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LANDSCAPE – OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The rural areas of the Shire contain some of the most visually attractive landscapes in the Shire comprising an intricate mix of open valleys, rolling foothills, steep forested land and majestic mountain ranges.

Key Issues:

- High environmental and landscape qualities of many of the agricultural areas must be protected from intrusive and poorly designed development and non-sustainable land use.
- The scenic features of the non-urban areas are an integral component of the image and identity of the Shire, and they complement many of the rural and green wedge activities conducted within these areas.
- Vegetation including both remnant and mature exotic planting are important features of the Shire's scenic landscapes and contributes to the unique character of rural, townships and many residential areas.

Objective 1 – Scenic Landscapes

To retain and protect the scenic landscapes, rural and green wedge character and special environmental features of the Shire.

Strategies

- Protect the rural and green wedge landscapes and forested areas of all non-urban green wedge areas, and ensure that new development complements the established landscape character of significant rural and green wedge landscape areas.
- Protect the important open landscape elements and wine growing activities of the Yarra Valley Plains from visual and urban intrusions.
- Protect the residential amenity of rural and green wedge areas from potentially adverse effects of commercial and non agricultural land uses.
- Ensure that tourist development proposals protect and conserve the natural environment and minimise the adverse impacts on residential amenity.
- Prevent the further fragmentation of rural and green wedge landholdings in non-urban areas.
- Recognise the need for horticultural structures in intensive agricultural areas while ensuring that in areas of high landscape value they are sensitively designed and located.
- Prevent more intensive development in areas of low density rural residential use as these areas act as buffers or areas of transition between urban areas and other areas of high agricultural and environmental significance.
- Recognise the significance of the scenic landscapes abutting the Puffing Billy Railway and protect them from inappropriate development that would detract from the visitor experience.
- Restrict commercial and non-agricultural activities within rural and green wedge areas, especially along the highways and other main rural, green wedge and tourist road frontages, to ensure that agricultural land and environmental values are protected and rural and green wedge landscapes maintained.

- Provide for land uses that reinforce the rural and landscape character of the rural areas and that do not lead to the loss of productive agricultural land through land degradation processes or the carrying out of non agricultural land uses.
- Protect and enhance environmental and landscape values, particularly those derived from remnant vegetation.
- Ensure, where appropriate, that external surfaces, including roofs, are treated with non-reflective materials and subdued colours to reduce the visual impact of the development on the surrounding area.
- Maintain the distinct rural green wedge and agricultural character of areas between townships in order to retain well defined and compact townships throughout the Shire.

Policy

It is policy that:

- Any development proposal demonstrate that the proposed buildings and works will not compromise the landscape and environmental qualities of the surrounding area, or substantially change the natural land form.
- All development be designed and sited to:
 - Have regard to the built form and to maintain design consistency with surrounding development and avoid detriment to the local environment.
 - Recognise the land capability of the site in terms of slope, land subsidence potential, viewlines, enhancement of landscape values, protection of water resources, retention of indigenous flora and fauna and associated wildlife habitats and other local amenity considerations, and so as to be unobtrusive in the surrounding landscape.
 - Avoid the removal of remnant vegetation, particularly healthy trees above five metres in height, and to minimise the disturbance to the root zone of such vegetation.
 - Avoid prominent ridgelines, hill tops and other visually exposed sites.
- In the rural landscape areas, protect and enhance the environmental and landscape values particularly those derived from remnant indigenous vegetation.
- The external surfaces, including roofs, of all buildings, except within Metropolitan Residential Areas as identified in plans showing Residential Areas, be treated with non-reflective materials and subdued colours to reduce the visual impact of the development on the surrounding area. This is particularly necessary where any development is proposed to be located on a visually prominent site.
- On the completion of any development, the site be landscaped to protect and enhance the residential amenity, landscape character and any environmental features of the area.
- The landscaping be planted within 12 months of the practical completion of the development or works and then be maintained to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.
- In all areas outside the Urban Growth Boundary and in localities in residential zones which contain a tree canopy cover of mostly remnant vegetation, preference be given to landscaping using predominantly indigenous vegetation appropriate to the site, including upper, middle and lower storey plant species.
- All roads, including internal access tracks, be located, designed and constructed in a manner compatible with surrounding landscape values and character and which minimises soil erosion.

Implementation

Applying the Green Wedge Zone to areas of mostly cleared land used for a range of agricultural and other rural and green wedge activities.

Applying the Rural Conservation Zone to areas of predominantly privately owned rural and green wedge land which contains extensive areas of remnant vegetation.

Applying the Green Wedge A Zone to areas on the urban fringe which have been extensively subdivided into predominantly rural residential lots and provide a buffer between urban and rural and green wedge areas.

Including scenic landscape areas that have been classified or recorded by the National Trust within a Significant Landscape Overlay.

Including the environs of the Puffing Billy Tourist Railway within a Significant Landscape Overlay.

Including areas identified by the Country Fire Authority as being at risk of high intensity wildfires within a Wildfire Management Overlay.

Including maximum subdivision density provisions within the schedules to the Green Wedge Zone, Rural Conservation Zone and Green Wedge A Zone.

Applying a Restructure Overlay to minimise the adverse environmental effects of development in old and inappropriate subdivisions.

Maintaining, through Clause 53, a tenement holding control in the Dandenong Ranges and adjoining rural and green wedge areas to limit the scope for more intensive development in areas that have previously been subdivided into inappropriately small lots.

Applying, through Clause 53, a permit requirement for the removal of vegetation.