Submission to Consultation Draft Macedon Ranges Localised Planning Statement

This is a submission on behalf of [Redacted] who own land and live in [Redacted].

The [Redacted] family have lived in the Shire and in or around Gisborne since the [Redacted] grew up in Gisborne, and [Redacted] and [Redacted] built a house and have lived in [Redacted] for [Redacted] years. The family has been active in the local community with a previous [Redacted] in addition to involvement in various community and sporting clubs. Two of their children have had families and live in the [Redacted] area.

Land that they own on the north side of [Redacted] has been earmarked for residential development for the past [Redacted] years. It is currently designated as an investigation area for development.

Summary

The [Redacted] support the protection of high-value landscapes and conservation areas in the Macedon Ranges. However they recognise that it is necessary for there to be development of the townships in the Shire, in particular in Gisborne which is a designated growth centre. There is a significant difference between the Macedon Ranges proper and the land surrounding which is used for farming and urban purposes.

The Localised Planning Statement needs to find a better balance between the recognition of the need for protection of highly valued areas in the Macedon Ranges and the need for development of the Shire towns to accommodate existing and future populations in the area.

In summary, the [Redacted] are concerned that the supply of subdivision land is unnecessarily constrained and that the Shire has been slow to respond to the need to ensure adequate urban land can accommodate new development. This has resulted in constrained supply, lack of diversity and high prices. A few landowners of residentially zoned land are slowly releasing land, maintaining an artificial scarcity value.

The Shire is currently in breach of planning policy by having less than 15 years supply. This plays into the hands of a few small developers who 'ration' the available land, keeping prices unreasonably high.

In fact, the Shire has recently allowed the subdivision of high-value farmland for low density living, and allowed increased densities in low density rural living areas as an alternative to the properly managed and efficient growth of Gisborne.

There is the opportunity for environmentally sustainable urban development in Gisborne and Kyneton which would assist in taking the pressure away from subdivision and development in the Ranges and the smaller townships. This is not recognised in the Statement.

Specific drafting issues are identified below by reference to the relevant page number or section.
Detailed submission

*Introduction, page 5* - The introduction should include an express statement that there should be opportunities for growth within the Shire townships, particularly Kyneton and Gisborne which are designated as growth centres. At present, although there is a reference to 'a balanced approach to growth and conservation management' there is no express statement regarding the growth of the region towns to accommodate community needs.

*Purpose of the Statement, page 5* - The second bullet point commences 'balance development with protection of the areas landscapes'. In fact the approach of the Shire has been to prevent almost any development on the basis of the need for protection, other than the rezoning of land for low-density residential and some minor growth of a couple of townships.

There should be a more explicit statement along the lines of:

> 'Provide for development around existing centres while protecting the area’s significant landscapes, and high value agricultural land...’

*Our Vision, page 10* - This section appears to completely ignore the fact that the Localised Planning Statement applies to the whole of the Macedon Ranges Shire not simply 'the Ranges'.

The vision should include an express statement that development of the area's townships, in particular Gisborne and Kyneton, will be facilitated to ensure that the 15 year supply policy embedded in state planning policy is met and that there is adequate supply to provide for the community and ensure that residential prices are kept affordable.

The supply of urban land at appropriate densities in the region's towns would assist in taking pressure away from the need for additional houses or subdivision in the rural areas.

*Policy Domains*

Commencing on page 11 are a number of so-called 'Policy Domains' which identify values or characteristics of the area and strategies in relation to each of these Domains. Given the objectives of the document appear to be largely driven at protection of the Macedon Ranges landscape and environmental values, it is not unreasonable that these Policy Domains are weighted towards those matters.

However, it is only when you get to the 6th Domain that the existing settlements in the Shire are identified.

The discussion of settlements is less than enthusiastic and lacks any significant forward-looking element. The language is entirely negative, protective and defensive. There is no injunction to plan for the existing and future communities in these centres.

The reality is that, in particular, Kyneton and Gisborne are active, growing, vibrant communities. The area is not a static or declining 'museum' or 'retirement village'.

While there is a recognition of some potential growth, that growth is confined on the basis of the language of the section that talks about settlement boundaries, rezonings after 'a comprehensive level of planning and infrastructure assessment has been undertaken', the need for housing supply and demand assessment and related matters.

While these are valid planning matters, there should be an express recognition that the Shire
contains a number of regional centres which have active and growing communities.

There are families with children who need services and who are forming new households and may ultimately wish to settle in the area. There are single parents and single people. There is demand for a greater diversity and number of households.

Did the authors look at the Census and recent house prices when drafting this document?

In the context of the document as a whole there should be a much stronger statement about the need to ensure that the towns and regional centres can grow, albeit in a manner that is consistent with the landscape and environmental values espoused elsewhere in the document, so as to provide for and accommodate households within the Shire.

Council's past approach to planning

There is also a strong degree of hypocrisy in the way the document is drafted. The paragraph on page 21, immediately before Objective 6, talks about areas not being rezoned until comprehensive studies have been undertaken and the need for a housing supply and demand assessment.

Our clients had a detailed demand and supply assessment undertaken by consultants (who used to do the annual Urban Development reports for DELWP and its predecessors) some three years ago which showed that the supply of residential land in Gisborne was well below the 15 year requirement of state policy. It is now around 10 to 11 years with no action by the Shire.

The Council and its previous Director of Planning, has acted inconsistently over a long period. While refusing to extend the town boundaries to accommodate residential development, the Council unilaterally extended the boundary to the east of the existing industrial estate at New Gisborne to rezone land for industrial development. This was supposed to be urgent at the time of the panel hearing which considered the matter (despite many vacancies in the existing estate). However the site is still sitting vacant 10 years later. Why did council support this rezoning?

The area to the east of New Gisborne has been identified as a growth area for the past 17 years. Recent changes in Council planning staff has meant that there is a lack of knowledge of the planning history. Council planners should read the Panel report to Amendment C67 and the closing submissions which were put by Maddocks on behalf of Council to that hearing.

There was clear agreement that the development of land to the east of New Gisborne was to be treated in the same way as land to the west. Instead the area to the west has had the benefit of a rezoning and structure plan, while Council has refused to deal with a similar proposal to the east. The area to the east is currently identified as an investigation area. It is recognised as poor quality farmland, has low landscape significance and is capable of being developed for a residential community with good access to services.

Council recently rezoned high quality farmland in Amendment C110 for low density subdivision (on the south side of Gisborne-Kilmore Road, referred to locally as the 'Harry White' land). But Council has refused to rezone low quality agricultural land for conventional subdivision. 'Lack of strategic justification' (the reason advanced by officers, presumably under pressure) doesn't cut it in the face of a lack of supply and constraints on three sides of Gisborne. (see plan attached).

While our clients do not oppose the notion of a settlement boundary and the need for
appropriate infrastructure and services planning, there needs to be reciprocity between the
Shire's determination to protect the Ranges and other environmentally sensitive areas, and
the need to accommodate reasonable growth in the towns and regional centres.

Settlements, page 21 - There should be an additional strategy added;

To ensure that there is sufficient supply of residential zoned land to meet the 15 year
state policy test at all times.

That is, as the Panel to Amendment C100 accepted last year in relation to Riddells Creek,
you need to initially allocate something like 20 to 25 years supply to ensure ongoing
adequate supply. Otherwise you have to come back every year or two to maintain 15 years.
(Refer State policy 11.02-1)

Framework plan, page 25 - The framework plan is supported.

Town maps, pages 26 to 30 - There is no map included for Gisborne. The current Gisborne
Structure Plan identifies two investigation areas to the north-east and west, which were
designated as a result of a panel hearing following considering amendment C67. Despite
numerous requests over the past 3 years (and earlier) the Shire has ignored the need for
planning for the growth of Gisborne.

Conclusion

Gisborne is now heavily constrained to the east, west and south, given existing subdivision
patterns and recent rezoning and changes to density controls. There is no reason to back
away from the current Structure Plan notwithstanding that there may be a need to review the
future growth of Gisborne.

There should be a much stronger policy statement about the role of Gisborne (and possibly
Kyneton) as the two major growth centres.

Gisborne is identified as a growth centre in Plan Melbourne refresh and in the region plan
now included in the State Planning Policy Framework. See clause 11.14 ("Support growth in
... Gisborne ..."). Gisborne is expressly referenced as a growth centre in clause 11.01.

Overall, the Localised Planning Statement is too heavily weighted in favour of landscape and
environment protection at the expense of the local community.

To reiterate, protection of high-value agricultural land and the landscape and environmental
features of the Macedon Ranges is to be supported, including by more restrictive subdivision
and development controls as appropriate in those areas.

However, there should be a commensurate recognition of the need for growth around the
townships, particularly in Gisborne as the southernmost and major growth area, as a way of
taking pressure of subdivision and new houses in the Ranges area and ensuring adequate
supply for the existing and future population in the region.

15 February 2018
Rural conservation zone & overlays for potable water catchment

40 ha but subdivided into lots: 1 ha

8 ha minimum poor quality farmland

1 ha minimum Rezoned C110 high quality farmland

1 ha minimum Fully developed Rural Residential

40 ha minimum but already subdivided mostly 1 ha lots

2 ha minimum

4 ha minimum - fragmented some smaller lots