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C32**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT****Primary Production**

The economy of Ararat Rural City has a strong rural base which provides a diverse range of production. Agriculture in the municipality is dominated by the sheep industry with high grade wool being the major agricultural product. However grain, mutton, beef and viticulture provide significant revenue. Land holders have diversified their operations and broadened the agricultural base including the planting of canola and oats. Opportunities for further agricultural development and diversification present themselves in the cultivation of potatoes and onion crops and with alternative livestock production such as deer and emu production.

Agriculture is also an important sector of the local and regional economy in terms of its contribution to the gross state product, value-adding, employment and overseas trade. In this context, there is the need to ensure that high quality agricultural land is suitably identified and protected throughout the municipality and that a better understanding of the ability of land to access or harvest water as required for agricultural purposes is achieved. There is also the need to ensure that lot sizes adequately meet traditional farming needs and provide for sustainable and viable pursuits. It is vital for the municipality to pursue alternative agricultural activities in order to diversify the operations and pursue value-adding opportunities. There is also a need to attain a greater understanding of land capability throughout the municipality and to match land use to land capability.

The use of land for the purpose of intensive agricultural pursuits is increasing throughout the municipality. While there is the need to facilitate the provision of smaller lots for intensive agriculture, such pursuits must not adversely affect the environmental and agricultural qualities of land in the municipality. There is also a need to ensure that new dwellings in the rural areas are related to an agricultural outcome and do not prejudice agricultural pursuits.

Objective 1

- To maintain and promote a viable and sustainable agricultural industry.

Strategies

- Recognise and protect farmland as an important resource.
- Promote existing, new and improved forms of agricultural production and facilitate value-adding activities to primary production.
- Provide essential services in support of agricultural production and economic development.
- Provide for the sustainable use of land for extensive animal husbandry and crop raising.
- Recognise the significance of the agricultural base of the economy.
- Support and promote the expansion or establishment of horticultural activities.
- Support the sustainable expansion of emerging agricultural industries.
- Promote the further development of agro-forestry.
- Support the establishment of private wood lots.
- Support and facilitate the development of host farms, bed and breakfasts and other holiday opportunities in association with agricultural production as a mechanism to enhance the prosperity of farms.
- Support innovative and complimentary agricultural production in the Grampians tourism precinct

Objective 2

- To ensure that the fragmentation of viable agricultural land does not occur.

Strategies

- Discourage the non-agricultural use and development of high quality agricultural land.
- Ensure subdivision does not prejudice agricultural productivity and has regard to farm viability and land capability.
- Encourage the co-location of additional houses on farms adjacent to the existing house without the need for subdivision.
- Provide adequate buffers around activities such as piggeries so as to avoid the creation of incompatible land uses.
- Encourage the consolidation of lots with adjoining landowners to create more productive and efficient landholdings.
- Discourage rural residential and hobby farm outcomes in the Farming Zone.
- Ensure that subdivision and development in rural areas has regard to, and protects the environment.
- Discourage the creation of lots of less than 40 hectares in the Farming Zone other than where such lots are intended to be used for demonstrably viable viticulture or intensive farming activities, and where a whole farm plan is prepared.
- Discourage small lot subdivision if it includes land which was previously a road reserve, channel, utility lot, or similar that is less than 4000m² in area, or is of a shape that is not capable of supporting a dwelling.
- Consider any potentially adverse impacts which may result from subdivision including noise, reduced air quality, pollution of water, loss of flora and fauna habitat, adverse impacts on fauna and distance from surrounding dwellings.
- Consider management techniques to address potential environmental impacts and intended improvements to the land which will benefit the environment including protection against erosion and salinity, fencing of stock from eroded river banks and watercourses, introduction of buffers adjacent to watercourses and revegetation of non-productive land.

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Industrial Development

The majority of industrial businesses are located within Ararat city with a small (but significant) presence in Lake Bolac. The major manufacturers outside these areas are local wine producers and some mining. There is potential for increased industrial development in Willaura and Lake Bolac that would in turn assist in arresting the decline in population and commercial facilities in these towns. Council has prepared the Ararat Industrial Land Strategy (2002) and reviewed industrial land as part of the Ararat Sustainable Growth Future 2014 so as to ensure that the township of Ararat has a highly accessible, well serviced, consolidated and integrated supply of industrial land that meets the needs of today's industries. The study found that in the short term there is a shortage of well serviced industrial land. In the longer term there is scope to provide increased amounts of industrial land so long as there is a co-ordinated approach by all stakeholders. The strategy provides the basis for this approach over the next twenty years and identifies potential investigation areas for the long term as shown on the Ararat Town Structure Plan. The 2002 strategy found the following emerging trends for industry in Ararat:

- There is a demand for land in the region for new industries.
- There is a potential demand for small (200m²) to medium size (2000m²) factory units.
- Sites over two hectares are in demand for new development.
- Larger sites (greater than 10ha) are required for specialist industries which need access and exposure to the highway.

ARARAT PLANNING SCHEME

- Emerging opportunities exist in the agricultural processing; vehicle and equipment manufacturing; small to medium size sheds; and logistics inclusive of transport, warehousing and vehicle repair.

The ability to attract large industrial businesses relates to competitive advantages, such as location, transport infrastructure (road and rail), and industry strengths. The location of Ararat on the Western Highway between Adelaide and Melbourne with good road infrastructure and rail access, places the town in a relatively strong position to attract large industrial businesses or freight transfer/storage opportunities. The municipality provides important access to the Port of Portland, Port of Geelong and Port of Melbourne for agricultural produce as highlighted in the Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan and recently released Victorian Freight and Logistics Plan.

The Ararat Sustainable Growth Future 2014, notes that the strong competing supply of industrial land in Ballarat, the low employment base, and fragmented nature of industrial land, presently reduces the attractiveness of Ararat for large new businesses. However, with the proposed Western Highway duplication and Ararat Bypass, travel times to the region will improve and consolidate the position of Ararat as a regional centre for business and trade.

Objective 1

- To encourage new industrial activities in the municipality in preferred locations.

Strategies

- Provide industrial and employment opportunities to support population growth and reduce reliance on commuting.
- Reinforce the role of the Ararat Township as the major industrial centre of the Rural City.
- Ensure sufficient industrial land is available for expansion of agricultural support and value-add industries.
- Encourage industrial growth to the south-east of the town centre, between the railway line and Jacksons Creek Road/ Gordon Street and ensure appropriate access is provided to the arterial road network..
- Ensure industrial land supply is sufficient to allow for 15 years of organic growth.
- Provide a long term land bank for future industrial purposes within Ararat.
- Direct industrial development to areas that have good access to arterial roads to support efficient movement and to minimise the potential impact of freight vehicles on residential amenity.
- Identify land for future industrial purposes in accordance with the Ararat Framework Plan.
- Develop and promote Alfred Street as the preferred location for industries requiring access and exposure to the highway, heavy vehicle activities, warehousing and transport businesses.
- Develop and promote the Pyrenees Grampians Rural Industry Enterprise Centre (abattoir) as the preferred location for rural industries, value-adding agricultural businesses and agricultural research activities.
- Develop and promote the Ararat Local Industry Estate (Gordon Street) as the preferred location for small lot service industries, light manufacturing, small to medium sized factory units (200m² to 2000m²) and lots of up to 2ha in area.
- Promote and enhance Ararat, Willaura and Lake Bolac as key locations for additional manufacturing and industrial establishments.
- Promote and facilitate the establishment of service industries within the existing towns.
- Support the expansion of the wind energy industry in the municipality.

Objective 2

- To ensure industrial activities that impact on residential areas and conflict with major infrastructure use is appropriately managed.

Strategies

- Protect the preferred industrial areas and major industries from the intrusion of residential land use and ensure that the location of industrial land is compatible with surrounding land uses by implementing appropriate buffer distances.
- Ensure that any industrial development implements waste minimisation principles and produces waste water that can be satisfactorily treated at the sewerage treatment plant or on-site without detrimental effect on reuse options.
- Protect and promote the Ararat Aerodrome as a valuable infrastructure asset.
- Ensure that future development does not impinge on the operation of the Ararat Aerodrome.
- Support the enhancement of the aerodrome and associated infrastructure.

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Ararat Commercial Centre

The Ararat commercial centre plays a significant role in the municipality's economy. The retail sector is predominantly focused along the main street of Ararat (Barkly Street) which is the traditional shopping area. Supermarket developments comprising some specialty shops have extended the commercial area to the surrounding streets. Council acknowledge that a long term commercial strategy for Ararat township is required so as to ensure the consolidation of the town centre and to look at the offer, type and changes in commercial land uses. Opportunities for residential development above existing shops and offices are also recognised.

The business areas of Ararat have a long history of settlement and development dating to times when car parking was typically not required to be provided on site. Council does not believe that it can justify requiring the specified rates at Clause 52.06 given the supply of on and off street car parking in Ararat.

Objective 1

- To reinforce the role of the Ararat Township as the key retail centre of the Rural City and support consolidation of the retail/commercial core.

Strategies

- Encourage the provision of retail development in accordance with adopted settlement Framework Plans.
- Encourage the establishment of new businesses in a manner that supports the settlement hierarchy.
- Ensure commercial land supply is sufficient to allow for 15 years of organic growth.
- Improve the amenity of the commercial and business centre of Ararat.
- Focus further commercial development within the existing commercial zones in Ararat.
- Consolidate retail activity within the core retail areas.
- Discourage major new retail and commercial development outside the Ararat Central Business District.
- Locate large format retailing outside of the retail/commercial core, on the periphery of the town centre, taking into account considerations such as adjoining sensitive land uses and heritage buildings.
- Limit the height of buildings in the Ararat Central Business District.

- Discourage development along the Western Highway through Ararat which may be detrimental to its safety, efficiency and function.
- Promote high density residential opportunities in the Ararat central business district.

Objective 2

- To provide car parking at a rate which is appropriate to the use of the land in the central area of Ararat.

Strategies

- Encourage a car parking requirement rate in Commercial zones of 3 spaces per 100m² of net floor area for shops, offices and industry.
- Encourage a car parking requirement rate in Commercial zones of 5 spaces per 100m² of net floor area for a supermarket.

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Tourism

Ararat Rural City is close to major tourism features such as the Grampians, the Pyrenees and the various lakes, putting Ararat in a unique position to leverage nature based tourism. Numerous wineries and eateries can enhance the visitor experience by providing a complimentary service to other tourism products and enhance the overall visitor experience and continued viability of tourism product. The popularity of 'eco-tourism', adventure and nature retreat holidays means that there are a number of opportunities for the development of retreats, camping and caravanning areas, host farms, rural retreats and bed and breakfasts. The municipality is also well placed to cater for growth in the education and training sectors linking with tourism, such as heritage, wine, arts associated with Ararat and the Rural lifestyle and Natural attractions associated with the Grampians and Pyrenees. The opportunity exists to further promote the municipality as a tourist destination especially with the re-introduction of fast train services to Melbourne and the duplication of the Western Highway.

Objective 1

- To promote and maximise the benefits of tourism for the municipality.

Strategies

- Encourage and promote the development of the local tourism sector.
- Support and promote tourist accommodation.
- Support the development of tourism infrastructure and accommodation capable of attracting year-round visitation in appropriate locations.
- Promote the development of a large scale tourism accommodation facility in the municipality.
- Support the western townships as the gateway to the Grampians National Park.
- Encourage and promote the development of Pomonal and Moyston as key locations on the route to the Grampians National Park.
- Support the development of tourism infrastructure associated with the Grampians Peaks Trail.
- Recognise Lake Bolac as an important water sport asset.
- Recognise Barkly Street and the Western Highway as important approaches into and corridors through Ararat and where tourist based activities should be encouraged.
- Promote the establishment of farmers markets and the purchasing of local food and other products.

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Implementation

- Apply the Farming Zone with a schedule which provides that the minimum area for subdivision and for which no permit is required to use the land for a dwelling is 40 hectares except for intensive agricultural purposes which can be 20 hectares where they are supported by a Farm Management Plan.
- Apply the Industrial 1 and Industrial 3 Zone in accordance with the recommendations of the Ararat Industrial Land Strategy and Framework Plan.
- Apply the Mixed Use Zone to the Grano Street area and the Lowe Street area.
- Apply Commercial Zone corrections at Campbell and Wilson Streets.
- Apply the Rural Activity, Rural Conservation and Township Zone in accordance with the Stawell- Ararat- Halls Gap Triangle Rural Zone review to encourage and support tourism, lifestyle and agricultural activities.

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Further Strategic Work

- Prepare a commercial/retail strategy for the Ararat township.
- Prepare a Development Plan for Ararat Aerodrome in consultation with key stakeholders.
- Undertake a land capability and agricultural capacity study to identify agricultural and food production opportunities of the municipality in collaboration with water authorities and other agencies.
- Support, in conjunction with the other three municipalities adjoining the Grampians National Park, the establishment of a linking route around the park and the Grampians Peak Trail
- Undertake a tourism gap analysis including accommodation, activities and amenities to areas in which investment is needed to enhance the Ararat Region.
- Undertake an investigation of the role of Ararat as transport and logistics hub which capitalises on its manufacturing, agricultural base and unique position in the State Freight and Logistics network.