

# **URBAN GROWTH STRATEGY – BACKGROUND REPORT**

## **APPENDIX A – PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS**

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## 1 History

The Dja Dja Wurrung people are recognised as the first peoples of Mount Alexander Shire.

Gold was discovered in the 1850s which saw a quick influx of settlement. The landscape of Mount Alexander Shire has been significantly impacted by its gold history, by diggings and mines, but also through attractive gold rush era buildings and settlement patterns.

The Shire is commonly known for its heritage townships, buildings and places. The largest is the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park and Maldon being Australia's first Notable Town.



*Castlemaine Australia 1800s*

Today, Mount Alexander Shire is a picturesque shire located centrally between Melbourne and Bendigo. With beautiful natural surroundings, various cultural and heritage offerings and award winning local produce, Mount Alexander Shire is an attractive place to live and visit.

## 2 Environment and Environmental Risks

The Shire contains many areas of Endangered, Vulnerable and Depleted Ecological Vegetation Classes. This requires consideration as part of any future residential strategy.

Nearly all of Mount Alexander Shire is identified within Declared Water Supply Catchments (formally Proclaimed Water Supply Catchments), and all of the urban areas which form part of this study are included in the catchment areas, being the Cairn Curran and Eppalock Catchment areas. These identified catchments are protected by the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*.

Ministerial Guidelines, *Planning Permit Applications in Open Potable Water Supply Catchment Areas* provide guidance on how planning applications within a Special Water Supply Catchment Area (most of the Shire) are to be considered. These guidelines can be relaxed where Council has adopted a Domestic Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) which satisfies the criteria stipulated in the Guidelines. Council is in the process of preparing and adopting a DWMP to comply with the Guidelines. While that is in process, Goulburn Murray Water and Council have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which determines how the Guidelines will be applied across the Council in relation to the assessment of planning permit applications.

Changes to the planning scheme on land which forms part of water supply catchments need to consider the potential of impacts on water quality, noting water quality in water supply catchments should be protected from possible contamination. This is particularly relevant for the parts of the Shire

which are not connected to reticulated sewer and require onsite wastewater disposal. Reticulated water and sewer are essential for urban growth, and this will be a determining factor within the future strategy.

Flooding affects many towns within the Shire. The future strategy will need to consider the latest flood information, with an approach of limiting the community's exposure to flooding.

Significantly, much of the Shire is at risk of Grass and Bushfire, with the townships of Castlemaine, Chewton and Maldon being noted as having Extreme Danger within their Community Information Guides, and that nearly the entire municipality is within a Designated Bushfire Prone Area.

Recognising changes in the environment caused by climate change and climate change adaptation and resilience are important factors which influence all forms of land use planning, including the future strategy.

Appropriate separation distances from uses which have potential to cause adverse amenity impacts (such as requiring appropriate distances from industrial land uses) should be considered as part of any future densification of housing, or identification of new areas for housing. These changes should also recognise the potential for contaminated land.

### 3 Infrastructure

The Shire benefits from the local Mount Alexander Hospital, 18 schools (Primary and Secondary), a TAFE (Bendigo TAFE) and numerous community buildings and services. As a regional town, Castlemaine is the centre of these services.

The Shire has extensive road and rail transport links such as the Calder Highway and Melbourne-Swan Hill railway line. This corridor of connectivity provides strong road and public transport links from towns within the Shire Melbourne and Bendigo. Other connections include Midland Highway and Pyrenees Highway. A number of V/Line buses traverse the Shire heading to Maryborough, Bendigo and Ballarat. There are bus stops for these services in Guildford, Newstead, Castlemaine, Harcourt, Maldon and Welshmans Reef.

As outlined above, access to reticulated water and sewer is a key factor for growth. Areas identified for growth may require significant infrastructure upgrades to ensure the growth is able to be accommodated. This will form part of the consideration of the future strategy.

Castlemaine Bus Lines provides weekday and Saturday services that link Castlemaine to Harcourt, Maldon, Chewton, Bendigo and Campbells Creek.

## 4 Individual Towns

### 4.1 Castlemaine

Castlemaine is the largest town within the municipality, with approximately 50% of the population of the Shire being within Castlemaine. Castlemaine forms a central business, administrative and activity hub for the Shire, and broader region. Local and Regional Policy support the ongoing role of the town as one of regional significance.

As a regional town, Castlemaine is well serviced, with sewer, reticulated water, an operating train station, large supermarket, schools, TAFE, health services including a public hospital, government offices, policy and emergency services, art galleries and various sporting clubs. Castlemaine is easily accessible, via train, bus or car, however public transport access within Castlemaine (i.e local bus routes) are infrequent.

The township and broader area contain numerous buildings and areas of heritage significance, many of which are covered by a Heritage Overlay, which provides them with statutory recognition of their heritage value.

In addition to the risk of fire that affects the broader Castlemaine area, there is some risk of flooding within the township.

There is some diversity of housing within Castlemaine, however single dwellings are the overwhelming form of housing available. The work undertaken within the Urban Living Study identified an Urban Boundary for Castlemaine. This is included within the Framework Maps at Appendix A.

## 4.2 Campbells Creek

Campbells Creek is a smaller township adjoining Castlemaine. Given its close proximity, there are limited larger community services within the town, as these are located within Castlemaine. There is a local primary school, small scale shops, a Post Office and some local sporting clubs. Campbells Creek is serviced by sewer and reticulated water.

Settlement patterns in the township reflect its involvement in gold mining activities. Development has occurred in a relatively continuous ribbon along the highway and scattered throughout the surrounding gentle slopes to the east and west of the valley.

## 4.3 Chewton

Boarded by the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park to the north and south, the centre of Chewton is located approximately four kilometres east of Castlemaine with the outer reach of both towns joining. Similar to Campbells Creek, many larger services are accessed in Castlemaine, although Chewton does have smaller shops, a primary school and some local sporting clubs.

Reticulated sewerage was installed in 2002, which has provided opportunity for smaller lot subdivisions to occur.



*Chewton Manchester House*

Policy articulates the desire to maintain the green belt between Chewton and Castlemaine, to preserve Chewton's village atmosphere. This is reinforced through the Public Conservation and Resource Zone which separates the two localities.

## 4.4 Maldon

Maldon is the second largest town within the Shire, and is largely surrounded by State Parks and historic reserves.

Maldon is well serviced, with its sewerage system being installed in 2000. While the installation of sewer has enabled some additional infill development, this needs to be considered in balance with the heritage controls within the township. Significant policies seek to protect the character and heritage of Maldon.

The Mount Alexander Shire Council recognises that the heritage of the town of Maldon is of national significance due to:

- The town centre being one of the most intact of any nineteenth century town in Australia.
- The large number of buildings and works of historic significance in the area.
- The unusual and attractive relationship of the town and other historic sites with the diverse natural and historic landscape which forms an essential part of the character of both the town and its surroundings.

Tourism is significant for the town's economy, and this relates heavily to its picturesque setting.

## 4.5 Newstead

Newstead is located about 17 kilometres west of Castlemaine and 14 kilometres from Maldon on the Pyrenees Highway. Newstead has a small town character, with a strong grid layout, clearly identifiable town centre and avenue plantings along main streets. It is strategically located between Castlemaine and Maryborough, and is easily accessible to both Ballarat and Bendigo.

As with other towns within the Shire, there are heritage buildings within the township, which add to its character.

Sewerage has been installed in Newstead, and it benefits from numerous services, including a primary school, police station and community library, various small shops and sporting clubs.

Policy seeks to ensure the character of the town is preserved.

## 4.6 Harcourt

Harcourt is located approximately 8 kilometres north of Castlemaine and 30 kilometres south of Bendigo. Known for its fruit growing, particularly apples, Harcourt is undergoing change following from the construction of the Calder Freeway Bypass and installation of sewerage.

In addition to sewer, Harcourt contains infrastructure and services including a primary school, post office and local swimming pool.

Harcourt has been identified as a location for future residential growth, and the Mount Alexander Shire's Urban Living Study supports the growth of the town by approximately 500 new households.

The Shire's support for growth of Harcourt is reinforced through the Regional Growth Plan, meaning the growth of Harcourt is recognised as regionally significant.

## 4.7 Guildford

Guildford is located approximately ten kilometres south of Castlemaine on the Midland Highway and located between Castlemaine and Daylesford.

The township is enhanced by the location of the football oval, retail buildings on the corner of the main intersection in town and Guildford Primary School.

Guildford is not serviced by sewer, and as such new development will require onsite waste water system. The land is within a Potable Water Supply Catchment area, and as such changes to land use and new development must comply with relevant guidelines, and specifically consider the MOU with Goulburn Murray Water.

## 4.8 Elphinstone

Elphinstone is located approximately 13 kilometres from Castlemaine. It is generally a low density and dispersed town.

Elphinstone has limited services, although does comprise a local primary school, post office and general store.

As with Guildford, Elphinstone within a Potable Water Supply Catchment area and is not serviced by sewer and as such growth is constrained.

## 4.9 Taradale

Taradale is a small rural township, with a village character and significant views, located on the Calder Highway. Given the proximity to Castlemaine, Bendigo and Melbourne and the location of the town on the Calder Highway, there is considerable potential for commuting to the larger regional

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centres and as such the main role of Taradale is to provide a residential environment and provide the local community with essential services.

There are some local services and infrastructure, including a primary school.

There is no sewer and the land is within a Potable Water Supply Catchment area and as such additional growth within the township is restricted, as it is with Elphinstone and Guildford.