

## What we've already heard from our community

A review of recent Nillumbik Shire Council community consultation findings reports to inform the Nillumbik Urban Tree Canopy Strategy in 2024

For internal use only

**8 March 2024**

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Document title	What we've already heard from our community: A review of recent Shire community consultation findings reports to inform the Nillumbik Urban Tree Canopy Strategy in 2024
Version	Final
Date	8 March 2024
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## 1. Aim and purpose of this review

The purpose of this document review is to interrogate the feedback gathered in recent Nillumbik Shire Council community consultation programs to identify input potentially relevant to the Nillumbik Urban Tree Canopy Strategy in 2024. This interrogation process (or secondary data analysis) involves reviewing existing feedback for a purpose that is different to the original data-gathering intention.

**The following eight consultation findings reports were interrogated:**

1. Climate Action Plan Consultation Findings Report (ChatterBox Projects, 2022)
2. Draft General Local Law Consultation Findings Report (ChatterBox Projects, 2022)
3. Municipal Planning Strategy Review - Phase 2 Summary of Feedback - Incorporated Responses into the MPS (Nillumbik Shire, 2021)
4. Municipal Planning Strategy - Virtual Community Workshop Series Engagement Report (GHD, 2021)
5. Nillumbik Neighbourhood Character Strategy (NCS) Stage 1 Consultation Findings Report (ChatterBox Projects, 2022)
6. Nillumbik NCS Stage 2 Consultation Findings Report (ChatterBox Projects, 2022)
7. Nillumbik NCS Stage 3 Consultation Findings Report (ChatterBox Projects, 2023)
8. Nillumbik Biodiversity Strategy Stage 1 Consultation Findings Report (ChatterBox Projects, 2023)

**This review was guided by the following Urban Tree Canopy-related search terms (in alphabetical order).**

- Benefits of trees (shade, air quality, liveability, biodiversity, absorb carbon and rainfall, cool local environments, and support wildlife)
- Collaborating and engaging (community, stakeholder groups, volunteers, and friends of groups)
- Fire (bushfire, fire management, and balancing preservation with fire risk)
- Resourcing (funding to support trees, urban forest growth and management)
- Suburbs and townships within the Urban Growth Boundary: Diamond Creek, Eltham, Eltham North, Greensborough, Hurstbridge, Panton Hill, Plenty, Research, and St Andrews
- Tree conflict management (people, residents, developers, and development)
- Tree elements (branches, leafy upper branches, stems, and ground area covered by trees)
- Tree planning (tree planting, equity, distribution, and healthy urban forest)
- Tree protection (value trees, tree retention, tree management policies, street trees, private land, and Council land)
- Tree reduction (loss, removal, and degradation)
- Tree significance (large old trees, significant trees, heritage trees, cultural heritage)
- Types of trees (species, age, size, Indigenous, native, exotic)
- Urban canopy, urban forest, and Living Melbourne
- Planning policy, Environment Significance Overlay (ESO), Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO), Neighbourhood Character (not sure if this may cause overload from this strategy, though this project is linked), Bushfire Management Overlay, Bushfire Prone Area (all these only in relation to UGB)

The comments presented in this document have already been considered as feedback for the relevant Council strategic documents. Local government consultation feedback can be interrogated to generate insights about related matters, and efficiently inform other decision-making processes. By way of example, feedback received during the Draft General Local Law consultation has already been considered by Officers and Council in the context of reviewing Council's Draft General Local Law. In addition, feedback relating to the Draft General Local Law (Part 7, 47, 63 and 79) has been identified as also being potentially relevant to the Urban Tree Canopy Strategy (see Section 2.2). Taken together, a total of 1800+ participants were engaged across the eight consultation programs reviewed in this report. While it is difficult to estimate the precise proportion, many participants provided feedback that directly or indirectly referred to at least one of the above Urban Tree Canopy-related search terms.



## 2. Feedback from recent consultations that is relevant to the Nillumbik Urban Tree Canopy Strategy

This section presents the feedback gathered in recent Nillumbik Shire Council community consultation programs, which is also regarded as potentially relevant to the Nillumbik Urban Tree Canopy Strategy in 2024.

### Key insights from this document review

Overall insights from the document review regarding community views on urban tree canopy-related topics include:

- Despite the variation in townships and lifestyles across the Shire, residents and participants **value the natural environment, biodiversity, and vegetation** and generally welcome Council actions that balance or minimise **environmental degradation and tree loss** (vegetation, canopy, and understorey).
- A desire to prioritise Nillumbik as the **Green Wedge Shire** and preserve the **character** of the Shire.
- **A desire to preserve trees, tree canopy and vegetation and ensure trees are protected** in new development and built areas. Support for clear targets and strong indicators in relation to trees.
- **Support for tree planting.**
- A desire for **communication, information, and consultation** with community and stakeholders including Traditional owners. **Collaboration** for implementation and **enforcement** of landscape plans.
- Mixed views about **tree and vegetation protection versus fire prevention**, including balancing fire prevention measures (on Council and private land) and planning for bush fire risk and mitigation.
- Some views on planning policy and the Green Wedge. **Need to balance** new development, neighbourhood character, and the natural environment and consider cultural and historical values and significance.
- **Varying levels of feedback and differing views** and preferences across suburbs and townships within the Urban Growth Boundary (Diamond Creek, Eltham, Eltham North, Greensborough, Hurstbridge, Panton Hill, Plenty, Research, and St Andrews).



## 2.1 Climate Action Plan Consultation Findings Report

The consultation period was 4 October to 7 November 2021, providing the community with the opportunity to review and comment on the draft Climate Action Plan. Participation options were an online survey, four virtual drop-in sessions (including one for Council's Youth Council), and written submissions. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the proposed in-person workshops did not proceed. A total of 99 participants were engaged in this consultation program.

Key themes and comments potentially relevant to the Nillumbik Urban Tree Canopy Strategy are listed below.

### **Theme: Strategies to mitigate or minimise bushfire risk**

- Reduce the likelihood and impacts of bushfire.
- More advocacy to assist with costs of fire mitigation, reduce fire risk and achieve an integrated response to climate adaptation and mitigation.
- Genuinely work towards creating a landscape that is safer from major bushfires and doing something towards creating safer, well-maintained roadsides.
- Support fire prevention and preparing the community for bushfires and droughts, working alongside the CFA and stakeholders such as CSIRO outreach personnel, the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung people, and all land-managers/ stewards. Use traditional fire management systems where and when appropriate.
- Support Council fuel reduction to stop bushfire.
- Safe community starts with Council reduction of fire fuel on Council land and roadside.
- Carefully manage Council's roadside and bush reserves.

### **Theme: Mixed views about trees**

- Keep the flammable trees under control.
- Stronger stance on native logging, Council needs to call for an immediate end to logging of native forests which increases bushfire risks.
- Council to provide trees for residents to plant.
- Nillumbik planning scheme permits too many trees to be cut down for development.
- No further removal of any trees or clearing of green areas and maintain tree canopy in urban areas.
- Bush blocks support the suburbs with trees converting CO<sub>2</sub> to oxygen.

### **Theme: Information, collaboration, and engagement with the community and stakeholders**

- Increase the level of understanding and protection of the natural environment and reducing the risk of bushfire.
- Expand community education and information programs and establish an outreach program to activate community members.
- Community education must be prioritised, a major challenge is engaging the disinterested segments of the community.
- Establish a Community Reference Committee or Advisory Group or gather a group of community members to provide advice and support.
- Information and education for Executive officers and Councillors, support, encourage and educate all Council Staff.
- Private landowners should be encouraged through education and incentives.

### **Theme: Support for tree planting and tree canopy**

- Expand tree canopy in urban areas to counteract the decline of tree canopy and development of housing density.
- Provide incentives for tree planting on private land and introduce new strategies for tree plantings.
- Increasing overall tree canopy cover should be a focus of council.



**Theme: Support for clear targets and strong indicators in relation to trees**

- Incorporate clear targets and strengthen indicators. Include specific targets such as percentage increase in tree canopy cover, biodiversity, tree canopy, and vegetation coverage in rural areas by 2030.

**References to suburbs and townships within the Urban Growth Boundary**

- Eltham: Need to address the one way out situation for Eltham if there is a bushfire. Signage, information and/or QR codes for bushfire related information or direct people where to go if there is a bushfire.

## 2.2 Draft General Local Law Consultation Findings Report

The consultation period was 1 November to 5 December 2021. Participation options were online survey, three online community information sessions, and submissions (email, online, and written). A total of 190 participants were engaged in this consultation program.

Key themes and comments potentially relevant to the Nillumbik Urban Tree Canopy Strategy are listed below and accompanied by a reference to the relevant section/part of the General Local Law.

**Theme: Communication, consultation, implementation, and enforcement**

- Would like more information and transparency on the need for the laws.
- Would prefer the local law is less bureaucratic, clearer and is more inclusive and has a focus on education, facilitation, and collaboration.
- Would like to see greater efforts to inform and consult those who will be affected.
- Provide more explanation, be proactive, educate residents about why particular actions are/aren't good ideas as well as new local laws, collaborate with the community.
- Officers only required to respond if a community member reports a possible breach.
- Follow-up breaches, more enforcement officers and better education for officers and residents, especially for rural properties.
- Local Laws that protect and increase urban and rural tree canopy must be enforced, Officers to be available on weekends when vegetation is often removed.
- Strongly enforce the new Tree Amenity provision.
- Some owners and developers are not deterred by the value of current fines, consider increasing fines to deter unlawful behaviours.
- Developers/builders to pay a landscape bond to ensure compliance with landscape plans. Microclimate on our property has changed due to the removal of trees on adjoining properties.
- We need the strongest environmental laws we can possibly have right throughout Nillumbik.
- Trees are being cleared at a fast rate, concrete and buildings are occurring and the habitat of wildlife is being destroyed with suburban style homes and land clearing.
- Tree removal without a permit and blocks cleared by an owner or developer should attract a heavy and meaningful financial penalty.
- Clarify training provided to authorised officer and whether more resources will be allocated.

**Theme: Views about protection of amenity trees and vegetation (Part 7, 63 and 79)**

- Support, protect trees, tree canopies, vegetation and bush and environment, from developers and generally.
- Support strengthening the protection of amenity trees such as residents nominating significant trees, creating a tree register, enforcement, and significant fines for removing/ damaging.
- Support, essential for climate change and wildlife habitat purposes.
- Support and accompany with a public information campaign.
- Does not permit removal of fallen timber from paths and trails on Council land and on road reserves, to ensure passable and safe.
- Disagree with approval being required to remove dead timber that is a fire hazard.



**Theme: Views about overhanging and encroaching vegetation (Part 7, 47)**

- Given the strict rules around trimming/lopping, it needs to be made clear that the landowner does not need a permit to undertake this work in this specific instance. A more collaborative approach would be better received.
- Clarify whether responsibility for public land clearing sits with the public land manager (Council or VicRoads).

## 2.3 Municipal Planning Strategy - Phase 2 Summary of Feedback - Incorporated Responses

Through September and October 2021, Council Officers delivered an extensive consultation program on themes for the Municipal Planning Scheme (MPS). There were multiple participation options including an online survey on Participate Nillumbik. Officers conducted four virtual community workshops, nine internal workshops, two Youth Council workshop, two Councillor workshops and attended seven Advisory Committee meetings (including the Wurundjeri Cultural Committee). Officers also provided presentations to the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and various interested Advisory Committees.

Eighty-eight people registered to attend the virtual community workshops and 50 people attended (excluding staff, facilitators, and Councillors). A total of 458 submissions were received, 424 online survey responses and 34 written submissions.

Key themes and comments potentially relevant to the Nillumbik Urban Tree Canopy Strategy are listed below.

**Theme: Conserve and protect trees, tree canopy, and the natural environment**

- All themes should prioritise Nillumbik as a Green Wedge Shire.
- Development of a Nillumbik Urban Forest Strategy.
- Maintain and increase tree canopy - specifically indigenous vegetation.
- Maintain green spaces.
- Protect and enhance canopy cover.
- Protect and enhance natural environment.
- Protect and enhance existing vegetation, tree canopy and natural environments to help minimise climate change impacts.
- Protect tree canopy, understory, and plant.
- Protection and enhancement of tree canopy.
- Protection of the natural environment to maintain the appeal and character of the activity centres.
- Provide open spaces for the community while minimising impacts on the natural environment.
- Roadside Management Program – needs to maintain the integrity of the natural environment.
- Upkeep of the remnant endemic bush land. It is a precious resource that is under threat.

**Theme: Ensure trees are protected in new development and built areas**

- Built environment should not impede on the natural environment.
- Can we require a canopy tree with each development – a higher level statement that can support this – education the difference about canopy trees.
- Indigenous tree canopy and understory are protected throughout Nillumbik, including areas of built environment and all new developments within the Shire. Council actively pursues net increase of indigenous vegetation in both urban and rural areas.
- Minimise adverse impacts of development especially on tree canopy.
- Protecting habitat links and minimising fire and flood risk and erosion are important considerations in siting buildings and works, particularly in rural.
- Provisions to restrict the cutting down of trees for the purpose of solar.
- Tree canopy and understory to be protected, including in the built environment and all new developments.



**Theme: Plan to mitigate or minimise bushfire risk**

- Climate change objectives should be priority over bushfires.
- More bushfire and other climate change related risks considered in housing developments.
- Objective about development mitigate fire risk – other way around? Should be assessing area before putting a house in it rather than putting a house in the trees and then cutting down all the trees.

**Theme: Communication, information, collaboration, and enforcement**

- Better collaboration with private landowners that have an interface to public land/reserves.
- Collaboration between Council and the community and Traditional Owners.
- Education of the community to respond to bushfire risk, understanding of global warming and risks.
- Emergency management information has not been accessible – easy English, reaching older people.
- Knowledge sharing between Council, communities, groups to promote, encourage and help understand best-practice land use and management techniques.
- More tools and information for landowners on maintaining and managing their land.
- Need more enforcement for illegal clearing – budget issues.
- Strengthen enforcement.

**Theme: Planning policy and Green Wedge**

- Better planning and support of housing within BMOs.
- Conservation should be priority in the Green Wedge.
- Consider allowing further subdivision into smaller lots.
- Increase parkland (PPRZ) when opportunity arises.
- Lack of Biolinks, and a review of ESOs and SLOs.
- Needs to state that in managing the conflict, this is done through land management plans that address environmental protection strategies.
- Protect the current UGB and oppose any proposal to move it.
- When managing conflicts, land management plans should address to ensure the land use doesn't affect the environment.

**Theme: Views about cultural and historical values and significance**

- Development should not impede on or detract from all sights of heritage significance.
- Good that this references historical characteristics but needs to also reference environment, biodiversity, climate, urban tree canopy etc, as these are some of the key characteristics that we want to promote.
- Recognise the land, waterways, and all life they sustain are central to the cultural values of First Nations Peoples.
- Would like to see the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung heritage of care of the land acknowledged with intention to use consultation with Narrap team.

**References to suburbs and townships within the Urban Growth Boundary**

- Diamond Creek: Recognise potential heritage sites within Diamond Creek – police station and churches.
- Eltham: Eltham is overdeveloped, and further growth should not occur. Eltham to be kept leafy, green, and low rise.
- Plenty: More development of smaller townships such as Plenty.

## **2.4 Municipal Planning Strategy - Virtual Community Workshop Series Engagement Report**

The consultation period was September and October 2021. This report presents findings from four online workshops (conducted in conjunction with other engagement activities that are not reported here). A total of 50 participants were engaged in the online workshops.

Key themes and comments potentially relevant to the Nillumbik Urban Tree Canopy Strategy are listed below.





**Theme: Conserve and protect trees, tree canopy, and the natural environment**

- Maintain indigenous vegetation to preserve quality of life and sense of place.
- Protection of tree canopies to reduce the impact of increasing temperature.
- Participants were overwhelmingly strong advocates for the preservation of the natural environment. Much more needed to be done, participants agreed, to protect land from being cleared, infrastructure destroying natural environments, and to mitigate climate change impacts threatening Nillumbik.
- Protection of the natural environment. The need to respect the integrity of the natural environment was emphasized by the majority of participants. The loss of trees, shrubs and other vegetation was pointed to as a consequence of subdivision from consolidation of housing – while it was acknowledged consolidation was necessary, the loss of vegetation and garden space was of great concern for most participants.

**Theme: Ensure trees are protected in new development and built areas**

- Buildings should not impede on the natural environment, maintain tree canopy and other existing vegetation. Loss of vegetation as a result of development in activity centres.
- Maintain tree canopy which contributes to the local character.
- Concern about the loss of vegetation, and the subsequent degradation of the local character. Urban design that is sustainable and sensitive to the surrounding environment is of key importance.

**Theme: Plan to mitigate or minimise bushfire risk**

- Bushfire is a threat to community safety.
- Some residents are insufficiently aware of or understand bushfire mitigation strategies, and that opportunities to learn these should be more widely available. To achieve this, a well-informed and well-educated Council team is needed, as was strongly expressed by some participants. An exchange in land management knowledge could also be achieved by breaking down cultural barriers and improving communication between communities, including Traditional Owners. Council support for landholders in burns (in the right season), with the help of Traditional Owner knowledge, was also advocated.
- Particularly in regard to bushfires, safety of the community played a key role in ensuring the unique character is maintained, as participants noted that they pose a threat to the townships and rural areas. Sustainable design needed to consider such risks and better education could assist in keeping the community safe.
- Sustainable design and community education to mitigate risk.

**Theme: Planning policy and Green Wedge**

- Habitat links monitored and set out in the Planning Scheme
- Participants agreed that the integrity of the natural environment needed to be maintained, biodiversity looked after, and the intent of the Green Wedge and Conservation Shire prioritised.
- Strengthen Council's enforcement capacity to prevent further loss of environment and clearing of areas.
- The health of Nillumbik's ecosystems was of utmost priority to most participants in the workshop. They stressed that maintaining a healthy natural environment was the very purpose of the Green Wedge. As such, Council should ensure certain areas remain protected from development and are retained as open spaces.
- Include the heritage of Indigenous Peoples in the protection of the land to value and respect it.

**Theme: Communication, information, and collaboration with the community and stakeholders**

- Perceived lack of communication and collaboration between Council, the community, and the Wurrundjeri-Woi People of Nillumbik.
- Better communication to ensure landowners and residents understand how to manage the land, with the idea that there are no conditions on the land referred to as 'outdated'. A lack of understanding is self-resourcing and landowners that don't advocate for the land. Some support for the idea of providing incentives for effective land management which preserves local biodiversity.

**References to suburbs and townships within the Urban Growth Boundary**

- Eltham: Abundance of vegetation is the very reason many people live in Eltham.



## 2.5 Nillumbik Neighbourhood Character Strategy Stage 1 Consultation Findings Report

The consultation period was 28 March to 8 May 2022. Participation options were an online survey, paper-based survey, a range of in-person activities at three place-based pop-up engagements (at Diamond Creek, Eltham, and Hurstbridge), meetings with four of Council's Community Advisory Committees (Environment and Sustainability, Inclusion and Access, Positive Ageing, Youth Council), and submissions (email and written). A total of 578 participants were engaged in this consultation program.

Key themes and comments potentially relevant to the Nillumbik Urban Tree Canopy Strategy are listed below.

### Theme: Residents value the natural environment and vegetation

- When asked which features of the neighbourhood character they like now, the majority selected vegetation, which includes trees, tree canopy, habitat, wildlife corridors, green wedge, and natural bushland/ bushy areas.
- When asked how new development could be designed to enhance or improve neighbourhood character, residents suggested:
  - Protect green wedge
  - Protect trees, canopy trees, large gardens, and habitat
  - Protect, enhance, and increase vegetation, trees, habitat, and wildlife corridors
  - Maintain gum trees, tree canopy
  - Minimise subdivisions and keep larger blocks
  - New developments to include new vegetation and gardens
  - New developments to respect current architecture/ green leafy character
  - Retain hobby farms and grazing land.
- The unique neighbourhood character features that residents like include vegetation, trees, and canopy trees.

### Theme: Balance new development, neighbourhood character, and the natural environment

- Minimal loss of trees and vegetation and/ or more trees being planted.
- Neighbourhood character and tree planting to consider safety, accessibility, and connectivity.
- Ensure habitat connectivity occurs throughout the Shire, on a much larger scale than what is currently in place – from indigenous grasses and herbs to small shrubs, bushes, and giant trees.

### References to suburbs and townships within the Urban Growth Boundary

- Diamond Creek: Current character is green, bushy, beautiful trees, river red gums, lovely gardens, and nature, many like the vegetation, and the current neighbourhood character. This neighbourhood is different or unique due to the **Vegetation** (The greenery and green wedge look and feel. The beautiful trees, treed areas, river red gums, gardens, vegetation, and bushland) and **Built form** (Relatively low density, homes on big blocks with family friendly outdoor spaces and open green spaces). New development could be designed to enhance or improve neighbourhood character via **Built form** (Retain old homes and maintain consistency. Keep the larger blocks for family homes and backyards, permit the redevelopment of homes) and **Vegetation** (Protect native vegetation, more native vegetation, tree planting and larger gardens as part of new estates to cool blocks and neighbourhoods. Avoid damaging old river red gums and clear dangerous trees on the roadside).
- Eltham: Current character is leafy, green residential suburb with lots of trees, tree canopy and nature. Beautiful native bush and grassland with native birdlife. Lovely vegetation, natural, native flora and fauna, indigenous and native plants. Many like the vegetation and current neighbourhood character. This neighbourhood is different or unique due to the **Vegetation** (Beautiful trees, green, leafy open spaces, and natural settings. Tall trees, large canopy trees, native trees, mature, older eucalyptus trees, yellow box, and gum trees. Indigenous and native vegetation, plants, flora, and fauna. Gardens, big gardens and native bush gardens with natural features and mature vegetation); and **Built form** (Generally low-rise, low-density housing with large block sizes. Natural building materials and subtle earthy colour palette complement the environment and blend in with the vegetation). New development could be



designed to enhance or improve neighbourhood character via **Built form** (Respect the current architecture and the green leafy character of the town. Retain the low-rise, low-density housing with large block sizes, backyards, and gardens. Houses to be integrated into the landscape or nestled in large gardens and yards); and **Vegetation** (Protect the tree canopy, work with existing nature, bush plantings, mature trees, and native vegetation. Have strict controls on the removal of trees and vegetation for new developments and enforce them including the SLO3 overlay. Compulsory requirements for indigenous plantings, greenery, vegetation, plants, native trees, and tree canopy to offset new buildings. Ensure sufficient space on blocks to permit the growth of large trees and provide habitat for birdlife and wildlife. Include front gardens and large gardens or areas with indigenous trees and shrubs and quality landscaping).

- **Eltham North:** Current character is green wedge, bushy, leafy, greenery, vegetation, and a good tree canopy cover. A variety of trees such as mature native canopy trees, eucalyptus, and pine trees. Lots of nature, a natural environment, fauna and flora and native plantings. Many like the vegetation. This neighbourhood is different or unique due to the **Vegetation** (Lots of trees, native and indigenous trees, tall gum trees, eucalyptus trees, mature canopy trees and leaves. Natural environment, bushland and landscape with wildlife and wildlife corridors); and **Built form** (Single dwellings on large blocks [quarter acre], obscurely nestled in vegetation, native and indigenous trees and built into hills. Low density with mudbrick and other rustic buildings). New development could be designed to enhance or improve neighbourhood character via **Built form** (Retain existing large blocks, one house per block, space between houses and for backyard scapes. New buildings to be consistent with existing colours or styles and hidden within canopies, integrated into nature, or screened by planting); and **Vegetation** (Protect trees, canopy trees, vegetation, large gardens, grassed areas, nature reserves, and natural habitats. Promote native vegetation, native plant gardens and tree planting. Avoid removing trees and wildlife to facilitate new development. Where trees and vegetation are removed, replace with appropriate indigenous species).
- **Greensborough:** Current character is green, leafy, trees, bush, and gardens. Many like the vegetation. New development could be designed to enhance or improve neighbourhood character via no new development and a limited number of town houses per block.
- **Hurstbridge:** Current character is nature, green, beautiful trees, and leafy. Natural and bushy with native wildlife corridor and mixed landscapes. Many like the vegetation and current neighbourhood character. This neighbourhood is different or unique due to the **Built form** (low density housing, good size blocks, not overcrowded, one home per block with green areas, some vacant acreage and rural land) and **Vegetation** (Green spaces and landscapes, lots of trees, large trees, mature indigenous trees, and tree canopies. Nature, native flora, vegetation, and gardens). New development could be designed to enhance or improve neighbourhood character via **Built form** (New buildings to be respectful of existing small-town character and designed to preserve historic features and charm to retain a country rural feel. Retain low density housing, large block size, rural hobby farms and grazing land); and **Vegetation** (Preserve existing trees and leafy feel. No removal of trees, retain the canopy trees for shade and avoid damage to mature trees. Ban the removal of indigenous canopy trees with a permit. Native flora and gardens to attract birdlife and provide homes for wildlife. Leave space for substantial trees).
- **Panton Hill:** Current character is a bush township, bush and trees, grazing land with livestock, equine properties, and nice houses. This neighbourhood is different or unique due to the **Vegetation** (Green wedge, proximity to the bush, conservation bush, beautiful landscapes, lots of nature and trees). New development could be designed to enhance or improve neighbourhood character via **Built form** (New development must be consistent with a rural township and existing character in terms of design, colour, and appearance. Retain rural hobby farms and preserve existing grazing land for livestock).
- **Plenty:** Current character is rustic and old buildings, modern family homes, spacious and open). Many like the vegetation. This neighbourhood is different or unique due to the **Vegetation** (Natural parklands, nature, the Gorge Park, general retention of vegetation particularly native vegetation); and **Built form** (Modern development taking account of local environment, properties blending rural and suburban character, maintained homes). New development could be designed to enhance or improve neighbourhood character via **Built form** (Retain rural character. Limit subdivisions and multi-unit



developments, keep subdivisions at one-acre); and **Vegetation** (Retain tall trees and native vegetation planting, increase vegetation cover).

- **Research:** Current character is large trees, shade, natives, and natural bush settings. Native vegetation established trees and large gardens with wildlife, variety of areas including suburban, semi-rural, bushy and countryside. Many like the vegetation. This neighbourhood is different or unique due to the **Vegetation** (The bush, remnant bush, trees, fauna, greenery, large gardens, native landscapes and associated native wildlife, birds, and animals). New development could be designed to enhance or improve neighbourhood character via **Vegetation** (Retain vegetation and bush, control tree clearance and protect native species. More trees, native trees, gardens, and rain gardens rather than curbs/stormwater. Guidance for indigenous vegetation).
- **St Andrews:** Current character is bush blocks, paddocks, and large open areas for livestock as well as small and medium lots. Eclectic, rustic, and mostly natural colours, bush, and gumtrees. Many like the vegetation. This neighbourhood is different or unique due to the **Vegetation** (Bush, bushland, green wedge, unique native/indigenous trees and vegetation and abundant wildlife); and **Built form** (Large allotments, combination of residences and working farms). New development could be designed to enhance or improve neighbourhood character via **Built form** (No subdivisions, no developments, no big developments, no smaller blocks, keep block sizes large (more than 1000m<sup>2</sup>), preserve for wildlife and future generations. No new development or limit new development, no townhouses. If necessary, use natural materials, sustainable design, no outside lighting. New houses or more homes to be built and landscaped in the character of the existing buildings and sited amongst the bush setting); and **Vegetation** (Green wedge to be protected, developments must not damage the environment, creeks, wildlife, or trees. Use only native vegetation).

## 2.6 Nillumbik Neighbourhood Character Strategy Stage 2 Consultation Findings Report

The consultation period was 29 August to 10 October 2022. Participation options were an online survey, paper-based survey, a range of in-person activities at two place-based pop-up engagements (at Diamond Creek Fair and Eltham Farmers Market), and submissions (email and written). Information was also available via online and in-person appointment sessions with a planner; online community information sessions; and the Participate Nillumbik project page including an online interactive mapping tool. A total of 103 participants were engaged in this consultation program and provided 107 contributions. In addition, 175 people attended the place-based pop-up engagements.

Key themes and comments potentially relevant to the Nillumbik Urban Tree Canopy Strategy are listed below.

### Theme: Conserve and protect trees, vegetation, and the environment

- Protect and enhance trees, vegetation, and the green character of Nillumbik.
- Concerns expressed about loss of vegetation, tree canopy and greenery in response to land being cleared for development.

### Theme: References to Bush Residential 1

- Like: Trees and vegetation, and limited development and density.
- Concerns: Loss of character already happening, opposes development.

### Theme: References to Bush Residential 2

- Like: Large blocks, canopy trees, and vegetation.
- Concerns: Loss of character, loss of trees, development, and subdivisions.
- Suggestions: Native tree plantings on nature strips to be consistent with Bush Residential 1.

### Theme: References to Garden Court 2



- Like: Trees and vegetation.
- Concerns: Not enough native vegetation.

#### **Theme: References to Garden Residential**

- Like: Trees and vegetation.
- Concerns: Dwellings to not be a dominant feature of the garden setting.

#### **References to suburbs and townships within the Urban Growth Boundary**

- Eltham: Support for indigenous trees and natural views. New development to not exceed two-storeys and balancing subdivisions with retaining bush character, large canopy trees and vegetation. Concerns about recent subdivisions, loss of trees and tree coverage. Clarity needed to make garden setbacks with canopy trees a feature of the area. Concerns about recent instances where sites were cleared of all vegetation. Support for retaining and restoring the Bush Residential Character Area, significant high vegetation, and canopy trees. Ensure vegetation removal and block coverage from dwellings is minimized, and land coverage includes a generous spread of trees and shrubs.
- Eltham North: Some queries and concerns about building density per property and protecting views, trees, and vegetation. Maintain gardens and vegetation.
- Greensborough: Suggestion to increase setbacks for tree planting. Concern around being too prescriptive regarding plants.
- Hurstbridge: Support the intention to preserve the green character.



## 2.7 Nillumbik Neighbourhood Character Strategy Stage 3 Consultation Findings Report

The consultation period was 19 June to 30 July 2023. Participation options were an online feedback form, online appointments, and submissions. A total of 15 participants were engaged in this consultation program.

Key themes and comments potentially relevant to the Nillumbik Urban Tree Canopy Strategy are listed below.

### **Theme: Protect trees, plant trees, and enforce landscape plans**

- Ensure landscape plans are followed and continually monitored to preserve Neighbourhood Character.
- As much of the Shire is in the green wedge and rural, retention of mature trees should be a priority. Planting guidelines for new developments should have priority over land use, front and rear setbacks specified to allow for reasonable density of indigenous plants. Adequate root protection for existing trees should be mandatory during construction.

### **References to suburbs and townships within the Urban Growth Boundary**

- Eltham/Eltham North: Vegetation: Enquired about which species will be used as Yellow or Redbox can have a height of 30m. Draft Strategy – key issues and threats: Suggested emphasising climate change, loss of tree canopy, and heat island affect. Vegetation requirements are considered to be unrealistic; (to retain existing indigenous and native canopy trees, amenity trees and understorey vegetation; to provide indigenous and native canopy trees at a density of one to every 50-100m<sup>2</sup> across the site; to prepare a landscape plan that uses appropriate indigenous and native species; to limit the site area covered by buildings to 40%, and to provide at least 40% of the site as permeable surface). Loss of vegetation in rear setbacks is an issue. Asks whether Council is proposing to undertake further work that will lead to implementing rear setback canopy tree planting and biodiversity. Requests all properties to have large enough setbacks on all sides to give sufficient space for canopy trees to be retained or be planted and grow to full size be included in the final version of the Strategy. The proposed overlay appears to contradict fire planning recommendations. Planning overlays to include specific fire precautions and planning for vegetation known to be highly vulnerable to fire, and/or leaving homes exposed to the risk of falling tree limbs which impact resident safety and insurance premiums. Homeowners failing to actively manage fire, falling trees and storm risks to neighbouring properties should be actively discouraged. Property owners to be free to manage risk to their own properties without bureaucratic intervention or the need for expensive Council judgment and approval. Property owners to have some freedom to manage properties and plant vegetation.
- Hurstbridge: Impressed with the thoroughness and clarity of expression in the whole report, covers area very well.

## 2.8 Nillumbik Biodiversity Strategy Stage 1 Consultation Findings Report

The consultation period was 26 June to 30 July 2023. Participation options were an online survey, paper-based survey, a range of in-person activities at two place-based pop-up engagements (at Diamond Creek and St Andrews), two online stakeholder workshops, Youth Council survey, and school workshop (Edendale Community Environment Farm). A total of 350 participants were engaged in this consultation program.

Key themes and comments potentially relevant to the Nillumbik Urban Tree Canopy Strategy are listed below.

### **Theme: Communication, information, collaboration, and enforcement**

- Concerns about the lack of enforcement and accountability for landowners who clear vegetation illegally or fail to replant trees as required.



- Lack of understanding about the environment biodiversity being in a critical state, level of ignorance and inactivity. People objecting to trees because they cannot park their cars, lack of investment in where people live, lack of education.
- Increasing knowledge in land management, environmental management, and integrating Indigenous knowledge.
- Guidance on good practice planting (use of water crystals, correct season etc.). Support and grants for residents, landholders, and local groups to act. Free plants for private land holders and discounted stakes and guards.
- Schools are planting trees and raising awareness through education.
- Role of collaboration and education. Increase awareness and education about protecting and enhancing biodiversity.
- Educating the community about the importance of biodiversity and providing opportunities to get involved. Encourage participation in local 'Friends of' or community groups that protect biodiversity.
- Appreciating biodiversity, actively planting trees and indigenous vegetation.
- Council to emphasise the importance of habitat protection, promoting indigenous plantings, taking action to restore biodiversity, and taking more action against inappropriate land clearing.
- Requests to advocate to other levels of government.
- Requests stricter enforcement of regulations to prevent land clearing and habitat destruction.
- Some dissatisfaction with a perceived lack of enforcement and action by Council, particularly in the areas of illegal clearing of native vegetation on large private landholdings, and mismanagement of green wedge parcels.
- Concerns about lack of compliance, follow up, and enforcement of protections.

**Theme: Conserve and protect trees and tree canopy to protect biodiversity**

- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity is very important or important.
- Interconnections between biodiversity, trees, and clean air are valued.
- Threats to biodiversity most frequently identified are Habitat/vegetation loss, Climate change impacts, Subdivision and development of land and Tree canopy loss in urban areas.
- Embed consideration of nature and biodiversity into all Council decision-making.
- Increase urban tree canopy.
- The most frequently reported large threats to biodiversity in Nillumbik are habitat/ vegetation loss and subdivision and development of land which are interconnected with tree canopy loss.

**Theme: Support for strong indicators and resources in relation to trees and biodiversity**

- Requests for more robust conservation measures, better resources. The new Biodiversity Strategy to be well-resourced with increased staffing levels and expertise to address the ongoing decline in biodiversity.
- Requests for resources to be committed to meaningful action plans for biodiversity, including setting a baseline of the current state of the environment and tracking performance over time.
- Request for the strategy to have measurable actions or targets for increase in mature tree canopy, increase in habitat links, reduction in waste by households and businesses. Accountability if targets are not met.
- Requests to resource actions from the Biodiversity Strategy.
- Measurable actions, with sufficient funding and resources.

**Theme: Ensure trees and tree canopy is protected in new development and built areas**

- Concerns about the removal of tree canopy when developing, steady reduction of urban tree canopy, and loss of habitat and tree coverage, tree removal, and lack of controls for mature trees (stop their removal).
- Concerns about the reduction to tree canopy and importance of protection. Concerns related to the removal of tree canopy due to subdivision and urban development, a steady reduction of urban tree canopy, loss of habitat and tree coverage, tree removal, clearing trees for bushfire prevention, and lack of controls for mature trees (to stop removal).





- Concerns about the loss of habitat, biodiversity, vegetation, and trees in Nillumbik due to land clearing for subdivision, housing, and development, particularly the significant loss of trees and mature trees.

**Theme: Planning policy and Green Wedge**

- Requests for greater use and enforcement of planning rules and other regulatory tools to protect trees/ native vegetation and other biodiversity on private land.
- Stricter enforcement of planning rules and other regulatory tools to protect trees, native vegetation, and other biodiversity on private land.

**Theme: Plan to mitigate or minimise bushfire risk**

- Bushfire management actions: Clearing of understory in the name of bushfire management. Bushfire risk this year because of el-nina, back burning is needed.

**References to suburbs and townships within the Urban Growth Boundary**

- Diamond Creek (8 of 11): Rated tree canopy loss as a large threat
- Eltham (46 of 64): Rated tree canopy loss as a large threat
- Eltham North (8 of 11): Rated tree canopy loss as a large threat
- Greensborough (1 of 1): Rated tree canopy loss as a large threat
- Plenty (1 of 1): : Rated tree canopy loss as a large threat
- Research (3 of 7): Rated tree canopy loss as a large threat
- St Andrews (4 of 6): : Rated tree canopy loss as a large threat

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