



Ringwood—looking Southwards from Loughnan's Road.

PLANNING RINGWOOD

TOWN PLANNING

By Cr. H. E. PARKER, J.P.,

of James Forbes (Tar Distillers) Pty. Ltd. and Mayor of the Borough of Ringwood

This very useful contribution to Town Planning (a subject all should strive to appreciate and understand), written by Cr. H. E. Parker, mentions specifically Ringwood, where he lives and of which he is reigning Mayor, but the principles put forward can be applied to any town in any country. And now, as far as so many towns are concerned, is the right time to plan. The idea of Town Planning is not new, and when one reads Cr. Parker's article one is reminded of the highly enlightened plan that Colonel Light gave to Adelaide (S.A.) over a hundred years ago. Melbourne, too, was planned, but on rather limited lines, probably based by Surveyor Hoddle on consideration of the difficulties likely to be experienced by rural visitors in finding their way about. But Colonel Light had a real vision of the future, and in Cr. Parker's article you will see how the provision of breathing spaces, which was so much a distinguishing feature of Colonel Light's Adelaide plan, enters into the modern town planner's schemes. The photographs that accompany Cr. Parker's article show what an attractive district Ringwood is, and how necessary it is to preserve its natural charm as far as possible. Which reminds us that one of the features of some of Sydney's northern suburbs, whether consciously planned or not, is the practical demonstration that they provide that rustic beauty need not necessarily be destroyed to make a busy modern suburb.—Editor, "The Service Messenger."

Town Planning—the use of the land for the future benefit of the town itself and community as a whole—resolves itself into common business foresight so that the assets and dividends of the future town may be participated in, and enjoyed by, the greatest number at the least cost.

The Town Plan for Ringwood will help to obviate—in a greater or lesser degree according to the speed and enthusiasm with which the proposals are implemented—all those defects of development which towns have experienced in the past and which they will be increasingly subjected to in the future.

Towns in the past have always been coherent expressions of the economic and special development of mankind, and through the centuries have clearly reflected the changes which affected the conditions of society. The mediaeval town, for instance, crystallised around a market square, which in most cases was the economic nucleus of its development. The business life and the private amenities of a town depend largely upon its physical plan—property values, rating revenue and liabilities, the public demand for retail trade, farming and orcharding, and industries, and their relation to markets and to sources of labour—all are dependent upon the economic consequences of the disposition of buildings and land use. With uncontrolled urbanisation going on—as it must go on in the absence of properly-directed development through a town plan—the open areas in and around the town of Ringwood will be gradually exploited often to the detriment of the future well-being of the community and of the future town.

The science of town building and town development has undergone great changes in recent times. These changes have taken place and are taking place in such quick succession that few people have clearly



Cr. H. E. PARKER, J.P.
(Mayor of Ringwood).

recognised their nature, and magnitude, and the attendant consequences.

Within the last one hundred years the industrial revolution has meant that towns and cities are now subjected to mechanised production, mechanised transportation, new building techniques and new ideas upon health and recreation.

Consequently, the basic character of cities and towns and the lives and needs of the inhabitants are no longer the same as they were a century ago upon which period almost all of our present-day town development and growth has been based.

The complex of a city is made up of many units. Part of these units are publicly-owned and controlled. These are streets, parks and public buildings. By far the greater part of the units are

privately owned. They are the business blocks, industries and residential areas. All of them together make the city. The interest of each private owner of property multiplied by the number of owners, or better, the aggregate of private interests, is the interests of the city as a whole. The interests of the city as a whole must guide the town planner in shaping the future town.

The municipality of Ringwood is situated fifteen miles in an approximate easterly direction from Melbourne and by virtue of its geographical position, advantages of topography, soil and natural beauty is a municipality destined to become—with development according to the plan for its future—an outstanding residential municipality with a well-balanced industrial and rural background such as to make it ultimately worthy to take its place as a "Garden City."

The term "Garden City" should not be confused with the popular term "Garden City" used sometimes by estate subdividers for propaganda purposes. The true "Garden City" comprises a town properly "town-

planned," making provision for ideal conditions as far as possible for living, working, recreation and transport. Residential areas are so placed in relation to community facilities, parks and shopping areas, and the industrial section of the town—and all placed in proper relation to each other with a rural belt for farming, etc., surrounding the town—so as to obtain the maximum degree of health and happiness for everyone within the town.

This "Garden City" idea involving the creation of new towns outside the limits of existing large metropolitan centres has been successfully adopted (and Garden Cities created) in England at Welwyn and Letchworth and in some other countries. No such town has as yet made its appearance in Australia.

The Borough of Ringwood offers opportunities for the development of a town with many of the characteristics of the "Garden City." The rural and farming belt—an essential part of the "Garden City"—and a fast rail connection and improved main highway with Melbourne, and surrounding main centres are requirements which it should not be difficult to fulfil. With these accomplished and the town developed according to the general plans, Ringwood would become Australia's first example of a "Garden City."

Although the problems which confront Ringwood are not as acute as those existing in larger and older

municipalities, the necessity for the control of all future development within the borough according to the "Master Plan for Future Development" is just as urgent as in the oldest developed town. Indeed, it might be said that owing to the largely undeveloped nature of many parts of Ringwood and the possibility of avoiding—with wise direction—many of the mistakes of development of towns in the past, the need is very much more necessary. Planning the environment of our towns has been forced upon us with increased intensity in recent years by the complexities of modern living, and a rapidly extending industrialisation and mechanisation. In former times, with agriculture predominating, urban communities developed slowly—it was comparatively easy to predict the future. As the construction of streets was usually of a light nature and cheap, mistakes in alignment or grade were of little moment. But the mechanised era has changed this largely in a single generation. Many difficulties and problems so familiar in many of the metropolitan areas of Melbourne are a stern warning that the growth of Ringwood in the future must be adapted to meet new and changing conditions.

It is, therefore, a municipality such as Ringwood, with its possibilities for growth, which has a unique opportunity of providing and arranging for future physical facilities by planning in time—and not too



FOUR VIEWS OF RINGWOOD.

Top left—East Ringwood. Top right—Ringwood Lake. Lower left—Loughnan's Hill.
Lower right—Heathmont.



Looking South from Wonga Road.



A Heathmont Vista.

late. Such planning for the future will help arouse among the citizens a common and unified interest in education, recreation, amusement, work, mode of living, etc., all of which are important elements in providing a better environment and producing a more happy and contented people.

However carefully all the necessary data and information may be compiled and local problems considered, planning must be done in the face of uncertainty. Observing the past, nobody can predict the future and say how far invention and scientific advance will influence the manner of living and the form of towns.

Therefore a town plan—though meeting certain definite needs and solving certain definite problems, and rigid in some ways—must be flexible in others; it must grow as conditions change.

One of the first essentials in the formulation of a plan for future development is the zoning of the borough to provide appropriate amounts of space in suitable positions for residences, farms, factories, shops, public buildings, churches, schools and community or neighbourhood centres, open spaces and playgrounds, and economy in reticulation for essential services such as water supply, gas, electricity and sewerage.

Zoning insures that there shall not be indiscriminate building of factories, shops or dwellings in the one neighbourhood. A person is entitled to an assurance

from the municipality that the amenities of his home shall not be interfered with by the erection of factories or other structures which will mar the surroundings.

The effect of zoning—in addition to this safeguarding of the amenities of the home-dweller, shopkeeper, etc.—is to stabilise land values.

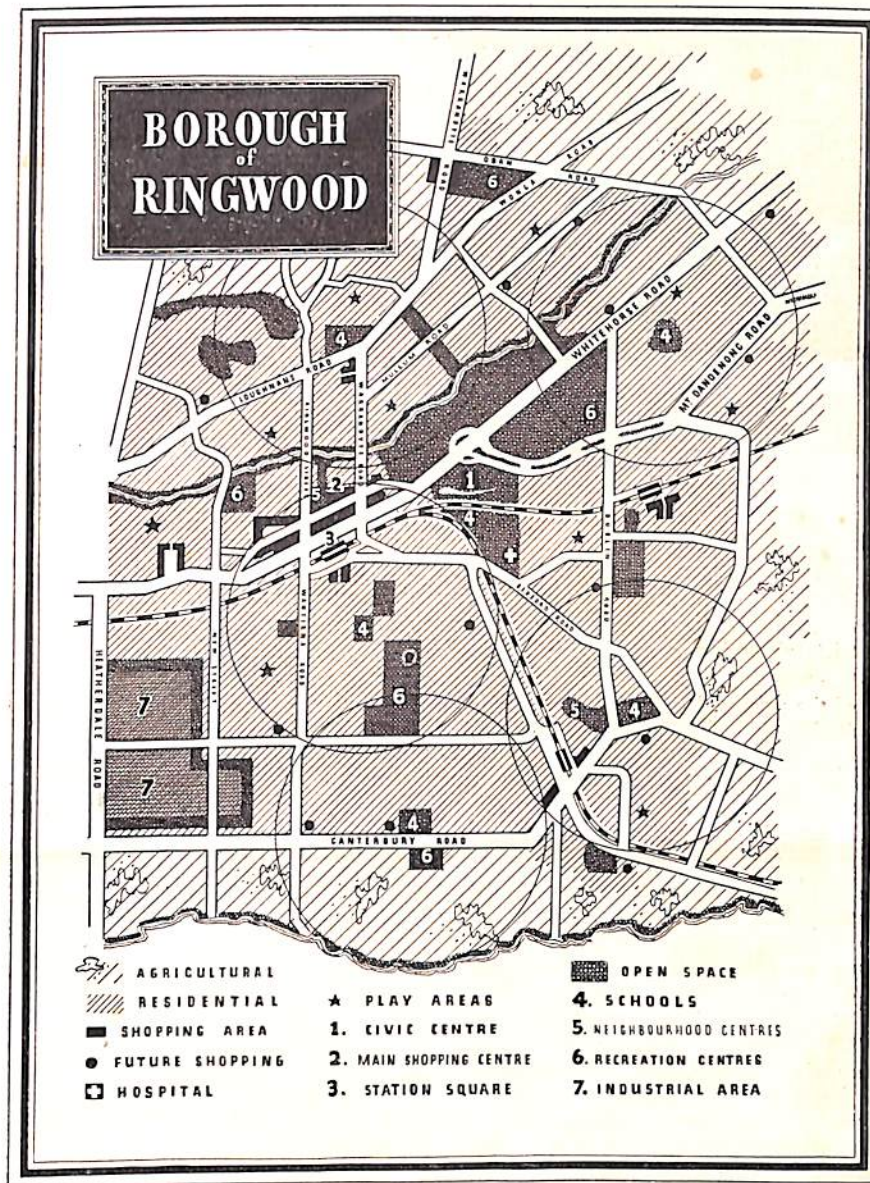
Having determined this, an examination of existing roads and new road systems required for the future town is then necessary, as well as a survey of existing transport facilities and their position in relation to the future town plan.

Following this, a working out of the town plan in detail is required, giving attention to the elimination of present defects in the borough, the planning of new areas to be ultimately developed, the restriction of ribbon development along main roads, the architectural appearance of buildings, the preservation and cultivation of trees, the placing of public buildings in appropriate surroundings, the control of advertisements, etc.

The experience of all large towns is sufficient to show that with a little more development in the borough, these matters will become a real problem.

The Street System

The street pattern of a community is the result of the interaction of traffic tension and lot development. For convenience, the main facilities sought by



citizens of a municipality are usually situated in the centre of the town. Therefore, a system of radial streets connecting this centre with the outlying areas is the obvious development. This has been the origin of Ringwood's radial street pattern. Since, however, in a town of any considerable size, congestion is caused by traffic having no particular business in a town being required to go through the main business part of the town to get to its destination, there arises the necessity for some circumferential streets at a greater or less distance from the centre. Further, it is necessary to get from any part of the municipality to any other part, and to be able to do so directly in order to shorten the route and to avoid the congestion mentioned above. Within the municipality there is a need for an additional number of more or less circumferential roads which if provided will be used by a considerable amount of through traffic. These sections of the street require to be of greater

width than purely residential roads as their function is to carry not only local traffic of the municipality but traffic between surrounding towns.

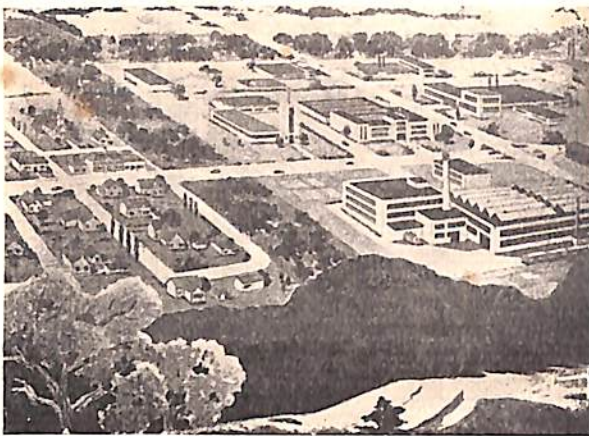
Civic Centre

To a visitor entering a town for the first time, the civic centre and town hall should present a dominating impression commensurate with its position as the focal point of administration and social life in the town.

One of the first essentials in any town, whether small or large, is a central open space or "place" where the administrative and civic affairs of the community may be centred. The civic centre should dominate the town plan and occupy a generous area of land.

A civic centre is now recognised as being an essential part of every town.

The whole should be set in a large area of land



Design of town, with breathing space between residential and factory zones.

with abundant open space around the buildings for trees, lawns and gardens.

The present town hall set on the street line just as a shop or hotel is altogether unworthy of its true purpose in the town.

The adoption of the proposed site for a future civic centre will permit the gradual building up, over the course of years, of a civic group of buildings in such a setting as to make it an outstanding example of a modern civic centre.

Open Space

The provision of open space, including a projected system of recreation areas, is an essential part of the town plan. The problem is—not to allot a certain percentage of land as open space regardless of its recreational value (e.g., disconnected waste land, difficult and expensive to develop and maintain)—but to resume certain areas in specific locations.

The open space plan must provide adequate areas of land suitable for recreational purposes for people of all ages in orderly conjunction with the residential neighbourhoods.

The Expansion of Residential Areas and "Neighbourhood Unit" Development

One of the most noteworthy phases in the development of modern town planning in relation to the extension of towns and redevelopment of old sections of towns is the evolution and development of the "neighbourhood unit" system.

In the existing system of expansion of our towns usually paddocks are subdivided by owners to show maximum return. Allotments are very often reduced to the absolute minimum consistent with the council regulations, and no open space for park or recreational facilities is set aside.

The gross result of this subdivision of private estates and paddocks in the metropolis of Melbourne over the years has been to give us dreary and uninteresting suburban development with a lack of adequate open spaces and a poor arrangement of streets.

The old idea whereby individual houses were regarded as the unit in town development with sub-

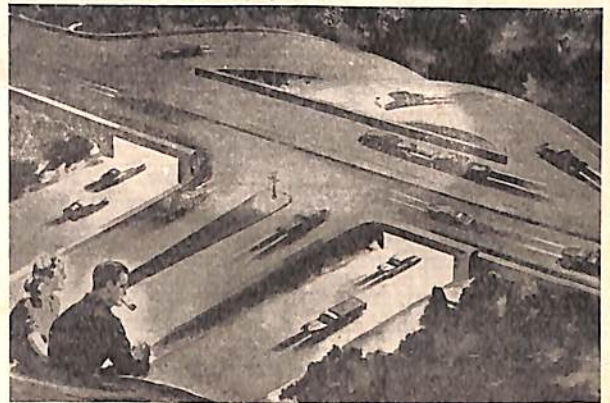
divisions arranged by the land speculator usually to get as many allotments and maximum financial return irrespective of the suitability of the subdivision to the surroundings and usually resulting in chaotic relationship between the location of shops, industry, open space and homes—with streets laid out according to an obsolete pattern—with extravagant duplication of services and utilities—and used for speculation long before urban development was needed—with municipal costs and taxes inflated by the installation and upkeep of only partly used public improvements; all of these are now superseded and largely obviated in modern town planning practice by what is known as a "neighbourhood community" or "neighbourhood unit."

Hoardings and Street Signs

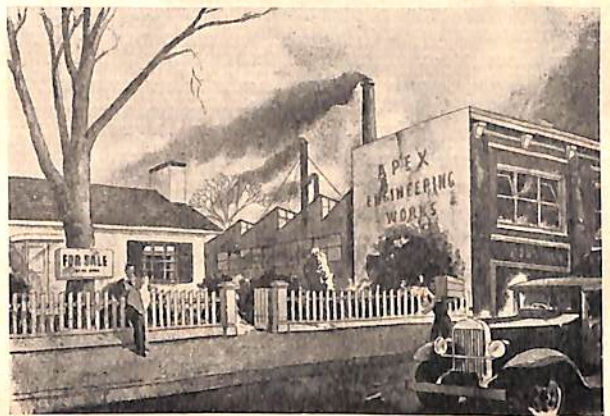
Hoardings along roads should be subject to certain measures of control. The quality of these hoardings often affects one's impressions of a town.

Petrol and Service Stations

It is fundamental in a proper town plan that cars should be fuelled and serviced upon private property and not left standing upon a public way to create congestion. All new service stations should be required to provide a sufficiency of parking area upon their own property to accommodate all cars requiring attention.



Safe, high-speed junction roads, properly planned.



Town-planning avoids this.

If you are thinking of building a house, what do you do? You call in an expert — probably an architect — to prepare plans for you. It will be his job to see that every unit is so arranged to give your home the maximum in comfort and convenience at the lowest cost. Let us compare the plan of our house with that of the average town.

The kitchen is the workshop of the house, the industrial area is the kitchen of the town. You try to keep kitchen smells from the rest of the house. For this purpose we provide a pantry. Similarly you try to segregate the city's working area.

The living room is the get-together room. It is like the social facilities of your neighbourhood.

The bedroom is the place for quiet and rest. It is like the residential area of Ringwood.

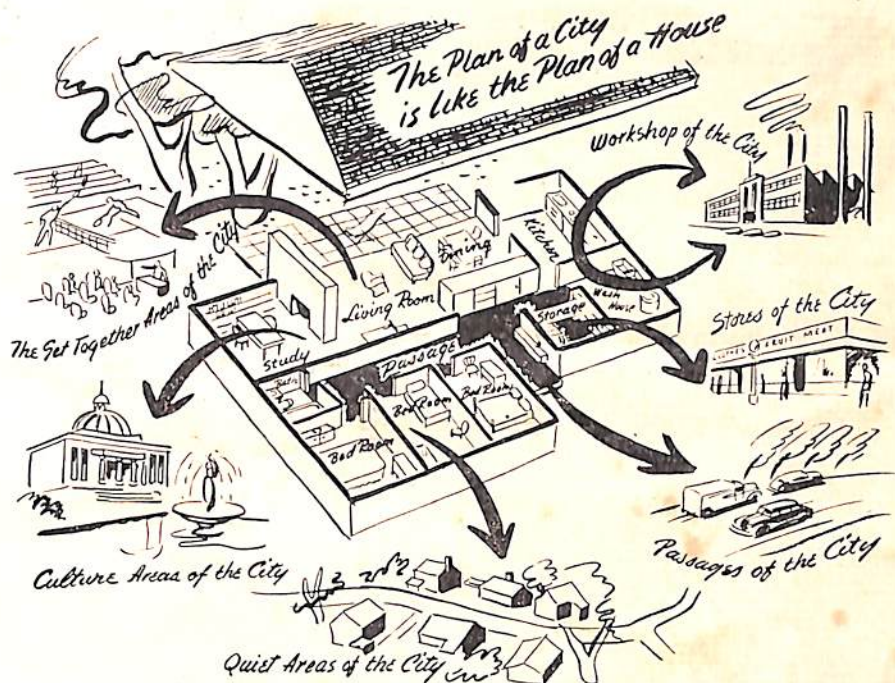
The bathroom serves cleanliness and health which the town provides by its system of water supply, sewerage system and disposal.

Dad's room is his office and study. In Ringwood this would be its administration buildings, its libraries, museums and places of education.

The parlour, porch and garden in the house are like the parks, squares and recreation places of Ringwood.

A passage separates the living quarters from the bedroom and connects your bedroom with your bathroom. That in town planning represents your road and street system.

The plan of a town should be as orderly and economical as the plan of a house.



Towns have too few corridors or passages.

Towns have beds in their kitchens.

Towns have crammed living rooms, or none at all.

Towns have their kitchens in all parts of the house.

These are conditions you can help to change in your own town. From neighbourhood to community to town—it's a big job, a long job, but by no means impossible if you will help to start it and stay to finish it.

In conclusion, it should be emphasised that the wide guidance and control of development by the municipality and the prevention of costly mistakes is better than cure—mistakes can be avoided now which will be exceedingly costly to undo even in five years time, and provision for the future can be made at a fraction of the cost if taken in hand now and dealt with promptly in accordance to a town plan.

“The final test of an economic system is not the tons of iron, the tanks of oil, or the miles of textiles it produces: the final test lies in its ultimate products—the sort of men and women it nurtures and the order and beauty and sanity of their communities.”

Lewis Mumford

Tuesday, July 23rd, 1946

Ringwood has the Right Idea.

In Ringwood, some 15 miles from the G.P.O., there is a move to prevent a pleasant district from being haphazardly engulfed in the eastward spread of Melbourne's factory and residential areas. The idea which is being promoted there, calls for the planned development of a garden city, with its own "green belt" of open space enclosing schools, commerce and social services.

The aim is a splendid one. It is to be approached on lines conforming to the general policy of the Town and Country Planning Board, but the Board has been asked to give the local council temporary control until a detailed plan can be prepared and submitted.

Neighbouring settlements stand to benefit from the civic sense of Ringwood, for they will share the advantages reserved on their borders. The tendency to a continuous line of homes and factories along main roads will be checked.

Instead of unbroken suburbs spreading in all directions from the city—as they now tend to spread along Point Nepean Road and the eastern side of Port Phillip Bay—we need the principle of the satellite town. The idea is that of a community with its own character and its own decentralised life.

The real value of fast intersuburban transport is not in carrying us to the end of a row of houses, but in allowing the city worker to live in a modern, healthy version of the rural village. That is what Ringwood's effort may achieve. Other outer suburban centres around Melbourne should consider the scheme.