CITY OF MELTON

Western Plains South **Green Wedge** Management Plan

FEBRUARY 2024

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

Melton City Council acknowledges Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples living and working in Melton. Council recognises the people of the Kulin Nations as the original custodians of the land now known as City of Melton. On behalf of the municipality, Council pays respect to their Elders, past, present and future.

Photography: Stephen Fuller

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Introduction, Background, and Policy Context

INTRODUCTION

The Melton City Council Western Plains South Green Wedge Management Plan (WPSGWMP) provides a framework to support sustainable land use, land management, and development for the Western Plains South Green Wedge (WPSGW) within the municipality.

It will document the findings of research, analysis and consultation with the community and stakeholders. Future use and development of this study area will be guided by a vision and shared principles.

The potential benefits for the Management Plan are to:

- Enhance knowledge of the environmental, social, economic, and cultural heritage attributes of the non- urban parts of the City, including addressing issues of environmental degradation and economic viability of traditional farming methods.
- Enhance community knowledge and awareness of non-urban land use, development, and management issues.
- Identify initiatives to be undertaken to ensure improved long term sustainable management of land and other resources in the green wedge area.
- Collaborate with other councils and agencies (including water authorities, other authorities, Registered Aboriginal Parties, and others) to implement initiatives

The full plan vision and themes are detailed in chapter 2 on page 15.

Approximately 40% of the Western Plains South Green Wedge area is located within the City of Melton and the remainder within City of Wyndham. Two separate background reports were produced in 2018 for each Council with a shared vision and principles. This plan builds upon Melton City Council's Background Report (2018) and refers only to the Western Plains South Green Wedge area within the City of Melton.

This project was introduced to landholders, community groups and agencies in mid-2018 with consultation sessions in both the City of Melton and City of Wyndham. Feedback received from this process informed the Background Report data. This set out key Issues and next steps to be addressed in the draft and final management plan phases of the project.

Key issues raised from initial consultation that informed the Background Report were:

- Rubbish and soil dumping
- Local roads and traffic
- Western Grasslands Reserve interface
- Urban Growth Boundary and Outer Metropolitan Ring (E6)
- Agriculture
- Grass fires
- Land management
- Planning controls
- Landscape

A GREEN WEDGE IS AN AREA OF LAND WHICH HAS AGRICULTURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, HISTORIC, LANDSCAPE, RECREATION AND/OR TOURISM VALUE.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

This report is structured into 10 sections and builds on the key considerations contained in the Background Report (2018). This Green Wedge Management Plan is structured in 10 chapters as follows:

- *Introduction, Background, and policy context*
- People and Consultation
- Vision and Themes
- Agriculture, Irrigation and Natural Resources
- Land Use and Infrastructure
- Environment
- Landscape
- Cultural Heritage
- Precincts
- *Implementation*

PROJECT PROCESS

The Western Plains South Green Wedge Management Plan process includes three rounds of community consultation as shown below. Further details of initial consultation activity can be found within the background report.

The second consultation stage consisted of five well attended community meetings. The project is now at the third consultation stage, for public comment and feedback of a draft plan document. After this stage, further changes will be made in response to the feedback.

GREEN WEDGES IN THE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT ACT (1987)

Section 46AD of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 has the following 'objects', or objectives, for Green Wedges:

a) to recognise the importance of green wedge land; and

b) to protect, enhance and promote non-urban values and non-urban uses of green wedge land, and to give primacy to those values and uses; and

c) to enable strategic planning for and management of green wedge land; and

d) to provide for the beneficial use of green wedge land that contributes to the sustainability, prosperity, health and wellbeing of Victorians; and

e) support primary production on green wedge land and to enable its growth by preventing incompatible uses and development; and

f) to manage threats of land use change that would detract from non-urban values and non-urban uses of green wedge land; and

g) to recognise the connection and stewardship of traditional owners in relation to land that is green wedge land.

HISTORY OF GREEN WEDGE MANAGEMENT PLANS

State Government reports identified the need for preserving the values of Green Wedge areas as early as 1971. Since 2002, Green Wedge land has been defined in legislation along with planning zones and controls for subdivision. As part of the implementation of Melbourne 2030 (the metropolitan planning strategy at the time) and the introduction of an Urban Growth Boundary for Melbourne, the Victorian State Government introduced a process for the preparation of management plans for all of Melbourne's Green Wedges, mandating a consistent format.

MELBOURNE'S GREEN WEDGES

Green Wedges are the non-urban areas of metropolitan Melbourne that lie outside the Urban Growth Boundary. There are 12 designated Green Wedge areas (Figure 1) that collectively form a ring around Melbourne. These 12 Green Wedges are: Manningham, Mornington Peninsula, Nillumbik, South East, Southern Ranges, Sunbury, Werribee South, Western Plains South, Western Plains North, Westernport, Whittlesea, Yarra Valley and Yarra and Dandenong Ranges.

The City of Melton is one of 17 fringe municipalities within metropolitan Melbourne which contain Green Wedges.

A Green Wedge is an area of land which has agricultural, environmental, historic, landscape, recreation and/or tourism value. Consequently, urban development is not allowed in these areas.

FIGURE 1 MELBOURNE GREEN WEDGE AREAS (DTP, 2021)

Planning Practice Note No.31, June 2015: *Preparing a Green Wedge Management Plan* provides guidance for the preparation of Green Wedge Management Plans and sets out that the role of Green Wedges includes:

- Providing opportunities for agricultural uses, such as market gardening, viticulture, aquaculture, farm forestry and broad acre farming.
- Conserving rural and scenic landscapes.
- Conserving conservation areas close to where people live.
- Conserving renewable and non-renewable resources and natural areas, such as water catchments.
- Providing and safeguarding sites for infrastructure that supports urban areas, such as airports and sewage treatment plants.
- Allowing industries such as sand and stone extraction to operate close to major markets.
- Enabling the development of networks of open space.
- Providing opportunities for tourism and recreation.
- Recognising and conserving heritage features.

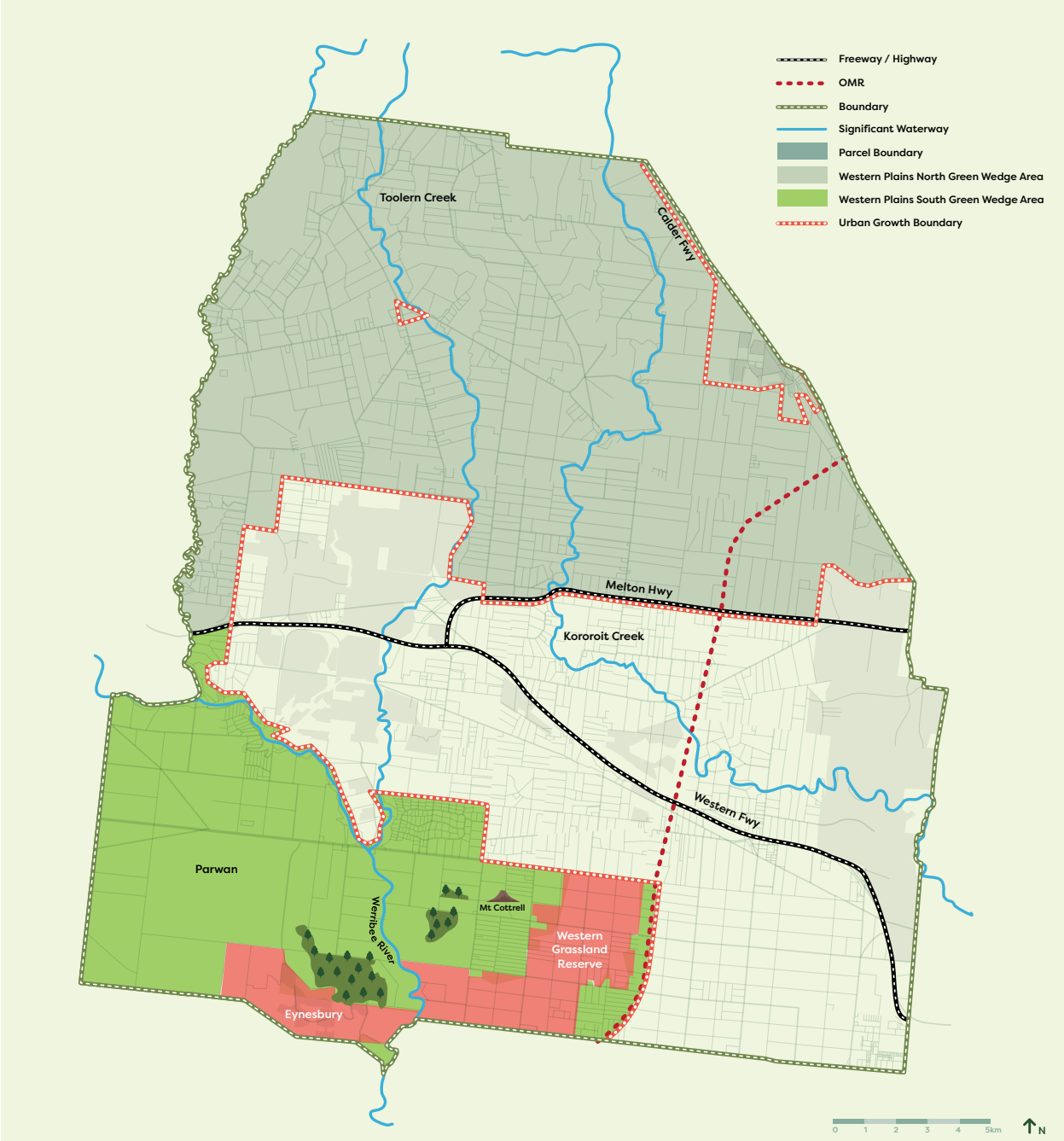


FIGURE 2 MELTON GREEN WEDGES

CITY OF MELTON GREEN WEDGES

The City of Melton has two designated Green Wedges, Western Plains North Green Wedge and Western Plains South Green Wedge (Figure 2). A Green Wedge Management Plan was completed for the Western Plains North Green Wedge in 2014.

The Western Plains South Green Wedge (WPSGW) is shared between two municipalities – The City of Melton and the City of Wyndham (Figure 4). The WPSGW has a total area of 31,618 ha, of which 11,307ha is located within the City of Melton (Figure 3)

The City of Melton Western Plains South Green Wedge area includes land outside the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) which is zoned Green Wedge Zone, Green Wedge A Zone, Rural Conservation Zone and Public and Special Use Zones.

The township of Eynesbury (in the Mixed Use Zone - MUZ) and the proposed Western Grassland Reserve (in the Rural Conservation Zone - RCZ) is outside the scope of this Green Wedge Management Plan, however, this Green Wedge Management Plan will consider interface issues and connections associated with these areas.

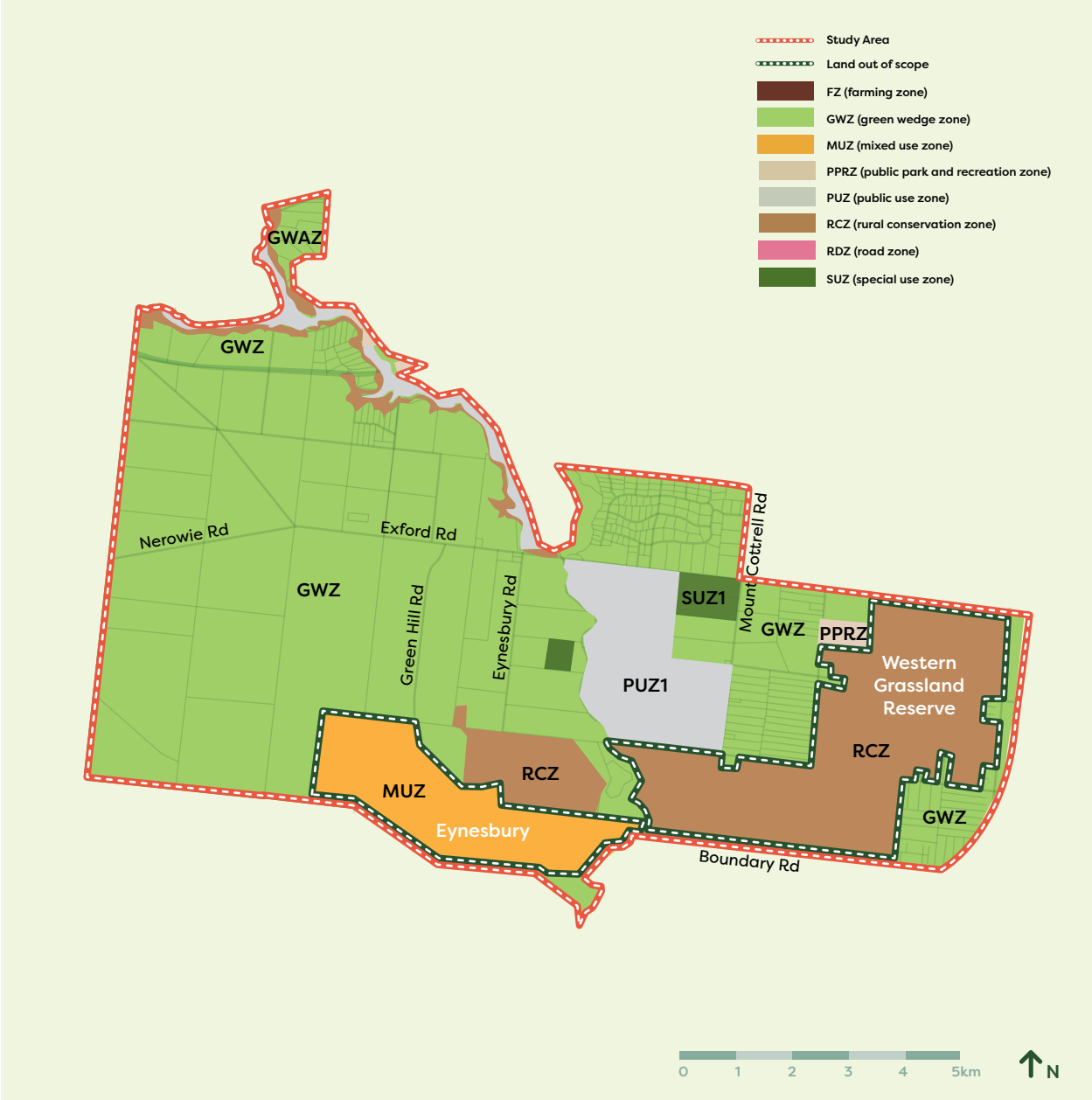


FIGURE 3 STUDY AREA ZONING MAP

REGIONAL CONTEXT

The City of Melton is part of the west growth corridor, a key growth area of Melbourne. Most of the area between the Melton township and the eastern section of this growth corridor (the Caroline Springs, Hillside, etc. area) is to be developed primarily for residential purposes. Cobblebank, south-east of Melton township will become a metropolitan activity centre for the region. In addition, large areas of land have been identified for employment uses in the south-east of the municipality and the eastern edge of the existing Melton township.

Other points of interest include the township of Eynesbury in the south of the area on the border of the municipality with Wyndham, and the proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring (OMR) which will enter the City of Melton from Diggers Rest in the north and cross the Western Highway before following the UGB route along the eastern boundary of the study area. At this point it continues further south into the City of Wyndham portion of the Western Plains.

The broader region is the Victorian Volcanic Plains which stretch across to the South Australian border. These plains are dominated by grasslands, with only small remaining pockets of highly threatened native flora and fauna. A dominant feature of these plains are several volcanic formations, such as Mount Cottrell, which can be seen across the open flat landscape. The major waterways of Werribee River and Toolern Creek are biodiversity and habitat corridors, as well as delivering water for downstream irrigation users.

The Western Grassland Reserve is not included in the Western Plains South Green Wedge, however its interface will be considered in this Plan.

Adjoining municipalities

The City of Melton shares municipal boundaries with Macedon Ranges Shire to the north, the City of Hume and the City of Brimbank to the east, the City of Wyndham to the south and Moorabool Shire to the west. Moorabool Shire is classified as a peri-urban area with modest townships and varied landscapes including large open agricultural areas. The Parwan Employment Precinct is a developing agri-business focused precinct in Moorabool Shire Council, directly adjacent the West boundary of the Green Wedge and the City of Melton. The proposed Western Irrigation Network (WIN) will provide recycled water from Melton Recycled Water Plant to the new Parwan-Balliang irrigation district in Moorabool.

To the south is Wyndham City Council, which shares many characteristics, being the other core municipality within the Western Growth Corridor. As previously discussed, both municipalities have sections of the

Western Plains South Green Wedge. The proposed extension of Green Hill Road south of Eynesbury will provide a direct north-south link through to Ballan Road and on to the Regional Rail Link at Wyndham Vale. Large landholdings are also a feature of the area and many cross municipal boundaries.

The municipalities of Brimbank and Hume to the east are primarily urban areas but include some areas of Green Wedge land, including a large area of land affected by Melbourne's Tullamarine Airport, Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay. which extends into the City of Melton.

The Calder Freeway provides a key connection between Bendigo to the north-west and Melbourne to the south-east and forms the eastern municipal boundary, and the Bendigo rail line runs alongside the Calder Freeway. The Western Freeway runs through the City of Melton (east to west) and provides a key connection between Melbourne and Ballarat, and the Melbourne to Ballarat rail line runs through the north-west part of the study area.

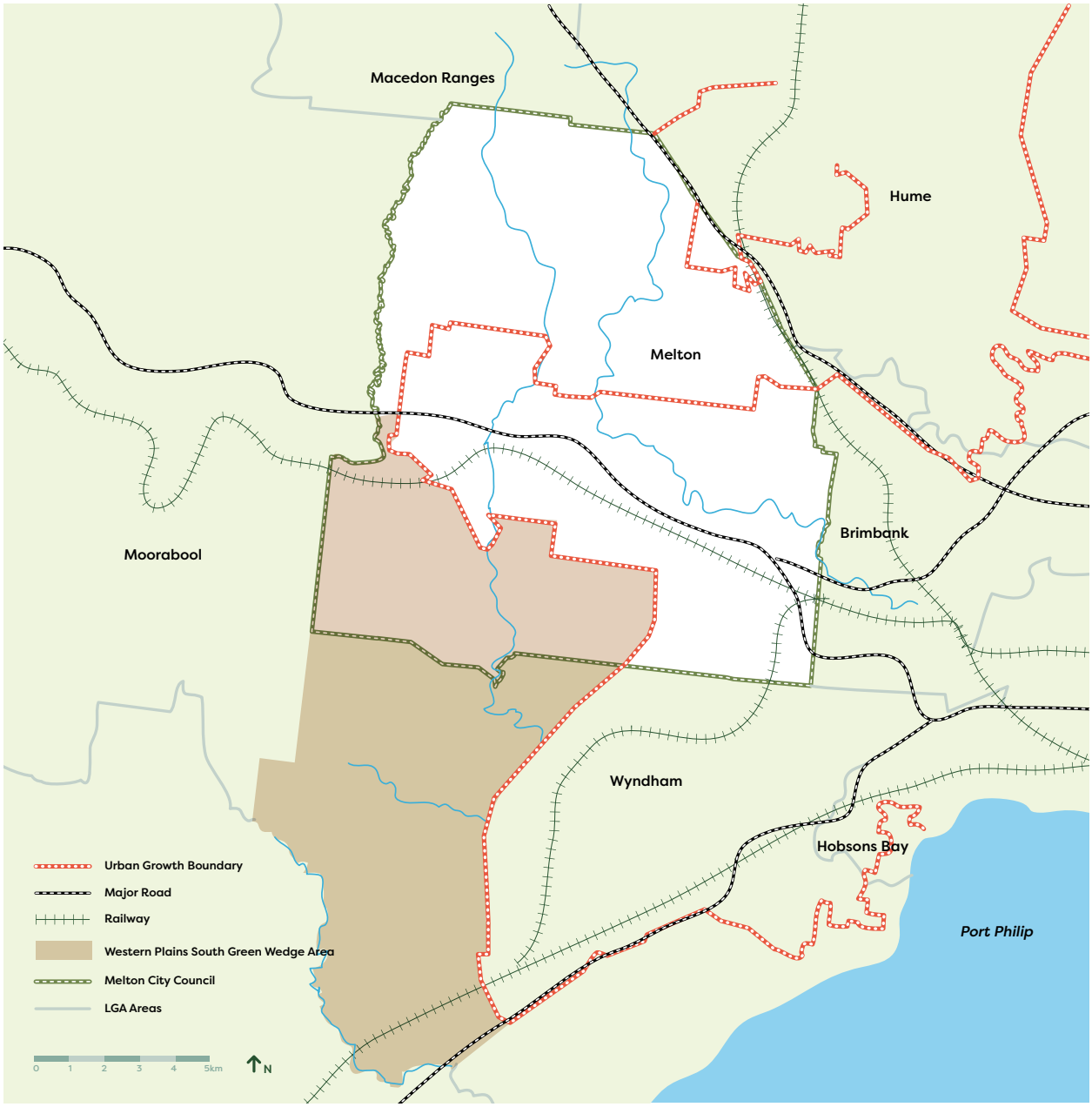


FIGURE 4 WESTERN PLAINS SOUTH GREEN WEDGE - SHARED WITH WYNDHAM

STATE PLANNING POLICY

A number of strategies and plans influence land use and development in the study area.

Urban Growth Boundary

The State Government introduced a legislated Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) in 2002. The purpose of the UGB is to restrict urban development within the boundary thus preserving and protecting the Green Wedge. As a legislated UGB, expansion requires approval from both the upper and lower houses of the Victorian Parliament. The same legislation that introduced the UGB also introduced the Green Wedge Zones to ensure the specific characteristics and objective of the Green Wedges was reflected in decision-making, where previously this land had utilised a suite of rural zones.

Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 (2017)

While the new UGB was intended to provide certainty at the rural - urban fringe, expansions and logical inclusions to the UGB between 2002 and 2012, applied pressure to the Green Wedges. Plan Melbourne 2017- 2050 (2017) reaffirms the importance of Melbourne's Green Wedges and the current location of the UGB. It sets out objectives and outcomes that need to be considered in the development of any Green Wedge Management Plan. The following implementation actions from Plan Melbourne are directly relevant.

ACTION 17 – SUPPORT STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR AGRICULTURE.
Improve planning decision making to support sustainable agriculture by identifying areas of strategic agricultural land in Melbourne's Green Wedges and peri-urban areas. This will give consideration to climate change, soils and landscape, access to water, integration with industry and significant government investment in agricultural infrastructure. It will also protect the right to farm in key locations within Green Wedges and peri-urban areas.

ACTION 72 - REVIEW GREEN WEDGE PLANNING PROVISIONS: Review Green Wedge planning provisions to ensure they support Plan Melbourne outcomes for Green Wedges.

ACTION 73 - GREEN WEDGE MANAGEMENT PLANS: Support local government to complete and implement Green Wedge management plans to protect and enhance the agricultural, biodiversity, environmental, natural resource, tourism, landscape and other values of each of Melbourne's Green Wedges by:

- Introducing a legislative requirement in the *Planning and Environment (Metropolitan Green Wedge Protection) Act 2003* for local government to prepare and review Green Wedge Management Plans
- Investigating options to support local governments in implementing adopted Green Wedge Management Plans.

Planning Melbourne's Green Wedges and Agricultural Land Project (GWAL)

In 2018, the Department of Planning and Transport (DTP) commenced a project to address and implement the above three key actions from 'Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 (2017).' that relate to Melbourne's Green Wedges. This includes a review of Green Wedge planning provisions and Green Wedge Management Plans. It also includes seeking to support sustainable agriculture by identifying areas of strategic agricultural land within 100kms of Melbourne in rural zones, where agriculture is a primary purpose of the zone, and protecting the right to farm in key locations within Green Wedges and peri-urban areas.

West Growth Corridor Plan (2012)

The West Growth Corridor Plan (2012) establishes a guide for the delivery of key housing, employment and transport infrastructure in Melbourne's new suburbs and provides a clear strategy for the development of the region over the next 30 to 40 years. It includes the Western Metropolitan municipalities of Melbourne including the City of Melton. A proposed Western Metropolitan Land Use Framework Plan (LUFP) is currently being developed, which may result in some changes to the West Growth Corridor Plan.

Precinct Structure Plans

Growth in the Western Growth Corridor is planned and delivered through Precinct Structure Plans. Five structure plan precincts in Melton have a direct interface with the study area: Toolern, Toolern Park, Mt Atkinson and Tarneit Plains, Rockbank South and Chartwell East.

PSPs can impact on Green Wedge land by increasing land speculation which can result in absentee landownership, degradation of biodiversity and rubbish dumping. Traffic is often increased on rural standard roads which Councils are expected to upgrade earlier than what would normally be required. Land use conflicts also occur between existing rural uses and discretionary urban type uses.

A number of Precinct Structure Plans (PSP) have been completed for the City of Melton and several more are identified as future PSPs (yet to commence) that will further develop urban zoned land within the current UGB settings.

Other State Policy

State policies of relevance include clauses 13.01-1S Natural hazards and climate change, waterways planning policy at 12.03-1S and 12.03-1R, and 18.02-7S Airports and airfields which covers safeguarding of airport approaches.

LOCAL STRATEGIES AND PLANS

The Western Plains South Green Wedge Management Plan is informed by the following local strategies:

- Western Plains North Green Wedge Management Plan 2014
- City of Melton Economic Development and Tourism Plan 2014-2030
- City of Melton Environment Plan 2017-2027
- Integrated Water Management Plan 2018-2028
- City of Melton Significant Landscape Features Strategy 2016
- City of Melton Dry Stone Walls Study (Vol 1 and 2) 2011
- City of Melton Heritage Study 2017-2021
- Werribee River Shared Rail Strategy 2013
- City of Melton Pedestrian and Cycling Plan 2022

Council and Well Being Plan 2021-2025

This Plan sets out an overarching vision guiding the development of the City. The following strategies from the document are based on six key themes and are particularly relevant to the Western Plains South Green Wedge Management Plan:

- **2.1.2** Ensure the maintenance and protection of waterway ecosystems
- **2.1.3** Ensure biodiversity is well managed and protected, both on Councils land and private land
- **2.1.4** Advocate to the State government to complete the acquisition of the Western Grassland Reserve and other biodiversity conservation areas
- **2.2.1** Provide an integrated approach to land management that addresses risks, such as bushfire, uncontrolled weeds, flooding and storm events
- **2.3.5** Facilitate access to and appreciation of local natural landscapes and places of cultural heritage
- **2.4.1** Educate and engage the community in local environmental and sustainability issues and decision making
- **2.4.2** Maximise the use of alternative water sources and reduce Council's reliance on potable water
- **3.4.3** Ensure road networks are adequate are safe and contribute the wellbeing of the community.

Local Melton Planning Provisions of relevance

The Melton Planning Scheme at Clause *11.01-1L-01 Non-Urban Land* identifies the features and settlement pressures of Green Wedge areas and includes key strategies to discourage uses that would be better located within the Urban Growth Boundary, and require the provision of reticulated (town) water to all new subdivision lots and the connection to a sealed road network.

Additional strategies under this clause include to support innovative agriculture, use of recycled water, sustainable land management, protecting habitat, planting windbreaks, and an appropriate transition between urban area development and the Green Wedge.

Local Green Wedge and Farming Zone schedules have legacy subdivision controls, which are discussed in detail at chapter 7.6.

Relevant local policies include clauses 15.03-1L-02 Dry Stone Walls policy, 15.01-2L-02 Store and Outbuildings Policy, and 12.05-2L Rural Landscape Character Policy, which all set character and urban design requirements for applications where they are relevant.

2 – Vision and Themes

THE VISION FOR THE WESTERN PLAINS SOUTH GREEN WEDGE IS DRAWN FROM THE KEY THEMES WHICH WERE ESTABLISHED IN THE BACKGROUND REPORT AND THROUGH COMMUNITY CONSULTATION. THE VISION WILL SPAN THE NEXT 15-20 YEARS AND CONSIDERS IMPORTANT VALUES THAT HAVE BEEN RECOGNISED THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN.

The Vision

Development and infrastructure will be carefully located to provide a clear break from urban development and minimise impacts on the landscape and environmental values of the area, protecting the long views and rare biodiversity unique to the Western Volcanic Plain, with sensible and sustainable use of resources, infrastructure, and roads.

Council will support actions to protect biodiversity and improve land management outcomes and environmental values in partnership with landowners and community groups, while both cultural heritage and built form heritage will continue to be celebrated and protected.

A range of uses will continue to be supported across the varied precincts of the area, including rural living in existing areas, agriculture, water infrastructure, tourism and heritage. Council will continue to advocate for and support appropriate policy changes to address the issues that arise across the area including protecting agricultural land, reducing land speculation near the urban fringe, and advocating for the community in major projects.

KEY THEMES

This section summarises the key supporting themes that are at the core of the vision and the chapters of this plan:

People and Consultation

Encourage participation and provide information and support for landholders to achieve sustainable land management outcomes. Council will advocate to State Government and relevant agencies on behalf of the community and protect the rural character and amenity of the area so highly valued by the community.

Agriculture, Irrigation and Natural Resources

Promote and support new and innovative agricultural activity which may benefit from irrigation infrastructure extensions, and protect productive land and natural resources from fragmentation and degradation.

Landscape

Any development will be carefully located to minimise impacts on the long views unique to the Western Volcanic Plain, including managing large infrastructure projects that can impact the most on the flat landscape and result in a loss of available farming land. Inappropriate small lot subdivisions will continue to be discouraged to protect against the fragmentation of farming land and the landscape.

Heritage

Both cultural heritage and historic built form will be protected and celebrated in the Green Wedge. Opportunities for First Nations Peoples to participate in nature- and / or culture-based tourism activities will be encouraged.

Infrastructure and Land Use

Infrastructure will be designed to minimise impacts on the landscape, roads, and rural amenity while supporting economic activity and links to markets. Inappropriate urban land uses will be discouraged, and discretionary uses only supported if they are consistent with the purpose of the Green Wedge and their impacts can be managed. Low impact tourism with a clear connection to the Green Wedge and community benefits will be encouraged.

Environment

Improve environmental values and protect remaining high quality biodiversity areas. Council will continue to support actions that improve land management and conservation outcomes in partnership with landowners and community groups.

Precincts

Council will continue supporting a range of uses across the varied and unique precincts, including rural living in existing areas, agriculture, water infrastructure, tourism and heritage. These activities will minimise their impacts on the unique landscape, cultural heritage, biodiversity and rural amenity. Council will continue to advocate to address local issues such as protecting agricultural land, reducing land speculation, and advocating for the community in major projects such as the completion of the Western Grasslands Reserve.

3 — People and Consultation

ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION AND PROVIDE INFORMATION FOR LANDHOLDERS TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT OUTCOMES. COUNCIL WILL ADVOCATE TO STATE GOVERNMENT AND RELEVANT AGENCIES ON BEHALF OF THE COMMUNITY AND PROTECT THE RURAL CHARACTER AND AMENITY OF THE AREA SO HIGHLY VALUED BY THE COMMUNITY.

DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS

The City of Melton population reached 178,960 in the 2021 census and is located in one of the most rapidly growing urban corridors in Australia, and forecast to grow to 416,106 by 2051. However, the Green Wedge population is a small fraction of this population, with significant demographic differences.

ABS 2021 Census demographic statistics for the South Green Wedge area were collected by combining data from three local Statistical Areas (21304157303, 21304135948, and 21304157203). This provided an accurate sample of around 850 rural residents located almost entirely in the study area, including the rural Parwan/Eynesbury, Exford, Brookfield, Strathtulloh, Mount Cottrell, and Chartwell area populations.

This data, shown below, is more recent and targeted than the 2016 data used in the background report which included data from various other rural areas of the municipality.

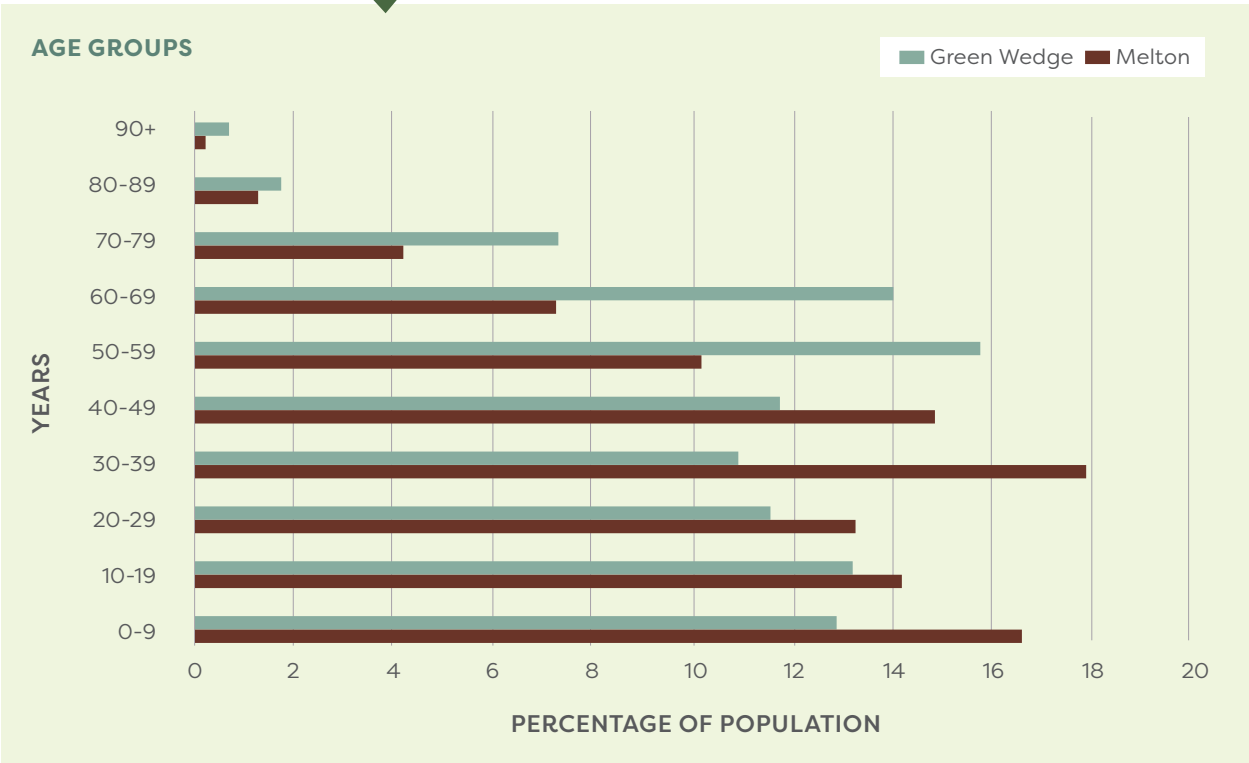
Demographic Conclusions

There are several notable trends in Green Wedge demographics, including a higher proportion of people over 50, slightly more couples with children and a high clustering of construction employment

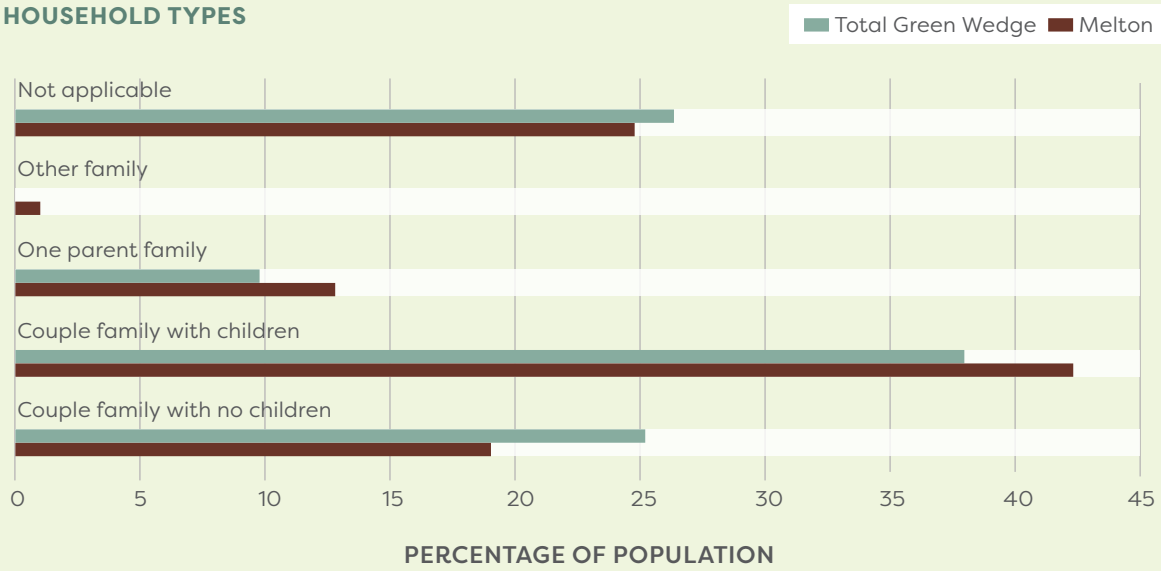
These statistics could be influenced by factors such as the availability of services which are mostly found in the more urban areas of the municipality, limited affordable housing options among large rural properties, and an existing ageing population.

Employment industries are very similar to the municipal average and indicate most residents commute to urban areas for work.

Notably, in the study area there is a significantly lower proportion of younger people, and significantly more people within the age bracket of 50-59s and 60-69s.



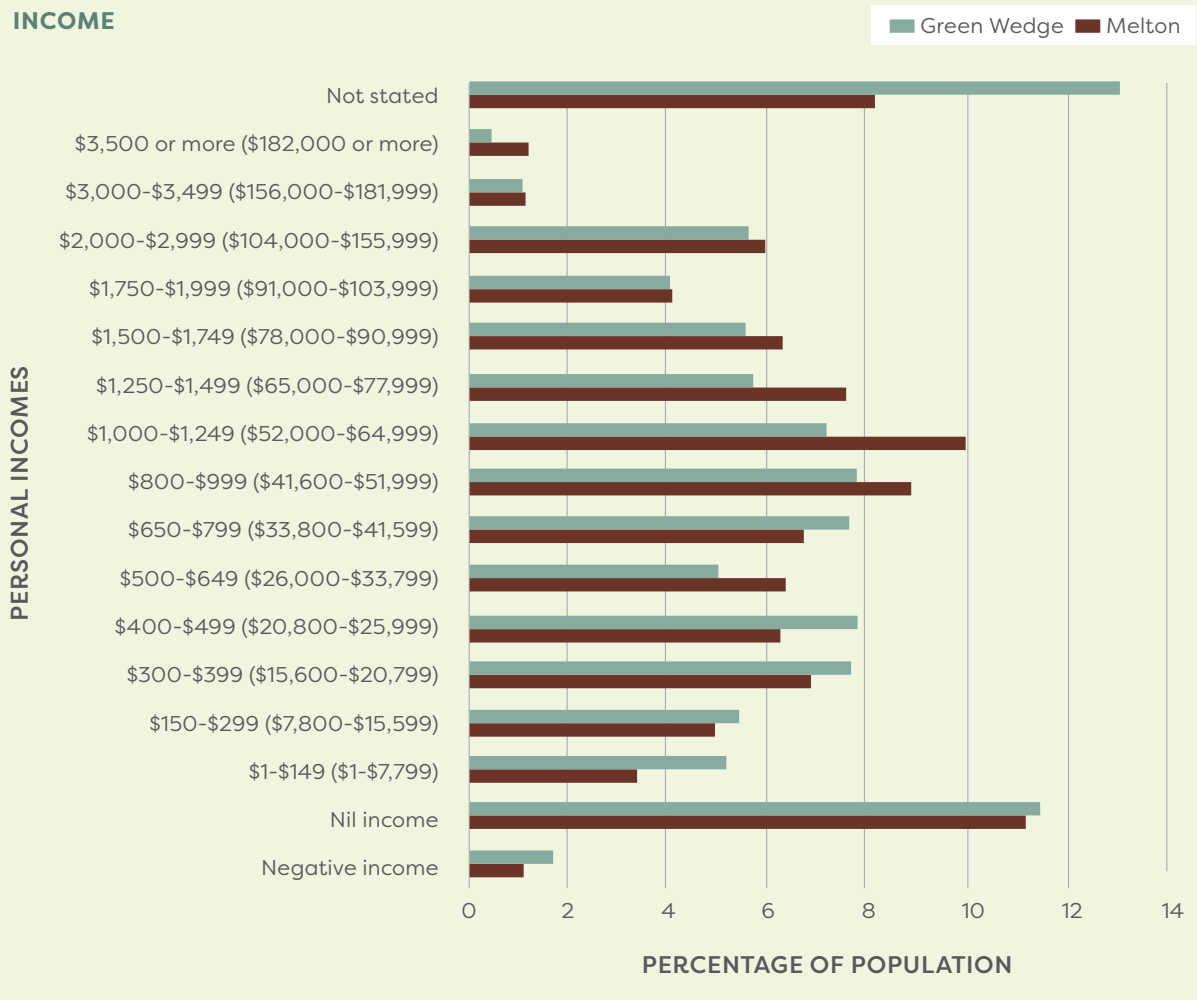
HOUSEHOLD TYPES



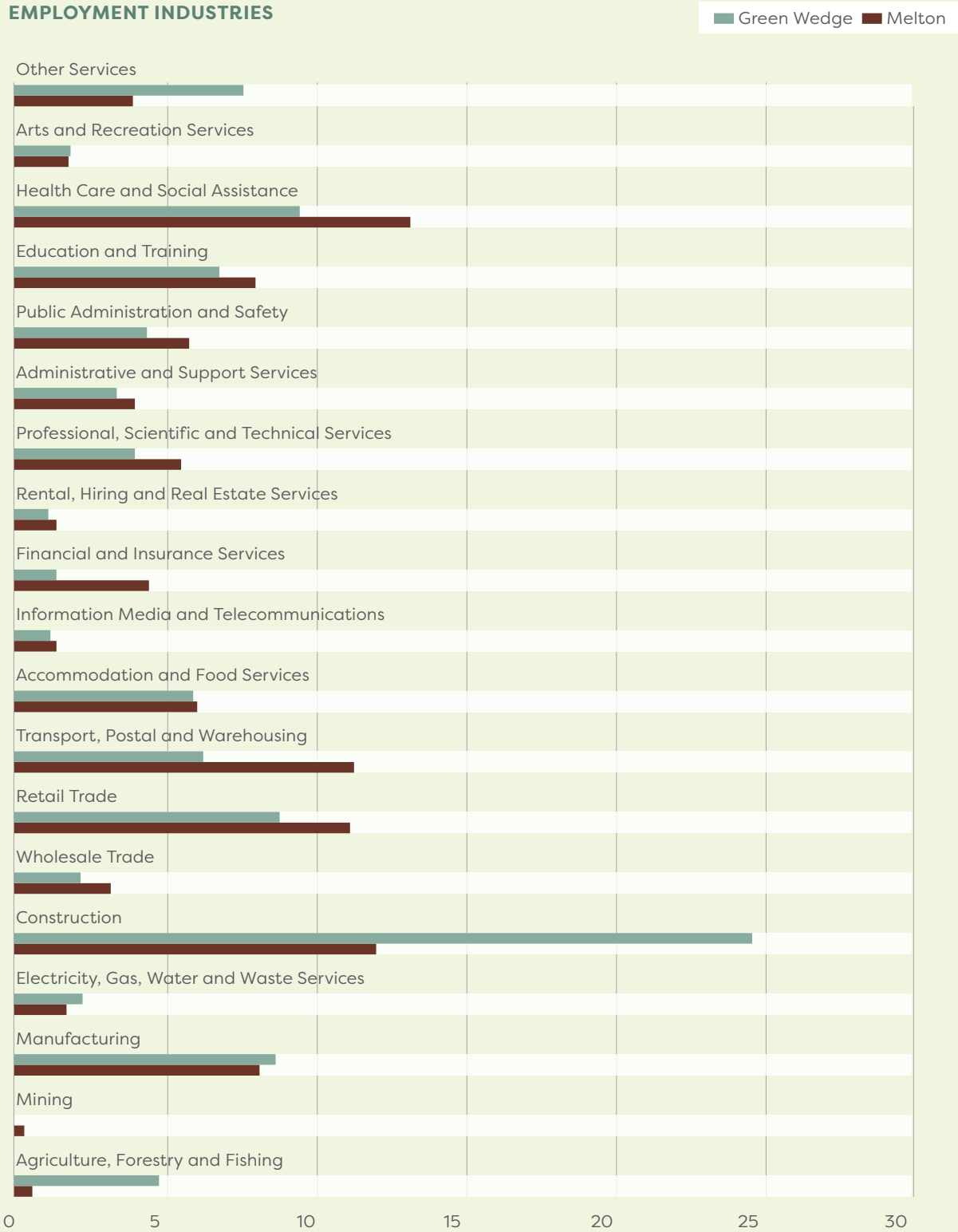
The statistics show the study area has a significantly higher number of couples without children, but slightly lower numbers of most other forms of households.

There is a slight proportion of lower incomes in the study area as well as a lower proportion of medium and high incomes compared to the municipality wide average. However, there was also a higher proportion of Green Wedge residents (13%) chose not to provide census data on their income, which limits the ability for appropriate comparison.

INCOME



EMPLOYMENT INDUSTRIES



Employment industry data for the rural areas is similar to the averages across the municipality. A major difference is that nearly twice as many people work in construction in the Green Wedge as the municipal average, making up nearly a quarter of all employment for Green Wedge residents. Agriculture remains a modest sector for primary employment, with most residents working in largely urban based sectors outside of the study area.

INITIAL CONSULTATION STAGE

BACKGROUND REPORT 2018

Drop-in sessions were held in Melton and Eynesbury and in the City of Wyndham. These sessions were designed to introduce the project to the community and inform them of the content of the Background Report.

Additional consultation was also carried out with key stakeholders including relevant agencies, landowners and occupiers, and community interest groups.

A summary consultation report was prepared and is available on Council's website.

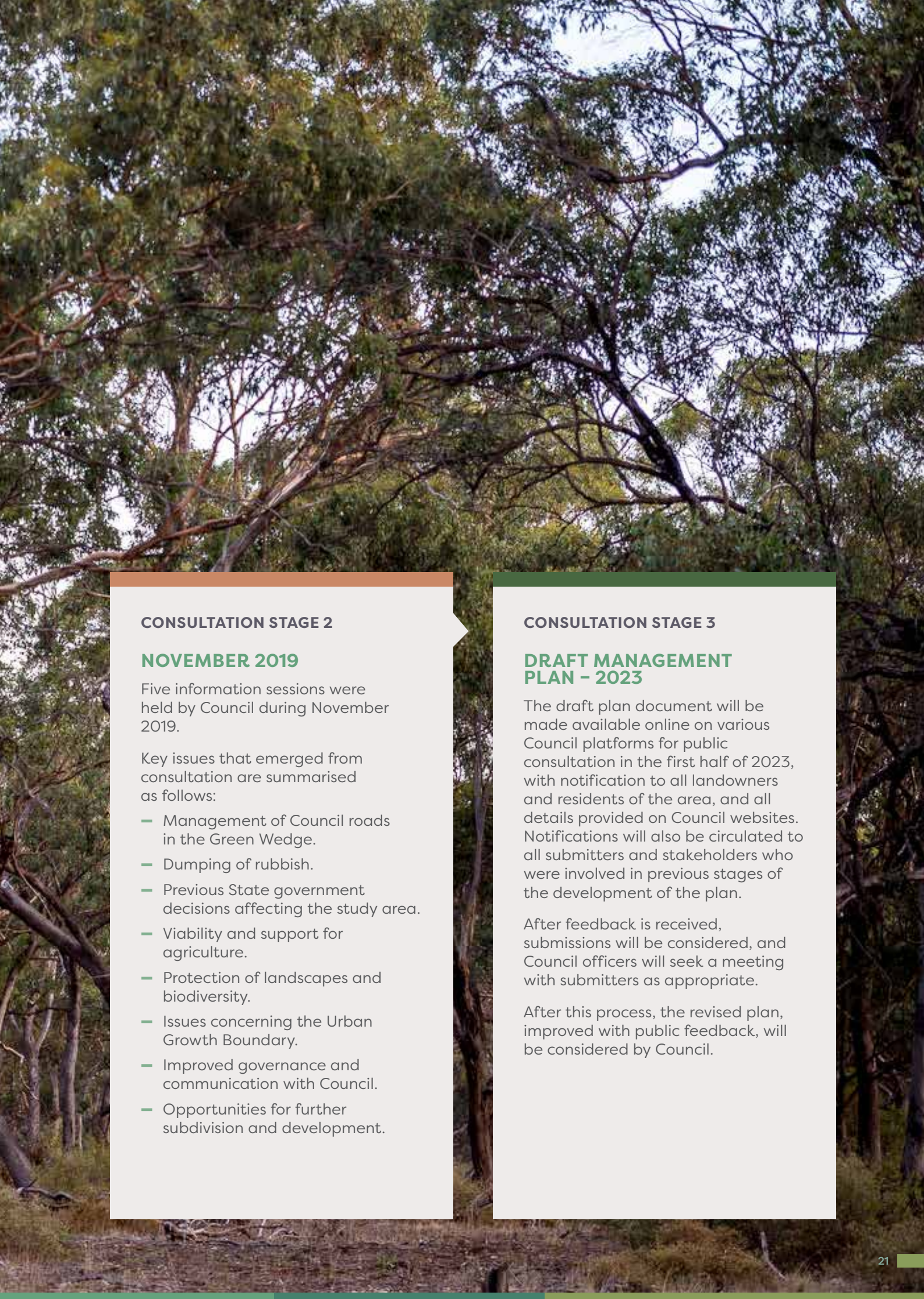
melton.vic.gov.au/WPSGWMP

BACKGROUND REPORT

KEY COMMUNITY CONSULTATION FINDINGS

Consultation with stakeholders during the drafting of the background report raised several issues and opportunities relevant to the population. Key concerns which are addressed in this report, include:

- The amenity and character of the study area was a strong attraction for people to live in the area and residents expressed a strong desire for their rural lifestyle to be protected and retained.
- There was concern that increased population growth and urban development adjacent to the Green Wedge will impact the rural ambience of the study area.



CONSULTATION STAGE 2

NOVEMBER 2019

Five information sessions were held by Council during November 2019.

Key issues that emerged from consultation are summarised as follows:

- Management of Council roads in the Green Wedge.
- Dumping of rubbish.
- Previous State government decisions affecting the study area.
- Viability and support for agriculture.
- Protection of landscapes and biodiversity.
- Issues concerning the Urban Growth Boundary.
- Improved governance and communication with Council.
- Opportunities for further subdivision and development.

CONSULTATION STAGE 3

DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN – 2023

The draft plan document will be made available online on various Council platforms for public consultation in the first half of 2023, with notification to all landowners and residents of the area, and all details provided on Council websites. Notifications will also be circulated to all submitters and stakeholders who were involved in previous stages of the development of the plan.

After feedback is received, submissions will be considered, and Council officers will seek a meeting with submitters as appropriate.

After this process, the revised plan, improved with public feedback, will be considered by Council.

4 — Agriculture, Irrigation and Natural Resources

PROMOTE AND SUPPORT NEW AND INNOVATIVE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY WHICH MAY BENEFIT FROM IRRIGATION INFRASTRUCTURE EXTENSIONS, AND PROTECT PRODUCTIVE LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES FROM FRAGMENTATION.

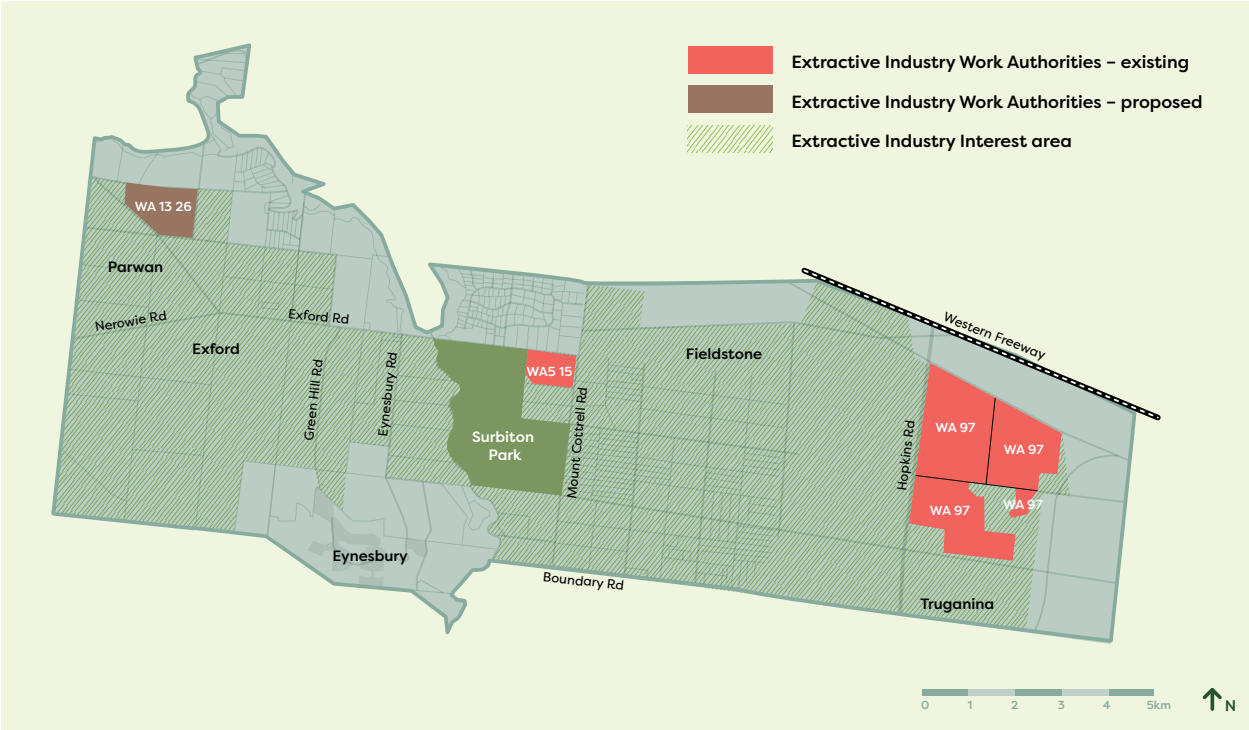


FIGURE 5 EXISTING AND POTENTIAL EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY (QUARRYING) SITES IN THE SOUTHERN HALF OF OUR MUNICIPALITY

EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY USES

As demand for construction materials such as road base, concrete, bricks and aggregate increases, areas close to Melbourne's Green Wedge will continue to be sought to extract these materials. The outer western areas of Melbourne supply most hard rock required for road infrastructure.

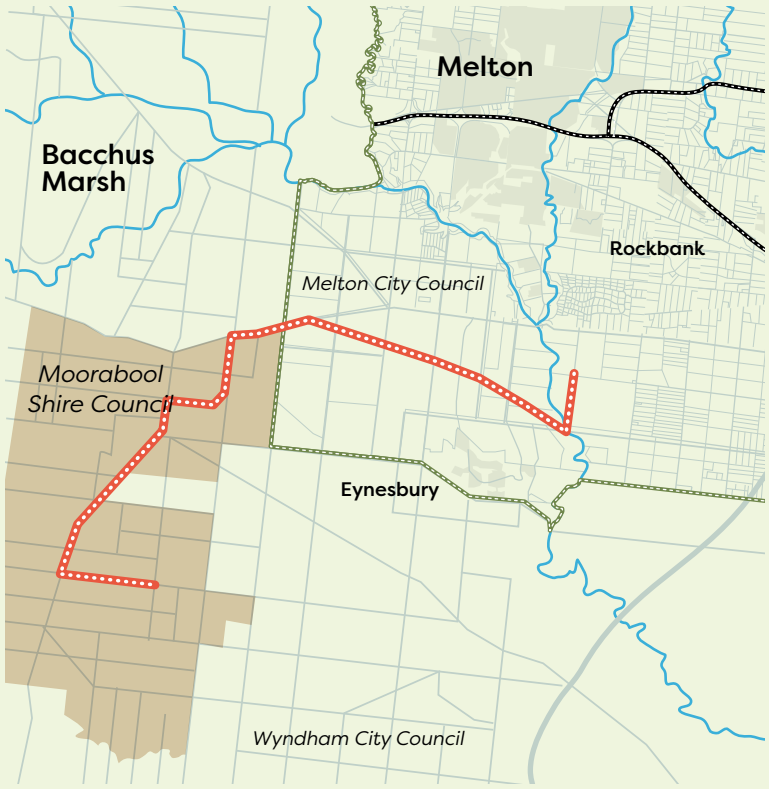
While there are no active quarries in this study area, there are four undeveloped potential sites and three of these hold Work Authority approvals. Two of these sites are in the Special Use Zone (SUZ), while others are classified as 'Interest Areas', indicating there is potential for extractive industry development in the future. Any of these sites could still be activated in the future subject to existing or updated approvals.

Under the GWZ, the use of land for 'extraction of resources' is not a prohibited use but does require a comprehensive planning application and a works authority approval from the relevant authorities. Land that is not currently identified as an extraction interest area, can be the subject of an application to develop a site.

The introduction of a quarry into a Green Wedge area can be beneficial to a local area for direct employment and the use of specialist contractors and equipment, particularly if located near other compatible uses or if relatively isolated from residents.

It is common practice to source material as close as possible to the project, particularly for road construction. However, these uses can also result in increases in heavy vehicle movements, dust, and noise issues. Through the planning and works approval process, it is important that the working life of a quarry and its impacts are carefully considered including, impacts on local roads and whether a buffer is required, as is often applied around a facility. Quarry operations come with inherent challenges and in some cases amenity issues can be underestimated, while long term planning is needed for eventual remediation.

The Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action, are currently implementing a range of reforms that include planning controls and regulation, updated mapping of extractive industries and guidelines for industry and local government. Under changes being piloted in Wyndham and South Gippsland, sites identified as key Strategic Extractive Resource Areas (SERAs) have a State Resource Overlay Schedule 1 (SRO1) overlay applied to such existing or potential quarry sites, while a Schedule 2 (SRO2) overlay is applied to implement a buffer area surrounding the site where conflicting high amenity uses are avoided. It is possible that this project may be extended to sites in this area and elsewhere in future.



Proposed recycled water pipeline (red line) linking recycled water plants and providing recycled water to the new Parwan-Balliang Irrigation District (brown area) under the WIN project, with opportunities for future potential connections along the pipeline throughout parts of the Green Wedge such as Exford and Parwan.

FIGURE 6 WESTERN IRRIGATION NETWORK (WIN) PROPOSED PIPELINE ROUTE MAP (GMW, 2022)

WESTERN IRRIGATION NETWORK

The Western Irrigation Network (WIN) is a major infrastructure project by Greater Western Water to manage the increasing volumes of recycled water being produced by the growing population in the region, particularly in the Melton, Sunbury, and Bacchus Marsh areas.

The WIN will connect dryland farmers in the Parwan-Balliang area, near Bacchus Marsh, with a guaranteed supply of Class C recycled water suitable for irrigation farming, anticipated to commence during 2023. The scheme will initially supply around 2,400 million litres of recycled water per year and will increase as irrigators adapt and expand production. By 2050, WIN could deliver up to 18,000 million litres of recycled water to farmers each year.

The WIN has potential to transform farms dependent on unreliable rainfall by connecting them to a year-round guaranteed water supply for livestock grazing and broadacre crops (e.g. wheat, barley, and canola). Capital works to support the project include an interconnector pipeline between the Melton and Bacchus Marsh recycled water plants, and a new pump station and a recycled water storage facility at Melton. The pipeline will follow the existing gas line through the Exford-Eynesbury area within Precinct 3.

The WIN has been planned to incorporate other recycled water services along the pipeline route, however, these remain subject to future demand and cost benefit analysis.

Any landowners who would potentially be interested in future connection for large quantities of recycled water for agriculture or other purposes should contact Greater Western Water (GWW) to express such interest. Council will continue to advocate for the protection of the WIN and surrounding land to ensure its long-term viability.

AGRICULTURAL USE POTENTIAL

The report 'Assessment of Agricultural Land Capability in Melbourne's Green Wedge and Peri-urban Areas' by Agriculture Victoria (2018) identified the soil capability of land in the Parwan/Exford area west of Werribee River and near to or North of Exford Road as class 3, and the remainder to the South other than near Werribee River as class 4, on a 1 to 5 rating, where 1 is the best quality land. In the east some areas near Mt Cottrell are class 3, while most other areas are class 4.

Class 3 was defined as 'Land that is inherently capable for soil-based agriculture at moderate to high intensity', while Class 4 was defined as 'Land that is not as inherently capable for intensive soil-based agriculture'.

*Class 3 land has soils with agricultural potential ranked in the top 15% out of all land that is both within 100 kilometres of the Melbourne CBD and outside the Urban Growth boundary. It therefore has some of the best agricultural potential of all land close to Melbourne and is considered "potentially suitable... ...for future identification as '**Strategic Agricultural Land**' (SAL)" by the Agriculture Victoria 2018 report.*

Other studies have similarly shown land in the Green Wedge area to vary between lands with moderate to high agricultural potential and lands more suitable for low-intensity grazing. However, it should be noted that varying levels of volcanic rock scattered through the soil may also limit cultivation in some parts of the study area, and that critically endangered and protected grassland and eucalypt vegetation in some areas will limit the development of some properties.

Currently there are no specific planning protections. Council will continue to protect the potential of this land from inappropriate developments or any future expansions of the urban growth boundary.

The potential availability of large quantities of recycled water via the proposed Western Irrigation Network (WIN) pipeline could drastically increase agricultural potential output in an area which currently has relatively low rainfall. Irrigated production in a low rainfall area may also offer ideal conditions for some crops, with relatively low risks of humidity related fungal crop diseases and similarly low risks of rainfall induced fruit splitting.

Besides any in-ground cultivation potential, any form of hydroponic or greenhouse agricultural activity would not be influenced by soil qualities and would potentially benefit significantly from the presence of large quantities of recycled water available via the WIN water pipeline.

Water authorities are also considering potential projects in the area for the similar use of treated stormwater from creek catchments for irrigation and other uses.

NEW AND POTENTIAL AGRICULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

The potential availability of large amounts of recycled water through the WIN for irrigated agriculture could support more reliably raising traditional crops of the wider area such as barley, wheat, and canola.

A 2015 study created by RMCG consulting and commissioned by DTP on 'Land Capability and Market Viability of Irrigated Agriculture with Alternative Water in Melbourne's West' outlined that:

'The assessment of land capability and of domestic and export market opportunities suggests that the area is most likely suited to the production of:

High value horticultural crops that can be viable on relatively small land areas (by comparison to say dairy) and take advantage of the proximity to Melbourne markets and transport opportunities. These include:

- A range of vegetable crops, including Asian vegetables and gourmet lettuce varieties
- Fruit crops such as apples, pears, stone fruit and cherries
- Minor amounts of viticulture — limited by market opportunities
- Many horticultural crops with potential for development (e.g. lettuce) in the study area will require Class A recycled water (or equivalent for stormwater). This has a significant treatment cost implication.
- Fodder and broadacre cropping as an adjunct to the horticultural development. This will be mainly associated with hobby farming (with costs supplemented by off farm income) and feed supply to specialist industries (e.g. horses) who can afford to pay a premium.'

VIEW FROM EYNESBURY ROAD FACING EAST AT PEAK OF CANOLA CROP GROWTH.

Small scale greenhouse operations were also considered a potential option.

The report also noted that a key environmental constraint is the need to protect the likely presence of the natural temperate grasslands and the grassy eucalypt woodlands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain, which have both been listed as critically endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)*.

Landowners with significant remnant native vegetation on their property may choose to contact groups such as trust for nature or offset providers such as 'bush-broker' or other such organisations to explore the possibility of providing permanent protection to vegetation on the property in return for financial compensation.

Native grass seed production is relatively new and may be appropriate in the area. The seeds are in significant demand for a range of uses including providing for park and reserve landscaping with critically endangered grassland vegetation, use in artisan breads and other foods, and use as high-quality feedstock for equine industry.

The City of Melton has a strong equine industry with the presence of Tabcorp Park and equine businesses. There may be significant potential for landowners to provide for further equine services and agistment.

LAND SPECULATION AND AGRICULTURE

Despite the areas within the Urban Growth Boundary already providing ample land for future suburban development through to 2050 or beyond, many speculative land purchases have occurred in the Green Wedge. This speculation is resulting in a significant number of absentee landowners and the reduction of legitimate farming ventures in the Green Wedge, with many properties being placed in lower value activities such as agistment and in worse instances neglect.

One option pursued by other Councils, including Hume City Council in the management of their Green Wedge area, is the introduction of an agricultural rates rebate program incentive. This would provide an economic incentive for the productive use and improvement of the land and promote a value-adding increase in the level of agricultural activity occurring in the area. This would however be at significant cost both to the rates base, and in monitoring and implementing such a program, and therefore should be investigated further by Council.

SHEEP GRAZING IN THE PARWAN/EYNESBURY AREA.

AGRICULTURE, IRRIGATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES ACTIONS:

1. Work with Greater Western Water to investigate future opportunities for access to recycled water or treated stormwater for agriculture along the WIN pipeline route and throughout the study area.

2. Consider a Council agri-business officer, or other additional tourism or economic development roles, to encourage and support activity in our rural areas.

3. Advocate to DTP on key issues affecting the Green Wedge area including discretionary uses, land banking, and advocating against any amendments to the Urban Growth Boundary that would result in a loss of Green Wedge land.

4. Investigate whether an agricultural rates rebate scheme or similar incentives would be viable to encourage greater agricultural activity and improved land management.

5 — Infrastructure and Land Use

INFRASTRUCTURE WILL BE DESIGNED TO MINIMISE IMPACTS ON THE LANDSCAPE, ROADS, AND RURAL AMENITY WHILE SUPPORTING ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND LINKS TO MARKETS. INAPPROPRIATE URBAN LAND USES WILL BE DISCOURAGED, AND DISCRETIONARY USES ONLY SUPPORTED IF THEY ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE PURPOSE OF THE GREEN WEDGE AND THEIR IMPACTS CAN BE MANAGED.
LOW IMPACT TOURISM WITH A CLEAR CONNECTION TO THE GREEN WEDGE AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS WILL BE ENCOURAGED.

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Key roads that travel through and around the study area study area include, Exford Road, Greigs Road, Mount Cottrell Road, Boundary Road, Troups Road South, and Dohertys Road. Urban growth has lead to several secondary or gravel roads being increasingly used by commuters during peak times, and construction and heavy vehicles during the daytime hours. Maintenance schedules for these and other rural roads have increased in recent years but the maintenance of so many unsealed roads in this area remains an ongoing challenge for Council. Issues including speeding, dust, drainage, and general condition of roads were frequently raised during consultation on the management plan.

It is anticipated the completion of proposed Troups Road South and Boundary Road upgrade works will improve the road network, and that Council's engineers will plan further works with an unsealed roads and interface roads sealing strategy in future years.

While the Melbourne to Ballarat railway line passes through the area, the nearest railway stations are at Melton, Cobblebank, and Rockbank and typically accessed via a short drive for residents of the area.

OUTER METROPOLITAN RING

The Outer Metropolitan Ring (OMR) is a proposed 100 kilometre high speed transport link for people and freight in Melbourne's north and west. The project was identified by the State government in 2010 and a Public Acquisition Overlay (PAO) was applied along its route via planning scheme Amendment VC68. The corridor is planned to enable both a freeway standard road and a railway line, and the Department of Transport and Planning is responsible for this project and PAO.

The OMR may also in future facilitate road and rail access to the proposed Western Intermodal Freight Precinct (WIFP), which would also border the Green Wedge and is intended to support the industrial and employment activity of the West of Melbourne.

For the study area, road access and egress is proposed at:

- The Western Highway
- Riding Boundary Road
- Access only from a new freeway standard road parallel to the eastern side of Middle Road.

Part of the reservation runs through the eastern end of Chartwell Estate.

The OMR will have a significant impact on the eastern part of the Green Wedge south study area (Precinct 7) by changing access and traffic movement in and around the precinct. It will have significant traffic, traffic noise, and visual impacts, creating a clear dividing barrier along the Urban Growth Boundary. It is important to note that the width of the reservation is generous and therefore does allow for some flexibility for the final road alignment.

A VLINE RAILWAY SERVICE PASSES OVER THE MELTON WEIR VIADUCT.

As discussed later in this report (page 76-78), the application of the PAO produced a poor planning outcome for many landowners adjacent to the proposed corridor. This includes multiple zones across single property titles and areas of GWZ land that are no longer viable to support the main purposes of the zone. Council continues to raise this issue with relevant authorities and will advocate for solutions to be considered along the western interface of the UGB/ OMR. These could include altered access layouts or additional land acquisitions beyond the current PAO settings to provide for a buffer zone for the Western Grasslands Reserve and integration of passive recreation, such as vegetation and walking/ cycling tracks that link into the WGR and north south PSP connections. The acquisition process is the responsibility of the Department of Transport.

The Outer Metropolitan Ring Road will also act as the border of urban development with the urban growth boundary following the route. This means suburban growth areas on one side to the east, and undeveloped Green Wedge areas to the West.

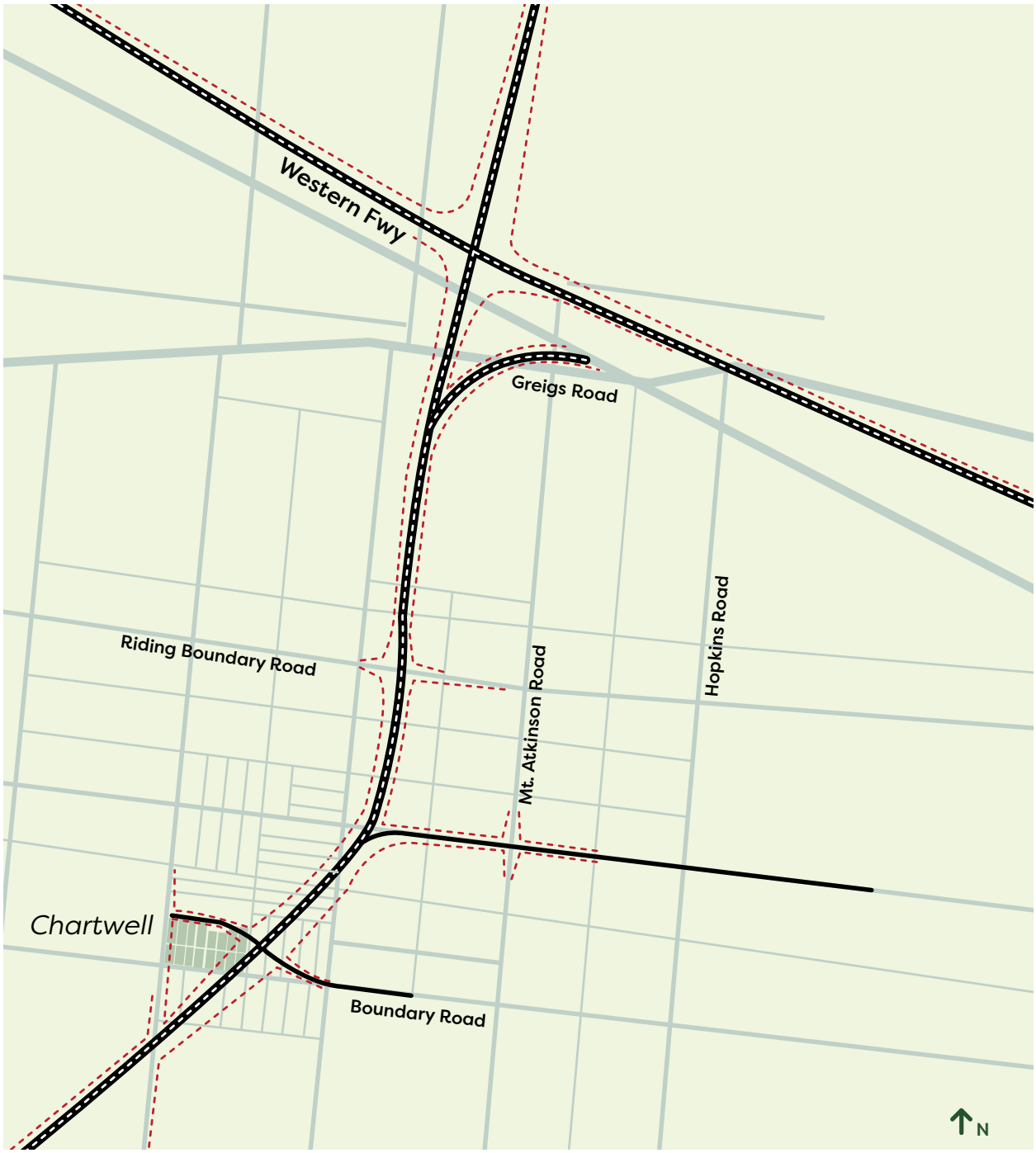


FIGURE 7 PROPOSED OUTER METROPOLITAN RING ROAD (OMR) ADJACENT CHARTWELL (DOT, 2021)

This stark contrast, and the common association of freeway infrastructure with development, is likely to lead to significant development pressure and expectations on the adjacent Green Wedge areas, where there is ready access to major road and rail infrastructure. Careful restraint is required to prevent much proliferation of inappropriate discretionary development in proximity to the proposed new freeway.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Wind, solar and battery storage facilities are driving Victoria's efforts to reduce carbon emissions. Areas west of Melbourne that can accommodate these large facilities are attractive locations for renewable energy projects providing they have access into the power grid. The current situation has seen solar farm proposals located in open landscape in and around farming land which can have a significant visual impact on the area and reduce available farming land. While landscape buffering treatments can support certain locations, it is preferable that large renewable energy facilities be located closer to the UGB or existing infrastructure facilities where these impacts can be minimised. While the study area does not currently have any solar farms, future proposals are likely.

Planning for solar farms and other renewable energy facilities is subject to clause 53.13 and Clause 72.01-1 with the Minister for Planning the responsible authority for energy generating facilities of 1 megawatt or greater. As the assessment of large energy facilities can include complex technical details, this is often appropriate.

Clause 53.13 includes the *Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guideline* (Department of Transport and Planning, August 2019). Consideration is given to identifying suitable locations for solar energy facilities at the Decision Guidelines of Clause 53.13 as follows:

- *sufficient distance from existing urban areas or designated urban growth areas*
- *where there can be adequate space between facilities within an area to avoid cumulative impacts of built form concentration*
- *avoiding a concentration of facilities by distancing them apart within the landscape.*

In practice, it has been Council's experience that the above points in the guideline can lead to the support of energy facilities within the Green Wedge, significantly interrupting the rural break that it provides, rather than leaving energy infrastructure clustered with other urban and industrial uses. Siting should be selected to reduce visual and amenity impacts on the existing rural environment.

While significant landscape impacts may be unavoidable, an increasing number of solar farm developments have been either grazing livestock or growing crops on the remaining land between and in some cases underneath the structures to maintain a significant level of productive agricultural land use. This synergy is shown by an increasing number of studies to benefit livestock and some crops that use the shade and shelter provided, and any new solar farm development applications should assess whether and how new or existing agricultural activities can continue on the site.

HIGH VOLTAGE POWERLINES CROSSING THE WESTERN PLAINS.

OTHER UTILITIES INFRASTRUCTURE

Important energy and gas infrastructure travels through the study area which links Melbourne and regional Victoria including:

- 500Kv transmission line connecting the Moorabool and Sydenham terminals which traverses through the Mount Cottrell and Surbiton Park precincts
- High pressure gas pipeline which follows Greigs and Exford Roads to Bacchus Marsh and includes a connection point that runs south through Mount Cottrell into the City of Wyndham.

While high pressure gas pipelines are located underground and are unobtrusive, set-backs are mandatory to maintain safety requirements. Conversely, transmission lines pose a significant visual impact on the surrounding landscape. Traditionally, these assets have not been located underground due to cost.

As Melbourne's demand for electricity grows it is likely there will be upgrades to existing infrastructure and proposals for new transmission lines. Planning for these scenarios is challenging and where possible, underground options and alternative routes need to be considered in consultation with affected communities. Avoiding sensitive uses and farming land should be a key objective in the planning stage.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE – SCHOOLS AND PLACES OF WORSHIP

There is increasing pressure from schools seeking to use affordable rural land in the Green Wedge for campuses, primarily for urban students.

Council is not the responsible authority for new public and private school proposals under clause 72.01 and is only referred proposals as a third party. There are no technical details that would prevent Council from being able to adequately assess such applications if it were to be the responsible authority. Clause 53.19 also exempts any school permit applications from objector appeal rights.

While schools are an essential basic element of community infrastructure, proper consideration is currently not being given to whether school campuses primarily serving urban students are appropriate in the Green Wedge, and whether they should instead be encouraged to be located within the urban growth boundary. These campuses are a large urban intrusion in the landscape, lead to student commuting being longer and vehicle dependent, put significant traffic on rural roads, and have significant potential noise, traffic, and amenity impacts. This also represents a transfer of costs to Council and ratepayers for necessary infrastructure works.

Similarly, place of worship proposals are frequently lodged which are intended to primarily serve a large urban population, often with heavy traffic, noise and amenity impacts which can be highly inappropriate for the area and the local rural roads.

OTHER DISCRETIONARY USES

Low impact developments with a clear link to agriculture, the environment and nature-based activities that complement the Green Wedge should be encouraged. These developments will support productive and suitable use of the land and typically fit well within the rural landscape.

Some planning applications may rely on the 'in conjunction test' to allow consideration of commercial uses including accommodation, function centres and restaurants as ancillary uses in conjunction with an appropriate primary purpose, such as agricultural production on the site, or a winery, or similar core use which is in line with the purpose of the Green Wedge.

These uses should not be supported where the primary use is not first established and only represents a small part of the overall contributing use of the land. In conjunction, such uses may support productive uses specific to the rural environment, while on their own, such uses may be inappropriate given the relatively remote locations and often basic roads and utility services.

The adoption of appropriate siting, layout, built form and materials to fit into the rural landscape is also crucial to ensuring such developments can respectfully compliment these environs.

One means to address issues with discretionary uses, including schools and places of worship, would be to create a local discretionary use policy for the Melton Planning Scheme.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND LAND USE ACTIONS

1. Continue to implement the actions of the City of Melton Integrated Water Management Plan 2018-2028 (IWMP) in conjunction with key agencies to improve environmental outcomes affecting Green Wedge land.

2. Preparation of road sealing strategy by Council's Engineering Services team to plan for future sealing of rural roads and interface roads.

3. Ensure that developments should be sited to avoid unspoiled greenfield sites and reduce impacts on the existing rural landscape character and views of the Green Wedge. Advocate to DEECA and DTP for improved policy on Renewable Energy Generation facilities.

4. Ensure major developments are limited to sites with suitable utilities and infrastructure such as sealed road access, and demonstrate that impacts on existing uses, the landscape, and agriculture have been addressed including considering alternative options during the planning process.

5. Advocate to the DTP on behalf of the Chartwell community to protect community interests in relation to the OMR final road alignment, amenity issues, biodiversity impacts, and urban design issues affecting landowners.

6. Discourage inappropriate freeway related and discretionary development in proximity to the proposed OMR, by observing the intended use and purpose of the Green Wedge and preventing any proliferation of inappropriate activity.

7. Address locations for places of worship and schools and other discretionary uses in the green wedge as part of a local discretionary use policy in the Melton Planning Scheme. This will address uses that have no direct connection to the area and may be better located closer to existing urban infrastructure.

8. Discourage discretionary uses such as accommodation, markets, places of assembly, restaurants, or other such uses where there is no direct connection to an ongoing primary use of the land that is, or will be, established before the discretionary use commences.

9. Ensure that the siting, layout, built form, and external materials/finishes of all development must respect and complement the existing character of the Green Wedge areas in accordance with Councils Rural Landscape Character Policy and Landscape Features Strategy/Guidelines.

10. Encourage low impact sustainable development that supports appropriate agriculture, land management, tourism, recreation, or nature-based activities.

11. Advocate to State and Federal governments for additional road safety funding and upgrades that will take pressure off arterial roads in non-urban areas including Mount Cottrell Road and Exford/Greigs Road.

12. Applications for new solar farms and other relevant development proposals are to provide a detailed assessment of whether and how the land between structures can still be used for agricultural activities such as grazing livestock, which may then benefit from the shade and shelter provided, or left open for notable local flora and fauna.

6 — Environment

INCREASED COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE IS ESSENTIAL TO IMPROVING ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES AND PROTECTING REMAINING HIGH QUALITY BIODIVERSITY AREAS. COUNCIL WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT ACTIONS THAT IMPROVE LAND MANAGEMENT OUTCOMES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LANDOWNERS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The study area lies in a rain shadow and is part of the driest area south of the Great Dividing Range in Victoria. Average annual rainfall for the City of Melton is 487mm.

Weather patterns are no longer predictable or consistent as climate change continues its progress. Average temperatures have increased over the last century and more rapidly in recent decades. This trend is expected to continue with predictions showing further temperature rises, less rainfall particularly in autumn and winter and more storm related weather events throughout the year. By 2050, cold years could be warmer than most of the region's current climate's warm years. Soil moisture and catchment runoff are confidently predicted to decline, driven largely by changes to rainfall and increased evaporation.

While historically, flooding has not been a major issue with the GWMP area, it is likely that due to climate change this may be an issue into the future. Council in partnership with Melbourne Water will continue to review relevant scientific data and implement changes to relevant documents including the Melton Planning Scheme as appropriate.

MELTON CITY COUNCIL HAS ADOPTED THE *CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION PLAN 2020-2030* TO UNDERSTAND AND ADDRESS THE LOCAL IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

City of Melton future

According to data from the Bureau of Meteorology, the City of Melton will experience hotter summers, drier springs, longer bushfire seasons and more frequent extreme weather events.

TEMPERATURE

- **Has increased 1.2°-1.4°C since 1950 for the Melton area, and will continue to increase in all seasons.**
- Annual average temperature rise in the period 2020-2039 to be 0.9°C; in 2060-2079 to be 1.5°C to 2.6°C.
- Fewer frost days, but possibly increased risk of frost in springtime.
- More and longer hot spells - more days above 35°C; currently 8 per annum, projected to be 12 in the period 2020-2039 and 14 to 18 in the period 2060-2079.

RAINFALL

- Declined since the 1950s, especially in autumn; decreased 100-200mm for Melton area.
- **Expect decreased annual rainfall and increased evaporation.**
- (Beyond natural variability) less rainfall in winter and spring; uncertain changes in summer and autumn (possible decrease in autumn).
- **More frequent and more intense extreme rainfall events.**
- **Increased duration of drought periods.**

FIRE WEATHER

- **More frequent days of very high and extreme fire danger** (a combination of fuel dryness, and hot, dry windy conditions); by 2050: 4 or 5 times more often.
- Melbourne region currently experiences catastrophic fire days once every 33 years on average; may increase to once every 2.4 years.

FIGURE 8 SUMMARY FROM MELTON CITY COUNCIL'S 'CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION PLAN 2020-2030'

IN THIS CONTEXT, THE FOLLOWING ISSUES ARE DIRECTLY RELEVANT TO THE STUDY AREA;

- Reduced annual rainfall will result in less cropping and to a lesser extent grazing activity in an area that is already marginal. However, this could potentially be off-set by access to recycled water and innovation in new agricultural methods.
- Longer and more intense heat waves present a greater risk to vulnerable groups in the community, including the elderly, disadvantaged and the less mobile.
- Reduction in biodiversity across the study area has long been occurring for various reasons. While some flora and fauna types will adapt to climate change, many will not, particularly those that are already threatened or endangered.
- Increased risk of grass and bushfires is already playing out across the region and will require ongoing community education and cooperation between key agencies and local government.
- Water security – Longer summers, increased evaporation and less rainfall all contribute to less supply of potable water and non-potable water for agriculture and other uses such as maintaining public open spaces. Opportunities for additional recycled water will build in long term security for urban and rural areas and provide resilience during years of drought.

Climate change is already affecting many areas of Council services and operations. Council policies and strategies need to reflect how Council will consider climate change issues now and in the future.

The City of Melton has committed to net zero emissions by 2040 in accordance with the *City of Melton Environment Plan 2017-2027*, and since this time, have a number of actions to meet this target. The City of Melton is also participating in regional initiatives which are relevant to the study area. The Western Alliance for Greenhouse Action (WAGA) undertook a regional risk assessment and developed the first Climate Change Adaptation Strategy in 2013 to respond to the priority climate change risks for the region, and this work forms key parts of the actions and objectives in Council's Environment Plan.

Other relevant regional initiatives include Greening the West and the Resilient Melbourne Strategy.

BIODIVERSITY

The study area is located within the Victorian Volcanic Plain Bioregion (VVP) which is classified as one of only fifteen biodiversity hotspots in Australia and the only one in Victoria.

It is highlighted by two key ecosystems, Natural Temperate Grasslands and Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain, which have both been listed as critically endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)*. These are among the most under-represented ecosystems in Australia's conservation estate and are recognised nationally as among the most threatened vegetation types.

Much of the biodiversity in the study area is under pressure and degradation risks. This is due to historic land clearing for farming, changes to fire regimes and the introduction of pest plants and animals.

The Victorian Biodiversity Atlas identifies many significant species recorded in the study area. This includes six nationally significant species and 63 species of state significance.

Significant rare species found in Western Plains Grasslands include:

- Golden Sun Moth (*Synemon plana*)
- Spiny Rice-flower (*Pimelea spinescens subsp.spinescens*)
- Striped Legless Lizard (*Delma impar*)
- Plains Wanderer Bird (*Pedionomus torquatus*)
- Growling Grass Frog (*Litoria raniformis*)
- Large Fruit Groundsel (*Senecio macrocarpus*)

SPINY RICE-FLOWER

STRIPED LEGLESS LIZARD

BLUE DEVIL

GOLDEN SUN MOTH

An Environmental Significance Overlay 4 (ESO4 - Grasslands within the Werribee Plains Hinterland) applies to the western part of Precinct 3 which provides some protection from inappropriate development through a planning application process, while an Environmental Significance Overlay 1 (ESO1 - Remnant Woodlands, Open Forests and Grasslands) applies to selected areas in Precinct 3, Strathtulloh and Surbiton Park (Pinkerton Forrest).

It is difficult to quantify the current state of the biodiversity in the study area and the broader municipality beyond the more obvious areas of degradation, and therefore, there is a clear need to improve the understanding of biodiversity assets for better targeting of resources and improved outcomes. The creation of a Council Biodiversity Strategy will greatly assist this.

EMERGING SPECIES AT RISK

One rare local tree species of particular interest is *Eucalyptus baueriana subspecies thalassina*, commonly known as the Werribee Blue Box Gum. This is a subspecies of *E. baueriana* that is endemic to the Werribee River catchment. It was formally described by taxonomist Kevin Rule in 2011. Further work is needed to better research and understand the distribution of this tree and how to preserve it, as it both has importance to Traditional Owners and forms a key feature of the local landscape.

In a remarkable discovery in 2023 a small population of the critically endangered Victorian Grasslands Earless Dragon was found, which had previously been presumed possibly extinct after over 50 years after the last confirmed sighting of this small lizard species. The location of this small population has not been made public for their safety but work by various parties will be needed to protect and re-populate this rare grassland species.

LAND MANAGEMENT

The City of Melton commenced the Environmental Enhancement Program in 1992 and is one of only a few Councils that maintain such a program. The program provides rural landholders with a financial incentive in the form of a rate rebate to undertake environmental improvement works on their property.

The program targets land degradation problems including noxious and environmental weeds, pest animals and erosion as well as sustainable land management and biodiversity enhancement such as protecting and enhancing native vegetation. Eligible landholders are issued their annual rates notice with the rebate already granted which is retained by undertaking approved works.

Council also provides environmental grants to support community environmental groups.

Melbourne Water and other agencies have also delivered environmental programs in the area in recent years including Waterwatch, Frogwatch and Valuing Our Volcanic Plains. Council should pursue partnerships with such organisations and programs where possible.

Grant programs such as the Melbourne Water's liveable communities, liveable waterways program, stream frontage management program, and Victorian Landcare grants are also invaluable to supporting both Council and the community to improve the health and public benefits of our waterways.

Protecting and enhancing the environmental values of the study area requires a collaborative effort between the State government, Council and landowners within the area, as examples of best practice land management on public and private land that produce win-win outcomes are an important demonstration of commitment to the Green Wedge and for new initiatives being supported.

Land management methods/practices can be varied and are mainly focused on targeted locations and support through local community groups. Awareness of land management issues and ways to respond requires providing information that is as accessible and practical as possible for the landowner.

RUBBISH DUMPING AND FILL DUMPING

The dumping of waste and rubbish, such as furniture, building materials and fill within the area impacts on the environment and amenity of the Green Wedge area. This situation is not new but is attributed to several issues including landfill levy

EXAMPLES OF LOCAL WILDFLOWER GRASSLANDS VEGETATION AT BUSH'S PADDOCK COUNCIL RESERVE.

increases, the pace of development, and non-compliant contractors.

Whilst there have been approvals for legal fill sites to accommodate soil from construction activity, it remains difficult to monitor and stop the dumping of fill elsewhere. The dumping of fill, which may at times include not only clean soil but also other waste material, often comes from adjoining municipalities where developers operate across the region, and Council does see an opportunity to work with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other Councils in a coordinated approach to address this issue. Melton City Council has allocated significant resources in response to dumping of land fill and general rubbish, employing technology that supports the real time reporting of dumping and other surveillance initiatives.

The vast dumping of fill on a site may change the landscape, impact grassland vegetation and wildlife, and potentially bring in new contamination, including hazardous materials such as asbestos.

Fill dumping activity is not clearly defined in planning schemes and is generally captured under a broader definition of earthworks which is often interpreted in the context of gardening or landscaping. The GWZ only requires a planning permit for earthworks if specified in the schedule to the zone.

Currently, the *Melton Planning Scheme* has requirements in the relevant schedule but these requirements remain ambiguous, difficult to quantify on site and to express in permit conditions. Further strategic planning work is needed to address this, potentially by adding specific planning permit requirements to zone schedules for the dumping of more than a specific amount of clean-fill.

BUSHFIRE MANAGEMENT

Bushfire is the main natural risk facing people and the environment within this study area, particularly with grassfires.

The *Metropolitan Bushfire Strategy 2020* (DTP, 2020) outlines that the Western Grasslands within our region are considered '*lower risk, as they are dominated by grass not forest*'. It further outlines that while grassfires burn quickly, compared to forest fires, prediction modelling and fire history indicates they are less likely to result in house losses. The plan considers townships such as Melton to be at risk from grassfires. It also recognises the ecological values and used the expert opinions of land managers to develop fire regimes for state reserves suitable for the species and communities that occur in these grasslands.

More residential development adjoining the study area will increase the number of people at risk from bushfires that occur in the Green Wedge particularly at the urban rural interface. This is also exacerbated by absentee landowners in some areas including within and adjoining the proposed Western Grasslands Reserve.

As outlined in the later Cultural Heritage chapter, some of the local Registered Aboriginal Parties do offer land management advice and assistance to landowners who wish to employ their services. It is also possible to work with Traditional Owners to advocate for and investigate opportunities to undertake seasonal burns through funding such as Forest Fire Management's Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Grants (CFG). The return of these seasonal burns will also benefit the biodiversity within the study area.

WATERWAYS

Watercourses are highly visible features across the flat western volcanic plain and comprise of well-defined valleys, deep gorges, forested river corridors and create a backdrop to the surrounding open landscape.

The Werribee River corridor is a significant gorge formation and the riparian areas and escarpments along the Werribee River are a major natural feature of the region and the study area. The Werribee River rises in the Great Dividing Range and flows into the northern part of the City of Melton before reaching the Melton Reservoir (Precinct 2), past the Melton Recycled Water Plant and Eynesbury (Precinct 3) before entering the City of Wyndham and into Port Phillip Bay.

Other waterways that run through the study area include a small section of the lower reaches of the Toolern Creek which is a small tributary of the Werribee River and Djerriwarrh Creek which also runs into the Melton Reservoir. The Werribee River and Toolern Creek do generally have consistent flows while other smaller creeks are ephemeral or have minimal water flow.

The Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO2) applies to these waterways and adjoining forested areas. As the ESO mapping was originally translated from the old format planning scheme, updated mapping is required to ensure its accuracy and consistency with the operation of the schedule. Changes in rainfall patterns associated with climate change will also affect peak flows and the general behaviour of waterways within the study area.

The DTP 'Waterways of the West Action Plan' (2021) sets out State plans for planning controls, tree planting and amenity works, and involving Traditional Owners in managing waterways. The Co-Designed Catchment Program for the Werribee Catchment Region (2018) further details waterway conditions and measures and objectives for improvements.

ADJACENT WESTERN GRASSLAND RESERVE

While the proposed Western Grasslands Reserve (WGR) is not included in the study area of this project, its strategic location and size within the wider area cannot be ignored as it does impact on adjoining land uses within the study area. When the reserve is fully established it will cover a vast area which shares boundaries with a large number of Council reserves such as Bush's Paddock and the Mount Cottrell reserves, and also water authority land at Melton Weir, Werribee River, Surbiton Park and Pinkerton Forest. If managed well, the potential links between these sites and reserves may provide useful corridors for flora and fauna.

Much of the designated WGR area is unoccupied even though the vast majority remains in private ownership. The State government has only acquired around 10% of this land. Due to the delay of acquisition and uncertainty, land management and biodiversity protection of this area has not been delivered as originally intended. The WGR has potential to become a significant biodiversity asset within the Green Wedge but this will not occur without the State's commitment to a management plan that can be delivered by a long-term funding arrangement.

ENVIRONMENT ACTIONS

1. Create a biodiversity strategy and build internal capacity to monitor biodiversity across the study area.

2. Collaborate and advocate with State agencies, land managers, and local environment groups to identify and pursue opportunities for improvements in biodiversity, landowner education, and land management programs.

3. Continue to work collaboratively with landowners and State government agencies to manage weeds and feral animals, including through Council's Environmental Enhancement Program, and highlight land management obligations under local and State laws.

4. Review and update the ESO2 mapping to ensure accuracy and consistency with the operation of the overlay.

5. Advocate to Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, Department of Transport and Planning, Country Fire Authority, Fire Rescue Victoria, and Parks Victoria for improved management of the Western Grasslands Reserve interface with the Green Wedge.

6. Work with Southern Rural Water, Department of Transport and Planning, and the Environmental Protection Agency to restrict vehicle access to waterways and address illegal dumping.

7. Advocate for, or directly pursue through further strategic planning work, changes in the Melton Planning Scheme to improve planning controls relating to the management of fill generated by bulk earthworks.

8. Advocate to DTP, DEECA, and the State government for a faster land acquisition process to complete the Western Grasslands Reserve, and for improved communication and engagement with landholders whose land is affected.

9. Engaging through the Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee, continue to work with, CFA, FRV, DEECA and Parks Victoria to identify programs that provide education and support to improve public awareness and response to local bushfire risks.

10. Support any opportunities that arise for work to understand and protect the recently identified Werribee Blue Box tree (*Eucalyptus Baueriana subspecies Thalassina*) and land management action to conserve it.

11. Manage reserves to benefit from the direct wildlife and habitat corridor links available to flora and fauna between Eynesbury Forest, Melton Weir and Werribee River, Surbiton Park and Pinkerton Forest, Bush's Paddock, the Western Grasslands Reserve, and the Mount Cottrell reserves.

12. Advocate to the State government for updated vegetation mapping for Melton and improved extension and enforcement of the Catchment and Land Protection Act (CALP Act) in the Green Wedge area.

13. Work with water authorities to protect and enhance waterways within the study area.

7 — Landscape

DEVELOPMENT MUST BE CAREFULLY LOCATED TO MINIMISE IMPACTS ON THE LONG VIEWS UNIQUE TO THE WESTERN VOLCANIC PLAIN, INCLUDING MANAGING LARGE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS THAT CAN IMPACT THE MOST ON THE FLAT LANDSCAPE AND RESULT IN A LOSS OF AVAILABLE FARMING LAND. INAPPROPRIATE SMALL LOT SUBDIVISIONS WILL CONTINUE TO BE DISCOURAGED TO PROTECT AGAINST THE FRAGMENTATION OF FARMING LAND AND THE LANDSCAPE.

OVERVIEW

As mentioned, the study area is located within the Victorian Volcanic Plain Bioregion, which extends westward of Melbourne to almost the South Australian border. Across much of this landscape, numerous, thin, basalt lava flows (several metres thick) have formed the dominant geological land surface. It is one of only 15 biodiversity hotspots in Australia and the only hotspot in Victoria, making it an area of state and national biological significance.

The Western Volcanic Plain landscape character type features stony rises, old lava flows, old volcanic cones and grasslands which together create a unique visual landscape. Trees are mainly associated with waterways while shelterbelt planting, rural-style fencing and dry stone walls are common along property frontages and paddock edges. Farm houses and outbuildings are scattered throughout, with a smaller subdivision pattern occurring on the perimeter of the townships. Rocks are often grouped into piles in paddocks as a result of land clearing to make it more arable for farming. The Werribee River and Mount Cottrell are the most significant natural features in the study area.

VIEWING CORRIDORS

Important views into and through the study area include:

- 180° views across the grasslands from Faulkners Road towards Melbourne CBD and Port Phillip Bay.
- View of Mount Cottrell from surrounding roads including Greigs Road and Mount Cottrell Road.
- Views towards Mount Cottrell, and to the more distant Pyrete Range from Exford Road.
- Views from Mount Cottrell which extend across the Port Phillip Bay as far as Point Nepean, although this area is not currently open to public access.
- Views along Werribee River from Exford Road.

Viewing corridors which traverse this landscape include:

- Exford Road
- Eynesbury Road
- Mount Cottrell Road
- Nerowie Road.

VIEW FROM EYNESBURY ROAD FACING A CANOLA CROP AND MATURE EUCALYPT TREE.

EYNESBURY FALLS

WATERWAYS

Sections of the Werribee River are incised across the volcanic plains as well-defined valleys or deep gorges. Forested river corridors are highly visible features of the volcanic plains, contrasting with the surrounding open and expansive countryside. Where waterway settings are cleared, the topography of the waterway is a highly distinctive feature of the landscape. Cleared volcanic plains give way to vegetated valley walls or exposed rock faces.

Deeply incised creek lines are a distinctive feature of the grasslands of the Western Plains. The Werribee River corridor is a significant gorge formation and the riparian areas and escarpments along the Werribee River are a major natural feature of the region. The Werribee River forms a contemporary boundary between the lands of the Wadawurrung and those of the Wurundjeri and the Bunurong Peoples, with many tangible and intangible living cultural heritage values such as middens and burial sites located within the Werribee River corridor. A section of the lower reaches of the Toolern Creek is also within the study area.

MOUNT COTTRELL

Mount Cottrell is 205m above sea level and is one of the most striking extinct volcanoes close to Melbourne and is geologically state significant. This dormant volcano has a classic profile and from its summit it provides panoramic views in all directions, including views to the You Yangs, Mount Macedon, Port Phillip Bay and Melbourne's CBD.

As has been outlined by the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council (2021),

'Mount Cottrell is an important Cultural site to all Peoples. The mountain is a place of profound trauma, a cultural memory of the men, women, and children; old and young; warriors and caregivers; who were massacred there. The Peoples who lived there left their Culture and trauma embedded in the landscape. We respect that trauma still experienced in descendants of those who walked the Country. This is a place of shared grief and so a place of shared custodianship.'

The cone area and lower eastern slopes are located on Council land which is accessed from Faulkners Road, while the surrounding land to the north and west is private land.

Over recent decades, infrastructure has been located at the top of Mount Cottrell including a telecommunications tower and navigational equipment for Melbourne Airport. For security reasons, this has restricted public access to the site. A new potable water storage facility is also planned to be built on the western side of Mount Cottrell at the time of writing this plan.

LANDSCAPE PROTECTION PLANNING CONTROLS

Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO1) applies to the cone area of Mount Cottrell down to the 160m contour. In 2016, Melton City Council adopted a Significant Landscape Features Strategy which through Amendment C173 was implemented into the *Melton Planning Scheme* in May 2020. The Strategy assessed and identified land having state, regional or local landscape significance within the City of Melton and detailed recommendations to improve existing policies and planning controls.

Amendment C173 introduced a local planning policy and Landscape Management Guidelines into the Melton Planning Scheme, although a proposed extension to the existing SLO affecting Mount Cottrell was not supported by affected landowners and Council subsequently removed this from the final amendment. Development proposals are now assessed against Council's Landscape Management Guidelines (Appendix A of the City of Melton Significant Landscape Features Strategy, 2016) which detail guidance for the siting and design of new development and impacts on view lines.

The site is also an area of Cultural Heritage Sensitivity under the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations and a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) would be required for any significant works triggering this requirement under the regulations.

SUBDIVISION PLANNING CONTROLS

The subdivision and fragmentation of land titles can have a significant impact on the open rural landscape.

Subdivision requirements set the spacing of development, and therefore whether the landscape is an open agrarian area or a more intensely developed primarily residential area.

Both the Green Wedge Zone and the Farming Zone in the municipality have unique subdivision lot size requirements in their schedules, with the N=A/20 rule applicable to a large amount of land in these zones. This is a complex equation for the number of lots allowed according to the size of the property, rather than a simple minimum lot size, such as the default lot size for both zones of 40 hectares.

As has been previously stated in the City of Melton Western Plains North Green Wedge Management Plan (2014):

'The subdivision controls affecting the majority of the Green Wedge area which remain in the Melton Planning Scheme were identified as early as 2001 by an independent planning panel as "almost unworkable" and changes to these existing subdivision controls are clearly required to facilitate appropriate management of the Green Wedge.'

While a simple standard minimum lot size would normally lead to a consistent size of lots and spread of dwellings throughout the rural environment, the complex N=A/20 rule if used leads to a strange mixture of very large remnant lots and very small new lots of only 1 to 5 hectares.

Under Clause 11.01-1L-01 Non-Urban Land, Council's local planning policies include strategy 2.11 to 'Require the provision of reticulated water to all lots and the connection to a sealed road network'. Providing sealed roads and reticulated water to new subdivision developments provides good utilities for new residents and prevents remote and inappropriate developments. However, it also means that completing a subdivision for just a couple of small lots allowed under the N=A/20 rule is often prohibitively expensive, and this has led to very few permit applications being lodged and even fewer developed.

In conclusion, the current subdivision requirements do not align well with the purpose and intention of the current Green Wedge Zone and Farming Zone, and current State policy. These requirements also were not supported by independent panel review, are rarely used in practice, and should be reviewed and replaced with a simpler and more consistent subdivision requirement.

LARGE PROJECTS IN THE GREEN WEDGE AREA

Stronger advocacy to State government and relevant agencies is required to limit the impacts of large infrastructure projects and other discretionary uses affecting the Green Wedge. In recent years, infrastructure projects have been proposed by government and private operators to locate new and expand existing facilities in the Green Wedge, including solar farms, transmission lines and quarries.

These proposals are likely to increase as demand for energy and resources are necessary for Melbourne's growth. These uses can impact significantly on rural land and viewing corridors across a flat and open landscape. A best practice approach including clear policy is required to support the location and consideration of these projects to minimise impacts on host communities.

OPPORTUNITIES

While a strengthening of planning controls affecting the Green Wedge is an important improvement, long term protection and certainty for landowners and occupiers is required to reduce the impacts of land speculation, un-managed properties, and degradation of Green Wedge biodiversity. The landscapes of the study area are too often under-valued and misrepresented due to its topography and vegetation which differs greatly from other Green Wedges around Melbourne.

Community awareness and education is required along with nature based infrastructure including trails and viewing platforms that allow parts of the Green Wedge to be enjoyed and appreciated by local and regional visitors. The proposed Western Grasslands Reserve and Werribee River Shared Trail provide such opportunities.

Below: Existing shared trail. Werribee River Shared Trail is a proposed extension of the Toolern Creek trail network. (see pages 66–67 for more details).

EXISTING SHARED TRAIL. WERRIBEE RIVER SHARED TRAIL IS A PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE TOOLERN CREEK TRAIL NETWORK. (SEE PAGES 66-67 FOR MORE DETAILS).

LANDSCAPE ACTIONS

1. Encourage landowners, developers, and State government to engage with Council planners early in the planning process for any large infrastructure projects proposed to impact the Green Wedge.

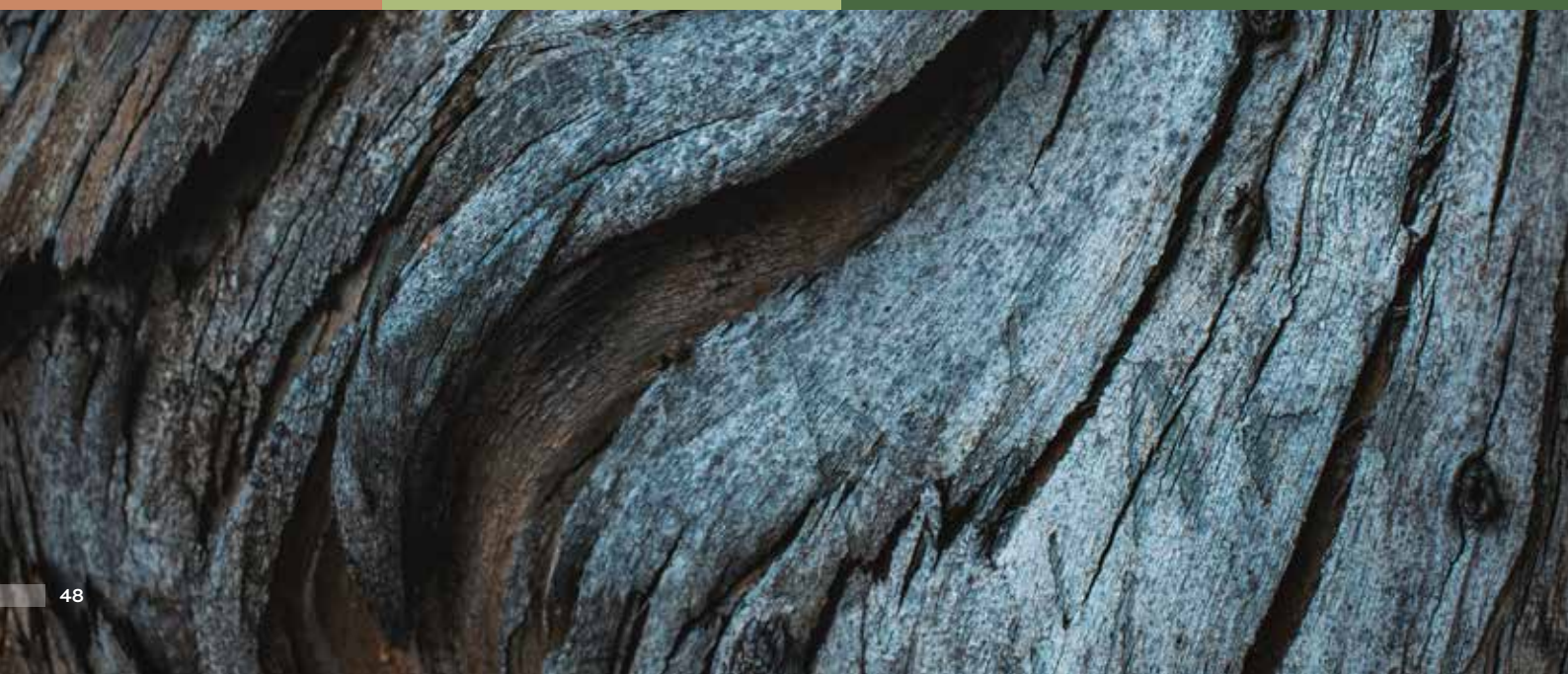
2. Work with Parks Victoria, DEECA, and other relevant government agencies to examine opportunities for park works and infrastructure for nature-based tourism in appropriate Green Wedge areas that support local and regional visitation.

3. Consider changes to the complex N=A/20 legacy subdivision controls in the Green Wedge and Farming Zone schedules to provide simpler controls for appropriately large sized lots.

8 — Cultural Heritage

BOTH CULTURAL HERITAGE AND HISTORIC BUILT FORM WILL BE PROTECTED AND CELEBRATED IN THE GREEN WEDGE. OPPORTUNITIES FOR FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES GROUPS TO PARTICIPATE IN NATURE- AND OR CULTURE-BASED TOURISM ACTIVITIES WILL BE ENCOURAGED.

THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE CITY OF MELTON IS CONSIDERED IN THE CONTEXT OF PRE-CONTACT ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE AND POST-CONTACT EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT.



ABORIGINAL HERITAGE

The lands, waters and skies of the City of Melton are the traditional homes to the Bunurong, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Peoples. The remnant grassland landscape, rivers, creek valleys and volcanic cones are representative of First Nations Peoples' stewardship and occupation of these lands and waters for more than 60,000 years. The names of places such as Djerriwarrh, Parwan, Toolern and Kororoit record their continuing relationships to the landscapes of this area.

Cultural heritage is important to Aboriginal people in reinforcing identity and belonging, and important to all Victorians as embodying knowledge connected to place.

Tangible evidence of Bunurong, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Peoples' long standing residency exists today within the municipality in the form of scarred trees and stone artefact scatters. Remaining artefact scatters and sub-surface deposits can be found near waterways particularly the Werribee River. Many of these places are enveloped within areas of Cultural Heritage Sensitivity protected under the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations.

The waterways are a particularly important landscape feature for Bunurong, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Peoples, as a source of livelihood and a meeting place. They were and continue today to find a rich variety of fish, eels, waterbirds as well as shelter in the City's waterways. It was their practice in relevant seasons to burn the grassy plains to attract game, promoting fresh grass growth for the following season.

In 2021, following several years of negotiations with Traditional Owners, the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council announced agreed variations to the location of boundaries for Registered Aboriginal Parties. Generally, land west of the Werribee River is represented by the Wadawurrung People while land east of the Werribee River south of Greigs Road is recognised as Bunurong Country and land north of Greigs Road is recognised as Wurundjeri Country. In recognition of the history of Mount Cottrell as a place of shared grief, that area is now shared between the latter two Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs).

The RAP statutory functions that Aboriginal Corporations undertake, vested under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, ensure that Traditional Owners are involved and, in time, will have control of all aspects and impacts of their cultural heritage on Country. Other relevant provisions lie within the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the *Melton Planning Scheme*.

Some of the local Registered Aboriginal Parties do offer land management advice and assistance to landowners who wish to employ their services. There may be opportunities to also to work with Traditional Owners, Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee, and Council's Environment Enhancement Program, to advocate and investigate opportunities for

MOUNT COTTRELL

RAILWAY VIADUCT OVER MELTON RESERVOIR (HO8)

regular Cool Burn Grant funding within the study area.

POST-CONTACT HERITAGE

The township of Melton was first settled by European pastoralists in the 1830s and 1840s, attracted to the extensive volcanic grasslands, its deep creeks and easy access to ports at Melbourne and Geelong. Most of the township and surrounding settlements were taken up by three large pastoral holdings, Exford, Greenhills and Rockbank. These properties left a legacy of elegant homesteads and outbuildings, dry stone walls, dams, historic road alignments, fords and bridges.

In the late nineteenth century 'closer settlement' period, the large estates were broken up into smaller farms in response to political and economic changes. These settlers created small dairy holdings, took up cropping and processed chaff, planted shelter belts, built wooden homesteads, and established small settlements, schools, churches and dry-stone walls. Many surviving heritage sites in the area date from this period.

The City of Melton's 2007 heritage study and the application of the Heritage Overlay (HO) provide a level of protection and recognition to a range of key timelines and themes including exploration, agriculture, settlement, use and built form.

The study area has post contact heritage features including homesteads, stone cottages, outbuildings, dams, bridges, parks, farms and dry-stone walls. These heritage features are an integral part of the study area as they connect residents and visitors to the municipality's post settlement agricultural and grazing past and provide an insight into how life once was. Heritage features assist in creating a historical sense of place for the community and provide key landmarks within the Green Wedge.

The dry-stone wall landscape of the municipality is expressive of both the natural history of the volcanic creation of the area and the cultural history of its human modification. The dry stone wall landscape is of particular significance to the municipality which has undertaken work to protect, educate and incorporate dry stone walls in existing and formerly rural areas. The Dry-Stone Walls Driving Trail includes sites in the vicinity of Mount Cottrell including, along Mt Cottrell Road, Boundary Road and Greigs Road.

Sites of State level historical significance are placed on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR), and permit applications for any works or changes to these sites are assessed by Heritage Victoria under the Heritage Act 2017.

Heritage overlay sites in the Western Plains South Green Wedge area are listed below:

HO	Green Wedge Heritage site description and address
Heritage overlay sites in the Western Plains South Green Wedge area	
HO2 (VHR H316)	Exford Homestead, 355-605 Exford Road, Weir Views
HO3 (VHR H317)	Strathtulloh, 1402-1600 Greigs Road, Strathtulloh
HO8 (VHR H2327)	Railway Viaduct over Melton Reservoir, Melton South
HO97	Early Crossing Place associated with Djerriwarrh Bridge, old Ballarat Road (disused route), across Djerriwarrh Creek, Melton West
HO98	House 'Nerowie', 155 Nerowie Road, Parwan
HO100	Former Dairy, 1180 Exford Road, Eynesbury
HO101	House, 865 Exford Road, Exford
HO102	Glengallan (A.K.A. Glengallon), 77-207 Butlers Road, Mount Cottrell (access from Greigs Road West)
HO103	Former Dairy and Trees, 30 and 35 Hickey Road, Exford
HO104	Moloney's Farm Site and Water Reserve, 1884-1908 Mount Cottrell Road and 2182-2356 Boundary Road, Mount Cottrell
HO105	Mt Cottrell Road Stock Yard, Ruins and Dry Stone Walls
HO107	House, 285 Nerowie Road, Parwan 285 Nerowie Road, Parwan
HO111	Mount Cottrell Homestead, 167-177 Faulkners Road, Mount Cottrell
HO200	Mount Cottrell Dry Stone Wall Precinct, various locations (see figure 12 map on page 52).

FIGURE 9 HERITAGE OVERLAY SITES (PINK) AND HERITAGE INVENTORY SITES (GREEN) MAP. DRY STONE WALLS ARE BROWN LINES

Nearby sites of interest which are outside the Green Wedge area include the Eynesbury Homestead building and ancillary structures (HO1), and the Kerr Farm site (HO110) which is located within the proposed Western Grasslands Reserve area.

As low bald mounts, 'Shield volcanos' such as Mount Cottrell, do not immediately identify as dormant volcanos. However, Mount Cottrell had one of the biggest lava outputs of the entire Western Volcanic Plain and is the origin of the fieldstone that was gathered up by early settlers and shaped into the dry stone walls that characterise the landscape.

To preserve these, Amendment C100 was introduced into the *Melton Planning Scheme* in 2016, including a local policy applying to all dry stone walls listed in the Heritage Overlay. Precincts 5 and 6 contain some of the best examples of dry stone walls in the region, forming part of the Melton Dry Stone Wall Driving Trail. Dry stone walls are an important part of local post-contact heritage that is often overlooked and should be celebrated.

DRY STONE WALLS.

CULTURAL HERITAGE ACTIONS

1. Investigate opportunities with First Nations Peoples and the State government to better recognise and conserve areas of cultural heritage and related activities within the Green Wedge, and to support traditional cultural land management practices.

2. Work with First Nations Peoples and Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee to advocate for regular Cool Burn Grant funding within the study area.

3. Invite and involve a First Nations Peoples working party to help guide future planning, respect, conservation, and management of the Mount Cottrell reserves. Cooperatively scope respectful opportunities to provide for community access and understanding of the significance of Mount Cottrell.

MT COTTRELL AND THE DRY STONE WALL AT ITS BASE.

9 — Precincts

CONTINUE TO SUPPORT A RANGE OF USES ACROSS THE VARIED AND UNIQUE PRECINCTS, INCLUDING RURAL LIVING IN EXISTING AREAS, AGRICULTURE, WATER INFRASTRUCTURE, TOURISM AND HERITAGE. THESE ACTIVITIES WILL MINIMISE IMPACTS ON THE UNIQUE LANDSCAPE, CULTURAL HERITAGE, BIODIVERSITY AND RURAL AMENITY OF THE AREA. COUNCIL WILL CONTINUE TO ADVOCATE TO ADDRESS LOCAL ISSUES SUCH AS PROTECTING AGRICULTURAL LAND, REDUCING LAND SPECULATION, AND ADVOCATING FOR THE COMMUNITY IN MAJOR PROJECTS SUCH AS THE COMPLETION OF THE WESTERN GRASSLANDS RESERVE.

The study area is divided into seven precincts which reflect different land use, development and geographical areas as shown on the map below. This section of the document will include key discussion points and actions that are documented in the Implementation Plan.

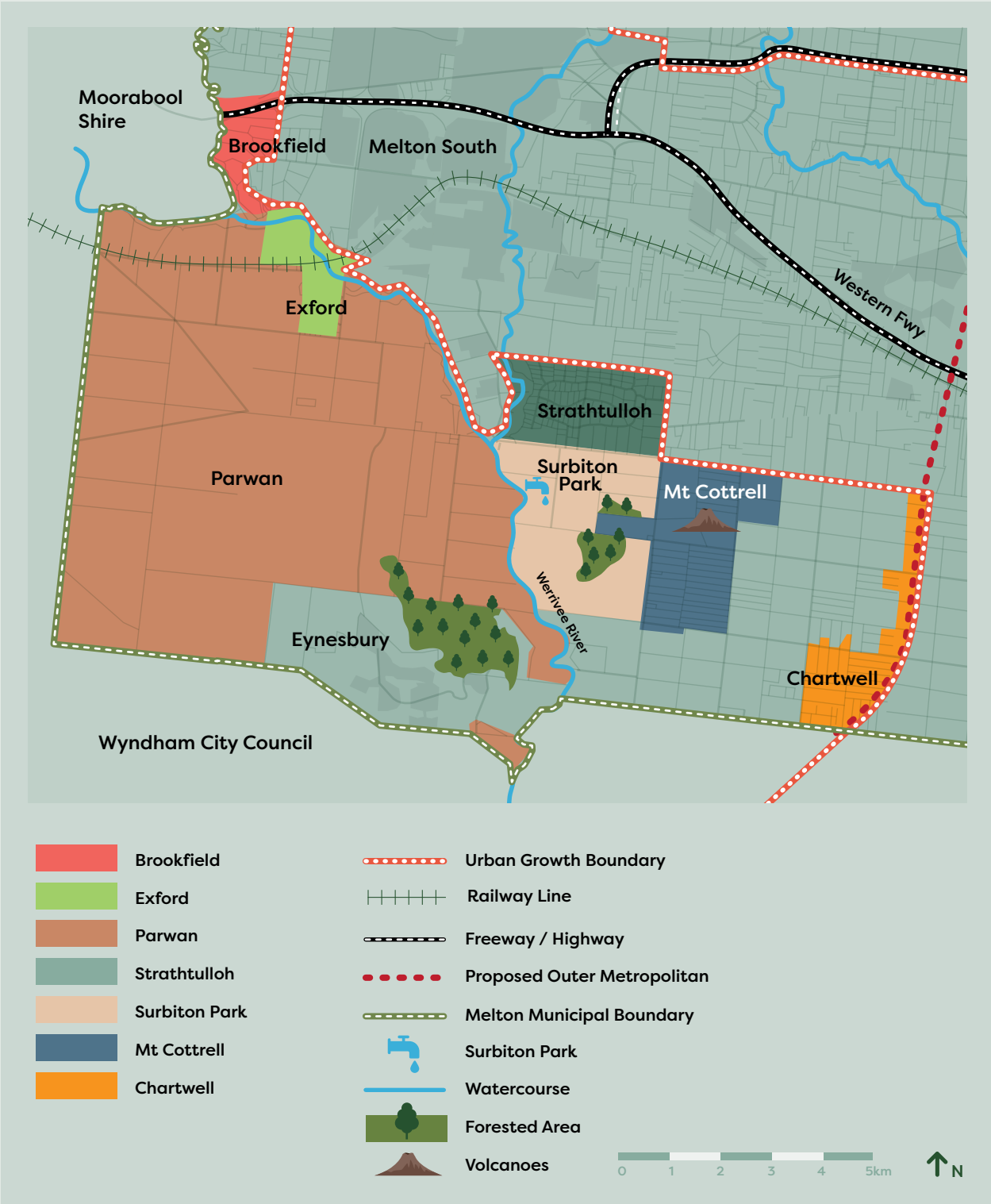
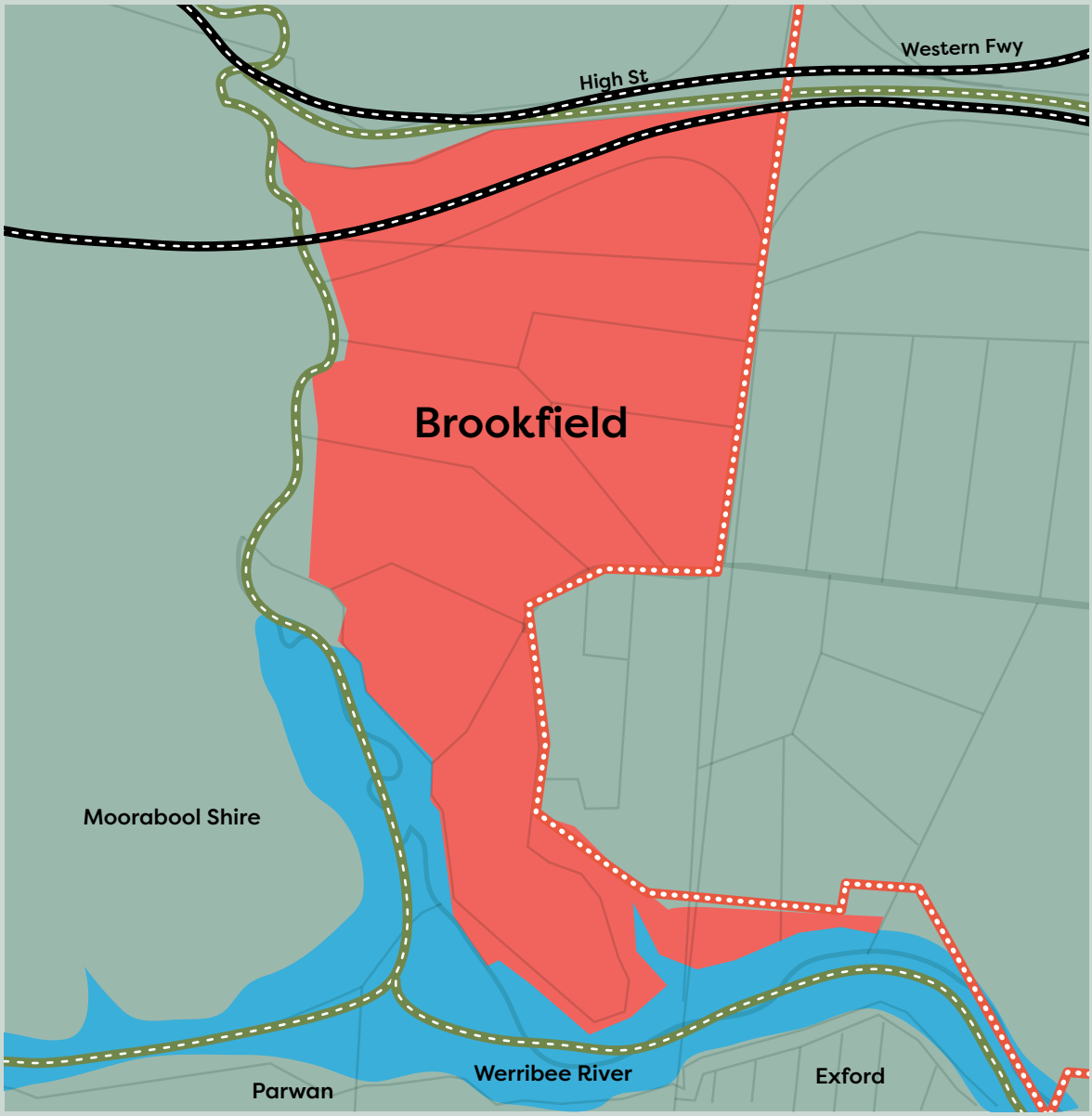


FIGURE 10 PRECINCTS MAP

PRECINCT 1

BROOKFIELD



Brookfield

Urban Growth Boundary

Freeway / Highway

Melton Municipal Boundary

Watercourse

N

0 750 1,500m

Precinct 1 is located between the UGB to the east, Western Highway to the north and Djerriwarrh Creek along the west and southern perimeter. The total area comprises 9 lots between 2-23 hectares which are all occupied by dwellings. Despite proximity to nearby residential development, the precinct is relatively isolated. It is bounded by the Djerriwarrh Creek to the west and the Werribee River/Melton Reservoir to the south.

Development Plan Overlay 3 (DPO3) applies to the precinct requiring a development plan to be approved prior to development. A Rural

Conservation Zone (RCZ) applies to land adjacent to the Djerriwarrh Creek and acts as a buffer between the waterway and the Green Wedge A Zone (GWAZ). The GWAZ limits subdivision to two hectares for land within 300 metres of a RCZ and five hectares for all other land. Five of the nine lots are affected by both zones.

Planning permits in the study area have been primarily for minor development such as sheds and extensions to existing dwellings. Inappropriate discretionary use proposals that would greatly compromise amenity of the precinct have been and will continue to be discouraged.

Development Plan Overlay

The Development Plan Overlay 3 - Harkness Road Rural Living Area (DPO3) which covers both areas within this precinct and in Harkness to the north, dates to the introduction of the new format Planning Scheme in 1999. No precinct wide development plan has been prepared, and the current schedule to the overlay is brief and considered insufficient to guide the preparation and assessment of a development plan for this precinct.

The DPO does not add anything significant to the controls of the GWAZ and local policy other than requiring an internal road network and building envelopes. It relies on reference documents which are either outdated or already included in local policies. A requirement for the provision of a set distance of road frontage to each lot may also result in poor outcomes. The DPO3 is therefore ineffective and should be considered for removal.

Urban Growth Boundary

In recent years and through consultation for this project, interest in residential rezoning of the precinct has been sought by some landowners. The 2011 State government assessment of Logical Inclusions areas investigated periphery land on the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). The Logical Inclusions Advisory Committee Report which considered submissions from landholders, supported rezoning of land east of Brooklyn Park Drive but did not support any rezoning on the western side. The committee concluded that due to environmental, biodiversity and cultural heritage constraints, the subject area provided an appropriate urban break to the Djerriwarrh Creek and was therefore not suitable for inclusion within the UGB.

Illegal dumping and firewood harvesting

The dumping of waste and vandalism is a significant problem in this precinct. Council is working closely with the EPA, employing technology based solutions, and working with Southern Rural Water and the Department of Transport and Planning to restrict access to waterways, to prevent illegal dumping.

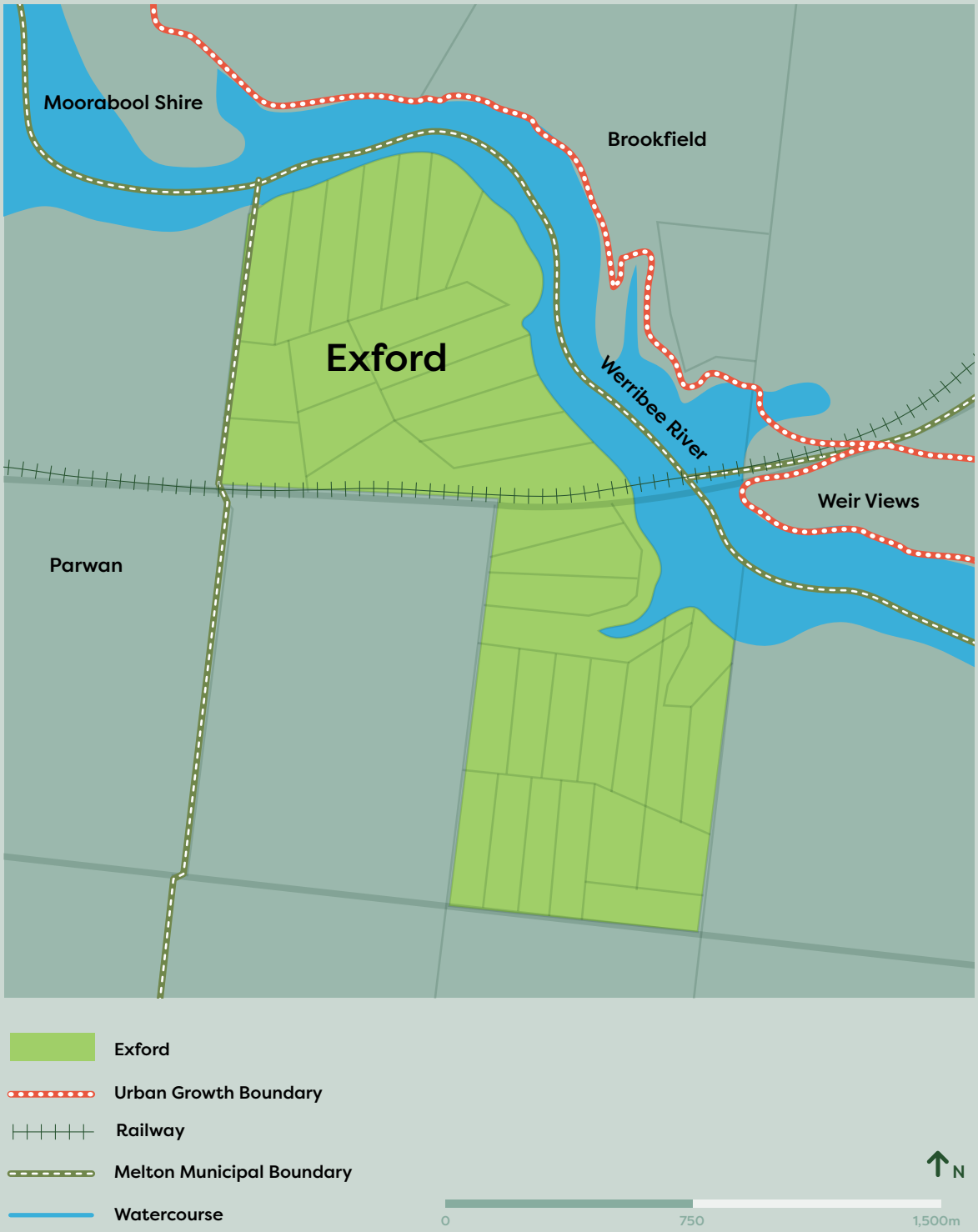
Illegal firewood harvesting from trees on public land has recently emerged as a new problem in the area and Council is investigating new methods of monitoring and enforcement action to address this issue.

Precinct Actions

Action No	Description
1A	Review the DPO3 overlay to determine whether it should be amended or deleted.
Actions from other chapters with specific relevance to this precinct:	
Environment Action 6	Work with Southern Rural Water, Department of Transport and Planning, and the Environmental Protection Agency to restrict vehicle access to waterways and address illegal dumping.

PRECINCT 2

EXFORD



Precinct 2 comprises approximately 35 lots which are all occupied by dwellings. Lot sizes average four hectares and are unable to be subdivided under the current subdivision controls of the Green Wedge Zone (GWZ). It is a de-facto rural living area that was subdivided prior to the introduction of the new format planning schemes in 1997. The precinct borders the Werribee River to the north and east and open farming land to the south.

The Melbourne-Ballarat rail line crosses the Werribee River gorge along the State

heritage listed Melton Viaduct before travelling through the northern part of the precinct. Despite its location being just across the waterway from emerging residential estates in Brookfield and Weir Views, the precinct is relatively isolated and has no direct access from the north. The precinct has limited infrastructure and is not connected to reticulated water.

While the Melton Reservoir permits some recreational uses, no formal access is currently permitted along land fronting this section of the weir. When the reservoir is high, the Melbourne Runabout and Speedboat Club whose clubhouse is located further south with access from Exford Road, holds regular weekend events on the waterway.

Issues raised during consultation focussed on the management of Southern Rural Water land along the embankment of the weir including the need for better grass clearing, transport connections to Melton township and whether the current planning controls were appropriate.

Council has engaged consultants to review and update the Melton Weir Parkland Strategy (Melton Reservoir Interface Strategy 2005) to provide direction on the development of park and amenity improvements along the weir interface. The strategy is set to be completed in 2023 and is expected to recommend actions Council can implement to ensure Melton Weir becomes a leading tourism and recreational drawcard for the City of Melton. It will include an assessment of linear park and path connections along Werribee River and Toolern Creek.

Improved transport connections to Melton township from this precinct can only be based on existing road networks that will progressively be upgraded as residential development along Exford Road and in nearby Eynesbury is completed.

In summary, Precinct 2 represents a developed legacy rural lifestyle subdivision that is expected to remain unchanged into the future. The isolated location, limited infrastructure and surrounding large lots do not warrant any changes to current subdivision controls.

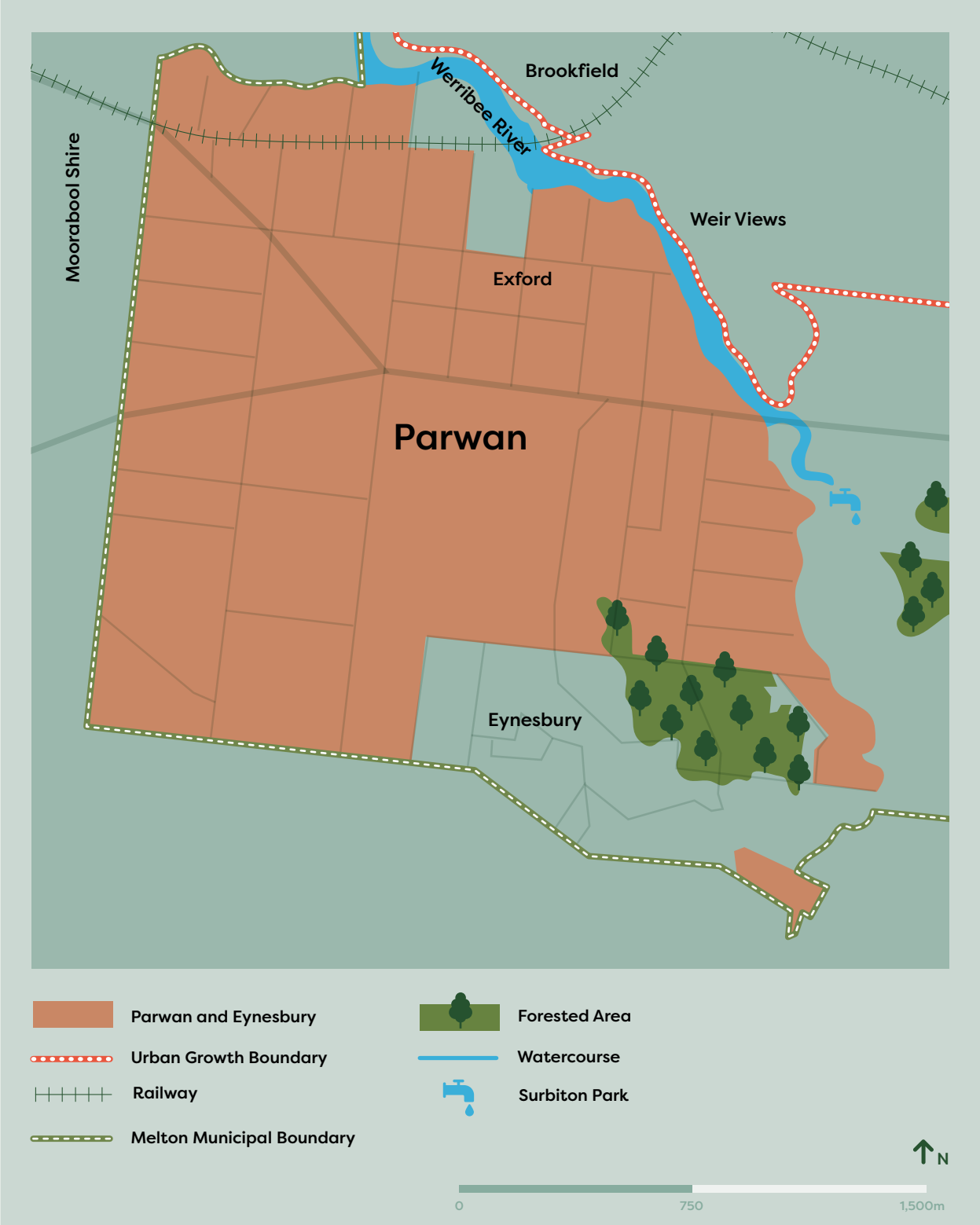
MELBOURNE-BALLARAT RAILWAY LINE CROSSING OF THE MELTON WEIR.

Precinct Actions

Action No	Description
2A	Work with Southern Rural Water to improve grass clearing and management of land adjoining the Werribee River and Weir in Precinct 2, and to improve communication with adjoining landowners.
2B	Upon the completion of any revised Melton Weir Strategy, seek to implement any recommended actions to enhance its tourism and recreational potential.
Actions from other chapters with specific relevance to this precinct:	
Environment Action 6	Work with Southern Rural Water, Department of Transport and Planning, and the Environmental Protection Agency to restrict vehicle access to waterways and address illegal dumping.

PRECINCT 3

PARWAN



Precinct 3 is bound by Moorabool Shire (west), the Werribee River (north and east), and Eynesbury Township and the City of Wyndham (south). The precinct has a total area of approximately 5,670 hectares and the majority of lots are well over 40 hectares in size. The precinct includes some of the last remaining large land holdings in the municipality which are still actively farmed.

The Melbourne-Ballarat railway line traverses through the north-west part of the precinct after crossing the Werribee river. The Western Irrigation Network (WIN) pipeline that is currently under construction (at the time of writing this plan) will follow an existing gas

pipeline route. This route travels from Melton Recycled Water Plant (Surbiton Park) south of Exford Road through open farmland before joining the western end of Exford Road and onto the Parwan-Balliang Irrigation District.

Access to recycled water along the route could be made possible in the future, and DTP may consider strengthening planning controls to protect this irrigation corridor area under its Green Wedge Agricultural Land (GWAL) project.

In addition to the existing Eynesbury Road that enters the township through the Grey Box Forest, a new road connection, Green Hill Road, was constructed further west off Exford Road in 2021. This road will become the main access into the Eynesbury town centre and eventually extend south along Mt Mary Road into the City of Wyndham.

While Eynesbury Township is not included in the Green Wedge and therefore the study area, its future development and associated infrastructure will affect the dynamics of the precinct and place pressure on the adjoining Green Wedge land. Increased traffic along local roads also presents potential conflict for movement of stock between paddocks, operating of farm machinery and other rural related activities.

The precinct has significant landscape values including long views north to the Macedon Ranges and the Pyrete Range. As previously mentioned, Rural Landscape Character Policy and Landscape Management Guidelines were introduced into the *Melton Planning Scheme* in 2020 which ensures development proposals consider landscape values through the planning application process. An Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) applies to the western part of the precinct where areas of remnant woodland, open forest and grasslands are located.

Historically, the City of Melton was a successful producer of grains and livestock. In recent decades, however, several factors (including declining commodity prices, increasing land prices, fragmentation of rural land, and urban encroachment) have reduced agricultural production. Within the study area, commercial agriculture has mostly contracted to Precinct 3 where there remain a small number of farming properties and share farming operations.

One constraint for agriculture is the extent of surface rock across the basalt plains and poorly draining soil. Where there is an absence of rock in the north western parts of the study area or in paddocks that have been cleared of rock, extensive cropping of

EYNESBURY FOREST, TYPICAL OF DRY WOODLAND REMNANT VEGETATION IN THE AREA.

grains and pasture improvement has been undertaken. Pastures on land with substantial surface rock comprise mainly native grass species, which can be productively grazed with appropriate management practices. Generally, the soil profile in Precinct 3 is reasonably productive in good years of rainfall but this has been less frequent in recent decades.

The Werribee River provides water for irrigation primarily to farms outside the study area in the Bacchus Marsh and Werribee South Irrigation districts. However, Greater Western Water's Melton Recycled Water Plant (Surbiton Park) produces Class C water for the production of pastures and summer crops such as maize. Further access to recycled water within Precinct 3 could provide long-term viability and opportunities for value adding uses such as horticulture.

Significant work has been done in recent years examining the viability of agriculture and Melbourne's long-term food security. The impacts from the Covid 19 pandemic highlighted many issues, including where our food is produced, distance to markets and the importance of locally grown produce. It is anticipated that this may lead to more agricultural related investment occurring in the region whether on a small or large scale and the City of Melton's Green Wedge areas could play a small but important part of any such transformation.

Through DTP's Planning for Green Wedges and Agricultural Land Project, a range of planning reforms are expected to be introduced into planning schemes in the future to protect Green Wedge land from further fragmentation and to support agriculture in Melbourne's fringe areas.

Discretionary uses should be discouraged within Precinct 3, particularly uses more often associated with urban areas such as schools and places of worship, to limit fragmentation and prevent detracting from the core role of the precinct.

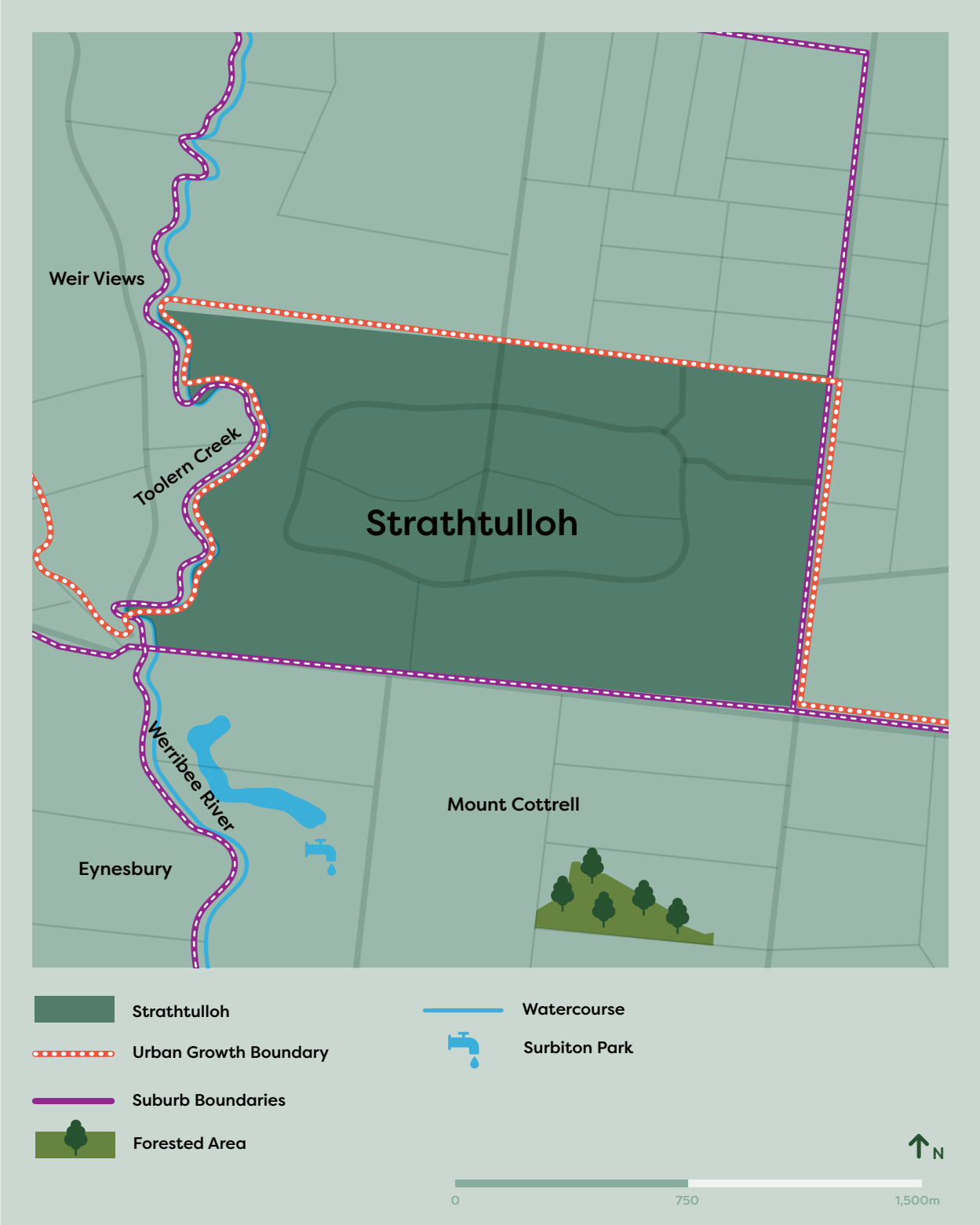
Low impact developments with a clear link to agriculture, the environment and nature-based activities that complement the Green Wedge should be encouraged. Planning applications relying on the 'in conjunction test' to support commercial uses including accommodation, function centres and restaurants should not be supported where the primary use is not already established and only represents a small part of the overall contributing use of the land.

Precinct Actions

Action No	Description
3A	Protect landscape values of the precinct such as the Eynesbury Forest and views of the Werribee River and Mt Cottrell from inappropriate development impacts.
Actions from other chapters with specific relevance to this precinct:	
Agriculture Action 1	Work with Greater Western Water to investigate future opportunities for access to recycled water or treated stormwater for agriculture along the WIN pipeline route and throughout the study area.
Agriculture Action 3	Advocate to DTP on key issues affecting the Green Wedge area including discretionary uses, land banking, and advocating against any amendments to the Urban Growth Boundary that would result in a loss of Green Wedge land.
Landscape Action 6	Consider changes to the complex N=A/20 legacy subdivision controls in the Green Wedge and Farming Zone schedules to provide simpler controls for appropriately large sized lots.
Infrastructure Action 10	Encourage low impact sustainable development that supports appropriate agriculture, land management, tourism, recreation or nature-based activities.

PRECINCT 4

STRATHTULLOH



Strathtulloh Estate is a subdivision that was approved prior to the introduction of the new format planning schemes in 1997. It provides a unique rural living area, close to the urban areas retaining the attraction of a rural living location. The Estate comprises 115 lots between 1.5 to 15 hectares in size including five vacant lots at the time of writing this plan. Approximately 90% of lots are less than four hectares in size. The GWZ schedule applying to the precinct has a minimum lot size for subdivision of 12 hectares.

Strathtulloh Estate is largely developed and features established gardens, scattered native vegetation and an informal road network with reticulated water. The Toolern Creek provides an important natural and recreational buffer on the western side while adjacent land to the north forms part of the Toolern PSP. A 500 metre buffer extends into the south east corner of the precinct which applies to a future potential extraction site at the south west corner of Greigs Road and Mount Cottrell Road in Precinct 5.

The 2011 Logical Inclusions Advisory Committee report which was established by the State government to examine further changes to the UGB, considered a submission to include a large site on the south west part of Strathtulloh Estate into the urban side of the UGB. The committee considered the submission in the context of the overall estate in its deliberations. The committee concluded that it was "*unreasonable to consider the site as a logical inclusion, now or into the future and that the land has a stronger association with the surrounding rural residential subdivision and sits comfortably within the rural living and low density estate*". Based on submissions made by local residents, the committee agreed "*the area clearly has a long-term low-density future*".

Consultation to inform the Background Report and this Green Wedge Management Plan included a small number of landowners seeking changes to sub division controls, whilst others indicated a desire to maintain the current subdivision controls. Other issues raised included impacts from development associated with the Toolern and Toolern Park PSP growth areas including concerns around the northern interface with these areas and increased traffic on surrounding roads that are not safe for high speeds and heavy vehicles.

Changes to the location of perimeter roads, open space and new dwellings at Millstone Estate within the Toolern PSP (along the northern interface at Renaissance Drive) have resulted in limited setbacks for new housing that faces directly towards the Strathtulloh Estate. This has produced a poor design outcome for the area and Council will need to consider planning options for the interface of any further development.

One of the greatest challenges for the City of Melton is prioritising road infrastructure for both existing and new roads. Overflow of traffic from nearby growth areas, combined with out of sequence development results in construction vehicles and safety issues on narrow roads. Council's infrastructure program has identified safety measures that are scheduled for Greigs Road while other upgrades are being planned.

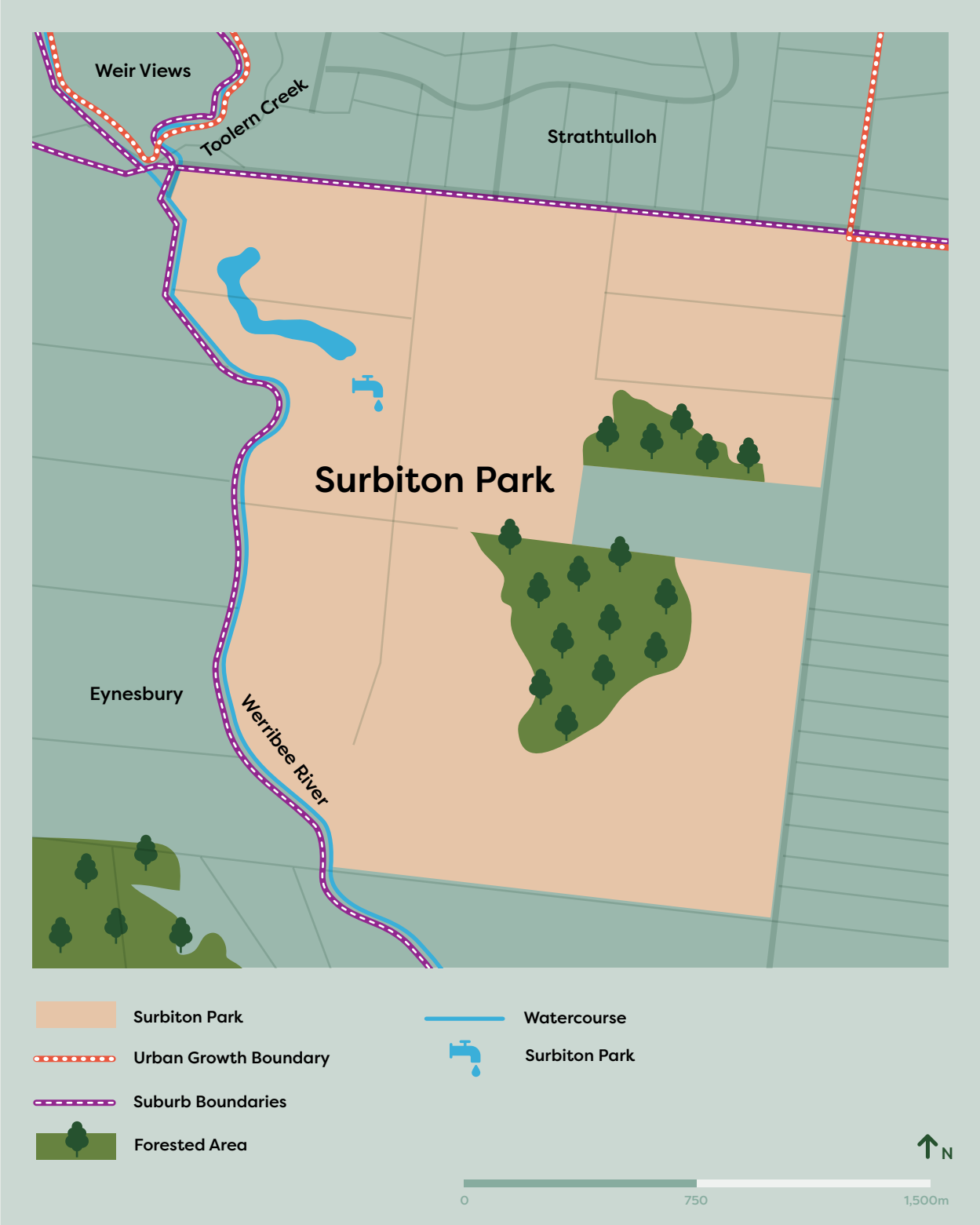
In summary, Strathtulloh Estate will continue to provide a rural lifestyle option and act as a transitional buffer between the larger Green Wedge lots to the south and urban development to the north. While there are some larger undeveloped lots near Mount Cottrell Road, almost all other lots are developed with limited potential to accommodate additional housing.

Precinct Actions

Action No	Description
4A	Ensure any new stages of residential development adjacent Strathtulloh Estate provide suitable interface treatments. These must be consistent with approved PSP plans and provide for appropriate setbacks and siting of roads, infrastructure, landscaping, and reserves along the interface.
Actions from other chapters with specific relevance to this precinct:	
Infrastructure Action 11	Council will continue to advocate to State and Federal governments for additional road safety funding and upgrades that will take pressure off arterial roads in Melton's non-urban areas including Mount Cottrell Road and Exford/ Greigs Road.

PRECINCT 5

SURBITON PARK



The Surbiton Park precinct has a total area of approximately 800 hectares and is majority owned by Greater Western Water who operates the Melton Recycled Water Plant within the precinct and its surrounding infrastructure. The precinct also includes private land reserved for a future extraction site at the corner of Greigs Road and Mount Cottrell Road, and Council owned land known as Bush's Paddock which has significant remnant vegetation.

The Melton Recycled Water Plant known as Surbiton Park is a critical piece of infrastructure for the City of Melton and the wider region. Class A recycled water is provided by the plant to Eynesbury and some new residential areas south of Melton. As mentioned previously, (see pages 23-26) the Western Irrigation Network (WIN) will provide Class C water to the Parwan/Balliang irrigation district in the near future, with potential for future expansion.

The Melton Recycled Water Plant includes a 500 kilowatt solar photovoltaic array which was completed in December 2019 and together with Biogas, enables the plant to produce up to 50% of the power required to operate the facility. Surrounding fields are used for discharge of treated water particularly during winter and wet years.

The precinct is partly elevated and has outstanding 180 degree views to the west, particularly from Mount Cottrell Road. The western side of the precinct covers a 6km frontage to the Werribee River and forms part of the proposed Werribee River Shared Trail which is planned to link through to Eynesbury and the Western Grasslands Reserve in the City of Wyndham. The trail extension was investigated by the Werribee River Shared Trail Strategy (2013) prepared on behalf of Melton City Council, Wyndham City Council and Parks Victoria.

The trail extension has potential opportunities for Cultural Heritage and nature-based recreation to be established along this section of the river. Exford Reserve is a 1.3 hectare area of open space located on the east bank of the Werribee River at the intersection of Exford and Greigs Roads. This location provides a great informal recreation spot and an ideal starting point to explore the wider area.

Greater Western Water land also contains the ruins of the former Pinkerton Homestead from the Pinkerton family who were the first European pioneering family to settle in the area. These features are not open to the general public but the Pinkerton Land Care group does have access for re-vegetation of the Pinkerton Forrest (a grassy Grey-Box Eucalypt Woodland) and adjacent land at the Bush's Paddock Grasslands. There is a HO200 overlay on the two sites for dry stone walls.

The precinct is highly significant as the Werribee River is the boundary between several First Nations Peoples. Some of the best examples of dry stone walls in the region are also located along Mt Cottrell road which are protected by a Heritage Overlay.

The elevated views from the eastern part of the precinct provide potential for a bird watching/viewing platform somewhere inside the public land area. This would also complement the existing Dry Stone Wall Driving Trail that travels along Mount Cottrell Road. Links through this land back to the Werribee River would also provide potential opportunities to celebrate the cultural and environmental significance of the area.

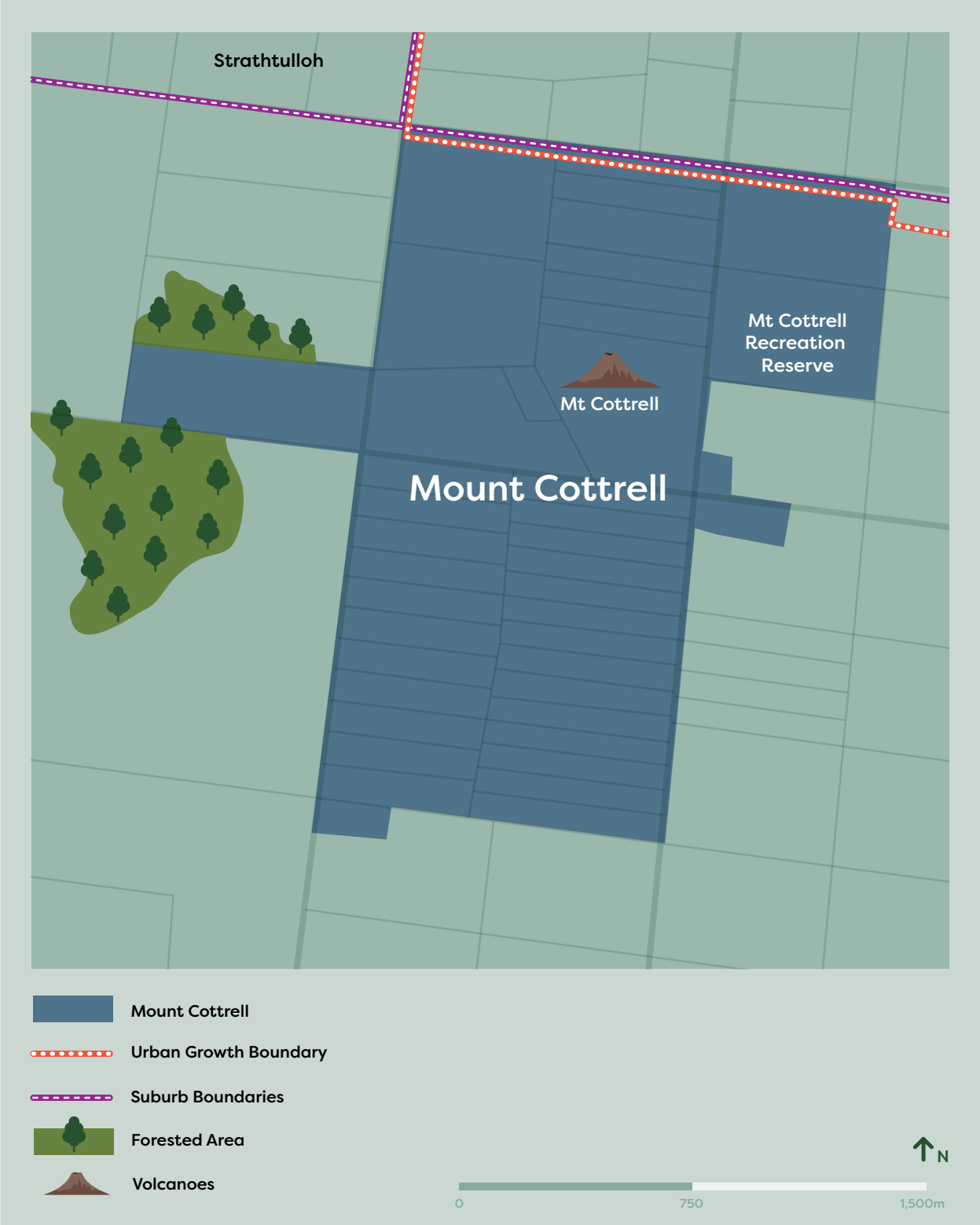
Precinct Actions

Action No	Description
5A	Investigate with Greater Western Water the potential for a viewing and bird watching platform at Surbiton Park / Melton Recycled Water Plant site, and a link to the Werribee River.
5B	Continue to advocate for funding to facilitate the construction of the Werribee River Shared Trail extension between Exford Road/Greigs Road and Molonys Reserve (Eynesbury). Explore options with the City of Wyndham as recommended by the Western Metropolitan Regional Trails Strategic Plan.
5C	Explore opportunities with Greater Western Water that could potentially allow an acceptable level of community access to view the heritage ruins at Surbiton Park/Melton Recycled Water Plant site.

FIGURE 11 PROPOSED WERRIBEE RIVER TRAIL, CITY OF MELTON SECTION. (PINK IS PROPOSED, BLUE IS EXISTING TRACK, RED IS GREEN WEDGE STUDY AREA BOUNDARY.

PRECINCT 6

MOUNT COTTRELL



Precinct 6 comprises 45 lots ranging from 4-48 hectares. Most of these lots are approximately 10 hectares and occupied by dwellings. These lots were subdivided prior to the introduction of the new format planning schemes in the late 1990s.

Mt Cottrell is the main feature of the precinct which rises to 200 metres and provides long views across the surrounding Volcanic Plains. It is of state significance as the largest shield volcano in Victoria.

As mentioned previously in this plan, the cone area is protected by a Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO) and is Council owned land with no public access. While communications and aviation infrastructure were erected on the cone area some years ago and do detract from its appearance, Mt Cottrell remains a significant landmark in the region.

Council has commenced rehabilitation of the site to improve the appearance and support biodiversity, with much further work needed in future. Council will need to engage with First Nations Peoples to plan for management and conservation of the site, and to scope and appraise culturally respectful opportunities to provide for community access and understanding of Mount Cottrell. There is a significant section of dry stone walls along Faulkner's Road which is protected by a Heritage Overlay and forms part of the City of Melton Dry Stone Walls Driving Trail. This section of wall is also used by Council to conduct dry stone wall workshops for practitioners, heritage groups and Council staff.

On the western side of Mount Cottrell, Greater Western Water plans to construct water storage tanks in 2024/25 to provide water security as part of their potable water supply network for the area.

Several properties located on the east and southern parts of the precinct were impacted by the introduction of the RCZ, ESO and PAO planning controls in 2010 to facilitate the proposed Western Grasslands Reserve (WGR). As mentioned previously in this plan, many of these properties are yet to be acquired by DTP and the drawing of the proposed WGR boundary remains contentious with some landowners and occupiers. Since the declaration of the proposed WGR and rezoning of the area over 10 years ago, only around 10% of land has been acquired.

The slow acquisition of land for the WGR and general misinformation about Green Wedge planning has created uncertainty and frustration for landowners. Land speculation in the area continues and the extent of absentee landholders has seen a steady decline in land management and biodiversity. This situation is undermining Council's ability to consult with affected landowners including on this project and will require continued advocacy to the State government for a faster completion of the acquisition process.

While DTP is seeking to respond to some of these issues through proposed reforms as part of the *Planning for Melbourne's Green Wedges and Agricultural Land Project*, further initiatives are required to limit land speculation and provide certainty for existing landowners. These could include strategic land acquisitions to create open space and environmental buffers adjacent to the Urban Growth Boundary and land management incentives for landowners.

The risk of grass fires in the Mount Cottrell area during the fire season can be high and there is a need to work with the Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee to continue to improve information and public awareness about fire safety and land management.

Another issue is that secondary or gravel roads in the area are increasingly used not only by local residents, and the maintenance of so many unsealed roads remains an ongoing challenge. This can in part be addressed by reinforcing the hierarchy of the road network (with signage and design) to minimise through traffic on local roads.

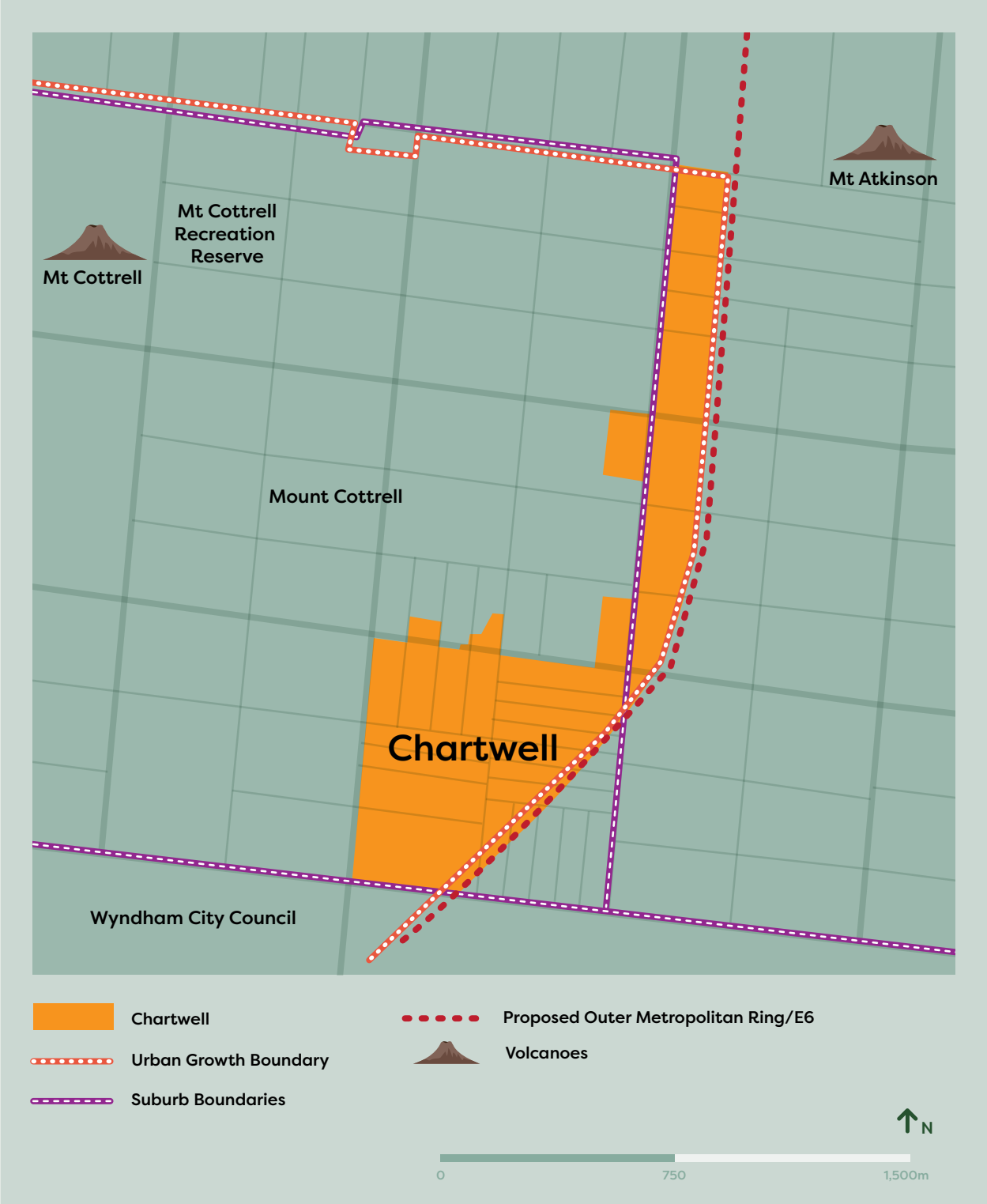
VIEW OVER THE WESTERN PLAINS FROM MT COTTRELL TOWARDS MELBOURNE IN THE DISTANCE.

Precinct Actions

Action No	Description
6A	Reinforce the hierarchy of the road network (with signage and design) to minimise through traffic on local roads within the precinct 6 Mt Cottrell area.
Actions from other chapters with specific relevance to this precinct:	
Cultural Heritage Action 3	Invite and involve a First Nations Peoples working party to help guide future planning, respect, conservation, and management of the Mount Cottrell reserves. Cooperatively scope respectful opportunities to provide for community access and understanding of the significance of Mount Cottrell.
Environment Action 5	Advocate to DTP, CFA, FRV, and Parks Victoria for improved management of the Western Grasslands Reserve interface with the Green Wedge.
Environment Action 6	Work with Southern Rural Water, Department of Transport and Planning, and EPA to restrict vehicle access to waterways and address illegal dumping.
Environment Action 8	Advocate to DTP, DEECA, and the State Government for an improved land acquisition process to complete the Western Grasslands Reserve, and for improved communication and engagement with landholders whose land is affected.
Environment Action 9	Through the Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee, continue to work with, CFA, FRV, DEECA and Parks Victoria to identify programs that provide education and support to improve public awareness and response to local bushfire risks.
Infrastructure Action 10	Encourage low impact sustainable development that supports appropriate agriculture, land management, tourism, recreation, or nature-based activities.

PRECINCT 7

CHARTWELL



This precinct includes Chartwell, an isolated subdivision area of approximately 20 lots located on Boundary Road. A Restructure Overlay was applied to Chartwell in the early 2000s to restrict further development and Council now owns most of the undeveloped lots.

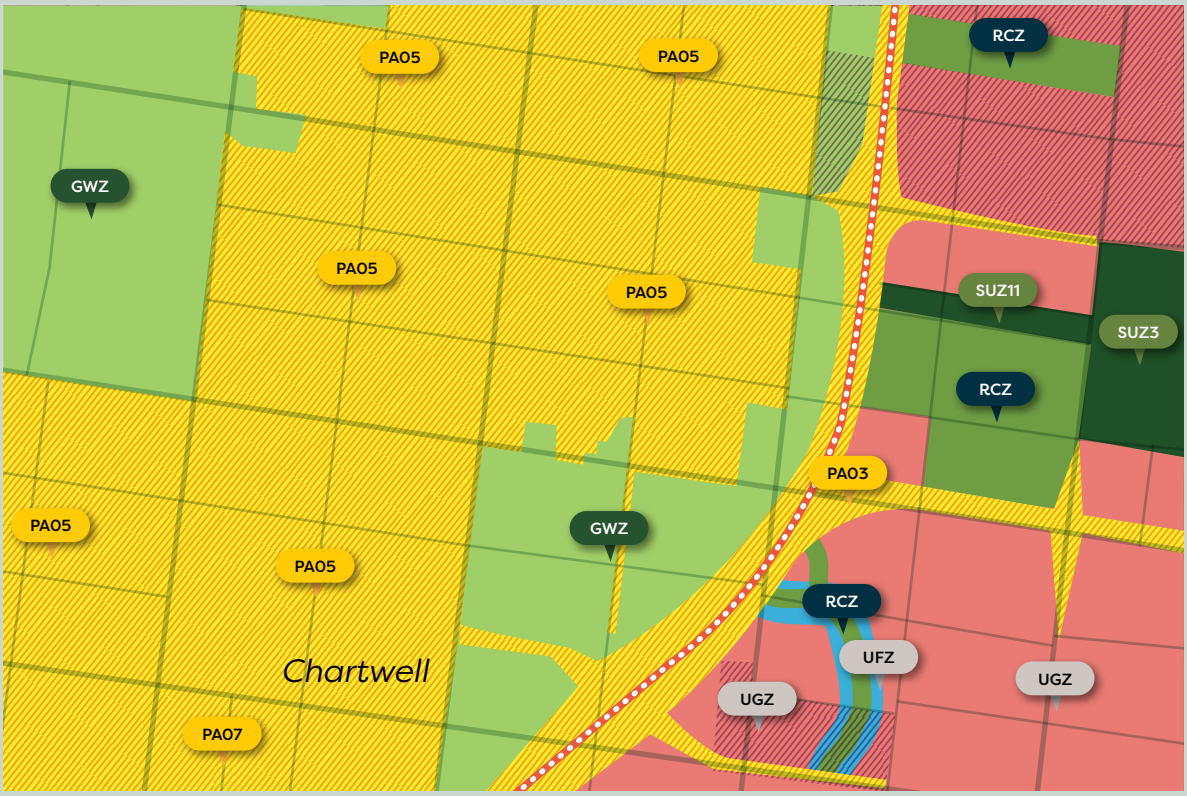
The precinct is an area of the green wedge that runs parallel to the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and the road reserve for the future Outer Metropolitan Ring Road (OMR). This area also adjoins land proposed for the Western Grasslands Reserve. Several lots extend across multiple zones and overlays

including into the Urban Growth Zone (UGZ) on the eastern side of the OMR. This outcome was a result of the expansion of the UGB and subsequent application of the Public Acquisition Overlay (PAO) for the OMR road reserve.

Chartwell will be impacted by a proposed interchange to service the OMR and this will significantly change the dynamics and appearance of this area. It will be important that the Department of Transport and Planning in their design of the OMR consider urban design and noise attenuation, and that the Chartwell community are consulted at all stages of the project. It is Council's expectation that regular discussions will occur with DTP as the design progresses, to ensure the impacts are minimised and that the public acquisition process is transparent.

The risk of grass fires and challenges with fire prevention works were identified as issues by residents during initial consultation. This has since been improved through regular meetings of the Melton Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee which brings together key agencies to identify local issues and integration of their respective roles.

Recently there has been creek flooding of both Boundary Road and Troups Road South in the area, and Melbourne Water had significant stormwater redirection concerns from even minor Council road upgrade works in the area. The design of the massive OMR Freeway through this area, is therefore likely to have large stormwater and flooding implications.



This map shows the highly constrained nature of the area. Green Wedge Zone (GWZ) land around Chartwell is isolated between the yellow PAO5 of the Western Grasslands Reserve to the West, and the yellow PAO3 of the proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring Road (OMR) to the East, and the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB, the red dotted line) which follows it, while some properties are also partly in Urban Growth Zone to the East. Many properties are split between a variety of different zones and acquisition overlays.

FIGURE 12 CHARTWELL AREA ZONES AND OVERLAYS MAP

Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO) planning controls only cover a small section of the known flood mapping in this area. Council will need to advocate on behalf of residents for careful mitigation of stormwater and flooding impacts during the design of the OMR, and for flood mapping and planning controls to be suitably updated once the works are complete.

As discussed in Precinct 6, the proposed Western Grasslands Reserve is not in scope for this project, but the interface with Green Wedge land in the study area is significant in terms of land management, biodiversity, and fire safety.

Land speculation is also an issue for the precinct, given its proximity to the UGB. The Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority report on Green Wedges, *Square Pegs in Green Wedge*, noted that within Melbourne's Western Plains Green Wedges, this was likely to be the major reason for owning land within the area. This has significant implications for achieving sustainable land management regimes within the area, given that maintenance of the land could be seen as contrary to the aims of such speculation.

The proximity of the precinct to the UGB has resulted in a significant increase in heavy vehicles and cars using rural roads which previously were not frequently used. This impacts on the amenity of existing properties with dust and speeding vehicles that create dangerous conditions.

Council is regularly grading gravel roads and reviewing speed limits, and it is anticipated that the completion of the proposed Troups Road South and Boundary Road upgrade works will improve the situation. Council's engineers will be looking at further subsequent works as part of an unsealed roads and interface roads sealing strategy in future years.

Precinct Actions

Action No	Description
7A	Advocate to DTP for careful consideration and mitigation of stormwater and creek flooding impacts during the design of the OMR, and for planning controls to be suitably updated to reflect the altered landscape once the works are completed.
Actions from other chapters with specific relevance to this precinct:	
Infrastructure Action 2	After completion of the Council road works to upgrade Boundary Road and Troups Road South, Council engineers will plan further works by completion of an unsealed roads and interface roads sealing strategy in the following years.
Infrastructure Action 5	Advocate to the DTP on behalf of the Chartwell community to protect community interests in relation to the OMR final road alignment, amenity issues, and urban design issues affecting landowners.
Environment Action 8	Advocate to DTP, DEECA, and the State Government for an improved land acquisition process to complete the Western Grasslands Reserve, and for improved communication and engagement with landholders whose land is affected.
Environment Action 9	Through the Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee, continue to work with, CFA, FRV, DEECA and Parks Victoria to identify programs that provide education and support to improve public awareness and response to local bushfire risks.

10 — Implementation Plan

ACTIONS TABLE

There is a total of 43 actions for implementation in this plan.

General actions relevant to a chapter topic such as environment, landscape, or cultural heritage are all listed by their relevant topic below. Medium term actions are anticipated to take within one to three years, while long term actions are anticipated to occur over four or more years.

General Actions by Subject: (33 Actions)

Action No	Description	Responsibility	Timeframe	Precinct
Chapter 4 – Agriculture, Irrigation and Natural Resources				
A1	Work with Greater Western Water to investigate future opportunities for access to recycled water or treated stormwater for agriculture along the WIN pipeline route and throughout the study area.	City Environment And Sustainability, City Economy and Place, and Greater Western Water	Ongoing	All
A2	Consider a Council agri-business officer, or other additional tourism or economic development roles, to encourage and support activity in our rural areas.	City Economy and Place	Medium	All
A3	Advocate to DTP on key issues affecting the Green Wedge area including discretionary uses, land banking, and advocating against any amendments to the Urban Growth Boundary that would result in a loss of Green Wedge land.	City Strategy, City Growth and Developments	Ongoing	All
A4	Investigate whether an agricultural rates rebate scheme or similar incentives would be viable to encourage greater agricultural activity and improved land management.	City Strategy, City Economy and Place	Medium	All
Chapter 5 – Infrastructure and Land Use				
IN1	Continue to contribute to the Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP) in conjunction with key agencies to improve environmental outcomes affecting Green Wedge land.	City Infrastructure Planning, Greater Western Water, Southern Rural Water, Melbourne Water	Ongoing	All
IN2	Preparation of road sealing strategy by Council's Engineering Services team to plan for future sealing of rural roads and interface roads.	City Infrastructure Planning	Medium	All
IN3	Ensure that' developments should be sited to avoid unspoiled greenfield sites and reduce impacts on the existing rural landscape character and views of the Green Wedge. Advocate to DEECA and DTP for improved policy on Renewable Energy Generation facilities.	City Growth and Development, City Strategy, Department of Environment Land Water and Planning	Ongoing	All

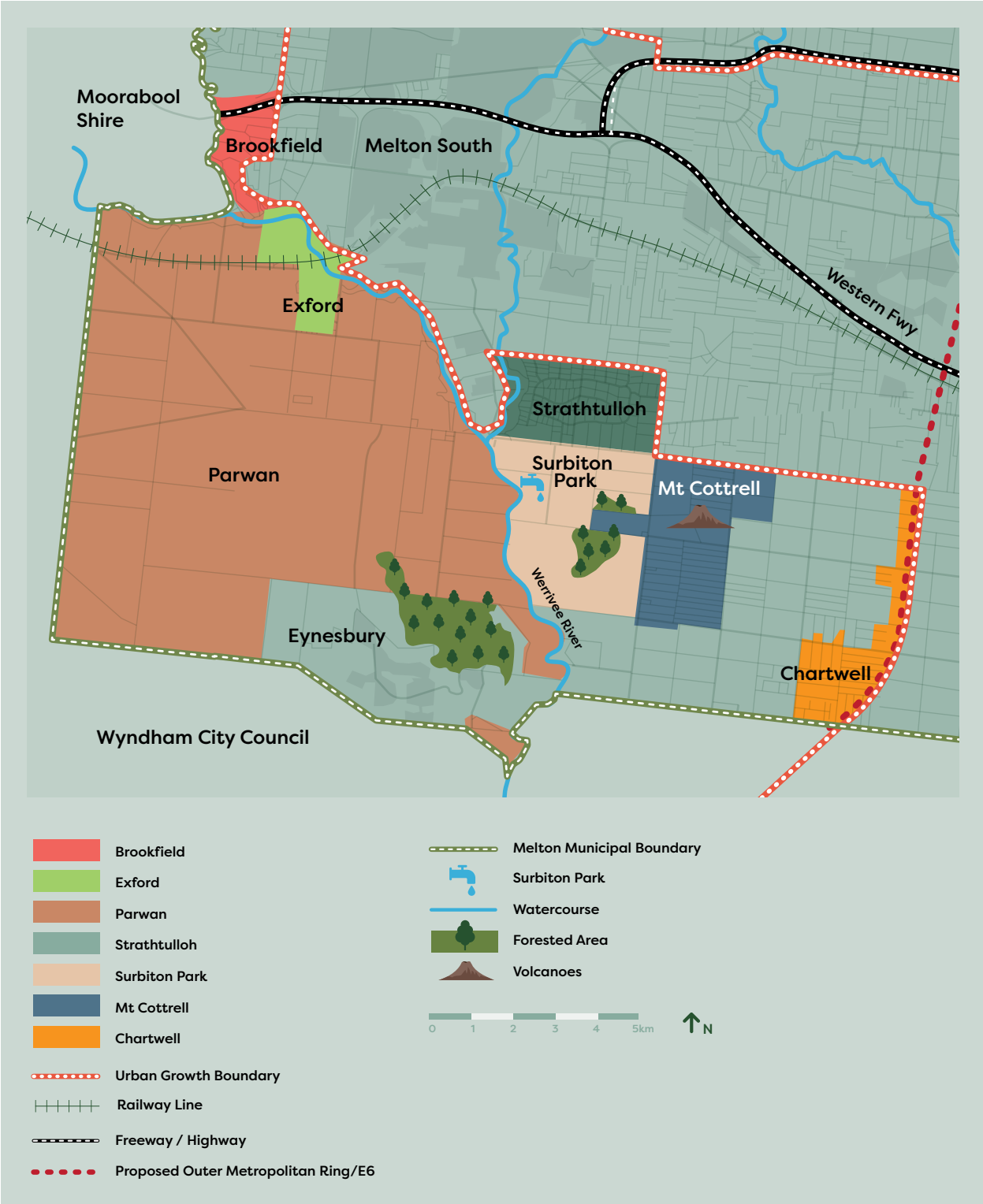
Action No	Description	Responsibility	Timeframe	Precinct
IN4	Ensure major developments are limited to sites with suitable utilities and infrastructure such as sealed road access, and demonstrate that impacts on existing uses, the landscape, and agriculture have been addressed including considering alternative options during the planning process.	City Growth and Development	Ongoing	All
IN5	Advocate to the DTP on behalf of the Chartwell community to protect community interests in relation to the OMR final road alignment, amenity issues, biodiversity impacts, and urban design issues affecting landowners.	City Infrastructure Planning, City Strategy, City Economy and Place	Ongoing	7
IN6	Discourage inappropriate freeway related and discretionary development in proximity to the proposed OMR, by observing the intended use and purpose of the Green Wedge and preventing any proliferation of inappropriate activity.	City Growth and Development	Ongoing	7
IN7	Address locations for places of worship and schools and other discretionary uses in the green wedge as part of a local discretionary use policy in the Melton Planning Scheme. This will address uses that have no direct connection to the area and may be better located closer to existing urban infrastructure.	City Growth and Development	Ongoing	All
IN8	Discourage discretionary uses such as accommodation, markets, places of assembly, restaurants, or other such uses where there is no direct connection to an ongoing primary use of the land that is, or will be, established before the discretionary use commences.	City Growth and Development	Ongoing	All
IN9	Ensure that the siting, layout, built form, and external materials/finishes of all development must respect and complement the existing character of the Green Wedge areas in accordance with Councils Rural Landscape Character Policy and Landscape Features Strategy/ Guidelines.	City Growth and Development	Ongoing	All
IN10	Encourage low impact sustainable development that supports appropriate agriculture, land management, tourism, recreation, or nature-based activities.	City Growth and Development	Ongoing	All
IN11	Advocate to State and Federal governments for additional road safety funding and upgrades that will take pressure off arterial roads in Melton's non-urban areas including Mount Cottrell Road and Exford/Greigs Road.	City Economy and Place, City Infrastructure Planning	Ongoing	4

Action No	Description	Responsibility	Timeframe	Precinct
IN12	Applications for new solar farms and other relevant development proposals are to provide a detailed assessment of whether and how the land between structures can still be used for agricultural activities such as grazing livestock, which may then benefit from the shade and shelter provided, or left open for notable local flora and fauna.	City Growth and Development	Ongoing	All
Chapter 6 – Environment				
E1	Create a biodiversity strategy and build internal capacity to monitor biodiversity across the study area.	City Environment And Sustainability	Medium	All
E2	Collaborate and advocate with State agencies, land managers, and local environment groups to identify and pursue opportunities for improvements in biodiversity, landowner education, and land management programs.	City Environment And Sustainability, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, Parks Victoria	Ongoing	All
E3	Continue to work with landowners to manage weeds and feral animals, including through Council's Environmental Enhancement Program, and highlight land management obligations under local and State laws.	City Environment And Sustainability	Ongoing	All
E4	Investigate an update to the ESO2 mapping to ensure accuracy and consistency with the operation of the overlay.	City Strategy	Medium	All
E5	Advocate to DEECA, DTP, CFA, FRV, and Parks Victoria for improved management of the Western Grasslands Reserve interface with the Green Wedge.	City Environment And Sustainability, Municipal Fire Officer, Country Fire Authority, Fire Rescue Victoria, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, Department of Transport and Planning, Parks Victoria	Ongoing	All

Action No	Description	Responsibility	Timeframe	Precinct
E6	Work with Southern Rural Water, Department of Transport and Planning, and EPA to restrict vehicle access to waterways and address illegal dumping.	City Infrastructure Planning, City Environment And Sustainability, Southern Rural Water, Department of Transport and Planning, Environmental Protection Agency	Ongoing	All
E7	Advocate for, or directly pursue through further strategic planning work, changes in the Melton Planning Scheme to improve planning controls relating to the management of fill generated by bulk earthworks.	City Strategy	Long	All
E8	Advocate to DTP, DEECA, and the State Government for an improved land acquisition process to complete the Western Grasslands Reserve, and for improved communication and engagement with landholders whose land is affected.	City Strategy, City Economy and Place, Department of Transport and Planning, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action	Ongoing	6, 7
E9	Engaging through the Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee, continue to work with, CFA, FRV, DEECA and Parks Victoria to identify programs that provide education and support to improve public awareness and response to local bushfire risks.	Municipal Fire Officer, Country Fire Authority, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action	Ongoing	All
E10	Support any opportunities that arise for work to understand and protect the recently identified Werribee Blue Box tree (*Eucalyptus Baueriana subspecies Thalassina*) and land management action to conserve it.	City Strategy and City Environment And Sustainability	Ongoing	All areas with these trees.
E11	Manage reserves to benefit from the direct wildlife and habitat corridor links available to flora and fauna between Eynesbury Forest, Melton Weir and Werribee River, Surbiton Park and Pinkerton Forest, Bush's Paddock, the Western Grasslands Reserve, and the Mount Cottrell reserves.	City Environment And Sustainability, Parks and Open Space Team	Ongoing	All
E12	Advocate to the State government for updated vegetation mapping for Melton and improved extension and enforcement of the Catchment and Land Protection Act (CALP Act) in the Green Wedge area.	City Environment And Sustainability	Ongoing	All

Action No	Description	Responsibility	Timeframe	Precinct
E13	Work with water authorities to protect and enhance waterways within the study area.	City Environment And Sustainability, Water Authorities	Ongoing	All
Chapter 7 – Landscape				
L1	Encourage landowners, developers, and State government to engage with Council planners early in the planning process for any large infrastructure projects proposed to impact the Green Wedge.	City Growth and Development, City Strategy, City Economy and Place, Department of Transport and Planning	Ongoing	All
L2	Work with Parks Victoria, DEECA, and other relevant government agencies to examine opportunities for park works and infrastructure for nature-based tourism in appropriate Green Wedge areas that support local and regional visitation.	City Environment And Sustainability, City Economy and Place, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, Parks Victoria	Ongoing	All
L3	Consider changes to the complex N=A/20 legacy subdivision controls in the Green Wedge and Farming Zone schedules to provide simpler controls for appropriately large sized lots.	City Strategy, City Growth and Development	Ongoing	All
Chapter 8 – Cultural Heritage				
CH1	Investigate opportunities with First Nations Peoples and State government to better recognise areas of cultural heritage and related activities within the Green Wedge.	City Strategy, Department of Transport and Planning, Parks Victoria	Ongoing	All
CH2	Work with First Nations Peoples, Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee and Councils Environment Enhancement Program for regular Cool Burn Grant funding within the study area.	Municipal Fire Officer, City Environment And Sustainability	Ongoing	All
CH3	Invite and involve a First Nations Peoples working party to help guide future planning, respect, conservation, and management of the Mount Cottrell reserves. Cooperatively scope respectful opportunities to provide for community access and understanding of the significance of Mount Cottrell.	Parks and Open Space Team, City Environment And Sustainability, City Economy and Place, City Strategy	Ongoing	6

PRECINCT SPECIFIC ACTIONS (11 PRECINCT ACTIONS)



COLOUR MATCHED MAP OF ALL NUMBERED PRECINCTS.

Under each precinct heading below, precinct-specific unique actions are laid out.

In the body text for each precinct earlier in this plan, underneath the heading *'Actions from other chapters with specific relevance to this area'*, any general actions from other chapters that are obviously important to that precinct are also listed. Note that this is just a shortlist of specifically relevant actions, all actions from the other chapters remain relevant even if not also listed there.

Medium Term actions are anticipated to take within one to three years, while Long Term actions are anticipated to likely occur over four or more years.

Precinct Actions: (10 Actions)

Action No	Description	Responsibility	Timeframe	Precinct
Precinct 1 - Brookfield				
1A	Review the DPO3 overlay to determine whether it should be amended or deleted.	City Strategy	Medium	1
Precinct 2 - Exford				
2A	Work with Southern Rural Water to improve grass clearing and management of land adjoining the Werribee River and Weir in Precinct 2, and to improve communication with adjoining landowners.	City Environment And Sustainability, Southern Rural Water	Ongoing	2
2B	Upon the completion of any revised Melton Weir Strategy, seek to implement any recommended actions to enhance its tourism and recreational potential.	Southern Rural Water, City Strategy, Parks and Open Space Team	Long	2
Precinct 3 - Parwan				
3A	Protect landscape values of the precinct such as the Eynesbury Forest and views of the Werribee River and Mt Cottrell from inappropriate development impacts.	City Growth and Development	Ongoing	3
Precinct 4 - Strathtulloh				
4A	Ensure any new stages of residential development adjacent Strathtulloh Estate provide suitable interface treatments. These must be consistent with approved PSP plans and provide for appropriate setbacks and siting of roads, infrastructure, landscaping, and reserves along the interface.	City Growth and Development	Ongoing	4

Action No	Description	Responsibility	Timeframe	Precinct
Precinct 5 - Surbiton Park				
5A	Investigate with Greater Western Water the potential for a viewing and bird watching platform at Surbiton Park / Melton Recycled Water Plant site and a link to the Werribee River.	City Economy and Place, Greater Western Water	Long	5
5B	Continue to advocate for funding to facilitate the construction of the Werribee River Shared Trail extension between Exford Road/Greigs Road and Molonys Reserve (Eynesbury). Explore options with the City of Wyndham as recommended by the Western Metropolitan Regional Trails Strategic Plan.	City Economy and Place	Long	5
5C	Explore opportunities with Greater Western Water that could potentially allow an acceptable level of community access to view the heritage ruins at Surbiton Park/Melton Recycled Water Plant site.	City Economy and Place, City Infrastructure Planning, Greater Western Water	Long	5
Precinct 6 - Mt Cottrell				
6A	Reinforce the hierarchy of the road network (with signage and design) to minimise through traffic on local roads within the precinct 6 Mt Cottrell area.	City Infrastructure Planning	Ongoing	6
Precinct 7 - Chartwell				
7A	Advocate for careful consideration and mitigation of stormwater and creek flooding impacts during the design of the OMR, and for planning controls to be suitably updated to reflect the altered landscape once the works are completed.	City Growth and Development, City Infrastructure Planning	Long	7

MONITORING AND REVIEW

This plan and implementation actions lay out a vision and actions for the area. Over time, the level of progress, the context, and situation in the area will change gradually. The primary party for monitoring and review of progress on actions taken is the Council departments identified with each action.

The primary party for reviewing the Plan itself and whether significant review and update work has become warranted is Council's Strategic Planning Team.

Over time, regular Planning Scheme Review processes should review the status of both of the City of Melton Green Wedge Plans, and consider if any significant changes have made a review of either Green Wedge Plan required, or likewise if other associated Green Wedge policy work is necessary.

Glossary of Abbreviations and Key Terms	
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CFA	Country Fire Authority
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment, and Climate Action
DTP	Department of Transport and Planning
Discretionary Use	A use which is listed in Section 2 of the relevant zone use table, and therefore requires Council planning permit approval (discretion) to be allowed.
DJSIR	Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
DoT	Department of Transport
DPO	Development Plan Overlay
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESO	Environmental Significance Overlay
FRV	Fire Rescue Victoria
GWAL	Green Wedges and Agricultural Land (Review / Project)
GWAZ	Green Wedge 'A' Zone
GWMP	Green Wedge Management Plan
GWW	Greater Western Water
GWZ	Green Wedge Zone
HO	Heritage Overlay
IWMP	Integrated Water Management Plan
LUFP	Land Use Framework Plan
MUZ	Mixed Use Zone
OMR	Outer Metropolitan Ring (Road / Freeway)
PAO	Public Acquisition Overlay
PSP	Precinct Structure Plan
RAP	Registered Aboriginal Party
RCZ	Rural Conservation Zone
SERAs	Strategic Extractive Resource Areas
SLO	Significant Landscape Overlay
SRW	Southern Rural Water
SRO	State Resource Overlay

Glossary of Abbreviations and Key Terms	
Study area	The area studied by this plan, which is the area of the Western Plains South Green Wedge within the City of Melton boundaries.
SUZ	Special Use Zone
UGB	Urban Growth Boundary
VAHC	Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council
WAGA	Western Alliance (for) Greenhouse Action
WGR	Western Grasslands Reserve
WIN	Western Irrigation Network
WPSGW	Western Plains South Green Wedge
WPSGWMP	Western Plains South Green Wedge Management Plan
WPNGWMP	Western Plains North Green Wedge Management Plan

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