



TALKING POINTS FOR WESTERN EDGE INVESTIGATION

- The Western Edge investigation area is approximately 9,800 hectares in area and includes land generally bordered by the Murrumbidgee River and the existing urban areas of Belconnen, Molonglo Valley, Weston Creek and Kambah.
- This general area was identified for investigation in both the 2012 and 2018 Planning Strategies. However, the 2018 Planning Strategy reduced the extent of the investigation area.
- The area is in the early investigation stages that will form the basis of identification and consideration of whether land has future potential for a range of uses consistent with the ACT Planning Strategy.
- Over the last two years, the EPSDD has completed a range of preliminary background investigations, including environmental and bushfire risk investigations, that are necessary to provide an informed understanding of the area.
- Further, more detailed environmental investigations are required and are planned to be undertaken.
- Similarly, the risk of bushfire will also need to be further, carefully and thoroughly considered as the investigations progress. It is expected that a number of further bushfire risk assessments will be undertaken at different stages in the overall project program over the coming years to better confirm the risk.
- The western edge investigation area is declared bushfire prone. This reinforces the need for thorough and careful further consideration of the degree of risk and, if development is ultimately considered an option in the area, what bushfire mitigation measures would be needed to reduce the risk to the community.
- New houses in parts of our new suburbs, such as Denman Prospect, are already required to be built to higher construction standards to lessen the risk. This would be expected in the western edge investigation area, if development is recommended.
- The preliminary investigation studies already completed are now available on the EPSDD website at <https://www.planning.act.gov.au/planning-our-city/planning-studies/western-edge-investigation>.
- The only exception is the heritage assessment that will not be released due to its cultural sensitivities.
- It is important to note that all the completed preliminary reports are consultant advice based on their specific focus of engagement. These reports have not been endorsed by Government. One of the preliminary investigations was a Landscape Character Values and Visual Assessment that includes figures identifying Potential Development Nodes including within Central

Molonglo. The option for Central Molonglo will not be considered further, consistent with the requirements of the Planning Strategy that Central Molonglo will not be considered for potential urban development.

- In 2022, EPSDD is further examining the area to identify the capability and suitability of parts of the Western Edge for potential change, such as for conservation or urban uses. This project is expected to be completed late this year.
- Substantial work is still required before options and recommendations regarding proposed land use can be provided to Government to consider and inform any future statutory environmental and/or planning processes. Similarly, this level of data and analysis is needed before being able to provide further detail to the community.
- This work is critical and requires investment and effort over many years. If urban development is proposed in the western edge investigation area it may be at least 10 years away and will be subject to the outcomes of future detailed studies and investigations; Government decisions; community engagement; budget funding; and Commonwealth and ACT statutory planning and environmental approvals.
- It is important to note that no development recommendations or decisions have been made to date.
- The nature of the preliminary investigations is to provide baseline information on the environmental values and identify potential risks. These studies do not pre-empt urban development to the exclusion of other potential uses and are being undertaken to allow for known constraints and opportunities to be considered.

BACKGROUND/SENSITIVITIES

ACT Planning Strategy 2018

- The ACT Planning Strategy (2018) contained the following strategic direction and action:

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1.2 - Investigate the potential for new residential areas to the west of the city to meet future housing need.

Action 1.2.1:

- Undertake environmental, infrastructure and planning studies for the western edge of the city to identify suitable areas for:
 - potential urban areas (excluding Central Molonglo);
 - nature reserves;
 - environmental offset and potential environmental offset areas;
 - the consideration of cultural and heritage values; and
 - other uses, for example rural, broadacre, major infrastructure, transport and services.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3.5 - Protect biodiversity and enhance habitat connectivity to improve landscape resilience.

Action 3.5.1:

- Identify and establish environmental offset areas within planning processes to mitigate any unavoidable impacts of development on ecosystems and biodiversity of national significance and other protected matters.

Action 3.5.2:

- Incorporate consideration of natural habitat and conservation areas into urban planning and design processes to promote habitat connectivity and support the establishment of biodiversity refuges.
- An Aboriginal Cultural Values Assessment is intended to be undertaken in the second half of this year, as early engagement is needed with Representative Aboriginal Organisations (RAOs), consistent with Heritage Act 2004 requirements, the Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee (DNCCC) and other knowledge holders on the cultural values of the Western Edge Investigation Area.

Denman Prospect Environmental Impact Statement Exemption – not related to the Western Edge investigations but located immediately adjacent

- The suburb of Denman Prospect, in the Molonglo Valley, located immediately east of the Western Edge investigation area, is being developed by Capital Estate Developments (CED).
- The planning and land authority (the Authority) has received an application for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Exemption for the extension of a future residential estate at Block 12 Section 1 Denman Prospect.
- There have been representations from the Conservation Council, 'Friends of Bluett's Block' and other individuals on this application.
- The Authority after its assessment and public notification has asked CED to undertake further work in preparing a revised EIS exemption application for determination by the Minister for Planning and Land Management.
- The current process is only an assessment of the information regarding environmental impacts. Once the Government is satisfied there is sufficient information, it will assess this information to determine if the block contains areas of environmental significance. These will be protected through the planning process, as I have noted above.
- There is currently an e-petition with the ACT Legislative Assembly, sponsored by Dr Marisa Peterson MLA for the protection of Bluetts Block-Piney Ridge, described in the petition as extending across Stromlo Block 402/403 and Denman Prospect Block 12, Section 1. As of 10 May 2022, the e-petition had 652 signatures and will close on the 7th July 2022.

Approved by:

June 2022

ACT GOVERNMENT

Western Edge Investigation Area – Project Status



BACKGROUND

ACT Planning Strategy 2018

Action 1.2.1

Undertake environmental, infrastructure and planning studies for the western edge of the city to identify suitable areas for:

- ▶ potential urban areas (excluding Central Molonglo)
- ▶ nature reserves
- ▶ environmental offset and potential environmental offset areas
- ▶ the consideration of cultural and heritage values
- ▶ other uses, for example rural, broadacre, major infrastructure, transport and services.

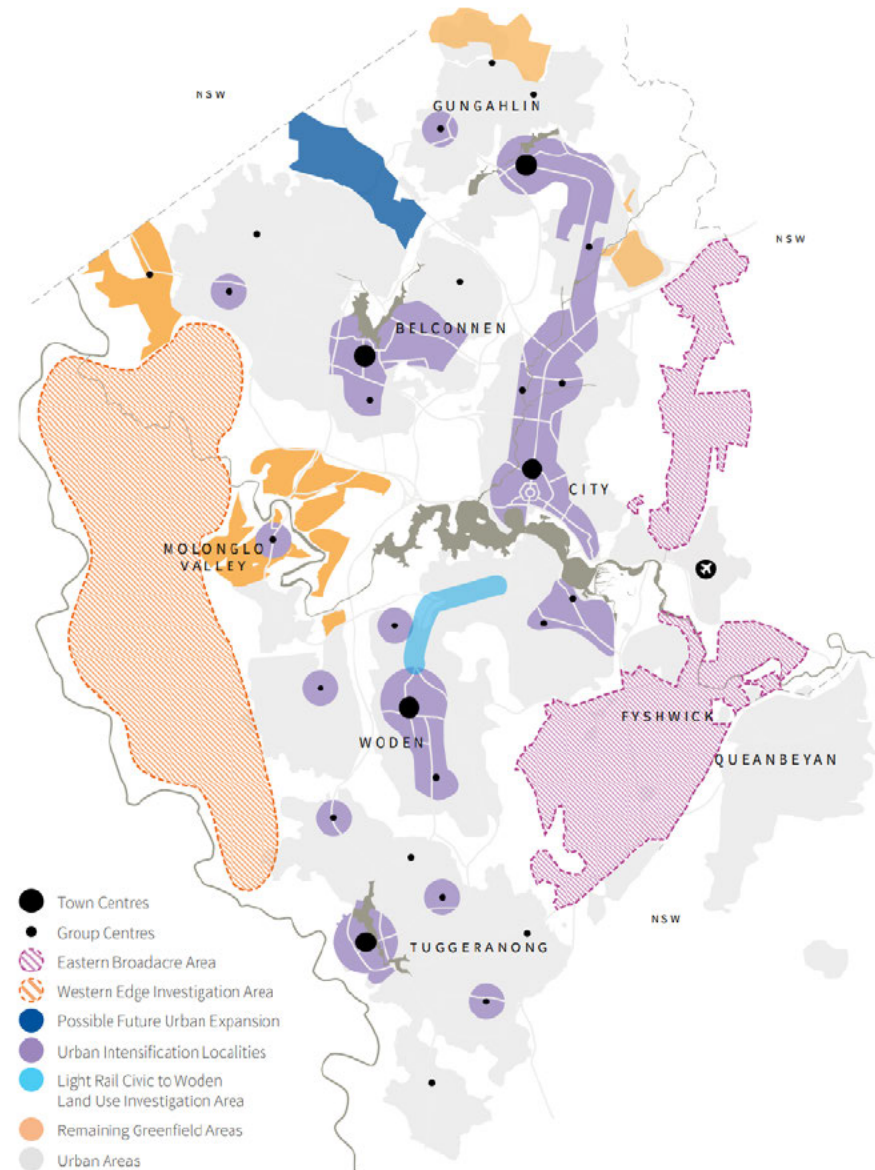
The planning investigations must consider the appropriateness of the western area in the context of ACT-wide opportunities for urban (greenfield) growth.

Action 3.5.1

- ▶ Identify and establish environmental offset areas within planning processes to mitigate any unavoidable impacts of development on ecosystems and biodiversity of national significance and other protected matters.

Action 3.5.2

- ▶ Incorporate consideration of natural habitat and conservation areas into urban planning and design processes to promote habitat connectivity and support the establishment of biodiversity refuges.



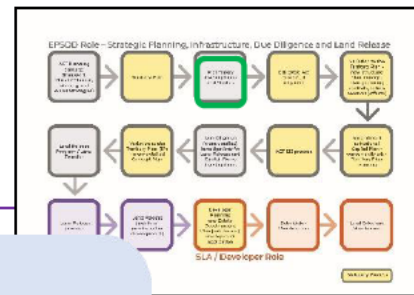
Budget (2019/20 to 2020/21)

Two years funding was allocated in 2019-20 ACT Budget (EPSDD E22.2019-20 Budget) for scoping and preliminary investigations:

Year	Original Budget Allocation (\$'000 excl GST)	Spent (\$'000 excl GST)	Revised Budget (include reprofile) (\$'000 excl GST)
2019/20	650	170	-
2020/21	500	270	-
2021/22	-	-	477
2022/23	-	-	230
Total	\$1.15	\$1.147 (*available through reprofiling)	

Note - ongoing funding will be needed in the coming years.

WEIA Project Phases



PHASE 1 Preliminary Investigations 2020-21

- Contamination Assessment
- Bushfire Risk Assessment
- Geotech & Hydrogeological
- Air Quality
- Visual Assessment
- Ecological Review
- Water Values and Environmental Hydrology
- Cultural Heritage Assessment
- Engineering infrastructure (transport, sewerage, water supply, electricity)

PHASE 2 Urban Capability 2021-22

Urban Capability and Suitability Assessment

- Review previous studies
- Opportunities & Constraints Analysis
- Stakeholder engagement
- Capability & Suitability
- Land use options
- Identify new urban and conservation areas
- Recommend further studies
- Recommendations for Structure Plan

- Ecological Study
(habitat and wildlife corridor mapping)
- Murrumbidgee River Aquatic Study
(ecosystem-based)
- Cultural Heritage Assessment

PHASE 3 Structure Planning 2022-23

- Draft Structure Plan
 - High level principles for development area
 - Dwelling Mix
 - Estimated Yield
 - Public consultation
- Ecological Surveys
(endangered and threatened species)
- Murrumbidgee Aquatic Surveys
(multi-species)
- Planning, Infrastructure and Transport Study
- Transport Network Modelling
- Light Spill Study (if required)
- Water & Sewerage Servicing Strategy
(funded by D & I, TBC)

URBAN CAPABILITY AND SUITABILITY ASSESSMENT

- **Previous approach** - preliminary planning and infrastructure study & preliminary traffic modelling.
- **New approach** - urban capability and suitability assessment to ensure all known constraints clearly identified and areas with environmental values identified.

Benefits

- Avoids more detailed design work occurring before identifying all constraints and opportunities.
- Removes presumption that entirety of the area will be developed.
- Allows for more thorough consideration of physical constraints and areas requiring environmental protection.

Urban Capability and Suitability Assessment

- Review previous studies
- Opportunities & Constraints Analysis
- Stakeholder engagement
- Capability & Suitability
- Land use options
- Identify new urban and conservation areas
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CONCURRENT STUDIES

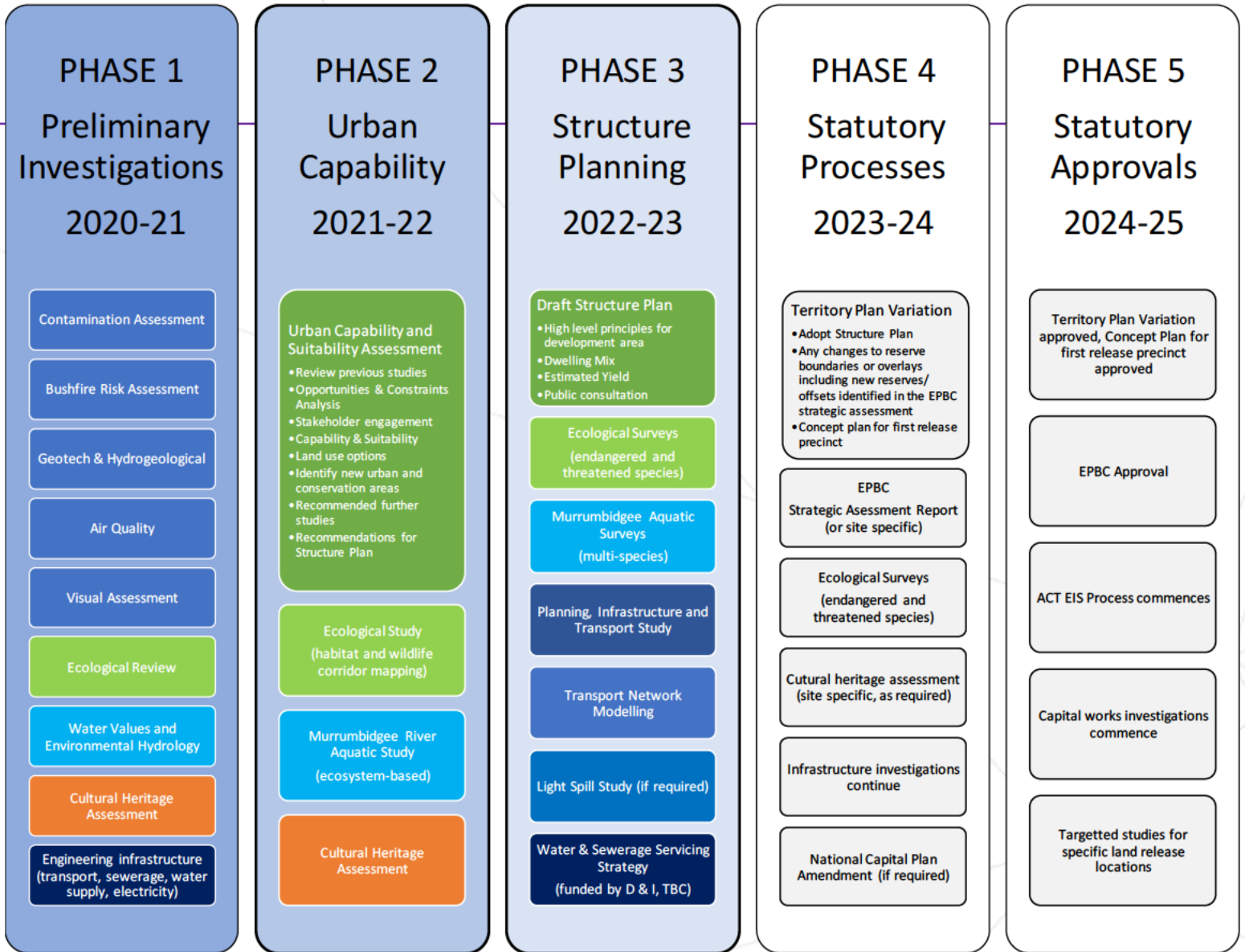
- Focus on areas where environmental values unknown and not protected by existing nature reserve or other
- Cultural Heritage Assessment – two zones recommended for more detailed investigation

Ecological Study
(habitat and wildlife corridor mapping)

Murrumbidgee River Aquatic Study
(ecosystem-based)

Cultural Heritage Assessment

PHASE 3 AND NEXT STEPS



PROJECT MANAGEMENT RISK

