Alpine Shire Rural Directions Strategy

Alpine Shire Council

Draft

FEBRUARY 2026



© SGS Economics and Planning Pty Ltd 2025

This report has been prepared for Alpine Shire Council. SGS Economics and Planning has taken all due care in the preparation of this report. However, SGS and its associated consultants are not liable to any person or entity for any damage or loss that has occurred, or may occur, in relation to that person or entity taking or not taking action in respect of any representation, statement, opinion or advice referred to herein.

SGS Economics and Planning Pty Ltd
ACN 007 437 729
www.sgsep.com.au

OFFICES IN CANBERRA, HOBART, MELBOURNE, AND SYDNEY ON THE COUNTRY OF THE NGAMBRI/NGUNNAWAL/NGARIGO, MUWININA/PALAWA, WURUNDJERI, AND GADIGAL PEOPLES.

Statement of Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the region known as Alpine Shire is the traditional land of many Traditional Owners. We acknowledge them as the custodians of their Country; we recognise their rich and diverse cultural history and continuous connections to Country and thank them for sharing their lands and cultures.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of (in alphabetical order) Bpangerang, Dalka Warra Mittung, Dhuduroa Waywurru, Duduroa Dhargal, Gunaikurnai, Jaithmathang, Taungurung, and Waywurru.

We pay our respects to all Elders, past and present, and extend that respect to ancestors that guide through history, and emerging leaders that will lead the way into the future.

Contents

Statement of Acknowledgement 3

1. Executive summary 6

Key elements of the Rural Directions Strategy 7

Proposed changes in rural settlements 8

2. Introduction 12

2.1 What is the ARDS? 12

2.2 Study area 14

2.3 Developing the ARDS 15

3. The Alpine context 17

3.1 Snapshot of Alpine Shire 17

3.2 Policy and planning framework 18

3.3 The rural economy 23

3.4 Agricultural land capability and productivity 27

3.5 Natural landscapes and hazards 30

4. What we heard from the community 32

4.1 Community consultation process 32

4.2 Community insights 33

5. Trends and challenges 35

6. Planning Framework 37

6.1 Strategy structure 37

6.2 Strategy vision 37

6.3 Strategic directions 39

6.4 Spatial directions 59

6.5 Rural Framework Plan 68

7. Implementation plan 70

7.1 Implementation process 70

7.2 Implementation partners 71

7.3 Implementation plan 72

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Preparing the ARDS 6
Figure 2: Alpine Shire Rural Directions Strategy study area, 2025 14
Figure 3: Alpine Shire Rural Directions Strategy, Project process, 2025 16
Table 1: Zones used in Alpine Shire 19
Figure 4: Areas within and outside the Bushfire Management Overlay 22
Figure 5: Commodity Contributions to GVAP (%), Alpine Shire, 2024 23
Figure 6: Land use type, Alpine Shire, 2024 24
Figure 7: Capability of agricultural land, Alpine Shire, 2025 27
Figure 8: Irrigation status, Alpine Shire, 2025 28
Figure 9: Range and distribution of farm size, Alpine Shire, 2024, ... 30
Figure 10: Image from community workshop at Porepunkah 32
Figure 11: Alpine Shire Rural Directions Strategy structure 37
Figure 12: Productivity of Farming Zoned land in the Alpine Shire 42
Figure 13: Identification of alternative uses for land used for timber production 45
Figure 14: Potential freight hub location 53
Figure 16: Productivity of Agricultural land: Myrtleford, Gapsted and Merriang 61
Figure 17: Proposed settlement boundary, Wandiligong 63
Figure 18: Proposed settlement boundary, Harrietville 64
Figure 19: Proposed settlement boundary, Freeburgh 65
Figure 20: Proposed settlement boundary, Tawonga 66
Figure 21: Proposed settlement boundary, Dederang 67
Figure 22: Rural Framework Plan 69

1. Executive summary

Alpine Shire Council (Council) has prepared the *Alpine Shire Rural Directions Strategy* (ARDS) to guide land use and development outcomes in the Shire's rural areas over the long term. It identifies and provides clarity on resources that require stronger protection, preferred locations and outcomes for future rural residential development, and areas well suited to support more diverse economic activity.

The focus of the strategy is on areas of the Shire zoned for rural land uses. These are areas zoned Farming Zone, Rural Conservation Zone and Rural Living Zone. The ARDS provides policy direction at the Shire-wide level and as well as place-specific guidance for eight rural settlements that have been identified by Council and the community as facing acute challenges relating to rural lands: Dederang, Harrietville, Tawonga, Wandiligong, Freeburgh, Ovens, Buckland Valley and Buffalo River.

The ARDS sits alongside the *Alpine Shire Land Development Strategy* (2024), which addresses land use and development areas in urban zoned areas of the Shire. It also considers relevant directions from Council's other strategic work, including the *Alpine Shire Economic Development Strategy* (2022) and the *Alpine Shire Bushfire Planning Study* (2024). It also revisits and extends the earlier *Alpine Shire Rural Land Strategy* (2015).

Figure 1: Preparing the ARDS



The draft ARDS has been shaped by detailed background research and input from key stakeholders and the broader community received through consultation.[1] Many of the objectives and strategies contained in the Strategy will be implemented into the Alpine Planning Scheme following completion of the project, giving them legal weight within the broader land use planning system (for instance, updates or changes to rural zones and overlays). Other non-regulatory actions will be led by Council and implemented in partnership with relevant community, government and business stakeholders.

Key elements of the Rural Directions Strategy

The ARDS set out the following vision for rural lands in Alpine Shire:

> Alpine Shire Council will support and plan for use and development in rural areas in a manner that best harnesses and protects the environmental, economic, social, landscape and cultural values of rural land.

The strategic directions guiding the key content and policy in the strategy are:



Strategic direction 1: Environmental risks: To avoid development in areas at risk of natural hazard to protect human life.



Strategic direction 2: Natural resource management: To identify, protect and manage significant natural resources so that they can be harnessed in a sustainable manner.



Strategic direction 3: Rural Settlement: To direct future population and housing development in accordance with the defined future roles of service towns, rural towns, small settlements and rural localities.



Strategic direction 4: Rural residential development: To direct rural residential development to defined rural settlements and identified land of low agricultural productivity, while appropriately managing bushfire risk.



Strategic direction 5: Rural industry and tourism: To support appropriate non-agricultural uses in rural areas where these do not compromise agricultural production or landscape values.



Strategic direction 6: Environmental and landscape values: To manage use and development to protect the environmental and landscape values of the Shire.

The above vision and strategic directions are underpinned by a series of objectives, strategies and actions, which provide an increasing level of detail for how the vision will be realised. These are set out in detail in Sections 6 and 7. However, in summary, the key outcomes proposed in the strategy are:

[1] See: *Alpine Rural Directions Strategy: Background Report* (2024) and *Alpine Shire Rural Directions Strategy: Community Engagement Summary Report* (2025) for further detail.

1. Mapping of, and improved protection for, high-value agricultural land; and clearer direction about preferred locations for non-agricultural land uses.
2. Clarity about the preferred land use on the edges of rural settlements where conflict between land uses and proliferation of small lots in farming areas has undermined agricultural productivity and created uncertainty for residents and businesses.
3. Identification of rural economic clusters that are well-suited to supporting more diverse agricultural enterprises such as market gardens, wineries, and on-site processing of farm produce, while carefully considering environmental and amenity impacts.
4. Establishes criteria where consideration of rezoning for rural residential development may be appropriate.
5. Identifies potential locations for infrastructure such as a future freight hub and battery storage near existing energy assets.

Proposed changes in rural settlements

The strategy includes a large suite of objectives strategies and actions. The below place-based summaries provide a brief overview of the outcomes expected in key locations.

Dederang and Mudgegonga

Dederang and Mudgegonga are small rural settlements located in the Kiewa Valley region.

Dederang features a modest cluster of facilities along the highway, including a pub, recreation reserve, and electricity infrastructure, but lacks reticulated water and sewerage.

Mudgegonga, situated between the Ovens and Kiewa Valleys, has no defined town centre but contains a dispersed cluster of dwellings amid productive farmland. Agriculture in both areas is dominated by beef grazing and dairy, with Mudgegonga benefiting from large lot sizes and a mix of medium to low capability land.

Key planning outcomes for Dederang and Mudgegonga:

- These areas are functioning well from a land use perspective with minimal changes proposed.
- The Farming Zone will be maintained with policy strengthened to reinforce protection of land for agricultural purposes through policy.
- Potential for battery storage infrastructure near existing energy facilities, offering low visual impact and efficient grid integration.
- The area could be considered for future residential growth due to its lower bushfire risk, if directed by the Victorian government. However this is not currently recommended given its limited infrastructure.

Harrietville

Harrietville is a small alpine settlement located at the southern end of the Ovens Valley, known for its scenic landscape and tourism appeal.

The town is surrounded by bushland and steep terrain, contributing to its high bushfire risk. It has limited capacity for growth due to environmental constraints, heritage values, and infrastructure limitations.

The settlement supports tourism and small-scale agriculture. Harrietville has low productivity due to poor soil types (resulting from earlier mining activity stripping the topsoil) and smaller farm sizes.

Key planning outcomes for Harrietville:

- Consider rezoning limited areas of low agricultural productivity to Rural Activity Zone to better reflect existing patterns of development, areas of lower agricultural potential and allow for a greater diversity of agricultural enterprises.
- Zoning should reflect exist patterns of development but further growth is not encouraged due to the level of bushfire risk.
- Support tourism-related uses to help small farms diversify income and improve viability.
- Allow for incremental infill development within the existing settlement footprint.

Tawonga

Tawonga is a small settlement located in the Kiewa Valley, north of Mount Beauty. It has a modest cluster of homes and community facilities, with surrounding land primarily used for agriculture, particularly beef and dairy farming. The settlement is not connected to reticulated sewerage, and its growth potential is limited by infrastructure constraints and bushfire risk.

Planning in Tawonga focuses on maintaining its rural character, supporting agricultural activity, and carefully managing any future development.

Key planning outcomes for Tawonga:

- This area is functioning well from a land use perspective with minimal changes proposed.

Wandiligong

Wandiligong is a historic settlement located in the narrow valley carved by Morses Creek, just south of Bright. The valley is enclosed by steep hills, with pine plantations to the west and the Alpine National Park to the east, creating a striking and highly valued landscape setting.

The settlement is renowned for its heritage character, featuring numerous historic buildings that reflect its gold rush past. Most of Wandiligong is subject to heritage controls that protect its built form and cultural significance. The surrounding landscape is also safeguarded by planning overlays that preserve their scenic and environmental qualities.

To the south of the settlement lies land of high agricultural capability. Around Wandiligong fragmentation of land into smaller farm sizes has also reduced the productivity of land zoned Farming Zone. The convergence of heritage values, landscape protection, and agricultural significance presents a complex planning context.

Key planning outcomes proposed for Wandiligong:

- Apply more suitable zoning, such as the Rural Activity Zone or Rural Conservation Zone, to areas of lower agricultural productivity to: recognise Wandiligong's heritage and landscape values; allow more flexibility for appropriate non-agricultural uses; and to allow potential rural residential development where bushfire risk can be resolved, while preventing further subdivision.
- Support limited infill development within the existing settlement to accommodate incremental growth while preserving heritage and landscape values.
- Enable tourism-related uses to support economic diversification for small farms, enhancing farm viability without compromising landscape or heritage character.
- Encourage diverse agricultural enterprises, such as market gardens, wineries, and on-site produce processing on land with moderate to low productivity, with careful attention to environmental and amenity impacts.

Buckland Valley and Buffalo River

Buffalo River and Buckland Valley are narrow, scenic valleys located south of Myrtleford and Porepunkah, respectively. Both areas are primarily zoned Farming Zone and support productive agriculture, including beef, dairy, cropping, horticulture, and vineyards.

The Buffalo River Valley features steep terrain that flattens near Myrtleford, with picturesque views of Mount Buffalo. Buckland Valley is subject to flooding near the river and benefits from active and sleeper water licences that support farming.

Key planning outcomes proposed for Buckland Valley and Buffalo River:

- Retain Farming Zone with a minimum 40 hectare subdivision size, reflecting the area's high agricultural productivity.

The surrounding land includes high-capability farmland and areas zoned for National Park, contributing to the region's environmental and landscape significance.

Freeburgh

Freeburgh is a small rural settlement located along the flat to gently undulating valley floor of the Ovens River, between Bright and Harrietville. The valley is framed by steep slopes rising into the Alpine National Park to the east and State Forest to the west, offering striking alpine views along the Great Alpine Road.

The area has low agricultural capability due to historic dredging and mining on the river flats and the steepness of surrounding terrain. Despite this, Freeburgh has experienced modest growth, with six dwellings and one subdivision approved since 2015. The settlement has no defined town centre and is characterised by dispersed rural living within a scenic and environmentally sensitive landscape.

Key planning outcomes proposed for Freeburgh:

- Apply the Rural Activity Zone to reflect areas of lower agricultural productivity, allowing more flexibility for appropriate non-agricultural uses and potential rural residential development where bushfire risk can be resolved, while preventing further subdivision.
- Support limited infill development within the existing settlement to accommodate incremental growth while preserving heritage and landscape values.
- Enable tourism-related uses to support economic diversification for small farms, enhancing farm viability without compromising landscape or heritage character.
- Encourage diverse agricultural enterprises, such as market gardens, wineries, and on-site produce processing on land with moderate to low productivity, with careful attention to environmental and amenity impacts.

Merriang, Merriang South and Myrtleford

The precinct just south of Myrtleford is flood prone and has a patchwork of land zoned Farming and Rural Living Zones. Lots are generally small.

The existing constraints of lot size and zoning, combined with the proximity to Myrtleford, support more flexible use of rural land in this area.

There are parcels south and west of Buffalo Road that are low productivity and in close proximity to Rural Living Zone.

Key planning outcomes for Merriang, Merriang South and Myrtleford:

- Recognise this area in policy as a rural economic cluster.
- The Farming Zone will be maintained but minimum lot sizes for the construction of a dwelling without a permit could be supported in this area.
- Some land south and west of Buffalo Creek Road can be rezoned to Rural Living Zone, with minimum lot sizes preventing further subdivision in recognition of bushfire risk.

2. Introduction

Alpine Shire's rural lands are a vital part of the region's identity and prosperity, supporting thriving communities and a broad range of local industries. The Alpine Shire Rural Directions Strategy is a land use planning framework that will guide sustainable development and land management across the Shire's rural areas over the long term.

2.1 What is the ARDS?

The Alpine Shire Rural Directions Strategy (ARDS) is the Shire's planning framework guiding the future use and development of all rurally zoned land in Alpine Shire rural areas over the long term. It also considers specific land use outcomes in Rural Towns, Small Settlements and selected Rural Localities, as identified in the *Alpine Shire Land Development Strategy* (2024). The settlements have been included in the ARDS due to identified land use and development challenges that are adversely affecting rural outcomes in these areas. These are:

- Rural Towns of Dederang, Harrietville, Tawonga and Wandiligong.
- Small Settlements of Freeburgh and Ovens.
- Rural Localities Buckland Valley and Buffalo River.

The ARDS sets a clear vision and strategic direction to manage growth and change, strengthen rural resilience, protect of the Shire's distinctive rural assets and provide clarity about rural land use outcomes over the long term. The objectives of the ARDS are:

Support established rural industries like agriculture and forestry.

- Identify and protect areas of agricultural and landscape significance.
- Determine preferred locations for existing and emerging rural employment uses.
- Support growth and innovation in rural industries.
- Ensure fair and consistent long-term land use and development frameworks.
- Reduce land use conflict and manage competing demands for rural land.
- Guide the future role and land use outcomes of Rural Towns, Rural Settlements and selected Rural Localities.

The Strategy complements other recent strategic work such as the *Alpine Shire Economic Development Strategy* (2022), the *Alpine Shire Land Development Strategy* (2024), and the *Alpine Shire Bushfire Planning Study* (2024). It also revisits and extends the earlier *Alpine Shire Rural Land Strategy* (2015), with a particular focus on providing greater spatial and policy clarity.

What the RDS does:

	Identifies areas of agricultural and environmental significance and looks to safeguard this from competing uses over the long term.
	Guides where and how rural housing growth should occur, aligning with policy direction and infrastructure and services.
	Informs planning scheme updates, zoning decisions, and development priorities.
	Supports advocacy and funding by providing an evidence base for housing-related initiatives.

What the RDS doesn't do:

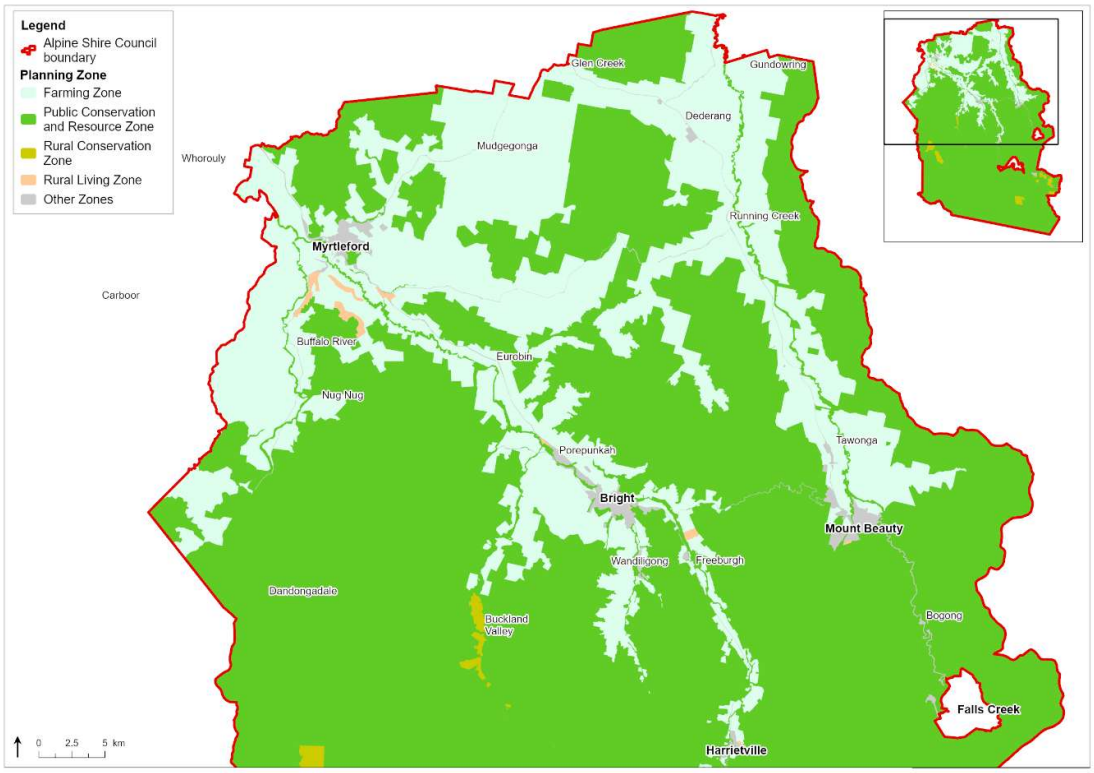
	It does not approve or assess individual development applications.
	It does not rezone land directly - this occurs through separate planning scheme amendments, led by proponents and managed by Council.
	It does not guarantee housing delivery or construction outcomes.
	It does not override state planning policy or infrastructure constraints.

2.2 Study area

The ARDS applies at a Shire-wide level and primarily relates to land subject to the Farming Zone (FZ), while considering land within the other rural zones where relevant including the Rural Conservation Zone (RCZ) and Rural Living Zone (RLZ). It does not address land use in the Public Conservation and Resource Zone (PCRZ), which applies to state and national parks.

The ARDS also provides more detailed, place-specific guidance for settlements identified in the *Alpine Shire Land Development Strategy* (2024) as Rural Towns, Small Settlements and selected Rural Localities.

Figure 2: Alpine Shire Rural Directions Strategy study area, 2025



Source: RMCG (2025)

2.3 Developing the ARDS

The ARDS project commenced in mid-2024 and will be completed over four stages as shown in Figure 1.

Stage 1 of the ARDS involved technical background research to inform the strategy's direction. It reviewed relevant strategies and planning policies, assessed the performance of current planning controls, and analysed rural land use patterns, agricultural capability, and environmental constraints. It also identified key themes for further investigation in later stages and culminated in the Alpine Rural Directions Strategy: Background Paper (2024).

Stage 2 included the publication of a succinct Issues and Opportunities Report (2024), which distilled the findings of the detailed background research and informed the first round of community consultation.

Stage 3 included a comprehensive first round community engagement process involving an online survey, in-person and online workshops, drop-in sessions, digital mapping via Engage Alpine, and written submissions. A total of 189 people participated across these activities, and the outcomes have been documented in the *Alpine Shire Rural Directions Strategy: Community Engagement Summary Report* (2025).

Stage 4 involved the preparation of the draft Alpine Shire Rural Directions Strategy, which will be subject to a second round of community engagement in Stage 5. Following this final stage, the Strategy will be refined and presented to Council for consideration.

The ARDS includes both policy directions and proposed changes to planning scheme controls, which will be implemented through an amendment to the Alpine Planning Scheme. It also outlines broader implementation actions outside the planning scheme, to be delivered by Council and relevant partners. Further detail on implementation is provided in Section 7.

Figure 3: Alpine Shire Rural Directions Strategy, Project process, 2025



3. The Alpine context

Planning for rural land in Alpine Shire is shaped by a combination of geographic, economic and policy factors. This section provides a brief overview of the key contextual influences that inform the strategy.

3.1 Snapshot of Alpine Shire

The Alpine Shire is in northeast Victoria and spans an area of 4,791 square kilometres. It is notable for the high proportion of Shire land in State and National reserves. Some of this crown land is allocated for forestry purposes.

The landscape features of the Alpine Shire include the picturesque and iconic scenery that is of environmental and cultural significance to residents and the broader Victorian community. Many rural towns, small settlements and rural localities are in Alpine's rural areas.

Agricultural activity is concentrated in the two major valleys between the mountain ranges: Ovens and Kiewa Valleys. Agricultural land is also found along the Buffalo River, Morses Creek, Happy Valley and around Rosewhite. The Ovens and Kiewa Valleys are key tourist destinations, benefitting from proximity to the Alpine resorts, natural beauty and abundant lifestyle and recreation opportunities.

As with other scenic areas of Victoria, the agricultural sector is increasingly integrated with tourism activities such as cellar door sales, and pick-your-own and farm stay experiences. The sector also underpins allied service sectors such as transport and manufacturing.

The desirability of the Shire's rural areas for a range of agricultural, tourism, residential and other uses sharpen competition for land in these locations and requires clear direction.

3.2 Policy and planning framework

The ARDS presents a planning framework for rural land and settlements, informed by state, regional and local planning policy.

It incorporates relevant recommendations from Planning Panels Victoria and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) and responds to findings from previous planning scheme reviews.

The Strategy aligns with state-level directions for rural land use and advances the implementation of Council's existing strategic priorities. Where necessary, it updates or replaces local planning policy to support the vision for rural land use in the Shire.

The following documents inform the ARDS.

- Plan for Victoria (2025)
- Hume Regional Growth Plan (2014)
- Hume Bushfire Management Strategy (2020)
- Alpine Planning Scheme (2025)
- Alpine Community Vision and Council Plan 2025-2029 (2025)
- Alpine Planning Scheme Review (2023)
- Alpine Shire Land Development Strategy (2024)
- Alpine Shire Bushfire Planning Study (2024)
- Alpine Shire Economic Development Strategy (2022)
- Alpine Shire Rural Land Use Strategy (2015)

Detailed summaries can be found in the Alpine Rural Directions Strategy: Background Paper (2025).



The existing planning scheme

The Alpine Planning Scheme is the key document controlling land use and development planning in Alpine Shire. It includes a policy framework that distils other strategies (notably those mentioned above) to guide decision-making. It also includes zones and overlays that control the use of land and recognise areas with special qualities, values, and hazards.

More than 80% of the Shire is within the Public Conservation and Resource Zone, reflecting the large areas of National Park across the Alpine areas and their hinterland. Of the balance however, most of the land is zoned for rural purposes, reflecting the farmland along the valley floors. This is predominantly land zoned Farming Zone, which prioritises agricultural uses. This zone covers 88% of the land that is outside the Public Conservation and Resource Zone.

The conservation-focussed Rural Conservation Zone is used in a few limited areas, notably in the southern (upstream) end of the Buckland Valley (1.3% of all zoned land). The Rural Activity Zone, which allows more flexibility for non-farming rural uses, is not currently used on any land in the Shire.

Table 1: Zones used in Alpine Shire

Zone	Area (sqkm)	% within Shire
Farming Zone	783.3	16.4%
Public Conservation and Resource Zone	3901.7	81.4%
Rural Conservation Zone	62.7	1.3%
Rural Living Zone	6.3	0.1%
Rural Activity Zone	0	0%
Other Zones	36.7	0.8%
Total	4790.7	100%

Source: RMCG (2024)

Rural Zones

There are four key rural zones relevant to the Alpine Shire: the Farming Zone, Rural Conservation Zone, Rural Activity Zone, and the Rural Living Zone. The Victorian government Practice Note *Applying the Rural Zones* guides the choice of which zone is to be used. The descriptions below summarise the guidance in the Practice Note about the features of the zones and how they are to be to applied.

The Farming Zone

This zone, used on the overwhelming majority of rural land in Alpine Shire, is predominantly focused on protecting and promoting farming and agriculture.

Farming is treated as the dominant land use with other uses subordinate. Dwellings not associated with farming, and other non-farming land uses, can be considered but should not prejudice the operation of existing farming uses. Fragmentation of land through subdivision is discouraged.

Key features and settings:

- Minimum subdivision size: defaults to 40 hectares, although in Alpine Shire, the scheme allows 20 hectares to be considered if in accordance with policy guidelines. Subdivisions below the minimum lot size are allowed only in limited circumstances, the most significant being in association with a new dwelling.
- Dwellings: need a permit on land below 40 hectares (this number can be increased using a schedule to the zone, but the Alpine Planning Scheme does not make such a change).

The Rural Conservation Zone

The Rural Conservation Zone is used on a small percentage of Alpine Shire's rural areas. It is primarily concerned with protecting and conserving rural land for its environmental features or attributes. These may include native vegetation, flora and fauna, significant habitats, or landscape qualities.

Key features and settings:

- Minimum subdivision size: defaults to 40 hectares, although in the limited areas the zone is used in Alpine Shire, a 100 hectare minimum has been applied. Subdivisions below the minimum lot size are allowed only in limited circumstances, the most significant being in association with a new dwelling.
- Dwellings: need a permit on all land in the zone.

Rural Activity Zone

This zone, not currently used in the Alpine Planning Scheme, is for areas where farming is important but the planning objectives identified for the land support the establishment of other land uses. For example, this can give greater support to tourism or rural industry.

Key features and settings:

- Minimum subdivision size: set by the schedule to the zone, with no default.
- Dwellings: need a permit on all land in the zone.
- Can nominate (through a local schedule) specific purposes that the zone should provide for – allowing a measure of customised focus for a particular area.

Rural Living Zone

This zone is to be used for rural areas that have a mainly residential function. In contrast with the Farming Zone, in this zone, farming can take place but is subordinate to that residential use. It is suggested in Planning Practice Note 42: Applying the rural zones that for "rural areas that have been substantially subdivided and developed for dwellings in proximity to an urban area or township with a range of urban services and infrastructure."

Key features and settings:

- Minimum subdivision size: defaults to 2 hectares (and this is used in the Alpine Planning Scheme).
- Dwellings: need a permit on land below 2 hectares (this number can be increased using a schedule to the zone, but the Alpine Planning Scheme does not make such a change).

The Alpine Planning Scheme employs a relatively limited range of environmental and landscape overlays across rural land. There are no Environmental Significance Overlays or Vegetation Protection Overlays, for example. However Significant Landscape Overlays (SLOs) apply to:

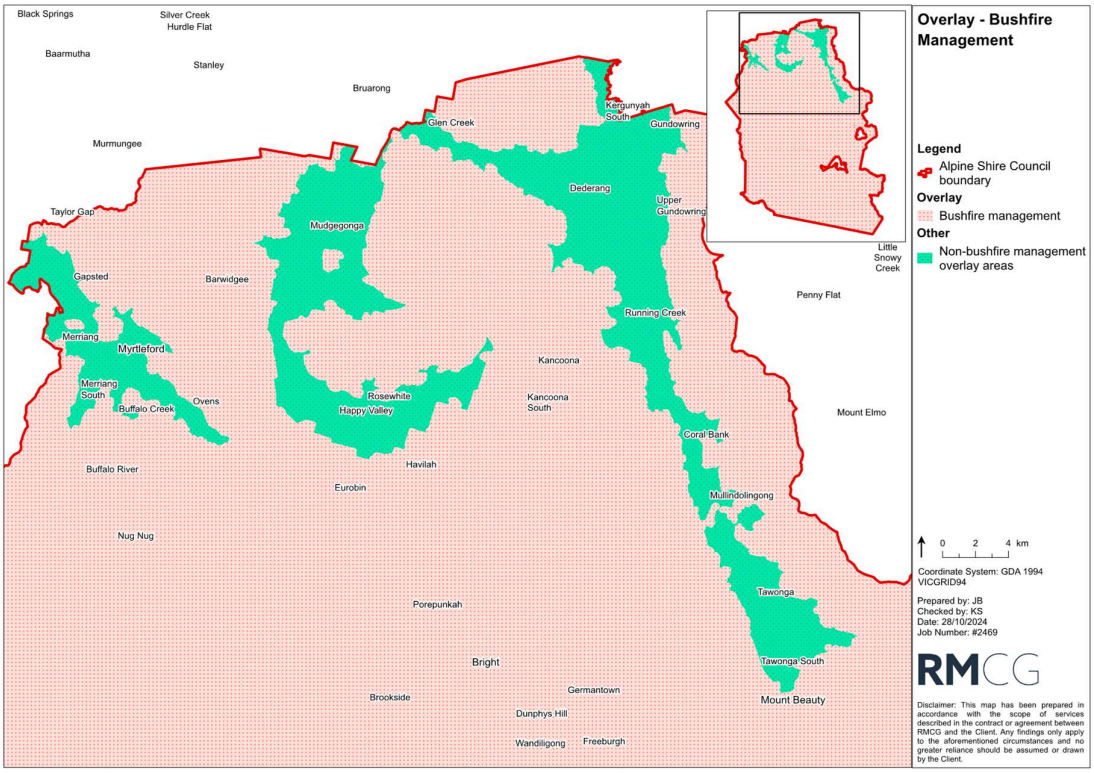
- Most of the Buckland Valley and the lower portions of the approach to Mount Buffalo (along Mt Buffalo Road, before the park is entered).
- Much of the Wandiligong (Morses Creek) Valley.
- Much of the Ovens Valley between Germantown and Harrietville.
- The upper Kiewa Valley from near Dederang to Mt Beauty.
- Happy Valley (along the road between Ovens River and Running Creek).

These derive from 1970s National Trust listings (Landscape Planning & Conservation in North-East Victoria, National Trust of Australia, 1977) and were identified as warranting review in the Alpine Planning Scheme Review in 2023.

Flood prone land is recognised by the Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO), which applies throughout much of the Ovens Valley, notably along the valley near Myrtleford (affecting the southwest edges of the town) and along the Snow Road (especially near Whorouly). More limited application occurs close to watercourses feeding the Ovens River, notably along the Buffalo River, Happy Valley Creek, and along the Barwidgee Creek (between Myrtleford and Mudgegonga).

The Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) applies widely across the Shire. In addition to the forested hills and valleys, it covers the entirety of the Ovens Valley floor from a point just southeast of Ovens and the Buffalo River Valley from outside of Myrtleford, as well as the higher edges of other valleys.

Figure 4: Areas within and outside the Bushfire Management Overlay



3.3 The rural economy

The rural economy of Alpine Shire is diverse and underpins the Shire's social and economic development. It encompasses a mix of agricultural production, nature-based tourism, and niche industries that collectively sustain local communities.

Agriculture

Food and fibre production in the Alpine Shire is a key contributor to the economy generating $72 million in value and employing 564 people in 2021. The major agricultural industries by value of production, included livestock (predominately beef), milk production, fruit, plant nurseries, cut flowers and cultivated turf and nut production (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Commodity Contributions to GVAP (%), Alpine Shire, 2024

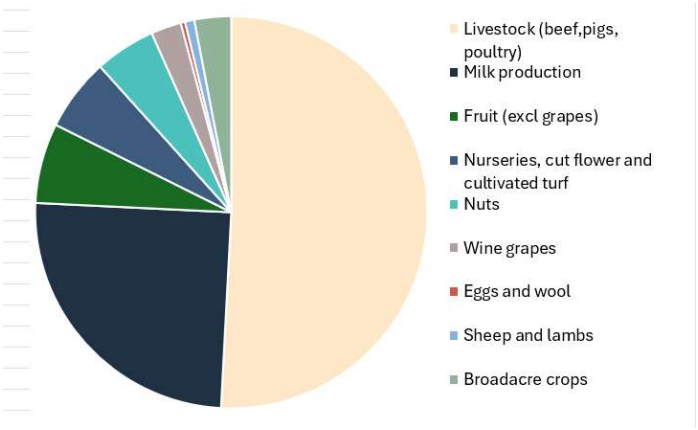
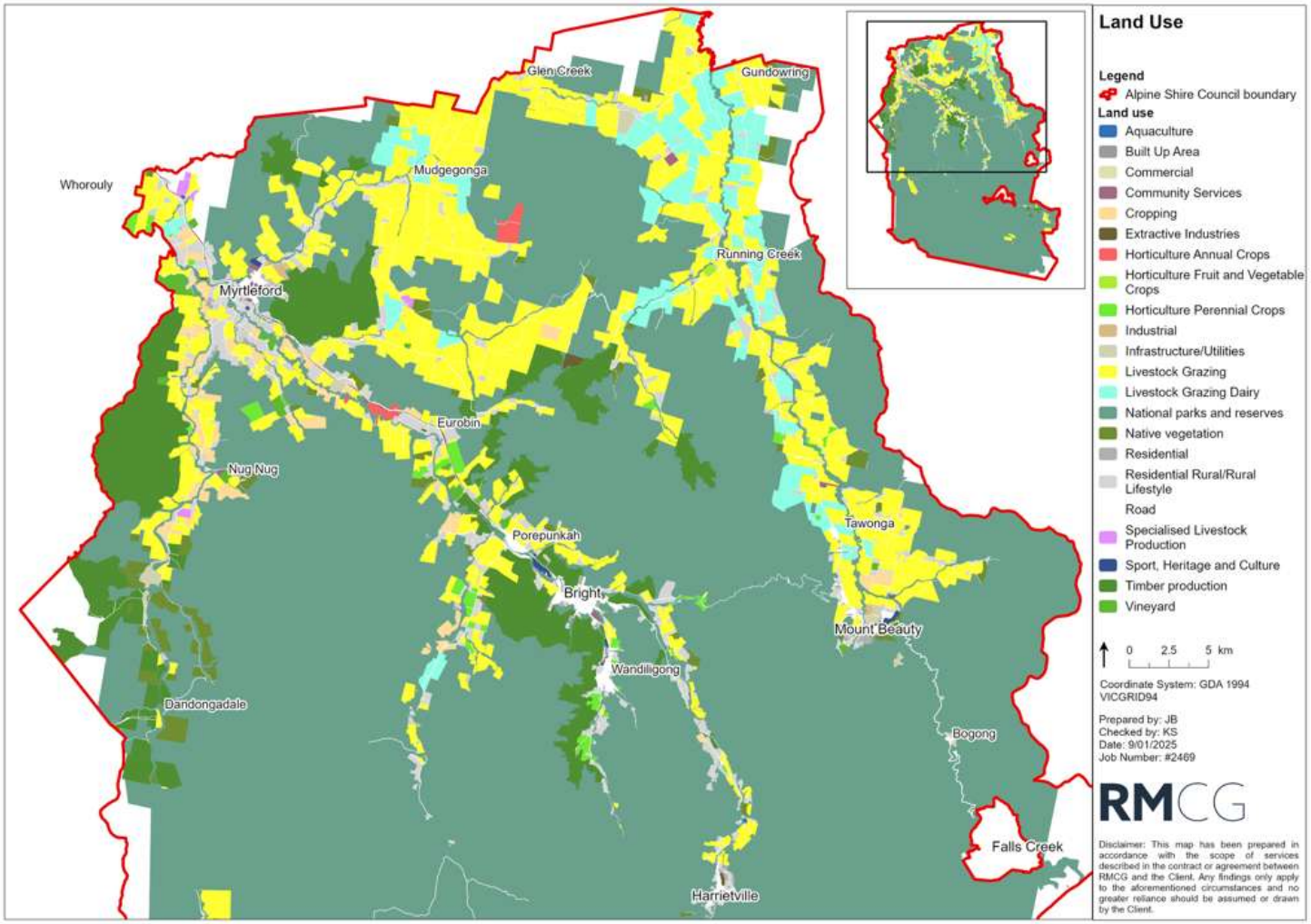


Figure 6 shows the distribution of agricultural uses across the Alpine Shire. Livestock grazing occurs throughout the Shire (as shown in yellow) and is the largest industry in terms of area of land use and value of production. Milk production (dairy) occurs predominately in the Kiewa Valley and Dederang with a small amount occurring around Mudgegonga (as shown in blue). There are pockets of horticulture and broadacre cropping across the Shire following the Buffalo River in the Lower Ovens and the Ovens River in the Upper Ovens.

A comparison of key commodities produced in Alpine Shire from 2006 to 2021 indicates that the value of livestock (beef and sheep) production, milk production, nuts, nurseries and cut flowers has increased, while the value of other commodities has remained steady or declined. Further detail on each industry is provided in the *Alpine Shire Rural Directions Strategy: Background Paper* (2025).

Hops and some types of seeds (such as pepitas) are grown specifically in the Alpine Shire due to the prevailing climatic conditions, fertile soil and water supply. As such they are considered regionally important commodities. The outlook for hop production in Australia is optimistic, driven by a growing craft beer industry, rising global demand for unique hop varieties, and investments in research and sustainability. The Alpine Shire offers ideal conditions for hop cultivation; however, climate variability and water availability remain key concerns as droughts and heatwaves can impact yields and hop quality.

Figure 6: Land use type, Alpine Shire, 2024



Rural Tourism

Visitor expenditure to Alpine Shire was estimated at $379 million in 2019 driven by domestic overnight visitors (81%). Key activities undertaken by domestic visitors include eating out at a café / restaurant (62%), followed by nature-based and outdoor recreation involving sightseeing (36%), bushwalking (31%) and visiting national parks (29%). This reflects the Alpine Shire's strengths in nature-based and outdoor experiences.[2]

Agriculture is a key element in the Shire's tourism product including sale of gourmet food and wine and contributing to the rural landscape and amenity.

> Agritourism is a tourism-related experience or product that connects people to agricultural products, people or places through farm visits or stays. Agritourism businesses range from farm stays, retail and dining to events, tours and education.

Agritourism provides opportunity in the Alpine Shire to capitalise on the region's natural assets, existing tourist market, and overcome the need for larger farm sizes in areas which have become fragmented.

Forestry

Timber production in Alpine Shire is mainly softwood timber grown by private companies on Crown land under long term lease from the Victorian government.

The area of timber production on private land is relatively small. Timber production occurs mainly in the Lower and Upper Ovens, often on land with steep slopes. The largest timber producer in the Alpine Shire is Hancock Victorian Plantations (HVP).

The leasing of land for timber production provides economic benefit to the Shire and also facilitates recreational activities such as mountain biking in Mystic Bike Park outside of Bright (which is located on land leased for timber harvesting.)

Renewable Energy

The Alpine region has been designated as either 'de-prioritised' or 'avoidance' areas for future renewable energy zones by the Victorian government; however, the presence of a power switching station in Dederang, the Dederang Terminal Station, has led to the identification of this area as suitable and of interest for energy storage.

Since then, two large-scale battery energy storage projects in the Kiewa Valley region have progressed through the Victorian government's Development Facilitation Program. The first is Mint Renewables' Dederang BESS, a 200MW/400MWh facility on a 4 hectare site near Dederang, which will connect to the National Electricity Market via the adjacent Dederang Terminal Station. The second is Trina Solar's

[2] Economic Development Strategy Alpine Shire Council

Kiewa Valley 500MW/1,000MWh battery system, located two kilometres from the Dederang Terminal Station, in Dederang.

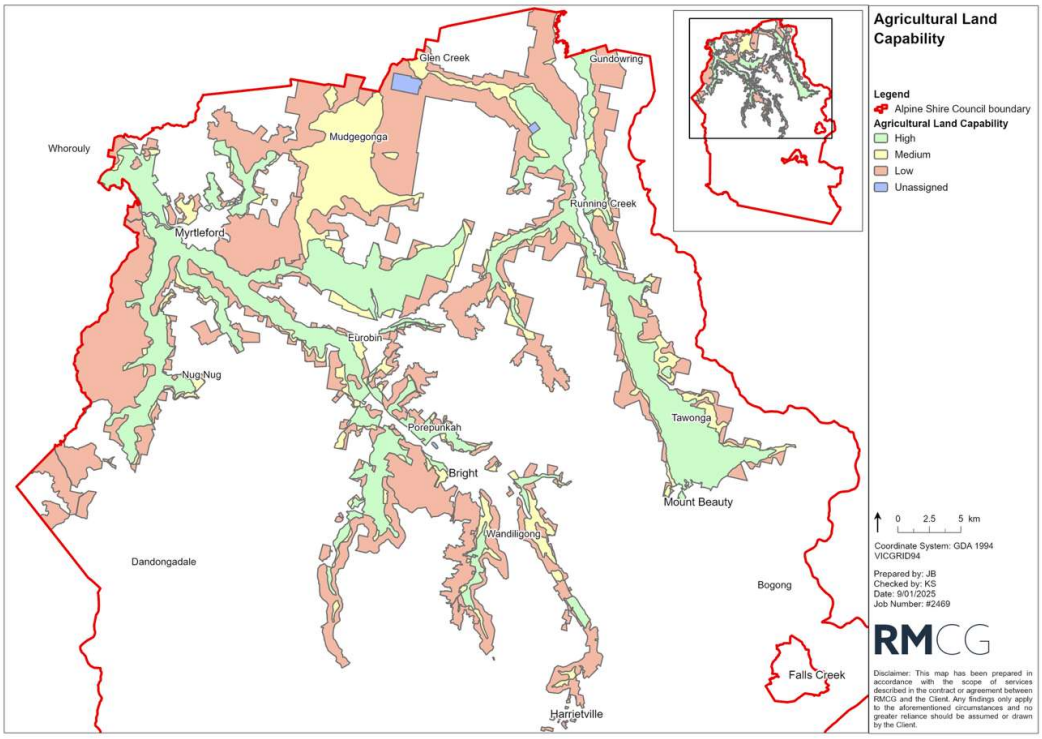
3.4 Agricultural land capability and productivity

The physical characteristics of the land—such as soil type, climate, access to water and supporting infrastructure—are fundamental in determining its agricultural use and long-term productivity. However, sustained productivity also relies on a wider set of factors, including market demand, availability of storage and transport, access to processing and value-adding facilities, adoption of technology, effective marketing and industry support, opportunities for farm expansion and the cost and availability of labour. These factors have been considered when analysing the agricultural capability and productivity of land zoned Farming Zone in the Alpine Shire.

Soil Quality and Land Capability

Soil capability varies across the Shire. The most productive soils occur on river flats and terraces, which are well suited to horticulture due to their drainage and structure. In contrast, areas affected by historical gold mining, particularly in the Upper Ovens Valley, have lost significant topsoil and exhibit reduced agricultural capacity. Land capability mapping classified land into high, medium and low capability based on soil depth, texture, sodicity, slope, erosion risk and access to irrigation (Figure 7). High capability areas support horticulture and dairy, medium capability supports mixed grazing and cropping, and low capability is suited to extensive grazing. The most capable land is concentrated in the Kiewa Valley, Happy Valley, Lower Ovens Valley and Upper Ovens Valley from Myrtleford to Bright, as well as the Buckland Valley. Steeper, erosion-prone areas around Happy Valley generally have lower capability.

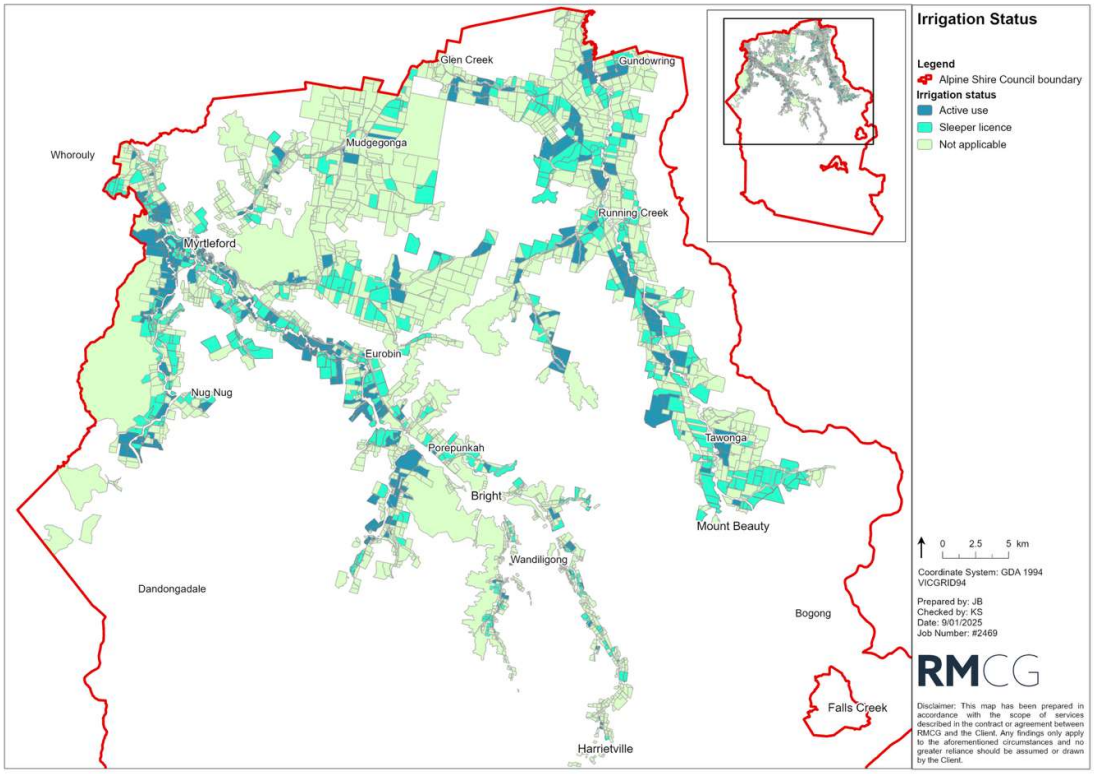
Figure 7: Capability of agricultural land, Alpine Shire, 2025



Water

Irrigated agriculture in the Alpine Shire is supported by diversions from the Kiewa, Ovens and Buffalo Rivers, as well as groundwater and storages such as Lake Buffalo. While water use is significant, licence volumes over the last few years have been underutilised with a number of inactive or "sleeper licences" existing (Figure 8). This suggests there is capacity for further irrigation development and greater security of supply if these sleeper licences were to be reactivated or sold, particularly in years of high rainfall when restrictions are less likely to be imposed. A drier future, with less rainfall, is predicted for the Shire however given storage capacity and flow into the upper reaches of the catchment it is likely that opportunities exist to expand or intensify irrigation-based production, provided water availability is carefully managed alongside environmental requirements.

Figure 8: Irrigation status, Alpine Shire, 2025



Access to Markets

The Shire's distance from major markets and ports poses challenges for agricultural businesses supplying markets outside of the municipality. The principal freight routes of the Hume Freeway and Murray Valley Highway are outside the Shire, leaving the agricultural sector reliant on less direct connections via the Great Alpine Road, Kiewa Valley Highway, and Snow Road (none of which are included on the Principal Freight Network). Industry consultation highlighted high costs and reliability issues in transporting produce. Establishing a freight hub in Myrtleford could improve coordination of agricultural transport and reduce barriers to market access.

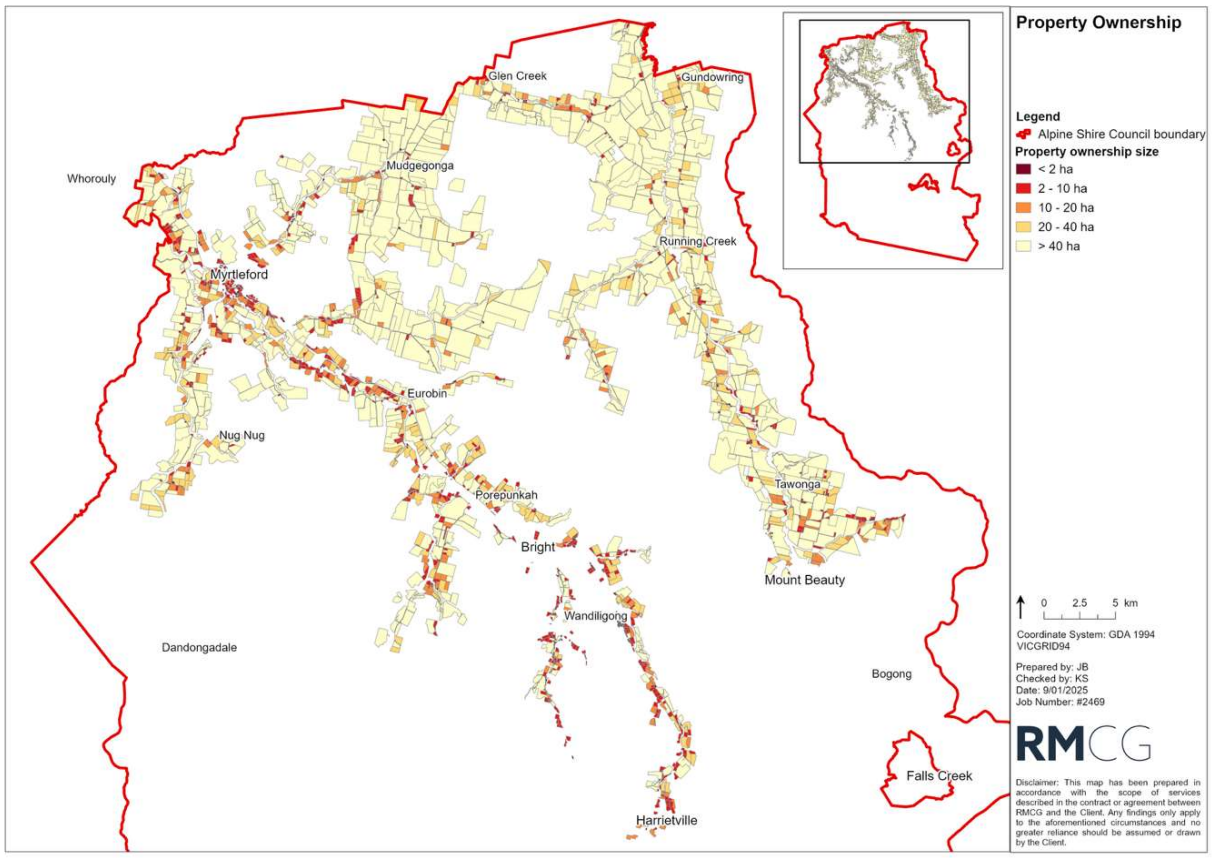
Industry Clusters and Strategic Significance

Agricultural industry clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected businesses, suppliers, and institutions focused on a specific agricultural product or sector. These clusters create synergies through shared infrastructure, knowledge exchange, and regional specialisations often resulting in creation of agricultural value significant at a regional and state level. The hop industry is of state significance, as Australia's hop production only occurs in the alpine region of Victoria, and Tasmania, making it critical to the national industry. Dairy is of regional significance, representing 25 percent of farms in northeast Victoria and providing the second highest gross value of production in the Shire. Beef, horticulture and other enterprises contribute at a local level but remain important for economic diversity.

Farm Size

Farm size strongly influences agricultural viability. Fifty-seven percent of farms in the Shire are 10 hectares or less and concentrated along the Great Alpine Road from Whorouly to Harrietville (Figure 9). Fragmentation increases land values, limits economies of scale and complicates farm expansion. Larger holdings (above 40 hectares) are found in the Kiewa Valley, Happy Valley and Mudgegonga, where dairying and beef grazing predominate. Economic analysis (outlined in the *Alpine Shire Rural Directions Strategy: Background Paper* (2025)) indicates that $500,000 gross annual sales are required to sustain a viable farming business (with no secondary off-farm income). This translates to minimum of 12–18 hectares for production of apples and vegetables, 71 hectares for milk production, and over 500 hectares for dryland beef or cropping. Smaller farms must therefore focus on high-value horticulture or incorporate agritourism to remain viable, while larger holdings support livestock industries but may rely on supplementary off-farm income.

Figure 9: Range and distribution of farm size, Alpine Shire, 2024,



Key Findings

The Alpine Shire contains land of high agricultural capability and strategic significance, particularly in valley systems where water, soil and lot size combine to support viable farming. Irrigation resources remain underutilised, with opportunities for further development through activation or trade of licences. Smaller farms dominate much of the landscape, requiring diversification into high-value horticulture or agritourism. Industry clusters, particularly hops and dairy, provide regional and state significance to the agricultural sector. However, distance to market and freight challenges remain a major barrier. Land fragmentation, soil limitations and competing land uses pose risks to productivity, underscoring the importance of targeted planning to protect and enhance the most productive agricultural land in the Shire.

3.5 Natural landscapes and hazards

Alpine Shire's landscape is dominated by its rivers, alpine peaks and extensive public land, much of it within national and state parks. These features provide iconic environmental and cultural values but also expose the Shire to a range of natural hazards. Land use planning plays a critical role in balancing

the protection of environmental assets with the sustainable use of farming land, towns and villages located in the river valleys.

Climate change is expected to increase average temperatures, reduce winter and spring rainfall and intensify extreme rainfall events. These shifts pose significant risks for agriculture, including reduced viability of cool-climate crops, increased heat stress for livestock and reduced pasture quality. At the same time, reduced snowpack and more variable rainfall will affect water availability for irrigation. Landholders and the agriculture industry more broadly will need to plan and adapt to this future by implementing more water-efficient practices and diversifying crop types. Council can support this transition by promoting emerging opportunities such as agroforestry and carbon farming. Protection of declared water supply catchments, which are vital for downstream communities and the Murray–Darling Basin is also required.

Bushfire risk is a critical concern across the Shire, with all land falling within a Bushfire Prone Area. Extensive application of the Bushfire Management Overlay highlights the vulnerability of rural zones and settlements. While some lower-risk areas, such as around Dederang and Mudgegonga, may provide potential for residential growth, the prevailing pattern of agricultural use and farm consolidation supports retaining much of this land for dairy and livestock grazing. Planning for future residential growth will need to direct development towards lower risk landscapes, in alignment with state policy, however suitable locations in the Alpine Shire are limited, and may negatively impact on agriculture.

Flooding and extreme rainfall events remain a hazard in the major valleys, with the Ovens and Kiewa Rivers and their tributaries acting as key wildlife corridors but also prone to inundation. Flood risk is expected to worsen with climate change. Concentrating urban expansion in lower-risk areas, restricting sensitive development in floodplains, and ensuring that infrastructure design accounts for more intense rainfall will be important planning considerations.

Erosion is a further hazard, particularly in steep areas where slopes exceed 20 percent. Plantation forestry currently provides an effective land use that stabilises slopes and reduces fire risk. Clearing steep land for agriculture or housing would significantly increase erosion risk, threatening land productivity and water quality in rivers and catchments. Application of the Erosion Management Overlay could provide stronger controls in these areas, ensuring that unsuitable land is not converted to more damaging uses.

4. What we heard from the community

4.1 Community consultation process

A range of engagement activities were undertaken during the first phase of engagement, including a community survey, digital mapping, online and in-person workshops, community drop-in sessions and written submissions. Through these engagements, we heard from a total of 189 people across the Shire.

The community survey gathered insights relating to land use priorities, rural infrastructure, tourism, environmental values, natural hazards, and other emerging topics. The community workshops and community drop-in sessions aimed to gather further insights from the community around issues and opportunities identified in the Background Report and Issues and Opportunities Paper, as well as identify priorities and what could be done to address these. A digital mapping activity on Engage Alpine allowed community members to share particular places and activities that they would like to see protected or supported, or that are causing tension or conflict.

Figure 10: Image from community workshop at Porepunkah



4.2 Community insights

The following insights represent the key themes that emerged across the engagement process with the community of Alpine Shire. Drawn from community workshops, community survey, digital mapping and submissions, these findings highlight the community's values, aspirations, concerns and priorities to support rural land in the Shire:

- **Protecting productive agricultural land and farming viability:** There is strong agreement on the need to protect productive farmland from inappropriate development. There is concern about the viability of farming due to increasing costs and rising land prices driven by development pressure, as well as the impact of small lot sizes.
- **Rezoning to enable flexibility and alignment with uses:** There is widespread support for rezoning non-productive and /or unviable farmland (i.e., land with small lots, poor soil, etc.) to residential or rural living zones, particularly near townships. This includes better aligning zoning where farming is no longer occurring. There are however mixed views on subdivision, with some seeing it as a way to enable housing or greater financial viability, while others are concerned about land fragmentation (e.g., around Wandiligong and Freeburgh).
- **Addressing housing shortages for workers and families:** There is clear support for greater flexibility to allow small-scale housing on larger farms to provide much needed affordable housing for workers, family members, or income diversification for farmers.
- **Supporting agritourism and economic diversification:** The community expressed strong support for agritourism, nature-based tourism and outdoor activities, and would like to see collaborative, tailored assistance from Council to support rural businesses in helping to diversify income for farmers.
- **Improving infrastructure and environmental risks:** There is need to improve the condition and accessibility of existing infrastructure, particularly road connections and greater investment in water storage or irrigation systems, as well as stronger pest control and planning for flood events, erosion and climate risks facing rural areas.
- **Simplifying planning processes and flexible policies:** There was a call for reducing planning decision delays and greater consistency in decisions which are a key barrier to tourism and rural business development. There was also desire for Council to introduce a clearer framework for zoning and subdivision, and more flexible policies around land use, subdivision and housing, particularly for degraded or underutilised land in rural areas.
- **Preserving rural character while balancing growth:** There was a strong desire to maintain existing rural character, scenic values and natural landscapes, whilst carefully managing growth to protect township identity, farming activity and the environment.

Alongside these overarching themes, across the engagement period we also heard a range of place-specific feedback. Reoccurring feedback received across each township is summarised as follows:

Dederang:

- Interest in protecting productive agricultural land, with need for some residential development to support workforce.
- Concerns over battery energy storage conflicting with farming and landscape protection.

Buckland Valley:

- Interest in protecting productive agricultural land and some opposition to agritourism and unmanaged camping due to environmental and fire concerns.

Wandiligong:

- Legacy issues of ad hoc subdivision of farmland reducing viability for agriculture, and a call for rezoning of smaller lots to provide more flexible land uses that allow for low density residential development.
- Desire for consistent planning controls that provide clarity and protect heritage and landscape values, and defined settlement boundary.

Freeburgh

- Legacy of subdivision of farmland reducing viability for agriculture, and a call for rezoning of smaller lots to provide more flexible land uses and allow low density residential development.

Harrietville:

- Misalignment of small lots zoned Farming Zone, which are not viable for agriculture and desire for rezoning of small lots to Residential or Rural Living Zones.
- Concern about rebuilding dwellings after natural disasters on land in rural areas where bushfire or other risk controls have been applied.
- Desire for consistent planning controls that provide clarity and defined settlement boundary.

Myrtleford:

- Desire to rezone under-used farming areas, especially near Rural Living Zones, to better reflect land use, and reducing minimum lot sizes or introduce the Rural Activity Zone.
- Interest in protecting significant views and cultural heritage.

Tawonga:

- Interest in subdividing or rezoning properties that are too small for viable agriculture to support rural living, and concern about protecting prime agricultural land from residential growth and visual impacts.
- Need for flexibility for nature-based tourism for infrastructure.

The full findings from the Issues and Opportunities community consultation process can be found in the *Alpine Shire Rural Directions Strategy: Engagement Summary Report* (2025).

5. Trends and challenges

Detailed background analysis and community consultation identified several key trends and land use challenges affecting Alpine Shire's rural areas. The strategic directions and detailed strategies and actions contained in the ARDS aim to provide a comprehensive response to these issues.



Loss of productive farmland

Alpine Shire's scenic appeal has led to increasing lifestyle development within farming areas, resulting in land fragmentation and land use conflict. This trend limits farm expansion and undermines agricultural viability by preventing economies of scale.



Tourism uses in rural areas

Tourism is an important source of income to the Shire, and there is significant pressure to provide tourism opportunities in the rural areas of the Shire. If not managed and sited carefully, they can also threaten the valued rural aspects of the Shire and agricultural production.



Risk from natural hazards

Alpine Shire faces widespread bushfire risk, with no area without some exposure. There are also large areas of the Shire affected by flood and erosion risk associated with steep slopes. Future growth must be carefully managed to protect life and ensure sustainable land use.



Climate change and economic diversification

Climate change is expected to bring higher temperatures, more extreme weather, and reduced surface water flows. While major shifts in agricultural commodities are unlikely, producers will need to adapt through improved water efficiency and diversification.



Limited supply chain infrastructure

Agricultural production in Alpine Shire is constrained by its remote location and high freight costs, with no dedicated freight facility currently available. This limits access to major markets and places pressure on producers.



Forestry interface conflicts

The proximity of forestry operations to residential, agricultural, and other land uses increases the potential for conflict. Key issues at these interfaces include heightened bushfire risk, increased heavy vehicle traffic, and greater pest activity.



Outdated planning policy

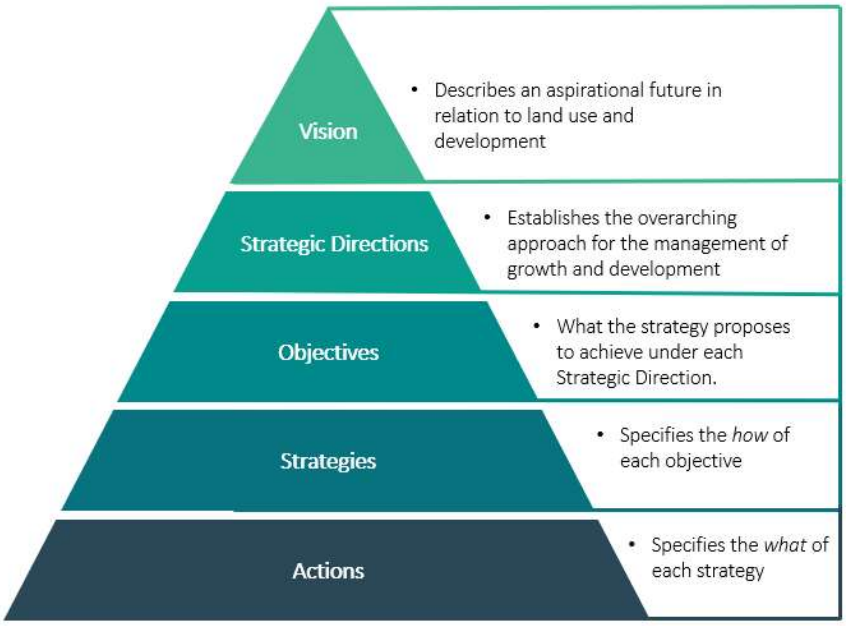
Alpine Shire's rural planning framework remains outdated, with key strategy recommendations unimplemented and unresolved planning irregularities. Flooding and significant landscape overlays rely on dated assessments, and the Alpine Planning Scheme does not reflect the diversity of rural land uses.

6. Planning Framework

6.1 Strategy structure

This section sets out the overarching strategic direction for future land use and development in Alpine Shire through 2041. It sets an overarching vision for rural lands in the Shire in 2041. The vision is underpinned by a series of strategic directions, objectives, strategies and actions, which provide an increasing level of detail for how the vision will be realised, as described in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Alpine Shire Rural Directions Strategy structure



Source: SGS Economics and Planning (2025)

6.2 Strategy vision

The Vision for the Rural Directions Strategy needs to complement and progress the broader vision of Council.

Council has adopted the *Community Vision and Council Plan 2025-29*. The community vision is:

> A strong and adaptable Alpine Shire that embraces change, supports new ideas, and leads with confidence. Through community, sustainability, and bold leadership, we help to create a vibrant future.

The vision has three objectives, with statements of vision under each, as follows:

> Objective 1: Customer Focus and Leadership

- We lead with confidence and innovation to overcome challenges
- We are committed to excellent service

Objective 2: Resilience and sustainability

- Our people, places, and environment strengthen Alpine Shire's future
- We make informed decisions to support our community

Objective 3: Healthy and Vibrant Community

- We embrace change to build a strong, thriving community
- We support people at every stage of life

The Alpine Planning Scheme also includes the following statement of vision, which is from the previous Community Vision and Council Plan:

> Our people, places and environment enrich our area's resilience, prosperity and sustainability.
>
> - **For those who live and visit**: To be connected, supported and welcomed throughout all stages of life.
> - **For a thriving economy**: Ideas and industry thrive through a climate sensitive and diverse economy.
> - **For bold protection of our future**: Our natural environment is protected and preserved.
> - **For the enjoyment and opportunities of our lifestyle**: The connection between people and place is strengthened.
> - **For strong and informed leadership**: Collaborative, bold and evidence-based decision making.

Also relevant is the 2024 Land Development Strategy, which has the following vision for land use planning:

> In 2041, the diverse housing needs of our community will be met, while preserving the unique local character of our many towns and settlements. The Shire will be a thriving visitor destination, with diverse local industry, and a strong jobs, goods, and services offering. Growth and development will be managed in a way that recognises the significant natural values of the Shire, and the impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

The vision for this Rural Directions Strategy, which refines this vision to focus on the planning for rural land, is below.

Alpine Shire Council will support and plan for use and development in rural areas in a manner that best harnesses and protects the environmental, economic, social, landscape and cultural values of rural land.

6.3 Strategic directions

The strategic directions that underpin this strategy and frame the discussion that follows are as follows.

- 1: Environmental risks: To avoid development in areas at risk of natural hazard to protect human life.
- 2. Natural resource management: To identify, protect and manage significant natural resources so that they can be harnessed in a sustainable manner.
- 3. Rural Settlement: To direct future population and housing development in accordance with the defined future roles of service towns, rural towns, small settlements and rural localities.
- 4. Rural residential development: To direct rural residential development to defined rural settlements and identified land of low agricultural productivity, while appropriately managing bushfire risk.
- 5. Rural industry and tourism: To support appropriate non-agricultural uses in rural areas where these do not compromise agricultural production or landscape values.
- 6. Environmental and landscape values: To manage use and development to protect the environmental and landscape values of the Shire.

These strategic directions complement (and in some cases partially overlap with) the directions of the *Alpine Shire Land Development Strategy* (2024). They have also been written to align with the structure of the Municipal Planning Strategy in the Alpine Planning Scheme, which also includes a range of strategic directions.

Strategic Direction 1: Environmental risks

Alpine Shire is at risk of flooding, erosion and bushfires. Changes in patterns of rainfall and temperature have the potential to exacerbate these risks. Future planning for residential and land use development needs to consider how to best manage these risks and prevent harm to human health, agriculture and the environment.

Bushfire

Bushfire risk is a significant challenge for accommodating future residential growth in the Alpine Shire. All land within the Alpine Shire is within designated Bushfire Prone Areas (BPA). This status is shared with almost all non-metropolitan land in Victoria. However, the Shire also has a large amount of rurally zoned land (Farming Zone, Rural Living Zone and Rural Conservation Zone) with the Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO). This reflects a higher level of bushfire risk than the much more widely applied Bushfire Prone Areas.

Within the identified BMO areas, Council is required to consider the state policy in Clause 13.02-1S – Bushfire planning, which has an overall objective:

> To strengthen the resilience of settlements and communities to bushfire through risk-based planning that prioritises the protection of human life.

The policy also gives priority to the protection of human life by:

- Prioritising the protection of human life over all other policy considerations.

- Directing population growth and development to low-risk locations and ensuring the availability of, and safe access to, areas where human life can be better protected from the effects of bushfire.
- Reducing the vulnerability of communities to bushfire through the consideration of bushfire risk in decision making at all stages of the planning process.

The *Alpine Shire Bushfire Planning Study* (2024) identified Dederang and Mudgegonga as lower risk areas that may be suitable for future residential development if the Victorian Government requires additional growth in the Alpine Shire. These areas are not currently serviced by reticulated water and sewer.

The BMO applies detailed obligations relating to construction standards, defendable space, access arrangements and the like when new houses are built. This provides a level of assurance regarding protection of human life through the planning system. However, it is important that planning decisions consider bushfire risk more broadly.

For example, maintenance of defendable space frequently involves vegetation removal. If lots are too small in areas subject to the BMO, this can require levels of clearing that threaten valued habitat and landscape values. It is also important that planning provisions not give owners of land the impression that land is suitable for housing if there is doubt about whether it is safe to use for this purpose. This is relevant to the discussion of rural living opportunities discussed at Strategic Direction 4.

Erosion

Erosion poses a threat to land sustainability, water quality, and potentially tourism activity. The significant slope of land within the Alpine Shire, and extreme weather events associated with future climate change is likely to increase the risk of erosion. A Victorian government review, like that occurring currently in East Gippsland, could occur in Alpine Shire to consider incorporation of land greater than 20% slope into the Erosion Management Overlay.

Climate change

Climate change is predicted to increase temperatures, result in more extreme weather events and decrease surface water flows by 20% in the Alpine Shire.[3] Although it is unlikely that there will be significant change in the type of commodities produced in the Alpine Shire (as they are considered best suited land uses) industry will need to consider how they prepare for this future through potential diversification of crops and improved water use efficiency.

Objective

- **O1.1:** To manage natural hazards in rural areas and prioritise the protection of human life in relation to the use and development of rural land.

Strategies

- **S1.1.1:** Direct residential development to areas of low bushfire risk consistent with State Planning Policy.

[3] Climate Futures – Opportunities and Challenges. Climate adaptation for dairy farming in the Alpine Valleys (2019)

- **S1.1.2:** Strongly discourage development that increases exposure to bushfire hazards in areas where risk to life cannot be reduced to an acceptable level.
- **S1.1.3:** Avoid further subdivision or rezoning for rural living purposes in rural areas subject to the Bushfire Management Overlay.
- **S1.1.4:** Ensure decisions regarding subdivision consider the environmental and landscape impacts of the management of bushfire risk.
- **S1.1.5:** Encourage innovation by supporting new technologies and sustainable practices that help agriculture adapt to climate change.

Actions

- **A1.1.1:** Request the Victorian government undertake an assessment of erosion risk from public land to private land and apply appropriate planning controls.
- **A1.1.2:** Advocate for the Victorian government to apply flood controls to land identified by the North East Catchment Management Authority as being subject to inundation.
- **A1.1.3:** Encourage ongoing landholder education and proactive land management to reduce fuel loads, maintain access, and enhance landscape resilience to bushfire events.

Strategic Direction 2: Natural Resource Management

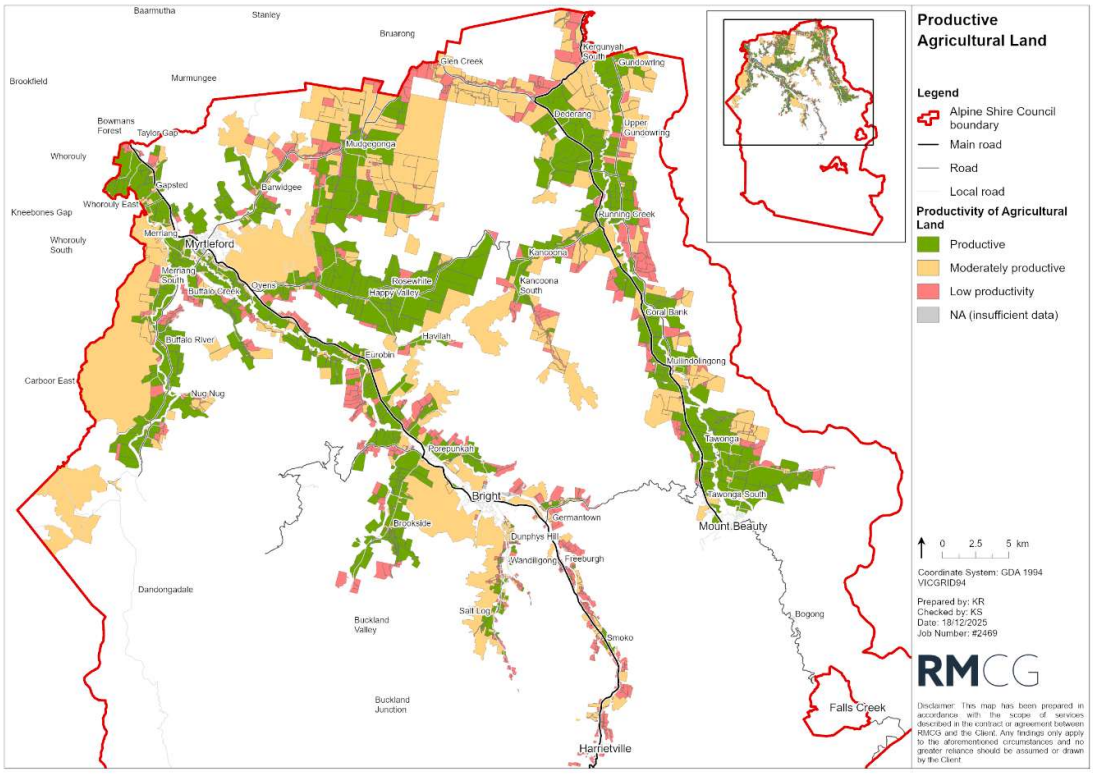
Agriculture

The Farming Zone – which applies to most of Alpine Shire's farming land – affords the highest level of protection for agriculture. The principles enforced within this zone are important to ensure the future sustainability of these industries and their contribution to the regional economy.

However, it is important that the choice of zone acknowledges variability in the productivity of agricultural land. Maintaining the strong protection of the Farming Zone in areas that are no longer valuable for agriculture can stifle other appropriate uses of land. Ensuring the zoning properly reflects productivity also helps to strengthen protection when the Farming Zone is applied.

The agricultural productivity of land currently zoned Farming Zone has been assessed and mapped (Figure 12) according to the suitability of soil type, climatic conditions and infrastructure (such as access to irrigation water) for agriculture. This data has been combined with the present pattern of subdivision to identify areas which are more capable of supporting agriculture (high and moderate productivity) versus those that are more constrained (low productivity). The criteria and matrix used to develop this map is provided in the *Alpine Shire Rural Directions Strategy: Background Paper* (2025).

Figure 12: Productivity of Farming Zoned land in the Alpine Shire



Source: RMCG (2025)

This data, grounded by landholder consultation, identifies that land zoned Farming Zone within the Kiewa Valley, Happy Valley, Buffalo River Valley and Buckland Valley is being used productively and appropriately for agriculture. There are also areas of highly productive land around Mudgegonga and sections of the Lower Ovens Valley along the Great Alpine Road between Gapsted and Porepunkah. These areas contain land of suitable soil types for agriculture, low slope and access to water for irrigation.

This analysis is generally consistent with the land identified by the Victorian government in 2014 as strategic agricultural land in the *Hume Regional Growth Plan* – while this is only a background document in the planning framework, that plan recognised the strategic significance of land within the Kiewa Valley, Lower Ovens Valley and Buffalo River Valley.[4]

The highest level of protection is recommended for these areas to ensure agriculture remains a viable industry for the future. Agribusinesses in these areas have also been able to consolidate lots into larger farms. For businesses focussed on beef and milk production sufficient economies of scale are critical to financial viability. For these areas the protection afforded by the Farming Zone is appropriate and will

[4] As of writing, the regional growth plan is recognised as a background document in the Alpine Planning Scheme, but the formal regional strategy is *Plan for Victoria*. This new strategy does not, however, include detailed mapping of strategic agricultural land.

help to ensure future industry sustainability. It is therefore recommended that the Farming Zone is retained for these areas.

Much of the land between Bright and Harrietville has low productivity due to poor soil types (resulting from earlier mining activity stripping the topsoil) and smaller farm size. Around Wandiligong fragmentation of land into smaller farm sizes has also reduced the productivity of land zoned Farming Zone. These areas have been subject to higher levels of pressure for rural living, reducing the capacity of land to support agriculture due to land use conflicts, reduced amenity, and challenges for legitimate farming operations.

Opportunities for agriculture still exist in this area but may look different to 'traditional' farming operations. Land adjacent to the Great Alpine Road in the Ovens Valley sees higher visitation by tourists presenting opportunities for agritourism. Facilitating the development of tourist uses provide an opportunity for agribusinesses on smaller farms to diversify income and improve farm viability.

The policy at Clause 14.01-1L of the Alpine Planning Scheme (Protection of agricultural land) outlines sound principles but can be made more specific through the reference to mapping of productive agricultural land. This mapping should be included as a supplement to the main strategic framework plan at Clause 02.04 of the Municipal Planning Strategy of the Alpine Planning Scheme.

This productivity mapping also provides basis for clearer spatial guidance through zones and the strategic framework plan. This may enable a broader range of land uses than typically permitted in the Farming Zone, including expanded opportunities for rural living (see Strategic Direction 4) and tourism-related development (Strategic Direction 5). Directing such outcomes through rezoning and the strategic framework plan will strengthen the remaining areas zoned Farming Zone and reduce the pressure for ad hoc approvals of non-agricultural uses in highly productive areas. These areas are discussed in more detail below at Strategic Directions 4 and 5, and the discussion of spatial directions in Section 6.4.

Outside of those areas identified for increased flexibility, policy and zone settings should be strengthened to reaffirm the commitment to protecting agricultural land. Currently the Alpine Planning Scheme contemplates subdivision in the Farming Zone to 20 hectares (lower than the statewide default of 40 hectares) subject to certain criteria specified in policy at Clause 14.01-1L of the Alpine Planning Scheme.[5] However the strategic rezoning of suitable low productivity land in a targeted manner is preferable to continued ad hoc subdivision. A 40 hectare minimum subdivision area in areas maintained as Farming Zone would better reflect the productivity and importance of Alpine Shire's agricultural land.

Objective

- **O2.1:** To support agriculture and add value to industries.

Strategies

- **S2.1.1:** Protect productive agricultural land and intensive agricultural areas from incompatible uses.
- **S2.1.2:** Limit the subdivision of productive agricultural land.

[5] This schedule requires revision, regardless of this strategy, to address an outdated cross-reference to the policy criteria.

- S2.1.3: Limit new dwellings on productive agricultural land unless they are legitimately required for agricultural operation.
- S2.1.4: Encourage a diverse range of agricultural enterprises on moderate to low productivity land, such as market gardens, wineries, and on-site processing of farm produce, while carefully considering environmental and amenity impacts.
- S2.1.5: Foster tourism development that complements both agricultural operations and the natural landscape on moderate to low productivity land.
- S2.1.6: Discourage land uses that create urban-style activity levels or infrastructure demands.

Actions

- A2.1.1: Include the map of productive agricultural land as a supplement to a Rural Framework Plan at Clause 02.04 of the Alpine Planning Scheme.
- A2.1.2: Outside of identified settlements and rural economic clusters, amend the Schedule to the Farming Zone of the Alpine Planning Scheme to apply a minimum subdivision area of 40 hectares and remove the associated criteria for subdivision below 40 hectares from Clause 14.01-1L of the Alpine Planning Scheme.

Forestry and timber production

Timber production in the Alpine Shire primarily consists of softwood plantations on Crown land leased by private companies (the largest operator is Hancock Victorian Plantations (HVP)). These lease arrangements not only provide economic benefits but also enable community uses, such as mountain biking at Mystic Bike Park near Bright.

Maintaining forestry operations on leased land is particularly valuable in areas with slopes greater than 20 percent, where agriculture is unsuitable due to erosion risk and management challenges. Continued investment by HVP in vegetation management also contributes to reducing bushfire risk. This is because if lease arrangements were discontinued, responsibility for vegetation management would revert to the Victorian government, requiring ongoing, significant resources to ensure that fire risk and land stability are effectively addressed.

However, when timber production is located close to residential development and farming land it can:

- Increase risk to human life due to bushfire.
- Facilitate the entry of large vertebrate ‘pests’ such as kangaroo and deer onto farmland which graze on crops (such as vines).
- Increase traffic (particularly large trucks) on roads when harvesting trees.
- Increase erosion risk and soil movement into waterways when harvesting trees.

Land currently used for timber production in the Alpine Shire was assessed according to slope, risk of flood, and proximity to waterways and settlements (Figure 13). Timber production occurring in areas with:

- Brown and blue hatching should continue to be used for timber production due to the significant slope and/or risk of flooding in these areas.

- A green outline and hatching could be considered for other land uses (if desired) to reduce the potential movement of soil into waterways and presence of large trucks on the Great Alpine Road when harvesting.

Sites 1 – 6 are zoned Farming Zone. These parcels could be converted to agriculture; however, further investigation of the capability of this land to support agriculture is required (as its productivity has not been mapped). Conversion to other land uses will need to consider the presence of a water treatment plant (Site 2) and a water reservoir (Site 5). Where parcels are located close to settlements and of moderate to poor agricultural productivity, Section 2 Uses for tourism and/or value adding to agricultural produce (processing and manufacturing) could be considered.

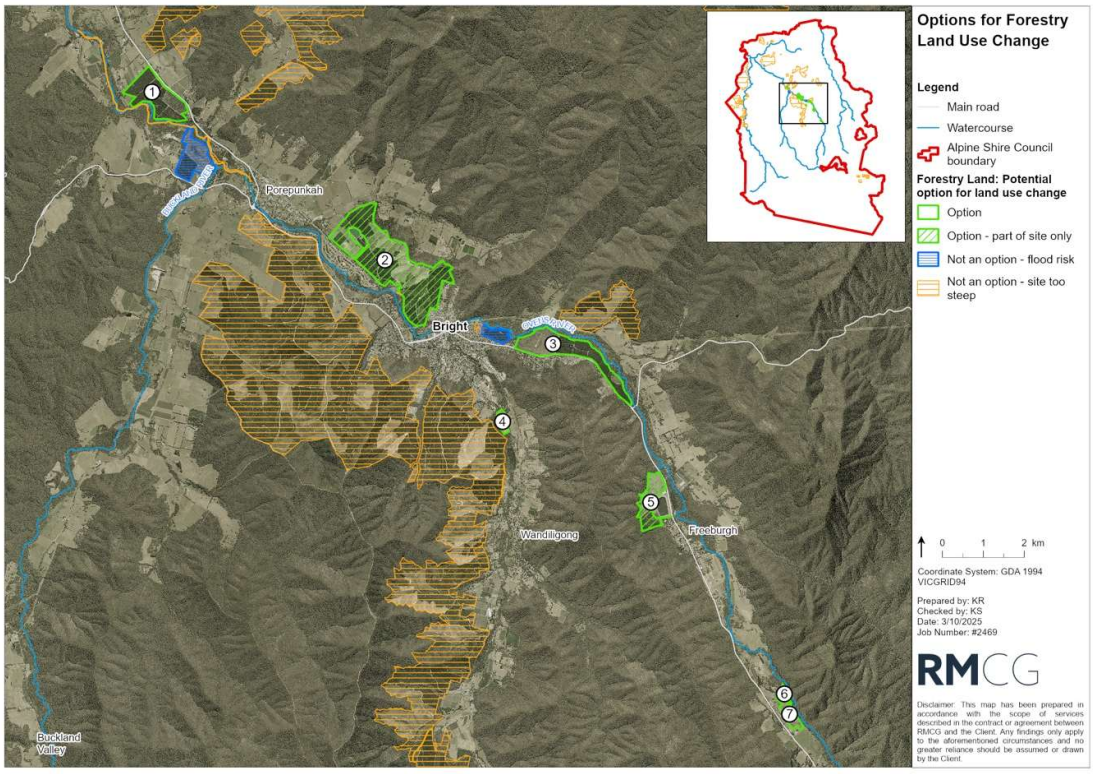
Objective

- O2.2 To manage timber production to avoid detrimental impacts on waterways and settlements.

Strategy

- S2.2 Convert land used for timber production with minimal slope (less than 20%), low risk of flooding (not within a relevant overlay) and proximate to settlements to other land uses suited to the Farming Zone and with low risk to settlements.

Figure 13: Identification of alternative uses for land used for timber production



Strategic direction 3: Rural settlement

The Alpine Shire Land Development Strategy (2024) identified a settlement hierarchy for the Shire's towns and settlements.

The largest towns in the Shire are classed in that hierarchy as *service towns* – moderate to large towns that contain commercial centres and provide the majority of the Shire's housing and services. Towns in this category within Alpine Shire are Bright, Myrtleford and Mount Beauty / Tawonga South. Porepunkah is identified in that strategy as an emerging service town having regard to its capacity for residential, commercial and industrial growth.

The next identified category, *rural towns*, have limited commercial and community facilities and typically lack a clear commercial centre. Dederang, Harrietville, Tawonga, and Wandiligong are in this category. Dinner Plain is a seasonal tourist town.

Finally, the strategy identifies *small settlements*. These are areas of dispersed dwellings with limited services, facilities, or urban zoning. Freeburgh, Ovens and Germantown are in this category.

The Alpine Shire Land Development Strategy (2024) supports growth being directed to the service towns given the availability of services; however, Alpine Shire's service towns are constrained by bushfire and flooding risk, which limits their opportunity for outward growth.

Dederang and Mudgegonga both have relatively low bushfire risk compared to other areas in the Shire – although bushfire risk still exists. This has raised the possibility that these townships may accommodate further growth if this is sought by the Victorian government.

However, in practice, there are only very limited services and infrastructure in both towns (especially Mudgegonga). The land zoned Farming Zone around both towns is being well used for suitable agricultural uses such as beef and dairy production. It is therefore recommended that these areas retain their current zoning and role in the settlement hierarchy.

Wandiligong has significant dispersed residential development in areas zoned Farming Zone that, along with the small subdivision size, has reduced the agricultural productivity of the land. In some areas this may warrant review of the suitability of the Farming Zone. While there is opportunity to provide for more rural living within these areas, this opportunity is significantly constrained by bushfire risk. This is discussed at Strategic Direction 4.

Freeburgh and Ovens similarly have areas of limited agricultural productivity. There is opportunity to accommodate some additional rural living and tourism uses in these areas. Again, however, these opportunities are constrained by bushfire risk, as discussed at Strategic Direction 4.

Therefore, no change is proposed to the settlement hierarchy, which remains an appropriate framework for growth.

It should be noted, however, that Alpine Shire is likely approaching a natural limit to its population given bushfire risk and the practical constraints of servicing lower risk locations such as Dederang and Mudgegonga. Some incremental growth can be accommodated through infill development in existing towns, but there is limited opportunity for new residential land given the issues outlined above. This ultimately may require the Victorian government to clarify the resolution of competing policy objectives – accommodation of population growth, protection of human life, and protection of agricultural land –

that can no longer be fully resolved. It may be that substantial population growth needs to be directed elsewhere in regional Victoria.

The following objectives and strategies are from the 2024 Alpine Shire Land Development Strategy and remain applicable as overarching guidance regarding rural settlement. The Objective below also serves as Objective 3.1 for this Strategy.

Objective

- To direct residential, commercial, industrial and community infrastructure growth to safe, suitable and well serviced locations, in an orderly manner.

Strategies

- Direct residential, employment and community infrastructure growth to locate within the settlement boundaries of Service Towns as shown on the Service Town Framework Plans.
- Promote intensification of residential development in existing urban zoned areas.
- Consolidate commercial and industrial activity in existing zoned land in Service Towns.
- Include commentary in the Municipal Planning Strategy about the impact short stay accommodation has on delivering affordable and available long term housing and the impact this has on the community.

Action

- A3.1: Advocate for the Victorian government to clarify guidance regarding future population growth in the Shire given the constraints of bushfire risk and protection of agricultural land.

Strategic Direction 4: Rural residential development

Land within the Alpine Shire is highly desirable for rural residential purposes, given the alpine and rural scenery and proximity to well-serviced townships. The area's tourism industry also means that there is considerable demand for holiday accommodation, including in rural settings. This increases the competition in rural areas between rural residential use and other uses such as agriculture and tourism uses. The current strategic directions in the Alpine Planning Scheme identify Low Density Residential and Rural Living land as being able to support rural residential living.

There are, however, limited areas within these zones. Instead, areas such as Wandiligong and Harrietville have seen considerable ad hoc development on land zoned Farming Zone.

The priority in areas zoned Farming Zone should be the protection of productive agricultural land, given the economic importance of this land (see Strategic Direction 2); however, where factors such as soil capability or previous land fragmentation have significantly decreased productivity, zone settings may be changed to allow more potential for rural living to occur. This should occur only where:

- Agricultural productivity is low and existing land use has already shifted away from a focus on farming.
- Multiple sites with low productivity are located together (rather than rezoning individual sites with low productivity).

- Sites are close to services and existing townships – preferably in locations that allow for a coherent settlement boundary.
- Increased flexibility with regards to use will not create inappropriate levels of bushfire or natural hazards risk.

This assessment should be embedded in zones to minimise further loss of agricultural land on a site-by-site basis. Identification of suitable land through the application of appropriate zones increases the effective strength of the protection of agricultural uses on land zoned Farming Zone by demonstrating that the current zoning settings have been actively reviewed and reflect land where it is intended to continue to prioritise agriculture.

A significant constraint on such use of zones to identify land for rural living is that most of the Shire – and particularly areas subject to the most pressure for rural living, such as the Ovens Valley upstream of Myrtleford – is within the Bushfire Management Overlay. This complicates the application of the Rural Living or Low Density Residential Zones, as these would explicitly endorse land for residential use. This would not be appropriate, as some properties may on further investigation prove unsuitable for housing because of bushfire risk. This may result in landholders and future purchasers being unable to develop in line with reasonable expectations raised by the zone.

An alternate approach is to use the Rural Activity Zone. This would retain "Dwelling" as a Section 2 Use, avoiding the automatic endorsement of land as suitable for housing. A custom purpose could be added to "allow for residential use in a rural environment in locations if bushfire risk can be appropriately managed." This is derived from a purpose of the Rural Living Zone but makes explicit that residential use will only be supported if the bushfire risk can be appropriately addressed. It contrasts with the strong emphasis on protection of agriculture in the Farming Zone.

A schedule to the zone could include a minimum subdivision size above the existing lot sizes to prevent further subdivision of this land. This will prevent the creation of additional lots in land with significant bushfire risk.

Even with these approaches, it may be that some areas involve such high levels of risk that rezoning should not be contemplated.

In Wandiligong, where much of the land zoned Farming Zone that is of lower productivity is also covered by Heritage and Significant Landscape Overlays, the Rural Conservation Zone could be used in recognition of the town's historic, landscape and cultural values. This would similarly signal a lesser level of protection for farming than in the Farming Zone. As with the Rural Activity Zone, a schedule to the zone could be used to prevent further subdivision.

Clause 02.03-6 of the Alpine Planning Scheme (Rural residential development) does not currently have resolved strategic directions listed. The following strategic direction could be added once appropriate land is rezoned:

- Direct rural residential development to defined rural settlements and land within the Rural Conservation Zone and Rural Activity Zone [Schedule x], provided that bushfire risk can be appropriately managed.

The strategies and policy guidelines at Clause 14.01-1L of the Alpine Planning Scheme should reflect this strategic direction. Further discussion of how this is resolved spatially is included at Section 6.4.

There are several isolated pockets within Alpine Shire that are within the Bushfire Management Overlay and have already been rezoned to either the Rural Living Zone or the Low Density Residential Zone. Examples include properties around Diggins Road outside of Tawonga and Rural Living Zone parcels on the eastern edge of Harrietville. Given the levels of risk associated with these locations, minimum subdivision sizes should be increased to prevent further subdivision.

Objective

- **O4.1:** To direct rural residential development to locations with low agricultural productivity, low bushfire risk, and that are close to existing settlements.

Strategies

- **S4.1.1:** Direct rural residential development to defined rural residential settlements and on land zoned Low Density Residential Zone and Rural Activity Zone [Schedule x] if bushfire risk can be appropriately managed.
- **S4.1.2:** Prevent further subdivision of Rural Living and Low Density Residential zoned land within the Bushfire Management Overlay.

Actions

- **A4.1.1:** Investigate rezoning areas of low agricultural productivity near townships that are currently zoned Farming Zone to Rural Activity Zone with a purpose supporting residential development if bushfire risk can be appropriately managed, and with a minimum lot size that prevents further subdivision.
- **A4.1.2:** Investigate rezoning areas of low agricultural productivity around Wandiligong that are currently zoned Farming Zone to Rural Conservation Zone with a purpose supporting residential development, if bushfire risk can be appropriately managed, and with a minimum lot size that prevents further subdivision.

Strategic Direction 5: Rural industry and tourism

Rural tourism

Agricultural tourism and value adding to agricultural produce is already established in Alpine Shire and includes selling primary produce or processed products through road-side sale and cellar doors, pick your own and online direct sales. Accommodation in conjunction with an agricultural business such as farm stays and farm-to-table dining are also opportunities to value add to primary production.

Tourism uses that are permitted in the Farming Zone include bed and breakfast (for less than ten people), primary produce sales and rural stores.

Examples of farm-related tourism uses considered appropriate for the majority of areas zoned Farming Zone within the Shire include pick-your-own operation, farmgate sales and accommodation within the primary farm residence (e.g., bed and breakfast). Some of these already have relatively favourable zone settings, even in the Farming Zone. For example, farmgate sales (called “primary produce sales” in the Alpine Planning Scheme) does not need a planning permit if the display and sale area is less than 50 square metres and more than 100 metres from a dwelling. Bed and breakfast, similarly, can often be established without a permit.

Other uses that can be considered, subject to a planning permit, include camping and caravan park, group accommodation, host farm, residential hotel, restaurant and winery. Some of these uses – such as camping and caravan parks or residential hotels – are better suited to townships which have the infrastructure services to support developments of this scale. Large scale tourism developments in rural areas also have the potential to impact the operation of surrounding agricultural businesses, landscape and biodiversity values.

There are also locations along the Great Alpine Road where there are already clusters of small lots or tourism uses, including in Gapsted, Ovens, Eurobin, north of Porepunkah, Germantown, Freeburgh and Smoko. In these locations agricultural productivity is already reduced due to combinations of lower quality soils, small lots and clusters of housing and tourist uses. At the same time, sites with direct access to the Great Alpine Road are prime locations for tourist uses. This tips the balance of policy considerations more favourably towards allowing some increased flexibility for a broader range of agritourism uses.

These locations could be identified in policy as designated Rural Economic Clusters (RECs). Supporting a greater range of agritourism activities in these locations through policy will provide landholders with an opportunity to supplement their income, which may be limited by small farm size and poorer soil types. These proposed “rural economic clusters” are discussed in more detail in Section 6.4.

Examples of tourism uses encouraged in these areas include:

- Pick-your-own and farmgate sales.
- Farm stays, bed and breakfast.
- Accommodation including cabins, glamping, and tiny houses in conjunction with an agricultural activity or natural values.
- Function centres in conjunction with an agricultural activity such as a winery.
- Adding value to agricultural experiences such as cookery schools and farm management education.
- Restaurants which allow for the sale of beverages alongside food produce.

Examples of tourism uses considered inappropriate in rural areas, including in the rural economic clusters, include:

- Camping and caravan parks.
- Group accommodation.
- Markets.
- Residential hotels.

These uses are more appropriately located in or adjacent to towns where there are relevant services and infrastructure.

Objective

- **O5.1:** To encourage rural tourism that protects and capitalises upon the Shire's agricultural strengths and environmental, landscape and cultural values.

Strategies

- S5.1.1: Ensure tourism use and development is at an appropriate scale and sited to:
    - Avoid impacting the operation of surrounding agricultural enterprises.
    - Appropriately consider impacts on environment and landscape values.
- S5.1.2: Focus tourism development in identified rural economic clusters and areas of low agricultural productivity.
- S5.1.3: Locate large-scale tourism development within existing settlements unless:
    - The tourism enterprise requires a rural location.
    - The development will not contribute to the urbanisation of the area.
    - The land use is compatible with the use of adjoining and surrounding land for agriculture or forestry and is complementary to the rural setting.
    - The facility will significantly contribute to the local and regional tourism economy.
- S5.1.4: Only support tourism uses and development in the Farming Zone where it is associated with, and will remain subordinate to, an existing agricultural enterprise.
- S5.1.5: Encourage tourism buildings and ancillary infrastructure to be clustered together on the property and screened from view from neighbouring dwellings.
- S5.1.6: Support the use and development of land for tourism if it will result in net environmental benefit or rehabilitation of degraded land.

Actions

- A5.1: Identify preferred locations for increased range of agritourism through mapping of rural economic clusters in the strategic framework plan, and provide guidance about the range of uses supported within and outside these clusters in policy.

Renewable Energy

The majority of the Alpine Shire is designated by the Victorian government as either “deprioritised” or “avoidance” tiers for future renewable energy zones. Key factors for this designation are the landscape values of the region and the narrow valley floors. The Victorian government has recently approved two applications for development of battery storage facilities in Dederang.

Battery storage, which requires less space/area and has a lower visual impact (then solar or wind developments), could be entertained in areas of the Shire that currently have other energy infrastructure (such as existing substations or transmission lines) to minimise connection costs and maximise value to the electricity system.

Objective

- O5.2: To support the provision and use of renewable energy in a manner that appropriately responds to its landscape context.

Strategies

- S5.2.1: Facilitate renewable energy development in appropriate locations where:
    - It is proximate to existing energy infrastructure;

- The land is of low agricultural productivity; and
- Landscape impact can be appropriately mitigated.

Freight and logistics

Industry consultation has highlighted that the cost, availability and reliability of transporting primary produce from the Alpine Shire to market is a challenge.[6] The establishment of a freight hub could provide benefit to the agricultural sector by facilitating the coordination of freight in and out of the Shire potentially addressing current freight concerns. Myrtleford is already recognised in the Alpine Planning Scheme as an ideal location for such a facility due to its location with ready access to Wangaratta, the Lower and Upper Ovens Valleys, and the Happy Valley (including connections to the Kiewa Valley).

Ideally this freight hub should be located in an industrial zone. The *Alpine Shire Land Development Strategy* (2024) contemplates the planned release of further industrial land (Strategy 7.1), and this planning should consider the potential location of a freight hub.

However, a road freight terminal can also be considered in the Farming Zone. The priority locations for a road freight terminal would be:

- Close to Myrtleford (ideally to the west to avoid large trucks entering the town)
- With direct access to the Great Alpine Road
- If within the Farming Zone, on land with the lowest available agricultural productivity.

The strategy below is the existing strategy from the Alpine Planning Scheme (at Clause 18.02-5L – Freight), which along with the action below is considered to provide an appropriate path forward with regards to freight.

Objective

- O.5.3: To provide appropriate freight facilities to support agricultural production in locations that minimise impacts upon residential areas and other road users.

Strategy

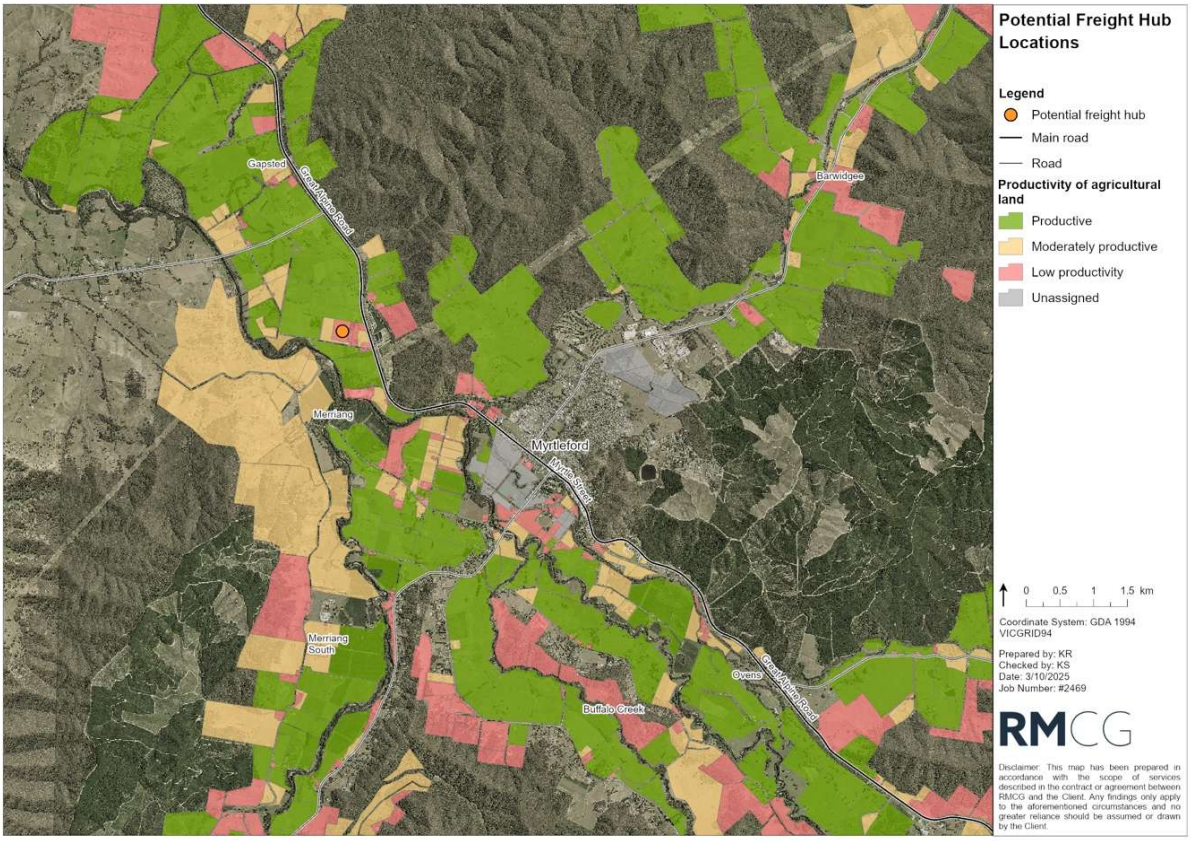
- S.5.3: Encourage new freight transport facilities and activities in Myrtleford that will improve economic development opportunities and support agricultural growth.

Action

- A5.3: Consider the potential location of a freight hub close to Myrtleford as part of the planned release of new industrial land.

[6] Agriculture and Food and Beverage Manufacturing Roundtable (2024)

Figure 14: Potential freight hub location



Development applications in rural areas

The review of the operation of the Alpine Planning Scheme highlighted concern about the development settings with regard to common agricultural buildings such as sheds. The development settings within rural areas should allow for the ready construction of appropriate agricultural buildings. While the Alpine Planning Scheme also needs to balance this with the landscape value of the land – discussed in more detail at Strategic Direction 6 – agricultural buildings need to be accepted as part of the landscape even in high amenity rural settings.

In this context, it is important to note that in April 2023 the Victorian government changed some settings in the Farming Zone to increase the size of agricultural buildings that could be extended without a permit from 200 to 250 square metres.[7] This may slightly reduce the need for permits for these buildings.

Council currently uses the schedule to the Farming Zone to change the default setback distance from a road below which there is a need to seek a planning permit. From roads within a Transport Zone 2 –

[7] This is a simplified summary of the provisions. This does not apply to buildings used to keep animals; and in some location buildings associated with agriculture do not need a permit even above this size.

which includes most of the highways such as the Great Alpine Road, the Kiewa Valley Highway, as well as many secondary routes including Buckland Valley Road, Happy Valley Road and the Tawonga Gap Road – the setback is increased from 50m to 100m. This does increase the obligation to seek permits on rural land but this is considered reasonable given the scenic values of the Shire and the importance of tourism.

Another key provision requiring planning permission within the Shire is the Significant Landscape Overlay. This is discussed further in Strategic Direction 6, below.

Objective

- O.5.4: To facilitate development of agricultural land in a manner consistent with their agricultural purpose and the Shire's valued rural landscapes.

Action

- A.5.4: Continue to monitor outcomes from recent changes to the Farming Zone, and proposed changes to rural design policies, to assess the level of regulatory burden imposed upon rural landowners and businesses.

Strategic Direction 6: Environmental and landscape values

Environmental Values

The Upper Ovens and Kiewa sub-catchments support a diverse range of environmental values, including several threatened species and important wetland habitats. The waterways provide critical habitat for native fish such as Murray Cod, Golden Perch and Macquarie Perch, as well as the Spotted Tree Frog and alpine skinks. Alpine Sphagnum Bogs and Associated Fens, along with significant wetland systems such as the Alpine Pondages and Mount Buffalo Peatlands, sustain rare flora and fauna and are important refuges in alpine environments.

Water quality is generally excellent in the upper reaches of both catchments but declines in lower sections where agricultural runoff contributes to sedimentation and nutrient loads. The physical form of the rivers reflects their natural variability, with gravel-bed streams and dynamic flows creating erosion, channel movement and multiple inter-connected channels, particularly in the Ovens River floodplains.

These catchments also hold substantial social and economic values. They are highly valued for recreation, with fishing, rafting, camping, snow sports and boating drawing both locals and visitors. Falls Creek, Lake Buffalo and the Alpine National Park are major tourism assets, while Landcare groups across both valleys play an active role in stewardship and advocacy for waterway health. Economically, the catchments underpin water supply for multiple towns, irrigated agriculture, hydroelectricity generation and industries such as horticulture, dairy and forestry. Tourism and lifestyle opportunities are also closely tied to the amenity of the rivers and surrounding landscapes, supporting strong regional economies.

Cultural and heritage values are interwoven throughout the landscape. For thousands of years, Traditional Owners have cared for these waterways, which remain places of cultural and spiritual significance. Alpine areas were important meeting places, particularly during bogong moth migration, and sites such as scar trees, artefact scatters and floodplains reflect this deep connection. European settlement brought hydroelectric development, forestry, mining and agriculture, with features such as

the Kiewa Hydroelectric Scheme and pastoral history shaping the character of the region. Together, these values highlight the environmental richness, community importance and layered cultural heritage of the Upper Ovens and Kiewa catchments.

Ongoing pressures impacting these values include climate extremes, hydrological change and historic land use impacts. Large areas of both catchments were severely affected by the 2019–2020 bushfires, which caused widespread erosion, sedimentation, habitat destruction and long-term changes in water quality and run-off patterns. Forested areas remain at continuous risk of fire, while floods and storms associated with climatic events further exacerbate erosion, bank instability and the loss of critical habitats for threatened species. These impacts are compounded by altered hydrology, with the Kiewa River regulated by hydroelectric operations and upstream storages, and the Ovens River experiencing reduced stream flows from consumptive use and semi-regulated flows from Lake Buffalo. Together, these changes have affected flow regimes, particularly in summer, and increased threatening processes in gravel bed streams, which drive channel movement and sediment transport.

Ecological and land use pressures further threaten the condition of the catchments. Declines in macroinvertebrate populations, loss of streamside vegetation connectivity and fish barriers on the Ovens and Buffalo Rivers restrict habitat and species movement. Historic impacts from gold mining, tobacco growing and land clearing have left a legacy of habitat degradation in floodplains and lower reaches. Ongoing urban expansion in townships such as Bright and Myrtleford, alongside intensive agriculture including hops and cattle feedlots, contribute to:

- Increased water demand.
- Nutrient and sediment loads.
- Fragmentation of habitats.
- Potential for invasive weeds and pest animals.

The Alpine Planning Scheme recognises the potentially damaging impact of urban expansion and aims to avoid impacts of land use and development on important areas of biodiversity landscape character.[8]

Tourism, while vital to the regional economy, must be carefully managed in sensitive alpine and wetland environments to prevent further degradation of waterways and maintain the ecological integrity of sites such as Lake Buffalo and the alpine wetlands.

Objectives

- O6.1: To protect and enhance Alpine Shire's environmental values, including its biodiversity, native vegetation, and waterway health.

Strategies

- S6.1.1: Support land management practices such as:
    - fencing remnant vegetation from livestock and implementing weed control to protect flora, fauna habitats and riparian areas.

[8] Alpine Shire Land Development Strategy (2024) SGS Economics and Planning

- reduced tillage and use of green manure crops to improve soil health and increase soil carbon levels.

- S6.1.2: Adopt water sensitive urban design in peri-urban growth areas such as the Lower Kiewa and Middle Creek.
- S6.1.3: Support the Traditional Owners of the Alpine Shire to meet their goals to protect land and water.
- S6.1.4: Consider legitimate environmental benefits in areas with significant environmental values that may be proposed as part of the construction of a dwelling.
- S6.1.5: Plan for climate resilience by protecting high-value assets from increasing risks of fire, flood and long-term hydrological change.
- S6.1.6: Promote low-impact recreation and tourism.

Actions

- A6.1: Council to partner and work collaboratively with the North East Catchment Management Authority, landholders, Landcare and community groups, Traditional Owners/First Nations people to:
    - Strengthen weed and pest animal control programs, particularly in sensitive wetland environments such as the alpine wetland complex, complemented by targeted management of invasive garden species in peri-urban areas.
    - Restore and protect streamside and wetland areas through fencing, revegetation and provision of off-stream watering, ensuring improved habitat connectivity and reduced erosion and sedimentation.
    - Recognise cultural values, embed self-determined involvement in waterway management and incorporate Indigenous knowledge into planning and decision-making.
    - Adjust hydroelectricity operations to create more natural flow regimes that reduce erosion, improve aquatic habitat and moderate water temperatures.

Landscape Values

Containing much of Victoria's alpine country, Alpine Shire's meandering rivers and dramatic views provide a picturesque location. Public land makes up 92 percent of Alpine Shire, in areas identified as state and national parks, state forests and nature reserves, including part of the Alpine National Park and all of Mount Buffalo National Park. The remaining 8 percent of land consists of towns, villages and farming land in the major river valleys: Ovens, Buffalo, Buckland and Kiewa Valleys.

Located in Victoria's High Country, Alpine Shire contains over 100 named mountains and boasts the highest and second-highest mountains in Victoria, Mount Bogong and Mount Feathertop, located in the Alpine National Park. The region's mountains are home to some of Victoria's major snow and ski resorts including Falls Creek and Mount Hotham. These landscape features provide a picturesque and iconic scenery that is of environmental and cultural significance to residents in Alpine Shire and the broader Victorian community.

Threats to landscape values in the Alpine Shire include:

- Increased risk of bushfire leading to vegetation loss, erosion, sedimentation and damage to scenic and ecological values.
- Floods and storms causing riverbank instability, erosion, habitat loss and impacts on public and private infrastructure.
- Poorly managed land use such as timber harvesting resulting in 'bare hills', and clearing of land for agriculture reducing landscape connectivity and increasing habitat fragmentation.
- Urban expansion in towns such as Bright and Myrtleford and poorly located or designed tourism infrastructure has the potential to diminish landscape value along the Great Alpine Road.

Several areas in the Alpine Shire are currently protected by a Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO). These are the Upper Kiewa Valley, Happy Valley, Wandiligong Valley, Buckland Valley, and the Upper Ovens and Harrietville Valley. These overlays are based on work undertaken by the National Trust in the late 1970s. The overlays provide limited guidance to decision makers about the significance of the landscapes and the planning response needed to protect these locations.

The age of these overlays raises questions about the ongoing relevance of these landscape assessments. Furthermore, reliance on these overlays to control landscape impacts may overstate the difference in value between these landscape areas and other areas of the Shire, given the entirety of the Shire is considered to have considerable landscape value. Events since the 1990s have also arguably elevated the landscape importance of some areas. An example is the development of the former railway line as a major cycling route, which has considerably increased the accessibility and tourism value of the landscape and views along the Ovens Valley between Bright and Myrtleford.

While it may be possible to extend the application of the SLOs to further areas, this would require additional strategic justification. Care would also need to be taken to ensure that this did not create unnecessary barriers for legitimate farming enterprises to establish essential infrastructure, such as sheds or glasshouses, required for their operations.

Given that the landscape value of the Shire is nearly universal, a rural development policy could be used to provide for a broader-based assessment of landscape impacts. While Council does have policy relating to rural residential development (at Clause 16.01-3L of the Alpine Planning Scheme), it does not have a broader policy relating to design for rural areas (which would sit at Clause 15.01-6L). A policy could be used to outline strategies for rural design including materials, finishes, landscaping, as outlined below.

Once such a policy was introduced, further review would need to occur. Updated and extended SLOs may still be justified if warranted by updated landscape assessments, especially if the default permit requirements in rural areas did not apply to all development that is sought to be controlled. However as discussed in Strategic Direction 5, the current settings in the Farming Zone require assessment of buildings within 100m of major highways. This would provide significant scope for assessment of prominent buildings against policy.

Objective

- O6.2: Manage development to ensure that visual impacts do not diminish the character or significance of the landscape, while supporting the role of productive agriculture in maintaining and enhancing rural farmed landscape character.

Strategies

- **S6.2.1:** Ensure that the design and external appearance of development respects the surrounding landscape, with careful consideration of building form, construction materials, colours, finishes and detailing.
- **S6.2.2:** Require development along touring routes and township approaches to be sensitively sited and designed to minimise visual intrusion, by using low building heights, modest building footprints, sympathetic colours and materials, and integration with existing or new vegetation.
- **S6.2.3:** Direct development to locations that minimise landscape impact by:
    - Clustering buildings within existing groups where feasible.
    - Avoiding visually prominent sites such as ridgelines, hill faces and identified landscape features.
    - Locating within or adjacent to established vegetation and incorporating substantial landscaping using locally appropriate species.
    - Following natural land contours and forms.
    - Reducing visibility from significant viewing points, including major road corridors.
- **S6.2.4:** Protect and rehabilitate stands of remnant indigenous or native vegetation where they contribute to the character and significance of the landscape, giving particular consideration to roadside vegetation, paddock trees and vegetation along waterways, while recognising the requirements of farming, fire protection and safety.

Actions

- **A6.2.1:** Introduce a design for rural areas policy at Clause 15.01-6L of the Alpine Planning Scheme reflecting the above strategies.
- **A6.2.2:** Council to commission a comprehensive assessment of the significant landscapes and vegetation in the municipality, including those at a regional scale (e.g., views to Mount Buffalo and Mount Bogong) and local scale (e.g., boulevards in Bright) and put in place planning controls to protect such as the Significant Landscape Overlay, Environmental Significance Overlay, Vegetation Protection Overlay and Heritage Overlay.
- **A6.2.3:** Council to seek support from the Department of Transport and Planning to fund or lead the review of significant landscapes and vegetation in the Alpine Shire.
- **A6.2.4:** After the introduction of the design for rural areas policy and based on further landscape assessment, review the existing Schedules to the Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO1, SLO2, SLO3, SLO4 and SLO5) to either:
    - strengthen the statement of significance and objectives, and populate the schedules to more effectively guide decision making; or
    - remove the overlays where the guidance of the design for rural areas policy is considered to sufficiently guide decision-making.

6.4 Spatial directions

Several of the strategic directions are reflected in outcomes and policy settings that affect particular areas, and these are described in more detail below.

Rural economic clusters

As discussed in Section 0, there are areas along the Great Alpine Road where a combination of existing uses, subdivision patterns, and soil conditions have already reduced the agricultural productivity of the land. The tourist route of the Great Alpine Road also makes these favoured locations for a diverse range of agriculture-related tourism uses where direct access is available to this route (the Myrtleford South cluster does not have direct access to the Great Alpine Road and presents somewhat different issues, discussed below).

In these areas it is still expected that farming remains a significant activity, and the policy support should be for those individual sites within these locations with direct access to the Great Alpine Road. These areas will therefore continue to be in close proximity to significant agricultural activity. They are therefore recommended to remain within the Farming Zone, but subject to policy guidance indicating the diversity of agritourism supported on these lots.

This approach can also apply to areas that might be suitable for rural residential development according to the criteria discussed at Strategic Direction 4 if not for the level of bushfire risk. It is anticipated that this may be the case for most of the low productivity land outside Harrietville, for example.

Merriang, Merriang South and Myrtleford South

The area south of Myrtleford, at the entry to the Buffalo River Valley, presents several challenges. Much of the floor of the Ovens Valley at the entry to this precinct is flood prone. At the same time, there is a patchwork of land zoned Rural Living zone interspersed with land zoned Farming Zone (Figure 15).

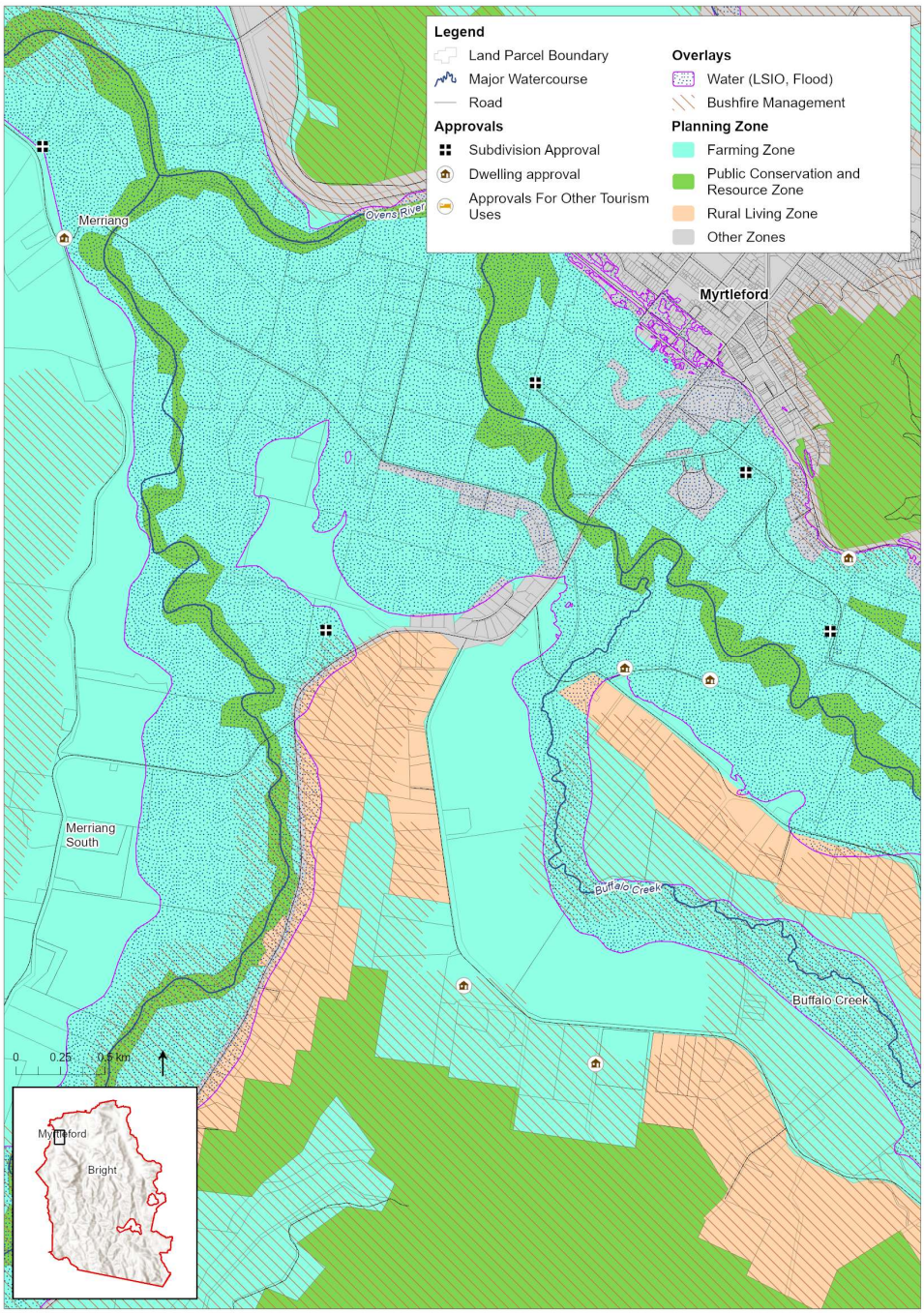
While much of the land zoned Farming Zone is productive (see Figure 16), the density of housing already present, proximity to pockets of land zoned Rural Living Zone, and extremely close proximity to Myrtleford support a more flexible policy approach in this area.

It is not recommended that further subdivision is encouraged in this location given the productivity of much of the land, as well as the flooding risk; however, reduction of the minimum lot size for construction of a dwelling without a permit could better recognise the existing pattern of uses in the area. It could also accommodate a greater range of tourist uses, analogous to the rural economic clusters. While it does not have the direct access to the Great Alpine Road, it is very close to Myrtleford and the factors described above warrant increased flexibility for agriculture related tourism.

In addition, there is an area of land zoned Farming Zone south and west of Buffalo Creek Road that is close to land zoned Rural Living Zone and is considered less productive (Figure 16). This could logically be rezoned to Rural Living Zone. The minimum subdivision size should prevent further subdivision given the land is largely within the Bushfire Management Overlay.

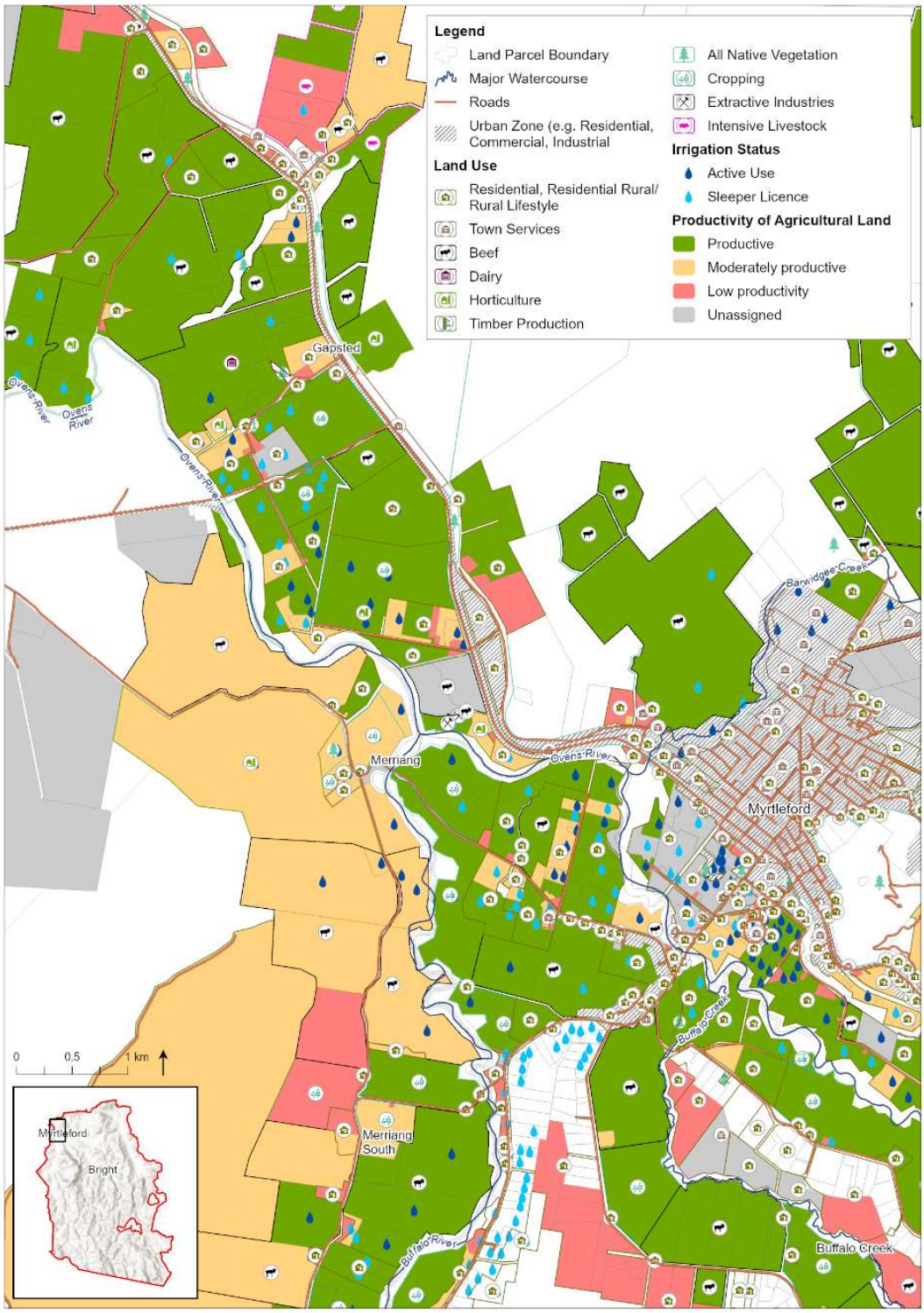
Further south, the Buffalo River remains a productive area and should retain its farming focus. It should remain in the Farming Zone and should not be treated as part of the South Myrtleford rural economic cluster

Figure 15: Zoning patterns in Merriang



Source: RMCG (2026); VicPlan (2025)

Figure 16: Productivity of Agricultural land: Myrtleford, Gapsted and Merriang



Source: RMCG (2024)

Settlement maps

The following maps show settlement boundaries established according to the principles established in Section 6.3.

Figure 17: Proposed settlement boundary, Wandiligong

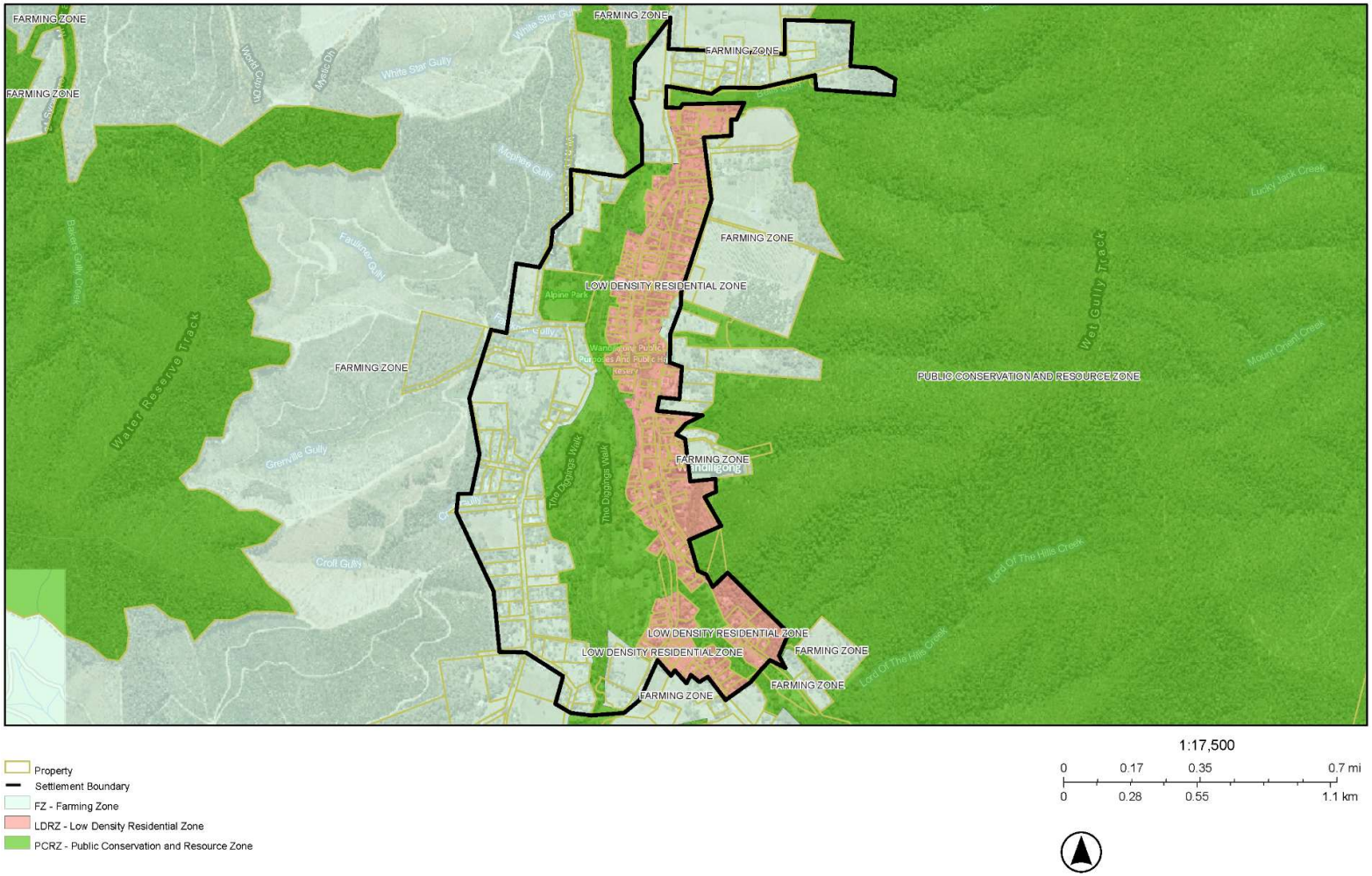


Figure 18: Proposed settlement boundary, Harrietville

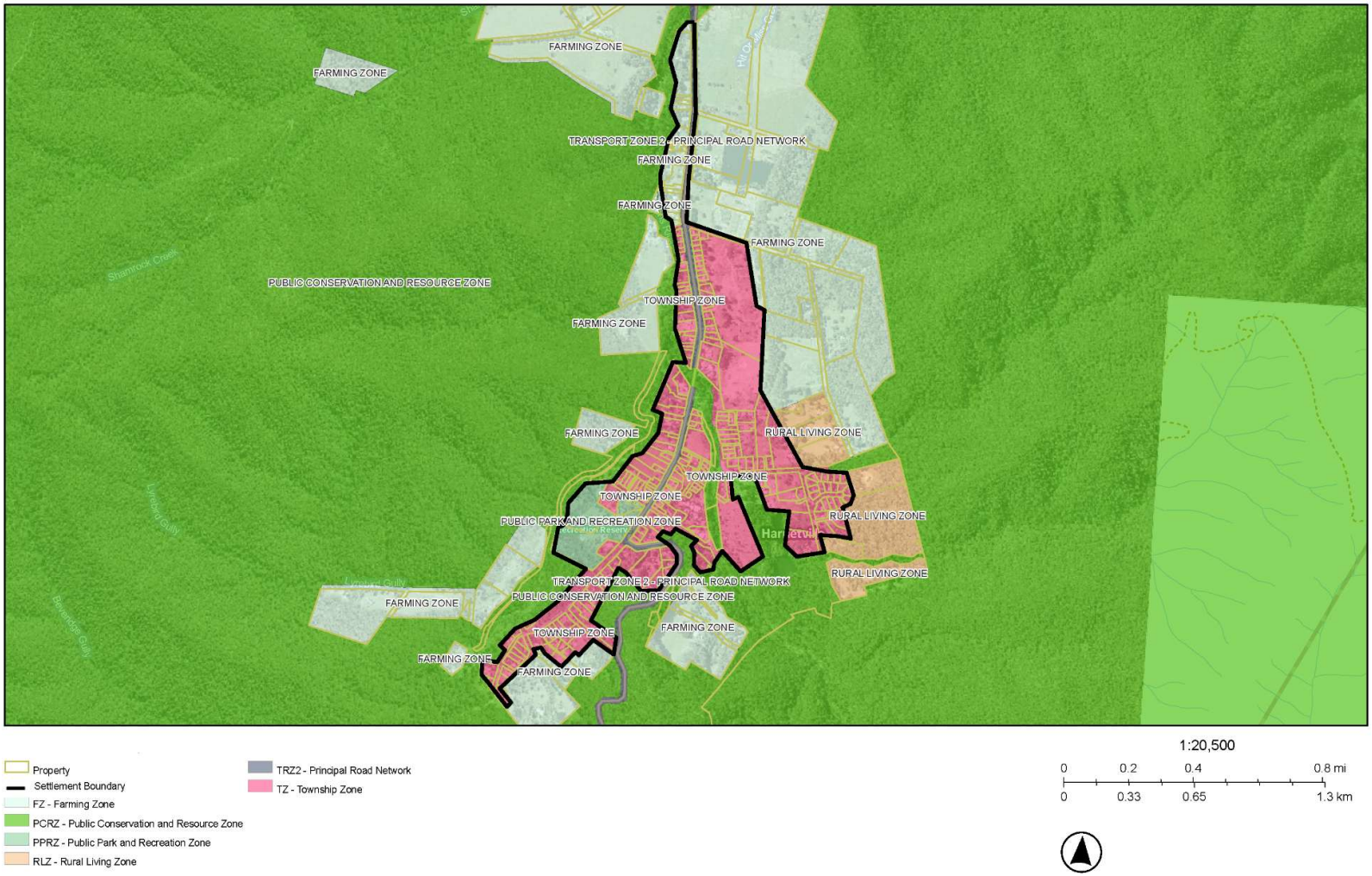


Figure 19: Proposed settlement boundary, Freeburgh



Figure 20: Proposed settlement boundary, Tawonga

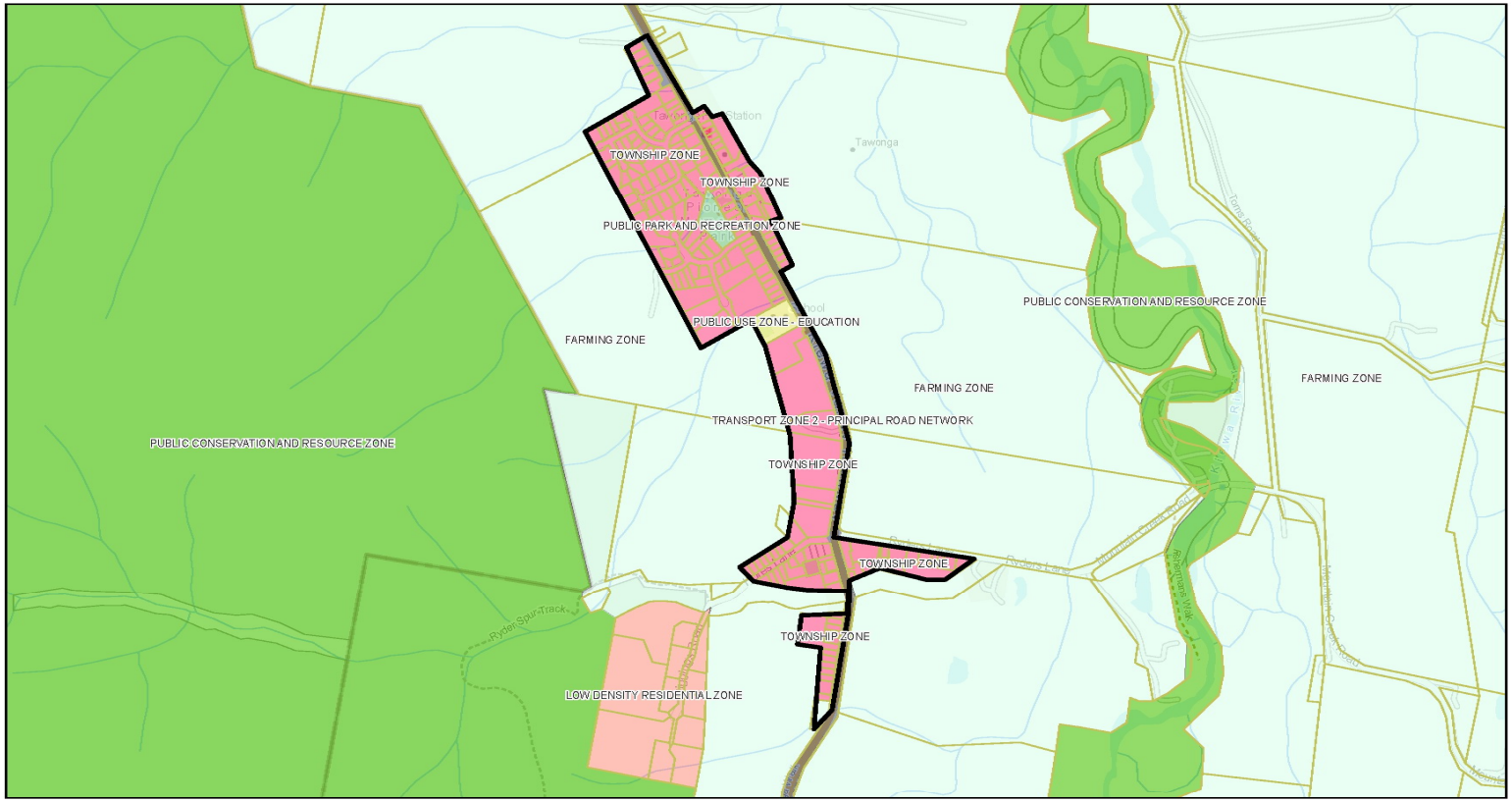
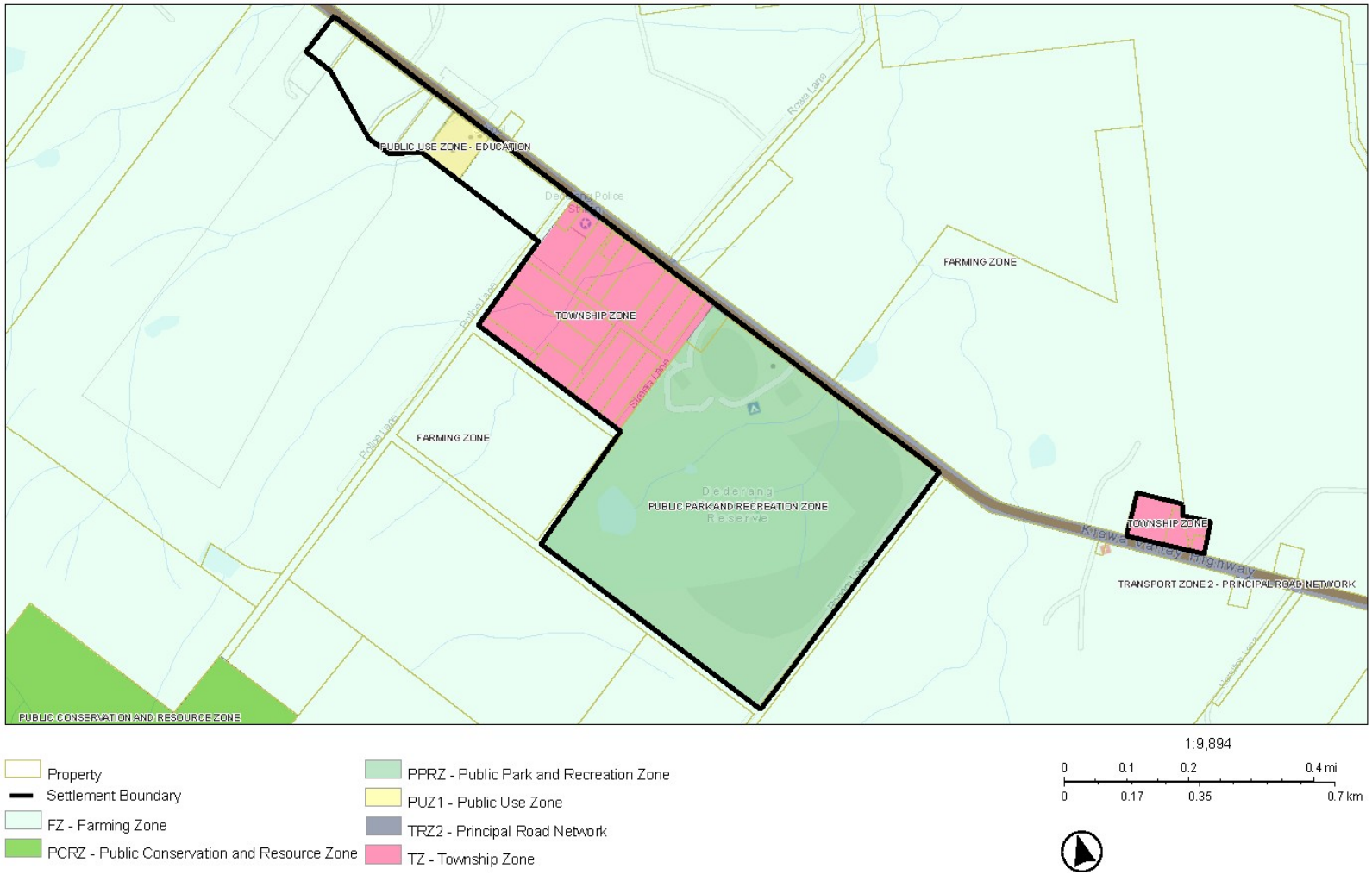


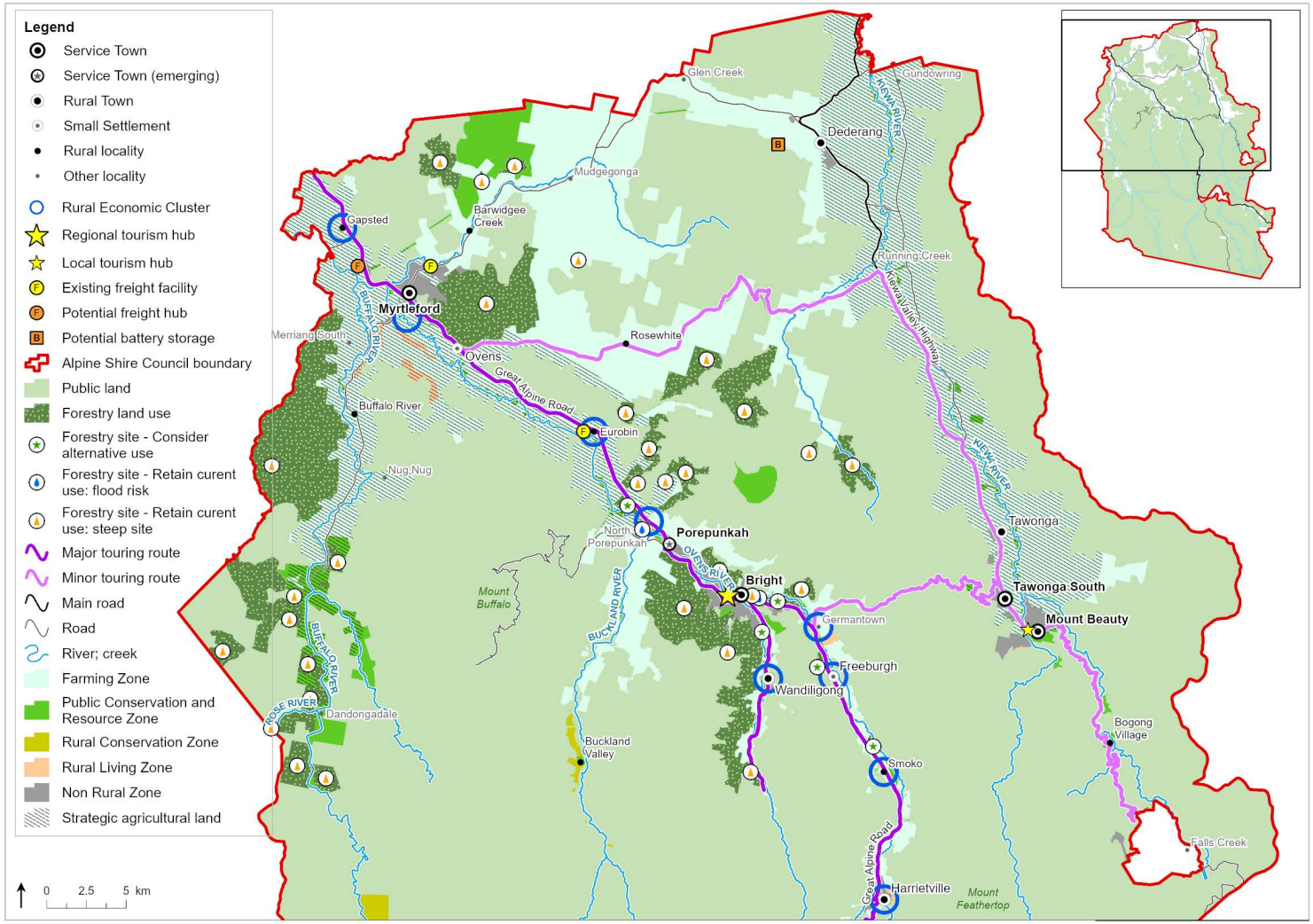
Figure 21: Proposed settlement boundary, Dederang



6.5 Rural Framework Plan

The Rural Framework Plan at Figure 22, along with the mapping of productive agricultural land at Figure 12, can be used to supplement the main Strategic Framework Plan of the Municipal Planning Strategy at Clause 02.04 of the Alpine Planning Scheme.

Figure 22: Rural Framework Plan



7. Implementation plan

The planning framework outlined in Section 6 will be implemented through a range of processes led by Alpine Shire Council, in collaboration with government and non-government partners. This section of the ARDS sets out the plan for implementation.

7.1 Implementation process

implementation of the ARDS will be led by Alpine Shire Council, drawing on its diverse roles and responsibilities as illustrated in the diagram to the right.

Many of the objectives and strategies from the planning framework will be formally integrated into the Alpine Planning Scheme through Council's role as a regulator. This will occur via a planning scheme amendment process, ensuring these elements carry legal weight within the broader land use and planning system.

Other actions will be delivered through Council's additional functions, as provider, partner, enabler, advocate, policy director, educator and researcher.

The accompanying Implementation Plan clearly defines Council's role in implementation for each action, identifies relevant partner organisations, establish priorities, and outlines indicative timeframes for delivery.

To maintain relevance and responsiveness, a review program will be established for the ARDS. This will ensure continued alignment with Council's budgetary processes, resource allocation, and emerging funding opportunities.



7.2 Implementation partners

Some actions identified in this Strategy may involve participation and collaboration with state, regional and local organisations to enable their realisation. These include but are not limited to the partners listed below.

- Dhudhuroa, Gunaikurnai, Taungurung, Waywurru and Yaitmathang Traditional Owner groups
- Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR)
- Regional Development Victoria (RDV)
- Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA)
- Department of Transport and Planning (DTP)
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)
- North East Water (NEW)
- North East Catchment Management Authority (NECMA)
- Various Alpine Shire Council departments
- Councils for adjoining local government areas (LGAs)
- Country Fire Authority (CFA)
- Agriculture Victoria
- Heritage Victoria
- Regional tertiary and other education providers.

7.3 Implementation plan

Objective	Strategies (for planning scheme) and actions (further work)	Implementation	Timing
Objective 1.1: To manage natural hazards in rural areas and prioritise the protection of human life in relation to the use and development of rural land.	**S1.1.1:** Direct residential development to areas of low bushfire risk consistent with State Planning Policy.	Planning scheme strategy – cl 13.02-1L	Short
	S1.1.2: Strongly discourage development that increases exposure to bushfire hazards in areas where risk to life cannot be reduced to an acceptable level.	Planning scheme strategy – cl 13.02-1L	Short
	S1.1.3: Avoid further subdivision or rezoning for rural living purposes in rural areas subject to the Bushfire Management Overlay.	Planning scheme strategy – cl 13.02-1L	Short
	S1.1.4: Ensure decisions regarding subdivision consider the environmental and landscape impacts of the management of bushfire risk.	Planning scheme strategy – cl 13.02-1L	Short
	S1.1.5: Encourage innovation by supporting new technologies and sustainable practices that help agriculture adapt to climate change.	Planning scheme strategy – cl 13.01-2L	Short
	A1.1.1: Request the Victorian government undertake an assessment of erosion risk from public land to private land and apply appropriate planning controls.	Advocacy	Short
	A1.1.2: Advocate for the Victorian government to apply flood controls to land identified by the North East Catchment Management Authority as being subject to inundation.	Advocacy	Short
	A1.1.3: Encourage ongoing landholder education and proactive land management to reduce fuel loads, maintain access, and enhance landscape resilience to bushfire events.	Advocacy	Short
Objective 2.1: To support agriculture	**S2.1.1:** Protect productive agricultural land and intensive agricultural areas from incompatible uses.	Planning scheme – cl 14.01-1L	Short

and add value to industries.	**S2.1.2:** Limit the subdivision of productive agricultural land.	Planning scheme – cl 14.01-1L	Short
	S2.1.3: Limit new dwellings on productive agricultural land unless they are legitimately required for agricultural operation.	Planning scheme – cl 14.01-1L	Short
	S2.1.4: Encourage a diverse range of agricultural enterprises on moderate to low productivity land, such as market gardens, wineries, and on-site processing of farm produce, while carefully considering environmental and amenity impacts.	Planning scheme – cl 14.01-1L	Short
	S2.1.5: Foster tourism development that complements both agricultural operations and the natural landscape on moderate to low productivity land.	Planning scheme – cl 17.04-1L	Short
	S2.1.6: Discourage land uses that create urban-style activity levels or infrastructure demands.	Planning scheme – cl 14.01-1L	Short
	A2.1.1: Include the map of productive agricultural land as a supplement to a Rural Framework Plan at Clause 02.04 of the Alpine Planning Scheme.	Planning scheme – cl 02.04	Short
	A2.1.2: Outside of identified settlements and rural economic clusters, amend the Schedule to the Farming Zone of the Alpine Planning Scheme to apply a minimum subdivision area of 40 hectares and remove the associated criteria for subdivision below 40 hectares from Clause 14.01-1L of the Alpine Planning Scheme.	Planning scheme – Farming Zone schedule	Short
Objective 2.2: To manage timber production to avoid detrimental impacts on waterways and settlements.	**S2.2:** Convert land used for timber production with minimal slope (less than 20%), low risk of flooding (not within a relevant overlay) and proximate to settlements to convert to land uses suited to the Farming Zone and with low risk to settlements.	Planning scheme – cl 14.01-3L	Short

Objective 3.1: To direct residential, commercial, industrial and community infrastructure growth to safe, suitable and well serviced locations, in an orderly manner. (This objective is carried over from the Alpine Shire Land Development Strategy)	A3.1: Advocate for the Victorian government to clarify guidance regarding future population growth in the Shire given the constraints of bushfire risk and protection of agricultural land.	Advocacy	Short
Objective 4.1: To direct rural residential development to locations with low agricultural productivity, low bushfire risk, and that are close to existing settlements.	**S4.1.1:** Direct rural residential development to defined rural residential settlements and in land zoned Low Density Residential Zone and Rural Activity Zone [Schedule x] if bushfire risk can be appropriately managed.	Planning scheme – cl 16.01-3L	Short
	S4.1.2: Prevent further subdivision of Rural Living and Low Density Residential zoned land within the Bushfire Management Overlay.	Planning scheme – schedules to rural zones	Short
	A4.1.1: Investigate rezoning areas of low agricultural productivity near townships that is currently Farming Zone to Rural Activity Zone with a purpose supporting residential development if bushfire risk can be appropriately managed, and with a minimum lot size that prevents further subdivision.	Planning scheme amendment	Short
	A4.1.2: Investigate rezoning areas of low agricultural productivity around Wandiligong that is currently Farming Zone to Rural Conservation Zone with a purpose supporting residential development, if bushfire risk can be appropriately managed, and with a minimum lot size that prevents further subdivision.	Planning scheme amendment	Medium
Objective 5.1: To encourage rural	**S5.1.1:** Ensure tourism use and development is at an appropriate scale and sited to: – Avoid impacting the operation of surrounding agricultural enterprises	Planning scheme – cl 17.04-1L	Short

tourism that protects and capitalises upon the Shire's agricultural strengths and environmental, landscape and cultural values.	– Appropriately consider impacts on environment and landscape values.		
	S5.1.2: Focus tourism development in identified rural economic clusters and areas of low agricultural productivity.	Planning scheme – cl 17.04-1L and cl 02.04	Short
	S5.1.3: Locate large-scale tourism development within existing settlements unless: – The tourism enterprise requires a rural location. – The development will not contribute to the urbanisation of the area. – The land use is compatible with the use of adjoining and surrounding land for agriculture or forestry and is complimentary to the rural setting. – The facility will significantly contribute to the local and regional tourism economy.	Planning scheme – cl 17.04-1L	Short
	S5.1.4: Only support tourism uses and development in the Farming Zone where it is associated with, and will remain subordinate to, an existing agricultural enterprise.	Planning scheme – cl 17.04-1L	Short
	S5.1.6: Encourage tourism buildings and ancillary infrastructure to be clustered together on the property and screened from view from neighbouring dwellings.	Planning scheme – cl 17.04-1L	Short
	S5.1.7: Support the use and development of land for tourism if it will result in net environmental benefit or rehabilitation of degraded land.	Planning scheme – cl 17.04-1L	Short
	A5.1: Identify preferred locations for increased range of agritourism through mapping of rural economic clusters in the strategic framework plan, and provide guidance about the range of uses supported within and outside these clusters in policy.	Planning scheme amendment	Short
Objective 5.2: To support the provision and use of renewable energy in a manner that appropriately responds to its landscape context.	**S5.2.1:** Facilitate renewable energy development in appropriate locations where: – It is proximate to existing energy infrastructure – The land is of low agricultural productivity; and – Landscape impact can be appropriately mitigated.	Planning scheme – cl 19.01-2L	Short

Objective 5.3: To provide appropriate freight facilities to support agricultural production in locations that minimise impacts upon residential areas and other road users.	**S.5.3:** Encourage new freight transport facilities and activities in Myrtleford that will improve economic development opportunities and support agricultural growth.	Existing strategy – cl 18.02-5L	No action required
	A5.3: Consider the potential location of a freight hub close to Myrtleford as part of the planned release of new industrial land.	Future strategic work	Medium
Objective 5.4: To facilitate development of agricultural land in a manner consistent with their agricultural purpose and the Shire's valued rural landscapes.	**A.5.4:** Continue to monitor outcomes from recent changes to the Farming Zone, and proposed changes to rural design policies, to assess the level of regulatory burden imposed upon rural landowners and businesses.	Ongoing monitoring	Ongoing
Objective 6.1: To protect and enhance Alpine Shire's environmental values, including its biodiversity, native vegetation, and waterway health.	**S6.1.1:** Support land management practices such as: – Fencing remnant vegetation from livestock and implementing weed control to protect flora, fauna habitats and riparian areas. – Reduced tillage and use of green manure crops to improve soil health and increase soil carbon levels.	Planning scheme – cl 14.01-2L	Short
	S6.1.2: Adopt water sensitive urban design in peri-urban growth areas such as the Lower Kiewa and Middle Creek.	Planning scheme - cl 14.01-2L	Short
	S6.1.3: Support the Traditional Owners of the Alpine Shire to meet their goals to protect land and water.	Planning scheme -cl 14.01-2L	Short

	S6.1.4: Consider legitimate environmental benefits in areas with significant environmental values that may be proposed as part of the construction of a dwelling.	Planning scheme - cl 14.01-2L	Short
	S6.1.5: Plan for climate resilience by protecting high-value assets from increasing risks of fire, flood and long-term hydrological change.	Planning scheme -c l 14.01-2L	Short
	S6.1.6: Promote low-impact recreation and tourism	Planning scheme – cl 17.01-4L	Short
	A6.1: Council to partner and work collaboratively with the Northeast CMA, landholders, Landcare and community groups, Traditional Owners/First Nations people to: – Strengthen weed and pest animal control programs, particularly in sensitive wetland environments such as the Alpine wetland complex, complemented by targeted management of invasive garden species in peri-urban areas. – Restore and protect streamside and wetland areas through fencing, revegetation and provision of off-stream watering, ensuring improved habitat connectivity and reduced erosion and sedimentation. – Recognise cultural values, embed self-determined involvement in waterway management and incorporate Indigenous knowledge into planning and decision-making. – Adjust hydroelectricity operations to create more natural flow regimes that reduce erosion, improve aquatic habitat and moderate water temperatures.	Advocacy and collaboration	Short / ongoing
Objective 6.2: Manage development to ensure that visual impacts do not diminish the character or significance of the landscape, while supporting the role of	**S6.2.1:** Ensure that the design and external appearance of development respects the surrounding landscape, with careful consideration of building form, construction materials, colours, finishes and detailing.	Planning scheme - cl 15.01-6L	Short
	S6.2.2: Require development along touring routes and township approaches to be sensitively sited and designed to minimise visual intrusion, by using low building heights, modest building footprints, sympathetic colours and materials, and integration with existing or new vegetation.	Planning scheme - cl 15.01-6L	Short

productive agriculture in maintaining and enhancing rural farmed landscape character.	**S6.2.3:** Direct development to locations that minimise landscape impact by: – Clustering buildings within existing groups where feasible – Avoiding visually prominent sites such as ridgelines, hill faces and identified landscape features – Locating within or adjacent to established vegetation and incorporating substantial landscaping using locally appropriate species – Following natural land contours and forms – Reducing visibility from significant viewing points, including major road corridors.	Planning scheme - cl 15.01-6L	Short
	S6.2.4: Protect and rehabilitate stands of remnant indigenous or native vegetation where they contribute to the character and significance of the landscape, giving particular consideration to roadside vegetation, paddock trees and vegetation along waterways, while recognising the requirements of farming, fire protection and safety.	Planning scheme - cl 15.01-6L	Short
	A6.2.1: Introduce a design for rural areas policy at clause 15.01-6L of the Alpine Planning Scheme reflecting the above strategies.	Planning scheme - cl 15.01-6L	Short
	A6.2.2: Council to commission a comprehensive assessment of the significant landscapes and vegetation in the municipality, including those at a regional scale (e.g. views to Mount Buffalo and Mount Bogong) and local scale (e.g. boulevards in Bright) and put in place planning controls to protect such as the Significant Landscape Overlay, Environmental Significance Overlay, Vegetation Protection Overlay and Heritage Overlay.	Future strategic work	Medium
	A6.2.3: Council to seek support from the Department of Transport and Planning to fund or lead the review of significant landscapes and vegetation in the Alpine Shire.	Advocacy	Medium
	A6.2.4: After the introduction of the design for rural areas policy and based on further landscape assessment, review the existing Schedules to the Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO1, SLO2, SLO3, SLO4 and SLO5) to either: – strengthen the statement of significance and objectives, and populate the schedules to more effectively guide decision making; or	Monitoring / future strategic work	Ongoing / Medium

	– remove the overlays where the guidance of the design for rural areas policy is considered to sufficiently guide decision-making.		

CANBERRA / NGAMBRI /
NGUNNAWAL / NGARIGO

Level 2, 28-36 Ainslie Place
Canberra ACT 2601
+61 2 6257 4525
sgsact@sgsep.com.au

HOBART / NIPALUNA

PO Box 123
Franklin TAS 7113
+61 421 372 940
sgstas@sgsep.com.au

MELBOURNE / NAARM

Level 14, 222 Exhibition Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
+61 3 8616 0331
sgsvic@sgsep.com.au

SYDNEY / WARRANG

Suite 201/50 Holt Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010
+61 2 8307 0121
sgsnsw@sgsep.com.au

SGS Economics & Planning

Certified B Corporation