

Agricultural Land Study & Rural Settlement Strategy Engagement Approach

Introduction

The 2020 Planning Scheme review nominated a schedule of future strategic planning work including:

- Undertaking an Agricultural Land Study to determine the future agricultural needs and requirements in the municipality and ensure agricultural land is adequately protected, including the review of Farming Zone schedules.
- Preparing a Rural Settlement Strategy to better understand the risks and challenges posed in the Shire's settlements and to guide development consistent with the municipality's inherent rural character and other attributes.

Our rural areas are changing. In recent years we have seen increased demand for opportunities to live in a rural setting. Rural tourism based around the region's food and wine and nature is well established and growing. New technology is changing the way farmers operate their businesses. Climate change poses challenges to our biodiversity and risks to people living in rural areas. **Our shared challenge is to provide a planning framework that responds to these changes and supports our agricultural industry, rural tourism and biodiversity and provides for sustainable and safe small rural settlements.**

Agricultural Land Study & Rural Settlement Strategy will provide an improved decision-making framework creates consistency for communities and business, reduced land use conflicts, and better land management planning allowing us to enjoy our rural setting for generations to come.

How can you be involved?

Step One: Agricultural Land Study

This project begins with a Background Report which provides a current understanding of rural industries and natural assets, the key issues and opportunities. You can participate by reading through the Background paper, sharing your knowledge and thoughts by completing the accompanying survey. The information that you share will drive the development of the draft Strategy. The outcomes from the engagement activities will be shared as a report on Participate Hepburn.

Step Two: Strategy Development



In our community's words...

'Protect our existing farmland from inappropriate development' and losing the land from our agriculture forever'.

'Our environment, the climate, the water, the diverse economy including our agriculture and it's produce make our Shire a great place to live.'

Quotes from Hepburn Shire residents in their words.

What we know is important to our community...

The Hepburn Shire community values our beautiful natural bushland and our rich agricultural land. Our rural location and slower-paced lifestyle and lower density living is very much part of our identity. Our community also values our open space, recognition of our Traditional Owners and post-contact heritage. Our community nominated that a planning process that protects the character of our area through greater planning controls was an important change.

This second stage begins with the Draft Strategy. This is our opportunity to have deeper conversations about the strategy content, the impact the strategy has on those living rurally and whether it achieves its aims of protecting further fragmentation of agricultural land and while reflecting our community values. You can participate by visiting us in person at drop in sessions held in key farming areas across the Shire. There will be opportunities for you to lodge submissions online and in person through Council's service centres or via www.participate.hepburn.vic.gov.au. At the completion of the submission process, another Engagement Report will be shared to outline the themes of any feedback received. The Participate Hepburn project page will continue to be updated with dates, times, and locations of any engagement activities.

Key engagement questions	What can be influenced?	What is not changing?
<p>Q. What do you value most about living in a rural environment?</p> <p>Q. What do you see as appropriate and managed growth and in what areas could these occur?</p> <p>Q. What are the opportunities and challenges for the Shire's agriculturally based businesses?</p> <p>Q. How might we resolve land use conflicts between rural living and rural industries (agriculture, tourism)?</p> <p>Q. Do our significant landscapes and environmental features require additional protection in planning controls?</p> <p>Q. How might we plan and provide for the future of our rural settlements?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strategic vision for agricultural land use in the Shire. • Biodiversity and environmental protections • Current zoning schedules including Farming Zones, Rural Conservation Zones, Rural Activity Zones and Rural Living Zones. • Future planning for rural settlements including township boundaries in providing for development and growth. • Planning and providing for a diverse range of both small and large rurally based businesses • Creating planning mechanisms and policies to guide future development consistent with inherent rural character and community values. 	<p>Planning principles that we know are already important to our community. These include any planning controls that conflict with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protection of human life through bushfire controls and flood overlays • The value of protecting and enhancing biodiversity • Preserving the quality of our water catchments • Further fragmentation of our valued agricultural land for non-farming uses

Consult:

In developing the Agricultural Land & Rural Settlement Strategy we will seek your feedback, opinions, priorities and preferences at each step and share with you how we have refined the strategy based on your feedback.

Keep up to date with this and other projects we encourage you to continue visiting Participate Hepburn or, alternatively sign up for Council's newsletter 'Hepburn Life'.

