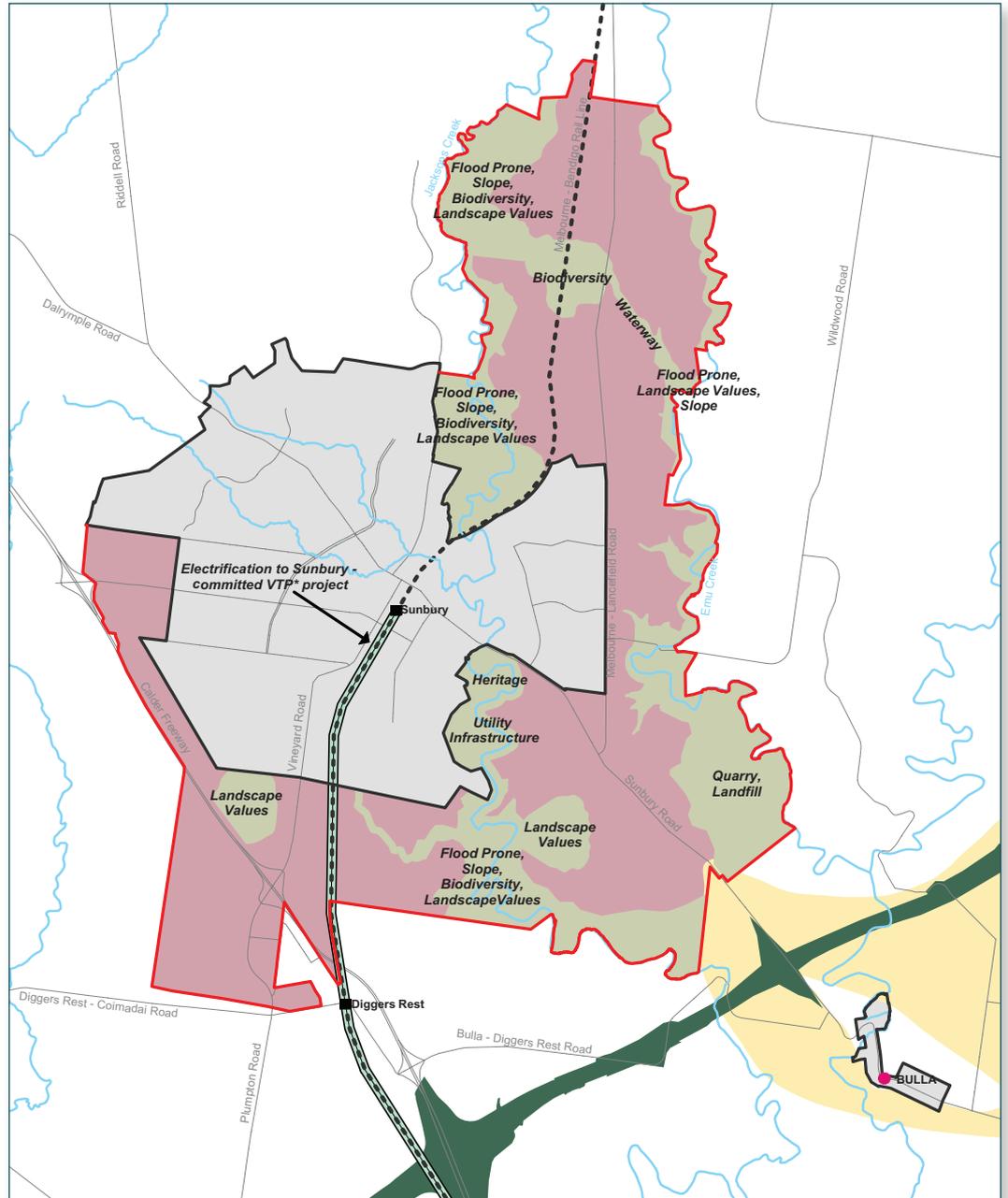


6. MELBOURNE NORTH INVESTIGATION AREA (SUNBURY)

MELBOURNE'S NORTH (SUNBURY) – LAND USE AND TRANSPORT INITIATIVES MAP

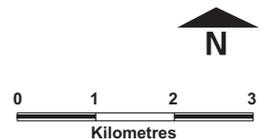


* The Victorian Transport Plan

- | | |
|--|--|
| Land within existing Urban Growth Boundary | Investigation Area: Outer Metropolitan Ring/E6 Transport Corridor Link Road to Airport |
| Proposed Urban Growth Boundary | Rail line - Regional Service |
| Significantly Constrained Land. See Project Reports | Roads |
| Land Suitable for Development | Rivers / Creeks |
| Proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring/E6 Transport Corridor - Refer to individual project report for detail | Locality |
| | Train station |

The boundaries of land suitable for urban development will be refined by Precinct Structure Plans and have regard to the constraints shown above. Further details of this map can be accessed at www.vic.gov.au/planningmelbourne

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6.1 UNDERSTANDING THE AREA

The Melbourne North Investigation Area (Sunbury) is located around the existing Sunbury Township and the small hamlet of Diggers Rest. Sunbury has been developed as a 'satellite town' that is well served by an existing road and rail network. The Calder Freeway bisects the Investigation Area in the south-west, while Sunbury Road bisects it in the south-east and links Sunbury to Melbourne Airport and the Tullamarine Freeway. The Bendigo rail line (V/Line) extends north-south through the Investigation Area and there are existing stations at Sunbury and Diggers Rest.

Apart from Sunbury township, land use in the area is predominantly rural with some industry including an existing extractive industry operation and an olive oil processing plant. The combination of steep hills, deep valleys and elevated plateau creates a visually diverse and varied landscape.

Key natural and built features that have been considered in determining land suitable for development within this Investigation Area are described in this section. Background Technical Reports are available for further information.

Biodiversity

The Sunbury part of the North Investigation Area contains sites with high biodiversity values that pose a constraint to urban development. Most of the ecological attributes within the Investigation Area are associated with watercourses and adjacent floodplains including Jacksons Creek and Emu Creek and their tributaries.

Scattered remnants of Grassy Woodlands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain occur throughout the Investigation Area. The Natural Temperate Grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plains also occurs within the Investigation Area but is relatively restricted in size compared to the grasslands in the West Investigation Area.

The Investigation Area does not fall within close proximity of a declared Ramsar site.

Heritage

There is one site listed on the Register of the National Estate within the Sunbury part of the North Investigation Area – the Sunbury Rings Aboriginal Ceremonial Site. This site can be retained and protected as part of preparing Precinct Structure Plans. There are no Commonwealth Heritage Places within the Investigation Area.

Jacksons Creek and Emu Creek

The Investigation Area is drained by Jacksons Creek to the north-west and south, Emu Creek to the east and Kororoit Creek East Branch to the south-west. Both Jacksons Creek and Emu Creek pose constraints to development. They are deeply incised and the

steep grade of their escarpments renders these areas unsuitable for urban development. Conversely, they also present an opportunity for significant environmental and visual amenity assets for Sunbury and for the protection of sites and places of Aboriginal cultural heritage. Jacksons Creek has particular aesthetic value.

Landscape features

Sunbury comprises a number of landscape features including the extensive volcanic plain, old volcanic cones and the severely downcut Jacksons Creek and Emu Creek. The conical hills, including Burkes Hill, Mt Holden, Redstone Hill, Jacksons Hill and Big Hill are natural markers in Sunbury and present an opportunity to be incorporated as major landscape elements.

The combination of steep hills, deep valleys and elevated plateau creates a visually diverse landscape.

Wildfire

The Sunbury part of the North Investigation Area is largely vegetated, with areas of grazing and cropping, with some significant pockets of grassland and small pockets of trees. The areas of trees are small and scattered and not considered important at a strategic level for wildfire risk. Any development bordering native vegetation, trees or grassland is at some risk from wildfire.

The presence of grassland areas and scattered trees indicates that consideration needs to be given to wildfire protection when preparing Precinct Structure Plans and designing developments.

Melbourne Airport Flight Path

Melbourne Airport lies to the south-east of Sunbury. As referred to in the Melton section of this assessment, urban development should be kept clear of flight paths in accordance with the policies outlined in *Melbourne 2030*. Some areas in the Investigation Area west of Diggers Rest along the Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road are affected by aircraft noise and should remain outside the proposed Urban Growth Boundary.

Existing quarries

An existing quarry and landfill operation between Sunbury Road and Emu Creek poses a potential constraint to urban development. Although the quarry is currently active, there may be some flexibility in terms of the quarry's expansion if it is included within the Urban Growth Boundary.

There is a proposed soil extraction quarry outside the southern edge of the Investigation Area. The buffer for this quarry is inside the Investigation Area. Given the nature of activities proposed, the buffer should not inhibit urban development.

Intensive Agricultural Uses

Craiglee Vineyard is an operating vineyard and a site of cultural heritage significance that needs to be protected. The vineyard and heritage issues do not preclude adjoining development however development should respect the cultural heritage and activities on the site.

An olive oil processing plant exists south of the Sunbury Road in part of the Investigation Area. Being a rural industry it may require a buffer to other development of around 300 metres under Clause 52.10 of the *Hume Planning Scheme*.

If this activity remains, there may be conflicts with future urban uses if interface issues are not appropriately managed.

Waste Water Treatment Plant

There is an existing waste water treatment plant along Jacksons Creek that will require an upgrade if major development occurs in Sunbury. This is an important local facility serving the township. There is a need to ensure that sufficient buffers are maintained around the plant to protect its operations. The Environment Protection Authority buffer guidelines suggest a distance of 3-400 metres should be maintained between a plant of this nature and surrounding residential uses.

Sydenham to Sunbury Railway Line

The extension of suburban rail services from Sydenham to Sunbury (through electrification of the rail line) is a funded project that has been identified in *The Victorian Transport Plan*. This will allow for extra peak services for the Sydenham line, more frequent services and longer hours of operation, and (by freeing up V/Line carriages) it will also relieve pressure on Ballarat V/Line services. This will provide Sunbury residents with a high capacity public transport service directly linked to the metropolitan public transport system.

Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor

There is an opportunity to link Sunbury residents to employment opportunities in the growth areas of Hume, Mitchell, Whittlesea and Wyndham with the construction of the Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor where it crosses the Calder Freeway between Diggers Rest and Sydenham.

6.2 ISSUES RAISED IN PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS

Most of the submissions received for the Sunbury part of the North Investigation area are within the proposed Urban Growth Boundary. A number of submitters raised detailed land use and development planning issues that will be further considered and refined through growth area framework planning and precinct structure planning.

Several submissions were received from submitters outside the Investigation Area, including to the south of Diggers Rest and to the south and north-east of the Investigation Area boundary. This land has not been considered for inclusion in the Investigation Area.

Other issues raised by submitters that have been considered in determining the location of the revised Urban Growth Boundary include:

- > The need to allow Diggers Rest to expand to a township with a population of around 10,000 to support the provision of local services;
- > The opportunities presented by the electrification of the rail line to Sunbury;
- > Protection of existing extractive industry operations, including buffers, and the longer-term plans of the quarries including rehabilitation works;
- > Protection of areas of high biodiversity value;
- > Protection of land affected by the Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay (the need to maintain Melbourne Airport as a 24-hour curfew-free airport);
- > Proximity to existing employment areas in the Hume employment corridor and Melbourne Airport;
- > Opportunity to build on access to the Calder Freeway, Tullamarine Freeway, proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor and proposed E14 extension; and
- > Protection of important landscape and cultural heritage features including the creek corridors.

A summary of the submissions received during the first round of consultation and a response to these submissions is provided in the Urban Growth Boundary Review - Summary and Response to Submissions Report June 2009.

6.3 ASSESSMENT

As a stand-alone town, Sunbury provides many services to its residents but relies heavily on other parts of the metropolitan area to provide residents with jobs. The town also acts as a regional centre for residents living to its north east.

The town is already contained to the confines of the Jacksons Creek valley, surrounding hilltops and the Calder Highway, to retain an open rural backdrop to the town and its unique ‘country town’ character. The town has now reached a point in its growth where a decision needs to be made about whether it should expand.

Public transport accessibility and growth

A major factor impacting on Sunbury’s future is the Victorian Government’s commitment to extend electrified railway services to Sunbury. Given this decision it makes sense to build on the upgraded infrastructure and improve passenger catchments where that is practical and appropriate.

There are a number of opportunities for Sunbury to grow in areas that are within a reasonable catchment of the expanded rail service. At the same time the character of Sunbury should be retained and where possible enhanced, including the attractive setting along Jacksons Creek and Emu Creek, its rural surrounds and hills.

While *The Victorian Transport Plan* provides for the extension of electrified services to Sunbury town centre, there may be potential in the long term to extend this service beyond Sunbury to the north east along the Bendigo rail line and create a new station north of Goonawarra. This could provide an opportunity to create sustainable new communities in this location. Based on the assumption that the railway line may be potentially extended in the long term, the proposed Urban Growth Boundary has been located along the creeks to the east and west in this location.

To the south of Sunbury there is an opportunity to expand Sunbury along the electrified rail corridor, re-subdivide the larger lots in this location and possibly provide an additional train station in the longer term. The Diggers Rest rail station could provide public transport access to this land.

There is also an opportunity to extend the town along the Sunbury Road to the south-eastern side of Sunbury. Development in this area will afford the opportunity to provide local services to Goonawarra and the wider area. Further investigations will be needed to determine the mix of land uses in this area and to take account of local features worthy of protection such as Redstone Hill. There may be an opportunity to develop substantial new employment activities to take advantage of the access to the Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor off Sunbury Road.

These areas should be large enough to attract significant regional employment opportunities.

The quarry and landfill east of Sunbury along the Emu Creek has been included in the Urban Growth Boundary on the basis that parts of these operations are being rehabilitated and may be suitable for urban use and the current buffers to these

operations will change. This will provide an opportunity for more detailed local planning to proceed.

To the west there is an opportunity to infill Sunbury between its current edge and the Calder Freeway while still maintaining an attractive landscape buffer through appropriate development conditions.

Biodiversity

The ecological community most affected by the proposed Urban Growth Boundary and transport corridors in the Sunbury part of the North Investigation Area is the Grassy Woodlands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain (referred to as the grassy woodlands), which are scattered throughout the Investigation Area. In addition to the grassy woodlands, the North Investigation Area also contains remnants of the Natural Temperate Grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain (referred to as the grasslands).

Both the grassy woodlands and the grasslands are likely to be significantly and irreversibly affected as a direct result of clearing for housing, roads and other infrastructure. Fragmentation of existing remnants is also likely to have a significant impact on the grassy woodland community.

The Strategic Impact Assessment Report provides a complete list of the threatened flora and fauna listed, or nominated for listing, under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999* that have been identified as potentially occurring within the Sunbury part of the North Investigation Area. The report also provides a detailed assessment of the impacts on each species as a result of the proposed Urban Growth Boundary, Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor and Regional Rail Link.

A major objective in determining the proposed Urban Growth Boundary and areas to be designated for urban development and areas to be protected has been to avoid large damaging areas of contiguous grassy woodlands. However, actions associated with the proposed changes to the Urban Growth Boundary in the Sunbury part of the North Investigation Area will have a significant impact on more fragmented areas as a result of direct clearing.

To minimise this impact, a large pocket of high quality grassy woodland is proposed to be protected within the proposed Urban Growth Boundary and will not be available for urban development. This area will provide for the conservation of a viable and representative area of an endangered ecological community and will provide important habitat for a number of species listed in *The Strategic Impact Assessment Report*. A habitat link is also proposed, linking the Jacksons Creek environs and the grassy woodlands, which then link to Emu Creek via an existing drainage line.

Remnant grassy woodlands and grasslands in the Sunbury part of the North Investigation Area will however, need to be cleared to make way for housing, employment areas and associated infrastructure including roads. The proposed grasslands reserves in Melbourne's west will be made available for offsets from clearing. Grassy woodlands will also need to be offset to appropriate locations.

Although remnant grassy woodlands and grasslands inside the Urban Growth Boundary will be cleared and offset, some areas of native vegetation will be preserved in places like parks or along waterways.

Surveys to confirm the presence of threatened species within the Urban Growth Boundary will be conducted as part of preparing a Growth Area Framework Plan and Precinct Structure Plans. This process will resolve offset obligations from clearing grasslands through the application of *Victoria's Native Vegetation Management – A Framework for Action*.

A sustainable Diggers Rest

Diggers Rest, on the opposite side of the Calder Freeway to Sunbury, has only modest services. An expansion of the town to accommodate up to 10,000 people would enable the provision of higher order services to residents such as an expanded supermarket, larger school and other public services. The opportunity exists for most of an expanded town to be within a three kilometre catchment of the current railway station. The Urban Growth Boundary at Diggers Rest has been proposed to provide for this growth. It avoids areas that are affected by noise buffers applying to Melbourne Airport.

Landscape Values

Because of its topography and natural features Sunbury is an attractive locality. The challenge is to meet urban growth demands while protecting the remaining landscape character and cultural heritage values of the area. These include the environs of the creeks, the conical hills, and the plateau edges where they can be seen from below, such as those visible from the Emu Bottom area.

It is important to contain the development of Sunbury in order to protect its important rural township values. Now that development has extended out from the valley floor and onto the plains, containment should occur by using major landscape and physical infrastructure features (such as roads, railways and rivers).

Urban Growth Boundary

The opportunities for Sunbury are strongly influenced by the Victorian Government commitment to provide a metropolitan rail service to Sunbury.

In addition, the proposed location of the Urban Growth Boundary around Sunbury is influenced by:

- > The potential to create a new railway station in the long term (which could be an extension of the metropolitan rail service) and a surrounding new community north of Goonawarra.
- > The expansion of the Goonawarra area to allow a catchment sufficient to enable the opportunity for a neighbourhood activity centre.
- > The creation of a third community on the south-eastern side of Sunbury which together with the other two areas would enable the provision of higher order community facilities, such as a secondary school. It could also enable a precinct with a significant jobs component to be created that relates to Melbourne Airport to the east.
- > Increasing the residential catchment of Diggers Rest to create a local neighbourhood centre on the town's south-eastern boundary and to allow for more sustainable land uses in this area.

6.4 CONCLUSIONS

It is proposed that:

The Urban Growth Boundary in Sunbury be based on:

- > Areas within the catchment of the Sunbury rail line once it is electrified;
- > The protection of areas of high biodiversity and environmental significance;
- > The boundaries formed by Jacksons Creek and Emu Creek; and
- > An expanded Diggers Rest to bring its population to a more sustainable level.

Landscape and cultural heritage features be embodied in the Growth Area Framework Plan and Precinct Structure Plans including:

- > The environs of Jackson Creek and its tributaries;
- > Containment of settlement on the elevated plateau areas;
- > The conical hills – as natural markers;
- > Major views of the river valleys and hills, as well as views beyond Sunbury;
- > Rural views from major transport corridors including the Calder Freeway and Bendigo rail line; and
- > Fine-grained landscape elements such as stone walls, heritage homesteads and gardens, and sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Refer to Background Technical Report 4: Landscape Values for more detailed examples.