

# Beech Forest Township Master Plan Report

Prepared for the Colac Otway Shire  
on behalf of the Beech Forest Community

**Adopted May 2004**

*Administered by:*



*Prepared by:*



*Prepared by:*



202 Grant Street  
BALLARAT VIC 3350

Phone (03) 5333 5942  
Fax (03) 5333 5488

Email: [thala@netconnect.com.au](mailto:thala@netconnect.com.au)

**February 16, 2004**

---

# Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Table of Contents</b> .....  | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>1.0 Background</b> .....   | <b>1</b>  |
| 1.1 Project Scope.....  | 1         |
| <b>2.0 Community Consultation</b> .....                                       | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>3.0 Summary of Beech Forest Township Master Plan Recommendations</b> ..... | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>3.0 Beech Forest Community Development Priorities</b> .....                | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>3.0 Implementation - The ‘Next Step’ in the Project</b> .....              | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>4.0 Funding Opportunities</b> .....  | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Appendix One – Beech Forest Township Master Plan</b> .....                 | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Appendix Two – Beech Forest Community Response Sheets:</b> .....           | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>Appendix Three – Community Survey Responses</b> .....                      | <b>12</b> |

## 1.0 Background

In September 2003, the Colac Otway Shire engaged THA Landscape Architects to prepare a Township Master Plan for the town of Beech Forest.

Design proposals and development strategies prepared for the township are based on the project brief prepared by the Colac Otway Shire, combined with community and steering committee meetings, discussions with community members, a comprehensive township site analysis, a review of available literature, use of aerial photography for analysis purposes and our professional response to the visual character and community needs of the township.

This report and associated plans have been prepared as a basis for:

- identifying the existing character of the township;
- establishing a framework for the future direction of urban design development in the township.
- recommended design concepts and actions to be undertaken in the short, medium and long term.

The Township Master Plan has been developed to provide short, medium and long term development opportunities for Beech Forest and is an important tool for sourcing funds for implementation of specific actions. The level of design detailing provided at this stage is low – with concepts and development strategies proposed in a generalised manner only. Further detailing & documentation of design concepts is required to more accurately estimate the cost of works and enable tendering and construction.

The Steering Committee met three times during the study period and was comprised of the following representatives:

Councillor Stephen Hart

Councillor Stuart Hart

Cressi Golding (Business & Community Development Officer - Colac Otway Shire)

Kaz Paton (Arts & Culture Co-ordinator – Colac Otway Shire)

Paula Gardiner (Engineering Department – Colac Otway Shire)

### 1.1 Project Scope

The following points provide a list of key issues that required specific attention as stated in the project brief developed by the Colac Otway Shire:

- Provision for a clear strategic direction for the development of the town in respect to streetscape and public land issues;
- Consideration of the physical and natural environment of the town;
- Recognition and appropriate treatment of heritage assets / heritage character throughout the town;
- Initiative to improve the township environment.

The Township Master Plan for each town should provide and identify:

- A plan indicating the concepts to be developed and actions to be taken; and
- A series of cost effective and sustainable options for action by the community and Council.

## 2.0 Community Consultation

To achieve a clear understanding of the specific needs of the community, the project brief required a high level of community consultation from the commencement of the project and in particular during the analysis stage of the project and the community design assessment and review stage.

A summary of the community consultation methodology undertaken for the town follows:

- Placement of advertisements in local newsletters and postage of flyers to each household advising of the master planning process etc.
- Preliminary steering committee meeting with the specific aim of this meeting being to collect available base information and to be briefed by Council officers in relation to the history, current initiatives, current topics and key community requirements & expectations.
- An initial site inspection / analysis to gain a preliminary understanding of the town prior to attending the public meeting.
- Attendance at a public meeting (September 23, 2003) held at the Beech Forest hall. The primary aim of the initial public meetings was to receive feedback from the community with regard to the way the community felt about their community, the community aims for the future development of their township, likes and dislikes about the township, visions for the future development of the township and specific issues local relating to the community / township development plans. This meeting was attended by Cressi Golding and chaired by Cr. Stephen Hart on behalf of the Colac Otway Shire.
- The secondary aim of the initial public meeting was to explain the project to the community, and present an outline of the design and consultation process and timelines for the project.
- Display of the preliminary Township Concept Plans for a minimum period of 14 days to enable the community to become fully familiar with all recommendations.
- The second public meeting was held at the hall on December 9, 2003. The format of this meeting included an introduction by Cr. Stuart Hart, a short presentation by the consultants to outline the key features of the Township Concept Plan, with the majority of the meeting dedicated to feedback from the community and associated discussion. This approach enabled direct discussion of key issues by the community in the forum of a public meeting. Project resolution and outcomes for the development of public land for Beech Forest were developed in association with the community in a 'workshop' type forum.
- A community survey sheet was developed to obtain specific feedback regarding the preliminary Township Concept Plan. Survey sheets were made available at the start of the concept plan review stage to enable the consultants to obtain a clear indication of the community's perceptions in relation to the Township Concept Plan. The survey response sheets also provided an opportunity for individuals to respond to the township master plan by a method other than a public meeting. The feedback obtained from the survey response sheets and the public meetings was considered and assessed by the consultants, in association with the steering committee. This feedback formed the basis for all modifications / developments made to the Township Master Plan (February 2004). The community response sheets and associated results prepared for Beech Forest are tabled later in this report.
- Based on the survey results, the key projects proposed for Beech Forest were rated based on community feedback to determine the highest to lowest priority.
- Rating of each project into an order of priority provides important information for the Colac Otway Shire for long-term capital works budgeting, and sourcing of funds from external organisations.

### 3.0 Summary of Beech Forest Township Master Plan Recommendations

The following points provide a summary of the key Township Master Plan recommendations for Beech Forest. Refer to the attached reduced plan (Drawing No. 03085 – MO1 & M02) for full framework details.

The following recommendations have been based on community feedback, detailed site analysis and the professional response to Beech Forest by THA Landscape Architects. The consultation process has provided a review opportunity for the Beech Forest community with community responses reflected in the final master plan.

|  |
|--|
| <p><b>Ferguson</b></p> <p>Develop a lookout at Ferguson, in association with the Beechy Line Rail Trail Committee and the Colac Otway Shire Council. The lookout to be developed to display interpretative photos / directional signage / historical information pertaining to the former Beechy Line.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Subject to land owner agreement, develop the eastern corner of the Ferguson intersection (near the existing tennis courts), with iconic tree planting (e.g. Bunya Pines etc.) to recognise the cultural significance of this community gathering space.</i></li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Cliff Young Memorial</b></p> <p>In memory of former local resident, ultra marathon runner Cliff Young and in consultation with family and friends, consider the dedication of a road name or part of the proposed Beechy Line Rail Trail track to be named after Cliff Young.</p>  |
| <p><b>Drainage</b></p> <p>The Colac Otway Shire to liaise with VicRoads and the Beech Forest community to improve the roadside drainage along both sides of Gardner Road / Main Street. Drainage to be designed to overcome flooding of adjoining properties and to stabilise road shoulders. Township drainage is investigated by drainage plans as prioritised by Council.</p>   |
| <p><b>Signage</b></p> <p>Prepare a signage and visitor connections analysis to provide clear traffic directions throughout the Beech Forest township and on approaching roads / intersections to the township, particularly at intersections in the town (i.e. Main St. &amp; Denherts Track).</p>   |
| <p><b>Viewing Points</b></p> <p>In association with VicRoads, develop safe, accessible, vehicle 'viewing spots' along the ridgeline of the Beech Forest - Lavers Hill Road to take advantage of the magnificent Otway views (to the north and the south).</p>  |
| <p><b>Beech Forest Entry</b></p> <p>Liaise with the Colac Otway Shire and adjoining landowners to improve the presence of the town at entry points by continuing the existing 'fingers' of vegetation (located on freehold land) into the road reserves to enhance the Blackwood and Beech tree forest character.</p>  |
| <p><b>Streetscape Planting Theme</b></p> <p>Liaise with the Colac Otway Shire to develop a 'village like' quality to the town through planting strategies including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Development a weed management program to control exotic weeds such as holly before it gets out of control.</i></li> <li>• <i>Remove aged, senescent Cypress, Pine trees within road corridors.</i></li> <li>• <i>Establish clumped indigenous plantings, located near gullies to extend indigenous rainforest vegetation (particularly along the gullies) into the town.</i></li> <li>• <i>Use selected indigenous vegetation (i.e. Beech Trees) to put the 'Beech back into Beech Forest'</i></li> <li>• <i>In strategic locations, such as road corners or adjacent embankments, develop plantings of colourful exotics such as Rhododendrons or Waratahs etc. which will provide additional colour throughout the town. With the exception of small areas of colourful exotic planting (i.e. Rhododendrons) the planting theme throughout the town will be strongly indigenous.</i></li> </ul> |

### **Beech Forest Public Hall**

The Beech Forest Public Hall was originally constructed to overlook the Old Main Road on the south side of the Hall. Since the development of Gardner Road on the north side of the Hall, the entry to the Hall is not prominent. As the Hall is one of the largest and most significant in the district its preservation and development is important to the Beech Forest community.

Proposals to redevelop the Hall and surrounds include:

- *engage an architect to prepare a development plan for the Hall, including refurbishment of structural components of the Hall, particularly the Hall floor;*
- *develop the external surrounds to provide an attractive, functional, clearly defined entry point.*
- *formalised layout of carparking;*
- *development of Hall grounds to increase, promote usage for functions such as significant events, weddings, parties etc. particularly the gardens on the western side of the Hall which could provide a significant opportunity for indoor / outdoor community related events. The gardens may provide a more discrete gathering place for local functions (compared to the John H. Gardner Reserve)*
- *assess health of existing trees. Remove inappropriate species (i.e. Cypress trees) and replace with culturally and visually significant trees.*
- *maximise views of the district to the south from the garden.*
- *locate a safe pedestrian crossing point across Gardner Road in the vicinity of the Hall / Gardner Park.*

Treatment of service road behind hall to include:

- *provision of 45 degree parking along Hall side of road (15 spaces approx.).*
- *one-way traffic management.*
- *ensure ongoing maintenance of War Memorial to preserve this important memorial. Upgrade existing flagpole and install heritage bollards with a chain fence to enhance presence of the site.*
- *manage vegetation along the roadside by removing species which have a weed potential (i.e. Holly) and other shrubs / trees as required to open up this space.*

### **John H. Gardner Reserve**

This site provides a significant and important area of public open space for both locals of Beech Forest and visitors to the town. Proposed park improvements are intended to maximise use and opportunities of the site and include:

- *short term treatment of front of existing Visitor Information Centre to include rendering of the front wall and fixing of information board to wall.*
- *long term improvements include redesign of Centre to 'bring the back to the front' raising the prominence of the local history information and seating area.*
- *formalised carparking to accommodate a number of vehicle types (cars / long vehicles / coaches).*
- *new playground.*
- *lookout (with views to the north).*
- *new shelters to accommodate a number user groups including large groups and families.*
- *selected planting of Beech trees, Blackwoods etc.*
- *expanded historical display of selected unique agricultural pieces relating to the development of Beech Forest over the years within the existing Visitor Information Centre. Antiquities to be treated to ensure ongoing preservation.*
- *maintain existing seating area within Visitor Information Centre and install netting along internal ceiling / trusses to prevent birds nesting over tables.*

Refer to the detail plan on Drawing No. 03085-02.

### **Cultural Heritage**

Proposed developments in the vicinity of, or on the site of the Old Beechy Line should be undertaken with due regard to the cultural significance of the former railway line.

Developments should where possible aim to promote the Old Beechy Line and the objectives of the Beechy Line Rail Trail project, including links to the line from adjoining areas.

- *Remaining features of the line (i.e. earth formations) should be preserved and protected from development works.*

### Footpaths

Proposed recommendations for the footpaths within the Beech Forest township include:

- *1500mm wide asphalt sealed footpath between Old Main Road and Beech Street.*
- *gravel surfaced footpath between the Hall and Buchanan Street via the Beechy Line and Gardner Road which links to the asphalt path leading through the town to the balloon loop.*
- *footpath to be constructed for multi-use purposes including pedestrians, bicycles, prams etc.*
- *proposed pedestrian crossing over Gardner Road to the east of the Public Hall.*
- *footpath to link with the Beechy Line wherever practical.*

### Emergency Services Facility / Traffic Speed

Prepare a feasibility study to determine the most appropriate location of the emergency services facilities. Ensure the study addresses issues such as cost, access, safety, public benefits, training requirements, streetscape values etc.

Reduced traffic speed (to 50km/h) within the town - subject to VICROADS approval.

### Miscellaneous Streetscape / Public Land Proposals

The following points provide a summary of various streetscape recommendations developed in association with the community for Beech Forest.

- *The Colac Otway Shire to liaise with VicRoads and the Beech Forest community to improve the roadside drainage along both sides of Gardner Road / Main Street. Drainage to be designed to overcome flooding of adjoining properties and to stabilise road shoulders.*
- *Beech Forest community to liaise with the Colac Otway Shire to install additional street light(s) mounted to existing poles where required.*
- *Prepare a signage and visitor connections analysis to provide clear traffic directions throughout the Beech Forest township and on approaching roads / intersections to the township.*
- *In association with Colac Otway Shire and Beechy Rail Trail relocate or screen the existing gravel stockpile site located near the Gardner Road – Old Main Road intersection.*
- *Establish indigenous planting along the embankment on the south side of Gardner Road, near the Old Main Road intersection to improve the user experience / amenity of the reserve and strengthen vegetative links between remnant vegetation and the town.*
- *Proposed road re-alignment to 'tighten-up' intersection and improve safety by extending Denherts Track to Main Street and removing angled road intersection. Former road alignment to be replanted with selected indigenous species. Indigenous plantings to become like 'fingers' of rainforest, extending into the town, to 'bring the Beech back into Beech Forest'.*
- *All proposed plantings / species throughout the township to be reviewed and approved by the Country Fire Authority.*
- *Provide clear orientation signage links between the John Gardner reserve and the Beechy Line balloon loop.*
- *Negotiate with Hancocks Victorian Plantations to establish indigenous vegetation within the depot area to screen the depot / sheds for vehicles and pedestrians and improve the amenity of the township.*
- *Promote indigenous tree and shrub plantings on all approaches to town to highlight local flora.*
- *In association with the Beechy Line Rail Trail, develop a connection to Ditchley Park with signage to indicate significant heritage values, public toilets etc. Promote the Beechy Line Rail Trail link along the original route (subject to landowner agreement / negotiation) to link Beech Forest with Ditchley Park. Steep sections along this part of the trail may require earthworks, boardwalks etc.*
- *Establish indigenous vegetation within the railway reserve between Gardner Road and Ditchley Park with strong connections to remnant vegetation within the drainage lines. Indigenous revegetation along former railway line subject to landowner / Beechy Line Rail Trail Committee approval.*
- *Establish selected exotic trees within the road reserve to enhance the entry to historical Ditchley Park.*

### Maintenance

In association with the Beech Forest Progress Association and the Colac Otway Shire Council, prepare a maintenance program for the town to address mowing regimes / public rubbish collection / treatment of stormwater drains / toilet cleaning and general township maintenance.

### 3.0 Beech Forest Community Development Priorities

The following table provides a summary of the Beech Forest township development priorities (ranked in order from highest to lowest priority) based on feedback from the community response sheets (16 survey sheets returned) completed by the Beech Forest community during the public consultation and review stage of the Township Master Plan.

The ranking of projects was based on the priority scores provided by individual community members. The highest priority (ranking 1) was scored with 13 points (the number of key projects identified by the consultants on the survey form) and the lowest priority was scored with 1 point. Projects ranking 2 to 12 were scored using the same scoring system. Total scores for each project were tallied and ranked in order from highest to lowest score – therefore reflecting the order shown below.

The prioritised project list will assist the Colac Otway Shire in understanding the Beech Forest community's expectations for the implementation of the streetscape works, assist in budgeting for capital works and for applying for capital works funding to assist in the implementation of the streetscape plan.

| Ranking | Key Master Plan Element  |
|---------|--|
| 1       | Improvements to the roadside drainage throughout the town – in particular along both sides of Gardner Road / Main Street.  |
| 2       | Develop a streetscape planting theme which includes assessment and removal of inappropriate / aging vegetation and replacement with clumped indigenous plantings throughout the town (including Beech Trees) with strategic plantings of colourful non indigenous plantings (including Rhododendrons and / or Waratahs).   |
| 3       | Improved tourist information signage throughout the town.  |
| 4       | Develop the John H. Gardner Reserve to allow this public open space to better cater for a range of groups including family and club gatherings. Improvements include new carparking, a playground, lookout and picnic shelters, additional indigenous planting and an expanded historical display within the existing Visitor Information Centre.  |
| 5       | Engage an architect / building designer to prepare a development plan for the Beech Forest Public Hall to ensure adequate works / funds are committed to the Hall and surrounds to ensure it fulfils the purpose of a community meeting place into the future. Significant internal and external works are needed to bring the Hall to an adequate and safe standard to allow for the complete range of public / community functions to be held at the Hall. |
| 6       | Proposed carparking, tree planting and improved landscape / public amenity and interpretative signage improvements within the Beech Line Turning Circle site including a display of relevant railway relics.   |
| 7       | Improved entries into Beech Forest by strengthening the existing 'fingers' of indigenous vegetation into the road reserves.  |
| 8       | Proposed construction of a 1500mm wide multipurpose footpath along Main Street between Old Main Road and Beech Street, including a pedestrian crossing over Main Street (near the Hall) and linking the path into the proposed John H Gardner reserve re-development.  |
| 9       | Proposed re-alignment of the Denherts Track / Main Street intersection to improve traffic safety and the township amenity of this area.  |
| 10      | Development of a low-key self-sufficient camping reserve including a small amenities block, a basic camp kitchen and powered / un-powered camp sites. The development of the camp site to be subject to a feasibility study.   |
| 11      | Upgrading of the service road to the south of the Public Hall including angle parking, one-way traffic flow, street tree management and maintenance / enhancement of the War Memorial.   |
| 12      | As a long term aim, in association with the Beechy Line Rail Trail Committee develop a pedestrian link along, or as close as possible to the correct alignment of the Beechy Line between Gardner Road and Ditchley Park. This link may require significant infrastructure (i.e. boardwalks) and revegetation but could become a feature of the walk.  |
| 13      | Commission and install a statue of Cliff Young as a memorial to the ultra marathon feats of this former local identity.  |
| 14      | Other (refer to Colac Otway Shire for survey information).   |

### 3.0 Implementation - The 'Next Step' in the Project

Whilst community interest in the township master plan has been strong, implementation works should commence as soon as possible to harness this community interest / enthusiasm including labour, materials and equipment resources.

The Colac Otway Shire should be fully informed of all intended projects to maximise potential greater outcomes from funds contributed by the Shire or external funding organisations and project management by the Shire be costed into projects.

The implementation of each project will need to be 'driven' by the community. Council will not force communities to implement projects, however they will provide significant support to communities who demonstrate they want, and are willing to contribute to streetscape projects.

The level of detail provided in the Township Master Plan is not suitable for construction purposes. As part of the planning for the project an allowance should be made for further design development and project documentation to ensure suitable detail is available for contractors to quote and build from.

### 4.0 Funding Opportunities

The proposed recommendations for the development of the Township Master Plan for Beech Forest are diverse and will require a diverse range of skills to complete.

The advantages of having a diverse range of implementation strategies include:

- Allowing a greater number of people with a broader range of skills to be involved in the project;
- The opportunity of funding the project from a broader funding base;
- Allowing separate community groups the opportunity of working on quite separate projects with the common aim of implementing the plan – thus creating a greater sense of community ownership of both the plan and the on-ground works.

It is important that community understands that the successful implementation of the masterplan will be based on a partnership between:

- The community including individuals and community groups;
- The Colac Otway Shire;
- External funding organisations including State and Federal Government Departments; and
- LandCare and Catchment Management Authorities.

Organisations that may fund parts of the Urban Design Framework Plans include:

- Natural Heritage Trust
- Greening Australia
- Colac Otway Shire
- VICROADS
- Corporate sponsorship
- Federation Community Projects Program
- Sports and Recreation Victoria
- Department of Infrastructure – Pride of Place Funding
- Tourism Victoria
- Regional Infrastructure Development Fund - Department of State and Regional Development).

For LandCare related funding applications the Colac Otway Shire should contact the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority to ensure the proposed projects are linked to projects with regional priorities, thus ensuring a higher project priority and improving funding opportunity.

## **Appendix One – Beech Forest Township Master Plan**





## **Appendix Two – Beech Forest Community Response Sheets:**

# Beech Forest Concept Plan Community Response Sheet

The Beech Forest Township Concept Plan is in the community review stage.

**A public meeting will be held at the  
Beech Forest Hall at  
8.00pm on Tuesday December 9, 2003**

The purpose of the public meeting will be to receive responses from the community in relation to the draft preliminary streetscape / public land proposals for Beech Forest.

For those people that cannot attend the public meeting this Community Response Sheet allows you to formally respond to the proposed development strategies and also assist as a community in prioritising the key elements of the plan. All comments will be considered and assessed by the Steering Committee and the plans modified as required to reflect community consensus.

**Positive Aspects of the Beech Forest Township Concept Plan:**

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Negative Aspects of the Beech Forest Township Concept Plan:**

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Any other Suggestions or Changes That Should be made to the Plan?**

.....  
.....  
.....

**Priorities for the Development of the Beech Forest Township Concept Plan:**

Please insert a number from highest (1) to lowest (13) priority for the implementation of key elements of the plan:

- Improvements to the roadside drainage throughout the town – in particular along both sides of Gardner Road / Main Street.
- Improved tourist information signage throughout the town.
- Improved entries into Beech Forest by strengthening the existing ‘fingers’ of indigenous vegetation into the road reserves.
- Develop a streetscape planting theme which includes assessment and removal of inappropriate / aging vegetation and replacement with clumped indigenous plantings throughout the town (including Beech Trees) with strategic plantings of colourful non indigenous plantings (including Rhododendrons and / or Waratahs).
- Engage an architect / building designer to prepare a development plan for the Beech Forest Public Hall to ensure adequate works / funds are committed to the Hall and surrounds to ensure it fulfils the purpose of a community meeting place into the future. Significant internal and external works are needed to bring the Hall to an adequate and safe standard to allow for the complete range of public / community functions to be held at the Hall.
- Upgrading of the service road to the south of the Public Hall including angle parking, one-way traffic flow, street tree management and maintenance and enhancement of the War Memorial.
- Develop the John H. Gardner Reserve to allow this public open space to better cater for a range of groups including family and club gatherings. Improvements include new carparking, a playground, lookout and picnic shelters, additional indigenous planting and an expanded historical display within the existing Visitor Information Centre.
- Commission and install a statue of Cliff Young as a memorial to the ultra marathon feats of this former local identity.
- Proposed re-alignment of the Denherts Track / Main Street intersection to improve traffic safety and the township amenity of this area.
- As a long term aim, in association with the Beechy Line Rail Trail Committee develop a pedestrian link along, or as close as possible to the correct alignment of the Beechy Line between Gardner Road and Ditchley Park. This link may require significant infrastructure (i.e. boardwalks) and revegetation but could become a feature of the walk.
- Proposed construction of a 1500mm wide multipurpose footpath along Main Street between Old Main Road and Beech Street, including a pedestrian crossing over Main Street (near the Hall) and linking the path into the proposed John H Gardner reserve re-development.
- Proposed carparking, tree planting and improved landscape / public amenity and interpretative signage improvements within the Beech Line Turning Circle site including a display of relevant railway relics.
- Development of a low-key self-sufficient camping reserve including a small amenities block, a basic camp kitchen and powered / un-powered camp sites. The development of the camp site to be subject to a feasibility study.
- (Other) .....
- (Other) .....

We thank you for your valued input in completing this form.

For further information regarding this plan please contact Cressi Golding at the Colac Otway Shire (tel. 5232 9450) or David Hay or Jenni Kelynack at THA Landscape Architects – Ballarat (tel. 5333 5942).

***Please return this sheet and any other comments by:*** *December 9, 2003*

***To:*** *The Beech Forest Pub or bring this form to the public meeting.*

## **Appendix Three – Community Survey Responses (Summary Responses)**

## Beech Forest Community Survey Responses

Number of response sheets returned: 16

The community response sheets were designed to provide THA Landscape Architects, the Colac Otway Shire and the Beech Forest community with a summary of the opinions expressed by individuals in relation to the proposals developed for the Beech Forest Township Master Plan. It is important to note that the following comments are reflective of individuals and do not necessarily reflect the views of the entire community or the Colac Otway Shire. All comments provided by the community on the response sheets are listed to provide an accurate record of community views in relation to the proposals.

Modifications to the plans have been made following community feedback at the public review meeting (December 9, 2003) and from feedback from the community response sheets. Modifications to the plans are based on community consensus, rather than individual responses.

The following provides a summary of the notes provided by the Beech Forest community from the Beech Forest Streetscape Concept Plan Community Response Sheet. Repetition of some notes occurs – this has intentionally been retained to provide an accurate indication of community responses. Community responses are generally tabled below as they have been submitted.

### Positive Aspects of the Beech Forest Township Master Plan:

- It all looks very good.
- Most of it is really good, particularly – realigning Denherts Track intersection, car parking at J H Gardner Reserve, car parking at hall, development of balloon loop and tree removal / planting.
- Everything especially: the proposed work to be done on the Beech Forest Hall including the car park and land adjacent to war memorial etc, to benefit community members directly. The proposed changes to the J H Gardner reserve to benefit visitors directly, community members indirectly.
- Improvement to footpaths and drainage.
- Update and landscaping of info centre
- Landscaping and parking area of old playground.
- The preparation of long term plan is very worthwhile and should result in the area becoming more attractive in which to live.
- Creating an entrance on the Western side of the existing building is a good idea but it should have a door that can shut as the wind from the west is very severe.

### Negative Aspects of the Township Master Plan

- Can't see any.
- Please don't remove existing trees
- Too cold for caravan park as suggested
- Area west of information centre is subject to flooding most of winter at present – needs very good drainage.
- None – The Cliff Young issue (memorial) has been somewhat resolved, all that's required now is time and funding.
- Too many little buildings and covered walkways will detract from the open area of the BF Common
- Rhododendrons are poisonous to wandering stock
- Should keep indigenous plantings with names attached for interest.
- The old Beechy sign and the milepost should be left where they are.
- The proposed camping area adjacent to the hotel should be restricted to a couple of bays for campervans. This area is very exposed and unsuitable for tents. A much more attractive and sheltered campsite is available at Dow's farm, Ferguson and the owner of that property should be encouraged to seek formal registration of that area as a bush camping site.
- Cliff Young should be remembered rather than exploited.

### Other Suggestions or Changes to the Plan

- An attractive screen or notice board / feature to disguise the entrance to the toilets.
- Street lighting & footpaths a priority.
- Only what we discussed at meeting ( x 2)
- More playground equipment – preferably durable plastic type
- Memorial / information footpath – historical sites or memories of BF etched into the footpath and /or large pavers will encourage people to walk further and prevent such information being vandalised.
- The pathway should be extended to service the houses on the Western entrance to the town.
- The machinery needs to be treated to prevent further deterioration.
- A project to install interpretive signage is required.
- In the long term Midway should be encouraged to find a different site for their depot rather than having it in the centre of the township. They own land on the Eastern outskirts of the town which would be suitable. Their current site could then be developed as housing or commercial shops. In the meantime their depot requires screening plantings adjoining the road.
- No additional structures should be established unless the construction is accompanied by a long term funded maintenance plan.
- I cannot express too strongly that the existing maintenance of public infrastructure in the township is inadequate. Currently the township is experiencing an upsurge in tourism related in large part to the Otway Fly so that the existing facilities, previously utilised, are now grossly overloaded. Examples:
  - *Toilet cleaning is totally inadequate. These should be inspected daily and cleaned as required. A local resident as part time cleaner might be the answer. Water supply to the hand basins and cisterns is a mere trickle. One of the cisterns in the ladies' toilets takes about 5 minutes to fill. Problems with the taps are ongoing either no or too little water flow. This problem has existed for about 5 years.*
  - *Grass around the village common, hall and public areas needs mowing weekly during growing season.*
  - *The hall has been out of operation for 12 months, due to lack of will in decision making re repair of floor. Decision making within the Shire Offices needs speeding up.*
  - *Long grass on sloping area adjacent to the Visitor Centre and amongst the trees is an eyesore and fire hazard. We don't need more trees as much as better maintenance of the existing plantings.*
  - *Ragwort and blackberries are out of control near the hotel.*
  - *Coordinated maintenance by the Shire and the Beechy Rail Trail committees.*
  - *The Shire storage dump at the Western entrance to the town should be screened from view.*
  - *District residents are currently carrying out much of the maintenance and they can be expected to continue to provide a proportion of the necessary maintenance, but the character of the town is rapidly changing from leisurely rural village with a few visitors to a busy tourist centre with many non resident visitors. We can cope with our needs but need assistance with the visitors.*

### Other Priorities

- Lookout areas where cars can safely pull over to appreciate the views between Ferguson and Beech Forest.
- Recognition of Cliff Young at the town entrance.
- Is it possible to save and recognise the Young house on the back road?