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# Nillumbik Gap Study Stage B

Shire of Nillumbik Heritage Review: Stage B  
Thematic Environmental History Post-war Update

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# 1 Introduction

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The Post War Gap Analysis outlined sections of the Thematic Environmental History (TEH) that could be expanded upon to cover the post-war period. It was determined that the TEH currently covers residential development in the post-war period adequately for the purpose of assessing and providing context to the existing and proposed residential heritage places. Some additional information has been added concerning post 1975 residential development broadly in the Shire of Nillumbik (Shire).

Sections of the history that could be expanded were around post-war developments in infrastructure, community and recreation, work and education.

This document does not replace and is meant to be read as an addition to the Thematic Environmental History (2016).

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## 2 Thematic Environmental History Post-War Addendum

### 2.1 Connecting Nillumbik by Transport

The bulk of transport routes in the Shire, including roads, river crossings and railways were established through the nineteenth century. Transport continued to be a major theme in the development of Nillumbik in the post-war period of the twentieth century. However, the focus shifted gradually from the creation of new transport connections to their improvement and expansion to meet the needs of a growing municipality.

In the 1950s, new bridges included the Gipson Street Bridge (1950) in Diamond Creek, the Wilson Road Bridge (1953) at Wattle Glen, and the Bridge Street bridge (1957) at Eltham which was rebuilt with concrete and steel girders. The Country Road Board continued to be responsible for this and other upgrades, such as the Fitzsimons Lane –Yarra Bridge (1961). A major focus of its work was the replacement of old timber trestle bridges with concrete bridges, such as that at Bourkes Bridge (1979) at Hurstbridge, which was erected beside the old 1897 structure. Other old timber bridges were replaced entirely either with concrete or new timber, such as Allendale Road Bridge following its collapse (1977) and Mittons Bridge (1978). By the late twentieth century, the focus of road and bridge development shifted to duplication, such as the duplication of the Fitzsimons Lane Yarra Bridge in 1991.

Railways, though already established, were improved in the post-war period through the replacement of railway platforms and building of new stations. The Eltham Railway Station was rebuilt from a single-faced to island-faced platform in 1959. In 1969, the Greensborough Railway Station was upgraded to brick. In 1982, a new Hurstbridge railway station was opened, with the old station moved to St Andrews as a house.



Figure 1. Single-carriage Tait (Red Rattler) train at Eltham Railway Station, 1983. Source: Eltham Historical Society.



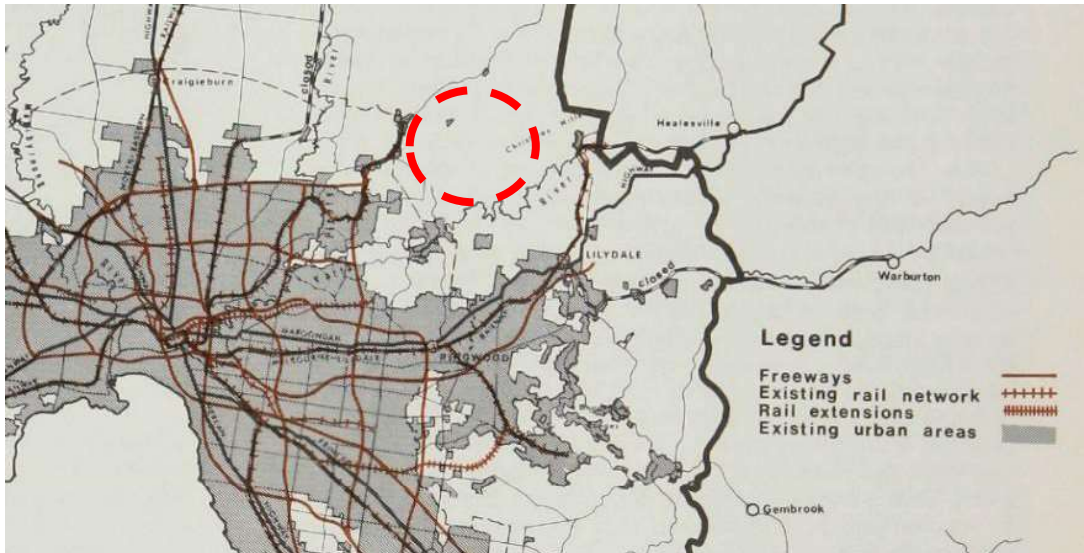


Figure 2: Extract of the 1969 transportation plan. The existing urban areas are denoted with grey, which do not include the Nillumbik areas. Source: Metropolitan Transportation Plan, cited in *Planning policies for the Melbourne metropolitan region*, 1971: 31.

## 2.2 Transforming and Managing the Land and Natural Resources

Forestry continued in the Shire in the post-war period. In 2004 April 07 Nillumbik and Whittlesea Shire Councils received \$50,000 funding from the Federal Government for the farm forestry and land care programs. The program aimed to battle widespread rural erosion and salinity ("Funding saves project" in *Leader- Whittlesea Post*, 07 April 2004: 19).

New parks and bushland reserves were created. These included the Warrandyte Park created in 1974, which incorporated sections along the Yarra River.

Since the 1960s, agricultural usage has continued in rural areas of the Shire but have contracted in the urban fringe areas. The Christmas Hills areas continued to comprise small farms and bush properties, beef cattle or horse-raising enterprises. Small farm operators however tended to become part time and rely on non-farm income. This included a rise in hobby farming or professionals seeking a rural lifestyle. Conservation, rather than simple economic exploitation became an increasing concern for new methods of farming (CERAP, 2012b:10) At St Andrews, the land use on cleared land was generally grazing by horses, goats or beef cattle with conservation use on bush blocks. The pattern of settlement and development however meant that the land was similarly fragmented and no longer suited to single-property, large commercial-scale agricultural holdings." (CERAP, 2012a:10) At Strathewen too, slope and soil characteristics precluded large scale agriculture. (CERAP, 2012c:12)

One major development in the post-war period has been the expansion of viticulture. One of the earliest wineries to start in this period was Panton Hill Winery (145 Manuka Road, Panton Hill). The winery was established by winemaker and viticulturist Teunis Kwak and his wife Dorothy. They bought the land that was to become the winery in 1973, with the first vines planted in 1977, and the major part of the crop planted in 1987/88. Most of the buildings onsite were constructed with Grampians sandstone, recycled timbers and Welsh slate (Panton Hill Winery website, 2019, History). Other wineries that opened later included Yarrambat Estate (45 Laurie Street, Yarrambat) in 1995 and Kings of Kangaroo Ground (15 Graham Road, Kangaroo Ground) in 1990.

In 2009 extreme heat and draught affected the wineries at Panton Hill Kangaroo Grounds and surrounding areas ('Winemakers crushed', *Leader- Diamond Valley News* 11 Feb 2009: 413).





Figure 3. Panton Hill Winery, built c.1980s. Source: Panton Hill Winery.

### 2.3 Building Nillumbik's workforce

In the post-war period, the tourism industry continued to expand. Local commercial centres expanded, such as that at Research, where a new post office opened among the row of post-war shops that opened in 1968. In 1971 Eltham Village Shopping Mall opened. The site was formerly the location of Eltham Public Hall and Shire Offices along Main Road.



Figure 4. New Post office, Research, opened 1968 (has since moved next door – row of postwar shops at 1528-1546 Main Road appear to be have been highly modified but may be of historical interest. Source: National Library of Australia.

### 2.4 Building towns and shaping suburbs

The immediate post-war years threw up substantial problems for settlement including a major housing shortage, 'austerity' conditions and shortages and rationing of virtually all building materials. Despite these difficulties, the survivors of the war also felt a responsibility to explore and build a new and better order. Peter Cuffley describes how, in the field of



building, this was 'an important period of experimentation when theories were tested, ideas shaped and reshaped and the essential foundations were created for the mature Australia of the late 20th century.' (Cuffley 1993:91). These propelled the post-war architects to search for a new language for the domestic architecture outside the established inner suburbs, creating a notable building stock of Melbourne Regional Style in Eltham, Warrandyte and Warrandyte North (Goad 1992). At the same time, environmental builders such as Alistair Knox used mud brick and rubble rock to build, paving the foundation of the 'Eltham Style' that dominated the post-war built environment of the Shire.

The concept of a Melbourne Regional Style emerged in 1947 in Robin Boyd's publication *Victorian Modern*. Architects worked in the style campaigned for the simple elegance offered by the International Style, while developing a regional architectural language that could be easily understood by the average citizens. **Melbourne-Reginal-Style** houses were mostly residential and located in Melbourne's outer suburbs or in the bush (Apperley et al, 1989:218), such as in Warrandyte and Eltham. The young architects had difficulty understanding Melbourne's urban environment in the aftermath of WWII and chose these areas to express their architectural ideas. The houses were typically narrow, linear, single-storey dwelling with a low-pitched gable roof, exposed rafters and wide eaves. Walls were generally bagged or painted brick and contain large areas of glass with regularly spaced timber mullions. Notable architects who had worked in the Nillumbik area included Robin Boyd, Roy Grounds, John Hipwell, Fritz Janeba, Kevin Borland, John Hipwell and Albert Ross. In 1969, architect and architectural historian Peter Samuel Staughton designed a residence for his wife Ruth in Warrandyte (Reed, 1985).



Figure 5: The Hipwell House was featured in *The Australian Home and Beautiful* in 1954. The house was destroyed in the 1962 bushfire. Source: *The Australian Home and Beautiful*.



Figure 6: Colvin House at 3 Lawrence Court, Warrandyte North designed by Kevin Borland. The property is not included in an HO. Source: Kevin Borland Architecture from the heart.

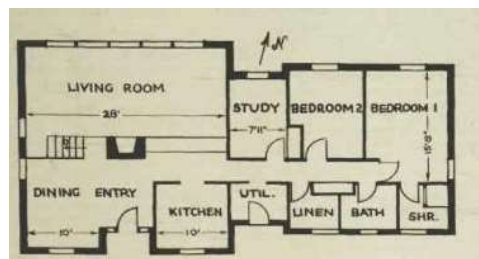


Figure 7: Peter Staughton's house in 1969. The floor plan is featured on the right (Figure 8). Source: *Australian Women's Weekly*. The address, if it is still extant, has not been identified.



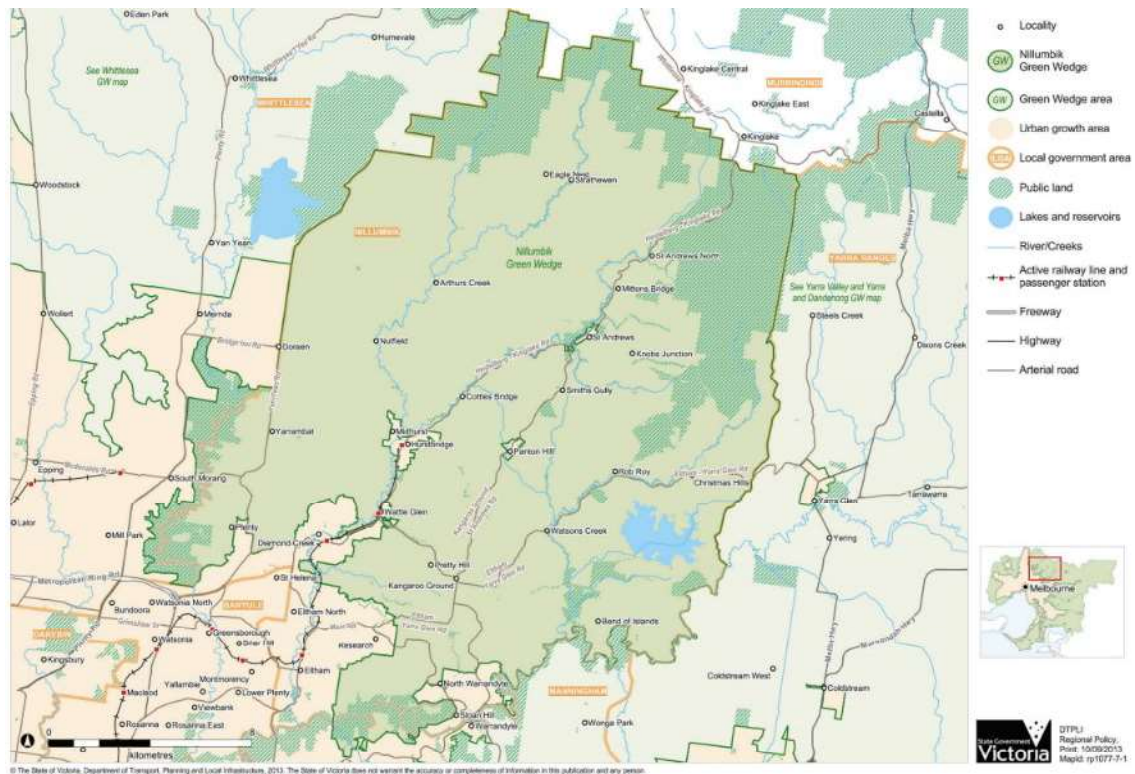


Figure 9: Plan shows Nillumbik Green Wedge areas (denoted green). Source: DELWP, 2013.

From the 1970s onwards, large scale subdivisions and land sales tended to be bulk developers using standard designs. From a population of 28,632 in 1976, the Shire of Eltham grew to 34,648 in 1981. The town of Hurstbridge grew from 878 in 1971, to 1,725 in 1986. In 1982 the administration of Hurstbridge Water Works Trust & Sewerage was handed to the Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW). By the 1990s, the Shire of Eltham reached 42,682 residents in 1991, and following the expansion and amalgamations of the council areas, by the 1996 census the new Shire of Nillumbik had a population of 54,417 residents.

#### *The Green Wedge and Development Pressures in Nillumbik*

The original intent of the 'green wedge' strategy (came into being in the 1980s) was to preserve the undulating semi-rural enclaves as 'the lungs of Melbourne'. It set in concrete a minimum eight-hectare subdivision in two-thirds of the Shire and in the outer reaches of Manningham, which includes Park Orchards, Warrandyte and Wonga Park ('Pressure on Green wedge Age, 8 March 1998:4).

In 1995, March 29 *The Age/ Sunday Age* reported that the Diamond Valley area had one of the fastest growth in housing development in the past 25 years, with land 'available at varying prices, large-scale builders have targeted its mixture of good flat land and interesting undulations.'

Townships like Diamond Creek, Hurstbridge, Wattle Glen and Panton Hill have advanced from villages to suburbs in the past quarter century, Greensborough has become a major retail and commercial centre, and Eltham, and historic gem in the Diamond Valley crown, has managed to hold on to its history.' ("Growing on the outskirts" Age 29 March 1995:24).

The Diamond Valley became popular with house-hunters because of its dual-personality it has good transport communications on the south side with Melbourne and immediate access to superb open country to the north. ("Growing on the outskirts" Age March 29, 1995:24)



Local community resistance to further development was bypassed by the State government through the appointment of commissioners during the period of local government amalgamations in the mid 1990s. For example, the controversial sale by tender of nearly 100 hectares of Eltham bushland known as Pretty Hill was ordered by State Government-appointed commissioners despite unease in the local community. The land was originally earmarked for landfill purposes but, responding to pressure from the community, Eltham Shire Council changed instead listed the land for development **as public open space**:

The commissioners have since decided that the community cannot afford such public open space and it will be sold in total with a planning permit for subdivision into 11 lots ranging in size from six to 10.9 hectares (15 to 27 acres).

Apart from its natural beauty, what attracts buyers to this area and this part of Kangaroo Ground, in particular, is its close proximity to both Eltham and Greensborough (with its 200-shop Plaza shopping centre) and the fact that it is not too far from town at about 35 minutes off-peak driving. It is also very close to Eltham College.

The land, surrounded by similar developments with large houses on extensive acreages, would be likely to attract higher- than-average-income families with an interest in the environment, and has obvious appeal for horse lovers with the Kangaroo Ground pony club not far up the road. ('Prime 'open space' in Eltham goes to tender', *Age* April 27:6)

Even following the reintroduction of democracy at the local level, it was reported that in the Shire, the subdivision of the green wedge led to such deep splits on the council that the Government sacked it once more. ('Quest for a happy medium / Battle of the suburbs', *Australian* January 8, 1999:5) In this way, while the 'Green Wedge' remained the official government policy, pressure nonetheless built for development in the urban fringes like Nillumbik, particularly around Diamond Valley and Hurstbridge where strong demand for residential housing met resistance from a Council that was against more subdivisions. ('Pressure on green wedge', *Age* 8 March, 1998:4) Large corporate developers such as the Brentwood Corporation were involved in residential subdivisions including a 96-lot subdivision in Eltham by 1994 (*Sydney Morning Herald* 22 March, 1994:44).

## 2.5 Building spiritual life

A significant post-war change was the amalgamation of the Uniting Church of Australia in 1977, when the Hurstbridge Methodist Church became part of the Diamond Valley Parish of the Uniting Church. The adjacent weatherboard hall belonged to the Greensborough Methodist Church. It was moved to Plenty in 1965, where it served as the hall for another church in the Diamond Valley Parish until the Plenty church closed. It was moved to Hurstbridge in 1985. (Eltham Historical Society, 2000:97)

Declining church attendance nonetheless posed a challenge for maintaining local church congregations in the late twentieth century, as illustrated by the closure or conversion of a number of smaller churches. For example, in 1966 church services ceased at St Andrews, and in 1971 the Diamond Creek church was sold for a restaurant.

## 2.6 Educating people

After WWII, the baby boom and post-war migration created pressure on the existing school system within the Shire as well as across Victoria. The older schools had inadequate facilities and space to cope with the situation. In the case of Eltham and Hurstbridge Primary Schools, there was no electricity for lighting until 1954. Yarrambat Primary School suffered from overcrowding, as a single classroom had to accommodate two teachers and approximately fifty students. In response, the Shire entered a period of rapid expansion of



schools. The plan saw the upgrade and expansion of older school buildings, such as those of Eltham and Yarrambat Primary Schools. At the same time, new schools were built across the Shire to cater for the growing education needs within the community. These include Eltham East- Grove Street School (1963), Diamond Valley East Primary School (1971), Eltham College (1974) and Hurstbridge Preschool (1975).

In 1976, the Hurstbridge High School opened, followed closely by the new Warrandyte High School in 1978. As the population of young families grew in the area in the 1980s, a new primary school was opened in Hurstbridge in 1981 and new school buildings were added in St Andrew (1984) and Yarrambat Primary School (1988). In 1989 Diamond Creek Living and Learning Centre established. In 1992 Hopkins & Clarke were the architects of a new primary school in Hurstbridge (Ferguson's Paddock)



Figure 10. Eltham East Primary School, Grove Street, 27 December 2011. Source: Eltham Historical Society.



Figure 11. Eltham High School. Only the tree is currently covered by the HO.



Figure 12. Yarrambat Primary School.



Figure 13. Hurstbridge Primary School.

## 2.7 Establishing meeting places

In the post-war period, the growing community necessitated a number of new community meeting places. At the time, decline in some of those community groups established in the nineteenth century was balanced by the growth of new models of community development and organising. The Eltham War Memorial Trust was among the groups established to meet new community needs, in this case also meeting the demand for remembering the fallen. In 1955 it commenced a pre-school building, and in the following decade expanded to include the Memorial Garden along the Main Road Entrance (1963). In 1965 the Trust transferred its property to Eltham Shire Council. A committee of Management for the Eltham Memorial Trust land was appointed by the Council in August 1965. (See also THE p108) Other developments in the post-war period included the completion of the Eltham Youth Club Hall in Youth Road (1958) and the establishment of the Eltham Senior Citizens' Centre established in November 1962. In 1966, its new hall opened in War Memorial Trust grounds.



In 1965 Diamond Creek Senior Citizen's Centre was built. In 1966 Eltham Public Library commenced in the Old Shire Office Main Road, staffed by Heidelberg Library.

1972 The **Shire of Diamond Valley (later Nillumbik) Civic Centre** opened, designed by Whiteford and Peck. It was among a number of community buildings following the new model of community development. A community centre also opened at Eltham in 1978. In 1984 Allwood House, a community house, was purchased by Eltham Shire and opened the following year.



Figure 14. Eltham Infant Welfare Centre, 1954. Source: Eltham War Memorial Trust. Source: Eltham War Memorial Building Complex, Eltham ([www.iathome.com.au](http://www.iathome.com.au))



Figure 15. War Memorial Garden, Main Road, Eltham, February 1968. Source: Eltham District Historical Society.



Figure 16. Diamond Creek Senior Citizen's Centre at 32-34 Elizabeth Street, Diamond Creek. Source: Google Maps.



Figure 17. Eltham community centre designed by Whiteford and Peck, pictured in *Architect*, August 1979.

## 2.8 Shaping cultural and creative life

Artists, writers and intellectuals continued to be among those who were attracted to the area in the decades after the Second World War. At Warrandyte, potters began to outnumber painters. In 1958 five local potters, Phyl Dunn, Arthur Halpern, Gus McLaren, Reg Preston and Charles Wilton, along with John Hipwell, established a 'Potters Cottage' in Moonlight Cottage selling their wares and demonstrating their craft. Soon the Potters Cottage was moved to a new location south of the river, but other young potters continued to live and work in North Warrandyte. Similarly, Eltham continued to attract artists of all types. (Butler & Associates 1996:55).

Two postwar artists attracted to the area, and concerned to protect and maintain its unique environmental characteristics, were Clifton Pugh, who built *Dunmoochin* at Cottles Bridge (HO8) in the 1950s and Neil Douglas, largely responsible for the Environmental Living Zone at the Bend of Islands in the 1970s. Pugh attracted a number of other artists to join him in an artists' colony at *Dunmoochin*. Several of them also built mud brick homes at Cottles Bridge (Butler & Associates 1996:55).



Other artists have lived in the *Dunmoochin* area since, including Rick Amor, Heja Chong (HO10) and Geoffrey Davidson. A number of important artists were friends of Clifton Pugh and frequent visitors to the property during the 1960s and 1970s. These include Fred Williams and Albert Tucker (Bick & Kellaway 1992). Clifton Pugh's home at *Dunmoochin* burned down in 2001 but early studio buildings and other original features remain.

A new generation of artists in the Shire upholds this strong artistic tradition. *Montsalvat* is still a centre for the arts. *Dunmoochin* continues to be a place for artists to work and live and maintains an artist-in-residence program. The tradition of artists opening their homes and studios to the public, which began in the 1960s, is maintained as part of the Nillumbik Shire Artists Open Studio program. In 1975, *Montsalvat* became a charitable trust. In 1989, it was recognised by the Victorian Government and was placed on Victoria Heritage Register (VHR 716). In 1996, the great red brick barn/ workshop/ studio was subject to arson and burnt down. The building was since rebuilt and forms part of the exhibition space, the Barn Gallery (Jorgensen, 2001).

Nillumbik is also known for its close association with writer and political activist Allan Marshall (1902-1984). Marshall firstly moved to the Shire in his teenage year with his parents, when he awarded a scholarship to attend Stott Business College. He left the college without a qualification and spent the ensuing decades in writing, traveling and political activism. In 1955, Marshall returned to Eltham and settled in a bungalow-style residence at 13 Park Road West Eltham (HO 147), where he lived until 1980. Marshall became a keen defender of the Shire's natural and cultural heritage. During his time in Eltham, he completed several important publications, including *I Can Jump Puddles* (1955), *This is the grass* (1962) and *In Mine Own Heart* (1963). Other notable publications completed in this period included *The Gay Provider* (1962), a commissioned history of the Myer Emporium, and *Pioneers and Painters: one hundred years of Eltham and its Shire* (1971). Marshall was appointed OBE in 1972 and AM in 1981. He died in 1984 and was buried in Nillumbik Cemetery (McLaren, 2012). Alan Marshall is mentioned in Section 1.3 of the TEH under the theme of appreciating and protecting the natural environment.

Facilities that grew in the post-war period included not only artistic communities, but also sports and recreation. Hurstbridge Football Club was particularly successful in the post-war period. Other active groups included the Kangaroo Ground Pony Club, established in 1967. In Hurstbridge, a similar Horse and Pony Club was started by the Fergusons near Silvan Road and later moved to Ferguson-s Paddock in 1976. Ferguson's Paddock, acquired as a passive recreation reserve by the council in 1975, became an important local recreation ground. Groups that moved to the ground included the Hurstbridge Tennis Club, which built a new clubhouse and courts there in 1985.



### 3 Post-1975 Developments

#### 3.1 Areas of Residential Development

Large areas of the Shire have been given over to residential development since c.1975. Areas identified through research where substantial development has occurred include around Diamond Creek, Diamond Creek North, Research and surrounding area. None of these areas have been identified as being of potential heritage significance, due to the wholesale nature of development and the relatively limited period of time elapsed. No notable architectural involvement has been noted in any of these developments that could justify the inclusion of these areas in a Heritage Overlay.

The Shire has been a designated Metropolitan Shire. Nonetheless, only 9% of the Shire is included in the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). Whereas 91% is outside the UGB, with the development being constrained by the Green Wedge **Registration**. This has resulted in a limited area of the Shire being available for residential subdivision.

In 2001, the subdivision and development of the *Diamond Creek North Area A* was approved by the Nillumbik Shire Council. According to *Leader- Diamond Valley News*, the area had been earmarked for residential development since 1971 ('Deal OK for landowners' *Leader- Diamond Valley News* 25 July 2001:3). The area is located to the north of Diamond Creek, and is bounded by Murray, Blackgully and Broad Gully Roads, and Hillingdon Drive to the South. To the east of Area A, on the east side of Broad Gully Road is the *Diamond Creek North Area B*. The area is bounded by Scrubby Creek and Diamond Creek to the east and comprises 99-ha of land. **Area B is identified to as a Major Activity Centre in State Government policy**. Development of the area has commenced in early 2010s.



Figure 18: Aerial photo taken in 1976 by the Department of Crown Lands and Survey, Victoria in 1976 shows the approximate extent of the Diamond Valley North Area A (indicated with red) and Area B (indicated with yellow). These areas were dominated by empty paddocks with vegetations. Source: State Library Victoria Digital Collection, <http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/240090>



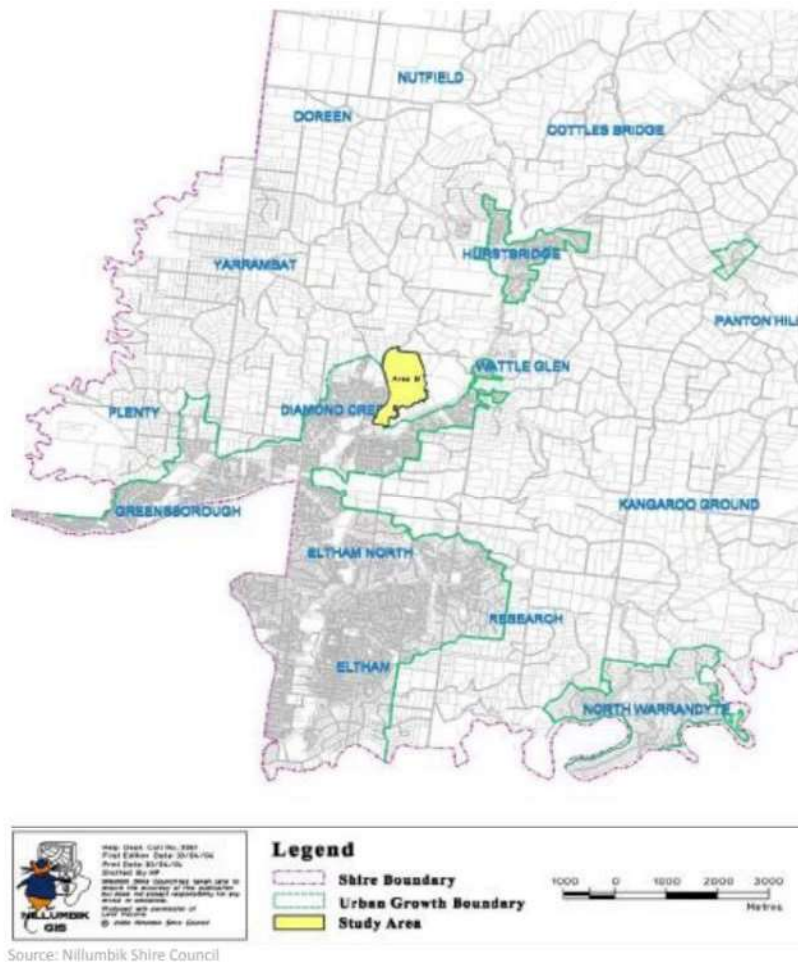


Figure 19: Plan shows the Diamond Creek North Area B. The plan also indicates the designated Urban Growth Area within the Shire. Source: SGS Economics and Planning, 2013.



Figure 20: Aerial view dated January 2011 shows the residential development at the Diamond Creek North Area. Source: Nearmap, 2021.



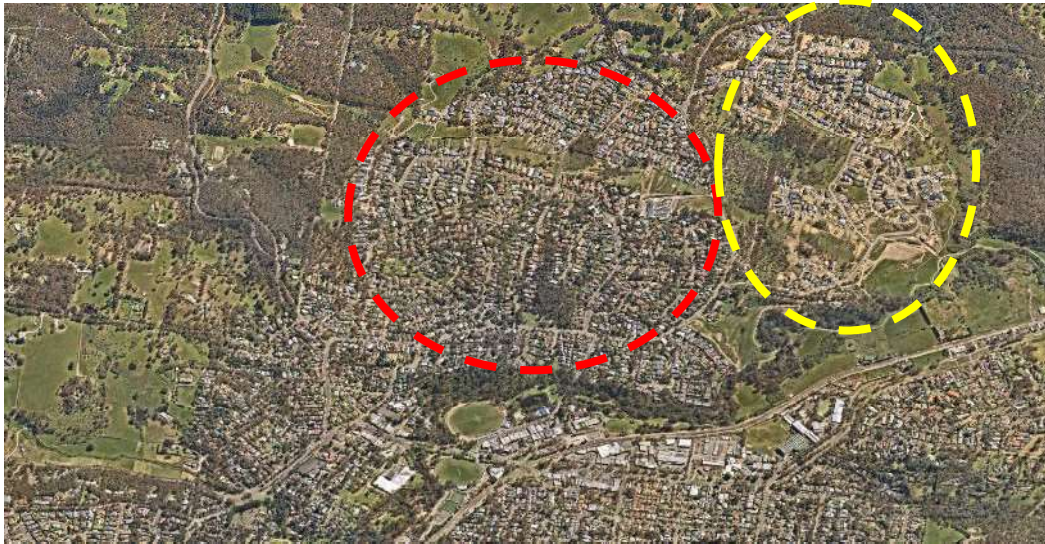


Figure 21: Aerial view dated October 2021 shows the residential development at the Diamond Creek North Area. Source: Nearmap, 2021.

Further to this, a comparison between the 1976 aerial photo also indicates that the housing development in Research mostly began in the late 1970s, as the area were still mostly dominated by vacant land on the 1976 aerial photo.

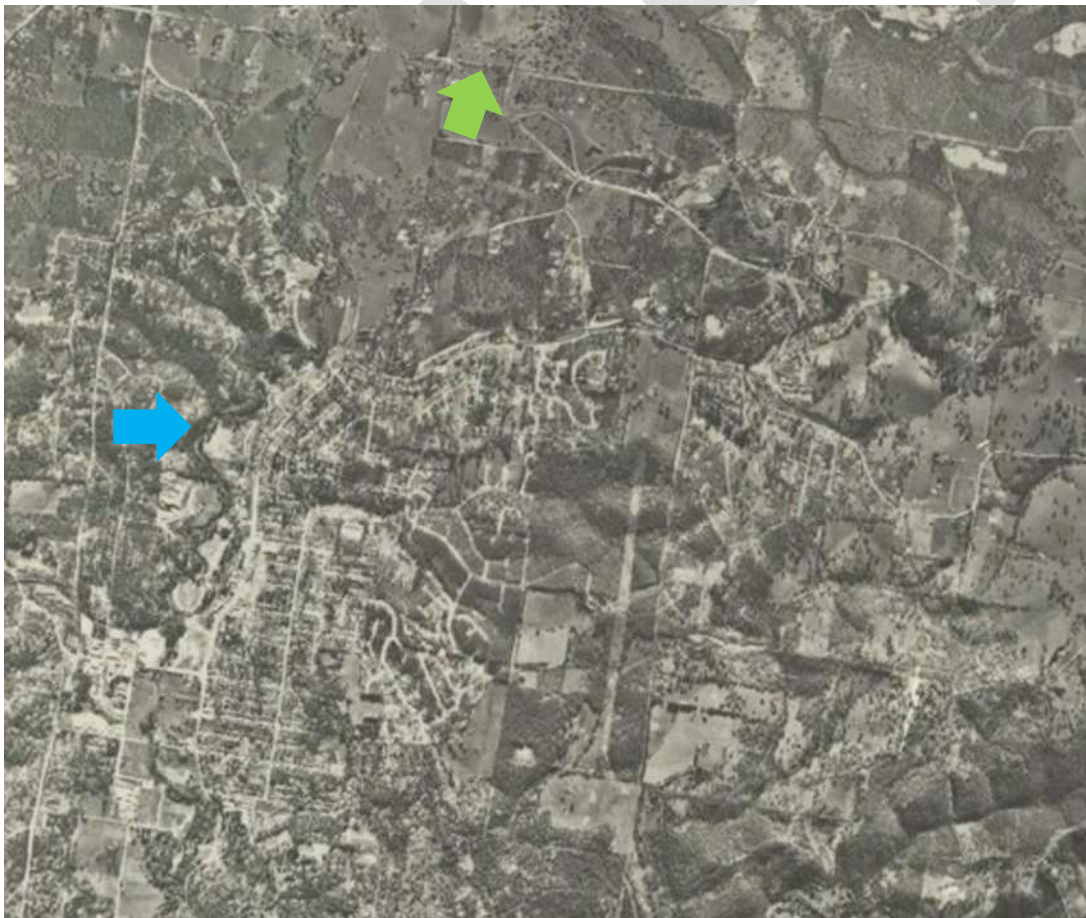


Figure 22: The 1976 aerial view of the Department of Crown Lands and Survey shows the suburb of Research and surrounding area. Allendale Road is indicated with green and Diamond Creek with blue. Source: State Library Victoria Digital Collection, <http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/240090>



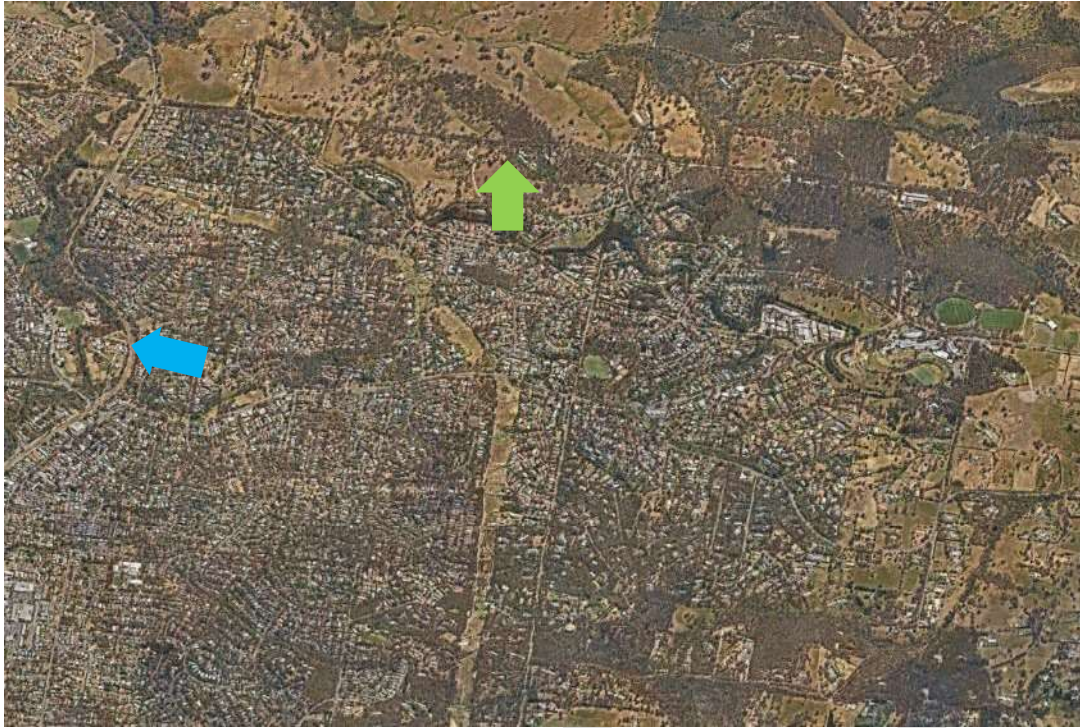


Figure 23: Aerial photo shows the expansion of housing development in Research and surrounding area in December 2019. Allendale Road is indicated with green and Diamond Creek with blue. Source: Nearmap, 2019.

Based on the events listed above, the development within the Shire is about striking a balance between the Green Wedge strategy and the need for development to accommodate the **growing population**. Notable historical figures in this narrative included Green Wedge Protection Group (with its chairman Kahn Franke), and Neil Roberts, a former Councillor.

As a municipality spanning the Greater Melbourne fringe, the Shire's main historical driver for development has been the interplay between the **city's substantial population growth** on the one hand, and the constraints of the urban growth boundary on the other. Economic and demographic trends drive the demand for new development, while heightened concerns over the environment and quality of life drive demands for greater regulation and control of such development.

**The expansion of the urban growth boundary** and suburban development pressures drove development, while the growth of concerns around the environment, sustainability and lifestyle constrained these, particularly as manifested through the Green Wedge strategy and local community action.



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