

VISUAL EXPOSURE MAPPING

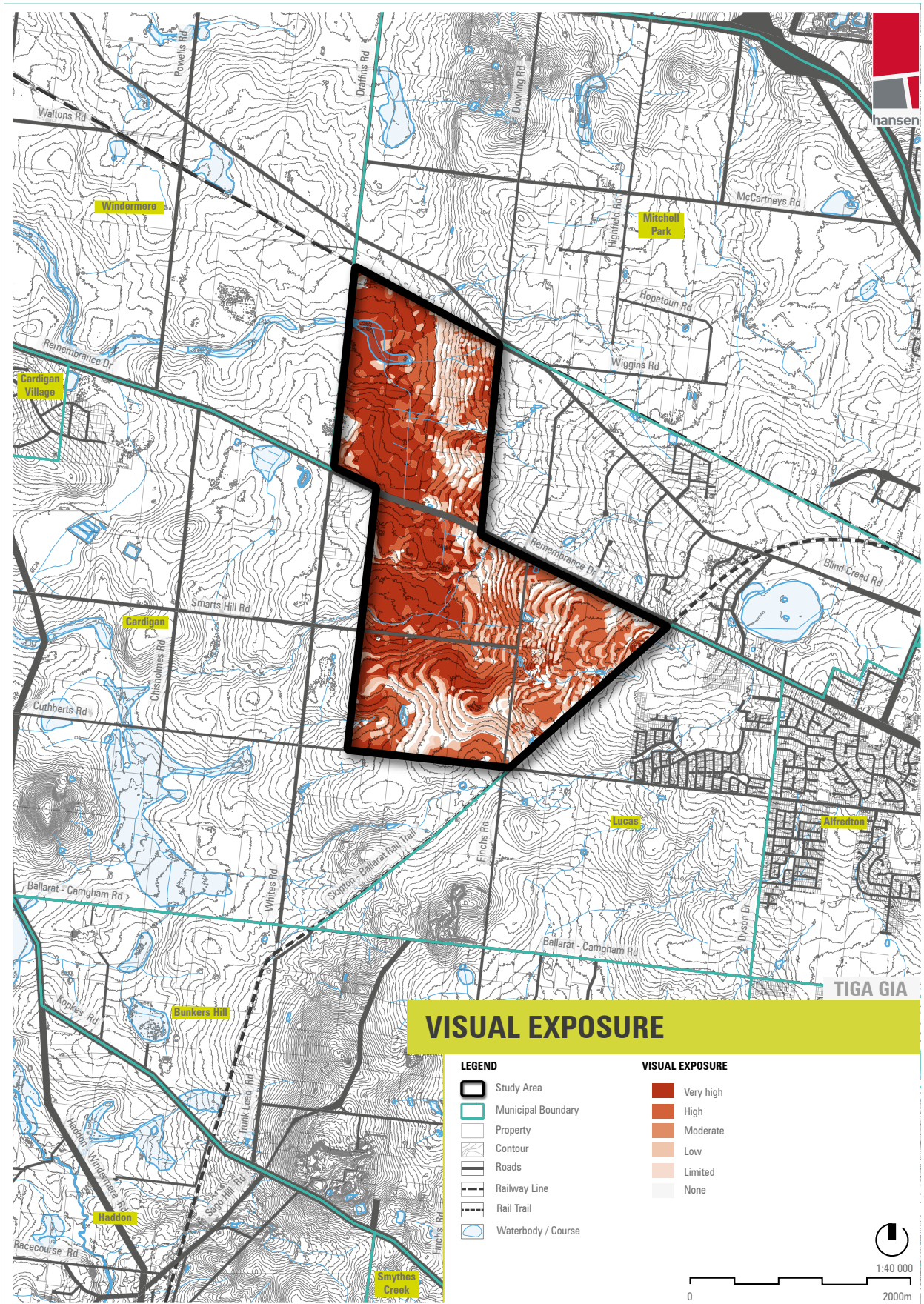
Following on from the detailed viewshed assessment and broad demonstration of visual exposure, degrees of visual exposure have been more succinctly mapped. This involves accentuating the differences between the varying red colour shades that indicated visual exposure based on the previous overlaying process to enable easier distinction. The colours have been differentiated using Adobe suite automated colour identification and separation tools.

The purpose of this assessment is to enable a more effective comparison of this data to areas of landscape value.

Based on the visual exposure analysis, areas in the study area have been assigned as having either of the following:

- Very high visual exposure
- High visual exposure
- Moderate visual exposure
- Low visual exposure
- Limited visual exposure
- No visual exposure

This breakdown is shown graphically in the visual exposure mapping. The mapping reflects a number of underlying trends in the viewshed assessment which result from topography and its impact on visual exposure. The broad implications of this and a comparison to results from site inspections which take into account on-ground factors such as trees and buildings are discussed in the following sections.



NORTH WESTERN GIA – VISUAL EXPOSURE

- Terrain in the North Western GIA typically slopes from being higher in the east of the study area to lower in the west of the study area, over a height variation of approximately 50 meters. Overall the terrain varies from consistently gentle slopes to gently undulating. The terrain allows for localised open views within the study area. The extent of views are contained by gently grading landform, as demonstrated by the viewshed mapping.
- The sparse vegetation in the study area means that views are typically open across fields, and then contained by gently grading landform or field boundary vegetation of mature canopy trees or shelter belt planting. As such the views demonstrated in the viewshed mapping are generally consistent with observed views from the site inspection.
- The western portion of the study area displays a very high to moderate visual exposure, afforded by gently sloping terrain. The eastern portion of the study area displays moderate to limited visual exposure determined by more elevated terrain relative to levels within the study area.

ASSESSMENT OF

5. LANDSCAPE VALUES

Associating and evaluating value within landscapes can often be an abstract, subjective and difficult concept to comprehend. This section aims to assess relative landscape value of the study area in a manner that is as objective as possible. This is to be achieved through review and analysis of previous assessment work, guided by benchmarking documents, primarily *Visual Landscape and Planning in Western Australia, a Manual for Evaluation, Assessment, Siting and Design. November 2007*. In this manual landscape values are broadly defined as (p.33):

“values or preferences refer to the value placed on a landscape feature by the community based primarily on its perceived visual quality.”

It is important to note that the assigned landscape values derived from this assessment are relative and have been compared to the study areas context. It is also important to acknowledge the existing high level of significance attributed to some existing areas of the North Western GIA as identified in the planning scheme via the Heritage Overlay (HO) applicable to the Ballarat Avenue of Honour, the Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO), and Environmental Significance Overlays (ESO).

The Landscape Values Assessment will use the following methodology:

- The identification, through the review of benchmarking documents, of objective criteria to assess landscape value.
- Using these criteria, the relative value of the different landscape character areas can be discussed and evaluated. Relative landscape value will be assigned as either high, moderate or low based on criteria such as:

HIGH

- Prevalence of typically valued landscape features such as native vegetation, waterbodies and topographic variety that form a cohesive environment.

MODERATE

- Some presence of landscape features such as native vegetation, waterbodies and topographic variety that often form a cohesive environment.

LOW

- Minor presence of landscape features such as native vegetation or topographic variety that are at times either degraded or rarely form a cohesive environment and may be encumbered by structures such as out-buildings or infrastructure (i.e. powerlines).

Once a level of value has been assigned to each character area, these will be compared with visually exposed areas. This in order to assign appropriate value to visually prominent areas and will be done through the subsequent Visual Sensitivity Assessment.

CRITERIA FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE VALUES

For the purposes of this study a set of broad landscape values assessment criteria have been developed through professional assessments by Hansen Partnership, an office of professional landscape architects, urban designers and planners.

These criteria ultimately take the form of landscape preference indicators, and it is intended that they be used to assess landscape value of the North Western GIA in a manner that is as objective as possible. In order to achieve this several publications have been assessed and subsequently used to formulate the landscape values assessment criteria.

To ensure that the methodology for this landscape values assessment is grounded by a best practice approach, it has been based on the methodology outlined in the guidelines provided by the *Visual Landscape and Planning in Western Australia, a Manual for Evaluation, Assessment, Siting and Design. November 2007* (VLPWA Manual).

The process of utilising these guidelines to establish landscape values assessment criteria, and then in turn to gauge landscape value is explained in further detail in subsequent sections of the report.

VLPWA MANUAL

The VLPWA Manual aims to provide a valuable resource for undertaking visual assessments of the landscape in lieu of often nonexistent formal local or state planning policy. This Landscape Values Assessment conducted for the North Western GIA specifically refers to: *Part Two, Section 2, Identify and assess what is valued in the visual landscape (p32-33) and Appendix 7, Visual landscape character preference indicators (p175-177)* within the VLPWA Manual.

The landscape character preference indicators identified in Appendix 7 of the VLPWA Manual have been developed using community preference research and subsequently list landscape features as being either most preferred or least preferred in a generalised landscape typology. These landscape typologies are categorised broadly as being natural, rural or built.

As the study area contains rural landscape typologies, it was deemed suitable to list all the applicable landscape preference indicators. It is intended that these preference indicators provide a structured basis for the landscape values assessment criteria, which is in keeping with the methodology outlined in the VLPWA Manual.

COMMUNITY VALUES

Community held landscape values are important to consider in the development of preference indicators to ensure the values assessment reflects community aspirations. 'Mapping Ballarat's Historic Urban Landscape' (Context Pty Ltd, 2013) identified a number of broad community landscape values through the 'Ballarat Imagine' community engagement process. These landscape values are broadly described as follows:

'Ballarat is a city 'in the landscape'. Valued landscape elements include Lake Wendouree, Mt Buninyong, views of Mt Warrenheip, Canadian Forest and the countryside that surrounds the city. Ballarat has a country feel and ambiance. And within the city, parks, gardens, street trees help create a beautiful city, bring nature into its heart. Open spaces are also valued places for recreation and leisure, and for community events. The creek systems and trails and the nearby bush are important. Even the weather, which often attracts adverse comment from outsiders, is valued.'

These community landscape values have been reflected in the preference indicators for natural and rural landscape typologies, and are listed in the following pages. It should be noted that a number of the preference indicators have been altered from the originals presented in the VLPWA Manual to reflect reoccurring landscape features specific to Ballarat and the previous community values. Adjusting the preference indicators for site specific features and community values is encouraged in the VLPWA Manual.

RURAL LANDSCAPE TYPOLOGY

PREFERRED LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Most preferred landscape features for this landscape typology are tailored from the VLPWA Manual to reflect reoccurring landscape features and community values specific to Ballarat, and include:

1. Diversity in agricultural landscapes (colour and contrast or species diversity of cropping).
2. Agricultural patterns, colours and textures that complement natural features.
3. Topographic variety and ruggedness, including elevated landforms and undulating terrain.
4. Presence of waterways and water bodies (dams, lakes, inundated areas, drainage lines and creeks) that borrow location, shape, scale and edge configuration for natural elements.
5. Areas or sites frequently prone to ephemeral features (presence of fauna, distinctive crop rotations, water conditions and climatic conditions).
6. Significant landscape features (established exotic windbreaks in good condition, trees and tree stands).
7. Settlement patterns and individual structures that strengthen the local rural character (water tanks, historic buildings, hay bales and dams).
8. Historic features and land use patterns that strengthen the local rural character (historic farm machinery, old sheds and historic buildings).
9. Distinctive remnant or established canopy vegetation / bushland located within allotments, along streamsides, roadsides and in paddocks.
10. Built form design which takes account of landscape features, vegetation and landform.
11. Incorporation of significant cultural and environmental features into design.
12. Presence of natural rock features (eg limestone cliffs, granite outcrops).
13. Built developments that do not impinge on dominant natural features (for example river foreshores, bushland and coastal landscapes).
14. Well maintained gardens (native and exotic).
15. Panoramic views to landscape features such as the Learmonth volcanic cones.
16. Well presented public open spaces including path networks.



LEAST PREFERRED LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Least preferred landscape features for this landscape typology are tailored from the VLPWA Manual to reflect reoccurring landscape features and community values specific to Ballarat, and include:

1. Areas of soil salinity/salt scalds or dead, dying or diseased vegetation.
2. Areas of extensive weed infestation.
3. Eroded areas
4. Tips, dumps and landfill areas.
5. Recently harvested areas (stumps, debris, abandoned off-cuts).
6. Land use areas or buildings that contrast significantly from rural landscape characteristics (can include plantations, mines, rural settlement and/or housing, utility towers, roads and fencing).
7. Run-down areas (dead grass, bare and, dead vegetation, derelict housing and/or buildings, abandoned and/or trashed cars).
8. Abandoned structures, yards or paddocks in a state of disrepair or destruction.
9. Farm structures and buildings in a state of disrepair.
10. Unmanaged roads and access tracks in a state of disrepair.
11. Eutrophied dams, lakes and water bodies (for example; algal blooms).
12. Degraded waterways and drains prone to stagnation, pollution and littering.
13. Presence of utilities (towers, transmission line, overhead power lines).
14. Severed or badly pruned street trees.

