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ALPINE RESORTS STRATEGIC STATEMENT

Resorts Profile

Introduction

The Alpine Resorts Strategic Statement is a local policy to give strategic direction to the designated Victorian Alpine Resorts. It applies across all of the Resorts. This policy is similar to a Municipal Strategic Statement, however the Resorts are not part of any municipal district and therefore a Municipal Strategic Statement is not required.

The Alpine Resorts Strategic Statement should be read in conjunction with the State Planning Policy Framework and the other local planning policies. It establishes objectives for the Resorts that all planning applications should attempt to satisfy.

Existing Land Uses

There is a variety of land uses in the Resorts.

The larger northern Resorts, Falls Creek, Mt Buller and Mt Hotham, have intensive Village and alpine recreation developments, while Mt Stirling is a nature based Resort and a destination for cross country and back country skiing. Mt Baw Baw and Lake Mountain are less intensively developed, with Mt Baw Baw comprising a small Village with corresponding recreation development and Lake Mountain providing a departure and arrival point for cross country skiing and an accessible destination point for snow play.

The existing uses within the Resorts comprise the following:

- Commercial operations: hotels, shops, food and drink premises and hire places.
- Accommodation: flats, apartments, hotels, lodges and other special uses.
- Recreation: facilities and infrastructure for snow based activities including trailheads, skifield facilities, lifting systems, and groomed trails and runs and Green Season recreation facilities including mountain bike trails and walking tracks.

Social Context

There are diverse social considerations within the Alpine Resorts. These include access levels, employment opportunities and residency.

The Resorts provide significant seasonal employment opportunities in the construction, hospitality and tourism industries. The hospitality and tourism industries are recognised as important industries in Victoria and Australia.

The size of the permanent residential population within each of the Resorts varies. Falls Creek has an established population of approximately 100 people and Mt Buller approximately 200. Mt Hotham has a small permanent residential base residing predominantly at Dinner Plain, outside of the Resort. Mt Baw Baw has a small residential population, whilst there is no residential population at Lake Mountain or Mt Stirling.

The 'off mountain' communities for all of the Resorts play an important role. Whilst lying outside of the Resorts, these communities impact on the social fabric of the Resorts and vice versa, by providing employment, economic, accommodation and residential opportunities.

The Resorts also have different historical links to the surrounding areas such as major cultural and scientific significance related to Aboriginal, pioneer, mining and ski history.

Economic Context

The Resorts make a significant contribution to the Victorian economy. The snow market is an increasingly high yield sector and enjoys average daily spending above any other sector of Victoria's regional tourist industry. Significantly, the investment in the Resorts represents one of the highest investments in tourism in Victoria.

ALPINE RESORTS PLANNING SCHEME

The contribution to the Victorian economy is achieved through investment and employment in infrastructure, property, construction and hospitality. The Resorts also contribute to raising and leading skill and education levels in environmental protection, construction techniques and hospitality services.

Environmental Context

The Resorts are nestled in significant and fragile natural environments. Within the Resorts, and surrounding parks, there are communities of special and endangered flora and fauna species. These are important in a regional, state or national context. The relevant species are listed in the following table for each of the Resorts:

Falls Creek Alpine Resort

Mountain Daisy (*Brachyscome tenuiscapa*)

Wire-head Sedge (*Carex cephalotes*)

Dwarf Sedge (*Carex paupera*)

Rough Eyebright (*Euphrasia scabra*)

Alpine Bog Community

Alpine Snowpatch Community

Caltha introloba Herbland Community

Fen (Bog Pool) Community

Mountain Pygmy-possum (*Burramys parvus*)

Stonefly (*Riekoperla intermedia*)

Stonefly (*Thaumatoperla alpina*)

Lake Mountain Alpine Resort

Leadbeater's Possum (*Gymnobelideus leadbeateri*)

Smoky Mouse (*Pseudomys fumeus*)

Barred (or Brown) Galaxias (*Galaxias olivaceus var. fuscus*)

Alpine Bog Skink (*Pseudemoia cryodroma*)

Mt Baw Baw Alpine Resort

Alpine Bog Community

Caltha introloba Herbland Community

Baw Baw Frog (*Philoria frosti*)

Leadbeater's Possum (*Gymnobelideus leadbeateri*)

Mt Buller Alpine Resort

Caddisfly (*Archaeophylax canarus*)

Mountain Pygmy-possum (*Burramys parvus*)

Alpine Bog Skink (*Pseudemoia cryodroma*)

Stonefly (*Riekoperla isosceles*)

Alpine Stonefly (*Thaumatoperla flaveola*)

Broad-toothed Rat (*Mastacomys fuscus*)

Falls Creek Alpine Resort**Mt Hotham Alpine Resort**

Mountain Daisy (*Brachyscome tenuiscapa*)

Wire-head Sedge (*Carex cephalotes*)

Dwarf Sedge (*Carex paupera*)

Silky Daisy (*Celmisia sericophylla*)

Rock Tussock-grass (*Poa saxicola*)

Fairy Bluebell (*Wahlenbergia densifolia*)

Eicher's Buttercup (*Ranunculus eichleranus*)

Alpine Bog Community

Alpine Snowpatch Community

Caltha introloba Herbland Community

Fen (Bog Pool) Community

Mountain Pygmy-possum (*Burramys parvus*)

Alpine She-oak Skink (*Cyclodomorphus praealtus*)

Broad-toothed Rat (*Mastacomys fuscus*)

Other environmental considerations include watercourses (catchment and quality issues), salinity and land degradation.

Geotechnical Context

The geotechnical stability of land in the Resorts is an important environmental and safety issue. Natural features within the Resorts, including geology, soil structure and depth, vegetation cover, overland drainage flow, drainage lines and subterranean water levels, are key influences on stability.

Given the potential for damage to property and natural assets and human injury or death, development needs to carefully consider the landform and its potential exposure to geotechnical hazards.

Extensive geotechnical investigations have taken place across the six Resorts, including hazard mapping, individual site investigations and mitigation works.

The Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation (SMEC) has developed a system for land stability classification and mapping for all land in the Resorts. This classification system has been used to assess the stability of all developed areas, proposed development areas and access roads within the Resorts. The study concentrates on natural landslides, natural rock falls, failure of cut slopes and failure of fill slopes. The SMEC Alpine Resorts Geotechnical Stability Review and other relevant geotechnical studies are available from the relevant Alpine Resort Management Board.

Bushfire Context

Bushfires are a naturally occurring event that can threaten both life and property. The Alpine areas of Victoria are particularly prone to bushfires with extensive areas of vegetation cover and steep slopes.

Where people are accommodated, and the standard of the buildings within which people are accommodated, are crucial factors affecting people's exposure to bushfire risk. Appropriate planning for land use and development in bushfire prone areas such as the Alpine Region is one way of minimising risks to life and property from bushfire.

The National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management (2004) nominated land use planning as the ‘...single most important mitigation measure in preventing future disaster losses in areas of new development’. The Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (2010) noted that protection of human life is the overriding objective in implementing bushfire prevention measures through improved planning and building regulation.

In this context, there is a need to:

- Balance the creation of defensible space around development against the biodiversity and conservation values of the vegetation to be cleared.
- Ensure safe and secure access to and from any property.

The Responsible Authority will assess all applications so as to achieve this balance. At all times however, the protection of human life will remain as the overriding objective in decision making.

In response to the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (2010), a revised state planning policy for bushfire risk was prepared to prioritise the protection of human life. This will require a risk-based approach to planning in bushfire hazard areas which integrates with other bushfire risk management and mitigation strategies.

Due to the nature of the bushfire risk in Alpine Resorts, a strategic assessment of development options, vegetation management and emergency procedures should be prepared to tailor a response which delivers necessary bushfire risk mitigation.

21.01-2

31/05/2012
C21

Key Issues

The key issues facing the Resorts are focussed around eight strategic themes:

Environmental and Landscape Values

- Protection of the significant flora and fauna species and communities, including the Alpine Bog Community and the Mountain Pygmy-possum (*Burramys parvys*).
- Protection of the integrity of the flora and fauna and their biodiversity values by appropriate development and assessment of Village and skifield expansion.
- Protection and maintenance of natural drainage lines and moss beds within the Villages from inappropriate development as they are important components of the natural drainage system and contribute to slope stability in the Resort.

Natural Resource Management

- Protection of water quality as the Resorts are located within and near Special Water Supply Catchment Areas.
- Buildings to be adequately setback from waterways and sediment control principles implemented during construction to protect water quality.
- Identification of appropriate and environmentally sensitive snow making opportunities for the long term viability of the Resort and catchment management.

Infrastructure

- Improving infrastructure, in accordance with environmental protection requirements and practices, to allow year round use and growth of the Resorts.
- Responsible management of water to satisfy the needs and expectations of residents and visitors to the Resorts as well as to protect water resources within the catchments.

Environmental Risks

- The removal of vegetation, and the location and siting of buildings, works and infrastructure, to have regard to drainage lines, subterranean water levels and movement to minimise the risk associated with ground stability within the Resort.

ALPINE RESORTS PLANNING SCHEME

- Uses and developments within the Resort need to recognise the influence of the extreme weather conditions that characterise the Resorts.
- There is the potential for climate change to influence snow depth levels in Victoria within the next 50 years.
- Appropriate vegetation management and built form techniques implemented to aid in the protection of the Resort Villages from bushfire.

Settlement

- Provision of an appropriate level of facilities and services to meet the needs of the existing and future permanent population of the Resorts.
- Provision of a range of accommodation that caters for both permanent residents and visitors to the Resorts.
- Provision of commercial, civic and sporting facilities for residents and visitors to the Resorts outside for all seasons.
- Consolidation of any future growth of the Villages to within the existing Village boundaries to maximise accessibility and infrastructure use and to limit intrusion into skifields and environmental impact.
- Future development outside of the Villages will require significant justification to demonstrate an overriding need for remote settlement.
- Environmental and infrastructure implications will also need to be considered.
- Vistas to the skifields should be protected and promoted by the location, design and siting of developments.
- A sensitive transition between the Alpine National Park and the Resorts needs to be maintained and preserved.

Economic Development

- Promotion of All Seasons visitation and activation in line with the Alpine Resorts Strategic Plan through facilitation of active and passive recreation developments that operate year round.
- Maintenance of a key winter season focus promoting increased participation in snow based activities.

Built Environment and Heritage

- Ensuring that design, scale, height and materials of development are sympathetic to the existing natural and built form character of the Resorts.
- The future siting and design of developments should ensure that culturally historic places are preserved through appropriate management techniques.
- Due consideration is required to be given to the notification requirements of the *Native Title Act 1993* and the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* in association with the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

Transport

- Effective management of traffic on the access roads during peak snow season.
- Appropriate location and siting of transport terminals, including bus and helicopter infrastructure, together with appropriate integrated intra- and inter-Village transport solutions.
- Ensuring appropriate provision for short and long term car parking for visitors, residents and commercial operators during both the winter season and the summer season.
- Ensuring safe movement through the Villages for skiers, pedestrians and vehicles.

21.01-3

31/05/2012
C21**Objectives – Strategies – Implementation****Resorts Objectives**

All planning applications should attempt to satisfy the following objectives:

- To provide for the proper establishment, development and use of the Resorts for intensive, year-round recreation, including the development of alpine and cross country skifields, having regard to environmental, ecological, economic, aesthetic and safety considerations.
- To reinforce the Resorts as a destination by providing a range of recreation and tourist facilities, residential accommodation, commercial activities and support services.
- To ensure that use and development within the Alpine Resorts is carried out to benefit the present and future Resort users whilst maintaining a high quality environment.
- To conserve and protect the natural environmental systems within and adjacent to the Resorts so as to minimise disturbance to flora and fauna communities and to areas of high scenic quality or visual sensitivity.
- To encourage best practice, low impact and environmentally-sensitive management practices for the Resorts.
- To encourage best practice in urban design that reflects the alpine character of the Resorts.
- To provide for the necessary management of snow deposition, in particular related to public safety and snow removal requirements.
- Enhance skier, pedestrian and vehicle activity at desirable levels related to the accessibility and capacity of skifields, services, commercial activity and development of trailheads and appropriate transportation for cross country skiing.
- To minimise conflicts arising from development on sites near and adjacent to habitat or communities of flora and fauna which may be adversely affected by development.
- To take account of the requirements of the Victorian *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*, the Commonwealth *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984* and the views of local Aboriginal communities in providing for the conservation and enhancement of places, sites and objects of Aboriginal cultural heritage value.
- To ensure that development is supported by appropriate investigation, documentation and resolution of geotechnical hazards.

Management of Geotechnical Hazards

Geotechnical hazards need to be managed in order to ensure that appropriate development takes place in the Resorts.

Objectives

To ensure that geotechnical hazards are managed throughout the Resorts so as to minimise risk to property and persons.

To ensure that management of geotechnical hazard forms an integral part of the development approvals process in the Alpine Resorts.

Strategies

Ensure that applications for development are supported by adequate investigation and documentation of geotechnical and related structural matters.

Ensure that development is appropriate to be carried out either conditionally or unconditionally, having regard to the results of those geotechnical and related structural investigations.

Ensure that development is only carried out if identified geotechnical and related structural engineering risks are effectively addressed.

Implementation

These strategies will be implemented by:

- Applying an Erosion Management Overlay (EMO) to all land in the Alpine Resorts.
- Applying a Local Planning Policy to provide guidance on determining applications.
- Ensuring that Strategic Statements for the relevant Resorts identify local specific issues for the management of geotechnical hazard.
- Requiring the preparation of a Preliminary Geotechnical Assessment as part of an application for planning permit or Site Development Plan as required under the EMO.
- Requiring the preparation of a quantitative risk assessment where a Preliminary Geotechnical Report shows risk greater than low.
- Ensuring that development is not supported, on geotechnical grounds, if a Quantitative Risk Assessment or independent review of a Quantitative Risk Assessment accompanying an application, identifies the risk posed by a geotechnical hazard as high or very high (as defined by the AGS Guidelines) after all feasible measures to reduce the risk have been considered.

References

Australian Geomechanics (May 2002) Landslide Risk Management Concepts and Guidelines, Journal and News of the Australian Geomechanics Society, Volume 37 Number 2 (as updated)

Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation (April 2000) Alpine Resorts – Geotechnical Stability Review – Final Report, Department of Natural Resources and Environment (as updated)

Management of Bushfire Risk

Bushfire risk needs to be managed to ensure that appropriate development takes place in the Resorts.

Objectives

To ensure the protection of human life.

To protect significant fauna and flora species and communities.

To ensure that bushfire management is managed throughout the Resorts so as to minimise risk to property and persons.

To ensure that management of bushfire hazard forms an integral part of the development approvals process in the Resorts.

To facilitate a defensible space around buildings.

Strategies

- Ensure that applications for development are supported by adequate investigation and documentation of bushfire risk management matters.
- Ensure that development is appropriate to be carried out either conditionally or unconditionally, having regard to the results of those bushfire risk management investigations.
- Ensure that development is only carried out if identified bushfire risks are effectively addressed.
- Discourage people from living in areas where it is not possible to have the minimum defensible space.
- Encourage the creation and maintenance of a defensible space around buildings.
- Take account of bushfire risk in all decisions.

ALPINE RESORTS PLANNING SCHEME

- Minimise non-residential use in areas at greatest risk from bushfire unless the risk can be mitigated to an acceptable level.
- Discourage new development of sites in bushfire prone areas that are also of high biodiversity conservation value.
- Ensure that new development in bushfire prone areas only proceeds where bushfire risk can be reduced to an acceptable level on a continuing basis without unacceptable biodiversity costs.

Implementation

- These strategies will be implemented by:
- Applying a Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) to all land in the Alpine Resorts identified as being at risk of bushfire.
- Applying a Local Planning Policy to provide guidance on determining applications.
- Ensuring that Strategic Statements for the relevant Resorts identify local specific issues for the management of bushfire hazard.
- Requiring the preparation of a Bushfire Land Use Risk Assessment as part of an application for planning permit or site development plan as required under the BMO.
- Ensuring the that development is not supported, on bushfire risk grounds, if an assessment identifies the risk posed by bushfire is high or very high (as defined by the CFA Guidelines) after all feasible measures to reduce the risk have been considered.
- Requiring the preparation and implementation of Resort Strategic Fire Risk Assessments.

References

National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management (2004)

Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (2010)

AS 3959-2009 Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas

HB 330-2009 Living in Bushfire-prone Areas

Resort Emergency Management Plans