

21.05 NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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21.05-1 Agriculture

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Agriculture is projected to remain the key economic driver of the Wimmera Southern Mallee region. Protection of land and water resources and support for agricultural productivity improvements will enhance the region's economic base and meet growing export demands. Opportunities to build on the agricultural industry will be supported by encouraging a range of related activities such as value adding industry, new commodities, specialist services, research and education and improved transport connections to export markets.

Horsham's combination of soils, landform and climate provide a rural environment that is inherently suitable to broad acre agricultural production. The rural environment supports a rich agricultural economy, significant to the wellbeing of the regional centre of Horsham, the local population, as well as to state and national exports. Wheat is the predominant cereal crop, followed by barley. Grain legumes are growing in importance and lentil production has rapidly increased in recent years. Sheep are principally grown in the region for wool production and prime lamb production.

Horsham is also the centre of agricultural research and development, with government and private agencies leading the way in innovative agriculture and agro-processing. Horsham has been promoted as a centre for agricultural and industrial development. The Grains Innovation Park and Longerenong College provide a significant focus for agricultural research in the region.

Agricultural diversification and value adding to primary production is taking place in the region, which will lead to strengthening of the local economy. Sensible and innovative farming practices are necessary to ensure long term productivity and economic wellbeing. Investment in infrastructure, including road and rail transport and interchange, and the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline project have been facilitated to improve the productivity of agriculture. Care must be taken to ensure that these investments are not undermined by the encroachment of non-farming related land uses.

Productive agricultural land is a finite resource that is valued, supported and needs to be protected. There is significant risk to Horsham's agricultural activities by ad hoc land use change that can compromise viability and growth of the sector. The proliferation of dwellings, and other non-agricultural land uses in rural areas should not be allowed to impact on the right to farm land.

The Farming Zone provides opportunities to subdivide land. Council supports subdivision of land within the Farming Zone where it is clearly based on improving a productive farming outcome. Council is generally not supportive of creating lots smaller than the minimum permitted in the Farming Zone unless it can be demonstrated that the lot is required for a use or development that must be located in a rural area.

Objectives and Strategies

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| Objective 1 | To manage agricultural land within its capability to maintain and enhance the regions soils, whilst improving and sustaining the productivity of the agricultural sector. |
| Strategy 1.1 | Encourage sustainable farm management practices having regard to land capability, sustainability and the conservation of soil, water and vegetation resources. |
| Strategy 1.2 | Support the right to farm in the Farming Zone. |
| Objective 2 | To support research and innovation in agriculture. |
| Strategy 2.1 | Support the establishment of agricultural research and development centres. |

- Strategy 2.2 Support the ongoing use and development of the Grains Innovation Park and Longerenong College.
- Objective 3 To support agriculture as an important element of the municipality's economic and employment base.**
- Strategy 3.1 Support diversification of farming activities which support a sustainable agricultural economy.
- Strategy 3.2 Support agricultural value adding industries.
- Strategy 3.3 Support the establishment of rural industries in the Farming Zone.
- Objective 4 To ensure that productive agricultural land remains available for agriculture and sustainable resource use.**
- Strategy 4.1 Provide for the construction of dwellings in rural areas only where it can be shown that the development will result in improved agricultural productivity.
- Strategy 4.2 Prevent rural living and other inappropriate use and development of agricultural land.
- Strategy 4.3 Prevent the encroachment of urban land use and development into areas of agricultural land.
- Objective 5 To prevent the fragmentation of productive agricultural land through the encouragement of sustainable and innovative land management practices.**
- Strategy 5.1 Avoid the fragmentation of productive agricultural land by non-farm related subdivision and development.
- Strategy 5.2 Support the restructuring of farm holdings to facilitate the ongoing use of agricultural land for primary production.
- Strategy 5.3 Where subdivision of agricultural land is supported, all lots created must include an agreement under Section 173 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* prohibiting further dwellings on the land if it is less than the minimum lot size specified in the schedule to the zone.

Scheme Implementation

Apply the Farming Zone to areas identified as being suitable for agricultural production.

Apply the Farming Zone to most rural land in the municipality with a 60 hectare minimum subdivision size to prevent fragmentation and to encourage land to be maintained under agricultural production.

Further Strategic Work

Prepare a strategy to promote development in the area of research and innovation in agriculture.

Prepare a Rural Strategy for the municipality.

21.05-2 Intensive Agriculture

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Good opportunities for growth in intensive agriculture exist in Horsham, with the municipality particularly well suited for further expansion due to its existing infrastructure. The Wimmera Mallee Pipeline is a significant investment in upgrading water supply to towns and rural areas and presents opportunities for intensive agriculture through improved water security. Horsham also has sufficient land and infrastructure to cater for related transport, logistics and industry functions associated with growth of intensive agricultural production.

Niche agricultural uses in the municipality include horticulture, viticulture, and intensive animal husbandry.

Key favourable characteristics of Horsham include:

- Low population density and close proximity to grain production areas.
- Established feed mills that can easily deliver feed to the region.
- Adherence to correct design and planning provides biosecurity.
- The Western, Henty and Wimmera highways provide key transport routes to export markets.
- Quality and security of water supply is provided by the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline.
- Potential for growth of the intensive agriculture industry within Horsham and the Wimmera Southern Mallee Region.

The transition from extensive animal husbandry land uses to intensive animal husbandry land uses has the potential to increase externalities (e.g. nutrient run-off, noise, smells, dust, traffic, and the like) to much higher levels. This transition is a process that needs to be managed through approval processes to ensure that externalities generated by intensive animal husbandry are managed.

Objectives and Strategies

Objective 1 To develop a more diverse and productive intensive agriculture industry.

- Strategy 1.1 Provide support and direction on appropriate locations for the establishment of intensive agricultural activities.
- Strategy 1.2 Support intensive animal husbandry in compliance with scheme requirements.
- Strategy 1.3 Support allied businesses that provide services to intensive agriculture activities.
- Strategy 1.4 Avoid the proliferation of dwellings and other urban development encroaching on land suitable for intensive agriculture.
- Strategy 1.5 Maintain buffer areas around intensive agriculture.
- Strategy 1.6 Ensure intensive agricultural activities are managed to address environmental impacts.

Objective 2 To support the investment in, and development of, the intensive animal husbandry industry.

- Strategy 2.1 Require intensive animal husbandry uses to be suitably located away from sensitive land uses.
- Strategy 2.2 Avoid environmental impact from intensive animal husbandry.
- Strategy 2.3 Require quality design and appropriate siting of intensive animal husbandry developments.

Scheme Implementation

Apply the Farming Zone to areas identified as being suitable for intensive agricultural production.

21.05-3

Catchment Management

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The Wimmera and Glenelg Catchment Management Strategies establish the land and water management priorities within the region. Land use and development decision making can have effects on the quality and quantity of water available for use.

Objectives and Strategies

Objective 1 To ensure healthy waterways.

- Strategy 1.1 Protect water supply catchments, reservoirs, floodplains and channels from the impacts from development and potential sources of pollution, including sediment runoff.
- Strategy 1.2 Minimise the impacts of development on downstream water quality.
- Strategy 1.3 Minimise the impact of works that have the potential to affect local drainage patterns.
- Strategy 1.4 Maintain a vegetated buffer zone along each side of a natural drainage corridors or waterway to maintain the natural drainage function, stream habitat and wildlife corridors and landscape values.
- Strategy 1.5 Avoid blocking public access along stream banks and foreshores by development.
- Objective 2 To ensure the continued availability of clean, high-quality water supply.**
- Strategy 2.1 Protect the Wimmera Systems Proclaimed Catchment, water reservoirs, channels and associated infrastructure from potential contamination.
- Strategy 2.2 Avoid incompatible land uses in the Wimmera Systems Proclaimed Catchment.

Scheme Implementation

Apply the Environmental Significance Overlay to ensure protection of the water resources are protected.

Further Strategic Work

Prepare an Integrated Water Management Strategy.

In conjunction with the relevant Catchment Management Authority and other state agencies, identify saline discharge and recharge areas in the municipality and determine the appropriate planning scheme response.

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Mining And Extractive Industry

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Provision of transport and energy infrastructure is critical to enable earth resources projects to proceed, particularly to transport raw materials to processing facilities and export ports. Earth resources projects can place significant demands on infrastructure. Improved use of rail transport is encouraged.

The introduction of sensitive land uses, including urban residential growth and rural living, in proximity to earth resources (especially quarries) can constrain future extraction of resources depending on methods used.

Mineral sand resources are in abundance in various locations in Horsham. Interest from multi-national mineral companies indicate that mining of the sands could create more than 200 direct employment opportunities, and would have major economic spin-offs for the municipality.

Objectives and Strategies

- Objective 1 To create prosperity through the continued growth of the mining sector.**
- Strategy 1.1 Facilitate and encourage the development of mineral sand deposits and associated activity.
- Strategy 1.2 Ensure urban growth and rural residential is not directed to areas where it would limit the ability to mine and extract valued earth resources.
- Strategy 1.3 Identify housing, transport, infrastructure, and support service needs associated with mining and extractive industry and plan to manage any impacts in advance of the commencement of mining.

Strategy 1.4 Require all mining and extractive industry operations to adhere to best practice environmental management practices.

Scheme Implementation

Apply the Special Use Zone Earth and Energy Resources Industry to areas identified as being suitable for extractive industry.