Introduction

This report has been prepared to support a Planning Scheme Amendment proposal to implement the Coldstream Structure Plan. It focusses on the land at 638-640 Maroondah Highway, Coldstream, which is intended to be rezoned to a General Residential Zone. It is currently zoned part Mixed Used Zone and part Public Use Zone.

The Coldstream Structure Plan recognises this vacant site as a key redevelopment opportunity in the town. The Structure Plan emphasises the need to provide for more diverse housing options on the site (p.14), which should be sited and designed in a way that is sympathetic to the surrounding locality (p.19).

In determining an appropriate form of development, a key consideration is site cover. The proportion of any site taken up by buildings will affect the available space for open space and landscaping. The types of new estate development seen in the more urban areas of Melbourne are arguably not appropriate in Coldstream’s case. Many of these developments have very high site cover proportions with little landscaping opportunities. Boundary to boundary, single story development predominates. In contrast, this redevelopment site requires adequate spacing to the front, rear and sides of new buildings to provide for landscaping opportunities.

This is firstly necessary in order for new development to complement existing residential character in Coldstream. The town’s residential blocks are generally 850-1000 square metres, with large back yards and significant areas available for large trees.

However, a second and perhaps more significant consideration is that future development of this site needs to complement the green wedge character of land to the west of Maroondah Highway, where there are significant views across the Yarra Valley.

The Coldstream Structure Plan recommends building heights of up to three storeys on this site, which should in theory allow for reduced site cover.

In determining an appropriate site cover figure, a balance is needed between placing a value on the town’s residential and landscape character, and the need to realise this site’s redevelopment potential.

This report analyses existing planning controls, and looks at expected site cover ratios for two and three story development. It recommends a discretionary site cover limit of 45 per cent, to be implemented via a new schedule to the General Residential Zone.

Figure 1. Vacant site at 638-640 Maroondah Highway, Coldstream
Planning Controls on Site Cover in the Established Residential Area of Coldstream

Abutting the site to the east and south are established residential areas. These are in a Neighbourhood Residential Zone Schedule 3 (NRZ3) with a Design and Development Overlay Schedule 5 (DDO5) and a Significant Landscape Overlay Schedule 22 (SLO22). The Overlay controls require a planning permit if the building coverage proportion on a site exceeds 30%, or the area of the site covered by impervious surfaces (including buildings) exceeds 50%. If development is kept within these thresholds, no permit may be needed providing other parts of the Scheme are satisfied.

These Overlays were implemented by Planning Scheme Amendment C97 in May 2013. They were based on a Tree Canopy Assessment of Coldstream, which found that the area of Coldstream’s established neighbourhoods abutting the subject site had 30-50% tree canopy cover. Given this, the Overlay’s site cover requirements were created as a way to achieve consistency of new development with existing character.

Figures on Site Cover in Established Residential Area

The average size of the 14 established residential properties with direct abuttal to the subject land is 971sqm. Based on this, the available space for planting on these properties averages to 680sqm per property if the 30% building cover figure is adhered to.

Site Cover at 638-640 Maroondah Highway, Coldstream

In 2018, a Notice of Decision to grant a permit was issued for the site by Council for a 67 lot subdivision (YR-2017/354). This is now the subject of a VCAT appeal.

This subdivision has lots ranging in size from 344 sqm to 527sqm. The average lot size across all 67 lots is 432sqm.

Using this as a model for what may eventuate on this redevelopment site, clearly each subdivided block would be unable to provide an area for planting in the order of the 680sqm average for nearby established residential properties.

How to Determine an Appropriate Site Cover Figure for the Subject Site?

Given that the site cannot match the open space areas of surrounding residential land, suggested criteria in determining an appropriate open space requirement is a figure that:

- Allows ample space for the planting of canopy trees to the front and rear of new buildings;
- Allows for spacing between adjoining buildings
- Allows for driveways, sheds and other features associated with dwellings
- Allows for the efficient development of newly subdivided land with more diverse dwelling typologies than the single storey, detached housing that predominates in the town (i.e. 2 and 3 storey townhouse development).
- Complements the landscape character of
nearby green wedge land.

**What is Ample Space for the Planting of Canopy Trees?**

Council’s Landscape Guidelines direct that in residential areas, at least 50% of new planting should be indigenous to the site’s area, and strongly encourages higher ratios on the basis that this increases the environmental value of any development.

There are two indigenous tree species in Coldstream with heights of 15m or less:

- **Acacia Implexa (Lightwood, Hickory Wattle)**, 5-15m high, 4-7m wide
- **Aloasuarina Littoralis (Black Sheoak)**, 5-12m high, 2-6m wide

Based on this, there is an average width of 6.5 metres needed. Expressed as an area (6.5m squared), this calculates to 42.25sqm.

It is noted that by comparison to the above figure, the State Government’s “Apartment Design Guidelines for Victoria” requires a minimum area of 30 square metres to accommodate one small canopy tree (6-8 metres tall), and a minimum area of 50 square metres for one medium canopy tree (8-12 metres tall) (p.27).

Using the figure of 42.25sqm per canopy tree, approximately 84.5sqm would therefore be needed per property for the provision of two canopy trees - one to the front of a future building and one behind.

**How Much Land is Needed to Achieve Spacing Between Adjoining Buildings?**

In the established residential area of Coldstream, properties typically have spacing between side walls of dwellings and the side property boundaries of 2-4 metres. Allowing for 2 metres either side of future buildings, and based on a building lengths of roughly 15 metres (based on unit/townhouse development elsewhere in Yarra Ranges), this would result in a need for an additional 60sqm.

**Sheds and Other Features?**

Based on unit and townhouse developments in Yarra Ranges, approximately 25sqm should account for this, made up of a 3 metre wide driveway x 4 metre front set back, a 10 sqm shed, and 3 sqm for any other purpose, such as clothes lines or bin storage.

Added to the 84.5sqm needed for canopy trees and the 60sqm needed for spacing between buildings, this results in 144.5sqm. Based on the average proposed subdivision lot size of 432sqm at 638-640 Maroondah Highway, Coldstream, this represents an open space area of 39% with a building site cover up to 61%, very similar to Rescode Standard A5 (Site Coverage Objective).

**How Much Land Area Per Site Does 3 Storey Development Need in Yarra Ranges?**

Considering the issue from the opposite perspective, this report will now examine how much land is required for family dwellings of 2-3 storeys, as opposed to how much is needed to achieve satisfactory landscape character. A comparable development to that foreseen by the DDO20 is the development of Central Avenue, Mooroolbark (former Department of Education land) with 79 dwellings using a 3 storey townhouse typology. The below figures show building coverage.

**Average Building Coverage**

- 2 bedroom dwelling average = 60.2sqm
- 3 bedroom average = 72.2sqm
- 4 bedroom average = 129.2sqm
- Total average = 65.4sqm

**How Much Land is Needed for Driveways,**
Figure 3. Aerial image of Central Avenue, Mooroolbark

Figure 4. Streetscape image of Central Avenue, Mooroolbark

Based on the average lot size of 432 square metres in the recent subdivision application of 638-640 Maroondah Highway, Coldstream, the above site cover figure for a 4 bedroom home would result in a site cover of 29.9 per cent. However, it is noted that the future GRZ land would need to allow also for double storey development to step down to established residential interfaces to the south and east, which may require higher site cover.

Future planning controls would also need to allow for development of lots under the 432sqm average shown in the recent subdivision application at 638-640 Maroondah Highway. The smallest lot proposed is 344sqm.

A quick review of double storey building cover in selected developments elsewhere in Yarra Ranges shows the following:

**19 Mimosa Avenue, Kilsyth**
3 x 4 bedroom dwellings
Average building cover of 144sqm

**9 Blair Street, Lilydale**
2 x 2 bedroom dwellings, 1 x 3 bedroom dwelling, 1 x 4 bedroom dwelling
Average building cover of 82.5sqm

**31 Lomond Avenue, Kilsyth**
3 x 3 bedroom dwellings, 1 x 2 bedroom dwelling
Average building cover of 91.6sqm

The average of the above figures amounts to 106sqm. Based on the average lot size of 432 square metres in the recent subdivision application at 638-640 Maroondah Highway, Coldstream, this would result in a building cover of 24 per cent. Based on the smallest lot size proposed of 344sqm, it would be a building cover of 30.8 per cent.

**Comparison of GRZ with the Existing NRZ of the Established Residential Area**

The difference between the General Residential Zone and the existing Neighbourhood Residential Zone land in the established residential area can be summarised as:
- the established residential areas have planning controls encouraging site cover of up to 30%
- the General Residential Zone has a default site cover maximum of 60% (Rescode), enforceable through both the planning and building systems.

An average between these two figures is 45%.
Conclusions

Overall, this report recommends a site coverage figure of 45% to be applied on 638-640 Maroondah Highway, Coldstream via a new Schedule to the General Residential Zone. As the majority of new dwellings on this site, once subdivided, will not need a planning permit (other than those facing Maroondah Highway or Killara Road, triggered by the DDO20), this 45% requirement will be implemented through the Building Regulations 2018.

In summary, the basis for the above figure is:

- It is not possible for the key redevelopment site in Coldstream to be developed in a way that is entirely consistent with existing residential and landscape character due to the smaller size of the lots to be created.

- The calculations in this report show that the minimum area of open space per site needed to achieve some consistency with the landscape character of the town is roughly 40%. The building cover proportion per site needed for 2-3 storey development is likely to be at least 30%. Between these figures, there is a remaining 30% of each site unaccounted for. Splitting this remaining 30% equally between building coverage and open space figures would result in a maximum building site cover of 45% per site.

- The 45% figure would meet the suggested criteria described in this report for site coverage, and balance the need for landscape character with the opportunity to add to Coldstream’s housing choices through the future development of this site.

- The 45% figure would allow for tree canopy to be established on 638-640 Maroondah Highway, Coldstream in the order of 30-50 per cent, congruent with existing landscape character as identified by the Tree Canopy Assessment of Coldstream described above.

- The 45% figure represents a compromise between the 30% building cover encouraged by the SLO22 and the 60% building cover default of the GRZ.