

21.04 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

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21.04-1 Key Issues and Influences

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Agriculture and horticulture

The diversity in agricultural production and potential across the Shire is an economically valuable resource. Extensive grazing and cropping dominate large areas of the Shire. Where irrigation water or higher rainfall combines with highly productive soil types, the Shire supports intensive horticultural pursuits. The protection of agricultural and horticultural production is an important planning outcome.

The Shire's agricultural base and attractive rural setting are important drivers in attracting people to live in Moorabool. Council supports rural living development where it does not compromise the long term productive use of rural land for agriculture and horticulture, maintains the Shire's environmental qualities, and provides services and infrastructure to support such development.

Land fragmentation can occur when residential development takes place in rural areas with no link to the rural activities of the area. It is important that planning solutions are implemented that reduce the off-site impacts of rural living on the farming activities within the Shire. Farm businesses need to be able to retain the capacity to operate as agricultural enterprises. Unplanned or ad hoc rural residential development on existing titles is often inappropriate due to the lack of necessary services including sustainable road infrastructure. The Shire's rural setting provides an important social, cultural, and economic resource that needs to be protected.

The Shire's horticultural land resources are important economically in supporting tourism and the lifestyle appeal of the area. The highly productive irrigated horticultural areas adjoining Bacchus Marsh are a major asset for the Shire and the township and are to be protected from the encroachment of residential development.

Commerce

There is a need to retain the benefits of a consolidated commercial centre in Bacchus Marsh and Ballan. The relatively high commuter population also results in trade leakage. Council recognises that centrally-located, consolidated, and attractive commercial centres will assist in reducing trade leakage and enhancing the viability of the town centre. Bacchus Marsh has attractive commercial elements such as magnificent approach roads, historic buildings and a village like Main Street.

The existing consolidated commercial activity centre at Bacchus Marsh provides a sound base from which a regionally competitive commercial centre can be developed. Moorabool's economic development strategy, Growing Moorabool, has identified the need for a mixed-use activity centre creating a more densely developed inner core that adds vibrancy, increases patronage for local business (including retail) and helps realise a stronger community and cultural hub.

Industry

Moorabool Shire contains industrial land stocks, in Bacchus Marsh and Ballan that have good access to transport infrastructure and are in close proximity to metropolitan Melbourne and the regional centres of Ballarat and Geelong. In Bacchus Marsh the industrial land is located south of the Werribee River. In Ballan the area to the southeast is zoned for industrial activity. There are large tracts of this land undeveloped but its development is hindered by the lack of supporting hard infrastructure.

The Moorabool Industrial Areas Strategy 2001 identifies the need to rezone industrial land from IN2Z to IN1Z in areas, particularly Bacchus Marsh, that are in close proximity to sensitive uses such as residential.

Provision is to be made for new employment areas and to consolidate Bacchus Marsh's role and capacity to provide for an increasing level of local employment. A key requirement is to provide adequate supplies of fully-serviced industrial land to accommodate development opportunities and create local employment.

Local employment

Moorabool Shire residents are employed in a diverse range of industries that are characterised by its rural environment and proximity to urban centres. The Shire has significant location advantages for business including its proximity to ports and major population centres and access to road and rail infrastructure that provides transport links across Victoria and into South Australia. There is a distinct commuter labour force that travels outside of the municipal boundaries to places of employment. A primary goal is to facilitate economic development that reduces the reliance on employment opportunities outside of Moorabool Shire.

The Growing Moorabool, Economic Development Strategy, 2006 is designed to provide the basis for a long-term series of initiatives to strengthen the economic base and establish an economic environment that is conducive to, and encouraging of, new investment and employment generation. It proposes a major master-planned and transport-oriented activity centre for the heart of Bacchus Marsh to combat the high escape expenditure currently experienced, enhance the township character and amenity of the area and to create a critical mass of people living and working in the town centre.

Tourism is a growing industry and important economic driver in the Shire that presents opportunities for economic development and diversification of the local economy and workforce. The Shire and the Spa Region to the north have tourism links with the Goldfields region to the west and north of the Shire. Tourism development draws on many aspects of the Shire including recreation, leisure activities, environment, wineries, mineral springs, heritage and landscape features. Council recognises that economic prosperity is dependent on its natural resources and seeks to promote economic activity that is consistent with protecting and enhancing the Shire's natural resource assets.

21.04-2 Objective—Agriculture

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To protect good quality agricultural land and support the productivity and sustainability of existing and future agricultural and horticultural activities.

Strategies

- Maintain productive farm sizes by discouraging fragmentation of land for non-rural use and development.
- Direct rural residential and rural living developments to strategic growth areas where they will not impact on agricultural and horticultural production.
- Encourage and support best practice water use efficiency, including the use of recycled water use, in existing and planned new agricultural land use and development.
- Require land use changes and new developments in productive agricultural areas to demonstrate that they do not impact detrimentally on existing agricultural activities.
- Encourage the use and development of land for small-scale tourist activities that are associated with, or enhance the use of the land for agricultural purposes.

21.04-3 Objective—Commerce

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To reinforce Bacchus Marsh's and Ballan's role as regional centres for employment, shopping, tourism, industry, business, and cultural services.

Strategies

- Focus commercial and retail development in the existing central Bacchus Marsh retail area in accordance with the Bacchus Marsh Urban Design Framework and

the Growing Moorabool, Economic Development Strategy, 2006 (including the development of a Local Structure Plan for the area between the main street and the railway station).

- Limit other retail development in Bacchus Marsh to meeting local retail needs.
- Enhance the Ballan commercial centre streetscape as well as wider pedestrian movement, signage and landscaping improvements.
- Provide for a range of residential, commercial, and industrial land uses which complement a mixed-use function within Bacchus Marsh.

21.04-4 Objective—Industry

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To provide for a range of industrial development and activities in proximity to transport networks and existing infrastructure and avoid off-site impacts on residential amenity, environmental quality, or agricultural values.

Strategies

- Ensure that industrial land supply in the Shire’s major urban centres can readily meet the needs of new industries and land use planning identifies suitably located sites for new industries.
- Ensure that industrial development is in general accord with the Moorabool Industrial Areas Strategy 2001.
- Focus larger scale employment development to suitably located and buffered sites in Bacchus Marsh.
- Support new industries in appropriate locations with the potential to utilize the existing road and rail infrastructure along the Western Highway corridor.
- Plan for future transport infrastructure needs of business including roads, rail and air.
- Recognise and protect the long-term potential of stone and mineral resources.
- Manage off-site impacts and avoid conflict with sensitive uses to realise economic development opportunities.
- Discourage any open pit areas to be used as putrescible waste dumps.
- Focus agribusiness related industries in the Moorabool Agribusiness Industrial Area in Parwan.

21.04-5 Objective—Local Employment

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Support the development and facilitation of increased local employment opportunities in order to strengthen the local economy.

Strategies

- Facilitate development of the tourism sector by protecting the natural environment, heritage and town character.
- Promote tourist-related industries (wineries, art, festivals), and strengthen tourism links with surrounding municipalities.
- Encourage home-based occupations and facilitate relocation for enterprises with a demand for out-of-home business accommodation.

21.04-6 Implementation

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Zones and overlays

Specific application of zones and overlays to achieve the strategic objectives includes:

- Apply the Farming Zone and specification of minimum subdivision sizes in zone schedules that encourage appropriate lot sizes to ensure the productive capacity of agricultural and horticultural land.

- Apply zones to encourage suitable locations for horticultural enterprises and prevent the location of other land uses with the potential to create conflict with adjacent horticultural activities.
- Apply a Development Plan Overlay to the area contained within the Kennedy Place Industrial Estate to address amenity issues and establish buffers to residential areas.
- Apply Design and Development Overlays to each of the five identified gateway entrances into Bacchus Marsh.

21.04-7 Further Strategic Work

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- Develop a rural strategy including a review of minimum lot sizes.
- Develop a Local Structure Plan within the Bacchus Marsh town centre in order to provide for a master planned mix of activities based on Melbourne 2030 Activity Centre principles.
- Review the Moorabool Industrial Areas Strategy 2001.
- Identify potential uses in and around Wallace township, where there is a full diamond interchange on the Western Highway and access to natural gas, to facilitate the growth of agricultural and related industry.
- Investigate feasibility and if relevant develop strategies to increase industrial and transport-related activity in and around the Bacchus Marsh Aerodrome.
- Rezone and apply overlays on industrial land in general accordance with the Moorabool Industrial Areas Strategy 2001.