



*City of*  
**Whittlesea**



# shenstone park

# visual character assessment

**SHENSTONE PARK PRECINCT STRUCTURE PLAN (1069.1)**

**Prepared for:** The Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) and The City of Whittlesea  
**Prepared by:** City of Whittlesea, 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang, Victoria, 3752  
**Date:** November 2017

## **DISCLAIMER**

Information presented in the Shenstone Park Visual Character Assessment is based on site analysis and site visits undertaken in 2017 as well as background reports prepared to inform the Shenstone Park Precinct Structure Plan.

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

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

**City of Whittlesea, November 2017**





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## executive summary



Identifying, retaining, integrating, and enhancing visual character features into the future Shenstone Park Precinct Structure Plan area will secure and create a strong sense of place and local identity.

The following Visual Character Assessment has been prepared for the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) and the City of Whittlesea to identify existing visual features within the Shenstone Park Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) area. The report provides recommendations as to how to sensitively integrate these features into future urban development within the Shenstone Park precinct.

The City of Whittlesea's growth corridors are highly valued for their existing visual character features. The Shenstone Park PSP area boasts many natural and heritage visual character features which provide a strong foundation for future urban development which can create an enhanced local identity.

The defining landscape features of the Shenstone Park PSP area include clusters of native river red gums, windrow planting, stony rises, and waterways. Views to Mt Frazer, Kinglake National Park, and the city are also available from various vantage points within the precinct. Past geological activity has also created a number of stony rises scattered throughout the site as well. There are a number of dry stone walls and heritage structures within the precinct which provide a direct link to the historical rural uses in the area and add to the visual interest and cultural identity of the precinct.

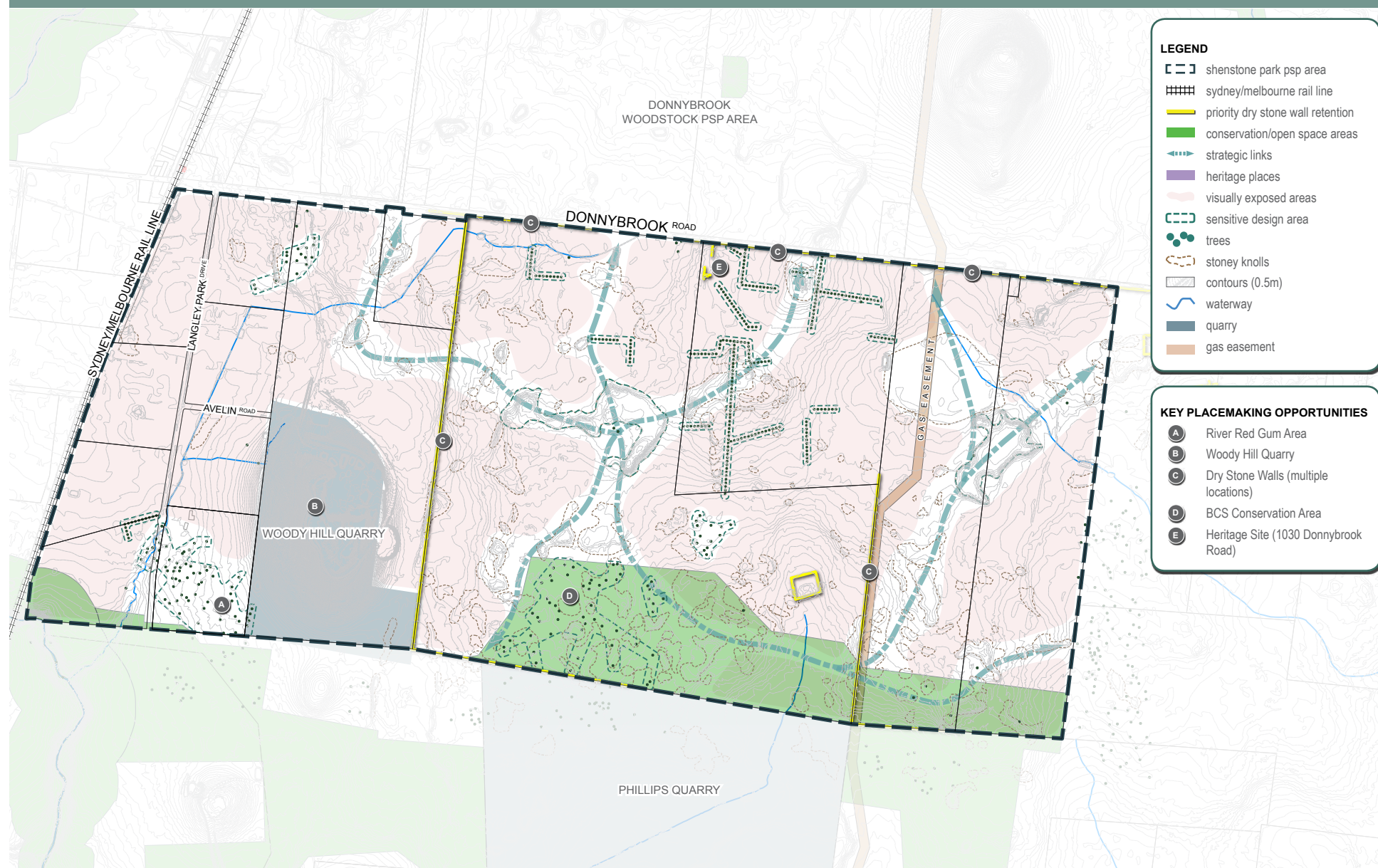
### KEY PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The key project 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



figure 1: Summary Opportunities and Constraints



### SITE ANALYSIS

A thorough site analysis has been completed with opportunity and constraints mapping undertaken to assess the value of retaining and enhancing existing visual features within the Shenstone Park PSP area.

Through this analysis the following opportunities have been identified:

#### Conservation or Open Space Areas

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

#### Strategic Links

Physical and visual linking opportunities between visual character elements (ie. via roads and/or linear open space reserves).

#### Priority Dry Stone Wall Retention

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

#### Heritage Places

Approximate locations of potential heritage places have been identified and informed by the post contact and Aboriginal and Cultural Heritage assessments.

#### 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 and windrows where development will need to be carefully designed to ensure a positive interface to trees can be created and maintained within a future urban area.

### Key Place Making Opportunities

Five place making opportunities were identified for impacting local place making as part of this visual assessment. The sites were selected based on a variety of criteria including their impact on the existing visual character, contribution to local identity, and location. Each site requires further investigation and detailed site analysis as part of the future subdivision process.

These sites include:

- A. River Red Gum Area
- B. Woody Hill Quarry
- C. Dry Stone Walls (multiple locations)
- D. BCS Conservation Area
- E. Heritage Site (1030 Donnybrook Road)

### RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of recommendations have been made in this report in the form of a series of objectives, requirements and guidelines. 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 Shenstone Park.

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	Investigate the opportunity to retain, enhance or reinterpret key place making elements.
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 long range and key local views where possible.
8	Protect and enhance waterways and associated open space opportunities.
9	Locate the open space network to preserve visual character features.

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# visual character assessment

SHENSTONE PARK PRECINCT STRUCTURE PLAN (1069.1)



### BACKGROUND

The 2012 Growth Corridor Plan (GCP) identified the Shenstone Park PSP area suitable for urban development.

The Shenstone Park PSP area will potentially be developed to provide opportunities for new residential, commercial, mixed use, and industrial development opportunities. It is anticipated that the precinct will be serviced by a local town centre, community hub, a primary school, active recreation, passive reserves, and conservation areas.

This report has been prepared for the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) and the City of Whittlesea to help guide the future development of Shenstone Park as well as to retain and enhance the existing visual character of the PSP area.

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

This report is limited to assessing existing conditions that have a visual impact on the local precinct.

### KEY PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The key project 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





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 (Treetec, 2017)
  - Post-Contact Heritage Assessment (Ecology & Heritage Partners, 2017)
  - Land Capability Assessment (Meinhardt, 2017)
  - Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (Biosis, 2017)
  - Quarry Impact Assessment (GHD, 2017)
- Available GIS information for the site including surface analysis and aerial photography.

### FIELD WORK

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

- 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 Shenstone Park PSP 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 CONTEXT

The Shenstone Park PSP sits within the context of a number of overarching strategies and detailed policies. The 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)
- Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 (2017)

#### Other Strategies

- Whittlesea Planning Scheme
- State Planning Policy Framework
- Local Planning Policy Framework
- Particular Provisions
- Donnybrook Woodstock PSP

#### City of Whittlesea Strategies

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

**Note:** Refer to the Appendix for detailed discussion of the key relevant principles of each document.

### LOCATION

The Shenstone Park PSP is located on the southern boundary of the suburb of Donnybrook in the City of Whittlesea. The Shenstone Park PSP is approximately 620 hectares in size (Meinhardt 2017), and is bound by Donnybrook Road to the north, the Wollert suburb boundary to the south, the Urban Growth Boundary to the east, and the Sydney/Melbourne railway corridor to the west. The precinct lies immediately south of the Donnybrook/Woodstock PSP area and immediately east of the English Street PSP area.

Contained within the Shenstone Park PSP, is the existing Woody Hill Quarry. Directly south of the Shenstone Park PSP boundary is the future Yarra Valley Water Sewerage Treatment Plant. Each of the uses have recommended separation distances from sensitive uses.

The Shenstone Park PSP will ultimately accommodate a mix of residential, recreation, community and employment uses and will be integrated with the neighbouring Wollert and Donnybrook PSPs.

These precincts form part of a larger-scale development in the Northern Growth Corridor and will contribute to a projected population increase in the North of between 260,000 to 330,000 residents by 2031.

### EXISTING LAND USE

The Shenstone Park PSP area is currently used primarily for non-intensive agricultural purposes, extractive industries such as quarries, and utilities uses characterised by water assets and infrastructure. Adjacent land uses directly include:

#### North

The area to the north of Donnybrook Road forms the Donnybrook Woodstock PSP area which covers an area of approximately 1,786 hectares. This precinct will ultimately support a residential community of approximately 16,400 dwellings, a projected population of around 46,000, delivering 3,000 local jobs.

#### East

The Green Wedge Zone (GWZ) to the east of the Shenstone Park PSP is defined by clusters of River Red Gums which will ultimately form part of a protected woodland area.

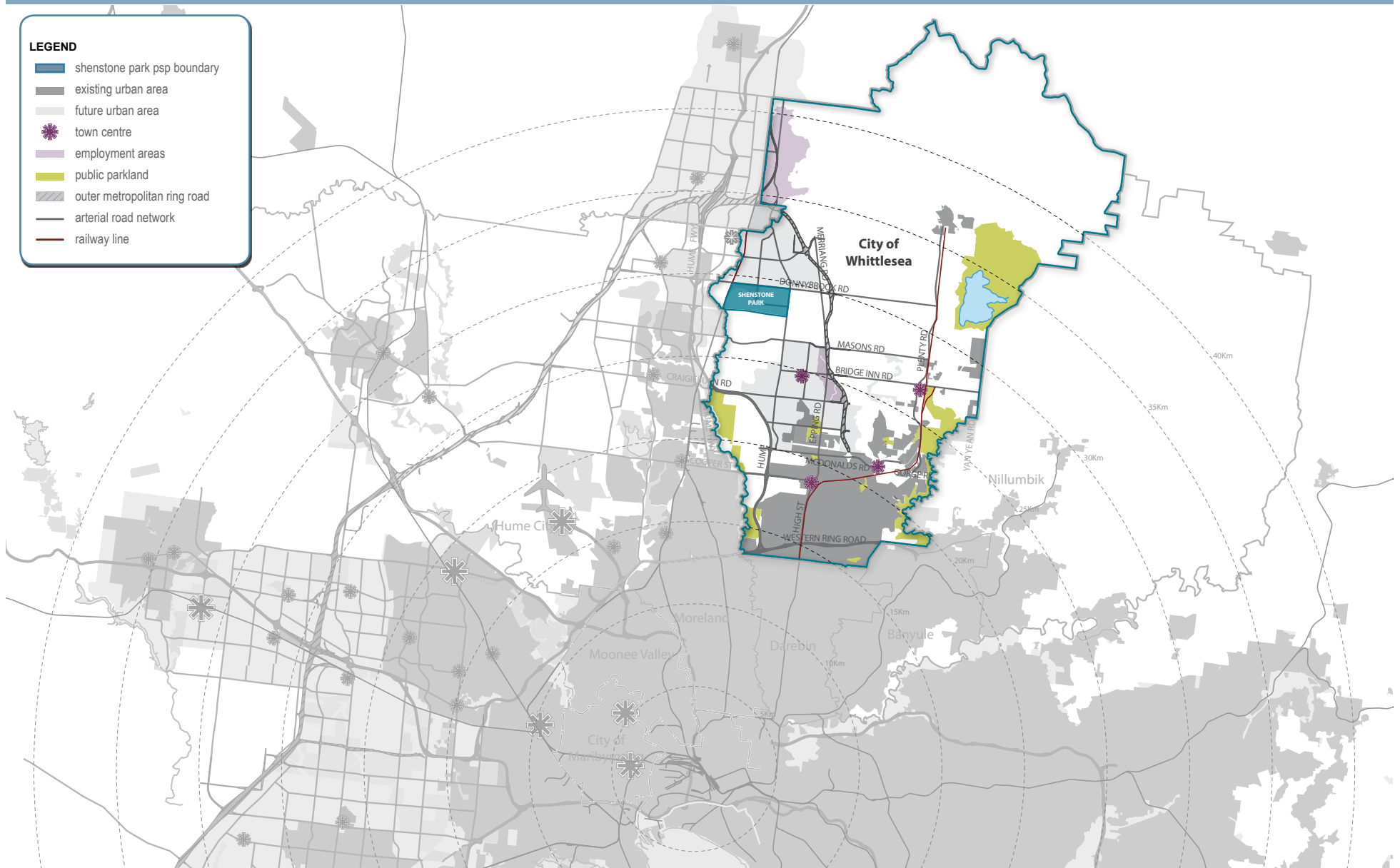
#### South

The Northern Quarries Investigation Area (NQIA) is located to the south of the Shenstone Park PSP area. It is a predominantly rural landscape that includes a number of extractive industries, utilities and designated conservation areas.

#### West

The western boundary of the study area is formed by the Melbourne to Sydney railway line which runs in a north-south alignment. Beyond the railway is the English Street PSP, which is characterised by a mix of residential, commercial, community, and conservation uses.

figure 2: Context Plan





### **SHENSTONE PARK PSP CHARACTER**

Shenstone Park has a distinct character that can be characterised by:

- A flat landform that is punctuated by stony knolls, providing a varied and visually exposed landscape.
- River Red Gums which dominate areas of the landscape are significant in both scale and number.
- An exposed treeless plain featuring tributaries that appear to be little more than depressions in the land form.
- Historic buildings, sheds and farmsteads along with dry stone walls, which highlight historic settlement patterns of the area.
- Existing agricultural uses which are evident in the open paddocks, grazing activities and livestock feed production in the area.
- A visual highpoint, Woody Hill, is a former volcanic cone which is currently being quarried and will eventually become part of the existing surrounding landscape.

The *City of Whittlesea Rural Review* (2000) identifies the Shenstone Park PSP area as part of the western plains landscape character area. A more detailed assessment of the Shenstone Park PSP highlights three more distinct landscape character elements which for the purpose of this study are identified as:

- Woodlands;
- Plains; and
- Basalt Flows

#### **Woodlands**

The primary woodland areas within the Shenstone Park PSP are located on the southern boundary of the precinct on each side of the existing quarry operations. There are two areas consisting of small clustered groupings of River Red Gums which extend to the south into areas outside of the PSP. There are some other minor groupings that should be investigated for retention as part of the PSP process.

#### **Plains**

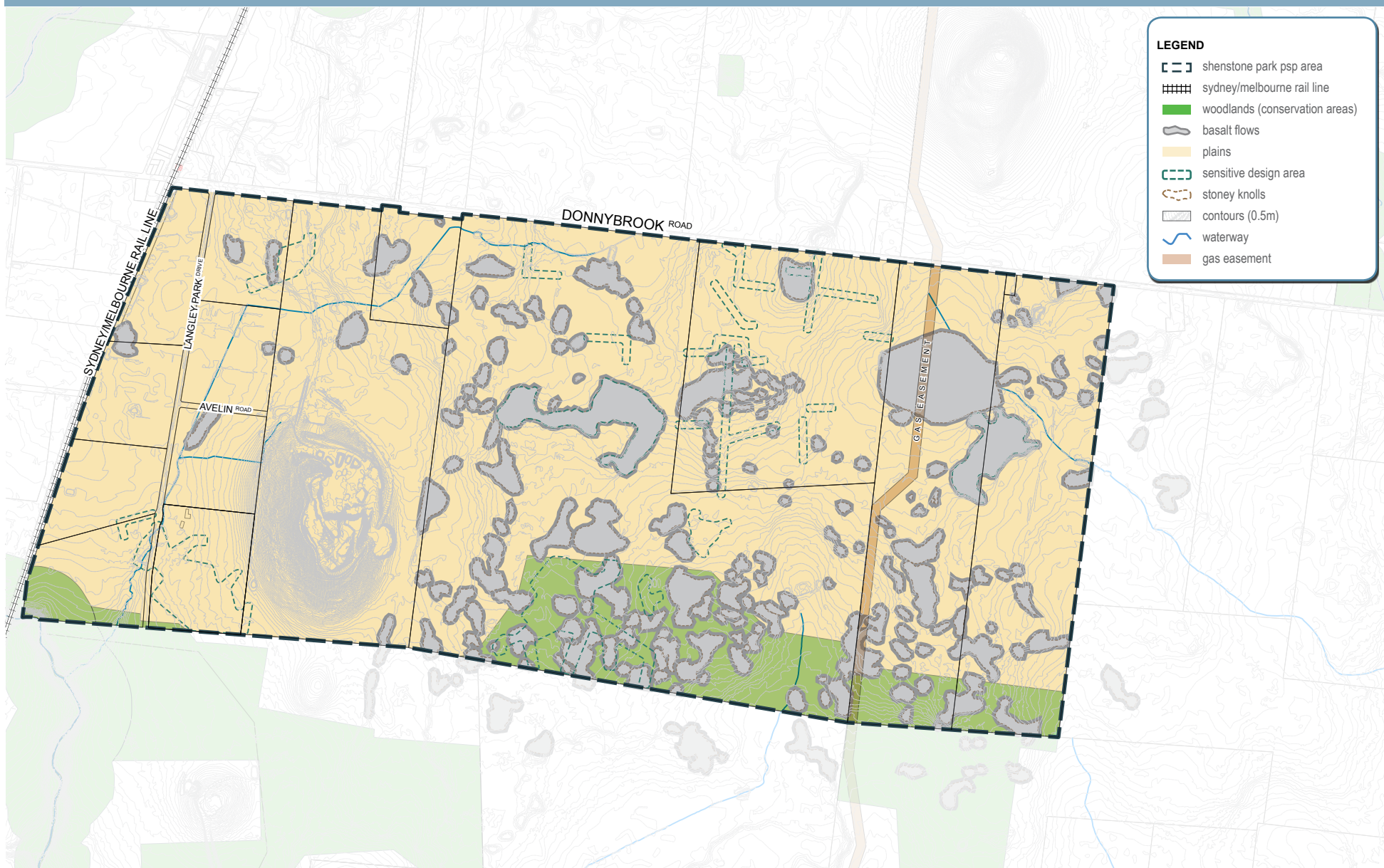
The flat and rolling plains of Shenstone Park are visually exposed across the precinct. Some ephemeral water features are also evident although not visually prominent within the landscape. At many points the existing waterways are little more than minor depressions in the ground. A number of existing tree rows throughout the area serves to break up the typically flat and rolling plains.

#### **Basalt Flows**

This broad character area contains many stony rises formed by basalt flows. Some stony rises have biodiversity value and can coincide with the location of findings of aboriginal artifacts.



figure 3: Broad Character Areas



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# key visual character elements

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## visual character elements



The defining visual character elements of the study area can be categorised into seven 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.

1. Trees
2. Stony Rises
3. Heritage Places
4. Dry Stone Walls
5. Waterways
6. Infrastructure
7. Hills









## Visual Character

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

The Shenstone Park Arboriculture assessment identified 386 trees in the study area. The predominant species in the study area are River Red Gums accounting for 80% 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 Shenstone Park.

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

Throughout the study area exotic deciduous plantings are often associated with existing development while exotic evergreen trees are often part of planted windrows.

Of note is the expanse of River Red Gums located within the Conservation Area abutting the eastern boundary of the study area. The trees within this area will act as area of high prominence that will serve to increase the amenity of the Shenstone Park PSP area.

## 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. Trees engage our senses, providing shade shelter, outlook, enclosure and visual relief.

The age of 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 Shenstone Park 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.

Replacement of River Red Gums is improbable in a future urban context considering their age and slow growth. It would take many years to regain their height alone.





## stony rises



### Visual Character

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

A large number of stony rises have been identified in the Shenstone Park PSP area using a combination of aerial photography, site contours and site inspections. The size of the stony rises within Shenstone Park 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 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 and adding variety and providing development breaks, particularly when incorporated into open space areas.

Their height provides views of the surrounding landscape and further afield.

Historically, loose rock sourced from the 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 traveling routes vantage points and transient occupation sites for Aboriginal groups traveling through the area.

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.



## heritage places



### Visual Character

The Shenstone Park PSP area contains a number of built elements that have value as places of heritage and visual interest. Heritage elements identified include:

- A series of dry stone walls;
- Blue stone buildings; and
- Stockyard remnants.

### Retention Values

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

If retained, heritage places can provide important visual links to the past, often forming local landmarks, and helping to retain the cultural identity of the area.

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.

Historic buildings provide opportunities for adaptive reuse as commercial uses (e.g. cafes), community buildings, or education centres.

The most prominent heritage element within the Shenstone Park PSP area is the farm holding at 1030 Donnybrook Road, named 'Shenstone Park'. The farmstead comprises a mix of outbuildings and stockyard remnants, setback approximately 60m from the road, with a modern built dwelling immediately to the east.

The main milking shed is a large corrugated iron structure with a double pitched roof and bluestone flooring that opens towards the south. The other outbuildings are simple structures that are generally built from a mix of timber and corrugated iron. Another feature of the site is the semi-circular brock feature which was likely to act as a well.

A series of dry stone walls are found at the property. These include a fine example to the rear of the outbuildings adjacent to the stock ramp. The western section of the wall is approximately 1.1-1.2m in height and 15m in length.



## 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 Shenstone Park are typically wide at the base and taper to their top and vary in structure and condition.

A network of dry stone walls exists within the Shenstone Park PSP area creating a strongly linear element within the rural landscape. Dry stone walls are often located as boundaries of heritage places.

Wherever possible, the dry stone walls in the Study Area should be retained, in line with Council policy. But, where this is not possible, priority should be given to higher significance walls and to the highly visible examples on stony rises which lend character to the landscape.

### 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.





### Visual Character

Waterways in Shenstone Park have limited direct visual impact as drainage areas are sparsely vegetated resulting in a largely exposed landscape. A number of dams constructed for farming purposes are also evident.

1 in 100 year flood areas in the south-south-east of the area feed the far northern extent of Curly Sedge Creek; an upper tributary of the Merri Creek Catchment. The 1 in 100 year flood plains across the western section of Shenstone Park also connect into Merri Creek in the far south-west corner.

These drainage areas have been subject to long term farming practices resulting in limited visual presence and minimal associated vegetation.

### Retention Values

Waterways provide important ecological, cultural, aesthetic and recreational component of the landscape. Natural drainage features such as this have potential to provide strong natural amenity and linear activity links across the site.

They can become vital environmental assets and help facilitate habitat links between larger conservation sites recognised for retention in the wider area.



## Visual Character

Woody Hill is a very prominent feature. Located towards the western end of the PSP area and being some 270m above sea level, Woody Hill is visible from most vantage points and is a reminder of the past geological activity of the area.

At the top of the rise is a large depression associated with the extractive industry operation on the land. The extractive industry use has been operating at Woody Hill since the 1980s extracting mostly a sand stone type material.

The Melbourne sheet (SJ 55-5) in the 1:250 000 Geological Map Series 1997 (Vandenberg, 1997) indicates that the geology is predominantly 'Ovn' – Pliocene olivine basalts of the newer volcanic Group (with extrusive tholeiitic to alkaline Basalts: containing minor scoria and ash).

## Retention Values

Although Woody Hill has been significantly modified through the extraction of rock, Woody Hill does have value due to its natural occurrence. It provides an elevated element in the landscape breaking up the generally flat landform.

In a developed setting Woody Hill will continue to be excavated until the hill is leveled with the adjoining land. Prior to its leveling, Woody Hill can assist in creating a legible focal point for the site. However, development during this time will be limited due to impacts from the operations of the quarry.

Once leveled, the area that previously encompassed Woody Hill can be incorporated into adjacent development. The opportunity does exist for the assist

in creating a unique sense of place and improve legibility. Its height on the other hand provides views of the surrounding landscape and further afield creating an excellent open space opportunity.

Development in proximity to Woody Hill will be limited in terms of use due to the history of the immediate area. Nonetheless this development should appropriately respond to this hybrid element and minimise the extent of the encroachment.



### Visual Character

The Woody Hill Quarry located within the western section of the Shenstone Park PSP area is a dominant visual character element. The earth mound associated with the Quarry rises significantly above the landscape forming a strong visual bulk. The buffer surrounding the Quarry provides a more gradual interface. Generally, there is minimal tree cover to soften the visual dominance.

Existing gas pipeline easements exist across the east of the site. These easements will increase in visibility once subdivision occurs as no development may occur within the easement. They can however provide opportunities for linear open space links across the Shenstone Park PSP and wider area. There is an existing CityGate site located at 1100 Donnybrook Road that will require appropriate screening to minimise the visual impact that the infrastructure will have on the future subdivision.

### Retention Values

The Quarry provides a valuable industry function but currently has a poor visual character. The visual impact however will need to be managed in an urban context.

The use of vegetation and other screening measures will be required to lessen the prominence of the Quarry. Subdivision and design response will also need careful consideration in order to minimise the view lines to the Quarry.





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# site analysis

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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 Shenstone Park PSP area, opportunity and constraints mapping has been undertaken.

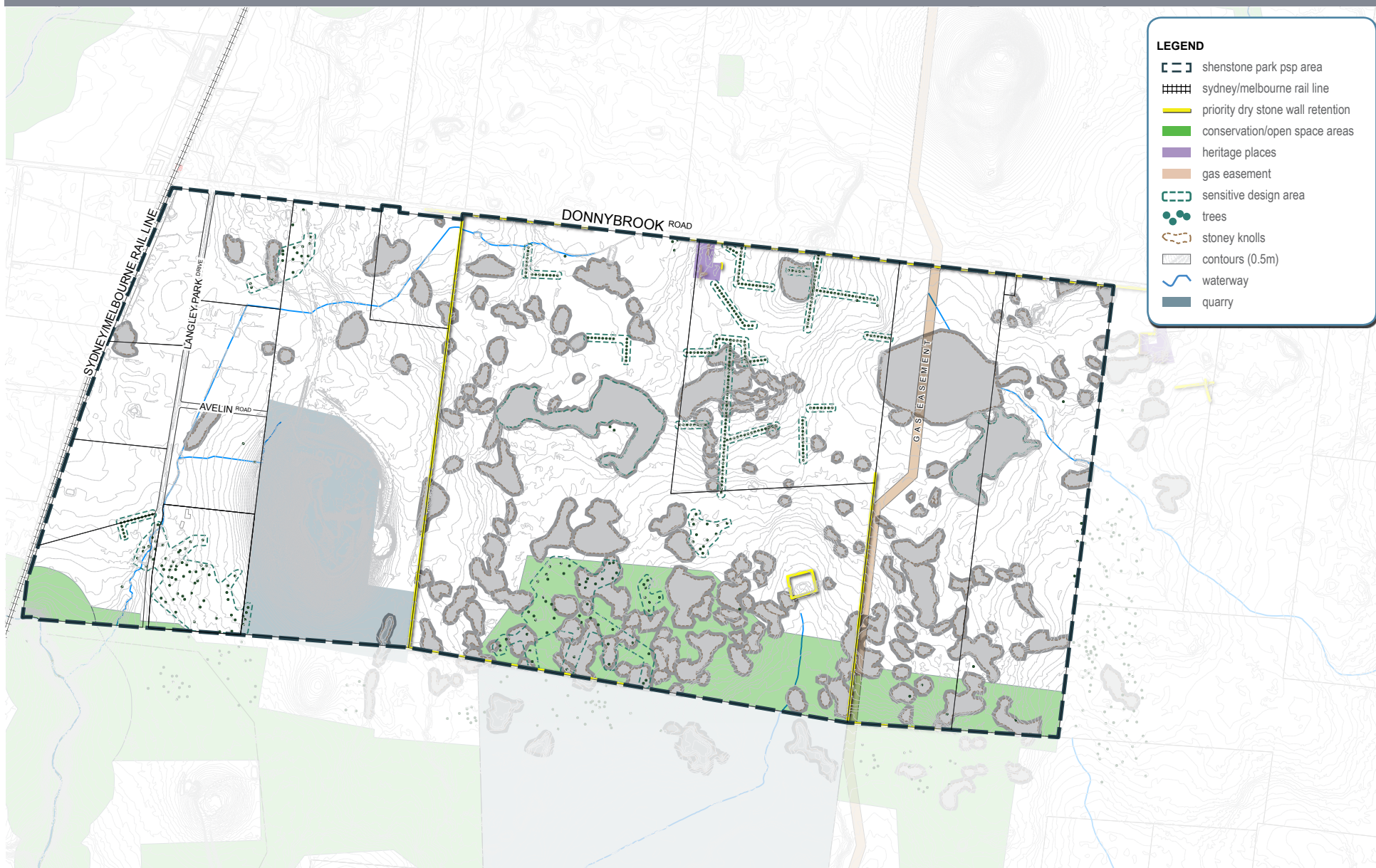
The visual character elements plan (Figure 4) maps the location of the visual character elements in the Shenstone Park PSP area including:

- 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.
- Individual stony rises, including groupings to show where they form part of a larger basalt lava flow.
- Heritage buildings and the network of dry stone walls found throughout the precinct.
- Natural drainage features present the opportunity to be enhanced to provide outlook and linear links across the site.
- The gas easement is not currently visible however will be exposed in the future due to lack of development within associated boundary.
- Railway embankment is relatively insignificant from a visual perspective. Whilst views over the railway line are possible, it does have limited physical connections.





figure 4: Visual Character Elements Plan



## visual character sector analysis



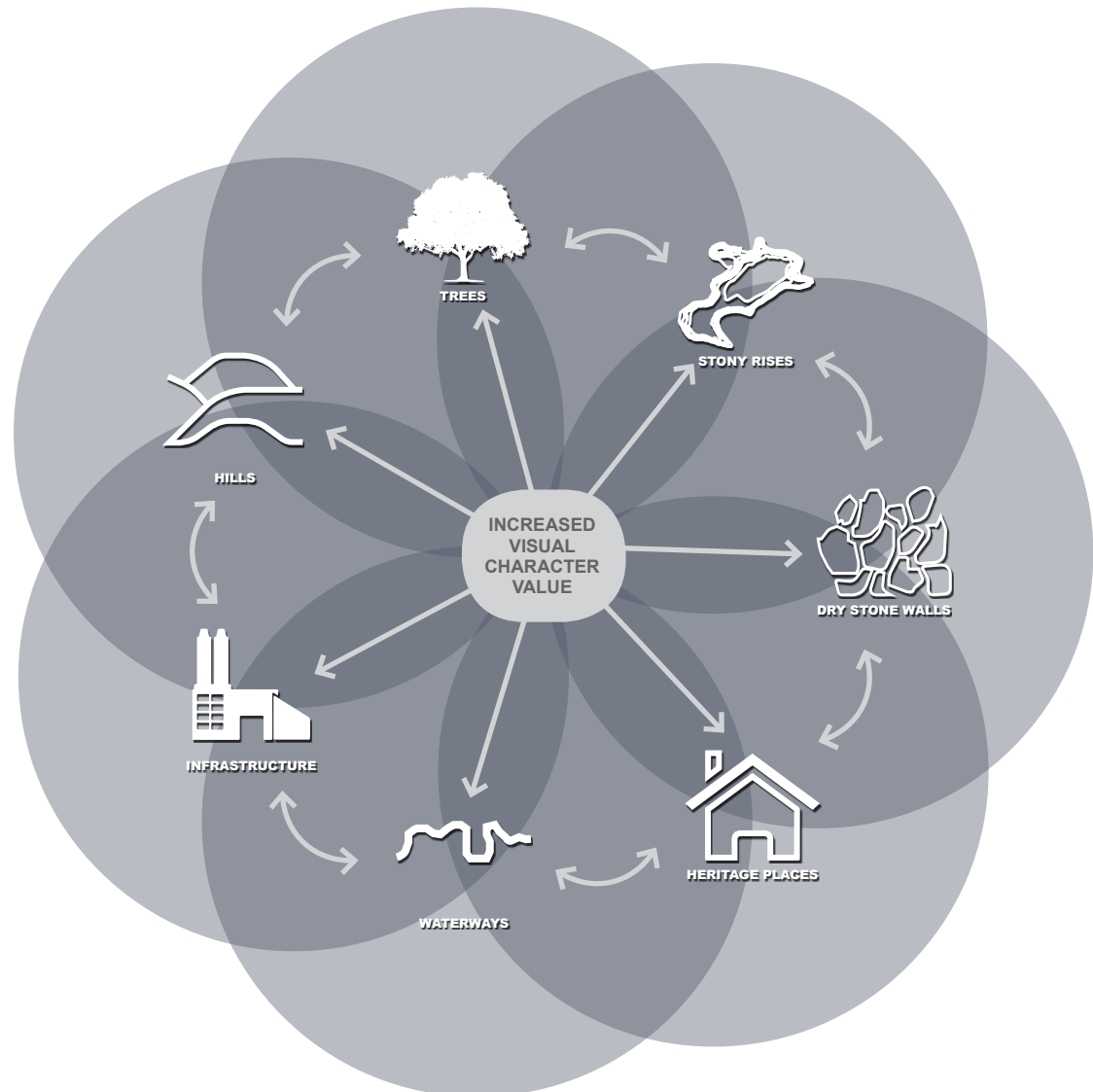
This visual character analysis has rated visual character elements as possessing higher retention value when co-located or linked with one or more other visual elements. Or when large groupings of the same elements co-exist. Individual visual character elements were deemed to have high retention value based on both strong visual character and/or heritage value.

### Key Place Making Opportunities

There are a number of locations within the Shenstone Park 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.

The Visual Character Element Values diagram (Figure 5) demonstrates the elements' overlapping individual values and links that increase their overall visual character value.

figure 5: Visual Character Elements



The Shenstone Park PSP area has been divided into two visual character sectors to allow closer analysis of site specific opportunities and constraints. The sectors are selected based on site features and land use. The site analysis for each of the two sectors identifies opportunities and constraints presented by the visual character elements across the site.

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

### Conservation or Open Space Areas

Large woodland areas and areas with significant existing trees identified for retention. These areas are co-located with other visual elements which typically include stony rises, dry stone walls, and waterways.

### Strategic Links

Opportunities for both physical and visual links between key visual character elements (ie. via roads, linear open space reserves, and infrastructure elements including gas/electricity pipelines).

### 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 elements. Opportunities for retention within open space reserves and as part of roadways or shared path links is encouraged.

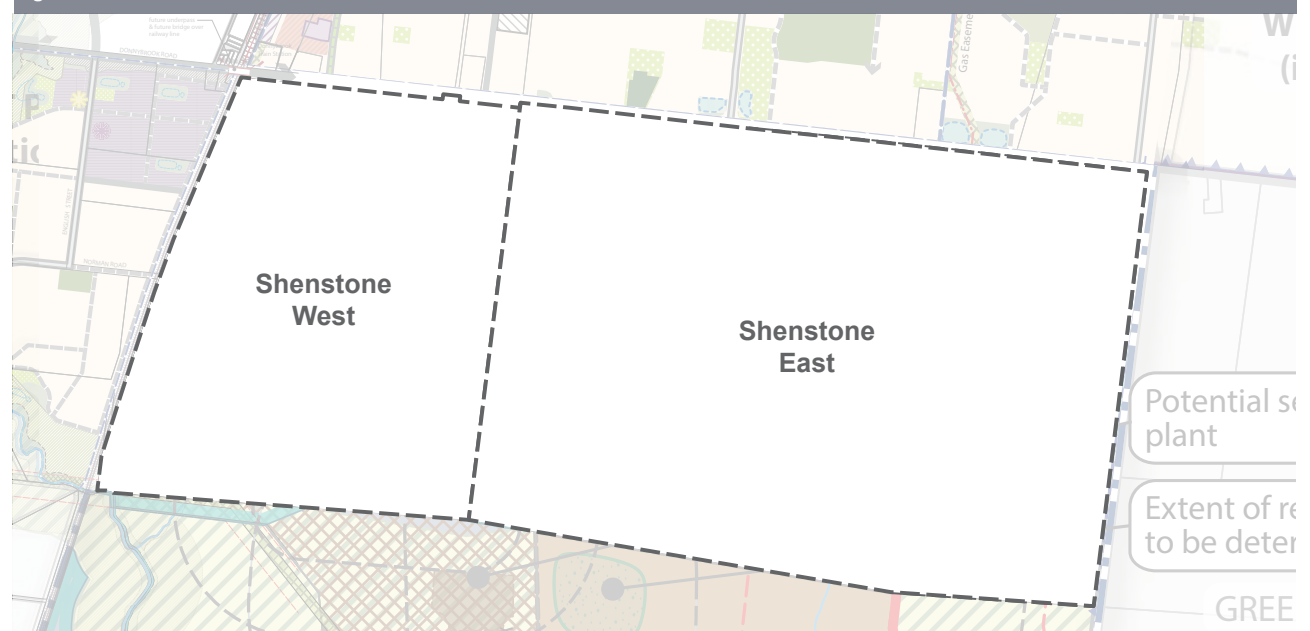
### Heritage Places

Where possible heritage sites and in turn heritage elements should be retained and/or repurposed to retain existing character elements of the precinct.

### Visually Exposed Areas

Areas where development will be visually exposed, such as treeless plains where few visual character elements exist should be used as transitions between

figure 6: Visual Character Sectors



more visually interesting areas. Literal and visual links through these areas are critical to linking the key visual character elements within the Shenstone Park PSP area.

### Sensitive Design Areas

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





### OPPORTUNITIES

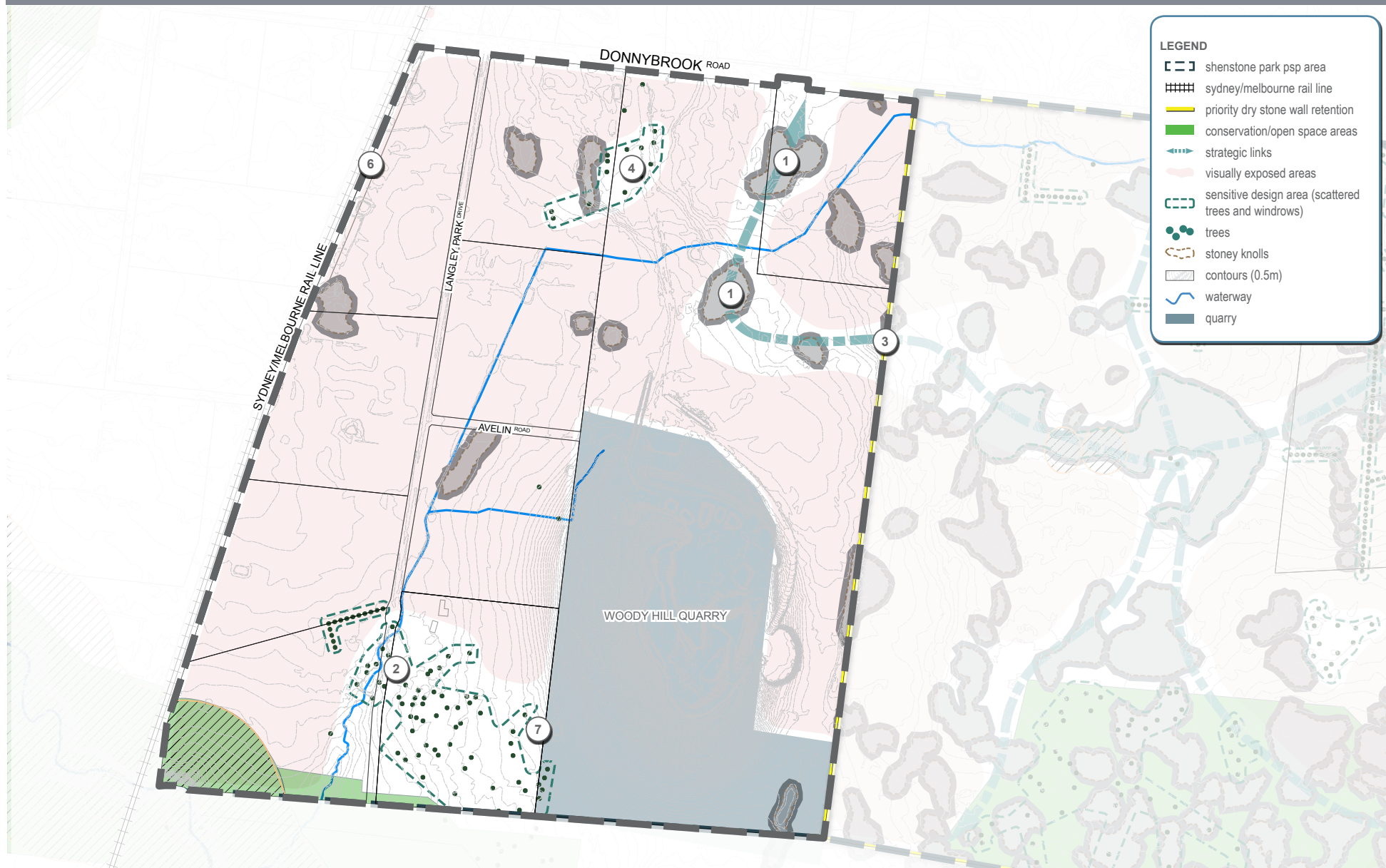
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|---|--|
| 1 | Elevated parts of the site with views should be explored for local passive open space opportunities.                               |
| 2 | Investigate ways to incorporate and link open water bodies with adjacent visual character elements.                                |
| 3 | Retain existing sections of dry stone walls in open space and along road reserves where possible.                                  |
| 4 | Existing River Red Gums must be incorporated in the subdivision layout to enhance visual character and place making opportunities. |
| 5 | Links connecting various visual character elements should be enhanced through any future subdivision layout.                       |

### CONSTRAINTS

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 6 | The subdivision layout will need to appropriately respond to the existing railway interface.  |
| 7 | Areas and land uses adjacent to quarry uses and areas for servicing requirements should explore sensitive design treatments to enhance and protect visual character elements. |



figure 7: Shenstone West





### OPPORTUNITIES

- 1** Opportunity to provide strategic links along existing creek corridors.
- 2** Elevated parts of the site with views should be explored for local passive open space opportunities.
- 3** Links connecting various visual character elements should be enhanced through any future subdivision layout.
- 4** Existing River Red Gums must be incorporated in the subdivision layout to enhance visual character and place making opportunities.
- 5** Existing windrows should be incorporated in the subdivision layout to enhance place making opportunities.
- 6** Retain existing sections of dry stone walls in open space and along road reserves where possible.
- 7** Convergence of multiple character elements including stony rise, dry stone wall and topography elevation presents an opportunity to emphasise and celebrate it spatially.

### CONSTRAINTS

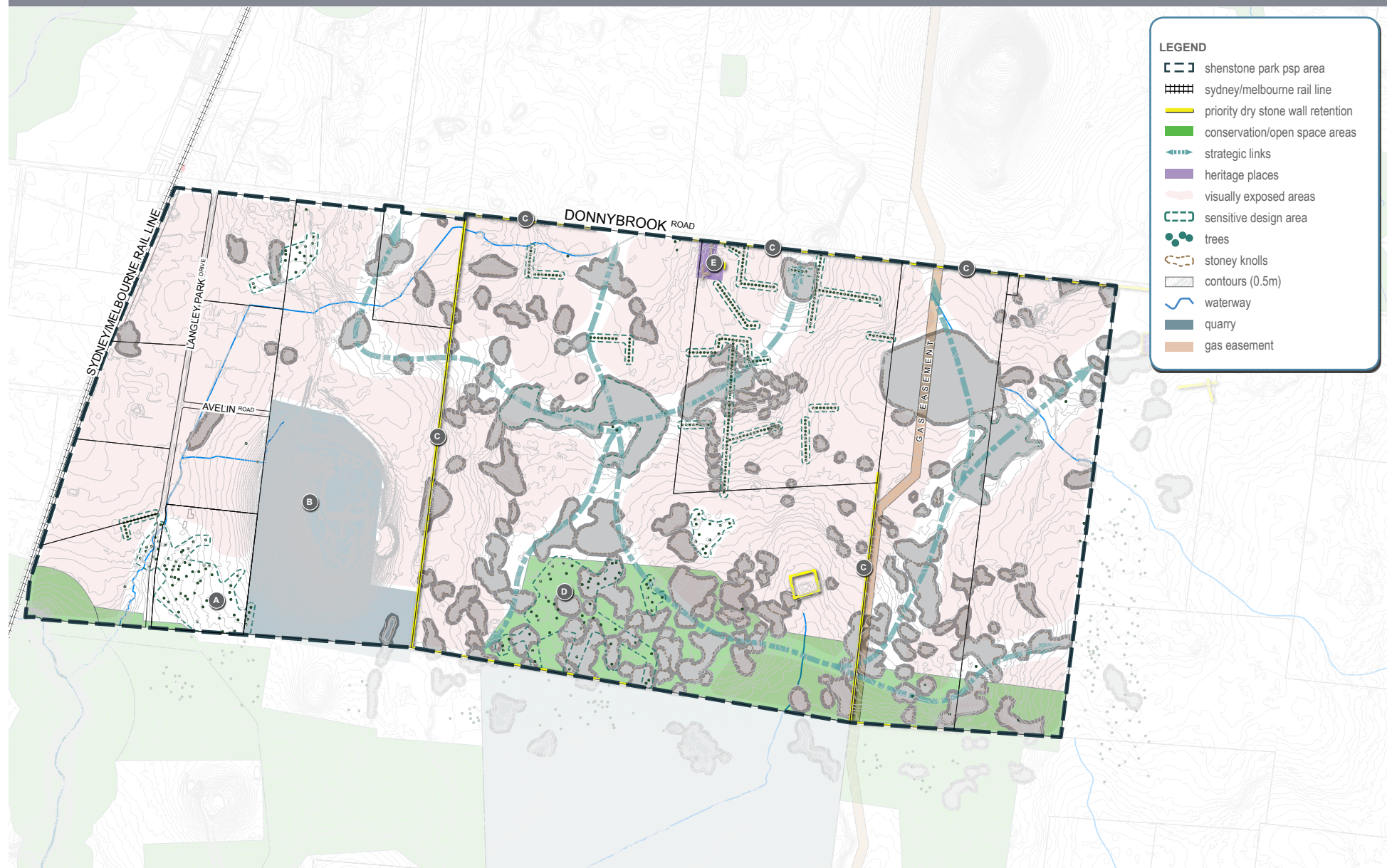
- 8** Subdivision layout will need to appropriately respond to future arterial road interfaces, including Donnybrook Road and Koukoura Drive.
- 9** The future subdivision layout must respond appropriately to the existing City Gate with sensitive interface treatments design to minimise the impact of the City Gate on the surrounding development.



figure 8: Shenstone East



figure 9: Summary Opportunities and Constraints





## key place making opportunities: shenstone park psp



Five place making opportunities were identified for impacting local place making as part of this visual assessment. The sites were selected based on a variety of criteria including their impact on the existing visual character, contribution to local identity, and location. Each site requires further investigation and detailed site analysis as part of the future subdivision process.

These sites include:

- A. River Red Gum Area
- B. Woody Hill Quarry
- C. Dry Stone Walls (multiple locations)
- D. BCS Conservation Area
- E. Heritage Site (1030 Donnybrook Road)

### Strategic Links

A number of strategic links have been identified to connect various visual character elements.

Roads and/or linear open space reserves should be investigated as a way of linking visual character elements.

Visual character elements along these links should be prioritised for retention.



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# local case studies

SHENSTONE PARK PRECINCT STRUCTURE PLAN (1069.1)



## epping north conservation reserve (Lyndarum Drive, Epping North)



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

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

Pedestrian paths, both formally paved and informal dirt tracks have been provided to maintain pedestrian connectivity (Images 3 & 5).

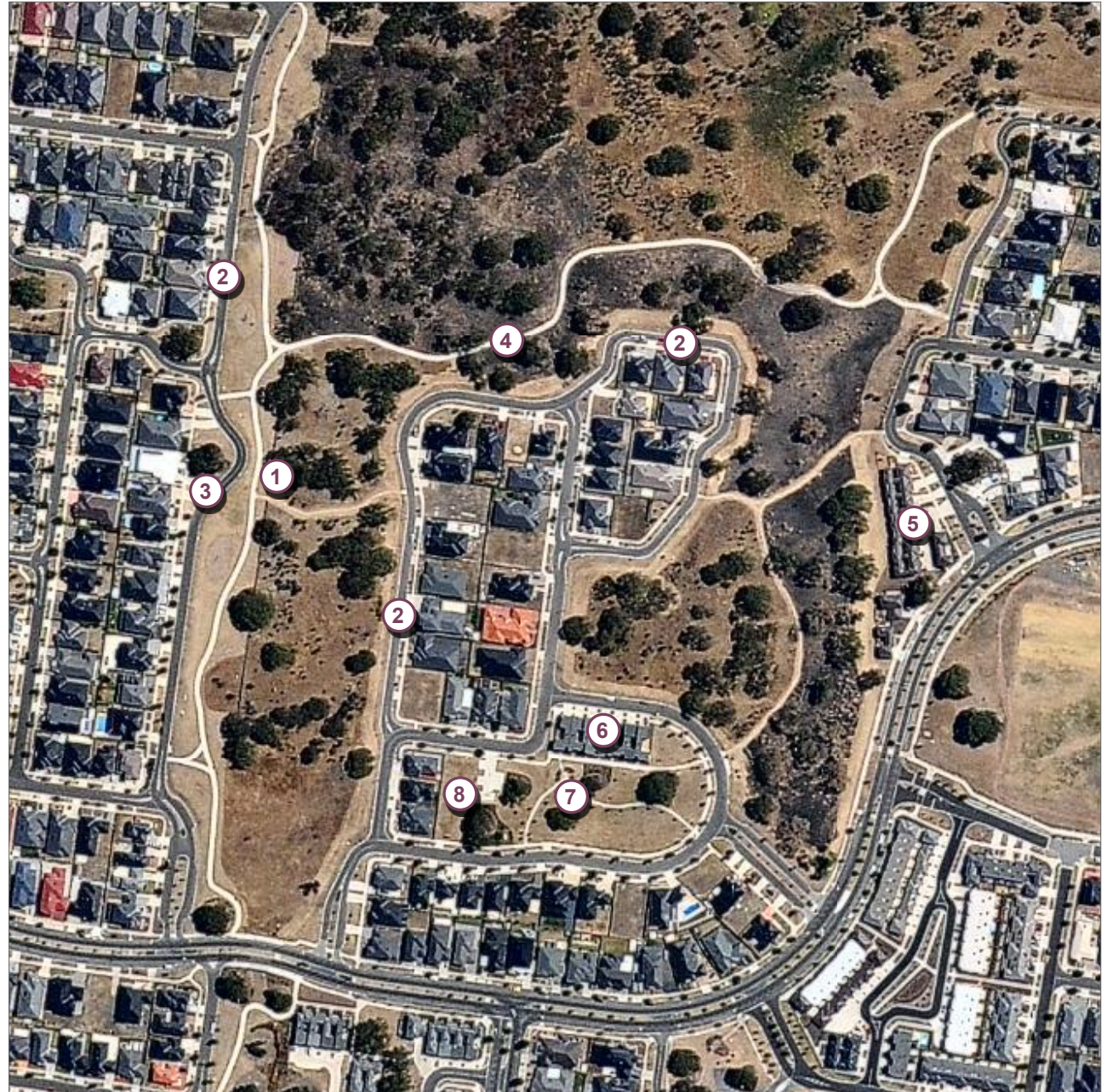
The reserve provides a pleasant outlook to the neighbouring dwellings. Two medium density housing sites have been created where development for standard lots was limited (Image 2).





## Epping North Conservation Reserve

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 (see image A).
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 (see image B).
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 (see image ).
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.
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.



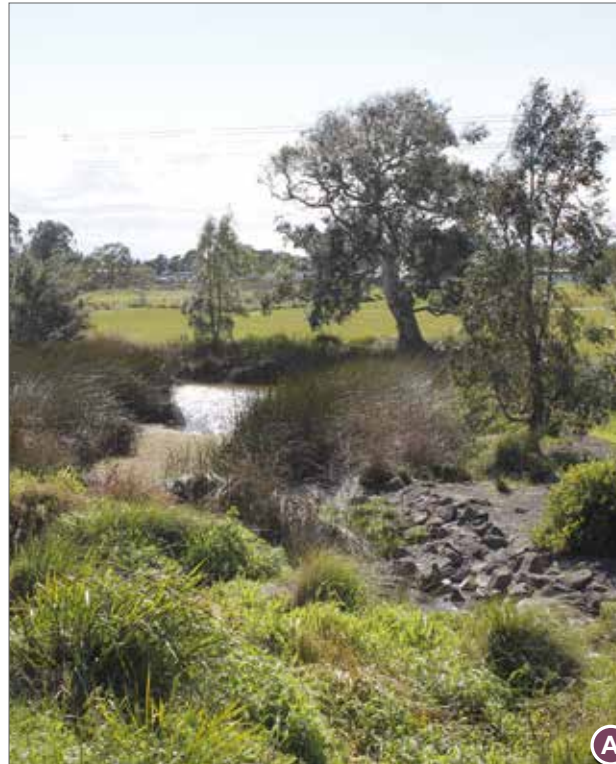


## findon creek (Hayston Boulevard, Epping North)



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.





## Findon Creek

1	The undeveloped portion of land to the north of the site indicates how the creek may have appeared before subdivision (see image A).
2	Findon Creek has been embellished in this location, forming wetlands and a technical drainage function (see image B)
3	Houses front the creek separated by local roads (see image D).
4	A network of shared paths is located along both sides of the creek maximising connectivity.
5	A pedestrian bridge has been provided across the creek in this location (see image D).
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 (see image C).



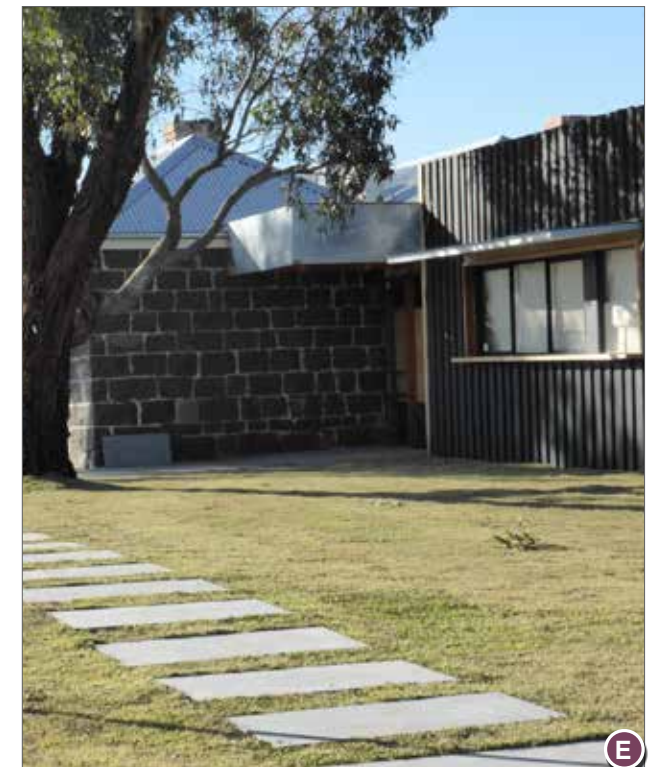


## hehr's pine park farm/3<sup>rd</sup> place (Pine Park Drive, Wollert)



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.





### Hehr's Pine Park Farm/3<sup>rd</sup> Place

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 (see image A).
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 (see image B).
3	The site is visually prominent from Epping Road to the west and local streets (see image C).
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 (see images D & E).
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 (see image A).
7	Rural post and rail fencing has been utilised to define the edges of the site.





## 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.





## Lehmann's Farm Playground

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 (see images C & E).
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 (see image A).
3	A number of mature trees are retained on the site.
4	The recreated house foundation and reconstructed brick garage wall (see image B).
5	A new windmill replaces the original structure (see image D).
6	Circular planters mark the location of old wells (see image D).





## scanlon park (4 Sunraysia Road, Epping)



Scanlon Park is approximately 3,000sqm in size and forms a gateway entry into the Melbourne Wholesale Markets site in Epping off Cooper Street.

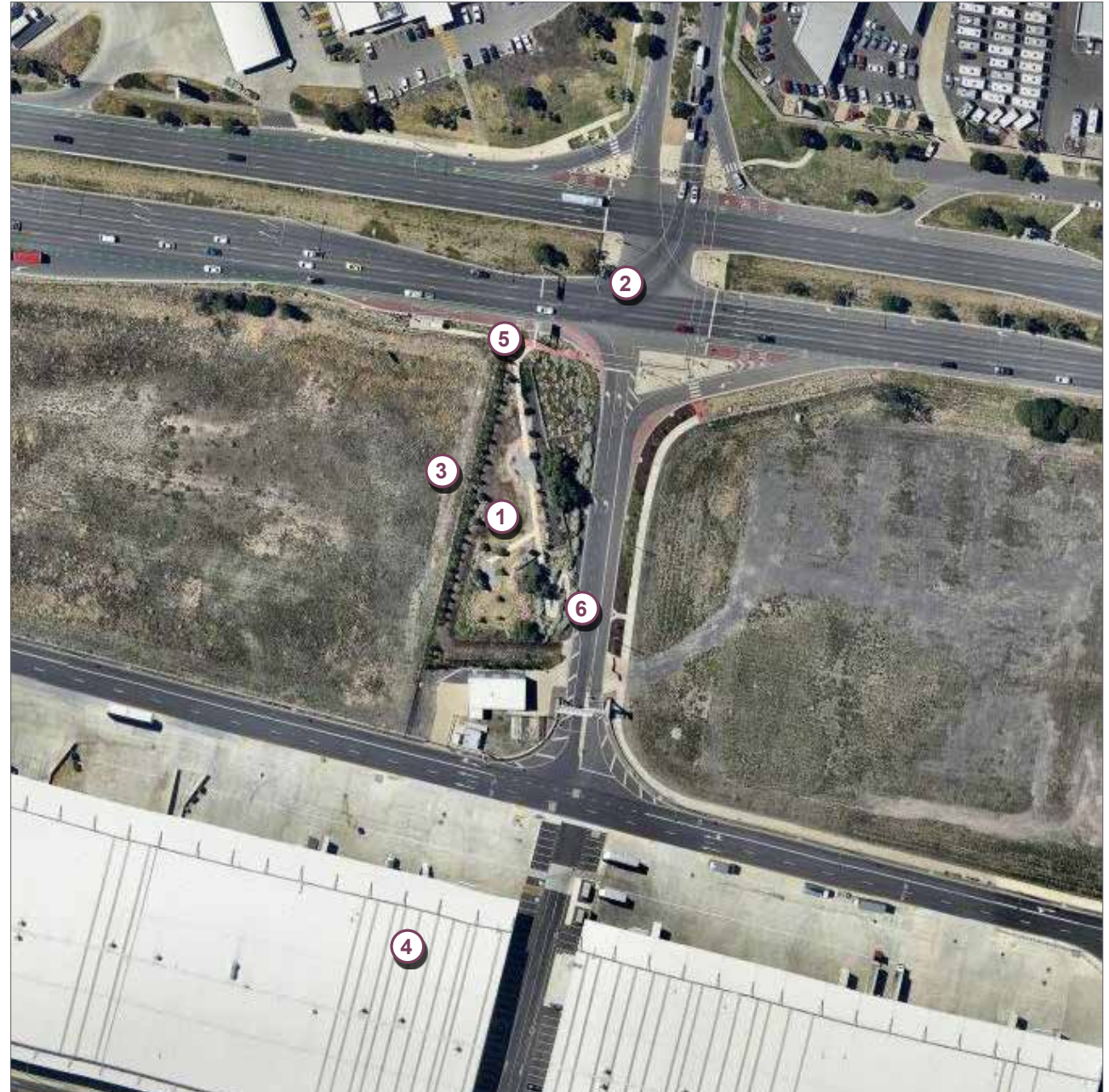
This case study demonstrates how a passive park can be utilised as a gateway entry into an employment/ industrial area. Scanlon Park has enhanced a complicated site which included a stony rise and existing dry stone walls and has created a passive park to soften the surrounding employment cluster uses. Scanlon Park is a good example of what can be achieved in employment areas and adjacent to arterial roads when visual character elements are prioritised and retained for the benefit of the local community.





## Scanlon Park

1	This site has utilised an existing stony rise to create a visual high point for a passive park. The elevation enhances the gateway nature of the park and gives the site visual prominence from Cooper Street (see image A).
2	The site is visually prominent from Cooper Street and serves to soften a major entry gateway into the Melbourne Wholesale Markets site in Epping.
3	The adjacent undeveloped site should be designed to create an attractive interface with the existing Scanlon Park to maintain the visual character that the park has already protected and improved.
4	The Melbourne Wholesale Markets completely surround the park and provide an industrial building typology which the park must respond to in terms of maintaining the character of existing visual elements (see image C).
5	Scanlon Park provides simple and effective links to the existing shared path network on Cooper Street as well as the existing bus stop to the north west of the site.
6	A ramp has been introduced to provide universal access to the passive seating areas and responds well to the stony rise on the site (see image B).



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# recommendations

SHENSTONE PARK PRECINCT STRUCTURE PLAN (1069.1)

## 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
- Key Place Making Opportunities.
- The review of case studies including identified opportunities and issues that can be either captured or avoided in Shenstone Park.
- The review of policies and strategies guiding development within the City of Whittlesea

The Summary Opportunities / Constraints plan (Figure 9) and also each of the Opportunity and Constraint Sector Plans (Figures 7 and 8) 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 Shenstone Park.

Key Recommendations	
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 (ie. via roads and/or linear open space reserves).
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 where possible.
8	Protect and enhance waterways and associated open space opportunities.
9	Locate the open space network to preserve visual character features.





The Shenstone Park Visual Character Assessment provides the following recommendations:

- Identify the existing key visual character elements of the site and retain where appropriate.
- Provide a site analysis identifying site specific opportunities and constraints.
- Provide an analysis of local case studies that have successfully incorporated visual character elements in to an urban context.
- Recommend design responses for incorporating identified visual character elements in an urban context.
- Identify existing strategies and policies that influence the retention of visual character elements.
- Through the subdivision process detailed analysis of visual character elements must be undertaken to determine appropriate boundaries or buffers from new developments.
- Subdivision design must respond to the landscape character by actively aligning roads, lots and open space to retain visual character elements.
- Cultural Heritage Management Plans must be undertaken for heritage places to ascertain cultural value, significance and appropriate site boundaries.
- Location, quality and retention value of existing Dry Stone Walls must be identified in subdivision plans.
- A planning permit must be gained for any alterations to or removal of Dry Stone Walls as per Council Policy within the Whittlesea Planning Scheme.
- Built form must respond to the scale, proportion and materials of adjacent or nearby heritage places and open space in a contemporary manner.
- Dwellings must not back onto the railway line and the existing gas easement (ie. back fences along these edges).
- Visual character elements should be incorporated into the design of streets, conservation areas, public open space and local town centres to enhance local identity, where appropriate.
- River Red Gums should be retained within the public realm. Retention within private ownership will be considered on merit (ie. within town centres, car parks and schools).
- Identified placemaking opportunity sites should be retained to create focal points and add variety and interest to subdivision plans, where possible.
- Trees should be visually linked throughout the site by passive and active open space, boulevard treatments and viewlines created by roads and shared paths.
- Legibility and wayfinding should be promoted through visual access to distant views and identified placemaking opportunities, heritage places and significant trees.
- Subdivisions should protect and enhance creek corridors to facilitate linear trails and open space opportunities.
- Hard landscape within open space should incorporate local materials, natural colours and finishes to complement the landscape.
- Dry Stone Walls should be integrated as a design feature of open space areas, in accordance with Council Policy. Of particular importance are walls that define the edges of conservation or open space areas.
- Open space should be located adjacent to heritage places to provide a visual 'rural' context, where possible.
- Heritage places and their contributory elements should be conserved, restored or adaptively reused to add to the creation of local identity (reference 3rd Place, Carome Homestead and Creeds Farm case studies).
- Heritage places that are degraded and cannot be reused should be retained for its historic and interpretive value where possible. Ruins should be retained within open space or adapted for use as a playground (reference Lehmann's Farm Playground case study).
- Heritage places should be prominent in the subdivision design (reference Hehr's Pine Park Farm case study) to ensure that their importance is acknowledged.
- All open space areas and conservation reserves should be bounded by roads unless an improved outcome can be demonstrated.
- Where fencing is unavoidable adjoining open space areas, it should be a maximum 1.5m in height and at least 50% visually permeable.
- Development adjacent to conservation and open space areas should overlook and activate the area by using large windows, decks and balconies.
- Subdivision pattern abutting railway line and the existing gas easement should align road geometry to offer a mixture of lot frontages and sideages. Additional landscape buffer could be utilised along both of these interface conditions.

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# appendix

SHENSTONE PARK PRECINCT STRUCTURE PLAN (1069.1)



## state planning strategies



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

### North Growth Corridor Plan (GAA, 2012)

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

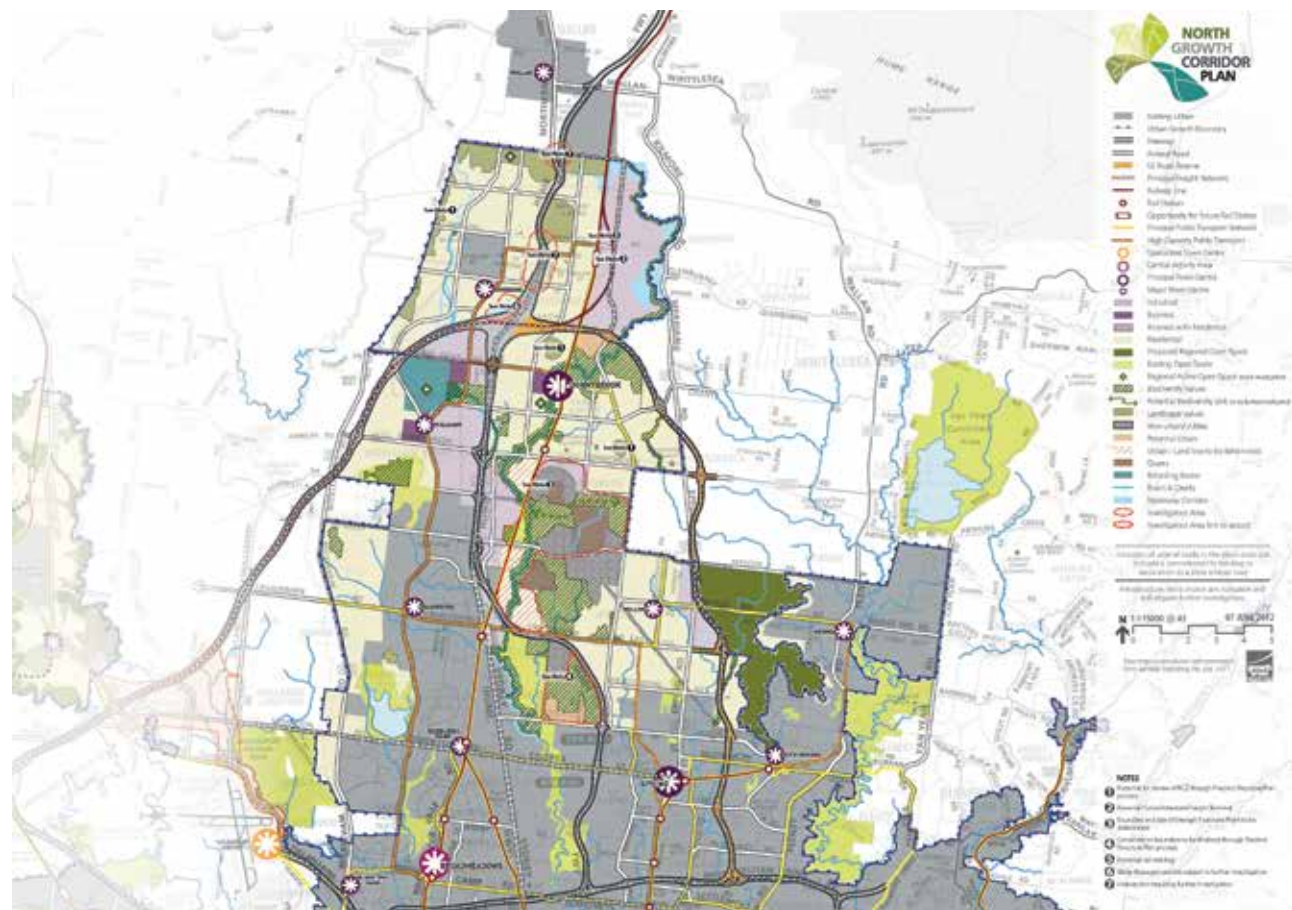
It highlights the need to undertake work such as the Shenstone Park Visual Character Assessment to determine the most appropriate mechanism for recognising and protecting the valued natural features.

### 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.

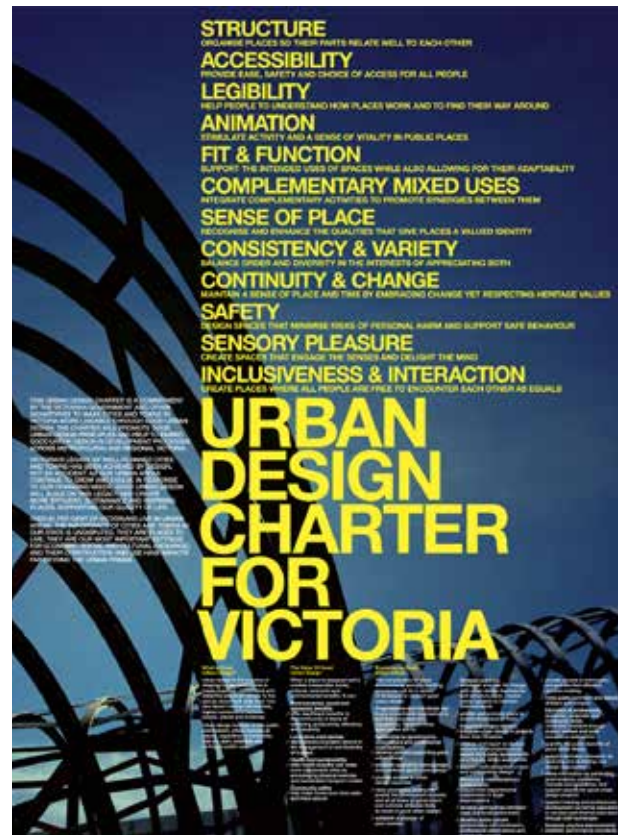
The MPS Discussion paper proposes a number of principles to guide the strategy. Most relevant to this assessment is Principle One: A distinctive Melbourne. While this principle focuses more on the built form rather than the natural values of the landscape, we would expect this to be covered in the future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



### Urban Design Charter for Victoria (2010)

Key principles relevant to this assessment are

- **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.
- **SENSORY PLEASURE** Create spaces that engage the senses and delight the mind.



### Plan Melbourne 2017-2050

Plan Melbourne is a metropolitan planning strategy that defines the future shape of the city and state over the next 35 years.

Integrating long-term land use, infrastructure and transport planning, Plan Melbourne sets out the strategy for supporting jobs and growth, while building on Melbourne's legacy of distinctiveness, liveability and sustainability.





### STATE PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

#### Clause 12: Environmental and Landscape Values

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

#### 12.04 Significant environments and landscapes

##### 12.04-2 Landscapes

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

Ensure natural key features are protected and enhanced.

#### Clause 15: Built Environment and Heritage

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

#### 15.01 Urban environment

##### 15.01-1 Urban Design

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

##### 15.01-3 Neighbourhood and subdivision design

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

#### 15.03 Heritage

##### 15.03-1 Heritage Conservation

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

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

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

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

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

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

### LOCAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

#### Clause 21.07 Built Environment and Heritage

##### 21.07-1 Urban Design

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

##### 21.07-3 Heritage Conservation

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

#### Clause 21.08 Housing

##### 21.08-1 Residential Capacity and Location

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

#### Clause 22.04 – Subdivision Design Policy

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



#### **Clause 22.10 - River Red Gum Protection Policy**

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

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

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

It is policy that:

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

## **PARTICULAR PROVISIONS**

#### **Clause 52.37 - Post Box and Dry Stone Walls**

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

#### **Clause 56.05 - Urban Landscape**

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

#### **Standard C12**

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

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

## relevant council strategies and reports

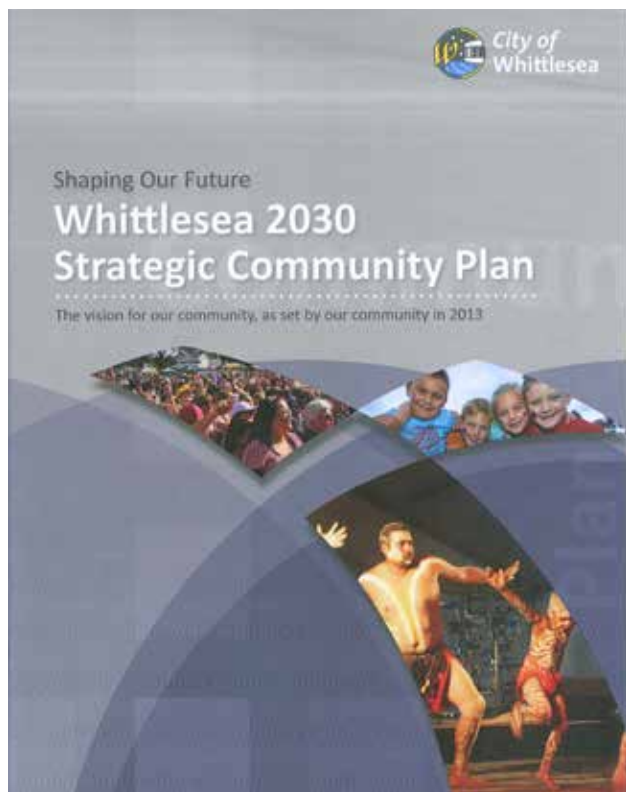


### Whittlesea 2030 Strategic Community Plan (City of Whittlesea: 2013)

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

#### Key relevant statements:

- We share an open expression of cultural heritage.
- Our urban design helps build connection to place and the community.
- Our natural environment is a resource for all to enjoy and we need to protect it for future generations.

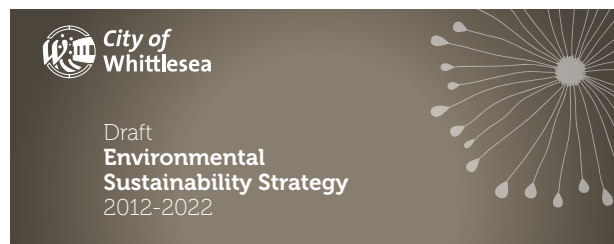


### Environmental Sustainability Strategy (City of Whittlesea, 2013)

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

#### Relevant objective:

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



### 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 Shenstone Park PSP area comprises the Red Gum and Souther 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.

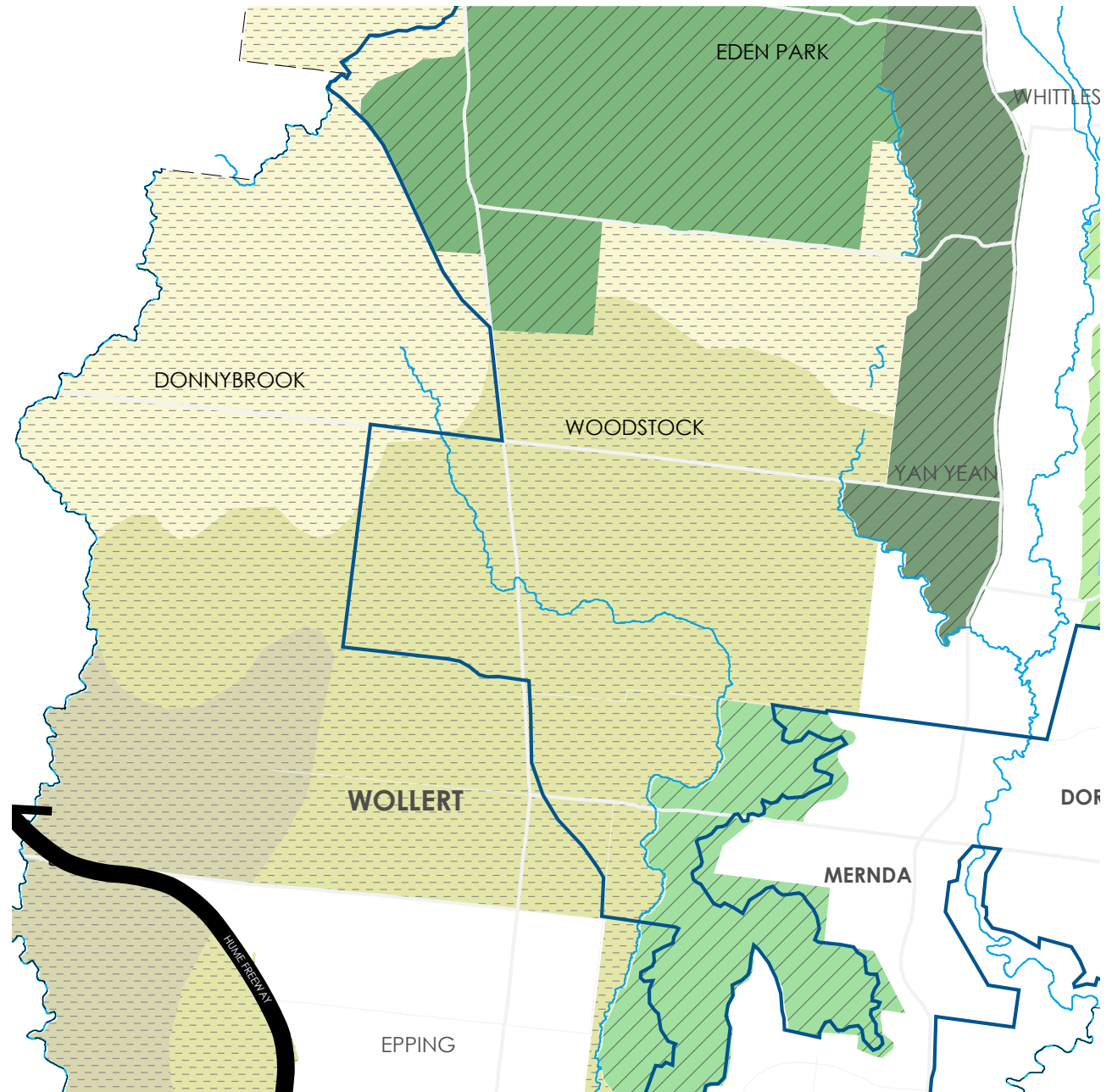
### Southern Plains Sub-area

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.

-  NORTHERN PLAINS
-  REDGUM
-  SOUTHERN PLAINS
-  EDEN HILLS
-  QUARRY HILLS
-  URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY
-  DONNYBROOK/WOODSTOCK
-  PSP BOUNDARY

#### 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 Shenstone Park PSP.





## references



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

- The City of Whittlesea Green Wedge Management Plan, 2011
- City of Whittlesea Heritage Study, Context (2011)
- The City of Whittlesea Rural Landscape Character Assessment, Contour Consultants (1999)
- The City of Whittlesea Rural Review, City of Whittlesea (1999)
- Delivering Melbourne's Newest Sustainable Communities (July 2009)
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy, City of Whittlesea (2013)
- A Guide to Growth Area Street Tree Planting, City of Whittlesea (June 2007)
- Landscape Assessment for Aurora, VicUrban (December 2004)
- North Growth Corridor Plan, Growth Areas Authority (June 2012)
- Whittlesea 2030 Strategic Community Plan, City of Whittlesea (2013)
- 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, Meredith Gould Architects (1991)
- Whittlesea Planning Scheme

Shenstone Park PSP Background Reports:

- Arboricultural Assessment (Treetec, 2017)
- Post-Contact Heritage Assessment (Ecology & Heritage Partners, 2017)
- Land Capability Assessment (Meinhardt, 2017)
- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (Biosis, 2017)
- Quarry Impact Assessment (GHD, 2017)