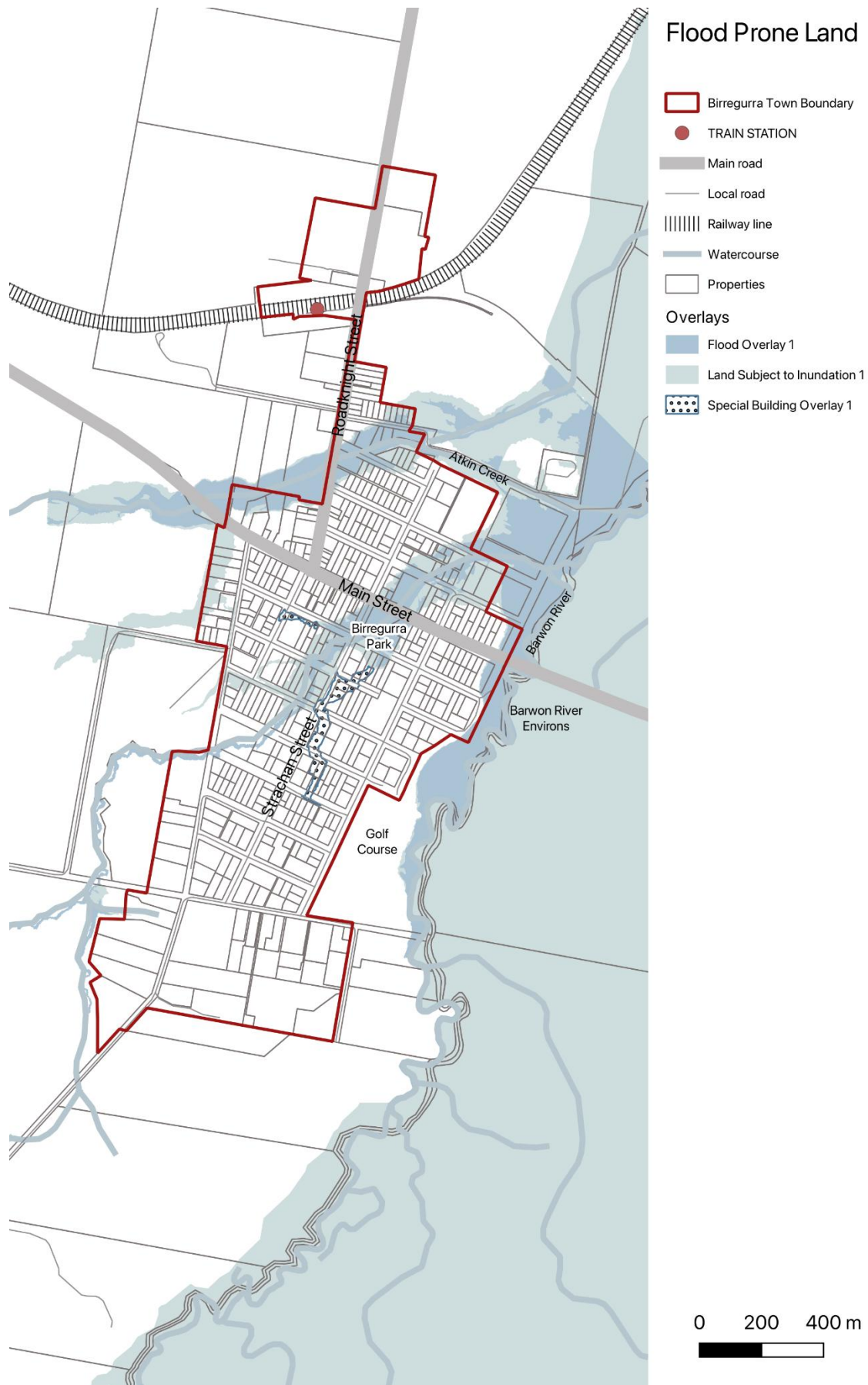
The effect of these recommendations is that from a bushfire perspective smaller lots are generally preferred. While lots larger than 1,200sqm could be considered, vegetation would need to be managed to strict standards so as not to create new bushfire hazards. Perimeter roads would be required to any growth area regardless of lot size.

Recommendation 4 discourages planning policy which could introduce new bushfire hazards into township areas. This does not necessarily mean planting of vegetation should be discouraged, but rather that it should be undertaken with regard for the bushfire context. Council and the CFA both have publications to assist with creating gardens to reduce bushfire risk and landowners should be encouraged to refer to these guidelines.

## **Flooding**

New flood mapping for Birregurra was introduced into the Colac Otway Planning Scheme in September 2022 based on the Birregurra Flood and Drainage Strategy, prepared by Engeny Water Management.

**Figure 13 Birregurra Flood Overlays, Colac Otway Planning Scheme**





The new mapping identifies a small section of land in the southern part of Area 3 as subject to flooding and inundation, and some small areas of land in the north and east of Area 2 as subject to inundation.

More recently, the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CCMA) has advised that the methodology used to estimate climate change flood probability is now considered to significantly underestimate flood extents and is not fit for purpose for planning of future growth areas. State policy requires that new growth areas minimise exposure to natural hazards, including increased risks due to climate change.<sup>9</sup>

It is recommended that any future application to rezone land for residential purposes include updated flood mapping using the new methodology to account for increased rainfall intensity associated with climate change (refer to the Australian Runoff and Rainfall Guidebook (Version 4.2, August 2024)).

### **Proximity to Industrial Land and the Municipal Transfer Station**

A priority in planning is to avoid land use conflict and avoid locating new sensitive uses (such as residential development) in areas that may be impacted by adverse off-site impacts from commercial or industrial uses. It is important to ensure that any proposal to change land use zoning has consideration for potential environmental risks and hazards posed by existing or previous land use in the surrounding area. This protects existing operators of industrial businesses and future communities. It is preferred to direct urban residential growth away from areas that have the potential to be affected by negative, off-site amenity impacts such as noise, dust, odour, contamination, etc.

The 2013 Structure Plan included an objective *“to protect the ongoing integrity of industrial activities in the Industrial 1 Zone to the north of town”*. The area was consolidated through rezoning of additional land adjacent to the Birregurra Railway Station to the Industrial 1 Zone (IN1Z). While there has been little activity in the industrial area which has required planning permission over the last 10 years, more recently some new development and activity has occurred. It is considered appropriate to continue to direct new industrial activity to this area and ensure uses are appropriately separated from sensitive land uses, including residential development.

The Birregurra Transfer Station (former landfill) is located outside the industrial area and to the north-east of town. Advice from Council is that the former landfill was most likely a Type 2 facility because it accepted putrescible waste. The 2013 Structure Plan included a strategy to *“ensure sensitive uses do not encroach into the Birregurra Transfer Station’s EPA recommended buffer”*. The buffer was shown as a 500-metre area encircling the transfer station on the ‘land use and activity’ map but was not included in the Structure Plan Map that was introduced into the Planning Scheme.

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<sup>9</sup> Clause 11.01-1S, Colac Otway Planning Scheme



In 2024, the Environment Protection Agency of Victoria (EPA) released a new Separation Distance Guideline, which provides advice on recommended separation distances between industrial land uses and sensitive land uses, and a Landfill Buffer Guideline (which applies to both existing and former landfills).

Any proposal which may allow the sensitive use or development of land within a buffer or separation distance for industry, or a transfer station, must comply with the requirements of Ministerial Direction No. 19 'Preparation and content of amendments that may significantly impact the environment, amenity and human health'. This requires a planning authority to seek the written views of the EPA about any potential impacts.

The advice of the EPA was sought regarding investigation Areas 1 and 3 due to their proximity to the:

- industrial land north of the railway line; and
- Municipal Transfer Station east of Area 3.

The EPA identified four matters for further consideration and made associated recommendations (summarised as):

1. **Industrial land uses:** Refer to EPA's Separation Distance Guideline, August 2024 to inform the suitability of Areas 1 and 3 for future residential development.

#### Recommendation

- Review nearby industry and identify applicable separation distances.
2. **Transfer Station and former landfill:** the Separation Distance Guideline recommends a 500-metre separation distance (for odour) for sites that accept putrescible waste and a 250-metre separation distance (for dust) for transfer stations. The Landfill Buffer Guideline recommends a 500-metre landfill gas buffer based on a Type 2 former landfill.

#### Recommendation

- Identify these separation distances to determine whether Areas 1 or 3 would result in encroachment.
  - If a proposed rezoning would encroach into the separation distance, refer to the Guidelines which set out the decision-making process.
3. **Noise impacts from railways and roads:** Areas 1 and 3 are located near the railway line.

#### Recommendations

- Review Planning Practice Note 83: Assessing external noise impacts for apartments (PPN83), which provides guidance in understanding and addressing noise impacts posed from railways and roads.
- If Areas 1 or 3 are proposed for rezoning for residential development within a noise influence area, a noise risk assessment may be required.

4. **Potentially contaminated land:** Planning Practice Note 30 Potentially contaminated land (PPN30) provides guidance to address risk if land is potentially contaminated at the time of rezoning.

Recommendation

- Document and consider potentially contaminated land for parcels within Areas 1 and 3.

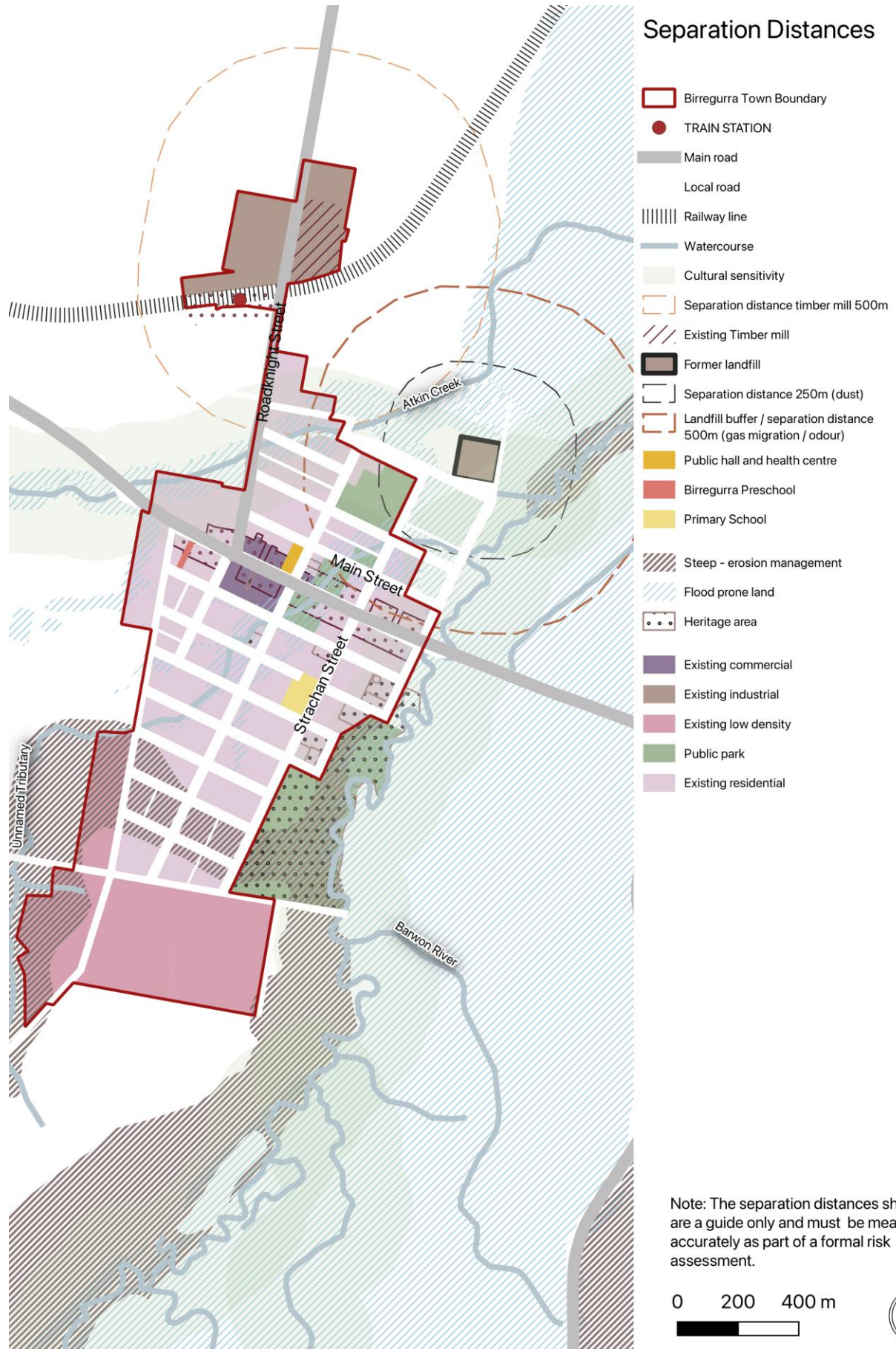
It is noted that while advice from the EPA was sought for Areas 1 and 3 due to their proximity to the industrial estate and the transfer station, all land needs to be assessed to determine whether it is potentially contaminated from past land use activities. It is standard practice for potential site contamination to be considered when rezoning land for more sensitive uses.

The investigation areas were reviewed to understand their proximity to the former landfill and industrial uses.

**Figure 14** shows the approximate separation distance for the Birregurra Transfer Station. Area 3 would be partly within the 500-metre buffer. If land within the affected area is to be considered further for residential development, a landfill gas risk assessment would need to be undertaken to confirm that this might be appropriate. An odour and dust risk assessment would also be required for land within the applicable separation distance.

The exact nature of operations of all existing businesses throughout the industrial area is unknown. However, it is noted that Forrest Timber Products timber mill is located in the south-east of the industrial area abutting the railway line. The applicable separation distance for a timber mill (which includes sawing and milling) is 500 metres for both odour and dust. Rezoning land within this area for future residential development would only be possible if a risk assessment deemed it appropriate. **Figure 14** shows a 500-metre separation distance from the south-east corner of the site. The point at which the 500-metre separation distance should be drawn could change through a risk assessment, if the source of the activity with potential amenity implications is determined to be elsewhere on site.

**Figure 14 Birregurra Separation Distance Map**



## Servicing – Sewer and Water

Barwon Water is the agency responsible for sewerage and water provision in Birregurra.

The Birregurra Sewerage System was built in 2012. It is on the north side of town and was initially built to service 466 people. Barwon Water has advised that ultimately the plant is intended to be duplicated to provide service for approximately 925 people.

Recently Barwon Water commenced upgrading the town water supply through the construction of a new underground pipeline to connect Birregurra to the Colac water supply system.

The advice of Barwon Water was sought to understand whether any of the three areas was preferred from a servicing efficiency or cost perspective.

Barwon Water advised that Areas 1, 2 and 3 could be serviced by the existing gravity sewerage system and that all areas generally fall towards the existing network. The capacity of individual sewers would be assessed at the time of a development proposal.

Barwon Water also advised that the investigation areas appear serviceable for water and would likely need extensions of the DN150 pipeline at the time of development (which would need to be developer funded). However, it noted that this advice is high level and may be subject to change based on Barwon Water's requirements at the time land is proposed for development.

## Other considerations

In addition to the above matters, other considerations raised through community consultation included:

- Neighbourhood character – subdivision and development to be designed to be complementary to the existing character of Birregurra and its various precincts. This could include the application of planning provisions to any new areas designated for residential development consistent with adjoining land (e.g. application of the Design and Development Overlay).
- Street pattern – subdivision that reflects the current grid network of Birregurra which facilitates walking and cycling as modes of transport.
- Compatibility with nearby agricultural activities – limiting potential land use conflict between new residential development and existing agricultural activities.

## Findings

Based on the above analysis it is recommended that Area 2 be identified on the Birregurra Structure Plan Map as a potential “residential investigation area”. This is due to the combination of the following factors:

- The area is largely devoid of existing buildings.
- It is located on the western edge of town, which has been identified in the Bushfire Assessment as a priority area for creating new bushfire optimised interfaces.
- It is not constrained by potential separation distances from activities in the Industrial Estate or the Municipal Transfer Station.



Any rezoning proposal for the area would be subject to further detailed analysis. The further analysis should include, but not be limited to, assessments for:

- Climate resilience and adaption, including flooding analysis based on the most up to date flood modelling recommendations.
- Aboriginal cultural values.
- Biodiversity and landscape values.
- Neighbourhood character.
- Detailed land capability and identification of any potential contamination.
- Land use compatibility with nearby agricultural or industrial uses.
- Potential visual amenity impacts.
- Sustainable design.
- A design response which adheres to the recommendations of the Strategic Bushfire Planning Assessment.

### Council Resolution to Approve Structure Plan

Following consideration of submissions lodged in response to the exhibition of the draft Birregurra Structure Plan, Councillors resolved at the Council meeting held on 25 November 2025 that Area 1 also be included as an investigation area. At such time this area is investigated, full consideration will need to be given to that area's constraints, including proximity to the industrial estate and any separation distances required. An application would need to be accompanied by relevant assessments referred to in the list above.

### Birregurra Town Boundary

The town boundary should not be moved to accommodate the potential residential investigation areas and should only be moved if land is rezoned to a residential zone. Until appropriate assessments are undertaken as described above, the extent of land area proposed for rezoning to accommodate residential use and development is not defined.

A review of the town boundary at clause 11.03-6I (Birregurra) of the Planning Scheme has revealed an anomaly in the vicinity of Roadknight Street. The existing town boundary includes a parcel of land that was formerly in the Public Use Zone to the west of Roadknight Street. Although this parcel is relatively small and developed with an existing dwelling, it is within the Farming Zone and therefore should not be included within the town boundary. It is recommended the town boundary exclude all land within the Farming Zone.

It is recognised that there are several parcels of land west of Roadknight Street and south of the railway line that are developed with dwellings and of a size suitable for residential use rather than farming. There may be merit in rezoning this land to a residential zone to reflect the existing use. At the Council meeting held on 25 November 2025, Councillors resolved that this area should be included as a residential investigation area. The area has therefore been included as an investigation area in this Structure Plan, noting that appropriate investigation would need to be undertaken to establish its suitability for future residential development given its proximity to the timber mill. The cost of such an assessment and the associated planning scheme amendment process could be significant.



## RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Objective:

To provide opportunities for future residential growth by supporting continued infill development and through small scale urban expansion.

### Strategies

- Encourage sensitive infill development and subdivision consistent with preferred neighbourhood character objectives.
- Designate Areas 1 and 2 for possible future urban development subject to further investigation on the Birregurra Structure Plan Map (shown on the Structure Plan Map as Areas A and B).
- Any rezoning proposal for the area would be subject to further detailed analysis. The further analysis should include, but not be limited to, assessments for:
  - Climate resilience and adaption, including flooding analysis based on the most up to date flood modelling recommendations.
  - Aboriginal cultural values.
  - Biodiversity and landscape values.
  - Neighbourhood character.
  - Detailed land capability and identification of any potential contamination.
  - Land use compatibility with nearby agricultural or industrial uses.
  - Potential visual amenity impacts.
  - Sustainable design.
  - A design response which adheres to the recommendations of the Strategic Bushfire Planning Assessment, KH Bushfire Planning (2024).
- Encourage landowners to landscape gardens having regard to the following publications:
  - Landscaping for Bushfire, Garden Design and Plant Selection, CFA.
  - Landscaping your Coastal Garden for Bushfire, Colac Otway Shire.
- Support measures to improve bushfire resilience along the western edge of the township.
- Amend the town boundary to exclude land within the Farming Zone.

## 5.4 Housing Diversity

All dwellings were reported as detached housing (i.e. not units or apartments) in the 2021 Census indicating very little housing diversity in Birregurra. Housing is predominantly on the larger side with 78.7% of dwellings having 3 or more bedrooms, yet more than a third of dwellings accommodate one person.

Encouraging a more diverse mix of housing products could have the following benefits:

- Caters to various life stages of the population, including young families, first time homeowners, single households and older persons.
- Offers a wider range of price points to cater for different budgets.
- Supports people to age in place.
- Potential for more accessible homes for people with limited mobility.
- Increased density in areas close to retail areas and community services (within 400 metres) can promote more active modes of transport, e.g. walking and cycling.
- Minimise environmental impacts.

Current policy for Birregurra encourages medium density style development in areas closer to Main Street. However, since 2013 there has been little interest in terms of development applications for medium density housing or the creation of smaller lots (refer **Figure 15**).

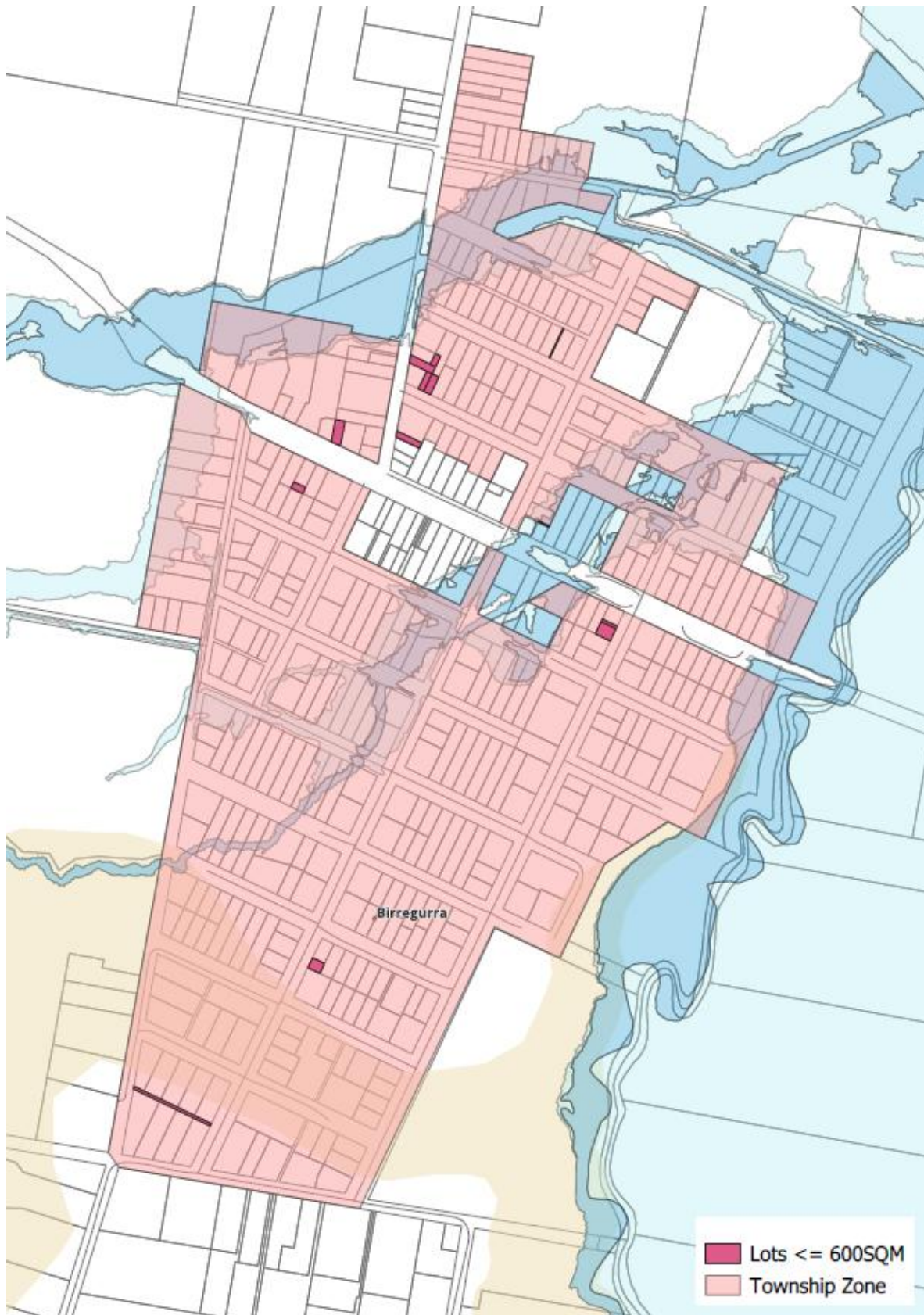
This is likely a reflection of the rural village style character of Birregurra. People coming to town are often seeking land, space and privacy. These features attract people to the town and are highly valued by the community.

This is not to say that smaller homes or some increase in density would destroy the valued character of Birregurra. The introduction of the neighbourhood character provisions into the Planning Scheme at the time of the 2013 Structure Plan were designed to allow for some diversity, ensuring new development would be complementary to neighbourhood character.

Several comments through community feedback supported providing a range of smaller homes and units and some smaller lots within the town. Some submissions suggested that consideration should be given to different typologies and ownership arrangements.

There was also support for more variety in housing options for older persons including lifestyle villages and retirement living units.

**Figure 15 Residential Lots 600sqm or less, Birregurra Structure Plan Review: Issues and Opportunities Report, 2024**



The approach to encourage some smaller homes and medium density style housing is consistent with State policy. Increased density should continue to be supported within 400 metres of Main Street. This is recommended with one proviso. The proximity of the Municipal Transfer Station to residential land north-west of Main Street is something which needs further consideration (refer to Chapter 5.3). While the 2013 Structure Plan identified a transfer station buffer area, it was not introduced into the Planning Scheme. However, new policy was introduced into the Planning Scheme to encourage higher density in some areas within the buffer area. It may be that there is no current risk. However, this cannot be assumed, and it is recommended that no further residential subdivision be supported within the buffer area until a gas migration analysis can confirm that it does not pose a safety risk.

In late 2023, the Victorian Government introduced changes to all planning scheme in Victoria and the Building Regulations 2018 to make it easier to build a small second home on a developed residential lot. In most cases, a planning permit is no longer required to build a small second home up to 60sqm. New small homes cannot be subdivided or sold off separately from the main home. It is anticipated that this will provide further opportunity for an increase in the diversity of housing stock.

Existing local policy in the Planning Scheme supports retirement/aged care living close to the community and health node, and Main Street. Given there is no defined 'community and health node' in the Planning Scheme it is recommended this policy be reworded as "support retirement / aged care development close to community and health facilities, including in the Commercial 1 Zone on the north side of Main Street."

## HOUSING DIVERSITY

### Objective:

To encourage a diversity of housing type and residential lot sizes to accommodate people of varying ages and life stages.

### Strategies

- Encourage the provision of smaller homes and residential lot sizes within 400 metres of Main Street consistent with preferred neighbourhood character objectives.
- Support retirement/aged care development close to community and health facilities, including in the Commercial 1 Zone on the north side of Main Street.
- Do not support residential subdivision within 500 metres of the Birregurra Transfer Station until a gas migration analysis can confirm that it does not pose a safety risk.

## 5.5 Character and Heritage

Birregurra's rural village character remains one of its key qualities and continues to be highly valued by residents and visitors to the town. Heritage buildings and precincts contribute significantly to this character and are appropriately included within the Heritage Overlay in the Planning Scheme.

There was considerable feedback from the community seeking to maintain the rural and heritage character of Birregurra and to avoid generic style housing in future development. There was also strong support for protecting vegetation within the town.

Current strategies in the Planning Scheme seeking to protect Birregurra's town character include:<sup>10</sup>

- Protect the town's significant and contributory heritage places.
- Protect the landscape character and view lines of town entrances as defining elements of the north, east and west gateways.
- Encourage adaption and re-use of heritage buildings on Main Street.
- Retain low building heights throughout the town and the single storey, built form of Main Street.
- Support development in the Industrial 1 Zone that reflects the rural character and visual amenity.
- Support road upgrades that retain and enhance the character and informal nature of road reserves.
- Design built form in residential areas to maintain the dominance of the surrounding landscape.

Other neighbourhood character objectives, strategies and design guidelines are set out in the:

- Design and Development Overlay (DDO), Schedules 11-16
- Vegetation Protection Overlay, Schedule, Schedule 3

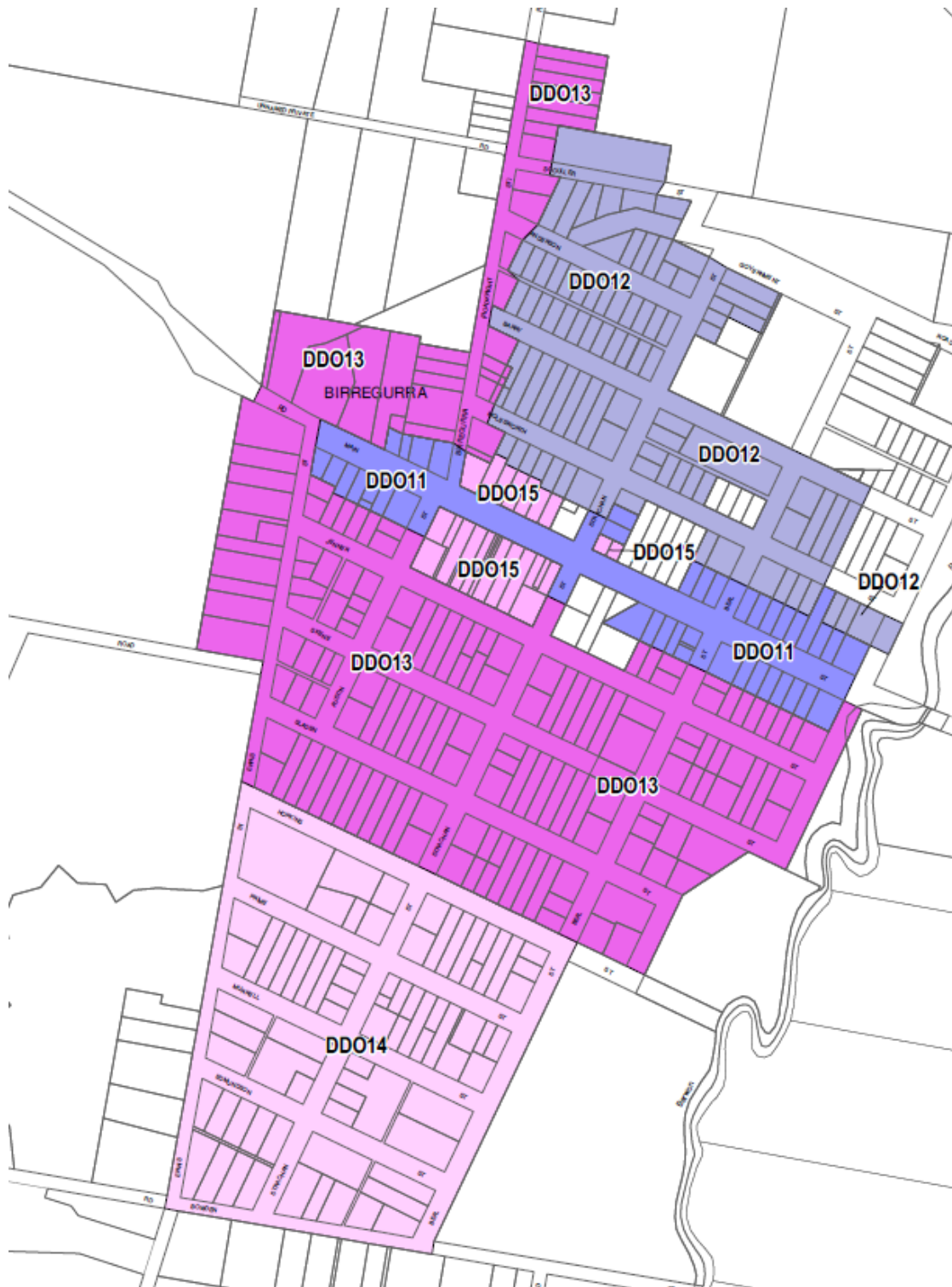
**Figure 16** and **17** show land affected by the DDO schedules.

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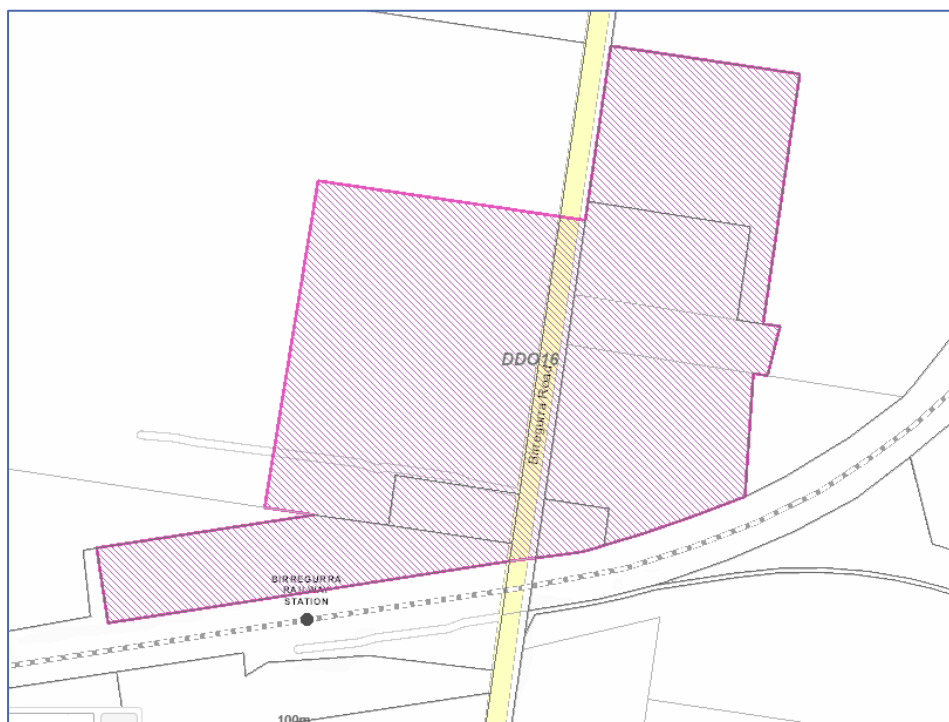
<sup>10</sup> Clause 11.03-6L, Colac Otway Planning Scheme



**Figure 16 DDO schedules 11-15, Colac Otway Planning Scheme**



**Figure 17 Industrial Precinct - DDO16, Colac Otway Planning Scheme**



A review of the neighbourhood character provisions in the Planning Scheme was undertaken as input into the development of the Structure Plan. It examined whether provisions have been effective in achieving the preferred character as set out in the *Birregurra Neighbourhood Character Study 2012* (2012 Character Study).

The 2012 Character Study emphasised that respecting character did not mean new development needed to mimic or copy existing development but rather complement existing development.

The review of neighbourhood character provisions involved assessing the six precincts using the following methodology:

- A review of Council's planning permit register over the 10 years since the neighbourhood character provisions were introduced.
- A workshop with Council's statutory planners to discuss the neighbourhood character provisions and identify planning permit applications of relevance.
- A review of several planning permit application officer reports over the 10 years since the neighbourhood character provisions were introduced.
- Mapping analysis having regard to lot sizes, aerial photography and comparisons with maps in the 2013 Background Report.
- Site inspections from the public realm.

Detailed findings are in the *Birregurra Structure Plan Review: Review of Neighbourhood Planning Provisions, 19 July 2024* (Neighbourhood Character Review).

The Neighbourhood Character Review found the planning provisions have generally been effective in maintaining Birregurra's valued character attributes. The town continues to exhibit a low rise, rural and heritage character presenting a mix of housing styles which are generally unobtrusive and in keeping with surrounding development.

The character of the commercial area in Main Street stems from the heritage fabric of existing buildings. New development or extensions to existing buildings have responded well to the historic character of building stock, through low rise building heights and the appropriate use of materials. However, the DDO15 does not contain any specific guidance for commercial land fronting Jenner Street. This area presently functions as the rear of retail premises facing Main Street, but there is potential for development to front Jenner Street in the future. It is recommended that further design guidance be introduced in the DDO15 to ensure that future development fronting Jenner Street responds to its sensitive residential interface.

Until recently there has been little development in the industrial area since the introduction of the DDO16. The Neighbourhood Character Review noted that planning permit applications were assessed as generally consistent with the rural township character of Birregurra. Proposed buildings were relatively low rise (for industrial buildings) and would be constructed from materials appropriate in the streetscape context and at the northern entrance of town. However, concerns have since been raised through community consultation about the impact of some of the new buildings under construction on the views of the historic Railway Station from the town entry at Roadknight Street. There are strategies in the DDO16 directing that new development should have an appropriate interface with the Railway Station but there is nothing to guide the siting of buildings to protect views of the Station from the public realm. It is recommended that a new strategy be included in the DDO16 to protect these important views.

Recommended amendments to the Colac Otway Planning Scheme arising from the Neighbourhood Character Review are set out in Appendix 1.

They include the following amendments to the DDO schedules 11-14:

- Ensure there is an objective for each precinct which clearly articulates the preferred character for that precinct (based on the 2012 Character Study).
- Ensure the schedules are drafted in accordance with the Ministerial Direction on the Form and Content of Planning Schemes.
- Introduce new design guidelines to provide clarity around how landscaping objectives can be met for some of the precincts.
- Review, and potentially extend, the application of the VPO3 across Birregurra.
- Adjust schedule boundaries where anomalies have been identified.
- Reduce the rear setback design standard in the DDO schedules 11-13.
- Include a new objective and design guideline in the DDO15 to ensure new commercial development fronting Jenner Street will respond appropriately to its sensitive residential interface.
- Include a new objective and performance standard in the DDO16 to protect views to the historic Birregurra Railway Station from Roadknight Street.
- Exempt the removal of environmental weeds in the VPO3.

## CHARACTER & HERITAGE

### Objective:

To encourage new development that complements the rural village character and heritage of Birregurra.

### Strategies

- Retain the following built form neighbourhood character and heritage policy objectives and strategies in the Colac Otway Planning Scheme:
  - Protect the town's significant and contributory heritage places.
  - Protect the landscape character and view lines of town entrances as defining elements of the north, east and west gateways.
  - Encourage adaption and reuse of heritage buildings in Main Street.
  - Retain low building heights throughout the town and the single storey built form of Main Street.
  - Design built form in residential areas to maintain the dominance of the surrounding landscape.
- Amend planning provisions in accordance with the recommendations of the *Birregurra Structure Plan Review: Review of Neighbourhood Planning Provisions, 19 July 2024*, and as set out in Appendix 1, to:
  - Ensure there is an objective for each precinct which clearly articulates the preferred character for that precinct.
  - Ensure DDO schedules are in accordance with the Ministerial Direction on the Form and Content of Planning Schemes.
  - Introduce new design guidelines to provide clarity around how landscaping objectives can be met for some of the precincts.
  - Review, and potentially extend, the application of the VPO3 across Birregurra.
  - Adjust schedule boundaries where anomalies have been identified.
  - Reduce the rear setback in the DDO schedules 11-13.
- Include a new design guideline in the DDO16 to protect views of the historic Birregurra Railway Station, which provides guidance around the siting of new buildings and works.
- Amend Schedule 3 to the Vegetation Protection Overlay to exempt the removal of environmental weeds.



## 6. Commerce and Industry

### 6.1 Business and Tourism

The Birregurra General Store is an anchor point for the town centre, alongside the Royal Mail Hotel, the post office and other cafes and speciality stores. The core town centre of Birregurra was rezoned to the Commercial 1 Zone (C1Z) as part of the implementation of the 2013 Structure Plan to clearly define the centre and ensure longer term options for retail and commercial uses. This has assisted in reinforcing the role of Main Street as the retail heart of the town between Austin Street and Birregurra Park.

Most of the commercial development is on the south side of Main Street, which has good solar access and lends itself to outdoor seating. In recent years, Birregurra Art Gallery has opened on the north side of Main Street. The town does not yet support a population or catchment to support a full line supermarket, and the General Store continues to fulfil the role of providing food essentials.

There are only a few vacant lots in the commercial centre, but much of the development does not make full use of the available land area. It will be important to ensure that residential uses do not become a primary or dominant use in this precinct to preserve the ability for the commercial offering to expand as the town grows. The C1Z restricts the style of residential development permitted in the zone, and coupled with the design standards in the DDO15, the existing planning provisions should be sufficient to minimise residential intrusion into the commercial area.

The design of buildings in the commercial area is guided by the neighbourhood character provisions set out in the DDO15. The potential for commercial development to occur along Jenner Street is discussed in Chapter 6.5 and clear design guidance should be introduced into the Planning Scheme to ensure new development responds to the sensitive residential interface of this area.





Community consultation identified strong support for a thriving town centre, with year-round activity and businesses supporting residents and tourists. It has been suggested that installation of EV charging stations close to businesses in the town centre would support activity.

Birregurra is also known as a tourist destination with several arts, craft and food related tourism businesses, including the award-winning Brae Restaurant. While the Birregurra Festival is not currently occurring, a Sunday Market continues to be held between November and May.

The 2013 Structure Plan noted some community support for a service station. This was raised again in recent consultation. Current planning policy encourages any potential service station to locate in or close to the town centre, but away from the heritage core and identified town gateways. This would be difficult to achieve as the heritage core spans most of the length of Main Street and residential development extends along Roadknight Street to the Railway Station. No applications for a service station have been received since the 2013 Structure Plan and with the Princes Highway just six kilometres to the north of Birregurra, it is likely that a potential provider would prefer a highway location. However, if an application should be received the existing policy provides some guidance about where it should be located, and should therefore be retained but modified to refer to a location 'close' to the town centre, but not 'in' the town centre.

## **BUSINESS & TOURISM**

### **Objective:**

To support the Main Street commercial area as the retail heart of the town servicing the needs of local residents and tourists.

### **Strategies**

- Encourage retail businesses to locate in the core town centre on Main Street.
- Support tourism developments which respond to Birregurra's rural setting and heritage character.
- Support the installation of EV charging stations close to businesses in the town centre.
- Locate any future service station close to the town centre, but away from the heritage core and identified town gateways.
- Amend Schedule 15 to the Design and Development Overlay to include design guidance to ensure that new commercial development fronting Jenner Street responds to the sensitive residential interface.

## 6.2 Industry

Industrial activity and development is concentrated in the industrial area to the north of Birregurra along Roadknight Street. Since 2013, the industrial precinct has been further consolidated with land adjacent to the Birregurra Railway Station rezoned to Industrial 1 Zone.

Current planning policy for industry in Birregurra seeks to:

- Encourage consolidation of industrial uses in the Industrial 1 Zone.
- Support development in the Industrial 1 Zone that reflects the rural character and visual amenity.

There has been little activity in the industrial estate which has required planning permission over the past 10 years. Some permits have been issued more recently for new development in the estate which is positive for economic growth in the area. Permits have included landscaping and other design requirements to ensure new development is screened or consistent with Birregurra's rural character where visible from public viewing points, particularly along the entry to town and from the Birregurra Railway Station. Some concerns have been raised recently through community consultation about the impact of development on views to the historic Railway Station from Roadknight Street. Further discussion about this issue and a recommendation to address concerns is included at Chapter 5.5.

The established mechanic in Molesworth Street continues to provide an important service for the town and has not sought to expand beyond the mechanic businesses current site.

New industrial business should be encouraged to locate in the industrial area in the future to ensure uses are appropriately separated from sensitive land uses such as residential land.

### INDUSTRY

#### Objective:

To support the ongoing viability of Birregurra's industrial precinct

#### Strategies

- Encourage industrial uses to locate on land in the Industrial 1 Zone.
- Protect the integrity of existing industrial activities in the Industrial 1 Zone by ensuring sensitive uses do not encroach into separation distance areas unless supported by a risk assessment.

## 7. Environment and Landscape

The 2013 Structure Plan provided the following description of environmental and landscape assets in Birregurra:

*Birregurra is located on the west bank of the Barwon River and is dissected by two of its tributaries (Aitken Creek and an unnamed watercourse). The township is well recognised for its treed character and topographic diversity associated with flat, low-lying land to the north, and steeper land and escarpments to its south. A range of exotic and native vegetation scattered throughout the township contributes to significant canopy tree cover.*

*The northern half of the town is relatively flat and has several areas of poorly drained land that is prone to flooding. In comparison, the ridgeline along the southern area of the town provides a magnificent setting for housing, with significant views of the Barwon River floodplain and of surrounding rural areas extending as far north as Mount Gellibrand.*

*The three highway entries into Birregurra play an important role in determining the landscape character of the town. They provide a first impression of the township upon arrival. The visibility of land along these approaches needs to be taken into consideration in making decisions about possible future township expansion and the form in which any such expansion might occur.*

Local policy seeks to protect these assets through the following strategies:

- Preserve and enhance the Barwon River corridor and connected waterways.
- Protect the landscape character and view lines of town entrances as defining elements of the north, east and west gateways.
- Design built form in residential areas to maintain the dominance of the surrounding landscape.<sup>11</sup>

The assets are further protected by the application of planning scheme zones and overlays including the:

- Farming Zone over land at the east and western gateway entrances to town.
- Significant Landscape Overlay, Schedule 6 Rivers of the Barwon: Barwon River (Parwan) Corridor Environs
- Vegetation Protection Overlay, Schedule 3 Birregurra Tree Protection Area

The Design and Development Overlay also plays a role in supporting the enhancement of the landscape character of the town.

The combination of these planning provisions have generally been effective in protecting these valued assets and landscape vistas, and they should continue to be applied.

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<sup>11</sup> Clause 11.03-6L, Colac Otway Planning Scheme

In addition to the policy framework, ‘on the ground’ actions are occurring to improve the town’s assets. Over many years the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (Corangamite CMA) has been working alongside the Upper Barwon Landcare Network, Birregurra Landcare Group and local landowners to improve the health of the Barwon River at Birregurra, particularly through weed removal and re-establishment of indigenous vegetation. These endeavours should be strongly supported.

There was strong support through community consultation for further street tree planting to mitigate the effects of climate warming and to provide shading and pleasant amenity in Main Street and in public parks.

Council recently completed a street tree planting program in Birregurra, planting approximately 70-80 trees throughout 2024.

## 7.1 A Changing Climate

Key challenges for the future of Birregurra’s important environment and landscape assets stem from the changing climate. The State government, working with climate scientists, has undertaken a significant amount of research and investigation into Victoria’s changing climate in recent years.

The recently released Barwon Climate Projections 2024 identifies that the climate of the Barwon region has already changed and will continue to change.



Source: Barwon Victoria’s Climate Science Report 2024 Collateral, Victorian Government & CSIRO

The purpose of this climate science information is to help manage and mitigate the impacts of climate risks

### Bushfire

As discussed in Chapter 5.3, a Strategic Bushfire Planning Assessment (Bushfire Assessment) was undertaken by Kevin Hazell Bushfire Planning to inform the preparation of the Birregurra Structure Plan 2025.

The Bushfire Assessment focuses on planning considerations for new growth and development. It does not address bushfire mitigation measures for operational, on-going management as this work falls outside the structure plan process.

The CFA supported the Bushfire Assessment and reinforced the need to include appropriate bushfire policy in the Structure Plan to guide new growth or development. In addition to the recommendations of the Bushfire Assessment, the CFA recommended that vulnerable uses (such as aged care, childcare, education, etc) are located away from bushfire hazards.

### Flooding

Council commissioned a flood and drainage strategy in 2021 which aimed to improve the understanding of flooding in Birregurra and management of flood risk. The recommendations of the study included updating flood mapping in the Colac Otway Planning Scheme and the Municipal Emergency Management Plan. A planning scheme amendment was approved in 2022 which implemented the new mapping (refer **Figure 13**). However, it is noted in Chapter 5.3 that the methodology used to estimate climate change flood probability is now considered to significantly underestimate flood extents and is not fit for purpose for planning of future growth areas. What this means for current urban areas is unknown, but it is likely revised modelling will be required. It is recommended that Council continue to liaise with the Corangamite CMA to determine the most appropriate approach to facilitating updated flood modelling for existing urban areas.

### High Temperatures

The 2024 Climate Science Report indicates with a degree of high confidence that days and nights of high temperatures are likely to become more frequent. This issue was raised through community consultation, and it was suggested that Council needs to designate a safe space for people to go on days of high temperatures and the example of the Seniors' Room in the Birregurra Town Hall was given.

Council currently provides guidance on the Council website for 'Places to Go on High Risk Days' both for bushfire and heatwave planning. It includes a list of possible examples for places it may be appropriate to spend time on such days, depending on conditions. It notes that the list is not exhaustive and individual opening hours will apply. Other advice includes:

*It is important to consider what best fits your personal circumstances. Talking to friends and family about options for what to do during heatwaves or bushfires is the best way to be prepared. Planning to stay elsewhere may be the simplest and best option.*



## ENVIRONMENT & LANDSCAPE

### Objectives:

To improve the climate resilience of Birregurra township.

To preserve and enhance the Barwon River corridor and connected waterways.

To preserve and enhance the vegetated character of Birregurra without increasing risk from bushfire.

To protect the landscape character and view lines of town entrances as defining elements of the north, east and west gateways.

### Strategies

- Ensure new development addresses risk factors associated with a changing climate, including bushfire, flooding and heatwaves.
- Locate vulnerable uses such as aged care, child care, education away from bushfire hazards.
- Design built form in residential areas to maintain the dominance of the surrounding landscape, having regard to landscaping for bushfire risk guidelines.
- Liaise with the Corangamite CMA to determine the most appropriate approach to facilitating updated flood modelling for existing urban areas
- Support the ongoing programs and works of the Corangamite CMA, Upper Barwon Landcare Network, Birregurra Landcare Group, and other members of the community to improve the health of the Barwon River.

## 8. Aboriginal Cultural Values

### 8.1 Bio-Cultural Landscape and Aboriginal Cultural Values

Birregurra is situated on the traditional lands of the Gulidjan people of the Eastern Maar Nation and holds significant cultural importance for Aboriginal people and Birregurra's Eastern Maar citizens. The *Eastern Maar Country Plan* highlights that Country encompasses more than just the physical aspects of land, water, air, plants and animals. It includes spirituality, Ancestors, and a deep connection that dictates how people feel, live, and find their identity. When Country's health declines, so does the health of its people, illustrating a profound, interdependent relationship.

Waterways are culturally important places to Aboriginal people, and Birregurra is adjacent to the culturally vital Barwon River, with the Atkins Creek and an unnamed tributary flowing through the town. It is nestled within a broader bio-cultural landscape where the volcanic Lava Flow Country of the Eastern Maar Nation meets the Wet Forest Country of the Otway's cool temperate rainforests. This diverse landscape has been home to Aboriginal people for thousands of years, and their spiritual, cultural, and traditional connections continue to thrive through their descendants.

Birregurra's rich and enduring Aboriginal narrative of the area remains less visible and understood within the broader community. This presents a meaningful opportunity to deepen our collective understanding, recognition, and celebration of the Aboriginal cultural heritage that has shaped the landscape for tens of thousands of years. As Birregurra continues to grow modestly, particularly in areas adjacent to its waterways, there is an important responsibility to approach development with cultural sensitivity and awareness.

These waterways and surrounding landscapes are of profound cultural significance to Aboriginal people, holding both tangible and intangible values that reflect deep ancestral connections. Future planning and development must respect and protect these places, preserving their context within Birregurra's open space network. It is essential that the voices of the local Maar community are central to this process. By creating opportunities for storytelling, cultural sharing, place naming, and leadership, we can ensure that places of Aboriginal significance are not only safeguarded, but also respectfully acknowledged and celebrated as vital elements of Birregurra's identity and future.

### 8.2 Principles

The following overarching principles and directions have been developed in relation to the theme of a Bio-Cultural Landscape.

#### **Respectful Partnership and Cultural Leadership**

Planning for Birregurra must be guided by genuine, ongoing partnerships with the Eastern Maar, Gulidjan, and other Aboriginal community members. This includes respectful engagement, representation, and shared decision-making in shaping the town's future. Recognising the Eastern Maar as Traditional Owners and knowledge holders, this principle supports a planning approach where community voices are central, cultural leadership is valued, and self-determination is upheld.

## Cultural Identity, Wellbeing, and Intergenerational Strength

Protecting and celebrating Aboriginal culture, story, and sites of significance is fundamental to community pride and wellbeing. Planning must support spaces, programs, and initiatives that strengthen cultural identity, keep the Dreaming alive, and create opportunities for young people to be connected, active, and on pathways to their full potential. In doing so, Birregurra becomes a place where Aboriginal citizens feel physically, emotionally, and spiritually safe, respected, and empowered.

### Caring for Country and Creating a Sustainable Future

Future development must respect and preserve the cultural and ecological values of Country. This means managing Birregurra's natural assets—particularly its waterways and open spaces—in ways that align with Aboriginal knowledge systems and sustainability practices. By supporting a healthy Country and enabling the responsible use of resources, planning can contribute to a resilient community and create a foundation for economic opportunity, environmental stewardship, and cultural continuity.

## 8.3 Strategies

The following strategies have been developed in relation to the theme of Bio-Cultural Landscape for Birregurra.

### 1. Embed Cultural Mapping into the Planning Process

Partner with Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation (EMAC) and other relevant Traditional Owner groups to undertake cultural mapping of Birregurra and its surrounding landscapes. This mapping should identify both tangible and intangible cultural heritage values—including stories, songlines, and places of past and present significance—and be used to inform zoning, open space planning, infrastructure projects, and environmental management.

### 2. Continue to work with EMAC on the future planning of Birregurra

Continue to work with EMAC to provide ongoing input into land use planning decisions in relation to Aboriginal cultural values. EMAC should be engaged as part of the future implementation of the Structure Plan to ensure cultural values, community aspirations, and appropriate protocols are embedded from the outset.

### 3. Design and protect culturally significant open spaces

Incorporate culturally significant sites and landscapes that are identified as part of the cultural mapping project into the open space network, with appropriate interpretative signage, protection, and landscape design and art installation elements that reflect Aboriginal cultural values. This might include the renaming of existing or proposed parks, creation of cultural trails along the waterways, use of local language and stories in signage, public art, or the inclusion of bush food and medicine plantings in public landscapes, in partnership with EMAC.

### 4. Explore opportunities to formally name the unnamed waterway in Birregurra

The unnamed waterway in Birregurra is culturally important and there is an opportunity to work with EMAC and formally advocate to State Government for a place name that reflects Aboriginal cultural values.

## **ABORIGINAL CULTURAL VALUES**

### **Objective:**

To adopt Principles associated with the Bio-Cultural Landscape and Aboriginal Cultural Values as follows:

- Respectful partnership and cultural leadership
- Cultural identity, wellbeing and intergenerational strength
- Caring for Country and creating a sustainable future

### **Strategies**

- Embed cultural mapping into the planning process
- Continue to work with EMAC in the future planning of Birregurra.
- Design and protect culturally significant open spaces
- Explore opportunities to formally name the unnamed waterway in Birregurra

## 9. Access and Movement

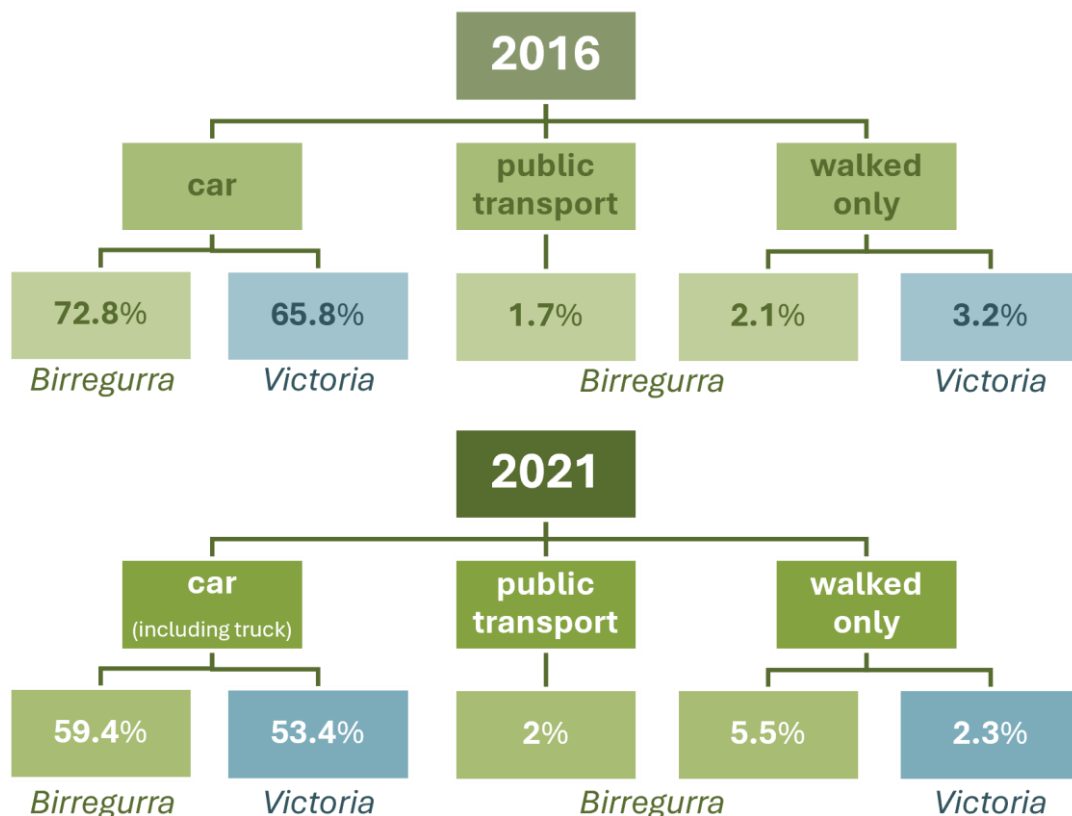
Birregurra has a grid-based street network, with primary access points into town along arterial roads. From the east this is Warncoort-Birregurra Road, west is Birregurra-Deans Marsh Road and from the north - Roadknight Street. There are few footpaths and no formal cycling infrastructure.

There is limited data available to understand regular modes of travel and use of the existing transport network, but it is recognised that cars are the primary means of travel for residents. The network carries local, regional and tourist traffic. Heavy vehicles also travel along Main Street and Roadknight Street. Both roads are gazetted arterial and municipal roads for Class 2 B-Doubles and Class 3 B-Doubles operating under Victoria's Livestock Loading Scheme.

2021 Census data for travel to work patterns was influenced by the COVID pandemic. Regional Victoria was not in lockdown on Census night, but metropolitan Melbourne was. More people than usual worked from home during this period. For this reason, reference is made to both the 2021 data and the 2016 Census data to gain insights about the travel to work patterns of residents in Birregurra.

Not surprisingly, most people travelled to work by car on the day of the Census, significantly more than the Victorian average. Notably the percentage of people who walked to work was higher in Birregurra than the Victorian average in 2021 but was a similar level in 2016. Only a small number of people travelled to work by public transport in 2021 and 2016, reflecting the limited services available.

### Mode of Travel to Work





## 9.1 Road Network

Several concerns were raised through community feedback about poor road condition and the need for upgrades. While most comments indicated improvements were needed, there were mixed views on whether infrastructure should be formalised (e.g. sealed roads, kerb and channel) or informal (e.g. dust suppression treatments).

There has been minimal change in the road network in the last decade. Many of the strategies in the 2013 Structure Plan related to road and street design that might occur with new subdivision, rather than upgrades to the existing network. Given subdivision has primarily been small scale over this time new roads have not been created, although some subdivisions have included minor upgrades to accessways or sections of a road.

Strachan Street has been the subject of numerous concerns over many years due to its degraded state. It functions as the main collector road from residential areas north and south of the town centre and Main Street. Council has recently undertaken work to upgrade Strachan Street, between Main Street and Barry Street. Works included:

- Road pavement rehabilitation addressing drainage issues between Main Street and Barry Street.
- Road reserve width of 10.8m with 2m wide parallel parking either side.
- New kerb and channel where none existed and replacement of damaged sections.
- Underground stormwater pipes to improve drainage along the rehabilitated pavement.
- Road signs and markings.

Consultation with the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) and Council engineers has identified that there could be opportunity to improve road safety on Main Street between Austin Street and Strachan Street. While traffic volumes have been estimated as low to moderate in this area, there have been a couple of crashes recorded in the last 10 years. Reducing the speed limit on Main Street to 40km/hr was suggested for further investigation in the 2013 Structure Plan, with the outcome resulting in a reduction to 50 km/hr. It is recommended that additional traffic calming measures are explored to improve overall safety along this section of road. Any investigation would need to consider the heritage character and values of this area.

A request was made through community consultation for the sealing of Jenner Street between Austin Street and Strachan Street. While this section of road presently functions as a quiet local road, one side is zoned Commercial 1 Zone, meaning it is likely that this section will become more developed and experience a greater level of activity in years to come.

Council has a process for assessing whether a road should be sealed or unsealed. This is set out in the Road Management Plan, 2021. The assessment utilises both traffic volume criteria and other criteria, including:

- Links to existing sealed roads.
- Road hierarchy classification.
- Planning Scheme and future development potential.
- Traffic generators.
- Customer request history.

- Road condition and maintenance costs.
- Road geometry and road safety.
- Roadside vegetation and biodiversity.

It is difficult to forecast when the level of activity on Jenner Street might trigger the need for a significant upgrade, but it is recommended that an assessment against the criteria be undertaken having regard to land on one side being zoned Commercial 1.

Existing local policy in the Planning Scheme supports road upgrades for Birregurra that retain and enhance the character and informal nature of road reserves. This allows for a balance between improved road surfaces and maintaining neighbourhood character. However, requirements to appropriately manage stormwater drainage may be different in each context and will be particularly important to consider in areas prone to flooding.

## 9.2 Active Transport (Walking & Cycling)

Provision of infrastructure to improve pedestrian modes of travel was a priority topic in community consultation. There were mixed views on whether formal infrastructure should be introduced to facilitate walking and cycling, with some people preferring the informal character of unmade roads to move about town. There were equally as many people expressing a desire for improved pathways, able to be navigated safely with prams, walking frames and small children on bikes. A need for safe pedestrian crossings at key locations was frequently raised.

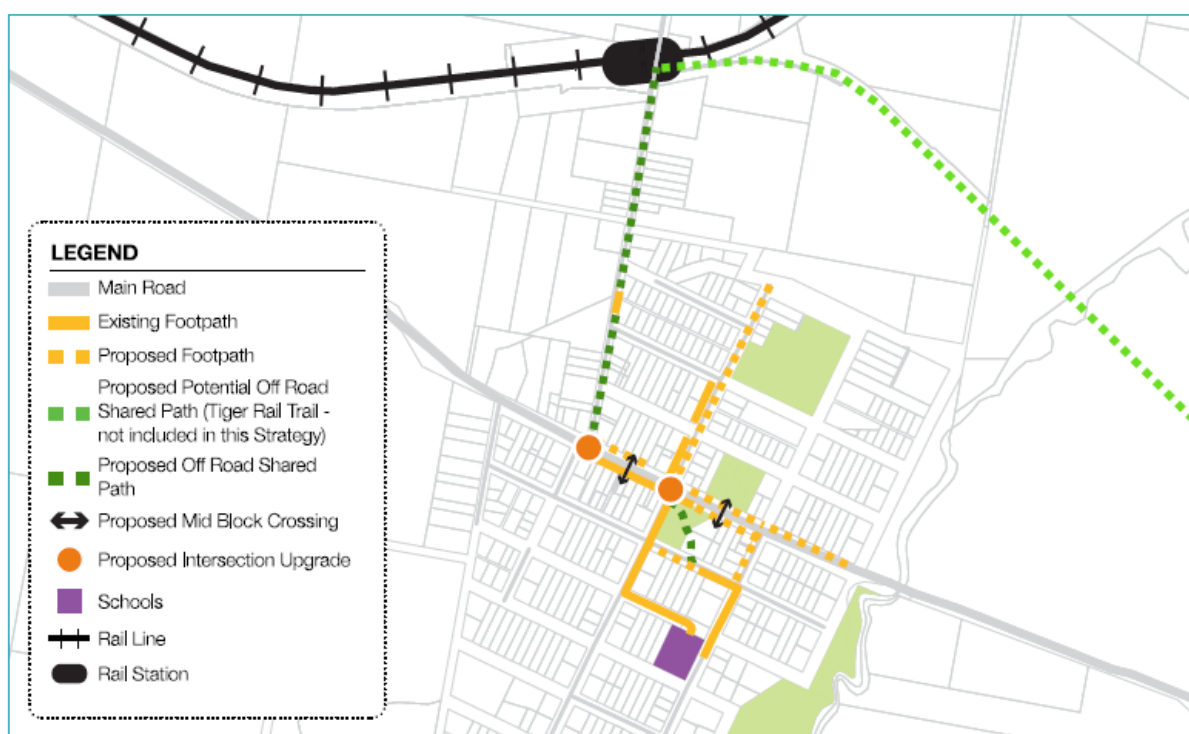
Current footpath provision in Birregurra is minimal, connectivity is poor and there are no formal pedestrian road crossings in the town. There is no cycling infrastructure. Notwithstanding, there was some feedback through community consultation that people generally felt safe moving around Birregurra due to the wide roads and verges.

Council adopted the Colac Otway Active Transport Strategy in 2013, which has three overarching goals:

- **Healthy People:** support the health and wellbeing of the Shire's residents by enabling and promoting physical activity through walking and cycling for transport and recreation.
- **Healthy Communities:** support the health and sustainability of local communities through the provision of enhanced walking and cycling infrastructure, which will encourage more people onto the street supporting social interaction while reducing reliance on car-based travel for local trips.
- **Healthy Economy:** contribute to the health and sustainability of the local economy by supporting local cycling tourism and local businesses.

The Active Transport Strategy recommended the following improvements in Birregurra:

**Figure 18 Proposed Improvements - Birregurra Map, Colac Otway Active Transport Strategy 2013-2023**



Of these improvements, only the Roadknight Street path has been constructed. Due to funding constraints, it was constructed as a 1.5 metre wide pedestrian path and not a shared path.

There is still interest from the community to pursue the 'Tiger Rail Trail from Forrest to Birregurra'. Council undertook an analysis of the issues and opportunities associated with construction of the trail in 2014. The outcome of the analysis was that Council resolved not to pursue the trail to Birregurra and does not support further investigation. For this reason, it is not recommended in this Structure Plan.

Several suggestions for infrastructure improvements were made through community consultation, including:

- An improved footpath network from the Primary School to the Recreation Reserve.
- Pedestrian crossings over Main Street. Locations suggested included:
  - to the bus stop at Roadknight Street
  - from Birregurra Park to the Skatepark
  - from the Birregurra Hall to the shops
  - at Beal Street for access to the Primary School.

Suggestions were explored in more detail with DTP and Council engineers as follows:

- Main Street, between Austin Street and Ennis Street.
  - Issue: Lack of formalised pedestrian crossings over a 200m stretch, making crossings difficult and potentially unsafe. There is a bus stop on Main Street (east bound). The stop is used by school students. Children residing in the south of the

township need to cross the road. Members of the community have raised safety concerns due to lack of a formalised pedestrian crossing.

- Factors to consider in developing a crossing design:
  - Main Street in Birregurra is part of a Heritage Precinct, therefore potential heritage implications will need to be considered.
  - A minimum road width of 6.5 metres per lane for oversized agricultural vehicles must be maintained.
- Barry Street, between Roadknight Street and the Birregurra Recreation Reserve.
  - Issue: No bike paths. Enhancing cycling amenities in this location would encourage active transport modes of travel and support safer cycling options to the Birregurra Recreation Reserve on Barry Street.
- Beal Street, between Jenner Street and Molesworth Street.
  - Issue 1: Lack of a formal crossing. The Primary School on Beal Street has warning signage but no formal school crossing. While low traffic volumes reduce immediate safety risks, adding formal crossing points and footpaths would improve access to the Primary School, increase safety, and encourage more walking.
  - Issue 2: No separated bike paths or footpaths, and part of the road is unsealed which discourages cycling. Enhancing cycling amenity in this location would encourage active transport modes of travel and support safer cycling options to the Primary School.
- Strachan Street.
  - Issue: No pedestrian path south of Skene Street. This is a major connecting street to Main Street. Enhancing active transport infrastructure in this location would encourage active transport modes of travel.

Based on a review of the recommendations in the Active Transport Strategy 2013, community input and discussions with the DTP and Council engineers, the following active transport projects are recommended. Community feedback on these improvements should inform the priority for timing of projects in the final list.

**Table 3 Potential Active Transport Projects**

	Potential Project	Comments
1.	Pedestrian crossing: from the south side of Main Street to the bus stop (north of Austin Street).	Undertake further investigation to determine exact location and style of crossing. Ensure minimum road lane widths required are maintained and consider heritage impacts.
2.	Pedestrian crossing: across Austin Street from the shops to the Mechanics Hall.	Undertake further investigation to determine exact location and style of crossing. Ensure minimum road lane widths required are maintained and consider heritage impacts.

		This may be a lower priority due to the lower traffic volumes using Austin Street.
3.	Sealed footpath: Main Street (south side) from Ennis Street to 95 Main Street.	This has been identified as a missing link between Ennis Street and the Birregurra Kindergarten.
4.	<p>Connecting Active Transport Link between the Primary School and the Recreation Reserve with the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Upgrade the existing footpath to a shared path: From the Primary School on Beal Street (west side), then along Jenner Street and through Birregurra Park.</li> <li>b. Pedestrian crossing: across Main Street from Birregurra Park to the Skatepark.</li> <li>c. Sealed footpath: Main Street (north side) from the Skatepark to connect with footpath in front of the Pharmacy.</li> <li>d. Shared path: Strachan Street (east side) from Main Street to the Recreation Reserve.</li> </ul>	<p>Undertake further investigation to determine exact location and style of crossing. Ensure minimum road lane widths required are maintained and consider heritage impacts.</p> <p>Undertake further investigation to determine style of footpath that complements the heritage character of the Main Street precinct.</p> <p>Undertake further investigation to determine style of footpath required.</p>
5	On-road cycle lane: along Barry Street, from Roadknight Street to the Recreation Reserve.	
6	Sealed footpath: Main Street (north side), from Roadknight Street to the Birregurra Town Hall.	<p>Undertake further investigation to determine style of footpath that complements the heritage character of the Main Street precinct.</p> <p>This path is likely a lower priority at present but may become more important as commercial businesses develop on the north side of Main Street in the Commercial 1 Zone.</p>
7	On-road cycle lane: along Roadknight Street, from Main Street to the train station.	



8	Connecting link along Beal Street, between Molesworth Street and Jenner Street.	Undertake further investigation to determine whether there is a need for a footpath, cycle lane or shared path in this location to facilitate active transport modes of travel to the primary school for students on the north side of Main Street.
9	Connecting link along Strachan Street, south of Skene Street.	Undertake further investigation to determine whether there is a need for a footpath, cycle lane or shared path in this location to facilitate active transport modes of travel.

It is also recommended that funding options for the improvement projects should be investigated in consultation with the Department of Transport and Planning.

The type and design of footpaths is important to the community. Some people preferred more informal surface treatments (not concrete), while others requested more formal pavements suitable for people of all abilities. The choice of pathway construction will depend on the location of the asset and its primary purpose. Consideration should be given to ensuring that pathway design is consistent with the village character of Birregurra.

### 9.3 Public Lighting

Several community members have suggested that more street or other public lighting is needed to improve safety for pedestrians at night. However, some people expressed concerns about potential light pollution from additional lighting and the negative effect on the night sky, bats, birds and insects.

Requests for lighting included:

- Sensor lights in the public toilets behind the town hall for users.
- A street light on Beal Street at the top end near the golf greens.
- A street light on the corner of Main Street and Strachan Street
- A street light on Park Lane
- Lighting on the bridge exiting the park near the BBQ

Council does not have a formal policy on street lighting in existing areas and assesses requests for new street lighting based on safety, pedestrian and traffic volumes, with priority given to areas with higher pedestrian activity or vulnerable users, and subject to budget allocation through the annual budget process.

There are two main categories of lighting accepted for use within Victoria, Category V and Category P. Category V is applicable to arterial roads whereas Category P is applicable on local roads and is considered to have lesser impacts on the night sky and fauna.

Street lighting in new subdivisions is typically developer funded and would be subject to compliance with AS/ANZ 1158 – ‘Lighting for Roads and Public Spaces’ and the Council adopted Infrastructure Design Manual.

## 9.4 Public Transport

Public Transport options have improved in Birregurra in recent years. Birregurra has the benefit of a train station and there has been a moderate increase in service frequency. Birregurra is located on the Warrnambool line and V/Line offers services between Melbourne and Warrnambool including:

- Five train services each way on weekdays.
- Four train services each way on weekends.
- One daily weekday coach service from Geelong to Colac, which stops in Birregurra.
- Two early morning weekday coach services from Colac to Geelong, with connection at Waurin Ponds to the Melbourne bound train if desired.

Feedback from V/Line is that the majority of passengers are travelling towards Melbourne on the service, and there is higher patronage on weekends.

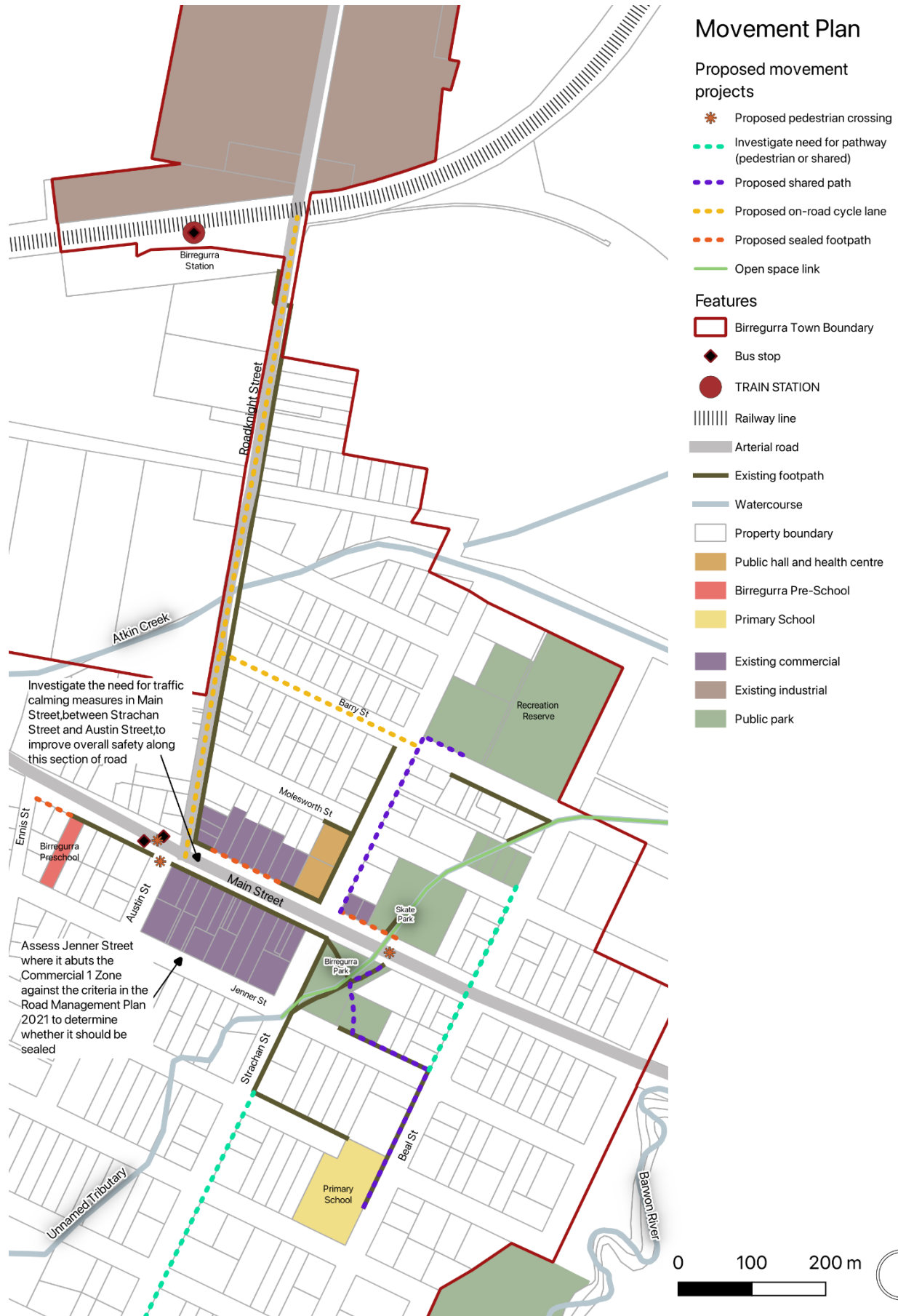
On Wednesdays there is a return bus service from Colac to Marengo / Apollo Bay, which stops in Birregurra and is used by a couple of residents regularly.

Over summer (December-January) there is a bus service between Colac and Lorne which stops at Birregurra five times daily.

It is recommended that Council continue to advocate for improved public transport services for Birregurra as the town continues to grow.

A current priority of residents is an upgrade to the bus stop on the corner of Main Street and Roadknight Street. The stop was upgraded in 2024 to improve access for people with mobility challenges and to assist the vision impaired; however, seating and weather protection were absent and are required. Council is in the process of sourcing a *Disability Discrimination Act* compliant bus shelter for the existing bus bay on the northern side of Main Street.

Figure 19 Birregurra Movement Plan



## ACCESS & MOVEMENT

### Objectives:

To ensure the Birregurra road network provides safe and continuous access for all road users.

To encourage active transport modes of travel through an improved pathway and cycling network.

To advocate for increased Public Transport services to meet the needs of a growing town.

### Strategies

- Investigate the need for traffic calming measures in Main Street, between Strachan Street and Austin Street, to improve overall safety along this section of road. Ensure investigations consider the heritage character and values of this area.
- Assess Jenner Street against the criteria in the Road Management Plan 2021 to determine whether it should be sealed, taking into account the zoning of land on the northern side as Commercial 1 Zone.
- Adopt the Active Transport Projects in Table 3. Timing to be determined in consultation with the community about priorities.
- Adopt road and pathway typologies and designs that complement the village character of Birregurra while meeting appropriate functional standards.
- Investigate, in consultation with the Department of Transport and Planning, opportunities for funding the Active Transport Projects in Table 3.
- Continue to advocate for improved public transport services for Birregurra as the town continues to grow.

## 10. Open Space, Recreation and Community Facilities

### 10.1 Open Space and Recreation

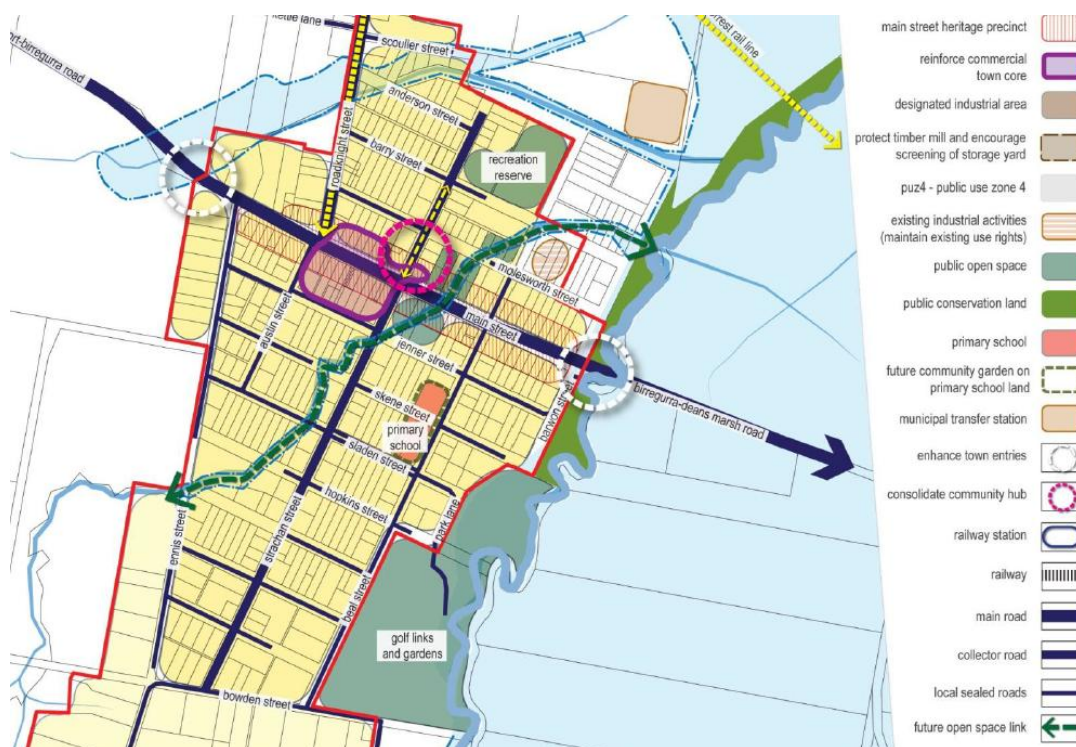
Public open space and recreation facilities are highly valued by the Birregurra community and significantly add to the town's amenity and health and the wellbeing of its residents.

Birregurra has a mix of active and passive open space reserves, including the Birregurra Recreation Reserve, Birregurra Park, the Skatepark and the Barwon River streamside. It also has some restricted open space areas, including the golf course and a bowling green. Most residents have access to some public open space in walking distance from their home, although most of the open space does tend to be in the north or along the eastern side of town.<sup>12</sup> Should residential growth be permitted beyond the current western boundary of Birregurra, it is likely that a local neighbourhood park will be required to service the new residents.

Council continues to work towards the long-term goal of an open space link along the unnamed waterway, extending from the Barwon River in the north-east of town to the middle of town (refer Figure 20). The section from Main Street to the north-east is near complete with land transferring to Council as part of a recent subdivision in Barry Street. It is recommended that development of this link with a shared path as envisaged by the 2013 Structure Plan should be investigated.

The open space link is currently shown as extending south-west of Birregurra Park along the unnamed waterway. This section is unlikely to be feasible due to the number of private landholdings it extends through. It is recommended this section of the link not be pursued.

Figure 20 Future Open Space Link - Birregurra Structure Plan 2013



<sup>12</sup> Walking distance is generally accepted as 400 metres.



Several community members suggested construction of a green space / loop path around the edge of Birregurra, making use of waterways and road reserves. While this opportunity could be explored in the future, it is recommended that focus at this stage be directed to delivering the open space link referred to above and improving pedestrian connections through town (refer Chapter 10.2).

The Birregurra Recreation Reserve is a key recreation and social hub in town. At the time of the 2013 Structure Plan, the Birregurra Recreation Reserve Master Plan 2012 had recently been adopted. The purpose of the Master Plan was to guide the future development of the Reserve's infrastructure to better meet community needs. Council supported the process by providing a community grant matched by the Reserve Committee's own funds. Various actions have been implemented, including redevelopment of the tennis/netball courts, installation of compliant match standard lighting for both tennis and netball, and upgraded sports oval lighting. There is now urgent need for an upgrade of the football / netball clubrooms to bring them up to standard as they are currently not fit for purpose. There are no change room facilities for female, gender diverse or players with disabilities. There are no bathrooms in the social clubrooms and the kitchen needs upgrading. It is recommended that upgrade of the clubrooms be a short-term priority and that Council assist the Committee of Management in pursuing funding opportunities.

The Birregurra Park Playspace at Birregurra Park received Council funding for an upgrade. Council engaged with the community on the upgrades to the playspace with the existing equipment being refurbished, and new play equipment and nature play elements installed.

A bike park was suggested as a new recreation facility through community consultation.

## 10.2 Community Facilities

Birregurra has a range of community facilities as outlined below. Most of these facilities and services are not delivered by Council.

### *Birregurra Primary School*

- The school had 111 students enrolled at the school in 2023.
- Before and after school care is offered and delivered by an external provider.
- The school received a state government grant (approx. \$2.21m) in 2021 for major renovations at the school.

### *Kindergarten*

- The kindergarten building and land are owned by the Country Women's Association (CWA). A trust manages the building, made up of CWA members and community members. A parent committee, overseen by the trust, manages the kinder service and program.
- The kindergarten received a state government grant (\$722,163) in 2024 for repairs and a new building extension, which will include a staff meeting and kitchen space, storage, student lockers and more toilets.
- The kindergarten currently offers 42 places and with the renovations will be able to offer an additional 14 places.

- The draft Colac Otway Shire Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan identifies that there will be an unmet demand for kindergarten places from 2031 in the Colac and Surrounds SA2 district. This district includes the kinder services of Coragulac and District Kinder and Birregurra Kinder. It has been determined that the unmet demand will sit with Coragulac as Birregurra will be covered with the additional 14 places.

#### *Birregurra Community Health Centre*

- Includes a medical centre, allied health services, a gymnasium and playgroup sessions.
- Council provides fortnightly Maternal Community Health services from the centre.

#### *Other Facilities and Services*

- Birregurra Public / Mechanics Hall (managed by the Council), which hosts the Birregurra Senior Citizens Centre, music and theatre events.
- A range of community groups and clubs, including the Birregurra Community Group.

The need for additional childcare services has been raised by some community members. Council engaged a consultant in 2019 to explore childcare options for Birregurra which recommended concentrating on expanding existing services. It is understood that members of the community are further exploring alternative options, including a separate facility. Council provided a letter of support for the investigation.

Current planning policy for Birregurra supports consolidating civic, community and health facilities in a community node on the north-east edge of the town centre. This stems from a recommendation in the 2013 Structure Plan and is based on the view that this location is highly accessible and supports several existing community services. This continues to be the case and this policy should be retained.

It is anticipated that there will be a modest and gradual growth in the population of Birregurra. It would be appropriate for Council to undertake a Community Infrastructure Needs Assessment to consider the implications of future growth on existing facilities and services and to determine what future planning needs might be.

## **OPEN SPACE, RECREATION & COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Objectives:**

To provide a range of passive and active recreation opportunities within the township.

To establish a connected network of accessible public open space and recreation facilities.

To recognise the Birregurra Recreation Reserve as the primary recreation and sporting precinct in the township.

To support a range of community services and facilities commensurate with the size of the population.

### **Strategies**

- Facilitate the provision of an open space link along the unnamed waterway extending from the Barwon River in the north-east of town to Birregurra Park in the middle of town.
- Advocate for the upgrade of the Birregurra Recreation Reserve clubrooms as a short-term priority and assist the Committee of Management in identifying and pursuing funding opportunities.
- Support continued investigations by the community into the provision of a bike park recreation facility.
- Undertake a Community Infrastructure Needs Assessment to consider the implications of future growth on existing community facilities and services.

## 11. Utilities

### 11.1 Water, Sewer and Drainage

As identified in Chapter 5.3, Barwon Water is the agency responsible for sewerage and water provision in Birregurra. The town was connected to a reticulated sewerage system just prior to the preparation of the 2013 Structure Plan. Barwon Water has advised that ultimately the plant is intended to be duplicated to provide service for approximately 925 people.

More recently Barwon Water has commenced upgrading the town water supply through the construction of a new underground pipeline to connect Birregurra to the Colac water supply system. Barwon Water analysed the costs and benefits of upgrading the local treatment plant against construction of the new pipeline. The assessment found the benefits of the pipeline were more compelling and included:

- Increased water security for Birregurra without impacting Colac's water security.
- Fewer water quality risks and improved pressure.
- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions and water losses.
- Improved bushfire resilience.
- More affordable water supply.

Barwon Water has also been partnering with the Birregurra community to explore sustainable water use opportunities. To date the initiative has saved 38 million litres of water and reduced customer bills by \$81,000 since it was established in 2020<sup>13</sup>.

Colac Otway Shire Council is the agency responsible for drainage infrastructure. The 2013 Structure Plan noted that the existing local network was in poor condition. It recommended strategies to encourage consistency of drainage treatments for new development, including optimising on-site stormwater collection and detention and use of Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) where appropriate. In 2018, the State government introduced new initiatives into all planning schemes in Victoria (Amendment VC154) to enable the planning system to better manage water, stormwater and drainage in urban development, collectively known as Integrated Water Management. New subdivision and development in Birregurra is required to adhere to these policies.

Council commissioned the Birregurra Flood and Drainage Strategy in 2022 to further consider opportunities to manage stormwater quality. The Strategy noted that new developments are required to achieve Best Practice Environmental Management Guidelines (BPEMG) pollutant removal targets. As such, a range of WSUD options were investigated. It recommended that Council consider the outcomes of these assessments and consider options which might be progressed to further feasibility assessments subject to funding. To date options have not been further investigated.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.yoursay.barwonwater.vic.gov.au/birregurra/birregurra-community-and-barwon-water-celebrate-water-savings>, 2 May 2024

To further Integrated Water Management (IWM) outcomes for Birregurra, Barwon Water has suggested undertaking an IWM Design Sprint process to facilitate an on-going collaborative approach to water management and planning into the future. This process would identify strategic IWM goals for the town, current issues and potential projects to improve water management and resilience. The process is a relatively simple and cost-effective means of identifying priority actions compared with preparing a comprehensive IWM and is recommended.

## 11.2 Power

Powercor is the agency responsible for electricity connection in Birregurra.

There is no reticulated gas network in Birregurra and it is noted that, from January 2024, reticulated gas connections for new dwellings, apartments and residential subdivisions are being phased out across Victoria.

## 11.3 Telecommunications

Mobile phone service and internet provision has caused some concern in Birregurra over recent years in regard to coverage and speed. There have been a few applications for new telecommunications facilities, one of which was refused in Jenner Street due to potential impacts on the heritage values of the town centre. A separate facility was approved at an alternative location to improve services in the area.

### UTILITIES

#### Objective:

To support the provision of physical infrastructure necessary to service the current and future needs of the community, in a manner that respects the character of the town and will add to its future resilience in a changing climate.

#### Strategies

- Undertake an Integrated Water Management Design Sprint in partnership with Barwon Water to identify priority actions for integrated water planning and management.
- Consult with service providers as required when considering proposals for new development.



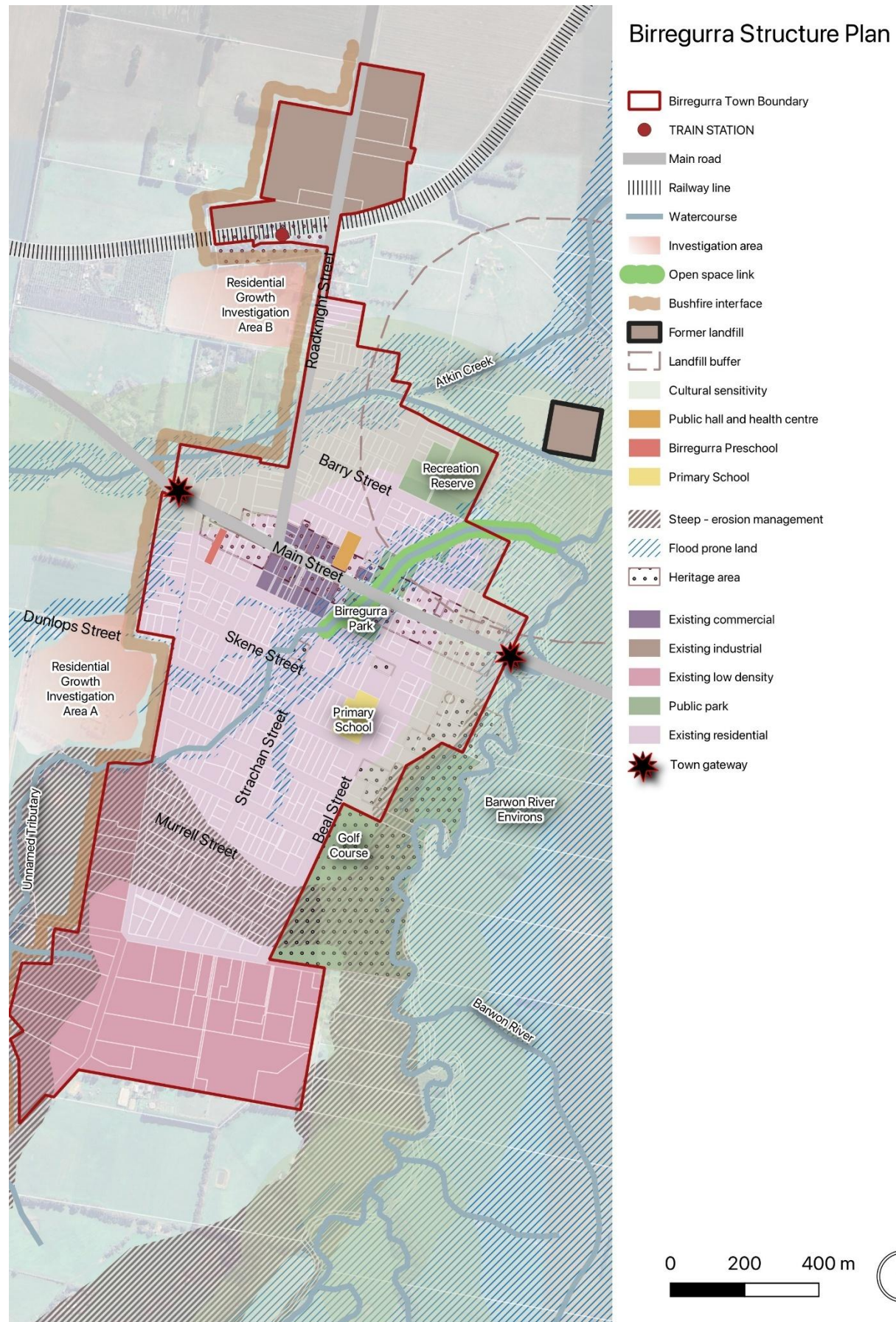
## 12. Birregurra Structure Plan Map

The Birregurra Structure Plan below outlines the overarching land use planning framework for the town. It reinforces the current town boundary but notes the options to further investigate land to the west of the town for future residential development. The town boundary should not be moved unless investigation of these areas finds that land is suitable for small scale development.

Key considerations for future development are shown on the map, including flood prone land, land at risk of erosion, heritage areas and the Municipal Transfer Station buffer.

Key assets are also noted, including the Barwon River, Atkin Creek, open space reserves and the proposed open space link from Birregurra Park to the Barwon River.

Figure 21 Birregurra Framework Plan 2025



## Part C - Implementation

The Birregurra Structure Plan 2025 sets out key strategic directions and initiatives to guide growth planning for the town over the next 10-15 years.

Implementation of the Plan will require a range of actions, including a planning scheme amendment to introduce the new policy into legislation. Table 4 outlines the actions that will be required to deliver the Birregurra Structure Plan 2025. It also sets out Council's role and prioritises the actions in terms of short (5 years), medium (5-10 years) or long-term (15 years) delivery or identifies actions as on-going.

### Monitoring and Review

The Birregurra Structure Plan 2025 has a 10-15 year timeframe. A progress report on the implementation of the Structure Plan should be provided to Council every five years with an audit of actions completed. At such time, any changes in policy direction should also be identified, which may require updates to the Plan to respond to changes in State or local government direction or other changing circumstances.

The Implementation Table should be reviewed annually at the time of Council's budget preparation, to identify opportunities for funding of actions.

*Table 4 Implementation Table*

No.	Action	Timing	Responsibility
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare a planning scheme amendment to introduce:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the objectives and strategies of the Birregurra Structure Plan 2025 in relation to land use and development.</li> <li>the recommendations of the <i>Birregurra Structure Plan Review: Review of Neighbourhood Planning Provisions, 19 July 2024</i>, as set out in Appendix 1 of the Birregurra Structure Plan 2025.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Short	Council
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support proposals to investigate Area 2 for potential, small scale future urban development.</li> <li>Require any rezoning proposal for Area 2 to include the following analysis:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climate resilience and adaption, including flooding analysis based on the most up-to-date flood modelling recommendations.</li> <li>Aboriginal cultural values.</li> <li>Biodiversity and landscape values.</li> <li>Neighbourhood character.</li> <li>Detailed land capability and identification of any potential contamination.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Short	Landowner, Council role – planning authority

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Land use compatibility with nearby agricultural and industrial uses.</li> <li>– Potential visual amenity impacts.</li> <li>– Sustainable design.</li> <li>– A design response which adheres to the recommendations of the Strategic Bushfire Planning Assessment, KH Bushfire Planning (2024).</li> </ul>		
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In line with the Council resolution of 25 November 2025, support proposals to investigate Area 1 for potential, small scale future urban development.</li> <li>• Require any rezoning proposal for Area 1 to include the following analysis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Climate resilience and adaption, including flooding analysis based on the most up-to-date flood modelling recommendations.</li> <li>– Aboriginal cultural values.</li> <li>– Biodiversity and landscape values.</li> <li>– Neighbourhood character.</li> <li>– Detailed land capability and identification of any potential contamination.</li> <li>– Land use compatibility with nearby agricultural and industrial uses.</li> <li>– Potential visual amenity impacts.</li> <li>– Sustainable design.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A design response which adheres to the recommendations of the Strategic Bushfire Planning Assessment, KH Bushfire Planning (2024).</li> </ul>	Short	Landowner, Council role – planning authority
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage landowners to landscape gardens having regard to the following publications (or updated guidance): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Landscaping for Bushfire, Garden Design and Plant Selection, CFA.</li> <li>– Landscaping your Coastal Garden for Bushfire, Colac Otway Shire.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Ongoing	Council
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaise with the Corangamite CMA to determine the most appropriate approach to facilitating updated flood modelling for existing urban areas</li> </ul>	Short	Council
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the ongoing programs and works of the Corangamite CMA, Upper Barwon Landcare Network, Birregurra Landcare Group, and other members of the community to improve the health of the Barwon River.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Community led, Council support



7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate the need for traffic calming measures in Main Street, between Strachan Street and Austin Street, to improve overall safety along this section of road. Ensure investigations consider the heritage character and values of this area.</li> </ul>	Short	Council led, DTP support
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess Jenner Street against the criteria in the Road Management Plan 2021 to determine whether it should be sealed, taking into account the zoning of land on the northern side as Commercial 1 Zone.</li> </ul>	Medium	Council (local roads)
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine appropriate timing for delivery of the Active Transport Projects in Table 3 and consult with the Department of Transport and Planning about opportunities for funding towards projects.</li> </ul>	Medium	Council led, DTP support
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce Council policy to adopt road and pathway typologies and designs that complement the village character of Birregurra while meeting appropriate functional standards.</li> </ul>	Short	Council (local roads)
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to advocate for improved public transport services for Birregurra as the town continues to grow.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Council to advocate
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for the upgrade of the Birregurra Recreation Reserve clubrooms as a short-term priority and assist the Committee of Management in identifying and pursuing funding opportunities.</li> </ul>	Short	Community led, Council support
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support continued investigations into the provision of a bike park recreation facility.</li> </ul>	Medium	Community led, Council support
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake a Community Infrastructure Needs Assessment to consider the implications of future growth on existing community facilities and services.</li> </ul>	Medium	Council
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake an Integrated Water Management Design Sprint in partnership with Barwon Water to identify priority actions for integrated water planning and management.</li> </ul>	Short	Partnership with Barwon Water
16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consult with service providers as required when considering proposals for new development.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Council
17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the installation of EV charging stations close to businesses in the town centre.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Council



## Appendix 1: Recommended Amendments to the Colac Otway Planning Scheme

Clause	Heading	Proposed Amendment
11.03-6L	Birregurra	<p>Amend the 'Strategies' to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace the fifth strategy with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Encourage sensitive infill development and subdivision consistent with preferred neighbourhood character objectives.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Replace the sixth and seventh strategies with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Encourage retail businesses, and other appropriate commercial uses, to locate in the core town centre on Main Street.</li> <li>– Support tourism developments which respond to Birregurra's rural setting and heritage character.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Replace the eleventh strategy with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Support retirement/aged care living style development close to community and health services, including in the Commercial 1 Zone on the north side of Main Street.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Replace the fifteenth strategy with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Adopt road and pathway typologies and designs that complement the village character of Birregurra while meeting appropriate functional standards.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Replace the sixteenth strategy with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Design built form in residential areas to maintain the dominance of the surrounding landscape, having regard to landscaping for bushfire risk guidelines.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Insert new strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Designate land west of Ennis Street and south of Dunlop Street for possible future urban development subject to further investigation on the Birregurra Structure Plan Map.</li> <li>– In line with the Council resolution of 25 November 2025 to include Area 1 as an investigation area, designation land west of Roadknight Street and north and south of Kettle Street for possible future urban</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

		<p>development subject to further investigation on the Birregurra Structure Plan Map.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Support measures to improve bushfire resilience along the western edge of the township.</li> <li>– Protect the integrity of existing industrial activities in the Industrial 1 Zone by ensuring sensitive uses do not encroach into separation distance areas unless supported by a risk assessment.</li> <li>– Facilitate the provision of an open space link along the unnamed waterway extending from the Barwon River in the north west of town to Birregurra Park in the south east.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace the Birregurra Structure Plan map with the new Birregurra Structure Plan 2025 map.</li> </ul>
Schedule 3 to Clause 42.02 (VPO3)	Birregurra Tree Protection Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amend to include an exemption for the removal of environmental weeds specific to Colac Otway Shire.</li> <li>• Review, and potentially extend, the application of the VPO3 across Birregurra.</li> </ul>
Schedules 11-16 to Clause 43.02	Design and Development Overlay Schedules 11-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure there is an objective for each precinct which clearly articulates the preferred character for that precinct as described in the 2012 Character Study.</li> <li>• Ensure there are no more than five objectives in accordance with the Ministerial Direction on the Form and Content of Planning Schemes.</li> </ul>
Schedule 11 to Clause 43.02 (DDO11)	Birregurra Preferred Character Area A (Main Street)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider revising the landscape character objective noting vegetation removal does not require a permit pursuant to the DDO11.</li> <li>• Include a design standard to address the revised landscaping objective.</li> <li>• Reduce or remove the 15 metre minimum rear setback set out in the design standards.</li> <li>• Remove the DDO11 from the lot at the rear of 10 Main Street (and include it in the DDO12).</li> </ul>
Schedule 12 to Clause 43.02 (DDO12)	Birregurra Preferred Character Area B (North East)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider revising the landscape character objective noting vegetation removal does not require a permit pursuant to the DDO12.</li> <li>• Include a design standard to address the revised landscaping objective.</li> <li>• Reduce or remove the 10 metre minimum rear setback set out in the design standards.</li> <li>• Include a new design guideline:</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Do not support residential subdivision within 500 metres of the Birregurra Transfer Station unless a gas migration analysis confirms that it does not pose a safety risk.</li> <li>• Remove the DDO12 from land at 15-19 Strachan Street which is part of the Birregurra Recreation Reserve.</li> </ul>
Schedule 13 to Clause 43.02 (DDO13)	Birregurra Preferred Character Area C (Roadknight Street Entry & South of Main Street)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce or remove the 15 metre minimum rear setback set out in the design standards.</li> </ul>
Schedule 15 to Clause 43.02 (DDO15)	Birregurra Commercial Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include a new objective and decision guideline to ensure that new commercial development fronting Jenner Street responds to its sensitive residential interface.</li> </ul>
Schedule 16 to Clause 43.02 (DDO16)	Birregurra Industrial Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include a new design guideline in the DDO16 to protect views of the historic Birregurra Railway Station, which provides guidance around the siting of new buildings and works.</li> </ul>
Clause 72.08	Table to Clause 72.08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include the following documents as background documents:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Birregurra Structure Plan 2025</li> <li>– Strategic Bushfire Planning Assessment 2024</li> </ul> </li> </ul>