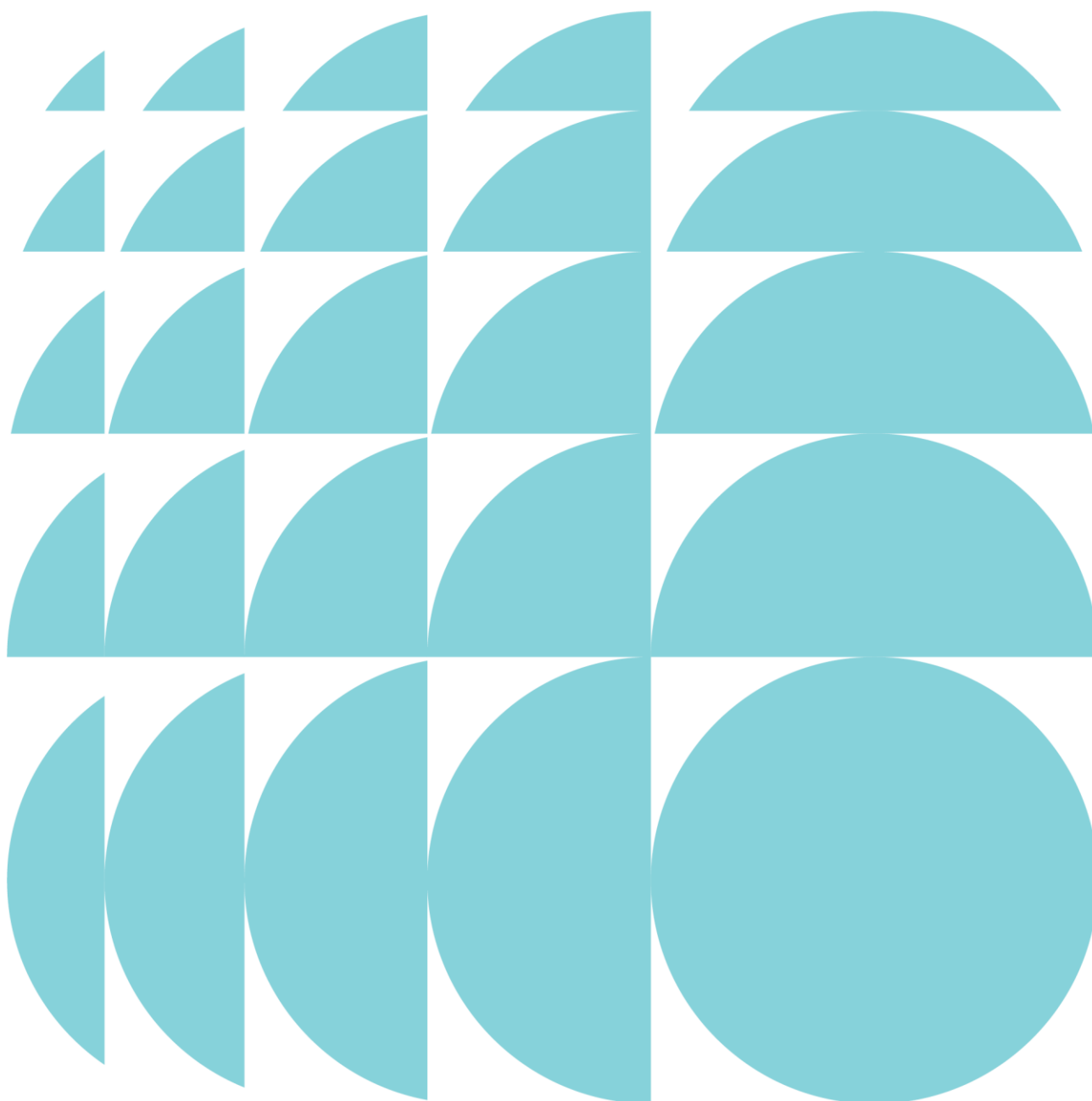


**ETHOS
URBAN**

**Amendment C395 to the Greater
Geelong Planning Scheme**

*Expert Witness Statement of Chris
McNeill, B.Econ*



Contact details

For further details please contact Ethos Urban Pty Ltd at one of our offices:

Ethos Urban Pty Ltd	ABN 13 615 087 931	
Level 8, 30 Collins Street Melbourne VIC 3000 (03) 9419 7226	173 Sussex Street Sydney NSW 2000 (02) 9956 6962	Level 1, 356 St Pauls Terrace Fortitude Valley QLD 4006 (07) 3852 1822

economics@ethosurban.com

www.ethosurban.com

Our Reference: 3190440

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Planning Context	3
3	Response to matters raised in the Adelaide Brighton Submission	11
4	Summary of Key findings	17

1 Introduction

Professional Details

- 1.1 My name is John Christopher McNeill. I practice as Director, Economics at Ethos Urban's Melbourne office located at Level 8, 30 Collins Street, Melbourne.

Area of Expertise

- 1.2 I hold a degree in Economics from Monash University.
- 1.3 My area of professional expertise is urban economics and the economic analysis of urban policy.
- 1.4 My opinions expressed herein are, to the context relevant, made by me in reliance upon my above expertise.
- 1.5 I am a Fellow of the Victorian Planning and Environmental Law Association.

Instructions

- 1.6 I have been instructed in this matter by Norton Rose Fulbright, lawyers acting on behalf of the McCann Family. My instructions are to consider the issues raised in submission by Adelaide Brighton concerning the future location of the sub-regional activity centre which is located on land owned by the McCann Family in the proposed Future Urban Structure but which Adelaide Brighton argues should be re-located further to the north.

Preparation

- 1.7 In preparing this statement:
- (a) I have limited my enquiries to the matters raised in the Submission of Adelaide Brighton and have not undertaken a detailed retail impact assessment;
 - (b) I am aware that, as a witness giving evidence (by report, or otherwise) in a proceeding as an expert, I have a duty to assist Planning Panels Victoria and that this duty overrides any obligation that I may have to any party to the proceeding or to any person who is liable for my fee or expenses in this matter;
 - (c) I have neither received nor accepted any instructions to adopt or reject any particular opinion in preparing this report;
 - (d) I have made all the enquiries which I believe are desirable and appropriate and that no matters of significance which I regard as relevant have, to my knowledge, been withheld from the Panel; and
 - (e) I have considered the relevant documents disclosed by the parties to this proceeding as well as the documents listed in this report.

Materials relied upon in preparing my evidence

- The City of Greater Geelong Settlement Strategy (October 2018)
- *Victoria In Future 2019* and *Victoria In Future 2016*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
- 2016 National Census of Population and Housing, Australian Bureau of Statistics

- The City of Greater Geelong Retail Strategy 2016-2036 (Collaboration between the City of Greater Geelong and SGS Economics and Planning)
- Northern and Western Geelong Growth Areas Framework Plan, March 2019
- Northern and Western Geelong Growth Areas Consolidated Activity Centre Assessment, September 2017 (Prepared by Tim Nott for City of Greater Geelong)

1.8 I have been assisted in preparing this Evidence Statement by Mr Rajiv Mahendran, an Urbanist (Economist) at Ethos Urban, who assisted in the preparation of data and maps included in my Evidence Statement.

2 Planning Context

2.1 In this section of my Evidence Statement, I provide an overview of relevant matters in the planning context.

Amendment C395 to the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme

2.2 In October 2018 Council adopted the City of Greater Geelong Settlement Strategy. In March 2019 Council adopted the Northern and Western Geelong Growth Areas Framework Plan. Amendment C395 seeks to implement these documents into the Planning Scheme. The changes proposed by the amendment include:

- Minor changes to Clauses 21.03 Objectives – Strategies - Implementation, 21.11 Armstrong Creek Urban Growth Area and 21.16 Anakie to reflect the Framework Plan.
- Replace the Municipal Framework Plan at Clause 21.04 to implement the Settlement Strategy.
- Replace and amend Clauses 21.06 Settlement and Housing, 21.08 Development and Community Infrastructure and 21.14 The Bellarine Peninsula to implement the Settlement Strategy.
- A new Clause 21.20 Northern and Western Geelong Growth Areas to implement the Framework Plan.
- Rezone land in the Northern and Western Growth Areas from Rural Living, Farming, Public Park and Recreation and Industrial 1 Zones to the Urban Growth Zone.

Settlement Strategy

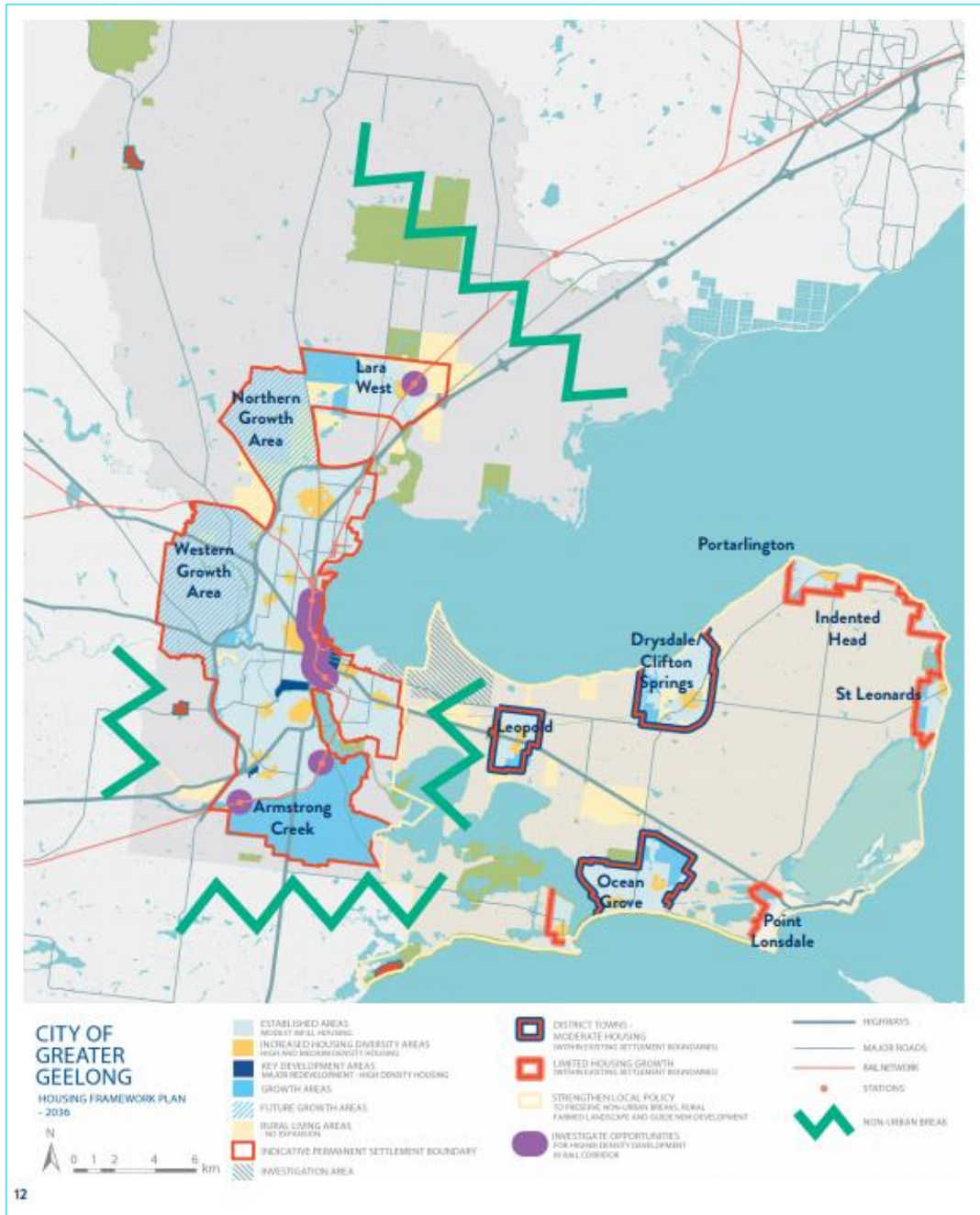
2.3 The City of Greater Geelong Settlement Strategy (October 2018) provides an overview of current settlement and housing policies, assesses recent population and dwelling growth and future dwelling requirements based on various population growth scenarios, and provides recommendations designed to ensure Greater Geelong's housing needs are secured over a reasonable planning period.

2.4 The identification of two new growth areas is substantiated in the Settlement Strategy.

2.5 The Settlement Strategy includes a Housing Framework Plan (at page 12) which identifies the key locations for future urban growth. These include the Western Geelong Growth Area (WGGA), located directly west of the established Geelong urban area, and the Northern Geelong Growth Area (NGGA), located to the north-west of the established Geelong urban area.

2.6 The Greater Geelong Housing Framework Plan, which provides a regional context for the WGGA and NGGA, is provided at Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Greater Geelong Housing Framework Plan - 2036



Source: City of Greater Geelong Settlement Strategy, October 2018 (Spatial Economics)

Northern and Western Geelong Growth Areas Framework Plan

- 2.7 The Northern and Western Geelong Growth Areas represent the largest growth project in regional Victoria and, combined, are expected to accommodate more than 110,000 residents. The Northern and Western Geelong Growth Areas Framework Plan (Framework Plan) is intended to guide future land use and development in the two growth areas. The Framework Plan outlines major land uses and development requirements and will inform the preparation of Precinct Structure Plans (PSPs) that will provide a more detailed layer of planning and facilitate urban development in the precincts.
- 2.8 The Framework Plan provides an overview of the anticipated growth potential in the two growth areas (refer Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Growth Potential of the Northern and Western Geelong Growth Areas

Estimated Growth Potential	Combined Growth Areas	Western Growth Area	Northern Growth Area
Total Growth Area	5,331 ha	3,241 ha	2,090 ha
Total Residential Area	3, 309 ha	1,864 ha	1,445 ha
Anticipated Dwellings	40,028	22,953	17,075
Anticipated Population	112,078*	64,269*	47,809*
Total Employment Area	294 ha	117 ha	177 ha
Non-development Area	1,728 ha	1,377 ha	354 ha
Future Residential Potential	267 ha	1,377 ha	202 ha
Future Employment Potential	125 ha	65 ha	125 ha

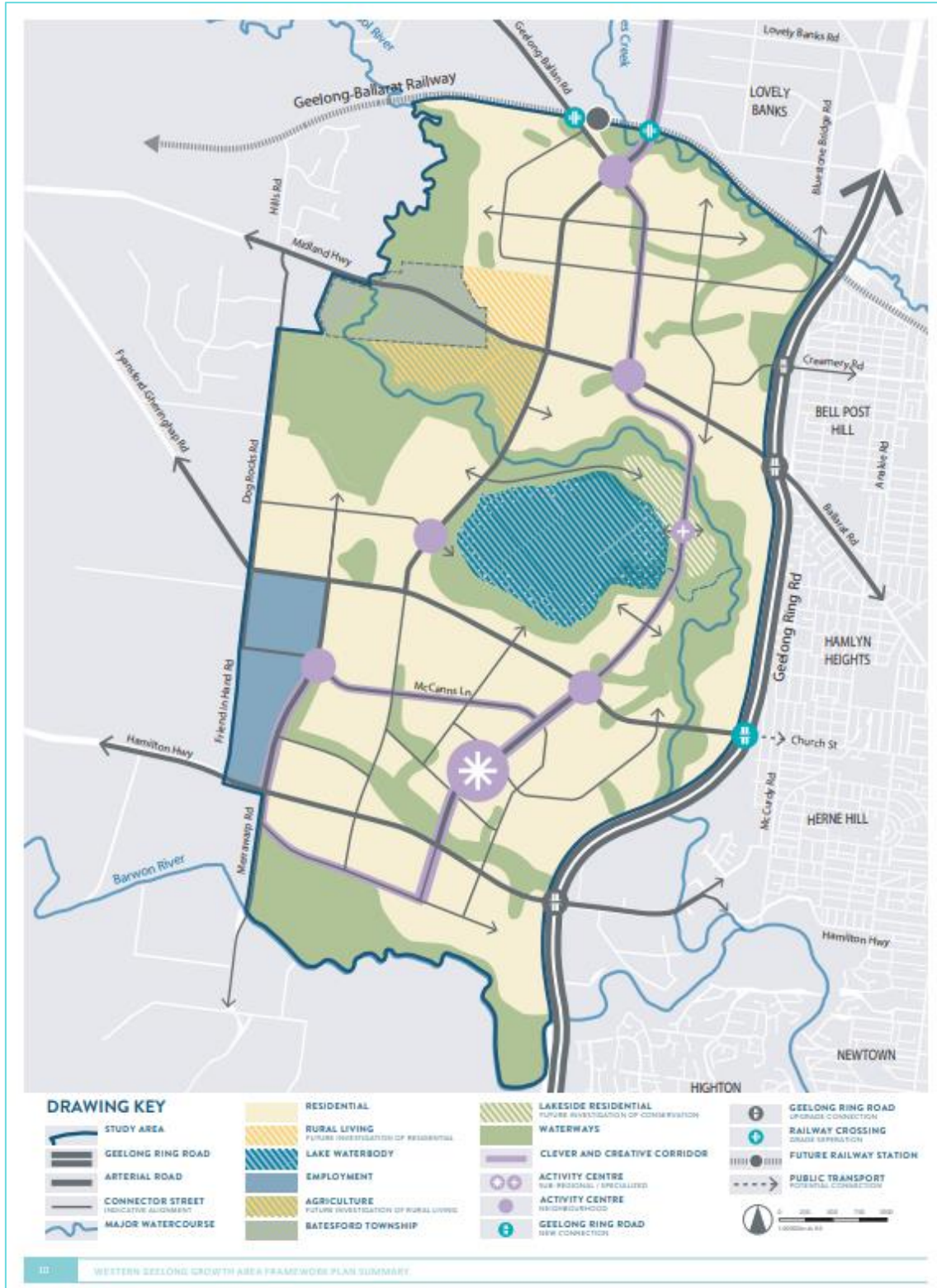
Source: Department of Environment, Lands, Water and Planning Victoria, *The Northern and Western Geelong Growth Areas Framework Plan (2018)*

*Estimated population includes residential development in areas subject to future investigation

- 2.9 The matter I have been asked to consider relates to the location of the Sub-Regional Activity Centre in the WGGA. In this regard, the WGGA is the key area of focus in my evidence statement. Key features in the proposed WGGA include:
- A central lake as part of a major area of open space and based on the existing quarry.
 - A key north-south road running through the growth area connecting the Hamilton Highway in the south with the Midland Highway in the north (and further north to the NGGA).
 - A Clever and Creative Corridor which follows the alignment of key roads in the WGGA (including the key north-south road). The Clever and Creative Corridor is envisaged as a tree-lined boulevard transit corridor that prioritises public transport, cycling and pedestrian movement between activity centres, schools, community facilities and recreational areas.
 - An employment area in the south-west of the WGGA.
 - Connections to the Northern Geelong Growth Area via the Geelong Ring Road and an upgraded Evans Road.
- 2.10 The WGGA is bounded by:
- To the north, the Geelong Ballarat railway line.

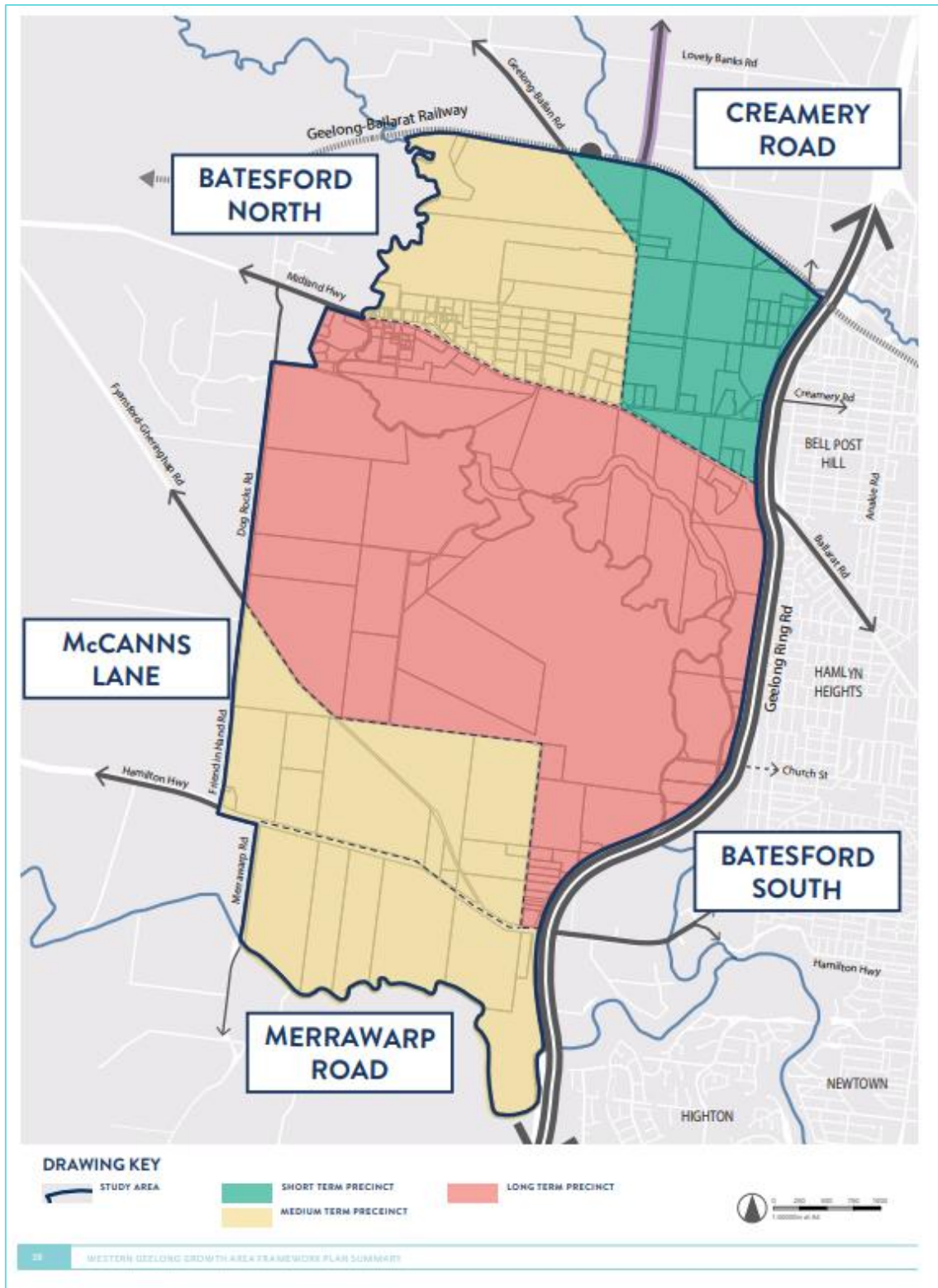
- To the east, the Geelong Ring Road.
 - To the south, the Barwon River.
 - To the west, Dog Rocks Road and the Moorabool River.
- 2.11 A number of activity centres are proposed in the WGGA to serve the growth area's future population. These include:
- A sub-regional activity centre with retail floorspace of approximately 40,000m², restricted retail floorspace of approximately 20,000-25,000m² and non-retail floorspace of approximately 40,000-45,000m².
 - Five neighbourhood activity centres, each containing an estimated retail floorspace of approximately 7,000-8,000m² and restricted retail floorspace of approximately 3,000m² to 4,000m².
 - A specialised activity centre adjacent to the lake (on the main north-south road on the eastern side of the lake) which will be subject to an urban design framework.
 - Smaller local activity centres in areas located beyond a comfortable walk to the sub-regional and neighbourhood activity centres, particularly south of the Hamilton Highway.
- 2.12 The proposed Future Urban Structure of the WGGA is provided at Figure 2.2, including the proposed activity centre locations. The location of the Sub-Regional Activity Centre is on the main north-south road, approximately 600m north of the Hamilton Highway.
- 2.13 The Framework Plan notes the need to sequence urban development in a manner that considers the implications for the delivery of infrastructure and services. Accordingly, the Framework Plan breaks the WGGA into five separate precincts (refer Figure 2.3) with each to be the subject of a PSP. Commencement and approval of PSPs in the WGGA is proposed as follows:
- Short-term: Creamery Road Precinct.
 - Medium-term: Batesford North Precinct, McCanns Lane Precinct and Merrawarp Road Precinct.
 - Long-term: Batesford South Precinct.
- 2.14 The Framework Plan acknowledges that the long-term nature and scale of the Batesford South Precinct means that WGGA will develop as two separate smaller growth corridors in the short to medium-term. Major infrastructure, including bridges that connect the northern and southern parts of the WGGA may be delayed until the Batesford South Precinct is sufficiently progressed and funding is available to provide a connection.

Figure 2.2: Future Urban Structure (Western Geelong Growth Area)



Source: Northern and Western Geelong Growth Areas Framework Plan Summary, March 2018 (Page 10)

Figure 2.3: Development Sequencing (Western Geelong Growth Area)



Source: Northern and Western Geelong Growth Areas Framework Plan Summary, March 2018 (Page 38)

Western Geelong Growth Area – Retail and Activity Centre Technical Report

- 2.15 A background technical report (Technical Report) was prepared by Urban Enterprise in June 2017 on behalf of a landowner consortium (including the McCann Family) to provide the first phase of the growth area planning framework. The Technical Report establishes the need for an activity centre framework in the WGGA including the need for a sub-regional activity centre to support the future resident population. The Technical Report also considers potential locations for the sub-regional activity centre and considers the locational merits of a northern, central and southern location, but stops short of making a recommendation. In relation to the location of a sub-regional activity centre, the Technical Report observes that the elongated nature of the WGGA may result in “high quality service and accessibility in one part of the WGGA for high-order shopping, and lower level service in others” (Page 44).

Northern and Western Geelong Growth Areas Consolidated Activity Centre Assessment

- 2.16 The Northern and Western Geelong Growth Areas Consolidated Activity Centre Assessment (Activity Centre Assessment) was prepared by Tim Nott for Council in September 2017 and provides “a summary of work undertaken to plan the provision of activity centres in the Northern and Western Geelong Growth Areas. It also brings together the work on the individual growth areas by looking at how the proposed activity centre network in each growth area will interact with the other and with the existing network” (page i).
- 2.17 The Activity Centres Assessment notes that the Technical Reports prepared for private sector consortia in both the NGGA and WGGA provided estimates of growth areas, populations, retail spending and retail floorspace demand as well as options for the scale and location of activity centres within the respective growth areas. The report on the Northern Geelong Growth Area was prepared by Essential Economics (2017) and identified a 3-4 centre network to service around 43,000 persons within the growth area. The report on the WGGA (The Technical Report, Urban Enterprise report) identified a six-centre network to service a growth area of 64,000 persons. Note: I have not read the NGGA Technical Report prepared by Essential Economics (now Ethos Urban).
- 2.18 The Activity Centre Assessment has been undertaken to provide a fuller appreciation of how the proposed growth area centres will interact with each other and the existing network. The Activity Centre Assessment notes that “Council has been concerned that the Corio Sub-Regional Shopping Centre, in particular, may be adversely affected by the competitive impacts of two new sub-regional centres” Page i).
- 2.19 The Activity Centre Assessment establishes catchment populations by allocating every population cell in the growth areas and surrounding districts to the catchment of a single centre at each level in the retail hierarchy. This has been done on the basis of the least travel time from the centre of that cell.
- 2.20 The analysis in the Activity Centres Assessment indicates that “the proposed sub-regional centres in both the Northern and Western Geelong Growth Areas will serve beyond the growth area boundaries including parts of urban Geelong as well as rural districts to the north and west. The population of the catchment for the Northern sub-regional centre varies between 67,000 and 76,000 depending on its location and that of the Western centre. The population in the Western sub-regional centre varies between 65,000 and 96,000. These populations are regarded as “easily sufficient to support substantial sub-regional retail facilities” (Page ii).
- 2.21 In regard to impacts on the Corio Sub-Regional Shopping Centre, the Activity Centre Assessment, notes that (Page ii):

For each combination of locations – 12 in total - the population in the catchment of the Corio sub-regional centre has also been modelled. The resulting estimated retail demand has been used to model the impact on the demand for retail floorspace at the Corio centre. At best, where the centre in the Western Geelong Growth Area is

on the Hamilton Highway, the catchment of Corio will support around 5% less sub-regional retail floorspace at full development compared with the present situation. At worst, where the centre in the Western Geelong Growth Area is on the Midland Highway, the support for sub-regional retailing in the remaining Corio catchment could fall by 44%, challenging the provision of any sub-regional centre at Corio”.

- 2.22 The Activity Centres Assessment also concludes that, “the impacts of the growth area sub-regional centres on other large centres in the Geelong network appear to be minimal” (Page ii).

Retail Strategy

- 2.23 An Amendment (C393 to the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme) is presently underway that will implement the City of Greater Geelong Retail Strategy 2016-2036 (Retail Strategy). With regard to the future activity centre hierarchy in the NGGA and WGGA, the Retail Strategy notes that (Page 28):

In determining the location and provision of centres within the growth areas, the City has considered how the proposed retail network will interact with the existing and future network.

The timing and scale of new retail centres, particularly sub-regional centres, will proceed in a planned way that assesses the retail impact of the proposed centre and will allow any potentially affected existing centre time to adjust to new circumstances.

- 2.24 The Retail Strategy does not consider the location of a future sub-regional activity centre in the WGGA.

Summary

- 2.25 The activity centre hierarchy proposed for the WGGA, including the location of sub-regional activity centres, has been the subject of significant assessment and analysis.
- 2.26 Of particular relevance to the issues subject to this Expert Witness Statement, the location of the sub-regional activity centre in the WGGA has been identified as having a potential influence on the trading performance of other sub-regional centres, namely the Corio Sub-Regional Shopping Centre. The Activity Centres Assessment indicates a sub-regional centre in the southern part of the WGGA will have a lesser impact on the demand for retail floorspace at Corio sub-regional centre than a location in the northern part of the WGGA.

3 Response to matters raised in the Adelaide Brighton Submission

3.1 The Submission to Amendment C395 to the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme by Adelaide Brighton (Golder, 29 July 2019) includes a section titled 'Location of Sub Regional Centre'. The Submission argues that the WGGA Sub-Regional Activity Centre should be moved to a location in the northern part of the WGGA; preferably to a location on the Midland Highway. The key reasons outlined in the Adelaide Brighton Submission in support of the relocation of the Sub-Regional Activity Centre are:

- That the proposed location for the Sub-Regional Activity Centre in the southern part of the WGGA would mean residents and businesses in the northern part of the WGGA would not have access to the benefits provided by direct and near access to a Sub-Regional Activity Centre for many years (noting that the long-term delivery expected of the Batesford South Precinct is likely to delay north-south connectivity through the growth area).
- That concerns relating to the Corio Sub-Regional Shopping Centre are unlikely to be realised as physical and perceived barriers exist to movement between Corio and the WGGA.
- That a Midland Highway-based Sub-Regional Activity Centre would be very accessible and could achieve critical mass early in the development of the WGGA. It is further suggested that a Midland Highway location is better suited to manage traffic and access requirements for a Sub-Regional Activity Centre; the Midland Highway provides the most direct transport access to central Geelong and is proposed to be duplicated; a Midland Highway location is highly accessible to locations not served by neighbourhood or higher order facilities including Bannockburn and some of the established suburbs of western Geelong; and the Midland Highway location is more proximate to the Ballarat rail-line and therefore would be more readily accessible to fixed rail public transport if and when passenger rail services are provided.

3.2 I provide a response to the matters raised in the Adelaide Brighton Submission as follows.

The Proposed Southern Location will disadvantage residents and businesses in the North of the WGGA

3.3 In my experience, Sub-Regional Activity Centres do not emerge in growth areas during the early stages of development and, if they do, they are developed in stages with early development generally replicating that of a neighbourhood scale activity centre; anchored by a supermarket with some specialty shops.

3.4 In this regard, even if the Sub-Regional Activity Centre was located in the north of the WGGA, it is unlikely the residents and businesses in the Creamery Road Precinct and Batesford North Precinct would receive the higher-order services envisaged as part of a significantly advanced Sub-Regional Activity Centre.

3.5 A comparable example can be found in the Armstrong Creek Urban Growth Area (ACUGA), which at full development is expected to accommodate approximately 22,000 dwellings; very similar in scale to that of the WGGA.

3.6 As with the WGGA, at completion the ACUGA will include a number of neighbourhood activity centres and a Sub-Regional Activity Centre (the Armstrong Creek Town Centre).

3.7 Although residential development commenced in 2010, the first retail centre - the Village Warralily, a neighbourhood activity centre based in the Armstrong Creek East Precinct -

commenced operation in late 2017 and accommodates a Woolworths supermarket, BWS, a number of specialty stores, as well as several medical facilities and commercial premises. A number of community facilities including schools and recreational facilities are accommodated on adjacent sites.

- 3.8 A dwelling count based on analysis of aerial imagery dated 2 October 2019, indicates more than 5,500 dwellings are now accommodated in the Armstrong Creek Urban Growth Area with, to date, only one neighbourhood activity centre operating.
- 3.9 A second centre is now under construction with stage one of what will become the Armstrong Creek Town Centre also developed at a neighbourhood activity centre scale. The first stage will include a Coles supermarket and a number of specialty retail outlets.

Figure 3.1 Armstrong Creek Activity Centres (Existing and Under-construction)



Source: NearMaps, Ethos Urban

- 3.10 The number of dwellings and resident population anticipated in each WGA precinct is Development in the WGA is estimated in the Framework Plan as follows:
- Creamery Road Precinct (Estimated Population in the Framework Plan: 8,450 persons in 3,010 dwellings)
 - Batesford North Precinct (Estimated Population: 10,640 persons in 3,800 dwellings)
 - McCanns Lane Precinct (Estimated Population: 8,810 persons in 3,150 dwellings)
 - Merrawarp Road Precinct (Estimated Population: 6,460 persons in 2,310 dwellings)
 - Batesford South Precinct (Estimated Population: 29,930 persons in 10,690 dwellings)

- 3.11 Expected development sequencing in the WGGA is set out at Action W5.2.3 of the Framework Plan. It notes a sequencing as follows:
- Creamery Road PSP prior to Batesford North PSP
 - Creamery Road PSP prior to McCann Lane PSP and Merrawarp PSP
 - All other PSPs prior to Batesford South PSP
- 3.12 As in the ACUGA and other major growth areas, development in the WGGA will not be fully completed in one precinct when another precinct commences development. For example, development in the Batesford North Precinct may begin well before the Creamery Road Precinct is fully developed. Similarly, the McCanns Lane Precinct may commence well before the Creamery Road Precinct is complete, and may commence at the same time as, or before, the Batesford North Precinct commences.
- 3.13 It is possible, though not certain, that a neighbourhood activity centre in the north will be progressed before development occurs at the Sub-Regional Activity Centre.
- 3.14 I acknowledge the likelihood of a delay in road connections between the north and south of the WGGA is not ideal in terms of providing a sequenced approach to the WGGA's development, including the development of a range of community infrastructure and activity centres. Even so, I do not believe that higher order services typically found in a Sub-Regional Activity Centre is likely to be delivered based purely on the development of the Creamery Road and, potentially, the Batesford North Precincts.
- 3.15 At a broader growth area level, I note that the greater proportion of the future population of the WGGA is based to the south of the Moorabool River where 5 of the seven primary activity centres are proposed to be located, including the sub-regional activity centre and the specialised activity centre. In my opinion, this adds weight to the siting of the sub-regional activity centre being located in the southern part of the WGGA.

Impact of a Northern Sub-Regional Activity Centre on the Corio Sub-Regional Activity Centre

- 3.16 A key concern for Greater Geelong City Council has been the potential for the Corio Sub-Regional Shopping Centre to experience material adverse impacts as a result of Sub-Regional Activity Centre located in the north of the WGGA. As noted, the Activity Centre Assessment (Tim Nott, September 2017) formed the view that a significant negative impact would emerge should a Midland Highway-based Sub-Regional Activity Centre be identified in the WGGA.
- 3.17 The key issue relates to the extent to which a Midland Highway-based Sub-Regional Activity Centre would cross into the existing catchment area of the Corio Sub-Regional Shopping Centre. As noted, the Submission by Adelaide Brighton argues this is unlikely due to physical and perceived barriers that will limit movement between the WGGA and the established urban areas of Geelong that form part of the Corio catchment.
- 3.18 The primary physical barrier between a Midland Highway-based Sub-Regional Activity Centre and established areas of Geelong is the Geelong Ring Road. Established suburbs that would most likely be impacted are Bell Post Hill, Bell Park and the northern part of Hamlyn Heights. There are presently two connections from these areas that enable vehicles to pass over the Geelong Ring Road; the Midland Highway where there is a full-diamond interchange, and Creamery Road where no access to the Geelong Ring Road is provided but a direct link is provided past Covenant College to the Geelong-Ballan Road.
- 3.19 The Activity Centre Assessment undertakes a catchment analysis of Geelong's existing and proposed sub-regional centres. As noted, catchments have been established based on least travel time from the centre of each population cell. In terms of the WGGA, it is assumed (at full development) that if the Sub-Regional Activity Centre is located on the Midland Highway (the

northern option), its catchment area will extend eastward of the Geelong Ring Road and capture significant trade from the residential areas of Bell Post Hill, Bell Park and the northern part of Hamlyn Heights. The result would be a significant impact on the Corio Sub-Regional Shopping Centre.

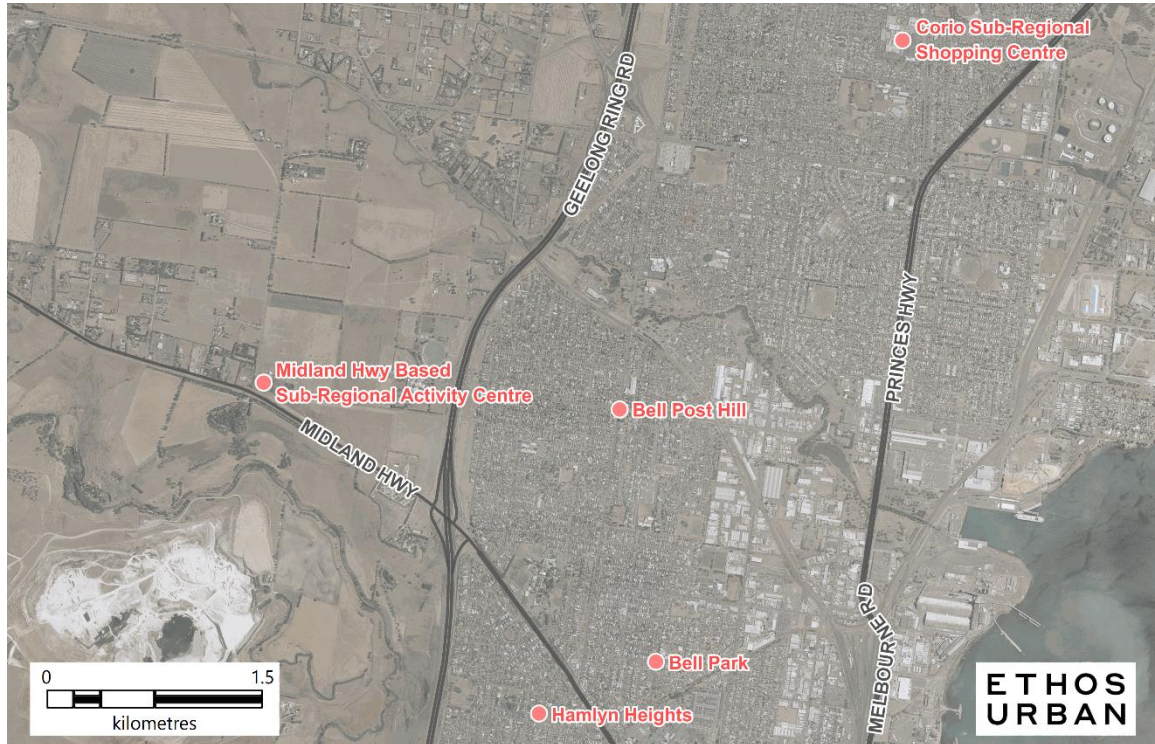
- 3.20 Although I agree that major physical barriers such as freeways can act as a physical and perceived barrier, the extent to which they do so is dependent on the ease and frequency with which they can be crossed, and the accessibility of the competing centre (in this case, the Corio Sub-Regional Shopping Centre). In my opinion, a Midland Highway-based Sub-Regional Activity Centre is likely to prove attractive to residents and businesses in areas just east of the Geelong Ring Road due to the ease with which the Geelong Ring Road can be crossed and the relative accessibility of Midland Highway-based location.
- 3.21 To demonstrate, distance and travel times outlined in Table 3.1 and identified in Figure 3.2, indicate the relative proximity and ease of travel from selected locations in Bell Post Hill, Bell Park and Hamlyn Heights of a Midland Highway Sub-Regional Activity Centre compared to the Corio Sub-Regional Shopping Centre. In each case, the Midland Highway-based location is favourable to that of the Corio Sub-Regional Shopping Centre in both distance and time.

Table 3.1 Distance and Travel Time Analysis

Location	Distance to nominal Midland Highway location	Travel time to nominal Midland Highway location	Distance to Corio Sub-Regional Shopping Centre	Travel time to Corio Sub-Regional Shopping Centre
Bell Post Hill: Intersection of Braund Ave and Anakie Road	2.7 km	3 mins	4.6 km	7 mins
Bell Park: Nelson Park School	3.8 km	6 mins	5.9 km	10 mins
Hamlyn Height: Hamlyn Banks Primary School	3.6 km	5 mins	7.1 km	12 mins

Source: Google Maps, Ethos Urban

Figure 3.2 Selected Locations For Distance and Travel Time Analysis



Source: Ethos Urban

Superior Transport Connections, Access and Exposure of a Midland Highway-based Centre

- 3.22 The Submission by Adelaide Brighton also argued that a Midland Highway-based Sub-Regional Activity Centre would provide advantages in terms of accessibility, suitability in terms of traffic management, direct connections to central Geelong, proposed improvements to the Midland Highway, better accessibility for locations not served by neighbourhood or higher order facilities, and proximity to the Ballarat rail-line.
- 3.23 In terms of accessibility and exposure to the Midland Highway, I note that the location for the Sub-Regional Activity Centre as proposed in the Framework Plan is proximate to the Hamilton Highway and will be conveniently located to the majority of the ultimate population of the WGGA. In this regard, it is not dissimilar to the Caroline Springs Town Centre; which is embedded within a significant population catchment and has successfully developed as a commercial hub and is surrounded by regional-level community facilities and an emerging high-density residential market.
- 3.24 I agree that the plans for the upgrade (including duplication) of the Midland Highway will see it better connected to the broader Geelong road network including to central Geelong than the Hamilton Highway where major road improvements in the area above Zillah Crawcour Park may prove difficult. In my opinion however, this should not prove to be a material issue for the development of a Sub-Regional Activity Centre in the McCann Lane Precinct. The centre will still have a significant population catchment, enjoy easy access to the Geelong Ring Road and elements of the catchment will arguably be more contained and reliant on the centre.
- 3.25 A Midland Highway-based location will less convenient for Bannockburn residents, though it should still prove to be the nearest sub-regional activity centre. The Fyansford-Gheringhap Road, which presently provides a direct route from the Midland Highway to the Hamilton

Highway will be re-routed as the WGGA develops. Note: A Hamilton Highway location will be more convenient to the residents of Inverleigh.

- 3.26 I understand that, at present there are no formal plans to re-open the Geelong-Ballarat railway line to passenger trains. In any event, a Midland Highway-based Sub-Regional Centre would be approximately 1.5km to 2km south of a potential railway station.

Other Matters

- 3.27 I note that recent population growth in Greater Geelong has been at a higher rate (approximately 2.5% per annum between 2014 and 2018) than was contemplated when the Retail Strategy and other planning for NGGA and WGGA activity centres took place. The Victorian Government's latest Victoria In Future projections (VIF2019) projected average annual population for Greater Geelong of approximately 2.1% between 2019 and 2036. The Settlement Strategy considers a population growth rate of 2.5% per annum to be a suitable rate of growth for which planning for the future residential growth of Greater Geelong should be undertaken. I agree with this view.
- 3.28 In terms of activity centre planning, the impact of a higher growth rate is not likely to be material in terms of future floorspace requirements or activity centre locations. A higher rate of population growth would however mean the growth areas, including the WGGA and NGGA may develop at a faster rate than originally envisaged. In terms of the WGGA, this may mean that the development of the precincts in the southern part of the WGGA and the Sub-Regional Activity Centre may proceed several years earlier than originally contemplated.

4 Summary of Key findings

4.1 Activity centre planning for the Western Geelong Growth Area (WGGA) has determined that a Sub-Regional Activity Centre is required to support the growth areas future population. Background economic assessments have identified a location in the south of the WGGA as being the most suitable site. The identified location is considered:

- accessible to the Hamilton Highway and Geelong Ring Road
- relatively convenient for the majority of future residents and business in the WGGA
- well located on what will be the WGGA's main north-south road
- likely to minimise any adverse impacts on the established activity centre hierarchy, particularly the Corio Sub-Regional Shopping Centre.

4.2 Submissions by Adelaide Brighton to Amendment C395 (which will introduce a Framework Plan into the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme for the WGGA and the Northern Geelong Growth Area) have requested that the WGGA Sub-Regional Activity Centre be re-located to a northern location on the Midland Highway. The Adelaide Brighton submission argues that a Midland Highway location would:

- Provide the higher order services associated with a Sub-Regional Activity Centre to residents of the Creamery Road Precinct which is expected to be the first precinct to be developed in the WGGA.
- Be unlikely to intrude upon the catchment of the Corio Sub-Regional Shopping Centre due to physical and perception barriers.
- Be better in terms of transport connections more generally.

4.3 In my opinion:

- a) Higher order services of the kind associated with a Sub-Regional Activity Centre are unlikely to be developed based early development in the northern part of the WGGA (in particular, the Creamery Road Precinct). Typically, development of the scale proposed in the northern precincts will support development at a neighbourhood activity centre scale. Higher order services of the kind provided in a Sub-Regional Activity Centre are likely to be provided only at an advanced stage of development across the WGGA.
- b) Notwithstanding the Geelong Ring Road representing a significant barrier between Geelong's established urban area and the WGGA, a Midland Highway-based centre is likely to prove an attractive alternative for residents of Bell Post Hill, Bell Park and Hamlyn Heights due to its proximity and available crossing points over the Geelong Ring Road.
- c) The Midland Highway may offer more convenient highway-based connections, access and exposure than the Hamilton Highway, but the advantages should not be overstated.

4.4 Based on the investigations I have carried out in completing this evidence statement, I do not believe there is clear strategic merit in re-locating the WGGA Sub-Regional Activity Centre north to a Midland Highway-based location.

Declaration

I have made all the inquiries that I believe are desirable and appropriate and no matters of significance that I regard as relevant have to my knowledge been withheld.

Chris McNeill
Director
Ethos Urban

6 November 2019