

Submission to the Growing the Suburbs Inquiry – Epping North, Non-Transport By the Aurora Community Association

(Please also see our separate Transport submission)

This submission has been written especially to assist the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee with regard to item “(b) assess the capacity of existing infrastructure to accommodate increased population growth”. Our submission focuses on Epping North in the City of Whittlesea which, like many outer Melbourne growth areas, is already seriously missing out on necessary infrastructure.

There are many issues relating to the capacity of existing infrastructure to accommodate the population growth currently being experienced in Epping North. Transport is covered in a separate submission. The non-transport issues can be divided into a number of broad categories:

1. Early Years Services

As a new growth area, Epping North has many couples starting families and is in great need of Early Years services including a Kindergarten (funding is lacking from current State Government), Long Day Child Care/ Occasional Child Care (promised to be built many years ago by VicUrban but still hasn't started construction), Playgroups and a Maternal and Child Health centre (planned by council for Lyndarum but still yet to start construction). Council needs support from State Government to fund these services.

2. Youth Services

There is almost nothing in the way of services and programs for adolescents in this area as yet. The Creeds Farm Living and Learning Centre (CFLLC) could offer youth-oriented programs such as street art and stencilling. A skate park is always enjoyed by people of this age and would provide a meeting place for the young. In talking to a teenager, he said the main thing lacking was a train line. Not only would allow his friends to visit him but it would also give him access to the Epping Plaza, the movies and other attractive alternatives.

3. Aged Services

It is imperative that Epping North has master-planned the following aged care services and infrastructure: retirement villages, low and high care residential aged care and Senior Citizens Clubs. In particular, older migrants, who may not have excellent English, need to be able to stay in the area to be near their relatives and friends.

4. Activity and Community Centres

Activity or community Centres, which can cater for the continuing education and wellbeing of the residents, are also essential. With a population of 44,000 predicted by 2031 for Epping North, these centres will need to be large enough to cater for big community meetings and education programs (such as U3A, health and well-being classes like tai-chi, social activities, community information sessions, IT skills lessons and so on). In the immediate future, the local CFLLC needs more government funding to help these activities flourish.

5. Libraries

The closest local library to Epping North is either in Lalor or Mill Park, neither of which are easily or quickly accessible for residents and certainly not by public transport. A Library in the estate is much needed and would be well used, as would a toy library, literacy programs for the many migrant families living in the area and other information or research assistance services.

6. Performing and creative arts

Performing and creative arts are important in community building so providing space and funds for these types of programs is necessary. One of the best-attended events at Aurora was the community-run “Bollywood Feast” demonstrating the value of such events. Public art also gives communities an increased sense of community enjoyment. It is disappointing that a number of pieces of public art commissioned by VicUrban have been removed from the Aurora estate. It would be great to see these reinstalled.

7. Sport and Recreation

People need recreation spaces locally to build stronger, resilient communities and also reduce travel for people on our already congested roads. Facilities for the following would be wonderful to see:

- Scout hall space: a building shared with other organizations, to make the best use of the land available from council. Night-time use for scouts, day-time use for other things.
- Squash courts: squash as a sport is dying a terrible death in Australia because of the loss of urban courts to developers. It is vital that council and state government fund land for squash courts to ensure the continuation of this sport in Australia.
- Swimming pool and associated activities- closest is in Mill Park or Thomastown
- Basketball and netball courts for competition with other courts for other sports (volleyball, badminton, indoor soccer, cricket) also available.
- Gymnastics centre.
- Cricket oval and nets with toilet facilities
- Athletics track with toilet facilities
- Football/ rugby oval with toilet facilities
- Lawn bowls facility to cater for the increasing number of elderly in area.

8. Passive Open Space

Cycling: We need a safe cycling path to the Plaza and hospital, perhaps running parallel with the train line since this would minimise driveways and roads cutting across it. The cycle lanes on the roads need to be wider. We need access from Harvest Home Rd to the cycling path that runs along the Craigieburn Bypass. O’Herns Rd, which does connect to the cycling path that runs along the Craigieburn Bypass has no bike path or lane and is dangerous for cyclists with the heavy trucks and other traffic that use it. Some cycle lanes and paths stop suddenly with nowhere to go, while others are intermittent.

Walking: There should be walking paths along the creek areas, connecting to parks.

Footpaths should double-width wherever possible to encourage group walking and to cater for prams and the disabled.

Nature: We need more conservation areas where wildlife can be safe.

Playgrounds: Toilet facilities must be provided so that parents with young children will feel encouraged to use these spaces.

9. Education

We are concerned that there will not be enough well-equipped schools to provide for the expected population. Our one government primary school, Epping Views, is already using portables and we're still in the early days of population growth. There is only one secondary school planned in Aurora, a Prep- Year 12. What schools are planned inside other developments?

10. Emergency and Judicial Services

The Epping North region will need sufficient emergency services, such as police, fire (with improved access), ambulance, SES and judicial services (courts, mediation and dispute resolution).

11. Health and Community Services

While Epping currently provides these sorts of services (hospital, doctors, specialists, community health, drug and alcohol, mental health, family support, maternal and child, various counselling and disability services) it's not clear that they could handle the increase that will occur as the Epping North area becomes bigger. We need to have these programmes and services available and accessible to residents so they should be planned for now.

Summary

The overall picture is that Epping North non-transport needs include:

- a significant increase in the amount and range of services for children from their early years to their adolescence;
- development of master plans for aged care, health and community services;
- a local library;
- better use of open space;
- facilities for performing and creative arts that enable an increased sense of community enjoyment for residents;
- facilities for an increased range of sport and recreation including local squash courts, scout hall, and swimming pool.

We would like to thank the Committee for their time and would be more than welcome to speak on behalf of our community in regards to this submission.

Written by Tony Francis, Joanna Durst, Toni Wuelfert, Cara Horner and Linda Anderson-Berry on behalf of the Aurora Community Association.

Warm Regards,

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