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C90gpla**STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS****02.03-1****Settlement**09/07/2020 --/--/----
C92gpla Proposed C92gpla

The Shire's population is dispersed, with the largest proportion of the population residing in Bannockburn, followed by Teesdale. All other townships have a population of less than 1000 people.

Each settlement performs important living, retail, service and community roles to residents and the rural community.

Settlement patterns are based on historic rural service centres and nineteenth century mining towns, which differ significantly between the north and south. The role of many towns has changed over time to one of commuting areas to the regional centres of Ballarat, Colac and Geelong.

The north-west has seen a proliferation of subdivisions and subsequent rural residential developments, many of which have developed into distinct communities. There is also a proliferation of rural living development in isolated areas devoid of appropriate infrastructure. All of the towns in the Central Highlands Water district are supplied with an interconnected, potable water supply. There is sufficient infrastructure capacity to cater for all anticipated growth over the next 20 years.

In the south-east, urban development is more focused around townships. All water is treated and the existing systems, with minor augmentations, are adequate to cater for the existing populations and anticipated growth in the immediate future.

The majority of growth has occurred in the settlements at the south-east and north-west as more people come from Melbourne and the regional cities looking for affordable housing and a country lifestyle, close to Ballarat and Geelong. In the south-east of the municipality, the population has increased rapidly by about 40 per cent between 2005 and 2015. In the north-west area, the population increased by approximately 6 per cent during the same period.

There is pressure for subdivision and development outside existing townships, particularly for subdivision and hobby farm development close to Geelong and Ballarat. Residential development is not supported outside existing township boundaries.

With sufficient land being set aside for the moderate growth forecast across the Shire, no significant new areas of land need to be provided for residential development, except in Bannockburn where rezoning continues to be required to accommodate expected future growth.

The towns of the Shire need to operate in clustered networks with key towns providing services and facilities utilised by towns within that network. Bannockburn, Meredith, Rokewood and Smythesdale provide the focus points for these clusters.

Council seeks to:

- Encourage the consolidation of townships, including directing residential development to within township boundaries.
- Maintain a clear distinction between urban and rural areas.
- Avoid urban development in unserviced areas.
- Direct residential development primarily to Smythesdale in the north-west and Bannockburn in the south-east.

South East Area

The south-east area of the Shire is within a 15-kilometre radius from the Geelong bypass intersection with the Midland and Hamilton Highways. It excludes the Bannockburn and Batesford townships.

The south-east area is now within both the Geelong and the wider Melbourne metropolitan spheres. The completion of the Geelong bypass has increased the rate of change and the pressure to provide land for urban and rural residential development.

It has large flat open areas, together with a number of infrastructure and locational advantages that can be attractive to certain forms of development, including two railway lines, two State highways, access to a high-pressure natural gas pipeline and a high voltage electricity transmission line.

The south-east area will be supported by:

- Protecting the open rural landscape values in the corridor between the towns outside the Gheringhap Precinct.
- Managing growth to avoid ad hoc development outside township boundaries.

North West Area

The north-west area of the Shire contains a mix of settlements, rural residential, rural living and rural areas.

A number of these settlements are strongly connected to the regional centre of Ballarat and provide an option for those seeking a different lifestyle and larger allotments. An opportunity exists to connect to services and infrastructure that are developing as a result of more intense development in the City of Ballarat, close to Golden Plains Shire.

Council intends to:

- Promote growth in Smythesdale.
- Support growth in Linton, Napoleons, Rokewood, Scarsdale and Meredith.
- Support growth in Ross Creek, Smythes Creek, Corindhap, Dereel, Cape Clear and Berringa in the form of infill development within existing Township, Low Density Residential or Rural Living Zones.
- Contain growth in Enfield, Garibaldi, Staffordshire Reef and Steiglitz.

Townships

Bannockburn

Bannockburn is the largest urban centre in Golden Plains Shire and a key regional centre within the Shire's network of townships across the south-east, serving residential, commercial and administrative functions. The sewerage of the town, its rural ambience and proximity to Geelong have attributed to its strong growth in recent years. This growth, however, has also placed pressure on retaining the ambience that makes the town attractive.

Council seeks to support Bannockburn by:

- Accommodating all growth within Bannockburn's growth boundary.
- Protecting the natural and built environment including environmental assets, the Bruce Creek environs, town character and rural ambience.
- Providing an integrated and environmentally responsive open space network throughout Bannockburn township.

Teesdale

Teesdale is the second largest town within Golden Plains Shire, located 12km west of Bannockburn.

Settlement is characterised by low density residential properties with a strong connection to the natural environment and surrounding agricultural land. The town is largely reliant on Bannockburn and Geelong for both services and job access, and is experiencing considerable pressure for residential development.

Council seeks to:

- Accommodate future residential growth to areas within the existing town boundary and by encouraging infill development.

- Encourage additional commercial services locally.
- Protect the small town character, rural lifestyle, and natural environmental values that contribute to its appeal.

Smythesdale

Smythesdale is a rural township surrounded by state forest, with a rich gold mining past.

The township has been identified as the northern growth centre for the Golden Plains Shire, in a prime strategic location to service the wider catchment of rural and residential communities. This is due to its distinct country-living character within commuting distance of the regional centre of Ballarat. However, the town lacks structure and is fragmented by Crown land.

The population of Smythesdale is expected to increase due to its strong relationship with Ballarat and residential growth resulting from improved services and the introduction of reticulated sewerage to the town. The community is keen to ensure that growth is managed and sustainable.

The Woody Yaloak Creek precinct is a potential asset offering many opportunities for Smythesdale, including linking key recreational assets throughout the town.

Council seeks to:

- Develop Smythesdale into a self-sufficient settlement and service hub for the north of the Shire.
- Enhance the town's heritage character by encouraging development within the Smythesdale Heritage Precinct to respect the heritage context.

Inverleigh

Inverleigh is located approximately 30 kilometres west of Geelong and 10 kilometres south-west of Bannockburn, on the Hamilton Highway at the junction of the Leigh and Barwon Rivers.

Inverleigh has an array of natural features including areas of environmental significance, rural landscapes and riversides, as well as areas and sites of historical and cultural significance.

Inverleigh's proximity to Geelong, connection to the Geelong Ring Road and links to Melbourne have increased pressure for residential development. The population dynamics have changed and the township provides a home base for many residents who commute to work in Geelong and Melbourne. There is limited opportunity for new residential development within the established historic township area ('old town') due to flooding and limited capacity for effluent disposal.

Growth areas for Inverleigh have been identified outside of the floodplain to the west and the north of the town.

Council seeks to:

- Maintain the heritage characteristics and natural qualities that make the township attractive to residents and visitors.
- Encourage use and development that enhances the town centre's role as a community focus and meeting place.

Gheringhap

Gheringhap is situated approximately 15 kilometres north-west of Geelong and 6 kilometres south-east of Bannockburn. Gheringhap is close to major infrastructure including the Port of Geelong, Geelong Ring Road and the Midland and Hamilton Highways, which provide access between Geelong, Ballarat and the rest of Victoria. The town is well-positioned for business opportunities and future development of the Gheringhap Employment Area.

The Midland Highway and rail infrastructure intersect the settlement. Land south of the Midland Highway is relatively flat with much of the land previously cleared of vegetation. The flat open plains are a defining feature of Gheringhap and the wider Golden Plains south-east region.

The town is valued for its open grasslands, the Moorabool River and its rural character consisting of agricultural land interspersed by clusters of dwellings that coexist with the surrounding agricultural activities.

Council seeks to:

- Facilitate commercial and industrial development in the Gheringhap Employment Area as shown on the Gheringhap Structure Plan at Clause 11.03-6L Gheringhap.
- Locate and design commercial and industrial development to protect the amenity of the existing clusters of dwellings.
- Protect the Moorabool River environs, open grasslands and existing rural character of Gheringhap.

Small Towns

Golden Plains Shire consists of numerous small townships and settlements, including Teesdale, Haddon, Lethbridge, Linton, Meredith, Ross Creek and Scarsdale. Town structure plans have been prepared for most settlements and establish a basis for future strategic planning decisions in each town.

Settlement planning for the Shire's small towns will:

- Contain growth within existing settlement boundaries.
- Limit the rezoning of land to form new residential land.
- Facilitate infill development as shown on each township map at Clause 02.04.

02.03-2

09/07/2020
C90gpla

Environmental and landscape values

Biodiversity

The municipality is home to a wealth of flora and fauna, including rare and threatened species and communities, major waterways and freshwater wetlands.

Many of the municipality's significant natural environments are protected by international, national and state agreements and legislation.

Remnant native vegetation across the municipality is estimated to be approximately 25 per cent of that which existed prior to European settlement. However, the quality of much of these remnants is degraded. While remnant native vegetation is contained on private land, some of the Shire's most significant native vegetation occurs on roadsides.

The effects of climate change are having a significant impact on the natural environment, placing already stressed native flora and fauna assets at higher risk. The municipality is at risk of climate change with projected increased temperatures and reduced precipitation affecting natural systems, with flow on effects to the community and economy.

The quality and quantity of native vegetation, flora and fauna across the municipality is threatened by development, land use change and poor land management practices. There is a need to protect and enhance the natural environment to protect ecological processes while providing for continued land use change.

The protection and enhancement of waterways and wetlands is essential to ensure environmental values are secure and that the social and economic benefits of healthy rivers and streams are maintained.

Biodiversity will be supported by:

- Protecting significant habitats and remnant vegetation from the encroachment of development.
- Balancing native vegetation conservation with development pressures, land use change and protection of people from bushfire.

02.03-309/07/2020
C90gpla**Environmental risks and amenity****Bushfire**

Bushfire is a significant issue across the municipality affecting built communities and natural systems. Development or rezoning of land for residential purposes can have an adverse effect on the natural environment.

Although the protection of human life is the primary consideration, vegetation conservation is a lower, but still important, priority in bushfire prone areas.

Bushfire risk will be mitigated by:

- Avoiding development in bushfire prone areas.
- Avoiding the rezoning of land that allows for settlement in areas of high bushfire risk, particularly where natural assets will be compromised.
- Minimising the impact of bushfire protection measures on vegetation with high environmental value.

Floodplain management

The catchments of the various rivers and streams within Golden Plains Shire include areas of flood prone land where flooding has historically caused substantial damage to the natural and built environment. The town of Inverleigh is most affected by flooding due to the confluence of the Leigh and Barwon Rivers. The Woody Yaloak River is another key floodplain affecting the north of the Shire. Natural flooding, long term productivity of flood prone land, river and wetland health are all closely linked. Inappropriate development on the floodplain can lead to the deterioration of environmental values and reduced agricultural production.

The impact of floods is increasing due to land use and vegetation changes. In particular, urban expansion, raised earthworks and the clearing of land for rural and urban development have all contributed to the increase in the instances of flooding.

Council seeks to mitigate flood risk by:

- Discouraging the intensification of land use and development in floodplains.
- Ensuring the future use and development of land prone to flooding minimises the consequences of inundation on life and property.
- Protecting floodways for their role in conveying floodwater.

Salinity

Golden Plains Shire includes areas that have experienced salinisation of soil and water resources. The resultant impacts on biodiversity, agriculture and water resources can have significant negative environmental, social and economic impacts.

It is important that new development and land use change protects naturally saline waterways and wetlands and undertakes appropriate risk management strategies to mitigate damage from salinity on the natural environment, built structures and infrastructure.

Council seeks to:

- Protect soil and water resources from the risk of increased salinity.
- Manage salinity impacts derived from urban and rural residential development or re-zoning.

Natural resource management

Agriculture

Agricultural industries continue to be the major economic sector comprising more than 25 per cent of the employment in the Shire. Agricultural industries have been under economic pressure in recent years, in common with state-wide trends. There has been a trend for farm size to increase to counteract those economic pressures. This has generally occurred in locations away from areas of population growth.

The opportunities for agricultural diversity are limited by the Shire's climate, the availability of water and, in the northern portion of the Shire, fragmentation of land due to rural residential development.

There has been a growth of intensive agricultural activities within the Shire, particularly in the wine and specialist livestock industries. Other significant farm types are sheep and fat lambs for meat production, egg production, poultry, pastures, grasses and horticulture.

Forestry and timber production are increasingly significant local industries, given the climate, topography and the proximity to the Port of Geelong. Production at this stage comes mainly from pine plantations, but there is a growing demand for land for hardwood plantations.

House lot excisions can be detrimental to the efficient operation of farming activities and can result in isolated residential development without adequate access to social and physical services. They can also reduce the capacity of an area to undertake agricultural production as conflicts can arise between residential and farming land uses.

Council aims to support sustainable agriculture in the Shire by:

- Protecting the role of agricultural land as an economically valuable resource.
- Facilitating more intensive and diversified use of rural land for higher value products, including timber and agroforestry.
- Maintaining farm sizes.
- Minimising the potential for conflict between sensitive uses and agricultural practices.
- Discouraging dwellings and house lot excisions on rural properties.
- Directing timber plantations to land that is already cleared and is used for grazing or cropping.

Animal industries

Many intensive animal production uses are in Golden Plains Shire and they represent an important local industry, with the potential for growth. The issue for the Shire will be how to accommodate growth in this industry while protecting other important values. The proper siting and design of this form of use and development is needed to ensure residential amenity and environmental quality is protected.

The Shire features a dedicated Food Precinct where significant infrastructure has been provided to service intensive animal industries.

Council seeks to:

- Support the development of intensive animal industries.
- Locate intensive animal production uses within the Food Precinct.
- Encourage quality design of intensive animal production developments so that they do not cause any unreasonable amenity impacts on surrounding residential land uses.
- Ensure that the use and development of land for intensive animal production does not detrimentally impact on the environment and minimises the downstream impacts on the water catchment.

Catchment planning and management

With limited annual rainfall and extensive demand for water for both urban and rural use, many of the waterways in the municipality are in poor condition and action needs to be taken to improve the condition of rivers and streams.

Council aims to protect its catchment water quantity and quality by:

- Adopting an integrated catchment management approach that includes integrated water management techniques, such as stormwater re-use.
- Managing use and development in the Moorabool River and Stony Creek Water Supply Catchment Areas.

02.03-5

09/07/2020
C90gpla

Built environment and heritage

Heritage

Throughout Golden Plains Shire are buildings, streetscapes, sites and precincts that represent a significant asset and resource for the Western District of Victoria. The Shire's history is also evident in the layout and settlement pattern of 19th century towns, rural properties and historic infrastructure related to agriculture and gold mining areas.

Heritage is also found in the natural environment where avenues of honour, streets and reserves were planted to beautify towns and to improve their practical amenity. These areas are important for the Shire's residents and tourists.

Recognition and protection of heritage places and areas is a crucial component of planning in Golden Plains Shire. Good conservation practices will ensure the retention and viable re-use of Golden Plains Shire's significant and contributory heritage places and areas.

Council seeks to develop the Shire's character and sense of place by:

- Protecting, maintaining and enhancing heritage areas and features in private and public ownership.

02.03-6

09/07/2020
C90gpla

Housing

Residential development

Over time the Golden Plains Shire's towns will become more urbanised. There is substantial supply of residential land in all urban centres and towns in the Shire. Future residential use and development needs to be considered in a regional context, taking into account settlement strategies for Ballarat and Geelong.

Limited amounts of medium density housing are currently provided in the Golden Plains Shire. With changing housing needs there is a necessity to promote a wider range of housing types and set clear direction for the form and design of this development.

Many townships and community areas contain land zoned for low density residential use, with lot sizes usually ranging from 1 to 4 hectares. These are often located on the periphery of urban type residential areas. Subdivision provisions under the zone allow for these areas to be subdivided into lot sizes down to 0.4 hectare in line with the Domestic Waste Water Management Plan, a plan that seeks to find affordable and appropriate solutions to manage domestic wastewater.

The established character of low density residential areas vary, but are generally derived from the expansive open areas surrounding dwellings and outbuildings. The presence of large old trees with extending canopies is a strong feature of low density residential areas. Buildings are generally set back from road frontages and property boundaries, with wide spacing between houses set within established landscaping, separated by rural type fencing. Drainage is managed with open spoon drains, creating a distinct difference in appearance to the typical kerb and channel drainage infrastructure in suburban sewer residential areas. Road reserves are wide and open.

Council will:

- Support a range of housing styles and types within urban areas to cater for changing household needs.
- Encourage the consolidation of sites and intensification of development in existing towns where it avoids detrimentally altering the character or quality of these areas.
- Discourage subdivision of land in the Low Density Residential Zone that does not maintain or complement the established character.
- Discourage subdivision that does not meet the requirements of the Domestic Wastewater Management Plan.

Rural residential development

Over the past two decades the Shire has continued to experience demand for rural residential development. The north-west area of the Shire contains Rural Activity and Farming zoning that is interspersed with large areas of Rural Living zoning. There is a substantial over supply of land zoned Rural Living in the north of the Shire.

To sustainably manage rural residential development, Council will:

- Direct infill rural residential development to the Rural Living Zone in the north-west area of the Shire.
- Limit further rezoning of land to Rural Living Zone.

02.03-7

09/07/2020
C90gpla

Economic development

The retail sectors of the Shire’s urban centres have strong relationships with surrounding agricultural communities. Bannockburn is a regional shopping centre with a significant catchment. Other towns such as Inverleigh, Linton, Meredith and Smythesdale perform important local shopping and business roles.

A significant proportion of the Golden Plains community’s retail expenditure occurs outside of the Shire to major regional centres of Ballarat, Colac, Geelong and Melbourne. In the longer-term, additional floor space will be required for retail use and development in Bannockburn.

In promoting economic development, Council will:

- Support the efficient use of commercially zoned land.
- Consolidate commercial use and development to reinforce the viability and vitality of commercial and retail centres.
- Direct commercial and retail services to Bannockburn and other district commercial and retail centres, as identified in Table 1.

Table 1: Commercial and Retail Hierarchy Framework

Status	Township	Description
Sub-regional commercial and retail centre	Bannockburn	Higher order and speciality commercial and retail development to service the south-east portion of the Shire.
District commercial and retail centres	Inverleigh Linton Meredith Rokewood	Commercial and retail needs to service the surrounding area.

Status	Township	Description
	Smythesdale	
Town commercial and retail centres	Corindhap Dereel Haddon Lethbridge Napoleons Ross Creek Scarsdale Teesdale Other towns	Commercial and retail needs to service immediate residents.

Industry

Golden Plains Shire has a moderate manufacturing base, with employment in the manufacturing industry representing approximately 14.7 per cent of jobs in the Shire.

A number of industrial sites in the north of the Shire established to provide land for industrial use and development remain vacant. This reveals that a significant proportion of small-scale industrial uses are located within town areas largely due to historic reasons and operator preference. The remaining industrial zoned land is within inappropriate or non-preferred areas or may lack necessary infrastructure. There is also competition for industrial land provided by the larger urban areas of Geelong, Ballarat and the Melbourne Metropolitan area.

The completion of the Geelong Ring Road has increased pressure for industrial land, particularly in the south-eastern area of the Shire.

Council supports:

- Industrial development in areas that are strategically sound or identified for industrial development.

Tourism

Tourism in Golden Plains Shire is a relatively small industry sector with significant capacity to grow. Tourism attractions include wineries and cellar doors, with the majority located around the Moorabool Valley Wine Region; cafes and restaurants; gourmet food and produce; farmers' markets, including the Golden Plains Farmers' Market, events and festivals such as the Golden Plains and Meredith music festivals; heritage sites and equestrian facilities.

There is a lack of tourism accommodation in the Shire, with opportunities to increase accommodation offerings across the region, particularly around the Moorabool Valley.

Council aims to support the development of the tourism industry by:

- Encouraging the development of tourism accommodation.

02.03-9

09/07/2020
C90gpla

Infrastructure

Development infrastructure

All the towns in the Shire have reticulated water supplies provided either by Central Highlands Water or Barwon Water. Central Highlands Water, which has its involvement in the northern part of the Shire, believes it can service most of the anticipated growth within its area. The exception is the higher land south-east of Scarsdale, extending to the area south of Ross Creek. Central

GOLDEN PLAINS PLANNING SCHEME

Highlands Water believes that the existing supply systems in that area, with minor augmentation works, are adequate to cater for the existing populations and anticipated growth in the immediate future.

The extent of sewerage systems in the Shire is limited to Woodlands Estate (near Enfield), Bannockburn and Smythesdale. Central Highlands Water will assess the need for sewerage in Scarsdale and Linton when development and growth has reached a stage where it is warranted.

Council aims to support the community's access to infrastructure by:

- Directing development to areas with access to water and sewerage infrastructure.
- Facilitating water and sewerage infrastructure works in unsewered townships.
- Improving service delivery to urban centre townships, including sewerage infrastructure and treated water supply where it is lacking.