

22.06 GEMBROOK TOWNSHIP

This policy applies to the Gembrook township.

22.06-1 Policy basis

Gembrook is a small rural township set in the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges which has a distinctive character based on its historical role as a timber production and agricultural town. Continued potato farming of the red volcanic soils surrounding Gembrook contribute to the characteristic “patchwork” scenic views of the hills.

In 1998, the extension of the Puffing Billy Tourist Railway from Emerald Lake Park to Gembrook was completed which is a significant opportunity to develop a tourism role for Gembrook.

This policy seeks to maintain the identity and scenic quality of the township and its surrounding landscape, and to identify and develop opportunities for the township and district.

This policy assists in the implementation of the objectives and strategies in the Municipal Strategic Statement in relation to agriculture, tourism and townships.

Reference: Gembrook Strategy, August 1997(as amended August 2001).

22.06-2 Objectives

- To harness the positive attributes of the historic and scenic character of Gembrook along with its strong local community into a consolidated and well managed town core.
- To promote economic development opportunities in tourism (particularly associated with the Puffing Billy Tourist Railway), agriculture and local services.
- To protect the environmental, landscape and heritage qualities which contribute to the character of the Gembrook township.
- To encourage new development with building design elements that contribute to the character of the township.

22.06-3 Policy

It is policy that:

- New residential development be limited to the township which maintains the “hill town” character of Gembrook. Preference will be given to establishing smaller sewered lots (if possible) in the defined urban core of the township, with rural residential lots located in the peripheral areas of the township where it can be demonstrated that development will not adversely impact on the environmental, landscape and agricultural values of the area.
- Commercial and retail development be located in the existing township core, with a focus on the immediate surrounds of the Puffing Billy Tourist Railway Station.
- New developments reflect the existing built environment in Gembrook. Key historical buildings which define the character of the Main Street should be retained. Building materials, relative scales and proportion, roof pitches, windows and door treatments, verandahs and chimneys should contribute to the overall historic streetscape character of the township.

- Tourist developments be encouraged in the township including restaurants, cafes, tourist accommodation and galleries, building on the significance of the Puffing Billy Tourist Railway as a regional tourist attraction.
- Agricultural land be protected from inappropriate development and fragmentation which would lead to a reduction in agricultural viability and the loss of land from agricultural production. Alternative and innovative agricultural activities should be encouraged, particularly if they can be integrated with tourism uses in the township.
- Consideration be given to the Gembrook Strategy (August 1997 - as amended August 2001) in deciding on a proposal to use or develop, including subdivide, land in the Gembrook township.