3.5.0 South East Growth Area

3.5.1 Introduction

- Poor planning in Casey has already resulted in huge sprawling developments with little public amenity or natural values. The development area itself should combine development and natural conservation areas (i.e. not solid development with a compensatory wetland outside the area). Division of space should be such that per capita private land area is reduced but public open space increased (i.e. pockets of dense residential interspersed with carefully designed and well-planned public open space.)

- This region has already been subject to significant urban growth threatening biodiversity values. Many local groups and local government have worked hard to delineate green wedges, biolinks and areas containing important natural values to be preserved. More intensive development without areas for habitat and linking is not acceptable. If intensive development is allowed without preserving and managing for natural values, we will lose important areas of habitat and links that are irreplaceable.

- The waterways of the South-East Growth Zone feed directly to the Ramsar-listed wetlands of Western Port and provide habitat for Nationally threatened Australian Grayling, Dwarf Galaxias and Growling Grass Frog. They require significant protection, not only for their value as habitat corridors but also to reduce flow of sediment and pollution downstream.

- Active ongoing management of threatening processes affecting significant species is required. This would include weed control, pest control (foxes, cats) and restrictions for pets (especially cats).

3.5.2 Issues

- The area delineated within the South-East Growth Zone provides a strategically important east-west link between the Koo Wee Rup Swamp and Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne (RBGC), and from the north to the Ramsar site of Port Phillip Bay. It is vitally important for facilitating movement of species between different habitat patches. Development of this area without appropriate corridors and natural areas will prevent such movements and isolate remaining habitat patches, leaving populations prone to genetic inbreeding and greater risk of extinction through local disturbances.
- Locations within the South-East provide habitat for the Nationally listed Southern Brown Bandicoot and Growling Grass Frog. Flora species include River Swamp Wallaby-grass, Maroon Leek-orchid and Swamp Everlasting among others.

- If any offsets are required for development within the expanded UGB, they should occur within the boundary of the expansion area to enhance the important habitat connectivity for which this Zone is vital.

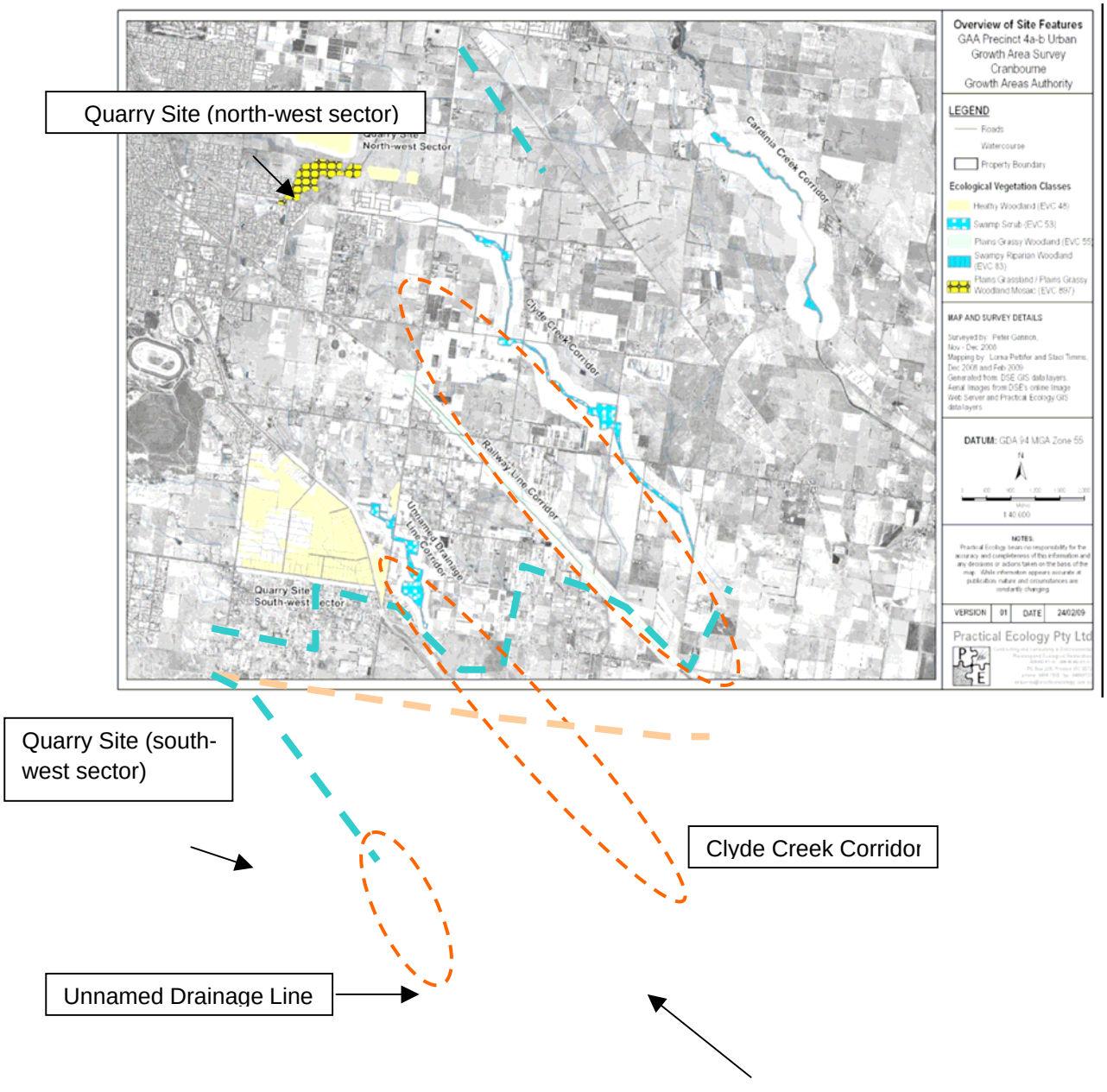
- The Urban Growth Boundary Review, Report for Public Consaltation, June 2009 indicates that wetland habitat is proposed for development within the UGB but will be offset to the south and east of the zone. The habitat within the zone is not transferable. Wetlands should not be offset outside the South-East Zone.

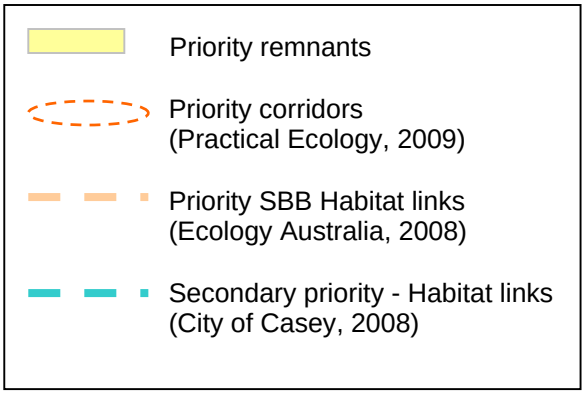
- This area contains important links along creeks, drainage lines and other easements that have already seen improvement through restoration efforts. There are four properties with Landcare revegetation projects within or immediately adjacent the proposed area. If development is allowed, the value of this potential for future restoration is lost.

3.5.3 Areas that must be protected

Priority locations that will assist in delivering improved connectivity and habitat values are shown in the Figure shown below and discussed further below.

Figure 15- Areas that must be protected and actively managed in South East
Base map sourced from Practical Ecology, 2009.





Railway Corridor

Identified by both Practical Ecology and Ecology Australia as an important habitat link. It is important for threatened flora and fauna and as a link for the Southern Brown Bandicoot.

Any re-commissioning of the railway line, which is likely to occur with increased development, must seek an alternative

Primary areas for protection should align with the recommended locations, widths and alignments identified by Practical Ecology (2009). This includes three corridors (Clyde Creek, railway line and Unnamed Drainage Line) and two sites of significance (Quarry site NW and Quarry site SW), shown above. These areas should be protected and enhanced as a minimum to allow biodiversity movements and ecological functions within the landscape.

The disused South Gippsland Railway line presents an excellent opportunity to link bandicoot populations in the Dalmore-Koo Wee Rup (and Cardinia) areas to RBGC, by making use of an existing, partially vegetated, landscape corridor leading directly north-east to Cranbourne.

Conserving this corridor for use as a habitat link also provides a good opportunity to conserve and enhance substantial remnants of vegetation in a depleted landscape, including BioSites of National and Regional significance, at Manks Road, Clyde and between Dalmore and Koo Wee Rup.

Biosis (2008) has assessed this corridor and regards it to be a critical link for the Southern Brown Bandicoot. Although this option makes use of an existing corridor, the link may require the inclusion of some roadside vegetation along Ballarto Road to link directly to RBG Cranbourne.

Ecology Australia (2009) has mapped potential habitat corridors for the Southern Brown Bandicoot (SBB). In their report they also identify the importance of the Railway Corridor.

Another primary link which should be established prior to the precinct planning process includes the Ballarto Road link from Cardinia Creek (but within the proposed UGB extension from Clyde Creek) to the RBG. Ecology Australia (2009) identified Ballarto Road as a strategic link to the Koo Wee Rup Swamp.

This biolink alignment is supported by the Cardinia Environment Coalition, and the Department of Sustainability and Environment has requested its consideration by the Growth Areas Authority (GAA) when preparing the Cranbourne East Precinct Structure Plan. The 70m wide corridor has implications for adjoining private land, and also for growth area planning and open space allocations (Biosis 2008c). It is noted that this link would require further research and design to be effective.

Secondary habitat corridors include those identified within the City of Casey's Revegetation Strategy (2008). There are a number of these within the proposed UGB expansion zone (see Figure 3 on pg 10 of that document). Unfortunately they are not individually named or described in the document.