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NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

This clause provides local content to support Clause 14 of the State Planning Policy Framework.

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Agriculture

Overview

Agriculture predominates in the northern and eastern parts of the Shire as a productive, broad acre farming area with the area's high quality agricultural land, large productive properties, and areas of fragile soils. Council wishes to see these areas continue to be used for stock raising (including sheep, cattle and horses) and intensive and extensive cropping.

High quality soils are situated between Lancefield and Romsey, in the Kyneton district and north of Woodend/Newham and Hesket. Large farm holdings are predominantly located in the northern part of the Shire. Being close to Melbourne, the Shire has capitalised on its location, high quality soils and water resources to enhance the productivity of land through the ongoing development of intensive farming activities to supplement traditional grazing.

In 2006 the value of agricultural production in the Shire was \$43 million, with livestock slaughter and livestock products accounting for 70 per cent of the agricultural production of the Shire (Macedon Ranges Economic Development Profile, 2009). In 2011 the equine industry contributed \$140 million to the Shire economy (Macedon Ranges Equine Strategy). Other enterprises include timber plantations, the equine industry and viticulture.

Objective 1

To protect agricultural land.

Strategies

- Strategy 1.1 Support the continuation of agricultural activity.
- Strategy 1.2 Encourage the use and management of land for agriculture to address the potential impacts of climate change, including the likelihood of more frequent and more extreme droughts, flooding and bushfires.
- Strategy 1.3 Discourage conversion of productive agricultural land to non-productive uses.
- Strategy 1.4 Ensure proposed development demonstrates how it relates to the ongoing productive use of the land for agricultural purposes and does not promote rural lifestyle development.

Objective 2

To provide for sustainable, productive agriculture within the Northern Catchments and Agricultural Landscapes areas identified on the Rural Framework Plan in Clause 21.03, discourage land use and development that is contrary to the vision for these areas and limit expectations of land use change and speculation.

Strategies

- Strategy 2.1 Discourage the creation of additional lots in the area as fragmentation of existing lots and an increased density of lots would threaten the vision for these areas to maintain agricultural productivity.
- Strategy 2.2 Avoid subdivision, excision of a house lot or construction of a dwelling that does not support the continued use of the land for productive, sustainable agriculture.
- Strategy 2.3 Ensure development, including dwellings, relates to agricultural production and is supported by land capability assessments.

Objective 3

To protect the quality soils of land with high capability for agriculture.

Strategies

- Strategy 3.1 Direct residential development away from locations of higher quality productive agricultural land.

MACEDON RANGES PLANNING SCHEME

- Strategy 3.2 Ensure development considers land capability characteristics and does not degrade the quality of the soils.
- Strategy 3.3 Ensure high quality and highly adaptable agricultural land is protected for agricultural use by encouraging best practice land use management including the use of deep ripping, minimum tillage and pasture rotation to restore fragile soil.

Objective 4

To maximise benefit from high value agriculture.

Strategies

- Strategy 4.1 Maintain productive farm sizes.
- Strategy 4.2 Evaluate agricultural land uses relative to suitability of soil type, climatic conditions and protection of land and water resources.

Objective 5

To encourage the development of alternative agricultural activities in appropriate parts of the Shire.

Strategy

- Strategy 5.1 Support the productive potential of the agricultural and horticultural industry and actively encourage sustainable management of land and water resources.

Objective 6

To facilitate productive agricultural activity and ensure new development is related to the ongoing, productive use of the land for agriculture.

Strategies

- Strategy 6.1 Discourage re-subdivision, excision of a house lot or construction of a dwelling unless it can be demonstrated it is required to facilitate or enhance the ongoing primary use of the land for productive, sustainable agriculture.
- Strategy 6.2 Ensure new use or development relate to the productive use of the land for agriculture.
- Strategy 6.3 Ensure any use of the land for residential activity is secondary or ancillary to the primary agricultural use of the land.
- Strategy 6.4 Encourage any dwelling and/or outbuildings to be located on poorer quality land where it will not compromise efficient agricultural use of the land.

Application requirement

An application for agricultural industries must provide an assessment of the sustainability of the proposed development and how the impact on residents, landscape quality and the general environment is limited.

An application to use or develop land must be accompanied by the following information, as appropriate:

- A report that comprehensively justifies the proposed development is required for the continuation or enhancement of the agricultural use of the land. This justification must include how the land is to be used for sustainable, productive agriculture, including details of the proposed stock or crop, stocking rates, type and location of fencing, paddock rotations, pasture species, weed control and other management activities, as appropriate.
- A 'whole farm plan'. This plan must demonstrate how the land is to support sustainable agriculture as the primary land use. The plan must include such initiatives as fencing that relates to land units, fencing of remnant vegetation, fencing of gullies and waterways, revegetation of hill tops, gullies and waterways, revegetation of areas prone to erosion and revegetation of areas prone to groundwater discharge, as appropriate.

Decision guideline

When deciding on an application for rural residential development, the following matter will be considered, as appropriate:

- An impact assessment of the proposed development in terms of implications for existing and proposed infrastructure and continued rural land use.

Specific implementation

- Apply the Farming Zone to appropriate areas to support agricultural activities and protect productive agricultural land.
- Apply Clause 22.02 (Dams) local planning policy when considering an application to construct a dam or carry out works to a dam to prevent construction of dams in environmentally sensitive areas, and to prevent obstruction to environmental flows from streams and waterways.
- Apply Clause 22.03 (Intensive animal husbandry) local planning policy when considering applications for intensive animal husbandry to ensure developments are suitably located, and will not have a negative impact on the environment.
- Initiate programs to encourage best practice land use management.
- Support value adding to local agricultural produce where possible.
- Assist agricultural industries to meet their employment and training needs.
- Build strong partnerships with government agencies, industry associations/ organisations and education providers to assist in growing business.
- Encourage good environmental and farm management practices through working with community groups such as Landcare.
- Undertake projects that manage environmental weeds in conjunction with landholders, Landcare and other community groups, the Department of Environment and Primary Industries and Catchment Management Authorities.

Further strategic work

- Undertake further work to understand productive farm sizes in Macedon Ranges Shire.
- Undertake further work to provide appropriate planning provisions to support the equine industry in the Shire.

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Sustainable rural land management

Overview

Sustainable management of rural areas enhances the condition of the natural resource base, protects significant environmental assets, and supports the continuation of agricultural activity.

Objective 1

To ensure land in rural areas is managed in a sustainable manner to improve the condition of the environment.

Strategies

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| Strategy 1.1 | Encourage use and development that enhances the condition of the natural resource base and provides positive environmental outcomes. |
| Strategy 1.2 | Encourage and facilitate the eradication of pest, plants and environmental weeds throughout the Shire. |

Specific implementation

Consider approved local land care policies and plans in the assessment of development applications.

When considering applications for use and development of land in rural areas consider the effect of the use and development on the environment.

Utilise appropriate environmental and landscape overlays in rural areas that will support sustainable rural land management.

Further strategic work

- Investigate the location of high quality agricultural land in partnership with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

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Water

Overview

The protection of water quality is a significant issue in the Shire. Extensive areas of the Shire fall within proclaimed local and regional water catchments (Special Water Supply Catchments) which supply drinking water. Water supply within the Shire is subject to increasing demand and development pressures which can affect quality through the intensification of wastewater and septic discharges, and changing land management practices. A number of the Shire’s unsewered settlements are in catchment areas, which also contributes to water quality issues.

Inappropriate management may cause a decline in water quantity and quality, leading to increased treatment costs (and higher water tariffs) as well as a loss of recreation opportunities in reservoirs and watercourses.

There are 24 proclaimed water supply catchments, including the headwaters of the Campaspe, Coliban, Maribyrnong and Werribee Rivers. Special Water Supply Catchments wholly or partly within the Macedon Ranges Shire include: Djerriwarrh, Eppalock, Eppalock (Kyneton), Eppalock (Woodend), Lake Merrimu, Lake Merrimu (Goodmans Creek), Lake Merrimu (Lerderderg River), Lancefield (Deep Creek), Macedon (Bawden Creek), Mollison Creek (Pyalong), Monument Creek, Romsey (Upper Bolinda Creek), Rosslyne Reservoir (Jackson Creek), Rosslyne Reservoir (Riddell Creek), Sunbury (Cherlies Creek), Sunbury (Main Creek).

Objective 1

To retain and improve water quality and yield in the Special Water Supply Catchments, waterways and groundwater.

Strategies

- Strategy 1.1 Promote the development of reticulated sewerage systems for towns within the Special Water Supply Catchments.
- Strategy 1.2 Direct development to settlements where reticulated sewer systems are available.
- Strategy 1.3 Discourage uses and development in Special Water Supply Catchments and elevated areas that have the potential to reduce water quality.
- Strategy 1.4 Ensure use and development, including dwellings, on land which cannot be serviced by a reticulated sewerage system is designed, sited, managed and maintained to prevent the contamination of water supplies in the catchment.
- Strategy 1.5 Ensure the design of effluent disposal systems is suitable to the soil type and topography of the site and land capability assessments demonstrate development and use will not compromise water quality.
- Strategy 1.6 Encourage larger lots where there are drainage lines, waterways and steep slopes.
- Strategy 1.7 Require on site property works that enhance water quality. These works may include fencing of gullies and waterways and revegetation of gullies and waterways.
- Strategy 1.8 Ensure the natural drainage functions are retained in the development of land for residential purposes.
- Strategy 1.9 Protect waterways from erosion and other water pollution sources, such as intensive animal husbandry, by the provision of appropriate buffers.
- Strategy 1.10 Require commercial, residential or industrial uses to demonstrate the activity will provide a net benefit to the health of the waterway.

Objective 2

To ensure the development and use of agricultural land does not adversely impact water quality in the catchments.

Strategies

- Strategy 2.1 Consider agricultural land use and development proposals relative to land capability.
Strategy 2.2 Require a land capability assessment to support development proposals.

Application requirement

An application to use or develop land in a Special Water Supply Catchment must be accompanied by the following information, as appropriate:

- A report prepared by an appropriately qualified person that conclusively demonstrates that the proposal will not compromise water quality and is consistent with any land use determination applicable to the land.

Exercise of discretion

It is policy to:

- Not support the clearance of vegetation within 20 metres of a watercourse without the consent of the relevant water authority.

Decision guidelines

When deciding on an application to use or develop land in a Special Water Supply Catchment, the following matter will be considered, as appropriate:

- Any relevant catchment management strategy for the area.

Specific implementation

- Apply the Rural Conservation Zone (RCZ1 and RCZ3) to protect water supply catchments.
- Apply the Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO4) to protect and maintain water quality and yield in the Eppalock Proclaimed Catchment.
- Apply the Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO5) to protect and maintain water quality and yield in other water supply catchments within the Shire.
- Apply Clause 22.01 (Macedon Ranges and surrounds) local planning policy when considering applications within the policy area to protect water resources and water quality and to maintain or enhance natural systems and landscape character.
- Apply Clause 22.02 (Dams) to instances where a permit is required for the construction of a dam.

Reference documents

Port Phillip and Western Port Regional Catchment Strategy 2004-2009

North Central Regional Catchment Strategy, 2003

North Central River Health Strategy, 2005

Domestic Wastewater Management Plan, 2007

Kyneton Land Capability Study, 1996

Romsey Land Capability Study, 1994

Woodend Land Capability Study, 1992

Macedon Ranges Equine Strategy, 2012