



Shire of Merredin Local Planning Strategy

PART 2 **Background Information and Analysis**

June 2025

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The Shire of Merredin

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APPENDIX 1 Areas Susceptible to Flooding Extent of February 1979 Floods

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Part 2 is to provide the rationale and evidence base for Part 1. It provides the relevant background information and analysis which supports the planning directions and actions outlined within Part 1 of the local planning strategy. This part provides a summary of the relevant State, regional and local planning contexts and their implications for the local planning strategy.

A local government profile is also included that provides a presentation and analysis of information relating to the demographic profile of the Shire and the key planning issues and opportunities influencing future development and land use of the Shire.

2.0 STATE AND REGIONAL PLANNING CONTEXT

The Shire of Merredin Local Planning Strategy (Strategy) was endorsed by the WA Planning Commission on the 27 December 2007. The purpose of a Strategy 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 Local Planning Scheme.

It is intended that a strategy 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 strategy provides the relevant background and guidance for decision-making in relation to subdivision, development and zoning matters under the Local Planning Scheme.

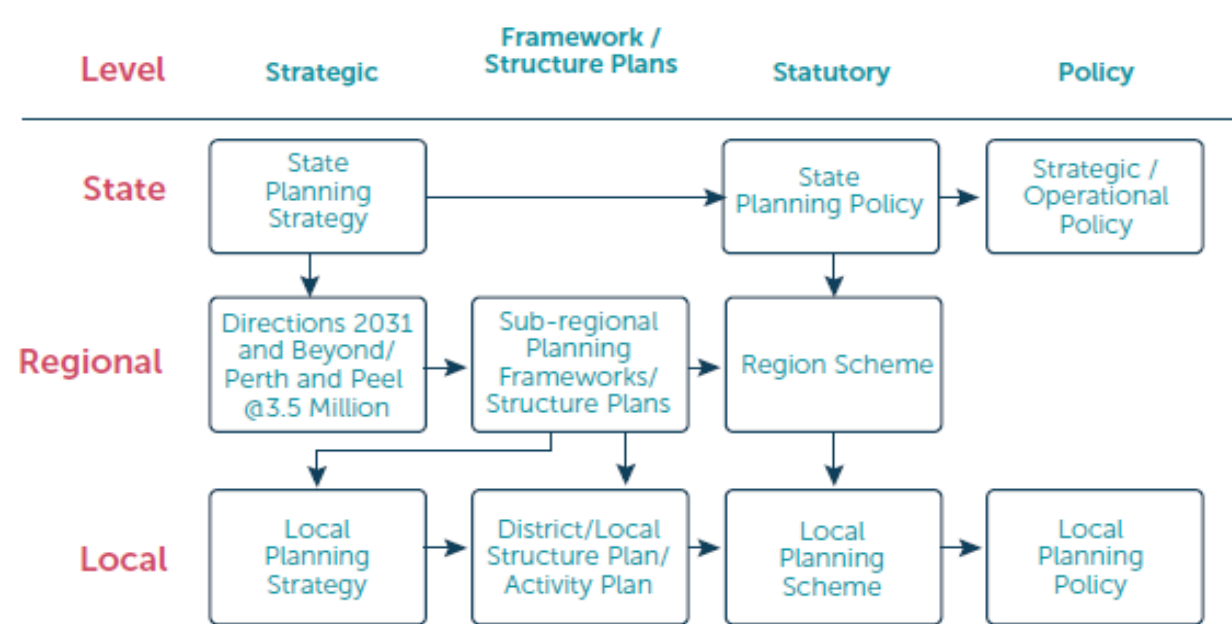
To facilitate this role, a strategy includes a description of the key characteristics of the municipality, its regional context and the major planning issues affecting it. It sets out opportunities and constraints for land use and development; identifies the aims of the municipality providing an explanation 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.

Merredin is a regional hub servicing the needs of surrounding communities and is strategically located along main transport arteries such as the Great Eastern Highway as well as the main railway line linking Perth and the Eastern States.

An important role of the Strategy is interpreting State and regional planning policy within the local government context and relating those specific State and regional plans and/or policies which are relevant to the municipal area to which the Strategy applies.

The relationship of this Strategy to the State and regional context is shown in the diagram below.

FIGURE 1 - STRATEGY IN CONTEXT



Source: DPLH

The Shire of Merredin Local Planning Scheme No. 6 has been amended on several occasions to ensure that it is a contemporary document that meets the needs of the local community. The Shire of Merredin has prepared an update on several components of the Strategy which will allow for the future strategic growth of the Merredin townsite for another 10-15 years. The Strategy will also designate land considered suitable to satisfy the current and future need for industrial development.

2.1 State Planning Strategy 2050

The State Planning Strategy provides the strategic context and basis for the coordination and integration of land use planning and development across Western Australia, regional and local levels. It contemplates a future in which high standards of living, improved public health and an excellent quality of life are enjoyed by present and future generations of Western Australians.

The State Planning Strategy proposes that diversity, liveability, connectedness and collaboration must be central to achieving the vision of sustained growth and prosperity, and establishes principles, strategic goals and directions to ensure the development of the State progresses towards this vision.

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

1. Economic development, including the resources economy, education, training and knowledge transfer, tourism, agriculture and food, remote settlements, land availability.
2. Physical infrastructure, including movement of people, resources and information, water, energy, waste, telecommunications.,
3. Social infrastructure including spaces and places, affordable living, health and wellbeing.
4. Environment.
5. Security.

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 Strategy for the Shire of Merredin must relate.

The State Planning Framework 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 State Planning Policies and other Commission policies which may apply across the State, and which are relevant to the Shire. The Wheatbelt Planning Strategy was prepared in 2015, however this Strategy is yet to be finalised.

2.2 State Planning Policies

The following Table provides a summary of State Planning Policies.

TABLE 1 - STATE PLANNING POLICIES

State Planning Policy (SPP)	Policy Overview	Strategy Implications and Responses
SPP 1.0 State Planning Framework (Nov 2017)	SPP 1.0 restates and expands on the key principles of the State Planning Strategy in planning for sustainable land use and development. It brings together existing State and regional policies, strategies and guidelines within a central State Planning Framework, which provides a context for decision-making on land use and development in Western Australia. The Framework informs the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC), local government and others involved in the planning process on State level planning policy which is to be taken into consideration, and given effect to, in order to ensure integrated decision-making across all spheres of planning. The framework identifies relevant policies and strategies used by the WAPC in making decisions and may be amended from time to time. The framework is the overarching SPP. Additional SPPs set out the WAPC's policy position in relation to aspects of the State Planning Strategy principles.	Noted – the local planning strategy has given due regard to the principles and objectives of SPP 1.0.
SPP 2.0 Environment and Natural Resources (Jun 2003)	SPP 2.0 is a broad sector policy and provides guidance for the protection, management, conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. The policy promotes responsible planning by integrating environmental and natural resource management with broader land use planning and decision-making. SPP 2.0 outlines general measures for matters such as water, air quality, soil and land quality, biodiversity, agricultural land and rangelands, basic	SPP 2.0 will influence land use planning within proximity to waterways and other areas of key environmental value. The Strategy incorporates protection over the key environmental areas within the Merredin and Burracoppin townsites, as well as, broadly throughout the Shire.

	raw materials, marine resources, landscapes and energy efficiency. These general measures should be considered in conjunction with environmentally-based, issue-specific state planning policies which supplement SPP 2.0.	However, the Strategy also acknowledges that in some circumstances, a balance will be required to facilitate development and growth.
SPP 2.4 Basic Raw Materials (Jul 2021)	SPP 2.4 recognises basic raw materials as a finite resource and promotes the importance of its extraction in support of regional development and agriculture within Western Australia. Its primary purpose is to facilitate the responsible extraction of basic raw materials while ensuring that any extraction minimises and mitigates detrimental impacts on the community and environment. SPP 2.4 supports land use conflict being addressed as early as possible in the planning process. Principal considerations for decision-makers include considering the suitability or otherwise of basic raw material extraction on planning and environmental grounds; ensuring broad compatibility between land uses and avoiding development of sensitive land uses within separation distances.	This policy will particularly influence land use planning for areas within the Shire as there are a number of extractive industries within the Shire. The planning framework will need to demonstrate a balance between landowners, existing stone extraction and potential future development.
SPP 2.5 Rural Planning (Dec 2016)	SPP 2.5 applies to rural land and land uses as well as land that may be impacted by rural land uses. SPP 2.5 seeks to protect and preserve Western Australia's rural land assets due to the importance of their economic, natural resource, food production, environmental and landscape values. SPP 2.5 includes policy measures aimed at protecting rural land while encouraging a diversity of compatible rural land uses.⁷⁸	This policy will need to be given due regard in developing the Shire's planning framework to manage land uses and development of the Shire's rural land. The framework will need to balance traditional rural land uses with creating opportunities for diversification of agricultural and other activities such as tourism. A basic principle of SPP 2.5 is the designation of rural land as either Priority Agriculture or General Agriculture. Designation of land as Priority Agriculture places a clear emphasis on the primacy of agriculture in

		those areas above other proposed uses. While the General Agricultural area is still an area of agricultural and rural use, there may be increased flexibility for other uses. In order to promote growth and potential in-fill of existing Rural Residential zoned areas, the Strategy seeks to clarify the position of the Shire in considering the circumstances where it would support in-fill subdivision. In addition, SPP 2.5 sets out the guiding objectives for DCP 3.4 which provides for the creation of homestead lots. It is the Shire's position that this opportunity should be extended to rural properties within the Shire and this is reflected in the Strategy. Similarly, whilst SPP 2.5 and DCP 3.4 outline a general presumption against the subdivision of rural land, the Shire considers there is merit to low-density rural strata development with shared facilities. Refer to Part 2, section 2.4 Operational Policies (DCP 3.4) and section 3.4 Local Planning Policies for further information regarding the proposed variation.
SPP 2.7 Public Drinking Water Source (Jun 2003)	The purpose of SPP 2.7 is to inform decision makers of those aspects of state planning policy concerning the protection of Public Drinking Water Supply Areas throughout the state. It is intended that this be implemented through the preparation of strategic	This policy will influence land use and development within the Shire, particularly given the presence of protected groundwater areas P1, P2 and P3.

	plans, regional and local planning schemes, conservation and management strategies, and other relevant plans or guidelines, as well as through decision-making on subdivision and development applications.	Consultation with the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation will be required for a number of proposals in these areas to ensure adequate protection of water sources.
Draft SPP 2.9 Planning for Water (Aug 2021)	SPP 2.9 provides guidance in the planning, protection and management of surface and groundwater catchments, including consideration of availability of water and waterways management, wetlands, waterways, and estuaries and their buffers, and implementation of total water cycle management principles in the land use planning system. The policy recognises that planning should contribute to the protection and management of water resources through implementation of policy measures that identify significant water resources, prevent the degradation of water quality and wetland vegetation, promote restoration and environmental repair and avoid incompatible land uses.	Land use and development proposals will be influenced by this policy and demonstrated throughout the planning framework to ensure appropriate ongoing protection and management of the Shire's water sources.
SPP 3.0 Urban Growth and Settlement (May 2006)	SPP 3.0 is a broad sector policy that sets out the principles and considerations which apply to planning for urban growth and settlement in Western Australia. The purpose of the policy is to facilitate sustainable patterns of urban growth and settlement by setting out the requirements of sustainable settlements and communities and the broad policy for accommodating growth and change. SPP 3.0 outlines general measures to create sustainable communities, plan liveable neighbourhoods, coordinate services and infrastructure, manage rural-residential growth and plan for Aboriginal communities. These general measures should be considered in conjunction with issue-specific urban growth and settlement state planning policies which supplement SPP 3.0.	This policy reinforces the need to focus urban growth in areas where feasible to make optimal use of existing infrastructure and services. As the provision of essential services is limited in the Shire, creative solutions and options will need to be encouraged throughout the planning framework to ensure sustainable development and to facilitate continued growth of the Shire. The policy promotes urban consolidation, an efficient use of land and it recognises the important role of rural residential development in providing lifestyle choice and the potential to revitalise

		rural communities. There is also a need for rural residential development to be appropriately located and appropriately managed.
SPP 3.4 Natural Hazards and Disasters (Apr 2006)	SPP 3.4 encourages local governments to adopt a systemic approach to the consideration of natural hazards and disasters. The objectives of this policy are to include planning for natural disasters as a fundamental element in the preparation of planning documents, and through these planning documents, minimise the adverse impacts of natural disasters on communities, the economy and the environment. SPP 3.4 sets out considerations for decision makers in relation to hazards including flood, bushfire, landslides, earthquakes, cyclones and storm surges. Consideration of these hazards should be undertaken in conjunction with issue-specific state planning policies which supplement SPP 3.4.	This policy is applicable, particularly in the context of bushfire risk throughout the Shire. The framework will need to consider the impact of bushfire and other hazards in the context of a rural environment whilst balancing the environmental values.
SPP 3.5 Historic Heritage Conservation (May 2007)	SPP 3.5 sets out the principles of sound and responsible planning for the conservation and protection of Western Australia's historic heritage. The policy seeks to conserve places and areas of historic heritage significance and to ensure development does not adversely affect the significance of heritage places and areas. SPP 3.5 primarily relates to historic cultural heritage noting that Aboriginal heritage and natural heritage are protected by other legislative instruments. Historic cultural heritage includes heritage areas, buildings and structures, historic cemeteries and gardens, manmade landscapes and historic or archaeological sites with or without built features. The policy contains development control principles and considerations for decision-makers for proposed development within a heritage place and/or heritage area. The policy also states that care should be taken by	There are a number of significant heritage places within the Shire that contribute to the profiles of each community. The planning framework will need to reflect this policy by providing further guidance for development assessment and control of places with significant heritage values in the Shire, to support their conservation for future generations. This will be highly relevant in the review of the Shire's Heritage List and review of relevant development provisions.

	decision-makers to minimise the extent to which land use zoning and other planning controls conflict with, or undermine, heritage conservation objectives.	
Draft SPP 3.6 Infrastructure Contributions (Apr 2021)	Draft SPP 3.6 sets out the principles and requirements that apply to both development and community infrastructure in new and established areas. Its primary purpose is to promote the efficient and effective provision of public infrastructure to meet the demands arising from population growth and development. The policy is intended to apply across all development settings, including urban, industrial and greenfield growth areas and regional towns. Implementation of this policy is primarily through local planning schemes, improvement schemes or structure plans as well as subdivision and development proposals. In determining the suitability for infrastructure contributions, decision-makers are required to consider six underlying principles, including need / nexus, transparency, equity, certainty, consistency, and accountability. SPP 3.6 is supplemented by the Infrastructure Contribution Implementation Guidelines (the Guidelines) that provide additional information regarding the preparation and operation of development contribution plans (DCPs) in areas where coordinated development of infrastructure and cost-sharing is required. The Guidelines recognise that the DCP must have a strategic basis and be linked to the local planning strategy and strategic infrastructure plan and program which identify the infrastructure and facilities required over the life of the DCP (generally up to 10 years for new greenfield development, or longer for the delivery of citywide Community Infrastructure),	The Shire has not previously identified Development Contribution Areas within the Scheme area. Development Contribution Areas and Plans may need to be a consideration for future areas of potential growth, to facilitate the appropriate upgrade of shared infrastructure such as roads and reticulated sewer.

	and the cost and revenue sources for the provision of the infrastructure.	
SPP 3.7 Planning in Bushfire Prone Areas (Dec 2015)	SPP 3.7 provides a framework in which to implement effective, risk-based land use planning and development outcomes to preserve life and reduce the impact of bushfire on property and infrastructure. The policy emphasises the need to identify and consider bushfire risks in decision-making at all stages of the planning and development process whilst achieving an appropriate balance between bushfire risk management measures, biodiversity conservation and environmental protection. The policy applies to all land which has been designated as bushfire prone by the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner as well as areas that may not have yet been designated as bushfire prone but are proposed to be developed in a way that introduces a bushfire hazard. SPP 3.7 should be read in conjunction with the Deemed Provisions for local planning schemes contained in the P&D (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015 (Schedule 2), Guidelines for Planning in Bushfire in Prone Areas and Australian Standard 3959: Construction of Buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas.	This policy has a significant impact on land use and development proposals within the Shire given the prolific presence of bushland and associated bushfire prone areas. The planning framework will need to demonstrate a balance between planning for bushfire risk and facilitating development within the Shire.
SPP 4.1 Industrial Interface (Jul 2022)	Draft SPP 4.1 guides planning decisions with the aim of protecting the long-term future operation of industry and infrastructure facilities, by avoiding encroachment from sensitive land uses and potential land use conflicts. The policy encourages the use of statutory buffers; facilitating industrial land uses with offsite impacts within specific zones and compatible interface between strategic/general industry zones and sensitive zones. Draft SPP 4.1 supports land use conflict being addressed as early as possible in the planning process. It is also expected	Expansion areas are identified west and east of the Merredin townsite which will further consider the policy at future planning stages.

	that land use conflict will be subsequently considered at each stage of the planning framework, increasing in detail at each level. The policy recognises the overlap of various environmental, health and safety regulations and guidelines and outlines considerations for decision-makers in this regard.	
SPP 5.2 Telecommunications Infrastructure (Sep 2015)	SPP 5.2 recognises telecommunications infrastructure as an essential service and aims to balance the need for this infrastructure and the community interest in protecting the visual character of local areas. The policy aims to provide clear guidance pertaining to the siting, location and design of telecommunications infrastructure and sets out specific exemptions for where the policy requirements do not apply. Decision-makers should ensure that telecommunications infrastructure services are located where it will facilitate continuous network coverage and/or improved telecommunications services to the community whilst not comprising environmental, cultural heritage, social and visual landscape values.	This policy will inform the future consideration of infrastructure proposals. Telecommunications infrastructure as a specific land use will be provided in the Zoning Table.
SPP 5.4 Road and Rail Noise (Sep 2019)	SPP 5.4 provides guidance for the performance-based approach for managing and mitigating transport noise associated with road and rail operations. This policy applies where noise sensitive land uses are located within a specified distance of a transport corridor, new or major road or rail upgrades are proposed, or where works propose an increase in rail capacity resulting in increased noise. The policy also sets out specific exemptions for where the policy requirements do not apply. SPP 5.4 supports noise impacts being addressed as early as possible in the planning process for the purpose of	Development adjacent or in close proximity to the rail network and major traffic routes will need to be appropriately sited and designed to minimise noise impacts. Consultation with, and direction from, the Public Transport Authority and/or relevant provider (i.e. Arc Infrastructure) will need to be considered for development proposals in close proximity to the rail corridor(s).

	avoiding land use conflict and achieving better land use planning outcomes. Considerations for decision-makers include ensuring that the community is protected from unreasonable levels of transport noise, whilst also ensuring the future operations of transport corridors. SPP 5.2 is supplemented by the Road and Rail Noise Guidelines.	
SPP 7.0 Design of the Built Environment (May 2019)	SPP 7.0 is a broad sector policy relevant to all local governments. The policy sets out the objectives, measures, principles and processes which apply to the design and assessment of built environment proposals through the planning system. It is intended to apply to activity precinct plans, structure plans, local development plans, subdivision, development and public works. The policy contains ten design principles which set out specific considerations for decision-makers when evaluating proposals. These include context and character, landscape quality, built form and scale, functionality and build quality, sustainability, amenity, legibility, safety, community and aesthetics. The policy also encourages early and on-going discussion of design quality matters and the use of design review. These principles should be considered in conjunction with the range of supporting State Planning Policies that provide design quality guidance for specific types of planning and development proposals.	The planning framework considers the design principles of the SPP which will underpin the Shire's approach to the design of built form. These will be integrated into the new Scheme and relevant planning policies.
SPP 7.2 Precinct Design (Feb 2021)	SPP 7.2 provides guidance for precinct planning with the intent of achieving quality planning and design outcomes for precincts within Western Australia. The policy recognises that there is a need to plan for a broader range of precinct-based contexts and conditions to achieve a balance between greenfield and infill development.	The Shire's townsites are generally not fully developed albeit in a rural context. Any changes to the local planning framework to implement State policy direction, such as development involving higher density residential development may require

	Objectives of the policy include ensuring that precinct planning and design processes deliver high-quality built environment outcomes that provide social, economic and environmental benefit to those who use them. Precinct types include activity centres, station precincts, urban corridors, residential infill and heritage precincts. These areas are recognised as requiring a high-level of planning and design focus in accordance with a series of precinct outcome considerations as outlined in the policy. The policy also encourages the use of design review.	the establishment of a precinct plan.
SPP 7.3 Residential Design Codes Volumes 1 and 2 (May 2019)	SPP 7.3 – Residential Design Codes (Volumes 1 and 2) provides the basis for the control of residential development throughout Western Australia for single houses, grouped dwellings and multiple dwellings. The purpose of the policy is to address emerging design trends, promote sustainability, improve clarity and highlight assessment pathways to facilitate better outcomes for residents. They are also used for the assessment of residential subdivision proposals. The policy outlines various objectives for residential development, planning governance and development processes and sets out information and consultation requirements for development proposals. The policy also makes provision for aspects of specified design elements to be varied through the local planning framework. SPP 7.3 - Residential Design Codes (Volumes 1 and 2) should be read in conjunction with the supporting Guidelines.	The R-Codes currently apply to all residential areas across the Shire. The planning framework considers the implications of the provisions of R-Codes when other applicable legislative requirements may apply (i.e. where no sewer infrastructure is required / available, the Government Sewerage Policy applies to minimum lot sizes). Several variations to the development provisions of the R-Codes need to be considered in the context of a rural environment where community needs may differ from a city environment, such as outbuilding sizes.

2.3 Regional Planning Context

The WAPC prepares various regional planning instruments to guide land use and development at the regional and sub-regional level, including:

- Regional and Sub-regional planning strategies and structure plans
- Regional Planning Schemes

Regional planning instruments considered to be specifically relevant to the Shire are outlined and described in Table 2.

Table 2: Regional planning instrument overview and local planning strategy implications and responses

TABLE 2 - REGIONAL PLANNING RELATIONSHIPS

Regional Planning Instrument	Regional Planning Instrument Overview	Local Planning Strategy Implications and Responses

2.4 Regional Strategies for Significant Local Government Roads – Roads 2040

The Wheatbelt Regional Transport Strategies was first released in 2001, with these strategies continued to be reviewed and further developed to meet specific demands and industry requirement within the Region. The latest iteration of *Regional Strategies for Significant Local Government Roads* (Roads 2040) was released in 2022 and amended in 2023.

Roads 2040 is a live document which allow amendments from Regional Roads Groups. An overall review will take place approximately every five years.

The Wheatbelt's economy is based on agriculture, with cropping being the most dominant industry in the Region. Other major agricultural commodities include livestock (disposal) and wool. A strong retail and wholesale trade industry services the agricultural sector.

The region's manufacturing sector is largely based on supplying and servicing the agricultural sector and in processing local produce.

The mining sector plays an important role in the Wheatbelt's economy with key commodities being heavy mineral sands, gold, iron ore and nickel. A range of commercial activities occurs across the Region, and some are concentrating in the centre Merredin.

The tourism industry makes a notable contribution to the Wheatbelt's economy with a growing number of domestic and international visitors to the Region. Commercial timber production in the Wheatbelt Region is of a relatively small scale and is concentrated mainly in logging hardwood plantations.

Merredin has the economic advantage of being close to the Perth Metropolitan Area, the State's largest market, with strong rail and road connections.

The Indian Pacific Railway Line passes through Merredin, with 2 to 3 train services per day for passengers travelling from to Perth.

The Great Eastern HWY is the major road connecting Merredin to Perth, with key upgrades and improvements completed on this important highway east and west of Merredin, these include:

- 193 km of shoulder sealing between Northam and Walgoolan, and 15 km between Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie.
- New westbound overtaking lane between Carrabin and Bodallin.
- Intersection improvements at Carrabin Siding and Westonia Road.
- Road re-alignment on the approach to Carrabin.

2.5 State Planning Policy No 4.1 (SPP 4.1.1) – State Industrial Buffer Policy

The Commission's SPP 4.1.1 was adopted in July 2022 and the principal objectives are:

The objectives of this policy are to:

- a) Ensure the impacts of industrial land uses are considered at all stages of the planning process.
- b) Adequately separate industrial land uses and any resulting off-site impacts and/or safety risks from incompatible land uses to:
 - protect industrial areas to improve long-term operational certainty
 - avoid, mitigate or manage potential impacts on the health and amenity of people and the environment
 - promote co-location of like uses to minimise the impact area.
- c) Plan the land use transition between industrial land uses/infrastructure facilities and sensitive land uses by providing compatible zones, reserves and land uses.

There are several uses within Merredin including the sewerage treatment plant, the airport and the Cooperative Bulk Handling railway depot that require the implementation 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.

2.6 Heritage

2.6.1 State Heritage

The following eleven 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,
- Railway Housing Precinct,
- Agricultural Bank (FMR),
- Railway Dam,
- 2/1 Australian Hospital, and
- Merredin Railway Water Tank.

Under the Heritage Act 2018, any changes or works that may affect a registered place of significance are required to be referred to the Heritage Council for advice.

2.6.2 Indigenous Heritage

The following site is on the Register of Aboriginal sites:

TABLE 3 - 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.

A portion of the Shire of Merredin is captured by one of the Indigenous Land Use Agreements that have been implemented by the state government. The intention of these to provide specific portions of land for use by the Aboriginal community in exchange for the clearing of Native Title in other areas.

2.6.3 Shire of Merredin Heritage Survey

In June 2022, the Shire of Merredin Council adopted the Shire of Merredin Heritage Survey which identified 99 places of having some form of cultural and historical significance. This work was consolidated and finalised via the adoption in August 2023 of the Shire of Merredin Heritage List which now offers protection via development approval requirements to 67 places within the Shire of Merredin municipal district.

2.7 Wheatbelt Regional Planning and Infrastructure Framework – Dec 2015

A Regional Strategic Planning document for the Wheatbelt Region was released in December 2015. The Framework is a regional strategic planning document that provides an overview of regional planning issues and a basis for ongoing planning and development.

Part A of the document provides for Regional Strategic Planning, whilst Part B provides for Regional Infrastructure Planning.

In its decision-making, the Western Australian Planning Commission will aim to focus growth in and around established centres that provide a high level of amenity and employment opportunities by facilitating growth in the sub-regional centres.

Merredin is classified as a main urban centre and a sub-regional centre.

The document acknowledges that the Wheatbelt offers an abundant source of renewable energy. The climatic and geographic conditions of the Wheatbelt are conducive to alternative energy generation such as wind, solar, geothermal and biomass generation. Renewable energy offers the capacity to reduce reliance on centrally distributed energy. A number of wind farms already exist, for example the Collgar Wind Farm near Merredin (the largest single stage windfarm in the southern hemisphere), as well as several solar farms. There is a current JDAP application for a battery energy storage system which is consistent with the Shire's objective of becoming a centre of excellence for renewable energy.

The document also acknowledges the part that Merredin plays in providing;

- the Merredin District hospital,
- Merredin Residential College,
- Merredin College K-12 school and Trade Training Centre
- Managed Environment facilities to provide essential infrastructure and support for field research projects directed at identifying adaptive traits and management strategies for improved productivity of field crops growing in water limited environments (DPIRD).
- Delivery of a range of supported learning opportunities to outlying smaller schools from large, strategic centres such as Merredin.

3.0 LOCAL PLANNING CONTEXT

3.1 Strategic Community Plan

The Strategic Community Plan is a long-term planning document that sets out the community's vision and aspirations for the future, and the key strategies the community will need to focus on to achieve these aspirations. It is part of the fulfilment of the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) Framework. All Local Governments in Western Australia are required to implement IPR which enables robust decision-making.

The Strategic Community Plan will be reviewed every 2 years and will be used to:

- Guide Council decision-making and priority setting.
- Engage local residents and ratepayers, local businesses, community groups, and other local stakeholders that contribute to the future of our community.
- Inform decision-making with respect to other partners and agencies, including the State Government and other Local Governments in our region.
- Provide a clear avenue to pursue funding and grant opportunities by showing how projects align with the vision and strategic direction outlined in this Plan.
- Inform future partners of our key priorities, and the ways in which we seek to grow and develop.
- Provide a framework for monitoring progress against the community's vision and aspirations.

The Shire of Merredin has adopted as part of its Strategic Community Plan for 2020 – 2030, six key theme areas setting strategic direction designed to achieve the municipal vision. These being:

- Theme 1: Community and Culture
- Theme 2: Economy and Growth
- Theme 3: Environment and Sustainability
- Theme 4: Communication and Leadership
- Theme 5: Places and Spaces
- Theme 6: Transport and Networks

Objectives for each of the key theme areas are identified as follows;

TABLE 4 - KEY STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PLAN OBJECTIVES

1.1	Events, Arts and Culture
1.1.1	A community that is engaged in a variety of inclusive events, arts and other cultural activities which enrich their community experience and increase their sense of belonging
1.1.2	The Cummins Theatre is an accessible and inclusive cultural space, serving the needs of Merredin and other surrounding wheatbelt towns
1.2	Community Sports & Infrastructure
1.2.1	Sporting clubs are thriving in membership and volunteers, with an appropriate standard of facilities and other support services
1.3	Community Safety

1.3.1	The Shire, Local Emergency Services and wider community working together to prevent bushfires and other emergencies as well as being well placed to respond and recover in such events
1.3.2	Collaboration between the Shire and WA Police to improve safety and surveillance through the continued improvement of CCTV in the town and across all Shire facilities
1.4	Community Development
1.4.1	Activities and programs that assist in youth development and leadership are developed or promoted
1.4.2	An improved sense of belonging for our Njaki Njaki Noongar and wider Aboriginal community
1.4.3	Merredin is rich with thriving community organisations and clubs who are working together with the Shire to increase the profile of arts and culture in Merredin
1.4.4	Merredin is an age friendly community where seniors are respected and supported to actively participate in community life
1.5	Environmental Health
1.5.1	The Shire of Merredin provides a proactive Environmental Health service which is integral to monitoring food safety in commercial premises and ensuring buildings meet accessibility and safety standards
1.6	Merredin Regional Library
1.6.1	The Merredin Regional Library continues to provide learning, social and cultural opportunities
2.1	Economic Development
2.1.1	Merredin is well known by those not local to the area, as a great place to live, work and visit
2.1.2	The Shire of Merredin is a place of choice for business investment and for new residents settling to enjoy a balance lifestyle and employment opportunities
2.1.3	Job and training opportunities are available in Merredin to community members who are entering the workforce
2.2	Tourism
2.2.1	Visitors to the Shire are well serviced and accommodated, with opportunities that leverage our historic, cultural environmental and natural assets
2.2.2	The Shire works closely with businesses and other community groups to actively support and develop visitor growth
2.2.3	Leveraging on our local strengths, our tourism-based economy is resilient and adaptable to change
2.3	CBD
2.3.1	The Merredin town centre is strengthened as a regional centre, serving the needs of the Merredin community and surrounding catchment
2.3.2	The Merredin town centre is contemporary and adaptable to the emerging retail and industrial trends, continuing to attract business and investment opportunities
2.3.3	Merredin has suitably located and sized land for various industrial opportunities that serve the productive needs within the Shire

3.1	Environmental Management
3.1.1	The Shire of Merredin observes a number of sustainable water and energy harvesting, conservation and usage practices
3.1.2	The Shire of Merredin's fleet is dominated by vehicles fueled by renewable or alternate fuels
3.2	Waste Management
3.2.1	Reduced waste through increased recycling, re-use and reduction education and practices
3.3	Environmental Planning
3.3.1	Land use planning respects our natural assets and ensures limited impact on climate change
3.3.2	Natural assets are protected and conserved
4.1	Community Engagement
4.1.1	The Shire regularly engages with its community and, in return, communicates the information gathered in a clear and transparent manner
4.1.2	The Council works closely with the community to successfully achieve projects or outcomes that delivery the community's vision for Merredin
4.1.3	The Shire has a strong working relationship with the Njaki Njaki Noongar Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal community members
4.2	Decision Making
4.2.1	Council is equipped with appropriate technology, allowing for better public accessibility to the Council Chambers
4.2.2	The Shire is progressive while exercising responsible stewardship of its built, natural and financial resources
4.2.3	The Council is well informed in their decision-making, supported by a skilled administration team who are committed to providing timely, strategic information and advice
4.3	Advocacy
4.3.1	The Shire is implementing its Public Health Plan and strongly advocates to other decision makers and the wider community for a healthier environment
4.3.2	The Shire continues to advocate for infrastructure and services which meet the need of its business and residential community
4.4	Communications
4.4.1	The Shire is continuously working to maintain efficient communication, providing open, transparent and factual information, through a variety of channels
4.5	Customer Service
4.5.1	The Shire is continually working to improve its customer service
4.5.2	Shire is an employer of choice within the region, offering its team with a positive and productive workplace culture
4.5.3	The Shire works to continually improve its systems and processes to improve internal capacity and capability
4.6	Regional Collaboration

4.6.1	The Shire is proactive in seeking out regional collaboration and partnership opportunities which seek to benefit the Shire of Merredin and the wider eastern wheatbelt region
4.7	Integrated Planning and Reporting
4.7.1	The Shire is committed to ongoing consultation to ensure that the reporting associated with the State's Integrated Planning Framework is in line with the community's vision for the town and its surrounds
5.1	Streetscapes
5.1.1	The Merredin CBD has been significantly upgraded and is well maintained and representative of the regional status that it holds
5.1.2	The streetscapes within Merredin's urban areas have well kept, tidy and safe streets, verges and footpaths
5.2	Parks and Gardens
5.2.1	Parks within the Shire are maintained to a high standard, with adequate facilities for community members of all ages and abilities
5.2.2	The Shire of Merredin's Public Cemetery is well planned for, attractive and respectful
5.3	Facilities
5.3.1	The Shires heritage assets are maintained and protected for future generations
5.3.2	The Shire is continually improving its asset management practices
5.4	Town Planning & Building Control
5.4.1	Community members are educated and empowered to ensure their privately owned heritage sites are maintained and protected for future generations
5.4.2	The Shire has a current local planning scheme and associated strategy which is flexible and able to suitably guide future residential and industrial growth
6.1	Roads & Footpaths
6.1.1	The Shire's road system, footpaths and cycle trails are well maintained and safe
6.2	Drainage
6.2.1	Stormwater drainage is well managed and capable of handling storm events at an appropriate standard
6.3	Verge Maintenance
6.3.1	Verges are attractive and well maintained
6.4	Merredin Airport
6.4.1	The airport is acknowledged as an important strategic asset to the region

The themes were not challenged by the community during the engagement. They provide a sound framework and logical structure upon which to construct the plan. The following priorities in each theme are key drivers of the plan.

TABLE 5 - PLAN PRIORITIES

Community and Culture	Economy and Growth	Environment and Sustainability
• Development of cultural life: infrastructure and spaces; activation; and celebration of Njaki Njaki Noongar culture. • Development of sport and recreation: infrastructure and participation. • Community safety.	• Clearly articulate Merredin's identity and value proposition. • Tourism product development, including cultural tourism. • Strengthening the economy through local business development. • Building on Merredin's strengths to expand the economy.	• Address climate change • Ensure continuous potable and non-potable water supply. • Advocacy for drylands farming support. • Developing a more efficient and sustainable waste management service. • The Shire leading by example.
Communication and Leadership	Places and Spaces	Transport and Networks
• Effective mechanisms for community representation in key decision-making. • The Shire has a strong working relationship with the Njaki Njaki Noongar Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal community members. • Maximising the value of Shire assets.	• Revitalise the Merredin Central Business District. • Improve public open space.	• Improving local roads • Improving stormwater management.

3.2 Previous Local Planning Strategy

The original Strategy was prepared in 2007 and endorsed by the WA Planning Commission on 14th August 2007. This strategy largely only mapped the Merredin townsite area.

3.3 Local Planning Scheme

The existing Scheme was gazetted on 24th June 2011 and has been the subject of several amendments.

Of particular relevance was Amendment No 7 that updated the Scheme to comply with the deemed provisions of the *Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015*.

3.4 Other Planning Schemes

There are no other planning schemes in the Shire.

3.5 Local Planning Policies

A Local planning policy (LPP) can be prepared by Shire in accordance with Division 2 of Schedule 2 of the Regulations in respect of a particular class or classes of matters specified in the LPP; and may apply to the whole Scheme area or part of the Scheme area.

An overview of the Shire's LPPs and implications for the local planning strategy are provided in the following Table.

TABLE 6 - LOCAL PLANNING POLICIES (LPP)

Name of LPP	Date of Adoption	Purpose of LPP	Strategy Implications
No 1 – Moveable Buildings		To control the use of second-hand and other structures, especially in the townsite areas	Nil
No 2 – Subdivision for Homestead Lots		To guide proponents on the Council's position for the creation of 'Homestead lots'.	Nil
No 3 - Carparking		A clarification of Scheme parking requirements.	Nil
No 4 – Landscaping		A clarification of Scheme landscaping requirements.	Nil
No 5 – DA Delegation		To clarify where selected staff may have delegated authority to determine DAs	Nil
No 6 – Planning Approval for Single Houses		Clarification of the need for Single houses' to lodge a DA.	Nil
No 7 – Cash-in-lieu		Cases where cash-in-lieu of open space requirements.	Nil

3.6 Structure Plans

There are no Structure Plans within the Shire.

3.7 Local Development Plans

There are no Local Development Plans within the Shire.

3.8 Other Relevant Strategies, Plans and Policies

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, these do not address strategic issues as much as particular items of land use control related to statutory items.

The Council also maintains a Register of Delegations for Council staff to make straightforward determinations.

4.0 LOCAL GOVERNMENT 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 Narembreen 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 townsites of Merredin, Burracoppin, Hines Hill, Nangeenan, Muntadgin, Nukarni and Korbel, and 12 localities including Goomarin, Nukarni, Burracoppin, Nokaning, Merredin, Hines Hill, Nangeenan, South Burracoppin, Norpa, Korbel, Tandegin and Muntadgin.

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 town sites of Burracoppin, Hines Hill, Nangeenan, Muntadgin, Korbel and Nukarni form the second level of settlement within the Shire. These town sites reflect the original 'opening up' of the region for agricultural development but have now been superseded by the dominance of the Merredin townsite.

Burracoppin and Muntadgin have recreation centres supported by Shire grants. Both townsites have kerb-side rubbish collection services. Hines Hill has several residential dwellings. Nangeenan has 6 houses, which are used as a depot by a freight company. The Nangeenan community hall is in the process of being renovated to re-energise community use. Nukarni and Korbel 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. Korbel 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

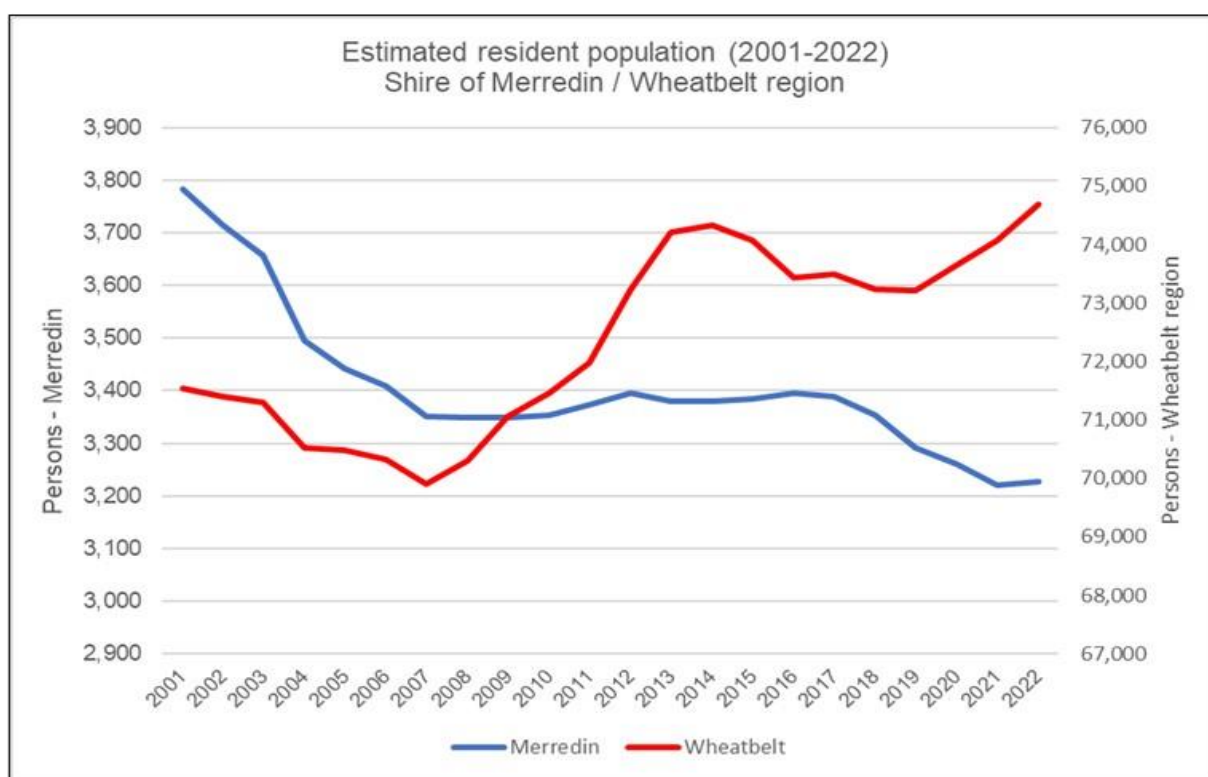
4.1.1 Population

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 5,297 at the 1966 Census. During the 1970s the estimated resident population (ERP) fluctuated between 4,693 at the 1971 Census to 4,900 at the 1976 Census. The current

estimate is 3,228 (ABS, 2022). The Shire of Merredin's population has been in steady decline since the 1976 Census. **Figure 1** shows the movement of the ERP from 2001 to 2022 of both the Wheatbelt region and the Shire.

FIGURE 2 - ESTIMATED RESIDENT POPULATION



Source: DPLH, ABS 2021 Census

Censuses indicate 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 78% of the Shire's population as counted in the 2021 Census.

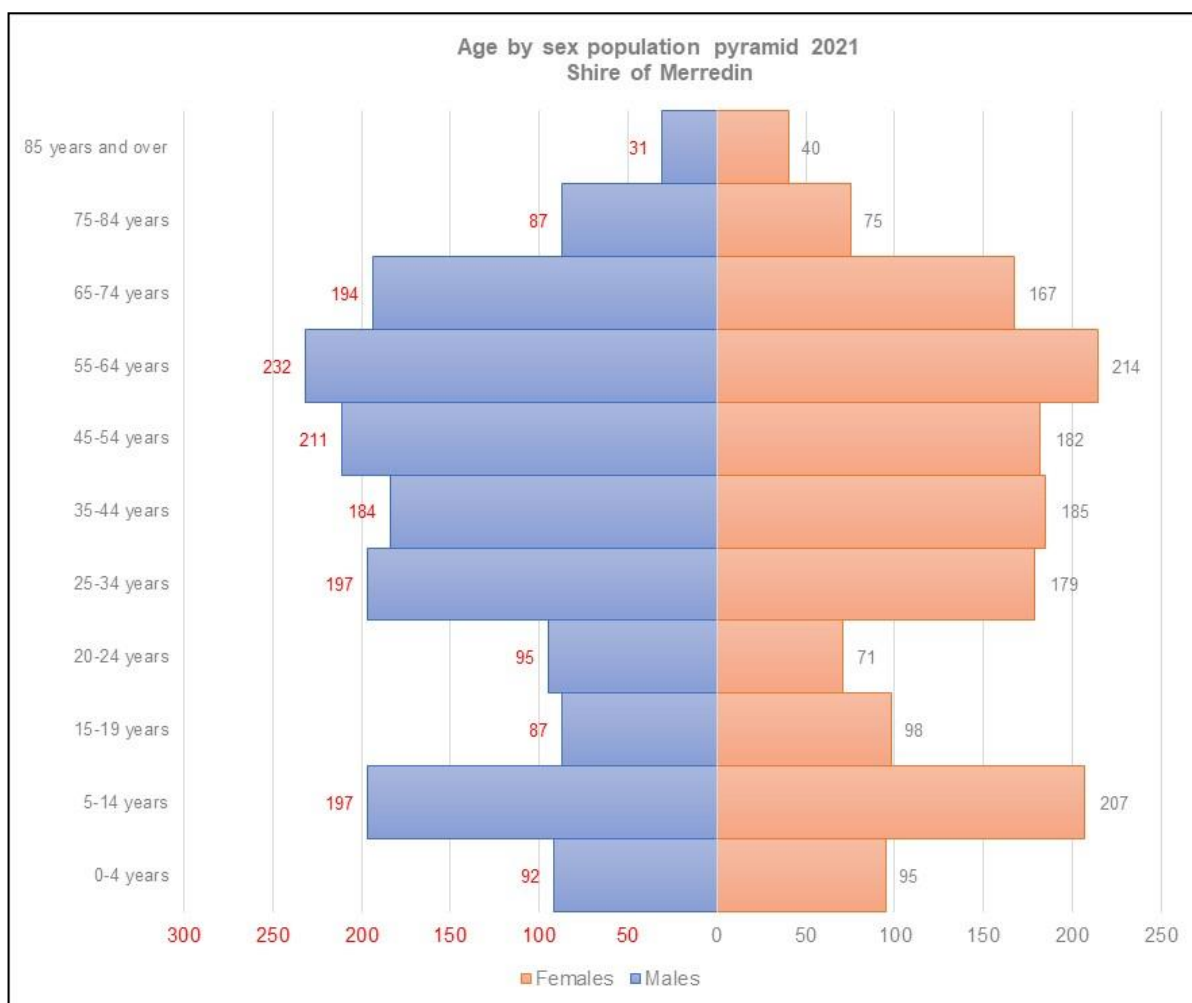
Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH) population projections (Table 7) for the Shire of Merredin indicate a turnaround from decline to modest growth in the next 15 years. The Merredin townsite is expected to retain its relative importance as the primary residential location in the Shire.

TABLE 7 - POPULATION

	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021	2022
Merredin	3,783	3,408	3,374	3,395	3,221	3,228
Wheatbelt	71,534	70,319	71,984	73,423	74,070	74,685
Regional WA	450,913	473,669	519,842	536,715	557,635	563,408
Western Australia	1,906,274	2,050,581	2,353,409	2,555,978	2,749,864	2,787,883

Source: DPLH, ABS 2021 Census

FIGURE 3 - POPULATION PYRAMID



Source: DPLH, ABS 2021 Census

In terms of household composition, the 2021 Census data indicates the predominance of two-parent with children family group, which comprised 38.4% of the residential population. The next largest family group comprised a couple-family with no children at 45.7% and one-parent family households comprising 14.5% of the residential population. The remaining groups comprise couple families living with other related persons or unrelated individuals living in family households.

Figure 3 provides an age pyramid profile from the 2021 Census.

DPLH projections indicate that the age profile of Shire's population will undergo change until the year 2031. 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 19.6% in 2016, to 18.7% in 2021. An increase in the proportion of people 65 and over (retirement age) from 15.6% in 2016 to an estimated 19% in 2021. There is also a trend for the general ageing of the workforce population.

The Council, in recognition of this growth, is keen to support development that provides for appropriate housing for the elderly. This has been facilitated by Shire support for the CEACA (Central East Accommodation & Care Alliance) development in Merredin which consists of 27 dwelling units. The Council has, as part of the review of the Scheme, is seeking to rezone land adjacent to the existing facility to allow for future demand.

Table 8 and **Figure 4** show the DPLH various projected population estimates.

New population growth is likely to be derived from the establishment of new industries and potentially the development of lifestyle opportunities.

The Shire has, and will, experience short term growth associated with the construction of large-scale project – for example the Merredin solar farm.

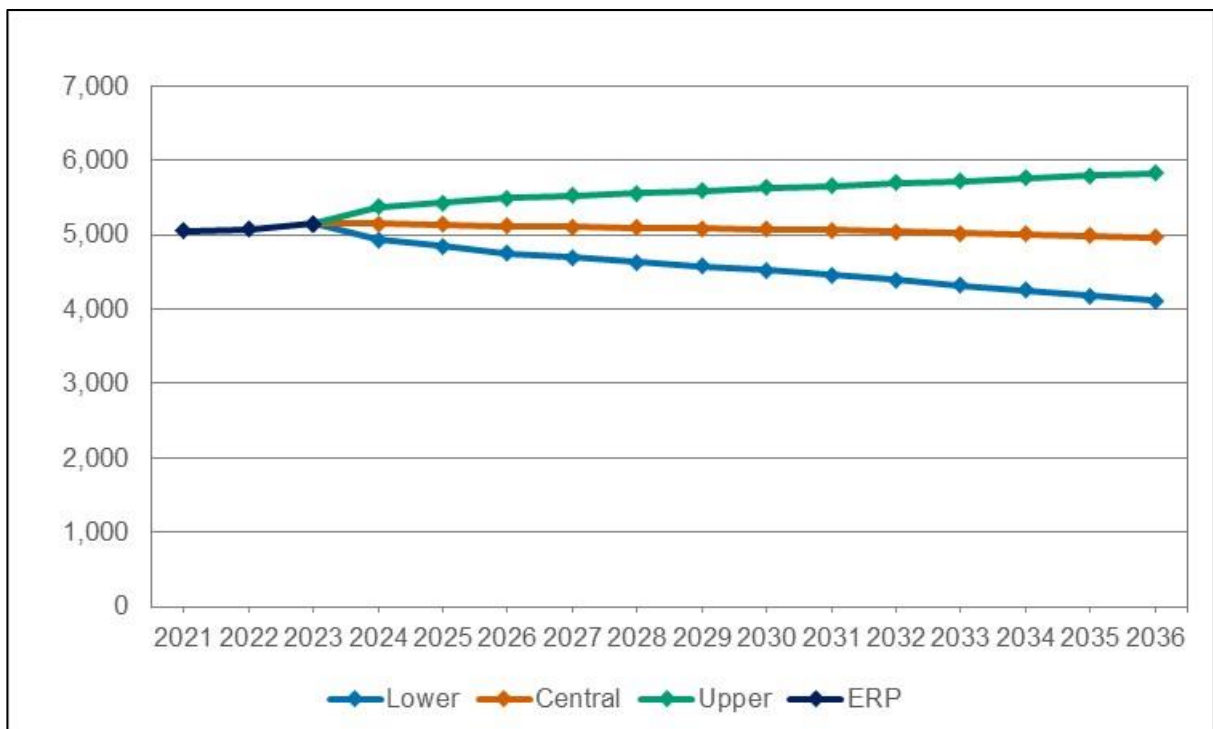
Another potential area for growth may be associated with the Merredin airport site. The Council is supporting a Scheme amendment that would allow the development of a strategic mixed-use park.

TABLE 8 - POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Year	Lower	Central	Upper
2026	-1.22%	0.26%	1.68%
2031	-1.24%	0.01%	1.14%
2036	-1.36%	-0.11%	0.95%

Source: DPLH, WA Tomorrow No. 12

FIGURE 4 - POPULATION PROJECTIONS



Source: DPLH, WA Tomorrow No. 12

4.1.2 Housing

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.

In the 2021 Census 94.9% of all dwellings in the Shire were single houses with the remainder comprising of apartments, semi-detached housing and other similar housing forms. 46% of

the single houses had 3 bedrooms and 33.1% with 4 or more bedrooms. The 2021 Census indicated a total of 1,422 dwellings within the Shire.

35.2% of dwellings in Merredin are owned outright, compared to 29.2% in the State and 31% in Australia. The occupancy rate in 2021 of 2.2 people per household is less than both the State (2.5pph) and Australia (2.6pph).

In Merredin Townsite there are approximately 208 vacant residential blocks within existing residential areas of Scheme No 6. in the Merredin townsite. However, 57 of these are Crown land lots located in the southeast portion of the town may not have been provided with services such as power and water supply. 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 that was for students of the China Southern West Australian Flying College and, Caridi Close subdivision and Whitfield Way land releases.

A strong demand for new residential blocks and quality rental dwellings still exists in the Merredin town. 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 parcels (UCL) within the Merredin townsite should also be encouraged for residential development.

Notwithstanding the amount 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.

Development Scheme (No 2 and 5) were gazetted in 1970 and 1971 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-1970s, development of these Schemes stalled. Only minimal subdivision and housing development has occurred along existing constructed roads.

Under these Schemes, the Shire is required to provide major infrastructure works and levy landowners for contributions via subdivision approval. These development Schemes have now been revoked.

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 the bulk of service infrastructure, i.e., roads and utilities.

Dwelling construction has slowed down significantly also due to pressures on the building and construction industry that have been exacerbated by government stimulus.

Table 9 shows the number of dwellings constructed over the last 2 decades. The charts show there were very few dwellings completed within the town, the majority of dwellings constructed were either on rural properties or aged persons accommodation in Merredin townsite.

Dwelling construction has slowed down significantly also due to pressures on the building and construction industry that have been exacerbated by government stimulus. Whilst there may be demand from locals wanting to build the market led investment is limited due to the costs of land development, cost of building and limited capital gain.

TABLE 9 - DWELLING CONSTRUCTION

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	TOTAL
PRELIMINARY APPROVALS												
Residential	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rural residential-Special res	12	4	0	0	0	4	0	5	0	0	0	25
Commercial	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Industrial	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	5
Rural	5	8	2	5	0	2	4	1	2	0	2	31
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	17	12	2	6	0	6	4	6	3	2	4	62

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	TOTAL
FINAL APPROVALS												
Residential	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Rural residential-Special res	0	0	12	0	4	0	0	4	2	0	0	22
Commercial	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Industrial	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
Rural	0	3	7	0	4	0	6	0	6	0	0	26
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL:	2	3	19	0	8	0	6	4	9	0	2	53

Source: DPLH, ABS 2021 Census

The aging of the population indicates a potential increasing demand for aged person's development in the Merredin townsite. 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 with standard residential zonings, no specific sites need be identified.

Current planning practice in many local governments is to adopt the R10/30 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 densities greater than R10 development would require connection.

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 townsite for medium density. Land around the Merredin town centre is afforded a higher density to promote the better use of existing infrastructure with proximity to all the existing services and amenities.

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, and perhaps multiple dwellings where they can occur in the commercial areas of Merredin.

The proviso for density in the town centre is that it can only occur where it does not occupy an area best suited for commercial development – for example, on the street front.

Table 10 provides a breakdown of areas within the Shire for various zones and the R-Code designations in the townsites.

TABLE 10 - LAND USE AREAS

Zone	Ha
Commercial/Business	32.59
Industrial	233.44
Infrastructure/Public Uses	2646.94
No Zone	2.97
Other Residential	3.82
Recreation/Conservation	2193.52
Residential	365.40
Rural	19260.10
Rural Living	625.60
R-Code	Ha
R10/30	279.4029
R10/50	45.14117

Source: DPLH,

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 businesses.
- 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 within the existing townsites 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.
- Aging State government housing stock for government workers and social housing.
- The need to promote energy efficiency and water conservation in the design and development of housing in the Shire to assist with managing the impacts of climate change.

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 townsite, which accommodates the majority of the residential population and urban development. It is supplemented by historic outlying town sites (a number of which are in significant decline) and individual farming properties.

Areas north and south of the Merredin townsite 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 in **Tables 11 and 12** for their suitability for rural residential development.

TABLE 11 - SPP No 3 CONSIDERATIONS FOR RURAL GROWTH

SPP No. 3 considerations for Rural Residential Growth	Rural Residential Area (north) Merredin to Nungarin Road (RR7)	Rural Residential Area (south) Merredin to Bruce Rock Road (RR1-6)
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 Rural Residential zoned land is available with the Merredin townsite, and future growth areas identified.	More than sufficient vacant Rural Residential zoned land is available with the Merredin townsite, and future growth areas identified.

TABLE 12 - SPP No 2.5 CRITERIA FOR RURAL SETTLEMENTS

SPP No. 2.5 Criteria for Rural Settlements	Rural Residential Area (north) Merredin to Nungarin Road (RR7)	Rural Residential Area (south) Merredin to Bruce Rock Road (RR1-6)
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 townsite. 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 townsite 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 townsite. 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 townsite to accommodate current population growth rates to the year 2052. A northern growth corridor for the Merredin townsite could still occur if required.	There is sufficient urban land within the Merredin townsite to accommodate current population growth rates to the year 2052. A northern urban growth corridor for the Merredin townsite 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 townsite where commercial and community services and employment opportunities are available.	The rural residential settlement is within 1 km of the Merredin townsite 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.

SPP No. 2.5 Criteria for Rural Settlements	Rural Residential Area (north) Merredin to Nungarin Road (RR7)	Rural Residential Area (south) Merredin to Bruce Rock Road (RR1-6)
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 townsite 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. Development to be located to avoid clearing. A small creek line on the western portion to be revegetated via subdivision.	The land is almost completely cleared. Opportunity exists to revegetate the land through the 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.

SPP No. 2.5 Criteria for Rural Settlements	Rural Residential Area (north) Merredin to Nungarin Road (RR7)	Rural Residential Area (south) Merredin to Bruce Rock Road (RR1-6)
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.

Rezoning of additional rural residential areas will only be supported by the Council where a proven demand can be demonstrated; the land is subject to a detailed land capability and suitability assessment with the land having a fair to very high capability of sustaining the development; and that the criteria outlined in SPP 2.5 can be satisfied. Additionally, structure planning, proposals for revegetation, safe and effective road access and provision of essential service (water and power) may also be requirements for rezoning proposals of potential rural residential areas.

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

- The WA Planning Commission's policy on subdivision of rural land;
- a decline in the population in the rural area with a trend towards bigger farms for economies of scale;
- retention of viable parcels of land for broad acre farming and other rural activities
- existing services within the general farming area;
- demonstrated demand for smaller rural lot development within the rural 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.

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 rural 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 may be 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 number of State and Federal Government Agencies maintain an office presence within Merredin. The following is a list of the relevant agencies -

- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Department of Communities (including Housing)
- Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
- WA Country Health Service
- Water Corporation
- Police Department
- Centrelink (service operated by Merredin Community Resource Centre),
- Wheatbelt Development Commission,
- Western Power,

Educational facilities include two 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,
- KARIS Medical Centre
- Physiotherapy, Dentistry and Chiropractic services,
- Royal Flying Doctor Service,
- St John's Ambulance and State Emergency Service,
- Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service
- Merrittville Retirement Village,
- Berringa Frail Age Lodge,
- Merredin Senior Centre
- NDIS service providers
- Central East Accommodation and Care Alliance (CEACA).

4.2.2.1 Western Power: Electricity

A 132 KV overhead power-line feeds two transformer substations at Merredin, supplying electricity to the townsite and surrounding areas. The sub-stations 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

Merredin Energy, Collgar Windfarm, Merredin Solar Farm and other future suppliers have potential for upgrades to add in to the South West Interconnected System (SWIS).

4.2.2.2 Sewerage

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 north west sector of the Merredin town residential area.

The wastewater treatment plant located west of the Merredin townsite is designed to treat a nominal value of 750m³ of wastewater per day. During 2021/2022, the average mean discharge of the plant was 415.4m³ per day. Current plant and pump station capacity is considered sufficient to accommodate townsite 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, with some additional works aimed at improving holding capacity taking place in 2019.

4.2.2.3 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. In 2022 the Water corporation completed the construction of an above ground water storage tank and decommissioned the water storage dam.

Limitations of water pressure in areas flagged for industrial land development, requiring businesses to comply with fire suppression requirements.

4.2.2.4 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 Merredin townsite.

The Shire of Merredin has in recent times approved several transmission towers for CRISP Wireless to improve internet connectivity in the outlying areas.

The Shire has also approved the installation of several INMARSAT Telecommunications dishes as well as the Telstra Earth Station consisting of 5 Telecommunication dishes.

Broadband internet access is available in Merredin via NBN node to premises connection.

Upgrades to 5G network have also taken place within the Merredin townsite.

4.2.2.5 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 town sites 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.

The dispersed settlement patterns of the Wheatbelt region of WA, requires an extensive transport network to adequately service the area. Merredin Shire is connected by a mixture of sealed all weather access roads and dry weather only unsealed network. The key routes are represented by the Great Eastern Highway which traverses the shire from east to west. The shire is connected to the north and beyond via the Merredin Nungarin Rd, and to the south via the Merredin – Bruce Rock.

An increased investment in the road network has taken place since the closure of the tier three railway. Merredin – Narembene Road is one of the main Grain Freight Routes from the south to the Merredin CBH receival point and transport route through to Perth and Fremantle Port for stock and freight. The road caters for increasing volume of heavy vehicles and lighter tourist traffic, creating a potential safety problem. Major upgrade and improvements carried out on this route, which included pavement strengthening, sealing widening, and line marking.

Other Major routes within the shire of Merredin includes:

Hines Hill North Rd

This route connects the town of Hines Hill on Great Eastern Highway, to Nungarin, with key functions include freight, heavy haulage of agricultural products, is a school bus route, tourism, and general access via Great Eastern Highway to Perth. This road is also a main tourist route to the historic Mangowine Homestead

Chandler – Merredin Rd

This road is the main route that connects the north east regions of Nungarin, Mukinbudin & Westonia to Merredin Townsite, as well as to the Merredin CBH receival point.

Shire of Merredin undertake routine maintenance upgrade of its existing road network as its important to maintain current and future transport needs of the Wheatbelt Region.

The Merredin airfield located 7kms southeast of the town provides a unique opportunity to be a major contributor to the Shire's economy.

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 impacts is already considered with an existing nominal buffer zone or Special Control Area (SCA).

The Merredin Airfield currently subject of a 'Special Use - Airfield' zone under the existing scheme with a 500m buffer area (SCA). The potential of this site to house commercial and industrial development of regional significance highlights the need for this site to be rezoned to a less restrictive zoning that would allow for this type of development.

4.2.2.6 Education facilities

The Merredin townsite has a K-12 independent school, Merredin College, one of five in the State, one private catholic primary school, St Marys, and the Merredin Residential College catering for Year 7 to 12 students from surrounding districts attending Merredin College. A Trade Training Facility, the John Rutherford Centre, is co-located with the College and provides training to certificate level for students.

Merredin residents have access to tertiary education facilities with a Central Regional TAFE site near the Merredin College, and one of four Lumen Regional University Centre hubs located at the North Merredin Primary School Site.

4.2.2.7 Desalination

As the impacts of climate change become increasingly pronounced in the region, the Shire has actively investigated options to improve water usage and explore the repurposing of brackish bore water in Merredin.

This water is required to be abstracted from bores located throughout Merredin townsite to manage the water table and associated salt damage to infrastructure. The brackish bore water is currently not used for any purpose given its salinity and is discharged into evaporation basins. As this brackish bore water is required to be taken from around Merredin townsite to prevent damage caused by salinity, the installation of a desalination unit allows more effective and efficient management of groundwater within the Merredin townsite. With the introduction of the desalination system into the irrigation network and access via a standpipe, an increase of 36,500kL a year of water is incorporated to the towns overall water supply. This both ensures that the existing shallow water tables are managed effectively while also taking advantage of an otherwise unused water source. Having an additional strategically located standpipe gives the community a better option to draw their water from when required. This in turn will decrease the amount of scheme water used for construction, fire mitigation and off-farm usages drawn from other standpipes in the area.

The inclusion of desalinated brackish bore water would mean the Shire has access to four water sources, including: treated brackish bore water, treated wastewater, captured stormwater, and mains scheme water offering security and flexibility in Merredin's irrigation network, fire mitigation strategies, construction works, as well as ensuring an off-farm water source is available to the community given the increased number of available water sources.

4.2.3 Observations

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 most of the residential and commercial development and community services.
- Merredin plays a sub-regional centre role, servicing the broader central east sub-region.
- 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. Note water pressure is low in the existing McKenzie Crescent industrial area, adding significant development costs for businesses constructing sheds over 500m².
- 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 townsite 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 provide a mix of accommodation for a range of workers, from short term placements, executive appointments and service industry workers. Consideration of how zoning can be flexible to accommodate temporary worker accommodation may be required should resource projects commence in the region.
- A need to acknowledge the importance of new and unique service industry in the Shire and the potential of the Merredin airfield site to house commercial and industrial development of regional significance highlighting the need for this site to be rezoned to a less restrictive zoning that would allow for this type of development.
- Expansion of industrial land in the Shire to accommodate economic growth including new industry development such as renewable energy, mining and continuing productive capacity of agriculture in the region.
- Consideration of the impacts of climate change on energy and water efficiency in design of housing and new developments.
- Consideration of the impact of hotter and drier weather on the community, including urban landscaping, including increasing tree cover to reduce vulnerability of residents and infrastructure.

4.3 Economy and Employment

4.3.1 General

The Shire of Merredin's economy is diverse compared to adjacent local government areas, reflecting its regional centre status. The majority of land in Merredin is used for broadacre grains and livestock production. The Shire had an economic output of \$587M in 2022, with agriculture (\$90M); electricity, gas, water and waste services (\$80M); wholesale trade (\$55M) and transport, postal and warehousing (\$50M) the most significant contributors to economic output (REMPPLAN 2022). Tourism output was valued at \$11M in 2022. There was a small, yet growing mining contribution of \$10.7M in 2022 (from \$4M in 2018).

The Shire's Gross Regional Product was \$309M in 2022 (see **Table 13**).

The Shire has a strong small business sector, with 325 businesses recorded in 2022. Most are non-employing (168) or with 1-4 employees (111), with a number employing 5-19 (39) and over 20 employees (7). Almost half of businesses have turnovers of \$200K to \$2M (153), with 8 having turnover of \$10M or more.

TABLE 13 – WHEATBELT ECONOMIC OUTPUT

Economic Output	Merredin	Wheatbelt
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	\$98.255 M	\$3,925.673 M
Mining	\$10.677 M	\$3,889.957 M
Construction	\$33.161 M	\$1,165.320 M
Manufacturing	\$22.854 M	\$1,047.381 M
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services	\$46.542 M	\$950.028 M
Public Administration & Safety	\$28.582 M	\$694.573 M
Transport, Postal & Warehousing	\$48.847 M	\$517.574 M
Electricity, Gas, Water & Waste Services	\$85.148 M	\$508.994 M
Health Care & Social Assistance	\$34.532 M	\$492.385 M
Education & Training	\$28.283 M	\$438.283 M
Wholesale Trade	\$55.119 M	\$426.632 M
Retail Trade	\$23.477 M	\$329.617 M
Financial & Insurance Services	\$11.487 M	\$243.210 M
Accommodation & Food Services	\$12.315 M	\$228.648 M
Other Services	\$17.281 M	\$208.390 M
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	\$8.837 M	\$176.263 M
Administrative & Support Services	\$3.645 M	\$95.355 M
Information Media & Telecommunications	\$15.545 M	\$66.662 M
Arts & Recreation Services	\$2.413 M	\$33.811 M

Source: Department of Commerce and Trade and DPIRD, REMPLAN 2022.

4.3.2 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.

The largest employers are within agriculture (15%), health care and social assistance (14%), education and training (11%), retail trade (10%), wholesale trade (9%) and the transport industry (8%). This is reflective of the region's sub-regional role as a commercial and government services hub. Notably, median weekly incomes have increased from \$943 in 2006 to \$1380 in 2021.

Table 14 compares these two survey dates showing that the growing numbers in 'Technicians and Trade Workers' in 2021 contrasting from the number of 'Managers' and 'Professionals' in 2016.

An understanding of the local economy make-up and trends from a workforce perspective, is derived from a comparison of the 2021 Census on workforce by industry type.

In 2021 57.3% of the Shire's population were involved in the workforce. The distribution of occupations has rearranged its order from 2016 to 2012 Census.

TABLE 14 - OCCUPATION OF WORKFORCE**Shire of Merredin 2021 Census, ABS**

Occupation, top responses <i>Employed people aged 15 years and over</i>	Merredin	%	Western Australia	%	Australia	%
Technicians and Trades Workers	186	17.6	199,379	15.3	1,554,313	12.9
Machinery Operators and Drivers	139	13.2	100,392	7.7	755,863	6.3
Community and Personal Service Workers	130	12.3	154,341	11.8	1,382,205	11.5
Professionals	128	12.1	287,009	22.0	2,886,921	24.0
Managers	124	11.7	160,687	12.3	1,645,769	13.7
Clerical and Administrative Workers	119	11.3	157,610	12.1	1,525,311	12.7
Labourers	113	10.7	122,961	9.4	1,086,120	9.0
Sales Workers	93	8.8	101,670	7.8	986,433	8.2

Shire of Merredin 2016 Census, ABS

Occupation <i>Employed people aged 15 years and over</i>	Merredin (S)	%	Western Australia	%	Australia	%
Managers	270	18.0	139,350	12.0	1,390,047	13.0
Technicians and Trades Workers	239	16.0	187,396	16.2	1,447,414	13.5
Machinery Operators and Drivers	191	12.8	86,392	7.5	670,106	6.3
Professionals	187	12.5	237,230	20.5	2,370,966	22.2
Clerical and Administrative Workers	169	11.3	150,408	13.0	1,449,681	13.6
Labourers	154	10.3	112,599	9.7	1,011,520	9.5
Community and Personal Service Workers	134	9.0	122,889	10.6	1,157,003	10.8
Sales Workers	133	8.9	102,337	8.8	1,000,955	9.4

Source: ABS Census 2016 and 2021

In 2021 the major employment categories within the Shire were Technical and Trade Workers (17.6%), Machinery Operators and Drivers (13.2%), Community and Personal Services (12.3%) and Professionals (12.1%) and Managers (11.7%).

Whilst the decline in the latter of these categories is the result several factors including a declining population in general, a change in the way professional and manager services are delivered (like drive-in drive-out workers), and the change in agriculture, transport and storage categories are most likely the result of improvements in technology, production and transport and economics of scale. The improved capability of businesses to service industries such as mining and agriculture may also be influencing the increased number of technical roles. There is a rise in community and personal services roles, reflective of the improved infrastructure that is supporting the older population to age in place, and the establishment of new businesses stimulated by the advent of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Alternative models of service delivery in the region may see a continual rise in the number of these workers.

Climate change will have an impact on agricultural production, and may influence the agricultural workforce, employment and prosperity of the population generally. Notwithstanding the changeable climate, the unemployment rate for Merredin is consistently lower than the State and Australian proportions.

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 Heritage Survey and Heritage List.

Landuse and development within the Tourist zone includes service stations, roadhouses, motels, caravan parks, a fast-food outlet and restaurants. Under Scheme No.6 the town centre is designed to target a mix of shops, offices, civic and cultural and public purpose land for amenities and services. Maintaining a degree of flexibility in the composition of the town centre allows the area to service a variety of activities that will service the needs of a growing and diverse community.

The vacancy rate of premises in the town centre will vary with the economy and most likely reflect the economic state of Perth (and other capitals) vacancy rates.

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 DPIRD 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 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.

The most significant emerging landuse suitable for the rural areas is the renewable energy facility sector. This landuse means premises used to generate energy from a renewable energy source predominantly and includes any building or other structure used in, or relating to, the generation of energy by a renewable resource. The definition does not include renewable

energy electricity generation where the energy produced principally supplies a domestic and/or business premises and any on selling to the grid is secondary.

There is also mining exploration occurring in the Shire and in the surrounding sub-region, on areas used for broadacre farming. The demand for critical minerals to support economic decarbonisation may see some of this activity translate to mining operations in years to come. The Shire should be actively monitoring this activity.

Whilst the use of rural land will reduce the amount of rural produce, it will more than compensate in the land's productivity. The Shire is keen to encourage renewable energy producers, whether it is for wind, solar or any other proven energy source.

The Shire should be prepared to maximise the outcomes of any potential development for the long-term benefit of the community.

Another issue relevant to rural land, 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 Light and General Industry

Merredin is experiencing an increased demand for industrial land. The town's central location in the Wheatbelt and its transport and access benefits have seen a take-up of available industrial properties.

To ensure an adequate supply of industrial lots, the Council has identified three locations that it considers suitable for additional industrial activities. Two of these three areas are designated as 'Future Industrial Areas' in this Strategy. The third area is shown as 'Industrial Investigation Area'.

The **first area** is in the western part of the townsite including Lots 503 and 601 and Lots 504 and 602 located between Goldfields Road and Gamenya Avenue. Part of the site is affected by the 500-metre buffer from the town's sewerage treatment works. The land is currently used for agricultural purposes and abuts an area used for agricultural research.

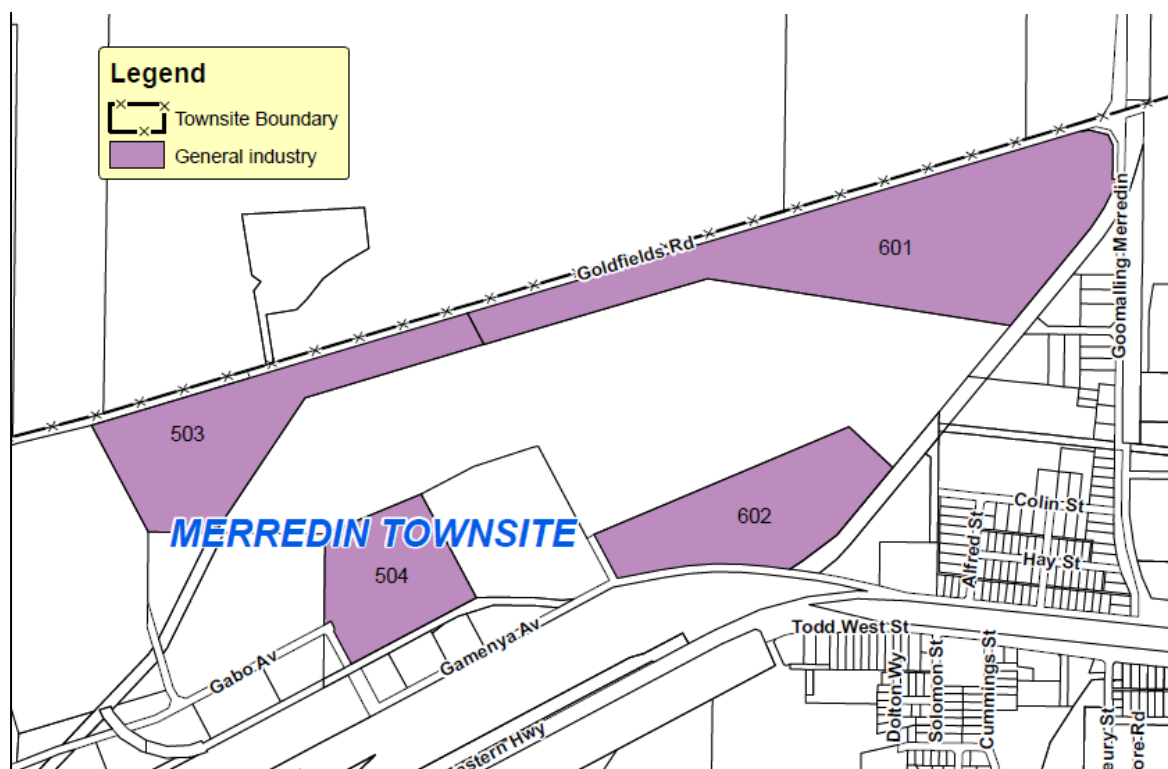
The northern lots (Lots 503 and 601) are 17.6 ha and 34.4 ha and surrounded by uses that are unlikely to be affected by any industrial activities. To the north is farming land, to the east are industrial uses including the drainage ponds, to the west is the sewerage settlement ponds and other industrial land. **Figure 4** shows these proposed areas.

The southern lots (Lots 504 and 602) are 10.5 ha and nearly 15 hectares and have similar surrounding activities. The land between the north and south areas has been planted with vegetation to reduce the water table in the town to prevent higher salinity levels that have previously affected the town. This project is not affected by this part of the proposed new industrial area.

The **second area** shown in **Figure 5** includes land to the east of the of the main light industrial area in Merredin. The land is north of Adamson Road and south of a large recreation reserve. This area measures about 138 hectares with Lot 82 currently cleared of vegetation with a dwelling and sheds near Lot 81 that has recently been rezoned for Light industry.

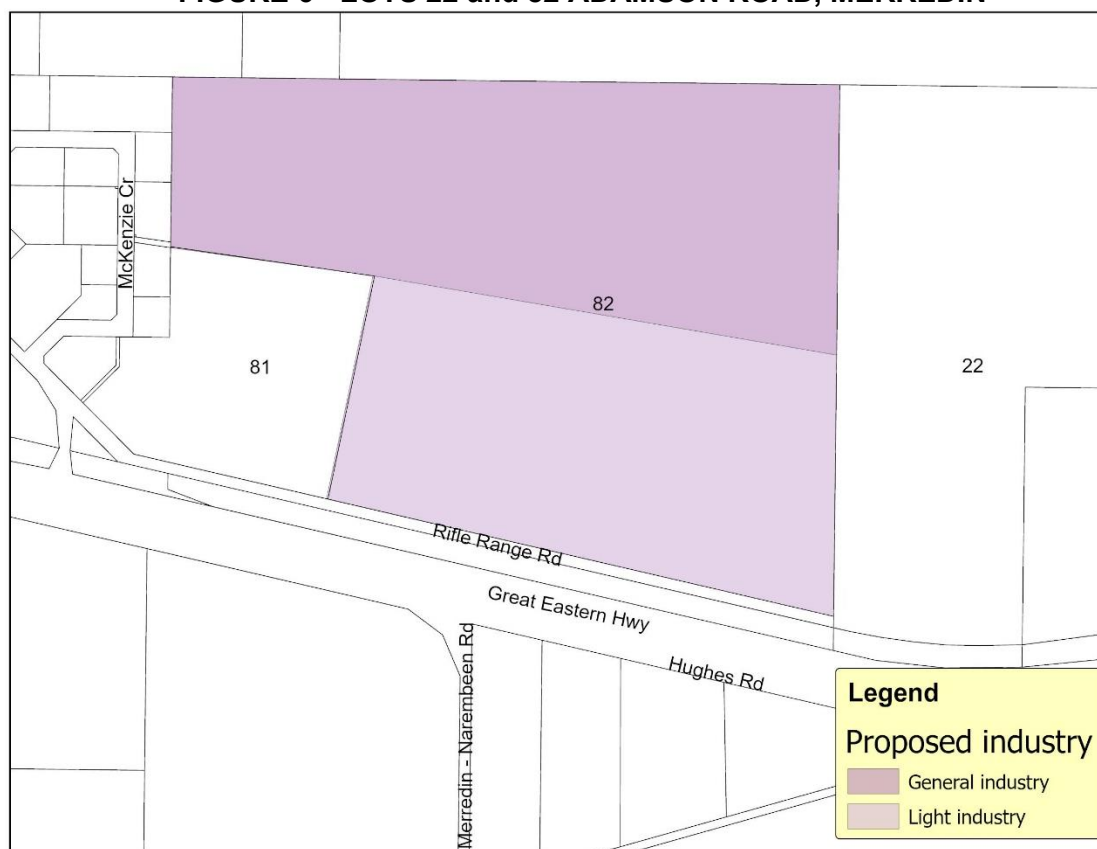
The whole area slopes from east down to the west with a difference of about 30 metres in 1.8 kilometres from east to west. This constitutes a slope of around 1 vertical metre in 60 horizontal metres.

FIGURE 5 - LOTS 601, 503 GOLDFIELDS RD and 602, 504 GAMENYA AVE



Source: Landgate, DPLH, Planwest

FIGURE 6 - LOTS 22 and 82 ADAMSON ROAD, MERREDIN



Source: Landgate, DPLH, Planwest

The southern part of this land is proposed to be zoned 'Light industry' as it is closer to potential sensitive uses south of the highway (zoned 'Rural residential').

Due to the absence of sensitive uses in the northern part of these properties, it is proposed that the area may be better suited for General industry that allows a broader range of industries, including light industries.

Although these proposed industrial areas may provide a supply for the demand for industrial land in the immediate future, it is acknowledged that the Strategy should note that a strategically located industrial area, probably near but outside the Merredin townsite, should be further examined.

The third site, marked an 'Industrial Investigation Area', is located on the north side of Goldfields Road outside the townsite. This is a longer term designation that requires further in-depth analysis to ensure its suitability in terms of impact, prevailing winds, soil types,, access and services.

4.3.6 Strategically Located Industrial Area

The Shire is generally experiencing an increase in demand for industrial land. The zoned land in the Scheme within the Merredin townsite and those areas designated in the Strategy, are being taken up by enterprises requiring a centralised location to service the regional growing demands of the Wheatbelt's activities.

The Merredin Council is currently considering the cost/benefit of commissioning a study to establish the viability of creating a new strategically located industrial area that will satisfy these perceived demands. This study will include an assessment of supply and demand for such industrial uses in the region, options for suitable locations, grant availabilities, and an implementation program and timetable.

The new estate will ensure that the larger scale industries that are area-hungry do not occupy land within the townsite at the expense of the smaller industries that would otherwise be located in the town.

The Council is also keen host a new strategically located industrial area to reduce the risk of larger significant industries locating elsewhere in the region because of the shortage of their specific requirements.

The Council envisages that a new strategically located industrial area will provide land central to the wheatbelt for larger regional activities that may otherwise be lost to the Perth region. The new estate may provide extensive areas for activities that may better deal with potential impacts, or lack of space.

It is anticipated that the benefits of the increased workforce in the region will gravitate to Merredin bringing the collateral advantages of families and building the community.

The domino effect of increased local expenditure will not only profit local operations but achieve certain tipping points to justify a range of more specialised human services to service the growing community.

4.3.7 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, Njaki Njaki Cultural Tours, the Golden Pipeline project and the CBH grain storage facility. Other than these man-made features, the district has a variety of natural assets that are of interest to tourists.

It is estimated some 800,000 vehicles passed through Merredin along Great Eastern Highway every year, 71.2% being cars and the remainder trucks (Source: MRWA 2020-21). 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, and a number of bed and breakfast options, including a number of short-term rentals.

Tourist accommodation is permitted in various zones and local reserves of the Scheme to encourage sensitive application of the policy and flexibility in the location of such accommodation.

In order that the status of tourism in the Shire can be properly assessed it is planned to conduct a survey of tourist accommodation by location, capacity, quality, and adequacy to determine where and how much additional accommodation should be encouraged and supported.

The policy objectives for planning for tourism are to:

- Provide a strategic approach to the sustainable development and management of tourism land uses by ensuring decision-making is guided by a local planning strategy which reflects the demand for local and regional tourism.
- Identify opportunities and protect locations, tourism precincts and sites (existing and potential) where demand for future tourism land use and development have been identified. The character, landscape, visual amenity, economic, social, cultural and environmental values of natural and/or built features that may have future tourism potential should be protected; any negative impacts minimised; and, where possible, values enhanced.
- Plan appropriate infrastructure and services necessary to support tourism development and ensure new and expanded tourism development has secure access to services/infrastructure.
- Recognise that the commercial sustainability of tourism may require flexibility in product mix, site design and risk mitigation approaches. Promote the colocation of complementary and compatible tourism land uses to create identifiable tourism precincts that benefit tourism amenity.
- Ensure land use impacts between tourism activities and other land uses (including residential areas) are appropriately managed.

In November 2024 the WA Planning Commission released a Position Statement - Planning for Tourism. The intent of the policy is to facilitate acceptable development of new and evolving tourism opportunities, provide a high-level of amenity in tourism areas and deliver quality land use planning outcomes.

This Position Statement also incorporates new and amended definitions for various types of tourism land use types. A copy of these new provisions and definitions can be accessed through the DPLH web site using the following link.

<https://www.planning.wa.gov.au/planning-reform/short-term-rental-accommodation-planning-reforms>

These definitions will be incorporated into the Scheme.

4.3.8 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.
- A high proportion of the population participating in the workforce with unemployment consistently below the state average.
- Dominant employment categories are Managers, Technicians and Trades Workers, Machinery Operators and Drivers, and Professionals.
- 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.
- Insufficient 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.
- 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 redevelopment of sites like the old abattoir site and the Merredin airfield.

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 wheatbelt 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 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.

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.6 for residential development. This area is to be retained under current zoning and any future subdivision is to be guided by WAPC policy. 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 the previous 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 DBCA/DPaW; land reserved for water catchment under the management of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation; 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 townsite, are well suited to a recreation reservation, other sites beyond the townsite 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.6 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

Priority natural management areas are hydrological processes, biodiversity, soil, pest and weed control. 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.

4.4.4 Salinity

Salinity is a major environmental issue. 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.

Key initiatives current being undertaken in the 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 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 townsite.

The evaporation ponds and desalination plant is on land reserved in Scheme No.6 for Public purposes. 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 townsite is an issue. The Merredin townsite is within a shallow valley with high ground to the northeast and southern side of the Merredin townsite forming a water shed off which runoff becomes channelled through the lower parts of the townsite, especially the northern portion of the townsite.

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 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 townsite.
- Postponement of urban development with the northern portion of the townsite susceptible to flooding until major flood irrigation works have been complete.
- Upgrading of the existing main drain in the centre of the 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 Biodiversity, Conservation

and Attractions (DBCA) 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 DWER 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 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 DWER 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 DWER.
- 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 Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) 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 townsite.

4.5 Land Supply

4.5.1 Residential

There are several types of residential development, each of which should have an appropriate supply available in various locations.

The **types** include single and grouped dwellings, higher density developments, aged persons accommodation, commercial accommodation, tourist accommodation and workforce accommodation.

The **locations** include townsites, rural areas and specifically designated areas.

The vacant land for single and grouped dwellings is adequately catered for in the zoned land of Merredin Townsite and the other townsites. Density is reliant of effluent disposal such that most townsite areas, other than Merredin, are not connected to a suitable sewerage system. Merredin allows for greater density in and around the commercial centre, however demand would need to be demonstrated before such an investment is committed.

Merredin caters for an expansion of aged accommodation as part of the Omnibus Scheme amendment, however future needs will need to be the subject of a separate study to assess forecast demand, suitable land, private interest and government assistance.

Aged accommodation is not considered appropriate in other townsites because of the lack of suitable support services and the need to centralise these facilities.

Commercial and workforce accommodation are problematic to cater for in a Scheme. Commercial accommodation would require a separate study based on demand, location and support facilities and services.

Likewise, workforce accommodation will be dependent on the location of the workplace, land ownership, land availability, availability of services and other infrastructure. Often these areas need to be separated from regular residential areas due to the likelihood of irregular working hours and the potential to impact existing residential areas.

The existing zoned areas for Highway Service, Commercial and Town Centre are considered adequate to satisfy shorter term demands for commercial accommodation, however workers' accommodation will need to be assessed on demand.

4.5.2 Industrial

Industrial development can be catered for in three groups. These include light industry, general industry and strategically located industrial area. Industrial development is a term that is used for where future industrial development is planned but needs further investigations regarding services and site suitability.

There is a shortage of all these categories in Merredin, however the Omnibus Scheme Amendment looks to partly satisfy this deficiency by expanding the existing light industrial area on Adamson Road on the eastern end of the town.

The northern portion of the land on Adamson Road is proposed to be zoned General Industry as it provides a better buffer from the Rural residential area south of the railway/highway. Additional land to the west part of Merredin on Goldfields Road and Gamenya Avenue will provide for general industrial uses without interrupting the plantation designed to reduce groundwater levels in the townsite.

It is possible that even these areas may not be adequate in the longer term as Merredin is designated as a sub-regional centre and is likely to become a major hub in the Wheatbelt Region. To this end the Council is keen to investigate the potential to establish a strategically located industrial area near the Merredin townsite, with access to major transport routes and essential services with minimal impact on other nearby activities.

A potential site could include a closer investigation of the Merredin airfield site that, on the face of it, possesses many of the features required.

4.5.3 Commercial

The provision of land for commercial, office and shops is considered adequate in the current land allocations in Merredin. Commercial accommodation could be high rise in the existing Town Centre, Commercial and Highway Service zones. Motels, because of their reliance on motor vehicles should be restricted to the Highway Service and Commercial zones.

4.5.4 Services

The provision of land for services and facilities is considered adequate for the immediate future. A revised assessment will be necessary if there is a new funding program or a demonstrated demand for a major facility whether it is for health, education or policing.

4.6 Water and renewable energy advocacy

Merredin is keen to become the region's centre of excellence for renewable energy through building on its existing infrastructure and performance and will support appropriate new initiatives in energy production and storage.

Merredin is uniquely placed to also to be a leader in dryland water management, and should work with the view to reducing its reliance on scheme derived potable water for non-potable water uses, including irrigation of parks and gardens, and commercial or industrial use.

4.7 Digital connectivity

In line with Merredin's ambition to become a centre for digital connectivity, the Council will endeavour to facilitate and provide for, where appropriate, new infrastructure and facilities that will cement the district as a leader in digital connectivity.

4.8 Facilitating regional cooperation

The Council will participate and interact with regional agencies and service providers to ensure that Merredin maintains its cooperation with regional organisations commensurate with its status as a sub-regional centre.

Where possible, the Council will offer to host meetings, consultations and gatherings to display its capacity and willingness to become a regional facilitator.

4.9 Tourism

The Council encourages the establishment of a wide range of tourist attractions and accommodation options in the region. Tourist attractions are to include natural, manmade and cultural places of interest in Merredin and around the shire. Accommodation options include town-based facilities of varying scales, and rural-based venues based on locations of tourist sites.

4.10 Infrastructure development, land assembly and transport logistics

The Council is aware of the servicing issues around the provision of essential services in Merredin. In particular is the provision of adequate water supplies to service the development of new industrial lots.

The Council encourages the respective service agencies to coordinate their provision of planned essential services to reflect the town's future growth pattern as demonstrated through this strategy and the Council's local planning scheme.

The Council will assist, where possible, in the assembly of land for larger development proposals with the end view of supporting such development.

The Merredin airstrip provides a unique opportunity to host a variety of activities as the site is protected with a 500-metre buffer and is not close to any sensitive uses.

The site is extensive and has the capacity for activities that would normally require separation from urban areas.

5.0 REFERENCES AND RESOURCE MATERIAL

Australian Bureau of Statistics Census Data, 2016, 2021, 2022.

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

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

APPENDIX 1 - Areas Susceptible To Flooding Extent of February 1979 Floods

