



**plān i' spherē** [ // urban strategy planners ]



Shire of Strathbogie

# EUROA NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER STUDY

Final Report  
March 2008

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## 1. Brief and Method

## 1.1 Brief

The Euroa and Nagambie Neighbourhood Character Studies were commissioned by the Strathbogie Shire as part of a wider study covering the four townships of Euroa, Nagambie, Avenel and Violet Town.

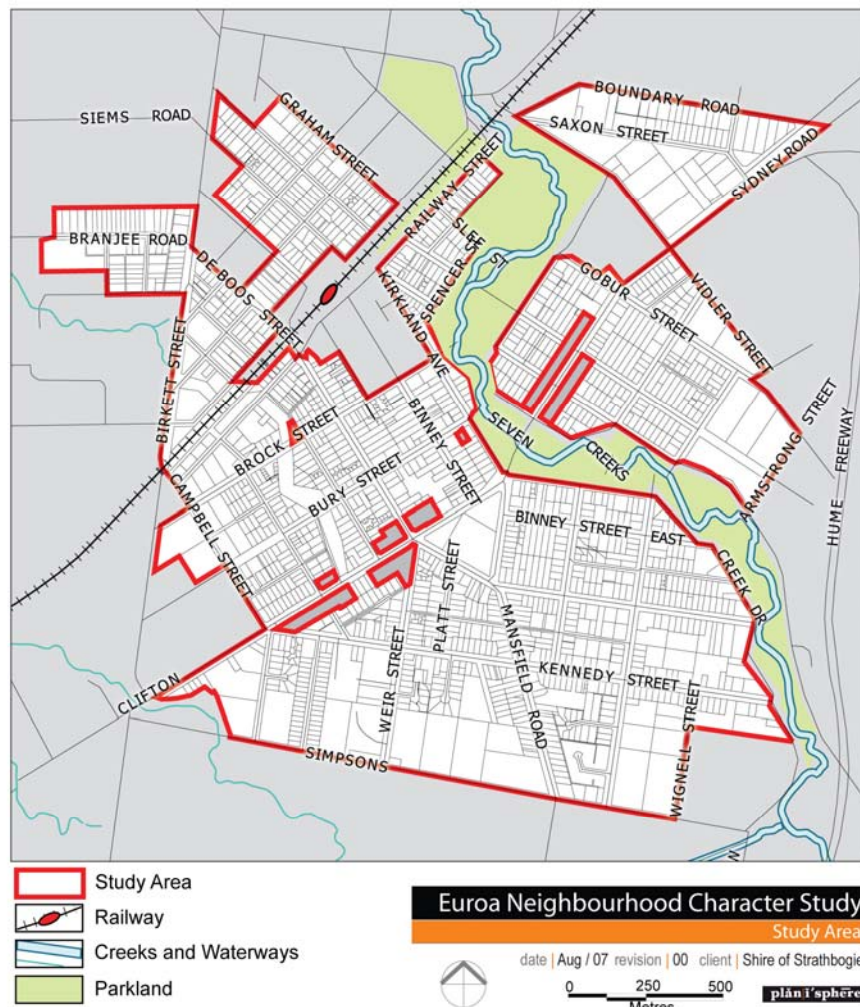
### Euroa

Euroa is the largest of the Strathbogie Shire's towns, with a population of over 2,000 people. It comprises major services including the Council's main office, hospital, nursing home, Euroa Secondary College and two primary schools.

Euroa was founded as a pastoral lease and later became a major thoroughfare on Sydney Road when a crossing of the Seven Creeks was constructed in 1854. Following the construction of the rail link to Melbourne in 1872, many of Euroa's important buildings were constructed around Binney Street. By the 1920s, the commercial centre was built up to its current form, however residential development has gradually continued up to the present day<sup>1</sup>.

### Study Area

The Brief stipulated that the Study should cover the entire urban areas of the townships, excluding the commercial and industrial precincts. The Study Area is shown in the map below:



## 1.2 Methodology

The methodology is based on the tasks included in the Brief, elaborated and modified to include the following four stages:

### Stage 1: Preliminaries

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During this stage, we confirmed Council's requirements, established detailed timelines and commenced background research.

#### Survey and Mapping

Stage 1 also involved the major site survey, which allowed to Study Team to establish the broad character types throughout each township, and identify preliminary precinct boundaries based on these character types.

For each township, an overview survey was immediately followed by a detailed survey. The detailed survey involved documentation of key elements of the existing character of areas.

Every street was surveyed, with relevant information collected, mostly in map form and aggregated to blocks or groups of properties with like characteristics. The survey focused on elements of the environment that should be incorporated into preferred future character-related planning controls, such as building height, site coverage and significant landscapes or trees.

### Stage 2: Precinct Identification and Issues Papers

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#### Precinct Identification and Issues Papers

Following the detailed survey process and community consultation in Stage 1, preliminary precinct boundaries were refined. For each precinct, an Issues Paper was prepared.

Draft Precinct boundaries were precisely mapped for the purpose of consultation, based upon community feedback and the detailed survey data collected. A draft Preferred Character Statement was also prepared for each precinct for the purpose of community consultation.

### Stage 3: Precinct Guidelines and Brochures

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#### Precinct Guidelines

The next stage of the project, following finalisation of the Preferred Character Statements, involved the preparation of Design Guidelines specific to each Precinct. These provide objectives and appropriate design responses for new residential development, including alterations or renovations visible from the street.

The Design Guidelines are framed in direct response to any mismatch identified between the potential changes to a precinct's character and the preferred future character of each precinct. The detailed content includes, for each precinct, Design Guidelines addressing the following Character Elements where relevant to that precinct:

- Existing buildings

- Vegetation
- Siting
- Height and building form
- Materials and design detailing
- Front boundary treatment
- Seven Creeks Interface
- Township edge development
- Natural landscape interface
- Properties adjoining flood and vegetation lines

For each Character Element, an *Objective*, *Design Response* and *Avoid* statement was prepared. Broad summary information was also included where relevant to address public domain treatment.

#### **Stage 4: Implementation Recommendations**

The best statutory implementation mechanisms were developed in consultation with the Council, and where relevant, the Department of Sustainability and Environment. Options that were considered included implementation through Local Policy, Overlays or changes to ResCode Standards.

An important aspect of this task was to apply a *discriminating* approach to statutory implementation, one that considered the full statutory context, including the range of existing policies and controls, and the methods of ensuring that the effectiveness of all tools is maximised.

The Study Team also broadly addressed non-statutory mechanisms such as education and encouragement and, importantly, works by public authorities, in particular road and footpath treatments and street planting usually carried out by the Council.

Monitoring and review of the Study form part of our recommendations. This may include future assessment of housing needs, capacity and take-up and issues of neighbourhood character that need to be re-examined.

## **1.3 Consultation**

The Brief stipulated that community consultation should be an integral part of the project. A communication strategy, focusing on the three elements of communication, participation and consultation was discussed with the Council in the initial stage of the project.

### **Community Workshops**

The first phase of consultation involved a community workshop in Euroa, run by Planisphere.

Questions asked at the workshops were intended to draw out how people feel about their environment and the activities that take place there. The physical aspects of the environment will be explored as well as those elements that give people a sense of community or neighbourhood.

*What do you like about your neighbourhood? What things do you dislike or want to see improved?*

*Where can change occur? What form should it take?*

Implicit in this is the recognition that some aspects are more important than others. The values that are placed upon each element of neighbourhood character identified in different areas will be explored at the workshops.

The aim of this initial discussion is to generate principles for each precinct or sub area. The Neighbourhood Character Study will only address issues relating to the physical characteristics of each place which can be translated into Planning Scheme controls. However, the other issues raised at the workshops which relate to social and community values will be documented for reference by Council in other capacities.

### **Disposable Cameras**

The Disposable Cameras Exercise was carried out in the weeks immediately following the workshop. At the Community Workshop, the Study Team called on volunteers to participate in the Disposable Cameras Exercise. This was a highly effective way of capturing visually the most and least valued aspects of neighbourhood character, as well as suggestions for change.

### **Consultation on Precinct Issues Papers, Brochures and Draft Report**

Throughout Stages 2, 3 and 4, members of the community, stakeholders, Council officers and Councillors were provided with opportunity to comment on various products of the Neighbourhood Character Study.

During Stage 2 and 3, the Precinct Issues Papers and Brochures were distributed to members of the community who had entered their details into the mailing list. This provided opportunity for comment on the precinct descriptions, draft preferred character statements and draft guidelines prepared for each precinct. A summary of the feedback received is included in Appendix 2.

This Draft Report will be posted on the Council website and comment will be invited from the wider community, Council officers and Councillors.



## 2. Policy Context



## 2.1 State Policies

The State Planning Policy Framework (SPPF) comprises a statement of general principles for land use and development planning, and specific policies dealing with sectoral issues. Planning and responsible authorities must take into account and give effect to both the general principles and the specific policies applicable to issues before them to ensure integrated decision-making.

Specifically, the SPPF seeks to:

- Encourage higher density housing development on sites that are well located in relation to activity centres and public transport.
- Ensure housing stock matches changing demand by widening housing choice.
- Ensure planning for growth areas provides for a mix of housing types and higher housing densities around activity centres.
- Ensure an adequate supply of redevelopment opportunities within the established urban area to reduce the pressure for fringe development.
- Ensure all new development appropriately responds to its landscape, valued built form and cultural context.

In Clause 13 *Settlement*, the SPPF states the following issue as being of relevance to neighbourhood character:

*Planning is to anticipate and respond to the needs of existing and future communities through provision of zoned and serviced land for housing, employment, recreation and open space, commercial and community facilities and infrastructure. Planning is to recognise the need for, and as far as practicable contribute towards:*

- *Health and safety.*
- *Diversity of choice.*
- *Adaptation in response to changing technology.*
- *Economic viability.*
- *A high standard of urban design and amenity.*
- *Energy efficiency.*
- *Prevention of pollution to land, water and air.*
- *Protection of environmentally sensitive areas and natural resources.*
- *Accessibility.*
- *Land use and transport integration.*

Under the Settlement section, Clause 14.01 Planning for Urban Settlement, one of the objectives is:

*To facilitate the orderly development of urban areas.*

At Clause 14.01-2 General Implementation the SPPF states that:

*In planning for urban growth, planning authorities should encourage consolidation of existing urban areas while respecting neighbourhood character.*

Under the Housing section, the objectives in relation to medium density housing as outlined in Clause 16.02-1 are:

*To encourage the development of well-designed medium-density housing which:*

- *Respects the neighbourhood character.*
- *Improves housing choice.*
- *Makes better use of existing infrastructure.*
- *Improves energy efficiency of housing.*

Clause 19.03 of the SPPF includes the following objectives in relation to Design and Built Form:

*To achieve high quality urban design and architecture that:*

- *Reflects the particular characteristics, aspirations and cultural identity of the community.*
- *Enhances liveability, diversity, amenity and safety of the public realm.*
- *Promotes attractiveness of towns and cities within the broader strategic contexts.*

Clause 19.03-2 General Implementation states that:

*Development should achieve architectural and urban design outcomes that contribute positively to local urban character and enhance the public realm while minimising detrimental impact on neighbouring properties.*

## 2.2 Council Policies

There are parts of the Strathbogie Planning Scheme that have relevance for the Neighbourhood Character Study. A description of each policy and its implications are as follows:

### 2.2.1 Municipal Strategic Statement

The Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) sets the local policy context of the Strathbogie Planning Scheme. It is a concise statement of the key strategic planning, land use and development objectives for the municipality and the strategies and actions for achieving the objectives.

#### **Clause 21.03 Objectives – Strategies – Implementation**

Clause 21.03 provides direction under the three different themes of Settlement, Environment and Economic Development. Under Settlement, the MSS states Council's aims to 'ensure that future residential growth and development is accommodated for in a planned manner'. Neighbourhood character and acknowledgement of built and cultural heritage are identified as common issues that need to be addressed within the four major townships of the Shire (Euroa, Nagambie, Avenel and Violet Town).

The MSS encourages consolidation of residential development in existing urban centres, new development that provides for a high quality lot layout and diversity of sizes and housing options to maintain a diverse population mix within the Shire. One of the key Settlement Strategies and implementation measures is the identification of neighbourhood character of the four main townships.

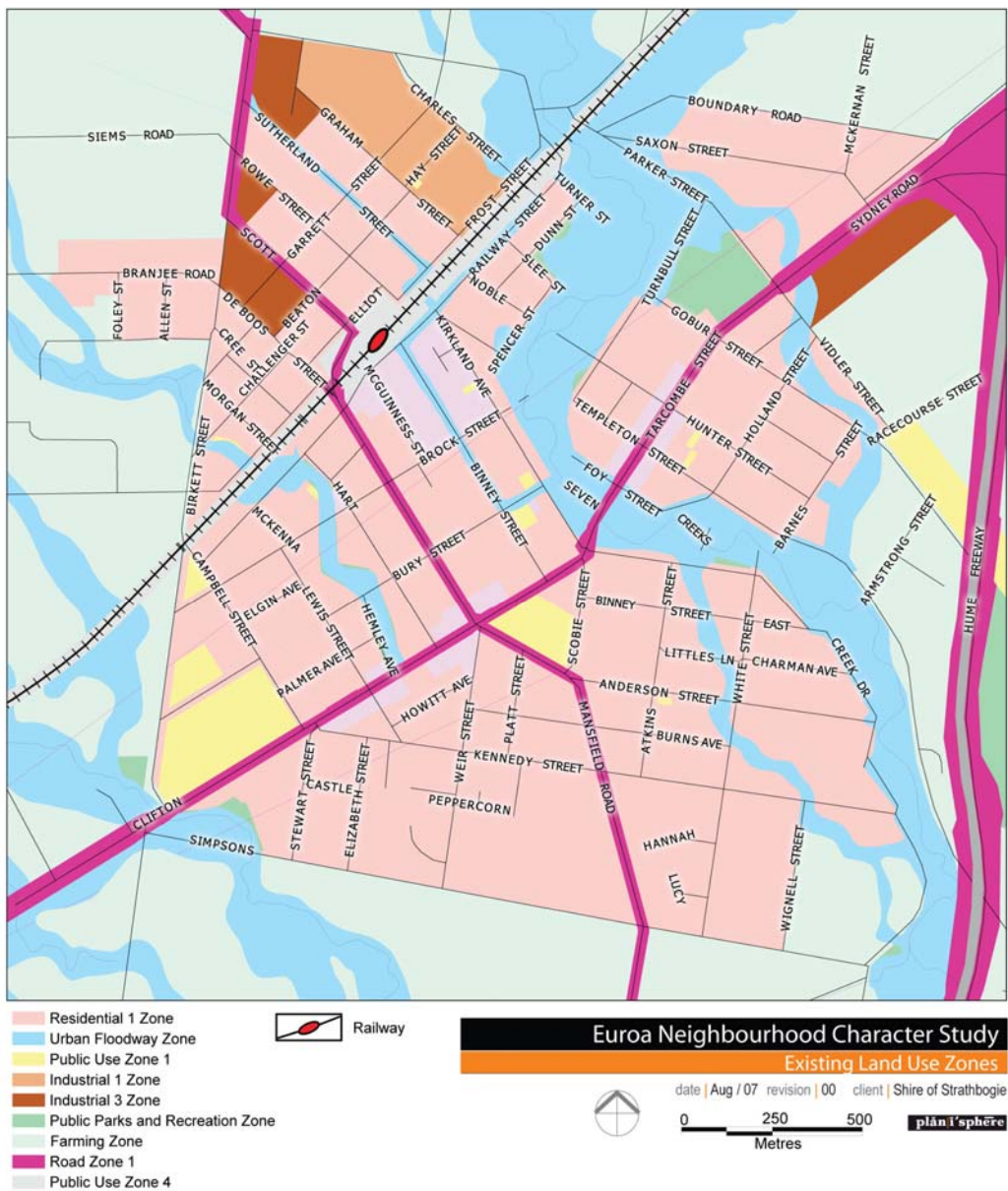
Structure Plans for the four major townships within the Shire are also included under Clause 21.03 of the MSS. The Euroa Structure Plan provides direction for some of the key land uses, transportation routes, buildings of significance and town entrances. It identifies areas that could be investigated in the future for residential growth when required. Most of these areas are included within the Neighbourhood Character Study boundary.

## 2.2.2 Local Planning Policies

### Clause 22.03 Natural Landscape Protection

The Natural Landscape Protection Policy applies to all applications for new buildings and extensions to existing buildings within the Shire. The policy seeks to protect the natural landscape, and in particular areas of environmental and visual significance, from inappropriate development and also provides a basis and guideline for the sympathetic external treatment of buildings in their context. Clause 22.03 provides policy statements for the siting and design of buildings and the use of building materials and finishes. It also states that mature vegetation which provides a backdrop for any development must not be removed or lopped.

## 2.2.3 Zones and Overlays



## Residential 1 Zone

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The Residential 1 Zone (R1Z) applies to the majority of the Study Area. The purposes of the R1Z are to:

- *provide for residential development at a range of densities with a variety of dwellings to meet the housing needs of all households.*
- *encourage residential development that respects the neighbourhood character.*
- *In appropriate locations, allow educational, recreational, religious, community and a limited range of other non-residential uses to serve local community needs.*

The R1Z requires that new developments meet the requirements of either Clause 54 (one dwelling on a lot) or Clause 55 (two or more dwellings on a lot).

## Urban Floodway Zone

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The Urban Floodway Zone (UFZ) applies to some limited residential lots throughout Euroa. The purposes of the UFZ are to:

- *identify waterways, major floodpaths, drainage depressions and high hazard areas within urban areas which have the greatest risk and frequency of being affected by flooding.*
- *ensure that any development maintains the free passage and temporary storage of floodwater, minimises flood damage and is compatible with flood hazard, local drainage conditions and the minimisation of soil erosion, sedimentation and silting.*
- *reflect any declarations under Division 4 of Part 10 of the Water Act, 1989.*
- *protect water quality and waterways as natural resources in accordance with the provisions of relevant State Environment Protection Policies, and particularly in accordance with Clauses 33 and 35 of the State Environment Protection Policy (Waters of Victoria).*

A permit is required to construct a building or construct or carry out works, and to subdivide land.

## Land Subject to Inundation Overlay and Floodway Overlay

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The Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO) applies to almost the entire residential area of Euroa. The purpose of the LSIO is to, among other things, identify land in a flood storage or fringe area affected by the 1 in 100 year flood, or any other are determined by the floodplain management authority. The Floodway Overlay (FO) applies to selected residential areas within Euroa. The purpose of the FO is to, among other things, identify waterways, major floodpaths, drainage depressions and high hazard areas which have the greatest risk and frequency of being affected by flooding. Both overlays seek to ensure that development maintains the free passage and temporary storage of floodwaters and minimises the damage caused by flooding.

## 2.2.4 Other Relevant Council Policies

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### Strathbogie Urban Design Framework, 2003

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The Strathbogie Urban Design Framework provides an Urban Design Framework (UDF) for each of the major towns within the Shire: Euroa, Nagambie, Avenel, and Violet Town. The purposes of the UDF for each township are to:

- Assist with the long-term sustainability of the township;
- Identify areas of significance;
- Provide and clarify urban design visions and strategic directions;
- Identify preferred land use and development options;
- Identify existing building or features in strategically important locations;
- Identify improvements to the visual quality of town entrances and thoroughfares;
- Identify improvements to vehicular and pedestrian routes and linkages; and
- Identify improvements to the town's functions and to strengthen the role of the township within the regional context.

## **Euroa**

The UDF briefly describes the history of Euroa, stating that it was founded as a pastoral lease and later became a major thoroughfare on Sydney Road when a crossing of the Seven Creeks was constructed in 1854. Following the construction of the rail link to Melbourne in 1872, many of Euroa's important buildings were constructed around Binney Street. By the 1920s, the commercial centre was built up to its current form, however residential development has gradually continued up to the present day. In 1996, the township had a population of 2,697, a decline of 0.5 per cent since 1991. The population of the township is expected to remain relatively stable within the foreseeable future.

The UDF identifies the main boundaries of the township (Birkett Street, the Hume Freeway, Boundary Road North and Boundary Road South). The town plan is best described as a square that is broken up by diagonals formed by the Old Hume Highway, the North Eastern Railway, the Shepparton-Euroa-Mansfield Road and the Seven Creeks Corridor. The railway line and the Seven Creeks corridor are identified as visual and physical barriers within the township. Seven Creeks is also highlighted as a generous spine of attractive open space. Although the topography of Euroa is predominantly flat, there are internal vistas and short-range views along streets and roads, with the principal long-range view gained from the eastern part of the township across to Balmattum Hill.


### Implications for the Neighbourhood Character Study

The UDF sets out a framework for Euroa, which provides direction under the headings of Land Use, Urban Design and Landscape, and Transport Infrastructure. Of particular importance to the Neighbourhood Character Study are the recommendations provided under Land Use. According to the UDF, there is ample residential land within the identified town boundaries to cope with residential development demand. Land already subdivided for housing and zoned Residential 1 (R1Z) could accommodate about 200 dwellings at medium density, while R1Z areas un-subdivided could yield 375-400 lots. Effectively half the number of dwellings counted in the 1996 census (1,304) could be added to the township within the existing boundaries. Any further expansion outside the existing boundaries could potentially be accommodated west of Birkett Street, between Siems and Drysdale Roads, should the need occur in the future.

Under Urban Design and Landscape, the UDF recommends several improvements to landscaping around the main gateways to the township. The UDF focuses on the Mansfield Road entry to Euroa, the northern end of Birkett Street, and the north-east side of Sydney Road.

Under Transport Infrastructure a number of recommendations are made, including the development of a streetscape improvement scheme for the Old Hume Highway, as well as removal of the ramp which connects Railway Street with the overpass.

The UDF states that this would result in improved safety, as well as the opportunity for parking improvements and a small open space.



### 3. What is Neighbourhood Character?

## 3.1 Neighbourhood Character Defined

The concept of Neighbourhood Character, its components and its value has been widely discussed and debated over the last ten years in the planning of Melbourne's suburbs. It has been demonstrated well that neighbourhood character is something that can have a range of meanings for different people or situations and is difficult to define. In the neighbourhood character studies that Planisphere has undertaken, we have attempted to arrive at a definition of neighbourhood character to form the basis of our study methodology. This understanding of what constitutes neighbourhood character has been developed over the course of many studies and collaboration with local communities, Councils and DSE/DPCD.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with a clear understanding of Neighbourhood Character: what does it mean; how it is practically administered within the statutory framework; what are the principles of Neighbourhood Character; and what are Neighbourhood Character typologies?

### What is Neighbourhood Character?

In December 2001 the former Department of Infrastructure published a General Practice Note titled 'Understanding Neighbourhood Character'. The Note contains useful information, however it fails to provide a single, all-encompassing and concise definition of neighbourhood character. Perhaps the most succinct definition is 'neighbourhood character is essentially the combination of the public and private realms'. The document suggests a number of factors as relevant, which to the reader may appear to obscure, rather than illuminate, the essence of neighbourhood character. Yet there have been useful previous statements on this subject, either auspiced by the former Department of Infrastructure, or produced by independent panels.

A more succinct and encompassing definition was included in the Draft Practice Note on Neighbourhood Character published in June 2000 as part of the first draft of ResCode:

*Neighbourhood character is the interplay of natural, built social, cultural and economic conditions that make one place different from another.*

This definition is helpful, but it has a number of weaknesses:

- The focus does not remain on the meaning of neighbourhood character that is reflected in tools provided in the Victoria Planning Provisions (VPPs).
- The adjective 'qualitative' is excluded when using the term 'interplay'.
- The reference to 'combination of the public and private realms', which is in the current Practice Note, is not included.

It is true that people attribute widely differing meanings to the term 'neighbourhood character'. For many, character is about the people who live in the area; for others it is broad attributes of the area, such as closeness to shops or transport, how much open space or traffic there is. Because this character study has been commissioned to provide planning scheme policies and controls, it needs to be focussed on the physical planning outcomes that are capable of being influenced by planning scheme tools. Fundamentally we are aiming to answer the question: how do buildings and landscape interact? Built form, vegetation and topographical characteristics are the physical manifestation of neighbourhood character addressed in the VPPs. The former Good Design Guide used these terms in defining neighbourhood character.



The term 'interplay' in the former Practice Note comes from the 1998 Advisory Committee report on the City of Monash neighbourhood character 'local variations' amendment. Monash have Amended their Scheme to include the Monash Neighbourhood Character study, and have also made changes to the Schedule of the Residential 1 Zone.

The Monash report coined the phrase 'qualitative interplay'. Qualitative interplay refers to the way that the main distinctive components of an area's character combine to produce a particular sense of place. This concept carries important implications:

- Neighbourhood character needs to be described in a written character statement; it is insufficient to simply produce a catalogue or list of characteristics.
- Character statements must be skilfully written to describe the synthesis of qualities that make one area distinct from another.
- Character statements should make clear which characteristics are most important, and the manner in which they relate to each other.

The term 'qualitative interplay' transcends 'private and public domains', as the Monash report emphasises. The character of buildings and their grounds cannot be divorced from the character of the street scene in which they sit. For example, in the inner suburbs of Melbourne buildings often present as solid 'walls' to the street, producing a hard, urban character. In some landscape-dominated areas on the urban fringe, natural bush vegetation flows across private property and public domain alike, only stopping at the edge of the roadway. Clearing all the trees on a private allotment would completely change the character of this type of area. So would the construction of kerb, channel and footpath, or planting of street trees of an incompatible species or in a formal pattern.

Therefore, in summary, neighbourhood character is a synthesis of public and private domain characteristics, as listed in the provisions of ResCode. It is the qualitative interplay between those characteristics that make a place, town or neighbourhood distinctive. Some of these characteristics are more important than others in creating a distinctive character.

Surveying all characteristics, then listing the 'key' characteristics, is a useful analytical tool. However a written statement that explains the interplay of the character components is necessary to properly describe, assess and evaluate the character of a particular area. This is the theoretical and statutory basis for the Preferred Character Statements that have been drafted for each precinct within the study area (as detailed in section 5).

The following definition of neighbourhood character, used by a former Department of Infrastructure working party into neighbourhood character that met in late 1999, seems to us to accommodate all of these requirements. It forms the basis of the work undertaken in this Neighbourhood Character Study :

*Neighbourhood character is the qualitative interplay of built form, vegetation and topographic characteristics, in both the private and public domains, that make one place different from another.*

### **Neighbourhood Character Elements**

In many areas, building type, era and spacing, the proportions and combined appearance of the 'walls' and 'floor' of the street space, and the amount and type of vegetation, are the key determinants of the area's character. How the buildings 'sit' in their landscape is critical. Vegetation includes street trees, front garden vegetation, and canopy trees in rear yards and public reserves forming a backdrop.

Critical elements of the 'walls' and 'floor' of the street space are the height, permeability and profile of the 'walls': the depth of front setbacks; type of garden (eg lawn and roses, shrubs and trees, or an apparent continuation of the street space planting); presence and permeability of a front fence; and the formality (or otherwise) of the street space.

Other character components can include traffic, noise, type of activity, and demographic characteristics. Members of the public often cite these as important characteristics of their neighbourhood. People often raise amenity issues such as access to open space in character consultation sessions. All of these can be argued to be an essential part of an area's character.

Focussing on planning scheme implementation options

The important question in each case is: *how relevant is this to the task in hand?* In preparing policy and controls for implementation through the planning scheme, then the focus of the study needs to be on elements that are mentioned in either ResCode provisions or overlay controls and can therefore be addressed and influenced by the appropriate statutory tools. Many neighbourhood character elements can be addressed through other mechanisms such as social development strategies or public awareness campaigns that are outside the scope of planning schemes.

### **Neighbourhood Character is Not**

The differentiation between different types of character area is not simply a question of architectural style or era of development. Neighbourhood character is founded on the layout and form of the areas, and the way that the built form interacts with and relates to the landscape. These factors should be the basis for the application of neighbourhood character policies. Neighbourhood character is not about the imposition of design styles. Rather it should be about recognising the distinctive characteristics of different urban forms, and their relationship to topography and vegetation. Getting this right is the best way of maintaining and enhancing the sense of place of the municipality's residential areas.

Nor is neighbourhood character about the amenity of adjoining properties or dwelling densities as such, although it has implications for both of these issues. In practical terms it does not dictate planning controls for either. For example, the recommended guidelines contained in the area papers with regard to spaciousness between dwellings may require that new buildings should be setback from both side boundaries. This may reduce the amount or number of buildings that can be accommodated on a site, and may also reduce potential amenity impacts from overlooking and overshadowing of adjoining properties. Front setback controls may also have a similar effect in some instances. These are secondary outcomes of the neighbourhood character guidelines, and while not the primary intent, may reduce community concerns about other aspects of new development.

Nor is character about density controls. ResCode makes no provision for density controls, and it is not considered that a policy which proposed density maximums or medium density housing saturation levels, would be supported by the Department of Sustainability and Environment. ResCode has more extensive provisions relating to amenity issues and it is likely that once these provisions become more widely implemented many amenity concerns will be reduced.

## 3.2 Neighbourhood Character Principles

The following principles of neighbourhood character were prepared by a former Department of Infrastructure working party into neighbourhood character that met in late 1999. They were included in the Draft Practice Note on Neighbourhood Character published in June 2000 as part of the first draft of ResCode. These form the basis of the process and content of the work undertaken by Planisphere for Neighbourhood Character Studies. The principles are:

### Community Values

*The values of the local community are part of determining the appropriate response to neighbourhood character. Planning controls that aim to protect, change or improve character must draw on professional and community views.*

The community should be involved in identifying the neighbourhood character measures appropriate to their area. Professionals assist in developing and translating these ideas into techniques to manage design.

### Physical Focus

*Character, in its broadest sense, can include environmental, social and economic factors, but the planning system is concerned with managing the physical evidence of character and related social impacts.*

The planning system is primarily focussed on achieving a wide range of objectives through the physical environment. Character is not concerned only with the private domain, as much of neighbourhood character is manifested in the public street space. However, some character issues are related to social outcomes or impacts. For example, the height of front fences is a town planning issue with character implications that may be physical (does a high fence contribute positively to the 'look' of the area?) and social (how do high fences affect social interaction?).

### Special Qualities of an Area

*All areas have a character that can be described, evaluated and, in many cases, improved. In some areas protection of particular qualities may be warranted; but there is no distinction between areas of special character and 'the rest'.*

The aim in placing greater priority on character is to improve the quality of the environment throughout Victoria's residential areas, not just in retaining or improving a few select 'special' areas that already have high amenity values. For this reason, a neighbourhood character is equally relevant everywhere. Planning controls should aim to protect identified distinctive and valued elements.

### Interaction between Elements of Character

*Character is about the interrelationships between various elements of an area, and so cannot be described or evaluated by considering individual elements in isolation.*

Design responses need to consider the whole picture of a neighbourhood, rather than focussing upon one or two elements of the building form or siting.

### Neighbourhood Character and Other Planning Policies

*State and Council policies provide the rationale for decisions about whether to protect, change or improve the neighbourhood character of an area. Area-specific controls should be developed in the light of these strategic directions.*

A Council's Municipal Strategic Statement will provide guidance about priorities in any particular area. Local housing issues and other Melbourne 2030 directions such as focusing higher density development around activity centres will be important considerations.

### **Preferred Character**

*Neighbourhood character descriptions and evaluations should focus on the preferred character of an area.*

Descriptions of existing characteristics are an important part of the process of identifying the 'starting point', but the desired character needs to be evaluated and considered in the context of other policy priorities. It may be that some areas should be encouraged to develop a new character, just as there may be some areas where critical elements need to be protected or reflected in all new development. The concept of preferred character is discussed in detail in section 5.1.

### **Neighbourhood Character Typologies**

*There are a limited number of consistent precinct types that can be defined, and frequently appropriate policy responses can be formulated without the need for expensive studies.*

The 'Responding to Neighbourhood Character' ResCode Practice Note has adopted this approach in presenting possible policy responses to three typical residential character types. This is not to say that detailed analysis can be completely avoided, but much can be gained from shared understandings. Many councils have undertaken very detailed character studies and this information may supplement the examples provided.

### **Site Analysis**

*A site analysis, specifically from the neighbourhood character perspective, is necessary whether or not a detailed character study has been undertaken.*

A site analysis is a mandatory requirement of ResCode.

### **Character and Heritage**

*Character and heritage share many attributes, but there are important differences between the two concepts. Community values are a key justification for the protection of neighbourhood character. Policies to transform character may be appropriate in some areas.*

Character studies evaluate the interplay of built form, vegetation and topographical qualities, with reference to styles and ages where relevant, whereas heritage studies evaluate cultural heritage significance, with some reference to built form, vegetation and topographical qualities. Heritage studies designate levels of significance for sites or precincts by assessment against established criteria and by way of comparison with other heritage places. The basis of neighbourhood character is that every place has character regardless of its age or appearance and community feedback is an important means by which the value of this character can be understood. (See below for further discussion.)

### **Character and Amenity**

*The difference between neighbourhood character and amenity must be recognised.*

Character and amenity are terms often used interchangeably, but in ResCode factors like visual and acoustic privacy and overshadowing should continue to be treated as issues separate to neighbourhood character.

### 3.3 Neighbourhood Character Types

#### Four Neighbourhood Character Types of Victoria

Neighbourhood character is a fundamental of sense of place in residential communities. While many councils have undertaken neighbourhood character studies, little or no attempt has been made to generalise the findings of these studies into a typology of neighbourhood character types. Broadly speaking, the following neighbourhood character types have been identified across Victoria:

Built Form / Landscape Relationship	Character Type
Built form dominated residential areas	'Inner Urban'
Spacious residential areas in a garden setting (formal street pattern, generally modified grid)	'Garden Suburban'
Spacious residential areas in a garden setting (informal, generally curving street pattern with courts/cul-de-sacs)	'Garden Court'
Landscape dominated residential areas	'Bush Suburban'

Table 3: Victorian Neighbourhood Types

These four broad categories illustrate the four main types of residential areas that exist in Victoria, from an urban design perspective. The differentiation between these types is NOT based on architectural style or era of development. It is founded on the layout and form of the areas, and the way that the built form interacts with and relates to the landscape. These factors should be the basis for the application of neighbourhood character policies. Neighbourhood character is NOT about the imposition of design styles. Rather it should be about recognising the distinctive characteristics of different urban forms, and their relationship to topography and vegetation. Getting this right is the best way of maintaining and enhancing the sense of place of the state's residential areas.

An initial version of these character types, prepared by Planisphere, was included in the Draft Practice Note on Neighbourhood Character published in June 2000 as part of the first draft of ResCode. Although this Practice Note has since been superseded, it provided some useful principles about the nature of neighbourhood character. The upgraded version of the character types shown here is included in *Sense of Place: urban design principles for the Metropolitan Strategy*, a technical report on urban design prepared by Planisphere and published in October 2002 as part of the Metropolitan Strategy.

#### Local Neighbourhood Character Types

In establishing a system of neighbourhood character description for a particular place, these broad level definitions are a useful starting point, from which further detailed classification can follow. They form the basis for definition of local character types. In undertaking neighbourhood character studies, Planisphere first establish a municipal-wide framework of broad character types. Within these broad areas further, finer-grained definition of character follows with the identification of precincts.

Often neighbourhood character studies identify wide variations within these broad character types, and these are important in differentiating the character of one neighbourhood from another, and in creating or strengthening sense of place.



## 4. Neighbourhood Character in Euroa

## 4.1 Survey

During the initial stage of the project, a survey was undertaken to firstly determine what character types were evident throughout residential areas of the township, secondly to determine where precinct boundaries may be drawn, and finally to take note of the different character elements on a street-by-street basis.

The following character elements were noted throughout the survey:

- Landscape Setting
- Vegetation
- Building Form (including Roof form)
- Siting including Building Spacing and Setbacks
- Design Detail and Finishes
- Building materials and colours
- Frontage Treatment
- Façade Treatment
- Car Parking and Vehicular Access

## 4.2 Community Values

In order to gain an understanding of what the community values in Euroa, a public workshop was undertaken and a disposable cameras exercise was carried out. The workshop and the Disposable Cameras Exercise proved to be very useful in identifying what it is that the community values about different aspects of neighbourhood character in the township. Below the outcomes of these exercises are summarised.

### Community Workshop

At the Community Workshop, participants were asked to divide into groups and were asked the following three questions:

1. What do you *like* about your neighbourhood?
2. What do you *dislike* or want to see improved?
3. Where can *change* occur? What form should it take?

Useful information was gathered about local community values. This information is summarised in the table below.

### Summary of Euroa Community Workshop Comments

Likes	Dislikes	Where change could occur
Large lot sizes	Un-maintained buildings	Trees could be used to screen eyesores
Spaciousness	Poor drainage and impervious surfaces	More native trees could be planted in the private and public domain

Likes	Dislikes	Where change could occur
Low-scale buildings	Uncontrolled new development	The integrity of older buildings could be maintained
Views to trees and hills	Inappropriate street trees	Allotment sizes could be larger
Open brick drains	Lack of native vegetation	
Soaks		
Seven Creeks and parkland		
Older, historical buildings		

### **Disposable Cameras Exercise**

The purpose of the Disposable Cameras Exercise was to provide an insight into the local community's values in relation to neighbourhood character. Seven disposable cameras were distributed to residents at the Community Workshop, and an additional three participants submitted digital images.

A photographic survey form accompanied the disposable cameras so that participants could write explanatory notes to accompany the photos. As part of the exercise, participants were asked to take photographs of places or things in their neighbourhood that they either liked or disliked and to explain why. They were also asked to include three photographs that demonstrated each of the following:

- A feature, place or view that depicts the special character of their neighbourhood. (A)
- A photo of an aspect of their neighbourhood that they think needs improving. (B)
- A photo of a building or place in their neighbourhood that is a good example of new development. (C)

Following is a summary of the findings from the Disposable Cameras Exercise.

#### **Photos of places or things that participants like**

Many common themes emerged through photographs taken of places or things that participants like about the character of Euroa. There was an overwhelming response in the number of photographs taken under this category.

In particular, the natural and rural aspects of the township were recurrent features of photos under this category. Participants responded that they felt strongly about the influence that Seven Creeks and the adjoining parkland has on the character of the township. Photographs of streetscape features such as soaks, waterholes, open drains and wide grass verges were also frequently represented in pictures of things that participants like about their neighbourhoods. Large native trees were also a prominent feature under this category, and many comments were made about the importance of retaining mature trees in new development.

Balmattum Hill was frequently cited in photographs as an important backdrop in views throughout the township and a distinguishing landscape feature.

In terms of the built form, participants often commented that smaller houses on larger lots were more suited to the character of the township. While many also remarked that they like houses that are designed to reflect the styles of those surrounding them, there was also an appreciation for the diversity of dwelling styles apparent in



some streets. Residents also stated that they like the well maintained historical dwellings that play an important role in the character of the township.

Sample Photos and comments



“New houses that reflect the styles of those surrounding it.”



“Euroa has many houses that have been carefully and sensitively restored by their owners.”



“The rural aspect of Euroa.”



“Open drains and grass verges that... are more in keeping with the rural feel of the township.”



“View of Balmattum Hill from Anderson Street.”

**Photos of places or things that participants dislike**

Although many photographs were received in response to things that participants dislike about the character of their neighbourhood, only a limited number of themes emerged and it appeared that many residents were in general agreement about what they dislike.

Although participants had many positive things to say about new developments and subdivisions within the township, some negative themes emerged, including the lack of landscaping in gardens and the need to encourage more indigenous species. Fencing used in new developments was highlighted as being either inappropriate or unnecessary, and there were some comments related to dwellings being too large for the lot sizes.

Several individual dwellings were also singled out as examples of inappropriate in terms of their character due to their siting and design, use of materials and general incongruence with surrounding dwellings.

Views to the railway overpass were frequently emphasised as a negative feature of the character of some parts of the township.

Sample Photos and comments



“The Railway Overpass is ugly and poorly maintained”



There are a lack of gardens in new development. Owners should be encouraged to plant indigenous species in keeping with the area.



“New development land subdivision.”



“Trees that are too large and unsuitable for the urban environment.”

### Photos depicting the special character of Euroa’s neighbourhoods (A)

The special character of Euroa’s neighbourhoods was represented in photos in a range of forms. Naturally, many of the places or things that participants like about their neighbourhoods were also things that they thought made their neighbourhood special.

Again, common themes included features such as open drains, soaks, waterholes and wide grass verges, the impact of Seven Creeks on the character of the township, and the large trees that feature throughout residential areas. Photos taken under this category were mostly focused away from the built form of the township.

#### Sample Photos and comments



“Seven Creeks Park is traditionally associated with Euroa as a visitor / recreational precinct. Beautiful creek, large trees winding through the town”.



“Space and respect for magnificent trees.”

### Photos of aspects of Euroa’s neighbourhoods that need improvement (B)

Aspects of the township’s character that participants felt needed improvement were generally underrepresented in photos taken throughout the exercise.

Where participants responded under this category, photos generally focused on the maintenance of roadside verges and natural features. One participant also mentioned that there were some examples of historical houses left in disrepair, and that owners could be encouraged to sensitively restore older dwellings. A couple of comments were also made about vacant commercial buildings outside residential areas that are run-down. Although not strictly relevant to neighbourhood character, views to buildings such as these can impact on the character of residential areas. Another reference was made to the need to improve the overall standard of design in new developments, in particular through the use of appropriate fencing.

### Photos of buildings or places that are good examples of new development in Euroa (C)

Many participants responded positively to new or recent subdivisions and cited some aspects of them as good examples of new development. The Hill Views Estate in particular was mentioned for its retention of large native trees and the creation of larger lot sizes. Some photos were received of infill housing that participants felt responded particularly well to the existing dwellings within the street.

## Sample Photos and comments



The Hill View Estate has "large gums that have been retained, large blocks, underground services and hill views".

## 4.3 The Character of Euroa

### Distinctive Qualities of Euroa

Euroa has many unique and distinctive qualities that contribute to its neighbourhood character. Through field surveys and information gathered during consultation, the Study Team was able to gain an understanding of the distinctive neighbourhood character qualities that separate Euroa apart from other places in Victoria. Some of these character elements exist in the private realm while others are visible only in the public domain.

The character precincts that were arrived at during the initial stages of the Study reveal distinct differences between the precincts. Two very distinctive influences on different areas within the township include the historic element of Euroa, and the natural and rural landscapes which are evident from within and around Euroa. These two major influences are manifested through character elements such as the presence of historic buildings, street layout and streetscape treatments. These are further described throughout the following paragraphs.

Vegetation and landscaping are key character elements throughout all areas of the township. The older parts of Euroa contain well-maintained gardens consisting of predominantly exotic species, while properties towards the edge of the township are surrounded by less formal gardens which contain predominantly native vegetation that often flows across the streetscapes and surrounding landscapes. In the public domain streetscape vegetation is a very important factor in terms of neighbourhood character. The established avenues of trees that can be found closer to the town centre create a leafy, formal atmosphere which sets apart these streets from others. In other areas of the township scattered roadside vegetation results in a more informal atmosphere with vegetation that flows across the private and public domains.

Local landmarks and views to landscape features have an important impact on the character of streets. Landmarks closer to the town centre relate more to the built form and include historic civic buildings and churches, while further away from the town centre, views to natural and rural landscapes such as Balmattum Hill and farming land tend to have more of an influence on neighbourhood character. Seven Creeks, which is highly valued by the community, winds through the township and has an enormous influence on those streets that surround it.

Streetscape treatments and natural landscape features that have been retained within streetscapes are important features of Euroa. Swale drains and wide nature strips with open brick channelling are featured along a number of the township's streets and have a unique impact on streetscapes. These features also indicate the regional location of the township. Soaks are also a frequent feature of streetscapes

and serve as a reminder of the presence of larger water features and the location of the township on floodplains.

Euroa accommodates a very diverse housing stock, with dwellings from across many eras. These range from grand historic homes which date back to the original period of settlement, to the modest homes of the post-war era, to current contemporary styles. All of these dwelling styles contribute to the character of their neighbourhoods in some way, and often where a particular era of housing dominates an area, landscaping patterns and general streetscape treatments will reflect those typical of that period in time.

## **Character Precincts**

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Following the field surveys, individual precincts were identified. It is important to note that *preferred* character is the main criterion for precinct delineation. Character studies that attempt to delineate every variation in *current* characteristics often produce very large numbers of areas. While this approach might have some benefits in achieving a finer grain of information, it also may result in an overload of information that relates to segmented areas and this often tends to not be responsive to the community's aspirations for their area as whole.

### **Precincts and Preferred Character**

Furthermore, preferred character should be a concept that provides a broad direction rather than prescriptive detail. Achieving an uninterrupted flow of landscape and vegetation across private and public domain might be the main aim of a preferred character statement. From this aim, numbers of policies and guidelines are derived. These are cognisant of the existing situation with boundary treatments, site coverage etc, but fine grain local variations in these characteristics today should not preclude the setting of an aim to create, in the future, a consistent character across a broader area. Town planning is, after all, about creating desired futures. Town planning policy should be arrived at after considering existing conditions. It should not necessarily be determined by them.

### **Precincts and Neighbourhood and Site Description**

ResCode provides for a process of neighbourhood and site description that encompasses an assessment of neighbourhood character. The preparation of a character study does not remove the need for a site assessment. Local conditions and the specific circumstances need to be assessed and considered alongside the preferred character for the area. They may also change over time. It is not necessary for a character study to provide a detailed brief for every site. The character study should provide the broad future direction, complemented by the neighbourhood and site description, which assesses detailed local conditions.

### **Precinct Delineation**

Character area delineation is arrived at by considering a number of important factors: preferred character, similarity of characteristics and threats, and useability of the precinct definition. Some emphasis is placed on the detailed survey findings, but because the basis of delineation is preferred character, all the other factors may also be relevant. The actual boundaries between precincts are often well defined by the characteristics, and thus preferred character of an area. When this clear delineation occurs, there is always a physical separator such as a road or railway between areas. Where the characteristics change more gradually across an area, for example due to sporadic development or a gradual thinning of the tree canopy, a boundary must nevertheless be determined for reasons of useability. In these instances a road

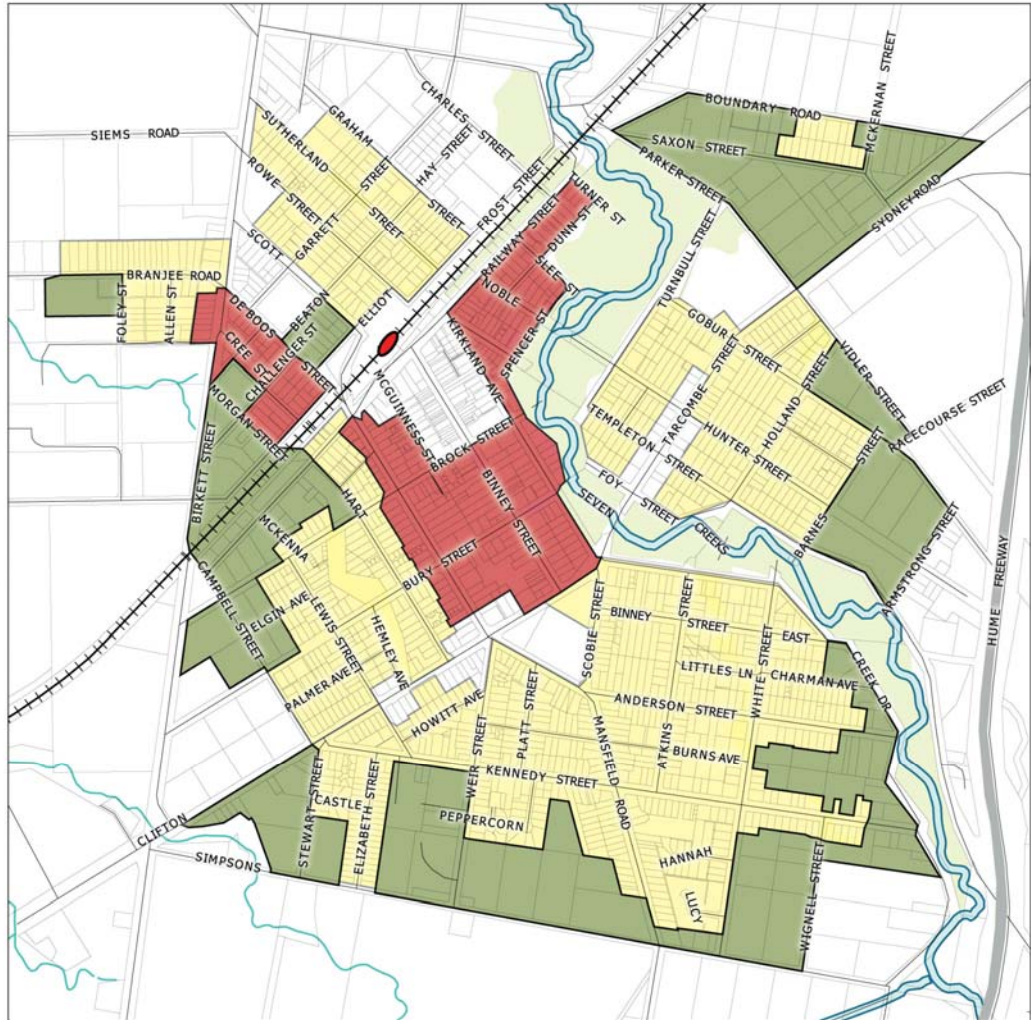
or other obvious physical element is used to provide an easily identifiable boundary between precincts.

### **Interface Issues**

There are three situations where interface issues are of importance. The first relates to the immediate interface between two adjoining precincts. Precincts are usually delineated using identifiable physical elements such as roads. In many cases, however, the actual boundary may be slightly blurred such that the characteristics of the adjoining precinct may also apply to the land in question. Where this occurs, the adjoining precinct guidelines should be taken into account in the assessment of proposals on land adjoining another precinct. The second occasion where interface issues are of importance is in specific situations where a residential area adjoins an area outside the study boundaries. This includes public reserves, institutions, the railway or freeway corridors and commercial or industrial areas. Thirdly, the style and era of development within Heritage Overlay areas often has an influence upon the existing and preferred future character of adjoining neighbourhoods. In most cases it will be necessary for new development to pay particular attention to building and siting requirements to ensure that it is respectful of the heritage significance of the adjacent overlay area.



## Precinct Map



- Old Township Precinct
- Interwar / Postwar Mix Precinct
- Rural Interface / Future Residential Precinct
- Non-residential Zoned Land
- Railway
- Creeks and Waterways
- Seven Creeks Parkland

**Euroa Neighbourhood Character Study**  
Precinct Boundaries

date | dec / 07    revision | 00    client | Shire of Strathbogie



## 5. Character Directions for Euroa

## 5.1 Preferred Character

With the increasing emphasis of neighbourhood character theory on preferred character, it is necessary to develop a logical way to arrive at a preferred character statement. Without an explicit emphasis on preferred character, character studies tend to dwell on existing characteristics. Most of the survey work of a character study, and most of the discussions in the initial stages of the project, focus exclusively on present characteristics. Also, community members tend to be sceptical and guarded when the issue of a preferred future character is placed on the agenda. Many respond that they want 'no change', or that they have no desire to impose their view of a preferred character on others. A sound, simple process is needed to 'unlock' this subject, one that enables the participants to see the sense and logic of it. It is also important for a future Planning Panel to be able to examine an explicit process by which preferred character statements have been crafted.

The following section describes the process for arriving at preferred future character for the precincts. Draft Precinct Issues Papers were produced for each precinct to describe the existing characteristics, planning controls and strategic directions, summarise the community's values and identify issues or threats. A Draft Preferred Character Statement was included in the Issues Papers. Draft statements were based on existing characteristics, community values discussed at the workshops and the study team's view of the potential or need for change in each area was produced. The Precinct Issues Papers were then reviewed by Council planning officers and interested people on the mailing list. Comments were incorporated and the Papers revised as the Precinct Brochures, which include character descriptions and Design Guidelines for each precinct.

### Precinct Issues Papers

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#### Precinct Description

The Precinct Description encapsulates all of the existing neighbourhood character features of the precinct. The interplay between existing characteristics and any unique aspects of the precinct's neighbourhood character are described. The precinct description is important because it paves the way for identifying elements that may need to be either maintained or changed within the precinct.

#### Key Existing Characteristics

Key Existing Characteristics that were recorded throughout the field survey are summarised in this section. The dot points provide a catalogue of information related to elements such as architectural style, building materials and garden types.

#### Community Values

The various methods of community consultation, including the Community Workshops and the Photographic Exercise gave the Study Team an understanding of what it is that the community values about specific precincts as well as the township as a whole. A summary of these values are included in this section

#### Policy Context

The Policy Context identifies other relevant sections of the Planning Scheme that apply to the local area. This ensures that the Study builds on and is consistent with Council's existing directions where applicable.



### Issues / Threats

Issues and threats applying to each precinct are identified within this section. These were identified through community consultation and by the Study Team. The issues may be current (i.e. examples may already exist in the precinct) or there may be potential for them to threaten the preferred neighbourhood character of the precinct in the future.

### Draft Preferred Character Statement

The Draft Preferred Character Statement outlines the desirable character features for that precinct, and how they should be achieved. The Preferred Character Statement is a lead-in to the Character Guidelines, illustrating key elements for which guidelines need to be prepared.

## 5.2 Character Guidelines

Based on the Precinct Issues Papers and the feedback received on these, guidelines were prepared for each precinct. Together with the Precinct Issues Papers, the guidelines form a brochure for each precinct.

The Design Guidelines address the following character elements where relevant to the precinct:

- Existing Buildings
- Vegetation
- Siting
- Height and Building Form
- Front Boundary Treatment
- Materials and Design Detailing
- Specific interfaces

Each character element is accompanied by a Design Objective, Design Response and Avoid statement. The Design Objective states the desired action relating to each character element, the Design Response outlines specific ways in which the objective can be achieved and the Avoid statement summarises design treatments to avoid when trying to achieve the objective.

## 5.3 Key Character Issues

In order to determine appropriate implementation methods, the key character issues applicable to the township need to be considered. These are summarised below based on the survey findings of the Study Team and through consultation.

### Historical Buildings and Features

The history of Euroa is evident in the many public, commercial and private dwellings that are located within the township. Although public and commercial buildings are generally outside the Study Area of this project, they form a key component of overall character of the township and views to these buildings often influence the character of the three precincts. Older private dwellings date back to the establishment of the township and range from smaller cottages close to the town centre to farm houses on larger allotments within the more rural parts of Euroa. The numerous older private dwellings are a very important feature of the character of the township and in some

cases may require further protection, although this would be subject to a heritage assessment.

### **Period Reproduction Styles**

Period reproduction styles are often thought of as the best design response in a street of period homes, with the intent of 'blending in' new development. Many would argue that in fact period reproduction style homes detract from the integrity of older authentic homes. In areas where period homes exist, contemporary architecture that is distinguishable from existing buildings should be encouraged, in order to add another layer to the architectural history of the town.

### **Building Materials**

Building materials are only an issue in certain locations within Euroa, including opposite rural landscapes and natural features. Opposite rural landscapes, reflective materials should be avoided in order to avoid interruptions to the landscape. Opposite natural features and close to rural landscapes, materials that blend in with the landscape, including timber and stone should be encouraged.

### **Lot Size**

Historically, the pattern of lot sizes has been fairly consistent throughout Euroa. Closer to the town centre, lot sizes have been smaller, with buildings sited closer together, while further out, lot sizes have been greater. This pattern is slowly changing with new development and larger scale subdivision. Throughout consultation, many people attributed a loss of character to the changing patterns of lot sizes however there are a number of ways in which the character issues associated with lot sizes can be overcome. Often it is not lot size itself that is the core issue; it is the size, siting and design of the actual buildings being developed that contribute to the perceived loss of character. An emphasis on measures such as increased space between buildings and greater front setbacks can be used to overcome this issue.

### **Site Coverage**

Site coverage relates to the proportion of space on a site that is taken up by both buildings and impermeable surfaces. There are a number of issues related to site coverage that are specific to Euroa, including the need to allow for adequate drainage given the location of the township within flood plains as well as the need to allow space for vegetation and space between buildings. Areas directly affected by flooding already have specific controls that apply, however the remainder of the township still has a role to play in allowing for permeable surfaces and sustainable stormwater drainage.

### **Vegetation**

Vegetation is a key component of the character of Euroa. Ranging from formal avenues of exotic trees to stands of native vegetation that flow across the public and private domain, vegetation has a distinct impact on the appearance of the township. Residential development often brings with it a clearance of the landscape, which is usually replaced by a combination of exotic and native vegetation. Exotic vegetation has also become a valued part of the character of the township, but there are some instances where it is recommended that native vegetation is favoured over exotic for environmental and landscape character reasons. This includes along existing flood lines, adjacent to some parts of Seven Creeks and opposite other natural features. It is also important that not only the level of vegetation throughout the township is maintained, but that certain areas, including new subdivisions, are enhanced by increased planting with careful consideration towards environmental constraints.

### **Higher Scale Buildings**

Euroa is a low-scale township surrounded by landscapes that can be viewed from within residential areas. Although pressure for development of higher scale buildings is relatively low, there are some locations where an increase in scale would threaten views to outside the township. The introduction of height limits would be an unnecessary imposition on new development but careful attention should be given to ensure that the design buildings between two and three storeys is sensitive to the retention of views.

### **New Subdivisions**

While pressure for large-scale subdivision is low in Euroa, there are some parcels of land that have been subdivided for new residential dwellings in recent years. Areas of residentially zoned land should be allowed to be developed for such uses, but it is important that these do not appear 'disjointed' from the remainder of the township. There is concern amongst residents that new subdivisions appear to be 'like the suburbs of Melbourne'. New areas should be able to develop a character of their own, but should also respond to the existing character of the township and surrounding landscapes. The Rural Interface / Future Residential Precinct Brochure provides design guidance for new buildings in existing undeveloped residentially zoned areas. Public works including road layout, streetscape treatment and landscaping should be further considered by the Council.



## 6. Implementation

## 6.1 Considerations in determining the Implementation Approach

Implementation of neighbourhood character strategies can be undertaken using statutory and non-statutory methods and this chapter examines both types. Statutory implementation is perhaps the most important as it legally binds the Council, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) and the community to consider neighbourhood character objectives identified through a study such as this. Implementation options have been set out based on the following considerations:

### Existing Character and Preferred Future Character

The types of characteristics identified in each precinct and their relative significance in Council-wide and regional terms is a starting point for determining the Preferred Future Character of an area. What is it about each precinct that makes it distinctive, and to what extent is this distinctiveness important on a local, regional or state level? The detailed survey material gathered during this study identifies the consistency and form of the various characteristics and enables comparisons across the study area. The consultants' experience in these types of studies throughout the State enables a regional and State context to be assessed. The community's aspirations for their area are the final defining element in the equation for determining the Preferred Future Character, however these must be realistic and reflect the key or valued aspects of the area. The key and valued elements are contained under the Precinct Description, Key Existing Characteristics and Community Values headings of the Brochures, and the Preferred Character Statement is the culmination of this information.

### Threats

The extent of threats to the important characteristics within each precinct needs to be assessed. Each Preferred Character Statement includes an assessment of the types of threats that are possible, overlaid with an understanding of the development pressures occurring.

### Community Acceptance

The likelihood of community acceptance of new controls over some forms of development will relate to the extent of community concern about the loss of particular aspects of the character of the precinct. The acceptability of controls can be assessed during the preparation of the study, through discussions with planning officers, Councillors and community representatives, however the ultimate test is the exhibition of any planning scheme amendment.

### Planning Scheme

Strategies, policies and controls already contained in the Planning Scheme are considered in determining the implementation options. The strategic context has been examined in Chapter 2.

### Non statutory implementation

This is an important part of the implementation program that accompanies the statutory measures. It includes implementation of neighbourhood character objectives within the public realm spaces, promotion of the study findings and raising awareness of neighbourhood character issues amongst the community, design profession and Council.

### **Likelihood of Approval**

The likelihood of approval of any planning scheme amendment to introduce statutory controls by an independent State government appointed Planning Panel and the Minister for Planning, is an important consideration. There is little point in recommending measures to the Council that are unlikely to be approved. The most important aspect of this consideration is the need to determine which parts of the study area require additional planning controls and those which can be successfully managed with existing controls and the range of other non-statutory implementation techniques available.

There are, however, other contextual issues that must be considered such as State policy and directives, and issues raised previously by Panels in making recommendations on other similar planning scheme amendments. A Planning Panel will also examine all of the above issues in their deliberation about a planning scheme amendment. Discussion about some issues raised by previous Planning Panels is included in the following section.

### **What should the planning scheme implementation achieve?**

The starting point for discussion of statutory implementation options is to understand exactly what we would like the planning scheme controls to achieve in terms of retaining valued aspects of neighbourhood character and setting a vision for future change.

Section 5.3 'Key Character Issues' details the key neighbourhood character elements that have been identified in Euroa and what should be considered in the approach to implementation. This discussion and analysis has formed the basis of the implementation recommendations for the study.

### **Practice Notes**

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All statutory options are guided by Practice Notes issued by the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

The Department in 2001 issued a Practice Note entitled 'Understanding Neighbourhood Character'. This Practice Note provides general information regarding the matters to be considered in implementing the provisions of ResCode that require regard for the surrounding character in development applications. It provides a list of elements of the surrounding neighbourhood that may be of relevance to the preparation of a Neighbourhood and Site Description plan and design response. In so doing, it provides some indication of the types of characteristics of an area that may be identified in a character strategy. It is by no means definitive nor exhaustive in this regard.

The Practice Note 'Using the Neighbourhood Character Provisions in Planning Schemes' outlines the steps in preparing a Neighbourhood Character Study and the implementation options through the use of Neighbourhood Character Overlays and Schedules to residential zones.

### **Planning Panel Reports**

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A number of planning scheme amendments have been undertaken by other Councils to incorporate neighbourhood character objectives within the planning scheme. Planning Panels, established to hear submissions regarding the amendments and make recommendations to the Council about the submissions and the suitability of the amendment, have been held in most cases. Some of these Panel reports provide lessons for the implementation of neighbourhood character objectives.

Two previous Panel reports, for neighbourhood character planning scheme amendments in the Cities of Knox and Banyule, have highlighted the importance of addressing the strategic context of neighbourhood character. In particular the reports have highlighted the need to establish the relationship between the proposed neighbourhood character objectives and the State planning objectives for housing, and ensuring that the Council's MSS contains strategic rationale for character policy. It is important to ensure that housing strategies, such as future housing needs and locations for additional housing if required, have been clearly identified and do not conflict with the neighbourhood character policy and/or controls.

Where provisions other than a local policy are proposed, such as overlay controls or changes to the residential zone schedule, the Banyule decision also highlighted the need to demonstrate that the provisions of ResCode combined with a local policy on character, were not adequate. It is of particular importance to demonstrate that single dwellings are of equal or greater concern in achieving neighbourhood character objectives, than medium density housing, as policy can influence decisions in any case where a planning permit is required.

Panel reports and subsequent DSE decisions regarding amendments affecting Ocean Grove and Hedgeley Dene in the City of Stonnington highlight that the implementation of Neighbourhood Character Overlay controls will only be considered over small, discreet and highly justified areas with clear neighbourhood character objectives, and under demonstrated threat.

## 6.2 Implementation Recommendations

### Summary of Implementation Recommendations

#### Preferred Implementation Approach

Planisphere has undertaken many Neighbourhood Character Studies and has developed a preferred approach to implementing these through Planning Schemes. In the past, a successful approach has involved the inclusion of selected parts of the Precinct Brochures into a Local Planning Policy at Clause 22. It would typically be recommended that the Preferred Character Statements and the Objectives and Design Responses from the Design Guidelines be included in a Local Planning Policy.

It is not considered at this time that neighbourhood character of Euroa required the introduction of new zones or overlays. This Study has however identified the potential for heritage or landscape overlays, subject to further study by Council.

#### Recent Directions from the DPCD

As part of the State Government initiative entitled *Cutting red tape in planning*, the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) has released a document called *Making Local Policy Stronger*.

Recent advice from the DPCD regarding the findings of these initiatives and their implications has been that:

- Any strategic statements such as the Preferred Character Statements should be included in Council's Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) at Clause 21 and should not be repeated in Local Planning Policy.
- Local Planning Policies should be of a minimal length and should only include elements that cannot be addressed by other VPP tools such as zones or

overlays. This implies that parts of the Precinct Brochures should no longer be included in Local Planning Policy.

### **Coordination of Other Projects and the Planning Scheme Amendment Process**

Given that Council is currently undertaking Neighbourhood Character Studies of other townships including Nagambie, Avenel and Violet Town, it is important that any implementation recommendations are coordinated for these townships and that a consistent approach is arrived at.

Matters related to the format and content of any proposed VPP tools should be resolved with the DPCD at the time of the preparation of a Planning Scheme Amendment. Any Planning Scheme Amendment involving the Neighbourhood Character Studies of the four townships may also form part of a broader LPPF Review.

### **MSS**

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The MSS (Clause 21) should be updated to reflect the broad findings of the Neighbourhood Character Studies of all four townships. For Euroa, this may include summary points of the findings set out in Section 4.3 'The Character of Euroa' and the 'Key Character Issues' detailed in Section 5.3. It is also recommended that the Preferred Character Statements are included in the MSS.

### **Local Planning Policy**

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Based on advice from the DPCD as outlined above, it is not recommended that the development of a Local Planning Policy is pursued at this stage.

### **Zones and Overlays**

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#### **Zones**

As part of the initiatives outlined above, the DPCD has also advised that a revised suite of residential zones will be introduced to better reflect state policies. A draft of these zones is expected to be released in late 2007. Until it is known what the revised suite will contain, recommendations cannot be made regarding implementation of the Neighbourhood Character Study through the Zones.

#### **Overlays**

There are a number of issues outlined in Section 5.3 *Key Character Issues* that may be able to be addressed through the introduction of overlays. The VPP Practice Note 'Using the Neighbourhood Character Provisions in Planning Schemes' discusses the overlay controls that could be used to protect areas of neighbourhood character significance. The appropriateness of the overlays outlined below would require further investigation and work by the Council.

##### *Design and Development Overlay*

A Design and Development Overlay (DDO) requires that a permit be obtained for all development within the area covered (some types of development can be exempted). It ensures the implementation of the detailed guidelines in the consideration of all development in that area. A DDO can control elements such as height, setback, site coverage, fences and development within certain distance of tree trunks. It cannot control demolition.

The DPCD has advised that the use of DDOs for the sole purpose of neighbourhood character implementation is not encouraged. However, DDOs are considered



appropriate for areas where mandatory height limits are warranted, or change is encouraged and no other mechanism would achieve the desired outcome. The DDO may also be required to address the height and design of fences where this is a particular concern as this is not possible through the Neighbourhood Character Overlay.

The DDO should only apply to small areas where a high degree of change is anticipated and specific design outcomes are desired. This may be applicable to areas around activity centres or along the transport corridors identified in the MSS for higher density housing, or to large redevelopment sites.

#### Neighbourhood Character Overlay

The Neighbourhood Character Overlay (NCO) was heralded, on the introduction of ResCode, as the most specific and effective tool for applying neighbourhood character policy. The permit requirements are comprehensive and there are few allowable exemptions.

The advantages to the use of the Neighbourhood Character Overlay are that it provides the opportunity to assess all applications for new dwellings or demolition within an area. The ResCode schedule can be modified to suit the requirements for the particular NCO area and tree removal controls can be introduced.

The NCO should be applied to small, well-defined areas where there is strong justification for additional controls of this nature.

#### Vegetation Protection Overlay and Significant Landscape Overlay

A Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO) or Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO) can require a permit for removal of trees; and it can apply to all trees, trees over a certain trunk diameter or height or to native, indigenous or exotic vegetation. The only limitation is the ease of use and enforcement of the provisions. In order for a VPO or SLO to be justifiable, the vegetation or landscape must be demonstrated to be of significance to the character of the area.

The VPO is primarily aimed at situations where the vegetation itself is of significance. The VPO must be confirmed by a parallel study that identifies the environmental significance of the vegetation. The SLO has the distinct advantage of providing the opportunity to control the type of vegetation, as well as the types of buildings and works and fences that require a permit, as necessary.

The VPP Practice Note 'Using the Neighbourhood Character Provisions in Planning Schemes' states that:

*'Sometimes vegetation may be the only feature of neighbourhood character defining the urban area. If the principal objective is to identify and protect vegetation for its contribution to the character of an area, overlays such as the VPO and SLO can be used instead of the NCO to protect these valued aspects of neighbourhood character.'*

This study has demonstrated that vegetation is a significant feature, although not the only feature, of the neighbourhood character in Euroa. However most of this vegetation occurs on public land, in streets, or along creek beds. Other significant features of neighbourhood character such as site coverage and building setbacks will assist in achieving the retention of vegetation.

#### Heritage Overlay

The Heritage Overlay is not considered to be a neighbourhood character implementation tool however it can play a role in protecting neighbourhood character through the protection of significant buildings, sites and precincts. Through field work

and consultation, the Study Team discovered the presence of a number of older, historical buildings, particularly in the Old Township Precinct that could be of potential heritage significance. These buildings are central to the character of this precinct and their retention is important to the character of the township.

It is recommended that the Council undertakes a Heritage Study to identify any buildings that may be of significance. In the instance that a Heritage Study does not find any buildings within the Old Township of heritage significance, Council may wish to pursue the option of an NCO, as outlined above. Although the NCO cannot require buildings to be retained, it can require a permit for demolition and can delay a planning permit for demolition until the design of the replacement building is approved.

## **Reference Documents and Incorporated Documents**

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### **Incorporated document**

An alternative approach to including parts of the Precinct Brochures in Local Planning Policy is to include the brochures as an incorporated document. The Precinct Brochures would be amended for incorporation to include the Preferred Character Statement, Objectives and Design Responses. The advantage of the inclusion of the Precinct Brochures in an incorporated document is that they carry more weight, particularly at VCAT, than a Reference Document, and are considered to be an actual component of the Planning Scheme. One of the only disadvantages to this approach is that if the Council needed to make any changes to the brochures once they were included as an Incorporated Document, this would require a Planning Scheme Amendment.

### **Reference Document**

As an alternative to including the Precinct Brochures as an Incorporated Document, the Study Report and Brochures could be included as a Reference Document. Although a Reference Document carries less weight, it can be altered without requiring a Planning Scheme Amendment. Should the brochures be incorporated documents, it would still be appropriate to Reference the Study Report.

## **Non-Statutory**

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Non-statutory tools can provide an important means of implementing Council's neighbourhood character objectives. The public domain, which includes elements such as street trees, roads, footpaths, kerbs and channels, parks and reserves, has a significant impact on the neighbourhood character of an area. It is not only a question of appearance, but also of location, and the desired geometrical arrangement of all the elements, and how they will relate to each other. The Council is often directly or indirectly responsible for the undertaking of these works and management of assets, and therefore is ideally positioned to maximise the achievement of character objectives.

### **Design Coordination**

While this study was not asked to make specific recommendations about the public domain, decisions about changes or strategies will ideally have some reference to the neighbourhood context determined by this study. The key character contributions of the public domain are included in each precinct description. This generally relates to distinctive street planting, such as avenue trees or planter beds, bluestone kerbing or a precinct's location alongside a public reserve.

The best way of coordinating works in the public domain with the design principles established for each precinct by this study is, in the short term, to establish a coordination mechanism.

This could take the form of an officer group with the following objectives:

- Coordinate all aspects of design in road reserves and other parts of the public domain.
- Build up a consistent character across defined local areas (preferably the precincts defined in the Neighbourhood Character Study).

The group would comprise representatives from the design engineers, infrastructure, development approvals (both statutory planning and building), strategic planning, environment and social planning, street lighting, landscape architecture and parks services.

The group would:

- Ensure that design decisions relating to a single street, park or other facility are consistent with the various strategies.
- Resolve conflicts, overlaps or gaps in the strategies.
- Establish guidelines for the conduct of public consultation about public domain design, with mechanisms designed to accommodate pressures for divergent treatments in every location within a strategic, consistent approach.

### **Community Encouragement and Education**

Education and encouragement, partly by means of forming partnerships, is an essential aspect of implementation.

The following strategies could be adopted:

- Education of real estate agents, developers and landowners generally.
- Education of design and building professionals.
- Encouragement schemes for 'good character' developments.

The kinds of techniques that could be used to give effect to these strategies could include:

- Information leaflets
- Workshops
- Award schemes
- Displays
- Media articles/events

The partnership aspect of this option could be fostered by bringing stakeholders with differing perspectives (eg residents and developers) together into the same forum. This may be best accomplished independently of a contentious planning application with statutory time limits.

### **Staff Skilling and Design Advice**

It takes time to come to grips with a topic like neighbourhood character. The Council's statutory planners need continued support and skilling to make the best use of this study's recommendations. Correct approaches to site analysis, knowledge about acceptable design solutions, familiarity with architectural styles, and consistency of decisions are all important. Training sessions, workshops and

review of current applications by urban design consultants are useful techniques. In addition, training may be required by other parts of the Council organisation where the recommendations impact upon public domain works designed and undertaken by engineering personnel or contractors in accordance with specifications prepared by Council staff.

Resourcing may be an issue in the implementation of the recommendations of this study, as some recommendations such as increasing controls over buildings and vegetation and more detailed assessment of design, may result in increased workloads for planning staff. The Council must be aware of this potential and monitor the effect of introducing new controls to ensure that implementation of the study is effective.

Above all, the Council must determine to 'send out the right message' to the development community through consistent decision making as well as communication techniques discussed earlier. That message must foster an expectation that good quality design is expected, and that applicants will be subject to delays or refusal if they fail to meet this expectation.

### **Statutory Support**

The main vehicles for statutory support are the Precinct Brochures and the local policy described above. Planning controls will also provide significant help, as will the community education and encouragement initiatives referred to above. However, there are allied or associated measures that can be taken.

Possibilities include:

- Permit conditions.
- Better enforcement of planning conditions.
- Increased publicity about penalties.
- Active monitoring of works undertaken without permission (eg illegal carports).
- Local Laws.

### **The Building Regulations**

There are a number of matters that impact upon neighbourhood character that require only a building permit in many instances, rather than a planning permit. These include removal of or alterations to front verandahs, fences and crossovers.

Where the neighbourhood character of an area has a particular sensitivity, these matters should be controlled through a Neighbourhood Character Overlay or Heritage Overlay.

Otherwise, the neighbourhood character study or policy may be consulted in the assessment of a building permit where the standards of Clause 54 are not met.





# Appendices

# 1. Precinct Brochures

## CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

## Old Township



### Precinct Description

This area, the Old Township, comprises many of the original Victorian and Edwardian dwellings surrounding Binney Street that were built in the first phases of development in Euroa. There has been some limited infill in the form of Interwar and more recent dwelling styles. The streetscapes in this precinct have an open and spacious feel which is heightened by their large exotic street trees often within formal avenues, and open frontages, with low or no fences that allow views to dwellings. A unique feature of some of the streetscapes throughout this precinct is the wide nature strips with open brick gutters and swale drains. Buildings are predominantly low scale and a mix of timber and brickwork, with iron roofing. There are several civic buildings and views to well-maintained parks and gardens throughout the precinct which enhance the character of the area.

### Key Existing Characteristics

- Architecture style is predominantly Victorian and Edwardian. Some dwellings may be of potential heritage significance.
- Buildings are predominantly single storey.
- Building materials consist of timber and brick. Roofs are predominantly iron, but occasionally tile.
- Front setbacks are varied throughout the precinct but are generally smaller closer to Binney Street.
- Side setbacks are generally small, and range between 1m and 3m.
- Garden styles are generally well established with scattered exotic species and native vegetation throughout.
- Front fences are generally non-existent or low in scale.
- Streets are often lined with avenues of large exotic street trees.
- Roadways are wide, often with on-street angle parking, particularly within close proximity of the main street of the township.
- Roads are sealed. Many streets have unsealed shoulders, wide nature strips with open brick gutters and concrete footpaths. Upstanding kerbs, footpaths and nature strips exist on other streets.
- Views are available to parks, gardens and landmark buildings such as churches and schools.
- Occasional views are available to Seven Creeks and the surrounding parkland.

### Community Values

- Private, well-maintained gardens.
- Generally low building heights.
- The historical aspect of the township.
- Historic buildings that are well-maintained and the character derived from older buildings.
- Off-street parking.
- The avenue feel of streetscapes.
- Attractive streetscapes with uniformly maintained trees.
- Wide, clean roadways with grassed verges.
- Asphalt footpaths.
- Open brick gutters.
- Diversity of building materials.
- Variation in building styles.

- The quiet atmosphere of local streets.
- Proximity to shops, parks and the railway station.
- Good street lighting.
- Views to open spaces, trees and hills.
- The notion of Euroa as a garden town.
- Vegetation in the private and public domain.

### Policy Context

- The Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) contains strategies that:
  - 'ensure that future residential growth and development is accommodated for in a planned manner'.
  - encourage consolidation of residential development in existing urban centres, new development that provides for a high quality lot layout and diversity of sizes and housing options to maintain a diverse population mix within the Shire.
- The Residential 1 Zone provides for residential development at a range of densities with a variety of dwellings to meet the housing needs of all households. It also encourages residential development that respects neighbourhood character.
- The Urban Floodway Zone, Land Subject to Inundation Overlay and Floodway Overlay seek to ensure that development maintains the free passage and temporary storage of floodwaters and minimises the damage caused by flooding.

### Issues / Threats

- The removal of original Victorian and Edwardian buildings.
- Contemporary reproduction style architecture.
- Large bulky dwellings with unarticulated facades.
- Loss of street trees.
- High front fences that block views to dwellings.
- Large areas of hard, impervious surfacing.
- Loss of views.

### Preferred Character Statement

The character of the Old Township will continue to be defined by original Victorian and Edwardian dwellings surrounded by well-maintained gardens. Existing exotic and native vegetation in the private and public domains will be maintained and enhanced through further planting in private gardens. New development will be of a high standard of design and will respect the existing built form through the articulation of building facades and consistency with the existing pattern of front and side setbacks. Front fences will remain low and open to ensure that dwellings and gardens are visible from the street.

This will be achieved by:

- encouraging the retention of older buildings that contribute to the valued character of the township.
- ensuring that dwellings are set back from front and side boundaries in accordance with the prevailing setback pattern in the street.
- encouraging the retention of vegetation in private gardens and ensuring that new development is sited to provide for new and existing vegetation.
- encouraging a high standard of design in new developments.
- encouraging low or no front fencing.



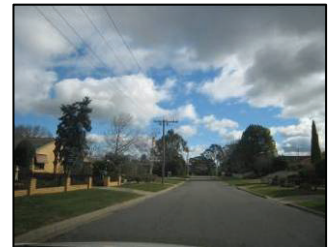
## DESIGN GUIDELINES

## Old Township

CHARACTER ELEMENT	OBJECTIVE	DESIGN RESPONSE	AVOID
<b>Existing Buildings</b>	To encourage the retention of older dwellings that contribute to the valued character of the area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; In streets that contain intact groups of Victorian and Edwardian dwellings, consider retaining and/or adapting those buildings that are in good condition, particularly the front section, wherever possible in new development.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Loss of intact streetscapes.</i></p> <p><i>New development that is out of scale and character with the existing Victorian/Edwardian dwellings.</i></p>
	To respect the qualities of older adjoining buildings that are in good condition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Where adjoining an older building in good condition, respect the height, building forms, siting and materials, of the building/s in the new building design.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Buildings that dominate older buildings by height, siting or massing.</i></p> <p><i>Historical reproduction styles.</i></p>
<b>Vegetation</b>	To maintain and strengthen the garden settings of dwellings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Retain large, established trees and provide for the planting of new trees and substantial vegetation wherever possible.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Removal of large, established trees.</i></p> <p><i>Lack of landscaping and substantial vegetation.</i></p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; In the vicinity of Seven Creeks and associated parkland, planting in private gardens should contribute to the unique landscape quality of the creek and its surrounds through the use of native vegetation.</li> </ul>	<p><i>High fences that block views to front gardens or period dwellings.</i></p> <p><i>Lack of landscape connection between the Seven Creeks and private gardens of adjacent properties.</i></p>
<b>Siting</b>	To provide space for front gardens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Buildings should be set back from the front boundary a sufficient distance to accommodate a front garden including trees and shrubs.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Loss of front garden space.</i></p>
	To maintain the rhythm of spacing between buildings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Buildings should be set back from side boundaries in accordance with the predominant pattern of side boundary setbacks in the street.</li> </ul>	<p><i>New development that interrupts the rhythm of side boundary setbacks.</i></p>
	To minimise the loss of front garden space, the dominance of car parking structures and the number of vehicular crossovers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Locate garages and carports behind the line of the dwelling.</li> <li>&gt; Minimise hard paving in front yards.</li> <li>&gt; Provide only one vehicular crossover per typical site frontage.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Car parking structures that dominate the façade or view of the dwelling.</i></p> <p><i>Front setbacks dominated by impervious surfaces.</i></p>
<b>Height and building form</b>	To ensure that buildings and extensions respect the dominant building scale and forms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Respect the predominant building height and pitched roof forms in the street and nearby properties.</li> <li>&gt; Articulate the form of buildings through the composition of openings and setbacks.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Buildings that appear to exceed by more than one storey the predominant number of storeys in buildings in the street and nearby properties.</i></p>
<b>Materials and Design Detailing</b>	To ensure that the use of materials and design detail in new buildings complements that of the predominant building styles in the street.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Articulate the facades of buildings through the use of a limited palette of colours and materials found commonly within the precinct, and through variations in wall surfaces.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Large, bulky buildings with flat, poorly articulated wall surfaces.</i></p>
<b>Front boundary treatment</b>	To maintain the openness of streetscapes and views to dwellings and into front gardens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Front fences should be appropriate to the building era or reflect the typical fencing height and style of the street.</li> <li>&gt; Provide a front fence that allows views through or over the fence into the front garden.</li> <li>&gt; Opposite Seven Creeks, front boundaries should either be open or fences should be low and constructed of permeable materials.</li> </ul>	<p><i>High, solid front fencing that blocks views of dwellings and gardens.</i></p>

## CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

## *Interwar / Post-war Mix*



### Precinct Description

The streets in these areas are wide and open, a characteristic that is strengthened by the expansive grassy nature strips, large setbacks and low front fencing. Dwellings are predominantly single storey and contain a range of architectural styles including Interwar, Post-war and contemporary infill. Further away from the town centre, streetscapes often appear informal, with unsealed shoulders that merge with nature strips planted with scattered vegetation. The spacious atmosphere and low scale buildings enable occasional glimpses to the landscapes in and surrounding the township, including Balmattum Hill. Properties along Foy and Turnbull Streets and Kirkland Avenue also have scenic views towards Sevens Creek and the adjoining parkland.

### Key Existing Characteristics

- Architecture comprises a mix of building eras and styles, including Interwar bungalows, Post-war 1950s weatherboard and 1960s-70s brick housing, as well as contemporary infill dwellings. There are also a limited number of dwellings which date back to the Victorian era.
- Buildings are predominantly single storey.
- Building materials consist of timber and brick, with iron or tile roofing.
- Front and side setbacks are varied, however, dwellings are generally well set back from front and both side boundaries.
- Front fences vary in height but are generally low enough to allow views to dwellings and front gardens.
- Streets are wide and verges are planted with generally native vegetation that is either planted formally or informally.
- Garden styles are varied with well established and low maintenance exotic styles and native vegetation throughout.
- Kerbs are either formal and upstanding, or informal with unsealed shoulders that merge with nature strips. Some streets contain concrete footpaths on both sides, while others have informal gravel pathways.

### Community Values

- Private, well-maintained gardens.
- Housing under two storeys, and generally low building heights.
- Spaciousness of streetscapes, large building allotments and large building setbacks.
- Off-street parking.
- Wide, clean roadways with grassed verges.
- Open brick gutters.
- Natural landscapes and parks.
- Diversity of building materials.
- Variation in building styles.
- The quiet atmosphere of local streets.
- Proximity to shops, parks and the railway station.
- Views to open spaces.
- Views to trees and hills.
- The notion of Euroa as a garden town.
- Vegetation in the private and public domain.

- The avenue feel of some streets.
- Asphalt footpaths and the informal street layout of some streets.

### Policy Context

- The Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) contains strategies that
  - ensure that future residential growth and development is accommodated for in a planned manner.
  - encourage consolidation of residential development in existing urban centres, new development that provides for a high quality lot layout and diversity of sizes and housing options to maintain a diverse population mix within the Shire.
- The Residential 1 Zone provides for residential development at a range of densities with a variety of dwellings to meet the housing needs of all households. It also encourages residential development that respects neighbourhood character.
- The Urban Floodway Zone, Land Subject to Inundation Overlay and Floodway Overlay seek to ensure that development maintains the free passage and temporary storage of floodwaters and minimises the damage caused by flooding.

### Issues / Threats

- Buildings with a high proportion of site coverage that reduce the feeling of spaciousness in streets.
- Large unarticulated facades.
- Boundary to boundary development.
- Excessive hard surfaces surrounding dwellings.
- High front fences that block views to dwellings.
- Demolition of older housing stock.
- Car parking structures that dominate the streetscape.

### Preferred Character Statement

The spacious streetscapes and the use of vegetation throughout the precinct will be maintained and strengthened. Dwellings will continue to be well set back from front and side boundaries and front fences will be low or open. New development will generally occur in the form of low-scale infill dwellings that complement existing Interwar and post-war housing and respond to the surrounding built form. Front and side setbacks will be more extensively planted with vegetation to strengthen the landscape character of the precinct.

This will be achieved by:

- Encouraging the retention of older housing stock that contributes to the valued character of the area.
- Ensuring setback distances reflect the existing setback pattern in the street.
- Encouraging low or no front fencing.
- Encouraging street planting in new developments.
- Ensuring development is sited to reduce the loss of vegetation and to provide for new vegetation.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

## Interwar / Post-war Mix

CHARACTER ELEMENT	OBJECTIVE	DESIGN RESPONSE	AVOID
<b>Existing Buildings</b>	To encourage the retention of older dwellings that contribute to the character of the area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Consider retaining and/or adapting older Victorian, Edwardian or Interwar dwellings that are in good condition, particularly the front section, wherever possible in new development.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Loss of older dwellings that contribute to the character of the area.</i></p> <p><i>New development that is out of scale and character with existing dwellings.</i></p>
<b>Vegetation</b>	To maintain and strengthen the landscape character of streets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Retain large, established trees and provide for the planting of new trees and substantial vegetation, including canopy trees, wherever possible.</li> <li>&gt; For properties adjoining flood lines or existing vegetation corridors, consider the use of indigenous and native species to enhance the landscape character of these natural features.</li> <li>&gt; In the vicinity of Seven Creeks and associated parkland, planting in private gardens should contribute to the unique landscape quality of the creek and its surrounds through the use of native vegetation.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Removal of large, established trees.</i></p> <p><i>Lack of landscaping and substantial vegetation.</i></p>
<b>Siting</b>	To provide space for front gardens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Buildings should be set back from the front boundary a sufficient distance to accommodate a front garden including trees and shrubs.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Loss of front garden space.</i></p>
	To maintain the rhythm of spacing between buildings and allow for planting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Buildings should be set back from boundaries to create the appearance of space between buildings and to accommodate substantial vegetation.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Boundary to boundary development.</i></p> <p><i>New development that interrupts the rhythm of side boundary setbacks.</i></p>
	To minimise the loss of front garden space, the dominance of car parking structures and the number of vehicular crossovers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Locate garages and carports behind the line of the dwelling.</li> <li>&gt; Minimise hard paving in front yards.</li> <li>&gt; Provide only one vehicular crossover per typical site frontage.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Car parking structures that dominate the façade or view of the dwelling.</i></p> <p><i>Front setbacks dominated by impervious surfaces.</i></p>
<b>Height and building form</b>	To ensure that buildings and extensions respect the dominant building scale and forms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Respect the predominant building height and pitched roof forms in the street and nearby properties.</li> <li>&gt; Articulate the form of buildings and facades through the composition of openings and setbacks.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Buildings that appear to exceed by more than one storey the predominant number of storeys in buildings in the street and nearby properties.</i></p> <p><i>Large, bulky buildings with flat, poorly articulated wall surfaces.</i></p>
<b>Front boundary treatment</b>	To maintain the openness of the streetscape and views into front gardens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Front fences should be appropriate to the building era or reflect the typical fencing height and style of the street.</li> <li>&gt; Provide a front fence that allows views through or over the fence into the front garden and to the dwelling.</li> <li>&gt; Opposite Seven Creeks, and at the rural interface, front boundaries should either be open or fences should be low and constructed of permeable materials.</li> <li>&gt; In streets where front fencing is predominantly absent, provide an open frontage.</li> </ul>	<p><i>High, solid front fencing that blocks views of gardens.</i></p>
<b>Seven Creeks Interface</b>	To use materials and finishes that complement the landscape features of Seven Creeks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Use materials such as natural timber, stone, or brick in subdued tones and finishes that complement the natural environment and its bushland qualities. Consideration should also be given to how the materials will weather over time.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Brightly coloured or highly reflective materials or finishes.</i></p>



## CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

## *Rural Interface / Future Residential*



### Precinct Description

The character of these streets is generally derived from their location at the edge of the residential area of the township. Streetscapes are wide and open, with inconsistent development on a range of lot sizes which include many large vacant lots. Some properties are subject to rural uses. Where dwellings are present, they are predominantly from the post-war era, and are well set back from front and side boundaries and surrounded by large grassed areas with scattered vegetation. In streetscapes, vegetation is often informal and native. Some areas contain large native trees which significantly contribute to the character of the precinct. There is a strong interface between many of the streets in this precinct and the rural or bushy landscapes that surround them. These landscapes provide long-range views and pleasant surrounds. There is also sometimes an obvious interface between this precinct and other precincts, particularly where recent subdivisions have occurred.

### Key Existing Characteristics

- Dwellings are a mix of styles, including large low-slung brick dwellings and post-war timber dwellings.
- Lot sizes are of a lower density, and where buildings are present, they generally have large setbacks.
- There are many large undeveloped lots.
- Roadways are generally informal, with gravel pathways, no kerb or channel and unsealed shoulders. Roads are sometimes unsealed.
- Streetscapes are lined with informal native vegetation, often consisting of large eucalypts.
- There is often a direct interface with, or views to, the rural or bushy landscapes surrounding the township.

### Community Values

- Private, well-maintained gardens.
- Housing under two storeys, and generally low building heights.
- Wide, clean roadways with grassed verges.
- Open brick gutters.
- Diversity of building materials.
- Variation in building styles.
- The quiet atmosphere of local streets.
- Views to open spaces, trees and hills.
- Vegetation in the private and public domain.
- Large building allotments.
- Low density housing and the space between houses.
- The open environment.
- Asphalt footpaths and the informal street layout.
- The diversity of surrounding landscapes.
- The notion of Euroa as a garden town.

### Policy Context

- The Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) contains strategies that:
  - 'ensure that future residential growth and development is accommodated for in a planned manner'.

- encourage consolidation of residential development in existing urban centres, new development that provides for a high quality lot layout and diversity of sizes and housing options to maintain a diverse population mix within the Shire.
- identify areas that could be investigated in the future for residential growth when required.
- The Residential 1 Zone provides for residential development at a range of densities with a variety of dwellings to meet the housing needs of all households. It also encourages residential development that respects neighbourhood character.
- The Urban Floodway Zone, Land Subject to Inundation Overlay and Floodway Overlay seek to ensure that development maintains the free passage and temporary storage of floodwaters and minimises the damage caused by flooding.

### Issues / Threats

- Large-scale subdivision that results in cul-de-sacs and narrow roadways and overdevelopment of sites.
- Loss of informal roadways.
- Large areas of impervious surfaces on private property.
- Housing development that exceeds the existing low scale of streetscapes.
- New development lacking on-site landscaping or tree planting.
- Use of brightly coloured or highly reflective materials or finishes.

### Preferred Character Statement

This precinct may see a moderate level of change in neighbourhood character over the coming years. Dwellings throughout the precinct should continue to be set back from front and side boundaries to maintain the spaciousness of streetscapes, and native vegetation should continue to be a strong feature of both the public and private domain. New development will be designed to integrate green corridors along flood and vegetation lines, and existing native vegetation that significantly contributes to the character of the precinct will be retained wherever possible. Open front boundaries and large areas of permeable surfaces that allow vegetation to flow across streetscapes will strengthen the landscape character of these areas. Where new housing development occurs opposite natural features such as the creek, or other open spaces, it will be sensitively designed to address the surrounding landscapes through the use of materials that complement the landscape and well-vegetated spacious setbacks.

This will be achieved by:

- Encouraging low or no front fencing.
- Ensuring buildings are well set back from front and side boundaries.
- Encouraging retention of informal streetscape treatments.
- Encouraging the retention and planting of indigenous and native trees.

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

## Rural Interface / Future Residential

CHARACTER ELEMENT	OBJECTIVE	DESIGN RESPONSE	AVOID
<b>Vegetation</b>	To maintain and strengthen the spaciousness of streetscapes and to enhance the landscape character of the precinct.	> Retain large, established native trees and provide for the planting of new trees and substantial vegetation wherever possible.	<i>Removal of large, established trees.</i>
		> For properties adjoining flood lines or existing vegetation corridors, consider the use of indigenous and native species to enhance the landscape character of these natural features.	<i>Lack of landscaping and substantial vegetation.</i>
		> In the vicinity of Seven Creeks and associated parkland, planting in private gardens should contribute to the unique landscape quality of the creek and its surrounds through the use of native vegetation.	
<b>Siting</b>	To provide space for front gardens.	> Buildings should be set back from the front boundary a sufficient distance to accommodate a front garden including trees and shrubs.	<i>Loss of front garden space.</i>
	To maintain the spaciousness of streetscapes and allow for planting.	> Buildings should be set back from both side boundaries to create the appearance of space between buildings and to accommodate substantial vegetation.	<i>Boundary to boundary development.</i>
	To minimise the loss of front garden space, the dominance of car parking structures and the number of vehicular crossovers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Locate garages and carports behind the line of the dwelling.</li> <li>&gt; Minimise hard paving in front yards.</li> <li>&gt; Provide only one vehicular crossover per typical site frontage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Car parking structures that dominate the façade or view of the dwelling.</i></li> <li><i>Front setbacks dominated by impervious surfaces.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Height and building form</b>	To encourage well designed, innovative architectural responses.	> Articulate the form of buildings and facades through the composition of openings and setbacks and through variations in wall surfaces.	<i>Large, bulky buildings with flat, poorly articulated wall surfaces.</i>
		> Where vegetation forms an important part of the streetscape, keep new development below the established mature tree canopy height.	<i>Buildings that protrude above the tree canopy height.</i>
<b>Front boundary treatment</b>	To maintain the openness of the streetscape and views into front gardens.	> Provide a front fence that allows views through or over the fence into the front garden.	<i>High, solid front fencing that blocks views of gardens.</i>
		> In streets where front fencing is predominantly absent, provide an open frontage.	
		> Opposite Seven Creeks, front boundaries should either be open or fences should be low and constructed of permeable materials.	
<b>Township edge development</b>	To create a defined urban edge that complements the character of surrounding rural and natural landscapes.	> In new subdivisions, provide a street or road edge to the development.	<i>New subdivisions with an internal focus delineated by high fences at the boundary.</i>
		> Encourage consistent front and side building setbacks.	
<b>Natural landscape interface</b>	To use materials and finishes that complement the landscape features of Seven Creeks, surrounding rural areas and other natural landscape features for dwellings within close proximity of these.	> Use materials such as natural timber, stone, or brick in subdued tones and finishes that complement the natural environment and its bushland qualities. Consideration should also be given to how the materials will weather over time.	<i>Brightly coloured or highly reflective materials or finishes.</i>
<b>Properties adjoining flood and vegetation lines</b>	To retain and complement the natural landscape features that contribute to the valued character of the area.	> Buildings should be sited away from existing green corridors along flood and vegetation lines.	<i>Filling of natural topographical landscape features.</i>
		> New development should be designed to maintain existing vegetation and topographical features that contribute to the valued character of the area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Excessive use of impervious surfaces.</i></li> <li><i>Excessive removal of native vegetation to accommodate residential buildings.</i></li> </ul>

## 2. Community Feedback Received on the Draft Precinct Brochures

## Feedback on Euroa Precinct Issues Papers, October 2007

Comments	Response to comments
Sevens and Castle Creeks and the railway line should be identified on the map.	Agreed. These will be added to the map.
All land use zones should be identified on the map.	Agreed that it would be useful to identify land use zone boundaries exist. These will be included on a separate map in the report.
The existing residential allotments in the business zones around Binney Street should be included in the study.	The brief for the project stipulated that the study should exclude commercial areas (this includes all business zones).
The land east of Barnes has been identified as "Interwar", but this is in fact earmarked for future residential development.	Agreed. This will be changed.
Existing housing in Armstrong has not been identified.	The land on the eastern side of Armstrong Street is within the Farming Zone (FZ) and this land is not earmarked for investigation for future residential development in the Planning Scheme, therefore it has been excluded from the Study Area.
The land south and east along Simpsons and Wignell is indicated as blank, but there appears to be existing residential development or opportunities for future residential development. Where is the township boundary?	This land is currently zoned Farming (FZ). However, the Euroa Structure Plan identifies this area as an area to be investigated for future residential development when required. Neighbourhood character policies can really only apply to residentially zoned land. If or when Council decides to rezone this land, it could be included in the Rural Interface / Future Residential Precinct.
Not sure of the reference to the precinct named "Old Township". The old township goes beyond these boundaries including to the other side of the creek and south of the old highway, and includes the commercial precinct. This area needs clarifying and renaming.	The Old Township is referring only to the neighbourhood character within these streets. It is not referring to an official boundary of the original township and is a result of the survey work undertaken during the initial stage of the project. This survey work revealed a prevalence of older or original housing stock in these areas.
Rural Interface precinct should include reference to underground power supply. This should also apply to infill developments in other precincts.	While it is acknowledged that the appearance of power lines can detract from the neighbourhood character of an area, it is outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Character Study to investigate / recommend underground power supply.
Rural Interface should include protection for significant trees.	The presence of, and the need to protect, important vegetation is acknowledged in the precinct brochure.



Comments	Response to comments
Subdivision developments should be encouraged within the Rural Interface precinct without footpaths, as seen in existing streetscapes.	Footpaths are within the public domain and many would argue that they are important for pedestrian amenity. They can be designed to be more in keeping with the character of the area.
Natural building and landscape materials with colours of muted tones should be encouraged in the Rural Interface precinct.	Agreed. This will be added to the precinct brochure.
Single storey, low-scale development should be encouraged in the Rural Interface precinct.	It may be too restrictive to encourage only single storey development. Instead, the guidelines will be performance based in order to encourage new development to be sited below the tree canopy, and to avoid dominance of surrounding landscapes.
New major subdivisions or development along the urban fringe should be designed to integrate green corridors along flood and vegetation lines, and open up a proportion of land as public recreation space. Pedestrian pathways and links to be protected and encouraged.	Agreed. This will be added to the precinct brochure.
In the Old Township precinct, buildings considered to be architecturally significant and not protected under a heritage overlay should be identified and protected.	It is outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Character Study to identify and recommend buildings for protection through the Heritage Overlay. The brochure mentions that there may be buildings of potential heritage significance in this precinct, which could be further investigated by the Council.



## 3. References

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<sup>1</sup> Strathbogie Urban Design Framework, Connell Wagner, 2006.