

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

# Sandy Point Caravan and Camping Ground Site Investigation



*Undertake an investigation of caravan parks and camping grounds at  
Sandy Point*

**Council Plan 2018/19**

Ordinary Meeting of Council No. 435 - 26 June 2019



**South Gippsland  
Shire Council**



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# Introduction

The Victorian coast continues to remain an attraction for intrastate, interstate and overseas visitors. A key characteristic of tourism in coastal Victoria is the huge influx of visitors and beach users over the summer period. Most of our coastal towns more than double in size each summer and Sandy Point is one of these towns .

The existing Sandy Point Caravan Park is small and has no practical opportunity to expand its operations. Traditional short stay caravan and camping grounds provide tourism and economic benefits to the region.

The aim of this project was to explore different options to establish a new caravan and camping ground that would concentrate on the large volume short stay tourism market that has been absent in Sandy Point for many years.





## Background

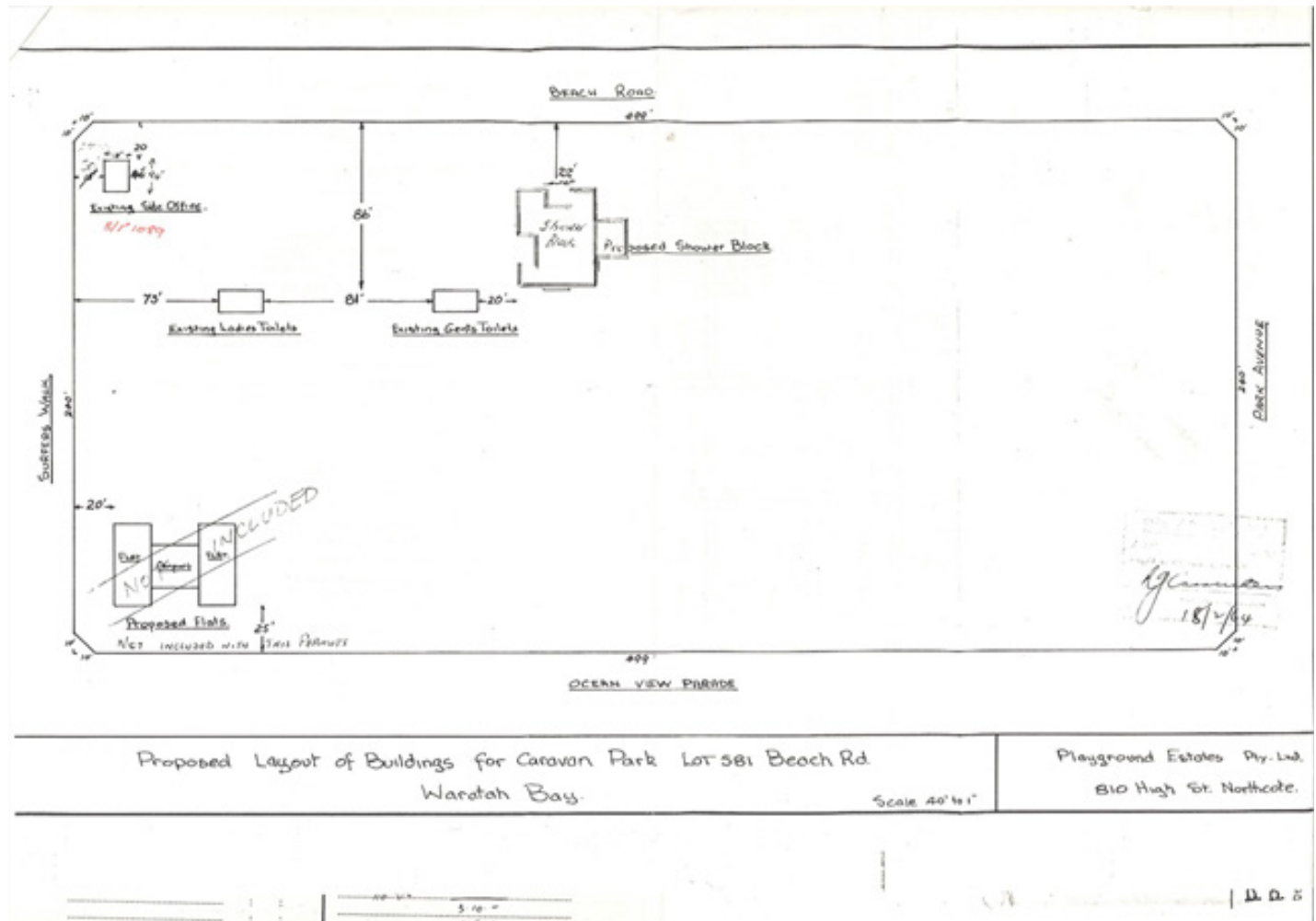
Sandy Point is located 201km south east of Melbourne, 56km south of Leongatha, five minutes from Shallow Inlet with Wilson's Promontory National Park to the east. It was developed as a small holiday coastal hamlet in the 1950s and has remained a popular destination for surfing, fishing and boating.

Sandy Point as a small coastal hamlet has three main roles:

- Primarily it is a holiday destination for people from Melbourne and the surrounding district;
- It is also a settlement for a small permanent year round population; and
- It is a destination for tourists to Shallow Inlet and the surrounding Coastal Parks.

The heart of Sandy Point is the coastal foreshore and commercial area. The shops and stores are all located along Beach Parade and consist of nine narrow lots which are generally accessible by foot for most of the local residents. Directly behind this small group of shops is the community hall and tennis courts. Across the road from the commercial area is Sandy Point beach and Surf Life Saving Club. Sandy Point beach is patrolled by volunteer life savers throughout summer on weekends and public holidays. This season the beach will be patrolled from 1 December 2018 until 14 April 2019.

The Sandy Point Caravan Park is also located on Beach Parade immediately east of the shops. The Sandy Point Holiday Park or Telopea Caravan Park as it was previously known has been in operation since before 1964 and is currently registered with Council for 74 short term sites (or annuals) and 10 camping sites. While the sites are technically defined 'short term', these sites are where you own the structure on the site i.e. the cabin or caravan/annex and pay an annual fee to occupy the site for holiday use.



*Plans from original building permit for shower block and toilets 12/02/1964*



Over the past 15 years the caravan park has undergone a number of changes. Planning approval was issued in May 2011 for the construction of seven dwellings in the north east corner of the Caravan Park site, only three of which have been constructed. Another planning approval was issued for a five lot subdivision in May 2018. This area is currently being used for camping at the caravan park. Once the subdivision proceeds this will effectively leave the caravan park with no camping or caravan sites available, only the annual sites will remain.

Further application has been made to Council to subdivide the remaining caravan park. If approved the caravan park would be subdivided into an additional 14 lots.

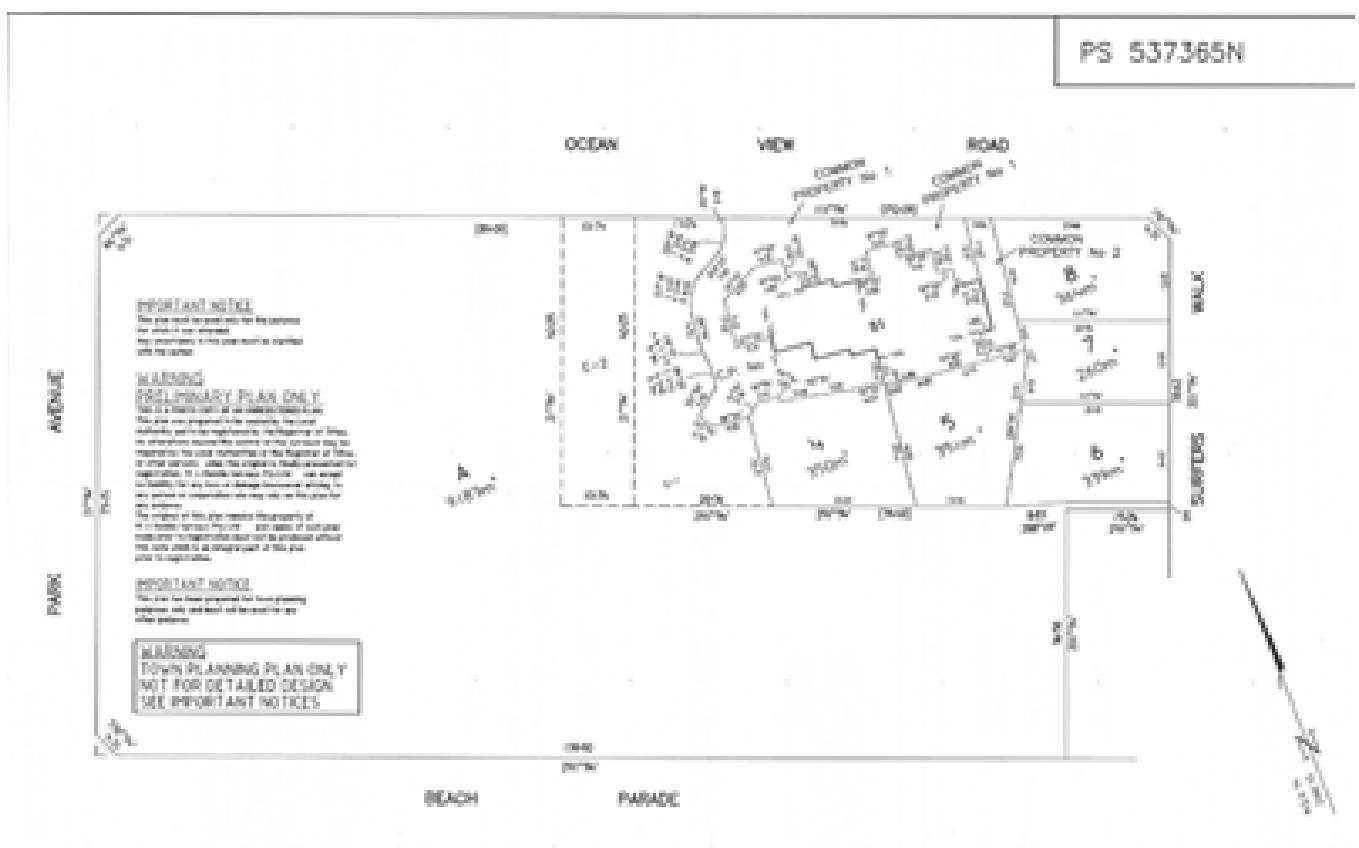
The caravan park is located in the Township Zone. The purpose of the Township Zone is to ensure future development is of a scale and design that is consistent with the township role and function and maintains its unique character. Being in the Township Zone does not safeguard the existing caravan park site for the future.

The location of the current caravan park provides no scope for expansion. The surrounding land is already developed and therefore cannot expand in any direction. It also lacks shade or protection from the elements by way of trees and landscaping as space does not allow. The size of the camping area is prohibitive to large vans entering the park as there is just not enough room to manoeuvre the vans into the sites. It also restricts group booking sizes.





Current site plan for Sandy Point Caravan Park



Planning Permit 2017/76 Endorsed Plans



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Proposed further subdivision of Sandy Point Caravan Park



## Caravan and Camping Grounds

Sandy Point is well positioned to provide accommodation for a significant market of people looking for a more isolated caravan and camping experience; away from main population areas and close to coastal water and natural areas.

There are a number of different options in regard to caravan and camping parks. Large holiday parks that cater for the ever increasing van sizes and include facilities such as jumping pillows and indoor heated pools to the free-camping sites that only provide basic ablutions such as Parks Vic managed camp grounds like Bear Gully.

## Statistics - Caravan and Camping Australia

The following statistics were taken from the Caravan Industry Association of Australia

- There was a total of 11.6 million overnight caravan and camping trips undertaken by Australians for the year ending June 2017, a 2.4 per cent decrease from the previous year. Decline largely attributed to Cyclone Debbie, which lead to an 8 per cent decrease quarter on quarter from last year within the state. (Year ending June 2017)
- Total nights generated by domestic caravan and camping visitors for the year ending June 2017 reached 49.97 million, a marginal decrease of 1.1 per cent.
- Visitors aged 55 years and over retained the largest market share in terms of nights, accounting for 44 per cent of all nights (21.9 million). The 30 to 54-year market segment represents 41 per cent of all nights created (20.3 million). (Year ending March 2017)
- There are more people aged 30 to 54 years undertaking caravan and camping trips, however, the 55 years and over demographic spend more time on their holidays. (Year ending March 2017)
- Travelling for a holiday remains the most popular reason for consumers to undertake a caravan and camping trip, representing 77 per cent of the market. (Year ending March 2017)
- 377,000 international visitors chose to take a caravan and camping holiday in the year ending June 2017, an increase of 13 per cent from the previous year.
- International caravan and camping nights increased by 2 per cent to reach 5.1million nights.

Caravan and Camping State of Industry 2017 report states that key findings for 2016 include:

- There were 21,841 Recreational Vehicles manufactured in Australia, the second largest year for manufacturing in the last 37 years.
- An estimated \$1.8 billion of revenue was generated by Cabins, Powered sites and unpowered sites.



## Local Area Caravan Park Review

A review was completed by SGL Consulting Group Australia Pty Ltd on caravan and camping parks in the likely catchment region (approx. 100km either side of the South Gippsland area).

The competitor Caravan Park review found there were 36 parks in this review zone. Key findings from this review included:

- The average park rating was 3.0 to 3.5 and one park was rated 4.5 (RACV Inverloch).
- A review of management models indicated a total of:
  - 20 parks were independently owned/managed.
  - 12 were managed by local councils/some contracted/some in-house.
  - Three were managed under a management franchise i.e. Big 4/Top Tourist etc.
  - One park was managed by Parks Victoria (Wilsons Prom National Park).
- A review of total sites indicated:
  - One park had more than 450 sites (484 sites).
  - One park had more than 200 sites (238 powered sites).
  - Seven parks had between 50 and 99 sites.
  - 18 parks had less than 50 sites.
  - Nine parks did not supply information on the number of sites they had.
- There were a total of 2,420 sites in the 27 parks that supplied information on their number of sites.
- The average minimum daily rental for a site was \$25 to \$40 for a double and maximum rental for a double was \$40 to \$80/night. Extra persons charges ranged from \$10 to \$20/person.
- A total of 20 out of the 26 parks supplied information on their cabins with:
  - Eight parks having less than 10 cabins,
  - Seven parks between 11 and 20 cabins,
  - Four parks between 21 and 30 cabins,
- The facility inventory review identified a total of 258 cabins in the 20 parks.

- The average minimum rental rate for cabins ranged from \$75/\$160 night for 2 people to \$100/\$220 night in peak season. Extra person charges ranged from \$8 to \$25/person.
- Only 14 out of the 258 cabins did not have ensuite or amenities connected to the cabins.
- A review of available information on extra customer features indicated:
  - 19 parks offered camp kitchen facilities,
  - No parks had ensuite facilities adjoining sites,
  - 11 parks provided public access internet.
  - 17 parks had a shop or café onsite.
- A review of recreation and sport facilities indicated:
  - 10 parks had swimming pools onsite,
  - 11 sites had hard courts (tennis etc.)
- A total of 23 parks had playgrounds.

The estimated population of Sandy Point is 209 with 658 private dwellings, 73 of which are occupied and 571 are non-resident owners. A large proportion of the non-resident owners use their properties as holiday rentals either through real estate agents or websites such as Airbnb or Stayz. A quick search on Airbnb identified at least 20 properties available for rent.





## Possible Site Options

The investigation looked at four sites in Sandy Point as possible areas for a future caravan and camping site.

### Site One - West of Sandy Point

This site provides easy access for large caravans to enter the site. It is a large flat section of land where a significant sized caravan and camping park could be established. The site is situated behind the primary dune system, a short walk to the beach via an existing track. There would be limited if any vegetation removal required.

Constraints:

- The property is covered by the Bushfire Management Overlay and the Land Subject to Inundation Overlay meaning consultation with the CFA and West Gippsland Catchment Authority (WGCMA) would be required.
- It is further from the commercial centre of town but has a walking track that would provide safe passage to the centre of town.
- The beach access point is not at the patrolled beach area (approx. one kilometre walk). However the existing caravan park at Waratah Bay is not impacted by the beach not being patrolled.
- Unsure of current owner willingness for the property to potentially be a caravan camping ground in the future.





## Site Two - Southeast of the Sandy Point Township

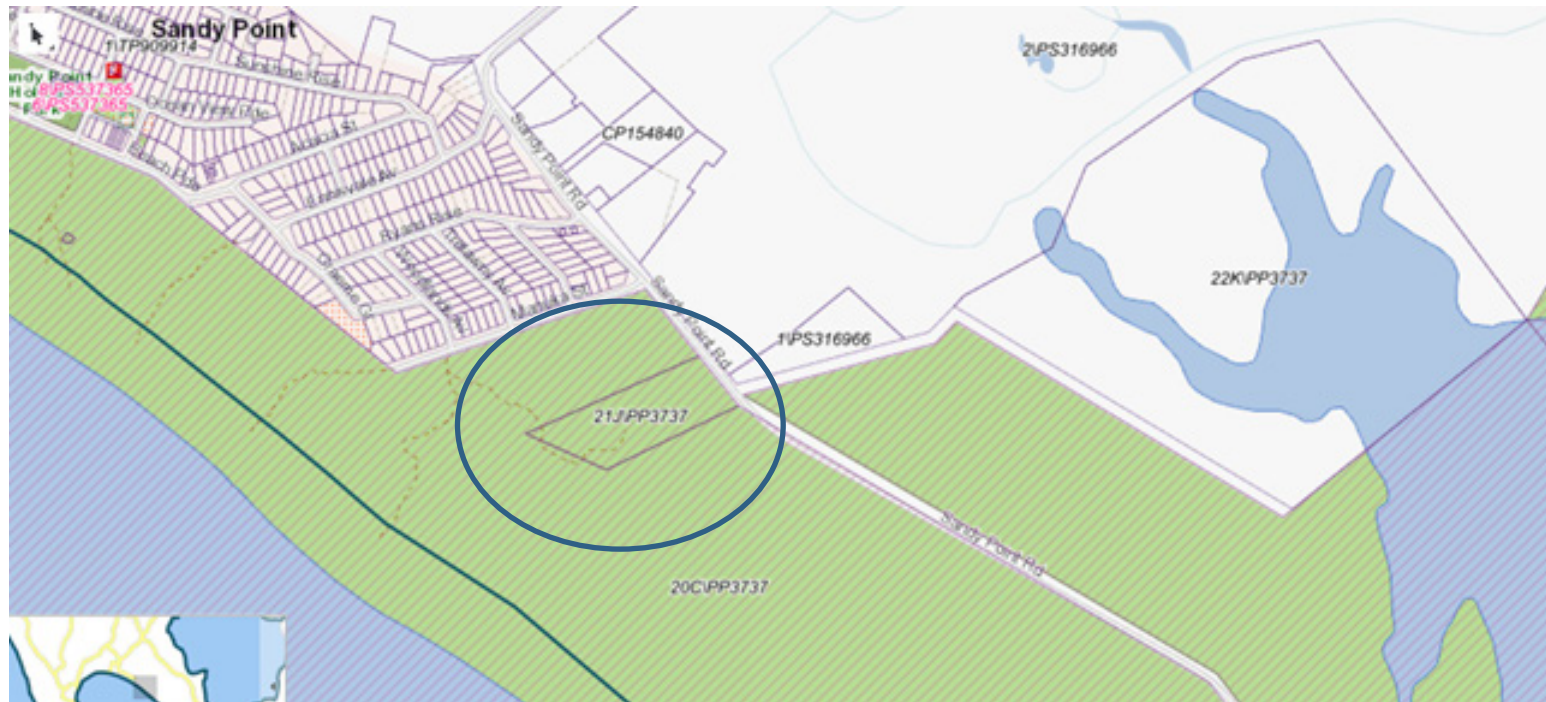
A camping ground such as the camping grounds located at Cape Liptrap Coastal Park (e.g. Bear Gully) could be developed in this area. These areas are managed by DELWP, Parks Vic or the Sandy Point Foreshore Committee and only opened for a three month period over the summer periods and school holidays.

The area has existing walking tracks to the beach but would require a great deal of vegetation removal as it is heavily vegetated with coastal scrub. The location is central between the open ocean side which is perfect for surfing and fishing and to Shallow Inlet, a calm bay like beach perfect for fishing and families.

### Constraints:

- The area is covered by Bushfire Management Overlay so the CFA would need to be consulted.
- Part of it is an old landfill site that closed more than 20 years ago. The land is unstable due to movement of the landfill and would need investigation into the possibility of asbestos and soil contamination.
- Beach access is approximately 700 metres away from the patrolled beach area.
- The subject site is on Crown land and so permission would need to be sought from DELWP.







## Site Three - North of Sandy Point Township

There is a large farming property to the north of the main township of Sandy Point. It is currently in the Farming Zone and has previously subdivided smaller sections of the property. It is located directly behind the main township and if access could be made through to either Harbour View or Ash Avenue to provide a direct walking track through the township to the beach.

Depending on where access to the township is made it would be approximately a 700 metre walk. There is a vacant parcel of land at 57 Harbour View, Sandy Point that could be used as an access through to the main township. It is a central position to the commercial area and the beach entrance would be direct to the patrolled beach.

### Constraints:

- The area is covered by Bushfire Management Overlay and the Land Subject to Inundation Overlay. Again the CFA and WGCMA would need to be consulted.
- Depending on the access road this could potentially divide the property in two.
- Unsure of current owner willingness for his property to potentially be a caravan camping ground in the future.
- Access to the beach would be via roads as there is no footpath.
- Probable acid-sulfate soil in section of land adjacent to Harbour View.







## Site Four - Existing Caravan Park Site

The existing caravan park site is ideally located. It is central to the commercial area, the patrolled beach and recreation facilities. During the development of the Sandy Point Urban Design Framework in 2006 the Caravan Park along with the commercial centre were recognised as an important physical and social element of the town, particularly for non-permanent residents.

Through the exhibition of the Framework the potential loss of the caravan park was identified as an issue for the community. At the time the suggested relocation of the Caravan Park to the northern end of Telopea Street or near Ennisvale Avenue was objected to by several residents as it placed the caravan park within direct view of several residents which was considered inappropriate and unwelcome.

### Constraints:

- In its current form the caravan park only has provision limited sites. Removing the existing caravan and/or annexes from the annual sites would allow for a number of powered sites to be available for caravans and camping. Landscaping could be provided to provide shelter and aesthetics.
- Planning approval for subdivision of the site has been granted.

PLEASE NOTE: The owners of the sites identified in this report have not been contacted regarding being identified as a proposed caravan and camping ground site. Contact will be made as the project progresses.

## Conclusion

The most suitable site for the future development of a caravan park and camping ground in Sandy Point has been identified as Site One. Its proximity to the beach, town centre and accessibility makes it clearly the best location. A caravan and camping ground with minimal infrastructure providing short stay sites for camping and caravans would be ideally suited to the site. Whilst the current peak period for tourists is growing longer every year a caravan and camping ground could potentially close over the quiet periods. In failing to provide for future short term accommodation in Sandy Point Council risks losing the tourism and economic benefits that short term stay accommodation provides.

Possible next steps include:

- Undertake feasibility study to determine gaps in the market, identify caravan and camping ground model, undertake land acquisition and prepare for the setup of park and management model.
- Acquire land for a caravan and camping park at Sandy Point.
- Establish a caravan and camping park at Sandy Point.
- Manage a caravan and camping park at Sandy Point.

## References

1. Urban Design Framework Settlement Background Paper Sandy Point, Connell Wagner Pty Ltd 2006
2. Waratah Bay Caravan Park Business Assessment and Strategy Development Report, Final Report, May 2016 by SGL Consulting Group Australia Pty Ltd
3. [www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au/downloads/file/672/settlement\\_background\\_paperpdfUrb](http://www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au/downloads/file/672/settlement_background_paperpdfUrb)