



# Rural Hepburn: Agricultural Land Study and Rural Settlement Strategy

The Rural Hepburn strategy plays an important role in planning for the future use and development of our rural land. The strategy seeks to identify and protect what the community values, guiding appropriate development more consistent with the things that are important to our community. It will determine our future agricultural needs and requirements, ensuring that they are adequately protected and help us better understand the risks and challenges posed in our rural settlements.

The community's feedback has been essential to the development of this strategy. Thank you to all the community members who have shared their ideas, priorities and preferences, these have served as the foundation for the strategy's vision, objectives and strategies. The next step for Rural Hepburn will be for the community to get involved and comment on the draft strategy.

## You can participate by:

- Downloading and reviewing the draft Rural Hepburn strategy and making an online submission using the form at [www.participate.hepburn.vic.gov.au](http://www.participate.hepburn.vic.gov.au). Submissions can be made until Wednesday 12 June 2024.
- You can also make a submission at any of the six Community Information Sessions to be held across the Shire. Dates, times and venues for these sessions are on the Participate Hepburn site. We encourage you to come along and chat to Council officers about Rural Hepburn.

Hard copies of the draft strategy are available at Council customer service centres and libraries. Community members can request a copy by either calling Council on 5348 2306 or by emailing [strategicplanning@hepburn.vic.gov.au](mailto:strategicplanning@hepburn.vic.gov.au).



Scan the QR code to learn more about Rural Hepburn.

*Hepburn*  
SHIRE COUNCIL

# The Rural Hepburn Strategy

**Vision:** Rural Hepburn's vision statement has been developed by drawing on both community and stakeholder ideas. Describing how rural areas will look and function into the future, it underpins the planning provisions and policy recommendations.

## Rural Hepburn's guiding principles:

- Tailoured planning policies will address the various landscapes, land use drivers, and their respective impacts.
- The protection of productive land, significant landscapes, biodiversity and water catchments will be given highest priority.
- A precautionary principle applies in relation to bushfire. Safety always comes first.
- Encouraging housing and employment within township boundaries while preserving the green spaces in between.
- Planning policy will not serve as a solution for addressing business management and planning matters like succession planning.
- Previous planning practices should not be used as a reason to maintain outdated planning policies.

### Policy Area 1 - Our Agricultural Engine

**Area:** Policy Area One includes our most strategic and productive agricultural land. Supporting the continued operation and viability of commercial scale agricultural enterprises is the highest priority. New dwellings and subdivisions are supported where direct and legitimate agricultural benefits can be demonstrated. Non-agricultural uses, such as tourism, are strongly discouraged.

### Policy Area 2 - Mixed Rural Activity

**Area:** Policy Area Two's agricultural land productivity is varied and relates to land where there is existing development including housing and tourism. There are opportunities to apply the Rural Activity Zone providing flexibility for farming and other land uses to co-exist. New rural uses will need to demonstrate a link with agriculture or an environmental benefit.

To find out which Policy Area is appropriate to you see Rural Framework Plan

Rural Hepburn explores five themes for the two Policy Areas: Housing, Rural Tourism, Biodiversity, Water and Natural Hazards, Landscape, and Cultural Heritage.

# Our challenge



How can we protect the agricultural productivity and biodiversity of our rural land from inappropriate development while providing for the future planning needs of our rural settlements?

The table below details Rural Hepburn's planning responses to the key findings of our community engagement.

| Key Community Feedback  | Rural Hepburn's Planning Response   |
|---|---|
| Agricultural land is highly valued and there is strong desire to see it preserved for agriculture into the future acknowledging the sector's significant economic contribution. | <p>Rural Hepburn prioritises the protection of our high-quality agricultural land above all else. This is demonstrated in Policy Area 1: Agricultural Engine Area, which includes farmland of strategic significance and the most productive and least fragmented agricultural land in the Shire.</p> <p>The strategy acknowledges the diversity of agriculture we have in the Shire, including artisan agriculture. There are various actions identified within the strategy that supports the protection of land located within Policy Area 1 which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increasing the minimum size of lots where dwellings can be considered.</li><li>• Increasing the minimum lot sizes for submissions.</li><li>• Focusing dwellings into the Rural Living Zone.</li></ul> <p>For more information see:<br/>Chapter 5. Agriculture</p> |

The preservation and enhancement of biodiversity and rural landscapes are highly valued, with strong support for their conservation and improvement.

Rural Hepburn recognises the need to protect and enhance the Shire's native vegetation, habitat and waterways. As ecological assessments continue, it is acknowledged that the Planning Scheme needs to be further strengthened to protect our important biodiversity. As a result, the strategy recommends:

- A Vegetation Protection strategy for Council-owned land and roadsides.
- Updated biodiversity mapping.
- Consideration of further expansion of the Rural Conservation Zone.
- Recommendations for new vegetation overlays.

The strategy identifies that our rural landscapes are valued by the community. The strategy works to protect, enhance and manage the visual impact of the Shire's landscape character and significance, and maintain the important contribution these views bring to the local economy.

Rural Hepburn proposes:

- Recommendations for new landscape overlays.
- Ensuring development complements the character of the surrounding landscape.
- Reasonable balance between the protection of landscapes and the ability to undertake agricultural activity.

Currently a number of our volcanic cones are covered by a Significant Landscape Overlay (in the western parts of the Shire). In response the strategy is recommending that further work be undertaken to extend the protection of these valued landscapes.

For more information see:

Chapter 7. Biodiversity, Water and Natural Hazards

Chapter 8. Landscape

Chapter 9. Cultural Heritage

Appendix 2: Propose Rural Conservation Zone



**Engagement period:**  
**1 May 2024 - 12 June**  
**2024**

There are concerns that continued population growth and subsequent development in rural areas could adversely affect biodiversity, landscapes, and puts pressure the Council's infrastructure to support increased population.

Hepburn Shire comprises numerous smaller settlements providing a wide variety of housing options and lifestyle choices. Presently, the Hepburn Planning Scheme lacks clarity regarding the future development of certain rural settlements, considering factors like available infrastructure, services and natural risks (such as bushfires and flooding).

Rural Hepburn establishes a Settlement Hierarchy which classifies each of the Shire's towns and settlements as either a Town, Small Town/Township, Small Settlement or Rural Locality. When classifying each of the locations the following was considered:

- Existing population size and number of dwellings.
- Extent of commercial activity or a defined commercial area.
- The provision of infrastructure and community services.
- Land use zoning patterns.

This work will help support Council's ability to establish sustainable patterns of population growth and residential development. To achieve this objective the strategy includes four key actions:

- Direction of future population growth in line with the established settlement hierarchy, supporting the efficient use of land and infrastructure and convenient access to jobs and services.
- Discourage the outward expansion of residential development in rural localities.
- Explore incremental growth opportunities within small settlements, subject to an assessment of environmental risk and agricultural significance.
- Investigate whether the current infrastructure (both physical and community) can support the additional dwelling capacity.

For more information see:

Chapter 10. Rural Settlement

Chapter 11. Rural Living

Appendix 3: Rural Settlement Assessment

| Key Community Feedback  | Rural Hepburn's Planning Response  |
|---|--|
| <p>There was overall agreement on channeling residential growth towards existing settlements as a balanced way of addressing these challenges, while also getting the most out of the current infrastructure.</p>                     | <p>Rural Hepburn notes that population growth should be planned in sustainable locations throughout the Shire. The development of sustainable and vibrant communities should be supported by enhancing access to key services and infrastructure.</p> <p>To ensure there remains plenty of places to live across the Shire, the towns and rural living areas have been reviewed and more land is proposed to be made available for the different housing types the community is seeking.</p> <p>Complementing Rural Hepburn, five township structure plans have been developed for Clunes, Creswick, Daylesford and Hepburn Springs, Glenlyon and Trentham. The structure plans play an important role in planning for and guiding appropriate growth and development and providing a land use framework into the future.</p> <p>For more information see:<br/> Chapter 10. Rural Settlement<br/> Chapter 11. Rural Living<br/> Appendix 3: Rural Settlement Assessment</p>                          |
| <p>Rural tourism is acknowledged as a significant contributor to the local economy. However, there is a need to ensure that tourism growth does not negatively affect agricultural activities, landscapes, or the rural ambiance.</p> | <p>Agriculture is a strong economic driver in the Hepburn Shire. Rural Hepburn recognises the need for the region's economy to be strengthened so that it is more diversified and resilient. Any tourism developed should build on the region's agricultural, environmental and cultural assets and should be consistent with the identified Policy Area 2's objectives.</p> <p>Council proposes two main actions to achieve this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The application of a new planning zone, a Rural Activity Zone (RAZ), that still retains agriculture as its preferred activity but allows Council to provide clearer direction and grant permits for tourism uses and rural industry.</li> <li>• Creation of a specific policy describing Council's preference for where and how new tourism establishments can locate and develop, including their scale, design and environmental impact.</li> </ul> <p>For more information see:<br/> Chapter 6. Rural Tourism</p> |

## Will my property be affected?

To determine if your property is affected we encourage you to read:

- Section 2 Strategic Framework designates two Policy Areas that may create potential impacts on properties. See the maps to determine which Policy Area applies to you.
- Chapter 12 Implementation lists the recommended updates to the Hepburn Planning Scheme.
- Appendix 5 details subdivision and dwelling requirements that apply to Farming and Rural Activity Zones.
- Appendix 6 outlines Farm Management Plan requirements.

Any planning scheme amendment process as result of Rural Hepburn will involve an additional phase of community engagement and further opportunities for submissions.

## How do I find out more?

- **Visit a Community Information session:** Speak to a planner at one of the six Community Information Sessions that will be held across the Shire. An Introduction Presentation will be given by a Strategic Planner key planning elements contained in Rural Hepburn. No bookings are required.
- **Attend a webinar:** This will be recorded and made available via our website.
- **Visit the Participate Hepburn project page:** Copies of the Rural Hepburn, Submission form and other supporting documents have been made available online.
- If you have limited access to the Internet you are welcome to contact the team and request a hard copy of the documents by contacting Council on 5348 2306 or emailing [strategicplanning@hepburn.vic.gov.au](mailto:strategicplanning@hepburn.vic.gov.au)



## Next steps

Your feedback on the Rural Hepburn strategy will be collected and considered prior to a final draft being developed. Submissions are open from **1 May to 12 June 2024**.

An Engagement Summary Report will summarise the feedback and Council's response. Council will consider the final drafts and feedback at a Council meeting before deciding to adopt them.

A planning scheme amendment is required to give effect to the strategic directions within the structure plans and Rural Hepburn strategy. This process will involve an additional phase of community engagement and opportunities for submission.

## Have your say

We invite you to submit comments and feedback on the Rural Hepburn strategy.

- Complete a submission form at the Future Hepburn Participate Hepburn site. Scan the QR code to access the Submission form.
- Email the Strategic Planning team at **[strategicplanning@hepburn.vic.gov.au](mailto:strategicplanning@hepburn.vic.gov.au)**
- Contact us by telephone on (03) 5348 2306.



Have your say and scan the QR Code to make a submission on Rural Hepburn.

