



Western Plains North Green Wedge Management Plan

September 2014



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version	title	date	issuer	changes
A	Western Plains North Green Wedge Management Plan - Preliminary Draft for PCG Review	21.02.14	JK	n/a
B	Western Plains North Green Wedge Management Plan - Draft for Exhibition	11.04.14	JK	Internal review by Council PCG, DTPLI and others
C	Western Plains North Green Wedge Management Plan - Final Draft	13.06.14	JK	Updated following review of submissions following exhibition
D	Western Plains North Green Wedge Management Plan	14.07.14	JK	Updated following sign off from PCG

Part A - Background

1 Introduction

The overarching aim of the Western Plains North Green Wedge Management Plan (WPNGWMP) is to provide a framework to support sustainable land use, land management, and development of the City of Melton's Western Plains North Green Wedge. In order to achieve this aim, the project brief outlined the following key objectives:

- Identify the agricultural resources, water resources, infrastructure, significant landscapes, significant flora and fauna, and heritage places within the Green Wedge;
- Identify the land capability and environmental conditions of the Green Wedge;
- Identify the land uses within the Green Wedge and the contribution that they make to the City of Melton, to the surrounding region, and to the wider Metropolitan area of Melbourne;
- Provide strategic guidance on the kinds of land use and development that will be permitted to make best use of its natural resources and the environment; and
- Recommend a range of regulatory and non-regulatory measures to protect and enhance the Green Wedge, and to manage its interface with the Urban Growth Boundary.

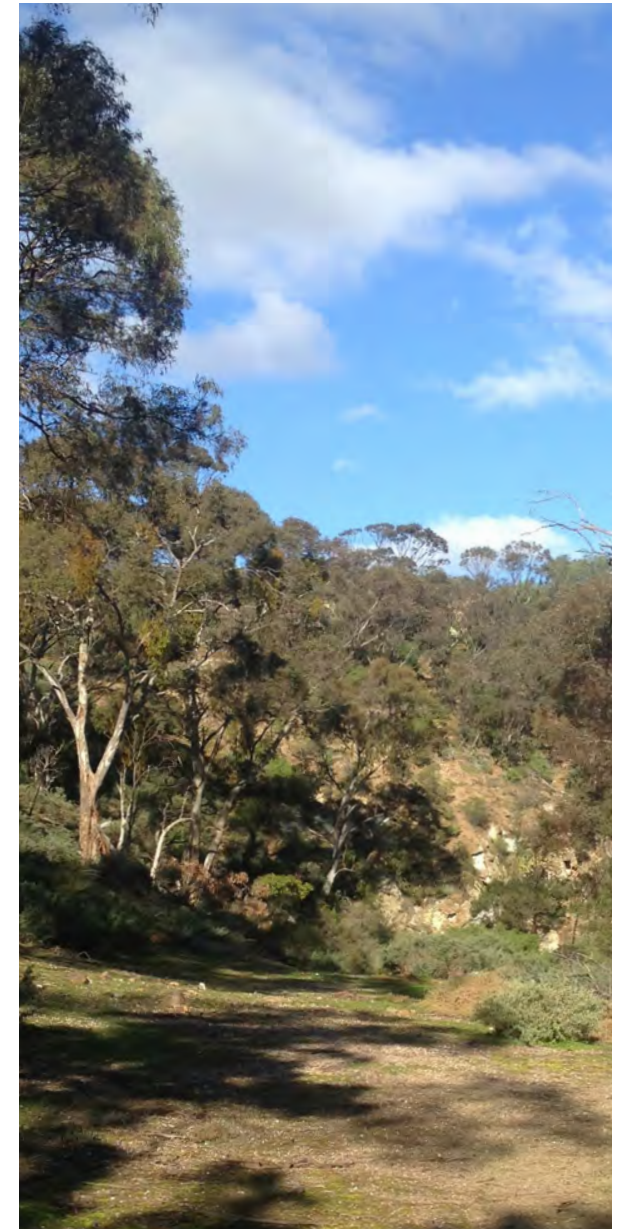
The WPNGWMP was undertaken in eight stages, including an Inception stage (Stage 1) as outlined below:

- Extensive background reporting, based on site visits and desktop analysis, to identify existing conditions within the study area and to flag areas likely to need addressing within the Management Plan (Stage 2).
- A stakeholder consultation session to test the desktop analysis, identify the 'big picture' issues and trends, and to begin the process of identifying appropriate principles (Stage 3).
- Documentation of the views expressed by stakeholders, along with an overall vision for the area, on the basis of stakeholder feedback and the findings of the desktop analysis (Stage 4).
- Testing of the 'vision' with the same stakeholders and the preparation of a draft Management Plan (Stages 5 and 6).
- Preparation of a draft Management Plan for which was exhibited to key stakeholders and landowners before being finalised (Stages 5, 7 and 8).

The Management Plan is supported by the following documents:

- The Background Report (June 2013).
- Vision and Community Views Report (October 2013).
- Consultation Summary and Response (January 2014).

These supporting documents are all available for public viewing through the Melton City Council website (melton.vic.gov.au).





1.1 How to Use This Document

The WPNGWMP is structured in three sections which build on the findings of the background analysis and consultation work that was undertaken to develop the management plan.

Part A - Background

Provides the introduction, including the key aims of the Management Plan and an introduction to 'green wedges'. It also provides a description of the Green Wedge itself and a summary of the community and stakeholder engagement that was undertaken as part of this project.

Part B - Vision

Outlines the overall vision developed for the Western Plains North Green Wedge, as well as a summary of the key values identified through that process which have informed the Management Plan.

Part C - Management Plan Themes

Forms the main body of this report and is structured under three key themes:

- **The Environment** addresses matters relating to the biodiversity and environmental health of the area, including waterway health.
- **The Land** looks at how the land is used and responses to the challenges of agriculture, as well as matters relating to the landscape qualities and other land uses.
- **The People** looks at the community, tourism and recreation, as well as heritage..

Each Theme outlines the relevant values associated with that theme and the key issues that have informed the Management Plan. These issues were identified through the Background Report and have been influenced from a range of stakeholders and community members. Each Theme is underpinned by a series of objectives and strategies which seek to address key issues and enhance the values of the green wedge.

Part D - Implementation

A comprehensive Implementation Plan outlines actions and areas of responsibility and timeframes for implementation.

The main body of each theme consists of a series of numbered strategies which are followed by a discussion, and then a series of related actions designed to implement the strategy. For example:

1. Example strategy

Discussion around details of the strategy and the implications that may arise.

E1 a1 – action

(theme letter / strategy number / action / action number)

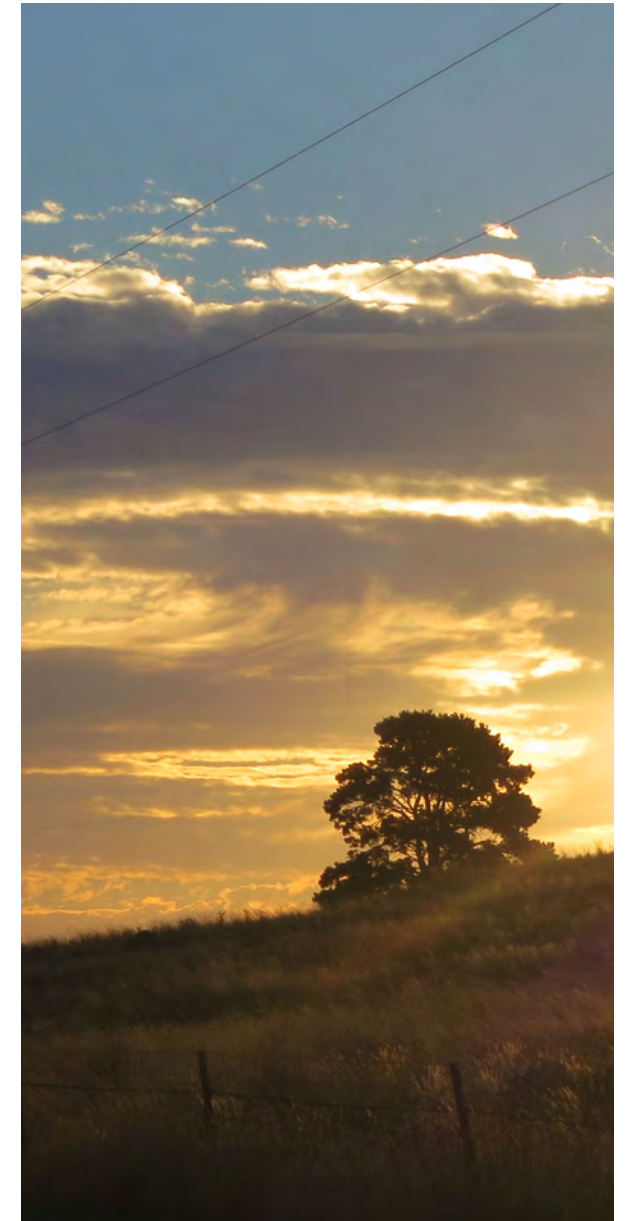
1.2 Community Engagement

- Consultation event #1 was held in May 2013, to seek background information on issues that currently exist in the Green Wedge. The sessions held on that day offered the opportunity for landowners, occupiers and other key stakeholders to provide the project team with their thoughts on what the key issues within the Green Wedge currently are, what they value about the area, and any ideas they have for its future management.
- Community surveys were also distributed and provided a good insight into particular issues affecting landowners and residents.
- Consultation event #2 was held in November 2013, comprised a series of consultation sessions held at the Toolern Vale Hall. The sessions provided an overview of the contents of the Vision and Community Views Report, before groups discussions about the objectives which had been developed as part of the 'vision'.
- Consultation was documented in the Vision and Community Views Report (October 2013) and the Consultation Summary and Response (January 2014).
- Consultation event #3 was held in May 2014, comprised a series of precinct based consultation sessions allowing discussion of the draft Management Plan prior to finalisation.

These reports, and consultation notes, are available from Council's website (www.melton.vic.gov.au).

Key themes that emerged from consultation events can be summarised as follows:

- Opportunities for further subdivision and development of rural residential properties.
- Issues around the Urban Growth Boundary.
- Protection of important areas of biodiversity.
- Protection of the valued rural lifestyle.
- Governance and opportunities for more positive engagement with Council.
- The viability of agriculture and the failure of planning to respond to the changing conditions.
- Concerns over a 'one size fits all' approach and a desire for recognition of diversity of the area.
- Need for better movement corridors for wildlife, and issues with how these may be implemented.
- Weed infestation and how this is best managed, including concern over levels of enforcement.





1.3 What is a 'Green Wedge'?

Green wedges are the non-urban areas of metropolitan Melbourne that lie outside the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). There are twelve designated green wedge areas that collectively form a ring around Melbourne. Each green wedge is unique with its own range of key features and related values. These twelve green wedges are:

- Manningham
- Mornington Peninsula
- Nillumbik
- South East
- Southern Ranges
- Sunbury
- Werribee South
- Western Plains South
- Western Plains North
- Westport
- Whittlesea
- Yarra Valley and Yarra and Dandenong Ranges.

The City of Melton is one of seventeen fringe municipalities within metropolitan Melbourne which contain these twelve green wedges. In the south of the municipality is the Western Plains South Green Wedge which will be addressed by a separate Management Plan. A green wedge is an area of land which has agricultural, environmental, historic, landscape, recreation and/or tourism value. Subsequently, intense urban development is precluded in these areas.

More specifically as documented in the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) Principles, Issues and Guidelines for Green Wedges (2005), the role of the green wedges includes:

- Providing opportunities for agricultural uses, such as market gardening, viticulture, aquaculture, farm forestry and broad acre farming

- Preserving rural and scenic landscapes
- Preserving conservation areas close to where people live
- Preserving renewable and non-renewable resources and natural areas (such as water catchments)
- Providing and safeguarding sites for infrastructure that supports urban areas (such as airports and sewage treatment plants)
- Allowing industries such as sand and stone extraction to operate close to major markets
- Enabling the development of networks of open space
- Providing opportunities for tourism and recreation.

Subdivision of Land in a Green Wedge Zone

One of the key differences between land zoned Green Wedge and other rural areas is that approval of a planning scheme amendment to allow increased subdivision of land are not just made by the local Council. While Council can present a strategic argument for why land should be subdivided, under the Planning and Environment Act 1987, any change that would allow an increase in subdivision within the area must be approved by the Minister and then ratified by both Houses of Parliament.

Part 3AA--Metropolitan Green Wedge Protection of the Act which outlines this applies to any amendment to the Melton Planning Scheme that *amends or inserts an urban growth boundary; or that has the effect of altering or removing any controls over the subdivision of any green wedge land to allow the land to be subdivided into more lots or into smaller lots than allowed for in the planning scheme.*

1.4 What is a Green Wedge Management Plan?

As part of the implementation of *Melbourne 2030* and changes to the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) for Melbourne, the sitting Government introduced a process for the preparation of management plans for all of Melbourne's green wedges, mandating a consistent format. These plans are intended to:

- Enhance knowledge of the environmental, social and economic attributes of the non-urban parts of the City, including addressing issues of environmental degradation and economic viability of traditional farming methods.
- Enhance community knowledge and awareness of non-urban land use, development and management issues.
- Identify initiatives to be undertaken by Councils and other bodies, in partnership as appropriate, to ensure improved long term sustainable management of land and other resources in the green wedge areas.

The relevant Practice Notes and Guidelines prepared by the State Government (and found on the Department of Planning, Transport and Local Infrastructure website) identify that a Green Wedge Management Plan (GWMP) should contain a number of key elements, relative to their particular areas. These elements include:

- An assessment of the context, both in relation to existing policy from both a Council and broader agency context.
- The development of an overall 'vision' for the areas, including the setting of goals and objectives.
- Identification of key issues based on the "attributes and values of the area, its land uses, land ownership pattern, the social and economic conditions, the environmental qualities and the values, conditions and issues associated with the natural resource base".

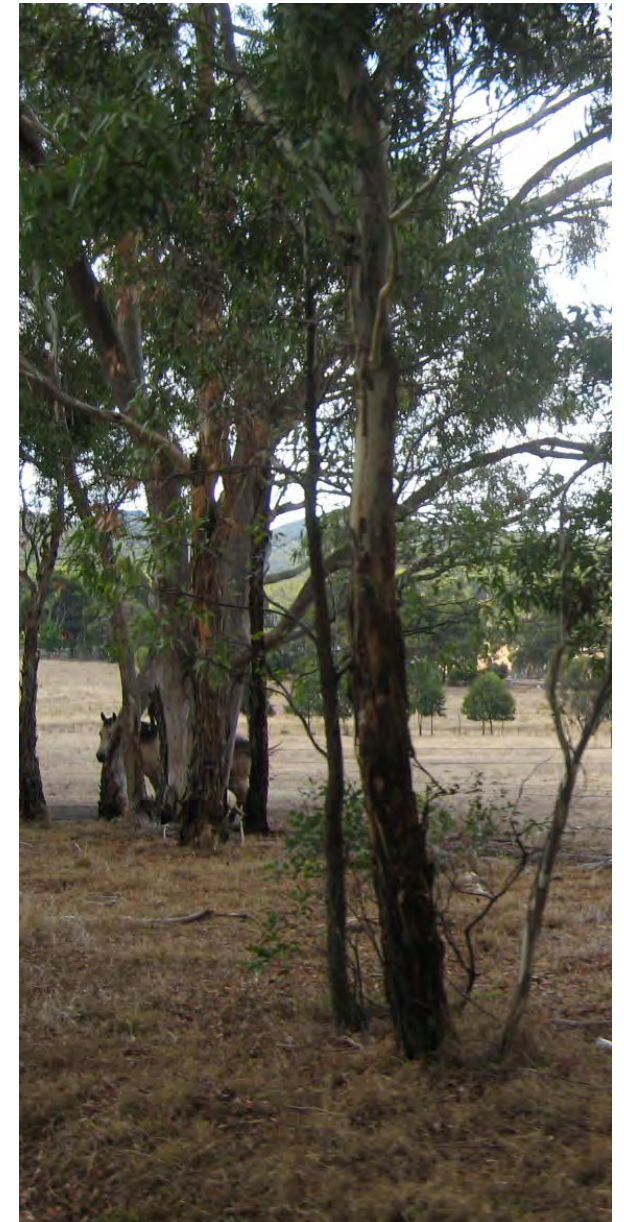
- The development of key themes that outline opportunities to address the identified issues through planning, environmental and native resource initiatives, infrastructure improvements, local actions, and partnerships.
- A series of actions to be taken by a range of stakeholders that will assist in achieving the overall vision outlined within the management plan.

Core information in the preparation of a management plan should ideally include land capability, vegetation and habitat mapping, land ownership, land use, land condition and potential productive uses, location of significant natural sites and elements, landscape values, heritage sites and attributes, specific resources and hazards.

One of the key things to note is that a green wedge management plan does not constitute a review of the concept of a 'green wedge', nor is its focus on land use and subdivision opportunities. The focus of any management plan must be to look holistically at what actions and initiatives will improve the long term sustainability of the green wedge.

It is not a 'planning' document, although the Melton Planning Scheme is one way in which the recommendations may be implemented and provides a useful tool for identifying key areas to be protected and valued. It also allows dissemination of the objectives for the Green Wedge identified through this process to guide decision making in relation to land use and development.

As outlined in Section 1 of this management plan, the WPNGWMP was undertaken in stages and the documents delivered as part of the study address the requirements outlined above.



2 The Green Wedge

2.1 Wider Context

The Western Plains North Green Wedge constitutes a significant part of the City of Melton. The Western Plains North Green Wedge area is around 20,000ha in size, which is approximately 37% of the City of Melton's total land area.

The City of Melton is located approximately 25 kilometres west of Melbourne's central business district. The core township of Melton was originally established, along with Sunbury, as a 'satellite' town to metropolitan Melbourne. More recently the transition from a primarily rural to a primarily urban municipality has been acknowledged through the re-designation of Melton as a City. The urban areas of Melton currently comprise primarily of two large urban areas; the township of Melton and the Eastern Corridor which forms the existing urban edge of metropolitan Melbourne. The City of Melton is one of the metropolitan Melbournes growth areas and current planning policy identifies the land between Melton Township and Melton East as land for urban development.

The natural environment of the broader region is dominated by the Victorian Volcanic Plain, a vast ecosystem stretching across to the South Australian border. This ecosystem is dominated by grasslands and, as a result has been extensively modified since white settlement and is substantially compromised, with the original environment only remaining in small pockets that remain under threat. One of the dominant features of these Plains are a number of volcanic formations, and these volcanos can be seen across the grasslands. Notable forms within the City of Melton include Mount Cottrell, Mount Kororoit and Mount Atkinson. There are important environmental areas in the immediate surrounds including the Long Forest Flora Reserve, which, while primarily located in Moorabool Shire, extends across into Melton and contains a small but very important remnant of native Mallee vegetation.

To the north-west of Melton and beyond, a different landform is present, a more mountainous area which is mostly preserved as part of the Lerderderg State Park. While this park is

primarily known for the significant gorge which is located within its boundaries, it also extends across to the east and includes the Pyrete Range within the City of Melton. This hillier terrain, known locally as the Toolern Vale Hills, signals the transition from the Victorian Volcanic Plains to the western uplands of the state. These hills also contain areas of intact vegetation and provide habitat for a range of threatened fauna species.

There are a number of important reservoirs which are located in or near these ranges including the Merrimu and Melton Reservoirs which are fed from the surrounding hills. South of the study area, the most important waterway in the region is the Werribee River, which (typically of many waterways within the volcanic plains) cuts through the surrounding plains as a deeply incised corridor as it winds its way to Port Phillip Bay. As well as the Werribee River, there are a number of other significant waterways in the area, including the Lerderderg River, Kororoit Creek, Djerrirwarrh Creek, Jacksons Creek, Parwan Creek and Toolern Creek.

2.2 The Western Plains North Green Wedge

The Western Plains North Green Wedge study area is shown on Figure 1. The northern extent of the study area is defined by the municipal boundary with Macedon Ranges Shire. To the east, the Calder Freeway forms a clear boundary with the suburb of Hillside defining the south-east corner. The Bendigo train line also runs along this edge and a recent rezoning was undertaken by state government to accommodate some train stabling within the Green Wedge.

Diggers Rest is situated to the north east of the study area but is outside the scope of this project, as are the 365ha of land to the west and south of the existing township which have been designated as growth areas.





The municipal boundary with Moorabool Shire forms the western boundary and is defined by Pyrete Range and Djerriwarrh Creek corridor. Both the Pyrete Range and the creek corridor are heavily vegetated.

The township of Toolern Vale sits at the base of the hills at the intersection of the Diggers Rest-Coimadai and Melton-Gisborne Roads. It should be noted that the township is not zoned Green Wedge and therefore is not subject to the management plan.

The southern boundary of the study area is defined by the Urban Growth Boundary which generally follows the alignment of Melton Highway, Minns Road and Harkness Road. It should be noted that the land to the south of the Melton Highway while is currently rural in appearance, is zoned for urban growth and will develop as an urban area over the coming decades.

The Western Plains North Green Wedge has three main landscape types, all of which are bisected by a number of creeklines which run on a north-south alignment through the Green Wedge. The south of the Green Wedge is characterised by relatively flat grassy plains, with Mount Kororoit being the only landform of note in this area apart from the aforementioned creeklines. To the north-west, there are the Toolern Vale Hills which add interest and provide an attractive backdrop to the lower plains. The north-east is also characterised by grassy plains, but has a much more pronounced topography and greater elevation than the southern parts of the Green Wedge.

Unlike many other green wedges around Melbourne, the vast majority of the Green Wedge is in private ownership with less than 10% of the area being in public ownership. This publicly owned land is generally located in the Pyrete Range (part of the Lerderderg State Park) and within the water supply catchment in the north-west corner of the Green Wedge.

2.3 Overarching Challenges

There are a number of overarching issues which provide challenges to the long term management of the Green Wedge. These issues are discussed in more detail in Part C of this Plan. However, it is considered that three overarching issues outlined below cut across all aspects of the plan and include:

Climate Change: the already challenging conditions within the Green Wedge are likely to be exacerbated by climate change which will have significant impacts on the productive use of the land for agriculture. It will also impact on the biodiversity of the area and in particular flora and fauna, already significantly under stress and affected by fragmentation of habitat.

The Urban Rural Interface and Urban Growth Boundary: the proximity of land to the urban interface raises a range of challenges as a result of spillover activities from urban areas, increased land prices and land use conflict, which make agriculture more challenging, particularly contributing to pressure for additional subdivision or rezoning of land. There are also some issues associated with landowners who have bought land for speculative purposes with no intention of using the land for the purpose for which it is zoned. This often leads to poor management and maintenance of the land.

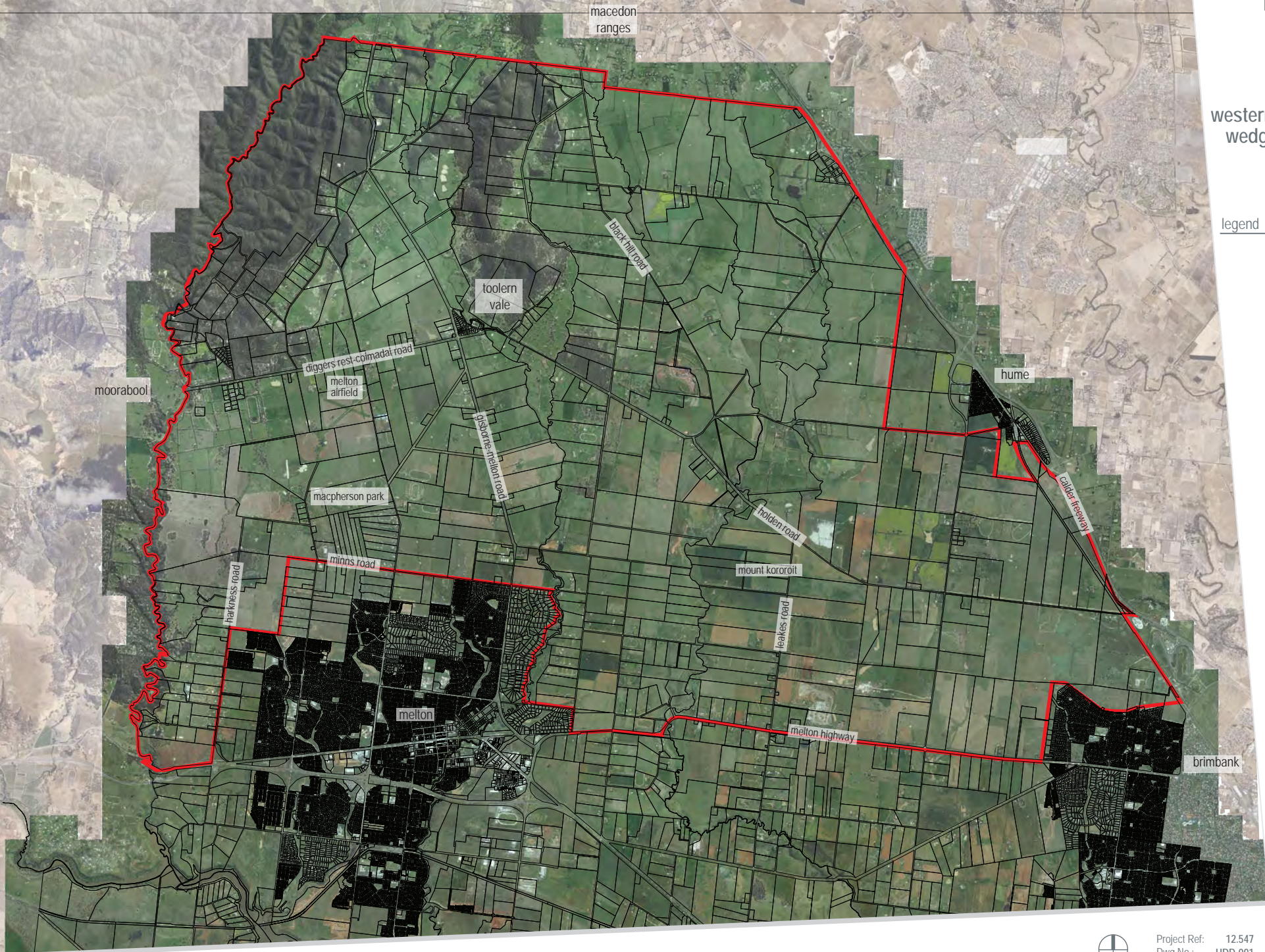
Broader Agricultural Market: the viability of agriculture within the Green Wedge is affected not just by local conditions but by regional and global markets and trends in agriculture. These trends have indisputably made productive agriculture in the study area more challenging. These more challenging conditions are affecting all agricultural areas, but those in the peri-urban fringe face greater challenges than most. Agriculture here is therefore competing with a range of other peri-urban areas which may have better climatic conditions, for new niche agricultural opportunities.

Figure 1: Aerial / Study Area

western plains north green wedge management plan

legend

study area 



Project Ref: 12.547
Dwg No.: UDD-001
Scale: NTS
Date: 04.10.13
Revision: A

Part B - Vision

3 Vision and Community Values

3.1 Vision

A range of consultation events with landowners, community members and other key stakeholders with an interest in the Green Wedge were held as part of the preparation of the WPNGWMP. The feedback provided to the project team, along with background research, has informed the preparation of a 'vision' for the Western Plains North Green Wedge.

The testing of the Vision in its draft form generated overall community satisfaction, albeit with some need for minor refinements. The final vision for the Western Plains North Green Wedge is outlined below:

3.2 Vision for the Area

Beautiful, well-managed, expansive rural landscapes...

...that increasingly contribute to the biodiversity values of Melbourne and its surrounds...

...which provide valued and sought after rural lifestyles based on conservation, part-time farming, full-time farming, equestrian and other rural interests, for those who want such a lifestyle whilst living close to Melbourne ...

...which provide opportunities for a diversity of farming and agricultural operations and discrete tourism, recreation and entertainment related activities associated with a rural environment ...

...and some limited opportunities for other land uses that contribute to improved land management outcomes or increased connectivity with the Green Wedge.

3.3 Community Values

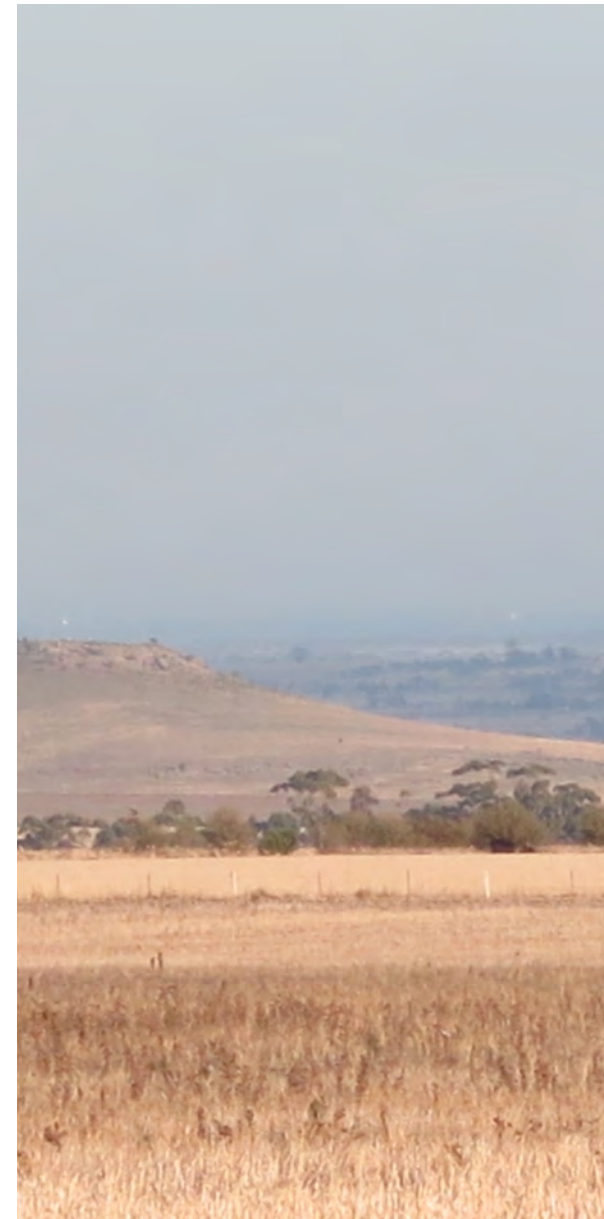
It is difficult to gain consistency about the community's values about the area, as there is considerable divergence of views expressed by different groups within the community. The divergence seems to exist in relation to matters such as:

- The planning controls that apply in parts of the study area
- The development and subdivision potential of the land
- The opportunities that exist to continue to farm land
- The role of the area in terms of accommodating Melbourne's long term urban growth.

However, the following key values of the Green Wedge have been identified by the project team from the background work and consultation with stakeholders and the community:

- The open rural landscapes
- The natural environmental and biodiversity values of the area
- The rural lifestyle opportunities provided in the area, close to the Melbourne metropolitan area and Melbourne Airport
- The sense of community that exists amongst people who live in the area
- The peacefulness and tranquillity of the area
- The history and heritage of the area, both Aboriginal and European
- The importance of the creeks and waterways
- The importance of the hills and more undulating land in the northern parts of the area
- The importance of specific features such as the hilltops
- The equine industry.

These values and other values identified through background research are discussed further in Part C and have informed the objectives and strategies for management of the Western Plains North Green Wedge.



Part C - Management Plan Themes

4 The Environment

The 'environment' of the Western Plains North Green Wedge area is a fundamental consideration of this Management Plan. Biodiversity and a healthy environment are fundamental to the overall quality of the soil, water and the air we breathe, not to mention the intrinsic value of a diverse community of flora and fauna. All human activity within the Western Plains North Green Wedge, be it agriculture, tourism, leisure or rural living, relies on a healthy environment. The environment within the Green Wedge is currently under stress and there are a number of significant challenges in improving the environmental health of this area. This section outlines some measures which will hopefully be early steps in the ongoing recovery of the areas ecosystems.

The Western Plains North Green Wedge contains two major ecosystems; 88% of the land forms part of the Victorian Volcanic Plain Bioregion, with the remaining 12% falling within the Central Victorian Uplands Bioregion. Within the main grassland, only limited examples of intact habitat remains, and these are primarily along roadsides, and on rocky outcrops or creeklines where cultivation has not been possible. However, to the north in the Uplands, more of the ecological vegetation classes (including Box Ironbark Forest and Grassy Dry Forest) have been retained. The area also contains the most southern example of Bull Mallee vegetation along the Djerriwarrh corridor.

The area contains a number of flora and fauna species which are identified as protected under either the Federal *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* or the State *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act*. While the known distribution of these species has been identified to date primarily on the basis of where surveys have been undertaken, it is clear that creeklines represent some of the more important hotspots for species in need of protection, many of which are birds or amphibians. The Djerriwarrh Creek corridor appears to be particularly important to this end.

The northern hills also play another key role as a water supply catchment, which feeds into the Merrimu or Djerriwarrh Reservoir. Careful management of the area to ensure this is not compromised must be recognised.

It is also important to acknowledge that feedback in earlier stages of this project indicated that there was strong support from a large number of stakeholders for the Management Plan to promote and prioritise conservation and the environment.

4.1 Values

The protection of *ecosystems* has an intrinsic value and is recognised as playing a key role in the protection of the overall air, water and soil quality, all of which are fundamental requirements of life.

The *grasslands* are home to a range of highly endangered flora and fauna in need of protection to prevent extinction.

The *Toolern Vale Hills* not only provide a relatively intact ecosystem, but also accommodate a State Park which is used for leisure and recreation, and a water catchment which provides drinking water.

The mallee along the *Djerriwarrh Creek* also provides opportunities for the protection and appreciation of species not seen anywhere else this far south.

Creeklines and the riparian environment provide a range of functioning natural habitat corridors and landscape character. Much of the water used on rural properties also relies on these creeklines.

Mount Kororoit and the remnant wetland are key *landforms* not found elsewhere in the Green Wedge but which represent important elements of the natural landscape.

The environment of the Green Wedge also has significant *aesthetic and amenity value* to residents of both the City of Melton and more broadly.





4.2 Issues

The health of the environment in the Western Plains North Green Wedge is fundamental to all aspects of this Management Plan. Without a healthy environment the productivity of the land is reduced and the amenity which has drawn many residents to the area is compromised.

Habitat

The ability of animals and birds to move safely between different areas is important. At both a large and small scale, protection of flora and fauna is increasingly focused around trying to establish corridors or biolinks. These corridors or links provide opportunities for vegetation to establish and for fauna to move freely across the landscape with lesser risk. Without the provision of such corridors, the increasing fragmentation of areas of natural habitat means that native fauna are increasingly at risk, not only of loss of habitat but also of genetic inbreeding when small populations are not able to interact with other groups. This becomes even more important in the light of a changing climate which increases the vulnerability of many species. Habitat corridors are generally provided along creeklines and roadsides where land is more likely to be in public ownership. However, within the Green Wedge area, much of the land which could play a key role in linking existing areas of habitat is in private ownership (particularly creek corridors), increasing the difficulty of providing these links without landowner support.

Urban Development

The proximity of part of the Green Wedge to urban areas mean the impacts of urban development are having significant impacts. The most obvious of these is pressure for the development of the land. This is occurring through both continuous pressure for the edges of the Green Wedge to be included within Melbourne's Urban Growth Boundary, but also through pressure for additional subdivision and development opportunities more broadly. The higher levels of development that occur within these areas means that additional fragmentation of the land occurs, not only as a result of subdivision, but also in the siting of buildings, the clearance of vegetation or the design of fences. In addition to these pressures, the proximity also means the area is affected by a range of pest species and local fauna is likely to be subject to increased levels of predation by domestic animals. Urban development within and around the Green Wedge also impacts on the fauna of the area through increased levels of roadkill as vehicle numbers consequently increase.

Value of Grasslands

A major issue in the protection of the environmental values of the 'Western' Plains North Green Wedge, and indeed many of the western green wedges, is the lack of understanding of the environmental importance of the western plains. There is a tendency to place a lesser value on the grasslands compared to other ecosystems, and particularly treed areas. This lack of perceived value has partly contributed to the current situation where less than 10% of the Victorian Volcanic Plain grasslands remains. Improving understanding of the vital role that the grassland plays in supporting some of Victoria's endangered flora and fauna and the role it plays in the wider ecosystem is critical. However, apart from valuing these grasslands, the issue of their on-going management also raises significant challenges.

Weed Infestation

As with many areas on Melbourne's fringes, the Western Plains North Green Wedge is facing significant infestation of weed species. The most notable of these within the Green Wedge is Serrated Tussock, but the area is also affected by infestation of Artichoke Thistle, Patterson's Curse, African Boxthorn, Prairie Ground Cherry and Chilean Needle Grass.

While Council has a well-regarded program in place to promote management of weed species, it is clear that a number of landowners within the management plan area are not participating in this scheme and do not appear to be being pursued by the relevant authorities, such as DEPI. One of the issues raised in consultation events, and a challenge facing the Council in encouraging sustainable land management, is that the actions of a minority, in not fulfilling their obligations, make management much more difficult for the remainder of the landowners. This fosters a sense of frustration in the 'authorities' perceived unwillingness to pursue those who do not 'do that right thing'.

Kangaroos

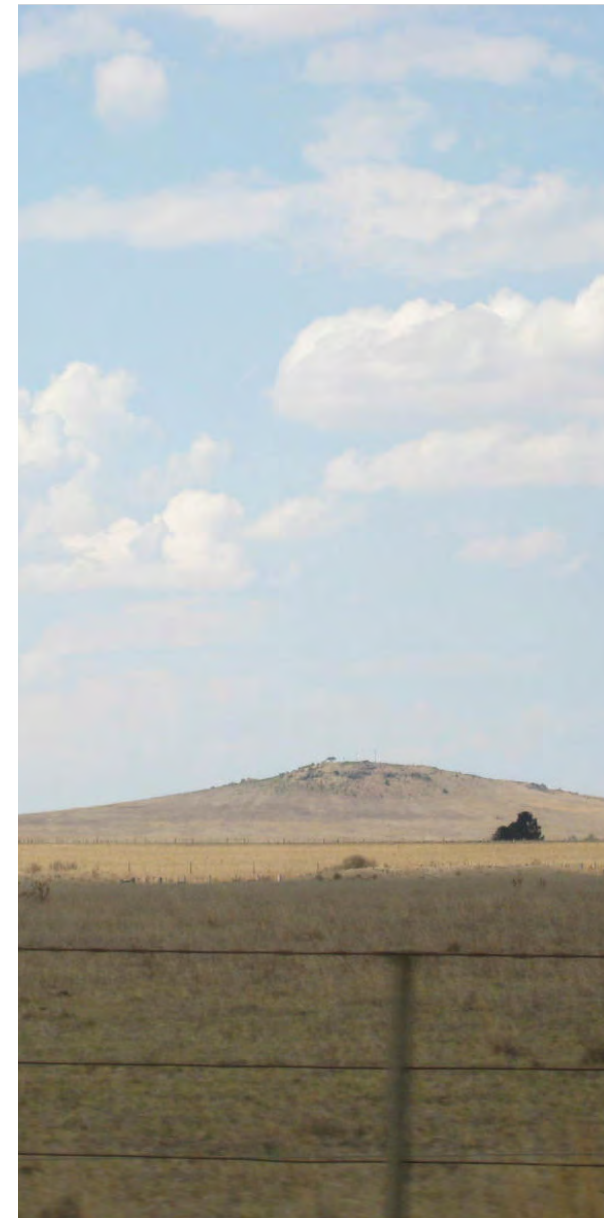
There also exist significant concern among community members regarding the increasing number of kangaroos within the area. While the value in relation to tourism is generally acknowledged, there is concern about the damage being done to waterways, revegetation efforts, as well as fencing, by large mobs. A longer term concern about the ability of the area to support increased numbers as more kangaroos find their way to the Green Wedge as the City of Melton's growth areas develop were also raised through consultation with the landowners. The need for a coordinated approach to the management of kangaroos was suggested.

Lack of Protection for Landscapes

The high value of the rural landscape has been identified through both the background research and community consultation. The rural landscape is considered a key factor in the attractiveness of the area not only for rural residents but for any tourism activities. While some of the key views within the Green Wedge were identified through the background stages of this project, these were not exhaustive and there is very little protection of these landscapes through the Melton Planning Scheme. While Council can seek to ensure that siting of new development is sensitive, a more comprehensive visual assessment of the landscape, having particular regard to the changes in topography, would be necessary to guide Council's decision making and to ensure a robust evidence base that would withstand any challenge at VCAT.

Illegal Dumping

There are significant environmental impacts (and visual impacts) caused by the dumping of illegal fill within the Green Wedge. This is considered likely to increase in frequency in the coming years as development within the City of Melton's growth areas continues. The dumping of illegal fill not only has a significant impact on the flora and fauna of an area, but also contributes to the spread of weeds and carries with it the risk of contaminated soil being imported into the Green Wedge. The illegal dumping of hard rubbish within the Green Wedge is also having detrimental effects on the environmental and landscape values of the area.





Inappropriate Stocking Rates

On agricultural properties, stock numbers in excess of what can be sustainably managed on the land can have negative impacts, not only on the soil and vegetation quality but also on water quality where there are water sources on the property. This applies to sheep and cattle, but is also relevant to the equine industry, where overgrazing can also cause environmental issues. It is important that properties are utilised at the appropriate intensity to manage these impacts.
















Fire

The risks of fire within the Green Wedge are twofold. The clearest risk is associated with the canopy vegetation in the Toolern Vale Hills, and much of this area is affected by a Wildfire Management Overlay to reflect this. However, there are also fire risks associated with the broader grassland areas. Balancing the development opportunities in the overlay area is one matter, but the Management Plan also needs to balance the concerns expressed by the community in relation to the maintenance of grassland areas with environmental considerations in the protection of these areas where they have not been identified as a significant risk through the application of an overlay.

Figure 2: The Environment

western plains north green wedge management plan

legend

- study area 
- revegetation and fencing along creek reserves 
- priority waterway corridors for public use and revegetation 
- mt kororoit and wetlands environmental destination 
- environmental features 
- OMR vegetative buffer 
- melton highway 'greening' 
- rural/urban buffer areas 
- environmental links 
- water catchment area 
- areas of endangered / vulnerable vegetation 
- high biodiversity : grassland area 
- high biodiversity : woodland areas 
- public conservation reserve areas 
- parks and reserves 

- environmental features
1. the remnant wetland north of mount kororoit
 2. mount kororoit
 3. holden road bridge reserve
 4. kororoit creek corridor
 5. toolem creek corridor
 6. toolem creek reserve
 7. roadside grassland reserves
 8. macpherson park
 9. melton gilgai woodlands nature conservation reserve
 10. long forest conservation reserve
 11. djerriwarh creek corridor
 12. the pyrete range





4.3 'Environment' Objectives

- To protect existing environmental and biodiversity assets of the area.
- To increase native vegetation cover and biodiversity values throughout the area, especially along creeks and watercourses.
- To establish biodiversity corridors combined with walking and cycling links along creeks, supplemented by links and corridors on the road network.
- To protect and improve water quality throughout the area.
- To protect significant views and rural landscapes throughout the area.
- To create a network of environmental features to improve awareness and protection of key areas.

4.4 Strategies for the Environment

E1. Improve understanding and mapping of existing flora and fauna within the Green Wedge.

While the Department of Environment and Primary Industry (DEPI) maintains databases which provide some information on the flora and fauna present in the Green Wedge, there are gaps in this information and some concern among stakeholders that the information is outdated or based on drought years only. To ensure decisions are being made on the basis of the best available information, Council should seek to supplement State-based information with local mapping for the Green Wedge area. Partnerships with universities and community groups could be a cost effective way to develop a greater understanding of existing flora and fauna. This information will ensure more informed decision making in the future.

E1 a1 – Advocate for updated mapping of flora and fauna assets to be undertaken by DEPI.

E1 a2 - Seek partnerships with universities or community groups to identify gaps in existing understanding of the Green Wedge and build a local database of flora and fauna assets

E2. Seek to enhance understanding of the Green Wedge's biodiversity value and measures necessary to protect and enhance the existing natural environment.

In addressing the best way of improving the biodiversity in the area, a more detailed Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy is needed to ensure actions which have the greatest benefit are prioritised and areas with the highest values are targeted. While some key corridors have been identified, it will only be through more detailed mapping and investigation that other

key linkages and connections can be determined on the basis of scientific evidence. This will also allow the most important areas to be prioritised and mechanisms for acquisition or management of these areas to be considered further.

In relation to public land and roadsides, the strategy should aim to convert public land, roadsides and unmade road reserves, etc throughout the Green Wedge into connected biodiversity corridors. These corridors should be planned to connect with creek and waterway corridors and other areas and patches of significant vegetation, where possible. They should be used to supplement the creek based pedestrian and cycle networks established along creeks and waterways (should they be acquired) to provide a connected network of paths and trails throughout the area.

As a longer term aim, revegetation and rehabilitation of all waterways within the Green Wedge could be pursued in partnership with Melbourne Water and the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority. Prioritising the revegetation and fencing (where required) of creeklines to assist in appropriate direction of funding would also be beneficial. Clear mapping of where works have been undertaken and funded could supplement this initiative.

E2 a1 - Prepare a Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy for the Green Wedge. This should include:

- Strategies to provide biodiversity corridors along creeks and waterways.
- Strategies to increase vegetation and biodiversity values on all publicly owned land in the green wedge including parks and roadsides.
- Strategies to increase indigenous vegetation on privately owned land.

E2 a2 – Seek to consolidate spatial documentation of where works have been funded and undertaken to date.





E3. Explore opportunities for longer term public access to land along the three main creek corridors within the Green Wedge (Djerriwarrh Creek, Toolern Creek and Kororoit Creek).

This could be achieved in a number of ways. For example, have a requirement on planning permits for obtaining land adjacent to a creek through any subdivision process, through a leasing arrangement or by negotiation with individual land owners where subdivision potential is not identified. This is likely to be a slow process as land will not be acquired by compulsory acquisition but monitored so that as land becomes available Council can pursue arrangements that allow for improved access and revegetation. These corridors should be fenced and revegetated as biodiversity corridors and should include walking and cycling tracks, where possible.

It is important that the parcels that are acquired are of sufficient size or connected to existing parcels, and have appropriate access to allow for on-going maintenance of these areas. Prior to these areas being identified and planned, it will be important to ensure that ongoing maintenance and management is carefully considered. Particularly in relation to management of bushfire risk, illegal use of track by trail bikes and appropriate separation measures between ongoing agricultural uses and public recreation spaces.

E3 a1 – Explore options for access to land along identified main creek corridors as this land becomes available through negotiation with landowners, sale or through conditions of subdivision (subject to management requirements).

E4. Promote proactive management of weed species through incentives.

This strategy seeks to continue Council's existing Environmental Enhancement Policy. Council's current system allows for a rebate of rates where weed management is undertaken. This is an effective policy that is well regarded by the community and is recommended to be retained into the future. In addition, the preparation of landowner handbooks in the longer term should provide a visual reference guide to weeds for landowners which should assist in early identification by landowners of infestations.

E4 a1 – Continue Council's existing Environmental Enhancement Policy.

E4 a2 - Ensure any landowner handbook includes visual representations of weed species to assist landowner identification.

E5. Increase awareness of opportunities associated with revegetation of land and investigate other incentives to promote improved biodiversity of the Green Wedge by landowners.

There are a number of options open to Council to increase landowner awareness and revegetation outcomes. Some of these include:

- Review of the existing EEP scheme with a view to having greater emphasis on revegetation, particularly as weed control is achieved throughout the Green Wedge.
- Documentation and celebration of case studies where landowners have accessed funding opportunities associated with revegetation and / or have undertaken beneficial works on their properties.

- On Council's website, creating an 'information portal' for the Green Wedge where Council can promote and provide links to opportunities for funding, subsidies or land acquisition available through external conservation groups and other agencies and authorities.

While the current emphasis of the EEP is on the maintenance of weeds, there is the potential for this to also be used to promote revegetation works over time as a form of on-going weed management. The recent review indicated not all landowners would seek to access this part of the EEP, however, it does offer an opportunity to increase the sense of ownership and to reward residents who are contributing to the environmental health of the Green Wedge through their management of the land.

Case studies celebrated on the information portal can provide a flexible approach as to whether the management is through introduction of innovative processes or large improvements over time, or just strong and steady progress. Celebrating well managed properties and documenting how they achieved it (funding, implementation etc) will provide an education resource and hopefully inspiration for all landowners.

There are an increasing number of external conservation groups active in supporting and subsidising sustainable land management practices. However this information is often not easily available to landowners or there is limited awareness. Where Council is aware of funding opportunities, outside Council's own programs, providing this knowledge to landowners would be beneficial. For instance, there are some recent programs that have been implemented which provide additional income streams to farmers through management of biodiversity assets alongside farm practices. Ensuring the community is aware of these options for their land is particularly important given the endangered status of the Western Plains grasslands.

E5 a1 – Create a dedicated Green Wedge 'information portal' on Council's website where relevant information and associated web links can be provided.

E5 a2 – Review the opportunities for the existing EEP to promote increased revegetation as a long term means of improving land management, and promote existing revegetation opportunities available through the Policy.

E5 a3 – Where feasible, prepare case studies of successful revegetation projects undertaken in the **Green Wedge, include specific details about works, species and funding.**

E5 a4 – Consider researching, and where relevant provide links to funding resources, and other relevant land management support services through the Green Wedge 'information portal'.

E5 a5 - Pull together information on revegetation, along with land management and other relevant matters in a landowners handbook.





E6. Seek to create a network of 'environmental features' and establish links between these to improve awareness, celebrate key assets within the Green Wedge and connect existing reserves.

Identified environmental features include:

- Long Forest Flora and Fauna Reserve
- The Djerriwarrh Creek corridor
- Melton Gilgai Woodlands Nature Conservation Reserve (Harkness Road reserve)
- MacPherson Park
- The roadside grassland reserves (Missens Road and McCorkells Road)
- Toolern Creek corridor
- Kororoit Creek corridor
- Holden Road Streamside Reserve
- Mount Kororoit
- The Pyrete Range
- The remnant wetland north of Mount Kororoit
- Toolern Creek Reserve.

These areas are recommended to not only be recognised within policy but should be a focal point for linkages and possible longer term acquisition by interested authorities such as Council, Parks Victoria, Western Water or others, if feasible. Creating a sense of connection between these areas, but also considering opportunities to provide informational / educational signage that increases understanding of these areas should be considered. If acquisition is not feasible, then landowners should be strongly encouraged to pursue their own revegetation works within these key linkages.

Connections between the above environmental areas also provide a beginning for a series of wider habitat linkages. Linking isolated pockets of public land where habitats may be supported and reinforced will become increasingly important. The links

identified on the relevant plan (Figure 2 The Environment) could be a starting point and include existing roads, creeklines and other key feature where possible. These linkages are identified as the priority areas, however, Council (and other relevant stakeholders) could support revegetation efforts along all roadsides within the Green Wedge.

The existing areas of reserve should continue to be managed with an emphasis on protecting their habitat value. There are also opportunities in the future for any works undertaken in MacPherson Park to consider opportunities for increasing indigenous planting and habitat in recognition of its location within the Green Wedge.

E6 a1 – Where practical, identify key environmental features and appropriate linkages and protect their habitat values.

E6 a2 - Explore the opportunities for integration of educational / informational signage within these areas.

E6 a3 – Consider ways of increasing indigenous vegetation and potential habitat within MacPherson Park.

E7. Create a key focal point or destination for visitors within the Green Wedge.

Council should explore opportunities for the identification of the Mount Kororoit precinct and wetlands area as a key focal point / destination for passive recreation / tourism within the Green Wedge.

The proximity of Mount Kororoit, the nearby wetland on Holden Road (an environmentally significant site as it's the only example of Plains Sedgy Wetland vegetation class in the area) and the Holden Road Streamside Reserve all offer opportunity to provide a 'destination' within the Green Wedge. This area could be a stopping point for walking, cycling or equestrian trails throughout the area. Consideration should be given to

providing public access to facilities such as a picnic site and to improve landscaping to enhance the visual qualities and the biodiversity values of this area.

E7 a1 – Explore opportunities for the identification of the Mount Kororoit area as a destination and investigate opportunities for recognising this.

E8. Identify and protect key landscapes, views and vistas within the Green Wedge from inappropriate development.

Council should seek to undertake a Significant Landscape Strategy identifying key landscape elements and views and determining parameters for development of these sensitive areas. While this current project has identified some of the key views to inform broader planning decisions, in order to identify areas which are visually sensitive across the broader landscape of the Green Wedge a more technical process of a visual assessment needs to be undertaken. This type of strategy, combining an analysis of key vistas and views with 3D modelling of topography, also allows Council to provide more detailed guidance of appropriate heights or siting parameters within visually sensitive areas. This evidence based process should assist in the longer term protection of the valued rural vistas and would be a valuable tool for Council decision making in relation to planning permit applications.

E8 a1 – Undertake a Significant Landscape Strategy.

E8 a2 – Develop appropriate planning controls for sensitive areas on the basis of the Significant Landscape Strategy.

E9. Develop appropriate controls for discretionary uses or development in sensitive areas.

Council should develop a consistent position and ensure there is statutory weight behind decision making in relation to both discretionary uses and development within sensitive areas. This Management Plan has identified some areas which Council should consider allowing 'non-rural' discretionary uses which complement the objectives of this Management Plan (see 'Land' theme starting at Page 28). However, critical to their suitability will be a sensitive design response to the rural environment. For example, in areas identified as visually sensitive, it may be that Council discourages development or requires development to have scale or height limitations. Documenting these parameters so that landowners and other stakeholders have a clear understanding of the design requirements is important.

E9 a1 - Prepare siting and design guidelines for discretionary uses or development in sensitive areas.

E10. Continue maintenance regimes for roadside vegetation and improve understanding of responsibilities.

Roadsides represent some of the largest volume of public land managed by Council within the Green Wedge. Ensuring this management contributes positively to the Green Wedge is important as these areas also represent the public 'face' of the Green Wedge. The maintenance regime should not just focus on the reduction of fire risk, but also on how these areas can be managed to contribute positively to the biodiversity and amenity of the Green Wedge.





Importantly, there are also other public land managers such as VicRoads who manage roadsides within the Green Wedge. Council should consider identifying through the Green Wedge 'information portal', the responsible authorities for different roads and contact details for each organisation. Where possible, a link to existing policies on the management of roadsides could be included on the information portal.

E10 a1 – Publish information on current practices in relation to roadside maintenance (including names and contact details for responsible authorities), and include this on the Green Wedge 'information portal'.

E11. Consider introducing targeted local laws to improve management of urban interfaces.

Where increased populations live at the interface of urban and rural areas, there are increased chances of negative impacts on the environment. One of the key areas is in the predation of native species by domestic animals and consideration should be given to a 'buffer' area where local laws or other restrictive mechanism may apply to reduce this risk. This buffer may be in smaller lots within the Green Wedge or it may also apply to peripheral urban areas.

These measures should only be applied where there are demonstrated to be areas of environmental sensitivity at the interface with urban uses. These are likely to be identified through the proposed Biodiversity Strategy.

E11 a1 – If areas of environmental sensitivity are identified at urban edges, investigate mechanisms through the system of local laws/PSP guidelines or other relevant avenues to manage threats.

E12. Advocate for a holistic management strategy for kangaroos.

While management plans are prepared by individual developers as part of subdivision developments within some areas of the municipality, there is benefit in considering the best means of managing the kangaroo population in a more holistic manner. There is benefit in also working with adjoining municipalities and State Government in the preparation of such a strategy, to provide a regional response.

E12 a1 – Liaise with State Government and adjoining municipalities to discuss a regional response to kangaroo management.

E13. Promote the creation of a significant landscape habitat buffer as part of the development of the Outer Metropolitan Ring.

The construction of the Outer Metropolitan Ring transport corridor will be a massive infrastructure project. The creation of such a large transport 'corridor' could also be utilised to create a metropolitan scale biolink along the alignment of the road. This would need to be generous in scale and separated from urban and road areas. Opportunities to create linkages on this scale will be limited and Council could advocate for the creation of such significant opportunity to allow for the movement of fauna through the rapidly urbanising edges of metropolitan Melbourne.

E13 a1 – Advocate for consideration of a significant landscape component to be included between the proposed OMR and the Green Wedge.

E14. Support indigenous nurseries and encourage the use of indigenous flora in growth areas adjoining the Green Wedge.

Given the vulnerable nature of much of the City of Melton's indigenous fauna, the presence of nurseries in the area dedicated to the propagation and promotion of indigenous species is important. Council should investigate opportunities to assist and enhance commercial enterprises specialising in indigenous species, and promote opportunities for expansion or new enterprises in conjunction with youth training providers, secondary schools or other interested parties. The ready availability and promotion of indigenous flora should be associated with an increased use of indigenous vegetation throughout the urban areas of the City of Melton, and in particular, areas close to the Green Wedge. This may be achieved through the production and mail out of an 'indigenous flora for habitat' brochure to relevant properties at the interface. This will ideally lead to an increased use of indigenous flora within private residences. While the use of indigenous species will not be suitable in all cases, a policy which requires consideration and the meaningful integration of indigenous vegetation in growth area landscape plans will have substantial benefits to the broader biodiversity objectives of this Management Plan.

E14 a1 – Identify and promote the use of indigenous species in areas within and adjacent to the Green Wedge.

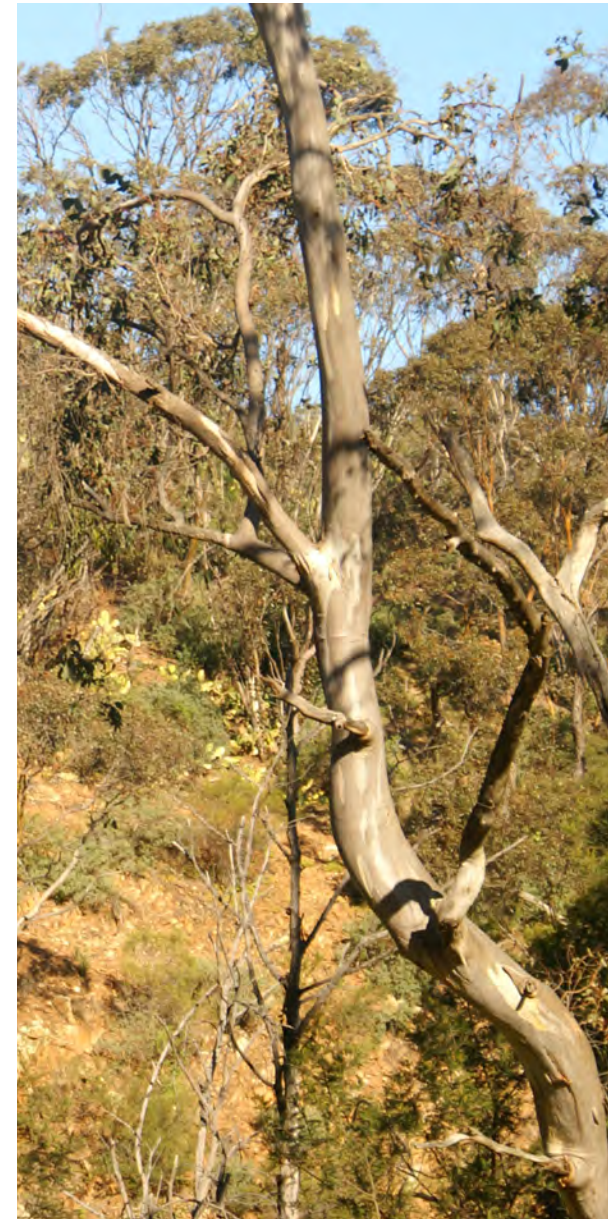
E14 a2 – Advocate for requirements for indigenous species to be used in the landscaping of growth areas adjoining the Green Wedge.

E14 a3 – Prepare fact sheets on indigenous species suitable for domestic landscaping and provide contact details of local nurseries that can supply stock.

E15. Pursue a 'greening' of the Melton Highway corridor to improve interface.

The Melton Highway will form a key boundary between the 'urban' and 'rural' areas in the longer term. While some parts of the corridor have generous canopy planting and are quite attractive, other areas have little or no vegetation, and present relatively poorly at this interface. Beginning a program of canopy tree planting along this corridor, in conjunction with VicRoads and the Metropolitan Planning Authority (in the shorter term), should ensure a generous landscape buffer is established prior to full development of the adjoining growth areas. This could be pursued in conjunction with the implementation of significant landscape planting in private properties fronting the highway within the Green Wedge Zone as part of any development.

E15 a1 – Advocate for a program of tree planting along the Melton Highway



5 The Land

While the land is generally used for agricultural purposes, much of this agriculture is undertaken in conjunction with rural residential uses. A proportion of the land continues to be managed as broadacre farmland through share farming but the continuation of this type of farming faces challenges. Land not used for broadacre farming is primarily used for grazing, or for equine related uses. There are some significant equine related businesses established within the Green Wedge, capitalising on the City of Melton's long relationship with horse racing. There are also some examples of other agricultural uses including intensive horticulture, olive groves and vineyards.

A range of smaller lots throughout the Green Wedge are used exclusively for rural residential uses and there are scattered businesses in the area, including animal boarding facilities, and tourism uses such as the Dingo Discovery Centre.

Lot sizes within the Western Plains North Green Wedge are generally large, particularly in the eastern part of the study area where the majority of lots remain over 40 hectares in size. Closer to Melton, and within the Toolern Vale Hills, lot sizes are generally between 10 and 40 hectares, while the area also contains a number of smaller lots between 1 and 10 hectares, which are located primarily along the main roads.

The Green Wedge has three major zoning regimes, the Green Wedge Zone, the Green Wedge A Zone and the Rural Conservation Zone. The Green Wedge A Zone is applied in the southwestern corner around Harkness Road and supports the establishment of rural residential development and generally allows subdivision down to a minimum of 2ha (subject to the preparation of a Development Plan). The Toolern Vale Hills are within a Rural Conservation Zone and have a 40ha minimum lot size. These hills are also managed through the application of Environmental Significance (ESO1 and ESO2) and Wildfire Management (WMO) Overlays.

The remainder of the study area is within the Green Wedge Zone (for zoning and overlay mapping please see WPNGWMP Background Report).

The Melton Planning Scheme recognises two separate areas through the use of a schedule with land closest to the eastern parts of the Melton Township (marked as 'B') having minimum subdivision size of 12ha, while the remainder (marked as 'A'), is subject to a subdivision 'formula' which allows for lots between 1 and 5 hectares to be created (and is often used for rural residential purposes), where this can be achieved while retaining a larger lot for the purposes of agriculture. A Section 173 agreement must be entered into to prevent further subdivision.

Large portions of the south-east parts of the Green Wedge are also affected by the Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay which has been applied to the land to protect the interests of Melbourne Airport to the west and reduce the impact of aircraft noise. The protection of this facility and its curfew free status is a specific objective of State Planning Policy. The *National Airports Safeguarding Framework* aims to achieve further protection.

Given the scale of the area, the land ownership pattern, and the requirement for the majority of land to be used for agricultural purposes under the Green Wedge Zone, agriculture is expected to be the dominant land use within the Green Wedge in the future (see further discussion on page 30). This is particularly the case as land use requirements and restrictions within the above zone, design and location restrictions and market trends indicate that other land uses (including rural residential uses and tourism uses) are not expected to dominate the area. However, the Management Plan acknowledges that the future of the Western Plains North Green Wedge is not as a broadacre farming area, as has traditionally been the case. The key aim of the Management Plan, in terms of how the land in the Green Wedge is used, is to ensure that as much of the land as possible is managed in a sustainable manner. The ways in which this may be achieved will vary, not only from precinct to precinct, but also from property to property.





5.1 Values

The key values identified in relation to the land within the Western Plains North Green Wedge are summarised below:

- The **productivity** of the rural land in providing opportunities for agricultural outputs close to Melbourne and the benefits in relation to ‘food miles’.
- Valued **opportunities to live in a rural environment** where hobby farms or horse paddocks can provide opportunities to enjoy a chosen lifestyle.
- An **established equine industry** which attracts significant investment and plays a role in the ‘culture’ of Melton.
- Existing **recreation and leisure opportunities** such as MacPherson Park and the Lerderderg State Park.
- The economic benefits **of tourism** and associated development opportunities as a result of either food production, heritage or the natural environment within the Green Wedge.
- The role of the land in providing **natural systems** and environmental benefits in terms of soil and water quality, and the inherent value of biodiversity.
- The **recycled water pipeline** which could provide a supplementary source of water.

5.2 Issues

Interface Pressures

The Western Plains North Green Wedge is subject to significant land use pressure as a result of its proximity to metropolitan Melbourne. While the concept of a ‘green wedge’ is entrenched within the planning system and plays a key role in Melbourne’s livability, the continued growth of the metropolis puts pressure on the Green Wedge to accommodate a range of land uses which prefer to locate in adjoining rural areas, either as a result of cheaper land prices, more space to

accommodate off-site impact or to avoid conflicts with urban uses. Infrastructure associated with urban development is also often located within rural areas at the periphery of urban zoned land. These land uses are not always compatible with the purpose of the Green Wedge or the values of the local community.

Extractive Industries

While an acknowledged purpose of the Green Wedge, quarrying activities are often associated with conflict with adjoining landowners. The Western Plains North Green Wedge currently has two quarries. These quarries operate within a strictly regulated system and are subject to a number of controls which minimise the impact on adjoining landowners, managed by DEPI. Opportunities exist to improve the interface between these areas of extractive industry and adjoining landowners. It will be important to ensure future conflicts are moderated and that quarrying activities do not occur in visually sensitive areas. When quarrying activities are complete there is generally a rehabilitation process that is required.

Agriculture

This study does not seek to resolve all issues around the future of agriculture in the Green Wedge but seeks to consider the sustainable long term management of the area and the potential future uses of the land within the area, in particular, what land uses may achieve improved land management outcomes. The situation in relation to the state of agriculture (which has been articulated through a number of reviews of the Melton Planning Scheme and independent Planning Panels which assessed proposed changes to the City of Melton’s rural areas) still remains unchanged. The amount of active farming enterprises in the Western Plains North Green Wedge has continued to decrease and there are only three primary broadacre farming landowners within the study area. At least two of these landowners have indicated through the consultation process a longer term intention to wind back farming activities.

The Western Plains North Green Wedge does have a harsher climate and a lower rainfall than other areas on the periphery of Melbourne which makes commercial agriculture more challenging. It also has less potential for developing new agricultural activities compared to some of the more fertile areas around the edge of Melbourne that have developed specialist agriculture markets, such as the Werribee Irrigation District. However, as identified in the introduction to this section, using the land for any purpose other than agriculture is not expected to occur in abundance as it is unlikely to be the only solution to improved land management outcomes.

While there is significant pressure for rural living type subdivision within the area, the finite real estate market for this type of development, combined with subdivision restrictions means it does not offer a 'solution' to how the land within the Green Wedge can be most appropriately managed.

There are three main opportunities for viable and sustainable agricultural use of the land:

- To get 'bigger', whereby economies of scale can be achieved.
- To get 'smarter', to focus on niche products or target particular agricultural pursuits which are tailored to the particular landholding and add value above the particular product. This will almost inevitably require access to water above and beyond the natural rainfall of the area.
- To supplement agricultural activities with off-farm income.

The first of these options is very challenging within the study area due a combination of factors, including the relatively constrained nature of the area, the presence of numerous existing rural residential properties and high land prices due to the proximity to Melbourne's urban areas. The decline of commercial farming activity, even share farming, within the Western Plains North Green Wedge demonstrates this.

As such, agricultural uses within the area are likely to be sustainable only if they are focused on particular niche products, have access to reliable external water sources or are 'hobby' farms supported by off-farm incomes.

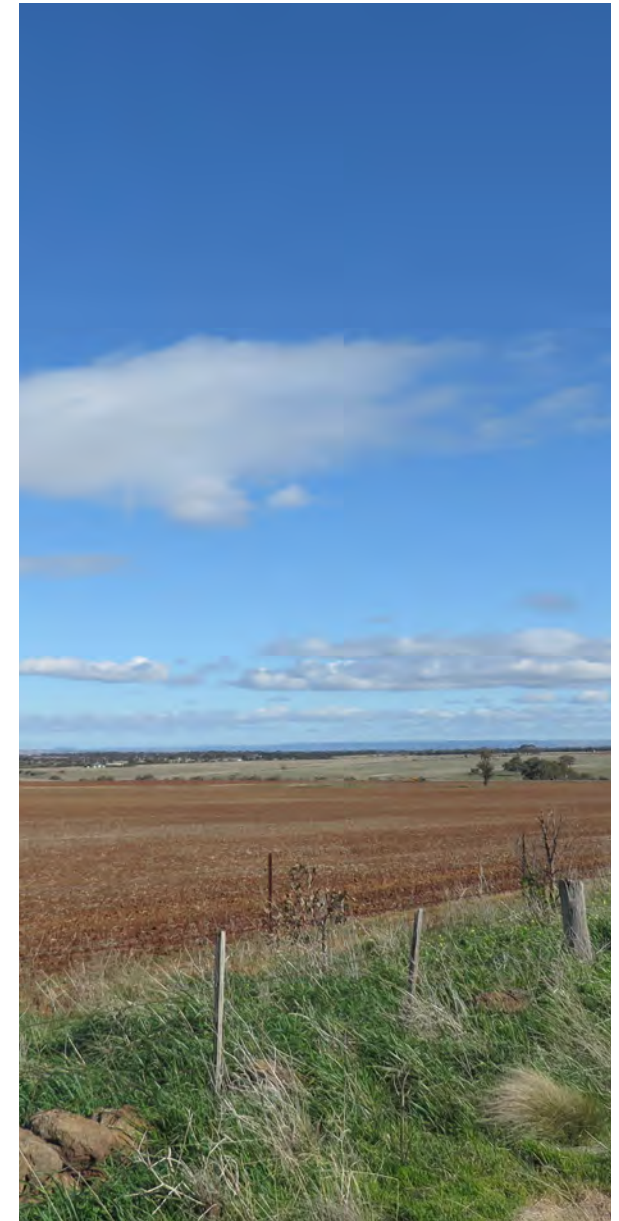
These 'viable' uses are considered as follows:

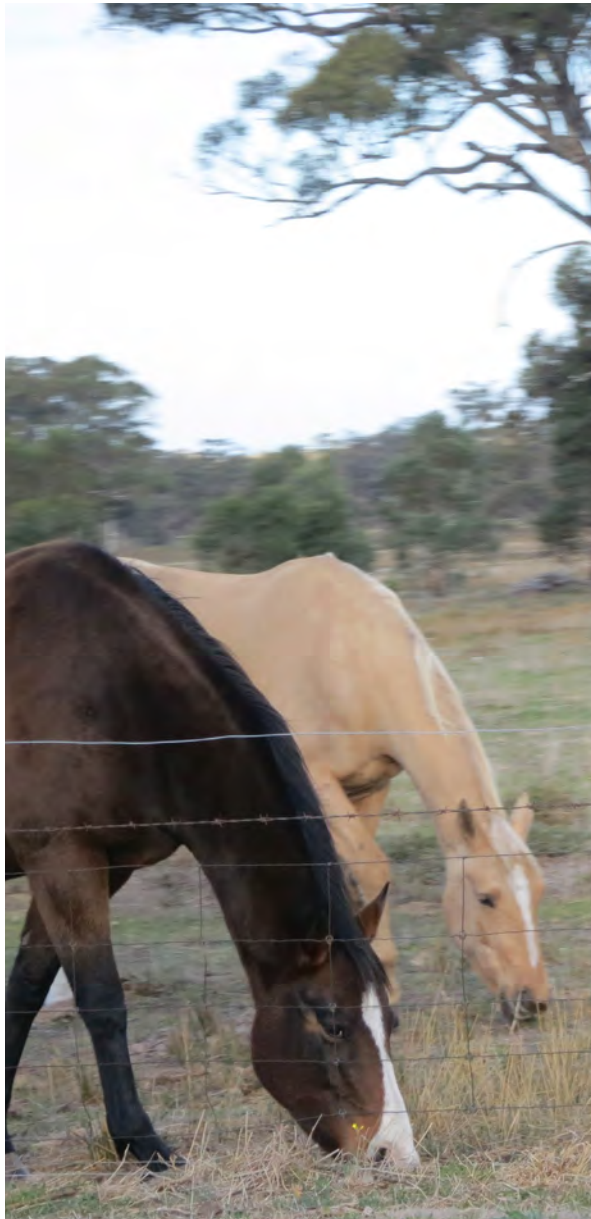
- Agricultural uses which may occur where access to the recycled water pipeline means more intensive or high value agriculture can be established. These uses often require a large injection of capital in their establishment.
- Agricultural uses which are undertaken in association with rural residential development, and off-farm incomes.
- Equine related uses which benefit from the areas existing reputation and location.
- There may also be opportunities for other 'niche' products which are suitable to the particular climate and soil type (such as olives etc), but these are likely to be relatively limited.

Uses which has been identified as having potential to successfully establish within the Green Wedge, and which should be investigated further to understand suitability and support within this area includes:

- Hydroponics, viticulture, goats/alpacas/equine, apples/ fruits, cell grazed bull beef, agroforestry, herbs as a first priority.
- Olives, berries, almonds/walnuts, aquaculture, wildflowers as a second priority.

When considering how the land can be best managed, it is important to consider where these different types of uses are likely to occur and what further work may be required to support these uses and inform changes to the Melton Planning Scheme.





Subdivision Controls

The current subdivision controls for the Green Wedge apply a subdivision formula which has resulted in the creation of a cluster of very small lots in order to maintain a larger lot (to be used for agriculture) within the Green Wedge, arguably creating an increased potential for conflict with agricultural uses. These controls are also resulting in a dispersed population of residents within the area who are not necessarily familiar with requirements of rural life. The requirement to retain a much larger 'super lot' is also potentially not the most responsive to the facilitation of productive agriculture within the Green Wedge, given the decline in broadacre activity that is anticipated. To avoid this, a Rural Land Use Policy has been adopted into the Melton Planning Scheme which limits approvals of these types of applications in most areas of the Green Wedge. This Policy however appears to conflict with what is currently permitted under the Green Wedge Zone.

The future of agriculture in Melton will be best served through a targeted approach rather than a blanket approach. The subdivision controls affecting the majority of the Green Wedge area which remain in the Melton Planning Scheme were identified as early as 2001 by an independent planning panel as "almost unworkable" and changes to these existing subdivision controls is clearly required to facilitate appropriate management of the Green Wedge. Advice provided by the project's agricultural expert (refer WPNGWMP Background Report) identified that, while not ideal from an agricultural perspective, 30ha was the minimum lot size that could be contemplated without significantly compromising future agricultural use of the land.

Recycled Water

While the recycled water pipeline offers a number of exciting opportunities for the Green Wedge, there are also some challenges to maximising this resource. Large scale commercial irrigated agriculture interests are more likely to choose alternative locations to invest in due to the type of

irrigated water offered. The cost of irrigation (infrastructure and the water itself) and reliability factors mean investment in this area is costly. (Although it is noted that the proximity to Melbourne means a decrease in transport costs compared to the costs required for transportation in other growing districts, a small benefit for this area.)

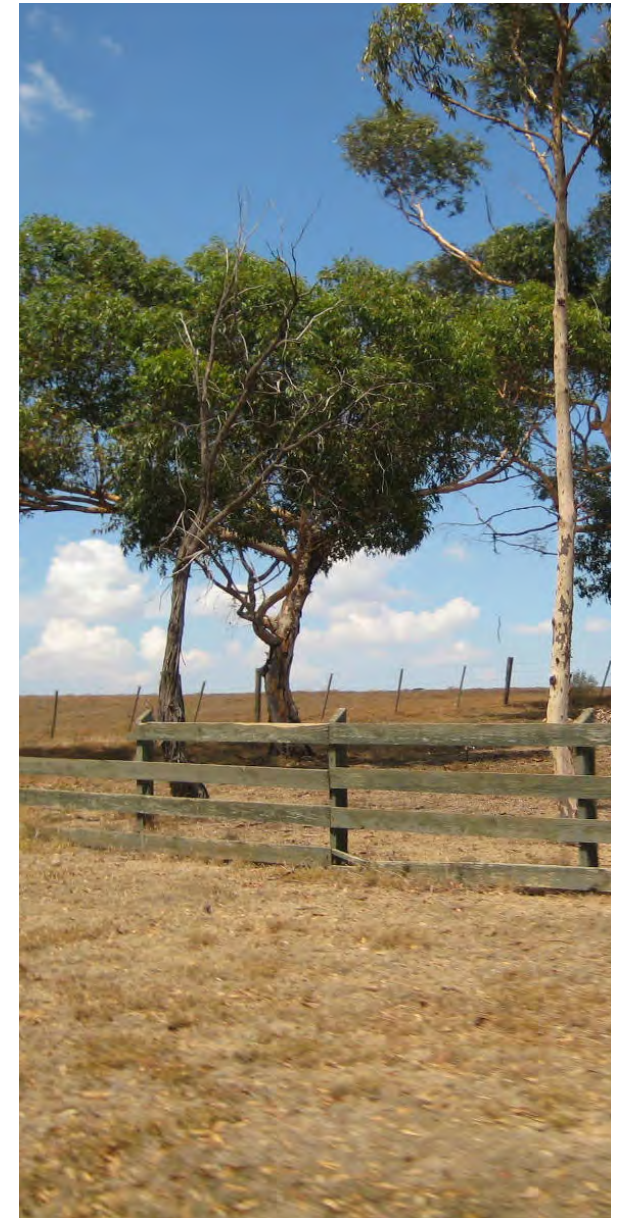
Despite the benefit of possible decreases in transport costs, the current pricing of the water means it is not likely to be feasible for use on lower value agricultural uses such as cropping or grazing. The pipeline currently only provides Class B water which limits the production of more high value products that may be more appropriate for this type of environment. There are also issues regarding the costs of conversion to farming practices which can use this resource efficiently and concerns over the security of supply remain a key among landowners. As such, while there has been a modest take-up of the water, there is significant scope to increase this if a better 'fit' can be found in the land uses which are being pursued and some of these key obstacles to the use of the pipeline can be overcome.

Conservation

Areas dedicated to conservation within the Green Wedge for the most part remain relatively limited and those areas which do remain are also significantly fragmented from other conservation areas. Adding to the challenges of conservation related uses is the fact that there is a relatively incomplete understanding of the location and health of various flora and fauna communities within the study area. The presence of many of the identified higher value areas of vegetation on private land also creates significant challenges for the ongoing management of this land for conservation purposes, particularly where there are limitations to the financial assistance available and opportunities for acquisition by alternative land managers are also limited.




















5.3 'Land' Objectives

- To increase the use of land for productive agricultural purposes wherever possible, whether it be by full-time or part time farmers, or rural residents.
 - To support the widest possible range of rural and related uses to provide long-term sustainable, land management outcomes for land in the Green Wedge.
 - To encourage innovation which improves and maximises investment in agricultural land within the Green Wedge.
 - To encourage a diversity of new and innovative agricultural uses that provide productive and long-term sustainable land use management practices.
 - To maximise the opportunities available for productive agriculture associated with the use of the recycled water pipeline.
 - To recognise rural living in conjunction with part time agricultural and / or conservation uses, as an effective use of land in some areas.
- To reduce the amount of land that is not actively managed to improve long term sustainability.
 - To provide the opportunity for tourism and related uses which are associated with, or consistent with, a rural land use or conservation use of the land.
 - To recognise equestrian establishments as a key use within the Green Wedge.
 - To provide limited opportunities for educational, recreation and institutional uses that benefit from a location within an attractive rural environment, provided that they are of an appropriate scale and make a positive contribution to both the biodiversity and the landscape character of the Green Wedge.
 - To provide a flexible planning policy and control framework that provides sufficient certainty to discourage speculation for zoning changes, yet provides the opportunity for new sustainable land uses to be considered on their planning merits.
 - To provide clear directions regarding the future planning and development of land in the Green Wedge.



western plains north green wedge management plan

legend

- study area 
- key lookout point 
- environmental destination 
- heritage overlay 
- quarries and interface buffer 
- prevent residential development 
- residential buffer to growth area 
- unsealed roads with residential potential 
- seek public creek access 
- dry stone wall driving trail 
- tree cover 
- recycled water pipeline 
- lots adjoining pipeline 
- non-residential uses along highway 
- urban interface management area 
- strong environmental living focus area 
- public open space 
- other public land 
- proposed outer metropolitan ring road 



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5.4 Strategies for the Land

L1. Adopt a proactive approach to the identification and investigation of future agricultural opportunities within the Green Wedge.

Council should investigate opportunities to work with other stakeholders and interested parties to advocate for an improved understanding of agricultural practices or crops which may be appropriate to the Western Plains North Green Wedge.

These investigations could include:

- Other municipalities to the north and west of Melbourne
- Government agencies involved in agriculture and sustainable rural land use management practices
- Peri-urban planning units
- Research institutions and tertiary education institutions running courses on agriculture and rural land conservation.

Council could advocate and market the opportunities available to students and research groups to undertake research which can identify gaps in existing understanding of how agriculture functions and potential practises within the Green Wedge areas. Once gaps are identified, there is the potential to do research to fill these gaps in order to improve knowledge, function and innovation in this Green Wedge

The purpose of the exercise should be to develop an on-going cooperative arrangement that can assist in investigating, researching and identifying new and innovative productive agricultural uses that may be suited to the green wedges to the north and west of Melbourne.

Potential tasks and opportunities that might evolve include preparing a list of research and thesis topics for under graduate and post-graduate agricultural and land management students. These topics could explore the potential for new niche agricultural operations in the area, potential markets for products, the costs of establishing new enterprises, potential income opportunities, etc. On ground case studies could be undertaken with Council's Green Wedge specialists (see page 50) connecting interested landowners with research partners.

Through relationships established with tertiary institutions, there could be ongoing annual student projects that involve preparing farm management plans and business plans for alternative productive agricultural operations within the Green Wedge.

These projects could be converted into 'fact sheets' on alternative agricultural products and practices that could be used to inspire or encourage landowners to implement this throughout the area.

L1 a1 – Identify and approach relevant research bodies and potential project partners to address existing issues with agriculture in the Green Wedge.

L1 a2 – Liaise and advocate with these partners to develop a greater understanding of the gaps, challenges and opportunities in the Green Wedge.

L1 a3 – Promote the findings of relevant research projects.





L2. Improve access and use of recycled water to facilitate agriculture within the Green Wedge

The recycled water pipeline (refer figure 3 'The Land') provides an outstanding opportunity to provide water for agricultural operations in the eastern parts of the Green Wedge. It has the potential to generate considerable economic benefits within the municipality, as well as improve land management outcomes within the Green Wedge.

Council will work closely with Western Water to prepare a business plan that seeks to maximise the opportunities provided by the recycling water pipeline. While this plan will be driven by Western Water as the pipeline manager, Council should be involved in the process to ensure the outcome is targeted to produce a meaningful assessment of how to maximise these opportunities with a focus on overcoming existing barriers (both real and perceived) to usage and in the implementation and transition of land uses with access to the pipeline. This should include investigation of the optimal lots sizes to maximise the use of this pipeline for productive agricultural uses.

L2 a1 - Work with Western Water to prepare a 'recycled water based agriculture' business plan.

L2 a2 – On the basis of the findings of the agricultural business plan, review subdivision controls in the Melton Planning Scheme to ensure these best facilitate recycled water based agricultural uses.

L3. Review planning scheme policies in relation to the Western Plains North Green Wedge.

There are no specific local planning policies contained in the Melton Planning Scheme which relate to the Green Wedge specifically.

The green wedge area which includes eight precincts which have different characteristics and which are relevant to the future planning decisions should be incorporated into planning policy and associated mapping to better respond to the objectives outlined in this document and to reflect the land use outcomes identified for each.

There are also a number of references to outdated documents and zones which should be updated through any review of the Melton Planning Scheme

L3 a1 - Update the Melton Planning Scheme to include specific policy as outlined within the Management Plan.

L3 a2 – Seek to incorporate relevant guidelines into the Melton Planning Scheme as recommended by the Management Plan, as these are developed.

L3 a3 – Begin the process of transitioning away from the current subdivision 'formula' to more tailored outcomes as recommended by this Management Plan and further strategic work identified.

L4. Enhance tourism trails and information signage across the Green Wedge.

Council should pursue a more active role in documenting and promoting tourism opportunities within the area, covering both private and public areas. Tourism to date has not played a significant role in the area, however, the rural landscapes, particularly in the west and north of the Green Wedge, are very attractive. An increased residential population in Melton could contribute to a growing local tourism market as 'urban' residents seek out more rural areas for recreation and leisure activities. Additional details on walking tracks and equestrian trails are provided in the following section (page 52).

Information signage boards will be a key component of any trail to develop a greater understanding of things which may not be immediately visible, including the grasslands, and the geological formation of the landscape within the area.

A carefully curated and high quality website can often play a critical role in attracting visitors to an area and increasing wider appreciation of scenic values of an area. Council should explore opportunities to further enhance existing tourism information on their own website and to bolster and update information provided on the 'Discover Your Own Backyard' site. Further promotion of the 'Discover Your Own Backyard' should also be considered, along with opportunities for regional promotions through that site. There are a number of existing areas or proposed attractions which could be highlighted on such a site, along with existing attractions such as the Dry Stone Wall Driving Trail and the Dingo Discovery Centre, which provide a good basis for the development of a local tourism industry. It often only takes one or two key destinations to begin to generate a local industry. Council could consider opportunities for a 'western fringes' tourism website in conjunction with adjoining municipalities. Policy should also seek to recognise the key role which could be played by the township of Toolern Vale in supporting any local tourism within the Green Wedge.

L4 a1 - Continue to promote the existing Dry Stone Wall Driving Trail.

L4 a2 - Consider additional measures to appropriately protect key heritage assets along the Dry Stone Wall Driving Trail.

L4 a3 - Consider an 'environmental' driving trail similar to the 'drystone' trail which could take in areas such as the 'environmental destination', the roadside grassland reserves and the viewpoint from the **Melton–Gisborne Road (as identified on Figure 2: The Environment and Figure 3: The Land)**

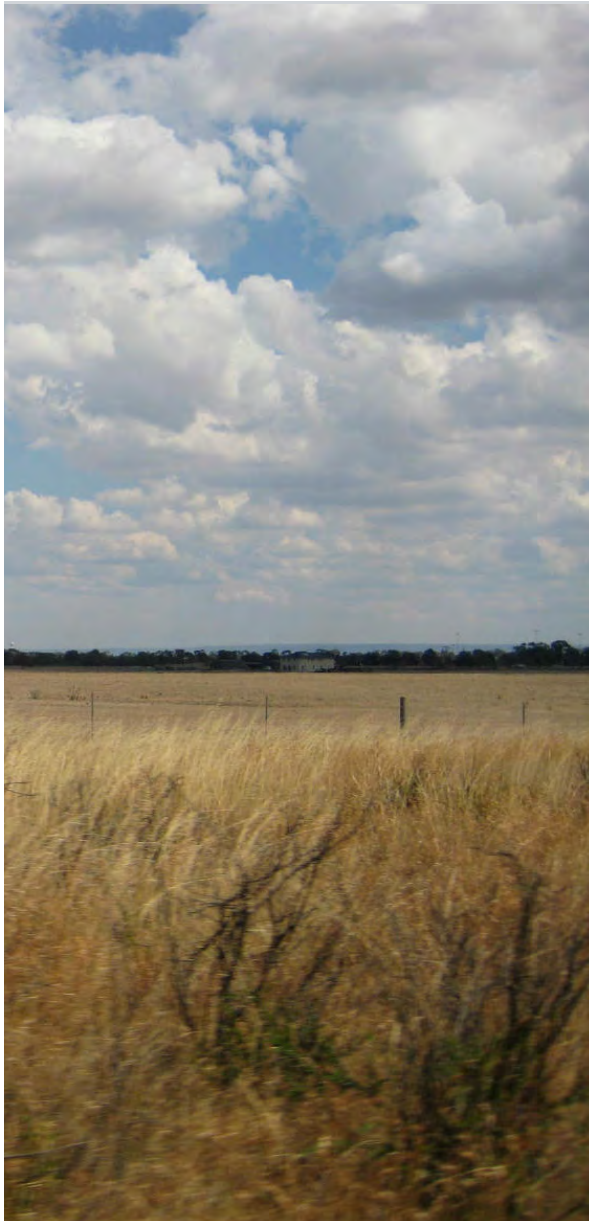
L4 a4 – Update and enhance existing Council tourism websites and, where possible, industry websites, to actively promote the broader destination, as well as individual attractions.

L5. Consider opportunities to provide increased clarity in decision-making to encourage innovative land uses which result in better land management outcomes.

Primarily this will mean implementing a process for assessment of merit-based planning scheme amendments. While the process exists for Council to consider amendments on a case-by-case basis, the process can be unclear to applicants. With this uncertainty, innovative solutions can appear to be discouraged which can affect sustainable management of the land. Council should therefore develop and publicise an approach which could be based on the following:

- Initial consideration of a proposal - Initial discussion with applicant to gain an understanding of the proposal and to advise them of the process for consideration of a proposal, which on face value appears to have 'planning merit'.





- In-principle support - Proponent submits summary documentation to Council to describe and to justify the proposal, sufficient for Council to determine whether or not it considers there is enough merit to provide 'in-principle support' and to enable a planning scheme amendment to be justified.
- Detailed consideration of proposal - If in-principle support is given for a proposal, the applicant should then prepare a full package of documentation so that Council and other relevant agencies, and the community, can fully assess its merits.
- Utilisation of Clause 52.03 provides a means by which Council may amend the planning scheme to allow for such uses. Note: depending on the proposal, this will be subject to ministerial approval and may require ratification by Parliament (see page 7 for further details).

As full-time farming and traditional farming methods become less viable within the Green Wedge, sustainable land use management becomes more difficult. New and innovative ways of managing Green Wedge land, consistent with the purpose of the Green Wedge Zone, are needed to ensure that the environmental and land resource remains well looked after into the future.

Planning policies and controls tend to be drafted based on known or expected outcomes and land use opportunities. They can prohibit or restrict new or creative ideas that might not have been anticipated, but which may introduce a new sustainable way of using and managing rural land. It is important to ensure that such a process is undertaken in a clear and transparent manner and does not unduly raise expectations. It is also important to recognise that proposals such as this must demonstrate a clear link to the purpose of the Green Wedge Zone

L5 a1 – Consider the merit of a process for merit based planning scheme amendments, and where relevant, publish a 'fact sheet' on the process which will be followed when Council considers a merit based amendment to facilitate a specific project.

L6. Establish clear guidelines for the approval of discretionary non-residential uses.

The recent amendments by State Government to the suite of rural zones including the Green Wedge Zones increase the number of uses for which a planning permit may be considered within the Green Wedge Zone, and in particular allows these to be considered in conjunction with the natural environment, as well as agricultural uses. This largely relates to education, recreation, religious and tourism uses.

A local planning policy should be prepared and included into the scheme that identifies preferred locations for such uses, types of uses and specific site design and environmental enhancement requirements. This should also address matters relating to public transport access which is critical for some discretionary uses such as Secondary schools.

Education and religious uses, and other uses which are much more closely associated with 'urban' development (such as churches or schools), should generally only be considered in precincts 4, 5 and 8 (see page 39).

In general, tourism and recreation uses should be considered across the whole Green Wedge area, subject to the parameters outlined below. The following principles could be adopted in assessing the suitability of discretionary uses:

- The site should be of sufficient size to accommodate a building and all associated works such as car parking, formalised outdoor areas, etc within a generously proportioned landscaping setting that responds to the original vegetation pattern that existed in the area.

- Buildings should be designed in a manner, and use materials and finishes that respect the rural landscape and / or the natural environment in which they are located. This will require:
 - Very low site coverage.
 - Substantial setback from property boundary.
 - Substantial separation distances from houses on adjoining properties.
 - Landscaping using indigenous vegetation and reflective of the landscape setting of the area.

It is noted also that Clause 35.04-5 of the new Green Wedge Zone contains permit triggers and provisions relating to buildings and works.

L6 a1 – Prepare a series of guidelines for discretionary non-residential uses. These should be incorporated into the Melton Planning Scheme.

L6 a2 - Consider the creation of 'fact sheets' outlining these guidelines including good examples for applicants.

L7. Investigate opportunities for a 'legal' cleanfill site.

One way of managing the proliferation of illegal dumping of fill within the Green Wedge may be to establish a legal cleanfill site, in recognition of the significant amount of new development that will occur in Melton over the coming decades. The development of the growth areas is likely to create significant demand. This legal cleanfill site may be in the Green Wedge area or in another area. Where an appropriate site is identified in the Green Wedge area it should be carefully planned and managed to ensure that impacts on the rural landscape, environmental processes and local biodiversity are minimised. One opportunity

may be to utilise quarry sites following finalisation of any activities on site.

Off-site impacts such as traffic and buffers would also need to be carefully assessed. The establishment of any cleanfill site should also be associated with an increased focus on the prosecution of landowners within the Green Wedge who continue to use their properties for illegal purposes.

Consideration should also be given to other measures that may be applicable in the longer term management of 'cleanfill' within the City of Melton given the scale of development anticipated over the coming decades.

L7 a1 – Investigate possible locations with a view to initiating discussions with relevant landowners or authorities around the demand and possible location for a Council-run or located cleanfill site.

L7 a2 - Investigate other longer term options for the management of 'cleanfill'.

L8. Continue to pursue absentee landowners to meet land management obligations.

Where Council is aware of absentee landowners who are neglecting to appropriately care for their land within the Green Wedge, 'reminder notices' could be sent to the landowners regarding their legal obligations to care for the land and to provide information about locally available services to undertake any works required on the land. Where Council is aware of land speculation being a factor in the absentee ownership, this could also be supplemented by additional 'updates' on matters relating to the Green Wedge and urban areas. For example, any recent assessments of land supply and demand which demonstrate existing available residentially

zoned land or identification of expected timeframes for development of existing zoned land and any future stages identified which would have priority ahead of land within the Green Wedge.

L8 a1 – Prepare and, when available, distribute correspondence at appropriate times to absentee landowners who are not meeting their land management obligations.

L9. Continue to monitor and advocate for the involvement of relevant State Government departments in the monitoring and enforcement of land management obligations.

Council (through the Green Wedge specialists, see page 50) should seek meetings with relevant State Government departments, on a regular basis to discuss matters relating to the enforcement of land management related matters within the Green Wedge. This will allow Council to have an understanding of what monitoring is being undertaken and what actions are being taken by other land managers in relation to enforcement. This should provide Council with valuable information as to the level of State Government involvement within the Green Wedge but also provide both levels of Government with a better understanding of the efficiency of existing programs, and opportunities to improve current practices.

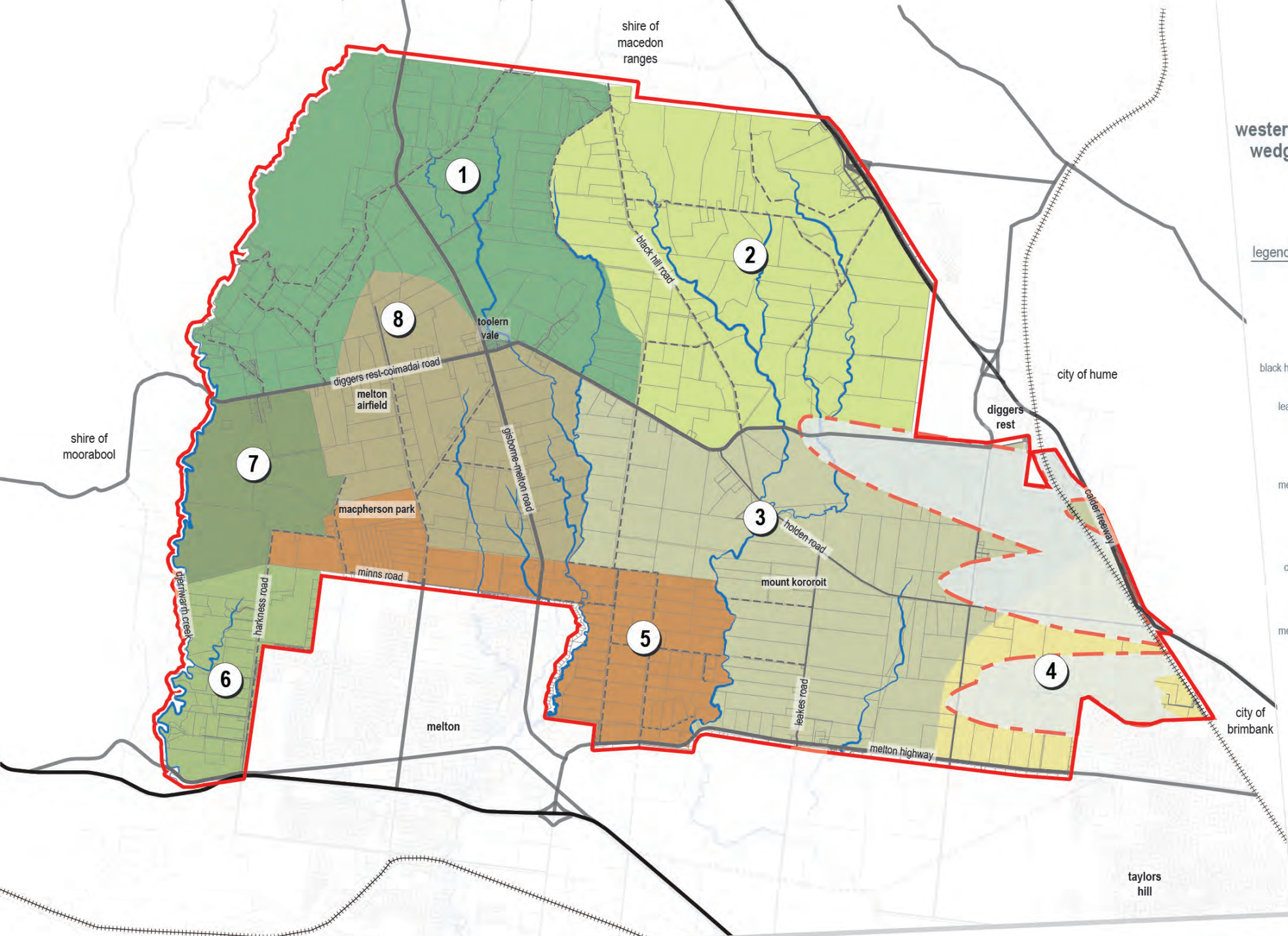
L9 a1 – Instigate regular meetings with relevant State Government departments to monitor progress of enforcement proceedings within the Green Wedge.

Figure 4: Precinct Key Map

western plains north green wedge management plan

legend

- study area 
- precinct 1: the toolern vale hills 
- precinct 2: black hill road - mt aikten road 
- precinct 3: leakes road - holden road 
- precinct 4: hillside interface 
- precinct 5: melton township interface 
- precinct 6: harkness road 
- precinct 7: central djerriwarrh creek 
- precinct 8: coburns road 
- melbourne airport overlay 



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western plains south green wedge

L10. Recognise the different responses to appropriate land uses which may apply to different parts of the Green Wedge.

One of the key messages provided through consultation events identified through background research was that the Western Plains North Green Wedge is a diverse area. Given this, there is a clear imperative to recognise the different areas of the Green Wedge through the creation of eight precincts. These areas are shaped by natural features and barriers, as well as current zoning regimes and other influencing factors. A different land use and development response is therefore identified for each precinct and documented on the following pages. Figure 4 'Precinct Key Map' provides a key map for the precincts.

It is important to note that the recommendations contained within this Management Plan, specifically in relation to the subdivision of land, can only be recommended by Council. Under the zoning, changes to the Melton Planning Scheme which would allow subdivision into smaller lots needs to also be approved by the Minister for Planning before being ratified by both Houses of Parliament (see page 7 for more details). As such, any recommendation contained in this section are still subject to other approvals.



Precinct 1: The Toolern Vale Hills

This precinct relates to land along the Melton-Gisborne Road to the north of Toolern Vale and within the Toolern Vale Hills. The land is presently included in a Rural Conservation Zone, which has a minimum lot size of 40ha. Most of the area is also covered by a Wildfire / Bushfire Management Overlay and an Environmental Significance Overlay. The land is generally more undulating than in other parts of the Green Wedge, has greater tree cover in places and provides attractive views and outlooks.

The current policies contained in the planning scheme are generally considered appropriate to remain for this area. However, a greater emphasis should be given to conservation and also to small scale tourist uses that complement the natural attractions of this area.

L10 a1 – Adjust planning policy to recognise the Toolern Vale Hills as a key area for conservation initiatives and small scale tourism uses.



Precinct 2: Black Hill Road - Mount Aitken Road

This precinct covers a large area of land in the northern part of the Green Wedge, to the Calder Freeway near Sunbury in the east and extending south to Diggers Rest - Coimadai Road. It encompasses an area of 4,120ha, in just over 100 lots (with most lots over 40ha). Land in this precinct is more gently undulating than land to the south and has some elevation, particularly to the north. It also contains a number of incised creek valleys, and is less affected by spillover activities associated with metropolitan Melbourne than land to the south. The recycled water pipeline from the Sunbury Wastewater Treatment facility crosses this precinct. A small portion of this land to the immediate north of Diggers Rest - Coimadai Road is affected by the Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay.

This precinct has a major highway abuttal to the Calder Freeway to the north-east and broad expansive rural landscapes and vistas exist across the study area when viewed from the Calder Highway, both when travelling to and from Melbourne. The openness of this landscape should be taken into consideration in assessing the appropriate land uses. These northern plains are particularly attractive undulating rural areas with wonderful views in places, across Melbourne and Port Phillip Bay.

This part of the area is seen as having more potential for tourism and related activities, and well as for rural living and ongoing farming uses. While Diggers Rest will expand to the west towards this area, this interface is currently proposed as a 'hard' boundary, where dwellings at this interface will front a road which will provide the 'buffer' between these areas. There has been suggestion that additional rural living be provided at this interface however the lack of a clear boundary for any such use, the current subdivision pattern and the proximity to the recycled water pipeline mean this would not be an appropriate use for this land. However, consideration does need to be given to how this interface will be managed.

The current subdivision controls in this area are not operating effectively and are creating 'strips' of much smaller lots along sealed roadway which is compromising the valued rural character. This area should be the focus for:

- Agritourism, whereby agricultural activities are supported by associated tourism facilities. These would need to be carefully designed to ensure they do not compromise the character of the area
- Tourism more generally, with historic homesteads or areas of natural beauty sensitively developed to allow an income to be generated, provided the land is managed sustainably
- Hobby farms, where residential uses occur in conjunction with agricultural or conservation uses.

Recommendations for this area are therefore as follows:

- Amend the current subdivision controls subject to approvals. This should be on the basis of findings of the Recycled Water Business Plan which should provide guidance as to the appropriate size for viable enterprises (see page 34 for additional details)

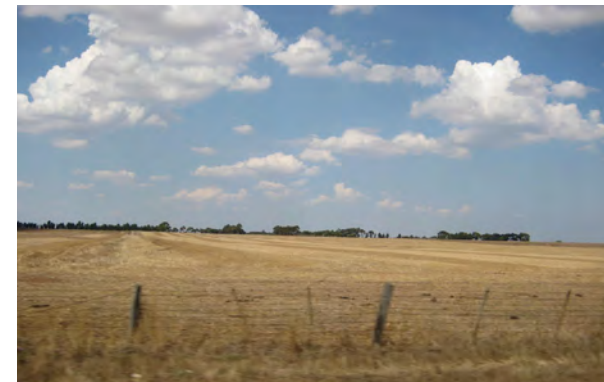
- In the shorter term, Council should consider an 'interim' change to the planning scheme to establish a 30ha minimum subdivision size in this precinct on the basis that broadacre farming is no longer a viable use of the land and that 30ha is appropriate to accommodate equine or other smaller scale agricultural enterprises. This is to prevent further development of small clusters of dwellings
- Discourage 'strip' residential development along Blackhill Road to retain rural character
- Support appropriate development of dwellings on existing vacant lots within this precinct. This would allow a modest number of new dwellings to be developed along Mount Aitken and Townsings Roads, Burns Lane and the northern portion of Ryans Lane. Any development of a dwelling should require a Sustainable Land Management Plan to be prepared and be designed to ensure any development is subservient to the landscape setting
- Recognise the existing quarry at Flagstaff Hill and ensure any new development does not compromise its on-going operations. Seek rehabilitation of this area following conclusion of operations to ensure landscape character is enhanced
- Support the development of tourism uses, including B&Bs, in the area, particularly those that involve the rehabilitation and preservation of buildings of historic importance. Consider opportunities to extend the existing drystone wall driving trail into this area, potentially across to The Gap
- Support the establishment of a landscape buffer (with suitable separation distances) between the edge of the road and the Green Wedge to provide a sense of separation between the urban and rural areas.

L10 a2 – Adjust Planning Policy to recognise the Black Hill Road - Mount Aitken Road Precinct as a key area for agritourism, tourism and rural living where this is associated with meaningful agricultural pursuits.

L10 a3 – Pursue changes to the Schedule to the Green Wedge Zone (subject to approvals) to introduce a flat 30ha minimum lots size as an 'interim' measure, until optimal agricultural uses and associated lots sizes are confirmed.

L10 a4 – Introduce relevant controls to discourage strip development along main roads in the precinct, outline requirements for Sustainable Land Management Plans, and recognise the ongoing quarry uses.

L10 a5 - Investigate options for establishing an appropriate, safe landscape buffer between urban and rural uses at the Diggers Rest interface.



What is a sustainable land management plan?

A Sustainable Land Management Plan is a document which clearly sets out how the land in question will be used in conjunction with any dwelling, and how this will contribute to improved land management outcomes.

A SLMP should detail whether the land will be used for small scale agriculture, for revegetation, or for another suitable purpose. The plan should be detailed enough to enable assessment of the longer term environmental impacts.

It should include mechanisms for monitoring and assessment against measurable land management goals.

It should also provide details of landscaping, in particular revegetation, to be undertaken and outline the proposed approach to matters such as fencing and weed management.

It should also include details of how water resources are to be managed, for both the proposed land use and for any domestic needs.

Precinct 3: Leakes Road - Holden Road

This precinct covers the eastern parts of the Green Wedge, extending from the Kororoit and Toolern Creeks across to the Calder Freeway and alignment of the Outer Metropolitan Ring Road.

As with Precinct 2, this precinct has major highway abutments and is bisected by the recycled water pipeline. Broad expansive rural landscapes and vistas exist across this area, more particularly when viewed from the north. The openness of this landscape is emphasised by the relative flatness and by the current large lot sizes (generally over 40ha) and lack of development. This openness should be taken into consideration when considering future planning permit applications in this area. Much of the land to the east of Plumpton Road is also affected by the Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay, as well as land to the south of Diggers Rest - Coimadaí Road. This has implications for development of sensitive uses which require a permit and noise attenuation measures.

There is a greater mix of land uses along the Melton Highway corridor that impact on the 'rural experience' along the road, and there is a greater presence of encroaching urban development.

Recommendations for this area are therefore as follows:

- Amend the current subdivision controls (subject to approvals). This should be on the basis of findings of the Recycled Water Business Plan which should provide guidance as to the appropriate size for viable enterprises (see page 34 for additional details)
- Discourage 'strip' residential development along Holden, Plumpton and Leakes Roads to retain rural character
- Recognise an 'environmental destination' within this precinct and where suitable support appropriate lands uses and development which complement this

- Discourage any land use or development which will compromise the scenic landscape value of Mount Kororoit
- Consider 'urban' related discretionary uses (such as schools or churches) abutting the Melton Highway, provided they are appropriately sited, traffic is managed and they contribute to a strong sense of a landscape buffer separation between the future urban area of the City of Melton and the Green Wedge
- Do not support the establishment of other discretionary uses within the remainder this area to avoid conflict with future agricultural activities.

L10 a6 – Adjust planning policy to recognise the Leakes Road - Holden Road Precinct as a key area for agriculture.

L10 a7 – Pursue changes to introduce a flat 30ha minimum lot size as an 'interim' measure, subject to approvals, until optimal agricultural uses and associated lot sizes are confirmed.

L10 a8 – Introduce relevant controls to discourage strip development along main roads in the precinct, outline requirements for Sustainable Land Management Plans, and recognise the ongoing quarry uses and associated buffers.

L10 a9 – Introduce relevant policy to identify support and design and siting parameters, as well as application requirements for discretionary uses in close proximity to the Melton Highway.

L10 a10 – Consider adjusting planning policy to recognise the impact of the proposed OMR on the Hillside Interface Precinct.

L10 a11– In the longer term, consider undertaking a planning study for the Hillside Interface Precinct.

Precinct 4 - Hillside Interface

This precinct applies to land in the far eastern part of the Green Wedge that will be located to the east of the proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring transport corridor.

While land in this area was previously identified as potentially forming an employment corridor, it is understood that recent assessment has indicated a more than sufficient quantity of 'employment' land available within Melton. However, the land in this precinct will effectively be cut off from the balance of the Green Wedge by the proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring transport corridor (OMR) when it is constructed. The land is also close to Melbourne Airport; it is affected by the Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay (MAEO) and has an abuttal to the Hillside area, albeit separated by an electricity reserve. The area is also affected by a proposed gas pipeline.

The development of new dwellings within this area should be discouraged to avoid longer term conflict with either the OMR or any future use of the land. This applies primarily to the southern part of Plumpton Road as Holden Road within the precinct is subject to the MAEO.

Ultimately a planning study should be prepared for the area to identify the full range of land use opportunities that may be appropriate to provide on this land. It is anticipated that in the longer term, following development of the OMR, this land is likely to transition to a more urban environment. Whilst industrial / employment and related uses appear appropriate given that much of the land is covered by the MAEO, there may be some opportunity for more sensitive uses in parts of the precinct not affected by the overlay. A review process would identify those opportunities, as well as constraints such as the presence of major infrastructure such as the rail yards in the area which may also influence potential uses.

Precinct 5 - Melton Township Interface

This precinct includes the area to the immediate north of the Melton Township, extending east to Kororoit Creek, which forms a notable barrier due to its deeply incised nature. It includes MacPherson Park, which is a major sporting and recreation facility. This area is subject to the most pressure for development and for urban-related uses. These include pressure for changes to the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), pressure for rural living opportunities, for 'urban' uses such as churches and for infrastructure such as telecommunications towers, etc.

It is not the role of the Management Plan to comment on the UGB which is a State Government matter and beyond the scope of this project. Melton has a significant amount of land within the Urban Growth Zone and sufficient land to meet the residential needs of the projected population to 2051 and beyond.

Due to the current planning policies (which identify a smaller subdivision size for much of this area) the subdivision pattern in this area is significantly different to other areas, with most lots around 12ha. The vast majority of lots in this area appear to be used for rural residential purposes.

Recommendations for this area are therefore as follows:

- Given the limited contribution this area makes to agricultural production and the very limited likelihood of this changing in the future, provide support for the development of dwellings on existing vacant lots where a sustainable land management plan has been prepared and demonstrates an appropriate outcome. Approximately 36 vacant lots within this precinct have not yet been developed with a dwelling
- Only support the development of a dwelling subject to appropriate siting and design and a Sustainable Land Management Plan (see page 42) which provides not only a detailed explanation of how the remainder of the

lot will be managed sustainably, but also a longer term maintenance program. This may be through revegetation of the land, through sustainable small scale agriculture, or in another manner, subject to Council being satisfied the land management outcomes will be improved

- Consider discretionary 'urban' uses (such as schools and churches) within this area, provided they meet any relevant design guidelines and do not create unreasonable conflict with existing residential uses
- Encourage complimentary recreational uses along Melton - Gisborne Road between MacPherson Park and the Melton Township to improve the sense of connectivity.

Following investigation into the supply and demand for rural residential opportunities in the municipality, consider reviewing the minimum subdivision size within this area to allow some further subdivision (subject to approvals). If a smaller subdivision size is considered, a Development Plan would be useful for the area to ensure orderly planning is achieved and that any development is proactive in improving the interface between the Green Wedge and urban area. At a minimum the Development Plan should consider:

- Retention of all native vegetation
- Public open space reserves along the alignments of both Toolern Creek and Kororoit Creek
- Landscape plans submitted with planning permit applications for subdivision
- Where any additional subdivision occurs on lots adjoining either the Toolern or Kororoit Creek, or through the preparation of a Development Plan, land adjoining the creek to a minimum of 30m depth could be sought for public ownership.

L10 a12 – Adjust planning policy to recognise the Melton Township Interface Precinct as a key area for hobby farms or other rural living uses which implement sustainable land management practices.

L10 a13 – Pursue changes to introduce a flat 12ha minimum lot size as an ‘interim’ measure within the parts of the precinct to which this minimum does not already apply.

L10 a14 – Consider undertaking a Rural Residential land supply and demand analysis to identify the demand in relation to number, location and lot size that exists within the City of Melton. On the basis of this work and the Biodiversity Strategy, consider longer term if a smaller minimum lots size may be warranted.

L10 a15 – Consider introducing relevant controls to outline requirements for discretionary uses in the precinct and outline requirements for Sustainable Land Management Plans.

L10 a16 – Consider the introduction of a relevant policy to identify requirements during subdivision of the transfer of land to public ownership along the Toolern Creek.



Precinct 6 - Harkness Road

This precinct relates to land to the west, extending to the Djerriwarrh Creek. This land is presently included in a Green Wedge A Zone, which has a minimum subdivision size of 2 hectares, or 5 hectares within 300 metres of specified environmentally significant features. The land is also covered by a Development Plan Overlay.

The current DPO only covers the area of land in this precinct zoned Green Wedge A Zone, however many of the properties in the precinct are also partially within a Rural Conservation Zone. It would therefore be more appropriate for the whole of precinct 6 to be included under the DPO so potential connections and areas of public access along creeks can be considered thorough any plan for residential development in the area.

Within this precinct the provisions of Schedule 3 to the DPO should be expanded to require improved biodiversity, design and siting in keeping with an ‘environmental living’ outcome as part of any proposal to subdivide land. Requirements to include in the schedule include the following:

- Site analysis required to be submitted with an application
- Landscape plan required to be prepared for the entire site showing vegetation and new landscaping (indigenous species)
- Requirement for a public reserve to be established along Djerriwarrh Creek and tributary connecting to the existing reserve on Harkness Road. The reserve should be a minimum 30 metres wide, or relate to clearly defined topographical features associated with the creek.

L10 a17 – Update and amend the Development Plan Overlay for this area to include all of Precinct 6, place a greater emphasis on environmental outcomes, require landscape plans to be prepared and to facilitate public access to land along creek corridors.

L10 a18 - Prepare a Development Plan for Precinct 6, in line with the requirements of the updated Development Plan Overlay (see L10 a17).



Precinct 7 - Central Djerriwarrh Creek

This small precinct has been identified due to the noticeably larger lots within the area and the relationship to two key areas of environmental sensitivity: the Toolern Vale Hills and the Djerriwarrh Creek. The area also makes a valuable contribution to the landscape character of this area, particularly in light of the relatively limited development. From the north of Harkness Road there are views across of vegetation to areas of environmental importance and the area has the potential to provide a linkage to the Long Forest Flora and Fauna Reserve (see page 52 for details).

Additional subdivision within this area should only be supported subject to consideration of impacts on the environmental and landscape characteristics of the area. The appropriate size may be considered with Precinct 8. Flexibility should be considered where this leads to the creation of the identified ‘environmental corridor’ and can be clearly associated with improved land management outcomes. Discretionary uses apart from tourism should not be supported, and development should be subservient to the landscape setting.

L10 a19 – Adjust planning policy to recognise the environmental qualities of the Central Djerriwarrh Precinct and need for sensitivity around additional subdivision.



Precinct 8 - Coburns Road

This precinct includes the area to the north of MacPherson Park and extends to Diggers Rest - Coimadai Road to the Rural Conservation zoned land. An air landing strip is also included in this area. Considerable lot fragmentation exists in parts of this precinct with lots ranging from 0.5ha to 50ha.

Land in this precinct is considered to have some potential to allow for limited rural lifestyle development, having some of the poorer quality soils and being unlikely to access additional water as a result of the recycled water pipeline. The character of the area, with views to the Toolern Vale Hills in the north also make the area attractive to those seeking a rural lifestyle. The opportunity is seen for this area to establish as a rural lifestyle and equestrian area, close to the urban facilities provided in Melton.

Recommendations for this area are therefore as follows:

- Identify policy support for the development of dwellings on existing vacant lots (there are currently less than 20 vacant lots within the area which do not have an existing dwelling) where this is supported by an appropriate land management proposal. Any development of a dwelling would require a Sustainable Land Management Plan to be prepared and be designed to ensure any development is subservient to the landscape setting
- In the longer term, pending any broader assessment of rural residential opportunities in the municipality, a change to the existing subdivision controls could be considered in this area, subject to a supply and demand assessment and relevant approvals. If subdivision controls are to be changed the following should be considered:
 - A Development Plan Overlay to be placed over the area and an overall subdivision concept is to be prepared that identifies a potential subdivision pattern, having regard to the natural features of the area and opportunities for environmental improvements in the precinct
 - Environmental site analysis and land capacity work undertaken as part of the preparation of a subdivision concept would be used to determine lot sizes. The pattern of lot sizes would also be based on the environmental / community benefits that can be gained from further subdivision
 - Key considerations to include in the concept plan will be realising the opportunity for public open space to be used for vegetated biolinks and walking and cycling trails along the Toolern Creek
 - A range of lot sizes is envisaged, but are still expected to be over 10ha
 - The establishment of safe off-road walking and cycling links between Toolern Vale and Melton, and to and from MacPherson Park, Djerriwarrh Creek and Toolern Creek would be a priority outcome for this precinct.
- It will also be important to ensure that development in the area does not compromise any of the following:
 - The operation and economic and / or tourism development opportunities associated with the airfield
 - The riverine health and water quality of any of the waterways within the precinct
 - The roadside grassland reserves along McCorkells and Missens Roads within the precinct.

L10 a20 – Seek to adjust planning policy to recognise the Coburns Road Precinct as a key area for hobby farms, equestrian farms or other rural living uses which implement sustainable land management practices.

L10 a21 – Undertake a Rural Residential land supply and demand analysis to identify the demand, including location and lot sizes that exist within the City of Melton. On the basis of this work and the Biodiversity Strategy, consider in the longer term if a smaller minimum lot size may be warranted.

L10 a22 – If additional demand is identified beyond that which could be accommodated in other areas, apply a Development Plan Overlay to the area to manage outcomes and to address matters outlined in this Management Plan.

L10 a23 - Identify policy support for dwellings on existing vacant lots where an appropriate Sustainable Land Management Plan is prepared (refer page 42).



6 The People

One of the critical elements in the 'health' of the Western Plains North Green Wedge is the amount of ownership and engagement the residents and landowners (not only of the Green Wedge but also the broader region) feel towards this land. The Management Plan has therefore focused on ways of increasing the appreciation people have of the Green Wedge, both for its biodiversity values, and for the recreation and leisure opportunities that it offers. There is also a high level of misunderstanding in relation to Council's role and a degree of mistrust by large numbers of existing residents. The Management Plan has also sought to build on recent good work by the Council in facilitating a more productive relationship with the Green Wedge community.

6.1 Values

The *people* of the Western Plains North Green Wedge, as individuals, business owners, dedicated community groups and CFA members have a significant value.

The *hard work and dedication* of many of the residents in looking after their land.

Indigenous cultural heritage sites are located within the Green Wedge and the land has significant value to the indigenous population.

Remnants of *European heritage* in the form of drystone walls, bluestone farmhouses and relics of the areas agricultural history.

Tourism opportunities associated with the heritage assets, as well as the rural landscape, native wildlife and agricultural businesses.

Recreational activities, both active and passive, have a positive influence on the community's physical and mental health and well-being.

6.2 Issues

Frustration with the Current Planning Systems

Whilst many existing residents of the Western Plains North Green Wedge enjoy the beauty and attractions of the area, and the lifestyle it provides, there are many dissatisfied residents either experiencing difficulty in farming the land or who want a change to existing planning controls. Expectations of landowners for a change of zoning or planning controls to allow further subdivision or development is at the heart of the high level of dissatisfaction of the community in the area. Where high levels of frustration exist this can lead to disengagement with the management of the land.

Lack of Trust or Understanding of the Role of Council

There is widespread confusion about the role of Council in determining policy within the Green Wedge. Many residents do not understand that the zoning of the land as Green Wedge, and the provisions that are associated with this in relation to subdivision size, are dictated by the State Government, who consider the role that the area plays across a broader metropolitan context. The State Government, not Melton City Council, are also the lead decision makers in relation to any changes to the Urban Growth Boundary.

Someone to Talk to

There are also issues associated to the continuity of information and the availability of 'someone to talk to' in relation to 'green wedge' matters. The loss of information when individual staff who may have had contact with the residents of the Green Wedge can lead to disillusionment among residents who feel they are repeating the same message, or who are seeking a more personal service from their Local Government.

The Need for Planning Continuity

Parliament and State planning authorities have held fast in terms of planning controls in Green Wedges around Melbourne. This has been generally successful in preventing the further fragmentation of land. However, over time, commercially viable farming operations have become more limited and pressures at the urban edges have increased. In recent years there has been large scale and small scale expansions of the Urban Growth Boundary which creates uncertainty and raises expectations of additional land being included within the 'urban' part of Melbourne. There is a need for a clear and consistent message to be conveyed across all parts of Council, but also from the State Government about the boundary. While this uncertainty creates issues for the development of a Management Plan, it is important to understand that the preparation of a Green Wedge Management Plan is about the management of the Green Wedge - it is not, and cannot review the extent of the area or the current zoning controls.

Connectivity

There is limited transport infrastructure within the Green Wedge. While this is partly a result of the 'rural' nature of the study area, there are considered to be benefits across a range of areas in increasing the connectivity, both figuratively and literally, between the urban areas of City of Melton and key destinations within the Green Wedge. These connections need to be carefully managed, and are likely to be established over a relatively long timeframe as many of the connections may require the acquisition of private land which will be subject to the landowners wishes. The range of transport options also need to be considered in terms of the suitable treatments and alignments of these connections.

Lack of Awareness

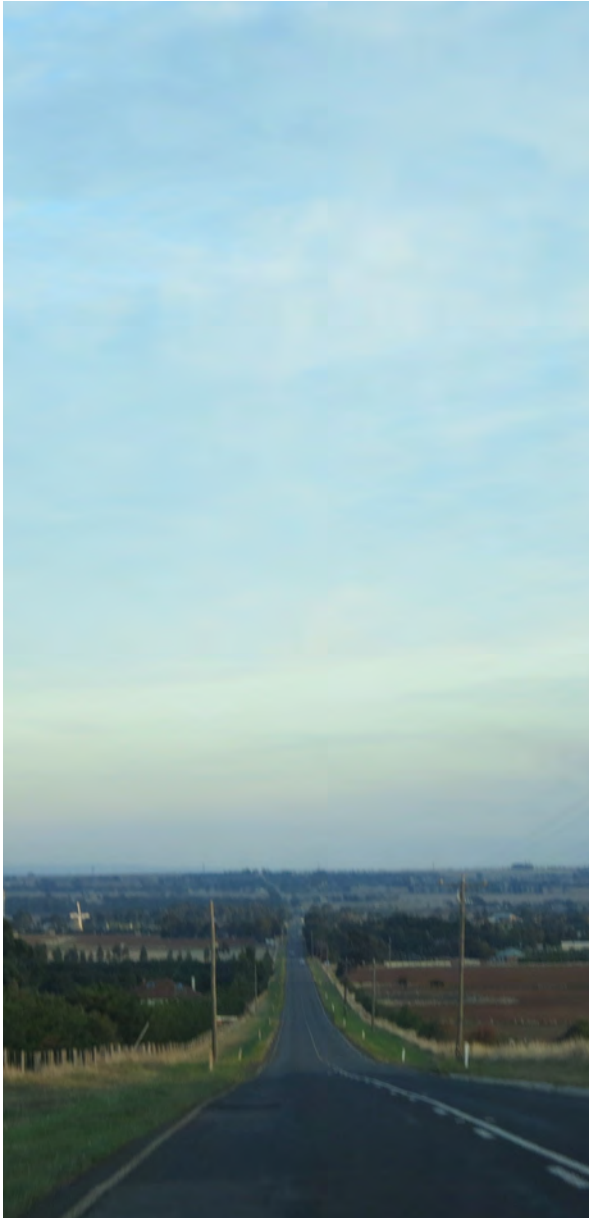
There is understood to be a lack of awareness in relation to two key matters within the Green Wedge. Firstly, it has been identified that many of the residents within the Green Wedge, even those with the best of intentions, may not have been able to access the information they need to make informed decisions on how to manage their land in a sustainable manner. This can unintentionally lead to poor land management outcomes. There is also a general lack of awareness of the variety of funding opportunities, both through private enterprises and government departments and authorities, to support land managers working towards the sustainability of their land. A greater awareness of these funding opportunities could mitigate some of the current issues with land owners feeling constrained in what they can achieve due to financial costs.

Opportunities for Recreation and Leisure

There are limited opportunities for recreation and leisure within the Green Wedge area and there may be scope to increase the availability of passive recreational opportunities, where people can enjoy the rural or bush surrounds.

There are also opportunities to increase the amount of active recreation in the area as well, both through support for recreational uses as identified in the previous section and by establishing movement corridors which allow for active recreation in the form of walking or jogging in a pleasant environment for the City of Melton's residents. These types of inclusions are expected to have consequential long term mental and physical health benefits.





6.3 'People' Objectives

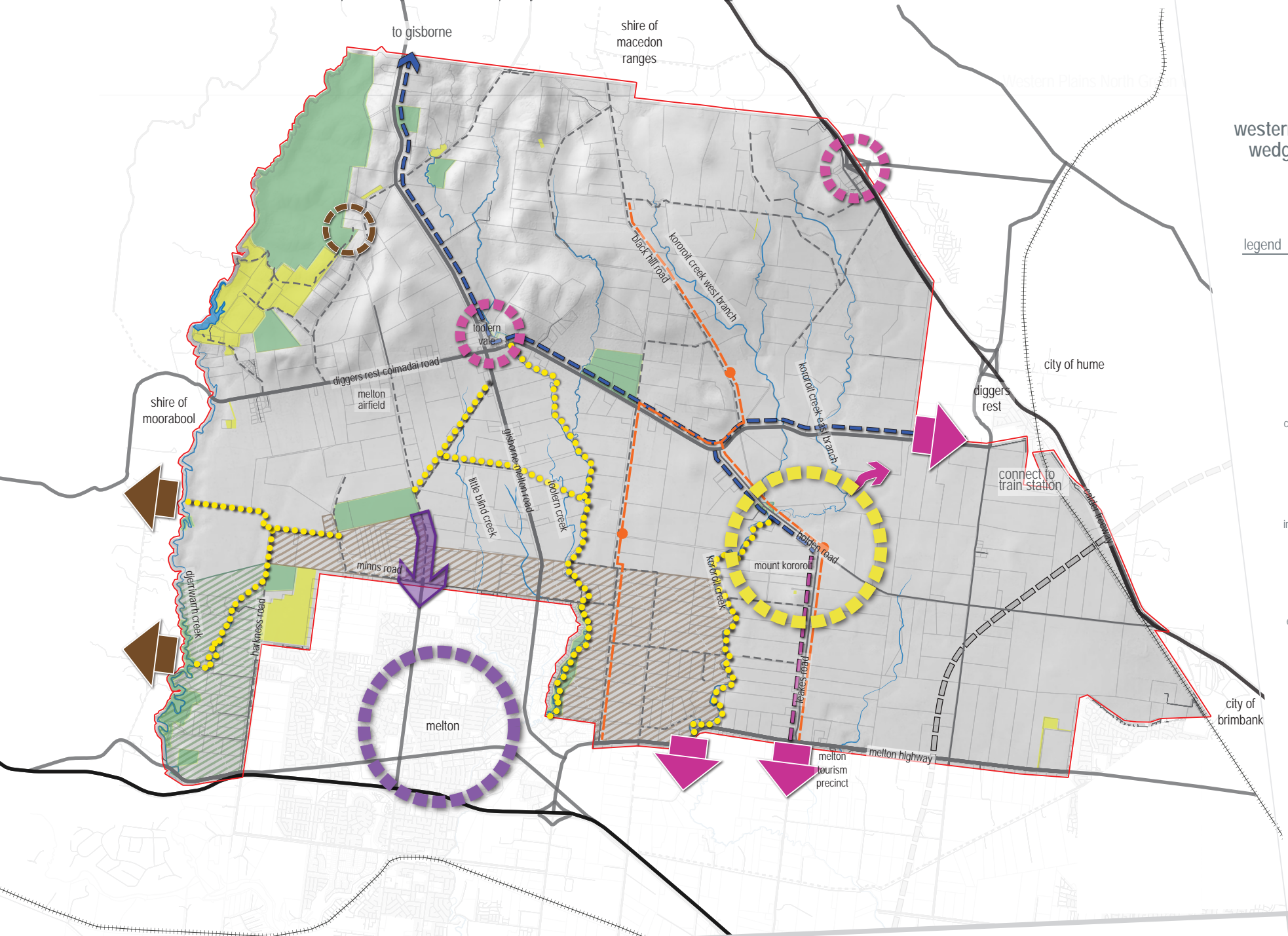
- To enhance engagement and build relationships between landowners, stakeholders and Council regarding ongoing management of the Green Wedge.
- To improve landowners' skills and knowledge in managing the land in a sustainable way.
- To support community based clubs and volunteer groups focussed on rural and related activities i.e. equestrian clubs, land care groups, farmers groups, etc.
- To better connect people and communities within the Green Wedge and connect the Green Wedge to the urban areas surrounding it, by creating a network of walking, cycling and, where appropriate, horse riding paths and trails.
- To adopt a strong and consistent strategic approach to planning policies and controls that apply to land within the Green Wedge.
- To support local residents and groups which are active in the protection and enhancement of the Green Wedge

Figure 5: The People

western plains north green wedge management plan

legend

- study area 
- celebrate local communities 
- environmental destination 
- work with parks victoria to establish picnic area 
- connections to new growth area 
- potential longer term connection to long forest reserve 
- increase community involvement in governance 
- improve connectivity to melton 
- potential long term connections 
- existing proposed on-road bike path 
- off-road shared trail 
- shared path along road alignment 
- drystone wall driving trail 
- consider programs to recognise transition between urban and rural 
- celebrate environmental living 
- public reserves 
- other public land 





6.4 Strategies for the People

P1. Provide a focal point for Green Wedge related activity within Council.

Issues affecting the Green Wedge involve a large range of Council departments. It is important that landowners and residents feel they have a clear point of contact within Council and also that momentum is maintained in implementing this Management Plan. Council has a number of staff who work across a range of disciplines which should be identified as 'Green Wedge Specialists'. These specialists should include those implementing the EEP, as well as those involved in the planning and management of the City of Melton's 'non-urban' area. They will deal with matters relating to both Melton's green wedges and duties could involve preparing information brochures, providing advice regarding planning policies and controls, and providing a referral service to other professional such as agricultural consultants and real estate agents familiar with the Green Wedge. The role of these specialists could be as follows:

- To play a lead role in the implementation of the Management Plan
- To participate in the Green Wedge Community Reference Group and provide necessary administrative support
- To provide advice to new landowners considering purchasing land in the area (where relevant), and advice to existing landowners seeking to sell land in the area
- To hold regular meetings with Council planning staff to discuss planning and management issues within the Green Wedge, including referral of planning applications within the Green Wedge
- To develop an 'information portal' on Council's website that provides advice on land management techniques appropriate to the Green Wedge
- To provide advice on establishment agricultural based rural enterprises.

- Provide a co-ordination role and direct contact for community-based clubs and organisations that exist throughout the Green Wedge.
- Run rural skills, land management and / or conservation workshops.
- Support the establishment of an informal Farmers and Business Support Group for rural residents, part-time and full time farmers and others who run businesses within the Green Wedge, to come together to discuss issues to do with the ongoing management of their land and to share information about techniques.
- Facilitate the development of case studies, fact sheets and other identified material.

P1 a1 – Identify relevant staff to be nominated as Green Wedge Specialists.

P1 a2 – Establish the Green Wedge 'information portal' on Council's website and develop content.

P1 a3 – Begin a program of forums to provide information and skills to Green Wedge residents and landowners on sustainable land management practices and related topics.

P2. Improve communication and cooperation between residents and landowners of the Green Wedge and the Council.

A Green Wedge community Reference Group should be established. The purpose of this group would be to:

- Liaise with Council on relevant matters regarding the ongoing management and planning of the Green Wedge.
- Be a conduit between Council and landowners and residents for the sharing of information about the Green Wedge.
- Provide advice to Council on a range of documents and initiatives which may impact on the Green Wedge.

Membership of the reference group should be carefully balanced and involve landowners and residents from all precincts within the Green Wedge, should meet on a regular basis and be run with a high level of transparency. Council should develop a clear Terms of Reference for the group and seek applications to ensure that the group is appropriately balanced. At least one of Council's Green Wedge Specialists will attend reference group meetings and possibly a landholder. Council's Green Wedge Specialists could provide administrative and support services to this group. It is recommended that the effectiveness of this reference group be evaluated by the Green Wedge Specialists after an identified period (for example, two years) to identify where the reference group has been able to contribute positively, what the financial implications have been for Council, where issues have arisen and any changes to the structure or Terms of Reference that may be needed.

P2 a1 – Establish Terms of Reference and seek application to form a Green Wedge Community Reference Group.

P2 a2 – Monitor and evaluate the function of the Green Wedge Community Reference Group after a set period.

P3. Improve access to information about the green wedge and sustainable land management practices.

There is a significant body of work which has been done in regards to sustainable land management practices. Much of this is highly technical and covers a wide range of areas. There are very useful resources that have been developed to assist landowners, and a number of funding opportunities available. The very breadth of information available and the variety of sources can itself make it difficult for landowners and residents to know where to look for this information. Council is able to play a clear role as a conduit between this existing information, funding opportunities and the community. To this end the Green Wedge information portal can play a key role in improving landowners' and residents' access to information and awareness of funding and resources available. In addition, there is the opportunity for Council, in collaboration with the Green Wedge Reference Group to begin a program of bi-annual forums. These forums could provide an update on how implementation of the Management Plan has progressed, as well as build capacity among landowners and residents by including workshops and / or seminars by guest speakers with key skills of knowledge within agricultural or environmental fields. These forums should be widely advertised and open to all landowners, residents and other stakeholders within Melton's Green Wedges. It is also important that these are carefully curated to ensure they provide meaningful unbiased information to landowners, and could be modelled on similar seminars that were held by AgriWest previously.

Council should also consider pulling together much of the key information that is prepared in relation to case studies, indigenous vegetation, weed species and broader land management issues to produce a landowners booklet to provide to new residents of the Green Wedge (see also actions E4 a2 and E5 a5)



P3 a1 – Establish a Green Wedge 'information portal' through Council website and collate available information.

P3 a2 – Begin to develop a series of 'fact sheets' to fill in the gaps in existing available information, including areas such as land management, conservation and planning.

P3 a3 – Begin a series of bi-annual Green Wedge forums to share information and build capacity.

P3 a4 – In the longer term pull together relevant information to produce a landowners handbook for new residents of the Green Wedge.



P4. Use documentary filmmaking to improve understanding and appreciation of the environmental qualities of the Green Wedge.

This is proposed as a 'discover the western plains' documentary which will promote the relatively under-appreciated natural values of the western plains. Possibly in conjunction with Wyndham and Hume Councils, the Department of Environment and Primary Industries, the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure (DTPLI), and the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWPCMA), prepare a high quality documentary that examines the environmental diversity of the Western Plains green wedges, possibly in the style of a David Attenborough wildlife documentary. This would allow a greater understanding of the importance of particular flora and fauna that may not always be immediately visible or may only be seen at particular times of the year. If suitable, the documentary could also address matters related to historical, cultural and agricultural characteristics of the area.

The purpose of the video would be to increase the community's awareness of the attractiveness and the values of the Western Plains green wedges. It could be screened in local schools and as a part of festivals or events. An increased awareness should lead to greater community support for green wedge policy, and increased levels of community and landowner interest in protecting, enhancing and managing land.

P4 a1 – Liaise with relevant interested parties to explore opportunities to produce a high quality documentary film.

P5. Seek to establish walking, cycling and biodiversity links between towns and through the Green Wedge.

Seek to create public shared paths along Toolern Creek, linking Melton and Toolern and along Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road

between Diggers Rest and Toolern Vale.

Implement the proposed northern portion of the Kororoit Creek Shared Trail, including a shared trail along Kororoit Creek to Holden Road and investigate options to link trails to Mount Kororoit, historic farm buildings, the Holden Road Bridge and the wetland area.

In the longer term, seek to facilitate public access along the eastern side of the Djerriwarrh corridor for pedestrians to link with the Long Forest Flora and Fauna Reserve on the western side of the creek. Work with ParksVic and consider ways to connect to existing tracks (Djerriwarrh–Bermagui Track in the south and Moonah Track in the north). Where possible require land proximate to the creek corridor to be available for public use as part of any subdivision of the Harkness Road precinct. All land for these tracks should be acquired voluntarily, either through transfer of land as part of subdivisions, voluntary purchase of the land, or through leasing or gifting of the land. This aspiration will be subject to management requirements.

Seek to provide public access and revegetation of the Djerriwarrh Creek tributary which connects to the Harkness Road reserve, particularly as part of any subdivision in this area.

Work with ParksVic to investigate the potential for walking opportunities within the Pyrete Range section of Lerderderg State Park (could look at using existing fire management tracks). If possible link this to the broader network of trails.

This initiative will be closely linked to the Biodiversity Strategy, given that environmental and biodiversity corridors will also provide opportunities for pedestrian and cycling links. Priority should be given to establishing the following pedestrian and cycle links:

- Between Toolern Vale and Melton.
- Between Melton and Sunbury.
- Between MacPherson Park and Toolern Vale and Melton.
- Interconnections across the area linking Djerriwarrh Creek,

Toolern Creek and Kororoit Creek.

Consideration of these trails and strategies should also look at opportunities for equestrian tracks and trails through the Green Wedge in recognition of the large number of horse riders who live or visit the area.

P5 a1 – As opportunities become available, seek to establish public walking and cycling trails along the Toolern, Kororoit and Djerriwarrh Creek. Prioritise links along the Toolern Creek.

P5 a2 - Seek to develop other walking track linkages along roads or other corridors to link key settlements.

P5 a3 – Liaise with ParksVic to understand opportunities for public walking access from Melton to the Long Forest Flora and Fauna Reserve.

P5 a4 – Liaise with ParksVic and advocate for walking tracks within the Pyrete Range section of Lerderberg State Park.

P5 a5 – Consider opportunities for the integration of equestrian trails into the Green Wedge, where this is environmentally sustainable.

P6. Promote opportunities for the community to provide information on illegal dumping of rubbish within the Green Wedge.

An approach which engages the local community in maintaining their local environment will have longer-term benefits and increased prosecution of illegal dumping will act as a deterrent. Council currently provides this opportunity but it is not widely known and should be promoted further through the Green Wedge information portal. Relevant contact details for not only Council but also other relevant public land managers should be provided. There is merit in promoting increased reporting of

dumping early, prior to the development of the adjoining growth areas which are considered likely to increase the incidence of this type of activity.

P6 a1 – Provide information and contact details regarding the dumping of rubbish and legal dumping opportunities through the Green Wedge information portal.

P7. Celebrate the Green Wedge communities.

Continue to support local festivals and community groups which support the on-going 'sense of place' of the Green Wedge communities.

Council should also maintain the relationship with the local indigenous community and continue to explore ways the indigenous community can be involved in the area, and their culture celebrated. Recognition as an informal 'referral party' for the Green Wedge specialists may be one way of continuing this involvement. There are also opportunities for this community to present at the proposed forums to share their understanding of the land and its history.

P7 a1 – Continue to support local community groups and festivals with the Green Wedge.

P7 a2 – Building on work from the WPNGWMP, continue to actively engage the local indigenous community, through the Green Wedge specialists and sharing of knowledge and history.

P7 a3 – Consider talks to share knowledge and history of indigenous community through the proposed bi-annual forums.



Part D - Implementation

7 Implementation

The success of the *Western Plains North Green Wedge Management Plan* will depend on the actions of a diverse range of stakeholders and land managers, both public and private. Close collaboration by the State and Local Governments as well as key agencies such as Western Water and the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority will be critical. The engagement and involvement of the local community in the implementation of this Management Plan will also be crucial to the long term success in sustainably managing the land. The preparation of the Plan is a first step in allowing this diverse range of stakeholders to have a common understanding of Council's goals in managing the land.

The implementation of this Management Plan will not yield significant results in the short term. However, over the longer term, pursuing the strategies and associated actions outlined within this document, should assist in improving the current land management outcomes within the Green Wedge.

This section of the Plan pulls together all the actions that have been identified under the three identified themes to provide a consolidated list of actions, and to assign responsibility and priority to these actions.

These actions are prioritised, in the following timeframes:

- Short term priority (1 - 3 years)
- Medium term priority (4 - 7 years)
- Long term priority (7+ years)

The actions identified represent a broad range, from specific ideas, changes in governance structure and higher level advocacy that may be undertaken. Many of the proposed actions also seek to establish investigations which will provide a clear evidence-base for making some of the larger 'planning' decisions in the Green Wedge which require robust strategic justification, such as reduction in subdivision size on the basis of agricultural or rural living opportunities.

Council's involvement will also be varied - in some cases, the role played by Council will be as a facilitator, in other actions, as an advocate, while in others still they will be the lead in implementing a new program or initiative.

7.1 The Green Wedge Specialists

One of the key initiatives identified through this Management Plan is the identification of 'Green Wedge Specialists' within Council who will take responsibility for a wide range of programs and planning that are related to the 'non-urban' areas of Melton. Having a group which provides a level of focus, scrutiny and continuity in decision-making within these green wedge areas is critical. This group will not only ensure that decisions made in relation to the Green Wedge consider overall impacts of individual decisions, but can also provide a 'frontline' service for those within the rural parts of the municipality, who often feel disengaged from the management of the land.

While a number of responsibilities in this Management Plan will be undertaken by these specialists, it may be that there are other existing responsibilities of Council that may also be addressed by these Specialists. Expertise should include biodiversity and agribusiness as well as strategic planning and communications. The Specialists would also be expected to provide targeted advice and input into a range of other Council projects and programs which may impact on the Green Wedge and liaise with existing Council officers involved in traffic, waste, tourism, heritage, etc. In many cases, these specialists will also act as 'advocates' for the interests of the Green Wedge within Council, whether through referral of planning applications in the Green Wedge area, or in participating in relevant peri-urban or State Government decision making forums.

7.2 Funding

While the identification of the Specialists and 'information portal' as well as many of their programs are recommended to be funded through Council, the funding of other actions will be dependent on external sources of funding. Many recommended actions will also require ongoing development and monitoring by the Green Wedge Specialists and funding through the State Government 'green wedge' programs. In addition, the identification of other actions will provide a basis for Council (or other groups) to put together proposals for funding when various grants become available across a range of programs.

7.3 The Melton Planning Scheme

While some changes to the Melton Planning Scheme are proposed as part of this implementation, and should be integrated into any review of the current Melton Planning Scheme, the Plan also identifies further changes which may be needed on the basis of future work. It is noted that any implementation of changes through the Planning Scheme will be subject to notification and review through the exhibition process associated with any change to the Melton Planning Scheme. These will need to be approved by the Minister, and in the case of some changes, be ratified by both Houses of Parliament.

7.4 Monitoring

One of the easiest way of monitoring the progress of this plan will be through the implementation of action or the commencement of identified further work or research. Other indicators of progress could be determined in conjunction with the proposed Green Wedge Reference Group, and may include a follow-up survey of the local community in line with the surveys undertaken to date.

It is recommended that Council also work closely with the PPWPCMA and Melbourne Water in determining a series of more targeted indicators for the health of waterways and catchments within the Green Wedge, to allow effective monitoring.

7.5 Review

Guidelines for green wedge management plans identify a need to conduct a review of the plan after a five year period and this should be undertaken as required. The development of a monitoring system by the Green Wedge Specialists to determine a number of 'key indicators' in the environmental health of the Green Wedge, the extent of productive agricultural use, the level of weed infestation and satisfaction of the local community will assist with any such review. The action and progress of the Green Wedge Specialists should be subject to yearly review with updates on Actions and reported to Council.

7.6 Actions Table

The table provided on the following page brings together all actions outlined within the Management Plan, allocates responsibilities, identifies the 'type' of action, and provides an indicative timeframe.

It is important to note that stakeholder actions other than those identified for Council are subject to negotiation and approval from external parties and that timeframes are estimates only.

Many of the actions outlined in the following table are related and the interdependencies between different actions have been considered in identifying priorities.

Action Table Legend

Action numbers identified on the following table link back 'part c' of this document. Action number follow related strategies i.e.

E1 a1 = 'Environment' strategy number 1, action number 2.

The following acronyms are also used:

DPTLI = Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure

DEPI = Department of Environment and Primary Industry

MPA = Metropolitan Planning Authority

The 'type' of action is defined as follow

MPS = a change to the Melton Planning Scheme

research = a research project

new initiative = a new project or action which will generally be undertaken by Council

new strategy = a new plan or body of work which Council should commission

existing program = continuation of an existing program

information provision = an initiative which provides additional information, often in the form of 'fact sheets'

advocacy = an action where Council does not undertake work themselves but seeks to have others do so

governance = changes to internal structures or management arrangements

<i>action number</i>	<i>action</i>	<i>type</i>	<i>responsibility</i>	<i>priority</i>
ENVIRONMENT				
<i>1. Improve understanding and mapping of existing flora and fauna within the Green Wedge</i>				
<i>E1 a1</i>	Advocate for updated mapping of flora and fauna assets to be undertaken by DEPI.	<i>research</i>	<i>Council, DEPI</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>E1 a1</i>	Seek partnerships with universities or community groups to identify gaps in existing understanding of the Green Wedge and build a local database of flora and fauna assets.	<i>research</i>	<i>Council, external partners</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>2. Seek to enhance understanding of the Green Wedge's biodiversity value and measures necessary to protect and enhance the existing natural environment</i>				
<i>E2 a1</i>	Prepare a Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy for the Green Wedge.	<i>new strategy</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>E2 a2</i>	Seek to consolidate spatial documentation of where works have been funded and undertaken to date.	<i>research</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>3. Explore opportunities for longer term public access to land along the three main creek corridors within the Green Wedge (Djerrivarrh Creek, Toolern Creek and Kororoit Creek).</i>				
<i>E3 a1</i>	Explore options for access to land along identified main corridors as this land becomes available through negotiation with landowners, sale or through conditions of subdivision (subject to management requirements).	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council, ParksVic</i>	Long term priority (7+ years)
<i>4. Promote proactive management of weed species through incentives.</i>				
<i>E4 a1</i>	Continue Council's existing Environmental Enhancement Policy.	<i>existing program</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>E4 a2</i>	Ensure any landowner handbook includes visual representations of weed species to assist landowner identification.	<i>information provision</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>5. Increase awareness of opportunities associated with revegetation of land and investigate other incentives to promote improved biodiversity of the Green Wedge by landowners.</i>				
<i>E5 a1</i>	Create a dedicated Green Wedge 'information portal' on Council's website where relevant information and associated web links can be provided.	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>E5 a2</i>	Review the opportunities for the existing EEP to promote increased revegetation as a long term means of improving land management, and promote existing revegetation opportunities available through the Policy.	<i>existing program</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)

<i>action number</i>	<i>action</i>	<i>type</i>	<i>responsibility</i>	<i>priority</i>
<i>E5 a3</i>	Where feasible, prepare case studies of successful revegetation projects undertaken in the Green Wedge, include specific details about works, species and funding.	<i>information provision</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>E5 a4</i>	Consider researching, and where relevant provide links to funding resources, and other relevant land management support services through the Green Wedge' information portal'.	<i>information provision</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>E5 a5</i>	Pull together information on revegetation, along with land management and other relevant matters in a landowners handbook.	<i>information provision</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>6. Seek to create a network of 'environmental features' and establish links between these to improve awareness, celebrate key assets within the Green Wedge and connect existing reserves.</i>				
<i>E6 a1</i>	Where practicable, identify key environmental features and appropriate linkages and protect their habitat values.	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>E6 a2</i>	Explore the opportunities for integration of educational / informational signage within these areas.	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>E6 a3</i>	Consider ways of increasing indigenous vegetation and potential habitat within MacPherson Park.	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>7. Create a key focal point or destination for visitors within the Green Wedge</i>				
<i>E7 a1</i>	Explore opportunities for identification of the Mount Kororoit area as a destination and investigate opportunities for recognising this.	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>8. Identify and protect key landscapes, views and vistas within the Green Wedge from inappropriate development.</i>				
<i>E8 a1</i>	Undertake a Significant Landscape Strategy.	<i>new strategy</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>E8 a2</i>	Develop appropriate planning controls for sensitive areas on the basis of the Significant Landscape Strategy.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>9. Develop appropriate controls for discretionary uses or development in sensitive areas.</i>				
<i>E9 a1</i>	Prepare siting and design guidelines for discretionary uses or development in sensitive areas.	<i>new strategy</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>10. Continue maintenance regimes for roadside vegetation and improve understanding of responsibilities</i>				

<i>action number</i>	<i>action</i>	<i>type</i>	<i>responsibility</i>	<i>priority</i>
<i>E10 a1</i>	Publish information on current practices in relation to roadside maintenance (including names and contact details for responsible authorities), include this on the Green Wedge 'information portal'.	<i>information provision</i>	<i>Council, VicRoads</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
	<i>11. Consider introducing targeted local laws to improve management of urban interfaces.</i>			
<i>E11 a1</i>	If areas of environmental sensitivity are identified at urban edges, investigate mechanisms through the system of local laws/PSP guidelines or other relevant avenues to manage threats.	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
	<i>12. Advocate for a holistic management strategy for kangaroos.</i>			
<i>E12 a1</i>	Liaise with State Government and adjoining municipalities to discuss a regional response to kangaroo management.	<i>new strategy</i>	<i>Council, DEPI, adjoining municipalities</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>E13</i>	<i>13. Promote the creation of a significant landscape habitat buffer as part of the development of the Outer Metropolitan Ring.</i>			
<i>E13 a1</i>	Advocate for consideration of a significant landscape component to be included between the proposed OMR and the Green Wedge.	<i>advocacy</i>	<i>Council, adjoining municipalities, VicRoads</i>	Long term priority (7+ years)
	<i>14. Support indigenous nurseries and encourage the use of indigenous flora in growth areas adjoining the Green Wedge.</i>			
<i>E14 a1</i>	Identify and promote the use of indigenous species in areas within and adjacent to the Green Wedge.	<i>advocacy</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>E14 a2</i>	Advocate for the requirements for indigenous species to be used in the landscaping of growth areas adjoining the Green Wedge.	<i>advocacy</i>	<i>Council, MPA</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>E14 a3</i>	Prepare fact sheets on indigenous species suitable for domestic landscaping and provide contact detail to local nurseries that can supply stock.	<i>information provision</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
	<i>15. Pursue a 'greening' of the Melton Highway corridor to improve interface.</i>			
<i>E15 a1</i>	Advocate for a program of tree planting along the Melton Highway	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council, VicRoads, MPA</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)

<i>action number</i>	<i>action</i>	<i>type</i>	<i>responsibility</i>	<i>priority</i>
LAND				
<i>1. Adopt a proactive approach to the identification and investigation of future agricultural opportunities within the Green Wedge</i>				
<i>L1 a1</i>	Identify and approach relevant research bodies and potential project partners to address existing issues with agriculture in the Green Wedge.	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council, external partners, adjoining municipalities</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>L1 a2</i>	Liaise and advocate with these partners to develop a greater understanding of the gaps, challenges and opportunities in the Green Wedge.	<i>research</i>	<i>Council, DEPI</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>L1 a3</i>	Promote the findings of relevant research projects.	<i>information provision</i>	<i>Council, DEPI</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>2. Improve access and use of recycled water to facilitate agriculture within the Green Wedge</i>				
<i>L2 a1</i>	Work with Western Water to prepare a 'recycled water based agriculture' business plan	<i>research</i>	<i>Council, Western Water</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years) subject to Western Water re sourcing
<i>L2 a2</i>	On the basis of the findings of the agricultural business plan, pursue any required updates to the identified subdivision controls to best facilitate agricultural uses.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council, DTPLI</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>3. Review planning scheme policies in relation to the Western Plains North Green Wedge.</i>				
<i>L3 a1</i>	Update the Melton Planning Scheme to include specific policy as outlined within the Management Plan.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>L3 a2</i>	Seek to incorporate relevant guidelines into the Melton Planning Scheme as recommended by the Management Plan, as these are developed.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>L3 a3</i>	Begin the process of transitioning away from the current subdivision 'formula' to more tailored outcomes as recommended by this Management Plan and further strategic work identified.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council DTPLI</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>4. Enhance tourism trails and information signage across the Green Wedge.</i>				

<i>action number</i>	<i>action</i>	<i>type</i>	<i>responsibility</i>	<i>priority</i>
<i>L4 a1</i>	Continue to promote the existing Dry Stone Wall Driving Trail.	<i>existing program</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>L4 a2</i>	Consider additional measures to appropriately protect key heritage assets along the Dry Stone Wall Driving Trail.	<i>existing program</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>L4 a3</i>	Consider an 'environmental' driving trail similar to the 'drystone' trail which could take in areas such as the 'environmental destination', the roadside grassland reserves as well as the viewpoint from Melton–Gisborne Road. (as identified in Figure 2: The Environment and Figure 3: The Land)	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>L4 a4</i>	Update and enhance existing Council tourism websites and, where possible, industry websites, to actively promote the broader destination, as well as individual attractions.	<i>information provision</i>	<i>Council, Tourism Victoria</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>5. Consider opportunities to provide increased clarity in decision-making to encourage innovative land uses which result in better land management outcomes.</i>				
<i>L5 a1</i>	Consider the merit of a process for merit based planning scheme amendments, and where relevant, publish a 'fact sheet' on the process which will be followed when Council considers a merit based amendment to facilitate a specific project.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>6. Establish clear guidelines for the establishment of discretionary non-residential uses.</i>				
<i>L6 a1</i>	Prepare a series of guidelines for discretionary non-residential uses. These should be incorporated into the Melton Planning Scheme.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>L6 a2</i>	Consider the creation of 'fact sheets' outlining these guidelines including good examples for applicants.	<i>information provision</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>7. Investigate opportunities for a 'legal' cleanfill site.</i>				
<i>L7 a1</i>	Investigate possible locations with a view to initiating discussions with relevant landowners or authorities around the demand and potential location for a Council run cleanfill site.	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>L7 a2</i>	Investigate other longer term options for the management of 'cleanfill'.	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>8. Continue to pursue absentee landowners to meet land management obligations</i>				
<i>L8 a1</i>	Prepare and, when available, distribute correspondence at appropriate times to absentee landowners who are not meeting their land management obligations.	<i>advocacy</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)

<i>action number</i>	<i>action</i>	<i>type</i>	<i>responsibility</i>	<i>priority</i>
	<i>9. Continue to monitor and advocate involvement of relevant State Government departments in the monitoring and enforcement of land management obligations.</i>			
<i>L9 a1</i>	Instigate regular meetings with relevant State Government departments to monitor progress of enforcement proceeding needed within the Green Wedge.	<i>advocacy</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
	<i>10. Recognise the different responses to appropriate land uses which may apply to different parts of the Green Wedge.</i>			
<i>L10 a1</i>	Adjust planning policy to recognise the Toolern Vale Hills as a key area for conservation initiatives and small scale tourism uses	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>L10 a2</i>	Adjust Planning Policy to recognise the Black Hill Road - Mount Aitken Road Precinct as a key area for agritourism, tourism and rural living where this is associated with meaningful agricultural pursuits.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>L10 a3</i>	Pursue changes to the Schedule to the Green Wedge zone (subject to approval) to introduce a flat 30ha minimum lots size as an 'interim' measure, until optimal agricultural uses and associated lots sizes are confirmed.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council, DTPLI</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>L10 a4</i>	Introduce relevant controls to discourage strip development along main roads in the Black Hill Road - Mount Aitken Road Precinct, outline requirements for Sustainable Land Management Plans, and recognise the ongoing quarry uses.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>L10 a5</i>	Investigate options for establishing an appropriate, safe landscape buffer between urban and rural uses at the Diggers Rest interface.	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>L10 a6</i>	Adjust planning policy to recognise the Leakes Road - Holden Road Precinct as a key area for agriculture.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>L10 a7</i>	Pursue changes to introduce a flat 30ha minimum lots size as an 'interim' measure (subject to approvals), in the Leakes Road-Holden Road Precinct until optimal agricultural uses and associated lots sizes are confirmed.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council, DTPLI</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>L10 a8</i>	Introduce relevant controls to discourage strip development along main roads in the Leakes Road - Holden Road Precinct, outline requirements for Sustainable Land Management Plans, and recognise the ongoing quarry uses and associated buffers.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>L10 a9</i>	Introduce relevant policy to identify support and design and siting parameters, as well as application requirements for discretionary uses in close proximity the Melton Highway, within the Leakes Road - Holden Road Precinct.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>L10 a10</i>	Consider adjusting planning policy to recognise the impact of the proposed OMR on the Hillside Interface Precinct.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Long term priority (7+ years)

<i>action number</i>	<i>action</i>	<i>type</i>	<i>responsibility</i>	<i>priority</i>
<i>L10 a11</i>	In the longer term, consider undertaking a planning study for the Hillside Interface Precinct.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Long term priority (7+ years)
<i>L10 a12</i>	Adjust planning policy to recognise the Melton Township Interface Precinct as a key area for hobby farms or other rural living uses which implement sustainable land management practices.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>L10 a13</i>	Pursue changes to introduce a flat 12ha minimum lots size as an 'interim' measure (subject to approvals), within the parts of the precinct to which this minimum does not already apply.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council, DTPLI</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>L10 a14</i>	Consider undertaking a Rural Residential land supply and demand analysis to identify the demand in relation to number, location and lot size that exists within the City of Melton. On the basis of this work and the Biodiversity Strategy, consider longer term if a smaller minimum lots size may be warranted.	<i>new strategy, MPS</i>	<i>Council, DTPLI</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>L10 a15</i>	Consider introducing relevant controls to outline requirements for discretionary uses in the precinct and outline requirements for Sustainable Land Management Plans.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>L10 a16</i>	Consider the introduction of relevant policy to identify requirements during subdivision of the transfer of land to public ownership along the Toolern Creek.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>L10 a17</i>	Update and amend the Development Plan Overlay for this area to include all of Precinct 6, place a greater emphasis on environmental outcomes, require landscape plans to be prepared and to facilitate public access to land along creek corridors.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>L10 a18</i>	Prepare a Development Plan for Precinct 6, in line with the requirements of the updated Development Plan Overlay (see L10 a17).	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>L10 a19</i>	Adjust planning policy to recognise the environmental qualities of the Central Djerriwarrh Precinct and need for sensitivity around additional subdivision.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>L10 a20</i>	Seek to adjust planning policy to recognise the Coburns Road Precinct as a key area for hobby farms, equestrian farms or other rural living uses which implement sustainable land management practices.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>L10 a21</i>	Undertake a Rural Residential land supply and demand analysis to identify the demand, including location and lot size that exist within the City of Melton. On the basis of this work and the Biodiversity Strategy, consider longer term if a smaller minimum lots size may be warranted.	<i>new strategy, MPS</i>	<i>Council, DTPLI</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>L10 a22</i>	If additional demand is identified beyond that which could be accommodated in other areas, apply a Development Plan Overlay to the area to manage outcomes and address matters outlined in this Management Plan.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>L10 a23</i>	Identify policy support for dwellings on existing vacant lots where an appropriate Sustainable Land Management Plan is prepared in the Coburns Road Precinct.	<i>MPS</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)

<i>action number</i>	<i>action</i>	<i>TYPE</i>	<i>RESPONSIBILITY</i>	<i>PRIORITY</i>
PEOPLE				
<i>1. Provide a focal point for Green Wedge related activity within Council</i>				
<i>P1 a1</i>	Identify relevant staff to be nominated as Green Wedge specialists	<i>governance</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>P1 a2</i>	Establish the Green Wedge information portal on Council website and develop content	<i>information provision</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>P1 a3</i>	Begin a program of forums to provide information and skills to green wedge residents and landowners on sustainable land management practices and related topics.	<i>information provision</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>2. Improve communication and cooperation between residents and landowners of the Green Wedge and the Council</i>				
<i>P2 a1</i>	Establish Terms of Reference and seek application to form a Green Wedge Community Reference Group	<i>governance</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>P2 a2</i>	Monitor and evaluate the function of the Green Wedge Community Reference Group after a set period	<i>governance</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>3. Improve access to information about the green wedge and sustainable land management practices.</i>				
<i>P3 a1</i>	Establish a Green Wedge information portal through Council website and collate available information	<i>information provision</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>P3 a2</i>	Begin to develop a series of 'fact sheets' to fill in the gaps in existing available information, including areas such as land management, conservation and planning.	<i>information provision</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>P3 a3</i>	Begin a series of bi-annual Green Wedge forums to share information and build capacity	<i>information provision</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>P3 a4</i>	In the longer term pull together relevant information to produce a landowners handbook for new residents of the Green Wedge.	<i>information provision</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>4. Use high quality documentary filmmaking to improve understanding and appreciation of the environmental qualities of the Green Wedge.</i>				
<i>P4 a1</i>	Liaise with relevant interested parties to explore opportunities to produce a high quality documentary film.	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council, adjoining municipalities, external partners</i>	Long term priority (7+ years)

<i>action number</i>	<i>action</i>	<i>TYPE</i>	<i>RESPONSIBILITY</i>	<i>PRIORITY</i>
	<i>5. Seek to establish walking cycling and biodiversity links between towns and through the Green Wedge.</i>			
<i>P5 a1</i>	As opportunities become available seek to establish public walking and cycling trails along the Toolern, Kororoit and Djerriwarrh Creek. Prioritise links along the Toolern Creek	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council, ParksVic</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>P5 a2</i>	Seek to develop other walking track linkages along roads or other corridors to link key settlements.	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>P5 a3</i>	Liaise with ParksVic to understand opportunities for public walking access from Melton to the Long Forest Flora and Fauna Reserve.	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council, ParksVic</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>P5 a4</i>	Liaise with ParksVic and advocate for walking tracks within the Pyrete Range section of Lerderderg State Park.	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council, ParksVic</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
<i>P5 a5</i>	Consider opportunities for the integration of equestrian trails into the Green Wedge, where this is environmentally sustainable	<i>new initiative</i>	<i>Council</i>	Long term priority (7+ years)
	<i>6. Promote opportunities for the community to provide information on illegal dumping of rubbish within the Green Wedge.</i>			
<i>P6 a1</i>	Provide information and contact details regarding the dumping of rubbish and legal dumping opportunities through the Green Wedge information portal.	<i>information provision</i>	<i>Council</i>	Medium term priority (4-7 years)
	<i>7. Celebrate the Green Wedge communities</i>			
<i>P7 a1</i>	Continue to support local community groups and festivals with the Green Wedge	<i>advocacy</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>P7 a2</i>	Building on work from the WPNGWMP, continue to actively engage the local indigenous community, through the Green Wedge specialists and sharing of knowledge and history	<i>advocacy</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)
<i>P7 a3</i>	Consider talks to share knowledge and history of indigenous community through the proposed bi-annual forums	<i>information provision</i>	<i>Council</i>	Short term priority (1-3 years)