21.05 SETTLEMENT

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21.05-1 Overview

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Urban growth boundary

The urban areas of Greater Bendigo are part of a complex urban system, which requires a strategic approach to its growth in order to achieve sustainable outcomes in relation to infrastructure and community services provision, natural environment protection and quality of life for residents. The *City of Greater Bendigo Residential Development Strategy 2004* has been completed to plan for the future development of the urban areas of Bendigo. An urban growth boundary (UGB) is to be used to define the limits of the Bendigo urban area and strategies will promote new development within this boundary.

The role of the UGB is as a policy tool to better manage the City's outward growth by channelling development into designated growth areas and away from areas, which Council wants to protect. Unlike the Melbourne UGB, the Bendigo UGB is not a hard statutory line but more of a policy tool to manage growth in the City which will need refinement over time to respond to changes in circumstances.

Urban forest interface

Large sections of the outer perimeter of Bendigo's urban area are proclaimed as national and regional parks, and discrete pockets of native vegetation also exist throughout the residential areas. The beautiful 'green' surrounds of Bendigo are an important reason for many people choosing Bendigo as a desirable place to live and additionally are a marketable feature in attracting tourists to the area. It is important to recognise that the existence of these areas of ecological significance, provide environmental and economic benefits, and they also provide an important contribution to the City's unique character. These areas of vegetation, including regional and national parks, are particularly threatened by urban development through increased fire risks, spread of weeds and nutrient runoff from gardens, wind blown and dumped litter, tree removal, illegal collection of firewood, trail bike riding, entering the park at non-designated entry points, and threat of domestic pets to native animals.

A key component of the Residential Development Strategy was to develop mechanisms that could be used in the planning scheme to address the urban-forest interface. Parks Victoria has indicated that the most effective way of ameliorating these impacts is through the provision of a 'buffer zone' and building setbacks. These measures will set minimum standards to be applied to residential development that abuts both public and privately owned forest. Higher standards may be required depending on the circumstances. In relation to public land as a matter of principle all buffers are to be provided on privately owned land.

Other measures to address the environmental issues associated with the interface between residentially zoned land and areas of native vegetation include: concentrating development in locations without significant vegetation features; maintaining larger areas as effective reserves; identification of areas of high ecological value; delivering education programs to further extend knowledge about the effects of urban activities on rural land; providing distinct, signposted entry points; and adopting the 'net gain' principle in Victoria's Native Vegetation Management Framework for Action in planning decisions.

In addressing the complex issue of the urban-forest interface around the Bendigo urban area, a number of mechanisms are to be used, such as, the provision of a buffer to residential land, fencing of the forest boundary, road setbacks from forest boundary, use of vegetation management plans and prohibiting discharge of stormwater and other pollutants into public forests.

Small towns

Smaller towns throughout the municipality include Heathcote, Elmore, Goornong, Marong, Redesdale and Axedale. These towns provide an important focal point for their communities and surrounding hinterland and offer an attractive lifestyle in close proximity to the major regional centre of Bendigo. The challenge is to ensure that existing service levels within these towns do not decline and to build upon existing opportunities including tourism, housing, service business and extractive industries.

Rural living

Significant areas of the municipality surrounding Bendigo and Heathcote provide a rural lifestyle in the form of non-commercial hobby farming, as well as more general low density residential living. This form of housing tends to be concentrated in the Strathfieldsaye and Heathcote areas, close to the services of Bendigo, and to the recreation opportunities, such as Lake Eppalock. Rural living is also found in other areas of the municipality.

Issues with rural living development include an over supply of land, wildfire hazard, standard of infrastructure construction such as roads and drainage, loss of agricultural land and adverse environmental effects. Council has completed two strategic studies that address these issues. Measures to improve the environmental sustainability of rural living development have been introduced.

21.05-2 Objectives

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To provide a policy framework on the timing and direction of urban growth and consolidation for the urban areas of Greater Bendigo.

To better manage the City's outward growth by channelling development into designated growth areas and away from areas which Council wants to protect.

To ensure residential development protects and maintains the environmental values of adjoining forested areas surrounding Bendigo.

To encourage attractive lifestyle options and a sense of place in small towns.

To provide an alternative residential option to those offered in the urban areas of Bendigo.

To recognize that rural living patterns of settlement are a legitimate and important aspect of settlement in the municipality.

To encourage rural living development which is sympathetic to the environmental values of the area.

21.05-3 Strategies

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Urban growth boundary

- Incorporate an UGB into the planning scheme and introduce planning controls to restrict urban development outside the UGB.
- Ensure that re-zoning requests for rural land within the UGB but not identified for future expansion are assessed on their merits, including the contribution which they may make to defining existing zoned residential land, their limitations resulting from constraints to development (including Ecological Vegetation Class mapping) and their capability for agricultural land use.
- Discourage rezoning proposals that are outside the UGB unless proposals are:
  - Generally consistent with the residential development objectives of the Residential Development Strategy 2004;
  - Contiguous with the UGB;
  - Exhibit sound ecologically sustainable development principles; and
  - Generally consistent with the Development at the Urban-Forest Interface Policy at clause 22.01.

Urban forest interface

- Protect environmental values, especially the network of forested private and public land, by ensuring that development is environmentally sustainable and meets the minimum standards for residential development within the urban-forest interface as outlined in the Residential Development Strategy.
- Control new residential subdivisions on existing residential land in the vicinity of the surrounding state and national parks.

Small towns

- Concentrate urban design initiatives on key elements that contribute to the identity of small towns.
- Encourage greater housing choice in small towns.

Rural living

- Discourage the rezoning of land in the Farming and Rural Conservation Zones to Rural Living Zones, while there is an adequate supply of rural living land.
- Discourage the construction of dwellings on existing small lots within the Farming Zone.
- Discourage the rezoning of more land to Rural Living while there is an adequate supply of rural living land around the south east side of Bendigo and near Heathcote.
- Consolidate existing areas of rural living by infill subdivision and development and improvement to infrastructure.
- Discourage the creation of isolated Rural Living Zones in rural areas which fragment and disrupt agricultural activities and areas of high environmental qualities and which impose difficulties for the efficient provision of physical infrastructure and community services.
- Encourage development within Rural Living Zones where the land meets one or more of the following criteria:
  - Close proximity to an urban boundary;
  - Abuttal to sealed main roads of at least sub arterial standard;
  - Proximity to a regional activity centre where substantial public infrastructure is provided and maintained; and
  - Close proximity to important community facilities, school bus routes, and within areas provided with municipal waste collection services.

21.05-4 Implementation

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The objectives and strategies will be implemented by:

Policy and the exercise of discretion

- Using local policy to manage the interface between residential areas and the forest in accordance with the Residential Development Strategy, 2004 (Development at the Urban-Forest Interface Policy at Clause 22.01*).*
- Using local policy to protect the operation of rural enterprises from the encroachment of residential activities (Rural Dwellings Policy at Clause 22.02).
- Using local policy to discourage the fragmentation of rural land or with significant environmental values (Rural Subdivision Policy at Clause 22.03).

Zones and overlays

- Applying the Township Zone to urban areas of small towns within Greater Bendigo.
- Applying the Farming Zone to agricultural areas surrounding Bendigo and Heathcote.
- Applying the Rural Living Zone to rural areas primarily containing residential uses including the area to the south east of Bendigo and in other locations surrounding the smaller towns.

- Applying the Rural Conservation Zone to the Lake Eppalock catchment area in recognition of the importance of protecting water quality in the catchment.
- Applying the Design and Development Overlay to the Lockwood South Rural Living Area to ensure the area develops in sustainable and orderly manner.

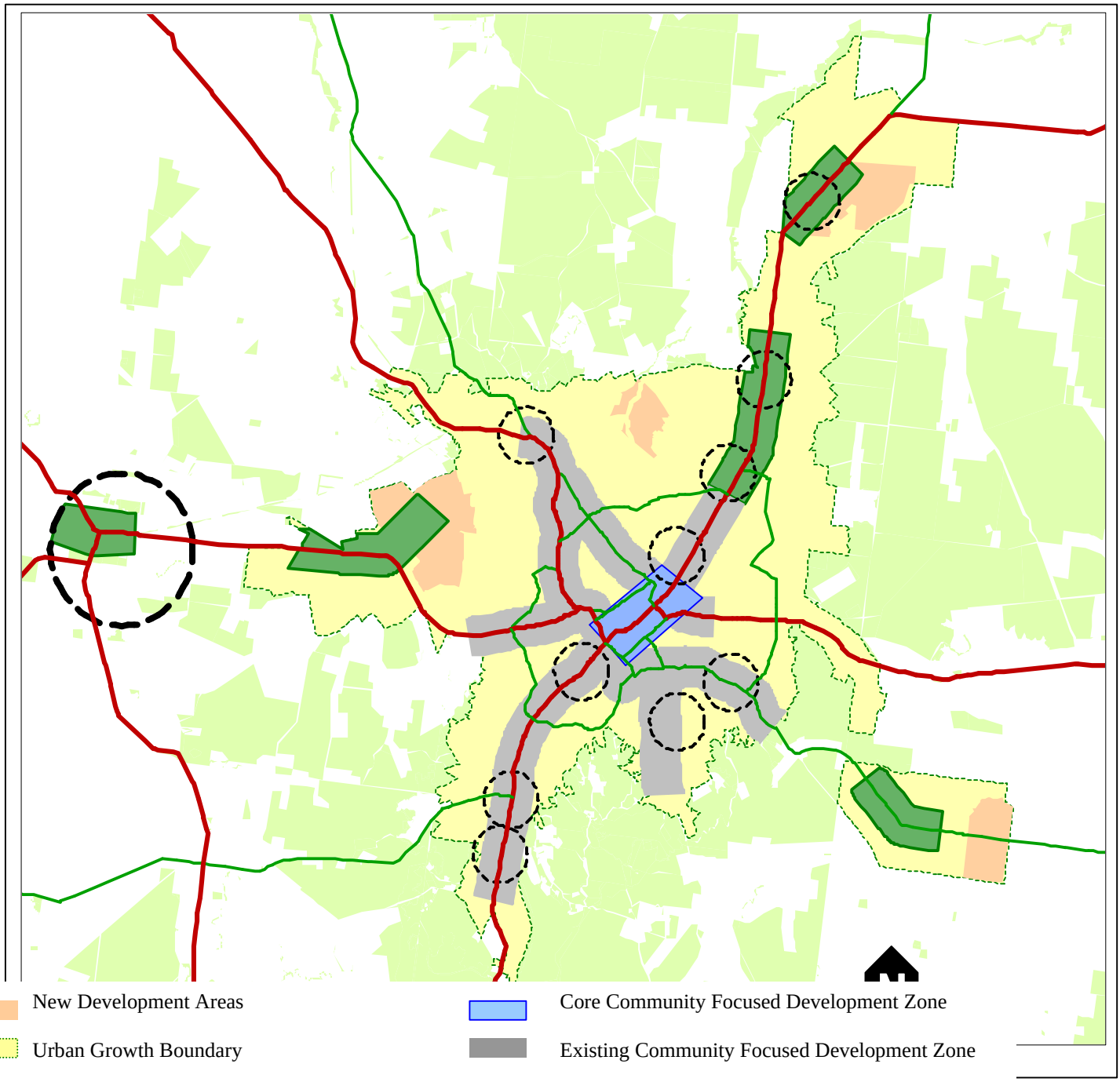
Further strategic work

- Preparing restructure plans for restructure sites covered by the Restructure Overlay.
- Reviewing the Low Density Residential Zone and the content of the Development Plan Overlay, Schedules 3 and 4.
- Developing town structure plans for Heathcote, Elmore, Axedale, Redesdale and Goornong to identify areas of future development.
- Investigating alternative zoning or overlay regimes to address the urban forest issues in association with the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Parks Victoria.
- Replacing Clause 22.01 Development at the Urban-Forest Interface Policy with a Design and Development Overlay.

Other actions

- Encouraging communities within small towns to implement initiatives with the assistance of Council that improve the quality of life in their communities.
- Assisting the Department of Sustainability and Environment in developing the Bendigo Sustainable Growth Strategy.

Residential strategic framework plan



New Development Areas

Urban Growth Boundary

National/Regional Parks

Investigation Area

Core Community Focused Development Zone

Existing Community Focused Development Zone

Proposed Community Focused Development Zone

Community Centre