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STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

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Settlement

The natural beauty of the environment and proximity to Melbourne make the Macedon Ranges Shire attractive for urban and rural living development, presenting challenges for managing growth. Maintaining a non-urban buffer at the edge of the Melbourne metropolitan area is important.

Gisborne and Kyneton will continue to be the major population and employment centres within the municipality.

There is an established **hierarchy of settlements** to accommodate forecast growth in the shire:

Table 1 Settlement hierarchy

Regional centres	Gisborne (together with New Gisborne), Kyneton
Large district town	Romsey
District towns	Riddells Creek, Lancefield, Woodend
Small towns	Bullengarook, Darraweit Guim, Malmesbury
Villages	Benloch, Carlsruhe, Macedon, Mount Macedon, Lauriston, Newham, Tylden
Hamlets/localities	Ashbourne, Clarkefield, Monegetta-Bolinda

The majority of growth will be directed to the larger towns and land within existing town boundaries and protected settlement boundaries. High bushfire risk and other environmental constraints affect the potential for growth in some settlements.

The shire has a distinctive character, featuring many smaller semi-rural settlements, and there is a considerable supply of low density residential and rural living land (generally close to townships), with dispersed housing across the rural balance.

Strategic directions for settlement are to:

- Ensure development is consistent with the capacity of settlements, and plan for growth on the basis of environmental constraints, infrastructure and service provision.
- Focus growth in the regional centres of Gisborne and Kyneton in the west of the shire.
- Accommodate moderate growth in Romsey, Lancefield and Riddells Creek.
- Accommodate modest growth in Woodend.
- Support limited infill development in smaller settlements, but retain their existing role, size, services and character.
- Ensure urban development is located within township boundaries and protected settlement boundaries.

Towns Regional Centres

Gisborne, including New Gisborne, form the major urban centre in the southern end of the shire. The Calder Freeway passes between the townships, with New Gisborne to the north and Gisborne to the south. Both townships share facilities, infrastructure and services, within easy commuting distance of Melbourne. Balancing rapid growth and development with the community's desire to maintain the semi-rural village character, whilst also providing for sustainable development is a key challenge.

The strategic directions for Gisborne and New Gisborne are to:

- Manage urban growth and development in a co-ordinated and environmentally sustainable manner that respects the established semi-rural village character, natural setting, topography and view lines of the area.
- Establish New Gisborne as a transit oriented settlement, building on the educational, public transport, local commercial and employment opportunities in the area, and sustainable development principles.
- Ensure development occurs in a sequential manner allowing for the efficient and timely provision of social and physical infrastructure, and integration with existing development.

Kyneton performs an important retail and service role for the surrounding agricultural district and smaller settlements further north. The town's economic base is supported by major industries and enterprises such as saleyards, abattoirs, and an administration centre. Some small, older industrial precincts are transitioning to other uses. Kyneton also has good road and rail connections to Melbourne and Bendigo, making it a popular tourist destination.

The strategic direction for Kyneton is to:

- Prioritise growth within the identified town boundary, and staged greenfield growth to the south and southeast of town within the protected settlement boundary in the longer term.

Large District Town

Romsey is the largest district town in the east of the municipality, with some limited economic activity, surrounded by a belt of productive agricultural land. Romsey is experiencing strong rates of growth, being popular with residents who have strong links to Sunbury and the airport corridor in Melbourne for employment and commerce. Balancing residential growth with employment, business services and community infrastructure is critical if sustainability objectives are to be met.

Strategic directions for Romsey are to:

- Strengthen the role of Romsey as the major urban centre in the north-eastern part of the shire.
- Restrict urban development within defined township boundaries to protect agricultural land and facilitate efficient, sustainable development.
- Maintain the 'rural break' between Romsey and Lancefield.

District Towns

Riddells Creek's location on the Bendigo rail line provides excellent access to Melbourne and neighbouring larger towns, which makes it an attractive lifestyle choice for commuters. Key issues for Riddells Creek as it grows include the staging of development in the priority residential development precinct and responding to increased demand for services and different types of housing.

The strategic directions for Riddells Creek is to:

- Prioritise growth within the protected settlement boundary and manage staged greenfield growth in the priority residential development precinct in the longer term.

Lancefield is a local service centre, providing convenience shopping needs for the agricultural community, rural ‘lifestylers’ and residents who commute, generally to Melbourne and Sunbury. Tourism is a significant part of the town’s economy. Limiting growth within and around the township is a key concern.

Strategic directions for Lancefield are to:

- Ensure residential growth and development is focused on the existing township areas and within the protected settlement boundary.
- Avoid residential growth and development in the hinterland surrounding the Lancefield township.

Woodend provides services and community facilities that support its role as a district town. Woodend is to follow a modest growth path due to environmental constraints and to ensure the valued rural township character and compact form that contributes to its tourism appeal is retained.

The strategic direction for Woodend is to:

- Prioritise growth within the protected settlement boundary.

Small towns, villages and hamlets

Malmsbury is a local service centre for township residents and community in the surrounding agricultural area with a rural village character. Given the level of existing services and infrastructure, as well as the low historical demand, Malmsbury is expected to retain its role as a small town. There is sufficient land available in Malmsbury to accommodate limited growth within the township boundary and surrounding area.

The strategic direction for Malmsbury is to:

- Provide for the orderly development of Malmsbury having regard to the constraints of the area.

Macedon has a village character and significant natural and planted landscapes. Macedon is closely linked to Mount Macedon, however the settlements are distinct in terms of their roles and development history. Being located on the railway line and close to the Calder Freeway, Macedon’s high quality residential environment is within an easy commute to Melbourne. While Macedon is now fully serviced, many other constraints still limit development in the town, including bushfire risk, the location within a special water supply catchment, storm water management, the character of the town and the protection of native vegetation.

Mount Macedon is one of the few internationally recognised garden townships in Australia and is defined by its landscape character and large lot subdivision pattern. Mount Macedon relies on the shops, services and facilities provided at Macedon, Gisborne and Woodend. The key issues affecting Macedon and Mount Macedon are to protect the physical separation between Macedon and Mount Macedon and containing development to existing areas.

Development will be restricted and discouraged in the rural areas and small, unsewered settlements to protect water quality, agricultural activities and environmental and landscape values.

Strategic directions for small settlements are to:

- Restrict development to preserve the size of Macedon and Mount Macedon villages.
- Maintain the landscape character of Macedon.
- Maintain a landscape break between Macedon and Mount Macedon to clearly distinguish the two settlements.
- Limit development to within areas of identified capacity to maintain the unique form and hierarchy of the shire’s established small towns, villages and hamlets.

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Environmental and landscape values

Biodiversity

The shire retains rich native biodiversity with extensive areas of remnant native vegetation, including significant forested areas which are an integral part of the shire’s unique landscape. Much of the shire’s remnant vegetation has been altered, degraded or cleared with 65 per cent of native vegetation and most existing high quality vegetation being on private land.

Macedon Regional Park, Black Forest, Cobaw State Forest, Wombat State Forest and bushland areas in the south of the shire, are highly significant natural resources with environmental (flora, fauna and habitat) values.

Council aims to establish a network of biolinks between these areas of significant vegetation. The protection and enhancement of native vegetation and habitat will be encouraged to achieve this environmental goal.

Strategic directions for biodiversity are to:

- Conserve the biodiversity values of the shire by protecting, enhancing, managing and restoring indigenous vegetation and fauna habitat.
- Enhance the significant and sensitive environmental assets including Mount Macedon, forested areas around Woodend, the Cobaw Ranges and Special Water Supply Catchments shown on the Rural Framework Plan at Clause 02.04 as Living Forests.
- Establish the Cobaw Biolink to connect areas of significant vegetation between the Macedon and Cobaw Ranges.

Significant environments and landscapes

Macedon Ranges Shire has many significant landscapes including the Macedon Ranges and the Cobaws which are part of the Great Dividing Range. These provide topographic variety and relief, contrasted with deeply dissected river and creek valleys of the eastern volcanic plains. Significant landscapes include sites of national, state, regional and local significance such as Mount Macedon and Hanging Rock, and volcanic cones and peaks including Golf Course Hill, Melbourne Hill, Mount William and The Jim Jim that form dominant landscape features.

Landscape character within the shire is also defined by:

- Heritage gardens with native vegetation, exotic species, hedgerows, managed plantations and pastoral qualities.
- Significant views and vistas from and to the undulating wooded hills, also forming visual edges to the shire.
- Treed avenues within townships and on their approaches.
- Distinctive settlements set within a rural environment.

As a growing peri-urban municipality, competing demands (for example residential development, or clearing to reduce bushfire risk) pose challenges and threats that could have a detrimental effect on the shire’s visual and landscape qualities.

Strategic directions for significant environments and landscapes are to:

- Protect and enhance sites of landscape and geological significance, including the shire’s volcanic cones and peaks and the Hanging Rock Precinct.
- Protect and enhance the character of existing rural landscapes.

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Environmental risks and amenity

Climate change resulting in more extreme weather events will exacerbate the present threats to the shire from flooding, bushfire and drought.

Much of the shire is at risk from, and has a history of, severe bushfires. There is potential for conflict between seeking to protect the natural environment and providing bushfire protection measures.

This risk is greatest in the forest and ranges areas around Macedon, Mount Macedon and Woodend that are also popular for rural residential development. Poor access in and out of high bushfire risk areas makes these areas particularly hazardous.

Some areas of the shire are subject to periodic flooding, particularly the immediate environs of Five Mile Creek and Slaty Creek through Woodend, Jacksons Creek through Gisborne and Riddells Creek. Flooding can impact negatively upon land use and development, however it also has positive environmental impacts. Floodways are critical in maintaining wetlands and improving the quality of riparian vegetation.

The soils are diverse and there are areas of soil erosion and salinity that affect both agriculture and the natural environment. Half the shire is situated in the Murray-Darling Basin, so land use here affects salinity on the broad flat plains to the north. Soil erosion results in loss of the soil as well as increased turbidity in waterways and transport of nutrients downstream.

Council is committed to fostering the social health and wellbeing of its local communities and visitors. Within the urban areas of the shire, there is a need to improve the appearance and amenity of town centres and existing industrial areas, protect residential amenity and manage the development of future commercial and industrial areas to minimise land use conflicts.

Strategic directions for environmental risks are to:

- Avoid increasing bushfire risk and minimise exposure of people to bushfire risk.
- Ensure the use and development of land prone to flooding minimises the consequences of inundation.
- Discourage further use and development of land that is prone to flooding.
- Reduce the impact of use or development on soil erosion and salinity in the shire and the region.
- Maintain the amenity of the areas interfacing with industrial and commercial uses and the quality of the rural environment.

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Natural resource management

Agriculture

The northern and eastern parts of the shire are productive, broad acre farming areas with high quality agricultural land, and large properties. These agricultural landscapes are used for grazing animal production and crop raising, and contribute to the character and economy of the shire.

Being close to Melbourne, the shire has capitalised on its location, high quality soils and water resources to enhance the productivity of land through the ongoing development of intensive farming activities to supplement traditional grazing.

Agricultural land needs to be protected. Inappropriate subdivision and development of rural land, particularly development for rural living and native vegetation removal, is the major cause of fragmentation and loss of landscape values. Sustainable management of rural areas enhances the condition of the natural resource base, protects significant environmental assets, and supports the continuation of agricultural activity.

Many animal husbandry uses are located in the Macedon Ranges Shire and represent an important local industry. The proper siting and design of this form of use and development is needed to ensure residential amenity and environmental quality is protected.

Strategic directions for agriculture are to:

- Protect agricultural land to support the continuation of agricultural activity.

- Support sustainable, productive agriculture within the Northern Catchments and Agricultural Landscapes areas identified on the Rural Framework Plan in Clause 02.04.
- Continue to use land within the Agricultural Landscapes area for grazing animal production and crop raising.
- Ensure land in rural areas is managed in a sustainable manner to improve the condition of the environment.
- Ensure land use and development for animal husbandry is suitably located, and minimises impacts on amenity, the environment or waterways.
- Encourage the development of emerging agricultural activities.

Catchment management and water quality

The presence of open potable water catchments in the shire highlights the need for land use and development planning to address the important regional issue of maintenance of and improvement to water quality and quantity.

Water supply within the shire is subject to increasing demand and development pressures that can affect quality through the intensification of wastewater and septic discharges, and changing land management practices. A number of the shire's unsewered settlements are in catchment areas. Inappropriate management may cause a decline in water quantity and quality, leading to increased costs as well as a loss of recreation opportunities in reservoirs and watercourses.

The construction of dams is often necessary to support the agricultural and residential use of land. The siting, design and construction of dams should be undertaken to minimise the impact on land and waterways.

Strategic directions for catchment management and water quality are to:

- Mitigate the impacts of development and use of agricultural land on water quality in the catchments.
- Minimise impacts of land use and development on environmental flows in streams and waterways.
- Avoid growth outside of township boundaries in Special Water Supply Catchment areas.

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Built environment and heritage

Urban design, built form and neighbourhood character

The community aspiration is that the shire's town centres retain a village atmosphere and that individual settlements maintain their distinctive identity.

The significant landscape qualities of the shire and highly valued built form of towns necessitate that development is sustainable and respects character. Respecting landscape values in the rural areas, so that built form is submissive to the environment, is a priority. There is a need to provide for greater housing diversity and choice close to town services, while ensuring that multi-dwelling development does not adversely affect the streetscape character of residential areas.

The shire's industrial areas are often located along township entries, gateways and adjoining major roads. It is important the appearance of development in these prominent areas complements the Shire's rural character and high landscape values.

Strategic directions for urban design, built form and neighbourhood character are to:

- Protect and enhance the distinctive character and form of the shire's towns and rural settlements.
- Facilitate industrial and commercial development that is attractive and has a positive impact on the amenity of the area.

- Promote development that respects the rural character and high landscape values of the municipality.
- Encourage subdivision in residential zones that responds positively to site features, integrates well with the neighbourhood, provides a functional environment and achieves energy efficient and environmentally sensitive layouts.
- Protect and enhance the rural character of the township entrances and gateways.

Heritage

A key feature of the shire is its rich heritage that encompasses pre and post European settlement. Heritage buildings and streetscapes, particularly in Kyneton, Gisborne, Woodend, Romsey, Lancefield, Mount Macedon and Malmsbury, contribute to the amenity and character of urban areas. Increasing development will place added pressure on the shire's heritage buildings and streetscapes.

Aboriginal cultural heritage is prevalent within the shire. Council recognises Aboriginal people as the primary guardians, keepers and knowledge holders of all Aboriginal cultural heritage in Macedon Ranges Shire.

Strategic directions for heritage are to:

- Protect and enhance important heritage features and values for residents, visitors and future generations.
- Protect Aboriginal cultural heritage places and values within the shire.

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Housing

Residential development within Macedon Ranges Shire, is predominantly in the form of detached dwellings, dispersed across urban and rural areas.

Towns

There is increasing demand for greater housing diversity, affordability and proximity to town centres. Small household size (one or two people) is a large and growing proportion of all households in the shire.

The population of Gisborne and New Gisborne is expected to grow significantly, creating the need for approximately 2130 additional dwellings by 2031. Gisborne has a large supply of residential land. Careful management is needed to ensure that development aligns with preferred character, and is sequenced with infrastructure provision.

Strategic directions for housing are to:

- Provide for diverse and affordable housing and lot sizes and styles, to meet the requirements of all age groups, household types, income levels, lifestyles and preference, particularly in settlements that have capacity to accommodate growth.
- Increase the range of housing options available to cater for the longer term needs of all members of the Kyneton, Woodend and Riddells Creek communities.

Rural residential development

Ongoing demand for rural residential development can produce adverse effects and must be carefully managed. The existing rural living areas, generally located adjacent to towns and smaller settlements across the shire, will meet this demand and protect land in the Farming Zone from fragmentation. Levels of development will be consistent with the role of towns in the settlement hierarchy and will depend on infrastructure provision and environmental constraints.

Strategic directions for rural residential development are to:

- Support rural residential development in Rural Living Zone areas that:

- Is close to township services.
- Provides a range of property sizes offering different lifestyle opportunities and landscapes.
- Preserves the existing rural character and minimises impacts on significant landscapes and viewsheds.

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Economic development

Economic diversity, incorporating agriculture, tourism, commercial centres and industrial areas is facilitated through the shire's proximity to metropolitan Melbourne, transport advantages, suitability for a range of agricultural enterprises, and significant landscapes and lifestyle offering.

Employment

The majority of Macedon Ranges residents are employed within the shire, or in the Melbourne and Hume local government areas. Local industrial areas are an important source of employment. There is a need to create further local employment opportunities within townships and reduce the reliance on commuting.

Business and retail

There is potential to reduce expenditure outside the shire with further retail development, particularly for higher order goods.

Industrial development

Kyneton is well placed to accommodate the majority of new industrial development in the northern part of the shire.

Further small to medium size industrial lots will be required to support population and small business growth in Woodend.

Strategic directions for economic development are to:

- Encourage economic development provided it does not compromise environmental values, particularly in Special Water Supply Catchment areas.
- Increase local commercial and industrial employment opportunities.
- Encourage retail development within activity centres consistent with their role in the settlement hierarchy with the majority of retail directed to the core of regional centres and district towns as identified in the shire's Strategic Framework Plan at Clause 02.04.
- Encourage development that meets the needs of residents and visitors, and reduces the leakage of economic activity to nearby areas, particularly in terms of basic grocery supply, medical provision and education.
- Avoid out of centre retail development.

Tourism

Tourism is a growing industry in the shire and will continue to provide employment opportunities. Tourism development draws on many aspects of the shire including recreation, leisure activities, environment, wineries, heritage townships and historic gardens, and landscape features. An increase in the supply of accommodation would deliver increased potential to capitalise on the tourist market.

Strategic directions for tourism are to:

- Encourage sustainable tourism growth compatible with the cultural and natural values of the shire.

- Increase the supply of tourist accommodation.

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Transport

Macedon Ranges Shire is located within the Melbourne-Bendigo transport corridor. Improvements to this infrastructure have significantly enhanced accessibility from the shire to Melbourne and the airports.

Current inter and intra town public transport linkages are generally poor. Existing public transport infrastructure provides opportunities for growth in well serviced locations, subject to landscape/character impacts and access. There are substantial areas of vacant land within walking distance of railway stations in New Gisborne, Kyneton and Riddells Creek. There are also opportunities to improve walking, cycling and horse riding trails.

Strategic directions for transport are to:

- Integrate transport with land use and development to facilitate efficient transport use.
- Facilitate the provision of a safe and efficient road transport network.
- Encourage the use of more sustainable transport modes, including public transport, walking, cycling and horse riding, and reduce distances travelled.

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Infrastructure

Open space, recreation, leisure facilities, aged care, and youth services are important to improving the health and wellbeing of the community.

Many of the shire’s townships are located in attractive settings adjacent to waterways that also provide the opportunity to enhance areas of public open space.

Growth in urban areas places increased pressure on roads, infrastructure and services. Many existing urban areas lack sufficient infrastructure and services. The larger towns are connected to natural gas however there is limited capacity, particularly for business use.

The provision of infrastructure to service further development should be assisted by development contributions. The provision of reticulated town water, gas and sewerage will provide increased opportunities for urban development.

The management of stormwater is important to limit impacts on water quality.

Rural infrastructure including roads, waterways, water supply, and community facilities must be carefully managed to maintain usefulness.

Strategic directions for infrastructure are to:

- Enhance open space areas to meet the active and passive needs of the community, in conjunction with required drainage infrastructure, areas of flora and fauna, and linkages to key destinations.
- Provide infrastructure, services and community facilities to new and established urban areas in an equitable manner.
- Ensure development does not exacerbate stormwater capacity issues.
- Implement measures to improve stormwater management.
- Protect rural and agricultural infrastructure such as roads and water supply.

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Gaming

Although gaming is a legitimate form of entertainment it can have detrimental effects on the community. Council is committed to protecting communities from the adverse effects of gaming machines.

MACEDON RANGES PLANNING SCHEME

The strategic direction for gaming is to:

- Ensure gaming machines are located so as to not be detrimental to the social and economic wellbeing of the community.