The City of Whittlesea’s population has grown at a rapid rate during the past 30 years, more than quadrupling from 27,000 in 1969 to approximately 130,000 in 2007.

The Whittlesea Green Wedge contains approximately 4800 properties and is home to around 7,000 residents. The Whittlesea Township contains around half of the rural population (ABS 2006).

**Key goal and directions**
The people goal for the Whittlesea Green Wedge is as follows:

**GREEN WEDGE GOAL**
People: A connected community that respects, values and celebrates its past, present and future.

This section of the Management Plan focuses on the following sub-themes:

**PEOPLE Sub-themes**
- 8. Communities and settlements
- 9. Tourism and recreation
- 10. Heritage and culture

Each sub-theme describes key features and values, conveys community views, identifies planning controls, guidelines and key programs. Relevant actions are listed in Part 3: Action Plan.

**Green Wedge Communities**
The Whittlesea Green Wedge contains 7 communities: Eden Park, Humevale, Kinglake West, South Morang (part), Whittlesea, Woodstock and Yan Yean.

Rural communities are clustered around the Whittlesea Township, and the smaller rural settlements in Yan Yean and Humevale. Areas of rural living are evident in Eden Park. Refer back to Map 2 for the location of Green Wedge settlements.

Although the majority of rural Green Wedge land parcels are 20 hectares or greater, a number of small lot subdivisions have been created, often with little understanding historically of local topographical features, land capacity or social infrastructure. This includes:

- In 1851, 640 acres were sub-divided into 1 acre lots to create the historic township of Separation.
- In the land boom of the 1880s, 1,324 lots between 1-4 acres were created in Eden Park. Around 80% of these lots have now been restructured into larger parcels capable of rural living and on-site effluent disposal.
- In 1894, two government initiated village settlements were created north of Whittlesea Township at Bruces Creek and north of Scrubby Creek (41 lots for fruit growing).
- In 1921, 1,000 acres in the Glenvale area was opened for small dairy farms by the Closer Settlement Board.
- At the end of World War II, a number of Soldier Settlements were established in the Wollert area.
- Humevale also contains areas of small urban type subdivision (City of Whittlesea 2000a)

**Community Capacity**
One of the City of Whittlesea’s most important assets is its people: individuals, family groups, community organisations, school groups, government agencies and authorities, business leaders and the like.

The former Victorian Department for Victorian Communities, now part of the Department of Planning and Community Development, was instrumental in conducting many studies that sought to explore the concepts of social capital, resilience, intra-generational and inter-generational equity.

The community’s current and future capacity to value and undertake actions associated with this Management Plan is paramount to achieving the vision, goals and objectives that contribute to a liveable, sustainable Green Wedge.
8.1 Objective

The objective for this sub-theme is:

Communities and settlements
objective
To ensure residents have the opportunity to participate in decisions relating to their community and the liveability of the Whittlesea Green Wedge.

The current and potential capacity of our communities to have meaningful participation opportunities is essential in developing ownership of the values and strategies for the Green Wedge area.

8.2 Features And Values

The Whittlesea Green Wedge community is made up of individuals and organisations, all of which have unique interests and skills. In order to improve the liveability of the Whittlesea Green Wedge, the community needs to be given an opportunity to be involved in achieving Green Wedge goals.

Without local ownership, there is risk of low participation rates, omitting vital local knowledge, poor coordination and lack of commitment. Therefore, it is useful to gain an understanding of the socio-demographic profile of the rural areas of the municipality based on 2006 Census data.

8.2.1 Socio-Demographic Profile

The following information is a summary of the communities within the Whittlesea Green Wedge based on ABS data released in 2006. Since 1996, the majority of population growth in the rural areas has occurred within the Whittlesea Township. By 2021, the population of the Township is expected to stabilise at around 5,000 residents. Currently around half of Whittlesea Township residents are 'new' residents, that is, they have been in their current home for less than five years.

The population of the surrounding rural areas is expected to remain relatively stable at between 3,500 and 3,700 residents. The average number of people per household fell from 3.0 to 2.9 between 1996 and 2006. The proportion of fully owned dwellings fell from 48% to 38% while the proportion of rented dwellings remained stable at around 16%.

Although a substantial proportion of new residents to the area are young families, the Green Wedge population is aging (as is the municipality generally). The proportion of Green Wedge residents beyond traditional retirement age is currently around 11% and is expected to rise to around 16% by 2021. Around 22% of current Green Wedge residents are children (aged less than 15 years). This proportion is expected to fall to around 19% by 2021.

Residents of the City come from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds. A high percentage of residents were born in other countries, particularly Macedonia, Italy, and Greece. Demographically, over half come from non-English speaking backgrounds.

The Green Wedge population is far more homogenous. Only 14% of Green Wedge residents were born overseas, which is less than half the proportion for the municipality as a whole. Only 9% normally speak a language other than English at home, compared to almost half the residents within the City. However, almost 1,000 Green Wedge residents are first-generation migrants, with 60% residing in the rural area surrounding Whittlesea Township. There are around 50 Indigenous persons living in the Whittlesea Green Wedge, which is comparable to the overall proportion for the municipality (0.7%).

Although the education level of Green Wedge residents is just below the municipal average, the northern region of the municipality has a significantly lower level of unemployment than the southern areas. The largest employment category is trades. The fastest growing industries of employment are retail, trade and health and community services. The only industry to show a slight statistical significant decline in employment from 1996 to 2006 is agriculture (from 8% to 6% in the rural areas).
8.3 What the Community is Saying
Consultation was undertaken with residents and community groups through a series of community forums and supplemented by workshops with government departments and agencies with an interest in the Whittlesea Green Wedge.

Despite the range of opinions expressed, a few common threads can be drawn from the feedback received:

- **Residents in our green wedge communities wish to retain the rural atmosphere of towns such as the Whittlesea Township.** They are concerned that residents are not fully aware of relevant planning controls and encourage Council to actively inform residents of rural matters.

- **Residents are often keen to be a part of various community groups,** but the lack of new members is an issue.

Refer to the Community Views Final Report for a detailed summary of community responses.

8.4 Issues
The main areas requiring action for the communities of the Whittlesea Green Wedge are:

- Limited understanding between urban and rural lifestyles
- Lack of renewal and rejuvenation of community groups
- Limited access to current information, particularly in relation to land use planning
- Lack of basic services and facilities such as a library, multiuse pathways, and public transport (including length of travel time to usual place of employment)
- Concern that the green wedge will be ‘given over’ to residential development
- Retention of the rural town atmosphere associated with the Whittlesea Township and surrounding land patterns

This is not an exhaustive list, but rather an overview of the current key areas requiring action.

8.5 Planning Guidelines
Within the context of broader green wedge values, Council should consider its communities in its decision making:

- At every opportunity, provide participation opportunities for the community on matters relating to the green wedge. Ownership of the values and strategies for the green wedge area will only result from mutual understanding and respect.
- Promote and encourage participation in community activities and groups. Actively target rural based events.

8.6 Incentives And Programs
Council has a range of Community Development Grants open to various community groups within the municipality. Although not primarily focused on rural areas, groups are encouraged to contact the Community Services Directorate for further information.

The Port Phillip and Westernport CMA plays a key role in the coordination and administration of funding for individuals and groups caring for land, water and biodiversity within the Port Phillip and Westernport region. Refer to the following website for further details http://www.ppwcma.vic.gov.au/funding-grants.aspx.

8.7 Actions
Refer to Part 3: Action Plan for the full range of actions proposed to sustain the Whittlesea Green Wedge into the future.

In summary, key actions proposed include:

- Promote and further develop community group involvement, capacity and benefits to the Green Wedge community
- Explore opportunities to promote the value of farmers and farming practices to the wider community
- Continue to advocate on behalf of the community for necessary services and facilities in the rural areas, and in particular Whittlesea Township
- Develop ‘Rural Information Packs’ that summarise pre-purchase planning information and land management tips.
Drystone wall constructed on a rural property in Woodstock.
9.1 Objective
The objective for this sub-theme is:

Tourism and recreation objective
To enhance and promote the diverse natural, cultural and landscape values of the Green Wedge for tourism and recreation opportunities.

Existing and proposed public open space and conservation reserves, heritage places, lineal reserves and recreational opportunities will continue to attract visitors from the broader region and will be managed to respect other Green Wedge values.

9.2 Features and Values
Tourism and recreation opportunities within the municipality provide valuable environmental, social and economic benefits for residents and visitors alike.

9.2.1 Tourism
The Whittlesea Green Wedge contains the majority of the City’s existing tourism attractions ranging from festivals and events, to markets and attractions.

According to Council’s Tourism Development Strategy, the municipality attracts approximately 285,000 visitors annually resulting in an annual visitor expenditure of $14 million (Essential Economics et al. 2002).

Nearly 65% of these visitors are day trippers. The most popular visitor activities are scenic drives, picnicking and bushwalking. The top attractions are:

- Yan Yean Reservoir
- Toorourrong Reservoir
- Funfields (Alpine Toboggan Park)

This information clearly shows the importance of the Whittlesea Green Wedge in providing and supporting tourism within the municipality.

General conclusions from the City of Whittlesea Tourism Development Strategy include the need to increase the range of business development opportunities and marketing strategies within the municipality. This includes the need for more and diverse accommodation providers and greater promotion of tourism through regional affiliations.

With the slogan ‘come and see Whittlesea - Melbourne’s slice of country’, the Whittlesea and Plenty Valley Tourism Association is committed to promoting the best the region has to offer. The following is a brief summary of tourist attractions located within the Whittlesea Green Wedge.

Attractions
Whittlesea Country Music Festival: Held over 3 days in February and attracting nationally and internationally recognised country music artists; this festival hosts the Victorian Country Music Awards, a street party and ‘Twilight with the stars’.

Whittlesea Agricultural Show: Founded in 1859 and held at the Whittlesea showgrounds on the first weekend in November, this event showcases the best in Australian agriculture and is the largest in Victoria after the Royal Melbourne Show.

Donnybrook Farmhouse Cheese: Traditional family made award winning cheese showcased in the total experience of tastings, sales and cafe facilities.

Just Picked Berries and Fruit: Farm gate sales from the orchard with a juice bar and cafe onsite.

Funfields: Located in Whittlesea Township, Funfields is an outdoor family fun park that features all day rides including the much loved Great Alpine Toboggan Slide.

Markets
Mernda: Located in the stockyards and held every Monday 7am-1pm

Whittlesea Secondary College: Located in the Whittlesea showgrounds this market is held on the third Sunday of the month between 8am-1pm.

Hawkstowe Jazz and Kids Art in the Park: Held on the third Sunday in November and May respectively, these events are held at Hawkstowe Park.

Accommodation
Curson Homestead B&B, Kinglake West
Hiltonvale Homestead B&B, Whittlesea

Heritage
Le Page Homestead @ Hawkstowe Park: Built in the 1850s, this historic homestead and art gallery are open weekends.

Whittlesea Courthouse, Lock-up and Visitor Information Centre: Built in 1864, the restored courthouse is open 7 days, 9-5pm and provides visitor information, art and craft sales and picnic facilities.
Bear's Castle: Built in 1842, this unique mud structure is located in Yan Yean and is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register for architectural, historical and archaeological significance. Periodically accessible to limited numbers of visitors.

Bakery Café Mernda: Mernda Bakery is a heritage listed bakery boosting a 120 year old wood fired Scotch oven. The café offers good old fashioned breads, cakes and coffee in a Victorian period setting.

9.2.2 Recreation
A range of passive and active recreational opportunities are offered within the Whittlesea Green Wedge.

Parks
Based around natural, landscape and cultural values, a network of parks and reserves play an important role in the provision of open space to rural and urban residents. This includes:

Yan Yean Reservoir Park: Yan Yean Reservoir Park is home to Melbourne’s oldest water storage site. Work began on the reservoir in 1853 and visitors can still view the remnant bluestone water channel, Valve House and Caretaker’s Cottage. A variety of walking tracks surround the reservoir which link to wetlands and surrounding bushland, proclaimed a permanent reservation for water catchment in 1857. The park has BBQ facilities and is open 7 days.

Toorourrong Reservoir Park: Toorourrong Reservoir Park is situated 4 kilometres north-east of Whittlesea Township. The Reservoir was a vital link in Melbourne’s water supply when it was constructed in 1885, allowing silt to settle prior to diversion via granite and bluestone aqueducts to the Yan Yean Reservoir. Today the park offers grassed picnic areas, surrounded by mature European vegetation and containing a rotunda and BBQs. Walking tracks lead to various lookout points. Platypus may be spotted from a special viewing ‘hide’ at the far end of the dam wall. Usually open 7 days, Toorourrong Reservoir Park has been closed to public access since the 2009 Black Saturday fires.

Plenty Gorge Park: The Plenty Gorge Park includes Hawkstowe Park, Red Gum picnic area, Yellow Gum recreation area, Middle Gorge Park and Yarrambat picnic area. Whittlesea Green Wedge supports the following three areas:

- Middle Gorge Park: Located on the edge of the Plenty River, Middle Gorge Park is a compact park which offers views of the Plenty Gorge and its river frontage. Open 24 hours 7 days a week, a wildlife protection fence borders the parklands and adjoining housing estates. New multi-purpose trails are expected to be built in the future to allow access along the edge of the park from Greensborough to Middle Gorge.
- Hawkstowe Park: With views of the Plenty River, a backdrop to the wooded Plenty Gorge and an historic homestead surrounded by European vegetation, this Park is the ideal spot for a BBQ, bike ride or walk. Le Page Homestead is home to the Plenty Valley Art Inc. gallery. The cottage garden surrounding the homestead is maintained by volunteers of the Mill Park Garden Club.
- Nioka Bush Park: A bush camp offering bunkhouse or campsite accommodation. The site is closed during the fire season.

Mount Disappointment State Forest: This State Forest is managed for a wide range of uses including water catchment protection, timber production, recreation and conservation. The Forest has various picnic sites, walking tracks, forest drives and camping opportunities.

Kinglake National Park: Kinglake National Park is the largest national park close to Melbourne. The park contains tall eucalypt forests, fern gullies, rain forests and an extensive network of walking tracks. Lookout points offer scenic views of the City skyline, Port Phillip Bay and the Yarra Valley. The Park lies at the edge of the Great Dividing Ranges and has a good population of lyrebirds. It is open from 9am daily.

Merri Creek Parklands: A new regional park is being established along a 15 kilometre stretch of the Merri Creek from the Ring Road in Thomastown to Craigieburn East Road in Craigieburn. The parklands will protect significant native grasslands and provide opportunity for recreational activities.

Quarry Hills Regional Parklands: This parkland forms a backdrop to urban development in Melbourne’s north, shared pathways and panoramic views. The parkland is proposed to be progressively expanded as discussed earlier in this document.

Whittlesea Township: Whittlesea Township contains various parks and shared pathways throughout the town.
Attractons

Growling Frog Golf Course and Restaurant: Designed by Graham Marsh, this 18 hole golf course has spectacular views of the Great Dividing Range. Facilities include a restaurant, cafe, driving range, pro shop and chipping green. Open 7 days.

Whittlesea Golf Club: One of the most picturesque courses in Melbourne. This 18 hole golf course is set in an undulating, bush setting. Facilities include a pro shop. Open 7 days.

Funfields (formerly Alpine Toboggan Park): Funfields offers outdoor recreation fun, including toboggans, go karts, waterslides, mini golf, electric bumper boats and more. Open from 10am on weekends, public holidays and school holidays.

Uncle Nev’s Horseriding: Horse trail riding available 7 days by appointment only.

Refer to Map 22 opposite for the distribution of tourist attractions and recreational facilities in the Whittlesea Green Wedge.
### 9.3 What the Community is Saying
Consultation was undertaken with residents and community groups through a series of community forums and supplemented by workshops with government departments and agencies with an interest in the Whittlesea Green Wedge.

Despite the range of opinions expressed, a common thread can be drawn from the feedback received:

- **Our municipality is an untapped tourism and recreation resource.** There is a need for targeted branding and innovative attractions, such as ecotourism, to attract greater visitor interest.

Refer to the *Community Views Final Report* for a detailed summary of community responses relating to the ten green wedge sub themes.

### 9.4 Issues
The main areas requiring action to enhance and promote the Green Wedge for recreation and tourism opportunities are:

- Limited branding recognition
- Insufficient tourism opportunities linked to the values of the Whittlesea Green Wedge
- Consider using unused assets, such as railway reservations and water pipelines, for tourism and recreation purposes
- Restricted pedestrian and bicycle connectivity within the municipality
- Lack of equestrian trails
- Limited transport options to support attendance at showcase events and attractions
- Low promotion of the diversity of parks present in the Whittlesea Green Wedge
- Increased local interaction with local recreation facilities

This is not an exhaustive list, but rather an overview of the current key areas.

### 9.5 Planning Provisions
Many forms of tourism and recreation are supported within the green wedge zones. The objective for tourism within the State Planning Policy Framework is to *encourage tourism development to maximise the employment and long-term economic, social and cultural benefits* (Whittlesea Planning Scheme Clause 17.03-1).

According to Clause 17.03-2, planning authorities should encourage those tourism facilities that are compatible with, and build upon, the assets and qualities of surrounding urban or rural activities and cultural and natural attractions.

The objective for tourism within the Municipal Strategic Statement includes planning for the leisure and recreation needs of existing and future residents (Clause 21.06-11).
Specific zones within the Whittlesea Planning Scheme relevant to the enhancement and protection of the Whittlesea Green Wedge for recreation and tourism opportunities include:

- **Public Park and Recreation Zone** has the purpose of protecting and conserving areas for public recreation and open space.
- **Public Conservation and Resource Zone** has the purpose of protecting and conserving the natural environment for scientific, landscape, habitat or cultural values. These areas are specifically recognised as assisting public education and interpretation of the natural environment in a manner that leads to minimal degradation of the natural environment or natural processes. This zone is applied to the Craigieburn Grasslands, Plenty Gorge Parklands and Kinglake National Park.
- **Public Use Zone** (Schedule 1) protects land set aside for service and utility uses and currently includes the water supply catchment areas associated with Toorourrong and Yan Yean Reservoirs.

Map 23 on the following page provides a summary of the tourism and recreation protection controls afforded by the Whittlesea Planning Scheme.

### 9.6 Planning Guidelines

Within the context of broader green wedge values, the following provides a guide for Council in its decision making regarding tourism and recreation:

- Where they are not detrimental to other green wedge values, support suitable tourism activities within the green wedge area.
- Seek opportunities to create linkages through the green wedge, such as bicycle, walking and equestrian trails in order to increase promotional opportunities. Consider off-road trails within appropriate reserves in order to reduce damage to fragile environments caused by unrestrained vehicle usage.
- Current recreational opportunities, including a wide diversity of parks, to be promoted. Greater facilities at reserves, in particular, to be encouraged.

### 9.7 Incentives and Programs

Melbourne Water’s ‘Go for Green’ program is designed to assist golf courses improve their river and creek frontages. Projects may include activities such as weed control, revegetation and fencing. For further information contact Melbourne Water’s Partnership Officers on 13 17 22.