

Mernda Town Centre North West Development Plan

The Development Plan was approved by the City of Whittlesea on 11 December 2012, in accordance with Clause 43.04 Schedule 15 of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme.

11/12/2012


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Signature of the Responsible Authority

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1435 Plenty Road, Mernda

Development Plan
North West Mernda Town Centre

Prepared by
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Prepared for
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December 2012

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1. Introduction

1.1 Development Overview

As part of a designated Major Activity Centre, 1435 Plenty Road presents an exciting opportunity to develop a key site within a rapidly expanding growth corridor of Metropolitan Melbourne. The centre is strategically located on the north west corner of Plenty Road and Bridge Inn Road, and opposite the heritage listed Bridge Inn Hotel and the Mechanics Institute.

Activity centres are a planning concept that seeks to concentrate a range of uses into a single area that are well served by public transport. They aim to be places where people can shop, live, work and recreate, in an inviting, engaging and aesthetically pleasing environment. This Development Plan sets out the framework how this can be realised at 1435 Plenty Road, Mernda, contributing to the achievement of this vision for the Mernda Town Centre.

An overriding ambition in the design process has been to connect the subject site with the town centre and to the local community surrounding the site. These connections form an important part of attracting the local community to this Activity Centre.

As the subject site will contribute to integrated living, business and lifestyle opportunities within Mernda Town Centre, it is the embodiment of the State Government's Melbourne 2030 and the subsequent Melbourne @ 5 Million strategic policies. It directly supports the Activity Centre Design Guidelines (Department of Sustainability and Environment, February 2005) and implements City of Whittlesea's planning scheme.

1.2 Purpose of Development Plan

This Development Plan provides a framework for the long term development of the land. It implements the objectives of state and local planning policy by providing broad parameters to guide use and development of the site into part of a future Major Activity Centre.

The North West Development Plan responds to, and is triggered by, the Development Plan Overlay (Schedule 16) (DPO16) that applies to the site. Table 1: 'Overlay Requirements' details the section of the Development Plan which addresses the requirements of this Overlay. Future planning applications for the site will be guided by this document.

Table 1. Overlay Requirements

| DPO16 Requirements | Development Plan Chapter |
|---|--------------------------|
| Application of the principles of the relevant incorporated plan | 4 |
| Co-ordination of different land ownerships | 3.6 |
| Local road network | 3 and 5.1 |
| A range of dwelling types including flats, units, terraced and semi-detached houses; | 3.0 |
| Topographic details | 2.2 |
| Location of pedestrian and bicycle access through residential areas; | 4.1 and 5.1 |
| Location and layout of non residential uses, including activity centres | 3.0 |
| A conceptual level landscape plan including the location and retention of existing vegetation | 3.4 and 5.3 |
| Identification of significant environmental and cultural features and measures to preserve and enhance these features | 5.0 |

Specifically, the Development Plan identifies:

- Land uses including commercial, retail, office and residential;
- Access, movement and parking arrangements;
- Urban design and built form principles;
- Proposed integration with surrounding sites; and
- Tree retention and landscape themes.

It is intended that Figure 5 - Development Plan, will be endorsed as the formal development plan under the provisions of the Development Plan Overlay (Schedule 16) (DPO16).

This Development Plan does not apply to the parcel of land located north east of the subject site at 1455A Plenty Road. Integration and access links between the two sites have been considered and incorporated into the development plan, facilitated through consultation with the land owner, council and the consultant team. Further details on the integration of the two sites is found at Section 3.4.

2. Site and Context

2.1 Site Description

The site is located on the corner of Plenty Road and Bridge Inn Road, Mernda, approximately 25 km north of Melbourne's CBD and is formally known as 1435 Plenty Road Mernda 3754 (Plan TP 749914K, vol 9500, Fol 732).

The site is rectangular in shape, covers an area of 2.513ha and is currently occupied by the Eden Valley Café and associated Garden Centre, with a single residential dwelling at the western end of the lot. The remainder of the site is vacant with scattered vegetation including River Red Gums. The topography of the land is generally flat near the intersection of Plenty and Bridge Inn Road, with a steeply sloped hill/knoll located in the middle of the site, adjoining the abutting northern subdivision of Everton Gardens.

A significant tree dominates the corner of the site at the intersection of Plenty and Bridge Inn Roads, with the remainder of the lot scattered with River Red Gums in varying size, age and health.

The subject site is bounded by two arterial roads and developing land for residential and mixed uses. To the east is Plenty Road running on a north-south axis and Bridge Inn Road bordering the southern boundary of the site and located on an east-west axis. Both Plenty and Bridge Inn are proposed to be primary arterial routes with a significant role in the current and future road network.

Developing residential land known as Everton Gardens is located to the north of the site, while land zoned Comprehensive Development 1 (CDZ1) (1435 Plenty Road) is situated to the north east and is currently vacant. The relationship, integration and interconnecting links from the subject site with the neighbouring vacant north east property is discussed in further detail in Section 3.4.

An established residential development named 'Mernda Villages' is located to the immediate west of the site and is distinguished by dwellings under construction.

Immediately south west of the subject site, on the opposing side of the Plenty and Bridge Inn Road intersection, is the proposed Core Mixed-Use Area of the Mernda Town Centre identified in the Mernda Town Centre Comprehensive Development Plan.

Please refer to Figure 1 – Locality Plan, Figure 2 – Local Context Plan and Figure 3 – Site Analysis Plan.

2.2 Site Context

In a regional context, the Mernda Town Centre/Mernda Major Activity Centre is located within Melbourne's northern growth corridor where strong population growth is occurring. The site is situated in the City of Whittlesea and is located approximately 6km south of Yan Yean Reservoir and 10 km north of the Metropolitan Ring Road/Northern Ring Road. Mernda forms the northern extent of the Whittlesea growth corridor stretching from South Morang in the South to Mernda in the north. The urban growth boundary is found some 2km to the north along Masons Lane.

Please refer to Figure 1 – Locality Plan

2.3 Flora and Fauna

Ecology and Heritage Partners were engaged to undertake a flora, fauna and net gain assessment of the subject site.

The majority of the subject site is highly modified. Native understory and mid-storey vegetation is either absent or in poor condition; remnant vegetation within the study area is largely restricted to scattered indigenous River Red-gum trees (ranging in size from small to very large) and one small remnant patch of Plains Grassy Woodland containing relatively young trees with highly depauperate understorey.

A total of 54 plant taxa (9 indigenous, 45 introduced) were recorded within the study area. No national or state significant flora species were identified. Due to the highly modified nature of the study area, there is very low likelihood that any flora species of national or state significance occur within the study area.

The study area supports four broad habitat types: a paddock of introduced pasture species and weeds; a patch of modified woodland; scattered remnant trees; and planted native and non-native trees and shrubs.

Twenty-two fauna species were recorded within the area during the site assessment, none of which were national, state or regionally significant. It is unlikely that any significant fauna reside in, rely upon or regularly use the subject site.

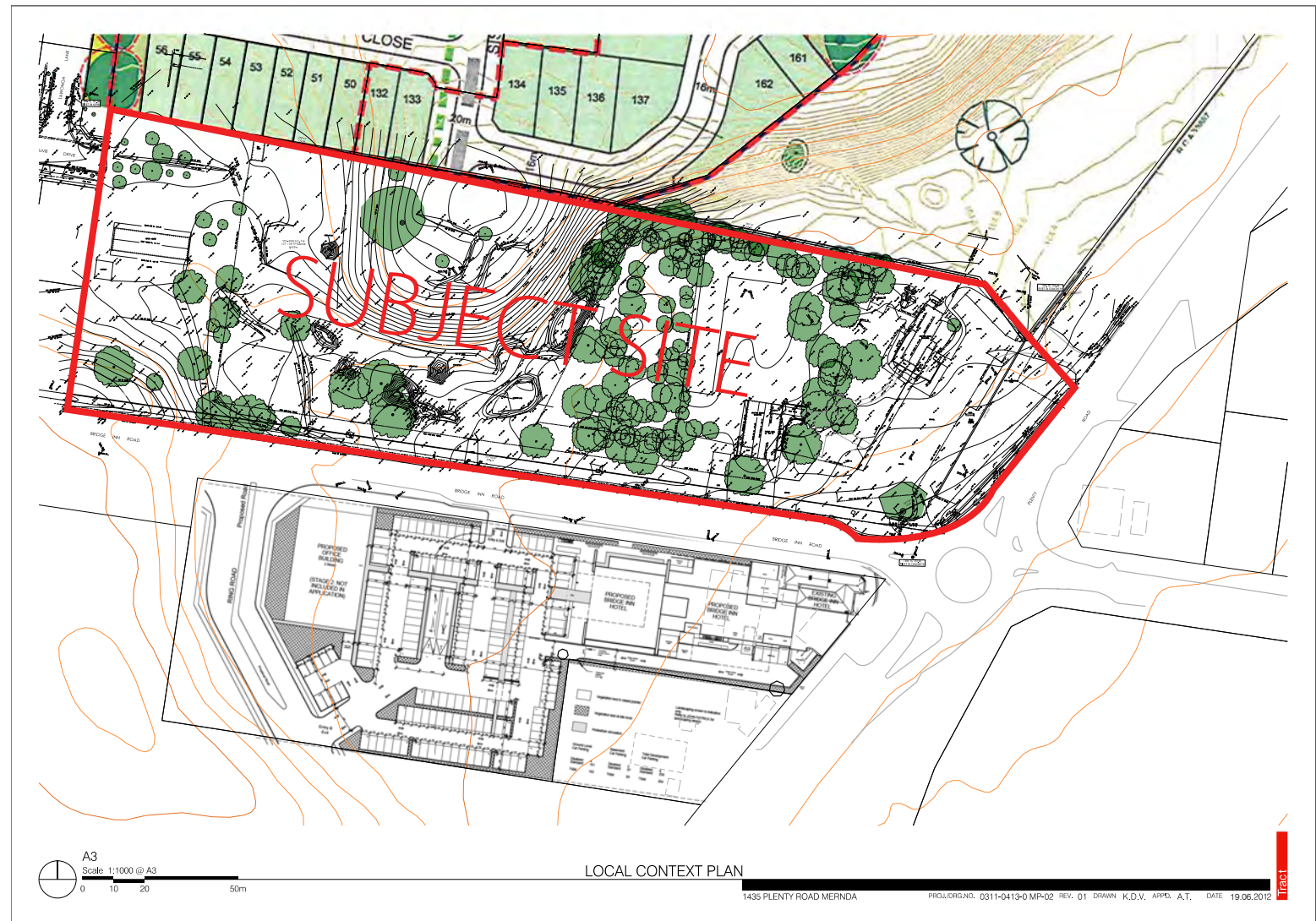


Figure 2. Local Context Plan

2.4 Trees

Galbraith and Associates were engaged to prepare an arborist assessment of the trees on site.

They found that the dominant species on the site is the River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*). It is highly likely that each individual of this indigenous species is a self sown tree. There are two mature trees of considerable age, namely tree 92 on the corner of Bridge Inn and Plenty Road and tree 21 (Refer Figure 17 - Tree Retention Plan). A small number of other River Red Gums are of intermediate age and could be regarded as being young mature. The great bulk of the remaining trees, particularly those in the eastern half of the site, consist of healthy young River Red Gums, probably all of a similar age. It is possible they sprung up after a site clearance or flooding event approximately 35 years ago.

Other species are present, the representatives of which being primarily found on the grounds of the existing residence at the west end of the site. These are of little significance or worth for retention, consisting of commonly occurring Australian natives and exotics of limited useful life expectancy.

2.5 Heritage and Cultural Heritage

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

Ecology and Heritage Partners were engaged to prepare a desktop cultural heritage assessment for the proposed Development. They found that there are 77 Aboriginal Places that have previously been recorded within 2 km radius. Over 50% of Aboriginal Place types are scarred trees, over 40% are artefact scatters. Many of the Aboriginal archaeological sites are located in close proximity to the Plenty River. All of these sites were recorded during previous archaeological and cultural heritage assessments undertaken within the surrounds of 1435 Plenty Road, Mernda. There are no registered Aboriginal Places located within the activity area.

Historical Cultural Heritage

Searches of the Registers of Cultural Heritage Places indicate that most of the historical sites within a 2 km radius of the activity area relate to the early settlement of the Mernda region and are associated with the agricultural, pastoral and economic development of the Mernda region. However, none of these existing historical archaeological sites, features or remains are located within the activity area.



Figure 3. Site Analysis Plan

Surrounds

The land to the immediate south of Bridge Inn Road is occupied by the Bridge Inn Hotel and Mernda Cattle Sale Yards, and sits under an approved Development Plan for the South Western Precinct. Extension of the Bridge Inn Hotel has been proposed and approved for this site. The Bridge Inn Hotel was constructed principally in 1891 and is graded C value in the City of Whittlesea Heritage Study (1990, Meredith Gould Architects Pty Ltd, 11.02) and identified as Heritage Overlay 67 (HO67) in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme. The Bridge Inn Hotel is detailed as being in 'Good' condition with 'Good 1981' integrity in the Heritage Study, and as a landmark in Plenty Road. It is also described in the Mernda Town Centre Comprehensive Development Plan as a key natural and cultural element of the Plenty and Bridge Inn Road intersection to be preserved and showcased, whilst acting as a feature to distinguish Mernda from other activity centres in Mernda.

Land to the east, across Plenty Road, contains the Mechanics Institute. The Mechanics Institute was constructed in 1888 and is Graded B Value in the City of Whittlesea Heritage Study (1990, Meredith Gould Architects Pty Ltd) and identified as Heritage Overlay 20 (HO20) in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme. The study describes the Mechanics institute as reflecting the 'prosperity of the Mernda Community in the latter period of the 19th century. The building has been a prominent land mark in the Plenty Road since it's construction of regional significance for its association with the wider City of Whittlesea' (1990, Meredith Gould Architects Pty Ltd, 11.01).

The Mechanics Institute is detailed as being in 'Good' condition and of 'Good' integrity in the Heritage Study.

The study recommends The Mechanics Institute for:

- Australian Heritage Commission Register (National Estate)
- Heritage Conservation Area
- Planning Scheme Protection
- Cultural Landscape

It is also described in the Mernda Town Centre Comprehensive Development Plan as a key natural and cultural element of the Plenty and Bridge Inn Road intersection to be preserved and showcased, whilst acting as a feature to distinguish Mernda from other activity centres in Mernda.

2.6 Opportunities and Constraints

The site offers the following opportunities and constraints:

Opportunities:

- Creation of a strong built form presentation to both Plenty Road and Bridge Inn Road
- Two major road frontages offer easy access to the site
- The site part of a designated town centre and nearby the future Mernda train station
- The slope of the site and opportunities to create a topographically responsive design
- Proximity to the landmark buildings of Bridge Inn Hotel and the Mechanics Institute
- Good connections to adjacent residential and mixed use facilities
- Major River Red Gums to create character and sense of place
- Opportunity to create safe pedestrian orientated design linking the north-west town centre with the main street precinct adjacent to the future train station.

Constraints:

- The steep slope from the centre of the site to the northern boundary, connecting with established residential uses
- Sensitive interfaces with residential land to the west and proposed residential land to the north
- Site access limited by proximity to the major road intersection at the junction of Plenty Road and Bridge Inn Road, and the narrowness of the lot
- Major arterial roads which sever the site from the remainder of the town centre
- Engineering constraints posed by drainage lines and services.

3. The Proposal

3.1 Vision – Statement

The Development Plan adopts the following vision for the development of the site:

“A new generation mixed use development where retail, office and residential will meet the needs of both the local and regional Mernda community in an integrated, high quality and pedestrian accessible development that forms an important component of the Mernda Town Centre.”

The Development Plan seeks to implement this vision by adopting the following objectives:

- Contribution to the Mernda Town Centre to create a community focal point for Melbourne's outer north
- Connectivity and integration with the Mernda Town Centre Main Street precinct
- Offering a high quality genuine mixed use development, including retail, residential and office
- Convenient and safe transport connections, especially for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users
- Creating a prominent landmark development which reflects the importance of the key intersection and gateway to Mernda Town Centre
- Responding to the features of the site and creating a sense of place
- Protection of Mernda Hotel and Mechanics Institute

3.2 Urban Design Principles

The development plan establishes the following urban design principles, which will be used at a later stage to guide future planning permits.

- All buildings to provide active frontages to roads and public spaces
- Loading and parking to be screened from public view by landscaping or architectural responses.
- Buildings on the corner of Bridge Inn and Plenty Road to celebrate the landmark corner through distinctive architecture
- Open spaces to be comprehensively landscaped to create a sense of place
- High quality architecture that embraces the landmark town centre location
- Clear, direct and safe pedestrian connections to and through the site

The development responds to the above principles and the context of the site, as shown in Figure 4 - Design Response and Figure 6 - 3D Perspective, which depicts exemplar images of the intended form for 1435 Plenty Road.

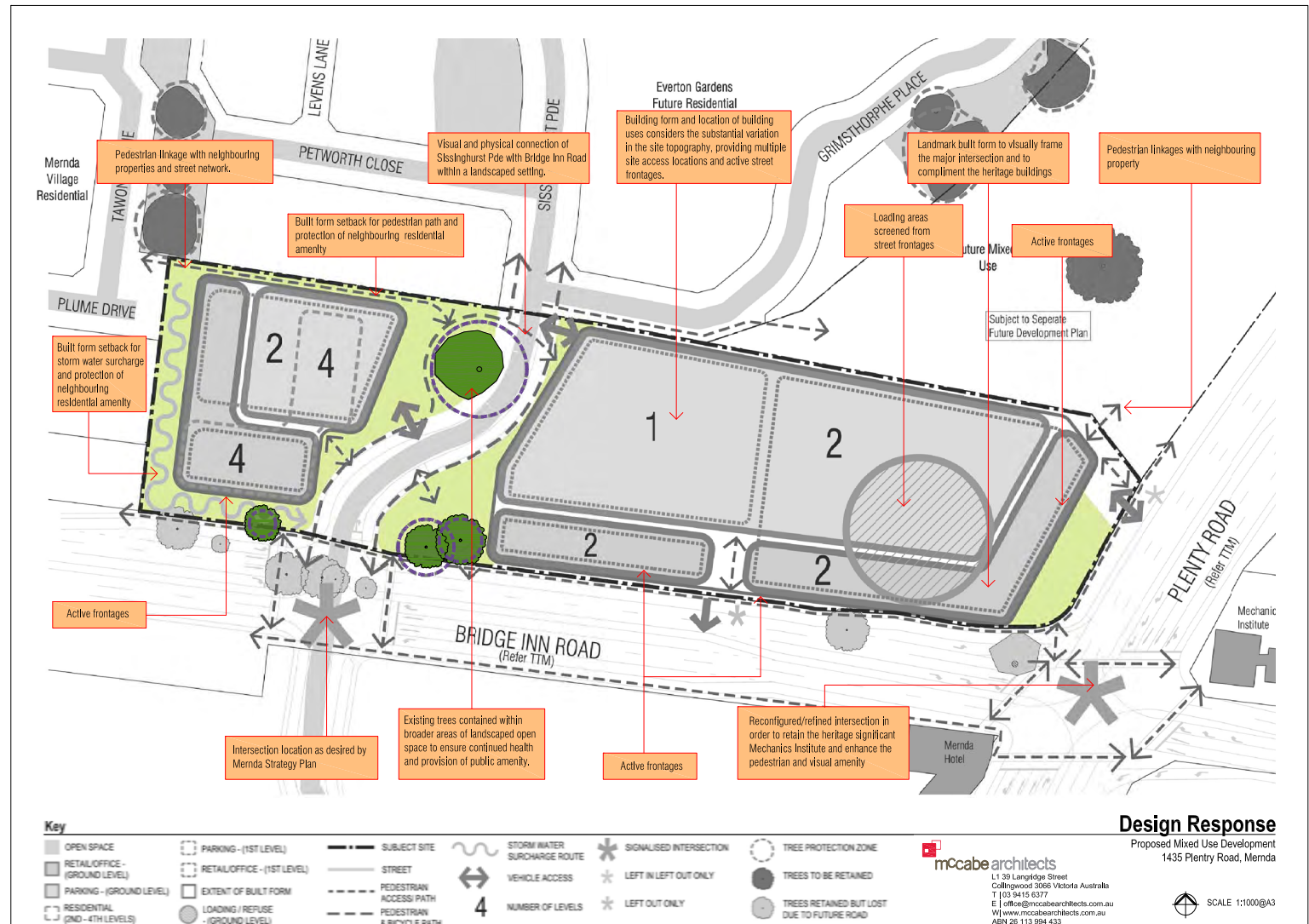


Figure 4. Design Response Plan

3.3 Key Land Uses and Buildings

The development plan proposes a mixture of landuses, including retail, residential and office. Ground floor uses are primarily retail, whilst the upper floors will be used for either residential or office. Upper floors may also be used for medical centres, child care, gymnasium or associated uses. Areas of open space are also proposed around major trees and to assist in providing pedestrian connections across the site.

Sissinghurst Parade is shown connecting through the site from the northern boundary to the signalised intersection approved as part of the Mernda Hotel permit.

Land for the future widening of Bridge Inn Road and Plenty Road has been allowed for based on a plan by TTM (refer Figure 15 - Proposed Intersection). A left in, left out is proposed off Plenty Road to provide access to the site and to allow separate access to 1455 Plenty Road.

Buildings have been located to front Bridge Inn Road and Plenty Road and frame the intersection between these two roads. Carparking has been located away from the main public streets to hide from public views.

Please refer to Figure 6 for 3D perspectives of proposed development.

3.4 Integration with surrounding sites

Integration with surrounding sites has been the key design principle for this Development Plan with Figure 2 - Local Context Plan illustrating the adjacent land uses and approved site access points. Approved residential subdivision both to the immediate north and west of the subject site, have provided the foundations for pedestrian and traffic linkages throughout the site. Figure 4 - Design Response Plan depicts a pedestrian link accessing the site from the public open space located on the north west boundary of the subject site. The access link has been designed to capitalise on the pedestrian flow generated from the public open space, to increase the development buffer from existing residential development and to link with the pedestrian path providing access along Sissinghurst Parade into Everton Gardens.

Sissinghurst Parade continues through the subject site, providing residents and pedestrians from the north with direct access to Bridge Inn Road, and the facilities on the site.

The future development of 1455A Plenty Road has been integrated into the Development Plan. A left in, left out vehicle access provided by a left turn deceleration lane originating at the intersection of Bridge Inn and Plenty Roads, allows entry and exit to the subject site whilst facilitating future separate access to 1455 Plenty Road. This design allows for flexibility for 1455 Plenty Road with no access constraints generated from the subject site. Consultation with the neighbouring site provided basis for built form design to ensure future integration with 1455 and to ensure active frontages with pedestrian engagement along both Plenty and Bridge Inn Roads.

Pedestrian linkages between the subject site and 1455 Plenty Road as depicted in Figure 5 - Development Plan, will strengthen integration between the two sites and further engage the active frontage along Plenty Road.

Consideration will be given to the residential interfaces abutting the site, through a transition in height of the proposed buildings in the western portion of the DP area, namely the northern and western interfaces.

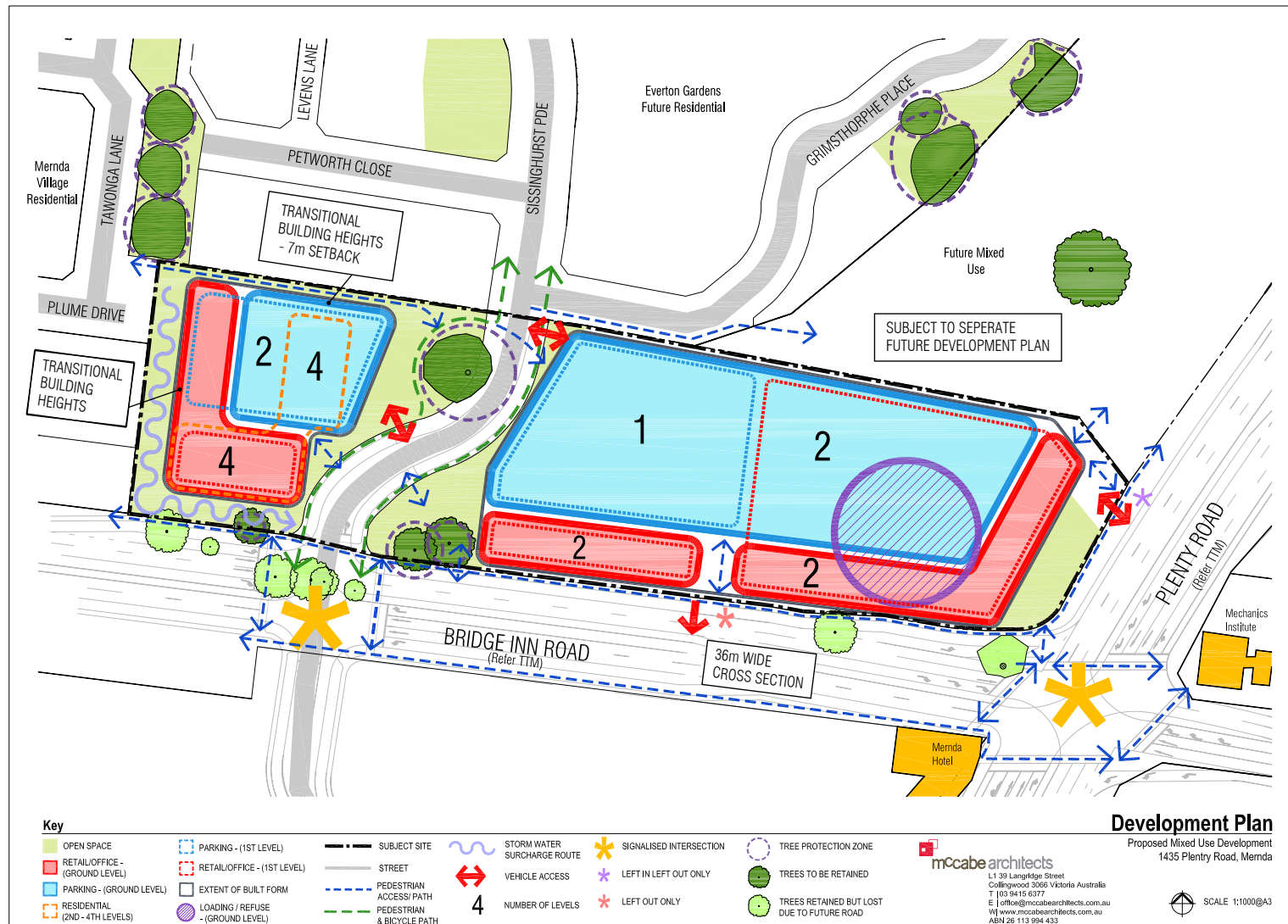


Figure 5. Development Plan



Figure 6. 3D Perspective



Figure 6. 3D Perspective (Cont.)



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4. Relevant Planning Framework

4.1 State Planning Policy Framework

Clause 11.01 Activity Centres

11.01-2 Activity Centre Planning

Objective:

- To encourage the concentration of major retail, residential, commercial, administrative, entertainment and cultural developments into activity centres which provide a variety of land uses and are highly accessible to the community

Strategies:

- Broaden the mix of uses in activity centres to include a range of services over longer hours appropriate to the type of centre and needs of the population served.
- Provide a focus for business, shopping, working, leisure and community facilities
- Encourage economic activity and business synergies
- Improve the social, economic and environmental performance and amenity of the centre

The site forms part of the Mernda Activity Centre as shown in the Growth Areas Framework Plan (DSE, 2006) and Draft Melbourne North Growth Corridor Plan (Growth Areas Authority, 2011). The Development Plan seeks to achieve the objectives of Clause 11.10 in that it provides a retail facility which is readily accessible to the local community and broadens the mix of uses in the Mernda Town Centre. The Development Plan will assist in delivering a greater intensity of uses as the centre develops.

The amenity of surrounding residential areas will be protected through the requirements of the Development Plan in providing sensitive interfaces to ensure the residential uses, located both west and north-west of the subject site, are protected.

Clause 11.04 Metropolitan Melbourne

11.04-2 Activity Centre Hierarchy

Objective:

- To create a network of activity centres comprising the Central Activities Districts, Principal Activity Centres, Major Activity Centres, Specialised Activity Centres and Neighbourhood Activity Centres.

Principal and Major Activity Centres

- Develop Principal and Major Activity Centres to accommodate ongoing investment and change in retail, office, service and residential markets.

Ensure Principal and Major Activity Centres:

- Have a mix of activities that generate high number of trips including business retail services and entertainment
- Are well served by multiple public transport routes and are on the Principal Public Transport Network or capable of linking to that network
- Have the potential to grow and support intensive housing developments without conflicting with surrounding land-uses
- Locate new Principal and Major Activity Centres on the Principal Public Transport Network and link them to the network as part of developing the site

- Encourage Major Activity Centres with good public transport links to grow in preference to other centres with poor public transport links serving the same catchment.

The Development Plan seeks to achieve the objectives of Clause 11.04 in that it provides a range of retail and office facilities readily accessible to the local community in the designated Mernda Activity Centre. The Development Plan will assist in integrating a variety of land uses on a single site, with the provision for pedestrian accessibility and integration when the neighbouring sites are fully developed.

Clause 15.01 Urban Environment

15.01-1 Urban Design

Objective:

- To create urban environments that are safe, functional and provide good quality environments with a sense of place and cultural identity.

Strategies:

- Promote good urban design to make the environment more liveable and attractive.
- Require development to include a site analysis and descriptive statement explaining how the proposed development responds to the site and its context

The Development Plan seeks to achieve the objectives of Clause 15.01 through:

- The compact road and intersection design that reduces the barrier effect of the major roads, and preserves the heritage protected Hotel and Mechanics Institute.
- The framing of the intersection corner with buildings to front the major roads
- The use of the topography of the site to access higher building levels
- High quality urban design and architecture that reflects the landmark character of the site.
- The preservation of key trees on site

Clause 17.01 Commercial

17.01-1 Business

Objective:

- To encourage development which meet the communities' needs for retail, entertainment, office and other commercial services and provides net community benefit in relation to accessibility, efficient infrastructure use and the aggregation and sustainability of commercial facilities.

Strategies:

- Locate commercial facilities in existing or planned activity centres
- Provide new convenience shopping facilities to provide for the needs of the local population in new residential areas and within, or immediately adjacent to existing commercial centres

The Development Plan will assist in achieving the objectives of this policy by facilitating the delivery of locally accessible retail infrastructure which will provide the local community with employment generating opportunities. The clause also states that it is policy to locate commercial facilities in planned activity centres, which is facilitated by this development plan.

18.01 Integrated Transport

Objective: To create a safe and sustainable transport system by integrating land-use and transport.

Strategies:

- Develop transport networks to support employment corridors that allow circumferential and radial movements.
- Plan urban development to make jobs and community services more accessible by:
 - Ensuring access is provided to developments in accordance with forecast demand, taking advantage of all available modes of transport and minimise adverse impacts on existing transport networks and the amenity of surrounding areas
 - Concentrating key trip generators such as higher density residential development in and around Major Activity Centres on the Principal Transport Network
 - Providing safe, convenient and direct pedestrian and cycling access to activity centres, public transport interchanges and other strategic redevelopment sites.

The Development Plan will allow for the future creation of an integrated development which complements the future town centre and provides integration with the future train station. The Development Plan allows for the new intersection at Plenty and Bridge Inn Roads, a key north-west access point to the Town Centre, and appropriate connections to nearby streets.

18.02-1 Sustainable Personal Transport

Objective:

- To promote the use of sustainable personal transport

Strategies:

- Encourage the use of walking and cycling by creating environments that are safe and attractive.
- Develop high quality pedestrian environments that are accessible to footpath-bound vehicles such as wheelchairs, prams and scooters.
- Ensure development provides opportunities to create more sustainable transport options such as walking, cycling and public transport.
- Ensure cycling routes and infrastructure are constructed early in new developments.

The access strategy for the Development Plan has been designed having regard to the existing and proposed road network. Please refer to Figure 3 - Site Analysis Plan.

The Development Plan has been designed to provide an interactive street front for bus routes servicing the PPTN and for numerous pedestrian access points to enter the site.

The Whittlesea Growth Area Framework Plan identifies a 'potential network option' for rail, subject to further investigation, stemming from South Morang to the Mernda Town Centre. The Development Plan provides for a pedestrian friendly intersection with Plenty and Bridge Inn Roads, allowing for safe and accessible pedestrian movement between the site and rail station, and with the remainder of the Town Centre. Refer to Figure 13 - Whittlesea Growth Area Framework Plan.

Pedestrian traffic within the site will be primarily accommodated by footpaths within the reserves of the road network. Additionally a pedestrian link is designed to stem from the north-west corner of the Development Plan from the existing public open space at Everton Gardens and Mernda Villages, running south along the western boundary of the subject site, to intersect with Bridge Inn Road.

4.2 Local Planning Policy Framework

4.2.1 Clause 21.05 – Growth Areas Framework

Ministerial Direction No.7 (Plenty Valley) and the MSS provide the broad strategic framework for growth area planning within the City of Whittlesea. The Plenty Valley Strategic Plan, in conjunction with the Whittlesea Planning Scheme, provides more specific, clearer directions and objectives for the area, which is identified as having a population capacity of 65,000 persons.

In recognising the need to provide further detailed planning objectives for specific areas, Local Structure Plans, are prepared, with the Development Plans providing the next level of detail for areas to guide the issue of planning permits.

The Mernda Strategy Plan, being the Local Structure Plan covering the subject site, has informed and guided the preparation of the Development Plan. Further detail on the Mernda Strategy Plan is found at Section 4.4.

4.2.2 Clause 21.06 – Objectives, Strategies and Actions

21.06-5 Activity Centres

Objective:

- To define the role and extent of a series of activity centres which establish a focus for the provision of accessible goods and services, employment generation, community meeting places and associated land uses.

The Development Plan contributes towards the definition and role of the Mernda Town Centre Activity Centre, through the provision of accessible goods and services which generate employment opportunities. The subject site compliments the Town Centre Main Street provision of services, providing an accessible range of goods at a key intersection.

21.06-9 Image and Appearance

Objective:

- To progressively upgrade the image and appearance of the City of Whittlesea focussing on retention of local environmental features, landscaped qualities and urban and landscape design improvements.

The development facilitated through the Development Plan will give the community of Mernda and the wider residents of Whittlesea, a quality and well designed development for a prominent and key landmark intersection. The high quality buildings will be complemented with feature landscaping and the retention and preservation of several mature and healthy iconic Red Gums.

4.2.3 Clause 22.10 - River Redgum Protection Policy

Clause 22.10 of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme states that it is policy that:

- Any planning proposal for development on land which contains one or more remnant River Red Gums should be accompanied by a comprehensive site analysis and arborists report
- Where a tree is to be located in a lot, the lot should be large enough to accommodate a suitable development envelope that does not disturb the tree or its root system.

The Development Plan has been informed by a comprehensive Arborculturalist assessment, with the design of the subject site preserving the key feature trees as identified in the report. Some trees have not been able to be retained because of the constraints posed by the fixed access points to the south and north (and the need for a connecting north/south road) plus the requirement to frame the corner with built form. Other trees are within the widened Bridge Inn Road reserve and may be removed when the road is constructed by VicRoads at a later date.

Figure 17 - Tree Retention Plan shows the trees to be retained and removed. The major and higher value trees, especially the large tree 21 on the rise, have been retained.

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4.3 Zone and Overlays

4.3.1 Comprehensive Development Zone – Schedule 1 (CDZ1)

The Mernda Town Centre North West Precinct is primarily zoned Comprehensive Development Zone (CDZ1) and is affected by Schedule 1 of the CDZ pursuant to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme.

The purpose of the zone is:

- To implement and support the Plenty Valley Strategic Plan and Mernda Strategy Plan
- To provide for a range of uses and the development of land in accordance with a comprehensive development plan incorporated in this scheme.

Please refer to Figure 7 – Zone Plan

The purpose of the Schedule 1 to the zone is;

- To designate land suitable for a compact, pedestrian-orientated and traditional mixed use town centre
- To provide an appropriate interface to adjoining residential areas, main roads open spaces and the future rail corridor and to ensure that non-residential uses do not cause a loss of amenity to nearby residents
- To allocate an appropriate level of retail, office and other commercial floorspace for the town centre
- To allocate an appropriate level of retail, office and other commercial floorspace for the town centre

- To provide attractive sires for anchor stores (including at least one full line supermarket) and designate the appropriate locations for commercial development along selected main road frontages.

The use of land must be generally in accordance with the Mernda Town Centre Comprehensive Development Plan and any further Incorporated Plan and Development Plan required under the scheme. Schedule 1 to the zone requires the integration and incorporation of a dynamic range of land uses including retail, office and residential use, in accordance with the Comprehensive Development Plan.

A permit is required to construct a building or construct or carry out works for a use in section 1 of Schedule 1 and must be generally in accordance with the Mernda Town Centre Comprehensive Development Plan and any further Incorporated Plan and Development Plan required under the scheme.

A small strip (approx 8 meters wide) of Residential 1 Zone land runs along the western boundary of the site. This is regarded as a mapping anomaly as the zone boundary would normally be expected to run along the lot boundary. Nonetheless, the development plan shows that buildings in this part of the site have been setback approximately 8m from the boundary so they are wholly contained in the CDZ. A request has been made to Council to rectify this anomaly as part of a routine planning scheme administrative tidy-up.

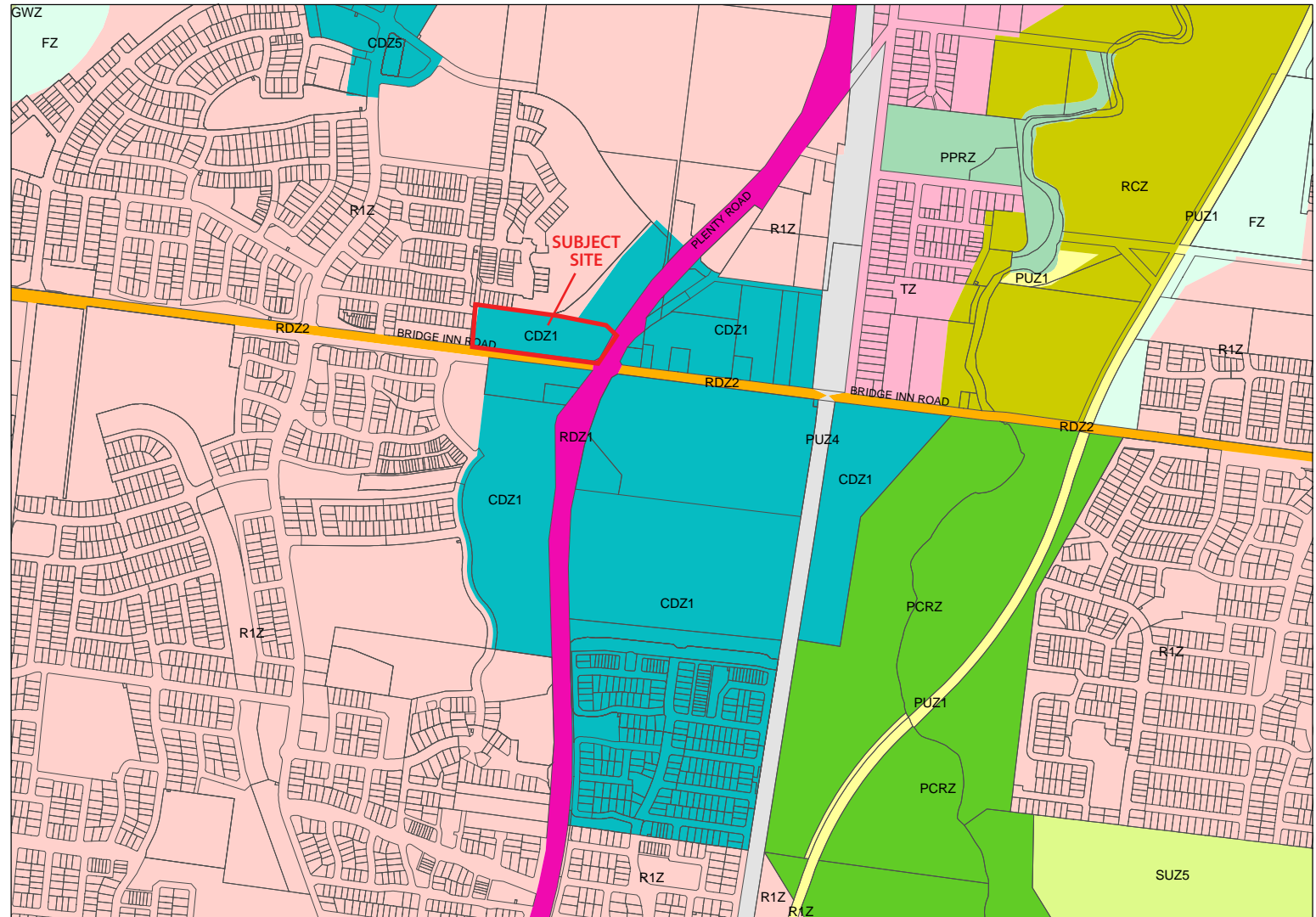


Figure 7. Zone Plan

4.3.2 Mernda Town Centre Comprehensive Development Plan

The Mernda Town Centre Comprehensive Development Plan (MTCCDP) represents the Comprehensive Development Plan for the land shown on Whittlesea Planning Scheme Map No.13 as Comprehensive Development Zone (CDZ1). All Development Plans relating to sites within this area must be in general conformity with the MTCCDP. Please refer to Figure 8 – Mernda Town Centre Comprehensive Development Plan.

The Mernda Town Centre is a designated sub-regional centre with an expected primary catchment of 50,000 people once the Mernda growth area is fully developed. The MTCCDP applies to an area of approximately 74.5 hectares and is expected to create a Town Centre for Mernda with the following characteristics and attributes;

- Form the social and economic heart of a community;
- Remove the need to use a car for many local trips;
- Support public transport services;
- Generate local economic activity and employment;
- Promote civic pride and community participation.

Five sets of Urban Design Principles have been adopted to guide the MTCCDP and ensure that the Mernda Town Centre delivers and incorporates the characteristics and attributes detailed above.

The development adopts and implements, where relevant, the following urban design principles from the Mernda Town Centre Comprehensive Development Zone Plan (WCC, 2002)

Land Use Integration and Density

- *Maximise employment capacity and opportunities for medium density housing around the mixed-use core.*
- *Integrate the Town Centre site with the movement economy.*
- *Provide small high quality public spaces or squares in the core of the Town Centre with larger ones to the periphery.*
- *Concentrate most intensive mixed-use development in the core of the Town Centre - close to public transport and arterial roads.*
- *Capture economic benefits that can flow from arterial roads by fronting them with appropriate retail and commercial development within the confines of the Comprehensive Development Plan area.*
- *Locate community land uses where they are most accessible.*

In response to these principles, the development plan:

- Provides for upper level medium density housing on the western side of the site
- Integrates with major and minor roads, and supports future public transport links
- Provides small parks, squares and other areas of open space around major retained trees
- Fronts Bridge Inn Road and Plenty Roads with active frontages and built form.

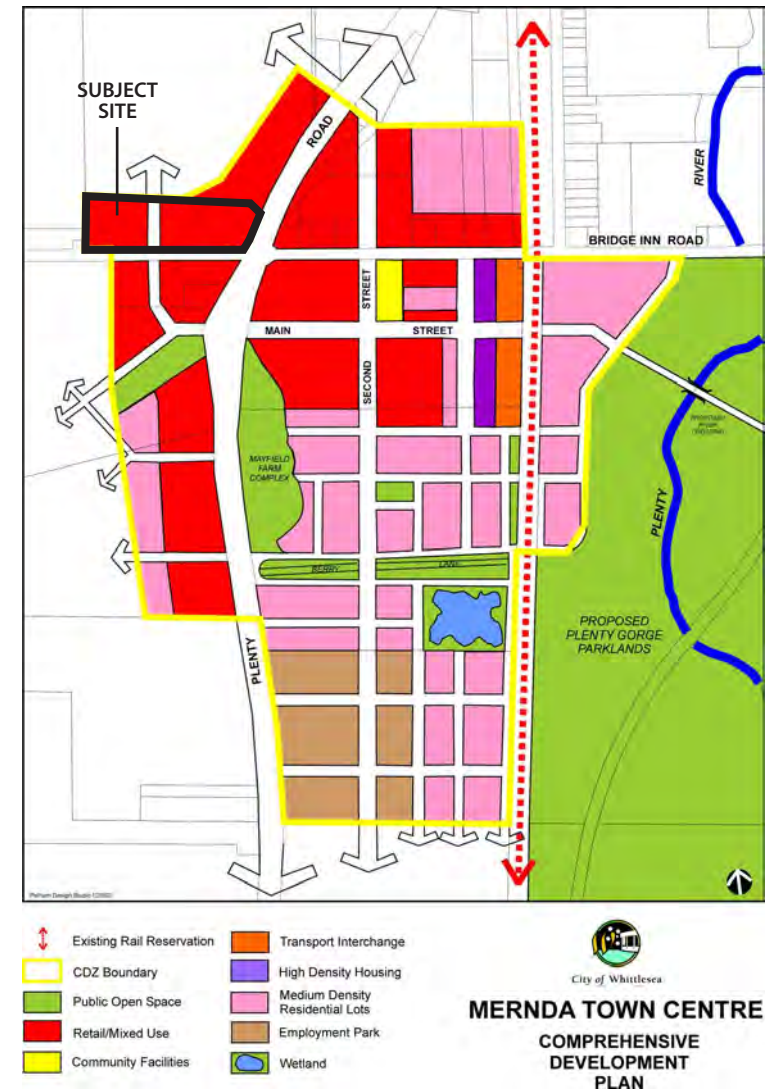


Figure 8. Mernda Town Centre Comprehensive Development Plan

Access and Connectivity

- *Create a logical and coherent network of connected routes to form a supporting skeleton for the Town Centre.*
- *Integrate public and private transport systems.*
- *Ensure that the transport hub effectively serves the residential precincts of Mernda.*
- *Design pedestrian and bicycle routes to provide continuous links between Town Centre, the Plenty Gorge Parklands, and all residential precincts.*
- *Align street linkages to provide safe and convenient access to public transport nodes.*
- *Provide for an active development frontage to all streets.*
- *Create strong road connections and synergies between the Town Centre, the adjoining residential precincts, and the Plenty Gorge Parklands.*
- *Surround public spaces with streets or building frontages.*
- *Design access to the Town Centre to spread traffic across the road network rather than channel it onto the primary arterial roads*

In response to these principles, the development plan:

- *Extends Sissinghurst Street through the site and provides access to the subject site from both Plenty and Bridge Inn Roads.*
- *Provides for pedestrian connections from all directions and neighbouring sites, plus cycling routes along Sissinghurst Street*

- *Surrounds open spaces with buildings*
- *Provides for Sissinghurst Street which acts to spread traffic*

Diversity and Adaptability

- *Provide for an appropriate mix of employment, residential and community land uses.*
- *Provide an interconnected grid-based street system that can support a range of land uses as conditions change over time.*
- *Design a robust urban form that can adapt to changing community needs and economic conditions.*
- *Transitions between different land uses, from retail to residential for example, should occur mid-block to ensure streetscape consistency.*
- *Locate new land uses so that they relate positively to existing land uses.*

In response to these principles, the development plan:

- *Provides a mix of office, retail, residential and other uses*
- *Provides for a flexible and robust urban form*
- *Sensitively treats adjoining residential development*

Local Identity and Legibility

- *Provide an urban form and movement network that is easily understood and negotiated.*
- *Utilise Mernda's distinctive and natural and cultural heritage features, such as River Red Gums and heritage buildings, to create a positive sense of place.*
- *Shape streets and paths in response to landform and natural features.*
- *Provide a strong visual connection between public spaces and the developments that front them.*
- *Achieve a high degree of visual enclosure around smaller public spaces in the retail core.*
- *Orientate medium density residential development so that it engages with the Plenty Gorge Parklands.*

In response to these principles, the development plan:

- Provides for a logical urban form that responds to existing developments and previous planning permits on adjoining sites
- Protects the key heritage elements of Mernda Town Centre, including Mernda Hotel and Mechanics Institute
- Visually encloses open space with built form
- Protects most major River Red Gums on site

Ecological Responsiveness

- *Protect sites of ecological sensitivity.*
- *Create green linkages between major areas of habitat.*
- *Showcase natural features within public space that is fronted by development.*
- *Orientation lots to maximise solar access to buildings.*

In response to these principles, the development plan:

- Protects major trees on site through incorporation into landscaped open space

The MTCCDP depicts a network of active streets that will provide the framework for the Town Centre and the ability to generate employment opportunities. The key natural and cultural elements of the Bridge Inn Hotel and the Mechanics Institute are identified to be preserved and showcased to forge local identity and distinguish Mernda from the other Activity Centres in the City of Whittlesea. This Development Plan has incorporated the Urban Design Principles of Access and Connectivity and Local Identity and Legibility, to preserve the Mechanics Institute and Bridge Inn Hotel. The proposed street layout and intersection fosters pedestrian movement between the subject site and the Main Street precinct, whilst incorporating the distinguishing features of Mernda.

The MTCCDP identifies Plenty Road as having the capacity to support finer-grained retail near the intersection with Bridge Inn Road, to be achieved through the road reservation narrowing and the traffic slowing. This Development Plan has incorporated these requirements to create an intersection which links pedestrians from residential catchments to the north and west and to the Town Centre, applying the Urban Design Principle of Land Use Integration and Density.

This Development Plan provides for retail development with interactive arterial road frontages and service road access which has the capacity to be integrated with the northern neighbouring site.

Ecological Responsiveness has been addressed through the preservation of key trees on site with sympathetic Urban Design to compliment the City of Whittlesea's natural features. Diversity and Adaptability is achieved through the proposed mix of office, retail and residential uses for the subject site.

The Development Plan supports the 'Retail/Mixed Use' designation on the subject site along with the north/south road through the site.

4.3.3 Development Contributions Plan Overlay – Schedule 7 (DCPO7)

The subject site is affected by Schedule 7 of the DCPO.

Please refer to Figure 10 – Overlay Plan

The purpose of the overlay is;

- To implement the State Planning Policy Framework and the Local Planning Policy Framework, including the Municipal Strategic Statement and local planning policies;
- To identify areas which require the preparation of a development contributions plan for the purpose of levying contributions for the provision of works, services and facilities before development can commence.

The Mernda Strategy Plan Development Contributions Plan has been incorporated into the Whittlesea Planning Scheme. As per the overlay, a permit granted must:

- Be consistent with the provisions of the relevant development contributions plan;
- Include any conditions required to give effect to any contributions or levies imposed, conditions or requirements set out in the relevant schedule to this overlay.

As per council minutes (11 December 2012) a Section 173 or similar will be prepared between Council and the applicant regarding development contributions and the necessary applicable road works as part of the subsequent future planning permit process.

4.3.4 Development Plan Overlay – Schedule 5 (DPO5); Schedule 16 (DPO16)

The subject site is affected by Schedule 5 and Schedule 16 of the DPO.

Please refer to Figure 9 – Development Plan Overlay (DPO) Plan

The purpose of the Overlay is:

- To implement the State Planning Policy Framework and the Local Planning Policy Framework, including the Municipal Strategic Statement and local planning policies;
- To identify areas which require the form and conditions of future use and development to be shown on a development plan before a permit can be granted to use of develop the land;
- To exempt an application from notice and review of it is generally in accordance with a development plan.

It is noted that in relation to Council providing notice and third party appeal rights, to any subsequent planning application, Clause 43.04 states that:

- Under Clause 43.04-2 of the planning Scheme an application generally in accordance with the development plan is exempt from the notice requirements of Section 52(1)(a), (b) and (d), the decisions requirements of Section 64(1), (2) and (3) and the review rights of Section 82(1) of the Act.

Development Plan Overlay Schedule 16 (DPO16) Mernda Township Development Plan

Any Development Plan for the Mernda Township prepared under the provisions of this overlay in accordance with Schedule 16, must be prepared to the satisfaction of the responsible authority and must show (as relevant):

- Application of the principles of the relevant incorporated plan;
- Local road network;
- Topographic details;
- Location of pedestrian and bicycle access through residential areas
- Location and layout of non residential uses, including activity centres;
- A conceptual level landscape plan including the location and retention of existing vegetation;
- Identification of significant environmental and cultural features and measures to preserve and enhance these features.

In preparing the Development Plan, consideration has been given to all the above requirements. Relevant consultants have been engaged to undertake the necessary studies and their analysis and findings have been included within this report.

Please refer to Section 5.

Table 1 'Overlay Requirements' provides a reference guide to the sections within the Development Plan that addresses the Development Plan Overlay requirements.

Development Plan Overlay Schedule 5 (DPO5) Mernda Development Plan

A small strip of land on the western boundary of the site is affected by DPO5. It covers the small strip of RIZ land. This is regarded as an anomaly that is a consequence of the zoning anomaly.

DPO 5 applies over a wider area, including the surrounding residential estates, than DPO 16, which is tailored for the town centre

These requirements apply to residential development plans and are less relevant to town centres.

4.3.5 Incorporated Plan Overlay – Schedule 1 (ICPO)

The purpose of the Overlay is;

- To implement the State Planning Policy Framework and the Local Planning Policy Framework, including the Municipal Strategic Statement and local planning policies;
- To identify areas which require:
 - The form and conditions of future use and development to be shown on an incorporated plan before a permit can be granted to use or develop the land.
 - A planning scheme amendment before the incorporated plan can be changed.
- To exempt an application from notice and review if it is generally in accordance with an incorporated plan.

The incorporated plan prepared by Council and incorporated in the City of Whittlesea Planning Scheme is the Mernda Strategy Plan – Incorporated Document and Development Contributions Plan. Please refer to Figure 10 - Overlay Plan. The Mernda Strategy Plan is detailed further in Section 4.4.

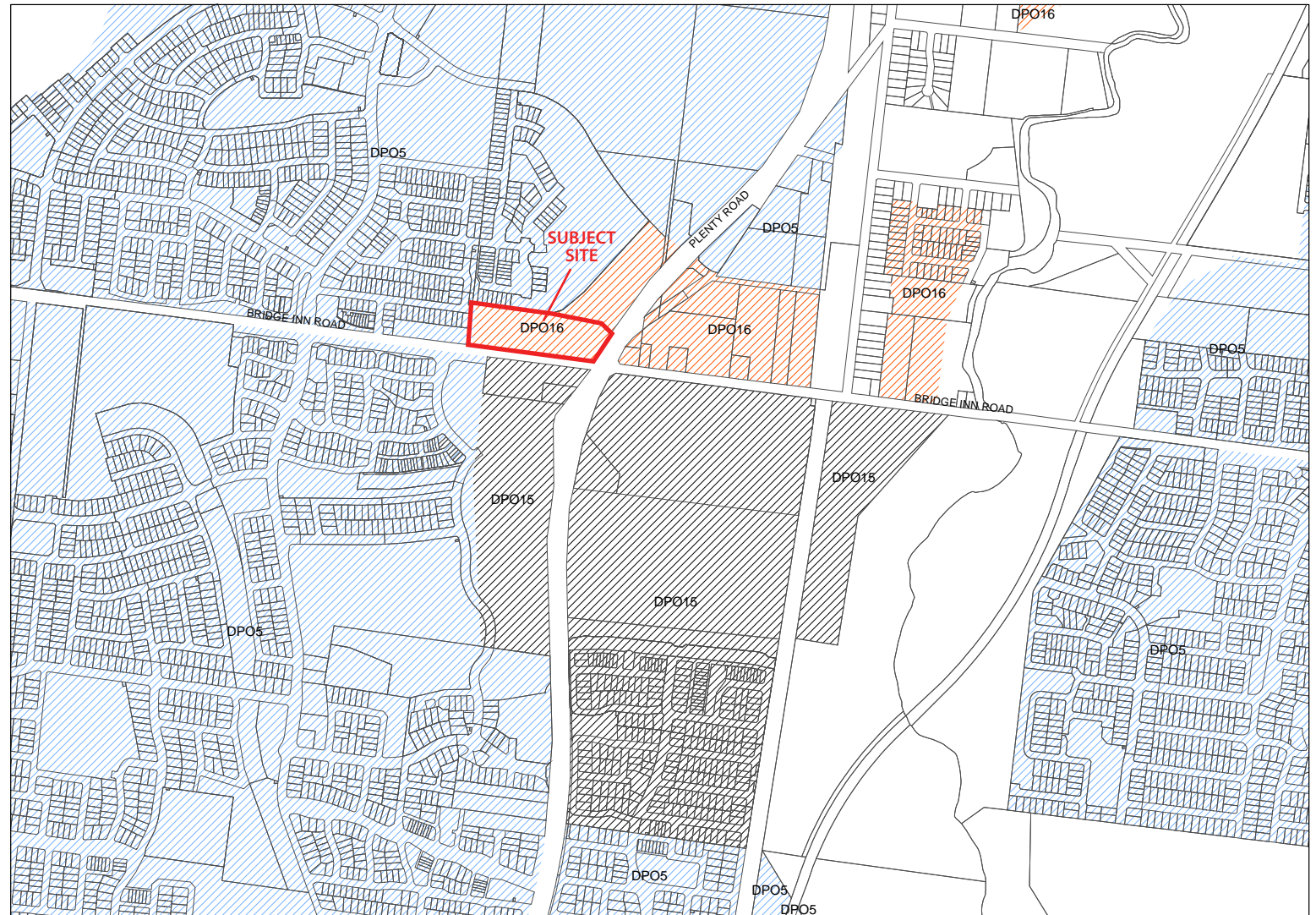


Figure 9. Development Plan Overlay (DPO) Plan

4.3.6 Vegetation Protection Overlay – Schedule 1 (VPO1)

The subject site is affected by Schedule 1 of the VPO.

The purpose of the Overlay is:

- To implement the State Planning Policy Framework and the Local Planning Policy Framework, including the Municipal Strategic Statement and local planning policies;
- To protect areas of significant vegetation;
- To ensure that development minimises loss of vegetation;
- To preserve existing trees and other vegetation;
- To recognise vegetation protection areas as locations of special significance, natural beauty, interest and importance;
- To maintain and enhance habitat corridors for indigenous fauna;
- To encourage the regeneration of native vegetation.

Schedule 1 specifies that no permit is required to remove, destroy or lop vegetation, which is not native vegetation.

The Development Plan has been designed to address the requirements of the Vegetation Overlay through development which preserves the maximum number of trees, with 13 trees of high value incorporated into the site design. Of these, 9 Red Gums are located within the land set aside for the future road widening by VicRoads. The Development Plan has been designed to balance the retention of trees with policies designed to create a cohesive urban form. Please refer to Figure 10 - Overlay Plan.

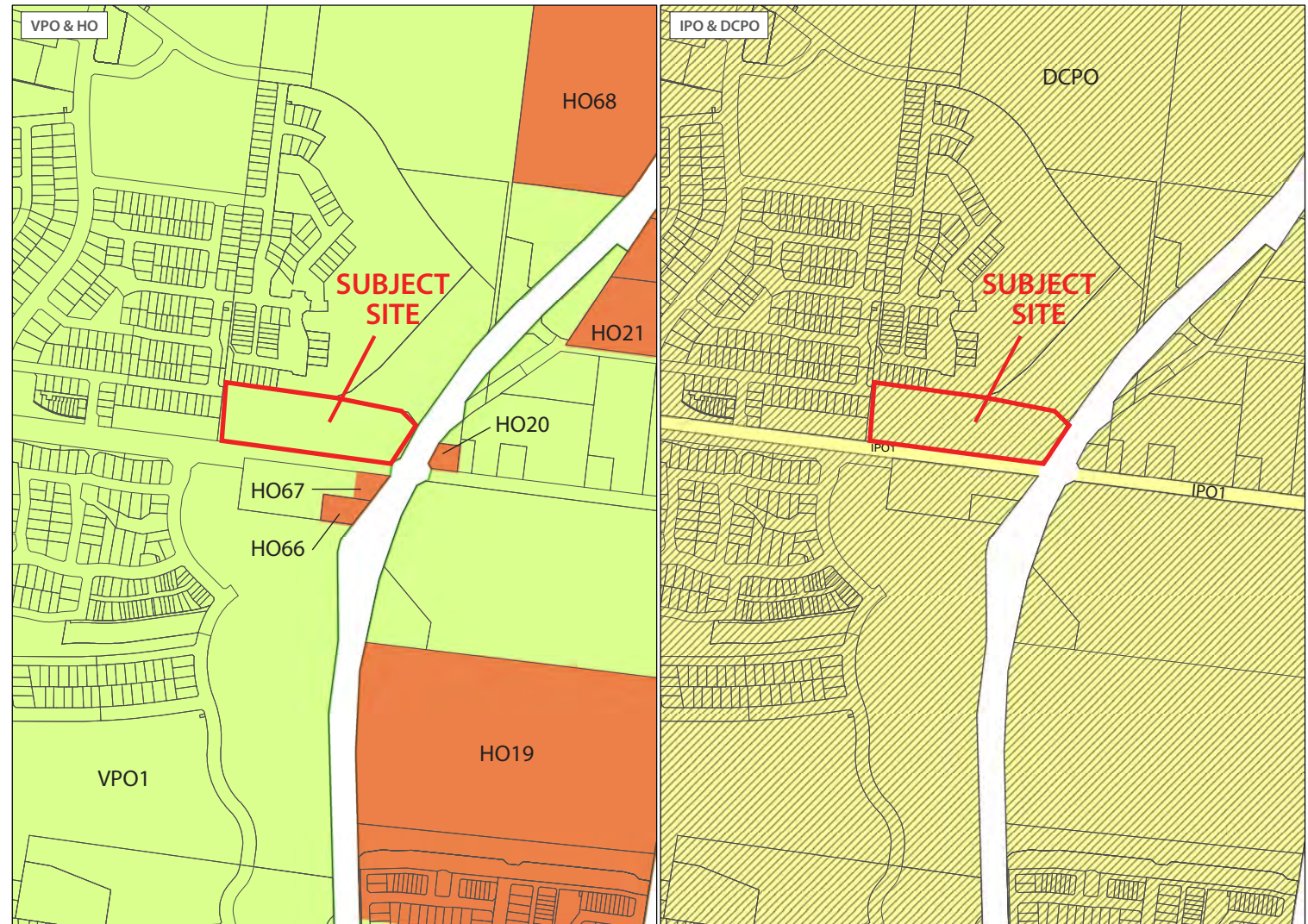


Figure 10. Overlay Plan

4.4 Incorporated Document Mernda Strategy Plan Precinct 3

The Mernda Strategy Plan – Incorporated Document is the primary policy document providing broad level guidance to the development of land in the Mernda/Doreen component of the Plenty Valley growth corridor. The Mernda Strategy Plan is designed to guide and inform the preparation of development plans for the Mernda Growth Area CDZ1 and DPO Schedule 5/16. It is complemented by the Mernda Strategy Plan – Development Contributions Plans and the Mernda Strategy Plan – Reference Document. Please refer to Figure 11 – Mernda Strategy Plan.

The Mernda Strategy Plan articulates the vision for a series of new communities designed to meet future housing needs, whilst also fostering economic development, environmental preservation and social progress. Realisation of this vision for Mernda is to be achieved through 9 Key Objectives and corresponding Strategic Actions which draw on the principals of sustainable development. They provide a planning and design framework to guide lower-order plans, to be used by developers in delivering the Mernda township region.

Activity Centres:

- To establish a series of diverse and pedestrian-friendly precinct activity centres that complement a mixed-use Mernda Town Centre of sub-regional status

The Mernda Strategy Plan area is divided into 6 precincts around the Mernda township region, which is identified to be developed as a Major Activity Centre. Development Plans must be generally in accordance with the relevant Precinct Plan.

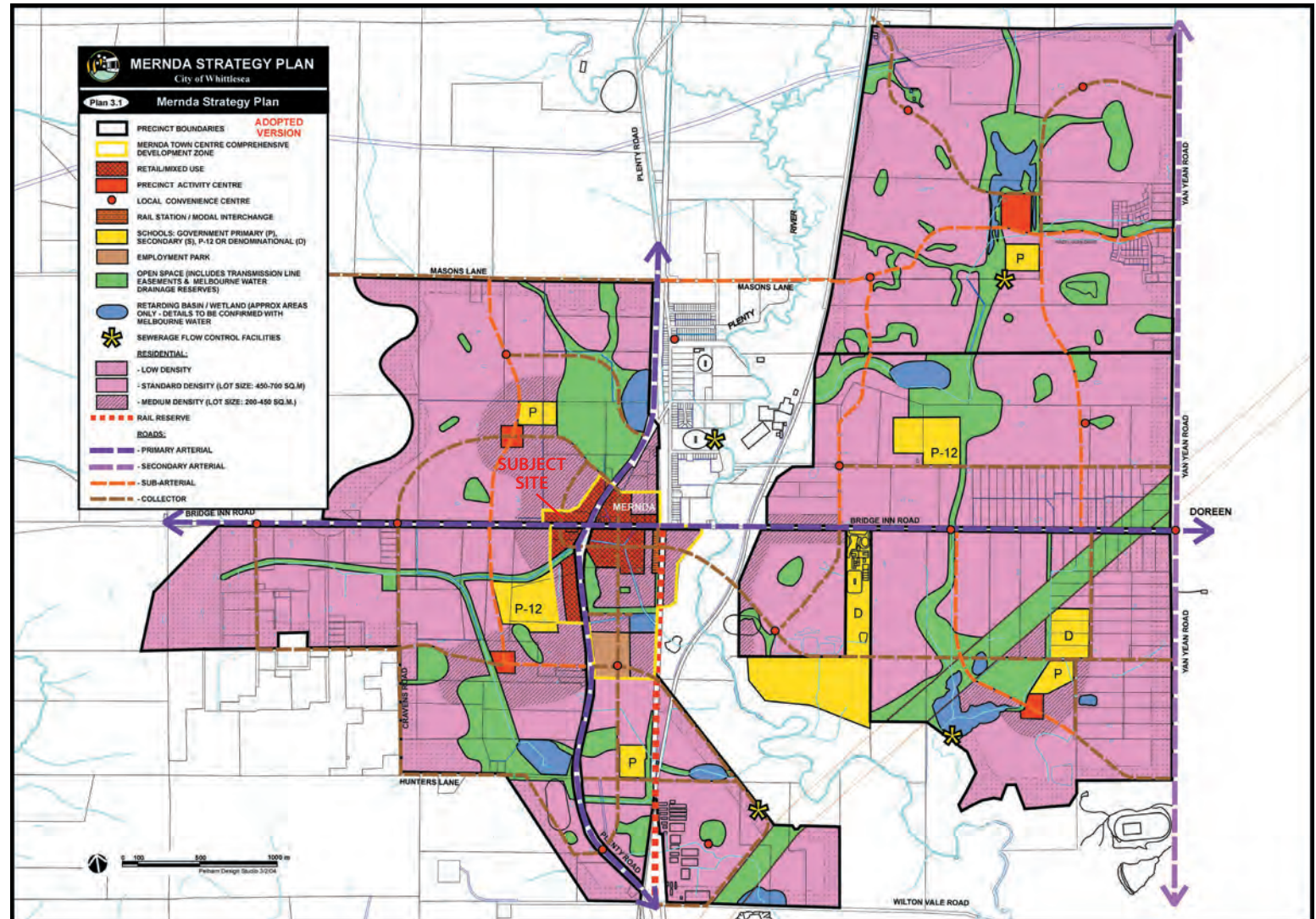


Figure 11. Mernda Strategy Plan

Precinct 3

The subject site is located within Precinct 3 of the Mernda Strategy Plan. Key features of Precinct 3 relevant to this Development Plan and the subject site are:

- The subject site is identified as part of the Mernda Town Centre Comprehensive Development Zone, Precinct Activity Centre and Retail/Mixed Use;
- Plenty Road and Bridge Inn Road are both identified as Primary/Arterial Roads, with a Collector Road depicted traversing through the subject site, with footpath widened to 2 metre minimum;
- An environmentally sensitive design area is depicted for the eastern half of the Development Plan site;
- The subject site, 1455 Plenty Road and the remainder of the Mernda Town Centre are all depicted to be zoned in conjunction with the subject site – Mernda Town Centre Comprehensive Development Zone, Precinct Activity Centre and Retail Mixed Use; and
- Plenty Road is shown within a 40m reservation whilst Bridge Inn Road is within a 36m reservation.

These Key Objectives and the Strategic Actions of the

Precinct 3 Plan have informed the preparation of this Development Plan to provide for local employment and economic generating land uses within the Mernda Town Centre. The Development Plan has been designed with respect to environmentally sensitive areas and provides local access connectivity to the site with surrounding land uses. Please refer to Figure 12 – Mernda Strategy Plan Precinct 3 Plan.

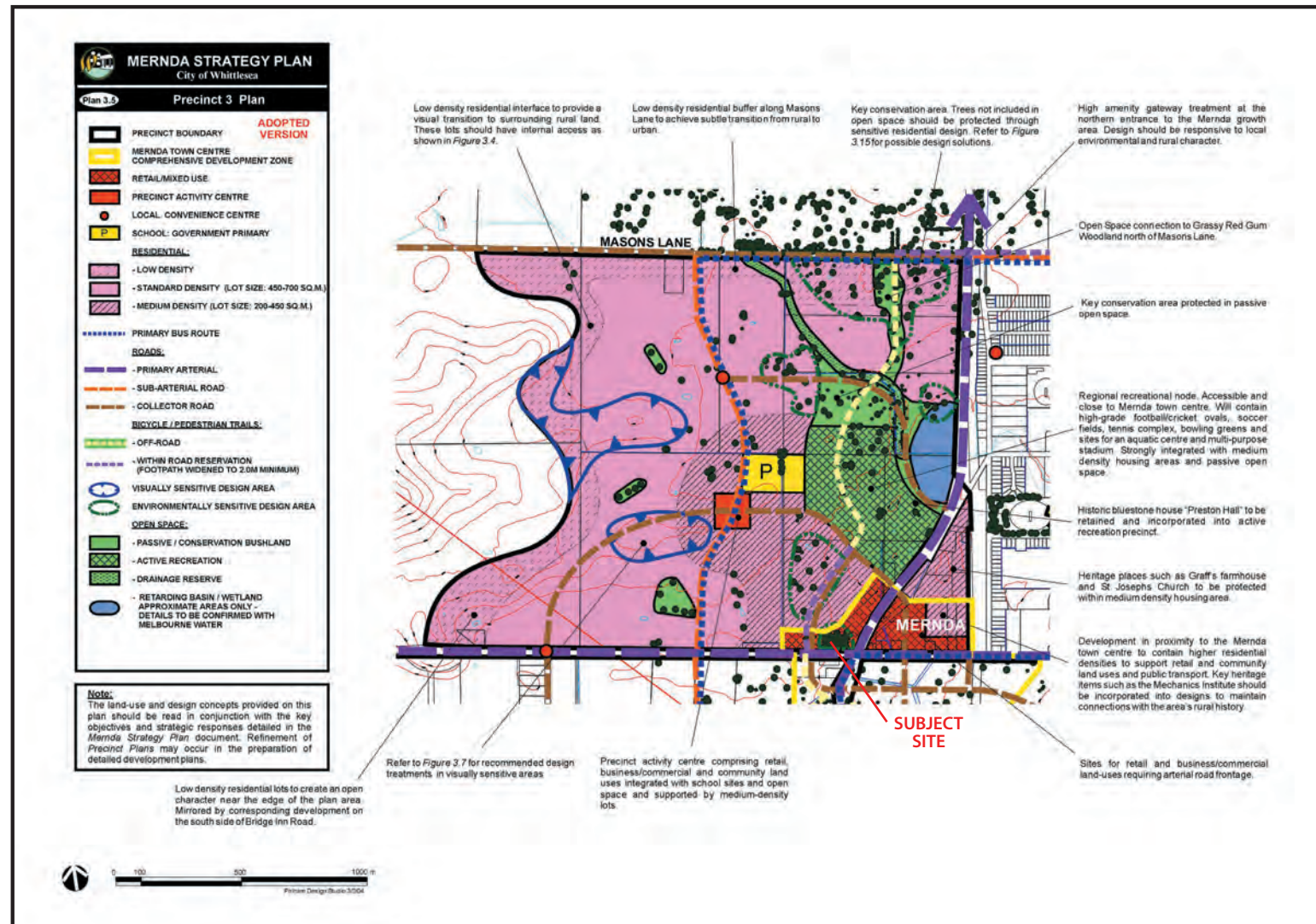


Figure 12. Mernda Strategy Plan Precinct 3 Plan

4.5 Relevant Strategic Documents

4.5.1 Activity Centre Design Guidelines 2005

These Guidelines set out design principles for the creation of coherent, compact and walkable activity centres. The guidelines are structured around a series of design considerations relating to streets and public spaces, building design, transport and parking.

The Guidelines are a reference document of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme. The content has been taken into consideration in the formulation of this Development Plan and is reflected in the urban design principles included in Section 3.

The Activity Centre Guidelines provide a number of aims to assist in the preparation of a suitable planning tool to guide the development of designated activity centres. These aims include:

- Develop good-quality public environment
- Promote street-based patterns of connection
- Improve community safety
- Encourage mix of uses
- Improve pedestrian and cycling amenity
- Promote a public transport focus
- Increase accessibility and integration
- Encourage environmental sustainability

Good quality public environment has been achieved through the proposed site design which combines active street frontages with walkability and accessibility from neighbouring residential areas. Access through the subject site is via pedestrian links and connector road. Footpaths with pedestrian and cycling provision, coupled with the Bridge Inn Road/Plenty Road intersection design, ensures community safety and amenity. Additionally it promotes street-based patterns of connection, and increases the accessibility and integration between surrounding residents, the subject site and the Town Centre.

The interactive and engaging street design will front the proposed Principal Public Transport Network (PPTN) along Bridge Inn Road. Mixed uses of retail, office and residential are proposed in this Development Plan with ESUD principles applied to ensure future environmental sustainability.

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4.6 Whittlesea Growth Area Framework Plan

The Whittlesea Growth Area Framework Plan was released by the State Government in September 2006 and is designed to assist in the future development of the Whittlesea Growth Corridor.

The Growth Area Framework Plans are incorporated in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme, meaning they are important considerations in a planning permit application or a development plan.

The site is identified as part of a Major Activity Centre within the Whittlesea Growth Area Framework Plan. The Mernda Town Centre is the only major town centre in the north-east Whittlesea and the Mernda Growth area. Additionally, the Mernda Town Centre, including the subject site, is identified as proposed 'Mixed Use Employment', the only employment land use for the north-east of Whittlesea. Refer to Figure 13 - Whittlesea Growth Area Framework Plan.

The Development Plan addresses the Whittlesea Growth Area Framework through providing services and local employment for the expected population increase for the developing town centre of Mernda. The proposed development is based on walkable neighbourhoods to support the activity centre and is designed with respect to the identified key east-west road link of Bridge Inn Road.

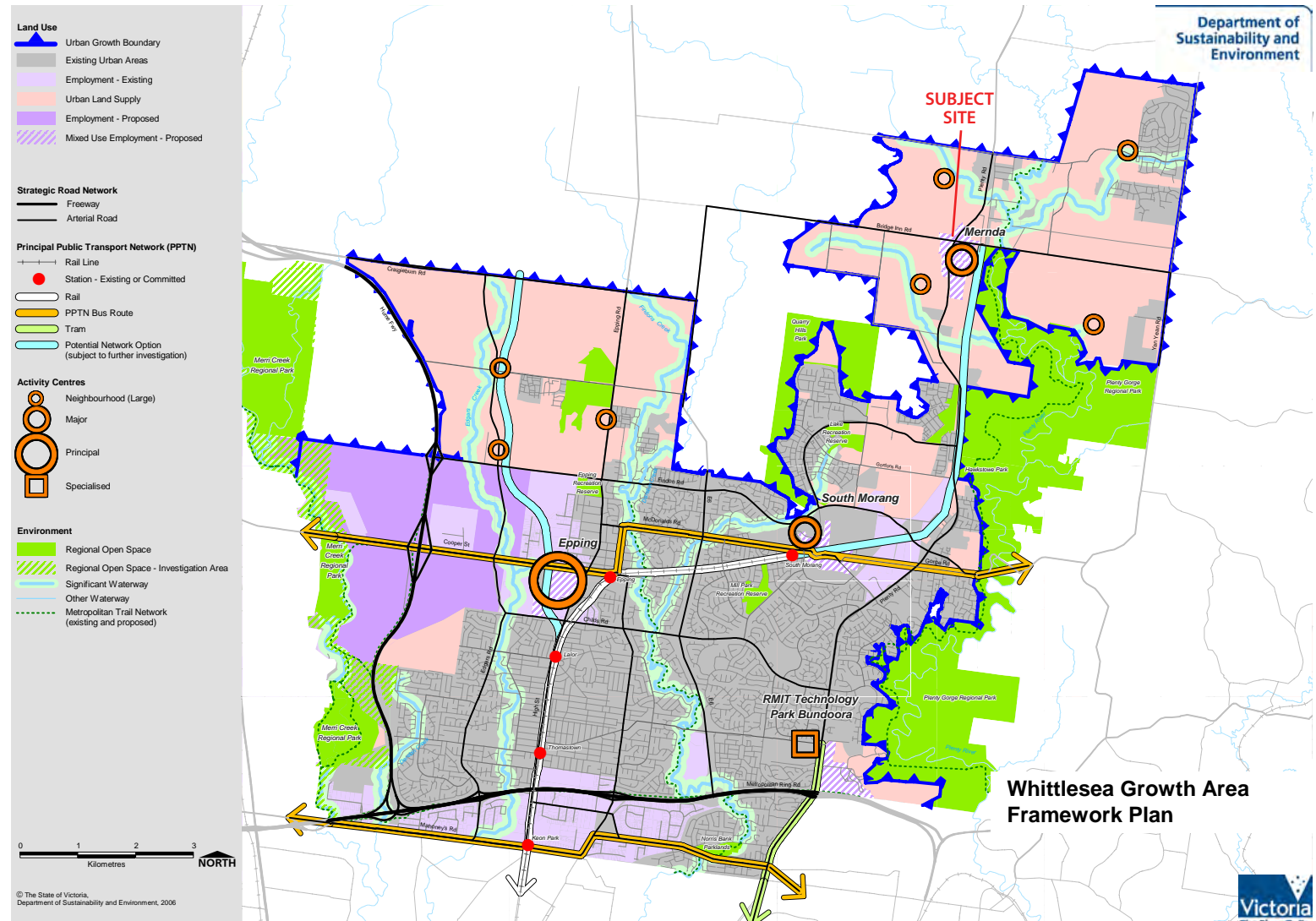


Figure 13. Whittlesea Growth Area Framework Plan

4.7 Growth Corridor Plan – The Melbourne North Growth Corridor Plan

The Growth Corridor Plans, released June 2012, set the strategic direction for future urban development in the growth corridors. The intention of the Growth Corridor Plans are to facilitate an ongoing ready supply of accessible, affordable and well serviced land in each of Melbourne's growth corridors. Please refer to Figure 14 – The Melbourne North Growth Corridor Plan.

Mernda is identified as a Major Town Centre within the Northern Growth Corridor and it also depicts a high capacity public transport line to the south west of the subject site.

The Development Plan supports this plan by facilitating development of a component of the Mernda Town Center.

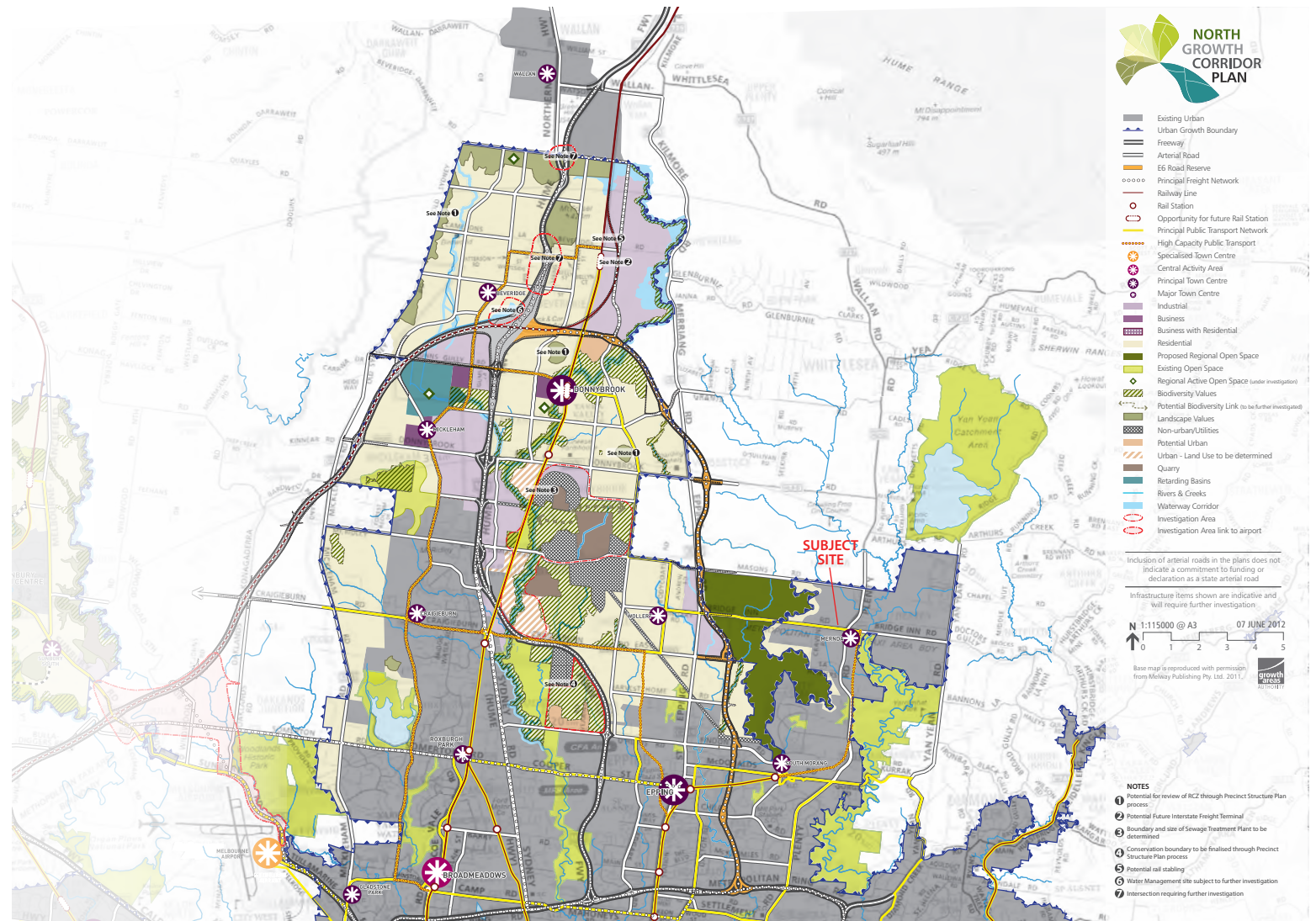


Figure 14. Growth Corridor Plan

5. Key Considerations

5.1 Transport

The Development Plan is supported by a road intersection design for Bridge Inn Road and Plenty Road by TTM (refer Figure 15 - Proposed Intersection 1435 Plenty Road, Mernda). The TTM plan responds to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme, which has considered the design of these roads and is very specific about Council's intentions.

The 'Mernda Town Centre Comprehensive Development Plan' states:

- 'Plenty Road/Bridge Inn Road reservation will be narrowed and the traffic slowed at this point. A slight tapering of the road pavement width on the approaches to the Plenty Road/Bridge Inn Road intersection will ensure the preservation of the Bridge Inn Hotel and the Mechanics Institute. It will have the additional advantage of calming traffic and preventing the intersection from becoming a major pedestrian barrier that servers the Town Centre from it's residential catchment to the north and west.'
- 'Key natural and cultural elements, including Bridge Inn Hotel, Mechanics Institute and cottage...are preserved and showcased. These features will help to distinguish Mernda from other activity centres in the City of Whittlesea.'

The 'Mernda Strategy Plan – Incorporated Document Precinct 3' states:

- 'Mernda Town Centre characteristics: a compact form with pedestrian-friendly streets'

The 'Comprehensive Development Zone Schedule 1 (CDZ1)' states:

- 'Purpose: to designate land suitable for a compact, pedestrian-orientated and traditional mixed use town centre.'

The TTM plan provides for a compact intersection design that is respective of its town centre context but still allows for adequate traffic movement and, importantly, allows for the retention of the Mechanics Institute.

The Development Plan builds on the approved signalised intersection at the rear of the Mernda Hotel (Planning Permit No. 712608, Approved 9 November 2010). It links this intersection with the extension of Sissinghurst Parade through the site. It also shows left in, left out vehicle access off Plenty Road which provides access to the site as well as facilitating independent entry and servicing to the neighbouring site of 1455 Plenty Road which is also part of the town centre.

The Traffic Impact Assessment Report (TIAR) dated 22/06/2012, justifies the road layout of the intersection design and details the compliance with council documentation pertaining to the Mernda Town Centre

Heritage preservation, pedestrian prioritisation and effective traffic flow facilitation are achieved through the TTM intersection design.

It is important to note that the TTM Plan responds VicRoads destination of this part of Bridge Inn Road and Plenty Road as having pedestrian prioritisation under the Smart Roads initiative.

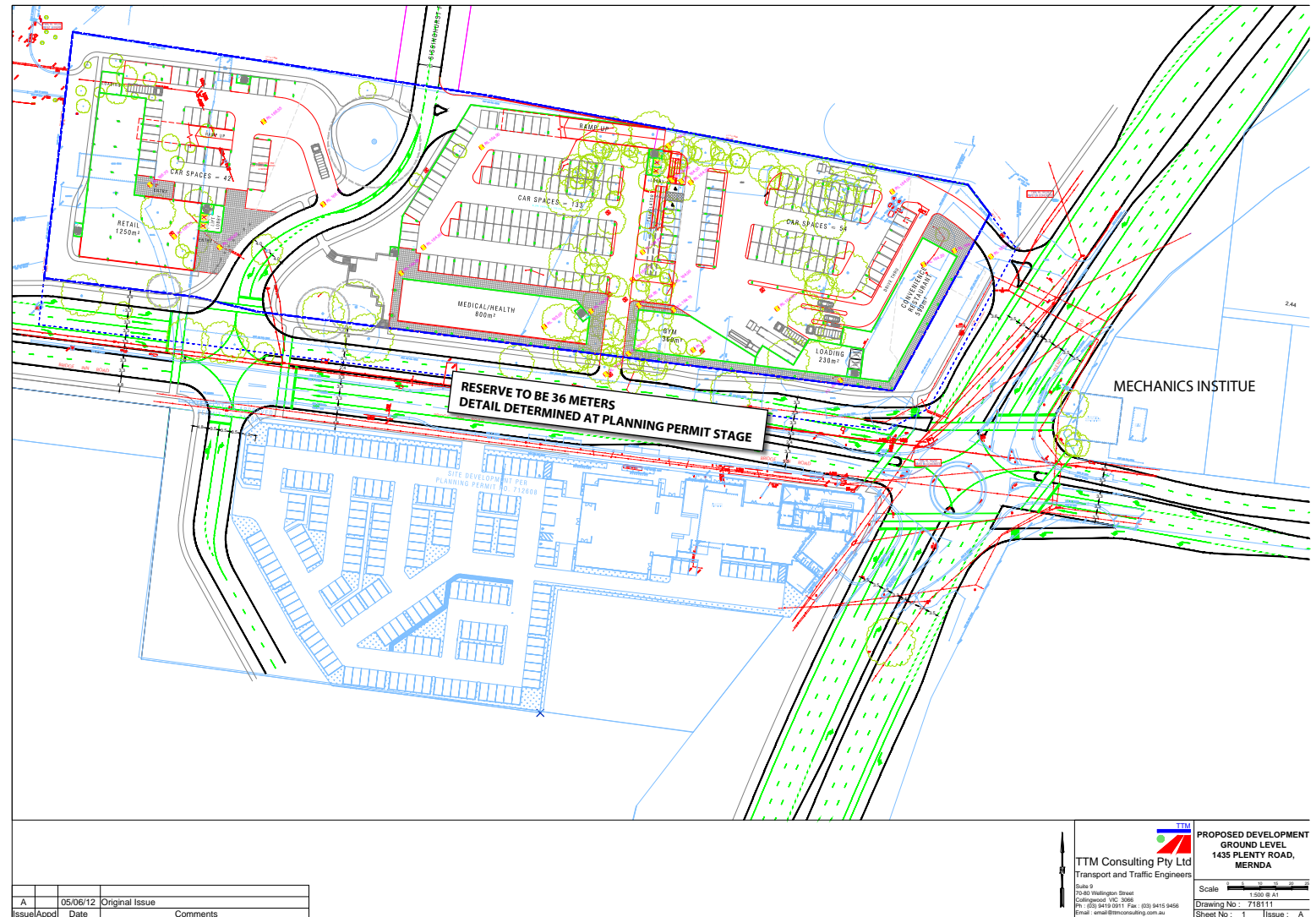


Figure 15. Proposed Intersection 1435 Plenty Road, Mernda

5.2 Flora and Fauna

The Habitat Hectare assessment identified approximately 0.36 hectares of remnant Plains Grassy Woodland (EVC55_61) and 60 scattered indigenous trees ranging from small to very large. The development plan avoids the removal of most large trees, and preserves 3 very large old trees, four large old trees, 2 medium old trees and 1 small tree. The vegetation community is centrally located within the site and cannot be retained given the town center context. Offsets required to meet Net Gain obligations in accordance with the Framework for the development plan are:

- 0.1 Habitat Hectares of High Conservation significance Plains Grassy Woodland; and
- Either the Protection of 4 LOTs, 14 MOTs and the Recruitment of 160 new plants OR the Recruitment only option of 1578 indigenous plants.

The removal of vegetation to facilitate the intensive urban development of the north-west corner of the Mernda Activity Centre will be offset as per the Net Gain requirements. In addition to the tree retention detailed in Section 5.3, the site will be landscaped with native vegetation to create a high quality, attractive public space with healthy species that add value to the Mernda Activity Centre.

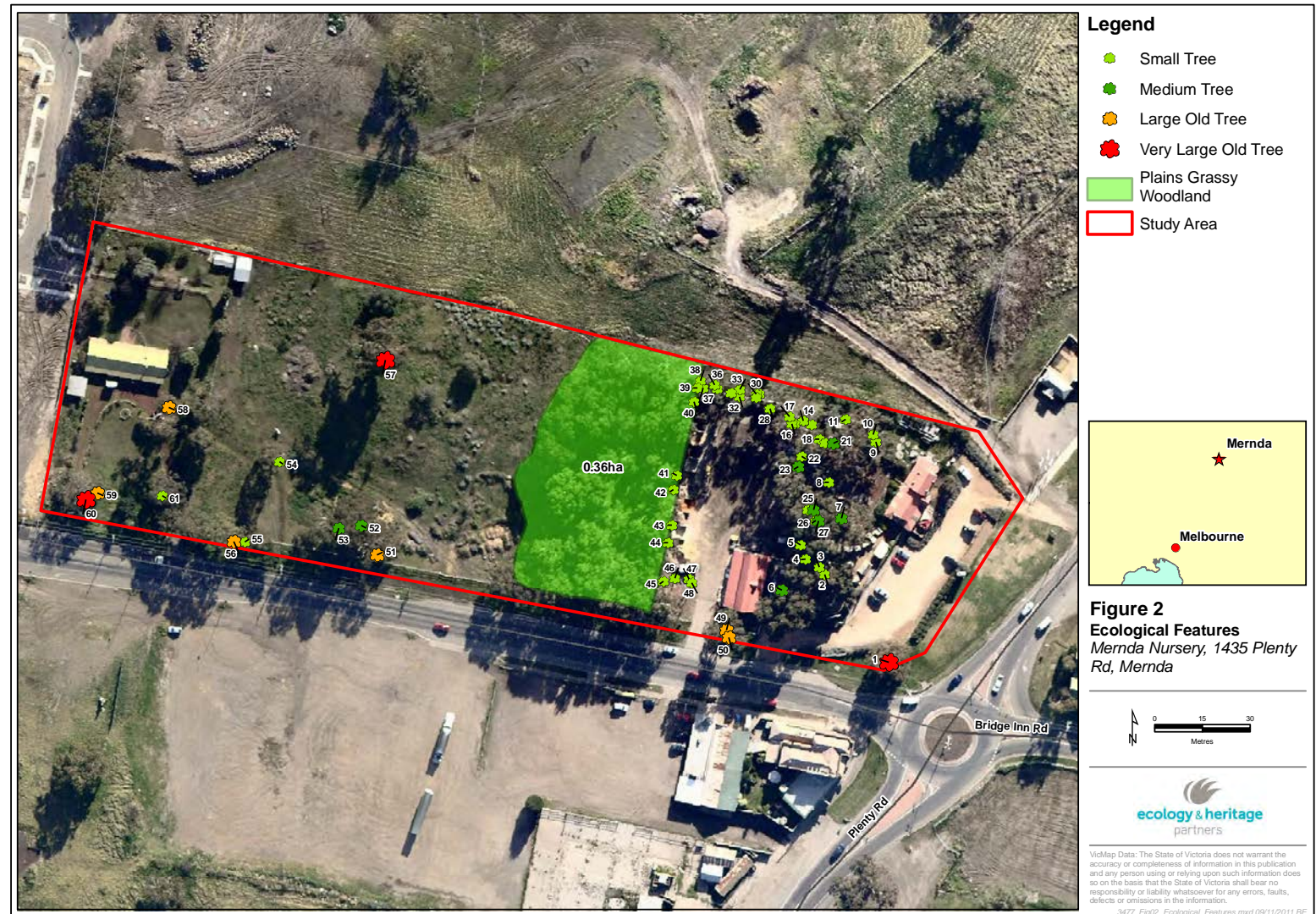


Figure 16. Ecological Features Plan

5.3 Arboriculture

The site has a high tree coverage and the majority of these trees are small River Red Gums of approximately 35 years age. The high value trees, especially tree 21, have been incorporated into the design and retained within small open space reserves. These reserves containing the large trees will provide landscape character to the site and contribute to a sense of place.

Other trees have not been able to be kept because of the constraints posed by the fixed road connections on the southern and northern boundaries, and the requirement for a north south road through the site. The preservation of trees has also been balanced with the overarching strategic direction for the site for intensive mixed use development as part of the Mernda Town Centre. Many of the more highly valued trees are located along the southern boundary of the site which is land required for the expansion of Bridge Inn Road by VicRoads. These will be retained but it is expected that they will need to be removed by VicRoads when the road is constructed. Please refer to Figure 17 - Tree Retention Plan.

Tree number 30 is not considered lost for flora and fauna purposes due to the fact that it has less than 10% intrusion within the TPZ and therefore meets the DSE standards. The DSE standards differ from the TPZ requirements of the City of Whittlesea.

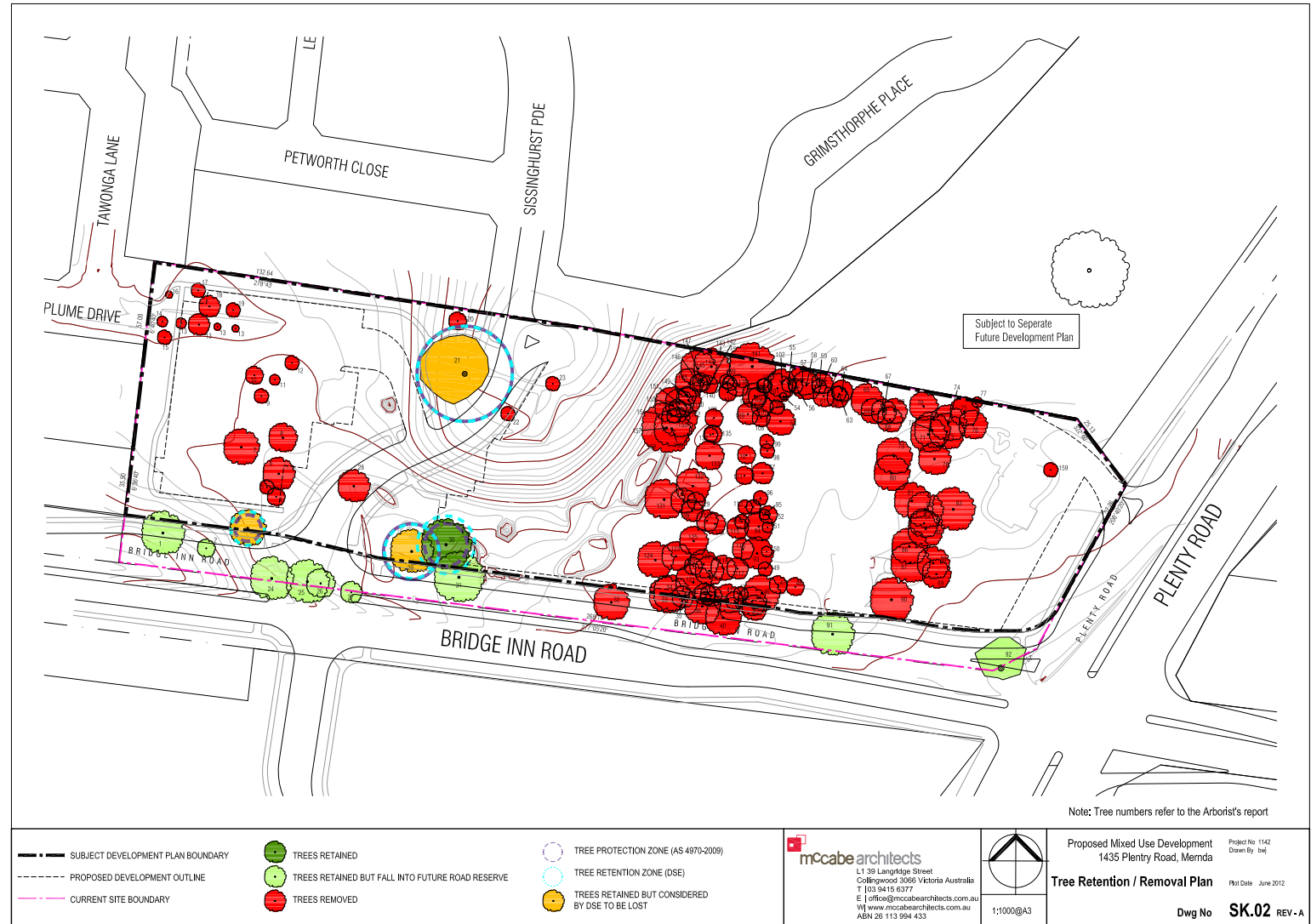


Figure 17. Tree Retention Plan

6. Conclusion

The site presents an exciting opportunity to create a component of a vibrant multipurpose town centre embracing pedestrian orientated development principles.

The North West Mernda Town Centre will provide community benefits through the new retail, commercial and residential facilities. Pedestrian links to surrounding residential areas and to the core retail precinct will strengthen movement whilst the new employment opportunities will provide direct community benefit.

The Development Plan implements the Mernda Strategy Plan and the Mernda Town Centre Comprehensive Development Plan, and recognises the State Government's designation of this site as a Major Town Centre in The Melbourne North Growth Corridor Plan.

The North West Mernda Town Centre Development Plan is consistent with the State and Local Planning Policy Framework as well as Victorian Government documents such as Melbourne 2030 and Melbourne @ 5 Million. It implements key design guidelines for activity centres such as the Activity Centre Design Guidelines. It will provide the framework to guide use and development to be implemented through the Development Plan Overlay that already applies to the site.

Council is respectfully requested to endorse this development plan under the provisions of Clause 43.04 (Development Plan Overlay) of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme.

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