



Municipal Planning Strategy

Virtual Community Workshop Series Engagement Report

Nillumbik Shire Council

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→ The Power of Commitment





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Executive summary

Introduction

Four online workshops were hosted in September and October 2021 to inform Nillumbik Shire Council's (Council) Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS). The MPS, due to be updated, provides an overview of important local planning issues and sets out the vision and strategic directions for future land use and development for the municipality.

The workshops hosted in autumn of this year sought to ensure the themes selected for the new MPS consider community views and sentiments, as they will set the vision for land use and planning in Nillumbik for the next 10-20 years. In addition to the virtual workshops, Council also opened an online survey on Participate Nillumbik, accepted written submissions via post and e-mail, and presented and conducted workshops with Advisory Committees and internal teams. The feedback gathered in the virtual workshops is one of several valuable components in understanding community views and therefore doesn't reflect all perspectives.

Many of the insights presented in this report are also outside the scope of matters the MPS can consider and implement. For example, this report makes clear there is work Council can invest in engaging and representing First Nations People. The Victorian Government has a long-standing commitment to closing the gap and working in partnership with the Aboriginal community¹, but the MPS has limited opportunities to do so.

However, the feedback captured and presented in this report can inform Council in the preparation of other strategies that have clear linkages to some of the matters raised, such as the Health and Wellbeing Plan.

Methodology

Four virtual community consultation sessions were held in September and October 2021 and welcomed 50 participants who shared feedback on a total of eleven themes across the four workshops. The first session explored community views on *Activity centres*, *Transport*, and *Housing*. Participants in the second workshop discussed the *Built environment*, *Heritage, arts and culture*, and *Infrastructure*. The third workshop explored the *Natural environment*, *Open space* and *Climate change*, while participants in the last session discussed *Economic development* and the *Green Wedge*.

Key community sentiments

- **Conservation and the protection of the natural environment:** Participants were overwhelmingly strong advocates for the preservation of the natural environment. The local flora and fauna, particularly indigenous, was found to be invaluable for a range of reasons: biodiversity itself, its contribution to the character of local townships and rural areas, and the multitude of health and wellbeing benefits it offers residents and visitors. Much more needed to be done, participants agreed, to protect land from being cleared, infrastructure destroying natural environments, and to mitigate climate change impacts threatening Nillumbik.
- **Connectivity and access:** The importance of being able to access places, and do so safely, was often referred to in relation to social activity, highlighting the necessary upgrade and investment in a network of trails and roads that enable people to access destinations and services, and have places in the activity centres that enable them to connect socially.
- **Preservation of local heritage and culture:** It was felt the whole of Nillumbik Shire is of significance – not just individual sites – and that original parts of townships, buildings from the early 1900s, the 50s and 70s, including the mudbrick houses, were all important to retain along with the surrounding vegetation.
- **Living more sustainably:** The multitude of suggestions that were brought up for how Council, communities and individuals could live more sustainable lives that are less detrimental for the natural environment was a testament for the acute awareness of climate change, its consequences, and direct threats it poses to the community.
- **Traditional Owners:** Across the workshops, the perceived lack of communication and collaboration between Council, the community and the Wurrundjeri-Woi People of Nillumbik was discussed.

¹ The overarching policy framework is the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023 (VAAF). It reflects Victoria's bipartisan commitment to achieving long-term generational change to close the gap in education, health and wellbeing, economic and justice outcomes. The VAAF provides specific indicators, targets and measures under six strategic action areas: maternal health and early childhood health and development; education and training; economic participation; health, housing and wellbeing; safe families and communities and equitable justice outcomes; and engaged people and confident communities. The Aboriginal Heritage Act 2008 - acts primarily to provide for the protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria.

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1. Background – Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS)

Why do planning schemes now have an MPS?

Amendment VC148, gazetted on 31 July 2018, introduced a new structure to the Victorian Planning Provisions (VPP) within all Victorian Planning Schemes including Nillumbik. This included introduction of a new Planning Policy Framework (PPF) and the introduction of the Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) (to replace the Municipal Strategic Statement). The intent of these reforms by the State government was to:

- Strengthen planning policy
- Better align and integrate state and local planning policy
- Make policy easier to navigate and use
- Ensure that policy is consistent and concise
- Simplify the review and update of policy

Amendment C135 has replaced the Local Planning Policy Framework of the Nillumbik Planning Scheme with a new Municipal Planning Strategy at Clause 02, local policies within the Planning Policy Framework at Clauses 11-19 and a selected number of local schedules to overlays and operational provisions consistent with changes to the Victoria Planning Provisions introduced by Amendments VC148.

The Minister is undertaking a policy neutral amendment of the Nillumbik Planning Scheme to translate the current LPP and the MSS into the new format. The MPS that will sit in the scheme and currently has the same content as the current MSS. Since the newly formatted Planning Schemes were introduced in 2000, some amendments have been made but a comprehensive review has not yet been undertaken. For Nillumbik Shire Council (Council), preparation of an updated MPS represents the best opportunity to capture the community's views, and to set the vision for the Nillumbik Planning Scheme and future local planning policy.

What is the MPS?

The MPS is a succinct expression of the overarching strategic policy directions of a municipality. It provides for the planning scheme's policy foundation, based on the municipality's location and regional context, history, assets, strengths, key attributes and influences. The MPS supports but does not form part of the PPF. The PPF and MPS work together to form the strategic basis of a planning scheme.

What does the MPS do?

The MPS provides an overview of important local planning issues and sets out the vision and strategic directions for future land use and development for the municipality. It provides:

- a link to the Council corporate plan and the planning framework
- the strategic basis for the local content of the planning scheme, such as local policies and the choice of zones and overlays; and
- the strategic basis for decision making by the responsible authority

What does the MPS look like?

The form and content of the MPS is set out in the Ministerial Direction - *The Form and Content of Planning Schemes*.

- The MPS is inserted at Clause 2 of all planning schemes
- There are specific requirements and format that the MPS must follow. The MPS must succinctly explain the context for a municipality and provide the overarching strategic directions for the major land use and development matters that affect it

- The content of the MPS should be easily read, expressed in a logical sequence and grouped by related land use and development themes. The preferred approach is to follow the PPF themes
- To ensure the MPS focuses on priorities and provides clear and direct messages, a limit of 5000 words applies (excluding plans/maps). Therefore, use of maps/plans is considered an optimal way where appropriate to present information in the MPS. The structure includes:
 - Context
 - Vision
 - Strategic directions
 - Strategic framework plans

Context to other Council Plans and Strategies

As noted above the *Our People, Our Place, Our Future* (OPOPOF) community engagement program and *Climate Action Plan* (CAP) survey have informed preparation of the Draft Council Plan, Draft Health and Wellbeing Plan Draft Climate Action Plan and Draft Community Vision which will be subject to their own consultation programs in the second half of 2021. The preparation of the MPS will have regard to the key objectives of these strategies/plans.

The diagram below provides an overview of the context of the MPS to other Council Plans and Strategies.

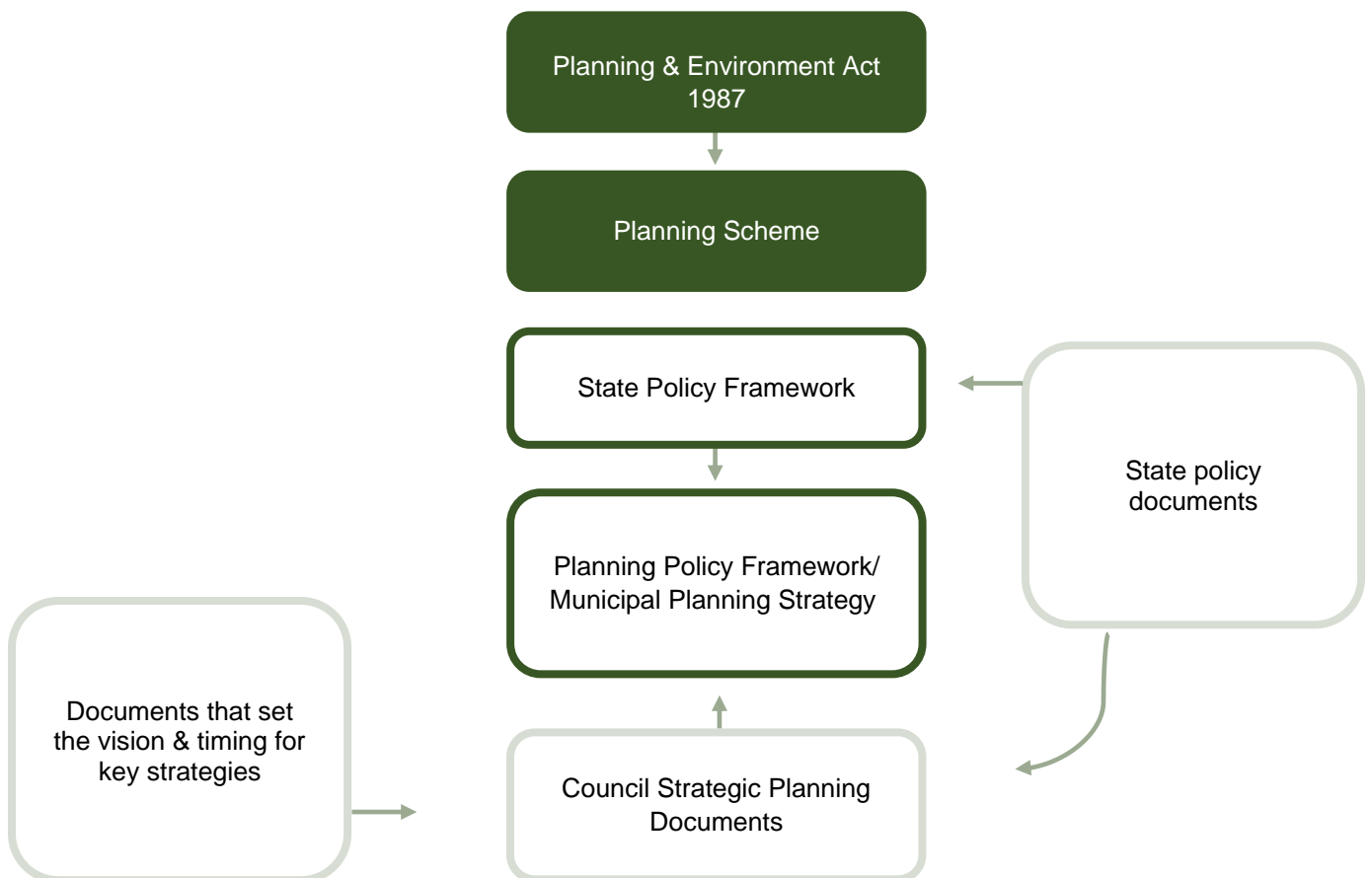


Figure 1 Council Plans and Strategies.

2. Purpose of Engagement

The MPS needs to be updated to reflect a modern vision for Nillumbik. The preparation of the updated strategy provides an opportunity to consult community members to capture their views and, where relevant and appropriate, set the vision for the Nillumbik Planning Scheme and future local planning policy.

Four workshops were hosted with the aim to capture feedback on the current MPS and its themes. Discussions explored whether these themes may still be relevant, of importance, or out-of-date. Further, the aim was to identify whether certain themes that do not feature in the current MPS should be added to the updated strategy.

The key sentiments, matters, and issues captured in the workshops are presented in this report. These findings will inform the draft MPS, which is expected to be put to community for further consultation in early 2022.

2.1 Workshop structure and attendance

Four online workshops were held in September and October 2021 to consult the Nillumbik Shire community on the direction and contents of the new Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS). The aim of the workshops was to create confidence that the themes chosen reflect the desires of the community and, importantly, identify any gaps in the MPS.

Participants

The workshops were promoted by Council on Participate Nillumbik, inviting stakeholders such as residents, property owners and tenants, local business owners and managers, community groups, sporting organisations, relevant government authorities, societies, and more.

To enable meaningful discussion, each session was limited to 25 participants, and a total of 88 signed up to the four workshops. The four 90-minute workshops were attended by a total of 50 participants. A minimum of three Council officers were present at each workshop. GHD was also represented by a team of three (two facilitators and one tech support). The full details of the workshop date, themes, and attendance are presented in the table below.

Table 1 Workshop details

Time and date of workshop	Themes	Number of participants	Number of Council Officers and Councillors
20 September 2021 7pm	Activity centres Transport Housing	12	4 Officers 3 Councillors
22 September 2021 7pm	Built environment Heritage, arts and culture Infrastructure	11	4 Officers 2 Councillors
30 September 2021 7pm	Natural environment Open space Climate Change	14	3 Officers 2 Councillors
2 October 2021 3pm	Economic Development Green Wedge	13	3 Officers 3 Councillors

Location

The sessions took place on the online platform Microsoft Teams. Engagement for the MPS had initially set out to host three in-person workshops (at the Eltham Major Activity Centre, Diamond Creek Major Activity Centre, and in Hurstbridge) and one virtual session. However, restrictions on group gatherings in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic prevented in-person engagement.

Format

The themes discussed in each workshop were chosen by Council to reflect the objectives of the MPS and to complement questions asked in the online survey. These were communicated with workshop participants ahead of the session.

The workshops commenced by providing context for the MPS and outlining the purpose of the session. Participants then automatically joined a Breakout Room, splitting the large group of participants into two. One moderator (from GHD) and at least one Council officer were present in each room.

Each theme was explored for approximately 15 minutes, during which the moderator took notes of the feedback shared and asked guiding questions to extract insights. Following this, participants returned to the main workshop room, where a summary was provided and the groups reshuffled, before participants returned into another Breakout Room to discuss the following theme. This was repeated until all set themes had been discussed.

Once returned to the main workshop room, participants were invited to share final comments, in particular any thoughts related to preserving Indigenous heritage and culture. Council and GHD then provided an overview of further opportunities for engagement, next steps in the MPS timeline, and closed the session.

3. Key sentiments

3.1 Activity centres

Overview

To gather community sentiment on Nillumbik's activity centres, workshop participants were asked whether the MPS should focus services and events in the major activity centres, what opportunities there are for diversity of housing and commercial premises, and what issues they may see occurring in the development of major activity centres.

Participants were supportive of some decentralisation to smaller centres in the Shire, but appreciated existing activity centres and hoped they would be strengthened as social gathering places and creative hubs. There was also support for greater diversity and flexibility in housing, with some participants expressing it was currently restricted to a few particular types.

Connectivity

Providing opportunities for connection to the outdoors and the arts.

Participants discussed the purpose of the activity centres in the Shire and recognised them as meeting places for the community. However, one participant mentioned they would like to see activities held in outdoor places, rather than shopping centres, where events are traditionally held. This participant also noted that more places for 'activity and engagement rather than passive recreation' were needed.

Some participants discussed connectivity through art, saying the centres could be unique if they provided an outlet for locals to create and share their artworks, crafts, pottery, etc. The importance of the activity centres as meeting places was also underlined when one participant suggested a greater focus on hospitality businesses over retail, to create more places for people to come together.

Key sentiments:

- Moving away from the traditional focus of shopping centres, provide opportunities for outdoor community engagement (rather than just recreation)
- Outlets for creative residents (arts and crafts), making the centres unique
- Balance between hospitality versus retail – focus on people meeting, gathering, and specialised businesses accordingly

Access

Congestion and access challenges that result in deterrence of visitors and difficulty connecting.

Some workshop participants pointed out that traffic congestion when trying to access the major activity centres was a deterrent for visitors. One way of addressing this would be the decentralisation to smaller centres (for example, Panton Hill and Hurstbridge).

“The loss of mature vegetation will render Major Activity Centres less attractive.”

“Don’t forget the smaller centres.”

“This needs to be a bit more nuanced, e.g. “most” services and events in major activity centre.”

“[The activity centres could be] meeting places for community, outlets for creative people of Nillumbik, crafts, pottery, artwork. They could be unique in that respect”

“Mini public transport for getting up hills, etc.”

Key sentiments:

- Congestion deters people from visiting, and Main Road through the shopping centre and typography of Eltham was not easy for pedestrian access
- Consider some decentralisation to smaller centres, e.g. Panton Hill and Hurstbridge, which is the centre of the Shire geographically
- Concern Diamond Creek will have too much congestion when the dual rail line is completed

Housing diversity

Providing more flexibility.

It was acknowledged that housing location was restricted geographically, but some participants pointed out they would like the type of housing to become more diverse, offering, for example, options that aren't just 4-bedroom houses. Any buildings should also ensure they do not impede on the natural environment, maintain tree canopy and other existing vegetation, as the loss of vegetation was said to be a key issue occurring as a result of development in the activity centres.

The Yan Yean Road along the train line was suggested by a Councillor as a suitable corridor for housing developments, and it was noted consideration should be given to State Government developments. However, there were concerns among participants that developments rarely align with the local character or threaten local flora and fauna.

Key sentiments:

- Geographical restrictions
- Flexibility of housing in Diamond Creek for example, more variety, not just 4-bedroom houses
- Not at the expense of vegetation and tree canopy
- Consider housing along the train line and Yan Yean Road corridors (Councillor input)

Natural environment

Ensuring development doesn't threaten natural features.

Most participants acknowledged and appreciated the abundance of vegetation in the activity centres as a key characteristic that makes them unique and attractive to locals and visitors. As such, several participants said that the loss of vegetation would be one of the key issues resulting from development – it is crucial nature and wildlife are protected to both maintain the local character, as well as the health of the natural environment.

Participants noted that commercial activities should stay within the Urban Growth Boundaries, which would maintain the rural character of certain areas.

Key sentiments:

- Maintaining natural environments to preserve the character of the Shire
- Protecting flora and fauna to maintain healthy ecosystems
- Commercial activities should stay within the Urban Growth Boundaries

Gaps

Participants were asked if there were any gaps in the stated MPS objectives relating to activity centres. Suggestions included:

- Protection of the natural environment to maintain the appeal and character of the activity centres
- De-centralisation of existing activity centres
- Flexibility and diversity in housing

3.2 Transport

Overview

The transport theme was explored through a series of questions that probed whether the MPS should focus on improving public transport for enhanced accessibility, what would encourage participants to use public transport options more, and how land and public transport access could be better integrated in Nillumbik's activity centres.

Feedback highlighted that more was needed to address active transport infrastructure, enabling cyclists and pedestrians to access destinations safely.

Participants also said they wanted to plan for the future of electric vehicles and see alternate options such as mini buses and dial-up services.

Connectivity and access

Reducing reliance on cars by increasing alternative options and improving transport infrastructure.

Participants discussed the high reliance of cars to access destinations within the Shire. While one said it 'would be beneficial to change that mindset', it was pointed out that the poor network into townships, and the need for more community transport options for Nillumbik's ageing population (e.g., to connect isolated members of the community to major activity centres on market days) made that challenging. Lack of parking at train stations making it difficult to access destinations, buses going too fast, and insufficient bus and train stops and frequency of services particularly from rural areas were all cited as concerns. A participant said active transport should be specifically integrated into the statement to better connect people to public transport options.

"'Death road' – no ability to walk safely!"

"Residents have to drive – there is no choice, it would be beneficial to change that mindset."

"Don't dismiss private transport, particularly from the Green Wedge."

Key sentiments:

- Insufficient community transport for an ageing population
- Insufficient bus and train stops and frequency of services, and poor access to the stations leading to high reliance on cars
- Greater focus needed on cycling and walking infrastructure
- Private transport still likely to be preferable in rural areas

Safety

Safer roads, paths and tracks for all users and modes.

Safety was a recurring concern throughout this discussion, with most participants noting a lack of safe walking and cycling paths, as well as roads. With the 'pleasant environment' to walk in, many said they would walk more if the conditions were better.

Key sentiments:

- Safer roads, paths and connections are needed to encourage all types of transport
- Accessing destinations on foot or by bike should be encouraged and facilitated more

Integration

Ensuring upgrades don't clash with the township character.

Most participants were supportive of transport infrastructure upgrades and of increasing the network throughout the Shire to better connect those living rurally. However, participants said that high volume transport may threaten the character of local townships. Any development would need to be sensitive and limit, to some extent, the capacity of the roads.

Key sentiments:

- High volume transport poses threat to township character

Sustainable transport

Planning for the future.

Here, participants stressed that more was needed to plan for the future of transport. By installing charging stations, Council could promote electric vehicle options such as bikes, scooters and cars, one participant said. Carpooling schemes, mini public transport options to access hilltops, or dial-up buses alternate to major bus routes were suggested as more sustainable transport options. Some participants said if students could walk to school, traffic congestion would also be reduced.

Key sentiments:

- Travelling sustainably
- Modes that meet the travel and transport needs of the local demographic

Gaps

Participants were asked if there were any gaps in the stated MPS objectives relating to transport. Suggestions included:

- Electric vehicle infrastructure to plan for the future
- Greater focus on active transport
- Upgraded transport infrastructure and transport modes that suit the needs of the demographic



3.3 Housing

Overview

In this discussion, participants were asked whether they support the current MPS position on providing diversity of housing choice, how the unique environment and character of Nillumbik can be maintained, and what opportunities, or risks, they foresee as a result of changing demographics and housing trends.

Participants particularly noted that there was a lack of understanding of housing needs and pointing out the incorrect assumption that large houses were suitable to all demographics across the Nillumbik.

Diversity of Housing

Greater variety in housing options.

Several participants argued that the range of options was insufficient, with too many 4-bedroom houses that don't cater for young adults, singles or older people, for example.

Assumptions, such as one-bedroom housing suiting older people, were noted to be incorrect as well. With many older people wanting to 'age in place', it was suggested retirement villages should be allowed in rural areas, and that smaller houses should exist in town centres.

One participant pointed to medium-density housing with lifts, and another said they would like to see fewer restrictions on 'granny flats'. Overall, participants said the culture around housing needed to change, and that people should be educated on what was really needed, such as independent living arrangements for as long as possible.

Key sentiments:

- Changing the culture and expectations of housing needs and wants
- Adapting housing offer to changing demographics

Connectivity

Connecting communities and providing them with open spaces.

Some participants said open spaces should be retained for community to gather. Others picked up on the benefits of the proximity between schools and areas that house older people, by suggesting multi-generational activities be promoted to connect demographics.

Key sentiments:

- Connecting demographics for multi-generational activities

Identity and character

Preserving the character of the Shire and controlling development.

A key sentiment in the discussion was the preservation of the local character and ensuring future development doesn't significantly change its nature. As such, most participants said they wanted to limit development to keep the Shire 'unique'.

"We're at the mercy of developers."

"Not just four-bedroom housing."

"Follow up on permit conditions, big issue."

"More dense housing but with lifts."

"Have a 'soft edge' around activity centres. Variety in land sizes."

"Older people from rural areas want more open place. Ageing in place."

Several participants highlighted that maintaining tree canopy, and succession planting was pointed to by some, underlining the importance of vegetation and their significant contribution to sense of place (with a particular focus on indigenous vegetation). It was felt by some participants that developers 'win', resulting in inappropriate development that doesn't suit the neighbourhood character.

Key sentiments:

- Limiting development and overcrowding to keep the Shire and its townships unique
- Maintaining tree canopy, which contributes to the local character

Natural environment

Ensuring there is space for wildlife, maintaining mature trees and spaces for community.

Many participants stressed the need to limit development in order to maintain open spaces that are largely untouched to allow biodiversity to thrive. Some expressed frustration with previous schemes and a 'culture of agreeing' before doing something different, indicating insufficient efforts were currently being dedicated to looking after the natural environment.

Key sentiments:

- Retaining open spaces for plants and wildlife
- Protecting the environment from development

Safety

Planning for bushfire risk.

Particularly in regard to bushfires, safety of the community played a key role in ensuring the unique character is maintained, as participants noted that they pose a threat to the townships and rural areas. Sustainable design needed to consider such risks and better education could assist in keeping the community safe.

Key sentiments:

- Bushfire threat to safety of community
- Sustainable design and community education to mitigate risk

Gaps

Participants were asked if there were any gaps in the stated MPS objectives relating to housing. Suggestions included:

- Greater focus on the protection of the natural environment in housing development to maintain the local character
- Bushfire and other climate change related threats included in design considerations
- Shifting understanding of housing needs for the population of Nillumbik



3.4 Built environment

Overview

On this theme, participants discussed how issues of accessibility and inclusion can be better addressed through the built environment, whether they agree that outcomes should be promoted which detail the historical and individual characteristics of each area, and considerations for Nillumbik's built environment to minimise environmental risks and protect native flora and fauna.

The majority of participants were deeply concerned about the loss of vegetation, and the subsequent degradation of the local character. Urban design that was sustainable and sensitive to the surrounding environment was therefore of key importance.

Identity and character

Future developments must maintain the local character.

Some participants said it was important to retain buildings from the distinct areas of development (from the late 1800s to the early 1900s, as well as the 1950s and 1970s) for future generations, particularly since there are few left. For new developments, one person felt the definition of "neighbourhood character" was too open to interpretation.

The conservation of natural features was emphasized here, too, as it was widely acknowledged to play a key role in the character of Nillumbik. As such, one participant pointed to mature eucalypts and birdsong, which give Nillumbik the atmosphere many people moved to the Shire for: "it's the very reason many live in Eltham".

Key sentiments:

- Crucial to maintain indigenous vegetation and old buildings, as well as new ones that complement them and contribute to the local character
- Consider footprint on the land and regulation to minimise destruction.

Integration

Sustainable and inclusive design.

Similar to infrastructure upgrades and other developments in Nillumbik, participants said design should be sensitive and match the local character of the area, as well as consider its impact on the natural environment. Design and nature shouldn't be treated as separate, one participant said, but rather be combined to consider how design can be integrated into natural systems.

Some participants said Council should 'promote ongoing innovative sustainable design' and use renewable materials in construction. Further, it was noted that design should reach beyond the physical and make people 'feel welcome and embraced' in the local environment.

Key sentiments:

- Promote and demonstrate exemplary sustainable design
- Consult with community more frequently on proposed built forms
- Way finding signs into commercial office buildings in activity centres

"It's crucial to protect indigenous vegetation – it's the very reason many live in Eltham. Maintaining tree canopy is important to maintain the character of local areas."

"Neighbourhood character" definition is too narrow. May not help resolve disputes"

"Think about what surrounds buildings and how to integrate with natural systems."

"Feel we're fighting not to become another suburb of the Melbourne mass."

Conservation

Protection of the natural environment.

Throughout the discussion on this theme, the need to respect the integrity of the natural environment was emphasized by the majority of participants. The loss of trees, shrubs and other vegetation was pointed to as a consequence of subdivision from consolidation of housing – while it was acknowledged consolidation was necessary, the loss of vegetation and garden space was of great concern for most participants.

Key sentiments:

- Maintain indigenous vegetation to preserve quality of life and sense of place
- Abundance of vegetation is the very reason many people live in Eltham

Gaps

Participants were asked if there were any gaps in the stated MPS objectives relating to the built environment.

Suggestions included:

- Greater considerations for innovative, sustainable, biodiverse urban design
- Design to consider social integration and inclusion
- Crucial to maintain the unique character of the area



3.5 Heritage, arts and culture

Overview

In the discussion around heritage, arts and culture, participants were asked whether they agree that the MPS should ensure that new uses and development should not impede on or detract from sites and features of cultural heritage and archaeological significance, particularly Aboriginal heritage.

The questions also examined how the shared heritage, history and artistic culture could be better promoted to strengthen the community, and in what ways it can be ensured all members of the community have access to and are able to participate in recreational and cultural activities.

The key sentiment that came out of this discussion was the need for a complete framework shift regarding the concept of culture itself: the current lens through which it is viewed does not consider Aboriginal heritage, and Council and communities must work closely with Traditional Owners to ensure this is understood and shared appropriately.

“The tendency to ignore what really matters needs to be addressed.”

“The whole area is of significance.”

“(At Diamond Creek) It feels like it’s lost its identity and is being replaced by the new area east of the railway line.”

Framework shift – Traditional Owners

Changing how we perceive heritage – understanding and sharing the living Aboriginal culture.

Some participants were very vocal about the ‘narrow idea of culture’ and that it was time to ‘move on from this’ as it was creating an uninhabitable place: working with Aboriginal People would help communities take better care of the land, value it, and treat it respectfully.

Council, one participant said, should have a thorough understanding and knowledge of biodiversity and natural systems in Nillumbik, as well as work closely with Traditional Owners. Giving them a voice, which several participants said currently did not seem to be the case, would enable Nillumbik to share the heritage of its living culture.

Key sentiments:

- Working collaboratively with Traditional Owners
- Culture has so far been ‘white’ history
- Council should be well-informed, understand Nillumbik, have strong knowledge of Aboriginal Peoples in the Shire, local biodiversity, and natural systems
- Necessary framework shift through which we address culture and inclusion in all processes

Promotion and inclusion

“Uniting the Shire under cultural matters”, such as its Aboriginal heritage, and the natural environment, should include events and programs for children and adults, and challenge problematic attitudes. One participant said they would like to lead the way with active, community-led approaches, while another said redefining this perspective would help create a ‘sustainable culture’.

Participants also said that more needed to be done to strengthen existing sites of importance by improving wayfinding and signage. This would provide an opportunity for education and share the significance of the place or building. Some participants also agreed that it was important to recognise all of Nillumbik as a significant area, rather than limit this to specific sites.

Key sentiments:

- Offering incoming residents and businesses information about the area's culture and history via rates notices etc
- Investing in historical research to strengthen community understanding and participation, similar to what was done for the war memorial
- Providing community groups with education material to share with participants
- Including a heritage trail in Eltham like the one in Hurstbridge

Gaps

Participants were asked if there were any gaps in the stated MPS objectives relating to heritage, arts, and culture. Suggestions included:

- Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners as part of Nillumbik's community – this has been completely omitted
- Collaboration between Council and the community and Traditional Owners
- Showcasing Aboriginal heritage, past and present
- Recognising the older part of Diamond Creek which includes its churches and police station
- Recognising the entirety of Nillumbik as a place of significance – not simply individual sites



3.6 Infrastructure

Overview

The theme of infrastructure explored key challenges to creating accessible and connected places in the Shire, particularly in relation to active and public transport options. Participants were also asked how infrastructure in rural or lower density areas could be improved while still maintaining their open space character and landscapes, before exploring how future infrastructure upgrades can meet mobility and accessibility issues of all members of the community.

Key feedback included the necessity to involve the relevant groups in the decision-making process, and that minimising impacts on the natural environment should remain a priority.

Access

Ensuring infrastructure upgrades and improvements are sensitive and have minimal environmental impact.

Most participants were supportive of retaining the rural character of certain areas in Nillumbik. One participant noted that improving access to lower density areas could be done in a sensitive manner by upgrading existing infrastructure, and another agreed that the characteristics of infrastructure could be examined to provide the best outcome for the community and the environment (e.g. the characteristics of sealed and unsealed roads). One participant said there should be more dialogue between Councils to improve movement between regional and urban areas. Another participant agreed, stating that the state of existing active transport infrastructure between townships also needed to be upgraded.

Key sentiments:

- More collaboration between Councils to improve movement between Shires
- Need for infrastructure upgrades (and possibly removing some, like the flag poles in Main Road Eltham)
- Focus on environmentally-friendly options – impact on the natural environment should always be considered
- Public transport is too infrequent, so it doesn't encourage more usage
- In rural areas initiatives to increase public transport have not been supported

Inclusion

Clear, meaningful conversations with the individuals and groups affected.

Several participants pointed out their reluctance to comment on how to improve accessibility, stating instead that this discussion had to take place with the groups and individuals affected by any constraints. Clear discussions and decision-making processes had to involve and empower those facing these issues.

Key sentiments:

- Issues and solutions should be discussed and workshopped with members of the community affected by mobility constraints and access issues – clear communication should occur with the relevant groups
- Lots of focus on sporting recreation infrastructure in recent years but not in other areas

“Inclusively workshop with the right audience and the groups affected – ensure communication is happening and clear. This also applies to cultural significance – the Indigenous population should be involved in discussions and decision-making processes.”

“We need a dual network, electric vehicles will become prevalent, more electric scooters, needs to be network of trails people can commute on.”

“More people visiting the area and enjoying green wedge, so need more amenity to support that.”

Gaps

Participants were asked if there were any gaps in the stated MPS objectives relating to infrastructure. Suggestions included:

- Prioritising the natural environment when considering infrastructure projects



3.7 Natural environment

Overview

Participants discussed what Council should consider in supporting the protection of endangered species in the Shire, and how it can better address drainage and sewerage in urban growth areas to reduce impacts on stormwater quality and downstream areas. The guiding questions also explored how threatening processes could be addressed that lead to the loss and degradation of the natural and built environment, and any general gaps in the key objectives.

Virtually all participants were very vocal about the need to better protect the natural environment, minimise loss of natural habitats, and strengthen enforcement powers.

Conservation

Placing the conservation of biodiversity above all else, strengthening enforcement capacity, and minimising adverse impacts of development.

The majority of participants strongly supported measures and policies that enhance the protection of flora and fauna, stressing the focus on indigenous species and the conservation of all, rather than merely endangered species.

Some participants said that any development, for example road sealing programs, needed to look at the environmental impact, while others underlined that land management plans seemed to be inefficient in protecting the environment. Others expressed exasperation and said little was being done to prevent the loss of natural environments through land clearing.

Participants agreed that the integrity of the natural environment needed to be maintained, biodiversity looked after, and the intent of the Green Wedge and Conservation Shire prioritised.

Key sentiments:

- The conservation of all flora and fauna, not just endangered species
- Achieve net gain – increase quality and quantity and maintain the integrity of biodiversity
- Road programs and other infrastructure projects - consider and prioritise their environmental impact
- Strengthen Council's enforcement capacity to prevent further loss of environment and clearing of areas

Gaps

Participants were asked if there were any gaps in the stated MPS objectives relating to the natural environment. Suggestions included:

- Habitat links monitored and set out in the Planning Scheme, connection of small habitats for wildlife movement
- Importance of waterway corridors, and the position of Melbourne Water on waterway corridors
- Roadside Management Program – needs to maintain the integrity of the natural environment
- More focus on conservation of run-off from private dwellings, and monitoring of private dams and how that affects water flow

“Waterway corridors are extremely important.”

“Small areas of natural vegetation need to be connected to enable wildlife movement – this needs to be included in Planning Schemes.”

“People should be encouraged to plant local native trees.”

3.8 Open space

Overview

This theme explored opportunities participants can foresee in ensuring public open spaces enable safe, healthy and active lifestyles. It also asked whether participants would support the provision and linking of open spaces and trails across the Shire so it forms one network, how spaces can be created that are accessible to all members of the community, and whether participants can identify any gaps in the theme.

Responses largely expressed the value of open spaces for social connection and recreation, but many participants noted the importance of prioritising the natural environment and expressed concern over its loss and degradation.

Connectivity and recreation

Providing open spaces for the community to connect while minimising impacts on the natural environment.

The majority of participants strongly supported the provision and maintenance of open spaces in which the community can connect and socialise. Some noted that any infrastructure required should not be considered if it would harm the natural environment and ecosystems, and that a balance was needed between recreation needs and conservation. By restricting tourist activities to townships, one participant was supported by a few in saying this would further minimise adverse impacts on the environment.

There were also views expressed about how open spaces can be managed to cater for multi-generations, and a balance between the needs of cyclists and other users.

Key sentiments:

- Places to connect and gather outdoors, and live socially connected lives
- Open Space Strategy has not yet been implemented – this would benefit from updating
- Prioritising the health of the natural environment over recreational considerations
- Tourist activities should be restricted to townships so as not to destroy the amenity of the Green Wedge
- More “pocket parks” which are considered safer for the elderly
- Consider more water stations, bike repair stations and paths for horse riding

Conservation

Viewing the land through the lens of the heritage of Traditional Owners, preserving and protecting it.

The health of Nillumbik’s ecosystems was of utmost priority to most participants in the workshop. They stressed that maintaining a healthy natural environment was the very purpose of the Green Wedge. As such, Council should ensure certain areas remain protected from development and are retained as open spaces. While one participant mentioned that the MPS should be written from an environment, rather than human perspective, some others stated that Aboriginal Peoples’ perspectives should be included in the valuation of the land, as it would result in greater respect for it.

“The natural environment and indigenous habitats should still be prioritised – access needs to be balanced.”

“It should include the conservation and regeneration of native fauna – wording in the MPS should be from an environmental perspective, rather than always human.”

“The MPS needs an overarching statement about the land, the life on it, and the central role it plays to First Nations people – its value has to be respected and protected throughout the Shire.”

Key sentiments:

- Prioritising the protection of *indigenous* flora and fauna
- Conservation Shire – growth corridor concept, and the idea that the Green Wedge would provide recreational areas
- Pressure needs to be put on Council to ensure certain areas remain open spaces and protected from development
- Include the heritage of Indigenous Peoples in the protection of the land to value and respect it

Accessibility

Balancing access for the community with the health of the natural environment.

There was clear acknowledgement among workshop participants of Nillumbik's ageing demographic and consequent mobility needs. Feedback did largely support improving accessibility to destinations and spaces, but also highlighted that this should not dominate, or harm the environment. A balance is to be struck between inaccessible natural environments, and spaces for recreation and socialisation.

Key sentiments:

- Support for some all-abilities access, but not everything needs to be accessible to everyone all the time
- Natural environments should be prioritised over infrastructure

Gaps

Participants were asked if there were any gaps in the stated MPS objectives relating to open space. Suggestions included:

- Conservation and regeneration of *native* flora and fauna
- Reconsider and review an Open Space Strategy that is fit for this time
- Overarching statement on the land, the life on it, and the role they play to Aboriginal People



3.9 Climate change

Overview

To gather community feedback on climate change, participants were asked how Council could mitigate fire and climate-related risks (in addition to paying particular attention to fire issues in the design of subdivisions, the siting and design of buildings, and land use and management. Participants also discussed how Council's direct contribution to climate change could be reduced, and how Council can support the community to reduce their contributions to climate change, as well as to adapt to climate change risks and impacts. Lastly, participants were asked whether they could identify any gaps in the theme.

Feedback showed acute awareness of climate change impacts and risks, and participants pointed to the dangerous lack of knowledge on mitigation of these risks within the community.

"We need to protect tree canopies to reduce the impact of increasing temperatures."

"Even in activity centres, we need to ensure we're not developing all of the lot size."

Education

Ensuring Council and community are well-informed and prepared, and can confidently and actively respond to climate change issues.

Many participants stressed that residents of Nillumbik are insufficiently aware of or understand bushfire mitigation strategies, and that opportunities to learn these should be more widely available. To achieve this, a well-informed and well-educated Council team is needed, as was strongly expressed by some participants. An exchange in land management knowledge could also be achieved by breaking down cultural barriers and improving communication between communities, including Traditional Owners. Council support for landholders in burns (in the right season), with the help of Traditional Owner knowledge, was also advocated for by one participant.

Key sentiments:

- Lack of understanding around mitigation strategies for bushfire risk
- Well-informed and educated Council officers and councillors on climate change
- Knowledge sharing with Traditional Owners to improve land management practices
- Consider water infrastructure and pressures and flows to protect against fire danger

Sustainable transport and design

Sustainable housing design and modes of transport.

Electric vehicles, charging stations, and a connected network through the Shire was advocated for by some participants, noting that environmentally-friendly and sustainable options needed to be planned for now. One participant highlighted the urgent need to reduce consumption and waste in Nillumbik. Another pointed out there were hardly any solar panels used on commercial premises.

Key sentiments:

- Sustainable building design, e.g. solar panels, smaller buildings
- Requiring new sub-divisions to meet higher sustainability standards
- A network of electric vehicle charging stations
- A reduction in consumption and waste

Renewable energy

Reducing emissions and producing clean energy

Some participants pointed out that there was great focus on mitigating climate change risks, such as bushfires, but insufficient discussion and effort directed towards the production and use of clean energy. Council, some participants said, needed to be held accountable for its own emissions, as should new developments.

Key sentiments:

- Renewable energy to fight climate change, rather than mitigate its consequences
- Reduce Council owned asset emissions in excess of state targets
- More promotion and incentives for clean energy use

Conservation

Protecting and maintaining existing vegetation, tree canopy, and natural environments to minimise climate change impacts.

At the forefront of this discussion, the natural environment and the preservation of its health was the highest priority for all participants. They noted its significant contribution to the community and the Shire, and the importance of looking after the environment for the conservation of biodiversity.

Key sentiments:

- Protection of tree canopies to reduce the impact of increasing temperatures
- Great contribution to planting of native vegetation in private suburban areas

Development

Minimising development throughout the Shire.

Those participants who said development should be limited and appropriate, noted it would otherwise threaten precisely the reasons for which they valued living in Nillumbik, e.g. the character of the area, the dispersed nature of some places, and the abundance of green and open spaces.

Key sentiments:

- Limiting development across the Shire

Gaps

Participants were asked if there were any gaps in the stated MPS objectives relating to climate change. Suggestions included:

- Education of the community to respond to bushfire risk, understanding of global warming and risks
- Maintaining the current level of vegetation
- Sustainability of buildings
- Council needs to be more ambitious, do more, and finance this appropriately
- Greater focus on clean energy and role Council can play in contributing to the use of it



3.10 Economic development

Overview

This discussion focused on how the main local and new business opportunities can be maintained in the major activity centres and industrial area at Research, and whether participants agree that tourism and commercial activities should continue to be restricted to activity centres or purposes used in conjunction with agriculture, rural industry or wineries. Participants were asked whether they envisage any issues to arise as a consequence of retaining land for soil-based agricultural production and the protection and enhancement of agricultural land, before identifying any gaps in this theme.

The need for regenerative farming to become a key component of the local economy was strongly supported by many participants. Most also called for more communication and collaboration with Traditional Owners to develop the economy sustainable and tap into the opportunity the living culture has for Nillumbik.

“We can’t have farming on any scale if we don’t protect and value our existing agricultural land – but Council hasn’t been very supportive.”

Sustainability of local economy

Supporting small scale and/or remote businesses and working with Traditional Owners to revive a strong heritage.

Many participants said Council should support local businesses, for example by adapting to changing structures: some participants noted Council needed to recognise that many businesses were now home-based and no longer traditionally working out of activity centres. Many also agreed that all activity should prioritise the natural environment, noting that agricultural enterprises should only be allowed and supported if they were regenerative: the environmental sustainability of the Shire’s economy was seen by some as a key factor in ensuring its overall sustainability. As such, it is crucial ‘regenerative farming’ is clearly defined. Participants said they would like to see small-scale accommodation, arts & heritage, restaurants, and wineries in the region, as these would encourage local employment as well as respect the environment. One participant also commented that rural activity, such as vets on small properties, is an important economic driver in rural areas. Another said that longstanding farms in the Shire were part of the cultural heritage and that they needed to be maintained.

Collaboration with Aboriginal People in the Shire was also discussed, with some participants arguing it was necessary to address Aboriginal heritage and learn from Traditional Owners. This would enable Nillumbik to showcase its Aboriginal heritage to locals and visitors, as well as empower Aboriginal People.

Key sentiments:

- Support local businesses, adapt to new business formats
- Support businesses that are environmentally sustainable (e.g. regenerative farming)

Access

Creating better connectivity between key destinations.

Some said connecting destinations throughout Nillumbik was key, with one participant saying a better network of shared trails would provide an opportunity to access places and support businesses while reduce the high reliance on cars. Some participants discussed that any infrastructure would need to have minimal to no impact on the environment, and it was stated that the preservation of the natural spaces and the development of a trail network were not mutually exclusive.

Gaps

Participants were asked if there were any gaps in the stated MPS objectives relating to economic development. Suggestions included:

- Environmental sustainability of businesses as a determining factor for support and success
- Adjusting to and supporting the changing nature of businesses
- Working with Traditional Owners to create a more sustainable economy



3.11 Green Wedge

Overview

The guiding questions on the Green Wedge explored whether participants are supportive of the protection of agricultural land in Nillumbik, and how access to services and facilities can be ensured for community members in rural areas while retaining the rural character of these areas. Participants discussed how land use conflicts can be managed to ensure the community can use the land while preventing harm to local ecosystems, and any gaps they could identify in the theme.

At the forefront of this conversation was the virtually unanimous agreement that environmentally sustainable farming land should be retained. In order to achieve this, most participants said better understanding was required on land management, and that Council needed to share knowledge or promote collaboration between communities to share and workshop best-practice methods.

“Enhancing capability of land’ needs to be clearly defined by Council as it may support damaging processes – set clear and ambitious protocols to protect the natural environment and indigenous systems.”

“We need to focus on maintaining the integrity of the Green Wedge.”

Agricultural land

Retaining sustainable, regenerative agricultural land.

The majority of participants were strongly supportive of the retention of agricultural land, under the condition it meets sustainable, regenerative farming practice standards and has a minimal impact on the environment. As such, participants said Council needed to clearly define what “enhancement of the capability of the land” should entail, as well as set clear ambitious and protocols to protect the natural environment and indigenous systems.

Many participants also agreed that better communication was needed to ensure landowners and residents understand how to manage the land, with the idea that there are no conditions on the land referred to as ‘outdated’. A lack of understanding, one participant said, results in self-resourcing, and landowners that don’t advocate for the land. Further, some participants supported the idea of providing incentives for effective land management which preserves local biodiversity.

Key sentiments:

- The protection of regenerative agricultural land and enhancement of its capability, as well as enforcement of land management plans on future developments
- The protection of the natural environment above all else
- Local food production for Melbourne
- Delivery of information on land management
- Incentives for effective land use/management
- Mixed views in allowing some subdivision of large land holdings into still reasonable size lots (5+ acres)

Connectivity and collaboration

Better connectivity and improved collaboration between townships.

Some participants advocated for improved communication between townships to promote collaboration and increase connectivity. Most also said Council should share knowledge with landowners and residents, clearly communicating how to manage land, protect the environment and maintain the local character. This feedback was strongly echoed on the topic of climate change, as participants said more education was needed to understand climate change impacts, increasing awareness and improving preparedness.

Key sentiments:

- Better connections and collaboration between townships supported by Council
- Making more information available for landowners and farmers on caring for the land, managing climate change impacts, mitigating fire risk

Gaps

Participants were asked if there were any gaps in the stated MPS objectives relating to the Green Wedge.

Suggestions included:

- Knowledge sharing between Council, communities, groups to promote, encourage and help understand best-practice land use and management techniques
- More effective controls for feral animals (deer, foxes, kangaroos) and invasive vegetation to protect indigenous flora and fauna
- Lack of Biolinks, and a review of ESOs and SLOs



3.12 Other themes

Following the themed discussion in each workshop, participants were asked to share thoughts on any theme that had not been addressed at all and was therefore not represented in Council's key objectives.

"We are learning as a nation."

Virtually all comments shared underlined the importance of connecting with the Wurrundjeri-Woi people and creating an empowered community of Traditional Owners that is able to decide, in collaboration with the remainder of the Nillumbik community, the preferred strategic direction of the Shire.

Workshops and decision-making processes with Traditional Owners were, as outlined in this report, of significance across a broad range of issues, challenges and opportunities. Land use and management, conservation of flora and fauna, and the local heritage were some of the key areas participants said would greatly benefit from the involvement of the Aboriginal People from Nillumbik.

Importantly, participants shared this insight with humility: they had no right to comment on *how* this was to be done and were primarily advocating *that* communication had to take place.

Additional comments included the need to factor in the true cost of environmental loss of any development or strategic decision made. Participants also highlighted the role of physical activity and its importance to the community, advocating for activities near the hubs to keep with the environment and enable community activity.

4. Conclusion

The fifty members of the Nillumbik community that participated in the four online workshops shared invaluable insight into how Nillumbik is perceived, the issues and challenges it faces, and the opportunities they envisaged for the Shire.

Participants discussed the need to protect all species to be able to maintain thriving biodiversity, green open areas, and spaces for community to connect in nature.

They pointed to infrastructure projects that would significantly improve access and safety, and connect townships, strengthening individual and community connections and improving access to services.

A more sustainable lifestyle was explored at great length, with participants keen for Council to encourage and enable environmentally-friendly transport options, reduce emissions, and support regenerative farming practices.

The lack of collaboration with Traditional Owners became very apparent, with many participants stating that this needed to occur to a significantly greater extent. Participants said Traditional Owners needed to be involved in conversations around the environment and its protection and management, as well as the preservation and showcasing of the cultural heritage of the area.

Perhaps most importantly, the discussions highlighted the interconnectedness of all the themes: flora and fauna was not only important for biodiversity itself, but the immense contribution it makes to the identity and character of the Shire, the health, wellbeing, and social benefits it provides to people, and the role it plays in mitigating impacts of climate change.

In summary, participants pointed to a necessary framework shift: reconsidering the way culture is perceived and defined, as is the sustainability of farming. The prioritisation of the health of the natural environment, participants said, was the first step to creating a holistically sustainable future for Nillumbik. It should be noted that many of the issues, opportunities and gaps identified are not within the scope of the MPS, and cannot be considered and implemented by the Strategy. The insights gathered are important nonetheless and will contribute to Council in relevant work and in the preparation of strategies that have clear linkages to the matters discussed.



Attachment 1

MPS – Key objectives

Theme 1: Activity centres

Key Objective 1

The Eltham and Diamond Creek Major Activity Centres will continue to provide inclusive and accessible commercial activities, community services, recreational facilities and housing opportunities, as well as containing a substantial public transport hub.

Key Objective 2

The Major Activity Centres will continue to accommodate most of the Shire's growth and will have an increased role in providing for a diversity of housing and in particular, medium density housing (including mid-rise commercial development and apartments).

Key Objective 3

The Hurstbridge and Research Neighbourhood Activity Centres will continue to offer a blend of uses and the availability of public transport generally supports higher levels of business and other activities, resulting in lower car usage and enabling multipurpose trips.

Theme 2: Transport

Key Objective 1

Enhance the accessibility and vibrancy of local townships, neighbourhoods and activity centres through connectivity with a focus on improving active and public transport options.

Key Objective 2

Further development of pedestrian and cycle trails to link the key activity centres is a priority to encourage safe pedestrian access for residents.

Key Objective 3

Facilitate increased public transport usage to aid in issues such as increased greenhouse gas emissions and traffic congestion.

Key Objective 4

Incorporate greater links between land use planning and transport, especially in relation to activity centres and the public transport network.

Key Objective 5

Facilitate safe and efficient roads and road links within the municipality and to the wider region that cater for all users given that the majority of residents travel to employment outside the Shire.

Theme 3: Housing

Key Objective 1

Recognise that the Shire will experience a reduction in household size due to an ageing of the population. The trend of decreasing average household size provides the impetus to provide for some medium density housing as an alternative housing choice.

Key Objective 2

Direct housing growth and diversity to activity centres in which are accessible, close to infrastructure, public transport, commercial areas, public open space and other community facilities.

Key Objective 3

Ensure a considered approach to planning and development will retain and enhance Nillumbik's unique environment and neighbourhood character.

Theme 4: Built environment

Key Objective 1

Apply design principles which will create a built environment that strengthens the inclusiveness and accessibility of our neighbourhoods, activity centres, facilities and services, while respecting our natural environment.

Key Objective 2

Promote urban design outcomes in activity centres and townships that retain the historical and individual characteristics of each area while enhancing its attractiveness, distinctiveness, safety and accessibility.

Key Objective 3

Design places and development to maximise access for all users, including pedestrians and cyclists, and cater for the mobility needs of people of all abilities.

Key Objective 4

Protecting habitat links and minimising fire and flood risk and erosion are important considerations in siting buildings and works, particularly in rural areas.

Theme 5: Heritage, arts and culture

Key Objective 1

Protect and enhance places of heritage significance, including sites of Aboriginal heritage significance.

Key Objective 2

Ensure new use and development do not impede on or detract from sites and features of Aboriginal cultural heritage and archaeological significance.

Key Objective 3

The culture and heritage of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people is understood and recognised as a proud part of our shared identity.

Key Objective 4

Promote our shared heritage, history, arts and artistic culture to strengthen our community – Aspiration from OPOPOF engagement: "Residents enjoy a wide variety of recreational and cultural pursuits and have a strong sense of feeling part of their local community and townships."

Theme 6: Infrastructure

Key Objective 1

Enhance the accessibility and vibrancy of local townships, neighbourhoods and activity centres through connectivity with a focus on improving active and public transport options.

Key Objective 2

Design places and development to maximise access for all users, including pedestrians and cyclists, and cater for the mobility needs of people of all abilities.

Key Objective 3

Recognise the difficulties created through the dispersed nature of low-density residential areas in providing a full range of infrastructure services, and that rural areas have only limited physical infrastructure.

Key Objective 4

Facilitate efficient provision of infrastructure to areas designated for residential and low-density residential development.

Theme 7: Natural environment

Key Objective 1

Given the large number of threatened native species and *threatening processes occurring in the Shire*, Planning needs to protect and conserve biodiversity, provide habitats for native flora and fauna, and control pest plants and animals.

Key Objective 2

Consideration of environmental values and the facilitation of drainage and sewerage in urban growth areas is particularly important, given their proximity to the Plenty River. Use and development have the potential to affect stormwater quality and adversely affect downstream areas.

Key Objective 3

Discourage development, including vegetation removal that degrades stormwater quality and increases potential risk of soil erosion, expansion and landslip or other hazards.

Key Objective 4

Address threatening processes associated with the loss and degradation of the natural and built environment in order to maintain the landscape values in the Shire.

Theme 8: Open space

Key Objective 1

Ensure the planning, maintenance and enhancement of public open spaces enables and encourages safe, healthy and active lifestyles.

Key Objective 2

Ensure open space and recreational facilities are equitable and accessible to all community members.

Key Objective 3

Facilitate the provision of active and passive recreational facilities as an integral part of each township.

Key Objective 4

In rural areas the emphasis is towards developing key regional and district recreational areas, protecting native flora and fauna as well as developing a comprehensive regional based trail network.

Key Objective 5

Facilitate the provision and linking of open space and local recreational facilities to form a network across the Shire.

Theme 9: Climate change

Key Objective 1

Recognise that planning and preparedness for bushfire and other emergencies protects life, critical infrastructure, property and the environment.

Key Objective 2

Ensure emergency management information and capabilities are shared in the pursuit of preparedness, prevention, response and recovery.

Key Objective 3

Avoid intensifying bushfire risk to people and property through poorly located, designed or managed use or development.

Key Objective 4

Apply particular attention to fire issues in the design of subdivisions, the siting and design of buildings, and use and management of land in bushfire prone areas.

Key Objective 5

Reduce Council's direct contribution to climate change

Key Objective 6

Prepare for, respond and adapt to the risks and impacts of a changing climate on our community, environment, infrastructure and services.

Key Objective 7

Support our community to reduce their contributions to climate change and to adapt to climate change risks and impacts

Theme 10: Economic development

Key Objective 1

Focus on strengthening existing enterprises and facilitating new business initiatives that respect the Shire's environmental, social and economic development priorities.

Key Objective 2

Maintain the main employment locations, the Eltham and Diamond Creek Major Activity Centres, Hurstbridge Neighbourhood Activity Centre and the industrial land at Research, to continue to provide opportunities for local employment.

Key Objective 3

Protect industrial precincts from non-industrial use and development unless otherwise identified.

Key Objective 4

Agriculture is an important area of economic development:

- Promote land use in rural areas in accordance with the capability and productive potential of the land
- Retain existing agricultural land for soil based agricultural production

- Promote sustainable agricultural activities and land management practices that minimise adverse impacts on the primary production and environmental values of surrounding land and the catchment
- Protect and enhance agricultural land for both its productive potential and environmental value

Key Objective 5

In non-urban areas, the range of tourism and commercial activities are restricted to activity centres or purposes that can be used in conjunction with agriculture, rural industry or winery.

Theme 11: Green Wedge

Key Objective 1

Recognise the rural areas contain sites of environmental and landscape significance, natural resource based activities and residences.

Key Objective 2

Protect our Green Wedge and its environmental integrity to ensure a safe haven for native wildlife, thriving biodiversity and native vegetation

Key Objective 3

Recognise that the rural areas often lack existing infrastructure. Including essential services, community facilities and internet coverage.

Key Objective 4

Acknowledgment of land use conflict between agricultural and rural residential land uses and a risk that further residential development will fragment rural land into unviable land parcels.

Key Objective 5

Ensure development in rural areas mitigates potential fire risk.

Key Objective 6

Avoid sensitive use and development on land that contains or may contain unacceptable levels of soil contamination, unless testing and necessary remedial treatment have been undertaken. Advocate to State Government to undertake Shire Wide testing and analysis of contaminated land.

Key Objective 7

Protect and enhance agricultural land for both its productive potential and environmental value.

Key Objective 8

Our connection to the Green Wedge is celebrated by all who live, work or enjoy their time in it.



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