

# MOORABOOL SHIRE RETAIL STRATEGY 2024



**Moorabool**  
Shire Council

BY TIM NOTT WITH HANSEN PARTNERSHIP  
FOR MOORABOOL SHIRE COUNCIL  
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# REPORT DATA

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For the purposes of this Strategy, retail activity includes the sale of food, groceries and liquor, clothing, household goods, recreational and other goods, cafés, restaurants and take-away food outlets and selected services such as hair-dressers, beauty parlours and household goods repairs. It does not include pubs, clubs and hotels, automotive sales or showrooms where most of the income is from wholesale sales.

Front cover image: Moorabool Shire Council

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# INTRODUCTION

***This Retail Strategy provides guidance for the development of retail activity centres in Moorabool Shire over the next 5-10 years.***

***The Retail Strategy builds on previous retail strategies and complements Council's existing policies on economic development, tourism and land use planning.***

## 1. WHY HAVE A RETAIL STRATEGY?

Retailing is an important service and an economic activity that shapes our towns and villages. It is also an activity over which Council has a strong influence through its planning and economic development policies. Council influences where shops are located and how large our shopping and commercial activity centres can grow. Given this influence, it is appropriate to make sure that Council's decisions in this sphere are consistent with broader policies and that they are equitable and sustainable. The location and scale of retail activity centres has a direct impact on the quality of life of our residents and the industry provides opportunities for small businesses and for employment. It is also a rapidly moving industry that can sometimes generate tensions with the static nature of activity centres.

**“ In 2021, the number of jobs in retailing, food and beverage service and personal services in Moorabool was 1,858, or 19% of all jobs in the Shire.**

***Retailing alone had a gross revenue estimated by REMPLAN to be \$88 million in 2021 (4% of the municipal total). There were 133 retail businesses that year, accounting for 4% of all local businesses (REMPPLAN, 2022).***

There are a number of changes in the retail landscape that need to be taken into account in a Retail Strategy. These include:

- Ongoing changes in the forecast number of people who will live in the municipality and where they will live
- The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic including the way this has encouraged population shifts and acceleration of growth in online sales
- Evolution of the retail offer in activity centres, with decline in non-food goods and growth in dining, entertainment and other services
- Changes in thinking about how bulky goods outlets can be accommodated within the Shire
- Ongoing change to the competitive environment, including expansion of centres outside the municipality that cater for Moorabool residents

These issues and more will be addressed in the Strategy.

## ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

The Strategy provides:

- A vision for retailing in the Shire
- A purpose and description of each objective
- Principles for activity centre networks in growth areas
- Actions and an implementation program.

The Strategy is supported by a background report that provides information and analysis on which Council's action program is based, including:

- A summary of the relevant existing policy framework
- A description of the existing retail activity centre network and the hierarchy of activity centres, as well as the population catchment of those centres
- Potential population growth in each catchment and what this could mean for demand for retail goods and services
- Implications for planning policy.

## VISION AND OBJECTIVES

**Council Vision** Embracing our natural environment and lifestyle options to create an inspiring place for everyone to live, work and play.

(Moorabool Shire Council Plan, 2021 to 2025)

### Objectives

- Maintain and extend the hierarchy of retail activity centres
- Support the Bacchus Marsh town centre as the major retail centre within the Shire
- Support the Ballan town centre to maintain its character as it grows
- Ensure that new residential areas are well-served by the retail hierarchy
- Encourage appropriate retail expansion in the small towns and villages of the Shire
- Support the provision of a wider range of goods and services in the Shire
- Encourage improvement in the provision of retail services to visitors

These objectives are interconnected and support one another. Each objective is discussed in further detail in the following chapters, and include a set of corresponding actions.

**“ The overall purpose of the strategy is to grow and sustain a vibrant network of retail activity centres that offer the best possible range of goods and services to Moorabool residents and visitors, distributed in an equitable and efficient way.**

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## SUPPORT THE RETAIL HIERARCHY



## 2. SUPPORT THE RETAIL HIERARCHY

### Purpose

Concentrating shops, offices and many community services into well-located activity centres will maintain and improve the accessibility, equity and sustainability of services. A planned hierarchy of activity centres provides guidance for investors and consumers about the anticipated level of service at each location.

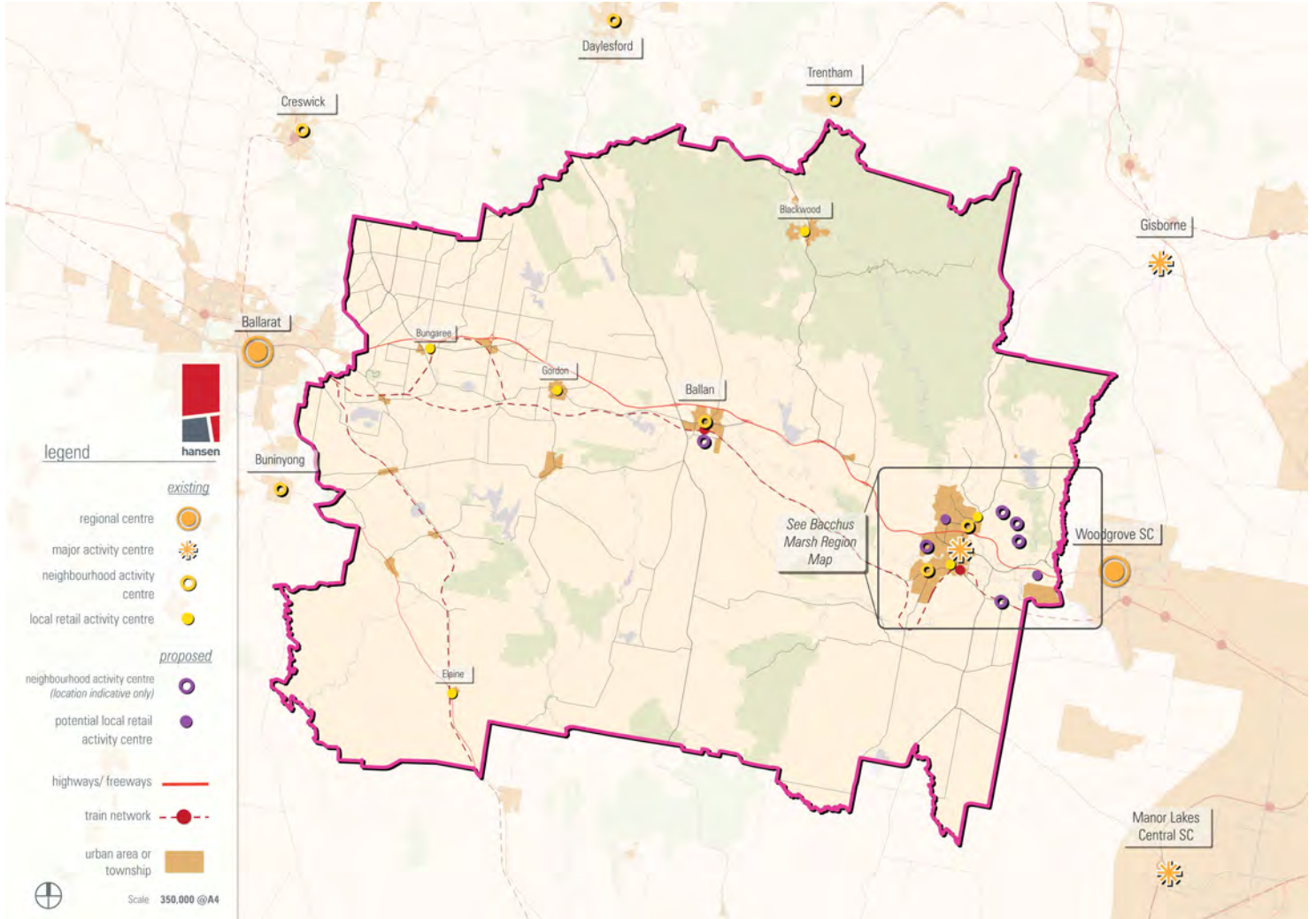
Moorabool has a hierarchy of centres and as the population grows, the network will need to expand to provide excellent levels of service and employment opportunities.

### Description

The network of existing and proposed activity centres, and expectations about their key features, is described in the following table. The location of the centres is shown in the maps on the following pages.

**Table 2 -1: Existing and proposed activity centres in Moorabool**

Centre type	Key features	Typical population served	Typical retail floorspace	Existing and proposed centres in Moorabool by 2060
Major activity centre or large town centre	Discount department store or similar, large array of routine comparison goods and services; significant employment, including civic services, night-time economy.	35,000 to 100,000	25,000 sqm+	<b>Existing</b> Bacchus Marsh
Neighbourhood activity centre or local town centre	Significant food and grocery provision and a selection of day-to-day goods and services as well as front-line medical and childcare services.  A small neighbourhood centre has a medium-sized supermarket or equivalent (typically 1,500 to 2,500 sqm of food and grocery provision). A neighbourhood centre has a larger supermarket (3,000+ sqm) or equivalent.	5,000 to 11,000	3,000 sqm to 7,000 sqm	<b>Existing</b> Ballan Darley Plaza Maddingley Village  <b>Potential future</b> Underbank town centre, Parwan Station town centre Merrimu 1 Merrimu 2 Merrimu 3 South Ballan (possible) Wallace (possible)
Local activity centre or village centre	Single general store or small collection of day-to-day goods and services or visitor outlets.	1,000 to 4,000	200 sqm to 1,000 sqm	<b>Existing</b> Blackwood Bungaree Albert St (Darley) Elaine Gordon Grant Street (Maddingley) Mt Egerton  <b>Potential future</b> Halletts Way Hopetoun Park North
Homemaker centre/ bulky goods precinct	Collection of large outlets selling furniture, hardware, recreational goods and a wide range of comparison goods	20,000+	10,000 sqm+	<b>Potential future</b> Bacchus Marsh homemaker centre (location to be determined)



**Figure 2-1: Location of existing and proposed activity centres, Moorabool**

Bacchus Marsh inset is shown in more detail on the following map.



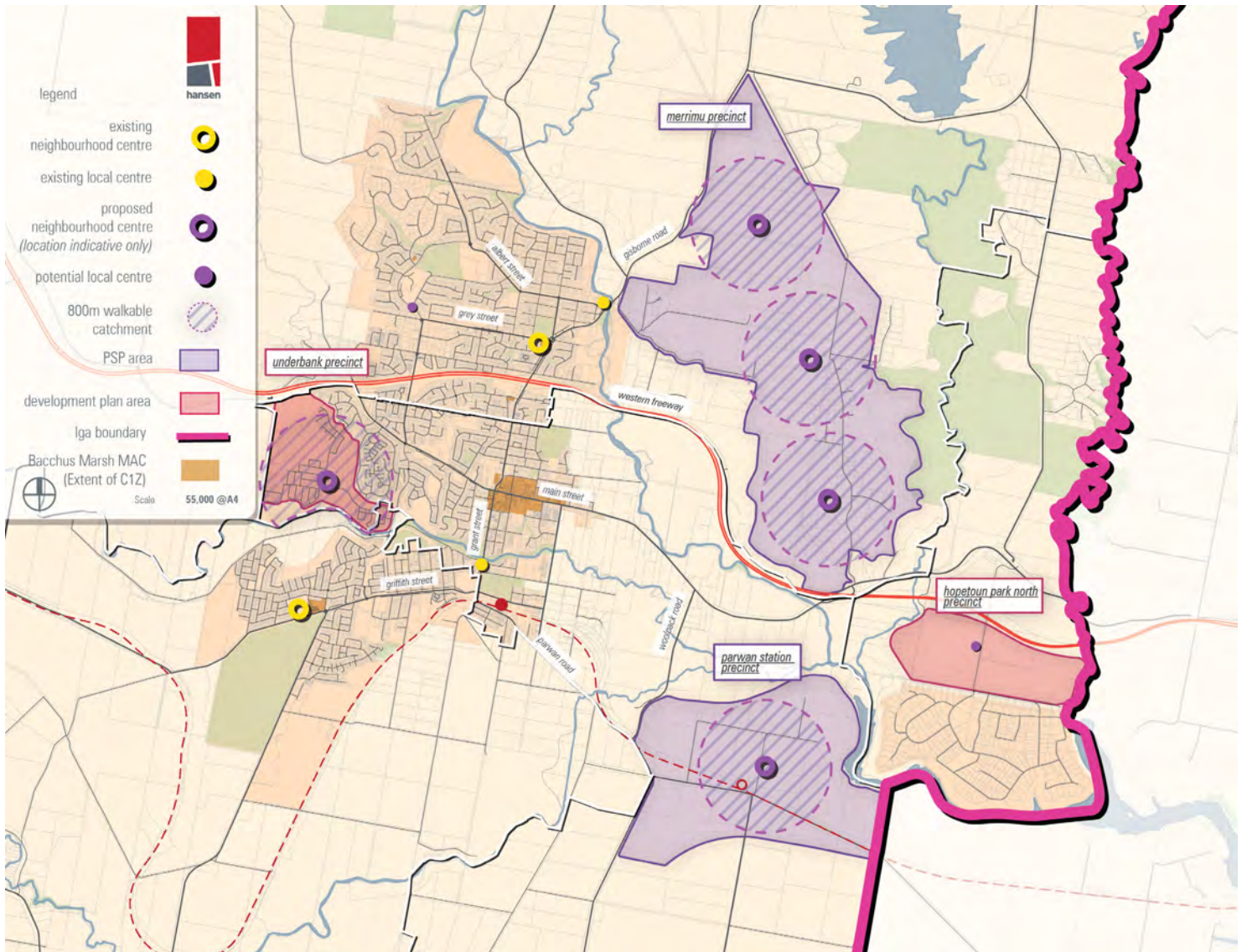


Figure 2-2: Existing and proposed activity centres, Bacchus Marsh district

## Actions

1. Direct retail investment to the activity centres identified in Table 2 1.

This will provide accessible services for residents and certainty for investors as well as creating a more sustainable urban form. Exceptions to this should be few but may include:

- a. On-farm retailing directly associated with the farm production
  - b. Retailing associated with a tourism enterprise where the floorspace amounts to no more than would be expected in a local centre
  - c. Retail development in a village not listed but where it is viable, subject to the tests in point 3 below
  - d. For the development of a new centre to serve an area which has had population growth that has been higher than anticipated in this strategy
2. Encourage investment types that are appropriate to the role of the centre, in order to maintain the retail hierarchy.

Substantial supermarkets should be located in Neighbourhood or Major centres. Large comparison goods stores (discount department stores, clothing, furniture, electronic goods shops etc) should be located in the Major Activity Centre, or in a homemaker/bulky goods precinct if appropriate.

3. Require out-of-centre retailing or change in the status of an activity centre to be justified at a level of detail commensurate with the scale of the development.

Development of a new general store in a small town or settlement which is currently without one would require a low level of justification. A proposed new neighbourhood centre would require a much higher level of justification. Justification would need to identify the net community benefit of the proposal including, at Council's discretion:

- a. Identification of the catchment to be served and how this affects the catchment of surrounding centres
- b. Retail supply and demand analysis
- c. Assessment of economic impact on other centres in the network and how this will affect their expected role
- d. Assessment of net impacts on sustainability, including social and employment changes brought about by the proposal



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SUPPORT BACCHUS  
MARSH TOWN  
CENTRE



### 3. SUPPORT BACCHUS MARSH TOWN CENTRE

#### Purpose

The Bacchus Marsh Town Centre, as the largest activity centre in the Shire, should be the focus of investment in higher order retailing and other services for the growing municipal community. Concentrating such investment will improve its accessibility, and encourage specialisation that will improve the diversity of goods and services and generate employment.

#### Description

The Bacchus Marsh Town Centre is the designated Major Activity Centre in the Shire and must grow as a focal point for services and employment if it is to meet the needs of the growing community. The role of the major activity centre in the hierarchy is to provide a wide range of routine comparison goods such as clothes, electronics, and hardware, as well as a strong offering of convenience goods and services i.e. food and groceries, personal services, cafés, restaurants and take-away food. In addition, major activity centres, especially town centres such as Bacchus Marsh, need to provide a wide range of non-retail activities - civic and community services, entertainment, professional services and visitor services.

**“ A new Bacchus Marsh Town Centre Structure Plan (BMTC Structure Plan) is currently being prepared to guide future land uses and development.**

Bacchus Marsh town centre lost its Council offices some years ago, although Council has several sites in the town centre, which could provide for a future council office. The town centre has also lost some key retailers, including Target Country. Residents consulted for the BMTC Structure Plan identified a lack of clothing stores as a key reason for visiting centres outside the Shire. As the population grows, there is potential for the reintroduction of a discount department store into the centre as well as a wider range of mini-majors (larger comparison goods stores) and a more extensive set of clothing stores. To compete effectively with internet shopping, the offering of the centre will need to focus on drawing people into the shopping experience, clustering

like activities, providing entertainment, and developing attractive and authentic surroundings. The urban design of the centre should reflect this by providing interconnected spaces, beautiful buildings and an engaging public realm.

Previous structure plans for the Bacchus Marsh Town Centre have all identified the importance of improved traffic management and accessibility for the centre. Population growth will generate pressures on the access arrangements in and around the town centre, including roads, footpaths, cycleways, carparking and intersection treatments. Grant Street is an arterial road through the town centre carrying significant truck traffic. This degrades the pedestrian amenity of the centre and creates congestion. A preferred alignment for the Eastern Link Road bypass of the town centre has been determined by State Government, and this project should reduce congestion in the long term. In the meantime, the intersection between Grant Street and Main Street is to be signalised, with positive impacts on pedestrian amenity, although impacts on congestion remain to be seen. The impact of carparking on the town centre, including the amount of space it consumes and its visual impact, needs to be considered. Opportunities to maximise the use of active transport within and around the centre should be evaluated.

Demand modelling for this retail strategy (see Background Report section 4.9) suggests that the town centre may need to accommodate a further 10,800 sqm of retail floorspace by 2041 and a similar area of floorspace for non-retail commercial and community services. The notional land requirement to accommodate this growth was approximately 4.9 hectares. In 2021, the demand was matched by a supply of approximately 5.0 hectares in vacant sites and developable land. This land has already begun to be developed to accommodate the demand. However, these calculations do not take into account the potential for higher density housing.

There are a range of solutions for accommodating the expected growth including:

- Take-up of existing vacant buildings – although this currently at only 2% of the floorspace or around 1,500 sqm
- Improved efficiency in the use of existing commercial buildings by, for example, encouraging activities into more appropriately sized premises
- Redevelopment of existing buildings to make better use of sites; there may be potential to increase the number of floors that are allowed in town centre buildings

- Reduction in the carparking requirement for individual new buildings and the provision of collective multi-storey car parking structures that have a smaller footprint
- Removal of the office and retail floorspace caps on land that was formerly zoned Business 2 at the eastern and western ends of the town centre

Expansion of the Commercial 1 Zone within the town centre is likely to be required over the longer term, as the currently vacant land is developed, particularly considering that on the forecasts for this Strategy, a further 4 to 5 hectares of land may be required to accommodate growth over the period 2041 to 2061.

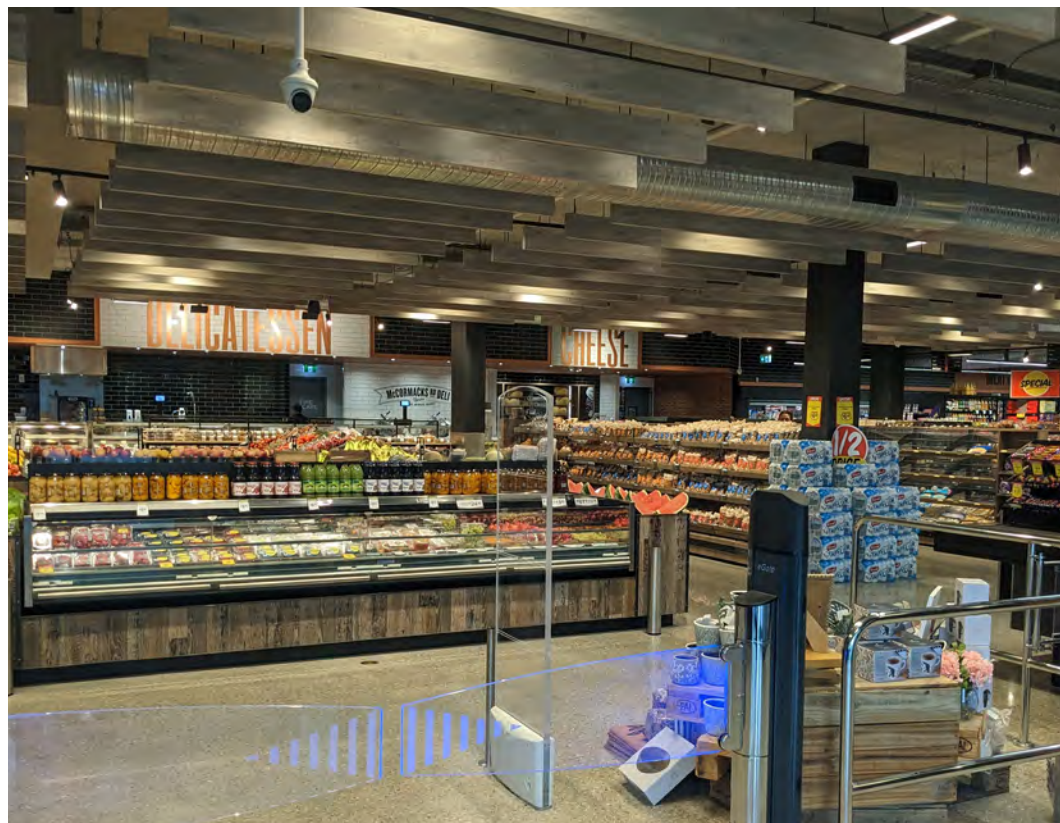
In looking at the total demand for land, it is also instructive to understand the types of activities that may require space in the town centre.

Some uses, such as significant supermarkets and discount department stores, both of which are likely prospects for the town centre, require large floorplates and extensive carparking. Sites to accommodate such uses are very limited.

In the preparation of the BMTC Structure Plan, recommendations in this Retail Strategy can be included in the town centre work to address the need to maintain and improve a vibrant commercial precinct that has sufficient space to cater to the needs of the growing community.

## Actions

4. Implement the key findings and recommendations from this Strategy relating to the Bacchus Marsh Major Activity Centre through the Bacchus Marsh Town Centre Structure Plan.
5. Work with stakeholders to encourage higher order retail goods and services as well as non-retail activity such as offices, community services, entertainment, arts and culture and accommodation.
6. Ensure that the town centre is a key focal point of Council investment, including the location of appropriate Council services.
7. Encourage larger vacant sites to accommodate large-scale uses.
8. Encourage new retail buildings and streetscapes to contribute to the overall attraction of this centre as the heart of the Moorabool community by developing urban design guidelines and ensuring Council buildings set high standards.
9. Remove existing floorspace caps in Bacchus Marsh Town Centre applying to C1Z areas previously zoned B2Z.



4

# SUPPORT BALLAN TOWN CENTRE



## 4. SUPPORT BALLAN TOWN CENTRE

### Purpose

Ballan Town Centre is the thriving centre of the growing township of Ballan and serves both the town and surrounding district in the centre of Moorabool. The growing population will require additional services, many of which will best be provided in the town centre. Growth in the town centre needs to be managed to ensure appropriate spaces can be provided whilst ensuring that the attractive streetscapes and the overall liveability of the town can be maintained and enhanced.

### Description

In retail terms, Ballan Town Centre functions as a neighbourhood activity centre for the town and surrounding districts but, because of its historical development, it has a broader community and commercial role, hosting health and community services and a variety of commercial and visitor services. The town is connected to Melbourne and Ballarat by rail, with the station only 400m or five minutes' walk from the town centre.

The town centre has approximately 5,060 sqm of retail floorspace, with a further 12,300 sqm of space in health and community services, professional offices, automotive repairs and hospitality.

**“ The retail modelling for this Strategy suggests that there will be demand for at least a further 1,400 sqm by 2041.**

As the population grows, a larger supermarket will become viable. This will be an important milestone for the centre because a larger supermarket will reduce the escape spending from the catchment and begin to attract investment from a wider variety of retailers. While there are substantial vacant sites in the centre, site consolidation may be required to accommodate a large new entrant such as a supermarket.

With further growth, especially in Ballan South, a new small neighbourhood activity centre may become viable. Such a centre would need to be sequenced appropriately in order that the role and function of the

Ballan Town Centre is not unduly affected.

The population of Ballan township is anticipated to grow from 3,000 to 11,000 or more over time. This kind of growth will generate substantial extra pressures on the access arrangements in and around the town centre, including roads, footpaths, cycleways, carparking and intersection treatments. Emerging changes in transport technologies will have some impact on these demands (self-driving cars, transport as a service, new forms of mobility etc). The impact of carparking on the town centre, including the amount of space it consumes and its visual impact, may be reduced by catering to these emerging trends and by maximising opportunities for active transport. This would include dedicated cycleways and footpaths that connect Ballan's outer suburbs to its town centre. This aspect of town centre planning will be made more complex because of the need to cater adequately for visitors and those activities that generate income from tourism. Visitor parking and services will be important to the success of large part of the existing town centre.

Physical growth of the town centre brings the challenge of retaining and enhancing the charm of the streetscape. This will include protecting and recycling the various heritage buildings and ensuring that new buildings contribute to the attractiveness of the place, which is valued by visitors and residents.

### Actions

10. Undertake a structure plan/urban design framework for Ballan and its Town Centre that identifies how the centre will expand to accommodate new activities, link to the rest of the town and retain/improve its attractive streetscapes.
11. Identify how to reduce the need for carparking in the town centre including through planning for active transport from future growth areas.
12. Ensure that the sequencing of any new activity centre in Ballan South does not undermine the retail and community role of the Ballan Town Centre.

5

# SERVICE NEW RESIDENTIAL AREAS





## 5. SERVICE NEW RESIDENTIAL AREAS

### Purpose

New residents of the housing growth areas around Bacchus Marsh and Ballan will require accessible services, including retailing. New retail-based activity centres will provide focal points for the developing communities and contribute to the State Government's policies to deliver 20 minute neighbourhoods. Residents of new communities should be within walking distance of comprehensive food and grocery provision as well as a range of other day-to-day goods and services.

If new residential growth fronts open elsewhere, the planning system should allow the expansion of accessible services to improve sustainability and the quality of life of residents.

### Description

The demand by Moorabool residents for higher order goods and services will be satisfied by the Bacchus Marsh Town Centre and by any future bulky goods precinct, as well as by large centres outside the municipality such as Melton and Ballarat. However, the intent of the retail hierarchy is to deliver services as close to the population as can be viably provided. This is especially important in residential growth areas where activity centres, along with local schools, act as the key focal points for new communities, assisting in community development.

Council expects that the great majority of residents of the growth areas will be within walking distance of a neighbourhood centre anchored by a supermarket (or equivalent) that has a comprehensive food and grocery offering as well as a range of day-to-day goods and services, including dining/take-away food, front-line health services and childcare.

The concentration of activity in centres makes it easier to undertake multi-purpose trips and enhances the ability of residents to walk or cycle to access services in their neighbourhood if they wish. This will improve the sustainability of urban development.

The number of neighbourhood centres in growth areas around Bacchus Marsh, Ballan and elsewhere will be strongly influenced by the density of development and the number of residents deemed necessary for a viable level of service. There is a tension between providing the highest level of service and keeping the catchment areas as small as possible to enable residents to walk. This is most apparent in the size of the supermarket that can be supported by the residents in the local catchment.

In the current market, a mid-sized supermarket, between 1,500 sqm to 2,500 sqm, can be supported by 5,000 to 8,000 residents; a large supermarket of 3,000+ sqm requires, broadly, 9,000 residents or more. In this Strategy, a neighbourhood centre with a mid-sized supermarket is designated a small neighbourhood centre. This describes the type of centre currently found at Darley Plaza or Maddingley Village.



**Figure 5-1: Maddingley Village – a new small neighbourhood centre, with a mix of street-facing and internal spaces as well as a variety of retail and non-retail activity, with medium density housing clustered nearby.**

The dwelling density will depend on the landform, on the policy expectations of Council and State Government, and on the housing market. The Victorian Planning Authority's current target for dwelling density in precinct structure plans in Metropolitan Melbourne is,

*to increase density to an average of 30 dwellings per hectare around town centres and at key areas of amenity, and an average of 20 dwellings across the precinct moving toward 25 over time. (VPA, 2021)*

If applied to the Bacchus Marsh growth areas<sup>1</sup> this target suggests that there may be potential to accommodate a range of neighbourhood centres anchored by a mix of large and medium-sized supermarkets whilst ensuring that the great majority of residents are within walking distance.

The urban density required to have 9,000 people within 800m of an activity centre is, very broadly, around 25 to 30 dwellings per hectare. The density required to have an 800m catchment of 7,000 people is likely to be in the range of 20 to 25 dwellings per hectare.

<sup>1</sup>The dwelling density target may be adapted to be lower in regional areas.

## Principles

This Strategy recommends the following principles for developing the activity centre network in growth areas:

- Encourage compact neighborhoods within 800m walking distance of an activity centre;
- This accessibility will enable each new neighbourhood centre to be anchored by a commercially viable supermarket (or equivalent service such as a market or a large collection of food and grocery stores) that can provide a food and grocery offering to residents. The exclusive catchment<sup>2</sup> of new neighbourhood centres would need to contain 5,000 to 11,000 residents. There may be scope to vary this where catchment populations approach this level; where residents would be significantly disadvantaged without the presence of a neighbourhood centre; and where operators can viably provide a centre without damaging the role of adjacent centres.
- Neighbourhood activity centres are multi-functional and should include retail, primary health care and childcare, as well as other cultural, community and commercial activities. This will enable multi-purpose trips, reducing the social and environmental costs of transport. Encouraging multi-functional centres will also create a variety of local employment opportunities, helping to reduce the need for long-distance commuting.
- Neighbourhood activity centres should be located at highly accessible points within their community; on collector roads or close to arterial roads, serviced by public transport and at the confluence of the local trail/active transport network.
- As far as possible, urban design of the growth areas should maximise the resident population within the walkable catchment of activity centres. It also suggests that higher density housing provision should be close to centres.
- Each centre should be unique to its setting, helping to create a sense of place for the new community through architectural and urban design features, responding to the local landscape and heritage. Centres should demonstrate environmental and social sustainability with shaded outdoor meeting and relaxation spaces and a significant street-based presence.

These principles have implications for the density of urban development, with a presumption that most new suburbs will be developed to cater for a demographically balanced set of households and not simply separate houses for families with children.

With these principles in mind, Table 5-1 identifies the expected number of new activity centres in growth areas.

Area	Population in catchment at full development*	Number of centres	Type of centres
Merrimu	20,100	3	1 neighbourhood activity centre, 2 small neighbourhood activity centres
Parwan Station	10,000 to 13,000	1-2	1 neighbourhood activity centre or two small neighbourhood activity centres
Hopetoun Park North	2,700	1	1 local activity centre
Underbank	4,400	1	1 small neighbourhood activity centre
Ballan	17,600	2	1 existing local town centre, 1 small neighbourhood activity centre

**Table 5-1: Expected new centres in growth areas**

Source: Tim Nott \*Refer to Background Report p.27

<sup>2</sup> Exclusive catchment in this context means the area around a centre which is closer to that centre than to any other centre of an equivalent or higher order in the retail hierarchy.

It is unlikely that all parts of growth precincts will fall within 800m of a neighbourhood activity centre simply because of the irregular shape of the areas. In places that remain beyond a comfortable walk to the nearest neighbourhood activity centre and where demand is sufficient, Council will encourage the provision of local activity centres. Such centres would provide a limited retail service, usually in the form of a general store or small supermarket, that may include services such as cafés, take-away food and hairdressing. The size of such local centres would generally be in the range 200 to 1,000 sqm, depending on the demand demonstrated by the local catchment.

### Size of new neighbourhood activity centres

The total retail floorspace required in a neighbourhood activity centre is 0.55 sqm per person in the catchment, and in a small neighbourhood activity centre 0.45 sqm per person in the catchment. In addition, an allowance for non-retail space should be made. A common assumption for planning purposes is that non-retail space will account for 30% of the total building area of a neighbourhood activity centre. As an example, a catchment of 10,000 residents will generate a neighbourhood activity centre with 5,500 sqm of retail floorspace and 2,400 sqm of non-retail space (see Background Report, section 4.9.2).

While this estimate for commercial activity space is a guide for broad planning purposes, each centre should be individually designed to make the most of its position and to allow for connections to landscape features and the road and trail network as well as to enable the provision of facilities and housing that may be required by the local community. It is important that neighbourhood activity centres are individual and reflect their site and the nature of their community.

### Floorspace caps

The activity centre network will be developed sequentially as the population grows. In designing the network for growing suburbs, a key aim is to ensure that the people moving into an area at the end of the period will have a similar level of service as those who moved in at the beginning. If the first centres grow so large that they eat into the catchment of later centres, those later centres may not be viable and their catchment residents will be disadvantaged by having to travel further for their goods and services. In addition, the important community building role played by activity centres in new residential areas would be lost.

To prevent this from happening, it is common for planning authorities to place floorspace caps on centres,

at least until full development of the growth area in question.

In this strategy, floorspace caps are recommended on the retail floorspace in neighbourhood activity centres. Floorspace caps are not recommended for:

- The Bacchus Marsh Town Centre; this is to encourage development of this major activity centre for the wider population, noting that there will be some natural restrictions on the town centre because of the growth of the neighbourhood activity centre network which will provide convenience goods from locations close to the growing population in the district
- Non-retail floorspace in neighbourhood activity centres; this will encourage a wider range of employment activities in local neighbourhoods
- Retail floorspace in other types of centres, assuming each application for new retail space is accompanied by a sufficiently detailed analysis of demand commensurate with the scale of the proposal

The recommended cap on shop floorspace for each person in the catchment is:

- 0.61 sqm in neighbourhood activity centres; or
- 0.50 sqm in small neighbourhood activity centres

This should be calculated to the nearest 100 sqm and enables the anticipated retail floorspace per person from the retail model plus a margin of 10% to allow for development flexibility. The catchment for each centre is defined as the area for which the centre is the quickest to get to compared with other centres providing a similar or higher level of service, and which does not overlap with any other catchment at that level in the hierarchy.

This limit on shop floorspace, rather than retail floorspace, will make it easier for planners to review proposals for development.

The indicative shop floorspace caps on proposed activity centre are shown in Table 5-2 below. The potential centres in Merrimu and Parwan Station are not shown since the population catchments are not fully known. As noted previously, it is appropriate to allow 30% of the commercial building area to be comprised of non-retail uses that may include medical facilities, child-care, gyms, real estate agents, professional offices etc. Table 5-2 also provides an indicative total floorspace for each centre for planning purposes.

Activity centre scale	Ballan South Small neighbourhood activity centre	Underbank Small neighbourhood activity centre	Example PSP Centre Neighbourhood activity centre	Explanation/source
Catchment population at full development* (no.)	5,700	4,400	10,000	From catchment population forecast*
Modelled retail floorspace demand (sqm)	2,600	2,000	5,500	From retail model - 0.45 sqm per person
Shop floorspace cap (sqm)	2,900	2,200	6,100	Retail floorspace plus 10% for flexibility
Indicative total retail and non-retail floorspace (sqm)	3,700	2,900	7,900	Retail floorspace =70% of total centre

**Table 5-2: Proposed caps on shop floorspace**

Source: Tim Nott, \*Refer to Background Report p.27

These proposed caps can be finalised once precinct planning is complete. Darley Plaza has an existing retail floorspace cap of 1,552 sqm. This will not be sufficient to allow the centre to grow to its potential. Given the projected population in its catchment, the cap on shop uses should be lifted to 5,900 sqm.

### Actions

13. Use the principles in section 5 to position new activity centres to ensure that the great majority of growth area residents have walkable access to neighbourhood activity centres.
14. Use the principles in section 5 to assist in the planning of new activity centres in growth areas on the basis of the number of catchment residents, including use of floorspace caps to maintain the retail hierarchy.

6

# ENCOURAGE RETAIL EXPANSION IN SMALL TOWNS AND VILLAGES



## 6. ENCOURAGE RETAIL EXPANSION IN SMALL TOWNS AND VILLAGES

### Purpose

While some small towns in the Shire have activity centres with some level of retail provision, there are many smaller communities throughout the Shire which lack immediate access to retail providers. While some rural residents are content to be remote from services, many in Moorabool's small towns would prefer easier access, especially to top-up food and groceries. Council will encourage the provision of such services in existing and former village centres. Where possible, retail activity will be clustered with existing services to create multi-functional activity centres, improving the viability and accessibility of all local services.

### Description

Some small towns including Bungaree, Gordon, Elaine and Mt. Egerton have small retail offerings but others, such as Dales Creek, Greendale, Lal Lal, Myrning and Wallace have significant populations but lack retail provision. In some cases, these towns have emerged as rural residential settlements without a clearly defined centre (this also applies to Hopetoun Park on the outskirts of Bacchus Marsh). Other towns are from the gold-rush era but have lost their retail provision, although some retain other town centre activities such as community halls and pubs or hospitality businesses.

Council can work with investors who find it viable to provide small scale retail services in these settlements, encouraging investment through measures such as supportive planning, and facilitation of infrastructure where appropriate.

In some cases, it may be possible for existing facilities such as pubs to expand into retail provision or to provide a space for more informal exchange of home produce; shelves and refrigerators for home gardeners to exchange their surplus, for example.

As identified in the previous section, existing village centres may grow, particularly as a result of the provision of new infrastructure. In the central western small towns of the Shire, the catchment population may grow organically over time. A centre located at Wallace would serve this area most effectively, being central to the catchment. Though it currently lacks retail provision, Wallace has an existing centre with a hotel and community facilities.

### Actions

15. Encourage investors to provide local retail services in settlements that currently lack them. This can be achieved through identification and appropriate planning of small town centres, along with supporting new investment through Council, such as assistance through local laws (footpath trading etc).
16. Provide small business assistance and advice through Council's economic development function to encourage small town retail investment.
17. Continue to monitor council engagement with small town communities, to identify shortfalls in retail provision, and connect with potential investors or providers.
18. Consider an appropriately zoned and scaled commercial centre located in Wallace if the central western catchment population increases.



7

# SUPPORT PROVISION OF A WIDER RANGE OF GOODS AND SERVICES





## 7. SUPPORT PROVISION OF A WIDER RANGE OF GOODS AND SERVICES

### Purpose

There is scope for the provision of a wider range of retail goods and services in Moorabool. This applies to improved provision of clothing options in the Bacchus Marsh town centre but is especially relevant to the provision of bulky goods/homemaker wares. Council will encourage the provision of appropriately located bulky goods provision that can deliver an improved service to Moorabool residents and create local employment.

### Description

Currently there is no bulky goods floorspace in Moorabool, with the nearest centres located in activity centres in Melton and Ballarat.

In keeping with the principle of positioning services as close as possible to the population being served whilst maintaining viability, there is potential to locate that floorspace in Moorabool, particularly in Bacchus Marsh.

According to modelling undertaken for this Strategy, there is currently a shortfall of approximately 12,000 sqm of bulky goods floorspace in Moorabool which could rise to 24,000 sqm depending on future development scenarios (see section 4.7 of the Background Report).

This potential has been recognised by previous reports for Council (including Macroplan Dimasi, 2015 and Essential Economics, 2018). These previous reports have investigated a variety of sites that would be appropriate for bulky goods provision.

The modelled demand for bulky goods can only be approximate given the “lumpy” nature of provision. A typical Bunnings Warehouse store, for example, is 11,000 sqm (see Location IQ, 2023). In planning for a new bulky goods/homemaker precinct it would be prudent to allow for a site much larger than the anticipated demand. In this instance, an area of 10 to 12 hectares would allow for anticipated demand with a healthy margin for growth as well as car-parking and landscaping. This may be even larger if developed as part of a location for more general light industrial activity – warehousing, wholesale showrooms, small factories and the like.

Figure 7-1: Bulky goods precinct sites

In the short to medium term, the 3.7 hectare site on the corner of Geelong-Bacchus Marsh Road and Fiskin Street would be a suitable location for bulky goods development. This site has been identified in previous studies. It is within the buffer for the Maddingley Waste Resource and Recovery Centre where residential development is not supported. A bulky goods and light industrial area would generate useful urban activity here that would provide jobs and services for the municipal population. The area would be readily accessible to the southern part of the Bacchus Marsh urban area, and with the advent of the Eastern Link Road, to the other growth areas around the town.

If this location is not available for development, other nearby locations on the Geelong-Bacchus Marsh Road may be suitable for bulky goods, subject to further investigation.

In the longer term, a location on the western edge of the Parwan Station PSP area would provide ample room for bulky goods development. This location has access to the main Geelong-Bacchus Marsh Road and to the proposed Eastern Link Road that will provide an improved connection between the northern and southern parts of Bacchus Marsh. This main road network should provide excellent access to the growing suburbs of Bacchus Marsh. In addition, this part of the Parwan Station PSP area falls within the buffer of the Maddingley Waste Resource and Recovery Centre, where residential development is unlikely to be supported.

Provision of improved non-food retail options in Bacchus Marsh Town Centre is also desired by the local community according to consultation undertaken for the BMTC Structure Plan. Such provision may arise naturally as the local market grows and retail development occurs. Council should update investors on demand for these services as part of its economic development work, and where appropriate, support development to satisfy that demand.

#### Actions

19. Identify a preferred area to accommodate a bulky goods retail (restricted retail) precinct in a location in Bacchus Marsh south of the railway line and with convenient access to the Geelong-Bacchus Marsh Road and the planned Eastern Link Road. The area identified should be able to readily deliver an efficiently serviced and well connected precinct with a total area of 10-12 hectares (approx.) allocated for bulky goods. The hectare figure is based on forecast population growth, and may be revised at a later date.



8

# ENCOURAGE TOURISM RETAILING



## 8. ENCOURAGE TOURISM RETAILING

### Purpose

Visitor spending supports activity centres throughout the municipality and is particularly important for small towns such as Blackwood and Gordon as well as for the farm gate produce outlets on the Avenue of Honour in Bacchus Marsh. There is potential to improve the offering of services to visitors, generating higher local incomes and employment. Bolstering the attractiveness of the offering to visitors will also help improve services for residents.

### Description

Tourism is an important aspect of the Moorabool local economy, with recent figures from SpendMapp (2021-22) indicating that visitors to the municipality spend around \$80 million per year on retail and other services (and this was during the pandemic when travel for many was restricted for part of the period).

Visitors to the municipality include:

- people who come for work or family reasons or for whom the activity centres are relatively close to where they live; the spending patterns of these people are similar to those of Moorabool residents
- people who are attracted to destination stores such as the fruit and vegetable outlets on the Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour, the Garden of St Erth nursery near Blackwood, or the Ballan Farmers' Market
- people who are travelling through Moorabool and break their journey at the freeway services or the towns along the Freeway and other through-routes
- people who are visiting the Shire for the natural and historic attractions, including Lerderderg and Werribee Gorges, Wombat forest, Kryal Castle and Lal Lal Falls

From observations for this Strategy, there may be scope to increase the provision of services for this latter group of visitors through:

- the more widespread offering of farmgate produce or provision of a regional produce store in Bacchus Marsh or Ballan
- development of a visitor precinct (cafés with visitor information, outdoor clothing stores, bicycle shops, hostel accommodation etc) at Bacchus Marsh for those visiting the gorges and forests

- art and craft outlets
- mobile food trucks to service visitor attractions in busy periods

The attraction of visitors is particularly important for services in the small towns of the Shire, where a local café or produce store may only be viable if it caters to visitors as well as residents.

Outdoor markets are popular attractions for residents and visitors. The Ballan Farmers Market attracts hundreds of visitors each month. Markets and market/festivals such as the Bacchus Marsh Strawberry and Cherry Festival are ways of showcasing local producers, creating new connections, and developing new products and outlets. Council supports these events as a way of assisting new business development, encouraging visitation, and boosting local incomes. Capturing some of the festival atmosphere will be important in helping activity centres to compete in the years ahead.

### Actions

20. Promote investment in tourism retailing as part of wider tourism development strategies for the municipality.
21. Ensure that tourism strategies recognise the importance of retail development in small towns as a means of servicing visitors and residents.
22. Encourage the development of a visitor precinct within the Bacchus Marsh town centre that would include appropriate visitor information, parking and outdoor spaces as well as stores and entertainment offerings and, potentially, accommodation.
23. Encourage Ballan town centre to encompass the needs of visitors (specialist parking, information, appropriate stores and other services).
24. Continue to support markets and festivals in the town centres of the Shire to assist new business development, encourage visitation and boost local incomes.

9

# PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY



## 9. PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

The following Council actions will be required to implement the Moorabool Retail Strategy as set out in the previous sections. This includes ensuring the Strategy is incorporated into the Moorabool Planning Scheme and that its recommendations inform other strategic planning policies such as town and precinct structure plans.

### Actions

25. Facilitate a Planning Scheme Amendment to implement key recommendations of the Moorabool Retail Strategy, including:
  - a. Update of Clause 11.03-1L Activity Centres to ensure alignment with current retail hierarchy outlined within the Moorabool Retail Strategy.
  - b. Include a retail hierarchy map to Clause 11.03 - 1L Activity Centres.
  - c. Prepare a local level retail policy for inclusion within Clause 17 Economic Development, to include:
    - i. Key objectives and strategies as outlined within the Moorabool Retail Strategy relating to the retail hierarchy and the policy framework to guide decision making relating to retail and commercial land-use and development.
    - ii. A policy assessment framework for the consideration of commercial focused use and development applications, and rezoning requests for the provision of additional commercial land, including:
      - Strategic guidance on the appropriate locations for different types of retail and commercial uses.
      - Strategic guidance for the consideration of commercial rezoning requests to ensure the potential provision of additional commercial land is broadly in line with the retail floorspace projections of the Moorabool Retail Strategy.
      - Strategic guidance relating to limited opportunities for out of centre retail and commercial activity.
    - iii. Any detailed recommendations developed as part of the current Bacchus Marsh Town Centre Structure Plan process.
    - d. Remove existing floorspace caps on shops in Bacchus Marsh Town Centre applying to C1Z areas previously zoned B2Z.
26. Ensure the activity centre design principles set out in section 5 are embedded into the relevant growth areas planning controls and that a bulky goods precinct is considered in proximity to Bacchus Marsh.



10  
MONITORING  
OF THE RETAIL  
STRATEGY



## 10. MONITORING OF THE RETAIL STRATEGY

### Monitoring

Progress in achieving the objectives outline in this Strategy will be reported as data becomes available.

Council's planning and economic development officers will continue to:

- Monitor population growth by area, and the implications for retail demand
- Monitor retail floorspace growth by centre, how that compares with growth anticipated in this Strategy, and identify likely reasons if different
- Evaluate how the recommendations of the Strategy have been incorporated into the Moorabool Planning Scheme and other relevant planning policies
- Undertake discussions with retailers and the retail property development industry about the state of the market and key issues facing the sustainable development of the sector

After five years, a more comprehensive internal review will be undertaken to ensure that the Strategy remains relevant and that the population and demand assumptions are broadly on track.

There may be a need to adjust the policy settings for particular towns or precincts from time to time as new information and intelligence becomes available.

In any case, the Strategy will be comprehensively reviewed in 10 years, subject to Council resources.

### Actions

27. Record and monitor the current levels of available retail floorspace in all centres (existing and proposed and/or recently developed):
  - Compare floorspace against the projected floorspace requirements of each centre
  - Utilise the floorspace monitoring program to influence and inform the consideration of the new retail developments and the rezoning of additional commercial land as required
28. Record and monitor progression of actions and the retail environment.
29. Prepare a 5-year internal review to assess the continuing appropriateness of the Strategy.
30. Plan for a full review of the Strategy after 10 years.



## 11. CONSOLIDATED ACTION PROGRAM

Action no.	Action	Strategy section
1	Direct retail investment to one of the activity centres identified in Table 2 1.	Support the Retail Hierarchy
2	Encourage investment types that are appropriate to the role of the centre, in order to maintain the retail hierarchy.	Support the Retail Hierarchy
3	Require out-of-centre retailing or change in the status of an activity centre to be justified at a level of detail commensurate with the scale of the development.	Support the Retail Hierarchy
4	Implement the key findings and recommendations from this Strategy relating to the Bacchus Marsh Major Activity Centre through the Bacchus Marsh Town Centre Structure Plan.	Support Bacchus Marsh Town Centre
5	Work with stakeholders to encourage higher order retail goods and services as well as non-retail activity such as offices, community services, entertainment, arts and culture and accommodation.	Support Bacchus Marsh Town Centre
6	Ensure that the town centre is a key focal point of Council investment, including the location of appropriate Council services.	Support Bacchus Marsh Town Centre
7	Encourage larger vacant sites to accommodate large-scale uses.	Support Bacchus Marsh Town Centre
8	Encourage new retail buildings and streetscapes to contribute to the overall attraction of this centre as the heart of the Moorabool community by developing urban design guidelines and ensuring Council buildings set high standards.	Support Bacchus Marsh Town Centre
9	Remove existing floorspace caps in Bacchus Marsh Town Centre applying to C1Z areas previously zoned B2Z.	Support Bacchus Marsh Town Centre Planning Implementation
10	Undertake a structure plan/urban design framework for Ballan and its Town Centre that identifies how the centre will expand to accommodate new activities, link to the rest of the town and retain/improve its attractive streetscapes.	Support Ballan Town Centre
11	Identify how to reduce the need for carparking in the town centre including through planning for active transport from future growth areas.	Support Ballan Town Centre
12	Ensure that the sequencing of any new activity centre in Ballan South does not damage the retail and community role of the Ballan Town Centre.	Support Ballan Town Centre
13	Use the principles in section 5 to position new activity centres to ensure that the great majority of growth area residents have walkable access to neighbourhood activity centres.	Service new residential areas
14	Use the principles in section 5 to assist in the planning of new activity centres in growth areas on the basis of the number of catchment residents, including use of floorspace caps to maintain the retail hierarchy.	Service new residential areas

Action no.	Action	Strategy section
15	Encourage investors to provide local retail services in settlements that currently lack them. This can be achieved through identification, and appropriate zoning of small town centres and ensuring local laws (footpath trading etc) are amenable to new investment.	Encourage retail expansion in small towns
16	Provide small business assistance and advice through Council's economic development function to encourage small town retail investment.	Encourage retail expansion in small towns
17	Continue to monitor council engagement with small town communities, to identify shortfalls in retail provision, and connect with potential investors or providers.	Encourage retail expansion in small towns
18	Consider an appropriately zoned and scaled commercial centre located in Wallace if the central western catchment population increases.	Encourage retail expansion in small towns Service new residential areas
19	Identify a preferred area to accommodate a bulky goods retail (restricted retail) precinct in a location in Bacchus Marsh south of the railway line and with convenient access to the Geelong-Bacchus Marsh Road and the planned Eastern Link Road. The area identified should be able to readily deliver an efficiently serviced and well connected precinct with a total area of 10-12 hectares (approx.) allocated for bulky goods. The hectare figure is based on forecast population growth, and may be revised at a later date.	Support provision of a wider range of goods and services
20	Promote investment in tourism retailing as part of wider tourism development strategies for the municipality.	Encourage tourism retailing
21	Ensure that tourism strategies recognise the importance of retail development in small towns as a means of servicing visitors and residents.	Encourage tourism retailing
22	Encourage the development of a visitor precinct within the Bacchus Marsh town centre that would include appropriate visitor information, parking and outdoor spaces as well as stores and entertainment offerings and, potentially, accommodation.	Encourage tourism retailing Support Bacchus Marsh Town Centre
23	Encourage Ballan town centre to encompass the needs of visitors (specialist parking, information, appropriate stores and other services).	Encourage tourism retailing Support Ballan Town Centre
24	Continue to support markets and festivals in the town centres of the Shire to assist new business development, encourage visitation and boost local incomes.	Encourage tourism retailing
25	Facilitate a Planning Scheme Amendment to implement key recommendations of the Moorabool Retail Strategy.	Planning implementation
26	Actively engage with the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) during PSP preparation to ensure the activity centre design principles set out in section 5 are embedded into the relevant PSPs and that a bulky goods precinct is considered for the Parwan Station PSP.	Planning implementation

Action no.	Action	Strategy section
27	<p>Record and monitor the current levels of available retail floorspace in all centres (existing and proposed and/or recently developed):</p> <p>a. Compare floorspace against the projected floorspace requirements of each centre</p> <p>b. Utilise the floorspace monitoring program to influence and inform the consideration of the new retail developments and the rezoning of additional commercial land as required</p> <p>Discuss retail demand and opportunities in the municipality with the business, developer and real-estate community, and work with the trader organisations and industry to secure investment.</p>	Monitoring
28	Record and monitor the progression of actions and the retail environment.	Monitoring
29	Prepare a 5-year internal review to assess the continuing appropriateness of the Strategy.	Monitoring
30	Plan for a full review of the Strategy after 10 years.	Monitoring

## 12. REFERENCES

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## 13. GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
<b>Bulky goods floorspace/ homemaker centre</b>	Type of retail that typically sells hardware and homewares from large floor-plate outlets (500+sqm stores) and often collected together in a single location to share carparking. Usually requires good main road access and often serves an extensive catchment.
<b>Catchment population</b>	Population within a relevant catchment, as calculated and mapped in the Background Report Chapter 3.5
<b>Escape expenditure</b>	Spending that residents of an area make in shops outside their home catchment. Often associated with travel to a larger or more well-provided centre.
<b>Floorspace cap</b>	Specified in the Moorabool Planning Scheme - a limit on the amount of floorspace of a particular type that can be developed in a location. Proposed here to limit the area of shop floorspace that can be developed in neighbourhood activity centres in order to safeguard the equitable provision of services to new and future residents.
<b>Local activity centre</b>	Single shop or small group of shops and other activities providing limited services to a small catchment; includes small suburban centres and small town centres such as Gordon or Blackwood
<b>Major Activity Centre</b>	Large activity centre that has shops and other buildings that provide a wide range of goods and services. These centres usually have an extensive food and grocery offering, with several supermarkets, and a variety of routine non-food goods (clothing, household goods, electronics etc). MACs are often a focal point for other commercial, civic and community infrastructure (offices, libraries, clinics etc) and usually provide significant employment opportunities. Bacchus Marsh Town Centre is the only MAC in Moorabool.
<b>Neighbourhood Activity Centre</b>	Centre that has shops and other buildings that provide day-to-day or convenience goods and services, most notably food and groceries but often also take-away food, chemist, newsagent, hair-dresser, front-line health care and child-care. The characteristic retail form of a NAC is a substantial supermarket, usually of 3,000 sqm or more. In a suburban context, most catchment residents should be able to walk to their nearest NAC.
<b>Non-retail space</b>	Floorspace of buildings in an activity centre that is used for non-retail activity. This could include offices, civic and cultural buildings or shops that accommodate non-retail activity. This category excludes housing.
<b>Precinct Structure Plan (PSP)</b>	land use and infrastructure plan to guide the development of an area over time. It provides certainty for community members and developers by providing a long-term vision for how an area will develop in the future.
<b>Retail</b>	For the purposes of this Strategy, retail activity includes the sale of food, groceries and liquor, clothing, household goods, recreational and other goods, cafés, restaurants and take-away food outlets and selected services such as hair-dressers, beauty parlours and household goods repairs. It does not include pubs, clubs and hotels, automotive sales or showrooms where most of the income is from wholesale sales.
<b>Small Neighbourhood Activity Centre</b>	Neighbourhood centre with a mid-sized supermarket (1,000 to 2,500 sqm), the type of centre currently found at Darley Plaza or Maddingley Village.
	Small town and village are used interchangeably in this document to denote the smallest settlements in the Shire
<b>Small town or Village</b>	Use the principles in section 5.3 to position new activity centres to ensure that the great majority of growth area residents have walkable access to neighbourhood activity centres.





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