

6.2.5 Right hand turns within the Brunt and Rix Road corridor

Responsible GM: Peter Benazic
Author: Dan Hammond

Recommendation(s)

That Council

- For the road safety and operational reasons described in this report and in the attached traffic impact assessment it is recommended that a centre median opening not be provided at the entrance to the Blue Gum Lifestyle Village, or within the wider Brunt-Rix Road corridor, in line with the requirements of the Officer PSP.
- Council Officers further engage with the Blue Gum Lifestyle Village regarding the access arrangements and future works required in the Officer PSP in the local area.

Attachments

1. CONFIDENTIAL REPORT CIRCULATED TO COUNCILLORS ONLY - Blue Gum Lifestyle Village Beaconsfield - Traffic Assessment Report [6.2.5.1 - 24 pages]

Executive Summary

Works have recently been completed on Brunt Road in Officer to bring a section of this road in line with the standards required by the Officer Precinct Structure Plan. This has resulted in access arrangements at the Blue Gum Lifestyle Village being restricted to left in and left out only and leading to a notice of motion being raised by Council to investigate the implications of providing centre median openings along the Brunt-Rix corridor to facilitate right turn movements.

A traffic impact assessment has now been completed and has found that providing centre median openings along the Brunt-Rix Road corridor: is not in line with the intended or required standard for a Connector Street Boulevard road corridor within the Officer PSP, will adversely impact the safety and operation of Brunt Road at the location required for the entrance at Blue Gum Lifestyle Village, and create a precedent for other roads with a similar PSP cross section.

Background

Both Brunt Road and Rix Roads in Officer are classified as Local Arterial Road (4A) in the Cardinia Shire Council Road register. As part of the Officer Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) they are designated to become Connector Street Boulevard classified roads to cater for traffic generated by the development of the areas of Officer south of the Princes Highway. This road corridor connects the Princes Highway to Officer South Road and the Monash Freeway and will provide one of only two remaining rail crossings in Officer following the planned closure of the Station St level crossing closure prior to 2025.

The Officer PSP, along with all the PSPs within the Cardinia Shire growth area, have been established to inform development and map out land use and infrastructure requirements for the area as the population increases. As a result, conditions abutting developments, main thoroughfares, and community spaces can change significantly from what was existing pre-development. These changes are necessary to cater for the infrastructure demands of a growing and changing community, however, unfortunately can cause concern among longer

term and new residents who may not understand the changing environment associated with living in a growth area.

Significant traffic volumes are expected along this route and are likely to exceed to estimated volumes modelled for the PSP (being 14,500 vehicles per day). This is due to the continued surrounding development, the Station St level crossing closure, and local travel to and from the future Whiteside Neighbourhood Activity Centre (located on the northwest corner of the Whiteside Road/Brunt Road/Princes Highway intersection).

Following the construction works to upgrade a section of Brunt Road to the ultimate PSP standard (including the construction of a roundabout at Pioneer Way), complaints were received from the Blue Gum Lifestyle Village regarding the removal of the right-hand turn facilities in to and out of the village. With this facility removed, residents of the village are required to U-turn at the new roundabout instead of right turning in, and loop back through the adjacent residential estate to head south.

Similar issues are being faced by residents on Rix Road as development occurs and right turn in/out access is removed by implementation for the PSP road cross section.

The Brunt Road/Pioneer Way roundabout now provides the ultimate U-turn facility south of Blue Gum Lifestyle Village as stipulated in the PSP.

A notice of motion was raised at the December 2023 general Council meeting to:

Prioritises carrying out an independent traffic assessment to assess the safety considerations associated with providing right turns out of facilities located Brunt Road / Rix Road in Officer. This is with a view to understand how a safe and low-risk roadside environment can be provided for motorists, whilst balancing this with the amenity and convenience for residents accessing local facilities. The findings of which is to be reported back at the Council meeting on 19th February 2024.

This assessment has now been completed and is attached. The key findings of the report are as follows:

Provision of regular median breaks is not in line with the intention of a connector street boulevard cross section planned for Brunt Road and Rix Road.

With continued development of land within the Officer PSP area, the planned connector street boulevard cross section will be required along both Brunt Road and Rix Road to provide the necessary traffic capacity to facilitate the future volumes.

The provision of a break in the centre median under the ultimate scenario is anticipated to adversely impact the safety and operation of Brunt Road at a critical location and is not consistent with the intention of the PSP.

The provision of a median break will set a precedent for other intersections along Brunt and Rix Road.

Two alternatives to the median break were provided for consideration specifically at the Blue Gum Lifestyle Village entrance, these were:

- Provide a U-turn facility at the northern end of the newly separated road section.
- Permit exit/entry from the northern access point to the village that is currently adjunct to the existing non divided road that allows right turn movements.

Investigations into the first option have shown that allowing a U-turn at this location cannot be achieved spatially due to a lack of room within the current road pavement and is against road rules due to the current line marking. Alterations to the current line marking to allow this will expose Council to undue risk. Please note that a U-turn facility is not achievable within the future Princes Highway/Brunt Road/Whiteside Road intersection design.

Blue Gum Lifestyle Village currently intend to permanently close their northern access and have a permit to construct additional dwellings here, making the second option not viable.

Policy Implications

N/A

Relevance to Council Plan

2.1 We support the creation of liveable spaces and places

2.1.5 Upgrade Council's Road network to improve safety and connectivity while considering traffic demand and freight transport needs.

Climate Emergency Consideration

N/A

Consultation/Communication

As part of the Brunt Rd/Pioneer Way project, the project team held a community drop in event where project staff were available to discuss the project. This was advertised locally and included a social media campaign. Plans were available on the night for viewing and have been available upon request throughout the project. Subsequently, and prior to works commencing, a letter drop occurred, giving contact details, and directed residents to the project website for updates. As the plans have been prepared in accordance with the Officer PSP, they have remained consistent throughout, and the access arrangements at Blue Gum Lifestyle Village have not altered since the project began.

An accelerated works program for this project was implemented due to the commencement of the level crossing removal project and programmed opening of the State School off Pioneer Way, and although community engagement occurred and plans were made available, it is acknowledged that improvements can always be made to how council communicates with residents effected by projects, and learnings will be applied for future projects.

If the recommendations of this report are accepted by Council, engagement with Blue Gum Lifestyle Village will need to occur to inform them of the decision regarding the centre median opening and why it was made. Additionally, they can be informed/educated about the Officer Precinct Structure Plan and interim/ultimate traffic arrangements surrounding the village including the Princes Highway/Brunt Road intersection upgrade.

Financial and Resource Implications

To construct a centre median opening at Blue Gum Lifestyle Village the approximate costs for this is in the order of \$40,000 as this is not included as part of the current works. This will also risk setting a precedent for this corridor and may result in pressure to provide additional centre median openings along Brunt and Rix Roads requiring further funds.

Conclusion

Brunt Road and Rix Road form an important high traffic volume road corridor with the Officer township south of the Princes Highway, linking key transport routes and providing access to various facilities for local residents.

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For the road safety and operational reasons described in the traffic impact assessment it is recommended that centre median openings not be provided at the entrance to the Blue Gum Lifestyle Village, or within the Brunt-Rix Road corridor, in line with the requirements of the Officer PSP.