

21.04 THE STATE PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Mount Alexander Shire Municipal Strategic Statement has been prepared within the context of the State Planning Policy Framework (SPPF). This Municipal Strategic Statement both reflects the wider State and regional environment within which the Mount Alexander Shire functions and seeks to assist in the overall implementation of State policies and directions.

Settlement

In 1996 the population of Mount Alexander Shire was approximately 16,970. *Victoria in Future*, (Department of Infrastructure, 1996) projects that the population will increase by approximately 3,590 to 20,560 in 2011. This represents an average annual growth rate of 1.4% between 1996 and 2011, higher than the 0.88% average predicted for Regional Victoria. This increase in population creates the need for a predicted additional 1,830 dwellings during the period 1996 to 2011. The average size of each household is not expected to change significantly, decreasing from an average of 2.45 persons per household in 1996 to 2.35 persons in 2011. The planning scheme provides sufficient zoned land for residential development to accommodate the projected increase.

The development of the Calder Highway upgrade to freeway and dual highway standard will reduce the travel time between the Shire and Melbourne and Bendigo. This will provide new opportunities for development, particularly tourism, and an increase in commuting. The Planning Scheme seeks to provide strategies to manage this growth and development for the benefit of the community.

Small townships, villages and communities are located throughout the Shire, providing a unique settlement pattern which is part of the character of the Shire. The maintenance of this settlement pattern is of great importance to the residents and many visitors to the area. This is recognised in the Municipal Strategic Statement and the Local Policies.

Environment

The Environment policies of the SPPF provide a strong context for the Shire's land use and development planning. Mount Alexander Shire is predominantly in the Loddon River catchment and the eastern areas are in the Campaspe River catchment. All of the urban areas and large townships are in the Loddon Catchment. Future use of the land within the catchment will require the assessment and monitoring of the implications created by various uses and developments and the relationship they have upon the volume and flow of water within the various rivers. The Planning Scheme seeks to give strong recognition to the regional catchment strategy prepared by the North Central Regional Catchment and Land Protection Board. There is a particularly strong emphasis on improving water quality in the rivers and streams throughout the Shire.

The heritage throughout the Shire is exceptionally rich. There are important buildings in most of the towns and rural areas, and historic precincts exist particularly in Castlemaine and in the central area and some residential areas of Maldon. The significance of the heritage in the Shire is recognised and specific policies and zones are to be implemented to ensure sound management of these areas.

Housing Development

Housing development throughout the Shire will be in accordance with the principles and requirements of the Good Design Guide and VicCode 1. With the prediction of an increasing proportion of people aged over 60 years living in the Shire, attention will need to be given to providing appropriate accommodation for this group. Such housing should be close to major community services and facilities and may include medium density developments.

Economic Development

The economic base of Mount Alexander Shire is dependent on a number of sectors, including many of those identified in the SPPF. The provision of vibrant and exciting commercial centres is essential to the Shire to attract new businesses and specialty/tourist shops and also to reduce retail expenditure to the regional centres outside the Shire.

Castlemaine is the major commercial service centre for the Mount Alexander Shire. Its main competitors are Bendigo and Ballarat. The importance for the commercial centre for the Shire cannot be overstated as it provides the major retail and commercial functions for the hinterland.

The main advantages of the existing central business district is its compactness. Further commercial development should occur within the area defined by Barker, Mostyn, Lyttleton and Hargraves Streets. The advantages of the existing compactness of the commercial centre, together with the redevelopment of the Castlemaine Market Place (Incorporated Plan Overlay - Schedule 1) need to be further exploited and enhanced. Further commercial development should occur within the exiting commercial area, and adequate car parking be provided.

Local Policies seek to ensure the continuance of a successful commercial centre particularly in Castlemaine.

The Shire has had a traditionally strong role in heavy engineering with Thompson's foundry having a natural identity. Manufacturing is still an important industry but food processing is now very significant with Castle Bacon one of the largest such enterprises in the State.

Recreation and tourism are significant in the rural and urban areas of the Shire, with a variety of attractions located throughout the municipality. The Planning Scheme includes policies which support high quality tourism developments that relate to the character or attributes and the Shire.

Agriculture is a major industry in the Shire. The Planning Scheme supports the continuing role of agriculture and the growth of horticulture as a major element of the local economy and includes local polices to retain land in production.

There are significant extractive industries and mineral resources found in Mount Alexander Shire. The Municipal Strategic Statement and Local Policies recognise the importance of these industries to the local economy. They also identify the need to consider environmental effects and site rehabilitation when the use has been completed

Infrastructure

Infrastructure is a significant factor in the future planning and development of the Shire. Mount Alexander Shire is well served by the State's highway and rail network. The Calder Highway provides links to Melbourne and Bendigo and will be upgraded to dual highway standard. The Midland and Pyrenees Highway also provide essential links to Ballarat and Maryborough respectively. The recent introduction of the V/Line sprinter trains have improved access to Melbourne and Bendigo.

Comprehensive sewerage systems are needed in a number of townships throughout the Shire. Coliban Region Water Authority have plans to provide sewerage schemes for Maldon, Campbells Creek, Harcourt, Chewton, Newstead, Elphinstone, Taradale and Guildford over the next ten to fifteen years. Effluent disposal relying on septic tanks is a major issue in many areas, especially Maldon, Campbells Creek and Chewton. Strong attention needs to be given to effluent treatment in rural residential development and the density of development must be linked to the capacity of systems to maintain water quality in streams.