

# Whittlesea Township **Plan 2021**



## **Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners**

The City of Whittlesea recognises the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country and acknowledges the Wurundjeri Willum Clan as the Traditional Owners of this place.

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners .....	2
Overview .....	4
Vision and Strategic Framework Plan .....	6
Policy Context .....	8
About Whittlesea .....	12
Whittlesea Township Fast Facts .....	15
Engagement .....	16
Whittlesea Township Plan 2021 .....	20
Implementation and evaluation .....	44
References .....	49
Appendices .....	50



# Overview

The *Whittlesea Township Plan 2021* (the Plan) is a strategic document that establishes a long term vision for the Whittlesea Township. It seeks to protect the significant attributes of the township that contribute to its distinctive semi-rural character whilst building upon its opportunities. The Plan will be used to guide and manage future planning and decision making over the next 15-20 years. Whilst the Plan provides a long-term vision for the Whittlesea Township, it is anticipated that the Action Plan will be reviewed every 5-10 years to ensure that the actions continue to respond to identified issues and changing needs of the community.

The Plan is a 'place-based' strategy that sets out our key priorities, actions and an advocacy strategy that will help make it a comprehensive strategy that provides solutions to meet the specific needs of the community. It has evolved from consultation and dialogue with the local community, and clearly articulates the community's aspirations for the Whittlesea Township as well as identifying areas for change and/or improvement.

Managing growth is a key issue for the Whittlesea Township community. Located on the urban fringe of Melbourne, the Whittlesea Township has a unique rural character and sense of place.

The Plan examines how the potential growth in population might be accommodated in a way that continues to protect the rural character, which is highly valued by the local community.

The Plan focusses on those issues that matter most to the local community and that impact sense of place, sense of community, character, amenity, role and function of the Township.

The Plan presents a vision for the future of the Township, and details how this vision might be achieved. The Action Plan details the key priorities and anticipated timing of implementation to ensure that the vision of the Strategy is realised.





## Key Findings

The following section highlights the key findings of the Plan which has been informed by and responds to community feedback about Whittlesea Township.

- Retention of the rural character of the Whittlesea Township is highly valued by the community.
- Significant topographical and landscape features including the Whittlesea Hills and Plenty Valley floodplain together with environmental risks including bushfire and flooding have assisted in defining the current Township boundary and will continue to constrain the future expansion of the Township.
- Need to establish a clear Township boundary to maintain the character of the Township and provide for the long term protection of identified environmental/landscape values and agricultural land within the Whittlesea Green Wedge.
- Ongoing review of community service provision to meet the current and changing needs of the community is required. Whittlesea Township is generally well serviced in respect to provision of community services and associated infrastructure, however some gaps have been identified as well as the need to better utilise existing community infrastructure.
- Increased opportunities for, and improvements to, transport infrastructure to support sustainable and active travel options will be investigated to ensure the community remains connected to jobs, services and networking opportunities.
- Review of planning controls is needed to ensure that development in the Township provides a range of housing options to meet the current and future needs of the community, whilst ensuring that it enhances and respects the existing and preferred character of the area.
- As a major service centre for the surrounding rural area, initiatives which support growing existing businesses and creating local jobs and services are a priority to ensure that Whittlesea Township remains vibrant and continues to support local employment.
- Opportunities exist for public realm improvements to build on the sense of place, particularly within the town centre.



# Vision and Strategic Framework Plan

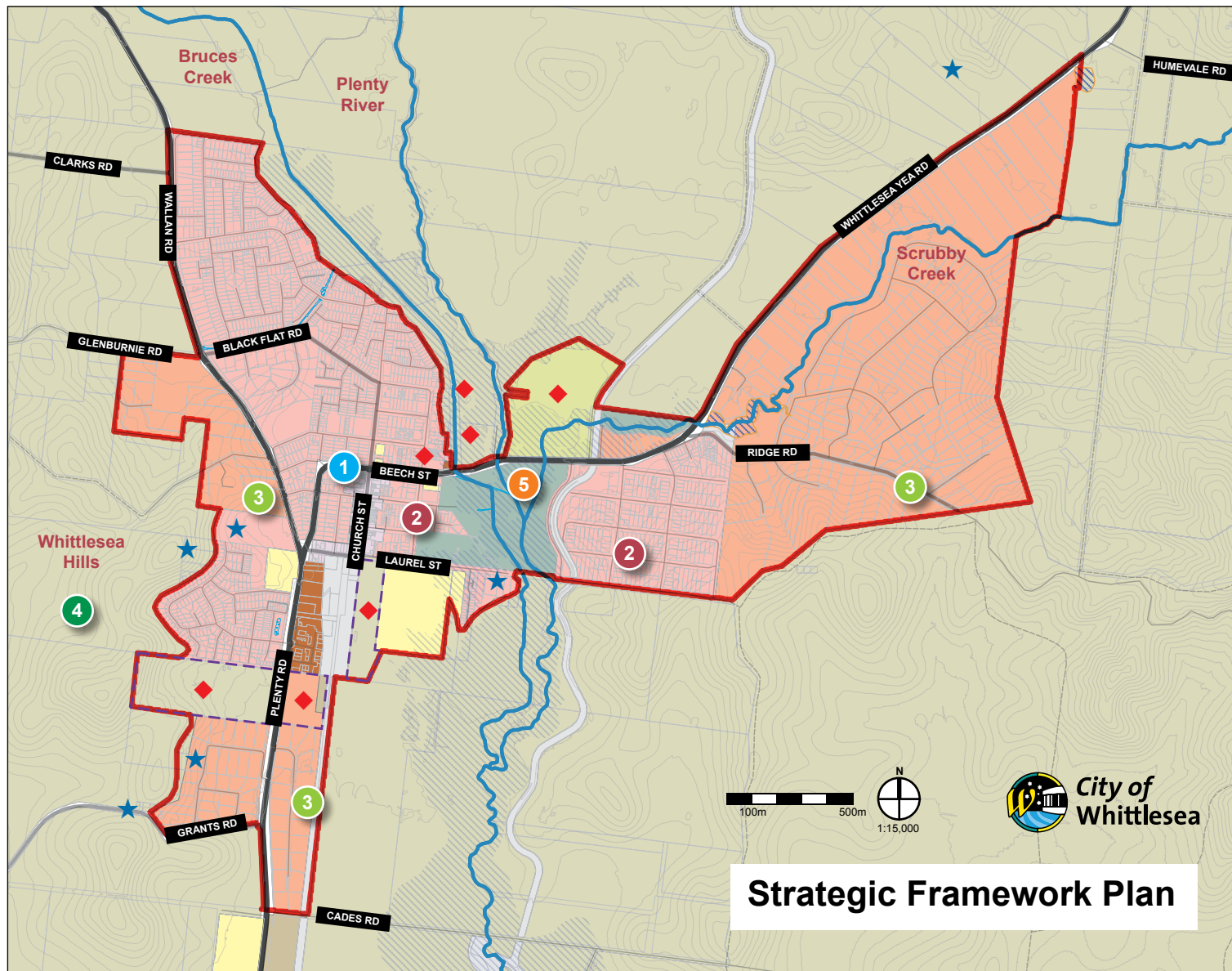
The Vision has been developed having regard to the community's aspirations for the Township as they apply to each of the six key focus areas developed as part of the Plan.

Looking forward, Whittlesea Township will:

- retain its unique rural country feel, continue to serve the day to day needs of the local community with a strong community focus for the surrounding rural areas.
- have a thriving, inclusive, connected and safe community and provide for the community to age-well across all life stages, with well utilised services and facilities, including opportunities for recreation, to meet the current and changing needs of the community.
- be a contained town where residential growth is appropriately managed, and which has a diversity of housing options to meet the needs of different household types and which respects the character of the local area.
- be a well connected and accessible community with sustainable and active travel options.
- have a strong and vibrant local economy and local employment opportunities.
- continue to have a strong connection to the surrounding natural environment.



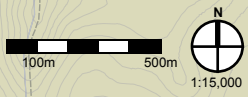




### LEGEND

- Existing urban land uses
- Low density residential
- Township Residential
- Town Centre/Township Diversity
- Community use
- Open space
- Showgrounds
- Infrastructure
- Industrial
- Green wedge land
- Schools, community uses
- 1-in-100-year floodplain
- Waterways
- Masterplan opportunities

- 1 Town Centre**
  - Enhance public realm
  - Strengthen link between Laurel and Church Street
  - Encourage shop-top office
  - Develop and implement built-form controls to protect local character in Church Street precinct
- 2 Township residential**
  - Implement Council's Housing Diversity Strategy to encourage a range of housing forms and ensure new housing enhances local character
- 3 Low Density Residential**
  - Maintain 0.4 hectare minimum lot size
- 4 Green Wedge**
  - Protect the rural character including agricultural land
  - Limit development in areas with high environmental and landscape values including significant ridgelines
- 5 Lions Club Park**
  - Masterplan opportunity in collaboration with Whittlesea Showgrounds & Recreation Reserves CoM
- ★ Sites/areas identified as anomalies in the planning scheme requiring further investigation and/or correction. (Refer Appendix 1)
- ◆ These sites require further investigation to address specific land use outcomes. (Refer Appendix 2)



## Strategic Framework Plan



# Policy Context

The *Whittlesea Township Local Structure Plan (1994)* is the key strategic document guiding development within the Township. Development within the Whittlesea Township has largely been occurring in line with the current Local Structure Plan and associated Outline Development Plans which are incorporated documents within the Whittlesea Planning Scheme. The Local Structure Plan is now outdated and much of the land identified for future residential housing has been largely developed. It is within this context that the *Whittlesea Township Plan 2021* (the Plan) has been developed in order to set the direction for the future development of the Township over the next twenty years.

The *Whittlesea Green Wedge Management Plan (2011)* also includes an action for Council to undertake a review of the *Local Structure Plan* with an emphasis on defining the township boundary and interface issues between urban and rural areas.

The Plan has been prepared within the context established by State Planning Policy including *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*, Melbourne's Growth Corridor Plans, the Whittlesea Planning Scheme and *Whittlesea 2040: A place for all*. A summary of the overarching directions set by current state and local planning policy is included below. More detailed commentary on those policies that specifically relate to this Plan is included in **Appendix 3**.

The Plan also has regard to other major plans and strategies which have been developed for the City of Whittlesea.

## State Planning Policy Context

*Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* is the primary metropolitan planning strategy developed by the Victoria Government, which sets out the long-term vision for the city. It sets the strategy for supporting jobs, housing and transport, while building on Melbourne's legacy of distinctiveness, liveability and sustainability. Planning at a local level needs to ensure consistency with and give effect to State Planning Policy.

*Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* notes that growth is to be focused in the established suburbs and those areas within the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). Growth in peri-urban areas is only expected to occur in specific towns as noted within *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*. Whittlesea is not identified as an area where significant growth is expected to occur.

It is also noted that there is a significant focus on protecting natural environments and landscapes, as well as a need to protect high quality agricultural land in and around Melbourne for food production.

Significant areas in the south and west of the municipality are identified for future urban growth, and planning policy recognises the importance of retaining key landscape and environmental features in Green Wedge areas.

## Local Planning Policy Context

Local planning policy focusses on maintaining the existing boundaries and the non-urban breaks which contribute to the character of the area and protecting rural, environmental and significant landscape values. It recognises the importance of Green Wedge areas with large parts of the municipality valuable for their agricultural productivity and well as containing significant natural features and areas of cultural significance which contribute to the character and identity of the municipality. Parts of the municipality are also susceptible to environmental hazards such as bushfire and flooding, and planning needs to ensure these risks are considered as part of decision making.

Planning needs to ensure that greater housing choice is provided to enable residents to 'age in place' close to established networks, family and support services. Planning policy seeks to ensure the distinct rural character of the Township remains through encouraging standard residential density within much of the Township, with more diverse forms of housing in the town centre.

Any changes to the Planning Scheme resulting from this Plan, will be considered through a separate Planning Scheme Amendment process, subject to Council approval, including a formal public exhibition process.

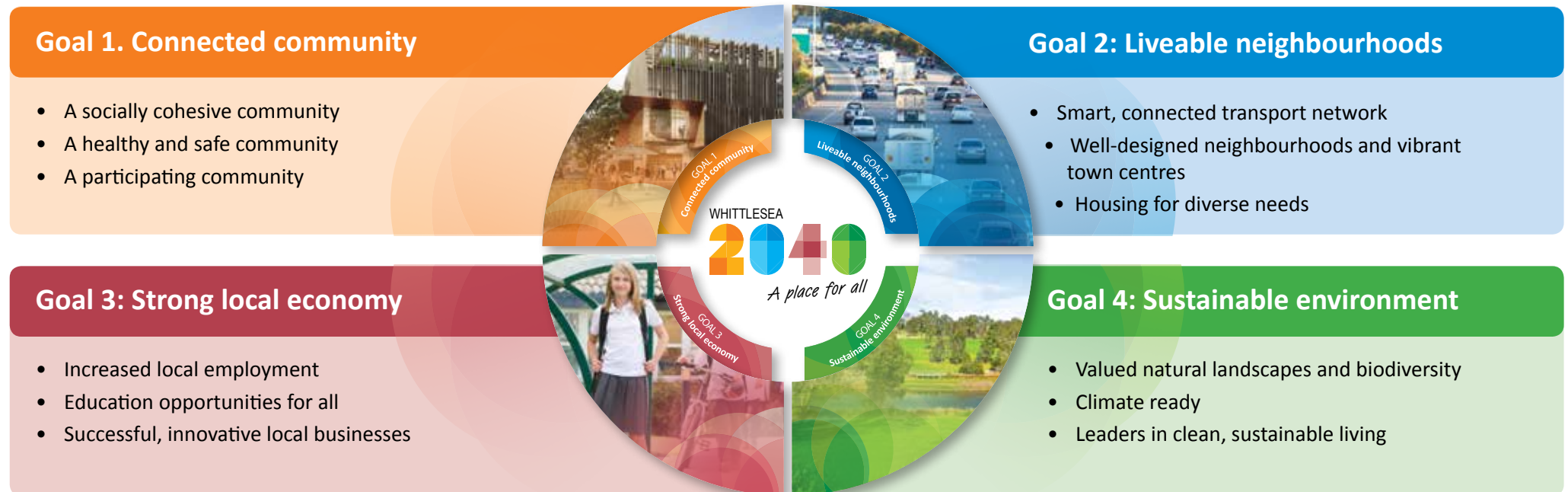
## City of Whittlesea Policy

### **Whittlesea 2040: A place for all**

The Plan has been developed to align with all four of the overarching goals of *Whittlesea 2040: A Place for All* (Refer Diagram 1). *Whittlesea 2040: A place for all* provides the long-term strategic vision for the municipality, which was developed through the shared aspirations of the community and Council, and responds to the challenges and opportunities

the municipality will face ensuring that the City of Whittlesea is a great place for all, now and into the future. *Whittlesea 2040: A place for all* is expected to guide all future Council work as we develop strategies for our key centres. It will enable us to develop a more consistent approach with the development of all of our strategies giving equal and fair consideration to the same key elements that contribute to a liveable community, but which reflect local community views and aspirations.

The *Whittlesea Township Plan 2021* seeks to deliver on the *Whittlesea 2040: A place for all* outcomes at a local level by directly responding to those issues raised by the community and producing a plan that provides solutions to meet the specific needs of the community and support the Township’s unique character through a collaborative whole of Council approach to the implementation and delivery of the Plan. The Plan will be achieved through a framework of strategic objectives and actions across the four priority goals of *Whittlesea 2040: A place for all*.



**Diagram 1 – Whittlesea 2040: A place for all – Priority Goals and Key Directions**

## Related strategies

There are a number of current plans and strategies, which have specific related actions for the Whittlesea Township that are currently being implemented or which are proposed to be implemented. This Plan has been informed by, and responds to, these strategic documents. Where these documents contain specific recommendation(s) that have direct implications for this Plan, they have been included as a priority action:

- Community Building Strategy – better together
- Health and Wellbeing Partnership Plan 2017-2021
- Community Safety and Crime Prevention Strategy 2016-2020
- A Positive Ageing Strategy for the Whittlesea Community 2016-2025
- Disability Action Plan 2017-2021
- Active Whittlesea 2019
- Integrated Transport Strategy 2014
- Northern Regional Trails Strategy 2016
- City of Whittlesea Bicycle Plan 2016-2020
- City of Whittlesea Open Space Strategy (2016)
- Housing Diversity Strategy 2013-2033
- Social and Affordable Housing – Policy and Strategy 2012-2016
- Economic Development Strategy – Growing our Economy Together
- Tourism Strategy 2014-2019
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2012-2022
- Climate Ready Whittlesea
- Stormwater Management Plan 2012-2017
- Biodiversity Strategy 2019-2029
- Green Wedge Management Plan 2011-2021
- Cultural Heritage Strategy 2019-2025







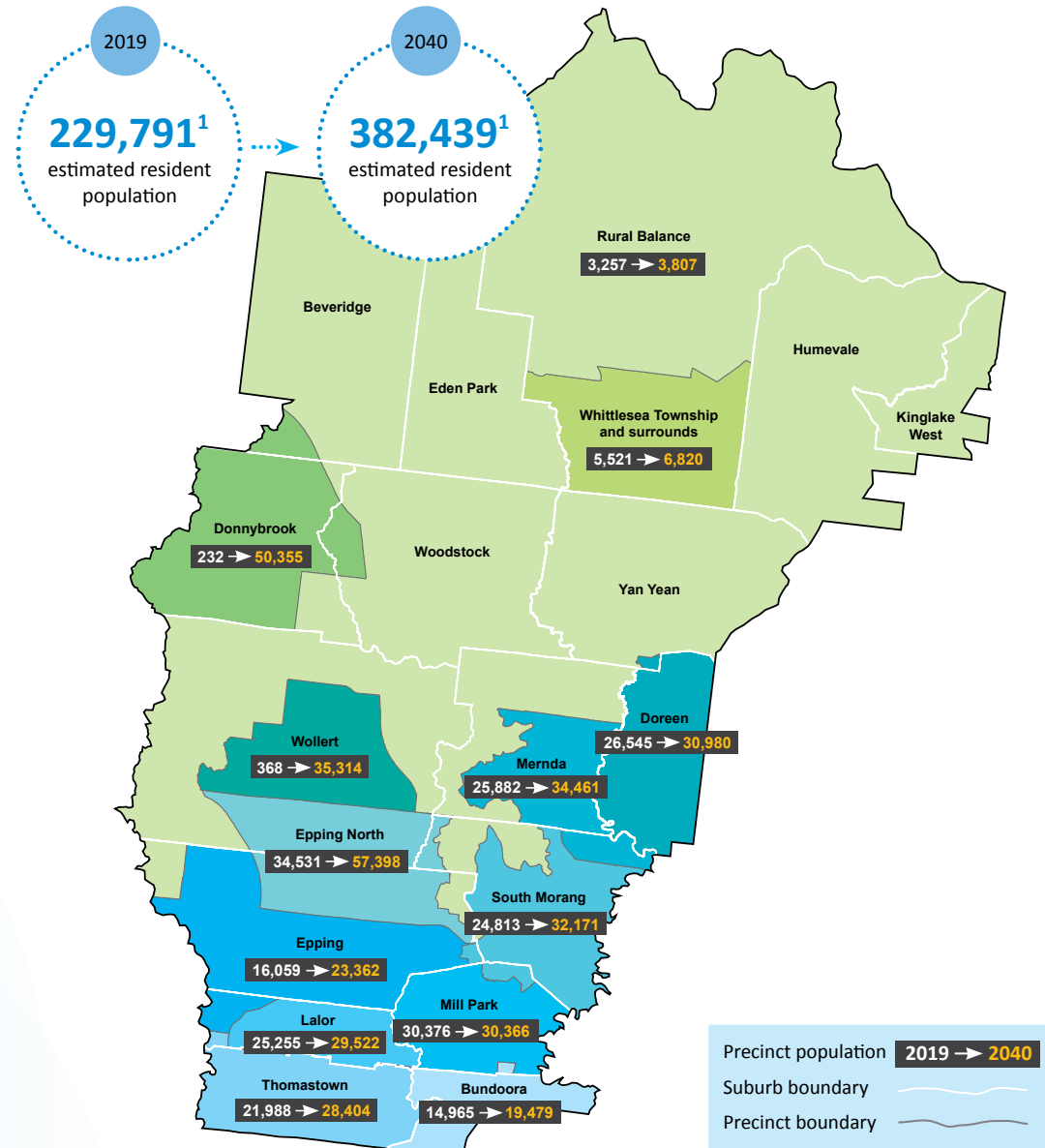
# About Whittlesea

The City of Whittlesea is located on Melbourne’s metropolitan fringe, approximately 20 kilometres north of the central business district. Covering 490 square kilometres, it is a large municipality with established urban, growth and rural areas.

## Location and Geography

The Whittlesea Township is located within the peri-urban area of Melbourne approximately 40 kilometres from the CBD and 10 kilometres north of the existing suburban area. Whittlesea Township and surrounds has a land area of 1,994 ha (20 Km<sup>2</sup>)<sup>1</sup>. It is a unique area being a rural style Township in proximity to outer suburban Melbourne.

Located at the edge of the Great Dividing Range adjacent to the Yan Yean Reservoir, Whittlesea Township is nestled between Whittlesea Hills to the west and Eastern Hills to the east with the Plenty River traversing through the centre. In addition, views from the Township to the Plenty Ranges form a strong landscape backdrop. Planning for the Township to date has largely sought to protect these significant topographical features which contribute to the local landscape amenity and have assisted in defining the current Township boundary. Maintaining a separation between the Whittlesea Township and proposed urban development to the south and west has been a key attribute of land use planning for the Plenty Valley precinct within the North Growth Corridor Plan.



## Rural centre

First surveyed in 1838, post-European contact development of the Whittlesea area was driven by grazing and agriculture. Whittlesea Township is now surrounded by the rural areas of Eden Park, Yan Yean, Humevale and Kinglake West, and acts as the major service centre for people in these areas and beyond, providing opportunities for social connections through meeting places and access to a range of community services and facilities in addition to meeting day to day shopping needs. Its locational context has had a major impact on its growth. Its proximity to metropolitan Melbourne and its rural surrounds has allowed the Township to develop its own unique character.

The Township has a strong rural setting, surrounded by significant ridgelines which offer panoramic views of the nearby hills and distant mountains from core areas of the Township. For the most part there are clear edges to the town and the delineation between urban and rural land. These landscape and topographic features have been identified as significantly contributing to the character of the Township by the local community.

The Church Street precinct serves as the main retail and commercial area extending from Beech Street in the north to Laurel Street to the south. It is anchored by the historic 1864 Whittlesea Courthouse in the north and the 1926 Soldier Monument in the south. Its compact form and mix of retailers supports its role as service centre to meet the daily and weekly shopping needs of its local residents and surrounding region. The Plenty Road industrial precinct is located towards the southern entrance of the Township supporting a mix of commercial and industrial activities.

Some of the early heritage buildings constructed from 1860 onwards still remain including various public and commercial buildings, and residences and ruins from the earliest pastoral settlements through to the inter-war period.

Whittlesea Township is located within the traditional land of the people from the Woi wurrung language group (EHP, 2012). The Woi wurrung were made up of several clans, one of which was the Wurundjeri Willam Clan, the traditional custodians of Whittlesea. Areas along the waterways are identified as being areas of cultural heritage sensitivity, acknowledging the local waterways as being important locations for food and other indigenous activities.

## Population

The population of the Whittlesea Township is estimated to be 5,521 as of 2019<sup>2</sup>. The Whittlesea Township performs an important retail, service and tourism role for the local and surrounding areas.

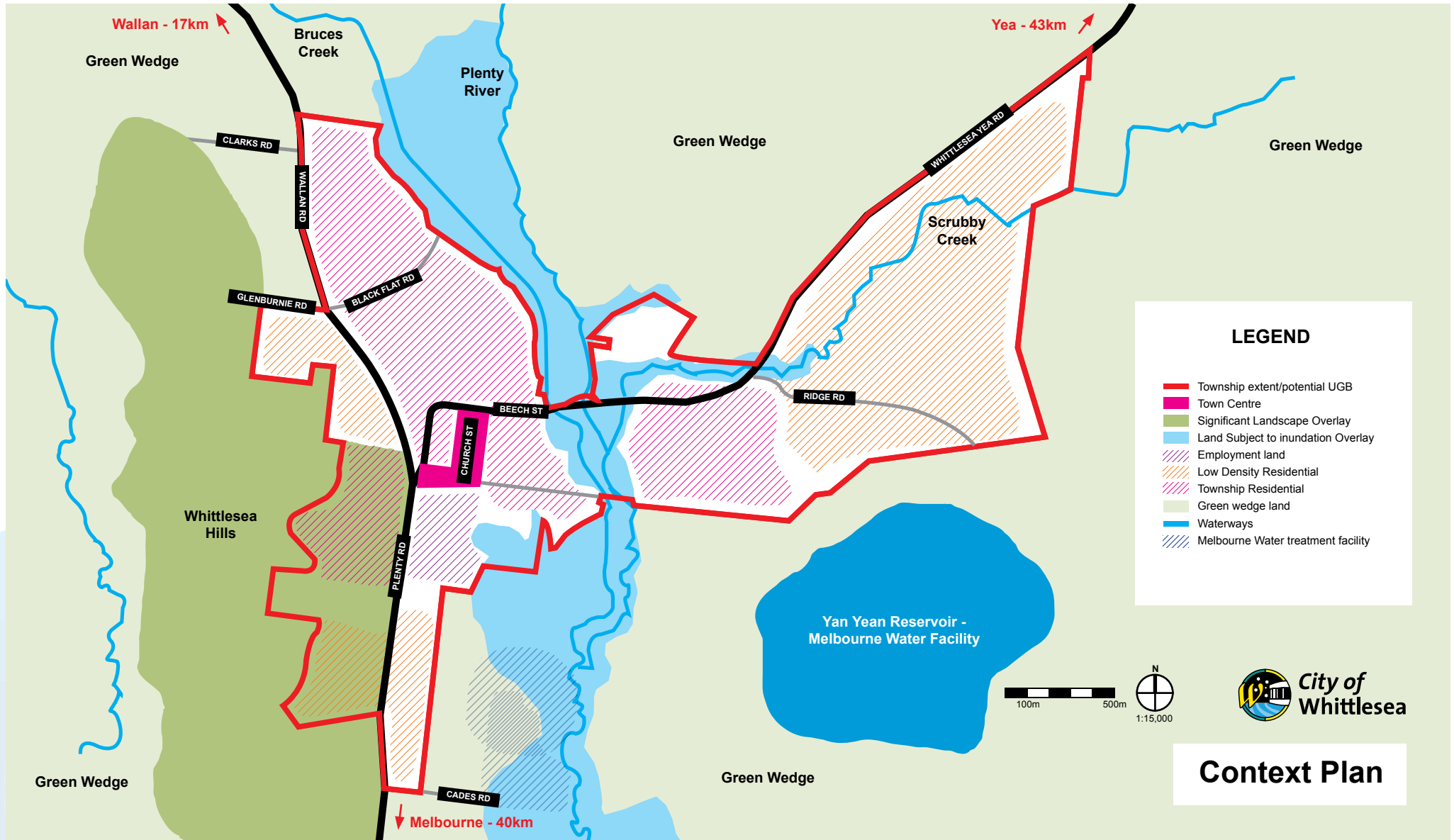
## Recreation, community facilities and tourism

There are a number of tourism features in and around Whittlesea Township including various events e.g. Whittlesea Agricultural Show and Whittlesea Market; significant parks including the Yan Yean Reservoir; formalised adventure parks such as Funfields; and nearby golf courses. More recently there has been an increase in cycling tourism in the area. Agriculture is also an important part of land management in and around Whittlesea Township and also plays an important part of the overall economic profile of the municipality.

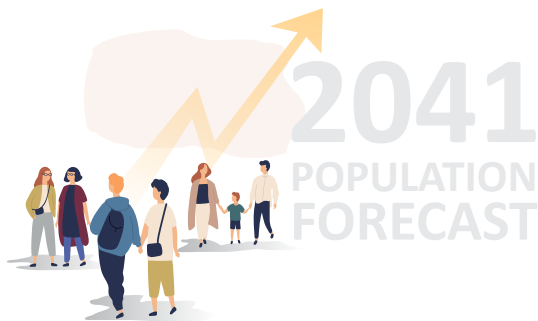
Community facilities are important for the social cohesion of an area. Whittlesea Township is reasonably well serviced from a community facility, recreation and open space perspective.



# Whittlesea Township Context Plan



- By 2041 the population in Whittlesea Township is forecast to reach **6,882** (an increase of 1,360 or 24.67% from 2019) (compared to 69.0% increase in population between 2019 (229,791) and 2041 (388,417) for the City of Whittlesea (Forecast.id).



- By 2041 the **service age group** expected to experience the greatest change includes those aged 70 and over (Forecast.id).



- In 2041, the **three largest age groups** are expected to be those aged 15-19, 10-14 and 5-9.



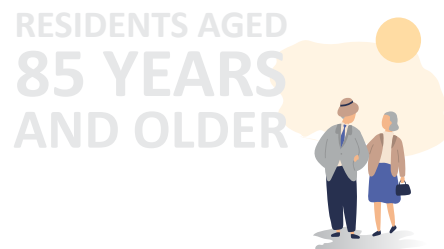
- The **total number of dwellings** in Whittlesea Township in 2019 is 2,116. It is forecast that total number of dwellings in this precinct will increase by 655 dwellings by 2041 (approximately 30 dwellings per annum) (Forecast.id).



- In 2019, Whittlesea Township has the largest proportion of **lone person households** compared to all other precincts within the municipality. The proportion of lone person households in Whittlesea Township is also significantly higher than the municipal average (25.8% compared to 16.1% for City of Whittlesea) (Forecast.id).



- Whittlesea Township has a higher proportion of **residents aged 85 years and older** compared to the City of Whittlesea average (2.9% and 1.2% respectively) (Profile.id).



- Analysis of the **method of travel to work** of the residents in Whittlesea Township and Surrounds in 2016, compared to City of Whittlesea, shows that 3.7% used public transport, while 77.6% used a private vehicle, compared with 10.8% and 74.5% respectively in City of Whittlesea. (Profile.id).



# Engagement

Extensive community consultation undertaken as part of Whittlesea 2040 is a vital part of our approach to informing new Strategies and plans. Its engagement phase reached more than 4,000 individuals, community groups and organisations. Feedback from the engagement process identifies the broader community vision, aspirations and priorities for the future for the City of Whittlesea.

It is clear that there is a strong connection between the issues/challenges identified for the municipality more broadly and the key priorities identified by the Whittlesea Township community. As such, it is important to recognise that whilst many of these issues/challenges affect the whole of the municipality and will need to be addressed at a municipal level, they also need to be considered at a local precinct level. Specific feedback received from the Whittlesea Township community as part of the *Whittlesea 2040* consultation has been considered in developing this Plan. Significant work has been/or is proposed to be undertaken to respond to many of these municipal wide issues.

The City of Whittlesea previously consulted with people in the Whittlesea Township to better understand what is currently working within the Township and what improvements could be made. We also heard what your aspirations are for the Township's future. Over 640 responses were received through this consultation process.

It is significant that the responses provided as part of the *Whittlesea 2040* engagement, are generally reflective of the more targeted community engagement previously undertaken for the Whittlesea Township.

The Plan has also been informed by the feedback received as part of the bi-annual Household Survey which was most recently undertaken in early 2019.

In response to the exhibition of the draft Whittlesea Township Strategy, a total of forty-seven written submissions were received. Changes to the Plan have been incorporated as appropriate, following the review of submissions.

A range of matters were raised through the community consultation, with a number of responses dealing with competing interests e.g. support for further residential growth or protection of the Green Wedge/rural values and retention of the country character of the Township; reduction vs increase of specific types of businesses.

It is therefore important to recognise that the *Whittlesea Township Plan 2021* will not be able to address or facilitate all of the matters raised throughout the consultation.

In addition, this Plan also recognises the need to advocate to the State Government and/or relevant public agencies to give effect to key outcomes identified through the consultation.

The result is this Plan which has been informed by the consultation feedback and seeks to respond to these matters in a meaningful manner. The following section highlights key issues raised through the community engagement process (including quotes from the community) as they align with the goals and key directions of *Whittlesea 2040: A place for all*.





## Goal 1. Connected community

Maintaining a strong sense of community is an important issue.

Safety (real and perceived) is a significant issue for the community.

The provision of services and facilities, including recreation opportunities, appropriate for all ages and abilities is seen as important by the community.

'I love how the municipality embraces urban and rural living and communities'.

'is a safe and secure environment for all who live here'.

'provides facilities for all ages to enjoy'

'has the same community feel, where crime is at a minimum, people feel safe, take pride in their town.'

'has a strong sense of community, welcomes diversity and retains its 'village character''

'I like our neighbourhood because of all the supportive people'



## Goal 2. Liveable neighbourhoods - Smart, connected transport

The community is significantly car-dependent and improvements to the road network in addition to improvements to public transport options are highly desired by the community.

Improvements to the pedestrian/cycling network is also important to encourage greater active travel in the local area.

'stop patching roads and fix them properly. Patches break quickly'

'roads need upgrading'

'walking and cycling tracks around the township'

'more buses at more frequent rates. Better connected walking track'

'walking/cycling paths are poorly connected'



## Goal 2. Liveable neighbourhoods - Well designed neighbourhoods

The community has indicated a strong desire to retain the rural character of the Township. The surrounding hills, landscaping and trees contribute to the character of the area.

Design that respects the existing character needs to be considered as part of any new development.

'Hope we don't lose the rural feel'

'The reason we moved to Whittlesea was because of its quaint style. More housing would ruin this'

'Opposed to medium and high density housing. Important to keep our country feel'.

'I love the way Whittlesea is still a country town'.

'I love our natural environment and everything it offers'

'Housing should respect rural character'

'The landscape, space, wildlife and mountains, small population of Whittlesea'

I don't have any issues with the boundary being extended. There is plenty of space to extend.'

'Maintain residential boundary as they are. No expansion'

## Goal 2. Liveable neighbourhoods - Housing for diverse needs

Community responses diverged in relation to the need for and ways to manage further residential growth of the Township.

Some community members indicated a need for more diverse housing options to better meet the needs of the community.

'Aged care homes; Retirement village';  
'...more share accommodation for the disabled in this town'.

'I am not sure where the exiting boundary is, however I think more people living in the township means more support for the local businesses.'

'Do not agree with increasing housing density - will destroy character'

### Goal 3. Strong local economy

Increased opportunities for overnight accommodation options, specialty shops, more diverse dining options, tourism related opportunities and larger retailers are desirable by the community.

There is support for a defined boundary around the Township to protect Green Wedge values including farming/agricultural activities.

Increased local employment opportunities is seen as important by some community members.

'I love what I do. Owning and running a farm'

'More local jobs – especially for younger people'

'We need accommodation – nowhere for families to stay if attending any functions in Whittlesea'

'Land should be kept for agricultural uses'



'Waterways in general in the Township are not kept clean'

'Flooding anywhere is important.'

'Maintain our natural rivers and creeks whilst improving flow and appearance of the area, that can be maintained by Melbourne Water and the Council on a regular basis'



### Goal 4. Sustainable environment

Environmental risks in the form of flooding and bushfire were identified as key issues by some community members.

Controlling weeds and the ongoing management of waterways including removal of weeds has been identified as an issue by some residents.

Some residents identified the need for the planting of additional trees or replacing existing trees with alternative species within the Township.

'Should be bushfire- proof - wetland for flood mitigation'

'More trees on entrances to the town'



# Whittlesea Township Plan 2021

The *Whittlesea Township SPlan 2021* (the Plan) establishes a shared community vision and establishes a framework for the community, Council and other partner organisations to work in a more collaborative manner to ensure a more integrated approach to planning, implementation and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. This Plan brings together key actions which we are already implementing through existing strategies and initiatives across Council where these respond to an identified need by the community and the desired outcomes being sought.

Additional actions have been identified where appropriate to address identified gaps or issues.

The Plan embodies the goals and key directions within *Whittlesea 2040: A place for all*, which provides the framework for a liveable community. It presents a vision for the future of the Township and details for how this vision might be achieved through six focus areas as follows:

Each focus area details the desired vision to be achieved, provides a discussion of the key issues and relevant policy considerations and highlights what the community told us. It also provides an outline of Council's future direction and the priority actions we will undertake in response to the context and evidence presented.

1. Connected community

2. Liveable Neighbourhoods - Smart, connected transport

3. Liveable neighbourhoods - Well designed neighbourhoods and vibrant town centres

4. Liveable neighbourhoods - Housing for diverse needs

5. Strong local economy

6. Sustainable environment





## 1. Connected Community

### Vision – Desired Outcomes

The creation of a welcoming, safe, inclusive Township where people are inspired to work together to make their community better. Whittlesea is a thriving rural township that offers an alternative lifestyle to the established urban areas.



There is opportunity for active community participation and for residents to engage in community life and celebrate diversity. There are a broad range of community services and facilities within the Township ensuring good access to health and support services and which support community members to age well across the life-stages. Physically, opportunities for walking, social interaction and recreation are encouraged by the more intimate nature of the township; its compact town centre and accessibility to parks, walking trails and open spaces. The public realm is designed and managed, with provision of appropriate facilities to ensure access for all.

### Key Issues - Discussion

As we plan, it is important to understand the local community and its changing social make up. The age, fabric and what people will need the place to be for them over time will be informed by having a better understanding of the community and how it will change over time.

Below, is a snapshot of the key issues that are influencing the community:

#### *Changing demographics*

The Township contains the third largest proportion of primary aged residents in the municipality and a relatively large proportion of 12-17 year old residents compared to other areas, reflecting the community desire to improve services and facilities used by young people within the community<sup>1</sup>.

Those aged between 5-19 years will continue to remain the most populous group to 2031<sup>2</sup>.

Like many established areas of Melbourne, the overall population in the Township is ageing, with the largest forecast growth expected to occur amongst those aged 70-84 years. Between 2016 and 2031 the age structure forecasts for Whittlesea Township and surrounds indicate a 46.6 per cent increase in population of retirement age<sup>2</sup>. This sector of the population will have increasing healthcare and social support needs to age in place.

#### *Community Infrastructure*

Community infrastructure is vital to life in a rural township. It provides opportunities to come together, to engage with friends or to form new connections and reduce social isolation, to be active and provide passive recreation opportunities. Social participation is also important to health and well-being. The *Health and Wellbeing Partnership Plan 2017-2021* acknowledges that there is an established link between social connection and inclusion and positive mental health and wellbeing.

As part of the community feedback received, places for teenagers, swimming pools, playgrounds and health facilities were identified as the main leisure and community facilities requiring improvement.

Whittlesea Township has a good range of community infrastructure but the feedback received, asking for new or improved facilities perhaps highlights changing social needs along with a need to think differently about how we use or program existing community spaces. There is an opportunity to explore the better use of existing community spaces to meet the identified community facility gaps such as shortage of playgroup and meeting spaces e.g. adjusting programming at existing community facilities.

Community Infrastructure Needs assessment for the township have identified the need for a health hub in the Township area that allows for flexible spaces for specialist services and which could also provide for the expansion of disability services in the Township. There is also an identified need for emergency food relief services. Council have been working closely with Whittlesea Foodshare (Whittlesea Ministries) in respect to food relief services. Whittlesea Neighbourhood House has also indicated their interest in providing some form of food relief.

Council should continue to work with existing service providers in the Township, to identify opportunities to facilitate ancillary services to meet the needs of the community within the Whittlesea Township.

Whittlesea Township has a wide variety of recreation services and facilities and is well-provided for, particularly by non-Council facilities. A number of these facilities are accessible for community use (e.g. for meeting spaces). Whilst the opportunity to increase the size of facilities and provision of services

dedicated to young people should be investigated within the Township, it is expected that existing youth services, sport and recreation spaces as well as events planned at the Mernda Town Centre and Mernda Sports Hub will continue to meet the needs for sport, recreation, children and young people.

The Mernda Social Support Centre will provide day respite for residents over the age of 65 and support people with care needs to maintain their independence and participate socially in their community. The Mernda Centre and innovative problem solving with existing Aged Care providers in Whittlesea Township will help address the social support needs of older residents.

The Kindergarten Infrastructure Service Plan (KISP) has been noted by Council and the Department of Education (DET), May 2021 and provides kindergarten places demand data. The participation rate accessing sessional kindergarten programs in the Whittlesea township is at 110%. The KISP has identified a shortfall of in 3YO and 4YO sessional kindergarten places in the coming years. This is currently being discussed with the DET and will be addressed as part of infrastructure roll out through the State building blocks program.

#### *Open Spaces in Whittlesea*

Within the Whittlesea Township and surrounds, approximately 30ha is set aside for open space purposes which constitutes approximately 1.5% of the township area.

According to the *Open Space Strategy (2016)* the available open space per person is 62sqm. The total quantity of open space in the precinct is relatively low when compared to the whole precinct area, this is primarily due to the lack of public open space in the low density residential and rural areas where land parcels are larger. Within the township itself, there is a generous provision of open space.

Key open space areas in the Township include Whittlesea Park, the adjoining AF Walker Recreation Reserve and the Whittlesea Showground. Other smaller areas of open space include Church Street Park in the main street (noting that this is privately owned and is not formally reserved for open space purposes), and open space reserves in the more recently established urban areas to the north and west of Beech Street including Eagles Nest Park and Black Flat Reserve.

Improving connectivity to and between open space, particularly from Whittlesea Park has been identified within the *Open Space Strategy*. Other recommendations relate to increasing opportunities to improve walking and cycling links; diversity and accessibility of recreation facilities; and adding to the linear open space corridors along Bruces Creek and Scrubby Creek. Whilst the *Open Space Strategy* captures key opportunities for Council owned and/or managed public open space, the opportunity to work with the Whittlesea Showgrounds and Recreation Reserves Committee of Management (CoM) to strengthen the connection between the Lions Park and the Township should be investigated

given its central location in the Township and overall benefits to the community's health and well-being. This action could be considered as part of the preparation for a Master Plan for the broader Whittlesea Park area, incorporating the Lions Park, to help better understand how people use the area and what improvements could be made in the future. The Showgrounds and Recreation Reserves CoM would be a key stakeholder as part of any future consultation in this matter.

#### *Open Space Improvements*

In recent years, Council has undertaken significant works to install new/upgraded playground equipment at Oakbank Boulevard Park and Willow Park. The upgrade of the playground at Fir Street is also proposed which is expected to address community feedback regarding the need for more playgrounds. Other recent open space improvements include a new dog-off leash area in Whittlesea Park and new cricket nets and additional female change rooms at the AF Walker Reserve. An upgrade of the Skate Park is also proposed to commence in late 2021. Improvement works were also recently completed at the Whittlesea Swim Centre including a new entry, change rooms, kiosk, synthetic lawn areas and seating. Further works to improve the facility are due to be completed in 2020 and include an all abilities play zone with water play features, upgrade of one change room to a Changing Places standard change room and shade sails. Although not part of the open space network, the school owned gymnasium has also had significant Council investment.

All of these improvements seek to increase community participation and contribute to the health and wellbeing of the community.

Future works should be in line with existing Council commitments to the Township, such as the Netball/Basketball Strategy and acknowledge recent investment in infrastructure works in the Township.

#### *Community Safety*

Safety, policing, crime and drugs (which includes issues around the perception of safety in the municipality) was identified as a key community priority as part of the 2019 Household Survey with respondent households from the Whittlesea Township area nominating it as the second highest priority in the survey. Community safety and crime prevention remains a key priority of the *Health and Wellbeing Partnership Plan 2017-2021*. Addressing crime and community safety has strong synergies with community building, good health, wellbeing and improved access to education and employment. Whilst policing falls under the direct control of the Victorian Government, a number of community members have used the community engagement processes to advocate for better policing within the Whittlesea Township. Whilst Council is largely limited to an advocacy role with Victoria Police infrastructure and policing, it is noted that the Mernda Police Station, which opened in 2017, has resulted in a realignment of response zones in the region, which has seen a substantial reduction in the population coverage by the Whittlesea Police Station, which is expected to improve response times.

## **What did you tell us?**

Through the consultation we heard that:

- The community has a strong desire to see improvements to places for teenagers, swimming pools and playgrounds. Respondents see services and places for young people as an important issue that needs addressing.
- The community wants to build on the strong sense of community, diversity and inclusiveness of the Township through opportunities that bring the community together including community festivals and events.
- The community also identified a desire for improvements to community infrastructure to enhance opportunities for greater community connectedness and social inclusion through facilities such as a public square, education facilities, community meeting rooms, performance spaces and public art.
- The community also identified the need for a range of improvements to open space including the provision of more playground equipment (including exercise equipment); the need for an off-leash dog park; and improvements to the BMX track/skate park, which is reflective of other feedback supporting improvement to facilities and services for children and young people.

- Opportunities for improvements to the public realm and public open spaces within the Township are strongly desired by the community including the need for more and upgraded toilets (particularly in Lions Park, at the Showgrounds and at the park across the road from the showgrounds), additional walking and bike paths; and more amenities such as picnic tables, drinking fountains, seating, BBQ areas and public bins.
- Opportunities that improve the health, safety and wellbeing of our community are also highly valued, with respondents identifying the need for a 24-hour police station, improvements to health facilities, public art and education facilities.
- The community also expressed a desire for more street lighting to encourage a safe, well-lit environment that encourages active travel.

### Future Direction

Council will work in partnership with the community to identify and deliver programs that support a safe and healthy environment. Whilst minor to moderate infrastructure additions are anticipated, there is an opportunity for more streamlined management of services within existing facilities to meet community needs. Council will work with service providers to meet the current and future needs of the community.

Council will continue to enhance open space assets and community infrastructure to encourage increased participation levels. Council will continue to implement key actions from the *Open Space Strategy (2016)* and any subsequent updated endorsed version as it applies to the Whittlesea Township.

One of the central planks of the City of Whittlesea's planning approach is the creation of precincts in both the growth areas and in the established parts of the municipality. As part of an integrated and place based approach to infrastructure planning, Council is proposing to prepare a Long Term Community Infrastructure Plan which identifies key projects for each key precinct within the municipality.

Council will:

- continue to identify gaps/opportunities to improve infrastructure provision.
- continue to implement key actions from the *Open Space Strategy (2016)* as it applies to Whittlesea Township.

### Priority Actions

1. **Undertake research and analysis exploring opportunities to increase community health, wellbeing and connectedness, and address associated service and facility needs and opportunities in the Whittlesea Township.**
2. **Ensure responses to facility needs and opportunities are captured in the development of Council's Long Term Community Facilities Plan.**
3. **Ensure future service planning and partnership opportunities address the community's needs, strengths and interests.**
4. **Enhance the safety of our community through the appropriate design of community facilities to promote passive surveillance, provision of lighting and promotion of active spaces and activities.**
5. **Continue to implement the *Open Space Strategy (2016)* as it applies to the Whittlesea Township.**
6. **Develop a Master Plan for the Whittlesea Park area, and subject to the support of the Showgrounds and Recreation Reserves Committee of Management, incorporate the Lions Park to among other things identify opportunities to strengthen the connection between the park and the town centre.**



## 2. Liveable neighbourhoods - Smart, connected transport

### Vision – Desired Outcomes

A balanced approach to accessibility, connectivity and providing equitable access for employment and social connections is at the heart of creating more liveable communities. Being able to move about the community also determines social and civic participation and access to community and health services. Due to the Township’s location, it is recognised that an efficient road network is important to provide connections to jobs, services and social networking opportunities.



This is of particular importance for the Whittlesea Township given the reliance on the bus network as the only form of public transport in the Township. Greater emphasis should be placed on planning to slow traffic movement within the commercial centre of the Township to encourage safer pedestrian and cycling movement. Provision of a safe and efficient network of paths, tracks and trails for walking and cycling will also ensure that people can move throughout the Township more easily with significant health benefits for the community by increasing active travel options.

### Key Issues - Discussion

Located approximately 9 kilometres north of the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and remote from the Principal Public Transport Network (PPTN), residents are heavily reliant on private vehicles for transport. Traffic management is consistently identified as the top issue for Council to address in the Annual Household Survey. Traffic management and roads maintenance and repairs were identified within the top 3 priorities by respondents from the Whittlesea Township (*Annual Household Survey 2019*). Bus services are the only form of public transport within the Whittlesea Township, and consistent with the findings of the *Integrated Transport Strategy*, residents consider that public transport provision is insufficient to meet people’s needs in terms of frequency, reliability and general access.

Transport access can influence other key determinants of health including access to education, employment, community and health services and affordable housing. Giving people a greater transport choice in a quality built environment improves social connections, access to employment and greater equity.

The following section provides a snapshot of the key issues that will influence provision of transport access within the Township:

#### *Private vehicle use*

The Whittlesea Township provides an important regional centre service role to the surrounding rural communities, and as such will always have a strong focus on private vehicle use. As typical of geographically remote settlements, Whittlesea Township and surrounds is significantly car dependent with almost 60 per cent of households having access to two or more vehicles. Just over three-quarters of residents indicated that journey by car was the main method of travel to work. Less than 5 per cent used public transport to get to work. The domination of use by private car is compounded by the lack of viable public transport options available and reliance on the bus network which is considered inefficient by the community. Council has received feedback from the community about traffic and car parking issues in relation to a number of sites in Whittlesea, including Funfields and local schools, which will need to be managed into the future.

### *Public transport*

Public transport within the Township is limited to the provision of bus services. The frequency of bus services and extended journey times compared to travel by car, are barriers to improving patronage. It is further noted that the steep hills and lack of footpaths also make using the bus impractical in some parts of the Township. It is noted that in recent years, there have been some changes to the bus network and destinations (i.e. the 385 now goes to Greensborough Shopping Centre, a key destination that was requested by the community). Access to public transport for all is an equity issue. Council will continue to advocate for improved public transport services to more effectively align to community needs.

Whilst the extension of the rail line has been identified as an important issue for the Whittlesea community, advocating for the extension of the metropolitan rail system to the growth areas of Epping North and Wollert which is expected to service approximately 75,000 people, is a major priority for the City of Whittlesea. The train line was extended to Mernda in mid-2018, bringing the train line within approximately 10 kilometres of Whittlesea Township.

### *Physical infrastructure*

Several of the main roads traversing the Whittlesea Township are classified as arterial roads and any works or improvements to these roads are funded

and managed by VicRoads, including Plenty Road and Wallan Road. Whilst Council is limited to an advocacy role for improvements to these roads, Council is responsible for managing the local network of public roads. Council will continue to prioritise local roads for improvement as part of its ongoing 'reseal and maintenance program' for the whole of the municipality.

The intersection of Plenty Road, Laurel Street, Wallan Road and MacMeikan Street was a key intersection identified for improvement by the community. This intersection has since been signalised.

Given the level of pedestrian activity, Church Street is intended to operate with a low speed environment to promote safe pedestrian movement around the shopping precinct, whilst facilitating vehicular traffic movement. Recent streetscape improvement works have been undertaken in Church Street including installation of raised pedestrian crossings, pedestrian and road surface upgrade and improved car parking.

### *Active Travel*

Council's Annual Household Survey (2017) indicates that the levels of walking and cycling use (for non-work related trips) are higher within the Whittlesea Township than in other areas of the municipality. There is opportunity to improve the connectivity and safety of shared paths and to identify desire lines for walking and cycling within the Township and the barriers in place that prevent them from occurring,

to further increase the rates of active travel and improve the walkability of the Township.

The *Integrated Transport Strategy* includes an action to advocate for more walking paths around the municipality which incorporates the 'missing links' program which is designed to install small sections of footpaths in key areas to improve overall connectivity and access. This program has seen a number of small and larger footpath projects completed in recent years and further works are proposed as part of this ongoing program. Other improvement works identified for future capital works funding include resurfacing of the Bruces Creek Trail from Tambo Circuit to Yea Road.

Council is committed to increasing cycling participation for residents and visitors of the City of Whittlesea. A number of barriers to encouraging cycling within and around the Township have been identified include distance to destinations, lack of connecting infrastructure and safety. Council's Bicycle Plan has four key directions: make cycling safer, encourage and promote cycling, build and maintain a high quality network and monitor cycling into the future. The Northern Regional Trails Strategy identifies the opportunity to develop a 'Rail Trail' between Mernda and Whittlesea Township. A shared user path / trail between Mernda and Whittlesea would provide tourism benefits for the township and provide access to the South Morang and Mernda Train stations and to a number of Regional Parks and Conservation areas.

## What did you tell us?

Through the consultation we heard that:

- The community identified the need for significant improvements to public transport, with improvements ranging from major infrastructure provision (e.g extension of the train line to Whittlesea) to increased frequency and reliability of existing bus services and new/improved routes of travel/destinations.
- Opportunities for the provision and maintenance of active transport infrastructure, including walking paths and bicycle tracks which contributes to a healthy community are also highly valued by the community. Improvements are needed to provide greater connectivity and integration of cycling and walking routes and to provide for greater accessibility to all.
- The community has also expressed a desire for the ongoing maintenance and improvements to the road network to ensure the provision of an efficient road network. Any changes to the road network needs to provide for the adequate movement of vehicles and flow of traffic whilst also ensuring pedestrian safety and connectivity.
- Further opportunity for additional car parking, particularly around Church Street has also been raised as an issue by the community.

## Future Direction

The *Integrated Transport Strategy* (2014) recognises that the City of Whittlesea faces significant transport challenges over the next 20 years and identifies the transport priorities for the municipality and actions necessary to ensure the transport needs of the community are met. Whilst a number of the actions are relevant to the Whittlesea Township, *Whittlesea Township Plan 2021* seeks to give effect to the actions at a local level.

Council will continue to identify and implement upgrades and improvements to the local road network, in addition to addressing the ‘missing links’ of priority footpaths through the Capital Works program. Council will also continue to advocate for improvements to main arterial roads where issues are identified.

As Whittlesea is not part of the Principal Public Transport Network (PPTN), Council has a significant role in advocating for continued improvements to the public bus network and improved services for the Township to better meet the needs of the community.

There are also opportunities to improve active travel modes including walking and cycling in addition to improving overall connectivity across the shared path network to achieve a fully integrated cycling and walking network.

Council will:

- continue to advocate to the State Government and relevant agencies to ensure safe and efficient road and public transport networks and services are provided which are essential to providing connections to jobs, services and social networking opportunities
- continue to identify and implement upgrades and improvements to the local road and pedestrian/shared path networks to improve accessibility around the Township and offer opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of the community.

## Priority Actions

- 7. Continue to advocate to the State Government and relevant public agencies for improvements to the bus network including more efficient service provision and changes to bus routes to better meet the needs of the community.**
- 8. Promote and increase active and environmentally sustainable travel options, including infrastructure improvements to facilitate cycling and walking and address ‘missing links’ in the footpath/cycling network.**
- 9. Advocate to VicRoads to upgrade the pedestrian crossings at Beech Street (Church Street intersection) to facilitate safer pedestrian movement.**

### 3. Liveable neighbourhoods - Well designed neighbourhoods & vibrant town centres

#### Vision – Desired Outcomes

Whittlesea Township is the largest rural township within the City of Whittlesea. It has its own unique character, heritage and sense of place.



The rural character of the Township is highly valued by the local community and plays a strong role in local identity. Planning needs to provide for the protection of the rural character of the Township. The gateway or entrance to a town also plays an important role in creating positive and welcoming first impressions and can assist in reflecting part of the character and / or attractions of the area.

The Church Street retail precinct extending from Beech Street to Laurel Street is an integral part of the Township contributing to community life and a more liveable community. Church Street contains an eclectic mix of building styles, however the low scale of buildings and rhythm of shop fronts and wide verandahs builds a strong sense of a rural character. Whilst it is important to protect the unique character of the town centre it is also important to ensure that the town centre remains a thriving and economically viable centre and therefore, a balanced approach needs to be taken in respect to any new development to ensure the best outcome for business and the community.

A well-designed neighbourhood characterised by a high quality public realm and open spaces. In addition to providing attractive streetscapes and public spaces, well-designed infrastructure for walking and cycling to ensure a high level of connectivity between key services and facilities, open spaces and places where people live is a critical feature.

#### Key Issues - Discussion

Whittlesea Township is located outside the Metropolitan Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) however, it does not have a formal boundary to control and manage urban growth. Whilst existing landscape features and topographic constraints limit the ability to further expand the current Township boundaries in many cases, there have been numerous enquiries in recent years from landowners seeking support for further development on the fringes of the Township. This has contributed to a level of uncertainty amongst the farming community and the broader community more generally. A key outcome in planning for the future growth of Whittlesea Township is the protection of the rural character of the Township, which is identified as a key aspiration by the community.

As an important regional service centre, Whittlesea has a number of features that contribute to a strong and sustainable community including access to a broad range of services and social infrastructure, open spaces, local jobs and a vibrant town centre. Planning should continue to build on the strengths to ensure a high level of connectivity and accessibility for all.

The following section provides an outline of the key issues that will influence future planning decisions for the Township.



### *Local Planning Policy Context*

There are a number of local planning strategies that affect place making which have influenced the growth of Whittlesea Township to date:

- Following designation of the Plenty Valley as a main growth corridor in 1987, the Plenty Valley Strategic Plan, approved by the State Government in 1990, sought to provide a balanced approach to providing new urban communities and associated infrastructure, by also designating large areas for conservation and environmental management. This Plan recognised that the area contains significant landscape values, such as the Whittlesea Hills and that this area would accommodate only limited growth. Further expansion of the area is constrained by the scenic hills and ridgelines which surround the township and the floodplain of the Plenty River which bisects the existing community.
- Within this regional context, the *Whittlesea Township Local Structure Plan (LSP)* was approved in 1994 and is the current strategic plan controlling growth within the Whittlesea Township. This LSP is now over 20 years old with much of the development identified in the LSP now largely implemented. The LSP was given effect through various Development Plans and Outline Development Plans. Whilst many of the principles contained in the LSP are still relevant, the planning controls applying to the Township are complex and an opportunity exists to refresh and simplify the planning controls over time.

- Council's *Green Wedge Management Plan 2011-2021* recognised the absence of a township boundary and the need to provide such a boundary to provide for long term certainty. An action has been included within the Green Wedge Management Plan to define a boundary and address the interface issues between urban and rural uses as a short term priority. This lack of certainty can result in land speculation, rural land fragmentation and lack of certainty for long-term agricultural activities.
- In recent years there has been increasing pressure on the City of Whittlesea to support further development on the fringes of the Township in the form of reduced lot sizes within the existing Township boundaries or rezoning of land adjacent to the Township. Careful consideration needs to be given to the location and nature of development to ensure it does not impact on the existing character or the Township of identified landscape and environmental values.

### *State Planning Policy Context*

Planning needs to ensure consistency with State Planning Policy and key Government Strategies with many of the matters affecting Green Wedge land being controlled at a State level. There are a number of major State policy objectives that influence our ability to make changes:

- The delineation between urban and non-urban land is defined by the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), put in place in 2002 by the Victorian

Government to better manage Melbourne's growth. Land outside the UGB including the Whittlesea Township is defined as Green Wedge land. The UGB was expanded by the State Government in 2010, which provided an additional 25 years of housing opportunity across Melbourne. It is noted that no changes were made to the Whittlesea Township boundary as part of this process.

- Whittlesea Township and its surrounds are located within the nominated agricultural and conservation area of the municipality more commonly referred to as the Whittlesea Green Wedge. The current State Government remains committed to protecting Green Wedge values and maintaining the current extent of the Urban Growth boundary.
- The State Government recently commenced a strategic review of agricultural land, reinforcing its commitment to identifying and protecting the long-term future of strategic agricultural land in Melbourne's Green Wedge and peri-urban area. The community engagement findings for this project, confirm that there are a range of issues which impact the long term viability of land for agricultural use, which included the uncertainty arising from the lack of a more defined boundary around small settlements.

- State planning policy for bushfire planning has also been updated in recent years to strengthen community resilience to bushfire through planning decisions. Its overarching strategy is to prioritise the protection of human life over other policy considerations when assessing the risk from bushfire. Directing development to the lowest risk locations is the most effective way to prioritise the protection of human life. Bushfire is and continues to be a threat to the Whittlesea Township and its community and planning needs to ensure that protection of human life remain a priority as part of future decision making.

Having regard to the State Planning Policy context it is clear that many of the issues affecting the future growth potential of Whittlesea Township are controlled at a State level. Application of, or changes to, the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) are the responsibility of the State Government. Council will continue to carefully manage future residential growth within the existing Township. Those areas where Council can more directly influence change through planning include neighbourhood character, built form and directing uses to appropriate locations (refer section 4 – Housing for diverse needs).

#### *Township Boundary*

Whittlesea Township does not have a defined Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). Whilst there is clear delineation between urban and rural zoned land in some places, the lack of a clear boundary together with ongoing pressure to permit some expansion

of the Township boundary, has caused uncertainty within the community and potentially threatens long term investment in agricultural activities. The current State Government remains committed to protecting Green Wedge values and maintaining the current extent of the UGB. Council will therefore need to continue to work with the State Government to advocate for an appropriate planning solution to define the Township Boundary and provide for the ongoing protection of Green Wedge land. Any future process or decision taken to implement a Township Boundary will need to take into account relevant Council and State Government strategies, noting that ultimately the Minister for Planning is the Responsible Authority for decisions on the Urban Growth Boundary.

Whittlesea Township boasts many natural and heritage visual features providing a solid foundation for the town's local identity. These significant landscape and topographic features including the Whittlesea Hills, Eastern Hills, Plenty Valley and the Plenty River have contributed to the current form of the Township and remain significant visual features of the Township. Its significant landscape values, topographical constraints and overall vision to retain the rural character of the Township, mean that Whittlesea Township is unlikely to experience any significant residential growth. There is an opportunity to review existing controls to ensure that development further protects and enhances the landscape and environmental values and responds to its rural character.

State Planning policy identifies the need for strategic planning to accommodate a projected population growth, at a municipal level over at least a 15 year period, with clear directions on where this should occur. Although the City of Whittlesea does not currently have a municipal wide housing strategy to direct and manage growth, the bulk of further residential growth is being directed to the identified growth corridors to the south and west of Whittlesea Township and within preferred locations within the established areas (generally close to public transport routes and activity centres). The dedicated Precinct Structure Plans prepared for the identified growth areas within the municipality are expected to accommodate significant growth over the next 20-30 years. As a consequence, it is not expected nor considered necessary for the Whittlesea Township to play a significant role in accommodating further residential growth.

The Whittlesea Township and surrounds is expected to experience only a moderate increase in growth of approximately 25 per cent between 2019 to 2041 compared to 69 per cent for the same period for the City of Whittlesea. It is forecast that the total number of dwellings in the precinct will increase by 655 dwellings by 2041 (approximately 30 dwellings per annum). An assessment using Council's GIS data indicates that there are approximately 120 vacant residentially zoned lots within the Township. These figures exclude land at 5 Wallan Road and 2388 Plenty Road which have yet to be developed and provide opportunity for further residential development subject to Council approval.

Council's GIS data also indicates that a substantial proportion of residentially zoned lots within 400m of the town centre have a lot size of 650sqm or greater. These more established areas of the Township are more typically developed with dwellings constructed prior to 1979. More recent development (post 2000) to the north and south-west of the Township is more typically developed on lots of between 300-650sqm.

Whilst it is expected that the development of vacant lots together with some infill development within the existing Township boundary will meet the identified forecasted needs of the Township for the foreseeable future, the more fundamental question is the desire to protect the rural character of the Township versus the option to provide for additional growth opportunities. Large proportions of the Township are beyond reasonable walking distance to the Township and any further development on the fringes of the Township would further reduce accessibility and connectivity between the town centre and places where people live. Further expansion of the Township boundaries would ultimately result in an increased extent of residential development on green wedge land, further removed from the commercial centre and other services and facilities and exacerbate those issues that have been identified as key priorities by the local community. Planning also needs to ensure that those features identified by the community as being desirable and contributing to the character continue to be protected from development.

Bushfire is, and continues to be, a threat to the Whittlesea Township and its community with all land around the perimeter of the Township designated as 'Bushfire Prone Areas'. Land further east of the Township is also included within a Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO).





The municipality has a history of significant grass and bushfires and is influenced by the steep topography to the north.

#### *Zoning Anomalies and Sites Requiring Further Investigation*

A number of zoning anomalies have been identified (refer Appendix 1), many of which appear to date back to the introduction of the new-format planning scheme, which was introduced in 1999. A number of the identified zoning anomalies occur along the existing delineation of the residential zones and the green wedge. Whilst the use of specific contour lines to define the town boundary provides a strong strategic basis as a means of managing residential development, there have been some unintended consequences, resulting in the dual zoning of land around the perimeter of the Township.

Other matters requiring further review relate to the application of the Green Wedge A Zone schedule (which has not been applied using cadastral boundaries resulting in different provisions applying to individual parcels of land) and the application of different zones applying to flood prone land. Council will need to work with DELWP and relevant public agencies as appropriate (e.g. Melbourne Water as it applies to flood prone land) to determine appropriate solutions for identified anomalies as part of any gradual refresh of planning controls for the Township with the aim of simplifying the existing planning provisions.

A number of sites within the proposed Township boundary require further investigation to determine whether changes to the planning controls are required to provide long-term strategic direction/ certainty for these sites (Whittlesea Showgrounds at 30 Yea Road, 34 Beech Street and 2388 Plenty Road). This includes two land parcels on the periphery of the Township which are currently zoned Green Wedge (Funfields at 2365 Plenty Road and existing aged care facility at 43 Laurel Street), however are considered logical inclusions within the Township due to their location adjacent to urban zones and the current use and development of the land (refer to Appendix 2).

#### *Town centre*

Church and Laurel Streets play a key role as the main street (Church Street) and linking street (Laurel Street) in the Township. As noted previously, Whittlesea Township provides a significant regional service centre role to the surrounding rural communities. As a vibrant town centre as well as servicing the needs of the local community, it also offers opportunities for social interaction and community participation. The spacing between shops on the western side of Church Street provides strong visual links to the Whittlesea Hills. There are several heritage buildings in Church street which provide a link to the street's historic development and provide additional character in the streetscape. Consideration should be given to providing further built form guidance to ensure new development enhances the existing character of the town centre. The town centre is the economic and social heart of the

Township and new development will need to be accommodated over time to ensure it remains viable and services continue to meet the needs of the community.

#### *Township Gateways*

The gateway or entrance to a town plays an important role in creating first impressions for those visiting an area. Signage or other treatments such as landscaping or artwork not only provide a sense of arrival to a place, but can also reflect part of the character and/or attractions of the area. Gateway treatments can also instil a sense of belonging and pride within the local community. The key gateways or entrances to the Whittlesea Township are via Plenty Road from the south, Wallan Road from the north and Whittlesea-Yea Road from the east, with Plenty Road forming the primary access route for visitors arriving from metropolitan Melbourne. There is an opportunity to improve the entrances to the Township to create a better sense of place, through improved landscaping and / or other appropriate treatments such as artwork and way finding signage.

#### **What did you tell us?**

Through the consultation we heard that:

- The community has a strong desire to retain the rural character of the Whittlesea Township with views to the hills, existing trees, landscaping, scale of residential development and size of backyards identified as being important features which contribute to the charm of the Township.

## Future Direction

Council will work with the State Government to establish a clear township boundary to protect the rural character of the Township and support the long-term viability of agricultural land. Any future process or decision taken to implement a Township Boundary will need to take into account relevant Council and State Government strategies noting that ultimately the Minister for Planning is the Responsible Authority for decisions on the Urban Growth Boundary. It is also proposed to refresh and simplify the planning controls applying to the Whittlesea Township over time to provide greater certainty to the community and ensure more consistent decision making.

The town centre is a central focus point for community life within the Township and new development that provides for the continued economic viability of the town centre is supported. New development in Church and Laurel Streets requires greater built form guidance to ensure it supports and enhances the existing character of these key streets whilst meeting the ongoing needs and aspirations of the community.

There is also an opportunity to improve the public realm and sense of place within the town centre including integration of public art within Church Street and providing better linkages between Church, Laurel Street and Beech Streets.

Council will:

- seek to establish a clear township boundary around the Township to manage growth, protect the character of the Township and the long-term viability of agricultural land in the Green Wedge. Any future process or decision taken to implement a Township Boundary will need to take into account relevant Council and State Government strategies noting that ultimately the Minister for Planning is the Responsible Authority for decisions on the Urban Growth Boundary.
- review and refresh the planning controls for the Township to ensure they remain current and provide for consistent decision making.
- encourage development which contributes to the ongoing viability of the town centre and which enhances the existing character of the streetscape.

### Priority Actions

- 10. Continue to advocate to the State Government, as the Responsible Authority, to establish a clear Township Boundary around the Township. Any future process or decision taken to implement a Township Boundary will need to take into account relevant Council and State Government strategies.**
- 11. Undertake a review of the various planning controls currently applying to the Township including the relevant incorporated documents, Development Plan Overlays and associated Development Plans in order to simplify the controls currently guiding development in the Township.**
- 12. Further investigate appropriate solutions to address identified zoning and overlay anomalies and other sites requiring further planning investigation and where appropriate initiate a planning scheme amendment to implement any proposed changes (refer to Appendix 1 and 2 for list of potential planning scheme anomalies requiring correction and sites requiring further investigation).**
- 13. Develop and implement built form controls in the Planning Scheme (e.g. Design and Development Overlay) to ensure that new development responds to and enhances the existing character of the Town Centre.**
- 14. Undertake a Public Realm Strategy for the commercial area to strengthen the link between Laurel and Church Streets and for the three main Township entrances (Plenty Road, Wallan Road and Whittlesea-Yea Road) to identify opportunities for public realm improvements including investigation of gateway treatments as appropriate.**

## 4. Liveable neighbourhoods - Housing for diverse needs

### Vision – Desired Outcomes

Over the next 20 years the demographic profile of the municipality's established suburbs, including the Whittlesea Township is forecast to change, resulting in the need for a greater range of housing types. Different types of housing will ensure greater choice for residents as their housing needs change.

Planning needs to provide for a diversity of housing in appropriate locations to enable people to age in place whilst also ensuring that development makes a positive contribution to the existing and preferred character of the area.



The charm of the Whittlesea Township stems from a sense of spaciousness between the buildings and in the streetscapes that facilitates the visual separation of buildings and landscaping on properties, in road reserves and other reserves. Outward views to the surrounding Whittlesea and Eastern Hills are available from many parts of the Township and are a key aspect of the Township's character.

### Key Issues - Discussion

Providing policy direction on the future management of residential growth in the Township and assisting future decision making is a key outcome of this Plan. Having regard to the State and local planning policy context, Council's proposed policy direction is to contain urban development generally within the existing residential boundaries. To this extent, those planning matters that Council can influence include matters relating to urban character, built form and directing development to appropriate locations. The following is a snapshot of those matters that will guide future residential development and change in the Township.

#### *Demographic forecasts*

Whittlesea Township is expected to experience moderate population growth over the next twenty years (an increase of 1,350 or 24.67 per cent from 2019) (forecast.id). Over the same period it is expected that the number of dwellings in the Township will increase by 655 (Forecast.id) approximately 30 dwellings per annum.

In 2016, the dominant household type in Whittlesea and surrounds was 'couple families with dependents' and by 2031 the largest forecast increase is expected in 'lone person households'.

Separate dwellings account for over 90 per cent of dwelling types within the Whittlesea Township, with medium-density housing accounting for the remaining 9.1 per cent of dwellings. While an ageing population may encourage an increased demand for medium density housing, separate houses are expected to remain the dominant housing form.

#### *Local character*

The key character attributes of the Township include the panoramic views, low scale of development and the spaciousness between houses that facilitates landscaping on sites. The older parts of the Township has a character that is strongly formed by the wide streetscapes and sense of spaciousness between buildings, whilst more recent development has a strong suburban character that contrasts strongly with other precincts. These attributes are generally reflective of those elements identified by the community as being important. Protection of the rural character of the Township is rated highly by the community. Planning for future growth needs to ensure that development considers and respects the existing character of the residential areas.

Where the low density residential development is present on the edges of the Township primarily to the east and south, it provides a sensitive transition



between the more urban areas of the Township and the surrounding rural areas. Most land zoned for low density residential purposes has been developed having regard to approved Development Plans within the framework set by the *Whittlesea Township Local Structure Plan (1994)*. Although there is limited opportunity for further subdivision of some lots, primarily those fronting Yea Road. It is significant that as part of the changes to the Low Density Residential Zone (LDRZ) provisions to reduce the minimum lot size where development is connected to reticulated sewerage in 2014, a 4000sqm minimum lot size was maintained for all land in the LDRZ located within the green wedge. There has been pressure from some landowners to modify the planning scheme to default back to the minimum lot size of 2000sqm where reticulated sewerage can be provided or to modify approved Development Plans to enable further subdivision of larger lots. Planning in these areas to date has prevented development above specified contour lines around the Township which has in effect sought to give effect to the Township boundary and control development on significant ridgelines. The faithful implementation of the Development Plans has contributed to the strong local identity and rural character of the Township.

Many of the principles which have been used to guide development to date have strong planning merit and any review of the planning controls should retain these overarching principles to ensure that development continues to be located in appropriate locations and to protect significant ridgelines. Some land within the LDRZ also has significant

topographical and environmental constraints which is likely to limit any further development of these areas.



### *Diverse and Affordable Housing*

The *Housing Diversity Strategy (HDS)* recognises the need for planning to cater for the community's changing household needs, whilst complementing the existing neighbourhood character. Due to being located outside the Principal Public Transport Network (PPTN), the Township is considered to have limited capacity for further infill development. Whilst recognising that the distinctive rural character should be protected and enhanced, the HDS identifies some infill opportunities along the main road entering the Township (Laurel Street) and closer to the centre (Church Street) which offer some capacity to accommodate infill residential development. These areas are referred to in the Strategy as Township Diversity.

Such development on these streets will assist with activating the shopping centre core and gateways into the Township whilst providing for a greater diversity of housing in accordance with community need. The remaining residential area is referred to as Township Residential where a standard residential density is encouraged. Future development in these areas needs to respect the character of the area having regard to the identified key design principles contained in the HDS. Implementation of appropriate planning tools to implement the *Housing Diversity Strategy* and to ensure that future development respects the character of the Township is a priority.

The lack of affordable housing is an issue that impacts many people across the City of Whittlesea regardless of age, gender and background. Council has identified the need to increase the supply of affordable housing including crisis and emergency accommodation as a key objective. The *Social and Affordable Housing – Policy and Strategy 2012-2016* outlines the steps to help Council address the issue.

Appropriate housing and support that allows older people to age comfortably and safely within their local community ensures people remain connected to their communities and contributes to the health and wellbeing of all. Whilst the Township offers support for older people in the form of residential aged care, more diverse housing types to enable residents to downsize, such as retirement village accommodation is encouraged to locate within the Township.

## What did you tell us?

Through the consultation we heard that:

- The community has indicated support for more diverse housing options, which are designed to reflect the character of the area, to enable people to age in place in recognition that the housing needs of the community are changing and to better reflect the demographic changes over time.
- Some community members have raised concern about the impacts any further growth will have on the character of the Township, in addition to the detrimental impacts on Green Wedge Values and agricultural/farming opportunities. There are differing views within the community in respect to managing population growth particularly in terms of where new growth should be accommodated i.e within the existing residential boundaries versus expanding the boundaries of the Township.
- Similarly, whilst some residents do not support increased housing densities within the current residential areas, other community members expressed support for increased residential densities, which is reflective of the desire for more diverse housing options to be provided particularly close to the commercial precinct, bus stops and other services and facilities. A number of respondents noted that any new development should respect the rural character of the Township.

## Future Direction

Whilst only incremental change is expected within the Township, Council will seek to provide opportunity for a diverse range of housing options to meet the needs of different people within the community. Further policy direction is required to ensure that medium density development is directed to areas close to existing services and facilities, whilst providing for an incremental level of change in areas further removed from the town centre. The implementation of the *Social and Affordable Housing – Policy and Strategy 2012-2016* (which is currently being reviewed) and investigation of additional planning controls to ensure that development respects the the existing character of the residential areas is a high priority. Housing which responds to community needs such as aged care will be encouraged in the Township.

The low density residential areas provide a transition between the more urban areas of the Township and the surrounding rural areas and contributes to the rural character of the Township and its strong local identity. The current minimum lot size of 4000sqm should be maintained to protect the rural character of these areas. Any development above the specified contour lines should continue to be carefully managed to ensure protection of significant ridgelines.

Council will:

- encourage a diverse range of housing options in appropriate locations to meet the changing needs of the community.
- maintain the existing Low Density Residential Zone minimum lot size controls, to retain an appropriate transition between the Green Wedge and more urban areas which contribute to the character of the Township.

## Priority Actions

- 15. Undertake further work to implement the Housing Diversity Strategy including the need for additional controls or changes to overlays and guidelines for the 'Township Residential' areas, to ensure that different types of housing are appropriately located within the Township and have regard to the existing and preferred character of the area.**
- 16. Encourage aged care facilities and other types of housing options for older persons to be located within the Township in appropriate locations to enable people to age in place.**
- 17. Encourage the development of adaptable and affordable housing in the Township.**

## 5. Strong local economy

### Vision – Desired Outcomes

Supporting and growing existing businesses and attracting new jobs within the local area is critical to improving the prosperity and liveability of the local community. Ways in which Council will seek to support the local economy include fostering an environment that encourages the development of a vibrant local economy; promoting the municipality as an attractive destination to invest and work in, visit and enjoy; and collaborating with the community, businesses and other stakeholders to deliver resources and other opportunities.



Whittlesea Township’s business role includes its retail, commercial, industrial and tourism related activities. Outside the immediate Township, agricultural activities also contribute significantly to the local economy. There are opportunities to look at more innovative ways of doing business and encouraging opportunities to improve the retail, commercial and tourism offerings within the Township.

### Key Issues - Discussion

The key role of the Whittlesea town centre is to meet the daily and weekly shopping needs of local residents. The recent expansion of the local IGA supermarket and the presence of a number of specialty food retailers, major banks and other business services highlight the Township’s role as a local service centre for the surrounding rural areas. Retail and commercial uses on the periphery of the town centre largely relate to agricultural enterprise and are typically located on larger land parcels within smaller factory style buildings or outbuildings. The Plenty Road industrial precinct supports a mix of commercial and industrial activities. Council will continue to work with local business and identify opportunities to ensure that the Whittlesea Township continues to thrive and remain a vibrant service centre.

Whittlesea Township also supports tourists and visitors to the area. The tourism sector has the potential to provide increased economic, environmental and social benefits to the Whittlesea

Township. Tourism provides an opportunity to complement the retail and hospitality sectors through the attraction of expenditure from outside the centre’s traditional trade area, with a range of tourism features in and around the Township.

### *Local economy*

Given its location and separation from Melbourne, the future economic growth of the Township will predominantly be generated from within the Township itself and the regional catchment area. The urban fringe has shifted progressively north from South Morang to Doreen and is now only approximately 7 kilometres south of the Whittlesea Township. This new residential development has brought with it new neighbourhood activity centres and the future Mernda Major Activity Centre (expected to develop over the next 5-10 years). This offers Whittlesea Township residents increased opportunities to shop and be entertained elsewhere. However, Whittlesea Township has sufficient services to provide for the daily and weekly needs of the community, which has been reinforced through the expansion of the IGA supermarket, as well as by the presence of a number of specialty food retailers, major banks and other business activities, highlighting its role as a local service centre.

### *Retail & Business*

A Market Analysis report undertaken to inform this Plan, indicates that the Church Street retail precinct, which benefits from its compact form and mix of



retailers and variety of health and business services, is performing well with minimal vacancies. However, it is approaching full development capacity (in terms of available land) as a result of the IGA supermarket expansion, development of two medical centres and associated retail/office development.

The report has indicated a business demand for retail floorspace of approximately 1000m<sup>2</sup> by 2036 based on the projected population growth and other factors. An additional 70 office based jobs is also projected over this period. It is expected that much of the expected demand for retail floor/office space can be met without the need for the rezoning of additional land, through more efficient use and adaptation of existing buildings to cater for additional floor space, including first floor level office space and greater use of online services by existing businesses. Establishment of home based offices also presents further opportunity to decentralise office jobs while providing the benefit of living and working in the local area.

### *Tourism*

The visitor economy is a thriving industry within the City of Whittlesea, contributing over \$369 million in total tourism and hospitality sales and value add. In 2017/2018 there were more than 641,000 international visitor nights in the City of Whittlesea, accounting for more than 45 per cent of the total visitor nights. The average length of stay for international visitors is 35 days, which is significantly higher than the average for Victoria. This growth

sector supports more than 2,500 people employed directly within the tourism and hospitality workforce. The most recent data indicates that the municipality attracts approximately 456,000 visitors annually with 52 per cent stating their main purpose for visitation is visiting friends and relatives (VFR).

A total of 78 per cent of total visitors to the municipality are domestic daytrip visitors. The majority of the municipality's attractions are located in Green Wedge areas, which feature prominently around the Whittlesea Township. The most popular visitor activities are scenic drives, picnicking and bushwalking. Whittlesea Township has a unique semi-rural location and has a number of features conducive to encouraging tourism activities including:

- Accessibility for day trippers from across metro Melbourne;
- Natural, built, historic and new tourism attractions and sites;
- Strong population growth within the municipality which supports growth in the 'visiting friends and relatives' market; and
- Opportunity to build niche experiences from existing tourism and infrastructure

There are many tourism features in and around Whittlesea Township including attractions such as Funfields, events including the Whittlesea Country

Music Festival and Agricultural Show, large open space areas including Yan Yean Reservoir and Toorourrong Reservoir Parks, nearby golf courses and heritage buildings including the former Whittlesea Courthouse/Visitor Information Centre.

The lack of accommodation options available within the Whittlesea Township is an issue in growing tourism. The Tourism Strategy identifies a lack of caravan and camping style accommodation within proximity to major events in the Township, including the Whittlesea Country Music Festival and Agricultural Show.

Cycling is one of the fastest growing recreational activities within the country and many cyclists have identified the Kinglake ranges as one of the preeminent cycling areas in Victoria. The Tourism Strategy has identified the importance of cyclists and identifies them as a target market. Cycling tourism has benefits in bringing tourists to an area and having them use the available facilities. The Tourism Strategy includes an objective to 'position the City of Whittlesea as an optimal cycling destination' and includes a number of actions relevant to encouraging tourism within the Whittlesea Township.

Tourism provides an opportunity to increase business within the Whittlesea Township as it complements the retail and hospitality sectors through attracting trade from outside a centre's traditional trade areas, thereby providing additional support for business activity.

### *Industrial*

Whittlesea Township has two small industrially zoned precincts comprising approximately 6 hectares of land. The main industrial precinct is located on the eastern side of Plenty Road, south of Laurel Street. It is estimated that only 4.2ha of the industrially zoned land is currently used for industrial purposes, with land to the north occupied by non-industrial uses or relatively under-developed. There has been a spill-over of non-retail uses onto the adjacent public use zoned land to the east (owned by the Public Transport Corporation). In addition, commercially zoned land along Laurel Street, has largely been developed for industrial uses.

A Market Analysis report undertaken for Whittlesea Township has projected a future demand for 2.1 hectares of industrial land by 2036, with future growth expected in the following industrial activities: building related services; repairs and maintenance; small scale wholesaling; and peripheral sales retailing. There may be an opportunity to provide more intensive industrial land use activity on under-developed industrial zoned sites without the need to rezone land in the foreseeable future.

Land to the south of the commercial area appears to be a logical inclusion within the Township for the purposes of future employment opportunities (particularly given part of this land is currently being used for a range of commercial/industrial activities). It is noted, however, that this land formerly contained the railway line to Whittlesea

and has been identified for use and development of the future Whittlesea-Mernda Rail Trail. Any formalisation of this land to support future commercial/industrial activities would need to have consideration to the future alignment of the trail and the interface with the adjoining aged care.

### *Agricultural and Land Management Activities*

Agriculture is an important part of land management in and around Whittlesea Township and also an important part of the overall economic profile of the municipality.

An assessment of key figures relating to Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Industry for the municipality indicates that there is opportunity potential for growth within the peri-urban agricultural industry and Whittlesea Township is a prime area for benefits from this growth. However, there has been a significant reduction in horticultural and agricultural land within metropolitan Melbourne due to the recent realignment of the Urban Growth Boundary. This makes the agricultural land around the Whittlesea Township even more valuable.

It is recognised that there is a general need to change the rhetoric regarding agriculture and shift the emphasis from 'viable' to 'productive use' of land for agriculture. This approach is about strategically reserving land near the city which may in the future be suitable if new agricultural industries emerge or other conditions change, such as recycled water becoming available, new niche markets opening up,

incentives for eco-systems services or changes on the cost of agricultural inputs.

### **What did you tell us?**

Through the consultation we heard that:

- The community identified a need for more accommodation options such as motel/hotel, bed and breakfast or caravan parks within the Township.
- Other types of businesses the community indicated they would like in the Township include specialty stores (i.e. clothing, homewares, computer store etc), which is reflective of the lack of these types of businesses within the Township, more food premises (e.g. improved eating/fine dining options) and larger retailers e.g. Country Target. There has been a mixed response to those types of businesses the community would like to see less of in the community, including take-away food premises, electronic gaming machines and supermarkets.
- Building on the tourism strengths and upgrading the shopfronts along Church Street were also raised as key improvements to be made as part of the community engagement.
- Opportunities for provision of local jobs for young people and local employment is desired by the community.

- There were some differing views from the community in respect to agriculture. Some respondents in the community identified the importance of maintaining agricultural activities (food/jobs) and the contribution this provides to the rural character of the Township whilst others indicated that agricultural activities are no longer viable and that consideration should be given to expanding the residential boundaries of the Township.

## Future Direction

Council currently provides a range of support services for local businesses including free business mentoring and visitations to help strengthen and grow local business, coordinating various business events which offer networking opportunities and promotion of the think local/buy local campaign. Council will continue to investigate new opportunities to help support individual local businesses and promote the town centre to ensure that Whittlesea Township remains vibrant and supports local employment.

Council will investigate opportunities for adaptation and re-use of Council owned buildings to provide further support to local businesses and more innovative ways of working. This could be through the provision of flexible working spaces to meet the needs of small operators who do not have capacity to work from home or require meeting spaces.

There is opportunity to increase tourism numbers by encouraging more accommodation options within

the local area, greater promotion of tourism offerings and supporting complementary and niche business opportunities to support additional commercial activity and increased employment. Council will also investigate options for increased visitation within the Township as part of its review of the Tourism Strategy and will implement actions as they relate to the Township accordingly.

Agricultural activities make a significant contribution through food production and to the local economy. It is important to ensure further development does not impact on productive agricultural land and activities. Where appropriate, planning provisions should be strengthened to support agricultural activities.

Council will:

- continue to investigate and implement initiatives that support and grow existing businesses and attract new jobs within the local area to ensure Whittlesea Township remains a viable and vibrant regional service centre.
- investigate options which support increased visitation within the Township as part of its review of the Tourism Strategy and implement actions accordingly.
- support measures to protect the long-term viability of the agricultural activities in the Whittlesea Green Wedge.

## Priority Actions

- 18. Encourage shop-top office use in Church and Laurel Streets to meet the additional need for office space.**
- 19. Investigate opportunities for the adaptive re-use of Council owned assets e.g. former Whittlesea Courthouse, to meet identified social, economic and community needs.**
- 20. Continue to identify opportunities to support local businesses including encouraging activation of the commercial centre by joining vacant shops in the 'vacant to vibrant program'.**
- 21. Investigate options for increased visitation within the Whittlesea Township as part of the development of the Destination Plan and Strong Local Economy Strategy. Support implementation of any actions in the Destination Plan and Strong Local Economy Strategy as they relate to the Whittlesea Township.**
- 22. Continue to implement Council's Green Wedge Management Plan, particularly those actions associated with the protection of agricultural land and strengthen relevant provisions of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme to protect and support the on-going use of land for agricultural purposes.**



## 6. Sustainable Environment

### Vision – Desired Outcomes

The Whittlesea Hills and floodplain of the Plenty River form a significant and distinctive ‘non urban break’ between the Mernda growth area and the Whittlesea Township. The hills provide visual relief, interest and definition of the Plenty River Valley and the extent of the Western Plains. Parts of Whittlesea Township and its surrounds are susceptible to threat from bushfire and flooding due to the combination of undulating topography and waterway catchment system, which has the potential to significantly affect public safety and result in property loss.



There is a growing body of science that suggests we can expect a change to our climate due to rising greenhouse gas emissions generated by human activity. To ensure we are climate ready consideration needs to be given to providing more trees for cooling and shelter, provision of infrastructure to withstand the changing climate and building community resilience.

### Key Issues - Discussion

#### *Natural Environment*

The rural parts of the City of Whittlesea are extensive and can be divided into four basic land character areas: The Plenty Valley (Rural Land Character Area), The Plenty Ranges, The Hills and The Western Plains. These landscape character areas contain significant productive qualities, natural features and examples of the City’s cultural heritage which contribute to the establishment of the identity of the City of Whittlesea. The Whittlesea Hills to the east and west of the Township has significant visual sensitivity due to topography, slope, major ridgelines and viewing corridors. The Plenty Valley Rural Land Character Area is also significant due to its historical homesteads, hedgerows, pastoral qualities and River Red Gum Woodlands in proximity to farming properties and the Whittlesea Township.

Biodiversity is the number and variety of living things on the planet. Natural areas provide ‘ecosystem services’ such as nutrient cycling, air and water purification, soil stabilisation, flood control and

climate regulation. These services are vital for human health and wellbeing. The natural environment also provides important recreational opportunities and a strong cultural connection to place. As a result of significant clearing since European settlement, areas with high biodiversity are largely confined to the riparian zones of the Plenty River and its tributaries and within publicly owned land. The Township is, however, situated between a number of areas with high biodiversity values such as the Eden Park Hills to the West, Mt Disappointment to the north, Kinglake National Park to the North East, Yan Yean Reservoir to the East and Dunnets Road Swamp to the South East.

Development needs to continue to be appropriately managed and discouraged from locating on significant ridgelines, other visually exposed areas and in identified floodplains to maintain the rural character of the area and protect identified biodiversity values by minimising loss of indigenous vegetation and wildlife habitat. Waterways also provide an increasingly important role by providing connectivity between natural areas and allowing for the movement of animals across the landscape.

Waterways are generally healthier in their upper rural reaches than those surrounded by urban development. The quality of urban run-off is managed with reticulated drainage systems and Water Sensitive Urban Design. One of the challenges for land use planning and for landowners in the Township is to manage water sustainably so as not to detrimentally affect downstream water quality in the Yarra River catchment.

### *Flooding and drainage*

Drainage and flooding are an issue for parts of the Whittlesea Township. The Township itself is located at the junction of three waterways - that being the Plenty River and Bruces and Scrubby Creeks. Land identified as having the greatest risk and frequency of being affected by flooding is identified through the application of the Rural Floodway Overlay (RFO) and Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO) in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme and which has been prepared by Melbourne Water. Council is generally responsible for the local drainage system within Whittlesea Township excluding the area covered by the Black Flat Road Drainage Services Scheme, which is administered by Melbourne Water Corporation. Melbourne Water is also the responsible drainage authority for creeks, tributaries and rivers. Council and Melbourne Water are therefore both responsible for drainage management and related flood mitigation as drainage authorities.

Flooding may occur within the Township as the result of riverine flooding from the Plenty River or its tributaries or localised flash flooding. Blocked or capacity impaired stormwater drains can also lead to overland flows and associated flooding. Some individual privately owned properties within the Township are identified as being subject to flooding including the Whittlesea Showgrounds. Any development occurring in areas subject to flooding will continue to be managed in accordance with the relevant planning controls. Flood modelling work was recently undertaken in order to provide Council with

options for addressing flooding in the Township. Council will also continue to work with the relevant floodplain management authority to ensure that mapping is reviewed and updated as appropriate.

### *Bushfire*

Bushfire continues to be a threat to the Whittlesea Township and its community. The municipality has a history of significant grass fires, which can generally be expected to occur from January to April and is influenced by the steep topography to the north. State Planning policy requires that priority is given to protection of human life by directing population growth and development to low risk locations and prioritising the protection of human life over other policy considerations. Planning needs to ensure that appropriate consideration is given to the risk presented by bushfire and ensure that any development is appropriately located having consideration to any identified risk from bushfire.

### *Climate Change*

It is expected that our climate will change due to rising greenhouse gas emissions generated by human activity. An increase in global average temperature of two degrees is considered unavoidable and will change weather patterns worldwide resulting in the potential for more frequent and severe storms, fires and droughts in some parts of the world.

There is an increased awareness of the community's vulnerability to climate change. Events such as the 2009 bushfires, associated heat waves as well as widespread flooding focus these concerns.

Any growth and development in and around Whittlesea Township must be considered within the context of climate change. Climate change will change rainfall levels and temperature. This will affect access to water and impact rural production and the natural environment. Increased frequency of extreme weather events such as storms will impact farming through increased erosion and damage to crops. The impacts of climate change must be embedded in any future planning for the Whittlesea Township.

### **What did you tell us?**

Through the consultation we heard that:

- Environmental risks in the form of flooding and bushfire (to a lesser extent) were identified as key issues within the Township by some respondents.
- Controlling weeds and the ongoing management of waterways including removal of weeds has been identified as an issue by some residents.
- Some residents identified the need for the planting of additional trees or replacing existing trees with alternative species within the Township.

## Future Direction

Council is proposing to undertake work to further assess biodiversity values and identify strategic habitat links. Planning need to ensure that these areas are appropriately protected and managed to minimise the loss of indigenous vegetation and wildlife habitat with a view to improving biodiversity values on public and private land. Council also supports initiatives that seek to manage pest plant and animals and will continue to work with relevant land management agencies in this regard.

The Whittlesea Hills and the Plenty Valley floodplains are significant visual features and contribute to the character, landform and landscape of the Township and surrounding area. There is an opportunity to review the planning controls applying to the area to ensure that development continues to be appropriately managed and discouraged from locating on significant ridgelines, other visually exposed areas and in identified floodplains to maintain the rural character of the area and protect identified biodiversity values.

Planning for the Township needs to ensure that environmental risks from bushfire, flooding and land degradation are continued to be appropriately monitored and managed to mitigate identified risks.

Council will:

- undertake work to further identify and protect significant landscape and environmental values from inappropriate development.

- continue to work with the State Government and relevant agencies to ensure that environmental risks such as bushfire and flooding are considered through planning decision making.

## Priority Actions

- 23. Continue to implement the Biodiversity Strategy 2019-2029 to ensure that biodiversity values are appropriately identified, protected and managed as it applies to the Whittlesea Township.**
- 24. Review the Significant Landscape Overlay Schedule 1 (Whittlesea Hills) to assess its effectiveness in protecting the landscape values of the Whittlesea Hills through restrictions on development above the 215 and 225 contour lines.**
- 25. Continue to work with DELWP and relevant government agencies to address environmental risks such as flooding and bushfire as they apply to land use planning matters for the Whittlesea Township.**
- 26. Continue to implement the Environmental Sustainability Strategy and ensure that the impacts of climate change are embedded in any future planning for the Whittlesea Township.**





# Implementation and evaluation

The action plan provides a framework which sets out how the overall vision and future directions will be achieved and how projects will be delivered. Delivery and timing of all projects identified in the action plan will be subject to preparation of business cases, endorsement from the Executive Leadership Team and budget approval for specific works by Council. The plan outlines the lead unit for each action. For the purposes of the action plan, the following time-frames are anticipated:

- Ongoing:
- Short: 0 – 3 years
- Medium 4 – 7 years
- Long 8 – 10+ years

The action plan will be reviewed as part of the ongoing monitoring and evaluation to determine priority actions and projects. A report will be prepared on a biennial basis to measure progress and ensure that adequate resources are allocated to delivering key actions within a timely manner. The Plan is not a static document. It will be subject to ongoing review and updates as required to incorporate key outcomes from relevant Council and State Government strategies/plans. In addition it should be reviewed every ten years to ensure that it remains relevant and is consistent with Council's plans and policies, and to identify any changes required to respond to new or emerging issues, trends, policies or changing circumstances.

Delivery of the implementation actions will be the responsibility primarily of Council with support from the State Government and other agencies and the private sector as appropriate.



## Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timing
1. Undertake research and analysis exploring opportunities to increase community health, wellbeing and connectedness, and address associated service and facility needs and opportunities in the Whittlesea Township.	Strategic Projects	Short
2. Ensure responses to facility needs and opportunities are captured in the development of Council's Long Term Community Facilities Plan.	Strategic Projects	Short
3. Ensure future service planning and partnership opportunities address the community's needs, strengths and interests.	Strategic Projects	Short
4. Enhance the safety of our community through the appropriate design of community facilities to promote passive surveillance, provision of lighting and promotion of active spaces and activities.	Capital Delivery (as applicable to appropriate projects)	Ongoing
5. Continue to implement the <i>Open Space Strategy (2016)</i> as it applies to the Whittlesea Township.	Urban Design and Transport	Ongoing
6. Develop a Master Plan for the Whittlesea Park area, and subject to the support of the Showgrounds and Recreation Reserves Committee of Management, incorporate the Lions Park to among other things identify opportunities to strengthen the connection between the park and the town centre.	Capital Delivery	Short
7. Continue to advocate to the State Government and relevant public agencies for improvements to the bus network including more efficient service provision and changes to bus routes to better meet the needs of the community.	Urban Design and Transport / Advocacy, Communications & Customer Service	Ongoing

## Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timing
8. Promote and increase active and environmentally sustainable travel options, including infrastructure improvements to facilitate cycling and walking and address 'missing links' in the footpath/cycling network.	Urban Design and Transport	Short-Medium
9. Advocate to VicRoads to upgrade the pedestrian crossings at Beech Street (Church Street intersection) to facilitate safer pedestrian movement.	Urban Design and Transport / Advocacy, Communications & Customer Service	Short
10. Continue to advocate to the State Government, as the Responsible Authority, to establish a clear Township Boundary around the Township. Any future process or decision taken to implement a Township Boundary will need to take into account relevant Council and State Government strategies.	Strategic Futures	Short
11. Undertake a review of the of the various planning controls currently applying to the Township including the relevant incorporated documents, Development Plan Overlays and associated Development Plans in order to simplify the controls currently guiding development in the Township.	Strategic Futures	Short
12. Further investigate appropriate solutions to address identified zoning and overlay anomalies and other sites requiring further planning investigation and where appropriate initiate a planning scheme amendment to implement any proposed changes (refer to Appendix 1 and 2 for list of potential planning scheme anomalies requiring correction and sites requiring further investigation).	Strategic Futures	Short



## Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timing
13. Develop and implement built form controls in the Planning Scheme (e.g. Design and Development Overlay) to ensure that new development responds to and enhances the existing character of the Town Centre.	Strategic Futures / Urban Design and Transport	Short
14. Undertake a Public Realm Strategy for the commercial area to strengthen the link between Laurel and Church Streets and for the three main Township entrances (Plenty Road, Wallan Road and Whittlesea-Yea Road) to identify opportunities for public realm improvements including investigation of gateway treatments as appropriate.	Urban Design and Transport	Medium
15. Undertake further work to implement the Housing Diversity Strategy including the need for additional controls or changes to overlays and guidelines for the 'Township Residential' areas, to ensure that different types of housing are appropriately located within the Township and have regard to the existing and preferred character of the area.	Strategic Futures	Short
16. Encourage aged care facilities and other types of housing options for older persons to be located within the Township in appropriate locations to enable people to age in place.	Strategic Futures	Ongoing
17. Encourage the development of adaptable and affordable housing in the Township.	Strategic Futures	Ongoing
18. Encourage shop-top office use in Church and Laurel Streets to meet the additional need for office space.	Strategic Futures	Short - Long

## Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timing
19. Investigate opportunities for the adaptive re-use of Council owned assets e.g. former Whittlesea Courthouse to meet identified social, economic and community needs.	Strategic Futures / Economic Development	Short
20. Continue to identify opportunities to support local businesses including and encouraging activation of the commercial centre by joining vacant shops in the 'vacant to vibrant program'.	Economic Development	Ongoing
21. Investigate options for increased visitation within the Whittlesea Township as part of the development of the Destination Plan and Strong Local Economy Strategy. Support implementation of any actions in the Destination Plan and Strong Local Economy Strategy as they relate to the Whittlesea Township.	Economic Development	Ongoing
22. Continue to implement Council's Green Wedge Management Plan, particularly those actions associated with the protection of agricultural land and strengthen relevant provisions of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme to protect and support the on-going use of land for agricultural purposes.	Strategic Futures	Ongoing
23. Continue to implement the <i>Biodiversity Strategy 2019-2029</i> to ensure that biodiversity values are appropriately identified, protected and managed as it applies to the Whittlesea Township.	Sustainable Environment	Ongoing

## Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timing
24. Review the Significant Landscape Overlay Schedule 1 (Whittlesea Hills) to assess its effectiveness in protecting the landscape values of the Whittlesea Hills through restrictions on development above the 215 and 225 contour lines.	Strategic Futures	Short
25. Continue to work with DELWP and relevant government agencies to address environmental risks such as flooding and bushfire as they apply to land use planning matters for the Whittlesea Township	Strategic Futures	Ongoing
26. Continue to implement the Environmental Sustainability Strategy and ensure that the impacts of climate change are embedded in any future planning for the Whittlesea Township.	Sustainable Environment	Ongoing

## References

<sup>1</sup> Profile.id, City of Whittlesea Community Profile, 2019, citing Australian Bureau of Statistics Census 2016, <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea>

<sup>2</sup> Forecast.id, City of Whittlesea Population Forecast, 2019, <https://forecast.id.com.au/whittlesea/home>



# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Whittlesea Township Planning Scheme Anomalies

This table identifies land both within and on the outskirts of the Whittlesea Township which have been identified as anomalies which require correction through an amendment to the planning scheme or which require further investigation to determine whether changes to the planning scheme are appropriate. Whilst the focus of the Whittlesea Township Plan is on land within the existing Township boundaries, this table also identifies mapping anomalies outside the Township boundaries where these matters have been raised through the community engagement process, or where a more consistent approach will result in the more orderly application of planning controls and provide for more consistent decision making. Any change(s) to the planning scheme will need to be considered as part of a formal planning scheme amendment process which will be subject to Council endorsement.

### Address / Land Affected - 733 Grants Road

#### Issue:

Land in two zones [part Green Wedge Zone (GWZ) and part Low Density Residential Zone (LDRZ)]

#### Officer Response

Given the majority of the site falls within the GWZ and is located above the 225m contour, it is recommended that the entire site be included within the GWZ which is consistent with the zoning of the dwellings to the west of the site

Changing the zoning of the land will require a planning scheme amendment subject to endorsement by Council.

### Address / Land Affected - 12-16 and 28-48 Thomson Park Drive

#### Issue:

Land in two zones [part Green Wedge Zone (GWZ) and part Low Density Residential Zone (LDRZ)] due to misalignment of the zone boundary which is not consistent with the 225m contour.

#### Officer Response

The 225m contour (which has been applied as a key principle to limit the extent of residential development in parts of the Township), generally follows the existing cadastral boundaries of these rural-residential lots. It is recommended that the LDRZ be extended to the cadastral boundaries, which is consistent with the proposed extent of the Township boundary.

**Note:** 20 Thomson Park Drive – A significant proportion of this property is in the GWZ. A Development Plan previously developed for this area, indicated that any development be located below the 225m contour, consistent with surrounding lots. Rezoning of the entire site to LDRZ is not supported.

Changing the zoning of the land will require a planning scheme amendment subject to endorsement by Council.

### Address / Land Affected - 41-47 Lorikeet and 45-65 Corella Drive

**Issue:**

Land in two zones [part Green Wedge Zone (GWZ) and part General Residential Zone Schedule 1 (GRZ1)] resulting in a misalignment between the zone and property boundaries.

**Officer Response**

The zone boundary generally follows the 225m contour line (consistent with the approved Outline Development Plan), which has resulted in multiple lots in two zones, which should be tidied up if possible, to avoid having land in two zones. For those lots with only minor incursions into the GWZ it is recommended that the GRZ1 is extended to the cadastral boundary. For those lots which contain more significant areas of GWZ land, the rezoning of these lots to GRZ1 is not supported. Other planning controls such as a Design and Development Overlay (DDO) should also be investigated to prohibit any development above the 225m contour.

Changing the zoning of the land will require a planning scheme amendment subject to endorsement by Council.

### Address / Land Affected - 5 Wallan Road

**Issue:**

Land in two zones [part Green Wedge Zone (GWZ) and part General Residential Zone Schedule 1 (GRZ1)].

**Officer Response**

The current residential zone boundary is consistent with the 225m contour line (which has been applied as a key principle to limit the extent of residential development in parts of the Township), however the future residential development of this land will result in land in two zones. It is recommended that further advice is sought from the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning to resolve the matter prior to land being developed.

## Address / Land Affected - Land zoned Rural Conservation Zone (RCZ) through centre of Whittlesea

### Issue:

Public and private land affected by the Rural Flood Overlay (RFO) to the north of Yea Road, through the centre of town is included in a Rural Conservation Zone Schedule 1 (RCZ1). Consistent application of the zoning and flood controls.

Privately owned land including 30 McPhees Road, 210 Wallan Road, 55, 75 and 425 and 435 Wildwood Road are in two zones [part Green Wedge Zone (GWZ) and part RCZ1)].

Privately owned land on east side of Forest street also in two zones (part RCZ1 and part GRZ1).

Publicly owned land in Teston Close is in two zones (part GWZ and part GRZ1). No flood data has been mapped for land north of Tambo Circuit.

### Officer Response

The application of the RCZ1 is generally considered appropriate in order to protect to the environmental values of the Plenty River and its tributaries.

It is however recommended that those residential properties backing onto Bruces Creek (Lower) should have the underlying residential zone applied in conjunction with the relevant overlay applicable for flooding issues. This matter will need to be further investigated in conjunction with the relevant floodplain authority.

It is recommended that public owned land should be included in the appropriate public use zone to better reflect its use for public purposes (e.g. PPRZ/PCRZ)

In the event of any future work to review the flood controls applying in this area, a more holistic review of the zoning and overlay controls could be undertaken at this time by Council in conjunction with the relevant floodplain management authority.

Changing the zoning of the land will require a planning scheme amendment subject to endorsement by Council.



**Address / Land Affected - 205-345 Yea Road, 210 Wildwood Road, Whittlesea and 25 Scrubby Creek Road, 20 ,40 and 50 Austins Road, Humevale**
**Issue:**

Schedule to Green Wedge A Zone does not follow cadastral boundaries resulting in dual provisions applying to individual land parcels i.e. conflicting minimum lot size for subdivision.

**Officer Response**

Whilst it is recommended that the alignment of the mapping of the schedule should be changed to ensure consistency with cadastral boundaries, that further investigation required to determine justification for the current mapping, which pre-dates the New Format Whittlesea Planning Scheme. As such a wholistic review of the zone provision is proposed. It is noted that if the 'RL2' (12ha minimum lot size) was amended to RL1 (8ha minimum lot size) that an additional 3 lots could be created under the current property boundary alignment, however any mapping to reduce the lot size will require strategic justification to support a planning scheme amendment.

Changing the zoning of the land will require a planning scheme amendment subject to endorsement by Council.

**Address / Land Affected - 71 and 75 - 83 Laurel Street**
**Issue:**

All four land parcels are affected by three zones [part General Residential Zone Schedule 1 (GRZ1), part Low Density Residential Zone (LDRZ) and part Rural Conservation Zone Schedule 1 (RCZ1)].

The Rural Flood Overlay (RFO) also applies to each of these parcels, however it is not consistent with the zone boundaries nor the contour lines.

**Officer Response**

The subject land and surrounds was rezoned from LDRZ to GRZ1 as part of Amendment C28 to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme. The retention of small areas of LDRZ land appears to be an anomaly created through the development and approval of the amendment. It is recommended that the GRZ1 should be extended to the extent of the LDRZ to correct this anomaly.

In the event of any future work to review the flood controls applying in this area, a more holistic review of the zoning and overlay controls could be undertaken at this time by Council in conjunction with the relevant floodplain management authority.

Changing the zoning of the land will require a planning scheme amendment subject to endorsement by Council.

## Appendix 2 – Whittlesea Township - Sites requiring further investigation

There are several sites within Whittlesea that require further investigation where requests have been made to change the planning scheme to support specific land use outcomes and where it is considered that there is planning merit to support further investigation. Any change(s) to the planning scheme will need to be considered as part of a formal planning scheme amendment process which will be subject to Council endorsement.

### Address / Land Affected - Whittlesea Showgrounds – 30 Yea Road

#### Issue:

Seeking a change to Schedule 1 of the Special Use Zone (SUZ1) to permit use for Camping and caravan park (accommodation).

#### Officer Response

It is recommended that the appropriateness of changing the schedule to the SUZ1 be further investigated. Further discussion will be required with relevant Government agencies. Any change to the controls would require a planning scheme amendment subject to endorsement by Council.

### Address / Land Affected - 19-39 Pings Road and 28 McPhees Road

#### Issue:

The land is currently in a Rural Conservation Zone Schedule 1 (RCZ1) and is also affected by a Rural Flood Overlay (RFO).

The Whittlesea Agricultural Society who owns the land, has indicated that the subject land is also used in conjunction with the operation of the Whittlesea Agricultural Show and would be more appropriately included in a Special Use Zone Schedule 1 (SUZ1). It is considered that would be consistent with the remaining land currently used for the Show (of which the WAS also owns part of the land).

#### Officer Response

It is recommended that the appropriateness of applying the SUZ1 be investigated and further discussed with key stakeholders to better understand how the subject land is used in respect to the operation of the Whittlesea Agricultural Show. Any unintended implications of applying the SUZ1 also need to be further considered, particularly having regard to the flood prone nature of the site.

Changing the zoning of the land will require a planning scheme amendment subject to endorsement by Council. As the site is currently designated as green wedge land, approval to change the zoning would be required by both houses of parliament.

### Address / Land Affected - Funfields – 2365 Plenty Road

#### Issue:

The land is currently in a Green Wedge and Zone (GWZ). All buildings and works currently require a planning permit or amendments to existing permits, resulting in a piecemeal approach to the ongoing planning of the site. Having a master plan for the site would facilitate a more integrated and coordinated approach to the future development and operations of the theme park and also provide the surrounding residents with greater certainty regarding the longer-term future of the site. zone boundaries nor the contour lines.

#### Officer Response

Investigate use of a master plan or other appropriate planning controls in order to facilitate a more integrated coordinated approach to any future development for the subject land.

The most appropriate planning solution will also need to have regard to whether the site is included within the Township Boundary which would require application of a more appropriate zone.

### Address / Land Affected - 48 Beech Street

#### Issue:

Land is in a Rural Conservation Zone Schedule 1 (RCZ1) and is also affected by a Rural Flood Overlay (RFO). A planning permit was previously issued for the use and development of the site for a motel, conference centre, restaurant, caretaker's house and associated car parking (2005). Most recent extension in 2016 was not granted. A planning permit was more recently issued for a dwelling in the north-east corner of site, which has since been developed.

#### Officer Response

The site is located within the centre of the Township and subject to overcoming flooding issues, provides an opportunity for some form of development in the centre of the town. It may also provide the opportunity to negotiated part of the site to be used for open space purposes.

Changing the zoning of the land will require a planning scheme amendment subject to endorsement by Council. As the site is currently designated as green wedge land, approval to change the zoning would be required by both houses of parliament.



### Address / Land Affected - 34 Beech Street

#### Issue:

The land is dual zoned – part Industrial 3 Zone (IN3Z) and part General Residential Zone 1 (GRZ1).

#### Officer Response

Whilst the existing business has existing use rights, the site is a significant gateway to the entrance to the Township. Recognise the site as a key gateway and investigate opportunities for a range of land-uses compatible with the surrounding residential uses and its location adjacent to Bruces Creek. Any change to the zoning would require a planning scheme amendment subject to endorsement by Council.

### Address / Land Affected - 43 Laurel Street

#### Issue:

Land in two zones [part Green Wedge Zone (GWZ) and part Rural Conservation Zone Schedule 1 (RCZ1)]. The land is partly affected by the Rural Flood Overlay (RFO) which generally affects land in the RCZ1, however it also extended into a zoning portion of land in the GWZ.

#### Officer Response

This site which contains an existing aged care centre is seen as a logical extension to the Township. Any planning solution will need to have regard to whether the site is included within the Township Boundary which would require application of a more appropriate zone reflecting its current use. In the event of any future work to review the flood controls applying in this area, a more holistic review of the and overlay controls could be undertaken at this time by Council in conjunction with the relevant floodplain management authority. Changing the zoning of the land will require a planning scheme amendment subject to endorsement by Council.

### Address / Land Affected - 2388 Plenty Road

#### Issue:

The site is in two zones [(part Low Density Residential Zone (LDRZ) and part Green Wedge Zone)] and is located between existing rural-residential housing to the south and employment development to the north.

#### Officer Response

The site, whilst containing a single dwelling is largely undeveloped. Having regard to its locational context, the site offers the potential opportunity for a range of land-uses to be considered that provide a transition between the current land-uses to the north and south.

## Appendix 3 – State and Local Planning Policy Context

### State Government Planning Policy Context

#### Plan Melbourne

*Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* is the current metropolitan planning strategy from the Victorian Government.

*Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* sets out the Victorian Government's vision for the city to 2050. It seeks to integrate long-term land use, infrastructure and transport planning, and, in doing so, meet the city's future environmental, population, housing and employment needs.

Planning at a local level needs to ensure consistency with and give effect to State Planning Policy. Key Directions and Policy initiatives of *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* that are of particular relevance to the Whittlesea Township are:

- **Direction 1.4** Support the productive use of land and resources in Melbourne's non-urban areas
- Policy 1.4.1 Protect agricultural land and support agricultural production
- **Direction 2.1** Manage the supply of new housing in the right locations to meet population growth and create a sustainable city
- Policy 2.1.1 Maintain a permanent urban growth boundary around Melbourne to create a more consolidated, sustainable city
- **Direction 2.5** Provide greater choice and diversity of housing
- Policy 2.5.1 Facilitate housing that offers choice and meets changing household needs
- **Direction 4.4** Respect Melbourne's heritage as we build for the future
- **Direction 4.5** Plan for Melbourne's green wedges and peri-urban areas
- Policy 5.2.1 Improve neighbourhoods to enable walking and cycling as part of daily life
- **Direction 5.4** Deliver local parks and green neighbourhoods in collaboration with communities
- **Direction 6.2** Reduce the likelihood and consequences of natural hazard events and adapt to climate change
- **Direction 6.5** Protect and restore natural habitats
- Policy 6.5.2 Protect and enhance the health of urban waterways

## Melbourne's Growth Corridor Plans

The Growth Corridor Plans are expected to accommodate close to half of Melbourne's new housing and much of the commercial and industrial land supply for the next 30 years or more. The Growth Corridor Plans provide a framework to guide the planning of new communities in each of the four growth corridors.

Key elements of the Growth Corridor Plans are to indicate:

- Areas suitable for urban development and the broad form of development appropriate for each area;
- Areas of high environmental and/ or landscape value which must be protected from development; and
- Open space networks.

Land identified for future growth within the City of Whittlesea is detailed in the North Growth Corridor Plan and primarily incorporates the southern and western part of the municipality. The Northern Growth Corridor Plan recognises the importance of the key landscape features for the area including:

- The retention of key views to the hills that flank the Growth Corridor; and
- Retention of distant views to the Great Dividing Range to the north and the east.

It is significant that Whittlesea Township is located outside the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and is therefore defined as 'Green Wedge Land' pursuant to the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. Given its location outside the UGB, and the regulatory framework applying to Green Wedge land through the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, the implication is that this area is unlikely to experience major growth.

## Local Strategic Planning Context

### Whittlesea Planning Scheme

Land use and development is controlled by the Planning and Environment Act 1987 through the Victorian Planning Provisions, and the Whittlesea Planning Scheme administered by the City of Whittlesea.

The following sections of the Municipal Planning Strategy (Clause 02) are of particular relevance to this Plan:

- **Clause 02.03-1** Settlement, Green wedge areas, recognises the important characteristics and qualities of the green wedge. It outlines Council's aim to protect green wedge areas by:
  - o Conserving and enhancing the rural and natural landscape character.
  - o Protecting natural and cultural heritage.
  - o Maintaining designated non-urban breaks.
  - o Protecting identified viewing corridors that offer important visual access to rural and natural areas.
  - o Protecting and enhancing biodiversity and environmental values.
  - o Reducing land use conflict between the green wedge areas and urban and rural communities.
  - o Discouraging development that would diminish the significant rural character of the green wedge areas.
- **Clause 02.03-1** Settlement, urban growth, recognises that the rapid population growth occurring in the municipality requires careful management of the boundaries between land reserved to accommodate growth and land set aside for rural or conservation purposes. In addition, that the areas that form non urban breaks between settlements and areas designated for growth need to be permanently preserved to maintain the character of the municipality and contribute to the overall attractiveness of the city. Council aims to manage urban growth by:
  - o Reinforcing the Urban Growth Boundary.
  - o Protecting the non-urban breaks between growth areas.
  - o Avoiding incursions into non-urban or environmentally sensitive areas from urban expansion.
- **Clause 02.03-3** Environmental risks and amenity, Bushfire, recognises that parts of the municipality are susceptible to bushfire and grassfire which can have significant social, economic and environmental impacts on its residents. Council's aim is to strengthen community resilience to bushfire and grassfire and reduce the impact of fire risk by ensuring that strategic and settlement planning decisions prioritise the protection of human life.



- **Clause 02.03-5** Built environment and heritage, recognises that all forms of development and elements of the rural landscape contribute to the character of the municipality and that well designed urban environments build connection to place and the community. Council aims to encourage the provision of attractive and walkable neighbourhoods that uses spaces to encourage recreation and social interaction. This clause also recognises the importance of ensuring that new development responds to the character of an area whilst acknowledging the need to ensure a diversity of housing in appropriate locations.
- **Clause 02.3-6** Housing, recognises the need for the established suburbs to also accommodate forecast population growth, with the highest level of housing change being directed to areas which are well serviced by public transport and other services and facilities. Within the Whittlesea township housing diversity is largely directed to the commercial mixed use area of Church and Laurel Street with the existing residential area expected to support only limited change. It also recognises the need to encourage a range of housing types to meet the changing needs of the community and to enable people to age in place. Housing should also contribute positively to the local character and sense of place. In addition, Council supports the provision of more affordable housing.
- **Clause 02.03-8** Transport identifies the need to ensure an integrated transport system to ensure people are and businesses are connected both within the municipality and with the rest of Melbourne to ensure access to jobs, services and business opportunities. In addition to ensuring a well connected road system, Council also aims to support sustainable modes of transport.
- **Clause 02.03-9** Open space recognises the importance of open space as a valuable resource for recreation, conservation, visual amenity, health and well-being. Council aims to facilitate an appropriate range and proportion of open space types to reflect community expectations for nature conservation, formal and informal recreation.
- **Clause 02.03-9** Integrated water management recognises the need to focus on the sustainable use of water resources to ensure water security into the future. It further recognises the need to carefully manage the tributaries of the Plenty River and Merri Creek, particularly in urban areas where stormwater can cause risks to water quality, and flooding.

Clause 10 contains the State, Regional and Local Planning Policy Framework. The following section outlines the key local planning policy strategies that are relevant to the consideration of this Plan.

- **Clause 11.01-1L** Green wedge areas contains the following strategies:
  - o Define boundaries that preserve the integrity of both rural and urban areas.
  - o Limit rural residential subdivision to those precincts identified in the Whittlesea Township Local Structure Plan (Whittlesea, 1994).
  - o Protect the identified significant viewsheds and visually significant roadside corridors including, Whittlesea/Wallan Road along the eastern gateway to the municipality and Yan Yean Road between Whittlesea Township and Kinglake.
  - o Protect visually significant areas including the non-urban break between Masons Road and the Whittlesea Township along the Plenty Road corridor and the views to the Plenty Ranges, the Great Dividing Range and Quarry Hills.

- o Design development to respect the visual characteristics of the landscape and without compromising its visual integrity.
  - o Site dwellings and other buildings to sit below hilltops and ridgelines and in areas that minimise visual intrusion.
  - o Locate access ways below ridgelines following the contours of the land.
  - o Facilitate opportunities for tourism that focuses on local character, historic structures, living and traditional cultures, landscape, cuisine and arts, as well as local flora and fauna.
- **Clause 11.01-1L** Rural character areas notes that the rural parts of the City of Whittlesea can be divided into four overarching land character areas and seeks to ensure that development respects the identified visual character values of the Plenty Valley, Plenty Ranges, the Hills and Western Plains. The following strategies are relevant to this Plan:
    - o Protect the Plenty Valley with its historic homesteads, hedgerows, pastoral qualities and River Red Gum woodlands close to farming properties and Whittlesea Township.
    - o Protect the Hills with their visual sensitivity due to topography, slope, major ridgelines and viewing corridors.
    - o Protect the visual qualities and significant hill tops of the Whittlesea Hills and Quarry Hills by limiting development to below designated height contours as identified in the Whittlesea Township Local Structure Plan (Whittlesea, 1994).
    - o Maintain the existing low density rural character of the Plenty Valley, Plenty Ranges, the Hills and the Western Plains.
  - **Clause 11.03-1L** Activity Centres contains strategies to support the continued viability of lower order centres by encouraging a mix of compatible uses and built form improvements that contribute to the amenity, access and useability of the centre; and providing activated street-based environments that are pedestrian friendly together with a mix of retail, commercial and community facilities with opportunities for residential or business uses on upper levels.
  - **Clause 11.03-2L** Growth areas includes a strategy to protect the non-urban breaks between South Morang, Mernda/Doreen and Whittlesea Township and between Wollert and Donnybrook/Woodstock with a focus on the Quarry and Whittlesea Hills and linking key watercourses.
  - **Clause 12.01-1L** Protection of biodiversity seeks to protect and improve existing habitat corridors and remnant vegetation.
  - **Clause 13.02-1L** Bushfire planning applies to all land in a designated Bushfire Prone Area and seeks to strengthen community resilience to bushfire and grassfire and protect environmental and cultural values.
  - **Clause 14.01-2L** Sustainable agricultural land use encourages sustainable land management including managing weed and animal pests and retention of native vegetation.

- **Clause 15.01-1L** Urban design aims to support built form outcomes that create a connection to place and the community; enhance the appearance of the municipality's major gateways through prominent and distinctive built form, urban design and landscape treatments that contribute to the amenity and visual appearance of the locality; and encourage canopy trees in urban streetscapes. Clause 15.03-1L Heritage conservation in Heritage Overlay areas includes a broad range of strategies aimed at protecting places with identified heritage values and ensuring that any works complement and respect the built form and architectural style of a place.
- **Clause 16.01-1L** Integrated housing identifies the need to support the provision of social housing in established suburbs. Clause 16.01-1L Housing supply in established areas recognises the need to promote increased diversity and quality in housing and to accommodate with different needs and abilities. Clause 16.01-2L Housing affordability also seeks to ensure provision of more affordable housing within the municipality.
- **Clause 18.02-2L** Public transport provides for the protection of the dedicated railway corridor between Mernda and Whittlesea Township.
- **Clause 19.02-6L** Open space incorporates the following strategies:
  - o Support the establishment of tourism enterprises relating to open space that are compatible with the local environment.
  - o Protect the open space values of watercourses such as the Plenty River, Darebin and Merri Creeks and their various tributaries.
  - o Provide for river parklands within Whittlesea Township.







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