

21.04 SETTLEMENT & HOUSING

01/05/2014
C55(Part 1)

21.04-1 Overview

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Urban townships

Sale is the main employment, education, medical and commercial centre of the Shire. It also fills a service role for its rural hinterland and the smaller towns and settlements. The Shire's other main towns (with populations greater than 1,000) are Maffra, Yarram and Heyfield. These towns act primarily as service centres for surrounding rural communities as well as providing community services, employment and recreation facilities. They are experiencing either low population growth or decline. Most have reticulated sewerage and water supply, and drainage services, and have had urban growth areas identified. The towns of Stratford and Rosedale (populations also greater than 1000) are located on the Princes Highway and have developing specialist functions, such as tourism based retailing and as stopping points for highway travellers.

Rural townships

There are a number of smaller inland townships (populations less than 1,000) throughout the Shire which are typically minor rural service centres providing a limited range of commercial, community and recreational facilities to the local population. They generally do not have reticulated sewerage or drainage. Dargo and Licola are recognised access points to the High Plains and Alpine National Park and attract large numbers of visitors, including four wheel drive enthusiasts, horse riders, bushwalkers and fishing enthusiasts.

Rural Areas

The Shire contains sparsely populated areas used for broad hectare agriculture. These areas feature a lack of reticulated services and are often far removed from townships. Development within these areas should be associated with agricultural purposes.

Rural lifestyle

There are numerous low density residential and rural living areas in the Shire. They are predominantly located in attractive rural or natural settings accessible to township services but beyond the urban fringe and away from urban growth corridors. Key characteristics of these areas include a clustering of lots between 4,000 square metres and 8 hectares, a lack of reticulated services and limited drainage. Longford is well positioned to cater for a significant proportion of the demand for rural living in the Sale area, in accordance with the Sale, Wurruk and Longford Structure Plan, 2010.

Infrastructure

Physical infrastructure includes drainage, water, waste and energy services, open space and recreation facilities, roads, pedestrian and cycle paths, railways and airfields. Most larger settlements are connected to reticulated services except for low density residential properties that operate on-site effluent disposal systems. Some rural towns, including Maffra and Yarram, have significant drainage issues and limited infrastructure.

The extent to which residents and visitors to the Shire can access human services is also important. Human services include all of those services and facilities which satisfy the basic needs of the Shire's population and include child care, aged care, hospitals, youth services, public transport, crisis accommodation etc.

Coastal areas

There are a number of coastal settlements along the Ninety Mile Beach, the largest being the townships of Loch Sport and Port Albert.

Loch Sport's population has declined in recent years; however its earlier growth occurred in a largely unregulated manner. It has no reticulated water infrastructure and only limited drainage facilities. The town has limited commercial and community facilities, with no recognised 'town centre'.

There are significant environmental issues facing development of the existing township area. The soil in the town is excessively porous and little or no purification of waste effluent is achieved prior to the discharge of waste into adjacent coastal waters. Investigations have revealed evidence of groundwater contamination at Loch Sport. This is a major impediment to the growth of the town.

Port Albert is a place of special heritage significance in Gippsland.

Where the other coastal townships have no suitable system for effluent disposal the resultant environmental impacts of inappropriate development are of concern. Any further expansion of urban boundaries should be subject to investigation into the impacts of such growth on the environment, the need for provision of infrastructure, and the development of necessary commercial and community facilities. The development of inappropriate subdivisions in the Coastal areas needs to be restricted and environmental constraints taken into account.

There are over 11,000 subdivided lots along the Ninety Mile Beach between Paradise Beach and the Honeysuckles, east of Seaspray. These lots occur both on the sand dunes of the Ninety Mile Beach and on the adjacent sandy soils. None of the lots are connected to reticulated water or sewerage systems.

The "Wellington Coast Subdivision Strategy: The Honeysuckles to Paradise Beach", February 2007, provides a preferred settlement structure for the Wellington Coast between Paradise Beach and The Honeysuckles, as a way to encourage development that responds appropriately to environmental values and community needs, and prohibits unplanned development outside the defined settlement boundaries shown in Clause 22.08 'Ninety Mile Beach Policy'. Due to existing constraints and acknowledged coastal hazard risks (erosion and inundation) development is prohibited in the area outside the defined settlement nodes apart from some limited exceptions at Glomar Beach. .

Seaspray is located on the sandy soils behind the primary sand dunes of the Ninety Mile Beach. The township has considerable ground water quality problems as a result of using septic systems in the past. Tourism is an important part of the town's economy, however, the impacts of summer tourist activity on the town's effluent management is likely to be a significant problem.

The issue of climate change, in particular potential sea level rise, is an important consideration for coastal communities in this region and is currently under investigation in other related coastal studies. The outcomes from these studies need to be considered in detail in relation to the future planning and development of coastal communities. In the interim, Council will exercise its discretion through the planning permit process to require a climate change response plan for new development in areas identified as being vulnerable to sea level rise and inundation.

The Gippsland Coastal Board and State government should continue its work in assessing climate change impacts on the coast in Gippsland together with Wellington Shire Council, other government agencies and the Gippsland coastal communities.

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Settlement Objectives

- To accommodate future population growth over the next fifteen years in those settlements that can accommodate change and are expected to grow.

- To provide adequate infrastructure to existing urban settlements and to identified urban growth areas.
- To ensure that urban design and development provides for greater connectivity and amenity that encourages use of public transport services and physical activity (including walking and cycling) throughout the Shire.
- To ensure all development in coastal areas has the necessary infrastructure to protect environmental values, particularly water quality of the Gippsland Lakes.
- To provide rural lifestyle opportunities in appropriate locations.
- To discourage major development outside existing centres other than when a genuine need has been demonstrated and there will be minimal adverse impact on the natural environment.
- To promote improved sewerage infrastructure especially to coastal towns around the Gippsland Lakes and rural townships.
- To provide and improve stormwater systems so that high nutrient and sediment concentrations are prevented from entering waterways and wetlands.
- To protect coal related land and other assets such as airports from inappropriate encroachment by urban settlement.
- To protect agricultural land from inappropriate encroachment by urban settlement.
- To ensure that the aged and other members of the Wellington community with special needs (housing, medical facilities, transportation etc.) are adequately catered for.
- To support and reinforce the regional role of Sale.
- To avoid residential development in farming areas unless it is required for the agricultural use of the land.

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Settlement Strategies

Urban and rural townships

- Ensure that development occurs in accordance with the town strategy plans and other relevant plans included in Clauses 21.05 – 21.12.
- Ensure that rezonings to residential zones only occur when it is demonstrated as necessary to satisfy housing needs within 10 – 15 years or to provide a choice of residential locations.
- Encourage urban development to be consolidated within existing town boundaries and in identified urban growth areas.
- Promote compact urban forms which fully utilise existing residential areas and infrastructure.
- Promote the consolidation of retail, community, civic, education and other important services at key destination points that can be served by public transport and easily ‘walkable’ for the local community.
- Promote urban design that encourages physical activity and promotes accessibility to public open spaces as part of a broader network of walking and cycling opportunities.
- Ensure that the future development of land identified for urban growth is not compromised by inappropriate rural residential development.
- Ensure future growth directions on the periphery of towns do not detrimentally affect high quality agricultural land or environmental features.

- Ensure that future urban development in rural and coastal townships without adequate effluent disposal systems is contained within the perimeter of such towns.
- Encourage increased housing densities and choice throughout the main townships of the Shire in areas that are close to their town centres.
- Encourage infill medium density housing close to the town centres to provide greater housing choices for the town's ageing population.
- Restrict the development of towns and settlements where such development threatens water quality and ecosystem values of the Gippsland Lakes and coastline.
- Restrict the development of towns and settlements where such development is subject to flooding (including the effects of tidal flooding), or subsidence (particularly around the Gippsland Lakes).
- Restrict the development of towns and settlements where such development minimises the availability of high quality agricultural land.
- Require that development is sympathetic to the existing character and heritage of townships throughout the Shire.
- Require that the scale, height and building materials of development are in keeping with the landscape and heritage character of the townships and their surrounds.
- Encourage planning for land use and development to minimise potential conflicts between industrial and residential land uses.
- Restrict population growth and urban development in environmentally sensitive parts of the Shire, such as coastal areas.
- Restrict urban development in areas subject to flooding and fire hazard.
- Ensure that development adjacent to highways and other main traffic routes throughout the Shire is of a standard, style and overall form which reflects the importance of the area and improves the impression that development in such locations can create.
- Ensure that access to and use of highways and other main traffic routes throughout the Shire reflects the importance of these corridors to all road users, including vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians and the mobility impaired.
- Encourage the incorporation of appropriate streetscape and landscape treatments in the development of industrial areas, particularly where such sites are highly visible to the town centre and town entries.
- Provide suitable land for the development of future noxious or offensive industries such as food and animal processing industries, together with appropriate value adding industries.
- Encourage physical activity and social interaction in new residential areas through development which provides community facilities, open space, recreational activities, pedestrian and cycle paths and spaces.
- Integrate local walking and cycling paths with tourist attractions, natural destinations and other existing infrastructure where appropriate (e.g. drainage channels) to encourage low impact access that links key destinations or creates opportunities for physical activity.
- Restrict development on rural township sites incapable of treating and managing waste disposal until reticulated sewerage is installed.

Rural lifestyle

- Locate rural living areas in close proximity to developed settlements, to utilise existing social, cultural, and infrastructure facilities.

- Encourage rural living proposals to have regard to environmental features and constraints, in particular wastewater and effluent disposal.
- Ensure rural living activities do not reduce or adversely impact on the productive capacity of high quality agricultural land.
- Discourage dwellings in agricultural areas except where there is a clear connection between the use of the dwelling and a legitimate rural activity on the land (eg. farming, mining, timber production, caretakers dwelling, etc.).

Rural areas

- Discourage subdivision and dwellings unless they are directly related to the agricultural use of the land.
- Encourage the consolidation of small lots.
- Maintain the right of existing farms to continue their operations without being adversely affected or constrained by residential concerns.

Infrastructure

- Ensure adequate effluent and stormwater discharge systems are provided in order to lessen existing and future environmental impacts from townships.
- Maintain and further develop existing open space networks and recreation systems throughout the Shire within the framework of Council's Recreation Plan.
- Prevent high concentrations of nutrients and sediments entering waterways, wetlands and groundwater through stormwater systems.
- Discourage the discharge of wastes (particularly to areas of high conservation significance) unless it can be demonstrated that the wastes can be assimilated without detrimental effect to the receiving environment.
- Minimise development (including the construction of roads) within prominent areas such as hillsides, promontories, ridge-lines and headlands, and in fragile, unstable and flood prone areas to lessen their impacts.
- Require that tourist developments provide adequate infrastructure to treat effluent and stormwater run-off, and minimise erosion and loss of vegetation.
- Ensure that new residential developments in outlying areas provide for access to community services and facilities including taking into consideration the needs of an ageing population.
- Ensure that development provides an appropriate effluent treatment system within the boundaries of the lot.
- Ensure that cost effective infrastructure is provided for the present and future development of the Shire's towns.
- Require that development plans achieve efficient utilisation of existing urban infrastructure.
- Require that development plans provide for re-subdivision of low density areas where they are supported with full services, including sewerage.

Coastal areas

- Discourage development that generates and disposes of wastewater on-site within the setback distances of waterways and/or wetlands as prescribed by the Environment Protection Authority.

- Concentrate development in existing coastal settlements with established physical, social, and economic infrastructure through infill development within existing town or settlement boundaries and restricting development distant from these settlements.
- Consider proposed major developments outside existing coastal centres only when a genuine need has been demonstrated and environmental capability adequately assessed to ensure minimal adverse impact.
- Maintain coastal settlements with little or no existing infrastructure at their present development density and confine development within zone boundaries.
- Maintain the natural condition of the coastline between settlements.
- Consolidate residential development within coastal settlement boundaries before developing new areas for residential purposes.
- Prevent unplanned development outside defined settlement boundaries in accordance with the Wellington Coast Subdivision Strategy, Clause 22.08: Ninety Mile Beach Policy.
- Ensure any further expansion of urban boundaries is subject to investigation into the impacts of such growth on the environment, the need for provision of infrastructure, and the development of necessary commercial and community facilities.
- Require all new coastal residential development or use to provide utility services.
- Encourage all new coastal residential subdivision to have lot sizes of at least 0.4 ha if reticulated sewerage cannot be provided.
- Protect sensitive or dynamic areas such as primary or secondary sand dunes, or the Lake Reeve islands by strongly discouraging new residential subdivision or development.
- Facilitate the restructuring of old and inappropriate coastal subdivisions where restructure is an appropriate strategic response and where the development of such lots will not result in significant environmental impacts.
- Ensure that use or development does not adversely impact on adjacent coastal parks.
- Ensure new buildings in coastal areas are designed to complement the identified or valued character of coastal settlements.
- Ensure development and works within a wetland are associated with the ongoing use of the land as a wetland.
- Promote coastal tourism in areas with attractive natural attributes and appropriate access and infrastructure.
- Encourage the concentration of coastal tourist and commercial recreation development in established centres.
- Consider major developments on freehold land outside existing settlements where they will not have adverse environmental and social impacts.
- Ensure tourist developments along the coastline and lakes foreshore locate on environmentally suitable sites.
- Encourage major tourism uses or developments which are not dependent on a coastal location to develop inside the main existing townships of Loch Sport and Port Albert.
- Encourage commercial facilities in coastal areas to develop within existing town boundaries, and preferably close to the 'town centre' where one exists.
- Encourage a diversity of commercial activity in coastal areas, particularly where it is related to environmentally sustainable tourism.
- Promote low density agricultural uses such as extensive animal husbandry in coastal areas, provided they are not detrimental to the surrounding natural environment.

- Encourage the integration of conservation and agricultural production in coastal areas.
- Promote the conservation of the locality's natural resources through the considerations of potential impacts from proposals including farm size, productive capacity of land to sustain the rural enterprise and whether the use, development or subdivision will have an adverse impact on traditional land uses.
- Promote urban design in coastal towns that encourages physical activity and promotes accessibility to public open spaces as part of a broader network of walking and cycling opportunities.