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KEY INFLUENCES

Future use and development within the Resort requires an appreciation and understanding of the key influences that exist, as well as an identification of the opportunities/constraints that such influences will present over the next 10 – 15 years.

Significant communities of flora and fauna

The Resort is part of a delicate and rare environmental system that requires protection. The *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* and the recently enacted Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* require that rare and endangered flora, fauna and communities are protected and managed. The habitat of the Mountain Pygmy-possum (*Burramys parvus*) and other listed species are key influences for the siting and construction of development within the Resort.

Management of geotechnical hazard

The geotechnical stability of the Resort is an important environmental and safety issue. Natural features within the Resort, including vegetation cover, overland drainage flow, drainage lines and sub-terranean water levels are key influences on stability. The siting and design of new development needs to carefully consider the landform and its potential exposure to landslip.

Water catchment

The Resort is located at the headwaters of four major river catchments. Future development needs to be sensitively designed and located to provide adequate setbacks from watercourses. Sediment control principles need to be adopted during the construction of new buildings and infrastructure, as well as through the management of ongoing activities, such as overland flow drainage management and slope grooming. The provision of service infrastructure, including the sewerage treatment plant, should not adversely affect the water quality of catchments.

Water supply

Being able to provide an adequate supply of water to visitors, as well as for associated commercial operations, is a significant factor that will influence the sustainability of the Resort. In order to meet the water supply requirements generated by expanded snow making facilities and residential expansion of the Resort, a new water supply weir and storage facilities may be required. It is important to ensure that such facilities are visually unobtrusive and sensitively located.

Climate

The altitude, physical conditions and location of the Resort on the ridgeline make the area susceptible to quick and dramatic changes in weather conditions. Uses and developments within the Resort need to recognise the influence of these climatic conditions and be located and sited so as to minimise undue exposure to such elements.

There is the potential for climate change to reduce snow depth levels in Victoria within the next 50 years. Skiing is currently viable on slopes down to 1400 metres. Should the snow level rise, Hotham is likely to continue to be a viable winter Resort in the longer term as the majority of its ski areas are above 1600m in height.

Boundary interfaces

It is important to ensure that an appropriate interface is provided between the Resort and the adjoining Alpine National Park. The impact of land uses, recreational activities and building works in proximity to the Resort boundary must be assessed to ensure that they are compatible

with environmental values, and the Management Plan for the Alpine National Park.

Topography

Development at the Resort has been uniquely positioned on the ridgeline of the mountain range. One of the key advantages of this location is that it provides visitors with excellent views of the surrounding mountains and valleys. Maintaining and optimising these views will have a major influence on future development of the Resort. One of the key disadvantages of the ridgeline location is susceptibility to frost and extreme changes in weather conditions. Building design and location decisions must take this variability into account.

Leaseholds

With the exception of three parcels of freehold land, all land within the Resort, including the ski fields, is Crown Land. Much of this Crown Land is subject to leasing agreements that are managed by the Mt Hotham Alpine Resort Management Board. Future growth of the Resort is reliant upon investors being willing to inject capital into developments, which requires appropriate medium-long term lease terms to facilitate finance. The location and density of future development is related to the way the land is divided under leasing agreement.

Native Title

The Commonwealth *Native Title Act 1993* is a legislative consideration for leasing matters and the use and development of land. Due consideration is required for the notification requirements of the Commonwealth *Native Title Act 1993* in association with the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

Precinct development

Accommodation and commercial activity is concentrated in two identifiable areas: Hotham Village and Davenport. The two precincts have historically developed at different times and are distinctly different in both physical appearance and the type of accommodation available. It is important that the scale and design of future development in each area is compatible with the current built form, as well as the landscape values and topographical characteristics of the individual site.

Dinner Plain

Development at Dinner Plain over the last 10 years has facilitated greater day visitor numbers to Mt Hotham. Dinner Plain and Mt Hotham collectively provide an integrated Resort experience by offering different, yet complementary services. Future development of Mt Hotham needs to complement the range of recreational activities and services provided at Dinner Plain, rather than compete with them.

Built form

Architectural design has a significant influence on the current and future character of the Resort and its attractiveness to visitors. It is important to ensure that the design, scale, height and materials of new development within both the public and private domain is sympathetic to the surrounding built form and the natural environmental features of the Resort. Stone has been a significant foundation building material, given its prevalence in the area, and will continue to be encouraged.

Access to the Resort

Access to the Resort has been a major influence on past development and will continue to be a major influence on future development. The opening of the Mount Hotham Airport has substantially increased the accessibility of the Resort. This is likely to support an increase in both

accommodation and recreation facilities, particularly during the winter months. It will also make the area more accessible and attractive to summer visitors, including the conference/convention market.

The Great Alpine Road is the only all year round vehicle access route into the Resort. There is significant traffic flow on the road at peak travel times during winter. It is important to ensure that it can continue to operate as a major thoroughfare during the winter period, whilst also facilitating safe and efficient visitor access. Capital works that improve the safety of the Great Alpine Road and its interface with roads within the Resort should be encouraged as a priority.

Access within the Resort

Pedestrian and skier access within the Resort is currently constrained due to a number of factors. These include the bi-nodal nature of the Resort, the location of the Great Alpine Road through the centre of the village and the separation of the main snowfield from the beginners slopes at Davenport. The shared use of the Great Alpine Road by skiers, pedestrians and vehicles creates conflict and reduces the efficiency and safety of traffic flow. This potential for conflict is exacerbated by the lack of skier bridges/underpasses at well used crossing points along the Road. Minimising conflict and improving links, particularly during the winter season, are essential considerations for future operations and development within the Resort. The design and location of access roads and car parking areas within the Resort must consider safety, environmental systems and scenic qualities.

Car parking

Ensuring adequate provision is made at the Resort for both short-term and long-term parking is a major consideration for future development. The provision of parking at the Resort needs to be carefully linked with intra-village transport to ensure ease of access and reduce congestion on the Great Alpine Road, particularly within the accommodation areas.

The provision of on-site car parking in association with accommodation is currently limited due to shortage of flat land, which has resulted from the historic construction of the Resort along the ridgeline. Visitors seeking serviced accommodation increasingly request either on-site car parking or parking in proximity to their accommodation. This parking needs to be accessible and therefore requires all weather access. The provision of on-site parking will increase pedestrian and skier safety as it reduces vehicle movements within the Resort. It will also reduce the demand for converting undeveloped land into broad acre open car parking areas.

Ski field area

The Resort currently operates primarily as a winter ski destination. An unacceptably high skifield/skier ratio compromises skier safety and strains snow retention on key slopes. If visitor numbers increase it is important that additional ski areas and lifts are provided. This will ensure that visitors continue to be provided with a challenging, safe and high quality experience. Existing downhill trails primarily cater for intermediate/advanced skiers. New downhill trails should be designed to cater for a range of skill levels and should provide skier satisfaction by ensuring runs are not overcrowded.

Winter activities

Ensuring that a range of winter recreation experiences are available at the Resort is a key factor in attracting and retaining visitors to the Resort, thereby ensuring its continued success. There is currently a restricted range of recreation activities, other than skiing and snowboarding. A wider range of both indoor and outdoor recreational facilities should be encouraged to enhance the visitor experience. The provision of a central focus for visitors is considered important as the bi-nodal nature of the Resort means that it is currently lacking a defined "village centre". Winter activities are a key tourism and employment source resulting in significant economic benefit to the wider region.

Summer activities

Encouraging summer use of the Resort is a major challenge for current stakeholders and for future development. An all-year round destination will make better use of current infrastructure and provide greater economic opportunities. However, the potential for creating a successful year round resort is currently constrained due to the limited range of summer recreational activities and facilities. Subject to appropriate environmental assessment, active or passive recreation facilities and activities which add value to the year round use of the Resort should be encouraged and facilitated. This will enhance the attractiveness of the Resort as a conference destination and high altitude elite athlete training facility, during both the summer and winter months.

Services infrastructure

The Resort's ability to operate effectively and meet visitor demand is integrally related to the capacity of essential services, including sewerage, water, electricity, gas and refuse disposal. Limitations to any of these services and the ability of these services to be expanded will be major factors in dictating the level of visitation and population threshold.