

21.01 INTRODUCTION

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The Municipal Strategic Statement has been developed as the overall land use strategy for the Golden Plains Shire. The Statement is to be read in conjunction with the adopted Council Plan which provides the overall corporate direction of the Shire.

21.01-1 Municipal profile

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The Shire has a total area of 2,705 square kilometres and is located south of Victoria's third largest city Ballarat and north west of Victoria's second largest city Geelong. It is approximately 70 kilometres south-west of Melbourne. The Shire shares a boundary with the Shires of Colac Otway, Corangamite, Pyrenees, Moorabool and Surf Coast, the City of Ballarat and the City of Greater Geelong. Ballarat and Geelong, play an important role as the service centres for the north and south of Golden Plains Shire.

The Shire is within the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority Region.

The Shire is included in two regional planning areas in the State Planning Policy Framework. Land in the southern part of the municipality is in the G21 Region and land in the northern part of the municipality is in the Central Highlands Region.

The Shire contains rich and diverse environmental, cultural and scenic landscapes including granite outcrops, deeply incised river valleys and wide open volcanic plains. These landscapes include post contact features including goldfields and station homesteads.

The Shire contains nationally significant roadside native grasslands and grassy woodland plains. Native grasslands are home to the endangered striped legless lizard and spiny rice flower.

The Shire forms part of the Brisbane Ranges National Park and is home to the Enfield and Linton State Forests, Steiglitz Historic Park and Inverleigh Nature Conservation Reserve.

In 2015, Golden Plains Shire had a population of just over 20,000 people. Apart from the traditional owners of the land, the Shire is characterised by three waves of new arrivals. The first was the original settlers and land-owners including those who arrived during the Gold Rush. Some of their descendants are still involved in broad acre farming. The second wave was the soldier settlers with their families. Currently a third wave of population growth with many young families and retirees are moving to Golden Plains Shire, some as the result of the Geelong Bypass Ring Road which has opened up a new catchment from the Western suburbs of Melbourne.

21.01-2 Key issues and influences

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- Since the late 1990's, the Shire has consistently experienced some of the highest population growth rates in percentage terms of any municipality outside of Melbourne Metropolitan Area.
- The high rate of growth is influenced by the Shire's proximity to Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat, and recent population projections indicate that the population will continue to grow at current rates in future.
- Future residential use and development needs to be considered in a regional level context in terms of settlement strategies for Ballarat and Geelong.
- The Shire is characterised by agricultural land used predominantly for grazing and cropping as well as other activities including intensive animal industries and wind farms. There are a large number of small townships, natural forested areas, bushland areas and riverine gorges.
- The north-west and south-east of the Shire have distinctly different settlement patterns and this is reflected both in subdivision patterns and provision of infrastructure including treated water and sewerage.
- The towns of the Shire need to operate in clustered networks with key towns providing services and facilities utilised by towns within that network.

- Bannockburn, Meredith, Rokewood and Smythesdale provide the focus points for these clusters.
- There are a limited range of employment opportunities within the Shire. It does not have large economic and service industries, and many of its residents travel outside the Shire for employment. The strength of the economy in adjoining municipalities is therefore important for the Shire's residents.
- The urban-rural interface needs to be managed appropriately. Lack of reticulated sewerage systems and, in some places, poor soil conditions for disposal of septic tank effluent provide constraints to development.

Key land use and planning issues relate to:

- Managing residential growth.
- Protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment.
- Maintaining and encouraging viable agricultural industries.
- Supporting the transition from agriculture to modern farming techniques and technology.
- Enhancing economic growth.
- Providing services to a dispersed population sustainably.

These are addressed under the following strategic themes:

- Settlement.
- Environmental and natural resources
- Built form and heritage
- Economic development
- Transport and infrastructure

21.01-3 Vision and strategic framework plan

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As outlined in the Council Plan, Golden Plains Shire is a developing municipality that offers a lifestyle and opportunities that foster social, economic and environmental wellbeing.

Land use and development will be sustainably managed. Residential development will predominantly be contained within townships.

The natural environment will be protected and enhanced.

The local economy will grow, particularly in township development and rural based and farming industries.

The Golden Plains Strategic Framework Plan (Figure 21.01-1A) sets out the key land use planning directions for the Shire.

Figure 21.01-1A. Golden Plains Strategic Framework Plan

