

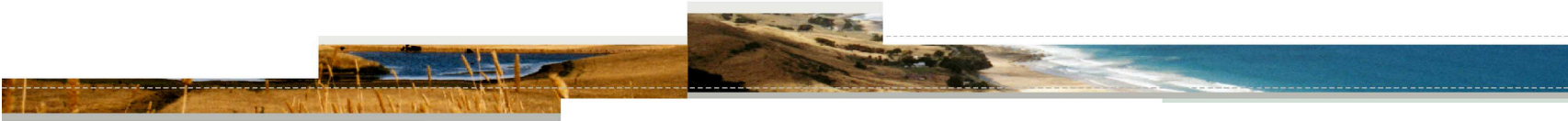


THE GREAT OCEAN ROAD REGION
LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT STUDY

plān|sphēre [// urban strategy planners]

MUNICIPAL TOOLKIT
COLAC OTWAY SHIRE

FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT | SEPTEMBER 2003



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1. Introduction

Planisphere was commissioned by the Department of Sustainability and Environment to undertake a landscape character assessment of the Great Ocean Road Region.

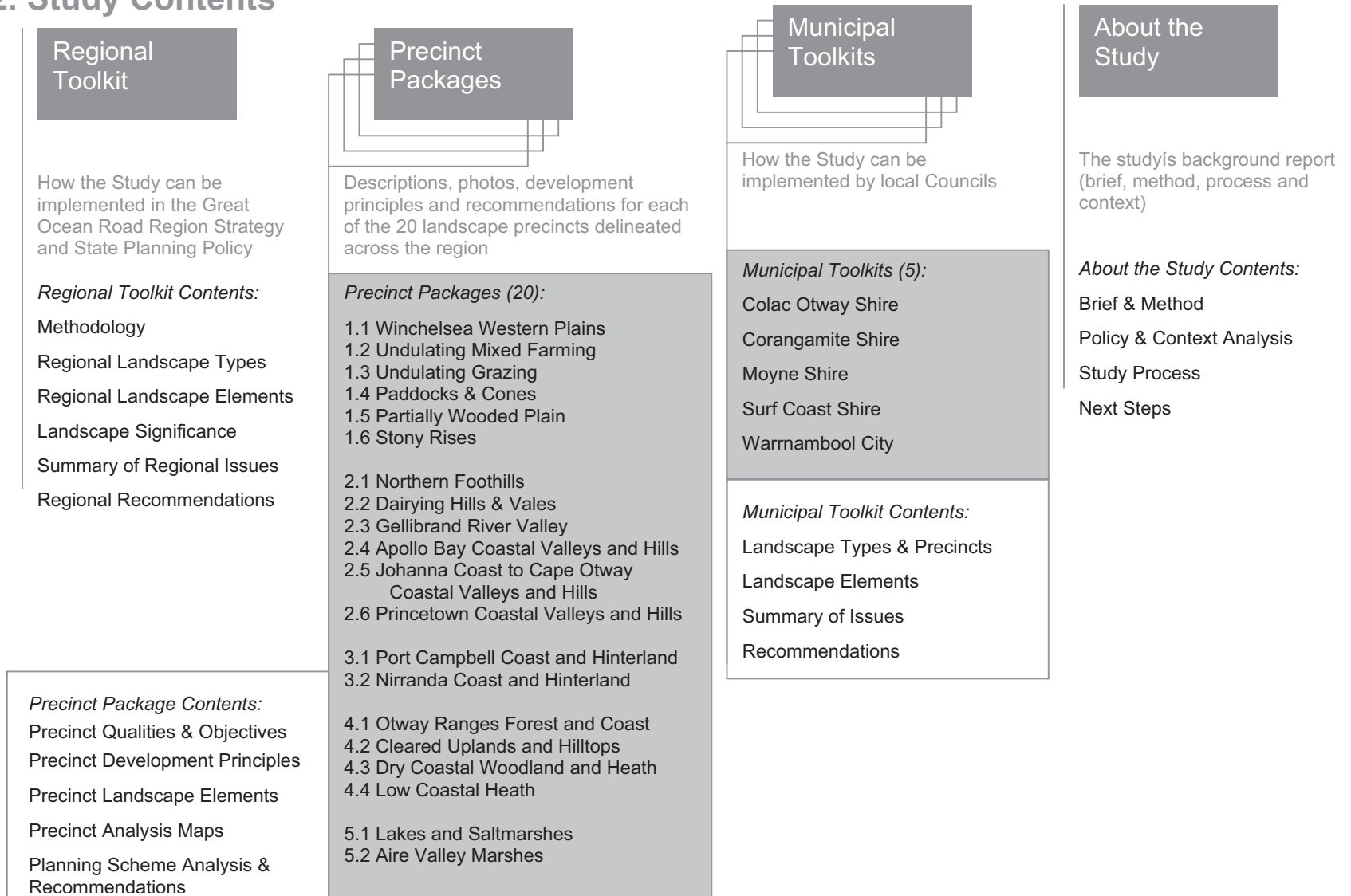
Landscape character is the interplay of geology, topography, vegetation, water bodies and other natural features, combined with the effects of land use and built development, which makes one landscape different from another.

The landscape character assessment was undertaken as part of the overall Great Ocean Road Region Strategy, and has devised a sound and consistent methodology for assessing the character of landscapes and the way in which various types of development can be managed in different landscape types.

This document, the 'Colac Otway Municipal Toolkit', contains a synopsis of the landscape character types and precincts within the Shire, an explanation of landscape elements, a summary of key landscape character issues, and proposed recommendations, including the best method of implementing the findings of the Study through the Colac Otway Planning Scheme. It is intended that the relevant 'Precinct Packages' be appended to the Colac Otway Municipal Toolkit for a complete picture of landscape character within the Shire.

The Municipal Toolkits are one of four components that make up the contents of the Great Ocean Road Region Landscape Assessment Study. An outline of the full contents of the Study is included on page 3 of this Toolkit.

2. Study Contents





3. Landscape Types & Precincts in Colac Otway

The Colac Otway Shire is located approximately centrally within the Study Area, bounded by the Princes Highway to the north and the Great Ocean Road coastline to the south.

The landscape of the Shire within the Study Area is characterised by large areas of Otway Forest, containing dense, tall forest cover in hilly terrain. This landscape type extends the coast in places, terminating at high sea cliffs such as those located at Cape Otway. At the foothills of the Otway Ranges to the north and in some areas on the coast, the landscape is characterised by hilly topography with incised creeks and valleys. Apollo Bay is located within this landscape type, at the base of the steep Otway foothills. The northern part of the Shire within the Study Area is characterised by a plains landscape, punctuated in some areas by volcanic cones, craters and rocky outcrops. In the southern area of the Shire is a localised flatlands landscape associated with the Aire River valley marshes.

The following landscape character types and precincts exist within the Shire and are shown on the Colac Otway [Landscape Character Types and Precinct Map](#) on page 5.

Western Plains, Cones and Lakes (1.1 – 1.6)

1.1 Winchelsea Western Plains (part)

1.3 Undulating Grazing (part)

1.4 Paddocks & Cones (part)

1.6 Stony Rises (part)

Otway Foothills, Valleys and Uplands (2.1 – 2.6)

2.1 Northern Foothills (part)

2.2 Dairying Hills & Vales (part)

2.3 Gellibrand River Valley (part)

2.4 Apollo Bay Coastal Valleys and Hills

2.5 Johanna Coast to Cape Otway Coastal Valleys and Hills

Otway Forests and Coast (4.1 – 4.4)

4.1 Otway Ranges Forest and Coast (part)

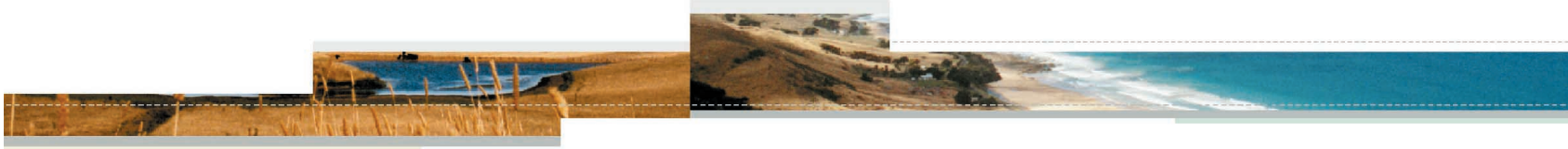
4.2 Cleared Uplands and Hilltops

Localised Flatlands (5.1 – 5.2)

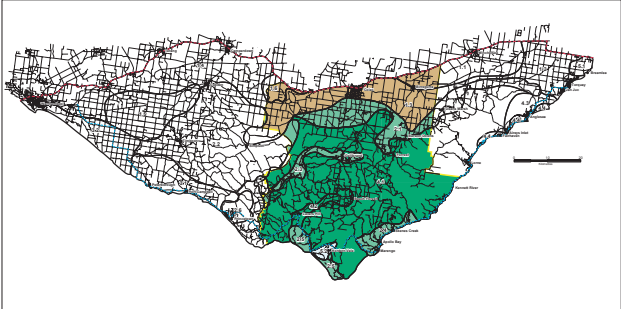
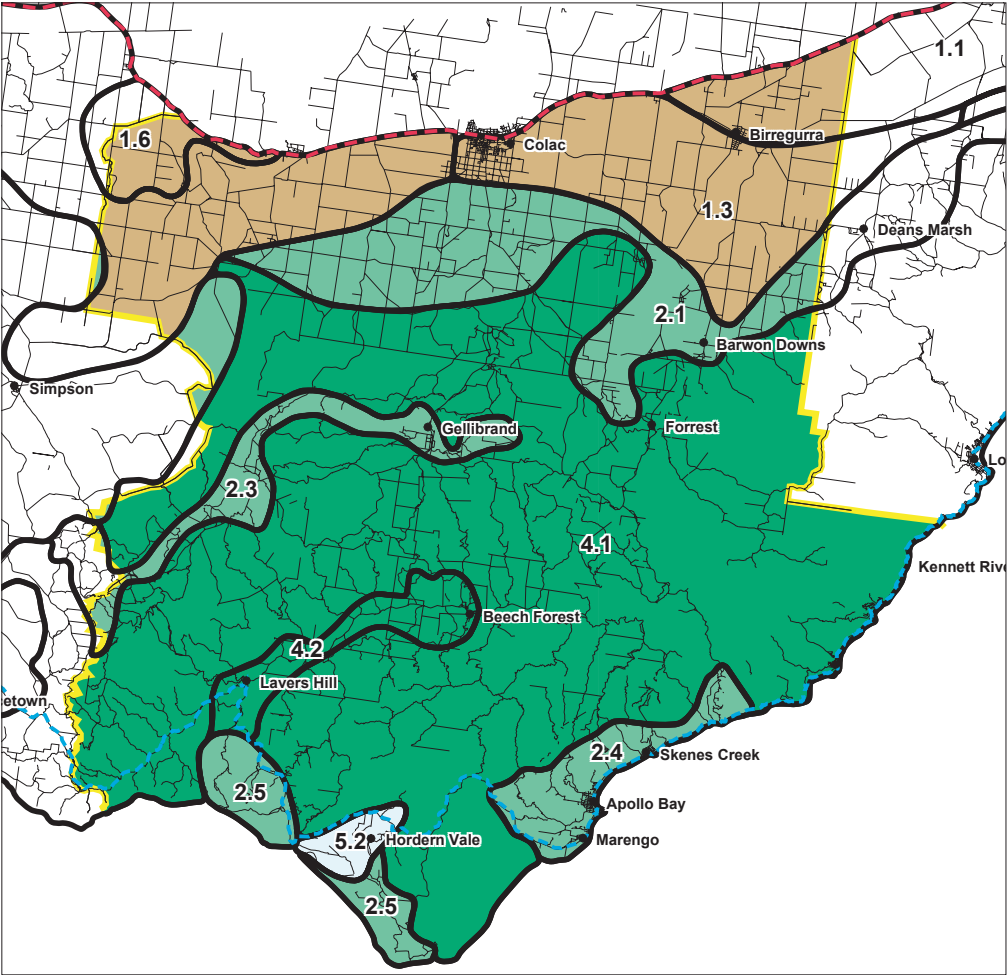
5.2 Aire Valley Marshes

Implications for Local Policy

It is recommended that the Precinct Descriptions, Distinctive Qualities and Development Principles (including Landscape Objectives) relating to the precincts in the Shire be included as Local Policy in the Colac Otway Planning Scheme. (Refer to relevant [Precinct Packages](#) for details).



Landscape Types and Precincts



Legend

- Great Ocean Road
- Princes Highway (Northern Study Boundary)
- Municipal boundary

Landscape Character Types and Precincts

- Western Plains, Cones and Lakes (1.1 - 1.6)
- Otway Foothills, Valleys and Uplands (2.1 - 2.6)
- Otway Forests and Coast (4.1 - 4.4)
- Western Coastal Cliffs (3.1 - 3.2)
- Localised Flatlands (5.1 - 5.2)



4. Landscape Elements in Colac Otway

Townships

Townships within the Colac Otway Shire vary in their settings and relationship to the landscape. Coastal towns such as Apollo Bay and Marengo are dominated by their dramatic landscape setting, being located at the base of steep, cleared hills with a frontage to the beach. In contrast, a township such as Birregurra is located in the relatively flat topography of the Western Plains where the Barwon River is one of few natural features in a landscape dominated by cleared paddocks. Providing a different landscape experience again are towns such as Forrest and Gellibrand, nestled in clearings of the Otway Ranges with dense forest all around.

The landscape character of the following Colac Otway townships is described in the Precinct Landscape Elements section of the relevant Precinct Package:

- Colac (Precinct 1.3)
- Barwon Downs (Precinct 2.1)
- Forrest (Precinct 4.1)
- Kennett River (Precinct 4.1)
- Wye River (Precinct 4.1)
- Skenes Creek (Precinct 2.4)
- Apollo Bay (Precinct 2.4)
- Marengo (Precinct 2.4)
- Lavers Hill (Precinct 4.2)
- Beech Forest (Precinct 4.2)
- Gellibrand (Precinct 2.3)

Key issues in Colac Otway townships include ribbon development between settlements, particularly in coastal areas along the Great Ocean Road. It is important to contain the urban form of townships, and for the natural landscape to dominate beyond the township edge.

Township edges may vary in the way they interface with the natural landscape. It may be appropriate that the built form edges of some townships are clearly demarcated, while others are 'softer' comprising a combination of buildings and vegetation. If not appropriately designed and integrated with the landscape, development on the periphery of settlements, often in low density residential areas, can 'blur' the urban boundary of townships with development spilling into the natural landscape. Signage clutter along the main road into a township can have a similar negative visual effect.

Another key issue is the visual dominance of buildings located on hill faces around townships, associated with the clearing of vegetation and multiple storey elevations that result from buildings having no relationship to their topographical setting. The emergence of 'heavy' urban or suburban building forms, particularly in coastal towns, is also emerging as a key issue where previously the casual, 'beachside' character was derived from light, simple buildings with articulated forms and a mix of materials.

Edges

'Edges' occur in the landscape when different landscape types or features intersect. They create complexity in the landscape and provide visual contrast and a point of interest. For any given landscape (eg the sea, a forest) it is often the edge (eg the coastline, a clearing in the forest) that attracts the most people and creates management issues.

There are many edges within the Colac Otway landscape, including perhaps the most complex and dramatic coming together of edges in the Region. This occurs in the Apollo Bay Coastal Valleys and Hills Precinct (Precinct 2.4) where the following landscape elements intersect: Low sea coast, beach side township, topographic edge of the Otway Ranges sweeping down to the narrow coastal strip, edge of the forest, and the incised, vegetated creek valleys.



Other landscape edges are described in the Precinct Landscape Elements section of the Precinct Packages and include:

- Township / natural landscape edges
- Edges where landscape character types intersect
- Edges where landscape character precincts meet
- The coastline
- The forest edge
- National Park edges
- Topographical edges
- Features in the landscape creating edges ie incised valleys, stands of vegetation, rivers and other waterways, shelter belts, dry stone walls, volcanic craters and cones etc
- Road corridors creating edges

Corridors

Main road corridors and key tourist routes that pass through the Study Area in Colac Otway include the Great Ocean Road and the Princes Highway. Linking these corridors are a number of key north to south routes, and roads such as the Otway Lighthouse Road to Cape Otway. The road corridors throughout the Shire pass through different landscape types and precincts, resulting in a variety of landscape experiences and scenery throughout the journey. Some of these journeys are described in the Precinct Landscape Elements section of the Precinct Packages.

Main road corridors throughout the Region are zoned Road Zone Category 1 and buildings within 100 metres of them require a planning permit in the Rural and Environmental Rural Zones. As a result most development adjacent to main roads can be assessed and managed. This is important because the impression and landscape character of an area is often confined to what is seen from the main road corridors, particularly the key tourist routes.

The assessment and management of development that can be seen from main road corridors is therefore an important issue in the Shire.

Particular types of development for which Development Principles have been prepared in relation to this issue include timber plantations adjacent to main roads, development on highly visible hill faces and ridges, ribbon development and low density development on township fringes.

Key Views

There are many key viewing locations within the Shire that are frequented by tourists and visitors to the Region, and feature on postcards from the Great Ocean Road. These include many stunning views from the coastal side of the Great Ocean Road featuring steep rocky cliffs and the Southern Ocean. Other scenic lookouts are located on ridges in the Otway Forest and feature panoramic views of surrounding bush and farmland.

Views from the following key locations in Colac Otway are described in the Precinct Landscape Elements section of the relevant Precinct Package:

- Cape Patton Lookout (Precinct 2.4)
- Mariner's Lookout (Precinct 2.4)
- Castle Cove (Precinct 2.5)
- Johanna Beach (Precinct 2.5)
- Mt Defiance Lookout (Precinct 4.1)
- Scenic Lookout at Barramunga (Precinct 4.1)

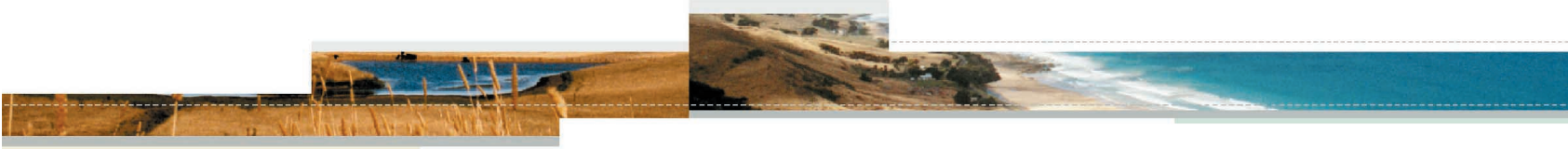
These key viewing locations are shown on the Colac Otway Key Views Map on page 9.

The protection and management of views from popular and established viewing locations is a key issue within the Shire. It is very important, in most instances, to retain the dominance of the natural landscape from these key viewing points, and to ensure that any new development is assessed for its impact on the character of the landscape.

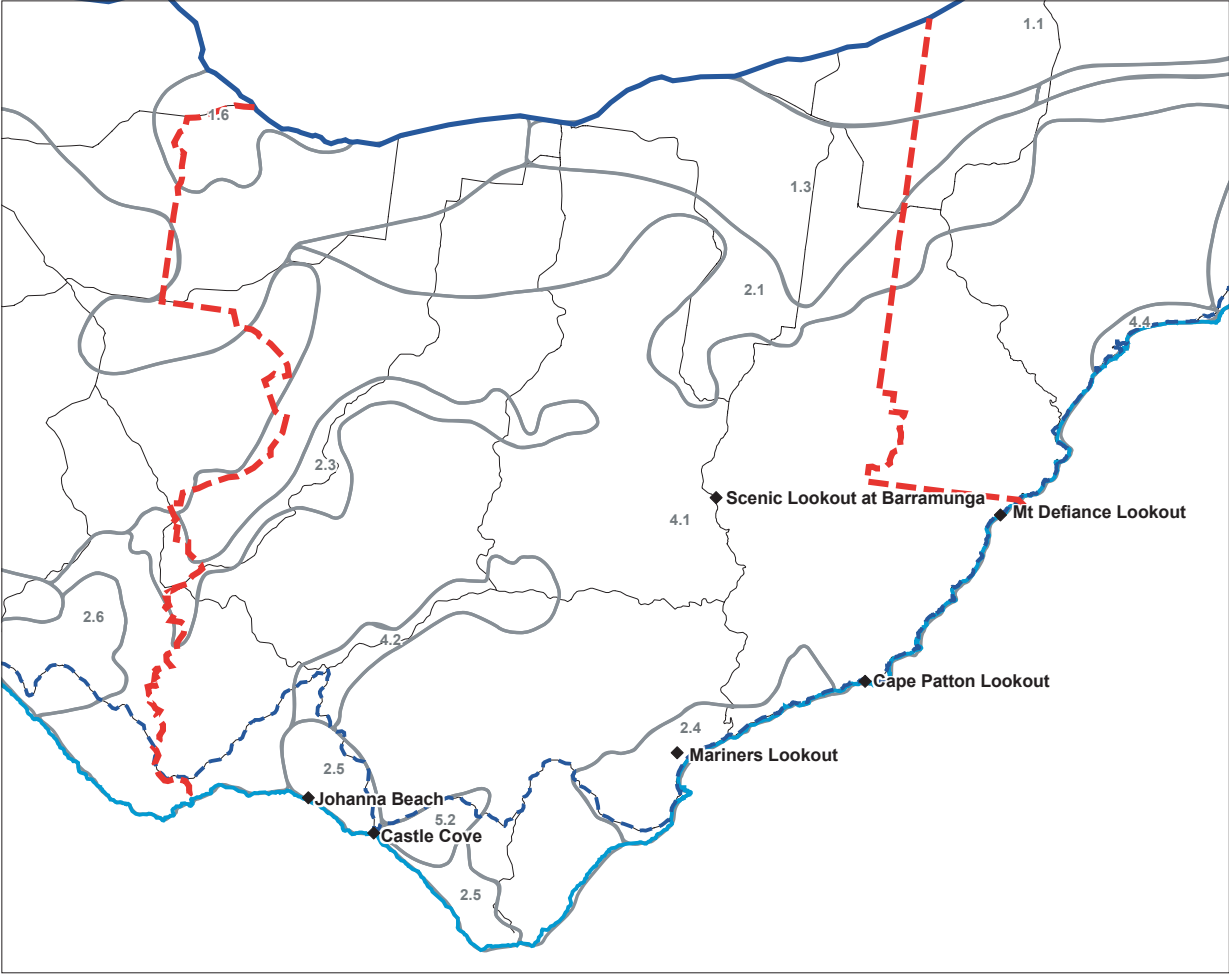


Implications for Local Policy







It is recommended that brief policy statements about each of these Landscape Elements be included as Local Policy in the Colac Otway Planning Scheme. It is envisaged that the policy statements would be incorporated into the relevant Local Policy for that landscape character precinct.



Key Views



Legend

-  Great Ocean Road
-  Princes Highway (Northern Study Boundary)
-  Coastline (Southern Study Boundary)
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  Landscape Character Precincts
-  Key Viewing Locations



5. Summary of Colac Otway Issues

Development Pressures

Development pressure has increased dramatically in recent years, and is focussed along the coast of Colac Otway, on any land that is zoned and available for development. The majority of new development is centred on and around townships, particularly Apollo Bay, with pressure expected to increase in nearby settlements such as Skenes Creek, as it will be seweraged in the near future.

Development is also occurring between towns on the coast on isolated lots or old small lot subdivisions. Often these developments are highly visible and on steep sites that are inappropriate for development.

Development is primarily residential or tourism related, including large dwellings that cater for permanent residents as opposed to the holiday shacks of the past. As a result, these homes tend to be larger and more visually imposing, often sited and design to take advantage of coastal views. Tourism development includes B&Bs mostly in the vicinity of the Great Ocean Road, with increasing pressure for larger tourism establishments, often marketed on an eco tourism theme.

Inland, there is pressure for timber plantations with the associated clear felling being visually intrusive, particularly from main tourist roads. Other development pressure in the hinterland is mostly associated with the rural use of the land, and includes pressure for small lot subdivision for hobby farms, particularly in and around settlements such as Barongarook.

Planning Permit Controls

Zones

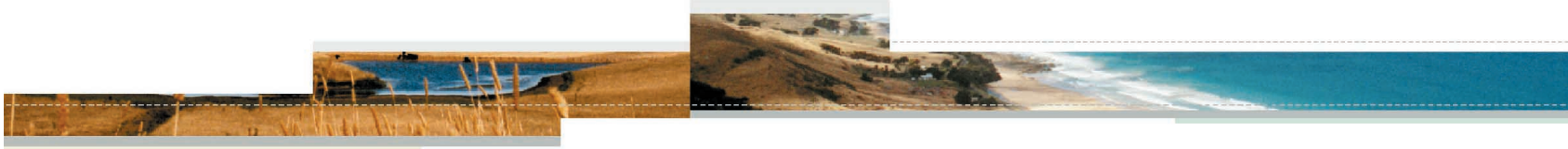
Much of the Shire of Colac Otway is zoned Public Conservation and Resource, reflecting the State or National Park status of the Otway

Forest. Under the requirements of the zone, a permit is required to construct a building or carry out works unless it is shown on an Incorporated Plan which applies to the land, or is carried out by or on behalf of the public land manager.

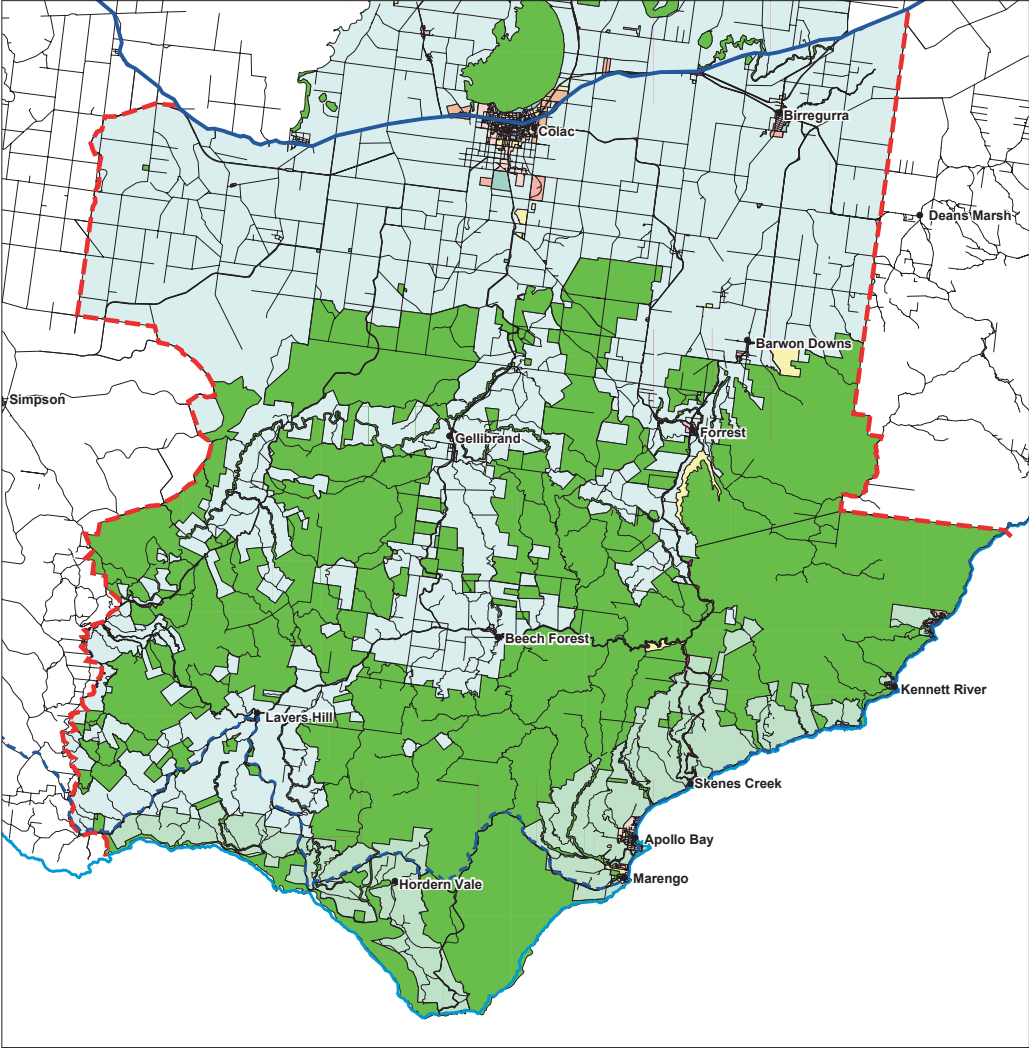
A large area of the Shire in the northern part of the Study Area is zoned Rural. The Gellibrand River Valley (Precinct 2.3) is also zoned Rural, as is the cleared hilltop between Lavers Hill and Beech Forest (Precinct 4.2). Privately owned pockets within the Otway Ranges are also zoned Rural. The key purpose of the Rural Zone is for dairying, grazing and crop raising.

A key issue throughout the Shire that has the potential to be managed through the provisions of the Rural Zone is the clear felling of plantation trees adjacent to main road corridors and tourist routes. This practice leaves large and often highly visible areas of the landscape scarred, detracting from the landscape character of the Region. The schedule to the Rural Zone provides the opportunity to require a permit for timber production over 40 hectares. It can also be specified that this requirement only relates to timber plantations abutting a Category 1 Road Zone. Introducing a permit trigger in the Colac Otway Planning Scheme would provide the opportunity to require plantations to be screened from main road corridors by an indigenous and/or native vegetation buffer including understorey (minimum width 20 metres to be stipulated in Local Policy), thus obscuring clear felled areas from key tourist routes and other main roads.

Large areas of coastal hinterland within the Shire are zoned Environmental Rural, including the Johanna coast to Cape Otway (Precincts 4.1, 2.5 and 5.2) and the Apollo Bay coastal area (Precinct 2.4). The Environmental Rural Zone requires a permit for more uses and development than the Rural Zone, with a key purpose of the zone being to conserve environmental sensitivity and bio-diversity. It is specified in the schedule to the Environmental Rural Zone in the Colac Otway Planning Scheme that a permit is required for earthworks on all land.



Zoning



Legend

- Great Ocean Road
- Princes Highway (Northern Study Boundary)
- Coastline (Southern Study Boundary)
- Municipal Boundaries

Zones

PPRZ	IN1Z
TZ	R1Z
ERZ	SUZ1
LDRZ	PUZ4
PUZ7	CA
PCRZ	B4Z
RUZ	RDZ1
B1Z	B2Z



Both the Rural and Environmental Rural Zones require a permit for buildings within 100 metres of a Category 1 Road Zone. However, the standard Victoria Planning Provisions (VPPs) Decision Guidelines under both zones contain minimal reference to the protection and enhancement of landscape character. This gap in the VPPs will be overcome through the provision of Local Policy containing the Precinct Principles (including Development Principles) prepared as part of this Study.

A review of existing VPPs rural zones has recently been completed, which may have implications for the detailed implementation of the above recommendations. However, it is recommended that the proposed changes be adapted as necessary and accommodated within any changes to the structure of the rural zones.

Towns within the Shire are primarily zoned Township or Residential 1, with some Low Density Residential or Rural Living zoned areas on the outskirts. As discussed, it is often the low density fringes of townships that 'spill' into the natural landscape as opposed to being contained, and result in an erosion of the landscape character.

The zones in place within the Study Area of the Shire are shown on the Colac Otway [Zoning Map](#) on page 11.

Overlays

Existing Significant Landscape Overlays

The Significant Landscape Overlay is used in three areas of the Study Area within the Colac Otway Shire. The overlay areas are located near Cape Otway (part Precincts 2.5 and 4.1), to the west of Glenaire (part Precincts 2.5 and 4.1) and towards the north of the study area, over a large section of the plains landscape (part Precincts 1.3, 2.1 and 4.1).

Despite applying to three different landscape types, one schedule is used to cover all three SLO areas ('SLO1 Coastal, Otway and Plains Landscapes'), with a combined statement of the nature and key elements of the landscape(s), landscape character objectives, permit requirements and decision guidelines.

As a result, the key elements of the landscapes are not clearly defined, and the character objectives are generalised. Also, the permit requirements contain statements that are decision guidelines, and the decision guidelines themselves are very broad.

It is therefore recommended that the SLO1 schedule is re-structured and separate detailed schedules are prepared for each of the three landscape types, based on the findings of the precinct analysis undertaken as part of this Study.

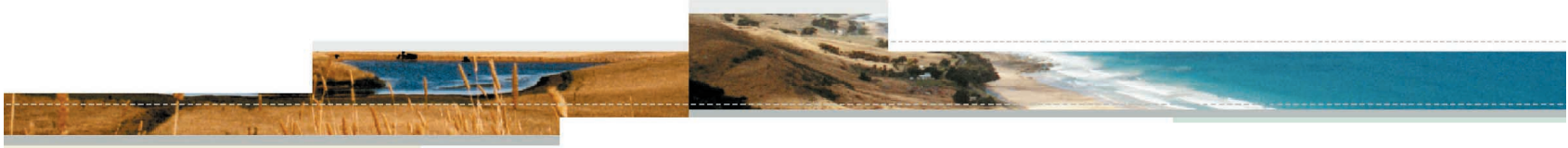
In addition, there is the potential to extend the existing SLO area at Cape Otway to cover the remainder of the Environmental Rural zoned land immediately to the east. This is canvassed more fully in the [Proposed Significant Landscape Overlays](#) section of this [Toolkit](#).

Other Existing Relevant Overlays

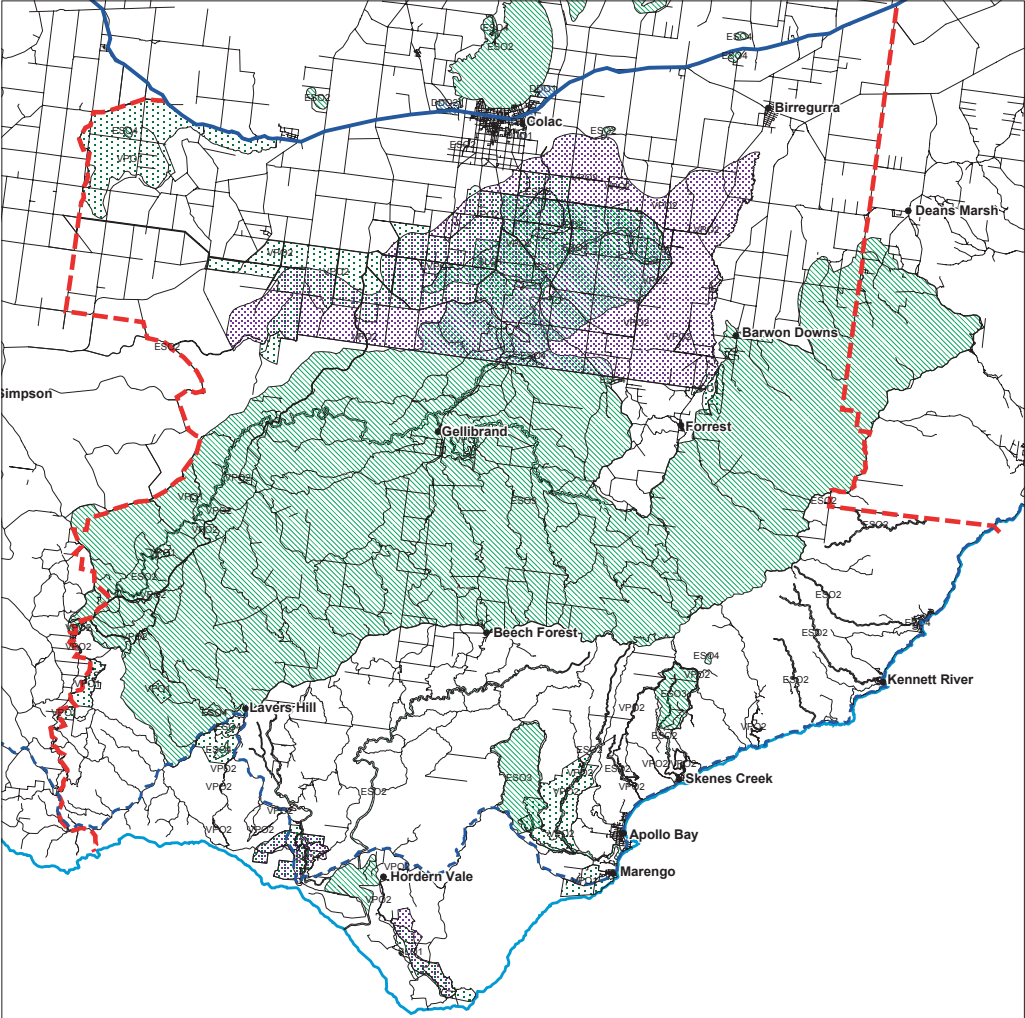
Other relevant overlays utilised within the Shire's study area are the Environmental Significance, Vegetation Protection and Design and Development Overlays.

Key areas where these overlays are used include the vegetated slopes and vegetation adjacent to the main road in the Gellibrand River Valley Precinct 2.3, and areas of environmental and vegetation significance in the Lavers Hill Precinct 4.2. The Environmental Significance Overlay is also in place for the majority of Precinct 5.2 which is recognised for its environmental qualities and features, including the Aire River and environs.

Existing overlays relevant to landscape character within the Study Area of the Shire are shown on the [Relevant Overlays Map](#) on page 13.



Relevant Overlays



Legend

- Great Ocean Road
- Princes Highway (Northern Study Boundary)
- Coastline (Southern Study Boundary)
- Municipal Boundaries

Overlays

- Design and Development Overlay
- Vegetation Protection Overlay
- Significant Landscape Overlay
- Environmental Significance Overlay



Proposed Significant Landscape Overlays

There are areas of significant landscape character within the Shire that are not covered by sufficient Planning Scheme controls and are experiencing development pressure. In many of these areas, zone controls are relied upon to trigger a permit and comprehensive assessment guidelines are not available. The following 'formula' has been applied to all parts of the Shire within the Study Area to determine where these 'Priority Areas' are located:

Significance + Pressure + Lack of Control = Priority Area (for additional control)

The level of significance (Regional, State or National) was attributed to the landscapes through the application of a set of assessment criteria. The methodology and findings in relation to landscape character significance are outlined in the [Regional Toolkit](#).

The Priority Areas are recommended for protection and management through the application of the Significant Landscape Overlay. Proposed Significant Landscape Overlay areas are as follows:

Stony Rises Landscape

The 'stony rises' landscape of Precinct 1.6 is recommended as a Significant Landscape Overlay area. (The area may also extend into part of Precinct 1.4.) The concentration of dry stone walls, stony boulders and outcrops throughout this landscape are of State significance. In addition, the Princes Highway, a designated main road and tourist route passes through the precinct and development pressures associated with the private ownership of the land are being experienced. It is also of note that the Significant Landscape Overlay is already in place within this precinct in the adjacent Municipality.

Johanna Coast Landscape

Private land in the Johanna coastal area extending approximately from the Shire's western Municipal boundary to Johanna (part Precincts 2.5 and 4.1) is recommended as a Significant Landscape Overlay area. (This area would extend westward into the Corangamite Shire.) The

landscape and scenery of this coastal area is of State significance and is accessible, in part, from the Great Ocean Road. In addition, the area is experiencing development pressure focussed on the coast.

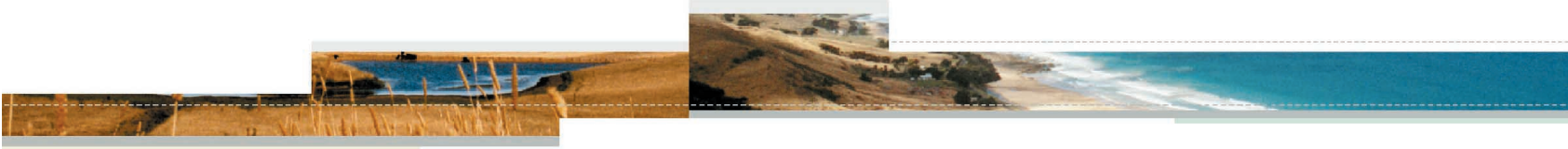
Apollo Bay Coastal Valleys and Hills Landscape

Private land (excluding the townships) in the Apollo Bay Coastal Valleys and Hills landscape (Precinct 2.4) is recommended as a Significant Landscape Overlay area. The landscape setting of the whole precinct is of National significance. The Great Ocean Road travels through this area, it experiences high tourism visitation and development pressure is ever increasing.

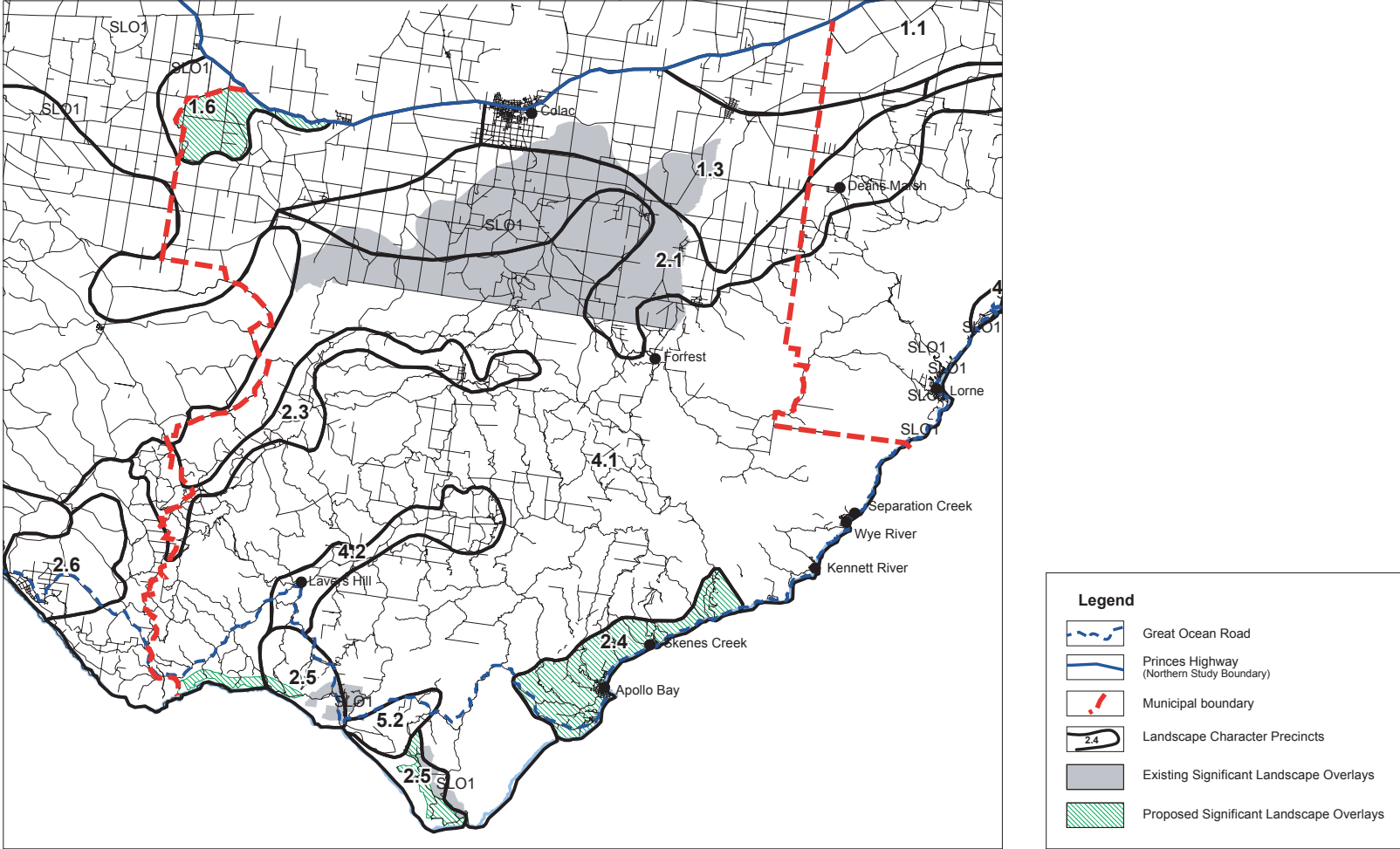
Existing Cape Otway Significant Landscape Overlay Area

It is recommended that the existing Significant Landscape Overlay area at Cape Otway be extended to cover the remaining private land immediately to its east (part Precinct 2.5). The coastal landscape and scenery in this area is of State significance and Cape Otway itself is a landmark destination of National significance. Being accessible via a main tourist route and other secondary roads, this area experiences moderate visitation.

The proposed Significant Landscape Overlay areas within the Colac Otway Shire are depicted on the [Existing and Proposed Significant Landscape Overlay Areas Map](#) on page 15.



Existing and Proposed Significant Landscape Overlay Areas





Local Planning Policy Framework

The Colac Otway Planning Scheme includes Strategic Directions to:

- Manage the key elements of the natural environment in a sustainable manner.
- Protect key visual, cultural and environmental features which give the Otway Coast its character while facilitating development in an environmentally sustainable way.
- Enhance the role of Apollo Bay as a key settlement.
- Encourage high quality design of tourism developments.

And includes the following Local Policies relevant to landscape character:

- 22.01 Main Roads / Scenic Routes
- 22.02 Ridgelines
- 22.03 Tourist Development – Apollo Bay Harbour Precinct
- 22.04 House Lot Excision in the Rural and Environmental Rural Zones
- 22.05 Coastal and Otway Ranges Townships

The Three Year MSS Review Report (Keaney Planning and Research Pty Ltd and Michael Kirsch, August 2002) recommends changes to the structure, format and content of the Municipal Strategic Statement, including the above Local Policies which are of some relevance to landscape character. The majority of these changes can be implemented without affecting the recommendations of this Study.

The Colac Otway Planning Scheme does not contain Local Policy relating specifically to landscape character and following the delineation of landscape character types and precincts, and the assessment of landscape character significance as part of this Study, it is recommended that this information be included as Local Policy in the Planning Scheme. It is important that Local Policy assists in exercising discretion within the Planning Scheme and it is therefore recommended that the Development Principles prepared as part of this Study also be included. (The Development Principles are contained in the relevant Precinct Packages).

The Local Policy, including Development Principles, will provide guidance in decision making in relation to landscape character that is currently lacking. Particular issues within the Colac Otway Shire that will be covered include development visible from key tourist roads, buildings on hill faces and ridges, and plantations adjacent to main road corridors.



6. Colac Otway Recommendations

Colac Otway Planning Scheme

Municipal Strategic Statement

Review and strengthen the Municipal Strategic Statement in relation to landscape character generally, including the following Clauses:

- 21.01-03 and 21.04-02 The Nature of the Land

Review and strengthen the Municipal Strategic Statement in relation to townships in the landscape, including the following Clauses:

- 21.01-04 and 21.04-03 Settlement Patterns and Rural Living
- 21.04-10 Apollo Bay, Birregurra, Colac and Smaller Communities of the Shire

Local Policy

Introduce new Local Policy specific to the landscape character of Colac Otway, including Precinct Descriptions, Distinctive Qualities and Development Principles (including Landscape Objectives) relating to the precincts in the Shire.

Include brief policy statements about each of the Precinct Landscape Elements in the new Local Policy. It is envisaged that the policy statements would be incorporated into the relevant Local Policy for that landscape character precinct.

Amend Local Policy 22.01 Main Roads / Scenic Routes to include a requirement for an indigenous or native vegetation buffer (minimum depth 20 metres) for timber plantations abutting a Road Zone Category 1.

Review and strengthen all relevant Local Policies.

Rural Zone

Amend the Schedule to the Rural Zone to require a permit for timber production over 40 hectares abutting a Road Zone Category 1.

Significance Landscape Overlay

Restructure and rewrite the existing Significant Landscape Overlay schedule (SLO1), so that a separate schedule is prepared and tailored to each existing landscape character area.

Extend the existing 'Cape Otway' Significant Landscape Overlay area (Precinct 2.5) into the Environmental Rural zoned land immediately to the west.

Apply the Significant Landscape Overlay to the Stony Rises Landscape (part Precinct 1.6 and possibly extending to part Precinct 1.4).

Apply the Significant Landscape Overlay to the Johanna Coast Landscape (part Precincts 2.5 and 4.1). This overlay area will extend into the Corangamite Shire.

Apply the Significant Landscape Overlay to the Apollo Bay Coastal Valleys and Hills Landscape (Precinct 2.4)

Detailed investigation is required to determine the exact cadastral boundaries of the above proposed overlay areas, as this was outside the scope of the brief.

Colac Otway Community Education

Consider the need for community education programs to disseminate information about landscape sensitive development and the findings of this Study.



Council Staff Skilling

It will take time to become familiar with the findings of this Study and its implementation through the planning system, and the Shire's planners will need support and skilling to get the most out of the Study's recommendations. Correct approaches to site analysis, knowledge about acceptable design solutions for particular landscape character types and consistency are all important. Training sessions, workshops and a review of permit applications by appropriately qualified consultants may be useful techniques. Above all, the Council must send out the right message to the development community through consistent decision making as well as communication about the value of the landscape character to the Shire's image and economy.

Council Statutory Support

The main products for statutory support, which will aid decision making are the proposed changes to the Colac Otway Planning Scheme, including the Development Principles and Local Policy. However, there are other allied or associated measures that can be taken, including:

- Introduction of additional permit conditions
- Better enforcement of permit conditions
- Active monitoring of illegal works, and increased publicity regarding penalties
- Improved communication and coordination with public land managers to ensure that the desired landscape character outcomes are achieved