

21.05

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ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE VALUES

This clause provides local content to support Clause 12 of the State Planning Policy Framework.

The Macedon Ranges and its surrounds are acknowledged as an area of both state and national environmental and conservation significance. The preservation and enhancement of its natural environment is fundamental to the Shire’s attractiveness as a residential living area and tourist destination.

21.05-1

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Biodiversity and native vegetation management

Overview

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 since European settlement, with 65 per cent native vegetation and most existing high quality Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) vegetation being on private land. The 35 EVC’s within the municipality demonstrates significant variation in biodiversity values.

Council aims to establish a biolink between areas of significant vegetation in the Macedon and Cobaw Ranges – the Cobaw biolink - as the first stage of a progressive program to establish a coordinated network of biolinks. The protection and enhancement of native vegetation and habitat in residential development will be used as a tool to achieve this environmental goal.

Key issues

- Some of the most serious threats facing the Shire’s biodiversity include: poorly planned urban and rural residential developments, infrastructure development, inappropriate land use change, vegetation clearing, grazing, weed invasion, inappropriate fire regimes, predation by pest and domestic animals, pressures of recreational use, changes in hydrological regimes, firewood collection, soil disturbance and vandalism.
- Competing demands on some forested areas include residential development, construction of roads and fences, recreation and tourism.
- The need for a partnership approach at all levels of government, community and various agencies to ensure biodiversity is protected, maintained and enhanced within the Macedon Ranges Shire.

Objective 1

To conserve the biodiversity values of the Shire by protecting, enhancing, managing and restoring indigenous vegetation and fauna habitat.

Strategies

- Strategy 1.1 Avoid the removal of remnant vegetation with high ecological values.
- Strategy 1.2 Maintain biodiversity through the protection of remnant vegetation by diligently applying the *Permitted clearing of native vegetation – Biodiversity assessment guidelines* to the removal of all native vegetation on public and private land.
- Strategy 1.3 Ensure applications for permits demonstrate existing native vegetation will not be compromised.
- Strategy 1.4 Protect and facilitate appropriate management of indigenous vegetation on privately owned land to ensure its biodiversity values, including indigenous fauna values, continue into the future.
- Strategy 1.5 Improve biodiversity values in rural areas by actively managing vegetation within land use and development proposals.
- Strategy 1.6 Enhance vegetation links, habitat corridors and stabilise waterways through encouraging revegetation.
- Strategy 1.7 Enhance and restore the ecological viability of significant areas of vegetation through the creation and maintenance of biolinks.
- Strategy 1.8 Encourage larger lots in areas where there is significant remnant native vegetation.
- Strategy 1.9 Protect areas of high ecological value from further fragmentation of existing lots.

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Strategy 1.10 Encourage re-subdivision and consolidation of lots where such development will better support the vision for the area identified in Clause 21.03-3 than the existing lot pattern.

Objective 2

To develop a substantial biolink between the Macedon and Cobaw Ranges in the area identified as ‘Cobaw biolink’ in Clause 21.03-3 Rural Framework Plan and protect the character and landscapes of the area.

Strategy

Strategy 2.1 Encourage revegetation in locations where it can best contribute to the Cobaw biolink.

Objective 3

To protect and enhance the existing forest mosaic in the Living Forest area identified on the Rural Framework Plan in Clause 21.03-3 for its environmental, character and landscape values.

Strategy

Strategy 3.1 Enhance and maintain the mosaic of the area by encouraging appropriate revegetation and discouraging inappropriate development.

Specific implementation

- Apply the Rural Conservation Zone to the Living Forests and specific areas, including proclaimed water catchments, areas of high environmental value and parts of the Cobaw Biolink that are environmentally constrained or sensitive, particularly private land with remnant vegetation. Lot sizes will have a high minimum subdivision size to prevent the creation of additional lots.
- Apply the Vegetation Protection Overlay to areas of significant remnant vegetation on public and private land.
- Apply the Vegetation Protection Overlay to maintain and enhance wildlife corridors (VPO6) and the Cobaw Biolink (VPO8).
- Apply the Significant Landscape Overlay to areas requiring landscape protection in the Cobaws.
- Develop an inventory of the Shire’s biodiversity values.
- Develop programs (such as the Cobaw biolink) and partnerships to protect the Shire’s biodiversity values, on both Council-managed and private land.
- Develop and implement programs to facilitate linking significant areas of vegetation.
- Require environmental improvement works in approvals for dwelling construction or land subdivision to contribute to local environmental goals, as appropriate.
- Permit limited residential development only on existing lots in the Living Forests and Cobaw biolink areas where revegetation and environmental improvement works will achieve positive environmental outcomes.

Application requirements

- An application to use, develop or to subdivide land or carry out works must be accompanied by the following information, as appropriate:
 - A comprehensive assessment demonstrating that the lot can support a dwelling, associated infrastructure and appropriate fire protection buffers without requiring the removal or destruction of existing native vegetation.
 - An environmental management plan for new use and development. This may be registered by the responsible authority as part of an application for subdivision, use or development of land.

- An application to use, develop or subdivide land or carry out works in the Cobaw biolionk area must be accompanied by the following information, as appropriate:
 - - Proposals for a dwelling must include plans for revegetation of an area of 1 hectare or 10 per cent of the property area, up to 5 hectares, whichever is greater. This requirement may not apply if the property already contains 5 hectares of remnant native vegetation that can be incorporated into the biolink.
 - Revegetation species to the satisfaction of responsible authority.
 - An ongoing management plan for revegetated areas or areas of remnant native vegetation. This ongoing management plan may provide for weed management and fencing. This management plan may be tied to the property through a Section 173 Agreement.

Decision guideline

When deciding on an application to use, develop or subdivide land, the responsible authority may consider whether on-property works are required to enhance existing native vegetation, as appropriate. These works may include fencing of remnant vegetation, revegetation of critical areas such as contributing to vegetation links or enhancing the sustainability of existing stands.

Further strategic work

- Develop a plan to create a conservation reserve for the Shone/Schulz land in Riddells Creek.
- Prepare and implement roadside vegetation management plans for Macedon/Mount Macedon.
- Prepare and implement a long-term plan to underground power for Macedon/Mount Macedon.
- Prepare and implement land management conservation guidelines for properties in environmental significance areas.

21.05-2

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Significant environments and landscapes

Overview

Macedon Ranges Shire has many and varied rural and township landscapes which are highly valued by residents and visitors. Important landscapes include 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. Open areas of rural land used for grazing and some cropping activities make up the remaining areas of the municipality. There are also sites of national, state, regional and local geological significance including volcanic cones and peaks such as Hanging Rock, Camels Hump, Golf Course Hill, Melbourne Hill and The Jim Jim that form dominant landscape features in the Shire. These landforms provide a valuable scientific, educational and aesthetic resource for the community.

Landscape character within Macedon Ranges 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, which also form major visual edges to the Shire
- Distinctive settlements set within a rural environment.

Key issues

As a growing municipality on the fringe of Melbourne, these landscapes face many challenges and threats which could have a detrimental effect on the Shire's visual and landscape qualities. Competing demands on natural areas may also erode the significant landscapes; they include fire risk, nature conservation, recreation, vegetation protection and bushland living environments.

Objective 1

To maintain and enhance the existing rural landscapes.

Strategies

- Strategy 1.1 Ensure development and works complement the Shire's rural landscape character.
- Strategy 1.2 Protect the landscape, environmental and scenic qualities of the Macedon Ranges.
- Strategy 1.3 Encourage sensitive subdivision designs with use of larger lots and building envelopes to minimise landscape and environmental impacts for land supporting areas of vegetation or adjacent to waterways or the Calder Freeway.

Retain and enhance the environmental and landscape features of forest residential areas by applying density and vegetation controls, and requiring high quality siting and design standards for all buildings and works.

Objective 2

To maintain and enhance the open character of the plains area of the south east of the Shire.

Strategies

- Strategy 2.1 Ensure development is a subservient visual element into the open plain areas.
- Strategy 2.2 Discourage urban development within the non-urban buffer to the south east of the Shire between Mount Macedon and metropolitan Melbourne.
- Strategy 2.3 Enhance the rural open character of the area by requiring significant landscaping of development.

Objective 3

To protect and enhance the farming character of the Agricultural Landscapes area identified in the Rural Framework Plan in Clause 21.03-3.

Strategy

- Strategy 3.1 Discourage new buildings from siting proximate to prominent ridgelines and landscape features and ensure appropriate siting and design of buildings and works.

Objective 4

To maintain and enhance the ranges, major hills and ridges as significant visual backdrops to the Shire.

Strategy

- Strategy 4.1 Protect the rural landscapes and bushland setting of the Shire's towns by preserving non-urban breaks between towns.
- Strategy 4.2 Ensure rural living subdivisions are designed to promote the rural character of the area, protect existing remnant native vegetation, provide for productive use of higher quality soils and minimise impact on significant landscapes and viewsheds, such as to and of Mount Gisborne, Mount Aitken, the Macedon Ranges and creek escarpments such as Jacksons and Riddells Creeks.
- Strategy 4.3 Avoid development on prominent ridgelines and hilltops and ensure development within view sheds to the Shire's backdrop of ranges, hills and ridges does not detract from their significance as a land range feature.

Objective 5

To protect and enhance sites of geological significance.

Strategies

- Strategy 5.1 Preserve sites of geological significance by minimising impacts of land use and development.
- Strategy 5.2 Recognise the landscape importance of the Shire's volcanic cones and peaks.
- Strategy 5.3 Discourage new buildings from siting proximate to sites of geological significance that are prominent landscape features.

Objective 6

To protect the character of visually sensitive areas such as roadsides, rail corridors and water courses.

Strategies

- Strategy 6.1 Ensure buildings and works are designed and sited so that landscape values, natural features and important vistas including significant stands of cypress hedges are not degraded.
- Strategy 6.2 Ensure building siting, form and design is sympathetic to the landscape character of the surrounding area.

Objective 7

- To preserve significant exotic and native vegetation as a fundamental component of the Shire’s character and landscape.

Strategy

- Strategy 7.1 Encourage the retention and enhancement of all remnant vegetation and exotic vegetation which contributes to the landscape quality or character of the area.

Specific implementation

- Apply Clause 22.01 (Macedon Ranges and surrounds) when considering an application within the policy area.
- Apply the Environmental Significance Overlay to land around the Kyneton Mineral Springs (ESO3) and to preserve the visual outlook from the Calder Highway through the forested area leading into Woodend locally known as the Black Forest (ESO6).
- Apply the Vegetation Protection Overlay to significant remnant vegetation in identified roadsides (VPO2) and areas around Woodend (VPO9).
- Apply the Significant Landscape Overlay to mountain ranges and features (SLO1) and ridges and escarpments (SLO2).

Further strategic work

- Undertake a landscape assessment of the Shire, which includes a review of the application of the Significant Landscape Overlay and schedules.

Reference documents

Macedon Ranges Habitat Quality and Conservation Significance Study, 2004
Macedon Ranges Shire Natural Environment Strategy 2009-2012.
Roadside Management Plan for Romsey, Newham, Woodend & Kyneton, 1994
Roadside Management Plan for Gisborne, 1994
Macedon Ranges Cultural Heritage and Landscape Study, 1994
Jacksons Creek, Gisborne Study 1987
Campaspe River Kyneton Landscape Concept Plan, 1994
Kyneton Land Capability Study, 1996
Romsey Land Capability Study, 1994
Woodend Land Capability Study, 1992
Macedon Regional Park Management Plan
Hanging Rock Management Plan, 1993
Black Gum Strategy, 1994
Rural Land Review, 2002