BACCHUS MARSH

Key issues and influences

Bacchus Marsh is located midway between Melbourne and Ballarat, and is the largest town in the Shire with some 19,000 residents (2017 estimate including Darley, Bacchus Marsh and Maddingley urban areas). Bacchus Marsh currently fulfills a number of important functions as a regional service centre, a peri-urban town and an increasingly popular alternative housing destination to the west of Melbourne.

Despite being located within the Central Highlands Region, Bacchus Marsh is closer to the centre of Melbourne than growth areas within Melbourne’s designated urban growth boundary, such as Pakenham. It also borders two of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia, being the City of Melton and the City of Wyndham. Spillover urban growth into the Shire has been largely driven by the westward migration of residents from metropolitan Melbourne and the progressive integration of Bacchus Marsh housing into the metropolitan market.

Bacchus Marsh is identified as a regional growth centre in Plan Melbourne as well as the Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan. In order to respond to metropolitan growth pressures and to meet the strategic goals set out in these plans, Bacchus Marsh will need to provide for more than 20,000 additional residents by 2041. Some of this growth will be accommodated within the existing urban area, while the balance will be accommodated within the adjoining growth precincts of Merrimu, Hopetoun Park and Parwan Station (as inter-connected, masterplanned urban components of the wider Bacchus Marsh valley).

Bacchus Marsh is characterised by high levels of commuting, especially towards job opportunities in metropolitan Melbourne, significant housing growth and an attractive living environment.

Residents of Bacchus Marsh have been attracted to the town by the combination of its distinctive landscape setting comprising of escarpments and irrigated river valley, combined with attributes found in a metropolitan corridor such as well-established commercial, business, industry and community infrastructure.

The town is defined by the following character elements:

- The rural and natural gateway entries, in particular the entrance from the Western Freeway through the Avenue of Honour;
- An open feel due to the rural and low density surrounds, wider streetscapes, large open space areas, farmlands, orchards and market gardens;
- A natural landscape character and setting with undulating landforms.
- A scenic backdrop that surrounds the town with Lerderderg State Park, Werribee Gorge State Park and Long Forest Nature Conservation Reserve.
- Werribee and Lerderderg Rivers that traverse through the town and in some places include linear walking paths and open space along the waterways.
- Networks of open space throughout residential areas and adjoining forested areas;
- Significant heritage buildings and trees including the Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour, Grant Street and Maddingley Park;
- Topography defined by the Lerderderg State Park and sand mines to the north, the Merrimu and Hopetoun Park plateaus to the east, the Pentland Hills to the west and the Parwan Valley and coal mine to the south
- A strong range of commercial and business enterprises including industrial base business that provide local employment opportunities, particularly in the transport and the agricultural industries; and
- A diversity and range of residential development opportunities (infill and greenfield).
Bacchus Marsh has been designated as the major urban growth centre in the Shire but expansion is constrained by the surrounding natural landscape, topography, mineral and agricultural/horticultural resources. The existing settlement boundary contains a substantial amount of residential land supply (infill and greenfield) that is likely to accommodate short to medium term population growth.

However opportunities for long-term growth outside of the existing settlement boundary require further investigation. Urban growth investigation areas are located at Merrimu, Parwan Station and Hopetoun Park, as shown on the Bacchus Marsh Urban Growth Framework Plan. Urban growth at Hopetoun Park will provide potential for a local activity centre which is a key missing element in the existing settlement. Ultimately, it is envisaged that Bacchus Marsh will comprise a multi-nodal settlement with a core area (Bacchus Marsh, Darley and Maddingley) together with new fully integrated and functional high quality ‘masterplanned’ precincts which provide for diversity of urban living choices.

The highly productive irrigated horticultural land provides a source of employment and fresh food that needs to be protected from the urban expansion of Bacchus Marsh.

There are a number of strategically important land uses to the south of Bacchus Marsh - such as the Maddingley Brown Coal operations (coal mining, landfill and green waste composting), agribusiness, the airport and the Bacchus Marsh Recycled Water Plant. Such uses are inherently incompatible with residential development due to their off site impacts.

Any new urban growth precincts at Merrimu, Parwan Station or Parwan (i.e. Parwan Employment Precinct) will require the provision of an Eastern Link Road, with connections to Gisborne Road, Western Freeway and Geelong-Bacchus Marsh Road. This road would enable new growth precincts to integrate with the local and regional transport network. An Eastern Link Road is a regional priority, as it will enhance existing road network performance and enable the integration of new growth precincts.

Bacchus Marsh currently has an affordable housing supply compared to the outer western region and metropolitan Melbourne, however diversity of the supply is limited. It is important that diversity in housing improves to ensure there are housing options to meet the requirements of existing and future residents. This is particularly important due to the ageing population and decreasing household sizes where there is likely to be increased demand for smaller, affordable and low-maintenance dwellings.

Council also recognises the importance of directing housing to locations that are easily accessible relative to activity centres and public transport. Directing development to appropriate locations will assist building on Council’s vision to create compact and sustainable neighbourhoods. However, new development must complement the defining character elements of the town, including the historic Avenue of Honour and the open and natural landscape while also preserving horticultural land.

The Camerons Road area is designated for limited rural living development to balance the area’s landscape level bushfire risk, significant flora and fauna values, quarry buffer requirements, fragmented ownership and low agricultural value. The land immediately adjoins the Lederderg State Park and state significant quarries.

**Objectives - Managing urban growth**

To accommodate sustainable residential growth within the existing settlement boundary of Bacchus Marsh in the short to medium term.

To accommodate medium to long term residential growth within the investigation areas at Merrimu, Parwan Station and Hopetoun Park.

To facilitate the development of an employment precinct within the Parwan Employment Precinct investigation area.
To protect existing and future industrial and agribusiness land uses (particularly Maddingley Waste and Resource Recovery Hub, Darley/Coimada sand quarries, South Maddingley industrial precinct south of Kerrs Road, Parwan Employment Precinct, Bacchus Marsh Aerodrome and Bacchus Marsh Recycled Water Plant) from the encroachment of sensitive land uses.

**Strategies**

- Contain short term residential development within the existing settlement boundary (infill and greenfield).
- Ensure that Bacchus Marsh maintains an adequate long term residential land supply to accommodate the projected population growth.
- Implement the Residential Settlement Framework within the existing Bacchus Marsh settlement boundary.
- Provide for medium to long term residential growth within the investigation areas at Merrimu and Parwan Station. Medium-term timing may be considered for one or more growth precincts if it can be demonstrated that such precinct/s will facilitate the provision of an Eastern Link Road.
- Provide for medium term residential growth within the investigation area at Hopetoun Park, subject to demonstrating how the precinct will facilitate improved connectivity with the Western Freeway, to and from the west along with an acceptable level of community facilities/amenities in accordance with Council’s Community Infrastructure Framework.
- Require the provision of sound strategic justification for any urban growth precincts at Merrimu, Parwan Station, or Hopetoun Park, including detailed technical assessments such as environmental, cultural heritage, landscape, infrastructure, transport and economics.
- Require and implement precinct structure plans for any urban growth precincts at Merrimu and Parwan Station, and a development plan for any growth precinct at Hopetoun Park, and ensure that such plans provide for early delivery of appropriate community and social infrastructure, activity centres, schools, integrated transport, reticulated services and local job opportunities.
- Work with State Government and other relevant servicing authorities towards the servicing of Parwan Employment Precinct, with particular emphasis on the provision of reticulated water (including recycled water) and gas.
- Ensure that land use and development within the Parwan Employment Precinct shown on the Bacchus Marsh Urban Growth Framework Plan is compatible with:
  - Protection of the brown coal resource within the defined mining licence area;
  - Any existing or permissible future activities associated with the Maddingley Brown Coal Mine;
  - The continuation of existing industries and the establishment of new industries in the nearby industrial zones; and
  - Ensuring that separation distances between sensitive uses and uses with off-site amenity impacts comply with Environment Protection Authority Publication 1518 ‘Recommended Separation Distances for Industrial Residual Air Emissions’, or a lesser distance determined by an area-specific environmental study in collaboration with the Environment Protection Authority.
- Encourage agribusiness uses to locate within the Moorabool Agribusiness Industrial Area in Parwan.
- Promote the establishment of sustainable residential neighbourhoods by:
  - Encouraging high quality design of dwellings, open space and the public realm;
- Encouraging infill development that assists in creating walkable and pedestrian scale environments;
- Encouraging quality higher density development close to activity centres and public transport; and
- Ensuring that the form and design of new development responds to walkability and neighbourhood design principles.

- Protect escarpments from development impacts.
- Minimise the visual impacts of urban development on ridgelines and hilltops.
- Retain a green belt between Bacchus Marsh and Melton.
- Retain the intrinsic character elements of Bacchus Marsh and surrounds.
- Encourage subdivision patterns that provide a diversity of lot sizes.
- Encourage a wide range of options in terms of dwelling typologies which include affordable and accessible housing options.
- Encourage the delivery of alternative housing models, such as co-housing or eco-villages to assist in improving the diversity of housing stock within Bacchus Marsh.
- Protect the Bacchus Marsh irrigated horticultural land from residential encroachment and ensure appropriate interface treatments in development abutting these areas.
- Provide appropriate separation between sensitive land uses and land uses with off-site impacts.
- Ensure that land use and development within the Parwan Employment Precinct shown on the Bacchus Marsh Urban Growth Framework Plan is compatible with the continued operation and protection of the Brooklyn to Ballan High Pressure Gas Transmission Pipeline.

### Objective—Consolidating land uses within the inner areas of Bacchus Marsh

To encourage the consolidation of a variety of land uses within Bacchus Marsh in areas that are highly accessible to the community.

**Strategies**

- Promote a mix of activities throughout the Bacchus Marsh Activity Centre.
- Encourage development of existing agricultural land south of Main Street and south of the Werribee River for a variety of dwelling types sensitively designed to respond to the site context.
- Reinforce the commercial hub role of Main Street through the intensification of a mix of retail, commercial and leisure land uses, within a walkable environment.
- Strengthen Grant Street as the secondary activity core of the Activity Centre and the secondary location for complementary commercial land uses.
- Encourage civic and community uses on land west of Lord Street in the vicinity of the library and public hall.
- Direct housing to locations that are easily accessible to activity centres and public transport as a priority.
- Consider the effect of natural hazard such as fire or flood on development in rezoning requests that intensifies development.

### Objective—Rural living development

To provide high amenity rural lifestyle opportunities while protecting irrigated horticultural land and the sustainability of environmental assets.
Strategies
- Provide planned rural living development in appropriate locations as detailed on the Bacchus Marsh Urban Growth Framework Plan.
- Recognise the importance and attractiveness of rural residential and rural lifestyle living as an alternative living environment in designated areas around Bacchus Marsh.

Objective—Cameron's Road Area limited rural living
To provide limited high amenity rural lifestyle opportunities while protecting human life from bushfire risk, avoiding fragmenting agricultural land, protecting extractive industry from accommodation development and protecting significant flora and fauna values.

Strategies
- To apply a precautionary approach to landscape level fire risk by allowing limited rural living development and specifying alternative approved measures.
- To specify setbacks and direct buildings to appropriate locations to protect the environmental values of the land, a nearby State Park, waterways and extractive industry.
- To specify subdivision requirements to limit development and site buildings appropriate to the environmental constraints of the land.
- To require integrated land management plans to ensure sustainable land management.

Policy
It is policy:
- To require all dwellings to be located within a dwelling envelope.
- That a dwelling envelope that requires the clearing of significant vegetation will be discouraged.
- To require a plan of subdivision submitted for certification to show a dwelling envelope that meets the siting requirements in the Design and Development Overlay Schedule 14 and an effluent disposal envelope on each lot.
- That alternative dwelling envelopes other than specified in Design and Development Overlay Schedule 14 will only be considered where:
  - All setback requirements for development in Design and Development Overlay Schedule 14 are met.
  - An alternative envelope provides a better response to bushfire risk, avoiding native vegetation clearance and environmental outcomes.
- That an application to resubdivide lots to create a lot less than 6 hectares on land zoned Rural Conservation will be considered where:
  - The location of a lot is consistent with the subdivision requirements in Design and Development Overlay Schedule 14.
  - A resubdivided lot has a minimum lot size of two hectares.
  - A smaller lot is required to provide an environmental gain on the balance lot through a larger vegetated lot.
  - An appropriate mechanism is included to ensure that the balance lot may not be further subdivided.
- To require an integrated land management plan for new dwellings and subdivision applications to ensure sustainable land management to protect native vegetation, waterways, stabilisation of soil and pest plant and animal control.
Objectives—Urban design

- To improve the quality of urban design throughout Bacchus Marsh.
- To enhance the elements of Bacchus Marsh that contribute to the character of the town.
- To enhance the visual amenity of all key gateways to Bacchus Marsh.

Strategies

- Manage built form impacts on escarpments, slopes and other significant landscape features within key views and vistas from the Western Freeway.
- Ensure a clear separation between urban development and farming activities is retained.
- Encourage subdivision design that provides for diverse streetscapes, strong connectivity and public spaces and retains the values characteristics that make Bacchus Marsh a special place.
- Ensure residential development is in accordance with the preferred character statements as set out in Housing Bacchus Marsh to 2041.
- Encourage innovation and best practice sustainable design and development outcomes.
- Ensure that housing design allows space for tree plantings and enhances the existing landscape as a priority on both public and private land.
- Ensure the impact of small lot development in greenfield areas is minimised or offset by incorporating larger lots in other locations, incorporating widened road reserves with provision for enhanced street tree plantings and other design based initiatives to avoid emergence of a typical suburban character.

Implementation

Zones and overlays

Specific application of zones and overlays to achieve the strategic objectives includes:

- Apply the Urban Growth Zone to the investigation areas at Merrimu and Parwan Station.
- Consider applying either the Low Density Residential Zone or the Neighbourhood Residential Zone to any urban growth precinct at Hopetoun Park.
- Apply the Development Plan Overlay to any urban growth precinct at Hopetoun Park.
- Apply Design and Development Overlays to each identified key gateway into Bacchus Marsh.

Further strategic work

- Undertake a detailed assessment of bushfire risk for all growth precincts identified on the Bacchus Marsh Urban Growth Framework Plan in this clause, in accordance with Clause 13.02, prior to the preparation of precinct structure plans or development plans.
- Undertake a planning study for the Maddingly Waste and Resource Recovery Hub site and surrounds, to determine appropriate zone and overlay controls.
- Prepare and implement a Precinct Structure Plan and a Land Use and Amenity Plan for Parwan Employment Precinct, to address key infrastructure and land use priorities that will deliver value-added and vertically or horizontally integrated agribusiness/industries.
- Prepare and implement an Urban Design Framework for Bacchus Marsh Main Street precinct, addressing car parking, pedestrian and cycling networks, public transport and road networks, civic improvements and a civic square.
- Prepare and implement Urban Design Guidelines, to assist in delivering high quality design outcomes for activity centres, residential, commercial and industrial developments and subdivisions.
- Prepare and implement a new Gateways Strategy for Bacchus Marsh, with the aim of enhancing the design, style and appearance of all key gateways into town.

Residential Settlement Framework

Table 1 – Explanation of Settlement Framework

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement Type</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Expected Housing Types</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimal Residential Growth Areas</td>
<td>Generally applies to residential land on the fringe of the township that does not have direct access to services and facilities and often has limitations to further development (e.g. topography, connectivity, existing development).</td>
<td>Future residential development within these areas will predominantly comprise of detached dwellings, generally of a modest scale, with dual occupancies of one to two storeys only being supported where the intent of the settlement type and preferred character is not compromised.</td>
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<td>Natural</td>
<td>May also include residential land that has been identified as having strong characteristics that requires protection from further development.</td>
<td>These areas encompass the majority of Bacchus Marsh’s established residential areas. The identified locations will allow for modest housing growth and a variety of housing typologies in the form of townhouses and multi-dwelling developments, with detached houses continuing to dominate. Low scale medium density housing and alternative housing typologies (such as co-housing, retirement villages, aged care, etc.) may be appropriate in areas within the precincts that are more accessible to public transport, activity centres and open space than others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>Applies to residential land that has been identified for natural change over time. Appropriate well designed, infill development, including multi-unit developments that complement the preferred character of the area, while providing for a variety of housing options will be encouraged in suitable locations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>Generally applies to residential land that is well located to services and facilities and has been identified as suitable for infill and increased densities of development. This will include a range of multi-units, townhouses and alternative housing typologies within a walkable catchment of residents daily needs.</td>
<td>These areas will provide for housing growth with increased densities. Housing development will generally be in the form of townhouse and multi-dwelling developments with opportunities for apartments and alternative forms of housing (cohousing, aged care, retirement villages, etc.).</td>
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<td>Greenfield</td>
<td>Land that is generally located on the fringe of the established urban areas and has been identified as land suitable for future residential development or is in the process of being developed for residential purposes, often over a number of years.</td>
<td>Providing a diverse range of lot sizes that will be capable of accommodating a range of housing typologies.</td>
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