Monday 19 February 2018

Submission to the Macedon Ranges draft Localised Planning Statement

We make this submission in support of the draft Localised Planning Statement (LPS).

Our understanding is that the State Government established a Macedon Ranges Protection Advisory Committee (MRPAC) and subsequently engaged in robust consultation, including a Panel Hearing, to determine the best way to provide ‘protection’ for the Macedon Ranges region. MRPAC consulted extensively with local interest groups, Council and relevant authorities, and the resulting Panel Report was well received. The State Government accepted all the recommendations of MRPAC, and the proposed LPS has been drafted to reflect the community input. In our view, it is a reasonable and considered update to the wording and status of SPP8, providing overarching recognition of the environmental values of the Macedon Ranges region.

The Committee concludes:

- The principles and protections offered by SPP8 have been slowly eroded and are no longer reflected in the current policy framework.
- SPP8 and the draft LPS do not provide an appropriate policy basis for protection. A revised LPS should be prepared, based on the Committee’s preferred version in Appendix B and further embodying the principles outlined in Chapter 6.4.1.
- Clause 11.14 of the VPP recognises Macedon Ranges as a distinctive area in State Policy and provides the mechanism (through a Localised Planning Statement) for planning to protect its key values and attributes.
- However, a revised Localised Planning Statement alone will not provide the requisite certainty. The unique pressures facing Macedon Ranges mean that additional legislative protections are warranted, just as legislative protections already apply to similar highly valued peri-urban areas of Melbourne which are also recognised in Clause 11.14.
- Existing checks and balances in the planning system are significant, and the Committee does not consider that additional oversight or governance arrangements are warranted or would assist in providing clarity for decision-makers, applicants and the community. (MRPAC Final Report, July 2016)

We anticipate that the new LPS will, once finalised, be included in the State Planning Policy Framework at Clause 11.14, as recommended by the Macedon Ranges Protection Advisory Committee.
It had been generally accepted for some time that SPP8 was outdated and not based on current science, best practice or contemporary constraints and opportunities. It was in need of updating and reinforcement, and we commend the Macedon Ranges Residents Association for lobbying the state government over a long period of time to have this work done. The MRRA’s active commitment has resulted in the State Government’s timely implementation of the recommendations of the Protection Advisory Committee.

As noted in the MRPAC report, since the creation of Statement of Planning Policy No 8, the State Government has invested in significant transport, water and road infrastructure along the Calder corridor, and population growth has subsequently escalated in the Macedon Ranges region. In 1961 SPP8 focussed on the importance of the region ‘for leisure activities and nature conservation’. More than 50 years later, the region plays a far more complex role, including inter-city transport, provision of goods and services, leisure, tourism, employment, residential and cultural, as well as retaining nature conservation values. We therefore welcome the new draft LPS’s updated consideration of natural environmental values, but also the broader environment of amenity and liveability, transport, housing and jobs.

We understand that both Plan Melbourne and the Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan (LMSRP) have provided detailed consideration and support for regional Victoria’s growth and participation in Victoria’s future:

Future directions

- **Enable residents to work and participate in the region by continuing to expand the region’s diverse economy**
- **Leverage greater employment and investment outcomes from growth sectors such as health, education and professional services**
- **Develop employment areas that are located, serviced and sited to take advantage of water, infrastructure, transport and energy connections**
- **Support and develop emerging and potential growth sectors such as tourism, renewable energy, resource recovery and other green industries**

* (Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan, p.21)

Our client’s specific interest is in Gisborne. The draft LPS does not include a settlement boundary for Gisborne, and we support the stated intent to introduce that element following the scheduled Gisborne Structure Plan update work. Towns for which a settlement boundary is set out in the draft LPS have all had Structure Plans endorsed and implemented recently (Kyneton, Woodend, Riddells Creek).

Since adoption of the Gisborne Structure Plan (date?), residential zone provisions have had significant revision, population growth has exceeded forecasts, and both Plan Melbourne and the Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan have outlined clear direction for Gisborne as a regional centre/town, and a requirement to manage expected significant growth.
Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan, future settlement growth directions, p41

Strategic work associated with the Gisborne/new Gisborne Structure Plan (currently embedded at Clause 21.13) and other relevant planning work such as the approved New Gisborne Development Plan, and Fersfield Road Development Plan, were all done prior to Plan Melbourne and the Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan, whilst structure plans for other towns in the region have been prepared more recently and with clear reference to these guiding documents.

It is therefore reasonable to expect that the LPS would include, for Gisborne, an updated Structure Plan depicting the township’s boundary.

We anticipate the Gisborne Structure Plan work will offer opportunity to embrace the Localised Planning Statement intent, and the Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan directions, and promote some robust discussion, and creative consideration, of how/when/why Gisborne will grow to accommodate expected population growth.

At present, and under the current Structure Plan, Gisborne is formed along a north-south axis, bisected by the Calder Freeway. There is increasing pressure on road and service infrastructure, and requirement for growth as supported by Plan Melbourne (for peri-urban areas), the Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan, and state and local policies with the Macedon Ranges Planning Scheme.

Our clients are keen to participate in the Structure Plan review process and wish to explore a new regional town settlement pattern, complementing the linear Gisborne-New Gisborne framework. Moreover, the structure planning process provides the opportunity to integrate emerging technologies, and innovative transport and infrastructure options. If the current Gisborne Structure Plan is locked into the LPS, the opportunity to renew an important regional town and shape its future will be lost.

Council’s work on a New Gisborne Development Plan, and more recently on an Environmental Management Plan for the Racecourse and Marshlands Reserve, provide a sound basis for reviewing accessibility throughout the town. When considered collectively, there are significant opportunities to create and extend walking and cycling networks, improve accessibility to existing infrastructure and encourage sustainable transport modes (as an alternate to cars). Our clients intend to bring this kind of lateral thinking to the table with the review of the Structure Plan.
Gisborne Racecourse Marshlands Reserve and Magnet Hill Environmental Management Plan, Concept Plan, November 2017

With [redacted], our clients are considering the planning for Gisborne’s future in a wholistic manner. This process has identified opportunities to complement Gisborne/New Gisborne’s linear settlement pattern with a sustainable village, accommodating future growth to the east of the town and creating a triangulation of access and activity (refer Attachment One).

By complementing the existing fabric and lifestyle offering of Gisborne/New Gisborne with best practice and emerging innovations, particularly regarding the way people wish to live, work and travel, there is opportunity to establish a model for sustainable, liveable development within regional townships.

These opportunities could manifest in the:

- Integration of town wide recreation networks, including walking and cycle paths connecting key recreation and community assets;
- Adoption of localised and alternate servicing models;
- Incentivisation of sustainable transport modes and new technologies, such as autonomous vehicles and electric bikes;
- Provision of local services and amenities, ensuring a walkable community;
- Development of a range of housing types, accommodating a diverse range of family types and providing affordable living options (particularly for the young and elderly);
- Creation of extensive areas for recreation, including linear pathways and park networks;
- Respecting and celebrating the heritage and character of the town, reinterpreted in a contemporary manner in the design of the streets, open spaces and buildings.
The Structure Plan review and any further open space planning for the town should consider and these opportunities.

Our submission to the draft LPS therefore endorses the approach of determining a Gisborne settlement boundary through the future Structure Planning process, as proposed. This will facilitate what our clients hope will be a multifaceted approach to reimagining Gisborne as a model for sustainable regional towns.

In summary, we support the draft LPS and its intent, and consider that it’s inclusion in the State Planning Policy Framework will provide the protection for the Macedon Ranges that was envisaged by the MRPAC Panel Report, whilst also embracing the future evolution of existing settlements and infrastructure.

Regards,

[Signature]

[Name]

Director