



THE GREAT OCEAN ROAD REGION  
LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT STUDY

**plān i' spherē** [ // urban strategy planners ]

MUNICIPAL TOOLKIT  
SURF COAST SHIRE

FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT | SEPTEMBER 2003





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## 1. Introduction

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

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

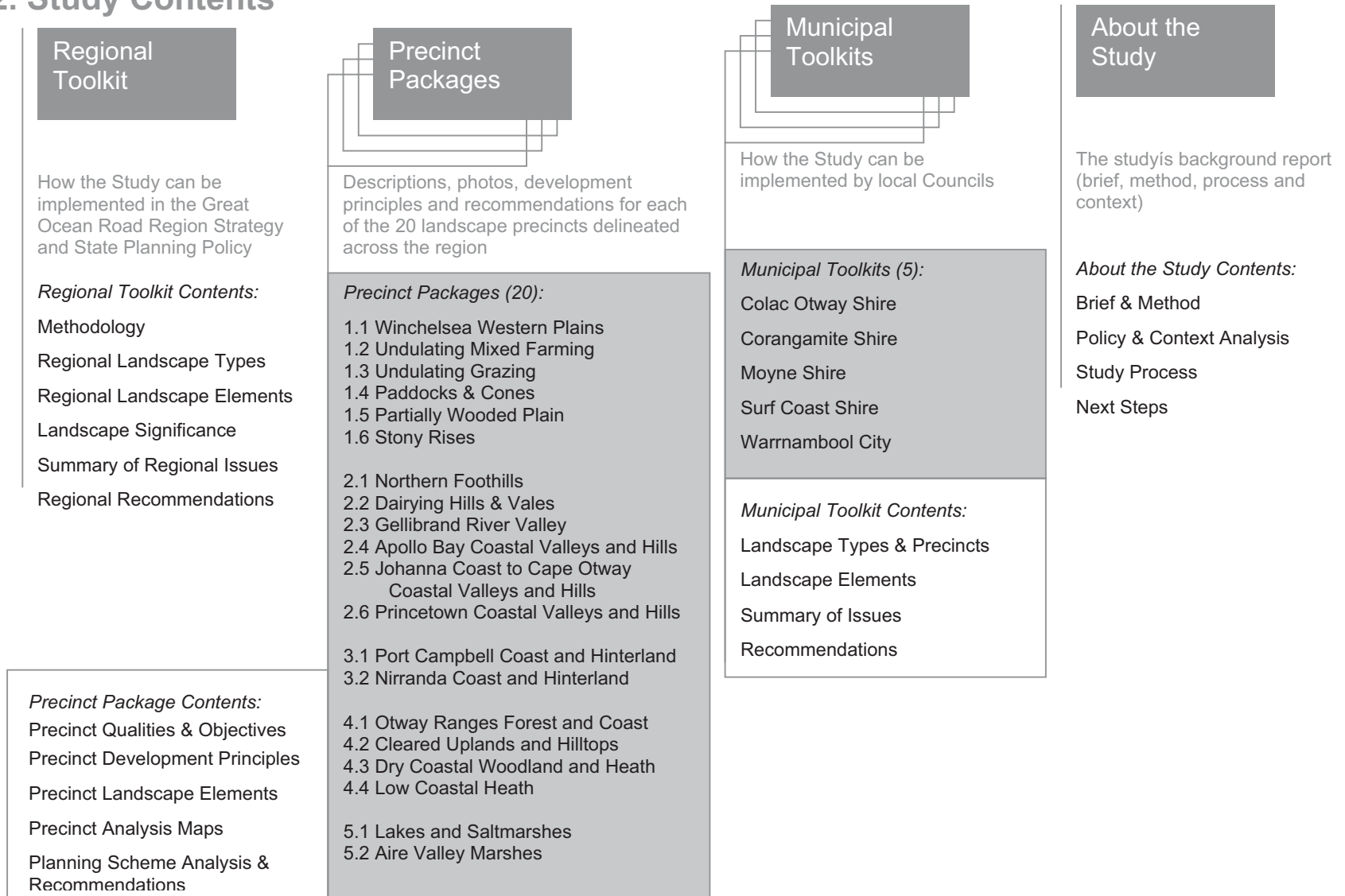
The landscape character assessment was undertaken as part of the overall Great Ocean Road Region Strategy, and has devised a sound and consistent methodology for assessing the character of landscapes and the way in which various types of development can be managed in different landscape types.

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

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



## 2. Study Contents





### 3. Landscape Types and Precincts in Surf Coast

The Surf Coast Shire is located at the eastern end of the Study Area, bounded by the Princes Highway to the north and the Great Ocean Road coastline to the south.

The landscape of the Shire within the Study area is characterised by large areas of Otway Forest, containing dense, tall forest cover that graduates to low heathland vegetation at the coast. The coastal areas of the Shire are characterised by rugged sea cliffs and dune backed surf beaches, including the Great Ocean Road landmark destination of Bells Beach. The northern foothills of the Otway Ranges are associated with undulating topography, overlaid with a patchwork of paddocks and shelter belts. Further north and extending to the Princes Highway is a relatively flat landscape associated with the Western Plains. Stands of remnant vegetation exist throughout. At the very western end of the Shire is an area of localised flatlands associated with the lakes and saltmarshes near Bremlea.

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

#### Western Plains, Cones and Lakes (1.1 – 1.6)

##### 1.1 Winchelsea Western Plains

##### 1.2 Undulating Mixed Farming

##### 1.3 Undulating Grazing (part)

#### Otway Foothills, Valleys and Uplands (2.1 – 2.6)

##### 2.1 Northern Foothills (part)

#### Otway Forests and Coast (4.1 – 4.4)

##### 4.1 Otway Ranges Forest and Coast (part)

##### 4.3 Dry Coastal Woodland and Heath

##### 4.4 Low Coastal Heath

#### Localised Flatlands (5.1 – 5.2)

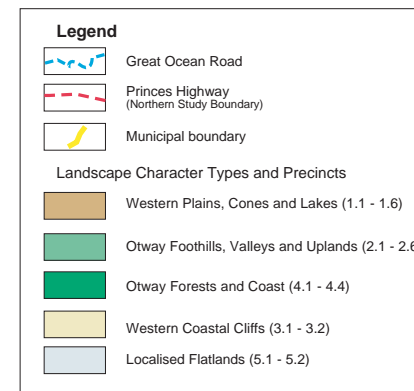
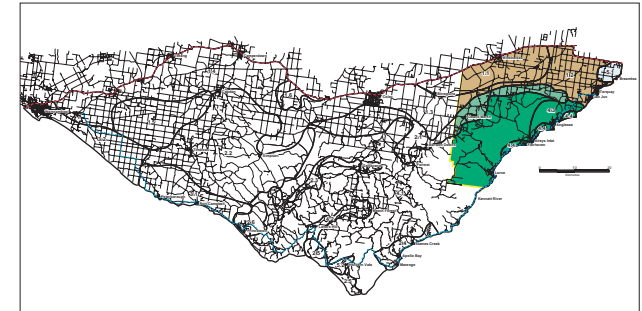
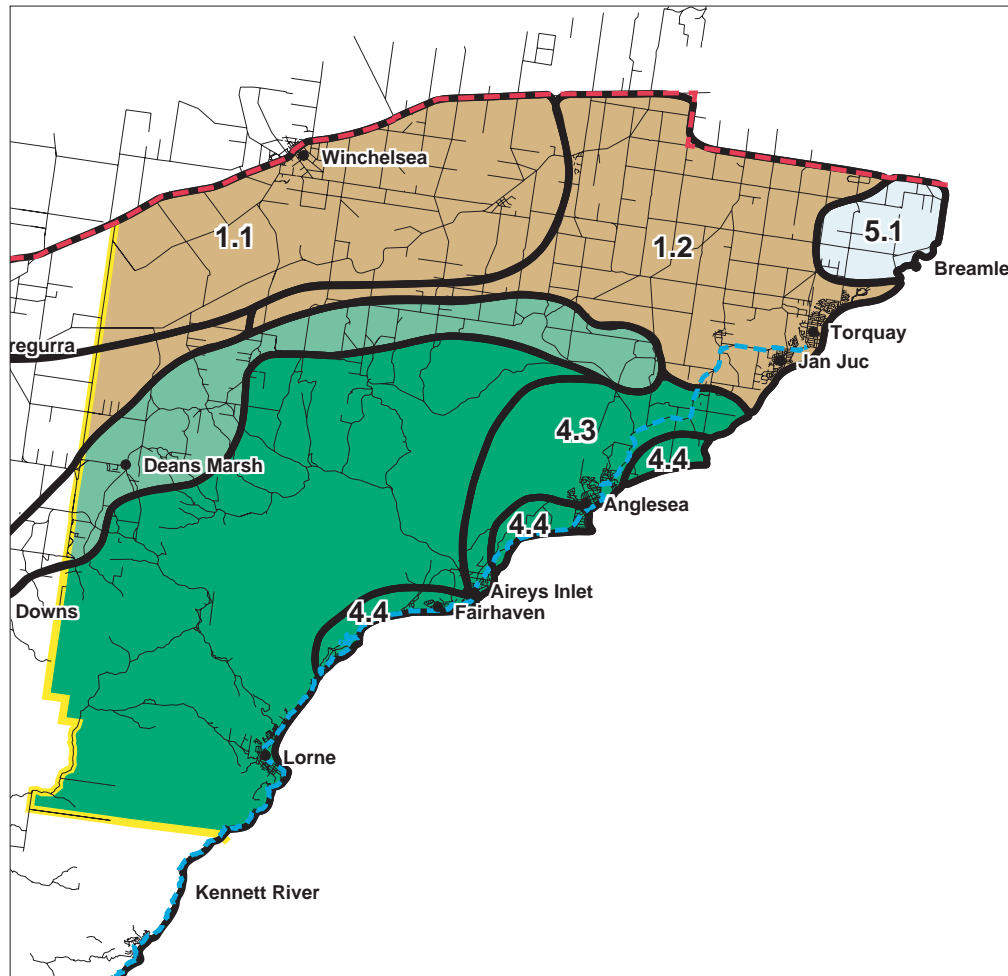
##### 5.1 Lakes and Saltmarshes

### Implications for Local Policy

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



## Landscape Types and Precincts





## 4. Landscape Elements in Surf Coast

### Townships

Townships within the Surf Coast Shire vary in their settings and landscape character. A coastal town such as Anglesea, for instance, is defined by its setting at the foot of the Otway Ranges, overlooking the ocean. Buildings are often highly visible due to the low, coastal heath and lack of substantial vegetation. In contrast, Deans Marsh is set among the rolling hills and valleys of the northern Otway foothills, where buildings appear tucked into the landscape and are often screened by bushy vegetation.

The landscape character of the following Surf Coast townships is described in the [Precinct Landscape Elements](#) section of the relevant [Precinct Package](#):

- Winchelsea (Precinct 1.1)
- Torquay (Precinct 1.2)
- Jan Juc (Precinct 1.2)
- Anglesea (Precinct 4.3)
- Aireys Inlet (Precinct 4.3)
- Fairhaven (Precinct 4.4)
- Moggs Creek (Precinct 4.4)
- Lorne (Precinct 4.1)
- Deans Marsh (Precinct 2.1)

Key issues in Surf Coast townships include ribbon development between settlements, particularly in coastal areas along the Great Ocean Road. . It is important to contain the urban form of townships, and for the natural landscape to dominate beyond the township edge. Township edges may vary in the way they interface with the natural landscape. It may be appropriate that the built form edges of some townships are clearly demarcated, while others are 'softer' comprising a combination of buildings and vegetation. If not appropriately designed and integrated with the landscape, development on the

periphery of settlements, often in low density residential areas, can 'blur' the urban boundary of townships with development spilling into the natural landscape. Signage clutter along the main road into a township can have the same negative visual effect.

Another key issue is the visual dominance of buildings located on hill faces on the periphery of townships such as Torquay. This is associated with the clearing of vegetation and multiple storey elevations that result from buildings having no relationship to their topographical setting. Also in coastal locations, the emergence of 'heavy' urban or suburban building forms is a key issue where previously the casual, 'beachside' character was derived from light, simple buildings with articulated forms and a mix of materials set among coastal heath.

### Edges

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

There are many edges within the Surf Coast landscape, including the following that are described in the [Precinct Landscape Elements](#) section of the [Precinct Packages](#):

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





- Road corridors creating edges

## Corridors

Main road corridors and key tourist routes that pass through the Study Area in Surf Coast include the Great Ocean Road and the Princes Highway. Other key tourist routes include the road to Bells Beach and other routes that access the Otway Forest. The road corridors throughout the Shire pass through different landscape types and precincts, resulting in a variety of landscape experiences and scenery throughout the journey. Some of these journeys are described in the [Precinct Landscape Elements](#) section of the [Precinct Packages](#).

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

The assessment and management of development that can be seen from main road corridors is therefore an important issue in the Shire. Particular types of development for which Development Principles have been prepared in relation to this issue include timber plantations adjacent to main roads, development on highly visible hill faces and ridges, ribbon development and low density development on township fringes.

## Key Views

There are many key viewing locations within the Shire that are frequented by tourists and visitors to the Region, and feature on postcards from the Great Ocean Road. These are predominantly panoramic coastal views and vary from colourful bluffs and dune backed beaches to dramatic sandstone cliffs and wild, isolated ocean scenery.

Views from the following key locations in Surf Coast are described in the [Precinct Landscape Elements](#) section of the relevant [Precinct Package](#):

- Bells Beach South (Precinct 1.2)
- Bird Rock Lookout (Precinct 1.2)
- Anglesea Scenic Lookout (Precinct 4.3)
- Point Addis (Precinct 4.4)
- Urquart Bluff (Precinct 4.4)
- Cinema Point (Precinct 4.4)

These key viewing locations are shown on the Surf Coast [Key Views Map](#) on page 8.

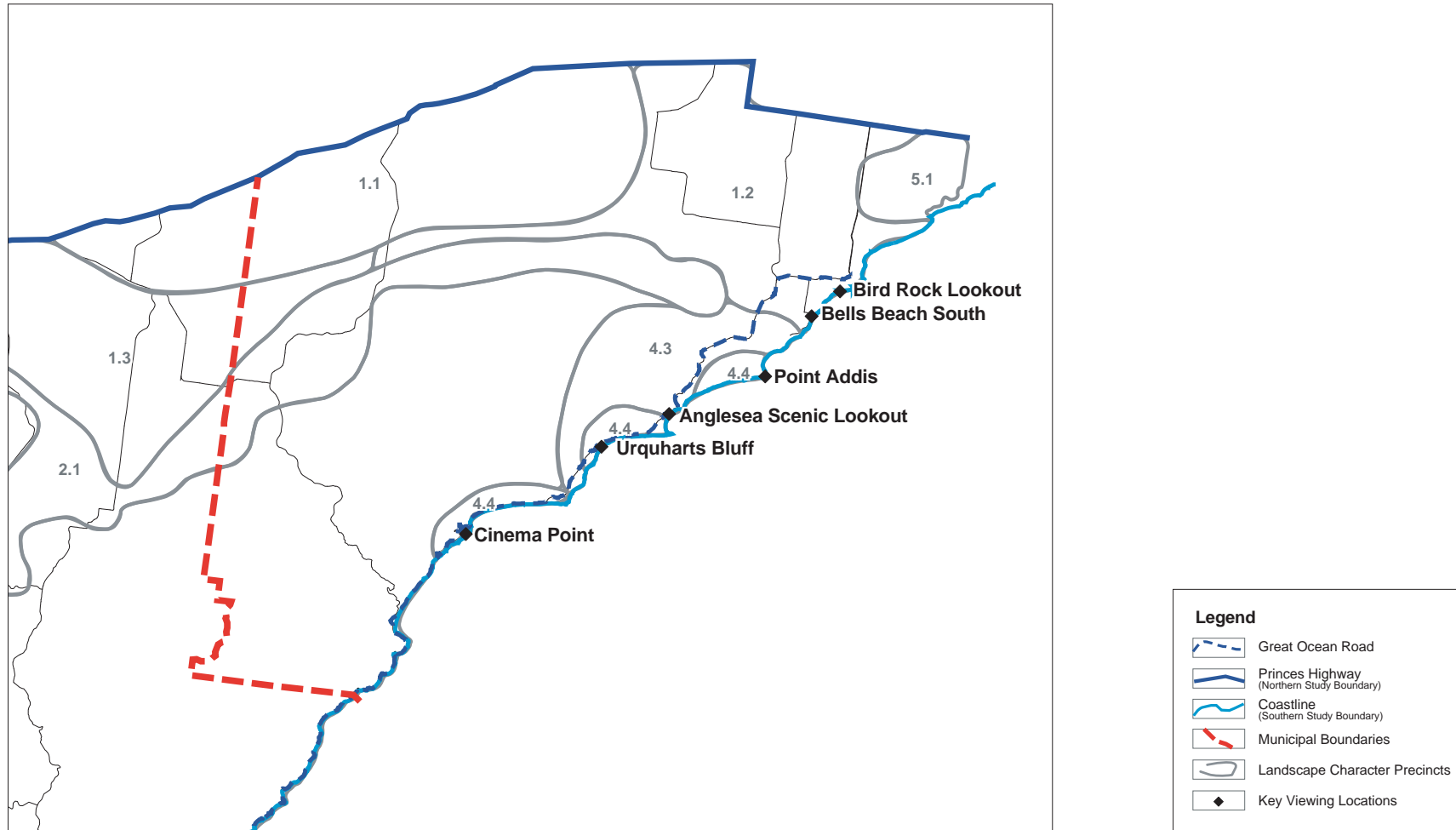
The protection and management of views from popular and established viewing locations is a key issue within the Shire. It is very important, in most instances, to retain the dominance of the natural landscape from these key viewing points, and to ensure that any new development is assessed for its impact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

## Implications for Local Policy

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



## Key Views





## 5. Summary of Surf Coast Issues

### Development Pressures

Development pressure has increased markedly over the last few years all along the coast, on any land that is zoned and available for development. The majority of new development is focussed in and around townships, however development is also occurring between towns on isolated lots or within old small lot subdivisions. Often these latter developments are highly visible and on steep sites inappropriate for development.

Some development that has occurred within towns is visible from a distance. Often these developments are large dwellings or tourist facilities designed to maximise the sea views. Design features that add to the visual dominance of the buildings include roof structures that exceed the predominant tree canopy line, incompatible or highly dominant colours, or vegetation removal around the building sometimes for fire protection.

There is some pressure in the coastal hinterland for wind farms, including smaller installations or individual farms of 1 or 2 turbines. The development of telecommunication towers is an on-going issue, which can in some instances require careful siting or may be inappropriate in particular view sheds.

There are occasional proposals for timber plantations (monoculture) inland from the coast. Also inland, broiler sheds are sometimes a controversial issue. However these are relatively low lying buildings that can often be screened with landscaping.

### Planning Permit Controls

#### Zones

Much of the coastal land within Surf Coast Shire is zoned Public Conservation and Resource, with Public Park and Recreation Zone along the coastal fringe. In these zones a permit is required for most uses and development unless carried out by or on behalf of a public land manager, or shown within an Incorporated Plan.

Townships are primarily zoned Residential 1, while smaller settlements and older subdivisions between towns are within the Environmental Rural Zone. There are also large areas of land on the outskirts of Torquay and Jan Juc within the Low Density Residential Zone.

In the Residential 1 zone standard requirements must be met, including the state-wide ResCode provisions. Without additional design or neighbourhood character guidelines some development within these areas can be inappropriate to the coastal character, and this needs to be carefully managed.

However a more pressing issue, in terms of this study, relates to development at the fringes of towns and between towns, where development has a tendency to spread, sometimes ribbon-like, along the major roads, and in some cases dominate the views and vistas along the coast in particular. The new development behind Jan Juc is an example of development that has completely transformed the entry/exit from the town, is highly visible and dense. While residential development is a legitimate use of the land and response to the extreme pressures on the coast for additional housing, the form of developments of this type needs to be carefully managed to ensure that the landscape character of the area and the setting of the town is not compromised. In addition, visual separation between settlements is an intrinsic element of the landscape character of the coast that should not be compromised by unchecked or visually prominent development between towns.



In the Environmental Rural Zone most use and development, and all dwellings and earthworks require a permit, with the key purpose of the zone being to conserve environmental sensitivity and bio-diversity. Dwellings are only allowable where adequate infrastructure services are provided. The schedule to the Zone for the Shire lists the environmental outcomes for various areas of the Shire including the Great Ocean Road hinterland and Otways and hinterland, as well as a minimum lot size of 60 hectares.

The Rural Zone applies to extensive areas of the Shire to the north and west (Precincts 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, part 4.1 and 5.1). A key issue within the Rural Zone, in particular, is the clear felling of plantation trees adjacent to main road corridors and tourist routes. This practice leaves large and often highly visible areas of the landscape scarred, detracting from the landscape character of the Region. The schedule to the Rural Zone for the Shire requires a permit for timber production on sites over 40 hectares. The inclusion of requirements in a Local Policy (as proposed) to provide an indigenous and/or native vegetation buffer including understorey, of a minimum of 20 metres, will assist in reducing the impact of the timber felling activity on the landscape character.

Both the Rural and the Environmental Rural Zones require a permit for buildings within 100 metres of a Category 1 Road Zone. However, the standard VPP decision guidelines for the zones do not contain adequate reference to the protection and enhancement of landscape character. This gap in the VPPs will be rectified by the inclusion of a Local Policy in the Surf Coast scheme containing the Precinct Principles (including Development Principles) prepared as part of this Study.

A large tract of land behind Anglesea is within the Special Use Zone and used for the Alcoa coal mine and brown coal electricity generator. The environmental issues associated with this land are not dealt with in this Study, and have been the subject of other studies.

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

## Overlays

### Existing Significant Landscape Overlays

There are a number of Significant Landscape Overlay areas along the coast, generally between Torquay and Lorne. The schedules to the Significant Landscape Overlay are detailed and place-specific (SLO1 Great Ocean Road and Coastal Environs and SLO2 Coastal Township Character). The SLO1 relates to the townships of Aireys Inlet, Fairhaven and Lorne and surrounds, and requires a permit for buildings and some native vegetation removal. The SLO2 applies to the Anglesea township and the Torquay and Jan Juc foreshore, and requires a permit for development over 5 metres in height, certain site coverage and lot size etc. Various Reference Documents and Local Policies are listed in the Decision Guidelines section of the schedules, providing additional assessment tools.

### Other Existing Relevant Overlays

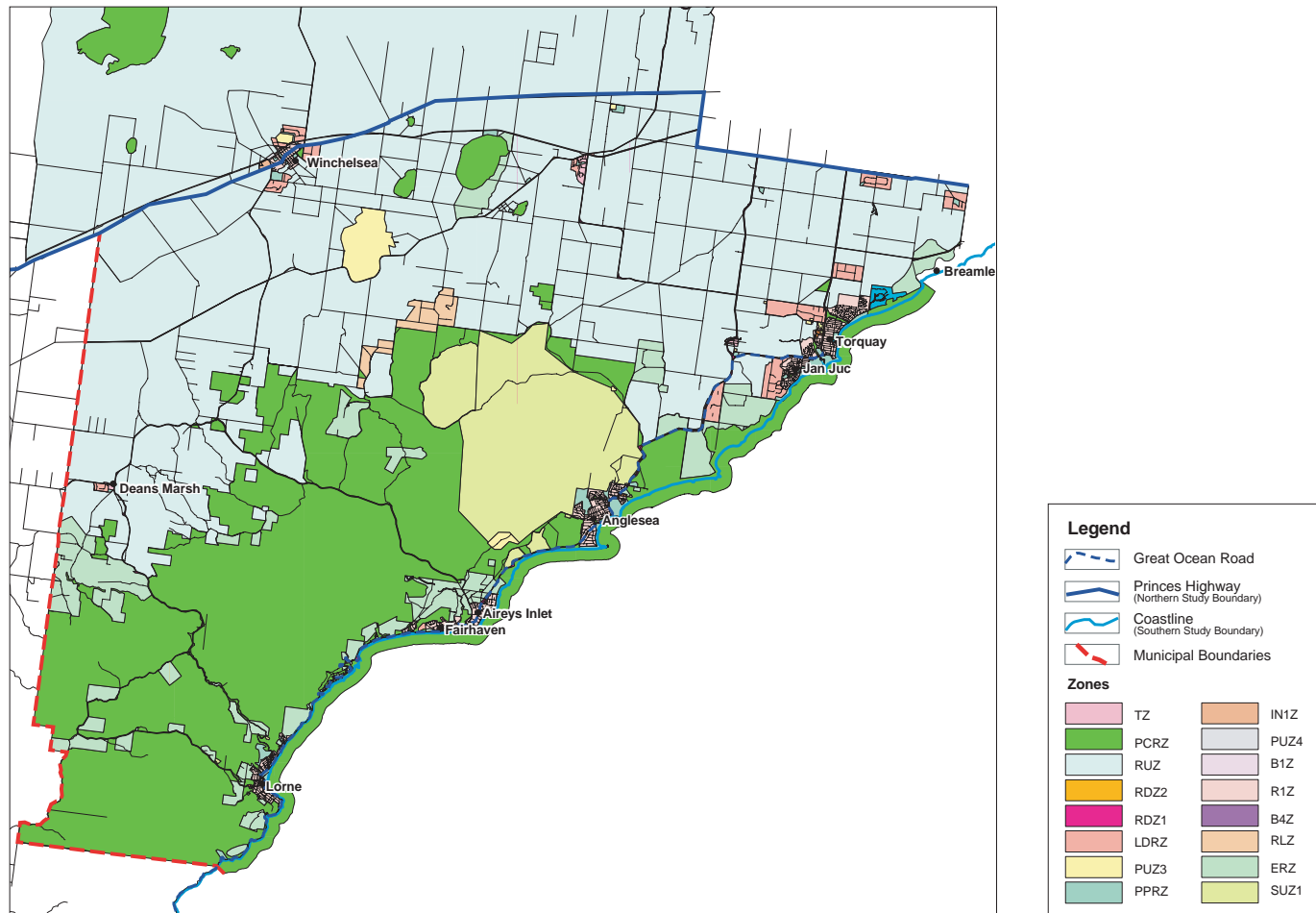
The Design and Development Overlay applies to northern coastal townships and special precincts, and the Vegetation Protection and Environmental Significance Overlays are also utilised within the Shire's Study Area.

The DDO1 that applies to large areas of land around Torquay and Jan Juc, requires a permit for buildings over 7.5 metres in height, and lists various local policies as decision guidelines. It may be that the height trigger for this DDO is too low, as some of the development occurring within areas covered by this Overlay could have been better designed in relation to the landscape character. Referencing the proposed Local Policy in the decision guidelines may assist in better built form outcomes. Where the SLO and the DDO overlap, some rationalisation of controls and policies may be advantageous.

Existing overlays relevant to landscape character within the Study Area of the Shire are shown on the [Relevant Overlays Map](#) on page 12.

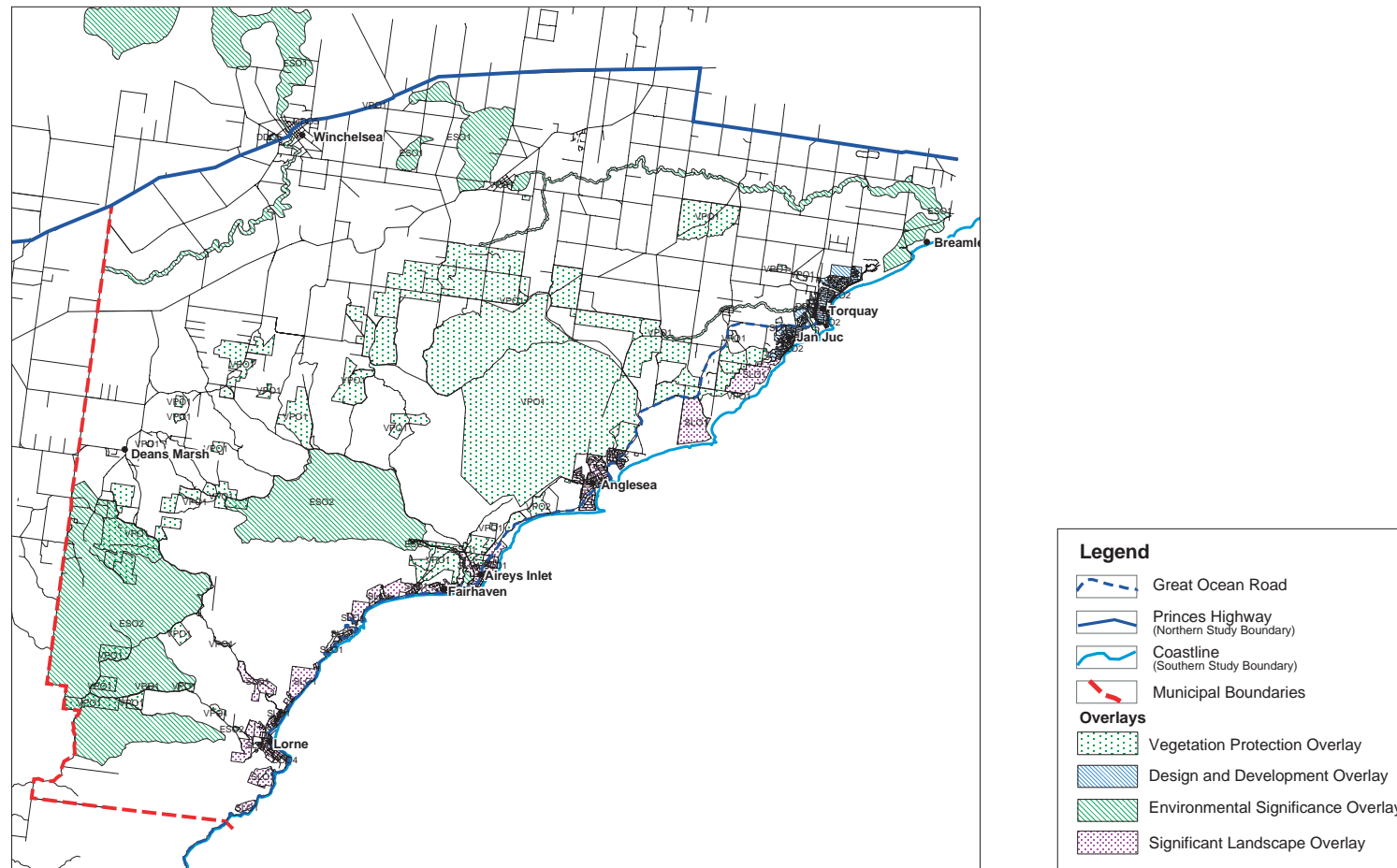


## Zoning





## Relevant Overlays





### Proposed Significant Landscape Overlays

There are no additional areas of significant landscape character that warrant protection and management through the application of the Significant Landscape Overlay. This was determined by applying the following formula to all parts of the Shire within the Study Area.

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

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

### Local Planning Policy Framework

The Surf Coast MSS includes Strategic Directions to:

- Manage the diverse environmental values of the Shire.
- Preserve and enhance scenic landscapes and cultural heritage values.

The Municipal Strategic Statement also includes a summary of the Landscape and Culture Strategy, defining landscape units and objectives for those units.

In addition the MSS includes Strategies for the following townships within the Study Area: Torquay / Jan Juc, Lorne, Anglesea, Aireys Inlet to Eastern View, Winchelsea, Moriac, Bellbrae and Deans Marsh.

The Planning Scheme includes the following Local Policies relevant to landscape character:

- 22.01 Coastal Development
- 22.02 Rural and Environmental Development Policy
- 22.03 Fire Safety
- 22.05 Surf Coast Design and Colours
- 22.06 Streetscape and Landscaping

The Three Year MSS Review Report (Keaney Planning and Research Pty Ltd and Michael Kirsch, August 2002) recommends changes to the structure, format and content of the Municipal Strategic Statement, including the above Local Policies which are of some relevance to landscape character.

Of particular note are the recommendations in relation to the Coastal Development Policy and that it should be “collapsed” into the appropriate overlay schedule. We have some reservations in relation to this recommendation and would prefer that the Coastal Development Policy be revised utilising the recommendations of this Study.

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

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



## 6. Surf Coast Recommendations

### Surf Coast Planning Scheme

#### Municipal Strategic Statement

Review the Municipal Strategic Statement (strengthen if required) in relation to landscape character generally, including the following Clauses:

- 21.04 Environment and Landscape, and Housing and Settlement
- 21.06 Landscape and Culture Strategy (review / amend landscape units, descriptions and objectives)

Review the Municipal Strategic Statement (strengthen if required) in relation to rural residential development in the landscape, including the following Clauses:

- 21.09 Rural Residential Strategy for LDRZ and RLZ areas

Review the Municipal Strategic Statement (strengthen if required) in relation to townships within the landscape, including the following Clauses:

- 21.10 Torquay to Jan Juc Strategy
- 21.11 Lorne Strategy
- 21.12 Anglesea Strategy
- 21.13 Aireys Inlet to Eastern View Strategy
- 21.14 Winchelsea Strategy
- 21.17 Deans Marsh Strategy

#### Local Policy

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

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

Local Policy should include an indigenous vegetation buffer requirement for plantations adjacent to Road Zone Category 1 (RDZ1).

Review relevant related Local Policies for inconsistencies with the proposed Local Policy (eg Development Principles).

### Surf Coast Community Education

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

### Council Staff Skilling

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





## Council Statutory Support

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

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