



Croskell PSP

Landscape Character
Assessment

December 2022

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Dense scrub with native trees in the background

Author

Spiire

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of the existing landscape character of the Croskell Precinct which abuts the already developed Cranbourne and Cranbourne East suburbs to the west and completed PSP’s of Cranbourne North, Thompsons Road and Cranbourne East.

The report identifies and describes landscape characteristics and views within the precinct. A key objective of the report is to provide recommendations as to how these features might be considered to ensure retention and integration into future development to preserve local identity and establish a strong sense of place.

Four landscape characters have been identified in the study area to provide a broad visual character assessment of the Croskell Precinct:

- Agriculture
- Water Bodies
- Remnant Vegetation
- Industrial

These character areas have been defined using a combination of onsite analysis and visual inspection by a Registered Landscape Architect combined with desk top review of data, site contours and aerial photography.

An evaluation of key viewing locations and view lines was undertaken to understand how the visual landscape character is viewed and experienced by residents both current and future, motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. Significant views were limited to those from the elevated Heritage House looking south and Linsell Blvd looking north over the existing water asset. It is noted that on a clear day, from the eastern portion of the site looking north you can see the outline of the Yarra Ranges in the distance although as you get closer to Thompsons Road these are obscured by the development to the north.

The Croskell Precinct is an infill piece to the greater Cranbourne growth area within the City of Casey and is bordered by the existing residential and commercial/industrial development to the north,

east, south and west. How this interface or ‘edge’ is treated will be an important consideration for the planning and urban design of this precinct, as is the integration of the significant easement within the framework of the development.

Opportunities and constraints were identified and considered in the development of recommendations along with local case studies that provide examples of successful retention and incorporation of existing landscape character features into urban development.

A number of objectives were developed to facilitate the retention and preservation of the landscape character of the Croskell Precinct. A series of recommendations have been developed for inclusion in the PSP to provide a means of achieving these objectives.

Key Objectives

1. Retain existing vegetation to preserve the landscape character of the site
2. Establish a sense of place by retaining and enhancing key features/characteristics of the landscape character types
3. Protect and enhance natural waterways and drainage corridors where applicable
4. Preserve, where possible, views to significant landmarks
5. Locate the open space network to preserve visual character features and provide linear connections
6. Retain significant buildings and visual character elements as place making opportunities
7. Create a complementary and sensitive interface to the adjacent existing landscape character



Existing mature tree and agricultural buildings

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide a Landscape Character Assessment to inform the Croskell Precinct Structure Plan.

The findings will promote a unified approach to landscape planning, design and management effectively linking recommendations for landscape character and visual amenity to existing planning policies, and influencing future planning policy and subsequent development.

This report provides an overview of the existing landscape and visual environment, and identifies and describes key landscape characteristics and views within the precinct.

The purpose of the assessment is to inform the preparation of the PSP by:

- Identifying key landscape and visual characteristics, and significant views within the precinct
- Recommending methods to avoid or minimise impact on significant landscape and visual features whilst accommodating future development, maintaining a high-quality landscape, and establishing a strong sense of place in an area of significant change.

Croskell specific considerations:

- Consider views within the PSP towards the hilltop and as well as views from the hilltop
- Provide recommendations on requirements to manage areas of steep slope (e.g. slope requirements in Pakenham East PSP and the Slope Management Guidelines).

The methodology used in the development of this report included:

- A site inspection and field analysis
- A photographic record
- An existing landscape conditions plans
- A site analysis and descriptions of landscape character
- Identification of key views and vantage points
- An opportunity and constraint assessment

Review of relevant local case studies which have successfully incorporated desired visual character elements into an urban context.

Recommendations for requirements and guidelines for inclusion into the PSP to achieve the objectives.

A number of assumptions and limitations are associated with this assessment. These include:

- The report is based on the information available for the project at the time of writing, June 2022.
- Baseline conditions were confirmed in the field during the site survey.

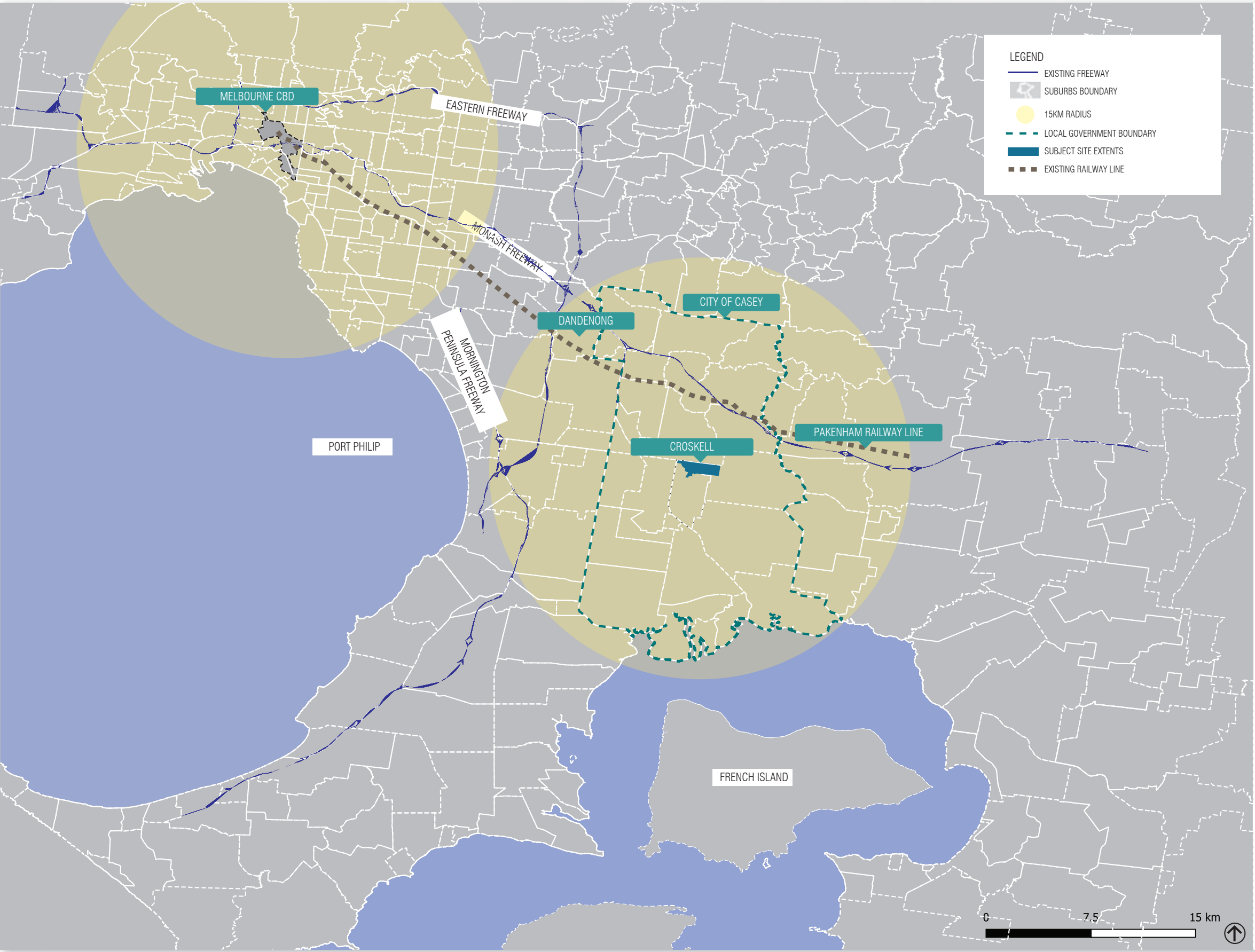
The assessment process aims to be objective and describe the landscape factually. Assessment requires qualitative (subjective) judgements to be made. The conclusions of this assessment therefore combine objective measurement and professional interpretation.



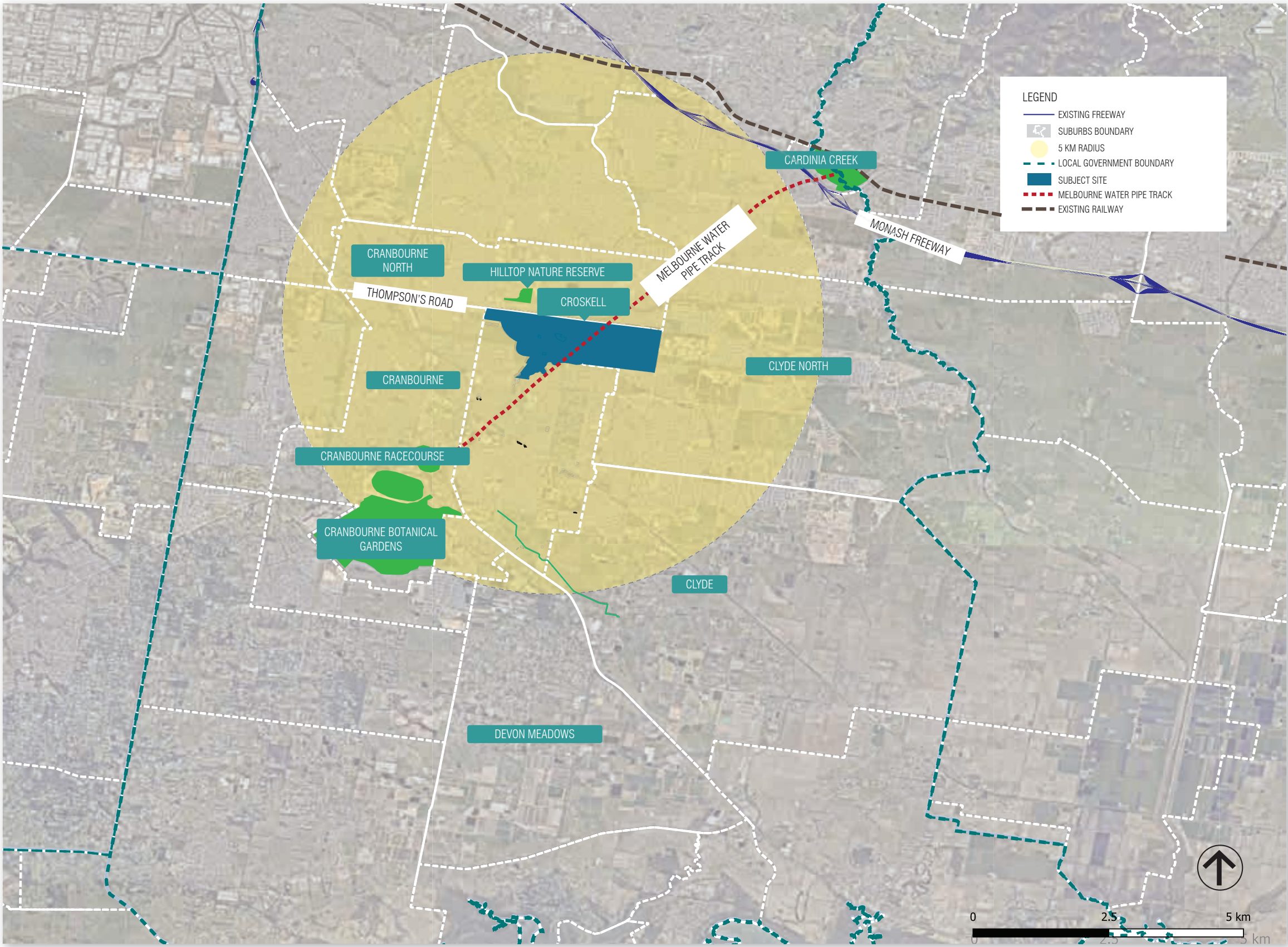
Existing mature tree row lining driveway

CONTEXT

Croskell sits 15km south east of Dandenong and 45km south east of Melbourne CBD within the City of Casey. The subject area is framed by major arterial roads to the east, north and west and residential connector streets to the south. The subject area is approximately 300 hectares.



Croskell is something of an infill precinct within the broader Cranbourne East suburb. Surrounding PSP's have already been gazetted and so Croskell will play a key role in tying the area together and facilitating connectivity across the locality.



METHODOLOGY

There is no formal or legislated guidance on the assessment of landscape character specific to Victoria.

Therefore this assessment has been compiled using techniques described in ‘Visual Landscape Planning in Western Australia: A manual for evaluation, assessment, siting and design’ and ‘Guidance Note for Landscape and Visual Assessment’ (AILA, June 2018).

Desktop Study

The desktop study included a review of relevant published documents in relation to landscape conditions and visual amenity at a state, regional and local level for the Study Area.

The following data sets were reviewed:

- Aerial photography
- Topographic maps with contours at 1m
- Road networks
- Cadastral
- Water courses
- Local Government Area (LGA) boundaries
- Adjacent Precinct Structure Plans including:
 - Thompsons Road PSP
 - Cranbourne East PSP
 - Cranbourne North (Stage 1 and 2) PSP

Site Survey

The site survey was undertaken over two days in May 2022. During the site survey, a Registered Landscape Architect viewed the Study Area from all accessible roads as well as traversing each of the landscape character areas on foot to verify, validate and complement the desktop analysis. Photographs were taken at key locations.

The site survey was undertaken to:

- Characterise the landscape
- Verify and ground truth the desktop study
- Photographically record the Study Area
- Assess opportunities and constraints to retaining landscape features
- Record landscape areas and / or views / view corridors of value to the area, and;
- Observe and document how the landscape may be viewed.

Defining the Landscape Character Units

Landscape Character Units (LCUs) form the basis for describing the landscape character of the Study Area. LCUs are considered to be common landscape types defined by typical features and characteristics.

LCU's were identified through a study of key landscape character elements including landform, water form, vegetation and land use, as well as a field survey. Landscape categorisation was also informed by a review of information gathered during the desktop study and the site survey.

SELECTION OF VIEWPOINTS

Key viewpoint locations were identified, recorded and photographed. Viewpoints were chosen to represent a range of typical views possible from that locality. In addition, the viewpoints were selected to:

- Represent views of particular landscape and /or visual feature/s of importance, and;
- Represent views from key visual receptors (existing residents, community facilities and road users).

Relevant Case Studies

Several relevant local case studies were reviewed and summarised that demonstrate incorporation of desired landscape character elements within an urban context.

Establishment of Image and Character Objectives

Image and character objectives, which relate to the identified landscape character and are informed by the issues/opportunities, will be established. These objectives will describe the desired outcome to be achieved once the site is developed.

Recommendations

Recommendations for inclusion in the PSP have been developed to achieve the objectives based on the following:

- Site analysis
- The opportunities and constraints identified
- Analysis of GIS data including site contours and aerial photography
- Review of both State and Local Government Strategic Plans and Policies

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Overview

The following section provides an overview of the existing conditions within the Study Area including: land use, land form, recreation facilities, potential cultural heritage, vegetation, geology, hydrology, slope, views and landscape character.

Land Use

The site is predominately rural comprising agricultural land, mainly for grazing and food production with small pockets of industrial land use, namely an abattoir, an old quarry and concrete batching plant. The land to the north is currently commercial/residential. The land to the east is developed and/or developing industrial and residential. The land to the south and west is developed residential.

Vegetation

Vegetation within the site is scattered and inconsistent. There are large plantings of generally low quality *Pinus radiata* trees with an understory of Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) around the west and south of the abattoir site which also has some dense native planting to its northern boundary. The former mine site provides the most concentrated collection of trees and is scattered predominantly with Eucalypt species and other indigenous trees with some blackberry growth along the eastern edge. To the south there is a large massing of *Leptospermum* sp. with interspersed mature Eucalypts. Windrows around paddocks consist a mix of Eucalypts and Melaleuca sp. and there are examples of other planted native and exotic trees close to residential buildings. There are numerous large trees worthy of retention where possible (refer to Arborist Report). These are generally spread across the site and consist of both native and exotic species.

Water Form

There is a water body to the south west corner that is an extension of wetlands from the development to the south. This connects to a drain through the site on a north-east alignment to connect with the development to the north. Some large dams also represent significant water bodies.



Market gardens at Springmont Farm, 1450 Thompsons Road



Chicken sheds, 1580 Thompsons Road



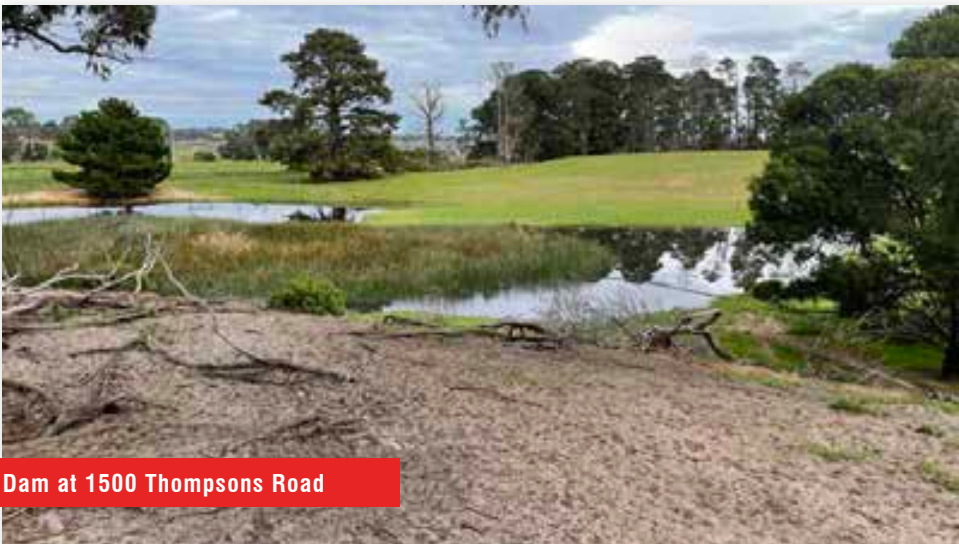
Pine tree buffer at 1500 Thompsons Road



Mature Eucalypts, 585S Berwick-Cranbourne Road



View of existing wetland from Linsell Blvd looking north



Dam at 1500 Thompsons Road

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Topography

The site generally falls from the north to the south. The northwest corner is particularly elevated. The central northern section is elevated through man made excavation and stockpiling of cut material with loose materials forming large berms, bunds and rises. On some of these landforms, trees have established to maturity. Large sections of the east and southern portions are relatively flat with modest fall to the south.

Vertical Elements

Large overhead powerlines dominate the site and are continuous from east to west. Tree lined windrows and groupings around the industrial areas also represent significant vertical elements, particularly the large pine tree buffer around the abattoir site.

Easements

Significant easements impact the future development potential of the site and will inform the future character. Most notably there is an east-west easement in the southern portion of the site that contains both overhead electricity and a sub-surface high voltage power line to the Victorian Desalination Plant. There is also a Melbourne Water underground sewer alignment that runs diagonally through the middle of the site.



Man-made landform: Cut from quarry site



Man-made landform: Batching plant



Existing overhead powerlines run the entire length of the site



Pine tree buffer to abattoir site



East-west electrical easement



North-south water pipetrack easement

Figure 1: Site Analysis Plan

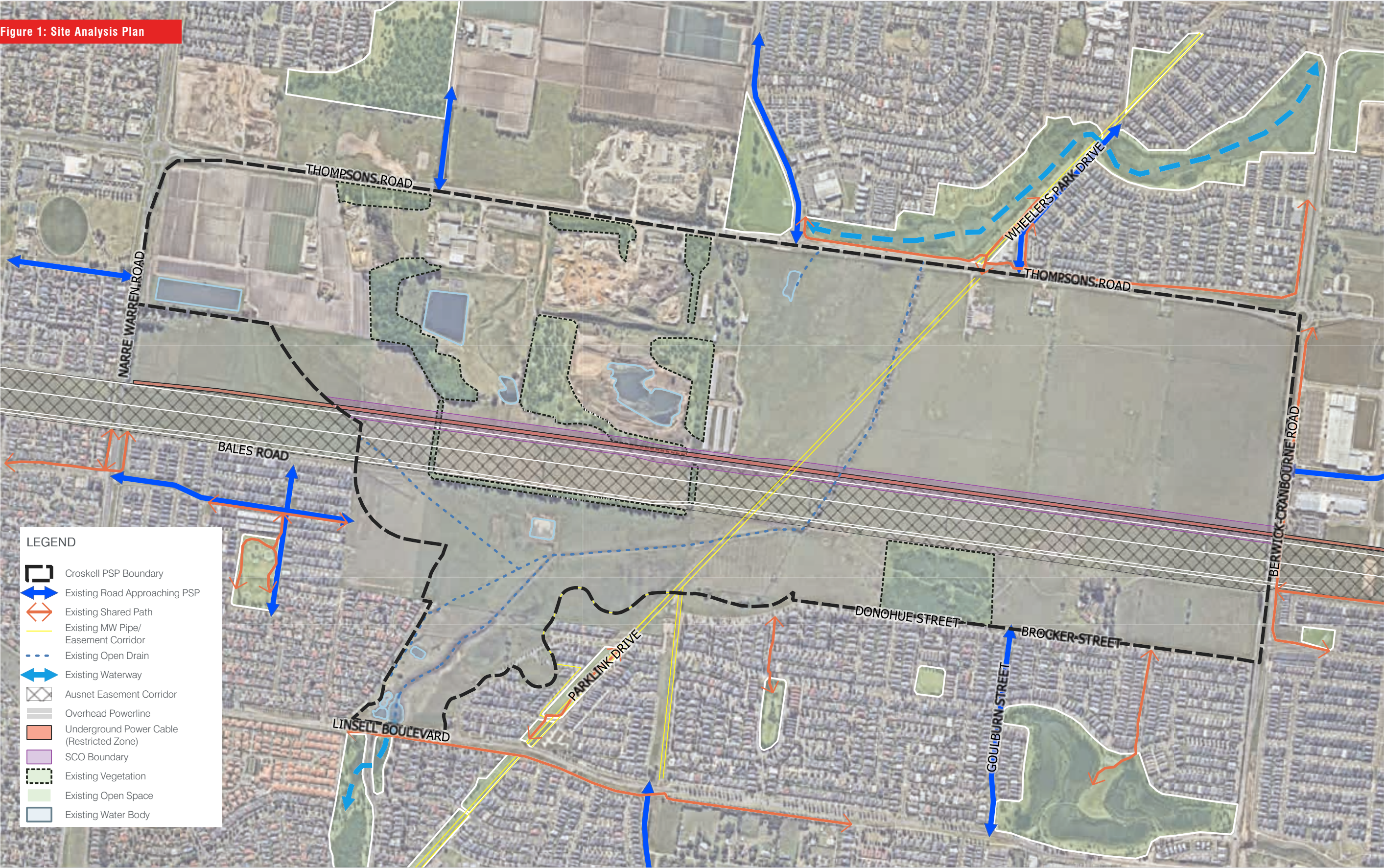


Figure 2: Topography Plan

