

Delivering Melbourne's Newest Sustainable Communities



Submission on behalf of the Shire of Melton
July 2009

1. General Comments

- Council supports the long-term, integrated approach to growth area planning by the State Government.
- In its February 2009 submission, Council sought to have the Investigation Area for the review expanded to include the Plumpton-Diggers Rest corridor and the areas identified for future development in the Melton Township Strategy Plan. Council is disappointed that the investigation area hasn't been expanded to include these areas, and urges the State Government to consider the potential for urban development in these areas as part of the finalisation of the UGB.
- Council generally supports most of the broader elements of the announcements, with some localised issues outlined in further detail in our submission. This support is given in the context that the planning for committed growth areas is appropriately recognised. In particular, Toolern as the Shire's largest designated growth area must be given the opportunity to establish itself in the corridor before new competing growth fronts are opened up, noting that it provides a range of employment and residential opportunities that are unique to the corridor.
- The State Government is encouraged to work co-operatively with local government in the preparation of Growth Area Framework Plans, to ensure resolution of a range of issues identified within Council's submission.
- Council acknowledges that the current suite of announcements does not seek feedback on the proposed introduction of the Growth Area Infrastructure Contribution (GAIC). Council would, however, like to voice its objection to the contribution in its current form. In Council's view, the ultimate developer of the land should be responsible for the payment of the Growth Area Infrastructure Contribution, and it should be payable upon development of the land.
- Council is wary of the impacts of social dislocation, which may result from the acquisition of lots and houses. This must be treated with fairness and compassion, and support provided to council and the community to deal with the ramifications.

2. Areas of Support

2.1 Melton Rail Line urban growth focus:

The major focus on maximising urban growth opportunities in the Melton Rail Line corridor is a strong and positive outcome of the UGB review. Not only will this maximise the opportunities for achieving 'transit oriented development' for new communities, it will provide the opportunity to significantly improve the access and quality of public transport services for existing communities. Urban development along the Melton Rail Line was identified by Council as one of its key priority outcomes in its February 2009 submission to the UGB review.

The focus on the rail line for future urban growth in the corridor reaffirms the State Government's commitment in the *Victorian Transport Plan* (VTP) to significantly upgrade services on the Melton Rail Line, including:

- the construction of a new rail station at Caroline Springs;
- doubling the number of services on the Melton Rail Line following the Sydenham-Sunbury electrification;
- progressive duplication and the construction of additional stations to service new development; and
- the ultimate electrification of the rail line to Melton.

Opening up areas for new urban development along the Melton Rail Line underlines the importance of the State Government delivering on its strong commitment to major upgrades to the line outlined in the VTP. Improvements to the rail line to allow it to appropriately service new growth as it occurs will help influence modal choice in newly forming households, and will ensure that State Government strategies around achieving an appropriate mix of dwelling densities in growth areas can be achieved.

2.2 Diggers Rest Township – Contained Growth:

The proposed UGB for Melbourne North (Sunbury) provides for the limited western expansion of Diggers Rest township, to allow the settlement to grow to around 3,000 households. At around 800 households currently, Diggers Rest does not have sufficient catchment to support a broader range of neighbourhood-order infrastructure and services, and accordingly current services are limited (particularly commercial and retail services).

The proposed limited growth of the township will ensure that Diggers Rest can attain the critical mass required to support these services, and makes better use of the Government's investment commitment to the extension of the metropolitan electrified rail services from Sydenham to Sunbury. When combined with the growth of Sunbury within the City of Hume (and the corresponding provision of regional service and employment opportunities), this growth represents a very positive planning outcome for the existing Diggers Rest community.

2.3 Toolern and Kororoit Creek Regional Parks:

The proposed UGB changes enhance the opportunities for the development of two major recreational and environmental assets – the Toolern Creek and Kororoit Creek Regional Parks. Parks Victoria has identified both parks as metropolitan priorities as part of its *Linking People and Spaces (2002)* strategy.

Planning for the Toolern Creek Regional Park is already well advanced, with Parks Victoria currently seeking public comments on the draft master plan for the park. The Toolern Creek Regional Park is intended to be a major recreational asset servicing the entire Melton Township region, and is an integral component of the Toolern Precinct Structure Plan. However planning for the park and its relationship to adjacent urban development has been hampered by an anomaly with the UGB at Toolern, whereby half the park and an area of adjacent potential urban development were outside the UGB. This anomaly is proposed to be addressed as part of the revised UGB.

The Kororoit Creek Regional Park is a planned regional park to service the Eastern Corridor community. Although planning for the park is not as progressed as that for Toolern Creek, the potential site has long been identified to the west of Caroline Springs, south of the Kororoit Creek. The importance of securing this site and establishing the park has been increased given the proposed inclusion of the site within the UGB, and the anticipated significant growth in the population of the Eastern Corridor community. Council is keen to work proactively with Parks Victoria to determine to exact location and boundaries of the park, and to scope out a process moving forward towards its establishment.

2.4 Strategic Management of Native Vegetation:

A particularly commendable component of the announcement has been the strategic approach that has been taken with regard to planning for the conservation and offset of native vegetation in growth areas. In the past there have been many instances of strategically important urban outcomes having been compromised because of the presence of native vegetation. Similarly, important vegetation has been lost or damaged, even when protected as part of a conservation reserve, because of the incompatibility of urban uses and some forms of native vegetation.

Whilst there are a number of issues associated with the proposed grassland reserves (in particular, regarding the proposed boundaries, acquisition process and ongoing management), preserving these sites for their biodiversity value and as a location for vegetation offsets within the new urban area is a sensible approach. It will provide greater certainty to the market in terms of the development potential of land, and will ensure that important planned outcomes for new growth areas can be achieved.

2.5 Plan for “Generational” Transport Infrastructure:

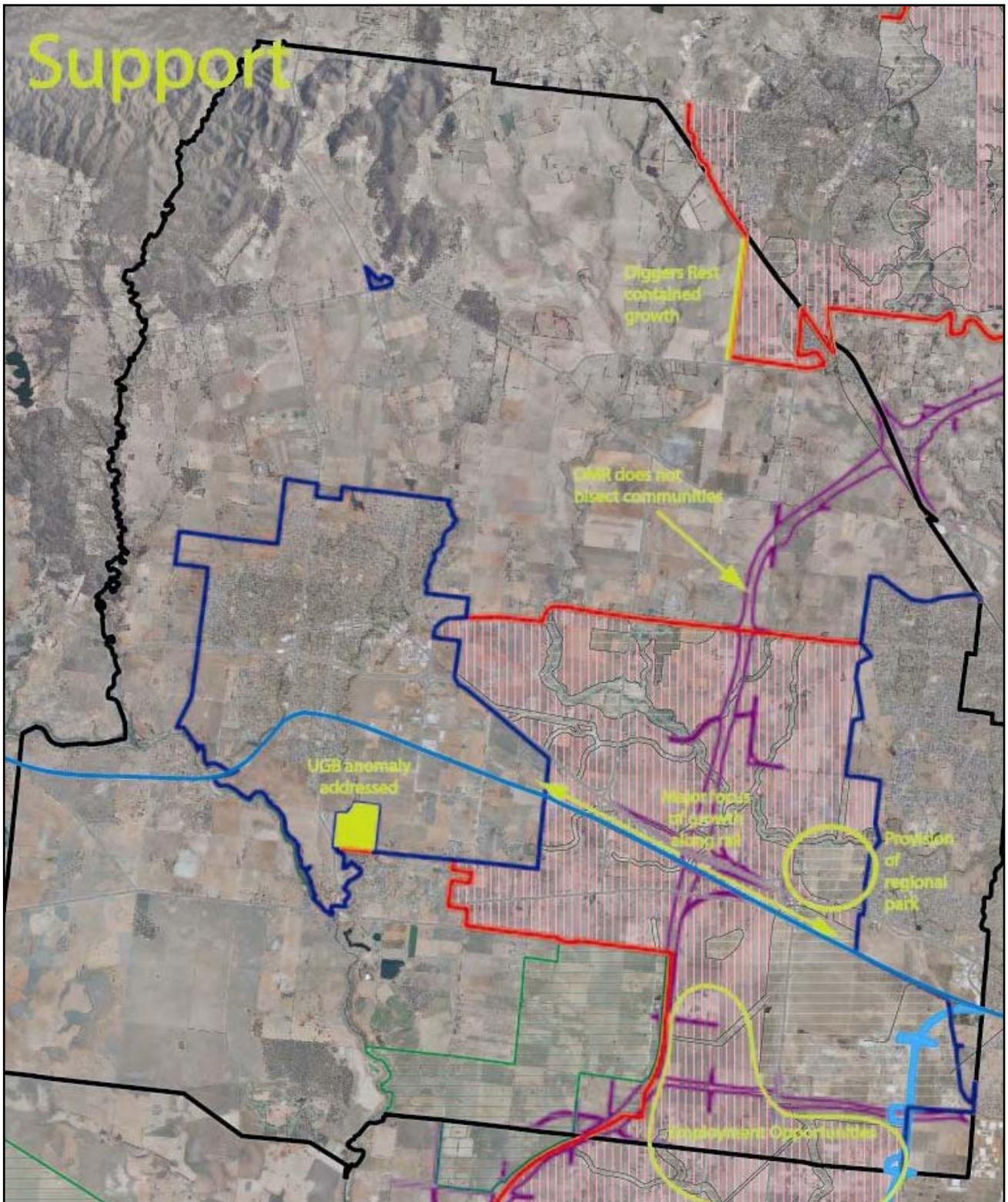
With the announcement of proposed major changes to the UGB, the protection of important biodiversity sites as a conservation resource and a tool for better management of urban offsets, the identification and protection of the alignment for the proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring (OMR) transport corridor, and the planning and investment commitments to the delivery of the Regional Rail Link, the State Government has clearly taken a long term, strategic approach to managing the growth of metropolitan Melbourne. This should be commended.

In particular, the planning for the OMR represents a strong strategic outcome. Melton Shire Council has long supported the concept of the OMR, as a means of better connecting the entire north-west region of Melbourne – the region expected to deliver the bulk of Melbourne's growth over the next 30 plus years. The OMR should lead to stronger investment in the north-west of Melbourne, and greater integration of the economies across the region, leading to greater provision of local employment opportunities and a lower reliance upon central Melbourne.

The proposed OMR alignment itself provides for the orderly growth of both Melton Township and the Eastern Corridor. Whilst the revised UGB would involve the connection of these two communities through a continuous urban corridor, the OMR is likely to create a significant barrier between these communities. However the location of the alignment centrally between Melton Township and the Eastern Corridor will allow each community to grow in an orderly and sustainable way.

Notwithstanding these strengths, the detailed design for the OMR must ensure that east-west connections between the two growing communities are enhanced. In addition, there are a range of localised impacts that the OMR alignment is likely to have (as outlined later in Council's submission) that should be investigated to determine whether there are alignment variation options that may minimise these impacts.

Figure 1: Areas of Support



3. Specific Issues

3.1 Urban Growth Boundary

3.1.1 “Strathtulloh” estate, Mount Cottrell Road

The proposed UGB would see the inclusion of a small number of lots to the west of Mount Cottrell Road and north of Greigs Road – part of the ‘Strathtulloh’ rural residential estate. In Councils view this represents a problematic boundary, as conventional urban development in this location will be physically separated from other urban development to the east (given the future arterial road status of Mount Cottrell Road). The small number of blocks are likely to yield a minimal amount of residential lots, and the yield is likely to be significantly less when density graduation/interface issues are taken into account. In fact, the inclusion of these blocks within the UGB would seem to be at odds with *Section 5.3 – Locating the Urban Growth Boundary*, which states “exclude land west of Mount Cottrell Road that comprises low density residential lots from the urban growth area”.

If these blocks are to remain within the UGB, Council recommends that the full band of lots along the western side of Mount Cottrell Road be included within the UGB to provide the opportunity of a flexible design response and more orderly boundary as part of the future preparation of a PSP.

Recommendation: That the proposed UGB is reviewed to respond to the issues outlined above.

3.1.2 Melton North UGB Anomaly – Coburns Road.

When the UGB was revised following the recommendations of the Melton-Caroline Springs Smart Growth Committee in November 2005, approximately 100ha of land either side of Coburns Road and south of Minns Road was included in the north of Melton township. This land was included to provide a more logical urban/rural boundary and to provide for the development of commercial and community facilities to service existing and future residents in the area. One property, at 530-568 Coburns Road was excluded, as it was deemed to have locally significant vegetation.

It is Councils view that the current UGB at Melton North represents an anomalous situation, based upon incorrect/incomplete information at the time the UGB was last reviewed in 2005. Council concedes that the land is outside the investigation area for the current UGB review, and that the current review is not intended to address UGB anomalies, as anomalies with the UGB were considered as part of a comprehensive anomaly review in 2002/03 (as outlined in the *Summary and Response to Submissions* report, page 99). However the Melton North anomaly was not considered as part of that process, as the anomaly was only created as part of the broader UGB review in 2005. This anomaly should be addressed as part of the current UGB review.

Recommendation: That the UGB at Melton North be extended to Minns Road to include the property at 530-568 Coburns Road.

3.1.3 *Land north of Melton Hwy – Excluded from UGB*

A significant tract of land north of the Melton Highway that formed part of the investigation area has been excluded from the proposed UGB. The report outlines that this is because of the presence of Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay (MAEO) and the need to maintain a buffer from an existing extractive industry.

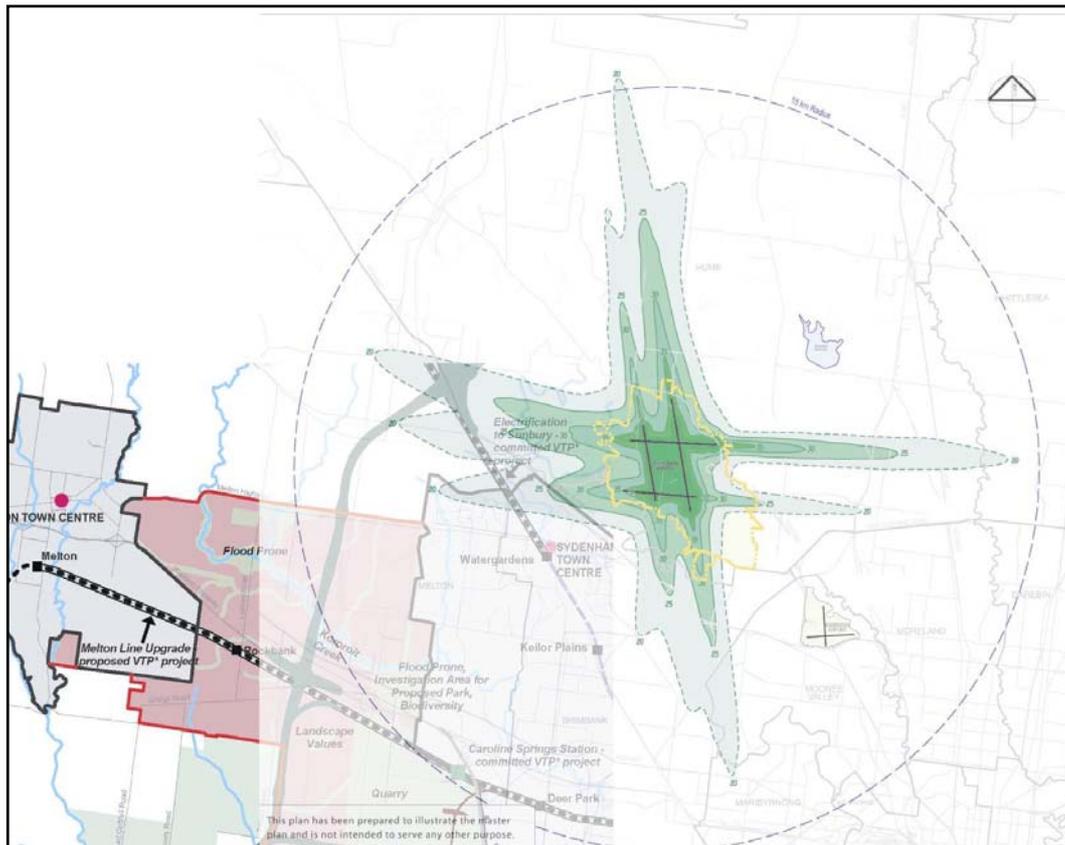
Council understands that the Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay is likely to be reviewed shortly, based upon the noise forecasts established in the 2008 Melbourne Airport Master Plan. If so, the revision would remove the overlay from a large part of the investigation area, north of the Melton Highway. This would effectively remove any land use constraints from the land.

Given the likely removal of the MAEO, the capacity to establish a functional neighbourhood north of the Melton Highway, and the current designation of the Melton Highway as forming part of the ultimate Principle Public Transport Network (PPTN), the exclusion of that part of the investigation area north of the Melton Highway seems inappropriate. Development north of the Melton Highway would provide additional catchment for future trunk public transport services, and potentially help deliver these services sooner.

An appropriate interface with rural areas to the north could still be achieved without relying upon the Melton Highway to create that boundary. As part of the development of a Precinct Structure Plan for the area, an appropriate interface treatment (be it a road or some alternative form of interface) can be determined.

Recommendation: That the proposed UGB is reviewed at Plumpton, north of the Melton Hwy, in light of the likely removal of the MAEO from this land.

Figure 2: 2008 Aircraft Noise Exposure Forecast – Melbourne Airport



3.1.4 Plumpton – Public Transport Provision

The proposed UGB for the Melton-Caroline Springs corridor includes a major expanse of land generally extending from the Eastern Corridor of Melton Shire west to Melton Township. A significant proportion of this corridor has the potential to be well serviced by the Melton Rail Line and the Western Highway. However the northern part of the corridor, the area generally referred to as Plumpton (between the Melton Highway and the Kororoit Creek), is remote from both the Melton and Sydenham/Sunbury Rail Lines.

The Outer Metropolitan Ring transport corridor makes provision for passenger rail services within the reservation, however it is not clear whether these rail services will be available to suburban commuter movements or whether they will be only high speed, regional rail movements. Nor is there any real direction around the timing for delivery of such services. In the event that these services are not able to provide for suburban commuter movements, most of Plumpton will be significantly beyond the 3km catchment for existing or planned public transport services (identified on page 17 of the report as a guiding principle for locating the UGB).

DMNSC highlights the need to identify the most appropriate and effective public transport routes between the Melton Hwy and the Western Freeway as

part of the preparation of the Growth Area Framework Plan, and Council agrees that this is critically important. However Council also considers that a broader review of public transport provision in the Plumpton area will need to occur as part of the GAFP, given its relative isolation from fixed rail services. This review should include:

- An assessment of the high-capacity public transport service requirements within the corridor (including the degree to which these can realistically be delivered through OMR-rail services and a review of the status of the proposed Melton Hwy PPTN route); and
- An assessment of the future capacity of committed transport infrastructure (including the Melton and Sunbury Railway lines) to determine whether local services from Plumpton will be able to appropriately feed into these services.

Given the distance of most of Plumpton from existing or planned high-capacity transport services, it is considered critical that high quality public transport connections to the Melton and Sunbury Rail Lines be provided from the very first stages of any future development in this area.

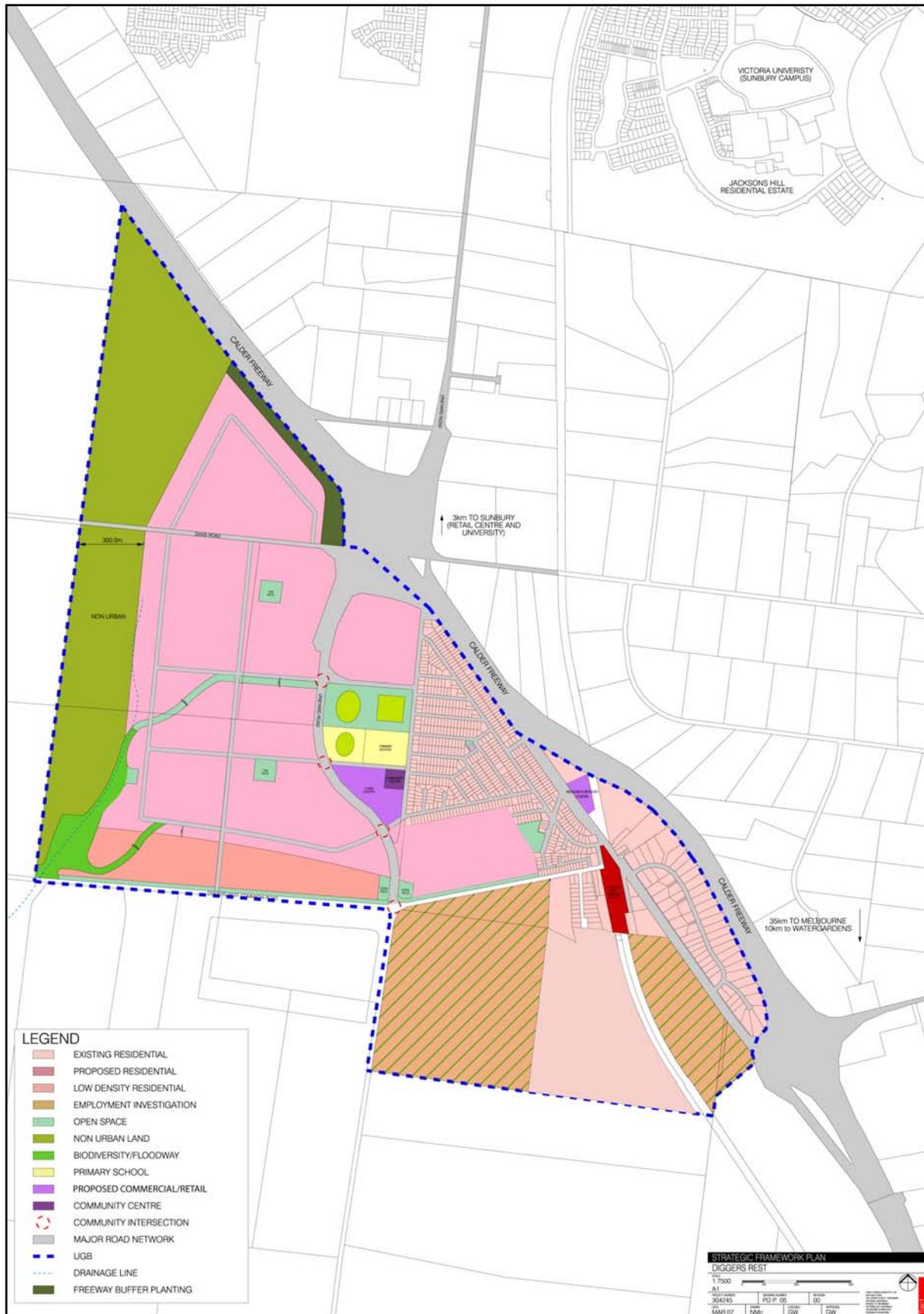
3.1.5 Existing Diggers Rest township:

As outlined above, Council is very supportive of the proposed expansion of the UGB at Diggers Rest, to provide for the contained growth of the township to a size of around 3,000 households. This is consistent with a long-standing strategy of Council to ensure that Diggers Rest is allowed to grow to a point where it can sustain a broader range of neighbourhood-order services and infrastructure. It also provides the opportunity to make better use of the State Government's investment in the Sunbury Rail Line electrification project, as it will provide for significant population growth within the catchment of an existing train station.

The UGB as proposed, however, would exclude the existing Diggers Rest township. Council assumes that this is just an oversight or a mapping error, however it will need to be rectified when the final UGB is introduced to allow an integrated plan for development and consolidation of the township to be established. In addition, Council urges the State Government to reconsider the potential for employment-focused development south of Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road, as indicated in the Diggers Rest Strategic Framework Plan

Recommendation – That the proposed UGB at Diggers Rest is revised to include the existing township.

Figure 3: Diggers Rest Strategic Framework Plan



3.1.6 Warrensbrook Fair Tourist Precinct

Over a number of years, Council has proactively encouraged the development of the Warrensbrook Fair precinct as a hub of tourism and agribusiness development. This has been met with some success, and the area has developed to include a number of wineries and function facilities. The wineries have been able to consolidate their position and protect their ongoing water supply following the construction of a C Class recycled water pipeline from the Sunbury Treatment Plant that passes through the area (Western Water advise that the wineries are amongst the biggest customers serviced by this infrastructure).

Whilst the *Melbourne West – Land Use and Transport Initiatives Map* shows the land as significantly constrained, it appears as though the area is still to be included within the UGB. In Council's view, inclusion within the UGB is likely to ultimately lead to pressure for transition to urban uses in the longer term. The current and potential future tourism uses are generally consistent with the Green Wedge Zone, and therefore the continued use of the land for this purpose is not threatened in the event that the land remains outside the UGB. Therefore, to preserve this important economic resource in the Shire, it is recommended that Warrensbrook Fair be excluded from the UGB.

Recommendation: The Warrensbrook Fair tourist precinct is excluded from the proposed UGB.

3.1.7 Troops Road South – east of OMR

A small triangular pocket of land, extending across two properties, between Troops Road South and the OMR is excluded from the UGB. Whilst the balance of this property is west of the proposed OMR alignment, the eastern triangle will be effectively severed once land is acquired for the OMR, leading to an isolated pocket of rural land surrounded by urban development. This land should be included within the UGB.

Recommendation: The proposed UGB is revised to include the land east of the proposed OMR at 820-852 Troops Road South, Mount Cottrell.

3.1.8 Constrained Land:

The *Melbourne West – Land Use and Transport Initiatives Map* shows a number of tributaries of the Kororoit Creek as being significantly constrained land. These sites haven't been identified as being potentially subject to inundation in a recent review from Melbourne Water, and perhaps need to be more rigorously assessed before they can be categorically ruled out as having development potential. This assessment should occur as part of the preparation of the revised Growth Area Framework Plan.

3.2 *Grassland Reserve*

As outlined earlier, Council is generally supportive of the concept of creating a native grassland reserve for ongoing conservation and to provide greater certainty for development potential within the UGB. There are, however, a number of issues that Council would like to see resolved, in relation to the boundaries of the reserve, and its ongoing management. These issues include:

3.2.1 *Grassland Reserve Boundary*

The proposed grassland reserve excludes a large pocket of land south of Middle Road, east of Downing St, and west of the proposed OMR. This is the only pocket in the vicinity that is not either within the proposed UGB or within the grassland reserve. The physical isolation of this land is likely to cause issues, and may further marginalise the continuation of agricultural/rural uses on the land. Council submits that the State Government should consider consolidating this land into the grassland reserve.

3.2.2 *Grassland reserve connection along Werribee River –*

As the Melton and Wyndham grassland reserves are only approximately 2km apart, an opportunity exists to connect the two via the Werribee River. Public acquisition of a relatively narrow strip (around 100m) would enable a habitat and recreation corridor to extend along a good portion of the Werribee River.

3.2.3 *Land Management Incentive Schemes.*

The proposed public acquisition of land for the grassland reserves is likely to cause land management issues prior to public acquisition (whilst the land is still in private ownership). Given the lag time between designation of land for the grassland reserves and the actual acquisition, the State Government should consider an appropriate range of incentive schemes/programs for private landowners to ensure that the land is appropriately managed until such time as it is publicly acquired. In addition, it is recommended that the State Government consider the impact of the grassland reserves on the private native vegetation offset market, and any potential incentive programs for ongoing land management outside the grassland reserve.

3.2.4 *Fire management:*

Council officers have held preliminary discussions with the CFA around the management of fire risks associated with the native grassland reserve. The CFA are keen to ensure that the need to mitigate against wild fire risk through the reserves is a major component of any management plan. Council would be keen to work co-operatively with officers of the CFA and DSE to address this concern.

3.3 Outer Metropolitan Ring

As outlined earlier, Council is generally supportive of the proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring transport corridor, particular in relation to the growth opportunities it presents to both Melton Township and the Eastern Corridor. Council sees the OMR as a strategically important piece of infrastructure, that will lead to the stronger integration of the north-west region of Melbourne, and ultimately reduce its dependence upon central Melbourne for employment.

There are however a range of specific issues regarding the alignment that require review, including:

3.3.1 Chartwell Estate:

The Chartwell Estate on Boundary Road is a small closer settlement of around 15-20 houses. The proposed alignment has a major impact upon this settlement, and would effectively see its complete destruction. This is likely to have significant social implications. Whilst Council appreciates that there are significant engineering constraints associated with the alignment of the OMR, the impact of this outcome should not be underestimated, and Council would urge VicRoads to explore whether there are alignment options which might see the OMR avoid Chartwell.

3.3.2 Detailed Design – Interchanges

Planning for the OMR has involved a detailed assessment of future interchange locations and designs. Council seeks to ensure that the ultimate location and design of interchanges on the OMR remains flexible. Through the preparation of the Growth Area Framework Plans and the Precinct Structure Plans, a range of desired land use and development outcomes will be explored, which may require revision or refinement of the ultimate interchange designs. If this flexibility is not maintained, it may lead to compromised planning outcomes.

In addition, Council has identified a number of instances where the detailed design for the OMR will lead to potentially damaging outcomes. The impact of the proposed interchange of the OMR with the Calder Freeway on the existing Diggers Rest interchange will have major impacts upon that community, particularly in light of the likely expansion of the township. Council would look to work with VicRoads to identify potential solutions to these issues as part of future detailed planning.

3.3.3 Other OMR alignment impacts

In addition to the Chartwell Estate discussed above, there are a number of rural properties along the entire length of the proposed alignment through the Shire that would be negatively affected were the alignment approved in its current form. This is particularly true in the north-eastern part of the Shire,

south of Diggers Rest. The ultimate alignment should seek to minimise the social impact of the transport corridor, and any unnecessary impact on private, occupied land should be avoided. Council asks that VicRoads, within the constraints posed by the engineering requirements of the corridor, revisits the alignment to determine whether some of these impacts can be avoided. Council officers would happily work with VicRoads to identify impacts and explore alternative alignment options.

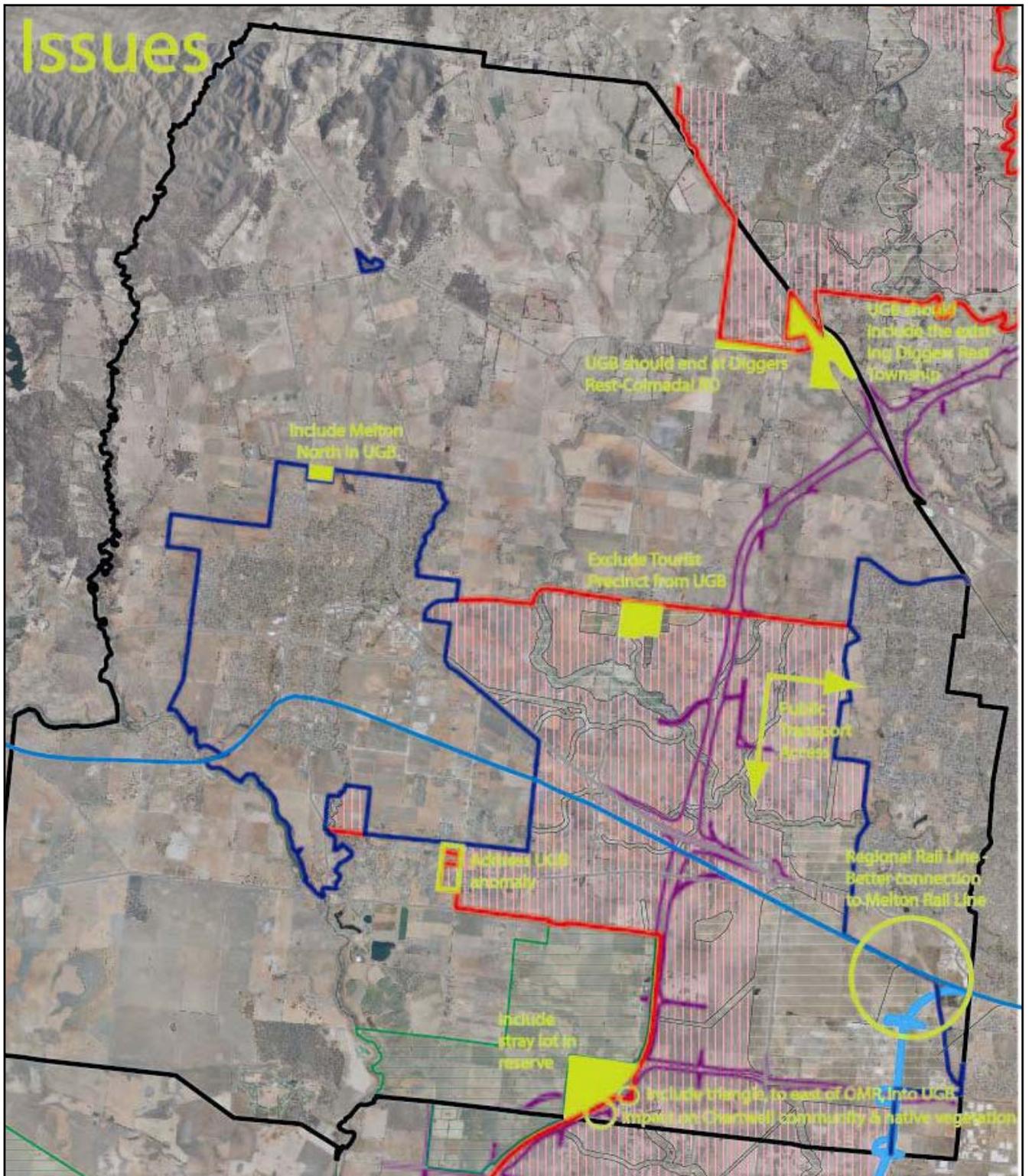
Recommendation: That VicRoads review alignment options for the OMR to determine whether impacts on existing communities (in particular Chartwell and the rural community south of Diggers Rest) can be avoided.

3.4 Regional Rail Link

- The proposed Regional Rail Line alignment would not provide the opportunity for an effective interchange at the future Caroline Springs train station. The RRL will pass through an employment precinct of state significance, and providing opportunities to connect growth areas such as the Melton-Caroline Springs corridor to major employment precincts is critically important. Some of the other options considered as part of the alignment options for the rail line intersect with the Melton line further west, thereby providing an opportunity for a Caroline Springs interchange. These options represent Council's preferred alignment for the rail line.

- In the event that a western alignment for the Regional Rail Link cannot be achieved, the opportunity to establish a western branch line connection between the RRL and the Melton Rail Line should be explored. This would provide the opportunity to directly connect via heavy rail services the two growth areas of Wyndham and Melton-Caroline Springs to the state significant employment node at Truganina, and reduce pressure on radial rail movements into the CBD to access employment.

Figure 4: Areas of Concern



4. Development Staging

With the broad scale of the proposed changes to the UGB within the Shire of Melton, there will be pressure to allow urban development to occur on a number of different fronts. Council sees opportunities to support multiple growth fronts, given the fact that different areas are likely to partly service different markets, and there are a number of localised positive planning outcomes that early growth will deliver. However there are a range of particular outcomes that Council has identified as priorities, and the development of a staging program as part of the Growth Area Framework Plan should complement these priorities.

4.1 Diggers Rest Township:

Diggers Rest should form part of the first stage of development following the revision to the UGB. The limited growth of Diggers Rest township is about delivering a range of neighbourhood-order services and infrastructure. Early growth will ensure that these services are delivered promptly for the existing community. There are limited constraints to development, and planning for the growth of Diggers Rest is already well advanced (through the preparation of the Diggers Rest Strategic Framework Plan, and given the fact that there are only a limited number of landowners within the proposed UGB). In addition, given the proposed timing for the Sunbury Rail Line electrification project (2012), early growth at Diggers Rest will be able to take advantage of higher frequency electrified rail services.

4.2 Melton-Caroline Springs Corridor

With approximately 8,000ha of developable land earmarked within the Melton-Caroline Springs corridor, in addition to the 2,500ha or so included within the UGB in 2005, there are likely to be a range of potentially competing pressures for early development within the corridor. Council and the GAA have significantly progressed the preparation of Precinct Structure Plans for the Toolern, Melton North and Taylors Hill West areas, with formal exhibition on each anticipated to commence over the next couple of months. All three of these need to be protected as short term growth priorities.

4.3 Toolern Growth Area

In Council's view, Melton Township has greater short-medium term capacity to service growth (with existing and planned regional infrastructure and services such as rail, super-clinic, significant retail, regional sporting facilities, TAFE etc). In addition, the vision of the Toolern PSP is largely predicated on the early delivery of key projects such as the rail station and the first stages of the Major Activity Centre, to ensure that development at Toolern can occur following T.O.D. principles.

Toolern must be allowed to have 'significantly developed' (residential development commenced on two fronts / MAC development commenced / rail station delivery committed and plans approved) before major new land parcels are made available for development, particularly land in the east of the

municipality. This will reinforce the importance of integrated land use and transport planning, allow the Department of Transport to better target investment in upgrades to the Melton Rail Line, and ensure a greater net community benefit than would be otherwise achievable.

In addition, it will also give Council greater certainty in moving forward with the process of entering into a joint venture with a development partner for its 380ha of land at Toolern. Council has recently resolved engage the services of a property advisor to help manage the process of engaging a joint venture partner.

Council supports the concept of multiple growth fronts, as a means of providing choice for households and stimulating demand across the Shire. However care needs to be exercised to ensure that the early availability of land within the revised UGB does not undermine investment in committed growth areas, nor compromise the provision of early infrastructure critical to their successful development.

4.4 Plumpton – Public Transport Provision

In Council's view, the future provision of high capacity public transport services in the Plumpton area remains a significant and unresolved issue that will influence the development potential of that land. Therefore, Council submits that land north of the Kororoit Creek should not be released for development until such time as plans have been established for the provision of high capacity/frequency public transport services, and the delivery of these services has been committed to by the Department of Transport. Given the likely strong pressure for development of this land following revisions to the UGB, the strategic review should be made an early priority, perhaps as part of the preparation of the revised Growth Area Framework Plan.

Figure 5: Development Staging

