



Urban Growth Strategy

Background Report

February 2016

Prepared For:



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1 Executive Summary



Newstead, Guildford, and Maldon

Mount Alexander Shire Council is undertaking an Urban Growth Strategy to guide the urban residential growth for the Shire.

This Background Report has been written with the intent of it being provided for Community Consultation, to inform the community of the information gathered to date, and test the emerging themes as articulated at the end of this document.

This report identifies a number of key findings, including:

- Mount Alexander is in need of an updated Urban Growth Strategy.
- Mount Alexander is experiencing population growth, but it is at a slower rate than past population projections suggested. Mount Alexander has a higher percentage of older people than the average across Regional Victoria, and this aging population is expected to continue to rise.
- The State Government's Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan identifies Castlemaine and Harcourt as places where growth should be supported.
- Reticulated water and sewer are essential for urban growth. Towns without sewer are constrained for urban growth.
- Transport, infrastructure, access to employment and services, heritage, ecological and environment values of the Shire will need to be considered in the Urban Growth Strategy.

2 Introduction

As with much of Victoria, population growth within the municipality is rising, however for Mount Alexander Shire, this population growth has been less than projected, despite increases in local services, in particular the installation of sewerage in many townships in the early 2000's. In order to ensure that there is sufficient land available for new residents and housing, and that new development and subdivision occurs in appropriate locations, Council is undertaking an Urban Growth Strategy for the Shire.

The Urban Growth Strategy will provide a cohesive framework for managing the future urban growth of the Mount Alexander Shire.



Elphinstone Hotel

Other townships and rural areas not listed above, within the Shire are not considered to be 'urban' and are not considered within this Strategy.

Once endorsed by Council, the Urban Growth Strategy will be formally recognised through the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme.

Community feedback will be sought at various stages of developing the Urban Growth Strategy. This Background Report is the starting point for the project, and forms part of the community and stakeholder consultation.



Campbells Creek

3 Purpose and Methodology

3.1 Purpose of the Urban Growth Strategy

The Urban Growth Strategy will be a high level and overarching strategy to guide urban residential growth within the Shire. It will review the development, population and living trends, and consider the potential impacts of future influences such as an aging population, changes to and availability of infrastructure (such as the NBN) and future employment patterns.

The Urban Growth Strategy will:

- Provide high level strategic guidance for Council, the community, stakeholders and developers relating to future urban growth within the Shire.
- Take a holistic approach when considering and planning for the future of Mount Alexander Shire.
- Identify appropriate locations for future residential growth.
- Identify locations where future residential growth should not occur.

As part of understanding the purpose of the Urban Growth Strategy it is also important to understand what is outside the scope of the project. The Urban Growth Strategy will not:

- Provide guidance on commercial land, rural land, or townships outside of those identified within the Study Area.
- Provide guidance on built form outcomes, heritage protection or environmentally sustainable design of new development. The Strategy will relate to the residential use of land only.

Once adopted by Council, it is envisaged that the Urban Growth Strategy will be formally recognised within the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme.

3.2 Methodology

The Urban Growth Strategy will be undertaken in the following stages:



This document forms the Background Report, which is being conducted as part of Stage 2 – Background Report.

This Background Report will assist with the conversation with the community. Community consultation will be undertaken to test the emerging themes identified as part of this Report. An Issues and Opportunity Statement will be produced following consultation.

A Draft Strategy will then be produced, which will be put out for consultation for review prior to the final Urban Growth Strategy being produced.

3.3 Purpose of this Background Report

The Background Report forms a “starting point” for the project, and informs the community and stakeholders of the findings established by the research done to date.

The Background Paper does not make decisions for the future Urban Growth in the Shire, it collates facts, identifies trends and draws out emerging themes, which are to be tested through community and stakeholder consultation.

4 Study Area

Mount Alexander Shire is located in Central Victoria approximately 110km north of Melbourne. The Shire has a whole has a population of approximately 18,102 persons, with a total area of 152,870 Ha, equating to a population density of approximately 0.12 people per ha (ABS, 2014).



Figure 1: Mount Alexander Shire (source: Meinhardt)

The Shire includes the following towns:

- Castlemaine
- Campbells Creek
- Chewton
- Maldon
- Newstead
- Harcourt
- Guildford
- Taradale
- Elphinstone

Importantly, it is only these towns which are being considered under the Urban Growth Framework.

5 Physical Characteristics

A summary of the key findings can be summarised:

- Reticulated water and sewer are essential for urban growth. Towns without sewer are constrained for urban growth.
- Mount Alexander Shire is located in a highly accessible area serviced by the Calder Freeway and Melbourne-Bendigo Railway line. Future development should respond by maximising the access opportunities provided by this infrastructure, whilst protecting their important regional economic functions (such as the movement of freight and people).
- A connected multi-modal (walking, cycling, public transport and vehicles) transport network is essential to support future urban growth. Consideration must be given to how transport and land use interact to ensure transport infrastructure and services can be efficiently provided as townships grow.
- Castlemaine Health and other health services provide regionally accessible health services to the community, particularly for people located within Castlemaine. It also provides a source of employment for a significant portion of the Shire.
- Protecting heritage values is a strong consideration in many of the townships, most notably Maldon.
- The Shire is home to many Endangered, Vulnerable and Depleted Ecological Vegetation Classes, some of which exist within or with close proximity to the urban areas considered within the Study Area.
- V/Line train services between Bendigo and Melbourne service Mount Alexander Shire, predominately commuter services in both directions.
- Environmental risk associated with flood, fire and vegetation affects where future urban land should be considered.

A detailed review of physical characteristics in **Appendix A**.

6 Policy and Planning Studies

A summary of the key findings can be summarised:

- The Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan identifies Castlemaine as a Regional Centre which will support infill growth and some targeted expansion. It identifies Harcourt as a place where sustainable growth should be encouraged.
- Mount Alexander Shire is in need of an updated Urban Growth Strategy.
- There are currently many Planning Scheme Amendments underway which would rezone land and add to the supply of residential land.
- Mount Alexander Shire has various existing Strategies, Plans and Policies, which are relevant to the development of an Urban Growth Framework for the Shire. These particularly include the existing Urban Design Framework Plans, many of which include township boundaries.

A detailed review of policy and planning studies in **Appendix B**.

7 Demographics, Trends and Population Data

A summary of the key findings can be summarised:

- Mount Alexander is experiencing population growth, but it is at a slower rate than the population projections suggested would occur.
- While the population projections suggest that there is to be a population increase of between 0.8% and 0.9%, there is a projected household increase between 1.3% and 1.4% per year.
- Mount Alexander has a higher percentage of older people than the average across Regional Victoria, and this aging population is expected to continue to rise.
- The yearly rate of new residential building approvals exceeds the yearly population increase.
- Castlemaine (east) has the highest population density.
- Maldon has the highest median aged residents (53 years old).

- Maldon also has the highest proportion of un-occupied private homes (22.4%).
- The most common type of households is 2 person households, making up 37.6% within the Shire.
- The most common type of dwelling is a three bedroom dwelling, with 47.4% of dwellings within the Shire.
- 59% of the employed population live and work within the municipality.
- There is a documented undersupply of affordable and social housing within the municipality.

A detailed review of demographics, trends and population data in **Appendix C**.

8 Next Steps

The Urban Growth Strategy will be continued in the following stages:



This Background Report will assist with the conversation with the community. Community consultation will be undertaken to test the emerging themes identified as part of this Report.

Following the inputs received from consultation, an Issues and Opportunity Statement will be produced.

A Draft Strategy will then be prepared, which will be put out for consultation for review prior to the final Urban Growth Strategy being produced.