



South Gippsland
Shire Council

Come for the beauty, Stay for the lifestyle

Leongatha Structure Plan

June 2008

Prepared by the South Gippsland Shire Council in
collaboration with Planning by Design

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1. Introduction

This Structure Plan is designed to provide a strategic framework for the future physical development of Leongatha over the next 20 years. It also provides a broader assessment of opportunities and issues that will need to be considered for the time period beyond the 20 year horizon. The plan provides the foundation for the pursuit of more detailed statutory planning provisions, amendments to the Planning Scheme as well as design and development initiatives, for specific areas and activities in the town. It will also guide Council policies, programs and initiatives relating to future community, economic, social, environmental, and physical initiatives.

The Structure Plan identifies a future vision for the town that captures the community's objectives and aspirations for Leongatha. It also provides planning, design or development objectives to be pursued in order to attain the vision. The plan will identify a sustainable population growth for Leongatha, as well as key roles and functions for the town to fulfil in order to meet the needs of its local community and the broader population of the region.

The Structure Plan acknowledges the extent of work that the Leongatha community has already undertaken through the "Planning for Real" initiative, identifying their future aspirations, goals and objectives and specific actions. It aims to build upon this work and contribute to the implementation of the community objectives by creating an effective, integrated and coordinated vehicle through which to pursue them.

The plan has been prepared by Planning by Design (planning consultants) under the direction of the South Gippsland Shire Council, Strategic Planning Unit. Input has been received and provided from all other relevant Council departments, government agencies, authorities and infrastructure providers, and the Leongatha community.

The Local Structure Plan identifies:

- Areas in and around Leongatha that are considered suitable for future residential, industrial and commercial development.
- Existing areas of Leongatha where opportunity exists to change or intensify development.
- Current and future pedestrian, cycle, traffic and transport links, routes and facilities.
- Areas of environmental importance.
- Leongatha's Town Centre and the specific issues and opportunities it faces, recognising the critical and ongoing social, economic and environmental roles that the Town Centre will have in the future of Leongatha.

It is important to note that the Structure Plan itself will not provide all the details of how these initiatives will be pursued. This will be the subject of future more detailed projects undertaken as part of its ongoing implementation.

2. Leongatha now and into the future

2.1 *Introduction to Leongatha.*

With a current population of 4,667, Leongatha is the largest urban settlement in the South Gippsland Shire. It is a major business, industry, education, leisure, recreation, entertainment, health, community and civic centre for the region. Leongatha is a major centre for the dairy industry located at the intersection of the Bass Highway, Strzelecki Highway and the South Gippsland Highway amidst the rolling hills of South Gippsland, surrounded by fertile agricultural land.

Population projections for Leongatha indicate an anticipated annual population growth rate, from 2006 to 2026 varying between 1.2 % in 2006 and 2.0% in 2011. This will see the town with an estimated population of 6,850 in 2026, an increase of 2,183 over the 2006 figure.

This population increase, and increases in the population of the larger region that Leongatha services will create demand by 2026 for:

- 1,300 Additional new dwellings (average 65 per annum).
- 5Ha of town centre retail/commercial activity and 8Ha of 'Out of Centre' (Bulky goods retailing) to the year 2020.
- 34Ha of land required for future urban residential development.
- 32.5 Ha of land required for future industrial facilities.

(Figures from Essential Economics 2004 & 2007)

2.2 *Future Roles and Functions for Leongatha*

With an anticipated residential population of 6,820 in the year 2026, Leongatha will have the capacity to maintain its current status and extend its roles as:

- An attractive, sustainable and vibrant residential location in the heart of South Gippsland.
- A dairy industry centre of state significance.
- A regional industrial service centre.
- A regional health centre.
- Headquarters for the South Gippsland Shire Council.
- A regional transport hub with road and rail (long-term) connections to Melbourne and Gippsland and air connections to other regional centres.
- A regional community services and facilities hub.
- A regional education, entertainment and recreation centre.
- A regional retail and business centre.
- A tourist service centre.

2.3 Driving Principles and Future Visions

In order for Leongatha to fulfil these roles it will be necessary to identify a “preferred future” for the town and maintain principles, which will influence the way Leongatha develops.

Leongatha in the year 2026 will:

- Be a thriving sustainable urban centre where the rural characteristics, and compactness have been retained and are valued.
- Have a strong and distinctive sense of community pride that reflects the rich cultural, social and environmental heritage of the town.
- Have a vibrant Town Centre that is the primary location for business, retail, entertainment and community activities, providing a full range of goods services and facilities for the local and regional populations, with all facilities within easy walking distance of Bair and McCartin Streets.
- Be recognised as a learning centre with state of the art education and training facilities provided in the education precinct adjoining Ogilvy Street.
- Provide its community with a comprehensive range of health, leisure, recreation and social facilities.
- Provide residential accommodation for all age groups, family types and lifestyles.
- Have strong transport linkages to Melbourne and Gippsland.
- Be a community where all residents have access to quality pedestrian and cycle networks, which link them to all key services and facilities.
- Be an attractive and vibrant centre where tourists choose to stop and spend time.
- Have a sustainable economy providing employment for the local community as well as the region.
- Be a community that minimises energy requirements and is committed to environmentally sustainable development principles.

It is also important to consider that Leongatha will never be “completed”. Its location and environmental attributes will make it an attractive urban settlement far beyond 2026. With this in mind it is essential that opportunities for further, long term development, investment and activity be provided for in the Structure Plan.

2.4 *Issues and opportunities*

Key issues identified by the community and other agencies during the preparation of this plan were:

- The immediate need to establish a highway by-pass of the Town Centre.
- The need to provide direct access for heavy vehicles to the industrial areas, from the South Gippsland Highway at the western approaches to Leongatha.
- To immediately identify and facilitate the establishment of a preferred area for bulky goods on the South Gippsland Highway to the south of Leongatha.
- To recognise and protect the role of the Leongatha Town Centre as the location for retail, commercial, civic, community and entertainment, and tourism facilities in the town and ensure that adequate land is available within the Town Centre to accommodate future activity and development.
- To recognise the existing industrial areas to the north of the town as the location for industrial activities and to ensure that adequate capacity exists to accommodate the future industrial requirements of Leongatha.
- To ensure that adequate areas of appropriately located urban residential land are available to accommodate future population growth.
- To ensure that adequate areas of appropriately located rural residential land, primarily to the south of the existing urban areas are available to accommodate future population growth.
- To enhance and maintain the natural environment of the Coalition Creek and associated watercourses and floodplains to the east of the town, allowing this area to provide a natural boundary for urban growth of the town in an easterly direction.
- To recognise the importance of the Education and Training precinct in the eastern part of the town.
- To ensure that all future development is sustainable in terms of water, physical infrastructure services, community and social services, has the capacity to be accessed by all people and can be effectively linked to existing areas and facilities.
- The impact of the Draft Victorian Coastal Strategy, which nominates Leongatha as a centre for future regional growth.

3. Structure Plan Themes

3.1 *Future Development and Activity in the town*

3.1.1 Residential

Relevant issues and information

There are currently 210 vacant residential lots in a Residential 1 Zone (R1Z) available for future development. There are a further 190 lots which have received planning permits. An additional 33Ha of vacant, unsubdivided, R1Z land in Leongatha could create a further 330 allotments.

This indicates that if all available R1Z land is suitable for development, there will be an adequate supply of R1Z land to meet Leongatha's needs until 2016. Between 2016 and 2026 it is estimated that there will be a demand for an additional 38Ha of R1Z land.

The major opportunities for future broad scale urban density residential development, beyond the currently urban zoned areas of Leongatha, appears to be to the south of the town, between the Rail Trail and the South Gippsland Highway.

The provision of housing for retired and ageing will be a significant factor over the next 20 years. This type of residential development should be preferably located in areas with suitable topography and easy access to the Town Centre, social and community facilities.

Assessment of the lower density residential supply, including the new Boags Road Estate of 54 allotments, indicates that current availability will satisfy demand for the next 7 years. Projected growth through to 2021 would require an additional 14 Ha of land suitable for Low-Density Residential Development.

The Victorian Coastal Strategy released by the State Government in November 2007 identifies Leongatha as a major regional growth area. This may produce additional demand for residential accommodation and raise the current population projections. It is considered that sufficient land has been identified in the Structure Plan to accommodate this eventuality and it may result in the earlier rezoning of future residential areas than previously forecast.

Objectives

- To ensure that there is sufficient amount of appropriately located and zoned land to meet the expectations of current and future residents of Leongatha including those who wish to live close to the Town Centre and those who wish to live in a lower density residential development further from the Town Centre.

- To ensure that all future residential development is well connected to existing residential areas, the Town Centre and other key facilities and services in the town.

Strategies

1. Monitor the availability and development of residential land, and rezone appropriate areas identified in the Structure Plan to maintain a supply to meet 10 years of anticipated residential demand, catering both for residents seeking urban or sustainable rural residential lifestyles.
2. Prefer higher density residential development with two or more dwellings on an urban residential site, on sites within a 400m radius of the Town Centre.
3. Require the preparation of Outline Development Plans for all residential subdivisions to ensure that the design of new estates relate to the existing access and infrastructure systems, protect and retain existing vegetation and natural features and will enable future development stages to occur in logical and efficient manners.
4. Ensure that residential subdivision occurs in a logical and contiguous fashion with clear linkages to existing residential areas, road infrastructure, services, pedestrian and cycle access ways.
5. Give preference to development of existing R1Z areas prior to the rezoning of rural land for residential purposes.
6. Ensure that rural residential subdivisions are environmentally sustainable, self sufficient in regards to infrastructure, services, drainage and waste disposal.
7. Ensure that rural residential development and subdivisions will not disrupt or restrict existing agricultural and rural activities from operating and legitimately expanding.
8. Ensure that residential subdivision proceeds in a fashion that recognises and protects existing environmental features, large stands of trees, native vegetation areas, native animal habitats and movement corridors, water courses and drainage areas and provides appropriate interfaces with public land and rural activities.
9. Ensure that the staging of future subdivision proceeds in an efficient and logical manner and rezoning and subdivision approvals have regard to the locations relative proximity to, and linkages with, the Town Centre and its capacity to integrate with existing services, facilities and established residential areas.
10. Consider specific initiatives that accord with the strategies for the following areas (see Structure Plan map):

Plan ref	Description	Comments
A	Current Farming zoned land between Rail Trail and South Gippsland Highway, south of the Leongatha Hospital.	Vacant land to the south of current urban residential area providing significant opportunity for future urban residential development. Urban development should commence at northern edge to integrate with existing urban development. Development adjoining Simons Lane is proposed as rural residential to match existing

		development to the south. A buffer area should also be established between the residential areas and the proposed Business 4 Zone adjacent to the South Gippsland Highway.
B	Current Farming zoned land on southern edge of the town, east of South Gippsland Highway.	Vacant land located between existing residential areas and the floodplains of the Coalition Creek. Urban development should commence from the north, integrated with existing residential areas off Carr Avenue. Development adjoining Boags Road is proposed as rural residential to match existing development to the south.
C	Current Farming zoned land on the eastern edge of the town, south of Parr Street.	Vacant land located between existing residential areas and the floodplains of the Coalition Creek. Urban development should commence from the west integrated with existing residential areas off Parr Street.
D	Current Farming zoned land on the eastern edge of town adjacent to Education precinct.	Vacant land between existing residential areas and the floodplains of the Coalition Creek. Urban development should commence from the west integrated with existing residential areas off Chamberland Drive.
E	Current Farming zoned land on the western edge of town, south of Shingler Street	Vacant land adjacent to existing urban edge of Leongatha. Development should commence from eastern edge and integrate with existing residential areas.
F	Current Farming zoned land south of Bazley Street.	Vacant generally low lying land with some capacity for low density residential development providing drainage (potential inundation) and waste disposal issues can be addressed. Development should commence from its northern edge.
H	Current farming zoned land south of cemetery and west of Leongatha- Inverloch Road.	Vacant rural land with some capacity for rural residential development commencing initially from the northern edge. Proximity to waste treatment plant will provide some constraints on development in the vicinity of the plant.
N	Current low density residential zoned land east of Brown Street, bounded by Higg Street, Begg Street and Gibson Street.	Partially developed area that may have potential for rezoning to facilitate urban density residential development.

3.1.2 Retail Development

Relevant issues and information

Essential Economics undertook an assessment of business and commercial land requirements for Leongatha for the Council in June 2004.

The report identifies a trade area (for higher level goods) for Leongatha of 27,000 people. As the population of Leongatha was estimated at the time of the study to be in the order of 4,500, this clearly establishes a strong regional retail role for the town.

The Essential Economics report indicates a requirement of an additional 13,000sqm (1.3Ha) of retail floor-space by 2020 in the town centre. Including land for ancillary activities such as car parking, access, buffers, landscaping etc it is estimated that this additional floor-space will generate a requirement of a total area of 5Ha in the town centre. In addition to this Essential Economics estimate that a further 8Ha of land will be required for 'Out of Centre' retail / commercial development (Bulky goods retailing) by the year 2020.

Objectives

- To provide as broad a range of commercial and retail goods, services and facilities for the Leongatha community and visitors in a central, easily accessible and sustainable location.
- To maintain the primacy of the Leongatha Town Centre as the preferred location for all retail activities in the town, other than large format bulky goods retail.
- To provide opportunities for large format, bulky goods retail to occur in high profile locations adjacent to major road network, initially on the western side of the South Gippsland Highway to the south of the town.

Strategies

1. Ensure that adequate and appropriate land is available to accommodate additional retail development within the Town Centre. (Refer to specific strategies identified in the Town Centre section of the Structure Plan).
2. Council to take a facilitation role in the future commercial and retail development of the town through strategic planning and economic development initiatives and strategic use of all resources at Council's disposal.
3. Require retail development proposals that seek to develop outside of the Leongatha Town Centre to clearly demonstrate:

- a) Why it is inappropriate for the development and or activity to occur in the Town Centre or that adequate land to accommodate the facility is not available within the Leongatha Town Centre.
- b) That the development will provide clear benefit to the Leongatha community and will not have a detrimental impact on the economic, social or cultural viability of the Town Centre.
4. Review the zoning of existing commercial areas beyond of the Town Centre to discourage development and activity that could be accommodated in the Town Centre.
5. Pursue specific initiatives to facilitate future commercial activity and development that accord with these strategies in following locations (see Structure Plan map):

Plan ref	Description	Comments
J	Land adjoining the east side of the South Gippsland Highway, south of the existing Residential Zone	<p>Investigate the future development opportunities for this area having regard to the proposed bulky goods precinct opposite, the existing commercial activities and the proposed residential areas further east.</p> <p>The prominent highway frontage, accommodating topography, proximity to the Town Centre and the proposed bulky goods precinct, identify this land as a key development opportunity site for Leongatha - especially for uses that are difficult to locate in town centres and are inappropriate for a bulky good precinct. While demonstrating advantages, the rezoning of this land to support commercial development must appropriately consider residential interface issues, the imperative to avoid inappropriate Town Centre competition and the avoidance of uses that would generate large volume vehicle and pedestrian movement across the highway – to the bulky goods Precinct. Rezoning or broad scale development of the area should be accompanied by an Outline Development Plan to direct the integrated development of the subject area and its surrounds.</p>
P	Land adjoining the west side of the South Gippsland Highway, south of Leongatha Hospital	<p>Land is currently included in the Farming Zone. It has been subject of a recent amendment process, which stalled following the Independent Panel process. It is considered appropriate to support the process to rezoning the land to a Business 4 zone immediately to facilitate bulky goods activities. Specific provisions to establish a minimum floorspace requirement of 1000sqm per premises will be required to ensure that a focus on bulky goods activities, not appropriate for location in the town centre, is maintained. Activities will need to be regulated to prevent this location competing inappropriately with the Leongatha Town Centre. It</p>

		should not accommodate activities suited to the Town Centre such as cinemas, food retailing, tourism services and facilities.
K	Land adjoining the western boundary of the rail trail south of Bazley Street.	Investigate the future development opportunities for this area having regard for its proximity to the Town Centre and the Rail Trail which could provide potential for some form of commercial or tourism related activity that can cope with drainage and environmental issues. It is currently zoned Farming and contains some low-lying areas, which will restrict future development.
L	Land between the industrial estate and residential areas, adjoining Horn Street and Watson Road.	Investigate the future use of this land. It is currently included in a PPR zone and acts as a buffer between industrial zone and residential zone. It is currently used for a mixture of recreation and leisure activities on an informal and interim basis.

3.1.3 Commercial Office development

Relevant issues and information

The Essential Economics report identifies the need for an additional 5,200sqm of commercial offices within the Town Centre by 2020. If a car-parking rate of 3.5 spaces per 100sqm is applied, the land requirement grows to 10,660sqm or 1.07Ha. It is essential that all major commercial offices are located within the Town Centre.

Objective

To ensure that adequate land and suitable premises are available within the Leongatha Town Centre to accommodate future demand for commercial office space.

Strategies

1. Ensure that opportunities for commercial office accommodation is considered as part of any development or redevelopment proposals.
2. Ensure that commercial office proposals in the Town Centre provide active (back of pavement) ground floors and frontages and do not disrupt major retail frontages.

3.1.4 Industrial Development

Relevant issues and information

Leongatha is the main industrial location in South Gippsland with approximately 104.4 Ha of gross industrially zoned land. A major industrial precinct has developed on the northern edge of the town adjacent to the Murray Goulburn dairy manufacturing plant, a significant state dairy complex. The concentration of existing industrial activity in this area of the town, its proximity to the Murray Goulburn complex, the access it enjoys to the major road network, infrastructure and the Saline Outfall pipe facility combine to make the area ideal to serve the future industrial needs of Leongatha and surrounding areas. An assessment of the future demand for industrial development, undertaken as part of the Structure Plan preparation, has indicated that Leongatha will require an additional 30Ha of suitable industrial land to accommodate industrial demand through to 2026. Currently there is 40Ha of vacant industrial zoned land in this area, some of which is subject to development constraints through environmental, topography, infrastructure, accessibility, flooding or drainage issues. Strategic opportunity exists to direct future industrial activity to the west of existing industrially zoned areas, back towards the South Gippsland Highway to the north of the existing recreation reserves. Industrial development in this area could facilitate the establishment of a new access road from the South Gippsland Highway, which would greatly improve access to the industrial area as a whole.

The design and configuration of industrial development to the west of the existing industrial areas will require careful consideration as these areas are visible from the South Gippsland Highway and currently provide a dramatic rural, rolling hills vista which creates an attractive entrance and image for Leongatha.

Objective

To ensure that there is adequate, appropriately located and zoned land available, adjoining the existing industrial precinct, to accommodate the industrial and allied activities required to support the Leongatha community and economy into the future.

Strategies

1. Facilitate and direct future industrial and allied development to areas adjacent to the existing industrial precinct to the north of the town.
2. Require outline development plans to be prepared for future industrial subdivisions to ensure; their integration with existing industrial areas; that an appropriate range of sized industrial allotments are created and that efficient use is made of existing infrastructure.

3. Identify land to the west of the current industrial zone, towards the South Gippsland Highway as the preferred area for future industrial expansion, having regard to the proximity of the recreation reserve and taking account of requirements for its future expansion.
4. Investigate opportunities to create a heavy vehicle access road to the west of the existing industrial precinct and north of the recreation reservations to provide direct access from the South Gippsland Highway to the industrial precinct. Ensure that the heavy vehicle access road is identified in the outline development plans for industrial subdivision of the land that the access route traverses, and that the construction of the road occurs as land is subdivided and developed. Should (new) road access across the rail reserve be unachievable, continuous and direct heavy vehicle access from Hughes Street to Wild Dog Valley Road is to be promoted.
5. Prepare a Design and Development Overlay to ensure that the design and development and configuration of areas to the west of the existing industrial precinct reflect the rural environment and minimise the visual impact of development on the existing rural vista from the South Gippsland Highway.
6. Consider specific proposals that accord with the strategies, in the following locations (see Structure Plan map):

Plan ref	Description	Comments
G	Farming zoned land between the existing industrial zoned area and the South Gippsland Highway adjacent to the Recreation reserves.	This area has been identified as the major future industrial development area for Leongatha. Development of land for industrial purposes should commence at the eastern or western ends of the area and facilitate the provision of the heavy vehicle access road between the existing Industrial area and the South Gippsland Highway.
M	Industrial zoned land on south side of Young Street	This industrial area is adjacent to the Town Centre and may be more suited to commercial Town Centre activities rather than industrial activities in future. Area's zoning should be reviewed as part of Town Centre project. Existing industrial activities should be acknowledged and accommodated in any review.

3.1.5 Open Space, Recreation, Public land

Relevant issues and information

The Shire has recently prepared an Open Space Strategy and Recreation Strategy for Leongatha that identified the following initiatives relevant for consideration in the Structure Plan:

- Ensure that recreation and open space facilities are provided to serve newly establishing residential areas in the south of the town.
- Develop a network of off-road trails across town using creek and rail corridor and drainage reserves; creating linkages between the key reserves, schools and residential areas.
- Retain a good diversity of different types of spaces including bushlands, wetlands, horticultural spaces, and reserves for sport and social/ family recreation accessible from the town.
- Review the layout of facilities on the Recreation Reserve (see 'S' on Structure Plan Map), and consider a minor expansion.
- Investigate the site options for emerging / expanding sports provision to accommodate a dedicated athletics track, permanent home for equestrian sports and soccer, and the need for expansion/ resurfacing of tennis facilities.
- Work closely with the schools to maximise the opportunities to develop and manage shared sporting, recreation and arts related infrastructure, and enhance sports participation.

Objective

To ensure that the Leongatha community has adequate access to an appropriately located range of recreation and open space facilities and that necessary public land in and around the town is maintained and protected.

Strategies

1. Implement the recommendations of the Open Space Strategy and Recreation Strategy 2007.
2. Ensure that future access initiatives and development adjoining the Leongatha Recreation Reserve (see 'S' on Structure Plan Map), does not jeopardise the future expansion of the reserve.
3. Ensure that the preparation of outline development plans for future residential development provides appropriately for recreation and open space provisions.

3.1.6 Health and Education

Relevant issues and information

A key asset to the township of Leongatha is the (ongoing) development of the Leongatha Education Precinct (see 'Q' on the Structure Plan Map). The substantial capital development works provide Leongatha with a strategic advantage that raises the regional profile and significance of the township. While all of the currently planned works are intended to occur within land already in the ownership of the Department of Education, Council should seek to ensure that developments adjoining the site complement the Precinct use.

Leongatha Hospital (see 'R' on the Structure Plan Map) is a leading health care facility in the municipality. While significant development works are currently occurring (assisted care facility under construction), the whole site redevelopment Master Plan currently remains unfunded. The provision of quality health care services is essential to promoting the liveability of regional communities. The funding and redevelopment of the Leongatha Hospital Precinct is an important township priority and Council should assist this process wherever achievable.

Objectives

To support and promote public education and health care services in the township and ensure that future township growth is complementary with, and does not adversely effect, the ongoing provision and improvement of these services.

Strategies

1. Support the ongoing development of the Leongatha Education Precinct as the regions leading public education service provider.
2. Ensure that new residential development in proximity to the Leongatha Education Precinct does not restrict the future expansion potential of the Precinct.
3. Support the redevelopment of health care services at the Leongatha Hospital Precinct.
4. Ensure that developments adjoining and surrounding the Leongatha Hospital Precinct are compatible with, and do not restrict, the operations of the hospital - including helicopter operations.

3.2 Water, Sewerage, Gas and Electricity services.

Relevant issues and information

Water Supply

Water availability and consumption are and will remain to be major factors in the future development of Leongatha. The Shire of South Gippsland is committed to being a “water wise” municipality and establishing sustainable communities throughout the municipality. Water is identified as a key strategic agenda item in the draft South Gippsland Economic Development Strategy.

South Gippsland Water (SGW) has advised that the current shortages of water should not be used as a primary determinant of population growth. The water authority indicates that there is opportunity for Leongatha to continue to grow in line with existing growth rates.

South Gippsland Water advised that Leongatha uses 6 mega litres of water per day, of which approximately 50% is used by Murray Goulburn dairy industry activities. Longer-term water supply prospects are good based on the following factors:

- *Murray Goulburn is to become water self sufficient in 10 years.*
- *The potential capacity of significant flows within the Tarwin River and tributaries.*

The reticulated water system in Leongatha is considered adequate and there are no plans for an upgrade of the facilities in the short-term. Currently there is no significant water recycling programs associated with SGW operations due to cost implications. Infrastructure exists to potentially irrigate the Leongatha Recreation Reserve from the Leongatha Sewerage treatment plant.

Gas and Electricity Provisions

Reticulated natural gas is to be implemented in Leongatha. This is a major step forward for the town. Information provided from the regional gas provider indicates that capacity exists for all new residential and industrial areas to be serviced with natural gas as they are developed.

Current electrical supply is sufficient for the current population, however future expansion will require incremental increases to supply infrastructure. No major problems are anticipated with this expected supply expansion.

Sewerage

South Gippsland Water have advised that the current sewerage infrastructure is adequate and opportunity exists for the system to be extended to service the areas identified for future urban development in the current Structure Plan and Planning Scheme. The sewerage treatment plant, located to the south of the town, off the Bass Highway, requires buffers for sensitive uses and therefore provides an impediment to residential development in that area.

Objective

To ensure that Leongatha develops in a sustainable fashion that will make the most efficient use of available infrastructure and minimise requirements for additional water, sewerage, power or drainage resources and infrastructure, in line with the South Gippsland Shire “water wise” and sustainable communities initiatives.

Strategies

1. Require that ‘Environmentally Sustainable Development’ principles be achieved in all subdivision and development.
2. Prefer residential development that can be developed utilising existing infrastructure.
3. Ensure that development occurs in a logical and incremental fashion to prevent infrastructure services having to cross undeveloped areas in order to reach isolated pockets of development.
4. Encourage the appropriate use of grey water, the installation of water tanks and the use of drought tolerant plants and landscapes throughout the town.

3.3 Access and movement

3.3.1 Vehicular Traffic

Relevant issues and information

The key vehicular traffic issues identified during the structure planning process were, the need for a highway by pass of the Leongatha Town Centre and the need for a direct heavy vehicle access road from the South Gippsland Highway to the Industrial estate. Intersection and pedestrian crossing issues in the Town Centre also require attention.

Objective

To ensure easy and safe vehicular access is provided to, and through, Leongatha catering for the needs of the local community, visitors, travellers, freight and heavy vehicles.

Strategies

1. Pursue the establishment of a highway by pass of the Leongatha Town Centre by diverting traffic from the existing South Gippsland Highway via Hughes Street and Long Street (Refer Leongatha Structure Plan Town Centre enlargement) as per the recommendations of the 'Korumburra and Leongatha Traffic Study'.
2. Investigate opportunities to improve traffic movement at key intersections in the Town Centre.
3. Investigate opportunities to improve pedestrian crossing facilities in the Town Centre.
4. Provide, in conjunction with the subdivision and development of industrial land between the existing industrial estate and the South Gippsland Highway, a heavy vehicle access road between the South Gippsland Highway and the industrial estate.

3.3.2 Pedestrian and cyclists

Relevant issues and information

A town the size of Leongatha should provide safe and secure opportunities for all forms of non-motorised transport. Leongatha is currently not an easy town for pedestrians and cyclists to access. Recent residential development patterns have created numerous isolated residential communities that, whilst being physically close to the Town Centre, are very difficult and circuitous to access from the Town Centre by foot or bicycle. Central Leongatha has an existing network of lanes and rear right of ways. These can greatly assist in facilitating access, movement and linkages and should be maintained wherever possible.

It is important to note that the proposed 'Future Walking / Cycling Connections' routes identified on the Structure Plan map are indicative in their depiction of how areas should be connected. They are not designed to indicate precise locations and do not identify land to be acquired by Council for this purpose.

Objective

To establish Leongatha as a “walkable community” with all key activities being accessible from all residential areas by foot or non motorised transport by providing safe secure and attractive walking and cycling paths that link all parts of the town and will enable and encourage walking and cycling as an alternative to motor vehicles.

Strategies

1. Identify on the Structure Plan, where existing roads or other access opportunities do not exist, indicative locations for safe, secure and attractive pedestrian and cycle paths through the town. Networks should link key features, facilities, schools, sporting and recreation facilities and the Town Centre with all residential areas, hence establishing a Pedestrian and Cycle network for the town.
2. Require all new residential subdivisions to be connected to the pedestrian and cycling network.
3. Provide facilities to secure bicycles at key locations, require bicycle parking to be provided in all new developments.
4. Provide safe, secure and attractive facilities for pedestrians and bicycles on existing roads that link key features and facilities throughout the town.

5. Ensure that pedestrian and cycle ways link with the existing and proposed open space and recreation initiatives as identified in the Recreation and Open Space Strategies.

3.3.3 Railway connections

Relevant issues and information

Leongatha has been fortunate to have, until recently, a passenger rail connection to Melbourne. The existence of the railway reservation and supporting infrastructure represents a significant strategic advantage for Leongatha given energy, sustainability and climate change issues.

The fact that the railway connection has currently been replaced by a bus service, and that the State Government has recently withdrawn its commitment to the short term return of the passenger rail service, should not be seen as an opportunity to remove the railway line, its supporting infrastructure or the railway reservation itself. The opportunity for the resumption of a passenger and/or freight railway connection to Melbourne in the future must be retained.

Traffic management initiatives and opportunities to expand the Town Centre may require the railway station to be relocated. It is essential that the railway station remains within easy walking distance of the Town Centre.

Objective

Continue to lobby for the eventual return of rail services linking Leongatha and Melbourne.

Strategies

1. To ensure that the necessary infrastructure and reservations to enable the provision of passenger rail services to Leongatha are retained.
2. To ensure that future planning and development proposals do not jeopardise the reestablishment of rail services to the town.
3. To ensure that if the existing railway station needs to be relocated to facilitate expansion of the Town Centre or traffic management initiatives, that a new facility is provided within 400 metres of the intersection of Bair Street and McCartin Street.
4. To pursue opportunities for long-term potential for rail access to the industrial estate.

3.4 Natural Environment

Relevant issues and information

The major natural environmental feature of Leongatha is the Coalition Creek and associated tributaries and floodplain to the east of the town. These features provide a natural boundary for the town. Also highly valued are the landscape qualities of the township's location within the rolling hills of South Gippsland.

Objective

To protect and enhance the natural environment of Leongatha and ensure that future development occurs in an ecologically sustainable fashion.

Strategies

1. Restrict inappropriate development and activity in the floodplain areas of the Coalition Creek and its tributaries to the east of the town.

3.5 *Specific locations and features*

3.5.1 Leongatha Town Centre

Relevant issues and information

The Town Centre of Leongatha represents the focal point for all urban activities, services and facilities. Its ongoing viability is fundamental to the overall sustainability of the Leongatha community from a social, environmental and economic perspective.

Essential Economics report has indicated an additional 5Ha is required to accommodate retail and commercial floor space demand up to the year 2020.

The sites identified in the previous Structure Plans have been reviewed as part of this process and the following assessment is made.

It is essential that sufficient suitably zoned land be available to accommodate future Town Centre activities as they arise in order to maintain the role and function of the centre, its status in the region and to ensure that the Leongatha community have access to an appropriate range of goods services and facilities. A review of land currently zoned B1 indicates that the only properties, either vacant or not developed for commercial purposes, suitable to accommodate significant future development are the properties at the intersection of Church Street and Bruce Street, properties at the intersection of Watt and Smith Streets, a vacant block in Bair Street and vacant premises in Bair Street. The area surrounding the Leongatha railway Station, currently zoned PUZ4 is the largest potential development site in the Town Centre and the site that offers the best potential to accommodate additional development that can integrate with and complement the existing retail areas of the town centre. Development of this site is hampered by the (long-term) uncertain future of the railway line and the topography of the site. Whilst these uncertainties remain it is necessary to consider other potential locations for Town Centre expansion.

The 2003 structure plan indicated potential Town Centre expansion areas as follows:

Area 1 (North) - *An area to the north of the Town Centre in multiple ownerships of 1.5Ha with frontages to Bellingham St, Peart St and Michael Place.*

Area 2 (North) - *An area of 1.0Ha in Allison Street to the north of the Town Centre.*

Area 3 (South) - *An area of 3.9Ha in multiple ownerships to the south of the Town Centre with frontages to Ritchie, Church, Bruce, Holt and Young Streets.*

Area 4 Railway Station - *The surplus land in the rail yards. This site is single (public) ownership, has a total area, including the current railway station facilities of 3Ha.*

The Railway Station Site (Area 4) is considered the most appropriate location for major retail expansion, given its connections to the existing Town Centre. The two areas to the north of the Centre (Areas 1 and 2) also appear appropriate as they provide a natural extension of the Town Centre.

Relevant issues and information (continued)

At this stage it is not considered necessary to consider the large scale rezoning of Area 3 to the south of the centre as this could result in further dislocation and fragmentation of the Centre. It may however be appropriate to consider the parts of this area directly adjoining the existing B1Z land in Young Street (currently zoned industrial) and the blocks on the north side of Church Street, which have abuttal to the existing Business 1 Zone and all or some of the properties bounded by Ritchie, Young, Bruce and Church Streets. These precincts are identified on the Structure Plan (Leongatha Town Centre Enlargement) as "future investigation areas". Their future zoning and development should be the subject of a more detailed design and development strategy for the Town Centre prepared in consultation with the property owners.

Car parking in the Town Centre

The availability of car parking in suitable locations within the Town Centre to meet the needs of customers, staff and visitors is critical. The most efficient method of providing car parking for the Leongatha Town Centre is through the provision of large shared car parking areas that can be used to meet the needs of a range of activities over a range of operating hours. Traffic Engineers advise that in large scale shared car-parking areas that parking should be provided at a rate between 3.5 and 4.0 car parking spaces per 100m² of floorspace.

Objective

To maintain the primacy of the Leongatha Town Centre as the location for retail, business, leisure, entertainment community, civic, cultural activities, services and facilities.

Strategies

1. Ensure that the Planning Scheme directs and facilitates the Town Centre as the preferred location for all appropriate retail, social, community, commercial and entertainment facilities.
2. Develop a detailed Physical Framework Plan for the Town Centre to establish future directions for the Centre as a business, social, civic, cultural and transport centre in collaboration with the businesses, property owners and community representatives in order to establish an inclusive and integrated approach to the future design, development, operation and management of the centre. Such a plan should undertake a detailed assessment of the area identified on the Structure Plan as "future Town Centre development investigation areas"
3. Prepare, in collaboration with the Town Centre business community and property owners a "business plan" for the centre that identifies business roles, functions and the ideal business and activity mix for the centre and opportunities to market and manage the centre in a coordinated fashion.

4. Maintain a compact Town Centre with all key features and major retail activities within easy walking distance of the intersection of Bair Street and McCartin Street, building on the 'retail development surrounding landscaped car parking areas' theme that currently successfully operates adjacent to the Safeway / cinema precinct and the IGA precinct.
5. Prepare a development and investment prospectus for the Town Centre that identifies key sites, and development opportunities and provides the investment and development community with essential information they require to develop and invest in the Leongatha Town Centre.
6. Facilitate and promote the appropriate redevelopment of the Railway land in an integrated fashion with Bair Street, as the prioritised commercial expansion area of the Town Centre.
7. Facilitate an integrated approach to the management of the town centre, recognising that the centre will require ongoing support and direction and encourage the business community to work collaboratively towards business development, marketing, promotions, events and the operation of the centre.
8. Pursue opportunities to improve the streetscape of the Town Centre, particularly Bair Street and the Highway approaches to the Town Centre.

3.5.2 Entry Points

Relevant issues and information

The highway entry points to Leongatha are important “image and perception” forming locations providing views and vistas to the rolling hills and reflecting the rural character of the town. As the town expands the impact of development on the appearance of the entry points will need to be carefully considered.

Objective

To ensure that the entry points to Leongatha create a welcoming and attractive impression of the town that reflects the character, heritage and future aspirations of the Leongatha community.

Strategies

1. Review the planning and design guidelines for development at the entry points to the town.
2. Improve the streetscapes at the entry points to the town.
3. Rationalise the signage along the entry points to the town.

3.5.3 Rail Trail

Relevant issues and information

The Rail trail, linking Leongatha Town Centre to southern residential areas of the town and townships further east along the former South Gippsland Railway Line, is an important movement and tourism component of the town. The rail trail will attract tourists and visitors to the town and provides a significant north / south pedestrian linkage through the town.

Objective

To recognise the Rail Trail as an important tourism and access feature for the town, and integrate it into the future development of the town as a pedestrian and cycle link for use by the community as well as tourists and visitors.

Strategies

1. To use the Rail Trail as a central north south pedestrian and cycle spine through Leongatha.
2. To provide pedestrian and cycle access to the Rail Trail from new adjoining residential developments.
3. To improve the awareness of the Leongatha Town Centre as the starting point of the South Gippsland Rail Trail.
4. To use the Rail Trail as an opportunity to market and promote Leongatha.

4. Implementation of the plan

4.1 *Incorporation of the Structure Plan into the Planning Scheme*

The Structure Plan will be incorporated into the Planning Scheme in the Municipal Strategic Statement through the preparation of a Planning Scheme amendment that will introduce a summary page, identifying the key aspects of the plan and provides reference to the Structure plan documents and physical framework plan which captures the essential elements of the Structure Plan. These documents and the Planning Scheme amendment will be produced following the final adoption of the Structure Plan by Council.

4.2 *Further Strategic work.*

Ref	Description
LS1	Feasibility study for heavy vehicle access (northern bypass) to Industrial area.
LS2	Prepare Physical Framework, business plan and development prospectus for the Leongatha Town Centre.
LS3	Strategic investigation of specific site and precincts identified in the Structure Plan.
LS4	Prepare a pedestrian and cycle access strategy for Leongatha in accordance with the Open Space Strategy and Recreation Strategy.

4.3 *Actions.*

Ref	Description
L1	Prepare, following formal Council adoption of the Structure Plan, a Planning Scheme amendment to introduce the driving principles of the Structure Plan into the South Gippsland Planning Scheme.
L2	Commence the establishment of the Town Centre highway traffic bypass.
L3	Facilitate the rezoning of land for Bulky goods precinct on the western side of the South Gippsland Highway in accordance with the Structure Plan recommendations.
L4	Prepare Physical Framework Plan, business plan and development prospectus for the Leongatha Town Centre.
L5	Pursue the redevelopment of the Leongatha Rail Yards in accordance with the recommendations of the Structure Plan.