

**Gordon Structure Plan December 2013**

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## Executive Summary

### What is this Gordon Structure Plan about and why has it been prepared?

- Council has prepared a new Structure Plan for Gordon Township and surrounds. The Structure Plan has been based on an extensive community consultation process. It sets out a plan to guide and manage the future development of the township and its surrounds. It addresses land use, zoning, urban design, visual amenity, facilities and infrastructure.
- The development of the Plan has been assisted by consultants and has been based on a process of; meetings with and a survey of town residents, discussions with children at the two schools, discussions with Council officers and Councillors, and meetings with various agencies. It brings together a wide range of information and proposes a series of actions.
- The Structure Plan is being placed on formal public exhibition as an Amendment to the Moorabool Planning Scheme. Submissions to the Amendment are invited.
- Council had developed the Structure Plan to guide land use and development as part of the administration of the Moorabool Planning Scheme and to assist in investment by the Council. When approved the structure plan will form part of the Moorabool Planning Scheme.
- The Structure Plan includes changes to the Planning Scheme including the addition of planning provisions to guide the form and type of uses and developments to be supported and the strategies and policies that Council will apply to the future planning and development of Gordon.
- Before the Planning Scheme can be changed Council must follow a formal legal process that includes placing any proposed changes on public exhibition, personally notifying all residents of those proposed changes, considering an independent Panel review of any submissions and obtaining the approval for the changes from the Minister for Planning.

### Significant elements that have guided the preparation of the draft Gordon Structure Plan

- Gordon township and the immediate surrounds have a population of about 1,000 people and it is growing. The provision of a reticulated sewerage system in the township area over the next year or so by Central Highlands Water is likely to boost growth and create opportunities for different forms of residential and other development. Much of the highly valued character of Gordon is linked to its small size and its rural setting. Increases in the rate and scale of development, particularly facilitated by the provision of reticulated sewerage services could impact on that character. Although more population and development raises the possibilities for improved community and commercial services.
- At present there is an estimated 270 houses within the study area, about 120 are in the surrounding rural living area, and about 150 are in the Township zone area. In the last 8 years about 60 new houses were built. Within the township area there are currently about 90 vacant lots and within the rural living area there are about 40 vacant blocks that could be built on, together these will provide about 17 years supply of land at current rates of development. However not all lots are necessarily suitable for building. The provision of a reticulated sewerage system has the capacity to allow forms of development not currently possible in Gordon and to therefore potentially provide for substantially increased levels of housing and other development and further population growth.

The current Moorabool Planning Scheme sets out six broad strategies for Gordon township.

- Develop a structure plan for the development of Gordon consistent with the principle of establishing walkable catchments with access to community facilities, shops, and public transport.
- Require development plans for any areas proposed to be rezoned to residential in Gordon.
- Protect the urban and landscape elements that contribute to the township's rural character.
- Contain urban growth by promoting infill development.
- Provide a clear township boundary.
- Determine growth potential and township structure as part of the structure plan process.

The proposed Structure Plan reinforces and builds on these core elements. In particular the Plan provides for

- The built character and the future commercial development of the town to focus on the main street, which historically formed part of the main Melbourne to Ballarat highway. There is a strongly expressed community desire to reinforce that core area, and maintain the village character and rural setting of the town. Considerable care needs to be taken to ensure that the location, scale and form of new development reinforce the qualities and character of the town and the landscape setting.
- The State Government has prioritised Gordon Township for the provision of a reticulated sewerage scheme. The area proposed by Central Highlands Water for the scheme is most of the properties currently within the Township Zone . This could provide for considerably more dwellings in the township because it potentially allows development on lots smaller than the current waste disposal systems will allow.
- Proposals for further development in some parts of Gordon township or proposals for intensive development may require the proponent to provide substantial drainage works at their cost in order to accommodate the impact of storm water and run off.
- The township and the entire surrounding area are located within the catchment of the East Moorabool River and within a legally Proclaimed Water Supply Catchment. This potentially imposes important limitations on possible new developments.
- New residential and other forms of land use and development need to be carefully managed in terms of their location, siting, scale, appearance and design. In the old township area this particularly applies to the areas in and around the main street and areas highly visible from the main street. Major new development and unplanned expansion of the township area may impact on the village appearance and scale of Gordon, which are highly valued by the local community.
- In the rural residential/rural living areas around the township there is a need to carefully site new development so it does not impact on the appearance of the rural amenity setting of the town and the views from the town to the rural areas that reinforce that setting. Expansion of these areas surrounding the old township is not planned.
- The proximity of the town to the upgraded Melbourne to Ballarat railway line and the passenger rail services provided on that line has prompted many in the town to call for the reopening of the Gordon railway station. This is a policy position long supported by the Moorabool Shire Council. The Structure Plan supports and advocates the reopening of the railway station and the provision of passenger rail services to Gordon and the wider district. This is consistent with implementing state and regional policy and providing for a more sustainable, productive and liveable community. The Council and the community are also supportive of natural gas being provided to the township.

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## **Part One - Background**

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### **The Structure Plan**

#### **What area does the Structure Plan cover?**

The boundaries of the Structure Plan area are the freeway to the north and the railway to the south, and the area defined by the existing Township and Rural Living zones. The area is shown on Map 1.

#### **What is a Structure Plan?**

A Structure Plan is a written document supplemented with maps and diagrams. A structure plan sets out how a town or area is to be planned and land use and development managed. This Structure Plan sets out a plan for Gordon township, the actions that are needed to guide the town and surrounding area's future development. The structure plan also provides guidance on the planning scheme provisions that will need to apply to ensure the implementation of the plan through the administration of the planning scheme. The Structure Plan has been prepared so that it can form part of the Moorabool Planning Scheme. Once forming part of the Planning Scheme the Structure Plan becomes a legal document.

The Structure Plan covers items such as

- the extent of existing and future urban growth
- the proposed staging of that growth
- revisions to township boundaries and zones
- the location of key developments
- the type and form of future development
- the need for and location of future infrastructure
- road and other networks that facilitate improved access and movement
- township character and urban design that supports this character

#### **Why is the existing Gordon Structure Plan not adequate for the future?**

The existing plan for Gordon township and surrounds is set out in the Moorabool Planning Scheme, it comprises policies and zones. Clause 21.09 of the planning scheme specifically relates to Gordon. This clause was prepared on the basis that the township is not sewered. That situation will change soon. Zoning of land in Gordon comprises a Township zone in the core township area and a Rural living zone for the immediately surrounding rural area. While these zones assist in providing some guidance on the types of land use and development they have a number of weaknesses. The Township zone provides no clear guidance between uses such as residential, business and even industrial. Nor does it provide any basis to assess whether proposed new development (the scale, form and appearance of development) is in character with the town and its setting and amenity.

The existing plan was prepared and adopted on the basis that the town does not have a reticulated sewerage system. With the provision of reticulated sewerage in the immediate future the development of the town will potentially be significantly different. The existing plan does not provide a basis to guide forms of development. A new structure plan with those elements addressed can form part of the planning scheme to assist in decision-making into the future.

**Map One: Gordon Structure Plan Area**

**What has been the overall process to prepare the Structure Plan and how will it be implemented?**

The process involves six stages.

1. Information gathering and conduct first round of consultation
2. Produce Background Report and conduct second round of consultation
3. Prepare ideas and proposals to form the basis of the Structure Plan and conduct third round of consultation
4. Final Draft Plan submitted to Council for consideration and Council formally exhibits amendments to the planning scheme that include the new Structure Plan and follows the processes set out in the Planning and Environment Act
5. Panel Hearing of Submissions to the Planning Scheme
6. Council adopts amendments to the planning scheme and submits to the Minister for Planning for approval

The structure plan will be able to be progressively implemented once it forms part of the Moorabool Planning Scheme. The Structure Plan together with proposed changes to the planning scheme provisions seeks to manage land use and development so as to reinforce the stated values of the town and to limit development forms that will not support the key elements of the structure plan.

What are the current Moorabool Planning Scheme provisions for Gordon?

Clause (21.09) in the Moorabool Planning Scheme relates to Gordon Township, it states:

**Key Issues and Influences**

- *Gordon is the third largest town in the Shire located on the Western Freeway some 23 kilometres from central Ballarat. The town layout is characterised by two residential areas and a denser central core with larger lots on its outskirts that provide a distinctly rural character. Sewerage reticulation is planned for the town in the short term that will provide opportunities and increased demand for residential growth.*
- *Gordon is strategically located on the Western Freeway between Bacchus Marsh and Ballarat, and has direct access to both Ballarat and Melbourne by rail with the Gordon Railway Station located less than a kilometre south of the town centre that could be reopened to support public transport to both Ballarat and Melbourne. Sewerage and the proximity to Ballarat and major employers such as the University of Ballarat and IBM are anticipated to drive growth that must be planned for.*
- *It is logical that future growth in Gordon will be concentrated between the main street and the railway line but further investigation is needed to determine the location and extent of any growth. This investigation will need to identify population growth trends, environmental constraints, existing lot patterns and infrastructure needs.*

**Objective - Township Growth**

- *To identify and manage urban growth opportunities driven by the upcoming sewerage of Gordon and other growth drivers.*

**Strategies**

- *Develop a structure plan for the development of Gordon consistent with the principle of establishing walkable catchments with access to community facilities, shops, and public transport.*
- *Require development plans for any areas proposed to be rezoned to residential in Gordon.*
- *Protect the urban and landscape elements that contribute to the township's rural character.*
- *Contain urban growth by promoting infill development.*
- *Provide a clear township boundary.*
- *Determine growth potential and township structure as part of the structure plan process.*

**Implementation**

**Further Strategic Work**

- *Prepare and adopt a structure plan study for Gordon.*
- *Prepare a small town's development strategy that includes Gordon.*

**Other Actions**

- *Advocate for the provision of adequate capacity sewerage infrastructure for existing and future growth in Gordon.*

## **Introduction**

Gordon is a small township and surrounding rural community in Moorabool Shire within the Melbourne to Ballarat regional transport corridor - a region and transport corridor experiencing rapid population growth and change. The future planning of Gordon needs to be guided by the strong community expression to retain the small town – ‘village feel’ and the quality of the rural amenity and setting. Therefore future growth and development needs to be well managed, and at a scale comparable with the existing character.

The future provision of a reticulated sewerage system by Central Highlands Water will address long standing issues associated with effluent disposal and surface water quality. Existing residential and other development is dependent on separate septic disposal systems. The provision of reticulated sewerage to parts of the existing township area potentially changes the type and form of land use and development that could be proposed in the township.

Gordon and the immediate surrounds have a population of about 1,000 people and the number of people living in the town and surrounding rural area is growing. In the last 8 years about 60 new houses were built. Transport (road and rail) improvements, lifestyle advantages and relative housing affordability are all factors that are driving population growth in communities in the regional transport corridor including in Melton, Bacchus Marsh, Ballan and Ballarat, and in the surrounding rural landscapes. While population growth in Gordon has been limited, recent new housing development in the core township and in surrounding rural residential areas indicates likely demand for future growth. Continuing expansion of the Melbourne commuter belt and further growth of population and employment in Ballarat will be likely to make Gordon a desirable residential location.

The construction of a sewerage treatment plant and the sewerage of the core township area by Central Highlands Water is likely to boost demand for further residential development and provide opportunities for different forms of residential and other development in the town. For instance it will be more likely (but not necessarily certain) that Council will receive proposals for more intensive residential development, infill development and increased densities of residential and other development in the area to be sewerage.

The Structure Plan is *not* advocating further population growth for Gordon. It is though premised on the basis that further housing development is not only highly likely but needs to be planned for in advance rather than applying a reactive approach when development proposals are submitted to Council. That raises questions about where should development be provided for, what it should look like and what impact it will have on Gordon township and surrounds. The Structure Plan seeks to limit further development where it is considered that it would impact detrimentally on the character of the town. It also seeks to provide a plan for the longer term development of the town in those areas and in those forms that will support and strengthen the town’s role, the services and facilities that it could provide and in reinforcing the overall liveability and attractiveness of the town and surrounds. The Structure Plan therefore sets out requirements for the form and scale of future development. That element reflects the fact that the consultation with the community has indicated a very strong community expression to retain the small township – village feel and the quality of the rural setting.

Further growth and change in Gordon township offers mixed prospects – growth offers scope for increased community and commercial services including justifying the reopening of the Gordon railway station and the provision of natural gas; two facilities and services for which there is strong community support. But growth also presents possible threats to the character, setting and 'village feel' of the town. Much of the highly valued character of Gordon is linked to its small size and its rural setting – yet the possibilities for improved community and commercial services presented by a larger population base hold potential. Critically, at this point, it is important to identify ways in which appropriate levels of new development can occur while the characteristics so valued locally are retained. It is in response to this situation and the prospects created by the provision of reticulated sewerage that the Moorabool Shire Council has commissioned the preparation of a new Structure Plan.

### **Regional Context**

Future population change and housing development in Gordon should be seen within the context of change throughout the corridor from Melbourne to Ballarat – an area that has experienced considerable population growth over recent decades. Improved transport linkages, population and employment growth on Melbourne's fringes and in Ballarat, and the interest in rural lifestyle are all factors in this change and growth.

The population of the Ballarat corridor (including Melton, Moorabool and Ballarat) has increased by an average of 3.3% annually since 1997 – compared to a growth rate of 1.2% for Victoria. This represents a population growth of over 56,000 people. Areas such as Melton and Bacchus Marsh experienced most of this new population, and have seen considerable growth in population and housing since the 1970s. Additionally, housing development in rural areas (averaging 65 new dwellings each year of this decade in Moorabool Shire) is a contributor to population growth throughout the region. To date, growth in the western area of Moorabool Shire, including in Gordon, has been only moderate by comparison.

The growth of the western corridor generally is identified in Melbourne's metropolitan strategy (*Melbourne 2030* and the update *Melbourne@5 million*), as is the growth of other corridors extending from Melbourne's fringes – this growth is intended to occur largely in the existing regional centres and towns along the main transport routes. Regional Victoria is likely to continue to grow strongly and is projected to grow by approximately 477,000 people between 2006 and 2036. *Melbourne@5million* states that the distribution of this regional growth is projected to be in the major regional centres such as Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo.

At a local level, the accessibility to Melbourne's growing western region created by the Western Freeway and recent upgrades to it suggests scope for ongoing pressure for expansion in Moorabool Shire. Growth in the two largest towns (Bacchus Marsh and Ballan) has been considerable. As the third largest township in the Shire, along with the currently proposed sewerage program, it is likely that development pressure in Gordon will increase.

Within the regional context of Ballarat and the corridors that extend from it considerable infrastructure investment is taking place. To the north Creswick township is to be linked to Ballarat by train services as part of the provision of services between Ballarat and Maryborough To the south west and east Smythesdale and Gordon have been funded by State government with the provision of sewerage services. Through infrastructure investments three corridors that lead into Ballarat are being supported and new development provided for.

In June 2010 the state government released its *Regional Blueprint*, which advocates further population growth in regional Victoria and provides framework within which regional specific plans will be prepared and implemented. In August 2010 the Central Highlands grouping of Councils that includes Moorabool released its *Central Highlands Regional Strategic Plan*. While this plan addresses regional scale issue in respect to the western area of Moorabool shire and specifically Gordon it provides for further growth at Gordon as part of development along the Melbourne - Ballarat corridor and as part of the planned development of the wider Ballarat area.

The *Central Highlands Regional Strategic Plan* supports and promotes further population growth and development into those existing settlements that already have a core of key facilities and services. Specifically clause 5.3 of the Plan on page 24 focuses on managed urban growth in the Ballarat area and includes recognition of ‘three development corridors; to Creswick and potentially to Clunes, to Gordon and potentially to Ballan and to Smythesdale and potentially to Linton.’ ‘Smaller cities and towns will further specialise and complement each other based on better use of local infrastructure and driven by improved local services. These local communities will be empowered by better connections to information and fellow citizens, particularly supported by high-speed broadband connections and improved transport services. The region’s settlement plan will, take advantage of the strength of existing urban and town facilities, need to meet future housing needs, support transport services through the use of underutilised capacity, and support population growth with strategic infrastructure investment in key requirements such as sewerage and natural gas.’ This will take place in three major areas (of which the third aspect is)

*“Three major settlement and transport corridors. These corridors are places where transport services or facilities upgrades are occurring or need to be further targeted. They are where there are existing settlements that have extensive services and facilities or where there is government investment occurring now in improved services. These three settlement and transport corridors are – Creswick-Clunes, Gordon-Ballan, and Smythesdale-Linton. In each of these corridors services are being upgraded such as passenger rail at Creswick, and reticulated sewerage services at Gordon and Smythesdale. Transport services on all three corridors need further enhancement commencing with reopened railway stations at Gordon and Clunes.”*

The implementation of the Regional Blueprint is assisted by recent amendments to the State Planning Policy Framework, which is part of the Moorabool Planning Scheme. Implementation of Section 12.03 of the State Planning Policy Framework in the Moorabool Planning Scheme is mandatory. This section specifically addresses matters forming the framework of the Victorian government’s *Regional Blueprint*. While the focus of Clause 12.03 is on major regional centres like Ballarat and larger regional centres it also addresses smaller settlements particularly those within Melbourne’s hinterland (the area within 100 kilometres of central Melbourne) and along major transport corridors (as is Gordon in both instances).

Clause 12.03 directs urban growth into major regional centres like Ballarat. It promotes transport and communications and economic linkages between the various settlements through such actions as Improving connections to regional and metropolitan transport services.

Clause 12.03 requires the management of growth in Melbourne’s hinterland, with provision for development in selected discrete settlements and specifically so as to

- maintain the attractiveness and amenity of hinterland towns,
- prevent dispersed settlement,

- site and design new development to minimise risk to life, property, the natural environment and community infrastructure from natural hazards such as bushfire and flooding,
- manage the growth of settlements to ensure development is linked to the timely and viable provision of physical and social infrastructure and employment,
- strengthen and enhance the character and identity of towns,
- improve connections to regional and metropolitan transport services,
- direct growth to locations where utility, transport, commercial and social infrastructure and services are available or can be provided in the most efficient and sustainable manner, and focus major government and private sector investments in centres on major transport corridors, particularly railway lines, in order to maximise the access and mobility of communities.

The Gordon structure plan seeks to not only be consistent with those policies but to actually implement it with initiatives such as directing long term growth and development into areas which reinforce the capacity and opportunity to reopen the railway station for passenger services.

### Population and Housing Trends

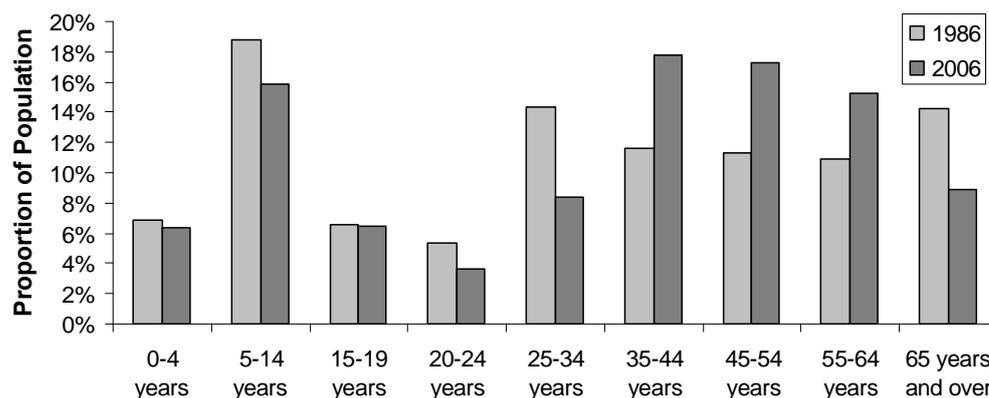
The population of Gordon is comparatively small, but it has grown in the previous two decades – mostly evident in the late 1980s and again in the last decade. Much of this growth has occurred beyond the core township area, including within the surrounding rural landscape and towards Mount Egerton. At the most recent census in 2006 the population of the Gordon area was just under 1,000, while the population of the core township was 437 (Table 1). In addition to the rapid growth in dwellings (and more modest population growth) in the town area, the expansion of rural residential housing in surrounding areas has been significant.

*Table 1: Population and Dwellings: Gordon Urban Centre 1986-2006*

	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Population	246	379	378	390	437
Dwellings	105	152	161	171	202

Gordon's population profile reflects the trend of the age structure typically found in rural Victoria. Young adults (20-24 and 25-34 years) are poorly represented as proportions of the population but this is characteristic of smaller towns. For Gordon the median age in 2006 was 38 years. Data from 1986 shows a younger age structure than in 2006 – both at the local and regional level- even though there was a higher proportion of the over 65 years age group (Table 2). This change reflects a general shift in family size and social movements.

*Table 2: Age Structure 1986 v 2006*



Among the local workforce key employment sectors include transport services, health care, manufacturing and retail trade'. This is also characteristic of the whole of Moorabool Shire. As there is very little local employment, most of the workforce commute to Melbourne, Ballarat and other parts of Moorabool, with commuting to Ballarat and fringe Melbourne increasing (Table 3)

Table 3: Journey to Work Destinations (Moorabool Ballan Area – including Gordon) 1996-2006

	Melbourne			Ballarat	Moorabool	Other
	(Inner)	(West)	(Other)			
1996	12.9%	20.0%	5.5%	11.0%	38.6%	11.8%
2006	9.5%	21.2%	5.3%	14.9%	36.5%	12.5%

### Housing in the Township Zone Area

There are 264 houses within the study area. Of these, 118 are in the surrounding rural living area, and 146 are in the Township Zone area. In the last 8 years (2000-2008), there have been 47 building permits issued for new dwellings in the township of Gordon, and in the surrounding rural residential area. This equates to growth of 2-3% per annum. Housing in the town is a mix of styles, ages, and sizes.

Within the township area, the majority (63%) of blocks (housing and vacant land) fall within the 1,000-4,000 square metre range (1,000 square metres is equivalent to a quarter of an acre). Many of these blocks could also be further subdivided, and still provide reasonable sized blocks (especially when sewerage removes on-site waste constraints). There are currently 93 vacant lots in the Township area of Gordon, however 29 of these form part of a single property, often with an adjoining house and are currently used as part of their yard (Table 4). For this reason, many of these blocks may not become available for sale in the short to medium term.

Table 4: Properties by Size Range (hectares) – Vacant, Occupied and Recent Approval\*

	<300sqm	300-600sqm	600-1000sqm	1000-4000sqm	4000-10000sqm	>10,000sqm	Total
Existing House	0	1	4	91	41	9	146
Vacant Properties	0	0	1	34	9	6	50
Dwelling Approvals	0	0	1	13	2	2	18
Vacant Lots	1	7	10	60	12	3	93

\*If constructed, recent approvals are also included in 'Existing House' count

There is a total of 64 remaining vacant lots. Based on current building rates over the last 8 years, this should provide for 28 years of supply, however sewage services in the town may alter the pace of development of these blocks.

### Housing in the Rural Living Zone Area

As shown in Table 5, the majority of the lots in the surrounding rural living area range in size from 6-12 ha, with the next largest group smaller than 1ha. This high proportion of smaller lots helps blur the boundaries between the Rural Living and Township zones. The minimum size for a new sub-division in the Rural Living zone is 6 hectares, but only one current lot in the area is greater than 12 ha.

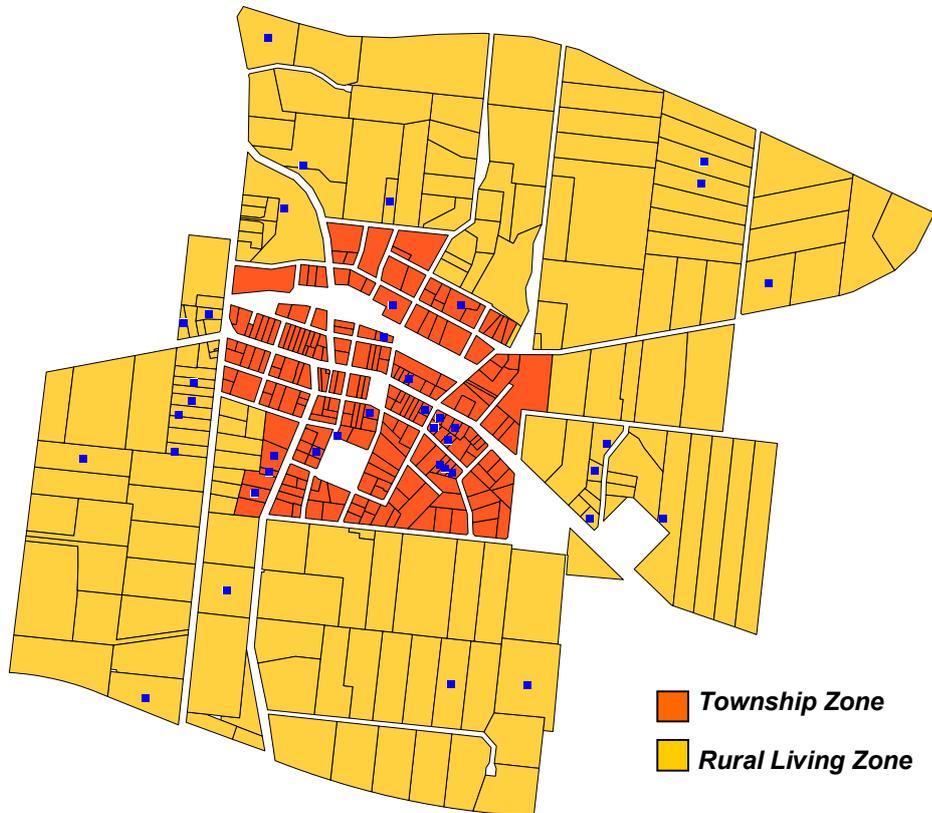
Table 5: Properties by Size Range (hectares) – Vacant, Occupied and recent Approval\*

<b>RLZ</b>	<b>0-1ha</b>	<b>1-3ha</b>	<b>3-6ha</b>	<b>6-12ha</b>	<b>&gt;12ha</b>	<b>Total</b>
Existing House	33	19	51	14	1	118
Vacant Properties	12	4	17	10	0	43
Dwelling Approvals	11	1	11	5	0	28

\*If constructed, recent approvals are also included in 'Existing House' count

Most houses are on smaller blocks, and recent preferences (as expressed through building permits) suggest a strong preference for lots below 6 hectares. Based on recent trends in demand, the 43 currently vacant blocks will provide about 12 years supply of land. Map 2 below indicates the zoning of the township and surrounds area and the location of recent housing. Land outside the Structure Plan area is zoned Farming.

### Map 2- Current Planning Scheme Zones in Structure Plan Area



## **Local Businesses and Community Facilities**

A number of small scale businesses exist in the town. These provide a mix of tourism such as the hat shop, and gallery, services to locals through the gas supplies service, post office and general store, tourist café, and services to locals and surrounding towns by the panel beater, and joiner. The businesses provide employment to the owners, and a number of employees as well. Gordon also has a number of home based businesses that are less dependent on location – and scope exists for other appropriately sited businesses, particularly in the town core. Community facilities are limited but commensurate with the population. The town boasts two primary schools, churches, a well-developed recreation reserve, halls and public open space.

## **The Gordon Railway Station**

The Melbourne to Ballarat line is one of four higher speed regional rail lines radiating from Melbourne that have been substantially upgraded in the last few years and provided with frequent services. The existing Gordon railway station has been closed for a number of years and in fact the renewed track has been built away from the existing railway station platform. It has been suggested by the Department of Transport that the re-opening of the station cannot be justified in terms of the likely patronage. This position is hard to reconcile with an overall state government policy to grow rail passenger travel, focus development in the Ballarat corridor and support more sustainable living patterns. There is no railway station between Ballan and Ballarat – a distance of about 40 kilometres. Persons in Gordon wishing to access rail travel either to Melbourne or Ballarat are required to travel to Ballan – about 12 minutes car trip away. For those wishing to travel to Ballarat ironically they must firstly travel a considerable distance in the opposite direction to Ballarat in order to access the rail service. This means that using a car to travel to Ballarat is a much shorter and quicker option.

Estimates of the number of persons who would use a train service that stopped at Gordon are difficult to determine. The number of persons who live in Gordon and surrounds significantly understates the potential catchment patronage. The Mount Egerton community contains similar numbers to the Gordon area and access to the rail service would be just as convenient for them. The road network and communities in the wider area such as in the west at Wallace and from areas to the north of the Freeway, are also served by the Gordon railway station. In general terms the 'catchment' of the Gordon railway station is likely to be in the order of 2,500 persons. Existing bus services are infrequent and poorly timed. Currently there are sixteen rail services a day passing through Gordon, it would not be necessary that all train services would stop. By comparison trains on the Bendigo, Gippsland and the Seymour line stop at many more stations on their lines and at stations that serve far fewer people in their localities than the Gordon railway station can serve.

After further consultation the Department of Transport has written to Council in June 2010 in respect to the Gordon railway station and indicated that while there is no commitment to re-open the station, the intention is to keep the option open and that land use planning should preserve that option and reflect the potential. The Department notes that the structure plan provides for further population growth and for township development towards the railway station

## **Local Character and Landscape**

Gordon presents as a village-like community in a very attractive landscape setting. Gordon is situated in a fertile rolling landscape punctuated with prominent hills and distant views. Agricultural land has been extensively cleared but there are major stands of remnant vegetation and isolated trees within and on the fringes of the town particularly to the north and east. Exotic tree planting forms major windbreaks in parts of the township. The built character of town focuses on the main street, which historically formed the main Melbourne to Ballarat highway. A number of important buildings from that era and function are still located in the core township area. Other historically important buildings include the two schools, churches and the disused railway station. Some newer housing is found in the old township area but is mostly found on the periphery and in the rural residential areas surrounding the town. The road network largely reflects the original town survey although not all roads are open for traffic. Some newer roads have been surveyed and built to accommodate rural residential development.

The distinctive village character of Gordon is represented by its open feel within a natural environment and rolling hills in its distance presenting the township with distinct views and vistas and open fields. The sense of space is also reflected in its built form, with regular setbacks and spacing between buildings and large landscaped front setbacks, able to accommodate medium to large sized vegetation.

The village's predominant and preferred built form presents a modest low built form, with single storey detached buildings. The regular presence of verandas with wooden posts and flat tin roofs is a common vista within Gordon, and such features within the Main Street commercial properties provides pedestrian protection and adds to the village character.

Building materials are predominantly natural materials, such as wood and brick with main buildings consisting of gabled roof forms with flat roofed verandas.

A number of buildings within the township may have heritage significance and these buildings are important to the character of the township.

In terms of the landscape of the town and the residential areas there are three dominant features. Paddock Creek is a deeply incised valley that commences on the western edge of the town and runs west- east and forms a natural physical barrier to the northern expansion of residential development and provides an open space break. Secondly, extended views from many parts of the town to nearby and distant rural and agricultural landscapes are important elements in reinforcing the town's rural amenity setting. The third aspect is the importance of trees. In the township these are either isolated large native trees or exotic deciduous trees along roads and pine trees planted as windbreaks. These features make strong statements and help to close off many views and reinforce a feeling of compactness. This is particularly the case in locations such as around the state primary school, around St Patrick's school and church, in the residential areas to the south and south west of the main street and along the road leading south from the township towards the railway station.

The landscape character of the town is quite complex and made up of a diverse range of elements, natural, introduced and built. Considerable care needs to be taken to ensure that the location scale and form of new development reinforces the qualities and character of that landscape. There are considerable opportunities to reinforce the landscape and character of

the town particularly through further carefully selected and sited planting associated with new development and along key roads and routes.

Map 3 on the following page provides an analysis of the key features of the township

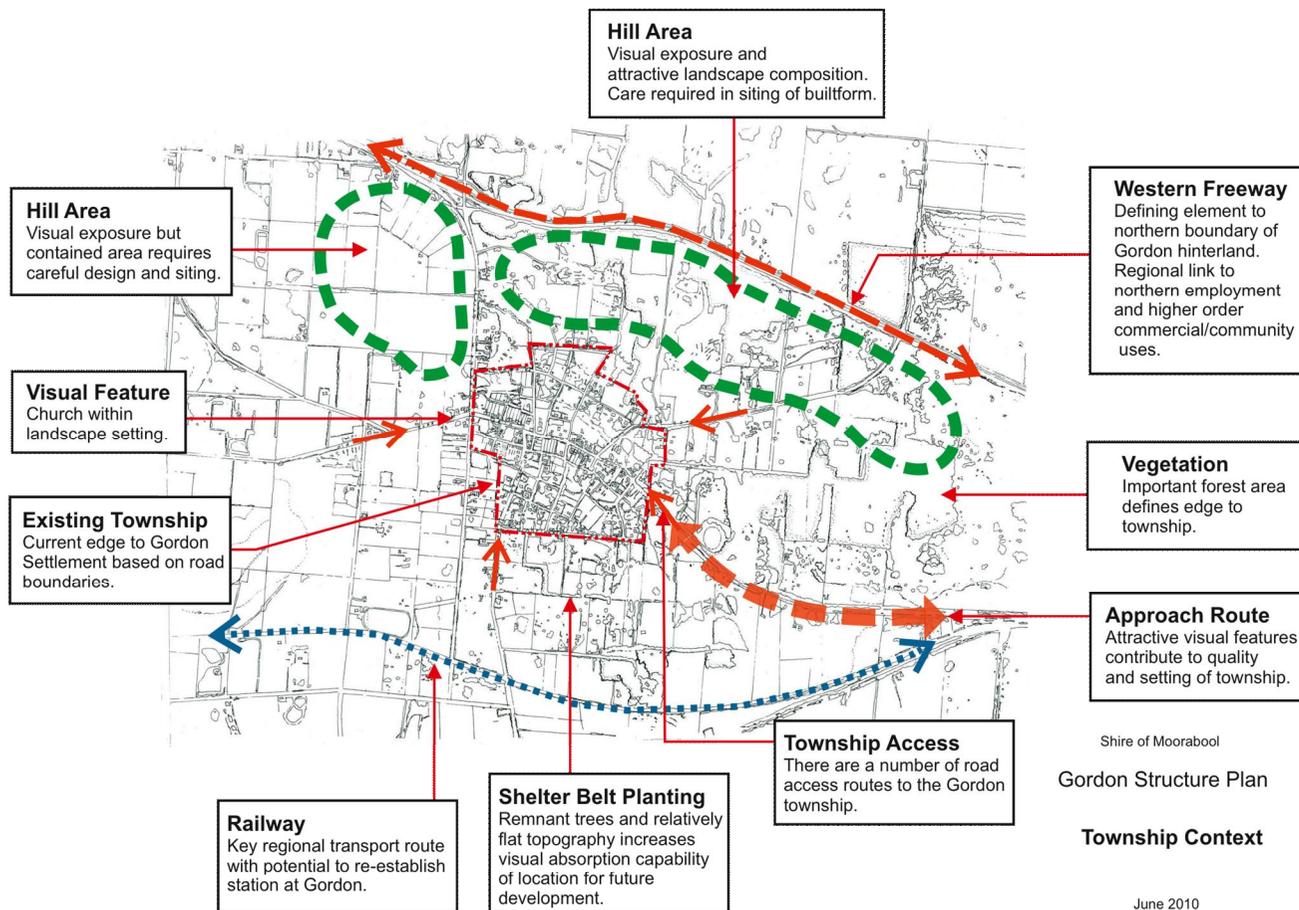
### **Infrastructure - Roads, Pathways, Drainage and Recreation**

An important consideration in future planning of the town is the provision of adequate physical services.

The main roads in Gordon are sealed but long lengths of residential access streets are gravel and some surveyed roads (legal existing) are not open to traffic. While some residents expressed a wish to have road surfaces upgraded others saw the current arrangements as limiting development and contributing to the country town feel. It is likely that further residential development in some areas would place increased pressure on Council to open some roads and upgrade others. Development of some areas could be dependent on the proponent partly or fully upgrading the road or contributing to costs.

With the exception of the traditional main street and through the Nature Reserve (Paddock Creek) there are no formally constructed footpaths or walking trails. There are many informal walking trails through the town and there is an opportunity to link these and further develop this network to provide access to locations such as the schools and the recreation reserve. School students expressed an interest in better linkages as they enjoy riding their bicycles around town and to and from school but would find it safer if there were dedicated pathways. Similarly dedicated and shared pathways would assist recreational walking.

# Map Three Township Area and Surrounds Major Features



Drainage in the existing residential areas is an important consideration. Part of the village feel is reinforced by the lack of formal constructed facilities such as roads, footpaths and drainage systems. The open swale drains reinforce the character in a number of areas. Council is well aware of substantial town drainage problems in locations such as:

- The area between Nightingale Street and Main Street, especially along Urquhart St, with street table drains shedding water into local properties.
- There have been ongoing problems with storm water coming down Old Melbourne Rd from Careys Road East and flooding properties around the intersection with Old Western Highway. Council has had to pay out water damage claims twice in the past three years to affected property owners in this area.
- There are major drainage problems at the intersection of Foxes Lane and Cartons Road that can only be addressed by a new piped drainage
- There are drainage problems around the intersection of Stanley and O'Donnell Streets and Gladstone and Hopwood Streets,
- There have been periodic complaints about flooding of properties in Main Street.
- Lyndhurst St is subject to periodic flooding which cuts road access.

There are sufficient issues with drainage in the old township area to warrant a full new underground drainage system being constructed in part or the entire township. However this is prohibitively expensive. Issues around drainage in some areas may well have the effect of creating a brake on the further development on a number of sites in and around the old township. It is likely that proposals for further development in some parts of Gordon or proposals for intensive development will require the proponent to provide substantial drainage works at their cost in order to accommodate the impact of storm water.

The existing Recreation Reserve is well equipped and extensively used, particularly considering the population of the town and district. Ideally it would have been located more centrally but its development means that its present location has to be accommodated in the Structure Plan. As the use of the Recreation Reserve increases the scale and capacity of facilities will need to be increased. It would be desirable if the present open space – nature reserve development (Paddock Creek) could be extended to ultimately link to the Recreation Reserve with a vegetated corridor with a walking and bicycle track.

### **Development in Proclaimed Water Supply Catchments**

The whole of the Gordon study area and an extended area beyond the study area boundary is located within a Proclaimed Water Supply Catchment. Paddock Creek, drains to the east and flows to Bostock Reservoir and the East Moorabool River.

Large areas of Moorabool Shire are within proclaimed water supply catchments. This situation has produced a number of land use and development issues. On the one hand increased residential development reliant on septic tank systems for effluent disposal has the potential to increase the flow of pollutants into waterways and ultimately potable water supplies. This can occur from both surface drainage and sub-surface water movement. There has been increasing concern throughout Victoria that long term reliance on septic tanks in water supply catchments is not a sustainable long term strategy. Central Highlands Water, as one of the state's water supply authorities, has consistently raised concerns about residential development in their water supply catchments. The sewerage of Gordon township will reduce polluted runoff from existing and future urban development and improve the quality of water in Paddock Creek.

A recent policy initiative of the State government in relation to development in areas within open potable water catchments together with a recent relevant Supreme Court and VCAT case decision have implications for the future development of Gordon. For many years the State Government had an Interim Policy on development in open potable water supply catchments. In May 2009 the policy was clarified and reissued. The full policy can be accessed at:

[http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/CA256F310024B628/0/2B621C537A272364CA25700600224716/\\$File/Guidelines+for+permit+applications+in+catchment+areas.pdf](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/CA256F310024B628/0/2B621C537A272364CA25700600224716/$File/Guidelines+for+permit+applications+in+catchment+areas.pdf)

A recent Victorian and Civil Administrative Tribunal decision (Rozen v Macedon Ranges SC [2009] VCAT 2746 - 23 December 2009), subsequent to a Supreme Court decision, in relation to residential development in a Proclaimed Water Supply Catchment where the dwellings would be reliant on septic tank waste disposal and applying the state government policy on development in open potable water supply catchments, determined that

- There should be a dwelling density of 1:40 hectares
- Each lot created in a subdivision should be at least 40 hectares in area.
- Planning permit applications in open potable water supply catchments should be determined by reference to the policy in the current Guidelines; that each of the individual guidelines should be applied cumulatively; and that the current Guidelines should take priority over competing policy objectives or decision guidelines in the planning scheme in the event of a conflict.
- The protection of water sources is of paramount importance and must never be compromised, and
- The above provisions do not apply if a catchment management plan, water catchment policy or similar project addressing land use planning issues and the cumulative impact of onsite waste water/septic tank systems has been prepared for the catchment, and the objectives, strategies and requirements of the plan or project have been included in the planning scheme.

### **Infrastructure - Sewerage**

The State Government has prioritised Gordon Township for the provision of sewerage. Sewerage provision is the responsibility of Central Highlands Water (CHW) who will heavily subsidise the costs of the scheme. At this stage the area to be included in the sewer district includes most of the properties within the area defined as Residential in this structure plan, some larger properties on the periphery of this area are to be excluded. In terms of capacity it is evident that there is sufficient design capacity in what is proposed to cope with a very substantial increase in the number of households and residents in the area to be sewered. CHW favour infill of the township area over expanding the township boundary.

If there was any proposal to extend the township and the area sewered CHW would prefer to see that undertaken in a planned manner and focused in a limited number of locations rather than ad hoc scattered development. There is no intention to provide sewerage services to any of the scattered rural residential and rural living areas on the fringe of the township. Following discussions with the CHW they have agreed to an extension to the area to be sewered to embrace an area of land in the vicinity of the Gordon Hotel where it embraces a number of existing relatively small lots.. Council believes that the area to the south of this land which includes a number of existing residential properties and which is part of the headwaters of Paddock Creek should also be investigated for further residential growth in the future and included within the area to be sewered, This area is shown on Map 4.

The development of the Structure Plan has identified that in relation to the area proposed to be seweraged CHW do not propose to sewer the whole of the existing township area on the basis that some areas have larger lots and therefore a septic tank is feasible. This appears to be a short term approach as increased numbers of septic tanks in these areas are not appropriate if the concern is water quality. This decision by CHW appears to be inconsistent with the VCAT decision as it means that some land zoned township may not be able to be developed.

With the State government's decision to require Central Highlands Water (CHW) to implement a reticulated sewerage system for Gordon township the development prospects for the town are potentially altered. Smaller vacant lots currently precluded from development because of on-site effluent disposal issues could be built on once the sewerage scheme is operating. Existing lots that have houses could be further subdivided and additional houses constructed. Larger lots could now support extensive subdivision.

CHW has identified 141 existing properties to be serviced by reticulated sewerage and to make provision for an upper limit of 280 properties in the declared sewerage district to be connected. In the event that additional connections beyond the 280 were required CHW would require additional costs to connect to the sewerage system. While it is understood that the whole system has considerably more potential than 280 connections the costs of further individual or large scale connections could be substantial as local and site augmentation of the system may be required.

Such costs could be a deterrent to future development and any large scale subdivision of land or intensification of development may well be substantially curtailed based on likely costs. It is apparent from the current CHW position that connections beyond 280 have the potential to shift sewerage provision in the town into a very different cost regime. It appears that the documents upon which potential contractors have tendered have effectively placed a significant first stage 'cap' on the township in terms of the number of houses and that the cap is not based on any planning study merely a doubling of the existing number of connections.

The sewerage of the township area will make a substantial difference to the potential for cleaner water discharging into Paddock Creek. The Rural Living zone provides for residential development on larger lots. The current zone provisions establish a minimum lot size for new lots of 6 hectares and a requirement for a planning permit for a house on any lot below 6 hectares. There are 33 vacant lots in the Rural Living zone that are less than 6 hectares in area. There is only one lot larger than 12 hectares in the zone, ie large enough to be subdivided. The implementation of the VCAT decision across the rural living zone could preclude any further residential development anywhere in the Rural Living zone.

### **Estimating Future Residential Demand**

One of the major issues in preparing a Structure Plan for Gordon is the difficulty in quantifying future residential demand. Based on recent years it is likely that there will continue to be a small but steady stream of housing constructed in the township area and the surrounding rural living area. Projections based on recent years could support about 2-4 houses per year in the area. However without sewerage there are less and less suitable blocks. Development is also dependent on land owners being willing sellers or developers. If the current patterns and rate of development continued a 20 year development period may support 40 to 80 houses, although it is unlikely that there is sufficient vacant land to support that amount of development.

While there is no guarantee that the provision and availability of sewerage will alter the development rate of the town it substantially alters the potential rate of development. The sale and development of existing small vacant lots becomes possible, the re-subdivision of existing larger lots including those with a house becomes feasible and new and different forms of development (such as shops on the small lots in the main street) and even multi unit development all become possible. While future rates of residential development are speculative it is much more likely that given Gordon's location on the Melbourne - Ballarat corridor, ready access to the Western Freeway and the potential future prospect that the railway station could be reopened, all support the concept that development rates are likely to increase rather than reflect existing rates. While it is difficult to estimate likely future development rates, a modest development rate of 6 - 10 new houses a year in the township would mean as little as 14 years supply under the proposed costing regime that CHW has provided for (140 additional connections). Beyond that sewerage connection may be cost prohibitive for some prospective developments.

In order to establish the likely prospects of future residential development, following the provision of reticulated sewerage, consultants preparing the Structure Plan developed and trialled a methodology to identify possible and likely future residential development within the area identified as Township Zone within this structure plan. The area considered also embraced the proposed the area immediately west and south of the intersection of the Old Melbourne Road and Brougham Street, which includes a number of existing residences. The area of Rural Living Zone between the Township and the Railway line was not included.

### **Precinct Methodology for Determining Land Supply**

The Gordon Township area was divided into a series of precincts where there are common characteristics in terms of; the existing and prospective pattern of housing development based on lots sizes and the layout of lots; the road network, road surfaces and likelihood that surveyed roads that are not constructed would remain so. Extensive areas of vegetation that would be likely to limit housing infill; proximity to the town centre; the position of existing houses on lots such that they would preclude or limit further subdivision; and the aspect or amenity of existing areas were all factored into the calculations. In all 20 separate precincts were identified.

An assessment was then made of each precinct as to the likely level of development that could be supported using the criteria set out above and an estimate of the likely generation of the amount of new housing development that would be supported with the provision of reticulated sewerage. It should be noted that a conservative approach was used. Only in those precincts close to the town centre was it considered that most available existing or potential subdivision lots would be developed and even in these areas modest lot sizes of 1,000 square metres were used as the basis of calculation. For some lots in peripheral areas very limited numbers of new lots or housing development were provided for. It was recognized that the provision of sewerage could support a much more intensive development of land for medium density or multi lot development. An assumption was made that a total of 20 new medium density lots would be created in or around the town centre.

Using this methodology there is 'potential' for the provision of an additional 172 dwellings in the Township zone area. These are additional to the existing 141 connections identified by CHW.

This methodology also identified that there are 34 existing dwellings that should be added to the base figure of 141 on the grounds that they are inside the sewerage district but should be

or are likely to seek connection to the system or that they are outside the district and should be included because of physical proximity or potential issues with effluent disposal, township drainage or being in the catchment of the Paddock Creek. These include areas to the immediate west and south of the intersection of the Old Melbourne Road and Brougham Street. (see notes under (3) and (4) below). Further if these areas are included there is the potential for an additional 41 lots to be added into the calculations on the basis that these areas can support further residential development that should be connected to the sewerage system. If all these lots are added then there is the prospect of a further 247 lots (in addition to the 141 existing connections that CHW have been identified).

It should be noted that in terms of potential connections no allowance has been made for uses such as new retail or business premises. These are likely to be modest in number but 5 – 6 such connections are likely.

The figure of 247 is based on the following assumptions:

1. There is the potential for an additional 152 houses in the area to be provided with reticulated sewerage using a modest assessment of likely current and future lot development
2. Provision for 20 multi unit or small lot developments
3. There are 34 houses in areas within the Township zone that not proposed to be sewered or are immediately outside the Township zone (in the area to the immediate west and south of the intersection of the Old Melbourne Road and Brougham Street). Because of the existing scale of development it should be connected to sewerage because of their location at the head of the catchment of Paddock Creek
4. There is the provision for an additional 41 lots in the area referred to in (3) above based on the utilisation of vacant lots or the re-subdivision of existing lots at a rate that will retain the existing low density pattern. This can only occur after a more detailed investigation of this area and a further amendment to rezone this area of land.

It is recognized that these calculations are based on current landowners being willing sellers and or developers. Clearly not every landowner will view his or her land this way. Some parcels of land will not be developed in the foreseeable future.

The potential new residential lot scenarios are shown on map 4 on the following pages.

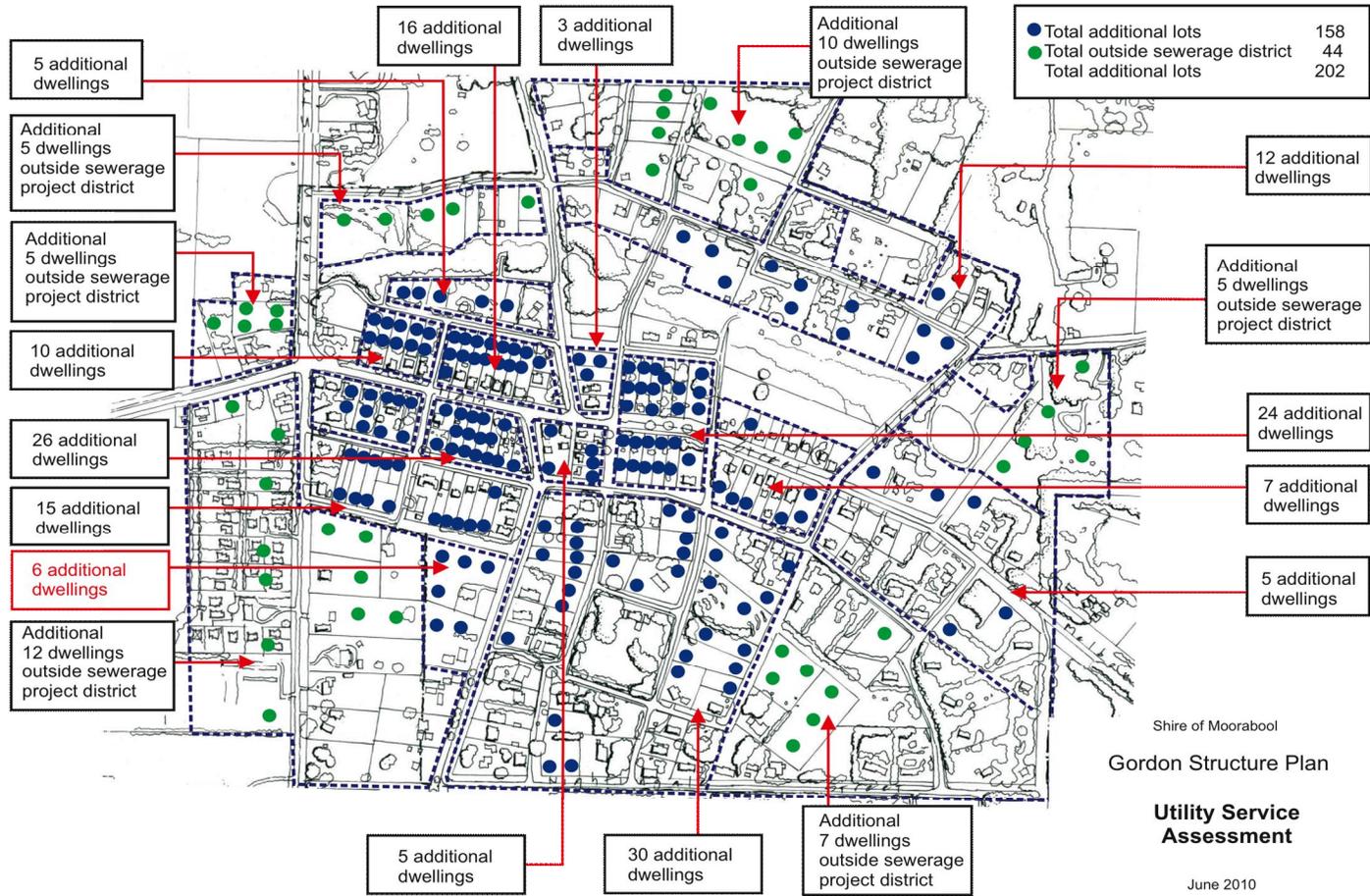
### **Effects on Land supply**

What the calculations have provided is a lot development scenario, which modestly uses the potential provided by the provision of sewerage. If that development opportunity was progressively used over a period of time some concept of the development potential of the township can be factored into a land supply model. For example with the prospect of a further 172 dwellings (the figure excludes lots identified in (3) and (4) above), at a current rate of 4 houses per year the township could support over 40 years of demand. If the development rate doubled to 8 houses per year (because of sewerage) then the township has the capacity to support 20 years of development.

However if the existing 34 houses (identified in (3) and (4) above) are added to the 141 existing connections making a total of 175 and there is a 'cap' of 280 connections, at a rate of 8 dwellings per year there is effectively only 13 years land supply.

While the figure of 280 connections factored in by CHW does not create a fixed upper limit for the township, (although it is not clear what is the ultimate capacity of the sewerage treatment works) the requirement for connections beyond 280 to meet the full cost of connections and any upgrade in infrastructure, could well mean that further connections beyond that number will be severely constrained. If 280 proved to be a tipping point in terms of supporting future development the 280 connections figure could be reached well inside the planning horizon of 20 years. One substantial development proposal utilizing an area of vacant land embracing a range of lot sizes including medium density housing (eg an aged persons village) could utilize most of the capacity within the 280 connection 'cap' in a very short space of time. While not immediately evident there is the possibility that the entire capacity of the system within the 280 connections could be utilised in a 5-7 year period and that there would be little prospect of further development beyond that number. While CHW favours infill of the existing township area the prospective costs of connection beyond 280 may limit further infill and mean that opportunities to effectively utilize land inside the township may be lost. In that scenario support for the extension of the township area may need to be brought forward on the basis that only a relatively large development could provide the cost structures to support upgrading the sewerage system capacity.

# Map 4 Potential Residential Development Opportunities



## **Part Two – The Gordon Township Structure Plan**

### **Introduction**

The Gordon Structure Plan seeks to guide the development of the township and surrounding area over a planning period of the next twenty years – to 2030 at least.

Currently the township comprises the historic core area of the town and its expansion into the immediately surrounding area based on the historic surveyed town plan and the consequent re-subdivision of some areas and an extensive surrounding rural living development area.

### **Existing constraints to and opportunities for growth of Gordon township**

A number of constraints exist on the town's development. These constraints include

- There has been little need to fully construct all the roads that comprised the original surveyed township. Consequently the surveyed township road network does not necessarily relate to the constructed on ground road network.
- There has been limited development of some basic services such as stormwater drainage systems and footpaths
- The continuing reliance on on-site effluent disposal and septic tanks has meant that residential development over the last few decades has been limited to lot sizes that could demonstrate compliance with the Septic Tank Code of Practice (generally lots of 0.5 hectare and above) and this has prevented small lots from supporting new houses leading to a fragmented development pattern (which has maintained the rural feel of some areas.
- The level of residential development has been insufficient to maintain all but a basic level of commercial and community facilities
- The closure of the Gordon Railway Station and the loss of convenient rail passenger services

Despite these constraints there has been a steady continuing but modest rate of residential development.

Opportunities for and support, even encouragement, for development have included factors such as

- The location of Gordon with its improved road access to Ballarat and Melbourne
- The range of local facilities such as two primary schools
- The attractive rural setting and small town – village lifestyle appeal
- Larger lots in a range of sizes
- The landscape of the area

- A strong sense of community
- Housing and land affordability

### **Land Use and Development within the Gordon Township**

Within the current Township zone three land use and development precincts have been defined with the following proposed zone and overlay changes to the Moorabool Planning Scheme.

1. Town Centre (Main Street) is defined as the land which interacts with Old Melbourne Road between Russell and Brougham Streets.

The town centre is a commercial and community area identified as proposed Business 1 Zone in this structure plan. The Business 1 Zone will ensure that commercial based uses are able to be established and create a core town centre to service the township, and mitigate land use conflicts should the zoning remain township zone.

2. Core Residential is defined as the area bounded by Urquhart, Lyndhurst, Tennyson Streets and the western edge of the built up township area.
2. The Remaining township area within the Residential 1 Zone
3. The Rural Living Surrounds is identified as the land located within the Rural Living Zone which surrounds the township area

The proposed DDO will ensure future built form is respectful of the distinct country village character of Gordon. The proposed DDO will include provisions to ensure minimum lots sizes protect the landscape and country character of Gordon.

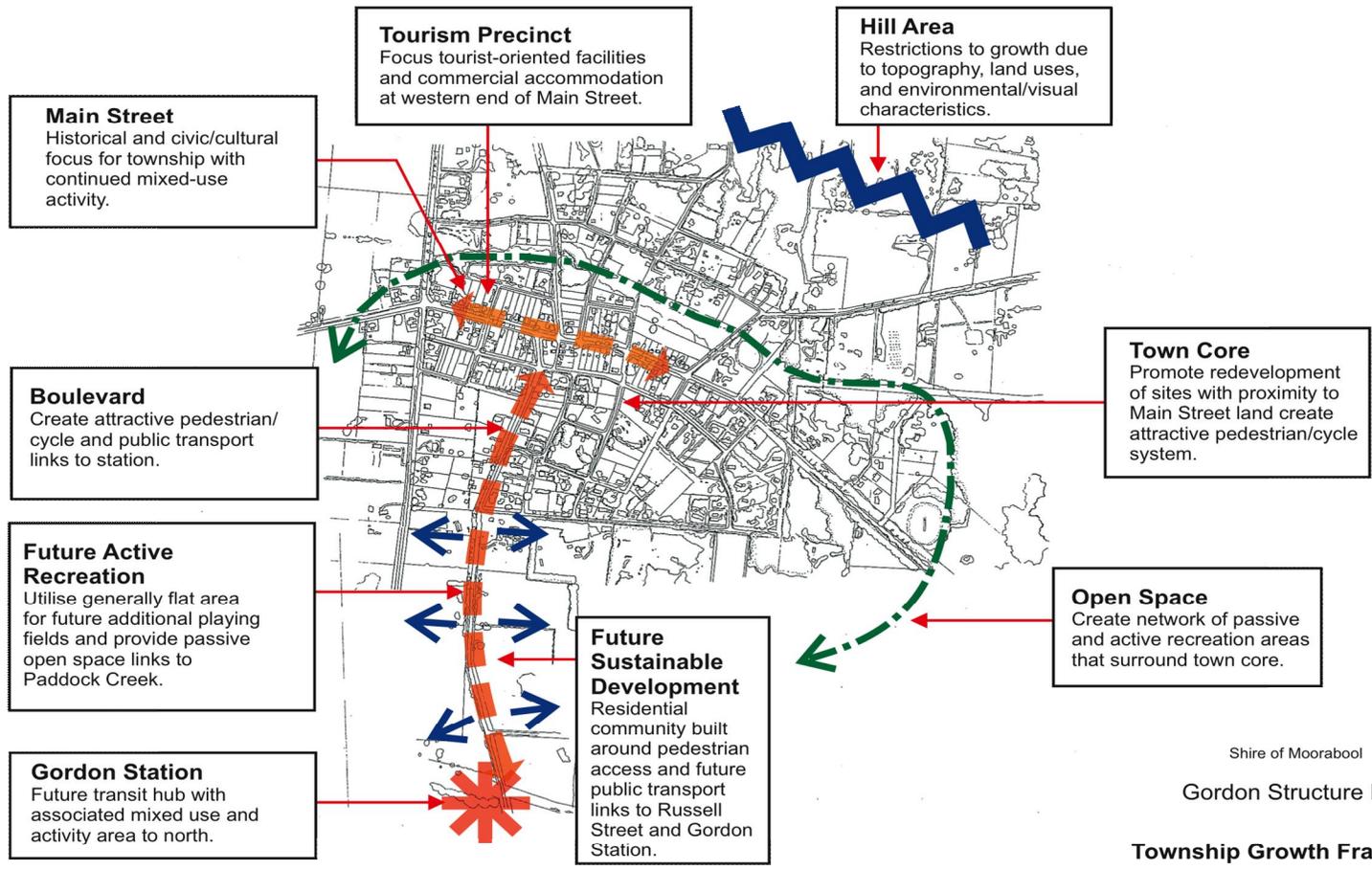
### **Structure Plan Principles**

The Gordon Structure Plan has been developed on a number of principles agreed by Council and confirmed with community meetings. These principles are:

- *Planned and managed growth of the township should be supported.* Council's policy is that with the provision of sewerage Gordon's role as the prime urban area and rural service centre in the western third of the Shire is affirmed and that Gordon is the third ranking urban township in the Shire
- *The retention of the rural character of the township area and surrounds is paramount.* That is to be achieved by emphasizing high quality, township scale residential and business development in the core area around the main street and immediate surrounds, and retaining the lower density scale residential and vegetated areas in the surrounds and the wider rural living setting of the township

- *Preference for residential development is for utilising vacant land within the township area. This form of development will utilise the capability of the planned sewerage system to support more opportunities for more intensive urban development prior to residential development outside of the Residential Zone.*
- *The longer term provision of areas for future expansion of the township is to be based on the area around the railway station and the linking of that node to the existing township through the expansion of the town southwards. However further detailed investigation will be necessary to determine whether this appropriate, in particular possible infrastructure constraints. As an alternative there may be some opportunity to extend westwards along Old Melbourne Road. This too would need to be subject to more detailed investigation some time in the future. Any expansion of the township area into these areas would be based on the achievement of substantial levels of infill development in the existing township area and on the full provision of urban services included reticulated sewerage and drainage as part of a comprehensively planned urban development.*
- *Future commercial business development and community facilities should be focussed in the Main Street - (the Old Melbourne Road generally between Russell and Palmerston Streets). Commercial development in the town centre should be based on business frontage to main streets, active retail frontages, avoidance of blank walls on frontage, no setback on the frontage and car parking at the rear of developments.*
- *Future development based on higher density and smaller lot residential development should be focussed in the area bounded by Urquhart, Lyndhurst, Tennyson Streets and the western edge of the built up township area.*
- *The scale and form of residential development will be managed by the application of a Design and Development Overlay and a Significant Landscape Overlay directed towards ensuring that development is in character with the rural feel and village scale of the township and surrounding area.*

*Strict control of the town's outward growth by a township boundary that separates township from rural living, and rural living from agricultural. Refer to map 5 on the following page.***Map 5- Gordon Structure Plan – Growth Framework**



Shire of Moorabool

Gordon Structure Plan

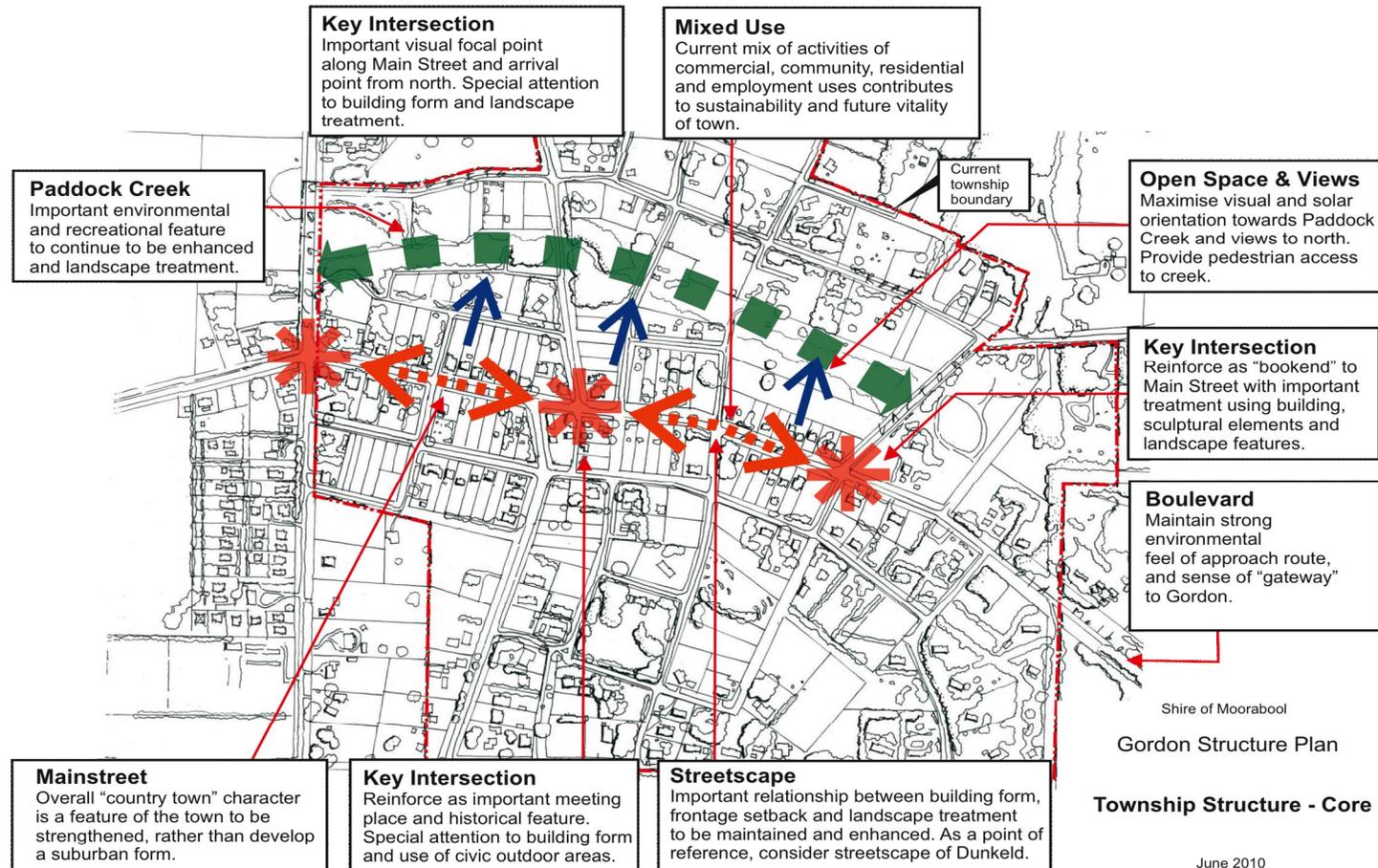
Township Growth Framework

June 2010

- *The future re-opening of the railway station with a new station constructed on the southern side of the railway line. While this initiative forms a core element of the Structure Plan the progression of the Plan is not dependent on it.*
- *Development of a network of existing and new interconnecting walking and cycling pathways. These should utilise the Paddock Creek alignment where possible and should connect the town in both an east-west and north-south alignment to allow safe pathways to the schools, the town centre and residential areas and potentially a reopened railway station. In parts this pathway network will need to utilise existing road reservations.*
- *The Paddock Creek reserve should be progressively upgraded as a community and environmental feature and facility.*
- *Further development of a compact planned town also reinforces the potential that the provision of reticulated gas is more financially feasible.*
- *Stormwater drainage and the overland flow of water from new residential development is to be managed through the imposition of local drainage schemes where determined to be necessary to facilitate further development.*
- *A progressive street tree planting program is to be implemented along roadways and pathways.*

The key elements of the Structure Plan relevant to the core area of Gordon are shown in Map 6 on the following page.

## Map 6- Gordon Structure Plan – Core Area



## **Implementation of the Structure Plan through the Planning Scheme**

The implementation of the Gordon Structure Plan through the planning scheme will be achieved by:

- Rezone all existing Township Zone to Residential 1 Zone , with the exception of a portion of the Town Centre which is to be rezoned to Business 1.
- referencing the Structure Plan in the Municipal Strategic Statement,
- inclusion of a revised clause 21.09 in relation to Gordon township to replace the existing clause 21.09
- Application of the Design and Development Overlay to the township and surrounds to protect the character of the township including a minimum lot size of 800m<sup>2</sup>.
- Application of a Significant Landscape Overlay over the town centre and the rural living surrounds precincts to protect the landscape qualities of the township.

## **Accommodating Residential Development**

There is still considerable capacity to support further residential development within the area zoned Township under the provisions of the Moorabool Planning Scheme and especially with the provision of a sewerage scheme. There is an estimated 93 vacant lots in the zoned Township area (of varying sizes) with 29 lots comprising single separately titled parcels of land. The rest are multiple adjoining parcels of land. There are a further 64 vacant lots in the Township zone area which are considered not suitable for residential development generally because they are currently too small in area for on-site disposal of sewerage.

The Gordon Sewerage Project being conducted by Central Highlands Water (CHW) has defined a sewerage district, which equates with the Township zone. Within that area CHW identified 141 properties (with existing residences) to be connected to the new sewer. Central Highlands Water has determined that there should be an upper fixed limit of 280 residential properties in total in the sewerage district to be eventually seweraged. That is CHW has made provision for an additional 139 houses to be constructed in the township area and connected to the planned sewerage system. CHW is not prescribing how that residential development should take place. But the provision of sewerage allows for a higher density of residential development than has been possible without sewerage.

In order to establish likely residential development prospects a precinct methodology based on common characteristics such as housing patterns, the road network and likelihood that surveyed roads would remain unconstructed, and areas of vegetation has been applied. Using this methodology there is potential for 172 dwellings, additional to the existing 141 connections identified by Central Highlands Water for the Gordon Sewerage Project.

The methodology also identified that there are 34 existing dwellings that should be included in the initial sewer connections that are within the sewer district, or in close proximity, that have potential effluent disposal or township drainage issues. In these areas there is also a potential further 41 that can support future development. If all these lots were added together there exists a further 247 lots above the 141 identified by CHW without additional retail or business

connections. It is recognised that these calculations are based on current landowner's willingness to sell or develop. Clearly not every landowner would wish to do so.

### **The Form and Character of Future Development**

The form and character of future development – residential and commercial should be designed and developed on the basis of the following criteria

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Enhance the village atmosphere and the rural setting, amenity and character</li><li>▪ Reject new development that does not respect the character of the town and the rural amenity and setting</li><li>▪ Reinforce the 'local community scale' of the town that supports a quality living environment and feeling secure</li></ul> |
|--|
- New residential and other forms of land use and development need to be carefully managed in terms of their location, siting, scale, appearance and design.
  - This requirement particularly applies to
    - the areas in and around the main street (the Old Melbourne Road generally between Russell and Brougham Streets),
    - the area bounded by Urquhart, Lyndhurst, Tennyson Streets and the western edge of the built up township area, and
    - open areas within the township where there is minimal existing tree cover and lots are generally larger and could be further subdivided after the provision of sewerage
  - areas in the Rural Living zone prominent and highly visible from the main street.

The preferred character of Gordon seeks to ensure that new development respects and continues the township and town centre built form. This requires new development to be sympathetic to the existing built form.

New development should contribute to the character of the area, through use of building materials (generally natural materials of brick and wood), roof forms (typically gabled) and landscape character. Picket, or post and wire front fencing is typical, and a maximum height of 1.2 metres to new front fencing is supported to ensure the preferred character of the township and town centre is maintained.

Development within the town centre should link to existing pedestrian spaces and interact with the public realm through the use of continuing verandas to provide shelter, placement of windows to provide visual stimulation and architectural detailing to provide visual interest from within the public realm.

The sense of space and open feel of the township is able to be continued through providing adequate separation between buildings of at least two metres to side setbacks, and setbacks of at least 9 metres to frontages. This separation seeks to maintain the open feel and sense of

space currently experienced in Gordon and to allow mature planting which adds to the landscape character.

Advertising signs in the town centre should be limited to three for each business to avoid visual obtrusion to the visual landscape of the area. Signs should generally be limited to above veranda, and small under veranda signs. Illuminated signs are strongly discouraged.

Large indigenous and exotic trees within the township add to the landscape character of Gordon and its country village atmosphere

Drawings on the following pages illustrate some of the elements of township character.

### **Rural Residential and Rural Living Development**

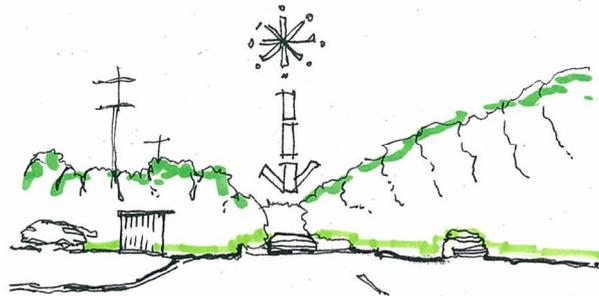
In the rural living areas surrounding the core residential area the form and character of future development should :

- carefully site new development so that it does not impact on the appearance of the rural amenity setting of the town and the views from the town to the rural areas that reinforce that setting
- carefully consider the landscaping and scale of new development particularly in open areas and locations exposed on hill tops and slopes

**Drawings 1 Township Character**

**Key Sites**

The formality of the main street provides significant opportunities for locating important civic and community buildings in prominent positions.



**Tourist Uses**

The tourist facilities and attractions are located within an identifiable precinct that also forms part of the overall town character.



**Gordon**

Townscape Character

**Recreation**

The sports and recreation facilities are proximate to the town centre and could be more strongly integrated with the character of the town centre.

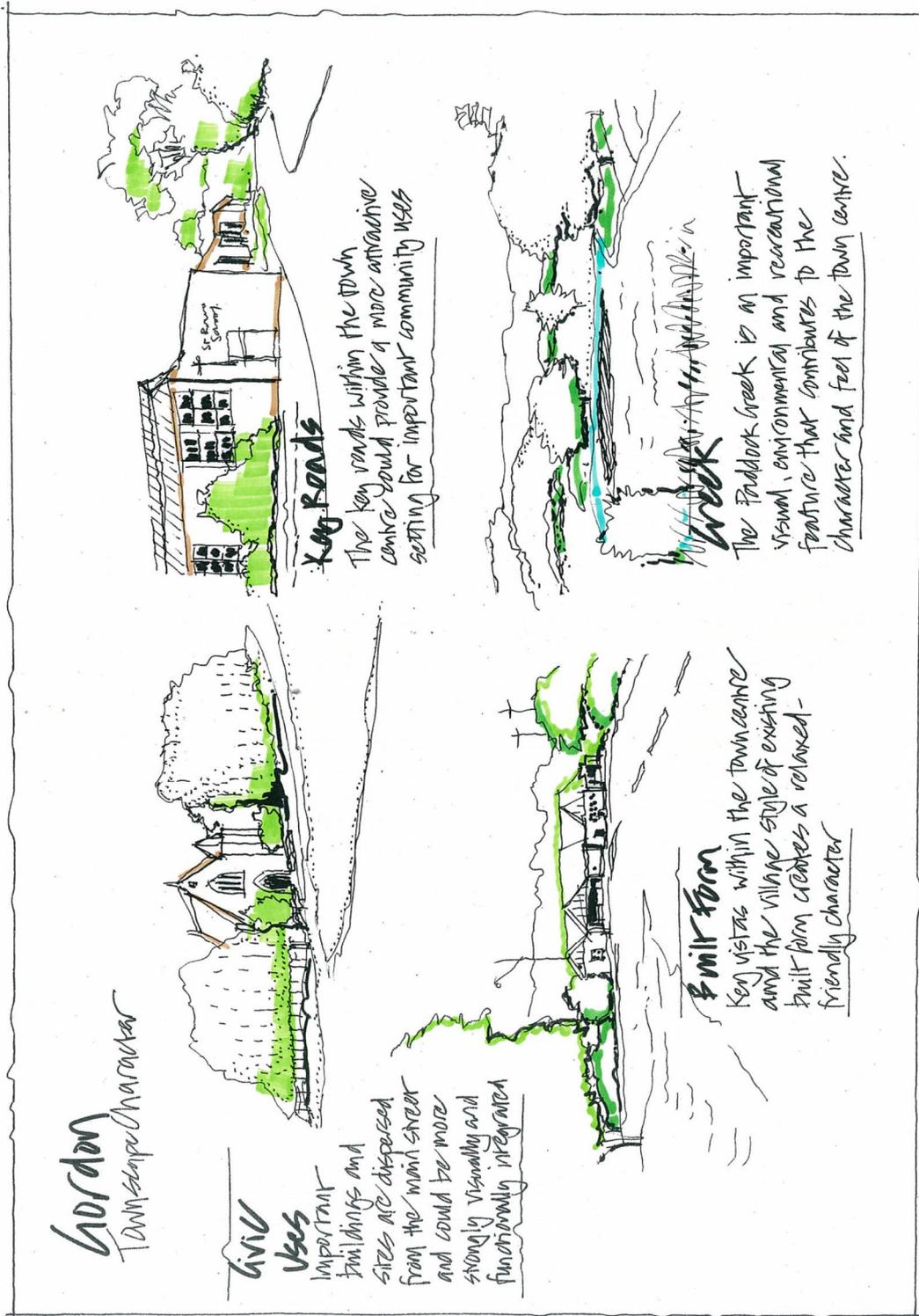
Drawing 2 Township Character Opportunities



Drawing 3 Township Character Opportunities



Drawing 4 Township Character



## **The Railway Station and Future Expansion of Gordon Township**

The Structure Plan advocates and includes provision for the re-opening of the Gordon Railway Station to facilitate the provision of passenger rail services to the Gordon community. The Structure Plan has as a core element the construction of a new railway station and the development of a car park. The development of the Structure Plan has been influenced by the location of the railway line and the prospect that the railway station will one day be opened. On the one hand it is hard to ignore the prospect of the station being opened and it would be seen to be poor strategic planning to do so. Conversely to plan the town driven primarily by a railway station that doesn't exist would be seen to be an unrealistic basis for planning. The irony is that if there was certainty about the opening of the railway station it would be a major boost to the growth of the town let alone enhance the liveability and sustainability of the community. A reopened station or a schedule for the future re-opening of the railway station reinforces the strategy to direct future long term serviced residential development to the south of the existing township area and to physically link the town with the station.

### **Future Residential Expansion of the Township**

The Structure Plan provides for the future logical growth of the town, in the period beyond the development of the existing township, is to provide for a staged and planned residential area to the south of the township area to progressively link the exiting township with the railway station. The reasons for this choice of area for future long term development is based on five factors.

1. The expansion of the town in any other direction is constrained by areas of high scenic value that can be viewed from the traditional centre of the town or by steeper or undulating land. The subject land is relatively flat. There is some suggestion that parts of the subject area are constrained by poor drainage. It should be noted that any long term residential development of the area would be based on full urban servicing including sewerage and drainage
2. The Gordon-Mt Egerton Road provides a main road focus to support the development of the area
3. In contrast to all but one other prospective development area the land is held in relatively large parcels which facilitates a comprehensive development plan
4. Residential development in this area better supports the re-opening of the railway station than any other area. This supports a more sustainable form of development than development that is more dependent on motor vehicle use
5. By focussing on one larger area for future longer term development it is much more likely that a higher quality comprehensively planned development can be supported that will provide better community services and facilities
6. However, irrespective of the above further investigation of urban expansion to the west of the township abutting Old Melbourne Road could be considered if residential expansion to the south as referred to in this plan is not possible, due to infrastructure and/or drainage issues.



## Part Three - Proposed Amendments to the Moorabool Planning Scheme

The proposed changes to the Moorabool Planning Scheme comprise three elements

1. A new Clause 21.09 to replace the existing clause in the Municipal Strategic Statement with reference in Clause 21.09 to the Structure Plan . the document set out in Part Two above.
2. The creation of a clear commercial area by rezoning the Town Centre to Business 1 Zone.
3. Rezone the residential area located within the Township Zone to Residential 1 Zone (R1Z)
4. Implement a new schedule to the Design and Development Overlay (DDO5) to apply across the town centre, core residential and rural living surrounds.
5. Implement a new schedule to the Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO2) to apply to the town centre and rural living surrounds.

### Proposed Changes to the Planning Scheme Zones

Set out below is the proposed new Clause 21.09 and the proposed new schedule to the Design and Development Overlay and Significant Landscape Overlay:

#### Proposed Changes to Local Policy:

##### **21.09 SMALL TOWNS**

26/02/2009  
C34

##### **21.09-1 Gordon**

//20  
C53

#### **Key Issues and Influences**

Gordon is the third largest town in the Shire located on the Western Freeway some 23 kilometres from central Ballarat. The town layout is characterised by two residential areas and a denser central core with larger lots on its outskirts that provide a distinctly rural character. Sewerage reticulation is planned for the town in the short term that will provide opportunities and increased demand for residential growth.

Gordon is strategically located on the Western Freeway between Bacchus Marsh and Ballarat, and has direct access to both Ballarat and Melbourne by rail with the Gordon Railway Station located less than a kilometre south of the town centre that could be re-opened to support public transport to both Ballarat and Melbourne. Sewerage and the proximity to Ballarat and major employers such as the University of Ballarat and IBM are anticipated to drive growth that must be planned for.

- Future growth of the township will be based initially on infill within the township zoned Residential 1 and Business 1.
- Long term future growth in Gordon will be concentrated between the southern boundary of the existing township and the railway line and areas to the west on Old

Melbourne Road as shown in the *Gordon Structure Plan 2011*.

### **Objective—Township Growth**

Manage urban development so as to maintain and reinforce the village character of the township and the rural landscape quality of the surrounding area

### **Strategies**

Implement the *Gordon Structure Plan 2011*.

Apply the *Gordon Structure Plan 2011* for the assessment of all applications for land use and development including subdivision.

Manage the development of Gordon consistent with the principles of establishing walkable catchments with access to community facilities, shops, and public transport.

Require a detailed development plan to be prepared for any areas to be rezoned to residential to accommodate long term growth of the Gordon township.

Protect the urban and landscape elements including view lines, windbreak planting, large freestanding native trees and areas of bushland that adjoin the township, that contribute to the township's village and rural character.

Provide for the progressive development of a linked series of parks to serve township and local needs.

Maintain a clear township boundary.

Contain urban growth by promoting infill development.

Require new development to provide adequate drainage infrastructure.

Provide for the progressive development of a designated pedestrian and cycle pathway system.

Provide a clear township boundary.

### **Implementation**

#### **Further Strategic Work**

Prepare a small town's development strategy that includes Gordon

- Investigate areas identified for future growth of the township.
- Complete Heritage Study of Gordon and surrounds.

#### **Other Actions**

E.

Advocate for the reopening of the Gordon Railway station

Advocate for the provision of natural gas for Gordon

## Proposed New Design and Development Overlay

XX/XX/20XX  
Proposed C53

### SCHEDULE 5 TO THE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OVERLAY

Shown on the planning scheme map as **DDO5**

#### GORDON TOWN CENTRE, TOWNSHIP and RURAL SURROUNDS

~~1.0~~ XX/XX/20X  
v

#### Design objectives

1.1  
XX/XX/20X  
v

#### General design objectives for the core town centre (Commercial Zones)

To reinforce and strengthen the distinctive character of the Gordon town centre

To maintain the pedestrian scale existing town centre.

To maintain the low rise character of the town centre.

To provide for commercial development with retail uses and frontages.

To allow some opportunity for medium density residential development.

To provide for advertising signs that are in character with the town centre.

1.2  
XX/XX/20X  
x

#### General design objectives for the township (Residential Zones)

To protect the village character of the township.

To discourage commercial or retail developments.

To ensure that buildings with visible roof form make a positive contribution to the character of the township.

To protect the spacious character of the township by maintaining larger lot sizes.

1.3  
XX/XX/20X  
v

#### General design objectives for the rural surrounds (Rural Living and Farming Zones)

To ensure that the design of buildings responds to the site slope and landscape features.

Carefully site new development so that it does not impact on the appearance of the rural amenity setting of the town and the views from the town to the rural areas that reinforce that setting.

Carefully consider the landscaping and scale of new development particularly in open areas and locations exposed on hill tops and slopes.

To discourage the use of materials, such as reflective cladding for building construction, which could have a detrimental effect on amenity.

2.0  
XX/XX/20X  
x

#### Buildings and works

A planning permit is not required for the construction of a fence within the residential zones under 1.2 metres in height which abuts a front street. If the site is on a corner, a permit is not required for the construction of a fence which fronts the side street.

A permit is not required for buildings and works that meet the following requirements:

### Requirements

- Buildings or extensions to existing buildings with a minimum side setback of 2 metres from either boundary and a minimum rear setback of 5 metres.
- The site area covered by buildings does not exceed 40%.
- Total floor area of all buildings does not exceed 300m<sup>2</sup> in floor area.
- Buildings under 9 metres in height.
- Earthworks under 1 metre in depth or height.
- Where all external walls and roof areas are clad with non-reflective materials.

All buildings and works should comply with the following standards:

- Development should not obscure views and view lines from the town and particularly the town centre to the surrounding rural landscape features.
- Development should avoid visible expanses of flat roofs and support a varied and interesting roof form.
- Development should be stepped with slope so that changes in natural ground level do not result in built form with a visual bulk that undermines the low-rise and fine-grained character of the town centre and township area.
- Buildings within commercial areas may be constructed to the street frontage along Main Street except where a setback is required to reflect site constraints including significant trees.
- Development providing for retail uses must have window frontage to main roads, not present large expanses of blank walls, have site car parking at the rear of the premises and present a frontage design in harmony with the streetscape scale and appearance.
- Development should provide a stronger physical and pedestrian connection between the town centre, the two schools, Paddock Creek and the Recreation Reserve in accordance with the Gordon Structure Plan.
- Development on land adjoining the Paddock Creek Reserve or open space areas should be designed to protect the bushland character of the open spaces areas.
- Development applications must address potential drainage and flooding issues and indicate works to be undertaken to minimize the impact the increased stormwater run off. The use of unique rainwater harvesting design responses, is highly encouraged, particularly in car parking areas.
- Colours, materials, finishes, façade articulation, roof pitch and form should respond to the existing neighbourhood character.

An application to undertake buildings and works and / or the construction and carrying out of works must be accompanied by the following:

- Details on why the setback, height and material requirements of this schedule cannot be met.
- Plans detailing compliance with the design objectives, including schedule of building materials which responds to the existing neighbourhood character.
- Plans detailing the topography of the site including any cut and fill required for the development.
- Full details of the type, colour and finish of all external cladding materials proposed;
- Details of drainage and how the development will manage stormwater runoff
- Any landscaping proposed around the buildings and works

**3 n**  
XX/XX/20X  
v

### **Subdivision**

A permit is required to subdivide land.

Subdivision of lots within the residential zoned areas must have a minimum lots size of 800m<sup>2</sup> to retain the spacious nature of the township.

Subdivision design should respond to existing site features and vegetation.

Subdivision design is to respond to the pattern of development and the character of the township.

**4.0**  
XX/XX/20X  
v

### **Advertising signs**

In addition to the requirements of the zone, a permit is required to display any of the following:

- Any advertising sign unless it is an above-verandah sign or a sign which does not exceed a total advertisement area of 1.5 square metres below a verandah.
- An internally illuminated or floodlit sign.

**4.4**  
XX/XX/20X  
v

### **Performance Criteria**

In addition to the decision guidelines at Clause 52.05, the following principles should be considered:

- Advertising signs should not obscure architectural features, and supporting structures should not be viewed from public areas.
- The display of floodlit or internally illuminated signs is strongly discouraged.
- Signage should be integrated with the building form and not protrude above the parapet or roof line.
- The total advertisement area of business identification signs must not exceed 10 square metres.

**5.0**  
XX/XX/20X  
v

### **Decision guidelines**

Before deciding on an application to construct or carry out works including development of advertising signage, the responsible authority must consider:

- Whether the development responds to the design objectives of the overlay.
- The contribution that the development makes to the preferred character of the area.
- Whether the development within the town provides pedestrian links to the established town centre.
- Whether the development has addressed drainage issues
- Whether the development within commercial town centre maintains the low rise built form and interaction to the public realm with minimal front setbacks and weather protection for pedestrians.
- Whether the development within the town centre has been designed to be visually appealing to pedestrians, through the placement of windows, entrances and architecturally detailing
- The impact of the development on visual amenity both from adjoining properties and from within the township of Gordon.
- The impact of the landscaping and scale of new development, particularly in open areas and locations exposed on hill tops and slopes
- Whether the proposed buildings and works would have any adverse impact on the landscape and the visual amenity of the surrounding area.
- Whether the materials proposed to be used, and the form of development proposed would avoid or reduce any adverse impact on the landscape and the visual amenity of the surrounding area.
- Whether the setbacks of the proposed building and works from adjoining roads and properties will ensure that the development would avoid or reduce any adverse impact on the landscape and the visual amenity of the surrounding area.
- Whether any proposed landscaping around the buildings and works would reduce any adverse visual impacts on the landscape and the visual amenity of the surrounding area.

## Proposed New Significant Landscape Overlay

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### **SCHEDULE 2 TO THE SIGNIFICANT LANDSCAPE OVERLAY**

Shown on the planning scheme map as **SLO2**

### **GORDON TOWN CENTRE, TOWNSHIP AND SURROUNDS**

#### **1.0**

#### **Statement of nature and key elements of landscape**

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Gordon is regarded as a village community with a distinct pattern of single storey dwellings with generous side and rear setbacks that compliment the landscaped setting. There are major stands of remnant vegetation and isolated trees within the town that are set amongst a backdrop of shelter belt plantings and forested ridgelines. Exotic tree planting forms major windbreaks in parts of the township, particularly towards the

Paddock Creek corridor, and surrounds. These features make strong statements and a significant contribution to the character of the township. Considerable care needs to be taken to ensure that the landscape and the character of the town are not compromised through the removal of vegetation.

## **2.0 Landscape character objective to be achieved**

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To retain and protect significant trees, vegetation and windbreaks that are significant component of local identity and landscape of the township character of Gordon.

To protect vegetation and trees of special significance, natural beauty, interest and importance.

To retain trees where they have high amenity value, unless identified as an environmental weed.

To support the retention and planting of further exotic and indigenous trees.

## **3.0 Permit requirement**

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A permit is not required for buildings and works provided a permit is not required under any other schedule, overlay or provision that applies to the land.

A permit is required to remove, destroy or lop a tree. This does not apply to:

- A tree having a single trunk circumference of 0.4 metres or less at a height of one metre above ground level.
- To remove, destroy or lop the minimum extent of vegetation necessary to continue the activity on land which has previously been cleared where seedlings or regrowth are less than 10 years old and the land is within the formation of a road or railway line.
- To remove, destroy or lop the minimum extent of vegetation necessary to maintain public utility services for the transmission of water, sewage, gas, electricity, electronic communications or the like.
- To remove, destroy or lop vegetation that is deemed unsafe by a suitably qualified arborist, and to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.
- To prune a tree for regeneration or ornamental shaping.
- To remove, destroy or lop vegetation that is dead to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.
- To remove, destroy or lop vegetation that is being maintained in accordance with a management program developed by a suitably qualified arborist and approved by the responsible authority.

## **4.0 Decision guidelines**

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C--

Before deciding on an application to remove, destroy or lop any tree, the responsible authority must consider:

- Whether it is possible for the proposal to be undertaken in a manner to avoid the necessity to remove the tree or trees.
- Whether the application provides for the long term management of the tree or trees to be lopped

## Gordon Structure Plan December 2013

- Whether it is possible to provide compensatory habitat for native fauna. Such habitat should be of a similar value to that removed or destroyed and must be planted within the vicinity.
- The impact on visual amenity both from adjoining properties and from within the township of Gordon.