Appendix G: Character and Landscape

Alpine Shire Council

Land Development Strategy

November 2023

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SHIRE COUNCIL

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Contents

1. Natural environment and landscape

This section sets out the physical considerations that may impact development capacity and future settlement patterns across the Alpine Shire LGA. It considers environmental values, landscape character, heritage, neighbourhood character.

1.1. Land Management

Alpine Shire comprises 92 percent crown land, including State and National Parks, while the remaining 8 percent of the land is freehold.[1] *The Alpine Planning Scheme* indicates that planning in the region should help to support and protect ecological systems and the biodiversity they support. Planning is required to implement environmental principles for ecologically sustainable development as established in international and national agreements. The Scheme recognises the potentially damaging impact of urban expansion and aims to avoid impacts of land use and development on important areas of biodiversity, specifically in national parks, conservation reserves, or nationally and internationally significant sites.

1.2. Biodiversity values

Alpine Shire is home to many flora and fauna species, some of which are classified as critically endangered, endangered, or vulnerable under the *Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act* 1999. Strategic Biodiversity Values (SBV) provide a view of relative biodiversity importance in the landscape by combining information on areas that are of importance to threatened flora and fauna, vegetation type and condition.[2] Areas with high SBV include Mount Buffalo National Park and Alpine National Park. Much of Alpine Shire has a high SBV rating, while the valleys in the North of the LGA, which contain the main townships, have a lower SBV.

Table 1 lists an example of some of the species of flora and fauna considered critically endangered, endangered, or vulnerable.[3] On freehold land, native vegetation and biodiversity have been significantly reduced and modified since European settlement. Native vegetation can primarily be found in Crown land, which makes up over 90 percent of Alpine Shire.[4] Under Clause 52.17 of the *Alpine Planning Scheme*, a planning permit is required to remove or destroy most native vegetation.[5]

Alpine Shire has a number of significant tree avenues which contribute to the character of the Shire and its towns.[6] The tree avenues are typically made up of a single species and all trees in each avenue were planted at the same time to allow for efficient management (noting that avenues were planted at differing times). Trees are subject to a range of pests and diseases, including the Elm Leaf Beetle which

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[1] Alpine Shire Council (2020), Alpine Shire Council Annual Report 2020-21
[2] DELWP (2018), Nature Print: Strategic Biodiversity Values
[3] This list is non-exhaustive, the full list can be found through the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (DELWP).
[4] Alpine Shire Council (2020), Alpine Shire Council Annual Report 2020-21
[5] Alpine Shire Council (2015), Alpine Shire Council Rural Land Strategy
[6] Alpine Shire Council (2021), Alpine Shire Council Tree Management Plan

has the potential to cause significant damage to the Shire's large Elm tree population as has happened in the past.

TABLE 1 SUMMARY OF ENDANGERED AND VULNERABLE SPECIES

Critically endangered	Endangered	Vulnerable
• Falco Subniger – Black Falcon • Burhinus grallarius – Bush Stone-curlew • Galaxias mungadhan – Dargo Galaxias • Cyclodomorphus praealtus – Alpine She-oak Skink • Litoria spenceri – Spotted Tree Frog • Arachnocampa (Lucifera) buffaloensis - Mt Buffalo Glow-worm • Oreixenica latialis theddora – Small Alpine Xenica Butterfly • Prosthanthera monticola - Bufallo Mint-bush	• Oreoica gutturalis – Crested Bellbird • Rhinolophus megaphyllus megaphyllus – Eastern Horseshoe Bat • Burramys parvus – Mountain Pygmy-possum • Dasyurus maculatus maculatus – Spot-tailed Quoll • Maccullochella macquariensis – Trout Cod • Euastacus yanga – Variable Spiny Crayfish • Brachyscome foliosa – Mountain Daisy	• Anas rhynchotis – Australasian Shoveler • Mastacomys fuscus mordicus – Broad-toothed Rat • Canis lupus dingo – Dingo • Ornithorhynchus anatinus – Platypus • Litoria raniformis – Growling Grass Frog • Austroaeschna (Austroaeschna) flavomaculata - Alpine Darner Dragonfly • Synemon plana – Golden Sun Moth • Acacia dallachiana – Catkin Wattle

Source: DELWP, *Victorian Biodiversity Atlas*, 2022. Note: More information can be found by visiting *the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas*.

1.3. Water supply catchments

Water is a critical resource in Alpine Shire, where the headwaters of many of Victoria's rivers originate. Alpine forms part of a declared water-supply catchment that supplies water to both the North and East Gippsland regions for domestic use and ultimately contribute to the Murray Darling System. [7] Water supply catchments are used to identify a region's water resources. These resources provide people with water for domestic and industrial use and are important for cultural sites, tourism, recreation, and wildlife. Water supply catchments identified as supply water for domestic use, irrigation or other purposes in Victoria are protected under the *Catchment Land Protection Act 1994*.[8]

In Alpine Shire, management of water supply catchments is guided by the *North East Regional Catchment Strategy 2021.* The management of these catchments is significant as water security will pose an increasing challenge to the region and state due to climatic events, such as drought. In 2019-2020, the condition of water in north east Victoria has been assessed as 'Concerned' and in decline. This was largely attributed to the impact of the 2019-2020 bushfires that impacted waterways by reducing

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[7] Alpine Shire Council (2015), Alpine Shire Council Rural Land Strategy
[8] Special Water Supply Catchment Areas are declared under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act, Vic., 1994.* These areas require careful planning and land use management, recognising the importance of a catchment for water supply purposes. Further information is available from URL: http://vro.agriculture.vic.gov.au/dpi/vro/vrosite.nsf/pages/landuse-water-supply-catchments.

water quality and increasing erosion.[9] Appropriate management of land use within water supply catchments is crucial to avoid degradation of water quality and quantity. [10]

The *Alpine Planning Scheme* seeks to protect waterways and water supply catchments by ensuring that development provides a minimum 30-metre setback from wetlands and waterways and support Catchment Management Authority Works on Waterways processes. Figure 1 illustrates the ten water supply catchment areas within Alpine Shire. All of the catchment areas have been declared a Special Water Supply Catchment (SWSC) under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*. The SWSC areas have significant value as a source of water for domestic, urban and stock use and the Planning Scheme implements policies to protect them:

- Applications to use or develop land within a SWSC must demonstrate that the proposal will not adversely impact upon water quality in the catchment

- The design of all developments in rural areas will be required to ensure that stormwater flows downstream of the site and is restricted to redevelopment levels unless increased flows are approved by the relevant drainage authority and there are no detrimental downstream impacts

- The creation of new point source discharges should be avoided

- Best practice land and water management should be employed to diffuse sources of pollution

- All development in rural areas will be required to retain and treat all effluent on site. Application to build within 100 metres of a waterway that would generate effluent should include evidence that the building site is capable of containing an appropriate water treatment system.[11]

The *Alpine Planning Scheme* outlines further steps to protect water quality in aquifer recharge areas, which lie beneath and adjacent to the Ovens River and its tributaries.[12] This includes promoting vegetation retention in aquifer recharge areas and preventing the establishment of incompatible land uses in aquifer recharge areas in potable water catchments.

[9] Victoria State Government, *North East Regional Catchment Strategy*, Accessed March 2022 from URL: https://northeast.rcs.vic.gov.au/themes/water/.
[10] Alpine Shire Council (2015), Alpine Shire Council Rural Land Strategy
[11] Alpine Shire Council (2022), Alpine Planning Scheme
[12] Alpine Shire Council (2019), Domestic Wastewater Management Plan

FIGURE 1 WATER SUPPLY CATCHMENTS IN ALPINE SHIRE
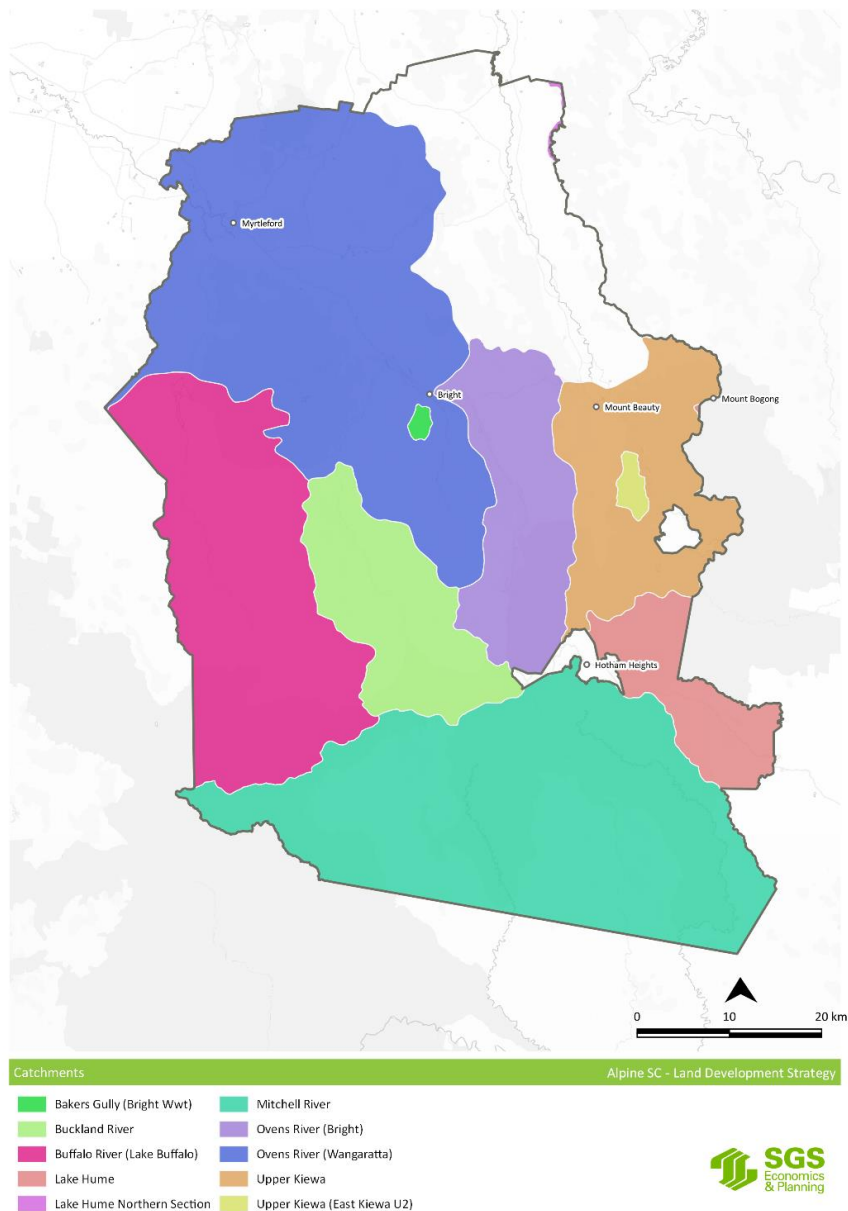
Source: SGS Economics and Planning, based on various datasets.

## 1.4. Landscape character

Bioregions across Alpine Shire

Landform and biodiversity in the Alpine Shire LGA are highly varied. Figure 2 illustrates the bioregions across Alpine Shire based on the Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA7). The IBRA7 is a national system to classify distinct bioregions based on common climate, geology, landform, native

vegetation and fauna. There are 89 distinct bioregions in Australia.[13] In Alpine Shire, there are five subregions under the IBRA7 classification:

- **South Eastern Highlands:** The predominant bioregion, covering much of the LGA including Bright and Mount Beauty.

- **Australian Alps:** Covering much of the south of the LGA and extending into the east and small pockets in the north and central area, including Alpine National Park and Mount Bogong.

- **NSW South Western Slopes:** Around the northern areas of the LGA.

- **Victorian Midlands:** Covering a small area in the north eastern boundary of the LGA.

- **Riverina:** Small areas in the north east and north west, covering Myrtleford.

[13] The Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA) is a framework for identifying land for conservation. It is a spatial mapping and information tool for vegetation communities and ecosystems. Across Australia, there are 89 large geographically distinct bioregions based on common climate, geology, landform, native vegetation and species information. Further information is available on the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment website: https://www.environment.gov.au/land/nrs/science/ibra.

FIGURE 2 BIOREGIONS IN ALPINE SHIRE BASED ON IBRA7
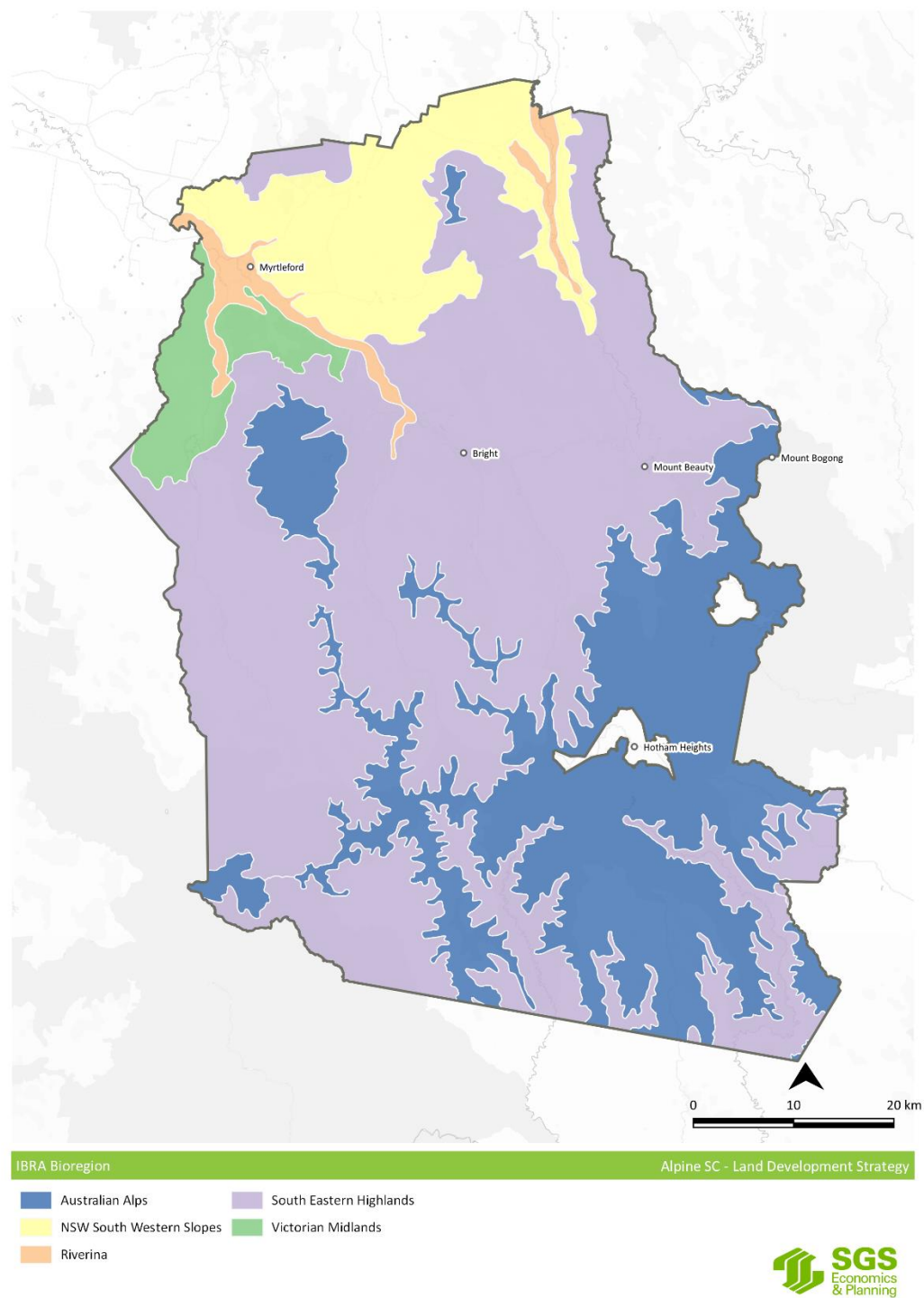
Source: SGS Economics and Planning, based on the various datasets.

Significant Landscape and Features

Containing much of Victoria's alpine country, Alpine Shire's meandering rivers and dramatic views provide a picturesque location. Public land makes up 92 percent of Alpine Shire, in areas identified as State and National Parks, State Forests and Nature Reserves, including part of the Alpine National Park and the Mount Buffalo National Park. The remaining 8 percent of land consists of towns, villages and farming land in the major river valleys: Ovens, Buffalo, Buckland and Kiewa valleys.[14]

Alpine Shire contains significant rivers including the Kiewa, Ovens, Buffalo and Buckland. The Ovens and Kiewa rivers and their tributaries are important wildlife corridors. In many areas, waterways have Crown land frontages that are often licensed to the adjoining landowners.[15]

Located in Victoria's High Country, Alpine Shire contains over 100 named mountains and boasts the highest and second-highest mountains in Victoria, Mount Bogong and Mount Feathertop, located in the Alpine National Park.[16] Alpine Shire's mountains are home to some of Victoria's major snow and ski resorts including Falls Creek and Mt Hotham. These landscape features provide a picturesque and iconic scenery that is of environmental and cultural significance to residents in Alpine Shire and the broader Victorian community. The landscape also provides economic benefits on a local and national scale.

Beyond the vast mountain ranges, the valley floor is the home to the majority of Alpine Shires' residents. Residents predominately live within the Ovens Valley and Kiewa Valley.

In the **Ovens Valley** are the towns of Bright, Porepunkah and Myrtleford, and settlements of Freeburgh, Ovens, Harrietville, Wandiligong, Buckland Valley and Buffalo River. From Harrietville to Bright, the Ovens Valley is narrow, flat and gently undulating. The Ovens River meanders through the valley and the sides rise sharply into the Alpine National Park to the east and the State Forest to the west. Further north along the Ovens Valley, from Bright to Myrtleford, the landscape broadens into the floodplain and valley floor and the tributaries of Roberts Creek, One Mile Creek, Porepunkah Gully Creek and Buffalo Creek. To the east, Mount Buffalo creates a dramatic skyline.[17]

On the significant landscape overlay (SLO), the Upper Ovens Valley is classified as a SLO5 due to its significant native and exotic species and historical past as a mining valley. Under the SLO5 classification, developments are contained and restricted to protect the character and biodiversity of the area. [18]

Wandiligong Valley is characterised by its narrow valley and Morses Creek. The surrounding steep hills contain pine plantations on the west and Crown Land to the east. The historic township of Wandiligong is situated along the valley, south of Bright.[19] The Wandiligong Valley is classified as a SLO3 due to its cultural and historic heritage and the unique character of the built environment. Under the SLO3 classification, new developments must maintain the existing character and patterns in the landscape.[20]

Buffalo River Valley is characterised by its narrow steep slopes near Lake Buffalo in the South of the valley. The valley broadens to a flat plain near Myrtleford where the Buffalo River meets the Ovens

[14] Alpine Shire Council (2020), Alpine Shire Council Annual Report 2020-21
[15] Alpine Shire Council (2013), Alpine Shire Council Recreation and Open Space Plan
[16] Alpine Shire Council (2013), Alpine Shire Council Recreation and Open Space Plan
[17] Alpine Shire Council (2015), Alpine Shire Council Rural Land Strategy
[18] DELWP (2020), Alpine Planning Scheme Ordinance Schedule 5 to Clause 42.03 Significant Landscape Overlay, Accessed March 2022 from URL: https://planning-schemes.api.delwp.vic.gov.au/schemes/alpine/ordinance/42_03s05_alpi.pdf
[19] Alpine Shire Council (2015), Alpine Shire Council Rural Land Strategy
[20] DELWP (2020), Alpine Planning Scheme Ordinance Schedule 3 to Clause 42.03 Significant Landscape Overlay, Accessed March 2022 from URL: https://planning-schemes.api.delwp.vic.gov.au/schemes/alpine/ordinance/42_03s03_alpi.pdf

River. Following the valley north to the Shire boundary, the valley rises into steep undulating hills near Gapstead.[21]

Buckland Valley is a pastoral valley along the Buckland River and Mount Buffalo National Park lies to the west.[22] The Buckland Valley is classified as a SLO4 due to its unique landscape where the pastoral valley floor contrasts with the steep and rugged terrain of Mount Buffalo. The SLO4 classification aims to maintain this contrasting landscape by encouraging rural development on a human scale and form.[23]

Happy Valley contains undulating slopes with minor alluvial plains significant to the Shire for its agricultural production, primarily supporting the cattle industry.[24] The Happy Valley is classified as a SLO2 due to its steep forested ridges and fertile valley floor. The classification aims to maintain these landscape features and the view of Mt Buffalo from the eastern end of the valley.[25]

Within the **Kiewa Valley** is the town of Mount Beauty-Tawonga South, and settlements of Tawonga and Dederang.[26] The wide valley floor features the floodplain of the Kiewa River alongside tributaries of Mountain Creek and Running Creek. The valley is bordered by state forest to the east and west and the Alpine National Park to the South.[27] The Upper Kiewa Valley is classified as a SLO1 due to the distinct character of the contrasting landscape. Under the SLO1 classification, urban development must be contained to existing townships and maintain the rural landscape.[28]

[21] Alpine Shire Council (2015), Alpine Shire Council Rural Land Strategy
[22] Alpine Shire Council (2015), Alpine Shire Council Rural Land Strategy
[23] DELWP (2020), Alpine Planning Scheme Ordinance Schedule 4 to Clause 42.03 Significant Landscape Overlay, Accessed March 2022 from URL: https://planning-schemes.api.delwp.vic.gov.au/schemes/alpine/ordinance/42_03s04_alpi.pdf
[24] Alpine Shire Council (2015), Alpine Shire Council Rural Land Strategy
[25] DELWP (2020), Alpine Planning Scheme Ordinance Schedule 2 to Clause 42.03 Significant Landscape Overlay, Accessed March 2022 from URL: https://planning-schemes.api.delwp.vic.gov.au/schemes/alpine/ordinance/42_03s02_alpi.pdf
[26] Alpine Shire Council (2021), Economic Development Strategy
[27] Alpine Shire Council (2015), Alpine Shire Council Rural Land Strategy
[28] DELWP (2020), Alpine Planning Scheme Ordinance Schedule 1 to Clause 42.03 Significant Landscape Overlay, Accessed March 2022 from URL: https://planning-schemes.api.delwp.vic.gov.au/schemes/alpine/ordinance/42_03s01_alpi.pdf

2. Built environment and character

The character of Alpine's built environment varies across the municipality. An overview of the character in each of Alpine's main towns and settlements are summarised in this section.

2.1. Understanding neighbourhood character

Across Victoria, the term 'neighbourhood character' means the cumulative impact of every property, public place, or piece of infrastructure, whether great or small. Documenting neighbourhood character helps in forming an understanding of built form challenges and opportunities within the municipality. It is important to have a reference for the feel of a place, influenced by its buildings and street networks, to ensure that new development in Alpine feels like it belongs, reflecting local values and features.

The interplay between different features forms the basis of a place's unique character. Those features may include:

- Key roles and services
- Topography (flat, undulating, hilly, physical features like river valleys)
- Landscaping and vegetation (size, type, native/non-native, or a mix)
- Built form (buildings: height, size, setbacks, roof form, heritage, site coverage and space around houses)
- Heritage sites
- Built form (dwelling types, extent of rear gardens and private open spaces, size and spacing of lots, street widths and patterns, fences style and height)

Detailed assessment has been undertaken of the Shire's three larger townships (Bright, Myrtleford and Mount Beauty-Tawonga South) which each comprise a commercial core and surrounding residential land. This is followed by a description of the smaller settlements in Dederang, Dinner Plan, Harrietville, Porepunkah, Tawonga and Wandiligong.

2.2. Settlement character descriptions

Bright

Bright is the second largest township in the Alpine Shire, with a population of 2,620 people (ABS 2021). Bright is a tourism-oriented town, serving as a gateway to Alpine National Park, the snowfields and a myriad of recreational activities. Bright also services surrounding settlements of Harrietville, Smoko, Freeburgh, Porepunkah and Wandiligong.

The relationship between the surrounding landscape and the built environment is an important aspect of Bright's character. The town offers natural beauty with views of surrounding mountain ranges, pine plantations and natural features, including Ovens River running east-west and the connecting Morses

Creek running south of the Ovens River. The Ovens River Water Frontage provides a unique riverside setting and a key community focal point for public open space.

The trees and vegetation in the town are adapted to a sub-alpine climate. The main streets in the commercial core are lined with deciduous European alpine and avenue plantings. Vegetation is most dense around Ovens River and Morses Creek. New street plantings have been integrated among established trees in residential areas, creating a sense of privacy and green leafy streets.

The direction of the town's growth has been shaped by the surrounding topography. The town is situated in a narrow valley, with Apex Hill to the north and Mystic Hill to the south. Bright's urban structure does not follow a traditional grid street pattern, instead comprising a highly varied street layout sympathetic to local landscape conditions. The town centre's pedestrian scale is a legacy of the township's settlement in the mid 1800's.

The character of Bright is influenced by its historical legacy as a gold mining settlement and its continued role in supporting forestry, agriculture and tourism industries. The history of Bright and these past industries is evident in the street patterns, historical buildings and surrounding areas such as the Victorian Heritage Registered gold sluicing site at Frasers Lane.

Recent development in Alpine Shire has been concentrated in Bright. Between 2016 and 2021, 40.5 per cent of all dwelling constructions occurred in Bright.[29] Development in Bright has been predominantly occurring on the outer areas of the town with very little infill development occurring around the town centre. New housing comprises largely separate houses in the general residential and low-density residential zones. Lot sizes remain large with sensitive modern architectural styles.

It is noted that further detailed character work for Bright is being undertaken by Mesh Planning.

Commercial core

Bright's town centre, the commercial core, is situated to the south of Ovens River, around Gavan Street which connects to the Great Alpine Road. This commercial area is surrounded by the Ovens River Water Frontage to the north, the Morses Creek Water Frontage to the east, and caravan parks to the north, east and west.

The commercial core has an established town centre character. It provides a variety of services and community infrastructure to meet daily needs, including supermarkets, medical centres, a community centre, library, and surrounding parks. There is a diversity of restaurant, retail and entertainment offerings located throughout the commercial area, which contribute to a vibrant and tourist oriented town centre.

The mix of uses in the commercial core lends itself to a variety of development types with predominantly one and two storey typologies. Gavan Street/Delaney Avenue, Barnard Street and Ireland Street are key boulevards in the commercial core, lined with established street trees. Services and businesses front the main streets and provide built canopy cover over sealed footpaths. These commercial areas are comparatively more compact, with smaller lots and larger building footprints compared to the established residential areas.

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[29] Alpine Shire Council (2021), Building permit activity.

Short stay accommodation such as hotels and Airbnbs are scattered throughout the commercial zone, occupying single detached dwellings and multi-unit developments. Single detached dwellings are concentrated within the fringes of the commercial zone area, to the east of Wills Street and along Wood Street and Burke Street.

The town's history is expressed most clearly through its extant original buildings in the commercial area, which include the Uniting Church, Oriental Guest House, former Bright Post Office and Bright Library. Other places and objects that express Bright's history within the commercial core include the Bright Memorial Clock Tower and Mafeking Square in the centre of the town.

Residential areas

Areas zoned General Residential Zone are located to the north and south of the Ovens River, and to the east and west of Morses Creek, with pockets of community-oriented land uses zoned Public Use Zone, such as a school, hospital, cemetery, bowls club and government land.

The General Residential Zone consists of mostly single detached dwellings, developed on residential blocks with a rectilinear subdivision pattern. Housing development is low scale with mostly pitched roof styles and a variety of timber and brick constructions varying between one and two storeys. Housing development is characterised by generous front and rear setbacks, except where dwellings are located on steep lots in the foothills, such as to the south of the town. Front fences on residential lots are generally low in height and permeable or otherwise absent. Vehicle crossings connected to driveways and on-site car parking is commonplace. Most streets are without footpaths.

Short stay accommodation is scattered throughout the General Residential Zone area, integrated among the single detached dwellings. Hotels are typically single or double storey construction in either detached buildings or units. Units tend to be situated on the edges of residential, or in holiday parks or motels with purpose-built hotel accommodation.

The public realm includes both established and young street tree plantings on large grass road verges. Front setbacks are also vegetated, creating a leafy green character throughout residential areas as well as a greater sense of privacy.

Town fringe

Areas of Low Density Residential Zone (LDRZ) extend outwards along the valley floor and are typically the towns fringe areas. Areas of LDRZ generally interface forested conservation areas, plantation areas in the Farming Zone and/or golf courses (to the west). Dwellings in the LDRZ are located on large lots, arranged around curvilinear streets that support country style living, with wide vegetated setbacks.

Housing is characterised by large ranch style houses with a range of both timber and brick constructions varying between one and two storeys. Some small pockets more closely resemble the regular rectilinear subdivision pattern of the General Residential Zone. Front fences on residential lots are generally low in height and permeable or otherwise absent, with some well-maintained hedges serving as front fences.

A small number of short stay accommodation options are scattered throughout the LDRZ with separate dwellings converted to hotels, and purpose-built hotel accommodation.

In the public realm, there are fewer footpaths, swale drains and wide, grassy verges.
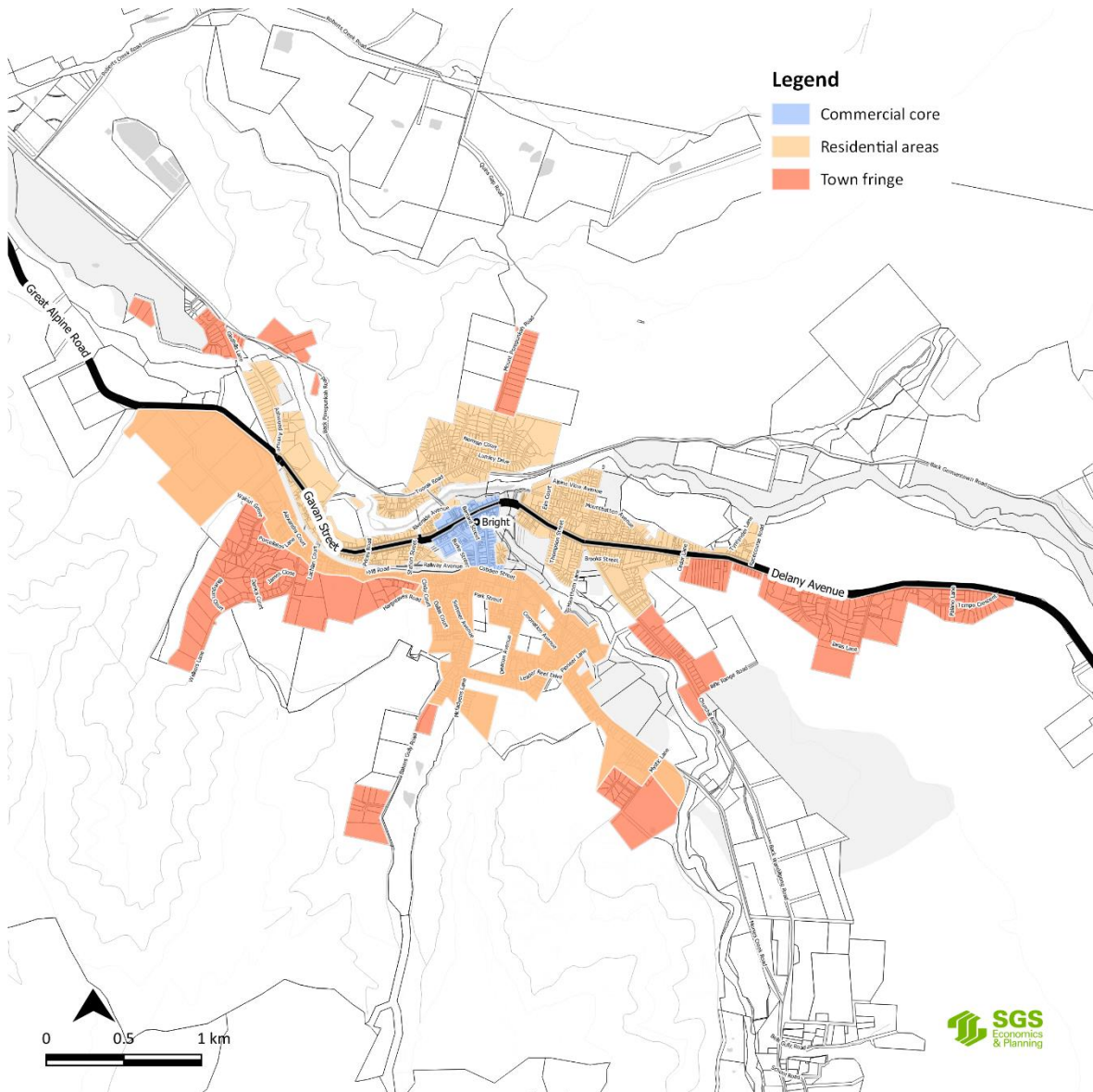
Source: SGS Economics & Planning, 2022

Mount Beauty – Tawonga South

Mount Beauty and Tawonga South are distinct settlements; however they are physically and economically linked and for the purposes of planning are considered to be one township. They are situated in the foothills of the Alpine National Park in the upper Kiewa Valley with steep hills to the south, east and west with Kiewa Valley extending to the north. Bogong High Plains Road connects Mt Beauty and Tawonga South. Together they have a population of around 1,922 (ABS, 2021). Mount Beauty-Tawonga South services nearby rural communities including Tawonga and Falls Creek. Tourism is a key focus, as the township serves as a gateway to the alpine recreation areas of Falls Creek and the Bogong High Plains.

The relationship between the surrounding landscape and the built environment is an important aspect of the town's character. The town offers scenic views of the Kiewa River and the hydro power generation regulating pond at Mt Beauty, as well as views of Alpine National Park, Mount Bogong and the agricultural fields of the Kiewa Valley.

A large central portion of Mount Beauty is government land zoned Public Use Zone and much of this area contains the North East Water pondage. Commercial areas are located in Mount Beauty and along the Kiewa Valley Highway. Residential development follows the Kiewa Valley Highway and south along the Simmonds Creek Water Frontage. A significant number of dwellings provide for holiday accommodation. A green buffer and rural areas surround the Mount Beauty and Tawonga South townships.

The Mount Beauty township is a product of the nearby hydro scheme and the township was purpose built to support the project. A Heritage Study conducted in 2007 recognises the historical importance of the designation of Mount Beauty as a hydro town and planned community. The State Electricity Commission (SEC) adopted a model town design when planning these communities and used the SEC Government Architect to design the houses originally built for staff accommodation purposes in the towns south. Development in Mt Beauty has since spread to the north with post-war style housing common throughout. Most recent development is located in the northern most areas of Mt Beauty's General Residential Zone, as well as in pockets following the highway towards Tawonga South with varying architectural styles.

Commercial core

The commercial zoned land around Hollonds Street in Mount Beauty is small, however it connects to surrounding public open space and recreation reserves, schools, community centres and library located in the Public Use Zone (government land) to the north. The commercial and public land integrate to provide for an important community focal point.

The retail strip along Hollonds Street, located in the Commercial 1 Zone, supports the local community's daily needs, and includes a community centre, hospital, supermarket, food and drink premises and other businesses. Services and businesses front Hollonds Street and provide built canopy cover over sealed footpaths. This commercial zoned area extends to the north of Lakeside Avenue, where a swimming pool and pub are located, and across the waterway to the west, with a visitor information centre and other retail offerings.

A separate retail strip is located along the Kiewa Valley Highway, between Tawonga South and Mount Beauty. Retail along this strip is diverse, and building are typically single storey but inconsistent in terms of setbacks, presentation to the street and construction materials.
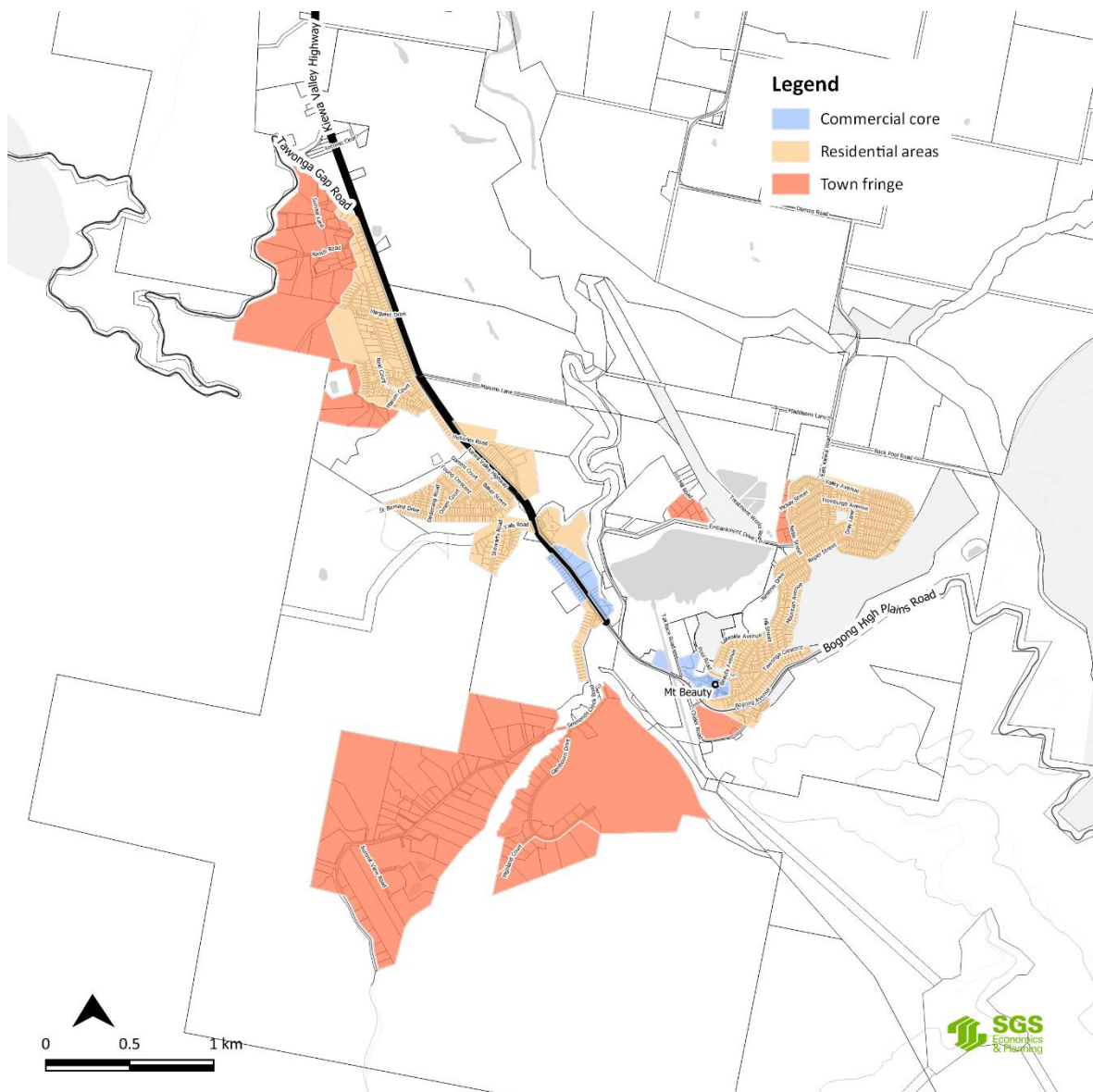
Residential area

Areas zoned General Residential Zone are concentrated to the east of the commercial core in Mount Beauty, and along Kiewa Valley Highway in Mount Beauty and Tawonga South. Housing in this area is generally comprised of one and two storey, detached dwellings with predominantly timber construction with gabled iron roofs. Residential lots are medium to large and include vegetated front setbacks. Residential streets feature few footpaths and road verges are planted with established trees of varying species.

Town fringe

The residential area described above further expands to the south-west of Mount Beauty along the Simmonds Creek Water Frontage and west of Kiewa Valley Highway in Tawonga South. These residential areas are zoned LDRZ, and are characterised by larger lot sizes, a greater sense of open space, and single detached dwellings that are obscured from the roads by trees and vegetation. Housing styles vary, however hipped and gable tin roofs are predominant, and front fences are absent or otherwise low in height. Roads are mostly unsealed with no footpaths and lined with trees and/or other vegetation.

FIGURE 4: CHARACTER AREAS OF MT BEAUTY-TAWONGA SOUTH TOWNSHIP

Source: SGS Economics & Planning, 2022

Myrtleford

Myrtleford is the largest township in Alpine Shire, with a population of 3,285 people (ABS, 2021). It is predominantly residential in nature, comprising residential land in the General Residential Zone, with fringe areas located in the Low Density Residential Zone to the north-east and south-east. The primary commercial area is located to the south, adjacent to the Great Alpine Road. Further north around Odonnell Avenue and Lawrence Street is the civic centre, which includes areas of public open space, sports ovals, the local government office, Myrtleford Hospital and schools. The town also services nearby communities in the Upper Ovens Valley.

The landscape character is punctuated by the broad open Ovens Valley, and scenic views to nearby Mount Buffalo and the forested hills rising to the immediate north and east. The edges of the township are lush and green, where it is adjacent to the Ovens River, Happy Valley Creek and Barwidgee Creek floodplains. Throughout the township, established trees of various species line the streets.

Historically, Myrtleford has been an agricultural town and continues to play an important service role to surrounding agricultural based land uses and enterprises. Parts of this history of the town are evident through the legacy of the tobacco industry that was present throughout the area. A historical log Tobacco Kiln which was used for drying tobacco crops is recognised under the Heritage Overlay in the town. There are very few historical buildings within the town centre. Those that do remain are scattered throughout and include the Railway Hotel and the Former Bush Nursing Hospital. While California bungalow housing was once a popular style in Myrtleford, very few remain. More recent development to the north-east is located on smaller lot sizes with larger floorplans and smaller sized or no private rear garden space. The township is lacking in established street trees, particularly in more recent development areas.

Commercial core

The town centre is comprised of Commercial 1 Zone and Mixed Use Zone land to the north and south of Myrtle Street. This commercial area is mostly comprised of various businesses including essential services such as a supermarket and pharmacy, retail, and food and drink premises. The architectural style of buildings in the town centre are diverse and there are few historical buildings. There is no unifying or predominant architectural or design style, resulting in a lack of visual cohesion. The front and side setbacks of buildings are however consistent. Shopfront verandahs are a prominent and practical feature in Clyde and Standish Streets.

Two areas of Mixed Use Zone, to the south and to the west, presents larger format retail in a more car centric environment, with access from Myrtle Street.

Dwellings are located on the outer edges of the town centre, along Elgin Street and to the west around Myrtle Street. Residential character is distinct from the commercial area with low density residential and single detached dwellings and vegetated front setbacks.

Residential area

The General Residential Zone is concentrated to the north of the Great Alpine Road. Residential areas interface Industrial 1 Zone land to the west which accommodates timber milling and freight industry activity, and Farming Zone land to the north and south. Residential development on the western edge has views to Barwidgee Creek, while development to the south-east has views to the conservation area, comprising the historic reserve and state forest. There are pockets of public open space and other non-

residential uses throughout the General Residential Zone. Many dwellings throughout the township are used for holiday accommodation and listed on Airbnb.

Housing is developed within a rectilinear grid pattern and is dominated by single detached dwellings, with both timber and brick constructions, and hip and gable roofs. Front setbacks are consistent throughout the township, of around six metres. Front fences, if present, vary in style with no uniformity.

Town fringe

The LDRZ is located to the north-east along Mummery Road, to the south-east along Great Alpine Road, abutting land zoned General Residential Zone and to the south of the Ovens River along Buffalo Creek Road. These residential areas are distinguished by very large lot sizes that follow wide curvilinear streets and a greater sense of open space. Housing is characterised by large country style living, with generous private open space, and low or otherwise absent front fences. Housing is situated within a leafy green forested setting.

FIGURE 5: CHARACTER AREAS OF MYRTLEFORD TOWNSHIP
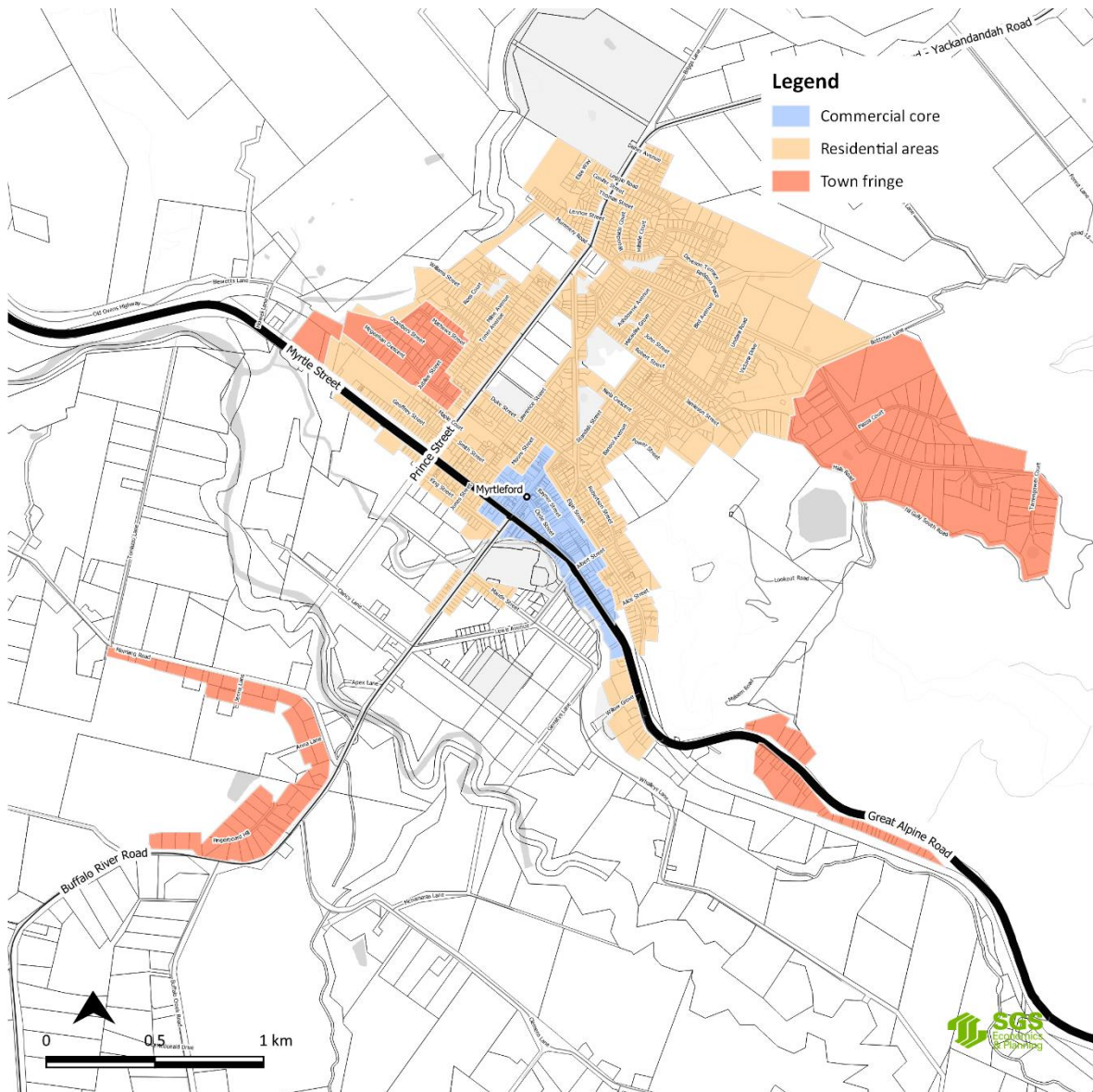
Source: SGS Economics & Planning, 2022

Small townships

The remaining settlements listed below are currently defined as smaller townships. The zoning in these towns include the Township Zone, Rural Living Zone, Low Density Residential Zone, Special Use Zone and Farming Zone. Unlike the three larger towns described above, these small townships lack a commercial zoned core and compact residential subdivision and development.

Other settlements in the municipality are comprised of rural districts, which is mostly farming land, located throughout Alpine Shire's valleys. The one exception is Bogong, which is comprised of land reserved for hydroelectricity production (Special Use Zone) and conservation area (Public Conservation and Resource Zone). These areas have been omitted as part of the survey of neighbourhood character.

Dederang

The township of Dederang is spread over two to three kilometres along the Kiewa Valley Highway, north of Mount Beauty. It presents a strong rural character. The area is predominantly zoned Farming Zone where farming properties are located, with two small areas of Township Zone land where residential development is concentrated on large narrow lots with wide setbacks and low-density rural dwelling styles. There is no defined town centre; the township is split into three nodes of activity: the area surrounding the hotel and primary school, the recreation reserve which is a community focal point for the town, and the area near the general store. The landscape is characterised by a wide open space and rural feel, with scenic views of surrounding mountain ranges. Trees tend to be clustered throughout the township, on private and public land.

Dinner Plain

Dinner Plain is a freehold alpine village resort located approximately 10 km south-east of the Mount Hotham Alpine Resort and is completely surrounded by the Alpine National Park. The township's small commercial precinct, comprising food and drink premises, and surrounding residential area is zoned Special Use Zone – Schedule 1.

The winding streets, uniform subdivision pattern and architectural style, and setting within the Alpine National Park give the town an Alpine village feel. The township is accessed from the south of Great Alpine Road, which connects to looping curvilinear streets. The residential area is populated with hotel accommodation, comprising lodges, apartments and individual houses. There is a consistent architectural style, defined by timber lodges, generally three storeys with steep tin roof pitches and consistent setbacks from the road. There are few footpaths, however the village is a walkable scale with some walking trails throughout. Development is guided by specific building controls and design standards, to achieve this uniform architectural character.

Harrietville

Harrietville is a small sub-alpine village located to the south-east of Bright, nestled in between mountain ranges to the east and west, in a forested setting. Most of the area is zoned Township Zone and fringe areas are zoned Rural Living Zone and Farming Zone.

There is no defined town centre, however the township provides a small range of commercial and retail uses for tourists and alpine recreation throughout the Township Zone. Dwellings styles are varied, with single and double storey timber houses with tin hipped roofs developed on a range of lot sizes fronting Great Alpine Road and connecting curvilinear streets. The fringe areas in the Rural Living Zone feature larger lots with rural style housing. Hotel accommodation is scattered throughout the town, mostly near the Great Alpine Road.

The residential area is punctuated by large public open spaces and heritage places. The Tronoh Gold Dredging Ponds in particular, which is heritage listed, represent the town's mining history. The highway and streets are lined with established trees and provide a forested character.

Porepunkah

Porepunkah is a small residential village located to the north-west of Bright between Station Street and Oven River, with most of the town zoned Township Zone. Land use is focused on rural living with less of a tourism focus compared to Bright. The township sits in a wide valley surrounded by the Ovens River to

the south-west and surrounding farmland, with scenic views of Mount Buffalo. The township is characterised by leafy green streets with established tree planting throughout.

Development is oriented around Ovens River, Great Alpine Road and Station Street in a rectilinear grid subdivision layout. The township includes a general store, hotel, recreation reserve, community hall, primary school and airfield. Hotel accommodation is scattered throughout the town.

Residential development comprises mostly single storey dwellings and comes in variety of housing styles including a mix of brick homes with tiled roofs and timber construction with tin roofs and vegetated setbacks. The LDRZ on the town fringe to the north-west and south-east comprises larger lots with all lots interfacing Ovens River on one side and Great Alpine Road on the other side.

Tawonga

Tawonga is situated to the north of Mount Beauty – Tawonga South, and is the older settlement in the upper end of the Kiewa valley, dating back to the 1850's. The town is located on the Alpine approach to Falls Creek and functions as an outlying residential area to Mount Beauty-Tawonga South. The town character is dominated by its semi-rural setting with an open space feel. To the east are significant views to Mount Bogong and north and south views along the Kiewa valley, while to the west forested hills skirt the town.

Development is dispersed along the Kiewa Valley Highway with two distinct hubs: the commercial precinct comprising a hotel, motel accommodation and restaurant at the intersection of the Kiewa Valley Highway and Mountain Creek Road (with surrounding residential development); and a predominately residential living area to the north of the town which also includes local community services such as the community hall, primary school, Country Fire Authority Brigade, general store, mechanical repairs shop and scout hall. A recreation reserve is located opposite the general store which includes tennis courts, public toilets, picnic facilities and play area.

Residential development is oriented around the Kiewa Valley Highway which runs in a north-south direction, with hills to the east and west. Housing is characterised by large single storey detached dwellings of predominantly timber construction with hipped tin roofs and generous vegetated setbacks. There is one small area of LDRZ land to the south-west where lots are much larger and developed with rural style housing.

Wandiligong

Located to the south-east of Bright and separated by a rural 'green belt' of farming land and plantations, Wandiligong is notable for its heritage and high landscape value set within a low-density residential character, with no defined commercial core. The historic town is known for its semi-rural look and feel, and sense of open space throughout the valley in which it is situated.

Wandiligong was founded in the 185O's as a mining settlement and is characterised by a dispersed collection of traditional cottages and outbuildings sitting amongst exotic trees such as willows, oaks, chestnuts, elms and poplars. Wandiligong evolved very differently to many other historic gold towns in Victoria because its long period of decline produced a sprawling mosaic of historic buildings and vacant blocks in a semi-rural landscape, rather than well-preserved nineteenth-century streetscapes.

The large irregular residential lot layouts and sizes form part of the heritage and semi-rural character of the town. Commercial and tourist services being dispersed through the village, located in the Low Density Residential Zone. Dwellings consist of historic mining cottages and low density rural style

dwellings. These dwellings are mostly obscured from roads by the highly forested and vegetated setting and large setbacks.

Wandiligong is also defined by its extensive areas of open space, particularly along the creeks running north-south. The residential area is surrounded by forested conservation areas and plantations.

Residential development is constrained by a lack of reticulated sewerage, limitations of other urban services and the constraints of the Farming Zone.

3. Heritage

This section covers Aboriginal cultural heritage and key built heritage sites of significance across the Alpine Shire. Aboriginal cultural heritage refers to the knowledge and lore, practices and people, objects and places that are valued, culturally meaningful and connected to identity and Country. Heritage in the built form is also an important aspect of local character and identity. The preservation of heritage helps to create unique and authentic places and provides a connection to the past.

3.1. Aboriginal cultural heritage

The traditional custodians in the Alpine Shire region include Dhudhuroa, Gunai-Kurnai, Taungurung, Waywurru and Jaithmathang. Since 2009, the Taungurung Land and Waters Council has been recognised by the State of Victoria as the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for cultural heritage on Taungurung Country and is working to find out more about what exists on Country and how to protect identified heritage. The Taungurung RAP covers much of the west of the Alpine Shire LGA. The Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) is the RAP for the Gunarkurnai Traditional Owners, recognised by the State of Victoria since 2006 and covers a small amount of Alpine Shire around Mount Hotham[30].

Traditional owners have not been formally recognised on the land to the north of the Ovens River, the Kiewa Valley, north of Mount Hotham and Dinner Plain and this land is not represented by a RAP at present[31].

Taungurung Land and Waters Council

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage can be found across Country as evidenced in the many Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMP) held on file by Taungurung Land and Waters Council. CHMPs identify and assess the potential impact of a proposed activity on Aboriginal cultural heritage. A CHMP is required when a 'high impact activity' is planned in an area of cultural heritage sensitivity' as defined in the *Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018*. When a CHMP is required, planning permits, licenses and work authorities can't be issued unless a CHMP has been approved for the activity.

The *Taungurung Country Plan* states that cultural mapping highlights Taungurung cultural heritage including art sites, rock art, natural resources, flora and fauna, birthing trees, scar trees, burial sites, waterholes, our rivers and waterways and post colonisation massacre sites and missions. A significant amount of Taungurung cultural heritage has been damaged, destroyed, removed or lost.

The *Taungurung Country Plan* sets out the identification and protection of cultural heritage sites, including vulnerable art sites that require immediate protection as a priority action. The *Taungurung Country Plan* identifies the need to 'establish ongoing support and investment for a major audit –

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[30] Welcome Map (achris.vic.gov.au) accessed 6 June 2023
[31] Welcome Map (achris.vic.gov.au) accessed 6 June 2023

cultural mapping activity – on Taungurung Country – from the tops of our mountains to our waterways and tributaries, including tangible and intangible heritage.'

### Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC)

The *GLaWAC Whole of Country Plan* describes the strong heritage across the landscape and states 'Aboriginal cultural sites and artefacts can be found along our songlines, and trade routes, mountain ridges and waterways.' The Whole of Country Plan identifies the need to 'take the time to understand what natural and cultural heritage exists out on Country' and to keep filling in the gaps of cultural heritage 'to learn about ourselves and strengthen our identity.'

The GLaWAC has an ongoing partnership with Monash University and other organisations conducting cultural heritage research. GLaWAC participates in the preparation of Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMP) and evaluates plans prepared by its Cultural Heritage Advisors. GLaWAC consider and advise State and Local Governments on applications for Cultural Heritage Permits, negotiate and enter into Cultural Heritage Agreements and advise and negotiate the repatriation of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Cultural Heritage Sensitivity

State planning policy supports the conservation of places of heritage significance, including Aboriginal cultural heritage significance. This is underpinned by strategies promoting the identification and protection of natural heritage sites and man-made resources; encouraging appropriate development that respects places with identified heritage values and ensuring that an appropriate setting and context for heritage places is maintained or enhanced. Areas of 'cultural heritage sensitivity' include registered Aboriginal cultural heritage places, as well as landforms and land categories that are generally regarded as more likely to contain Aboriginal cultural heritage. These include land within 200 metres of named waterways and land within 50 metres of registered Aboriginal cultural heritage places. Areas of cultural heritage sensitivity are defined for specifying when cultural heritage management plans must be prepared.

FIGURE 6: AREAS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SENSITIVITY
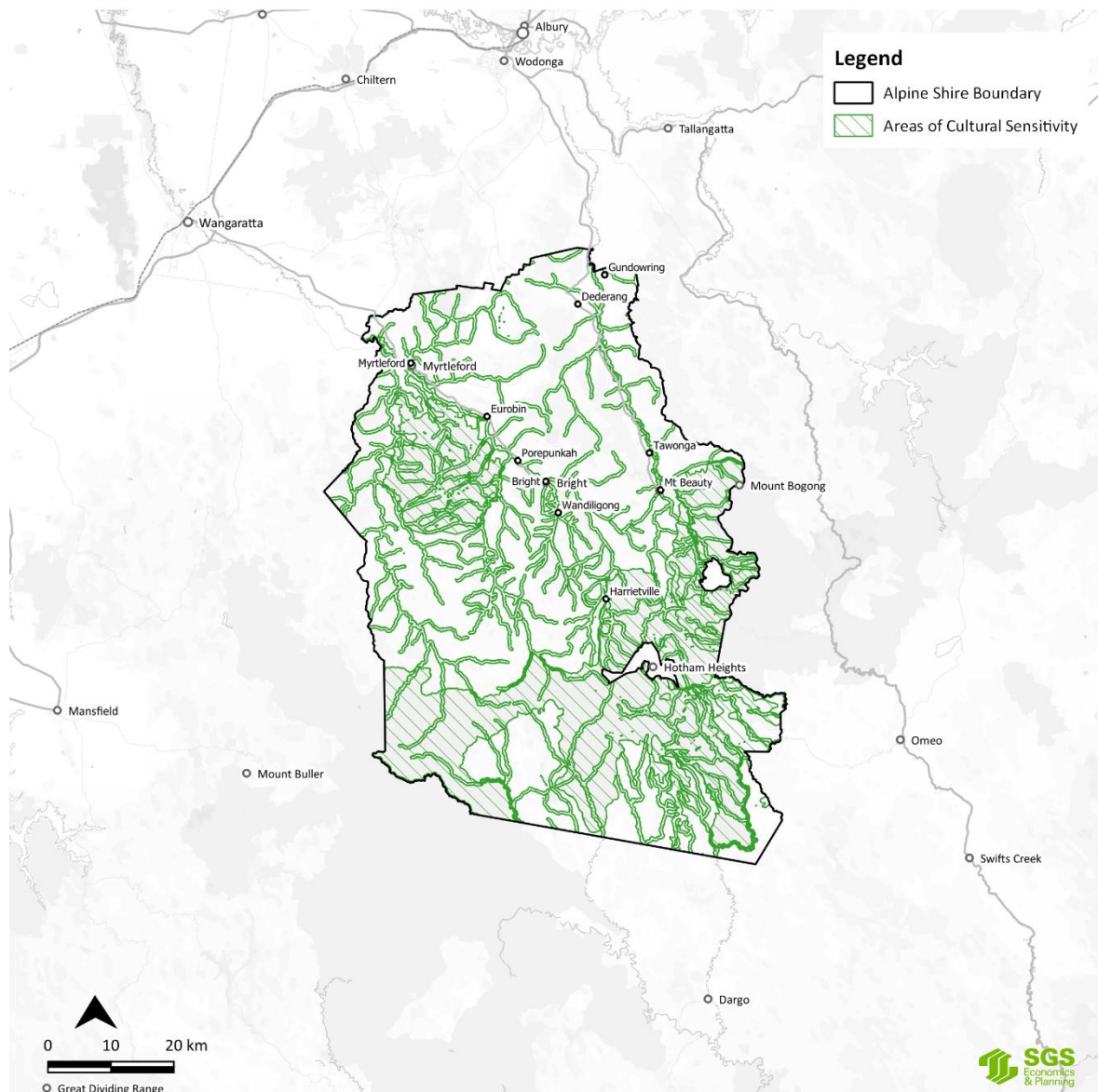
Source: Source: SGS Economics & Planning, 2022 using Victorian Government (2021), Areas of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sensitivity.

The current arrangements regarding Aboriginal heritage are subject to dedicated legislation (the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*). While this framework appropriately recognises that management of Aboriginal heritage involves unique challenges distinct from those raised by colonial heritage, it may also limit the responses able to be implemented through the planning system.

It will be important when working with Traditional Owners and RAPs to explore both implementable actions under the current framework, as well as identifying areas where the current framework is not meeting the needs of traditional custodians of the land. The latter may need to become the focus of advocacy by council to the Victorian Government.

3.2. Heritage in the built form

Many places, natural areas and buildings hold heritage significance across the Alpine Shire LGA.

The heritage significance of several places and features within the Shire have been recognised through registration on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) or through the application of the Heritage Overlay in the Alpine Planning Scheme.

The VHR lists and provides legal protection for heritage places and objects that are significant to the history and development of Victoria. It can include:

- **Heritage place:** buildings, trees, parks and gardens, streetscapes, archaeological sites, cemeteries, precincts, and structures such as bandstands.

- **Heritage objects:** furniture, shipwrecks, relics, archaeological artefacts, equipment, transport vehicles and everyday articles that contribute to an understanding of Victoria's history.

Places which that do not meet the criteria of state significance may be of local significance and may merit the application of the Heritage Overlay.

As well as covering places listed on the National Trust Heritage Register of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), there are a broad range of categories for including features under the Heritage Overlay, including places or features that are of local heritage significance because of:

- Cultural or natural historical significance

- Rarity, representativeness and/or research potential

- Aesthetic or technical significance

- Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

- Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.

A Heritage Overlay is applied over built form in areas of Bright, Mount Beauty, Tawonga South, Myrtleford and Wandiligong. Many original buildings within the commercial core and surrounds of Bright are subject to a Heritage Overlay. Mount Beauty, Tawonga South and Myrtleford have very few areas where the Heritage Overlay was applied. Myrtleford has a small number of historical buildings remaining but several memorials and monuments subject to a Heritage Overlay including a historical tobacco kiln.

In 2007, the Shire prepared a Heritage Study to identify, assess and document all post-contact places of cultural heritage significance within the Alpine Shire and to make recommendations for their future conservation. Stage one of the study involved the preparation of a thematic environmental history. Stage two of the study involved the actual assessment of significance of those places that have been identified in stage one. Heritage studies were prepared for the towns of Wandiligong, Mount Beauty and Bogong Village.

Due to the historical cyclical booms and declines associated with the industries across Alpine Shire, especially within the mining industry, there was little money invested into town infrastructure and buildings. Most of the money was taken elsewhere from the gold mining industry. This resulted in buildings of poorer construction that deteriorated rapidly in times of economic decline. While there

have been emerging architectural styles present in towns over the years, there are very few pockets of well preserved buildings remaining.

The township of Wandiligong is recognised as a heritage township, with a Heritage Overlay covering most of the town. The *Wandiligong Heritage Study 2007* was prepared to provide detailed analysis and assessment of the historic landscape of Wandiligong, examine and assess performance of heritage controls and assess new places of heritage significance. The heritage studies prepared for Mount Beauty and Bogong Village included heritage analysis of the areas and Planning Scheme recommendations.

The *Alpine Shire Heritage Study* (2007) provides a detailed history of the Shire's development and identified a range of significant heritage places. While Alpine Shire has a rich natural, cultural, and built heritage, there are gaps in the knowledge of the Shire's heritage assets, particularly sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

FIGURE 7: HERITAGE PLACES PROTECTED BY THE HERITAGE OVERLAY - BRIGHT, HARRIETVILLE, WANDILIGONG AND MYRTLEFORD

Source: SGS Economics & Planning, 2022 using VicPlan data.