



wollert

visual character assessment

FINAL REPORT: WOLLERT PRECINCT STRUCTURE PLAN (1070)

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Disclaimer

Information presented in the Wollert Visual Character assessment is based on site analysis and visits undertaken in 2012 and 2013 and background reports prepared to inform the Wollert 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.

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City of Whittlesea
September 2013

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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 Wollert 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 Wollert PSP area boasts many natural and heritage visual character features providing a solid foundation for an urban development with strong local identity.

The significant number, quality and character of River Red Gums within the Wollert PSP area make them the defining landscape feature. In addition, the waterways, stony rises and view corridors to mountain ranges, the city and Quarry Hills 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

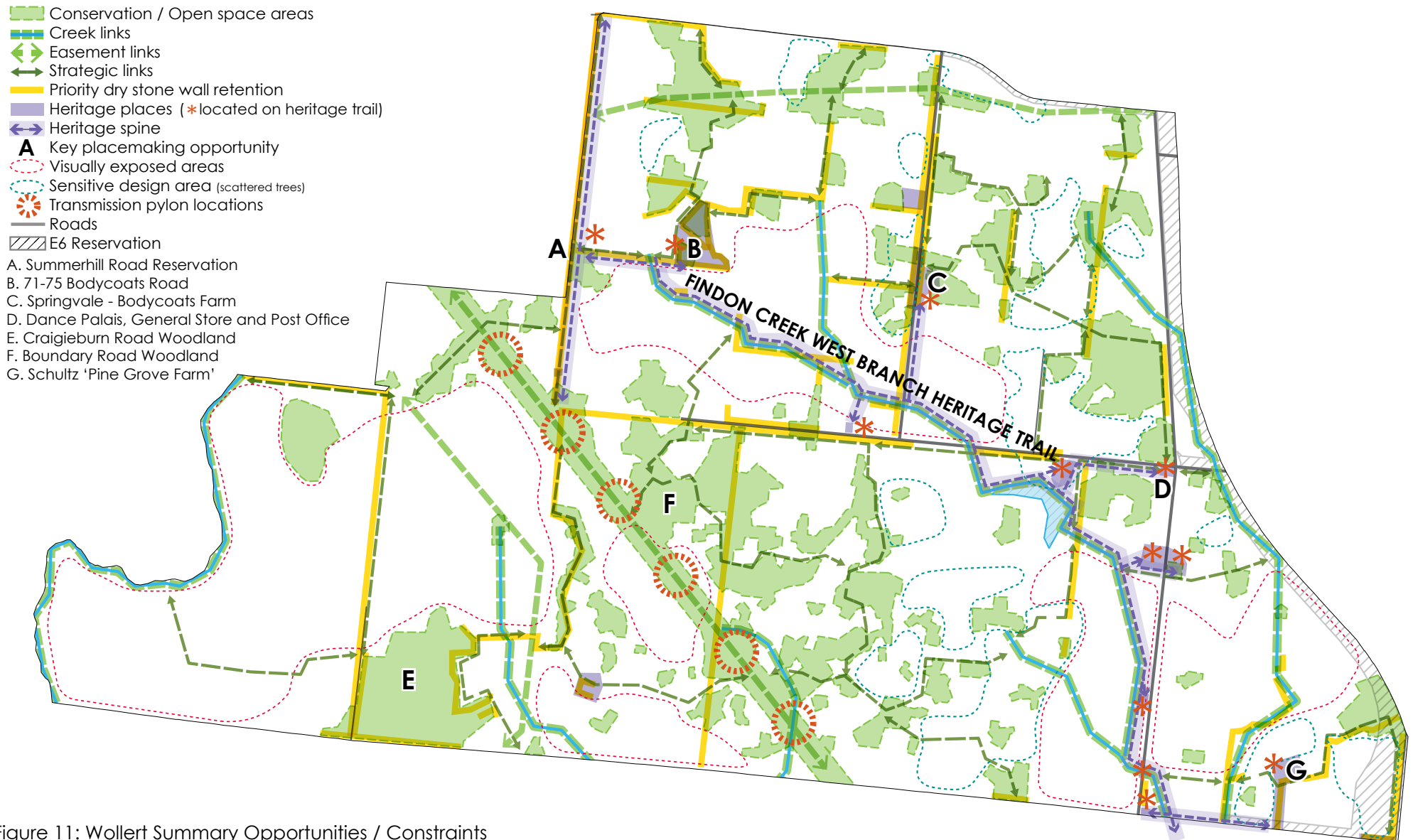


Figure 11: Wollert Summary Opportunities / Constraints



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 Wollert 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.

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

Places with potential heritage value. Approximate site boundaries 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

Seven significant sites and one precinct link for local place making were identified as part of the assessment. The sites were selected based on a variety of criteria including their standout 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. Summerhill Road Reservation

B. 71-75 Bodycoats Road

C. Springvale - Bodycoats Farm

D. Dance Palais, General Store and Post Office

E. Craigieburn Road Woodland

F. Boundary Road Woodland

G. Schultz 'Pine Grove Farm'

Heritage Trail Findon Creek West Branch

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 Wollert.

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 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.



visual character assessment

Introduction

Background

The North Growth Corridor Plan designates parts of Wollert for future urban development. The Wollert Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) is an instrument to inform this future development.

The area will be developed to provide a new residential community of between 25,000 - 40,000 people. It is envisaged to accommodate a major town centre with two smaller neighbourhood centres as well as an employment precinct and conservation areas. It will also include schools, community centres and areas of passive and active open space.

This report has been prepared for the Metropolitan Planning Authority (MPA) and the City of Whittlesea to help guide the development of the Wollert PSP.

Its key objective is to identify key visual features of the Wollert 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 Wollert PSP. Other reports examine matters such as cultural heritage and arboricultural values which will be incorporated into this assessment where relevant (reports listed in Appendix).

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

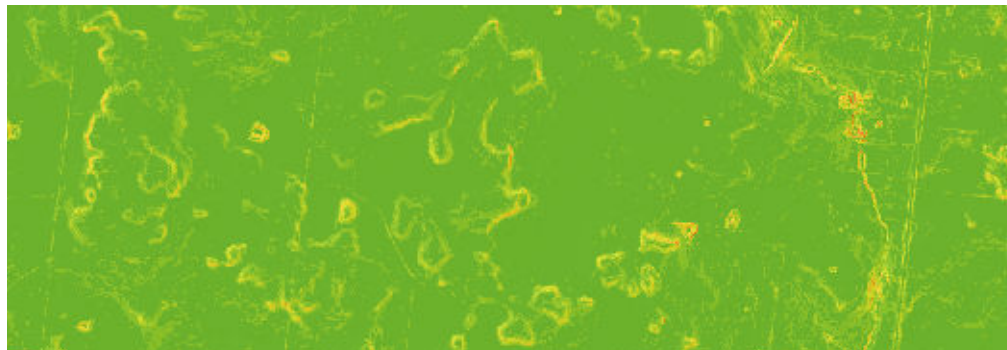


The Visual Character Assessment was prepared using a combination of desktop analysis and field work.

Desktop Analysis

Desktop analysis comprised a review of the following:

- Relevant planning policies and strategies.
- Relevant PSP background documents including:
 - Arboricultural Assessment (Treelogic, 2012)
 - Aboriginal and Historical Heritage Assessment (Ecology and Heritage Partners, 2012)
- Rural Landscape Character Assessment (Contour Consultants, 1999)
- Available GIS information for the site including surface analysis and aerial photography.
- Defence Ordinance Maps (1935)



WOLLERT VISUAL CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Field Work

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

- 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 Wollert 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 Wollert 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

- Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (2012)
- Sub Regional Species Strategies (2012)
- North Growth Corridor Plan (GAA, 2012)
- Metropolitan Planning Strategy: Discussion Paper (2012)
- Urban Design Charter for Victoria (2010)

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 Wollert PSP area is located in the City of Whittlesea approximately 23 kilometres to the north of the Melbourne central city. The Wollert PSP covers an area of 1,434 hectares spanning 6.2km east/west at its widest point and 3.5km north/south. Its boundaries include Craigieburn Road East including the Aurora and Epping North East growth area developments to the south, Curly Sedge Creek to the west and the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) to the north and east.

Existing Land Use

The site is predominantly used for agricultural and rural-residential purposes and has a population of approximately 100 residents. Properties range in size from 2000 square metres to 56 hectares and generally include a single residence with a cluster of sheds and other farm related infrastructure.

Residential development is currently occurring to the south of the site. The Wollert Landfill and Quarry are currently operating to the east of the site, with the potential for a new second quarry to commence operations. The reservation for the potential future E6 freeway runs along the east boundary of the site. A gas compressor station and brick-making facility are located to the west of the site. Rural uses continue to exist to the north of the site. This land is outside of the UGB.

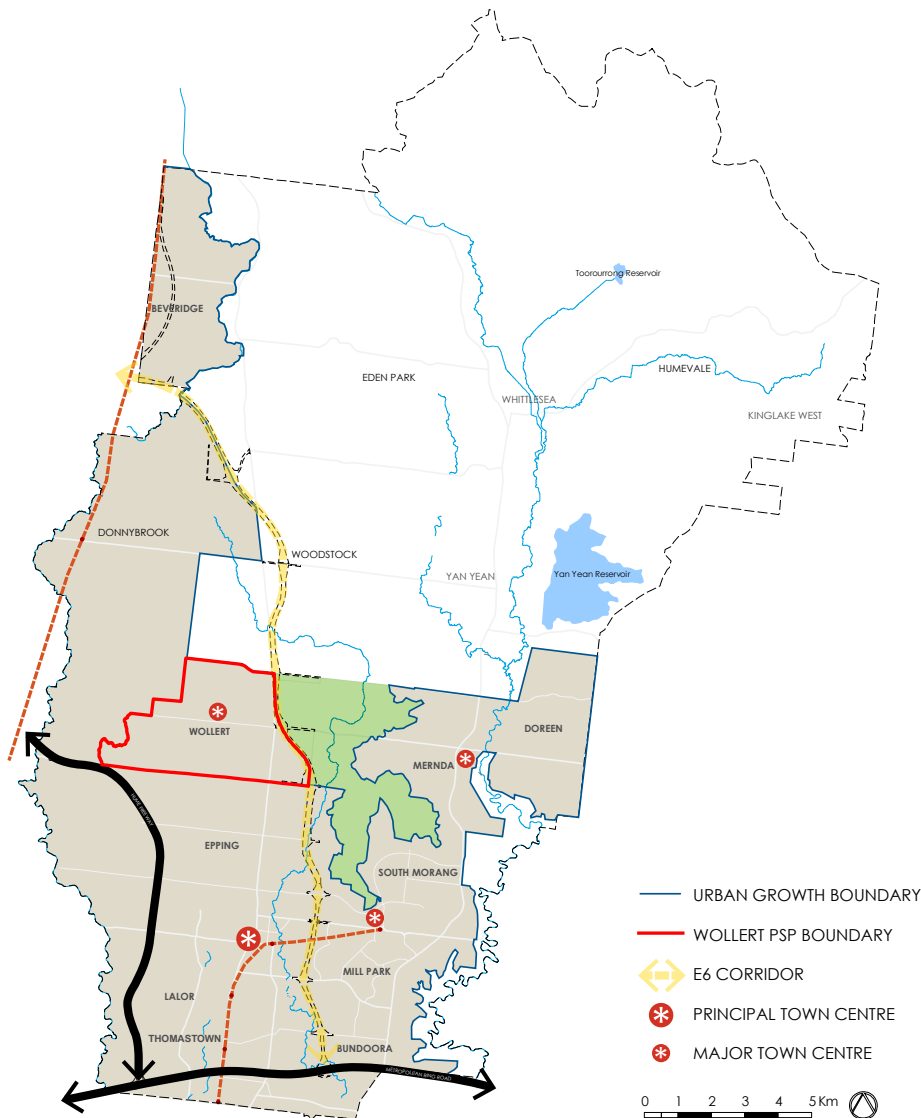


Figure 1: Location Plan
WOLLERT VISUAL CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Topography and Drainage

The site is located at the eastern edge of the Western Plains of Victoria landform. The site is gently undulating, falling from RL 215m in the north-west to RL168 in the south-west with maximum slope of 5%.

The site features a number of minor ridgelines and over 70 stony rises. The stony rises have a strong visual presence due to their scale, particularly when exposed due to lack of tree cover.

One creek and three creek tributaries are present within the site. Curly Sedge Creek which is part of the Merri Creek Catchment forms part of the western boundary. The two central tributaries are part of Edgars Creek and the eastern tributary branches are part of Findon Creek all of which are part of the Darebin Creek Catchment.

Views

The generally treed nature of the site creates visual enclosure except where trees become more scattered increasing opportunities for long viewlines. Views are opportunistic and varied throughout the site at present.

The elevated nature of the site results in views south to the city across areas of treeless plains. Other views include those to the nearby Quarry Hills to the east and distant Kinglake and Plenty Ranges to the north. Views from the open plains in the west of the site views open towards Mount Ridley to the north-west.

Broad Character Areas

Wollert's Character

Wollert's character is distinct, yet varied.

- Existing rural uses are evident by the open paddocks and grazing activities.
- The undulating landform is disrupted by stony rises, changing the landscape by creating sudden height and enclosure.
- River Red Gums dominate the landscape due to their scale and number.
- Exposed treeless plains feature tributaries that appear to be little more than depressions in the ground.
- Historic buildings are scattered throughout the site linked by dry stone walls that articulate historic settlement patterns.
- Transmission lines diagonally bisect the area but are visually absorbed in to the landscape due to extensive tree cover.

Three distinct visual landscape character areas have been identified to provide a broad visual character assessment of the Wollert PSP. For the purpose of the study these have been generically named:

- Woodlands
- Plains
- Basalt Flows

Woodlands

The Woodlands consist of dense groupings of River Red Gums separated by open areas of land. Tree groupings often feature high biodiversity values.

Plains

The plains of Wollert are visually exposed with few features other than the flat landform, grasslands and some ephemeral water features. They present as a strong visual contrast to the areas of woodland and stony rises throughout the rest of the study area. The waterways at many points are little more than depressions in the ground and may be ephemeral in nature. Tree cover throughout this area is widely dispersed. Some areas of grasslands in the plains feature biodiversity values.

Basalt Flows

This broad character area contains many stony rises formed by basalt flows along with small groupings of River Red Gums. It is difficult to ascertain the exact size and form of each stony rise. Many of the stony rises have biodiversity value and often coincide with the location of findings of aboriginal artefacts.

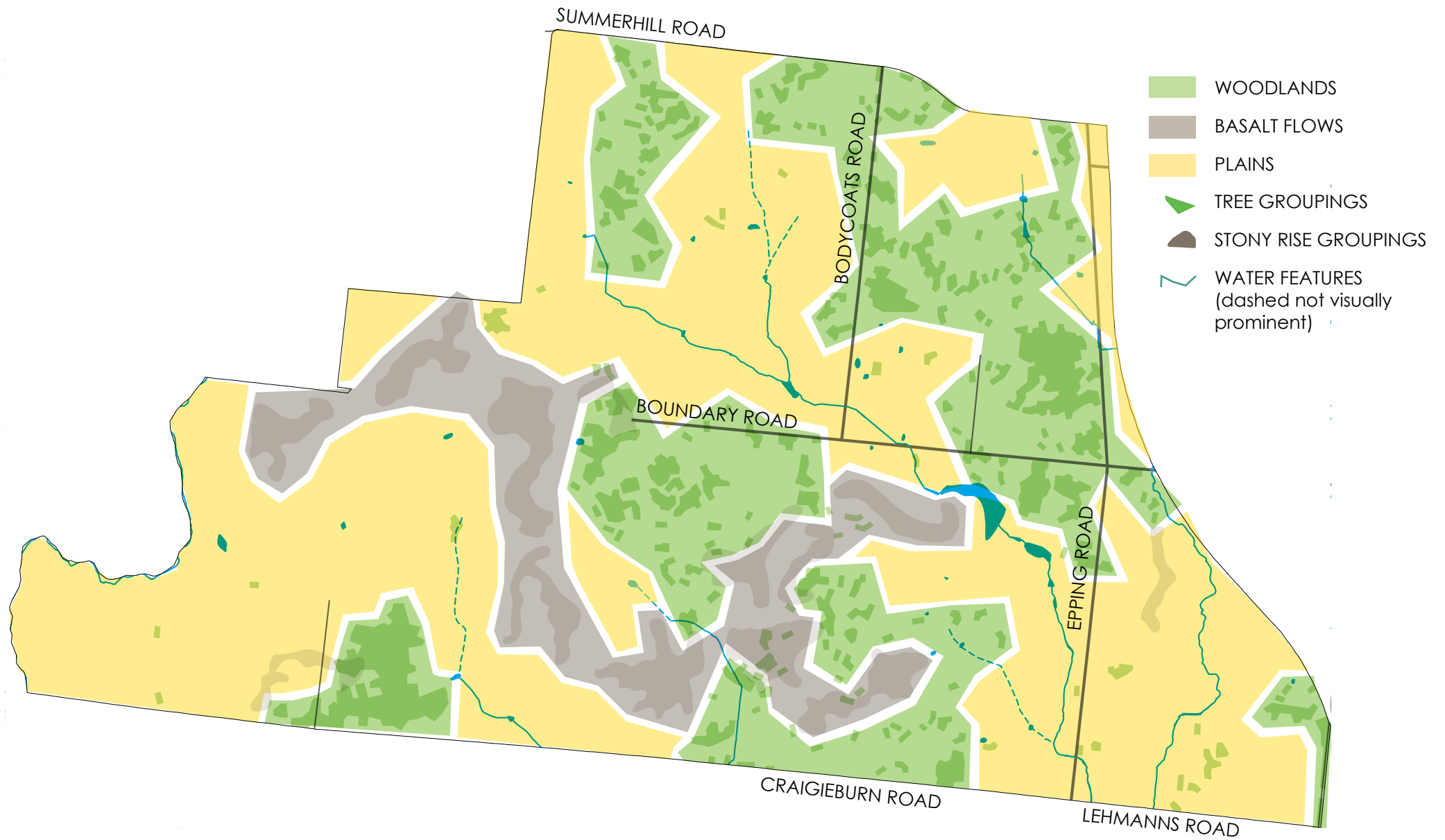


Figure 2: Broad Character Areas
WOLLERT VISUAL CHARACTER ASSESSMENT





key visual character elements

Visual Character Elements

The defining visual character elements 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. Aboriginal and post contact cultural value.

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 Wollert PSP process.





**DRY STONE
WALLS**



**HERITAGE
PLACES**



**WATER-
WAYS**



**INFRA-
STRUCTURE**



Visual Character

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

The Wollert Arboricultural Assessment (Treelogic, 2012) identified 3084 trees in the study area. The predominant species in the study area are River Red Gums accounting for 2980 of the identified trees. In addition there are a variety of other indigenous, native and exotic trees. Two trees have been identified as scar trees providing links to aboriginal cultural heritage.

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. As a result, they offer a key opportunity for creating a sense of place in Wollert.

River Red Gums appear in the landscape as individual trees (Image 2), scattered groupings and woodlands (Images 3 & 5). Despite their apparent separation in groupings their large scale effectively combines to create visual enclosure in the landscape.

Their average height is 14 metres with a spread of 17 metres. They feature broad trunks that often lean in the prevailing wind direction with some trunks touching the ground and then re-rooting (Image 1). Their canopy is often varied 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.

Exotic trees found in the study area include 12 English Oak, 1 English Elm and 1 Peppercorn (Image 4) and 7 Monterey Pines all of which have high arboricultural value. These trees offer opportunities to create a key point of difference in the landscape and to the prevailing landscape character.

Retention Values

Trees provide links to the natural environment and add variety to urban structure. The scale of trees assists in modifying the scale of urban development and mitigating the visual presence of the transmission lines.

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 Wollert and aboriginal cultural identity. Groupings of trees should be prioritised for retention to reflect their natural landscape pattern and provide visual links to the past rural landscape.



Some individual trees have high visual interest and therefore a high retention value. The Arboricultural Assessment identified 34 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 River Red Gums is improbable in a future urban 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.



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.

Over 70 Stony Rises have been identified in the Wollert PSP area using a combination of aerial photography, site contours and site inspections. The size of stony rises within Wollert varies enormously ranging from 20m to almost 300m in length. Their height and slope is also highly variable. Some stony rises appear as shallow surface rock, while others rise up to 6m above natural ground level. Stony rises are often difficult to identify and many more may exist within the site than are identified in this assessment. This assessment has focused on rises of visual significance.

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 generally flat landform.

Their retention in an urban setting can assist in defining spaces, adding variety and providing development breaks, particularly when incorporated into open space areas.

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

Historically, 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 often have high archaeological significance and provide cultural identity. Ridgelines and stony rises were often travelling routes and transient occupation sites for Aboriginal groups travelling through the area. Most of the artefacts 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. River Red Gums are often co-located with stony rises which also provide habitat and shelter for small animals.



Dry Stone Walls

Visual Character

Dry Stone Walls were used extensively in the late 1800's to delineate property and paddock boundaries. They were constructed using carefully placed local basalt stones without mortar. The stones were locally sourced from loose rock on stony rises and basalt stone floaters found in paddocks. Dry stone walls in Wollert are typically wide at the base and taper to their top and vary in structure and condition.

An extensive network of dry stone walls exists within the Wollert PSP area defining many of the existing road reserve boundaries (Images 12, 13, 16 & 17.)

Dry stone walls are a strongly lineal element within the rural landscape. Some of the examples within the Wollert PSP are over 1800m in length (Image 12).

Dry stone walls are often located as boundaries of heritage places.

Some of the large woodlands in Wollert are bounded in part by extensive dry stone walls.

Retention Values

Dry stone walls provide a direct link to the previous rural use, ownership patterns and transport routes of the area assisting to retain cultural identity.

Their construction of freely available local materials provides a visual reference to the natural materials found within the area.

Retaining the walls as contributory elements within local heritage places adds to their character and heritage value.

The walls lay out a pre-defined structure in the landscape that may assist with future legibility and wayfinding through the site.

They also provide visual interest and variety in the landscape.



Heritage Places



Visual Character

The Wollert 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, a bridge, dry stone walls and heritage conservation areas.

Heritage Places are often located on main roads through the site or natural vantage points that increases their visual prominence.

The heritage buildings identified in this report as having visual significance comprise a variety of dwellings (Images 20, 21 & 24), shops (Images 23 & 26), a church (Image 22), school and outbuildings (Image 25). 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

The character of heritage places contribute to local identity. Their varied age, construction methods and uses provide visual interest to the area. They help to define Wollert's settlement pattern and previous uses.

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

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

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

Retaining stony rises provides a visual link to aboriginal travelling routes and the aboriginal heritage of the area.

NOTE:

Aspects of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage have generally been excluded from this report as artefact 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. Refer to the background report by Ecology and Heritage Partners for further details.



“Wollert, an Aboriginal word for “where possums abound”, takes its name from the land parish in which part of it is situated. From 1836 until the early 1850’s, sheep raising was the main activity. In 1853, much of the land was subdivided into smaller farm lots, and necessary access roads laid out.

The first school, established by the Church of England, commenced in 1852. A bluestone state school replaced it in 1877. The timber Methodist Church was erected in 1878 to replace an earlier one built in 1859.

For over one hundred years, until the 1960s, dairying was the mainstay of Wollert’s economy. Large quantities of milk and butter were produced for the nearby Melbourne market.”

Historic Buildings of the Whittlesea Shire, Wuchatsch and Waghorn, 1985



22



23



24



25



26



Visual Character

Waterways in Wollert have limited direct visual impact but the drainage plains that form around them are sparsely vegetated resulting in large areas of exposed landscape. Dams constructed for farming purposes also feature in the area.

Curly Sedge Creek (Image 27), an upper tributary of the Merri Creek catchment is the most visually prominent of the creeks with a distinct bank and some associated vegetation. It forms part of the west boundary of the Wollert PSP area.

Findon Creek (Image 28) and tributaries of Edgars Creek (Image 29, Darebin Creek Catchment) weave through the Wollert PSP area and have generally been degraded due to modification and use for farming. They have limited visual presence, forming no more than an ephemeral depression in the ground with limited associated vegetation. Refer to the Sub Regional Species Strategy for info regarding biodiversity values of these waterways.

An existing large dam (Image 30), located to the east of the site south of Boundary Road has visual appeal and is an attractor of wildlife.

Retention Values

Waterways are important ecological, cultural, aesthetic and recreational components of the landscape.

These natural drainage features present the opportunity to be enhanced to provide outlook and linear links across the site.

They provide habitat for animals including the endangered Growling Grass Frog.





Visual Character

The electricity transmission line easement running diagonally through the Wollert PSP area is a dominant constructed visual character element. Six pairs of pylons are located within the site, with other pylons directly visible from the site. The pylons are 42 metres in height and are spaced approximately 430 metres apart with multiple transmission lines strung between (Image 31).

The pylons are visually dominant in areas of minimal tree cover but recede into the landscape where tree cover increases (Image 32). Generally the 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.

Retention Value

The electricity transmission line performs a critical utility function but has a poor visual character. This 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 visual character elements will increase the visual prominence of the pylons and transmission lines. Retention of these elements in their vicinity should be given strong regard.

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

VISUAL IMPACTS FROM NEARBY USES:

Extensive gas pipe line easements exist throughout the site. These easements will increase in visibility once subdivision occurs as no development may occur within the easement.

The APA Gasnet site adjacent to the northwest corner of the study area currently houses a gas compressor station. This existing use is highly visible due to limited vegetation cover in the adjacent areas of the PSP site. Increasing landscaping along the adjacent boundaries of the PSP site will assist with screening this use.

The Austral brickworks located west of the PSP boundary is highly visible due to its raised position relative to adjacent areas of the PSP site. Tree planting within the PSP area may be ineffective in this case as screening will be required to be located closer to the brickworks. The North Growth Corridor Plan indicates that the land between the Wollert PSP and brickworks has biodiversity values and may therefore have potential for tree planting that will effectively visually screen the area.

The Wollert Landfill and Hanson Quarry sites form the eastern border of the site are well screened by existing trees and landscape mounding. Retaining these screening elements will be important as the Wollert area is developed.

While full discussion of the impacts of the potential future E6 freeway corridor has been excluded from this report, it is worth noting that this element will have significant visual impact on the surrounding area and that a full visual character assessment will be required as part of any investigative studies prior to commencement of the project.







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 Wollert 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 Wollert 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.
- Individual stony rises, including groupings to show where they form part of a larger basalt lava flow.
- Ridgelines and high points in the landscape with opportunities for panoramic views.
- Heritage buildings and the network of dry stone walls found throughout the precinct.
- Aboriginal artefacts, areas and scar trees 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.
- Gas easements and the electricity transmission line easement. The gas easements are not visible in the current rural use of the land, but development surrounding them in the future will expose the lack of development within their boundaries. They have the potential to physically and visually link the visual character elements.
- 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.

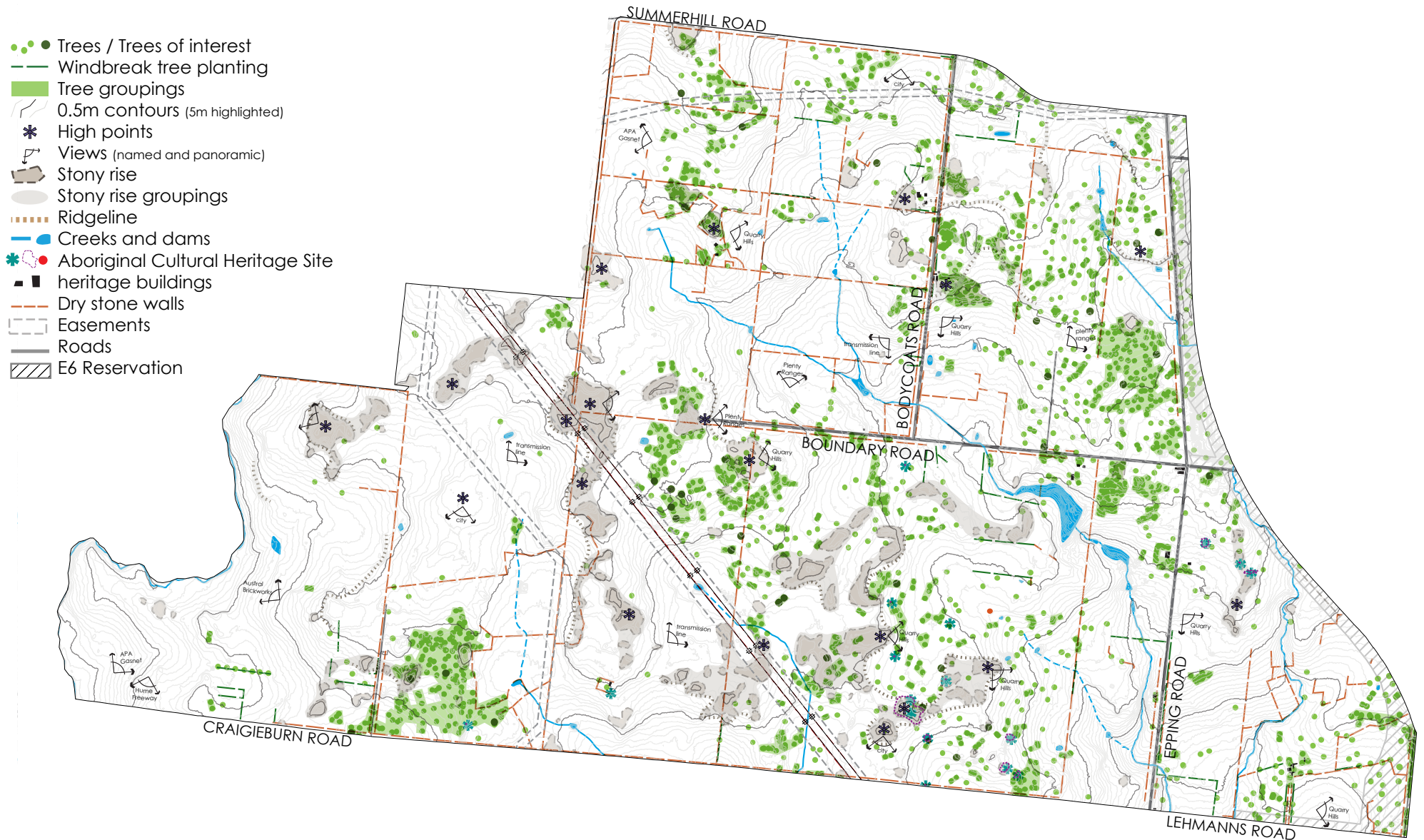


Figure 3: Wollert PSP Visual Character Elements Plan
WOLLERT VISUAL CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Visual Character Sectors Analysis

The Wollert PSP area has been divided into five 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 five sectors identifies opportunities and constraints presented by the visual character elements across the site.

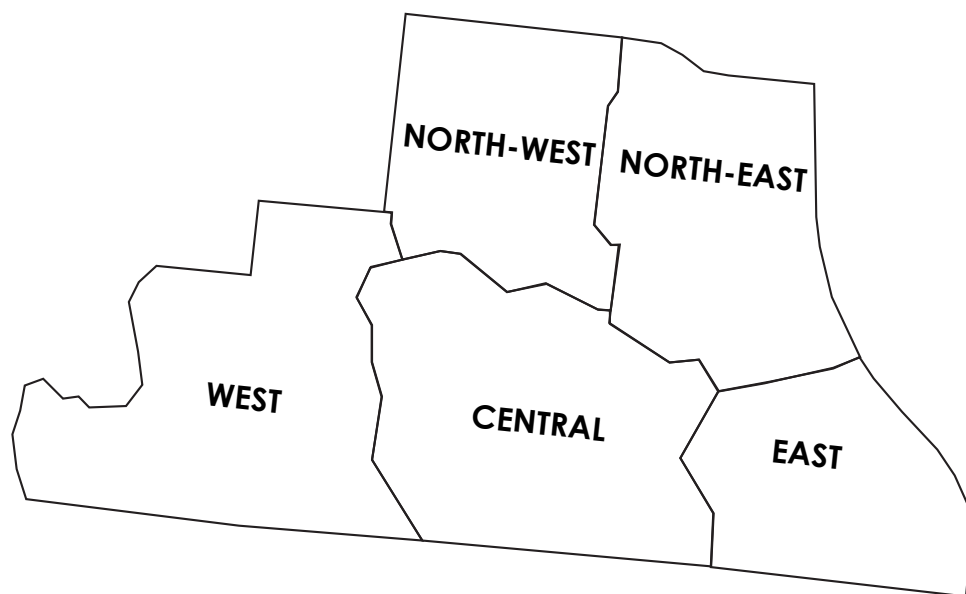


Figure 4: Visual Character Sectors

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

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.

Heritage Trail

A trail that presents the opportunity to physically link a number of heritage places throughout the precinct.

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 Wollert 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.

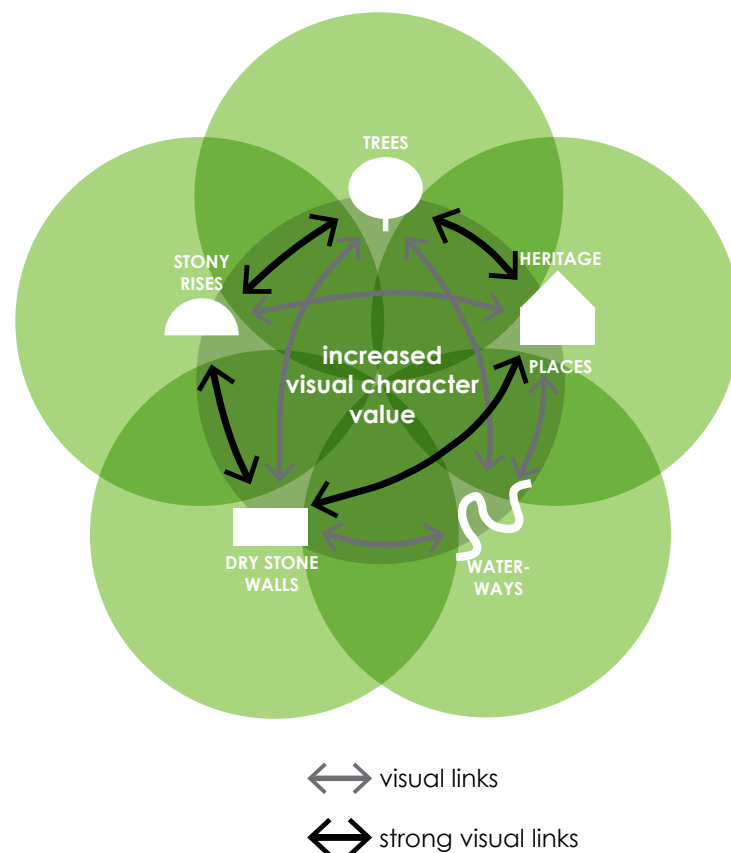
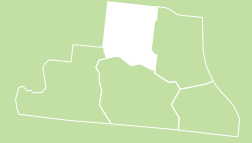


Figure 5: Visual Character Element Values

Opportunities / Constraints: North-West Sector



37



38



39



40



A. KEY PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITY SUMMERHILL ROAD RESERVATION

Existing historical road reserve lined both sides with dry stone walls could provide key north-south pedestrian/cycle link. This road reservation may also be used for planting to screen infrastructure at the APA Gasnet site to the west. (Image 38)

1. The interface and views to the APA Gasnet site need to be carefully considered along the site's west boundary.

2. Existing dry stone walls in the woodlands should be retained to create definition and special character in the woodland. (Image 39)

3. A heritage trail along Findon Creek could link key heritage places in this sector and throughout the precinct.

4. Opportunity to provide a shared path link from the Findon Creek tributary to the north boundary of the PSP area incorporating dry stone walls.

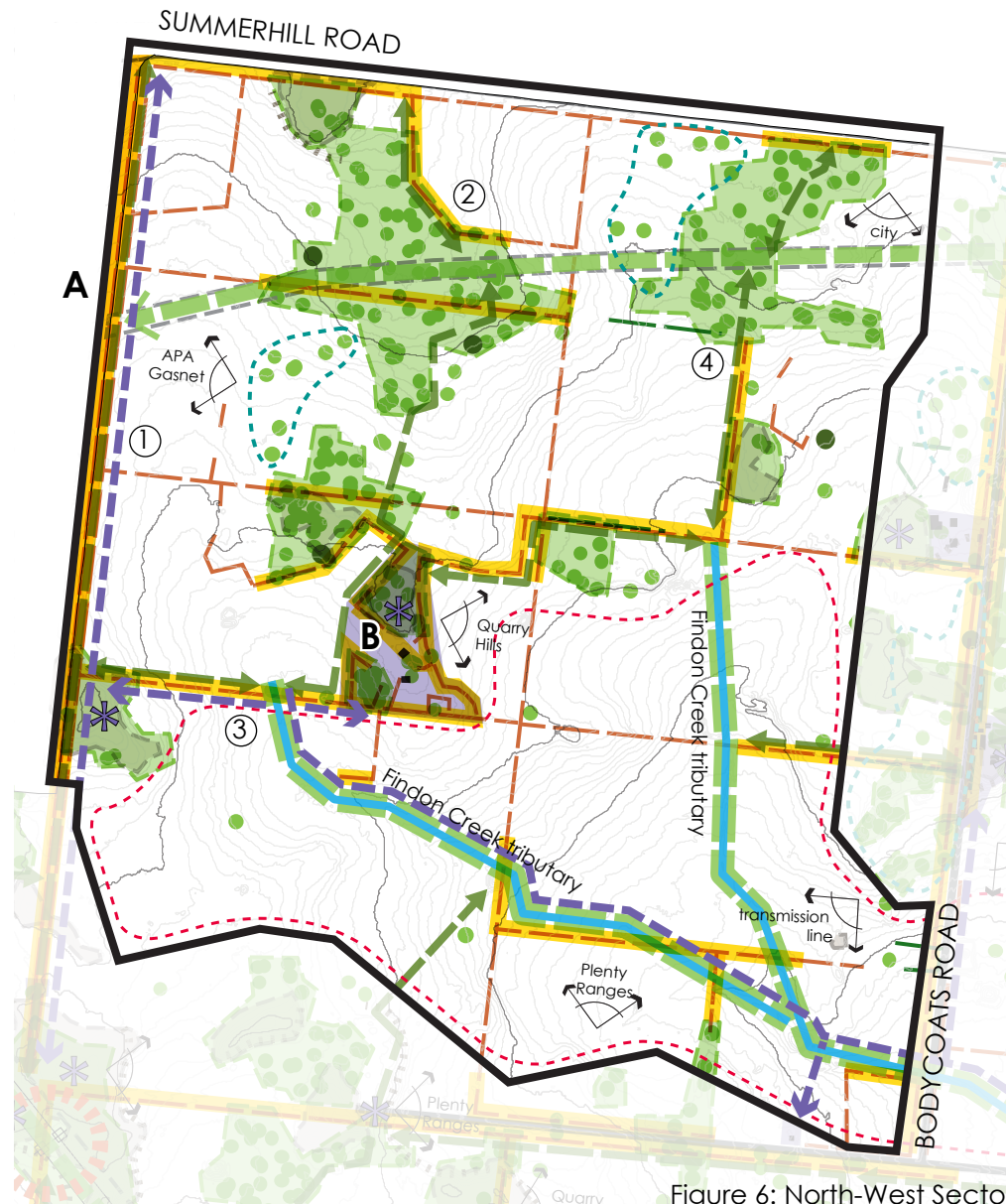


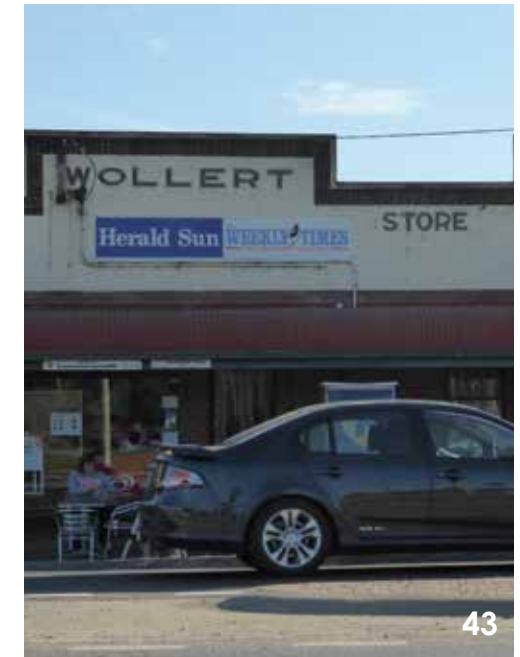
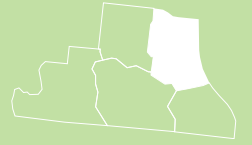
Figure 6: North-West Sector

B. KEY PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITY 71-75 BODYCOATS ROAD

The heritage buildings and sheds require further assessment as to their heritage significance, but combined with the surrounding natural features they have value for their visual character. A peppercorn tree and dry stone wall sits at the top of a stony rise that also features River Red Gums. Dry stone walls define its edges. The sites elevation results in panoramic views in most directions. (Images 37 & 40)

- Trees / Trees of interest / Windbreak
- ✱ Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Site
- 0.5m contours (5m highlighted)
- ✱ High points / Views
- Stony Rise / Ridgeline
- Conservation / Open Space Areas
- Creek links
- Dry stone walls (highlighted priority retention)
- Heritage places and buildings
- Heritage trail
- Easement links
- Key strategic links
- Visually exposed areas
- Sensitive design area (scattered trees)
- Roads / E6 Reservation
- Transmission pylon locations

Opportunities / Constraints: North-East Sector





C. KEY PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITY SPRINGVALE-BODYCOATS FARM

The cluster of bluestone buildings along Bodycoats Road could provide a focal point for local heritage. (Images 41 & 44)
The buildings appear to be in good condition increasing opportunities for adaptive re-use. Widening of Bodycoats Road should occur to the west to protect this site.

1. A key undulating east-west viewline exists along Boundary Road. A shared path along this road would take advantage of views and assist with linking the intermittent dry stone walls that line the road. (Image 45)

2. The existing dam is a visual feature and attracts a large range of wildlife. Opportunities for retaining the dam should be explored. (Image 46)

3. This area contains ridgelines that will create outlook opportunities over the local area. Development on these ridgelines should not detract from their visual prominence.

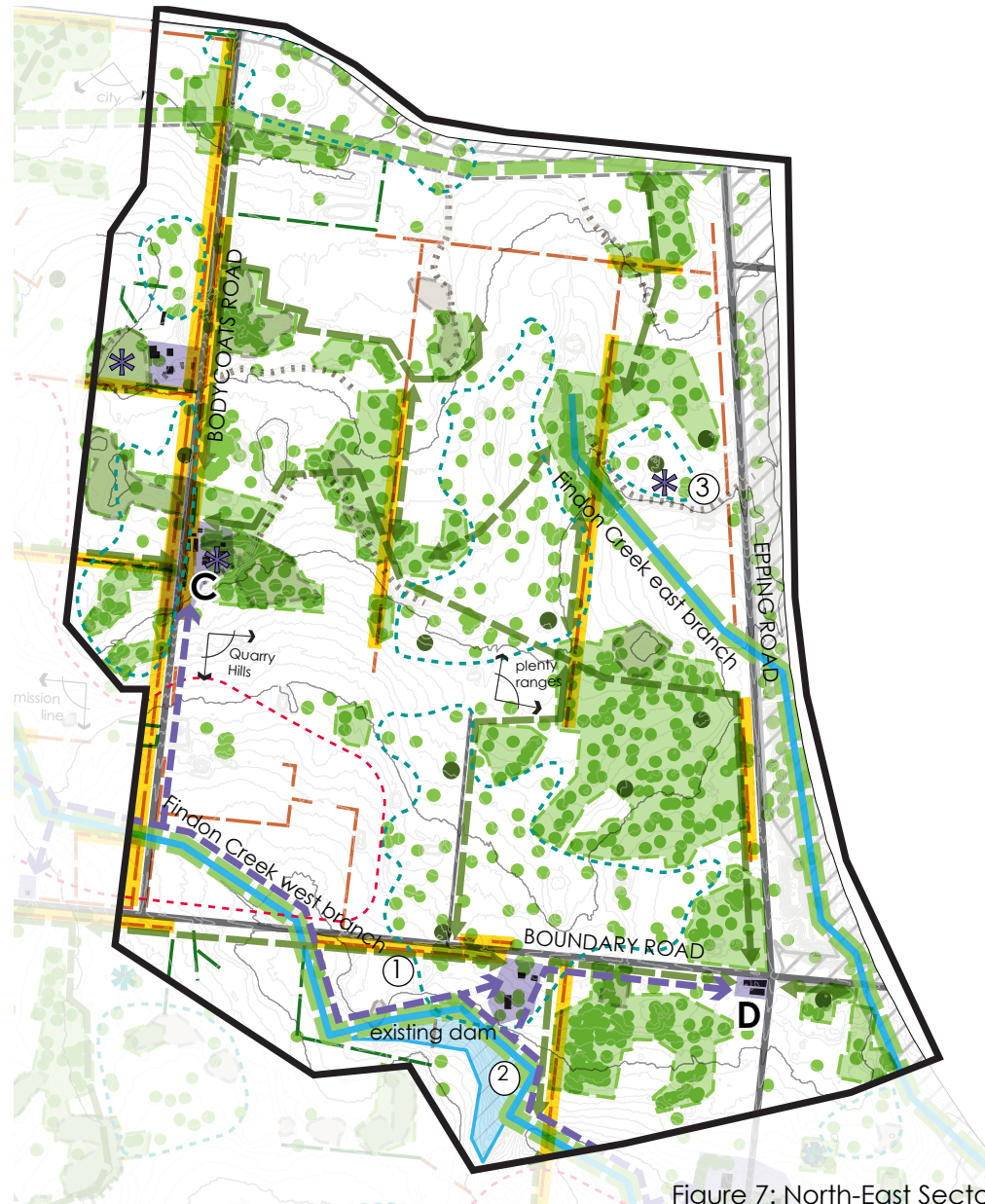


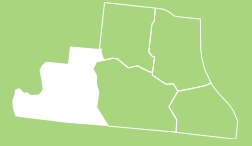
Figure 7: North-East Sector

D. KEY PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITY DANCE PALAIS, GENERAL STORE & POST OFFICE

This cluster of buildings on the corner of Boundary and Epping Roads mark the historic township of Wollert and should be protected. New development in the area should sensitively respond to their scale and materiality. Retaining the woodland to the north of Boundary road will assist in capturing the historic rural context and also strengthen the character of this potential gateway site. (Images 42 & 43)

- Trees / Trees of interest / Windbreak
- ✳ Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Site
- 0.5m contours (5m highlighted)
- ✳ High points / Views
- Stony Rise / Ridgeline
- Conservation / Open Space Areas
- Creek links
- Dry stone walls (highlighted priority retention)
- Heritage places and buildings
- Heritage trail
- Easement links
- Key strategic links
- Visually exposed areas
- Sensitive design area (scattered trees)
- Roads / E6 Reservation
- Transmission pylon locations

Opportunities / Constraints: West Sector



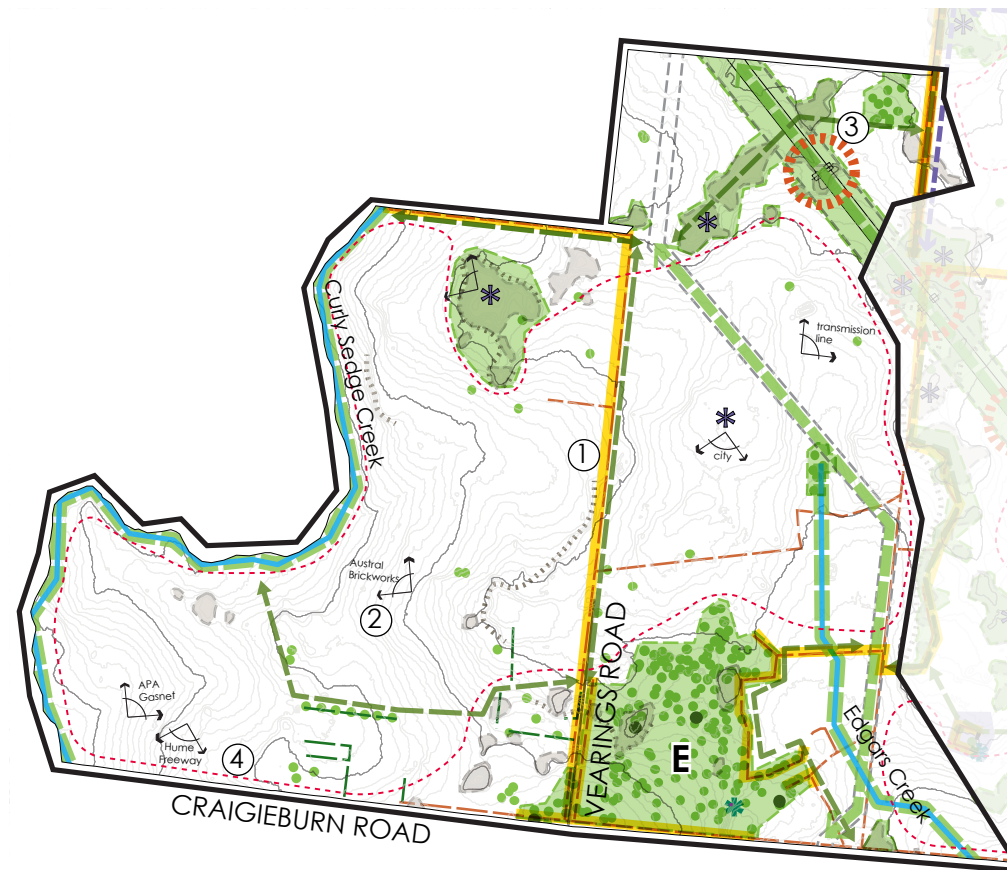


1. Dry stone walls are one of the few visual features of this open plain area. Opportunities to incorporate these in to road reserves or along shared path routes should be considered.

2. The open virtually treeless nature of this area leaves it visually exposed and also results in unencumbered views within the site to the transmission lines and out of the site to the brickworks, freeway and gas compressor station. Introduced landscaping will play a key role in screening these industrial uses. The creation of character will largely rely on the form of urban development in this location. (Images 47, 50 & 51)

3. This small River Red Gum pocket woodland is visually appealing and may be able to be linked to the nearby heritage road reserve to provide a local sense of place. Its retention will also assist in visually screening the gas compressor station. (Image 52)

4. The Hume Freeway and Craigieburn Road are visually prominent in this location. Increased screening of both roads is recommended. (Image 49)

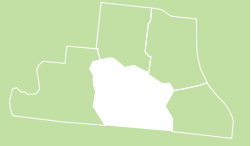


E. KEY PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITY CRAIGIEBURN ROAD WOODLAND
This large River Red Gum Woodland is the key character feature in the immediate area as much of the surrounds are treeless open plains. Extensive dry stone walling along the edges of this woodland provides opportunities for physically defining its boundaries and also locating shared paths networks along the wall edge. (Image 48)

- Trees / Trees of interest / Windbreak
- ✳ Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Site
- 0.5m contours (5m highlighted)
- ✳ High points / Views
- Stony Rise / Ridgeline
- Conservation / Open Space Areas
- Creek links
- Dry stone walls (highlighted priority retention)
- Heritage places and buildings
- Heritage trail
- Easement links
- Key strategic links
- Visually exposed areas
- Sensitive design area (scattered trees)
- Roads / E6 Reservation
- ✳ Transmission pylon locations

Figure 8: West Sector

Opportunities / Constraints: Central Sector





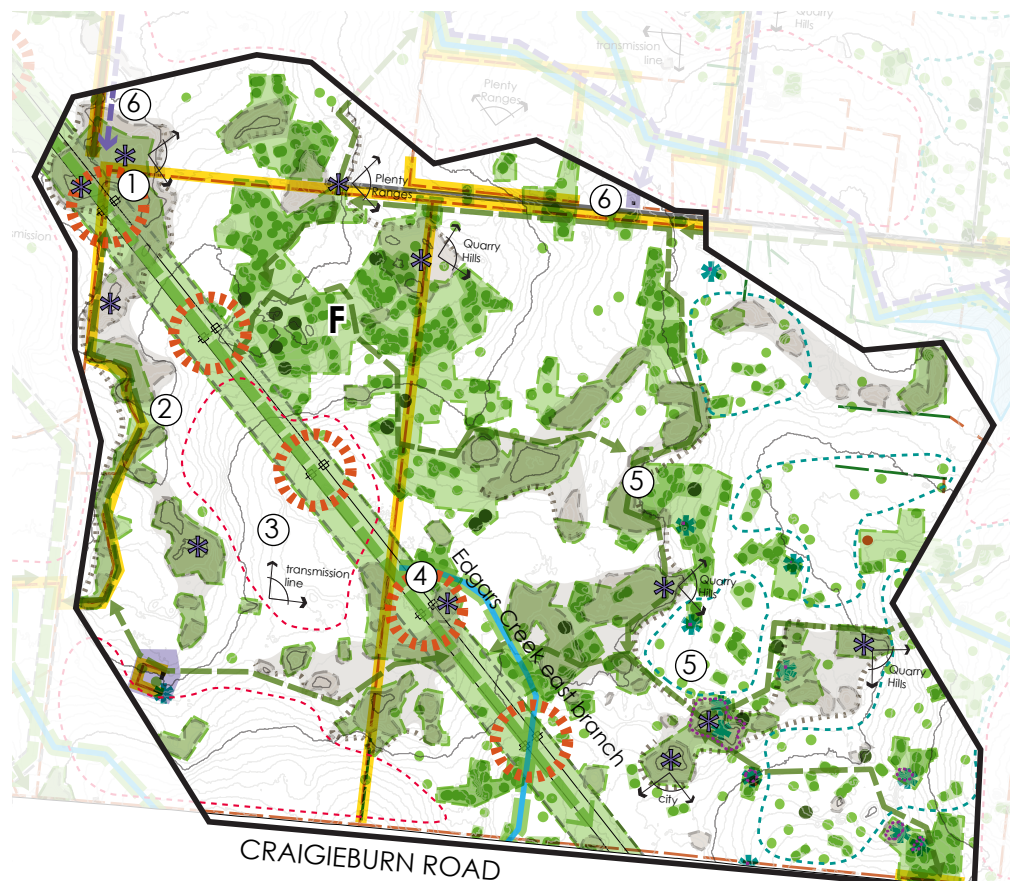
F. KEY PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITY BOUNDARY ROAD WOODLAND

This extensive River Red Gum woodland is one of the key visual character areas of the Wollert PSP due to its location, scale and outlook. It presents opportunities for co-locating with passive open space, shared paths and housing. (Image 53 & 54)

1. Very large stony rise located at the meeting point of the heritage road reserve, dry stone walls and transmission lines. Panoramic views over the site in this location should be considered in the design response. (Image 56)

2. This north-south continuous series of stony rises with associated dry stone walls may present an opportunity for a linear link through the site.

3. The Transmission line pylons are generally well screened from the east by woodlands and stony rises. From the west their visibility increases. Landscaping within the easement and along its edges will be critical to reducing the pylons' visual impact.



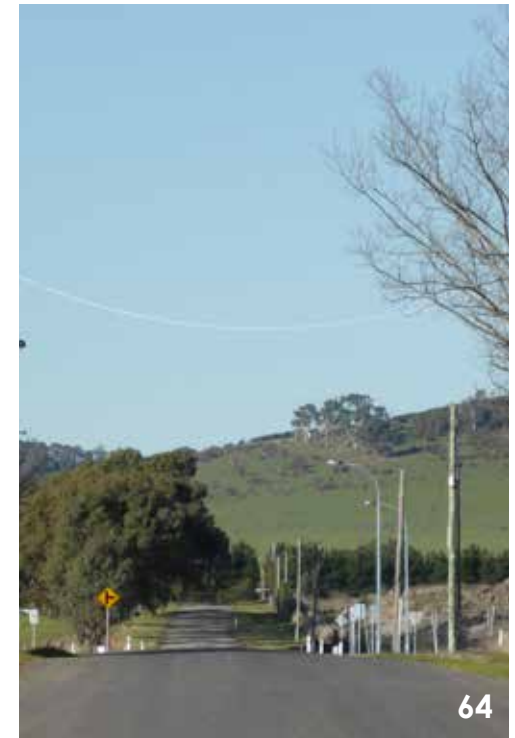
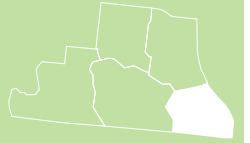
4. The stony rises along the easement often coincide with the location of pylons. This presents an opportunity for revegetation of the stony rises to assist in visually screening the pylons. (Image 55)

5. Linking stony rises and River Red Gum woodlands with shared path / open space network, will take advantage of high points for views over surrounding area and to the city and Quarry Hills.

6. Potential heritage trail along Findon Creek's west branch links to the historic Summerhill Road Reservation and the house at 160 Boundary Road.

Figure 9: Central Sector

Opportunities / Constraints: East Sector





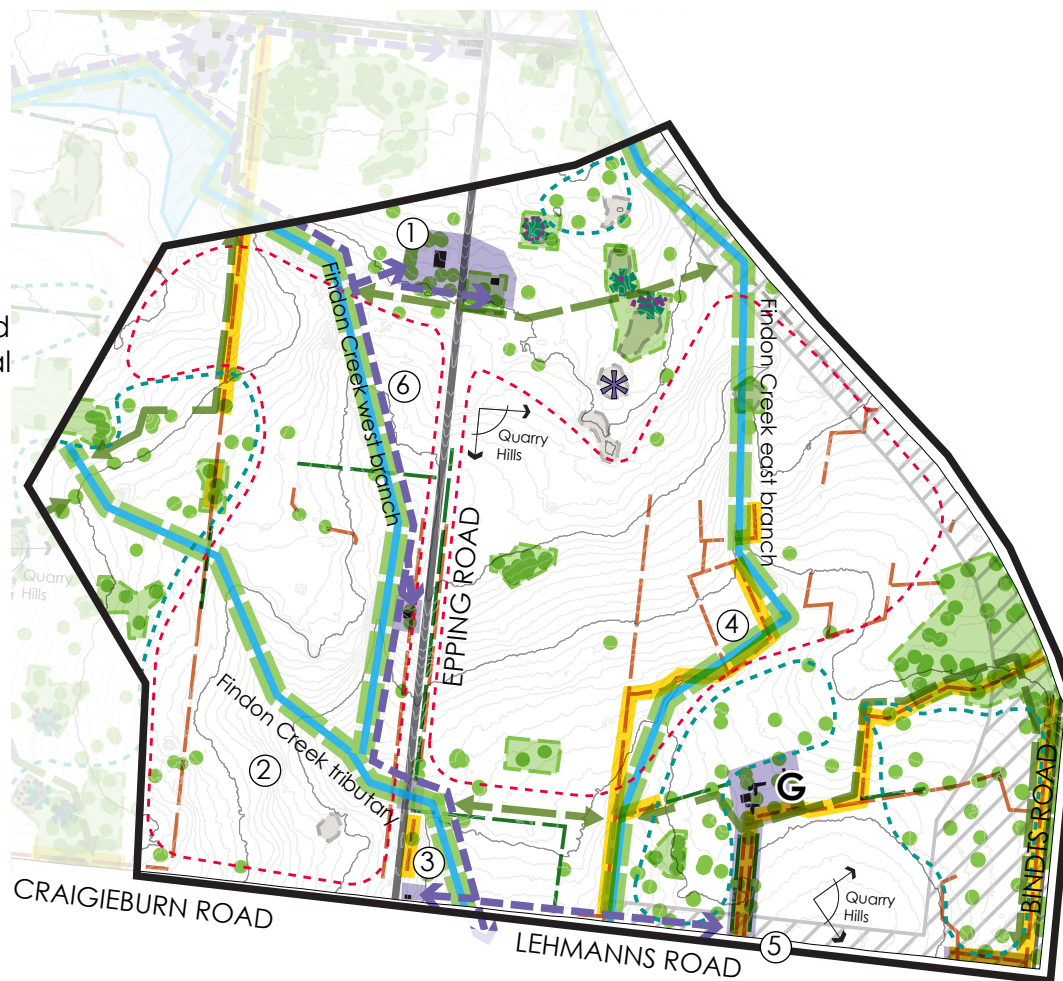
1. The historic Wollert school building is a landmark on Epping Road. Viewlines to this building must be protected. (Image 61)

2. Open plain with few visual features other than existing tributaries. Development will be highly visible from Epping Road. The embellishment of the tributaries will be important to add to the visual character of the local area. (Image 59)

3. The church building on the corner of Lehmanns and Craigieburn Road while small in scale is a place of local identity. It is currently threatened by road widening. Sensitive relocation of this building should be explored. (Image 60)

4. Investigate potential for retention of series of dry stone walls in this area and integration with embellished tributary where possible.

5. The Quarry Hills are a prominent visual feature in this area due to the viewline down Lehmanns Road. (Image 64)



G. KEY PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITY SCHULTZ 'PINE GROVE FARM'

This heritage place is linked to the nearby creek and woodland by a series of dry stone walls. The driveway features dry stone walls and mature pine trees and has a strong presence. Its location on the edge of the plain and with panoramic views of the Quarry Hills could be an ideal opportunity to build on the local identity. (Images 62, 63)

6. Potential heritage trail along Findon Creek's west branch links all heritage places in this sector.

- Trees / Trees of interest / Windbreak
- ✱ Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Site
- 0.5m contours (5m highlighted)
- * High points / Views
- Stony Rise / Ridgeline
- Conservation / Open Space Areas
- Creek links
- Dry stone walls (highlighted priority retention)
- Heritage places and buildings
- ↔ Heritage trail
- ↔ Easement links
- ↔ Key strategic links
- Visually exposed areas
- Sensitive design area (scattered trees)
- Roads / E6 Reservation
- ⊙ Transmission pylon locations

Figure 10: East Sector

Summary - Opportunities / Constraints

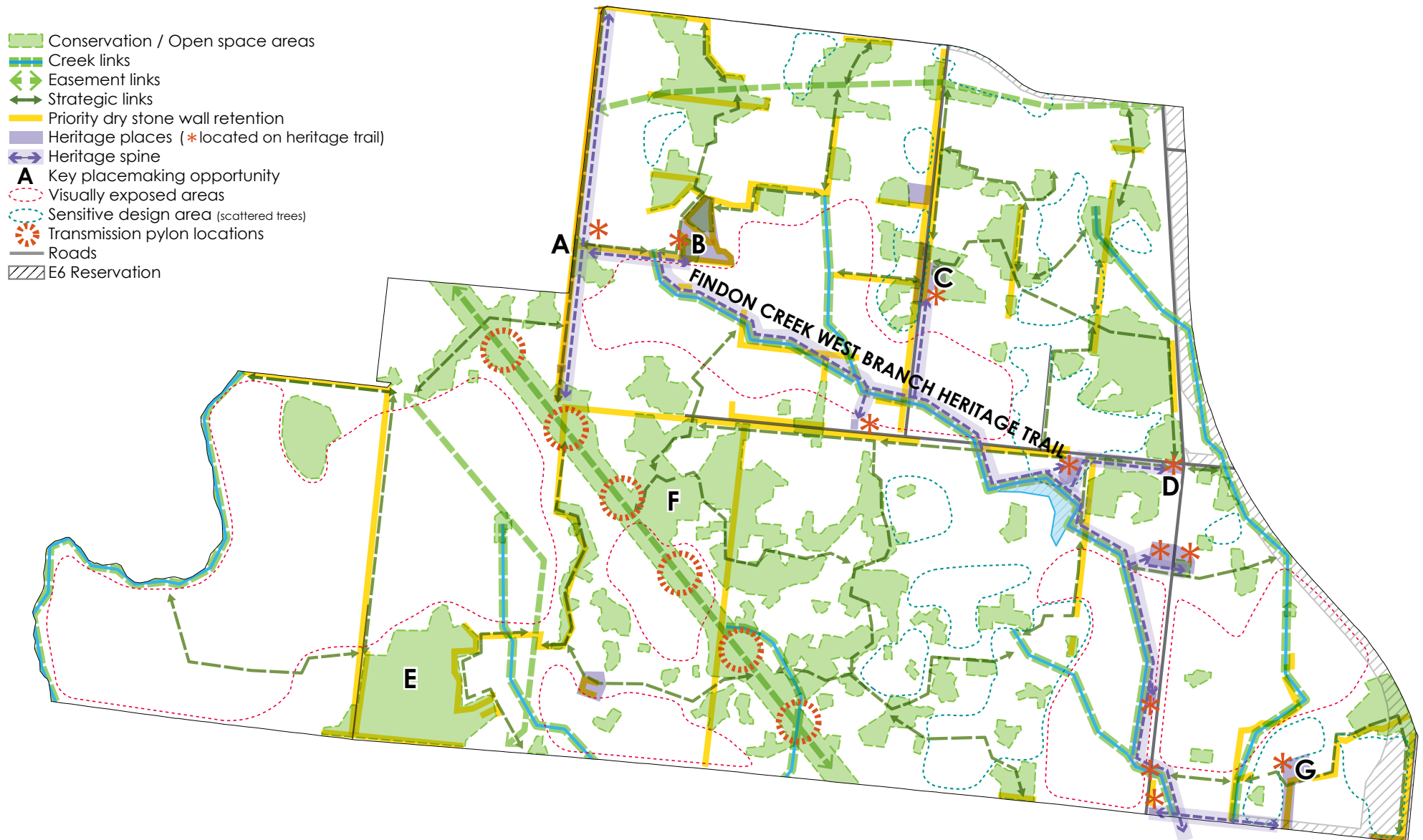


Figure 11: Wollert Summary Opportunities / Constraints

Summary - Key Place Making Opportunities



Seven significant sites and one precinct link for local place making have been identified as part of the site visits and site analysis. The sites were selected based on a variety of criteria including their stand out visual appeal, contribution to local identity and location. Each of these sites require further investigation and site analysis as part of the PSP and subdivision process. The sites are:

A. Summerhill Road Reservation

B. 71-75 Bodycoats Road

C. Springvale - Bodycoats Farm

D. Dance Palais, General Store and Post Office

E. Craigieburn Road Woodland

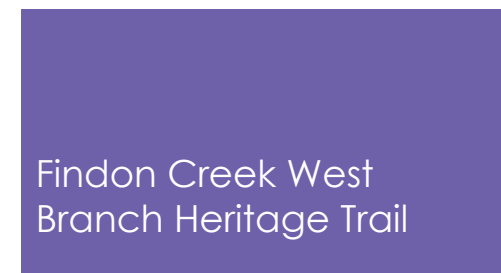
F. Boundary Road Woodland

G. Schultz 'Pine Grove Farm'

The precinct link is:

Findon Creek West Branch Heritage Trail

A potential heritage trail along Findon Creek's west branch could physically link many of the identified heritage places in the precinct. Visual character elements along this trail should be prioritised for retention. The precinct wide scale of this link has the potential to greatly add to the character of the Wollert PSP.







local case studies

Introduction

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.

Wollert's visual character elements have been retained in a variety of different urban settings across the local area. These sites provide relevant case studies particularly given their close proximity to the Wollert PSP area and their recent development.

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





Figure 12: Case study locations

Case Study Locations

1. Epping North Conservation Reserve

Lyndarum Dr, Epping North

2. Creeds Farm

Redding Rise, Epping North

3. Transmission Line Easement

Great Brome Ave, Epping North

4. Findon Creek

Hayston Bvd, Epping North

5. Hehr's Pine Park Farm / 3rd Place

Pine Park Dr, Wollert

6. Lehmann's Farm Playground

Broadleaf Dr, Epping North

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



TREES



STONY
RISES



DRY STONE
WALLS

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 67 & 69).

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 66).





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 71)

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 70)

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 67)



Figure 13: Epping North Conservation Reserve

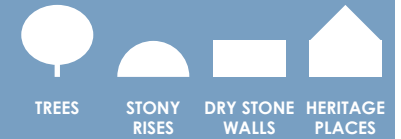
5. An integrated housing site at the edge of the reserve has frontage to the street. Frontage to the park to provide passive surveillance of the area would be a better outcome.

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 75, 76)

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 72, 73)

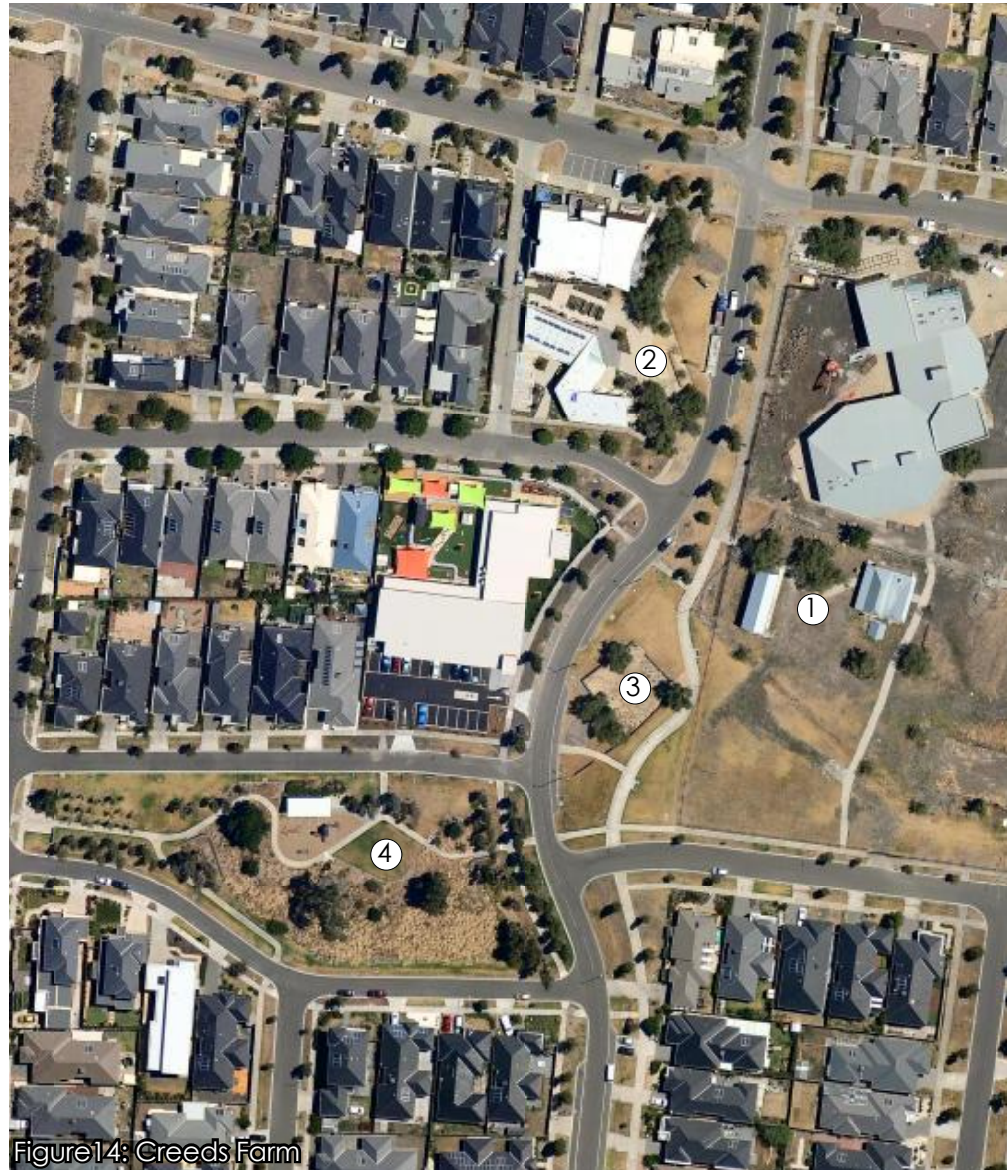


Figure 14: Creeds Farm

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 74, 77, 78)

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. 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 80)

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 79)

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 81)

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 83)

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.

4. 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 85)

2. Findon Creek has been embellished in this location, forming wetlands and a technical drainage function. (Images 85, 86)

3. Houses front the creek separated by local roads. (Image 84)

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 84)

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 86, 87)

5. 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.



88



89



90



91



92



93



94



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 89, 92, 93)

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 89)

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 91)

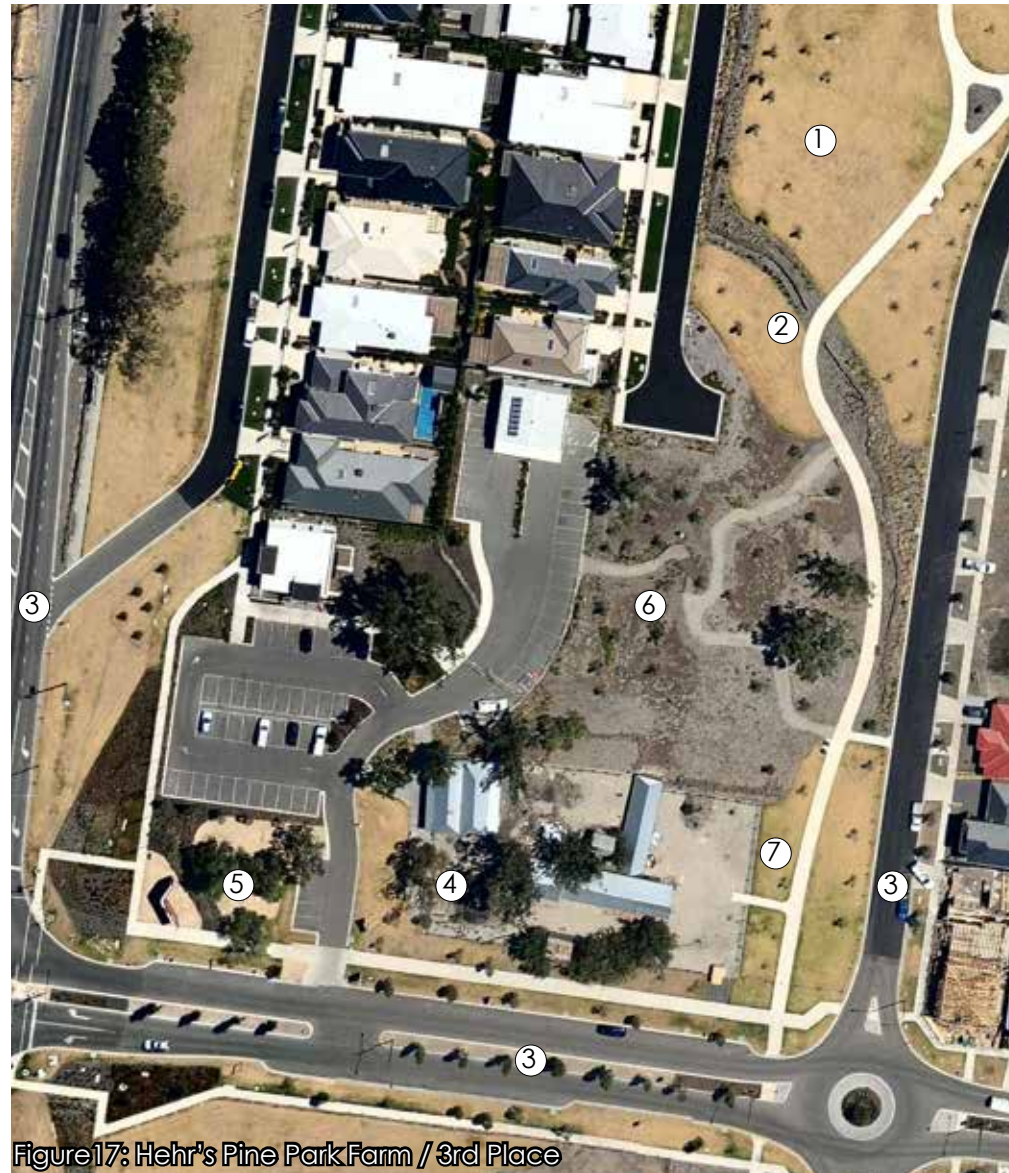


Figure 17: Hehr's Pine Park Farm / 3rd Place

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 92, 93)

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

6. 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 97, 98)

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

4. The recreated house foundation and reconstructed brick garage wall. (Image 95)

5. A new windmill replaces the original structure. (Image 96)

6. Circular planters mark the location of old wells. (Image 96)



Figure 18: Lehmann's Farm Playground

Example interpretive signage found at the site (Image 98):

'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.

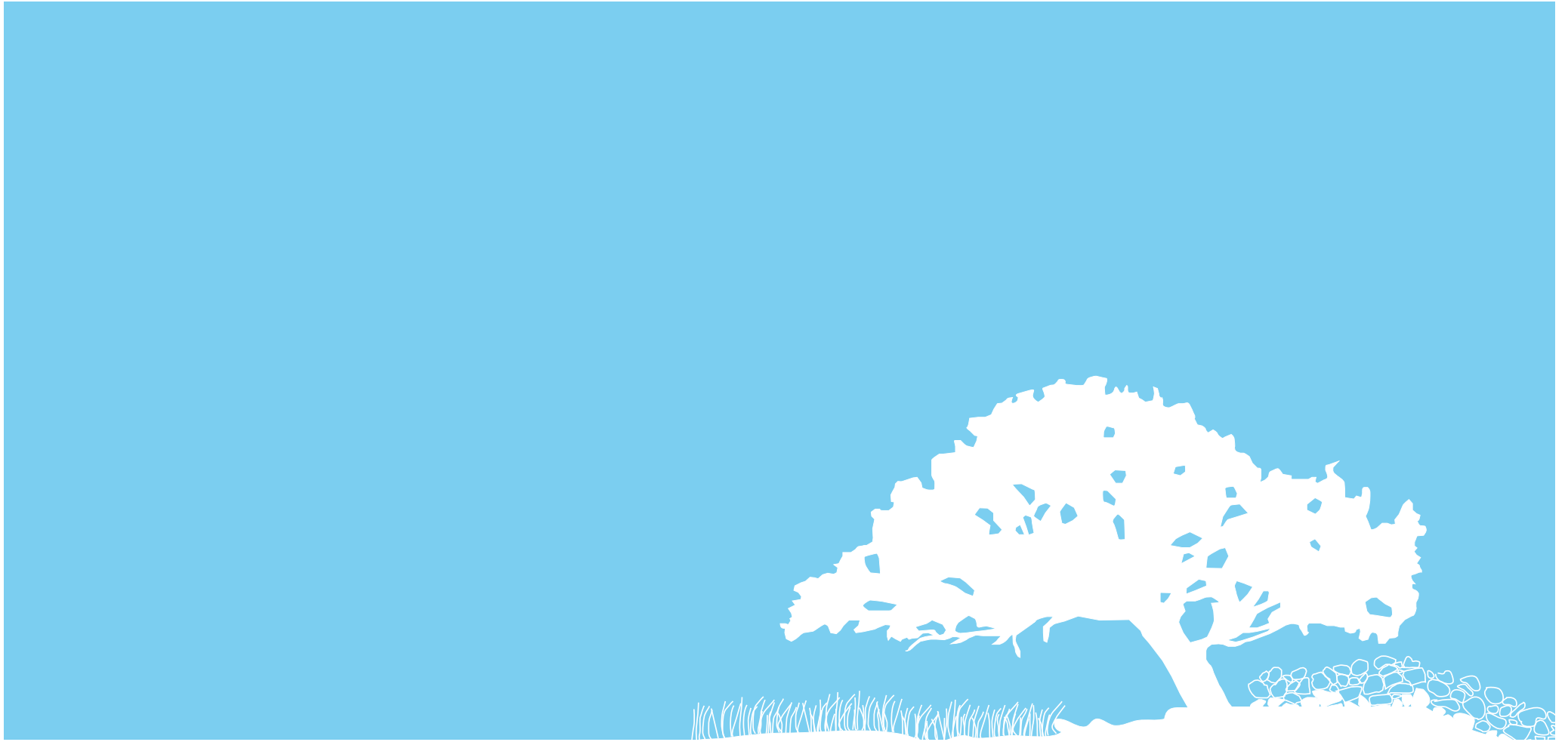
Can you see it?

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 Wollert.
- 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 adaptation for the PSP documentation for use in subdivision design throughout Wollert.

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 38-47) 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 Wollert.



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 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 as part of subdivision permit application.
R4	River Red Gums must be retained within the public realm, not within areas of private ownership.

Guidelines

G1	Identified placemaking opportunity sites (page 49) 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, identified as strategic links on the Summary Opportunity and Constraints plan (page 48) should be retained.
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.



G4	Tree groupings should generally be prioritised for retention over individual trees.	G12	Stony Rises should be retained in conservation or passive open space areas (eg. Epping North Conservation Reserve case study)
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.	G13	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.
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.	G14	The series of Stony Rises featuring Dry Stone Walls running north-south from the Summerhill Road Reservation should be used as a key shared path link and opportunity for views over the surrounding area.
G7	Shared paths should be provided within conservation areas to direct pedestrian movement and restrict movement through high value areas (eg. Findon Creek case study).	G15	Subdivisions should protect and enhance creek corridors to facilitate linear trails and open space opportunities.
G8	Use placemaking opportunity sites, heritage places, viewlines and significant trees as local landmarks to promote legibility and wayfinding in the street and path network.	G16	Hard landscape within open space should incorporate local materials, natural colours and finishes to complement the landscape (eg. Findon Creek case study).
G9	Shared path links should be provided along Boundary Road and Craigieburn Road / Lehmanns Road to take advantage of views to the Quarry Hills and visually link Dry Stone Walls lining these roads.		
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	The central treeless area within the Boundary Road Woodland should be utilised for passive open space to physically and visually connect the area.		

Recommendations

Heritage

Requirements

R5	Conservation Management Plans must be undertaken for heritage places to ascertain cultural value, significance and appropriate site boundaries.
R6	Location, quality and retention value of existing Dry Stone Walls must be identified in subdivision plans.
R7	Heritage places must be prominent in the subdivision design (eg. Hehr's Pine Park Farm case study) to ensure that their importance is acknowledged.
R8	A planning permit must be gained for any alterations to or removal of Dry Stone Walls.
R9	Heritage places not able to be adaptively reused but able to be retained as part of open space must be made safe and robust, sustainably maintained and appropriately integrated with other open space functions.

Guidelines

G17	A heritage trail should be established along Findon Creek's west branch to link heritage places and dry stone walls throughout the precinct.
G18	A key north-south shared path link should be created within the Summerhill Road Reservation to enhance and increase its visual prominence.
G19	Open space should be located adjacent to heritage places to provide a visual 'rural' context (eg. Hehr's Pine Park Farm case study).

G20	Heritage places and their contributory elements should be conserved, restored or adaptively reused to add to the creation of local identity (eg. Creed's Farm).
G21	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).
G22	Heritage places should be protected from road widening. Where protection of a heritage place from road widening is not possible (such as for the Wollert Church) consider appropriate relocation.
G23	The heritage Dance Palais, General Store and Post Office should be retained as they play an important role as local landmarks and assist wayfinding throughout the area. Retaining the woodland to the north of the site should be considered to capture the historic rural context and strengthen the character of this important gateway.
G24	Views to the historic Wollert school building should be protected to retain it as a landmark in the landscape.
G25	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).



Interface Treatments and Built Form

G26	Vearings Road should be closed in the Craigieburn Road Woodland area to protect the extent of the woodland and incorporate the Dry Stone Walls lining the road.
G27	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.
G28	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.
G29	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.
G30	Incorporate materials salvaged from removed dry stone walls in the precinct in to landscape features or returned to stony rises where appropriate.

Requirements	
R10	Built form must respond to the scale, proportion and materials of adjacent or nearby heritage places in a contemporary manner.
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 Curly Sedge Creek) to allow a visual transition.

Recommendations

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 to nearby industrial uses such the APA Gasnet site, Austral brickworks, Wollert Landfill and Hanson Quarry and also infrastructure such as the Hume Freeway.

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.
G39	Stony Rises within the transmission easement should be revegetated to provide visual amenity within the easement.
G40	Arterial or connector roads should not be aligned with the edge of the transmission line easement to avoid visually reinforcing its edge. Local roads may align with the edge for short distances (eg. Transmission Line Easement, Great Brome Ave, Epping North case study)
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 Wollert 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:

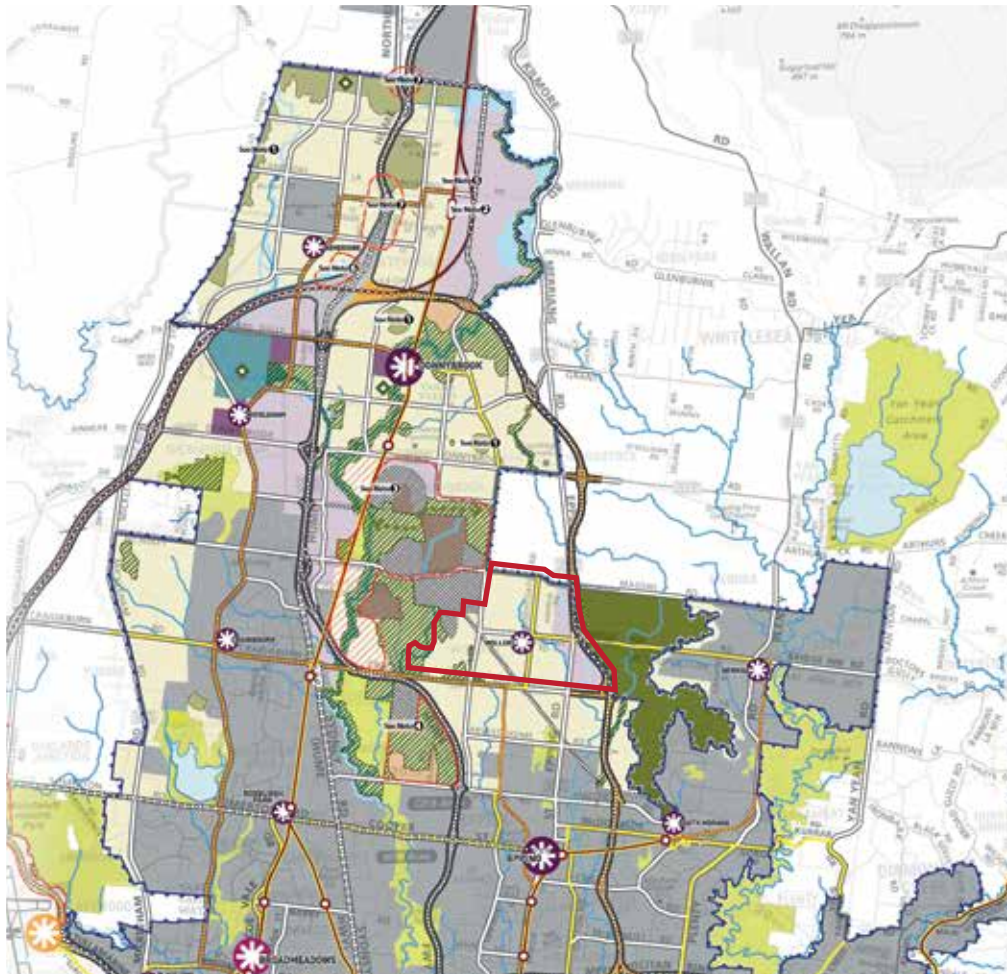


Figure 19: North Growth Corridor Plan

North Growth Corridor Plan (GAA, 2012)

The North Growth Corridor Plan sets the strategic direction for the Wollert 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 Wollert 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)

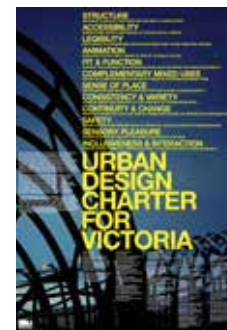
Key principles relevant to this assessment:

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 artefacts 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 Wollert 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 Wollert PSP.

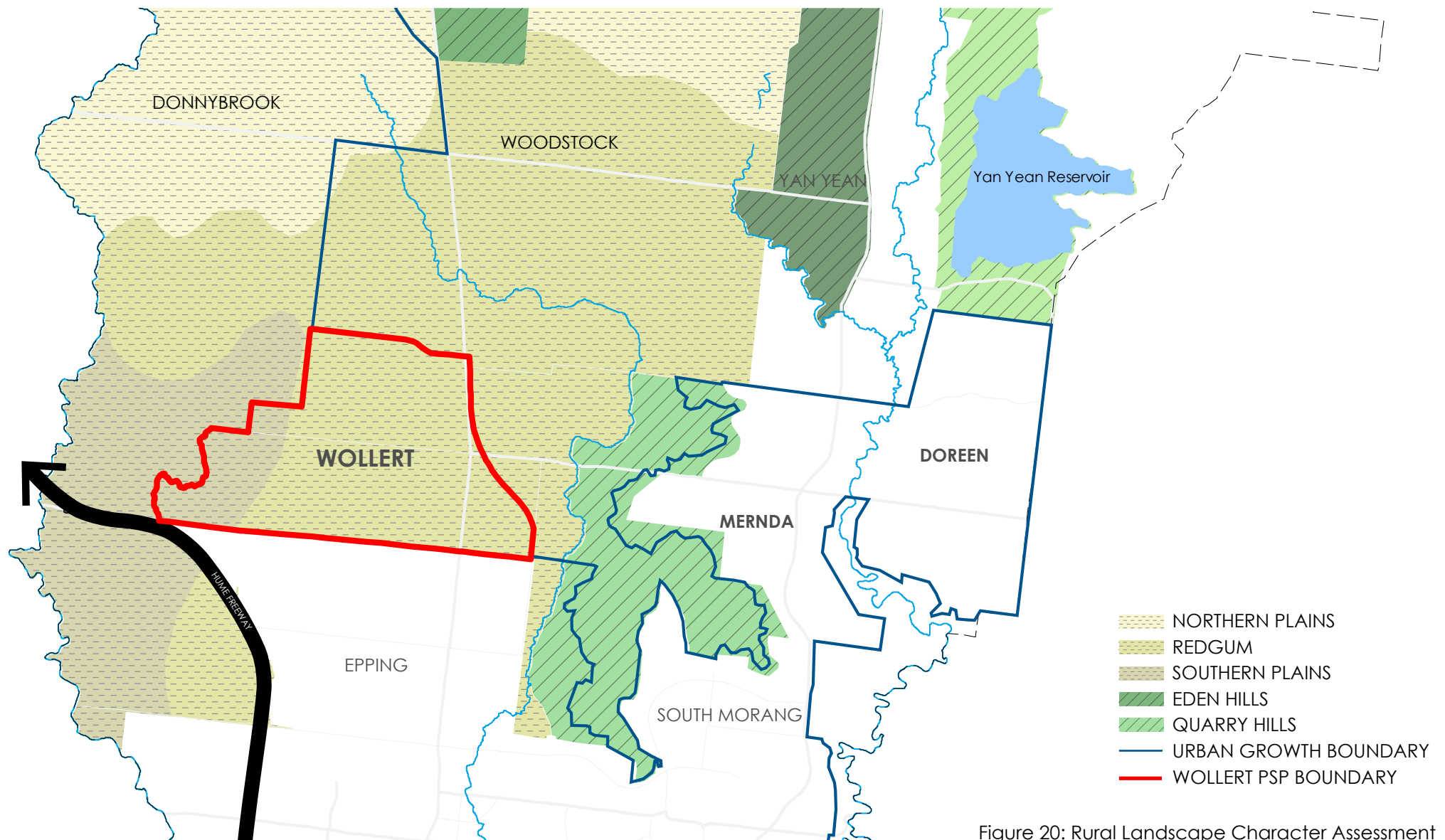



Figure 20: Rural Landscape Character Assessment

Heritage Places in Wollert

LEGEND

- A. Medland Estate Heritage Conservation Area
- B. Harvest Home Lane (Rd) Heritage Conservation Area

- 1. Schulz 'Pine Grove Farm'
- 2. Springvale - Bodycoats Farm
- 3. Wollert Primary School
- 4. Wollert Methodist Church
- 5. 260 Craigieburn Road Farm Complex
- 6. Epping Road Bridge
- 7. Hayes Cottage
- 8. Wollert General Store and Post Office
- 9. Pittaways Wayside House Dance Palais
- 10. Cameron's House
- 11. Summerhill Road Reservation
- 12. Dry Stone Walls
- 13. 71-75 Bodycoats Road
- 14. 115 Bodycoats Road
- 15. 160 Boundary Road
- 16. 395 Epping Road
- 17. General Dry Stone Walls

-  Heritage Feature
-  Heritage Conservation Area
-  Heritage Overlay
-  Draft Heritage Overlay
-  Heritage Buildings
-  Dry Stone Walls

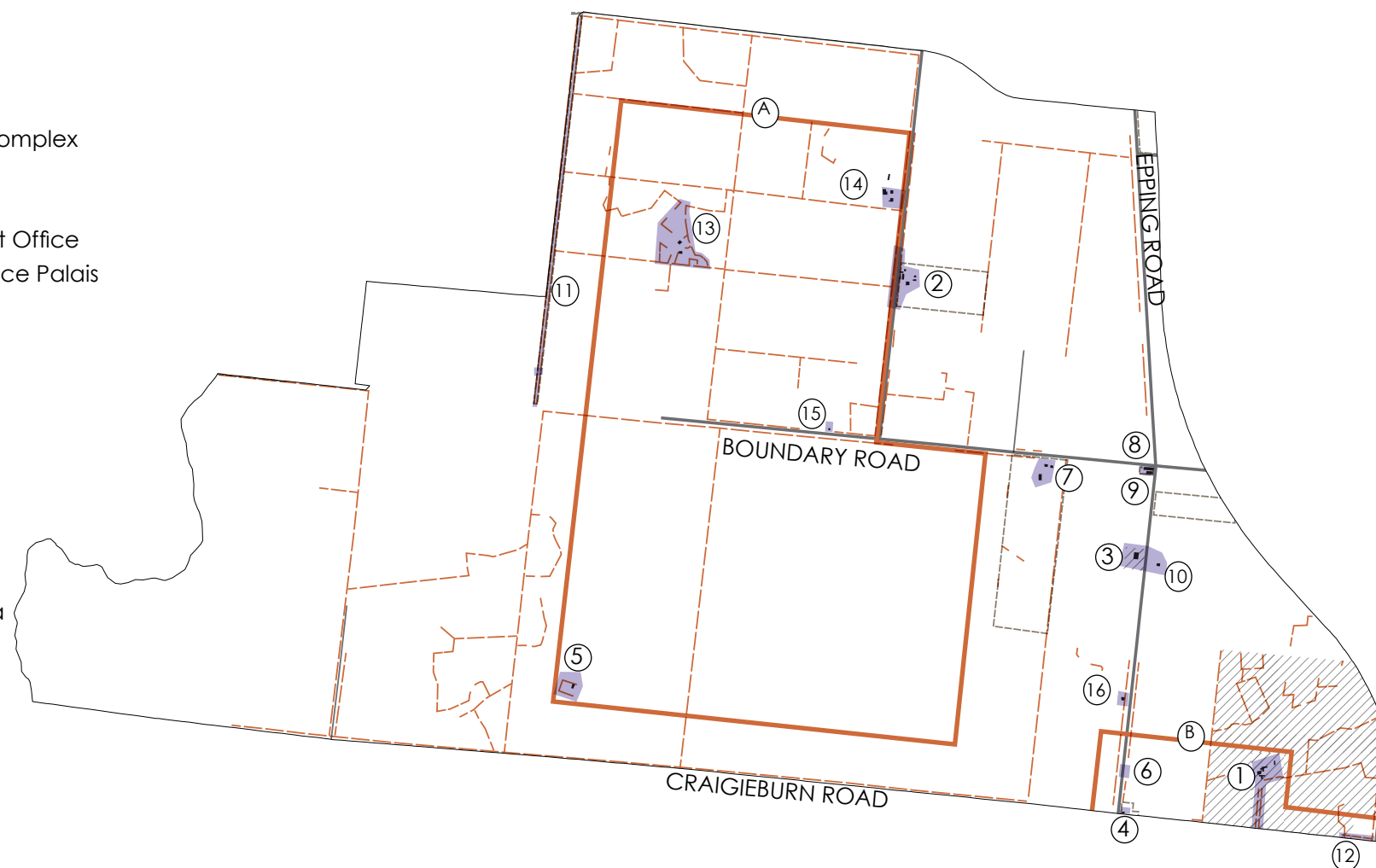


Figure 21: Heritage Places



Title / Address	Description	Heritage Grading	Status
1. Schultz 'Pine Grove Farm' 65 Lehmanns Road (HO41)	Bluestone dairy & milking sheds, weatherboard residence, bluestone stable, bluestone underground tank constructed 1890-1910.	B,C (Dairy).	Heritage Overlay -Schedule 41 Harvest Home Lane Heritage Conservation Area. Recommended for Heritage Conservation Area and Planning Scheme Protection
2. Springvale-Bodycoats Farm 80 Bodycoats Road (Whittlesea Study 5.05, Gould 1991: 5.05)	Bluestone house, bluestone shearers quarters, bluestone and timber milking sheds, bluestone and timber barns, bluestone stables, paving. Construction – late 1870's early 1880's	C	Proposed Heritage Overlay - Ammendment C153 (In progress). Recommended for Planning Scheme protection. Note: A small early house with only one original window survives at the rear of the existing weatherboard house c1920.
3. Wollert Primary School 455 Epping Road (HO51)	Bluestone school building constructed in 1877.	B	Heritage Overlay -Schedule 51 Recommended for Australian Heritage Commission Register (National Estate) and Planning Scheme Protection.
4. Wollert Methodist Church 340 Epping Road (Whittlesea Study 5.14)	Weatherboard church constructed in 1878 and mature trees.	C	Proposed Heritage Overlay - Ammendment C153 (In progress). Harvest Home Lane Heritage Conservation Area.
5. 260 Craigieburn Road Farm Complex (H7922-0484)	Two derelict outbuildings, dry stone walls, pens and stockyard areas located on a rise. Constructed 1840's.	None	Recorded on the Victorian Heritage Inventory Medland Estate Heritage Conservation Area
6. Epping Road Bridge Findon Creek crossing north of Craigieburn Road (D7922-0205)	Bluestone bridge (capped with concrete and bitumen)	None	De-registered on the Inventory at Heritage Victoria Harvest Home Lane Heritage Conservation Area.

A. Medland Estate Heritage Conservation Area (Gould 1991.A10)	Rocky rises, river red gums and extensive dry stone walls	C	Recommended for Planning Scheme protection See detail below.
<p>'This portion of the Medland Estate contained rocky rises unsuitable for close subdivision and best used for grazing. Few houses were built in the region but the area was fenced for grazing using the plentiful freestone for substantial drystone walls which follow the landform and often the alignment of the subdivision boundaries and roads. The lack of intensive farming and ploughing ensured the retention of the primeval river red gums.</p> <p>The natural landform of this area has combined with the unusual pattern of sale to produce a large remnant of pre European settlement landscape overlaid by a regularized fencing system generated by the land itself (the drystone walls). This area is both a region of natural beauty and a strong visual reference to the early land division of the Shire of Whittlesea hastened by the proximity to Melbourne and to the main Melbourne to Sydney highway.' (Whittlesea Conservation Study, Gould, 1991)</p>			
B. Harvest Home Lane (Rd) Heritage Conservation Area (Gould 1991.A5)	Houses grouped along the encircling road following the survey allotment boundaries. Development from 1850's.	B	Recommended for AHC, Heritage Conservation Area, Australian Heritage Council, Planning Scheme Protection, Cultural Landscape. See detail below.
<p>'The most significant feature of this area is the use of the natural features of the land to change the landscape for human purposes through the extensive elaborate drystone walling. This fencing technique occurs throughout Victoria wherever the basalt flow has resulted in large quantities of freestone on the ground. Here at Harvest Home Lane the walling is unusual for its intensive extent, in combination with the rectilinear form and the large number of small farms, so that the landscape form produced is more European than the other Victorian locations cited. The Harvest Home Lane heritage conservation area is also a cultural landscape which illustrates the pattern of small scale dairy farming in the second half of the nineteenth century.'</p>			
7. Hayes Cottage 45-55 Boundary Road (Whittlesea Study 5.09)	Residence constructed in 1878.	C	Whittlesea Draft Heritage Overlay. Recommended for Planning Scheme Protection
8. Wollert General Store and Post Office 491 Epping Road (Whittlesea Study 5.01)	Shop constructed in the 1920's.	C	Proposed Heritage Overlay - Amendment C153 (In progress). These buildings now mark the indistinct town of Wollert



9. Pittaways Wayside House Dance Palais, 491 Epping Road (Whittlesea Study 5.02)	Construction 1928	C	Proposed Heritage Overlay - Ammendment C153 (In progress).
10. Cameron's House 450 Epping Road (Gould 1991:5.02)	Weatherboard house constructed in 1920.	C	Draft Heritage Overlay. Recommended for planning scheme protection This house reinforces the remnants of the now scattered township of Wollert.
11. Summerhill Road Reservation (Whittlesea Conservation Study 5.20)	Landscape feature. Road reservation delineated on either side by dry stone walls.	C	Whittlesea Draft Heritage Overlay.
12. Dry Stone Walls (City of Whittlesea Heritage Study 1.26-1.29)	Dry Stone Walls and Post and Rail Fence constructed in 1850's-1880's.	C	Whittlesea Draft Heritage Overlay Recommended for Planning Scheme Protection, Heritage Conservation Area, Cultural Landscape. Harvest Home Lane Heritage Conservation Area
13. 71-75 Bodycoats Road (Farm complex)	This site requires further identification and assessment.	None	Medland Estate Heritage Conservation Area
14. 115 Bodycoats Road (Farm complex)	This site requires further identification and assessment.	None	Medland Estate Heritage Conservation Area
15. 160 Boundary Road (Farm complex)	This site requires further identification and assessment.	None	Medland Estate Heritage Conservation Area
16. 395 Epping Road (Farm complex)	This site requires further identification and assessment.	None	
General Dry Stone Walls	These require further identification and assessment.	None	High local significance. Recommend retention in their current locations. Reconstruction to be considered as part of retention. Planning Permit required for removal.

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)

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 Planning Scheme

Wollert 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)

