

21.04 OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

22/03/2007
C24

21.04-1 Management of Urban Growth

22/03/2007
C24

Overview

The Shire's urban centres accommodate approximately 67% of the Shire's total population. The urban population of the Shire is increasing due mainly to housing growth in Castlemaine. The Shire is experiencing a "sea change" trend. Almost 3,000 people moved to the Shire between 1996-2001 with the majority moving from Melbourne. Factors influencing this trend include reduced travel times to Melbourne and Bendigo, quality of lifestyle, heritage character, and comparatively lower house and land prices. The State Government Melbourne 2030 Strategy "promotes growth of regional cities and key towns within transport corridors..." Council's Urban Living Strategy is a strategic response to the Melbourne 2030 Strategy.

The Mount Alexander Urban Living Strategy estimates growth of the Shire's population from 16,200 to 21,400 by the year 2021. The proportion of the Shire's urban population is estimated to increase from around 67% in 2001 to 73% by 2021. Approximately 50% of the Shire's population growth during this period is expected to occur in Castlemaine.

The strategic foundation of Mount Alexander Urban Living Strategy is a growth management model called "Cluster Connect and Calder Corridor" (CCCC). The main components of this model are:

- Balanced development building on the Shire's existing settlement pattern with a regional urban focus on Castlemaine.
- Urban consolidation and expansion at Castlemaine.
- Urban containment and limited expansion at Maldon.
- Planned urban infill and expansion at Newstead as an alternative to Castlemaine and the Calder Corridor towns.
- Planned growth of Calder Corridor towns (Harcourt, Taradale, and Elphinstone)
- Limited growth of smaller settlements.
- Improving transport and access connections between Castlemaine and outlying towns.

Management of urban growth requires protection of built and cultural heritage, townscape, natural environment and lifestyle qualities that are valued by the community. It is these and other qualities that are attracting new residents to the Shire.

The Urban Living Strategy provides opportunities for housing growth in Campbells Creek and the recently sewerred towns of Maldon, Newstead, Harcourt, and Chewton. Council supports sewerred of Taradale, Elphinstone and Guildford to improve water quality and encourage an urban village form.

Issues

Settlement

- Calder Corridor towns are likely to experience unprecedented levels of urban development.
- New residential and industrial areas need to be identified in Castlemaine.
- Opportunities for town development at Elphinstone could be lost if a plan is not prepared to guide future development.
- People aged 50 years and over will comprise 55% of the population by 2021.

- Consolidation in major towns will result in more efficient use of land and existing infrastructure.
- Lack of housing diversity to meet existing and future diversity of households.

Environment

- Potential impact of urban consolidation and infill on heritage and residential character of the Shire's towns.
- Impact of residential zoning of land in Little Bendigo and North Castlemaine given the extent and significance of native vegetation and proximity to the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park.
- Impact of urban development on native vegetation, fauna (particularly at the interface with Parks, reserves and urban fringe areas) and heritage and landscape.
- The need for fire safety.
- Water quality and stormwater management.

Economic Development

- Industrial development opportunities for Harcourt and Elphinstone as a result of road and rail improvements in the Calder Corridor.

Infrastructure

- Melbourne 2030 Strategy will influence growth of towns within the Calder transport corridor.

Water quality impacts of *unsewered* development in Guildford, Taradale, and Elphinstone.

- Adopted Urban Living Strategy is dependent on improved access and transport between Castlemaine and outlying towns.
- Heavy vehicles travelling through townships and town centres are causing amenity and safety issues.

Objectives: What do we want to achieve?

Settlement

- Encourage and guide urban growth that is generally consistent with the preferred urban growth model (Cluster Connect and Calder Corridor) for the Shire to the year 2030.
- Encourage Taradale to develop a more compact village form with improved town centre amenity.
- Encourage Elphinstone to develop as a sewerred township with improved town centre amenity and a new industrial area.
- Encourage Harcourt to develop as a planned township with residential expansion east of existing highway and a new industrial area adjacent to the Calder Freeway and Midland Highway.
- Encourage residential infill and expansion in Maldon that protects the town's heritage significance and character.
- Encourage Newstead to develop as a "lifestyle and arts" town with planned residential infill and expansion, and enhancement of town centre functions and amenity.
- Increase housing choice to meet the diverse household types.

Environment

- Protect townscape, heritage, and landscape qualities of the Shire's towns.

- Protect Chewton's historic urban form and maintain existing streetscape character.
- Protect residential character and amenity of existing residential neighbourhoods.
- Encourage urban containment and planned growth to protect the natural environment and rural landscapes.
- Protect visual landscape corridors along highways between towns in the Shire.

Economic Development

- Promote the role and status of Castlemaine as a regional centre for shopping, business, and community life.
- Encourage new industrial areas at locations adjacent to Calder and Midland Highways.
- Infrastructure
- Encourage the efficient use of existing infrastructure, facilities and services (transport, sewerage, water, community facilities).
- Integrate land use and transport planning to facilitate better use of existing bus, rail, private and community transport services.
- Provide for increased residential densities close to retail, health and community facilities.
- Prevent adverse environmental and safety impacts from unserviced and serviced urban development.

Strategies: How do we achieve it?

Settlement

- Ensure urban growth and development is consistent with the Urban Living Strategy.
- Ensure urban growth and development occurs within urban boundaries defined on town framework plans.
- Apply Ministerial Direction No. 6 for any proposed rezoning to land to Low Density Residential Zone.
- Encourage planned and sustainable growth in recently sewered towns and areas (Harcourt, Maldon, Newstead, Chewton and Campbells Creek).
- Ensure that residential lot sizes provide opportunities for a range of dwelling sizes and types.
- Encourage higher density residential opportunities within 20 minutes walking distance from town centres.
- Limit urban development to below the AHD levels indicated for the provision of reticulated water supply for the respective townships.
- Prevent the sprawl of low density residential land uses along the Calder Highway, throughout the Harcourt horticultural area and on the fringe of towns along the Calder, Midland and Pyrenees Highways.

Environment

- Encourage sustainable urban development and residential design that protects remnant native vegetation and habitat, and promotes efficient use of water and energy.
- Ensure landscape and townscape character is protected from inappropriate development within the visual corridors of highways between towns.

Economic Development

- Make provision for new industrial areas within the Calder Corridor at the towns of Harcourt and Elphinstone.

Infrastructure

- Continue to support the installation of town sewerage systems at Taradale, Elphinstone and Guildford.
- Ensure land use and development proposals at Taradale and Elphinstone provide opportunities for further consolidation when urban sewerage is available.
- Ensure that new dwellings have adequate water supplies and access for fire safety.
- Require that all new dwellings that are not provided with reticulated water supplies to have 10,000 litres of water set aside exclusively for fire protection and with an all-weather track that will allow access to the dwelling and the water supply by a fire truck.

Implementation

Settlement

- Apply the Residential 1 zone in existing and proposed residential areas in Castlemaine and Maldon.
- Apply the Development Plan Overlay to proposed new residential areas in the Shire's towns.
- Apply the Incorporated Plan Overlay to the proposed residential expansion area in Diamond Gully, Castlemaine.
- Implement town framework plans.
- Use of local policies applicable to Castlemaine and the Shire's towns.

Environment

- Apply the Heritage Overlays to heritage significant buildings and areas.
- Apply the Significant Landscape Overlay to areas of special landscape significance and interest.
- Give priority to the preparation and exhibition of an amendment to replace the current WMO maps with the new mapping of bushfire prone areas.
- Apply additional Environmental Significance Overlays to watercourses in the Shire, in consultation with Goulburn Murray Water.

Further Strategic Work

- Urban design frameworks for Harcourt, Newstead, Taradale and Chewton.
- Outline Development Plan for Elphinstone.
- Neighbourhood Character Study for Castlemaine.
- Review of Castlemaine Historical and Architectural Study, 1979.
- Review of Maldon Conservation Study, 1977.
- Incorporated plans or development plans for proposed new residential areas.
- Flood Management Study for Newstead.
- Open Space Strategy for Castlemaine.

- Study of the supply and demand for low density residential lots and development of criteria to guide application of the zone.

21.04-222/03/2007
C24**Strengthening Castlemaine's Regional Role****Overview**

Castlemaine (which includes Campbells Creek) is increasingly being seen as an attractive place to live and an alternative to the highly urbanised environment of metropolitan Melbourne. The appeal of Castlemaine is related to the reduced travel times (road and rail) to and from Melbourne and Bendigo, the town's heritage and landscape character, lifestyle qualities, and its recognition as an arts and cultural centre.

In recent years there has been a marked increase in the number of dwelling approvals and level of residential subdivision activity, particularly as infill within the town. Population growth estimates (Mount Alexander Urban Living Strategy, 2004) indicate that Castlemaine's population will grow from 8,000 to 10,500 persons by 2021. Whilst urban consolidation needs to be encouraged, appropriate planning responses are required to protect the heritage character and amenity of residential areas.

Castlemaine is a regional centre for employment. Industry groups of manufacturing, retail, health and education are the major sources of employment. Castlemaine has traditionally had a strong manufacturing base with key industries such as KR Castlemaine Foods P/L and Flowserve.

A strengthening of Castlemaine's regional role will require strategies to reduce "escape" of retail expenditure, support and enhance regional level facilities (health, education, and cultural), and generate local employment facilities.

Castlemaine town centre is a regional shopping and business centre for a population catchment that generally equates with the Mount Alexander local government area. It services a population catchment of approximately 16,000 people. The local attraction of the Castlemaine town centre is significant. An in-centre survey undertaken in 1995 concluded that approximately 57% of customers using the town centre at the time of the survey were from Castlemaine (excluding Campbells Creek) and approximately 39% of customers commuted from nearby townships (Castlemaine Town Centre Retail Study, 1995).

Castlemaine is a heritage town of local, regional and State significance. The Castlemaine Central Conservation Area is possibly of national significance. Heritage protection is a priority issue and a major challenge at a time when Castlemaine is experiencing unprecedented development pressures.

Issues*Settlement*

- Lack of housing options close to and within the town centre.
- Lack of housing diversity to meet different household types eg. families, aged, and single and two person households; and home and business.
- Dwelling approvals and rates of residential subdivision are increasing.
- Castlemaine's population profile is characterised by increasing proportions of aged persons.
- More affordable housing is required to retain the current diversity of the town's population.
- Residential consolidation opportunities are available in Campbells Creek due to recent availability of sewerage.

Environment

- Residential expansion is posing a threat to remnant native vegetation and habitat.
- Visual qualities and entrance character of Highway entries to Castlemaine can be improved.
- Heavy vehicle traffic through the town and town centre is causing amenity and safety issues.
- Lack of an overall statement of heritage significance for Castlemaine, and particularly the Castlemaine Central Conservation Area.
- Infill housing and subdivision in the original township area of Castlemaine has potential for adverse impact on heritage and residential neighbourhood character.
- Potential for impact on habitat and cultural values of Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park from urban development.

Infrastructure

- Need to integrate land use planning with planning for transport services.
- Shortage of serviced residential lots without environmental constraints.
- Acute shortage of serviced industrial lots and unserviced industrial land.

Objectives: What do we want to achieve?

Settlement

- Encourage residential expansion to the west and south of Castlemaine in the McKenzies Hill, Diamond Gully and Campbells Creek areas.
- Provide for greater housing diversity to meet the needs of different households (families, aged, and single and two person households; and home and business)
- Provide greater opportunities for housing that is affordable.
- Encourage a compact town centre that is vibrant, promotes walking, improves vehicle access and parking, protects heritage, and provides opportunities for new development.

Environment

- Encourage urban fill and consolidation that is sympathetic to the heritage significance of buildings and areas, and the heritage and neighbourhood character of the town.
- Protect Castlemaine's built and cultural heritage significance and character.
- Protect the heritage and cultural landscape values of the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park from inappropriate urban development on abutting private land.
- Protect the heritage and cultural landscape significance of Pennyweight Flat and Moonlight Flat.
- Protect the heritage character and residential and landscape amenity of Castlemaine's town entrances.
- Create a town open space network based on watercourses in consultation with DSE and any other relevant land manager or authority.

Economic Development

- Develop an industrial land strategy for Castlemaine and the Calder Corridor.
- Ensure that business zonings are appropriately related to the role of each town centre and the anticipated population growth in the catchment area.

Infrastructure

- Provide opportunities for the expansion of regional health, educational and cultural facilities.
- Develop a town bus network from existing inter-town services with termination at the Castlemaine railway station.
- Assess the need for a longer term Midland Highway bypass to the west of the town.

Strategies: How do we achieve it?

Settlement

- Encourage residential living in the town centre and within a 20 minute walking distance
- Investigate housing potential of crown land situated south of Forest Creek and north of Duke Street.

Environment

- Ensure residential subdivision makes provision for open space links along drainage corridors and creeks in consultation with DSE and any other relevant land manager or authority.
- Ensure that development proposals are in sympathy with the heritage significance and character of buildings and areas.
- Ensure that proposed residential subdivisions, dwellings and alterations to dwellings respect and protect neighbourhood character.

Economic Development

- Provide new locations for industrial development at Harcourt and Elphinstone
- Maintain compact commercial cores within Castlemaine and the other townships.

Infrastructure

- Ensure new residential areas are integrated with existing urban areas to facilitate permeability for pedestrians and vehicle traffic.
- Ensure that land use planning is integrated with planning for transport services.

Implementation

- Apply relevant local policies

Settlement

- Use of Castlemaine Town Framework Plan.
- Apply the Residential 1 Zone to proposed new residential areas.
- Apply the Development Plan Overlay to the proposed new industrial area in Ranters Gully.
- Apply the Development Plan or Incorporated Plan Overlays to proposed new residential areas.

Environment

- Apply the Design and Development Overlay to identified development/redevelopment sites in the town centre.

Economic Development

- Apply the Industrial 3 Zone in Daws Road at location shown on Castlemaine Land Use Framework Plan.
- Apply the Mixed Use Zone to potential development sites on the south side of Forest Street shown on the Castlemaine Town Centre Urban Design Framework Plan.

Further Strategic Work

- Urban Vegetation Assessment Study for Castlemaine.
- Incorporated Plan for Diamond Gully area.
- Development plans for McKenzies Hill and West Castlemaine areas.
- Sustainable Housing Design Guidelines.
- Neighbourhood Character Study for Castlemaine.
- Review of Castlemaine Architectural and Historical Study, 1979.
- Local Policy for Urban-Forest interface areas.
- Retail and Commercial Study of the Castlemaine town centre.

21.04-322/03/2007
C24**Industrial development****Overview**

The manufacturing sector forms the largest sector for local employment. This employment is concentrated in two key groups: food processing, and machinery and equipment manufacturing.

Recent and expected growth in Mount Alexander Shire is placing demand on land, particularly for residential and industrial development. Industrial land in the Shire is concentrated in Castlemaine. Existing smaller scale industrial areas are also located in Harcourt and Maldon. There is limited land available for expansion in each of the four major industrial areas in Castlemaine.

The Mount Alexander Urban Living Strategy adopts a sub regional approach to industrial land supply encompassing Castlemaine and towns in the Calder Corridor. Duplication of the Calder Highway and the bypass of highway towns present opportunities for new industrial areas at locations that can utilise the advantages of improved road infrastructure. Whilst Castlemaine's industrial base and employment needs to be reinforced, new industrial locations at Harcourt and Elphinstone will reduce the amount of industry related traffic travelling through Castlemaine which is causing some residential and town centre amenity issues.

Issues

- Lack of serviced industrial lots and unserviced industrial land.
- Demand for smaller industrial lots (ie. 2,000 m²) for businesses with a small number of employees.
- Calder Freeway Corridor provides regional transport advantages for industry.
- Access through residential areas has caused some amenity problems in Wesley Hill.
- Main vehicle access to Castlemaine from the Calder Freeway will be via the Midland Highway at Harcourt.
- Heavy vehicle traffic through Castlemaine, Maldon and Newstead is impacting on residential and town centre amenity.

Objectives: What do we want to achieve?

- Provide locations for new industrial development adjacent to a highway or major road and away from existing or proposed residential areas.
- Provide for a range of industrial lot sizes to meet different land requirement of industry and business.
- Identify new industrial development locations at Harcourt and Elphinstone that have easy access to the Calder Freeway and Midland Highway.
- Encourage high standards of industrial development that adequately addresses issues such as access, parking, signage and landscaping.
- Encourage energy and water efficiency in the planning, design and development of industrial areas.

Strategies: How do we achieve it?

- Ensure that industrial subdivision is staged to meet demand for lots.
- Provide for industrial development locations at Harcourt and Elphinstone as shown on town framework plans.
- Ensure that the entrance character and civic presentation of Castlemaine's highways are protected and enhanced by the siting and design of new industrial or commercial buildings.
- Support the installation of a township sewerage system at Elphinstone.
- Monitor the need for a Midland Highway bypass of Castlemaine to the west of the town.
- Ensure that industrial development is of a high standard and fully serviced with sewer, water and drainage.

Implementation

- Use of Elphinstone town framework plan.

Further strategic work

- Outline Development Plan for Elphinstone.
- Urban Design Framework for Harcourt.

21.04-422/03/2007
C24**Rural Living****Overview**

There is a growing demand to live in Mount Alexander Shire, a trend that is expected to continue. The Shire includes sensitive urban and rural environments. All forms of growth, including rural living, need to be managed. The trend for rural living is a key element of the social, economic and environment change occurring in the Shire. Rural living, itself, has contributed to the attraction of new residents through opportunities for alternative forms of residential development it offers. The greatest demand for rural living is around Castlemaine, where land has been zoned for this purpose, and along the main roads and highways in the centre of the Shire.

Rural living has accommodated population growth and been a part of the rural landscape in the Mount Alexander area for many years. The attraction of this area for rural living is contributed to by its proximity to urban centres; Castlemaine, Bendigo and Melbourne, its attractive and variety of rural landscapes; undulating forest and farmland, low productivity values of much of the agricultural land and the prevalence of small lots throughout the rural areas as a result of the gold mining heritage of the area. Although there have been some areas specifically designated for rural living in the planning scheme, the land fragmentation pattern in the Shire has resulted in rural living activity being dispersed throughout rural areas.

Within the Shire, the only areas specifically designated for rural living are around Castlemaine. These areas are to the north of Castlemaine (Barkers Creek area), to the west of Castlemaine (towards Muckleford) and to the south of Castlemaine (Ross Drive area).

The prevalence of small lots throughout many areas of the municipality makes a substantial contribution to local supply and poses a significant land management issue. Unlike many agriculturally based rural municipalities, Mount Alexander Shire's mining heritage means that the land subdivision pattern in the Shire is highly fragmented into small lots throughout the rural areas, including forest areas around Maldon and Castlemaine.

There are opportunities to provide for this form of development at locations which are within close proximity to services and settlements and in locations which do not compromise existing land uses and values and future needs of the community. The provision of land for future rural living does not have to be on the basis necessarily that a continuing supply must be available.

Issues

Settlement

- There are constraints to the supply of suitable land.
- Fragmented small lots and dispersed rural living areas.

Environment

- Development in rural areas has potential to lessen or impact on environmental qualities and natural resource base (water quality, salinity levels, native vegetation and biodiversity loss).
- Appearance of the rural landscape is part of the charm and appeal for the Shire's residents.
- Rural living development has been associated with a number of land management and primary production impacts;
 - The spread of environmental weeds and pest animals;
 - Proliferation of dogs and feral cats;
 - Increased fire hazards.
- Proliferation of dams reducing the environmental flows on streams and waterways,
- Illegal vegetation removal and loss of understorey and habitat.
- Rural living developments in the Shire have increased levels of native vegetation planting, removed stock from marginal country, and can improve land management practices.
- Strip type development along highways has an adverse landscape and visual impact.

Economic Development

- Rural living has led to reinvestment in agricultural productivity particularly in intensive production of items such as grapes and olives.

Infrastructure

- Ad hoc residential development in rural areas can significantly increase costs of road upgrading and maintenance and general Council and community services.

Objectives: What do we want to achieve?

Settlement

- Reduce the number of small and inappropriately located lots in rural areas.
- Encourage rural living development that promotes efficient use of resources (eg. water, power and fuel).
- Discourage the use of existing old Crown allotments in the Rural Zone for rural living purposes.
- Avoid strip development along highways throughout the Shire.

Environment

- Provide locations for rural living development that will not cause water quality decline, native vegetation and habitat loss, soil erosion, and salinity.

Infrastructure

- Provide location for rural living development that can be readily serviced by the facilities of a nearby urban area or town.

Strategies: How do we achieve it?

Settlement

- Ensure rural living development is located outside of defined urban boundaries and does not occur on land set aside for future urban development.
- Encourage clustering of rural living development close to key service areas.
- Consolidate of lots in old and inappropriate townships into existing tenements or land holdings wherever practicable.

Environment

- Avoid rural living development in significant water supply catchments areas and in areas of significant vegetation and habitat and high erosion risk.
- Prevent vegetation removal and encouraging revegetation as a component of land use change.
- Ensure net environmental gain as a consequence of rural living development.

Economic Development

- Ensure rural living development does not detrimentally impact on adjoining or nearby productive agricultural uses.

Infrastructure

- Ensure the full impact of rural living development in respect to road infrastructure, services and the management of storm water is met by the proposed development.
- Ensure rural living lots are of a size that all effluent and household stormwater can be contained on site.
- Ensure all rural living development is serviced with sealed roads, where reasonable and practicable, to a standard approved by Council.

- Ensure all rural living development is serviced, where practicable, with a reticulated domestic water supply.

Implementation

- Implement the Mount Alexander Rural Living Study.
- Apply the Rural Living Zone to areas found to meet the criteria established in the Rural Living Strategy, as required to meet demands over time.
- Use of relevant local policies.

Further Strategic Work

- Prepare Rural Living Local Policy to assist implementation of the Rural Living Study.
- Develop a process to refine areas proposed for immediate zoning to Rural Living and determine the appropriate staging of other areas that have been found generally suitable.
- Undertake a Rural Land Study to assess the agricultural, mixed farming, lifestyle farming and environmental conditions of rural land, making recommendations on the application of the Farming, Rural Activity and Rural Conservation zones.

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Built and Cultural Heritage

Overview

The cultural heritage of the shire is outstanding. Its built environment is inextricably linked to the discovery of alluvial gold in 1851. The Mount Alexander goldfield was one of the world's richest, attracting international attention. The Central Victorian goldfields transformed the colony demographically, socially, politically and economically. Today the remnant gold diggings are of major cultural heritage significance locally, and at state, national and world levels. This significance was recognised with the creation in 2002 of the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park, now on the state and national heritage lists, and being considered for nomination to the World Heritage List.

The pre-eminent historic theme and significance of the shire lies in the concentrated evidence in the landscape of successive phases of gold mining and associated patterns of settlement, particularly the clear evolution from transient gold mining sites to permanent townships. The spatial relationships, condition and integrity of remnant structures, types of structures and their distribution contribute to the unique character of the shire.

During the peak of alluvial mining between 1850s-early 1870s the goldfields became a microcosm of international cultures. The interaction between the natural environment, topography and geology and social groups that occupied it, has resulted in distinctive 'cultural spaces'. Localities are imbued with special meaning and characteristics such as the Irish diggings at Fryers Creek, the Chinese miners at Mopoke Encampment, the Swiss-Italian settlements between Newstead and Yandoit. Place names reflect the origins and experience of the thousands who came to the diggings. Ruined structures of early dwellings, their stone fireplaces or walls associated with the diggings, are prolific in the landscape. More permanent villages mark the location of successful quartz gold operations. Here the formal European architecture reflects the wealth won from gold, and the surveyed street layouts presents a contrast with the vernacular architecture and organic settlement in adjacent goldfields. This has left a rich legacy of historic buildings, structures, such as freestanding miners' cottages, superb railway infrastructure, water systems, churches and cemeteries, public buildings, formal and remnant exotic plantings and remnant mining sites.

There is extensive evidence of Aboriginal occupation and activity throughout the shire. These sites include traditional and cultural places, ceremonial and camping sites, mining sites, rock wells, middens and ovens. Systematic historical and archaeological research is

likely to yield further detailed information on pre and post contact Aboriginal land use in the area and post contact land use by Europeans and other nationalities.

Early pastoral and agricultural use, before and after the gold rush, and its relics are still an important part of the cultural landscape. Industries which were established to support the mining and the population have also created a distinctive built legacy and some continue to underpin the local economy. Castlemaine, the largest town in the shire, was the centre of government administration on the goldfields and became a hub for commerce, transport, education, health services, religious observance and the whole range of social activity. It boasts a high degree of intact and authentic 19th century buildings which reflect those functions. Maldon is one of the most intact 19th century towns in Australia. There are also outstanding collections of historic buildings in many of the smaller towns in the shire.

Today, this distinctive heritage is a source of pride for the Shire and its communities. It also sustains economic growth as it attracts visitors and residents, supporting the tourist and building industries, and provides a stimulating context for arts, hospitality, professional and knowledge based businesses.

Issues

- Ongoing and potential loss or impairment of Aboriginal and European heritage places and cultural landscapes due to development pressures, including:
 - infill subdivision and housing impacting on the significance, character and appearance of townscapes;
 - demolition of an increasing number of historic cottages and other heritage buildings and structures;
 - removal of significant trees and vegetation;
 - inappropriate rural development impacting on the significance, character and appearance of cultural and natural landscapes;
 - neglect or inappropriate treatment;
 - disturbance to archaeological ruins.
- Potential impact of development on the significance and values of the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park.

Objectives: What do we want to achieve?

- Protect the significance, character and appearance of Aboriginal and European heritage places, precincts, buildings, streetscapes, places and structures.
- Encourage all heritage places to be restored, recycled and /or renovated in a sympathetic manner that will enhance the heritage value of the place.
- Protect the significance and values of the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park.
- Protect heritage character of towns in the Shire.
- Protect significant natural and cultural heritage landscapes.
- Protect, rehabilitate and enhance identified places of environmental and archaeological significance.
- Protect archaeological sites in the Shire.
- Protect the Aboriginal and European heritage and cultural landscape significance of Pennyweight Cemetery, Pennyweight Flat, Moonlight Flat and Lady Gully.

Strategies: How do we achieve it?

- Provide guidelines for demolition control.
- Ensure that all new developments within heritage overlay areas harmoniously integrate with the heritage character of towns and areas.
- Ensure that development on land adjacent to the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park does not impair its significance and values.
- Strengthen and extend heritage provisions to protect identified buildings, places and areas.
- Provide certainty and direction for alterations to and conservation management of heritage buildings.
- Ensure that land use and development proposals in areas where there is a known archaeological aboriginal site or potential for a site to be identified are assessed by a qualified Archaeologist and a report prepared addressing the potential impact of the proposal on aboriginal archaeological values, and are then referred to Aboriginal Affairs Victoria.
- Ensure development at Hundredweight Hill/Moonlight Flat does not impact on habitat and cultural heritage values of the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park.

Implementation

- Implement zone and overlay recommendations of the Heritage Studies for Castlemaine, Maldon, and Metcalfe (in particular Chewton to Elphinstone).
- Apply the Heritage overlay to all listed heritage buildings and places.
- Apply local policies for Natural and Cultural heritage (22.20) and for the townships of Castlemaine (22.01) and Maldon (22.02).
- Apply the Significant Landscape Overlay from Tunnel Hill to Chewton.
- Apply the Significant Landscape Overlay to areas of high visual sensitivity including those areas adjacent to the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park.
- Apply appropriate overlay controls to the area between the existing Castlemaine Central Conservation Area and Parker Street.
- Implement the Metcalfe Heritage Study.
- Implement the Newstead Heritage Study.

Further Strategic Work

- Review of Castlemaine Historical and Architectural Study (1979).
- Prepare comprehensive Heritage Study for the Shire to identify further buildings, places and structures requiring heritage protection.
- Prepare a consolidated history of the Shire.
- Complete of a Shire-wide Historic Cottages study.
- Prepare guidelines for demolition, buildings and works, and the restoration and management within heritage places.
- Prepare cultural landscape study for the Shire that includes identification of significant cultural landscapes.
- Prepare Mount Alexander archaeological sites study that includes the identification of significant archaeological sites.

- Complete a Shire Significant Tree Register.
- Further identification of significant geological landscape features.

21.04-622/03/2007
C24**Agriculture****Overview**

Agriculture is a significant industry within the Mount Alexander Shire. 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 have 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*Settlement*

- Land use conflict between established agricultural and horticultural land uses and the use of agricultural land for non agricultural, rural living or hobby farming purposes.

Environment

- Condition and health of the Loddon and Campaspe water catchments and its affect on agriculture.
- Scarcity of water is a limitation on agricultural uses in the Shire
- Groundwater needs to be conserved and used in a sustainable manner.
- Significance of the Harcourt horticultural area and the need for its protection.

Economic Development

- Agricultural land in the municipality is an important economic resource that needs to be protected.
- Diversity of the agricultural economy is becoming more diversified including industries such as wineries and fine foods.

Objectives: What do we want to achieve?*Settlement*

- Prevent conflicting non-agricultural uses and developments in the Shire's rural areas, most importantly in the Harcourt irrigation/horticulture area.
- Preserve broad area agriculture by maintaining rural land in large lots and discouraging the fragmentation and non-rural use of rural land.

Environment

- Encourage farm management practices that are sustainable and reflect the optimal use of the land.
- Appropriate agricultural uses given the scarcity of water.
- Conservation and sustainable use of groundwater.

Economic Development

- Encourage agricultural diversity.

Strategies: How do we achieve it?

Settlement

- Ensure that rural housing and subdivision is environmentally sustainable and implements land rehabilitation measures to achieve the sustainable use of rural land.
- Discourage the subdivision of agricultural land and the increased loss of land dedicated to agricultural production.
- Encourage consolidation of existing titles to maintain viability of farming and horticultural units.

Environment

- Minimise potential amenity impacts between rural agricultural uses and rural lifestyle uses.
- Encourage farm management practices and land use activities, which have the capacity to be sustained and reflect the optimal use of land.
- Reduce land degradation within the Loddon - Campaspe Catchment.
- Ensure developments are compatible with land capability.
- Ensure that any use and development proposals in productive agricultural areas consider the scarcity of water.
- Encourage the conservation and sustainable use of groundwater.

Economic Development

- Protect the economic potential of agriculture land.
- Maintain the productive agricultural use of land.
- Encourage agricultural diversity and promote opportunities for new farming enterprises by understanding new and innovative technologies and use of land.
- Ensure that any development proposal in productive agricultural areas are directly linked to and will benefit an agricultural use.
- Protect rural infrastructure, particularly road and water infrastructure.

Implementation

- Apply the Farming Zone and specify minimum subdivision sizes in zone schedule.
- Apply the Environmental Significance Overlay to the Harcourt horticulture area.
- Use of Reference Documents including the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy.
- Use of town framework plans that define urban boundaries.
- Applying local policies on spray drift in rural areas.

- Apply local policies for the use and development of rural land, for uses such as farm produce stalls, animal keeping and greyhound training.
- Develop and apply Restructure Plans to those areas covered by the Restructure Overlay for which no plans are currently included in the Schedule.

Further Strategic Work

- Undertake a Rural Land Study to assess the agricultural, mixed farming, lifestyle farming and environmental conditions of rural land, making recommendations on the application of the Rural Farming, Rural Activity and Rural Conservation zones.

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Protection of Biodiversity and Landscape

Overview

Climate change is predicted to create more hot days, more dry days and more intense storms across Victoria. Droughts are likely to increase in frequency and duration. Reduced rainfall and increased evaporation rates could also mean less water for dams and catchments. There is considerable uncertainty about how much water will be available in the future, but in planning for the future possible climate change impacts must be considered.

The Shire is located in the catchments of both the Loddon and Campaspe Rivers. The condition of the Loddon catchment is poor due to significant land degradation and poor water quality. It is the fourth most degraded catchment within Australia. Management of the natural environment is essential to sustain healthy catchments, habitats and retain remnant vegetation. 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. Issues relating to waterways include flooding, preservation of the levee banks along the Loddon River, deterioration of water quality and public access to waterways.

The Shire comprises parts of three Bioregions: Goldfields, Central Victorian Uplands and Victorian Volcanic Plain. It contains twenty Ecological Vegetation Classes of which sixteen are 'vulnerable' or 'endangered'. It also contains sixty-five threatened flora species and fifty-four threatened fauna species. Listed as Critically Endangered is the Spiny Rice-flower, as Endangered are the Maroon Leek Orchid, Little Pink Spider-orchid and Southern Shepherd's Purse, and as Vulnerable the River Swamp Wallaby-grass, Ornate Pink-fingers, Clover Glycine and Large-fruit Fireweed. There are also eleven nationally threatened fauna species found within the Shire. Listed as Endangered are the Macquarie Perch, Regent Honeyeater, Southern Brown Bandicoot, Swift Parrot and Trout Cod, and listed as Vulnerable are the Grey-headed Flying-fox, Growling Grass Frog, Murray Cod, Striped Legless Lizard and Superb Parrot.

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 the rural amenity of the countryside and road reserves which often comprise significant remnant native vegetation. The Shire has developed roadside management and roadside conservation strategies.

Native vegetation on public and private land is important for biodiversity conservation. Protection of native vegetation is becoming increasingly important at a time when there are higher rates of new housing in the Shire's towns and rural areas. The Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register and the National Heritage List. Urban development at the interface with the National Heritage Park can pose threats to native fauna, increase weed invasion, and increase fire risk.

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.

Issues

Protection of native vegetation

- Continuing decline in the extent and quality of native vegetation and a consequent decline of native fauna.

Biodiversity and habitat

- Loss of biodiversity and threatened species habitat.
- Fragmentation of habitat including that with high quality conservation significance.
- Impact of pest plants and animals on native habitat.

Catchments, waterways and water quality

- Poor water quality of waterways and condition of the Loddon and Campaspe catchments.
- Agriculture and tourism are dependent upon the health of the catchments.
- High numbers of dams impact on waterway flow and health.
- Urban stormwater adversely affects waterways and water quality.

Land protection

- Impact of domestic animals on fauna populations and vegetation.
- Salinity, soil degradation and erosion risk.

Environmentally sensitive areas

- Potential impact of urban development on habitat and cultural values of the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park.
- Potential impact of residential development on private forested land.
- Unsewered towns (Guildford, Taradale, and Elphinstone) contributing towards poor water quality and environmental degradation.
- Conflicting interests in the management of road reserves.

Objectives: What do we want to achieve?

Protection of native vegetation

- Protect remnant native vegetation and retain native vegetation in privately owned forested land.
- Encourage sustainable land use and management.
- Protect scenic rural landscapes.

Biodiversity and habitat

- Improve the conservation status of native fauna and flora in the Shire, especially the most threatened species.

Catchments, waterways and water quality

- Improve water quality and waterway health in the Shire.

- Continue to support and implement North Central Regional Catchment Strategy, salinity management, water quality, native vegetation, flood management and other relevant natural resource strategies.
- Reduce pollution of watercourses and water storages by minimising nutrient discharges, urban drainage and soil erosion.
- Investigate and implement water conservation strategies for the Shire.
- Increase environmental flows in all streams and watercourses.
- Restore and enhance riverine wetlands.

Land protection

- Reduce the risk of erosion in urban and rural areas.
- Revegetate cleared or damaged land susceptible to erosion.

Environmentally sensitive areas

- Protecting the significant natural and heritage values of the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park.
- Protect the pre and post European contact heritage and cultural landscape significance of Pennyweight Flat Cemetery, Pennyweight Flat and Moonlight Flat and Lady Gully.
- Recognise and protect key natural features including the Barfold Gorge, Mount Alexander and Mount Tarrengower.
- Identify and protect other significant features including Vaughan Springs, Muckleford Gorge, Mount Consultation and landscapes between Elphinstone and Castlemaine.

Strategies: How do we achieve it?

Protection of native vegetation

- Protect native vegetation and encourage appropriate revegetation to prevent land degradation, maintain water quality and protect biodiversity of flora and fauna species.
- Encourage development that protects native vegetation linkages and minimises the impact of development on native vegetation.

Biodiversity and habitat

- Ensure a net gain in habitat extent and quality across the Shire's range of native vegetation communities.
- Retain biodiversity values particularly those that represent high quality conservation significant vegetation communities and rare and threatened species.
- Protect habitats of Flora and Fauna guarantee listed species.

Catchments, waterways and water quality

- Ensure that land use planning and development supports the regional catchment management strategy and sustainable natural resource management practices.
- 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 assist community environmental projects involved in protecting, rehabilitating or enhancing watercourses or areas of remnant vegetation.

Land protection

- Ensure that land use and development proposals are based on land capability.

- Discourage inappropriate development in areas susceptible to erosion.
- Promote effective pest plant and animal control throughout the Shire, and provide support for pest plant and animal programs.
- Ensure that Council works do not contribute to the spread of pest plants.

Environmentally sensitive areas

- Protect public land values by discouraging land use activities and development on adjacent private land that could potentially conflict with habitat conservation.
- Protect and enhance roadside vegetation and ensure all planting of trees and shrubs are indigenous to the area, except where exceptional circumstances can be shown to exist.
- Ensure land use and development proposals in the Happy Valley/Moonlight Flat area are consistent with the Happy Valley/Moonlight Flat Strategic Plan, 2004.
- Ensure development at Hundredweight Hill/Moonlight Flat does not impact on habitat and cultural heritage values of Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park.
- Protect native vegetation, bushland character and significant archaeological sites in Moonlight Flat and Lady Gully.
- Support installation of reticulated sewerage schemes in Guildford, Elphinstone and Taradale.
- Manage land use and development adjacent to public and private forests to complement and enhance those forests.

Implementation

These strategies will be implemented by:

- Apply 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.
- Apply the Environmental Significance, Heritage, Significant Landscape, Development Plan, Design and Development, Erosion Management, Land Subject to Inundation and Wildfire Management Overlays.

Protection of native vegetation & Biodiversity and habitat

- Ensure that flora and fauna and ‘net gain’ assessments are carried out for proposed new residential before Incorporated or Development Plans are prepared for these areas.
- Apply the Vegetation Protection Overlay to land containing native vegetation of high significance and quality.

Catchments, waterways and water quality

- Apply the Environmental Significance Overlay to Lakes Eppalock, Cairn Curran and Laanecoorie catchments, Loddon and Campaspe Rivers and other watercourses.

Environmentally sensitive areas

- Apply the Rural Conservation Zone to areas of conservation significance and environmentally sensitive areas.
- 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, Vaughan Springs and Pennyweight Flat / Moonlight Flat.

- Apply the Environmental Significance Overlay to the known and potential habitat of the Swift Parrot generally in accordance with the area defined in the Habitat Management Plan.
- Implement the Shire's Roadside Management Strategy.

Further Strategic Work

- Review Environmental Significance Overlays and schedules.
- Prepare a Shire Vegetation Plan.
- Prepare an urban vegetation assessment study for Castlemaine.
- Prepare an Urban Forest Interface Study for Castlemaine.
- Develop a local policy for interface between urban and native vegetation/habitat areas.
- Support preparation of Newstead flood mapping project.
- Undertake a Rural Land Study to assess the agricultural, mixed farming, lifestyle farming and environmental conditions of rural land, making recommendations on the application of the Rural Activity and Rural Conservation zones.
- Identify high conservation value native vegetation and apply planning scheme overlays to ensure its protection.
- Participate in preparation of a strategy to identify biodiversity assets in the Shire in conjunction with the North Central Catchment Management Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

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Sustainable Housing

Overview

Population growth in the Shire will require residential expansion and urban consolidation within each of the Shire's urban centres. Sustainable housing and subdivision of land is a major challenge for the Shire community at a time when new residential areas will become available for development. There are now higher community expectations that residential design and new housing be developed according to sustainable development principles.

Planning and design of new residential communities needs to address issues such as water and energy efficiency, and the protection of native vegetation and habitat. This can be achieved during planning processes that ensure residential subdivision and housing designs are environmentally and site responsive. Whilst sustainable development principles are embodied in State policy and ResCode, much can be achieved at the local level to reduce energy and water use.

Community housing forums and planning workshops held in the Mount Alexander Shire have identified energy and water efficiency as increasingly important economic, environmental and social issues for the Shire.

Issues

Settlement

- Pressures for higher density residential development may lead to inappropriate infill development.

Affordability and diversity

- Limited housing choice – both amount and type, particularly in Castlemaine.
- Increasing numbers of single person households.

- Additional housing is required for older people living independently.
- Shortage of affordable housing intensified by resettlement from Melbourne, reducing rental stock and increasing rents and property value.
- Many lower income residents, including young people, artists and workers are being forced to leave Castlemaine due to escalating rents and housing costs.

Environment

- Housing and urban development has contributed to a continuing decline in the extent and quality of native vegetation and a consequent decline of native fauna.
- Domestic animals, especially cats, are having a severe impact on populations of native fauna.

Water and energy efficiency

- Urban stormwater run-off is adversely affecting waterways and water quality.

Objectives: What do we want to achieve?

Settlement

- Encourage high quality, environmentally responsible and affordable infill and higher density development where appropriate in the Shire's towns, particularly in Castlemaine.

Affordability and diversity

- Provide for affordable housing.
- Provide diversity in housing to suit different needs.

Environment

- Prohibit domestic animals in residential areas adjacent to public and private forests.
- Retain native and significant exotic vegetation.

Water and energy efficiency

- Reduce the use of energy and water per person/household in new and, where possible, existing housing in the Shire.
- Encourage neighborhood waste water treatment systems which allow re-use of treated effluent to minimise total water use.
- Encourage affordable housing for all residents and potential residents in the Shire that is good quality, five star rated and environmentally responsible.
- Encourage water wise urban design in all new residential subdivisions.
- Encourage the installation of water tanks for new dwellings.
- Encourage new housing to be plumbed for safe grey water re-use.

Strategies: How do we achieve it?

Settlement

- Encourage energy efficiency in the planning and design of urban communities in the Shire.
- Encourage "shop top" housing in town centres particularly in Castlemaine.

- Encourage alternative residential design concepts (eg. cluster housing) to minimise development footprints, minimise number of dams required, ensure native vegetation retention, and promote waterway health and water-use.
- Provide opportunities for low density housing in Happy Valley/Moonlight Flat area and serviced residential development at the southern end of Happy Valley Road consistent with the Happy Valley/Moonlight Flat Structure Plan, 2004.

Affordability and diversity

- Ensure residential subdivision and development provide for greater housing choice, affordability, sustainability and diversity.

Environment

- Ensure that proposals for new housing development respect heritage and neighbourhood character.
- Ensure that proposed residential subdivisions, housing and related infrastructure provide maximum opportunity for retention, protection and strategic restoration of native vegetation.
- Ensure street planting of exotic and indigenous vegetation, landscaping and other vegetation management is consistent with local streetscape plans and policies.
- Reduce the impact of domestic animals, especially in areas close to bushland.

Water and energy efficiency

- Ensure designs of housing developments (eg. lot orientation) maximise opportunities for passive heating and cooling.
- Ensure that water quality is improved or at least not degraded in the land development process.
- Ensure that proposals for new developments include the most appropriate systems for filtering of run-off storm water including during the construction phase.
- Encourage construction or retention of porous surfaces in lesser used roads and footpaths (where no erosion hazard exists), along with storm water management conducive to retention of both water and vegetation.

Implementation

Settlement

- Apply Development Plan Overlays and Design and Development Overlays to new residential areas in the Shire's towns.
- Introduce a score-card to assist proponents of development works with documenting how their proposal will sufficiently contribute to the Shire's objectives (i.e., with respect to energy and water efficiency, net gain of native vegetation, healthy flora and fauna populations, water quality and waterway health, soil health, chemical contamination).

Environment

- Use of Local Policies 22.01(Castlemaine Central Conservation Area) and 22.20 (Natural and Cultural Heritage).
- Apply a Local Policy for Happy Valley / Moonlight Flat area.
- Apply Environmental Significance, Landscape Significance Overlays to protect quality native vegetation and habitat, flora and fauna species, preventing cultivation of invasive weeds and keeping of cats.

- Use legal instruments (eg. section 173 agreements) and encourage use of covenants to achieve objectives such as prohibition of domestic animals in residential areas adjacent to public and private forests, and retention of native and significant exotic vegetation.

Further Strategic Work

- Prepare Development Plan and Design and Development Overlay Schedules for new residential areas that provide for site responsive residential design.
- Prepare a Castlemaine Neighbourhood Character Study.
- Prepare Shire-wide Roadsides and Street Tree Planting Policy and Plan.
- Review local policies relating to housing and protection of the natural environment.
- Prepare a Housing Strategy that includes affordability, diversity and sustainability as key components.
- Prepare sustainable residential subdivision and design guidelines.
- Develop a performance based approval system for new housing development to ensure that agreed water and energy efficiency standards are met.
- Develop a Shire list of invasive plants, planting of which to be discouraged in new residential subdivisions, and in existing and proposed housing developments.
- Identify sites in the Shire owned by Council and other public authorities that would be suitable for affordable housing.
- Organise a forum or series of forums on higher density housing, water sensitive urban design, sensitive urban consolidation, infill housing in heritage areas and sustainable residential subdivision.