02.03 Strategic directions

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02.03-1 Settlement

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The dispersed settlement pattern in Yarra Ranges, including many relatively small rural towns located in the Green Wedge, creates challenges in meeting community expectations about the range of accessible services and facilities.

There are opportunities for more intensive development within and adjoining activity centres to provide additional housing and employment generating uses.

The redevelopment of urban areas and key redevelopment sites including the Chirnside Park Activity Centre, the former Cave Hill Quarry and the former Swinburne University, will expand the diversity of housing, education, recreation and employment opportunities in Yarra Ranges.

The location of the Urban Growth Boundary has largely prevented urban expansion into the productive agricultural areas and rural landscapes of the Green Wedge. However, there are ongoing latent pressures to change the current Urban Growth Boundary to expand urban development into some adjoining Green Wedge areas.

The Green Wedge areas will continue to support a diverse mosaic of agricultural activities, rural lifestyle opportunities, tourism and bushland areas. New developments, subdivisions, and land use changes, will continue to be managed in a way that protects and enhances the primary Green Wedge values of supporting sustainable farming, retaining a healthy biodiversity and protecting valued landscapes

Table 1 below describes the key characteristics of the green wedge area.

Table 1- Green wedge land use and settlement

Category	Characteristics
Productive Agricultural Areas	Areas where: ▪ Lots are generally greater than 4 hectares in intensively cultivated areas, or 10 hectares in other areas ▪ Most lots are cleared and sown with pasture grasses or managed for horticulture ▪ Most lots are currently used for agriculture or have realistic potential to be used for horticulture, livestock grazing or other forms of productive agriculture.
Rural Landscape Areas	Areas where: ▪ Lot sizes are generally greater than 2 hectares ▪ Most lots have been at least partially cleared of indigenous vegetation ▪ Most lots are used for residential purposes in a rural environment ▪ Very few lots are used for productive agriculture (meaning lots of more than 4 hectares that are used for horticultural production or lots of more than 10 hectares

Category	Characteristics
	that are predominantly cleared and sown with pasture grasses).
Rural Residential Areas	Areas where: ▪ Lots sizes are generally between 0.1 hectares and 2 hectares ▪ Most lots are used for residential purposes in a heavily treed environment ▪ Very few lots are used for productive agriculture (meaning lots of more than 4 hectares that are used for horticultural production or lots of more than 10 hectares that are predominantly cleared and sown with pasture grasses) ▪ Many of the existing lots have been created by the consolidation of smaller lots under subdivision restructure and tenement requirements of previous planning schemes. These areas are mostly concentrated in the Dandenong Ranges although pockets exist in other localities.

Large landholdings and relatively lower land values in Green Wedge areas can attract uses that are seeking to relocate from urban areas. Some of these land uses can create potential conflicts with agriculture and rural amenity.

Additional urban housing development outside of the established Urban Growth Boundary would lead to unsustainable outcomes such as high infrastructure costs and adverse impacts on the environment, landscape and agricultural practices. Speculation about changes to the Urban Growth Boundary can also undermine the confidence and investment decisions of agricultural producers, tourism industry providers and rural lifestyle residents in the Green Wedge.

Council's strategic directions for settlement are to:

- Contain urban development and urban renewal within the urban growth boundary.
- Support a mix of housing, business opportunities and community infrastructure within the suburbs and larger rural towns.
- Protect the Green Wedge by ensuring use and development complements or enhances the primary values and characteristics of the Green Wedge.
- Minimise residential subdivision in the green wedge.
- Limit the use of rural land in the green wedge to agriculture, rural industry, tourist-oriented businesses or dwellings.

Activity centres

Yarra Ranges' network of activity centres (shown in Table 2 below and on the Economic Activity Plan at 02.04-3) plays an important role in providing a range of services and employment opportunities and a complementary range of housing types, commercial services and community infrastructure.

Table 2 - Yarra Ranges Activity Centre Hierarchy

Activity Centre Type	Role
Major Activity Centres Chirnside Park and Lilydale	These centres provide a large, diverse and intensive mix of retail, commercial, entertainment, cultural and other uses. They have strong public transport links, serve a large regional-sized catchment, and are priority locations for future private and public sector development. Land within and adjoining these centres is the preferred location for additional and more diverse residential development.
Large Neighbourhood Activity Centres Belgrave, Healesville, Kilsyth, Monbulk, Mooroolbark, Mount Evelyn, Seville, Yarra Glen, Yarra Junction	Smaller in floor space terms than Major Activities Centres, these centres have a retail mix that is focussed on convenience and grocery shopping. They also provide a range of community services to the surrounding communities. Some of these centres, which serve a catchment that extends into the rural hinterland, perform a significant role in the provision of community and civic services, with some also providing a range of facilities and services for tourists. Land within and adjoining these centres is generally an appropriate location for additional housing.
Small Neighbourhood Activity Centres Coldstream, Montrose, Mount Dandenong, Olinda, Sassafras, Tecoma., Upwey, Wandin North, Warburton, Woori Yallock.	These centres have a more limited role in providing convenience retailing and community facilities for an immediate surrounding catchment. Usually, they have a small supermarket as the main anchor tenant. In some cases, they also serve a tourist market.
Local Activity Centres Examples include: Colby Drive - Belgrave South, Monbulk Road Silvan and Switchback Road - Chirnside Park	Local Activity Centres consist of a small group of shops that typically serve a local walk-in catchment and provide for the daily convenience and ‘top up’ needs of local residents and passing motorists. Some of these centres contain a limited number of community facilities and other uses.

The existing activity centre network located in the suburban areas of the municipality, offers sufficient opportunities to meet projected future retail requirements in established centres that are accessible to residents.

The creation of a sustainable urban form that consolidates development around a network of activity centres also has environmental and social benefits including reducing car dependency, efficient use of community infrastructure, and reducing the need for urban development in rural areas.

Council’s strategic directions for activity centres are to:

- Locate retail, commercial, entertainment, community services and facilities and other intensive employment generating activities within established activity centres.
- Accommodate additional retail and office floor space within larger activity centres.
- Discourage activity centre functions in out of centre locations.

- Support housing within and adjoining activity centres.
- Support well-designed and integrated activity centres that service the needs of local residents and visitors and contribute to a sense of local identity.

02.03-2 Environmental and landscape values

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Biodiversity

The natural environment, dominated by hills and trees, will continue to be the most defining characteristic of Yarra Ranges.

Yarra Ranges retains extensive areas of forested land together with a complex network of fragmented remnants of indigenous vegetation and waterways that provide habitats for a rich biodiversity. Remnant scattered trees and vegetation on private land also provide habitat and connectivity to the areas of public reserves that exist in Yarra Ranges. A significant proportion of indigenous vegetation especially within the foothills and valleys of Yarra Ranges was cleared as part of past land management practices.

The patchwork of fragmented bushland remnants throughout the settled areas of Yarra Ranges is susceptible to incremental vegetation removal, weed and pest animal invasion. Loss of vegetation from the landscape leads to nutrient loss, soil erosion, silting and pollution of waterways which can contribute to reduced agricultural production. Further fragmentation of bushland remnants also undermines their long-term viability as wildlife habitat.

River corridors, catchments and waterways

The waterways within the Yarra River and Dandenong Creek catchments are important environmental and water supply assets of the region although they suffer from degradation due to past and ongoing land management practices.

The Yarra River and its associated wetlands are important for wildlife habitat, as a landscape feature, a source of drinking water and as a recreational resource.

Remnant vegetation along waterways plays an important role in protecting in stream habitat and water quality. Responsible land and water management will help to protect drinking water quality and enhance the value of Yarra Ranges' bushland remnants and waterways as wildlife habitats, water resources and for recreation.

Land use and development within the catchment areas of the Yarra River may have an adverse impact on water quality within Yarra Ranges waterways.

Council's strategic directions for environment are to:

- Avoid the incremental loss and further fragmentation of large intact remnant patches of indigenous vegetation.
- Sustainably manage habitat areas and improve connections between them.
- Offset unavoidable vegetation removal by revegetation or land management measures that achieve a net increase in key biodiversity assets.
- Protect biodiversity assets on public land and areas that are accessible to the public.
- Avoid the removal of indigenous vegetation or significant earthworks within riparian environments that will impact on water quality and habitat value of waterways.

02.03-3 Environmental risks and amenity

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The combination of Yarra Ranges' natural topography, its urban fringe location and projected climate changes has resulted in many communities being exposed to environmental hazards including bushfire, landslip, flooding and soil contamination. Priority should be given to the protection of human life in the management of areas that are affected by environmental hazards.

By recognising and planning for the risks associated with projected climate changes, the adverse effects of water scarcity, bushfire, flood and landslip events will be minimised.

Many communities especially in the Dandenong Ranges are not serviced by reticulated sewerage which also has adverse impacts on the local environment and waterway network.

Council's strategic directions for environmental risks are to:

- Discourage additional dwellings, subdivision and other sensitive land uses in bushfire prone areas and where the required defendable space would necessitate significant removal of high-quality indigenous vegetation.
- Locate and design development to minimise the potential risk from flooding.
- Protect the storage capacity of flood pondage areas.
- Locate and design development within areas of landslip risk to minimise the potential risk to life and property.

Amenity

The residential zones in Yarra Ranges permit a range of non-residential business uses that meet local community needs.

Lower land values in residential neighbourhoods can attract commercial activities that can adversely affect the amenity of residential neighbourhoods through car parking and traffic and undermine the role of activity centres.

Council's strategic direction for amenity is to:

- Provide opportunities in residential zones for non-residential land uses that respond to local community needs and retain the residential character of the area.

02.03-4 Natural resource management

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The relatively reliable rainfall and favourable soil conditions in many parts of Yarra Ranges Green Wedge have traditionally supported a strong agricultural sector.

Agriculture in Yarra Ranges will continue to evolve in response to changes in economic and climate conditions. The areas of potentially productive agricultural land will need to be managed to retain long term opportunities.

The extent of the stone resource within these quarries is finite and confined by environmental constraints and other land use priorities on nearby and adjoining land.

Council's strategic directions for natural resource management are to:

- Discourage additional dwellings and land fragmentation in productive agricultural areas that would have an adverse impact on farming operations or significantly reduce the extent of land available for productive agricultural use.
- Support development of existing extractive industry resources while protecting environmentally sensitive areas.

02.03-5 Built environment and heritage

02/12/2022
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Scenic landscapes are a key contributor to the identity of Yarra Ranges and unsympathetically designed new development can detract from these landscapes.

The identity and rural town character of many Yarra Ranges settlements is enhanced by their location in a rural landscape setting and distinct separation from other urban areas. The quality and presentation of buildings and public places in Yarra Ranges' activity centres also plays a significant role in creating a sense of place for local communities.

Much of the building stock in Yarra Ranges comprises modest buildings constructed before the introduction of environmentally sustainable design concepts.

The future built form of development will adopt environmentally sustainable design principles, be accessible to people of all abilities, respect heritage places and will reinforce the valued characteristics of their surroundings.

Yarra Ranges' diversity of heritage buildings and places reflect its origins and contributes to its identity. There is a need to protect the important elements of this heritage to nurture greater community awareness and appreciation of Yarra Ranges' past.

Council's strategic directions for the built environment and heritage are to:

- Protect and respect sensitive environments, significant landscapes and cultural and natural heritage.
- Incorporate best practice environmental design to contribute to sustainable building form.
- Encourage development that contributes to a sense of place and adds to the character and identity of the distinct localities in Yarra Ranges.

02.03-6 Housing

02/12/2022
C195yran

The combination of Yarra Ranges' attractive environment and its location on the fringe of Melbourne will result in ongoing pressures for additional and more intensive development.

Although there are latent pressures to expand urban development into the Green Wedge there is sufficient capacity within established urban areas and key strategic redevelopment sites to accommodate future housing and employment opportunities.

The concentration of additional housing development in identified consolidation areas (refer Residential Framework Plan to Clause 16.01-1L) based on established activity centres will improve housing diversity, increase the proportion of housing with convenient access to services, and reduce pressures for change in other neighbourhoods.

There is a limited diversity of housing stock to meet the needs of changing demography.

More diverse and adaptable housing stock will be required to meet community needs including affordable housing, housing that is accessible to people with disabilities and a range of specialised housing types to cater for the growing number of older people that provides opportunities for them to continue living within or close to their local community.

Council's strategic directions for housing are to:

- Support residential growth, increased densities and housing diversity in the consolidation areas of the major activity centres.
- Support diverse housing on key redevelopment sites and combined lots that are close to community services, local employment and public transport.
- Support affordable housing in new developments in consolidation areas and other locations with access to town centres, commercial and community facilities.
- Contain residential subdivision within the existing Urban Growth Boundary.
- Discourage housing in locations that would increase the potential for land use conflicts and adverse impacts on landscape amenity or the environment.
- Support aged care accommodation in locations that meet the needs of an ageing population.

02.03-7 Economic development

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Yarra Ranges has a narrow economic base with a limited range of higher-level employment opportunities. Many residents travel outside the municipality for jobs and high-order services, including tertiary education and regional shopping centres.

Much of the local employment is in sectors such as manufacturing and retailing which have limited long term prospects for job growth. There are a significant number of home based businesses in Yarra Ranges.

A number of large manufacturing businesses operate in Yarra Ranges, however recent expansion in industrial floorspace has been in smaller scale units that accommodate businesses catering for more localised markets.

There are limited opportunities within the Urban Growth Boundary for further industrial development however many existing industrial areas contain under-developed sites that offer potential for more intensive industrial use.

Yarra Ranges includes local industry sectors that support the growth of social enterprises. Opportunities exist for the development of local business incubator sites to support local business ideas and agribusiness.

The Green Wedge contains extensive areas of productive agricultural land which support a strong agricultural sector.

Processing of sustainable timber resources provides significant local employment and economic activity in some of Yarra Ranges' rural towns.

Council's strategic directions for economic development are to:

- Consolidate retail and office-based businesses in activity centres.
- Provide for new businesses in accessible locations that broadens the economic base and range of employment opportunities in Yarra Ranges.
- Retain a broad range of industrial based employment and support efficient use of industrial land.
- Manage industrial areas to provide opportunities for future changes and innovation within the local employment sector.
- Support the timber industry that adds value to the timber resources that are available in Yarra Ranges.
- Accommodate, rural industries and other infrastructure that support the ongoing use of rural land for agriculture in the Green Wedge.

Tourism

The Green Wedge areas contain tourist destinations including wine growing areas, national parks, State forests, recreational trails, golf courses and well- known attractions such as the Puffing Billy Railway, the Dandenong Ranges, Warburton and Healesville Wildlife Sanctuary.

The Green Wedge also includes a variety of businesses linked to tourist related activities including visitor accommodation, wineries, restaurants and cafes.

Many tourist related businesses have a direct association with their setting especially in the wine growing regions and areas of forestry activity.

The Green Wedge and its proximity to the metropolitan region will attract ongoing interest in providing tourism and hospitality services. This sector will provide new economic opportunities in the region. However, it needs to be managed to protect the primary values and characteristics of the Green Wedge.

Council's strategic directions for tourism are to:

- Support commercial land uses associated with tourist activities to create business opportunities that broaden the economic base of rural towns.
- Encourage tourism activity that supports overnight stays and a diversity of tourist experiences.
- Support tourism development in the green wedge that protects biodiversity, agriculture and valued landscapes.

02.03-8 Transport

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Relatively low population density of many communities within Yarra Ranges create challenges in providing frequent and reliable public transport linkages.

Many residential areas also lack a comprehensive network of connected footpaths and have limited access to off road pedestrian and bicycle trails.

Major new development proposals can have a significant impact on the operation of the road network. These impacts should be mitigated where necessary.

An integrated approach to transport needs is required to provide transport infrastructure to meet anticipated demands.

Council's strategic directions for transport are to:

- Manage and improve transport networks to meet community and regional needs and reduce private motor vehicle transport.
- Facilitate a range of transport options and increased public transport use.
- Protect future regional transport routes and support improvements to existing arterial road routes.

02.03-9 Infrastructure

02/12/2022
C195yran

The generally low density and widely dispersed settlement pattern in Yarra Ranges create challenges in meeting community expectations about the level of services and infrastructure.

Open space

There are opportunities to improve the quality of open spaces and the linkages between them.

Waterways such as the Yarra River and disused infrastructure such as former rail lines and water supply aqueducts offer long-term opportunities to expand the network of off-road recreational trail routes throughout Yarra Ranges.

There is a need for public open space and recreational facilities to respond to increased demand in locations where significant population increases or demographic changes are anticipated, and to provide an enhanced opportunity for all Yarra Ranges residents to lead healthy lifestyles within a safe environment.

Council's strategic directions for open space are to:

- Deliver an accessible and equitable public open space network with assistance from developer contributions.
- Improve links between regional public open space facilities.
- Facilitate rural based public open space and recreation opportunities.
- Support a network of accessible community infrastructure hubs.

Community and development infrastructure

Many low-density residential areas are not sewered. Extending reticulated sewerage to un-serviced areas will address effluent disposal issues in Monbulk and other residential communities in the southern foothills of the Dandenong.

Upgrade works to improve the capacity of stormwater drainage infrastructure is also required along with the extension of reticulated natural gas through to Warburton township.

More intensive redevelopment within activity centres, at strategic redevelopment sites and through urban consolidation and renewal needs to be coordinated with the provision of reticulated services infrastructure and community infrastructure.

Council's strategic directions for community and development infrastructure are to:

- Consolidate future development in fully serviced areas within the Urban Growth Boundary.
- Prioritise the extension of reticulated sewerage to unsewered areas within the Urban Growth Boundary.
- Support the upgrade of stormwater drainage and other reticulated infrastructure in established urban areas that have been identified for more intensive development.
- Ensure major developments make contributions to address community infrastructure needs, including through community hubs comprising clusters of adaptable community facilities in accessible locations.