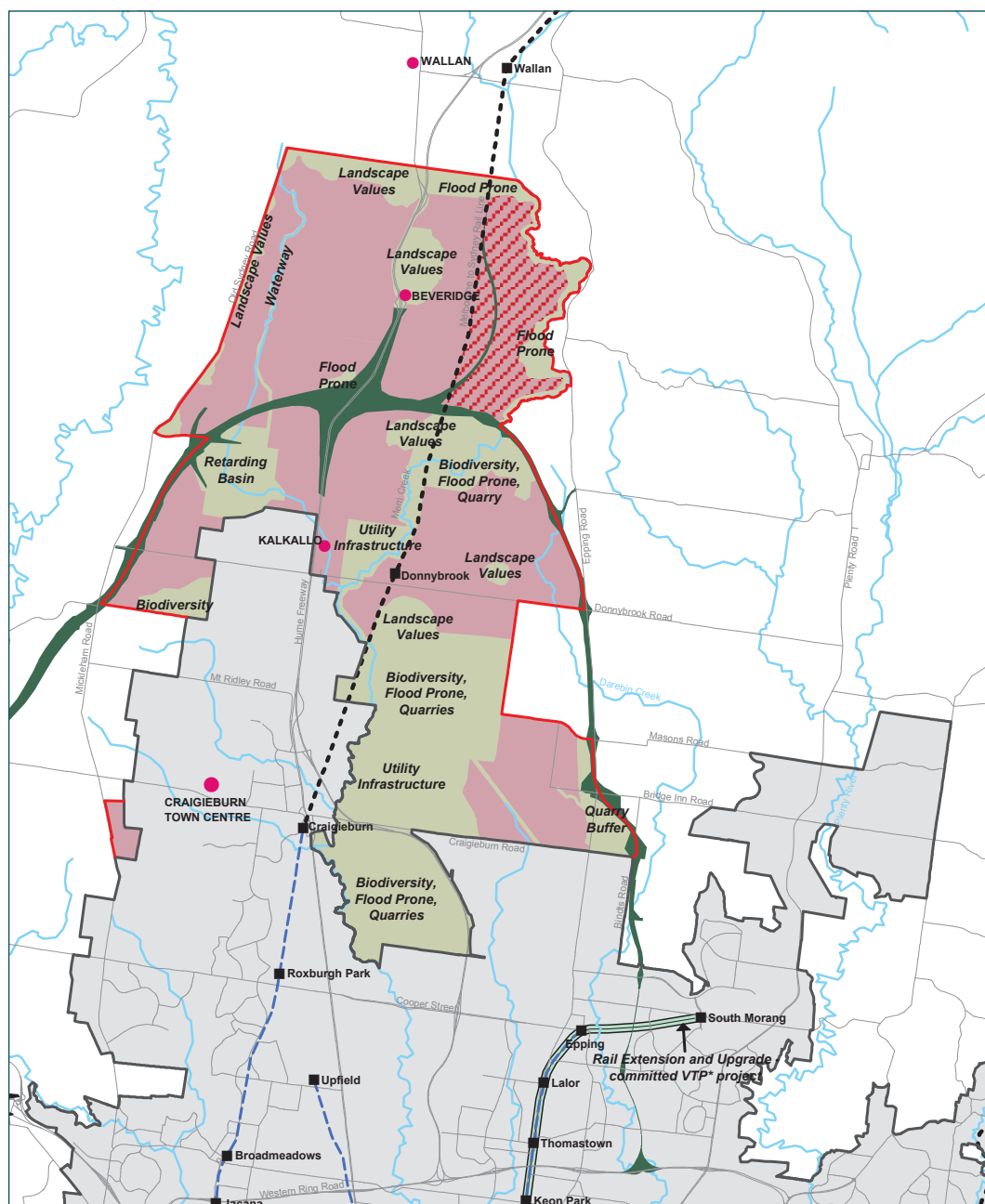


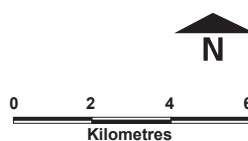
7. MELBOURNE NORTH INVESTIGATION AREA (HUME-MITCHELL-WHITTLESEA)

MELBOURNE'S NORTH - LAND USE AND TRANSPORT INITIATIVES MAP



* The Victorian Transport Plan

- | | |
|--|--|
| Land within existing Urban Growth Boundary | Proposed Intermodal and Logistics Precinct - includes proposed Donnybrook/Beveridge Interstate Freight Terminal, a proposed VTP* project |
| Proposed Urban Growth Boundary | Rail line - Metropolitan Service |
| Significantly Constrained Land. See Project Reports | Rail line - Regional Service |
| Land Suitable for Development | Roads |
| Proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring/E6 Transport Corridor - Refer to individual project report for detail | Rivers / Creeks |
| | Locality |
| | Train station |



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7.1 UNDERSTANDING THE AREA

The Melbourne North Investigation Area (Hume-Mitchell-Whittlesea) extends north from the outer areas of Craigieburn, through Donnybrook and ends south of the township of Wallan.

Land use in the area is predominantly rural. It contains a large number of existing extractive industry operations.

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

There are locations across the Investigation Area that contain significant flora and fauna, including within the watercourses of Merri Creek, Edgars Creek and Darebin Creek, that pose a significant constraint to urban development.

Scattered remnants of Grassy Woodlands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain occur throughout the Investigation Area and adjoining precincts within the existing Urban Growth Boundary. The largest concentration of remnant vegetation occurs in the south-east of the Investigation Area, with some consolidated patches in the south-west and along the Merri Creek where there are many adjoining stony knolls.

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 are eight sites listed on the Register of the National Estate within the Hume-Mitchell-Whittlesea Investigation Area – O’Herns Road Farming Complex and Ford in Epping; Summerhill Homestead and Outbuildings in Wollert; State School No. 1051 in Mickleham; Mickleham Post Office; Victoria Bridge in Kalkallo; St John’s Presbyterian Church in Kalkallo; Catholic Church in Beveridge; and John Kelly House in Beveridge.

These sites can be retained and protected through the preparation of Precinct Structure Plans. There are no Commonwealth Heritage Places within the Investigation Area.

Creek Catchments

The north section of the Investigation Area contains the Kalkallo Creek to the west and the Merri Creek to the east. These creeks join downstream of Donnybrook Road and

Kalkallo. In the south-west, Aitken Creek and Malcolm Creek traverse the Investigation Area in a south-easterly direction, eventually flowing to Merri Creek. The southern part of the Investigation Area is bordered by Merri Creek to the west, Darebin Creek to the east and Findons Creek in the central-south.

In general, the catchments do not pose a constraint to development. They can be developed through the application of traditional flood mitigation mechanisms such as retardation basins and/or wetlands. An exception is the portion of land along the south-east boundary of the Investigation Area (Quarry Hills) – the steep gradients of this land means that the area is not suitable for construction of wetlands and retardation basins. With the need to protect the downstream catchments from increased flooding, and the inability to restrict increases in urban run-off, this area is considered to be undevelopable.

Landscape features

The North Investigation Area covers the northern reaches of the volcanic plains between Craigieburn and the foothills of the Great Dividing Range at Wallan. The area is bounded to the east by the hills abutting Wallan East and Upper Plenty that strike south following and intersecting with the Epping Kilmore Road. To the west the boundary is Mickleham Road and Old Sydney Road and the escarpment of the Deep Creek and undulating hills further north. These higher areas form a north-south edge to the valley floor.

Central in this landscape is the upper catchment of the Merri Creek which occupies a broad and flat central valley. This valley is bisected by the Hume Highway and the Melbourne-Sydney Railway Line.

The several volcanic cones and hill tops (such as Quarry Hills, Mt Franklin, Rigg Hill, Springs Hill and Bald Hill) together with the distinct ridge lines to the west and east, provide an opportunity to create a sense of place for future residents. The waterways also offer the opportunity to enhance landscape and Aboriginal cultural heritage values if sensitively treated during later and more detailed planning stages.

Wildfire

The North Investigation Area is largely vegetated, with areas of grazing, cropping and native grasslands, with some small pockets of trees. The areas of trees are small and scattered and are 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.

Existing and proposed quarries

There are seven working quarries interspersed across the Investigation Area that pose a constraint to urban development in some locations. These activities require sufficient buffers to ensure they will not impact on future urban development. These buffers are generally all within the Investigation Area.

The City of Whittlesea has large areas of land consumed by extractive industry tenements and buffers. The clustering of these operations is a significant constraint to development, and also creates difficulty in maintaining connectivity and integration between future areas of urban development.

Major transport networks

The Hume Freeway runs through the middle of the Investigation Area in a north-south direction, generally parallel to the Melbourne-Sydney rail corridor.

A regional passenger train service operates between Melbourne and Seymour, serving Donnybrook, while suburban passenger trains operate close to the southern boundary of the Investigation Area at both Craigieburn and Epping. There is a funded commitment in *The Victorian Transport Plan* to extend the Epping service to South Morang.

The Government has committed to extending the existing Yellow SmartBus Route, (approximately 70 kilometres) from Ringwood to Melbourne Airport through Blackburn, Greensborough, South Morang, Epping and Roxburgh Park.

North-south arterial roads include Mickleham Road on the western edge of the Investigation Area and the Epping-Kilmore Road on the eastern edge.

A longer term opportunity rests with the construction of the Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor. This major road and rail corridor can join the Princes Freeway and Geelong rail line with the Hume Freeway and onward to the south-east to the Metropolitan Ring Road at Thomastown and interstate rail system at Beveridge. This can enhance connectivity between key international transport hubs such as Melbourne Airport, Avalon Airport and Port of Geelong and improve access to the proposed Donnybrook/Beveridge Interstate Railway Terminal. It can link residential and employment growth areas in the north and west of Melbourne and improve access in this major employment corridor which includes Avalon Airport, Werribee, Melton, Melbourne Airport and Donnybrook.

In the west a potential northerly extension of the current reservation for the E14 could provide the opportunity for a major additional north south arterial road between existing urban areas and the Investigation Area. The major existing east-west rural arterial road link is provided by Donnybrook Road.

The Hume Freeway and the rail line are critical national transport routes for distributing freight and offer both constraints and opportunities to urban development. These corridors are barriers to local travel and can potentially divide any urban communities developed in their vicinity. They perform an important freight function that can be capitalised on through the location of new commercial and industrial operations. Development of an extensive arterial road network will be imperative as access to the freeway network will continue to be restricted.

Although the Investigation Area is reasonably well served with transport in terms of its current function, there is a need for a high-capacity public transport system for any major urban development. Rail extensions to growth areas are identified in *The Victorian Transport Plan* as a priority, including the duplication of the Keon Park to Epping railway line and the extension of the rail service from Epping to South Morang.

Proposed Intermodal Freight Terminal

A significant issue affecting the Investigation Area is the decision in *Freight Futures* to develop a series of major 'open access' Metropolitan Freight Terminals in Melbourne's west, north and south-east, servicing current and future areas of intensive industry and related freight and logistics activity. The relocation of the domestic interstate freight handling from South Dynon to the Beveridge area offers a significant opportunity to consolidate freight logistics in the north. This is likely to be a very large facility and will require significant supporting logistics and services and industry on nearby land.

Trunk Services Infrastructure

Some land is earmarked for strategic trunk services can impact on future urban development. This includes Yarra Valley Water's Craigieburn sewerage treatment plant (and interest area for a new water treatment plant), Yarra Valley Water's Hazelwynde sewerage and recycled water treatment area, Aurora treatment plant, and APA's gas pumping station and proposed power station.

While there is a lack of existing trunk services (such as water, sewerage and electricity) over most of the Investigation Area, all infrastructure companies advise that this is not a long term constraint to development. Further investigation will be required to locate water supply tanks and electricity terminal sub stations to best serve future communities, having regard to local landscape issues.

There are existing major electricity and gas transmission lines intersecting the Investigation Area generally in the south. These lines may require additional buffers and therefore could impose some extra constraint to development.

7.2 ISSUES RAISED IN PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS

Most of the submissions received for the North Investigation Area are for land within the proposed Urban Growth Boundary. A number of these submitters raise detailed land use and development planning issues to be further considered and refined through the preparation of a Growth Area Framework Plan and Precinct Structure Plans.

A small number of submissions were received from landowners outside the Investigation Area, including to the north-west and south-west of the Investigation Area boundary. These properties have not been considered for inclusion in the Investigation Area.

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

- > Identification of land for the proposed interstate intermodal freight facility north and east of Beveridge;
- > Proximity to existing and anticipated residential development;
- > Opportunity for urban development to take advantage of locations with access to the Hume Freeway, the proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 transport corridor and a potential extension of the E14 reservation;
- > Protection of existing extractive industry operations, including buffers, and the longer-term plans of the quarries including rehabilitation works and potential for redevelopment;
- > Protection of national transport corridors;
- > Protection of areas of high biodiversity value particularly the Merri Creek corridor;
- > Protection of important landscape and cultural heritage features including hills and creek corridors; and
- > The relationship of Wallan to the future urban development area.

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.

7.3 ASSESSMENT

Planning for development in this Investigation Area needs to address a number of issues.

Strategic transport infrastructure

There are several significant transport proposals that may impact on this area as described in *The Victorian Transport Plan* and *Freight Futures*.

Freight Futures plans for the relocation of the domestic interstate rail freight handling facility from South Dynon in West Melbourne to an alternate terminal site in the Beveridge area proposed to be located on the east of the interstate rail line. The new terminal can enable interstate domestic freight (which currently travels through the metropolitan area) to terminate at Beveridge for distribution throughout Melbourne. In the long term the Beveridge terminal can form a key element of the Metropolitan Freight Transport Network servicing the Port of Melbourne and other metropolitan freight distribution centres.

Subsidiary activities are likely to locate around the planned logistics facility. Sufficient land should be set aside to allow this type of development along with the necessary transport access corridors.

The Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor can have a significant impact on the Investigation Area. It generally runs east-west across the Investigation Area, intersecting with the Hume Freeway and the interstate railway network and providing access to the proposed freight terminal south of Beveridge. The location for the proposed reservation responds to the topography of the area given the need for level ground for the railway to railway junction.

As part of this Transport Corridor, VicRoads is planning for a north-south freeway standard road from the existing E6 reservation at Findon Road Epping to link with the Outer Metropolitan Ring Road, north of Kalkallo.

Collectively these projects have a major shaping effect on this Investigation Area. At the same time they provide major opportunities for improved access to other parts of the metropolitan area, regional Victoria and interstate.

Transport accessibility to future communities

While a large part of the growth area can be accessed from the Hume Freeway there is a need to ensure that this important national freight route does not become congested with local traffic. There is a limited grid of north-south and east-west arterial roads serving the area. These will need to be augmented to provide a suitable level of access

across the Investigation Area in addition to the limited roads that currently exist.

The existing railway corridor provides a V/Line service and it lies in large part on the east side of the Investigation Area. It does not service land in Wollert, north of Epping North, which offers potential urban development opportunities.

A major challenge is to secure high capacity public transport links for future residents. Such a system requires large accessible patronage catchments to be cost effective. This is a fundamental driver for the amount and location of residential growth in this growth area.

During the development of a Growth Area Framework Plan for this area, options will need to be preserved for an appropriate high capacity transport corridor linking to the rest of the metropolitan area.

Biodiversity

The ecological community most affected by the proposed Urban Growth Boundary and transport corridors in the North Investigation Area is the Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain (referred to as the grassy woodlands), which are scattered throughout the Investigation Area. It 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 woodlands 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 Investigation Area. The report also provides a detailed assessment of the impacts on each species as a result of the proposed Urban Growth Boundary and Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor.

A major objective in determining the proposed Urban Growth Boundary and Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor, and areas to be designated for urban development within the Boundary has been to avoid large areas of contiguous grassy woodlands and grasslands. Nevertheless, actions associated with the proposed changes to the Urban Growth Boundary and the Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor will mean that more fragmented areas will need to be cleared.

As a consequence, large areas of high quality grassy woodlands have been excluded from the proposed Urban Growth Boundary. These areas are on the east edge of the

Investigation Area between Donnybrook Road and Summerhill Road and in the Quarry Hills area. The Quarry Hills area is recognised in the *Whittlesea Planning Scheme* as having high biodiversity value.

There are a number of areas identified for protection within the proposed Urban Growth Boundary, including a pocket of grassy woodland north of Craigieburn Road, adjoining the existing Urban Growth Boundary, and a pocket of grassy woodland east of the Merri Creek, south of Beveridge. There are other biodiversity values within close proximity of the latter area, the management of which can be resolved through preparing Precinct Structure Plans. A large contiguous area of grasslands in the vicinity of the Craigieburn grasslands is also proposed to be protected from urban development.

These areas 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*.

Although remnant grasslands inside the Urban Growth Boundary can be cleared and offset, some areas of native vegetation can be preserved in places such as parks or along waterways.

The remaining remnant grasslands within the area will need to be cleared to make way for housing, employment areas and associated infrastructure including roads. The proposed grasslands reserves in Melbourne's west can be available for offsets from clearing land in the North Investigation Area.

Surveys to confirm the presence of threatened species within the Urban Growth Boundary can be conducted as part of the precinct structure plan process. This process will determine the extent of biodiversity values and will resolve offset obligations from clearing grasslands through the application of *Victoria's Native Vegetation Management – A Framework for Action*.

Extractive industries

Other challenges that need to be met in planning the growth area include the protection and alternative long term use of quarries and their buffers. A large group of these activities and assets sit centrally within the proposed Urban Growth Boundary. Urban development should generally avoid quarries and their buffers. The future use and management of these locations will need to be determined through more detailed planning and will become clearer over time as quarries are worked out. Retention of these areas within the Urban Growth Boundary will allow the best land use, transport and biodiversity outcomes to be determined in the longer term.

Wallan

A central issue for this growth area is the future development and setting of Wallan Township. Wallan has some longer term constraints that limit the extent of major outward growth. In time, metropolitan urban development would become closer to Wallan as rural landscapes south of Wallan gradually change to a more urban setting. As a consequence, Wallan would increasingly become integrated into the metropolitan housing market.

There is merit in maintaining Wallan's identity as a separate town even though the influence of metropolitan Melbourne will grow. This can be achieved in a number of ways. The recommended option is to create a buffer between Wallan and the northern boundary of the Investigation Area using local landscape features such as hills, water bodies and vegetation to create a distinct edge to Wallan and future metropolitan urban areas. Details of this buffer will need to be addressed by the Victorian Government in conjunction with Mitchell Shire Council in the planning of Wallan and the growth area. In the interim the Urban Growth Boundary has been located to provide the basis for such a buffer.

There is also a need to plan Wallan's growth to ensure it has adequate levels of social community infrastructure to ensure it does not fall behind areas included inside the Urban Growth Boundary.

Quarry Hills

It is proposed that Quarry Hills in Whittlesea be omitted from the revised Urban Growth Boundary. The area has valuable natural vegetation, high landscape values, working quarries and drainage constraints. The future of this area needs to be determined through a more detailed planning process. It is noted that the City of Whittlesea submission indicates that changes in this area should relate to wider public benefits as distinct from simply achieving additional development. The process for preparing Green Wedge Management Plans may be an appropriate forum for considering these issues.

Other planning issues

There are a number of existing activities and prospective infrastructure developments that must be considered during the detailed planning of this growth area. These include the possibility of a large gas-fired power station at Wollert, a waste water treatment facility, also at Wollert, the extent and form of a large retarding basin near Donnybrook, and the future of the Yarra Valley Water's Hazelwynde waste water storage and treatment facility near Wallan.

Urban Growth Boundary and future planning

Three major transport concepts provide the foundation for the recommended Urban Growth Boundary and future settlement patterns. These are:

- The Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor;
- The intermodal freight terminal; and
- The potential to create a high capacity public transport corridor.

The alignment of the Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor is constrained by its design parameters to allow for high speed rail and by its need to be linked effectively to the proposed northern interstate intermodal freight facility.

When topography and the existing Beveridge community are taken into account, together with the constraint of the existing Beveridge community, the options for the preferred location of the Transport Corridor are narrowed.

The western approach from Sunbury is influenced by the limited opportunities to effectively cross the river valleys of Deep Creek and Jacksons Creek and the escarpment and hills along Mickleham Road. Therefore, the location of the Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor is kept to the periphery of the Investigation Area before turning east, which then maximises the development potential of this area.

The preferred location of the E6 as part of the Transport Corridor is away from the edge of developable areas and to avoid known constraints.

The intermodal freight facility requires direct and extensive access to the standard gauge rail network. It is also a location which would be expected to operate 24 hours a day. It has been located at the northern end of the Investigation Area to the east of the Melbourne-Sydney rail line. Delivering dedicated road access and managing all interface areas is an important outcome.

The location of a high capacity public transport network is influenced by the ability to connect to existing suburban networks and by the opportunity to create residential catchments that can ensure a viable service level.

Outside this core settlement corridor there are opportunities to build on access to the proposed E14 road proposal and the Merrifield and Folkstone employment precincts, which includes a proposal for an activity centre.

The rising land to the east and west of this growth area form a natural sense of enclosure and a landscape feature that creates a sense of place for future communities.

It is proposed that the Urban Growth Boundary be located as follows:

-
- > Minor extensions to the Urban Growth Boundary are proposed around Mickleham with a large area with high biodiversity values between Donnybrook Road and Mt Ridley Road remaining part of the Green Wedge;
 - > The Old Sydney Road is recommended as the western boundary, generally north of Gunns Gully Road;
 - > Land south of Gunns Gully Road and west of the proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor has been placed outside the proposed Urban Growth Boundary because of the inter-relationships between its landscape values, narrow dimensions and proximity to the Outer Metropolitan Ring Transport Corridor;
 - > The northern edge of the Urban Growth Boundary generally follows the edge of the Investigation Area to support catchments for future public transport and other community services. A suitable landscape buffer along this interface is provided to maintain the integrity of Wallan Township. The details of this need to be developed by the Victorian Government in conjunction with Mitchell Shire;
 - > The Merri Creek forms the Urban Growth Boundary in the north-east of the growth area excluding areas that are flood prone or unlikely to be linked to the activities on the west side of this creek;
 - > Land south of Donnybrook Road with high biodiversity values remains outside the Urban Growth Boundary; and
 - > The E6 part of the Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor forms the south-eastern location of the Urban Growth Boundary.

7.4 CONCLUSIONS

It is proposed that:

- > The Urban Growth Boundary be based on providing sufficient land to foster the creation of sustainable communities that are capable of being connected to a high capacity public transport system.
- > A plan is developed for the long term management of biodiversity assets inside the Urban Growth Boundary.
- > Further detailed planning of land inside the Urban Growth Boundary containing quarries is undertaken as part of preparing Growth Area Framework Plans.
- > The area served by the intersection of the Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor, the interstate rail network and the proposed locality of the future freight terminal is planned and protected as a long term logistics and employment area.
- > In light of the proximity of Wallan to future urban areas, the Government works with Mitchell Shire Council to develop a long term plan for Wallan Township and non-urban areas around the proposed Urban Growth Boundary.
- > Landscape and cultural heritage features be embodied in the Growth Area Framework Plan and Precinct Structure Plans including:
 - The cradle-effect of the eastern and western hills to frame and contain future development;
 - The red volcanic cones that dot the broader landscape;
 - The natural drainage system, which provides opportunities for open space corridors and visual amenity;
 - Managing views to and from the Hume Freeway and Outer Metropolitan Ring/E6 Transport Corridor transport corridors; and
 - Providing an urban break with Wallan.

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