



## **dandenong foothills urban & landscape review**

an urban & landscape assessment report prepared by hansen partnership  
on behalf of knox city council,

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## 1 introduction

The following review of the urban design and landscape attributes of the Dandenong Foothills has been prepared by Hansen Partnership for the City of Knox. The need for the review stems from the considerable increase in residential development demand in the Foothills in recent years and the ongoing influence of Melbourne 2030 and related metropolitan consolidation strategies.

The review is also necessary in light of a suite of recently completed strategic studies undertaken by the City of Knox, which seek to direct the pattern of urban growth across the municipality over time in association with increasing community interest in the protection of the important landscape and environmental values of this unique fringe suburban setting.

The aims of this review are:

- to examine the existing urban and landscape qualities of the Foothills setting
- to review the extent and status of existing design controls applying to the precinct
- to determine the key distinctive attributes of particular local precincts within the Foothills
- to identify of preferred character for particular precincts within the Foothills
- to specify precinct objectives and possible design management techniques
- to set the scene for future planning scheme amendment incorporating design controls

The intimate relationship in the City of Knox between the flat and undulating land to the south and east of the Dandenong Creek and rising land at the base of the Dandenong Ranges is crucial to the image and sense of place in Knox. The relationship between the flat and rising lands is different in Knox to that experienced to the north in Maroondah or south in Casey. Where neighbouring municipalities share the fringe of the Ranges within a broader suburban setting, the image of the rising Range in Knox is both proximate and consistent.

The visual experience of the Ranges (both within and outside the municipal boundary) as viewed from the low lying suburban parts of Knox is a varied one. While the 'postcard' image of heavily vegetated 'natural' slopes exist in part, the prevailing nature of the Foothills varies markedly from garden suburban subdivision, open pastoral lands, steeply sloping bush housing and confined valley floor strip development. While the distinctiveness between different urban/ suburban experiences within the Foothills is noticeable at close range, it is not perceived when viewed across the broad panorama of the Foothills (and Ranges above). In this regard, and in light of relatively broad-brush planning regime presently applied to the Foothills, it is important for prospective design controls:

- to recognise and reinforce the distinctive attributes of particular local precincts and ensure that new and emerging development and/or consolidation does not compromise them, and
- to acknowledge the 'bigger picture' of the Foothills as an undulating 'transition' landscape between the suburban foreground and the defining ridge of the Dandenong Ranges.

The purpose of this review is not necessarily to generate a suite of new planning and design controls, but highlight the difference between places within the Foothills, some of which is under threat from the significant impact of suburbanisation in the form of small lot subdivision, vegetation removal, excessive building height, high site coverage and inappropriate use of materials and finishes.

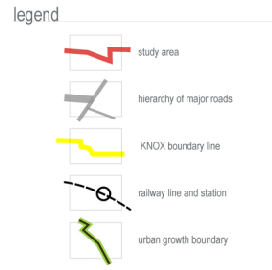
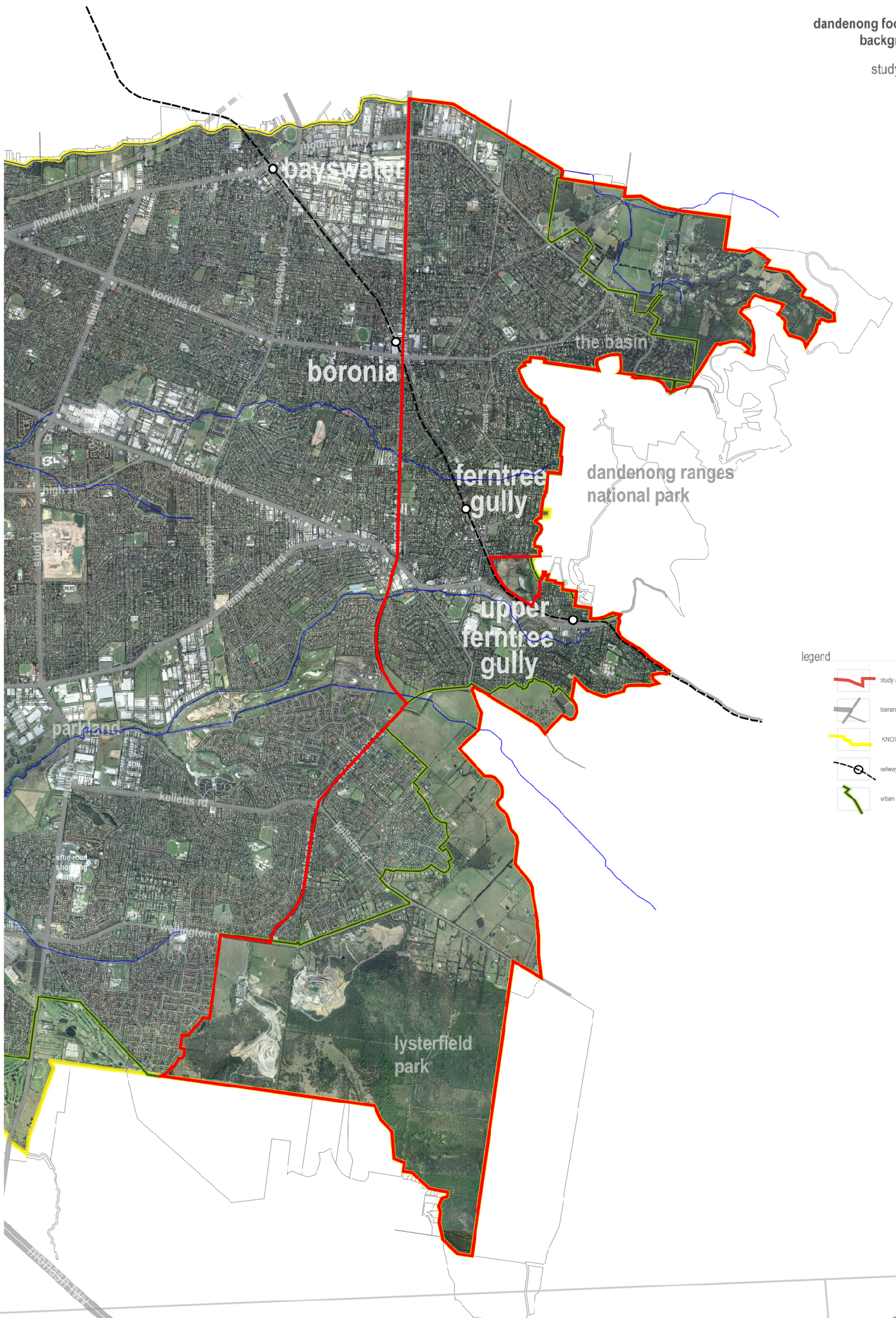


## 2 study area

The study area for the Dandenong Foothills Urban and Landscape Review comprises developed and undeveloped land on Melbourne's eastern urban fringe within the City of Knox. The study area includes the developed suburban areas of The Basin, Boronia, Ferntree Gully, Upper Ferntree Gully, Lysterfield and Rowville. It is bounded to the east and north by the Shire of Yarra Ranges (including area of the Dandenong Ranges National Park), to the west by Dorset Road, Napoleon Road and Kellets Road and to the south by Lysterfield Park and the Churchill National Park. Private land within the study area is for the most part developed, with the exception of some land in Lysterfield which is yet to be taken up for urban development (refer Figure 1).

The Knox Planning Scheme Municipal Strategic Statement recognises the landscape qualities of the Dandenong Ranges foothills as key contributor's to the identity of the City of Knox. With regard to the view catchment of Melbourne's eastern suburbs, the foothills provide a visually prominent 'zone of transition' between established suburban areas and the undeveloped slopes of both the Dandenong Ranges and the Lysterfield Hills. The manner in which the foothills area can continue to present as a transitional zone, from a visual perspective, is the fundamental focus of this study.

The particular neighbourhood and landscape character attributes of the suburbs within the overall foothills area together contribute to the character of the precinct as a whole. The Basin comprises a mix of both developed residential and undeveloped agricultural land, with the backdrop of the Dandenong Ranges National Park providing a strong visual presence. Boronia is an established suburban area with widespread mature canopy vegetation which both contributes to the visual amenity of the area as well as framing many of the views towards the Ranges. Ferntree Gully and Upper Ferntree Gully are established residential areas which are quite heavily vegetated, and exhibit a local character which very strongly reflects their transitory position between the suburbs and the Dandenong Ranges. The size and positioning of mature trees can be a critical determinant in these areas in tempering the visual impact of buildings. Rowville is a more recently developed residential area, and as such its character at present is defined more by its buildings rather than its landscape, which is still maturing. The degree to which the existing landscape – and in particular canopy trees – can mature and increase its visual dominance over time will be an important consideration of the contribution that the neighbourhood character of Rowville can make to the overall foothills precinct. Lysterfield, like The Basin at the other end of the study area, is a combination of developed residential and undeveloped rural land. Lysterfield Park provides a visually prominent, heavily vegetated backdrop to the area, as do the unvegetated Lysterfield Hills.





### 3 existing controls

The study area is subject to the following planning and design outlined in the Knox Planning Scheme. In addition to the stated Policy References, relevant zones and overlays are outlined in Figures 2 and 3.

#### 3.1 existing dandenong foothills policy

Clause 22.01 – ‘Dandenong Foothills’ – outlines Council’s objectives, policy, performance standards and decisions guidelines for land generally east of Dorset Road, Glenfern Road, Napoleon Road, Kelletts Road and Hallam Road North, within the City of Knox (refer diagram)



Plan to Clause 22.01

The objectives of the existing Dandenong Foothills Policy are:

- To ensure development is sympathetic to the significant landscape and environmental qualities of the Dandenong Ranges, State and National Parks and foothills areas.
- To ensure land use and development minimises visual intrusion to the Dandenongs and foothills, and maintains a residential character which is sympathetic to the natural surrounds.
- To acknowledge that whilst much of the area is predominantly urban, its character requires the maintenance of sympathetic building types and generally low development density.
- To minimise the intensity of residential development within those areas identified as being sensitive to environmental and other impacts, by virtue of the pattern and size of existing allotments, environmental and other constraints and the manner of utility and community service provision.
- To encourage appropriate use and development in rural areas and protect the physical and visual amenity of the rural areas.

The policy includes the following performance measures, intended to achieve the above objectives:

- The provision of dwellings at a density of no greater than 1 dwelling to each 1,000 square metres in the Residential 1 Zone, where there is no Design and Development Overlay.
- The provision of dwellings at a density of no greater than 1 dwelling to each 4,000 square metres in the Low Density Residential Zone.
- The provision of dwellings at a density of no greater than 1 dwelling to each 2,000 square metres in the areas covered by the Design and Development Overlay 1.
- The provision of dwellings at a density of no greater than 1 dwelling to each 1,000 square metres in the areas covered by the Design and Development Overlay 4.
- Any lot created has a building envelope not affected by the following environmental constraints:
  - Land with slopes greater than 20 per cent.
  - Land liable to flooding.
  - Land which is subject to land-slip or subsidence.
- Building height not exceeding 7 metres from natural ground level.



## 3.2 existing land use zoning regime

Land within the Dandenong Foothills study area is affected by numerous zoning controls as described within the Knox Planning Scheme. For the purposes of this study, those zoning controls considered relevant for discussion are the ones relating to land available for residential use and land which is considered contributory from either a landscape character and visual amenity perspective. The purpose of each of these zones is described in brief below (refer Figures 2 and 3).

### **Residential 1 Zone: (R1Z):**

- *To implement the State Planning Policy Framework and the Local Planning Policy Framework, including the Municipal Strategic Statement and local planning policies.*
- *To provide for residential development at a range of densities with a variety of dwellings to meet the housing needs of households.*
- *To encourage residential development that respects the neighbourhood character.*
- *In appropriate locations, to allow educational, recreational, religious, community and a limited range of other non-residential uses to serve local community needs.*

### **Low Density Residential Zone: (LDRZ):**

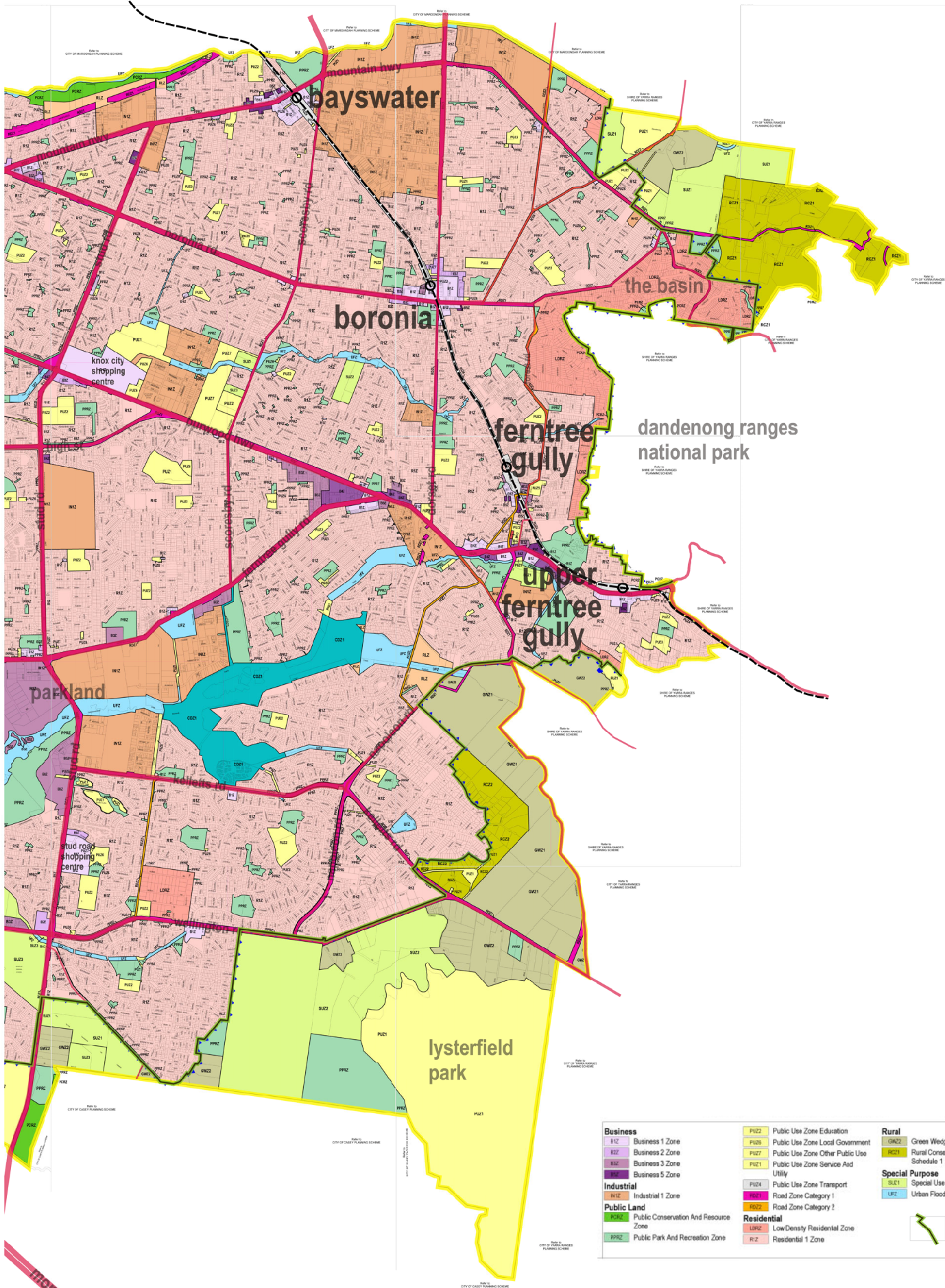
- *To implement the State Planning Policy Framework and the Local Planning Policy Framework, including the Municipal Strategic Statement and local planning policies.*
- *To provide for low-density residential development on lots which, in the absence of reticulated sewerage, can treat and retain all waste water.*

### **Mixed Use Zone: (MUZ):**

- *To implement the State Planning Policy Framework and the Local Planning Policy Framework, including the Municipal Strategic Statement and local planning policies.*
- *To provide for a range of residential, commercial, industrial and other uses which complement the mixed-use function of the locality.*
- *To encourage residential development that respects the neighbourhood character.*

### **Green Wedge Zone: (GWZ):**

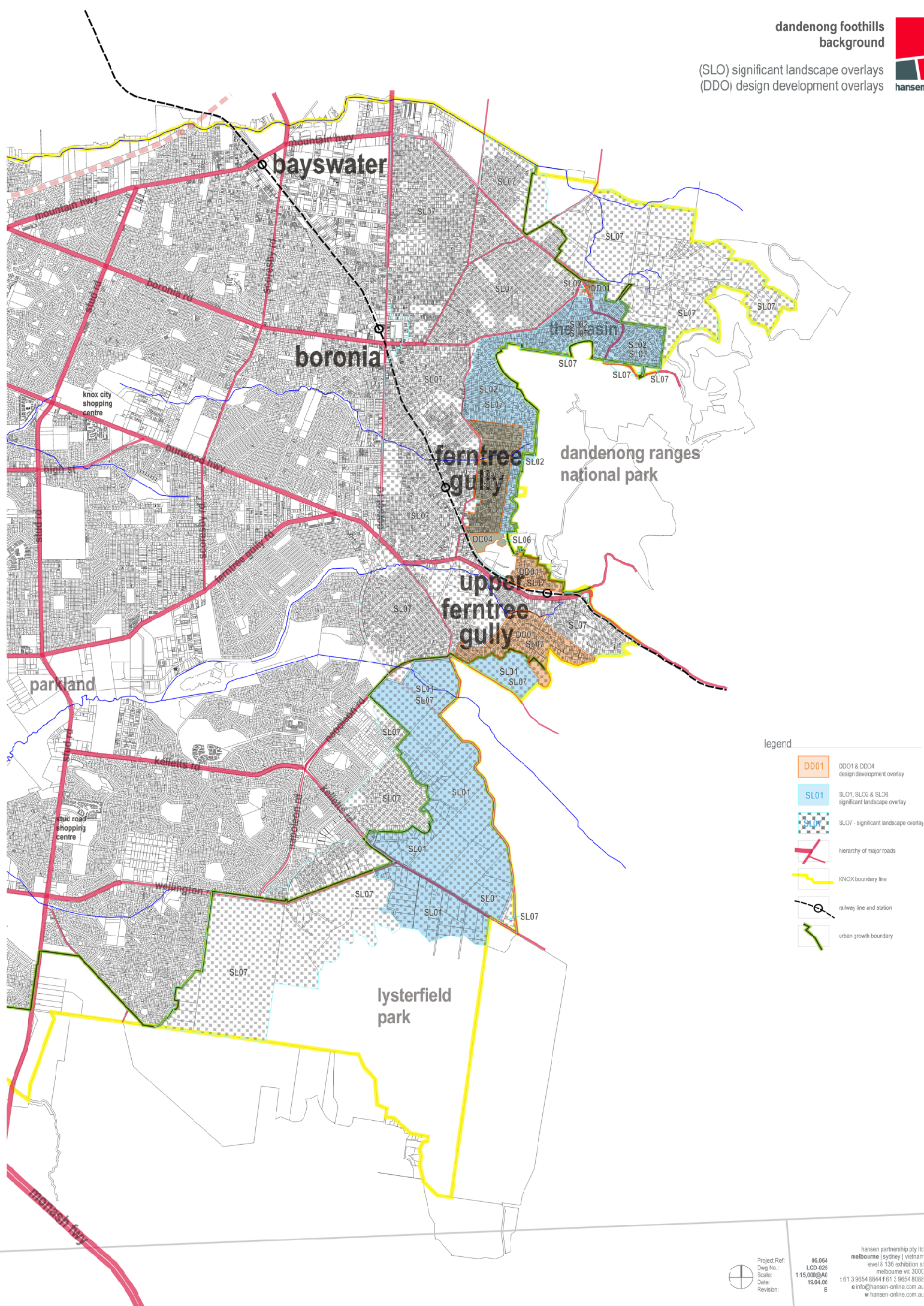
- *To implement the State Planning Policy Framework and the Local Planning Policy Framework, including the Municipal Strategic Statement and local planning policies.*
- *To recognise, protect and conserve green wedge land for its agricultural, environmental, historic, landscape, recreational or tourism opportunities, and mineral and stone resources.*
- *To encourage use and development that is consistent with sustainable land management practices.*
- *To conserve and enhance the cultural significance and character of open rural and scenic non-urban landscapes.*
- *To protect and enhance the biodiversity of the land.*



Business	Public Use	Rural
B1C Business 1 Zone	PUZ2 Public Use Zone Education	GRZ2 Green Wedge Zone - Schedule 2
B2Z Business 2 Zone	PUZ9 Public Use Zone Local Government	RCZ1 Rural Conservation Zone - Schedule 1
B3Z Business 3 Zone	PUZ7 Public Use Zone Other Public Use	
B4Z Business 4 Zone	PUZ1 Public Use Zone Service And Utility	Special Purpose
B5Z Business 5 Zone	PUZ4 Public Use Zone Transport	SPZ1 Special Use Zone 1
	PUZ3 Public Use Zone Transport	UFZ Urban Floodway Zone
	RUZ1 Road Zone Category 1	
	RUZ2 Road Zone Category 2	
Industrial	Residential	
IZ1 Industrial 1 Zone	LRZ1 Low Density Residential Zone	
	R1Z Residential 1 Zone	
Public Land		
PCR1 Public Conservation And Resource Zone		
PPRZ Public Park And Recreation Zone		







legend

-  DDO1 & DD04 design development overlay
-  SLO1, SLO2 & SLO6 significant landscape overlay
-  SLO7 - significant landscape overlay
-  hierarchy of major roads
-  KNOX boundary line
-  railway line and station
-  urban growth boundary





### **Rural Conservation Zone: (RCZ):**

- *To implement the State Planning Policy Framework and the Local Planning Policy Framework, including the Municipal Strategic Statement and local planning policies.*
- *To conserve the values specified in the schedule to this zone.*
- *To protect and enhance the natural environment and natural processes for their historic, archaeological and scientific interest, landscape, faunal habitat and cultural values.*
- *To protect and enhance natural resources and the biodiversity of the area.*
- *To encourage development and use of the land which is consistent with sustainable land management and land capability practices, and which takes into account the conservation values and environmental sensitivity of the locality.*
- *To provide for agricultural use consistent with the conservation of environmental and landscape values of the area.*
- *To conserve and enhance the cultural significance and character of open rural and scenic non urban landscapes.*

### **3.3 existing overlays**

Land within the Dandenong Foothills study area is also affected by numerous overlay controls as described within the Knox Planning Scheme. The purpose of each of these overlays is described below.

**Design and Development Overlay:** The purpose of the Design and Development 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 are affected by specific requirements relating to the design and built form of new development.*

Schedule 1 to the Design and Development Overlay (**DDO1**) – Residential Development in Dandenong Foothills, has the following objective:

- *To ensure that the density of residential development reflects the existing subdivision character of the area.*

**Vegetation Protection Overlay:** The purpose of the Vegetation Protection 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 and habitat corridors for indigenous fauna.*
- *To encourage the regeneration of native vegetation.*



Schedule 1 to the Vegetation Protection Overlay (**VPO1**) – Remnant vegetation with a high degree of naturalness, has the following objectives:

- *To retain vegetation which is representative of the natural heritage of the City.*
- *To maintain a stock of indigenous vegetation to provide a source of genetic material for the re-establishment of the natural heritage of the City.*
- *To retain high quality habitats for native fauna.*
- *To retain vegetation which is rare, threatened or recognised as being of local, regional or State significance.*
- *To retain vegetation in the vicinity of the Dandenong Ranges National Park to extend the biological values of the park.*
- *To retain vegetation which provides a buffer to waterways.*
- *To retain vegetation which provides natural beauty and interest.*

Schedule 2 to the Vegetation Protection Overlay (**VPO2**) – Significant exotic and non indigenous native trees, has the following objective:

- *To protect vegetation of special significance, natural beauty, interest and importance.*

Schedule 3 to the Vegetation Protection Overlay (**VPO3**) – Remnant over storey vegetation, has the following objectives:

- *To retain over storey vegetation which is representative of the natural heritage of the City.*
- *To maintain over storey remnant native vegetation to provide biodiversity and a source of genetic material for the re-establishment of the natural heritage of the City.*
- *To retain over storey habitat for native fauna.*
- *To retain native vegetation which provides a buffer to waterways.*
- *To retain native vegetation which is rare, threatened or of local, regional or State significance.*
- *To retain native vegetation which provides natural beauty and interest.*

**Significant Landscape Overlay:** The purpose of the Significant Landscape 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 significant landscapes.*
- *To conserve and enhance the character of significant landscapes.*

Schedule 1 to the Significant Landscape Overlay (**SLO1**) – Lysterfield Valley, has the objectives:

- *To protect the broad scale agricultural landscape character of the Lysterfield Valley.*
- *To retain remnant vegetation.*

Schedule 2 to the Significant Landscape Overlay (**SLO2**) – Dandenong Foothills, has the objectives:

- *To recognise the environmental and visual sensitivity of residential areas at the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges.*
- *To ensure that development is compatible with the scale and character of existing development at the foothills of the Dandenongs.*
- *To ensure that development is sensitive to the natural characteristics of the land including slope, terrain, services and any remnant vegetation.*



### 3.4 gaps

The various policies and controls described above are intended towards directing use and development within the study area in a manner which is consistent with the strategic objectives as expressed in the MSS and the associated policies, most notably the existing Dandenong Foothills Policy.

Whilst these controls provide the basis for assessment of development proposals with regard to their potential impact upon the established landscape and visual amenity values of the study area, there are significant gaps which at present limit the degree to which Council can ensure the protection of these values.

The existing Design and Development Overlay controls set clear standards with regard to minimum subdivision size, however they lack similar detail with regard to issues including maximum building height, number of dwellings, site coverage, slope, vegetation and landscaping, finishes and sewerage. Furthermore, the extent to which the existing Design and Development Overlay controls apply to the study area is limited spatially to a relatively small extent of the overall study area, being limited to parts of Ferntree Gully, Upper Ferntree Gully and The Basin.

The existing Vegetation Protection Overlay controls provide an appropriate level of protection for native and significant exotic trees, requiring a permit for their removal. These controls apply across the extent of the study area.

The existing Significant Landscape Overlay controls provide a similar level of protection for native trees as the Vegetation Protection Overlay controls, however they do not provide an equivalent level of protection for exotic trees, which in many instances are just as influential in considerations of visual sensitivity of development. Also, similar to the Design and Development Overlay controls, their spatial extent of coverage is limited to only a small proportion of the overall study area, comprising parts of The Basin, Ferntree Gully, Upper Ferntree Gully and Lysterfield.