

15 November 2019

Victorian Planning Authority
Re: Amendment C241wsea Shenstone Park PSP
Level 25, 35 Collins Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000.
amendments@vpa.vic.gov.au

Sarah Davies
Postal Address

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear Victorian Planning Authority,

Submission to: Exhibition of the Whittlesea Amendment C241wsea Shenstone Park Precinct Structure Plan

We provide a submission to the Whittlesea Amendment C241wsea Shenstone Park Precinct Structure Plan on behalf of the landowners of 795 Epping Road, Wollert 3750 and 825 Epping Road, Woodstock 3751.

Please find attached below our submission. Our submission relates to land use and statutory planning controls.

Should you wish to discuss this submission or have updates to provide please do not hesitate to call or email. [REDACTED]

Kind Regards,



Sarah Davies on behalf of

[REDACTED], the owners of 825 Epping Road, Woodstock 3751.

[REDACTED] of 795 Epping Road, Wollert 3750.

Submission to:
Exhibition of the Whittlesea Amendment C241wsea
Shenstone Park Precinct Structure Plan (PSP)

15 November 2019

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1 Executive Summary

The Landowners of 795 Epping Road, Wollert and 825 Epping Road, Woodstock provide this submission to the Exhibition of the proposed Amendment C241wsea to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme (Shenstone Park Precinct Structure Plan).

In considering the Shenstone Park PSP within the broader context of the development of the Northern Growth Corridor and the City of Whittlesea Planning Scheme we support Amendment C241wsea to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme (Shenstone Park Precinct Structure Plan).

Background

The properties affected in this submission comprise two adjoining parcels of land located on the western side of Epping Road in Wollert and Woodstock. The combined properties (subject site) have an area of 218.4 Ha.

The subject site sits outside of the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and is located within an area of approximately 700 hectares of Green Wedge zoned land which abuts the UGB on its northern, western and southern boundaries.

The following Precinct Structure Plan (PSP's) currently sit within the UGB in this location: Wollert, Woodstock and Shenstone Park. The imminent residential development means that the subject site and surrounding precinct will abut urban land along all but its eastern boundary.

Under the proposed amendments to the Planning Scheme the subject site will be encircled by 4 main arterial roads; being the road to be constructed along the Shenstone Park precinct boundary and existing Epping, Summerhill and Donnybrook roads.

The subject site has a history of agricultural use extending over a period in excess of 50 years during which the predominant farming activity consisted of cattle grazing.

The subject site has the following statutory planning context:

- Green Wedge Zone (GWZ)
- Environmental Significance Overlay
 - Schedule 1 (River Red Gum Grassy Woodland) (ESO1)
 - Schedule 5 (River Red Gum Grassy Woodland) (ESO5)
- Floodway Overlay (RFO)
- Heritage Overlay (HO168)

Considerations and Request

We seek to alert the Victorian Planning Authority to five considerations within the Whittlesea Planning Scheme that specifically relate to the subject site. These will impact current or future planning of Northern Growth Corridor including future iterations of the Shenstone Park PSP. These are detailed below in Section 2. Parts 2.1 to 2.5.

We submit that a review of the existing planning controls that apply to the subject site is warranted. This will ensure that planning controls that apply to the subject site reflect the true nature of the site. Hence planning controls can be accurately used within the broader strategic planning and land use context of the Northern Growth Corridor and City of Whittlesea Planning Scheme including future iterations of the Shenstone Park PSP.

2 Introduction

We the Landowners of 795 Epping Road, Wollert and 825 Epping Road, Woodstock, the subject site, wish to provide a submission to the Exhibition of Amendment C241wsea to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme (Shenstone Park Precinct Structure Plan).

We make this submission as the subject site is boarded at the west by the Shenstone Park Precinct.

Our submission relates to land use and statutory planning controls.

3 Subject Land & Surrounds

3.1 Physical Location

The site comprises two adjoining privately owned parcels of land located on the western side of Epping Road in Wollert and Woodstock approximately 50 kilometres to the north of Melbourne.

The site sits outside of the Urban Growth Boundary and is located within an area of approximately 700 hectares of Green Wedge zoned land.

The two properties comprise the following areas:

- 795 Epping Road, Wollert: 121.2 Ha (approx); and
- 825 Epping Road, Woodstock: 97.9 Ha (approx).

The combined properties forming the site have an area of 219.1 Ha (Approx). The following Cadastre Plan confirm the boundaries and areas of the combined sites.

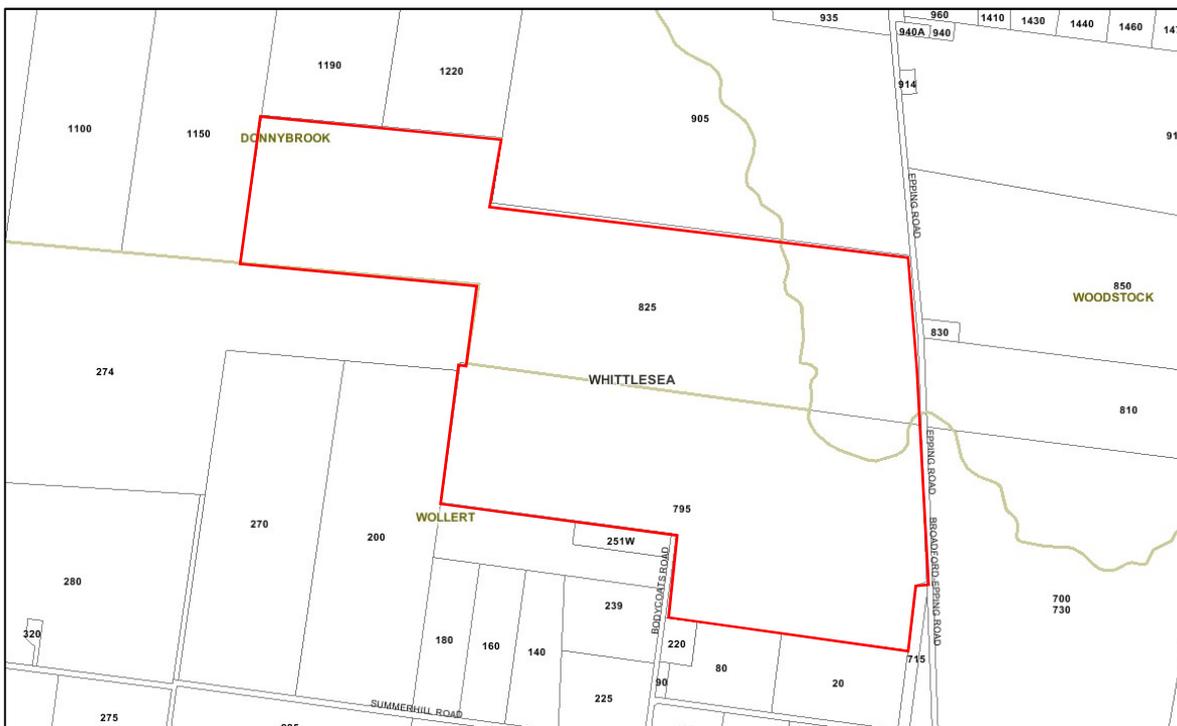


Figure 1: Cadastre Plan

3.2 Surrounding Land Use

The properties are located within a broader urban area generally bounded by Donnybrook Road to the north, the Urban Growth Boundary and related Shenstone Park PSP and Special Use Zone land to the west, Summerhill Road to the south and Epping Road to the east.

The site is located on the eastern boundary of the northern growth corridor. As such it has been witness to significant land use change within the surrounding area. Accordingly, much of the land to the north, west and south has been designated Urban Growth Zone (UGZ) consistent with its inclusion within the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) over the last decade. Land within these adjacent areas has either been developed or is currently transitioning to urban use via the Precinct Structure Planning process. PSP's proximate to the site include Wollert, Woodstock and Shenstone Park.

The following Locality Plan confirms the location of the site within the broader land use context.

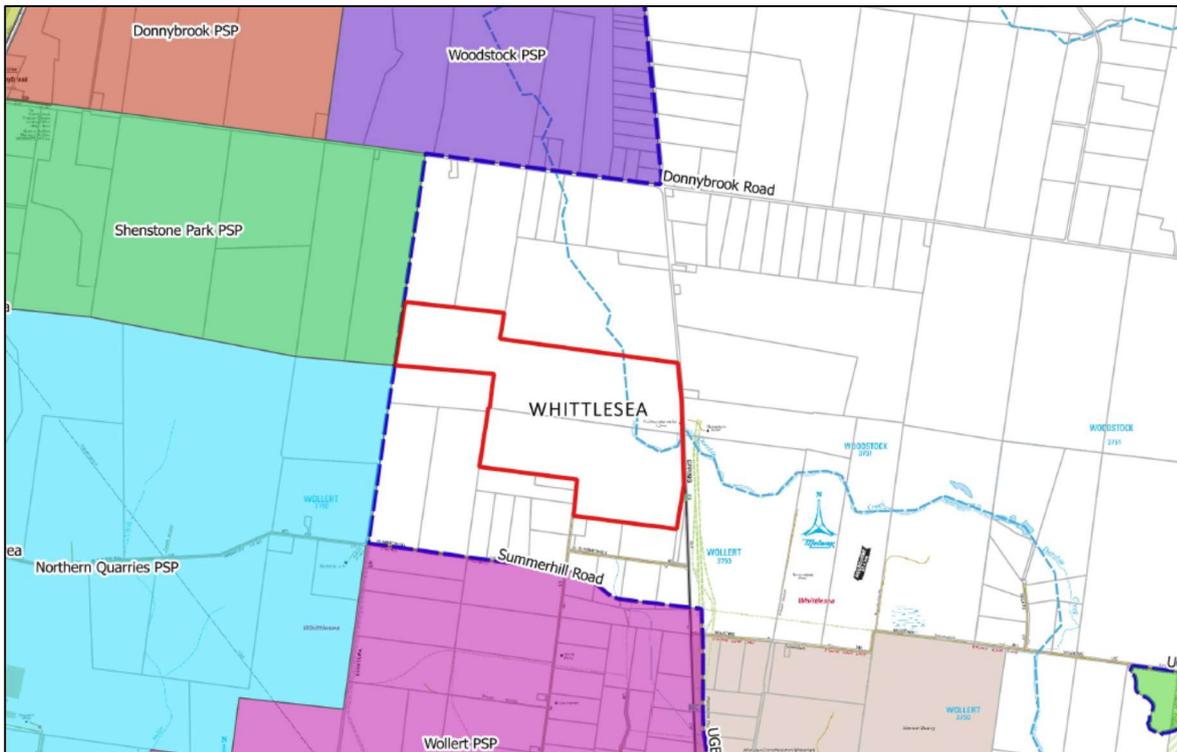


Figure 2. Locality Plan

3.3 Existing Land Use

The site has a history of agricultural use extending over a period in excess of 50 years during which the predominant farming activity consisted of cattle grazing.

Current improvements to the land consist primarily of the existing dwelling, internal and external fencing, cattle yards and watering facilities. Similar to adjacent landholdings, the site comprises typically level ground and or gently undulating landforms. Consistent with its historic use, the site is grassland interspersed with scattered mature red-gums. The following photographs document the site from various locations.



Figure 3: Photos of subject site

3.4 Statutory Planning Controls

The site has the following statutory planning context:

- Green Wedge Zone (GWZ)
- Environmental Significance Overlay
 - Schedule 1 (River Red Gum Grassy Woodland (ESO1)
 - Schedule 5 (River Red Gum Grassy Woodland) (ESO5)
- Floodway Overlay (RFO)
- Heritage Overlay (HO168)

4 Considerations

We seek to alert the Victorian Planning Authority to five considerations about planning controls and land use within the Whittlesea Planning Scheme that specifically relate to the subject site. These will impact current and future planning of the Northern Growth Corridor including future iterations of the Shenstone Park PSP. The five assumptions are outlined for consideration below:

4.1 Flora and Fauna

The subject sight has two environmental overlays. However a Vegetation and Biodiversity Offset Assessment of the subject site, undertaken by Ecology & Heritage Partners in October 2018 (Attachment 6.1) found:

“The study area is largely composed of introduced species, with small areas of remnant vegetation identified throughout.

The benchmark description of Plains Grassy Woodland is an open eucalypt woodland to 15 metres tall over a species rich grassy and herbaceous ground layer, with few sparse shrubs. (DELWP) 2018b).

Vegetation across the study area did not meet the required 25% relative cover of native species in order to be considered as a patch of remnant native vegetation.

*All patches of Plains Grassy Woodland within the study area contained a high cover (40% - 50%) of weeds, particularly introduced grasses such as Perennial Rye Grass (*Lolium perenne*), Kikuyu (*Cenchrus clandestinus*), Panic Veldt-grass (*Ehrharta erecta* var.) and Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*). Both Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Spear Thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*) were scattered throughout the study area, the former is a weed of National Significance (WoNS) and a noxious weed”.*

The above assessment confirms that the actual quality and significance of the vegetation within the site differs greatly from that contemplated by the existing Environmental Significance Overlays as contained within the City of Whittlesea Planning Scheme.

4.2 Agricultural

An Agricultural Capability Assessment of the subject site has been undertaken by Phillips Agribusiness in April 2019 (Attachment 6.2). The assessment found:

“The land capability for the property is estimated to be 4, (out of 5) or “Poor” with the main limitations being presence of rock, soil type, low arability and climate. Other characteristics that influence agricultural value include restricted water supply, small property size and urban location. Grazing is the only rural enterprise that can be conducted.

The property is a specialist grazing enterprise because of its lack of arability and prevailing climatic conditions. Its size of 219ha is insufficiently productive to support a self-sustaining grazing enterprise such as beef production. It can only be considered a part time farm which area cannot be increased due to its urban location and high land prices.”

The above assessment confirms the current opportunities for the use of this site as an agricultural enterprise are becoming increasingly limited and financially unsustainable.

4.3 Urban Encroachment

The subject site is currently located within a green wedge which abuts the UGB on its northern, western and southern boundaries. The following PSP's currently sit within the UGB in this location: Wollert, Woodstock and Shenstone Park. The imminent residential development means that the subject site and surrounding precinct will abut urban land along all but its eastern boundary. This will include being surrounded by 4 main arterial roads; a main arterial road to be constructed along the Shenstone Park precinct boundary and existing Epping, Summerhill and Donnybrook roads.

In addition, the construction of the future Outer Metropolitan Ring Road (OMR / E6) along land already reserved for this purpose ensures that the subject site will be effectively land locked and considered an island site.

4.4 Heritage Planning

The heritage overlay (HO168) that applies to the site is associated with a dwelling. However, it should be noted that the dwelling identified no longer exists. Accordingly, the heritage significance is no longer applicable for future use and development considerations.

4.5 Green Wedge Zone

There are many purpose of the Green Wedge zone. For example *'To recognise, protect and conserve green wedge land for its agricultural, environmental, historic, landscape, recreational and tourism opportunities, and mineral and stone resources'*

As described in considerations 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 the subject site is increasingly unable to fulfil the purposes contemplated by the existing Green Wedge Zone, eg agricultural, environmental and cultural heritage purposes

5 Conclusion and Request

In considering the Shenstone Park PSP within the broader context of the development of the Northern Growth Corridor and the City of Whittlesea Planning Scheme we support Amendment C241wsea to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme (Shenstone Park Precinct Structure Plan).

The proposed C241wsea amendments will change the use of the Shenstone area and impact on the subject site. We submit that a review of the existing planning controls that apply to the subject site is warranted, and will show:

1. The actual quality and significance of the vegetation within the subject site differs greatly from that contemplated by the existing Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO1 & 5);
2. Opportunities for the use of this site as an agricultural enterprise are becoming increasingly limited and financially unsustainable;
3. The subject site is becoming landlocked by urban development;
4. The heritage overlay (HO168) is no longer applicable to future use and development considerations; and
5. The subject site is increasingly unable to fulfil the purposes of the Green Wedge Zone, eg agricultural, environmental and cultural heritage purposes

A review will ensure that planning controls that apply to the subject site reflect the true nature of the site. Hence they can be accurately used within the broader strategic planning and land use context of the Northern Growth Corridor and City of Whittlesea Planning Scheme including future iterations of the Shenstone Park PSP.

6 Appendix

- 6.1 Vegetation and Biodiversity Offset Assessment October 2018
- 6.2 Agricultural Capability Assessment April 2019

Vegetation and Biodiversity Offset Assessment at 795 and 825 Epping Road, Woodstock

Date: 18th October 2018

Author: Jeremy Coyne (Zoologist) and Aaron Organ (Director / Principal Ecologist)

Ref: 10237

1 Introduction

Ecology and Heritage Partners Pty Ltd was commissioned by Sarah Davies to conduct an offset site assessment for 795 and 825 Epping Road, Woodstock. The purpose of this report is to broadly document the ecological values present within the study area and to provide options with respect to the suitability of the property to be used as an offset under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) and/or State Guidelines for the Removal, Destruction or Lopping of Native Vegetation (DELWP 2017a).

2 Study Area

The study area comprises approximately 219 hectares and is located 51 kilometres north of Melbourne (Figure 1). The study area is privately owned and has been used for grazing activities for over 50 years and supports many scattered trees.

According to the Department of Environment, Water, Land and Planning (DEWLP) Native Vegetation Information Management Tool (NVIM) (DELWP 2018a), the study area occurs within the Victorian Volcanic Plain bioregion. It is located within the jurisdiction of the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and the Whittlesea City Council. The property is currently zoned Green Wedge Zone (GWZ), and subject to Environmental Significance Overlay – Schedules 1 and 5 (ESO1 and ESO5). Parts of the study area are also subject to a Heritage Overlay Schedule (HO 168) and Rural Floodway Overlay Schedule (RFO). The study area is located within a designated Bushfire Prone Area (BPA) as determined by the Victorian Minister for Planning (DELWP 2018d).

1 Methods

1.1 Desktop Assessment

Relevant literature, online-resources and databases were reviewed to provide an assessment of flora and fauna values associated with the study area. The following information sources were reviewed:

- The DELWP NVIM Tool (DELWP 2018a) for:
 - Modelled data for location risk, remnant vegetation patches, scattered trees and habitat for rare or threatened species; and
 - The extent of historic and current EVCs.

- Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) benchmarks (DELWP 2018b) for descriptions of EVCs within the relevant bioregion;
- The Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (VBA) for previously documented flora and fauna records within the project locality (DELWP 2018d);
- The Flora Information System (FIS) (Viridans 2014a) and Atlas of Victorian Wildlife (AVW) (Viridans 2014b) for assistance with the distribution and identification of flora and fauna species;
- The Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Energy (DoEE) Protected Matters Search Tool (PMST) for matters of National Environmental Significance (NES) protected under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) (DoEE 2018);
- Relevant listings under the *Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (FFG Act), including the latest Threatened and Protected Lists (DELWP 2015b; DELWP 2015c);
- The Planning Maps Online (DELWP 2018c) to ascertain current zoning and environmental overlays in the study area;
- Other relevant environmental legislation and policies as required; and
- Aerial photography of the study area.

2.1 Field Assessment

2.1.1 Flora Assessment

Field assessments were undertaken on 11 December 2017 and 19 April 2018 to obtain information on flora values within the study area. The study area was walked, with all observed vascular flora and fauna species recorded, any significant records mapped and the overall condition of vegetation and habitats noted. Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) were determined with reference to DELWP pre-1750 and extant EVC mapping and their published descriptions (DELWP 2018b). Where remnant vegetation was identified, a habitat hectare assessment was undertaken following methodology described in the *Vegetation Quality Assessment Manual* (DSE 2004), and Large Trees mapped and counted.

2.1.2 Targeted Golden Sun Moth surveys

Targeted surveys for the nationally significant Golden Sun Moth *Synemon plana* were undertaken by qualified ecologists and commenced on 11 December 2017. A further three surveys were conducted on 13 December 2017, 12 and 16 January 2018. Surveys were undertaken on foot or driving across the entire site, focussing in areas identified as supporting indigenous grassland species such as Wallaby-grass *Rytidosperma* spp, which is a known food source for GSM larva. Surveys were undertaken at a time which is considered suitable for detecting the species (i.e. when adult males are likely to be flying). The male of this species generally flies between 11am and 3pm on calm warm and sunny days (over 20°C), although the species will continue flying outside of these times if conditions are suitable (i.e. mild temperatures and extended sunlight).

2.2 Gain Scoring Methodology

Gains in habitat score to compensate for vegetation loss can be achieved through a number of means where a commitment is made to designate an area as a permanent offset site. Four types of gains are recognised by DELWP for existing vegetation offset sites; these include prior management gain, security gain, maintenance gain and improvement gain. Gains in habitat score for each of these gain types are determined using the DELWP Gain Calculator and associated manual (DELWP 2017b). Gains can also be achieved through revegetation of formerly modified land where such offset types are permitted.

Gain scoring operates via the DELWP Gain Calculator, which allocates a score based on the habitat score measure for vegetation management actions that maintain vegetation quality, or at a higher level, improved vegetation quality.

The guidelines and methodology for gain scoring are presented in *Native vegetation gain scoring manual* (DELWP 2017b).

These resources were used in combination with the Gain Calculator to determine gains for vegetation protection, maintenance and improvement activities for this project. Vegetation gain data from the Gain Calculator was forwarded to DELWP for conversion into the current vegetation units.

2.2.1 Gain Scoring for Offsets in Existing Vegetation

The fundamental premise of gain scoring within sites of existing vegetation is that a gain will be achieved over a 10-year management period and that the offset site will be protected and maintained at that achieved 10-year condition in perpetuity.

Gain scoring within offset sites containing existing vegetation requires the quality of vegetation to be known (i.e. habitat score using the habitat hectares methodology). It is also desirable to have information on vegetation and ecological attributes, such as indigenous species diversity, weed cover, weed species present, management history and other general threats to vegetation and habitat condition. Such information is essential for working through the decision-making processes for gain scoring in a consistent and rigorous manner.

This baseline information is then used to undertake habitat gain scoring (DELWP 2017b) or more conveniently by using the DELWP Gain Calculator. Scores are allocated as either a percentage of the current total habitat score, or as a specified habitat score value depending on the type of gain.

Four types of gain are currently recognised:

- *Prior Management Gain* – This gain acknowledges actions to manage a freehold site and usually attracts a score of 10% of the current habitat score of the offset site.
- *Security Gain* – This is gain resulting from actions to enhance the security of the on-going management and protection of native vegetation. This gain usually attracts between 10 and 40% of the current habitat score of the offset site, depending on the security agreement reached and land tenure of the offset site.

- *Maintenance Gain* – This is gain from commitments that contribute to the maintenance of current vegetation quality over time (i.e. avoiding any decline).
- *Improvement Gain* – this is gain resulting from management commitments beyond existing obligations under legislation to improve the current vegetation quality.

Maintenance and improvement gains are allocated as a habitat score value and vary depending on a number of factors. The two key factors that determine how much (i.e. score) maintenance and improvement gain can be achieved are the nature of existing 'use rights' at the offset site, and the management commitments agreed to be undertaken for vegetation maintenance and improvement by the landholder.

Management commitments generally include activities such as vegetation protection through grazing control, weed control and eradication and supplementary planting. Maintenance/Improvement gain is not applicable for the control of noxious weeds, however, there are other weed species present and the management options for controlling high threat woody and herbaceous weeds are relevant.

Taking this into consideration, gains for the site have been calculated from prior management, and maintenance/improvement gain.

Once gain scoring has been undertaken for the offset site the total score for prior management, security and maintenance/improvement, gains are summed and multiplied by the area (in hectares) of the offset site to determine how much gain is available. This total allows comparison to gain targets for vegetation losses and decisions can be made regarding the ability of an offset site to achieve a gain outcome through vegetation protection.

Refer to Appendix 1 for a list of required and optional management actions and exclusion zones that were incorporated into the Gains Calculator as part of calculating overall gain within the study area.

3 Results

3.1 Vegetation Condition

The study area is largely composed of introduced species, with small areas of remnant vegetation identified throughout. Vegetation in the study area is representative of two Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs), in accordance with modelled pre-1750s native vegetation mapping (DELWP 2018b): Plains Grassy Woodland (EVC 55_61) and smaller patches of Creekline Grassy Woodland (EVC 68) present along Darebin Creek (ephemeral creek). The site assessment identified patches of highly modified Plains Grassy Woodland (EVC 55). Vegetation condition along the Darebin Creek was considered to be highly degraded.

3.1.1 Plains Grassy Woodland

The benchmark description of Plains Grassy Woodland is an open eucalypt woodland to 15 metres tall over a species-rich grassy and herbaceous ground layer, with few sparse shrubs (DELWP 2018b).

Vegetation across the majority of the study area did not meet the required 25% relative cover of native species in order to be considered as a patch of remnant native vegetation. Fourteen patches of Plains Grassy Woodland were identified within the study area comprising four habitat zones, which were based on

differences in understorey lifeforms, weed cover, organic litter, logs and recruitment. The tree canopy across all habitat zones was dominated by River Red-gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*. Large trees and logs were present in all patches of Plains Grassy Woodland identified within the study area.

All patches of Plains Grassy Woodland within the study area contained a high cover (40 – 50%) of weeds, particularly introduced grasses such as Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, Kikuyu *Cenchrus clandestinus*, Panic Veldt-grass *Ehrharta erecta* var. *erecta*, and Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*. Both Gorse *Ulex europaeus* and Spear Thistle *Cirsium vulgare* were scattered throughout the study area; the former is a Weed of National Significance (WoNS) and noxious weed.

Evidence of rabbits was found in several locations throughout the study area from surface diggings, burrows and scats.

3.1.2 Large Trees

A total of 617 Large Trees (predominantly River Red-gums), comprising both Large Trees within Plains Grassy Woodland patches and scattered trees (545 trees) are present throughout the study area.

3.2 Golden Sun Moth

Targeted surveys recorded approximately 8.591 hectares of Golden Sun Moth habitat in the north-east corner of the study area, with four individual Golden Sun Moths recorded (Figure 1). The number of Golden Sun Moth observed across the study area reflects the low-quality habitat for the species. Consideration should be given to implementing management actions to improve the quality and extent of suitable GSM habitat (i.e. increase the population of Golden Sun Moth) across the study area as part of an offset management plan, if the study area was in part or in whole established as an offset site.

3.3 Quantification of Gains Available from Offset Site

3.3.1 Eligible Vegetation under the Guidelines

In accordance with the eligibility criteria outlined in Native Vegetation Gain Scoring Manual, Version 2 (DELWP 2017), the following native vegetation values is eligible as a potential offset:

- 44.036 hectares of native vegetation [comprising patches, Large Trees (each Large Trees have a default area applied to it) in patches, and scattered trees]; and
- 569 Large Trees (both Large Trees in native vegetation patches and scattered trees); and,

3.3.2 Quantification of Gain

General Habitat Units

Based on the eligible native vegetation values described in Section 3.2.1, the study area contains a potential gain of 5.639 General Habitat Units within the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (CMA) boundary and Whittlesea Shire Council (Appendix 2). The Strategic Biodiversity Value across the study area ranges from 0.320 - 0.600, with an average of 0.479. General Habitat Units can be sold to third parties to offset any removals requiring offsets for General HUs within the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment



Management Authority (CMA) boundary and/or Whittlesea Shire Council municipality, as long as the Strategic Biodiversity Score of the offset site is 80% that of the clearing site.

Species Habitat Units

Species Habitat Units can also be generated through the protection of the native vegetation outlined above (Section 3.3.1), and these comprise (Appendix 2):

- 3.024 Species Habitat Units* for Curly Sedge *Carex tasmanica*
- 5.971 Species Habitat Units* for Large Headed Fireweed *Senecio macrocarpus*
- 5.971 Species Habitat Units* for Plump Swamp Wallaby-grass *Amphibromus pithogastrus*
- 5.971 Species Habitat Units* Brackish Plains Buttercup *Ranunculus dimintus*
- 5.971 Species Habitat Units* for Large-flower Crane's-bill *Geranium* sp. 1
- 5.971 Species Habitat Units* for Yellow Watercrown Grass *Paspalum flavidum*

*Note that some Species Habitat Units may be alternates. The use of any Species Habitat Units of one type will result in a proportional reduction in Species Habitat Units of other types.

Species Habitat Units can be sold to third parties to offset any removals within Victoria requiring offsets for the same species.

Golden Sun Moth habitat (EPBC Act)

The area in the north east corner of the study area supports 8.951 hectares of Golden Sun Moth habitat (Figure 1). This area can be used as an offset under the EPBC Act.

4 Conclusion

The following options are provided relating to the study area being used as an offset (under the Commonwealth and/or State Guidelines) or being rezoned for development.

4.1 Option 1 - Establishment of an Offset Site (under the Guidelines) across the Study Area

The establishment of an offset and ongoing management of vegetation across the study area would result in potential gains, including the General and Species Habitat Units, and Large Tree values described above (Section 3.3.2). Based on the trading history published by DELWP, the estimated market value of potential credits (General Habitat Units) within the study area is up to **\$730,000.00 (excl. GST)** under the Guidelines (DELWP 2017). The market value is subject to the type of habitat units sold, strategic biodiversity value, price per units and market demand.

The establishment of an offset site across the study area will also generate several Species Habitat Units for six rare and threatened species. Similar to the General Habitat Units, Species Habitat Units can be registered on the Native Vegetation Offset Register and traded. The trade price of Species Habitat Units is variable, with one Species Habitat Unit having a value of approximately **~\$60,000.00 to ~\$150,000.00 (excl. GST)**. However, the Species Habitat Unit rate depends on the demand for the Species Habitat Unit and the total of number of units required.

4.2 Option 2 - Establishment of a Golden Sun Moth offset site (EPBC Act)

Based on our expertise and previous experience completing trades for nationally significant offsets, Golden Sun Moth offsets under the EPBC Act can sell for approximately **\$45,000.00 (excl. GST)** per hectare. As such, the establishment of an offset site on suitable Golden Sun Moth habitat in the study area has an estimated value of **\$386,000.00 (excl. GST)**. Should this option be pursued there would be a requirement to manage the area for the conservation of Golden Sun Moth and the management costs would be included in the \$386,000.00 (excl. GST).

4.3 Option 3 - Potential for Rezoning and Development

At the time of survey, the vegetation within the study area did not meet the native understorey cover threshold of 50% to be considered Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain as described by the Commonwealth definition of the ecological vegetation classification. The *Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Melbourne's Growth Corridors* (DEPI 2013; Page 25) states that:

'The prescription requires that 80 per cent of Grassy Eucalypt Woodland in the growth corridors that meets the Commonwealth listed definition of the community be protected' (DEPI 2013).

It also states;

'Given some uncertainty about the final amount of land over the 61 per cent that will be protected for Grassy Woodland Reserve in conservation areas, additional land will be added to the proposed 1,200 hectare Grassy Woodland Reserve to be established outside the 2010 urban growth boundary.

'The total area to be added to the Grassy Woodland Reserve will be between 100 and 200 hectares and will be determined once the exact extent and quality of Grassy Eucalypt Woodland to be cleared for urban development in the growth corridors and protected in conservation areas is confirmed' (DEPI 2013)'.

The study area lies within the investigation area for the proposed 1,200-hectare Grassy Eucalypt Woodland Reserve (DEPI 2013; Figure 5), which is outside of the 100 to 200 hectares to be added to the Grassy Eucalypt Woodland reserve. However, given that detailed vegetation assessments across the northern Precinct Structure Plans (PSPs) (e.g. Wollert, Donnybrook / Woodstock, Merryfield West, English Street and Lockerie PSPs) have now been completed, the extent of the EPBC Act-listed Grassy Eucalypt Woodland that has, or that is proposed to be impacted through the northern growth corridor, is significantly less than what was estimated in the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (DEPI 2013). That is, the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy overestimates the total area of Grassy Eucalypt Woodland within the growth areas, and therefore there is not likely to be a requirement to protect significant areas of the community outside of the growth corridors (i.e. within the investigation area for the proposed 1,200-hectare Grassy Eucalypt Woodland Reserve) to fulfil the requirements of the Strategy (DEPI 2013). It is recommended that the landowner seek legal and planning advice relating to the potential for the study area to be rezoned for development purposes.

REFERENCES

- DELWP 2017a. Guidelines for the Removal, Destruction or Lopping of Native Vegetation. Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries, December 2013.
- DELWP 2017b. Native vegetation gain scoring manual Version 2. Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries, December 2013.
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FIGURES

- Legend**
- Study Area
 - Internal 6m buffer
 - Dwellings
 - 50m buffer around dwelling
 - Golden Sun Moth habitat
 - Vegetation patches
 - Scattered Large Trees
 - Trees in Patch
 - BCS Conservation Area
 - Major Road
 - Minor Road
 - Minor Watercourse

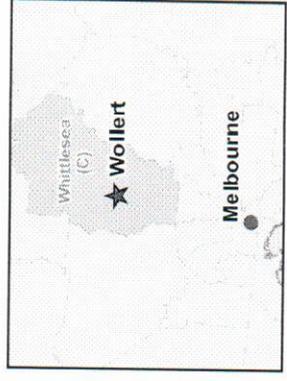


Figure 1
Scattered Trees
Scattered Tree Assessment
for 795 Epping Road, Wollert
and 825 Epping Road,
Donnybrook



VeriMap Data: The State of Victoria does not warrant the accuracy or complete correctness of information in this publication and any person using or relying upon such information does so on the basis that the State of Victoria shall bear no responsibility or liability whatsoever for any errors, omissions or inaccuracies in this information.

APPENDIX 1. METHODOLOGY

1 Management Commitments

In accordance with the minimum commitments to generate gain outlined in Native Vegetation Gain Scoring Manual, Version 2 (DELWP 2017), the following management commitments were included in the gain scoring undertaken for the study area:

- Securing on-title agreement for protection of vegetation in perpetuity;
- Ensure weed cover does not increase beyond the current level;
- Monitor for any new and emerging high threat weeds and eliminate to < 1% cover;
- Control rabbits;
- Exclude stock;
- Retain all standing trees (dead or alive);
- Retain logs and fallen timber;
- Retain leaf litter;
- Recruit at least five new canopy plants for each tree protected; and
- Monitoring and reporting on the progress of management actions.

It should be noted that standard management actions must be implemented within the study area in order to be utilised as an offset suite for nationally significant GSM, including but not limited to the following:

- No cropping, and no drainage/hydrology alteration;
- No rock removal or cropping;
- Limited artificial stock feeding within the offset area;
- Weed cover is managed in perpetuity to ensure it does not increase beyond the level recorded at year 10 of a 10-year offset management; and,
- GSM populations and habitat are maintained and/or improved.

2 Exclusion Zones

In accordance with the BushBroker quality assurance standards, the following exclusion zones were applied to the study area as part of the Biodiversity Offset Assessment:

- 6 metre exclusion zone from all parcel boundaries;
- 50 metre exclusion zone from all dwellings and around any area earmarked as a potential dwelling site in the future (for parcels not covered by a Bushfire Management Overlay); and

- 150 metre exclusion zone from all dwellings and around any area earmarked as a potential dwelling site in the future (for parcels covered by a Bushfire Management Overlay).

APPENDIX 2. ENSYM OFFSET REPORT

Native vegetation offset report

Information included in this report is based on spatial data provided to DELWP. The proposal has not been assessed to confirm eligibility or gain

This report provides information about a potential native vegetation offset site in accordance with the *Guidelines for the removal, destruction or topping of native vegetation*. The information in this report is based on spatial information and the gain score provided by the landholder (or their representative). Any changes to this input information will change the habitat units of gain reflected in this report and it must be reissued.

Date of issue: 14/06/2018

DELWP ref: EHP_2018_156

Time of issue: 9:33 am

Project ID EHP10237_Donnybrook_OS

Extent of proposed offset site

Total extent	44.036 ha
Patches	5.872 ha
Revegetation	0.000 ha
Scattered tree(s)	38.164 ha

Habitat units of gain for the proposed offset site

The offset site has the following total general and species habitat units. These units can be used to satisfy a **single permit condition** or if the offset site is established as a **first party offset site**.

Total habitat units and attributes used for a single permit (once off use)

Number of large tree(s)	569 large trees are protected at the offset site
General habitat units	5.639 general habitat units Port Phillip And Westernport CMA, Whittlesea City Council 0.479 Strategic biodiversity value
Species habitat units	3.024 species habitat units for Curly Sedge, <i>Carex tasmanica</i> 5.971 species habitat units for Large-headed Fireweed, <i>Senecio macrocarpus</i> 5.971 species habitat units for Plump Swamp Wallaby-grass, <i>Amphibromus pithogastrus</i> 5.971 species habitat units for Brackish Plains Buttercup, <i>Ranunculus diminutus</i> 5.971 species habitat units for Large-flower Crane's-bill, <i>Geranium sp. 1</i> 5.971 species habitat units for Yellow Watercrown Grass, <i>Paspalidium flavidum</i>

Native vegetation offset report

Habitat units of gain per zone of the proposed offset site

This table provides the habitat units of gain per zone of the offset site. Trading and allocation of units within the **Native Vegetation Credit Register** takes place at the zone.

The species-general offset test is done to determine which species the proposed offset site provides habitat for. The threshold is set at 0.0025 per cent of the mapped habitat value for a species. When the threshold is met or exceeded, species habitat units are generated. If required species habitat units can be generated for all other species mapped at the site. Multiple species units will be generated if the threshold is exceeded for multiple species.

The species habitat units for each species in a zone is calculated by the following equation in accordance with the Guidelines:

$$\text{Species habitat units} = \text{extent} \times \text{gain score} \times \text{species landscape factor}, \text{ where the species landscape factor} = 0.5 + (\text{habitat importance score}/2)$$

The general habitat units in a zone is calculated by the following equation in accordance with the Guidelines:

$$\text{General habitat units} = \text{extent} \times \text{gain score} \times \text{general landscape factor}, \text{ where the general landscape factor} = 0.5 + (\text{strategic biodiversity value score}/2)$$

Species and general habitat units are alternates and the use or sale of one type of unit will affect the number of other types of units remaining.

Information provided by or on behalf of the applicant			Information calculated by EnSym					
Zone	Type	Gain score	Polygon extent	Extent without overlap	SBV	HIS	Habitat units	Attributes
X-XX	XXXX	Refer to accompanying Excel spreadsheet, which must be included with this report in any application – 'Habitat units of gain per zone' tab						XXXX
								XXXX
								XXXX

Next steps

Offset sites must meet eligibility criteria as outlined in the *Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation* and the *Native vegetation gain scoring manual, version 2* available on the DELWP website, and any other relevant requirements. Eligible offset sites that are intended to be banked or sold as credits must be registered on the Native Vegetation Credit Register (NVCR). A gain scoring assessment must be done before any offset can be registered on the NVCR. All proposed offset sites must be secured by a relevant security agreement that includes an offset management plan.

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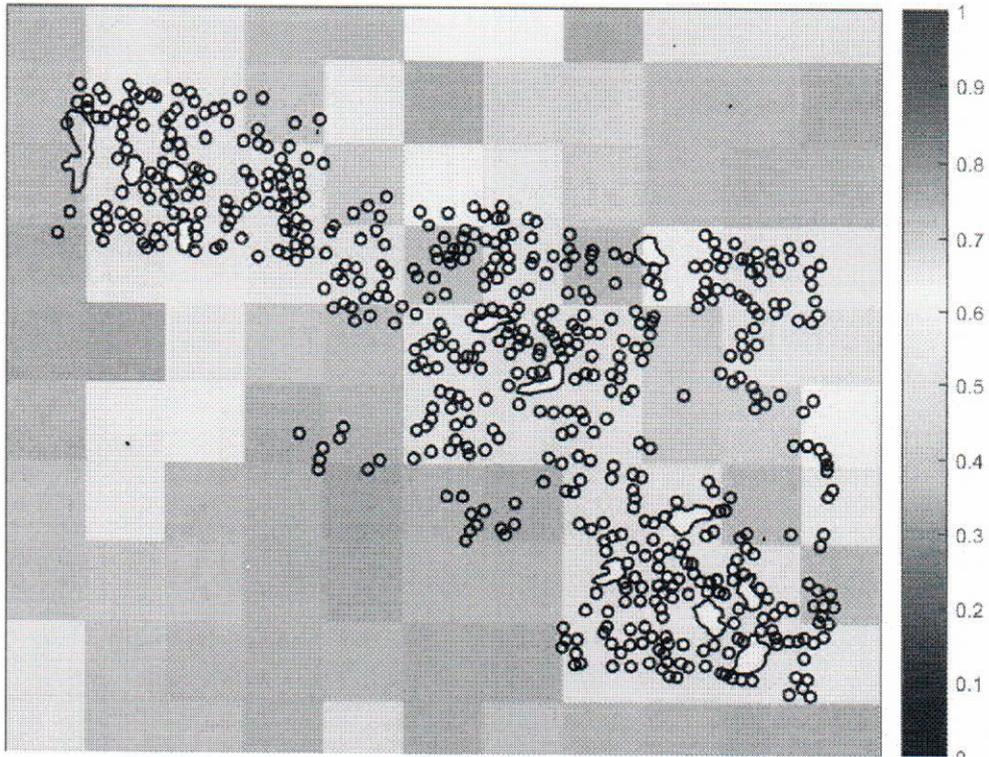
Appendix 1 – Images of marked native vegetation

1. Aerial photograph showing marked native vegetation



Native vegetation offset report

2. Strategic biodiversity value map



3. Habitat importance maps

Curly Sedge
Carex tasmanica
500650

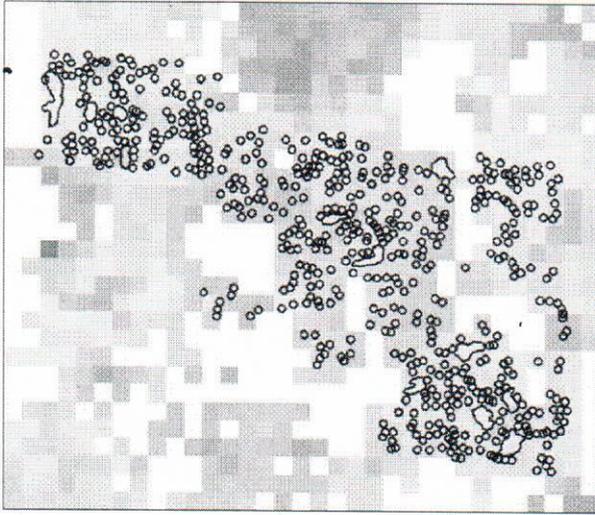


Large-headed Fireweed
Senecio macrocarpus
503116

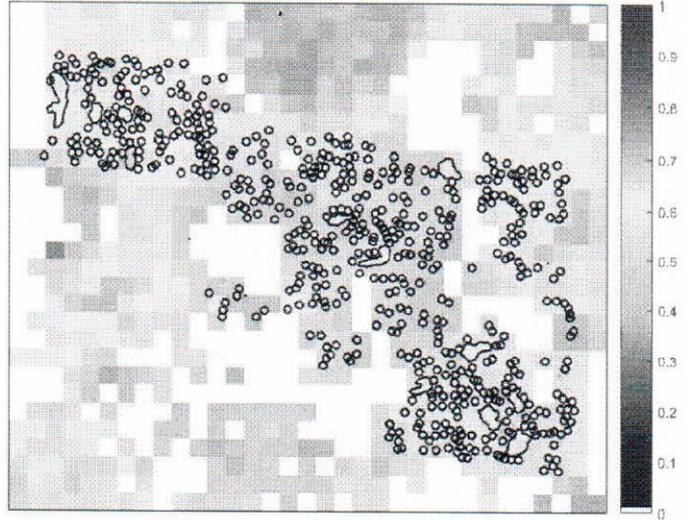


Native vegetation offset report

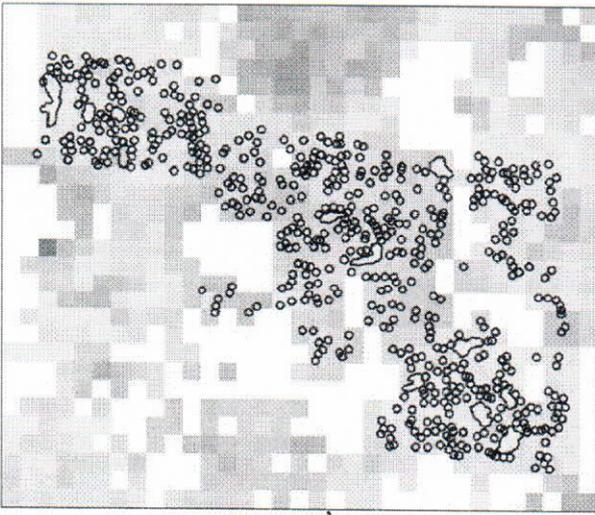
Plump Swamp Wallaby-grass
Amphibromus pithogastrus
503624



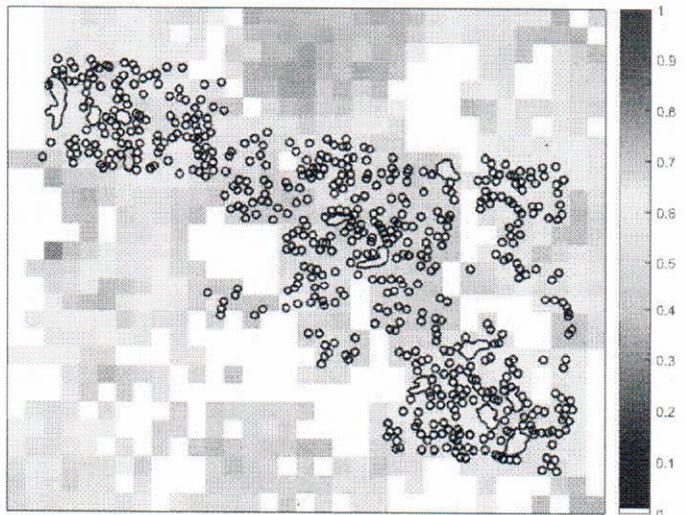
Brackish Plains Buttercup
Ranunculus diminutus
504314



Large-flower Crane's-bill
Geranium sp. 1
505342



Yellow Watercrown Grass
Paspalidium flavidum
507820



Native vegetation offset report

GLOSSARY

Alternate offset types Offset types within a zone are alternates. The use of one offset type will result in the proportional reduction of all other offset types within the zone. Refer to *Native vegetation offset sites* fact sheet available on the DELWP website for more information.

Gain score This is the site-assessed gain score for the native vegetation based on the agreed management and security commitments. Each zone in the proposed offset site is assigned a gain score according to the gain scoring assessment. The score is divided by 100 to give a number between 0 and 1.

General habitat units of gain The general habitat units quantify the overall contribution that the protection and management of native vegetation at the offset site makes to Victoria's biodiversity. The general habitat units are calculated as follows:

$$\text{General habitat units} = \text{extent} \times \text{gain score} \times \text{general landscape factor}$$

General landscape factor The general landscape factor is the adjusted strategic biodiversity value (SBV) score. The SBV score is adjusted so that site-based biodiversity information has more influence on the number of units.

General offset attributes The attributes of a general offset includes the location (Catchment Management Authority and Municipal District), strategic biodiversity value score and the number of large trees protected.

Offset type There are two types of offsets, general offsets and species offsets. All offset sites include general offsets. Sites that are mapped as habitat for rare or threatened species can also include species offsets for the mapped species.

Species offset attributes The attributes of a species offset is the mapped habitat for the species and the number of large trees protected.

Species habitat units of gain The species habitat units quantify the overall contribution that the protection and management of native vegetation at an offset site makes to the habitat of the relevant rare or threatened species. Species habitat units are calculated for each species in the zone where the result of the threshold test is greater than 0.0025 per cent. Species units are calculated as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Species habitat units}_{\text{species } x} \\ = \text{extent} \times \text{gain score} \times \text{species landscape factor}_{\text{species } x} \end{aligned}$$

PHILLIPS
AGRIBUSINESS

Agricultural Capability Assessment

795-825 Epping Road

Wollert

**Phillips Agribusiness
66 Linacre Road
Hampton Vic 3188**

April 2019

Agricultural and Management Consultants
Ph.: 03 9598 4018; e-mail ray@phillipsagribusiness.com.au

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The property is located at 795-825 Epping Road, Wollert. It comprises two adjacent lots that lie west of Epping Road and north of Summerhill Road. The size of the property is 219ha and currently used for beef production. It is zoned green Wedge Zone and subject to Environmental Significance Overlay-Schedules 1 and 5 (ESO1 and ESO5).

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) in association with Agriculture Victoria and Deakin University, is undertaking a study to identify strategic agricultural land in Melbourne's Green Wedge Zone and Peri urban areas. The objective is to improve land use and development decision making in these areas. Community input is being invited to contribute to this process.

The purpose of this report is to describe the natural feature characteristics of the property identified above to determine land capability, the forms of agricultural use to which it is most suited, expected levels of production and sustainability of performance. Comment is then made on how the proposed criteria used by DELEP to identify and protect strategic agricultural land applies to the subject property.

2.0 PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The natural features of the property determine the type of agricultural activity that can be practised. The following is a description of each of the features and their relative importance in the assessment of land capability.

2.1 Climate

The annual average rainfall for the district is approximately 660mm¹ with considerable seasonal variability and a high drought frequency. The growing season commences with the autumn break usually occurring mid-April-early May extending through winter and the spring months. A dry period is usually incurred from mid-November until April which leaves a plant growing period during autumn, winter and spring of 7-8 months. These conditions suit annual cropping, annual pastures and perennial pastures that comprise both native and introduced species.

2.2 Landform and soils

The landform is undulating plains with stony rises². It occurs as a crest of stony rises that grade to flatter plains. The vegetative pattern is open Red Gum woodland throughout the landform.

The soils vary according to landform. Stony rises have shallow stony red-brown gradational soils, black soils occur on the apron of the rises and yellow-brown calcareous sodic duplex soils on the plains. The gradational soils are fertile but too shallow and stony for cultivation whereas the flatter areas can be cultivated but waterlogging reduces their usefulness.

¹ Yan Yean, Bureau of Meteorology 2018.

² A Study of the Land to the North of Melbourne, P J Jeffery, Soil Conservation Authority 1981

The series of photos below show the different landforms. Photo 1 shows the undulating landform and Red Gum presence while photos 2 and 3 show the different components of stony rises and open plains.

Photo 1: Landform of stony rises and plains



Photo 2: Stony rises



Photo 3: Open plains



2.3 Vegetation

The Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVC) occurring on the site³ are Plains Grassy Woodland and Creekline Grassy Woodland along Darebin Creek. The Plains Grassy Woodland comprises an open eucalypt woodland over a ground cover that includes introduced species, native grasses and herbs and weeds. Some of the species identified include Perennial Ryegrass, Kykuyu, Danthonia, Sweet Vernal, Panic Veldt-grass, Gorse and Spear Thistle.

The agricultural productivity (stocking rate) of this pasture composition is low due to the absence of more vigorous introduced species, low soil fertility levels and at the time of inspection, drought conditions. The current stocking rate is estimated to be 5 dry sheep equivalents (dse)⁴ per hectare whereas under Best Management Practice⁵ and more favourable seasonal conditions rates of up to 7.5 dse/ha could be achieved.

The Creekline Grassy Woodland EVC has much the same species composition but in different proportions.

³ Ecology & Heritage Partners Report, October 2018.

⁴ Dry sheep equivalent (dse) is that amount of dry matter required by one mature wether per annum

⁵ Best Management Practice is an integrated program involving pasture renovation, raising soil fertility levels, increased subdivisional fencing and rotational grazing

2.4 Water resources and drainage

The two photos below show Darebin Creek as a seasonal stream line flowing across the property and a windmill being used to pump groundwater.

Photo 4: Darebin Creek



Photo 5: Windmill to access ground water



Darebin Creek only flows seasonally so is an unreliable water source. Groundwater is the main water supply. Bores are low yielding (1500-5500L/hr) with a depth range between 40m-60m. Water quality is adequate for livestock use and likely to be in the range of 4000-6000ppm of dissolved salts⁶ and near the limit for most grazing animals. Normal practice is to pump from the bore by windmill to an elevated storage tank and reticulate to paddock troughs.

Catchment dams can be constructed for water collection and storage but are an unreliable water source due to drying out over summer.

2.5 Land use patterns

The property is currently used for the grazing of beef cattle. The grazing enterprise comprises a Hereford beef herd of 70 breeding cows. Calving commences in February with sale of all progeny as store weaners within 12 months. Herd replacements are purchased. This number of cattle translates to a stocking rate of approximately 5 dse/ha. No fodder conservation is practiced due to the stony surface and feed is purchased in times of drought.

Productivity levels of the property are low due to soil and landform characteristics, volunteer pasture composition, low soil fertility and small farm size.

When the region was being professionally farmed, district practice was to increase pasture productivity through establishing perennial grass species where possible. Some crop production, mainly for livestock fodder and pasture improvement was conducted on the small areas of arable land. However, most professional farmers have moved to lower cost areas where land values are lower and better related to productivity. They can more easily achieve economies of scale and avoid the difficulties of farming in an urban environment.

With the loss of professional farmers to the district, the following changes have occurred:

- The fragmentation of land holdings that preclude the opportunity of farming under Best Management Practice;
- The lack of opportunity for the transfer of management and ownership to the younger generation.
- Urban based land ownership where farming experience and motivation to farm is lacking;
- Lowered levels of rural productivity through not being able to farm effectively.

3.0 LAND CAPABILITY

3.1 Land quality

Table 1 is a measure of land capability on an environmental feature basis. A 5-point scale is used where 1 is best and 5 worst.

⁶ Farm Management Handbook, Queensland Department of Primary Industry 1975

The table was originally developed by the Soil Conservation Authority to measure soil erosion impact but has been modified to measure agricultural land quality. It is closely aligned with the Land Unit classification used by Agriculture Victoria in their technical report “Assessment of Agricultural Land Capability in Melbourne’s Green Wedge and Peri-urban Areas”.

Table 1: Criteria and Performance Levels to Measure Agricultural Land Quality

Feature	Land Quality Classes *					Property
	1 Very High	2 High	3 Average	4 Poor	5 Very poor	
Length of growing season (months)	11 – 12	9 – 11	8 – 9	7 – 8	< 7	7– 8
Availability of supplementary water	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Slope %	0 – 5	3 – 6	6 – 12	12 – 20	20 – 30	3-6
Drainage	Good	Moderate - easily drained	Moderate - not easily drained	Poor	Very poor	Moderate - not easily drained
Soil	Friable loams	Friable loams	Clay Loams	Sands & clay	Sands & clay	Clay loam
Profile permeability	High	Moderate	Mod/low	Low	Low	Mod/low
Depth of friable soil	50 cm	20 - 30cm	10 - 25cm	5-10cm	< 5 cm	5-10cm
Soil fertility	High	Mod/high	Moderate	Low	Low	Mod/low
Depth to rock	1 m	1 - 0.5 m	0.5 m	0.5-0.1m	< 0.1 m	< 0.1 m
Erosion	Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very high	Low
Flooding frequency (years)	None	1 in 15	1 in 10	Annual	Annual	1 in 10
Arability	Excellent	Good	Moderate	Poor	Nil	Poor-nil
Overall land capability						4

3.2 Summary

The land capability for the property is estimated to be 4 or “Poor” with the main limitations being presence of rock, soil type, low arability and climate. Other characteristics that influence agricultural productive value include restricted water supply, small property size and urban location.

4.0 STRATEGIC AGRICULTURAL LAND

4.1 Objective

The DELWP study of protecting strategic agricultural land is based on identifying agricultural land of intensive and sustainable production within the Green Wedge and Peri-urban areas. Their main criteria include high quality soils, reliable rainfall, access to water and resilient to climate change. Mapping units have been produced that measure land capability across land within 100km of Melbourne. The classification method is a five class one, where one is best and five, worst. Strategic agricultural land is included up to Class three.

A further input is to consider agricultural production by commodity and to apply to those areas which are considered to have the most suitable conditions. Locations that are listed generally include those areas which currently undertake or have the potential to undertake, intensive soil-based agriculture.

4.2 Property Characteristics

The Epping Road property is not included as area of strategic agricultural land. There are two basic reasons for this assessment:

- 1 The property is not capable of being intensively cultivated because of high stone content, the lack of suitable soils and an environmental overlay protecting open woodland vegetation. Grazing is the only rural enterprise that can be conducted.
- 2 The climate shows a susceptibility to drought conditions. Mitigation measures are limited due to the difficulty of conserving fodder and the lack of any irrigation opportunity. Purchasing feed in times of drought imposes a high cost on the farming system.

There are several other considerations that act as constraints to the management and development of this property.

- 1 The property is a specialist grazing enterprise due to its climate, lack of arability and size. However, the level of productivity of the property is insufficient to support a sustainable and economic grazing enterprise such as beef production. It can only be operated as a part time farm which area cannot be increased due to its urban location and high land prices.

- 2 Residential development, particularly rural living cause land use conflicts between urban and rural. Normal farm practices that may involve dust, noise and odour are a cause for complaint while dumping of rubbish, theft and dog attacks on livestock impose a cost on farming activities.
- 3 The property lies within the Green Wedge Zone where the current planning controls do not effectively protect and support commercial farming. The Green Wedge Zone is a mixed use one which encourages uses incompatible with farming systems based on the management of natural resources.
- 4 Land owners are growing older and cannot provide the opportunity of inter-generational change. Farm management skills and experience are being lost, and retirement options are usually based on selling the property rather than its retention in agriculture.

5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The land capability for the property is considered to be 4 or “Poor” on a five class grading system. The main limitations are the presence of rock, lack of soil suitability, low arability and difficult climatic conditions. Other factors that limit agricultural productivity include limited water supply, small property size and urban location.

The DELWP study of protecting strategic agricultural land is based on identifying agricultural land of intensive and sustainable production within the Green Wedge and Peri-urban areas. The Epping Road property is not included as area of strategic agricultural land because of productivity constraints and lack of flexibility in use.

The property lies within the Green Wedge Zone where the current planning controls do not effectively protect and support farming systems based on natural resource management. The Green Wedge Zone is a mixed use one which encourages uses incompatible with farming systems based on the management of natural resources. A more flexible land use strategy is required in determining the future use of land.



R N Phillips
Phillips Agribusiness
20 April 2019