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| The City Of Greater Geelong, Wyndham city council & noa group |
| avalon corridor strategycommunity consultation report #2 |
| august – september 2021 |



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# Introduction

## Project background

The draft Avalon Corridor Strategy (ACS) is a strategic land use plan prepared by the City of Greater Geelong and Wyndham City Council, in collaboration with the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). It responds to Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 policy directions, as well as similar policy objectives within the G21 Regional Growth Plan (2013) and Greater Geelong Settlement Strategy (2020).

The draft ACS seeks to maintain a ‘green break’ between Greater Geelong (Lara) and Metropolitan Melbourne (Werribee) to protect significant cultural, landscape and biodiversity values. It also seeks to safeguard vital infrastructure and assets such as Avalon Airport and the Western Treatment Plant.

The finalised plan will guide land-use decision making in the Avalon Corridor, such as the location and extent of future development. In addition, a planning scheme amendment will incorporate the ACS into the Greater Geelong and Wyndham Planning Schemes as a reference document.

The draft ACS was released for public comment from Wednesday 11 August to Tuesday 21 September 2021. This report summarises the second community consultation in relation to this project.

## Engagement purpose

The purpose of the second consultation was to:

* Introduce the draft ACS to the community
* Test whether input from the first round of consultation had been adequately incorporated in the draft ACS
* Gain feedback on overall directions and guiding principles
* Gain an understanding of any specific issues or concerns.

## About this report

This report provides a snapshot of the key themes and issues raised during the second round of community consultation. The report was drafted by NOA Group.

## First community consultation

The first community consultation ran from 26 October to 25 November 2016. The purpose was to inform the community of the project, gain information on what the community valued in the Avalon Corridor and understand the issues that the strategy should address.

Participation included 2,400 hits to the project website, 100 survey responses and 250 people attending drop-in sessions in Little River.

The key themes that emerged from this first round of community consultation in 2016 were:

* Little River and Lara
* Tourism opportunities within the Corridor
* Landscape character
* Access and movement
* Planning controls
* Agriculture
* Water and drainage
* Future development
* Environment
* Airport impacts
* Heritage

Community input received during the first round of consultation was used to inform the drafting of the ACS. The first Community Consultation Report can be found on the [**City’s website**](https://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/planning/documents/item/8d3fcb2c1d547d6.aspx).

# How we engaged

## Overview

The second round of community consultation ran from 11 August to 21 September 2021.

COVID-19 pandemic restrictions overlapped with the second community consultation period. Consequently, the engagement was online, with the option of telephone calls for participants who were unable to engage with online processes.

## Consultation activities

The consultation program included:

* Eight online community workshops involving presentations, discussion, and comment capture
* Eight interview sessions involving discussion and comment capture
* ‘Have Your Say’ online portal with provision for comments and attaching submissions
* Participant submissions via email and post.

NOA Group was contracted by the City to assist with facilitating the community workshops and interviews, and to draft the content of this consultation report.

**132,957**

People reached on social media channels

**42 DAYS**
Of community consultation

NEWS

**6**

Print adverts in local newspapers

## Getting the word out

Communication activities to raise awareness of the draft ACS and encourage community participation included:

* Publishing the draft ACS via Greater Geelong’s Council Meeting Agenda (20 July) and Wyndham’s Planning Committee Agenda (5 August)
* Mailout to all landowners and occupiers within the study area, reaching approximately 3,000 addresses
* Emailing all project subscribers (12 August 2021)
* Publishing an article in Greater Geelong’s [**Council News**](https://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/news/item/8d95dac6eb36dd9.aspx) (12 August 2021)
* Placing advertisements in the following newspapers:
	+ Wednesday 24 August – Wyndham Star Weekly
	+ Thursday 26 August – Geelong Times, Bellarine Times, Armstrong Creek Times
	+ Friday 27 August – Geelong Independent
	+ Saturday 28 August – Geelong Advertiser
* Publishing ‘organic posts’ on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram at the start, middle and end of the consultation period
* Placing paid Facebook advertisements throughout the consultation period, reaching 132,957 people across both Local Government Areas (LGAs).

**114**

Unique participants

# Who we engaged

## Participants

The communication activities generated 3,921 Have Your Say page visits from 3,003 unique visitors between 11 August and 21 September 2021 (see ‘Performance Summary’ graph below).

We counted a total of 114 unique participants, who took part in at least one of the consultation activities on offer:

* 39 people participated in the workshops
* 22 people sought interviews
* 79 submissions were received.

Note that some participants contributed to more than one of the consultation activities which accounts for the discrepancy in individual activity participant numbers and the total number of people who participated.

Participant types included: residents, developers & landowners, environmentalists, farmers, government, services & utilities, transport, peak bodies, and tourism & recreation (see ‘Participant Type’ chart to the right).



# What we heard

## Approach to developing the report

Following the completion of the second community consultation period:

* All inputs were collated
* Similar comments were grouped under broad theme areas
* A short description of the theme and key issues was made
* Associated considerations were listed.

Please note that this consultation report outlines broad themes and issues raised during the consultation period.

During the consultation, several specific corrections to figures and maps were highlighted by participants. Where appropriate, these specific corrections along with the details contained in some submissions have been captured separately and forwarded to Hansen Partnership for consideration and adjustment in the final ACS.

## Breakdown of findings

A number of common themes were identified between the first and second consultation period, including Lara and Little River, tourism opportunities, landscape character, access and movement, agriculture, future development, environment and airport impacts.

## Theme 1: Green break

The ‘green break’ is supported by many who see it as safeguarding the Avalon Corridor from Melbourne and Geelong’s urban expansion. They also see it as providing buffer zones to Avalon Airport and the proposed Avalon Employment Precinct.

There is also support for the agricultural/rural landscape designation surrounding the You Yangs to prevent further residential and industrial development. Many people value landscape and view lines as integral to the rural character, often citing this as the reason they live in the area.

However, others perceive a 'blanket' approach to no development over the green break area as a concern, particularly for alternative land uses.

**Highlights:**

* Support for the continued presence of a green break to safeguard the Avalon Corridor from urban expansion and to protect cultural, landscape and biodiversity values.
* Support for retention of the ‘rural character’ of the area.
* Concerns over ‘blanketing’ the green break for predominately agricultural/rural landscape uses north of the Princes Freeway and the consequential issues of further development, being able to make a living off the land, a decrease in land values and ability to sell.

## Theme 2: Agricultural land capability

Broadacre farming is considered unsustainable and unviable with many farmers commenting that alternative land uses to supplement income are needed. Challenges to agriculture in the area are linked to insufficient access to water due to location within a rain shadow, bore water being unsuitable for irrigation and the continuing impact of climate change.

The long-held aspiration of recycled water use is acknowledged, but there is scepticism around its realisation. Significant weed infestation requiring chemical treatments also impact agricultural activities and threaten water catchments through potential run-off.

Other issues raised concerning successful farming include flooding and drainage, the loss of farming networks and suppliers in the area and residential needs conflicting with farming operations, particularly around shared roads.

**Highlights:**

* Call for rigorous investigation of current farmland capability.
* Zoning to be linked to land capacity with consideration of alternative zoning for smaller acreages to enable greater flexibility for residential uses (i.e., dwellings) or alternative uses (i.e., conservation).
* Consider identifying areas of further investigation in the ACS for complementary industries in the Green Wedge (Wyndham) and Farming Zone (Greater Geelong).
* Further investigate the potential of Class A recycled water use.
* Consider appropriate locations for hydroponic agricultural activities.
* Develop a weed management program.

## Theme 3: Regional biodiversity

Within the draft ACS, biodiversity considerations are dominated by the Ramsar wetlands, coastline, and Western Treatment Plant. There is strong support to protect the biodiversity of the entire Avalon Corridor (and beyond), in consultation with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners.

It is suggested that biodiversity needs to be considered in an integrated way and include wetlands, coastlines, grasslands, native vegetation, riparian ecosystems, mitigating any further biodiversity loss and impacts of climate change. There is strong support for the protection of the wetlands.

Many commented that the environmental impacts of any future land use development proposals should be understood and discussed with the community first.

**Highlights:**

* Take a regional, integrated approach to biodiversity issues to include coastlines, wetlands, rivers and waterways, grasslands, native vegetation, riparian ecosystems, weed management and the You Yangs regional park.
* Mitigate any further loss of biodiversity and help species and ecosystems adapt to the impacts of climate change.
* Deliver strong protections for the natural environment of the Avalon Corridor.
* Rehabilitate the Little River catchment and ensure adequate environmental flows.
* Prioritise the retention and protection of the ‘nationally significant wetlands’, including the habitat of migratory and native birdlife of the Corridor.
* Manage public access into the environmentally significant areas of the Avalon Corridor to minimise human impacts.
* Further investigate the impacts of future developments and expansion of Avalon Airport activities on wetland habitats and provide details on requirements for setbacks and landscape buffers along Avalon Road.
* Ensure adequate and appropriate water supplies to the Cheetham Wetlands area.
* Concerns over the impact of dredging and sediment disruption.
* Environmental impacts and community sentiment to be understood first when considering future land use development proposals.

## Theme 4: State significant projects

State significant transport infrastructure includes the proposed Bay West Port, the Outer Metropolitan Ring (OMR) Transport Corridor, Geelong-Melbourne rail line and Avalon Airport rail link. The rail link is generally supported. Many participants acknowledge these large infrastructure projects along with the proposed increased development in the area. There are, however, mixed views around the location and impact of some of the significant projects.

**Highlights:**

* Concerns over the proposed Bay West Port and its potential impact on the wetlands, birdlife, environment, marine life, cultural heritage and view lines from Werribee South.
* Consider alternative locations for Bay West Port within the area.
* Consider the construction of the Avalon Airport rail link and its impacts on drainage patterns and the environment.
* Install extensive sound barriers along the Princes Freeway to protect residents from increased traffic noise, particularly associated with freight and heavy vehicles.

## Theme 5: Avalon Airport

Avalon Airport is the primary economic asset in the ACS. The Master Plan for the Airport’s expansion and operations is due to be updated, including future flight paths and proposed Australian Noise Exposure Concept (ANEC). The land surrounding the airport plays a critical role in future airport activities and operations, including the development of complementary commercial and industrial land uses to support aviation and non-aviation activities. Therefore, it is important that the planning and implementation of initiatives from both the Avalon Airport Master Plan and ACS be undertaken with due consideration of each other.

There are concerns regarding the expansion of the airport and its impact on people, land values, biodiversity and the environment. The proposed flight paths and ANEC are of particular concern to a number of Little River residents.

**Highlights:**

* Implementation of the ACS, including potential rezoning of land near Avalon Airport, should be done with due consideration of and reference to the updated Avalon Airport Master Plan.
* Concerns regarding the expansion of the Avalon Airport and its impact on people and the environment.
* Concerns raised about existing aircraft noise on residents and the fact that aircraft are not sticking to the designated flights paths and turning sooner than permitted over the Little River township.
* Consider flight paths going over Corio Bay rather than over the Little River township.
* Concerns over the proposed ANEC and the impact on existing residents.
* Consider the positioning and timing of the second and third runways and the impact of noise on residents and property values.
* Assess impact of aircraft on the area’s birdlife and habitat, including concerns over interruption to feeding habits for migratory species and the potential of increased bird strikes.

## Theme 6: Employment & development

Many participants perceive the Avalon Employment Precinct (AEP) as an economic growth opportunity for the region and state. There are strong calls by potential developers and some landowners to expand the precinct north of the Princes Freeway as it is considered there may not be sufficient employment land allocated in the ACS. However, other participants are concerned that it may potentially impact the area's significant biodiversity and natural habitats, while detracting from the ‘green break’.

Many seek further clarity on what is proposed for the precinct. It is suggested that employment opportunities should include environmental management, land regeneration, ecotourism and mitigation of climate change impacts.

**Highlights:**

* Consider possible inclusion of residential, retail, tourism infrastructure, recreation, aquaculture and horticulture as potential land use designations.
* Include the confirmed AEP Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) boundary within the final ACS.
* Consider the development of the PSP in parallel with finalisation of the ACS.
* Coordinate with updates to the Avalon Airport Master Plan to ensure cohesion between the two plans.
* Include heat mitigation, Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) and Biodiversity-Sensitive Urban Design (BSUD) considerations in the PSP.
* Call to articulate a clear vision in the final ACS for the land south of the airport and Dandos Road and to expand the precinct boundaries north and south of the airport and ensure available land to respond to future opportunities.
* Mixed views on former Lara Intermodal Facility, with some community members expressing approval of its removal and others expressing desire to retain as an option for the future.
* Concerns over impacts on residents to the west of Avalon Road and support for buffers and landscape treatments, including retention of established trees along Avalon Road.

## Theme 7: Transport

Many participants consider that the movement of people and goods in, out, and through the Avalon Corridor is important and should be strongly represented in the ACS, including public transport and cycling pathways. Another key consideration is that transport infrastructure must keep pace with the proposed development. The need to upgrade the existing road network to accommodate the anticipated increase in traffic, together with the issue of shared roads between residents and farmers shifting machinery are also of concern to many participants.

**Highlights:**

* Include well-defined and protected transport networks in the ACS.
* Plan for public transport and cycling corridors to ensure a sustainable transport model, including cycling connections away from the Princes Freeway.
* Support for infrastructure upgrades to keep pace with development and associated traffic volume including Avalon Road and Point Wilson Road.
* Upgrades to existing road network to accommodate increased traffic and manage residential and farming machinery.
* Review and adjust the freight section of the ACS with information from Freight Victoria.
* Plan for a ‘ring road’ around Lara township to divert traffic flows to the Princes Freeway.
* Plan for quicker connections from Bellarine Peninsula and Surf Coast to Avalon Airport

## Theme 8: Townships – Lara & Little River

There is a divided opinion between allowing the townships to grow and desire to maintain the area's rural character. Increased population and subdivision of 5-10 acre blocks within Little River is seen by some as a way to ensure the township's long-term viability, including the provision of additional services. Some residents seek clarification of the Little River township boundary and ask for consideration of this in future planning, as already identified as a future action of the draft ACS.

There is divided opinion around the further growth of central Lara. Some participants suggest that expansion of Rural Living Zone adjacent to town centres would not impact the objective of the green break and should therefore be considered. Concerns were raised regarding property values should no new residential development be allowed within the Avalon Corridor.

**Highlights:**

* New settlement boundary and zoning classifications for Little River to reflect the ‘lived experience’ of local residents.
* Further work to show the full extent of the Little River settlement not just the township.
* Consider site-specific land uses and developments surrounding Lara, rather than a ‘blanket approach’.
* Reconsider limitations of small Farming Zone lots, including ability to subdivide and construct residential dwellings.
* Any new residential developments to be ‘eco-friendly’ with a focus on heat and water sensitive designs and use of renewable materials.

## Theme 9: Vision & approach

Collaborative approaches used to develop the draft ACS were appreciated, and the continued involvement of Wadawurrung Traditional Owners is seen as integral. There are comments that the vision of the draft ACS vision does not adequately capture the area’s cultural heritage, environment, and biodiversity.

**Highlights:**

* Continue the collaborative approach between the two LGAs in developing and implementing the ACS.
* Continue to work with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners to achieve objectives.
* Concerns that the vision is too focused on transport, economic and employment analysis and ignores the region’s cultural and natural heritage, environment and biodiversity strengths.

## Theme 10: Quarries & landfill

A number of areas in the Avalon Corridor are identified as Extractive Industry Interest Areas (EIIA), Work Authorities (WAs) or Strategic Extractive Resource Areas (SERAs). The Corridor contains several existing quarries on both the Greater Geelong and Wyndham side (however, most are located within the north precinct on the Wyndham side). They are identified as containing strategic extractive resources (hard rock) needed for the construction industry and major state infrastructure projects. Many participants express concern over the potential expansion of existing quarries and the development of new ones.

**Highlights:**

* Review maps and other relevant information within the ACS to ensure consistency with planning provisions of the Strategic Extractive Resource Area (SERA).
* Concerns about quarries within the Avalon Corridor, particularly the north precinct having too many quarries and the potential expansion of these.
* Concerns over existing and potential future SROs affecting the development of areas within the UGB that are future PSP areas.
* Quarries no longer in use should be reforested for biodiversity or recreational purposes like mountain bike trails.
* Consider how existing quarries adjacent to the proposed AEP could form part of the industrial/commercial precinct.
* Consider the ecological and community impact of expansion of the Wyndham Refuse Disposal Facility.

## Theme 11: Tourism & connecting experiences

The You Yangs are a key tourism destination in the Avalon Corridor. Community members raised aspirations for connecting the area to the coastline to create an enhanced cycling experience. Bike paths should link to the Port Phillip Bay Trail, with off-freeway tracks being preferred. However, public access links to Port Philip Bay should not be at the expense of protecting significant wetlands and migratory bird habitat.

Participants acknowledge the national and international potential of Avalon Airport for expanding tourism in the region. Participants also raise the issue of the availability of tourism infrastructure for visitors arriving and departing through this gateway. More clarity is sought on the aspiration and implications of Lara and Little River as tourism gateways to the You Yangs.

**Highlights:**

* Involve Melbourne Water in the process of planning cycling trails.
* Preference for off-freeway cycling networks for improved cyclist experience.
* Consider a connecting trail between the You Yangs and the coastline through the Avalon Corridor.
* Environmental considerations should be a priority in all future planning of trails with viewing platforms in sensitive areas the preferred method over walk-through paths.
* Consider the inclusion of tourism infrastructure in the land use designations of the Avalon Employment Precinct around Avalon Airport.
* Consider agri-tourism businesses, market gardens and fresh produce to help maintain the economic viability of the Corridor.
* Encourage wildlife and eco-tourism in the Avalon Corridor.
* Ensure Traditional place names are officially recognised and culturally appropriate.

## Theme 12: Amenity & character

Proposals to expand the Significant Landscape Overlay for the Foothills of the You Yangs (SLO1) to further protect landscape values and view lines were appreciated by many, though also caused concerns for some landowners. Potentially affected landowners raised the need for greater consultation on the matter. There were also calls for the Avalon Corridor and the You Yangs to be declared a Distinctive Area and Landscape (DAL) by DELWP.

While the rural character of the area is valued, increased intensive agriculture, such as hydroponic greenhouses, is not supported by the community. Invasive weed infestations are considered to be creating derelict land and will continue to impact the landscape buffers if not managed.

There are mixed views regarding the need for artistic gateway treatments along the Princes Freeway and at Avalon Airport.

**Highlights:**

* Investigate opportunities for the Avalon Corridor and You Yangs to be declared a DAL.
* Strengthen the language around protection of the biodiversity within the Avalon Corridor.
* Hydroponic farming to be located in appropriate locations to minimise impact on residential living and significant view lines.
* Consider planning protections around height limitations to protect view lines.
* Weed infestations within the Avalon Corridor to be managed as a priority.
* Locally inspired art works and the engagement of local artists in any gateway treatments in the Avalon Corridor.
* Consider impact on Werribee South around views and amenity with the location of Bay West Port.
* Support for further exploration of Aboriginal cultural heritage, especially in Melbourne Water lands.
* Include consideration of post-contact heritage within the Avalon Corridor, in addition to Wadawurrung cultural heritage.

# Next steps

Feedback received during the second round of community consultation, including this consultation report, has been passed on to the project consultant (Hansen Partnership) for consideration in the revised ACS.

We will endeavour to incorporate as much community input received as possible. However, this will need to be balanced against the overarching aims and objectives of the ACS.

A copy of this consultation report with be provided to Councillors from both the City of Greater Geelong and Wyndham City Council, along with the final revised ACS for approval. We anticipate that this will occur in the first half of 2022.

## Contact us

If you have any questions about this consultation report, please contact us.

**City of Greater Geelong**

Wadawurrung Country

PO Box 104

Geelong VIC 3220

P: 5272 5272

E: contactus@geelongcity.vic.gov.au

[www.geelongaustralia.com.au](http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au)

**Wyndham City Council**

PO Box 197

Werribee VIC 3030

P: 1300 023 411

E: mail@wyndham.vic.gov.au

[www.wyndham.vic.gov.au](http://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au)