Winchelsea Place Plan

Placemaking for the Future

March 2026



Acknowledgement to Country

Surf Coast Shire Council Acknowledges the Wadawurrung People, and the Gulidjan and Gadubanud Peoples of the Maar nation as the Traditional Owners of the land we now call Surf Coast Shire. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People who are part of our Surf Coast Shire community.

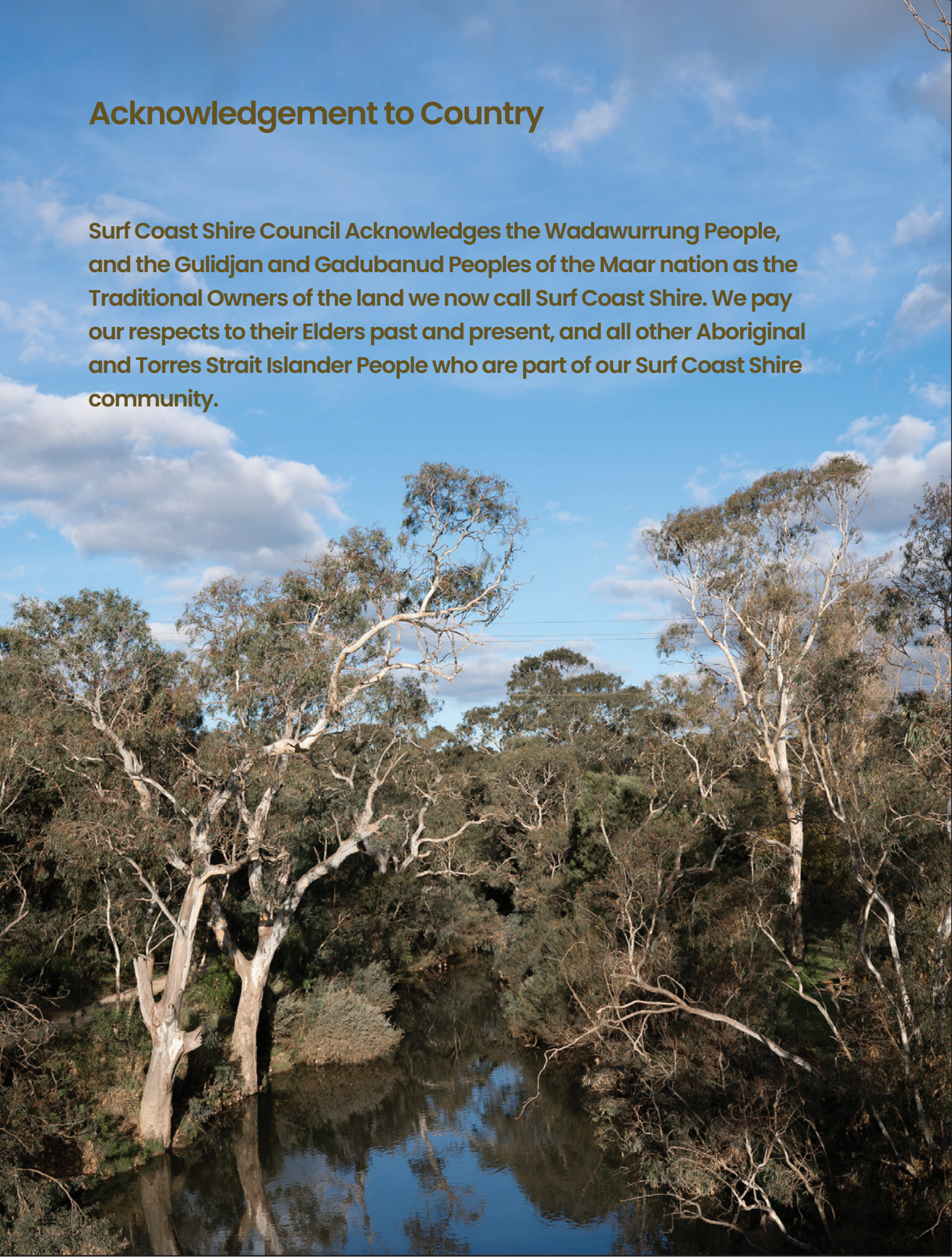


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Introduction to this plan and how did we get here?

Background

In 2025, Surf Coast Shire Council (Council) adopted a shire wide growth framework, the Urban Futures Strategy (UFS). The UFS identified Winchelsea as a key location for longer term growth, along with Torquay.

The 2015 strategy, *Growing Winchelsea: Shaping Future Growth 2015*, talked about the population of Winchelsea potentially reaching 10,000 by the year 2050. Through work in the UFS, it was recognised that long-term projections have many influences, and so housing and population demand is expressed as a range with moderate and higher growth scenarios.

In the UFS, forecasts suggest that between now and 2051, there will be demand for between 9,546 and 12,051 additional homes in Surf Coast Shire, of these 4,535 to 7,531 are expected to be in Winchelsea. This means a potential Winchelsea population could be between 10,771 – 18,757 people by 2051. This is beyond the aspirational growth previously outlined in Growing Winchelsea.

To create liveable neighbourhoods, where communities are well-connected and people have access to the services they need, requires forward planning, and often significant investment. Looking ahead and planning for projected growth helps Council and the community to prepare for changes and to shape the way the town evolves.

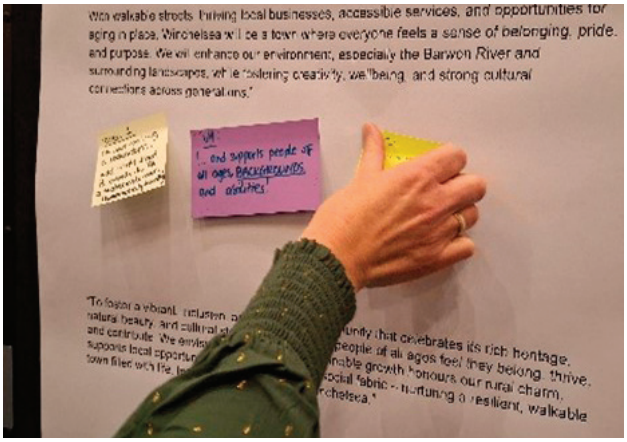
This plan (the Place Plan) is an aspirational community plan developed by the community members, with Council support, for their place. It sets out a vision and principles that are important to the community, now and into the future, as their town grows. This Place Plan provides guidance from the community to inform future structure planning and future land use decisions by Council.

A Place Plan working group was established in August 2025 after an open Expression of Interest process, to work on developing a Place Plan for Winchelsea.

Twenty nine people came together over a series of workshops to discuss, debate and develop a plan that outlines the essence of Winchelsea. This plan will be used to guide growth in the future and help retain the essential Winchelsea vibe for current and future communities.







Vision

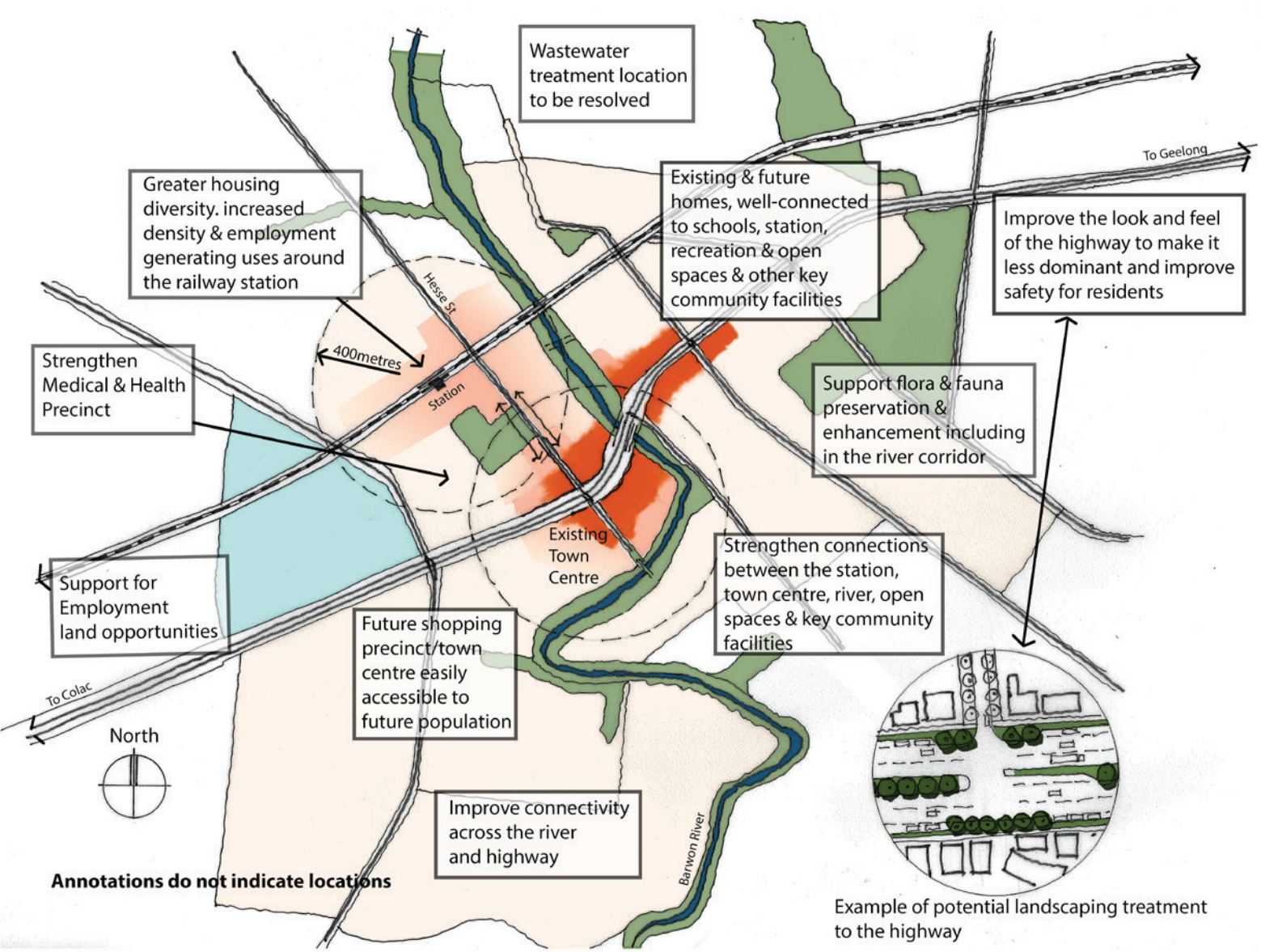


Winchelsea is a vibrant, inclusive and connected community - a place where people of all backgrounds and ages feel they belong, thrive and contribute. We celebrate our rural spirit grounded in agriculture and farming, and we enjoy living in harmony with the land and nature.

We envision a future where the community and First Nations People walk together with a deep respect for Country. Where our growth and development enhance our natural environment, honour our rural heritage, support thriving businesses and accessible services for all, and strengthen our social fabric.

Winchelsea Place Map

The map was developed in consultation with the Place Plan Working Group. The map communicates key aspirations in a visual way, connecting important places with ideas and opportunities.



7 Key Principles

Seven key principles have been identified to guide the sustainable growth and planning of the town, and help achieve the desired future vision for Winchelsea.



1. Managing Growth and Rural Character



2. Strong Community Connection



3. Environmental Stewardship



4. Celebrating Culture and Heritage



5. Inclusive Access to Services and Infrastructure



6. Walkable and Connected Town



7. Healthy Local Economy and Opportunity

Key Principle 1 - Managing Growth and Rural Character

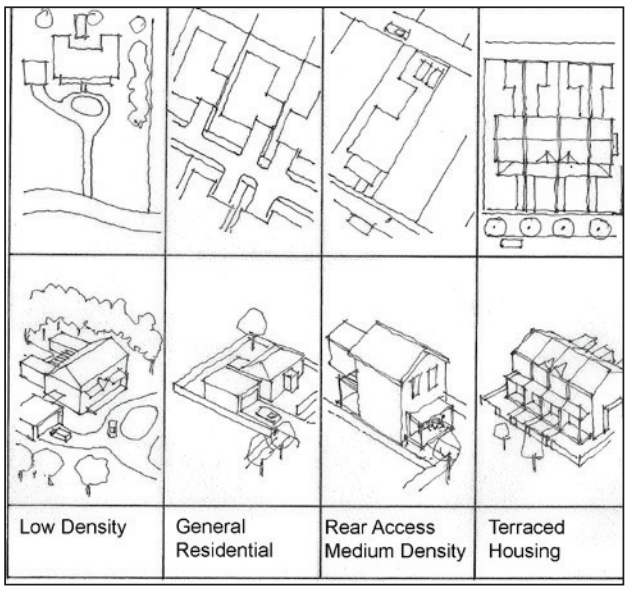
- **Plan for long-term, sustainable growth that respects the town's rural identity and ensures a diversity of housing.**
- **Balance innovation with preservation, ensuring Winchelsea retains its 'country feel' while embracing forward-thinking planning and infrastructure.**
- **Support climate resilience through Environmentally Sustainable Development, including Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design, Water Sensitive Urban Design, open space preservation and integrated water and land management.**

The things that are important to us as a community include:

- A community of many generations that have easy access to the services they need, and diverse and affordable housing options in the right places.
- Well-designed buildings.
- A vibrant and safe railway station precinct that supports a growing population with different dwelling types and employment creating activity.
- A central town centre with an inviting pedestrian-friendly streetscape, appropriate shopping facilities and good parking options, and buildings that have access to natural sunlight throughout the year.
- Capitalising on our river environment to ensure optimal connections and activation e.g. commercial opportunities close by.
- Building on what we have with our wide streets with reserves planted with vegetation and trees, and connected footpaths of various widths.
- A strengthened medical and health precinct that has the hospital at its core.



Diagram 1 - Housing Diversity Options





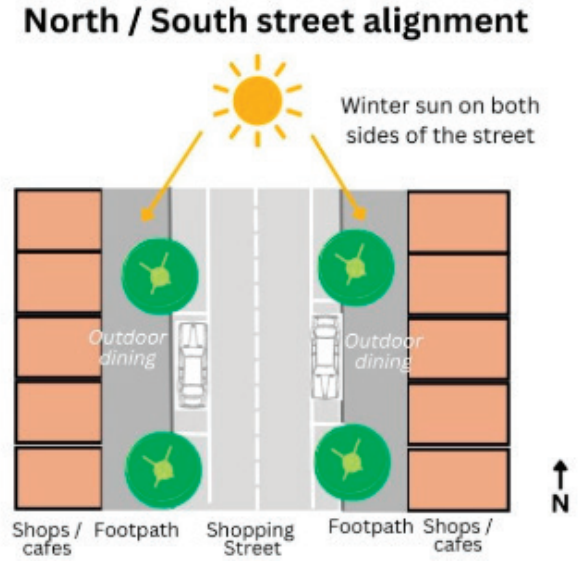


Diagram 2 - Example of north-south orientated commercial street providing maximum sun exposure

Diagram 3 - Potential cross section of river

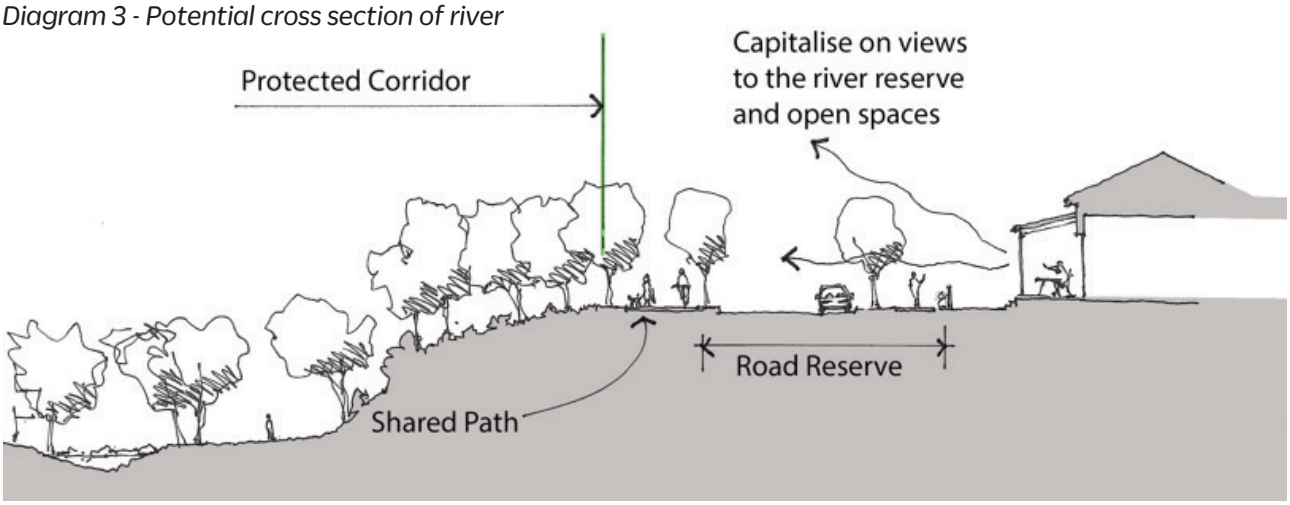
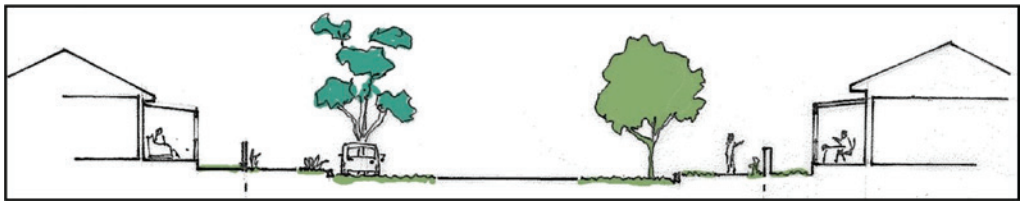


Diagram 4 - Potential cross section of low traffic volume residential street showing footpaths, planted verges with canopy trees providing shade.



Key Principle 2 - Strong Community Connection

- **Foster a connected, multi-generational community where people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds feel welcome, safe, and included.**
- **Support and encourage the development of all community groups, programs, events, community-led initiatives, activities and use of shared spaces, that promote social cohesion and wellbeing for all.**
- **Empower all community voices in decision making.**

The things that are important to us as a community include:

- As the town grows, building on, and promoting, our existing strong community groups and networks, through support and encouragement of our enthusiastic residents.
- Sharing our information, knowledge and resources effectively throughout the community to keep people connected.
- Continuing to foster community projects and events, such as the mud hut, amphitheatre, public art and story walks, to bring people of all ages together to connect and participate, and create a buzzing and vibrant town.
- Creating ample places to 'hang out', gather and meet up, building on the opportunities that currently exist, such as the mud hut, markets, public spaces near shops, and pool.
- Being an integrated community, with people of all ages included in all social activities and with a wide variety of opportunities for Winchelsea's youth to engage and participate.
- Supporting multi-use community spaces, such as community hubs and, business hubs, with facilities all in one place.
- Encouraging intergenerational sharing and practising of traditional and practical skills.




MEN & WOMEN
OF WINCHELSEA
AND DISTRICT

Key Principle 3 - Environmental Stewardship

- Protect and enhance natural assets, including the Barwon River, native ecosystems, street trees, biodiversity corridors and open space.
- Embed sustainability into all aspects of planning, with a commitment to protecting and enhancing ecological systems and supporting intergenerational wellbeing.
- Honour Meerreengeeye ngakeepoorryeet (Eastern Maar Country Plan) and Paleert Tjaara Dja (Wadawurrung Country Plan) recognising that 'water is life' and the connection between environment, culture, and community health.

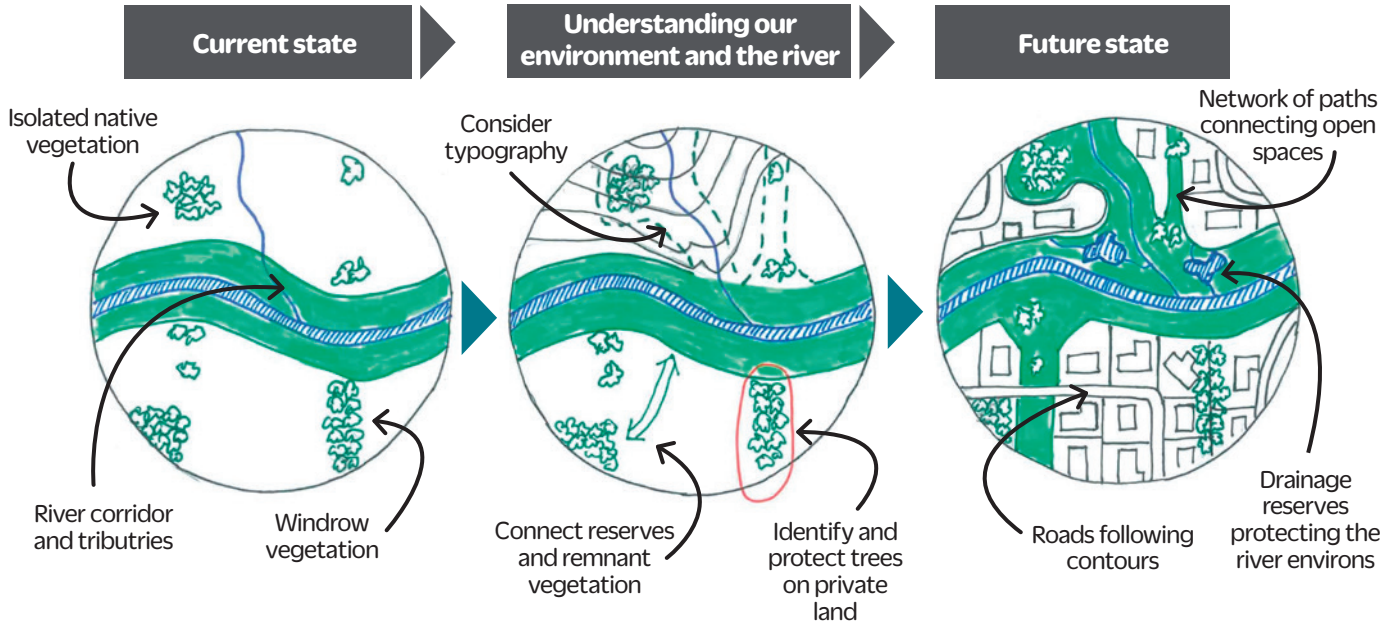
The things that are important to us as a community include:

- Protecting and connecting our key environmental assets and open spaces, such as the Barwon River, Winchelsea Common, Trebeck Reserve, and the walking trails along our river.
- Looking after our flora and fauna, including trees and natural bushland in open spaces.
- Using the Barwon River as an indicator of environmental health e.g. water quality, and the presence of Indigenous plants and animals, including platypus, birds, frogs and fish.
- Building our understanding and knowledge of our environment and the river, including learning from Indigenous knowledge and culture about healthy Country, healthy people.
- Encouraging lots of street trees, green streets and native plants in our town.
- Making sure we prepare for our future climate - hotter, drier, extreme weather events.
- Managing stormwater and drainage to avoid impacting the Barwon River e.g. making sure new developments include ways to capture, clean, and reuse stormwater.
- Supporting community interest in permaculture, community gardens, and river care, and explore opportunities for environmental forums.





Diagram 5 - Principles to preserve and connect environmental assets and open spaces







Key Principle 4 - Celebrating Culture and Heritage

- Recognise, protect, and celebrate Winchelsea's Indigenous culture, rich history, and local heritage assets.
- Incorporate cultural and historical context into the town's future identity, creating a sense of place grounded in its past.

The things that are important to us as a community include:

- Celebrating our shared culture by acknowledging and educating our community on both Indigenous culture and European heritage.
- Bringing people together through community run events that recognise and respect both Indigenous and European heritage e.g. the opening of the Cob wall.
- Stories and information displayed throughout the town, and public art capturing cultural stories e.g. the train station mural, story plaques about famous people and structures, displaying old images in public spaces.
- Education of culture and heritage, such as walks on Country with Traditional Owners, heritage walks showcasing important buildings/ structures, collecting and sharing stories from older generations who have lived in the area, and native species education sessions.
- Sourcing support and funding for First Nations communities to build capacity to share cultural stories alongside stories of the European heritage of the region.



Artwork on Hesse Rural Health main building – Harmony of Boundaries Worimi Artist, Gerard Black


PUBLIC LIBRARY

Key Principle 5 – Inclusive Access to Services and Infrastructure

- **Ensure equitable access to essential infrastructure and services for all life stages – including education, health, community, early years (including advocacy for childcare), youth, open space and recreation, without needing to leave town.**
- **Ensure social infrastructure meets the needs of the growing population, with flexible, multi-use community spaces that support evolving, multi-generational and connected communities.**

The things that are important to us as a community include:

- Access to services that support families, including childcare, libraries, social and family support, and youth services.
- Functional and inviting open spaces.
- Fit-for-purpose education facilities that are easy to access, grow with the town, and strengthen the diverse community and the economy, including a P-12 school, life skills curriculum, further learning hub/ TAFE /Deakin University.
- Disability access embedded in all infrastructure, spaces designed for all generations, and transit support to enable those who are socially isolated, such as the elderly, to access all services and infrastructure.
- Promoting and supporting Winchelsea's existing and future community facilities to be well managed and used by all.





Key Principle 6 - Walkable and Connected Town

- **Design for walkability, mobility, and access, with a focus on 400-metre catchments to key destinations and services.**
- **Encourage and support improvements to public transport services.**
- **Strengthen movement within the town and reduce the dividing impact of the highway and river through improved connectivity.**
- **Prioritise active transport and street appeal to encourage a vibrant public realm.**

The things that are important to us as a community include:

- Improved walking and cycling connections for people of all abilities that are safe and welcoming, linking key destinations like the town centre/commercial areas, railway station, community facilities, the river, pocket parks and open spaces, and residential areas.
- Improving the look and feel of the highway to make it less dominant and improve safety for residents e.g. use of urban design elements, safer traffic stops and merges, pedestrian crossings, median strip/boulevard with trees and vegetation, traffic calming measures and road markings to slow traffic, pedestrian timers, entrance signage.
- Well-located and appropriate highway and river crossings to improve safety and help connect people to the places they want and need to go.
- Having shops, services and facilities close to where people live so they can easily access them by foot, bicycle or a short car trip.
- That higher density development occurs around the railway station to make the most of this local resource.
- Increasing the usability of Main Street by reducing the impact of cars through design and safety improvements.
- Making sure that current and new developments are connected, with dedicated footpaths and bike paths to the town and river.



Example of potential planting to 'green' the highway to improve the look and feel.





Key Principle 7 - Healthy Local Economy and Opportunity

- **Support and grow local businesses and employment opportunities, building on existing strengths and creating new ones.**
- **Protect productive agricultural land and provide employment land to support a sustainable local economy and population growth.**
- **Promote local opportunities to ensure food security and circular economy principles.**
- **Encourage diverse tourism opportunities, cultural events, and creative industries to enhance economic resilience and town vitality.**

The things that are important to us as a community include:

- Easy-to-access and well-designed industrial and employment land to provide opportunities for new businesses and for local business expansion. Highway frontage is an important factor.
- Attracting businesses that are important to a sustainable town. e.g. childcare, health and secondary school to support local workers, and lifestyle businesses e.g. bakeries and coffee roasters, and short term stay accommodation.
- Making it easier for productive businesses to thrive.
- Promoting Winchelsea as a key business location by highlighting employment land opportunities.
- Making Winchelsea a place for people to stop and spend time in the town through the continued improvement of the Barwon River area, visitor information, street improvements such as shade and accessibility, and hosting events that promote our town.
- Promoting local produce through markets and making good quality, local and affordable food available that supports community traditions of growing and sharing food.
- Building on the existing health sector to attract workers and students, and develop partnerships with TAFEs for training, research and work placements.





Making this plan happen

Principles and Actions

Council values the contributions of the Place Plan Working Group and the Winchelsea community in expressing the vision, principles and aspirations that are important to the community as it grows.

The Place Plan will be used to guide a new Structure Plan for Winchelsea as set out in the 'Next Steps' section of this document.





Next steps and links to the Structure Plan

Our shared commitment

The success of the Place Plan is a shared responsibility. Council is committed to guiding the town's planning for growth in alignment with the Place Plan according to its vision and principles, including the associated provision of infrastructure and community facilities at the appropriate time. At the same time, the community also has a vital role to play in collaborating with Council in implementing the Place Plan and continuing to build strong community connections. We will work together over the long term to hold each other to account in ensuring future planning for the town is implemented as envisioned in the Place Plan.

Community commitment

The Winchelsea community commits to working together – and with Council - to realise the vision of the Place Plan.

We will work together to bring to life the priorities identified in the Place Plan, ensuring that the values and principles of the Plan are embedded into the heart of our community.

We will work with Council to ensure that the place plan principles and the "things that are important to the community" are reflected in the structure planning for Winchelsea and in any detailed growth planning for future development.

Council commitment

Council commits to continuing to work collaboratively with the community through the Structure Plan process and future planning for the town to make sure we are achieving the principles identified in the Place Plan, as we plan for a thriving town that offers:

- a strong community connection,
- an enhanced natural environment,
- diverse housing and employment options,
- a country feel and access to nature,
- walkable, green streets, vibrant public spaces, and
- infrastructure designed for resilience, and accessibility.

This Place Plan provides guidance from the community to inform future structure planning and future land use decisions by Council.

Any community or council projects or actions that are generated from this Plan will need to consider long term financial considerations and Council's budget prioritisation process.

Delivery of key infrastructure and /or services such as education and major health infrastructure remains the responsibility of State and Commonwealth governments or the private sector.

