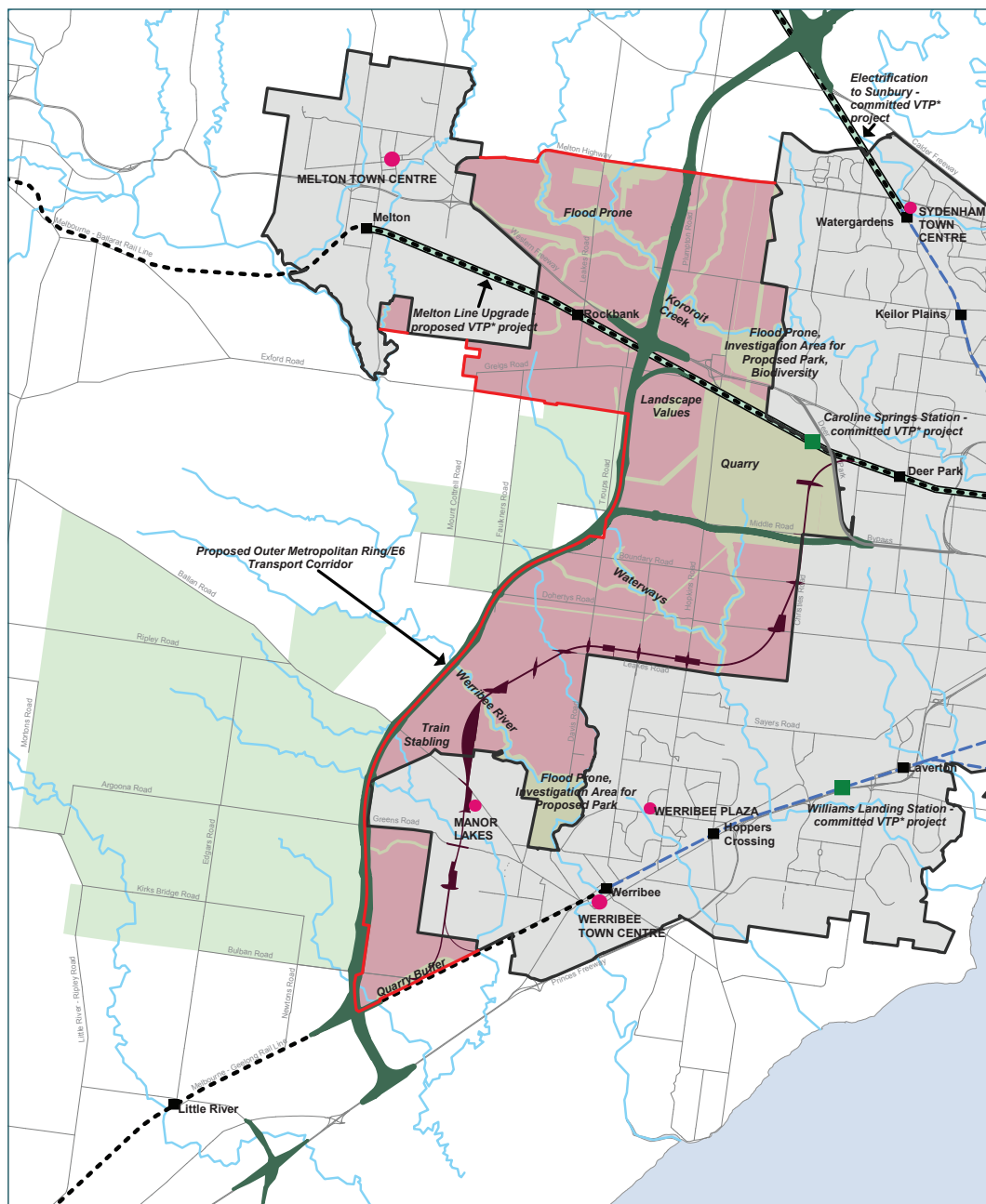


5. MELBOURNE WEST INVESTIGATION AREA (MELTON-CAROLINE SPRINGS GROWTH AREA)

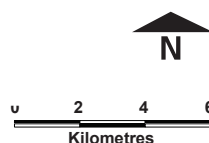
MELBOURNE'S WEST – LAND USE AND TRANSPORT INITIATIVES MAP



* The Victorian Transport Plan

- | | |
|---|--|
| Land within existing Urban Growth Boundary | Regional Rail Link - including rail/road crossing and potential stations (west of Werribee to Deer Park) Refer to individual project report for detail |
| Proposed Urban Growth Boundary | Proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring/E6 Transport Corridor - Refer to individual project report for detail |
| Significantly Constrained Land. See Project Reports | Roads |
| Land Suitable for Development | Rivers / Creeks |
| Proposed Grassland Reserve | Locality |
| Rail line - Metropolitan Service | Train station |
| Rail line - Regional Service | |

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5.1 UNDERSTANDING THE AREA

The Melton-Caroline Springs Growth Area has experienced considerable residential growth over the last ten years, which has been concentrated in the Caroline Springs area north of the Western Freeway and within the Melton township area. The Western Freeway and Ballarat rail line run mostly parallel to each other and transect this Investigation Area from north-west to south-east. The small township of Rockbank sits between the Western Freeway and rail line.

Land use is a mixture of rural, extractive industry and public use with a cluster of tourism based activities located along the Melton Highway.

The boundary of the West Investigation Area was modified in May 2009 because of the results of field investigations identifying the presence of nationally listed Volcanic Plains Grasslands east of Troups Road, Mt Cottrell. This allowed VicRoads to investigate a broader area for the Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor, ensuring the best possible transport route could be identified to service this growth area.

Background Technical Reports are available for further information.

Biodiversity

While not as extensive as those in Wyndham there are some locations in this part of the West Investigation Area with high biodiversity value including the Natural Temperate Grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain.

Biodiversity studies in the Investigation Area and land immediately adjacent (to the south) indicate the presence or potential presence of a number of flora species listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999*. These species are associated with the grasslands and are scattered along the Kororoit Creek, located west of Caroline Springs and adjoining major grasslands south of the Ballarat rail line.

The Melton-Caroline Springs part of the West Investigation Area does not fall within close proximity of a declared Ramsar site.

Heritage

There are two sites listed on the Register of the National Estate within the Melton-Caroline Springs part of the West Investigation Area. They are the Strathtulloh Homestead in Melton South and the Deanside Group in Rockbank. These sites will be retained and protected as part of preparing Precinct Structure Plans. There are no Commonwealth Heritage Places within the Investigation Area.

Kororoit Creek

Kororoit Creek runs through the Investigation Area from the north-west to south-east. There is an opportunity to improve the environmental attributes of Kororoit Creek, create a landscape and recreational feature of prominence and a focus for future urban communities.

Localised pockets of swamp deposits and some low lying areas along the creek are considered to be unsuitable for the construction of housing. Overall there are limited soil capability issues that prevent further urban development.

Kororoit Creek also has significant down-stream flooding constraints and will require control of the 1.5 year and 100 year ARI (Average Recurrence Interval) storm events within the sub catchments. While drainage issues can be addressed with appropriate management mechanisms, significant portions of this Investigation Area are characterised by basalt rock at shallow depth. This means the construction of offline stormwater quality and quantity treatment systems can be difficult and costly, constraining the depth of such systems, increasing the area needed and therefore reducing housing yields.

Wildfire

The Melton-Caroline Springs part of the West Investigation Area is vegetated with areas of grazing, cropping and native grasslands, and some small pockets of trees. Any development bordering native vegetation, trees or grassland is at some risk from wildfire.

There is a small area covered by a Wildfire Management Overlay in the western-most tip of the Investigation Area, near the Melton Reservoir, where the treed corridor along the bank of the Werribee River cuts across the corner of the Investigation Area.

In addition to the Overlay area 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.

Intensive Agricultural Uses

There are established vineyards in the Plumpton area that are taking advantage of recycled water, and smaller enterprises such as an olive farm and dispersed poultry enterprises within the Investigation Area. If these uses remain in the long term there may be conflicts with future urban uses unless interface issues are appropriately managed.

Existing Quarries

The Investigation Area contains a very major extractive industry and landfill operation in the south-east that is understood to have a very long term life span. It is a major regional asset as a source of building material and a landfill accepting a range of waste products.

A second operating quarry abuts the Investigation Area on the north side of the Melton Highway.

Both these quarries and their buffers need to be protected to ensure their ongoing operations.

Sensitive uses

Two prisons are located west of the Deer Park bypass at Ravenhall. The general area around the prisons is also impacted upon by the buffer to the nearby quarry and landfill and the Regional Rail Link. Given the range of sensitive uses in this area, future land use in this locality should be assessed during the preparation of Precinct Structure Plans.

Melbourne Airport Flight Path

Melbourne Airport lies to the north-east of Melbourne and is the State's premier airport. Its curfew-free status is of critical economic value. The airport's 24-hour, seven-days-a-week operation gives Victoria a competitive advantage and *Melbourne 2030* emphasises its protection. Some areas on the north-east edge of the Investigation Area are affected by the Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay, which presents a constraint to future urban development. As a consequence urban development should be kept clear of flight paths.

Ballarat Railway Line

The Victorian Transport Plan provides for services to Melton on the Ballarat railway line to be doubled following the completion of the Regional Rail Link and the electrification of the line to Sunbury. These projects will allow relocation of V/Line trains to the Melton service. Construction of a new Caroline Springs station is scheduled for 2010 and other stations will be built as development progresses and patronage rises. As patronage rises more trains will be needed, and the line will be duplicated. There are currently double tracks between Sunshine and the Deer Park Bypass. In the medium to long term, it is proposed that this line be upgraded to service the future community needs of the area.

Proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor

Another critical piece of infrastructure affecting this area is the Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor. This will bisect the Investigation Area in a north-south direction and provide connections to the Geelong transport corridor via west of Werribee and north to interstate transport corridors at Sunbury and Beveridge. A number of different options have been considered.

The proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor is influenced by a range of factors:

- > In the south, the key design consideration is to avoid the proposed grasslands reserves.
- > In the north, there are limited options for crossing the Calder Freeway, Jacksons Creek and Deep Creek.
- > Between Melton and Caroline Springs, the aim has been to provide the greatest flexibility for land use planning.

Proposed Metropolitan Freight Terminal

As with the Wyndham growth area, a potential opportunity for the region 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. While a specific location for Stage 2 of this terminal network in the west has yet to be selected, it may impact on the Investigation Area because of the need for an additional terminal to those located in Altona/Laverton.

Trunk Services

A major north-south electricity transmission easement located to the west of Caroline Springs constrains development to a limited extent.

While there is a lack of existing trunk services (such as water, sewerage and electricity) in the Investigation Area, all infrastructure providers have indicated 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.

Landscape values

Land between Melton and Caroline Springs is traversed by the upper reaches of the Kororoit Creek catchment and Mt Kororoit is just a short distance north of the Melton

Highway. The area is also occupied by parts of the Skelton Creek catchment.

The presence of several low volcanic cones in the surrounding landscape provides some change from the prevailing flat landscape which slopes gradually from north to south. These include Mt Cottrell and Mt Atkinson.

Distant views can be obtained to the Melbourne skyline, the You Yangs, Brisbane Ranges and foothills of the Great Dividing Range.

5.2 ISSUES RAISED IN PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS

Most of the submissions received for the Melton-Caroline Springs part of the West Investigation Area relate to land 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 the growth area framework planning and precinct structure planning.

There were a small number of submissions received from submitters outside the Investigation Area, including to the west of Melton Township and to the north of the Investigation Area boundary. These properties have not been considered for inclusion in the Urban Growth Boundary.

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

- > Proximity to existing industrial land to the east;
- > Proximity to existing and anticipated residential development;
- > Opportunity to improve access to the Western Freeway, Melton Highway and the proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor;
- > Protection of existing extractive industry operations, including the need for buffers between future urban development and industry operations;
- > Protection of transport corridors for the movement of industry related vehicles;
- > Protection of areas of high biodiversity value;
- > Protection of areas covered by the Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay (the need to maintain Melbourne Airport as a 24-hour curfew-free airport); and
- > The proposed regional park in Caroline Springs (Kororoit Creek) identified in *Linking People and Spaces*.

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*.

5.3 ASSESSMENT

During the study of urban growth options in the Melton-Caroline Springs growth area in 2005, development westward from Caroline Springs and at Rockbank was considered. Based on a range of constraints and opportunities and the population projections available at the time the preferred option was to consolidate development in Melton. The higher rate of population growth requires the Government to now consider additional areas in the west for urban development.

The designation of the Investigation Areas in *Melbourne @ 5 million* was based on the suitability of land for future urban development and known constraints such as the area nominated as a *Proposed Grasslands Area for Protection*. The boundary of this protection area was to be determined through further detailed investigation. The strategic impact assessment of biodiversity has demonstrated that the most appropriate grassland areas for protection are further west and south west. This also provides greater flexibility in planning the route for the Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor.

A more westerly route for the Transport Corridor opens up improved opportunities for the delivery of transit-oriented development along the Melton rail corridor. The preferred location allows for a residential community north and south of the railway line centred on a rail station at Rockbank and around a possible second station east of the proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor.

To take full advantage of this opportunity it is proposed that all land within three kilometres of the likely location of railway stations/activity centres should be included within the Urban Growth Boundary and be considered for urban development.

Public transport accessibility

The proposal in *The Victorian Transport Plan* to electrify the rail line to Melton in the long term will provide the opportunity to provide both Melton residents and future residents in the area with a high capacity public transport network serving the corridor between Caroline Springs and Melton.

A road-based public transport link is currently proposed along the Melton Highway to provide a high capacity link between Melton Township and Sydenham activity centre and Watergardens Railway Station.

The preparation of a Growth Area Framework Plan will identify the most appropriate and effective public transport routes to service new communities between the Melton Highway and Western Freeway.

Capitalising on accessibility

A key issue for the west is the provision of employment to new residents. *Melbourne @ 5 million* proposes linking growing outer areas to a greater choice of jobs, services and goods along radial and circumferential transport corridors. The accessibility that will be provided by the Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor in Melton is a significant opportunity for facilitating business investment and increased employment in the region. The possibility of a new intermodal freight terminal in the region as proposed in *Freight Futures* provides another opportunity.

It is proposed that large areas of land be set aside for future employment to capitalise on the future access improvements and new housing in this area. Initial planning investigations suggest that advantage should be taken of the access potential of the Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor and other major transport corridors and to balance these objectives with residential planning objectives. Mixed use employment precincts could be created along the Melton rail corridor to capitalise on the access afforded by improved public transport links.

The growth area framework planning process will consider these employment opportunities when establishing the general designation of land uses for this area.

Biodiversity

The ecological community most affected by the proposed Urban Growth Boundary and transport corridors in the West Investigation Area is the Natural Temperate Grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain (referred to as the grasslands). There are still remnants of these grasslands present in the Melton-Caroline Springs part of the West Investigation Area and there are large contiguous areas of grasslands further south and west, beyond the Investigation Area boundary. The remnant grasslands are likely to be significantly and irreversibly affected as a direct result of clearing for housing, roads and other infrastructure.

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 West 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 the alignments for the Regional Rail Link and Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor has been to avoid large areas of contiguous grasslands. Nevertheless, the proposed changes to the Urban Growth Boundary and the development of transport

infrastructure will have a significant impact on other more fragmented areas as a result of direct clearing.

To address this, two large grassland reserves of approximately 15,000 hectares, are proposed to be secured outside the Urban Growth Boundary.

Reserving these large areas of grasslands will provide for the conservation and secure management of viable and representative areas of an endangered ecological community. This approach is favoured over the creation of smaller, fragmented reserves within the proposed Urban Growth Boundary as it will mean the retention of contiguous and high quality areas of habitat in grasslands reserves and will maximise habitat condition for threatened and other resident species. This will generate gain to offset the loss from clearing within the proposed Urban Growth Boundary.

The reserves will be made available for offsets from the clearing of remnant grasslands within the proposed Urban Growth Boundary. These grasslands will need to be cleared to make way for housing, employment areas and associated infrastructure including roads.

Although most of the remnant grasslands inside the Urban Growth Boundary will be cleared and offset, some areas of native vegetation will be preserved in places such as parks or along waterways. A pocket of land in the vicinity of Clarkes Road has been identified for protection. This land contains grassland of very high conservation significance with high species diversity, including the Golden Sun Moth Orchid and Spiny Rice Flower. For these reasons, it is shown as an area unsuitable for urban development within the proposed Urban Growth Boundary.

Surveys to confirm the presence of threatened species within the Urban Growth Boundary will be conducted as part of the precinct structure planning 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*.

A sense of place

A key feature in the Melton-Caroline Springs part of the West Investigation Area is Kororoit Creek. Although the creek is degraded it provides an excellent opportunity to achieve improved environmental outcomes and a significant sense of place. Consideration also needs to be given to protecting sites and places of Aboriginal cultural heritage by designating them part of the public open space network.

Park's *Victoria's Linking People and Spaces* proposes investigating the possibility for a new Regional Park along part of Kororoit Creek to serve the Caroline Springs area.

Mt Cottrell (outside the Investigation Area) and Mount Atkinson feature volcanic hills and cones in the landscape and are proposed to be protected from inappropriate development.

Existing intensive uses

There are a number of activities occurring within the proposed Urban Growth Boundary that will continue to operate or be phased out over time depending on the owner's wishes. For instance there are areas in Plumpton planted with vineyards that form part of an established tourism precinct identified in the *Melton Planning Scheme*. How the area is managed will be an important consideration in preparing the Growth Area Framework Plan, which should set the principles for the area with the details being resolved through the preparation of Precinct Structure Plans.

Safeguarding extractive resources and other uses

Realising the opportunities to develop transit-oriented development along the Melton rail corridor and create new employment areas east of the alignment of the Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor will have the effect of encircling the mix of land uses in the vicinity of the quarry with urban uses in time.

It is recognised that the quarry operations, landfill and related uses have significant regional value and should be protected into the future. Similarly the two prisons at Ravenhall need to be protected from incompatible land uses. Planning in this locality is also complicated by the proposed route of the Regional Rail Link which bisects the area.

The preferred outcome is to ensure that urban land uses likely to be incompatible with current and future operations are not developed within the 500 metre buffer to the quarry tenements. The future of the land surrounding the two prisons should not be determined until a detailed assessment has been undertaken of compatible future land uses and the impact of the Regional Rail Link is considered.

Locating the Urban Growth Boundary

Key considerations in determining the Urban Growth Boundary in Melton include the following:

- > Take advantage of the Melton railway corridor which offers opportunities to create communities and employment areas with good access to a future high capacity public transport corridor.
- > Take advantage of Kororoit Creek and its environs as a major shaping element in the landscape, including its recognition of cultural heritage values. This includes land on both sides of this feature up to the Melton Highway.

-
- > Safeguard the opportunity for a major grasslands reserve outside the Urban Growth Boundary and south of Greigs Road.
 - > Use the Melton Highway as a boundary between urban and non-urban development and recognise the constraints of an existing large quarry (and its buffer) and the Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay.
 - > Maximise the land abutting and east of the Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor in Truganina to provide for longer term employment uses capitalising on access advantages provided by this corridor and proposed east west road links.
 - > Exclude land west of Mt Cottrell Road that comprises low density residential lots from the urban growth area on the basis of increasing distance from the rail line and the difficulty of redeveloping these lots for higher densities.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

It is proposed that:

- > The Urban Growth Boundary in Melton be based on:
 - The Melton Highway;
 - A three kilometre settlement catchment south of the railway line; and
 - The eastern boundary of the Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor where it abuts the proposed grasslands reserve in Truganina.
- > Two publicly owned grassland reserves be created outside the Urban Growth Boundary (in proximity to the Melbourne West Investigation Area) to safeguard the long term preservation of endangered native vegetation and fauna in the region.
- > Where possible, offsets, relating to the removal of native vegetation within the Urban Growth Boundary be directed towards the two proposed reserves in this locality, consistent with the *Native Vegetation Management Framework*.
- > Landscape and cultural heritage features be embodied in Growth Area Framework Plans and Precinct Structure Plans including the environs of Kororoit Creek, volcanic cones, views from railways, freeways and arterial roads, windbreak plantings, dry stone walls, heritage buildings and the geometry of 19th Century subdivision patterns.

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