



Quarry Hills Lookout - South Morang

Green Wedge Management Plan 2023-2033



Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

We recognise the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country and acknowledge the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and Taungurung People as the Traditional Owners of lands within the City of Whittlesea.

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Left page photo: Smoking Ceremony



Executive Summary

Council’s Integrated Planning Framework is comprised of seven key strategies. Each strategy expands on our long-term 20-year community vision, *Whittlesea 2040: A place for all* and our *Community Plan 2021–2025*.

In turn, each of these strategies are underpinned by multiple long-term plans, which provide the detailed analysis and rationale. This *Green Wedge Management Plan* (GWMP) (2023-2033) is one of these plans.

The Whittlesea Green Wedge is a resource for the benefit of all City of Whittlesea residents and visitors. The Green Wedge contains agricultural land, scenic landscapes, heritage places, open space and landscapes to be enjoyed.

There are many complex and competing priorities to be addressed in managing our Green Wedge, particularly at the Green Wedge/urban interface. These issues were clearly identified through the community engagement undertaken as part of the preparation of this *Green Wedge Management Plan*.

Over 550 community members told us about their vision and priorities through various engagement activities.

The *Green Wedge Management Plan* Vision, Objectives and Strategic Directions identified in this plan are derived from background research and the outcomes of the community engagement. The *Green Wedge Management Plan* has also been informed by the Traditional Owners.

The *Green Wedge Management Plan* tackles a range of issues under the Whittlesea 2040 goals; Sustainable Environment, Liveable Neighbourhoods, Strong Local Economy and Connected Communities.

The *Green Wedge Management Plan* reaffirms the communities’ priorities in protecting biodiversity, natural landscapes and rural characters of the Whittlesea Green Wedge. It envisages a stronger and balanced role for the Whittlesea Green Wedge in supporting a strong local economy through local food production and the visitor economy.

While our community hold diverse opinions on how the Green Wedge should be managed, there is common agreement that it should be protected now and into the future.

In this context it is an important key direction of the *Green Wedge Management Plan* that Council continues to partner, engage and empower Traditional Owners and the community in planning and caring for our Green Wedge.



Part 1 Introduction to the Whittlesea Green Wedge

About this document

This *Green Wedge Management Plan (GWMP)* has been divided into 4 parts.

Part 1 Introduction to the Green Wedge

This provides some context as to where the GWMP sits within Council's Integrated Planning Framework.

It also provides a snapshot of the Whittlesea Green Wedge including:

- the physical attributes
- the key features of the area
- a community and economic profile

Part 2 Policy Context for the Green Wedge

This outlines the federal, state and local legislative and policy framework within which the GWMP operates.

Part 3 What our Community told us

This provides information on the values, themes for inclusion in the GWMP and opportunities identified by the community and the Traditional Owners.

Part 4 The Plan: Vision, Objectives and Strategic Directions

This outlines the Vision, Objectives and Strategic Directions for the Green Wedge. These have been developed from background research and the outcomes of the community engagement. They are captured under the Whittlesea 2040 goals: Sustainable Environment, Liveable Neighbourhoods, Strong Local Economy and Connected Communities.

While the GWMP tackles issues of biodiversity, landscape, water and heritage separately, it is acknowledged that the Traditional Owner view of Caring for Country represents a more holistic approach managed according to cultural objectives.

Purpose of the GWMP

The Green Wedge is dynamic and constantly evolving. The State Government requires that all Councils¹ containing a Green Wedge area must prepare a GWMP as a framework for the sustainable management and development of the Green Wedge.

The key task of a GWMP is to articulate the type, scale and form of change in the Green Wedge and how those changes will be managed and facilitated.

Planning Practice Note 31, DELWP 2015, states that through the *Whittlesea Planning Scheme*, the GWMP articulate the Strategic Directions for the Green Wedge and should:

- ensure the vision, role and purpose of the Green Wedge is identified
- confirm the Green Wedge zoning and the schedules to these zones
- ensure identified values, environmental assets and resources are appropriately identified and protected in the planning scheme through tools such as planning scheme overlays and local planning policies
- consider the need to provide further guidance in relation to discretionary uses and developments within the Green Wedge through the Local Planning Policy Framework. (*Planning Practice Note 31 DEWLP 2015*).

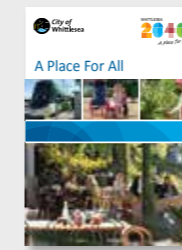
It is important to note that in identifying local directions for the Green Wedge, the GWMP must operate within the existing Victorian legislative and policy framework. For instance, the Whittlesea GWMP does not change things such as the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) or override any other policies, planning or zoning controls set out by the State Government.

The GWMP (2023-2033) proposes a Vision, Objectives and Strategic Directions for the Whittlesea Green Wedge. The Vision outlines the preferred future for the Green Wedge, the Objectives articulate what success looks like on the ground and the Strategic Directions articulate the high-level strategies that will guide Council's journey to achieve the Vision and Objectives.

¹ The Planning and Environment Act 1987 identifies the 17 fringe councils including the City of Whittlesea.

Level 1: Vision

Council's overarching vision



Whittlesea 2040



Community Plan

Integrated Planning Framework

The GWMP (2023-2033) has been developed under Council's new Integrated Planning Framework. The Framework is made up of four levels:

1. Level 1: Vision - Council's overarching Vision Whittlesea 2040: a place for all.
2. Level 2: Strategy - Council's seven key strategies and their action plans.
3. Level 3: Approach - Comprises the long-term plans (of which the GWMP is one) and the detailed analysis and rationale for each key focus area.
4. Level 4: Operations – Operational programs, guidelines and technical documents.

Level 2: Strategy

Strategic direction and action plan



Sustainable Environment Strategy



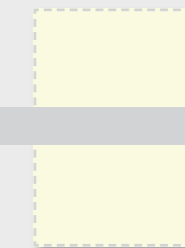
Strong Local Economy



Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy



Connected Communities Strategy

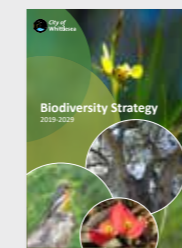


Reconciliation Action Plan

Under development

Level 3: Approach

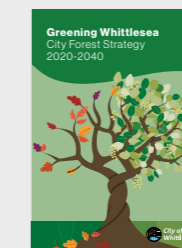
Long term plans, detailed analysis and detailed rationale



Biodiversity



Water For All



Greening Whittlesea



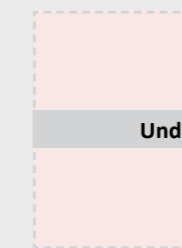
Rethinking Waste



Green Wedge Management Plan



Climate Change



Agri-Food Plan



Destination Plan

Under development

Level 4: Operations

Operational programs, guidelines and technical documents



Processes



Systems



Professional Development Plans



Environmentally Sustainable Design Guidelines



Yan Yean Reservoir, Yan Yean

What is the Whittlesea Green Wedge?

Over 60% of the City of Whittlesea is rural or non-urban land currently protected from urban development. Officially known as the '**Green Wedge**', this land is home to productive agricultural land, scenic landscapes, heritage places, rural living, National Parks, forests, waterways, reservoirs and nationally significant flora and fauna.

The Whittlesea Green Wedge is the lungs of the City of Whittlesea and Metropolitan Melbourne, - it's the food bowl that feeds us, - the farms and markets where some of us work or get fresh local fruits and vegetables and open space and landscapes to relax and recharge.

It also holds a significant proportion of the unimpacted Cultural Heritage with many sacred and special places for the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung people and the Taungurung people providing the opportunity to celebrate and facilitate enhanced cultural practice.



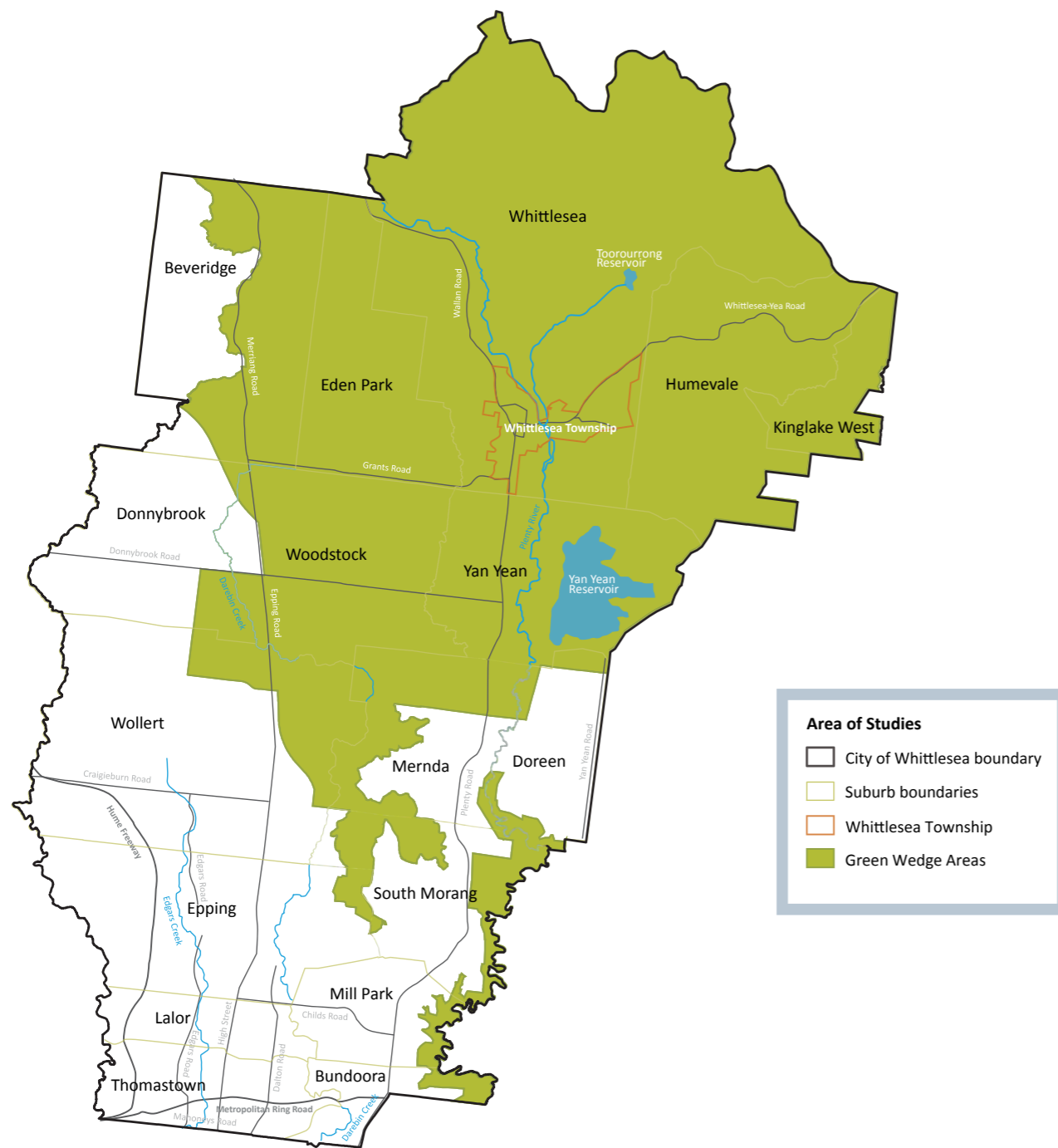
Extent of the Whittlesea Green Wedge

The City of Whittlesea's Green Wedge consists of the Whittlesea Township and the broader rural area which surrounds it, including Eden Park, Humevale, Kinglake West, South Morang (part), Woodstock, Wollert (part), Donnybrook (part), Beveridge (part), Mernda (part), Doreen (part), Whittlesea (part), and Yan Yean.

The Wurundjeri Willum Clan is the Traditional Owner of the land that now forms the Whittlesea Green Wedge.

The Wurundjeri Willum Clan of the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung is part of the Wurundjeri tribe and Woi-Wurrung language group: one of the many language groups that make up the Kulin Nation.

There are also small areas on the northern boundary of the municipality, in Kinglake West (the north facing slopes of the Great Dividing Range) where the Taungurung people are the Traditional Owners.



Map 1. Whittlesea Green Wedge

Key features

The Whittlesea Green Wedge is characterised by its diverse landforms, soil types and land uses. Natural landscapes in the Whittlesea Green Wedge consists mainly of the Highlands being the Southern Fall in the north, Victorian Volcanic Plain in the south, and a small area of Central Victorian Uplands in Quarry Hills.

The following section summarises the key features of the Whittlesea Green Wedge. Significantly, one third of the land is public land used for closed water catchments, national parks and state forests.

Other land uses and characteristics include:

- significant flora and fauna habitats
- agricultural activities
- rural living and small settlements
- recreation and tourism attraction opportunities
- scenic landscapes
- significant Aboriginal and European heritage places
- extractive resources such as sand, clay, gravel and stone.



Biodiversity

The Whittlesea Green Wedge is home to a diverse range of native plants and animals, including native grasslands of National and State significance, River Red Gums, Grassy Eucalypt Woodland, and forested areas such as Kinglake National Park and Mount Disappointment State Forest. Rural areas provide the majority of habitat for native species, and in some cases contain the only remaining vegetation community within the region. Healthy natural environments and the ecosystem services they support are important for the prosperity and liveability for which Melbourne is renowned.



Landscape

Significant landscapes include the flat agricultural landscape of the Plenty Valley, scattered River Red Gums and majestic Plenty Ranges that provide a scenic backdrop to Melbourne. These rural and natural landscapes provide a sense of place whilst contributing to ecological values, supporting tourism and also being culturally significant. The landscape qualities of the Green Wedge are a part of Melbourne's distinctive character and appeal.



Agriculture

Areas of productive agricultural land support locally grown produce such as olives, wineries, berry farms and cheese products offered for sale at local markets. Although a part time pursuit for many residents, grazing and equestrian activities are also common. Productive agricultural land is a finite resource and plays an important role in contributing to local food supply and making Melbourne a sustainable city. In the Whittlesea Green Wedge, high value is placed on the quality of the rural landscape, contributing an essential liveability element.



Water

The Whittlesea Green Wedge supports the upper and middle catchment areas of the Plenty River, Darebin Creek and Merri Creek. This area contains several closed water supply catchments that contribute to Melbourne’s water supply and is home to the Toorourrong and Yan Yean water storage reservoirs. Waterways, wetlands and floodplains within the municipality provide valuable cultural, environmental, social and economic benefits for residents and visitors alike.



Communities and Settlements

The Green Wedge is highly valued for its liveability with many small rural settlements and areas of rural living. The township of Whittlesea is the most significant, containing more than half of the rural population. Many residents are attracted to the Green Wedge by the rural lifestyle and sense of community.



Aboriginal Culture

Before European colonisation, the Aboriginal people of the Wurundjeri Willam Clan inhabited the area and remain in this area today. A small section of the Taungurung Land and Waters Council area is located in Kinglake West. There are many sites of cultural significance throughout the Green Wedge associated with Aboriginal culture, such as scarred trees, along waterways, stony rises, saddles and ridges. These sites hold special meaning for the Traditional Owners and need to be sustained for the practicing culture of today and future generations.



Historical Heritage

Remnants of early European colonisation are present throughout the Green Wedge including farm homesteads, outbuildings, dry-stone walls and historic hedgerows.

The dry-stone walls are linked to historic land use practices, as well as the industry and skills of settlers and landowners. Some walls were built in specific ways such as cultivation paddocks and dry-stone enclosures which may be unique in Victoria.



Tourism and Recreation

The Whittlesea Green Wedge supports a wide range of recreational pursuits, natural attractions and events. Key attractions range from the Country Music Festival to the Whittlesea Agricultural Show. Other attractions include farmers markets, golf courses, leisure recreation, local farm gate products, bushwalking, camping and horse-riding trails. It is also home to various cultural landscapes, education sites or areas of significance for Traditional Owners. All of these attractions and activities deliver important economic, social and environmental benefits to local communities and broader Melbourne.



Extractive Industry

There are two extractive industry operations (quarries) partly located within the Green Wedge. Extractive industries play a fundamental role in supporting Melbourne’s future development and prosperity.

Community and economic profile

This section provides a snapshot of the socio-economic characteristics of the people who live and work in the Whittlesea Green Wedge. It also briefly discusses the food and fibre economy in the City of Whittlesea which is relevant in the Green Wedge context.

Community snapshot

Approximately 3.7% of the City of Whittlesea's population lives in the Green Wedge. Of those 8,855 people, 64 per cent live in the Whittlesea Township (.id Demographic Profile, 2020).

A comparison of population in 2021 and 2011 shows the following trend:

- slow population growth and an increasingly higher proportion of people living in the Whittlesea Township
- an ageing population overall, with a minor but steady decrease in average household size
- a far more culturally homogenous community compared to the rest of the municipality.

One reverse trend worth noting is the change in the level of education of Green Wedge residents. In 2011, 42% of our Green Wedge residents had some form of qualification², slightly below the municipal average at 46%. By 2016, this had increased to 47% of Green Wedge residents, compared to an overall drop in the municipal average of 39% of residents with some form of qualification.

In comparison with the rest of the municipality, other notable features about our Green Wedge residents include:

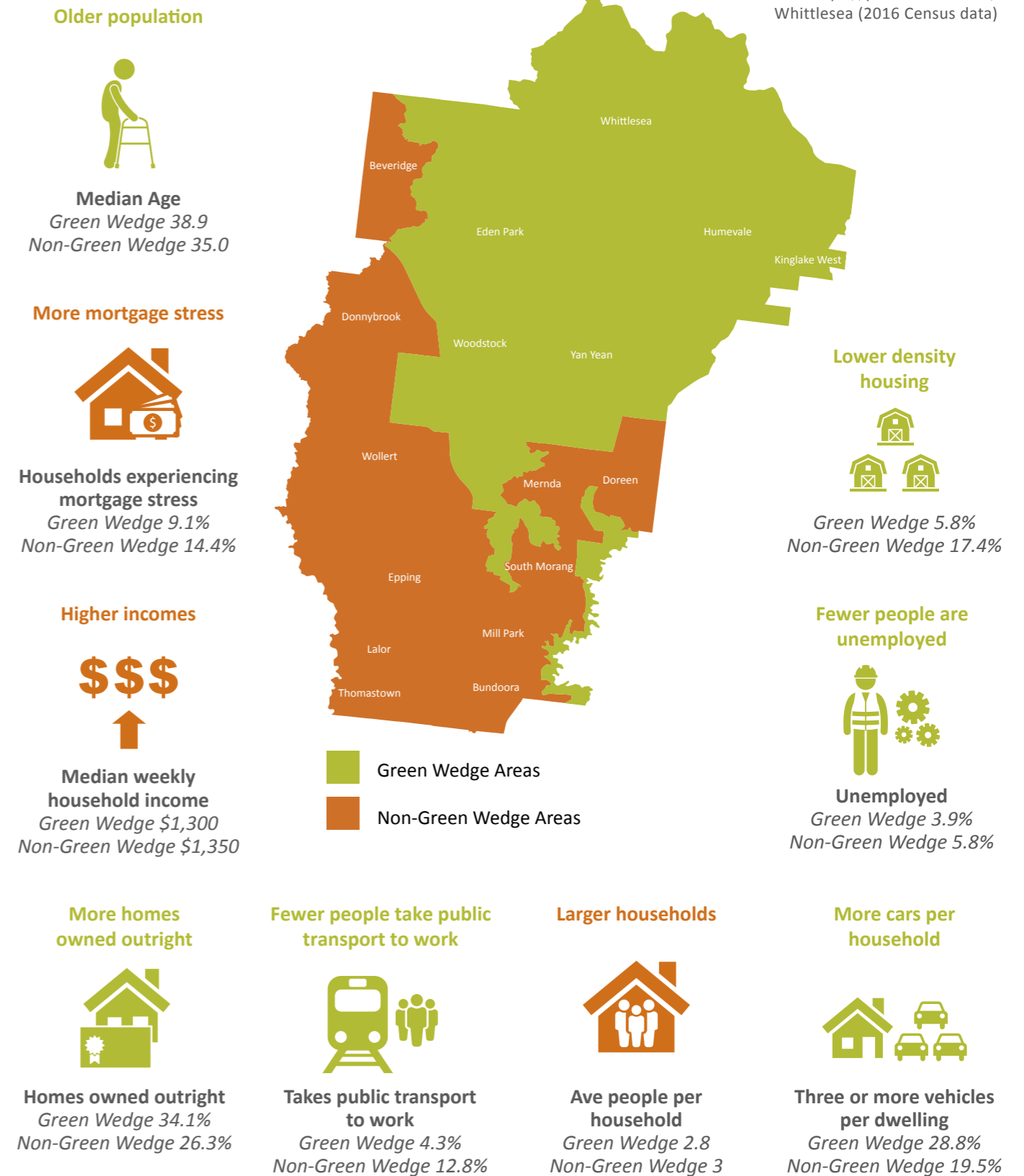
- highest median age and highest volunteering rate
- higher rate of disengaged youth – defined as 15-24-year-olds who are not in employment, looking for work or in full-time study
- considerably higher proportion of Technicians and Trade Workers and a slightly higher proportion of Managers or Professionals
- a notable trend of the 14-25 and 45-59 age cohort moving out of the Green Wedge
- higher and growing proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders population.

It is worth noting that the data above is based on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data which was collected before the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic could continue to disrupt the trends observed in the past decade. According to the ABS, in the March 2021 quarter alone, there was a net loss of 11,800 people from capital cities to regional Australia, the largest quarterly net loss on record. Greater Melbourne (including Green Wedges) has a net loss of 8,300 people in the March 2021 quarter, the second largest net loss among capital cities.³

A report commissioned by Council suggests that it is too early to tell how the outward migration from Greater Melbourne to regional areas might have implications for our Green Wedge area (SGS, 2021, *Whittlesea 2040 COVID 19 Impacts Research Report*). Council will need to closely monitor the implication as part of the GWMP implementation.

Fig 1. Green Wedge Socio-economic Profile

Source: .id Demographic Profile <https://profile.id.com.au/Whittlesea> (2016 Census data)



² In this case, it refers to Vocational, Diploma or Advanced Diploma, Bachelor or higher degree.

³ Source: ABS, Regional internal migration estimates, provisional, March 2021 (abs.gov.au)



Toorourrong Reservoir, Whittlesea

Local economy

Local food and fibre economy

Food and fibre economy refers to the human-produced or harvested resources used to directly sustain human life and are produced in managed environments such as farms and plantations or harvested from wild stocks.

According to Deloitte Access Economics (2016), the estimated existing economic contribution of food production and manufacturing in Greater Melbourne's Green Wedge and peri urban area is \$2.45 billion per annum to the city's regional economy. In addition, it creates 21,001 full-time equivalent jobs.

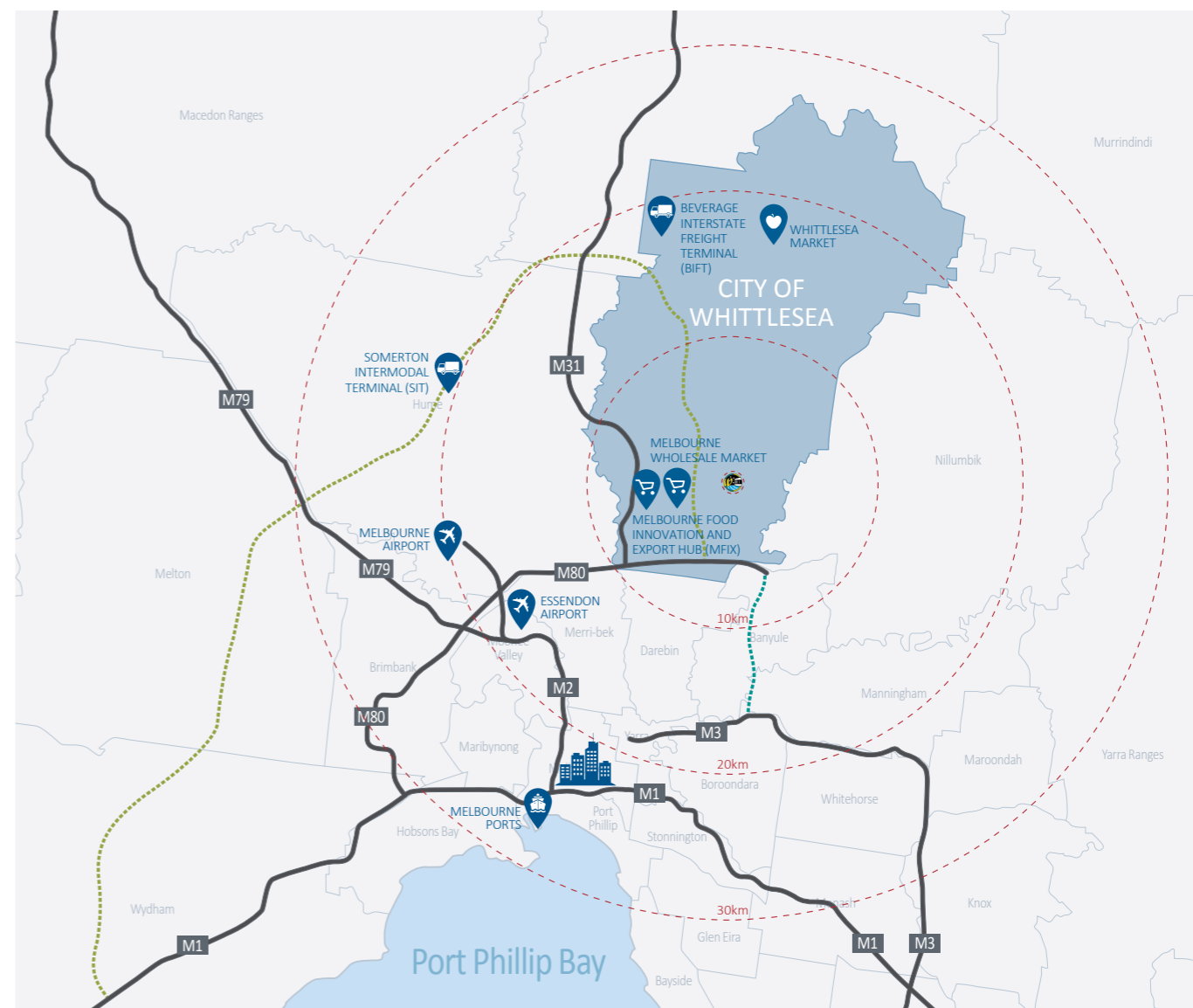
In Victoria, the value of food and fibre exports is projected to increase significantly, reaching a total of \$28 billion by 2030. Melbourne's North is expected to double its output to \$5 billion and create an additional 7,000 jobs in the sector over the next 10 years (North Link, 2020, *Building Communities, Connecting People, Northern Horizons 2020 Evidence Report*).

The City of Whittlesea is perfectly located to facilitate growth in food production and manufacturing, given the proximity to Melbourne Wholesale Market in Epping, the proposed Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub (MFIH), and the municipality's direct access to Melbourne's extensive transport infrastructure and close in proximity to Melbourne's Airport.

Historically, the City of Whittlesea has been a strong, diverse agricultural region servicing Melbourne with a wide array of produce, including meat, milk, wool, grain, fruit, vegetables and eggs. Many influences including the impact of urban development have since changed the extent and overall value and diversity of our agriculture sector.

In 2020/2021, the municipality had an agricultural commodity value at around \$92.2 million with mushrooms being the dominant agricultural commodity. About 58% of the mushrooms (value) produced in Victoria are produced in the City of Whittlesea.

Map 2.



Excluding mushrooms, livestock slaughtering is the predominant agricultural activity with a value of \$5.2 million. Nurseries (including flowers and cut turf) represents a smaller but still significant activity with a value of \$1.6 million. It is possible that the value of this sector may be higher but the supporting data is not available at this time. Hay and wool production each represent just over 3% of the agricultural value. (see Figure 2 2020/2021 Agricultural Production in City of Whittlesea)

The number of people employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing industries in the City of Whittlesea has reduced steadily from 481 people in 1996 to 332 in 2011. However, the number local residents who were employed by the agriculture, forestry and fishing industries in Victoria, increased in 2016 to 514 and then again to 565 in 2021. (*id. community profile, 2023*).

There is a substantial food manufacturing and a growing food retailing sector in the municipality that make up our local food industry. Food product manufacturing is the largest manufacturing sub-sector in the City of Whittlesea. In 2020/2021, the sub-sector was worth \$967.3 million.

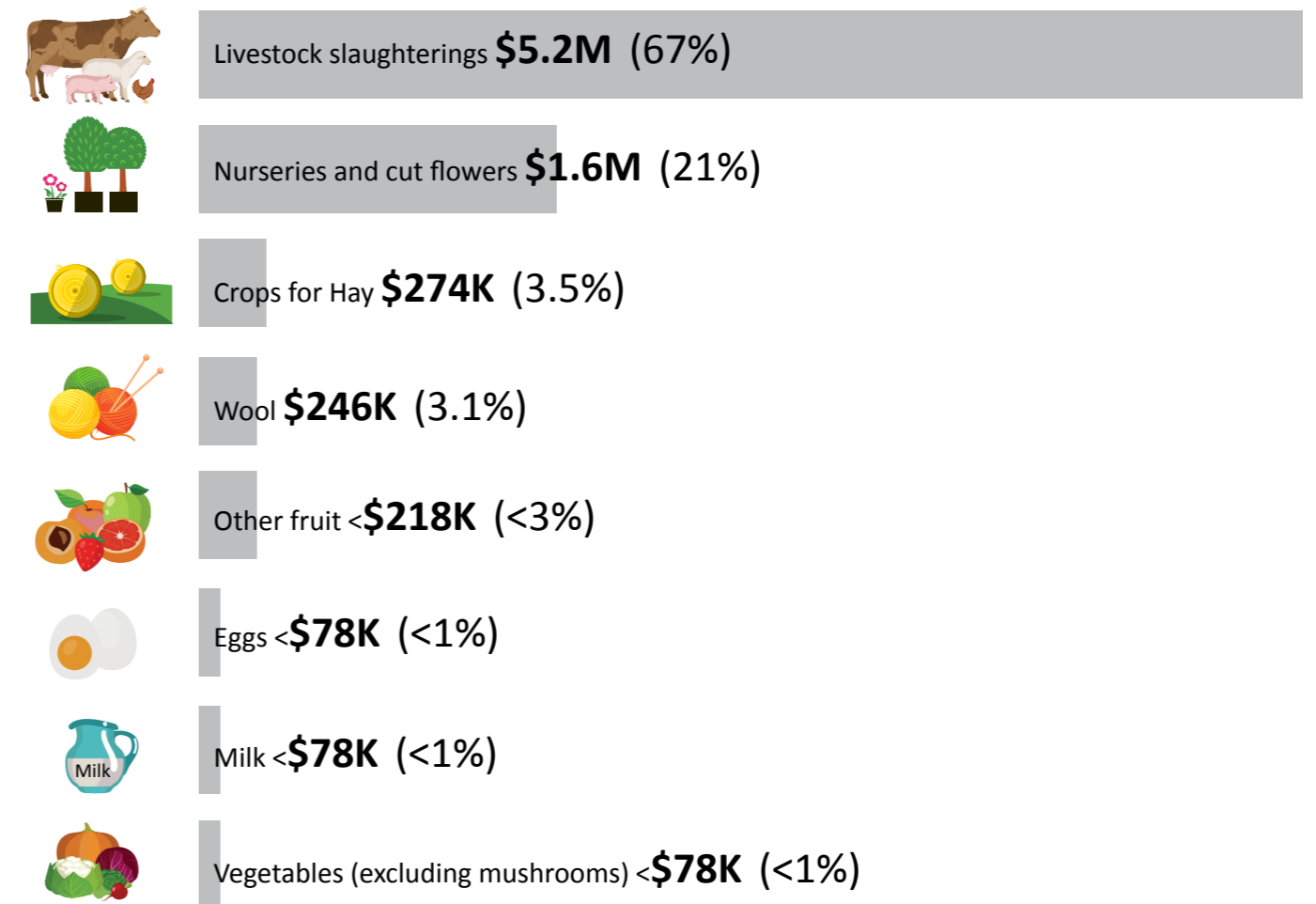
Food Retailing is a growing sector with significant specialisation in our municipality, worth just over \$349.1million (total output) in 2020/2021. The growth is potentially linked to the contribution of local agricultural products in local markets. (*Agri-business Profile, CoW, 2018*)

Council has been actively advocating to Federal government to advance the Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub (MFIH) - a 51-hectare site adjacent to the Melbourne Wholesale Market - and develop an international food hub in Melbourne's north. There is a significant opportunity to build upon the existing competitive advantage within the food industry and further support agriculture in the Green Wedge.

Broader local economy

Whilst agriculture is the predominant economic activity in the Whittlesea Green Wedge, a small number of other uses also operate in the Green Wedge. These include Boral and Hanson extractive industries and Funfields Themepark. These non-agricultural uses also contribute to the successful vibrancy of Whittlesea's Green Wedge areas.

Fig 2. 2020/2021 Agricultural Production in CoW (excluding mushroom production)



(Source: Value of Agricultural Commodities Produced in Australia, Australian Bureau of Statistics, June 2022)



Part 2 Policy context for the Green Wedge

Legislative framework

Green Wedges are established, planned and protected by the State Government’s legislative and policy framework.

In 2002, the State Government established an UGB around Melbourne to manage outward expansion in a coordinated manner.

It also identified 12 Green Wedges within 17 local government areas (refer to **Map 3**. Melbourne’s Green Wedges) and put in place legislation and policies to protect these valued Green Wedges.

Map 3. Melbourne’s Green Wedges



Table 1 lists the relevant legislation, policy and strategies which are applicable to the Green Wedge.

Table 1

Responsible body	Legislation	Relevant policy and strategy
Federal Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commonwealth’s Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy for Nature 2019-2030
State Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning and Environment Act 1987 (Part 3AA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 Planning Practice Note 31 – Preparing a Green Wedge Management Plan (2015) Water for Victoria (2016) Biodiversity Strategy (2037-2017) Agriculture Victoria Strategy (2017 - 2030) Victoria’s Climate Change Strategy (2022 - 2050) Helping Victoria Grow: Extractive Resources Strategy (2018) State-wide Waste and Resource Recovery Infrastructure Plan (2018) Planning Reforms for Animal Industries (2018) Integrated Water Management Forums Strategic Directions Statements (2018) Regional Tourism Review (2019) Visitor Economy Master Plan (under development) Draft Land Use Framework Plans for Melbourne’s metropolitan regions Planning for Melbourne’s Green Wedges and Agricultural Land Discussion Paper (G WAL) (report under development by DEWLP) Traditional Owner Country Plans Victorian Cultural Landscapes Strategy (2021)
City of Whittlesea	<p>The Whittlesea Planning Scheme contains the following state and regional provisions relevant to Green Wedges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clause 11.01-1R Green Wedges – Metropolitan Melbourne Clause 11.03-3S Peri-urban areas Clause 51.02 Metropolitan Green Wedge Land: Core Planning Provisions <p>The Whittlesea Planning Scheme also contains the following local policies relevant to Whittlesea’s Green Wedge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clause 02.03 Municipal Planning Strategy – Strategic Directions Clause 11.01-1L Green Wedge areas Clause 12.01-1L Protection of biodiversity Clause 14.01-2L Sustainable agricultural land use Clause 15.03-1L Heritage Conservation in Whittlesea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whittlesea 2040: A Place for All City of Whittlesea Community Plan 2021-2025 Sustainable Environment Strategy 2022-2032 Strong Local Economy Strategy 2022-2026 Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy (under development) Connected Communities Strategy (under development) Reconciliation Action Plan (under review) Greening Whittlesea: City Forest Strategy 2020 – 2040 Whittlesea Water for All - Our Water Strategy 2020 – 2030 Climate Change Plan 2022 - 2032 Biodiversity Strategy 2019 - 2029 Rethinking Waste Plan 2021 - 2030 Green Wedge Management Plan 2023 - 2033 Destination Plan (under development) Agri-Food Plan (under development)

Plan Melbourne - the city's current metropolitan strategy articulates the State Government's future Vision and desired planning outcomes for Melbourne's Green Wedge areas. Importantly, it identifies the State Government's intention to maintain a permanent UGB to strengthen the protection and management of Melbourne's Green Wedges.

Agriculture and environmental considerations are generally the primary focus of Green Wedges, although Plan Melbourne (Outcome 4) (Appendix 2 - Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 Desired planning outcomes for Green Wedge and peri-urban areas) provides further detail identifying other appropriate activities for Green Wedge including:

- Provide land for a range of open space functions to meet community needs for active and passive recreation and for protection of the environment
- Facilitate sustainable year-round tourism, and new tourism development (including diverse attractions, accommodation and eating establishments) that maintains the integrity of the natural environment, provides social benefits for communities and visitors and contributes to local economies.

The State Government is undertaking a *Green Wedge Agricultural Land Review (GWAL)* with the intent to further strengthen Green Wedge planning provisions and protect agricultural land. Council has been advocating for relevant changes supporting stronger protection of biodiversity conservation and agricultural land through the GWAL review process. At the time of writing, the GWAL outcomes had not been released by State Government.

Whittlesea Planning Scheme

There are **three rural zones** in the Whittlesea Green Wedge and all of these zones support the use of land for agriculture and biodiversity enhancement. A summary of rural zones in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme is included (refer to **Table 2**).

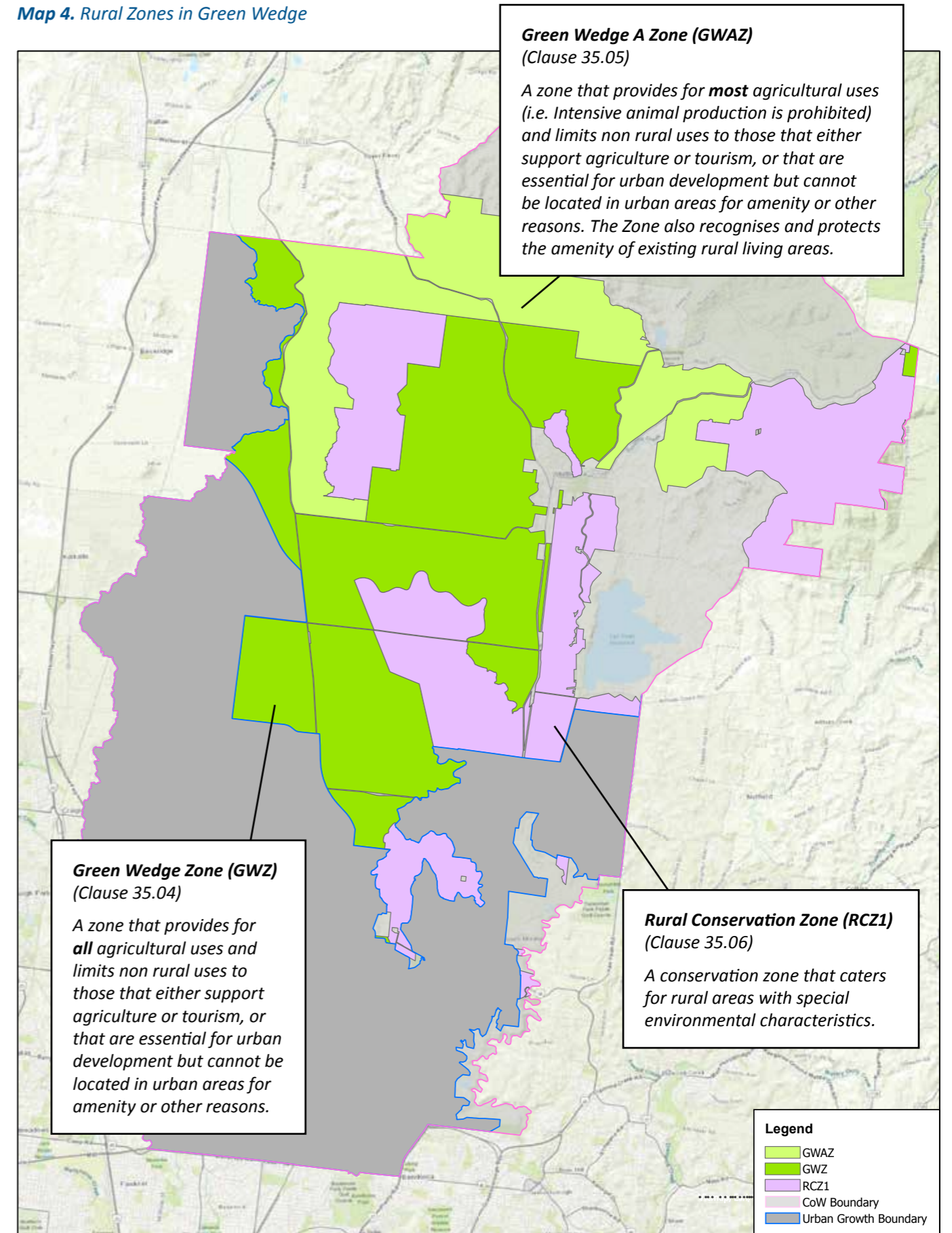
While, agriculture and environmental considerations are generally the primary focus of these zones, there are a range of other appropriate non rural uses that may be permitted, providing they also meet the purpose of Clause 51.02 of the *Whittlesea Planning Scheme*. Clause 51.02 includes:

- To protect metropolitan Green Wedge land from uses and development that would diminish its agricultural, environmental, cultural heritage, conservation, landscape natural resource or recreation values
- To protect productive agricultural land from incompatible uses and development
- To ensure that the scale of use is compatible with the non-urban character of metropolitan green wedge land
- To encourage the location of urban activities in urban areas.

Each Green Wedge zone defines the land uses which are permissible, either a Section 1 use where no planning permit is required or as a Section 2 use where a range of conditions must be met. Section 3 uses are prohibited.

In some instances for Section 2 uses, an 'in-conjunction' test may need to be applied. This test states that the use 'must be used in conjunction with Agriculture, Natural systems, Outdoor recreation facility, Rural industry or Winery'.

Map 4. Rural Zones in Green Wedge





Management: a shared responsibility

Managing Whittlesea's Green Wedge is a shared responsibility and involves a wide range of parties including:

- Traditional Owners
- Private landowners, residents and local business owners
- Government departments and authorities, utility and power companies and service agencies such as Department of Transport, Melbourne Water and Parks Victoria who manage significant land holdings, natural features, state assets or local facilities
- Volunteers and community groups including Landcare groups, "Friends of" groups, Country Fire Authority, dedicated community interest groups and sporting groups.

It is important to recognise that Council has different roles and responsibilities (provider, advocate, partner, regulator, and facilitator) in the management of the Green Wedge. Increasingly, the City of Whittlesea also needs to partner with the Federal and State Governments, other local councils, Traditional Owners and organisations who share a common interest in managing the Green Wedge.



Part 3 What our community told us

Community engagement

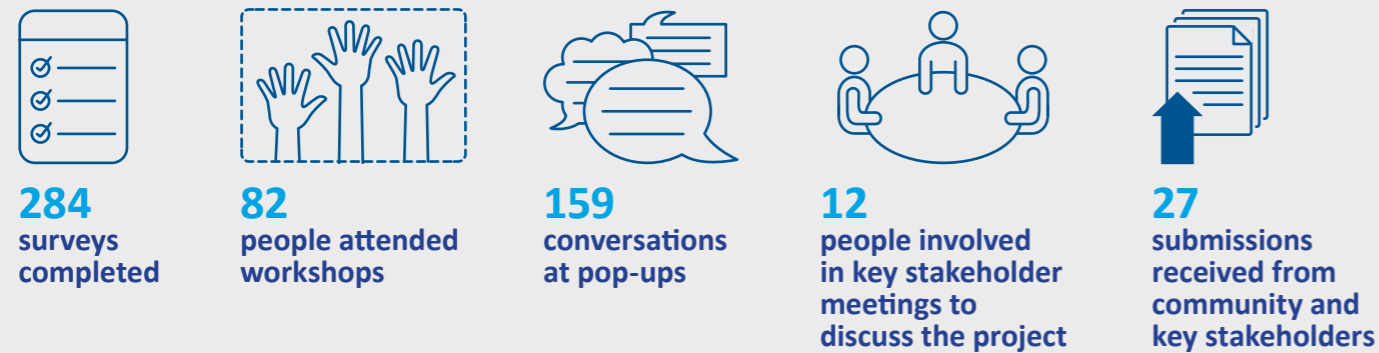
The Whittlesea Green Wedge community includes people who live or work in the Green Wedge, and those who feel strongly connected with Green Wedge for other environmental, social, economic reasons.

In preparing the GWMP, over 550 community members and stakeholders directly participated in a range of engagement activities including meetings, drop-in sessions, face to face or online information sessions, and surveys.

This engagement, used in conjunction with background research undertaken by Council and consultation with other key stakeholders, identified the key issues affecting the Green Wedge and guides the direction of the plan.

The infographic below provides the breakdown of engagement activities undertaken.

Figure 3. Overview of engagement activity participation



Source: Findings from Green Wedge Management Plan Community Engagement Report, CoW 2021
Findings from Green Wedge Management Plan Review Stage 2 Community Engagement, Capire 2022

The conversations were built around the Whittlesea 2040's four goals: Sustainable Environment, Liveable Neighbourhoods, Strong Local Economy, and Connected Community which form key elements of Council's Integrated Planning Framework (which is explained in more detail on page 7).

The main questions Council asked during the engagements included:

- what does the community value the most about the Whittlesea Green Wedge
- what themes the community want to see included the GWMP 2023-2033
- what opportunities exist to help meet these aspirations.



Quotes from our community

'Do not allow re-zoning for housing development or farming development in Eden park- protect the remnant vegetation' Protect the masons road metropolitan boundary.'

'Responsible interaction with the environment to avoid depletion or degradation of natural resources and allow for long-term environmental quality and increased community interactions, improved living standards and manageable growth.'

'Establishing appropriate uses/ development at the interface of the urban growth boundary. There will be a transition from urban to rural properties and therefore guidance on appropriate uses and development in those locations.'

'Greater support for innovative land use for value maximisation. Reduced focus on livestock, more focus on high value sustainable crops. Continue support for local distribution and consumption.'

'Raising awareness that a Green Wedge area serves an important role as the "lungs" of Melbourne and can only do this if there "Green" is protected through maintaining clean waterways and flora and fauna protection.'

'Protecting life is more important than allowing people to live in areas that will put them, their family and those tasked to go and save them from themselves during environmental hazards occurring.'

'Involve community in the solutions, upskill community to gain knowledge that supports economic participation and employment pathways that not only maintain but also activate these spaces in a sustainable way.'

'Improving and protecting our waterways is paramount. Assistance programs for landowners to improve the quality of the natural waterways, assisting with erosion and re vegetation.'

'It is imperative the metropolitan boundary is maintained, and the green wedge is protected. Connecting the community of Eden park with a bus service. Protecting vegetation and rejecting re zoning for development.'

'I would prefer to create tourism and recreation than develop land as it has been done in the past.'

'Green Wedge Education to the residents via different platform. Social media which is free to run and could reach out more people at a lower running cost should be considered.'

'The broader, diverse Whittlesea community needs greater opportunities to connect, engage with and protect the truly green elements of their local area.'

'Cultural heritage mapping to understand key Aboriginal values, Master planning of blue-green networks to build connectivity between the Green Wedge and neighbouring urban areas.'

'Give people the opportunity to reside here.'

'Adding value to the area is essential to attract visitors and income. This relies on well planned and managed spaces that are attractive, integrate the natural environment with the human, and are easily accessible to the community.'

'Work with innovative groups focused on sustainability in agriculture.'



'Having a Green Wedge zone in such close proximity to Melbourne creates significant opportunity for the development of an ecotourism industry that would serve to support employment and raise awareness for the diverse flora and fauna that exists in the area.'

'Stop large unsustainable subdivisions.'

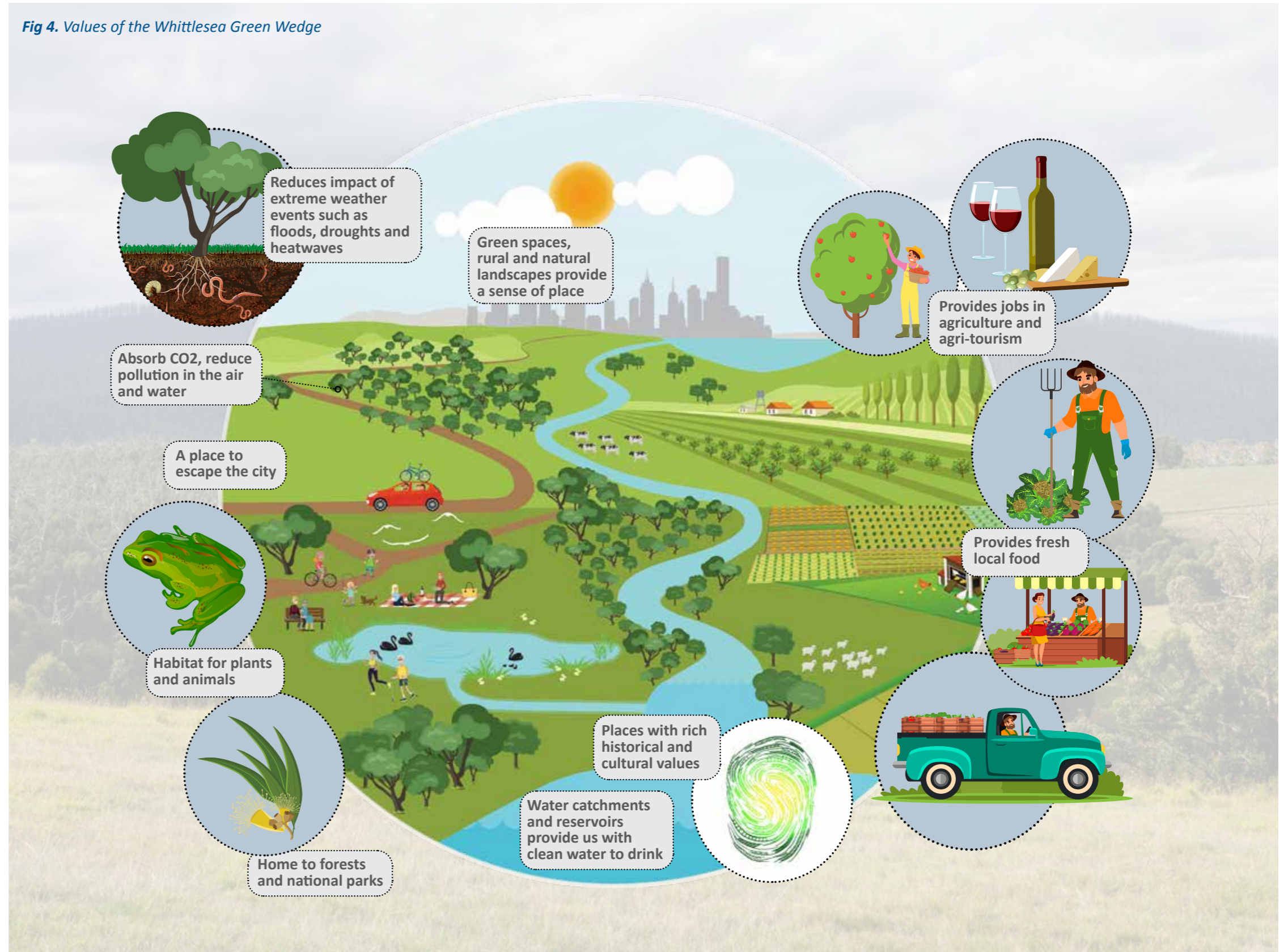
What the community values

Figure 4 illustrates the diverse values of the Green Wedge held by the broader Whittlesea community. Importantly, it highlights that 'environmental values' such as biodiversity and natural landscapes and its associated benefits are most important to the community.

The top 6 values are:

- The positive effects on my wellbeing from enjoying green natural spaces
- The existence of natural landscapes and features like hills, trees, waterways and animals
- The environmental benefits from reduced pollution in the air and water, reduced heat or flood impact from extreme weather events
- Local food produced in the area
- Local jobs in agriculture and related industries
- Cultural and spiritual connection to the land.

Fig 4. Values of the Whittlesea Green Wedge



The Fingerprint image has been created by Mandy Nicholson Wurundjeri artist, it contains traditional Wurundjeri motifs and represents how it is connected to the Earth, just like our fingerprints.



Themes identified

The values helped to identify the key themes that the community thought should be included in the GWMP. These themes include:



- enhance and protect biodiversity
- protect natural assets / resources
- encourage and support innovative and sustainable land management practice
- protect and enhance rural character and landscape
- support farming and food production
- protect and enhance the rich Aboriginal heritage and cultural practices
- protect and enhance post contact heritage, including dry-stone walls
- protect the Green Wedge from urban encroachment
- connect people to natural areas through the provision of walking trails and bicycle paths and other facilities
- educate and provide support to residents and visitors in caring for and respecting the Green Wedge
- more trees.

The community, as a whole, indicated they would like to continue to be involved and learn more about the Green Wedge including how to look after and care for the area.

Opportunities identified

The community was asked to identify the opportunities for the Green Wedge and these collated under the 4 goals of Sustainable Environment, Liveable Neighbourhoods, Strong Local Economy and Connected Communities.

Table 2. Opportunities identified in community engagement

 Sustainable Environment	 Liveable Neighbourhoods	 Strong Local Economy	 Connected Community
<p>Key opportunities identified for creating a Sustainable Environment included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve the management and protection of biodiversity • assist landowners, residents and environmental groups to deal with erosion, re-vegetation and weed control and improve the quality of the natural waterways • improve water management in the Green Wedge • partner with field experts to support and provide education in sustainable agriculture and land management practices, soil quality and ecology • protect and plant more trees in the Green Wedge and grow the significant tree registry • work with the State Government to maintain the Urban Growth Boundary. 	<p>Key opportunities identified for creating Liveable Neighbourhoods included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protect and enhance the rural landscape • discourage new residential development in areas prone to environmental hazards such as flood, erosion and bushfire • support good management and use of land close to the rural/urban fringe • provide better quality and fit-for-purpose roads • partner with other councils, government, and organisations who share a common interest in managing Green Wedge areas. 	<p>Key opportunities identified for creating a Strong Local Economy included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support local business owners in the agri-food industry that will bring more local jobs and help creating a healthier community • offer greater flexibility for producers in how they use their land to carry out diverse, value adding and innovative farming practices • increase opportunities for people to buy local produce, e.g. by promoting local producers, farm gate sales • explore opportunities for tourism in the rural areas; from agritourism to recreational activities • review Council incentives to better support agribusiness. 	<p>Key opportunities identified for creating a connected community included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand and support the diverse needs of our rural community • listen to landowners and residents to benefit from local knowledge for better land management outcomes and improved understandings of local histories • greater focus on protection of places of indigenous significance, and incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into the management of the Green Wedge • upskill the community and provide education on important issues relating to the Green Wedge.

The key opportunities identified within the community engagement have been developed into the Objectives and Strategic Directions used in this GWMP.

Part 4: The Plan: vision, objectives and strategic directions

The following section has been informed by the outcomes of the community engagement process.

Vision

The Whittlesea Green Wedge will be recognised for its enhanced natural environment and celebrated cultural assets, for providing a productive and diversified local economy and ensuring the well-being benefits of this beautiful space are enjoyed by all.

Objectives

The objectives for the Whittlesea Green Wedge have been captured under the four Whittlesea 2040 goals, listed on the next page.

Sustainable environment

Green Wedge objectives

- Our Green Wedge's natural landscapes are valued, healthy and biodiverse.
- Our Green Wedge is sustainably managed and is resilient to climate change and natural disasters.
- Our Green Wedge waterways are healthy and clean.
- Our Green Wedge protects and enhances greening on both council and non-council land.

Strong local economy

Green Wedge objectives

- The importance of agriculture in the Green Wedge is well understood by our community.
- Our Green Wedge supports activities that enhance agricultural and environmental values and discourages uses that are incompatible with the purposes of Green Wedge.
- Local agribusinesses are supported to facilitate ongoing viability and are encouraged to apply sustainable and innovative practices.
- Our Green Wedge supports a visitor economy that is sustainable and sensitive to the environmental and social impacts. The natural and built assets are recognised in the destination promotion activities.
 - Our Green Wedge supports renewable energy production, protects existing operation and future opportunities of extractive industry and regionally significant waste management assets that is compatible with Green Wedge values.

Liveable neighbourhoods

Green Wedge objectives

- High value landscape features and significant views, including Cultural Landscapes and Cultural Spaces, are identified, and protected in the Green Wedge.
- Communities understand the purpose of the Green Wedge zones and are supported to conduct appropriate land use, development and management on the land.
- Settlement in our Green Wedge is sensitive to the environment and is resilient to climate change and natural disasters.
- Our Green Wedge enjoy a safe and fit for purpose transport network that meets the needs and expectations of our community.
- Our Green Wedge has a clearly defined, permanent urban-rural interface that offer high ecological, recreational, agricultural values.

Connected community

Green Wedge objectives

- Our Green Wedge community take pride in their Green Wedge and are empowered with the knowledge and opportunities to look after it.
- Our Green Wedge community enjoy better accessibility to open space facilities, safe and fit-for-purpose road and public transport infrastructure for greater social and economic resilience.
- Our Green Wedge enhances, protects and promotes places of cultural significance.
- Partner with Traditional Owners to celebrate and facilitate enhanced Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung and Taungurung cultural practice, cultural heritage, improve land and water management and other Caring for Country practices in the Green Wedge.



Strategic Directions - Sustainable environment



Key Issues

Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the number and variety of living things on the planet. There are many threats to Whittlesea's biodiversity, such as land use changes; habitat fragmentation; weeds, pest animals and pathogens; inappropriate land management; and climate change. It is important that Council continues to work with State Government, landowners, residents, land managers and Traditional Owners to improve the management and protection of biodiversity and natural landscapes across the municipality now and into the future. The future Grassy Eucalypt Woodland (GEW) investigation area as described in the Melbourne Strategic Assessment, remains a significant outstanding matter (see below).

Grassy Eucalypt Woodland conservation

The future Grassy Eucalypt Woodland (GEW) investigation area of the Victorian Volcanic Plain is a Nationally significant ecological community that is listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act).

In 2009, The Commonwealth Government, under the EPBC Act, approved the extension of Melbourne's UGB, subject to conditions aimed at ensuring that development occurs in a way that protects areas of environmental significance. This includes securing 1200ha of GEW Reserve in the Whittlesea Green Wedge.

The Whittlesea GEW investigation area is covered by an Environment Significant Overlay (ESO). However, to date no land within this reserve has been secured or acquisition processes commenced by the State. Securing the GEW investigation area is important not only for the City of Whittlesea, but also adjoining Councils and the State of Victoria as a whole.

It will:

- protect biodiversity assets and safeguard the landscape qualities for Whittlesea's Green Wedge
- manage the urban-rural interface by introducing a permanent and functional buffer to the urban growth areas.

Soil management

Managing soil health is an emerging issue of national significance (Commonwealth, 2021). In the Whittlesea Green Wedge, high level soil mapping information indicates that the area is likely to contain sodic and dispersive soils that are prone to structural decline (Jacobs 2020). In addition, much of the northern area in our Green Wedge is hilly and susceptible to gully formation resulting from erosion. Any removal of vegetation and ground cover in these areas heightens the risk of gully formation and erosion, especially when the soils are sandy or sodic and prone to structural decline.

The significant environmental and economic impacts of erosion are often site-specific, yet their effects are wide ranging including but not limited to:

- increased erosion potential
- a deterioration in water quality and degradation of aquatic flora and fauna habitat
- failure of civil and private assets (i.e. roads, fences, dams and sheds) due to soil movement
- diminishing areas of productive agricultural land - poor ability to establish vegetative growth leading to a failure to thrive for open spaces, gardens and street trees
- decreased infiltration and holding capacity, and high runoff rates
- potential damage to traditional culture elements.



Tunnel erosion in Whittlesea Green Wedge

Soil salinity has also been identified as a key biophysical threat to our Green Wedge with saline soils recorded across much of the Green Wedge. Saline soils can have a significant impact on biodiversity, farming, water quality and physical condition of rivers and streams. Salinity can also degrade soil structure and cause erosion. It is important that Council seek opportunities to work with all level of governments, including neighbouring Councils to understand and improve soil management across the Green Wedges.

Green Wedge areas are also susceptible to illegal soil and fill dumping, particularly given their proximity to subdivision works within the growth areas making them attractive, cheap dumping locations.

This is partly due to the absence of permit triggers within the planning scheme on land within the Green Wedge and Rural Conservation Zones, unless the works are of a specified nature impacting on saline ground water or changing the rate of flow across title boundaries, or where the land is subject to an overlay that requires a planning permit for earthworks. Erosion management exemptions also create ambiguity and when coupled with the absence of all encapsulating permit requirements for earthworks, Councils are unable to properly regulate the occurrence of land filling and any associated impacts on the environment and the amenity of the surrounding area.

Water management

The Whittlesea Green Wedge contains the critical upper and middle catchments of various metropolitan waterways, including the Plenty River, the Merri Creek, Darebin Creek and a small portion of the Diamond Creek. It is also home to various wetlands and the important water supply catchment of Yan Yean Reservoir and the Toorourrong Reservoir that is linked by channels to the Yan Yean Reservoir. Groundwater held in aquifers also contributes to surface water supplies, interacting and contributing to the flow and health of waterways and wetlands.

Careful management of the upper and middle water catchment in the Whittlesea Green Wedge is crucial to the overall stream and waterway health. There are ongoing threats to the health of rural waterways. In the northern rural area of the Green Wedge, some waterways and their tributaries are flow starved due to the impact of human interventions in the catchment such as farm dams, licenced extractions and weirs and diversions for water supply.

This interwoven relationship between surface and groundwater resources, and how activities on the land affect water health, relies on integrated catchment management to tie together the range of considerations.

Council also recognises the importance of water to the culture and lifestyle of the Traditional Owners.

Council needs to continue work with rural landowners, water agencies and Traditional Owners to improve the ecological condition of the waterways, tributaries, wetlands and the overall water resilience in our Green Wedge. There may also be opportunities to explore alternative water sources given the proximity of agricultural land to the growth areas.

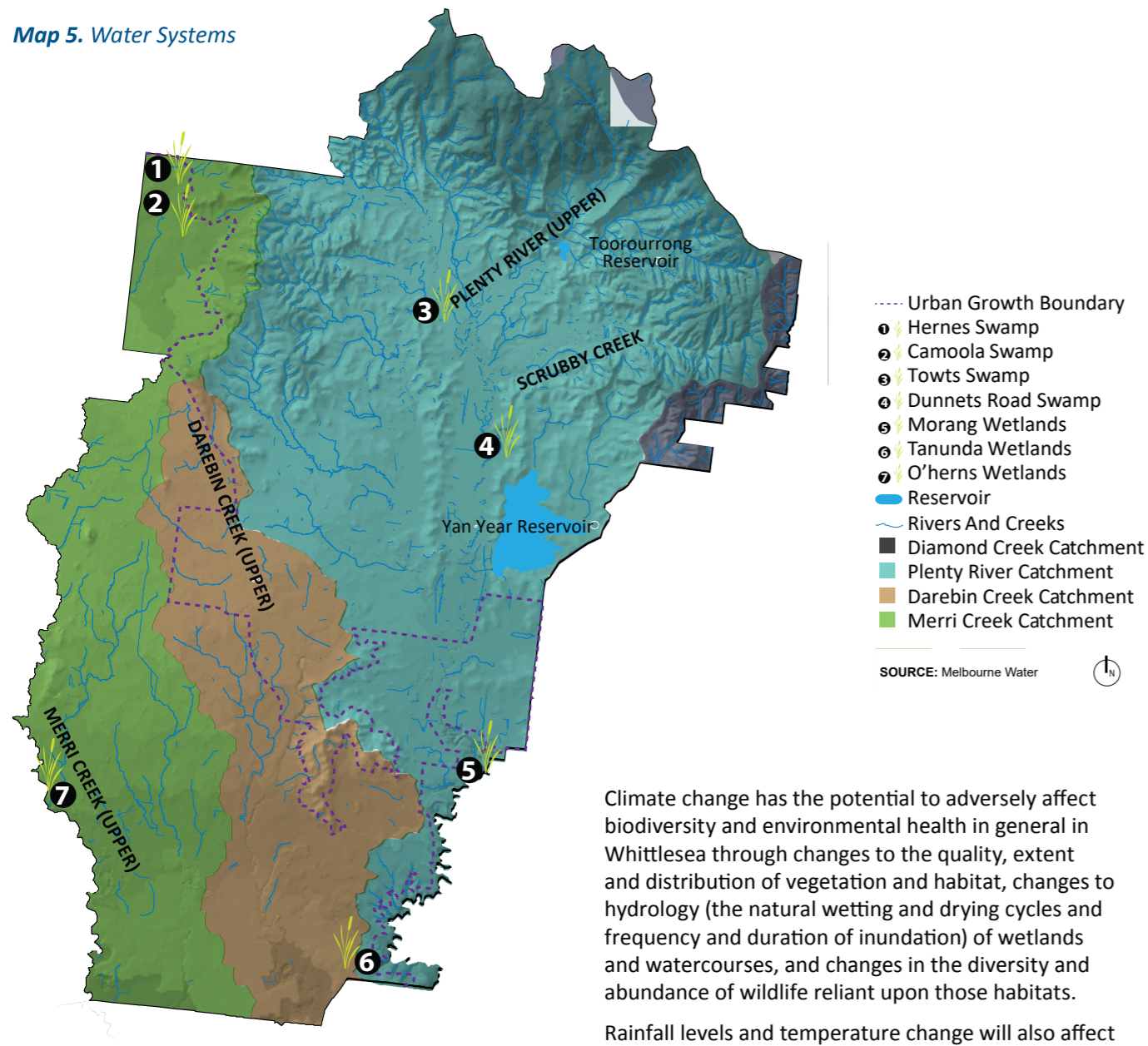
It is important to note that Melbourne Water's *Healthy Waterways Strategy* for the Yarra River catchment identifies an extensive range of objectives for each waterway within the strategy, including Plenty River, Merri Creek and Darebin Creek. There is a strong alignment between Council and Melbourne Water for collaboration in better water management.

Alternative water for farmers

Water is increasingly becoming a limiting factor for agriculture in the Green Wedge. Council also sees an opportunity in supporting farmers to build alternative water systems that are different to dams which can have detrimental impact on waterways health for multiple reasons.

Alternative water is water supplied by sustainable sources that can be used to help offset the use of fresh surface water and groundwater (such as lakes and aquifers). Alternative water sources include rainwater from your roof, storm water, treated wastewater or greywater. There is an opportunity in supporting farmers to build small alternative water systems that are different to dams.

For instance, capturing rainfall runoff from shed and house rooves can be a reliable, efficient water source that is easily overlooked. On small properties around 8 hectares or less, it is generally more efficient to capture water from a shed roof than to create a dam that will leak, erode and evaporate a lot of water when it is mostly needed. Agriculture Victoria has provided an online 'farm dam calculator' to demonstrate and compare differences.



Climate change

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released the first instalment of their sixth assessment report on 9 August 2021, which states that every corner of the planet is already being affected and it could get far worse. Based on our current trajectory, global warming would likely increase to 1.5°C by about 2030 (IPCC, 2021).

In recent decades, the City of Whittlesea has become hotter and drier, a trend which is expected to continue. In comparison to 1986-2005, by the 2050s under a high emissions scenario, the climate future of the City of Whittlesea will experience:

- rising temperatures (increase of maximum temperature up to 2.3°C)
- more frequent, intense, and longer heatwaves (double the number of heatwave days)
- decline in rainfall (up to 14% less cool season rainfall)
- harsher fire weather, longer fire season, and more fire danger days.

Climate change has the potential to adversely affect biodiversity and environmental health in general in Whittlesea through changes to the quality, extent and distribution of vegetation and habitat, changes to hydrology (the natural wetting and drying cycles and frequency and duration of inundation) of wetlands and watercourses, and changes in the diversity and abundance of wildlife reliant upon those habitats.

Rainfall levels and temperature change will also affect access to water and impact rural production. Increased frequency of extreme weather events such as storms will impact farming through increased erosion, yield reduction and damage to crops, etc.

Trees on public and private land are important green infrastructure providing a range of benefits including improved mental and physical wellbeing, reduced heating and cooling costs, increased property values. They also reduce air pollution, store carbon, slow and filter storm water run-off, and provide habitat for wildlife.

Trees also have a major role to play both in connecting communities within Liveable Neighbourhoods, and in our response to changing climate conditions.

There is potential to capitalise on carbon sequestration opportunities through sustainable farming practice and vegetation cover enhancement.

There is an increased awareness of the community's vulnerability to climate change. Recent flooding, bushfire events and heat waves have brought focus to the increasing impacts of climate change, changing the way land is managed, and future planning for the Green Wedge.

Strategic Directions

1.1 Improve the management and protection of biodiversity.

Implementation of *Sustainable Environment Strategy (2022-2032)*

- Seeks to improve the management and protection of biodiversity across the municipality

Implementation of the *Biodiversity Strategy (2019-2029)*

- Continues to build on the many efforts already underway by individuals, community groups, and government
- Aims to develop a coordinated approach that will allow for the protection and enhancement of the natural environment
- Recognises the Traditional Owner approach to biodiversity management

Implementation of the *Climate Change Strategy (2022-2032)*

- Includes a range of actions to build environmental/ecological resilience to the impacts of climate change

1.2 Partner with landowners and land managers to ensure water is managed in an integrated and effective manner in the Green Wedge.

Implement *Whittlesea Water for All (2020 – 2030)*

- Outcomes of this strategy aim to keep our waterways clean and our priority green spaces irrigated
- Aims to improve Council and the community's preparedness for floods and droughts, and water efficiency
- Within the Green Wedge area, the strategy proposes to 'Support local agriculture and improve water management
- Work with Traditional Owners and other partners to create a pathway to embed indigenous values (cultural flows) in the management of the Upper Merri Creek
- Strong alignment between Council's GWMP and the Melbourne Water's *Healthy Waterways Strategy*

1.3 Improve the management of our City Forest that connects people, nature and place.

Implementation of the *Greening Whittlesea - City Forest Strategy (2020-2040)*

In rural areas:

- work with land owners to revegetate rural areas, especially along waterways, taking bushfire considerations into account
- protect existing trees and green cover

1.4 Partner with landowners and other government agencies to improve soil health.

Implementation of *Sustainable Environment Strategy (2022-2032)*

- Managing soil health is an emerging issue of national significance
- Continue to partner with landowners, community groups and Traditional Owners to enhance soil quality via a framework of sustainable land management, and to liaise with various levels of government to manage risk and improve overall soil health
- Explore opportunities to protect and improve soil health, including the prevention of soil dumping

Strategic Directions - Liveable neighbourhoods



Key Issues

Landscape amenity and rural character

There are four main land character areas in our Green Wedge: The Plenty Valley; The Plenty Ranges; The Hills and Western Plains. Each of these landscape character areas contain specific areas of visual significances, natural features and examples of the City's cultural heritage which all contribute to the establishment of the identity of the City of Whittlesea. In addition, there are key green breaks identified as having particular importance to maintaining the Green Wedge. For instance, the green urban break between Mernda and Whittlesea Township.

Community engagement indicated that in the Whittlesea Green Wedge, a high value is placed on the quality of the rural landscape and landscape amenity which provide valuable environmental, social and economic benefits for residents and visitors alike through its contribution to liveability, sense of place, and delivering quality tourism/recreation experiences.

Local policies in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme already includes strategies to protect landscape amenity and rural land character in the Green Wedge. Yet, further work is required in better supporting Council officers at the policy implementation and enforcement stage to ensure the built form and location of development in the Green Wedge contributes to diverse environments and sense of place.

In particular, further guidance is required to ensure that the development of sheds/outbuildings in Green Wedge is compatible with the purpose of the zones and respond appropriately to their context. Planning data for the past decade indicates that over half of the statutory planning applications are for sheds/ outbuildings. A number of issues have been identified in respect to some of these proposals, including:

- the intensity of the building size and associated uses - some of those sheds are built at a scale larger than those on industrial blocks in designated industrial areas and have multiple cars and trucks entering and leaving sites via dirt roads that were not designed for heavy use
- inappropriate location - some are proposed to be built on structurally unstable sodic soils which create environmental issues such as tunnel erosion.

Rural living and natural hazards

Rural living or rural residential development refers to the occupation of rural land primarily for lifestyle residential purposes rather than for farming.⁵ Across metropolitan Melbourne, there is high demand for rural living and the desire to use Green Wedges and agricultural land for a range of urban activities.

The State Government clearly articulates the following desired planning outcomes to address rural living and natural hazards in *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*:

- manage rural living to prevent negative impacts on agriculture, biodiversity and landscape values
- avoid development in areas that are subject to high risk from bushfire or flooding and inundation so as to minimise potential risk to life, property and the environment.

In our Green Wedge, there are several pockets of rural living areas due to historic subdivision. Some of these existing rural living settlements are located in areas subject to environmental risks and hazards such as bushfire, erosion and flooding which can present a risk to the community and the land itself. For example, Eden Park has sodic soils and as a result tunnel erosion is widespread in the area which constrains its ability to accommodate further growth.

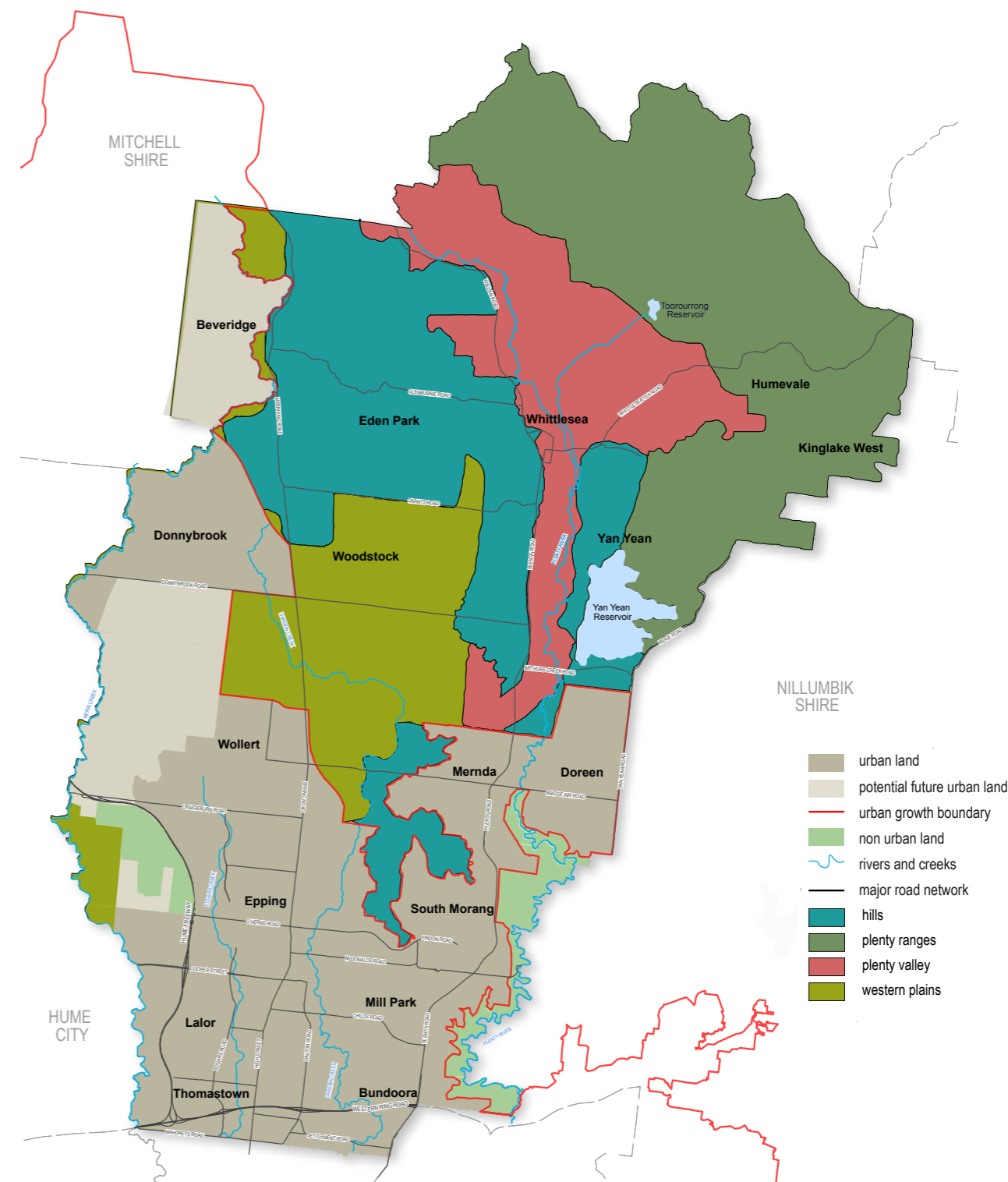
To reduce the environmental impacts of development and enhance the amenity of the area, a Restructure Overlay (RO) was introduced into Clause 45.05 of

the Whittlesea Planning Scheme in the 1980's to address old and inappropriate subdivisions. The RO seeks to restructure the lots in order to manage the environmental impacts of development and enhance the amenity of the identified area.

Primarily, the RO seeks to reduce the large number of small lots in Eden Park, although it also includes small pockets in Humevale and Whittlesea with lot sizes range from 4000sqm to 8000sqm. The RO also seeks to ensure lots are capable of supporting rural living and on-site effluent disposal. A permit to construct or extend a dwelling or other building in the RO may be granted for all or part of land in a restructure lot area only when the lot is restructured.

⁵ 'Rural residential development' refers to land in a rural setting, used and developed for dwellings that are not primarily associated with agriculture. Some agriculture may take place on the land however it will be ancillary to the use for a dwelling. It is likely to be carried on for 'lifestyle' reasons and is unlikely to provide a significant source of household income. Planning Practice Note 37 Rural Residential Development (DELWP 2015)

Map 6. Rural land character



The RO remains a valid tool to manage rural living in areas that are subject to high risk from bushfire, erosion and other environmental challenges discussed in previous section.

There is an opportunity for Council to work with the landowners affected by the RO to increase understanding of the purpose of the RO, explore ways to facilitate the restructure of lots and identify ways to mitigate the environmental risks through sustainable land management practices and appropriate land uses.

Transport and accessibility

Poor quality and congested roads, limited cycling and shared trail networks and lack of good public transport are the major transport and accessibility issues identified during the community engagement process.

The provision of safe and fit-for-purpose road network is crucial not only for social and economic reasons but also in emergency management for bushfires, flood, etc.

The above issues can have serious impact on rural community's health, wellbeing and overall resilience that derives from access to jobs, markets, social networks, key community facilities and amenities within and outside of the Green Wedge. In addition, better transport and accessibility in general mean that the broader communities who live outside the Green Wedge would have greater opportunities to visit, enjoy and protect the Green Wedge.

Within the Green Wedge, roads vary in degree of development from unpaved rural tracks to arterial roads. Roads and associated infrastructure must be developed in such a way that it restricts nonessential vehicle movements, keeps speeds low, provide for horse riding and maintain the rural character of the area.

Routine management of roadsides must also continuously strike a balance between safety and environmental considerations.

Interface management

The Whittlesea Green Wedge has a 93km interface to land used or reserved for different urban uses and which is largely defined by the application of the UGB.

There is ongoing pressure to permit more urban uses to locate in the Green Wedge, which may be inconsistent with the overarching purposes of the zoning. Similarly, the rural/urban interface needs to be carefully managed to ensure that urban development does not have an adverse impact on nearby rural activities.

The interface between the Whittlesea Green Wedge and the diverse urban land uses presents complex issues that require careful management. **Map 7** identifies the interface areas.

The key issues and interface areas impacted are listed below:

Management of environmental, landscape and productive values

- Northern Growth Area - Beveridge
- Northern Growth Area - Donnybrook (between Merri Creek and Merriang Road)
- River Red Gum Woodland Interface - Woodstock

Extractive industry operations

- Masons Road to Craigieburn Road

Conservation management and landscape protection including bushfire risk

- Quarry Hills
- Plenty Gorge Park

Reducing land use conflict

- Northern Growth Area – Mernda, Yan Yean and Doreen

Urban Growth Boundary (UGB)

- Shire of Nillumbik Interface (Yan Yean Road is designated as a permanent UGB)
- Whittlesea Township

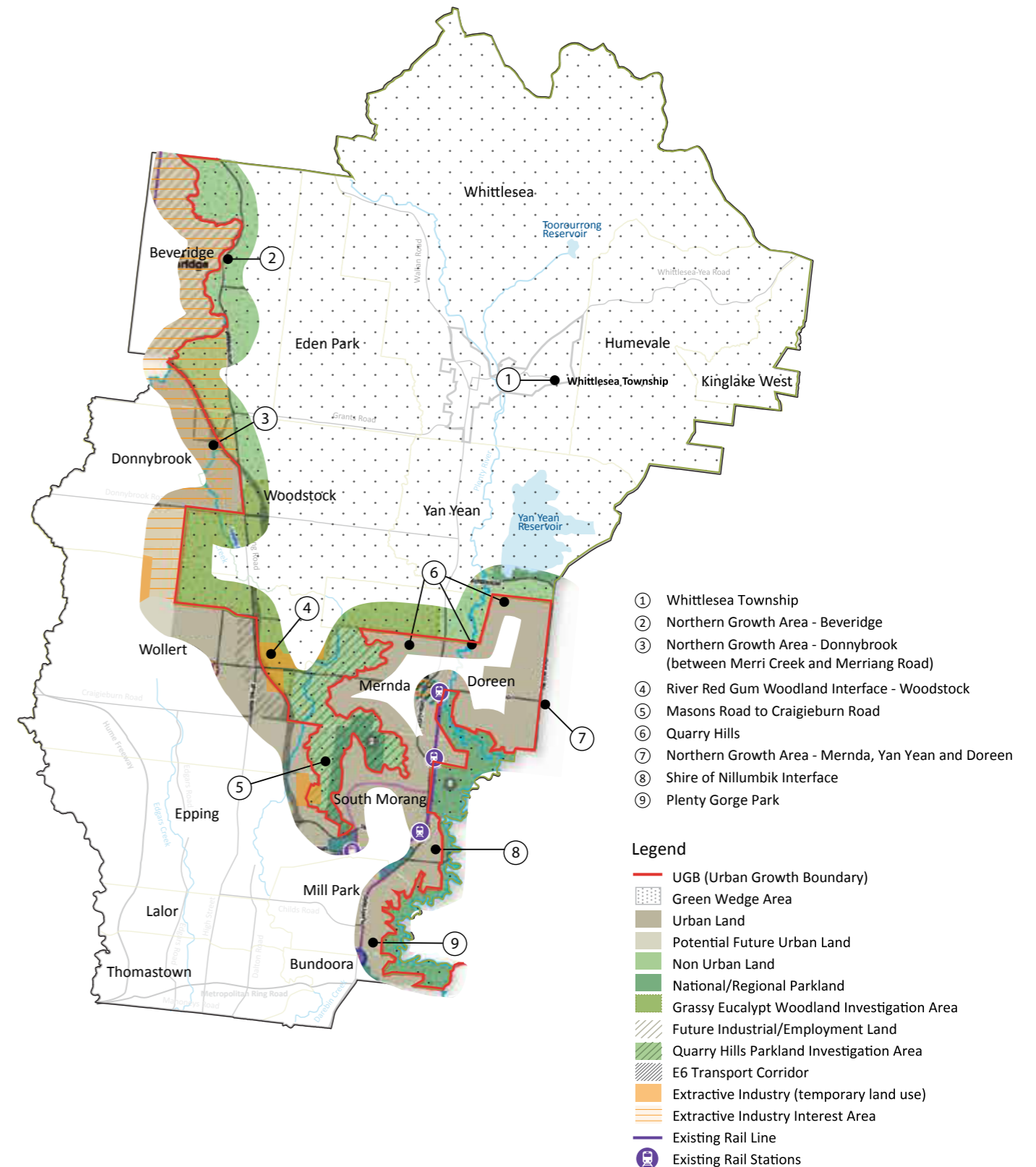
Work has already commenced in relation to the Quarry Hills section of the interface and the Whittlesea Township area.

Quarry Hills

The Quarry Hills comprise a significant elevated landscape which adjoins four urban areas: Mernda, Doreen, South Morang and Epping North.

The UGB forms a 25k boundary to the Quarry Hills. To manage land use pressures and the urban interface surrounding the Quarry Hills, Council has sought to create an enduring boundary to protect the natural quality, topography and amenity of the Quarry Hills. Council has initiated a long-term proposal to bring approximately 1,000ha of this land into public ownership as part of the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland. In addition to conservation management and landscape protection the parkland links the three surrounding growth areas. Land outside the UGB that is identified as being within the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland area will need to be managed for its landscape, productive and conservation values under private ownership until such time as the land is transferred and managed for public purposes.

Map 7. Green Wedge interface



Whittlesea Township

Whittlesea Township does not have the benefit of a UGB. Council recently endorsed the Whittlesea Township Plan (2021) - a twenty-year plan that will be used to guide and manage future planning and decision making for the township. The document establishes a long-term vision for the Whittlesea Township and seeks to protect the significant attributes of the township that contribute to its distinctive semi-rural character whilst building upon its opportunities.

A continuing commitment to maintaining the non-urban break between the Township and Mernda, Doreen to the south, protecting the Whittlesea Hills to the west, visually significant landscapes and catchment areas to the east and floodplains to the north and south will limit future development but ensure that the Whittlesea Township retains its unique rural character. Council will continue to work with the State Government to ensure that the rural urban interface is appropriately managed in order to minimise the impact of urban activities on rural activities in the Green Wedge.

Land speculation

Perceived uncertainty over the permanency of the UGB, and the Green Wedge boundary has led to an increasing trend of speculators, in the hope of future rezoning, buying up large parcels of land close to the UGB at a cost that would place land purchases out of reach of many, especially those who may be looking to commence farming in the region. Similarly, there has been continuing pressure for rezoning to support more residential development around the periphery of the Whittlesea Township.

Council's property data indicates that the increase of land value in our Green Wedge has grown considerably over the past 5 years. The median property price is now over \$1 million (per property) compared to \$680k (per property) in 2015. The data also indicates that the rate of value increase was greater for smaller land parcels, a trend observed more broadly in other peri-urban areas (*Parson 2017*). This suggests those smaller blocks are being purchased for lifestyle and aesthetic value rather than agricultural value.

Land speculation has also contributed to land banking which leads to environmental degradation as there is less incentive for owners and occupiers to manage weeds, improve soils or to increase biodiversity values on those properties.

Land speculation is an on-going problem for all Green Wedge municipalities. It is anticipated that the introduction of the State Government's Windfall Tax in July of 2023 will help to reduce land speculation.

Strategic Directions

2.1 Protect non-urban breaks and enhance landscape amenity and rural character.

Implementation of *Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy* (under development)

- Strengthen the planning controls as they relate to landscape amenity and rural character
- Preserve the non-urban breaks for conservation, cultural and recreational purposes
- Ensure development and land use occurring in the rural areas of the municipality respects the visual sensitivity of the landscape
- Rural character should be expressed in the siting, design, built form and landscape treatments

2.2 Discourage new settlement in areas prone to extreme natural hazards.

Implementation of *Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy* (under development) and *Sustainable Environment Strategy* (2022-2032)

- Recognise the impact of climate change and increasing temperatures
- Work with local communities to ensure that they are more resilient to environmental changes
- Avoid further subdivision in locations that are identified as being highly susceptible to natural hazards such as fire and flood

2.3 Provide safe and fit for purpose local road network and support active travel modes.

Implementation of *Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy* (under development)

- Endeavour to provide a safe and efficient local road network that is sensitive to the environment and meets the needs and expectations of our community
- Continue to advocate strongly for improved public transport, including growing the range of community bus services
- Seek better integration and connection between the Strategic Cycling Corridors (SCC) network and the local cycling network to support active travel modes

2.4 Protect the Green Wedge from further urban encroachment and improve management of the urban and rural interface.

Implementation of *Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy* (under development) and *Sustainable Environment Strategy* (2022-2032)

- The interface needs to be managed from both sides to minimise potential conflicts
- Continue to work with the State Government to safeguard the UGB
- Provide support to landowners in sustainable land management
- Create public green space
- Maintain conservation areas as permanent and enduring buffers on the urban side of the UGB

2.5 Direct urban uses towards designated Whittlesea township area and areas within the UGB.

Implementation of *Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy* (under development) and *Whittlesea Township Plan 2021*.

- Protect desired township character
- Further support the township's role in being the social and economic centre of rural communities in the municipality

Strategic Directions - Strong local economy



Key Issues

Agriculture in the Green Wedge

As the city expands, land previously reserved for agriculture has been brought into the UGB and converted into housing and related urban uses. In a global economic system, food and other agricultural production sourced nationally and internationally has substituted for lost local production. During COVID-19, disruption to employment and food supplies has further highlighted the vulnerabilities of the global and national market system.

The importance of access to healthy local food has also been identified as a key issue. The *Towards a Healthy, Sustainable Food System in Whittlesea – Food System Background Report* (CoW, 2015, p24) revealed that access to affordable healthy food is a critical issue for our low and middle-income groups. The effects of the pandemic are expected to further amplify the importance of local food production.

Agriculture in the Whittlesea Green Wedge has the potential for creating more local employment opportunities and enhancing long-term food security. On one hand, there are existing and emerging opportunities for agriculture in our municipality, including:

- proximity to growing urban markets
- location of the Melbourne Wholesale Market in Epping
- access to key transport infrastructure, including the Hume Freeway, Melbourne Airport and the future Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal (BIFT)
- more innovative and flexible planning controls via the State Government GWAL process
- potential for access to other alternative water sources
- the opportunity to work with farmers to explore new and innovative farming techniques which use less water, energy and land to create viable production levels.

There has also been an increase in relation to agri-food opportunities focussing on native foods and botanicals. This knowledge and associated practices have been developed over thousands of generations by Aboriginal people. The *Victorian Traditional Owner Native Food and Botanicals Strategy* (2021) will embed and apply Traditional Owner cultural frameworks in the industry.

Agriculture in the Green Wedge is also facing multiple social, economic and ecological challenges.

The demographic and lifestyle of Green Wedge residents is changing due to a lack of farm succession planning. Also, within the broader community, there is a limited understanding of local agricultural history, existing farming practices and the importance of preserving agriculture in Green Wedge areas. This often leads to competing land uses, incremental land fragmentation and rising land values.

It is difficult for new farmers to gain access to the land for agriculture purposes, not to mention the huge capital costs for those new entrants buying into the sector. For existing operations, it is becoming increasingly difficult for farmers to stay financially viable. 'On farm' costs such as rates, water, labour is rising as well as market pressure from pricing competition due to the increasing dominance of a larger, more intensive farming industry.

In addition, farmers in the Green Wedge and other peri-urban areas often find themselves receiving unequal treatment as opposed to their regional counterparts (e.g. restricted funding opportunities, lack of support from industry bodies and huge capital costs for new farmers buying into the sector due to higher land cost).

Agriculture in the Green Wedge is facing threat from land degradation, natural hazards such as drought and flood, and climate change in general.

Land fragmentation in the Green Wedge

Across the Whittlesea Green Wedge area there are approximately 1,500 properties (excluding Whittlesea Township), with a median size of 6.15ha and an average size of 18.15ha. Most of the private land holdings are in Green Wedge A Zone (GWAZ), Green Wedge Zone (GWZ) and Rural Conversation Zone 1 (RCZ1).

In the GWAZ the minimum subdivision size is either 8ha or 12ha depending on location. A sizable proportion (38%) of lots are smaller than 8ha with the majority (71%) being between 2ha to 10ha.

In the GWZ the minimum subdivision size is 40ha or 80ha depending on location. Only 6% of the lots in this zone are 40ha or larger. The majority (51%) are under 2ha.

In the RCZ1, over 80% of properties are under 40ha - the minimum subdivision lot size. The median lot size in RCZ1 is 8.11ha and the average size 18.94ha. The level of fragmentation is concerning given the conservation and biodiversity focus of this zone. 18% of the RCZ1 properties are in Eden Park.

Whilst it is true that smaller land sizes can still be productive, land fragmentation is a barrier to efficiency and productivity when farmers have to undertake agricultural production across multiple, non-contiguous properties. In the Whittlesea Green Wedge, especially those areas already fragmented with a high concentration of smaller lots, it is crucial for Council to work with State Government to safeguard the minimum lot size and discourage any further subdivision of the remaining large properties. This is essential in order to retain and future proof existing and future agricultural opportunities in the area.

Visitor economy (tourism/recreation/hospitality)

The Whittlesea Green Wedge contains recreation and tourism opportunities such as the Country Music Festival, the Whittlesea Agricultural Show, the Growling Frog and Whittlesea Golf Courses, the Yan Yean and Toorourrong reservoirs and a network of parks including the Quarry Hills Regional Park with exciting further development brought forward by a new Master Plan. There are also Aboriginal tourism opportunities both existing and emerging.

There are opportunities for creating a thriving visitor economy that maintains the integrity of the natural environment, provides social benefits for our local community and contributes to our local economy. Council will seek to make public land available for public access and enjoyment where possible.

The visitor economy opportunities might include agri-tourism, eco-tourism, agri-food and recreation (including trail networks) and hospitality that is attached to natural and rural landscapes, heritage, food and wine experiences, and sustainable farming practices in our Green Wedge. The State Government's *Draft Northern Metro Land Use Framework Plan* (DELWP, 2021) recognise that the Northern Metro Green Wedges including the Whittlesea Green Wedge provide opportunities for local and international tourism in close proximity to Melbourne.

It proposes a State level Strategy – 'Support sustainable tourism and recreation opportunities that complement key Green Wedge values and land uses including biodiversity, open space and trail networks, cultural heritage, agriculture, and scenic rural landscapes'. It is important that Council work with our Green Wedge community to identify prioritised opportunities that speak to our local history and our Green Wedge values.

A new *Destination Plan* and *Agri-Food Plan* are both under development. These plans seek to further advance the agricultural and other visitor economy opportunities, where appropriate, in the Green Wedge.



Image credit: Remi Rauline, 2021, Sharing the Sky: The case for agrivoltaics - Renew, retrieved from <https://renew.org.au/renew-magazine/solar-batteries/sharing-the-sky-the-case-for-agrivoltaics>

Extractive resources

Victoria is growing and demand for extractive resources such as sand, clay, gravel and stone are expected to more than double the 2015 levels by 2050 (DEDJTR 2018). To ensure materials are affordable and accessible now and into the future for affordable housing and infrastructure, it is essential that high quality resources in proximity to markets remain available for extraction. Plan Melbourne and Clause 14.03 1S (Planning Policy Framework) recognise the importance of protecting and carefully planning for these vital resources. The State Government's 'Helping Victoria Grow: Extractive Resources Strategy' (2018) and the Draft Northern Metro Land Use Framework Plan (DELWP, 2021) has also identified the need to refresh Extractive Industry Interest Areas.

Extractive industry plays a significant role in our municipality in terms of both supply and demand. The City of Whittlesea ranks 7th among Top Twenty Critical Supply LGAs in the State (PWC, 2016, p.44). In 2019/2020, approximately 6.3% of the State's extractives was produced in the CoW, worth approximately \$61 million in sales. More than half of Victoria's clay was produced in Whittlesea in the same period (DJPR, 2021) Being one of the fastest growing municipalities, Whittlesea is also considered one of the highest LGA for extractive resource demand.

There are two extractive industry operations (quarries) partly located within the Green Wedge. There is also an Extractive Industry Interest Area identified by the State Government, along the Northern Growth Area interface in Donnybrook and Beveridge (refer to **Map 6**. Green Wedge Interface).

Whilst our communities have diverse opinion about accommodating extractive industry especially future opportunities in the Green Wedge, it is important to note that provision of extractive resources is one of the purposes of Green Wedges. Council will work with the extractive industry and State Government to ensure appropriate buffer management during the operating life and rehabilitation at the end of the temporary use in a way that are suitable to the surrounding landscape character, environment and cultural values, thereby providing a net community benefit. This includes encouraging innovative end land uses that provide for improved community amenity outcomes.

Waste and resource recovery in a circular economy

There have been numerous challenges with waste management and recycling in Victoria. Population growth and increased consumption have put pressure on our resource recovery system. At local level, the City of Whittlesea has recently endorsed a *Rethinking Waste Plan 2021-2030* to help businesses and communities transition to a circular economy where environmental impacts of production and consumptions can be reduced while still enable economic growth through waste avoidance, resource recovery, environmental protection and more productive use of natural resources.

One of the purposes of the Green Wedges is to support provision of waste and resource recovery uses in the circular economy.

The Wollert landfill site in the Whittlesea Green Wedge is identified as a State significant Waste and Resource Recovery Hub serving the metropolitan and neighbouring regions. It is well located on the urban fringe and close to major transport routes.

The State Government's *Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Implementation Plan 2018* identified potential for the hub to expand resource recovery activities to meet the needs of the surrounding growth areas including establishing a resource recovery centre and pre-sort. It is important that adequate buffers and planning controls are provided around this site to protect the amenity of surrounding communities and prevent establishing incompatible uses that could impact on the functionality of the site over the long term (*Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Group, 2016, Waste and Resource Recovery - the Metropolitan Implementation Plan*).

Strategic Directions

3.1 Improve understanding of the value of agriculture in the Green Wedge to provide for appropriate use and development.

Implement the *Strong Local Economy Strategy (2022-2026)*

- Acknowledge that agriculture in the Green Wedge is under threat from pressure to convert land to other uses including housing and smaller non-agricultural uses, leading to land use compatibility issues
- Aims to raise the profile of agriculture in the Green Wedge
- Communicate (in conjunction with State Government) the purpose of the Green Wedge and the importance of protecting land for existing and future agriculture opportunities

3.2 Support local agri-businesses/agri-food and the visitor economy to grow, be sustainable and prepared for climate change.

Implement the *Strong Local Economy Strategy (2022-2026)* and the *Destination Plan* and *Agri-Food Plan* (both under development)

- Continue to work with farmers, business sector, institutions, other Green Wedge Councils, government agencies and community to support sustainable agri-business/agri-food opportunities and the visitor economy via:
 - knowledge sharing
 - incentive
 - partnership
 - advocacy
 - policy direction

3.3 Work with State Government to provide for future infrastructure and green energy needs.

Implement the *Strong Local Economy Strategy (2022-2026)*, *Sustainable Environment Strategy (2022-2032)*, *Climate Change Plan (2022-2032)* and *Rethinking Waste (2021-2030)*

- Work with State Government to protect existing and future opportunities and balance those important functions with other Green Wedge priorities

Strategic Directions - Connected communities



Key Issues

Community knowledge and diverse perceptions

The broader Green Wedge community is diverse in terms of age, needs and cultural background. It consists of not only people who live/work in the Green Wedges, but also those who connect with our Green Wedge via regular visits, cultural and spiritual connection. Naturally, the community's knowledge of the Green Wedge varies, as does the community's level of commitment to different Green Wedge values.

There are still many community members with a limited understanding of the Green Wedge and the benefits it can provide. There is an opportunity to build awareness and further connect our community on the purpose of the Green Wedge, its importance in terms of employment and supporting a healthy, sustainable community. The community also play an important role in caring for our Green Wedge.

In addition, the review of the GWMP has revealed the diverse and sometimes conflicting perceptions of our community on the value and use of the Whittlesea Green Wedge: on one hand, the majority of the people who participated in the recent community engagement valued the natural environment and requested stronger protection of the Green Wedge from urban development, whilst there are also community members who put more value on rural living and expect similar levels of services and facilities in the Green Wedges to those in the urban areas.

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage is an integral part of the Whittlesea Green Wedge.

Caring for Country is a term used to describe the relationship between Traditional Owners and their Country. Caring for Country is more than the physical management of the land, water, plants and animals, but also encompasses looking after all of the values, places, resources, stories, and cultural obligations associated with the area, as well as associated processes of spiritual renewal, connecting with ancestors, food provision and maintaining kin relations (AIATSIS 2011).

The Wurundjeri Willum Clan is the Traditional Owner of the majority of the land in the Whittlesea Green Wedge.

The Wurundjeri Willum Clan of the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung is part of the Wurundjeri tribe and Woi Wurrung language group: one of the many language groups that make up the Kulin Nation.

Taungurung Land & Waters Council is the Traditional Owner for several discontinuous sections of land along the north eastern boundary in Kinglake West, where the watercourse drainage systems are to the north from the heights of the Great Dividing Range.

The Whittlesea landscape contains places and artefacts that are important to Traditional Owners because of associations with ceremonies, communities and individuals. All Aboriginal cultural heritage places and artefacts are protected by State legislation. Sites may include artefact scatters, scarred trees, trails and pathways along elevated areas, stone quarries, burials and rock wells.

It is important to note that the *Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy (2021)* sets a framework and pathways to lead the planning and management of Country in line with their cultural obligations to Care for Country. The State Government has committed to working in partnership with Traditional Owners and has committed to a process of reforming the system and process that create barriers to the self determination of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.

There are existing and emerging opportunities to:

- improve understanding, preservation and the celebration of Aboriginal cultural heritage and practices
- partner with Traditional Owners in land and water management and other Caring for Country practices
- support heritage-based tourism opportunities.

Historical Heritage

The history of European settlement in Whittlesea mirrors closely the development of Victoria as a whole. Agricultural and pastoral activities dominated the early development of the region. Milling, timber, agriculture and dairying were the main economic drivers. Abundant reserves of local rock were used extensively for construction in the area.

The construction of the Yan Yean Reservoir, the gold rush and railway construction were major events that contributed to the settlement patterns and growth within the region. Places of heritage significance associated with European settlement within the municipality include rural homesteads, schools, churches, mills, bridges, dry-stone walls, aqueducts, reservoirs and their associated land.

The dry-stone walls reflect the earliest forms of infrastructure linked to historic land use practices, as well as the industry and skills of settlers and landowners. Some were built for specific purposes such as cultivation paddocks and dry-stone enclosures which may be unique in Victoria.

There are existing and emerging opportunities to:

- improve understanding and protection of heritage places, including dry-stone walls
- support heritage-based tourism opportunities.



Strategic Directions

4.1 Understand and support the diverse needs of our rural community for environmental, cultural, social and economic resilience.

Implement the *Connected Communities Strategy* (under development)

- Undertake further work to better understand the diverse needs of our community
- Continue to work and partner with different organisations, in particular to collaborate with neighbouring Councils which also have Green Wedges and government agencies to support our community by improving their access to essential resources, services and critical knowledge
- Rural character should be expressed in the siting, design, built form and landscape treatments

4.2 Better connect the Green Wedge with our communities via communication, placemaking and programs.

Implement the *Connected Communities Strategy* (under development), *Sustainable Environment Strategy* (2022- 2032), *Climate Change Plan* (2022-2032) and *Destination Plan* (under development)

- Empower the community to address climate action
- Amplify environmental stewardship within the community
- Seek to further connect our community with the positive aspects of the Green Wedge via the creation of shared use paths and trails, events, recreation, local food, tourism and environmental programs

4.3 Engage and empower community members on various aspects of caring for and managing the Green Wedge.

Implement the *Connected Communities Strategy* (under development), *Sustainable Environment Strategy* (2022-2032) and *Climate Change Plan* (2022-2032)

- Continue to partner with community members and groups who have already been actively looking after our Green Wedge land
- Provide support for community-led initiatives
- Explore options to further remove the barrier for our rural community to access Council information
- Encourage participation in conversations that will shape the future of our Green Wedge

4.4 Partner with Traditional Owners to celebrate and facilitate enhanced Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung and Taungurung cultural practice, cultural heritage, improve land and water management and other Caring for Country practices in the Green Wedge.

Implement the *Connected Communities Strategy* (under development), *Reconciliation Action Plan* (under development) and *Sustainable Environment Strategy* (2022-2032)

- Partner with Traditional Owners to improve understanding and the preservation and celebration of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage – the places and artifacts that represent the rich indigenous history of this land.
- Explore opportunities for partnerships and education to support a greater understanding of Caring for Country practices to improve land and water management outcomes in the Green Wedge.

Making it happen

The GWMP is developed to guide a whole-of-Council approach to the coordination and implementation of actions within the Whittlesea Green Wedge.

Council is the custodian of this GWMP and its successful delivery requires strong collaboration across the whole organisation. This will be facilitated by Council's Integrated Planning Framework which will drive implementation to deliver the outcomes we strive for and the actions we will deliver for our community.

Monitoring progress

The Strategic Directions of the GWMP have been reflected in the adopted *Sustainable Environment Strategy* and *Strong Local Economy Strategy*. The directions will also be incorporated into the *Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy*, *Connected Communities Strategy* and the *Reconciliation Action Plan* currently under development.

Each of these strategies have an associated Action Plan, generally for a two-year period. Specific GWMP actions will be incorporated into the each of the relevant Action Plans and will be reviewed according to the relevant strategy review schedule.

In accordance with the requirements of the State Government and *Planning Practice Note 31*, a five- year review of the GWMP will be undertaken (2028- 2029). The review will ensure that Vision, Objectives and Strategic Directions remain relevant for delivering impactful outcomes.



Glossary

Aboriginal

Throughout this document, the term 'Aboriginal' is taken to include people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. 'Aboriginal' is used in preference to 'Indigenous', 'First Nations', and 'Koori'

Active recreation

Activities that are engaged in for the purpose of relaxation, health and wellbeing or enjoyment with the primary activity requiring physical exertion, and the primary focus on human activity.

Amenity

A collection of qualities that make spaces attractive for human occupation. The features of an area, street or building, that provide facilities and services that contribute to physical or material comfort and benefit and are valued by users.

Agri-business

The business aspects of agricultural industries. It embraces all the input and support services for farming and food production including finance, taxation, banking and other corporate services; agronomy and other 'on farm' or technical advisory services; input supply including fertiliser, chemical and other consumable inputs; machinery supply and maintenance at all parts of the supply chain; market analysis, marketing advice and trading services.

Agri-food

Encompasses all stages of the food and beverage life-cycle, from the on-farm production of primary commodities, through to manufacturing, retail, consumption and recycling (organics and packaging).

Agri-tourism

Refers to experiences attracting visitors to places where they get to interact with a variety of food and agribusiness elements such as farm gate sales, entertainment or educating the visitors, while generating income for the farm or business owner. In some areas this may involve consuming locally grown products at cafes and restaurants.

Biodiversity

The number and variety of living things on the planet. It is the mix of plants, animals, and other organisms that make up landscapes from deserts to oceans.

Built form

The height, volume and overall shape of a building as well as its surface appearance.

Caring for Country

A term used to describe the different sustainable land management practices and initiatives that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people undertake, and the key role these practices play in continuing culture.

Circular economy

A model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible.

City forest

All the trees and other vegetation and the soil and water that support them. Urban forest is an alternative term. It incorporates vegetation in streets, parks, gardens, plazas, campuses, river and creek embankment, wetlands, railway corridors, community gardens, green walls, balconies, and roofs.

Climate change

Long term change in global or regional climate patterns attributed largely to the increased levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, particularly carbon dioxide, produced by the use of fossil fuels.

Economic inequality

Refers to the disparities in income and wealth among individuals in a society. Economic participation – an individual's engagement in work and/or education, and their access to economic resources that results from such participation.

Economic participation

An individual's engagement in work and/or education, and their access to economic resources that results from such participation.

Food and fibre economy

Food and fibres are the human-produced or harvested resources used to directly sustain human life and are produced in managed environments such as farms and plantations or harvested from wild stocks.

Green economy

Defined as low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive. Growth in employment and income are driven by public and private investment into such economic activities, infrastructure and assets that allow reduced carbon emissions and pollution, enhanced energy and resource efficiency, and prevention of the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Green Wedge

Non-urban land that is described in a metropolitan fringe planning scheme as being outside an Urban Growth Boundary.

Green Wedge Management Plan

A Council adopted strategy that identifies a Vision, Objectives and Strategic Direction for the sustainable management and development of each Green Wedge area.

Integrated water management

A collaborative approach to the management of all elements of the water cycle to contribute to water security, public and environmental health, as well as urban amenity.

Land use

The primary purpose for which the land is used or may be developed.

Land fragmentation

In the context of agriculture, land fragmentation occurs when farmland is broken up by other uses over time. In areas affected by land fragmentation, farmers sometimes undertake agricultural production across multiple, non-contiguous properties, which can be a barrier to efficiency and productivity.

Open space

Space open to the sky regardless of its ownership and management arrangements.

Passive recreation

Casual use of open space such as sitting, walking, reading a book, meeting people enjoying the ambience and relaxing.

Visitor economy

The visitor economy is made up of anyone who provides or promotes services to Australia's domestic and international visitors. It includes a diverse set of businesses that span several industry sectors and operate across cities and regional destinations.

Urban Growth Boundary (UGB)

A line drawn around a metropolitan area, defining the limits to urban growth.

Whittlesea Planning Scheme

A legal document prepared by the City of Whittlesea and approved by the Minister for Planning. A planning scheme includes:

- State Planning Policy set by the State Government and common to all planning schemes.
- Local Planning Policy tailored by each local government.
- Zones and Overlays: provisions that identify where certain uses and development can occur in the municipality, locations of significance such as heritage places, and which land use or development is 'as of right', requires a permit or is prohibited.

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