

Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategy for Castlemaine, Campbells Creek and Chewton

ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES, KEY MESSAGES & DISCUSSION POINTS

As part of the Issues and Opportunities Paper, we noted key discussion points and messages to discuss with the community during consultation, and also identified the issues and opportunities that relate to planning for housing and protecting neighbourhood character, and separated them into different themes.

Planning Policy and the Planning Scheme:

Key messages and discussion points:

- Housing is affected and influenced by policy at all levels of government, with each level of government having a different role and responsibility in relation to housing.
- Council's role in housing is to facilitate the orderly provision of housing, through mechanisms within the Planning Scheme, such as policy, zoning and overlays. This includes encouraging housing diversity and directing new development into sustainable and appropriate locations with access to services, transport and facilities.
- The strategy will be informed by state, regional and local planning policy.
- The Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan identifies Castlemaine as a 'regional centre/town' and notes that future planned growth is to be focused within the existing urban area, while having regard for the historic character of the town.
- The strategy is needed to guide future residential development in Castlemaine, Campbells Creek and Chewton over the next 20 years to ensure that housing responds to the needs of our changing population over this period.
- Castlemaine is the main population centre in the Shire, and is the key administrative and commercial centre for the Shire.

Issues:

- The Castlemaine Framework Plan (which includes Campbells Creek) was prepared in 2004. A high-level review of the plan was completed during the Mount Alexander Planning Policy Framework translation (in 2021) which made some updates to the plan. However, a more detailed analysis of the plan has not been undertaken since its original preparation.
- There is no local policy in the planning scheme specific to Chewton, despite the preparation of the Chewton Urban Design Framework and Addendum in 2008 and 2010 respectively.
- There is a need to review the application of the residential zones since they were reformed in 2017, and since the Planning Practice Note 91 (Using the residential zones) was developed in 2019, to ensure appropriate application of residential zones.
- State and local planning policy emphasises the need to support infill development, however there is limited guidance around preferred design responses and outcomes.

Working together for a healthy, connected shire

Opportunities:

- Preparation of (updated/new) local planning policy (including a graphical plan) for Chewton.
- Review of (updated) local planning policy for Castlemaine (including Campbells Creek).
- Review of the Castlemaine Land Use Framework Plan (which includes Campbells Creek).
- Review of the application of the Development Plan Overlay (DPO) and Schedules to understand whether they could be removed if they are no longer required.
- Review of the Happy Valley / Moonlight Flat Structure Plans, where the land is included within the Castlemaine township boundary.
- Investigation into the application of the Design and Development Overlay (DDO) and Neighbourhood Character Overlay (NCO) and schedules where required.
- Investigation into the application of the residential zones and their appropriateness.

Environment:

Key messages and discussion points:

- There is a need to ensure that future housing considers the impact of environmental constraints and factors.
- Council needs to direct urban development to low bushfire risk locations.
- There is a need to ensure land use compatibility between existing and future land uses. Conflicts and interface issues may arise between residential uses and uses that have adverse amenity impacts.

Issues:

Flooding:

- Development opportunities within areas affected by the Flood Overlay and LSIO are constrained.

Bushfire:

- Limited capacity for expansion at the edge of the townships given bushfire hazards surrounding townships.
- Increased bushfire risk at edges of Castlemaine and Campbells Creek given proximity to forested areas.
- Chewton is substantially affected by bushfire hazards arising from its linear development pattern.
- There are sometimes conflicts between bushfire design responses and the removal of vegetation.

Natural environment:

- Limited capacity for expansion at the edge of townships given native vegetation.
- Protection of vegetation.
- Balancing the need to encourage vegetation removal with the existing exemptions for removal of vegetation.

- Limited protection of exotic vegetation.

Land use conflict and potentially contaminated land:

- Existing industrial uses in close proximity to residential areas.

Opportunities:

Flooding:

- Potential application of 'minimal change' areas where there are flooding constraints.
- Vegetation/planting to assist with stormwater impacts.

Bushfire:

- Directing population and housing growth to low risk locations, informed by the Bushfire Risk Assessment.

Natural environment:

- Incorporation of vegetation within design responses.
- Identification of vegetation, views and landscapes which contribute to neighbourhood character.

Land use conflict and potentially contaminated land:

- Managing incompatible land uses.
- Application of buffers between incompatible land uses.
- Identification of land with potential contamination.

Residential development areas:

Key messages and discussion points:

- Council is seeking to identify more opportunities for housing in the existing urban areas which are close to existing services and facilities (including vacant and underutilised residential land).
- The strategy will help Council to explore how new housing can be delivered in a way that protects the environment, values heritage and neighbourhood character, and considers bushfire risk.
- The strategy will help to improve the way future residential development is planned and developed.
- The strategy will help to 'unlock' areas which have residential development capacity.
- There is an opportunity to accommodate future residential development within strategic opportunity sites.
- It is important to support 20 minute neighbourhoods when identifying areas for more housing, to encourage living locally.
- The strategy will help in guiding the level and locations of housing change to accommodate the future population, and the preferred outcomes to ensure housing is in line with the preferred neighbourhood character.

Issues:

- There is limited guidance on preferred development outcomes, particularly within established residential areas where there may be heritage or neighbourhood character values.
- Proximity to the landfill in Diamond Gully.
- There is limited capacity within the greenfield areas given they have either already been developed or are undergoing development.
- Limited dwelling diversity within greenfield areas.

Happy Valley:

There are significant environmental considerations which need to be taken into account in planning for this area, including:

- Bushfire risk
- Native vegetation
- Threatened species within the area
- Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park
- Cultural Heritage Sensitivity
- Potential contamination
- Proximity to Crown Land

Opportunities:

- Providing guidance and certainty regarding preferred locations, design and siting of future residential development.
- Encourage more housing diversity through planning policy.
- Identification and 'unlocking' of strategic opportunity sites.
- Investigate opportunities for application of the mixed use zone.
- Investigate options to enable and facilitate shop top housing.
- Review of DPOs and removal where they are no longer required.
- Review of the residential zones to ensure the combined effect of zones and overlays are consistent and achieve the desired residential outcome for each area.
- Support living locally through 20 minute neighbourhoods.

Happy Valley:

- Investigate whether the Happy Valley area should be excluded from the township boundary given its environmental context.

Built form and design:

Key messages and discussion points:

- Neighbourhood character is the combination of the public and private realms including streetscapes, infrastructure, design and built form of houses (such as setbacks and building heights), vegetation, topography, streetscapes and views.
- There is a need to encourage housing which respects the existing and preferred neighbourhood character.
- Housing should respond appropriately to and respect areas and buildings of heritage significance. The concurrent Castlemaine Heritage Study will provide relevant insight into planning for housing in a heritage context.
- Residential design guidelines will be prepared as part of the strategy, which will provide guidance to community about preferred development outcomes.
- How houses are designed and sited are an important part of the strategy as they impact on neighbourhood character and the functionality of residential areas.
- There is an opportunity to incorporate planning controls which encourage universal design of houses to improve the accessibility of housing and benefit all residents.
- Residential development constructed now will impact Castlemaine, Campbells Creek and Chewton's sustainability for many years to come, so there is a clear need to increase the environmentally sustainability of housing.

Issues:

Heritage:

- Castlemaine:
 - The Castlemaine Heritage Study is outdated and not comprehensive. It does not provide sufficient information regarding the significance of the place, and therefore leaves places vulnerable when developed as it does not allow planning and heritage officers to make an informed decision when assessing planning applications. The study also does not include statements of significance for heritage places.
 - Major gaps in the listings of heritage places such as North Castlemaine, Wesley Hill and West Castlemaine.

Neighbourhood character:

- There is no neighbourhood character study that has been completed for Castlemaine, Campbells Creek and Chewton, which means a preferred neighbourhood character has not been established.

Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD):

- Development constructed now will impact the municipality's sustainability for many years to come.
- There is no local ESD planning policy within the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme.

Opportunities:

Heritage:

- Alignment of the strategy with the findings of the concurrent Heritage Study for Castlemaine.

- A Castlemaine heritage study will help to inform areas for housing change and ensure that areas and places of heritage significance are protected and not compromised.
- Use the Newstead and Metcalfe heritage studies when planning for housing within Campbells Creek and Chewton to understand places and areas of heritage significance.

Neighbourhood character:

- Preparation of a neighbourhood character assessment for the study area, which establishes precincts based on common features and characteristics. Each precinct will include preferred character statements, threats or concerns to neighbourhood character, key characteristics and features of the character, design guidelines, and proposed planning scheme changes.
- Draw on previous work to inform the neighbourhood character assessment, including:
 - The Castlemaine Residential Strategy (2004, revised 2005).
 - The Urban Design Framework for Chewton (and associated Design and Development Overlay – Schedule 11).

Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD):

- Investigate opportunities for ESD policies and controls within the planning scheme to facilitate the design of more sustainable development (including subdivisions and houses).

Infrastructure:

Key messages and discussion points:

- It is important that our infrastructure can respond to and support the projected housing and population growth.
- Residential development increases the number of people using infrastructure, and therefore places pressure on this infrastructure.
- There are opportunities to share the cost of new or upgraded infrastructure between developers.
- Provision of new and/or upgraded infrastructure needs to be strategically justified.

Issues:

- Increased development and an increasing population impacts on existing infrastructure, and generates the need for new or upgraded infrastructure.
- There is a lack of certainty around expectations regarding infrastructure provision within areas that are outside the Campbells Creek South and Diamond Gully infrastructure plan areas.

Opportunities:

- Providing the justification to develop a clear holistic approach and plan for future infrastructure in Castlemaine, Campbells Creek and Chewton, which sets out the infrastructure requirements that will be required to support housing and population growth. This will help in providing certainty to Council, landowners, developers and the community regarding future infrastructure to service this growth.
- Identification of current and future 'gaps' in infrastructure.