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James Guy  
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Dear James,

**Re: Submission on Draft Ballarat Strategy – April 2015**

Following on from my email on this topic dated 21 April, I again wish to congratulate staff for the quality of this Draft Strategy. That said, it can most certainly be improved, as can the process for its further development.

Having taken the trouble to re-read my submission on the Preliminary Ballarat Strategy, and also the comments in my email of 21 April, 2015, I really do not have much to add, by way of bright ideas for your consideration. The earlier of these submissions was made in the expectation that there would have been an opportunity for discussion about some of the ideas canvassed. This would have been nice early on, or at the latest, at the time officers were putting the Draft cover report and document to the councillors, to explain why ideas had been rejected and adopted. This information was not provided in the covering officer's report, and submitters such as I are left wondering whether it is worth the effort of reiterating ideas in a further submission, or not.

My email of 21 April does roughly cover some of my earlier ideas, just in case there is a point in doing so. Having had a little longer to think about matters, I feel that there were some other issues raised in my earlier submission which I failed to include in my email, but which bear repeating.

First is my suggestion to include amongst the Principles pp47-49 an additional one entitled **Provide Value for Money** (see my Preliminary Paper submission). Scarcity of funds and a proliferation of projects is the norm. We need to establish clear cost benefit analyses for the life of infrastructure assets **prior** to committing to projects. The reality is that with continued and serious underfunding of

BCC's \$1.5b of assets, that the discretionary spend on **new** capital works, especially in light of imminent rate capping, is minimal. The Strategy would benefit considerably from spelling this out plainly from the outset, and lowering expectations of vested interests. An analysis of the borrowing capacity of council to meet future infrastructure needs would be welcome also, with the expectation that this would lead to policy being adopted which spells out the rationale for the appropriate use of borrowings, and the annual amounts BCC could afford to borrow over the coming 25 years.

Secondly, the benchmarking of targets to achieve, and the means by which they will be measured. What housing densities are to be achieved in future: citywide, new greenfields sites, urban infill, for CBD precinct in particular? How will these be achieved concurrently with an urban forest target of 40%? What are the implications for housing designs, height, servicing with parking and recreational space, etc? What qualifies as urban forest -green roofs, low water landscaping, shrubs and trees under 1.5m high, etc.? Doubtless, being creative young planners, you will be able to think of a number of other benchmarks and ways to measure the success of the Strategy. For example they need to be clearer than the ones offered on pages 174-5 and more ambitious (are the Current Situation figures for Ballarat or Vic averages; are they targets or current performance achieved; is settling for 2.2% mode share by 2040 an admission of defeat?) Spending money and specific projects are outputs, not outcomes or results. Any Strategy worth its salt will set measurable and coherent targets, and will be judged as a success or failure upon them.

Thirdly, my suggestion that we should take a **No Regrets** approach to investments and developments. For instance, planning for adaptation to severe climate change impacts now should be done in such a way as to deliver us on-going benefits, even if impacts prove less than severe. Similarly, investing without an eye to climate change is likely to result in investments that will fail in future, or require expensive retrofitting. Responding to likely risks that we can readily identify, and which are empirically supported by scientific projections and modelling, is a sensible driver for any strategic plan. Designing for multiple outcomes for future development is a minimum standard. A more compact urban form may deliver benefits in the long term that save us money, improve our health, provide less impact on the environment, and build social capital rather than squander it.

Fourthly, the Implementation Plan needs to go further. At present, a huge number of expectations are being raised by the Draft Strategy. Almost certainly, all of these will not be met. We could avoid an awful lot of argument into the future, and potentially making investments in things that are less important for Ballarat's future prosperity than other things that languish unfunded, if we establish a defensible methodology for prioritising projects now. This will be difficult, particularly where funds from other levels of government are anticipated, or where private sector investment is required, but

with the right set of policies, and a clear eye on what matters, we can present a powerful case for our city and surrounds. For example, champions for new, bigger, better sports facilities are ever present; advocates for improved drainage only appear briefly after floods. The popular should not always trump the essential.

Fifthly, the need for some form of urban land development body to drive higher density development in key activity centres within Ballarat is not canvassed at all in this Draft, even though I raised it in my response to the Preliminary document. It is a serious suggestion. What mechanism will deliver parcels of land sufficiently large to achieve new, well-designed, affordable and higher density suburbs from our existing small allotment ownership reality? An objective is one thing. A means of achieving it -entirely another. The description you provide of the Investment Facilitation Group p.147 does not go far enough.

Sixth. Whilst no longer apparently supported in the text, the use of the term Regional Capital Precincts on several maps (Figures 21 - 26) is confusing. What are they, and how do they relate to Activity Centres?

Finally, public transport servicing the urban needs of Ballarat requires serious discussion and debate (beyond its provision as a 'welfare' service for the aged, the unlicensed young, and the poor). The assumptions built into the Draft show an assumed network radiating from the CBD. This has had no debate and is given no justification in the Draft Strategy. It is acknowledged that there is a separate draft paper recently released on transport, but its reporting timeframe is after comments close on the bigger Draft Ballarat Strategy. How could a quite differently designed public transport network be accommodated within the broader work? What are the implications for the Corridor urban growth areas if a grid system is preferred over a radial one? Why is Transport, which is so central to the Draft Strategy, being considered after and separately? If anything, it should have come before.

It is my hope that this time around I will have the opportunity to discuss your responses to my submission prior to it being presented to Council as a *fait accompli*.

Yours sincerely,

John Barnes.