

SHIRE OF MERREDIN

LOCAL PLANNING STRATEGY

Endorsed By The Western Australian Planning Commission
14 August 2007

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Shire of Merredin Local Planning Strategy



Prepared for

The Shire of Merredin

By



October 2007

1 Amended LPS Text - 14 March 2007 - FOR COUNCIL ADOPTION2-track.doc

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Recent changes to the Town Planning Regulations 1967, have given effect to the Model Scheme Text as the basis for preparation of new town planning schemes and have replaced the Scheme Report with a Local Planning Strategy (LPS).

As part of any process of review or preparation of a new town planning scheme, local governments must now undertake preparation of a LPS. The purpose of a LPS is to set out the long term planning direction for the municipality, apply State and regional planning policies and provide a rationale for zoning and other provisions of the statutory Town Planning Scheme.

It is intended that a LPS will establish the future direction of growth and development of the municipality for a period of 10 to 15 years, and be a dynamic tool providing not only the rationale but the framework for decision making at both the local and State Government level. A LPS provides the relevant background and guidance for decision-making in relation to subdivision, development and zoning matters under the Town Planning Scheme.

To facilitate this role, a LPS includes a description of the key characteristics of the municipality, its regional context and the major planning issues affecting it. It sets out opportunities and constraints for land use and development; identifies the aims of the municipality providing an explanation of the strategic land use direction of the Council; provides strategic policy statements in relation to key issues; and details policy proposals for particular areas or specific issues and includes an outline of how the strategy will be implemented.

The LPS is the first task in the preparation of a new town planning scheme for Merredin to replace the current Shire of Merredin Town Planning Scheme No 1. It follows completion of a Councillors' February 2001 Town Planning Workshop. The Workshop established the planning framework within which the current Scheme operated and then provided an opportunity for Councillors to identify town planning, land management and development issues they considered affected the Shire of Merredin.

A workshop to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the Merredin Town Site with Councillors and senior administration staff was undertaken in 2001. The workshop clearly identified the need to pursue a new town planning scheme as existing Scheme No 1 was considered outdated and no longer sufficiently responsive to the land planning management and development needs of the Shire.

The Shire resolved to initiate preparation of a LPS as the first stage in pursuing the preparation of a new Scheme. This Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the Model Scheme Text and Local Planning Strategy directions as contained within the Western Australian Planning Commission's Planning Schemes Manual.

Preparation has included extensive liaison with the Shire, a wide range of government agencies and the Department for Planning and Infrastructure (DPI).

2.0 STATE AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

An important role of the LPS is to interpret and incorporate state and regional planning policy. The following discusses the relevant State and regional planning policy applicable to the Shire of Merredin.

2.1 State Planning Strategy

The State Planning Strategy was prepared by the Western Australian Planning Commission (the Commission) in 1997, and provides broad statements of planning intent at a state-wide level. It is intended as a broad strategic planning guide for the state's development to the year 2029. The State Planning Strategy divides the State into a number of regional areas, with the Shire of Merredin located within the Wheatbelt Region.

The key principles of the State Planning Strategy being environmental, community, economic, infrastructure and regional development, are interpreted through the regional strategies in place across the State.

Strategies applicable to the Wheatbelt Region, and therefore the Shire of Merredin, under the state-wide principles are as follows.

- Environment and Resource Principle
 - Ensure that agricultural land is managed sustainably
 - Protect natural resources especially water resources and prime agricultural land from incompatible development
 - Protect landscape and cultural heritage values
- Community Principle
 - Promote opportunities to develop a range of communities
 - Provide improved educational facilities
- Economy Principle
 - Promote opportunities for economic development
- Infrastructure Principle
 - Address the concerns arising from the decline of small rural settlements leading to the loss of services through both Government and private companies rationalising services
 - Improve service delivery of regional infrastructure to a highly dispersed population.
 - Provide a strategic transport network into the Wheatbelt Region

A series of actions have been identified to support these strategies however, only one makes specific reference to the Shire of Merredin under the Community Principle - Education Strategy, to investigate the need for a "super school" in Merredin. This action is to be completed by the Wheatbelt Development Commission, but the Shire of Merredin should facilitate any proposal via the planning process. Under the State Planning Strategy, the Wheatbelt Region identifies Merredin as a regional service centre.

In summary, the Wheatbelt Region, as identified under the State Planning Strategy, contains a range of general principles and strategies providing a context within which the Local Planning Strategy for the Shire of Merredin must relate. However, there is little specific reference to initiatives for the Shire itself.

2.2 State Planning Policy No. 1 - State Planning Framework Policy (SPP No. 1)

SPP No. 1 brings together State and Regional Policy Strategies and Guidelines within a central framework providing a context for decision making in relation to land use and development across the State.

No strategies, plans or policies are identified within the State Planning Framework which specifically apply to the Shire of Merredin, however, there are a number of statements of planning policy and other WAPC policies which apply across the State and which are relevant to the Shire. These include:

- The Residential Planning Codes
- Rural Small Holdings Policy
- Service Stations Policy
- Liveable Neighbourhoods Community Design Code
- Operational Policies as contained within the Western Australian Planning Commission Policy Manual No 1, Development Control (including subdivision)
- Policy No DC 3.4 Subdivision of Rural Land.

2.3 State Planning Policy No 3 – Urban Growth and Settlement (Draft SPP No 3)

The Commission's Draft SPP No 3 was released in April 2005 and sets out the principles and considerations, which apply to planning for urban growth and settlements in Western Australia.

The key policy measures of Draft SPP No 3 area:

- Creating sustainable communities
- Managing urban growth and settlement across Western Australia
- Managing urban growth in Metropolitan Perth
- Planning for liveable neighbourhoods
- Coordination of services and infrastructure
- Managing rural residential growth

Of particular relevance to the preparation of the LPS is the policy measure 'managing rural residential growth'. Draft SPP No. 3 policy measures indicates to locate and design rural residential settlements in a sustainable way, which is integrated with the overall pattern of settlement. Draft SPP No. 3 indicates the need to consider a range of negative impacts associated with rural residential

development including conflict with agricultural land use and rural reserves such as water catchment and raw materials as well as conservation and landscape values. The economic provision of services infrastructure and the potential to limit urban growth by fragmentation of ownership also need to be considered in providing for rural residential growth. Zoning of land for rural residential development should take regard of the requirements of SPP No 2.5, discussed below.

2.4 State Planning Policy No 2.5 – Agricultural and Rural Land Use Planning (SPP No 2.5)

Of particular relevance to the preparation of the LPS for Merredin, is the Commission's SPP No 2.5 gazetted on 12th March 2002. SPP No 2.5 is the principle guiding policy for rural land use decision making in the State in which local governments must have due regard to in preparing a LPS.

The policy is guided by the following four fundamental principles

- the State's priority agricultural land resource should be protected
- rural settlement opportunities should be provided if sustainable and of benefit to the community
- the potential for land use conflict should be minimised
- the State's natural resource should be carefully managed

SPP No 2.5 also details an extensive set of requirements for a LPS. Some of the more relevant requirements to the LPS for Merredin include:

- identify areas suitable for closer settlement in rural areas
- express the vision of the local government and identify proposals for the future development of the district
- develop subdivision and development criteria for identified agricultural, tourist and closer settlement areas
- provide a guide for future land use, zoning, subdivision and development within settlement areas identified

These requirements are particularly relevant to the task of providing an overall aim for the rural economy and meeting community aspirations for rural residential development in the Shire, as identified in the February 2001 Town Planning Workshop.

SPP No 2.5 Appendix 2 lists 15 matters that should be addressed in the identification and planning of areas for rural settlement. Relevant matters are discussed under Section 4.2- Settlement and Infrastructure in respect to the provision of special rural land use.

A key aspects of SPP No 2.5 is the identification of agricultural priority management areas, however, there are none in the Shire. SPP No 2.5 indicates the appropriateness of a general agricultural zone for typical agricultural land.

2.5 State Planning Policy No. 2 – Environment and Natural Resources Policy

SPP No. 2 sets out the principles and considerations needed in order to integrate environment and natural resource management within broader land use planning and decision making, to protect, conserve and enhance the natural environment, and promote and assist in the sustainable use and management of natural resources.

2.6 Wheatbelt Regional Transport Strategy

The Wheatbelt Regional Transport Strategy (WRTS) was released in October 2001 to provide a framework for the development of the Wheatbelt's transport network so that it:

- 1) Enhances the competitiveness of Industry and Commerce
- 2) Meets the needs of residents and visitors while minimising adverse transport impacts
- 3) Is integrated, coordinated and has appropriate funding

Merredin is serviced by rail and road with Great Eastern Highway being the major road / highway connecting Merredin to Perth. One important issue identified in the draft 2001 WRTS was the age and standard of the existing road network in the Wheatbelt Region. Reconstruction of sections of Great Eastern Highway between Hines Hill and Merredin, and Merredin and Walgoolan and widening of the road reserve has commenced and is proposed for completion in 2007. As exact routes and the location of roads that may require widening and / or reconstruction have yet to be determined, provisions must be made in the Strategic Plan to ensure all future development adjacent to Great Eastern Highway occurs with consideration to these proposals.

2.7 State Planning Policy No 4.1 – State Industrial Buffer Policy (SPP No 4.1)

The Commission's SPP No 4.1 was gazetted in May 1997 and the principle objectives are:

- To provide a consistent state-wide approach for the definition and securing of buffer areas around industry infrastructure and some special uses.
- To protect industry, infrastructure and special uses from the encroachment of incompatible land uses.
- To provide for the safety and amenity of land uses surrounding industry, infrastructure and special uses.
- To recognise the interests of existing landowners within buffer areas who may be affected by residual emissions and risks as well as interests, needs and economic benefits of existing industry and infrastructure which may be affected by encroaching incompatible land uses.

There are several uses within Merredin including the abattoir, sewerage treatment plant, small extractive industries, the airport and the Cooperative Bulk Handling railway depot that are likely to require the identification of buffer zones. At present these uses are some distance from sensitive development i.e. residential, but their identification within the Strategic Plan is imperative to guide future land use planning decisions.

2.8 Heritage

2.8.1 State Heritage

The following eight places in Merredin are on the State Register of Heritage Place:

- Cummins Theatre,
- Merredin Fire Station Complex,
- Merredin Post Office Group,
- Merredin Railway Station Group,
- Merredin State Farm Managers House (FMR),
- Road Board Office, and
- Railway Housing Precinct.

Under the Heritage Act of Western Australia 1990, any changes or works that may affect a registered place of significance are required to be referred to the Heritage Council for advice.

2.8.2 Indigenous Heritage

The following site is on the Register of Aboriginal sites:

Site ID.	Site Name	Location Approximate
5605	Talgomine Rock	Between Merredin and Burracoppin

All registered sites and items of Aboriginal heritage, whether registered or not, are protected under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1970. Proposals that may affect Aboriginal sites are required to be referred to the Department of Indigenous Affairs WA.

2.9 Avon Regional Natural Resource Management Strategy

The Shire of Merredin falls within the Avon Natural Resource Management Region, one of six regions in Western Australia. The Avon Catchment Council developed the Avon Regional Natural Resource Management Strategy in 2005, which together with the associated investment plans, has been accredited for Commonwealth and State funding under the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and continuation of the Natural Heritage Trust.

Natural resource management issues that have been identified within the Avon NRM Strategy that have relevance to land use planning include control of dams, floodplain management, regional transport planning, salinity, protection of groundwater quality and biodiversity protection.

3.0 MUNICIPAL CONTEXT

3.1 Municipal Vision

The Shire of Merredin has a vision for Merredin as a vibrant regional centre offering a comprehensive range of regional services, which improve the quality of life for the people within the Shire and Central Wheatbelt. This vision includes a central role for the Council in:

- promoting the strategic importance of Western Australian agricultural and associated industries
- positioning Merredin to meet world market requirements for clean, green production
- developing and marketing the town to be one of the major regional centres in WA
- developing Merredin as a town with the physical and commercial infrastructure to support growth and agriculture, private enterprise and population
- providing pro-active leadership in environmental and land care issues particularly the question of salinity
- supporting rural areas in their economic development
- encouraging community involvement
- creating a young and vibrant family community

3.2 Municipal Objectives

The Shire of Merredin has adopted as part of its strategic plan for 2000-2005, five key areas of strategic direction designed to achieve the municipal vision. These are:

- 1) Economic Development and Population Growth
- 2) Social and Physical Infrastructure
- 3) Community Development
- 4) The Environment
- 5) Business and Resource Management

Objectives for each of these key result areas are identified as follows.

- 1) Economic Development and Population Growth
 - To achieve sustainable agricultural growth.
 - To attract a diverse range of new industries and encourage expansion of existing industries.
 - To increase long-term employment opportunities in the Region especially for young people.
 - To increase and retain wealth in the Region.
 - To increase investments in the Region.

Five strategies each comprising a number of action priorities have been identified by the Council to pursue the above objectives. These include:

1. Making land available for commercial and industrial enterprise and housing
2. Marketing the Shire and Region to attract investment
3. Taking a leadership role and involving regional communities and appropriate Government agencies
4. Maintaining and enhancing the Shire's position as a regional centre, and
5. Financing the Shire's economic development strategies.

Relevant to the LPS are action initiatives identified under the Strategy and intended to make land available including developing a land use strategy covering existing and new areas and providing incentives to achieve the Strategy, encouraging Government agencies and private property owners to release land at reasonable prices and encouraging Government Agencies to provide head-works assistance for commercial, industrial and residential land.

2) The second corporate objective of the Shire relates to the provision of physical and social infrastructure and identifies three key objectives:

- To ensure provision of services and facilities appropriate to Merredin's status as a regional centre and the changing needs of a rural communities.
- To maintain and enhance the regional road infrastructure to meet demands of both economic growth and community safety.
- To achieve transport systems to meet local and regional needs.

Two principles and strategic approaches, with action plans have been identified. These are:

1. To take a leadership role in the Region and community to bring together appropriate groups to plan resources and implement services.
2. To develop and implement an asset management plan and action plans to include the need to plan for the social needs for the community and region over the short and longer term by identifying needs, what is available, gaps, etc.

Again, this relates closely to the LPS.

3) The third key corporate objective relates to community development. Three specific objectives are identified.

- Increase community participation in ownership of the strategic direction of the Shire and Region.
- To achieve a united community
- To encourage the Council and community to work in partnership.

The relevant strategies under this category include:

1. Increasing and enhancing the opportunities for community consultation
2. Increasing awareness and pride in relation to the Shire's history and heritage
3. Recognising and supporting community groups
4. Coordinating and encouraging community events
5. Financing the Shire's community development strategies.

The most relevant strategy to the Local Planning Strategy, are measures to improve community consultation and information dissemination to the community.

4) The fourth corporate objective relates to the environment. Specific objectives are to:

- Take a leadership role in promoting awareness of the linkage between environmental management and economic growth.
- Actively address environmental issues (especially salinity, water table, waste management and chemical disposal).

Two strategies have been identified:

1. Harvest and utilise water
2. Ensure a coordinated approach to environmental solutions for the region.

Action plans to be noted relative to the LPS include taking a proactive role and working closely with stakeholders to identify and implement best methods of harvesting, and utilising water and working with other relevant agencies and the community to develop an environmental plan for the region based on sound research and best practice principles.

Clearly, environmental issues as identified under this corporate objective are items that will need to be addressed in some detail and that are directly related to the Local Planning Strategy and its contents.

5) The final corporate objective for the Shire of Merredin relates to business and resource management. This identifies seven objectives as follows:

- Ensure quality delivery of services with strong customer focus.
- Achieve effective financial planning and management.
- Utilise up to date technology.
- Recognise Shire staff as a key asset.
- Make time for well-researched decisions.
- Use strategic plan and guide direction decisions.
- Achieve clarity between the strategic policy role of Councillors in their management administrative role of staff.

Four strategies are identified containing a range of action plans. While this objective does not specifically refer to the LPS, clearly the LPS will provide an important tool to enable it to be achieved. The LPS in particular will provide assistance in decisions and achieving clarity in relation to strategic and policy matters particularly in relation to town planning land management use and development decisions.

3.3 Relevant Municipal Policies and Strategies

The Shire of Merredin maintains an Executive and Legislative Policy Manual, which contains a wide variety of policies related to all aspects of the Municipal Government within the Shire. A range of these policies are related to town planning matters, however, do not address strategic issues as much as particular items of land use control related to statutory items.

It is envisaged that as part of the detail of refining the LPS, based on the identified strategic directions, these individual policy items will be reviewed.

3.4 Municipal Heritage Inventory

The Shire of Merredin has prepared a Municipal Heritage Inventory under the Heritage of Western Australia Act 1990.

There are 56 places on the Municipal Inventory with 46 within and near the Merredin Townsite, 10 within the smaller townsites of Nukarni, Burracoppin, Hines Hill, Nangeenan and Muntadgin, and a further four in the General Farming area.

Proposals that may affect places on the Municipal Inventory will be assessed with due regard to their heritage significance and classification.

A review of the Municipal Inventory is proposed for 2007.

4.0 MUNICIPAL PROFILE

The Shire of Merredin is centrally located within the eastern wheatbelt, 260kms east of Perth and 298kms west of Kalgoorlie. It is bordered to the north by the Shire of Nungarin, to the east by the Shires of Westonia and Yilgarn, to the south by the Shires of Narembeen and Bruce Rock and to the west by the Shire of Kellerberrin.

The Merredin Townsite is approximately located in the geographic centre of the Shire and represents the main regional service centre for the eastern wheatbelt. The majority of the Shire has been developed for agricultural production. The landform generally consists of gently undulating topography interspersed with granite outcrops and remnant bushland areas.

The Shire comprises the seven localities of Merredin, Burracoppin, Hines Hill, Nangeenan, Muntadgin, Nukarni and Korbelt.

The Merredin Townsite is the Shire's only major urban centre and dominates the settlement pattern with the majority of the residents residing in the town. The historic townsites of Burracoppin, Hines Hill, Nangeenan, Muntadgin, Korbelt and Nukarni form the second level of settlement within the Shire. These townsites reflect the original 'opening up' of the region for agricultural development but have now been superseded by the dominance of the Merredin Town Site.

Burracoppin and Muntadgin have recreation centres supported by Shire grants. Both townsites have kerb-side rubbish collection services. Hines Hill has a tavern/roadhouse and several residential dwellings. Nangeenan has 6 houses, which are used as a depot by a freight company. Nukarni and Korbelt are now little more than railway sidings with limited residential and associated uses remaining.

Hines Hill and Nangeenan are located along Great Eastern Highway to the west of Merredin, and Burracoppin on the Highway to the east. Nukarni is located near the northern boundary of the Shire. Korbelt is located in the southwest and Muntadgin in the southeast. The remaining settlement reflects individual farming properties across the Shire.

The characteristics of the Shire are considered under the four headings of Population and Housing, Settlement and Infrastructure, Economy, and the Environment. Each category is examined in terms of a profile of the Shire relevant to that category followed by discussion of the issues impacting upon the Shire related to that category.

4.1 Population and Housing

4.1.1 Population

Population growth and decline in the Shire of Merredin is linked to agricultural prosperity, technological advances in production and transport, a decline in services and a general trend in population drift to major urban centres such as capital cities.

Growing agricultural prosperity saw a steady rise in the Shire of Merredin's population to a peak of 5297 at the 1966 Census. During the 1970s population fluctuated between 4,693 at the 1971 Census to 4,900 at the 1976 Census. The Shire of Merredin's population has been in steady decline since the 1976 Census with a loss of 1132 people up until the 2001 Census, a population decrease of 23%. A comparison of workforce data from the 1976 and the 2001 Censuses indicates that population decline was due to loss in industries of agriculture, electricity, gas and water services, transport and storage and retail and wholesale.

Since the 1976 Census the Merredin Townsite has retained its relative importance as the primary location of the residential population comprising of 74% of the Shire's population.

Department for Planning and Infrastructure population projections for the Shire of Merredin indicate a turn around from decline to modest growth in the next 15 years with an expected 2000 more people living in Merredin by 2021. The Merredin Townsite is expected to retain its relative importance as the primary residential location in the Shire.

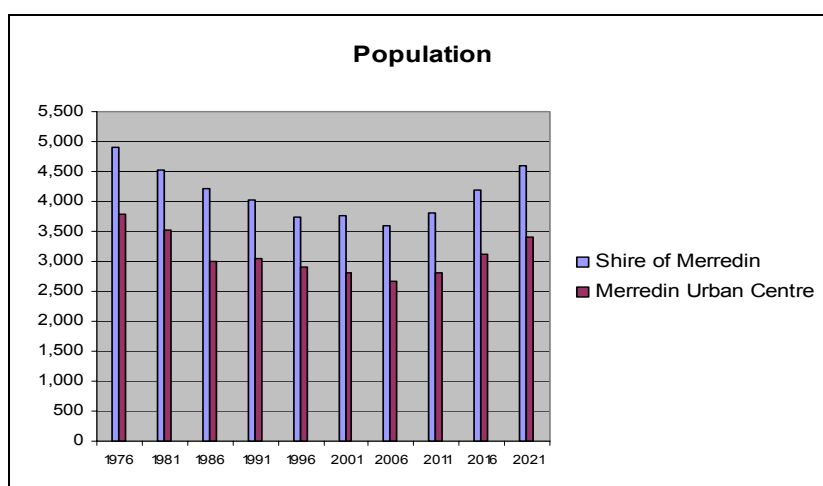


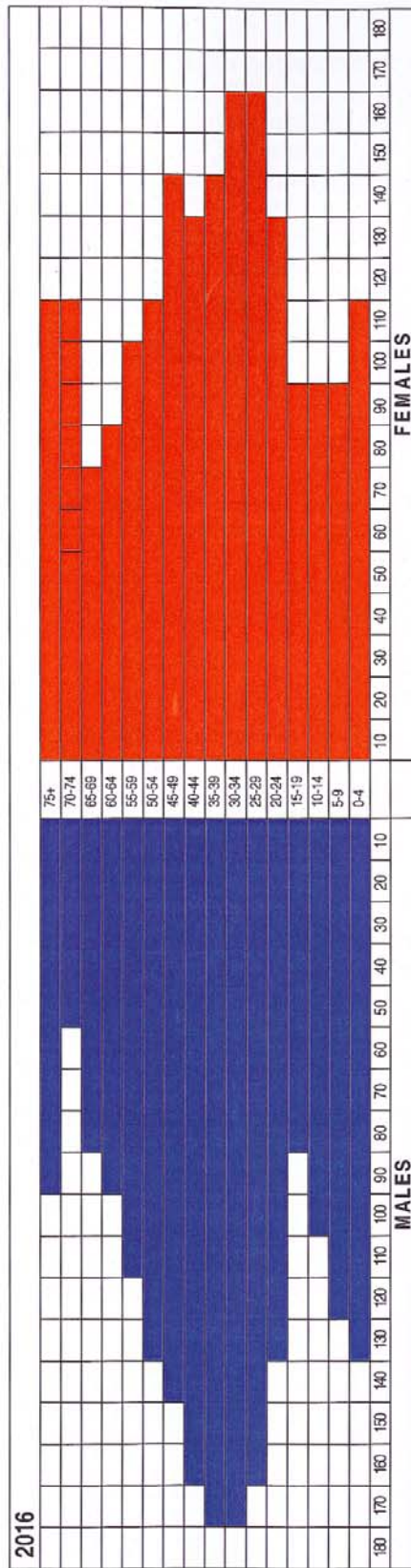
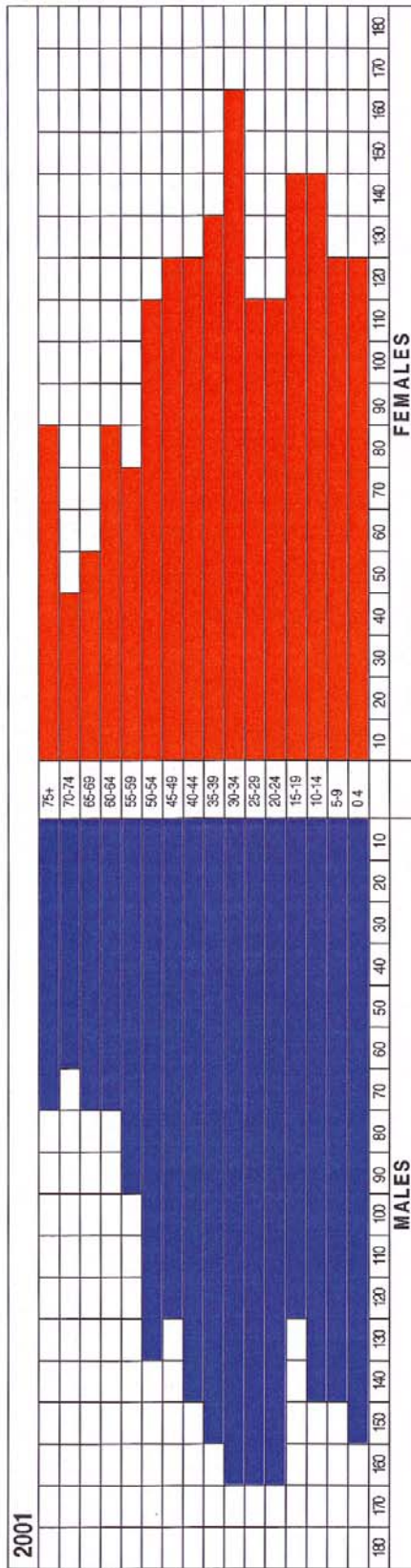
Figure 1 – Population

Year	Population						Projected			
	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021
Shire of Merredin	4,900	4,530	4,204	4,029	3,731	3,768	3,600	3,800	4,200	4,600
Merredin Urban Centre	3,791	3,520	3,001	3,038	2,911	2,807	2,664	2,812	3,108	3,404

Note: Merredin Urban Centre population projection for 2006, 2016 and 2021 based on 2001 rates of 74% of Shire of Merredin's population.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Table 1 – Population



Source: ABS Estimated Residential Population
2001-2016 MFP - MFP Pop Report No 4

Figure 2 – Merredin Age Profile Pyramid

In terms of household composition, the 2001 Census data indicates the predominance of the traditional two-parent with children family group, which comprised 63% of the residential population. The next largest family group comprised a couple-family with no children at 24% and one-parent family households comprising 12% of the residential population. The remaining groups comprise couple families living with other related persons or unrelated individuals living in family households.

DPI projections indicate that the age profile of Shire's population will undergo change until the year 2016. The predominant trend is for an ageing population. There is a projected decline in the proportion of young people in the 0-14 years age group (non-working age) from 24% in 2001, to 17.5% in 2016. An increase is predicted in the proportion of people 65 and over (retirement age) from 10% in 2001 to an estimated 12.5% in 2016. There is also a general trend for the ageing of the workforce population.

New population growth is likely to be derived from the establishment of new industries and the development of lifestyle opportunities. In respect to new industries, the establishment of the China Southern West Australian Flying College is a case in point. A student population is established in the Merredin Town Site with the permanent presence of flight training instructors. Potential population increase from lifestyle opportunities has yet to be tapped. The February 2001 Town Planning Workshop, indicated the desire for the development of rural residential lots.

4.1.2 Housing

The vast majority of dwellings (89%) are located within the Merredin Town Site. Remaining dwellings are distributed between farming properties and outlying townsites.

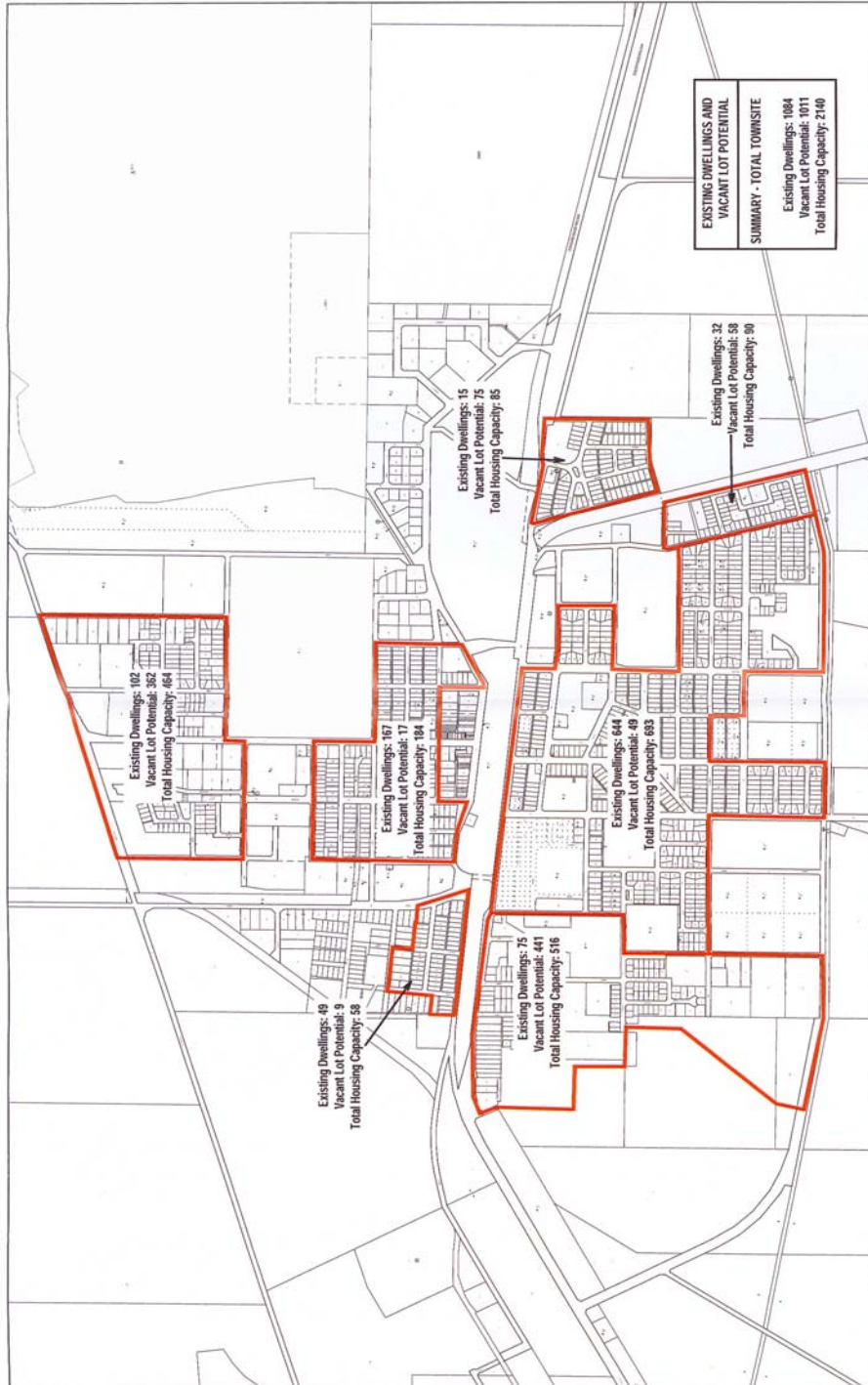
The current housing stock of the Merredin Townsite is a mix of dwelling types from various eras including cottages from the early 1900s, fibro clad housing from the 1950s and 1960s and more contemporary brick houses built from the late 1960s to the present day.

90% of all dwellings in the Shire are single houses with the remainder comprising of apartments, semi-detached housing and other similar housing forms. The predominance of the single house is also reflected in building approvals for the Shire, where 87% of all dwelling approved between 1996 and 2001 were for single houses. The 1996 Census indicated a total of 1230 dwellings within the Shire.

There are approximately 1000 vacant and potential blocks within existing residential areas of Scheme No 1 in the Merredin Townsite. Infill development on vacant land should be encouraged to utilise existing services and infrastructure.

Notwithstanding the existence of vacant blocks within established residential areas, residential subdivisions have occurred at small urban fronts to provide small estate style developments with a contemporary housing theme. Notable examples include the housing development in the southeast sector of the Merredin Townsite for students of the China Southern West Australian Flying College and, Caridi Close subdivision and Whitfield Way land releases.

Approval from the West Australian Planning Commission has been granted to the Shire of Merredin for the development of Carrington Way subdivision on Lot 301 and part Lot 504 Cummings Street, Merredin to create 29 lots.



ESTIMATED VACANT LAND & HOUSING CAPACITY PLAN SHIRE OF MERREDIN

Drawing No. FP-202405-1 Rev. 1.0
 Date: 25.6.2020
 Checked by: CC
 Drawn by: SJF
 Scale: 1:15000
 File: (p:\merredin\2020\2020\2020\vacant_land\2020\2020.dwg)

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A strong demand for new residential blocks and quality rental dwellings exists in the Merredin Townsite. All residential development whether infill or frontal should be encouraged to provide housing choices and promote construction activity. The development of various unallocated Crown land (UCL) within the Merredin Town Site for residential should also be encouraged. . The rezoning of reserved land under the current scheme to Residential in the new scheme or subsequent rezoning in the new scheme will also need to follow the requirements of any legislation or policy for the diverting of reserves and consideration of the need for such reserves in the town site.

Notwithstanding the abundance of vacant residential land, two additional areas for potential residential are identified. The first is located in the northeast sector of the town site between Telfer Avenue and MacDonald Street. The second is in the southeast sector of the town site just east of the Merredin to Muntadgin railway line. Although these sites are unlikely to be required for residential development in the medium to long term, a potential residential designation is considered appropriate as the sites are close to existing residential areas and service infrastructure. A potential residential designation will protect the land from uses that are incompatible with adjoining residential development.

Existing subdivision layouts at the fringe of residential areas should be reviewed with a view to rationalising the road networks and provide for larger blocks to promote the increased take-up of residential land. This will require the revocation of Scheme No. 2 – a guided development scheme over the northern residential area.

Scheme No 2 was gazetted in 1970 at a time when the Shire and the town site were experiencing population growth and there was a need for the Shire to co-ordinate and facilitate the orderly development of residential areas. However, due to population decline since the mid 1970's, development of the Scheme No 2 area has stalled. Only minimal subdivision and housing development has occurred along existing constructed roads.

Under Scheme No 2, the Shire is required to provide major infrastructure works and levy landowners for contributions via subdivision approval.

Current planning practice is for major infrastructure works to be the responsibility of developers/landowners with local government only requiring contributions for items under its jurisdiction, i.e., public open space and drainage, and developers/landowners providing for all service infrastructure, i.e., roads and utilities.

Council records indicate little if any implementation of Scheme No 2 requirements or the receipt of contributions there under. A detailed review of records is required to establish any contributions prior to revocation of Scheme No 2.

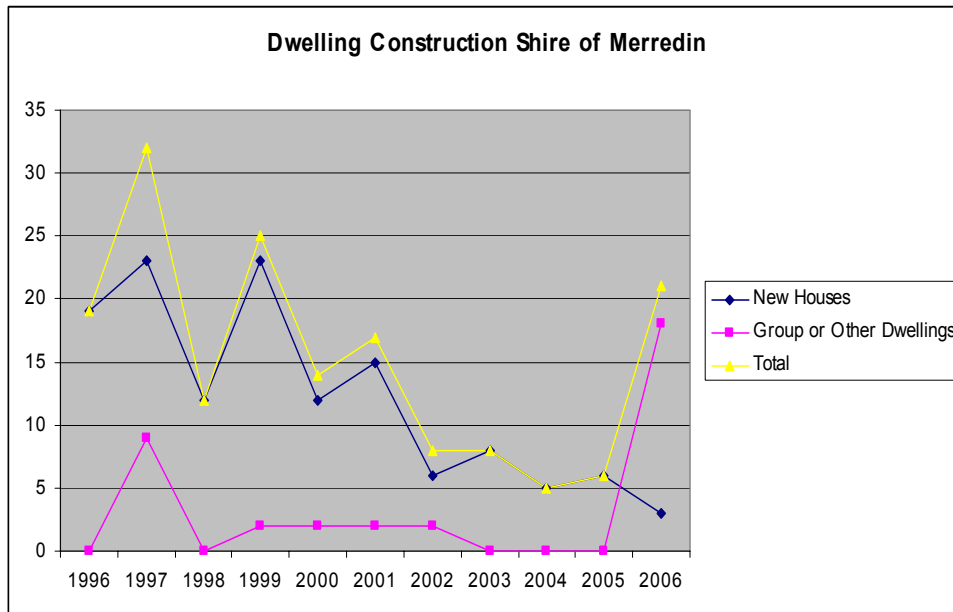


Figure 2 – Dwelling Construction

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
New Houses	19	23	12	23	12	15	6	8	5	6	3
Group or Other Dwellings	0	9	0	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	18
Total	19	32	12	25	14	17	8	8	5	6	21

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Table 2 – Dwelling Construction

The aging of the population indicates a potential requirement for aged person's development in the Merredin town site. Given the relative abundance of vacant land within the Merredin Townsite, especially within the medium density zone and the ability of such developments to be provided for under standard residential zonings, no specific sites need be identified.

Aircraft hanger sites at the northern fringe of the Merredin Townsite are identified as residential in Scheme No. 1 but are used for light industry. These aircraft hangers have historic and functional value and should be rezoned to provide for current appropriate industrial use. A buffer should be contemplated in structure planning for the adjacent residential development area to the aircraft hanger sites.

Under Scheme No. 1 residential development has been accommodated within the 2 zones of Residential 1 – Single Housing, and Residential 2 – Medium Density. As discussed, there is an operative guided development scheme in place: Scheme No. 2 – North Residential Area.

The Residential 1 – Single Housing zone primarily accommodates single housing at R12.5 density, with R20 density applying to group dwellings and similar forms of residential development.

The existing zoning regime for the Residential 1 and 2 zones was updated in 1996 via Amendment No 1 to Scheme No 1. This amendment provided for reference to the Residential Planning Codes; the dual R12.5 / R20 Code for the Residential 1 zone, and minor modifications to the Residential 2 zone.

Current planning practice in many local governments is to adopt the R20 Code as the base or minimum residential density for the predominately single residential areas. It is noted that reticulated sewerage is available to most areas in the Merredin Townsite and that all density development would require connection. There appears to be no practical reason to continue the restriction of single house dwellings being developed at the R20 density. Accordingly, it is considered appropriate to adopt the R20 code for the existing Residential 1 Area and dispense with the dual code.

A subdivision approval of land owned by the Council in the Residential 1 Area in the southwest sector of the Merredin Townsite proposes lots in excess of 1000 m² which are duplex lots. It is the Shire's and community's expectation that these lots, when developed, will act as an inducement for younger people to purchase and stay in Merredin.

The Residential 2 – Medium Density zone adjoins the western edge of the Merredin town centre and is just east of the Shire offices, along King Street. The land is suited to medium density use including, nursing homes and aged persons developments, by reason of its close proximity to the town centre; availability of sewer; run-down housing stock; large vacant sites, and; existing medium density development. A notable development in the Residential 2 zone includes the construction of 9 aged persons units in 1997.

With the aging of the population and the need to provide compact dwellings for small household types i.e., single workers, it is considered appropriate to allocate additional areas in the town site for medium density. Land bounded by Duff Street, Mary Street, Mitchell Street, Bates Street and Coronation Street is identified for medium density due to its proximity to the town centre and modest housing stock.

The existing medium density zoning regime provides for development at R30 and R50 Code depending on the type / class of residential development. Generally, the R30 density applies to group dwellings, single houses and aged persons dwellings, whilst R50 applies to aged persons village developments, which is effectively a form of density bonus for such developments.

Under the current Residential Design Codes, multiple dwellings are only accommodated under the R35 and higher codes. In order to continue to allow for multiple dwellings and provide a form of density bonus for aged person's dwellings, the R50 code for such developments should continue to be applied. For other forms of standard residential development ie single houses and group dwellings, the R30 Code should apply, as the R50 Code is considered too high for a medium sized rural town context.

It is proposed to marginally reduce residential zoned land by redesignating the aircraft hanger site for light industry, and a potential for reduction in the southwest sector of the Merredin Townsite to secure native vegetation for parks and recreation.

A final matter is the need to rectify a number of reservation and zoning amenities in Scheme No. 1, particularly where residential development is occurring on a reserved or unallocated crown land. The following locations are required to be designated for residential:

- Lot 1460 Reserve 28563
- Lot 130 Reserve 36065
- Lot 639 to 646 Reserve 22677
- Lot 709 Cummings Street

4.1.3 Issues

Based on the forgoing analysis of available data on population and housing the following key issues are identified.

- Slight population growth anticipated in the next 15 years.
- An anticipated ageing in the population with fewer younger people, an older workforce population and an increasing number of retirees.
- New population growth linked to the establishment of new business and industry i.e. China Southern West Australian Flying College.
- A desire for alternative lifestyle opportunities such as rural lifestyle blocks.
- Sufficient residential land to accommodate future population growth.
- Existing demand is for new blocks, as opposed to infill development of existing residential areas; associated development costs for new blocks are problematic and possibly prohibitive.
- Ability to take advantage of existing service infrastructure i.e., roads, sewer, water, electricity in vacant residential land with the town site for future residential development.
- The predominance of the single house as the existing and preferred housing form in the Merredin Shire.
- Residential development (subdivision) at the urban fringe providing for estates with new housing themes and stimulating construction industry.
- Additional medium density areas to provide for aged people accommodation and compact dwellings suitable for single workers and other small household groups.

4.2 Settlement and Infrastructure

4.2.1 Settlement

As previously noted, the settlement pattern within the Shire of Merredin is dominated by the Merredin Town Site, which accommodates the majority of the residential population and urban development. It is supplemented by historic outlying townsites (a number of which are in significant decline) and individual farming properties.

Scheme No. 1 makes no provision under its zoning regime for rural residential development within the Shire, although there has been over recent years, a number of smaller lot subdivisions associated with the outlying townsites, and on the southern boundary of the existing Merredin residential area but still within the Town Site boundary. There has been no coordinated development of these areas or specific zoning to support them. A notable exception is the area in northeast sector of town site, which was designated as a Stables zone, with all lots being sold in 2006.

The community desire to provide for rural residential development as an alternative to residential within the town site was identified the February 2001 Town Planning Workshop. It was suggested during the workshop to include the stables zone.

Two other areas north and south of the Merredin Town Site were identified as being potentially suitable for rural residential. In accordance with the requirements of SPP No 3 Part 5.6 Managing Rural Residential Growth, and more specifically the criteria specified in Appendix 2 of SPP No 2.5 for identification of Rural Settlements, the areas north and south of the town site are assessed below for their suitability for rural residential development.

SPP No. 3 considerations for Rural Residential Growth	Rural Residential Area (north) Merredin to Nungarin Road	Rural Residential Area (south) Merredin to Bruce Rock Road
Potential conflict with other land use and rural resources such as water catchments and basic raw materials	The only adjoining land use is broad acre farming – wheat cropping. Potential for conflict limited to short periods of activity i.e. sowing and harvesting.	The only adjoining land use is broad acre farming – wheat cropping. Potential for conflict limited to short periods of activity i.e. sowing and harvesting.
Potential conflict with conservation areas and outstanding landscapes	The area is not identified by local or state government as having conservation or landscape value.	The area is not identified by local or state government as having conservation or landscape value.
Economical provision of services	Water and power services are available within the Merredin to Nungarin Road.	Water and power services are available within the Merredin to Bruce Rock Road.
Potential to limit urban growth potential i.e. fragmentation of landholdings	More than sufficient vacant Residential zoned land is available with the Merredin Town Site. Future growth areas are also within the Merredin Town Site.	More than sufficient vacant Residential zoned land is available with the Merredin Town Site. Future growth areas are also within the Merredin Town Site.

Table 3 – SPP No. 3 Considerations for Rural Growth

SPP No. 2.5 Criteria for Rural Settlements	Rural Residential Area (north) Merredin to Nungarin Road	Rural Residential Area (south) Merredin to Bruce Rock Road
1. Protection of Priority Agriculture zones and agricultural areas of state or regional significance.	The land is not within a Priority Agricultural Zone.	The land is not within a priority agricultural area. The area comprises historic fragmented land parcels with little potential for broad acre farming on their own.
2. Identification of settlement patterns and settlement hierarchy – Settlement Strategy	The rural residential settlement area provides for lots of a minimum 2 hectares in a location close to the Merredin Town site for access to community & commercial services. There are few lots in this area range in the Shire, which comprise mostly broad acre agriculture lots and residential lots in the Merredin Town Site. Community aspirations are for lots in this range to provide for alternative lifestyle.	The rural residential settlement area provides for lots of a minimum 2 hectares in a location close to the Merredin Town Site for access to services. There are few lots in this area range in the Shire, which comprises mostly broad acre agricultural lots and residential lots in the Merredin Town Site. Community aspirations are for lots in this range to provide for alternative lifestyle.
3. Maintaining urban growth potential	There is sufficient urban land within the Merredin Town Site to accommodate current population growth rates to the year 2052. A northern growth corridor for the Merredin Town Site could still occur if required.	There is sufficient urban land with the Merredin Town Site to accommodate current population growth rates to the year 2052. A northern urban growth corridor for the Merredin Town Site could still occur if required in the future.
4. Proximity to towns and service centres	The rural residential settlement is within 1 km to the Merredin Town Site where commercial and community services and employment opportunities are available.	The rural residential settlement is within 1 km of the Merredin Town Site where commercial and community services and employment opportunity are available.
5. Service provision	Water and power service are located in the Merredin to Nungarin Road.	Water and power service are located in the Merredin to Bruce Rock Road.
6. Road access	The rural residential settlement area fronts the Merredin to Nungarin Road, a primary road in the Shire.	The rural residential area fronts the Merredin to Bruce Rock Road, a primary road in the Shire.
7. Landscape and conservation qualities	The rural residential settlement area is on slightly elevated land to the north of the Merredin Town site. There is some potential for views to the Merredin Town Site and major granite outcrop feature to the east. A portion comprises remnant vegetation (Acacia shrub land: Mallee) with granite outcropping which should be retained.	The landscape quality of the land is best described as flat broad acre farming land with minimal natural vegetation cover.
8. Fire risk assessment and management	The rural residential settlement area is predominately cleared farming land with native vegetation around the granite outcrop area. Standard local government bushfire requirements, ie boundary fire breaks and low fuel zones around buildings, should apply to development. Reticulated mains water is available for fire fighting.	The land is almost completely cleared. Standard local government bushfire management practices, ie boundary fire breaks and low fuel zones around buildings should apply to development. Reticulated mains water is available for fire fighting.
9. Natural resources	The area has not been identified with natural resource potential.	The area has not been identified with natural resource potential.
10. Environment	The eastern portion of the rural residential area comprises mature vegetation with granite outcropping.	The land is almost completely cleared. Opportunity exists to revegetate the land through the

SPP No. 2.5 Criteria for Rural Settlements	Rural Residential Area (north) Merredin to Nungarin Road	Rural Residential Area (south) Merredin to Bruce Rock Road
	Development to be located to avoid clearing. A small creek line on the western portion to be revegetated via subdivision.	subdivision process.
11. On-site effluent disposal	The requirement for ATU's will be assessed at building stage.	The requirement for ATU's will be assessed at building stage.
12. Demand and supply of rural residential and rural smallholdings lots	The Whitfield Way subdivision (5,000m ² lots) in the existing stables zone of Scheme No. 1 attracted significant public interest and all the lots on offer were sold readily.	The Whitfield Way subdivision (5,000m ² lots) in the existing stables zone of Scheme No. 1 attracted significant public interest and all the lots on offer were sold readily.
13. Specific purpose rural residential and rural smallholdings areas	The rural residential settlement area is to provide for hobby farming activity that is compatible residential amenity.	The rural residential settlement area is to provide for hobby farming activity that is compatible with residential amenity.
14. Land capability assessment	The geology of the locality is characterised by sandy soils with occasional granite outcropping. The granite outcropping in the western portion makes the land unsuitable for broad acre agriculture. The underlying geology does not present an impediment to road and dwelling construction for rural residential development. A detailed site investigation will be required at subdivision stage.	The geology of the locality is characterised by sandy soils with occasional granite outcropping which is not an impediment to road and dwelling construction. A detailed site investigation will be required at subdivision stage.
15. Tourist accommodation	No tourist accommodation is proposed within the rural residential settlement.	No tourist accommodation is proposed within the rural residential settlement.

Table 4 – SPP No. 2.5 Criteria for Rural Settlements

It is considered appropriate that these areas be designated for rural residential and a minimum lot area of 2 hectares apply in the Strategic Plan. It is also considered appropriate that additional land in the southern sector of the Merredin Town Site also be identified for potential rural residential use in the event that development in the designated areas proceeds rapidly.

Rezoning of potential rural residential areas under the new scheme should occur upon 60% completion of existing areas and be subject to a detailed land capability and suitability assessment with the land having a fair to very high capability of sustaining the development. Additionally, structure planning, proposals for revegetation, safe and effective road access and provision of essential service (water and power) should also be requirements for rezoning proposals of potential rural residential areas.

Prior to considering rezoning proposals for unsewered rural residential land on the periphery of the Merredin townsite, the Shire will need to assess the demand for residential land within the town. The rezoning of reserved land to 'Residential' will need to follow any requirements of any legislation or policy relating to divesting of reserves and the need for such reserves within the townsite.

The Shire of Merredin remains open to subdivision or intensification of land holdings in the general farming area, however when assessing such proposals shall have regard to:

- a decline in the population in the general farming area with a trend towards bigger farms for economies of scale;
- retention of viable parcels of land for broad acre farming and other general farming activities
- existing services within the general farming area;

- demonstrated demand for smaller rural lot development within the general farming area; and
- availability of adequate residential and existing rural residential land in and near the Merredin Townsite to accommodate persons seeking to locate or relocate in the Shire on non-farming properties.

Notwithstanding the above points, the Shire's position on subdivision in the general farming area, it is acknowledged that the Western Australian Planning Commission will have due regard to SPP No. 2.5 and the general presumption against subdivision of rural land unless the land is designated appropriately in an approved Local Planning Strategy.

Allowance should also be made for homestead lots in accordance with the criteria of Commission's Policy DC 3.4 Subdivision of Rural Land, to allow for residents in the general agricultural areas to carry on living in the homestead dwelling in their retirement. Each proposal for a homestead lots should be judged on its merits, but proposals in close proximity to essential community and commercial services maybe considered more favourably but subject to other considerations.

4.2.2 Infrastructure

The Merredin Townsite's important role as a regional centre reinforces its dominance within the Shire in terms of the provision of services to the residential community. Most outlying townsites, which historically provided important commercial and community services to their surrounding localities no-longer do so. Only Muntadgin, Burracoppin and Hines Hill provide facilities other than a limited number of residential properties. These generally involve some form of general store and licensed premises. Traditional district halls also exist to provide a focus for community activity. Beyond these minor services however, the majority of commercial, government, education and health services are all provided within the Town of Merredin.

A total of 25 State and Federal Government Agencies maintain an office presence within Merredin. The following is a list of the relevant agencies -

- Department of Agriculture and Food
- Department of Housing and Works,
- Department of Community Development,
- Department of Environment and Conservation ,
- Department of Health,
- Department of Education and Training
- Department of Attorney General,
- Department of Planning and Infrastructure.
- Telstra,
- Water Corporation,
- Westnet Rail,
- Police Department,
- Centrelink,
- Wheatbelt Development Commission,
- Legal Aid,
- Western Power,
- Disability Services Commission
- West Australian Local Government Association – Roadwise
- Small Business Centre – North East Wheatbelt

Educational facilities include three primary schools, one secondary school to senior high school level including the Merredin Residential College for boarding students from other regions of the Wheatbelt, and a campus of the C Y O'Connor TAFE.

Extensive health and aged care facilities are also provided, including:

- Merredin District Hospital,
- Merredin Medical Centre,
- Community Health Services,
- Physiotherapy, Dentistry and Chiropractic services,
- Royal Flying Doctor Service,
- St John's Ambulance and State Emergency Service,
- Silver Chain,
- Merrittville Retirement Village,
- Berringa Frail Age Lodge,
- Merredin Nursing Home and Respite Centre, and
- Merredin Senior Centre and Home and Community Care,

Western Power: Electricity

A 132 KV overhead power-line feeds two transformer substations at Merredin, supplying electricity to the Merredin Townsite and surrounding areas. The sub-station located south of the Great Eastern Highway, opposite the Cooperative Bulk Handling (CBH) Depot, provides electricity via 66 KV overhead powerlines. Electricity supply infrastructure has been installed at the light industrial subdivisions of McKenzie Crescent and Doyle Street, Merredin. Upgrading of electricity supply was required for the Whitfield Way land release.

Sewer

The Merredin Townsite has a reticulated sewerage system servicing the majority of the existing residential and commercial areas. Industrial areas are generally unsewered. The Water Corporation has no infill sewerage program for the Merredin Townsite. Expansions to the infrastructure network will be on a needs basis and developer driven. The Department of Health have been advised of the need to for sewer installation to the northwest sector of the Merredin Townsite residential area.

The wastewater treatment plant located west of the Merredin Town Site is designed to treat a nominal value of 750m³ of wastewater per day. During 2000/2001, the average mean discharge of the plant was 415.4m³ per day. The number 6 sewerage pumping station, located south of the Great Eastern Highway and to the west of the Merredin town centre, is to be decommissioned in the near future. Current plant and pump station capacity is considered sufficient to accommodate Town Site growth within the existing confines with no plans or requirement for future upgrading. A major upgrade of the sewerage treatment ponds was completed in 2006.

Water Supply

The Mundaring Weir via the main conduit provides water to the Merredin Townsite and surrounding land. Recently, a new water pumping station was constructed south of the old number 4 pumping station. The existing Scheme is currently functioning within its capacity, with no future plans to upgrade the existing infrastructure.

Telecommunication

The Perth to Kalgoorlie telecommunications link services the Merredin Townsite and surrounding areas. Three major communication sites provide telecommunication services to the Shire. The telephone exchange located on Barrack Street, and the communication tower in the town centre houses equipment for fixed and mobile customer services, and is the base for operations staff. Tank Hill communications site located to the east of the Merredin Townsite is part of the Perth to Kalgoorlie telecommunications link as is the Baandee R/T communications site which is located to the south west of the Merredin Townsite. There are no plans for any major changes to be made to these sites. Broadband internet access is available in Merredin.

Transport and Major Roads

The regional road network is dominated by Great Eastern Highway, which traverses the Shire from west to east. This is the main road route from Perth on the west coast through to the east coast of Australia and is straddled to both the north and south by the Town of Merredin. The historic townsites of Hines Hill and Nangeenan also abut the Highway to the west of Merredin and Burracoppin to the east. Other major roads within the Shire are the Merredin to Trayning Road to the North, the Merredin to Bruce Rock Road to the south and Merredin to Kondinin Road to the southeast. Other major transport infrastructure within the Shire comprises the standard gauge inter-continental railway from Perth to the east coast with narrow gauge lines linking Merredin to Trayning in the north and Kondinin and Bruce Rock in the southeast and south.

The dispersed settlement patterns of the Wheatbelt region of WA, requires an extensive transport network to adequately service the area. Merredin is serviced by rail and road with Great Eastern Highway being the major road / highway connecting Merredin to Perth. One important issue identified in the 2001 Wheatbelt Regional Transport Strategy was the age and standard of the existing road network in the Wheatbelt region. Reconstruction of sections of Great Eastern Highway between Hines Hill and Merredin, and Merredin and Walgoolan has commenced and is proposed for completion in 2007, along with widening of the road reserve. Identified in the Strategy was also the issue of minimising the impact of heavy haulage movement within the Merredin Town Site. Main Roads WA and the Shire have completed a study of the road network within the Merredin CBH grain receiver terminal. The study aims to minimise heavy haulage into the town site and cater for future direction of haulage to the terminal. Transportation studies have highlighted significant areas of road network requiring attention and potential future upgrading. The maintenance and upgrading of the existing road network is important to maintain current and future transport needs of the Wheatbelt Region.

The Merredin airfield, located 7kms from the town provides a base for the China Southern West Australian Flying College and remains a public air field. It is a major contributor to the Shire's economy on this basis. The Merredin airfield is currently designated rural under Scheme No 1. Given its relative importance both economic and symbolic as a new source industry, a revised designation to special site is considered appropriate. Further, in acknowledgement of the potential for noise impacts a nominal buffer zone is considered appropriate which should be investigated and refined further if noise issues arise.

Super School

The Merredin Townsite has two government primary schools including pre-primary, one private catholic primary school, and one senior high school.

The State Planning Strategy identified the need to investigate the need for a 'super school' in Merredin. The Wheat Belt Development Commission (WDC) is the agency driving the 'super school' initiative. The objective of the 'super school' is to facilitate the economic provision of education services within the Merredin Town Site to service not only the Town Site's needs but also that of the sub-region. It is envisaged that the 'super school' site, which is the land occupied by Merredin High School maybe developed with a facility that will provide for kindergarten, primary and secondary schools as well as a Trades Train centre and vocational training.

There maybe a need to close one of the primary schools in the Merredin Townsite but this will depend on future population growth or decline. The WDC and the local community are considering relocation of the remaining primary school site to the 'super school' site although a decision on this has yet been made.

In respect to the Trades Training centre, State government funding is being sought by the WDC. The Local Planning Strategy needs to support the 'super school' concept with appropriate strategies and actions.

4.2.3 Issues

Based on the available information in respect to settlement and infrastructure the following issues are identified.

- Merredin Townsite is the dominant focus of settlement within the Shire contains the majority of residential and commercial development and community services.
- Townsites of Muntadgin, Burracoppin and Hines Hill provide a limited number of commercial and community services for the day-to-day requirements of the local community.
- Existing services of water, sewer, electricity and telecommunications are adequate however future increases in demand may require major infrastructure expansion.
- Strong intra regional road links to other settlements within the Wheatbelt Region and inter-regional road links to other regions.
- A need to adequately maintain and upgrade strategic inter and intra regional links in conjunction with MRWA.
- A need to resolve traffic issues associated with heavy haulage vehicle traffic conflicting with local traffic within the Merredin Town Site and impacting on residential amenity and safety.
- A need to provide for alternative rural lifestyle use within and near the Merredin Townsite and ensure such development is carried out within a structure plan framework that considers landscape, amenity and revegetation matters.

- A need to acknowledge the importance of new and unique service industry in the Shire such as the China Southern West Australian Flying College via a special use site designation in the new scheme including a nominal noise buffer.
- A need to accommodate the 'super school' initiative.

4.3 Economy and Employment

4.3.1 General

The Shire of Merredin's economy is primarily based on agriculture with sheep and grain farming the main industries in the Shire.

An area within 100 km radius of Merredin produces 40% of Western Australia's wheat. Recent figures dating from 1999 show that total agricultural production in the Shire was worth \$65.4 million. Over one million tonnes of grain is received at the Merredin Cooperative Bulk Handling receivable point each season. Whilst production varies on seasonal conditions, there is a strong growth trend. The value for production of the last five years is on average 37% per year from 1994 – 1999. In addition to wheat other crops such as canola, lupins, barley and faba beans are also being harvested.

4.3.2 Agricultural Production

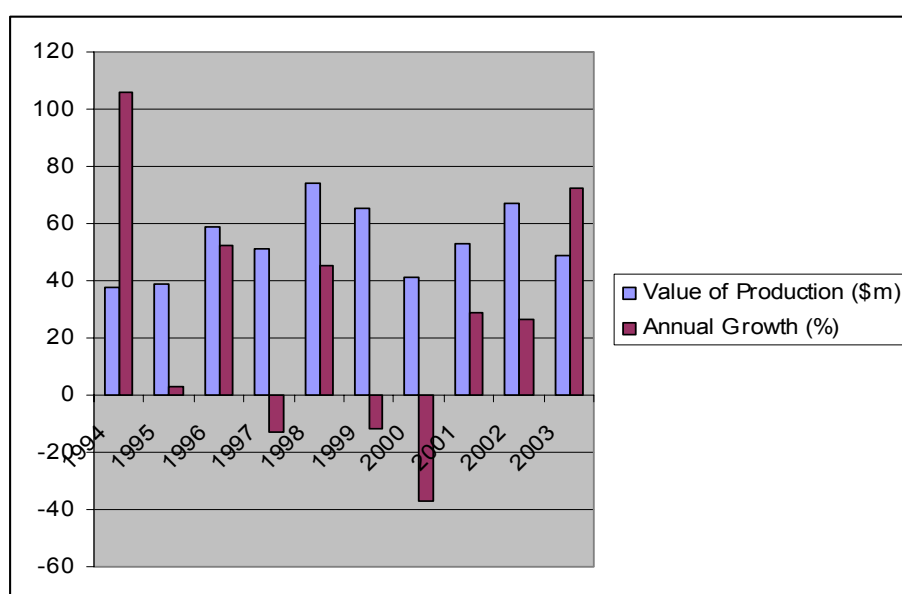


Figure 5 – Agricultural Production

Year	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Value of Production (\$m)	37.4	38.6	58.8	51.2	74.3	65.4	41.2	53.1	67.1	48.6
Annual Growth (%)	105.8	3.1	52.5	-12.8	45.1	-12.0	-37	28.8	26.3	72.4

Source: Department of Commerce and Trade and Department of Agriculture.

Table 5 – Agricultural Production

In support of this significant agricultural activity, a range of agricultural services including merchandising, agronomy advice, machinery sales and repairs, harvest spraying and contracting are provided from Merredin. Further, business services supporting these activities including, banking, accountancy and marketing advice are also located within the town.

The Merredin Townsite also acts as a regional service centre for commercial and retail needs servicing a wider district with a hinterland of 18,000 people. Wholesaling and retailing make up the largest employment category within Merredin.

An understanding of the local economy make-up and trends from a workforce perspective is derived from a comparison of the 1976 and the 2001 census on workforce by industry type.

SHIRE OF MERREDIN : COMPARISON 1976, 1991 & 2001 WORKFORCE BY INDUSTRY TYPE								
* Industry	1976		1991		2001		Proportional Increase/ Decrease	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	76-01	91-01
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting	475	21.2	289	17.2	297	18.4	-2.8%	+1.2%
Mining	8	0.4	8	0.4	6	0.4	0.0%	0.0%
Manufacturing	77	3.4	72	4.2	80	4.9	+1.5%	-0.7%
Electricity, Gas, Water	84	3.7	60	3.5	21	1.3	-2.4%	+2.2%
Construction	133	5.9	65	3.8	84	5.2	-0.7%	+1.4%
Wholesale/Retail Trade	497	22.1	353	20.9	388	24	+1.9%	+3.0%
Transport and Storage	293	13.1	165	9.8	136	8.4	-4.7%	+1.4%
Communication	25	1.1	28	1.6	31	1.9	-0.8%	+0.3%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Business Services	97	4.3	120	7.1	109	6.7	+2.4%	-0.4%
Public Administration and Defence	45	2.0	70	4.2	68	4.2	+2.2%	0.0%
Community Services	238	10.6	241	14.3	231	14.3	+3.7%	0.0%
Entertainment, Restaurants, Hotels	135	6.0	65	3.8	58	3.5	+2.5%	+0.3%
Other	139	6.2	147	8.7	42	2.6	-3.6%	
TOTAL	2,244	100.0	1683	100.0	1,613	100		

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics.
Table 6 – Workforce Comparison

* Note Industry categories are based on Shire of Merredin Town Planning Scheme No. 1 Report for comparison purposes.

In 2001 44% of the Shire's population were involved in the workforce comparable to the 45.8% workforce participation in 1976 and 44% in 1991. The Shire of Merredin work force has reduced by 631 jobs from the 1976 Census to the 2001 Census: a fall of 28%. The reduction in the number of jobs from the 1976 Census to 2001 Census corresponds closely to the Shire's population decline of 23% during the same period. The more recent trend from the 1991 to 2001 Census, showed a loss of 52 jobs: a fall of 3%, indicating a slowing rate of job losses in the last decade.

In 2001 the major employment categories within the Shire were retail and wholesale 24%, agriculture 18.4%, community services 14.3% and transport and storage 8.4%.

Industries with the greatest declining proportion of employment from the 1976 to the 2001 Census were agriculture – 2.8%, transport and storage – 4.7%, and electricity gas and water – 2.4%.

Whilst the decline in the latter of these categories is the result of declining population in general, the decline in agriculture, transport and storage are most likely the result of improvements in technology, production and transport and economics of scale.

In contrast, industries with a rising proportion of the workforce from the 1976 to the 2001 Census include community services +3.7%, public administration and defence +2.2%, and entertainment, restaurants and hotels +2.5%. Finance, insurance, real estate and business services + 2.4%.

Public administration and defence, finance, insurance, real estate and business services have not only increased proportionally but also the number of people employed has increased since the 1976 Census. This trend may represent the Shire's, and especially the Merredin Town Site's, increasing role as a regional service centre and indicates the need to accommodate future growth of such industries within the Merredin Townsite.

The more recent trend derived from the comparison of the 1991 to 2001 Census showed slight gains in the proportion of people employed in wholesale and retail, electricity gas and water, transport and storage, construction and agricultural of between 1 and 3%.

The overall loss in jobs and changes to the composition of jobs in Merredin has stabilised somewhat in the last decade.

4.3.3 Town Centre

The Merredin Town Centre is the hub of commercial and social activity for the Shire and also provides a regional service centre function.

The Town Centre is well defined by Fifth Street to the West, Queen Street to the east, Barrack Street to the south and Coronation Street to the north. There is a mix of contemporary and historic buildings the latter of which are suitably designated in the Shire of Merredin Municipal Inventory.

The town centre is made up of a composite of shops, offices, civic and cultural and public purpose land use zones and reserves. This strict regime of categorisation has served the Merredin Town Site well but current town planning philosophy indicates that a singular town site designation may allow greater flexibility to consider land use and development options for the town centre. This should form part of the Strategic Plan and be supported by strategies and actions.

There is no information available on the commercial component (shops and offices) of the town centre in respect to available floor space and vacancy rates that might allow for an understanding and analysis of land requirements.

Floor space and vacancy rates information would be an invaluable tool to Council and business and it is considered that a survey should form part of the strategies and actions in pursuit of orderly and proper provision of commercial land within the town centre.

4.3.4 Rural

In support of Merredin's agricultural production is the vast Rural zone which represents the overwhelming majority of Merredin's land area. Given the importance of agriculture to Merredin's economy, rural land should be protected from proposals that might compromise agricultural viability such as ad-hoc subdivision and incompatible use or development.

Nonetheless, new or innovative agricultural industries should be encouraged and where bona fide proposals have specific land requirements, support for subdivision or re-subdivision maybe contemplated subject to adequate justification.

Currently, scant information is available on agricultural land capability that could be a guide to Council decision making an agricultural land use and consideration of new agricultural industries. It is understood that Agriculture Western Australia is compiling information on agricultural land in Merredin. When such information is available it should be used to derive further strategies and actions for the rural economy.

In respect to new rural industry, the Mallee Oil Industry was identified in the February 2001 Town Planning Workshop as a potential new farming activity. Oil Mallee trees integrate well by complimenting existing farming systems, help to reduce water logging and other environmental limitations, offers a diversified income base to other income, provide huge carbon credit potential and employment opportunities.

Brushwood and sandalwood plantations would have similar economic and environmental benefits, although sandalwood plantations are a more long-term rural investment proposition for producers requiring about 25 years of growth before harvest.

The economic feasibility of developing these alternative agricultural industries is yet to be established, nevertheless, the Shire should actively encourage the establishment of alternative agricultural industries.

Another issue relevant to rural land and identified in the February 2001 Town Planning Workshop, was the desire for rural residential development. Clearly, such development should be accommodated close to the Merredin Townsite to take advantage of services. The issue of rural lifestyle is dealt with in more detail under the Infrastructure and Settlement Pattern section.

4.3.5 Industry

Light industry and showroom land use and development is primarily accommodated within two areas of the Merredin Townsite east and west of the town centre on the north side of Great Eastern Highway. The west area accommodates most of the showroom and light industrial. A significant portion of the land bank for these activities is occurring on land formally set aside as a railway marshalling yard (R10359), portions of which have been leased by WAGRC on an ad hoc basis for light industrial use.

The February 2001 Town Planning Workshop, identified business interest in the effective use of portion of R10359 for commercial and industrial type development. Council intends to purchase portion of R10359 and has rezoned the relevant area, in accordance with Town Planning Scheme No.1 Amendment No. 2 for showroom and light industry purposes. This needs to be followed through with appropriate economic strategies and actions in the LPS. The showroom zone has been designated along Mary Street, a main thoroughfare in the Merredin Town Site, to ensure a higher standard of development than light industry would afford on this high exposure land.

It is highlighted that the need to accommodate economic imperatives through the rezoning of portion of R10359 has been tempered against environment objectives to conserve natural vegetation on the balance of R10359 its reclassification of the balance of R10359 to recreation. The creation of a showroom and light industry precinct on R10359 coupled with existing vacant light industry land on McKenzie Crescent should satisfy land requirements for the next 10 years.

Less potential for future light industrial development exists in the light industry area east of the town centre where vacant sites are few.

As discussed under Population and Housing, the historic aircraft hanger site near the intersection of Goldfields Road and Railway Avenue, which is currently identified under Scheme No 1 for residential, continues to be used for industrial use. The hangers are substantial landmark buildings and have functional, aesthetic and historic significance to the Merredin Town Site. In view of this, it is considered appropriate that the site be designated for light industry to accommodate existing and anticipated future use.

There are also some amenity and aesthetic issues associated with the light industry development, especially along Railway Avenue - a major townsite entrance road. Some development on Railway Avenue consists of metal clad sheds with front setback areas being used for storage of bulky farming equipment and materials. It is considered appropriate that provisions be placed in the new scheme to prevent such use of the front setback areas and that refined landscape provisions be provided for light industry and showroom precincts requiring provision of landscaping within front setback areas.

In the event that the take-up of showroom and light industrial land is high, two options for expansion are identified. A light industrial precinct could also be established in an area currently subject to the provisions of Scheme No 5 - a guided development scheme, and intend to accommodate general industry. Scheme No 5 was gazetted in the early 1970's at the peak of growth in the Shire and Merredin Town Site. Shortly thereafter, Merredin's population went into decline and there has been no development within the Scheme No 5 area. Accordingly, revocation of Scheme No 5 should be straight forward as there are no outstanding financial implications.

A portion of this land bounded by the north bound railway spur line, Goldfields Road and the revegetated area associated with the Merredin Town Site's main drain, could be developed for light industry without impacting greatly on potential general industrial land provision. As part of any rezoning proposal under the new Scheme for this land, revocation of Scheme No 5 will need to be investigated. There is also a lot south of the revegetated area for the town's drain which front to Gamenya Avenue that is approximately located for potential light industrial use.

Potential for light industrial may also be contemplated in the southwest sector of the townsite on land adjacent to the abattoir, electrical sub station and Water Corporation dam. Light industry use is considered to be compatible and complimentary to these existing public utility and noxious industry land uses.

In considering proposals under the new scheme to rezone land designated in the LPS as Potential Light Industry, Council should consider the existing supply of industrial land, the availability of services and potential impacts on adjacent land use. The Council should view rezoning proposals that are accompanied by bona-fide industrial development proposals favourably.

Land set aside for heavy industry is located in the western sector of the townsite north of the railway line with some land in this area owned by Council. The CBH grain handling facility is the dominant industry in the area.

There is sufficient vacant general industrial land with several large yet undeveloped parcels of land within the existing zone to accommodate future industrial development. A site directly north of the CBH facility has been subject to substantial replanting to address the rising water table and salinity in the locality.

In order to preserve this rehabilitation, negotiations between Council and the landowner should be entered into if this site comes under pressure for industrial development. A land swap could be contemplated but economic imperatives should take precedence for a site that has long been identified for general industry.

Opportunity exists to transfer some smaller parcels of land directly north and east of the CBH grain storage area to the General Industry zone in the new scheme to designate balance areas of agricultural land with the town centre to an appropriate zone.

4.3.6 Tourism

An area with growing potential to form an important contribution to the local economy is tourism. Within the Shire there are a range of significant existing or potential tourist attractions including the old Railway Station Museum, the Merredin Military Museum, Cummins Theatre, Merredin Peak, the Railway Dam, 1893 Water Tower, wildflower tours, the Golden Pipeline project and the CBH grain storage facility.

It is estimated some 550,000 to 600,000 vehicles passed through Merredin along Great Eastern Highway every year. In addition regular train, bus and tour services link the Shire with the remainder of the State and points beyond. Existing accommodation includes four motels, one hotel and a caravan park with chalets.

In support of tourist related development within the Merredin Townsite, Scheme No 1 designated several Tourist zones on the south side of Great Eastern Highway. Land use and development within the Tourist zone includes service stations, road-houses, motels, caravan parks, a fast food outlet and restaurants. Under Scheme No. 1 – In the Tourist zone, a historic industry comprising the Water Corporation storage depot remains, and there are significant areas of vacant land, both of which provide for future growth. The Strategy should encourage the relocation of the Water Corporation Depot from the strategic highway location to the light industry area so that the land becomes available for Tourist Use. This should be a strategy and action in the LPS and be actively encouraged by the Shire. Under Scheme No. 1, Tourist Area was also designated a development area to ensure an overall plan. This is still relevant and also needs to be identified as an action and strategy in the LPS.

Although the Model Scheme Text provides for a tourist zone it is primarily aimed at major developments such as bona-fide resorts with integrated shops and services. Development within the Tourist zone service not only tourist but also other user groups including locals, passers by, short-stay workers, business travellers and the like. An update of the land use designation is considered appropriate to more accurately reflect the diversity of user groups. A highway service designation, which accommodates use and development for tourists and other user groups is considered appropriate and should form part of the Strategic Plan and be supported by actions and strategies. Designation of potential tourist zones is important to accommodate a diverse range of tourist developments in the future.

It is important that the foundations of the Merredin economy be protected and maintained especially the Townsite's regional service centre role. It is also important that potential additional investment opportunities and business activities are recognised as the long-term strength of the local economy will be directly related to diversification of the economic base. Items such as ensuring there is sufficient commercial, industrial or business land available to attract or respond to investment interest is imperative as well as ensuring services and infrastructure are available to support investment initiatives. These could include identified growth areas with potential within the Shire including tourism, aquaculture, land care and potential air training services.

4.3.7 Issues

Based on the foregoing assessment of economic and employment data the following key issues are identified.

- Merredin's economy is primarily based on agriculture with the townsite performing a regional centre function with supporting services in retail, commerce, industry and community services.
- Increasing importance of tourism to the Merredin economy.
- A high proportion of the population participating in the workforce with unemployment below the state average.
- Dominant employment categories are retail and wholesale, agriculture, public administration and community services.
- A rising importance in manufacturing and business related services, banking finance, consultancy as employment generators and a need to accommodate future expansion of these activities.
- Sufficient light industrial and showroom land to accommodate future demand but a need to identify future potential sites in case demand outstrips supply.
- A need to retain the town centre as the focus for retail and commercial activity in light of population decline.
- A need to provide Council with more flexibility in considering land use and development proposals within the town centre.
- A need to redefine the role of land set aside for tourist type activity to more accurately reflect appropriate development and user groups of the development and encourage historic industrial land use to relocate.
- A need to acknowledge that future growth of the economy will be derived from the establishment of new industry and business, and the need to encourage such development, ie, the China Southern West Australian Flying College, redevelopment of former Eastern Districts Abattoir site, Westonia Mines.
- A need to acknowledge the importance of and unique business and industry, ie, China Southern West Australian Flying College at the Merredin Aerodrome via appropriate designation in the new scheme including a national buffer zone.

4.4 Environment

4.4.1 Geology

The Shire is underlain by the very ancient granite and greenstone rocks of the Achaean age that comprise part of Yilgarn Block. These ancient rocks are largely covered by laterite (gravel), clay and sand and locally by salt lakes deposits containing gypsum'.

4.4.2 Native Vegetation

Eighty nine percent of land within the Shire has been cleared for agriculture leaving only isolated pockets of native vegetation spread throughout the Shire.

Some native vegetation sites are areas spared from clearing due to their geological or topographical unsuitability for agriculture, ie, areas around granite outcrops and salt lakes or areas with steep or rocky terrain. Other native vegetation sites owe their existence to their early reservation or enduring crown land status. There are three native vegetation sites located at the southern urban fringe of the Merredin Townsite. These are suitably protected under Scheme No 1 via the recreation reserve, although some degradation has occurred due to clearing and access tracks. Native vegetation sites are scarce and thus their protection should be a high priority, especially Reserve 23739 recognised as Tamma Parkland.

Commission Policy DC 3.4 Rural Subdivision, allows for the creation of conservation lots in the wheat belt agricultural policy area. Given the scarcity of nature vegetation in the Shire of Merredin, proposals for conservation lots should be supported by the Council but with due regard being given to the criteria of Policy DC 3.4 with each proposal determined on its merits.

There are some relatively large native vegetation sites that provide both functional and aesthetic value within the Merredin Townsite. The largest is located in the northeast sector of the Merredin Townsite and encompasses land reserved for recreation and includes a major granite outcrop, which is a significant landscape feature for the Merredin Townsite. The adjacent golf course also includes some significant stands of native vegetation as does the former railway marshalling yards (R10359) just to the south.

In acknowledgement of the native vegetation on R10359, the Shire is in negotiation with the Public Transport Authority of Western Australian and Department of Planning and Infrastructure to obtain the vesting for a portion of R10359 with a view to securing retention of the native vegetation via its reservation for recreation under Scheme No. 1. Clearly, this needs to be followed through in the Strategic Plan with an appropriate strategy and action.

There is a relatively large native vegetation site, which includes a granite outcrop in the southwest sector urban fringe. This site is in private ownership and portion is zoned in Scheme No 1 for residential development. Given these circumstances, retention of this native vegetation area is considered somewhat problematic. Negotiations between the Shire and the landowner should be entered into with a view to retaining as much native vegetation as possible via a structure planning process for the area. This should be reflected in the Strategic Plan with a suitable strategy and action.

The Shire has carried out revegetation in conjunction with Department of Agriculture and Food in the western portion of the townsite north of the CBH grain silos and between the townsite's sewerage treatment facility and the north bound railway spur line. These revegetation programs are part of the Department of Agriculture and Food investigations into salinity prevention and lowering the water table. The site north of the CBH grain silos is on General Industrial land and as such there is a need to reconcile this zone with the current use. A designation for parks and recreation reserve is considered suitable for this land with a similar sized area identified in the locality for General Industrial zone to compensate.

It is noted that under Scheme No 1, the conservation of native vegetation was implemented via the use of the singular recreation reservation. This generally encompassed: land reserved for conservation of flora and fauna under the management of CALM; land reserved for water catchment under the management of the Water & Rivers Commission; land reserved for gravel, landscape protection and recreation under the management of the Shire; and unvested reserves and Crown land.

The use of the singular recreation reservation, whilst offering the advantage of simplicity does not adequately reflect the status of the above described tenures. Further, since Scheme No 1, additional land has been identified under these tenures indicating a need for a refinement of the classification into categories such as Parks and Recreation, Conservation and Water Catchment and an update in the new scheme.

The future designation of Crown land and unvested reserves is more problematic. Whilst some land of these tenures, especially land within the Merredin townsite, is well suited to a recreation reservation, others sites beyond the town site would need assessment prior to designation. Until this assessment is carried out the land should remain with the rural zone unless already identified under Scheme No 1 for Recreation or a different zone or reserve.

In April 2005 the Shire of Merredin supported the Department of Environment and Conservation's (formerly CALM) placement of a Nature Conservation Covenant on Avon Locations 19108, 19110 and 19111 for the protection of native flora and fauna therein.

4.4.3 Natural Resource Management

Natural Resource Management issues are being addressed by the Shire of Merredin and Merredin Land Conservation District Committee (LCDC).. A Natural Resources Management Priorities and Strategic Plan (NRMPSP) for the Shire of Merredin was prepared in 2004. Priority management areas of the NRMPSP are Hydrological Processes, Biodiversity, Soil, Pest and Weed Control and Cultural of Natural Reserves Management. Strategies and actions are provided to address the specific management areas and these relate to catchment areas and assets of the Shire of Merredin, which have been categorised into land, water, infrastructure and biodiversity. The NRMPSP also sets out priority strategies for natural resource management.

4.4.4 Salinity

Salinity is a major environmental issue with the Wheatbelt region and was highlighted in the February 2001 Town Planning Workshop. As noted, clearing for agriculture has left the Shire with only 11% of its original vegetation and as a result ground water levels fluctuate seasonally.

Not only does rising groundwater and resultant salinity have an impact on agriculture land but also impacts on housing and infrastructure, i.e., road, rail & public buildings. It is estimated that major impacts will occur in about 25 years if measures are not taken.

This issue has been recognised within the Avon Regional NRM Strategy where the Town of Merredin has been ranked second in priority at risk from salinity within the Avon Catchment, and sixth within the State. Options for management including implementation of integrated water catchment management, minimising ponding and flooding, revegetation roadsides, and drainage and groundwater pumping have been identified within the Strategy.

The Shire of Merredin has invested significant funds (>\$200,000) in the Rural Towns Liquid Assets program since 2003. The Merredin Townsite Salinity Management Strategy (MTSMS) May 2002 has also been prepared. Action plans have been developed for the following five key goals: awareness of water as an asset, surface water management, education and awareness, research and development and planning.

Initiatives of the NRMPS and MTSM that may readily translate into strategies and actions in the LPS are as follows:

- development of industries and rural pursuits that utilise saline water
- development of infrastructure to desalinate water and make available for use
- development of infrastructure to lower groundwater.
- development of agricultural/horticultural uses that have potential to lower groundwater or utilise salt affected land
- revegetation proposals for salinity management and biodiversity improvements
- proposals that include catchment management initiatives including damming of upper catchment, vegetation of creek lines sacrifice areas in degraded valley floors.

Key initiatives current being undertaken in the Merredin Townsite to address salinity include the following.

- Pumping of groundwater from 6 bores in the town centre to evaporation ponds and storage tanks (adjacent to CBH) in the western sector of the Merredin Townsite.
- The establishment of a desalination plant to recover water.
- A tree-planting programme along the main drain also in the western sector of the Merredin Townsite.

The Shire of Merredin will need to seek additional funding from the State Salinity Council to continue these initiatives. The evaporation ponds and desalination plant is on land reserved in Scheme No 1 for parks and recreation. In acknowledgement of the unique activity a special use designation is considered appropriate with a strategy and action for continuation of initiatives to address townsite salinity.

4.4.5 Flooding

Flooding and drainage within the Merredin Townsite is an issue that was highlighted in the report for Scheme No 1, and the February 2001 Town Planning Workshop. The Merredin Town Site is within a shallow valley with high ground to the northeast and southern side of the Merredin Town Site forming a water shed off which runoff becomes channelled through the lower parts of the Merredin Townsite, especially the northern section.

A report of 1979 by the then Public Works Department recommended the following to address the flooding.

- A 1.5 metre levee bank along the Goldfields Road between MacDonald Street and Railway Avenue.
- Routing an additional drain through the northern portion of the Merredin Townsite with a suggested route within the standard gauge railway reserve extending into the discontinued Nungarin Railway Reserve before joining up with the existing drain to the west of the Merredin Townsite.
- Postponement of urban development with the northern portion of the Merredin Townsite susceptible to flooding until major flood irrigation works have been complete.
- Upgrading of the existing main drain in the centre of the Merredin Townsite.

These recommendations remain valid and should continue to form part of the Shire's flood mitigation program and be reflected in appropriate strategies and actions.

4.4.6 Contamination

The Contaminated Sites Act 2003 came into operation on 1 December 2006 conveying responsibility to the Shire of Merredin to advise the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) of any known or suspected contaminated sites under its control within the district. Subsequent assessment of such sites will determine the classification imposed by the DEC and will determine future usage of such sites. Certain contaminated sites may require to be identified within town planning documentation and restrictions placed on the future usage and development thereon.

4.4.7 Local Biodiversity Strategy

Local Government Biodiversity Planning Guidelines have been developed by the Western Australian Local Government Association. These guidelines establish a process for identifying, protecting and managing natural areas, which the guidelines define as;

'an area that contains native species or communities in a relatively natural state and hence contains biodiversity. Natural areas can be areas of native vegetation, vegetated or open water bodies (lakes, swamps), or waterways (rivers, streams, creeks – often referred to as channel wetlands, estuaries), springs, rock outcrop, bare ground (Generally sand or mud), caves, coastal dunes or cliffs (adopted from Environmental Protection Authority 2003a). Note that natural areas exclude parkland cleared areas, isolated trees in cleared settings, ovals and turfed areas.'

The Shire will consult with the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) to request the NRM Regions to give consideration to providing resources to prepare a local biodiversity strategy consistent with WALGA's Local Government Biodiversity Planning Guidelines to facilitate the protection and management of natural areas. The request should give consideration to pursuing a regional approach to the preparation of a local biodiversity strategy.

4.4.8 Buffers

Developments that may need a buffer include industries (rural and extractive), agriculture, infrastructure and services. Buffer requirements are generally guided by State and regional policy, including that which is set by the Environmental Protection Authority, Western Australian Planning Commission and the Department of Industry and Resources. Any proposed land use or expansion of an existing land use that may require a buffer should be referred to the relevant State Government Department for advice.

4.4.9 Issues

On the basis of available information in respect to environmental matters the following key issues are identified.

- A need to protect townsite native vegetation by way of an appropriate vesting with the Shire of Merredin or where occurring on private land via direct negotiation with the land owner or via the structure planning process.
- A need to refine the classification of sites with native vegetation in accordance with their vesting and management orders to more accurately reflect native vegetation sites intended purpose.
- A need to identify and report contaminated sites to the DEC and implement management plans where required.
- A need for environmental assessment of unvested reserves and unallocated Crown land within the Shire to establish potential to protect native vegetation on such sites. This should be undertaken in consultation with Department of Land Information and DEC.
- A need to continue initiatives to address townsite salinity and seek funding from the State Salinity Council.
- The need for an appropriate designated use for land being used for salinity research by Department of Agriculture and Food and it's vesting in that authority.
- A need to support the initiatives of the NRMPSP and the MTSMS.
- A need to carry forward flood mitigation recommendations for the Merredin Townsite.

5.0 STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Plan identifies new town planning directions in terms of land use designation. A key element of the Strategic Plan is the designation of most land within the Merredin Townsite boundary for land use other than rural in acknowledgement of the community's aspirations for townsite growth and allowance for alternative lifestyle and business opportunities. In most cases land use designations are supported by strategies and actions found in Section 6.0 Local Planning Strategies.

The Strategic Plan identifies recommended land use planning designations and potential land use planning designations.

Recommended land use planning designations are those proposed to be entered into the new scheme for the Shire of Merredin. They reflect appropriate changes to the zoning and reservation regime of Scheme No 1 based on the following general planning principles:

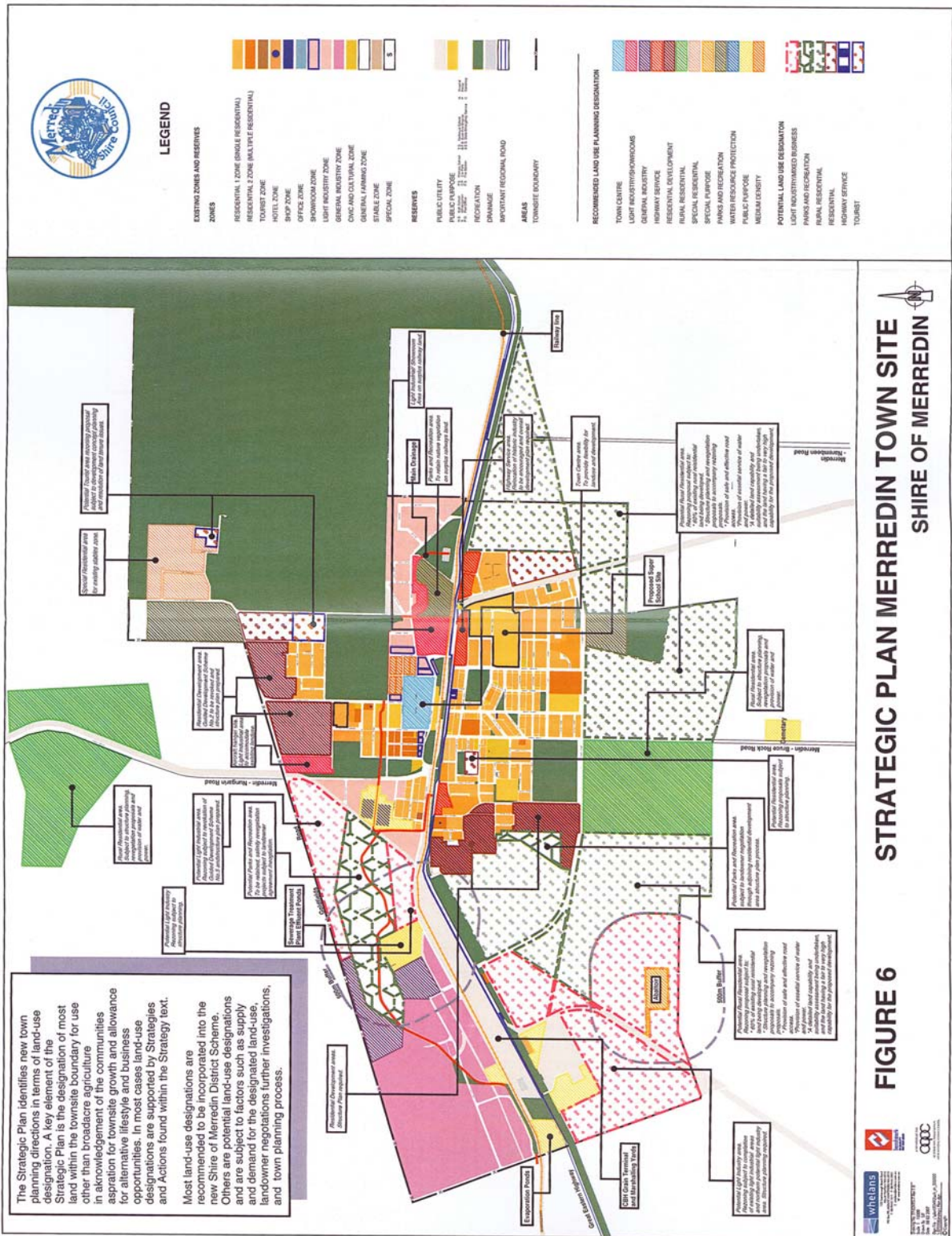
- change to acknowledge appropriate continuation of existing land use, ie light industry for the aircraft hanger site
- change to acknowledge current and future management of land, ie conservation for land under the management of CALM
- change to allow for more appropriate land use and development on land as discussed in the LPS, i.e., highway service for existing tourist zones
- change to allow for new land use and development as discussed in the LPS, ie special rural areas.

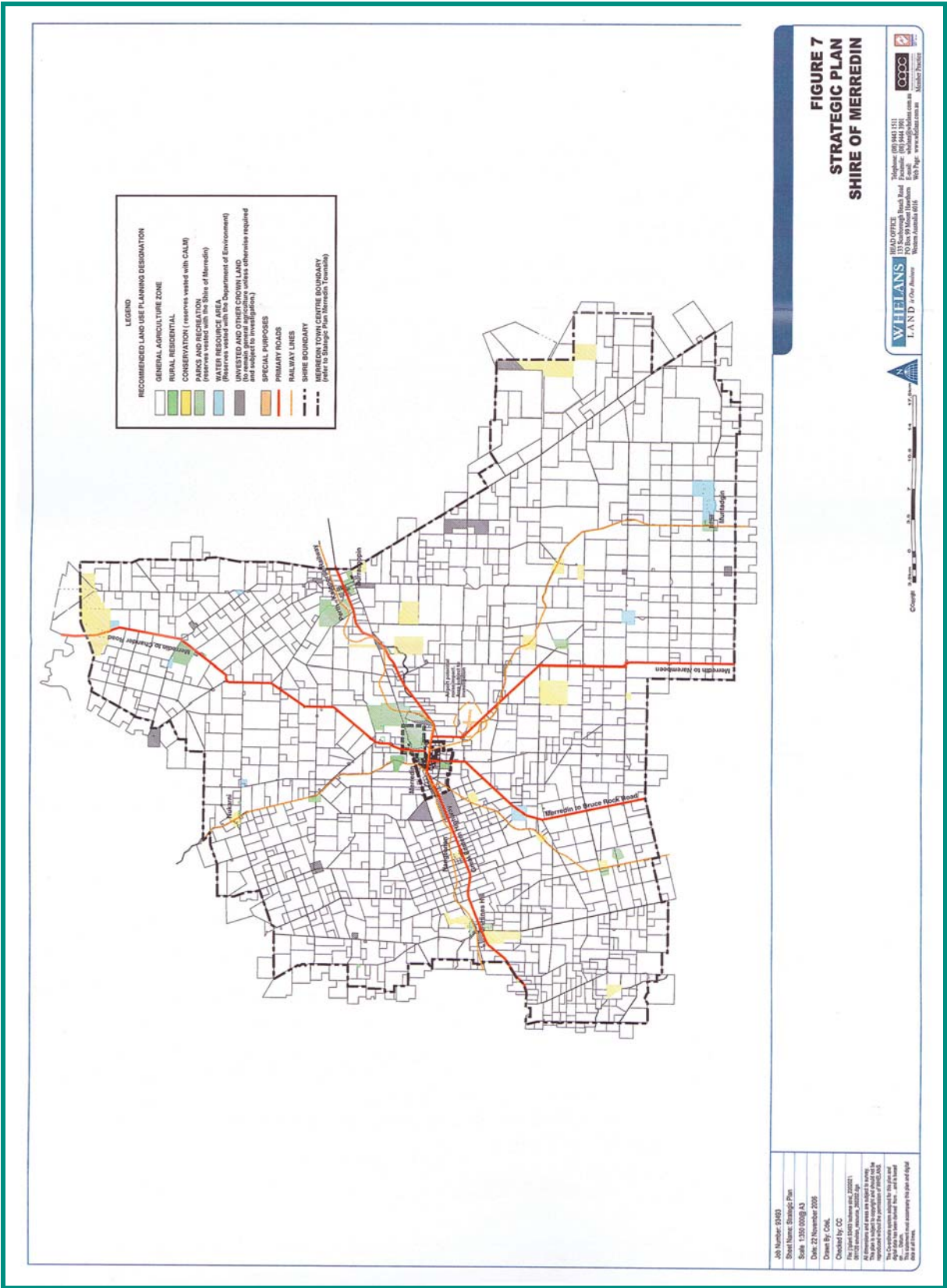
The recommended changes are also based on there being no identified significant physical or legal constraints and where appropriate service availability.

Potential land use designations are those that may be considered for the land use at a future point in time via the town planning scheme amendment process but subject to justification and consideration of (but not limited to) the following:

- demand and supply the land use
- landowner negotiation
- town planning or other investigation
- service / infrastructure availability
- structure planning
- specific requirements are identified for each area with a potential land use designation

Strategic Plans are provided for the Merredin Townsite and the Shire of Merredin as a whole. The focus of the Strategic Plan is predominantly on the Merredin Town Site. It is anticipated that any minor land use designation changes for the smaller townsites will be dealt with under the preparation of the new Scheme.





6.0 LOCAL PLANNING STRATEGIES

6.1 Economy and Employment

Aim: Townsite Economy	Strategy	Action
<p>Promote Merredin as a centre of regional economic and social development in the Wheatbelt Region.</p>	<p>Accommodate tourist related development and compatible uses within a broad based zone that accurately reflects the diverse range of user groups for intended development.</p>	<p>Designate existing tourist zones under Scheme No. 1 to a Highway Service zone.</p> <p>Designate Reserve 44697 and Reserve 22645 as “Potential Tourist” zones</p> <p>Actively encourage the relocation of historic industrial uses out of the future Highway Service zone to the light industry precinct east of the town centre, or the general industry precinct west of the town centre.</p> <p>Require the preparation of an overall development plan for the historic industrial use site and adjacent vacant land prior to subdivision or development.</p>
	<p>Acknowledge and protect new businesses that have made a contribution to Merredin’s economy.</p>	<p>Designate the Merredin aerodrome site to a Special Use zone and establish a nominal buffer zone requiring further investigation as required.</p>
	<p>Promote the Merredin town centre as the focus of commercial and social activity</p>	<p>Direct all commercial development including retail and office, and key social services including civic and cultural uses to the Merredin town centre.</p> <p>Undertake a commercial floor space survey for the Merredin town centre and identify occupied and vacant commercial floor space and sites to use in assessment of commercial development proposals.</p>

6.1 Economy and Employment (cont)

Aim:	Strategies	Actions
	<p>Identify suitable land for light industrial use capable of development as planned estates, which minimise land use conflict and environmental impacts.</p>	<p>Acquire portion of R10359 from PTAWA and facilitate subdivision of the western portion of the land for showroom light industry purposes.</p> <p>Designate land in the northwest sector of the townsite south of Railway Ave as potential light industry. Rezoning subject to completion of existing industrial estates, revocation of Scheme No 5 service provision and preparation of a structure plan.</p> <p>Designate land in the southwest sector of the townsite as potential light industry. Rezoning subject to completion of existing industrial estates, land capability service provision and structure planning.</p>
	<p>Acknowledge existing and historic light industrial land use.</p>	<p>Designate WWII aircraft hanger sites in the northwest sector of the townsite to light industry in acknowledgement of existing and appropriate light industrial use.</p>
	<p>Enhance the appearance of light industry and showroom development.</p>	<p>Provide provisions in the new scheme to prevent inappropriate use of front setback for light industry and showroom for storage and provide for standards for front setback landscaping.</p>
	<p>Accommodate home occupation and home business within residential areas but only where such activity does not adversely impact on residential amenity.</p>	<p>Provide for a discretionary land use of home occupation and home business within residential zones of the new scheme.</p>

6.1 Economy and Employment (cont)

Aims: Rural Economy	Strategies	Action
<p>Protect productive agricultural land and encourage opportunities for new and innovative agricultural industries</p>	<p>Ensure that the use and development of rural land is compatible with agricultural activity.</p> <p>Encourage plantations ie, mallee oil, sandalwood trees and, in appropriate areas as a means of developing environmentally sustainable alternative agriculture industry.</p> <p>Direct rural residential development away from productive agriculture land towards the townsite, existing fragmented land and/or unproductive land.</p> <p>Promote diversification of the rural economy and encourage proposals that conserve soil, water, and native vegetation and reduce salinity potential.</p>	<p>Discourage subdivision of broad acre productive agriculture land.,</p> <p>Continue to liaise with Department of Agriculture and Food on land capability mapping and when available use as a guide for land use decision-making. In particular, identifying areas suitable for alternative agricultural industries ie, plantations.</p>
<p>Provide for basic raw materials extraction subject to environmental, land use and visual compatibility and rehabilitation.</p>	<p>Ensure that proposals for extractive industries do not adversely impact the environment, adjoining land use and visual amenity.</p>	<p>Classify extractive industries a discretionary use in the General Farming Area of the new Scheme, and include provisions requiring the preparation of environmental management plans for proposals.</p>
<p>Protect the General Farming area from incompatible and deleterious uses.</p>	<p>Prevent incompatible and deleterious uses such as waste disposal from establishing in the General Farming area.</p>	<p>Classify used tyre disposal of any kind a prohibited use in the General Farming area.</p>

6.2 Environment

Aims	Strategies	Actions
<p>To conserve, protect and improve the natural environment, arrest damage caused by land clearing and development, and safe guard the human living environment from natural disaster and to provide suitable buffers to protect development and amenity.</p>	<p>Protect land identified for conservation of flora and fauna, water resource protection and, landscape and recreation.</p>	<p>Designate land reserved for conservation, water catchment and parks and recreation accordingly in the new scheme.</p> <p>Identify Nature Conservation Covenants on Avon Locations 19108, 19110 and 19111.</p>
	<p>Identify Crown and other government land with conservation, water catchment or parks and recreation potential.</p>	<p>In consultation with DPI and DEC assess all unallocated Crown land and unvested reserves for potential conservation, water catchment or parks and recreation designation</p>
	<p>Continue initiatives aimed at researching and addressing salinity.</p>	<p>Seek additional funding from the Avon Catchment Council to continue initiatives to investigate and address salinity. Provide for a special use zone for land used for the evaporation ponds and desalination project in the new scheme.</p>
	<p>Maintain existing strategies aimed at mitigating potential flooding of the Merredin townsite.</p>	<p>Prioritise required flood mitigation works and budget accordingly.</p>
	<p>Protect town site native vegetation currently in private ownership.</p>	<p>Negotiate directly with landowners to secure sites of native vegetation via potential land swaps or reservation of bushland via subdivision and structure planning.</p>
	<p>Promote revegetation of degraded land and land to be used for Rural Residential and Special Residential development.</p>	<p>Revegetation and landscaping programs to form part of Shire subdivision requirements for Rural Residential and Special Residential development.</p>

6.2 Environment (cont)

Aims	Strategies	Actions
	<p>Support initiatives of the NRMPS and MTSMS.</p>	<p>Provide provisions/policies in the new scheme that support land-uses that manages salinity issues including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • infrastructure to desalinate water and lower ground water • land use that utilises saline water • land use that reduces the water table i.e., fodder crops and oil mallees. <p>Require new land-uses to incorporate measures to attenuate salinity where appropriate i.e. revegetation of creek lines.</p> <p>Discourage land use that will increase soil degeneration i.e., erosion and salinity to unacceptable levels.</p>
	<p>Identify, protect and seek the appropriate management of natural areas of significance.</p>	<p>The Shire will consult with the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) to request the NRM Regions to give consideration to providing resources to prepare a local biodiversity strategy consistent with WALGA's Local Government Biodiversity Planning Guidelines to facilitate the protection and management of natural areas. The request should give consideration to pursuing a regional approach to the preparation of a local biodiversity strategy.</p>

6.2 Environment (cont)

Aims	Strategies	Actions
	<p>Based on available information, existing and proposed developments that require a buffer will be identified on the relevant strategy maps and until such time this occurs, buffer requirements will be guided by State and regional policy, including that which is set by the Environmental Protection Authority, Western Australian Planning Commission and the Department of Industry and Resources. The Shire, will therefore, not generally support proposed development that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. result in an incompatible land use being located within a buffer such as residential or rural residential; and ii. create a land use conflict as the result of a proposed development that will require a buffer or the proposed expansion of an existing development that results in a buffer that needs to be increased, that encroaches on incompatible land uses such as residential or rural residential. 	<p>In consultation with the Environmental Protection Authority and the Department of Environment and Conservation, determine the appropriate buffers for existing and proposed developments and illustrate these on the appropriate local planning strategy maps.</p>

6.2 Environment (cont)

Aims	Strategies	Actions
	<p>In assessing development proposals that require or are impacted on by a buffer requirement, the following will apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. existing development, the buffer will be in accordance with recommended distances as stipulated by State and regional policy unless a buffer study has been prepared and endorsed by the relevant State Government authority to adopt a modified boundary and ii. proposed expansion of an existing or new development, a buffer study will need to be submitted and may require referral to the Environmental Protection Authority. 	

6.3 Population and Housing

Aims	Strategies	Actions
<p>Promote Merredin Town Site as the preferred residential location in the Wheatbelt Region offering a high standard of residential amenity and varied lifestyle opportunities.</p>	<p>Provide for the preferred single dwelling housing type and alternative housing types, i.e., aged persons dwellings, villas and town houses in the Merredin Townsite.</p> <p>Direct aged persons and nursing home developments to the R50 – medium density zone near the town centre.</p>	<p>In the new Scheme provide for an R20 base coding for residential areas within the Merredin Townsite and to designate areas for higher density development at the R30 to R50 density codes.</p>
	<p>Encourage development at the urban fringe as a means of providing a range of residential development sites and as a means of promoting the construction industry.</p>	<p>Designate land with further lot potential in the northern sector of the Merredin Townsite and land with further lot potential in the southeast sector of the Merredin Townsite to a development zone wherein the requirement for a structure plan shall apply prior to consideration of subdivision.</p> <p>Subdivide Council owned land parcels in the southwest sector of the Merredin Townsite and make available to the community at attractive prices.</p>
	<p>Encourage infill development within established residential areas as a means of providing economical residential development sites.</p>	<p>Liaise with government agencies that have surplus residential land and encourage disposal to private interests.</p>
	<p>Discourage uses that are detrimental to residential amenity locating in residential areas.</p>	<p>Include appropriate provisions in the new Scheme to prevent incompatible uses in residential areas.</p>
	<p>Identify further land with residential potential in the Merredin Townsite and protect from incompatible use.</p>	<p>Designate two sites in the northeast and southeast sector of the Merredin Townsite for potential residential.</p>

6.4 Infrastructure and Settlement Pattern

Aims	Strategies	Actions
<p>Promote Merredin Townsite as a regional centre offering a high level of community services and infrastructure with new settlement opportunities.</p>	<p>Actively promote Merredin as a centre for the provision of Government services to the community.</p> <p>Acknowledge the contribution of existing service infrastructure by suitable designation in the new Scheme.</p>	<p>Establish and maintain links with State and Federal Government Agencies with offices located in Merredin and encourage continuation and expansion of service provision. Facilitate the development of community services where possible.</p> <p>Designate land used by Government Agencies for service provision to public purpose reservation and liaise with DLI and the relevant Government agency for appropriate vesting, where land is inappropriately vested in the Shire of Merredin.</p> <p>Continue to liaise with MRWA and CBH on transport strategies to minimise heavy vehicle traffic impacts in the town centre and incorporate where required the ultimate transport strategy into the new Scheme.</p>
	<p>Provide for and identify new rural based lifestyle opportunities in close proximity to the town centre.</p>	<p>Provide Rural Residential zones on fragmented land in the south sector of the town site west of the Merredin to Bruce Rock Road, and just north of the town site west and east of the Merredin to Nungarin Road, wherein the requirement for structure planning and revegetation shall apply.</p> <p>Designate the existing stable zone Special Residential and provide provisions within the new scheme to provide for a high standard of residential and rural lifestyle.</p>

6.4 Infrastructure and Settlement Pattern (cont)

Aims	Strategies	Actions
		<p>Designate potential rural residential areas in the south sector of the Merredin Townsite. Consider rezoning proposals under the new scheme subject to the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% of existing rural residential land being developed • Structure planning and revegetation proposals to accompany rezoning proposals. • provision of safe and effective road access • provision of essential services of water and power, a detailed land capability and suitability assessment being undertaken, and the land having a fair to very high capability for Rural Residential development. <p>Discourage the subdivision of viable agricultural land and/or intensification of land holdings in the General Farming area, with the exception of homestead lots where justified in accordance with the Commission's Policy DC3.4.</p> <p>Direct population settlement towards the Merredin Townsite.</p>

6.4 Infrastructure and Settlement Pattern (cont)

Aims	Strategies	Actions
<p>Recognise Hines Hill, Nangeenan, Burracoppin and Muntadgin Townsites as the secondary level of settlements with the Shire.</p> <p>Discourage settlement of Nukarni Townsite that would require provision of community and service infrastructure currently unavailable. Promote use and development to support the rural economy.</p>	<p>Maintain a variety of compatible land use and development including settlement, community and commercial services and highway and rural industry within the core areas of the Hines Hill, Nangeenan, Burracoppin and Muntadgin Townsites.</p> <p>Recognise the existing freight depot in the Nangeenan Townsite.</p>	<p>Designate the core areas of the Hines Hill, Nangeenan, Burracoppin and Muntadgin Townsites for mixed-use development.</p> <p>Designate land used as a freight depot in the Nangeenan townsite for light industry.</p>
<p>Promote the super school initiative of the Wheatbelt Development Commission.</p>	<p>Support the continuation and diversification of educational services within the Merredin townsite in accordance with the 'super school' initiative.</p>	<p>Designate the existing Merredin high school site for education with appropriate symbols to accommodate the 'super school' uses of kindergarten, primary and high school and technical school in the new scheme.</p>

7.0 IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING AND REVIEW

7.1 Implementation Monitoring and Review

The dynamic nature of planning and development in the Shire of Merredin requires that the LPS be subject to monitoring and review. The information gaps and further research needs identified in the LPS should be pursued. Further, the LPS will need to be reviewed in the light of changes to State Government policy, local priorities and visions.

Further monitoring and review will also focus on the success or otherwise of achieving the aims of the LPS and how well they have facilitated orderly and proper planning in the Shire of Merredin.

It is recommended that the LPS be reviewed every 5 years to coincide with the Shire of Merredin's town planning scheme review.

In order to implement the LPS the following procedures are put forward:

1. Forward the LPS to the Western Australian Planning Commission for certification in accordance with the Town Planning Amendment Regulations 1999.
2. Endorse the LPS for a 6 weeks public comment period to allow the community, industry groups and governmental agencies to make comment.
3. In light of comments received review the LPS and modify accordingly.
4. Adopt the LPS as the principle strategic planning instrument to guide landuse and development.
5. Submit a copy of the LPS to the Western Australian Planning Commission for its endorsement.
6. Incorporate landuse, zoning, reservation and other provision identified in the LPS into the new Shire of Merredin town-planning scheme.
7. Prioritise strategies and actions requiring resources to implement and budget accordingly and incorporate strategies from the Shire of Merredin Strategic Plan.
8. Carry out required investigations or preparation of plans on a needs basis prior to development and subdivision.
9. Review the LPS on a needs basis, or every 5 years.

The above procedures should ensure that the Strategy remains relevant to the Shire, the community, and business interests and facilitates orderly and proper planning.

8.0 REFERENCES AND RESOURCE MATERIAL

Australian Bureau of Statistics Census Data, 1986, 1991, 2001.

Department of Commerce and Trade, 'Regional Trends and Indicators Shire of Merredin', June 2001, Department of Commerce and Trade, East Perth, June 2001.

Draft Statement of Planning Policy No. 3 – Urban Growth and Settlement, Western Australian Planning Commission, April 2005

Fieldman Planning Consultants, 'Shire of Merredin District Scheme Report', West Perth, 1981.

Merredin Townsite Salinity Management Strategy Merredin Land Conservation District Committee, May 2002

National Resource Management Priorities and Strategic Plan for the Merredin Shire Western Australia, Merredin Land Conservation District Committee, 2004

Planning Scheme, 'Western Australian Planning Commission' Manual, Perth, July 2000.

Shire of Merredin, 'Municipal Inventory', Shire of Merredin, April 1999.

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Statement of Planning Policy No 4 – State Industrial Buffer Policy, Western Australian Planning Commission, May 1997

Statement of Planning Policy No. 11 – Agricultural and Rural Land Use Planning, March 2002

State Planning Strategy, 'Western Australian Planning Commission' Manual, Perth, December 1997.

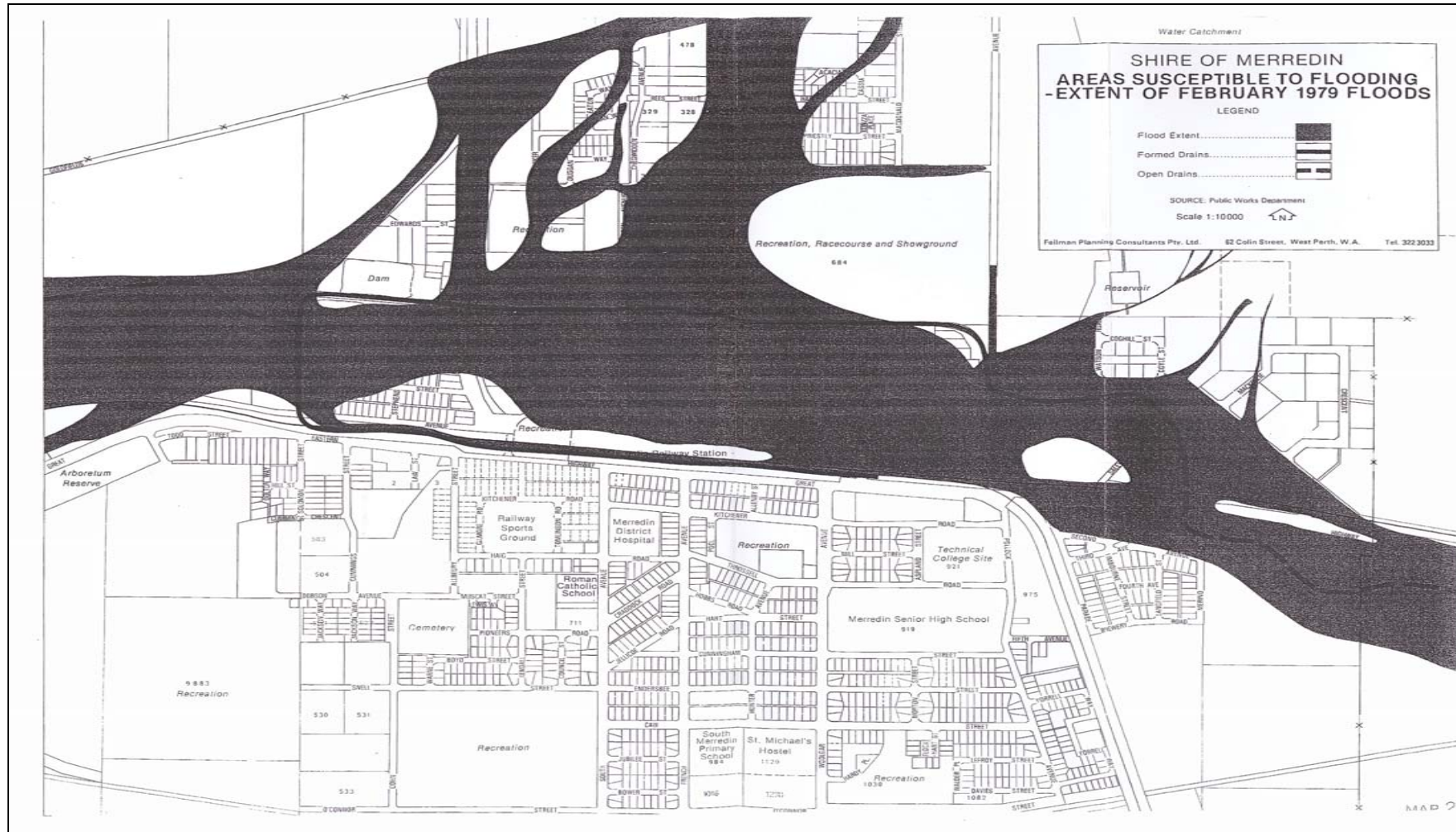
Western Australian Planning Commission, 'Population Report No. 4', October 2000.

Western Australian Planning Commission, 'The Wheatbelt Regional Transport Strategy' (WRTS), October 2001

APPENDIX 1

Areas Susceptible To Flooding Extent of February 1979 Floods

APPENDIX 1 AREAS SUSCEPTIBLE TO FLOODING EXTENT OF FEBRUARY 1979 FLOODS



ADVERTISING

The Shire of Merredin Local Planning Strategy certified for advertising on 12 July 2005.

Signed for and on behalf of the Western Australian Planning Commission

an officer of the Commission duly authorised by the Commission

Witness

Date _____
27 December 2007

ENDORSEMENT

The Shire of Merredin hereby endorses the Local Planning Strategy, at the Ordinary meeting of the Council held on the 20th day of March 2007.

SHIRE PRESIDENT

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Endorsed by the Western Australian Planning Commission on 14 August 2007.

an officer of the Commission duly authorised by the Commission

Witness

Date _____
27 December 2007
