Statutory Context

The existing DDO31 applies a mandatory height limit of 9 metres (10 metres on a sloping site, or 12 metres to meet Melbourne Water requirements in floodprone areas) to the entire study area, as shown on the map opposite.

A range of building height controls apply through zone or overlay controls. In some areas, overlay controls also trigger a permit above a specified height.

Height controls are shown on the map opposite and include:

- NRZ3 applies to neighbourhoods in Kew and Hawthorn and sets a mandatory height limit of 8m or 9m on a sloping site.
- GRZ1 applies to neighbourhoods in Kew and Hawthorn and sets a discretionary 9m height limit or 10m on a sloping site.
- GRZ3 applies to neighbourhoods in Kew and Hawthorn and sets a discretionary 10.5m height limit or 11.5m on a sloping site.
- RGZ1 is applied to residential areas along Riversdale Road and Power Street in Hawthorn, with a discretionary height limit of 13.5m.
- UFZ zoned sites in Kew have no height limit.
- MUZ applies to the former Hawthorn Tram Depot site and sets a discretionary height limit of 9 metres. DDO6 also applies to this site, and has a recommended maximum height of 33.3 metres.
- SUZ Schedule 1 applies to the Green Acres and Kew Golf Club sites, and does not set a height limit.
- SUZ Schedule 2 applies to the Scotch College campus, and does not set a height limit.

The Heritage Overlay also applies to numerous sites and precincts close to the river and while it does not set a specific height limit, would serve to restrict building heights due to heritage considerations.
Analysis of Building Heights

The existing height controls that apply within Boroondara have been reviewed to determine how they will achieve the desired outcomes for the Yarra River within this context.

The approach to determining building height within other areas of the Leafy Suburban and Parklands & Recreation character types of the Lower-Middle Yarra River corridor has been taken into consideration. This will ensure a consistent approach to managing development across the corridor.

Within the Boroondara context, the Yarra River retains a strongly naturalistic landscape character overall. In most locations:

- vegetation and topography are the dominant visual elements of the river corridor.
- the skyline, as viewed from the waterway, the river banks and trails or adjoining parklands, is mostly defined by the tree canopy.
- dense vegetation lines the river’s banks and screens views to buildings; while buildings are sometimes partly visible, the strong vegetation screen ensures they remain visually recessive.

Built form that is highly visible and dominant only occurs in several locations, due to a number of factors including:

- Buildings are set up on the higher ground of an escarpment.
- Buildings are set close to the river's edge.
- There is minimal tree canopy within the building setback to screen views.
- High scale development extending above the line of the tree canopy.

Four locations, shown on the map opposite, where buildings are highly visible for one or several of these reasons have been analysed in detail over the following pages. This analysis helps to understand the relationship of building scale and siting to topography and vegetation, and how effectively the current height limits would manage potential future development pressures.
1 Blythswood Court area

Buildings are visible on the skyline at the topographic height point around Blythswood Court, near the Victoria Bridge (Barkers Road). They range in scale between 1-2 storeys, and some have a high roof form. However, the established tree planting helps to screen buildings from view, and the tree canopy is still the dominant feature of the skyline.

This area is mostly within the NRZ3 zone, which sets a mandatory height limit of 8m (9m sloping sites). This is 1m lower than the mandatory maximum height of the existing DDO31, but consistent with the approach taken to building height within other areas of the Leafy Suburban character type within the Lower-Middle Yarra River corridor. It is recommended that this established 8m height limit is reflected in the revised DDO31.

The GRZ3 applies to sites immediately north of Barkers Road (discretionary 9m or 10m sloping sites). The GRZ3 applies to sites south of Barkers Road (discretionary 10.5m or 11.5m on a sloping site). DDO31 extends for a depth of one property back from the edge of the riverside PPRZ. It is recommended that the control boundary is extended to include an additional site on Swinton Avenue to capture the entire ridgeline, and that the height limits of DDO31 are retained. This reflects the approach taken for Leafy Suburban areas where an additional degree of design flexibility is warranted.

2 Harrison Crescent

Harrison Crescent is located on a ridgeline, with land rising up steeply from the river’s edge. Several properties on the western and eastern side of Harrison Crescent are highly prominent from various viewing locations on the opposite side of the river, as shown in the images to the right.

There is a significant gap in the vegetation in this location, which contributes to the visibility of these properties. Harrison Crescent Reserve provides an opportunity for buffer planting but does not currently support a significant tree canopy to screen buildings. Further south there is minimal public land adjoining the river and it does not allow for planting.

On the eastern side of Harrison Crescent, a three storey apartment building (to the left in the photo) is visible above the tree canopy. On the western side of the street, several buildings step down the slope to the river and are also visible; while these buildings have a double storey frontage to the street, the appearance of building height as viewed from the river or opposite banks can extend to 3 storeys.

These sites are located within the GRZ3, which has a discretionary height of 10.5m (11.5m sloping sites). It is recommended that the 9m mandatory maximum height of DDO31 is retained and extended to the eastern side of Harrison Crescent to ensure that future built form remains lower than the dominant tree canopy height, consistent with other Leafy Suburban areas.
3 Glan Avon Road

This double storey building is below the maximum 9 metre height limit of DDO31, yet is highly visible in the river corridor due to the lack of vegetation within the setback. Built form also extends into the proposed 30m setback ‘no build zone’.

Sites within the area are located within the GRZ3 (discretionary 10.5m, 11.5m on sloping sites). It is recommended that the 9m mandatory maximum height of DDO31 is retained. This will ensure that future built form remains lower than the dominant tree canopy height, consistent with other Leafy Suburban areas, and allowing a degree of design flexibility within the GRZ context.

The extent of the control boundary in this area is considered adequate as the topography does not have a significant slope from the river.

4 Wallen Road former Hawthorn Tram Depot & RGZ area

The former Hawthorn Tram Depot apartments are up to 7 storeys in height and highly visible from the opposite bank, breaking through the tree canopy skyline. The site and the adjoining RGZ1 area are located on an escarpment which rises steeply from the river’s edge.

The adjoining RGZ1 area on the south side of Riversdale Road also has the potential for highly visible built form to intrude into the river’s landscape setting. The RGZ1 applies a discretionary 13.5m height limit. This area (comprising five sites) is also included within the Heritage Overlay precinct HO148 ‘Fairview Park’. While the HO may limit the scope for visible new built form at the street frontage, it may not prevent visible built form at the river interface. Several of these sites extend into adjoining parkland, in close proximity to the river’s edge, and their roofs are visible above the tree canopy.

Therefore, it is recommended that the 9m mandatory height limit of existing DDO31 remain, to manage the scale of buildings in relationship to the river interface. This will ensure that future built form remains lower than the dominant tree canopy height, consistent with other Leafy Suburban areas, while allowing a degree of design flexibility within the RGZ context.

In this instance, objectives relating to parkland setbacks and interface are important. These should require a high standard of design, buildings that have a visual relationship with the adjoining open space, and adequate space for canopy tree planting.