

22.02 ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES09/06/2016
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This Clause provides local policy to support Clause 21.04, Environment and natural resources, of the Municipal Strategic Statement.

22.02-1 Native vegetation and biodiversity09/06/2016
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This policy applies to all land in the Alpine Shire.

Policy basis

Extensive areas of native vegetation cover much of the Alpine Shire. The intent of this policy is to give consideration to the importance of this natural resource not only from a biodiversity perspective but also because of the significant landscape and recreational values that provide close links to the sustainable and economic well-being of the Shire.

Objectives

- Protect threatened species and remnant native vegetation.
- Protect and enhance the habitat, particularly critical habitat, of Victorian Rare and Threatened Flora and Fauna species including, but not limited to, those listed under Schedule 2 of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988.
- Promote the maintenance of ecological processes and genetic diversity.
- Avoid inappropriate development in or near areas of high value native vegetation, habitat for threatened species or other areas of high environmental values.
- Encourage maintenance and development of linkages between existing remnant vegetation.
- Recognise the catchment wide land and water management benefits resulting from vegetation retention.

Policy

It is local policy that:

- Buildings and works (including on-site effluent disposal fields, fencing and access tracks) need to be sited and designed to avoid and minimise the requirement for native vegetation removal or any detrimental impacts on retained native vegetation.
- Preference be given to proposals, which incorporate measures to avoid and minimise the impact on remnant vegetation.
- Preference be given to proposals that provide areas of open space directly adjacent to existing vegetation or areas of public land.
- High value remnant vegetation of an Ecological Vegetation Class with a conservation status of depleted, rare or endangered; or, that is identified as habitat for rare and threatened species; or that is considered an area of significant local value, should not be removed.
- Where the removal of native vegetation cannot be avoided, conditions in accordance with native vegetation regulations and policy requirements will be included on any permit granted, to ensure that offsets achieve no net loss of native vegetation.

- Revegetation projects using appropriate native species need to be designed and located to enhance and protect existing remnant vegetation across the landscape. There is however the need to ensure that revegetation projects including offset works, are not located within or in a manner that compromises the defensible space requirements for a dwelling where a Bushfire Management Overlay applies to the land.
- The siting and design of any revegetation projects will be required to contribute to the protection and enhancement of vegetation links and habitat corridors across the landscape; the stabilisation of waterways; and the enhancement of riparian areas.

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This policy applies to all land located above 1100m Australian Height Datum across the Alpine Shire where snowfall may persist as ground cover for long periods over the winter months.

Policy basis

The high-altitude alpine areas of the Shire are natural assets of local, regional and State significance. They contain high levels of biodiversity across montane, sub-alpine and alpine habitat. These areas also exhibit significant social, historic and cultural values.

There are two alpine resorts within the Shire namely Mount Hotham and Falls Creek which have been removed from the Shire's jurisdiction. They are instead administered under the Alpine Resort Planning Scheme. Dinner Plain comprises freehold development nearby to Mount Hotham while Mount Buffalo is National Park administered by Parks Victoria.

The Shire plays a major support role to all these areas through visitor accommodation, community facilities, commercial services, infrastructure, equipment, access and provision of supplies. Because of these varied roles the alpine resorts and other alpine areas exert considerable influence over the Shire's economy and character and as such these areas also demand some strategic focus within the Alpine Planning Scheme.

Apart from Dinner Plain other significant freehold areas within the alpine and sub-alpine areas include Howman's Gap, Cobungra and Treasure Plain. Mount Hotham Airport is situated 10km from Dinner Plain with commercial air services generally operating from mid-June to mid-September during the winter season.

Changes in snow regimes predicted under future climate change scenarios are likely to have a significant impact on the animals and plants whose ecology is intrinsically linked to snow conditions. Likely impacts on the tourism industry will also require adaptive responses.

Objectives

- Encourage consolidation of tourism activities in the designated alpine resorts and Dinner Plain locality.
- Strengthen linkages with State policy including the Alpine Resorts Planning Scheme.
- Facilitate the responsible recreational use of the freehold sub-alpine and alpine areas of the Shire.
- Encourage sensitively designed development in designated areas within the alpine areas including the periphery of Dinner Plain village and land adjacent to Mount Hotham Airport.
- Recognise that the approaches to Falls Creek, Mount Hotham and Mount Buffalo warrant special attention in the context of planning and development to maintain a high visual amenity.

- Ensure that development is sited and designed to minimise any adverse visual and environmental impact.
- Facilitate the use and development of a quality integrated alpine tourist village at Dinner Plain with appropriate ancillary services.

Policy

It is local policy that:

- Buildings and works, including on-site effluent disposal fields and access tracks, should be sited and designed to minimise any potential to destroy or threaten native flora and fauna habitats.
- Any buildings and works be sited to minimise their visibility from public places.
- Any nature-based tourist accommodation facility within alpine areas or sub-alpine areas that provides overnight accommodation for more than 12 people:
 - Will be centrally managed by on-site management with all structural components being the responsibility of one management whether or not individual structures are owned by different entities; and
 - The development will contain facilities for the teaching, researching or dissemination of knowledge in respect of the natural and cultural history of the area; and
 - The development will provide opportunities for visitors to experience nature and culture in ways that lead to a greater understanding, appreciation and enjoyment.
- Any development within alpine areas or sub-alpine areas:
 - Is required to be designed to utilise building materials that blend with the surrounding landscape, promoting the use of natural materials and materials sourced from the region; and
 - Will maximise energy efficiency and use a minimum of non-renewable energy; and
 - Is developed appropriately on the basis of ecological sustainability and an understanding of the potential environmental impacts; and
 - Does not dominate the visual landscape and is compatible with the local cultural character; and
 - Ensures that water consumption in the development will be minimised, and that the water supply is ecologically sustainable; and
 - Retains and treats any on-site effluent to such a level that no environmental harm results from discharges.
- Require that any planning proposal for development within alpine and sub-alpine localities has identified any environmental risks that may arise from the proposed development and has consequently prepared relevant management actions.
- Requiring land capability assessments to demonstrate site suitability and recommend effluent disposal systems that are best suited to local conditions and provide the highest level of environmental performance.
- Any development within proximity of the Mount Hotham Airport have regard to the presence of, and the potential impacts on, alpine bogs, heathlands and wetlands.

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Landscapes

This policy applies to all applications for buildings and works within significant landscapes and view sheds including land on significant hilltops and ridgelines.

Policy basis

The natural landscape of the Shire is an important asset that requires protection from inappropriate use and development. Apart from extensive views across pastoral landscapes to the treed slopes and hilltops beyond, there are also many views of significance from numerous various scenic lookouts and vantage points across public land to the valley floors stretched out below. A number of these landscapes have been classified by the National Trust of Victoria while the Australian Alps are one of ten recognised National Landscapes.

The visual and environmental implications of inappropriate development along these natural features can readily destroy the significance, attractiveness and environmental qualities of the area.

Objectives

- Recognise landscapes across the Shire for their special appeal and characteristics.
- Maintain and protect areas of environmental and visual significance from inappropriate development.
- Limit development on prominent ridges and hilltops.
- Encourage the protection and revegetation of landscape features as an enhancement.
- Contribute to the protection of the environmental qualities of important view sheds.
- Ensure that all structures blend in with the surrounding environment.
- Ensure that the aesthetic amenity of the area is preserved and/or enhanced.

Policy

It is policy that:

- Environmental, landscape and visual significance of hilltops and ridgelines are considered in the assessment of applications for use and development.
- Developments must be sited to ensure that rooflines do not protrude above ridgelines when viewed from any road or public land.
- Mature vegetation which provides a backdrop for any development must not be removed or lopped.
- All external finishes must be non-reflective and of colours that blend with the surrounding landscape.
- The external cladding of all buildings within the rural areas of the Shire is to be of a muted tone except in instances where the buildings are not readily visible from roads, public land or adjoining properties due to the topography or existing vegetation.
- Views should be protected along the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail.