

**Agenda**

**Scheduled Council Meeting**

Tuesday 15 April 2025 at 6pm

Council Chamber,

25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang

Councillors

Cr Aidan McLindon, Mayor Kirrip Ward

Cr Daniela Zinni, Deputy Mayor Bundoora Ward

Cr Nic Brooks Thomastown Ward

Cr Blair Colwell Mill Park Ward

Cr Lawrie Cox Ganbul Gulinj Ward

Cr Deb Gunn Painted Hills Ward

Cr Stevan Kozmevski Lalor Ward

Cr Jarrod Lappin Mernda Ward

Cr David Lenberg Epping Ward

Cr Christine Stow North Ward

Cr Martin Taylor South Morang Ward

Executive Leadership Team

Craig Lloyd Chief Executive Officer

Agata Chmielewski Director Community Wellbeing

Debbie Wood Director Infrastructure & Environment

Sarah Rowe Acting Director Customer & Corporate Services

Liam Wilkinson Acting Director Planning & Development

Janine Morgan Executive Manager Public Affairs

Jacinta Stevens Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

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**Note:**

At the Chair’s discretion, the meeting may be closed to the public in accordance with Section 66(2)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. The provision which is likely to be relied upon to enable closure is set out in each item. These reports are not available for public distribution.

**Question Time:**

Council will hold public question time for up to 30 minutes at each Scheduled Council Meeting to allow for public questions, petitions or joint letters from our community to be read out by the Chief Executive Officers delegate and responses will be provide by the Chief Executive Officer.

Questions are required to be submitted in writing no later than 12 noon on the day prior to a Scheduled Council Meeting.

Priority will be given to questions or statements that relate to agenda items. Any questions submitted after 12 noon the day prior will be held over to the following Council Meeting.

The Public Question form can be downloaded from Council’s website. Refer: <https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/about-us/council/council-meetings/>

Council is committed to ensuring that all residents and ratepayers of the municipality may contribute to Council’s democratic process and therefore, if you have special requirements, please telephone Council’s Governance Team prior to any Council Meeting on
(03) 9217 2170.

 **1 Opening**

 **1.1 Meeting Opening and Introductions**

The Chair, Cr Aidan McLindon will open the meeting and introduce the Councillors and Chief Executive Officer:

Cr Daniela Zinni, Deputy Mayor

Cr Nic Brooks

Cr Blair Colwell

Cr Lawrie Cox

Cr Deb Gunn

Cr Stevan Kozmevski

Cr Jarrod Lappin

Cr David Lenberg

Cr Christine Stow

Cr Martin Taylor

Craig Lloyd, *Chief Executive Officer*

The Chief Executive Officer, Craig Lloyd will introduce members of the Executive Leadership Team:

Agata Chmielewski, *Director Community Wellbeing;*

Debbie Wood, *Director Infrastructure and Environment;*

Sarah Rowe, *Acting Director Corporate and Customer Services;*

Liam Wilkinson, *Acting Director Planning and Development;*

Janine Morgan, *Executive Manager Public Affairs;* and

Jacinta Stevens, *Executive Manager Office of Council and CEO*.

 **1.2 Apologies**

 **1.3 Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners Statement**

The Chair will read the following statement:

*“On behalf of Council, I 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.*

*I would also like to acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging.”*

 **1.4 Diversity and Good Governance Statement**

The Chair will read the following statement:

*“At the City of Whittlesea we are proud of our diversity and the many cultures, faiths and beliefs that make up our community. We strive to be an inclusive welcoming City that fosters active participation, wellbeing and connection to each other and this land. We commit as a Council to making informed decisions to benefit the people of the City of Whittlesea now and into the future, to support our community’s vision of A Place For All.*”

 **1.5 Acknowledgements**

 **2 Declarations of Conflict of Interest**

 **3 Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting/s**

# Recommendation

**THAT the following Minutes of the preceding meeting as circulated, be confirmed:**

* **Scheduled Meeting of Council held on 18 March 2025.**

 **4 Public Questions, Petitions and Joint Letters**

 **4.1 Public Question Time**

 **4.2 Petitions**

 4.2.1 Request for the Installation of Speed Humps in Mabel Street Doreen

**4.2.1 Request for the Installation of Speed Humps in Mabel Street Doreen**

A petition has been received from 57 resident requesting Council take immediate action concerning the installation of speed humps in Mabel Street Doreen due to concern of resident safety.

# Recommendation

**THAT Council**

**1.** **Note the petition relating to Mabel Street Doreen.**

**2. Refer the matter to the Chief Executive Officer for consideration.**

**3.** **Note the Chief Executive Officer will provide all Councillors with information at a future briefing in relation to the concerns raised in the petition.**

 **4.3 Joint Letters**

No Joint Letters

 **5 Officers' Reports**

 5.1 Planning Scheme Amendment C251 - Rezoning at 307 Bridge Inn Road and 390 Masons Road, Mernda - Planning Panel Outcome and Adoption

**5.1 Planning Scheme Amendment C251 - Rezoning at 307 Bridge Inn Road and 390 Masons Road, Mernda - Planning Panel Outcome and Adoption**

**Director/Executive Manager:** Acting Director Planning & Development

**Report Author:** Strategic Planner

**In Attendance:** Strategic Planner

# Executive Summary

This report relates to the rezoning of land at 307 Bridge Inn Road and 390 Masons Road, Mernda, to allow for residential development. The rezoning will apply to 21 hectares of land across two parcels to deliver 180-200 dwellings on one parcel and a retirement village and aged care facility on the other. The rezoning will also facilitate that transfer of 35 hectares of land to Council ownership for incorporation into the Quarry Hills Parkland.

An amendment to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme (Amendment C251wsea) is required to allow for the proposed use and development.

Amendment C251 is at the Council Adoption stage of the Planning Scheme Amendment process, having already progressed through two rounds of Council Decision and public exhibition. The purpose of this report is to detail the outcomes of the independent Planning Panel held to consider this Amendment, including discussion of the Panel Report, and for Council to decide on the adoption of the Amendment.

The Amendment applies to approximately 56 hectares of land across the two sites at 307 Bridge Inn Road and 390 Masons Road, Mernda, (*refer to Attachment 1*). The sites are currently used for animal grazing and are bound by Bridge Inn Road to the south, Masons Road to the north, residential development to the east and green wedge land to the west.

The Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) runs through the sites. The UGB is the boundary placed around Metropolitan Melbourne to contain urban growth within the boundary and to protect and conserve peri-urban land outside the boundary agriculture, environmental, historic, landscape, recreational and tourism uses. The properties were brought within the UGB in 2010 through Amendment VC68. This Amendment, which was led by the Victorian Government expanded the UGB to address the identified need for 600,000 additional dwellings in metropolitan Melbourne.

Approximately 21 hectares of the subject land sit within the UGB and 35 hectares outside the UGB. The land within the UGB is currently zoned Farming Zone, and it was always intended, through its inclusion within the UGB, to be rezoned for urban development. The land outside the UGB is currently zoned Green Wedge Zone. The Amendment proposes to rezone only the Farming Zone land within the UGB for residential use. The Green Wedge land will remain in the Green Wedge Zone.

The Amendment will facilitate the development of the ‘urban’ land for residential purposes and apply a development plan overlay to the rezoned land to ensure this residential development is subject to the same planning controls as the adjacent residential land.

Significantly, the Amendment also facilitates the assembly of the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland (the Parkland), now known as Quarry Hills Parkland, with the GWZ land transferred to Council and incorporated into the Parklands. The Quarry Hills Parkland is a Council master-planned open space at the heart of the City of Whittlesea, providing conservation, cultural, landscape and recreation uses. The new residential community will benefit from the amenity and recreational opportunities afforded by being in close proximity to the Parkland.

Council resolved to seek authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare and exhibit the Amendment at its March 2023 Council Meeting. The Amendment was then exhibited to surrounding residents, landowners and government agencies, including the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) in August and September 2023.

Nine submissions were received through the exhibition process. As a number of these submissions could not be satisfactorily resolved, Council resolved at its August 2024 Council Meeting to request a Planning Panel be appointed to consider the amendment and submissions.

The report by the Panel members is strongly supportive of the Amendment (*refer to Attachment 2*). The report finds the Amendment to have strong strategic support and significant net community benefit through the contribution of 35 hectares of land for the Parkland. The Panel found that the matters raised in submissions had either been satisfactorily addressed or would be satisfactorily addressed at a later stage of the planning process, which the Amendment makes provisions for. The panel report recommends no changes are made and that the Amendment be adopted as exhibited (*refer to Attachment 3*).

The Amendment will enable the development of housing with access to existing shops, schools, community and recreation facilities. The Amendment will also deliver a net community benefit through the incorporation of 35 hectares of public open space into the Quarry Hills Parkland. This report recommends that Council support the Panel Report recommendation and resolve to adopt the Amendment as exhibited.

# Officers’ Recommendation

**THAT Council:**

1. **Note the Panel Report at Attachment 2, which supports and recommends Council adopt Amendment C251wsea - Rezoning part of land at 307 Bridge Inn Road and 390 Masons Road, Mernda.**
2. **Adopt Planning Scheme Amendment C251wsea to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme as exhibited and as included at Attachment 3.**
3. **Submit Amendment C251wsea to the Minister for Planning for approval.**
4. **Advise the proponent and submitters to Amendment C251wsea of the above.**

# Background / Key Information

**Subject Site**

The sites subject to the Amendment comprise two properties located in the western extent of Mernda at 307 Bridge Inn Road and 390 Masons Road. They are bound by Bridge Inn Road to the south, Masons Road to the north, residential development to the east and green wedge land to the west. The properties total 56 hectares in area and are currently used mainly for grazing.

The sites are bisected by the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) as a result of the UGB expansion implemented through Planning Scheme Amendment VC68 in 2010 (*refer to Attachment 4*). This Amendment identified new parcels of non-urban land which were potentially suitable for urban development and incorporated them in the UGB. This was driven by the State Strategic Plan, Melbourne at 5 Million, which identified the need for an additional 600,000 dwellings in metropolitan Melbourne.

The part of the sites within the UGB remained in a non-urban zone, Farming Zone, with the direction being to rezone the land for urban development following further strategic planning and assessment. The parts of the land inside the UGB were identified for future residential development in the North Growth Corridor Plan which was prepared by the Growth Areas Authority in 2012.

**Quarry Hills Parkland**

The Quarry Hills Parkland (the Parkland) is one of the defining open space and landscape features in the City of Whittlesea. The Parkland was first proposed in the South Morang Local Structure Plan (SMLSP), approved in February 1997. The subdivision of land within the SMLSP facilitated the transfer of the first landholding for the Parkland to Council. The Parkland has since been designated a regional park due to its environmental, landscape and cultural significance.

The North Growth Corridor Plan, draft Northern Metro Land Use Framework Plan (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, 2021) and Whittlesea Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) recognise the Quarry Hills Parkland as regional open space.

The Parkland has been master-planned by Council to expand the former Quarry Hills Bushland Park ensuring vital recreation, habitat, cultural and biodiversity facilities are protected and enhanced. The transfer of land for the Parkland from private ownership to Council ownership has been linked to the rezoning of land brought into the UGB since the 2010 expansion. As the UGB is determined generally by the 185m contour line, rather than property boundaries, most properties feature land both inside and outside of the UGB. As landowners seek the rezoning of the urban portion of their properties, the non-urban portion is transferred to Council for use in the Parkland.

This is secured via a voluntary Section 173 Agreement. This agreement locks in the requirement to transfer the land, the timing for the transfer, and the condition of the land when transferred. The agreement is registered on title, so the obligation runs with the property, not with the landowner. If the property were to sell, the requirement to transfer the land would still be applied.

Through this process Council has secured over 70% of the ultimate parkland well in advance of the original 40-year project timeline. The Parkland currently comprises 430 hectares in direct Council ownership, and a further 290 hectares secured in agreements with the ultimate size being approximately 1,000 hectares by 2040 (*refer to Attachment 5)*. The Parkland will also contribute to Department of Transport and Planning’s strategy for establishing a Grassy Eucalypt Woodland Protected Area as part of the Melbourne Strategic Assessment.

**Land Transfer and Developer Contributions**

In 2020, Council received the request to begin the rezoning process from the landowners, Pitamara Pty Ltd. As mentioned above, before a planning scheme amendment process begins, the transfer of the non-urban land to Council for incorporation into the Quarry Hills Parkland must be secured via a Section 173 agreement.

An agreement is also required covering the payment of developer contributions to fund local infrastructure, open space and community facilities in the surrounding area and the application of a Growth Area Infrastructure Contribution (GAIC) equivalent contribution for the area to be rezoned for residential purposes. This contribution is usually charged by the State Government to fund higher order infrastructure in the broader area. This State charge is not triggered in this instance, so Council imposes an equivalent charge which Council will manage and use to contribute to the provision of higher order infrastructure. The section 173 agreement was signed and sealed by the Council delegate on 25 August 2022.

**Amendment Proposal**

The Amendment proposes to rezone the urban portion (21 hectares) of the subject land within the UGB from Farming Zone to the General Residential Zone to enable development for residential purposes consistent the expansion of the UGB in 2010, with the North Growth Corridor Plan (Growth Areas Authority (GAA), 2012) and all subsequent strategic planning documents designating the site for urban use.

Specifically, the Amendment will:

* rezone the urban land to GRZ Schedule 1;
* apply the Development Plan Overlay Schedule 27 (DPO27) to the rezoned land;
* apply the Vegetation Protection Overlay Schedule 1 (VPO1) to the rezoned land; and
* delete the Environmental Significance Overlay Schedules 1 and 5 from the rezoned land.

Land to be transferred to the Quarry Hills Parkland will be retained in the Green Wedge Zone.

The Amendment will facilitate the development of the urban land for residential purposes including opportunities for housing at similar densities to adjoining residential areas and potential for retirement living and aged care, which will be further resolved at the Development Plan stage of the planning process.

It is proposed to apply the Development Plan Overlay (Schedule 27) and the Vegetation Protection Overlay (Schedule 1) to the land proposed to be rezoned. This is in line with the rezoning of neighbouring sites which were brought into the UGB with the 2010 expansion and have subsequently been rezoned. The DPO27 and VPO1 will ensure development complements the existing residential area and considers conservation values. The future Development Plan assessment will consider appropriate interfaces to the Quarry Hills, ensuring its protection from urban encroachment.

Further detail on the planning scheme amendment process can be found at Attachment 6.

**Exhibition**

Council received nine submissions through the exhibition of the Amendment. Five submissions objected to the amendment and requested it be abandoned. Four of the submissions against the Amendment were from neighbouring residents and one from Hanson, the operators of the near-by Wollert Landfill.

The issues raised in submissions included:

* land use compatibility with the nearby landfill;
* implementation of Environment Protection Authority (EPA) separation distances and guidelines;
* noise and disruption during development;
* impact on the road network; and
* loss of open space, habitat, views and community identity for the neighbouring residential area.

**Landfill Buffer Guidelines**

Prior to exhibition of the Amendment, the EPA exhibited draft updated buffer and industrial separation guidelines. The guidelines proposed expanding the recommended separation between landfills and sensitive uses, such as residential, from the current 500 metres to 1,500 metres to address potential harm from odour.

The new guidelines also increased separation distances for ‘dust issues’ to 500 metres which therefore does not apply to the subject development as it is located much further than 500 metres from the dust generation.

In respect to odour issues, the new guidelines did make provision for reducing the 1,500 metres separation distance to 1,000 metres where an odour risk assessment has determined the buffer could be reduced without impact on human health. Due to the subject site's proximity to the Wollert Landfill and Quarry, this proposed change to the guidelines had the potential to affect the Amendment. The EPA advised Council how to measure the distance between uses, i.e., which elements of the landfill determined the boundary of the use. Using this, and as confirmed by the EPA, the subject site sat over 2,000 metres from the Wollert landfill.

Hanson’s submission provided alternative measurements, which saw the subject sites now falling within the 1,500 metre buffer area. These differed from the previous EPA confirmed separation measurement. As the subject matter experts, Council engaged the EPA again.

The EPA confirmed Hanson’s measurements, noting their previous advice relied on incomplete information and that the full detail of which areas of the site were to be used for landfilling had not been shared with Council. Landfill cells were located further east than originally advised. This brought the subject sites within the 1500 metre buffer, with 307 Bridge Inn Road approximately 1130 metres from the eastern most cell and 390 Masons Road 1030 metres from the nearest cell.

The draft guidelines feature a note advising “*The 1500m buffer may be varied to a minimum of 1000m with an appropriate odour risk assessment that demonstrates an alternative buffer is acceptable.”*

The EPA and Council advised the proponent of the new calculations and the need for the odour risk assessment to determine if a reduced buffer was appropriate in this situation. The Amendment was paused while this assessment was undertaken.

The odour risk assessment, performed by a suitably qualified professional, found that due to the prevailing winds at the Landfill, the risk to health and amenity posed by odour was acceptable in the area 1000m-1500m from the landfill at the subject site. EPA has reviewed and endorsed the outcomes of the assessment. The EPA’s confirmation of the assessment was shared with Hanson as the relevant submitter, however, the Hanson submission was not withdrawn prior to the Panel hearing.

**Planning Panel and Panel Report**

As the submissions to exhibition could not be resolved, Council resolved at its August 2024 meeting to request a Planning Panel be appointed to consider all submissions.

The Planning Panel was held on 26 & 27 November 2024. Parties to the Panel were Council, the proponent, Hansons and a community member representing the four resident objectors.

At the Directions Hearing conducted by the panel, Hanson advised the Panel they were no longer seeking the Amendment to be abandoned, being satisfied with the recommendations of the odour risk assessment and EPA’s endorsement of the assessment. However, they requested to remain part of the panel process and to be afforded the opportunity to present a submission.

Following the hearing, the panel members published the Panel Report in January 2025.

Detail of the matters discussed and Panel’s respective recommendations are discussed following.

Strategic Justification

The Panel found the Amendment has a sound strategic basis regarding the use of the site for both residential development and open space. They found the rezoning component aligns with the inclusion of the site within the UGB via Amendment VC68 (2010) and with the *Northern Growth Corridor Plan 2012* which shows the urban portion of the site as residential. A number of subsequent State and Council strategic documents have supported and reinforced this residential designation.

Regarding the transfer of the balance land for inclusion in the Quarry Hills Parkland, the report advises “this part of the subject land will provide an important contribution to one of Melbourne’s most significant land assemblage exercises”. They also find that this provides the Amendment’s strong community net benefit. Once again, the report notes the long history of strategic planning for the Quarry Hills Parkland, beginning with the S*outh Morang Local Structure Plan* in 1997.

Landfill Buffer

Rather than the landfill buffer distance being a live issue for consideration, the panel was presented with the chronology of events relating to the buffer issue. The relevant stakeholders, including the EPA, had previously been satisfied the separation distance between the landfill and the residential sites was appropriate and posed no risk to human health or risk to the operation of the landfill.

Loss of open space, habitat, views, solar access and community identity

Submissions from neighbouring residents raised concerns over residential development occurring on what is currently vacant farmland. These concerns related to a loss of views, loss of habitat, over shadowing, and the loss of the particular urban fringe identity.

Council submitted that the Amendment in fact permanently secure 35 hectares of land in public ownership for public use while protecting flora, fauna and landscape views.

The Panel agreed with Council’s position and highlighted the protection for existing solar panels embedded in the planning scheme.

Traffic and congestion post-development

A number of submissions from neighbouring residents raised concerns about the increased traffic and congestion that residential development would generate. Council’s submission to Panel referred to the requirements of DPO27, to be applied to the rezoned land, which requires a transport strategy which provides for a road network with a high degree of internal and external connectivity and permeability. Council also identified that three existing roads have been planned so that they can be extended and provide access to each of the two sites, these being Porepunkah Street, Langdon Drive and Henwood Rise to 307 Bridge Inn Road and Brunton Drive, Lockhart Street and Masons Road to 390 Masons Road. DPO27 is the same planning control that was applied to the developed residential land to the east of the subject site, and which resulted in a robust transport network which will accommodate development of the subject land through extension of the above-mentioned existing roads abutting the site.

The Panel members agreed with submitters that residential development of the subject sites would increase traffic generation, though agreed with Council that the application of the DPO27 will ensure that these traffic matters will be properly addressed in the preparation of a development plan for the subject sites.

Construction noise and disruption

Neighbouring submitters raised concerns over the noise, dust and disruption that construction on the subject sites would create. Council’s submissions acknowledged the potential for this type of disruption during any construction project. It is because of this that Council has developed a practice of requiring a site management plan or construction environmental management plan as part of any permit granted. These must address issues like construction vehicle access routes and measures to minimise the impact of noise and dust. These plans can and will be developed to minimise disruption to existing residents and manage site access and movement for construction vehicles.

The Panel was satisfied that these types of impacts would be appropriately addressed through planning permit conditions imposing either a site management plan or construction environmental management plan.

**Rationale for recommendation**

It is recommended that Council resolve to adopt the Amendment in its exhibited form and request approval of the Amendment by the Minister for Planning.

The Amendment will provide a number of positive outcomes, including:

* The provision of housing proximate to existing services and infrastructure in Mernda including schools, shops, community and recreation facilities.
* The continued assemblage of the Quarry Hills Parkland in public ownership.

The Amendment will see the implementation of long held strategic plans for the subject sites dating back to 1997 (South Morang Local Structure Plan) and 2012 (Northern Growth Corridor Plan) respectively.

The Amendment has been through a thorough and rigorous assessment via public exhibition and the planning panel process, which supported the Amendment and acknowledged the strong net community benefit to be delivered by the incorporation of 35 hectares of land into the Quarry Hills Parkland and commended Council’s Quarry Hills project as “one of Melbourne’s most significant open space land assemblage exercises”.

The resolution would align with the previous Council decision of August 2024, which was to support the Amendment in its exhibited form.

# Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**Liveable Neighbourhoods**

Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

*Response:*

Residential development of the subject sites will be guided by a Development Plan to ensure well planned and orderly development. The land to be incorporated into the Parkland will provide for active and passive recreation for future and existing residents.

**Sustainable Environment**

We prioritise our environment and take action to reduce waste, preserve local biodiversity, protect waterways and green space and address climate change.

*Response:*

The amendment will facilitate the transfer of 35Ha of land to Council for inclusion in the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland. This will provide an enduring and permanent development boundary preventing any further urban expansion and protecting and conserving land of significant conservation and landscape value.

# Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

Financial Management

The fee for submitting the Amendment to the Minister for Planning for approval is included in the current operational budget ($530.70).

The cost of conducting the Panel Hearing was borne by the proponents. In accordance with the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, the proponent has also paid Council a fee to assist with the resources required to consider submissions and adoption of the Amendment. Council was responsible for covering the cost of its representation at the Panel Hearing which came from its operational budget.

A s173 agreement has been executed with the proponent which formalises the liability to pay developer contributions to fund essential infrastructure in the area.

Community Consultation and Engagement

The Amendment was publicly exhibited from 29 August 2023 to 1 October 2023. Notifications were sent to 68 owners and occupiers adjacent to the subject sites, to seven potentially affected agencies, including the EPA, and to prescribed Ministers. Notification was also published in the Northern Star Weekly on Tuesday 29 August and in the Government Gazette on 31 August.

Nine submissions were received during the exhibition. Further conversations took place between Council officers and submitters, though not all submissions were able to be resolved. The submissions were then referred to an independent Planning Panel, providing another opportunity for submitters to engage in the Amendment process.

# Other Principles for Consideration

**Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles**

(b) Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations.

(d) The municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making.

(h) Regional, state and national plans and policies are to be taken into account in strategic planning and decision making.

Public Transparency Principles

(a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act.

# Council Policy Considerations

Environmental Sustainability Considerations

The Amendment will protect land of environmental importance through the incorporation of land into the Quarry Hills Parkland. This is in line with a number of Council policies that reference or guide the planning of the Quarry Hills Parkland including:

* *South Morang Local Structure Plan (1997);*
* *Open Space Strategy (2016);*
* *Green Wedge Management Plan (2023);*
* *Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2013);*
* *Quarry Hill Bushland Park Masterplan (2009);* and
* *Quarry Hills Parkland Future Directions Plan (202*3).

The DPO27 features a number of sustainability focused requirements for the development of the site. These include:

* retention of existing native vegetation;
* incorporation of a cycling network within the street network;
* innovative subdivision layout, urban design and built form responses that respond to the site and park interface;
* a landscape strategy that is to consider the enhancement of habitat values in open spaces; and
* a stormwater management strategy which considers water sensitive urban design principles which provides for protection of natural systems and integrated water management.

Social, Cultural and Health

The Quarry Hills Parkland Future Directions Plan was created in close collaboration with the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung. A key part of the plan is to return cultural practices to Country.

Economic

The development will have a positive economic impact through the development of the site for housing.

**Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications**

With respect to Strategic Risks, the Amendment implements the Parkland assemblage method Council first adopted in the *South Morang Local Structure Plan (1997)* and which has continued to be a strategic priority. Should the Amendment be abandoned, the continued assemblage of the Quarry Hills Parkland will be put at risk.

The s173 agreement which secures the transfer of the land into the Quarry Hills Parkland ensures that the land is to be transferred free of encumbrances and land contamination.

Policy, Strategy and Legislation

Planning and Environment Act 1987

The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (the Act) is the primary legislation guiding planning in the State of Victoria. The Act outlines the process for amending a Planning Scheme.

The Amendment implements the objectives of the Act which is detailed in the Explanatory Report included in the Amendment documents at Attachment 3.

Ministerial Directions

The Amendment considers and complies with the following ministerial directions:

* Ministerial Direction: The Form and Content of Planning Schemes.
* Ministerial Direction 1 – Potentially Contaminated Land.
* Ministerial Direction 9 - Metropolitan Strategy.
* Ministerial Direction 11 - Strategic Assessment of Amendments.
* Ministerial Direction 19 – On the preparation and content of Amendments that may significantly impact the environment, amenity and human health.

Planning Practice Notes

The Amendment is consistent with:

* Planning Practice Note 23: Applying the Incorporated Plan and Development Plan Overlays
* Planning Practice Note 90: Planning for Housing
* Planning Practice Note 92: Managing Buffers for Land Use Compatibility

**Planning Assessment**

Municipal Planning Strategy

* Clause 02.03-1 of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme (Settlement – Urban growth) seeks to protect the non-urban breaks between growth areas, to reinforce the urban growth boundary while protecting environmental assets.

*Response*: In rezoning the land, a hard border between urban and Green Wedge land is implemented with protection of the green wedge land a prime consideration.

* Clause 02.03-9 of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme (Settlement – Open space) seeks to facilitate the assembly of the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland.

*Response:* In facilitating the proposed rezoning of part of the subject site, Council will be transferred the balance of 35 hectares of land for the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland.

Planning Policy Framework

* Clause 11.01-1L of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme (Green wedge areas) seeks to define boundaries that preserve the integrity of both rural and urban areas.

*Response:* The amendment supports a natural, landscape-based boundary to urban growth, including use of identified open space, such as Quarry Hills Regional Parkland.

* Clause 11.02-3S of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme (Sequencing of development) seeks to require new development to make a financial contribution to the provision of infrastructure such as community facilities, public transport, and roads.

*Response:* If the Amendment is gazetted, the payment of Development Contributions and Growth Area Infrastructure Contribution (equivalent) will be required in accordance with the existing Section 173 Agreement between Council and the landowner.

* Clause 16.01-1S of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme (Housing supply) seeks to ensure an appropriate quantity, quality and type of housing is provided.

*Response:* The proposed rezoning will facilitate 21 hectares of additional residential land in the growth area of Mernda. The preparation of a Development Plan in accordance with DPO27 will guide the delivery of high-quality residential development and neighbourhood design.

State Government Planning Strategies

The Amendment is consistent with and implements:

* The North Growth Corridor Plan (2012) which identifies the urban land for residential use and the non-urban land for open space as part of the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland;
* *Plan Melbourne (2014)* which identifies the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland; and
* Draft Northern Metro Land Use Framework Plan (2021) which seeks to secure a 15-year supply of housing and protect the green wedge.

# Implementation Strategy

Communication

Should Council resolve to adopt the Amendment, officers will submit the Amendment to the Minister for Planning for consideration. Officers will notify the proponent and submitters when this has occurred.

Critical Dates

* Council Resolution to seek Authorisation to prepare and exhibit Planning Scheme Amendment: 21 March 2023.
* Authorisation granted by Minister for Planning: 24 July 2023.
* Exhibition of Planning Scheme Amendment: 29 August 2023 – 1 October 2023.
* EPA request Odour Risk Assessment, Amendment paused: 25 October 2023.
* Council Resolution to request a Planning Panel be Appointed: 20 August 2024.
* Directions hearing: 30 October 2024.
* Panel Hearing: 26 & 27 November 2024.
* Panel Report: 6 January 2025.

# Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

# Attachments

1. Subject Site Plans [**5.1.1** - 1 page]
2. C251 Planning Panel Report [**5.1.2** - 34 pages]
3. C251 Planning Scheme Amendment Documents [**5.1.3** - 17 pages]
4. Urban Growth Boundary and Existing Zoning Plan [**5.1.4** - 1 page]
5. Quarry Hills Parkland Plan [**5.1.5** - 1 page]
6. C251 Planning Scheme Amendment Process [**5.1.6** - 1 page]

 5.2 Proposed Budget 2025-26, Proposed Financial Plan 2025-26 to 2034-35 and Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29

**5.2 Proposed Budget 2025-26, Proposed Financial Plan 2025-26 to 2034-35 and Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29**

**Director/Executive Manager:** Acting Director Customer & Corporate Services

**Report Author:** Unit Manager Financial Development & Accountability

**In Attendance:** Acting Chief Financial Officer
Unit Manager Financial Strategy & Performance

# Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is for Council to consider the Proposed Budget 2025-26 (the ‘Proposed Budget’, Attachment 1), Proposed Financial Plan 2025-26 to 2034-35 (the ‘Proposed Financial Plan’, Attachment 2), and Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29 (the ‘Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan’ Attachment 3) which have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2020. Hereafter, these documents will collectively be referred to as the ‘Proposed Financial Strategic Documents’ throughout this report.

The Proposed Financial Strategic Documents have been developed to align to community priorities identified through consultation and Council’s key strategic directions. It is recommended that the Proposed Financial Strategic Documents be endorsed for community consultation from Wednesday 16 April 2025 to Sunday 4 May 2025, and a Hearing of Submissions Committee of Council be established to consider submissions from the community.

# Officers’ Recommendation

**THAT Council:**

1. **Endorse the following proposed documents to commence public exhibition and community consultation between the period Wednesday 16 April 2025 to Sunday 4 May 2025;**
2. **Proposed Budget 2025-26, including the Proposed Fees and Charges Schedule at Attachment 1.**
3. **Proposed Financial Plan 2025-26 to 2034-35 at Attachment 2.**
4. **Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29 at Attachment 3.**
5. **Resolve to hold a Hearing of Submissions Committee (Committee) meeting on Tuesday 6 May 2025 at 5pm in the Council Chamber at Civic Centre, 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang.**
6. **Note the Committee will provide recommendations to Council at its Scheduled Council Meeting on Tuesday 17 June 2025.**

# Background / Key Information

The Proposed Financial Strategic Documents have been carefully drafted to ensure Council remains financially responsible while meeting the immediate needs of our growing community and securing a strong, sustainable future. These documents reflect Council’s commitment to prudent financial management, ensuring resources are allocated efficiently while maintaining essential services and delivering long-term infrastructure projects.

The Proposed Financial Strategic Documents provide for the ongoing delivery of high quality essential services for our community including kerbside waste collection, maternal and child health, libraries and the upgrade of our existing facilities and assets, the maintenance and protection of our natural environment and open spaces, and the delivery of new infrastructure projects that will accommodate our rapidly growing diverse community.

Over the next ten years, Council will invest $5.1 billion with an initial $463.65 million in 2025-26 to deliver community services and invest in essential infrastructure. This includes a $1.07 billion capital works investment over ten years, with $116.6 million allocated in 2025-26 to improve community assets and create a lasting legacy for residents.

**Background**

The Proposed Financial Strategic Documents have been developed using the principles of responsible financial management, ensuring Council remains financially sustainable despite increasing cost pressures. External factors such as inflation, interest rates and global uncertainty continue to impact operating costs, requiring prudent financial planning to maintain essential services and infrastructure investment.

With population projections indicating a 40% increase by 2041; adding more than 6,000 new residents each year, Council faces the challenge of an expanding capital program to meet the needs of this rapidly growing municipality. The demand for roads, parks and community facilities is increasing at an unprecedented rate. Committed to delivering high-quality infrastructure, the gap in development contributions funding places additional pressure on financial sustainability, making strategic prioritisation of capital projects essential. The Proposed Financial Strategic Documents outline our approach and define how we will invest in the resources needed to support critical service delivery while driving efficiencies to ensure the needs of the community are met.

Despite these financial challenges, Council remains committed to making strategic decisions today that will safeguard future generations from unnecessary financial pressures while continuing to deliver essential services. Through rigorous budgeting, operational efficiencies, and responsible financial management, Council will ensure that the City of Whittlesea remains well-positioned to navigate financial pressures while investing in a strong, well-serviced future for the community.

At the same time, Council remains committed to supporting those experiencing vulnerability within our community. We continue to subsidise State and Federal contracted services, such as Aged Care, ensuring critical services remain accessible. In addition, Council will invest $18.2 million in community grants over the next ten years to foster social connection, support volunteers, and deliver programs that enhance wellbeing and resilience.

Financial hardship support is also being maintained, with flexible payment arrangements, rate deferrals, and fee waivers available for those experiencing financial difficulties. Council also continues to partner with community organisations to provide essential food and material aid.

The Fair Go Rates System caps Council’s rate increases to a rate set by the Victorian Government, with the 2025-26 cap set at 3 per cent. While this presents budgetary challenges, Council has worked diligently to identify operational efficiencies, reduce costs, and prioritise spending, ensuring it can continue to deliver critical services without seeking a variation to the rate cap for the 2025-26 year.

Additionally, the State Government has replaced the Fire Services Property Levy with a newly introduced Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund, shifting the funding model for further funding of emergency services for Council to collect on behalf of the Victorian Government. This change is expected to cause a significant rise in costs, with most property owners facing an increase of at least double the current charge. Despite this transition, local councils must administer and collect the levy on behalf of the State Government, effectively acting as intermediaries in the process. The increased costs and ongoing collection responsibilities raise concerns about the financial impact on communities and the administrative demands placed on councils.

**Waste Charges**

In 2018-19 the City of Whittlesea introduced the itemisation of waste charges on rates notices to provide transparency on the costs associated with this service provision. The cost of providing waste services continues to increase each year due to various factors including the Victorian Government’s Landfill Levy and the requirement to transition to a four-bin collection system in line with the Victorian Government’s, Recycling Victoria Strategy.

Historically, Council has subsidised the cost of the provision of kerbside waste collection services to rate payers in our municipality, including offsetting the increasing Victorian Government’s Landfill Levy.

The Victorian Government’s landfill levy will increase by 28% per tonne in 2025-26, further adding to the financial strain on waste management operations. As a result, Council is no longer able to continue to subsidise the landfill levy charge for waste management.

The full cost of the levy will now be passed on, ensuring Council can continue to manage waste services and other essential services sustainably.

As a result, waste charges in 2025-26 are proposed to increase by $84.90 per household which will mean a total charge of $409.95 with the landfill levy comprising of $105.85 for the average residential household, noting the inclusion of the fee for glass collection service and Food Organics Garden Organics (FOGO) service, in line with the Victorian Government Circular Economy Plan.

Waste charges provide for a weekly garbage collection, fortnightly recycling, and monthly glass bin collection for residential households. The FOGO bin is available as an optional service for eligible properties, at a cost of $95.30 per annum as a separate charge.

Waste charges for commercial properties are proposed to be $437.95 with a landfill levy of $166.60. This provides for a weekly garbage and fortnightly recycling kerbside collection.

Council is committed to keeping waste charges affordable for our community. Even with necessary adjustments, our waste charges will remain among the lowest when compared to our neighbouring and growth councils, ensuring continued value and sustainability for our residents.

The Minister’s Good Practice Guidelines for Local Government Service Rates and Charges were released in December 2023 and Council is working towards understanding the implications of these guidelines on future annual budgets.

**Proposed Financial Strategic Documents highlights**

Key highlights from Council's Proposed Financial Strategic Documents include:

* Operating revenue of $493.97 million in 2025-26 and $5.38 billion over ten years (including developer contributions, non-monetary assets, and non-recurrent capital grants).
* Operating expenditure of $347.05 million in 2025-26 and $4.03 billion over ten years.
* Adjusted underlying deficit of $14.32 million in 2025-26 and $19.56 million over ten years (excluding developer contributions, non-monetary assets and non-recurrent capital grants). Council anticipates being in a surplus position once reserve funding for operating expenditure is taken into consideration.
* Continue investing in essential services for our community such as:
	+ Resource recovery and waste management with $35.39 million in 2025-26 and $525.98 million over ten years.
	+ Family, children and youth services with $15.52 million in 2025-26 and $180.35 million over ten years.
	+ Aged services with $11.44 in 2025-26 and $132.75 million over ten years.
	+ Supporting local businesses and communities in services such as business event programs and economic development with $2 million in 2025-26 and $22.23 million over ten years.
	+ Leisure, recreation and community facilities with $11.09 million in 2025-26 and $138.42 million over ten years.
	+ Libraries with $6.09 million in 2025-26 and $89.16 million over ten years.
	+ Parks and open space with $31.24 million in 2025-26 and $421.53 million over ten years.
	+ Transport network improvements with $24.90 million in 2025-26 and $296.59 million over ten years.
* Continue building and maintaining essential roads and infrastructure and investing in new facilities such as libraries, community centres, parks and playgrounds.
* Increase community emergency resilience and preparedness, including a focus on at-risk people and communities.

The Council Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29 (Community Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29) is currently being developed with a newly elected Council, in accordance with the Local Government Act, with a requirement for it to be formally adopted by 31 October 2025. The draft plan will undergo extensive community consultation to ensure it reflects the needs and priorities of residents. Once finalised, it will serve as a clear roadmap for the city’s future, aligning services, infrastructure, and financial planning with community expectations.

**Capital Works**

Our Financial Plan delivers a focused $116.6 million in 2025-26 reflecting the ongoing challenges to the supply and availability of labour and materials and $1.07 billion Capital Works Program over the next ten years that invests in planning for shovel-ready projects to maximise our opportunities for grant funding in future years.

Highlights include:

* Continue construction of the Regional Sports Precinct.
* Complete the construction of Murnong (Patterson Drive) community centre in Donnybrook.
* Continue construction of West Wollert Community Centre.
* Complete the upgrade of Peter Hopper Lake in Mill Park.
* Complete construction of the Hill Top Splash Park and Playground in Doreen.
* Continue the roll out of the Food and Garden Organics bin service.
* Commence the development of Johnsons Road housing precinct in Mernda.
* Commence the upgrade of Huskisson Reserve Multipurpose facility.
* Delivery of local road restoration and resurfacing.
* Ongoing programs to upgrade playgrounds and landscaping.

# Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to *‘*Whittlesea 2040: *A Place for All’*

**High Performing Organisation**

We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

The Proposed Financial Strategic Documents are key enablers for planning and managing Council’s financial sustainability. They outline the key services and actions Council prioritises for delivery in the financial year 2025-26 and beyond, specifying the program of work with a focus on implementing the Council Vision *‘*Whittlesea 2040: *A Place for All’* effectively.

# Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

Financial Management

The cost is included in the current budget.

**Community Consultation and Engagement**

An extensive program of community engagement has been conducted to inform the development of the Proposed Financial Strategic Documents. Throughout August-September 2024 Council asked the community to tell us what was important to them to help shape Council’s Proposed Financial Strategic Documents including 2025-26 Budget, Financial Plan 2026-35 and Revenue and Rating Plan 2026-29. More than 880 people shared their thoughts both online and at 13 community-based pop-ups.

Our community told us their top five priorities were roads, public transport and footpaths; parks playgrounds and open space; community facilities; community safety; and arts, culture and events.

We again checked in with the community during December 2024 and January 2025 to confirm the priorities identified. Of the 133 people that participated, the majority (75%) agreed with the order of the priority areas.

In February 2025, 46 carefully selected community members, representing the diverse demographics of the community, participated in three focus groups to discuss local priorities. They identified key service areas they valued most and wished to see maintained or enhanced. Local business support, youth services, public health and safety, waste management, and ageing well services emerged as top priorities for continued or increased support. Participants also provided support for maintenance of areas such as animal management, creative communities, community strengthening, biodiversity, land management, and sustainable planning and design.

Following Council endorsement, we will be conducting a further check-in with the community to ensure the resultant Proposed Financial Strategic Documents align with community priorities. The community will be invited to lodge formal submissions between Wednesday 16 April 2025 to Sunday 4 May 2025.

A Hearing of Submissions Committeeof Council will be established to consider submissions on the Proposed Financial Strategic Documents and hear from members of the public who wish to speak to their submissions.

Based on the feedback from community consultation and after consideration of all submissions, the Hearing of Submissions Committee may make recommendations to Council at the Council Meeting on Tuesday 17 June 2025.

# Other Principles for Consideration

**Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles**

(g) The ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured.

Public Transparency Principles

(a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act.

# Council Policy Considerations

Environmental Sustainability Considerations

The Proposed Financial Strategic Documents prioritise the City of Whittlesea’s key actions in the environmental space for the financial year 2025-26, in line with the community vision articulated in ‘Whittlesea 2040: A Place for All’ and the Sustainable Environment Goal and associated strategy.

Social, Cultural and Health

The Proposed Financial Strategic Documents prioritise the City of Whittlesea’s key actions in the social, cultural and health space for the financial year 2025-26 and beyond, in line with the community vision articulated in ‘Whittlesea 2040: *A Place for All*’ and the Connected Community and Liveable Neighbourhoods Goals and associated strategies.

Economic

The Proposed Financial Strategic Documents prioritise the City of Whittlesea’s key actions in the economic space for the financial year 2025-26 26 and beyond, in line with the community vision articulated in ‘Whittlesea 2040: *A Place for All*’ and the Strong Local Economy Goal and associated strategy.

**Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications**

No implications.

# Implementation Strategy

Communication

A comprehensive multi-channel communications campaign will promote the opportunity for community to provide their feedback and make a submission on the Proposed Financial Strategic Documents.

The Hearing of Submissions Committee to Council will consider community submissions regarding the strategic proposed documents and hear community members who wish to present their submission in person.

Critical Dates

* Community consultation to inform drafts was undertaken in August-September 2024 and December-February 2025.
* Council to consider the Proposed Financial Strategic Documents to be released for further community consultation at Council Meeting on Tuesday 15 April 2025.
* Consultation is proposed from Wednesday 16 April 2025 to Sunday 4 May 2025, 5pm.
* The Hearing of Submissions Committee will meet to consider community feedback and submissions on Tuesday 6 May 2025.
* The Proposed Financial Strategic Documents will be considered for endorsement by Council at a Council Meeting to be held on Tuesday 17 June 2025 following consideration of community feedback and any submissions to Council.

# Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

# Attachments

1. Proposed Budget 2025-26 [**5.2.1** - 105 pages]
2. Proposed Financial Plan 2025-26 - 2024-35 [**5.2.2** - 45 pages]
3. Proposed Revenue and Rating Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29 [**5.2.3** - 38 pages]

 5.3 Asset Plan 2025 - 2035

**5.3 Asset Plan 2025 - 2035**

**Director/Executive Manager:** Director Planning & Development

**Report Author:** Manager Assets & Facilities

**In Attendance:** Manager Assets & Facilities
Unit Manager Asset Management

# Executive Summary

The Asset Plan 2025–35 (the Plan) is a strategic framework for managing public assets over the next decade and beyond, ensuring their sustainability for current and future generations. It aligns with the Whittlesea 2040 objectives and its vision of "A Place for All", fostering a community-friendly environment. Additionally, the Plan informs the public about how assets will be managed to support these objectives.

The Plan focuses on optimising capital and maintenance investments, balancing new assets and growth with existing infrastructure, and delivering services that adapt to evolving community needs. It promotes evidence-based decision-making, enhances community and Council engagement in asset management, and strengthens the link between costs and service levels while addressing key challenges and risks.

As a planning tool, the Asset Plan ensures the efficient allocation of resources by maintaining, improving, and replacing essential public assets such as roads, parks, buildings, and drains. It provides expenditure forecasts to guide long-term financial planning, maintenance, and capital projects, ensuring responsible budget management and asset sustainability for future generations (Attachment 1 - Asset Plan 2025-35 Draft).

Council has prepared the Plan in compliance with Section 92 of the Victorian Local Government Act 2020, which requires the use of deliberative engagement in its development. Engagement with the community and stakeholders resulted in the establishment of eight asset planning principles, guiding the creation of an integrated, long-term, and transparent plan to ensure the best outcomes for the community over a minimum period of 10 years**.**

The Plan reinforces Council’s commitment to inclusive, transparent, and best-practice asset management for the benefit of current and future generations.

The final stage of the community consultation process recommends placing the Plan on public exhibition before finalising the Plan for Council consideration.

# Officers’ Recommendation

**THAT Council:**

1. **Endorse the proposed Asset Plan 2025-35 at Attachment 1 to commence public exhibition and community consultation between the period Wednesday 16 April 2025 to Sunday 11 May 2025.**
2. **Note the finalised Asset Plan 2025-35 will be presented to Council at its Scheduled Council Meeting on Tuesday 17 June 2025.**

# Background / Key Information

Council provides a wide range of essential services that contribute to making the community *a great place for all.* These services rely on infrastructure assets, including buildings, roads, parks, and heritage sites, which play a crucial role in delivering services and enhancing community well-being. These assets—whether old or new, natural, or built—belong to the entire community and provide opportunities for people to work, live, play, and enjoy a safe and comfortable environment both now and in the future.

The Plan details how Council will optimise capital and maintenance requirements, balance new assets and growth with existing infrastructure, and deliver services in line with evolving community needs and expectations.

The Plan aims to support consistent, evidence-based decision-making, engage the community and the Council in asset management performance reporting, improve links between costs and service levels, and articulate our challenges and risks. All of this will result in more informed community engagement and the best use of Council assets in the interest of the community, to achieve the Whittlesea 2040 community aspirations.

In compliance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, deliberative engagement was undertaken with the community and stakeholders to inform the development of the Plan. Stakeholder consultation included the community, Traditional Owners, and various community and user groups. Three focus group sessions were conducted, comprising community members representative of the municipality's diversity, along with an internal focus group. These sessions aimed to develop a set of asset planning principles to guide decision-making in asset planning, development, and maintenance, ensuring that infrastructure aligns with the diverse needs of the community. The asset management principles are outlined in Table A: Asset Planning Principles**.**

**Table A: Asset Planning Principles**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Principle | Objective |
| Active & Healthy Community | Assets support and encourage an active and healthy lifestyle. |
| Connected Community | Infrastructure fosters strong community connections. |
| First Peoples Recognition | Assets acknowledge and reflect connections to First Peoples. |
| Safe Community | Asset risks are minimised to ensure public safety. |
| Community-Focused | Assets are designed to meet the evolving needs of a diverse community. |
| Equitable & Accessible | Infrastructure is planned to be inclusive and available to all members of the community. |
| Sustainability | Asset management decisions consider environmental, social, and financial sustainability. |
| Usability | Assets are optimised for efficiency, functionality, and practicality. |

Over time, assets deteriorate due to age, damage, disasters, or obsolescence. To ensure their longevity, Council carefully manages its budget to maintain and upgrade infrastructure, keeping it durable, sustainable, and functional in the long term. The Plan categorises Council-owned assets into 11 asset portfolios with a total replacement cost of over $4.03M. Considering the financial magnitude of the asset portfolio, there must be alignment with financial reporting, renewal programming, and maintenance services and contracts. The physical and financial state of these assets is detailed in Table B: Asset Portfolio Summary**.**

**Table B: Asset Portfolio Summary**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Asset Portfolio | Replacement Cost ($’000) | Fair Value ($’000) | Asset Health (%) |
| 1. Road Infrastructure
 | $1,812,655 | $1,410,040 | 77.8% |
| 1. Stormwater
 | $757,015 | $511,323 | 67.5% |
| 1. Buildings
 | $501,866 | $401,814 | 80.1% |
| 1. Pathways
 | $334,834 | $270,863 | 80.9% |
| 1. Park & Streetscape Infrastructure
 | $196,797 | $100,533 | 51.1% |
| 1. Bridges & Boardwalks
 | $145,411 | $75,405 | 51.9% |
| 1. Playgrounds
 | $101,139 | $55,522 | 54.9% |
| 1. Road Ancillary
 | $63,906 | $34,851 | 54.5% |
| 1. Landscape & Environment
 | $42,049 | $30,235 | 71.9% |
| 1. Car Parks
 | $35,367 | $27,326 | 77.3% |
| 1. Sporting Infrastructure
 | $30,717 | $15,553 | 50.6% |

The community expects these assets to be maintained at high standards to ensure public safety, functionality, and accessibility, supporting the delivery of quality services and programs. However, balancing community expectations with financial sustainability is essential, as needs evolve due to demographic changes, climate shifts, and technological advancements. Given the finite budget available, a planned and strategic approach to asset management is crucial for ensuring a fair and fiscally responsible long-term financial plan.

When making decisions about renewing, maintaining, or investing in new assets, the Plan outlines the process for life cycle planning and analysis to assess appropriate service levels before finalising budgets to ensure investments align with community aspirations and long-term sustainability goals.

Therefore, the Asset Plan:

* Defines service levels to ensure assets meet expected performance standards in availability, quality, risk, accessibility, and suitability. High-demand assets receive more frequent inspections, maintenance, and prioritisation within renewal programs to maintain reliability.

Service levels are based on community expectations, legislative requirements, and asset management standards, with decisions on maintenance, renewal, and upgrades driven by asset criticality, utilisation, and available resources.

* Promotes inclusive infrastructure to ensure all residents and visitors can fully participate in community life. Council integrates gender equality considerations into the planning, design, delivery, and maintenance of infrastructure, ensuring safe, welcoming, and accessible public spaces for women, men, gender-diverse individuals, people with disabilities and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.
* Commits to intergenerational equity, ensuring that current investments in assets do not place an undue financial burden on future generations. This approach balances the needs of present residents while preserving resources, opportunities, and infrastructure for future generations.
* Integrates climate resilience and sustainability strategies into asset management to mitigate risks related to flooding, municipal emergencies, and environmental sustainability.

The Asset Plan ensures sustainable, inclusive, and resilient infrastructure that meets community needs while aligning with financial responsibility and environmental sustainability. By integrating technological advancements, climate adaptation strategies, and intergenerational equity principles, Council remains committed to delivering high-quality services and infrastructure that support the well-being of both current and future generations.

# Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**Connected Communities**

We work to foster and inclusive, healthy, safe and welcoming community where all ways of life are celebrated and supported.

**Liveable Neighbourhoods**

Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

**Strong Local Economy**

Our City is a smart choice for innovation, business growth and industry as well as supporting local businesses to be successful, enabling opportunities for local work and education.

**Sustainable Environment**

We prioritise our environment and take action to reduce waste, preserve local biodiversity, protect waterways and green space and address climate change.

**High Performing Organisation**

We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

# Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

Financial Management

The cost is included in the current budget.

Community Consultation and Engagement

Council has prepared the Plan in compliance with Section 92 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, which mandates the use of deliberative engagement in its development.

In 2024, three community focus groups and one internal focus group were conducted to ensure diverse representation and meaningful discussions on asset planning. These sessions provided residents with opportunities to engage in discussions aimed at developing a set of asset planning principles. Feedback was collected through written surveys, table discussions, and whole-room conversations, ensuring inclusive participation. The insights gained from these discussions helped identify, assess, and prioritise eight guiding asset planning principles. This collaborative approach resulted in balanced principles that reflect community perspectives while aligning with best practices in contemporary asset management and supporting the Community Vision.

# Other Principles for Consideration

**Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles**

(a) Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law.

(b) Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations.

(c) The economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted.

(d) The municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making.

(e) Innovation and continuous improvement is to be pursued.

(g) The ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured.

(i) The transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

Public Transparency Principles

(a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act.

(b) Council information must be publicly available unless—

 (i) the information is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act; or

 (ii) public availability of the information would be contrary to the public interest.

(c) Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community.

(d) Public awareness of the availability of Council information must be facilitated.

# Council Policy Considerations

Environmental Sustainability Considerations

The Plan reaffirms Council’s commitment to integrating climate change adaptation, flooding mitigation, municipal emergency management, and sustainability into responsible asset management.

When designing new infrastructure or maintaining existing public assets, decisions are guided by the following key considerations:

* Climate-proofing assets to enhance long-term durability.
* Improving the resilience of buildings and road infrastructure to withstand climatic events.
* Minimising reliance on high-risk assets to reduce vulnerabilities.
* Investing in eco-friendly materials to promote sustainability.
* Implementing sustainable operations to reduce environmental impact.

This approach ensures that public infrastructure remains resilient, sustainable, and capable of adapting to future environmental challenges.

Social, Cultural, and Health

The Plan considers social, cultural, and health factors by ensuring that infrastructure is inclusive, accessible, and supportive of community well-being.

* Socially, it prioritises equitable access to essential services, public spaces, and recreational facilities, fostering community connectivity and engagement.
* Culturally, it acknowledges and reflects the heritage and identity of diverse communities, including Traditional Owners, through respectful planning and design.
* From a health perspective, the plan promotes active lifestyles by maintaining safe parks, pathways, and sporting facilities, while also ensuring public infrastructure supports clean, sustainable, and healthy environments.

Economic

The Plan considers economic factors to ensure long-term financial sustainability and efficient resource management.

* **Financial Responsibility**: The Plan aligns asset management with the Opex and Capex budgets and programs and the Long-Term Financial Plan to ensure that maintenance, renewal, and upgrades are cost-effective and fiscally responsible.
* **Economic Growth**: By investing in key infrastructure, such as transport networks, business precincts, and community facilities, the plan supports local economic activity, job creation, and business growth.
* **Cost-Effective Asset Management:** A lifecycle approach to asset management minimises long-term costs by optimising asset performance, extending lifespan, and reducing the need for premature replacements.
* **Sustainable Investment:** The plan considers climate resilience and sustainability, reducing operational costs through energy-efficient infrastructure, eco-friendly materials, and smart technologies.

**Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications**

The Plan ensures infrastructure is compliant, efficient, and aligned with Council’s Integrated Planning Framework by addressing legal, resource, and strategic implications.

* **Legal Considerations:** The Plan ensures compliance with Section 92 of the *Local Government Act 2020* and *Gender Equality Act 2020*. It also adheres to planning, safety, and environmental standards to mitigate legal risks and incorporate public liability and risk management to protect community interests.
* **Resource Considerations:** The Plan balances financial, human, and material resources to maintain and develop assets efficiently. It implements a lifecycle approach to asset maintenance, ensuring optimal use of resources, and uses technology and data-driven decision-making to enhance asset efficiency and reduce costs.
* **Strategic Considerations:** The Plan aligns with the City of Whittlesea 2040, the Community Plan 2025-35 (Council Plan), and the Long-Term Financial Plan to ensure that infrastructure meets future needs. It supports economic development, sustainability, and service delivery priorities, while also adapting to changing demographics, climate impacts, and technological advancements to enhance resilience and future readiness.

# Implementation Strategy

Communication

Commence the final stage of the community consultation process by placing the Plan on public exhibition before finalising the Plan for Council consideration.

Critical Dates

If Council endorses the Officers recommendations, the critical dates are:

1. Public exhibition and community consultation between the period Wednesday 16 April 2025 to Sunday 11 May 2025
2. Final Council Report and Asset Plan 2025-26 will be provided to Council at its Scheduled Council Meeting on Tuesday 17 June 2025.

# Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

# Attachments

1. Asset Plan 2025-35 Draft [**5.3.1** - 39 pages]

 5.4 CT2025-12 Pruning and Maintenance of Trees for the City of Whittlesea

**5.4 CT2025-12 Pruning and Maintenance of Trees for the City of Whittlesea**

**Director/Executive Manager:** Director Infrastructure & Environment

**Report Author:** Coordinator Trees Management

**In Attendance:** Manager Maintenance & Operations

These attachments have been designated as confidential in accordance with sections 66(5) and 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2020 on the grounds that they contain Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released.

# Executive Summary

On 31 March 2025, Council’s long-standing contract for Tree Maintenance services will expire.

Historically, tree maintenance services have been provided by a single-service provider, Citywide Service Solutions, who’ve held responsibility for the core tree maintenance services including tree inspections, tree pruning, tree planting, electrical line clearance, and after-hours/storm response, among others.

In recent years, a combination of macro environmental factors including an industry shortage of arborists, a shift towards subcontractor reliance, and increased operational expenses, have made that single-service provider model unsustainable for Council’s incumbent, and Council alike.

As a result, Council has opted to unbundle the current tree maintenance portfolio and test the market with an unbundled service offering.

In January 2025, Council went to market for the first portion of the unbundled tree offering, the tree pruning, tree removal and stump removal package that created contract CT2025-12. The intent of that contract is to engage a single supplier to perform general tree maintenance works, specifically programmed pruning, for a period of up to twelve months.

That timeline will allow Council to test the unbundled approach, trial new service providers, and return to market mid 2025 for the long-term tree maintenance contracts.

Tenders for contract CT2025-12 closed 18 February 2025. The tendered prices and a summary of the evaluation are detailed in the confidential attachment.

A total of nine suppliers submitted tender applications and were evaluated against weighted criteria. Across that criteria, the Tree Company Arboricultural Services Pty Ltd was selected as the preferred tenderer.

# Officers’ Recommendation

**THAT Council:**

1. **Resolve to award contract 2025-12 Pruning and Maintenance of Trees for the City of Whittlesea to The Tree Company Arboricultural Services Pty Ltd, for a period of 12 months from 16 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, with a total value not exceeding $2,700,000 excluding GST.**
2. **Approve the funding arrangements as detailed in the confidential attachment.**
3. **Authorise the Chief Executive Officer to sign and execute the contract on behalf of Council.**

# Background / Key Information

The City of Whittlesea manages 120,000 street trees across a diverse range of neighbourhood types including established, rural, and growth areas. Attractive tree-lined streets are valued by the community and are an important part of the City’s liveability.

Street trees provide a wealth of benefits to the community including shade, amenity, habitat for wildlife, and streetscape beautification. They also reduce air pollution and stormwater flows, and the amount of heat that radiates from buildings, footpaths, and roads on hot days. More importantly, street trees are an important element of place-making, creating a unique sense of place, as well as a unique brand of liveability for

the municipality.

Historically, the City of Whittlesea trees were maintained by a single external service provider who provided all tree maintenance including tree inspections, tree pruning, and tree removal. That single-service provider model has been utilised by the City of Whittlesea without material change since 2002.

In recent years, however, the single-service provider model has proved challenging for suppliers and Council alike. An industry shortage of suitably qualified arborists made it difficult to attract and retain key personnel for suppliers, resulting in Council’s incumbent relying on subcontract agreements. That subcontractor reliance increased operational costs for suppliers, reduced available margins for the incumbent, and often delayed service delivery timeframes for Council and the community substantially.

Noting the increased overhead costs for the incumbent, their ongoing reliance on subcontract agreements and subsequent proposal to increase the expense of Council’s contracts, and the increasing backlog of tree pruning works, officers opted not to exercise our option to extend the existing tree maintenance contract beyond its natural conclusion date of 31 March 2025.

In reviewing the current operational model, officers opted instead to unbundle the tree maintenance offering into its core components, and return to market for 12 month bridging contracts in order to test the sustainability of a new operating model.

Those unbundled components are as follows:

* Tree pruning, tree removal, and stump removal works, including an after-hours/storm clean-up response.
* Tree inspection works.
* Development tree hyper care; and
* Electrical line clearing works.

By segmenting the service offering, Council is hoping to achieve better pricing, efficiency, service delivery, auditability and governance, particularly in the separation between the tree inspection and tree pruning portfolios. Tree inspections ensure Council remains compliant from a risk and liability perspective, and each inspection generates work requests that flow to the tree pruning provider for action.

In January 2025, Council went to market for the first portion of the unbundled tree offering, the tree pruning, tree removal and stump removal package that created contract CT2025-12. The intent of that contract is to engage a single supplier to perform general tree maintenance works, specifically programmed pruning, for a period of up to twelve months.

That timeline will allow Council to test the unbundled approach, trial new service providers, and return to market mid 2025 for the long-term tree maintenance contracts.

Tenders for contract CT2025-12 closed 18 February 2025. The tendered prices and a summary of the evaluation are detailed in the confidential attachment.

No member of the Tender Evaluation Panel declared any conflict of interest in relation to this tender evaluation.

A Tender Probity and Evaluation Plan was designed specifically for this tender process, and it was authorised prior to this tender being advertised. All tenders received were evaluated in accordance with that plan. The evaluation involved scoring of conforming and competitive tenders according to these pre-determined criteria and weightings:

* Price 40%
* Capability 30%
* Capacity 25%
* Sustainability 5%

A bonus weighting was also applied as follows, post-evaluation:

* Local business 5%
* Sustainability 5%

The weightings reflect the relative importance of each element to this particular contract. They were determined as being most appropriate after considering numerous factors including (but not restricted to) the time, quality, risk, and contract management requirements which were likely to have the most impact on the achievement of best value.

Only tenders that were conforming and competitive were fully scored. Tender submissions that were evaluated as non-conforming or not sufficiently competitive were set aside from further evaluation. In cases where this occurred the reasons for that outcome are detailed in the confidential attachment. The evaluation outcome was as follows:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Tenderer** | **Conforming** | **Competitive** | **Score** | **Rank** |
| The Tree Company Arboricultural Services Pty Ltd | Yes | Yes | 83.4% | 1 |
| Tenderer D | Yes | Yes | 81.5% | 2 |
| Tenderer B | Yes | Yes | 70.1% | 3 |
| Tenderer C | Yes | Yes  | 55.34% | 4 |
| Tenderer E | Yes | Yes | 42.48% | 5 |
| Tenderer G | Yes | No |  |  |
| Tenderer F  | No |  |  |  |
| Tenderer H | No |  |  |  |
| Tenderer I | No |  |  |  |

Details of the full evaluation process can be found in the confidential attachment.

# Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

**Liveable Neighbourhoods**
Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

**Sustainable Environment**
We prioritise our environment and take action to reduce waste, preserve local biodiversity, protect waterways and green space and address climate change.

# Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

Financial Management

Sufficient funding for this contract is available in the budget for FY2024-25 and FY2025-26.

Community Consultation and Engagement

Community consultation and engagement was not required in relation to the subject matter of this report as it relates to commercial arrangements and contractual obligations that are confidential.

# Other Principles for Consideration

**Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles**

(b) Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations.

(c) The economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted.

(e) Innovation and continuous improvement is to be pursued.

(g) The ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured.

(i) The transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

Public Transparency Principles

1. Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act.
2. Council information must be publicly available unless—

(i) the information is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act; or

(ii) public availability of the information would be contrary to the public interest.

1. Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community.

# Council Policy Considerations

Environmental Sustainability Considerations

Tenderers were required to demonstrate their commitment to social and environmentally sustainable work practices such as independently certified environmental management systems and sustainable procurement monitoring.

Social, Cultural and Health

Well maintained parks and open space throughout the municipality fosters improved health and wellbeing outcomes, promotes both active and passive recreation, and enhances social cohesion and connectedness.

Economic

This service contract will potentially enable new employment opportunities for residents of Whittlesea (estimating a minimum of 8 positions) including social benefit suppliers, in line with social procurement requirements.

**Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications**

Contractors must comply with, and ensure that its employees, subcontractors and agents comply with, any Acts, Regulations, Local Laws and By-Laws applicable to the performance of this contract's services. The contractors’ responsibilities extend to include any statutory requirements that may be specific to Local Government entities.

# Implementation Strategy

Communication

No new communications are required for the implementation of this contract.

Critical Dates

The initial contract term will commence on 16th April 2025 and end on 31st March 2026, should Council resolve to adopt the contract.

# Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020*officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

# Attachments

1. CONFIDENTIAL REDACTED - Tender Evaluation Summary [**5.4.1** - 5 pages]
2. CONFIDENTIAL REDACTED - 2025-12 BAFO Pricing Table Updated Tree Company [**5.4.2** - 1 page]

 **6 Notices of Motion**

 6.1 CEO Employment Matters Advisory Committee Membership

**6.1 CEO Employment Matters Advisory Committee Membership**

**Councillor: Cr, Martin Taylor**

**NoM No:** **2025/03**

Cr Taylor has given notice that it is their intention to move the following Motion at the Scheduled Council Meeting to be held on Tuesday 15 April at 6pm.

# Motion

**THAT Council:**

1. **Resolve Cr Aidan McLindon (Cr McLindon) be immediately removed as a councillor representative on the CEO Employment Matters Advisory Committee (CEMAC).**
2. **Amend the City of Whittlesea CEO Employment and Remuneration Policy to reflect that membership will comprise of three councillors, noting Councillors Colwell and Kozmevski have already been appointed to the CEMAC.**
3. **Appoint Cr Martin Taylor as the third councillor representative on the CEMAC.**
4. **Notes the reappoinment of the Mayor of the day to CEMAC will form part of next annual consideration of membership to all internal and external Committees and Boards.**

**Notice Received:** 31 March 2025

**Notice Given to Councillors:** 11 April 2025

**Date of Meeting:** 15 April 2025

**PREAMBLE**

The purpose of this motion is for Council to formally express the importance of ensuring that councillor representation on the CEMAC remains impartial, fair, and reflective of the best interests of the Council and the City of Whittlesea municipality. Council refers to publicly available digital recordings from a gathering on Tuesday, 18 March 2025, during which a statement was made by Cr McLindon, calling for the immediate stepping aside of the Chief Executive Officer. This is cited as an example of potential bias and a basis for reconsideration of councillor representation on the CEMAC.

 **7 Urgent Business**

 **8 Reports from Councillors and CEO Update**

 **9 Tabled Reports**

No reports.

 **10 Confidential Business**

Under section 66(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* a meeting considering confidential information may be closed to the public. Pursuant to sections 3(1) and 66(5) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

# Recommendation

**THAT the meeting be closed to the public for the purpose of considering details relating to the following confidential matter in accordance with Section 66(2)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2020* as detailed.**

 **11 Closure**