

21.03 SETTLEMENT

28/04/2016
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This clause provides local content to support Clause 11 (Settlement) and Clause 16 (Housing) of the State Planning Policy Framework.

21.03-1 Urban growth

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Overview

The main urban centres of the Shire, being Castlemaine (including Campbells Creek and Chewton), Maldon, Newstead and Harcourt, currently accommodate approximately two thirds of the Shire's total population. Population growth and new dwelling construction is not evenly distributed across the Shire. Approximately 60 percent of new dwelling construction is occurring in Castlemaine and the central parts of the Shire, and 30 percent within Castlemaine itself.

The former Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure estimated that the population of the Shire will reach 21,112 by 2031 (Victoria in Future, 2014). The average annual rate of population growth is expected to be 0.8 percent per annum from 2011 to 2031, which is a higher rate of population growth than occurred from 2001 to 2011.

It is projected that the Shire will need to provide an additional 1,647 households to 2031 to accommodate this growth. This equates to a need for approximately 82 new dwellings per annum. Recent dwelling construction activity has exceeded this figure, which suggests that other influences such as part-time residents and smaller household sizes are contributing to demand for new dwellings in the Shire.

The Shire is attracting new residents from outside the Shire, particularly in the over 35 age groups, although it continues to lose people in the 12-24 age groups. There is potential for the Shire to experience greater population growth rates than are projected, in response to:

- the Shire's heritage, natural environment and lifestyle qualities (the 'tree change' factor);
- reduced travel times to Bendigo and Melbourne due to upgraded road and rail infrastructure;
- the influence of strong growth in the adjacent regional centre of Bendigo;
- house and land prices that are comparatively lower than in metropolitan areas; and
- State government and regional policies that promote population growth in provincial Victoria.

Management of urban growth requires protection of built and cultural heritage, townscapes, landscapes, natural environment and lifestyle qualities that are valued by the community. It also requires a strong framework to direct growth into appropriate areas and locations.

Preferred settlement pattern

The Shire has prepared a growth management model to accommodate potential growth called "Cluster Connect and Consolidation". The model was developed during the preparation of the Mount Alexander Urban Living Strategy. The model seeks to encourage balanced development across the Shire building on the Shire's existing settlement pattern with a regional urban focus on Castlemaine. The main components of the model are:

- 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 the Calder Corridor towns (Harcourt, Taradale, and Elphinstone).
- Limited growth of smaller settlements.
- Improving transport and access connections between Castlemaine and outlying towns.

The Mount Alexander Shire Urban Living Strategy (Figure 2) displays Council's settlement vision and provides population growth estimates for each town. Harcourt, in particular, has potential for growth as it is fully serviced and strategically located close to the Calder Freeway and railway line. It has been identified in the Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan (DTPLI, 2014) as a township where growth will be promoted.

In recent years, most of the new residential lots created in the Shire have been from small, infill subdivisions. Accommodating the forecast population growth is likely to require a shift towards larger subdivisions and increased urban densities, particularly in Castlemaine. Council has prepared the *Castlemaine Residential Strategy (2005)* to guide residential development in Castlemaine. This document identifies Diamond Gully as the principal growth area in Castlemaine. Diamond Gully is located approximately three kilometres to the south west of the Castlemaine town centre. There is also potential for urban expansion in the McKenzie Hill area. These areas are shown in the Castlemaine Land Use Framework Plan in Clause 21.12.

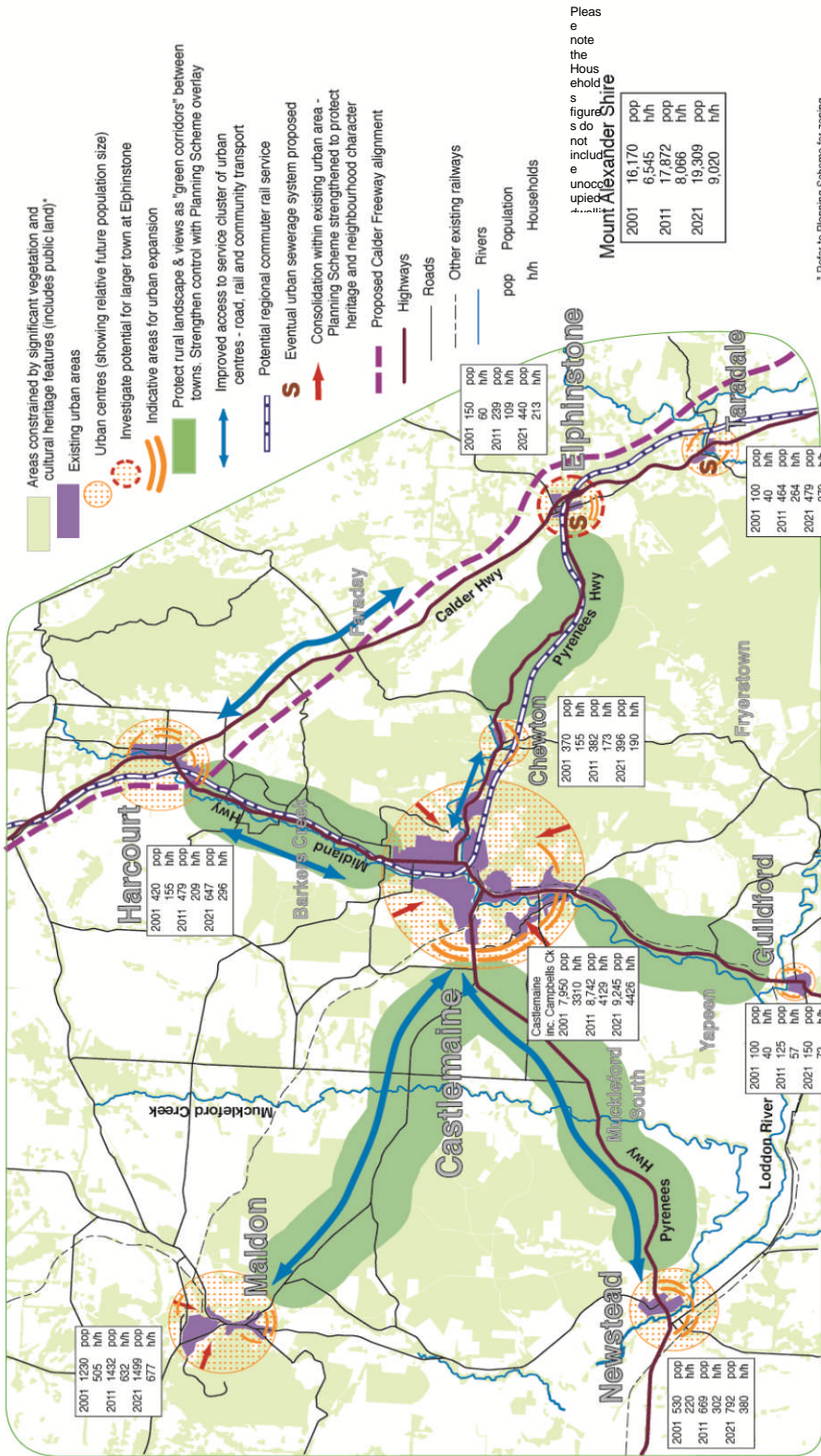
Analysis from the former Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure showed that the Shire has at least 15 years' supply of zoned residential land, and an additional 15 years of 'future' or unzoned land stocks (Urban Development Program 2012 Regional Residential Report - Shire of Mount Alexander, DTPLI/Spatial Economics). These areas require more detailed investigation to determine their development potential, particularly in response to bushfire risks.

Council has prepared Urban Design Frameworks or Framework Plans for the townships in the Shire (refer to Clause 21.12). These provide more specific guidance about future land use in the Shire's towns.

Key issues

- Understanding and managing growth pressures that are emerging from the improved connections between the Shire and Metropolitan Melbourne.
- Identifying areas for urban expansion in Castlemaine where bushfire risks can be managed without significant effects on biodiversity.
- Encouraging growth in small, but well serviced rural townships such as Harcourt and Newstead.
- Addressing wastewater management issues in Elphinstone, Taradale and Guildford, which are ideally placed to accommodate growth due to their proximity to road and rail infrastructure.
- Protecting areas of environmental and landscape significance, particularly areas of remnant native vegetation around Castlemaine.

Figure 2: Mount Alexander urban living strategy



* Refer to Planning Scheme for zoning and areas of land use, Environmental Significance, Erosion Management and Heritage overlays.

This plan is indicative only.

Population Statistics:
 1. 2011 data obtained from census, where collection district was the same as 2001. Where changed, proportioned total from shire used.
 2. Castlemaine 2011 population ascertained from census data, less Chewton population.
 3. 2021 population projections ascertained from Victoria in Future 2014 data for shire, then apportioned out based on population growth projections from ULS.

PLAN 2: MOUNT ALEXANDER URBAN LIVING STRATEGY
 Cluster, Connect & Consolidation

Objective 1

To establish a settlement pattern that is generally consistent with the 'Cluster Connect and Consolidation' urban growth model.

Strategies

- Strategy 1.1 Support urban growth and development that is consistent with the town framework plans in Clause 21.12.
- Strategy 1.2 Discourage the rezoning of land for urban purposes outside the urban/township boundaries shown in the town framework plans in Clause 21.12, except where the urban/township boundaries have been modified through an adopted structure plan or similar plan.

Objective 2

To ensure that low density residential development is appropriately located and serviced.

Strategies

- Strategy 2.1 Discourage the rezoning or development of land for low density residential development if the land is likely to be required for future urban development.
- Strategy 2.2 Require that developers provide sealed roads and drainage infrastructure to low density residential development unless alternative treatments are provided, in accordance with the preferred character of an area as identified in the planning scheme.
- Strategy 2.3 Require that developers provide a reticulated domestic water supply and sewerage to low density residential development unless the cost or scale of the works is not commensurate with the proposal based on a cost-benefit analysis.

Implementation

The strategies in relation to urban growth will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

Application of zones and overlays

- Applying the General Residential Zone to areas where moderate growth and diversity of housing that is consistent with existing neighbourhood character is to be provided.
- Applying the Development Plan Overlay to proposed new residential areas in the Shire's towns to manage preferred lot size and development staging.

Reference documents

- Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan, 2014
- Castlemaine Land Use Strategy, 2004
- Castlemaine Residential Strategy, 2004
- Development Plan Overlay Review, 2009

- Happy Valley/Moonlight Flat Strategic Plan: Stage One - Site Analysis, 2003
- Happy Valley/Moonlight Flat Strategic Plan: Stage Two - Planning and Design Response Report, 2005.
- Mount Alexander Planning Scheme Development Plan Overlay Review, 2009
- Mount Alexander Urban Living Strategy –Stage One and Two Reports, 2004
- Urban Development Program 2012 Regional Residential Report - Shire of Mount Alexander

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C61**Urban consolidation**

There are compelling social, economic and environmental reasons to develop housing in existing urban areas. Encouraging compact urban forms reduces the cost of infrastructure, limits the use of non-renewable resources, and assists in the viability of local businesses, transport and other public infrastructure and services. The Shire's towns have a range of transport, economic and social infrastructure to support an increase in population.

Small lots of less than 1 hectare in size represent around 50 percent of the supply of zoned residential land in the Shire. Castlemaine, in particular, has potential to accommodate additional dwellings in the existing urban area. It has large numbers of infill blocks with development potential throughout the urban area. The Castlemaine town centre is ideally suited to different forms of accommodation that are sympathetic to the heritage significance of the town. Opportunities also exist to develop new dwellings on sites that were formerly used for non-residential purposes or as part of mixed use developments.

Key issues

- Managing the form and appearance of medium density and infill housing to ensure that they do not adversely affect the heritage and residential character of the Shire's towns.
- Balancing the need to encourage medium density housing with community desires for relatively low density built form.

Objective 1

To encourage the consolidation of the Shire's existing urban areas.

Strategies

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| Strategy 1.1 | Ensure that residential development provides opportunities for a range of lot sizes, dwelling sizes and types. |
| Strategy 1.2 | Encourage increased residential densities within 20 minutes walking distance from town centres or close to retail, health and community facilities. |
| Strategy 1.3 | Maintain township boundaries for settlements and townships. |

Implementation

The strategies in relation to urban consolidation will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

Policy guidelines

- Applying relevant local policies to areas near activity areas, town centres, train stations and other areas suitable for increased housing activity such as smaller strategic redevelopment sites, when deciding on applications for use or development that relate to urban consolidation.

Application of zones and overlays

- Applying the appropriate residential zone to areas near activity areas, town centres, train stations and other areas suitable for increased housing activity such as smaller strategic redevelopment sites.
- Applying the residential zones to the townships of Newstead, Harcourt and Chewton to encourage residential development.

Further strategic work

- Investigating the application of the Residential Growth Zone and Neighbourhood Residential Zone to the Shire's urban areas.

Reference documents

- Castlemaine Residential Strategy, 2004

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Rural living

Rural living has been a part of the rural landscape in the Mount Alexander area for many years. The desire to live in a rural environment is a key element of the Shire's attraction for many new residents. Within the Shire, the only areas specifically designated for rural living are in the central part of the Shire around Castlemaine. Some low density residential land exists in Maldon.

Small Crown allotments also make a substantial contribution to the supply of land that is potentially available for rural living purposes, although the development of these lots can undermine the potential of the land for agriculture and can impact on environmental qualities and the natural resource base (water quality, salinity levels, native vegetation, introduced pests and animals and biodiversity loss).

If carefully planned, rural living developments can have a positive environmental impact by increasing levels of native vegetation planting, removing stock from marginal country, and improving land management practices. Council's *Rural Living Strategy (2006)* provides a set of principles for the development of rural living land that require consideration of the net environmental impact of the development and requires evidence of a net gain in the environmental condition of the land.

Opportunities to provide for new rural living development in the Shire are limited. The *Rural Land Study (2014)* found that agricultural should be the primary land use in the Shire's rural areas.

Key issues

- Protecting productive agricultural land from rural living development.
- Providing expensive services and infrastructure to isolated and unplanned rural living areas.
- Managing bushfire risks in existing and new rural living areas.

Objective 1

To provide for rural living development in identified areas.

Strategies

- Strategy 1.1 Encourage rural living development in the Rural Living Zone to the north, west and south of Castlemaine.
- Strategy 1.2 Discourage rural living development outside areas zoned Rural Living Zone, including land zoned Farming Zone.
- Strategy 1.3 Discourage development in the Faraday/Golden Point area and near Chewton until strategic investigation has been undertaken.
- Strategy 1.4 Prevent the sprawl of low density residential land uses along the Calder Highway, throughout the Harcourt horticultural area, and on the fringes of towns along the Calder, Midland and Pyrenees Highways.

Objective 2

To ensure that rural living development occurs in appropriate areas and provides a net gain in the environmental condition of land.

Strategies

- Strategy 2.1 Discourage proposals to rezone land to the Rural Living Zone that cannot demonstrate a net environmental gain based on the principles of the *Rural Living Strategy (2006)*.
- Strategy 2.2 Manage rural living development in potable water supply catchments areas, areas of significant biodiversity value, or high erosion risk.
- Strategy 2.3 Avoid rural living development in areas of high bushfire risk where defensible space cannot be provided.
- Strategy 2.4 Ensure that rural living lots are of a size that can retain and treat all effluent on site.

Objective 3

To ensure that rural living development is economically sustainable.

Strategies

- Strategy 3.1 Ensure the full impact of rural living development is met by the proposed development in relation to road infrastructure, services and the management of storm water.
- Strategy 3.2 Ensure that all rural living development is serviced with sealed roads to a standard approved by Council.
- Strategy 3.3 Require all rural living development proposals to consider environmental remediation works consistent with Strategy 2.2 above.

Implementation

The strategies in relation to rural living will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

Policy guidelines

- Applying local planning policy Clause 22.04 for the use and development of rural land.

Application of zones and overlays

- Requiring an application for a new dwelling or subdivision in the Rural Living Zone, or applications to rezone land to the Rural Living Zone, to be accompanied by the following information as appropriate:
 - An Environmental Management Plan that demonstrates a net environmental gain in the condition of the land.
 - Preparing Native Vegetation Precinct Plans for proposed subdivisions in the rural living zone.
- Facilitating rural living development that results in:
 - Better alignment of lot boundaries with topography and drainage patterns.
 - Substantial net gain in native vegetation cover.
 - Strengthening of wildlife corridors.
 - Creation of buffers to areas of high fire risk.
 - Creation of buffers from adjoining areas of indigenous vegetation and agricultural uses.
 - Creation of building envelopes to protect existing and proposed areas of vegetation.
 - Fencing of watercourses and areas prone to salinity.
 - Rehabilitation of areas subject to erosion.
 - Decommissioning and rehabilitation of existing dams.
 - Reduction in pest plants and animals.
- Applying the Development Plan Overlay to proposed new rural living areas to manage preferred lot size and development staging.

Further strategic work

- Preparing a Domestic Wastewater Management plan to address the cumulative impact of onsite waste water/septic tanks in potable water supply catchments.
- Investigating land supply and demand in the Low Density Residential and Rural Living zones.
- Reviewing the findings of the *Mount Alexander Rural Living Strategy, 2006* (the Strategy) for rural living areas as recommended in the *Mount Alexander Rural Land Study, 2014*, and updating the Strategy at the completion of this work.

Reference documents

- Mount Alexander Rural Living Strategy, 2006.
- Mount Alexander Shire Council Rural Land Study, 2014.

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Castlemaine and other towns in the Shire are well endowed with formal and informal open spaces that provide opportunities for sporting activities, passive recreation, events and relaxation. Barkers Creek, Forest Creek and the Castlemaine Botanic Gardens are important open spaces in Castlemaine.

The parks and reserves that surround Castlemaine and Maldon provide significant amenity and recreational value. Parks in the Shire are renowned for wildflowers in spring, and are popular areas for bird-watching, tourism and passive recreation such as picnicking and camping. State forests are used for car rallies, horse riding, hunting, four wheel driving, domestic firewood collection and fossicking.

Council recognises that participation in physical activities not only provides individual benefits such as improved health and wellbeing, but also facilitates community benefits such as stronger community bonds and social cohesion.

Key issues

- Ensuring that new open spaces link with existing open space assets and movement networks.
- Ensuring that open spaces are planned for in a strategic way to minimise future maintenance costs.

Objective 1

To provide for open spaces that meet the needs of local communities.

Strategies

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Strategy 1.1 | Require contributions for open space from new residential subdivisions that are commensurate with community needs. |
| Strategy 1.2 | Ensure that residential subdivision makes provision for open space links along drainage corridors and creeks in consultation with the relevant land manager or authority. |
| Strategy 1.3 | Identify active and passive open spaces in suitable locations as part of structure plans and other plans for new residential development. |

Implementation

The strategies in relation to open space will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

Further strategic work

- Introducing a schedule to Clause 52.01 (Public Open Space Contribution and Subdivision).
- Preparing an open space strategy for the Shire's towns that assesses existing open space provision and needs, likely future open space requirements and statutory provisions for open space.