WINCHELSEA STRATEGY

Overview

Winchelsea is a small rural town on the banks of the picturesque Barwon River. It is midway between Geelong and Colac on the Princes Highway (approximately ½ hour travel time by road or rail). It is the largest inland town in the Surf Coast Shire and is the major service centre for the surrounding farming community. The town has a welcoming country feel and a strong historical character. The scenic Barwon River, which meanders through the centre of town, was an important resource and focal point for indigenous peoples and later European settlers, and is still highly valued by the local Winchelsea community today. Winchelsea features a number of valued historical buildings, the Barwon Park Mansion and a bluestone bridge dating back to the 1860s, when the town was established as a European settlement. Winchelsea is a popular stop for people heading towards the Great Ocean Road, the Otways and western Victoria, being the first town travellers pass through when driving from Melbourne.

In the broader district there is an active tourism industry, with a number of wineries, berry farms, restaurants, cafes and accommodation.

Winchelsea is one of two Surf Coast Shire towns identified in the G21 Regional Growth Plan 2013 for growth. In recent times, significant infrastructure improvements such as the Princes Highway duplication, the provision of reticulated gas and the construction of the Geelong Ring Road have placed the town of Winchelsea on the path towards steady population growth.

Key Issues and Influences

- State and regional policies identify Winchelsea as a population growth node in the Great Ocean Road and G21 regions.
- A strong historical and country village character, which is greatly valued by the community, provides an opportunity for tourism growth.
- Balancing population growth and higher development densities against a community desire to maintain the country village character.
- More affordable housing and rental prices compared to Geelong and coastal settlements in Surf Coast Shire.
- A continuing trend towards an ageing population and single person households, with a higher than average number of people identifying as living with a disability.
- A strong demand for larger residential allotments to accommodate rural residential style living, with many farmers retiring into “town”.
- Winchelsea benefits from a strong connection to the rural hinterland and plays a role as a service centre for the surrounding rural districts.
- The Princes Highway, running through the centre of Winchelsea, brings the majority of traffic to and through town. This creates an opportunity for development along the Princes Highway to reinforce the country village character of the town, and is particularly important at the entrance points to town and in the commercial heart of the town either side of the Barwon River.
- The Princes Highway running east west and the Barwon River flowing north south effectively divide the town into four quadrants and connections between each of these is critically important to ensure good access to all facilities and services.
- Important historical buildings and structures including Barwon Park Mansion, the Bluestone Bridge over the Barwon River, the Globe Theatre and the former Winchelsea Shire building (now Tea Rooms).
- The Barwon River is the focal point of the town and provides a substantial corridor of open space. There is an opportunity to enhance public access to the river for recreational purposes, to attract visitors to town and to connect the four quadrants of the town.
Vistas of the Barwon River environs and riparian corridor are an important part of the character of the area.

The importance of the Winchelsea Common, the Collins Street Low Density Residential Estate and the Barwon River corridor as the few remaining areas within the town retaining remnant vegetation.

The town is well serviced by a railway station, hospital, community and recreation facilities, reticulated services including natural gas, commercial areas and an industrial estate. These provide opportunities for both population attraction and diversification of the economy.

An opportunity exists to diversify the economy and provide local employment opportunities through a “mixed economy” pathway. This pathway encourages and facilitates business and industry ventures in local services (particularly health and education) and liveability/tourism sectors.

Winchelsea has a need for long day child care to support working families.

Opportunities for significant tourist trade exist with access from the Princes Highway and the promotion of Winchelsea Deans Marsh Road as providing an alternate route to Lorne and the Great Ocean Road region.

The Princes Highway presents significant opportunities for commercial enterprise. It is a major truck route from the western district to Geelong and Melbourne.

Winchelsea benefits from a railway station providing increased commuter opportunities through passenger rail.

The existing Water Reclamation Plant (sewerage treatment) has limited capacity for growth. There is a need to work closely with Barwon Water on options to expand and ensure new development will not impede future expansion.

Objectives

Settlement, Built Environment and Heritage

To accommodate and manage the projected population growth and ageing demographics of Winchelsea in a manner that respects and celebrates the authentic country village atmosphere and rich cultural heritage of the town.

Environment

To protect and enhance the significant environmental assets, landscape values and scenic vistas of the Winchelsea district, in particular the Barwon River and surrounding environs as a focal point of the town.

Economic Development

To foster local economic growth and employment opportunities through supporting a “mixed economy” pathway in accordance with Growing Winchelsea: Shaping Future Growth 2015.

To maximise tourism opportunities by promoting the country village and historical character of Winchelsea through commercial development.

Transport and Infrastructure

To facilitate active transport opportunities and connections with public transport.

Strategies

Settlement, Built Environment and Heritage

Ensure that any new development is generally consistent with Map 1 and 2 to Clause 21.09 – Winchelsea Framework Map and Winchelsea Commercial Centre Framework Map.
- Encourage residential development in the south east growth corridor consistent with the Winchelsea Growth Area Outline Development Plan (2011).

- Ensure that new subdivisions contribute to the country village character of Winchelsea by providing wide streets, open spaces, and adequate space for front gardens with a generous setback from the street.

- Encourage the provision of smaller lot sizes as part of future residential subdivision in close proximity to the town centre and community facilities.

- Encourage dwelling diversity, including the provision of 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings, in close proximity to the commercial and health precincts allowing for people to ‘age in place’.

- Provide where possible housing and associated infrastructure suited to all abilities to accommodate the high proportion of older residents and people with a disability.

- Encourage aged care facilities (e.g. special accommodation and nursing homes) and older persons housing (e.g. retirement villages) in areas that are fully reticulated, close to services and facilities and served by public transport.

- Discourage further subdivision in the Quambatook Estate, Trebeck Court and Barkly Street Estates that do not have capacity for increased density due to the inability to treat wastewater and stormwater flows, flooding potential and significant environmental assets.

- Maintain the existing low density residential development surrounding the Winchelsea Water Reclamation Plant.

- Encourage the retention and conservation of Winchelsea’s heritage buildings and historical fabric and ensure that any new use and development contributes to the heritage significance of the place and its longevity.

- Recognise, protect, and celebrate culturally significant heritage places and areas of indigenous cultural heritage significance such as the Barwon River and environs.

- Encourage provision of new schools in the south east growth corridor. The “possible school precinct location” shown on Map 1 to Clause 21.09 – Winchelsea Framework Map should be investigated further as part of a future planning scheme amendment process.

- Support the co-location of health, education and other community services in the Health and Education Precinct within the area bounded by the Princes Highway, Hesse Street, Armitage Street and Murrell Street.

**Environment**

- Encourage the retention of native vegetation along the Barwon River and minimise visual intrusion of buildings and works.

- Encourage the landscaping of the Winchelsea Industrial Estate to enhance the visual amenity of the western town entry.

- Encourage the protection of Red Gums in the new residential growth areas.

**Economic Development**

- Facilitate commercial ventures in the health, education, “green industry” (e.g. renewable energy, local food production) and tourism sectors.


- Encourage uses compatible with tourism (e.g. cafes, antiques) to locate in the commercial precinct between the Barwon River and Austin Street, north of the Princes Highway as well as in the Winchelsea Town Centre.
Encourage the long term consolidation and growth of new commercial retail activities into a defined activity centre in accordance with Map 1 and 2 to Clause 21.09 – Winchelsea Framework Map and Winchelsea Commercial Centre Framework Map.

Avoid commercial and industrial use and development along the Princes Highway outside of commercial and industrial zones.

Direct industrial use and development to the Winchelsea Industrial Estate to prevent conflict with residential areas and to maintain rural land for agriculture.

Encourage the restoration of historic buildings and old shops. Support the establishment of associated tourism based commercial development.

Ensure subdivision and development in the industrial estate presents a high quality interface with the Princes Highway.

Respect and build on the historical and rural character of the town in commercial areas through the provision of signage, street lighting, street furniture and urban design features complementary to a country village or heritage theme.

New commercial development and external alterations to existing commercial buildings should respect and complement a country village or heritage theme (and include features in the design such as pitched roofs, wide eaves, or verandahs), particularly in the Main Street town centre and along the Princes Highway.

Where signage is appropriate, new commercial signs should complement a country village or heritage theme.

Transport and Infrastructure

Provide pedestrian access and cycle routes that link new subdivisions to the town centre, community facilities and public transport.

Ensure that older residents or people with special needs are considered when community infrastructure and pedestrian accesses are provided.

Provide a network of safe and sustainable pathways to link key community assets, public spaces and recreation areas.

Improve connectivity by providing a pedestrian/cycling link across the Barwon River at Hesse Street.

Ensure that development of land surrounding the railway station maintains and enhances pedestrian links to the station.

Implementation

These strategies will be implemented by:

Policy Guidelines

Require new commercial development to be designed and oriented to have active frontages to public streets and an outlook over the Barwon River reserve where possible. Uses that can utilise outdoor spaces (such as restaurants with outdoor dining areas) will be encouraged to locate along the river frontage.

Apply the ‘Architectural Guidelines’ from the Winchelsea Townscape Study 1995 to development and display of advertising signs within the Commercial 1 Zone.

Require developments for multi-dwellings to include provision for smaller dwellings, particularly when in close proximity to an activity centre.

Require commercial development to be designed to give pedestrians priority over vehicular transport through the provision of clear pedestrian connections throughout the activity centre and to surrounding residential areas.
• Where appropriately designed, encourage landscaping works associated with commercial development to be located within flood affected areas (subject to the approval of the floodplain manager).

• Support appropriate non-residential uses (those with a health, allied health or education focus) within the General Residential Zone in the Health and Education Precinct.

• Encourage population servicing industries (particularly health and education), “green” industries (eg. renewable energy, local food production) or industries that support liveability/tourism sectors.

Other Implementation

• Continue to implement the Winchelsea Industrial Estate Master Plan, with a particular focus on improving road access and enhancing the visual amenity of the estate.

• Continue to work with the National Trust of Australia to enhance and promote the Barwon Park Mansion as a major tourist attraction for Winchelsea.

• New street names should reflect the historic development of Winchelsea.

• Develop a second sporting oval on land to the south of Eastern Reserve.

Undertaking further strategic work

• Subject to majority landowner support, and if initiated by landowners, investigating the potential for increased densities at the Collins Street Low Density Residential Estate.

• Investigate the need for and feasibility of expanding the town centre along Hesse Street (west side).

• In the longer term, investigate the feasibility of developing a new employment precinct north of the railway line in the Cressy Road area.

• Prepare updated urban design guidelines for the Princes Highway corridor and the Winchelsea Town Centre. This should include landscape and thematic tree planting programs to improve the character of major town gateways and commercial areas.

• Investigate the preparation and implementation of a Development Contributions Plan for the provision of new community facilities and infrastructure.

• Prepare a precinct structure plan for the Winchelsea Town Centre (including all land in the Commercial 1 Zone east and west of the Barwon River and the intervening Crown Land).

Reference Documents

Growing Winchelsea – Shaping Future Growth 2015
Winchelsea Industrial Estate Master Plan 2010
Surf Coast Housing Policy Project 2006
Surf Coast Open Space Strategy 2016 - 2025
Winchelsea Townscape Study 1995
Winchelsea Growth Area Outline Development Plan 2011
Map 2 to Clause 21.09: Winchelsea Commercial Centre Framework Map