



Colac Otway Shire

Neighbourhood Safer Places Plan

Bushfire Places of Last Resort

1 September 2021



Document Format

This document has been created by using the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) draft Municipal Neighbourhood Safer Places – Interim Assessment Guidelines 2009 as the base document.

Document Control Information

Plan Name	Colac Otway Shire Neighbourhood Safer Places Plan
Department	Environment and Infrastructure
Business Unit	Environment and Community Safety
File Location	Content Manager F21/5322
Document Status	
Version	10.0
Version Date	01/09/2021
Next Review Date	August 2022

Document Status and Amendment History

Version	Date Revised	Sections Revised	Plan Updated By
1.0	8/6/2010	Plan developed	Wendie Fox
1.01	May 2012	Plan reviewed – Inclusion of Disable Access (Section 2)	Wendie Fox
1.01	May 2013	Plan reviewed	Wendie Fox
2.0	27/3/2015	Inclusion of NSP locations and maps	Peter Aston
3.0	20/7/2015	Complete plan update	Wendie Fox
3.01	05/04/2016	Appendix 6 – NSP Location Maps	Wendie Fox
4.0	07/08/2017	Appendix 5 - NSP Annual Audit requirements.	Tristan Crews
5.0	27/03/2018	Addition of Cressy NSP-BPLR	Tristan Crews
6.0	05/01/2019	Updated Annual Audits	Tristan Crews
7.0	13/08/2019	Updated Annual Audits	Tristan Crews
8.0	24/02/2020	Addition of Barwon Downs & Beech Forest	Tristan Crews
8.0	24/02/2020	Updated Annual Audits	Tristan Crews
9.0	15/09/2020	Updated Annual audits	Tristan Crews
10.0	01/09/2021	Updated Annual Audits	Tristan Crews

Contents

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	4
STRUCTURE OF THIS PLAN	5
SECTION 1- FLOWCHARTS	6
1.1 Overview of the process for establishing and maintaining NSPs identified and assessed prior to 31 December 2009	6
1.2 Overview of the process for identifying, assessing, establishing, maintaining and decommissioning NSPs from January 2010	7
SECTION 2 - SUMMARY OF STEPS FOR IDENTIFYING, ASSESSING, ESTABLISHING, MAINTAINING AND DECOMMISSIONING NSPS	8
2.1 Identification of Potential NSP Locations	8
2.2 CFA Assessment and Certification of potential NSP locations	11
2.3 Council Assessment of NSPs	13
2.4 Council Designation of Neighbourhood Safer Places	19
2.5 Establishment of Neighbourhood Safer Places	20
2.6 Maintaining Neighbourhood Safer Places	21
2.7 Annual Inspections of Neighbourhood Safer Places	22
2.8 Decommissioning of Neighbourhood Safer Places	23
SECTION 3 – SIGNAGE GUIDELINES FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD SAFER PLACES	24
APPENDICIES	27
Appendix 1 - Council Neighbourhood Safer Places Plan Criteria – Assessment Tool	28
Appendix 2 – Neighbourhood Safer Place Site Assessment Report Template	31
Appendix 3 – Annual Neighbourhood Safer Place Assessment Checklist	47
Appendix 4 – List of Council designated Neighbourhood Safer Places	49
Appendix 5 – Records of Council designated Neighbourhood Safer Places Annual Assessment Audits	50
Appendix 6 – Maps of Council designated Neighbourhood Safer Places	51

Introduction and Background

In its Interim Report, the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission recommended that Neighbourhood Safer Places, or '**NSPs**', be identified and established to provide persons in bushfire affected areas with a place of last resort during a bushfire¹.

In response to this recommendation, the Victorian Government introduced the *Emergency Services Legislation Amendment Act 2009 (ESLA Act)* which amends the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958 (CFA Act)* and the *Emergency Management Act 1986 (EM Act)*. The effect of these amendments requires the Country Fire Authority (**CFA**) to certify NSPs against the Country Fire Authority's Fire Rating Guidelines², and Councils within Victoria to identify, designate, establish, maintain and decommission NSPs in their municipal districts.

NSPs are not community fire refuges or emergency relief centres. NSPs are **Places of Last Resort** during the passage of a bushfire, and are intended to be used by persons whose primary bushfire plans have failed. NSPs are places of relative safety only. They do not guarantee the survival of those who assemble there. Furthermore, there may be serious risks to safety encountered in travelling and seeking access to NSPs during bushfire events. Depending on the direction of a particular fire, it may not be 'a safer place' to assemble than other places within the municipal district. At that point in time it almost certainly will be a matter for individual judgement and decision, as to which if any NSP a person or persons should travel in the presence of fire.

NSPs will be assessed by the CFA as providing some protection from immediate risk of direct fire attack, but not necessarily from other risks, such as flying embers. Where a potential NSP is used for an operational purpose at many times and meets the CFA's criteria, then the CFA considers that those operational activities will be able to continue (to the extent practicable in the circumstances) while the place is being used as an NSP.

This Plan is a Neighbourhood Safer Places Plan (NSPP) for the purposes of the legislation, and contains guidelines, which have been developed by the Municipal Association of Victoria (**MAV**) to assist the Council in:

- identifying;
- designating;
- establishing;
- maintaining; and
- decommissioning

Places as Neighbourhood Safer Places within its municipal district.

This Plan also identifies other matters that should be taken into account in identifying, designating, establishing and maintaining NSPs within the municipality.

Once this Plan has been adopted, Council must make it, and any documents incorporated into it, available at the Council's municipal offices for public inspection during normal office hours free of charge in accordance with section 50F(4)(b) of the CFA Act. It must also be published on Council's website in accordance with section 50F(4)(a) of the CFA Act.

¹Recommendation 8.5, 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Interim Report

²The CFA Act refers to "Country Fire Authority Assessment Guidelines". For ease of reference in the context of this MNSP Plan, these guidelines are referred to as the CFA Fire Rating Guidelines.

Structure of this Plan

This Plan contains a step-by-step methodology for the Council to follow in relation to identifying, designating, establishing, maintaining and decommissioning NSPs. Council must consider each of the factors set out in this Plan and consider other factors, which are specific to Council's circumstances, including the resources available to Council.

This Plan has been divided up into three distinct sections:

Section 1

Contains flow charts, which summarise:

- The process utilised in 2009-2010 for the identification, assessment, designation and establishment of NSPs within the municipal district.
- The process for Council to adopt when identifying, designating, establishing and maintaining NSPs within the municipal district from January 2010 onwards.

Section 2

Contains a more detailed summary of the steps for identifying, assessing, establishing, maintaining and decommissioning NSPs as summarised in the flow chart found in section 1.2.

Section 3

Contains details of the content of signage that Council is required to erect at designated NSP locations.

Appendix 1 – Council Neighbourhood Safer Place Plan Criteria Assessment Tool

Appendix 2 – Neighbourhood Safer Place Site Assessment Report Template

Appendix 3 – Annual Neighbourhood Safer Place Assessment Checklist

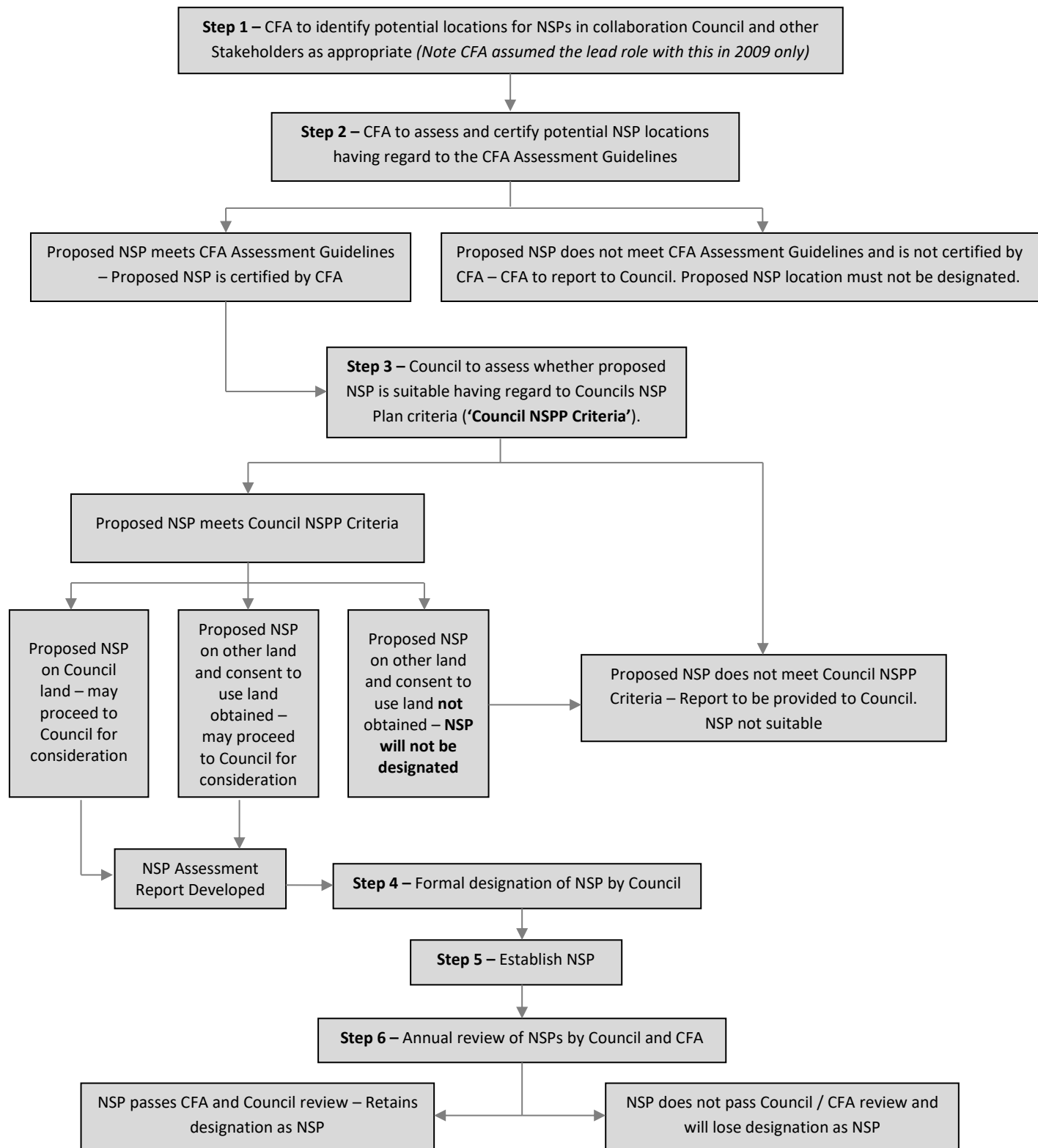
Appendix 4 – List of Council designated Neighbourhood Safer Places

Appendix 5 – Table recording details of Neighbourhood Safer Places annual audit

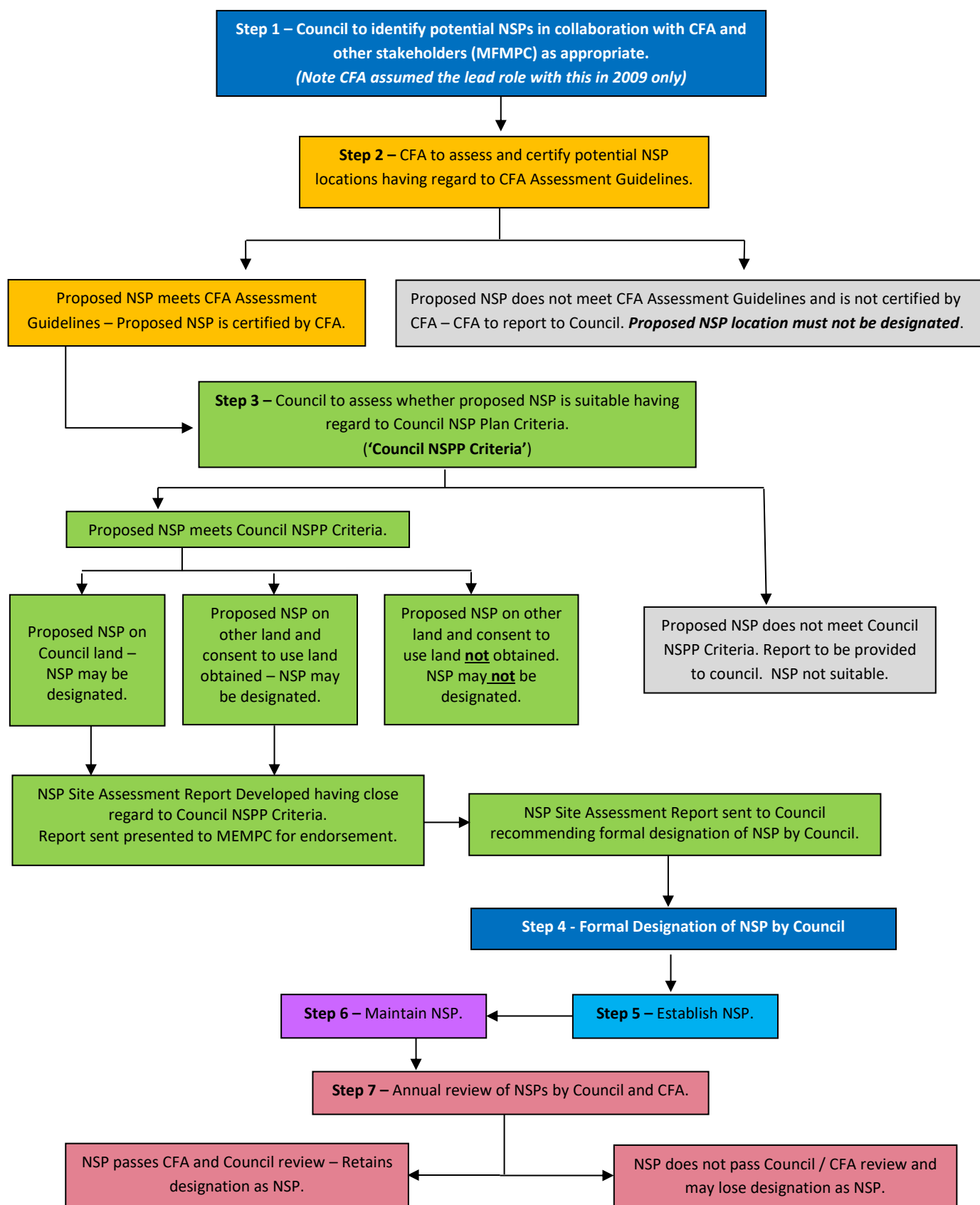
Appendix 6 – Maps of Council designated Neighbourhood Safer Places

Section 1- Flowcharts

1.1 Overview of the process for establishing and maintaining NSPs identified and assessed prior to 31 December 2009



1.2 Overview of the process for identifying, assessing, establishing, maintaining and decommissioning NSPs from January 2010



Section 2 - Summary of steps for identifying, assessing, establishing, maintaining and decommissioning NSPs

2.1 Identification of Potential NSP Locations

2.1.1 Responsibility for identifying potential NSP locations

For the 2009-2010 fire season, CFA assumed the lead responsibility for identifying potential NSPs. In Colac Otway Shire, CFA did this in consultation with representatives from Council, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (**DELWP**), Parks Victoria, Victoria Police, Barwon Water and Powercor.

The initial focus was to identify potential NSPs in each town within the municipality that had been assessed using the Victorian Fire Risk Register – Bushfire (**VFRR**) tool, as having a risk rating of Extreme and a priority ranking of 1A, 1B or 1C, and for which CFA were developing a Township Protection Plan (now known as Community Information Guides). These towns included; Barongarook, Barwon Downs, Forrest, Carlisle River, Kawarren, Lavers Hill, Marengo, Kennett River, Beech Forest and Wye River/Separation Creek.

From 2010 onwards, Council has been responsible for identifying potential NSPs within its municipal district. Section 50G of the CFA Act requires Council to identify potential NSP locations.

2.1.2 Identification process

Colac Otway Shire will undertake the identification of potential NSP locations in collaboration with the Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee (**MFMP**C).

Colac Otway Shire will employ a staged risk based approach in the identification of potential NSPs and will utilise the expertise of the MFMP; a sub-committee of the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (**MEM**PC) in this process.

The process of NSP identification is ongoing. Future identification of potential NSPs will follow the same approach as previously mentioned with the focus moving to townships assessed as having a lower risk rating and priority ranking.

Townships identified and assessed using the VFRR as Extreme and Very High risk rating will continue to have assessments undertaken with the intention of finding a suitable site for an NSP or other shelter option.

2.1.3 When do potential NSPs need to be identified?

The Colac Otway Shire will undertake to identify potential NSPs by 31 May each year. This should allow sufficient time for:

- firstly (CFA Certification) - assessment and certification of the potential NSP by the CFA;
- secondly (Council Designation) - designation of the potential NSP location by Council; and

- thirdly (Establishment) - subject to the outcome of the assessment and designation process, establishing the NSP, including the erection of signage and other steps by Council.

The process of NSP identification is ongoing. Following each fire season, Council should assess whether any additional potentially suitable NSP locations can be identified within the municipal district.

2.1.4 Factors to be considered when initially identifying potential NSP locations

When identifying potential NSP locations, Council should consider matters such as:

- the environment surrounding the potential NSP;
- what other uses are made of the potential NSP, and whether or not those uses could be inconsistent with its designation as an NSP;
- whether the land on which the potential NSP is located is Council-owned or non-Council owned land;
- whether there are clear means of access and egress to and from the potential NSP; and
- whether the potential NSP is in close proximity to population centres.

Council's identification of potential NSP locations should be undertaken by the Municipal Emergency Resource Officer (**MERO**) and the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer (**MFPO**), with input from other Council personnel (such as Infrastructure Services Manager, or equivalent) as appropriate.

2.1.5 Who should undertake the identification of potential NSPs?

Under the CFA Act, all Councils whose municipal district is located wholly or partly in the 'country area' of Victoria are required to identify and designate NSPs.

Council should ensure that the following actions are completed prior to making any determinations regarding the assessment, designation and certification of NSPs:

- A risk assessment considering the matters outlined in section 2.1.4 (above) must be undertaken by Council's Municipal Emergency Resource Officer (**MERO**) and Municipal Fire Prevention Officer (**MFPO**) (which may be initiated through the Municipal Fire Prevention Committee or the MFMPC as a sub-committee of the MEMPC), using appropriate available information such as Integrated Fire Management Planning data and/or VFRR data and any applicable Township Protection Plans.
- The MEMPC must review the results of the risk assessment, as summarised in the MERO's and MFPO's report prepared under section 2.1.4 (above), and submit a written report to Council with a recommendation as to whether CFA assessment and Council designation of the potential NSP is warranted in the area under consideration.
- Council should formally review the MEMPC report. Council should only decide that NSP assessment and designation is not warranted in the area under consideration where Council is satisfied that:

- The risk assessment undertaken by the MERO and MFPO has addressed the matters raised in section 2.1.4 of this NSPP; and
- The MEMPC has recommended that assessment and designation of the NSP is not warranted.

2.2 CFA Assessment and Certification of potential NSP locations

2.2.1 Who is responsible for assessing potential NSPs against guidelines issued by the CFA?

Under section 50G(5) of the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* (6228), the Country Fire Authority (CFA) is responsible for assessing potential NSP locations against the CFA Fire Rating Guidelines. This will be done by appropriately and experienced CFA personnel.

Council is not responsible for the assessment and certification of potential NSPs by the CFA.

2.2.2 What criteria must CFA take into account in assessing potential NSP locations?

In assessing potential NSP locations which have been identified by the CFA (for the 2009-2010 fire season), or by Councils (from 2010–onwards), the CFA must consider the criteria and other considerations as set out in the CFA's Fire Rating Guidelines as issued from time to time by the CFA.

The key matters to be considered by the CFA under current Fire Rating Guidelines criteria are:

a) For Open Spaces

- the appropriate separation distance between the outer edge of the of the potential NSP and the nearest fire hazard (**Buffer Zone**)³ should be at least 310 metres; or
- an alternative Buffer Zone distance may be prescribed by the CFA, which will ensure that the maximum potential radiant heat impacting on the site is no more than 2 kw/m².

b) For Buildings

- the Buffer Zone between the outer edge of the building and the nearest fire hazard should be at least 140 metres; or
- an alternative Buffer Zone distance may be prescribed by the CFA, which will ensure that the maximum potential radiant heat impacting on the building is no more than 10 kw/m².

2.2.3 When does the CFA assess potential NSPs?

Following identification of a place which may be suitable as an NSP, the potential NSP is assessed by the CFA as soon as practicable. This is likely to occur shortly after identification.

2.3.4 When does the CFA certify potential NSP locations?

Once the assessment of a potential NSP is completed by the CFA, the CFA will certify the potential NSP if the place meets the CFA Fire Rating Guidelines criteria. The CFA will provide a copy of the CFA certification in relation to a potential NSP to Council upon completion of certification, and a summary of the criteria and assumptions upon which the assessment is based.

Council should ensure that the boundaries of both the potential NSP as certified by the CFA, and any Buffer Zone surrounding it, are clearly defined in the CFA assessment.

³The CFA Guidelines refer to "separation distances". However, for ease of understanding, the term "Buffer Zone" is used throughout this MNSP Plan

For reasons of community safety, it is a requirement of the CFA Act, and it is also Council policy, that only those places assessed and certified by the CFA may be considered for designation as NSPs by the Council. The Council must not designate a place as an NSP unless it has CFA certification.

2.3 Council Assessment of NSPs

Factors applied by Council in assessing the suitability of a place as a potential NSP

Council must assess each potential NSP in accordance with the factors outlined in the following points to determine whether it is suitable to be designated as a NSP. Unless a potential NSP satisfies each of the following criteria outlined below, it should not be designated by Council as a NSP. [Appendix 1 - Council Neighbourhood Safer Place Plan Criteria Assessment Tool](#) contains an audit tool that Council will use to assist in undertaking a preliminary assessment of potential NSP locations against the criteria in the NSP Plan.

The Municipal Fire Prevention Officer in consultation with the MERO will be responsible for coordinating the Council preliminary assessment of all potential NSPs utilising the expertise of the MFMP.

The factors to determine the suitability of the place as a NSP are as follows (**Council NSP Plan Criteria**):

2.3.1 Consent and rights of access

There must be appropriate land access and tenure arrangements so that Council has the right to:

- use the place as a NSP;
- access the site and surrounding areas for maintenance; and
- erect appropriate signage at the NSP, and any additional NSP information signage that may be required.

Council Land

If the potential NSP is on land owned, managed or controlled by Council, appropriate rights of land access and tenure are unlikely to be an issue. However, Council will need to ensure that where Council land is leased or licensed to a third party; it must be possible to put in place appropriate arrangements on reasonably satisfactory and acceptable terms with the tenant or licensee permitting Council to use the land as a potential NSP. In taking these matters into account, Council should consider what alternative uses or arrangements may be made, whether temporarily or semi-permanently, of land under Council control or management.

Crown Land

If the potential NSP is on Crown land not owned or controlled by Council, then the consent of the Crown land manager is required. If the land has been leased or licensed to a third party, such as a caravan park operator, then the consent of the tenant or licensee to use the place as a potential NSP will also be required. In obtaining the consent of the relevant Crown land manager, it may be necessary to consider whether the Crown Grant authorises the place to be used as a potential NSP.

Private Land

Where it is proposed that a place on privately owned land is to be used as a NSP, then the consent of the relevant landowner (and, where applicable, occupier) is required for the place to be designated and used as an NSP. If the landowner (or occupier) does not consent to the place being designated and used as a NSP, on terms that are reasonably satisfactory and acceptable to the Council, it must not be so designated and used. If consent is provided the

proposed activities need to adhere to relevant legislation that may require permits to be obtained prior to works being undertaken (e.g. planning permit).

Deed of Consent

Where a potential NSP is located on non-Council land, with the result that consent and rights of access need to be negotiated with the owner and (where necessary) occupier, Council officers responsible for negotiating such consent and rights of access, may provide a draft form of consent to the owner/occupier for their consideration. This Deed of Consent may be a document which has been previously approved either by Council (through a formal resolution), or by the CEO acting under delegation.

Any amendments to the form of consent that may be requested by the landowner or occupier would need to be thoroughly considered before Council agrees to them. If it is not possible or appropriate for Council to agree on amendments that may be requested to the consent document, then Council should not designate the proposed NSP.

The form of consent may require a contractual licence. This licence may need to address issues such as responsibility for damage, and maintenance of the NSP.

2.3.2 Access and Egress

Council must assess whether there is sufficient access to the potential NSP, which will allow for:

- anticipated potential numbers of people to move to and from the place; and
- the CFA and other emergency services to attend the place for asset and personal protection activities and operations.

Council must assess potential access and egress routes, bearing in mind the fact that NSPs are Places of Last Resort.

As people may be seeking access to a NSP in a rushed or panicked state, a number of people could be seeking access in a relatively short time and visibility could be affected by smoke, therefore easily navigable routes to and from a NSP are crucial.

In considering whether access and egress routes are adequate, consideration should be given to issues such as:

- the condition of the road surface;
- the proximity of the NSP to major roadways and population centres;
- the type and amount of vegetation along any access routes, and whether that vegetation could be affected by fire and pose a risk of harm to those seeking access to the potential NSP, or otherwise block access to the NSP;
- whether appropriate vegetation management activities can be undertaken and maintained through minor works that are both possible and practical having regard for the resources available to the road owner;
- the capacity of access routes to accommodate potentially large numbers of vehicles, and to accommodate potential vehicle breakdowns;
- parking at the place, taking into account that a separate area or adequate space may need to be available to ensure pedestrians can move away from areas where vehicles may enter or park;

- any hazards that may exist for persons accessing the place by foot, including in the buffer zone; and
- any relevant matter contained in Council's Road Management Plan prepared pursuant to the Road Management Act 2004 (Vic).

If appropriate and satisfactory access and egress routes are not available, then Council should not designate the proposed NSP.

2.3.3 Maintenance of potential NSP in accordance with CFA assessment criteria

Council must ensure that the potential NSP can be maintained in accordance with the criteria taken into account by the CFA in arriving at its fire rating assessment.

If additional information is required from the CFA to understand the criteria they have considered in arriving at their fire rating assessment, Council should seek this information from the CFA. If necessary, Council may request the CFA to undertake further assessment to provide Council with additional information.

2.3.4 Opening of the NSP

Council must consider:

- whether it will be possible or practicable to open the potential NSP or otherwise make it available for use on a 24-hour basis during the declared fire danger period;
- the potential for damage to the place during times that it is open and available for use, but is not being used as a NSP;
- the potential costs to Council associated with the above mentioned points;
- the possibility that a potential NSP could be used for unintended purposes, such as a fire refuge.

2.3.5 Defendable space

CFA have advised that there is no guarantee that fire units will attend a NSP, and that individuals who use NSPs are doing so at their own risk. There should be **no expectation** that fire units or other emergency services personnel will attend an NSP during a bushfire.

Despite this, the potential NSP should be surrounded by sufficient open space to enable the CFA and other fire services to conduct asset protection and fire suppression operations around the place.

Any open space **should be reasonably** free of obstacles, which could hinder fire suppression activities. Obstacles may include:

- fences;
- buildings and sheds;
- steep inclines in close proximity to the potential NSP;
- vegetation, particularly large trees; and
- other land formations, including rocks, boulders or knolls which could substantially hinder fire suppression operations.

If necessary, advice should be sought from the CFA about their defensible space and fire vehicle access requirements.

When assessing the defensible space factor, Council must consider whether approval to clear or disturb flora and/or fauna is required, whether under legislation such as the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Commonwealth), *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic) or the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic). If such approval is required, then it must be obtained before the potential NSP location is designated.

If the proposed NSP does not have adequate defensible space around it, or if approval to clear or disturb flora and/or fauna is required but cannot be obtained before the NSP is required to be established, or cannot be obtained on reasonably satisfactory conditions, it should not be designated as a NSP by Council.

2.3.6 Dependability of buildings

If the potential NSP is a building, Council must consider whether or not it is likely to be subject to ember attack.

As the CFA is not required to assess the risk of ember attack to a building in undertaking the CFA fire rating assessment when certifying NSPs, the Council should consider this issue. In considering this issue, Council may need to seek expert advice from appropriately-qualified CFA personnel.

If there is an appreciable risk of the proposed NSP being compromised by ember attack which cannot be satisfactorily defended, then the building is unlikely to be suitable as an NSP and should not be designated by Council.

2.3.7 Signage

Council must assess whether it will be possible to have signage at the entry to, and in the vicinity of, the potential NSP. Consideration should also be given to additional directional signage that may be needed to assist in directing public to the site. Such signage must generally be in accordance with the Signage Guidelines for Neighbourhood Safer Places (as published by Emergency Management Victoria EMV), which is discussed in more detail in [Section 3](#) of this Plan.

Council must refer to the Signage Template when considering whether or not appropriate signage can be erected. If signage must be placed on private land, then the consent of the landowner will be required.

2.3.8 Maintenance and maintainability

Council must assess whether ongoing maintenance of the proposed NSP, and the surrounding area, is both possible and practical having regard to the resources reasonably available to Council. Council should consider this factor not only in relation to the suitability of a proposed NSP, but also as to the total number of proposed NSPs that can be reasonably maintained within the municipal district. This is needed to ensure that the place remains suitable for use as an NSP during each fire season.

Specifically, the place must be capable of being maintained to ensure continuing compliance with the CFA Fire Rating Guidelines Criteria and the Council NSPP Criteria. It is Council policy that if it is not possible to maintain a potential NSP, then it must not be designated as such.

When assessing the maintainability of the potential NSP, both the NSP, and surrounding areas may require various maintenance activities to be undertaken on a periodic basis. The potential introduction of hazards into the Buffer Zone, such as structures, animals and vehicles, should be taken into account.

There may be cases where maintenance activities can only be undertaken by, or with the consent of an adjoining landowner. This may, in turn, require assurances from such landowners that the place, and areas surrounding it, will be maintained to a satisfactory level.

When assessing the maintainability of a potential NSP, Council must consider whether or not approval to clear or disturb flora and /or fauna could be required, whether under legislation such as the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Commonwealth), *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (Vic) or the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic). If such approval is required, then it must be obtained before the potential NSP location is designated.

If the proposed NSP is not capable of being satisfactorily maintained, then Council should not designate it.

2.3.9 Disabled access

Council must consider whether or not there are clear means of access for disabled and mobility impaired persons to the potential NSP.

In considering this issue, regard should be had to such matters as whether or not it would be necessary for cars or other vehicles to enter the NSP area to allow persons with disabilities to be dropped off within the place.

2.3.10 Separation and demarcation of area

If the NSP is to be located in an open area, it must be possible to identify the area that is the NSP. This may be best achieved by signage and or some sort of boundary or perimeter marking. As an example, the NSP boundary for an oval may simply be an oval boundary fence.

Although not always possible, areas that enable separation or enable enough room to move away from other forms of potential hazards such as vehicles, buildings and animals are preferred.

2.3.11 Alternative uses of potential NSP

Council must consider what other uses may be made of the potential NSP which could impact on its ability to properly function as a NSP.

Where a potential NSP which is used for an operational purpose at many times and has been assessed by the CFA as meeting the criteria in the CFA Fire Rating Guidelines, and has been certified by the CFA, then the CFA has advised that those operational activities will be able to continue (to the extent practicable in the circumstances) while the place is being used as an NSP.

Should the site be leased or used by other organisations it should be communicated that the site is an NSP and in the event of a threatening fire, activities would need to cease and the use of the area as a NSP would need to take precedence. In most cases large open sites could accommodate a combination of uses. An example of where dual or multiple uses may not be possible is where large events at high risk times occur and where capacity of the site may already be reached.

If the place is used for other uses which could not be effectively managed and which would ultimately compromise its ability to be used as an NSP, then Council should not designate it.

2.3.12 Communication with the community

Council must be able to communicate the location of the NSP to the community. There should be good community awareness of the location of the place, together with the risks that relate to the use of the NSP, and the risks associated with travelling to the NSP in the event of a bushfire.

Note: The communication should also spell out the intended use of the location and what people can expect once at the location.

2.3.13 Public liability insurance

As a matter of prudent risk management, Council should have regard to:

- any additional factors which are relevant to Council's maintenance of insurance coverage for legal claims relating to the identification, designation, establishment, maintenance and decommissioning of a place as a NSP, as well as travel to a NSP; and
- any statutory defences to claims.

2.3.14 Who is responsible for undertaking the Council assessment of potential NSPs?

A report prepared by the MERO and MFPO detailing whether or not the potential NSP meets the above criteria should be prepared and provided to:

- a) The MEMPC, where it is practicable for the MEMPC to be involved in the Council assessment process; and
- b) The Council.

The MEMPC must assess the potential NSP, taking into account the MERO's report, and make recommendation to Council as to whether or not to designate the potential NSP.

2.3.15 When are potential NSP locations required to be assessed by Council?

Any potential NSPs certified by the CFA should be assessed by Council no later than 30 June each year, so as to allow time for the places to be designated and established as NSPs by Council, and for any appropriate amendments to be made to the MEMP and MFMP prior to the commencement of the bushfire season.

This timing is obviously subject to the CFA assessing and certifying the potential NSP location in a timely manner.

2.4 Council Designation of Neighbourhood Safer Places

2.4.1 Who is responsible for Council designation of NSPs?

Council must formally determine whether or not to designate a place as an NSP. Council should not designate a place as an NSP unless it is satisfied that the place is suitable, having regard to the Council NSP Plan criteria.

An NSP may only be designated by a resolution of the Council.

2.4.2 When should Council consider the designation of a potential NSP?

For sites that are certified by the CFA a NSP site assessment report will be prepared by Council's Municipal Emergency Resource Officer or a suitably qualified delegate detailing whether or not the potential NSP meets Councils NSPP criteria.

A template for the site assessment report is attached in [Appendix 2 – Neighbourhood Safer Place Site Assessment Report Template](#). In order to be completed the report will need to document detailed findings in relation to the NSPP Criteria and make a recommendation on whether Council should designate the site or not.

The report should be provided to the MEMPC and or the Municipal Fire Prevention Committee (or MFMP) for endorsement prior to being sent to Council. Once such endorsement has been received, Council must formally determine whether or not to designate a place as a NSP. Council should not designate a place as a NSP unless it is satisfied that the place is suitable, having regard to the Council NSPP Criteria and the CFA assessment guidelines.

A NSP may only be designated by a resolution of Council.

If prior endorsement by the MEMPC and or MFPC/MFMP is not possible Council should inform the committees of the designation of the NSP for noting and inclusion within their respective committees' plans. In such cases Council will only designate a NSP on the stipulation of obtaining appropriate endorsement from the relevant committee or committees. It is important to note that this is not the preferred approach and should only be undertaken in exceptional circumstances.

Council may designate a site as a NSP on the finalisation of any other provision it sees fit. In such cases Council will empower the CEO of the Shire or their delegate to ensure the provisions are satisfactorily met and then confirm by writing the designation of the NSP site on Council behalf.

2.4.3 What must the MFPO do once a potential NSP is designated by Council?

The MFPO must provide an updated list of all designated NSPs within the municipality to the CFA under section 50K of the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*. This updated list must be provided by no later than 30 September in each year.

2.5 Establishment of Neighbourhood Safer Places

2.5.1 Who is responsible for establishing NSPs?

Following designation, Council will establish NSPs within the municipal district.

2.5.2 What must be done when establishing NSPs?

To establish a NSP after its designation, Council must:

- erect appropriate signage at and near the NSP. Consideration should also be given to additional directional signage that may be needed to assist in directing public to the site;
- undertake any necessary preparatory works, including the construction or establishment of any required infrastructure and the clearance of vegetation, so as to enable the area to be used as a NSP;
- publish the location of the NSP on the Council website; and
- update Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan and Municipal Fire Management Plan to include the location of the NSP.

The Municipal Fire Prevention Officer must provide an up-to-date list of NSPs to the CFA no later than 30 September in each year.

2.6 Maintaining Neighbourhood Safer Places

2.6.1 Who is responsible for maintaining NSPs?

NSPs within the municipality need to be maintained by Council. Maintenance activities must include vegetation management, hazardous tree removal and the maintenance of infrastructure required to the satisfactory functioning of the place as an NSP. If additional works have been required to establish the NSP, then those works should be subject to periodic review.

The fuel load in the vicinity of the NSP must not increase so as to affect the fire rating of the NSP. Council must ensure that defensible spaces, the Buffer Zone and access and egress routes are appropriately maintained.

Council must inspect the NSP, Buffer Zone and access and egress routes on a periodic basis, and in any event not less than once per month during the declared fire danger period, to ensure that the NSP continues to be capable of functioning as an NSP.

If Council identifies issues that may impact upon the functioning of the place as an NSP, then Council must:

- address the issue;
- take reasonable steps to have the issue addressed, such as requesting the owner of the land on which the NSP or Buffer Zone is located to address the issue; or
- consider decommissioning the NSP and revoking the designation of the place as an NSP.

2.7 Annual Inspections of Neighbourhood Safer Places

2.7.1 Who is responsible for the annual review of NSPs?

Council must undertake an annual review of all designated NSPs within the municipality.

Council must also request the CFA to undertake an assessment against the CFA Fire Rating Guidelines of each NSP within the municipality on an annual basis.

These reviews are intended to ensure that each NSP remains suitable for use as a NSP during the up-coming fire season.

2.7.2 What must be considered when undertaking inspections?

NSPs should be assessed annually against the Council Neighbourhood Safer Places Plan (NSPP) Criteria. The CFA will assess NSPs against the CFA Fire Rating Guidelines.

If an NSP no longer meets:

- the CFA Fire Rating Guidelines Criteria, then it must be decommissioned; and
- the Council NSPP Criteria; then Council must determine whether or not it wishes to address any of the identified non-compliances against the NSPP criteria. If it does not, then the NSP must be decommissioned.

An Annual NSP Assessment checklist is provided at [Appendix 3 - Annual Neighbourhood Safer Place Assessment Checklist](#)

These assessment reports are to be stored on the council file management system, under Emergency Management Programs – Neighbourhood Safer Places and updated in the table below after each inspection.

NSP Location	Date of Audit	File Location / Record Number
Beeac	10 August 2021	Content Manager – F21/5322 Neighbourhood & Safer Places (NSP) Information and Advice 2021 - 2022
Birregurra	10 August 2021	Content Manager – F21/5322 Neighbourhood & Safer Places (NSP) Information and Advice 2021 - 2022
Gellibrand	14 July 2021	Content Manager – F21/5322 Neighbourhood & Safer Places (NSP) Information and Advice 2021 - 2022
Apollo Bay	14 July 2021	Content Manager – F21/5322 Neighbourhood & Safer Places (NSP) Information and Advice 2021 - 2022
Cressy	10 August 2021	Content Manager – F21/5322 Neighbourhood & Safer Places (NSP) Information and Advice 2021 - 2022
Beech Forest	14 July 2021	Content Manager – F21/5322 Neighbourhood & Safer Places (NSP) Information and Advice 2021 - 2022
Barwon Downs	14 July 2021	Content Manager – F21/5322 Neighbourhood & Safer Places (NSP) Information and Advice 2021 - 2022

2.7.3 When must NSP locations be inspected?

NSPs must be inspected prior to 31 August each year under section 50J of the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*.

Council must also undertake fire hazard inspections of the site prior to and during the fire danger period to ensure the site is being managed appropriately and continues to comply with the NSPP criteria.

2.8 Decommissioning of Neighbourhood Safer Places

Decommissioning of NSPs must be by Council resolution.

Council must decommission a designated NSP if the CFA assessment of the site determines it is no longer suitable.

The Council may decommission a NSP even though it has CFA certification, if Council is satisfied on reasonable grounds that it is not appropriate for the place to continue to be a designated NSP.

The Council will decommission a NSP that is not on council owned land if the occupier or the person in control of the land has withdrawn consent to the designation of the site as an NSP.

Section 3 – Signage guidelines for Neighbourhood Safer Places

(D20/30650) Neighbourhood Safer Places -Bushfire Place of Last Resort Signage Manual

<https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/publications/neighbourhood-safer-places-bushfire-place-of-last-resort-signage-manual>

Country Fire Authority Act 1958

Section 50H

Signage Guidelines for Neighbourhood Safer Places

1. Under section 50H of the **Country Fire Authority Act 1958**, municipal councils are required to:
 - (1) ensure that appropriate signs are provided at each designated neighbourhood safer place in its municipal district; and in meeting that obligation; and
 - (2) have regard to signage guidelines issued from time to time on the Internet site of the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner (OESC).
2. The OESC has, in consultation with the Country Fire Authority and the Municipal Association of Victoria, developed a standard sign for designated neighbourhood safer places.
3. The specifications for the standard sign are set out in Schedule 1.
4. Nothing in these guidelines prevents a municipal council from providing additional information on the sign post displaying the standard sign. For example, such information may relate to the capacity or use of the place.
5. If a municipal council determines there is a need for a directional sign in the style of a street sign then the following words are recommended:

BUSHFIRE NEIGHBOURHOOD SAFER PLACE
6. These guidelines come into effect on the date below and continue to apply until otherwise replaced or varied.



Michael Hallows
Emergency Services Commissioner

Dated: 28th September 2011

Bushfire Neighbourhood Safer Place
450mm x 450mm Sign



Notes:

- All Dimensions are in Millimetres
- Border, background and edgestrip - Retroreflective GREEN CL.2 (PMS Colour 342)
- Symbol - Retroreflective WHITE CL.2 (community information billboard sign)

The above has been designed in accordance with Australian Standards 2342 -1992 Guidelines.
Signage contractor responsible for manufacturing in accordance with VICROADS Specifications.

Australian Standards applicable:

AS 2899.1 - 1986	Public Information Symbols Part 1 – General Information Signs	
AS 2342 – 1992	Development, Testing & Implementing of Information & Safety Symbols and Symbolic Signs	
Colours:		
Background	Dark Green	(as specified)
Text	Reflective White	(as specified)
Enclosure	Reflective White	(as specified)

COMMOTION

WARNING

THIS *DESIGNATED NEIGHBOURHOOD SAFER PLACE (NSP)* IS A PLACE OF LAST RESORT DURING THE PASSAGE OF A BUSHFIRE. WHILST IT MAY OFFER SOME PROTECTION FROM BUSHFIRE, THE SAFETY OR SURVIVAL OF THOSE WHO ASSEMBLE HERE IS NOT GUARANTEED.

BEFORE DECIDING TO HEAD TOWARDS, OR ENTER, THIS NSP IN THE EVENT OF BUSHFIRE, BE AWARE THAT:

- MANY HOUSES MAY OFFER BETTER PROTECTION THAN THIS NSP
- TRAVELLING TO THIS NSP WHEN THERE IS BUSHFIRE CAN BE EXTREMELY DANGEROUS. THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT YOU WILL BE SAFE DOING SO.
- THIS NSP MAY NOT PREVENT DEATH OR INJURY FROM FIRE, EMBERS OR RADIANT HEAT WHEN YOU GET HERE
- YOU SHOULD ONLY USE THIS NSP WHEN YOUR PRIMARY BUSHFIRE PLAN HAS FAILED OR CANNOT BE IMPLEMENTED
- THIS NSP ONLY HAS LIMITED CAPACITY
- THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT CFA OR OTHER EMERGENCY SERVICES WILL BE PRESENT AT THIS NSP DURING A BUSHFIRE
- NO FACILITIES ARE PROVIDED FOR PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, INCLUDING THOSE REQUIRING MEDICAL ATTENTION
- THIS NSP MAY BE UNCOMFORTABLE AND NO AMENITIES SUCH AS FOOD AND DRINKS WILL BE PROVIDED
- THERE IS NO PROVISION FOR ANIMALS

VICTORIAN BUSHFIRE INFORMATION LINE - 1800 240 667

Colac Otway Shire

Neighbourhood Safer Places Plan

APPENDICIES

Appendix 1 – Council Neighbourhood Safer Place Plan Criteria Assessment Tool

Appendix 2 – Neighbourhood Safer Place Site Assessment Report Template

Appendix 3 – Annual Neighbourhood Safer Place Assessment Checklist

Appendix 4 – List of Council designated Neighbourhood Safer Places

Appendix 5 – Records of Council designated Neighbourhood Safer Places

Annual Assessment Audits

Appendix 6 – Maps of Council designated Neighbourhood Safer Places

Appendix 1 - Council Neighbourhood Safer Places Plan Criteria – Assessment Tool

NSP-BPLR Location: _____ Date: _____

Council NSPP Criteria	Issues to consider	Council comments	Satisfied? Yes/No
Consents and rights of access <i>See section 2.3.1</i>	If the potential NSP-BPLR is located on Council-owned land, can Council use the land as an NSP-BPLR if required? Consider whether or not Council allows the land to be used for potentially inconsistent purposes, such as for farmers' markets, fetes, circuses etc.		
	If the potential NSP-BPLR is on private land, or public land under the control of a Crown Land Manager (other than Council), can Council enter into arrangements which allow it to use the land as a potential NSP-BPLR on reasonably satisfactory terms? Also consider whether Council has the right to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> access the site and surrounding areas for maintenance; and erect appropriate signage at the NSP-BPLR. 		
Access and egress <i>See section 2.3.2</i>	Do access routes to the potential NSP-BPLR allow for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the anticipated potential number of people to move to and from the place; and the CFA and other emergency services to attend the place for asset and personnel protection activities? 		
	Are access routes easily navigable, bearing in mind they could be affected by smoke? Consider the condition of the road surface, proximity to population centres and major roads, capacity of access routes to accommodate large numbers of vehicles, the availability of car parking at the place and any other relevant matters.		
Maintenance of NSP-BPLR in accordance with CFA assessment <i>See section 2.3.3</i>	Can Council maintain the potential NSP-BPLR in accordance with the criteria taken into account by the CFA in arriving at its fire rating assessment? <i>If the CFA have not provided sufficient information in relation to the criteria it has taken into account in arriving at its fire rating assessment, it may be necessary for Council to seek further information from the CFA.</i>		

Council NSPP Criteria	Issues to consider	Council comments	Satisfied? Yes/No
Opening of the NSP-BPLR <i>See section 2.3.4</i>	<p>Will it be possible and practicable to make the potential NSP-BPLR available for use on a 24-hour basis during the declared fire danger period? This is a particular issue where the potential NSP-BPLR is a building.</p> <p>Consider the potential for damage to the NSP-BPLR which could result during times that it is open and available for use, but is not being used as an NSP-BPLR.</p>		
	<p>What costs could be incurred by Council in making the potential NSP-BPLR available on a 24-hour basis during the declared fire danger period? Are these costs reasonable, and capable of being borne by Council?</p>		
	<p>Could the potential NSP-BPLR be used for an unintended purpose which could impact upon its use as an NSP-BPLR (such as an emergency relief centre)?</p>		
Defendable space and fire suppression activities <i>See section 2.3.5</i>	<p>Is the potential NSP-BPLR surrounded by sufficient open space to enable the CFA to conduct asset protection and fire suppression operations? Is that open space reasonably free of obstacles (such as fences, buildings, steep gradients, vegetation and other land formations)?</p> <p><i>Council should seek CFA advice concerning the defendability of the potential NSP-BPLR and the Buffer Zone, including in relation to fire vehicle access requirements.</i></p>		
	<p>Will approval be required under legislation such as the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Commonwealth), <i>Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988</i> (Vic) and the <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i> (Vic)? Can such approval be obtained before the NSP-BPLR is established?</p>		
Defendability of buildings <i>See section 2.3.6</i>	<p>If the potential NSP-BPLR is a building, has Council sought expert advice from the CFA to determine whether the NSP-BPLR is likely to be subject to risk from ember attack? If it is subject to such a risk, can that risk be safely managed?</p>		
Signage <i>See section 2.3.7</i>	<p>Can appropriate signage be erected at the entry to the potential NSP-BPLR, and in its vicinity?</p>		
	<p>If signage needs to be placed on private land, can Council obtain the consent of the relevant landowner to the erection of the signage?</p>		

Council NSPP Criteria	Issues to consider	Council comments	Satisfied? Yes/No
Maintenance and maintainability <i>See section 2.3.8</i>	<p>Is the potential NSP-BPLR capable of being maintained to ensure continuing compliance with the CFA Fire Rating Criteria and the Council NSPP Criteria?</p> <p>Where relevant, consider whether adjoining land owners and occupiers will provide Council with an assurance that both the potential NSP-BPLR and the Buffer Zone can be maintained to a satisfactory level.</p>		
Disabled access <i>See section 2.3.9</i>	<p>Are there are means of access for disabled and mobility-impaired persons to the potential NSP-BPLR, including vehicle access to drop off people with disabilities?</p>		
Alternative uses of potential NSP-BPLR <i>See section 2.3.11</i>	<p>Can Council manage alternative uses which may be made of the potential NSP-BPLR so as to ensure that those uses will not compromise the function of the place as a potential NSP-BPLR?</p> <p><i>The CFA has advised that where a potential NSP-BPLR which is used for an operational purpose at many times meets the CFA Fire Rating Criteria, then the CFA considers that those operational activities will be able to continue (to the extent practicable in the circumstances) while the place is being used as an NSP-BPLR.</i></p>		
Community Communication <i>See section 2.3.12</i>	<p>Will it be possible to ensure that there will be good community awareness of the location of the potential NSP-BPLR, and the risks associated with using the potential NSP-BPLR?</p>		

Appendix 2 – Neighbourhood Safer Place Site Assessment Report Template



Neighbourhood Safer Place (Place of Last Resort) Site Assessment Report

SITE NAME
LOCALITY

Reference:	FILE NAME DATE
Lead Officer:	LEAD OFFICER NAME LEAD OFFICER POSITION Colac Otway Shire

Table of Contents

1.	<u>Executive Summary</u>
2.	<u>Introduction</u>
3.	<u>NSP Approval Process</u>
4.	<u>Compliance Standards</u>
5.	<u>Assessment Approach</u>
6.	<u>Site Identification</u>
7.	<u>Findings & Discussion</u>
8.	<u>Recommendations</u>

<u>Appendix A</u>
<u>CFA Assessment Criteria Compliant Confirmation</u>

<u>Appendix B</u>
<u>Signage Locations Map</u>

<u>Appendix C</u>
<u>SITE NAME</u> – NSP Plan Criteria - Assessment Tool

1. Executive Summary

In response to the Interim 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission Recommendation 8.5, the Victorian Government has introduced legislation, which requires the Country Fire Authority (CFA) to certify Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSPs) against the CFA's Assessment Guidelines, and Victoria's Councils to identify, designate, establish and maintain suitable sites as NSPs in their municipal districts.

In relation to the site known as **SITE NAME**, **LOCALITY** being assessed as a NSP, the Colac Otway Shire through the support of the Municipal Fire Prevention Committee (MFPC) and or the Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee (MFMPC), the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC) and CFA Barwon-Corangamite Area, has undertaken assessments in line with current guidelines and expected practices.

The results of both the CFA Assessment Guidelines and the assessment against the Colac Otway Shire Neighbourhood Safer Places Plan Criteria has shown the site described as **SITE NAME**, **LOCALITY** at the time of assessment to be compliant against the relevant guidelines and criteria.

Unless Council, on whatever grounds sees fit to decide otherwise, having successfully passed all current NSP criteria that has been established by the State Government, CFA, MAV and the Colac Otway Shire, it is recommended that:

IF THE SITE MEETS NSPP CRITERIA TO BE DESIGNATED

That Colac Otway Shire endorse the area as described and detailed within the NSP Site Assessment Report which is located within **SITE NAME**, **LOCALITY** as a designated Neighbourhood Safer Place (on the provision that):

a. LIST ANY PROVISIONS AS REQUIRED

On passing the recommendation above it is further recommended:

1. The Council provides signage at the NSP site in line with the guidelines published from time to time on the internet site of the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner.
2. The Municipal Fire Prevention Officer provides to the CFA information on the NSP designation of the site within **SITE NAME**, **LOCALITY**.
3. The MFPC and or MFMPC and the MEMPC include this site within a list of NSPs within their respective plans.
4. The Council informs the public of the designation of the site as a NSP and provides information to the public on the purpose and function of the NSP as a place of Last Resort and the fact that there is no guarantee of survival if used during an emergency event.
5. The Council asks the CFA to assist in an annual assessment and review of the NSP site by August 31 each year against the NSP Plan and the CFA assessment guidelines.
6. The NSP site is maintained to suitable standards and that the Municipal Fire Prevention Officers undertake routine inspections of the NSP site prior to and during the fire danger period.

7. That a budget is allocated to provide the site with signage, maintenance and annual inspections in line with the NSP guidelines, legislation and plans.

IF SITE DOES NOT MEET NSPP CRITERIA AND NOT TO BE DESIGNATED

That Colac Otway Shire **does not** designate the area as described and detailed within the NSP Site Assessment Report which is located within **SITE NAME, LOCALITY** as a Neighbourhood Safer Place.

This recommendation not to designate the site as a Neighbourhood Safer Place is based on the following findings; plethora

a. LIST ANY PROVISIONS AS REQUIRED

2. Introduction

In its Interim Report, the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission recommended that Neighbourhood Safer Places, or '**NSPs**', be identified and established to provide persons in bushfire affected areas with a place of last resort during a bushfire¹.

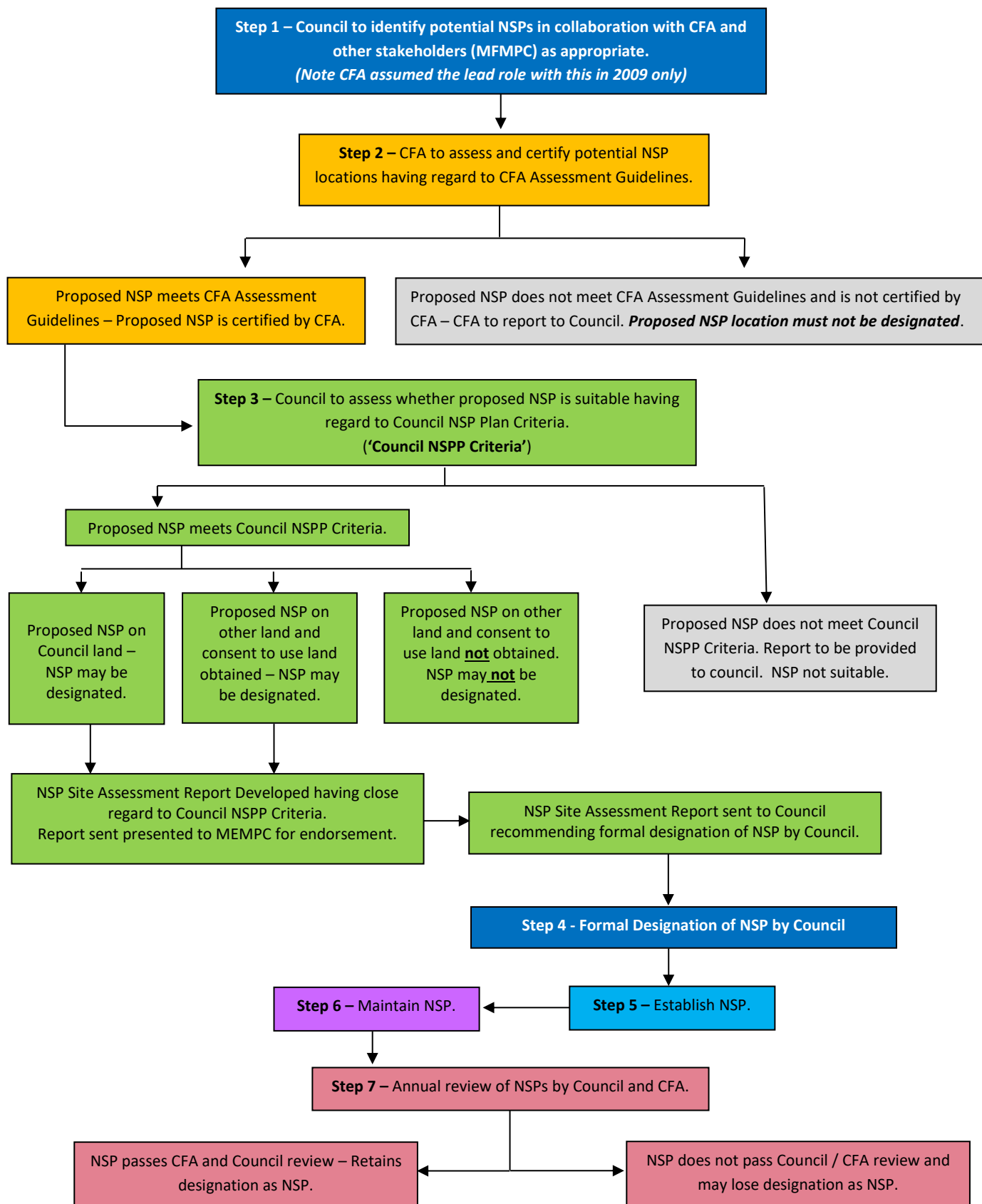
In response to this recommendation, the Victorian Government introduced the *Emergency Services Legislation Amendment Act 2009 (ESLA Act)* which amends the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958 (CFA Act)* and the *Emergency Management Act 1986 (EM Act)*. The effect of these amendments requires the Country Fire Authority (**CFA**) to certify NSPs against the Country Fire Authority Assessment Guidelines, and Councils within Victoria to identify, designate, establish, maintain and decommission NSPs in their municipal districts.

NSPs are not community fire refuges or emergency relief centres. NSPs are **places of last resort** during the passage of a bushfire, and are intended to be used by persons whose primary bushfire plans have failed. NSPs are places of relative safety only. They do not guarantee the survival of those who assemble there. Furthermore, there may be serious risks to safety encountered in travelling and seeking access to NSPs during bushfire events. Depending on the direction of a particular fire, it may not be 'a safer place' to assemble than other places within the municipal district. At that point in time it almost certainly will be a matter for individual judgement and decision, as to which if any NSP a person or persons should travel in the presence of fire.

NSPs will be assessed by the CFA as providing some protection from immediate risk of direct fire attack, but not necessarily from other risks, such as flying embers. Where a potential NSP is used for an operational purpose at many times meets the CFA's criteria, then the CFA considers that those operational activities will be able to continue (to the extent practicable in the circumstances) while the place is being used as an NSP.

¹ Recommendation 8.5, 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Interim Report

3. NSP Approval Process



4. Compliance Standards

The assessment of the site was done in line with the:

- Colac Otway Shire Neighbourhood Safer Places Plan (**NSPP**)
- Colac Otway Shire NSP Criteria Audit Tool
- The CFA NSP Interim Assessment Guideline Version 3.1 October 2009
- Emergency Services Legislation Amendment Act 2009

5. Assessment Approach

Five stages of assessment were made on this site.

1. Under the Emergency Services Amendment Act 2009, the CFA is responsible for assessing potential NSP locations against the CFA Assessment Guidelines. This was done by appropriately qualified and experienced CFA personnel.
2. Concerns regarding the site being designated as a NSP were also sought from Police, CFA, respective interested or associated parties and key operational Council staff.
3. The MFPC and or MFMPCC were briefed and information sought on the site being designated as a NSP
4. Phone or in person interviews were conducted with the CFA Brigade Captain.
5. The Council also conducted an onsite assessment in-line with the criteria in the Colac Otway Shire NSPP. This assessment was conducted with the assistance of the Emergency Services represented within the MFMPCC. In attendance were Council staff, Victorian Police, CFA operational and volunteer staff, Parks Victoria, Department of Sustainability & Environment and Department of Education and Early Childhood Development representatives.

6. Site Identification

Locality

Insert a 200-300-word description highlighting the following:

- Locality overview
- Township significant
- Future development
- Community facilities
- Transport overview
- Retail and Commercial overview
- Census information

Insert Locality Snapshot Map

Locality *Township Map Showing Proposed NSP Site (A)*

Specific Site – SITE NAME

SITE NAME situated at STREET ADDRESS is positioned within the locality of LOCALITY.

The NSP SITE OWNER owned section of the site is approximately SIZE hectares (SIZE acres) and abuts LOCAL FEATURE DESCRIPTION.

Insert access/egress to site blurb. Number of vehicle/pedestrian entries and ESO 4WD access.



Insert Site Aerial Photo Overview

The site encompasses;

- INSERT LIST OF FACILITIES ON SITE, E.G TOILETS, CAR PARK, SHELTERS, PAVILLIO, ETC

7. Findings and Discussion

Potential NSP site identified

On the **DATE** the Colac Otway Shire and the CFA produced a list of potential sites for consideration as NSPs.

This list included **SITE NAME** situated at **STREET ADDRESS** is positioned within the locality of **LOCALITY**.

CFA Assessment

CFA has developed guidelines to assess the suitability of potential sites as NSPs.

The key criteria considered by the CFA under the current CFA NSP assessment for this site were for an open space and therefore needed to meet one of the following criteria;

- The appropriate separation distance between the outer edge of the potential NSP and the nearest fire hazard ('Buffer Zone') should be at least 310 metres; or
- An alternative Buffer Zone distance may be prescribed by the CFA, which will ensure that the maximum potential radiant heat impacting on the site is no more than 2kw/m^2 .

The CFA informed the Council on the **DATE** in writing (appendix A) that the **SITE NAME** site was compliant with the CFA assessment guidelines and prescribed an area that the maximum potential radiant heat impacting on the site would be no more than 2kw/m^2 .

The resulting proposed NSP site area is depicted at Fig 1.

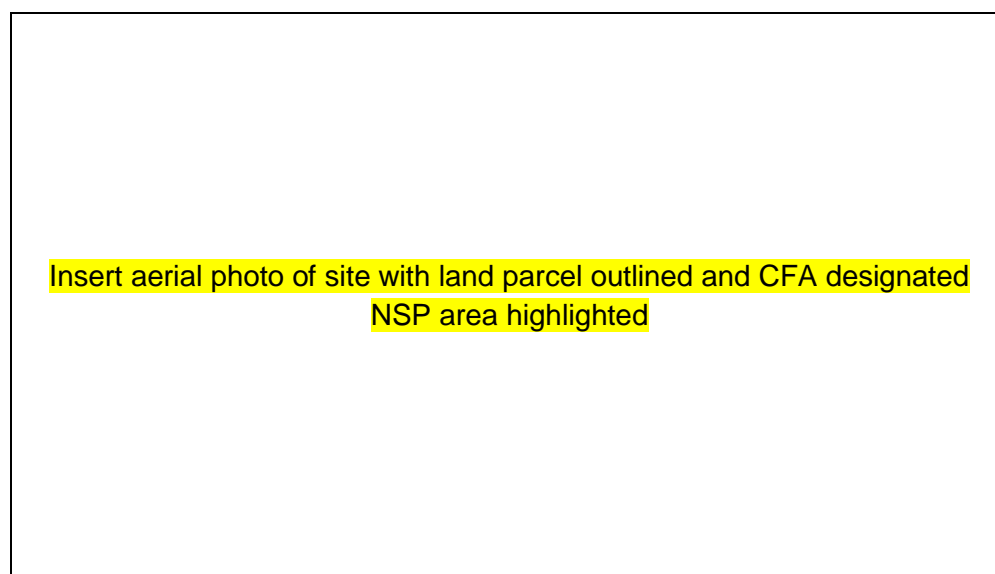


Fig. 1. Site Map Showing Land parcel and CFA designated NSP area

The proposed NSP area within **SITE NAME** can be simply described as the area within the **DEFINE BOUNDARIES**.

Survey of Concerns

The Council sought additional input from relevant agencies and personnel on the suitability of this site being used as a NSP. This occurred via an **EMAIL/PHONE/FAX/LETTER/INTERVIEW** on **DATE**.

We asked specifically for opinion in relation to:

- The suitability of access and entry to the location or building;
- The suitability in using the site for the congregation of people during an emergency;
- Any other reason for which the site may not be suitable as a NSP.

The request was sent to the following agencies:

- POLICE, CFA OPERATIONS, CFA BRIGADE, COUNCIL DEPARTMENTS, PRIVATE OWNER, OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

Response was received from the following agency(ies) with the following concerns highlighted;

INSERT SUMMARY OF RESPECTIVE AGENCY CONCERNS

Site Assessment against NSP Plan Criteria

On the **DATE** at approximately **TIME**, representatives from **INSERT AGENCIES ATTENDING THE SITE ASSESSMENT** inspected the site and discussed its potential of being used as a NSP.

The NSPP Criteria Audit Tool was used to assist in the discussion and ultimate assessment.

The following summary was concluded;

Consents and Rights of Access

INSERT SUMMARY

Access and Egress

INSERT SUMMARY

Defendable Space

INSERT SUMMARY

Dependability of Buildings

INSERT SUMMARY

Signage

INSERT SUMMARY

Maintenance and Maintainability

INSERT SUMMARY

Other Conflicting Uses

INSERT SUMMARY

Action to Endorse

INSERT SUMMARY

8. Recommendations

As per the Emergency Service Legislation Bill 2009, municipal councils must identify and designate places as neighbourhood safer places within their municipal district. In regards to this designation the Council must only designate sites that have passed the CFA Assessment Guidelines and may have regard to its Municipal Neighbourhood Safer Places Plan.

Having successfully passed all current NSP criteria established by the State Government, CFA, MAV and the Colac Otway Shire, it is recommended that:

IF SITE IS SUCCESSFUL AGAINST NSP CRITERIA

That Colac Otway Shire endorse the area as described and detailed within the NSP Site Assessment Report which is located within **SITE NAME**, **LOCALITY** as a designated Neighbourhood Safer Place (on the provision that):

b. LIST ANY PROVISIONS AS REQUIRED

On passing the recommendation above it is further recommended:

1. The Council provides signage at the NSP site in line with the guidelines published from time to time on the internet site of the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner.
2. The Municipal Fire Prevention Officer provides to the CFA information on the NSP designation of the site within **SITE NAME**, **LOCALITY**.
3. The MFPC and or MFMPC and the MEMPC include this site within a list of NSPs within their respective plans.
4. The Council informs the public of the designation of the site as a NSP and provides information to the public on the purpose and function of the NSP as a place of Last Resort and the fact that there is no guarantee of survival if used during an emergency event.
5. The Council asks the CFA to assist in an annual assessment and review of the NSP site by August 31 each year against the NSP Plan and the CFA assessment guidelines.
6. The NSP site is maintained to suitable standards and that the Municipal Fire Prevention Officers undertake routine inspections of the NSP site prior to and during the fire danger period.
7. That a budget is allocated to provide the site with signage, maintenance and annual inspections in line with the NSP guidelines, legislation and plans.

IF SITE IS UNSUCCESSFUL AGAINST NSP CRITERIA

That Colac Otway Shire **does not** designate the area as described and detailed within the NSP Site Assessment Report which is located within **SITE NAME**, **LOCALITY** as a Neighbourhood Safer Place.

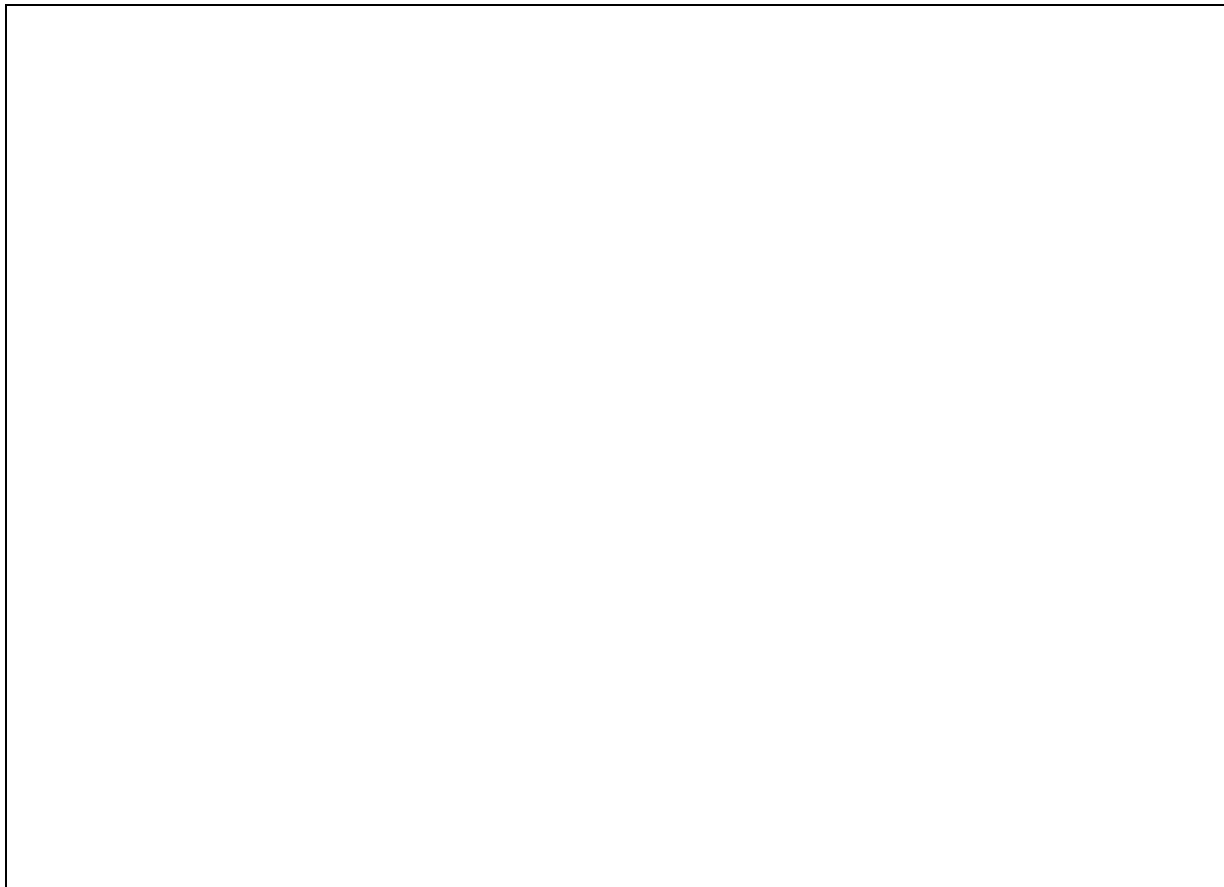
This recommendation not to designate the site as a Neighbourhood Safer Place is based on the following findings; plethora LIST **ANY PROVISIONS AS REQUIRED**

Appendix A - CFA Assessment Criteria Compliant Confirmation

**INSERT COPY OF CFA COMPLIANCY LETTER, RADIANT HEAT REPORT AND GIS MAP
ABOUT RESPECTIVE SITE**

Appendix B - Signage Locations Map

The following map depicts possible sites for directional signage and information signage



Appendix C - SITE NAME – NSPP Criteria Audit Report


INSERT SITE AUDIT REPORT

Appendix 3 – Annual Neighbourhood Safer Place Assessment Checklist

The table below contains an action checklist to assist with the management of the Shires NSP's:

STEP #	DETAIL:	TIMELINE:	COMPLETED:
1	Navigate to the CFA NSP website to request a reassessment of the Shires NSP sites. http://www.saferplaces.cfa.vic.gov.au/cfa/authen/default.htm (CFA will undertake assessment using Fire Rating Criteria)	May	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
2	Undertake annual assessments of designated NSP's and complete NSPP Criteria Sheet (Appendix 1). Refer to Section 2.7 of the COS NSP Plan to ensure annual assessment is fully completed.	July-August	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
3	Save completed annual NSPP inspection sheets to TRIM:	July-August	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
4	Login to CFA website (NSP Online Business System) as NSP Coordinator to sign-off on Councils annual assessments. CFA must be notified and the website updated by August 31 st : http://www.saferplaces.cfa.vic.gov.au/cfa/authen/default.htm	August (31 August-legislated deadline)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
5	-Update COS NSP Plan with any changes i.e. NSPP, list and mapping etc.	August	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
6	Ensure an up-to-date list of all designated NSPs <u>and</u> community fire refuges within the Shire are provided to CFA by 30 th September, as per Section 50K of CFA Act 1958.	September (30 September-legislated deadline)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
7	Notify NSP land managers (on non-council managed land) that NSPs on their land have been reassessed as compliant as part of an annual review –courtesy letter and reminder.	September	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
8	Systems Review: -Ensure Municipal Emergency Management Plan contains up to date NSP details. -Ensure Municipal Fire Management Plan contains up to date NSP details. -Ensure the COS website contains up to copy of NSP Plan, as per S50F of CFA Act 1958 -Ensure CFA website contains up to date NSP details. Notify CFA if changes required http://www.saferplaces.cfa.vic.gov.au/cfa/search/default.htm -Ensure CFA Community Information Guides (former TPP's) contain up to date NSP details. http://cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pagelId=publicTownshipProtectionPlans	September	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>

9	Hardcopy Check: -Check that an up to date Municipal Neighbourhood Safer Places Plan is available for public inspection at municipal offices, <i>as per S50F of CFA Act 1958</i> . -Check community safety documentation at COS Information Centres. -In accordance with <i>NSPP Community Communication</i> requirements, ensure appropriate information is available at Information Centres, such as Community Information Guides	September-October	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
10	Compliance over Fire Danger Period: MFPO to regularly inspect NSP's and adjoining private/council property to ensure compliance with CFA grassland treatment prescriptions. Communicate with landholders as per original agreements. All NSPs –Colac-Otway Shire responsible officers should undertake an inspection of NSP, buffer zone (if applicable) and access/egress routes (including walkways) at least once during the declared fire danger period.	Declared Fire Danger Period	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
11	Maintain vigilance with NSP's through the year, including potential issues that could affect criteria i.e. access, community/vegetation planting that may influence the CFA assessment, removal of signage etc.	All year round	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

NSP ASSESSMENT GUIDE COMPLETED BY: <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> DATE:	MERO SIGN-OFF: DATE:
---	---------------------------------

Appendix 4 – List of Council designated Neighbourhood Safer Places

Township	Type	Telephone /Toilets	Description & Location
Apollo Bay	Open Space	Public Phone (125 Collingwood St at pedestrian crossing) / Yes	Apollo Bay Foreshore Foreshore area Great Ocean Road, Apollo Bay (between Moore St and Nelson St)
Gellibrand	Open Space	Public phone (opposite general store) / Yes (adjacent park)	Rex Norman Reserve 5 Main Road, Gellibrand (corner of Old Beech Forest Rd)
Birregurra	Open Space	Public phone (Post Office – 65 Main St) / Yes	Birregurra Park 35-39 Main Street, Birregurra (corner of Strachan St)
Beeac	Open Space	Public phone (post office) / Yes (across Main St)	Beeac Playground & BBQ area 67 Main Street, Beeac. (corner of Wallace St)
Cressy	Open Space	Public Phone (New Station Street – across from toilets) / Yes (across road)	Front yard of the Cressy Community Hall 41 Yarima Road, Cressy (corner of Lyons St)
Cressy	Structure/indoor	N/A Yes	Cressy Community Hall 41 Yarima Road, Cressy (corner of Lyons St)
Beech Forest	Open Space	Public Phone (across road) / Information & historical centre (John H Gardner Reserve)	Open Space (gravel area next door to Beech Hotel) 35 Main Rd, Beech Forest.
Barwon Downs	Open Space	Public phone (across road from toilets) / Yes	Barwon Downs Parkland (town park - old school site) 1595 Birregurra-Forrest Road, Barwon Downs
Barwon Downs	Structure/indoor	N/A Yes	Barwon Downs Community Hub Room (rear of CFA Fire Station) 1599 Birregurra-Forrest Rd, Barwon Downs

Appendix 5 – Records of Council designated Neighbourhood Safer Places Annual Assessment Audits

NSP Location	Date of Audit	File Location / Record Number
Apollo Bay Foreshore Foreshore area Great Ocean Road, Apollo Bay (between Moore St and Nelson St)	14 July 2021	Content Manager – F21/5322 Neighbourhood & Safer Places (NSP) Information and Advice 2021 – 2022 Record # - D21/170286
Rex Norman Reserve 5 Main Road, Gellibrand (corner of Old Beech Forest Rd)	14 July 2021	Content Manager – F21/5322 Neighbourhood & Safer Places (NSP) Information and Advice 2021 – 2022 Record # - D21/170295
Birregurra Park 35-39 Main Street, Birregurra (corner of Strachan St)	10 August 2021	Content Manager – F21/5322 Neighbourhood & Safer Places (NSP) Information and Advice 2021 – 2022 Record # - D21/170291
Beeac Playground & BBQ area 67 Main Street, Beeac. (corner of Wallace St)	10 August 2021	Content Manager – F21/5322 Neighbourhood & Safer Places (NSP) Information and Advice 2021 – 2022 Record # - D21/170289
Cressy Community Hall 41 Yarima Road, Cressy (corner of Lyons St)	10 August 2021	Content Manager – F21/5322 Neighbourhood & Safer Places (NSP) Information and Advice 2021 – 2022 Record # - D21/170294
Cressy – open space Front of hall 41 Yarima Road, Cressy (corner of Lyons St)	10 August 2021	Content Manager – F21/5322 Neighbourhood & Safer Places (NSP) Information and Advice 2021 – 2022 Record # - D21/170293
Open Space (gravel area next door to Beech Hotel) 35 Main Rd, Beech Forest.	14 July 2021	Content Manager – F21/5322 Neighbourhood & Safer Places (NSP) Information and Advice 2021 – 2022 Record # - D21/170290
Barwon Downs Parkland (town park - old school site) 1595 Birregurra-Forrest Road, Barwon Downs	14 July 2021	Content Manager – F21/5322 Neighbourhood & Safer Places (NSP) Information and Advice 2021 – 2022 Record # - D21/170287
Barwon Downs Community Hub Room (rear of CFA Fire Station) 1599 Birregurra-Forrest Rd, Barwon Downs	14 July 2021	Content Manager – F21/5322 Neighbourhood & Safer Places (NSP) Information and Advice 2021 – 2022 Record # - D21/170288

Appendix 6 – Maps of Council designated Bushfire Places of Last Resort - Neighbourhood Safer Places

The following map identifies the townships within Colac Otway Shire in which Neighbourhood Safer Places have been designated. These townships are:

- Apollo Bay
- Beeac
- Birregurra
- Gellibrand
- Cressy
- Barwon Downs
- Beech Forest

Figure 1 – Map of townships with a Bushfire Place of Last Resort

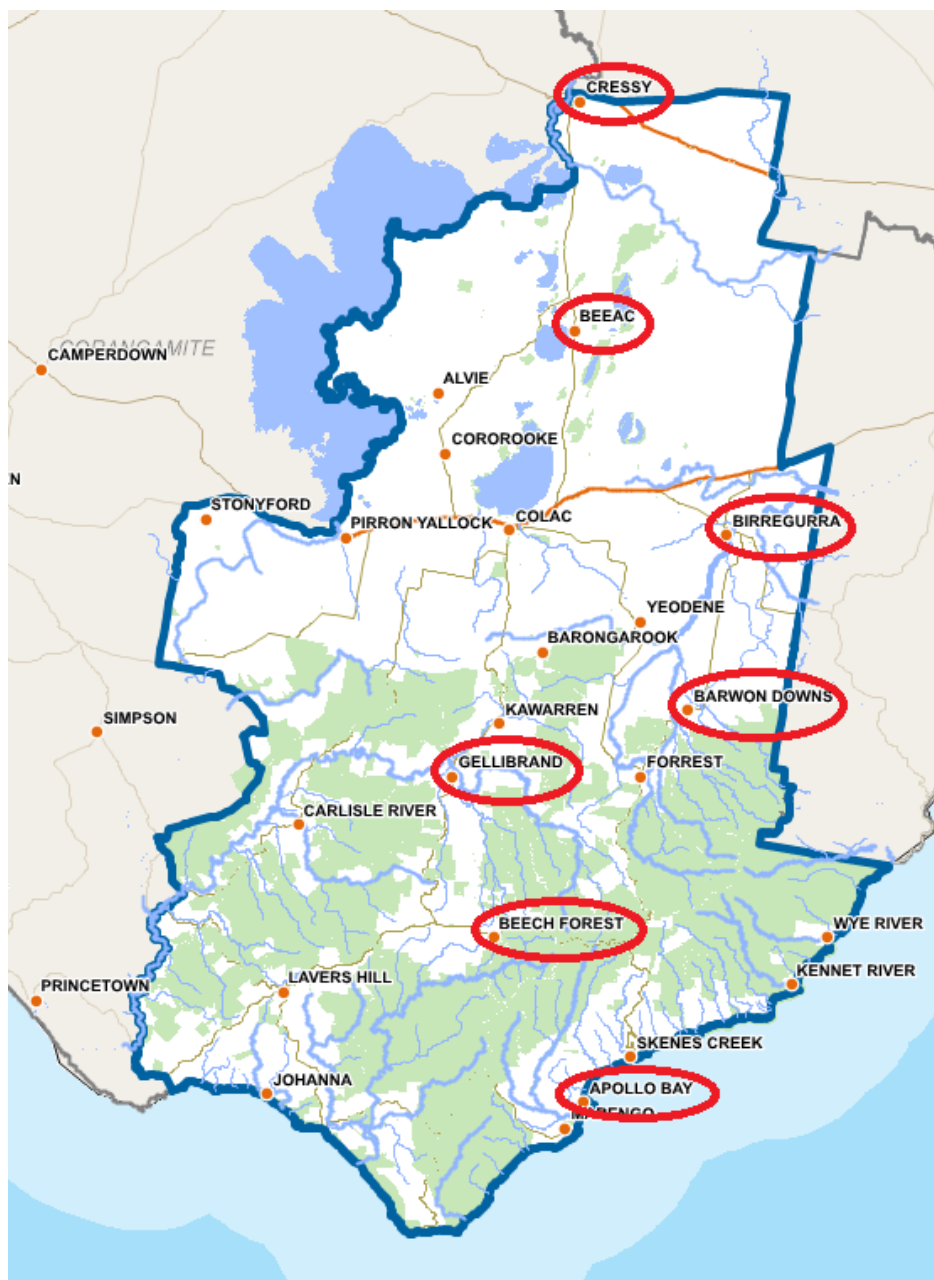


Figure 2 – Map identifying the Apollo Bay Bushfire Place of Last Resort – Apollo Bay foreshore.



Figure 3 – Map identifying the Beeac Bushfire Place of Last Resort – Beeac Park.



Figure 4 – Map identifying the Birregurra Bushfire Place of Last Resort – Birregurra Park.



Figure 5 – Map identifying the Gellibrand Bushfire Place of Last Resort – Rex Norman Reserve.



Figure 6 – Map identifying the Cressy Bushfire Place of Last Resort - Cressy Community Hall – indoor and outdoor.



Figure 7 – Map identifying the Beech Forest Bushfire Place of Last Resort – outdoor open space.



Figure 8 – Map identifying the Barwon Downs Bushfire Place of Last Resort - Barwon Downs Parkland (open space) and Community Hub (structure).

