

## 21.01 MUNICIPAL CONTEXT

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Moorabool Shire is located on the western urban/rural fringe of the Melbourne metropolitan area and extends to the outskirts of Ballarat to the west, along the major rail and road transport corridor between the two cities. This location within the Ballarat Transport corridor has seen an increase in commuting to both cities from towns within the Shire.

### 21.01-1 Municipal profile

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Bacchus Marsh is the municipality's main centre for retail, service, and employment activities. Bacchus Marsh has the most comprehensive community infrastructure in the Shire but there are shortfalls in infrastructure and service provision that require a larger population base for cost effective responses. Bacchus Marsh is the focus for economic and residential growth, with Ballan and potentially Gordon providing complementary roles.

*Plan Melbourne* and the *Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan* refer to Bacchus Marsh as a regional centre in recognition of its historical service centre role. Bacchus Marsh also has the potential to play a role in relieving population pressure on metropolitan Melbourne by absorbing a share of the projected housing growth.

There are planning challenges in accommodating and servicing residential growth and demand for lifestyle housing while protecting agricultural productivity, and environmental values and significant landscapes.

Moorabool Shire is characterised by its townships in rural settings and its distinctive rural landscapes which comprise a diversity of vast ranges, plains, ancient gorges, and areas of intensive horticulture. The varied and rich topographical features are integral environmental, agricultural, and recreational resources for the Shire.

These environmental assets, as well as existing built form, historic buildings and landscapes, contribute to the Shire's numerous places of natural and cultural heritage significance.

Much of the Shire is in Special Water Supply Catchments, which has a significant impact on the development potential of land in the west and north of the Shire. This combined with large areas of National or State Park or State Forest that traverse the Shire limit development opportunities and pose significant land management issues, particularly relating to sediment control and land clearing.

Agriculture is the major sector in Moorabool's economy and also contributes to the rural landscape setting that typifies the Shire. Agricultural production is predominantly broad acre cropping and grazing with intensive horticulture on irrigated land around Bacchus Marsh. Council's economic development strategies encourage new and innovative sustainable agricultural industries and the promotion of value adding industries that can capitalise the agricultural and resource base.

### 21.01-2 Key issues

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Key issues that direct land use planning in Moorabool Shire are:

#### Settlement

There is increasing pressure to balance residential growth objectives with the protection of environmental, landscape and lifestyle values across the Shire.

Significant population growth in consolidated urban areas over the next 25 years is expected which will need to provide cost effective delivery of appropriate infrastructure and services.

Bacchus Marsh is one of a number of important peri-urban towns or settlements that Plan Melbourne has identified as being suitable for increased development and offers an alternative housing destination within easy reach of Melbourne. The growth potential of

Ballan is also recognised in both *Plan Melbourne* and the *Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan*.

Moorabool Shire's capacity to accommodate future urban development is physically and environmentally constrained. Approximately two-thirds of the Shire is located in Special Water Supply Catchments, which includes privately owned land, mainly used for agricultural purposes, or National or State Park or State Forest. Steep land, areas subject to flooding, and resources capable of economic extraction are also significant development constraints. In the absence of reticulated sewer, the development of both townships and rural land within the Special Water Supply Catchments needs to be managed to protect water quality and quantity.

Cost is the major hurdle to the extension of reticulated sewer systems to other towns in the Shire, however without it the small towns and settlements of the Shire cannot grow to any substantial degree.

Many of the small towns and settlements lack the quantum of population to be considered sustainable communities in the sense that they lack diversity in the provision of local jobs, retail, public transport, other public and medical services and community infrastructure. They rely heavily on larger communities and tend to be strongly car dependent.

Future population growth needs to be balanced with protection and sustainable use of the Shire's environmental assets which contribute significantly to the lifestyle and attraction of Moorabool Shire as a place to live, invest and visit.

Urban growth, residential development, and lifestyle housing need to be managed to maintain the attractive rural setting and lifestyle, and to provide adequate services and facilities in a cost effective manner.

Urban growth has the potential to develop up to the LGA boundary and therefore reduce the existing rural buffer between Moorabool Shire and the Shire of Melton

## **Housing**

A range of residential housing choices is required to attract residents and to meet the changing needs and preferences of existing residents. The population is ageing, and often ageing in place, and therefore there may be demands for alternative dwelling types, with lower maintenance options.

## **Transport**

There is a need to improve vehicle and freight links between communities within the municipality and links to destinations outside the Shire. There is a need for links to address physical division created by the Ballarat Freeway and Ballarat Rail line, particularly in Bacchus Marsh.

Improved public transport levels of service and integration throughout the municipality and particularly along the Melbourne – Ballarat rail corridor are needed to support sustainable growth.

## **Environment**

The varied and rich topographical features of Moorabool Shire (including ranges, plains, and ancient gorges) need to be conserved not only for their intrinsic environmental and landscape values but also as a recreational resource to the Shire.

The environmental assets (including the Brisbane Ranges National Park, Lerderderg State Park, Werribee Gorge State Park, the Wombat State Forest, and Long Forest Nature Conservation Reserve), as well significant waterways, historic buildings, rural townscapes, and landscapes contribute to the Shire's numerous places of natural and cultural heritage significance. These features inter-twine to form the character and lifestyle opportunities that attract people to Moorabool Shire.

Moorabool River, Werribee River, and Lerderderg River supply water for domestic and agricultural purposes. Inappropriate development, land clearing and sediment deposition from erosion can threaten riparian environments and water quality within the catchments.

## Economic Development

Continued productive and sustainable agricultural and horticultural land use, which is critical to the Shire's economy and its ongoing economic development, requires protection from residential encroachment.

It is important to ensure planning to accommodate demand for rural living opportunities produces enhanced environmental outcomes and also protects agricultural production, particularly highly productive areas in the west of the Shire and irrigated land around Bacchus Marsh.

There is an ongoing need to manage existing and potential conflict between residential, rural residential and agricultural and horticultural production.

There is a need to strengthen the local economy to improve local employment opportunities and reduce the leakage of retail spending.

Bacchus Marsh and Ballan provide areas of important industrial and mineral resource. These include large sites zoned Industrial 2, the Maddingley Waste and Resource Recovery Hub and quarries in Bacchus Marsh. Planning to manage off-site impacts and avoid conflict with sensitive uses is required to realise economic development opportunities.

The Moorabool Agribusiness Industrial Area in Parwan provides an agricultural and employment hub that can implement best practice water management techniques and encourage local employment opportunities to assist the growing local and regional community.

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### Vision and strategic framework plan

Council's key strategic planning directions are illustrated on the Strategic Framework Plan. The framework plan identifies overall direction to guide specific land use outcomes. It identifies potential 'development opportunity areas' where significant land use change may be expected, and areas where land use constraints are likely to restrict future development.

Separate framework plans in Clauses 21.07 and 21.08 provide more detailed guidance for major townships.

The major strategic directions identified on the Strategic Framework Plan include:

- The location of Special Water Supply Catchments, parks and forests which have limited development potential;
- Designation of key towns in the municipality, with Bacchus March identified as the key centre for economic and residential growth and Ballan fulfilling a complementary role; and
- Identification of the Ballarat Rail line as part of the Ballarat-Melbourne transport corridor.
- Strengthening clusters of linked small towns and settlements through connections to a close Regional city, regional centre or town.

Moorabool Shire Strategic Framework Plan

