

Mansfield Shire Council

# Delatite Valley Plan

20265



Mansfield Shire

Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**

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## Acknowledgements

The Delatite Valley is on Taungurung Country.

Mansfield Shire Council acknowledges the Taungurung people as the traditional custodians and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present. Council extends that respect to all members of our community.

Council would like to acknowledge the large number of community members and other stakeholders who gave up their time to contribute to this project.

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## Introduction

The Delatite Valley is one of the four major valleys within the Shire. The region has significant environmental value with the Delatite River flowing from the Mount Buller Alpine resort area, through the Delatite Valley to Lake Eildon. Panoramic views of the Victorian High Country can be seen from the valley and the iconic Mt Buller Road approach.

The Delatite Valley is largely undeveloped, with the small settlements of Merrijig, Alpine Ridge, and Sawmill Settlement situated in an otherwise sparsely populated area. Merrijig has a distinctive rural character with undulating hills and sweeping views across the historic pastoral landscape. Alpine Ridge and Sawmill Settlement are nestled at the base of the Victorian Alps, in a densely vegetated region that has few permanent residents but forms an essential hub during the winter season.

The Delatite Valley Plan will be an overarching strategy used to inform both land use and development of the region, through the Structure Plan elements of this strategy, while giving direction and recommendations for infrastructure and other community initiatives across the Valley.

## Mansfield Shire Council Delatite Valley Plan

### Defining a Structure Plan

A structure plan defines the preferred future growth within an area and articulates how the associated growth should be managed (DTP, 2023). These plans are created by combining community vision and needs, expert knowledge and data to create a powerful tool for both the community and local government.

Generally, these plans:

- ▶ Manage change to ensure ~~the-that~~ valued character ~~of a town~~ is both maintained and improved to ensure the area is an attractive, vibrant area to live, work and operate businesses.shop
- ▶ Support the community by ensuring the area develops in accordance with a shared community vision
- ▶ Ensure economic and social vitality of the area
- ▶ Direct Council resources and focus investment to best serve the community
- ▶ Provide certainty to local communities and potential investors about expectations for the future form of development

The Delatite Valley Plan represents a n ongoing transformative initiative aimed at redefining the Mansfield-Mt Buller region as both a premier year-round destination and unspoilt regional locality. With the backing of the Mansfield Shire Council, key industry stakeholders, and the community, the plan focuses on leveraging the region's unique assets to enhance tourism, foster community development, and bolster the overall vitality of the Delatite Valley.



## Study Area

### Geographical Scope:

The Delatite Valley region, characterised by its picturesque landscapes, extends from the outskirts of Mansfield to the boundary of the Mt Buller & Mt Stirling Alpine Areas. Covering 28,675 Ha (287 km<sup>2</sup>), it encompasses several key localities, including the emerging township of Merrijig, the settlements of Alpine Ridge and Sawmill Settlement, as well as the broader Delatite, Boorolite and Piries regions.

The geographic region has been defined by predominantly using ABS (2021) mesh blocks, the smallest geographical region. These blocks broadly denote areas by use, such as residential, commercial, or parks, and allow for greater geographical regions to be built from them. Mesh **b**locks have been used in this case to define the Delatite Valley in a way that is centred around the geographical boundary following the river and landscape, while being cognisant of the constructed boundaries such as major roads and settlements.

The Delatite River traverses the valley, and flows into Lake Eildon downstream of the Howes Creek-Goughs Bay Road. The Delatite River's ecological values include supporting native fish like Murray Cod, providing habitat for waterbirds, and having significant native riparian vegetation and high-water quality. It is recognised as a high-value asset within the Goulburn Broken Regional River Health Strategy, but faces challenges like fish migration barriers, introduced flora, and issues with water quality and riparian condition, which are being addressed through restoration projects. The river is also a crucial part of the regional water system, feeding into the Goulburn River and contributing to the health of the Murray Darling system.

Key locations within the Delatite Valley include:

- ▶ Timbertop School
- ▶ The Sebel resort
- ▶ The Delatite Winery
- ▶ The Delatite River
- ▶ State Parks
- ▶ ~~The Alpine National Park~~



# Mansfield Shire Council Delatite Valley Plan

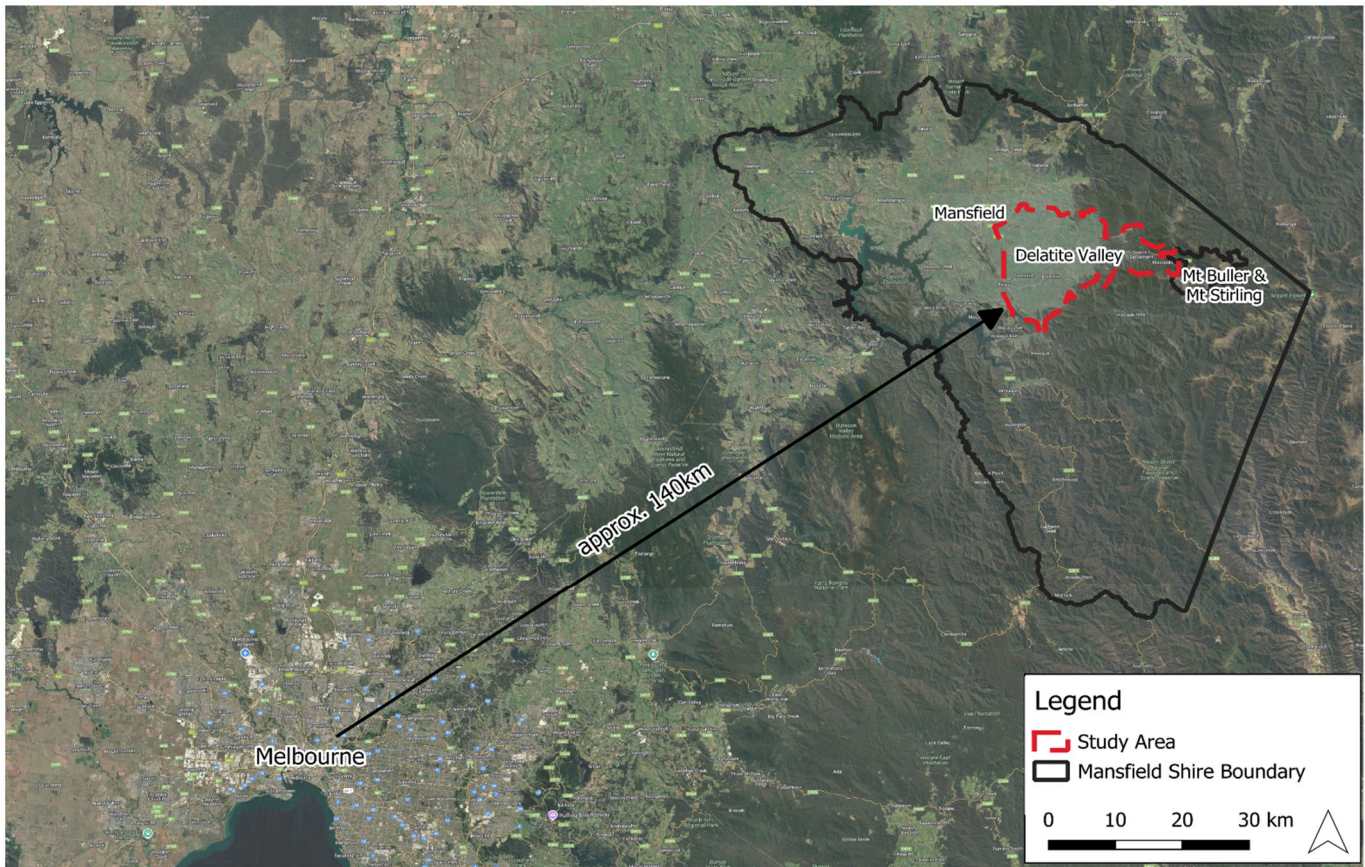


Figure 1. Location of the study area

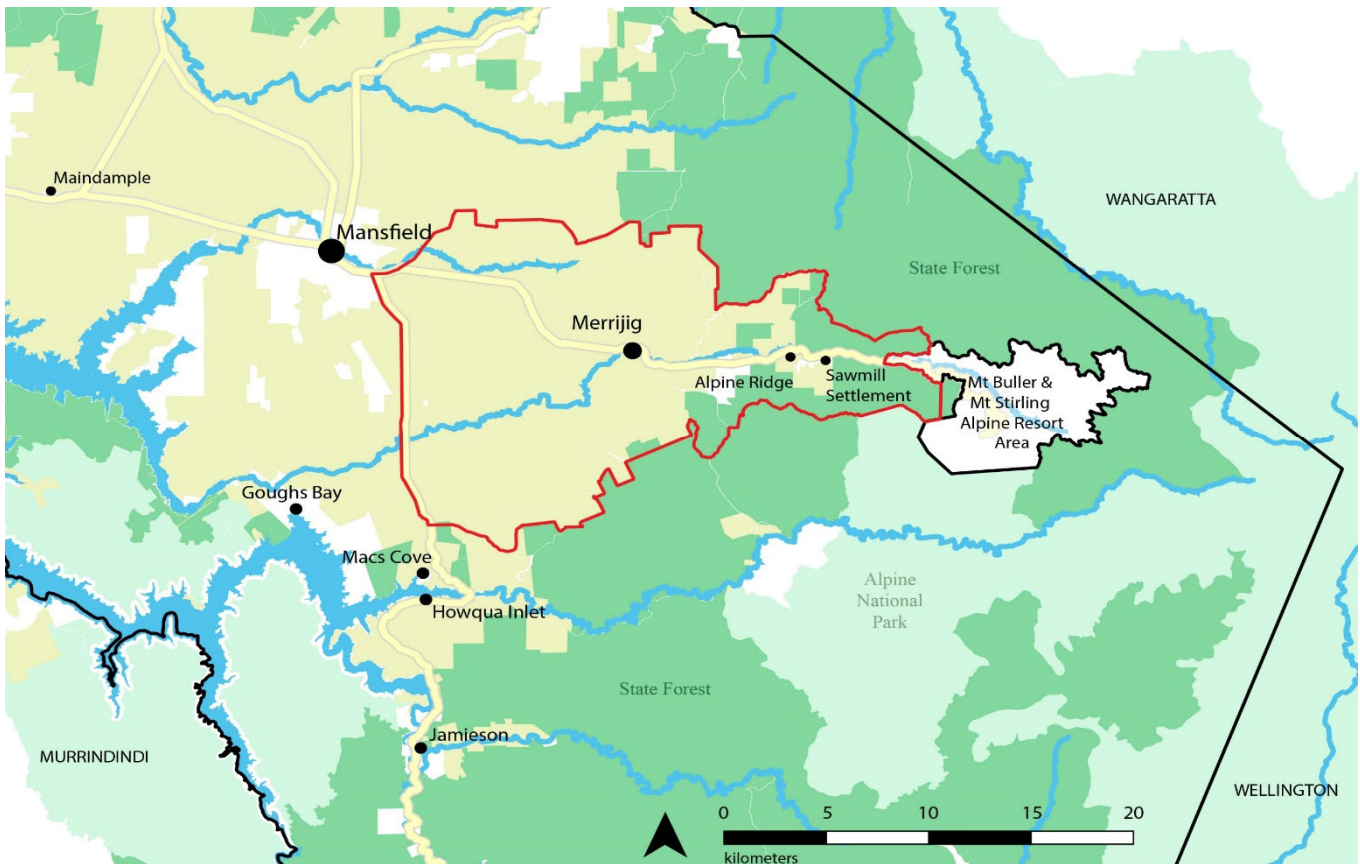


Figure 2. Towns within and surrounding the study area

## Community and Stakeholder Engagement

As part of Council's commitment to fostering an inclusive and participative decision-making process, we undertook a comprehensive community consultation initiative. Recognising the diverse preferences in the community for engagement and feedback, Council implemented a multi-faceted approach to ensure all voices could be heard.

**Direct Correspondence:** Council initiated outreach by distributing letters to over 650 addresses within the Delatite Valley. This ensured that every household had the opportunity to learn about the consultation process, understand the issues at hand, and know how they could contribute their views and suggestions.

**Township Walk-Through:** Understanding the importance of face-to-face interaction and the value of seeing issues in their real-world context, Council organised a walk through [the](#) Merrijig township. This activity allowed community members to engage directly with council representatives, share their insights, and discuss their concerns in an informal, yet productive, setting.

**Drop-In Sessions:** For those preferring a more structured environment, drop-in sessions were held at the Mansfield Shire Council Chambers and Merrijig Community Hall. These sessions provided a forum for residents to speak one-on-one with council staff, ask questions, and provide feedback on specific matters.

**Online Engagement Meeting:** Acknowledging the increasing preference for digital communication, we also hosted an online engagement meeting. This platform enabled participation from a broader segment of our community, particularly those unable to attend in-person events due to time constraints or physical limitations.

**Engage Mansfield Website and Survey:** Council launched an online platform with information and a survey through the Engage Mansfield webpage. This offered a structured environment where the broader community could provide feedback and have input to the plan. ~~The survey had the greatest response, completed by 63 respondents both resident and non-resident.~~

**Public Meetings:** In collaboration with the Delatite Valley Association, Council officers attended meetings to answer community questions and provide clarification on the plan and State Government policy including the planning reforms.



## Key Principles

Based on the community and stakeholder engagement, a series of key ~~objectives and~~ principles were created to guide the creation of this plan. They are as follows:



### Local Character

Acknowledge and protect the unique local character of the region while providing future development opportunities.



### Environmental Conservation

Prioritise the preservation of local ecosystems, with particular emphasis on the Delatite River, promoting biodiversity and sustainability.



### Infrastructure Enhancement

Address current infrastructure challenges, including public toilets, road safety and digital connectivity to meet future needs.



### Economic Growth and Tourism

Manage the impact of year-round tourism while promoting local and sustainable businesses and job opportunities.



### Cultural Heritage

Respect, celebrate and integrate the regions indigenous heritage alongside the promotion of high-country and pastoral history.



### Community Wellbeing

Enhance local services and amenities to improve the overall quality of life for residents.

## Community Feedback

The community suggested the following potential projects and strategies for the Delatite Valley:

- ▶ Protection of the natural environment
- ▶ Improved access to the Delatite River including walking paths
- ▶ Activation of key public spaces in Merrijig
- ▶ Development of all-season tourism activities
- ▶ Improved lighting in key areas for safety
- ▶ Tourism information areas with amenities
- ▶ Showcase rural industry within the region, with a focus on local produce
- ▶ Safer Cycling connections between Mansfield and Mirimbah

Many of the responses supported strengthening tourism in the area, but under a carefully managed approach so as to protect the natural environment and the wellbeing of the community who live within the region. This feedback reflects the community input received through the development of the Sustainable Tourism Plan.

~~And t~~ the following words were used to describe the Delatite Valley by the community:



Figure 3. Words used to describe the Delatite Valley by the community

## Vision Statement

Based on community feedback, the desired future direction for the Delatite Valley can be described as follows:

“

The Delatite Valley Plan aims to preserve and enhance the region's charm and natural beauty, characterised by its sweeping views and waterways set against a mountainous backdrop. This vision prioritises the protection of the agricultural landscapes and alpine environment by both residents and visitors, ensuring the ongoing integrity of the valley.

The Plan will direct growth in the Delatite Valley to reflect the unique local character of the region while recognising the significance of tourism and deep respect for the cultural heritage which fosters a vibrant and sustainable community.

”



## Part A: Existing Conditions



## Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**

### Heritage

Heritage values across the municipality are an integral part of the character of the area. The community engagement undertaken as part of the development of this plan clearly highlighted that the community highly values the protection and enhancement of both the pre and post settlement heritage values of the Delatite Valley.

Post-settlement, the area was significantly defined by the Australian mountain cattlemen, which began in 1834 with families moving into the Victorian High Country, including the Delatite Valley, establishing a unique culture of bush skills and land stewardship. Over this time, cattlemen built numerous huts from stone, timber and iron to provide shelter during their time in the high country, some of which still exist today. This heritage has since been immortalised in the 1982 film, the Man from Snowy River, which was filmed in the area.

The legacy of the mountain cattlemen can still be found in the Delatite Valley today, with multiple trail riding businesses operating, sharing the experience with tourists. Community events such as the Merrijig ANZAC Day parade highlight how the role of the horse has remained a key part of the local identity.



*Photo Credit: Caroline Brown, 2026*

## Mansfield Shire Council Delatite Valley Plan

There are limited places currently protected from a heritage perspective in or near the Delatite Valley, with the following places included within the Heritage Overlay in the Mansfield Planning Scheme:

Reference	Place	Victorian Heritage Register
HO34	Stockyard Creek Gold Mining Diversion Sluice Howqua Hills Track, Sheeppark Flat, Howqua	Yes H1255
HO35	Howqua United Gold Treatment Works Howqua Track, Howqua Historic Reserve, Sheeppark Flat, Howqua	Yes H1279
HO47	Tunnel Bend Township Conservation Area	No
HO64	Delatite Homestead and Garden Delatite Road, Mansfield	No
HO71	Howqua Track, Howqua	No

Table 1. List of places under the Heritage Overlay in the Delatite Valley

It is also noted that there is limited knowledge or mapping of the underlying Aboriginal Cultural heritage for the area, particularly with the extent of the Delatite River and the adjoining sensitive land around waterways in the area.

This is supported in the Mansfield Planning Scheme, where Clause 02.03-5 Built Environment and Heritage states that:

*'The Shire's rich cultural and built heritage is a major part of the attractiveness and amenity of Mansfield. However, there remain gaps in the knowledge of heritage assets of Aboriginal or post-European settlement significance, particularly in rural areas and smaller settlements.'*

And:

*'The Goulburn, Howqua and Big Rivers have been declared Heritage Rivers under the Heritage Rivers Act 1992, which has implications for land use in the vicinity of watercourses.'*

Additional work is required to understand, protect and enhance the heritage values of this area.

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### Community Profile

To understand the unique demographic profile of the Delatite Valley, localised data has been compared to the average figures for the rest of Victoria, excluding the Melbourne metropolitan area, which represents a high-density urban environment and is considered an outlier for our analysis.

The following data has been obtained from the 2021 ABS census using the 'suburbs and localities' areas for Merrijig, Sawmill Settlement, Boorolite & Delatite as outlined on the maps below. Data from the Piries, Mansfield and Barwite localities has been excluded from this analysis, due to the small land areas found within the Delatite Valley Study area. No census data is available for Mirimbah due to the small size of the population.

The area is currently serviced by the Merrijig Primary School, which is a multi-age school providing education for children in the area from Foundation to Year 6. Enrolment in 2025 was 17 students.



Figure 4. Delatite Valley Study Area and ABS Census Area in comparison

## Mansfield Shire Council Delatite Valley Plan

**Community Profile – continued**

Population  
approx. 986



Median age  
41



Number of private  
dwellings  
717



Median weekly income  
\$1663



Median weekly rent  
\$246



Average number of  
vehicles per dwelling  
2.3



Percent population  
change 2016-2021  
19.4%



Workforce  
57% in the labour  
force



Percentage of  
dwellings occupied  
54%

Annual growth rate  
3.9%

31% out of the labour  
force

## Population Overview

Based on the latest data from the 2021 ABS Census, the Delatite Valley is home to an estimated population of 986 individuals. It is important to note that the Census is taken in August, during the peak tourism period for the region which may inflate numbers. The permanent population is likely smaller than this.

## Age Structure

The median age in the Delatite Valley is 41 years, only slightly older when compared to Victoria, at 38 years. There is however a much higher percent of 10-19 year-olds in the Delatite Valley (22.7%) compared with the rest of Victoria (11.6%). Similarly, the percentage of 60-69 year-olds sits at 14.2% of the population, while Victoria sees 10.5% of the population in this age range. This suggests that the Delatite Valley is popular among retirees and young families. The Geelong

## Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**

Grammar Timbertop campus has also likely inflated the number of school-age people in the region.

### **Economic Insights**

- ▶ **Median household income:** The median income for a household in the Delatite Valley is \$1663 per week.
- ▶ **Mortgage and rent:** The median weekly rent is \$246, while the median monthly mortgage repayment is \$1618.
- ▶ **Workforce:** In 2021, 57% of residents were in the labour force, while 31% were not. The region has a very low unemployment rate at 0.5% when compared with the rest of Victoria at 5%.
- ▶ **Housing prices:** the current average housing price for a dwelling in the Delatite Valley is \$806,000, compared to the Victorian Regional average of \$598,000.

Mortgage and rental stress is defined as the need to spend more than 30% of your household income on housing costs including rent or mortgage payments, electricity, water etc. The above figures show that broadly speaking, households in the Delatite Valley are not experiencing mortgage or rental stress, however this could be misrepresented by the low levels of rental properties available (as detailed next).

### **Housing Tenure**

- ▶ **Homeowners:** 54.2% of residents in the Delatite Valley own their homes outright, while 31.9% own with a mortgage.
- ▶ **Renters:** 13.8% of residents are renters, and 4.7% have some other tenure type including occupying rent free.

The figures for homeowners with mortgages are fairly in line with the Victorian average of 36.1%, however many more residents of the Delatite Valley own their homes outright when compared with the Victorian average of 32.2%. The Delatite Valley sees a lower percentage of renters however has a much higher percentage of residents with some other tenure type. This is likely due to the high concentration of holiday-homes and family-owned properties.

Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan****Population Forecast**

A population forecast is available through forecast.id (informed decisions, 2023), noting it includes more than just the Delatite Valley study area.

The projection estimates the permanent population in the region to be 1,825 persons in 2025 and will change by 18.8% to be 2,208 by 2046. This is an annual growth rate of 0.98%, below the projected regional Victorian average of 1.3% to 2051 (Victoria in Future, 2023).

Victoria in Future data provided projected growth rates over regional Victoria averaged over all regional areas and does not consider the local experience in terms of growth. The Mansfield Planning Strategy 2022 noted that Mansfield Shire had experienced a much higher growth rate than the VIF average, with a 3.3% growth rate till 2025 predicted, reducing to a 2% growth rate until 2040.

With the limited residential land available in the Delatite Valley, the growth of the permanent population in this region is currently expected to be low given the lack of infrastructure and relative isolation, however this number does not reflect the population fluctuations over the peak tourist season and high demand for holiday homes and tourist accommodation.

There is a high demand for dwellings in this area, which is reflected in the average price of housing being above the Victorian average. In the absence of developable land, this demand will constrain population growth and put significant pressure on housing affordability.

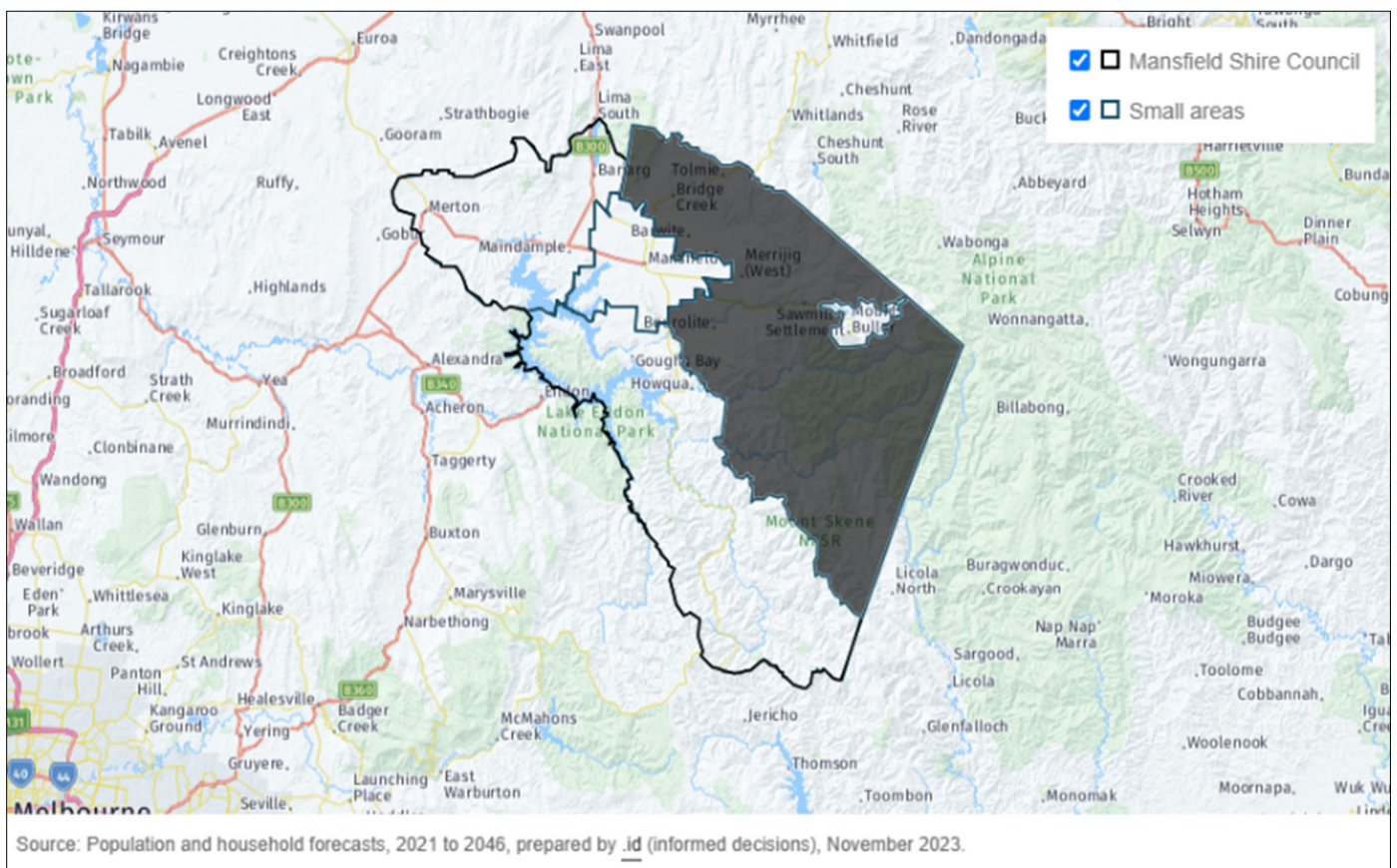


Figure 5. Areas (in grey) covered in the population forecast (source: informed decisions)

## Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**

### Policy Context

Multiple State, Regional and Local planning policies, plans and reports are relevant to the planning, development and management of Mansfield's Townships. The following is a brief summary of these:

#### Planning Policy Framework

State Planning Policies are the overarching policies that relate to the use of land and its development throughout Victoria. ~~In addition to following the strategic direction of Plan Melbourne, the framework seeks to improve the planning of key regional areas by creating regional strategies. The regional strategies applicable to Mansfield is the Hume Regional Growth Plan, 2019.~~

The Victorian Planning Policy (VPP) addresses issues of state importance that include settlement planning, residential development, environmental and landscape values including environmental risks and amenity, natural resource management, built environment and heritage, housing, economic development, transport and infrastructure.

Clause 15 directly applies to the purpose of this plan as it covers urban design, building design, subdivision design, healthy neighbourhoods, neighbourhood character and design for rural areas. The common objective between these topics is the "to create urban environments that are safe, healthy, functional and enjoyable and that contribute to a sense of place and cultural identity". The clause promotes the creation of a sustainable and liveable environment within a given area.

Part of this clause also seeks to preserve the existing natural landscape, positioning it as a valuable asset and identifying key landmarks to also be retained and promoted within the area. The importance of the lived experience is identified within the clause and the need for a level of integration between the built, architectural form and layout, and the existing natural environment. Additional considerations promote the design of spaces that support community safety and protect the neighbourhood character of the area.

#### Regional Strategies

The Plan for Victoria, 2025 provides statewide directions for the facilitation of sustainable growth and development across Victoria. The Plan introduces housing targets to local government areas and encourages growth and the development of facilities and services in line with settlement frameworks.

The *Hume Regional Growth Plan, 2019* provides broad directions for regional land use and development in the Hume and region and provides detailed planning frameworks for key centres. The plan also provides a vision for long-term prosperity and sustainable growth by identifying economic environmental, social and cultural resources to be preserved and enhanced. It also identifies which areas are capable of accommodating future growth, and opportunities for supporting regional level infrastructure to ensure the long-term sustainability of the region.

#### Local Planning Policy ~~Framework~~

~~The Local~~ Local Planning Policy ~~framework~~ comprises two key sections: the Municipal Strategic Statements (MSS) Planning Strategy (MPS) and local planning policies within the Planning Policy Framework.

The MSS-MPS sets out the vision for Council; thisese recognises that the municipality is expected

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to experience considerable increase in population in the future and sets out key strategies for the sustainable growth of the municipality. The visioning statements are focused on providing for population growth while also maintain the rural nature of the municipality.

**Clause 02.03-1** contains the following strategic directions for Merrijig: Merrijig is a small town with excellent proximity to mountain and rural views located in the Upper Delatite Valley. It is appealing to people who desire a small-town lifestyle with the additional services afforded by proximity to Mansfield. Its growth potential is supported by reticulated sewerage; however, its reticulated water and sewerage infrastructure will need to be significantly upgraded prior to any large-scale residential development. The topography and environmental value of the land will also mean that creative urban design and strict development and density controls will need to be applied to any development.

**Clause 02.03-1** also contains the following strategic directions for Alpine Ridge and Sawmill Settlement: Sawmill Settlement, Alpine Ridge and Pinnacle Valley are settlements that cater predominantly for non-resident landowners, holiday makers and tourists. There are also a number of permanent residents whose needs must also be catered for.

**Clause 02.03-2** relating to environmental and landscape values also notes the significance of the rural landscape and alpine views over Mansfield's landscapes with the following strategic directions being especially applicable in the Delatite Valley:

- ▶ *Protect the landscape character of the Shire and significant landscape features including large old trees, visually significant ridges and view corridors.*
- ▶ *Protect the environmental, landscape and visual significance of rural areas, mountain and environmental features and alpine approach areas.*

**Clause 02.03-3** identifies the environmental risks and amenity in the Shire including natural hazards such as bushfire and flood. Under the Victorian Bushfire Risk Register, Sawmill Settlement and Alpine Ridge has been rated for their extreme bushfire risk, and Pinnacle Valley has been rated for a high bushfire risk. The upper tributaries and the Delatite River are identified to be prone to flooding, with limited mapping of these areas available to fully understand and manage these risks. The following strategic directions apply:

- ▶ *Strengthen resilience to bushfire and minimise the risk to life.*
- ▶ *Discourage use and development in areas where an environmental hazard has been identified and cannot be sufficiently mitigated.*

**Clause 02.03-4** provides policy direction in relation to natural resource management, specifically relating to Agriculture and Water. This policy identifies that Rural land is under increasing pressure for residential use and development not associated with the rural use of the land. Productive agricultural land must be maintained to remain agriculturally viable and ensure the ongoing ability to farm is protected.

**Clause 02.03-5** provides policy direction for the built environment and heritage values of the Shire. This policy includes the following policy and strategic directions:

Development of land along the Maroondah Highway and other major routes such as Mt Buller Road in the Shire need to be sensitive to their role as gateways to the Alpine areas.

- ▶ *Support development (including advertising signage) that is sensitive to the role of the Alpine approaches as gateways to Mansfield Township and the Alps.*

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- ▶ *Encourage development that respects the unique character and location of each settlement and protects areas of natural, environmental and architectural character.*
- ▶ *Protect places of identified European and Aboriginal heritage significance.*

**Clause 02.03-7** sets the municipal direction in relation to economic development. While agriculture is one of the most significant contributors to the local economy, tourism is a key local economic driver, particularly in the Delatite Valley region. Nature based tourism, food and wine experiences, and (on- and off-road) bicycle tourism is noted as key sectors. Popular tourist destinations identified include Mount Buller, one of Victoria's most popular ski resorts, and Mount Stirling, a relatively untouched cross-country skiing and bushwalking area.

Further local policy in **Clause 11.01-1L-02** recognises that Merrijig, Sawmill Settlement and Alpine Ridge are townships with reticulated sewerage. This [clause-existing policy](#) provides both strategies and decision guidelines (if available) for each area as follows:

Location	<a href="#">Existing Strategies at Clause 11.01-1L-02</a>
Merrijig	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Develop Merrijig as a tourist gateway to Mount Buller and Mount Stirling as well as a local commercial and community centre for the surrounding rural community.</li> <li>▶ Provide for infill housing opportunities at Merrijig between Alpha Street and Omega Street.</li> <li>▶ Avoid the further subdivision of land fronting the Delatite River along the northern side of Mt Buller Road between Merrijig and Sawmill Settlement).</li> <li>▶ Discourage any new direct vehicle access to Mt Buller Road.</li> <li>▶ Provide access to any redevelopment on the east side of Mt Buller Road via McCormacks Road.</li> </ul>
Sawmill Settlement, Alpine Ridge and Pinnacle Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Encourage a variety of uses on existing sites that have commercial uses.</li> <li>▶ Support rezoning the General Residential Zone land to Township Zone for Pinnacle Valley, to reflect the lack of infrastructure to support more intensive development.</li> <li>▶ Develop a walking trail network in the open space corridor along the Delatite River.</li> </ul>

**Local Planning Policy Framework – continue Existing Framework Plans**

Current Framework plans in the Mansfield planning Scheme relating to the Delatite Valley are as follows:

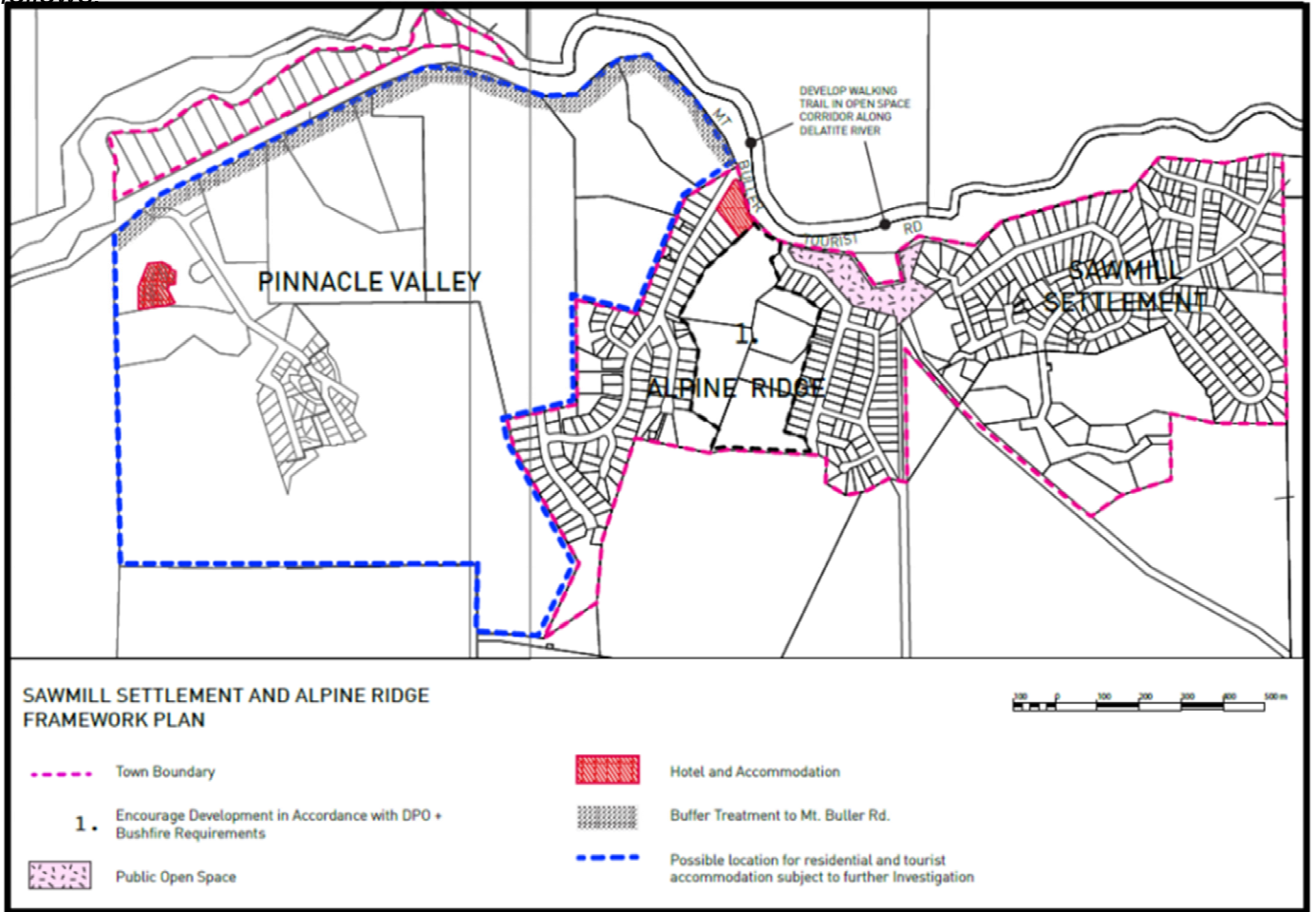


Figure 6. Current Sawmill Settlement and Alpine Ridge Framework Plan

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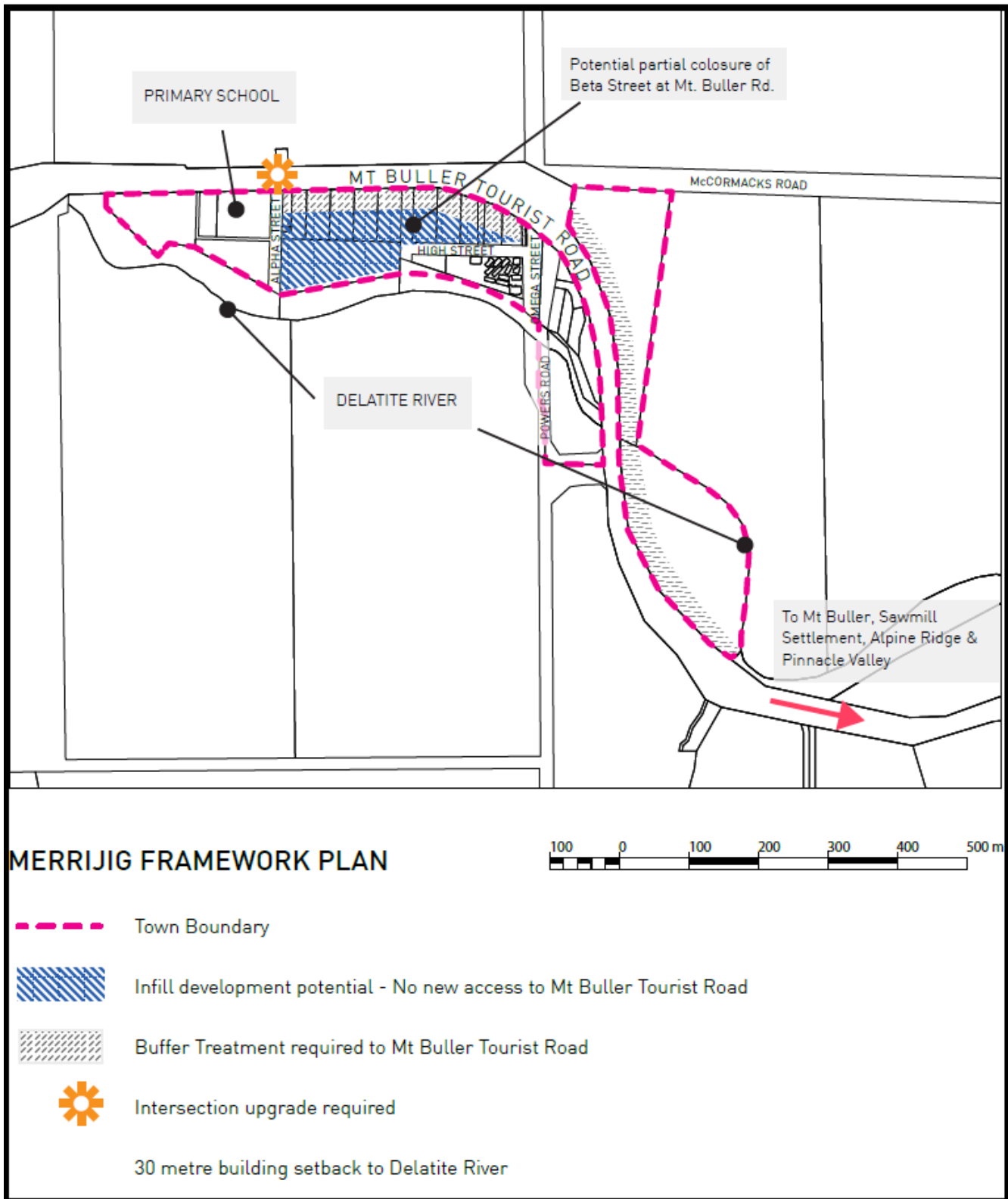


Figure 7. Current ~~Merrijig~~Merrijig Framework Plan

## Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**

### Zones

The study area of the Delatite Valley includes the **Farming Zone**, covering 81% of the land in the region. The purpose of this zone is:

- ▶ To provide for the use of land for agriculture.
- ▶ To encourage the retention of productive agricultural land.
- ▶ To ensure that non-agricultural uses, including dwellings, do not adversely affect the use of land for agriculture.
- ▶ To encourage the retention of employment and population to support rural communities.
- ▶ To encourage use and development of land based on comprehensive and sustainable land management practices and infrastructure provision.

The second most prominent zone is the **Public Conservation and Resource Zone**, covering the State and National Parks in the eastern portion of the study area. The purpose of this zone is as follows:

- ▶ To protect and conserve the natural environment and natural processes for their historic, scientific, landscape, habitat or cultural values.
- ▶ To provide facilities which assist in public education and interpretation of the natural environment with minimal degradation of the natural environment or natural processes.
- ▶ To provide for appropriate resource-based uses.

~~The **Township Zone** can be found within the Merrijig township boundary, which has the purpose:~~

- ~~▶ To provide for residential development and a range of commercial, industrial and other uses in small towns.~~
- ~~▶ To encourage development that respects the neighbourhood character of the area.~~
- ~~▶ To allow educational, recreational, religious, community and a limited range of other non-residential uses to serve local community needs in appropriate locations.~~

The **General Residential Zone - Schedule 1** can be found in Alpine Ridge and Sawmill Settlement, as well as in patches along Mt Buller Road. The purpose of this zone includes:

- ▶ To encourage development that respects the neighbourhood character of the area.
- ▶ To encourage a diversity of housing types and housing growth particularly in locations offering good access to services and transport.
- ▶ To allow educational, recreational, religious, community and a limited range of other non-residential uses to serve local community needs in appropriate locations.

The **Township Zone** can be found within the Merrijig township boundary, which has the purpose:

- ▶ To provide for residential development and a range of commercial, industrial and other uses in small towns.
- ▶ To encourage development that respects the neighbourhood character of the area.
- ▶ To allow educational, recreational, religious, community and a limited range of other non-residential uses to serve local community needs in appropriate locations.

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Despite being a residential zone, the Township Zone allows for a broad range of uses and is typically applied to small towns with no specific structure of residential, commercial and industrial uses. It is expected that minimal to incremental change is expected to occur in Township Zoned areas.

The Township Zone does not have a minimum subdivision area and includes a maximum building height of 9 metres for dwellings or residential buildings. This maximum height can be varied through the planning permit process and does not apply to commercial or industrial buildings.

The recent changes to state planning policy which introduced the Mid-Rise Code for four to six storey apartment developments does not apply to Merrijig, being a Township Zone outside the metropolitan growth area. However, the Townhouse and Low-Rise Code does apply, and introduces an assessment pathway which extinguishes third party rights of appeal to developments which are deemed to comply with the applicable objectives. This code applies to the development of two or more dwellings on a lot, and residential buildings up to three storeys.

The Delatite Valley study area also includes the Public Use Zone (Schedule Land uses 1, 2 and 7), Rural Activity Zone and Transport Zones.

The Rural Activity Zone denotes the location of the Timbertop School, and the schedule to this zone reflects the specific requirements of this use, and use and ensuring it integrates with the surrounding agricultural activities.

Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**

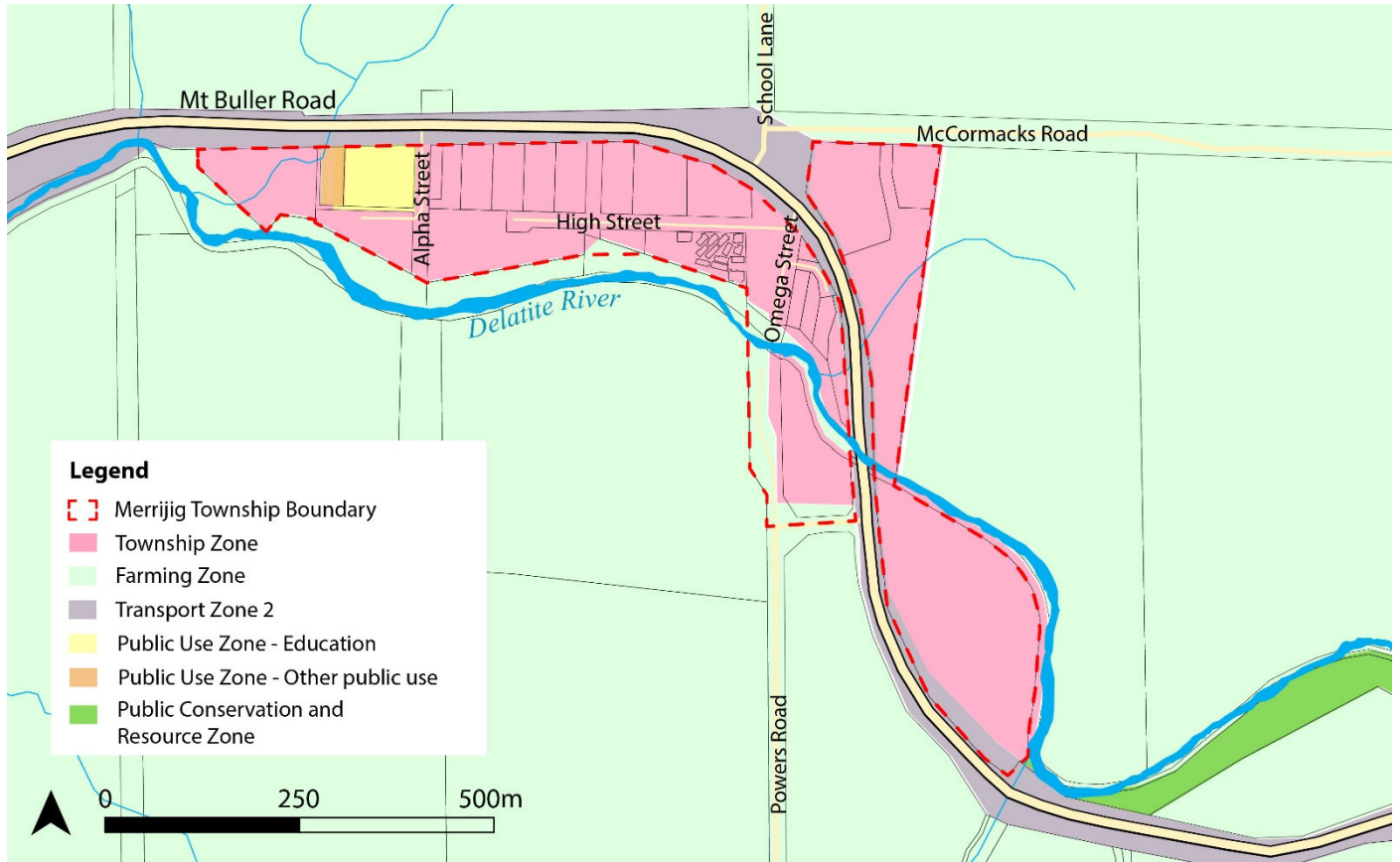


Figure 8. Zoning map of Merrijig

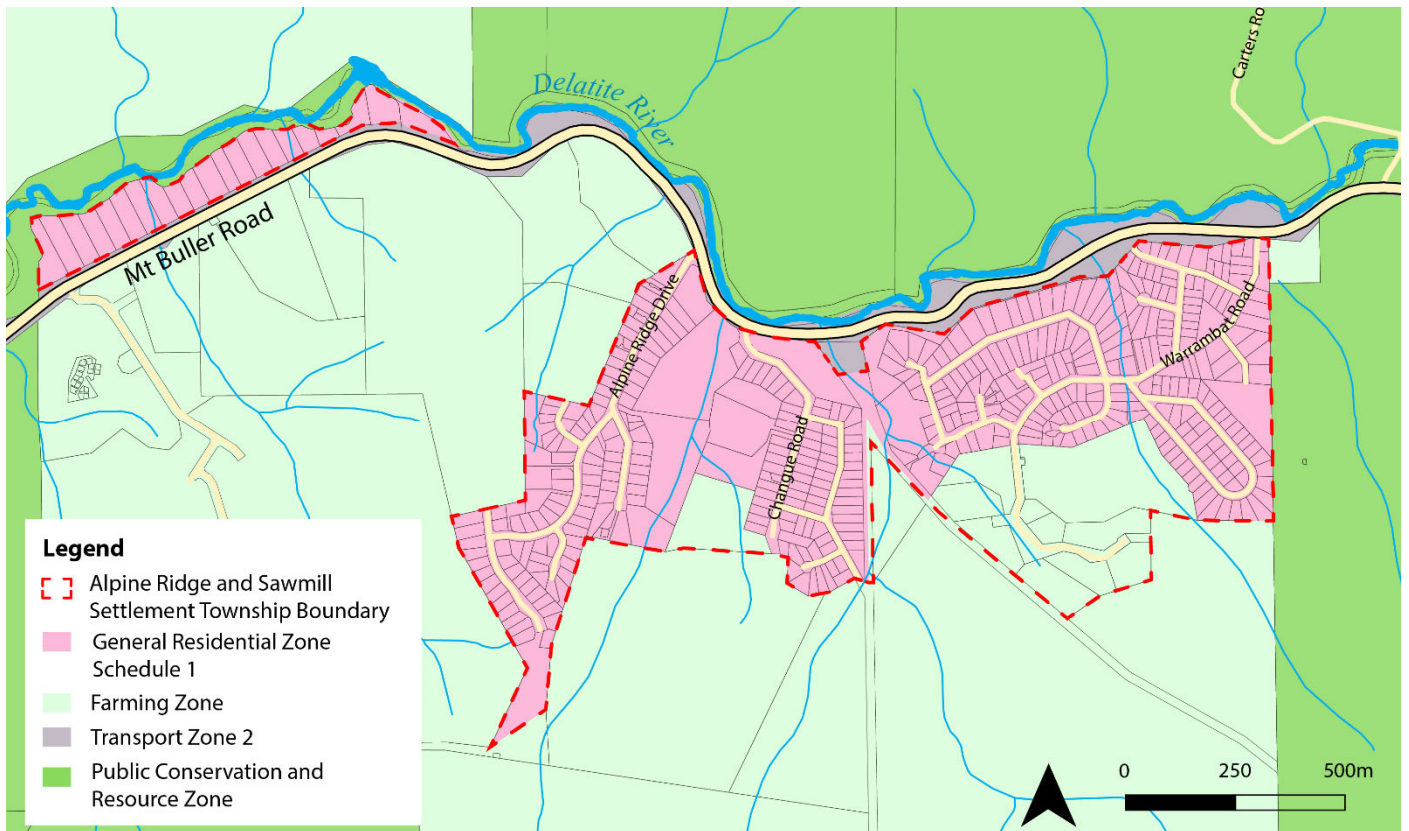


Figure 9. Zoning map of Sawmill Settlement and Alpine Ridge

# Mansfield Shire Council Delatite Valley Plan Delatite Valley Zones

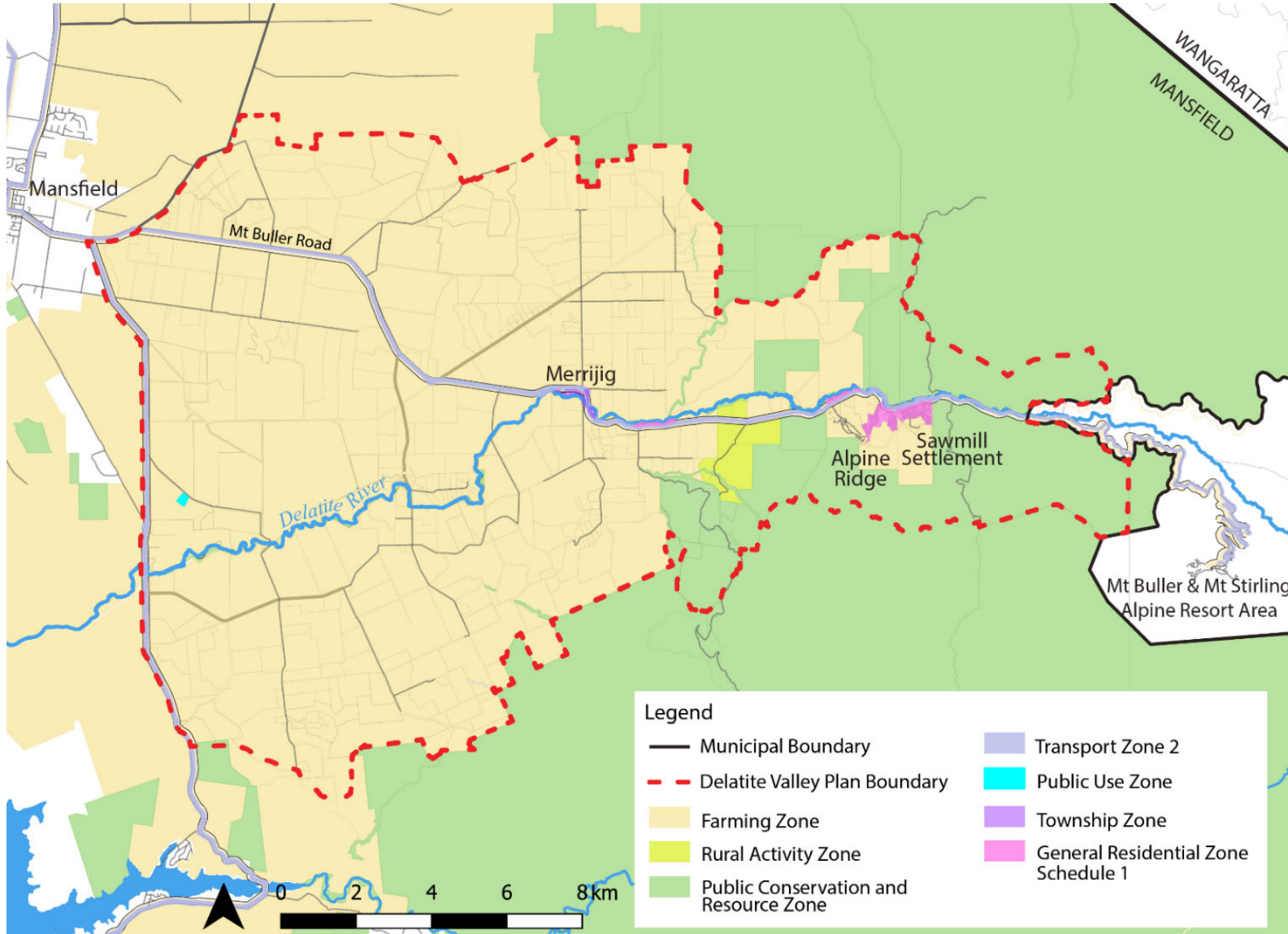


Figure 104. Overlay map of Merrijig Zoning map of the Delatite Valley



## Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**

### Overlays

A range of overlays apply to the Delatite Valley area as follows:

The **Environmental Significant Overlay – Schedule 2** applies to catchment areas at medium risk of water quality impacts, which covers 78% of the land of the study area. The purpose of the overlay includes:

- ▶ To identify areas where the development of land may be affected by environmental constraints.
- ▶ To ensure that development is compatible with identified environmental values.

The **Significant Landscape Overlay – Schedule 1** applies to 51% of the land in the study area along Mt Buller Road. It seeks to protect the short and long-distance views of Mount Buller from Mt Buller Road approach roads and public viewpoints. The purpose of the overlay includes:

- ▶ To identify significant landscapes.
- ▶ To conserve and enhance the character of significant landscapes.

The character statement outlined in the Planning Scheme for this area is as follows:

*The alpine approach is characterised by a strong valley bordered by the alpine areas to the north, south and east. The views from the Mansfield – Mt Buller Road to surrounding mountains and ranges are impressive especially in the winter when there is spectacular snowy backdrop. The valley has a relatively flat floor with undulating pasture, ribbons of vegetation along roads, fences, the upper Delatite River (a Proclaimed Water Supply Catchment Area), creek lines and in scattered patches. The Crown Land boundary is an abrupt interface with the dense woodland, which visually helps define the unit. All these elements create an area that is a major asset for the Shire.*

The **Bushfire Management Overlay** applies to the eastern, southern and part of the northern sections of the study area. This denotes areas that are prone to and at risk of very high to extreme bushfire hazard. It is considered inappropriate to create new residential areas within this overlay because of the significant risk to life. There are additional pockets of **Bushfire Management Overlay – Schedule 2** at Alpine Ridge which specify bushfire protection measures for Alpine Ridge BAL –29 areas.

The **Floodway Overlay** covers the area along the Delatite River. It identifies waterways, major flood paths and areas of high hazard level which have the greatest risk and frequency of being affected by flooding.

Other overlays in the study area include Environmental Significant Overlay - Schedule 1, Development Plan Overlay - Schedule 1, Heritage Overlay, Land Subject to Inundation Overlay, Vegetation Protection Overlay - Schedule 1, and Public Acquisition Overlay.

Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**

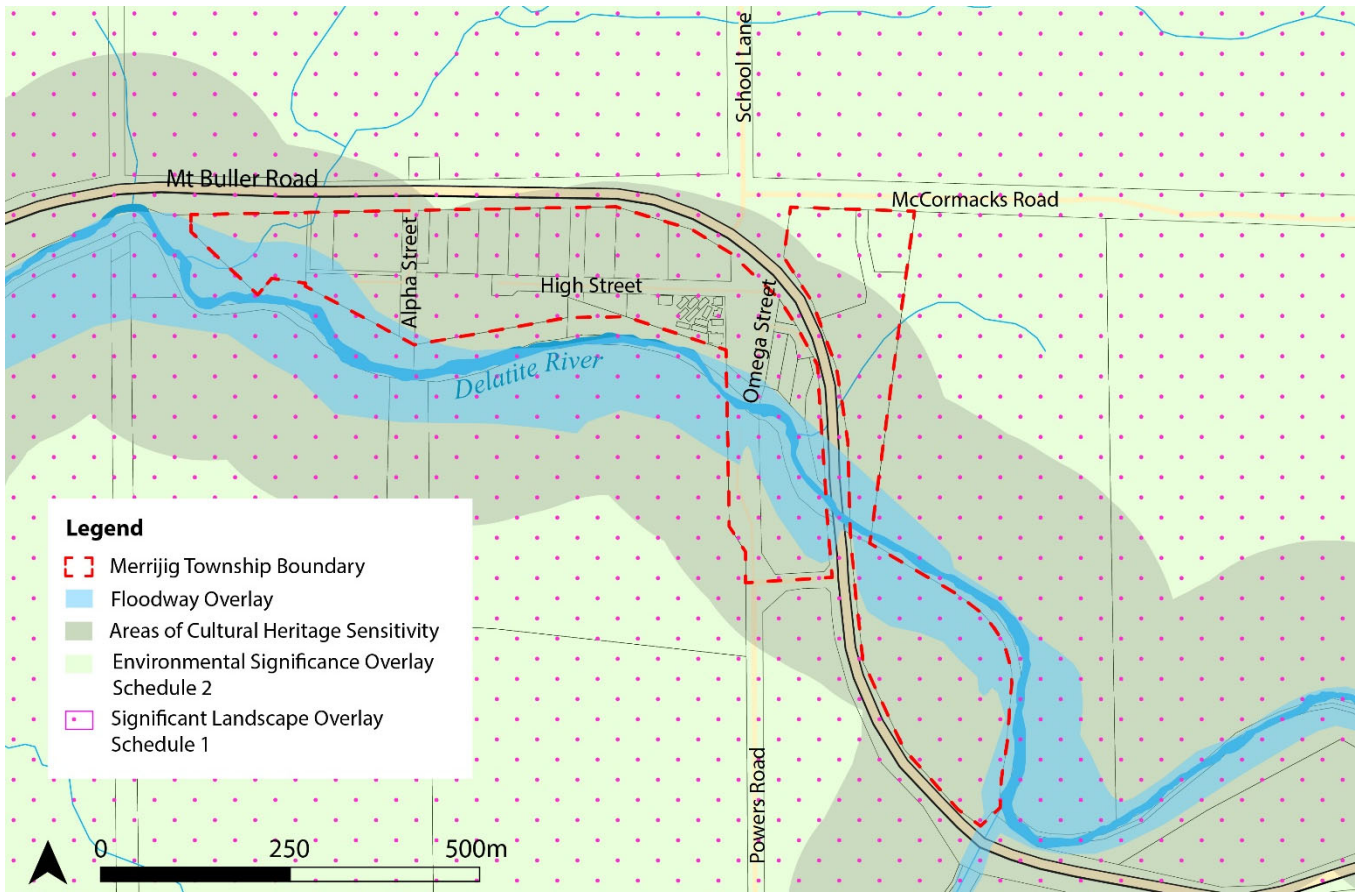


Figure 11. Overlay map of Merrijig

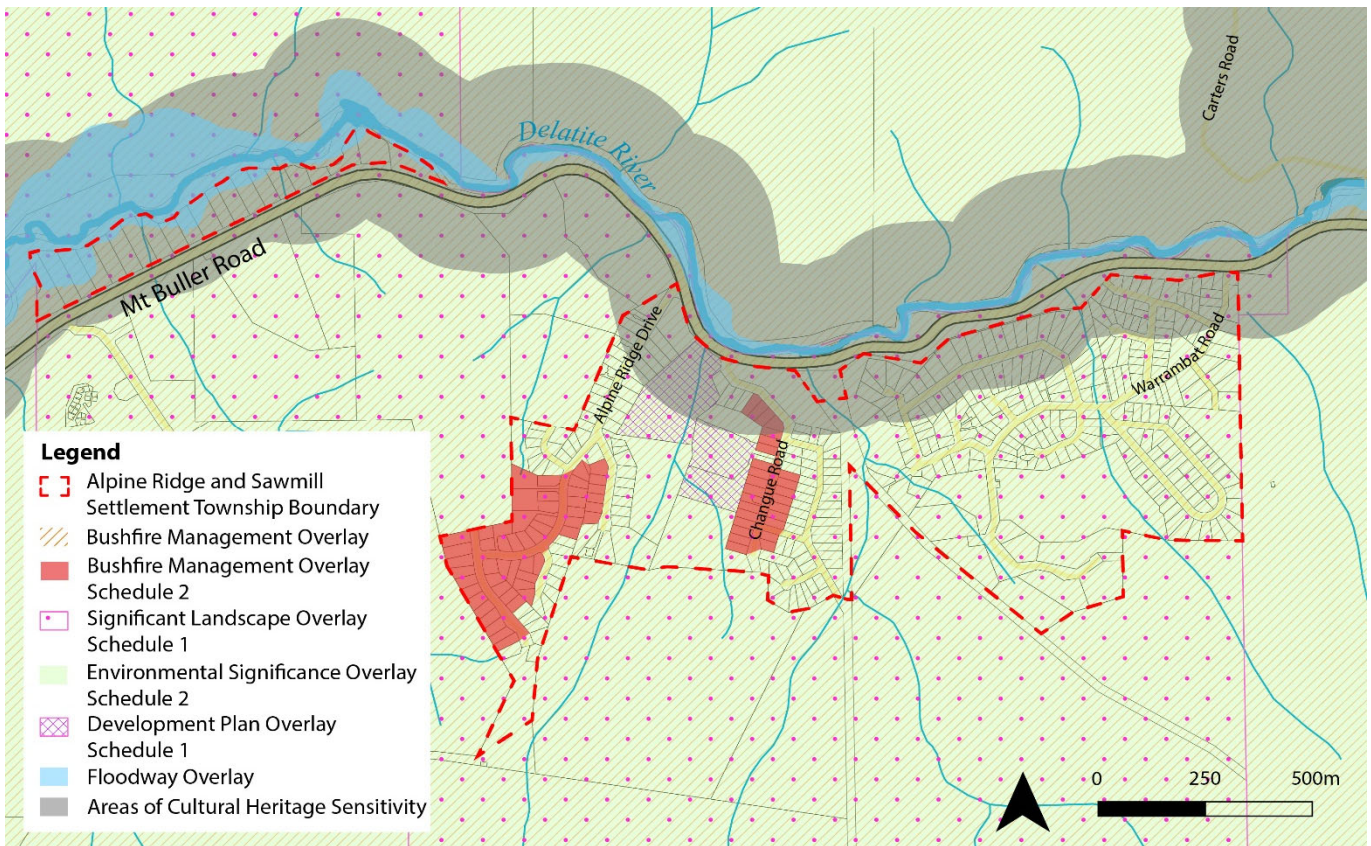


Figure 12. Overlay map of Alpine Ridge and Sawmill Settlement

Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**

**Delatite Valley Overlays**

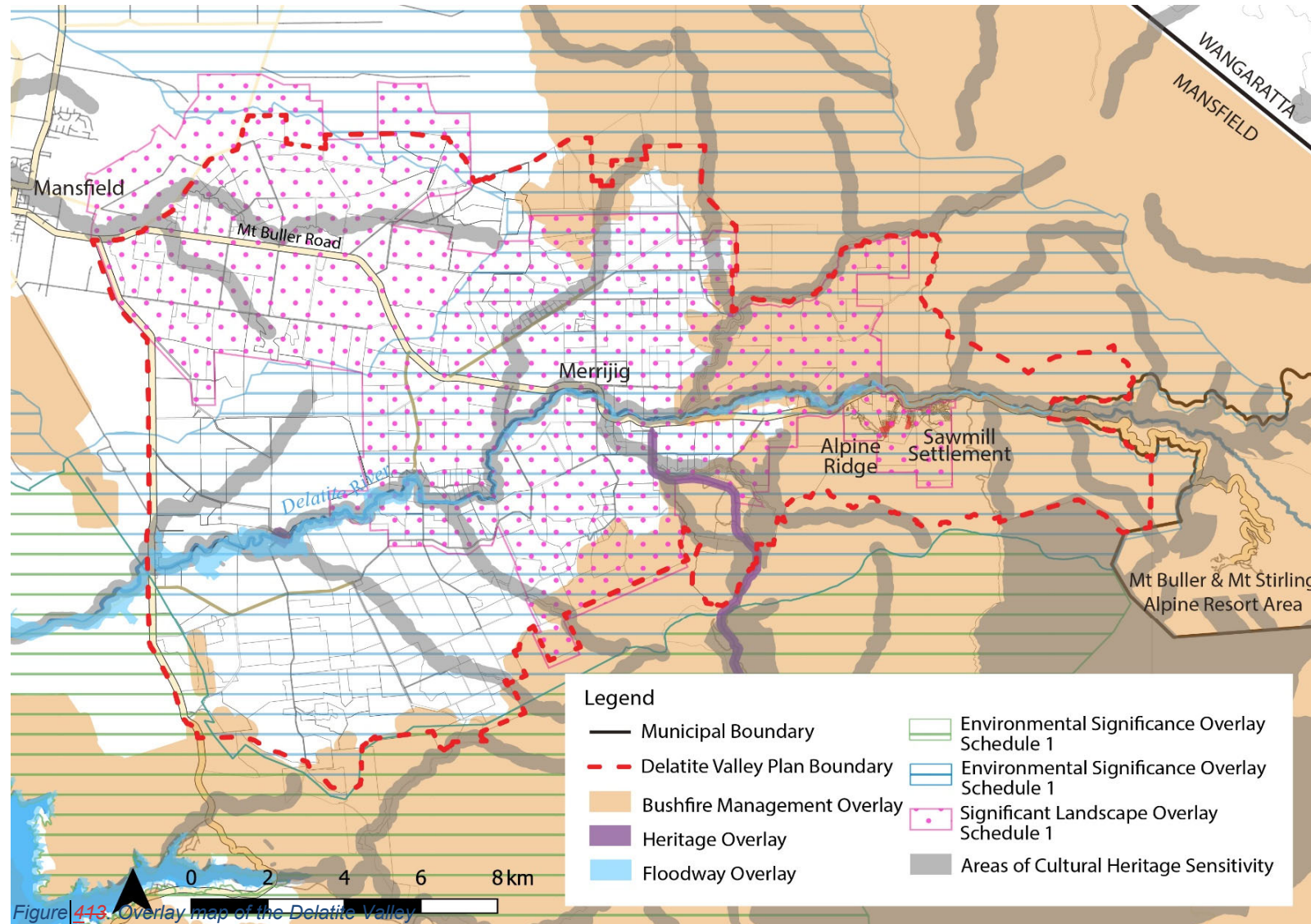
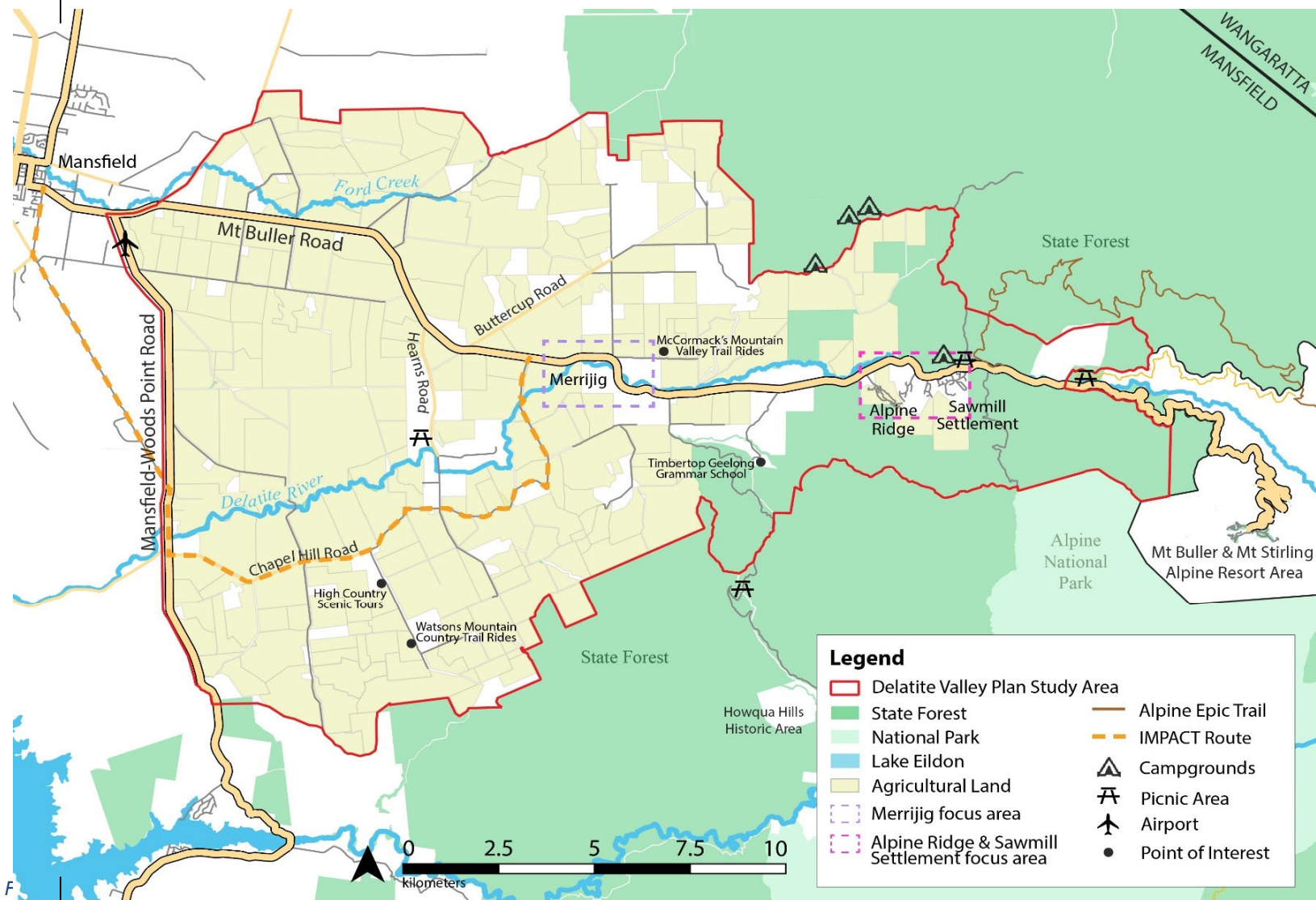


Figure 413. Overlay map of the Delatite Valley

Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**

**Land Use and Constraints**



## Built form

The Alpine Approach area is distinguished by its long ranging views to Mount Buller and Mount Stirling, which dominate the landscape. Homes are situated on moderately sized to large blocks, often elevated and designed to capitalise on the panoramic views. In lower-lying areas, dwellings are set among thicker bushland, featuring scattered mature trees and understorey vegetation. Significant front and side setbacks are provided to allow for the retention of existing vegetation or for new planting to uphold the prevailing river valley landscape.

Residential development in the area is characterised by a rural lifestyle aesthetic, featuring large dwellings accompanied by multiple outbuildings, significant trees, and open fencing. The properties often blend into the surroundings, with established vegetation and tree lines along road verges and private land providing a natural screen from the road. Several properties, both rural and residential, front the Delatite River and have private access to the space.

## Housing

The settlements follow Mt Buller Road, winding along the Delatite River. The gentle topography of the river valley creates opportunities for spectacular, long-ranging views to Mount Buller and Mount Stirling. From Merrijig to Mirimbah, there are several small settlements zoned for township and residential purposes (TZ and GRZ1) along Mt Buller Road: Merrijig, Pinnacle Valley, Alpine Ridge and Sawmill Settlement. These small settlements and the surrounding rural area have a population of approximately 1,040 people, comprising 300 permanent homes and 370 holiday homes (ABS, 2016). The settlements are currently serviced with reticulated water and sewer; however, further large-scale residential development would require upgrades to current infrastructure. The settlements are also constrained by bushfire risk (SGS, 2022).

Current plans discourage the creation of new access to Mt Buller Road. There is very little development within the Township Zone (TZ) at Merrijig itself. Development visible from Mt Buller Road has a strong rural character, defined by buildings situated in large, open fields and oriented towards the mountain views. Progressing east, the other Upper Delatite Settlements (Pinnacle Valley, Alpine Ridge and Sawmill Settlement) are obscured from the Mt Buller Tourist Road by dense vegetation and the undulating topography which climbs through the foothills of the Great Dividing Range (SGS, 2022)

## Visitor Accommodation

The study area has several short-term accommodation options, including the Sebel Pinnacle Valley Resort, as well as the Merrijig Motor Inn, Merrijig Lodge, Delatite Apartments and Daysend Cottages in Merrijig. ~~The Sebel is reporting strong year-round occupancy as a result of summer events and weddings (Urban Enterprise, 2023).~~ Additionally, in Sawmill Settlement and Alpine Ridge, holiday homes and unoccupied dwellings contribute to the supply of short-term accommodation. The current supply however is insufficient to meet the growing demand from tourists and temporary workers during peak tourist season.

## Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**

### **Town Centre**

Currently, there is no established town centre within the Delatite Valley. However, Merrijig presents an opportunity to develop into a central hub, given its existing infrastructure and absence of Bushfire Management Overlay. The public buildings include the Merrijig Primary School, Merrijig Fire Station, and a Community Hall, which provide a foundation for future growth. Building on these community facilities, there is potential for further development, such as residential growth and open spaces, to create a vibrant and functional town centre. Community input through the engagement process highlighted a desire to increase public services within Merrijig.

### **Retail and Commercial Opportunities**

Community feedback has indicated that basic supplies such as bread and milk can be purchased at the Merrijig Motor Inn, however for larger purchases residents must drive into Mansfield. The commercial landscape is limited, with few restaurants, including the Delatite Winery, the Hunt Club Hotel at Merrijig, and a restaurant space at Alpine Ridge. This scarcity of retail and dining options presents opportunities for future development to meet the needs of residents, tourists, and local businesses.

### **Open Space**

Within the established towns of the Delatite Valley, there is a notable lack of formalised public open spaces. Carters Road Picnic Area and Mirimbah Park serve as significant public open spaces, providing a popular stopover for tourists en-route to Mount Buller and Mt Stirling alpine resorts. However, Mirimbah Park is only freely available during the summer months as it is beyond the gates to the Alpine resorts and outside the Mansfield Shire area. Opportunities exist to formalise existing public open spaces in Merrijig, particularly along the Delatite River, which would enhance community recreation and environmental appreciation for both residents and tourists. The war and service memorial on Mt Buller Road is another small pocket of open space, however, is designed for reflection and is lacking in key infrastructure such as formal car parking and public toilets to support a higher numbers of visitors.

### **Landscape and Topography**

The gentle topography of the river valley creates opportunities for spectacular, long-ranging views to Mount Buller and Mount Stirling. The distinctive character of the settlements are shaped by their alpine approach setting, with looming mountain views, occasionally interrupted by dense vegetation along roadsides or dips in the winding river valley. The settlements' unique blend of mountain and rural scenery creates a captivating alpine ambiance, making them popular tourist destinations due to their breathtaking views and convenient proximity to Mansfield and the Alpine Resorts. Remnant river red gums along roadsides define short-range views and frame development across the Upper Delatite Settlements, especially along the river corridor (SGS, 2022).

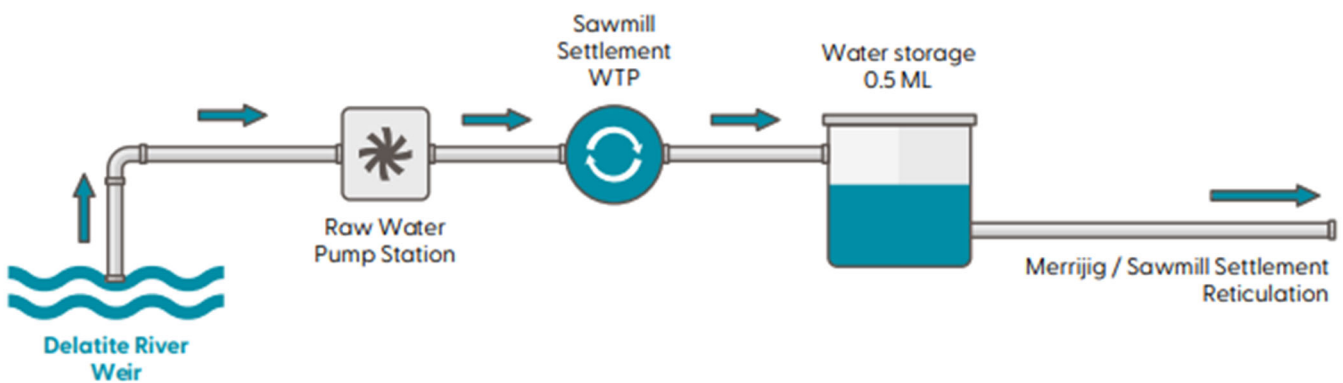
## The Delatite River

The Delatite River forms the backbone of the Delatite Valley and is an integral part of life in the area. Many private properties share a boundary with the river and the community engagement undertaken has highlighted a strong sense of community passion for protecting the waterway and its banks.

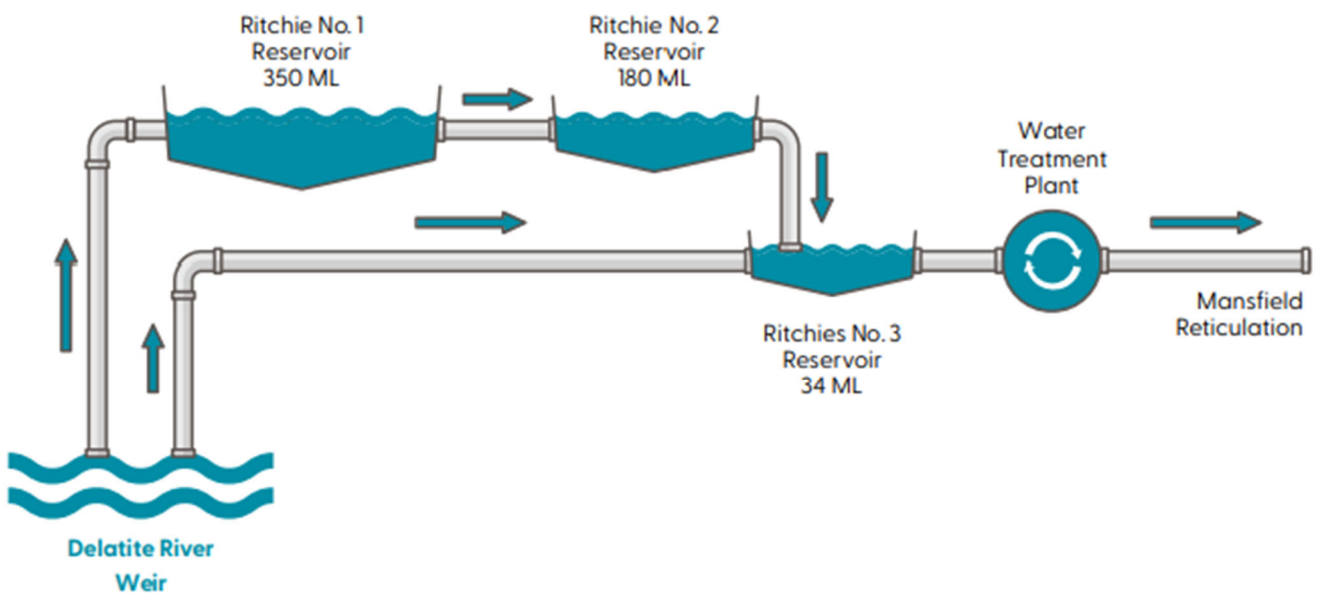
As well as being a valued community and environmental asset, the Delatite River is the water source for both Alpine Ridge, Sawmill Settlement and Merrijig, as well as Mansfield township. Goulburn Valley Water is licenced to take water from the Delatite River under bulk water entitlements which specify the volume of water which can be taken, and when.

The Goulburn Valley Water *Urban Water Strategy 2022* identifies the Delatite River as a water source reliant on seasonal rainfall, and where water is captured and stored for use during dry periods.

### Upper Delatite River System



### Delatite River System

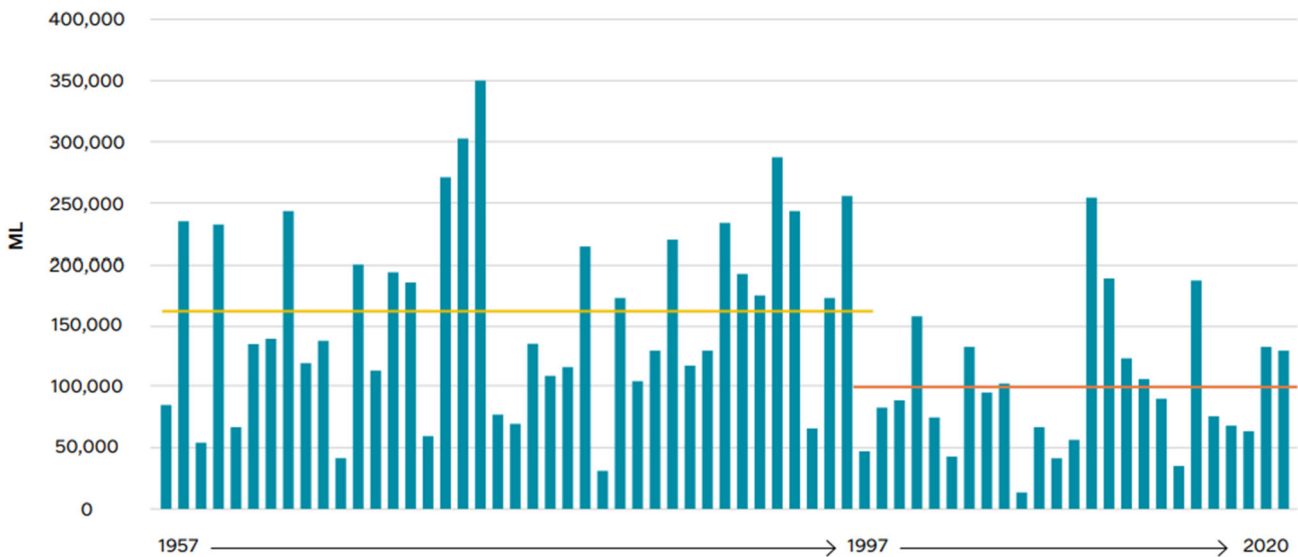


Source: Goulburn Valley Water, *Urban Water Strategy, 2022*

## Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**

The Delatite River, like many of Victoria's watercourses, has experienced a reduction in annual streamflow when compared to pre-1997 flow rates (GVW, 2022). Due consideration must be given to the changing climate and water resources when planning for growth and the ongoing servicing of settlements which rely on these streams for water supply.

**Annual Stream Flow - Delatite River at Tonga Bridge**

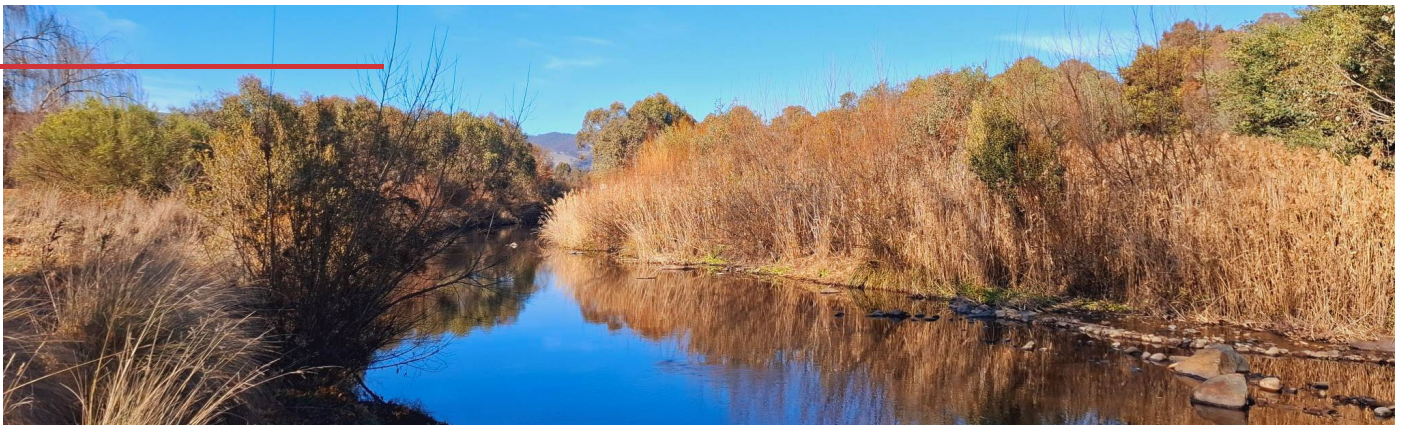


Goulburn Valley Water Urban Water Strategy 2022

Despite the reduction in streamflow, Goulburn Valley Water has deemed the current supply system sufficient to meet the agreed service levels for the Upper Delatite System for the next ten years. Additional measures are planned to ensure the security of water supply for Mansfield township.

As well as being the water supply for Mansfield and the Delatite Valley, the Delatite River is a vital environmental asset to the area. The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority has listed the river at a priority waterway, with a high environmental, social, cultural, and economic value. The Murray Cod, which is listed as a vulnerable species under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* can be found in its waters.

The Delatite River is considered at high risk of bank erosion due to stock access to the river, which exacerbates the known issues of poor riparian vegetation quality and introduced flora and fauna. The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority operates a river health incentive program to work to resolve these issues with the private landowners and land managers that have frontage to the river.



## Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**

### **Agriculture**

Agriculture plays a vital role in the Delatite Valley's economy and landscape, aligning closely with broader trends in Mansfield Shire. The Farming Zone covers 81% of the land in the region, predominantly characterised by mixed farming and grazing, with a smaller proportion of land used for intensive livestock operations and horticultural production. To both the north and south of Merrijig, there are active farming properties, primarily focused on grazing cattle.

Primary producers in the region typically engage in livestock management, reflecting the region's traditional family-run farming practices rather than intensive animal production methods found in other parts of the state.

The agricultural profile of Delatite Valley is consistent with Mansfield Shire's overall trends. The Mansfield Economic Profile and Direction Paper (2018) highlights that:

- ▶ The majority of agricultural land in the region is used for mixed farming and grazing, with only a small proportion allocated to intensive livestock production and horticulture.
- ▶ The region's agricultural land quality is generally low, with only a small portion rated as moderate, which supports grazing and some crop production.

Despite these strengths, land fragmentation from rural residential development has emerged as a key challenge, impacting the long-term viability of productive farming in the Delatite Valley.

One major constraint is land quality, as much of the area is classified as low-to-moderate agricultural land quality. This limits the potential for high-value crop production, making livestock grazing the most viable farming activity in the region.

To assess the extent of productive farmland in Delatite Valley, land parcels have been categorised based on their size: 0–4 hectares, 4–40 hectares, and 40+ hectares. The 40-hectare benchmark is significant as it aligns with the planning scheme, where a permit is required to build a dwelling on lots smaller than 40 hectares in the Farming Zone (FZ). This policy is designed to prevent land fragmentation and maintain land for agricultural use rather than rural residential development.

From an economic perspective, farms smaller than 40 hectares often struggle to be commercially viable, particularly for broadacre livestock grazing—the dominant agricultural activity in the region.



Mansfield Shire Council Delatite Valley Plan

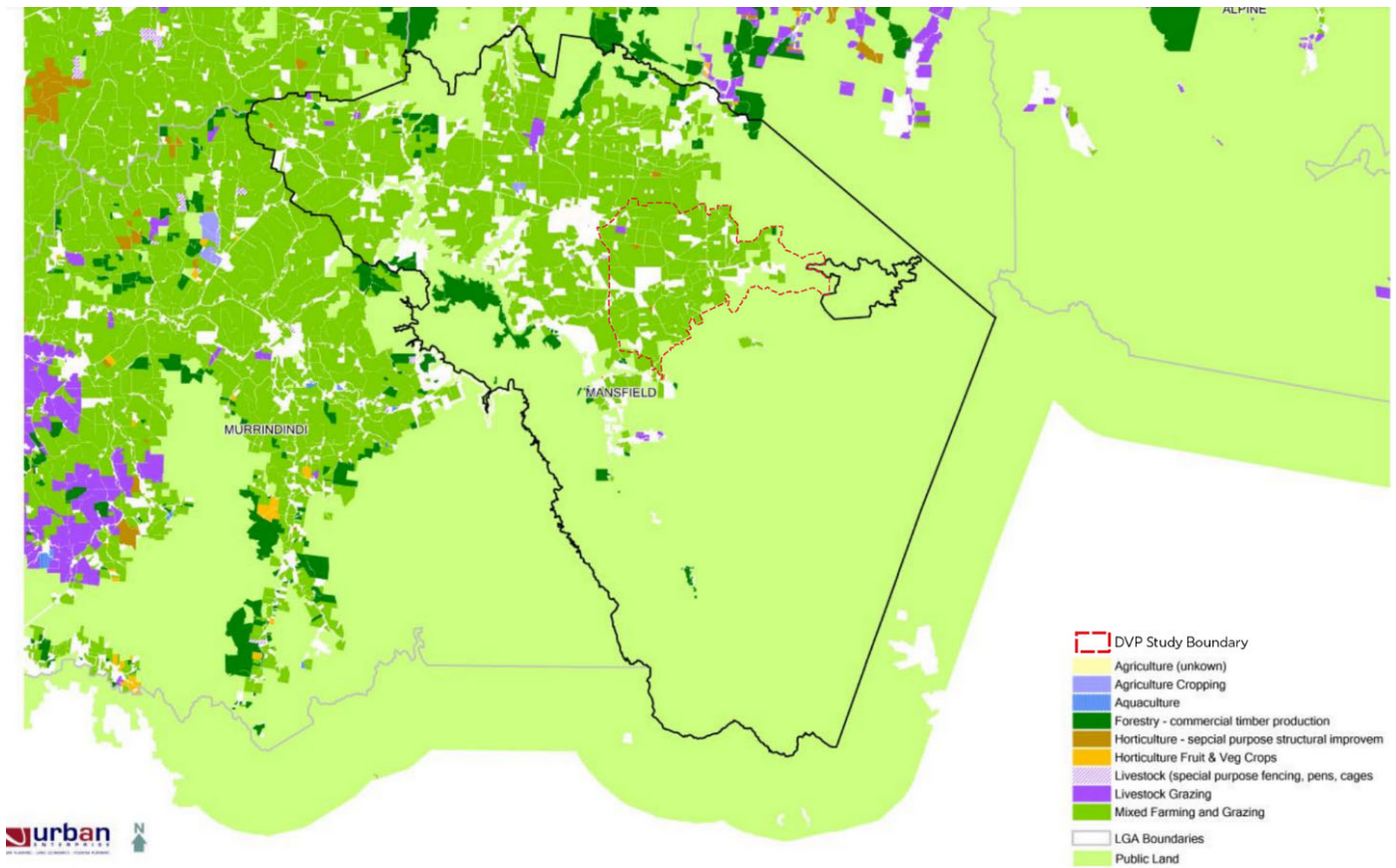


Figure 15. Agricultural land use, 2012 (Source: Hume Rural Land Use Strategy [Urban Enterprise, 2012])

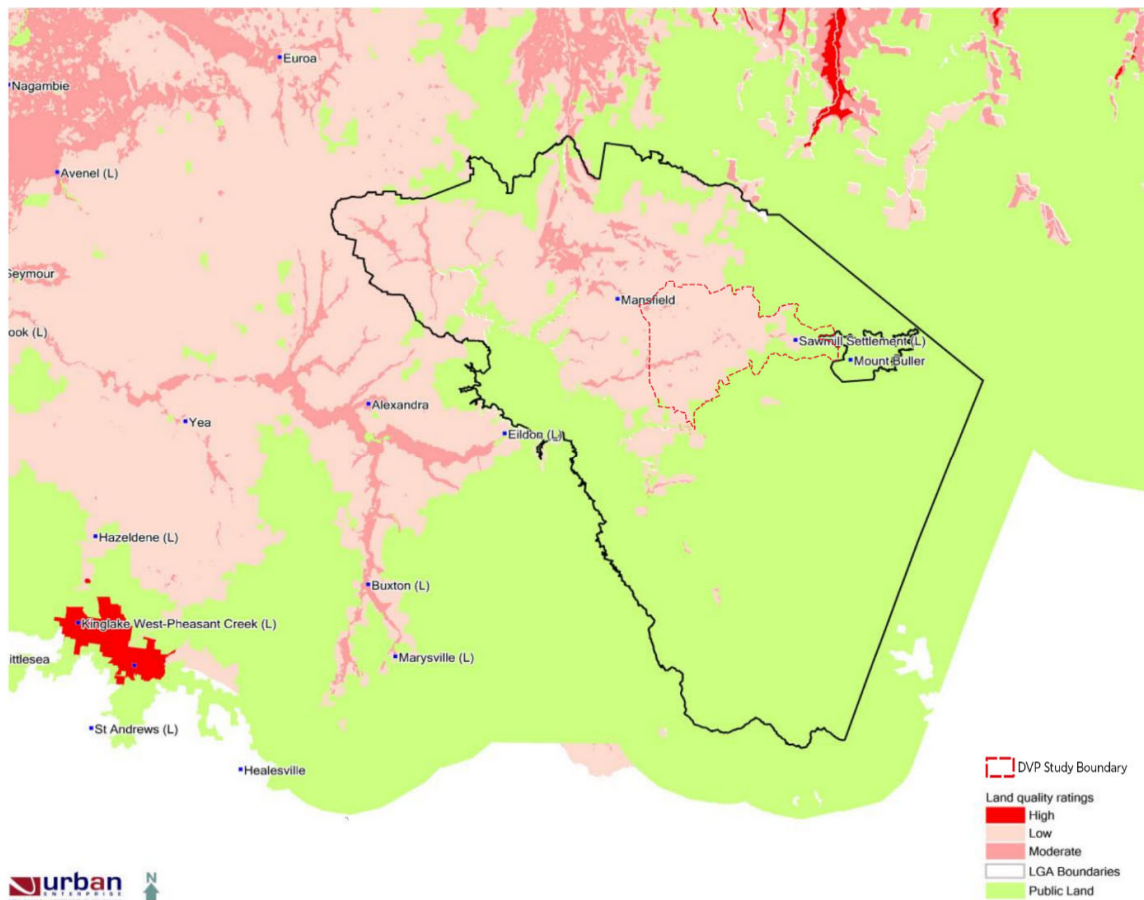


Figure 16. Agriculture land quality (Source: Hume Rural Land Use Strategy [Urban Enterprise, 2012])

## Mansfield Shire Council Delatite Valley Plan

### Agriculture – continued

An analysis of land parcel sizes under the Farming Zone in the Delatite Valley (Figure 17) reveals a significant presence of large agricultural lots alongside a high number of smaller, fragmented parcels within the Farming Zone. As depicted in the map, the majority of the study area consists of lots over 40 hectares (in green), forming the backbone of the region's agricultural productivity. However, smaller parcels (in white) under 40 hectares are scattered throughout the valley, particularly near key road networks and settlements. These smaller lots often struggle to support highly productive farming but remain attractive for rural lifestyle properties, increasing the risk of fragmentation.

Protecting the ability for the large parcels of land to farm is essential to aligning with existing planning policies that prioritise the preservation of high-value agricultural land. To do this it is essential to prevent further subdivision which created undersized lots and encroachment from incompatible land uses. Maintaining the integrity of these farming properties is critical for the long-term viability of the agricultural sector, supporting rural livelihoods, and preserving the valley's landscape character. Strategic planning measures must reinforce these protections to safeguard the region's agricultural future.

In addition to lot size distribution, Figure 18 highlights properties currently rated as farming, providing further insight into agricultural land use in the Delatite Valley. A comparison with Figure 17 shows that while many large lots over 40 hectares are designated for farming, there are also smaller parcels classified as farming properties, particularly near settlement areas and along key transport corridors. This suggests that some smaller properties continue to support agricultural activities, though their long-term viability may be limited compared to larger farms. Conversely, there may also be instances where farming-zoned land is not actively rated as farmland, indicating potential underutilisation or conversion to other uses ie. **R**ural living properties. This reinforces the importance of aligning land use policies with actual agricultural activity to prevent fragmentation and loss of productive farmland. Maintaining a strong policy framework that prioritises viable agricultural land while managing pressures from rural lifestyle development will be crucial in sustaining the valley's agricultural economy and landscape character.



# Mansfield Shire Council Delatite Valley Plan

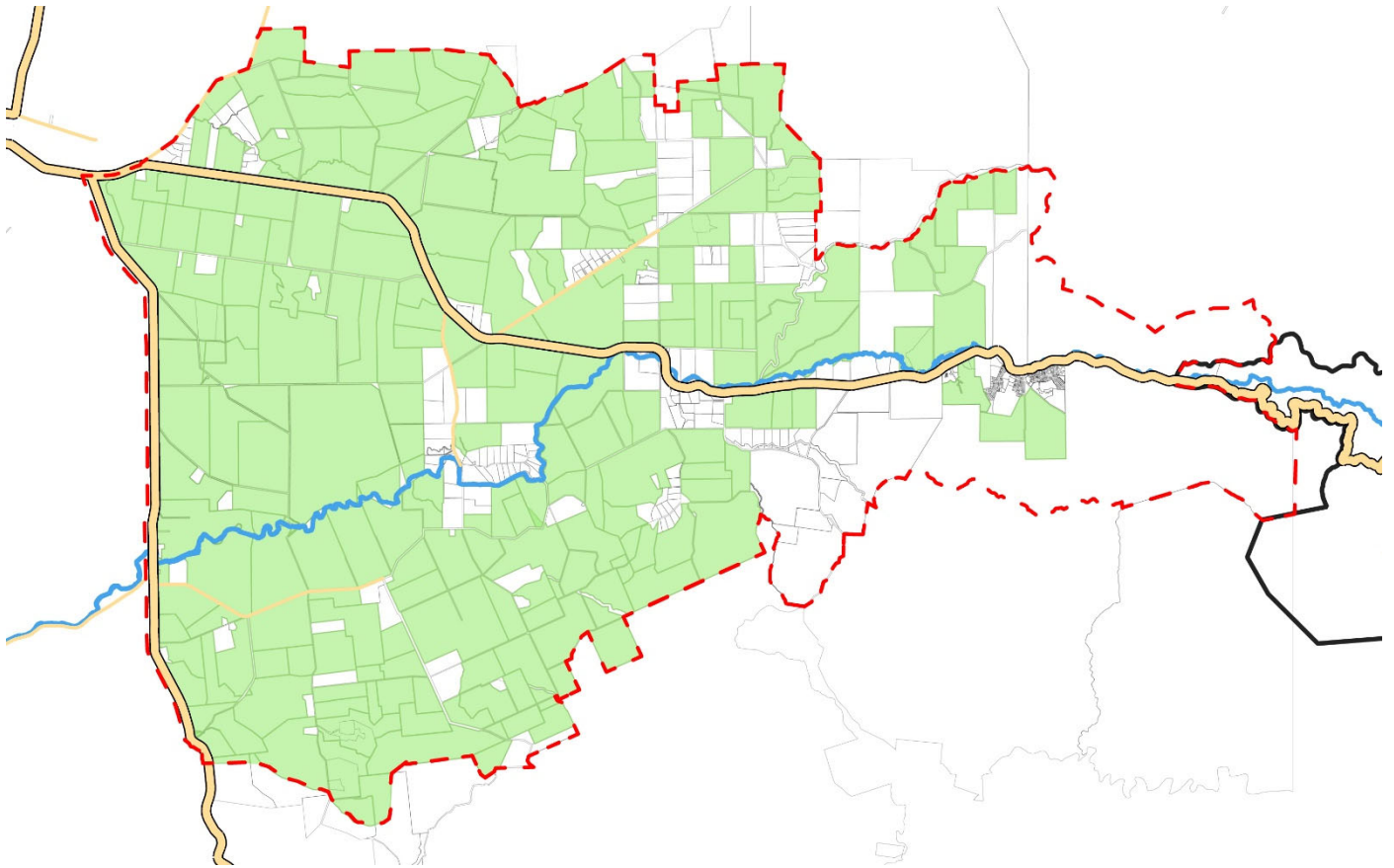


Figure 17. Farming Zone properties 40ha+ in the study area

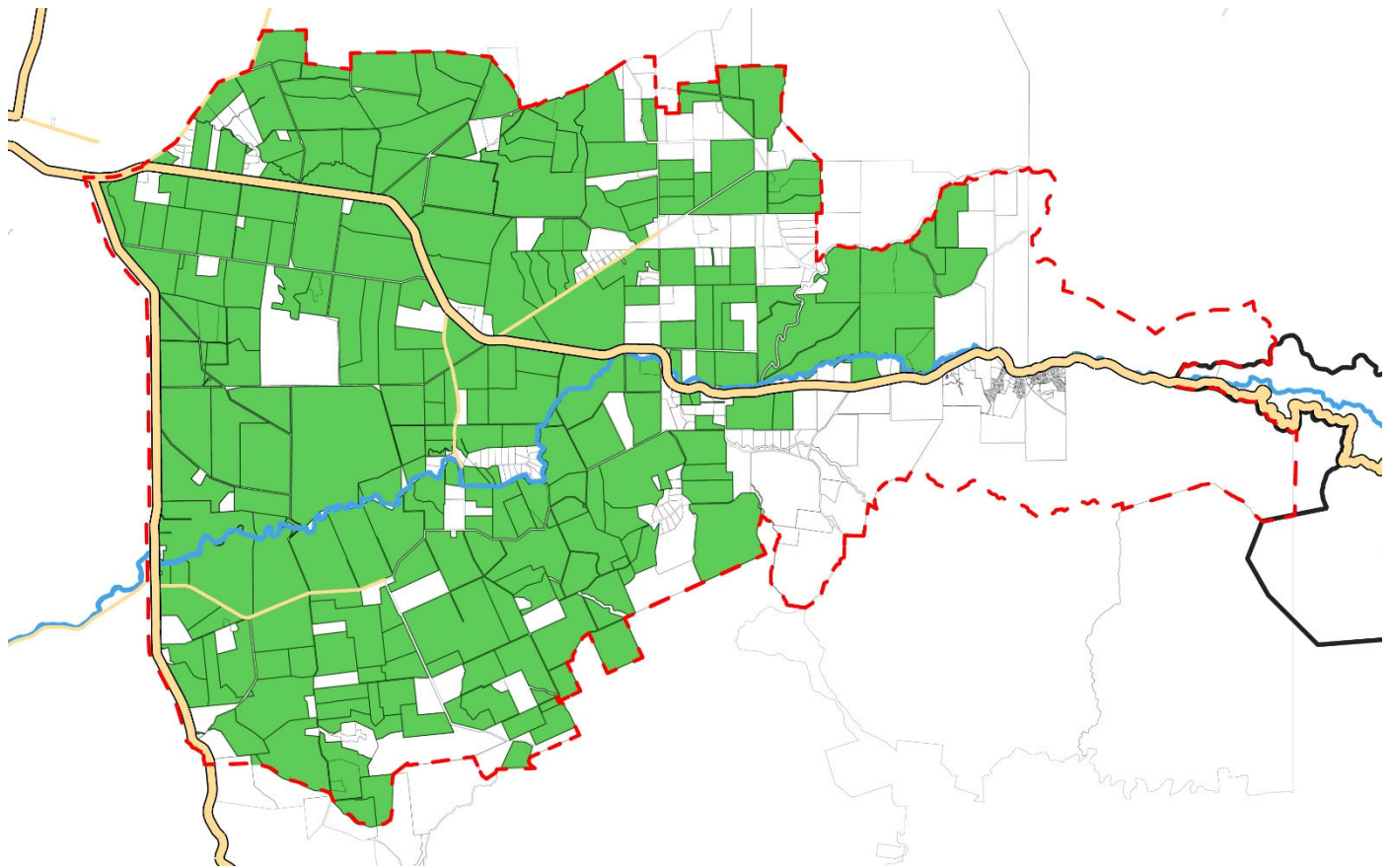


Figure 18. Farming properties in the study area

Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan****Tourism**

The region is home to several attractions that are pivotal to its broad tourism appeal. These include the renowned ski resorts of Mount Buller and Mount Stirling, the rustic allure of Merrijig, and the historical significance of Craig's Hut and the Victorian High Country. These attractions draw visitors while contributing to the local economy and sense of community.

The Mansfield Shire Sustainable Tourism Plan undertook an audit of the tourism product in Mansfield and found that there were over 136 attractions in the Shire, with over 70% free to use for the visitor economy. Most chargeable products are located around the Mansfield township.

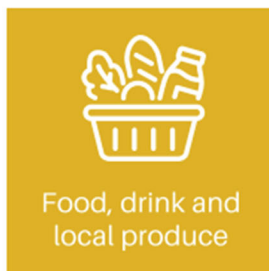
The pillars for the tourism product in Mansfield Shire are as follows:

**Explore our lakes, mountains and rivers**

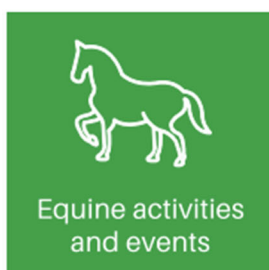
- Cycling
- Winter sports
- Adventure and nature-based activities (fishing, watersports, hiking and bushwalking, 4wd, hunting etc)
- Camping

**Immerse yourself in our heritage, culture and arts**

- First People's heritage
- Unique history of the region with the timber and gold mining historical industries, legend of Ned Kelly and story of the Man from Snowy River
- Exhibits and galleries
- Events showcasing art in various forms such as pottery, fine arts, music and theatre

**Indulge in food, drink and local produce**

- Cellar doors, distilleries and breweries
- Restaurants and cafes
- Rich, quality local produce
- Producers and providore markets

**Discover the Equine activities and events our region is famous for**

- Unique-to-place events including Merrijig Rodeo and Campdraft
- History of the mountain cattleman
- Trail rides through country

In terms of population activities, the most relevant for the Delatite Valley Region were in are the "Explore our lakes, mountains and rivers" and "Discover the equine activities and events our region is famous for" pillars.

## Mansfield Shire Council Delatite Valley Plan

Mansfield Shire's reputation as a premier holiday and recreation destination, coupled with its strategic location as a gateway to Mount Buller Alpine Resort, drives a thriving tourism industry. This popularity has given rise to a diverse array of tourism products, including wineries, horseback riding, 4WD adventures, farm-stay accommodation, dirt bike riding, rodeos, off-road cycling, camping, and the nearby Mansfield Zoo. While these activities are currently scattered throughout the study area, there is potential to consolidate and concentrate certain tourism offerings, creating focused activity hubs that attract more visitors and enhance the overall tourist experience.

The Shire's popularity as a holiday and recreation destination results in large, seasonal fluctuations in the population, in part driven by the high number of non-resident ratepayers. This high variability places pressure on local businesses and emphasises the need for greater diversification particularly during the off-season.

In addition, the tourism accommodation and non-resident ratepayer (holiday home) market has contributed to a housing affordability challenge for local key workers (retail, hospitality, local services, agriculture, etc.). Without appropriate accommodation, especially during peak tourism periods, the Shire's economy will suffer from a key worker shortage. (SGS, 2022)

An analysis of the available tourist accommodation in the Delatite Valley indicates a baseline of 1,500 beds across Merrijig, Alpine Ridge, and Sawmill Settlement. This has been based on data from Airbnb and ~~Stayz~~, and ~~Stayz~~ and further verified through consultation with local accommodation providers. This highlights the significant role of short-term rentals in the local accommodation market. While these properties cater to seasonal tourism demand, they also intensify housing pressures for permanent residents and key workers, particularly during peak visitor periods.

The following table provides a detailed breakdown of verified accommodation availability across different providers in the region.

Accommodation	Number of Beds
Daysend Cottages Merrijig	2 Cottages, 8 Beds
Delatite Apartments	55 Beds
Merrijig Lodge	12 Beds Additional 36 Beds used for winter staff accommodation
Merrijig Motor Inn	23 rooms, sleeps 93
Sebel Pinnacle Valley	75 beds total with approximately 50 beds publicly available

Table 23

## Access and Movement

Mt Buller Road serves as the primary arterial route connecting Mansfield, Merrijig, Sawmill Settlement, and Mt Buller, highlighting the region's reliance on this single major road. The areas transportation network is characterised by limited public transport options, with the Mansfield-Mt Buller Bus Line operating only during the snow season and offering pick-up points at select locations including the Hunt Club Hotel, Merrijig Motor Inn, Sebel Pinnacle Valley, and Alpine Ridge Drive. During peak tourist season in the winter months, the high volume of traffic can cause extreme congestion on Mt Buller Road.

Notably, while most roads in Sawmill Settlement and Alpine Ridge are sealed, many other roads in the Delatite Valley remain unsealed, presenting unique infrastructure challenges and opportunities for future development.

## Agricultural & Tourism Link

The Integrating Mansfield's Productivity, Agricultural Communities and Tourism (IMPACT) Route project aims to improve accessibility and support the growth of agricultural communities, tourism, and residents in the Delatite Valley. With \$9.8 million in Federal funding, Council is upgrading key infrastructure along Highton Lane, Rifle Butts Road, and Chapel Hill Road to enhance the 26km corridor connecting Mansfield, Mansfield-Woods Point Road, and Mt Buller Road.

Road	Key Upgrades:
Highton Lane	<u>Reconstruction works to address drainage and road surface issues. Upgrades include road widening, the installation of a new curb and channel, and adding footpaths. Completed in March 2025, the upgrade works also included the construction of a new roundabout at the intersection of Rifle Butts and Monkey Gully Roads.</u> <del>Reconstruction works will address drainage and road surface issues. Planned upgrades include road widening, the installation of a new curb and channel, and adding footpaths. Works on the east side were completed in December 2024, with the rest of the work finished in March 2025.</del>
Chapel Hill Road	Improvements to creek and river crossings have been completed, including the installation of a new culvert at Lanky Creek and the strengthening of the Delatite River Bridge. <u>Road sealing</u> <del>These</del> upgrades ensure safer access for all vehicle types, including agricultural transport.
Rifle Butts Road	<del>Planned Road</del> sealing and drainage upgrades will reduce dust and improve safety, providing all-weather access year-round, <u>with the works including road widening and a new pedestrian crossing together with safety improvements to the Ogilvies Road intersection.</u>

The IMPACT Route will enhance transportation links for agricultural businesses, stock trucks, and tourism operators, creating more efficient access to key destinations including Merrijig, while improving the visitor experience. The project is funded by \$9.8 million from the Australian Government's Remote Roads Upgrade Pilot Program, \$2.5 million from Council, and \$1.3 million in development contributions.

Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**

**Mansfield Airport**

Mansfield Airport, located adjacent to the intersection of Mt Buller Road and Mansfield-Woods Point Road, approximately three ~~kilometers~~kilometres east of Mansfield, features a single, uncontrolled airport with a grass surface runway measuring 900 ~~metres~~metres in length. The facility serves as a small private airstrip and helipad, playing a significant role in emergency management by operating as a base for Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) Forest Fire Management (FFM) fire-fighting aircraft. According to the Mansfield Municipal Emergency Management Plan 2024-2027, the airport supports emergency response operations and enhances the region's capacity to manage bushfire risks.

In 2014, DEECA completed a \$600,000 upgrade to Walsh's airbase at Mansfield as part of a \$4 million state-wide investment across five key airbases in Victoria. The upgrade aimed to modernise the facility, improve operational capacity, and support the growing demands of the state aviation fleet during fire seasons. The improvements included a larger helipad, a new communications building, and upgraded site facilities for aircraft, retardant mixing, and crew operations. These enhancements contribute to more efficient fire-fighting operations, including fire retardant bombing and fire-spotting missions, as well as supporting the delivery of the planned burning program.

Mansfield Airport continues to play a vital role in the region's emergency preparedness. In October 2024, DEECA reported that Forest Fire Management Victoria rappel firefighters conducted training exercises at the airbase, practicing helicopter rappelling for aggressive first attack missions in remote and inaccessible forest areas. These exercises are critical in preparing crews to respond swiftly to bushfires, helping to protect communities and the environment from the impacts of fire events. The airport's strategic location and ongoing upgrades make it an essential component of the region's emergency response infrastructure.

In addition to its emergency management functions, Mansfield Airport also serves a role in general aviation, with aircraft movements averaging between 0 to 10 each month. This activity supports private aviation and recreational flying, contributing to the broader aviation network of the region.

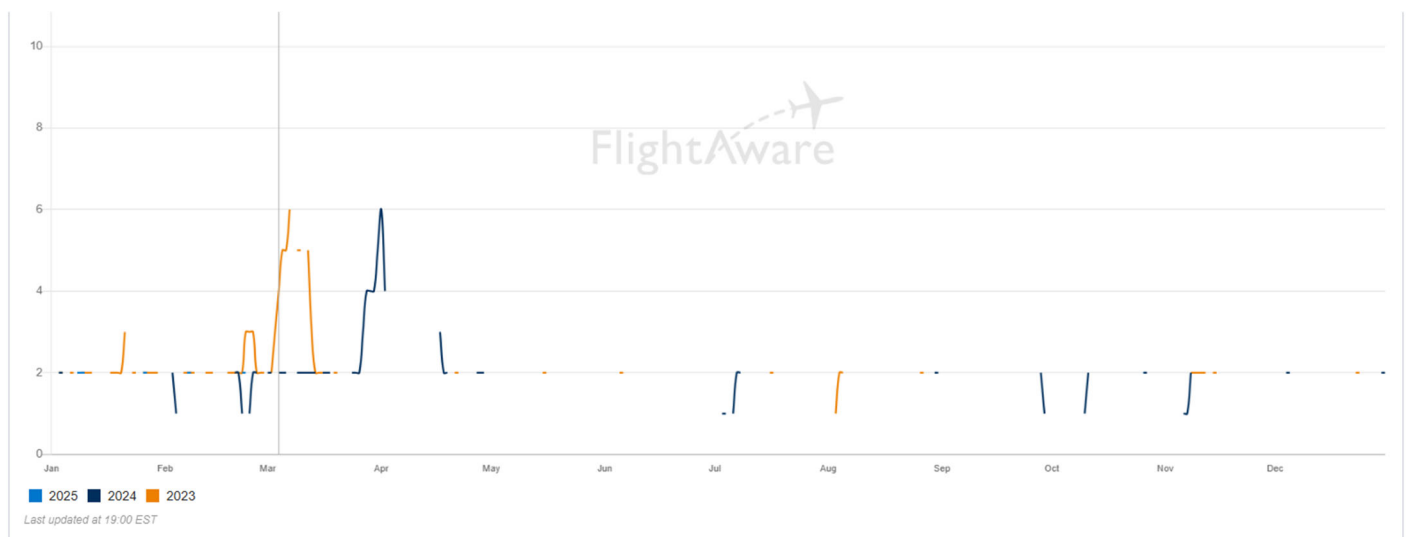


Figure 19. Aircraft movements at Mansfield Airport 2023 Jan - 2025 Mar

## Community Sustainability and Resilience

The communities in the Delatite Valley face different challenges in terms of sustainability and resilience. One of the primary concerns is the high bushfire risk present the eastern side of the Delatite Valley, where Sawmill Settlement and Alpine Ridge are nestled in the dense bushland and back onto state forests. Conversely, Merrijig is more prone to the potential flood risk posed by the Delatite River, which threatens the community's well-being and infrastructure.

In both cases it is important to note that the single sealed access to the region is Mt Buller Road. To mitigate these hazards, it's essential that any development in these areas is carefully planned and managed, taking into account the specific environmental and climatic conditions to ensure the long-term sustainability and resilience of the community.

### Strengths

- High quality grazing land
- Uninterrupted views over the landscape and to Mt Buller
- Healthy waterways, including the Delatite River
- Pristine National Parks
- Versatile State Parks

### Weaknesses

- Remote location
- Limited public infrastructure, including open spaces
- Limited road connectivity, particularly sealed, all-weather roads
- Topographical barriers to increased development in Sawmill Settlement and Alpine Ridge

### Opportunities

- Development of a sustainable tourism precinct
- Improved access and interface to the Delatite River
- Formalised day visitor area in Merrijig
- Stopping area and lookout to Mt Buller
- Collaboration with the Taungerung Land and Waters Council
- Collaboration with the Mansfield Historical Society

### Threats

- Limited sewer capacity at present
- Water availability subject to seasonality
- High Bushfire Risk
- Environmental impact from increased tourism
- Decrease in community well-being and connectivity from over-tourism
- High competition for tourism from other destinations in the region, particularly summer tourism

An aerial photograph showing a two-lane asphalt road that curves through a lush, green forested valley. A river flows through the center of the valley, surrounded by dense trees. The road has white lane markings and a guardrail on the right side. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains under a clear sky. The overall scene is a scenic, natural landscape.

## Part B: Recommendations and Implementation

## Community Outlook

The community describe the Delatite Valley as a charming and beautiful region in Australia, known for its scenery, mountains, waterways, and natural beauty. It serves as a gateway to the Alpine National Park and the Victorian High Country, offering stunning views, rural farmland, and vibrant local community with excellent eateries. The valley provides a variety of outdoor activities year-round, including hiking, skiing, and water sports, in a peaceful and unique environment with a rich history and a mix of farming and tourism. The area is celebrated for its serene, traffic-free atmosphere, making it a perfect place to enjoy nature, relax, and explore the magnificent countryside and its hidden gems. It is important to safeguard its unique alpine and farming landscapes from overdevelopment.

## Community Led Initiatives

### How can the community contribute to our shared vision?

The Delatite Valley community could significantly contribute to the area's vision by organising events and activities that capitalise on its natural environment and recreational strengths. Potential community-led initiatives could include:

- ▶ Seasonal markets or fairs showcasing local produce and crafts.
- ▶ Community gatherings or festivals celebrating the area's natural beauty and outdoor lifestyle.
- ▶ Community events such as pop-up galleries or workshops that make use of existing community infrastructure such as the Merrijig Hall.
- ▶ Community-led tours or walks with a focus on local history.
- ▶ Initiatives to continue to preserve and display the history and heritage of the Delatite Valley.
- ▶ Initiatives to maintain the environment and cleanliness of the Delatite River and surrounds.



## Objectives



To protect and maintain the natural beauty and environment of the Delatite Valley.



To define the identity of the region, including establishing a local character.



To enhance the social infrastructure in key locations.



To enhance the pedestrian and cycling network between Mansfield and Mirimbah.



To explore additional levels of housing with strict character controls.



To promote new commercial opportunities at key locations.



To provide for year-round tourism activities and eco-tourism initiatives.



To promote the unique history of the region.



To activate the Delatite River, with park space and trails.

## Theme 1: Identity and History

The Delatite Valley is set to establish itself beyond being a gateway to the High Country and Mount Buller, offering visitors a distinct and memorable experience within the valley. To reinforce this identity, signage and gateway treatments along Mt Buller Road are recommended to welcome visitors and showcase the region's unique character. This will help differentiate the Delatite Valley from Mansfield township and Mount Buller, fostering community pride among residents while enhancing the visitor experience and encouraging exploration of the area's natural and cultural assets.

A new visitor information point is proposed to provide a central hub for travellers to access insights about the region, ensuring they can make the most of their stay. Additionally, interpretive boards will be installed at key locations to highlight the history of logging, mining, sawmills, and High Country exploration. These will also acknowledge the Indigenous heritage of the Taungurung people, the traditional custodians of the land.

There is currently limited understanding and documentation of Aboriginal cultural heritage in the Delatite Valley, with much of the knowledge reliant on cultural sensitivity mapping, which has been minimal. ~~To address this, a heritage gap study is recommended to identify and document sites of Aboriginal and post-European settlement significance. This study will provide a foundation for conservation efforts and guide future interpretive programs.~~ Collaboration with the Taungurung Land and Waters Council will be critical to ensure Traditional Owner perspectives are respected and integrated into heritage interpretation strategies.

Protecting and enhancing the region's historical and cultural identity is a key priority of the framework plans, ensuring that future development supports Delatite Valley's rural character, agricultural heritage, and tourism legacy.

- ▶ The Delatite Valley Framework Plan includes the retention of significant landscape overlays across the Delatite Valley to ensure that future development is carefully assessed, protecting scenic views, cultural values, and natural landscapes that define the region's identity.
- ▶ The Merrijig Township Framework Plan supports consolidated development over unrestricted expansion throughout the valley, maintaining the town's rural character while allowing for small-scale commercial and residential activities that complement its identity.
- ▶ The Sawmill Settlement Framework Plan recognises the historical significance of the original sawmill site east of the town boundary, proposing its formalisation as a new public open space. Its proximity to Carters Mill Campground reinforces its role as both a heritage and recreational asset.

## Theme 2: Environment

To safeguard the delicate ecosystem of the Delatite Valley, a range of environmental protection measures are recommended. A key focus will be on water quality management, ensuring the long-term health of the Delatite River. This may involve the installation of additional public bins at key locations to reduce pollution from increased tourism activity.

In line with the Mansfield Planning Strategy 2022, Environmental Significance Overlays (ESO1 and ESO2) are in place for the upper Delatite region, offering additional statutory protection for water quality and quantity in the area. In addition, the application of the Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO1) is recommended to be retained, offering additional statutory protection for its significant ridgelines and alpine approaches.

These measures will help to continue to preserve the region's natural beauty, particularly short- and long-distance views of Mount Buller from Mt Buller Road and other public viewpoints, ensuring that the iconic mountain remains a stunning backdrop for visitors and locals alike.

Effective flood management is also a priority for the Delatite River, with plans to identify and protect farming areas from flood risks. To support long-term agricultural viability, subdivision within the Farming Zone is restricted. ~~Additionally, a Farming/Rural Land Use Study is recommended to identify high-value agricultural land requiring further protection. These efforts~~This will ensure that future development does not compromise the region's biodiversity, ecological integrity, or landscape values.

The framework plans integrate these environmental protections to maintain Delatite Valley's natural character while accommodating sustainable development:

- ▶ The Delatite Valley Framework Plan prioritises the protection of agricultural land, identifying large lots in the farming zones (40+ hectares) for preservation to support sustainable agricultural practices and prevent fragmentation. The Significant Landscape Overlay applies across the study area, ensuring that all future developments are assessed to prevent excessive land modification and protect scenic and environmental qualities.
- ▶ The Merrijig Township Framework Plan ensures that any new housing is strategically located to minimise environmental impact. Development in ~~these areas~~Merrijig will follow low-impact design principles, ensuring that new housing and tourism growth respect the valley's rural and ecological character.
- ▶ The Sawmill Settlement Framework Plan limits residential development due to its high bushfire risk, ensuring that new growth does not increase environmental vulnerability. Instead, the plan supports tourism and open space initiatives that align with environmental resilience principles.

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### Theme 3: Access & Infrastructure

To enhance the visitor experience and improve quality of life for residents, a range of infrastructure upgrades are proposed for the Delatite Valley. A key priority is the establishment of a safe pedestrian and bike path linking Mansfield, Merrijig, and Sawmill Settlement, promoting active transport and recreation.

Road safety improvements will also be explored, including speed reduction measures at key townships along Mt Buller Road to improve safety and amenity. Additionally, essential social facilities such as a public toilets are proposed to be developed in aat strategic locations, benefiting both residents and visitors. Council will also continue to advocate for better internet coverage, ensuring that residents stay connected and visitors can better share their experiences.

Improving connectivity while maintaining the region's rural character is a major focus of the framework plans. Strategic infrastructure investments will support safe travel, tourism, and economic activity, ensuring sustainable growth in the region.

The framework plans integrate these infrastructure improvements to enhance accessibility and safety:

- ▶ The Delatite Valley Framework Plan identifies Mt Buller Road as the region's primary access corridor, while introducing a new agricultural and tourism link along Chapel Hill Road, providing an alternative route to support local businesses and tourism.
- ▶ The Merrijig Township Framework Plan proposes key road upgrades and new connections to improve traffic flow and local access, including:
  - Advocating for Intersection upgrades at the Mt Buller Road, School Lane, and McCormacks Road intersection ~~to enhance traffic safety and efficiency.~~
  - ~~A pedestrian bridge crossing the Delatite River via Omega Street, improving connectivity between key parts of Merrijig.~~
  - ~~Service road upgrades near Merrijig Town Hall to improve access towards Alpha Street.~~
  - Speed reduction measures at town entry points to enhance road safety.
- ▶ The Sawmill Settlement Framework Plan acknowledges the high bushfire risk, meaning major new infrastructure is limited. However, it proposes formalising a public open space at the historic sawmill site, improving recreational access while maintaining environmental resilience.

## Theme 4: River & Trails

The Delatite River is one of the Valley's most treasured natural assets, and the goal is to protect and enhance its beauty while providing opportunities for recreation. A key priority is the formalisation of existing public open space at Merrijig, featuring a formalised river interface to allow locals and visitors to better appreciate the river's natural charm.

Plans also include revitalising sections of the river to accommodate low-impact recreational activities such as tubing and fishing, ensuring that these activities are managed in a way that preserves environmental integrity. To enhance public enjoyment, ~~scenic lookouts and formalised~~ picnic areas are recommended to reduce trespassing on private property while creating welcoming spaces for relaxation and socialising.

The framework plans prioritise enhanced river access, new trails, and eco-friendly recreation, ensuring that the Delatite River remains a vibrant and well-preserved asset for both the community and visitors.

The framework plans outline specific strategies to achieve this vision:

- ▶ The Delatite Valley Framework Plan focuses on identifying and formalising river access points, ensuring that appropriate infrastructure is in place to support recreational use while minimising environmental impact.
- ~~The long-term vision includes advocating for path connections from Mansfield to Merrijig to Mirimbah, utilizing existing tracks wherever possible. The first stage is recommended to commence at Merrijig, where community access to the river is most needed, laying the foundation for a recreational facility that showcases the region's natural beauty while promoting environmental sustainability.~~
- ▶ The Merrijig Township Framework Plan formalises existing public open space and creates a community park along the Delatite River, ~~stretching approximately 1 km, with a riverside trail for walking.~~
- ▶ The Alpine Ridge and Sawmill Settlement Framework Plan identifies three open-space investigation areas where access to the Delatite River ~~can~~ could be formalised subject to landowner/manager and consent, and the impact on the local environment can be managed.
- ▶ A walking trail extension is proposed from Carters Road to Alpine Ridge Drive improving connectivity, promoting eco-tourism, and supporting active transport.
- ▶ ~~The long-term vision includes advocating for path connections from Mansfield to Merrijig to Mirimbah, utilizing existing tracks wherever possible. The first stage is recommended to commence at Merrijig, where community access to the river is most needed, laying the foundation for a recreational facility that showcases the region's natural beauty while promoting environmental sustainability.~~

By balancing conservation and recreation, the Delatite River will remain a thriving, resilient ecosystem for generations to come.

## Theme 5: Housing

To support sustainable growth in the Delatite Valley, new housing development must be carefully managed to preserve the region's rural character while accommodating existing and future demand. ~~To achieve this, future residential areas have been identified in Merrijig, Future housing growth is supported within existing township boundaries~~ where the expansion of the township can occur with minimal environmental impact and efficient infrastructure provision. ~~These areas will also help Council meet its housing targets, ensuring a balanced approach to growth.~~

Any significant development intensification in Merrijig must provide for appropriate infrastructure upgrades as to ensure the additional population growth is managed and does not cause further disruption and impacts to the existing community.

Across the Delatite Valley, nNew development should not project above key ridgelines or into significant viewpoints along the Alpine approach, in line with the Mansfield Planning Strategy 2022 and Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO1 – Alpine Approach Significant Landscape Area). All new housing should follow the design guidelines of Clause 12.05-2L of the Mansfield Planning Scheme, ensuring that development respects significant landscapes, ridgelines, and alpine approaches.

All residential areas in Merrijig will are proposed to be covered by a Design and Development Overlay, to be used to further protect and enhance the character of these areas.

~~A Development Plan Overlay will be used in Area C to ensure the following outcomes:~~

- ~~1. A 20 metre wide tree reserve must be provided adjacent to Mt Buller Road.~~
- ~~2. The tree reserve must be planted out with appropriate vegetation to the satisfaction of Council.~~
- ~~3. A Section 173 Agreement must be entered into by all properties adjoining the Tree Reserve outlining the landowners ongoing maintenance and management requirements for that reserve.~~
- ~~4. No direct vehicular access to be provided to Mt Buller Road from Area C.~~
- ~~5. The existing dwelling can maintain access to Mt Buller Road up until an alternative access from either Powers Road or a new internal road has been provided.~~
- ~~6. Any development within Area C will be accessed from either Powers Road or other internal roads created as part of a subdivision.~~

The framework plans provide a structured approach to future residential growth:

- ▶ Merrijig Township Framework Plan
  - Existing Township Zone: There is capacity for future residential development within the existing Township Zone, noting significant development restriction in areas covered by the Flood Overlay, and topographical constraints.
  - ~~○ Area A: 3ha of proposed Neighbourhood Residential Zone north of McCormacks Road and adjacent to McCormack Park.~~
  - ~~○ Area B: 7.5ha of proposed Neighbourhood Residential Zone south of McCormacks Road. This property is intersected by a watercourse and has a steep slope down to the Delatite River restricting development, however, is not visible along the alpine approach.~~
  - ~~○ Area C: 7ha of proposed Low Density Residential Zone located between Powers Road and~~

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~~Mt Buller Road. This area is also adjacent to a watercourse and will not be accessible from Mt Buller Road through the vegetation reserve impacting the development pattern.~~

~~All areas already have~~ Merrijig has existing water and sewer infrastructure, making ~~them it~~ cost-effective for development while minimising environmental disturbance.

A housing capacity assessment was conducted for the ~~three investigation areas identified~~ existing township zone in the Merrijig Township Framework Plan, considering a range of zones to evaluate the township's future growth potential. The assessment was refined to ensure a realistic and practical estimation of dwelling capacity by incorporating key development constraints such as internal road infrastructure, access requirements, and open space provisions. To reflect these factors, a Net Developable Area (NDA) of 80% was applied across all calculations.

~~The following scenarios were used to estimate the number of dwellings that could be accommodated in each area, depending on the zone used in each area:~~

- ~~▶ Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ) – 1 dwelling per 1000sqm.~~
- ~~▶ Low Density Residential Zone (LDRZ) based on sewerage availability – 1 dwelling per 2000sqm.~~

As such, the total dwelling capacity ~~for each area, depending on the zone used in Merrijig~~ is as follows:

Existing Area	TZ (no minimum lot size)
Existing dwellings	17 dwellings
Infill development (existing Township Zoning)	~ 35 dwellings
<b>Total future dwellings in Merrijig</b>	<b>~ 52 dwellings</b>

~~The existing Township Zone in Merrijig also has capacity for an estimated 35 additional dwellings through infill development.~~

Provision of water is a driving factor in additional housing development in Merrijig, with ~~the the~~ Goulburn Valley Water 2022 Urban Water Strategy (2022) identifying that there will be the ability to support an additional 440 residential connections in this area.

By focusing residential growth in well-planned areas, the Delatite Valley can accommodate housing demand while protecting its iconic landscapes and preserving its rural charm. \_\_\_\_\_

## Theme 6: Commercial

To support both population growth and the increasing number of tourists, it is essential to provide commercial opportunities that enhance local lifestyles and drive economic development. Merrijig already has some capacity for future commercial development within the existing Township Zone.

To ensure new development integrates seamlessly into the landscape, a Design and Development Overlay (DDO) will be applied to Merrijig, permitting only small-scale developments that complement the local environment. This approach supports a sustainable rural economy while maintaining the distinct character of each township.

The framework plans outline strategic commercial development:

▶ Merrijig Township Framework Plan

- ~~Neighbourhood Residential Areas — Located along McCormacks Road, this area will allow for additional residential development in Merrijig with some low-impact commercial uses permissible.~~
- Existing Merrijig Township – Contains some existing commercial uses, with future commercial opportunities available through infill development.

▶ Sawmill Settlement Framework Plan

- Day-tourism Area – West of the town boundary along Mt Buller Road, this ~~50-hectare~~ site (including the Sebel Pinnacle Valley Resort) will be investigated for day-tourism and commercial uses that align with the bushfire-prone landscape.
- Due to high bushfire risk, further residential expansion is restricted. Instead, the plan encourages alternative tourism and recreation uses that align with the region's natural setting.

By strategically planning commercial growth, the Delatite Valley will be able to support local businesses, enhance visitor experiences, and strengthen the regional economy, all while preserving its unique rural identity.

## Theme 7: Tourism

Tourism is a key economic driver for the Delatite Valley, and as the region grows in popularity, it's essential to enhance infrastructure that improves the visitor experience and supports sustainable tourism. Establishing a Delatite Valley Visitor Information Point will serve as a gateway, offering visitors a chance to learn about the valley's natural beauty, rich heritage, and local attractions. This information point will help visitors connect with the region, encouraging them to explore more and better appreciate the unique characteristics of the valley.

In addition to providing key information, the Delatite Sustainable Tourism Precinct Concept envisions a year-round tourism destination that blends seamlessly into the valley's rural charm. This concept proposes a cluster of ecotourism activities, such as horseback riding, 4WD tours, and farm stays, located strategically to minimise disruption to highly productive agricultural land. To support these activities, infrastructure improvements such as signage, seating areas, public toilets, and road sealing will be necessary to create a seamless, sustainable experience for visitors.

Key projects and experiences under this concept could include:

- ▶ ~~Scenic viewpoints~~ Wellbeing, including wellness tourism and experiences.
- ▶ Food and drink, including winery/cellar door, distillery, or other local produce-based experiences.
- ▶ Nature-based tourism initiatives, including walking trails and cycling/mountain biking routes
- ▶ ~~Walking and mountain biking trails~~ Culture, including cattleman experiences and First Nations tourism.
- ▶ Community festivals and events

To ensure the Delatite Valley maximises its tourism potential while preserving its rural character, the framework plans identify specific initiatives aimed at enhancing infrastructure and improving access to local attractions. These plans prioritise sustainability and provide opportunities for diverse tourism experiences that benefit both residents and visitors alike.

The framework plans for the Delatite Valley outline several key projects aimed at enhancing the region's tourism infrastructure:

- ▶ A strategic cycling corridor between Mansfield and Mirimbah, passing through Merrijig and Sawmill Settlement, will improve connectivity and encourage eco-tourism.
- ▶ ~~Tourism focused development near Alpine Ridge will integrate tourism with the community and promote township growth.~~

The Merrijig Township Framework Plan supports the development of tourism through:

- ▶ A river-facing recreation reserve to formalises the space that and enhances both the resident and visitor experience, while providing a formalised access point to the Delatite River.
- ▶ A new tourist rest stop with public toilets and information boards, offering essential services for visitors and improving overall accessibility.

## Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**

The Sawmill Settlement Framework Plan prioritises sustainable tourism by:

- ▶ Introducing an area near The Sebel Pinnacle Valley Resort where day-tourism uses that align with bushfire policy are encouraged, and will integrate tourism with the community and promote township growth.
- ▶ Formalising a new open space at the historic sawmill site along the Delatite River, enhancing existing tourism opportunities for heritage and eco-tourism in the area.

By strategically improving tourism infrastructure and promoting sustainable tourism practices, the Delatite Valley will continue to attract visitors, support the local economy, and preserve the region's natural beauty for future generations.



## The Delatite Valley

The Structure Plan for the Delatite Valley provides a comprehensive strategic framework for managing land use, environmental conservation, and infrastructure development across the region. A primary focus of the plan is the protection of agricultural land, with specific areas designated in green on the map. These areas, identified as being within the farming zone and lot sizes exceeding 40 hectares, are critical to maintaining the region's agricultural productivity and economic stability. This approach supports the long-term preservation of farmland, which is vital for the local economy and the broader agricultural landscape of the Delatite Valley.

In addition to safeguarding agricultural land, the framework sets the groundwork for two smaller-scale framework plans that focus on specific township areas: the Merrijig Township Framework Plan and the Alpine Ridge and Sawmill Settlement Framework Plan. These detailed plans will address the unique needs and opportunities of each settlement, ensuring that any future development aligns with the region's broader strategic goals.

The framework also highlights areas with significant landscape overlays, which will require careful assessment for any development proposals to ensure that the natural environment and the region's landscape values are preserved for future generations. These overlays are an important tool for balancing growth with environmental stewardship, ensuring that the unique characteristics of the Delatite Valley are protected.

The plan also identifies key recreational areas, including campgrounds such as Buttercup Campground, Carters Mill, and the Howqua Hills Historical Area, located just south of the study area boundary. The Howqua Track, which leads to the Howqua Hills Historical Area, is heritage-listed, further emphasising the importance of preserving both cultural and natural heritage within the region. These campgrounds and heritage sites not only serve as recreational hubs but also as focal points for sustainable tourism, drawing visitors to the region while ensuring that development around these areas respects their historical and environmental significance.

To improve access to the Delatite Valley, the framework plan included the newly upgraded transportation links. In addition to the existing major gateway, Mt Buller Road, the new agricultural and tourism access route along Chapel Hill Road is receiving an upgrade. This upgraded route will provide better connectivity, particularly for agricultural and tourism-based activities, and will help support the growing demand for access to the region's natural attractions. The proposed transportation network ensures that the Delatite Valley remains accessible while also facilitating the sustainable growth of the area's tourism and agricultural sectors.

Two major projects are identified in the framework, each designed to enhance the region's tourism appeal and infrastructure. First, a strategic cycling corridor is proposed to link Mansfield and Mirimbah through key locations in the Delatite Valley, including Merrijig and Sawmill Settlement. This cycling corridor will provide both recreational and tourism opportunities, promoting sustainable transport options while also encouraging visitors to explore the natural beauty of the valley. Secondly, the identification and formalisation of river access locations is proposed, which will require necessary infrastructure upgrades to ensure safe and sustainable river access for recreational purposes.

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This comprehensive framework aims to balance the preservation of farmland, environmental values, and heritage sites with the need for sustainable tourism and infrastructure development. By integrating these various elements into a cohesive plan, the Delatite Valley can grow in a way that respects its natural beauty, supports the local economy, and preserves the region's unique cultural and environmental assets.



Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**  
**Structure Plan – The Delatite Valley**



Figure 20. Delatite Valley Structure Plan

Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan****Merrijig**

The Merrijig Township Framework Plan ~~redefines~~ reestablishes the town boundary to ensure-facilitate future developments while ensuring the settlement remains consolidated. The pink-coloured area on the map indicates the existing township zone. Growth in the Delatite Valley is encouraged within the settlement boundaries only. A Design and Development Overlay is recommended for the township to preserve the rural charm and scenic beauty of Merrijig, allowing for growth without compromising the town's overall character.

~~, with the new boundary extending south, and east. This boundary adjustment is designed to accommodate growth while aligning with the broader planning strategy, which seeks to preserve the rural character of the region while allowing for controlled development. The redefined town boundary will help focus development in appropriate areas, ensuring that Merrijig continues to thrive within its current geographical context.~~

~~The framework proposes a neighbourhood residential area along McCormacks Road, providing additional residential opportunities that can serve the needs of both the local population in the valley and visitors. Two additional residential areas are proposed to accommodate the future housing needs of the community. The first, located in the north-eastern part of the town south of McCormacks Road, covers approximately 7 hectares of land, and is proposed to be a neighbourhood residential area. The second is situated in the south-eastern part of the town, along Mt Buller Road and Powers Road, with an area of approximately 7.5 hectares. This is proposed to be a low density residential area with larger block sizes.~~

~~Both of these residential growth areas are already supported by essential infrastructure, including water and sewer systems. These locations have been selected as they allow for cost-effective development, minimising the expenses required for new infrastructure installation while ensuring efficient land use. The framework aims to ensure that the development in these areas will have minimal impact on the landscape, preserving the natural character of the surrounding environment. This sensitive approach to development will help maintain the rural charm and scenic beauty of Merrijig, allowing for growth without compromising the town's overall character.~~

Additionally, two key public open spaces are outlined within the plan. The first open space ~~extends~~ sits approximately 1 kilometre alongside the Delatite River within the Merrijig township boundary, with the intention of creating a scenic river ~~trail~~ side reserve alongside this within the existing, underutilised, public space. This area will enhance the town's recreational infrastructure, offering both residents and tourists an opportunity to enjoy the natural beauty of the river and surrounding landscapes.

~~The second public open space is located at McCormack Park, which will be transformed into a new recreation precinct. This area will provide a range of recreational facilities, making it a central hub for community activities and events, further promoting Merrijig as a vibrant and active township.~~ As part of the creation of this precinct, the framework proposes rezoning the land to a public land zone to more accurately reflect the proposed uses at this site. The proposed public land at McCormacks Park is already supported by essential infrastructure, including water and sewer systems, supporting a diverse range of future uses.

~~New roads and infrastructure will be developed to support these uses, with further strategic planning required to ensure that the area aligns with urban design goals and the town's long-term development vision. This investigation area has the potential to become a focal point for both local residents and tourists, offering a blend of residential, and recreational spaces that complement~~

## Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**

### ~~the town's rural identity.~~

Several new infrastructure projects are also included within the framework plan to enhance the town's connectivity and tourism infrastructure. A new tourist rest stop area will be ~~formalised near the centre of Merrijig~~ investigated along McComacks Road, complete with public toilet facilities, car parking, and a tourism information ~~boardsboard~~. This rest stop will serve as a welcoming point for visitors arriving in the Delatite Valley, providing essential amenities and information to help them explore the region.

Other proposed infrastructure improvements include ~~a new bridge connection across the Delatite River on Omega Street~~, speed reduction measures at the town's entry points, and an advocacy piece to seek upgrades to the intersection of Mt Buller Road and, School Lane, ~~and McCormacks Road~~. These upgrades are designed to improve traffic flow, safety, and overall accessibility within the town. The introduction of an Avenue of Trees along Mt Buller Road will enhance the aesthetic appeal of the township, while also contributing to environmental sustainability and township identity. ~~Further upgrades include the service road adjacent to the Merrijig Townhall along Mt Buller Road, a new river access point with car parking on Alpha Street and road upgrades along McCormacks Road.~~ These improvements will not only enhance the town's infrastructure but will also ensure that Merrijig remains ~~a~~ connected and well-serviced.

Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**  
**Framework Plan – Merrijig**

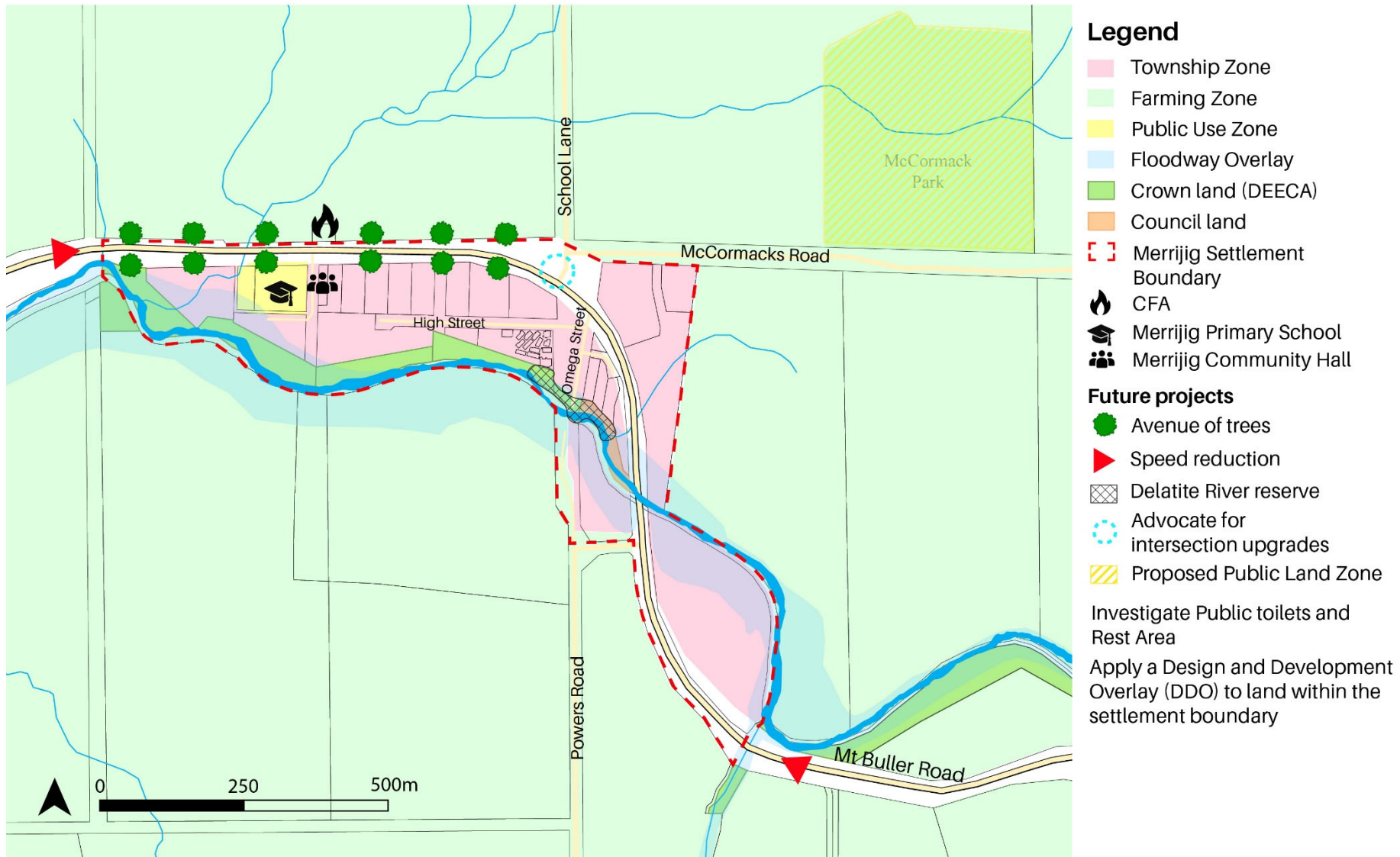


Figure 21. Merrijig Township framework plan



## **Alpine Ridge and Sawmill Settlement**

The Alpine Ridge and Sawmill Settlement Framework Plan reflects the unique challenges and considerations associated with the area's high bushfire risk. As such, the framework plan focuses on consolidating existing residential development to mitigate the risks posed by bushfire while focusing on maintaining the character of the settlement. The revised town boundary now limits development to Alpine Ridge and the immediate Sawmill Settlement area. This boundary redefinition serves as a precautionary measure, preventing the expansion of residential development into areas that are more vulnerable to bushfire threats. By consolidating the settlement within this defined boundary, the framework aims to reduce the potential for harm to both existing and future residents, prioritising safety and resilience in the face of natural hazards.

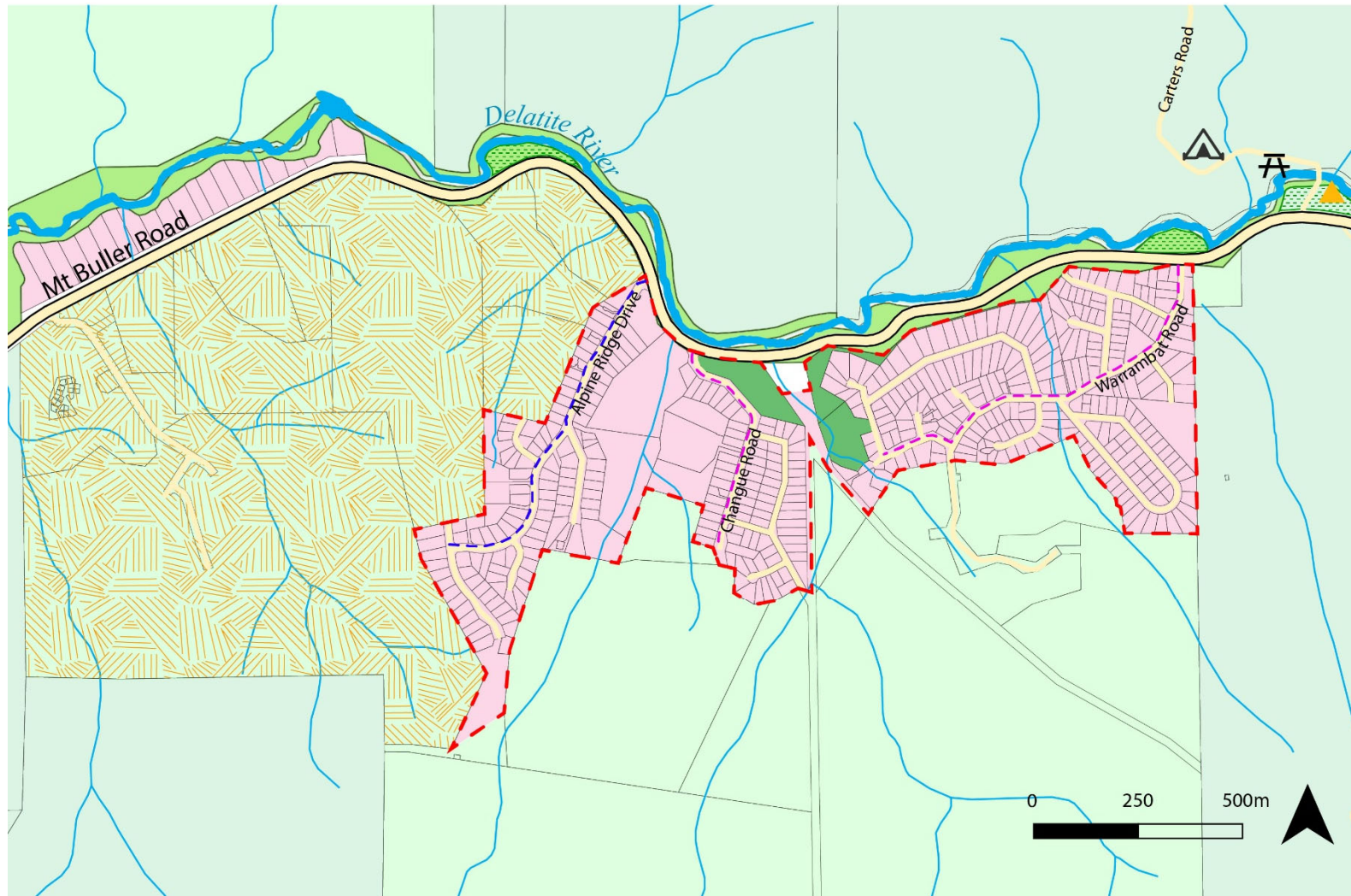
Despite these restrictions, the framework plan introduces two key investigation areas that align with the area's tourism and recreational potential. The first of these is the identified portions of Farming Zone land along Mt Buller Road between the Sebel resort and Alpine Ridge, where day-tourism uses could be encouraged. This area includes the existing Sebel Pinnacle Valley, a multi-use tourism resort, and spans approximately 50 hectares. The framework plan proposes investigating suitable tourism activities that could be developed within this area, with a focus on ensuring that any new facilities are compatible with the high bushfire risk environment. The investigation will explore the potential for tourism ventures that do not exacerbate the bushfire threat and that align with the natural characteristics of the region. This careful consideration of tourist uses will aim to balance the economic benefits of tourism with the necessary precautions for public safety and environmental protection.

The second type of investigation area proposes the formalisation of existing open space areas where access to the Delatite River can be achieved. The identified location south of Carters Road is the original site of the Sawmill Settlement, and is adjacent to several important recreational sites, including the Carters Road Picnic Area, the Alpine Epic Trail, and the Carters Mill Campground. The framework plan calls for an investigation into how this open space can be formally established and developed, with careful attention paid to its integration with surrounding recreational and natural areas. The new open space would provide valuable community and visitor amenities, serving as a hub for outdoor activities while maintaining the area's historic and environmental significance. This open space could become a key point of interest for visitors to the Sawmill Settlement, offering opportunities for passive recreation and enhancing the local tourism experience. Additional open space areas along Mt Buller Road would provide clear access points to the Delatite River at preferred locations, and protect the broader river ecosystem from the impacts of unplanned tourism.

In addition to these key investigation areas, the framework includes a new trail development along the Delatite River. This trail will be designed to extend the existing river trail at Carters Road west to Alpine Ridge Drive. The trail will be developed with a focus on environmental sustainability, ensuring that it does not disturb the natural environment or increase bushfire risk. It will also serve as a recreational resource for both residents and visitors, promoting tourism in the area and providing access to the Delatite River and surrounds while promoting healthy outdoor lifestyles.

Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**

**Framework Plan – Alpine Ridge & Sawmill Settlement**



**Legend**

- Alpine Ridge and Sawmill Settlement Township Boundary
- General Residential Zone
- Farming Zone
- State Forest
- Crown Land - Water Frontage
- Reserve Land
- Picnic Area
- Campground
- ▲ Water treatment plant

**Future Projects**

- Day tourism uses encouraged (to remain Farming Zone)
  - Open space investigation area
  - Footpath - High priority
  - Footpath - Low priority
- Investigate walking trail between Alpine Ridge Drive and Carters Road

Figure 22. Alpine Ridge and Sawmill Settlement framework plan

## Statutory Implementation

### Recommended Planning Scheme Changes:

There are some changes to local planning policy through the proposed amendment C60mans which implements the Mansfield Planning Strategy. This amendment contains multiple local policies relevant to the Delatite Valley, including character controls for residentially zoned land.

In addition to these, it is recommended that the local planning policies be amended to reflect the vision and intent of this plan, including the following:

1. Clause 11.01-1L-02 *Other local areas* to reflect the preferred vision for the Delatite Valley.
2. Clause 17.04-1L *Facilitating Tourism in Mansfield Shire* to reflect the desire for sustainable tourism

A recommendation is also made that Council consider updating the Strategic Framework Plans for Merrijig, and Alpine Ridge and Sawmill Settlement in line with the structure plan.

~~It is also recommended that Council re-zone the identified areas in the Merrijig framework plan with landowner consent. Due to the tax burden placed on landowners of rezoned land through the windfall gains tax, Council is supportive of proponent-led rezoning in line with the structure plan. This allows for both greater flexibility for identified landowners and creates a staged approach to development in Merrijig. This project is recommended to be undertaken in the medium term (5+ years) depending on how growth in the area progresses, and the interest of landowners impacted by a rezoning. A Design and Development Overlay will be applied to all existing and future residential areas to inform built form outcomes in Merrijig.~~

~~A Development Plan Overlay will be applied to Area C to ensure the following outcomes:~~

~~A 20 metre wide tree reserve must be provided adjacent to Mt Buller Road.~~

- ~~1. The tree reserve must be planted out with appropriate vegetation to the satisfaction of Council.~~
- ~~2. A Section 173 Agreement must be entered into by all properties adjoining the Tree Reserve outlining ongoing maintenance and management requirements for that reserve~~
- ~~3. No direct vehicular access to be provided to Mt Buller Road from Area C.~~
- ~~4. The existing dwelling can maintain access to Mt Buller Road up until an alternative access from either Powers Road or a new internal road has been provided.~~
- ~~5. Any development within Area C will be accessed from either Powers Road or other internal roads created as part of a subdivision.~~

~~A Design and Development Overlay is recommended to be applied to all land within the township boundary to ensure the following outcomes:~~

- ~~▸ The design and siting of buildings is sensitive to the Alpine approach and does not detract from the views to Mt Buller.~~
- ~~▸ No additional access points are created on Mount Buller Road.~~
- ~~▸ The materials used are muted in tone and non-reflective to blend with the natural landscape.~~
- ~~▸ Generous side and rear setbacks are provided to allow for landscaping.~~

## Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**

### **Project Implementation**

The following is a list of projects recommended to implement the findings of the Delatite Valley Plan. Most projects are ~~centered~~centred around Merrijig as an emerging township and creating a central hub for the Delatite Valley region.

The following actions are listed for implementation with the timeframes of:

**Short-term (0-5 years):** Projects that can be initiated and show results relatively quickly, such as installing signage, improving safety through increased patrolling, or addressing immediate infrastructure needs like toilets.

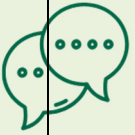



**Medium-term (5-10 years):** These projects involve more planning, development, and community engagement, like undertaking additional studies or implementing more complex or larger infrastructure projects.

**Long-term (10+ years):** Complex projects that require significant investment, partnerships, and foundational changes, such as developing affordable housing solutions for staff, which involve navigating housing markets, regulatory environments, and potentially constructing new housing.

Support type refers to how Mansfield Shire Council will play a role within the project, whether this be advocating with external actors and relevant bodies, facilitating the creation of new initiatives, or regulating how specific projects are undertaken to ensure that they are appropriate.




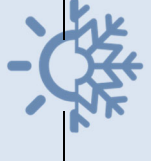


Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan**

THEME	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	SUPPORT TYPE	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES
	Delatite Valley <del>Entrance-Sign</del> <u>gateway treatments</u>	<del>Installation of creative signage and landscaping at each settlement entrance along Mt Buller Road to welcome visitors to the region to establish township character along the Delatite Valley</del>	Infrastructure	Short	Mansfield Shire Council, VicRoads
	Indigenous <del>h</del> <u>Heritage i</u> nformation	Develop and install informative boards across the valley that highlight indigenous knowledge and stories	Infrastructure, Education	Long	Mansfield Shire Council, Taungurung Land and Waters Council
	ESO <del>r</del> <u>R</u> evuew	Review the Environmental Significance Overlay to provide for improved environmental protection	Policy	Medium	Mansfield Shire Council, Goulburn Murray Water
	Flood <del>m</del> <u>M</u> apping	Complete a flood study for the upper tributaries in the Delatite Valley	Policy	Short	Mansfield Shire Council, Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority
	Public toilets and rest area	<del>Investigate i</del> <u>n</u> stalling public toilets in <del>the Delatite Valley</del> <u>Merrijig</u> and creat <u>ing</u> e a tourist rest area with visitor information and car parking.	Infrastructure	Short	Mansfield Shire Council, Goulburn Valley Water
	Improve <del>_s</del> <u>S</u> ignage at Mirimbah	Advocate to Alpine Resorts Victoria to improve the signage of available services and infrastructure in the region	<u>Advocacy</u>	<u>Short</u>	<u>Alpine Resorts Victoria</u>
	Digital <del>c</del> <u>C</u> onnectivity	Advocate for better communications infrastructure in the Delatite Valley	Advocacy	Medium	Network Operators
	Merrijig <del>p</del> <u>P</u> ark	Formalise existing public space in Merrijig, as well as supporting future connectivity and community projects through a masterplan	Infrastructure, Advocacy	Medium	Mansfield Shire Council, Community
	Delatite <del>r</del> <u>R</u> iver <del>a</del> <u>A</u> ccess	Improve amenity at key public access points along the Delatite River	Infrastructure	Medium	Mansfield Shire Council, Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, VicRoads, DEECA



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THEME	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	SUPPORT TYPE	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES
	Cycling <b>c</b> orridor	Expand local cycling infrastructure by developing a cycling corridor between Mansfield and Mirimbah	Infrastructure	Long	Mansfield Shire Council, VicRoads
	Road <b>s</b> afety	Analyse and seek speed reductions in townships and settlements in the Delatite Valley	Advocacy	Medium	VicRoads
	Public <b>t</b> ransport	Advocate for the improvement of Public Transport between Mansfield-Merrijig-Mt Buller as well as improvements to the school bus stops on Mt Buller Road	Advocacy	Medium	Mansfield Shire Council Public Transport Victoria VicRoads
	Bushfire <b>r</b> isk in <b>r</b> esidential <b>a</b> reas	Restrict new residential development in areas of high risk of bushfire through the implementation of new township boundaries	Policy	Medium	Mansfield Shire Council
	Local <b>c</b> haracter and <b>l</b> andscape <b>v</b> alues	Apply <del>design and development controls to re-zoned land</del> <u>Design and Development Overlay to Merrijig township to preserve in keeping with</u> local character	Policy	Medium	Mansfield Shire Council, Landowners
	Scenic <b>l</b> ookout	Advocate for the development of a scenic lookout with safe entrance and exits points onto Mount Buller Road with views of Mount Buller and Mount Stirling to the west of Merrijig	Advocacy	Long	Mansfield Shire Council, Department of Transport
	Tourism <b>g</b> rowth	Support the development of day-tourism in the Farming Zone west of Alpine Ridge	Policy, Advocacy	Long	Mansfield Shire Council, Landowners

Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan****References**

ABS Census of Population and Housing. (2016)

ABS Census of Population and Housing (2021)

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~~[Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, Waterway Strategy 2014-2022](#)~~

Mansfield Planning Strategy, 2022

Mansfield Shire Economic Development Strategy, 2020

Mansfield Shire Environment Strategy, 2019

~~[Mansfield Shire Shared and footpath strategy, 2022](#)~~

~~[Mansfield Shire Waste Strategy, 2020](#)~~

~~[Municipal Emergency Management Plan, 2022](#)~~

~~[Nelsen, I. \(2015\). Shire of Mansfield Stage One Heritage Survey](#)~~

~~[Onsite Wastewater Management Plan, 2022](#)~~

~~[Real Estate Institute of Victoria, 2025 <https://reiv.com.au/market-insights/victorian-insights>](#)~~

~~[Urban Enterprise. \(2018\).](#)~~

Mansfield Shire Economic Profile, June 2018, ~~[id. consultants.](#)~~

~~[Mansfield Shire Shared and footpath strategy, 2022](#)~~

~~[Mansfield Shire Sustainable Tourism Plan, 2025](#)~~

~~[Mansfield Shire Waste Strategy, 2020](#)~~

~~[Municipal Emergency Management Plan, 2022](#)~~

~~[Nelsen, I. \(2015\). Shire of Mansfield Stage One Heritage Survey](#)~~

~~[On-site Wastewater Management Plan, 2022](#)~~

~~[Real Estate Institute of Victoria, 2025 <https://reiv.com.au/market-insights/victorian-insights> \[.id-consultants\]\(#\)](#)~~

~~[Victoria's High Country, Destination Management Plan 2023-2033](#)~~

~~<https://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/cultural-heritage-sensitivity>~~

Mansfield Shire Council **Delatite Valley Plan****Appendix 1**

Census data for individual regions taken from ABS (2021)

	<b>Merrijig</b>	<b>Sawmill Settlement</b>	<b>Boorolite</b>	<b>Delatite</b>	<b>Total/Average</b>
Population	721	86	166	13	986
No. Of families	110	14	45	8	177
Median age	32	42	50	41	41
No. Of private dwellings	426	186	95	10	717
% occupied	44%	N/A	63.5%	N/A	53.75%
Median weekly income	\$1726	\$1424	\$1875	\$1625	\$1663
Median weekly rent	\$320	\$289	\$225	\$150	\$246
In labour force	53.5%	N/A	28.4%	N/A	56.95%
Out of labour force	33.4%	N/A	28.4%	N/A	30.9%
No. Of vehicles per dwelling	2.4	2.1	2.5	2.1	2.3
% pop change 2016 to 2021	549 (2016) 721 (2021)	88 (2016) 86 (2021)	143 (2016) 166 (2021)	15 (2016) 13 (2021)	795 (2016) 986 (2021) 19.37%