

21.05 OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY

21.05-1 Built and Natural Heritage

Overview

The Shire's built environment contains a unique mix of the old and the new and provides for attractive residential areas and town centres. The townscapes, streetscapes, historic precincts, old signage, significant and lesser known historic buildings ranging from small cottages to public buildings, cultural landscapes and sites of old gold diggings located throughout the Shire, all contribute to the richness of the built heritage and cultural landscapes.

The Shire has a natural environment that varies from rolling pastures and broad acre sheep grazing areas to the highpoints of Mount Tarrengower and Mount Alexander. The rural landscapes found throughout the Shire, together with the State Forests, streams and rivers are significant components of the Shire's character. Also of importance is the high visual quality which contrasts low lying areas with the steeper hilly country, and the definite edge between the cleared pastures and the forests. Some of these significant natural landscape features include, Mount Alexander, Mount Tarrengower, Mount Consultation, Barfold and Muckleford Gorges, Vaughan Springs and the landscapes between Elphinstone and Castlemaine.

Maldon is Victoria's first Notable Town and one of the most significant cultural heritage towns in Australia. Castlemaine is a fine example of a Victorian heritage town and together with the historic smaller towns establishes Mount Alexander Shire as one of the State's greatest concentrations of built heritage. The planning scheme provisions for the Maldon township recognise the historic significance of the residential and commercial areas. The extensive use of the Heritage Overlay and a local policy for Natural and Cultural Heritage recognises the importance of these areas, particularly Maldon.

Issues

- The need to identify heritage buildings and places not presently protected by the current municipal planning schemes
- The need to identify significant geological landscape features throughout the municipal area

Objectives

- To preserve heritage buildings, places and significant landscapes
- To provide certainty and direction for the redevelopment of heritage buildings
- To protect places of cultural significance and support the preservation of those localities threatened by development or neglect.

Strategies

- Extend the level of heritage planning controls for all notable buildings and places throughout the Shire by including identified building and places from the former Shire of Metcalfe Heritage study and any future study for the former Shire of Newstead.
- Heritage preservation to accord with the recognised criteria contained in the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS).
- Ensure that all new developments are in sympathy with the character and heritage associated with the town, areas or the general surrounds.

These strategies will be implemented by:-

- Apply the Heritage overlay to all listed heritage buildings and places
- Apply Significant Landscape Overlays to areas of high visual sensitivity such as Mount Alexander, Mount Tarrengower, Mount Consultation, Barfold and Muckleford Gorges, Vaughan Springs and the landscapes between Elphinstone and Castlemaine.
- Complete a heritage study for the former Shire of Newstead
- Apply local policies for Natural and Cultural heritage (22.04-8) and for the townships of Castlemaine (22.01-1) and Maldon (22.01-2).
- Preserve historic streetscapes by facilitating the use underground cabling, aerial bundling of cables in heritage areas
- Maintain a heritage advisory service to assist the public and private sector in ensuring appropriate development and the maintenance of heritage features.
- Develop guidelines for the location of buildings and works within significant landscape areas
- Develop guidelines for the restoration and maintenance of heritage areas and features
- Provide heritage and design advice to assist in the retention of heritage buildings
- Implementing local policies on streetscape development by facilitating the use of underground and aerial bundle cabling.

21.05-2 Ageing Community**Overview**

By the year 2021 almost 32% of the population will be aged 60 years and over. This demographic change will require an expanded range of housing choices, not presently catered for by the current housing stock of detached dwellings. A variety of housing types should be encouraged to cater for a variety of household types. The Shire needs to promote infill development in order to consolidate existing urban communities and maximise infrastructure use. The current land supply available for residential development across the Shire and in most townships, already exceeds 10 years.

The report 'Victoria in Fact' Interim Report (1997) based on the 1996 Australian Bureau of Statistic (ABS) census shows that age structure of the Shire is similar to Regional Victoria in the general population categories 5-17 and 35-49 years old. However the overall population is generally older than the regional average, within a greater representation in those over 35 than those under 35. As with the rest of the State, Mount Alexander Shire is facing an increase in growth within the upper age groups. This is particular is evident within two main centres of the Shire, Castlemaine and Maldon. In 1996 Regional Victoria had 15.9% of the population greater than 60 years old. In this same period, Castlemaine had almost 25% and Maldon almost 30%. With such high proportions of the general population being 'elderly' the Shire must recognise the wants and needs associated with this sector of the community.

Issues

- Medium Density Housing can only be provided in Castlemaine due to the current level of reticulated water, sewerage and drainage infrastructure
- The need to increase the provision of infrastructure to all urban areas to facilitate the development of medium density housing

Objectives

- To increase housing choice to accommodate future population needs
- To provide medium density development in close proximity to retail, health and, community facilities
- To cater for the social, cultural and economic needs of the population

Strategies

- Expedite the provision of sewerage infrastructure to those townships which have the potential to accommodate growth in medium density housing
- Facilitate the consolidation of urban areas by preventing the further expansion of urban zones.
- Provide a range of housing choices through the promotion of new innovative designs while recognising alternative shared/cooperative living and housing arrangements
- Identify residential redevelopment opportunities within existing residential and commercial areas of Castlemaine.
- Identify areas appropriate for Medium Density Housing upon the implementation of water and sewerage infrastructure.

These strategies will be implemented by:-

- Adopting the Residential 1 Zone to all serviced urban areas and the Township Zone to all unserved urban areas.

21.05-3 Settlement and Infrastructure**Overview**

The Shire's urban centres accommodate approximately 78% of the Shire's total population, that being 15,913 in 1996 an increase of 1.9% in the past 10 years. This compares with a 0.7% growth during this same period for Regional Victoria as a whole. Victoria in the Future (Nov 1996) predicts that Mount Alexander Shire will experience a moderate to strong growth rate of between 1.1% and 1.3 % per year for the next 25 year. Recent trends suggest that a large percentage of the growth has occurred in the rural and rural residential areas, rather than the central town of Castlemaine, however long-term growth is anticipated to favour the smaller townships due to provision of reticulated services.

Urban development in the Shire is concentrated in the townships of Castlemaine, Maldon and Campbells Creek. Other townships include Harcourt, Guildford, Chewton, Newstead and Taradale. Urban planning and development in the Shire must address the requirements of a range of land uses and developments including residential, rural residential, industrial, retail and the provision of community services and facilities.

Future urban development must be based on cost effective forms which are environmentally sustainable. Future development should complement the existing character and the protection of heritage areas and sites.

Mount Alexander Shire has a variety of small towns, villages and hamlets, each with its own special identity. Factors contributing to the character of these townships include attractive rural settings, significant built heritage and a rich community culture. The uniqueness and quality of life offered in each township, village and hamlet is of great importance to the people of the Shire.

The integration between the urban settlements and the rural settings and land uses is a valuable feature of the Shire. The mix between urban and rural offers an alternative to the

highly urbanised areas of Melbourne and nearby regional centres, and also increases the visual quality of the views within and between the settlements.

Although urban development is predicated on a variety of social, cultural and lifestyle choices of individuals, however, the provision of fully reticulated sewerage and water supply services is a major concern for the residents of Maldon, Harcourt, Campbells Creek, Newstead and Chewton. The lack of sewerage infrastructure in particular, poses a major environmental problem as land around these urban centres is nearing its capacity to effectively dispose of effluent wastes. The program of infrastructure upgrading has significant implications for township growth, with the benefits being:-

- reduction in untreated effluent and pollution of the environment
- improve water quality and standard of living
- ability for towns to expand and accommodate a wider variety of land use and developments

Coliban Region Water Authority (CRWA) has proposed the following timetable for the provision of sewerage to various townships throughout the Shire:

- Maldon - 1998/1999
- Newstead -1999/2000
- Campbells Creek - 1999/2000
- Harcourt - 1999/2000
- Chewton - 1999/2000

There are also water supply elevation limitations in relation to the following townships. Satisfactory water supply can only be provided to those areas below the Australian Height Datum levels (AHD) indicated for the following townships:-

- | | |
|---------------------|------------|
| ▪ Elphinstone | 435 metres |
| ▪ North Castlemaine | 325 metres |
| ▪ Taradale | 430 metres |
| ▪ Golden Point | 375 metres |
| ▪ Harcourt | 360 metres |
| ▪ Chewton | 350 metres |
| ▪ Barkers Creek | 340 metres |
| ▪ Maldon | 385 metres |

Issues

- Long lead times in the provision of sewerage infrastructure to unsewered townships
- The environmental affects of unserved urban development is affecting the Loddon River catchment
- Impact of sewerage on the potential to increase development density in heritage areas

Objectives

- To prevent unserved urban development
- To reduce environmental impacts caused by unserved urban development
- To plan for the proper development of the townships

Strategies

- Ensure that new development is encouraged to located within fully serviced areas
- Improve the standard of on-site treatment of effluent in unsewered urban areas.
- Improve public education and knowledge on the maintenance of on-site effluent disposal systems
- Ensure that new development is in accordance with town structure plans
- Ensure appropriate land supply for residential, low density residential and rural living zones.

These strategies will be implemented by

- Adopting framework plans for unserviced towns, which identify the AHD contours and other constraints to urban development
- Limit urban development to below the AHD levels, indicated for the provision of reticulated water supply for the respective townships.
- Restricting the expansion of unsewered townships, by preventing the rezoning of land for urban development
- Applying local policies for the small towns of Campbells Creek, Harcourt, Newstead, Chewton, Guildford, Taradale, Elphinstone, Rural communities.
- Applying local policies on urban growth boundaries, residential infrastructure, road construction and highways.
- Assisting Coliban Water in the supply of water and sewerage infrastructure to all unserviced urban areas.
- Facilitate the implementation of sewerage infrastructure in the respective townships by assisting the Coliban Water Authority.
- Review the area and location of urban, low density and rural living zones having regard to:-
 - environmental constraints
 - a maximum 10 year land supply
 - the supply, cost and extent of infrastructure to be provided to each town
- Promote the installation of improved septic tank systems and alternative waste treatment systems where reticulated services are not available.

21.05-4 Calder Highway Corridor**Overview**

The Calder Highway Corridor represents a major infrastructure asset and is the main entrance into the Shire. The highway is to be upgraded to dual carriageway standard from Melbourne to Bendigo.

The highway traverses through the townships of Taradale, Elphinstone, Harcourt. The alignment also traverses through the valuable horticultural area of Harcourt where orchards and new viticulture activities are located. The realignment of the highway will need to consider the environmental attributes of these urban and rural areas and ensure that they are not prejudiced or degraded.

The alignment of the highway may have major implications on the growth and development of the Shire, especially the areas located along or near the Calder corridor. The improvement of the highway will allow improved access to Melbourne, which may attract new industries and facilitate employment opportunities for Castlemaine. Likewise the realignment of the highway away from Castlemaine may prejudice future development.

Issues

- The location of the realignment and its impacts on the future growth and development of Castlemaine
- The amenity and quality of life of small townships such as Taradale, Elphinstone and Harcourt
- The design and location of the highway through the Harcourt horticultural area, needs to be sensitive to the environmental requirements of this industry.
- Strip development (residential, low density residential, rural living, commercial, industrial) adjacent to the new highway alignment.

Objectives

- Prevent strip development adjacent to the Calder Highway.
- Protect the Harcourt horticultural area from fragmentation caused by the realignment.

Strategies

- Prevent the sprawl of low density residential land uses along the Calder Highway and throughout the Harcourt horticultural area.

These strategies will be implemented by

- Applying the Road Zone to the Calder Highway corridor.
- Applying the Low Density Residential and Township zones to existing developed areas and the Rural zone to the remaining corridor areas.
- Utilise the local policies specifically developed for the realignment of the Calder highway.
- Develop guidelines for development at the entrances to the various townships located along the highway.
- Providing input into the alignment of the Calder Highway through the ESS consultative committee.

21.05-5 Agriculture**Overview**

Agriculture is a significant industry within the Mount Alexander Shire. It is estimated to be worth about \$25 million with 37% of this being derived from the Harcourt Horticultural area. The Harcourt area has a viable and important apple and pear industry, which needs recognition and protection. The area has the potential for further expansion, which will have significant economic benefits to the local economy. There is a concern that productive agricultural land is being lost to non-agricultural uses, especially to rural living and low density residential development. The Horticultural areas need to be identified and retained for agricultural purposes and the use of this land for non horticultural uses should be prevented.

There is growth in the diversification of agriculture as people are venturing into more intensive uses of land, including emu and ostrich farming, vineyards, boutique horticultural activities and other farming pursuits. Fine wool is also a specialty in the granite land system, especially throughout the eastern and north western areas of the Shire

The terms of trade and increasing costs associated with traditional agricultural pursuits has led to pressures on the traditional farming sector. Many traditional farming practices have now been identified with continuing loss of environmental quality and unsustainable land management practices. Significant initiatives at a local level (eg. Landcare) and regional level catchment management strategies are needed to address these matters. Ultimately the potential of the agricultural industry is dependent on the health of the environment and Loddon - Campaspe catchment.

Issues

- The significance of the Harcourt horticultural area and the need for its protection
- Use of agricultural land for non agricultural, rural living or hobby farming purposes which conflict with established agricultural and horticultural land uses
- The need for diversification of the agricultural economy

- Condition and health of the Loddon - Campaspe water catchment and its affect on agriculture

Objectives

- Prevent non-agricultural uses and developments in the Harcourt irrigation/horticulture area.
- Preserve broad area agriculture.

Strategies

- Undertake a study to determine appropriate locations for rural living development
- Encourage farm management practices and land use activities, which have the capacity to be sustained and reflect the optimal use of land.
- Discourage the subdivision of agricultural land as it leads to increased loss of land dedicated to agricultural production..
- Reduce land degradation within the Loddon - Campaspe Catchment
- Encourage agricultural diversity and promote opportunities for new farming enterprises by understanding new and innovative technologies and use of land.
- Discourage Rural Living development in Rural Zones.

These strategies will be implemented by

- Applying the Rural Zone to agricultural areas.
- Applying environmental significance overlays to the Harcourt horticulture area.
- Applying the principles of the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy to land use decision making.
- Applying local policies on spray drift residential development in rural areas.
- Applying local policies for the use and development of rural land, for uses such as industrial development, farm produce stalls, animal keeping and greyhound training.
- Applying the Rural Living Zones to preferred development localities within the Shire, more specifically, restrict rural residential development to areas that:
 - are not suitable for intensive productive agriculture.
 - are adjacent to existing urban areas so infrastructure can be developed efficiently.
 - do not prejudice the future growth of townships.
 - are capable of integrating residential development.
 - are in accordance with Ministerial Direction No. 6 on Rural Residential Development.

21.05-6 Environment

Overview

The Shire is located in the catchments of both the Loddon and Campaspe Rivers. The attributes of the catchment are poor due to significant land degradation and poor water quality. It is the fourth most degraded catchment within Australia. Only one town, Castlemaine is sewered with the remaining towns relying on septic tanks which discharge effluent into the sub soil. Eventually, some of this waste finds its way into the creeks and rivers within Mount Alexander Shire and has considerable downstream impacts.

If managed properly the natural environment can sustain the further economic development of the Shire. The condition of the environment vitally important for habitats, remnant vegetation and water catchments. The degradation of the environment affects land,

agriculture and community amenity, with resulting flow on affects to the economy and people who reside in the Shire.

The rivers and creeks play a vital role in the community and have historical significance. Issues relating to waterways include flooding, preservation of the levee banks along the Loddon River, deterioration of water quality and public access to waterways.

Appropriate locations for rural residential developments are to be based on a number of considerations including the condition and value of the natural environment, native flora and fauna habitats, flooding, fire hazard, land capability, soil structure, vegetation quality and proximity to reserves and parks. Choosing appropriate locations and appropriate lot sizes can enhance the control of weeds and vermin and the illegal dumping of household and garden waste which often results in the spread of weeds into public land and native bush.

The road verges throughout the Shire are very significant in terms of their attractiveness and environmental value. Issues relating to these areas include removing wood for firewood, clearing of land for planting or grazing and fencing off areas in front of properties. Part of the character of Mount Alexander Shire is experiencing the rural amenity of the countryside from the road, making it necessary to have attractive roadsides to preserve the overall rural character. The Shire intends to develop roadside management and roadside conservation strategies.

Issues

- The poor condition of the Loddon Campaspe catchment within the Mount Alexander Municipality
- Unserved urban areas contributing towards poor water quality and environmental degradation
- The major industries of agriculture and tourism are dependent upon the health of the catchment

Objectives

- To protect and improve the natural environment of the Shire
- Protect and enhance remnant vegetation and bio-diversity through effective management of road reserves, railway lines and other public land.
- To recognise and protect key natural features including the Barfold Gorge, Mount Alexander, Mount Tarrengower
- To identify and protect other significant features including Vaughan Springs, Muckleford Gorge, Mount Consultation and landscapes between Elphinstone and Castlemaine.

Strategies

- Ensure that land use planning and development supports the regional catchment management strategy and sustainable natural resource management practices.
- Minimise the detrimental environmental effects caused or created by new residential development. Such impacts relate to water pollution, land degradation and fire hazards. Mitigating measures may be introduced to ensure that the development meets approved guidelines for soil erosion control, land based effluent systems in appropriate locations and take into account the lands capacity to sustain the development.
- Protect the environment by enforcing appropriate setbacks and buffers, by encouraging landowners to maintain existing vegetation and encouraging the replanting of indigenous vegetation.
- Ensure that the maintenance of acceptable water quality standards and the natural condition of watercourses are considered in the assessment of land use proposals.

- Protect and enhance indigenous roadside vegetation through effective management of road reserves, railway lines and other public land and the non-indigenous roadside vegetation which forms part of the heritage character.
- Promote the development and installation of reticulated sewerage schemes in unsewered townships, and the development and installation of improved septic tank systems and alternative waster treatment systems (eg composting toilets) where sewerage systems are not yet available.
- Promote effective noxious weed and vermin control throughout the Shire and the region, and ensure that the Shire Council works do not contribute to the spread of weeds.
- Ensure that sustainable natural resource management practices are adopted.
- In partnership with the Department of Natural Resources, undertake the collection and mapping of environmental constraints such as:- erosion, salinity recharge and discharge areas, remnant vegetation, flora and fauna, land subject to inundation and flooding and land capability.
- Support Coliban Water in the implementation of water and sewerage infrastructure throughout the municipal area.

These strategies will be implemented by: -

- Applying environmental significance overlays to areas that have identified environmental constraints, such as lakes Eppalock and Cairn Curran.
- Applying the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy in determining land use and development applications.
- Inclusion of the overlay controls to further assist in the protection of sensitive locations, such as Environmental Significance Overlays for the protection of the Barfold Gorge, Mount Alexander and Vaughan Springs.
- Applying local policies on catchment and land protection, wildfire management, hill and ridge top protection, steep land, pest and plant management, roadside conservation and water supply catchments