

**02.03**Historic  
25/01/2024  
C157mith**STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS****02.03-1**Historic  
25/01/2024  
C157mith**Settlement**

Mitchell Shire has the challenge of managing two distinct settlement typologies: supporting substantial urban growth in the south and maintaining a rural role to the north that protects quality agricultural land and supports regional development of townships.

**Settlement within the urban growth boundary**

Significant growth is planned to occur in the southern area of Mitchell Shire within the Urban Growth Boundary over the next fifty years. Mitchell Shire has eleven precinct structure plan areas which will guide population growth and the associated infrastructure required as shown on the Mitchell Urban Growth Boundary Plan at Clause 02.04.

Existing settlements within the North Growth Corridor:

- **Wallan** : identified as an activity centre.
- **Beveridge** : identified as future activity centre.
- **West Beveridge and Lockerbie North** : planned for smaller town centres.
- **Lockerbie** : (located in Hume Council) will become the major activity centre serving southern Mitchell.

Over time these centres will develop to form the activity centre network for southern Mitchell.

The Beveridge Interstate Freight Terminal (BIFT) will be a significant transport and logistics hub for the state and nationally. It will develop as a major employment area.

**Settlement outside the urban growth boundary**

North of the urban growth boundary are several settlements that perform different regional and local roles as shown on the Mitchell Townships Plan at Clause 02.04.

- **Seymour** : an emerging regional centre.
- **Kilmore (including Kilmore East) and Broadford** : peri-urban townships that serve the municipal community.

These three townships will grow significantly guided by the structure plans that have been prepared for them.

Seymour is surrounded on three sides by the Goulburn River. It is significantly constrained by flooding, particularly the lower lying commercial areas.

Wandong-Heathcote Junction, Pyalong, Toobarac and Tallarook are townships with a range of housing options and local services.

There are several smaller settlements and some low density and rural living clusters with limited services.

**Strategic directions**

- Support well planned and sustainable urban growth within the Urban Growth Boundary and in townships identified for growth.
- Promote Wallan and Beveridge as well serviced and attractive growth areas ensuring that good access to jobs, quality services, open space and high amenity landscaping are provided.
- Maintain rural living qualities including open space, landscape amenity and easy access to the natural environment in the townships outside the urban growth boundary.

- Develop Seymour into a thriving, major regional centre that becomes one of the Hume Region's key service and industry towns.
- Strengthen Kilmore as a key service centre by leveraging education and health care provision to establish foundations for growth.
- Promote Broadford as a peri-urban town with a rural atmosphere and opportunities for lifestyle choice.
- Consolidate the smaller townships' attractive lifestyle opportunities including Tooborac, Tallarook, Pyalong, Wandong - Heathcote Junction by building on their high amenity landscapes and heritage values and supporting opportunities for niche and localised economic activity.

**02.03-2**  
Historic  
25/01/2024  
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## **Environmental and landscapes values**

### **Biodiversity**

Mitchell Shire is highly valued due to the extent of connectivity of the public forest areas and the rich diversity of native species. There are many threatened fauna species in the Shire.

Approximately 9350 hectares of the Shire is within national parks and public land conservation areas, concentrated at Kinglake National Park and Mount Disappointment and Tallarook State Forests.

The proportion of private land containing native vegetation is the highest among the peri-urban councils.

Clearing for farming and intensive residential development has reduced the quality and quantity of natural bushland and impaired ecosystem functions. Bushland is located in small patches on privately owned land, public reserves, road reserves and waterways. These remnant areas are susceptible to ongoing degradation due to impacts of adjacent land uses, removal of firewood, 'tidying up', grazing and salinity. The resulting fragmented landscape is susceptible to the gradual loss and the extinction of local species and loss of biodiversity.

Roadside vegetation and wildlife corridors contain pockets of remnant indigenous vegetation with rare, vulnerable and significant flora species. Some roadsides and corridors provide a valuable source of native seed stock and important habitat for wildlife.

### **Significant environments and landscapes**

Mitchell Shire has a diverse range of landscapes including steep to gently undulating sedimentary hills, dissected granite plateaus, volcanic plains and flat alluvial flood plains associated with the Goulburn River and some major creeks.

Hilltops, volcanic cones and ridgelines are seen in the distance throughout Mitchell Shire and inappropriate development on these natural features can destroy the attractiveness and environmental qualities of the area. The natural landscapes and related views should not only be retained for their rural and natural character, but also provide an important opportunity for tourism and economic development.

Buildings can be intrusive in this type of environment if constructed in materials which may not blend with the surrounding environment. The conflict between windfarms and landscape values is an issue in Mitchell and requires careful management to protect the valued landscape character of hilltops, volcanic cones and ridgelines, while ensuring continued investigation into areas suitable for windfarms and other renewable energy locations.

### **Strategic directions**

- Protect threatened flora species to improve habitat for fauna. Protect areas of remnant native vegetation identified in riparian zones and wetlands.
- Protect waterways and wetlands from degradation as a result of development on adjacent or upstream land.

- Encourage sustainable land management on private land. Ensure rural development and land use is respectful of landscape values.
- Protect and enhance the distinctive sense of place, cultural identity and landscape within Mitchell.
- Protect hilltops, volcanic cones and ridgelines as important features of the landscape.

**02.03-3**

Historic  
25/01/2024  
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## **Environmental risks and amenity**

### **Climate change impacts**

Climate projections for the Hume region indicate there will be an average increase of maximum temperatures of 3.1 degrees Celsius and annual rainfall will decrease by up to 21 millimetres by 2050. This will cause a significantly hotter and drier local climate, with fewer rain-days and more droughts, and although average annual and seasonal total rainfall is expected to decline, the intensity of heavy rainfall events is likely to rise in most seasons.

Changes in climate will impact on water resources, primary production and infrastructure and will affect ecological and human health.

These risks need to be considered in managing land use and future development including whether settlement is appropriate in areas highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

### **Bushfire**

Bushfire risk is expected to increase and fire seasons will be longer. Extensive areas are prone to bushfire. The impacts of a bushfire on life and property are influenced by factors, including the subdivision pattern, availability of reticulated water, proximity to vegetation and community capacity to prepare for and fight fires. Bushfire also impacts on water quality by increasing the flow of runoff after storm events.

### **Floodplains**

The riverine catchments in Mitchell Shire include areas of flood prone land. Natural flooding of floodplains and wetlands provides breeding habitats for bird and aquatic species and promotes the health of rivers and floodplains.

Flooding also causes substantial damage to the natural and built environment. The impact is increasing due to development and vegetation changes, in particular due to raised earthworks and urban expansion in floodplains. This has reduced flood storage, obstructed or restricted flood flows and increased flood flow velocities and levels and has increased safety risks to floodplain occupants. There are some areas in the municipality where the extent of flooding has not been mapped, and this causes further risks.

### **Soil degradation**

Much of Mitchell Shire is highly susceptible to land degradation problems, particularly the steep granite and sedimentary areas, as a result of clearing, overgrazing and loss of native perennial pasture. Sheet and gully erosion occurs on all steep to moderate slopes in this type of terrain. Sodic and friable soils that are particularly prevalent within the Urban Growth Boundary can lead to increased erosion risks and sedimentation of downstream waterbodies.

Degradation includes erosion, a rising saline water table and reduced water quality. The north west of the Shire, the Tallarook Ranges, Kilmore East hills and the outskirts of the Seymour and Broadford townships are affected by erosion. Impacts of climate change, including higher temperatures, extended periods of drought and more severe storm conditions will further degrade sensitive areas.

The salt loads in waterways contribute to salinity problems downstream. Clearing of land, especially along ridgelines has increased salt loads in water and soils, affecting both stream health and agricultural productivity. Land capability mapping has identified that all land north of the Great Dividing Range could be subject to the risk of salinity if indiscriminate removal of native vegetation occurs.

## Land use compatibility

Mitchell Shire increasingly deals with land use compatibility issues as urban development occurs. Existing pipelines, quarries, waste facilities and identified economically important land requires protection from encroachment by uses that may undermine the ability of these assets to be developed and perform their function. Land allocated for residential and agricultural use also needs to be protected from uses with adverse amenity potential or risk.

Due to its location close to urban growth areas, resource exploration and extraction is common in Mitchell Shire to provide materials for the construction industry. Conflicts between resource exploration and extraction as a short term use, and the longer term strategic intent for land, particularly in the Urban Growth Boundary requires balance so that the short term use does not jeopardise or delay the long term plan.

## Strategic directions

- Transition to drier seasonal conditions and the impacts of climate change by planning for better bushfire preparedness and the impacts on biodiversity and water supply.
- Facilitate primary production by responding to climate change impacts through land use and development changes to adjust to the changed climate conditions.
- Reduce the impact of floods as a result of land use and vegetation changes.
- Avoid land degradation associated with erosion, a rising saline water table and reduced water quality.
- Protect economic and community assets from encroachment by uses with a lesser community benefit.
- Protect land allocated for residential purposes from uses with adverse amenity potential.
- Support resource extraction where it does not undermine the longer term strategic intent for the land and surrounding area.

### 02.03-4

Historic  
25/01/2024  
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## Natural resource management

### Agriculture

The rural areas of Mitchell Shire are significant assets, generating more than \$174 million worth of agricultural production in 2019.

The highest quality agricultural land is associated with the alluvial areas covering almost 50,000 hectares, including the elevated river terraces above the Goulburn River. These areas have been classified as moderate in terms of land capability but can be improved by good land management. The major risks to these areas include flooding, site drainage, salinity, degradation of soil structure, stream bank erosion and the impact of rural residential development.

There are many small rural landholdings with only twenty per cent of Farming Zone parcels sized over 40 hectares. There is strong demand, especially in the southern areas, for smaller lots for 'lifestyle' living and small enterprise farms. In some cases this has had a positive environmental effect by reducing grazing pressure, increasing tree planting and attracting environmentally conscious residents who rehabilitate their land. In other cases, increased subdivision has had negative effects of increasing pest plants and animals, overgrazing, introducing amenity conflicts with farming, water pollution from septic tanks and effects on our natural waterways as the result of the creation of farm dams changing runoff patterns.

Agriculture is an important employment sector in the Shire, with farming and related industries employing nearly 500 people (ABS, 2021).

## Water

Mitchell Shire is within three catchments, the Goulburn Broken Catchment, the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment and the North Central Catchment. Special Water Supply Catchments have been declared at Wallaby Creek, Sunday Creek, Mollison Creek, and Lake Eppalock.

Diminishing water quality and supply is a key concern for Mitchell Shire.

Reduced environmental flows and diminishing river health are influenced by effluent and nutrient impacts from septic systems, and increasing numbers of stock and domestic farm dams that have diverted and detained water reaching the river and creek systems. Urban stormwater run-off, excessive use of agricultural chemicals, and unsustainable grazing practices have also added to the deterioration of water quality.

A high number of farm dam failures occur within the first year of construction.

## Strategic directions

- Avoid fragmentation of productive agricultural land by subdivision to maintain the productive capacity of the land.
- Protect high quality productive farming land from incompatible development or activities.
- Support the growth in local agricultural food production in urban-rural fringe areas, particularly on productive alluvial and volcanic soils.
- Accommodate smaller, boutique and lifestyle farming enterprises on existing small lots.
- Improve water quality by maintaining environmental flows, minimising stormwater runoff and managing use of water on farms.
- Support the sustainable expansion of agricultural industries.
- Protect Special Water Catchments.
- Improve the quality of stormwater run-off.

## 02.03-5

Historic  
25/01/2024  
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## Built environment and heritage

### Urban design

Mitchell has a range of activity centres and growth areas within the Urban Growth Boundary that are being planned by the Victorian Planning Authority or Council to be well designed, liveable places.

Design of town centres outside the Urban Growth Boundary is a priority to create comfortable environments for people to shop and recreate, and places that are attractive to tourists to the area. The heritage towns of Kilmore, Tooborac, Broadford, Tallarook and Seymour provide high quality residential environments.

Improved design around train stations and linkages to town centres will increase the walkability of these town centres.

Attractive design of industrial areas includes encouragement of common parking and signage areas and high quality landscaping.

Environmentally Sustainable Development is a core principle for all new developments.

### Heritage

Mitchell Shire heritage places include Mount William Stone Axe Quarry which is a major archaeological place of national significance with significant cultural and spiritual connections for the Wurundjeri people. It is an example of one of the most influential complexes of stone working traditions known to have occurred in the Greenstone belts of Victoria and one of the best preserved examples of prehistoric quarrying and ground edge hatchet head manufacturing technologies to have survived into the 19th century in southeast Australia.

Post-contact settlement history in the Shire is associated with the gold rush, bushrangers and explorers.

Military history within Seymour is very important, and places include the Puckapunyal Tank and Artillery Museum located within Puckapunyal Military Base and the Australian Light Horse Memorial Park on the eastern edge of Seymour which is a former military training area with strong associations with the Australian Army and is of local and potentially national significance.

Beveridge is the home to the birthplace of Ned Kelly and the house he was born in remains today. It is listed on the Victorian heritage register.

Numerous buildings in Kilmore, which is Victoria's oldest inland town, are of heritage significance. It is a town with consistent period buildings that create a unique sense of character and place.

Tooborac has an early example of a bluestone pub and brewery dating back to early white settlement.

Broadford has a range of significant buildings, spread across the town, which provide a strong heritage character.

The Goulburn River has 'Heritage River' status and the Trawool Valley is listed as a regionally significant landscape by the National Trust.

It is known that a number of places of cultural heritage significance to both the Taungurung people and Wurundjeri people are still to be fully investigated and protected.

### **Strategic directions**

- Support high quality design in precinct structure plan areas within Melbourne's urban growth boundaries, townships and industrial areas to create attractive and liveable places.
- Protect and enhance heritage places for the role they play in forming the distinctive amenity, character, cultural identity and sense of place of the Shire's towns and regions.
- Protect the Mount William Stone Axe Quarry as a major archaeological place.
- Preserve places of aboriginal cultural significance.

### **02.03-6**

Historic  
25/01/2024  
C157mith

### **Housing**

#### **Residential development**

Residential development in Mitchell has been dominated by detached housing at conventional, low and rural living densities. There has been limited medium density development but this is changing rapidly with significant growth happening in the Urban Growth Boundary at Wallan and Beveridge and in the townships of Seymour, Broadford and Kilmore. There is a need to further diversify the housing available across the Shire to cater for a range of different household types, including affordable housing options.

#### **Rural residential development**

Dwellings in the Farming Zone and the Rural Conservation Zone can introduce amenity conflicts with farming practice that increases infrastructure and service expectations of residents that are not viable for rural areas. Rural living opportunities are well provided for in areas zoned Rural Living and Low Density Residential.

### **Strategic directions**

- Facilitate significant housing diversity across the municipality.
- Support higher density housing in suitable areas as identified in Structure Plans.
- Protect the operational viability of farms in the Farming Zone and Rural Conservation Zone by minimising housing development.

- Encourage rural housing not associated with farming to be located in the Rural Living Zone and Low Density Residential Zone.

**02.03-7**

Historic  
25/01/2024  
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**Economic development**

**Diversified economy**

Mitchell Shire has a diverse, sound and sustainable local business base, great economic potential and opportunities for further growth and prosperity influenced by its strategic location at the northern gateway to Melbourne.

Strong transport links, land availability and proximity to primary producers, Goulburn Valley and Melbourne's wholesale fruit and vegetable market provides a competitive advantage over neighbouring peri-urban areas.

Investment that facilitates value adding rural industries is necessary to leverage the benefit of economically productive rural areas more fully. Access to construction jobs throughout the northern growth corridor is also a huge contributor to Mitchell's economy.

**Puckapunyal Military Area**

The Puckapunyal Military Area operates as a training facility for the Australian Army and is a major contributor to the local economy. The base covers an area in excess of 44,000 hectares. Given the role of the facility and the noise and vibrations produced from on-site weaponry, the development of surrounding land needs to respond to the effects from activities at the base.

**Beveridge Interstate Freight Terminal (BIFT)**

Over 1000 hectares of land has been identified for the proposed BIFT and associated freight and logistics based industrial area. Once operational, the terminal will enable freight to be transferred from Victoria's two largest ports of Melbourne and Geelong to the rest of Australia.

**Industry**

Potential growth industries where the Shire has a competitive advantage include the construction and construction services industries, health and education sectors, transport, logistics and warehousing, manufacturing, equine, value-adding agriculture, viticulture, organic farming and new technologies.

There is interest in locating industries with potential amenity impacts such as resource recovery and recycling and poultry farms in the Shire partly as a consequence of continued pressure on these industries from urban expansion in Melbourne.

The overall appearance of industrial areas is important in attracting ongoing and new investment. Care needs to be taken in considering the approval of these industries.

**Tourism**

The tourism industry creates a significant number of direct and indirect employment opportunities in the Shire. Attractions include:

- Natural environments including the Goulburn River, Tallarook State Forest, Mount Piper and Mount Disappointment.
- Historic places including the townships of Kilmore and Seymour.
- Sport, recreation and racing including the State Motorcycle Sports Centre, the Hume International Raceway, Golf courses and Country racecourses.
- Art and culture venues and public art including murals and sculptures and Seymour's Old Courthouse Gallery.
- Equine tours, agrotourism, food, wine and beverage offerings.
- Festivals and concerts as a result of the proximity to Melbourne.

- The Great Victorian Rail Trail with a potential to expand this network.

### **Strategic directions**

- Ensure sufficient land is zoned, serviced and available to attract investment and generate a diverse range of additional jobs.
- Support the development of the BIFT as a regional transport, logistics and employment precinct.
- Protect Puckapunyal Military Area from encroachment by sensitive uses in order to maintain its important role.
- Support industrial expansion in townships and other identified locations in accordance with structure plans.
- Improve the attractiveness of townships as places to live, work, invest in and visit.
- Facilitate tourism and recreational attractions to maximise benefits for the wider community.

### **02.03-8**

Historic  
25/01/2024  
C157mith

### **Transport**

Mitchell Shire is extremely well located within the transport system. The Hume Freeway, Northern Highway and Goulburn Valley Highway traverse the municipality. The southern area of the Shire is located close to Melbourne Airport and the northern area of this Shire is located close to Mangalore Airport. There is an extensive rail network linking Melbourne with regional Victoria and New South Wales, and BIFT will create a major transport, logistics and employment precinct to support the Victorian economy.

Local public transport is inadequate, and the number of routes and frequency of services will need to improve as development occurs in the urban growth boundary and in larger townships.

With significant growth to occur in the municipality, priority transport projects have been identified for delivery in partnership with the State and Federal Government and developers to ensure that the improvement and upgrading of transport infrastructure is in line with the expected impacts of use and development.

Growth in the municipality provides the opportunity to extend and improve pedestrian and cycle routes and support sustainable transport.

### **Strategic directions**

- Promote ongoing upgrades to the road and public transport network and facilitate better linkages between Melbourne, regional Victoria and New South Wales to support population growth and encourage economic growth.
- Support the transition to electric vehicles by providing the necessary infrastructure.
- Develop a safe and convenient network of pedestrian and cycle routes within and between townships to facilitate sustainable commuter and recreational travel.

### **02.03-9**

Historic  
25/01/2024  
C157mith

### **Infrastructure**

#### **Community facilities**

Ensuring that education, health and community facilities are provided when and where they are needed is a significant challenge for Mitchell Shire as rapid growth occurs within the urban growth boundary and larger townships.

The municipality, especially Kilmore, has got an exceptional reputation for private education. There is opportunity for both the private and public education offer to expand as growth occurs.

## Open space

Functional, quality and visually appealing open space is critical to community health and the environment and priorities are ensuring residents and visitors have equal access and opportunity to participate in sport and leisure activities, regardless of their circumstances.

The development and provision of open space will be guided by demographic characteristics and settlement type to determine the scale and delivery of services and infrastructure to ensure equity and viability of leisure opportunities across the Shire.

## Development infrastructure

Water quality and flow patterns are issues in rural areas. Use of water sensitive urban design techniques can ensure that the characteristics of natural waterways are protected.

Mitchell Shire aims to be a leader in the reuse of wastewater, especially in growth areas.

## Strategic directions

- Facilitate timely delivery of community and development infrastructure in growth areas within the urban growth boundary and the larger townships where growth is expected.
- Facilitate the provision of a variety of open space in all settlements that:
  - Serve the needs of people of all ages, cultural backgrounds and abilities.
  - Are visually appealing and inviting.
  - Encourage healthy lifestyles and social connectivity.
  - Provide a diverse range of uses.
  - Are accessible to the community.
  - Are fit for purpose and accommodate existing and future populations.
- Support infrastructure that allows sustainable disposal of waste and wastewater aiming for zero waste.