



Community CONSULTATION PROPOSED COUNCIL OFFICE SITE

Wattle Range Council provides hundreds of unique, complex and diverse services to our community ranging from childcare to cemeteries; from stormwater to fire protection; libraries, art galleries and community events; boat ramps; saleyards; public toilets; playgrounds, sports grounds, parks and gardens; visitor centres, swimming pools and caravan parks; waste water and recycling, landfill and green waste management; and animal management. We also look after 2,500 km of rural roads and their associated signs, reserves, vegetation and culverts.

These services are just the tip of the iceberg, and they are provided to over 12,000 residents across 13 townships and an area that spans over 4,000 square kilometres. They are funded through an annual budget of approximately \$25 million – a significant proportion of which is spent locally and stimulates and sustains our local economy.

These services are delivered by approximately 110 full time equivalent staff, the majority of whom live in and contribute to our local community both professionally and privately. Approximately half of these work in an office environment. If we want these people to continue to deliver these services to a professional standard, we need to supply them with the right tools for the job. Just like a street sweeper or a grader, a functional and efficient administrative office is an essential tool.

The Wattle Range Council office was originally built in the 1930's as a school, and while it has undergone a number of renovations over the past 90 years, it has not had any major work done since the three Councils of Beachport, Millicent and Penola amalgamated over 20 years ago. Whether we like it or not, it is no longer fit for purpose. Council staff are now spread over multiple sites due to congestion; the building has significant ongoing maintenance problems; and it is structurally unsuitable to be refurbished.

In 2017, Council made a strategic decision to explore alternative options and, in 2018, it commissioned concept plans for the former Community Club site in Millicent. Unfortunately, that site was sold by the Club's Administrator before these plans could be finalised and presented to Council.

Any decision to build a new office is a decision that will span many generations, and any new building should be designed to meet the needs of our community for the next 100 years. It will not be a rushed decision, and the decision-making process will be staged broadly as follows to ensure that the optimum long-term solution is found and that public money is spent wisely.

Stage 1 Site Selection (completed but Community Club subsequently sold by Administrator)

Stage 2 Concept Plans (completed)

Stage 3 Revised Site Selection (currently under consideration)

Stage 4 Detailed Scope and Design

Stage 5 Tender and Prudential Management Review

Stage 6 Budget Allocation and Contract Award

The final decision on whether to build a new office is still some time away and can only be made once a detailed design has been finalised and quotes have been received to build to that design. Before any of that can be done, we need to select a preferred site as the Community Club is no longer an option.

If Council ultimately decides to build a new Council Office, the tender process will include assessment criteria that will encourage local procurement, local sub-contracting and the use of local businesses and services throughout the design and build phases.

Recent State Government economic advice strongly recommends Local Government expenditure on infrastructure projects to assist with both the State's and the Region's economic recovery from COVID-19. Investment into infrastructure projects like this flows back through our local economy and has the potential to create an additional 16 direct and 31 indirect jobs – or 47 regional jobs in total.

Council is also in a relatively healthy financial position currently, with almost no debt, moderate cash reserves and the ability to borrow money at incredibly competitive rates. It must be stressed that we do not know what it will cost to build a new Council office at this particular point in time. The six million dollar figure that has been bandied around in the media was a Rough Order of Merit (ROM) costing that was associated with a high level concept design. ROM costings were requested to get a better understanding of the cost of building a 1280 square metre structure on a range of sites in order to make an informed decision about a preferred site. They were not a quote to build a new Council Office and the high level concept plan is not the agreed design.

The ROM costings varied for each site depending on whether Council had to acquire land; whether demolition or significant earth works were required; whether the site already has power, water and sewerage; or whether there is complementary carparking nearby. It should also be noted that approximately 50% of each ROM costing was associated with the construction of a new building; 15% was for demolition, earthworks and carparks; 5% was for furniture, fittings and equipment and the remaining 30% was for statutory charges, professional fees and contingency. All of the ROM costings were ball park estimates designed to help with the site selection process.

Council is seeking the community's input into the preferred site for a new Council office before any decision is made to develop a detailed design. In order to keep costs down, there is an obvious preference for land that is already owned by Council; land that is flat and cost effective to build on; and land that has services such as power, water and sewerage in close proximity. There is also a desire for the site to be close to the Millicent central business district, however building in the CBD itself will undoubtedly have significant acquisition and business disruption complications as the site would probably need to spread over multiple titles.

A number of sites have already been put forward that meet these criteria. They are as follows:

Site 1 – Former Netball Courts (corner of Williams Road & North Terrace)

***Advantages:** limited community use, existing service connections*

***Disadvantages:** further away from central business district*

Site 2 – Apex Park (corner of George Street & Adelaide Road)

***Advantages:** moderate proximity to central business district; limited community use*

***Disadvantages:** rail corridor acquisition required with potential contamination complications; some significant tree removal required*

Site 3 – Jubilee Park (North Terrace)

***Advantages:** close proximity to central business district; likely to be the most cost effective option due to adjacent carpark at the rear of the Civic & Arts Centre*

***Disadvantages:** significant community use; limited service connections nearby; some significant tree removal required*

Site 4 – Re-develop Existing Office Site (George Street)

***Advantages:** maximises existing footprint*

***Disadvantages:** sloping/multi levelled site; requirement to find alternative site during prolonged build phase; likely to be most expensive option*

Council would also like to hear from the community to see if there are any other sites that should be considered – taking the preferred selection criteria into consideration that relate to ownership, ease of build and service connections.

You are all encouraged to have your say. Please visit our website at www.wattlerange.sa.gov.au and follow the link to the online survey or collect a survey form from any of Council's Offices or the Millicent Library.

Des Nell

MAYOR

WATTLE RANGE COUNCIL