



quarry hills

visual character assessment

QUARRY HILLS PRECINCT STRUCTURE PLAN (1094)

Prepared for: Metropolitan Planning Authority and City of Whittlesea

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April 2014

Disclaimer

Information presented in the Quarry Hills Visual Character assessment is generally based on site analysis and visits undertaken in 2012 and 2013 and background reports prepared to inform the Quarry Hills Precinct Structure Plan.

This analysis is provided as a broad resource only and while care has been taken to ensure the content in this report is accurate, we cannot guarantee that the report is without flaw of any kind. There may be errors and omissions or it may not be wholly appropriate for your particular purposes.

The City of Whittlesea accepts no responsibility and disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from reliance on any information contained in this report.

City of Whittlesea

April 2014

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Executive Summary



Retaining and integrating visual character features into urban development establishes a strong sense of place and local identity.

This report has been prepared for the Metropolitan Planning Authority (MPA) and the City of Whittlesea to identify existing visual features of the Quarry Hills Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) area and provide recommendations as to how to sensitively integrate these features into future urban development.

The City of Whittlesea's growth corridors are highly valued for their existing visual character features. The Quarry Hills PSP area boasts many natural and heritage visual character features providing a solid foundation for an urban development with strong local identity.

The Quarry Hills PSP is located in a unique location, situated amongst the Quarry Hills Regional Park which offers great visual character and enhances local amenity for the surrounding residential area. The provision of walking trails, shelters, viewing platform with city views, allows the local community to engage with natural bushland and grasslands, and native fauna.


In addition, the Darebin Creek, River Red Gums, stony rises and view corridors to mountain ranges and the city provide a distinctive landscape framework. The dry stone walls and heritage structures provide a direct link to historical rural use and add to the visual interest and cultural identity of the area.

KEY PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The key project objectives of this report were to:

1. **Identify the existing key visual character elements of the site and evaluate their visual character and retention value.**
2. **Provide a site analysis identifying site specific opportunities and constraints.**
3. **Provide an analysis of local case studies that have successfully incorporated visual character elements in to an urban context.**
4. **Recommend design responses for incorporating identified visual character elements in an urban context.**
5. **Identify existing strategies and policies that influence the retention of visual character elements.**

Executive Summary

-  Quarry Hills PSP area
-  E6 Reservation
-  River Red Gums
-  Tree groupings
-  Views (named and panoramic)
-  Stony rise
-  Darebin Creek
-  Overland flow path
-  Heritage places
-  Dry stone walls
-  Easements
-  Areas of Aboriginal sensitivity
-  Conservation / Open Space Areas
-  Key strategic links
-  Visually exposed areas
-  Sensitive design area

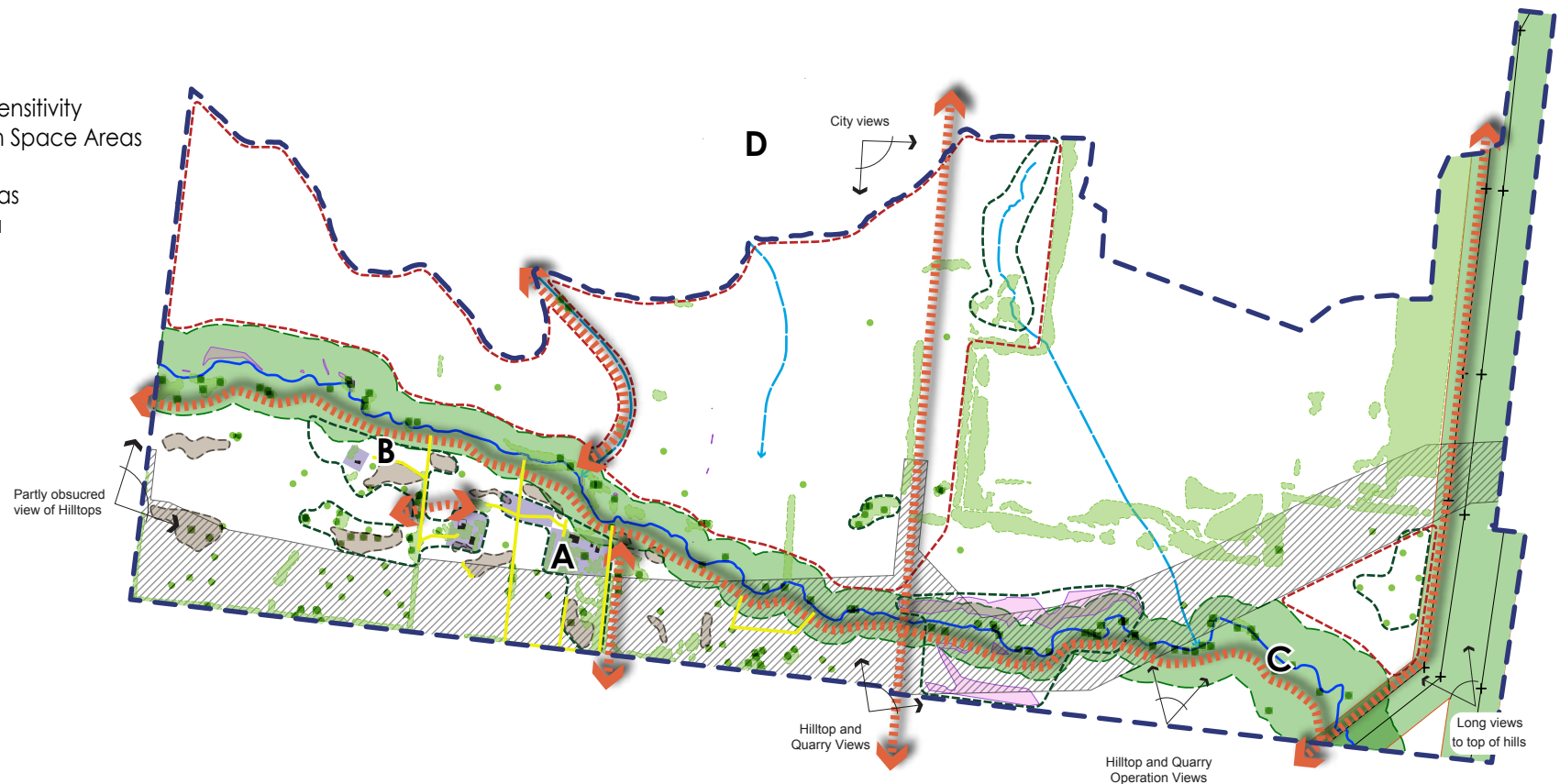


Figure 1: Quarry Hills Opportunities / Constraints

SITE ANALYSIS - OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

A site analysis and opportunity and constraints mapping has been undertaken in order to assess the value of retaining visual features in the Quarry Hills PSP area. The following opportunities were identified:

Conservation or Open Space Areas

Large woodland areas or areas with significant existing trees and multiple co-located visual character elements that should be prioritised for retention.

Linear Links (Creek / Easement links)

Future open space links that may physically and visually link visual character elements using easements and creeks.

Strategic Links

Linear linking opportunities between visual character elements. These may be suitable to form a shared path network through the precinct and into the broader open space network.

Priority Dry Stone Wall Retention

Dry stone walls prioritised for retention based on co-location of other visual character elements, heritage values and potential for links between visual character features.

Heritage Places

Approximate site boundaries around heritage places have been shown and will be refined upon further detailed investigation.

Visually Exposed Areas

Areas where development will be visually exposed such as treeless plains where few visual character elements exist.

Sensitive Design Areas

Areas of loosely scattered trees where development will need to be carefully designed to ensure positive interfaces to trees.

Key Place Making Opportunities

Four significant sites were identified as part of the assessment. The sites were selected based on a variety of criteria including their stand out visual appeal, contribution to local identity and location. Each site requires further investigation and site analysis as part of the subdivision process. The sites or links are:

A. 'Ewert Farmhouse' - 90 Bindts Road

B. 'Timms House' - 130 Bindts Road

C. Darebin Creek

D. Quarry Hills Regional Park Interface

Executive Summary

A number of recommendations have been made in this report in the form of a series of objectives, requirements and guidelines. It is intended that these recommendations will form part of the PSP document to influence the subsequent subdivision designs.

The recommendations are to be read in conjunction with the Opportunities and Constraints plans in this report to ensure that the outcomes remain specific to place making and the creation of local identity in Quarry Hills.

The nine key recommendations of this report are:

1. Establish a strong sense of place by responding to and enhancing the visual character of the precinct.
2. Retain, protect and sensitively integrate visual character elements where possible.
3. Conserve and enhance identified key placemaking opportunities.
4. Physically and visually link features where possible to retain a sense of the broader landscape character.
5. Retain an appropriate setting and context for heritage places.
6. Encourage the creation of a distinct neighbourhood identity by integrating existing visual character features within local centres.
7. Retain views to mountain ranges, the CBD and key local views to Quarry Hills Regional Park.
8. Protect and enhance the Darebin Creek and associated open space opportunities.
9. Integrate the open space network with the visual character features of the precinct.



visual character assessment

Introduction

Background

The Quarry Hills PSP area was established by the North Growth Corridor Plan to facilitate urban development. The area will be developed to provide a new residential community of between 6,500 - 7,000 people. It will include a local town centre with a government primary school collocated with a council community facility and an active open space reserve. The future community will also have great access to the adjacent Quarry Hills Regional Park. Once completed this parkland will consist in excess of 1000ha of hilltop reserve containing; walking trails, shelters, viewing platform with city views, natural bushland and grasslands, and native fauna.

This report has been prepared for the Metropolitan Planning Authority (MPA) and the City of Whittlesea to provide input to the Quarry Hills PSP.

The key objective is to identify significant visual features of the Quarry Hills PSP area and provide recommendations as to how these features may be sensitively integrated into future urban development.

The Visual Character Assessment is one of a number of background reports being undertaken to inform the Quarry Hills PSP. Other reports examine cultural heritage and arboricultural values which will be incorporated into this assessment where relevant (reports listed in References).

This report is limited to assessing existing conditions that have a visual impact.

Key Project Objectives

The objectives of this report are to:

1. **Identify the existing key visual character elements of the site and evaluate their visual character and retention value.**
2. **Provide a site analysis identifying site specific opportunities and constraints.**
3. **Provide an analysis of local case studies that have successfully incorporated visual character elements in to an urban context.**
4. **Recommend design responses for incorporating identified visual character elements in an urban context.**
5. **Identify existing strategies and policies that influence the retention of visual character elements.**

Methodology



The Visual Character Assessment was prepared using a combination of desktop analysis and field work.

Desktop Analysis

Desktop analysis comprised a review of the following:

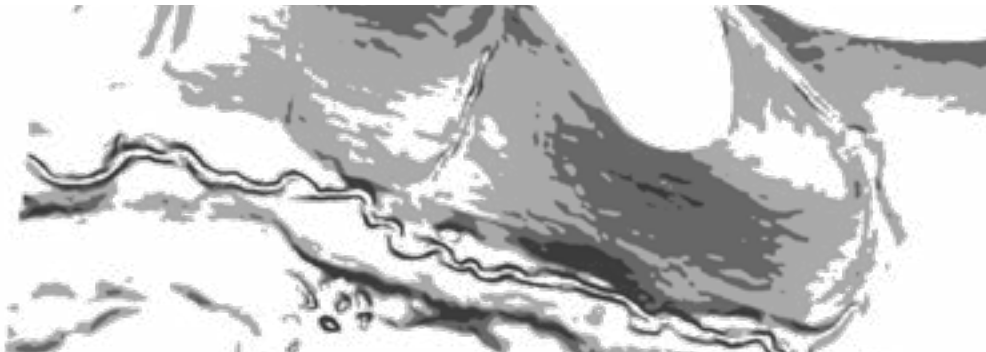
- Relevant planning policies and strategies.
- Relevant PSP background documents including:
 - Arboricultural Assessment (Treelogic, August 2012)
 - Aboriginal and Historical Heritage Assessment (Ecology and Heritage Partners, August 2012)
- Rural Landscape Character Assessment (Contour Consultants, 1999)
- Available GIS information for the site including surface analysis and aerial photography.

Field Work

The study area was observed through a series of site visits, including to:

- Properties made accessible by owners and developers.
- Vantage points to provide an overview of the study area.
- Proximate local areas to assess where similar visual features have been successfully retained in an urban setting.

Note: The Quarry Hills PSP site area is broad and some parts of the study area were unable to be directly accessed. Analysis of these areas is reliant on the desktop analysis. Further detailed site analysis is recommended upon site subdivision to confirm the findings of this report.



Strategic and Site Context

Strategic Context

The Quarry Hills PSP sits in the context of a number of overarching strategies and detailed policies. Policies, strategies and reports reviewed for this report include:

State Government Strategies

Plan Melbourne (MPA)
North Growth Corridor Plan (GAA)
Metropolitan Planning Strategy: Discussion Paper
Melbourne 2030 (2002)
Urban Design Charter for Victoria

Whittlesea Planning Scheme

State Planning Policy Framework
Local Planning Policy Framework
Particular Provisions

City of Whittlesea Strategies

Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2013)
Shaping Our Future: Whittlesea 2025 (2009)

Consultant Reports

Rural Landscape Character Assessment (Contour Consultants, 1999)

Refer to the appendix for detailed discussion of the key relevant principles of each document.

Location

The Quarry Hills PSP area is located in the City of Whittlesea approximately 23 kilometres to the north of the Melbourne CBD. The Quarry Hills PSP is 285 hectares, and is bounded by the proposed E6 freeway, the rear of properties on Ilani Street, Lauren Court and Dransfield Way, the proposed Quarry Hills Regional Park and an easterly extension of Lehmanns Road (both of which form the new Urban Growth Boundary). It lies immediately east of the Harvest Home Road and Epping North East local structure plan areas.

Existing Land Use

Land use within the Quarry Hills study area is largely rural living in nature, with many of the sites containing residential dwellings, a range of farm buildings and associated stock infrastructure/storage yards. Properties range in size from 24 to 179 hectares. Six residential dwellings are currently located in the precinct.

There is a current licensed quarry under operation, located in the southern sections of the study area, which is currently utilised for the extraction of basalt rock.

Residential development is currently occurring to the west of the site, with an established community to the south. The reservation for the potential future E6 freeway runs along the western boundary of the site. The high voltage electrical transmission easement runs along the southern boundary. Rural uses will continue to exist to the north of the site with this land currently outside of the UGB, within the boundary of the Quarry Hills Regional Parkland.

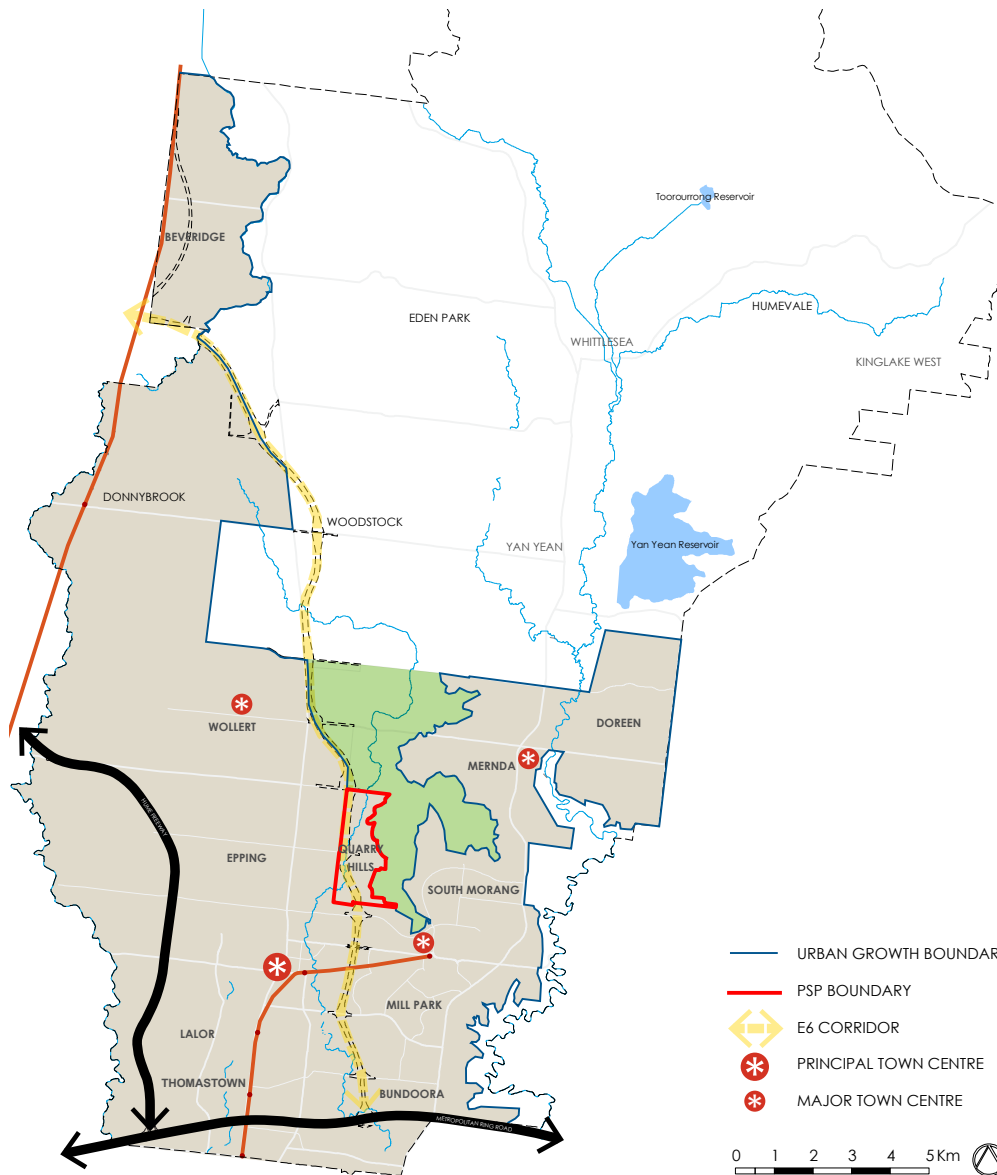


Figure 2: Location Plan

Topography and Drainage

The Quarry Hills study area is unique in that it maintains a highly undulating landform which reaches its ultimate steepness along the most eastern extent of the site, with some areas reaching a slope of more than 25%. The remainder of the land, is characterised by varied levels of undulation and indentations associated with the Darebin Creek environs (at the western boundary).

The Darebin Creek traverses the study area running parallel to the western boundary, generally in a north-south direction and contains habitat for the Growling Grass Frog and other native fauna. The creek environs also contain a number of sites with high cultural heritage significance.

Views

The elevated landscape of the study area provides a strong visual connection to and from the precinct with undisturbed views of the CBD to the south and Kinglake and Plenty Valley to the north.

The Quarry Hills provide a strong sense of local identity for the local community due to their visual dominance within the landscape.

Broad Character Areas

Quarry Hills Character

Quarry Hills is best characterised by the rolling landscape of the adjacent regional park. Four distinct visual landscape character areas have been identified to provide a broad visual character assessment of the Quarry Hills PSP.

For the purpose of the study these have been generically named:

- Hill Top
- Open Plains
- Darebin Creek Environs
- Active Quarry Edge

Hill Top

The Hill Top area carries the same characteristics as the Quarry Hills Regional Park and is generally steep in nature, ranging from a 10% slope to greater than 25% slope. These areas are currently being farmed with grazing livestock.

The additional areas of parkland to be transferred into council ownership will perform an important interface function in framing the existing parklands and providing opportunities for new entry nodes.

Open Plains

The existing open rural landscape contains large remnant River Red Gum trees with dwellings and farm buildings and associated landscape treatments in localised areas. They present as a strong visual contrast to the hill tops and Darebin Creek Environs. Tree

cover throughout this area is sporadic. Some areas of grasslands feature biodiversity values and significant areas of exotic undergrowth.

Darebin Creek Environs

The Darebin Creek is currently degraded in parts, but has the potential to become a significant landscape feature within the study area. The watercourse is clearly defined within the precinct forming the a natural edge to the rolling pasture land on the lower slopes of the Quarry Hills.

Active Quarry Edge

A portion of the south-eastern extent of the precinct contains an existing quarry operated by Boral. The quarry presents a negative interface for the future community, with noise, dust and poor visual amenity.



- Quarry Hills PSP area
- Hill Top
- Open Plains
- Darebin Creek Environs
- Active Quarry Edge
- River Red Gums
- Tree groupings
- Stony Rise Grouping
- Basalt Flows
- Darebin Creek
- Overland flow path

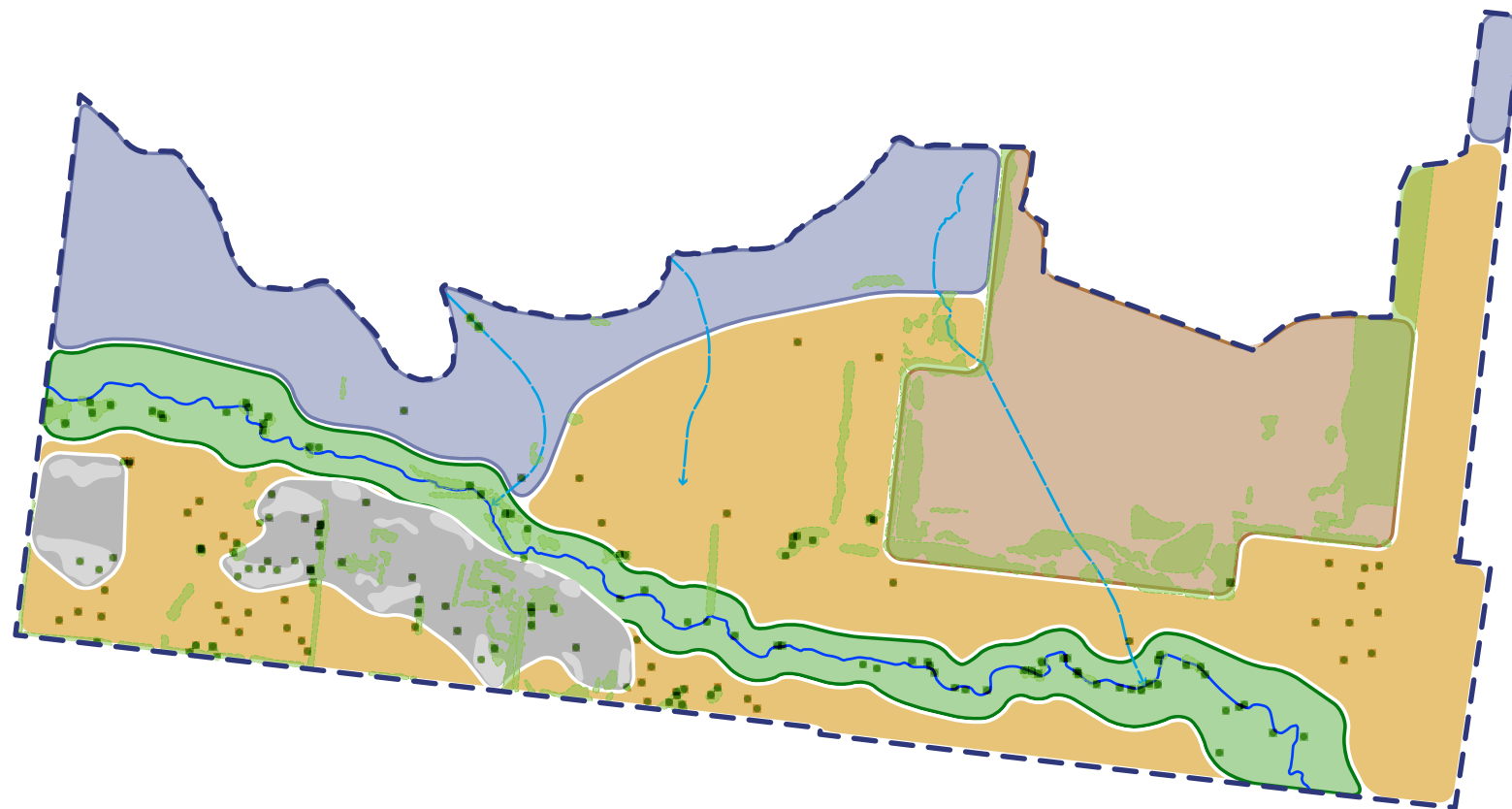


FIGURE 3: Broad Character Areas





key visual character elements

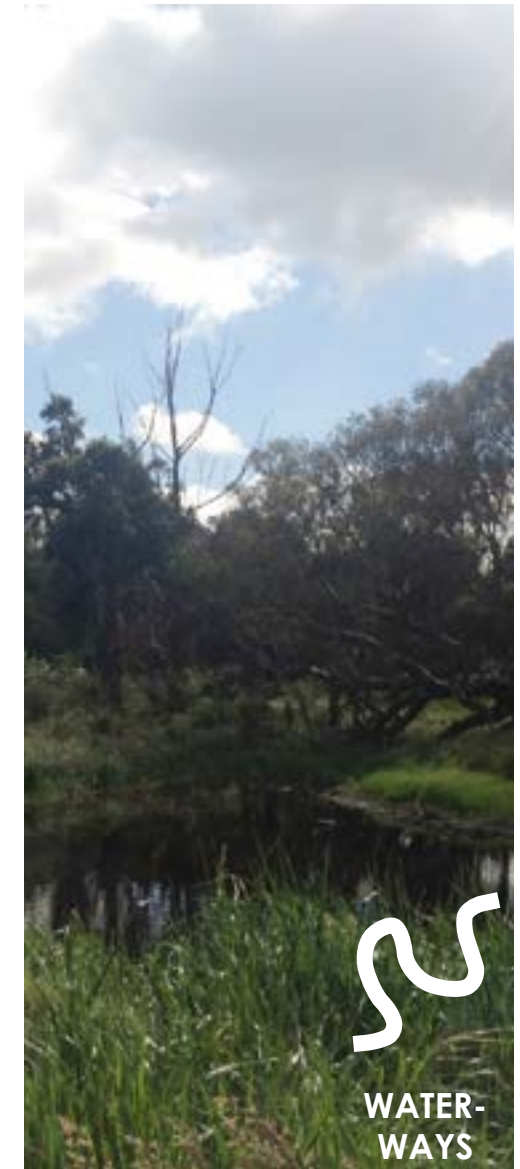
Key Visual Character Elements

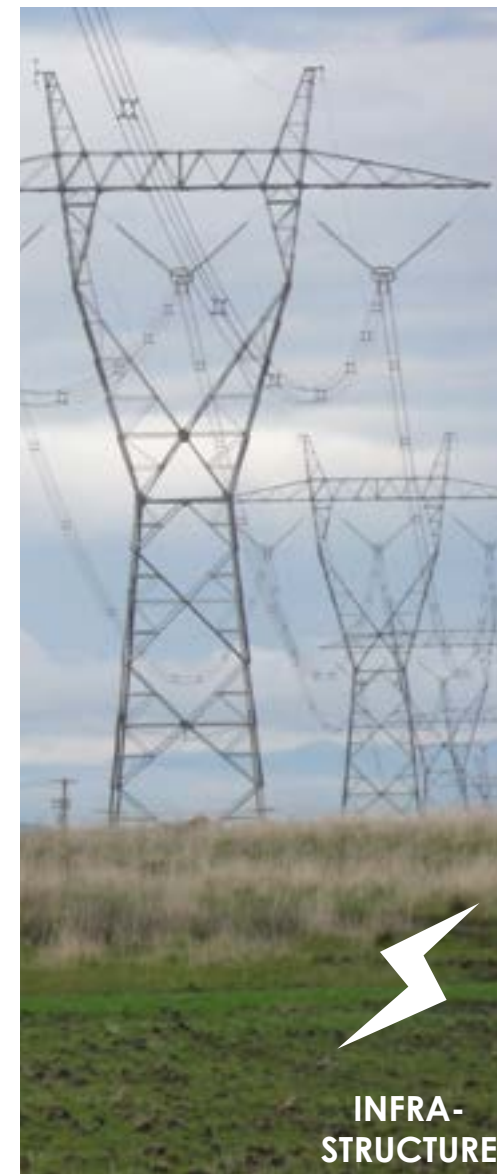
The defining visual landscape features of the study area can be categorised into 6 key elements. These elements present differently throughout the site and the combination of elements subtly changes giving local pockets of landscape identity.

Visual character elements were defined using three criteria:

1. Scale and visual prominence in the landscape.
2. The ability of the elements to define the landscape character.
3. Cultural value to the site.

The following pages examine the visual character of each element including their physical and cultural values. Retention values have also been explored in order to provide recommendations to guide the Quarry Hills PSP process.







Visual Character

Trees are a key visual character element of the study area due to their scale, quantity, character, ecological and cultural values.

The Quarry Hills Arboricultural Assessment (Treelogic, 2012) identified 255 trees in the study area. The predominant species in the study area are River Red Gums accounting for 203 of the identified trees. In addition there are a variety of other indigenous, native and exotic trees.

River Red Gums are the signature trees of the local area and the key defining feature of the City of Whittlesea. They differentiate this area from other parts of Melbourne and form landmarks within the landscape.

River Red Gums appear in the landscape as scattered groupings and woodlands. Despite their apparent separation their large scale effectively combines to create visual enclosure in the landscape.

They feature broad trunks that often lean in the prevailing wind direction with some trunks touching the ground and then re-rooting. Their canopy is often visually interesting and uneven. Their unusual growth pattern results in trees with great visual appeal.

Throughout the study area exotic deciduous plantings are often associated with heritage places while exotic evergreen trees are often part of planted shelterbelts.

Retention Values

Trees provide links to the natural environment and add variety to urban structure. Trees engage our senses, providing shade, shelter, outlook, enclosure and visual relief.

The age of the trees provides links to pre and post European settlement landscape settings and use, helping to define our cultural identity.

River Red Gums and other indigenous trees have the highest retention value of trees found in the study area due to their links to the natural landscape of Quarry Hills and aboriginal cultural identity. Retention priority should be focused on groupings to reflect their natural landscape pattern.

Some individual trees have high visual interest and therefore a high retention value. The Arboricultural Assessment identified 24 trees of interest for their notable scale, form or habit. Additional trees that meet this criteria should be identified for retention.

Exotic trees associated with heritage buildings act as contributory elements to the heritage place and therefore have high retention value.

Replacement of these trees is improbable in a future residential development context considering their age and slow growth habit. It would take many years to regain their height alone.



NOTE

The Arboricultural Assessment identified that over 50% of trees in the site have low arboricultural value.

The landscape, ecological and cultural values of trees are often greater than arboricultural retention values indicate.





Visual Character

The Darebin Creek forms a very important role in defining the landscape form within the Quarry Hills PSP. The watercourse runs the entire length of the PSP area in a north-south direction and the quality is considered as degraded and many parts of the creek is overgrown with weeds and rushes.

The watercourse is defined as an ephemeral stream that is dependent on seasonal flow and rainfall patterns. The seasonal nature of the watercourse provides unique landscape character along its extent, with ever changing environments all year round. The creek is often dry throughout the year with waterflow dependent on winter rainfall.

The watercourse provided valuable habitat for a number of native species, predominately the endangered Growling Grass Frog with known populations of within the extent of the creek line.

Retention Values

Waterways are important ecological, cultural, aesthetic and recreational components of the landscape. The Darebin Creek provides an opportunity for a range of open space types including local passive and 'wild' spaces.

The linear nature of the waterway provides the opportunity to be enhanced to provide outlook and pedestrian movement across the site.

The creek protects important populations of Growling Grass Frog and ensures connectivity between meta populations within the northern growth corridor. Importantly, the creek is nominated as Category 1 habitat for the Growling Grass Frog (Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Melbourne's Growth Corridors, DEPI June 2013) which extends the retention values 100m from the existing creek line.



Hills - Quarry Hills Regional Park

Visual Character

Quarry Hills Regional Park is located on Melbourne's northern fringe in South Morang, to the immediate north of the City of Whittlesea Civic Centre. Quarry Hills provide a marked contrast to the low plains of the adjacent areas due to their topographic relief and undeveloped nature.

The steep nature of the terrain within the Regional Park restricts recreation to walking on the trail network plus cycling / mountain biking. Bird watching and plant identification can be enjoyed by people with skills in these pursuits.

The elevation of the hilltops provide for panoramic views to the Melbourne CBD skyline and surrounding Plenty Valley Ranges, that can be viewed from specific vantage points along the extensive path network.

Retention Values

The Quarry Hills Regional Park can assist in creating a unique sense of place and improve legibility. Development of the surrounding areas should appropriately respond to this valued natural element and minimise the extent of landscape scarring.

There is a great opportunity to create wildlife corridors and a linked park land system with the Darebin Creek environs and River Red Gum reserves to the north. Revegetation of the hilltops with locally indigenous plant material will increase the existing habitat area and improve its long term sustainability and viability.

The provision of a range of compatible recreation experiences should be explored with associated facilities; active recreation on flatter land to west of Darebin Creek, horse riding and bikes on gentle northern slopes.



Heritage Places

Visual Character

The Quarry Hills PSP area contains a number of buildings, dry stone walls and clusters of built elements that have value as places of heritage visual interest. The Aboriginal and Historical Heritage Assessment (Ecology and Heritage Partners, 2012), Whittlesea Heritage Study (Meridith Gould Architects, 1991) and site visits have identified heritage buildings, dry stone walls and heritage conservation areas.

Heritage Places are predominately fronting Bindts Road or natural vantage points which increases their visual prominence.

The heritage buildings identified in this report as having visual significance comprise a variety of dwellings, and farm buildings. The buildings feature a variety of scales and construction techniques. Many are not included in current heritage overlays. The sites are mapped and described in more detail in the appendix.

Retention Values

Heritage places contribute to local identity and character. Their varied age, construction methods and uses provide visual interest to the area and help to define Quarry Hills settlement pattern and previous uses.

If retained they will provide a point of difference within the future urban landscape and help to retain the historical cultural identity of Quarry Hills.

Their continued presence on the site will provide direct visual links to the past. Where heritage places have visual prominence they can act as local landmarks and assist legibility in the area.

Some of these buildings provide interesting opportunities for adaptive reuse as cafes, community buildings or commercial uses.



NOTE:

Aspects of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage have generally been excluded from this report as artifact scatters and scar trees are difficult to identify with an untrained eye and have a limited direct visual presence within the site. Cultural values linked to visual character elements are acknowledged and discussed where relevant.



SOURCE: Context Pty Ltd



SOURCE: Context Pty Ltd

Stony Rises

Visual Character

Stony rises are a distinctive feature of the Western Plains landform. These features were formed by basalt lava flows and are visually expressed by irregular shaped areas of exposed basalt. Each stony rise may visually present separately but close inspection reveals that they form part of a linked larger flow.

A number of Stony Rises have been identified in the Quarry Hills PSP area using a combination of aerial photography, site contours and site inspections. The size of stony rises within the study area varies enormously ranging from 20m to almost 300m in length. Stony rises are often difficult to identify and many more may exist within the site than are identified in this assessment.

Retention Values

The stony rises have value due to their natural occurrence and uniqueness to this area. They provide a natural structural element in the landscape breaking up the otherwise flat landform.

Their retention in an urban setting can assist in defining spaces, adding variety and providing development breaks.

Their height provides views of the surrounding landscape and further afield to the city and nearby hills and ranges.

Loose rock sourced from stony rises was used to build the nearby dry stone walls. This directly links stony rises as natural elements to the cultural heritage of the study area.

Stony rises have high archaeological potential and cultural identity. Ridgelines and stony rises were often traveling routes and transient occupation sites for Aboriginal groups traveling through the area. Most of the artifacts recorded in the Aboriginal and Historical Heritage Assessment (Ecology and Heritage Partners, 2012) were located on stony rises.

Stony rises often support remnant vegetation and have retained high environmental values due to difficulty utilising their area for farming. They also provide habitat and shelter for small animals.



SOURCE: Context Pty Ltd

22



23



SOURCE: Context Pty Ltd

24



25



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Infrastructure - Transmission Lines and Boral Quarry



Visual Character

Electricity transmission line

The electricity transmission line easement running along the southern boundary of the Quarry Hills PSP area is a dominant constructed visual character element. Four pairs of pylons are located within the site with other pylons directly visible from the site. The pylons are 42m in height and are spaced approximately 350 metres apart with multiple lines strung between.

The transmission line pylons are visually dominant in areas of minimal tree cover but recede into the landscape where tree cover increases. Generally the transmission lines are well absorbed by the landscape due to their fine structure but are visible in treeless areas particularly at the lowest point of their arc between pylons.

Existing Boral Quarry

The existing Boral Quarry poses a threat to the visual character of the Quarry Hills PSP area. The quarry is under current operation and works will continue for a number of years to come.

Whilst the extent of the quarry works is outside the PSP area there are a number of ancillary uses that will have a negative impact on the future residential community. The quarry contains a batching plant and large stock piles of material that present a negative visual impact with increased noise and dust hazards.

Retention Value

The electricity transmission line performs a critical utility function but has a negative visual impact on the existing rural and future urban setting. Its permanence and visual prominence raises questions as to how its visual impact can be minimised in an urban context.

Currently trees and stony rises across the site screen and lessen the visual impact of the pylons and transmission lines. Loss of these features will result in increasing the visual prominence of the pylons and transmission lines.

Subdivision of land within the area and construction of roads will open up increased viewlines to the pylons and lines. Careful site analysis and design response will need to be undertaken to minimise exposing this feature.

The interface with the Boral Quarry will need to be carefully managed so that future residents are not impacted by noise and dust. Currently the quarry boundary is densely planted out with native vegetation which provides a minimal level of screening. Additional measures can be taken through the provision of temporary earth mounds and visual screens can improve local amenity.







site analysis

Visual Character Elements Plan








Many subtle changes in character occur across the study area beyond the previously identified broad character areas (see Figure 2). The different combinations and clusterings of individual visual character elements creates a distinct character for each localised area.

In order to assess the value of retaining visual features in the Quarry Hills PSP area, a site analysis and opportunity and constraints mapping has been undertaken.

The visual character elements plan (Figure 3) maps the location of the visual character elements in the Quarry Hills PSP area including:

- River Red Gums and other trees. Where River Red Gums are clustered together in groups these have been highlighted, as tree groupings provide a different visual character to individual scattered trees.
- Trees of interest (as identified in the Treelogic Arboricultural Assessment) are combined with nearby groupings where possible due to their increased retention value.
- The Quarry Hills Regional Park contains a number of ridgelines and high points in the landscape provides opportunities for panoramic views.
- Individual stony rises, including groupings to show where they form part of a larger basalt lava flow.
- Heritage buildings and the network of dry stone walls found throughout the precinct.
- Aboriginal artifacts and areas of significance based on information from the Aboriginal and Historical Heritage Assessment background report. While these are generally not visually apparent they are often associated with visual character elements and therefore increase the retention value of the associated elements due to their cultural heritage value.
- The electricity transmission line easement's pylons and lines are highly visible in the landscape. The currently undefined edge of the easement will be a strong visual character element in the future urban context.
- The reserve for the E6 potential future freeway. This has been indicated on the plan although at the time of this report the road remains unfunded and the design details unconfirmed.



-  Quarry Hills PSP area
-  E6 Reservation
-  River Red Gums
-  Tree groupings
-  Views (named and panoramic)
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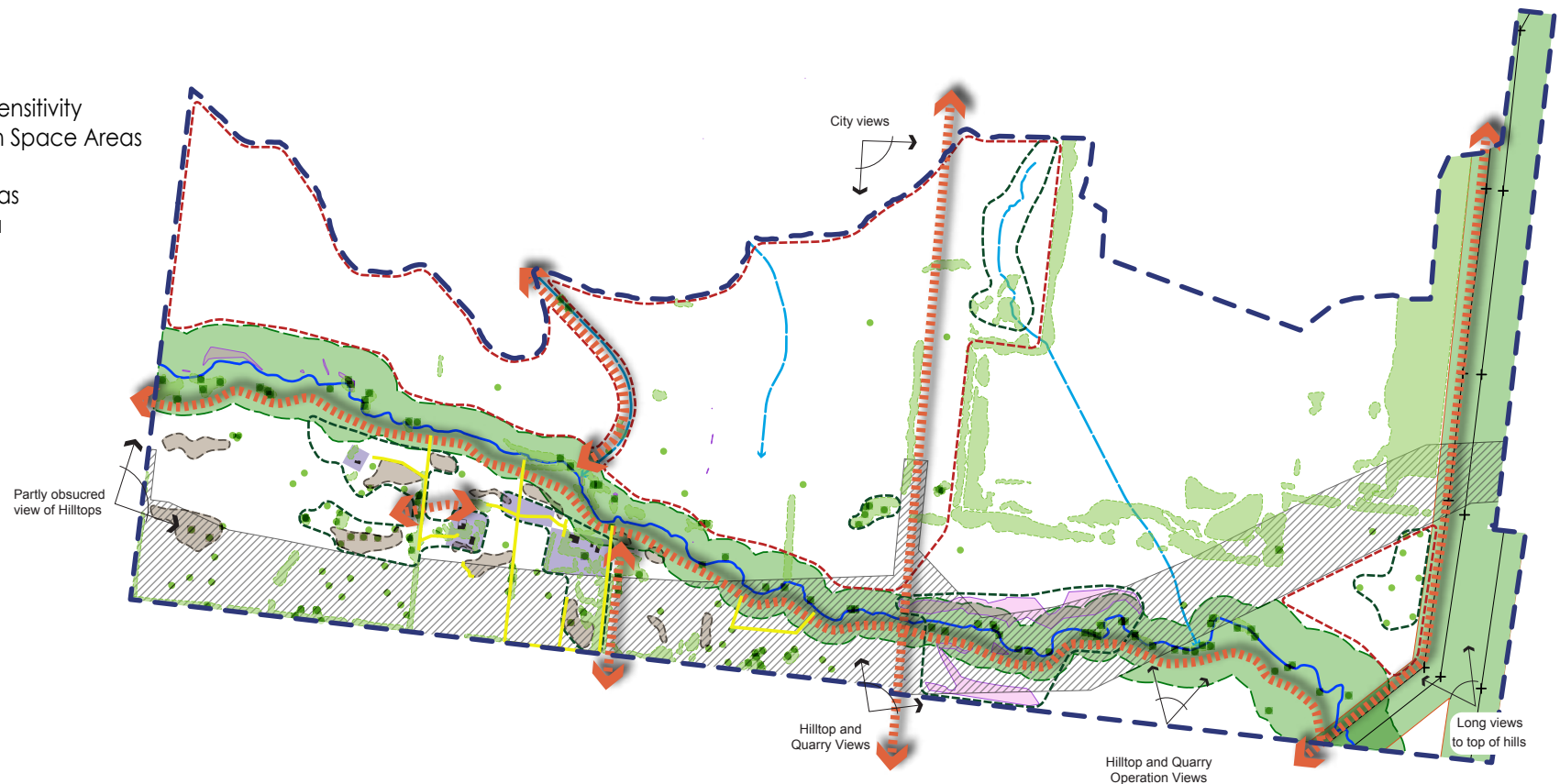


FIGURE 4: Quarry Hills PSP Visual Character Elements Plan

Visual Character Sectors Analysis

The Quarry Hills PSP area has been divided into two visual character sectors to allow closer analysis of site specific opportunities and constraints (Figure 4).

The sectors are selected based on natural groupings or boundaries of features on the site rather than following property boundaries or roads.

The site analysis for each of the two sectors identifies opportunities and constraints presented by the visual character elements across the site.



Figure 5: Visual Character Sectors

In general the analysis rated visual character elements as possessing higher retention value when co-located or somehow linked with one or more other types of elements or when large groupings of the same elements co-exist. In some cases an individual visual character element was deemed to have high retention value based on its strong visual character or heritage value.

Based on this rating system the sector maps identified the following opportunities:

Conservation or Open Space Areas

Areas with significant existing trees and multiple co-located visual character elements that should be prioritised for retention.

Linear Links (Creek / Easement links)

Future open space links that may physically and visually link visual character elements using overland flow paths and creeks.

Strategic Links

Linear linking opportunities between visual character elements. These may be suitable to form a shared path network through the precinct.

Quarry Hills Regional Park (QHRP)

Enhance local amenity by creating strong visual and pedestrian linkages with the existing Regional Park lookout points and existing shared path network.

Priority Dry Stone Wall Retention

Dry stone walls prioritised for retention based on co-location of other visual character elements, heritage values and potential for links between visual character features



Heritage Places

Approximate site boundaries around heritage places have been shown. Boundaries will need to be refined upon further detailed investigation.

Visually Exposed Areas

Areas where development will be visually exposed such as treeless plains where few visual character elements exist.

Sensitive Design Areas

Areas of loosely scattered trees where development will need to be carefully designed to ensure positive interfaces to retained trees.

Key Place Making Opportunities

Locations within the Quarry Hills PSP area that present a high level of existing visual character and if retained will contribute strongly to creating a sense of place and local identity in the new urban context.

Site specific design response opportunities have also been identified in each sector.

Constraints are also mapped, in particular the locations of the electricity transmission line pylons where nearby visual character elements gain greater retention value to assist screening the pylons.

The Visual Character Element Values diagram (Figure 5.) demonstrates the elements' overlapping individual values and links that increase their overall visual character value. The infrastructure element is excluded from the overlapping values as it has no visual retention values.

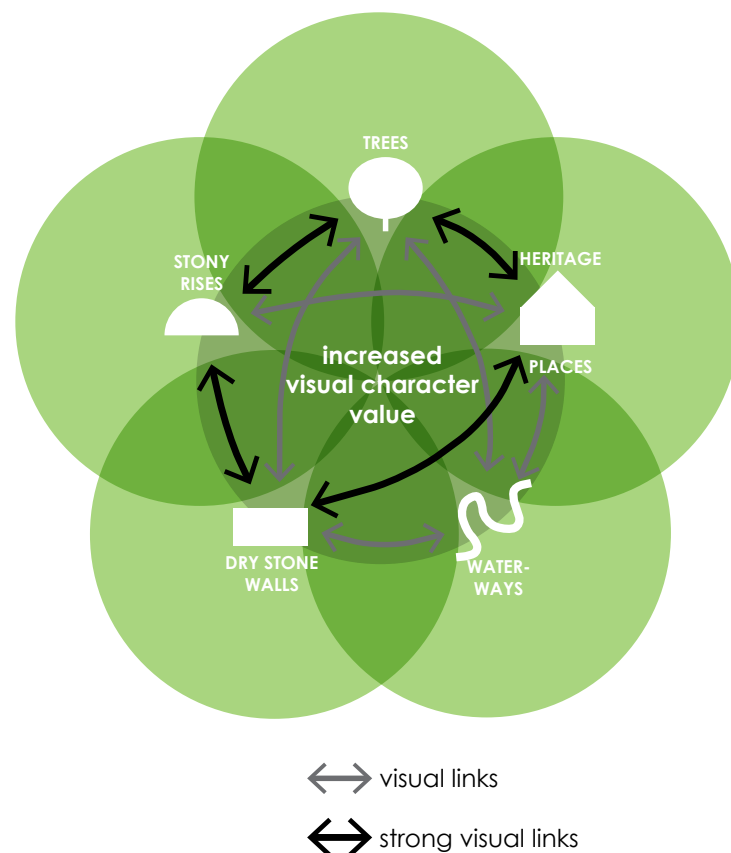


Figure 6: Visual Character Element Values

Opportunities / Constraints: Northern Sector



SOURCE: Context Pty Ltd

33

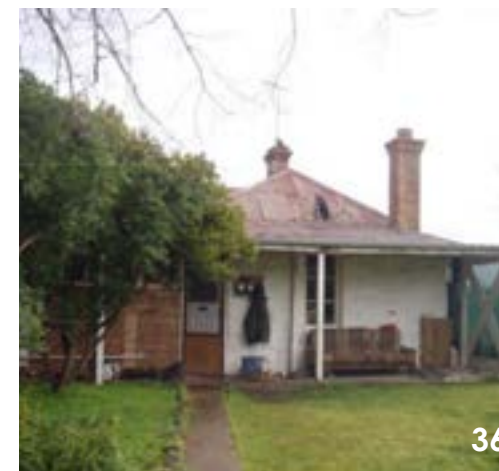


SOURCE: Context Pty Ltd

34



35



36



1. Very steep topography in this locations will need careful consideration. The percentage of slope ranges between 10%-25%.
2. Opportunity to create a linear open space link between the Darebin Creek and the QHRP by utilising the overland flow path and existing vegetation along the valley.
3. This small River Red Gum pocket woodland is visually appealing and provide a place making opportunity.
4. Harvest Home and Lehman's Road provide a strong viewline to the QHRP.

**A.
KEY PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITY
90 BINDTS ROAD - EWERT
FARMHOUSE**

Several features combine in this area to create a special placemaking opportunity. A number of outbuildings are found within the vicinity of the house. The house and outbuildings overlook a paddock partially fenced by a remnant drystone wall. The drive leading to the property from the road is lined with mature Cypress trees along one side.

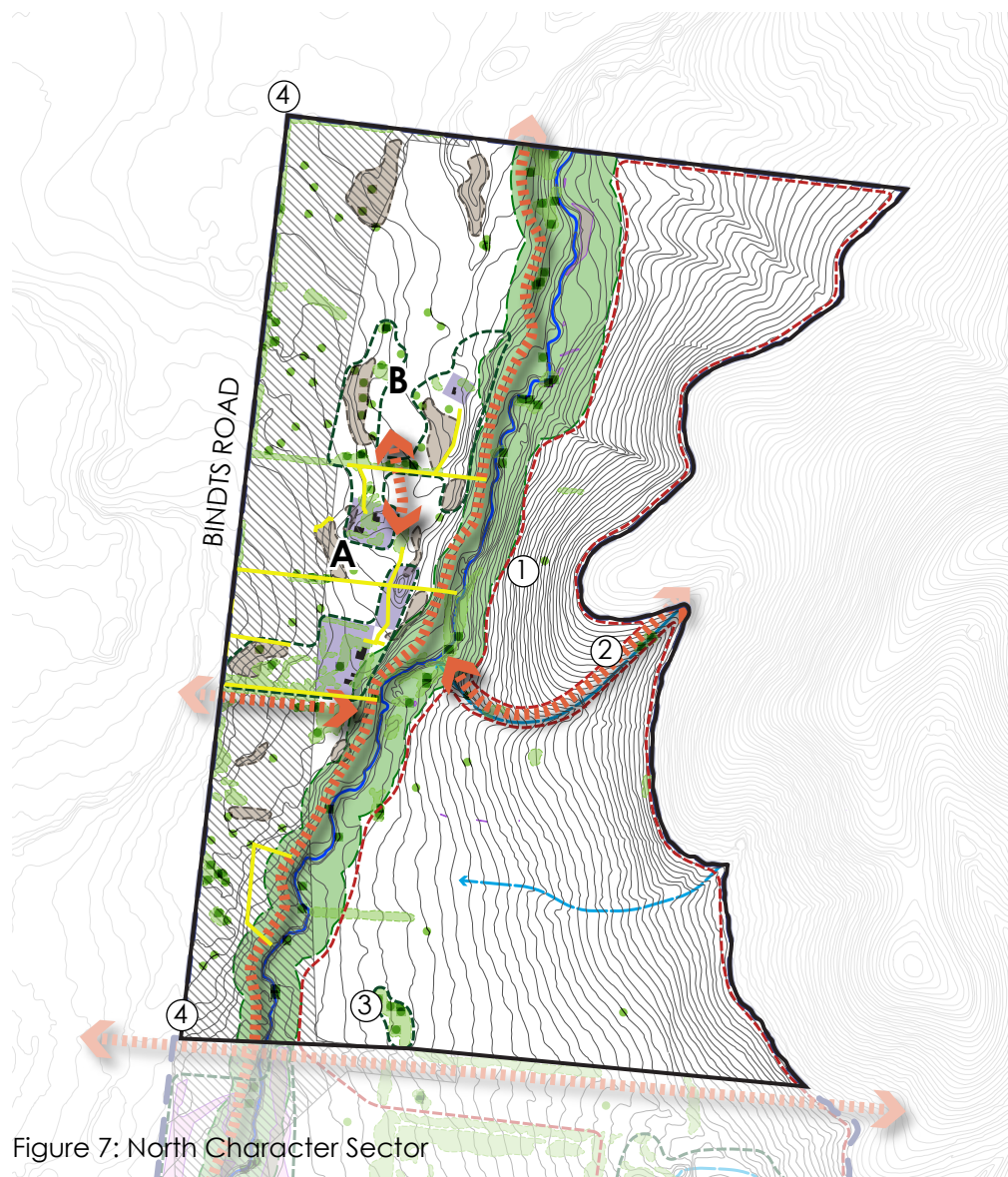


Figure 7: North Character Sector

**B.
KEY PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITY
130 BINDTS ROAD - TIMMS HOUSE**

This heritage place is linked to the Darebin Creek by a series of dry stone walls and stony rises. Notable elements in the immediate vicinity of Timm's house include a dry stone wall, red brick well, and a below ground cellar with a corrugated iron gabled roof. The heritage buildings in combination with the River Red Gums provide an ideal opportunity to build on the local identity.

- Quarry Hills PSP area
- E6 Reservation
- River Red Gums
- Tree groupings
- Views (named and panoramic)
- Stony rise
- Darebin Creek
- Overland flow path
- Heritage places
- Dry stone walls
- Easements
- Areas of Aboriginal sensitivity
- Conservation / Open Space Areas
- Key strategic links
- Visually exposed areas
- Sensitive design area

Opportunities / Constraints: Southern Sector



37



38



39



40



C. KEY PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITY DAREBIN CREEK ENVIRONS

The Darebin Creek is a great landscape feature that traverses the study area and will perform a crucial role in providing habitat for the Growling Grass Frog and other native fauna. The Darebin Creek is currently very degraded however it still rates highly as visual character element. Revitalisation of the waterway through development will ensure that it becomes a significant asset for the local community.

1. The existing Boral quarry presents a poor interface, interim landscaping along its edge will be critical reducing the visual impact.
2. The Darebin Creek provides a great opportunity to create a high quality linear open space with unique experiences along the waterway.
3. Transmission lines are visually prominent. Landscaping within the easement and along its edges will be critical to reducing the pylons' visual impact.

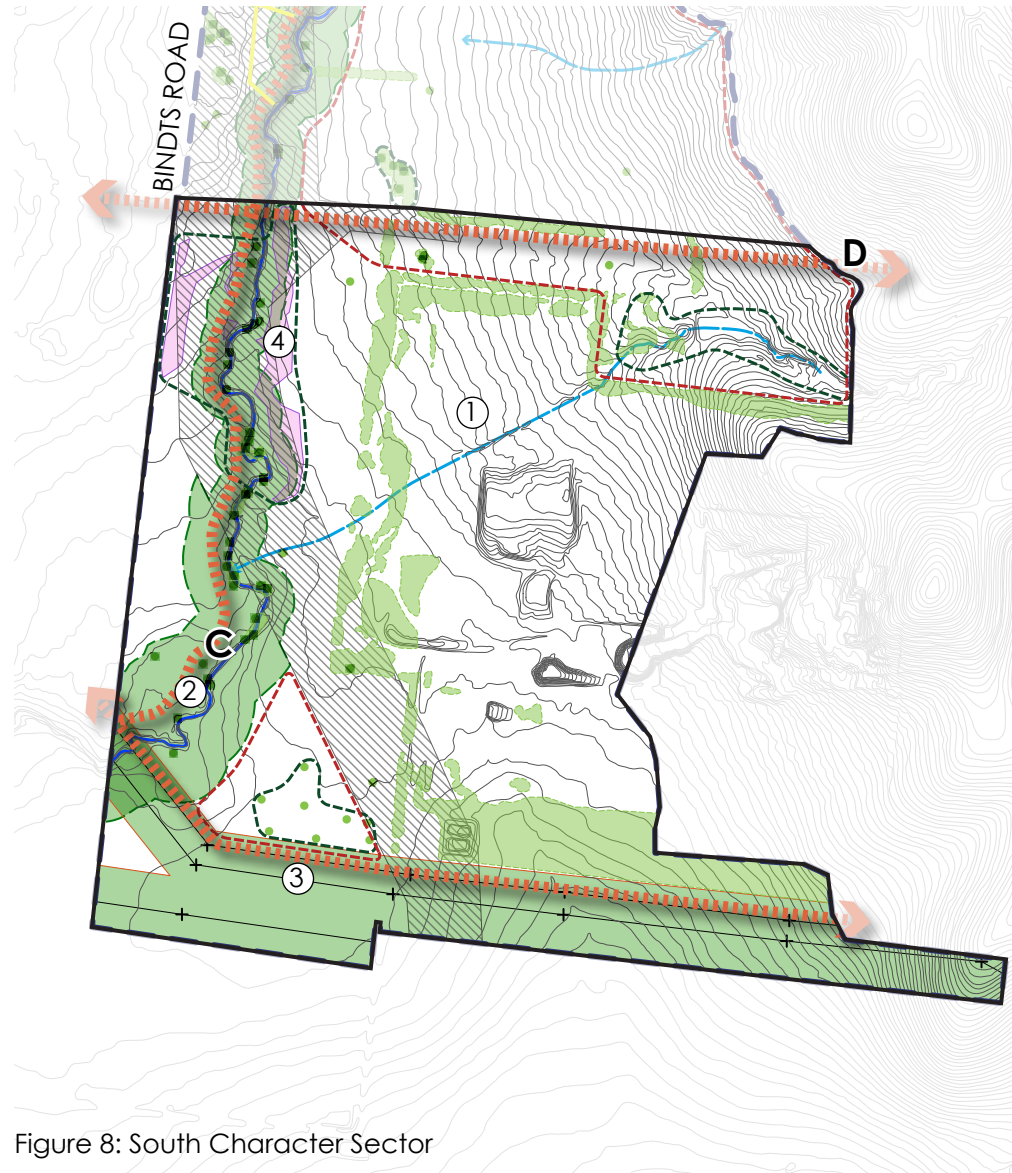


Figure 8: South Character Sector

D. KEY PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITY QUARRY HILLS REGIONAL PARK INTERFACE

The QHRP is a significant open space reserve for the City of Whittlesea and is admired for its natural beauty and diverse wildlife. The extensive network of pathways and viewing platforms provide opportunity for the local community to enjoy environmental and cultural values.

4. Areas of Aboriginal Sensitivity with high numbers of artefacts recorded along the Darebin Creek

- Quarry Hills PSP area
- E6 Reservation
- River Red Gums
- Tree groupings
- Views (named and panoramic)
- Stony rise
- Darebin Creek
- Overland flow path
- Heritage places
- Dry stone walls
- Easements
- Areas of Aboriginal sensitivity
- Conservation / Open Space Areas
- Key strategic links
- Visually exposed areas
- Sensitive design area

Summary - Opportunities / Constraints

- Quarry Hills PSP area
- E6 Reservation
- River Red Gums
- Tree groupings
- Views (named and panoramic)
- Stony rise
- Darebin Creek
- Overland flow path
- Heritage places
- Dry stone walls
- Easements
- Areas of Aboriginal sensitivity
- Conservation / Open Space Areas
- Key strategic links
- Visually exposed areas
- Sensitive design area

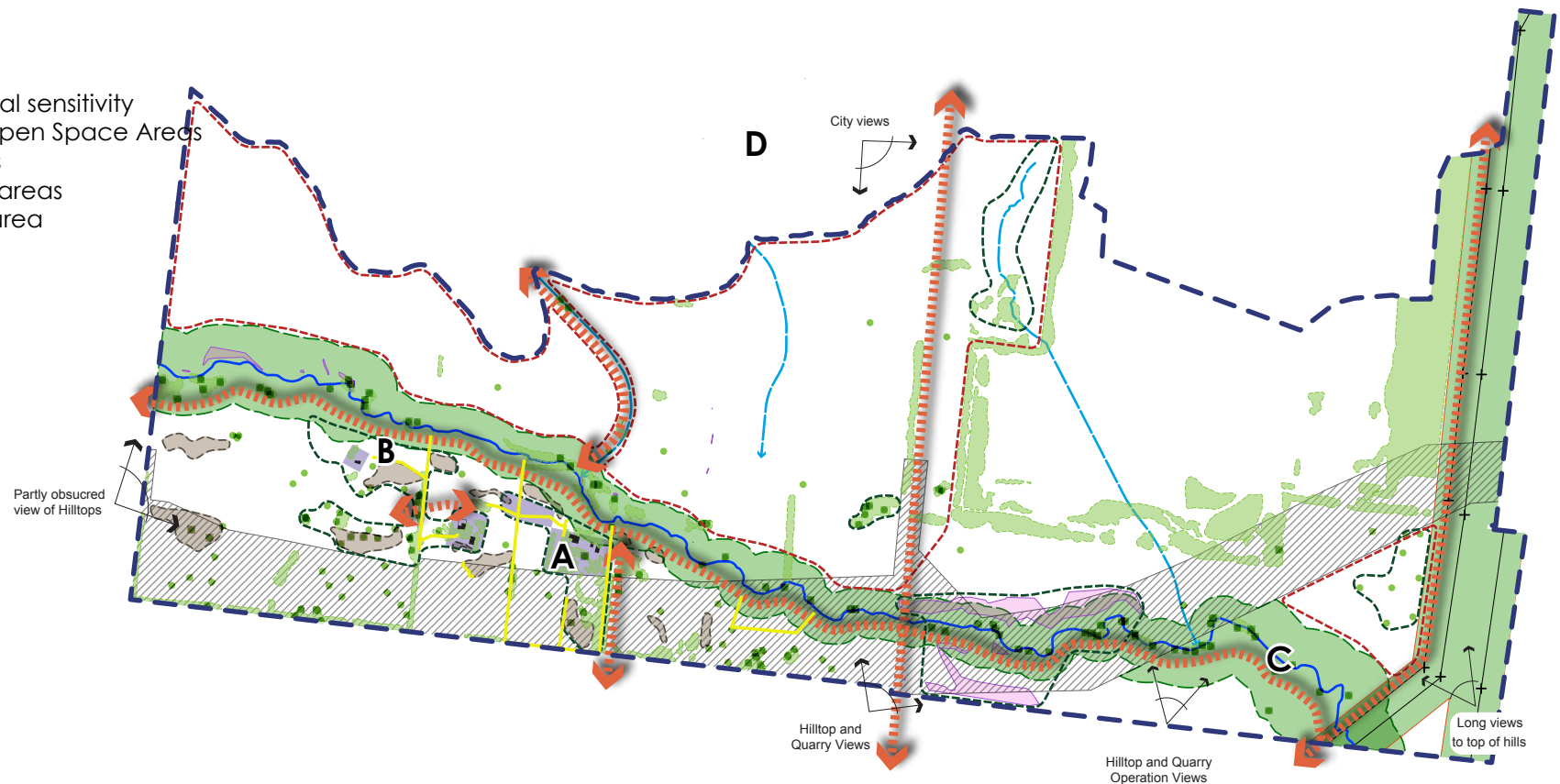


Figure 9: Quarry Hills Summary Opportunities / Constraints Plan

Summary - Key Place Making Opportunities



Four significant sites for local place making have been identified as part of the site visits and site analysis. They were selected based on a variety of criteria including their stand out visual appeal, contribution to local identity and location.

These are:

- A. 'Ewert Farmhouse' - 90 Bindts Road
- B. 'Timms House' - 130 Bindts Road
- C. Darebin Creek Environs
- D. Quarry Hills Regional Park Interface

Each of these sites require further investigation and site analysis as part of the PSP and subdivision process.





local case studies



The City of Whittlesea has a distinctive landscape character featuring many strong visual character elements. These elements help to shape the authentic local identity of places and also provide amenity to communities.

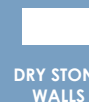
Visual character elements were often removed by residential development in the past. This stripped the landscape of its existing character and residents waited years for new parks and trees to establish.

These sites provide relevant case studies particularly given their close proximity to the Quarry Hills PSP area and their recent development.

For each case study, the visual character elements retained within the site are highlighted using the symbols below.



1. Epping North Conservation Reserve (Lyndarum Drive, Epping North)



This case study comprises a large (14ha) conservation reserve set aside to protect a large stand of remnant River Red Gums. It also features several stony rises and dry stone walls.

A balance between conservation and development has been achieved by allowing an irregular development edge including a residential pocket essentially surrounded by the reserve.

Pedestrian paths, both formally paved and informal dirt tracks have been provided to maintain pedestrian connectivity (Images 40 & 42).

The reserve provides a pleasant outlook to the neighbouring dwellings. Two medium density housing sites have been created where development for standard lots was limited (Image 39).





1. The long dry stone wall has been retained largely in its original state with the only modifications occurring where it meets the shared path. (Image 44)

2. Houses are separated from the conservation reserve with a local road. Open fencing with limited openings encourages use of the shared paths while protecting conservation areas. (Image 43)

3. A single River Red Gum has been retained within the nature strip resulting in a diversion of the road. This diversion provides a direct line of sight to the conservation reserve and the tree acts as a focal point along the road.

4. A shared path network runs through the site allowing resident interaction with the reserve whilst minimising pedestrian impact. Dry stone walls have been more formally rebuilt at the intersection of these paths. (Image 40)



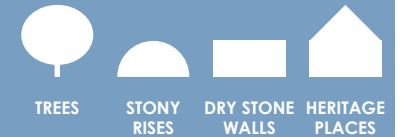
5. An integrated housing site at the edge of the reserve has frontage to the street. Frontage to the park to provide passive surveillance of the area would be a better outcome.

6. This medium density housing site has been sited to fit between a number of scattered trees. The dwellings face the smaller park which has unfortunately resulted in a row of garages fronting the main conservation reserve. Balconies at first floor overlook the main conservation reserve providing some activation/surveillance. (Image 66)

7. This smaller pocket park retains more River Red Gums providing a positive outlook for surrounding dwellings. It is visually linked to the larger conservation reserve and also physically with shared paths.

8. Housing lots yet to be built will provide direct frontage to the smaller park.

2. Creeds Farm (Redding Rise, Epping North)



Creeds Farm was a 19th century farm complex consisting of a bluestone house and barn, timber dairy with surrounding drystone walls, Cypress, Pine and Peppercorn trees.

These visual character elements are now incorporated into a neighbourhood centre consisting of a corner store/cafe, community centre, childcare centre and catholic primary school.

Mature Peppercorn trees and rebuilt dry stone walls create a key entry feature to the community centre. Subtle variations in the concrete footpath treatment delineate the location of old dry stone wall foundations. The catholic school has integrated and restored a heritage homestead and shed for use on its site.





1. The existing Creeds Farm heritage complex consisting of a bluestone dwelling and outbuildings has been retained and restored for use within the school grounds. (Images 48, 49)

2. A community centre and corner store have been located adjacent to mature peppercorn trees and rebuilt dry stone walls which act as a small avenue in to the public square. The contemporary design of new buildings provides a pleasant visual interplay with the historic trees and walls. (Images 45,46)



Figure 14: Creeds Farm

3. A stony rise surrounded by dry stone walls and peppercorn trees has been retained by diverting the road around a widened nature strip. The alignment of the road provides a direct view to this feature. The widened nature strip acts to protect the feature from encroaching development and retains the feeling of openness that its previous rural context would have provided. (Images 47, 50, 51)

4. A stony rise on the south-west edge of the area has been embellished to provide a local park and playground. The open space acts to extend the open feeling of the centre and references the previous rural setting.

3. Laurimar Hilltop Parks (Chadwick Park and Eagle Boulevard, Laurimar)



These local park examples demonstrate a way to incorporate public open space on hilltops.

Parks are different in size and shape. Chadwick park is 1.1Ha in size and more regular in shape. Park along Eagle Boulevard is just over 1Ha in size and is more linear in shape.

Both parks incorporate a various level of program for passive and active recreation, playgrounds, shelters and BBQ facilities.





1. Hilltop Park along Eagle Boulevard incorporates bold architectural structure designed to be visible. This structure not only serves as a place marker but is also functional in providing shelter. BBQ facilities, half basketball court and a soccer pitch have also been incorporated in this open space. (Images 52, 56)

2. Chadwick Park features a simple structure which also provides weather protection. BBQ, seating facilities and a playground are also incorporated in this open space. (Images 53, 55)

3. Network of DDA compliant paths provide easy access.

4. Parks are highly visible and located at termination of streets.

5. There is a visual connection between Hilltop Parks. (Image 54)



Figure 18: Laurimar Hilltop Parks

4. Hilltop Park (Woodland Waters) (Leonardo Drive, Mernda)



An elevated area with significant trees has been turned into informal public open space.

A network of paths provide access to the top where simple shelter offers an opportunity to rest. 360 degree panoramic views are available from the hill top.

Existing dwellings around the perimeter of the space provide surveillance and frontage.

This open space is a great example which retains the natural landscape character of the site.





1. Abutting dwellings provide frontage and surveillance to the park (Image 60).

2. The park has three road frontages.

3. A network of DDA compliant paths provide convenient access. (Images 59, 61). Curving nature of paths provides a meandering approach to hill that follows the natural contours.

4. Existing trees have been retained (Images 57).

5. Simple shelter structure incorporates resting / seating opportunities (Image 58).

6. Pedestrian passageway along eastern boundary provides another point of entry. It is an alternative and more direct route to the hill top.



Figure 19: Hilltop Park (Woodland Waters)

5. Transmission Line Easement (Great Brome Ave, Epping North)



This section of the Lyndarum transmission line easement contains trees, stony rises and a creek.

A large open space area has been created by retaining the trees and stony rises within and directly adjacent to the easement. The easement widens considerably to double its usual width creating a strong north-south link to connect to the Epping North Conservation Reserve.

The surrounding subdivision has been carefully designed to avoid direct views of the pylons from nearby dwellings. Roads avoid direct alignments with the pylons with their angles deflecting views away from the easement.

Lack of visual character elements to the east and west results in a defined edge to the easement created by property boundaries and roads.





1. The shared path network meanders along the easement turning views away from the pylons and towards the trees. The main east-west easement shared path connects to the north-south shared path which leads to the Epping North Conservation Reserve and also coincides with the formation point of the wetlands. (Image 63)

2. The stony rise at the base of the pylon has been embellished with landscaping, serving to reduce the pylon's visual impact. Vegetation, although restricted to grasses and shrubs has effectively added visual interest at ground level and draws attention away from the pylon. (Image 62)

3. The row of housing to the north fronts the easement providing passive surveillance to the open space.



Figure 15: Transmission Line Easement

4. The transmission easement's visual impact is lessened due to the lack of an edge road and retention of a number of trees in this location. (Image 64)

5. Wetlands have been located within the easement, successfully performing a technical function whilst adding visual interest. Decks and viewing platforms have been built above the wetlands along the easement. (Image 66)

6. Residential lots surrounding the easement have many different interfaces however no back fences are presented to the easement. Residential lots are sided to the reserve where frontages would result in direct views of pylons.

7. A fenced off-leash dog park has been created beneath the transmission lines maximising the open space's recreational potential.

6. Findon Creek (Hayston Bvd, Epping North)



Findon Creek has been embellished at this point by the creation of wetlands and the addition of a BBQ shelter and bridge. River Red Gums have been retained and an add to the amenity created around the creek.

Several curved stone walls are featured in the site referencing local heritage and using local materials. Their form clearly indicates they are not heritage dry stone walls that have been reconstructed from original positions. It is unclear whether the rocks have been relocated from old dry stone walls.





1. The undeveloped portion of land to the north of the site indicates how the creek may have appeared before subdivision. (Image 68)

2. Findon Creek has been embellished in this location, forming wetlands and a technical drainage function. (Images 68, 69)

3. Houses front the creek separated by local roads. (Image 67)

4. A network of shared paths is located along both sides of the creek maximising connectivity.



Figure 16: Findon Creek

5. A pedestrian bridge has been provided across the creek in this location. (Image 67)

6. It is unclear whether any dry stone walls existed in this location before it was developed. The stone walls utilised as landscape features can be seen as a positive feature as they use local materials. (Images 69, 70)

7. Hehr's Pine Park Farm / 3rd Place (Pine Park Drive, Wollert)



Hehr's Pine Park Farm is an A graded heritage place of regional and state significance. It is one of the most complete farms to survive from the 19th century in the City of Whittlesea. It comprises a bluestone house, milking shed, dairy machinery shed, loose box, stables, stones, extensive magnificent dry stone walls, mature Pinus species, Peppercorn trees and bluestone paving between buildings.

This heritage place has been retained and adapted to become a local cafe called '3rd Place'. It is of particular interest because similar local examples of adaptive reuse have occurred on the outskirts of residential developments whereas this example is near the main entry to the estate and central to the subdivision.



74



75



76



77



78



79



80



1. The rural setting of the bluestone dwelling has been respected by retaining a large open space area directly adjacent to the site. Despite the nearby residential subdivision, the sense of openness, the heritage integrity and rural character is retained. (Images 72, 75, 76)

2. A series of dry stone walls have been retained and incorporated in to the embellishment of the open space. Where paths cross the wall mortar has been used to protect the wall ends. (Image 72)

3. The site is visually prominent from Epping Road to the west and local streets.

4. The architecture of the addition is a simple form clad with dark earthy colours that recede into the background allowing the heritage building to retain its prominence. (Image 74)



Figure 17: Hehr's Pine Park Farm / 3rd Place

5. A small stand of Peppercorn trees has been retained in an informal passive open space. This allows for the heritage place to be viewed through this contributing element from Epping Road.

6. The stony rise adjacent to the buildings has been revegetated and a small timber viewing platform has been installed providing panoramic views to the north and east. (Images 75, 76)

7. Rural post and rail fencing has been utilised to define the edges of the site.

8. Lehmann's Farm Playground (Broadleaf Drive, Epping North)



Lehmann's Farm Playground is particularly interesting because much of the site has been recreated through replacement, reconstruction or reinterpretation of the heritage elements of the farm. The farm was in ruin before being redeveloped as a playground to cater to the residents of the surrounding residential development.

This case study demonstrates that a heritage place does not need to be in excellent condition to warrant retention or references as the cultural values of the place can be highlighted in a many different ways. This heritage place is listed only on the Heritage Inventory and has not had any planning scheme protection and yet the history has been preserved, adding to local cultural identity.





1. This site has utilised the ruins of a farm building and outbuildings to create an interactive playground with bespoke play equipment referencing the previous use of the site as a dairy.

2. Interpretive signage conveys the site's history including the previous use and owners and clearly identifies what structures have been rebuilt or replaced. The signage also explains interpretive linkages to the play equipment provided on the site. (Images 80, 81)

3. A number of mature trees are retained on the site.

4. The recreated house foundation and reconstructed brick garage wall. (Image 78)

5. A new windmill replaces the original structure. (Image 79)

6. Circular planters mark the location of old wells. (Image 79)



Figure 18: Lehmann's Farm Playground

Example interpretive signage found at the site (Image 81):

'Lehmann's Farm – Preserving the memory

The house foundation has been recreated and recycled brick paving has been used to mark the original location of the farm sheds.

Can you find the outlines?

A portion of the 1940's garage wall has been reconstructed and made in to a downhill wall and circular planters mark the location of the wells the Lehmann family used for drinking water.

A new windmill has replaced the original structure and an image of the original windmill can be seen in the ceiling of this shelter.

Can you see it?

A playground has been created and themed on the activities of the original dairy farm.

Lost and Found: The following artefacts were found on site.

Can you find some of these in the digging pits? Slate pencils, broken plate fragments, buttons, marbles, glass bottles.'





recommendations



Recommendations



Retaining key visual character elements and preserving their physical and visual linkages greatly enhances local identity.

The following recommendations are based on:

- the site analysis undertaken as part of this report.
- the identified opportunities and constraints and Key Place Making Opportunities.
- the review of case studies including identified opportunities and issues that can be either captured or avoided in Quarry Hills.
- the review of policies and strategies guiding development within the City of Whittlesea

The recommendations have been structured as a series of objectives, requirements and guidelines that will allow easy insertion in to the PSP documentation for use in subdivision design throughout Quarry Hills.

Objectives describe the desired outcome to be achieved in the completed development. Objectives must be met. Requirements must be adhered to in the development of the land. Guidelines are discretionary and alternatives may be considered by the responsible authority.

The Summary Opportunities / Constraints (Figure 11) plan and also each of the Opportunity and Constraint Sector Plans (pages 34-43) should be used in conjunction with these recommendations to ensure that the outcomes remain specific to place making and the creation of local identity in Quarry Hills.



SOURCE: Context Pty Ltd

Recommendations

IMAGE AND CHARACTER

Objectives

1. Establish a strong sense of place by responding to and enhancing the visual character of the precinct.
2. Retain, protect and integrate visual character elements where possible.
3. Conserve and enhance identified key placemaking opportunities.
4. Physically and visually link features where possible to retain a sense of the broader landscape character.
5. Retain an appropriate setting and context for heritage places.
6. Encourage the creation of distinct neighbourhood identity by integrating existing visual character features within local centres.
7. Retain views to mountain ranges, the city and key local views to Quarry Hills where possible.
8. Protect and enhance waterways and associated open space opportunities.
9. Locate the open space network to preserve visual character features.

Landscape Character

Requirements

R1	Subdivision design must actively respond to the landscape character throughout the precinct by actively aligning roads, lots and open space to retain visual character elements.
R2	Visual character elements must be incorporated into the design of streets, conservation areas, public open space and neighbourhood/town centres where appropriate.
R3	Undertake more detailed analysis of visual character elements to determine appropriate boundaries or buffers from development.
R4	River Red Gums must be retained within the public realm, not within areas of private ownership.
R5	Any development that interfaces with the Darebin Creek must be in accordance with the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (DEPI 2013).

Guidelines

G1	Identified placemaking opportunity sites (page 43) should be retained to create focal points and add variety and interest to subdivision plans.
G2	Physical and visual connections should be maximised between visual character elements through the design of streets, shared path networks and open space networks. Key links through the site are identified as strategic links on the Summary Opportunity and Constraints plan (page 42).



G3	Large areas of closely scattered River Red Gums should be retained as woodlands to enhance local identity and visually reference the historic rural landscape.	G12	Open space should be located at key vantage points (including platforms on Stony Rises where appropriate) to take advantage of and preserve panoramic views of the Quarry Hills, Kinglake Ranges and Plenty Ranges.
G4	Tree groupings should generally be prioritised for retention over individual trees.	G13	Subdivisions should protect and enhance Darebin Creek corridors to facilitate linear trails and open space opportunities.
G5	Trees with high visual character or those that have been identified as a 'tree of interest' by the Treelogic Aboricultural Background Report should be retained where possible.	G14	Hard landscape within open space should incorporate local materials, natural colours and finishes to complement the landscape.
G6	Trees should be visually linked throughout the site by passive and active open space, boulevard treatments and viewlines created by roads and shared paths.		
G7	Shared paths should be provided within conservation areas to direct pedestrian movement and restrict movement through high value areas.		
G8	Legibility and way finding should be promoted through visual access to distant views and identified placemaking opportunities (as landmarks), heritage places and significant trees.		
G9	Shared path links should be provided along Darebin Creek and Quarry Hills Regional Park to take advantage of viewlines and natural amenity.		
G10	Widened nature strips, medians or other public realm areas should be used to retain visual character elements when they can't be retained within open space areas.		
G11	Stony Rises should be retained in conservation or passive open space areas.		

Recommendations

Heritage

Requirements	
R6	Conservation Management Plans must be undertaken for heritage places to ascertain cultural value, significance and appropriate site boundaries.
R7	Location, quality and retention value of existing Dry Stone Walls must be identified in subdivision plans.
R8	Heritage places must be prominent in the subdivision design (eg. Hehr's Pine Park Farm case study) to ensure that their importance is acknowledged.
R9	A planning permit must be gained for any alterations to or removal of Dry Stone Walls must be maintained.
R10	Heritage places not able to be adaptively reused but able to be retained as part of open space must be able to be made safe and robust, sustainably maintained and appropriately integrated with other open space functions.
Guidelines	
G15	Dry Stone Walls should be retained in their current state. Where necessary walls may be secured by the use of concealed mortar or reconstructed more formally as per the Epping North Conservation Reserve case study.
G16	Highlighted priority retention Dry Stone Walls should be utilised for shared path or road alignments to take advantage of their linear form and provide visual links to the heritage of the precinct.

G17	Physical intrusion of dry stone walls should be minimised where aligned with dwellings frontages. In this case lots should be rear loaded and pathways consolidated.
G18	Dry Stone Walls should be integrated as a design feature of open space areas. Of particular importance are walls that define the edges of conservation or open space areas.
G19	Incorporate materials salvaged from removed dry stone walls in the precinct in to landscape features or returned to stony rises where appropriate.
G20	Open space should be located adjacent to heritage places to provide a visual 'rural' context .
G21	Heritage places and their contributory elements should be conserved, restored or adaptively reused to add to the creation of local identity.
G22	Heritage places that are degraded and cannot be reused should be retained for the historic reference and interpretive value. This may include interpretive signage and landscape features that explain and reference the history of the site. Ruins may be retained as part of open space as a landscape feature or adapted for use as a playground (as per Lehmann's Farm Playground case study).



Interface Treatments and Built Form

Requirements	
R11	Built form must respond to the scale, proportion and materials of adjacent or nearby heritage places in a contemporary manner.
R12	Development must present an active interface with the Quarry Hills Regional Park and the Darebin Creek in order to increase the usage and passive surveillance.
Guidelines	
G31	All open space areas and conservation reserves should be bounded by roads unless an improved outcome can be demonstrated.
G32	Where fencing is unavoidable adjoining open space areas, it should be a maximum 1.5m in height and at least 50% visually permeable.
G33	Visual character elements should be retained in town centres and public spaces to enhance local identity.
G34	Natural materials and colours should be used in built form to complement the landscape.
G35	Fencing required on the road edge of open space or heritage place should be of rural post and rail type.
G36	Development adjacent to conservation and open space areas should overlook and activate the area by using large windows, decks and balconies.
G37	Lower density lots should be provided in areas with a permanent development edge (such as Quarry Hills Regional Park) to allow a visual transition.

Infrastructure

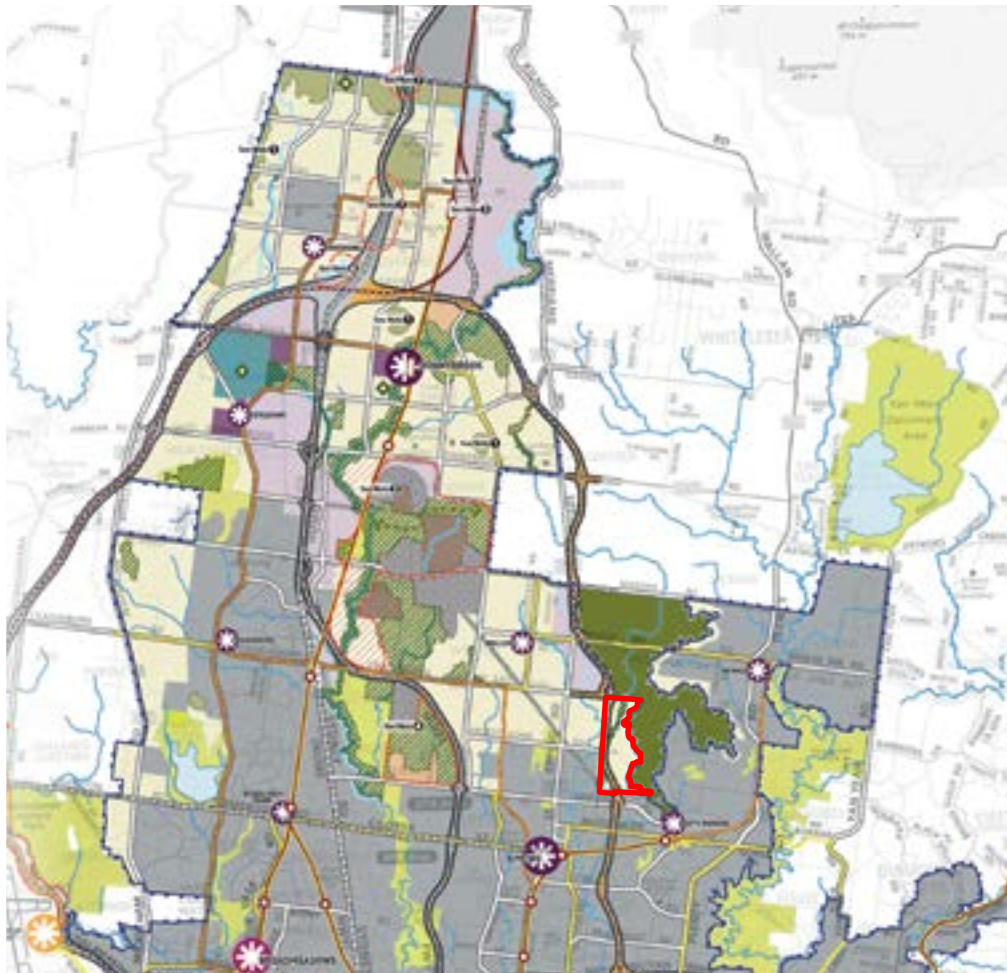
Requirements	
R11	The transmission line easement must be embellished with appropriate landscaping to increase its visual amenity.
R12	Landscape screening must be established or maintained where existing adjacent the Boral Quarry.
Guidelines	
G38	Significant vegetation should be retained in the vicinity of the transmission line pylons to assist with visual screening and lessening the visual definition of the easement's edge.
G41	Road alignments should not create direct views of transmission pylons.
G42	Shared paths should deviate within the transmission line easement to create varied viewlines and direct views out of the easement.
G43	Lots should not directly front transmission line pylon locations. In this location lots siding the easement are recommended.
G44	Back fences should not adjoin the transmission line easement. Side fences, where deemed to be appropriate, must be at least 25% visually permeable.



appendix

State Planning Strategies

The Quarry Hills PSP sits in the context of a number of overarching strategies and detailed policies. Policies, strategies and reports reviewed for this report are listed in the references. A detailed description of key relevant reports is as follows:



North Growth Corridor Plan

North Growth Corridor Plan (GAA, 2012)

The North Growth Corridor Plan sets the strategic direction for the Quarry Hills PSP. Preserving and enhancing the natural features of the site is one of the Corridor Plan's aims.

It highlights the need to undertake work such as the Quarry Hills Visual Character Assessment to determine the most appropriate mechanism for recognising and protecting the valued natural features.

North Growth Corridor Plan Vision

'Each community will have a distinctive character, defined by its natural setting – the foothills, grasslands, woodlands, creeks and waterways – and well designed, accessible town centres.'

Key principles relevant to this assessment:

- Protect and reinforce landscape and cultural features that distinguish each Growth Corridor to create new suburbs with high amenity, character and strong local identity.
- Utilise the open space network to preserve natural features, character and heritage and also to provide important connections throughout the corridor.
- Design built form to enhance the local character
- Retain key local and distant views .



Metropolitan Planning Strategy Discussion Paper (2012)

The Metropolitan Planning Strategy (MPS) is currently being developed. It is intended that this document will set a vision for Melbourne to the year 2050.



The MPS Discussion paper proposes a number of principles to guide the strategy. Most relevant to this assessment is Principle One: A distinctive Melbourne. While this principle focuses more on the built form rather than the natural values of the landscape, we would expect this to be covered in the future draft and final strategy.

Urban Design Charter for Victoria (2010)

Key principles relevant to this assessment:

Legibility

Help people understand how places work and to find their way around.

Sense of Place

Places are valued because of their character - the individual qualities that make them distinctive from other places. Urban design should understand, protect, develop and celebrate local character.



Consistency and Variety

Natural patterns of the landscape provide a unifying structure and introduce variety at a smaller scale into the repetitive patterns of roads and railways.

Continuity and Change

Some constants in the public environment such as cultural heritage should remain from generation to generation. This public inheritance reminds us of our origins, helping to define our cultural identity, and locating us in a continuum of time as well as in space. A rich cultural heritage can be seen in the layering of elements from different periods.

Sensory Pleasure

Create spaces that engage the senses and delight the mind.

State Planning Policy Framework

Clause 12: Environmental and Landscape Values

Planning should help to protect the health of ecological systems and the biodiversity they support and conserve areas with identified environmental and landscape values.

12.04 Significant environments and landscapes

12.04-2 Landscapes

Protect landscapes and significant open spaces that contribute to character, identity and sustainable environments.

Ensure natural key features are protected and enhanced.

Clause 15: Built Environment and Heritage

Ensure all new land use and development appropriately responds to its landscape, valued built form and cultural context, and protect places and sites with significant heritage, architectural, aesthetic, scientific and cultural value.

15.01 Urban environment

15.01-1 Urban Design

Require development to respond to its context in terms of urban character, cultural heritage, natural features, surrounding landscape and climate.

15.01-3 Neighbourhood and subdivision design

Create a strong sense of place by emphasising existing cultural heritage values, well designed and attractive built form, and landscape character.

15.03 Heritage

15.03-1 Heritage Conservation

Identify, assess and document places of natural and cultural significance as a basis for their inclusion in the planning scheme.

Provide for the conservation and enhancement of those places which are of aesthetic, archaeological, architectural, cultural, scientific, or social significance, or otherwise of special cultural value.

Encourage appropriate development that respects places with identified heritage values and creates a worthy legacy for future generations.

Retain those elements that contribute to the importance of the heritage place.

Ensure an appropriate setting and context for heritage places is maintained or enhanced.

Support adaptive reuse of heritage buildings where the original use has become redundant.

Local Planning Policy Framework



Clause 21.07 Built Environment and Heritage

21.07-1 Urban Design

The City of Whittlesea contains many diverse and rich urban and environmental features, which must continue to be identified, preserved and enhanced in order to retain the character of the municipality in the face of rapid urban development.

21.07-3 Heritage Conservation

The cultural heritage of existing and past residents contributes greatly to the identity of the City of Whittlesea. It is essential that the significance of heritage buildings, places and artifacts continue to be documented and measures continue to be put in place to ensure they are retained and incorporated within the development process. In a similar fashion to local environmental features, culture heritage offers the opportunity to add identity, interest and diversity to the City of Whittlesea.

Clause 21.08 Housing

21.08-1 Residential Capacity and Location

Create 'unique' local identity through the linking of new communities to local features or focal points including River Red Gums.

Clause 22.04 – Subdivision Design Policy

Create a sense of place and community focus through subdivision design. Features of cultural, heritage and natural significance are to be incorporated into subdivisions to create character, diversity and interest.

Clause 22.10 - River Red Gum Protection Policy

This policy applies to the protection of River Red Gums located in urban and rural areas.

Mature River Red Gums in an open plains grassland environment are generally recognised as the most important visual and environmental feature of this municipality. Many of the River Red Gums within the urban areas have been estimated to be between 200 and 800 years of age.

Council's experience has been that very few of the original River Red Gums survive the surrounding encroachment of urban development, unless careful site assessment and planning occurs. It is therefore essential that existing River Red Gums are properly assessed and treated as an integral part of development design.

It is policy that:

- The intrinsic value of River Red Gums be recognised in establishing character and identity in urban and rural areas.
- The majority of River Red Gums proposed for retention should be sited in public open space reserves and/or road reserves.

Particular Provisions

Clause 52.37 - Post Box and Dry Stone Walls

A permit is required to demolish, remove or alter a dry stone wall constructed before 1940 on land specified in the schedule to this provision.

Clause 56.05 - Urban Landscape

Incorporate natural and cultural features in to the design of streets and public open space where appropriate.

Standard C12

An application for subdivision that creates streets or public open space should be accompanied by a landscape design that:

- Responds to the site and context description for the site and surrounding area.
- Maintains significant vegetation where possible within an urban context.
- Takes account of the physical features of the land including landform, soil and climate.
- Protects and enhance any significant natural and cultural features.
- Protects and link areas of significant local habitat where appropriate.
- Incorporates natural and cultural features where appropriate.

Relevant Council Strategies and Reports



Whittlesea 2030 Strategic Community Plan

(City of Whittlesea: 2013)



This document is Council's community plan for connecting people, environment and economy

Key relevant statements:

We share an open expression of cultural heritage.

Our urban design helps build connection to place and the community.

Our natural environment is a resource for all to enjoy and we need to protect it for future generations.

Environmental Sustainability Strategy

(City of Whittlesea, 2013)



This strategy provides direction for Council and the community for living and working in a more sustainable way.

Relevant objective:

Use landscape scale planning to protect significant environmental areas from urban growth.

Relevant Council Strategies and Reports

Rural Landscape Character Assessment

(Contour Consultants, 1999)

This report was a component of the Rural Review Strategy (City of Whittlesea, 1999). This assessment identifies areas of significant visual quality within the rural areas of the municipality and details the specific characteristics that contribute to the unique visual qualities of each of these areas. Policy guidelines were developed to provide an assessment framework for development applications to protect the visual qualities of the identified areas.

Visual Character Areas

The Rural Landscape Character Assessment identified four Visual Character Areas (VCA) in the City of Whittlesea. The Quarry Hills PSP area comprises the Red Gum and Southern Plains sub-areas of the Western Plains VCA.

Western Plains Visual Character Area

'The Western Plains VCA, characterised by generally flat to undulating open plains with significant areas of River Red Gum Woodlands is significant in that with its open pastures and paddocks and farming buildings it is evocative of the more distant plains regions of the state but in close proximity to the urban areas and the other VCAs. The presence or lack of River Red Gums is a significant factor in the overall character of the various sub units. Other features which help to give this VCA a special character are the dry stone walls and older buildings and structures found throughout which provide visual reminders of the rural past, which given their proximity to the urban area, deserve special attention.' (Contour Consultants, 1999)

Red Gum Sub-area

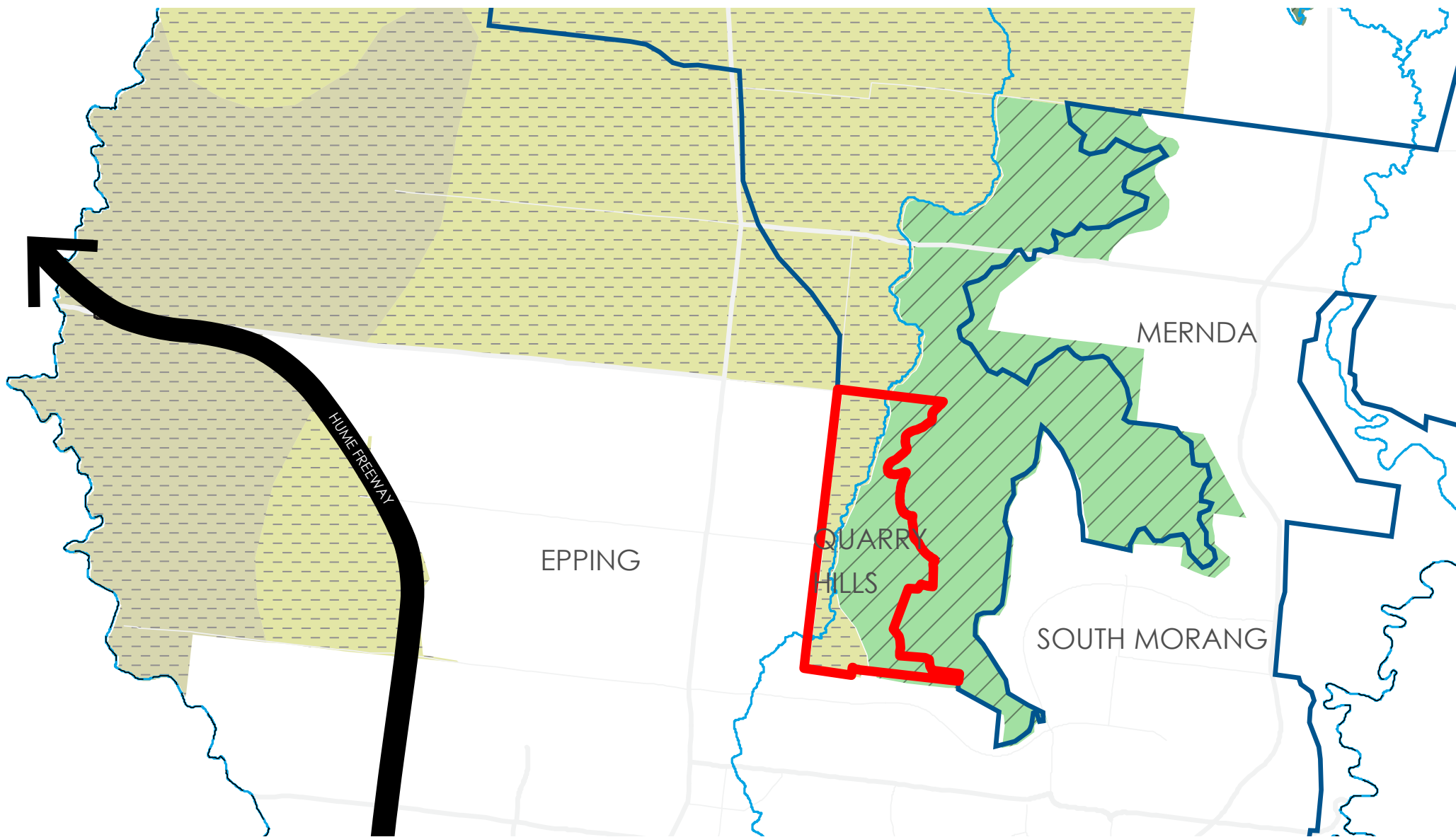
This sub-area is defined by the presence of the signature River Red Gums.

Southern Plains Sub-area

This sub-area is defined by the edge of the Merri Creek and on the east by the Red Gum Sub-area. It features views to the Melbourne City skyline.

NOTE

The Rural Landscape Character Assessment was carried out before the study area was nominated for residential development. As such the areas were assessed based on a continuing rural use. The definitions of landscape character apply as a good description of 'existing character' but the design response recommendations contained within the report are not relevant to the Quarry Hills PSP.



References

The key existing background studies and policy documents informing the urban design future for the Precinct Structure Plans areas of the City of Whittlesea include:

- The City of Whittlesea Green Wedge Management Plan, 2011
- City of Whittlesea Heritage Study, Context (2011)
- The City of Whittlesea Rural Landscape Character Assessment, Contour Consultants (1999)
- The City of Whittlesea Rural Review, City of Whittlesea (1999)
- Delivering Melbourne's Newest Sustainable Communities (July 2009)
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy, City of Whittlesea (2013)
- A Guide to Growth Area Street Tree Planting, City of Whittlesea (June 2007)
- Landscape Assessment for Aurora, VicUrban (December 2004)
- North Growth Corridor Plan, Growth Areas Authority (June 2012)
- Whittlesea 2030 Strategic Community Plan, City of Whittlesea (2013)
- Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Melbourne's Growth Corridors, DEPI (June 2013)
- Urban Design Charter for Victoria, Department of Community Planning and Development (2010)
- Urban Design and Landscape Approach for Aurora, MDG Landscape Architects (January 2007)
- Whittlesea Heritage Study, Meridith Gould Architects (1991)
- Whittlesea Heritage Review (2014)
- Whittlesea Planning Scheme
- Quarry Hills PSP Background Reports (August 2012)
 - Arboricultural Assessment, Treelogic (2012)
 - Aboriginal and Historical Heritage Assessment (Ecology and Heritage Partners (2012)
 - Draft Integrated Water Management Strategy, CPG (2012)

