

PART C BACKGROUND REPORT

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

Land use and development in Portarlington and Indented Head has thus far been guided by the Structure Plan prepared by the Geelong Regional Commission and adopted by the City of Greater Geelong in August, 1993. The 1993 Portarlington/Indented Head Structure Plan has ensured that development of the townships has been undertaken in a coordinated manner. It is timely to undertake a comprehensive review of the Structure Plan in order to provide guidance for future land use and development.

The purpose of the Structure Plan is to identify the key strategic planning issues and opportunities facing the townships and articulate the preferred future directions including the location of settlement boundaries, future residential and commercial growth and future community service provision, as well as identifying appropriate planning controls.

1.2 Location

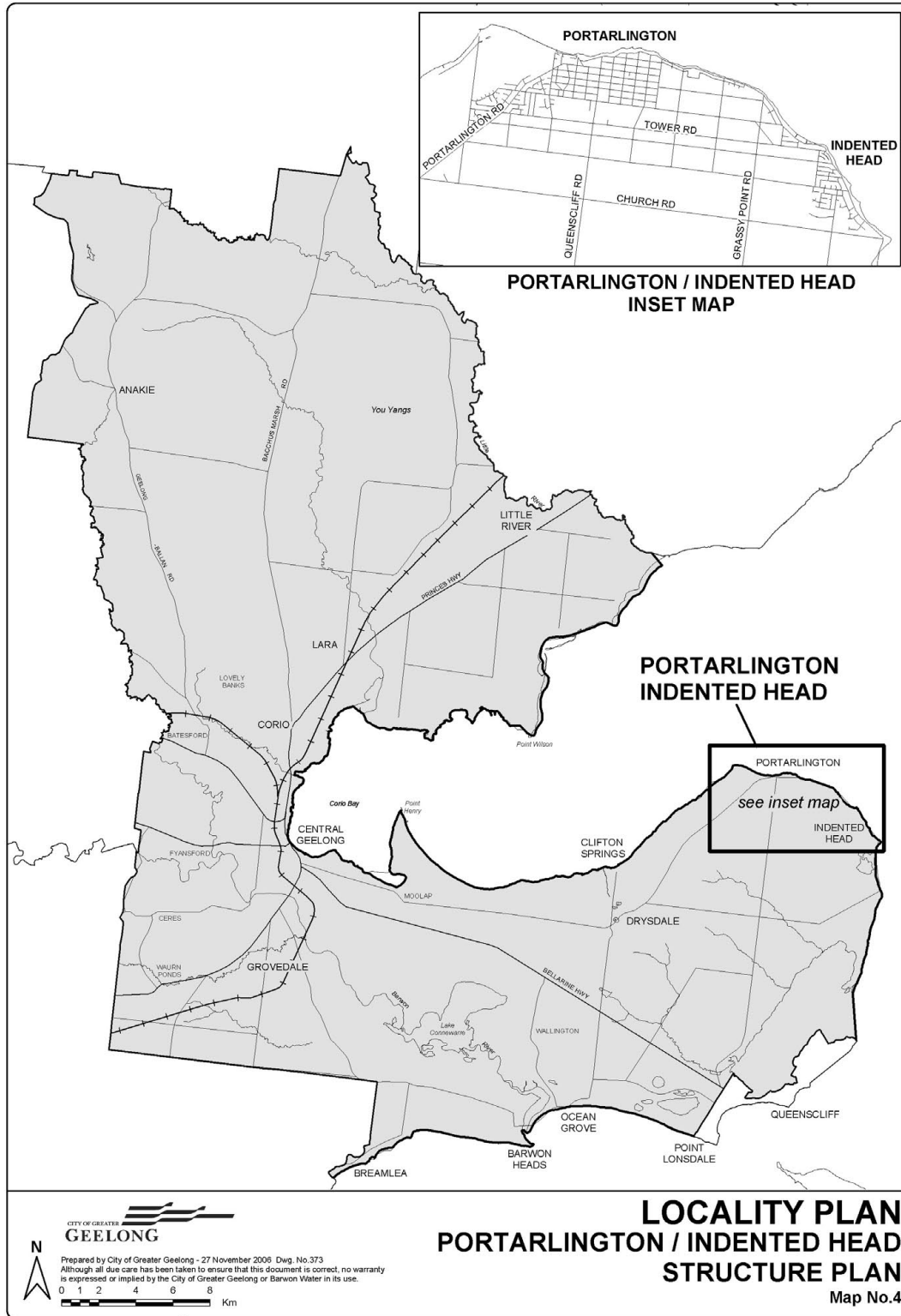
Portarlington and Indented Head are situated on the north-eastern shore of the Bellarine Peninsula, approximately 31 kilometres east of Geelong. The location of the townships in relation to the rest of the municipality and within the Bellarine Peninsula is indicated on Map 4 and Map 5.

The township lies between Drysdale/Clifton Springs and Indented Head and the Port Phillip Bay foreshore forms its northern edge. To the south-west of Portarlington, the Bellarine Hills form a significant landscape backdrop to the township. Land to the east of Portarlington on the coastal edge is low lying and mainly used for agricultural purposes. Geelong-Portarlington Road is the main entrance to the town from Geelong, with the commercial node focussed along Newcombe Street, to the south of the pier/foreshore area.

Indented Head is a small urban and tourist settlement, located six kilometres to the south-east of Portarlington. It lies between Portarlington and St Leonards, with the foreshore reserve stretching along the township's eastern shore to Port Phillip Bay. The Indented Head township is dispersed and elongated along the coast between Grassy Point and the Salt Lagoon Wildlife Reserve, a distance of over three kilometres.

The southern boundary of Indented Head is formed by a significant nature reserve, the Salt Lagoon Wildlife Reserve. To the west of the established township, lie the flat agricultural pastures of the eastern Bellarine Peninsula.

Map 4 - Locality Plan



Map 5 – Regional Plan



1.3 Indigenous Heritage

The environment of Portarlington and Indented Head provides significant values and associations with Aboriginal history. Council has entered into a formal arrangement through a protocol with the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative to assist in identifying, conserving and protecting places of Aboriginal cultural heritage. Protection of Aboriginal sites is formalised through the State *Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1972* and the Commonwealth *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984*.

The protocol establishes a number of trigger points where Council is required to take into account the requirements of Commonwealth and State legislation and the views of the Community in providing for the conservation and enhancement of places, sites and objects of Aboriginal cultural heritage. Council will continue to maintain a relationship with the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative in regard to proposed developments that may impact on Aboriginal cultural heritage, in accordance with both the established protocol and State and Commonwealth legislation.

1.4 Role of the Townships

Portarlington's and Indented Head's primary roles have traditionally been as seaside holiday villages, serving small permanent populations.

The towns have traditionally served various roles on the Bellarine Peninsula:

- Both have been and continue to be popular destinations for holiday makers and perform important resort roles. During holiday periods the population of the area becomes dominated by holiday makers, 'day-tripper' visitors and those making use of holiday homes
- Both are popular retirement centres and elderly persons comprise a large proportion of the permanent population.
- Portarlington is one of the centres for commercial fishing within Corio and Port Phillip Bays and is the centre for the Portarlington Aquaculture Areas.

Portarlington and Indented Head are not identified as growth locations within Council's Urban Growth or Rural Residential strategies for conventional residential or rural living development.

1.5 History

The area was originally inhabited by the Wathawurung Aborigines. European visitation of Port Phillip Bay dates back to 1802 when Lieutenant Murray spent over three weeks exploring its features. Lieutenant Murray was soon followed by Matthew Flinders who mistook Port Phillip Bay for Western Port. Flinders landed and made camp at the place now known as Indented Head, six kilometres south-east of Portarlington. He gave the site its European name after observing the cleft in the coastline.

Portarlington was surveyed c.1850 and named Drayton but was renamed in 1851 in honour of Lord Arlington (another claim is that it was named after an Irish village, owing to the predominance of Irish settlers in the area). The town was neatly laid out along broad streets planted in some locations with English elms and pines.

By the mid-19th century, the Peninsula was known as 'the granary of the colony' and Portarlington became a major player in the wheat industry with the construction of a large flour mill in 1857. Built from locally-quarried sandstone by T.H. Widdicombe, the four-storey, steam-powered mill stands today as a museum whose collection reflects both the region's Aboriginal and European heritage.

The mill provided a considerable stimulus to the development of the area and a jetty was built to facilitate the shipment of its produce in 1859. The jetty was extended then replaced in 1871 as Portarlington began to benefit from the steamer traffic in the bay.

The fishing industry also became a significant contributor to Portarlington's economy, and while the industry has declined in recent years, it is still possible to see a number of fishing boats moored at the pier.

Later in the 19th century paddle steamers began bringing Melbourne holiday-makers who enjoyed, and continue to enjoy, fishing, water sports and safe bathing at Portarlington and Indented Head. Built in 1886 to provide accommodation for holiday makers and hotel services for local residents, the Grand Hotel in Newcombe Street has retained its original character and appearance, and it remains a popular hotel for tourists and the local community - and it stands as a reminder of the grand buildings erected in the Victorian era.

Portarlington is not the major holiday resort it was 100 years ago but is still a popular and established seaside resort. Like many towns on the peninsula, Portarlington is also increasingly popular with people who now commute to work.

A stone cairn marks the place in Batman Park, Indented Head where John Batman and his fellow Tasmanian adventurers came ashore to camp in 1835 before moving on to the head of the bay which they earmarked as the site of a town that was to become Melbourne. There Batman signed his famous treaty with Aborigines for land surrounding Melbourne including Geelong and the Bellarine Peninsula. He then returned to the site of today's Indented Head township and there signed papers in exchange for the same land with local Wathaurong people. The landing of Matthew Flinders at Indented Head in 1802 is also commemorated.

An outstanding historical sight is the paddlewheel of the bay steamer "Ozone" which appears above the waterline at Indented Head, where it was scuttled offshore in 1925 to form a breakwater. The "Ozone" was the largest paddle steamer which once brought holidaymakers from Melbourne to the holiday resorts on the Bellarine Peninsula and then returned them to Melbourne.

Land around the town of Indented Head was farmed for wheat for many years and other townships grew long before it. There was foreshore camping there before the 1920s, and by 1951 Indented Head was a small seaside resort with a store, a telegraph office, the Batman Park camping area and two private camping areas. Despite superb views and access to the bay and the Port Phillip Bay Heads, Indented Head has grown very little in the past 30 years.