

21.05 ENVIRONMENTAL AND LANDSCAPE VALUES11/05/2017
C197**21.05-1 Environmental Assets**11/05/2017
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Environmental assets within urban and rural areas play a range of vital roles in relation to open space provision, habitat and fauna links, visual and landscape relief and in providing essential life support systems.

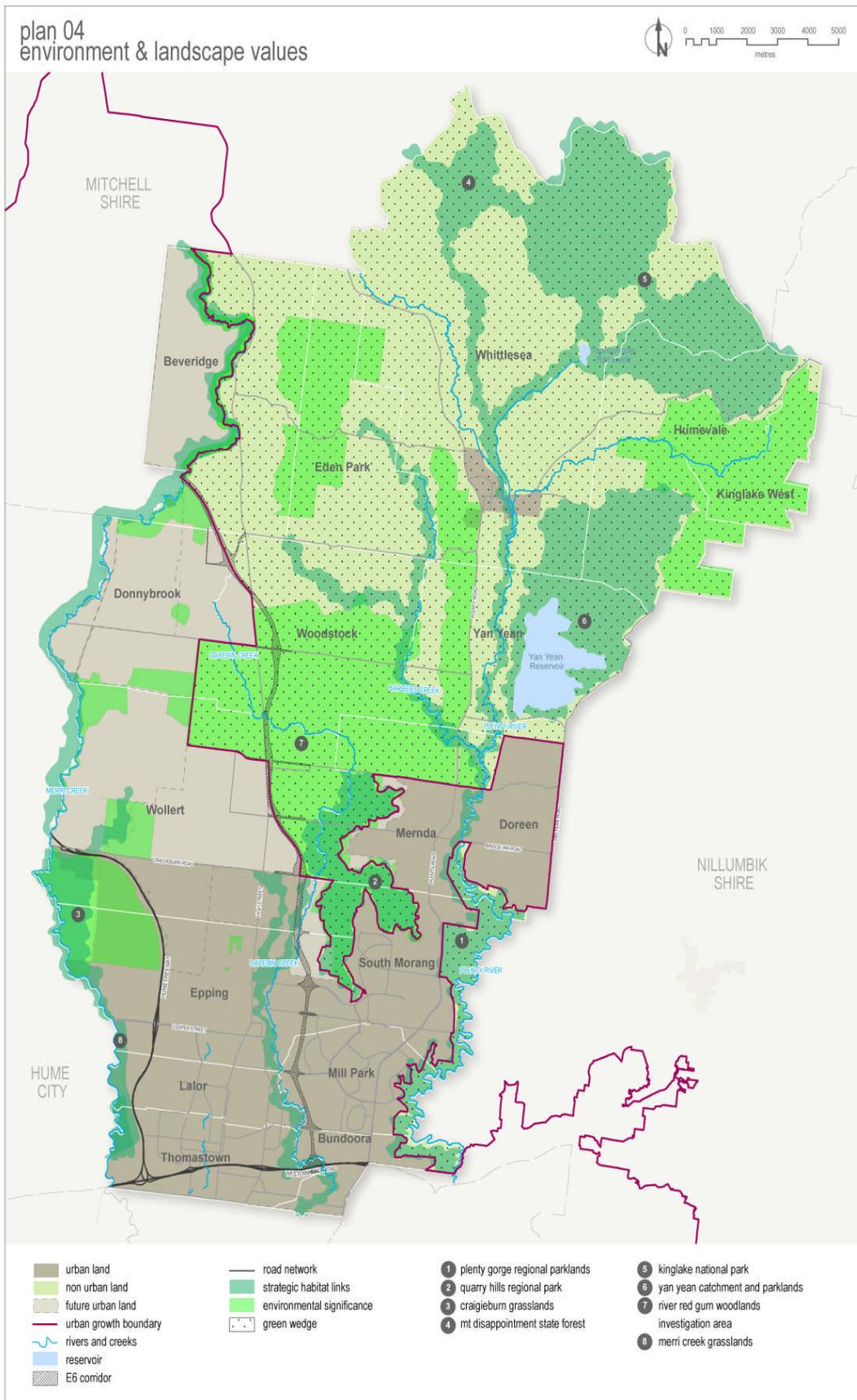
The City of Whittlesea endeavours to adopt a holistic approach to land management and recognition of sites of sensitivity. Recognition of the specific characteristics, roles and sensitivity of waterways, land capability and natural systems is critical to gaining an understanding, of development impacts, which must be viewed within the context of the wider catchment.

Council is committed to the protection of biodiversity and native vegetation; to do this key areas of ecological significance will be protected, native vegetation conditions will be improved and connectivity between key habitat sites will be maintained and enhanced.

Significant environmental and landscape features of the municipality are shown on Plan 4 in this Clause and include:

- the Plenty River and Plenty Gorge Parklands;
- the Merri Creek, and the Craigieburn Grasslands;
- the Darebin Creek;
- the Bald Hills Grasslands;
- Hernes Swamp;
- Toorourong Reservoir;
- the Great Dividing Range;
- The Yan Yean Reservoir and its Catchment;
- The Kinglake National Park;
- Mt Disappointment State Forest
- Quarry Hills and
- Whittlesea Hills.

The Whittlesea Green Wedge Management Plan provides a framework for the sustainable management of the municipality's non-urban (green wedge) areas and identifies a range of actions in protecting and managing the City's environmental assets in non-urban areas.



Objective 1: To protect environmental assets and landscape values.

Strategy 1.1 Provide appropriate buffers along waterways, wetlands and other environmentally sensitive areas

Strategy 1.2 Enhance the landscape values by retaining the identified natural features in new developments.

Objective 2: To increase the connectivity of key local and regional habitat areas

Strategy 2.1 Protect existing habitat corridors and remnant vegetation.

Strategy 2.2 Pursue strategic acquisition of key parcels of land linking key regional habitat corridors.

Strategy 2.3 Avoid and limit the removal of native vegetation when undertaking strategic planning and assessing applications and where appropriate pursue replacement strategies in close proximity to loss.

Strategy 2.4 Implement replacement strategies for cleared native vegetation to minimise and offset the impact on local landscapes.

Objective 3: To improve the environmental water quality and the health of river and creek waterways.

Strategy 3.1 Utilise the principles of water sensitive urban design.

Strategy 3.2 Achieve best practice stormwater management.

Strategy 3.3 Minimise the effects of urban stormwater on the environmental health of waterways.

Strategy 3.4 Support sustainable agricultural practices, including those that reduce the runoff of pollutants and sediment into waterways.

Strategy 3.5 Undertake stormwater treatment works along Darebin and Edgars Creeks to achieve significant improvement to the quality of runoff entering the waterways.

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Biodiversity

There are over 40 species of native fauna within the City that are recognised as species of State significance and there are 11 species recognised by the Federal Government as nationally significant, including the:

- Golden Sun Moth (critically endangered)
- Growling Grass Frog (vulnerable)
- Striped Legless Lizard (vulnerable).

These animals are all found within the nationally significant Victorian Volcanic Plains Grassland.

Unfortunately, extensive clearing and development has reduced the native flora found in the area. Of the 350 native plant species, 20 are recognised as having state significance. River Red Gums are a particularly important part of the landscape, have heritage value and provide habitat and food for native fauna.

Three nationally significant ecological communities (under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC)) are found in the City of Whittlesea:

- Victorian Volcanic Plains Grassland (critically endangered).
- Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain (critically endangered).
- Seasonal Herbaceous Wetlands (Freshwater) of the Temperate Lowland Plains (critically endangered).

The vegetation and biodiversity under greatest threat in the City of Whittlesea are the flatter Victorian Volcanic Plains Ecological Vegetation Community (EVC) of the Western Basalt land form. Accordingly, local priorities for vegetation offsets are areas of Red Gum Woodlands beyond the urban fringe. Priorities for environmental improvements include the Grasslands of the Merri Corridor, Plenty River, the Plenty Gorge Parklands, Quarry Hills and conservation areas protected for urban growth areas.

Objective 1: To protect biodiversity values

- Strategy 1.1 Facilitate the provision of buffers along waterways and between sites of biodiversity value and urban infrastructure.
- Strategy 1.2 Facilitate greater habitat connectivity between key habitat areas.
- Strategy 1.3 Protect and improve remnant native vegetation.
- Strategy 1.4 Improve biodiversity outcomes and habitat connectivity in newly developing areas.
- Strategy 1.5 Create local faunal movement in new growth areas.
- Strategy 1.6 Protect areas of important biodiversity in perpetuity through the execution of appropriate title protection agreements or covenants.

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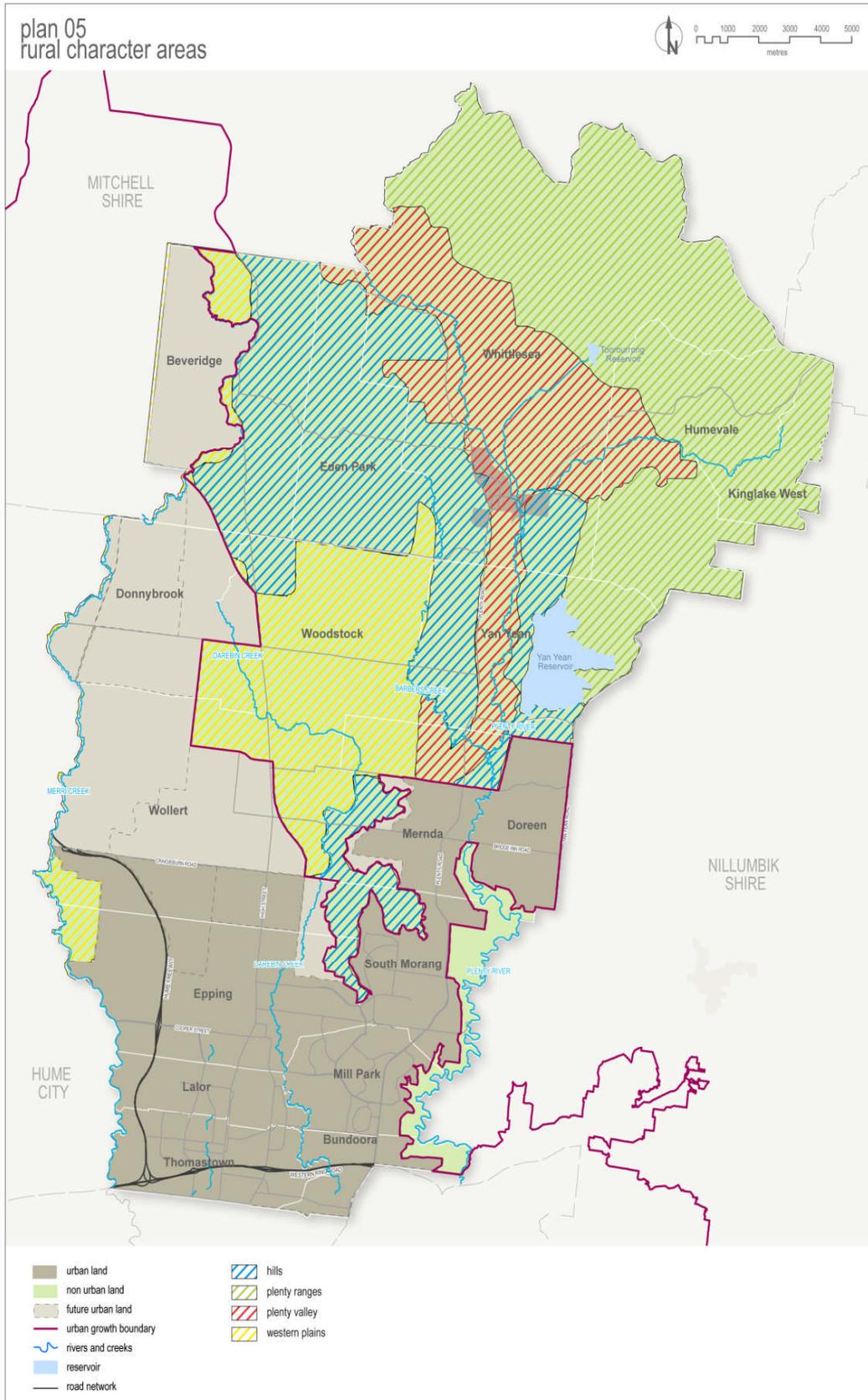
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Rural Land Character Areas

The rural parts of the City of Whittlesea are extensive and can be divided into four basic land character areas: The Plenty Valley (Rural Land Character Area), The Plenty Ranges, The Hills and The Western Plains (refer to Plan 5 in this Clause). These landscape character areas contain significant productive qualities, natural features and examples of the City's cultural heritage which contribute to the establishment of the identity of the City of Whittlesea.

Significant features within the rural areas include:

- the Whittlesea Hills,
- Plenty River Floodplain,
- Quarry Hills,
- Merri Creek,
- the River Red Gum Woodlands Investigation Area,
- Eden Park and
- the Northern and Eastern Foothills of the Plenty Ranges.



Objective 1: To ensure new development respects the identified Visual Character Area values of Plenty Valley (Rural Land Character Area), the Plenty Ranges, The Hills and Western Plains.

- Strategy 1.1 Protect the identified Visual Character Area of Plenty Valley with its historic homesteads, hedgerows, pastoral qualities and River Red Gum woodlands in proximity to farming properties and Whittlesea Township.
- Strategy 1.2 Protect the identified Visual Character Area of Plenty Ranges with its strongly dissected steep slopes and valleys associated with the southern slopes of the Great Dividing Range, the protected water catchment and the natural areas.
- Strategy 1.3 Protect the identified Visual Character Area of The Hills with its visual sensitivity due to topography, slope, major ridgelines and viewing corridors.
- Strategy 1.4 Protect the remaining elements of the Western Plains in the Green Wedge Area and the identified visual character values of open native grasslands, pastures, dry stone walls, stony rises and knolls, and farm buildings.
- Strategy 1.5 Maintain the existing low density rural character of the Plenty Valley (Rural Land Character Area), Plenty Ranges, the Hills and the Western Plains.

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Implementation

Policy Guidelines

When deciding on an application for use, development or subdivision the following matters will be considered, as appropriate:

- The recommendations of the North East Region of Councils (NEROC) Report 1997.
- *Merri Creek Environs Strategy 2009-2014.*
- The requirements of the 'Rural Land Character Areas – Siting Use and Development Guidelines'.
- *Whittlesea Green Wedge Management Plan 2011-2021.*

Reference Documents

- *Epping Central Structure Plan 2013*
- *Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2012-2022*
- *Green Wedge Management Plan 2011-2021*
- *Local Conservation Strategy 2000*
- *Merri Creek Environs Strategy 2009-2014*
- *River Redgum Protection Policy Guidelines 1998*
- *Roadside Management Strategy 2014*
- *Stormwater Management Plan 2012-2017*
- *Open Space Strategy 1997*

Further strategic work

- Strengthen policies and controls relating to new dams in rural areas so that stream flows in local waterways can be maintained and enhanced.
- Develop an Integrated Water Cycle Management local planning policy to include best practice integrated water cycle management and water sensitive urban design to cover development of non-residential land uses including mixed use, industrial and commercial.
- Establish a comprehensive and reliable database of ecological assets and develop a local biodiversity plan.
- Develop a Climate Change Adaption Plan.