

5.3 Planning Scheme Amendments C286 and C287 - Heritage Overlay at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda – Request for Authorisation and Interim Heritage Protection

Director/Executive Manager: Director Planning & Development

Report Author: Strategic Planner

In Attendance: Manager Strategic Futures
Unit Manager Strategic Planning
Strategic Planner

Executive Summary

This report outlines the process and rationale for applying a Heritage Overlay to a portion of the land at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda (refer to *Attachment 1*). The property was identified as being of local heritage significance in an independent expert heritage assessment undertaken as part of the recent process for preparing a Development Plan for the Station Road, Mernda precinct.

This report addresses two separate yet related amendments applying to part of 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda.

Planning Scheme Amendment C286wsea (Amendment C286) proposes to apply an interim Heritage Overlay (HO) to the dwelling on the site and its surrounding curtilage, in accordance with a heritage assessment and Statement of Significance prepared for the site by an independent Heritage Advisor.

Planning Scheme Amendment C287wsea (Amendment C287) proposes to apply a permanent Heritage Overlay to the property and this report will seek approval from Council to request authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare and exhibit the Amendment for the permanent HO.

The process to apply interim heritage controls to the site has already proceeded with a request to the Minister for Planning to apply interim heritage protection signed under delegation by the Chief Executive Officer. Under the Instrument of Delegation the application for interim heritage controls must be reported to the next available Council meeting for Council's information. No further action is required in relation to Amendment C286.

Interim heritage protection via Amendment C286 is deemed necessary due to a previous request from the landowner to demolish the dwelling and recent inspections of the site indicating that the condition of the building has deteriorated, including being vandalised. An application to apply interim heritage controls will only be considered by the Minister for Planning if it is demonstrated that Council is advancing an amendment for permanent heritage controls on the site.

Interim heritage controls will ensure the heritage significance of 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda, is considered through the planning permit process for any redevelopment proposals while a permanent heritage control is considered in a separate planning scheme amendment process via Amendment C287wsea. The control will also enable Council to undertake more effective enforcement action to maintain the condition of the heritage building if necessary.

As such, this report recommends that Council resolve to commence the Amendment C287 process and seek authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare and exhibit the Amendment. The exhibition process will include notice being given to the community and direct notification to the landowner and provide the opportunity for affected parties to make a submission to Council on the proposal.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT Council:

- 1. Note that a request to the Minister for Planning to apply interim heritage protection via Amendment C286 was made under delegation by the Chief Executive Officer on 7 November 2024, as the heritage place is under threat of demolition and the condition of the heritage building is at risk of falling into further disrepair.**
- 2. Seek authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare and exhibit Amendment C287 to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme which seeks to apply a permanent Heritage Overlay to a portion of the land at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda.**
- 3. Advise the landowner of 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda, of Council's resolution to apply heritage controls to the property.**

Background / Key Information

Background

The Whittlesea Planning Scheme is the primary statutory document that sets out objectives, policies and provisions relating to the use, development, protection and conservation of land' in the City of Whittlesea. To change the Whittlesea Planning Scheme, Council must undertake a Planning Scheme Amendment in accordance with the process outlined in the *Planning and Environment Act, 1987* (refer *Attachment 2*).

The City of Whittlesea has already sought Ministerial intervention to apply interim heritage protection to a heritage place at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda. This report has two purposes, firstly, to note the request for interim heritage controls to the Minister for Planning and secondly, to request Council approval to seek authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare and exhibit a Planning Scheme Amendment to permanently apply the Heritage Overlay (HO) to part of the site at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda (refer *Attachment 1 and 3*).

The house at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda, is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Whittlesea. Built circa 1891, it was one of the first substantial houses to be built in Mernda. It was home to the first resident doctor and later the first Methodist parsonage in the settlement. It is of aesthetic significance as a late Victorian villa with distinctive detailing as identified by an independent heritage consultant (refer *Attachment 4*).

The significance of the dwelling was noted during the assessment of the Station Road Development Plan, which affects a precinct of eight contiguous land parcels, including the subject site, in proximity to the Mernda Train Station. While the Development Plan was under assessment, Council officers were able to suspend a request to demolish the house under S29A of the *Building Act 1993*. The Station Road Development Plan was approved by Council in August 2024 with a notation against the site, that "the dwelling has been identified as being of local heritage significance and is in the process of being considered for permanent heritage protection".

The site is now subject to a current planning permit application for use and development of the land for two medical centres and a childcare centre.

Recent inspections of the property indicate that the condition of the heritage building has deteriorated. The building has been broken into and vandalised (refer *Attachment 5*).

The Chief Executive Officer has exercised his power of delegation to request the Minister for Planning to apply interim heritage protection to the dwelling and nominated curtilage.

The Instrument of Delegation (from Council to Council staff) makes the following provision under Section 8A (3) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*:

- *The CEO or Director of Planning and Development is authorised to apply to the Minister to prepare an amendment to the planning scheme which relates to the interim protection of individual heritage places having local or State significance which are proposed for demolition. The delegation must only be exercised if there is no reasonable opportunity for the matter to be reported to Council for resolution, and reports must be provided to the next available Council meeting.*

As such, both Amendments are being reported to Council at the December Council meeting, which is the first available Council meeting following Council elections. It should be noted that the Minister for Planning will only consider interim heritage controls once it can be demonstrated that Council is advancing a Planning Scheme Amendment for permanent controls. The amendment documents for Amendment C287 have been prepared and are ready for lodgement subject to approval from Council (refer *Attachment 6*). If approved, the interim controls will usually apply for 12 months and Council will apply for an extension to the interim controls if Amendment C287 has not been approved by this time.

Planning Scheme Amendment C287wsea

The first stage in the amendment process is for Council to request authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare and exhibit an Amendment (refer *Attachment 2*).

Amendment C287 seeks to apply a permanent HO under Clause 43.01 of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme to a dwelling and nominated curtilage at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda. The dwelling and curtilage are nominated for heritage protection in a Statement of Significance prepared by an independent heritage advisor (refer *Attachment 4*).

Application of the HO will provide permanent heritage protection over the site and enable Council to ensure that any proposals to use and/or develop the site do not adversely or irreversibly alter the place's heritage value. Standard planning permit requirements are set out in Clause 43.01 (Heritage Overlay) of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme for all places to which the HO applies. This generally requires a planning permit to:

- Demolish or remove a building, including part of a building;
- Construct a building, including part of a building;
- Externally alter a building;
- Construct or display a sign; or
- Other specific planning controls as identified in the Schedule to Clause 43.01.

The extent of the area affected by the HO is shown on the Planning Scheme overlay map (refer *Attachment 3*). This is commonly referred to as the 'curtilage'.

A Statement of Significance acts as a reference for each heritage place through identification of the site's contributing features (refer *Attachment 4*). It is used to inform the Planning Scheme Amendment process as well as a guide for future applications to be assessed against the heritage criteria identified for the site.

It is important to note that the HO does not:

- Prohibit development;
- Require landowners to restore, update or maintain their properties;
- Require a planning permit for routine maintenance or repairs that do not change the appearance of a heritage place; and
- Allow public access to private properties.

The application of the HO will also enable Council to undertake more effective enforcement action and deter demolition should the condition of the heritage building continue to deteriorate.

Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

Liveable Neighbourhoods

Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

Response:

Proposed Amendment C287 will implement planning controls to conserve a heritage place of aesthetic and cultural significance. The independent heritage assessment assessed the house as exhibiting particular aesthetic significance as a late Victorian villa with distinctive detailing including the ornate rendered chimneys, decorated eaves, and small arched niches and white tuckpointing to the facade. The house and its past residents are associated with the early development of the Mernda district following the opening of the Whittlesea railway in 1889.

Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

Financial Management

The cost of processing the Planning Scheme Amendment including potential Planning Panel is included in the current budget.

Community Consultation and Engagement

Please refer to the communication section later in the report.

Other Principles for Consideration

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

- (a) Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law.
- (b) Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations.

Public Transparency Principles

- (a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act.
- (c) Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community.

Council Policy Considerations

Environmental Sustainability Considerations

No implications.

Social, Cultural and Health

The Amendment proposal considers social and cultural implications by protecting a heritage place of aesthetic and cultural significance.

Economic

The Amendment proposal will provide for the use and development of the site with consideration of the conservation and enhancement of a heritage place.

Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications

No implications.

Implementation Strategy

Communication

Notification/statutory exhibition of Amendment C287

The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* requires notice to be given of an amendment. This process will be initiated through the resolution at this Council meeting, with Council approval sought to request authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare and exhibit Amendment C287. Should authorisation be granted, proposed Amendment C287 will be required to undergo a standard exhibition process, including a 28-day notification period to potentially affected landowners, prescribed Ministers and relevant Agencies. Any submissions must be received by the date identified in the correspondence.

The exhibition process will include:

- A letter notifying the owner of the land affected by the proposed Amendment and identifying how they may participate in and make a submission through the exhibition process, if they choose to do so. It will also identify critical dates for making a submission as required;
- A Statement of Significance for the property which identifies the heritage context, significance and contributing features that warrant Planning Scheme (HO) protection (refer *Attachment 4*); and
- A plan identifying the extent of the proposed HO curtilage and the specific planning controls that are proposed for the property (refer *Attachment 3*).

Critical Dates

The Minister for Planning will only consider the request for interim heritage controls for the site at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda, once it has been demonstrated that Council is advancing this Amendment for permanent controls on the site.

If authorisation from the Minister for Planning is granted, it is likely that the exhibition of Amendment C287 will commence shortly after.

Council officers will report to Council on the results of the exhibition process at a future Council meeting.

If submissions are received and remain unresolved these will be considered at a Council meeting and a Council decision made to abandon the amendment or refer the amendment to an independent Planning Panel to hear and consider submissions.

If the amendment is referred to a Planning Panel there will be a report presented to a subsequent Council meeting to consider the recommendations of the Planning Panel and a Council decision on whether to adopt the amendment.

Policy, Strategy and Legislation

Planning and Environment Act 1987

As the Planning Authority, Council must give effect to the objectives of planning in Victoria, including:

- *to conserve and enhance those buildings, areas or other places which are of historical or otherwise special cultural value (Section 4(d)).*

Section 6B of the Act specifically references heritage buildings, noting a planning scheme may make provision to further the objectives of planning in Victoria within the area covered by the scheme including:

- *to deter persons from unlawfully demolishing heritage buildings or allowing heritage buildings to fall into disrepair (Section 6B(b)).*

Ministerial Directions

The Amendment will be prepared considering the following ministerial directions:

- Ministerial Direction: The Form and Content of Planning Schemes.
- Direction No. 11: Strategic Assessment of Amendments.

Planning Practice Notes

The Amendment documents will be prepared considering the following practice notes:

- PPN01: Applying the Heritage Overlay.
- PPN46: Strategic Assessment Guidelines.

Whittlesea Planning Scheme

The Amendment is supported by the following clauses of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme:

Clause 15.03-1S (Heritage Conservation) seeks to ensure the conservation of places of heritage significance. Strategies include:

- identify, assess and document places of natural and cultural significance as a basis for their inclusion in the planning scheme;
- retain those elements that contribute to the importance of the heritage place; and
- encourage the conservation and restoration of contributory elements of a heritage place.

Clause 15.03-1L (Heritage conservation in Whittlesea)

Relevant strategies include:

- Identify and protect local heritage and other cultural features in development and subdivision.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

Attachments

1. Site Context Plans [5.3.1 - 2 pages]
2. Planning Scheme Amendment Process [5.3.2 - 1 page]
3. Planning Scheme Map (HO 205) [5.3.3 - 1 page]
4. 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda, Heritage Statement of Significance [5.3.4 - 2 pages]
5. Site Photos [5.3.5 - 1 page]
6. Amendment C287wsea draft documents for Authorisation [5.3.6 - 25 pages]

Attachment 1: Site Context Plan



Figure 1: Site Context Plan



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Figure 2: Aerial Photo

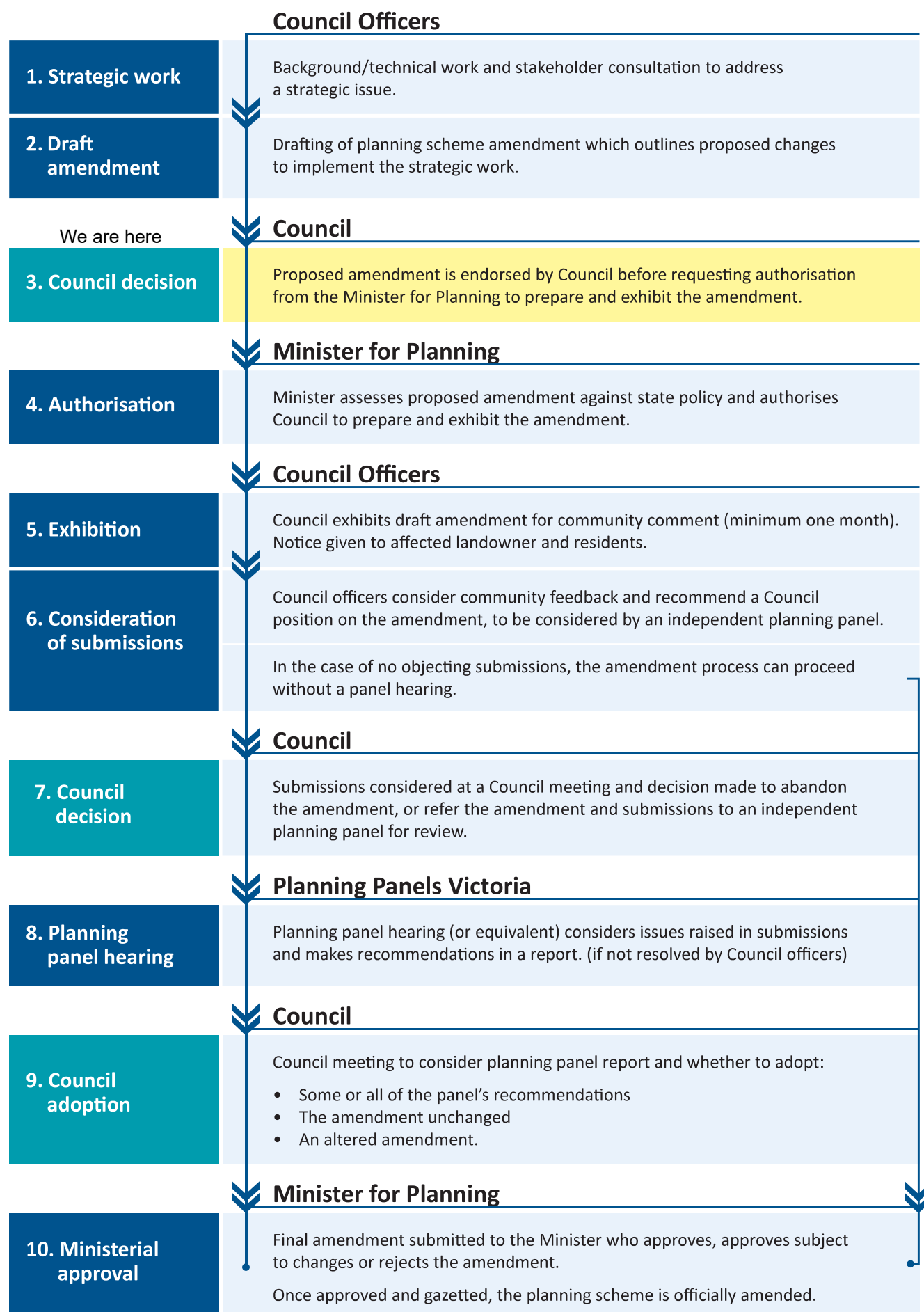


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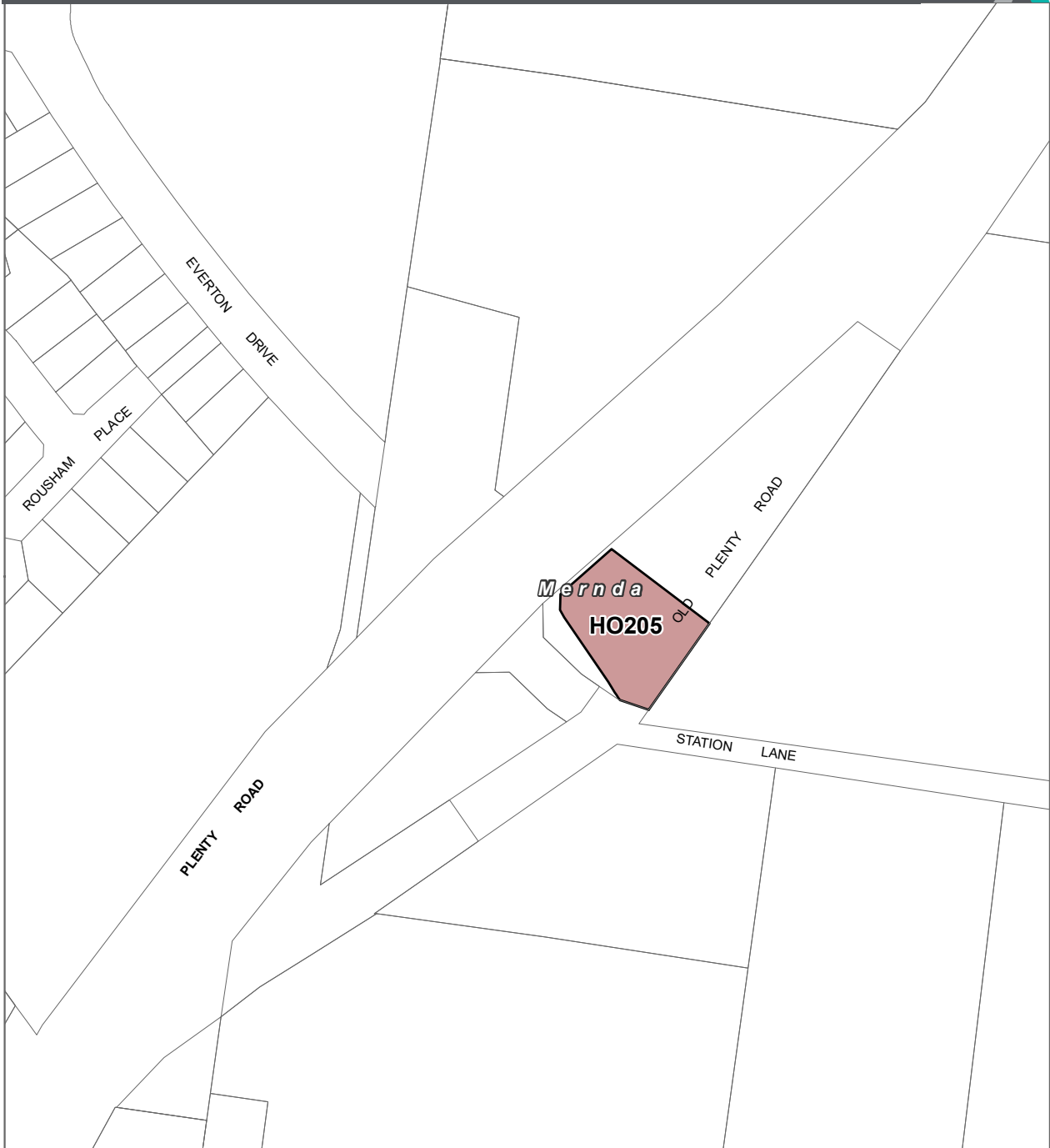
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Planning Scheme Amendment statutory process



Council-led amendments

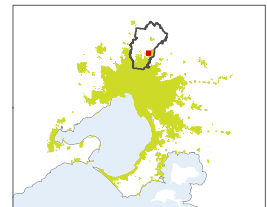


WHITTLESEA PLANNING SCHEME - LOCAL PROVISION AMENDMENT C287wsea



LEGEND

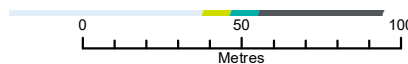
-  HO - Heritage Overlay
-  Local Government Area



Part of Planning Scheme Map 13HO


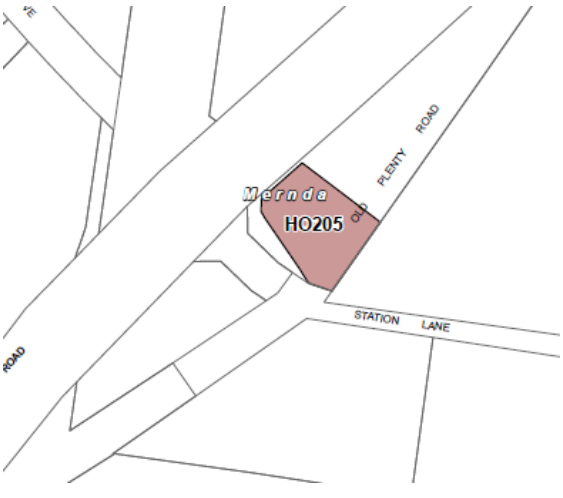
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 Amendment Version: 1



Department
 of Transport
 and Planning

1470 Plenty Road, Mernda Statement of Significance

<p>Heritage place: House (former doctor's residence and parsonage), 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda</p>	<p>PS ref no: HO205</p>
	

What is significant?

The former doctor's residence, later Methodist parsonage, built c.1891, at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda is significant. The brick house to the extent of the nineteenth century fabric, including an early addition at the north-west corner, contributes to the significance of the place.

The gabled porch to the front, and the timber section and verandah to the rear of the house are not significant.

How is it significant?

The former doctor's residence and Methodist parsonage at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Whittlesea.

Why is it significant?

Historically, the house at 1470 Plenty Road is associated with the development of the Mernda district following the opening of the Whittlesea Railway in 1889 and demonstrates how this encouraged the building of more substantial houses for prominent residents. It has associations with Dr. Alexander Sutherland who was the first resident doctor in the district and acted as the Health Officer for the City of Whittlesea from c.1890 to c.1902 and his successor Dr. Pieper. Following the creation of the Yan Yean South Methodist circuit in 1913 the Mernda Methodist Church purchased it in 1917 and from 1918 it became the first parsonage until it was sold in 1977. (Criterion A)

The house at 1470 Plenty Road is of aesthetic significance as a late Victorian villa with distinctive detailing including the ornate rendered chimneys with bracketed cornices and half circular caps, decorated eaves, and small arched niches and white tuckpointing to the façade. (Criterion E)

Primary source

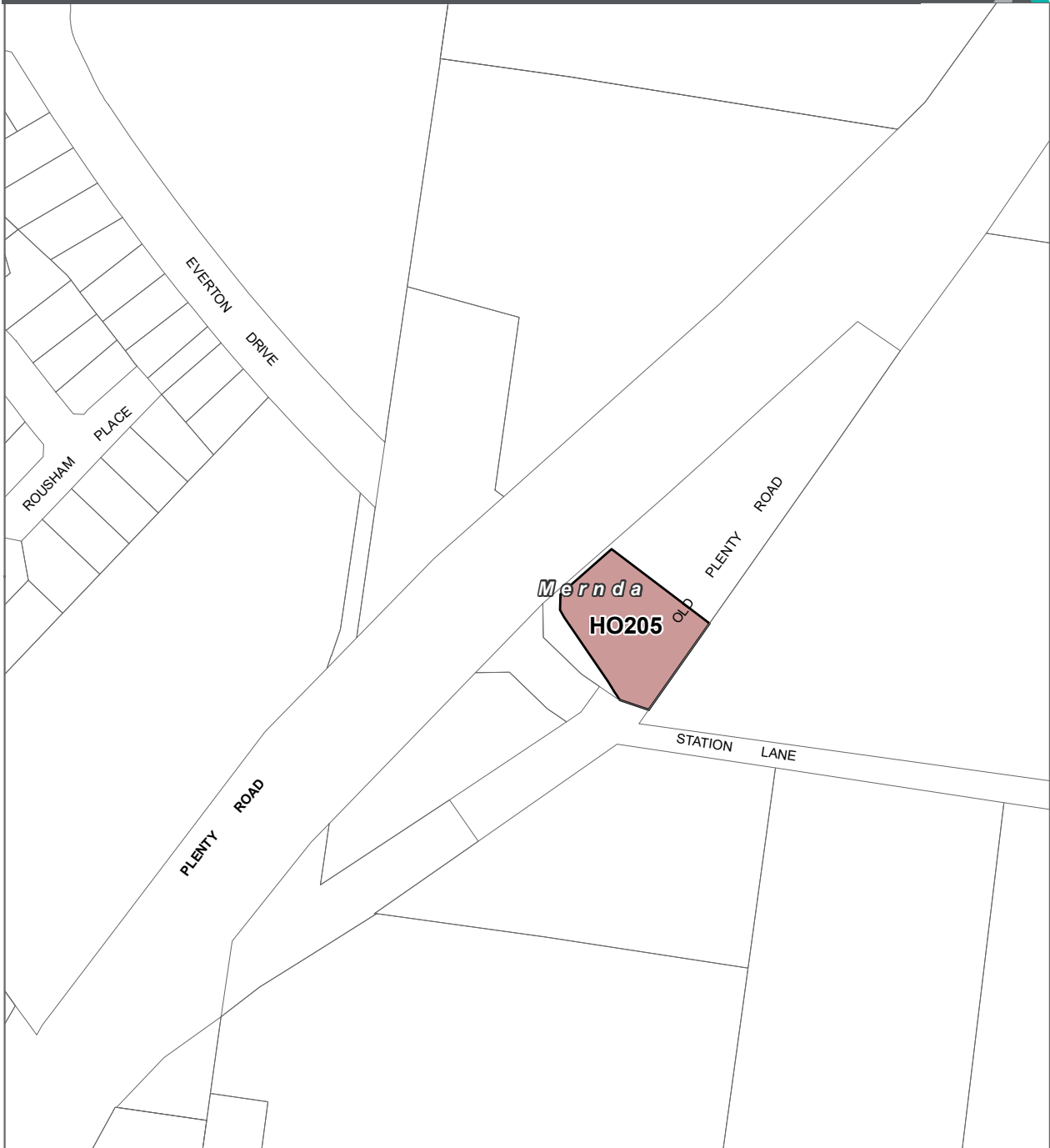
David Helms Heritage Planning, Assessment of heritage significance: 1470 Plenty Road and 4 Station Road, Mernda 2023

This document is an incorporated document in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme pursuant to section 6(2)(j) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*



Amendment C286wsea and Amendment C287wsea - Photo gallery – damage to house (19/9/2024 site inspection)

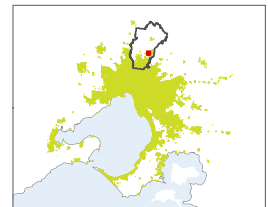


WHITTLESEA PLANNING SCHEME - LOCAL PROVISION AMENDMENT C287wsea



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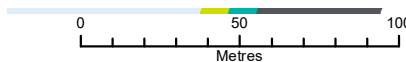
-  HO - Heritage Overlay
-  Local Government Area



Part of Planning Scheme Map 13HO

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 Amendment Version: 1



Department of Transport and Planning

Planning and Environment Act 1987

Whittlesea Planning Scheme

Amendment C287wsea

Explanatory Report

Overview

The amendment proposes to apply the Heritage Overlay at Clause 43.01 to part of the land at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda.

Where you may inspect this amendment

The amendment can be inspected free of charge at the City of Whittlesea website at: <https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/building-planning-development/planning-scheme-and-amendments/>

And/or

The amendment is available for public inspection, free of charge, during office hours at the following places:

City of Whittlesea Civic Centre, 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang 3752

The amendment can also be inspected free of charge at the Department of Transport and Planning website at <http://www.planning.vic.gov.au/public-inspection> or by contacting the office on 1800 789 386 to arrange a time to view the amendment documentation.

Details of the amendment

Who is the planning authority?

This amendment has been prepared by Whittlesea City Council which is the planning authority for this amendment.

The amendment has been made at the request of Whittlesea City Council.

Land affected by the amendment

The amendment applies to part of 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda, (Figure 1) including the dwelling and curtilage to provide a suitable buffer to manage development that could affect the setting of the house.

The subject site is in the General Residential Zone – Schedule 1.

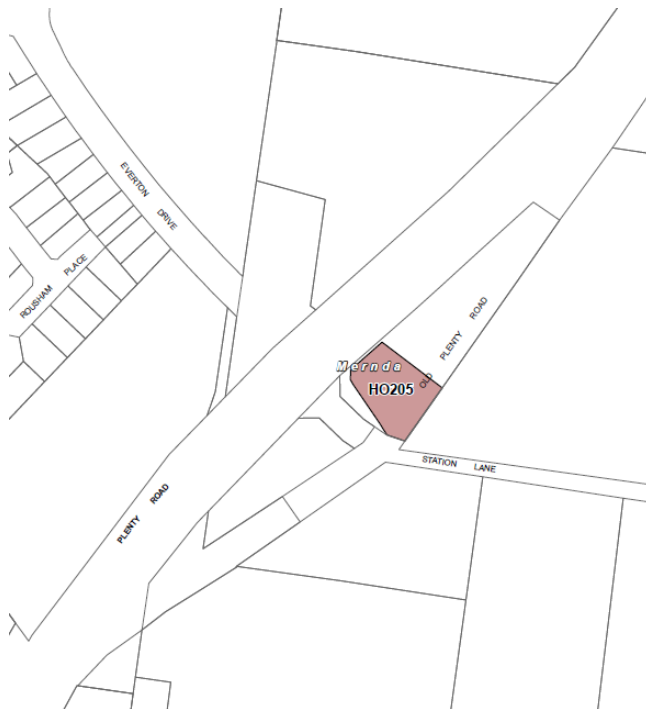


Figure 1. Land affected by Whittlesea Planning Scheme Amendment C279wsea

What the amendment does

The amendment applies the Heritage Overlay, on a permanent basis to part of the land at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda.

Specifically, the amendment:

- Amends the Schedule to Clause 43.01 (Heritage Overlay) to include HO205.
- Amends Planning Scheme Map No. 13HO to apply the Heritage Overlay HO205 to part of the land at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda.
- Amends the Schedule to Clause 72.04 (Incorporated Documents) to include the statement of significance for 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda.

Strategic assessment of the amendment

Why is the amendment required?

The amendment is required to provide heritage protection to the dwelling and its curtilage at 1470 Plenty Road Mernda.

On 28 September 2022, council received an application under Section 29A of the *Building Act 1993* to demolish the dwelling at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda. The request for demolition was suspended on 19 October 2022.

A request for demolition of the dwelling was received and Council has suspended the demolition request under Section 29A of the Building Act 1993. A request for an interim heritage overlay has been sought to protect the heritage place whilst permanent controls are pursued.

A report prepared in 2023 by David Helms for the City of Whittlesea titled 'Heritage Assessment - 1470 Plenty Road and 4 Station Road, Mernda' provides justification to place an interim heritage control on 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda.

The house at 1470 Plenty Road has been identified as having local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Whittlesea. The house is one of several that was built immediately following the opening of the Whittlesea Railway when the Mernda village began to take shape. The house at 1470 is associated with the development of the Mernda district and has associations with prominent community members including Dr. Alexander Sutherland, the first resident doctor of the district and his successor. The house is an example of a 19th century Victorian brick villa. It is considered to be a superior example of a late Victorian brick villa distinguished by the quality of the detailing and good integrity.

The amendment will ensure that any future use, development and subdivision of the subject land is considered having regard to the purpose and decision guidelines of the Heritage Overlay at Clause 43.01 of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme.

How does the amendment implement the objectives of planning in Victoria?

The Amendment implements the following objectives as set out in Section 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*:

- Section 4(1) (a) – to provide for the fair, orderly, economic and sustainable use and development of the land.
- Section 4(1) (d) – to conserve and enhance those buildings, areas or other places which are of scientific, aesthetic, architectural or historical interest, or otherwise of special cultural value via the Heritage Overlay.

- Section 4(1) (g) – to balance the present and future interests of all Victorians.

The amendment implements these objectives by implementing a Heritage Overlay that seeks to retain an historically and aesthetically significant building for the benefit of current and future communities of Whittlesea.

How does the amendment address any environmental, social and economic effects?

The amendment will have no adverse effect on the natural environment, while ensuring that elements of the built environment that are of heritage significance are conserved via the Heritage Overlay.

The amendment provides positive social and economic outcomes by ensuring that the historic and aesthetic identity of the site is protected for current and future communities of Whittlesea.

Does the amendment address relevant bushfire risk?

The amendment meets bushfire policy in Clause 13.02 of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme because the amendment does not allow for the intensification of the land or change the use of the land. Therefore, it is unlikely to result in any significant increase to the risk to life as a priority, property, community infrastructure or the natural environment.

Does the amendment comply with the requirements of any other Minister's Direction applicable to the amendment?

The amendment complies with the requirements of *Ministerial Direction – The Form and Content of Planning Schemes* (section 7(5) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*) by including an additional heritage place in Schedule to Clause 43.01 in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme.

The amendment complies with the requirements of *Ministerial Direction No 11 – Strategic Assessments of Amendments* under section 12 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. The Strategic Assessment Guidelines outlined in this Direction are incorporated into this Explanatory Report.

The amendment is consistent with *Ministerial Direction No 9 – Metropolitan Strategy*, pursuant to Section 12 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* that requires planning authorities to have regard to the Metropolitan Planning Strategy, *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*. The Amendment is supported by Direction 4.4 'Respect Melbourne's heritage as we build for the future' and Policy 4.4.1 'Recognise the value of heritage when managing growth and change'.

How does the amendment support or implement the Planning

Policy Framework and any adopted State policy?

Clause 15

The amendment supports the Planning Policy Framework including Clause 15 (Built Environment and Heritage) by supporting the objective that 'planning should protect places and sites with significant heritage, architectural, aesthetic, natural, scientific and cultural value'. The amendment identifies and protects a place of historical and aesthetic significance in accordance with Criteria A and E of the Hercon criteria.

Clause 15.03-1S (Heritage Conservation) seeks to ensure the conservation of heritage places as well as their setting and context. The proposed amendment is consistent with this directive, seeking to ensure the application of the Heritage Overlay to the dwelling and curtilage within the subject site that is identified as having heritage significance.

The amendment is also consistent with Clause 15.03-1L Heritage conservation in Whittlesea by providing for the protection of a local heritage place.

How does the amendment support or implement the Municipal Planning Strategy?

The amendment is consistent with the Municipal Planning Strategy, in particular Clause 02.03-5 Built environment and heritage through protecting and maintaining the integrity and historic character of Whittlesea's heritage places.

Does the amendment make proper use of the Victoria Planning Provisions?

The amendment makes proper use of the Victoria Planning Provisions by applying the Heritage Overlay to part of the site including the dwelling. The Heritage Overlay is the most appropriate planning tool to identify places of heritage significance. The Heritage Overlay requires a planning permit to be granted for buildings and works, including demolition and provides a framework to manage heritage values of each place.

How does the amendment address the views of any relevant agency?

The views of relevant agencies will be considered through the amendment process for permanent heritage controls.

Does the amendment address relevant requirements of the Transport Integration Act 2010?

The proposed amendment is not expected to have any significant effect on the transport system as defined by Section 3 of the Transport Integration Act 2010.

Resource and administrative costs

What impact will the new planning provisions have on the resource and administrative costs of the responsible authority?

The amendment will have minimal impact on resource and administrative costs on the responsible authority, as it only includes one additional place under the Heritage Overlay for consideration.

David Helms
HERITAGE PLANNING

21 July 2023

Linda Martin-Chew
Coordinator - Strategic Land Use Planning
City of Whittlesea
25 Ferres Boulevard
SOUTH MORANG VIC 3752

Dear Linda

Heritage assessment –1470 Plenty Road and 4 Station Road, Mernda

Please see attached the heritage assessment for the houses at 1470 Plenty Road and 4 Station Road at Mernda.

Based on the assessment, it is my opinion that:

- The house at 1470 Plenty Road is of local historic (Criterion A), and aesthetic (Criterion E) significance for the reasons set out in the statement of significance in Attachment 1 to the attached report, and justifies inclusion in the HO, as recommended in section 8.
- The house at 4 Station Road does not satisfy the threshold of local significance under any of the heritage criteria, and does not justify inclusion in the HO, for the reasons discussed in section 7.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Fond regards



David Helms

PO Box 1225 Chapel Street, Windsor 3181
e: info@davidhelmsheritage.com m: 0416 126 323

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: 1470 PLENTY ROAD & 4 STATION ROAD

Assessment of heritage significance: 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda and 4 Station Road, Mernda

1. Purpose

This report has been prepared by David Helms Heritage Planning for the City of Whittlesea. The purpose is to assess the cultural heritage significance of the houses at 1470 Plenty Road and 4 Station Road in Mernda to determine if either or both would satisfy the threshold of local significance as an individual place and justify the inclusion in the heritage overlay (HO) of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme. Figure 1 shows the location of the two houses.

The City of Whittlesea has requested this heritage assessment, as it is currently assessing a Development Plan (Station Road Development Plan) for the area comprising eight properties bounded by Plenty Road to the west, Station Lane to the south and Station Road to the east. As part of this process, Council was provided with a Memorandum of Heritage Advice for each property. These indicated that further assessment is required for 1470 Plenty Road and 4 Station Road. In addition, the dwelling at 1470 Plenty Road has been subject to a Section 29A Demolition application which was suspended on the basis that the Development Plan requires a Heritage Assessment as an application requirement of DPO5 and that the application is premature.

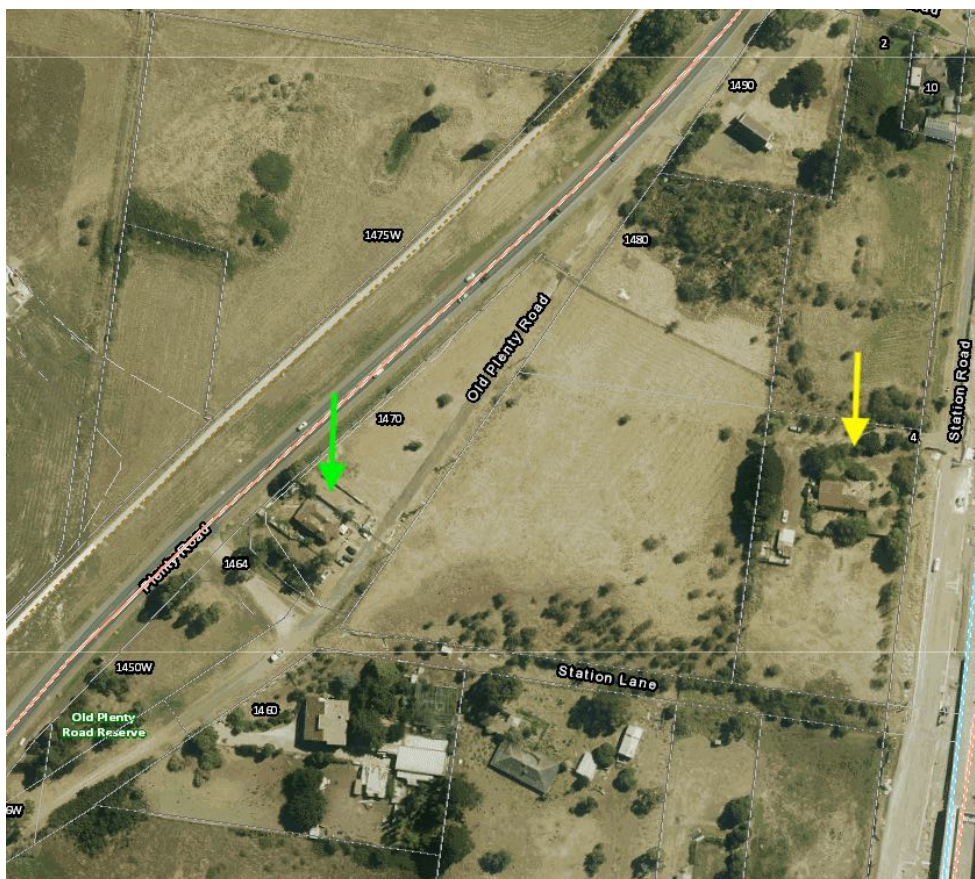


Figure 1: Locality map showing 1470 Plenty Road (green arrow) and 4 Station Road (yellow arrow) (Source: Vicplan).

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: 1470 PLENTY ROAD & 4 STATION ROAD

2. Methodology

This heritage assessment has been prepared in accordance with the Australia ICOMOS *Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*, 2013 (the *Burra Charter*) and its guidelines, and in accordance with relevant guidelines including Planning Practice Note 1: *Applying the heritage overlay* (PPN1). All terminology is consistent with the *Burra Charter*.

In preparing this assessment I have:

- Inspected both houses, accompanied by Linda Martin-Chew, Coordinator Strategic Land Use Planning, City of Whittlesea. 1470 Plenty Road was inspected from the adjoining streets and roads. 4 Station Road was inspected on-site with the assistance of the current owner.
- Undertaken historic research using selected primary (land title information, Whittlesea Shire rate books, newspaper articles) and secondary (heritage studies and local histories) sources.
- Undertaken a 'desktop' comparative analysis with other heritage places in the City of Whittlesea. This comparative analysis has also drawn on relevant comparative assessments forming part of a separate heritage study that I am currently preparing for the City of Whittlesea, which is reviewing and updating the citations and statements of significance for more than 70 heritage places currently included in the HO.
- Assessed the houses using the Hercon criteria and prepared a statement of significance in accordance with PPN1, as required.

3. Existing heritage listings and studies

The two houses are not included in the heritage overlay and are not included on any other heritage listing or register.

The two houses were not identified in the previous municipal heritage studies including the *City of Whittlesea Heritage Study*, prepared by Meredith Gould in 1990 and the *City of Whittlesea Heritage Study*, prepared by Context Pty Ltd in 2013-15.

The two houses were included in the 'Preliminary heritage assessment: Mernda township' prepared by Ray Tonkin for the City of Whittlesea in June 2017 (the Tonkin report). The purpose was to determine 'whether the building and features of the township warranted any further heritage recognition than currently provided in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme.'

The Tonkin report included a site inspection and some historic research for each house, which were among several places included in the assessment. The report concluded:

At this stage no attempt has been made to complete a formal heritage assessment of the Mernda Township

The area identified for this study is a very small part of the original township and the question to be considered before a final assessment is completed is how extensive the township area is and does the extended area warrant application of a Heritage Overlay

This preliminary assessment would indicate that the section subject to this study has sufficient remnants to warrant heritage identification. However, the area of land to the south of Bridge Inn Road (including the Bridge Inn and the saleyards as well as the extensive Mayfield property) and the former Yan Yean Water Reserve subdivision could be added to any future heritage precinct for Mernda. This would enable the existing individual heritage overlays to be considered as part of a broader precinct.

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On this basis, the Tonkin report recommended a formal assessment of the heritage significance of the whole Mernda Township.

In 2023 Bryce Raworth Conservation & Heritage prepared a 'Memorandum of heritage advice' for each property. These were prepared on behalf of the owner of 1470 Plenty Road, and a developer who owns land adjacent to the two properties and comment upon whether the dwellings have 'potential heritage significance that would warrant a comprehensive assessment at planning permit stage'.

In relation to 1470 Plenty Road, the memorandum concluded:

The subject site remains a handsome and recognisable example of a late 19th century brick farmhouse. Its level of intactness is generally high, although the property would benefit from some general conservation works. The most significant alteration is its modern porch; this could be removed, and the original profiled verandah reinstated, utilising evidence on the brickwork to inform the profile. The house could be a suitable building for adaptive re-use, subject to other planning matters.

The limitations of the heritage study may have been sufficient to exclude this property from previous assessment, however, it is this office's view that, considering the age of the property and its level of intactness, coupled with some comparable brick farmhouses that have been assessed for the study and found to warrant heritage protection, Council are likely to deem this property as requiring further heritage assessment if it is brought to Council's attention. There is also a likelihood that the building will require retention with a reasonable curtilage around it also subject to the Heritage Overlay.

In relation to 4 Station Road, the memorandum concluded:

It should be noted that, due to accessibility limits, research on the property has been limited and our commentary reflects this. To the extent it was visible, the subject site is a typical example of an early 20th century weatherboard cottage, or possibly a farmhouse. Whilst it appears to have undergone some alterations to its rear, the front of the house appears relatively unaltered.

A number of early twentieth century properties that are broadly comparable to the subject site in terms of age and construction have been identified as requiring heritage protection within the latest heritage study. These include:

- *Wildwood Farm, 425 Wildwood Road, Whittlesea, weatherboard cottage, c.1900.*
- *25 Gingles Road, Humevale, weatherboard cottage c.1910.*
- *41 Recreation Road, Yan Yean, weatherboard cottage c.1908.*
- *2 Walnut Street, Whittlesea, weatherboard cottage c.1908.*

The limitations of the City of Whittlesea Heritage Study (2013-2015) may have been sufficient to exclude this property from assessment to date, insofar as previously unidentified properties have not been sought out by in that review. However, it is this office's view that the age and reasonable integrity of the building, coupled with the number of comparable weatherboard cottages that have been assessed for the study and found to warrant heritage protection, suggest there is some likelihood that Council might deem this property appropriate for further heritage assessment if it is brought to Council's attention by a permit application process or similar. If that were to be the case, there is also some potential that the building will require retention with a reasonable curtilage around it.

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4. History**Thematic context**

Victoria's Framework of Historic Themes

6. Building towns, cities, and the garden state: 6.1 Establishing Melbourne Town, Port Phillip District, 6.5 Living in country towns, 6.7 Making homes for Victorians

City of Whittlesea Thematic Environmental History

5. Building settlements and towns: 5.2 Land speculation, 5.3 Towns that grew with the Yan Yean Reservoir

Contextual history

Within the City of Whittlesea, the earliest settlements developed around facilities provided for travellers, which were often situated near creek and river crossings. As settlers began to arrive the demand for houses and facilities increased and schools, churches, shops, inns, and other community infrastructure was developed. Other settlements grew because of the timber industry. The arrival of the railway in the township of Whittlesea in 1889 linked the township of Whittlesea to the City to Melbourne and sparked a further period of growth (Context 2015).

The district of Mernda (originally known as Morang and South Yan Yean), situated at the northern extreme of the Plenty Gorge, developed around the site of a crossing over the Plenty River, which from 1841 was served by the first Bridge Inn (described at the time as a wattle and daub hut). The construction of the Yan Yean Reservoir contributed to the area's growth. Between 1853 and 1857 up to 1,000 men were employed in building the reservoir and in 1853 the first school was opened, followed by a Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1856, a Presbyterian Church in 1860, and a post office in 1861. The Bridge Inn was rebuilt in 1856 and relocated by 1868 to the present site at the corner of Bridge Inn and Plenty roads and by the 1870s there were four hotels/inns along the Plenty Road at Morang within a square mile. The foundation stone for a Catholic church was laid in 1879, and after some delays the building was opened in 1884 (Context 2015).

The opening of the railway to Whittlesea in 1889 led to a minor development boom, as reported in the 31 July 1891 edition of the *Evelyn Observer and South and East Bourke Record*:

It is worthy of remark that within a radius of about a mile of the South Yan Yean railway station there is undoubted signs of progress since the railway to Whittlesea was opened. The most prominent buildings so far that have been erected being the splendid residence at Yan Yean of Mr. John Horner, the residence of Dr Sutherland erected by Dehnert Brothers ... the residence of Mr. E. Perkins also the residences of Messrs. Bradford, Johnstone, McCurdy, and others, all of which is proof of the rapid progress being made in the district ... while recently there has been just finished the most costly building so far erected here, viz., the new Bridge Inn.

It was estimated that in the five years from 1887 to 1892 more than £15,000 was expended in the construction of new buildings in Mernda within a two-mile radius of the railway station (*Evelyn Observer and South and East Bourke Record*, 7 October 1892, p.2). This included two new civic buildings, which opened in 1888 - the Wesleyan Methodist Church on the west side of Plenty Road (now Schotters Road) and the Mechanics' Institute and Library on the corner diagonally opposite the Bridge Inn - and the new brick bakery, built c.1891 by Charles and Stephenson Turner in Schotters Road.

By 1895 the district had changed its name to South Yan Yean, but by 1913, the experiment had been abandoned and the name was changed to Mernda. In 1915 when the Shire of Whittlesea was joined with the Shire of Epping, the new Council had begun conducting its meetings within the Mechanics' Institute, a practice that continued until 1939.

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After the period of growth in the early 1890s, further development was slow, and it was said that a house built in 1923 was the first for 15 years (Payne 1973:117). Nonetheless, by 1928, when Mernda was officially declared a township, there were over 200 houses, two Savings Banks, three general stores, a bakery, five churches, a hotel, a post office, a school and the Mechanics' Institute and Council Chambers (*Advertiser*, 4 May 1928, p.2 'Proclaiming Mernda a township').

Place history – 1470 Plenty Road

1470 Plenty Road forms part of Crown Portion Four, Section Three, Parish of Yan Yean, County of Bourke. Bridge Inn Road formed the south boundary and Schotter's Road the east, while the original route of the Plenty Road, which travelled in a diagonal line across CP4 from the southwest corner to the northeast where it intersected with Schotter's Road, divided it into two almost equal halves. The northern section formed part of the Preston Hall farm, established c.1865 by Michael McLaughlin, while the southern part was gradually subdivided into several irregularly shaped parcels.

Figure 2 contains part of a plan prepared in 1887 for the survey of the Whittlesea Railway showing the pattern of the development on CP4. At that time the subject property formed part of the Preston Hall estate on the north side of the former alignment of Plenty Road.



Figure 2: Extract of 1887 Whittlesea Railway Survey Plan with my annotations showing key roads and buildings and the site of 1470 Plenty Road indicated by red star (Source: Reproduced in Mills, 2017)

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The house on the subject property was built c.1891 by the Dehnert Brothers as the residence of Dr. Alexander Sutherland. The residence was one of several cited in the July 1891 newspaper article cited above about the development of Mernda following the opening of the railway station.

In the 1894-95 Shire of Whittlesea rate book, 'Alexander Sutherland M.D.' is identified as the person rated for a house in Yan Yean, owned by 'R. Dehnert' valued at £20. Dr. Sutherland was still the occupier in 1900-1901 rate book, when it was more specifically described as a brick house, then valued at £25.

As noted by Tonkin (2017:10) there were 'obvious advantages' for the growing district in attracting a doctor to live there, and it appears the Dehnerts built the house to facilitate this. Dr Sutherland came to the district in c.1891, setting up practice from this house and from a hotel in Whittlesea, and assumed the role of health officer for the Whittlesea Shire by 1892 (Tonkin 2017:10; Jones 1992:135). Dr. Sutherland left the area in 1902, dying shortly after, and was replaced as Shire health officer by Dr. F. Peipers (*Evelyn Observer and South and East Bourke Record*, 24 October 1902, p.2). Peipers took over renting the house on Plenty Road – he is identified as living there in 1904. He also consulted from Mr Timm's hotel in Whittlesea (*ibid*, 12 September 1902, p.2). The last reference in newspapers to Peipers is in December 1906 (Tonkin 2017:10).

In 1918 the house and just over three acres of land was purchased by the trustees of the Mernda Methodist Church to become the first parsonage (LV). The need for a parsonage arose after a division of the Preston circuit made in 1913, when the northern section comprising the churches at South Yan Yean (Mernda), South Morang, Whittlesea, Wollert, Hazelglen and Glenvale, became the Yan Yean South Circuit, with a Probationer based at Mernda. The first Probationer, Rev. B.L. Semmins stayed at Hazelmere, the home of John Horner, in Hayes Road. He was followed by Rev. Henry Clarke and later by Rev. Wesley Hobbs (Mernda Uniting Church booklet).

By July 1918 the house had been purchased and renovated and furnished at a cost of £670, of which £400 had been raised by the Furnishing Committee formed by the Ladies' Guild. The first resident minister was Rev. J. McIlroy and his wife (*ibid*).

The house remained the home of Ministers, Home Missionaries and Student Pastors until 1977 when it was acquired by the Country Roads Board at the time Plenty Road was realigned to the west behind the house (*ibid*).

Place history – 4 Station Road

4 Station Road also forms part of Crown Portion Four, Section Three, Parish of Yan Yean, County of Bourke. Bridge Inn Road formed the south boundary and Schotter's Road the east, while the original route of the Plenty Road, which travelled in a diagonal line across CP4 from the south west corner to the north east where it intersected with Schotter's Road divided it into two almost equal halves. The northern section formed part of the Preston Hall farm, established c.1865 by Michael McLaughlin, while the southern part was gradually subdivided into several irregularly shaped parcels (see Figure 2, above).

Several of the lots within the southern part of CP4 on the east side of Plenty Road were owned by James and Maria Ryan who arrived in the district in the early 1850s. James Ryan Snr. was the Whittlesea Shire Secretary from the 1870s and upon his death in 1899 he was succeeded by his son James Jnr. who served until 1939. The Ryan family were members of the St Joseph's Catholic Church congregation and in the 1870s donated the land for St Joseph's Church on Plenty Road, which after some delays eventually opened in 1884. The family home was situated just to the north of the church.

James Snr. played an important role in the early development of the district and was said to have 'given a great deal of stability to local government in the region'. One of his proudest achievements was obtaining the railway for Whittlesea in 1888 for which he received a gold watch and purse of

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sovereigns. Though James Jnr. served for as long as his father, his achievements were not as great, and his tenure ended in controversy after he was accused of 'sloppy administration' and of 'grooming' his son John to take over as Secretary when he retired. The situation worsened and Whittlesea Shire Council gave notice terminating James Ryan's position in February 1939 (Jones 1992:176).

Following the death of Maria Ryan in 1903 ownership of the land owned by the family in Plenty Road passed to James Jnr and another son, Patrick (LV). In 1908 James married Violet Kate Adelaide Riordan, and in 1922 a one-acre allotment was excised from the Ryan property and registered in Violet's name. This is the present 4 Station Road.

The house at 4 Station Road was built in about 1923. Violet Ryan is listed as the owner of 'land, part of Lot 4, Sec 3, Mernda valued at £9 in the 1922-23 rate book, and then as the owner and occupier of a House and land valued at £35 in 1924-25. It appears that this was the residence of James and Violet, although James continued to be listed in the rate books as the person rated for the original Ryan house. The house and land remained in Violet's ownership until her death in 1963.

Sources

Context Pty Ltd, *City of Whittlesea Heritage Study. Volume 1 – Thematic environmental history*, 2013

Jones, Michael, *Nature's Plenty. History of the City of Whittlesea*, 1992

Land Victoria (LV) Certificates of Title:

- 1470 Plenty Road: Vol. 4058 Fol. 591 (1918)
- 4 Station Road: Vol. 2390 Fol. 962 (1892); Vol. 4576 Fol. 196 (1923)

Meredith Gould Architects Pty Ltd, *City of Whittlesea Heritage Study*, 1990

'Mernda Uniting Church 1888-1988'. Booklet prepared c.1988 by the Mernda Uniting Church congregation.

Mills, Peter, 'History of Mernda township', unpublished report prepared for City of Whittlesea, 2017

Payne, J.W., *The Plenty. A centenary history of the Whittlesea Shire*, 1973

Shire of Whittlesea rate books:

- 1470 Plenty Road: 1894-95 (No. in rate, 162); 1895-96 (328); 1896-97 (375), 1897-98 (381); 1898-99 (174); 1899-1900 (394); 1900-1901 (418).
- 4 Station Road: 1922-23 (no. in rate, 448); 1924-25 (467)

Tonkin, Ray, 'Mernda Township preliminary heritage assessment', unpublished report prepared for City of Whittlesea, June 2017

5. Description**5.1. 1470 Plenty Road**

The house at 1470 Plenty Road is a Victorian brick villa. Symmetrical in plan, it is constructed of red brick on bluestone foundations, with white tuckpointing to the façade, and has a M-hip roof clad in corrugated iron, painted red. The central entrance contains a panelled timber door with a simple toplight and is flanked by timber sash windows with segmental brick arches and there are similar windows in the side elevations. On either side of the windows are small arched niches. The windows and niches have rendered sills that form part of a continuous rendered band and there is a second rendered band that aligns with the top of the entry door. Other details include:

- Eaves brackets separated by flat rectangular panels framed by a rendered band (see Figure 4).

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- Three chimneys. The front pair of chimneys are rendered with elaborate decoration including a bracketed cornice above a stringcourse and surmounted by half-circular caps with a clam imprint (see Figure 4). The rear chimney is of brick with simple corbelling.

Condition and integrity

On the north side, it appears the house has been extended by one room at an early date, as the brickwork and bluestone have been extended and a similar window installed. Much later alterations and additions include:

- The replacement of the original front verandah (the outline of which can still be seen on the front wall) with the low pitch gable-fronted porch supported by thin posts set on brick piers.
- The rear weatherboard section and verandah (see Figure 3).

Overall, the house appears to be in good condition. The garden contains no significant trees. Along the south boundary of the property, which adjoins Station Lane is a dry stone retaining wall. This is likely to date to c.1977 when Plenty Road was realigned to the west and Station Lane was extended.



Figure 3: 1470 Plenty Road showing front (east) elevation at left and north and west side elevations at right (Source: David Helms, 2023)



Figure 4: Detail showing eaves and rendered band decoration, segmental arch window and niches, and evidence of original verandah profile, and chimneys at right (Source: David Helms, 2023).

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Figure 5: Detail of front door, niche and cills, and wall showing white tuckpointing (Source: David Helms 2023)



Figure 6: South and west elevations of the house and the dry stone retaining wall along the north boundary of Station Lane (Source: David Helms 2023).

5.2. 4 Station Road

The house at 4 Station Road is an interwar, weatherboard bungalow. Asymmetrical in plan, it has a hipped roof with a gablet that extends to form the verandah, which is contained between projecting bays to the front and north sides. There are two plain brick chimneys with terracotta pots. The timber framed windows have multi-pane upper sashes.

The house has a prominent position on a low hill and is highly visible in views along Station Road. It is surrounded within a garden that contains several mature and semi-mature exotic and native trees including pines, cypresses, and a Silky oak.

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Figure 7: View of house from Station Road (Source: David Helms 2023)

Condition and integrity

The integrity of the house is fair. There is a large gabled addition at the rear. Alterations include:

- Replacement of all the external cladding.
- Partial enclosure of the verandah
- Replacement of some windows and doors.

6. Comparative analysis

6.1. 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda

The house at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda is an example of a late Victorian brick villa.

The late Victorian houses in the City of Whittlesea are all in the form of the ubiquitous double-fronted house constructed of timber, brick or stone with an M-hip roof and a separate verandah across the front that springs from below the eaves, which sometimes returns on one or more sides. There are two clear subsets of this type:

- The block-fronted house with a symmetrical façade: central front door flanked by windows with a verandah across the entire facade, sometimes returned to the side elevation(s); and
- The asymmetrical version with an M-hip roof punctuated by a projecting front bay (gabled or hip) to one side, and a verandah that does not continue across the projecting bay.

In some cases, the asymmetrical type was created in two stages, with the addition of a gable-fronted wing to an earlier house.

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Superior Victorian examples are distinguished by Italianate detailing, which can include timber or cement ornamentation to walls and chimneys, ornate cast iron verandahs, imitation Ashlar boards to timber examples, and the use of decorative bi-chrome brick. Windows are often single pane sash, either as a single window or a tripartite arrangement in superior versions.

Examples of this type range from the 1880s through to the 1910s, although some examples were built as late as the early to mid 1920s. The asymmetrical version was particularly popular after the turn of the century in the Federation/Edwardian period, embellished with Queen Anne-style details, such as half-timbering to the projecting gable and casement windows with highlights.

In the City of Whittlesea perhaps the finest example of this type is Wolserey, 340 Wallan Road, Whittlesea (HO150). Built c.1880 Wolserey is a rare example of an architect-designed house in the municipality and is distinguished by fine detailing, which includes imitation Ashlar boards, rendered chimneys with heavy cornices and string courses, eaves brackets and a return verandah with an elaborate cast iron frieze.

Other superior examples include:

- Moorilla, 1175 Plenty Road, South Morang (HO76). Asymmetrical in plan, it is built of bi-chrome brick and is distinguished by fine details including the projecting three-sided bay with compressed arch windows, decorated eaves, bracketed cornices and stringcourses to the chimneys, and the return verandah with cast iron decoration. The tiles to the roof and verandah are not original, but otherwise it has good integrity.
- Hazelmare, 32-36 Hayes Road, Mernda (HO15). Large (at least four rooms deep) and well-detailed example. Symmetrical with bi-chrome tuckpointed brick walls (decorative quoining to windows, doors, and wall corners, diaperwork below windows and to eaves), paired eaves brackets set within a string course, slate roof, and bi-chromatic chimneys with rendered cornices, panelled front door with sidelights and highlights and tripartite windows to main elevation. An elegant (reconstructed) ogee profile verandah with cast iron frieze returns on both sides.
- Le Page Homestead, 64 Gordons Road, South Morang (HO26). Typical and intact example. Symmetrical with bi-chrome tuckpointed brick walls (decorative quoining to windows and doors), paired eaves brackets set within a string course, front verandah, part slate roof, and rendered chimneys with cornices and string courses.
- Moorilla, 1175 Plenty Road, South Morang (HO76). Asymmetrical in plan, it is built of bi-chrome brick and is distinguished by fine details including the projecting three-sided bay with compressed arch windows, decorated eaves, bracketed cornices and stringcourses to the chimneys, and the return verandah with cast iron decoration. The tiles to the roof and verandah are not original, but otherwise it has good integrity.

Simple examples included in the HO include:

- HO119, 100 Cravens Road, Mernda. Brick. Typical of the style. Good integrity.
- HO72, Linton Park, 265 Hazel Glen Drive, Mernda. Weatherboard. Typical of the style. Moderate integrity due to visible additions and alterations to verandah.
- HO71, Clydebank, 31-35 Johnsons Road, Mernda. Bi-chrome brick. Typical of the style. Moderate integrity due to removal of verandah.
- HO20, Mernda Mechanics' Institute Caretaker's Residence (former), 1438 Plenty Road, Mernda. Bi-chrome brick. Typical of the style. Moderate integrity due to alterations to verandah.

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Discussion

The house at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda is a superior example of a late Victorian brick villa that is distinguished by the quality of the detailing, especially to the chimneys, which are comparable to those at Wolserey. The arched niches are a rare and unusual detail, which is not found in any other examples in the municipality. While the original verandah has been lost, the house otherwise has good integrity, with all the original detailing intact.

Historically, the house is one of several that were built immediately following the opening of the Whittlesea Railway in 1889 when the village began to develop and take shape around the intersection of Plenty and Bridge Inn roads. It compares with Hazelmare, Clydebank and the Mernda Mechanics' Institute Caretaker's Residence.

6.2. 4 Station Road

The house at 4 Station Road is a simple example of an interwar timber bungalow with typical form and detailing. However, the integrity of the building has been diminished by a large rear additions and alterations including replacement of all external cladding, some windows, and enclosure of the verandah.

There are relatively few interwar houses when compared with Victorian and Federation houses in the City of Whittlesea. This illustrates the limited development that occurred during the interwar period. In Mernda, one example is 635 Bridge Inn Road (HO116) which has a transverse gable roof with overhanging eaves but has been adapted from an earlier building. It nonetheless has relatively good integrity. Other examples are both in Whittlesea: 6 Lime Street (HO145) and 44 Walnut Street (HO153). Like 635 Bridge Inn Road they are simply detailed and have good integrity.

When compared to these places 4 Station Road has lower integrity and does not have any features that elevate it as a fine or representative example at the local level. The house has some aesthetic qualities due to its location on a prominent hill, but this does not elevate it to the level of local significance.

7. Analysis against Hercon criteria

Having regard to the analysis carried out for this report it is my opinion that the house at 1470 Plenty Road satisfies Criterion A and Criterion E at the local level.

Criterion A

Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

The house at 1470 Plenty Road is associated with the development of the Mernda district following the opening of the Whittlesea Railway in 1889 and demonstrates how this encouraged the building of more substantial houses for prominent residents. It has associations with Dr. Alexander Sutherland who was the first resident doctor in the district and acted as the Health Officer for the City of Whittlesea from c.1890 to c.1902 and his successor Dr. Pieper. Following the creation of the Yan Yean South Methodist circuit in 1913 the Mernda Methodist Church purchased it in 1917 and from 1918 it became the first Parsonage until it was sold in 1977.

While the house at 4 Station Road is now almost 100 years old, it is not associated with an important period of growth in Mernda. The association with the Ryan family is of some interest but does not elevate it to the level of local significance. While James Ryan Jnr. was a long-serving Shire Secretary, he did not play an important role in the establishment and development of Mernda when compared to his father, James Snr.

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Criterion B:

Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

Not applicable for either house.

Criterion C:

Potential to yield information that will contribute to understanding our cultural or natural history (research potential).

Not applicable for either house.

Criterion D:

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

Not satisfied at the local level for either house.

Criterion E:

Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

The house at 1470 Plenty Road is of aesthetic significance as a late Victorian villa with distinctive detailing including the ornate rendered chimneys with bracketed cornices and half circular caps, decorated eaves, and small arched niches and white tuckpointing to the façade.

The house at 4 Station Road, has some aesthetic interest due to its prominent location surrounded by a mature garden, but this does not elevate it to the level of local significance.

Criterion F:

Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance).

Not applicable for either house.

Criterion G:

Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

Not applicable for either house.

Criterion H:

Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

Not satisfied at the local level for either house. The associations of 1470 Plenty Road with two doctors and the Mernda Methodist Church are better recognised as part of Criterion A.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

The former doctor's residence and parsonage built c.1891, at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Whittlesea and justifies inclusion in the HO of the Whittlesea Planning Scheme as an individual place. No specific HO controls (External paint, internal controls etc.) are required. Attachment 1 contains the statement of significance (SoS).

The following changes to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme are recommended:

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- Apply an individual HO to the part of 1470 Plenty Road containing the house and a small curtilage, as shown in Figure 8. In accordance with PPN1, the curtilage has been applied to provide a suitable buffer to manage development that could affect the setting of the house, while avoiding applying the HO to land containing no heritage fabric.
- Inclusion of the 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda SoS in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme as an incorporated document.



Figure 8: Proposed HO curtilage for 1470 Plenty Road. Green indicates the current property boundary, yellow shows the proposed HO extent (Source: Vicplan with my annotations)


While the house at 4 Station Road is of some historic interest as house built in 1923 for the Ryan family, it does not satisfy the threshold of local significance as it is not associated with a key period of growth in Morang, and has been altered, reducing its integrity. Accordingly, application of the HO to this property is not recommended.

Other recommendations

Replacement of the gabled porch at 1470 Plenty Road with a period-appropriate verandah is strongly encouraged. The original roof profile is evident in the front wall and other detailing should be simple and based on typical verandahs of the period.

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Attachment 1 – 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda Statement of Significance

<p>Heritage place: House (former doctor’s residence and parsonage), 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda</p>	<p>PS ref no: HOXXX</p>
	<p>INSERT MAP</p>

What is significant?

The former doctor’s residence, later Methodist parsonage, built c.1891, at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda is significant. The brick house to the extent of the nineteenth century fabric, including an early addition at the north-west corner, contributes to the significance of the place.

The gabled porch to the front, and the timber section and verandah to the rear of the house are not significant.

How is it significant?

The former doctor’s residence and Methodist parsonage at 1470 Plenty Road, Mernda is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Whittlesea.

Why is it significant?

Historically, the house at 1470 Plenty Road is associated with the development of the Mernda district following the opening of the Whittlesea Railway in 1889 and demonstrates how this encouraged the building of more substantial houses for prominent residents. It has associations with Dr. Alexander Sutherland who was the first resident doctor in the district and acted as the Health Officer for the City of Whittlesea from c.1890 to c.1902 and his successor Dr. Pieper. Following the creation of the Yan Yean South Methodist circuit in 1913 the Mernda Methodist Church purchased it in 1917 and from 1918 it became the first parsonage until it was sold in 1977. (Criterion A)

The house at 1470 Plenty Road is of aesthetic significance as a late Victorian villa with distinctive detailing including the ornate rendered chimneys with bracketed cornices and half circular caps, decorated eaves, and small arched niches and white tuckpointing to the façade. (Criterion E)

Primary source

David Helms
HERITAGE PLANNING

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE: 1470 PLENTY ROAD & 4 STATION ROAD

David Helms Heritage Planning, Assessment of heritage significance: 1470 Plenty Road and 4 Station Road, Mernda 2023

This document is an incorporated document in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme pursuant to section 6(2)(j) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*

Planning and Environment Act 1987

Whittlesea Planning Scheme

Amendment C287wsea

Instruction sheet

The planning authority for this amendment is the Minister for Planning.

The Whittlesea Planning Scheme is amended as follows:

Planning Scheme Maps

The Planning Scheme Maps are amended by a total of 1 attached map sheet.

Overlay Maps

1. Amend Planning Scheme Map No. 13HO in the manner shown on the 1 attached map marked "Whittlesea Planning Scheme, Amendment C286wsea".

Planning Scheme Ordinance

The Planning Scheme Ordinance is amended as follows:

2. In **Overlays** – Clause 43.01, replace Schedule with a new Schedule in the form of the attached document.
3. In **Operational Provisions** – Clause 72.04, replace the Schedule with a new Schedule in the form of the attached document.

End of document

5.4 Victoria Government's Housing Statement - Update on Plan for Victoria, Activity Centre Program and other Planning Reforms

Director/Executive Manager: Director Planning & Development

Report Author: Unit Manager Strategic Planning

In Attendance: Manager Strategic Futures
Unit Manager Strategic Planning

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the key planning reforms arising from the *Victoria's Housing Statement: The Decade Ahead 2024-2034* (the Housing Statement). In September 2023, the State Government released the Housing Statement which aimed to improve housing supply and affordability with a target to build 800,000 homes in Victoria over the next decade.

This report provides an update and overview of the submissions provided by the City of Whittlesea on some of the key initiatives of the Housing Statement which have recently been consulted on, including the preparation of a new *Plan for Victoria* and the Activity Centre Program which applies to the Epping Activity Centre. This report also provides a summary of the more recent *More Homes More Opportunities* announcements by the State Government on further planning reforms and programs which support the aims of the Housing Statement.

A new 'Plan for Victoria'

The preparation of a new *Plan for Victoria* by the State Government is currently underway and expected to be released in late 2024. Consultation was conducted during 2024 on key themes and 'big ideas' to inform the new plan including draft housing targets. The City of Whittlesea made a comprehensive submission to this process which was prepared by officers in consultation with the Council and aligned with existing adopted Council policy and advocacy positions. This report recommends that Council notes the submission.

Activity Centre Program - Epping Activity Centre

One of the key Housing Statement initiatives currently in process, is for the State Government to prepare new planning controls to support the delivery of an additional 60,000 homes in ten 'pilot' activity centres across metropolitan Melbourne, including Epping.

This initiative is referred to as the 'Activity Centres Program' and is being delivered by the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) and the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) on behalf of the Minister for Planning.

In August and September 2024, the State Government undertook consultation on draft Activity Centre Plans for each of the ten 'pilot' activity centres, including Epping. The State Government advised that these plans would form the basis of new planning controls which would be developed and approved by the Minister for Planning by the end of 2024.

Noting that Council was in caretaker at the time of the consultation, Council's submissions were prepared by officers and submitted under delegation.

Councils' submissions to the program requested an extension of time for the program, to enable a public notice process on the draft planning controls/amendment to take place, provide the ability for elected Councils to make submissions on the draft planning scheme amendment and conduct a proper standing advisory committee process to review submissions. The submission highlighted issues in respect to the lack of genuine consultation as part of the program and finalising the new planning controls.

Council's submissions also focused on ensuring consistency with the current Council Plan 'Whittlesea 2040: A Place for All', local planning policy, adopted strategic plans (namely the Epping Central Structure Plan) and other strategic work prepared by Council.

The Epping Central Structure Plan was adopted by Council in June 2023 after a comprehensive preparation process including extensive community engagement. Council had commenced the process of developing new planning controls in Epping prior to the State Government's announcement of the Activity Centre Program and the State Government taking the lead on this work.

The 2023 version of the plan requires a number of minor updates to recognise the Housing Statement and align with the further work prepared by Council officers to inform its submissions to the Activity Centre Program. An updated version of the Structure Plan document was attached 'in draft' to the officer submission.

A further report will be presented in 2025, to seek endorsement of the updated version of the Epping Central Structure Plan which will align with the outcomes of the approved planning controls.

This report recommends that Council notes the submission made to the Activity Centre Program.

'More Homes More Opportunity' Announcements

In October 2024, the State Government made number of announcements in respect to additional planning reform and programs, to build on the Housing Statement and increase the supply and affordability of housing in Victoria. A key announcement relates to creating a new developer contribution system which is a significant reform and could have implications for the delivery of infrastructure to growing communities and Council's long term financial planning. Officers are still awaiting further information in respect to the process for developing and implementing each of these further reforms and programs and how councils will be engaged in the process.

This report recommends that noting the limited engagement on these reforms to date, that Council writes to the Minister for Planning and seeks assurances that Council will be properly consulted on the proposed changes to the planning system including the proposed developer contributions system.

Officers' Recommendation

THAT Council:

1. **Note the State Government's progress update on the implementation of Victoria's Housing Statement: The Decade Ahead 2024-2034 at Attachment 2.**
2. **Note the City of Whittlesea's submission to the State Government's *Plan for Victoria* consultation process, August 2024 at Attachment 3.**
3. **Note the City of Whittlesea's submission to the State Government's Activity Centre Program, September 2024 at Attachment 6.**
4. **Note the State Government's *More Homes More Opportunity* announcements at Attachment 7.**
5. **Write to the Minister of Planning to seek assurance that Council will be consulted on proposed changes to the planning system announced as part of its *More Homes More Opportunity* announcements.**

Background / Key Information

Victoria's Housing Statement: The Decade Ahead 2024-2034

In September 2023, the Victorian Government released *Victoria's Housing Statement: The Decade Ahead 2024-2034* (The Housing Statement) (Attachment 1). The Housing Statement aims to facilitate the construction of an additional 800,000 homes within the next decade to increase housing supply within Victoria to ensure that the cost of housing is affordable for Victorians.

In addition to setting housing construction targets for the next decade, the Housing Statement also outlines the State government's intention to reform the Victorian planning system to boost housing supply, including:

- Streamline assessment pathways for residential development;
- Expand the development facilitation program;
- Increase housing choice in activity centres (Activity Centre Program);
- Delivery of more social housing;
- Develop a new *Plan for Victoria*; and
- Review and rewrite the *Planning and Environment Act (1987)*.

Since, the release of the Housing Statement, the initiatives have been progressively rolled out by the State Government. In September 2024, a 12-month progress update was released by the State Government (Attachment 2).

The update advised:

- Almost 10,000 homes have been fast-tracked for development over the last 12 months, including 1,638 homes through the Development Facilitation Program;
- Planning changes were implemented to make it easier to build small second dwellings;
- Planning for activity centres was well progressed;
- Roll out of the Big Housing Build to deliver more affordable homes was continuing; and
- Preparation of a new *Plan for Victoria* was underway including the release of draft housing targets.

In addition, there has been a number of recent Ministerial Amendments gazetted which amend planning provisions to facilitate the above. These include:

- Amendment VC242 – this Amendment created a pathway for large developments to elect to have the Department of Transport and Planning assess their development application rather than Council.

- Amendment VC243 – this Amendment introduced a number of changes to facilitate more housing relating to Future Homes, ResCode changes for multi-unit applications and alterations to homes on lots sized between 300m² lot size and 500m².
- VC253 - this Amendment aimed at facilitating more second dwellings introduced a new land use term and standard siting, design and amenity requirements for a second dwelling.

This report recommends that Council notes the update on the implementation of the Housing Statement.

New ‘Plan for Victoria’ and Housing Targets

As noted above, the Housing Statement earmarked the preparation of a new ‘Plan for Victoria’ which would replace the current metropolitan planning strategy *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* and other regional plans. ‘Plan for Victoria’ will be the primary strategic land use plan to guide development in Victoria over the coming decades.

The Housing Statement outlined that the new plan would:

“set into action what our state will look like over coming decades. It’ll focus on delivering more homes near transport, job opportunities and essential services in vibrant, liveable, and sustainable neighbourhoods”.

The State Government conducted consultation on key themes and ‘big ideas’ relating to the new plan during 2024 with submissions invited up to the end of August. The key themes were:

- Affordable Housing and Choice;
- Equity and Jobs;
- Thriving and Liveable Suburbs and Towns; and
- Sustainable Environments and Climate Action.

As part of the consultation, the State Government also released draft Housing Targets for each municipality in Victoria. The City of Whittlesea’s target was the delivery of an additional 87,000 homes by 2051.

A comprehensive submission was prepared by the City of Whittlesea in response to the consultation (see Attachment 3). The submission document was prepared by officers in consultation with the Council. Noting that the submission aligned with existing adopted Council policy and advocacy positions, the submission document prepared by officers was not formally endorsed by the Council.

In summary, the submission highlighted:

- the strong growth being experienced in the City of Whittlesea and the Council's role in facilitating development and accommodating growth;
- that growth needs to be supported by adequate infrastructure and a respectful planning response that addresses the distinct characteristics that makes places special;
- the significant role local government plays in applying appropriate planning frameworks and controls to enable the delivery of housing but also noting that market factors will influence the delivery of housing development and achievement of targets.
- the need and mechanisms to deliver more affordable housing;
- the need to deliver critical transport projects such as Wollert Rail to support housing growth;
- the need to ensure that new planning controls respond to local context and enhance neighbourhood character;
- improvements to the planning system to make development more sustainable and responsive to the impacts of climate change; and
- changes to the developer contributions system to better support delivery of infrastructure in a timely manner.

The Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) are currently considering the feedback received from Councils, the community and other stakeholders from the consultation, as part of preparation of the new plan. It is not proposed to release a draft plan for further consultation or provide an individual response to submissions received. The final '*Plan for Victoria*' is expected to be released in late 2024.

This report recommends that Council notes the submission made by the City of Whittlesea to the '*Plan for Victoria*' consultation process.

Activity Centre Program

Background

One of the key initiatives in the Housing Statement related to increasing housing choice in activity centres. The initiative said:

"we'll (State Government) introduce clear planning controls to deliver an additional 60,000 homes around an initial 10 activity centres across Melbourne."

Epping has been identified as one of the ten initial activity centres.

The program is being led by the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) delivered by the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) and on behalf of the Minister of Planning.

Epping Activity Centre

Epping Central is the largest activity centre in the City of Whittlesea and is identified as a Metropolitan Activity Centre in *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*. Metropolitan Activity Centres provide significant housing and economic opportunities for Metropolitan Melbourne and are well serviced by public transport and other infrastructure. Metropolitan Activity Centres also provide a large range of facilities and services to the community, making them ideal places for future growth.

The Epping Central Activity Centre is a key location for employment, housing and higher order health, retail and education services in the City of Whittlesea. The activity centre includes a number of regional facilities including the Northern Hospital, Northern Private Hospital, Pacific Epping Shopping Centre, Melbourne Polytechnic (vocational training), the new Epping residential, health and commercial precinct, and significant retail developments. The activity centre is also connected to strategic transport links including the regional road network, public transport (Epping Station on Mernda Line and future station on proposed line to Wollert) and shared path network.

Epping Central Structure Plan, 2023

In June 2023, Council adopted a refreshed Structure Plan for the Epping Central Activity Centre. The Epping Central Structure Plan (ECSP) establishes a long-term vision for the Epping Central Activity Centre and sets out a policy framework that guides land use and development within the precinct (see Framework Plan at Attachment 5). The ECSP was first adopted by Council in 2011 following a comprehensive preparation process.

The refreshed Structure Plan was underpinned by extensive community consultation conducted over three stages. The refreshed plan includes a vision for Epping Central to be a *“attractive, welcoming and sustainable urban place experiencing strong population and job growth”*.

In adopting the refreshed plan, Council also resolved to commence the process of implementation of the plan by updating the planning controls for Epping Central in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme.

With the announcement of the Activity Centre Program, responsibility for the implementation of new planning controls for Epping has been assumed by the State Government. As part of the process, Council officers have advocated strongly for the outcomes to align with the adopted Epping Central Structure Plan and other strategic work undertaken by Council.

Activity Centre Program Draft Plans and Consultation

During the roll out of the Activity Centre Program, affected Councils have been kept informed. However, opportunity for community participation and Council submissions on the new 'planning controls' has been limited.

In August and September 2024, the State Government undertook consultation on draft Activity Centre Plans for each of the ten 'pilot' activity centres, including Epping (refer to Attachment 4). The State Government advised that these plans would form the basis of new planning controls which would be developed and approved by the Minister for Planning by the end of 2024.

The draft Activity Centre Plan (the plan) for Epping was very 'light' on detail compared to the other activity centres considering the extensive strategic work that Council had already undertaken in the precinct. The plan noted that *"land use and built form in the Epping activity centre is proposed to be guided by the Epping Central Structure Plan"*.

In addition to the activity centre area, the plan also identified 'catchment areas' around the activity centre. The plan noted that *"the catchment will provide an opportunity for more housing diversity including quality social and affordable housing, focusing on higher-density apartments, medium-density apartments, townhouses and semi-detached homes close to the activity centre"*.

Councils and the community were invited to provide feedback on the draft plans. It was advised that no further formal consultation would occur on the draft planning controls prior to approval by the Minister for Planning.

Noting that Council was in the caretaker period at the time, Council's submissions were prepared by officers and submitted under delegation (refer to Attachment 6).

Councils' submissions outlined a number of key issues with the process and proposed planning controls, which included:

- requesting that the finalisation of the Activity Centre Program planning scheme amendments not to proceed at this time and to be deferred for a minimum six months to enable sufficient time for;
 - a public notice process on the draft planning scheme amendment and planning controls to take place,
 - provide the ability for elected Councils to make submissions on the draft planning scheme amendment and,
 - conduct a proper standing advisory committee process to review submissions.
- highlighting issues in respect to the lack of genuine consultation with Councils and the community as part of the program and finalising the new planning controls;

- that the Epping Central Structure Plan and other strategic work undertaken by Council form the basis of the new planning controls for Epping;
- that the residential catchments areas be excluded from the final planning controls as they had not been strategically justified;
- that the new planning controls for Epping did not include 'deemed to comply' provisions as these were not consistent with the built form controls proposed by Council as part of its strategic work and the change was not justified;
- that the new planning controls include requirements to ensure adequate new open space, affordable housing and infrastructure to service additional housing; and
- that Council be consulted on any changes to developer contributions in Epping.

To support its submission Council prepared further strategic work including built form design analysis and testing (undertaken by design consultant Hodyl and Co), open space needs assessment and preparing draft planning controls. The outcomes of this work has resulted in the need to make some minor adjustments to the adopted version of the Structure Plan. The further strategic work including an updated version of the Structure Plan document was submitted in 'draft form' as part of the submissions to the Epping Central Structure Plan.

Updated Epping Central Structure Plan

As noted above, further strategic work undertaken by Council officers to inform its submissions to the Activity Centre Program has required a number of minor updates to the adopted Structure Plan. The changes remain consistent with the vision and objectives of the adopted Structure Plan however ensure that the plan remains current and responds to the new planning framework implemented by the State Government in activity centres.

These changes can be summarised as:

- recognising the release of the Housing Statement and identification of Epping as a key location to deliver increased housing opportunities;
- include the urban design analysis and testing report prepared by Hodyl and Co for Council as an Appendix to the Structure Plan and delete the content in the current appendix on housing typologies which has been superseded by the further work;
- update the open space plan and identify additional open spaces areas in locations where additional housing is expected to be delivered in the future;
- minor updates to movement network plans to identify some additional road and pedestrian connections;
- minor update to development principles and neighbourhood character statements in respect to preferred height and setbacks. Updated the preferred building height for Precinct 4 which is noted in the 2023 version of the Structure Plan as being 'under review'; and

- delete the 'potential alternate alignment' of the Wollert Rail corridor which is not feasible as a result of further investigations conducted by the landowner in consultation with the DTP. Retain the current preferred alignment for the rail corridor.

The adoption by Council of the most current version of the Structure Plan document is important to:

- ensure consistency between the adopted Structure Plan and Councils preferred planning controls for Epping Central as outlined in its submission;
- enable the updated Structure Plan to be a Background Document in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme; and
- enable the updated Structure Plan to be considered as part of assessments of planning permit applications for new development in Epping.

A further report will be presented to Council in 2025, presenting the updated Structure Plan for Councils consideration.

'More Homes More Opportunity' Announcements

In October 2024, the State Government made a number of announcements as part of its *'More Homes More Opportunity'* package. The announcements identified a number of further planning reforms and programs to build on the Housing Statement and the aim to increase the supply and affordability of housing in Victoria (refer to Attachment 7).

A summary of the key announcements relating to planning reform include:

- Expansion of Activity Centres Program: In addition to the initial ten 'pilot' activity centres, it was announced that the program would be expanded to include an additional 50 centres. 25 centres were identified as part of the announcement (none located in the City of Whittlesea) with an additional 25 to be identified in *Plan for Victoria* when it is released.
- New Developer Contributions System: This announcement signals the government intention to introduce a state-wide developer contributions system for contribute to the funding of new infrastructure, parks and services. Contributions would be levied for all new homes. The system will replace the current system for collecting developer contributions for state and local infrastructure. However, there is limited detail on the framework for the new system including the impact on existing developer and infrastructure contribution plans.

The new system will be piloted in the first 10 pilot Activity Centres, including Epping Central and commence on 1 January 2027. There is limited information on the new system and councils have not been engaged to date.

This is concerning given the significance of the system in respect to providing essential infrastructure to growing communities and impacts on Council's long term financial planning.

The media release states that the ultimate system will be informed by the Housing Affordability Partnership, which to date consists only of development industry stakeholders. The media release also indicates that councils need to have a 'voice' on the new system however it is unclear how councils will be consulted. Noting the potential financial risk to Council and Council extensive experiencing in managing contribution plans it is critical that Councils such as Whittlesea are highly engaged in the process of developing the new system.

- Great Designs Fast Track program: The Great Designs Fast Track program will expedite approvals for well-designed townhouses and apartments. The program will apply state-wide and would give the Minister for Planning control of applications for townhouses and apartment projects of three to six storeys that are submitted by proponents into the program and that meet the test of build quality, good design and sustainability.

It would function like the existing development facilitation program, aimed at cutting application times from 12 to four months. However, residents will retain the right to review and make submissions on proposed projects.

The Government will expand its *State Design Book* of 'future homes' to include additional designs up to six storeys:

- Subdivision: The government has announced a review of the subdivision process, with the aim of streamlining the planning and building systems to expedite the dual-occupancy and subdivision processes for two lot subdivisions.

The details will be determined through the review process and options for consideration include faster 10-day subdivisions (down from 60 days and often longer), criteria-based planning permit exemptions, or no requirement for a planning permit at all. This reform will be implemented by April 2025.

- Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) forward program: The Government has announced a 10-year plan for the preparation of 27 additional PSP's in greenfield areas, and timeframes for commencement for each. PSP's are integrated strategic plans which guide the transition of greenfield areas to urban development.

In the City of Whittlesea, all residential precincts have approved PSP's and only two employment precincts remain left to be planned. The activation of the employment precincts is critical for supporting local job opportunities to the City's residents and is an important advocacy position of Council.

One of these precincts is the Northern Freight Precinct (Beveridge Intermodal Precinct) was announced as a priority precinct to be delivered. The State Government, including the Victorian Planning Authority will lead the planning process in conjunction with the major landowner in the precinct which is the Commonwealth owned National Intermodal Corporation.

Planning for this precinct has now commenced with the planning controls for Stage 1A expected to be approved by the Minister for Planning in early 2025. The plans and planning controls for stages 1B and 2 are expected to be finalised by early 2026. The precinct upon development will support an intermodal precinct and adjoining logistics hub, with the potential to support up to 20,000 direct and indirect jobs.

The Government will also review some existing PSP that are not yet fully developed to increase housing density were this is supported by planned infrastructure. This list is not known at this stage.

Whilst the announcements have been made, there has been limited further information provided in respect to each of these reforms and limited engagement with councils to date. The proposed reforms will have a significant impact on the planning system and the changes to the developer contributions system will impact on the timely delivery of infrastructure to new communities and financial sustainability of councils. It is imperative that councils are effectively engaged in the implementation of each of these reforms.

This report recommends that Council writes to the Minister for Planning seeking assurance that Council will be consulted with on other proposed changes to the planning system including the developer's contribution system.

Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

Liveable Neighbourhoods

Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

Councils' submissions to the State Government planning reforms relating to implementation of the Housing Statement have aligned with Whittlesea 2040 and the goals to deliver Liveable Neighbourhoods including housing diversity and well-planned neighbourhoods.

Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

Financial Management

The cost is included in the current budget.

Community Consultation and Engagement

Council undertook comprehensive community engagement as part of preparing strategic plans which have informed its submissions including Epping Central Structure Plan.

The broader community was invited to participate in consultations led by the State Government in respect to *Plan for Victoria* and the Activity Centre Program. Council's submission to the Activity Centre Program advised that it considered the consultation to be inadequate and that a further public notice process be conducted on the draft planning scheme amendment and planning controls.

Other Principles for Consideration

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

- (f) Collaboration with other Councils and Governments and statutory bodies is to be sought.
- (h) Regional, state and national plans and policies are to be taken into account in strategic planning and decision making.

Public Transparency Principles

- (d) Public awareness of the availability of Council information must be facilitated.

Council Policy Considerations

Environmental Sustainability Considerations

Council's submissions to *Plan for Victoria* and the Activity Centre Program have highlighted environmental sustainability considerations including improving the sustainability of development and responding to the impacts of climate change.

Social, Cultural and Health

Council's submissions to *Plan for Victoria* and the Activity Centre Program have highlighted social, cultural and health considerations including providing for more affordable housing.

Economic

Council's submissions to *Plan for Victoria* and the Activity Centre Program have highlighted economic considerations including planning for employment precincts and providing critical infrastructure to facilitate investment and development.

Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications

There are strategic risks associated with the implementation of planning reforms such as a new system for developer's contributions.

Implementation Strategy

Communication

This report recommends that Council writes to the Minister for Planning seeking assurance that Council will be consulted with on other proposed changes to the planning system including the developer contributions system.

Critical Dates

- June 2023 – Epping Central Structure Plan adopted by Council.
- September 2023 - *Victoria's Housing Statement: The Decade Ahead 2024-2034* released.
- December 2023 – Minister for Planning writes to City of Whittlesea to advise that they have directed the Department of Transport and Planning in partnership with the Victorian Planning Authority to prepare new planning controls for Epping as part of the Activity Centre Program.
- March-April 2023 – Phase 1 consultation conducted by the Victorian Planning Authority on the Activity Centre Program.
- June – August 2024 – Consultation conducted by the Department of Transport and Planning on the themes and big ideas for the new *Plan for Victoria* and draft Housing Targets.
- August-September - Phase 2 consultation conducted by the Victorian Planning Authority on the Activity Centre Program.
- October 2024 - More Homes More Opportunities announcements by the State Government on new planning reforms and programs to increase housing supply.
- December 2024 – Expected release of new *Plan for Victoria*.
- December 2024 – Expected approval of new planning controls for Epping Activity Centre as part of the Activity Centre Program.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

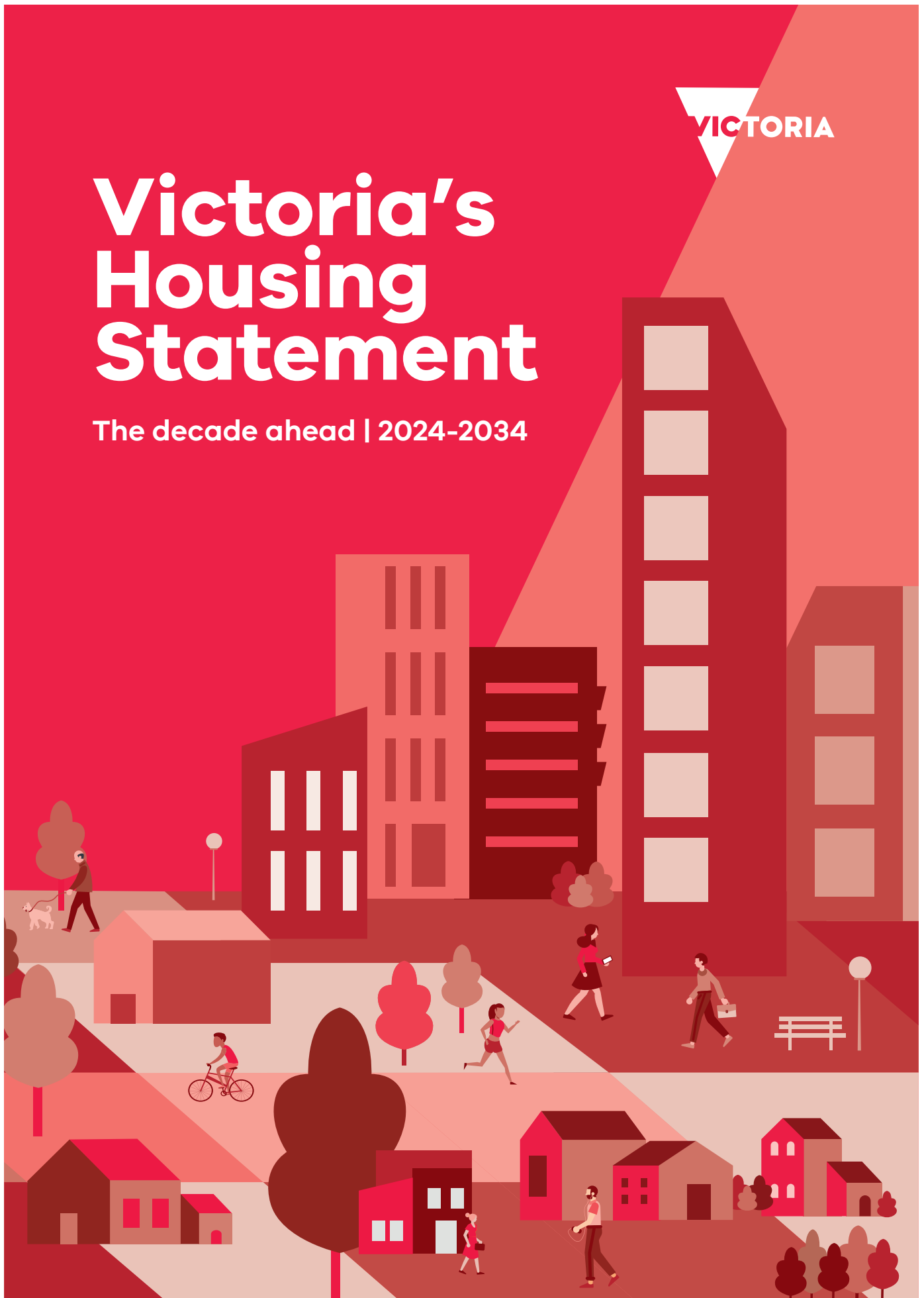
Attachments

1. Victorian Housing Statement, September 2023 [5.4.1 - 44 pages]
2. Victorian Housing Statement, Progress Update, September 2024 [5.4.2 - 4 pages]
3. City of Whittlesea Submission to Plan for Victoria, August 2024 [5.4.3 - 33 pages]
4. Draft Epping Activity Centre Plan, August 2024 [5.4.4 - 17 pages]
5. Epping Central Structure Plan, 2023 - Framework Plan [5.4.5 - 1 page]
6. City of Whittlesea Submission to Activity Centre Program, Epping, September 2024 [5.4.6 - 46 pages]
7. More Homes More Opportunities Information Pack [5.4.7 - 20 pages]

VICTORIA

Victoria's Housing Statement

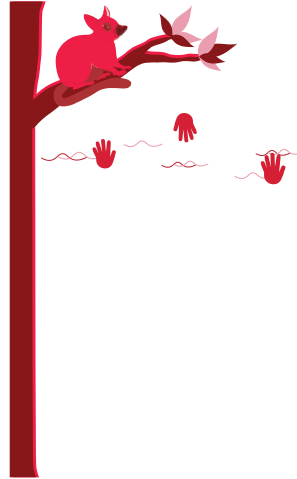
The decade ahead | 2024-2034



Acknowledgement of Country

We proudly acknowledge Victoria's Traditional Owners and their ongoing strength in practising the world's oldest living culture.

We recognise the diversity of Victoria's Traditional Owners in being distinctive communities with their own set of laws, customs and processes built upon tens of thousands of years of knowledge. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners' lands and waters on which we live and work and pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.



Authorised by the Victorian Government
1 Treasury Place, Melbourne 3002

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Accessibility

For an accessible version of this publication, visit vic.gov.au/housing-statement

Premier's Message

Nothing is more important than finding a home. For most of us, it's the biggest investment we'll ever make. Whether you're buying or building your first, upsizing as your family grows, renting near work or simply wanting to be closer to family and friends – you should be able to find a place to call home. And it should be a place of pride, comfort, and security.

But right now – and right across Australia – that's becoming harder than ever before. Housing affordability is at its lowest in decades, and it's taking so much longer to save for a deposit than it used to. Vacancy rates for rentals are at record lows, and prospective tenants are finding theirs is just one of dozens of applications. Key workers are struggling to find housing close to where they work – especially in the regions. And many families are getting priced out of the market altogether.

Admiring the problem will only make it worse. Without a reset – and without a more active planning system – we cannot seriously expect things to improve, more houses to be built, and more Victorians to enjoy the security of somewhere to live. The status quo is not an option. Unless we take bold and decisive action now, Victorians will be paying the price for generations to come.

That's why this *Housing Statement* puts forward an ambitious plan to tackle the root of the problem: housing supply. We're setting a bold target to build 800,000 homes in Victoria over the next decade.

It's a simple proposition: build more homes, and they'll be more affordable. But the Government can't fix the problem alone. We'll do it in an Affordability Partnership with industry. We'll foster the conditions needed to stimulate investment and build high-quality homes quickly in the places where Victorians want to live – and the private market will build more social and affordable housing for the Victorians who need it most.

At the same time, we'll give certainty to the sector and Victorians alike by building the infrastructure our growing state needs. Metro Tunnel is on the way, and it'll be here a year ahead of schedule. We've removed 72 level crossings to unclog Melbourne's roads and rail lines – and we're not slowing down. The Suburban Rail Loop will slash travel times and make it easier to get around our suburbs – all while taking 600,000 cars off the road.

We can do all of this and more, because we've invested in training for the skills our economy needs. We saved TAFE, re-opened and upgraded campuses, introduced Free TAFE and put 70 courses on the free list – including for in-demand jobs like construction. We've changed the once-in-a-lifetime limit, so Victorians can take multiple Free TAFE courses while they're continuing priority training pathways. We're also protecting TAFE funding, enshrining it in legislation.

All of that means we've got the workers our state needs to build the homes Victorians need – as well as the schools, hospitals, roads and rail to go with them. With that pipeline of workers, the building industry can also have confidence in its pipeline of work – and scale up as it needs to.

This *Housing Statement* is the first part of our journey: kicking off the critical work we can do now to build the homes, suburbs and communities Victorians can enjoy for generations to come. But we know there's more to do, and we'll get on with it – bringing Victorians with us. We'll keep talking to industry, including about the skilled workforces they need to meet demand. We'll keep consulting local communities. And we'll keep working to make sure every Victorian can realise the great Australian dream.

We'll build a better Victoria, together. Because Victorians deserve nothing less.



The Hon. Daniel Andrews MP
Premier of Victoria



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Introduction



Introduction

Right across the nation, housing is one of the biggest challenges we face.

The latest data shows that in June this year, housing affordability in Australia crashed to its lowest in 30 years. Successive interest rate hikes and booming house prices mean it's harder than ever to service a mortgage.

Today, if you're a household earning a median income of \$105,000, you could likely only afford around 13 per cent of homes on the market – that's the lowest share since this data was first collected almost three decades ago. And the situation for low and middle income families is much worse. A household earning \$64,000 a year could now afford just 3 per cent of homes on the market.

At the same time, prospective renters at a home inspection will find they're just one of dozens of applicants. Demand for rentals is skyrocketing – and so is the price. Rents across the country are rising at the fastest rate in 15 years. Annual rent increases peaked at 10 per cent in late 2022 and early 2023. The last time rent went up this quickly was when peak annual rent growth hit 9.7 per cent during the global financial crisis.

The status quo isn't an option. If we don't act now, Victoria will end up falling short – by more than 25,000 homes each year over the next ten years. That means more house prices skyrocketing, more families priced out of the market, and more competition for rental properties.

It all comes back to supply. It's a simple reality: as a country, we need to do more to build enough houses for all of the people who need them. Because it's only when there are enough homes to go around that more people will be able to afford them.

As a state, we're going to get on with it – quickly. Victoria is the fastest growing state in the country: our population is expected to reach 10.3 million by 2051. Melbourne is set to become Australia's biggest city by the end of the decade, with the population estimated to grow by an additional 2.9 million people over the next 28 years.

If we're going to make sure the current problem doesn't get worse, we need to build 1.6 million homes by 2051 – that's around 57,000 homes a year. To ease the acute pressure people are currently facing, we need to deliver 2.24 million homes by 2051 – that's around 80,000 a year.

On current trends, we are expected to build around 540,000 homes over the next decade. The work we're doing in this *Housing Statement* will facilitate an extra 250,000 homes being built in Victoria over the next ten years – and it'll support 16,000 jobs.



We'll give planning the resources they need, making sure good decisions are made faster. We'll then reform Victoria's planning system so projects don't get stuck again. We'll build up and out – making sure Victorians can afford to live where they want, close to where they work, in thriving and sustainable communities. We'll strengthen protections for renters, because every Victorian deserves a comfortable home – whether you own it or not. We'll build more social and affordable housing for the Victorians who need it most. And because this statement forms the first step of our work to boost housing supply and affordability – not the last – we'll develop a long term plan to guide the way our state grows.

Most importantly, we'll bring Victorians along for the journey. We'll keep consulting with the community, industry and local councils to make sure every Victorian has the opportunity to shape our state for the generations who follow us. And we'll keep working with the Commonwealth Government and other states and territories to form a national solution to one of our nation's greatest economic challenges.

01

**Good decisions,
made faster**



Good decisions, made faster



- Reforming Victoria's planning system to boost housing supply in every corner of the state
- Clearing the backlog of planning permits waiting to be approved – and standardising rules to make sure good decisions are made faster
- Giving builders, buyers and renovators certainty about how long approvals will take – and a clear pathway to resolve issues quickly if those timeframes aren't met

Victoria is growing. We're the fastest growing state in Australia, with our population set to hit 10.3 million by 2051.

By the 2050s, Melbourne will be home to more than eight million people, and regional Victoria will be home to more than 2.3 million. But the fundamental truth is this: we're not building enough homes for all of the people who will need them in years to come.

Right now, the system just isn't working like it should – and decisions aren't getting made fast enough. At a council level, there's a backlog of around 1,400 planning permit applications for multi-unit housing that have been sitting with councils for more than six months waiting for a decision. Some 550 of those applications have been sitting with councils for more than a year.

Instead of decisions being made by councils, more and more planning disputes are taking longer and longer and ultimately ending up at unelected VCAT to resolve. That clogs up the system even more – and results in more delays for the people who genuinely need to use it.

All of that means we're going backwards. Over the last year, the number of dwellings approved across the state fell by 26.1 per cent. Victorians deserve a planning system that works with them – not against them. It should be quick, efficient, and easy to navigate. It should be a clear, transparent and accountable system – because Victorians deserve to know who is planning our city and state.

And we've got a plan to do just that.

How we're helping Victorians build



Builders right across Australia are facing critical global economic challenges, including rising supply chain costs. This year, we announced a package of reforms to better protect Victorians building a home, while also giving our local building industry the certainty it needs.

Here's what we're doing:

- **Consumer focus:** We're putting consumers and homeowners at the centre of the system with clearer roles and responsibilities, greater accountability, access to insurance, and consumer support throughout the lifecycle of a build.
- **Strong regulators:** We're ensuring the people who oversee building projects have the powers they need to protect consumers and hold builders to account if they do the wrong thing.
- **Skilled builders:** We're making sure builders and contractors have the rights skills to build our homes, and that they operate with the transparency and professionalism Victorians expect.
- **Better approvals:** We're improving the approval process to make sure all buildings in Victoria are safe and built to last.

We've already started making important changes. We're creating a Building Monitor to represent consumers' interests, improving the approval process, and requiring more people involved in a building project to be registered. The Victorian Building Authority, with a new CEO, is getting on with its work to improve the performance of the regulator, drive improvements in the building system, and put consumers at the centre of all it does. We're also working on more changes to make it easier to get insurance, resolve disputes, and enforce the rules. We understand that building safe, durable homes is the priority.



What we'll do

Clear the backlog

Having applications sitting in the system doesn't get homes built. We'll begin the work to clear the backlog of 1,400 housing permit applications that have been stuck with councils for more than six months. We'll have a dedicated team that works with project proponents, local councils, and referral agencies to resolve issues delaying council decision-making – to avoid projects ending up in VCAT and to get homes built. Once we have a clearer picture of projects and if decisions keep lagging, then the Minister for Planning won't hesitate to call them in.

Make big decisions faster

We'll make sure big decisions are made faster by expanding Victoria's *Development Facilitation Program*. This will make the Minister for Planning the decision maker for significant residential developments that include affordable housing. We'll streamline the planning process for medium to high density residential developments that meet the set criteria: construction costs worth at least \$50 million in Melbourne or \$15 million in regional Victoria, and delivering at least 10 per cent affordable housing. This will include new build-to-rent projects. It'll mean around 13,200 additional homes will be brought to market that would otherwise be delayed – and it'll cut application timeframes for these types of projects from more than 12 months down to four.

Increase housing choice in activity centres

We'll introduce clear planning controls to deliver an additional 60,000 homes around an initial 10 activity centres across Melbourne: Broadmeadows, Camberwell Junction, Chadstone, Epping, Frankston, Moorabbin, Niddrie (Keilor Road), North Essendon, Preston (High Street) and Ringwood. Activity centre plans will guide investment in the things a growing suburb needs like community facilities, public spaces and parks. The program will also consider the best way to incentivise more affordable housing.

Making it easier to build a small second home

Small second homes on the same lot – also known as granny flats or dwelling garden units – have become more and more popular. They can give families the space to grow together, provide a critical second income, or give kids somewhere to stay when they visit for the weekend. But for many, the burden of getting a planning approval has put building a second small home in the too hard basket. We'll make it easier to build a second small home on your property. Dwelling garden units won't require a planning permit if they're less than 60 square metres. And we'll also introduce more permit exemptions for single dwellings for things like extensions to sheds and carports.





What we'll do

Faster permits and planning certainty

We'll streamline assessment pathways with a range of new *Deemed to Comply* residential standards for different types of homes. Council planners will be able to quickly approve permits for houses that meet the residential standards – like how much space homes take up on a block, or how much storage a home has – meaning councils will only assess aspects of a permit that don't comply with those standards.

We'll expand the *Future Homes* program to encourage more new builds. *Future Homes* provides four sets of ready-made architectural designs which can be purchased by developers and adapted to a site through a streamlined planning process. We'll create more high-quality designs for 4 and 5 storey developments, and we'll expand the areas where they can be used.

We'll also make changes to the types of homes that require planning permits. Single dwellings on lots bigger than 300 square metres, and not covered by an overlay, will no longer require a planning permit. Single dwellings on lots smaller than 300 square metres, where an overlay doesn't exist, will be ticked off within 10 days.

Red Tape Commissioner reforms

We'll introduce legislative reforms to strengthen our planning system. The legislation will implement Red Tape Commissioner recommendations, as well as other reforms like giving VCAT the power to dismiss matters without a prospect of success and imposing time limits on submissions. Planning Panels will also be able to undertake hearings on the papers and join parties.

Convert commercial buildings to residential

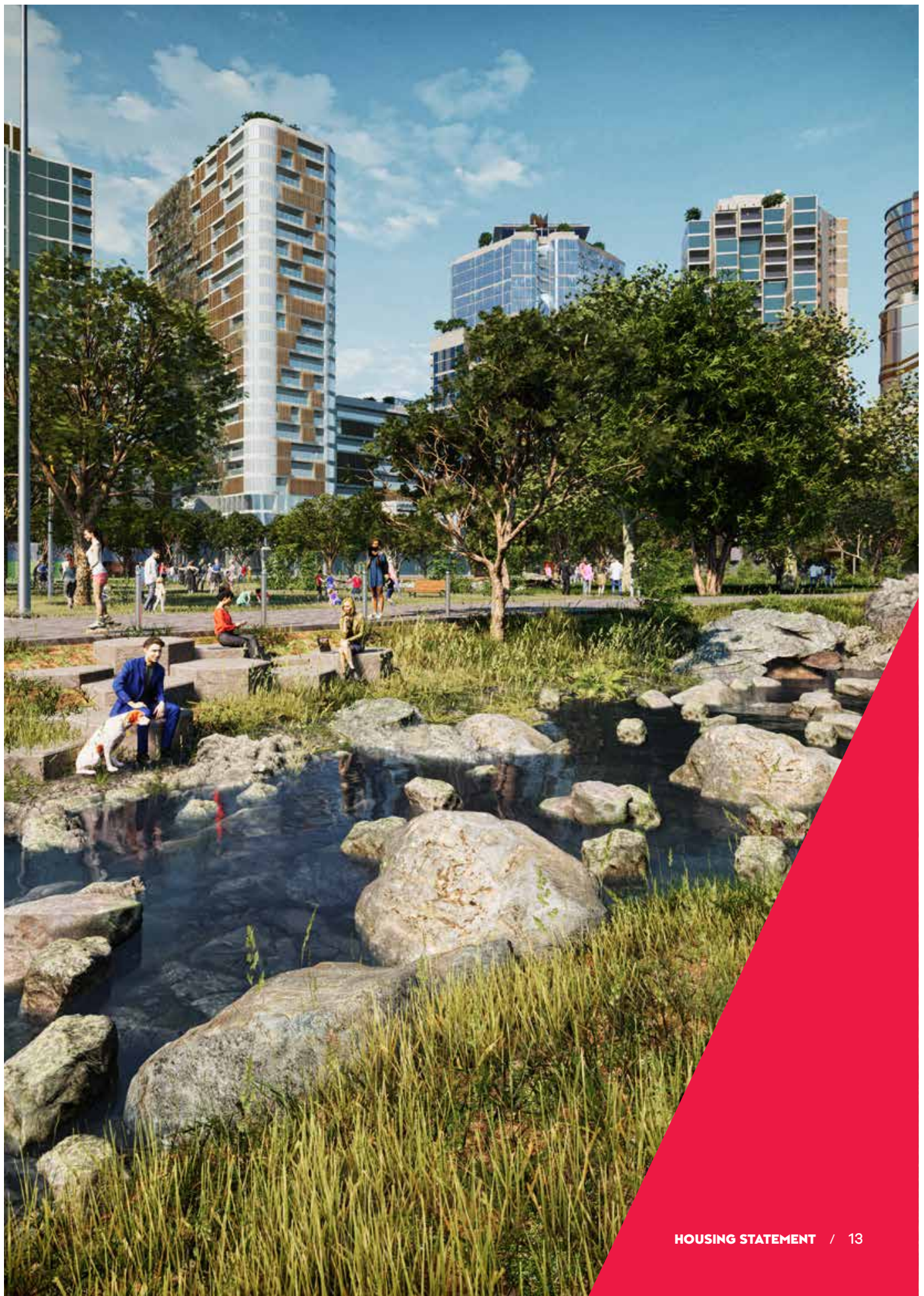
The Property Council of Australia (PCA) and the City of Melbourne have identified close to 80 commercial office buildings that are currently under-used because of changing work patterns and demand for flexible floor space increasing. We'll work with the PCA and the City to consider opportunities to facilitate the conversion of these offices into around 10,000-12,000 apartments and mixed-use properties.

Provide quicker water connections

As our towns and cities grow, utility connections – like water and electricity – need to happen quickly. We'll work to speed up water connections in greenfield areas to get Victorians into their new homes faster. We'll revise our statement of expectations to water corporations, strengthening the need to engage with developers and local councils early and regularly through the permit process – and setting clear timelines these water corporations need to meet to connect new communities and developments to the essential services they rely on.

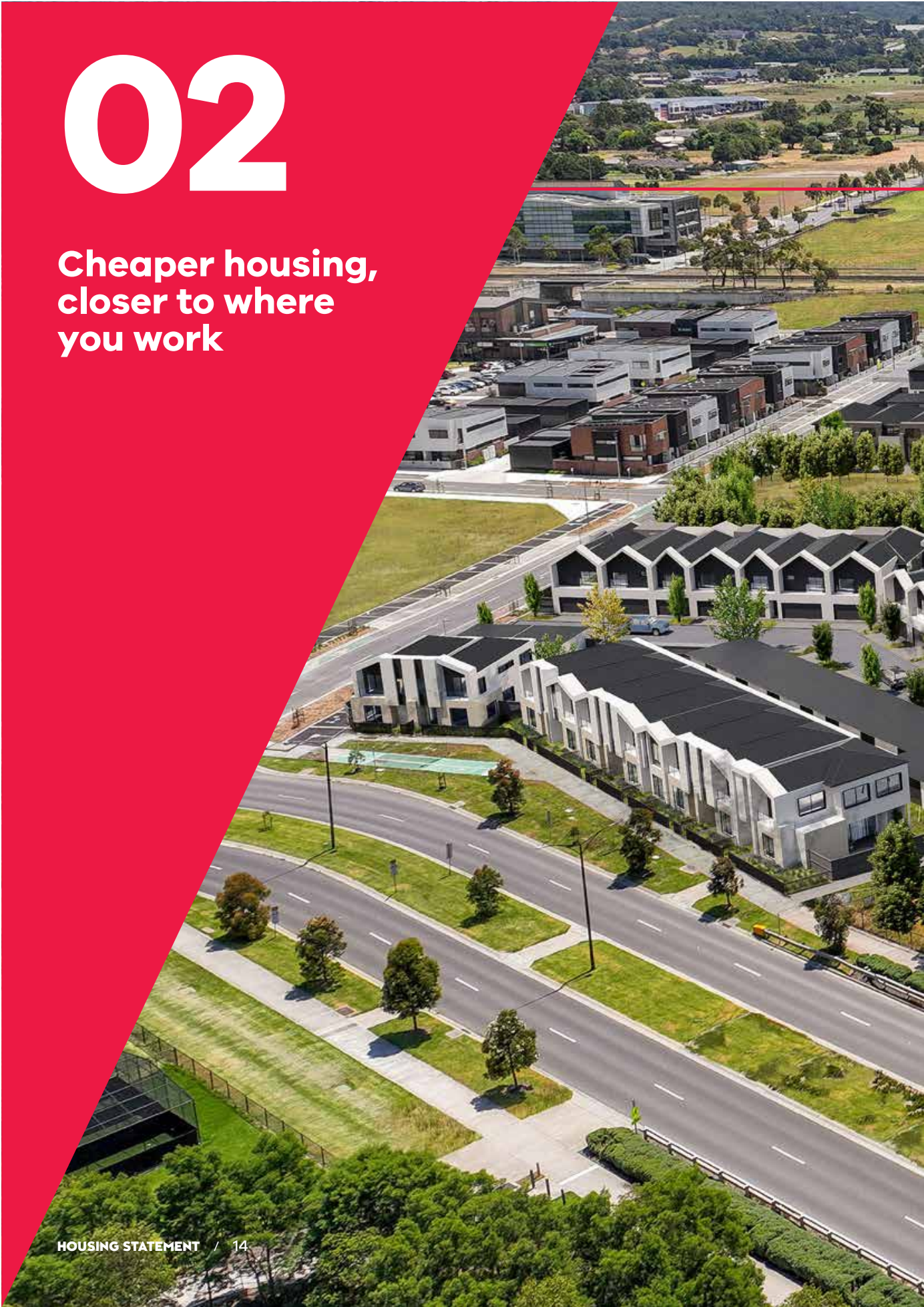
More resources to support a faster, fairer planning system

To give industry greater certainty, the Department of Transport and Planning will bolster its resources in the coming months – including by bringing on 90 new planners – to help with a range of priorities like clearing the backlog, making good decisions faster and increasing housing choice in activity centres.



02

**Cheaper housing,
closer to where
you work**





Cheaper housing, closer to where you work

- Unlocking new spaces to build – including across established suburbs and government land – to boost supply and stop urban sprawl
- Building more homes closer to where people have the transport, roads, hospitals and schools they need
- Delivering vital community infrastructure – like footpaths and parks – faster

The more a city sprawls, the less liveable it becomes for the people who call it home.

Your daily commute gets longer. It's harder to drop the kids off at school and get to work on time. Traffic skyrockets. And so does pollution.

Most importantly, the cost of living – and of finding somewhere to live – keeps going up. At the same time, the chances of living close to your job and the services you rely on keeps going down.

The solution isn't to keep pushing people further out by building suburb after suburb on the fringes of town. We know infrastructure investment to keep pace with urban sprawl is four times higher than what's required to support growth in suburban areas where there's already good access to services, transport and green spaces. And we can't let our state get stuck in an endless, unsustainable cycle of playing catch up by trying to keep pace with urban sprawl at the fringes.

We need to create more housing, with the best design standards, where people want to live. And that means going up **and** out – not just out. By unlocking new spaces to build homes across established suburbs, we'll stop urban sprawl and boost housing supply in the places Victorians want to be – close to where they work, or send their kids to school. And by delivering vital community infrastructure in those suburbs, we'll make sure they stay places where Victorians want to live.

Building the transport network Victoria needs to move generations

Suburban Rail Loop

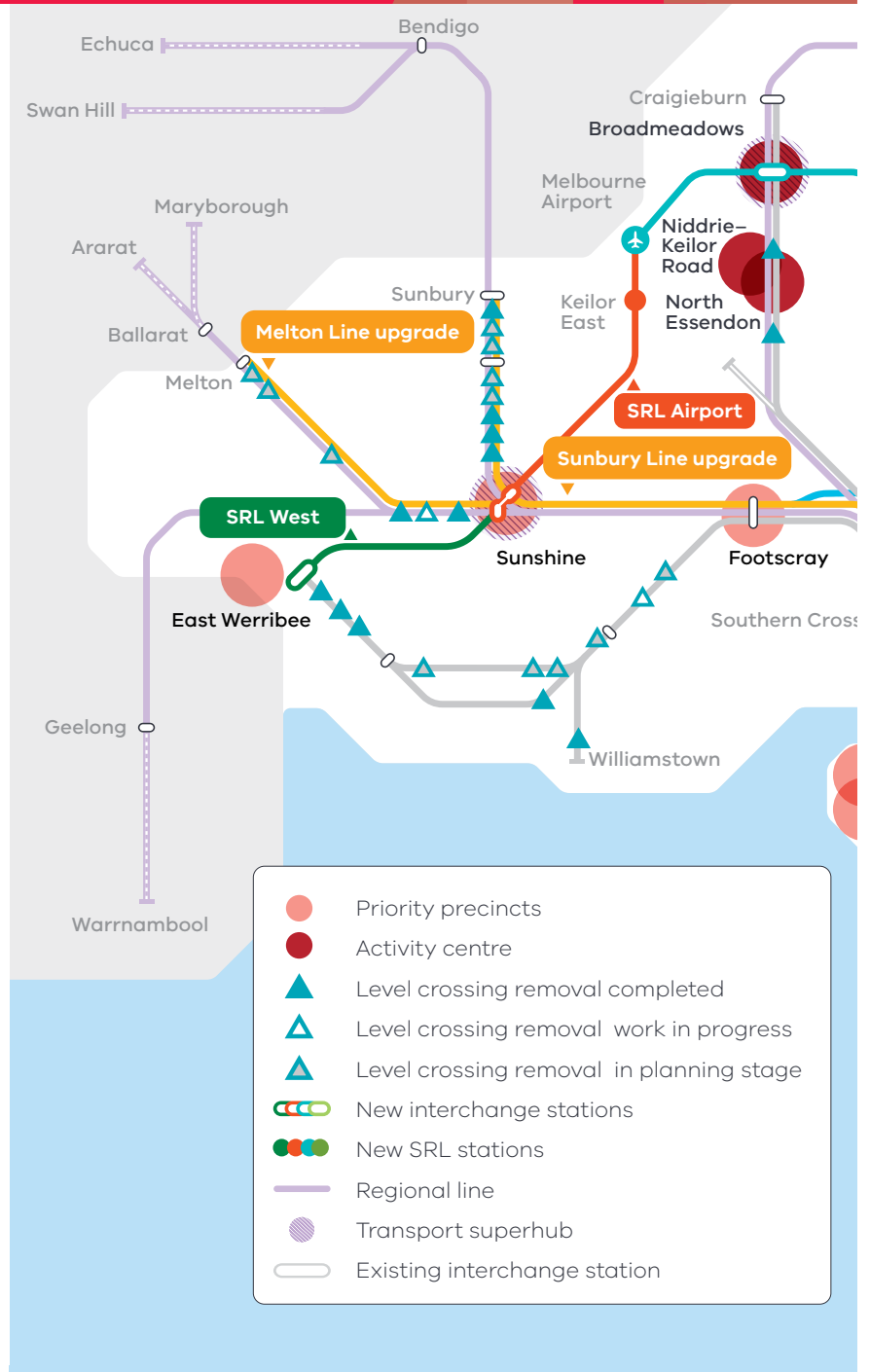
- SRL East will create up to **8,000 direct jobs**
- SRL will support up to **24,000 jobs** across Victoria
- Suburban Rail Loop will take **600,000 cars off the road**
- Improve travel times for at least **4 out of 5** Victorians, whether they drive or commute by public transport
- Tunnel boring machines will launch in **2026**
- First trains running in **2035**
- **6 SRL East precincts:** Cheltenham, Clayton, Monash, Glen Waverley, Burwood and Box Hill
- Precincts discussion paper out now

Level Crossing Removals

- **72** dangerous and congested level crossings already gone
- Will remove **110 by 2030**
- LXP projects have created more than **5,500 jobs** across the program to date
- More than **84 million hours** have been worked on LXP projects
- By **2030**, the Frankston, Cranbourne, Pakenham, Lilydale, Sunbury and Werribee lines will all be level crossing free

Metro Tunnel

- Almost **7,000 jobs** created from the Metro Tunnel Project
- 800 apprentices, trainees and cadets have worked on or are currently working on the project
- Complete in **2025** – a year ahead of schedule
- **9km** twin tunnels and **five** new stations



Our priority precincts – Arden, Docklands, Fishermans Bend, Footscray, National Employment and Innovation Clusters, Parkville, Sunshine, Richmond to Flinders Street corridor and Precincts and suburbs are expected to deliver around 150,000 homes – with opportunity for more homes to be built as the precinct grows over time.





What we'll do

Support institutional investment

Institutional investors – larger entities like superannuation funds or insurance companies – can play a critical role in housing supply. These entities have already shown their appetite to invest in long-term, stable rental properties and build-to-sell developments. We'll establish an *Institutional Investment Framework*, creating a dedicated planning pathway and one-stop shop for these investors – attracting more investment at scale in social, affordable, key worker and market homes.

Activate the Arden Precinct

A landmark precinct in central Melbourne, Arden will be a globally recognised destination for bio-medical and health sciences. Arden is an urban renewal precinct set to transform into a thriving community and a new home for Melbourne's growing technology, life science, health and education sectors. Just two kilometres from the centre of Melbourne's CBD, Arden is a central and connected precinct which will be home to up to 34,000 jobs and around 20,000 people by 2051.

We'll commence a market search for proposals to activate the Arden Precinct ahead of the Arden Metro Tunnel train station opening earlier in 2025. Our intention is to partner with the private sector, industry and investors to start delivering the Arden precinct – with quality and affordable housing to support diverse residents and key workers, including affordable build to rent, build to sell, shared equity and key worker housing.

Boost the Victorian Homebuyer Fund

Saving for a deposit is taking longer, and getting harder. In the early 2000s, it took a typical Victorian household 3.6 years to save a deposit for a house. Today, it takes an average of 6.2 years. We'll release another \$500 million from the *Victorian Homebuyer Fund*, putting home ownership within reach for more Victorians. This additional funding will support around 3,000 more Victorians into a home through a shared equity model.

The Fund provides eligible participants with a contribution of up to 25 per cent of the purchase price of the home, with participants contributing a minimum of 5 per cent of the purchase price. Since the Fund started in October 2021, we've supported 4,251 settlements with \$1.07 billion – including many Victorians who have found it particularly tough to get into the housing market. From the existing program, half of participants are women, more than half are single people, and two-thirds are first home buyers.

Introduce tougher penalties for real estate agents and sellers who break the law

Victoria has zero tolerance for real estate agents and sellers who flout the rules. We'll crack down on dodgy real estate agents by introducing tougher penalties for those who break the law, including taking commissions away from agents who underquote on properties. It'll mean more protections for Victorians looking for a home, and the majority of agents who do the right thing won't be unfairly disadvantaged by those who break the law to get ahead.

What is underquoting?



This is underquoting

- A property is advertised at \$500,000–550,000.
- After a week the online advertised price is reduced to \$450,000–490,000.
- The Statement of Information shows comparable properties in the \$600,000 range and the median price for the suburb is \$620,000.
- The property sells at auction for \$650,000 with a single bidder.
- This is underquoting as the property should have been advertised within the range of the comparable properties.
- The change in the advertised price is deliberate and triggers the search parameters of people in the sub-\$500K budget range.
- This unlawful behaviour falsely inflates the popularity or attendance numbers of the auction, which puts more pressure (false competition) on the potential bidders.
- It also wastes the time of people who are tricked into thinking a home may be within their budget.

This is not

- A property is advertised at \$500,000–550,000, which is reasonably based on the suburb's median price and the sale price of three comparable homes in the same area.
- The auction day is very popular, with multiple bidders. There are no vendor bids placed and the auctioneer declares it is 'On The Market' within the advertised range.
- The competitive bidding causes the property to sell for \$650,000.
- The bid sheet is retained in the Agent's folder for this property, and the auction was live streamed on the internet.
- Even though the sales figure was high, the auction and advertising campaign were conducted in a lawful and transparent way.



What we'll do

Unlock surplus government land

We've heard from institutional investors and the private sector that they need more clarity and certainty when it comes to under-used and surplus government land, in order to guide their investments. We'll unlock and rezone surplus government land to deliver around 9,000 homes across 45 sites in both metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. As part of this work, we'll set a target of at least 10 per cent of affordable homes to be built across these sites.

Strengthen design standards to ensure high quality builds

With more and more Victorians choosing to live in apartments, they should be the best they can be – with liveability and wellbeing front and centre. We've already strengthened Victoria's apartment design standards, with previous reforms improving the internal and external design of new builds. But we know there's more to do, so we'll strengthen the existing standards to make sure they deliver the variety of homes Victorians want into the future. Our clear new standards will ensure appealing, comfortable, sustainable, and fit-for-purpose homes.

Introduce a *Short Stay Levy*

While short stay accommodation – like Airbnb or Stayz – has become a popular feature of Victoria's visitor economy, it's also reduced the ability for many properties to be used for longer term accommodation. In Victoria, there are more than 36,000 short stay accommodation places – with almost half of these in regional Victoria. More than 29,000 of those places are entire homes. These are places that cannot be used for longer-term accommodation or rented out on fixed term agreements – so it makes sense that they should provide some benefit toward the places that can.

We'll introduce a levy on short stay accommodation platforms. The *Short Stay Levy* will be set at 75 per cent of the short-stay accommodation platforms' revenue. And the revenue raised from the levy will go to Homes Victoria, supporting their work building and maintaining social and affordable housing across the state, with 25 per cent of funds to be invested in regional Victoria. This also means other local council charges on short stay accommodation will be removed.

Give growing communities the local infrastructure they need

We'll bring forward a \$400 million package of works along growth corridors – providing the basic infrastructure that will make a difference on the ground to new and growing communities. Drawing from the *Growth Areas Public Transport Fund* and *Building New Communities Fund*, we'll look at priority projects where they're needed most for things like toilets, shelter and lighting upgrades at bus stops and train stations, footpaths and cycling paths.

Keep making precincts about people and places

The Department of Transport and Planning is leading the whole-of-government delivery and coordination of Priority Precincts such as Arden, Docklands, Fishermans Bend, Footscray, East Werribee, Parkville and Sunshine.

We want to create places where people have vibrant, liveable and sustainable communities, affordable housing and quality jobs which help to grow Victoria's economy. Our priority precincts will capitalise on the benefits of major infrastructure investments to support thriving communities and encourage further investment.

Priority planning projects for growing suburbs

We know we need to increase opportunities for homes in Melbourne’s inner and middle suburbs. At the same time, a home in our newest suburbs and regional cities will continue to be an attractive choice for many households. Growth areas will remain important – and we’ll need to support that growth in our suburbs while building the transport and infrastructure to connect people to jobs and services. The Victorian Planning Authority will continue preparing Precinct Structure Plans (PSPs) for new housing and jobs in Melbourne and regional Victoria. Further work across 21 priority projects will continue to be developed to deliver more than 60,000 homes and 60,000 jobs. They’ll deliver a sustainable supply of greenfield land, and more jobs close to home, while we plan for more housing choice in all parts of Victoria.

Regional Victoria

- Wonthaggi PSP
- Ballarat Infrastructure Growth Alignment Framework
- Shepparton South East PSP
- Corio Norlane Urban Renewal
- Bannockburn South East PSP
- East of Aberline PSP
- Ballarat North PSP

Industrial Land

- Officer South (Employment) PSP
- Greater Avalon (Employment) PSP
- Casey Fields South (Employment) PSP
- Croskell (Employment) PSP
- Merrifield North (due diligence only)
- Mambourn East (due diligence only)
- Werribee Junction (due diligence only)

Established Melbourne

- Braybrook Regeneration Project

Melbourne New Communities

- Beveridge North West PSP
- Gunns Gully Road Interchange GAIC WIK
- Greenvale North (Part 2) PSP
- Devon Meadows PSP
- Melton East PSP
- Clyde South (due diligence only)



425,600 new homes for regional Victoria



As part of our work to build the 2.24 million homes Victoria will need by 2051, we're setting a regional target to build 425,600 of those homes across our regions.

Regional Housing Fund

We're providing a new **\$1 billion Regional Housing Fund** to deliver more than 1,300 new homes across regional Victoria. The new homes will include a mix of social and affordable housing – and we'll work with councils, regional partnerships and local communities to determine the right mix of stock and locations for each region.

Regional Worker Accommodation Fund

We're investing **\$150 million** in a **Regional Worker Accommodation Fund** to provide new housing options for regional communities where key workers are struggling to find affordable places to live. The package will make regional workers' jobs more secure and make it easier for businesses to find and keep staff. We'll consult regional employers, workers, housing providers and councils on the program design to ensure it meets the needs of the local communities.

Big Housing Build

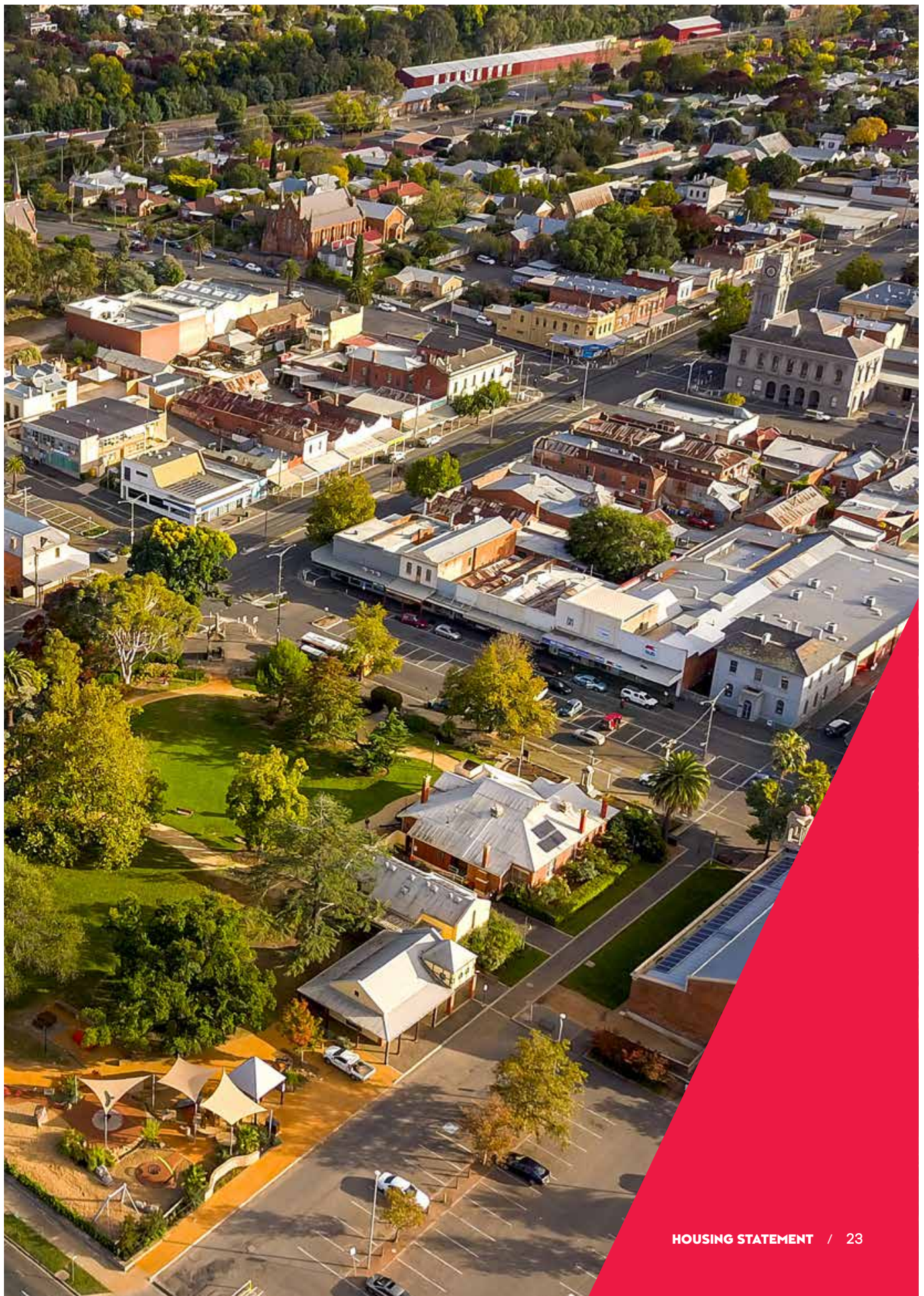
Our **\$5.3 billion Big Housing Build** is Australia's biggest ever investment in public and community housing. It's delivering more than 12,000 social and affordable homes across Victoria – including more than 9,300 social homes. As part of the Big Housing Build, **25 per cent of these homes will be delivered in regional Victoria – a \$1.25 billion investment in regional housing.**

Development Facilitation Program

By expanding Victoria's Development Facilitation Program, we'll boost critical housing supply in regional Victoria. We'll **streamline the planning process** for significant regional housing developments which are worth at least **\$15 million and deliver at least 10 per cent affordable housing**, including build-to-rent projects.

Short Stay Levy

The revenue raised following the introduction of a *Short Stay Levy* will go to Homes Victoria, supporting their work building and maintaining social and affordable housing across the state. To make sure our regions get their fair share, **25 per cent of funds from the Short Stay Levy will be invested in regional Victoria.**



03

Protecting renters' rights





Protecting renters' rights

- Closing loopholes that drive up the cost of living for renters
- Giving renters more certainty and security over their leases, living standards and finances
- Resolving tenancy disputes faster and keeping them out of VCAT

Across Victoria, more people are renting than ever before, and for longer.

Over the past 10 years, the number of rental properties in our state has increased by more than 32 per cent. In the early 2000s, it took a typical Victorian household 3.6 years to save a deposit for a house. Today, it takes an average of 6.2 years.

Demand for rental properties is skyrocketing. These days, the reality for most people trying to land a rental is that they find they're just one of dozens of applicants at an inspection. And when things are scarce, they always cost more. You can see that reflected in rising rents across the state: in the last five years, typical rents have gone up by 21 per cent in Melbourne and 40 per cent in regional Victoria.

We know the best thing we can do to make rental properties more affordable for more Victorians is build more of them. That's why the work this *Housing Statement* does to boost supply is critical for renters – because it's only when housing is abundant that it'll also be affordable. In other words, it's only by supplying more rental properties – not taking them off the market – that we'll be able to make renting where you want to live more affordable, for more people. In total, we anticipate 230,000 additional rental properties will be added to the Victorian market over the next ten years – that includes 70,000 facilitated by the measures outlined in the Housing Statement.

At the same time, everyone deserves the chance to have a safe, secure and affordable home – whether you own it or not. Repairs should be done properly, and quickly. Options for resolving disputes should be easy to access, quick and fair, and not too costly. Real estate agents and property managers should be held to professional standards, and renters should be taken seriously by them. Tenants should have certainty over their leases, and support with their finances. And applying for a rental property should be an easy, fast and fair process.

Victoria already has some of the strongest rental protections in the country. The Andrews Labor Government has worked hard to expand and protect renters' rights, with more than 130 reforms already in place. We've introduced minimum standards, so every renter has the right to the basics that matter: a working heater, hot and cold water, and lockable doors and windows. We've made it easier to do the little things that make a house a home – like hanging a picture, or owning a pet. And we've given renters more certainty with long term leases, fairer bonds and faster refunds, and annual rent increases – rather than unlimited ones.

But when it comes to protecting renters' rights, there's always more work to do to make sure tenants get a fairer deal.

Why rent control doesn't work long term



Rent control is a policy that, on the surface, appears to address the issue of affordable housing by limiting the amount landlords can charge for rent. But despite its intentions, international examples have shown rent control often worsens the housing crisis by discouraging investment in housing, reducing the quality of rentals and distorting the housing market.

Modern rent controls as we know them – also known as rent caps – came about during World War II as a way to try and deal with war-related migration and skyrocketing inflation. Since then, cities and states across the world have debated, introduced, amended and repealed different types of rent control measures. And the evidence from overseas paints a bleak picture for renters, especially as time goes on.

In San Francisco – a city known for its expensive housing – studies from Stanford University economists have shown that over time, rent control ultimately took crucial housing stock out of the market and drove up rents across the city. Landlords of rent-controlled properties started selling to owner-occupiers or moving their investments to other types of real estate, like condominiums, or newer, redeveloped buildings without rent caps.

In the long run, that did two things: it lowered the overall supply of rental housing by around 15 per cent, and it shifted San Francisco's properties towards more expensive ones catering to people on higher incomes. Rent control is estimated to have raised rents in San Francisco by 5.1 per cent – effectively kicking the problem down the road for the city's future renters. In Stockholm, Sweden, where strict rent controls have been in place for decades, reports of long queues for scarce housing aren't uncommon.

Rent controls in New York City tell another story on top of reduced housing supply. Evidence has shown that rent controls have had a significant impact on the quality of rental housing stock in New York. Landlords, unable to charge market rent to cover maintenance and repair costs, may defer necessary upkeep, resulting in deteriorating living conditions for tenants. Rent controlled homes in Manhattan have been found to be 9 per cent more likely to be deteriorating or dilapidated.

In contrast, studies examining rent control repeal in Massachusetts show that towns in the Boston metropolitan area experienced increases in both rental supply and housing maintenance after rent control was abolished.

We know that when things are scarce, they always cost more. This year, rental vacancy rates in Melbourne hit an historic low of just 0.8 per cent. In June, the total number of rental listings dropped by nearly 23 per cent in comparison to the same time last year. At the same time, median rent for a house hit a record high of \$520 per week. It's clear the cost of renting keeps going up because we don't have enough rental properties for all of the people who need them.

If we take more rental properties off the market – at a time when we already don't have enough to go around – the pressure on Victorian renters will get much worse in the long run. And inevitably, that's what a government-imposed cap on rental prices would do. Without a national scheme, rent caps in Victoria would discourage investment in rental housing stock – providing a powerful incentive for investors to take their money out of real estate here and put it elsewhere. When those investment properties are sold, there's no guarantee that they'll remain rentals – and the experience overseas shows they often don't.

At the end of the day, it comes down to this simple proposition: as long as rental supply is low, rental prices will stay high. And Victorian renters deserve a better deal than that.



What we'll do

Restrict rent increases between successive fixed-term rental agreements

We'll restrict rent increases between successive fixed-term leases, cracking down on an emerging trend which has seen some landlords evict tenants at the end of their first fixed-term lease in order to raise the rent substantially when re-listing the rental property. If agents or landlords are issuing a new lease after they've evicted previous tenants on their first fixed-term one, they'll have to offer the property at the same rent for at least 12 months. It'll reduce the incentive for landlords to churn through renters by evicting them, and give renters more certainty over their living arrangements.

Ban all types of rental bidding

In 2021, we made it illegal for real estate agents or landlords to solicit or encourage higher offers than the advertised price of a rental property. But a tight rental market with vacancy rates at record lows has put an incredible amount of pressure on prospective tenants. More and more, we're seeing people make their own unsolicited bids – either to pay more weekly rent or to pay more than four weeks in advance – to try and give their applications a competitive edge. We'll level the playing field for renters by closing this loophole and banning all types of rental bidding for good. We'll make it an offence to accept bids, and introduce tougher penalties for agents and landlords who break the law.

Establish Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria

With more people in Victoria renting than ever before, it's inevitable that the number of rental disputes has increased, too. Often, a rental dispute can be just one of a range of cost of living pressures a renter could be facing. And when that happens, a quick resolution can make a world of difference. But you shouldn't have to end up at VCAT to have simple repairs done, or to get the money you're owed. VCAT should be a last resort for tenants and landlords, not the first stop.

We'll establish *Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria*, providing a one-stop shop for renters, agents and landlords to resolve tenancy disputes over rent, damages, repairs and bonds. It'll have a clear pathway to settle issues in a faster, fairer and cheaper way – freeing up VCAT for more serious or complicated matters.





What we'll do

Introduce a portable rental bond scheme

Anyone who's ever moved house knows costs can add up, quickly. And when you're between homes, every dollar counts. We'll build a portable rental bond scheme, where tenants can carry their rental bond from one property straight over to another – rather than having to pay a new bond each time. It'll ease the financial burden on tenants, who won't have to fork out a substantial amount of money every time they move – or wait until they've got their old bond back to pay their new one. It'll streamline the administrative process for agents and property managers, who handle dozens of rentals at any one time. And it'll create a more efficient rental market – which is good news for both renters and landlords.

Extend notice of rent increase and notice to vacate periods to 90 days

Rent increases and eviction notices can be incredibly distressing. Some renters facing increases may not be able to afford to stay where they are, and be forced to change their housing situation altogether. Evicted renters have to quickly figure out their next steps – including finding a new place to live, budgeting, packing, and coordinating logistics – all while dealing with the emotional stress of their changing situation. For families with children, eviction notices can be particularly traumatic. We'll give renters more certainty, and ease the stress evicted renters face, by extending notice of rent increases and notice to vacate periods to 90 days.

Introduce mandatory training and licensing for real estate agents, property managers owners corporation managers and conveyancers

Every real estate transaction involves significant financial investments and legal complexities, and renters often rely on agents to provide accurate information and advice. We'll introduce mandatory continuing professional development for real estate industry professionals – including agents, property managers, conveyancers and owners corporation managers. It'll mean better skills for real estate workers, encourage ethical conduct across the industry, and give renters the peace of mind they deserve.

Make rental applications easier and protect renters' personal information

Applying for a rental property should be a fast, fair, straightforward process. But the reality is many renters – who usually apply for more than one property at a time – can face a field of different demands for information, records or documents just so they can secure a place to live. We'll standardise rental applications, saving renters time and giving them a clear idea of what they can expect to be asked for during the application process. We'll also limit the kind of information agents or landlords can keep on file, and how long they can keep it for, better protecting renters' privacy and data.

Deliver a Rental Stress Support Package

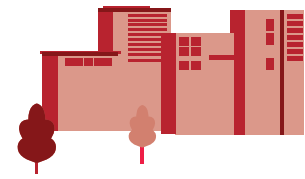
Right now, around five per cent of Victorian households are facing serious renting stress – meaning they're at risk of being evicted because they can't afford to pay their rent. There are a range of organisations who work tirelessly to prevent homelessness and help renters stay in their homes, providing legal assistance, financial information and advice, and advocacy services. We'll back their critical work for Victorians in need by delivering a \$2 million *Rental Stress Support Package* through the Victorian Property Fund. The package will help address the high demand for rental assistance these organisations are seeing, while we work to boost social, affordable and market housing supply across the state.



04

More social housing





More social housing

- Building up to 769 homes through the Commonwealth's *Social Housing Accelerator* – on top of 12,000 homes in the pipeline as part of our *Big Housing Build* and more than 4,000 social housing homes through other programs
- Retiring our ageing high-rise towers across Melbourne, to provide homes that are modern, comfortable and energy efficient
- Rapidly accelerating the rollout of social and affordable homes across Victoria

Every Victorian deserves a roof over their head – but for most, it means so much more than that.

It gives you a base to hold down a job, or to get a good education. It's also somewhere you can start a family – or keep your family safe.

Just like with the private housing market, the supply of social and affordable homes needs to keep up demand. As of June 2023, there are around 55,800 new applicants who have expressed interest in social housing in Victoria.

Our *Big Housing Build* is Australia's biggest ever investment in public and community housing. We're building more than 12,000 new homes throughout metro and regional Victoria. They'll be modern, energy efficient homes – cooler in summer and warmer in winter – saving tenants money on their power bills. They'll be delivered in partnership with local communities, for local communities. Innovative new projects like our ground lease model will unlock places to build upon, keeping residents in the communities they know and love. And in addition to the *Big Housing Build*, we'll provide a further 4,000 new, energy efficient social housing homes, through programs like the *Public Housing Renewal Program*.

On top of the thousands of new homes we're building across the state, we're upgrading and revitalising the ones that are already standing – so the people who live there can have the comfortable homes they deserve. We'll keep investing to upgrade more than 2,000 public housing homes per year.

We know it's getting harder to find a house in regional Victoria, and demand for social and affordable housing in the regions is growing. That's why, on top of the *Big Housing Build*, we're investing \$1 billion in a *Regional Housing Fund* to deliver more than 1300 new homes across regional Victoria. The new homes will include a mix of social and affordable housing – and we'll work with councils, regional partnerships and local communities to determine the right mix of stock and locations for each region.

We're also investing \$150 million in a *Regional Worker Accommodation Fund* to provide new housing options for regional communities where key workers are struggling to find affordable places to live. It's a critical investment that'll make their jobs more secure, and make it easier for local businesses to find and keep staff.

Victoria has the biggest social and affordable housing agenda of all of Australia's states and territories – and we've got the pipeline of skilled workers we need to build these homes thanks to our nation-leading investments in TAFE. But we know that when it comes to the dignity and security of a home for every Victorian, there's always more to do – and we'll get on with it.

This will change lives. It's not just an investment in bricks and mortar – it's an investment in Victorians for years to come.



Our progress on the *Big Housing Build*



Our \$5.3 billion *Big Housing Build* is delivering more than 12,000 social and affordable homes across metropolitan and regional Victoria – including more than 9,300 social homes.

- 820 construction sites across Victoria
- 10,000 jobs a year – with ten percent of work on large sites done through apprentices, cadets and trainees
- 7,600 homes are in planning or construction
- 2,800 households have either moved in or are getting ready to move in
- The BHB will deliver a ten percent increase in social housing dwellings in four years and construct new affordable rental homes across the state
- Ten percent of all dwellings will support Aboriginal housing needs
- 1,000 homes will support victim survivors of family violence
- 2,000 supported homes will be provided for people experiencing mental illness
- All homes will meet 7-star NatHERS efficiency standards
- Twenty five percent of the investment will be in regional Victoria
- The BHB makes up roughly 7 per cent of the residential construction pipeline in Victoria
- As at May 2023, more than \$1 billion has been invested across regional Victoria
- As at May 2023, the BHB has generated more than 28,000 jobs from development work that has been completed (8,758) or is underway (20,013)

What is the Ground Lease Model?



Our Ground Lease Model is the first of its kind for Victoria. Through a partnerships approach, public land is leased from Homes Victoria to a project group who finance, design and construct new housing.

Community housing providers will manage and maintain the sites for 40 years, before handing the land, and all dwellings, back to Homes Victoria. Under this model, the land is retained by the Victorian Government.

Ground lease sites will deliver social, affordable, specialist disability and market rental homes that are welcoming, secure and meet modern design and accessibility standards. Importantly, the sites will feature spaces to support diverse, inclusive communities in well-located areas where people want to live – not isolated concrete enclaves. These sites will be home to community rooms, artists' studios, social enterprise tenancies, active open spaces, communal gardens and pocket parks.

Currently, there are two Ground Lease Model project stages underway which will deliver 2,500 new homes and around 9,000 jobs. The first stage includes three sites due for completion in early 2024 and includes locations at Bangs Street in Prahran, New Street in Brighton and Victoria Street in Flemington. Planning for the second Ground Lease Model stage is underway, and will include locations at Bluff Road in Hampton East, Barak Beacon in Port Melbourne, Horace Petty in South Yarra and Essex Street in Prahran.





What we'll do

Launch Australia's biggest ever urban renewal project

Melbourne's high-rise public housing towers were built after World War II, between the 1950s and 1970s. They're reaching the end of their useful lives, and no longer fit for modern living. Constructed at a time that pre-dates current building codes, the towers no longer meet the minimum standards Victorians expect – including many of Victoria's Better Apartment Design Standards. The towers fail against noise, sustainability, waste and recycling, bedroom area dimensions, room depth, ventilation, private open space, accessibility and minimum amenity standards. Substantial investment would be needed to retrofit the towers. But even then, their design means that many tower homes would never be able to meet contemporary codes, nationwide energy rating schemes or accessibility needs for many households.

We'll launch Australia's biggest ever urban renewal project: retiring and redeveloping all of Melbourne's 44 ageing high-rise public housing estates by 2051. Starting with towers in Flemington, North Melbourne and Carlton, we'll bring forward a program of works to progressively retire each tower and redevelop each site.

Not only will the redevelopment mean households will move into a new home that meets every modern building standard – it'll boost the overall number of social homes across these sites by 10 per cent, while also boosting the number of affordable and market homes across the sites. There are currently around 10,000 people living across the 44 towers. Once we've redeveloped them, we anticipate around 30,000 people will live across these sites.

Build 769 more homes through the *Social Housing Accelerator*

On top of our *Big Housing Build*, we'll build up to 769 new social housing homes over the next five years with funding from the Commonwealth Government's *Social Housing Accelerator*. Announced in June this year, the *Social Housing Accelerator* is a \$2 billion investment in new social homes across Australia, with \$496.5 million provided for new homes across Victoria. We'll use this funding to build 769 new homes including low density developments on Homes Victoria owned land, as well as medium and high density developments on Victorian Government owned land. We'll also examine site spot purchases we can make across the state for further developments. This funding will support the redevelopment of the two towers in Carlton.

Invest \$1 billion in the *Affordable Housing Investment Partnership*

We'll invest \$1 billion in the *Affordable Housing Investment Partnership* (AHIP) program, providing low interest loans and government guarantees to finance social and affordable housing for Victorians that need it most – including projects that provide affordable housing for essential and key workers. The new AHIP expands on the previous Building Financial Capacity of Housing Agencies (BFCHA) initiative, bringing the total funding available up to \$2.1 billion. This is the first time that government low interest loans and government guarantees are available in Victoria for affordable housing as well as social housing.



What we'll do

Buy off-the-plan to boost social housing stock

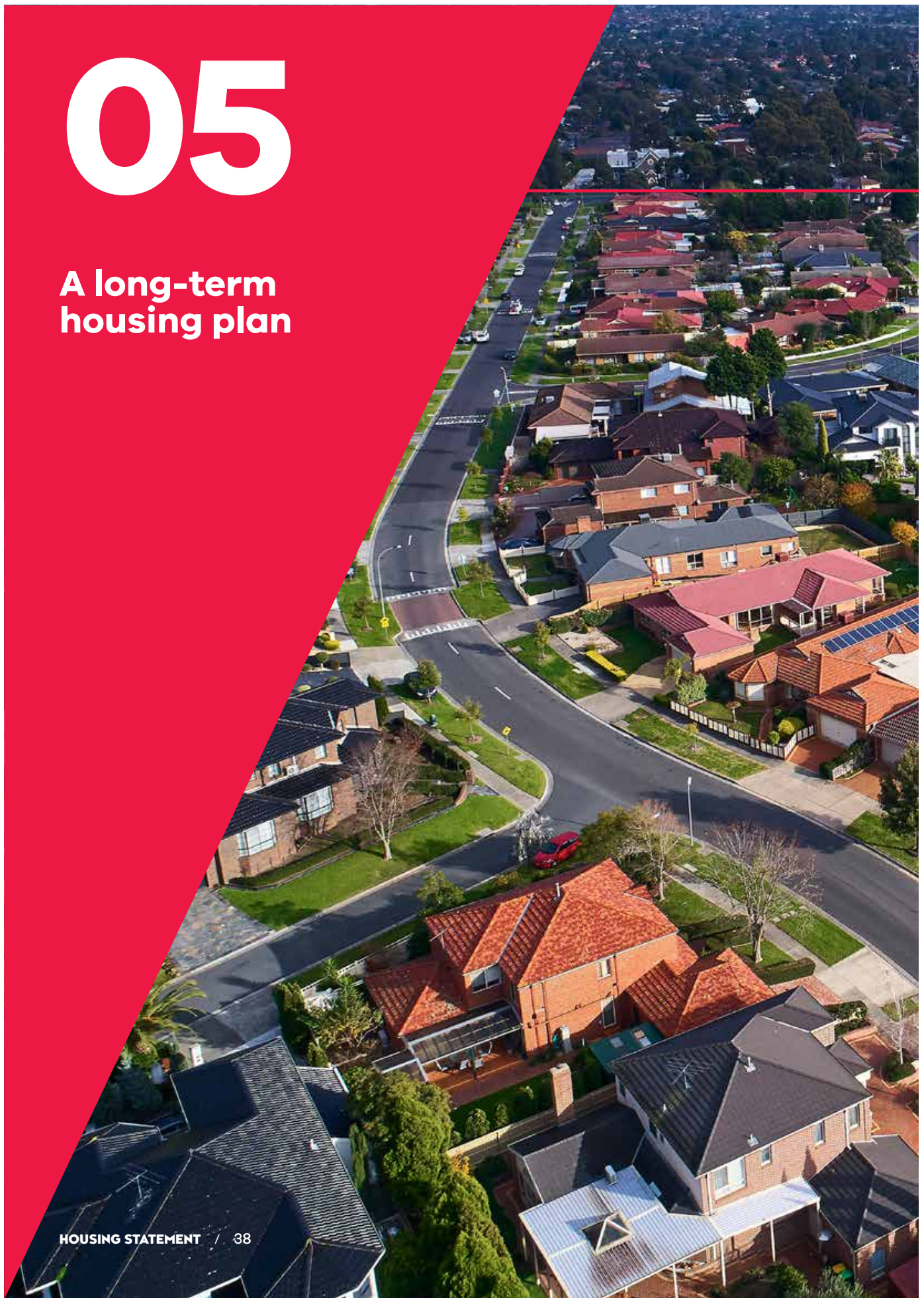
Developers need a certain level of apartment pre-sales before a housing project can commence construction – which can often add delays to new projects kicking off. We'll explore opportunities to buy pre-sale off-the-plan apartments in medium and high density developments to boost Victoria's social housing stock. We'll consult with industry on opportunities to buy at scale through spot purchasing. And we'll buy directly from project proponents, making sure we don't reduce stock in the market.

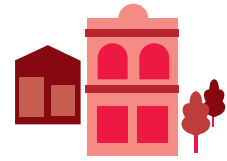
Headleasing leftover apartments

When a development project is finished, there are often a small number of units that don't end up being sold or leased. This means there could be as many as several thousand apartments left empty right now that could make a home for someone. Industry feedback suggests there may be opportunities for long-term headleases of these leftover apartments at social housing rental rates to support families who need social and affordable housing. We'll call for expressions of interest to test market appetite to add some of these apartments to our supply of social and affordable housing and help reduce the waiting list. The approach to market is not intended to subsidise developers beyond current social housing rental arrangements, or affect Homes Victoria's financial position.

05

A long-term housing plan





A long-term housing plan

- A planning strategy to guide how our state grows and develops in the coming decades
- Long-term reform to create a modern, fit for purpose planning system that works with Victorians – not against them

We know our state will keep growing – and we know we'll need a plan to manage that growth.

We'll need a long-term vision for what our cities, suburbs and regions look like in the future. We'll need a clear framework for how our communities grow, how to build homes where Victorians want to live, and how to attract future investment. And we'll need a modern, fit-for purpose planning system that works for Victorians – not against them.

At the same time, we'll need to make sure Victoria is moving in step with the rest of the country, as we work with the Commonwealth Government and other states and territories to deliver the nation's housing accord.

This *Housing Statement* forms the first step of that work, not the last. By acting now, we can work together as a state to set a vision for the future, building on what we love for future generations. And as part of that work, it's important that as many Victorians as possible can have their say on how our state grows in the years to come. It makes sense that when you listen to people, you get better outcomes. We want Victorians to come together and be part of the solution in planning for our future challenges – including industry, councils and local communities.

We'll keep working with Victorians to make sure people have affordable homes, where they want to live and work, well into the future.

How does the *Housing Statement* fit in with the national frameworks?



What is the *National Housing Accord*?

Announced in October 2022, the *National Housing Accord* is a landmark agreement designed to tackle housing supply and affordability right across Australia. The Accord aligns the work of all levels of government, institutional investors and the construction sector to help tackle the nation's housing problem – setting an initial target of building one million new, well-located homes in the five years from 2024. As part of the Accord, states and territories will also deliver 10,000 affordable homes, and expedite zoning, planning and land release for social and affordable housing.

What is the *National Cabinet Housing Plan*?

In August 2023, National Cabinet agreed on a plan with further measures to boost housing supply and affordability – including lifting the national housing target to 1.2 million new, well-located homes over the five years from 1 July 2024. The Commonwealth will support this target with a \$500 million *Housing Support Program* for local and state governments to kick-start housing supply in well-located areas for things like connecting essential services, amenities to support new housing development, or building planning capability. National Cabinet's plan also included a national planning reform blueprint and better protections for renters.

How does our *Housing Statement* fit in?

The *National Housing Accord*, the *National Cabinet Housing Plan* and our *Housing Statement* all work together to achieve the same goal: tackling housing supply and affordability. With this *Housing Statement*, we'll kick off a significant portion of the work we signed up for through the Accord and National Cabinet – across areas like planning reform, expedited approvals, social and affordable housing and renters rights. For some of the agreed actions, Victoria already has work and stronger laws in place thanks to our previous rental reforms and projects like the *Big Housing Build*. And we'll keep working with the Commonwealth and other states and territories to find national solutions to the national problem.

National Cabinet

- ✓ Housing affordability through increasing housing supply
- ✓ Social Housing Accelerator
- ✓ National Planning Blueprint Reform

National Housing Accord

- ✓ Victoria's contribution to 10,000 affordable housing dwellings delivered by states and territories
- ✓ Victoria's contribution to 1.2 million well-located homes across the government and private sector over five years from 2024
- ✓ Expedite zoning, planning and land release for social and affordable housing
- ✓ Working with local government to deliver planning reforms
- ✓ Support the distribution of the Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF)
- ✓ Ensure commitments made through the Accord contribute to increasing access to affordable housing beyond existing commitments
- ✓ Build a strong and sustainable Community Housing Provider Sector



What we'll do

A new plan for Victoria

We'll update *Plan Melbourne* – the Victorian Government's current metropolitan planning strategy spanning 2017-2050 – and expand it to cover the whole state. A new plan for Victoria will set into action what our state will look like over coming decades. It'll focus on delivering more homes near transport, job opportunities and essential services in vibrant, liveable, and sustainable neighbourhoods.

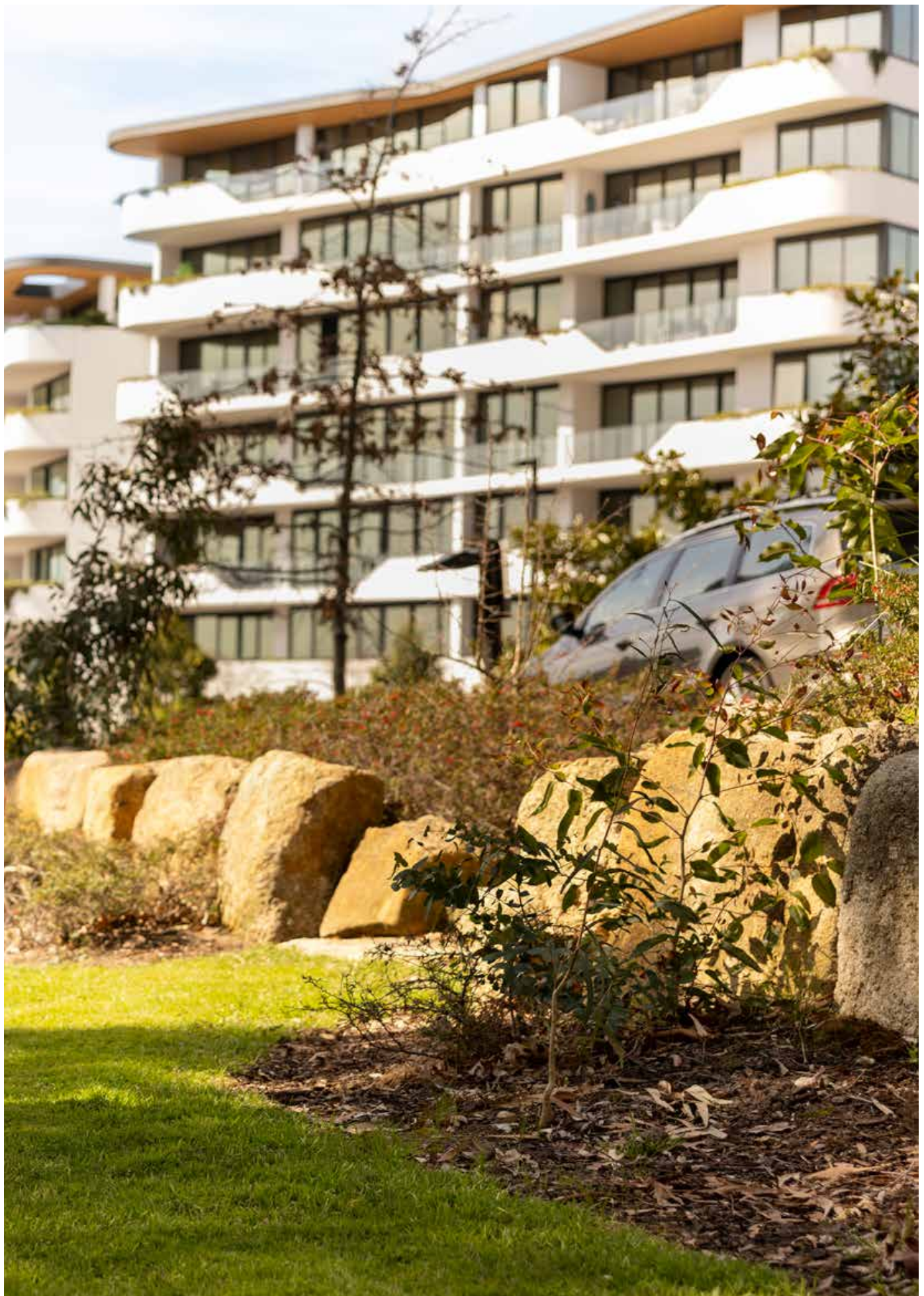
A new plan for Victoria will bring to life our target for 70 per cent of new homes to be built in established areas, while making sure growth areas deliver 30 per cent of new homes. We will establish local government targets for where those homes will be built. The plan will set our regions and rural areas up to thrive. We'll kick off initial industry consultation in the coming months, with broad and comprehensive community engagement to ramp up at the start of next year.

Build a modern, fit-for-purpose planning system

We'll review and rewrite the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* to build a modern, fit-for-purpose planning system. We'll look to establish and clarify timeframes for decisions, as well as looking at the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in our planning system – including councils, the Minister for Planning, the Victorian Planning Authority and the Department of Transport and Planning.









Victoria's Housing Statement

Progress Update



Our Housing Statement delivers more homes for Victorians

Victoria is number one in Australia for approving and building homes.

52,854 homes have been approved in Victoria over the last year – almost 10,000 more than in New South Wales – despite challenging economic conditions across the country.

That's **145 new homes ready to start construction, every day.**

Almost **10,000 social and affordable homes are under construction or completed** through the Big Housing Build, with more to come.

Additionally, almost **10,000 homes have been fast-tracked for development** in the last 12 months, and we're targeting more development in 10 built-up areas to support 60,000 more homes.

We have delivered more than **130 reforms to strengthen renters' rights** – and as we speak, our Rental Taskforce is cracking down on dodgy rental providers.

Communities and stakeholders have had their say on our \$1 billion investment to build **1,300 new homes in regional Victoria**, including a mix of social and affordable housing.

This matters. We're supporting families looking for a home to buy, young people looking for a home to rent, and vulnerable people looking for the home that can change their life.



A snapshot of our progress

Good decisions, made faster



- ✓ **Fast-tracking housing developments** – almost 10,000 homes have been fast-tracked for development over the last 12 months, including 1,638 homes through the Development Facilitation Program.
- ✓ **Making it easier to build small second homes** – we've eased regulations to allow homeowners to build small second homes, such as granny flats, without needing a planning permit.
- ✓ **Planning underway for 10 activity centres** – we're delivering 60,000 new homes over time in 10 busy Activity Centres close to services, jobs, and public transport, and we're now consulting with local communities.

Cheaper housing, closer to where you work



- ✓ **\$400 million investment in local infrastructure** – we've committed \$400 million to upgrade roads, public transport, utilities, and community facilities in growing outer suburbs.
- ✓ **Short Stay Levy** – short stay accommodation like Airbnb and Stayz has reduced the number of existing homes available for Victorians to live. The Short Stay Levy will unlock real rental and unlock funding for social housing.
- ✓ **Unlocked surplus land for housing** – we're unlocking surplus government land to deliver 9000 homes across 45 sites, close to jobs, community infrastructure, public transport.
- ✓ **A new inner-city community** – the Arden precinct procurement process has been launched, aiming to accommodate up to 20,000 new residents. Only 2 kms from Melbourne's CBD, Arden is on the doorstep of the new Metro Tunnel.

Protecting renter's rights



- ✓ **Delivery of the Rental Stress Package** – we have invested \$7.8 million to help people in-need stay in their homes.
- ✓ **Established a Renting Taskforce** – our taskforce is cracking down on rental providers and estate agents who do the wrong thing, such as renting out properties that don't meet minimum standards, false advertising, and not lodging bonds.
- ✓ **Rental Minimum Standards campaign** – we delivered a state-wide campaign on the minimum standards for rental properties so renters know their rights.
- ✓ **Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria** – our Rental Dispute Resolution service will be helping Victorians from 2025, allowing for matters between landlords and tenants to be resolved quickly and fairly.



More social housing



- ✓ **Big Housing Build** – we are delivering more social and affordable housing for Victorians with almost 10,000 homes under construction or completed. This year alone, we’ve housed 691 victims of family violence.
- ✓ **Redeveloping Public Housing Towers** – we are replacing outdated towers with modern buildings that are safer, more efficient and more suitable for residents. We’ve consulted with residents about their individual needs, and works are underway.
- ✓ **Regional Housing Fund** – a \$1 billion investment to build 1,300 new homes in regional Victoria is taking shape, now that local communities and stakeholders have had their say on the right housing mix and locations.

A long-term housing plan



- ✓ **Reforms for high-quality homes** – we are protecting Victorians building or renovating their homes. Before deposits are paid and insurance policies are issued, the Victorian Building Authority will conduct audits and oversee practices to ensure that high-quality homes are getting built.
- ✓ **A new Plan for Victoria** – as part of a comprehensive, long-term plan for our state, we released housing targets for every Victorian council so 70 per cent of new homes go in established areas that are well-supported by transport, services and jobs.
- ✓ **Planning Regulation Reform** – we’re conducting a full review of the state’s Planning and Environment Act to cut red tape, streamline processes, and deliver better planning regulations to get more homes built.



Let's do even more

The progress we've made in the last 12 months is significant.

We've delivered more homes for Victorians - and we're working hard to deliver even more.

Across Australia the building sector is facing real challenges, including inflation, interest rates, and a skills shortage. These challenges deserve further reform - and we will deliver it.

Over the next few months, we're going to outline new key policy changes to build even more homes.



We're top of the ladder for approving homes and we want to stay there.

We're not going to slow down on housing - we're going to double down on housing.

Because we want even more homes for Victorians.

We're helping to help young people looking for a home to rent, families looking for a home to buy, and vulnerable people looking for a home that can change their life.



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and pay our respect to them, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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For an accessible version of this publication, visit vic.gov.au/housing-statement



30 August 2024

Department of Transport and Planning
Via Email: planforvictoria@transport.vic.gov.au

To Whom It May Concern

City of Whittlesea Submission to *Plan for Victoria* consultation process.

The City of Whittlesea welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Victorian Government's *Plan for Victoria* consultation process.

The City of Whittlesea has accommodated significant growth in recent decades which is forecasted to continue, with our population expected to rise from over 250,000 to more than 360,000 people by 2041. This expansion will see a substantial increase in housing, primarily driven by implementation of Precinct Structure Plans in our growth areas in the short-medium term. Timely provision of infrastructure in these rapidly growing neighbourhoods is an ongoing challenge. While established suburbs have the capacity to accommodate many new dwellings, they too are constrained by availability and the age of infrastructure and access to open space. Provision of essential infrastructure and services communities is needed to provide equitable access to services across metropolitan Melbourne. Further, new planning controls used to facilitate growth need to respond to the distinct characteristics that makes each place special and create a sense of place.

Our submission makes a series of recommendations to help support the ongoing liveability of the City for existing and new residents, while protecting the landscape, environmental and amenity values of the Green Wedge areas. Along with supporting additional housing, the submission supports Councils aim to generate one job per household, in order to address the local jobs deficit and minimise the impacts of commuting for our residents. Our submission also requests that the Victorian Government commit to delivering catalyst projects such as the Wollert Rail and other improvements to public transport system including the electrification of the Upfield Line to Wallan and better bus services which are critical to unlock the additional housing supply and generate economic activity.

A coordinated effort from Victorian and Federal Governments, alongside better planning and management practices, is crucial to creating sustainable and liveable urban environments that can accommodate Melbourne's ongoing growth.

Please find attached the City of Whittlesea's final submission prepared by Officers, which provides feedback and recommendations in relation to the Big Idea's for Future Victoria consultation process and proposed Urban Modelling which has informed the draft state-wide housing targets, as they relate to our municipality.

Council Offices

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Should you have any questions in relation to this submission please contact Emma Appleton, Director Planning and Development, on 9217 2170 or via email to emma.appleton@whittlesea.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Lloyd'.

Craig Lloyd
Chief Executive Officer

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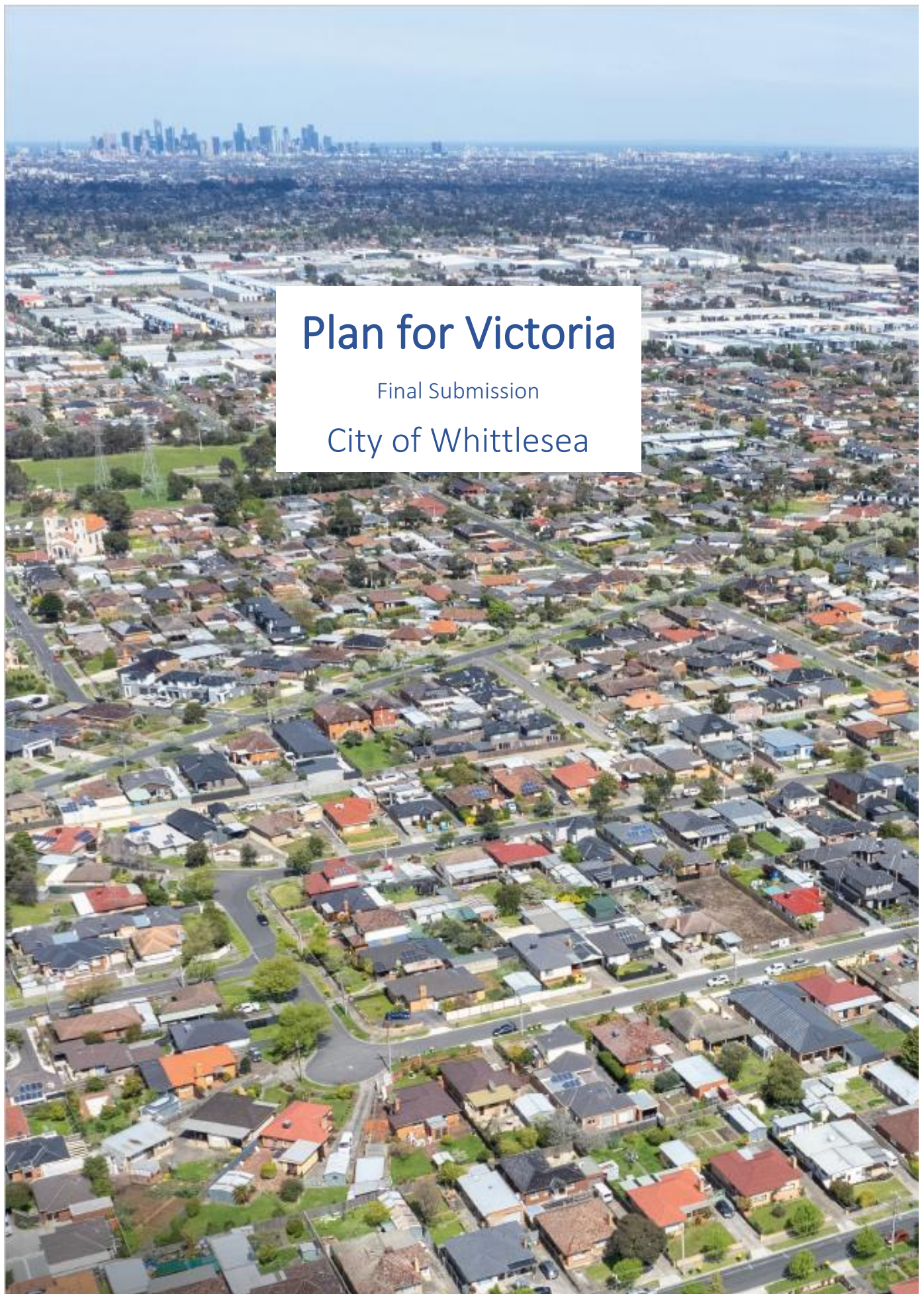
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Plan for Victoria

Final Submission

City of Whittlesea

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Summary of Recommendations

As part of preparing a new *Plan for Victoria*, the City of Whittlesea recommends that the plan:

1. Recognises the significant role local government plays in applying appropriate planning frameworks and controls to enable the delivery of housing but notes that market factors influence delivery of housing development and achievement of targets.
2. Identifies enabling services and infrastructure required to facilitate of higher density housing.
3. That local governments retain responsible authority status for metropolitan and major activity centres.
4. Identifies a mechanism for coordinating infrastructure delivery by Victorian, federal, and local governments, and better integrating infrastructure delivery with the Victorian planning system.
5. Identifies a mechanism to fund infrastructure so that both new and existing communities are equitably supported by infrastructure and services to create thriving, liveable communities.
6. Is supported by a sustained and coordinated action to ensure the delivery of infrastructure and services for public and community purposes, including targets for delivery of regional and sub-regional infrastructure in growth area communities.
7. Identifies a simplified approach for the provision of public land and infrastructure, including a review of the effectiveness of contribution systems (as highlighted in the Outer Melbourne Group of Councils submission).
8. Introduces mechanisms to support land assembly or lot consolidation to facilitate higher density development in precincts well serviced by public transport.
9. Considers the recommendations of Infrastructure Victoria's report, *Our Home Choices* in respect to improving housing affordability and security and enable people to move house in accordance with work and/or personal preference.
10. Implements housing diversity targets to respond to different demographics and price points.
11. Implements strategies to ensure early acquisition of land for public infrastructure projects, prior to the rezoning of the land, to minimise cost and optimise timely delivery for the community.
12. Uses a more nuanced approach to the discounting of capacity on sites subject to the Heritage Overlay to factor in the applicable zone as well.
13. Considers integration of further mapping data to improve the accuracy of the capacity discount applied to Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO) land.
14. Updates the Urban Modelling to be better account for land in the City of Whittlesea that is identified for Biodiversity and Waterway purposes and therefore encumbered.
15. Establishes social housing targets based on the socio-economic profile of each municipality for delivery by the Victorian Government by 2051.
16. Introduces state-wide planning measures that mandate and provide incentives for affordable housing including minimum of 15% affordable housing for significant developments and measures to ensure affordable housing is located close to services and infrastructure.
17. Provides recurrent and ongoing funding support for Community Housing Associations to support a consistent pipeline of affordable housing

18. Includes Wollert Rail on the plans and implementation plan as a 'future transport infrastructure project' to be completed by 2030.
19. Includes Melbourne Metro 2 on the plans and implementation plan as a 'future transport infrastructure project'.
20. Includes the Tram 86 route extension between University Hill and Plenty Valley Town Centre ensuring the design and delivery.
21. Plans for the provision of better bus services that meet the needs of current demand and allows flexibility to growing services in areas of increasing demand.
22. Plans for the duplication and electrification of the Upfield rail line to Wallan.
23. Facilitates the provision of one job per household, particularly in growth areas, to satisfy the needs of a rapidly growing residential population from a diverse range of backgrounds and skill levels.
24. Plans for the delivery of the Beveridge Intermodal Precinct, including supporting infrastructure.
25. Includes the delivery of the E6 between the Hume Freeway and the Metropolitan Ring Road as a planned transport project to commence construction by 2027 and delivered by 2035.
26. Ensures the retention of Epping Central as a Metropolitan Activity Centre and Lockerbie (Cloverton) to continue be recognised as future Metropolitan Activity Centre.
27. Ensures that Epping is identified as state-significant health precinct and regional level education precinct.
28. Ensures that Lockerbie (Cloverton) is identified as a future regional level health precinct and education precinct.
29. Continues the recognition of Mernda, Wollert and Plenty Valley (South Morang) as Major Activity Centre as higher order centre servicing the northern metropolitan region.
30. Continues to recognise the importance Neighbourhood Activity Centres (NAC) to ensure the implementation of the 20-minute neighbourhood policy.
31. Ensures that new planning controls respond to local context and enhance neighbourhood character.
32. Continues to recognise the contributions that protection, conservation and celebration of Aboriginal, natural and historic cultural heritage make to community identity, social cohesion and sense of place.
33. Ensures planning encourages good design outcomes by implementing the 'Sustainable Subdivision Design Framework' and ensuring any planning assessment approaches prioritise high quality architectural, urban design and landscape outcomes.
34. Ensures subdivision design and delivery considers emergency management risks such as bushfire and flooding, particularly during the staging of development at the urban interface.
35. Incorporates 'state-wide' planning provisions to elevate Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) targets in line with the proposed Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) Planning Scheme Amendment.
36. Ensures the protection of the Green Wedge Areas by maintaining the current Urban Growth Boundary.
37. Implements a target of 30 per cent tree canopy coverage in the public realm of urban areas to mitigate climate change impacts.

38. Identifies a priority action to secure land identified for the Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands Reserve within the City of Whittlesea.
39. Implements a Planning Scheme Amendment to include the need for electric vehicle charge infrastructure in the Victorian Provisions, in accordance with the Community Electric Vehicle Transition Plan: Part A, Prepared for the Northern Councils Alliance, December 2022.
40. Includes an additional pillar in the plan focused on Governance and Implementation to ensure the success of *Plan for Victoria*.
41. Reforms the infrastructure contributions systems to enable councils to deliver essential infrastructure in line with development in growth areas.
42. Reforms the infrastructure contributions system to allow for flexibility at the time of delivery.
43. Establishes a mechanism to ensure relevant authorities take a coordinated approach to the provision of infrastructure in growth areas.
44. Avoids 'out of sequence' developments through orderly planning and sequencing controls.
45. Includes protocols and legislative changes to guide early engagement with Traditional Owner groups to ensure strategic plans and subsequent planning decisions appropriately protect and respect Aboriginal cultural heritage.

City of Whittlesea Final Submission: *Plan for Victoria*

Introduction

The City of Whittlesea welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to inform the development of the new *Plan for Victoria*. The consultation topics encompassed by the four pillars are all relevant to the City of Whittlesea, given our rapidly growing and diverse population. This submission has been prepared by officers on behalf of the Council.

The City of Whittlesea is located on the traditional land of the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and Taungurung people. About 50,000 years before colonisation, a diversity of Wurundjeri and Taungurung people, families and communities managed the land that the City of Whittlesea now occupies. Throughout this time the waterways and other local natural features provided an abundance of flora and fauna as both a source of food and shelter.

The City of Whittlesea¹² covers over 490 square kilometres of both urban and green wedge land. The City is blessed with beautiful natural areas and vibrant suburbs and neighbourhoods each with their own distinct character and diverse communities.

The City of Whittlesea is the fifth most socioeconomically disadvantaged of Victoria's 31³ metropolitan local governments with 17% of residents living in poverty. With a low proportion of social and affordable housing, accounting for just 1.1% of households within the City of Whittlesea, the increase in social and affordable housing as well as a minimum 15% affordable housing for significant developments need to be mandated, planned and funded by the Victorian Government.

The municipality has some specific challenges that relate to the unique combination of metropolitan and urban areas. There are rapidly growing neighbourhoods like Epping and Wollert (estimated to double in population by 2041) as well as Donnybrook (estimated to increase from 5,210 residents in 2021 to 48,123 by 2041). Like other municipalities experiencing rapid population growth, having the resources available to deliver the services, open spaces and places needed to service all our community needs is challenging, particularly jobs for new suburbs where there is little supporting infrastructure. Further, neighbourhood characteristic and sense of place will be threatened by such rapid population growth without appropriate planning controls.

In response to the draft housing target, the submission acknowledges that the City of Whittlesea has existing capacity to accommodate significant growth however stresses that growth needs to be supported by adequate infrastructure and a respectful planning response that addresses the distinct characteristics that makes places special.

This rapid and significant growth also puts development pressure on the Whittlesea Green Wedge, which is highly valued for its landscape, environmental and amenity values and agricultural production. Development pressures particularly within a greenfield context are affecting the protection of Whittlesea's biodiversity assets in addition to the protection of significant cultural heritage.

The existing *Plan Melbourne* seeks to embed an approach to 20-minute neighbourhoods ensuring coordinated outcomes to deliver more inclusive, vibrant and healthy neighbourhoods as part of all major infrastructure investments. This approach is sensible, however need to be similarly applied in newly developed areas to ensure communities benefit from the coordinated planning of state and local infrastructure. This will include the retention of the Metropolitan and

¹ <https://forecast.id.com.au/whittlesea>

² City of Whittlesea, 2022, Community Plan 2022-2025

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016, Socioeconomic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) by Local Government Area

Major Activity Centres identified in *Plan Melbourne*, as well as the planning for Neighbourhood Activity Centres.

The City of Whittlesea encourages *Plan for Victoria* to recognise and plan for major infrastructure required to support growing communities. Major infrastructure will support the Northern Growth Corridor that is projected to accommodate 30% of Melbourne's future growth over the coming decades, with the region becoming home to more than 1.5 million people. Whittlesea's growth areas are projected to grow by just over 100,000 people under existing Precinct Structure Plans which have been prepared and approved by the Victorian Government. These areas are substantially lacking in essential infrastructure which is increasingly challenging to provide at the time it is needed. While the rebalancing of Melbourne's growth into established areas is welcomed, existing growth areas must be supported with appropriate levels of infrastructure co-ordination and investment.

This and other actions are discussed in more detail in the following sections, which respond to the four pillars, the Big Ideas and state-wide draft housing targets which have been released as part of this consultation process.

Council's track-record in facilitating development

As highlighted above, the City of Whittlesea has welcomed many new residents over recent years, largely because of the significant housing and infrastructure development facilitated by our strategic and statutory planning processes. The municipality has grown exponentially in the last two decades from approximately 113,000 residents in 2001 to the current population 250,000.

Whittlesea has always taken a proactive approach to strategic planning for growth preparing industry leading plans such as the Plenty Valley Corridor Plan, *Mernda Strategy Plan* and Epping North Strategic Plans. Since the inception of the Victorian Planning Authority (and its previous iterations), Whittlesea has taken a collaborative and proactive approach to the Precinct Structure Planning (PSP) process to enable the transition of non-urban land to the suburbs of the future. During this time, Whittlesea PSPs (or equivalent) have been prepared for Aurora, Donnybrook, English Street, Lockerie, Quarry Hills, Shenstone Park, and Wollert, – totalling over 55,000 planned dwellings to be delivered by 2051 in addition to the tens of thousands of homes already delivered in these precincts. Whittlesea has worked with landowners to prepare many development plans to enable development at a smaller scale and prepared the *Housing Diversity Strategy 2013-2033* to identify areas that can sustainably accommodate increased density in our established areas.

Additionally, Whittlesea has taken a proactive approach to facilitating the development of employment precinct notably in Epping including the renowned Cooper Street Employment Area and Cooper Street West precincts.

To highlight Council's role in facilitating development and supporting growth in the past four years (2020 to 2024) alone, the City of Whittlesea has:

- Released 12,941 new residential lots including 3954 in the 2023/24 year alone.
- Progressed Strategic Planning to deliver an additional 18,500 new homes.
- Adopted 5 Development Plans to deliver over 4000 new homes.
- Delivered 4 new community centres, one new library and five other kindergarten or community upgrades.
- Delivered 2 new active recreation reserves/pavilions and 11 active recreation reserve upgrades or expansions.
- Constructed and upgraded 35 playgrounds.
- 160 km of new roads and 237km of pathways constructed.

Noting the significant investment by Council in supporting new residential communities, it remains a significant challenge for Council to provide essential infrastructure and services in a timely manner.

Housing Targets

1.1 City of Whittlesea Housing Capacity

Whittlesea has demonstrated long-standing support for the provision of new housing. A strong contribution over recent years has allowed for intensive and continuous development of new communities in the northern region of our municipality. Whittlesea is home to over 250,000 people across an area of 490 square kilometres. This population is expected to increase to over 360,000 residents by 2041 – a 48% increase – with approximately 8,000 new residents settling in the City each year, representing an average annual growth rate of 2.4%.

A Residential Market Demand and Capacity analysis prepared by SGS Economics and Planning in 2022 indicates there will be a need for additional 53,200 dwellings between 2021 and 2041 to accommodate population growth; representing a 64% increase on the 2021 housing stock, or 2,660 dwellings per year on average. This population growth expects that most of the future demand (41,800) for new dwellings will fall inside growth areas, followed then by established areas with 10,900 new dwellings.

The report prepared by SGS Economics suggests that there is currently a sufficient zoned residential land available to meet projected housing demand. Established areas account for most of the available capacity due to significant potential to accommodate medium and high-density housing.

This work demonstrates the Whittlesea has enough capacity to meet both the expected demand and the draft housing target of 87,000 homes by 2051 as proposed by DTP. Despite there being sufficient capacity for new housing across the City, there is expected to be a gap between modelled housing demand and modelled take-up based on development trends of approximately 5,200 dwellings. This gap is predicted to be greatest for medium density housing in established areas, despite these locations having the significant capacity and potential for new housing.

Current development trends suggest that the market will not deliver the diverse mix of housing required to meet the forecast housing demand. This is in spite of Victorian and local policy settings prioritising increased density in established areas, and existing planning controls providing sufficient capacity to enable these outcomes. While local government plays an important role in setting the strategic direction, the targets need to recognise the impact of the market, capacity of the industry with Big Build projects and universal need for housing and the other factors which support the delivery of new housing.

Development of medium and high-density infill housing in established areas is contingent on a complex array of demand and supply side market factors. Current market conditions do not support development of higher density developments in many parts of the City of Whittlesea – as people are currently not willing to pay the cost at which these types of development are feasible. Potential purchasers are generally trading-off between where they want to live (relative to amenity and convenience) and how they want to live (size and type of accommodation) because of the financial reality of housing costs. Residents are increasingly willing to trade-off between a smaller alternative housing options (say a townhouse) in a more preferred location (close to public transport hubs, activity centres, employment locations or community facilities) and a larger house further from services and amenities in the growth areas.

Higher density development also needs to be made attractive through high amenity in the public realm such as open space, access to services and facilities and quality infrastructure such as public transport, schools and recreational facilities. There is significant investment required in

urban renewal precincts to upgrade the public realm and deliver improvements to critical infrastructure that will support higher density housing.

Until competing markets become more saturated, and the public transport and infrastructure improvements are delivered, higher-density development in parts of Whittlesea including Epping Central will not accelerate.

Given the importance of place-based knowledge in stimulating development in places like metropolitan and major activity centres that can make the biggest contribution to housing supply, and the significance of these centres to local economies and liveability, it is critical that local governments retain responsible authority status in these areas. In many cases, local government has undertaken significant economic, design and strategic planning assessments and has allocated staff resources to the planning of key centres, and the Victorian government's housing targets would be best achieved by leveraging these resources.

Case study: Epping Central Metropolitan Activity Centre

Epping Central Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC) is one of 10 priority precincts identified in *Victoria's Housing Statement* – the Victorian Government's plan to increase housing stock in the state over the next decade – due to its capacity to accommodate relatively significant residential growth. It is also identified in Council's *Housing Diversity Strategy 2013-2033* as an urban renewal area.

Built form testing completed on behalf of Whittlesea has calculated a capacity of over 14,000 dwellings based on existing planning controls and preferred built form. However, modelling completed by SGS Economics and Planning suggests only a small proportion of this figure is likely to be delivered by 2041.

Modelled take-up is constrained by low development rates, rather than any shortage of capacity. It is likely that high density development would be unfeasible under the current development market, particularly at the upper end of housing density.

Median Housing Price Ratios (MHPR) as a useful indicator for the likely emergence of median and higher density housing forms; the higher the ratio, the greater the feasibility of high-density development. Epping Central has a current MHPR 0.7:1. A ratio of at least 1.5 before larger apartment developments are feasible.

There are a number of interventions that could improve this ratio, namely, investment in facilities, infrastructure and amenity such as open space. In particular, delivery of the Wollert rail extension would provide direct connection into the city and other employment areas for new residents. Additionally, initiatives to support lot consolidation are also required to support high-density development.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

1. Recognises the significant role local government plays in applying appropriate planning frameworks and controls to enable the delivery of housing but notes that market factors influence delivery of housing development and achievement of targets.

2. Identify enabling services and infrastructure required to facilitate of higher density housing.
3. That local governments retain responsible authority status for metropolitan and major activity centres.

1.2 Challenges in Established and Growth Areas

The Victorian government's target of accommodating 70% of residential growth in established areas of Melbourne highlights a strategic push towards higher density housing redevelopment. However, this transition brings with it a unique set of challenges. The densification effort in established communities strains existing infrastructure and community services, leading to concerns about the sustainability of this growth. Traditional suburban landscapes characterised by long, narrow lots and detached houses will be required to adapt to higher density developments and alter the original fabric of the established neighbourhoods. There is community concern that infill development results with poor design quality, a lack of diversity in housing, shortage in open spaces and green canopy with community and transport infrastructure that is inadequate to meet the demands.

As Melbourne continues to expand, spatial inequality increases where areas of high historic disadvantage correlate with lower infrastructure provision. Residents in newly developed suburbs often find themselves disconnected from job opportunities and essential services within a reasonable commute distance. This geographical disparity results in higher travel costs and a reliance on lower-paying jobs available closer to home. The infrastructure necessary to support these communities—such as community centres, public transport networks, road systems and open spaces—has struggled to keep up with the rapid growth of the City of Whittlesea. For example, Infrastructure Victoria in their Infrastructure Plan (2021) found that that ‘growth areas have fewer libraries per person than other areas’⁴.

Despite the strong contribution that development in interface council areas has made to the growth and prosperity of Victoria, our communities face significant liveability challenges because of rapid population growth, changing demographics and the impact of historic underfunding. These challenges have created significant gaps in provision of infrastructure and services. Vital investment in road, public transport, health and education infrastructure and services has failed to keep with the demand created. Unless this deficit is addressed, living standards will continue to fall for residents in outer Melbourne.

Shifting the focus from greenfield to infill development aims to optimise the use of existing urban infrastructure. However, this strategy alone does not alleviate all pressures on new growth areas. Research by SGS Economics for Melbourne’s Interface Councils reveals that even with a shift to increased development, the forecasted population growth in greenfield areas would only marginally decrease. This emphasises the ongoing challenges associated with infrastructure and development pressures in rapidly growing areas.

⁴ [Infrastructure Victoria | All recommendations](#)

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

4. Identify a mechanism for coordinating infrastructure delivery by Victorian, federal, and local governments, and better integrating infrastructure delivery with the Victorian planning system.
5. Identify a mechanism to fund infrastructure so that both new and existing communities are equitably supported by infrastructure and services to create thriving, liveable communities.

1.3 Supporting Housing Capacity

While the rebalancing of Melbourne's growth into established areas is welcomed, existing growth areas must be supported with appropriate levels of infrastructure coordination and investment. Growing communities need to be supported by adequate provision of essential infrastructure including transport, community and recreation facilities at both a local and regional level. The challenge of delivering timely infrastructure and services to match the pace of housing development is particularly critical in growth areas due to their remote nature. The cost of constructing new infrastructure in these areas can be significantly higher in comparison to upgrading existing infrastructure in established suburbs including:

- Essential service connections such as water, sewer and electricity networks are not yet established and need to be included in project costs; adding approximately 5% to total project costs.
- Additional site remediation works such as levelling, rock and contamination removal is often required to be completed as part of project construction, which increases upfront budget commitments and project contingencies by approximately 10% of the total project cost.
- Projects are more likely to be staged over multiple years due to their size and cost incurring additional escalation costs each year (totalling approximately 7%-10% of the total project cost).

In addition to these site-specific costs, the funding gap between actual construction costs and Development Contribution Plan (DCP) / Infrastructure Contribution Plan (ICP) benchmarks continues to increase as construction costs have increased by up to 30% over the last 5 years, however DCP/ICP allocations continue to be indexed by CPI annually (which has varied between 2.7%-4% each year). For example, the gap between ICP/DCP funding and construction costs has grown to between 25% to 35% in some cases, with local councils and the private sector having to fund the gap. In addition, it is noted that some key public infrastructure (e.g. indoor recreation) is not funded under existing ICP and DCP systems. Victorian Government grant funding pools, particularly for sport and leisure infrastructure have also significantly reduced over the last 12 months.

Each of these items result in a larger funding gap for Councils to fill on projects, which leads to the delay in timely infrastructure provision across growth areas.

Infill development, which aims to use existing urban infrastructure more efficiently, also presents considerable challenges. Upgrading aging infrastructure to accommodate expanding community needs is essential for maintaining liveability standards and the functional purpose of infrastructure. Ensuring sufficient open spaces per capita has also been identified as critical for community wellbeing. However, current levels of open space within growing established communities are at risk of declining without additional investment and strategic land use planning.

A significant challenge for local government is the timely provision of local infrastructure to keep pace with development taking place in growth areas, planned by the Victorian government. The lack of a coordinated approach to funding and investment in infrastructure is a key reason for the differences in services between council areas, especially in rapidly growing communities. The historically fragmented approach to infrastructure planning and delivery makes it hard for

local communities, councils, and industry stakeholders to predict government funding allocation each year. This lack of clarity hinders the ability to make informed decisions. Areas with significant infrastructure inequality would benefit from having a coordinating body, especially in high-growth areas.

To foster resilient communities, there is a critical need for timely investments in local community infrastructure. This includes facilities and services that support social interaction, education, recreation, and cultural activities. Unfortunately, growth area councils like City of Whittlesea often face financial pressures that restrict their ability to expand, renew, and maintain infrastructure. Balancing these constraints with the growing demands for infrastructure in both emerging and established areas remains a complex challenge for local governments to deal on its own.

Further, a key challenge to realising higher density development in well located precincts is the fragmentation of land. Without mechanisms to either directly facilitate land assemblage or incentivise or mandate land consolidation the potential capacity of land will not be fully realised. This is a particular issue for the renewal of existing suburban residential precincts within proximity to metropolitan train stations and activity centres.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

6. That *Plan for Victoria* is supported by a sustained and coordinated action to ensure the delivery of infrastructure and services for public and community purposes, including targets for delivery of regional and sub-regional infrastructure in growth area communities.
7. That *Plan for Victoria* identifies a simplified approach for the provision of public land and infrastructure, including a review of the effectiveness of contribution systems (as highlighted in the Outer Melbourne Group of Councils submission).
8. Introduce mechanisms to support land assembly or lot consolidation to facilitate higher density development in precincts well serviced by public transport.

1.4 Beyond Housing Targets and Capacity

In addition to improved and coordinated delivery of infrastructure required to support all Victorians, strategic investment in social and affordable housing, supported by innovative taxation policies and community-focused development models, are imperative. This approach not only aims to alleviate housing affordability pressures but also promotes inclusive and sustainable urban growth.

Infrastructure Victoria's latest report, *Our Home Choices*, provides 10 principles for Victorian Government to consider that would influence the price, location and type of houses being built. The report recommends a reform into the infrastructure contribution system to reflect the true cost of infrastructure in different development settings and supports better use of existing infrastructure.

The report provides insight into land tax reform in Victoria to reduce price disincentives to buying in established suburbs by removing the stamp duty and replace them with a broad-based land tax. It suggests that this change can increase home ownership rates, particularly among younger people. Land tax can also influence growth patterns in different suburbs by incentivising higher density development. It also suggests that a land tax can influence homebuyers' choices when it comes to deciding between a larger home in a growth area or a smaller home in an established suburb.

Among other recommendations, the report also highlights that more choice and housing diversity is needed to meet people's needs as population grows.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

9. Consider the recommendations of Infrastructure Victoria's report, *Our Home Choices* in respect to improving housing affordability and security and enable people to move house in accordance with work and/or personal preference.
10. Implement housing diversity targets to respond to different demographics and price points.

1.5 Efficient Public Land Acquisition

Failure to secure land for public infrastructure has contributed to difficulties in delivering key public infrastructure, and increased cost of doing so in growth areas. It has occurred where there has been a failure within the planning process to identify and secure appropriate land in central locations to deliver efficient public infrastructure and services.

To improve the provision of public infrastructure, the Victorian Government should focus on several key strategies. First, it is crucial to ensure that land acquisition is coordinated across different government departments. This involves establishing dedicated teams or task forces to facilitate collaboration and create a unified policy framework that outlines the procedures and guidelines for land acquisition.

Next, land should be acquired in central locations, such as activity centres, or which provide access to activity or employment centres (including for active travel), which provide the best social, transport, employment, and environmental outcomes, consistent with the state's 20-minute neighbourhood policy. This requires strategic location selection, using data and modelling to identify optimal areas, and integrating land use planning with broader urban development plans to maximise benefits. It is also important to secure land at the time of PSP development. This means incorporating land acquisition needs early in the PSP process to align with future growth and minimise delays. Predictive planning and scenario analysis can help anticipate future infrastructure needs and secure land proactively.

Efficiency in the acquisition process can be improved by streamlining procedures and standardising practices to reduce bureaucracy. Implementing digital tools to manage and track acquisitions can also help. Also ensuring a fair return for private landowners and the community is essential. This involves using transparent valuation methods to determine fair compensation for landowners and engaging with communities and stakeholders early.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

11. Implement strategies to ensure early acquisition of land for public infrastructure projects, prior to the rezoning of the land, to minimise cost and optimise timely delivery for the community.

Proposed Urban Future Modelling**2. Future Modelling**

Whittlesea recognises the work undertaken to prepare the urban modelling to determine housing capacity. We understand the critical role of a robust modelling process in guiding urban planning and decision-making. However, we have identified several significant concerns and gaps that need to be addressed to improve the accuracy of the modelling accuracy and its effectiveness in informing planning policy.

The urban modelling process should be aligned with broader strategic and long term plans to ensure a coherent and integrated development efforts. The modelling should also be dynamic and adaptable. Establishing a process for periodic review and updating of modelling outcomes ensures that the process remains relevant in light of new data, changing conditions, and evolving

community needs. Implementing adaptive management practices allows for adjustments based on feedback and emerging circumstances.

By addressing these concerns and incorporating these recommendations, Whittlesea believes that the urban modelling process will be more effective in determining housing capacity and supporting well-planned and sustainable development.

Council understands that urban modelling approach used to estimate housing capacity identifies all available land, then discounts the proportion of developable lots where a constraint is likely to prohibit development (non-developable land) and takes into consideration any constrained land that may be affected by overlays or other constraints proportionally to how they might reduce capacity. The following sections provide feedback on some aspects of the proposed approach.

2.1 Discount for Heritage Overlay Properties

In relation to the proposed 50% discount to properties subject to the Heritage Overlay (HO), we note that the planning system already allows for sites included in the HO to be further developed in accordance with Clause 43.01-8 Decision Guidelines. Under this Clause, there is no restriction as to what capacity a site can be developed. A 50% discount will impact estimations of capacity across Victoria. This is particularly true for LGAs with a significant number of sites subject to the HO, resulting in a significant underestimation of capacity as a result of the applied discount. This under estimation of capacity per LGA may add pressure to other LGA to allow for an increased capacity.

In addition, under Amendment VC253 Clause 43.01-3 No Permit Required, has included the provision to allow the construction for a small second dwelling if all requirements are met, creating potential for significant additional capacity on HO sites.

Assuming a 50% discount to housing capacity on all land affected by the HO will not reflect the true capacity of the land. Although a discount could be applicable, it should also consider the applicable zoning of sites.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

12. Use a more nuanced approach to the discounting of capacity on sites subject to the Heritage Overlay to factor in the applicable zone as well.

2.2 Discount for Land Subject to Inundation Overlay

All land affected by flooding associated with waterways and open drainage systems is applicable for the Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO). Such areas are commonly known as floodplains. Although the applicable land may have further impact into water runoff and potentially restrict development, the LSIO currently requires a planning permit for buildings and works.

Considering a 50% discount on this overlay would not reflect the limitations on the land as some sites may have more restrictions than others. Therefore, it shouldn't be applied as a standard discount throughout Victoria and should consider further mapping information and data to be more accurate.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

13. Consider integration of further mapping data to improve the accuracy of the capacity discount applied to LSIO land.

2.3 Biodiversity and Waterway Land

Whittlesea has a large portion of land that is identified with Biodiversity and Waterway purposes that in the Urban Modelling hasn't been accounted for. This land is non-developable and if not considered in the modelling will result in further pressure to other areas to accommodate housing.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

14. Update the Urban Modelling to better account for land in the City of Whittlesea that is identified for Biodiversity and Waterway purposes and therefore encumbered.

Response to Four Strategic Pillars and Big Ideas for Victoria's Future

3.1. Affordable Housing and choice

3.1.1 Social and affordable housing supply

Big Idea: More housing options for all Victorians including social and affordable homes

The *Whittlesea Affordable Housing Strategy 2020-2030* notes that while there are a number of groups who are particularly vulnerable to housing insecurity or may find it more difficult to find stable, affordable and appropriate housing. The proportion of households in housing stress in the City of Whittlesea is approximately 13.5% (10,665 households)⁵. More than one third of renters are in housing stress, putting them in a precarious position if they are unable to remain in the private rental market.

Many homeowners in the City of Whittlesea are finding the cost of housing challenging, with more than 15.3% of mortgaged households facing mortgage stress. Further, the demand for affordable housing exceeds supply, with urgent need for more than 4,409⁶ affordable homes in the municipality⁷.

The City of Whittlesea has seen little growth in its supply of social and affordable housing, with only 58 social housing dwellings added between 2011 and 2016⁸. Recent investment from the Victorian Government's Big Housing Build will increase supply of social and affordable housing in municipality by 319 dwellings⁹. While this is a significant increase, it accounts for less than 10% of current demand.

Despite a significant Council commitment to facilitating social and affordable housing, including on Council owned land, opportunities for Council to deliver social and affordable housing at scale are limited. The Victorian Government needs to take a greater leadership role in long term planning and funding for social and affordable housing in all municipalities across the state.

Established areas such as Epping, Lalor, Thomastown, South Morang, and Bundoora present excellent opportunities to deliver affordable housing for very-low-income and low-income households. These suburbs have more access to jobs, public transport, education, and community infrastructure than newer areas.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

15. Establish social housing targets based on the socio-economic profile of each municipality for delivery by the Victorian Government by 2051.

⁵ [Housing Stress | City of Whittlesea | housing monitor \(id.com.au\)](#)

⁶ [Affordable Housing Need | City of Whittlesea | housing monitor \(id.com.au\)](#)

⁷ [Affordable Housing Need | City of Whittlesea | housing monitor \(id.com.au\)](#)

⁸ [Housing tenure | City of Whittlesea | Community profile \(id.com.au\)](#)

⁹ [What's happening in my area | Homes Victoria](#)

3.1.2 Introduce state-wide planning measures that mandate and provide incentives for affordable housing

Big Idea: More housing options for all Victorians including social and affordable homes

Council strongly supports mandatory affordable housing in new housing developments. Current opportunities to facilitate affordable housing in new developments is only voluntary and has failed to be supported in instances when tested at the tribunal.

In the absence of mandatory provisions there will continue to be uncertainty and lack of clarity, making it difficult for the development industry to factor in the cost of affordable housing, as well as being resource intensive for councils to negotiate voluntary contributions. This uncertainty and complexity means the amount of affordable housing being delivered via a voluntary contribution is likely to be small and will not meet the current demand.

Plan Melbourne¹⁰ highlights the existing gap and need for the provision of social and affordable housing however, the current planning system is not set up to ensure its delivery.

Where mandatory contributions for items such as public space and infrastructure are applied through a consistent process in the planning system, developers have proven to be able to make these contributions work within their business model. A similar approach should be adopted for the provision of social and affordable housing. Feedback from the development industry suggests many are not necessarily opposed to the concept of mandatory provisions, providing transitional arrangements are put in place so that these costs can be factored into the initial cost of the purchase of land.

Inclusionary zoning and/or overlays could require all developments, or at the very least, multi-dwelling developments over a certain threshold, to contribute to social and affordable housing in either built form or via financial contributions. Amending zone schedules to allow for social or affordable housing can also assist, where proposed land uses within the zone don't conflict with residential uses. The introduction of a state-wide planning measure that mandates and provides incentives for affordable housing including a minimum of 15% affordable housing for significant developments will provide greater certainty and clarity to the development industry and help to meet community needs.

Noting that there are different ways to deliver affordable housing, it is important to consider the mechanisms for securing allocation and longevity of the social and affordable housing stock once developed. Housing developed for the purpose of providing social and affordable housing – particularly affordable housing that is in private ownership – needs mechanisms to ensure that it is appropriately allocated to households in need and ideally remains affordable on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

16. Introduce state-wide planning measures that mandate and provide incentives for affordable housing, including minimum of 15% affordable housing for significant developments and measures to ensure affordable housing is located close to services and infrastructure.
17. Provide recurrent and ongoing funding support for Community Housing Associations to support a consistent pipeline of affordable housing.

¹⁰ *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 – Affordable Housing Strategy 2020-2030*

Case Study: New Epping Affordable Housing (Stage 1)

The City of Whittlesea worked collaboratively with landowner and developer Riverlee Caruso Epping Pty Ltd and other stakeholders to rehabilitate and transform a 51 hectare former quarry and landfill site into a modern and sustainable new community. The Stage 1 of this development delivered 151 new high quality social and affordable homes in partnership between the landowner and Haven Home Safe including funding from the Victorian Government's Social Housing Growth Fund.

Despite the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and State Planning Policy including objectives seeking to deliver more affordable homes close to jobs, services and transport, the planning controls are largely limited to negotiating voluntary agreements for the provision of social and affordable housing outcomes as part of the planning scheme amendment process for rezoning of land or planning permit applications for large residential developments.

Planning approval of the Stage 1 works, incorporating the social and affordable housing development and new Northern Private Hospital, were fast tracked via a Planning Scheme Amendment supported by Council approved by the Minister for Planning.

Whittlesea local policy Clause 16.01-2L Housing Affordability, has included in the policy guidelines the '...inclusion of 5 per cent social housing and 10 per cent affordable housing (that is not social housing) in the structure planning of any established or greenfield housing development.'

The inclusion of planning controls that require mandatory social and affordable housing in developments would assist with streamlining the process and facilitating the provision of social and affordable housing.

3.2. Equity and jobs

Continued population growth and car dependency are placing ongoing pressure on transport infrastructure and impacting the lives of residents. A sustainable, reliable and safe transport system is critical to the City of Whittlesea's success as a city and its neighbourhoods. It connects people to employment, education, health, recreational pursuits, shopping and services. A well-connected transport system is integral to supporting the movement of freight. City of Whittlesea has recently endorsed the *Integrated Transport Plan 2024-2034*¹¹ which provides a coordinated approach to delivering these outcomes and serves as a framework to address current and future transport needs, ensuring a well-connected, efficient, and sustainable transport system for our community.

3.2.1 Wollert Rail extension***Big Idea: More options for how we move from place to place***

Planning for Victoria's growth areas aims to 'undertake comprehensive planning for new areas as sustainable communities that offer *high-quality, frequent and safe local and regional public transport* and a range of local activities for living, working and recreation (emphasis added)'. The

¹¹ [integrated-transport-plan-2024-2034.pdf \(whittlesea.vic.gov.au\)](#)

City of Whittlesea in partnership with the Victorian Government has ensured that this policy is implemented as part of planning for new growth precincts.

The 2002 *Epping North Strategic Plan*, which was one of the first structure planning process undertaken for the Epping North/Wollert corridor identified a planned public transport corridor. The integration of a train line was a key feature of this transport corridor, located to encourage high density development and activity centres close to high-capacity public transport that connected homes to employment opportunities. This also influenced the decision of many residents to purchase property in these areas.

The *North Growth Corridor Plan* subsequently prepared and approved by the Victorian Government in 2012 also identifies a 'high capacity public transport' route along this corridor. Since then, over 90% of the corridor has been either purchased or secured for future acquisition in relevant strategic plans along the corridor, with the population in the Epping North and Wollert growth corridor is projected to increase by 101% by 2041 to over 85,000 people.

Residents in this corridor have an expectation that the Victorian Government will deliver high-capacity public transport to Wollert to improve the area's liveability, support their housing investment and their livelihoods. Projections demonstrate that Wollert Rail will be well used, with approximately 15,000 daily trips from day one and 40,000 daily trips by 2040¹².

Wollert Rail will connect this growth corridor to jobs and opportunities all the way to Melbourne CBD as well as local precincts such as the Cooper Street employment area, the Northern Hospital, Pacific Epping and the broader Epping Central Metropolitan Activity Centre. It will remove at least 2,000 cars per hour from heavily congested roads and improve liveability in one of Australia's fastest growing areas.

As part of the Victorian Governments Activity Centre Program, the Epping Central Metropolitan Activity Centre is earmarked to accommodate 6,000 to 14,000 dwellings. The realisation of this potential housing supply is reliant on high-capacity public transport connections including the Wollert Rail.

In support of suburban rail extensions such as the Wollert, *Plan for Victoria* should also identify the planning and delivery of Melbourne Metro 2, which will increase capacity on the Clifton Hill group services¹³, including the Mernda line.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

18. Include Wollert Rail on the plans and implementation plan as a 'future transport infrastructure project' to be completed by 2030.

Include Melbourne Metro 2 on the plans and implementation plan as a 'future transport infrastructure project'.

¹² Epping – Wollert Rail Corridor Independent Study by Hale Infra Consulting, 2021

¹³ [Victoria's Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051 Vol. 1](#)

Case study: Mernda Rail

In its long term strategic planning, the City of Whittlesea has identified two rail extensions to services its growth corridors: one to Mernda and the other to Wollert.

In 2012 the then 'Epping Line' was extended from Epping to South Morang and in 2018 it was extended again from South Morang to Mernda in 2018 including three new stations at Middle Gorge, Hawkstowe and Mernda. This extension has significantly helped provide greater equity in public transport coverage in the Mernda/Doreen area, alleviated congestion on outer suburban roads, supported more sustainable travel behaviours and created the conditions for higher density housing particularly in the Plenty Valley Town Centre near the South Morang Station. Further opportunities exist for housing in the Mernda Town Centre as a result of the proximity to the Mernda Train Station.

The Wollert Rail extension is still yet to be delivered. The Wollert Rail would connect the Epping North and Wollert growth corridor – where the population is projected to increase by 117% by 2040 – to jobs and opportunities in the Melbourne CBD and local precincts such as the Cooper Street employment area, the Northern Hospital, and Pacific Epping.

It would remove at least 2,000 cars per hour from heavily congested roads and improve liveability in one of Australia's fastest growing areas. It would also:

- increase property values by \$2.44 billion by 2030
- reduce congestion and generate approximately 500,000 hours and \$522.8 million in travel time savings to road users by 2030
- generate 2,000,000 hours and \$1.5 billion in travel savings to rail users each year by 2040
- make it easier for staff and visitors to get to the Northern Hospital, which has one of the busiest emergency departments in the state, treating nearly 90,000 patients each year and employing around 3,000 people.

Residents now expect the Victorian Government to deliver the Wollert train line to improve the area's liveability and support their housing investment and their livelihoods.

3.2.2 Plan for public transport improvements***Big Idea: More options for how we move from place to place*****Route 86 Tram**

Rapid population growth and new and expanded education and employment precincts such as University Hill and RMIT University in Bundoora have increased demand greater on the local tram and bus services creating the need for expansion of the network. The existing Tram 86 route and bus network between University Hill and Plenty Valley Town Centre require residents to transfer from a high-capacity tram and queue for a lower capacity bus. Residents have long called for the route to be extended between the current terminus in Bundoora to the South Morang Train Station. The connection will avoid the need for commuters to make this transfer from tram to bus, reducing their travel time and to be better integrate the public transport network and connect the City of Whittlesea.

The route will provide improved connection for students in the City of Whittlesea accessing RMIT Bundoora and La Trobe University and residents to access employment opportunities in La Trobe National Employment and Innovation Cluster. Land has been set aside within the road reservation to allow the Tram 86 extension to be designed and delivered efficiently and without delay.

Bus Improvements

The Victoria's *Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051* identified the need to improve 'bus networks beyond what is currently funded, focusing on congested roads and corridors in outer metropolitan and growth suburbs council areas'¹⁴. A further Infrastructure Victoria report *Faster, Frequent, Fair: How buses can better connect Melbourne (2023)* made as its number one recommendation to 'increase the frequency of bus services, beginning with outer and growth area suburbs'¹⁵.

The three bus routes between Epping North and the Epping Central Activity Centre introduced by Public Transport Victoria in 2016 have led to a 25% increase in residents using bus services. While critical, these services no longer meet the needs of our communities in Epping North and Wollert: they operate on a low frequency – every 20 minutes, even during peak times – and demand will exceed capacity by 2025.

The bus network is a critical to support the continued growth of the City of Whittlesea and needs review and investment to ensure that it best meets the demands of our community, including allowing flexibility to grow services as our growth areas of Wollert and Donnybrook continue to expand and redevelop existing services to provide more direct and frequent services to get people where they want to go.

Duplication and electrification of Rail to Wallan

The greatest public transport deficit between growth area communities compared to established areas is the train network. Duplication and electrification of the Upfield train line to Wallan is fundamental to the success of the metropolitan growth strategy and to connecting residents in the Northern Growth Corridor (including Donnybrook) to employment, education, health and recreation. The Northern Growth Corridor is projected to accommodate 30% of Melbourne's future growth over the coming decades, with the region becoming home to more than 1.5 million people.

This route will also service Cloverton, which is one of only two future metropolitan activity centres identified in Plan Melbourne and the Beveridge Intermodal Precinct (BIP). Cloverton will support a range of regional health, education, commercial and government services and support a population as large as Canberra. The city is planned to be delivered at density which is far greater than is typical in greenfields areas. However, its success is dependent on supporting infrastructure including a new train station along an electrified rail line. The BIP is expected to support at to 20,000 jobs and public transport connections are important to help workers and visitors access the precinct.

Victoria's *Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051* notes that 'outer suburbs already have fewer jobs, with higher rates of unemployment and more workers in jobs for which they are overqualified. Some investment in better transport connections is required'¹⁶. Further, it recommends that 'the Victorian Government should extend electrified metropolitan train services to Beveridge and determine whether there is a further need to extend to Wallan in the future.'

¹⁴ [Victoria's Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051 Vol. 1](#)

¹⁵ [Infrastructure Victoria | Fast, frequent, fair](#)

¹⁶ [Victoria's Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051 Vol. 1](#)

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

19. To include the Tram 86 route extension between University Hill and Plenty Valley Town Centre ensuring the design and delivery.
20. Plan for the provision of better bus services that meet the needs of current demand and allows flexibility to growing services in areas of increasing demand.
21. Plan for the duplication and electrification of the Upfield rail line to Wallan.

3.2.3 Local jobs to support rapidly growing population***Big Idea: More jobs and opportunities closer to where you live***

As highlighted earlier in this submission, the City of Whittlesea is a diverse and a fast-growing municipality with varying socio-economic profiles. Different segments of our community have their own economic participation challenges, which require local solutions tailored to local jobseeker needs and industry/business profiles. This is critical in order to achieve the City of Whittlesea's policy of one job per household.

There are more resident workers than local jobs and this gap is increasing. In 2020, there were 72,045 jobs in the City of Whittlesea. Each year the community welcomes 8,300 new residents, but only creates 2,300 more jobs¹⁷. In 2021, 63 per cent of local residents worked outside the City of Whittlesea.¹⁸ Some workers are clearly trading off proximity for affordability or lifestyle, while others have no choice but to commute to access jobs that suit their qualifications. This has implications for both demands on transport infrastructure, as well as lifestyle and cost consequences for residents. For example, nearly 30 per cent of Whittlesea residents spend more than an hour a day travelling to and from work and 60 per cent of households own two or more cars.¹⁹

The importance of planning for local jobs to support our rapidly- growing population is recognised in City of Whittlesea's *Strong Local Economy Strategy* and *Economic Participation Plan*, as well as the Federal and Victorian Governments in local jobs and skills forums. However, there is a need to ensure that *Plan for Victoria* addresses the need to support opportunities for local jobs from a diverse range of backgrounds and skills in rapidly growing population areas to reduce the municipality's job deficit.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

22. Facilitate the provision of one job per household, particularly in growth areas, to satisfy the needs of a rapidly growing residential population from a diverse range of backgrounds and skill levels.

3.2.4 Planning for the Beveridge Intermodal Precinct and Principal Freight Network***Big Idea: More jobs and opportunities closer to where you live***

The Beveridge Intermodal Precinct (BIP) will be a modern freight and logistics hub that will help transform the nation's supply chain and lower costs for Victorian families and businesses. The project will be developed in stages and is anticipated to create up to 7,000 local jobs and an estimated 20,000 jobs over the longer term.

The BIP is reliant of good access to the Principal Freight Network (PFN). Of particular importance is the proposed E6 freeway which is a missing link in Victoria's freeway network and PFN.

The E6 will be a freeway of metropolitan, capable of carrying more than 80,000 vehicles each day. The proposed E6 Freeway connecting the Hume Freeway to the M80 Ring Road will provide

¹⁷ Strong Local Economy Strategy, 2022-2026, City of Whittlesea

¹⁸ Calculated based on ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021

¹⁹ Calculated based on ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021

a much-needed north-south corridor through the City of Whittlesea and will be fundamental for the support of the Beveridge Intermodal Precinct.

Victoria's *Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051* recommends 'the Victorian Government should construct the E6 motorway soon after the opening of North East Link, which ends at the Metropolitan Ring Road'²⁰.

The Federal Government has already shown strong support for this project, announcing substantial funding in its 2021-22 Budget, matching the Victorian Government's \$10 million allocation. The City of Whittlesea therefore supports the Victorian Government in showing ongoing commitment to planning and construction of the E6 Freeway through the *Plan for Victoria*.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

23. Plan for the delivery of the Beveridge Intermodal Precinct, including supporting infrastructure.
24. Include the delivery of the E6 between the Hume Freeway and the Metropolitan Ring Road as a planned transport project to commence construction by 2027 and delivered by 2035.

3.2.5 Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub

Big Idea: More jobs and opportunities closer to where you live

Melbourne's north is fast becoming a world-class food and agricultural hub and is already a food hub of national significance, with produce worth \$2 billion passing through the market each year as more than 5,000 businesses buy and sell there. With around 120,000 square metres of warehouse space – the largest warehousing precinct of any central market in Australia – the Melbourne Market facilitates the integration of supply chain logistics. This unique capacity has already seen the local food production sector develop into an industry cluster of tertiary institutions, freight networks, and a burgeoning skilled workforce. Leveraging its proximity to Melbourne Market, and the Cooper Street employment precinct, the Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub (MFIH) will be developed as a global agri-food and beverage hub. MFIH will play a vital role in securing food and beverage industry investment and jobs in the region and connect food industry stakeholders across the state and nationally.

It is imperative that the location for the MFIH is identified to provide certainty and confidence for its future delivery. The project will advance MFIH as a transformational project for Epping and Melbourne's north. It will build on the City of Whittlesea's strength as a food hub of national significance and incentivise relocation of a major anchor tenant to attract innovative food manufacturing and export businesses.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

25. Identify the location and development of Melbourne Food Innovation and Export Hub to provide certainty for its future planning and delivery.

3.3. Thriving and liveable suburbs and towns

3.3.1 Activity Centres

The hierarchy of activity centres is critical to ensuring the diverse needs of the community—including housing, retail, commercial and civic services—are met. They are also a focus for services, employment and social interaction and higher-density development. They often have significant public transport infrastructure and have benefited from other public and private investment.

²⁰ [Victoria's Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051 Vol. 1](#)

City of Whittlesea seeks Epping Central and Lockerbie (Cloverton) to continue to be recognised as current and future Metropolitan Activity Centres respectively, to facilitate growth at a regional level and provide access to a range of major retail, community, government, entertainment, cultural and transport services.

Epping Central is strategically placed between the City of Whittlesea's southern established suburbs and the growth areas corridor to the north of Epping North, Wollert and Donnybrook. Epping Central MAC is fundamental to northern suburbs as a transport hub and is accessed from across the northern suburbs for its shops, health, justice, and community services. Paired with its schools, TAFE, and industrial development, the area provides jobs and education for thousands of people. It is fundamental to continue identifying Epping Central as a Metropolitan Activity Centre due to the critical growth across a regional catchment. In addition to the above Epping should be identified a state-significant health precinct in recognition of the Northern Hospital, multiple private hospitals and other health facilities and a regional education precinct in recognition of Melbourne Polytechnic campus.

Guaranteeing Lockerbie (Cloverton) MAC is delivered as planned and previously identified will provide certainty in the planning and delivery as a higher order centre supporting a population the size of Canberra. Further, Lockerbie (Cloverton) should be identified as a future health and education precinct to provide direction as it as a location for higher order regional health and education facilities.

Council also seeks that Mernda, Wollert and Plenty Valley (South Morang) continue to be recognised as Major Activity Centres, to provide for services and facilities at a sub-regional level. These relatively new and / or future centres have been planned and located such that they provide for their respective, growing communities. It is important that they retain their status as Major Activity Centres to enable future planning and infrastructure delivery required to services these populations.

In addition to the above University Hill should be considered as an Education Precinct in recognition of the RMIT campus.

Thirdly, City of Whittlesea seeks that the plan continues to recognise the importance of Neighbourhood Activity Centres (NAC) and supports the implementation of the 20-minute neighbourhood policy. Evidence has confirmed that active, walkable places produce a wealth of health, social, economic and environmental benefits. Therefore, continuing the identification of Neighbourhood Activity Centres (NAC) in the hierarchy system will be critical in supporting local community health and wellbeing. Building pedestrian friendly neighbourhoods will help create a sustainable transport system by enabling short trips to be made walking.

Plan for Victoria must provide a clear outcomes framework to support the delivery of 20-minute neighbourhoods are applied throughout the state.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

26. Ensure the retention of Epping Central as a Metropolitan Activity Centre and Lockerbie (Cloverton) to continue be recognised as future Metropolitan Activity Centre.
27. Ensure that Epping is identified as state-significant health precinct and regional level education precinct.
28. Ensure that Lockerbie (Cloverton) is identified as a future regional level health precinct and education precinct.
29. Continue the recognition of Mernda, Wollert and Plenty Valley (South Morang) as Major Activity Centre as higher order centre servicing the northern metropolitan region.
30. Continue to recognise the importance Neighbourhood Activity Centres (NAC) to ensure the implementation of the 20-minute neighbourhood policy.

3.3.2 Neighbourhood Character and Sense of Place

Effective planning requires an approach that recognises and respects the unique characteristics of different places. Adopting a template approach to applying new planning controls often fails to capture the essence of a neighbourhood, leading to a loss of local identity and character or new areas which all look and/or feel the same. To address this, the planning system and controls should be highly responsive to the distinct attributes of each area. This would require integrating historical, cultural, natural, and economic elements into new developments ensuring that they respond to the unique identity of the area.

In creating liveable neighbourhoods and towns it is important that flexibility is embedded in the planning controls to allow for adaptations that fit the unique needs and characteristics of different areas. It is also important to ensure that heritage and character is protected and celebrated as part of the ongoing change to the built environment. Heritage is highly valued by the community and is critical to creating a sense of place within neighbourhoods.

Planning can better respect and enhance the unique characteristics of different neighbourhoods, fostering a stronger sense of place and community identity.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

31. Ensure that new planning controls respond to local context and enhance neighbourhood character
32. Ensures planning encourages good design outcomes by implementing the 'Sustainable Subdivision Design Framework' and ensuring any planning assessment approaches prioritise high quality architectural, urban design and landscape outcomes.

3.4. Sustainable environments and climate action

3.4.1 Sustainable Subdivision Design Framework

Big Idea: More protections from flooding, bushfire and climate hazards

Embedding quality design outcomes early, at the subdivision stage is important to growing communities to set them up for long term wellbeing and sustainability. It is therefore critical to take a long-term view and consider the impact of climate change over the entire life of the development. To do this, City of Whittlesea seeks that the new plan incorporates the principles set out in the *Sustainable Subdivision Design Framework*²¹ to creating subdivisions that can adapt to the changing climate.

The initial subdivision design presents an enormous opportunity to create the fundamental conditions for a sustainable and resilient community. The Sustainable Design Framework will assist in balancing complex objectives in favour of overall long-term net community benefit by facilitating innovation and raise minimum standards working towards best practice over time.

Subdivision design and development staging should consider the increased risk of climate emergencies at development edges, which will continue to intensify as a result of climate change. Planning must ensure that as part of the staging of new developments that there are adequate road connections and interfaces to undeveloped land to minimise emergency management risks such as grassfire and satisfactory interim assets and systems are in place to deal with flooding until such time as permanent infrastructure is delivered.

Encouraging subdivisions that achieve best practice (or excellence) for environmental sustainability outcomes will be critical to achieving State and Federal Government commitments to addressing the impacts of climate change.

²¹ [Sustainable-Subdivisions-Framework-Explained-2022-update.pdf \(casbe.org.au\)](#)

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

33. Ensure planning encourages good design outcomes by implementing the 'Sustainable Subdivision Design Framework'.
34. Ensure subdivision design and delivery considers emergency management risks such as bushfire and flooding, particularly during the staging of development at the urban interface.

3.4.2 Improving Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) provisions

The Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) including the City of Whittlesea has identified shortfalls with the current Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) Policy, as well as the need to address relevant climate change objectives. A group Planning Scheme Amendment has been lodged to elevate the ESD requirements and targets. The amendment is sought to introduce elevated ESD requirements and, for councils with an existing ESD Policy, update the requirements within their respective Planning Scheme.

The elevated ESD requirements will enable the delivery of zero carbon development, as well as incorporate aspects of Climate Resilience, Social Sustainability and Innovation as a regenerative set of principles that aim to redefine and affirm the meaning of 'Best Practice' articulated within the existing ESD Policy framework – hence, collectively termed, Elevating ESD Targets.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

35. Incorporate 'state-wide' planning provisions to elevate Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) targets in line with the proposed Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) Planning Scheme Amendment.

3.4.3 Protection of the Green Wedge Areas***Big Idea: Greater protection of our agricultural land***

Approximately 60 per cent of the land in the City of Whittlesea is rural or non-urban land and is currently protected from urban development. Officially known as the 'Green Wedge', this land is home to productive agricultural land, scenic landscapes, heritage places, rural living, National Parks, forests, waterways, reservoirs and nationally significant flora and fauna.

The Whittlesea Green Wedge is the lungs of the City of Whittlesea and Metropolitan Melbourne. It's part of the food bowl that feeds us; home to the farms and markets where some of us work or get fresh local fruits and vegetables and open space and landscapes to relax and recharge.

It also holds a significant proportion of the unimpacted Cultural Heritage with many sacred and special places for the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung people and the Taungurung people providing the opportunity to celebrate and facilitate enhanced cultural practice.

With a rapid population growth, careful management and continued protection of the boundaries between land reserved to accommodate growth and land set aside for rural or conservation purposes is required to ensure the protection of the green wedge. Therefore, Council seeks that the new plan continues the Victorian Government's commitment to maintaining the current extent of the Urban Growth Boundary, to protect the rural and natural landscape in these areas.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

36. Ensure the protection of the Green Wedge Areas by maintaining the current Urban Growth Boundary.

3.4.4 Tree canopy coverage in urban areas

Big Idea: More trees and urban greening in our parks and community spaces

The City of Whittlesea has adopted a *City Forestry Strategy* which aims to increase tree canopy and green cover will each by a minimum of 20% across the City by 2040²².

Tree canopy coverage in urban areas plays an important role in moderating the urban heat island effect, which poses threats to human health due to substantially increased temperatures relative to rural areas. Tree canopy coverage has the largest impact on creating healthy environment for urban areas to withstand increasing temperatures. The inclusion of strategies to deliver greater tree canopy coverage in urban areas will mediate areas of high climate change vulnerability. Strengthened guidance and regulation of how increased tree canopy coverage can be included in urban areas, particularly in streetscapes, should be a key consideration of the new plan.

It is noted that the Victoria's *Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051* recommends that 'over the next 30 years, achieve 30% tree canopy coverage in new growth areas by mandating coverage during precinct development'²³.

Given the urgency with which climate change must be addressed at the local and state level, and the need for transformational adaptation, there is a clear imperative to elevate all climate change related policies to a position that is commensurate with the threat they possess.

Considerations need to be made explicit in the planning system so that the longer-term impacts and impacts on future generations are considered sufficiently among other interests and obligations that decisions makers need to consider in the planning system. It is recommended that the importance of considering climate change in decision-making is made more explicit, rather than relying on generic references to sustainability.

²² [Greening Whittlesea Strategy | Engage City of Whittlesea](#)

²³ [Infrastructure Victoria | All recommendations](#)

Case Study: Urban Tree Canopy Cover Project

The Urban Tree Canopy Cover Project (the Tree Project) was developed to support Amendment C200 - Stage 2 implementation of Council's *Housing Diversity Strategy 2013-2033*.

The Tree Project identified a critical decline in urban tree canopy cover in areas of highest infill development activity, off an already low base. The decline was particularly severe within areas of high infill development activity. The physical coverage of tree canopies over the land is a measure that can be used to assess community resilience to climate change. For example, a recent study on the urban heat island effect in Melbourne recommends that one of the most cost efficient and effective climate change mitigation strategies is to ensure a minimum canopy cover of 30% within the municipality.

The planning scheme changes included a local planning policy addressing housing typology and design, and changes to zones schedules to ensure canopy trees are part of the development design, and that residents have access to useable private open space. Variations to the ResCode standards (Clause 55.03-8 Landscaping Standard B13) for dimensions of secluded private open space, rear setbacks, and landscaping with canopy trees, as well as support for canopy trees in local planning policy to increase the area available for tree provision. Spatial variations to ResCode standards to have a compounding impact on the design of development – affecting site permeability, shade, building design and delivery of ground level open space.

The project and subsequent planning controls is helping to alleviate tree canopy lost as established areas in the City of Whittlesea are renewed.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

37. Implement a target of 30 per cent tree canopy coverage in the public realm of urban areas to mitigate climate change impacts.

3.4.5 Secure the Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands Reserve within the City of Whittlesea.

The future 1200-hectare Grassy Eucalypt Woodland (GEW) investigation area in the Whittlesea Green Wedge as described in the Melbourne Strategic Assessment, remains a significant outstanding matter yet to be progressed by the Victorian Government.

The GEW are Nationally significant ecological communities and the establishment of the GEW Reserve is necessary to enable to the long-term survival of this Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 critically endangered vegetation community. The delivery of this Reserve is a commitment between the Commonwealth and Victorian Government under the *EPBC Act* and the *Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Melbourne's Growth Corridors 2013*. To date no land within this reserve has been secured or acquisition processes commenced by DELWP and consequently the viability of this critically endangered ecological community is at risk. The City of Whittlesea is also noticing land within the Grassy Eucalypt Woodland (GEW) investigation area advertised and sold to investors as 'land banking' and 'future development' opportunity.²⁴

In 2020 the Victorian Government introduced the Melbourne Strategic Assessment (MSA) Levy to assist with funding the obligations of the *Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2013* including acquisition of the land for the GEW and other conservation reserves. Whilst the MSA levy has

²⁴ [905 Epping Road, Woodstock VIC 3751 - Sold Land & Development Property | Commercial Real Estate](#)

been introduced, the Victorian Government has not outlined a timeframe for acquisition of land for the GEW.

As a priority, the GEW land should be secured. Securing the GEW investigation area is important not only for the City of Whittlesea, but also adjoining Councils and the State of Victoria as a whole. It will protect biodiversity assets and safeguard the landscape qualities for Whittlesea's Green Wedge as well as manage the urban-rural interface by introducing a permanent and functional buffer to the urban growth areas.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

38. Identify a priority action to secure land identified for the Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands Reserve within the City of Whittlesea.

3.4.6 Transition to Electric Vehicle

Australia has legislated a 43% emissions reduction target by 2030 with transport being the fastest rising source of emissions. Within the northern Melbourne region transport contributes 20% of greenhouse gas emissions. The transition to sustainable transport modes, including walking, cycling, buses and Electric Vehicles (EVs), provides a significant opportunity to decarbonise transport across the region and improve liveability.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

39. Implement a Planning Scheme Amendment to include the need for electric vehicle charge infrastructure in the Victorian Provisions, in accordance with the *Community Electric Vehicle Transition Plan: Part A*, Prepared for the Northern Councils Alliance, December 2022.

3.5. Governance and Implementation

3.5.1 Governance and Action Plan

To be successful, *Plan for Victoria* requires strong governance from Victorian Government and agencies to ensure its implementation and the delivery of identified actions. The actions should be outlined in a detailed implementation plan and supported by appropriate funding. A strong governance framework will be required to support co-ordination across The Victorian Government and between all levels of government to support effective implementation.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

40. Include an additional pillar in the plan focused on Governance and Implementation to ensure the success of *Plan for Victoria*.

3.5.2 Infrastructure Funding

As noted in the submission above, the City of Whittlesea will experience significant growth in the coming years. This growth will be accommodated under existing planning settings including approved Precinct Structure Plans and other strategic plans. This is in addition to the significant growth which has already occurred in recent years.

Whilst the rebalancing of Melbourne's growth into established areas is welcomed, existing growth areas must be supported with appropriate levels of infrastructure co-ordination and investment. These growing community needs to be supported by adequate provision of essential infrastructure including transport, community and recreation of both a local and regional level but also timely and well-planned delivery to meet their evolving needs. Currently, infrastructure contributions and funding are falling short of what is needed to provide the infrastructure required by growing communities. This shortfall risks undermining the quality of life in these communities. To address these challenges a more comprehensive and adaptive

approach to infrastructure planning and delivery is needed. Infrastructure contributions system needs to be flexible to enable infrastructure to respond to community needs at the time of delivery.

As an example, the Donnybrook Woodstock Infrastructure Contributions Plan which is one of Whittlesea's 14 contribution plans has a funding shortfall for local community and recreation infrastructure of over approximately \$50million. This does not include regional level community and recreation infrastructure. As a result, growth area communities are falling behind in respect to infrastructure and service provision.

The Victoria's *Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051* identified this stating that the 'evidence shows growth areas have fewer libraries and aquatic centres than the rest of Melbourne and this will likely worsen over time as populations increase'²⁵. Further, the Growth Area Infrastructure Charge (GAIC) is failing to adequately support provision of state level infrastructure to growth areas in a timely manner.

The 2020 Victorian Auditor-Generals Office report 'Managing Development Contributions' found that 'Victoria's development contributions are not delivering the infrastructure needed by growing communities to support their quality of life'²⁶. In particular, the report found that; GAIC funding is not strategic and that there are significant risks and barriers to developing contribution schemes meaning 'that some councils do not want to participate, leaving them without a formal program to obtain development contributions and therefore missing opportunities to fund community infrastructure in this way'. The recommendation of this report should be considered in developing strategies to implement *Plan for Victoria*.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

41. Reform the infrastructure contributions systems to enable councils to deliver essential infrastructure in line with development in growth areas.
42. Reform the infrastructure contributions system to allow for flexibility at the time of delivery.

3.5.3 Infrastructure Planning and Co-ordination

The delivery of infrastructure in growth areas often lag development and is provided long after the community requires it. This is particularly in the case with community infrastructure such as schools, community centres and active open space, and regional-level services such as hospitals, justice facilities and regional open space.

Provision of this type of infrastructure faces many barriers within the current planning process. One such barrier is the difficulty in securing land for infrastructure that was not identified within a PSP and with no mechanism for funding. Many Victorian government agencies which deliver these services are not directly engaged in the PSP process, and do not have their own strategic plans which outline priorities for service delivery and identify suitable locations.

Victoria's *Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051* notes that while the PSP process encourages forward planning, it does not specify one entity that is responsible and accountable for the delivery of this infrastructure. The strategy recommends that a government body be set up to monitor and coordinate Infrastructure delivery in the growth areas to proactively advise on delivery sequencing and timing.

²⁵ assets.infrastructurevictoria.com.au/assets/Resources/1.-Victorias-infrastructure-strategy-2021-2051-Vol-1-web.pdf#page=204

²⁶ [Managing Development Contributions | Victorian Auditor-General's Office](#)

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

43. Establish mechanisms to ensure relevant authorities take a coordinated approach to the provision of infrastructure in growth areas.

Avoid 'out of sequence' developments through orderly planning and sequencing controls.

Case Study: Wollert 'Out of Sequence' Precinct

In 2018, the City of Whittlesea received multiple development applications in the Wollert PSP north of Boundary Road – approximately 2.5km north of the emerging Craigieburn Road development front to the south. This area had existing road access along rural style roads but was otherwise disconnected from the infrastructure and services to the south. Unfortunately, the Wollert PSP and Victorian Planning Provisions (VPP) include limited tools to maintain a logical sequence of development, and the applications were subsequently approved.

To facilitate this 'out of sequence' development, a series of enabling road infrastructure projects were required to be completed prior to the release of the first lots. This complex arrangement involved a consortium of development proponents in the precinct and a multi-phase infrastructure delivery strategy.

Despite this arrangement, this out of sequence development presented a series of challenges. Without clear planning tools to implement this infrastructure strategy, challenges arose in the fair apportionment of costs, protracted negotiations between landowners and developers, constraints on infrastructure design, and difficulty in obtaining land access for construction.

A key issue in this instance was the saturation of the existing road infrastructure to the south which had yet to be upgraded – namely the intersection between Epping Road and Boundary Road which requires State Government land acquisition. Also, an agreed mechanism to use 'lot caps' as a trigger for infrastructure delivery faced challenges at VCAT.

In addition to the challenges, a substantial amount of Council officer time and resources has been absorbed to facilitate this development. The precinct itself is isolated from the surrounding infrastructure and services. New residents need to drive a significant distance to access shops, services, and facilities, and the lack of community infrastructure and active transport links to the precinct severely limit its liveability.

Better tools for local government to control and maintain a logical sequence of development in growth areas is important to prevent these issues arising. In conjunction with this, further coordination and assistance from relevant authorities to ensure communities are not isolated from crucial infrastructure and services.

 # = h

The City of Whittlesea, including its growth areas, features significant areas of Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity and site locations. Notable in our local government area is the presence of hundreds of stony rises. Research has demonstrated that Aboriginal heritage sites and cultural material found on stony rises are not currently adequately protected under the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2006* and *Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018*. Protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage can be a challenge in areas designated for urban growth. *Plan for Victoria* must recognise the importance of comprehensive identification and management of all Aboriginal heritage places during the initial and final approval stages of Precinct Structure Plans to ensure protection within the future urban environment.

Council officers encourage the new *Plan for Victoria* to prioritise the importance of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and adequately plan for its protection at a strategic level, in partnership with Registered Aboriginal Parties. This should include clearer guidance in requiring engagement with Traditional Owners as part of preparing strategic land use plans and for review of planning proposals.

Recommendation for *Plan for Victoria*

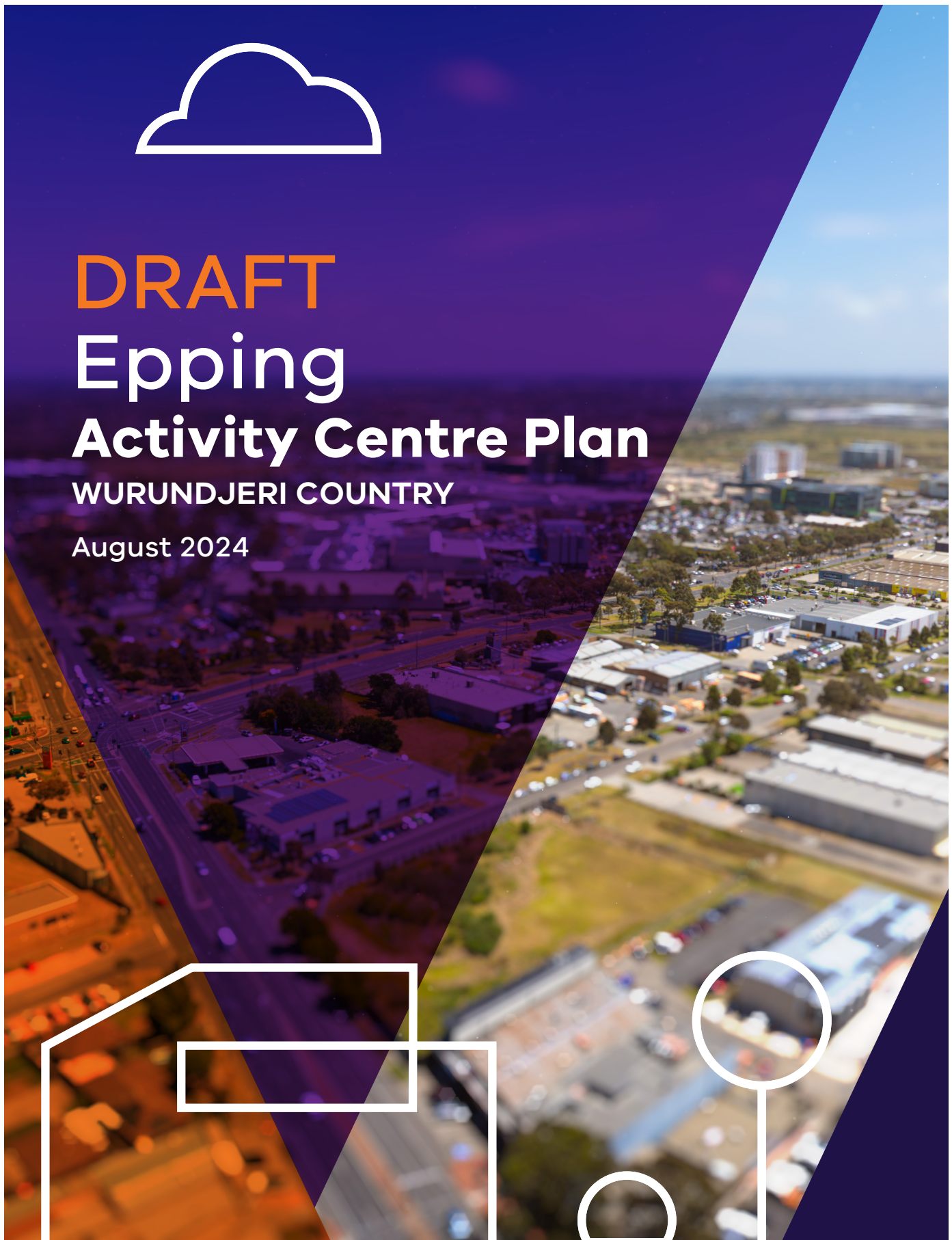
45. Include protocols and legislative changes to guide early engagement with Traditional Owner groups to ensure strategic plans and subsequent planning decisions appropriately protect and respect Aboriginal cultural heritage.



DRAFT Epping Activity Centre Plan

WURUNDJERI COUNTRY

August 2024





Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

We proudly acknowledge Victoria's First Peoples and their ongoing strength in practising the world's oldest living and continuous culture.

The Epping activity centre is located on the lands of the Wurundjeri Willum Clan and Taungurung People and we acknowledge them as Traditional Owners. We pay our respects to their Elders both past and present, and we acknowledge that they have never ceded their sovereign rights to lands and waters.

We recognise their unbroken connection to Country, we celebrate their culture and history, and we honour their rights as custodians.

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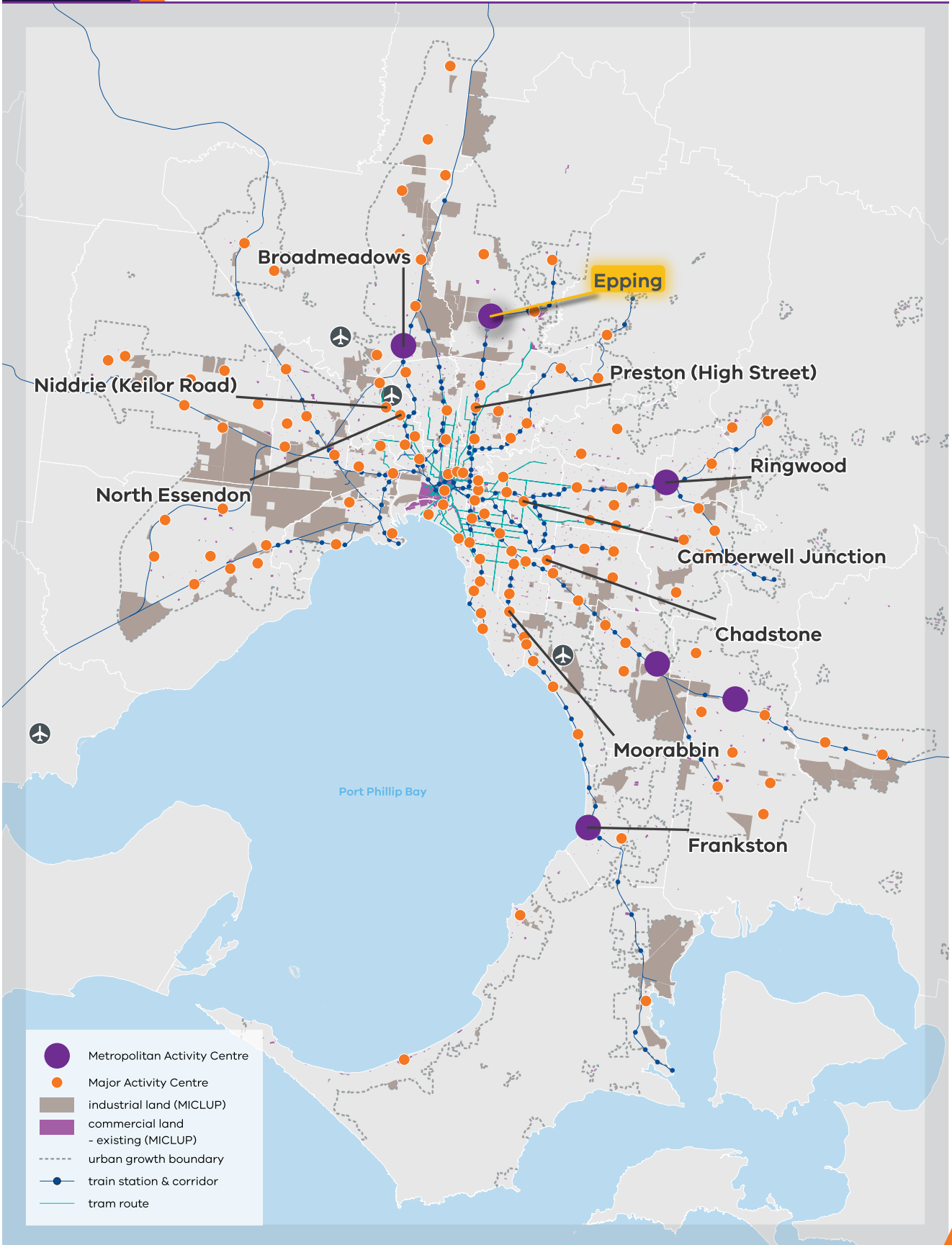
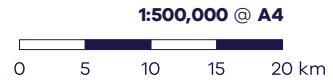
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Plan 1
Regional Context
Epping Activity Centre Plan



- Metropolitan Activity Centre
- Major Activity Centre
- industrial land (MICALUP)
- commercial land - existing (MICALUP)
- urban growth boundary
- train station & corridor
- tram route

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1 A network of activity centres

1.1 Strategic context

In September 2023, the Victorian Government released *Victoria's Housing Statement – The Decade Ahead 2024–2034*^{*} which identified 10 activity centres and their surrounds as key locations for a pilot program. The distribution of the centres is shown at **Plan 1 Regional context**. This builds on existing policy encouraging increased housing diversity and density in activity centres in *Plan Melbourne 2017–2050*^{**} and in the new plan for Victoria (under development in 2024).

Activity centres are identified as key locations for increased housing supported by additional jobs, services and amenities. This strategic work for activity centres will complement the new plan for Victoria which is currently being developed to reimagine the future of our cities, suburbs, towns, and regions. This will support delivery of new homes in locations with great public transport access and closer to jobs and opportunities.

The pilot program's seven objectives aim to facilitate increased housing supply through:



Built form controls tailored to place with guidance for ensuring place identity (public realm, amenity & heritage)

The Activity Centre Program will deliver a coherent, clear and consistent planning approach. This will include implementing a tailored suite of tools and planning controls to ensure local areas of significance are recognised and enhanced.



A new and simplified approach to infrastructure contributions

The program will deliver a simple approach to infrastructure contributions to contribute to the funding of community infrastructure, open space, walking, cycling and transport infrastructure. The infrastructure will support these growing centres and will include mechanisms to contribute to funding their delivery.



Focus on walkable catchments, encouraging new housing types and diversity

As well as providing clearer controls to facilitate density in the activity centre core areas, the program will provide guidance for the catchment of the centre, supporting greater housing diversity in areas that are within walking distance.



Transparent plans (as an alternative to traditional structure plans) that set out place objectives, local values, built form requirements, growth expectations and future vision

An activity centre plan will be prepared for each activity centre and will have clear planning controls that provide certainty of the built form outcomes. This will drive investment into the centres and provides the community with certainty of the long-term development expected.

Introducing deemed to comply standards will provide greater certainty on the supported built form outcomes in each centre. These built form outcomes have been tailored to the local context and ensure development expectations are known.

* State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet), *Victoria's Housing Statement – The Decade Ahead 2024–2034*, 2023.

** State of Victoria (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning), *Metropolitan Planning Strategy: Plan Melbourne 2017–2050*, 2017.



Shorter amendment pathway and streamlined approvals

Streamlined planning scheme amendment processes ensure development-ready land is available as soon as possible. Coupled with efficient planning permit processes, this means more homes for Victorians sooner.



Affordable housing

Activity centre planning will encourage the delivery of affordable housing by being clear on affordable housing needs and giving greater planning certainty when affordable housing is provided.



Using State Government landholdings to showcase new approaches and deliver housing and services

Utilising existing State Government landholdings within the centres provides an opportunity for the government to lead the sector in innovative ways to provide greater housing choice and services.

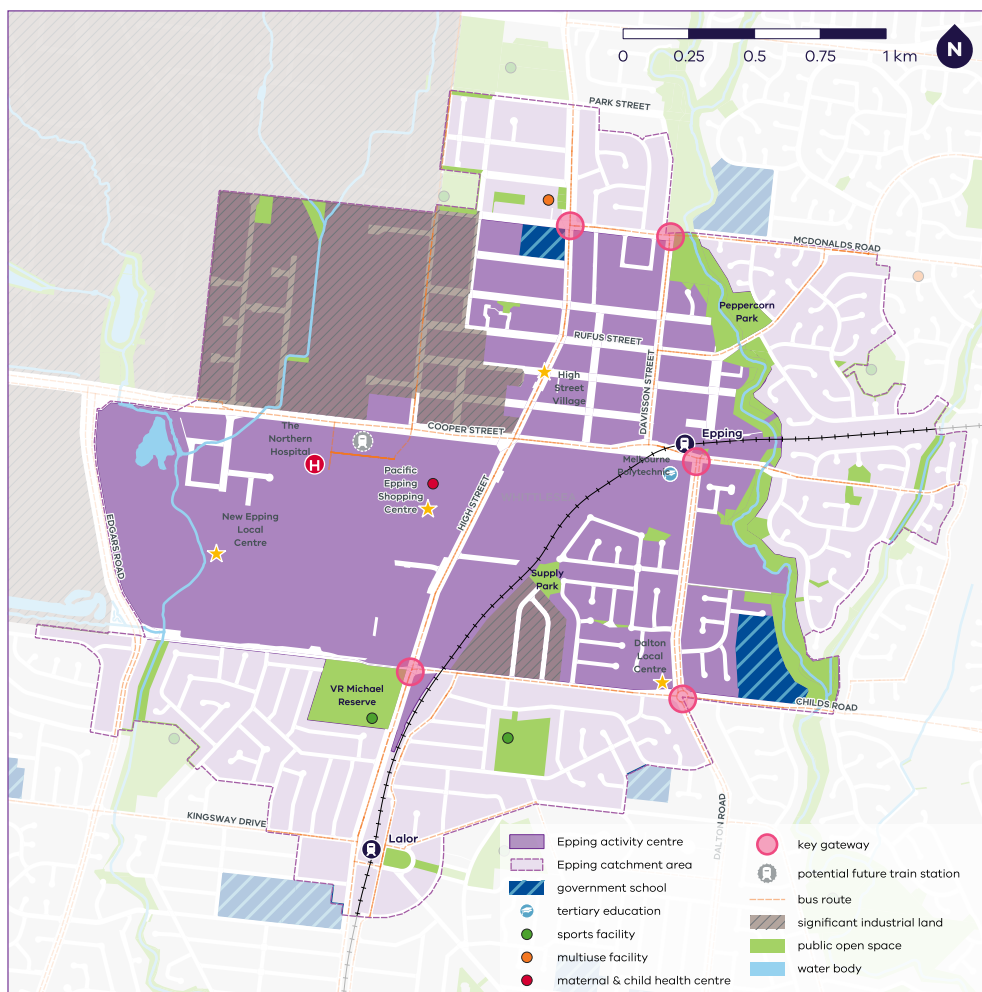




2 Purpose of this document

The *Draft Epping Activity Centre Plan* addresses development outcomes within the Epping activity centre and in the associated catchment areas, shown in **Figure 1 Epping activity centre and catchment area**. This is a draft plan for consultation and will be refined to inform a planning scheme amendment proposed to be completed by the end of 2024.

Figure 1 Epping activity centre and catchment area



2.1 Activity Centre Program

Victoria is the fastest growing state in Australia, with the population set to reach 10.3 million by 2051. By the 2050s, Melbourne is expected to be home to more than eight million people. However, not enough homes are being delivered to support this growing population*.

The purpose of the Activity Centre Program as identified in *Victoria's Housing Statement – The Decade Ahead 2024–2034* is to unlock 60,000 new homes by 2051. These homes are to be located in the 10 activity centres and their surrounds identified as having great access to services, jobs and transport. This plan outlines how the Epping activity centre and catchment area is to contribute 9,800 to 13,900 new homes.

* State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet), *Victoria's Housing Statement – The Decade Ahead 2024–2034*, 202.





2.2 Epping activity centre

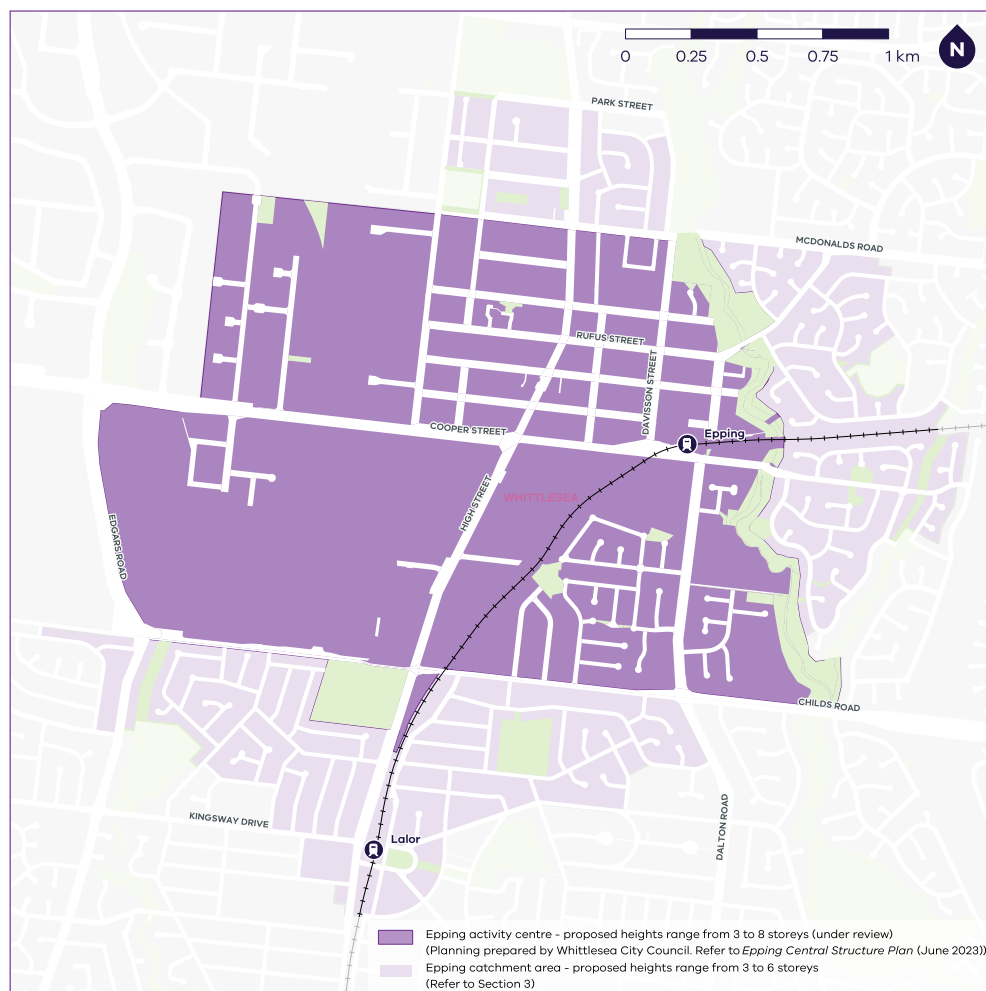
The Epping activity centre is the commercial core of the precinct. Activity centres are the heart of local businesses, community, transport, leisure, and more intensive styles of housing. They are the places where people come to shop, work, meet, relax and live. State planning policy recognises that activity centres are ideal places to support residential growth.

Whittlesea City Council has already consulted with the Epping community to develop the *Epping Central Structure Plan* (June 2023). The structure plan seeks to enhance the role and function of Epping through updated built form planning controls that will facilitate an increase in population, supported by greater density and better design. It is available on Whittlesea City Council's website.

It is proposed that built form in the Epping activity centre is to be primarily guided by the structure plan – see [Figure 2 Building height in the Epping activity centre and catchment areas](#).

The *Epping Activity Centre Plan* and *Epping Central Structure Plan* (June 2023) will be background documents at Clause 72.08 in the *Whittlesea Planning Scheme*.

Figure 2 Building height in the Epping activity centre and catchment areas





2.3 Catchment area attributes

Housing growth in catchment areas around activity centres is a longstanding state policy. State Government is seeking to give clearer direction on the level of growth needed in these locations in alignment with our housing needs as identified in *Victoria's Housing Statement*.

The *Epping Activity Centre Plan* builds on the strategic work undertaken by Whittlesea City Council by providing additional guidance for the catchment area. Key findings relating to Epping activity centre and surrounding catchment from phase 1 community engagement are detailed in [3.6 Phase 1 community engagement](#). These initial findings were considered in establishing the catchment area.

The catchment area primarily consists of residential, commercial and transitional neighbourhoods surrounding the Epping activity centre. The catchment provides an opportunity to increase accessibility for more people to meet their daily needs within a walkable distance to and from their home.

Built form implementation in the catchment is under investigation.

The extent of the catchment and the proposed types of housing are described at [3 Catchment area](#).





3 Catchment area

The catchment is the area within walking distance of the local jobs, services and public transport of the Epping activity centre. Building more homes here is a good way to create a more lively, inclusive and sustainable local community.

The plans will make sure Victoria builds the right types of homes in the catchment, in the places they fit best.

The plans will encourage greater housing diversity to meet the community's changing needs. This will encourage more efficient use of land through site consolidation, creating space for trees and greenery, as well as liveable and sustainable homes and neighbourhoods.

The catchment area is generally up to 800 metres from the edge of the non-residential areas of the activity centre. The extent of the catchment area is shown at [Figure 1. Epping activity centre and catchment area](#).

3.1 Defining the catchment area

The catchment was defined by undertaking a number of steps.

Firstly, the activity centre's residential and non-residential areas were identified.

From the edge of the activity centre's non-residential areas, an 800 metre walkable catchment was identified using streets, rather than "as the crow flies".

This catchment area was then refined to generally apply to whole blocks, and was further reduced where there are:

- natural and physical barriers
- limiting planning controls or environmental constraints that make these areas inappropriate for the proposed residential change
- areas subject to future planning investigations.

Non-residential uses will be removed from future planning approaches within the catchment area.

3.2 Proposed residential change

The catchment will provide an opportunity for more housing diversity including quality social and affordable housing, focusing on higher-density apartments, medium-density apartments, townhouses and semi-detached homes close to the activity centre.

Over time and on appropriate sites, small apartment buildings may be possible up to three to six storeys, mixed with townhouses and detached, semi-detached houses. Examples of different residential apartment building sizes are shown at [3.2.1 Examples of four to six storey development precedents](#).

Only the largest blocks of land in the catchment will be able to build up to five to six storeys. Smaller blocks will only be able to build up to three to four storeys, and some homes and buildings may not change at all.

The size and height of buildings will need to respond to standards to:

- Ensure good internal amenity within the new homes
- Provide opportunities for planting of canopy trees
- Ensure appropriate provision of car parking and storage facilities
- Minimise impact on neighbours.

Planning controls will be reviewed to create these opportunities.





3.2.1 Examples of four to six storey development precedents

4 storeys



Aboriginal Housing Victoria

Developer: Aboriginal Housing Victoria
 Architect: Breathe Architecture



Merri Green

Developer: MAB
 Architect: Six Degrees Architects

5 storeys



122 Roseneath Street

Developer: Wulff Projects, Icon Developments and Assemble
 Architect: Fieldwork Projects



Averi Apartments

Architect: Jackson Clements Burrows Architects

6 storeys



Ferrars & York

Ferrars & York, enabled by HIP V. HYPE, designed in collaboration with Six Degrees Architects and built by Ironside.
 Photography: Tess Kelly



Balfe Park Lane

Developer: Aspekt
 Architect: Kerstin Thompson





3.3 Non-residential areas

Land in the catchment area that is not currently zoned or used for residential purposes has not been identified for more housing.

Existing planning provisions are proposed to be retained in these areas.

3.4 Key attributes of the activity centre catchment area

Figure 1 Epping activity centre and catchment area shows some of the community and transport infrastructure for the activity centre and the catchment.

The catchment boundary for the Epping activity centre is affected in the east by non-residential land, and the activity centre itself has areas of residential. It is serviced by two train stations, Epping and Lalor, and there are bus routes throughout the catchment.

There are a high number of open spaces within Epping which include Whittlesea Park (located along Darebin Creek) and the Taryn Drive Wetlands (located along Edgars Creek). The Darebin Creek Linear Reserve also provides large amounts of open space.

The area has a predominantly curvilinear street network with courts.

3.5 Existing planning provisions

This section outlines existing planning provisions within the catchment study area and describes where there is a planning control with a significant relevance to development opportunities.

The General Residential Zone is the predominant zone in the catchment, with two schedules:

- Schedule 4 Neighbourhood Interface Areas and has variations to the requirements of Clause 54 and 55
- Schedule 5 Suburban Residential Areas applies to large areas of the catchment and has variations to the requirements of Clause 54 and 55.

In the catchment there are areas of:

- Residential Growth Zone Schedule 1 which has variations to the requirements of Clause 54 and 55.
- Neighbourhood Residential Zone Schedule 1 Suburban Residential Areas that has no variations to the requirements of Clause 54 and 55.

Other zones include:

- Transport Zone
- Public Use Zone
- Public Park & Recreation Zone
- Urban Floodway Zone

Within the catchment the following overlays apply:

- Development Contributions Plan
- Special Control Overlay 7 Childs Road (Midway Crescent to Prince of Wales Avenue) Upgrade Project Incorporated Document, February 2019
- Special Control Overlay 10 Epping Road (Craigieburn Road to Memorial Avenue) Upgrade Project Incorporated Document, November 2019.



3.6 Phase 1 community engagement

Engagement was undertaken from March to May 2024. The purpose of Phase 1 community engagement was to:

- Build community understanding about what will change in local neighbourhoods, the new planning controls, and what the community can influence.
- Learn from the community to inform the plans.

Whittlesea City Council has undertaken engagement on its structure plan between 2020 and 2023. As the Activity Centre Program intends to use council's plan for the activity centre, further broad community consultation was not undertaken. Instead, a community reference group was established for the Epping activity centre and surrounds. The intent of the community reference group was to allow representatives from the community to provide focused input on the issues and opportunities for the activity centre and surrounding area and to build upon existing engagement by council.

We heard:

- The need for improved public transport, cycling, and walking connectivity in and around the activity centre
- The opportunity for greater connectivity to open spaces and Darebin Creek
- The need for upgraded community infrastructure, such as schools, recreation centres, community hubs and open spaces.





4 Implementation

The proposed changes to the land use and development controls on affected land will be implemented via a planning scheme amendment. The Activity Centre Plan will also be implemented through other statutory and non-statutory measures including, but not limited to, identified future strategic work, establishing infrastructure contributions, and infrastructure projects as well as affordable housing requirements. It is intended that the planning scheme amendment/s to implement this activity centre plan will be completed by the end of 2024.

The preferred planning tool for the catchments is to be confirmed. It is not proposed to remove heritage overlays through new provisions.

4.1 Epping activity centre

Land use and built form in the Epping activity centre is proposed to be guided by the *Epping Central Structure Plan* (June 2023), which is proposed to be a background document at Clause 72.08 in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme.

The land use and built form outcomes described in the *Epping Central Structure Plan* (June 2023) are proposed to be implemented via a new planning tool, likely a zone and/or overlay, in the *Whittlesea Planning Scheme*.

4.2 Future strategic planning work

The preparation of this plan has identified additional work to be undertaken by the Victorian Government, Whittlesea City Council, or other agencies. This includes:

- 1 A new simplified and standardised infrastructure funding approach
- 2 Possible preparation of a Parking Precinct Plan and the introduction of a Parking Overlay
- 3 Possible introduction of updated flood management controls (subject to further work with Melbourne Water).

Other non-statutory work has also been identified. This includes engagement with Wurundjeri Willum Clan and Taungurung People on how to celebrate Aboriginal culture and values in the design and development process, especially for large opportunity sites and delivery of transport, and community infrastructure including open space.

4.3 Aligning existing controls

4.3.1 Activity Centre

Planning controls that are to be replaced by the new land use and built form controls will be removed to streamline assessments and make the planning scheme clearer. No planning overlays are proposed to be removed from the activity centre.

The planning overlays proposed to be retained in the activity centre are:

- Development Plan Overlay 39 – Epping Renewal Site
- All heritage protection
- Land Subject to Inundation Overlay
- Special Building Overlay
- All Specific Controls Overlays
- All Development Contributions Plan Overlays
- Environmental Audit Overlay
- Parking Overlay 01
- Road Closure Overlay.



4.4 Infrastructure delivery

The population of the Epping Activity Centre and surrounding catchment is expected to increase with additional housing required to accommodate the growing population. The additional dwellings required is anticipated to be between 9,800 and 13,900 dwellings by 2051.

As more people call Epping home, it is important that the local schools, services and infrastructure have the funding they need to grow. During consultation the community has been clear that vibrant places with green parks and local community facilities are important to support housing growth.

4.4.1 An innovative approach to infrastructure contributions

The State Government is exploring options for a simplified infrastructure funding mechanism to fund the things the future suburb needs.

This mechanism could provide direct contributions for councils and State Government to deliver essential infrastructure like roads, community centres and local sporting facilities to support growing and changing communities.

The activity centre plan will guide investment in the things a growing suburb needs like community facilities, bike paths and upgrading parks and open spaces.

We are consulting with the community on their priorities for investment in infrastructure.

4.5 Affordable housing

Affordable housing is defined in the *Planning and Environment Act, 1987* (The Act) as "housing, including social housing, that is appropriate for the needs of very low-, low- and moderate-income households." The Act specifies annually updated income range classifications for very low- to moderate- income households.

Applications for residential subdivision and development should consider how they contribute to meeting the need for affordable housing.

Where affordable housing is provided, it should contribute to meeting the needs of very low- to moderate-income ranges.

This contribution can be delivered via the following options:

- Discounted sale or gifting of homes to a registered housing agency or Homes Victoria which provides affordable housing
- A cash contribution equivalent to the above to the Social Housing Growth Fund or nominated trust account to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.
- Any other delivery method that provides for affordable housing, subject to the approval of the responsible authority.

This is in conjunction with the other local, state and federal government initiatives aimed at delivering more affordable housing such as:

- Unlocking surplus government land (State)
- The *Development Facilitation Program* (State)
- The *Short Stay Levy* (State)
- The *Regional Housing Fund* (State)
- The *Big Housing Build* (State)
- The *Public Housing Renewal Program* (State)
- The *Affordable Housing Investment Partnership* (State)
- The *Social Housing Accelerator* (Federal); and
- The *National Housing Accord* (Federal)

In addition, the State Government is seeking feedback on the "Big ideas for Victoria's future" through the plan for Victoria consultation process. Ideas include setting a minimum amount of social and affordable housing in new developments.



4.6 Identification of environmental constraints

To ensure that future residents are afforded a high-quality environment where potential risks of harm to amenity and human health are avoided or mitigated, the draft activity centre plan highlights the need to consider potential contamination, noise and vibration, as well as amenity and buffers at the permit application stage.

4.6.1 Potentially contaminated land – catchment

Identifying contamination is important because it can cause harm to human health and the natural environment. Where a site is contaminated, the local environment, including the soil, indoor or outdoor air, and/or surface water or groundwater may be unsafe for site occupants. Immediate and long-term health effects may occur where people are exposed to harmful levels of contamination.

It is anticipated that council's own strategic work will address matters related to potentially contaminated land within the Epping activity centre. However, the approach to planning for housing supply in the catchment area does not require any changes to the underlying residential zoning and will not change existing land use arrangements. As such, across the catchment, council's assessment of an application for a planning permit is the appropriate time for the proponent to address the potential for contamination and mitigate risks posed to human health or the environment, having regard to Section 60 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (the Act).

Section 60 of the Act requires a responsible authority, before deciding on a permit application, to consider "*any significant effects which the responsible authority considers the use or development may have on the environment or which the responsible authority considers the environment may have on the use or development*". Section 60 is applicable to potentially contaminated land, which may affect, or be affected by, use or development*.

4.6.2 Noise

Consideration of noise and vibration is important to ensure that future residents are able to undertake normal activities in and around their home and have access to an adequate sleeping environment.

To accommodate future growth, development should (where possible) seek to incorporate:

- Appropriate building siting
- Appropriate design, including orientation and internal layout
- Urban design, and
- Land use separation techniques appropriate to the functions and character of the area.

4.6.3 Amenity and buffers

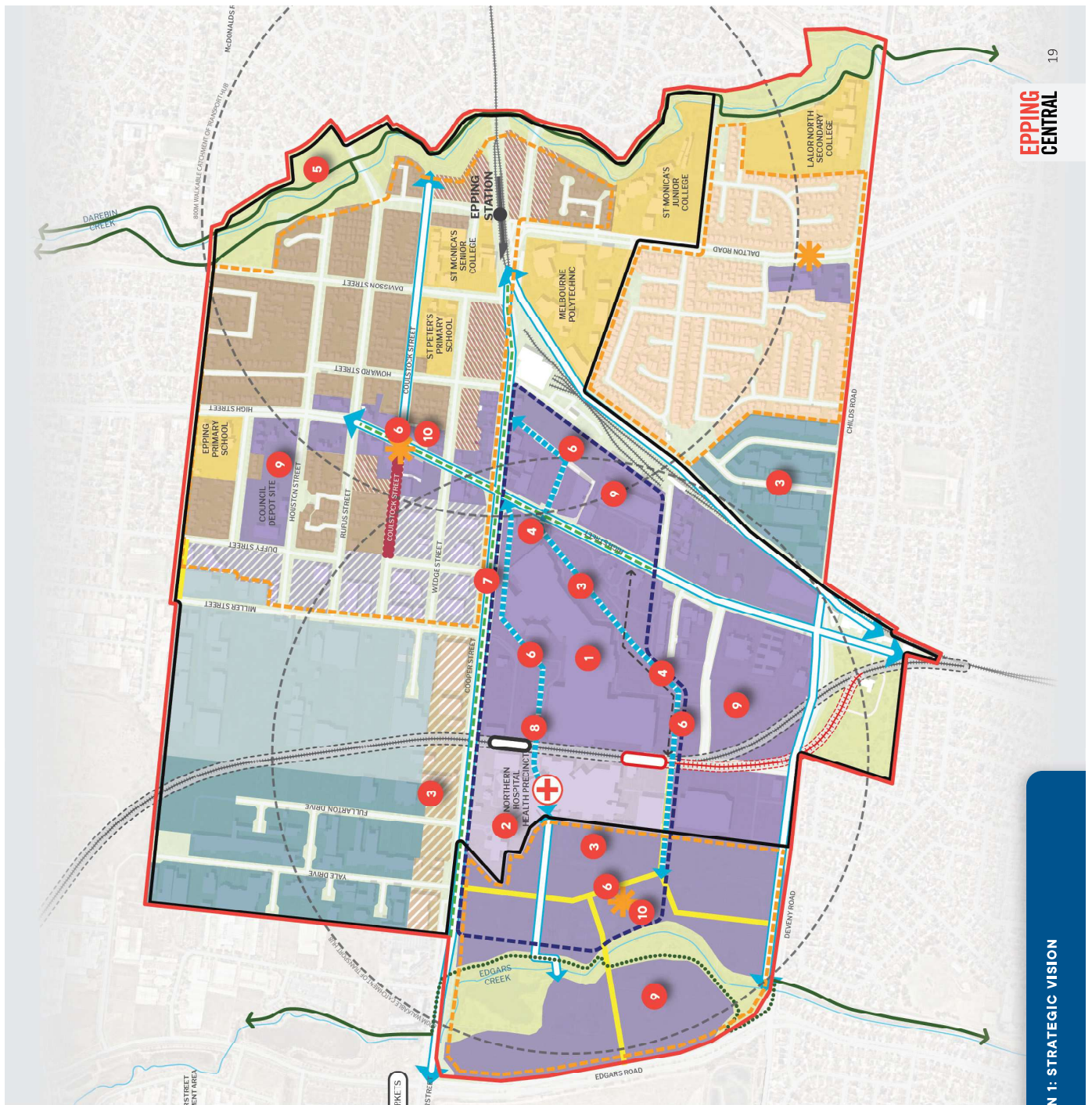
It is important to ensure that intensification of existing residential use and the associated development of land is compatible with adjoining and nearby land uses, particularly where there is potential for off-site impacts from commercial, industrial and other uses, such as dust or odour.

Where appropriate, development proposals will be required to demonstrate that the amenity and human health of future residents will not be adversely affected by these uses.

* Department of Planning & Transport, *PPN30: Potentially Contaminated Land*, updated May 2024, available at www.planning.vic.gov.au







Strategic Framework Plan

- EPPING CENTRAL STRUCTURE PLAN BOUNDARY
- ACTIVITY CENTRE CORE PRECINCTS
- NORTHERN HOSPITAL
- NORTHERN HOSPITAL HEALTH PRECINCT
- MIXED USE
- EMPLOYMENT - COMMERCIAL/OFFICE
- EMPLOYMENT - COMMERCIAL/OFFICE/LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
- INDUSTRIAL
- EMPLOYMENT - WAREHOUSING/LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
- EDUCATION FACILITIES
- HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
- MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
- RESIDENTIAL
- COULSTOCK STREET REDEVELOPMENT AREA
- ACTIVITY CENTRE - URBAN CORE
- NEIGHBOURHOOD PRECINCT
- NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE
- POTENTIAL WOLLERT RAIL CORRIDOR
- FUTURE TRAIN STATION INTERCHANGE
- POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE TRAIN STATION
- PROPOSED ALTERNATIVE RAIL ALIGNMENT
- 800M WALKABLE CATCHMENT - TRANSPORT HUB
- PROPOSED ROAD
- PREFERRED ROAD CONNECTION AREAS
- PRIMARY STREET/SCAPE IMPROVEMENT AREAS
- PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY MOVEMENT CORRIDOR (INDICATIVE ALIGNMENT)
- PRIMARY PEDESTRIAN LINK
- EXISTING OPEN SPACE TRAIL
- PROPOSED OPEN SPACE TRAIL

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 SCALE: 1:10,000 @ A3
 22.05.2023 V9



Enquiries: Emma Appleton 9217 2170

25 September 2024

The Hon. Sonya Kilkeny
Minister for Planning
Level 20, 1 Spring Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Sent via email: sonya.kilkenny@parliament.vic.gov.au
Cc: reception.kilkenny@transport.vic.gov.au

Dear Minister

Activity Centre Program Consultation – Epping Activity Centre

The City of Whittlesea is committed to supporting the delivery of high quality, diverse homes to meet the needs of its community and has a track record of facilitating significant growth in housing and development. As a growth municipality, the City welcomes approximately 7000-8000 new residents every year and in the last financial year alone, released 3,954 new residential lots.

Epping Central is the City of Whittlesea's 'city centre'. Council welcomes the focus on Epping as part of the Activity Centre Program and a shared focus on realising its opportunity as a vibrant urban precinct supporting strong population and job growth.

As an urban renewal precinct, the Activity Centre is significant in size (much larger than Fishermans Bend) and is anchored by a number of regionally significant land uses including the Northern Hospital health precinct, New Epping Health Precinct, Pacific Epping Shopping Centre and Melbourne Polytechnic. As part of the Activity Centre Program we have been a committed and an engaged partner to realise the aspirations of the program in line with Council's vision for the Activity Centre outlined in the adopted Epping Central Structure Plan.

Whilst we have been an engaged partner as part of the program, we raise significant concerns with respect to the process for developing the new planning controls, including the compressed timeframes, lack of genuine consultation, and limited information which has been made available in a timely manner during the program.

The desire to fast track the strategic planning process to around 12 months is creating significant risk of resulting in sub-standard development outcomes, transferring public value to private landowners, and subverting the ability for affected parties and the community to have an informed say on the proposal.

Council Offices

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Phone: 9217 2170

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In particular, the consultation process has not been transparent or adequate to enable stakeholders, including Council and community members, to be properly informed and to participate in the consultation. The consultation material released has been deficient and not included any proposed planning ordinances or background support material. The consultation process has also disappointingly coincided with Local Government elections, therefore excluding representative Councils from participating.

Council respectfully requests, that at a minimum, the process be extended an additional six months to enable a public notice process on the draft planning scheme amendment to take place, provide the ability for elected Councils to make submissions on the draft planning scheme amendment and conduct a proper standing advisory committee process to review submissions prior to any decision being made on new planning controls. Noting, the long term outlook of the planning controls (and limited current demand for high density residential development in Epping) and the current facilitative planning controls in place, a minor extension to the program will have minimal impacts on desired dwelling supply but will significantly enhance the ultimate credibility and implementation of the new planning controls.

Alternatively, it is requested that any new planning controls approved in the coming months, which have not been subject to consultation, be done so on an 'interim' time bound basis with final planning controls subject to a testing and review process including further consultation and notice. This will avoid any unintended consequences of introducing controls which have not been through a proper review and consultation process.

Council's detailed feedback on the material released for consultation on the Activity Centre Plan for Epping is included in its attached submission. Noting the overlap of the consultation process with the Local Government elections, the submission has been prepared by Council Officers on behalf of Council.

In summary, the program appears to be narrowly focused on delivering new planning controls to 'unlock' housing supply without an appropriate attention to good design, place creation, development feasibility or job creation. Activity Centres are inherently places of mixed uses where economic and social outcomes are equally as important as realising housing supply. Further, the demand for housing will only be realised with good design, high amenity public realm and improvements to infrastructure in order to create the environment which attracts people to live in these centres and makes development feasible. As a result, planning for Activity Centres needs to be holistic and to be successful, cannot be constrained into simplistic plans with a singular focus.

In respect to the potential application of 'deemed to comply' provisions and the up zoning of residential catchment areas, Council does not support the inclusion of these changes as part of the new planning controls noting the lack of strategic justification provided and consultation which has occurred. Council's submission also highlights the need to adequately plan the provision of open space and infrastructure required to support growth in Epping.

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We look forward to receiving a receptive response to our submission and to continuing to work closely with you to realise the potential of Epping and the aspirations of the Housing Statement.

If you would like to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact Emma Appleton, Director Planning and Development, via email emma.appleton@whittlesea.vic.gov.au or phone 9217 2170.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Lloyd'.

Craig Lloyd
Chief Executive Officer

Enc.

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Activity Centres Program Department of Transport and Planning

Submission City of Whittlesea

September 2024

A place for all

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City of Whittlesea Submission to Activity Centre Program

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Executive Summary

The City of Whittlesea is a well established growth Council supporting significant amounts of new housing every year as a result of its proactive strategic planning and efficient statutory planning processes. Council has been a highly engaged partner as part of the Activity Centre Program being delivered by the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) and Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) as it relates to Epping.

Epping Central is the City of Whittlesea's largest activity centre and its 'city centre'. The activity centre is over 400ha in size which is much larger in area than the Fishermans Bend redevelopment area or equivalent to almost ten Arden Macauley Structure Plan areas. The activity centre is anchored by a number of regionally significant land uses including the Northern Hospital health precinct, New Epping Health Precinct, Pacific Epping Shopping Centre and Melbourne Polytechnic. Whittlesea has invested significantly in its own planning for the precinct to realise its vision for Epping to be "an attractive, welcoming and sustainable urban place experiencing strong population and job growth" (Epping Central Structure Plan).

The new planning controls being developed as part of this program will have a significant impact on development in Epping with the potential to cater for over 15,000 new dwellings (not including the residential catchment areas) and potentially up to an additional 31,580 new residents.

Overall, the program appears to be narrowly focused on delivering new planning controls to 'unlock' housing supply without an appropriate attention to good design, place creation, development feasibility or job creation. Activity centres are inherently places of mixed uses where economic and social outcomes are equally as important as realising housing supply. Further, the demand for housing will only be realised with good design, high amenity public realm and improvements to infrastructure in order to create the environment which attracts people to live in these centres and makes development feasible. As a result, planning for activity centres needs to be holistic and to be successful cannot be constrained into simplistic plans with a singular focus.

Council also raises significant concerns in respect to the process for developing the new planning controls, including lack of genuine consultation and the potential outcomes (which are not known) from the program. The program which is aiming to fast track the strategic planning process to around 12 months is at significant risk of generating sub-standard outcomes, transferring public value to private landowners and subverting the ability for affected parties to have an informed say on the proposal. In particular:

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- the consultation process has not been transparent or adequate to enable stakeholders including Council and the community to be properly informed and to participate in the consultation process. The consultation material released has been deficient and did not include any proposed planning ordinances or background supporting material. The consultation process has also coincided with Local Government elections, therefore excluding representative Councils from participating.

It is requested that at a minimum the process be extended an additional six months to enable a public notice process on the draft planning scheme amendment to take place, provide the ability for elected Councils to make submissions on the draft planning scheme amendment and conduct a proper standing advisory committee process to review submissions prior to any decision being made by the Minister for Planning. Should the above not be supported and the planning controls are introduced in the coming months, it is submitted that any controls which have not been subject to consultation should be done so on an 'interim' time bound basis with final controls subject to a thorough testing and review process including further consultation and notice. This will avoid any unintended consequences of introducing controls which have not been through a proper review and consultation process.

- the program also appears to be apathetic to the development feasibility of delivering the housing outcomes sought or as identified above, creating the environment which supports the feasibility in the future. Without this lens, the program's objectives will not be achieved. Noting the long-term outlooks of the planning controls (and limited current demand for high density residential development in Epping) and the current facilitative planning controls in place, a minor extension to the program will have minimal impact on desired dwelling supply.
- the new planning controls are intended to increase dwelling capacity within the designated precincts and surrounding catchments along with providing greater certainty for development approvals. It is critical that the program does not 'echo' the same mistakes as Fisherman's Bend and upzone land (generating land value uplift) without requiring the provision of essential open space, infrastructure and affordable housing contributions. These contribution provisions must be introduced at the same time as the new built form controls and value capture of 75% or thereabouts of net uplift delivered.
- The proposal to introduce 'deemed to comply' provisions will provide 'approval in principal' for development proposals which comply with the 'deemed to comply' provisions. However, in Epping, noting the limited information which has been provided on the performance standards and the lack of rationale or basis for them, the proposed

City of Whittlesea Submission to Activity Centre Program

reform from the information provided is not credible and should not be pursued as part of this process. Further, such significant changes to the provisions should be the subject of adequate community consultation.

- The Epping precinct has a significant deficiency of open space, particularly in the core areas which have the most potential to accommodate significant residential development over time. Council submits that the planning controls mandate a minimum 10% open space contribution in these precincts as strategically supported in its Public Open Space Needs Assessment and Contributions Review.
- The proposed residential catchment areas have been proposed without any supporting information or justification. There is no clear information provided on the proposed planning controls to apply to these areas. In the context of Epping which is already a large activity centre (400ha in size), the boundaries extend over 1.6km from the Epping Train Station. They are, from the information available, not strategically justified and should be excluded from this program to enable a proper strategic planning process to occur.
- The drafting of the draft Planning Scheme Amendment should be through a co-design process with Council officers to ensure the controls are fit for purpose, avoid errors and accurately reflect the strategic work undertaken for Epping.

Council's submission expands on the above and provides more in-depth commentary in respect to the key issues relating to the development of new planning controls for the Epping Activity Centre.

We also raise significant concerns in respect to overlay of the consultation period with Local Government Elections and Council Election Period. As such there is no opportunity for Council to resolve a position on what will be significant changes to its planning scheme. This submission has therefore been prepared on behalf of the Council, by Council officers.

Summary of Recommendations

City of Whittlesea submits the following recommendations:

1. The finalisation of the Activity Centre Program planning scheme amendments not to proceed at this time and to be deferred for a minimum six month period to enable sufficient time for:
 - a. a public notice process on the draft planning scheme amendment including draft planning ordinances and supporting background reports.
 - b. an opportunity for Council to consider the draft planning scheme amendment and resolve a position on the proposed changes to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme.

City of Whittlesea Submission to Activity Centre Program

- c. an expedited Standing Advisory Committee process which includes sufficient time for the SAC to consider and hear submissions from affected parties.
 - d. an opportunity for the planning authority to review and 'test' the draft planning controls in consultation with Council ahead of the public notice period.
2. Should the planning controls be approved in the planned timeframe, the controls which have not been subject to consultation, should be approved on an 'interim' basis and time bound. The final controls should be subject to a proper review and testing process including further consultation with Council and public notice process.
3. That the draft Planning Scheme Amendment be prepared through a 'co-design' process with Council officers.
4. For the purposes of preparing the draft Planning Scheme Amendment rely on the strategic work prepared by Council including:
 - Epping Central Structure Plan (refer to Appendices A and B),,
 - Epping Central Built Form Report (refer to Appendix C)
 - Epping Central Open Space Needs Assessment and Contributions Review (refer to Appendix D),
 Draft ordinances prepared by the City of Whittlesea (refer to Appendices G-J).
5. Note that market factors influence delivery of housing development and achievement of targets, beyond the application of new planning controls.
6. Consider the methods that will incentivise land consolidation to ensure more integrated built form outcomes.
7. Ensure that the Activity Centre Program and associated planning controls enable the provision of services, infrastructure and amenity required to facilitate higher density housing in identified locations in Epping Activity Centre over time; including:
8. Commitment to delivery of the Wollert Rail including a station in Epping Central.
9. Provision of minimum 10% (preferably 13%) open space in the activity centre core to support high density housing and development.
10. Commitment of state funded social and community recreation required to support the projected population growth.
11. Ensure that the planning controls do not introduce elements which further detract from the feasibility of delivering higher density housing in the Activity Centre including 'deemed to comply' provisions, discretionary height controls and inadequate amenity provisions including open space.
12. Recommend that the ACZ1 continues to apply to those precincts where specific land use outcomes are not consistent with and/or will not be supported by existing standard zones or alternatively that where the ACZ1 is not proposed to be retained a commensurate zone that

City of Whittlesea Submission to Activity Centre Program

achieves the land use outcomes as proposed in the updated draft schedule to the ACZ1 should be considered.

13. Land located within the Epping Central Activity Centre Structure Plan boundary, and which is not included in the ACZ1 retain its existing zoning and overlay controls including public land and land in the Epping Renewal Precinct (except application of Parking Overlay to Epping Renewal precinct).
14. That Council owned land within the Structure Plan boundary and which is currently zoned ACZ and/or land within the proposed residential catchment be rezoned to an appropriate land use zone or sufficient time be given for Council to determine an appropriate zone for each of the affected land parcels prior to the approval of an amendment.
15. The reservation for the Epping North Public Transport Corridor be protected by the new planning controls for the Epping Activity Centre consistent with the existing provisions in Schedule 1 to the Activity Centre Zone and the advice of the Department of Transport and Planning.
16. The SAC recommend that an interim PAO (or other site-specific control) to protect the corridor is considered, allowing opportunity for the completion of the feasibility study and implementation of any recommendations.
17. The provisions of the draft ACZ1, particularly as it relates to the requirement for a Master Plan to be prepared for key sites within the Regional Demand Precinct be retained for the Activity Centre area consistent with the Attachment G.
18. Include a requirement for a master plan to be prepared over the Epping Homemakers site consistent with the Epping Central Structure Plan.
19. Deemed for comply provisions not be applied to Epping Central Activity Centre.
20. It is considered that the built form controls should instead provide for:
21. Discretionary envelope controls (eg height and setback) that guide the overall building scale; and potentially
22. Density controls through a mandatory Floor Area Ratio that guides overall development yield.
23. Should 'Deemed to Comply' provisions or other built form controls be entertained that they be subject to further testing and community consultation and/or introduced as an interim control for a period of 1-2 years to enable additional detailed urban design assessment and testing of the new controls.
24. it is suggested that a modified approach could be introduced which incorporates the following elements:
 - a. Establish an infrastructure contributions and inclusionary requirements regime which is clear and non-negotiable

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- b. Use plot ratio controls to establish an appropriate density of development for projects to be eligible for a streamlined assessment pathway and exemption from notification requirements/appeals
 - c. Set these plot ratio controls at a 'safe' level through urban design testing (as per a Hodyl and Co-like approach, noting that an awareness of the streamlined assessment pathway should inform this work)
 - d. Complement this with performance-based controls for building height, street wall height and set backs.
 - e. Allow exceedance of plot ratios via the default non-streamlined assessment pathway which would include notification and appeal rights, and would be subject to additional performance/principles-based controls, and
 - f. Enforce a suitable value capture approach. In principle, this could be applied for all uplift associated with development approval whether this is achieved through the streamlined or default assessment pathway. There would be an especially strong case to apply value capture to height exceedance (Am C270 to the Melbourne Planning Scheme provides a model for this).
25. That changes to the Parking Overlay be supported as contained in the updated draft at Appendix H.
 26. Support the extension of the Parking Overlay as depicted in Figure X in the Addendum to the Parking Overlay included as Attachment F.
 27. That the draft controls at Attachments G, H, I and J form the basis of any planning scheme amendment to give effect to any updated or new controls proposed to be introduced to Epping Central.
 28. The draft planning scheme amendment including proposed draft ordinances be subject to a public notice process including the opportunity for public submissions to be made.
 29. Ensure that the planning controls provide for a minimum of 10% and preferably a 13% public open space contribution.
 30. Investigate potential incentives or legal mechanisms such as section 173 agreement(s) to facilitate delivery of open space in lieu of payment. This could be incorporated into the ECAC Activity Centre Zone controls for specific areas such as Precinct 4 and will provide a means for Council to require/negotiate open space infrastructure delivery with landowners of larger strategic development sites including sites where subdivision is not proposed. Under this approach, minimum standards should be established such as requirements of size and quality of open space.
 31. That new planning controls which uplift land value are not introduced without supporting infrastructure, public open space and affordable housing contributions.

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32. That new or upgraded state infrastructure which is required to support the growth of the activity centre be identified and committed to as part of the finalisation of the Activity Centre Plan and support infrastructure plan.
33. That Council are properly consulted in respect to any proposed infrastructure contribution funding mechanism and/or changes to the existing Development Contributions Plan and Development Contributions Plan Overlay.
34. Include affordable housing targets in the Epping Activity Plan. These targets should aim to provide housing appropriate to very low-income and low-income households as a priority.
35. Include an implementation plan for delivering affordable housing in the Activity Centre Plan supported by planning provision in the draft Planning Scheme Amendment controls.
36. Include policy in the new planning controls which prevents underdevelopment of land on strategic sites in activity centres.
37. The residential catchment areas be excluded from this stage of the program and not included in any initial planning scheme amendment.
38. That any consideration of change to planning controls in residential catchment areas be subject to a proper strategic planning process including public consultation of the specific changes proposed and supporting background reports and strategic justification.
39. That 'pedestrian sheds' be taken from public transport nodes (i.e. Epping Train Station and bus interchange at Pacific Epping Shopping Centre) in the activity centre (rather than the boundary of the activity centre) be prepared to inform any application of residential catchment areas and a walkable catchment zone.
40. That noting the size of the Epping Activity Centre, that the 'residential catchment areas' be primarily restricted to areas within the existing activity centre boundary.
41. That any future application of a walkable catchment zone or equivalent, strategically consider the local context of those precincts including 'actual' walkability to services and public transport, heritage, neighbourhood character, transport and existing subdivision patterns.

City of Whittlesea Submission to Activity Centre Program

City of Whittlesea Draft Submission: Activity Centres

Introduction

The City of Whittlesea welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to inform the development of planning controls as they relate to the Epping Central Metropolitan Activity centre (MAC) and proposed residential catchment areas adjacent to the Activity Centre. This submission has been prepared by officers on behalf of the Council.

Epping is one of ten centres nominated as part of the Activity Centre Program (ACP) where activity centre planning is proposed to be streamlined to support an increase in housing and to direct future investment in community facilities, public spaces and parks.

Epping Central is the City of Whittlesea's largest activity centre and its 'city centre'. The activity centre is over 400ha in size which is significantly larger in area than the Fishermans Bend redevelopment area or equivalent to almost ten Arden Macauley Structure Plan areas. It is a key location for employment, housing and higher order health, retail and education services and is already home to existing significant uses, including a state significant health precinct comprising three expanding hospitals, research facilities, and large format retail centre, with some high density residential, including social and affordable dwellings.

The area has numerous projects in the pipeline including offices, medical suites, and serviced apartments and a large expansion of the Pacific Epping Shopping Centre is due to be completed in December this year.

Strategic Planning for the area is significantly progressed with the Refreshed Epping Central Structure Plan endorsed by Council in June 2023 and a Development Plan approved for the 50-hectare Epping Renewal Site (also referred to as New Epping) in January 2023. Council has invested significant time, resources and undertaken stakeholder and community engagement in developing the robust and well-informed strategic planning work including the updated Structure Plan and built form testing to inform draft planning controls and which were well progressed prior to the commencement of the ACP.

The City of Whittlesea is fully committed to facilitating the delivery of high quality, diverse homes to meet housing targets and welcomes State Government reforms, including planning, that enable housing delivery aligned with economic development and provision of infrastructure.

The City of Whittlesea has welcomed many new residents over recent years, largely because of the significant housing and infrastructure development facilitated by our strategic and statutory planning processes. The municipality has grown exponentially in the last two decades from approximately 113,000 residents in 2001 to the current population of 250,000. In the last four years alone, Council has released 12,941 new residential lots including 3954 in the 2023/24 year

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alone. Council recognises Epping as key location for growth in the future as outlined in Municipal Planning Strategy and supporting strategic plans.

However, the City of Whittlesea is concerned about the planning controls proposed for Epping as part of the State Government's ACP and the compressed timeframe within which these new planning tools are proposed, allowing limited opportunity to test the controls to identify any unintended consequences of the new planning tools.

Built form testing completed on behalf of Whittlesea indicated that Epping Central has the capacity to meet the housing targets nominated for Epping Central by the State Government. However, it is important that the level of residential growth anticipated, is supported by adequate infrastructure including open space and parks and a respectful planning response that provides for a high quality public realm and sustainable built environment that creates a desirable place for people to live, work and visit.

In addition, critical to unlocking the opportunity of Epping Central and realising the shared ambitions for medium density mixed use neighbourhoods is the investment in infrastructure, such as the Wollert Rail together with local and regional community infrastructure.

We are also concerned as to the lack of genuine consultation with stakeholders including service authorities, affected landowners and the broader community. It is normal practice, for an Amendment of this significance to undergo public exhibition to enable affected parties to review and provide feedback/submissions on the draft controls.

We also raise significant concerns in respect to overlay of the consultation period with Local Government Elections and Council caretaker period. As such there is no opportunity for Council to resolve a position on what will be significant changes to its planning scheme. This has restricted the submission to being prepared by officers on behalf of the Council.

Background

Epping Central is a designated Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC). MACs are designated as an important focus for business, housing and a broad range of services and facilities that are well serviced by public transport. They also provide communities with good access to a range of major retail, community, government, entertainment, cultural and transport services. Being strategically located between the City of Whittlesea's southern established areas and the growth area to the north, Epping Central has a significant role in supporting Melbourne's continued urban growth and development, noting that there is significant capacity for future growth within the Epping Activity Central Centre.

EPPING CENTRAL STRUCTURE PLAN

The initial Epping Central Structure Plan was adopted in 2011, following a comprehensive Structure Plan preparation process.

City of Whittlesea Submission to Activity Centre Program

The Structure Plan was given effect through Amendment C130 to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme (gazetted 19 March 2015), which among other things introduced the Activity Centre Zone and associated Schedule 1 – Epping Central Metropolitan Activity Centre (ACZ1) together with the application of the Parking Overlay (PO), Development Contributions Plan Overlay (DCPO), Environmental Audit Overlay (EAO) and Special Building Overlay (SBO).

The City of Whittlesea recently undertook a review of the Epping Central Structure Plan to among other things update the Structure Plan (2011) to better align with current policy and respond to emerging issues and opportunities.

Key aims of the Epping Central Structure Plan Review are to increase local employment, provide more diverse housing opportunities and create a more liveable and vibrant Activity Centre consistent with the goals contained in the Community Vision Whittlesea 2040: A Place for All.

A refreshed Structure Plan was adopted in June 2023 having been informed by a comprehensive community consultation program (see Appendix A).

The refreshed Structure Plan is comprised of the Strategic Vision together with broad Objectives and Strategies falling under five key themes aligned with the goals of Whittlesea 2040 to deliver:

- Urban Living – diverse, affordable attractive housing;
- Movement and Transport – Accessible, safe and sustainable transport;
- Employment and Investment – Thriving and resilient local businesses and jobs;
- Community facilities and Services – Community facilities that build and strengthen communities; and
- Public Realm and the Natural Environment – Connected and valued streetscapes, open space and creek networks.

Council officers have also attached a copy of an updated Structure Plan (2024) which has been updated to align with the objectives of the Activity Centre Program and the outcomes of more recent Built Form Analysis prepared by Hodyl and Co (see Appendix C). This version of the Structure Plan has not been endorsed by Council noting that Council is currently in caretaker owing to Local Government elections.

City of Whittlesea Submission to Activity Centre Program

Council's Submission

ACTIVITY CENTRE PROGRAM PROCESS

Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

1. The City of Whittlesea supports investment in the planning and development of the Epping Activity Centre to realise its vision as outlined in the adopted Epping Central Structure Plan.
2. Council officers have consistently sought a partnership approach for the delivery of the program. In this respect, while we have been 'informed' through the process, we have been provided with limited consultation opportunities on key aspects of the program which will have significant implications for development in Epping.
3. We have also been concerned with the limitations of the current consultation and the lack of information provided to Council and other stakeholders including service authorities, affected landowners and the broader community to properly inform their input and submissions to the process.
4. It is normal practice, for an Amendment of this significance to undergo public exhibition to enable affected parties to review and provide feedback/submissions on the draft controls. In this regard, we note the Act includes an objective:
5. *(i) to ensure that those affected by proposals for the use, [development](#) or protection of [land](#) or changes in planning policy or requirements receive appropriate notice;*
6. Council has not been provided with an opportunity to input into preparation key plans including the 'draft Activity Centre Plan' and 'proposed residential catchment areas' which are subject to the consultation process.
7. The material which has been placed on consultation is limited in detail and contains only references to the more detailed work which we understand to be having been recently prepared or currently under preparation. This does not provide parties sufficient ability to review and provide input in respect to the significant proposed changes to planning controls affecting the activity centres and their residential catchments.
8. Further, as has been raised, we have significant concerns over the timing of the program across the Local Government election period. A new Council will be elected in October and we consider it important that they have the opportunity to consider and form a position on the new planning controls noting their long-lasting significance in guiding development in the precinct for many years ahead. This is important to ensuring Councils continued commitment in realising the vision for Epping.
9. The delivery of outcomes in an activity centre is also reliant on the investment of key landowners / investors. The 'freezing out' of these stakeholders as part of this process risks

City of Whittlesea Submission to Activity Centre Program

disengaging them from the outcomes sought from the program and the vision of the activity centre planning work.

10. Whilst an expedited Standard Advisory Committee (SAC) process is supported in principle, the proposed Terms of Reference are inadequate to enable the Committee to properly receive submissions from affected parties, consider the submissions and make recommendations to the Minister for Planning. The Terms of Reference for the SAC must be expanded to provide additional time for the process and enable submissions to be made.
11. The drafting of the draft Planning Scheme Amendment should be through a co-design process with Council officers to ensure the controls are fit for purpose, avoid errors and accurately reflect the strategic work undertaken for Epping.

Consultation Material

12. Council notes that following document has been released for feedback in respect to Epping:
 - a. Draft Activity Centre Plan.
13. The following documents have **not been released for consultation** and therefore Council has not had an opportunity to review or consider these documents or issues which it considers necessary to inform its submission and input into the process:
 - a. Draft planning ordinances including proposed zoning and overlay controls (note: draft template versions of the head provisions provided for consultation on 19 September 2024)
 - b. Draft planning control translation based from Council's draft Built Form Analysis and Testing undertaken by Hodyl and Co in conjunction with Six Degrees Architects.
 - c. Community and Social Infrastructure Assessment.
 - d. Open Space Assessment.
 - e. Transport Assessment.
 - f. Details of proposed infrastructure contributions and potential changes to existing Development Contributions Plan and Development Contributions Plans Overlay.
 - g. Strategic work supporting proposed 'deemed to comply' planning provision.
 - h. Strategic work supporting residential catchment areas.
 - i. Built form testing and urban design analysis supporting residential catchment areas.
14. Council considers that the above is necessary for affected parties to have received 'appropriate notice' in respect to the proposed changes to planning policy and requirements which are significant in nature.
15. The lack of information inhibits the ability for Council to draft its submission and the specificity which can be included in the outcomes sought.

Summary of Outcomes Sought

City of Whittlesea Submission to Activity Centre Program

16. The finalisation of the Activity Centre Program planning scheme amendments not proceed at this time and be deferred for a minimum six month period to enable sufficient time for:
 - a. a public notice process on the draft planning scheme amendment including draft planning ordinances and supporting background reports.
 - b. an opportunity for Council to consider the draft planning scheme amendment and resolve a position on the proposed changes to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme.
 - c. an expedited SAC process which includes sufficient time for the SAC to consider and hear submissions from affected parties.
 - d. an opportunity for the planning authority to review and 'test' the draft planning controls in consultation with Council ahead of the public notice period.
17. Should the planning controls be approved in the planned timeframe, the controls should be approved on an 'interim' basis and time bound. The final controls should be subject to a proper review and testing process including further consultation with Council and public notice process.
18. That the draft Planning Scheme Amendment be prepared through a 'co-design' process with Council officers.
19. For the purposes of preparing the draft Planning Scheme Amendment rely on the strategic work prepared by Council including:
 - Epping Central Structure Plan (refer to Appendices A and B),
 - Epping Central Built Form Report (refer to Appendix C),
 - Epping Central Open Space Needs Assessment and Contributions Review(refer to Appendix D),
 - Draft ordinances prepared by the City of Whittlesea (refer to Appendices G-J).

Epping Central Housing Targets and Development Feasibility

20. The draft Epping Activity Centre Plan outlines how the Epping activity centre and catchment area is to contribute 9,800 to 13,00 new homes.
21. Built form testing completed on behalf of Whittlesea has calculated a capacity of over 14,000 dwellings based on existing planning controls and preferred built form (Hodyl and Co). In this respect Council is confident that there is adequate capacity within the Epping Central Structure Plan area to meet the draft housing targets proposed by the draft Epping Activity Centre Plan.
22. However, modelling and economic advice provided to Council by a number of reputable economic consultants advises that the market for high density development in Epping is 'not ready'. For example:

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23. In 2017, Charter Keck Kramer¹ advised:
- The evolution of Melbourne’s residential market suggests that there will be a future point at which high density apartment development is likely to become feasible in Epping but there is no current indicator to suggest that it will emerge within the next five years. Until such time that the economic costs of delivering apartments in Epping Central are supported by the relative house price structure and necessary feasibility metrics, new apartments will not be developed there.*
24. In 2019, Navire² advised:
- “large scale apartment product (5+ storeys) currently unfeasible to develop in Epping Central. With respect to point (a) above, house prices in Epping are not at a point where it makes financial sense for a purchaser to procure an apartment based on the price savings compared to a detached house. This is only emphasised in circumstances where there is a lack of amenity and/or other benefits associated with the apartments being offered.”*
- “the emergence of a larger scale apartment market in Epping Central is likely to be a longer-term prospect (i.e. 10 + years).”*
25. In 2023, SGS Economics and Planning³ advised:
- “Development of medium and high density infill housing in established areas is contingent on a complex array of demand and supply side market factors. While development feasibility has not been modelled in this project, it is likely that these types of development would be unfeasible under the current development market conditions, particularly at the upper end of densities proposed.*
- This assertion is supported by Median House Price Ratios for each of Whittlesea’s suburbs which indicate that house prices are not currently sufficiently high to support broadscale delivery of higher density housing, noting that ratios are likely to vary depending on the relative amenity of different locations within suburbs.*
- An improvement in market conditions would be required for higher density development to begin to occur at any significant scale.”*
26. As noted above, Median Housing Price Ratios (MHPR) is a useful indicator for the likely emergence of median and higher density housing forms; the higher the ratio, the greater the feasibility of high-density development. Epping Central has a current MHPR 0.7:1. A ratio of at least 1.5 is generally required before larger apartment developments are considered feasible.

¹ Charter Keck Cramer, (2017), Residential Apartment Market Assessment

² Navire (2019), Epping Central Economic Land Use & Market Analysis,

³ SGS Economic and Planning (2023), Residential Market Demand and Capacity Assessment

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27. As such high-density development is currently not feasible under the current development market, particularly at the upper end of housing density, and is not likely to become feasible in the short-medium term.
28. There are a number of interventions that could improve this ratio, namely, investment in facilities, infrastructure and amenity such as open space. In particular, delivery of the Wollert rail extension would provide direct connection into the city and other employment areas for new residents. Additionally, initiatives to support lot consolidation are also required to support high-density development.
29. Council submits that the Activity Centre Program does not adequately support any of the demand factors that would help activate a higher density residential market. Purely, updating the planning controls without supporting interventions will not realise the outcomes sought by the program.
30. One such intervention is the need to provide incentives to support lot consolidation to facilitate larger integrated development outcomes. Many of the lots identified for higher density development within Epping Central, and particularly within the residential areas, are relatively small and unlikely to support the intensity and density envisaged by the Structure Plan.
31. Further, Council submits that a number of the proposals including 'deemed to comply' and inadequate open space provision will further detract from development feasibility and delivery of bricks and mortar development.

Summary of Outcomes Sought

32. Note that market factors influence delivery of housing development and achievement of targets, beyond the application of new planning controls.
33. Consider the methods that will incentivise land consolidation to ensure more integrated built form outcomes.
34. Ensure that the Activity Centre Program and associated planning controls enable the provision of services, infrastructure and amenity required to facilitate higher density housing in identified locations in Epping Activity Centre over time; including:
 35. Commitment to delivery of the Wollert Rail including a station in Epping Central.
 36. Provision of minimum 10% (preferably 13%) open space in the activity centre core to support high density housing and development.
 37. Commitment of state funded social and community recreation required to support the projected population growth.
 38. Ensure that the planning controls do not introduce elements which further detract from the feasibility of delivering higher density housing in the Activity Centre including 'deemed to

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comply' provisions, discretionary height controls and inadequate amenity provisions including open space.

Design Quality

39. At Whittlesea, we have a strong commitment to enhancing the design and quality of development in Epping and across the municipality. We are concerned that 'deemed to comply' and 'fast tracked' processes will not provide sufficient opportunity to influence the architecture, materiality, sustainability and character of our future activity centres and neighbourhoods (which in turn builds the amenity and a future value and market to deliver the higher density outcomes sought by this program).
40. The promotion of good design and place creation are critical to the ultimate success of activity centre and their attractiveness as places to invest and live.
41. How built form and public realm interact and the importance of quality facades, interface treatments and activation of streets etc. are fundamental aspects to get right. It is imperative in higher density environments to set guidance and mandatory requirements that require architectural input which is assessed /reviewed by experts.
42. We are concerned that this process does not provide the time or opportunity for Council to input into the planning controls and framework to ensure a high quality design outcome within its 'city centre' that is responsive to the local context.

PLANNING CONTROLS FOR EPPING ACTIVITY CENTRE

Planning Tools

43. Section 4.3 of the Draft Epping Activity Centre Plan indicates that 'planning controls that are to be replaced by the new land use and built form controls will be removed to streamline assessments and make the planning scheme clearer. No planning overlays are proposed to be removed from the centre.'
44. As noted above, Council is yet to receive clarity or information in respect to the proposed planning tools for Epping including proposed zone or overlay ordinances. Verbal communications with the VPA/DTP have indicated that the Activity Centre Zone (ACZ) as it currently applies to much of the Structure Plan area, may be back-zoned (rezoned to an appropriate standard residential, commercial or industrial zone) and/or a new land use zone applied to part of the centre where the land use outcomes require a more nuanced approach to achieve the preferred land use outcomes.
45. Unlike some of the other centres such as Broadmeadows, Chadstone and Moorabbin, the draft Epping Activity Centre Plan does not contain detailed built form guidelines to help guide our response. Despite this, we draw your attention to the following matters for consideration as part of the SAC's consideration.

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Precinct Zoning

46. Regardless of the changes proposed to the planning controls, if the ACZ1 is proposed to be removed from Epping, this represents a significant change in planning controls for the precinct and we request the opportunity to be properly consulted on the proposed zone(s) to be applied in Epping.
47. It is noted that the back-zoning of any of the precincts within the Structure Plan area will result in some land uses inconsistencies between that proposed in the revised draft ACZ1 and inclusion in any of the existing standard zones. For some precincts it is anticipated that any such inconsistencies will be minimal, for example rezoning of a primarily residential precinct to a standard residential zone will likely have minimal land use conflicts, however the purpose and built form outcomes will be more paramount in the decision making. Although, now the potential introduction of a new 'Walkable Catchment Zone' provides further uncertainty as to its application.
48. Some precincts, incorporate areas with differing land use and built form outcomes across the precinct and rezoning the entire precinct to a single standard zone may fail to realise the land use and built form outcome envisaged by the Epping Central Structure Plan. For example, Precinct 1 contains the main street shopping precinct which is expected to be developed for higher density mixed use with retail/commercial activity at street level and residential and office above, however the precinct also incorporates part of the residential catchment for this neighbourhood. In such instances it is preferred that the ACZ1 continues to apply to these precincts or that a commensurate zone that provides for the same land use outcomes is considered for these precincts.
49. We have, however, undertaken a preliminary assessment of each of the precincts with a view to determining the preferred zone primarily focussing on land use. As noted above, not all precincts are considered suitable for inclusion in a standard residential, commercial or industrial zone. We have also not considered any other unintended consequences that may result from the rezoning of affected Precincts, noting that specific objectives cannot be incorporated into many of the standard zones.
50. Precinct 1 – High Street Village comprises the typical main street activity area along High Street which acts as a local neighbourhood centre to the surrounding residential catchment. This preferred future character of this precinct is for a multi-level mixed use development which creates a human scale urban village. Higher-density, mixed use development with activated street frontages is encouraged along Cooper and High Streets. It is anticipated that the surrounding residential catchment will ultimately support a mix of townhouses, medium density infill apartments and low-medium rise apartments up to six-storeys.

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51. Given the preferred future character of Precinct 1, we note that the ACZ1 provides for land use outcomes that reflect the intent that defines the role of the precinct as a neighbourhood centre for the local Epping Central community. Noting that back-zoning would cause some potential land use conflicts given the varied land use outcomes, it would not be considered appropriate to apply a single zone and ideally, the ACZ1 should be retained. However, if back-zoning were to proceed we would recommend that Precinct 1's High Street area be included in either the Mixed-Use Zone or in the Commercial 1 Zone and the surrounding residential catchment be included in the Residential Growth Zone or Walkable Catchment Zone, having regard to the purposes of these zones.
52. Precinct 2 – High Street North is primarily residential in nature and forms an extension of the residential catchment to the south with strong connections to the High Street Village precinct. There is also a strong civic presence with the Council Depot, Epping Police Station, Epping Primary School and churches located in the precinct. The City of Whittlesea Depot site provides a significant redevelopment opportunity for further employment opportunities, housing diversity and an increase in open space. Built form analysis supports a mix of housing typologies up to six storeys in appropriate locations across the precinct.
53. Precinct 2 is intended to be a medium change residential and community driven precinct. It supports the adjoining High Street Village and is an extension of Precinct 1. As mentioned, it would not be considered appropriate to include a single zone and ideally, ACZ1 should be retained. However, if the back-zoning were to proceed, we recommend that the High Street Village connection be included in either the Mixed-Use Zone or in the Commercial 1 Zone and the residential catchment be included in the Residential Growth Zone or Walkable Catchment Zone, having regard to the purposes of these zones.
54. Precinct 3 – Epping Station Hub is centred around the Epping Train Station and incorporates the Epping Campus of Melbourne Polytechnic and northern and southern campuses of St Monica's College. The Precinct also includes a residential catchment with the Darebin Creek and adjacent linear parklands forming the eastern boundary to the precinct. Preferred maximum building heights range from 3-8 storeys, with taller building heights supported around Epping Station, Melbourne Polytechnic, Darebin Creek Parkland and fronting Hendersons Road.
55. Considering that Precinct 3 is a moderate change, mixed use precinct with a focus on residential development and education-based uses in the Epping Structure Plan, it would not be considered appropriate to include a single zone and ideally, ACZ1 should be retained. However, if the back-zoning were to proceed, we recommend that the 'High Density Residential' areas be included in the Mixed-Use Zone, the 'Medium Density Residential' areas

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be included in the Residential Growth Zone or Walkable Catchment Zone and the 'Education Facility' be included in the Public Use Zone.

56. Precinct 4 – The Regional Demand Precinct is the primary activity area of the activity centre. It encompasses the major anchors of the Activity Centre including Pacific Epping Shopping Centre, the Northern Hospital, the Epping Homemaker Centre, as well as industrial, entertainment and community uses and significant opportunity for future residential development. This precinct offers perhaps the greatest opportunity for high-density, mixed-use development, however any change also needs to be carefully planned to ensure a permeable street and pedestrian network, strong pedestrian amenity and ensure appropriate protection of and built form interface to the future Wollert rail extension. The preferred maximum building heights range from four to twelve storeys.
57. The current (and draft) ACZ1 provides for specific planning outcomes as they relate to the protection of the Wollert Rail Corridor and development of a master plan for the various sub-precincts with the Regional Demand Precinct to ensure that the desired outcomes detailed within the ACZ1 and the Epping Central Structure Plan more broadly are achieved. Noting that the land owners' of the Epping Homemakers Centre and Pacific Epping respectively own significant land holdings, it is imperative to ensure that these areas or developed in a planned and orderly manner. In this respect it is recommended that the draft ACZ schedule should be applied to this Precinct.
58. To cater to the high change, multi-level, mixed use intent of Precinct 4, it is noted that back-zoning would cause some potential land use conflicts. We prefer that the ACZ1 is retained otherwise if back-zoning were to proceed, we recommend that a commensurate zone that provides for the same land use outcomes is considered. We recommend that the Precinct 4 be included in an alternate bespoke zone or potentially the Commercial 1 Zone, having regard to the purposes of the zone.
59. Precinct 5 – The Regeneration Precinct comprise an eclectic mix of industrial and commercial developments that are in varying levels of conditions and utilisation. The precinct is anticipated to be a high change precinct with an evolving focus on high quality multi-level office and commercial development. The precinct will provide a strong transition focus between industrial uses to the west and residential uses to the north and east. While residential use is permitted, the precinct is to have an employment focus. Upgrades are proposed to significantly improve connectivity and pedestrian amenity and to establish strong east-west connections between residential and employment areas
60. Precinct 5 is intended for high change and is mixed-use precinct with the preferred future character focusing on upgrades and urbanisation. It would not be considered appropriate to apply a single zone and to ideally retain the ACZ1. If back-zoning were to proceed, we

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- recommend that the Precinct 5 be included in a bespoke zone or potentially the Commercial 3 Zone, having regard to the purposes of the zone.
61. Precinct 6 – Employment is made up of three distinct sub-precincts. Non-employment generating uses such as caretaker dwellings are discouraged, and residential development is proposed to be prohibited in the Employment Precinct pursuant to the draft ACZ1. Development in this precinct also needs to appropriately manage the interface to the future Wollert rail corridor.
 62. Sub-precinct 6A comprises sites adjacent to Cooper Street. Development along Cooper Street is to provide a sense of arrival to the activity centre with high quality-built form and design. Commercial and office use is encouraged in this precinct.
 63. Sub-precinct 6B is expected to be developed with a mix of commercial, office and light industrial development which supports a greater intensity of employment generating activities. Whilst non-employment generating uses are discouraged, industrial uses proposed on the eastern periphery need to ensure that amenity impacts are considered to provide an appropriate transition to the use of land in the Regeneration Precinct. Less intensive employment generating activities such as storage and warehousing are discouraged particularly along Miller Street.
 64. Sub-precinct 6C is a focus for light industrial and warehousing uses.
 65. The ACZ1 provides for specific precinct objectives and land use outcomes to be developed to guide land use outcomes within each of the sub-precincts and ideally should be retained. Given the land use outcomes vary between each of the sub-precincts, it would not be considered appropriate to include each of the sub-precincts within a single zone if back-zoning is proposed. It is noted that back-zoning would cause some potential land use conflicts within and between the different sub-precincts, however as previously noted, officers have had insufficient time to assess all of the potential unintended consequences.
 66. In summary however if back-zoning were to proceed we would suggest that Precincts 6A and 6B be included in the Commercial 2 Zone and 6C in the Industrial 3 Zone having particular regard to the purposes of these zones.
 67. Precinct 8 – Dalton Road Neighbourhood. The north eastern corner of the existing Structure Plan area is predominantly residential in nature. It also includes Lalor North Secondary College and linkages to the Darebin Creek Linear Parkland. The Dalton Road Shopping Village provides local neighbourhood level retail shops, services and amenity to support the local community. Precinct 8 is made up of two distinct sub-precincts.
 68. Sub-precinct 8A comprises the Dalton Village Shopping Precinct
 69. Sub-precinct 8B comprises the surrounding residential neighbourhood.

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70. Significantly, as part of the refreshed Structure Plan, Precinct 8 has been identified as a contributory precinct on the basis that the area is distanced from the activity centre core and separated from the key activity areas by the rail corridor. In addition, this area is expected to experience only low to moderate levels of change over the life of the plan, with parts of the Dalton Road Neighbourhood comprising a curvilinear road network (i.e. not grid based) comprising many court bowls which is not conducive to supporting medium to high density apartment style developments consistent with achieving the vision for the Epping Central precinct.
71. The Commercial 1 Zone is Council's preferred zone for Sub-Precinct 8a noting the sub-precinct's role in providing commercial land uses which includes office and some residential above ground floor level.
72. On the basis that this precinct is expected to only realise low-moderate change over the life of this Structure Plan and that much of the precinct would be somewhat challenging to develop due to the subdivision layout, the General Residential Zone (or potentially Walkable Catchment Zone), which allows for development of up to 11 metres (3 storeys) is appropriate for Sub-Precinct 8b. It is acknowledged however, that there may be opportunity to consider development of increased density and possibly height along Dalton Road and in proximity to the Dalton Road Village Shopping Centre (also refer to discussion in respect to Residential Catchment Areas).
73. Precinct 9 – Childs Road Employment is designated as a contributory precinct with a low level of change anticipated over the life of the Structure Plan. This discrete pocket of industrial development provides small scale industrial activities which serves as a local service and employment role. Like the Dalton Road Neighbourhood Precinct the existing Mernda Rail line forms a physical barrier between this precinct and the rest of the centre. Noting that land is used and developed for residential use to the north and east of this precinct – the Industrial 3 Zone would be considered the most appropriate standard zone to ensure that amenity matters are appropriately considered.

Land not included in the ACZ1

74. There are various parcels contained within the current Structure Plan Boundary which are not included within the Activity Centre Zone. These predominantly include land parcels in public land use zones (PUZ and PPRZ) including land parcels owned and/or managed by Council, Department of Education, Department of Health, Melbourne Water and Department of Transport (Victrack).
75. It is submitted that land in an existing public land use zone should be retained regardless of whether or not the land has been potentially identified as a future development opportunity.

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76. Precinct 7 of the Epping Central Structure Plan being the Epping Renewal Site, has been included within the refreshed Structure Plan given its location on the western edge of the Epping MAC and the significant opportunity it presents as a high density mixed use precinct that will include a diverse range of commercial uses, housing types and built form outcomes that build on the vision for the Epping Central MAC.
77. It is not proposed to alter the planning provisions currently applying to the Epping Renewal Site, noting the extensive work that has been undertaken in recent years to rezone the land and more most recently in the assessment and approval of a Development Plan for the site (January 2023). It is noted that the Epping Renewal Site which has previously been used for industrial purposes including a landfill, has a range of complex issues which will affect the development of the site and which have been considered as part of the site specific controls applying to the site including the Development Plan Overlay. It is not considered that these complex matters can be easily translated into the ACZ or an alternate control.

Zoning of Council Land

78. Further to the above, the rezoning of land from the Activity Centre Zone (or existing zone in the residential catchment areas) will potentially generate Windfall Tax and may result in land owned by Council (including those used as reserves) triggering payment of the Windfall Gains Tax (where there is sufficient uplift) even where it is used as a reserve as it not developable. It is also possible that Council land within the residential catchment areas may also generate Windfall Tax if it is proposed to rezone these catchment areas to an alternate new zone such as the Walkable Catchment Zone. This outcome would not be supported by Council. In this instance we would seek to further discussion on the most appropriate planning tool including zoning of Council owned land.

Summary of Outcomes Sought

79. Recommend that the ACZ1 continues to apply to those precincts where specific land use outcomes are not consistent with and/or will not be supported by existing standard zones or alternatively that where the ACZ1 is not proposed to be retained a commensurate zone that achieves the land use outcomes as proposed in the updated draft schedule to the ACZ1 should be considered.
80. Land located within the Epping Central Activity Centre Structure Plan boundary and which is not included in the ACZ1 retain its existing zoning and overlay controls including public land and land in the Epping Renewal Precinct (except application of Parking Overlay to Epping Renewal precinct).
81. That Council owned land within the Structure Plan boundary and which is currently zoned ACZ and/or land within the proposed residential catchment be rezoned to an appropriate

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land use zone or sufficient time be given for Council to determine an appropriate zone for each of the affected land parcels prior to the approval of a Planning Scheme Amendment.

Epping North Public Transport Corridor (Wollert Rail corridor)

82. As noted above, in the absence of draft controls, showing if or how our draft ACZ1 is to be translated into alternative planning controls, we seek assurance that the current provisions relating to the future Public Transport Corridor at section 4.4 of the draft ACZ1 (refer Appendix G) is given effect through any proposed translation of the controls. The extension of the Public Transport Corridor is a key advocacy item for Council, and planning must continue to protect the proposed alignment of the Epping North Public Transport Corridor (ENPTC).
83. There is significant planning history associated with the identification and protection of the proposed Wollert rail extension between Lalor and Wollert. Planning provisions aimed at protecting the future Public Transport Corridor and associated train station within Epping Central, were initially included in a Development Plan Overlay (DPO13) applied to the land to be developed for the purposes of the Epping Plaza Shopping Centre (as it existed at that time) as part of Amendment C22 to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme. The DPO13 was implemented into the scheme in May 2003 in accordance with the Panel-recommended schedule.
84. As part of the preparation of Amendment C130 to the Whittlesea Planning Scheme, Council included the provisions relating to the Wollert Rail Corridor, previously contained within DPO13, within the ACZ1 at Clause 4.4 in order to maintain the protection of the Epping North Public Transport Corridor (referred to as the Wollert Rail Corridor in the draft ACZ1 controls). The Panel considering Amendment C130 supported this approach, noting that the ACZ1 addresses important centre-wide provisions across a number of precincts (noting that the future Public Transport Corridor also affects Precinct 6 of the refreshed Structure Plan).
85. In considering the matter in further detail the Panel noted, *'the PTV advice that detailed design has not been undertaken to fully finalise an alignment but suggests that the level of work necessary to preserve the alignment width and height should take place over a reasonable period (say 2 years) to allow a PAO to be put in place. Inaction on this matter potentially quarantines development of land within a Principal Activity Centre which is contrary to good planning outcomes. The Panel does not support PTV's position that it is premature to apply a PAO to the public transport corridor.'*
86. Despite the Panel's recommendation to *'Encourage PTV to place a PAO on land within the Epping Central Structure Plan area to reserve land for the Epping North Public Transport Corridor'*, no further action has been undertaken by the State Government to progress the application of a PAO. It is acknowledged that DTP has recently received Commonwealth

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Government funding to undertake a feasibility study of the corridor and which is expected to take a further two years.

87. The recent VCAT Hearing as it relates to 75 O'Herns Road, Epping [Warwick Concrete Company Pty Ltd v Whittlesea CC [2024] VCAT 678} to the north of the Epping Activity Centre, also recognised the importance of planning for the future Public Transport Corridor despite the absence of a PAO. There is significant policy support throughout the planning scheme/planning policy for the ENPTC, including Clause 02.03 (Strategic Directions) and Clause 18 (Transport) and therefore any plan plans prepared for land affected by the proposed ENPTC must protect the corridor for public transport purposes. On the basis that a station is proposed within Epping Central (with the preferred location located within the Regional Demand Precinct) it is important that any future development of land adjacent to the proposed corridor adequately responds to the current guidelines. The planning provisions within the existing ACZ1 provide a level of certainty to affected land owners, in the absence of more detailed design and application of a PAO.
88. As noted above, the delivery of the Wollert rail corridor is critical to the realisation of the vision for Epping Central as a sustainable urban place experiencing strong population and job growth. Provision of improved public transport options is critical to ensuring the delivery of high density housing within the centre.

Summary of Outcomes Sought

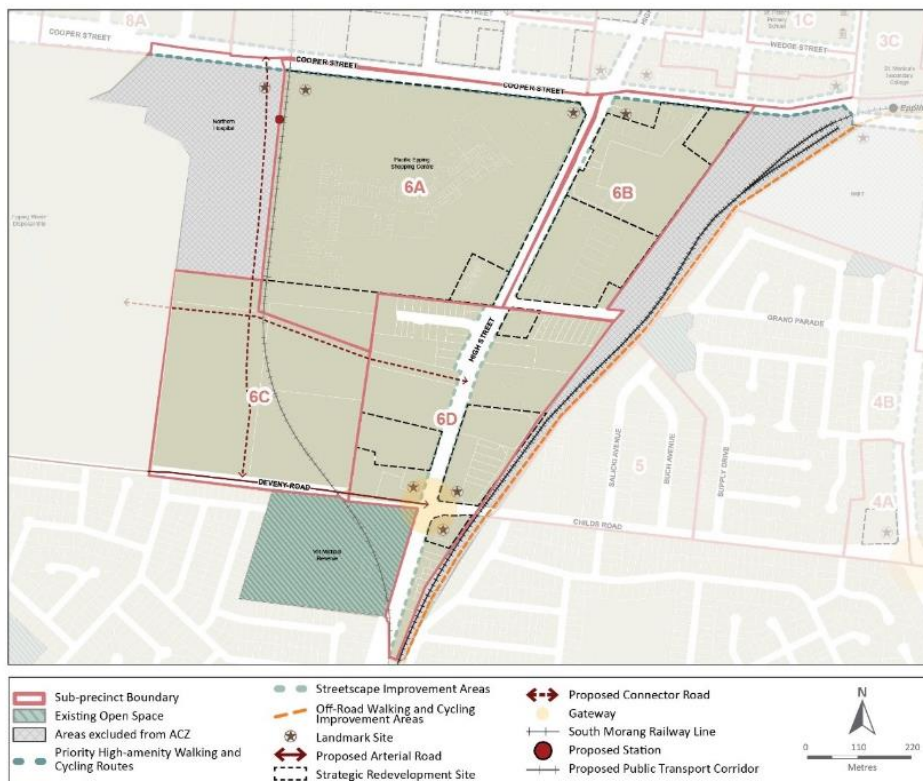
89. The reservation for the Epping North Public Transport Corridor be protected by the new planning controls for the Epping Activity Centre consistent with the existing provisions in Schedule 1 to the Activity Centre Zone and the advice of the Department of Transport and Planning.
90. The SAC recommend that an interim PAO (or other site-specific control) to protect the corridor is considered, allowing opportunity for the completion of the feasibility study and implementation of any recommendations.

Master Planning Process

91. The ACZ1 currently provides for a master planning process for part of the Regional Demand Precinct, more specifically sub-precincts 6A, 6C and that part of 6D west of High Street (refer to Figure 1 below). The master planning process was originally given effect through Amendment C22 to the Planning Scheme (May 2003). The Panel in considering the implementation of the Epping Central Structure Plan (2011) supported the maintenance of the master planning process (detailed in DPO13) as part of the introduction of the ACZ via Amendment C130.

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- 92. The Panel to C130 considered that the ‘...*master planning process for the land to the south of Cooper Street and, in particular to the west of High Street, would provide significant advantages over reliance only on provisions of the Schedule to the ACZ.*’
- 93. ‘*Master planning provides a mechanism to consider the evolution of the ‘core’ of the activity centre. It will ensure effective responses to strategic issues, such as development staging, the land-use attributes within the precinct, the preservation of options to enhance public transport infrastructure, an effective road network, and the treatment of key interfaces within and at the edge of the precinct, while providing the flexibility to respond to opportunities and changing circumstances over the extended development timeframe.*’



94.

Figure 1. Regional Demand Precinct (referred to as Precinct 4 within the new June 2023 Epping Central Structure Plan)

- 95. As part of the refreshed Structure Plan and updated ACZ1 it is proposed to expand the requirement for a masterplan to incorporate the Epping Homemakers Centre to ensure that future planning and development of the site, incorporates an appropriate interface to High Street, permeable pedestrian and road network including prioritising high amenity pedestrian connections to other key sites within the Structure Plan boundary and provision of open space.

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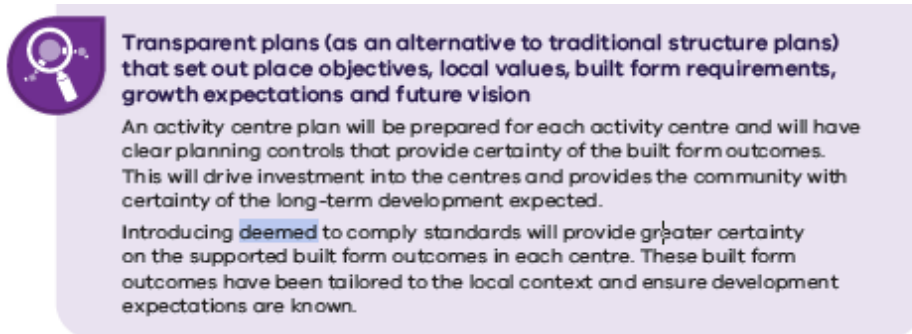
- 96. It is understood that the new Built Form Overlay will include the ability to require master plans on key strategic sites. It is recommended that Council be consulted on the drafting of the schedule in respect to the requirement to master plan key strategic sites in Precinct 4.
- 97. It is noted that a master plan has been previously endorsed for the Pacific Epping Site and that the City of Whittlesea has been working with the landowners of Pacific Epping to update the existing master plan.

Summary of Outcomes Sought

- 98. The provisions of the draft ACZ1, particularly as it relates to the requirement for a Master Plan to be prepared for key sites within the Regional Demand Precinct be incorporated into the Built Form Overlay controls generally consistent with the Attachment G.
- 99. Include a requirement for a master plan to be prepared over the Epping Homemakers site consistent with the Epping Central Structure Plan.

Deemed to Comply Provisions

- 100. The Draft Epping Activity Centre Plan document (along with other similar standard format activity centre plans) suggests that new ‘Deemed to Comply’ provisions will be used in drafting the new planning controls for activity centres.
- 101. Page 5 of the draft Activity Centre Plan documents states that the pilot program’s objectives aim to facilitate increased housing plan through:



Transparent plans (as an alternative to traditional structure plans) that set out place objectives, local values, built form requirements, growth expectations and future vision

An activity centre plan will be prepared for each activity centre and will have clear planning controls that provide certainty of the built form outcomes. This will drive investment into the centres and provides the community with certainty of the long-term development expected.

Introducing deemed to comply standards will provide greater certainty on the supported built form outcomes in each centre. These built form outcomes have been tailored to the local context and ensure development expectations are known.

- 102.
- 103. Although not detailed in the draft Epping Central Activity Centre Plan, the content of other draft activity centre plans released at the same time as the Epping Activity Centre Plan incorporates the following explanation of ‘deemed to comply’:

5.1.1 Introducing deemed to comply

Proposals in the activity centre that meet the building height, street wall height and setback requirements will be assessed against a ‘deemed to comply’ pathway. Under the deemed to comply pathway, if an application meets the deemed to comply requirement, then an application cannot be refused on the basis of that requirement.

Deemed to comply controls provide developers and the community with greater certainty about the likely expected scale and intensity of future development, while still allowing for a more innovative design response on a case-by-case basis if the deemed to comply requirements are not met.

A deemed to comply pathway is limited to built form standards and may be specified as a range. For example, buildings that are above or below a specified height range will not be deemed to comply.

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104. The text at clause 5.1.1 above suggests that Deemed to Comply standards will apply in respect of building height, street wall height and setback requirements. Given the lack of detail in the draft Epping Central Activity Centre Plan it is unclear whether these provisions are intended to be introduced into the planning provisions for Epping Central.
105. Despite this we have considered its proposed application in the other draft Activity Centre Plans and note that Part 6 of the Draft Moorabbin Activity Centre Plan outlines an extensive use of deemed to comply provisions. It covers building height up to 27 metres, street wall and podium heights up to 11 metres, and the front setback provisions above the street wall or podium are also for the most part set as deemed to comply provisions. In referencing Plan 7 (Front Setback Above Street Wall/Podium by Typology) it appears that those deemed to comply provisions would apply to the entire activity centre save for the large opportunity sites.
106. It is noted that the Epping Central Structure Plan and supporting Built Form work undertaken by Council has not been prepared with the intention of implementing 'deemed to comply' provisions.
107. Council is not aware of any other work which justifies the application of 'deemed to comply' provisions in Epping.
108. As such the question is 'deemed to comply with what?' No detailed performance standards or outcome requirements have been published to support the proposed 'deemed to comply' mechanism. The consultation material does not provide any information on the proposed planning provisions which enables stakeholders to respond to this proposal.
109. The City of Whittlesea has significant concerns in respect to the proposed 'deemed to comply' provisions, particularly in the absence of any supporting information for Epping. It is considered that the introduction of the proposed 'deemed to comply' provision will provide for 'in principle' development approvals without the rigour of supporting built form analysis or infrastructure analysis (from the information we have seen).
110. The controls also risk uplifting land values without the commensurate value capture for critical community infrastructure such as open space. Nor are the proposed controls intended to be applied to ensure the delivery of important amenity (i.e. wind, overshadowing, landscaping, character) and sustainability outcomes. The risk is that this will result in speculative land purchases, transfers and planning proposals without delivering the important housing and economic outcomes sought by the program.
111. The provisions may also contribute to a mismatch between land owner expectations and developer capacity to pay.
112. As noted above, Council has had advice from both experts who have provided advice in informing the Structure Plan and experienced developers/ landowners in the area, that the

City of Whittlesea Submission to Activity Centre Program

market for higher density housing is not yet ready, and will require extensive amenity and infrastructure uplift to support people choosing to live in apartments in Epping versus a detached house in the vicinity. While planning controls will technically enable medium density housing (as they currently do), the delivery will be market led, and while the industry may support increased controls, their ability to deliver the homes we need, will be determined by market feasibility.

113. Council further submits that the claim that ‘deemed to comply’ leads to more innovative design responses is not evident in the community engagement material, noting that supporting background documents have not been released as part of the community engagement material. As Council understands the way the provisions to operate, it is only if ‘deemed to comply’ provisions are not met, for example by an applicant seeking greater height than the already generous heights proposed, that a decision maker is availed of any discretion to consider the outcome. Where Deemed to Comply heights or setbacks are met, there is no discretion to encourage innovation. The City of Whittlesea considers that these are likely to lead to repetition and monotony in streetscapes with a sameness rather than diversity in built form.
114. The City of Whittlesea is keen to understand which urban design expert(s) has supported the ‘deemed to comply’ provisions within the activity centre context as proposed and on the scale that they are proposed. It is not evident that this is a recommendation resulting from any expert urban design assessment.
115. As far as officers are aware, there has never been a scenario where ‘deemed to comply’ provisions, as envisaged in the Draft Activity Centre Plan, have been given effect on the scale proposed.
116. SGS Economic & Planning Pty Ltd also highlighted in advice to Council that following concern with respect to the Deemed to Comply (DtC) provision as it may apply to Epping (see Appendix E)
- ‘The DtC provisions – as currently described without reference to mandatory provisions around Public Open Space, other infrastructure and affordable housing – risk the same mistake made in the general up-zoning of Fishermans Bend. Land value expectations will be pushed up, making future provision of essential infrastructure for Council and government more expensive. Indeed, the future master-planning of the Activity Area may be compromised; options for modulated densities, land use mix, walkability, and public realm and any other measure which may be seen to be diminishing ‘rights’ embedded by the DtC provisions can be expected to attract resistance.’*
117. In response to the draft housing targets together with the VPA lead review of the planning controls, the City of Whittlesea engaged consultants to undertake more detailed urban

City of Whittlesea Submission to Activity Centre Program

design work to provide a clear evidence base for how a design-led response can be embedded into updated planning controls. The Epping Central Built Form Guidelines report (Hodyl and Co in partnership with Six Degrees Architects) considered preferred building heights, street wall heights, Floor Area Ratios (FAR) and street setbacks. Additional work is currently being undertaken to test these built form controls to provide greater certainty in respect to the desired built form outcomes. To deliver good design outcomes, the use of controls such as these would be tailored to the context within each precinct through adoption of a combination of likely mandatory Floor Area Ratio controls and/or a mix of mandatory and discretionary controls for building heights, street wall heights and setbacks. This approach is more in line with contemporary built form practice.

118. It is submitted that without proper urban design assessment, there is no apparent basis to move forward with the 'deemed to comply' provisions which would otherwise enable an understanding of how the built form could transpire if developers were to build to the 'deemed to comply' requirements.

Summary of Outcomes Sought

119. Deemed for comply provisions not be applied to Epping Central Activity Centre.
120. It is considered that the built form controls should instead provide for -
1. Discretionary envelope controls (eg height and setback) that guide the overall building scale; and potentially
 2. Density controls through a mandatory Floor Area Ratio that guides overall development yield.
 3. Should 'Deemed to Comply' provisions or other built form controls be entertained that they be subject to further testing and community consultation and/or introduced as an interim control for a period of 1-2 years to enable additional detailed urban design assessment and testing of the new controls.
121. It is suggested that a modified approach could be introduced which incorporates the following elements:
1. Establish an infrastructure contributions and inclusionary requirements regime which is clear and non-negotiable
 2. Use plot ratio controls to establish an appropriate density of development for projects to be eligible for a streamlined assessment pathway and exemption from notification requirements/appeals
 3. Set these plot ratio controls at a 'safe' level through urban design testing (as per a Hodyl and Co-like approach, noting that an awareness of the streamlined assessment pathway should inform this work)

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4. Complement this with performance-based controls for building height, street wall height and set backs.
5. Allow exceedance of plot ratios via the default non-streamlined assessment pathway which would include notification and appeal rights, and would be subject to additional performance/principles-based controls, and
6. Enforce a suitable value capture approach. In principle, this could be applied for all uplift associated with development approval whether this is achieved through the streamlined or default assessment pathway. There would be an especially strong case to apply value capture to height exceedance (Am C270 to the Melbourne Planning Scheme provides a model for this).

Parking

122. It is noted that Section 4.2 of the Draft Activity Centre Plan for Epping flags the possible preparation of a 'Parking Precinct Plan' as a future piece of work (pg 14). We also understand that car-parking provisions are currently under review by the State Government. Managing parking is critical to realising the vision for activity centres including the activation of streets, the walkability of the centre and design of buildings.
123. The City of Whittlesea seeks further clarification in respect to the proposed approach to any proposed changes to the parking provisions noting that Epping currently has a Parking Overlay and which is proposed to be updated as part of this process. It is considered that a more innovative approach to the provision of car parking, particularly in middle-ring suburbs such as Epping which is currently dominated by private vehicular travel and associated car parking and has a number of larger development sites which provides an opportunity for a more consolidated approach to parking.
124. Whilst there has been insufficient time for officers to consider solutions as part of its Structure Plan process, officers are proposing to update the Parking Overlay to among other things: apply column B rates of Clause 52.06 for all uses not listed in the Parking Overlay; revise the car parking rates as they apply to shop, office and dwelling to reduce the car parking rates for these uses; update that car parking objectives to ensure greater consistency with State policy and the refreshed Epping Central Structure Plan; and to extend the Parking Overlay to incorporate part of the Epping Renewal Site and Regional Demand precincts (refer to Addendum to the Parking Precinct Plan at Appendix F).

Summary of Outcomes Sought

125. That changes to the Parking Overlay be supported as contained in the updated draft at Appendix H.
126. Support the extension of the Parking Overlay as depicted in Figure A1 in the Addendum to the Parking Overlay included as Attachment F.

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Built Form Controls

127. As noted elsewhere in this submission, the City of Whittlesea engaged Hodyl and Co to undertake an urban design analysis, capacity testing and develop built form guidelines in response to the draft Housing targets (refer to Appendix C). This work was seen as a priority to confirm that Epping Central has adequate capacity to meet the housing targets whilst ensuring that any development would achieve high quality built form outcomes together with a high amenity public realm including adequate provision of open space to support the anticipated increase in population. It is proposed that the Hodyl and Co work will form the basis of the built form controls proposed to be introduced for Epping Central, and which is generally consistent with the refreshed Epping Central Structure Plan.
128. Whilst Council was and is committed to working in partnership with the VPA and DTP, lengthy delays in reaching agreement on the proposed timing and planning pathway for Epping Central has resulted in the urban design analysis undertaken by Hodyl and Co being undertaken in a compressed time-frame.
129. This work is incomplete and the City of Whittlesea requests additional time to test the outcomes with a view to working with the VPA/DTP to translate the built form recommendations into the new planning tools proposed. We are continuing to progress this work, however, it is not sufficiently progressed to the point of being able to finalise controls for review by the Standing Advisory Committee.
130. We do however attached a draft Activity Centre Zone Schedule together with the key built form recommendations which we propose should be used as the basis to inform the new controls. Given the time constraints, it has not been possible to incorporate the Hodyl and Co urban design work into the Activity Centre Zone Schedule (noting that the ongoing use of the ACZ is also under review), we have pulled out the key elements from this work, which we envisage should be incorporated into the planning controls. These controls are provided without prejudice, noting that some aspects of the controls, particularly the built form work, is still being further considered and may be further refined.
131. It is proposed that the new tools should ensure ability to introduce mandatory controls. At a minimum we are wanting to introduce mandatory FAR controls, however we would like to work through the built form controls in more detail to consider if other mandatory controls may also be appropriate.
132. The height and setback tables in the draft ACZ Schedule have not been updated to reflect the new built form work as the areas designated for different heights (as depicted in the Hodyl and Co work) differ from the existing precinct plans contained in the schedul

Draft Planning Controls

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133. It should be noted that draft planning controls designed to give effect to the refreshed Epping Central Structure Plan were well progressed by the time the VPA was appointed by the State Government to lead the implementation of the Activity Centres Program, designed to support an additional 60,000 new dwellings within 10 pilot activity centres.
134. As previously noted, Council engaged Hodyl and Co in partnership with Six Degrees Architects to undertake further built form assessment to consider a design-led urban design process to the implantation of built form controls. A key aspect of the review is to update the open space plan in the Structure Plan to ensure that the increased uplift proposed by the housing targets is provided with a commensurate supply of additional open space to meet the needs of the future community, recognising the transformative nature of the predicated population growth.
135. Whilst noting that some additional work is required to further refine the built form controls, in order to assist with the translation of the built form guidelines into the new planning controls, the draft planning controls as attached, including Schedule 1 to the Activity Centre Zone (Appendix G), Parking Overlay (Appendix H), Schedule to 53.01 Public Open Space Contribution and Subdivision (Appendix I) and Clause 15.01 Built Form Environment (Appendix J) are strategically justified and are the result of an extensive consultation process undertaken as part of the review and development of the refreshed Epping Central Structure Plan.
136. It is noted that copies of the draft templates of ordinances including a 'Walkable Catchment Zone', 'Built Form Overlay' and 'Clause 58- Apartment Development' were provided to Council on 20 September 2024. However, the belatedness of these documents being provided in the submission preparation process has meant that they have not been able to be properly reviewed or feedback provided as part of this submission.

Summary of Outcomes Sought

137. That the draft controls at Attachments G, H, I and J form the basis of any planning scheme amendment to give effect to any updated of new controls proposed to be introduced to Epping Central.
138. The draft planning scheme amendment including proposed draft ordinances be subject to a public notice process including the opportunity for public submissions to be made.

Implementation**Open Space**

139. As noted earlier in this submission, the draft housing targets proposed for Epping Central will result a commensurate demand for additional open space. The demographic changes anticipated by the housing targets proposed by the Draft Epping Activity Centre Plan are

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transformative in nature and it is unclear how additional community infrastructure and in particular open space is to be supported and funded.

140. The *Whittlesea Open Space Strategy* (2016) (currently under review) is the principal document guiding open space planning in the municipality. Whilst it sets objectives and standards for open space delivery, the strategy refers back to the Epping Central Structure Plan (ECSP) for specific guidance on how gaps in open space network are to be addressed.
141. A key funding mechanism for open space delivery in local government is through the collection of open space contributions. Currently, this is primarily achieved through Clause 53.01 of the Planning Scheme however the Schedule to this clause currently does not have any specific provision for the Epping Central area.
142. In established areas such as Epping, Council has been implementing an informal sliding scale approach to collecting open space contributions where subdivisions are charged for the number of additional lots they produce. This is capped at 5% as per the Subdivision Act 1988.
143. At full development, it is estimated that Epping Central could support a total capacity of 15790 dwellings, which at an assumed average occupancy of 2 persons per household, implies a total future population of 31580 people. This represents an increase of 742% when compared to the baseline population of 3750 people (2021).
144. The expected change in land use towards high density housing such as apartments means that dwellings will also increasingly lack private open space. This will place greater pressure on the existing open space network and heighten demand for more parks as well as upgrades to existing infrastructure.
145. The map at Attachment D shows the current open space network within the Epping Central boundaries as per the VPA's analysis. The green indicates public open space whilst orange denotes restricted open space. Areas in grey have been identified as not having any access to open space within 400 metres walking distance. This assessment largely aligns with Council's own mapping of open space gaps in Epping Central completed as part of the *Open Space Strategy* (2016). Whilst the Open Space Strategy notes that the ECSP will address gaps in open space provision for the ACZ area, it does however, set proximity objectives for each type of open space. The plan at Attachment D identifies catchments in the open space network when adopting these metrics to illustrate gaps in walkable access.
146. The VPA's Community Infrastructure Needs Assessment sets a benchmark of 1200 people per hectare as an appropriate measure for quantifying open space demand for 2051. This translates to a standard of 8.33 sqm per person and reflects an average of Inner Ring suburb provision of open space. The justification for this benchmark is that the Activity Centres

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Program aims to achieve densities similar to inner metropolitan suburbs which face challenges in increasing the amount of land for open space.

147. Council officers have undertaken significant work on this issue which is demonstrating the need for additional open space contributions. In considering an 80% Development Scenario of the Epping Central Activity Centre, an open space rate in the order of 13 per cent would be required to meet the VPA's open space benchmark.
148. In determining an appropriate open space contribution rate to be applied to the Epping Activity Centre however, Council must also take into consideration the projected impacts to the development industry and the practice of other Councils in Metropolitan Melbourne. This has generally seen 8% fixed rates applied to Activity Centres where the projected rate is above the 5% cap determined under the Subdivision Act 1988.
149. It must be noted that an open space contributions rate would likely not result in the full cost recovery for delivering infrastructure, however, it should provide Council with the capacity and flexibility to deliver on its strategic objectives when open space opportunities arise.
150. The City of Whittlesea seeks assurances that the Amendment will include changes to ensure that commensurate open space is provided noting the significant dwelling yield and development rights conferred through this process.
151. Council understands that the new Built Form Overlay will include an ability to specify an Open Space contribution rate and Council submits that for Epping Activity Centre this rate should be a minimum of 10% and preferably a 13% public open space contribution.
152. Further, the new planning controls should include mechanisms which facilitate the reservation and dedication of land for public open space on larger strategic sites as part of future development including sites which may not ultimately be further subdivided.

Summary of Outcomes Sought

153. Ensure that the planning controls provide for a minimum of 10% and preferably a 13% public open space contribution.
154. Investigate potential incentives or legal mechanisms such as section 173 agreement(s) to facilitate delivery of open space in lieu of payment. This could be incorporated into the ECAC Activity Centre Zone controls for specific areas such as Precinct 4 and will provide a means for Council to require/negotiate open space infrastructure delivery with landowners of larger strategic development sites including sites where subdivision is not proposed. Under this approach, minimum standards should be established such as requirements of size and quality of open space.

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Development Contributions Plan

155. Minimal information has been provided to Council in respect to the new infrastructure contributions mechanism. It is unclear as to whether this new infrastructure contributions mechanism will be to update, supersede or work in tandem with the existing Development Contributions Plan and DCPO that currently applies to the Epping Central Activity Centre.
156. The Activity Centre Plan must be supported by a comprehensive infrastructure plan which outlines the infrastructure (both state and local) needed to support the growth of the activity centre over time. Currently a Development Contributions Plan applies to the centre which identified necessary local infrastructure. However, there is also infrastructure which is the responsibility of the state government (i.e. education, public transport, upgrades to declared roads) which is critical to supporting investment and growth in the centre.
157. The updated contributions mechanism must be implemented as part of the same Planning Scheme Amendment which uplifts the land value.
158. Managing contributions plans and delivering local infrastructure to growing communities carries significant financial risks to Council and therefore the plans must be carefully prepared and balanced.
159. The City of Whittlesea requests that further consultation is undertaken in respect to this matter prior to any finalisation of the controls or changes to the existing Development Contributions Plan.

Summary of Outcomes Sought

160. That new planning controls which uplift land value are not introduced without supporting infrastructure, public open space and affordable housing contributions.
161. That new or upgraded state infrastructure which is required to support the growth of the activity centre be identified and committed to as part of the finalisation of the Activity Centre Plan and support infrastructure plan.
162. That Council are properly consulted in respect to any proposed infrastructure contribution funding mechanism and/or changes to the existing Development Contributions Plan and Development Contributions Plan Overlay.

Affordable Housing

163. The strategic context of the Plan notes the pilot program has 7 objectives. One is affordable housing. The objective relating to affordable housing states:
 - o *Activity centre planning will encourage the delivery of affordable housing by being clear on affordable housing needs and giving greater planning certainty when affordable housing is provided.*

City of Whittlesea Submission to Activity Centre Program

164. Section 4.5 Affordable housing, however, does not clarify affordable housing need in Epping beyond noting the very low-, low- and moderate-income ranges that are already in the planning system.
165. It also does not give provide any planning certainty for when affordable housing is delivered, noting that development applications 'should consider how they contribute to meeting the need for affordable housing.' It then lists several options of how a contribution can be made.
166. This presents as the continuation of the status quo for delivering affordable housing which is unsatisfactory in terms of implementing the objective. It requires Council to negotiate with developers for a voluntary contribution. These negotiations are difficult and do not provide certainty for either party. Further, Councils are often successfully challenged at VCAT if the place a requirement on land for affordable housing contributions due to the lack of state policy.
167. The Epping Activity Centre plan should include targets for affordable housing (along with broader housing targets) which delivery are supported by a clear implementation plan including supporting planning provisions.
168. One option to consider could be an affordable housing contribution (i.e. discounted sale or gift, cash contribution, any other delivery method) particularly for sites and precincts where there is a value uplift created by the new planning controls, but with clear steps and methods of calculating an appropriate contribution.

Summary of Outcomes Sought

169. Include affordable housing targets in the Epping Activity Plan. These targets should aim to provide housing appropriate to very low-income and low-income households as a priority.
170. Include an implementation plan for delivering affordable housing in the Activity Centre Plan supported by planning provision in the draft Planning Scheme Amendment controls.

Under-development

171. Proposal which under develop land within the activity centre risk undermining the delivering the outcomes sought by the Activity Centre Program. Policy should be investigated to guide development to ensure that it appropriately responds to the long term aspirations for the activity centre.

Summary of Outcomes Sought

172. Include policy in the new planning controls which prevents underdevelopment of land on strategic sites in activity centres.

Residential Catchment Areas

173. As noted previously Council was not consulted on any of the material prepared as part of the Activity Centres engagement program which includes the proposed introduction of the

City of Whittlesea Submission to Activity Centre Program

- residential catchment areas and which are proposed to support more housing diversity with a focus on medium and higher density apartments, up to five and six storeys on larger lots.
174. The City of Whittlesea is concerned that the residential catchment areas are being proposed in the absence of any supporting information or justification. Nor have draft planning controls been distributed for review and comment. It is unclear how it will be determined what is considered a larger lot on which greater height can be supported versus a smaller parcel where only three to four storeys is permitted.
175. One of the most significant challenges to achieving a more integrated development outcome, relies on suitable tools to incentivise site consolidation. This will be an issue both within the proposed residential catchment areas and also within other residential precincts in the activity centre boundary e.g. sites east of High Street, with many lots having been previously developed for townhouses and which represents a significant under-development of the area.
176. Council officers are also opposed to the proposed residential catchment boundaries. In the context of Epping, which is already a significantly large activity centre (over 400ha in size), the proposed residential catchment boundaries extend over 1.6km from the Epping Train Station. It is submitted that such an expansive area is not consistent with the intent of designating an '800 metre walkable catchment'.
177. Further, the walkable catchment appears to have not been accurately assessed actual walking distances to the activity centre and key attractions such as shops and public transport. There are a number of barriers in the residential catchment areas which would restrict direct pedestrian access including subdivision design, waterways, railways and large development sites. For example, the property at 9 Jeffrey Court, is approximately 800m as the 'crow flies' from Epping Train Station however it is over a 1.4km walk. It is recommended that 'pedestrian shed' be prepared to inform any application of walkable catchments areas.
178. The 'pedestrian sheds' should be mapped from key nodes in the activity centre such as Epping Train Station and Pacific Epping Shopping Centre (see Figure 2). Inclusion of nodes outside of the activity centre boundary such as Lalor Train Station is opportunistic given the distance of the station from land in the Epping Activity Centre.

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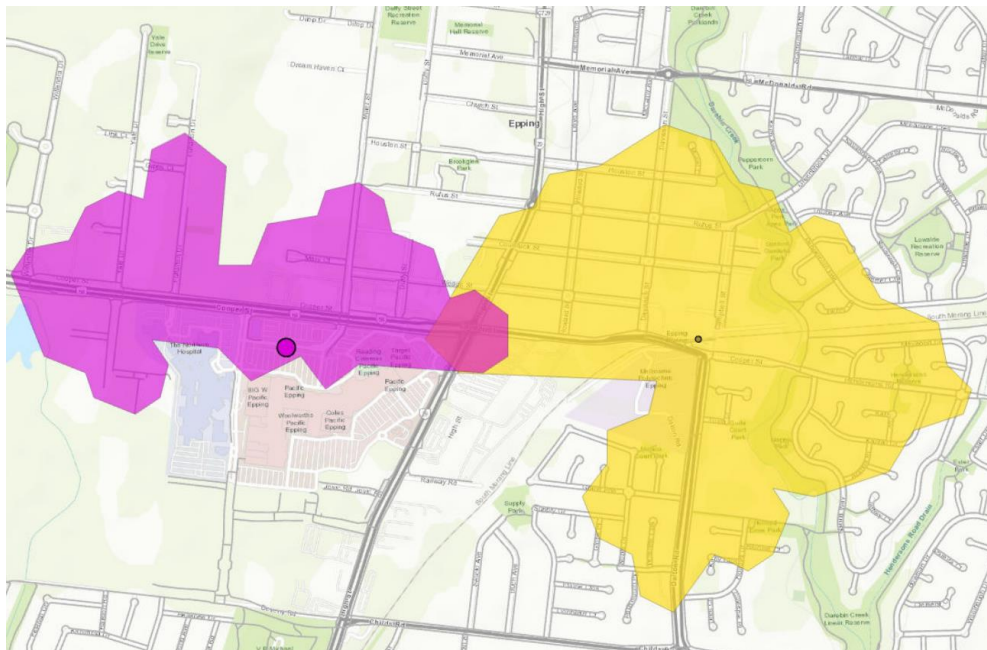


Figure 2. Epping Central Walkable Catchment – 800m from Epping Train Station and Pacific Epping Bus Interchange (note: the walkable catchment only recognises public roads and pedestrian paths)

179. As noted in this submission the Epping Activity Centre is already over 400ha in size and at its periphery includes residential catchments areas and open space (i.e. Darebin Creek corridor) in its boundaries (see Figure 2). It is a very different context to other centres where the activity centre boundary ends where the ‘activity’ ends. In the context of Epping, it is often a walk of 400m to 1km within the activity centre boundary to reach the ‘activity’. Mapping the residential catchments from the edge of activity centre boundary for Epping is therefore a flawed approach.

180. As noted above, the Epping Central Structure Plan already incorporates significant areas of residential land use including areas which are the ‘walkable catchments’ to the activity centre (see Figure 3). Recent built form analysis, commissioned by Council in response to the draft housing targets and to support the implementation of built form guidelines, recommended heights ranging from 3-6 storeys in these residential precincts to the north and east of the key retail and commercial activity areas.

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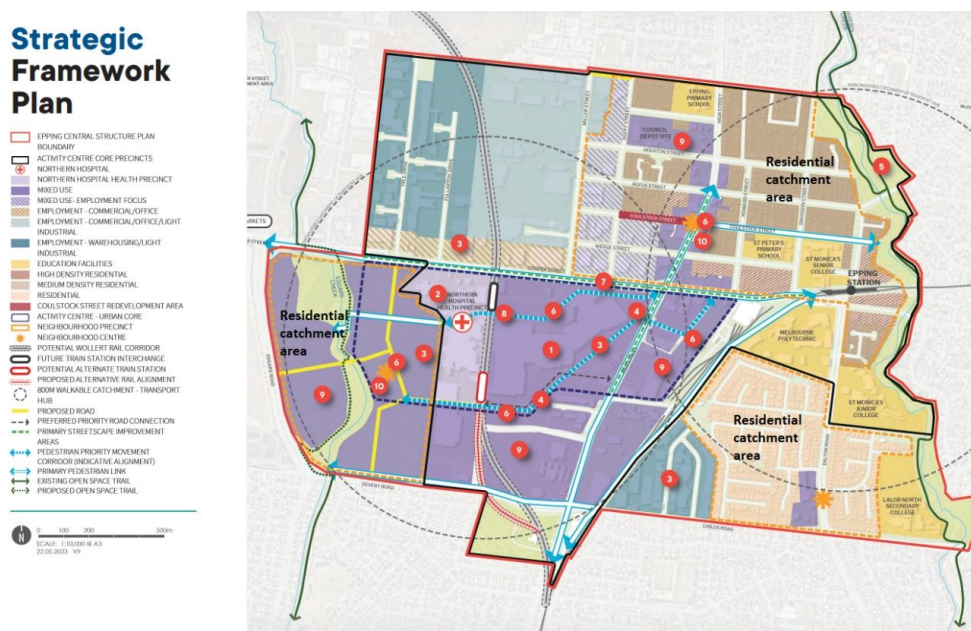


Figure 3. Epping Central Structure Plan (with Residential Catchment in Activity Centre boundary identified)

- 181. It is further noted that Precinct 8 which is a predominantly residential neighbourhood and forms the south east corner of Epping Central, was designated as a contributory precinct as part of the refreshed Structure Plan. This was on the basis that this area is distanced from the activity centre core and separated by the rail corridor. In addition, this area is expected to experience only low to moderate levels of change over the life of the plan, with parts of the Dalton Road Neighbourhood comprising a curvilinear road network (I.e. not grid based) comprising many court bowls which is not conducive to achieving the vision for the Epping Central precinct.
- 182. The refreshed Epping Centre Structure Plan identified that whilst some higher density development (3-5 storeys) could be supported within the retail centre, on the corner of Dalton and Childs Roads and potentially along Dalton Road given it's proximity to the Epping Train Station, that a low level of change is anticipated in the remainder of the precinct. The Structure Plan recommends that the precinct would support standard and medium-density residential development including units and townhouses up to three storeys. The proposal therefore to extend the residential catchment further south of this precinct, and which also encompasses areas with a similar curvilinear subdivision layout is therefore at odds with the Structure Plan and is not supported.
- 183. Similarly, the inclusion of the residential catchment areas east of the Darebin Creek, which also forms a physical barrier to the core activity areas is not supported. Like the Dalton Road Neighbourhood Precinct, this area is physically separated from the Activity Centre and has

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a curvilinear subdivision layout which is not conducive to higher density residential development.

184. Part of the Peter Lalor Housing Co-operative Housing Precinct and broader Saxil Tuxen Housing Estate has also been incorporated within the proposed residential catchment area south of Childs Road. These areas were considered as part of Amendment C181 by the Residential Zones Standing Advisory Committee and which were supported for inclusion in the Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ) by the Minister for Planning in approving C181 in correspondence dated 20 September 2015. These areas have been identified as being of heritage significance, and whilst a Heritage Overlay has not been applied to these properties to date, it is not considered appropriate to incorporate this area within a planning controls that supports the ultimate transformation of this area. Properties in the area also contain restrictive covenants.
185. It is therefore submitted that the residential catchment area as proposed, from the information available, is not strategically justified and is inconsistent with the Epping central Structure Plan and should be excluded from this program to enable a proper strategic planning process to occur.

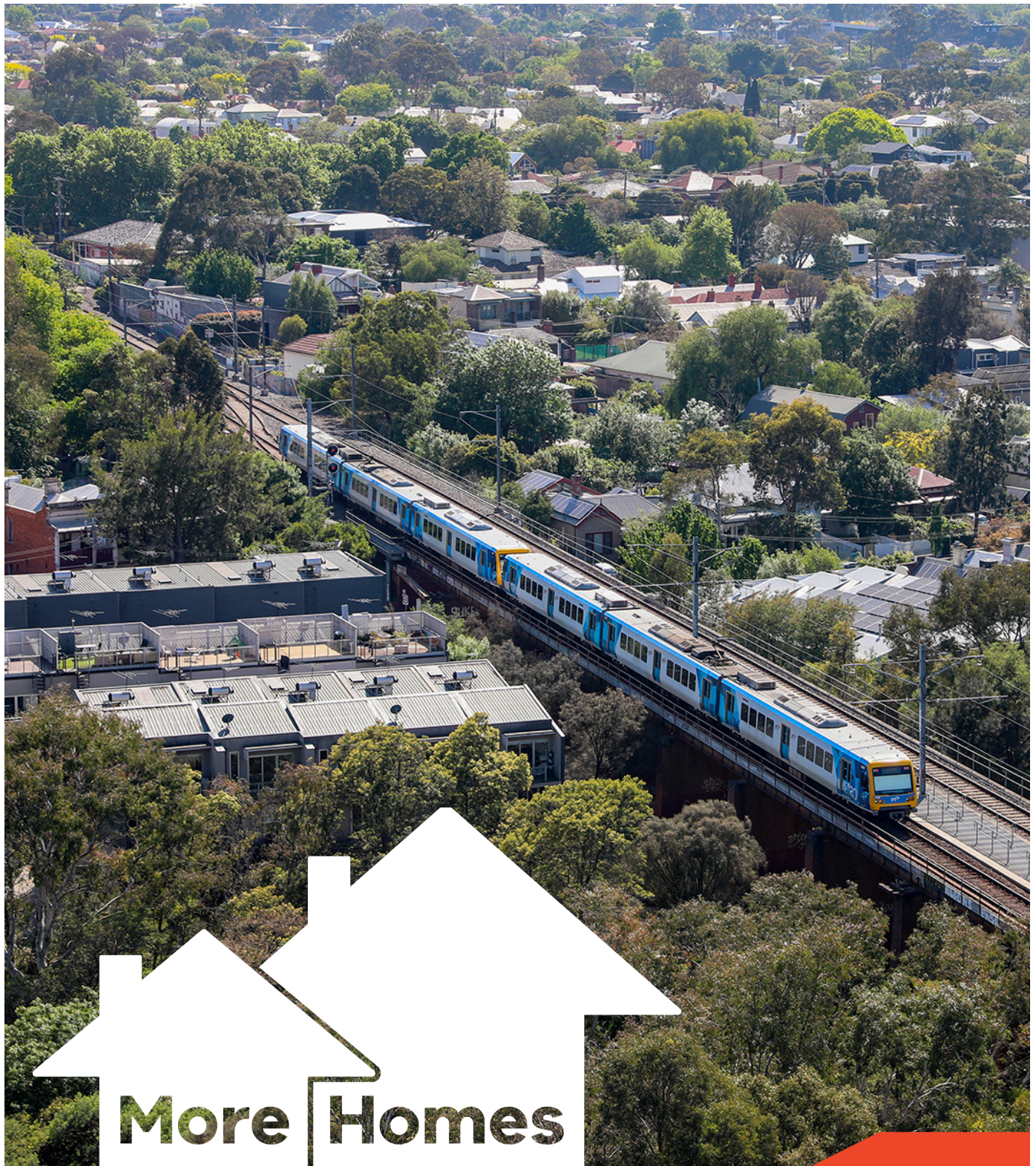
Summary of Outcomes Sought

186. The residential catchment areas be excluded from this stage of the program and not included in any initial planning scheme amendment.
187. That any consideration of change to planning controls in residential catchment areas be subject to a proper strategic planning process including public consultation of the specific changes proposed and supporting background reports and strategic justification.
188. That 'pedestrian sheds' be taken from public transport nodes (i.e. Epping Train Station and bus interchange at Pacific Epping Shopping Centre) in the activity centre (rather than the boundary of the activity centre) be prepared to inform any application of residential catchment areas and a walkable catchment zone.
189. That noting the size of the Epping Activity Centre, that the 'residential catchment areas' be primarily restricted to areas within the existing activity centre boundary.
190. That any future application of a walkable catchment zone or equivalent, strategically consider the local context of those precincts including 'actual' walkability to services and public transport, heritage, neighbourhood character, transport and existing subdivision patterns.

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Appendices

- A. Epping Central Structure Plan, 2023 (Adopted Version) - City of Whittlesea
- B. Epping Central Structure Plan, 2024 (Updated Version) - City of Whittlesea
- C. Epping Central Built Form Report, 2024 – Hodyl & Co
- D. Epping Central Activity Centre Public Open Space Assessment and Contributions Review, 2024 – City of Whittlesea
- E. Proposed ‘Deemed to Comply’ provisions for development control in Epping Central, 2024 – Advice provided by SGS Economics and Planning
- F. Addendum to Parking Precinct Plan, 2024 - City of Whittlesea
- G. Draft Schedule 1 to Activity Centre Zone, 2024 – City of Whittlesea
- H. Draft Schedule 1 to Clause 45.09 Parking Overlay, 2024 – City of Whittlesea
- I. Draft Schedule to Clause 53.01 Public Open Space Contribution and Subdivision - City of Whittlesea
- J. Draft Clause 15.01 Built Form Environment - City of Whittlesea



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JACINTA ALLAN MP
Premier of Victoria
October 2024



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- Page 9 **More infrastructure funding**
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- Page 13 **More social homes in the regions**
and a boost for regional councils
- Page 14 **Buildings get fast-tracked**
if they are designed and built well
- Page 16 **More rights for renters**
to make the system fairer
- Page 18 **\$30 million for more parks**
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More homes near train stations: 50 new activity centres

The Victorian Government will deliver more homes in 50 new **'train and tram zone'** activity centres at suburban train stations.

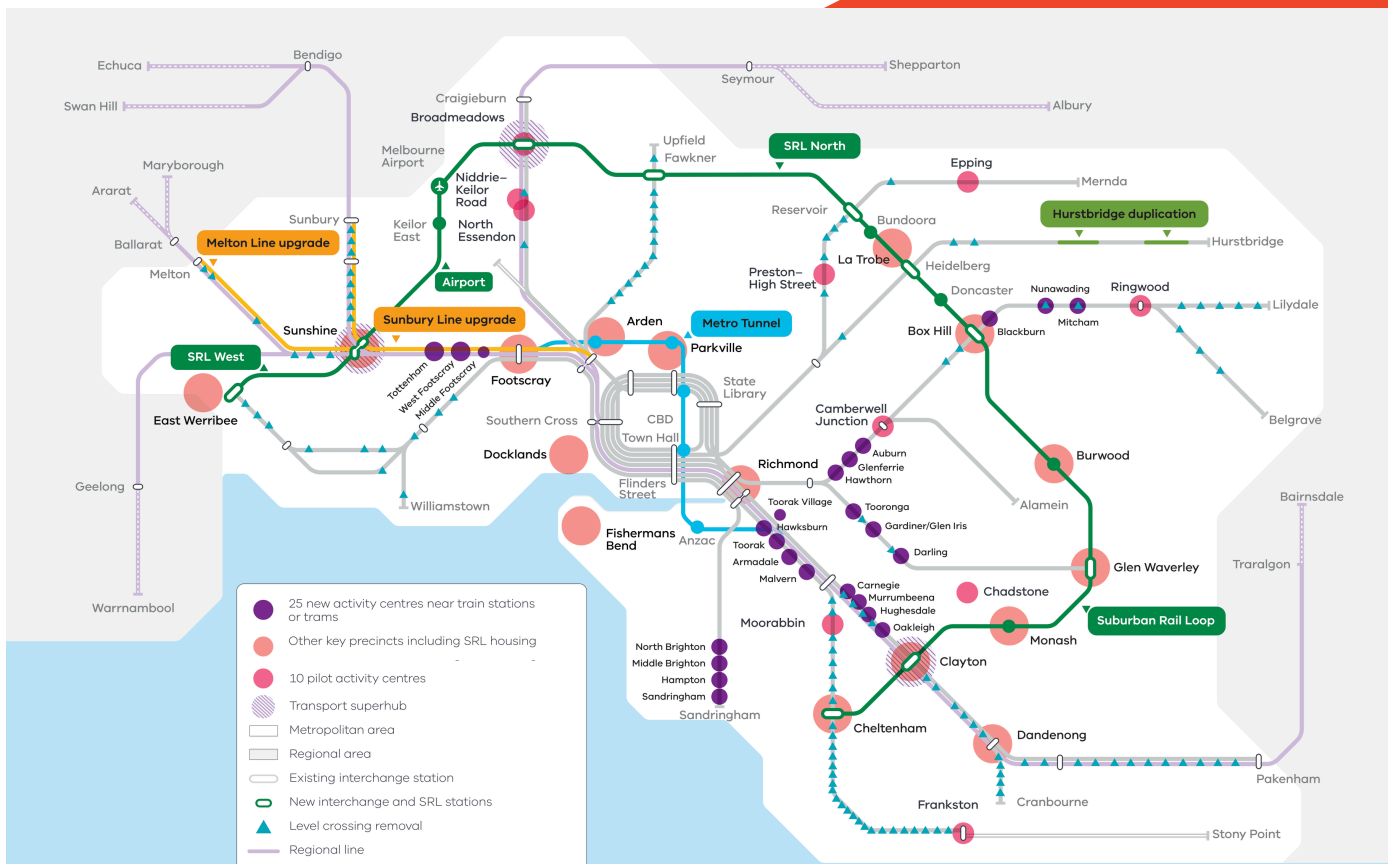
These zones, based around public transport, will **deliver more homes for young people, families and downsizers in Melbourne's suburbs.**

This is an expansion of the Government's Activity Centre program.

These 50 new activity centres will encourage more than 300,000 additional homes around Melbourne's train lines by 2051.

The first 25 centres will be delivered in two tranches over the next 12 months, with timelines to be communicated clearly. The process for all 50 new centres is expected to be complete by 2026.

First 25 locations announced



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More homes near train stations: 50 new activity centres

First 25 locations

The future Sunbury to Cranbourne-Pakenham line using the Metro Tunnel:

- Carnegie Station
- Hughesdale Station
- Murrumbeena Station
- Oakleigh Station
- Middle Footscray Station*
- West Footscray Station
- Tottenham Station

Belgrave/Lilydale Line:

- Hawthorn Station
- Glenferrie Station
- Auburn Station
- Blackburn Station
- Nunawading Station
- Mitcham Station

Frankston Line:

- Toorak Station
- Toorak Village* (58 tram)
- Hawksburn Station
- Armadale Station
- Malvern Station

Sandringham Line:

- North Brighton Station
- Middle Brighton Station
- Hampton Station
- Sandringham Station

Glen Waverley line:

- Tooronga Station
- Darling Station
- Gardiner & Glen Iris Stations (combined)

Toorak Village and Middle Footscray are smaller 'neighbourhood' activity centres.

The locations for the remaining 25 of 50 'train and tram zone' activity centres will be announced in late 2024.

These locations were recommended based on an analysis of transport capacity, access to jobs and services, and environmental considerations.

This builds on the 10 pilot Activity Centres the Government is already delivering in Broadmeadows, Camberwell, Chadstone, Epping, Frankston, Moorabbin, Niddrie, North Essendon, Preston and Ringwood.

What will they look like

Through this program of 50 new activity centres, **the vision is for taller buildings in the immediate 'core' where the train station and commercial centre is located.**

Streamlined planning will apply in this core. In areas where the train station is very residential, the core could be very small, with more modest height limits compared to larger stations.

In the walkable 'catchments' up to 800 metres surrounding this core, the vision is for gentler, scaled height limits and more low-rise apartments and townhouses alongside existing homes.

Normal planning processes including notice and third-party appeal provisions will continue to apply in these catchment areas, and change will be sensitive and incremental - occurring over time.

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Key questions: activity centres

What does activity centre planning mean for heritage or my right to have a say?

This program will not alter the rights of residents in the catchment areas to know, have their say, to appeal, and this program will not alter heritage or landscape overlays in the catchment areas.

How it works in every community will be designed in consultation with locals. This process will take time and opportunities to have your say will be communicated widely.

This engagement and planning process will ensure plans are tailored and appropriate for each community.

Why near public transport?

Because **Victorians want more homes close to public transport, jobs and services.**

The time is right. Melbourne's train network has completely transformed over the last ten years, with more services, more than 50 new or upgraded stations, 84 level crossings gone for good, more to go – and the Metro Tunnel on its way next year.

Decisions to add more activity centres at train stations follow community feedback on the 10 draft Activity Centre Plans, where Victorians emphasised the importance of transport connections.

Additionally, more than 70 upgrades to schools and kinders near each of the first 25 centres to be announced have been funded by the Government since 2016.

How big will the core and catchment areas be?

First, planning work must take place at a local level. This involves a street by street, metre by metre study of the community.

This will happen progressively as the 50 new activity centres are delivered by 2026.

The core is proposed to be the train station and its immediate vicinity, such as the main commercial/shopping area.

In areas that are more residential, the core could be small, with modest height limits compared to larger stations.

Catchment areas are proposed to be ten minutes walk (or 800 metres) from the core.

In the catchment areas, the vision is for gentler, scaled height limits and more low-rise apartments and townhouses alongside existing homes.

Plans for all activity centres will be different, because all communities are different.

Government will work with councils and locals to understand their priorities and help enhance what's important about their neighbourhood.

How do I learn more?

Planning work hasn't started for the 50 new activity centres, but planning for the 10 centres announced last year is underway.

To get an idea of the journey to date and the plans for these 10 first activity centres, visit engage.vic.gov.au/activitycentres

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Off-the-plan tax concessions to build more homes

The Victorian Government is slashing stamp duty on off-the-plan apartments, units and townhouses to cut upfront costs, speed up building, and make it more affordable for everyone to buy off-the-plan.

Current concession

Currently, first home buyers and owner-occupiers can access a stamp duty concession when they buy off-the-plan, allowing construction costs to be deducted from the sale price when calculating how much stamp duty they owe.

This is currently capped for first home buyers and owner-occupiers.

To access the concession, the reduced value for stamp duty calculations following the deduction of construction costs must be under thresholds of \$750,000 for first home buyers and \$550,000 for owner occupiers – otherwise the concession isn't available.

New extended concession

Anyone buying an apartment, unit or townhouse off-the-plan can claim the concession – that means first home buyers, owner-occupiers and investors.

Thresholds will be removed so the concession is available for apartments, units and townhouses of any value.

The 12-month extended concession applies from 21 October 2024 and it will allow a 100 per cent deduction of outstanding construction and refurbishment costs when determining how much stamp duty is owed.

Why? It's all about supply.

This gets more homes built.

By cutting upfront costs for more buyers, developers of new home projects can expect more pre-sales.

That helps developments meet finance requirements faster so they can start the construction of new homes sooner.

That's how this plan boosts housing supply.

More apartments, units and townhouses means more homes for young people and families to rent or buy.

How do I learn more?

This is an extension of an existing concession. The existing concession will continue to apply during and after this 12-month period.

To read more about the range of concessions available to buyers and how they are calculated, visit sro.vic.gov.au/offtheplan

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Key questions: tax concessions

How much will a buyer save?

The amount you save depends on how much construction has occurred.

Generally, someone buying an apartment off-the-plan is likely to pay about a quarter of the stamp duty they would pay without the off-the-plan concession.

A Victorian using this concession who buys off-the-plan before any construction work starts could pay around **\$28,000 less stamp duty on a \$620,000 apartment – with duty slashed from around \$32,000 to around \$4,000.**

What properties are eligible?

An eligible apartment, unit or townhouse is one that is in a strata subdivision – meaning they retain common property such as a driveway or a shared hallway.

House and land packages or other dwellings that are not part of a strata subdivision are not eligible for the extended concession. However, first home buyers and owner occupiers can still utilise the existing concession on these properties.

How do I know the value of outstanding construction?

It's the same process as for the existing concession and is well understood by industry, with the relevant information provided by the builder or developer in line with guidance from the State Revenue Office.

In simple terms – if the building hasn't been built yet – then you're only paying stamp duty on the land value.

How is it calculated?

When the new off-the-plan concession applies, you can deduct 100 per cent of the construction or refurbishment costs incurred on or after the contract date from the dutiable value of your property.

Land transfer duty will then be calculated on this reduced amount. Other concessions that you may be eligible for will also apply based on this reduced amount.

The method of calculating the off-the-plan value for this new concession will be the same as for the existing concession.

For example

Michelle is eligible for the concession, and she buys an eligible apartment off-the-plan for \$1 million before any construction work has begun.

The vendor advises Michelle that \$750,000 of the contract price will be spent on constructing her apartment.

Michelle can deduct 100 per cent of the construction costs when calculating the dutiable value of the property. That \$750,000 is now subtracted from the dutiable value of the home.

This means the amount Michelle pays in stamp duty is effectively calculated as if she purchased a \$250,000 property, not a \$1 million property.

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More infrastructure funding where homes are getting built

The Victorian Government will work with key members of its Housing Affordability Partnership to deliver long-term change that links more homes with more infrastructure.

Under this plan, all suburbs that build more homes will get more funding for the things they need, including:

- roads, paths, and public transport
- new and upgraded schools
- upgraded health & community facilities
- parks, playgrounds, sport and recreation, open space – and more

The need for change

Developers already contribute to the community through a system of developer contributions, paid to councils or the state.

Currently, 43 of 79 councils collect developer contributions in different ways.

This system has delivered a lot of local benefits, but **it's not in the right areas – like many inner-suburbs** - and the admin burden adds delays. Ultimately, it just isn't doing the job of providing more infrastructure funding to growing suburbs.

Participating in “a collaborative approach for liveable communities”, the industry working group will meet from November 2024, looking at models for change to find one that works for industry, councils, Government, and communities.

It will report back in March 2025 with options that help Victoria's suburbs grow sustainably, by delivering community infrastructure alongside new home projects.

Starting in 10 activity centres

The Government will introduce a simple developer contribution pilot in 10 growing areas close to jobs, transport and services where more homes are coming under Victoria's Activity Centre program: **Broadmeadows, Camberwell, Chadstone, Epping, Frankston, Moorabbin, Niddrie, North Essendon, Preston and Ringwood.**

The move will kickstart more funding for local infrastructure in these activity centres while Government and industry work on a long-term statewide system.

These contributions will start on 1 January 2027 to give industry time to prepare. Government will engage with industry before announcing fees, which won't necessarily be considered a benchmark for statewide reform.

\$150 million for outer suburbs

This year, the Government will open a new, \$150 million round of Growth Area Infrastructure Contributions funding for communities in Cardinia, Casey, Hume, Melton, Mitchell, Whittlesea and Wyndham.

This is an existing contributions scheme. The new round will focus on improving transport. Successful projects and final funding amounts will be confirmed next year.

More Homes More Opportunity



A ten year pipeline of land for family homes and backyards

The Victorian Government is delivering Victoria's longest ever pipeline of new land for new homes and backyards that are great for big, growing families.

The Government has released a landmark plan for **27 additional greenfield areas across Melbourne's outer south-east, north, and west** to be released over the next 10 years – committing to providing the space and completing the planning work to deliver 180,000 new homes over the decade.

The plan provides concrete timelines for industry and community. The structure planning process will ensure these areas are ready for development, with the release of unzoned land sequenced to align with the provision of infrastructure.

The plan also reinforces Victoria's strategy to ensure **30 per cent** of new housing growth goes in outer-suburban and greenfield areas, with **70 per cent** going in established suburbs close to jobs, transport and services - because Victorians deserve more housing choices wherever they want to live.

Where are they located

The first three greenfield plans set to be released in 2024-25 include:

- Northern Freight Precinct
- Cardinia Creek South Part 2
- Kororoit Part 2

These build on the seven Melbourne greenfield plans under preparation.

To view the ten year plan, visit vic.gov.au/more-homes

Plus more homes near train stations

Government is finding more room for homes in established areas, close to trains.

In addition to the plans for more apartments, units and townhouses in 50 'train and tram zone' activity centres, the Government is:

- Unlocking additional surplus government land near trains for more homes, in **Oakleigh** and **Footscray**.
- Progressing more housing projects in **Alphington, Coburg, Malvern and Preston**.
- Preparing to release ten further sites for more homes.

Next steps are also underway for the mega home project in Arden, where 20,000 people will live 2km from the CBD on the doorstep of the Metro Tunnel.

Helping builders get on with it

The key part of the 10-year plan is the horizon it gives to home builders – they can see exactly where the opportunities lie for their sector and look ahead with confidence.

From 2025, the Victorian Planning Authority will be integrated with the Department of Transport and Planning, bringing components together to cut delays and duplication and deliver faster and better structure planning.

More Homes More Opportunity



Tough new building watchdog for buyer peace of mind

The Victorian Government will deliver more protections for Victorian homebuyers, giving them peace of mind whether they're building, buying or renovating a home.

The Government will replace the building regulator with a new more powerful watchdog – the **Building & Plumbing Commission** – to oversee building and plumbing industries across the state.

For the first time, it will bring together all aspects of building quality control – regulation, insurance and dispute resolution – into a single agency.

The watchdog will get tough new powers to protect families and their homes.

Tough new powers

Currently, the regulator can only direct builders to fix substandard work before occupants move in.

Under new rules, the Building & Plumbing Commission will be able to direct builders to fix work before *and after* move-in day.

The Government will work with industry to define the eligible time period.

New powers will also enable the watchdog to **stop apartments with serious defects from being sold**. There will also be increased reporting requirements before occupancy certificates are signed off on new builds.

Inspection blitz & boots on ground

While most builders do the right thing, some dodgy operators continue to cut corners and break rules.

It's why the watchdog will be resourced with new boots on the ground, with a 50 per cent increase in auditors and frontline inspectors, as part of a \$63.3 million investment in this year's Budget.

The watchdog will also be tasked with leading an inspection blitz, including a **crackdown on unregistered building and plumbing work**.

Strong financial protection

Victorians will have better access to insurance if things go wrong – eliminating the need for complex and costly legal claims against builders who do the wrong thing.

Apartment buyers will also have stronger financial protection, with **developers required to provide a bond** to cover the cost of fixing poor work for buildings over three storeys.

The new bond will be the first step towards introducing a new 10-year insurance product for apartment buildings, with next steps to be developed in consultation with an industry working group.

More Homes More Opportunity



More townhouses in the suburbs thanks to easier subdivisions

The Victorian Government will make it easier, faster and cheaper for Victorians to divide their blocks and build more homes.

This is a plan to make Victoria the 'townhouse capital'.

The Government will immediately commence an implementation review into how to fix the current system, where **subdivisions take too long** and often discourage home building.

It will examine how our planning and building systems can be streamlined, so more Victorians can add a second home, build two new homes, or subdivide a block into two lots for a townhouse.

What are the options?

Options on the table include **faster 10-day subdivisions** (down from 60 days and often longer), criteria-based planning permit exemptions, or no requirement for a planning permit at all.

As part of the review, the Department of Transport and Planning will look at how approvals can be fast-tracked – while maintaining standards to ensure Victorians can rely on a good quality home.

Clear protections will remain in place for **trees and car parks**, and overlay permit requirements (such as in flood or heritage overlays) will still apply.

Why townhouses?

Townhouses are a great choice for young people trying to buy a home with **multiple bedrooms, a backyard and a carport**.

They can be built more easily in established suburbs and they fit in well with all streetscapes.

It also helps owners make money off an investment while they build someone else a home.

By making it easier for homeowners to subdivide their land, it will be easier for more Victorians to find a home in an established suburb – close to transport, jobs, schools and services.

What about granny flats?

Similar changes have already been made for granny flats. In 2023, the Government allowed homeowners to build *small* second homes, such as granny flats, without a planning permit.

When is this happening?

Government will consult with industry and consider final options with the aim of implementing the reforms by April 2025.

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More homes in the regions and a boost for regional councils

More social homes

The Government will deliver **1,300 social and affordable homes across regional Victoria** through the Regional Housing Fund.

The \$1 billion Fund ensures everyone has the dignity of a roof over their head – no matter where they live.

The Government has announced the regions where the first 1,000 homes will go.

This includes 238 homes in the Barwon region, 162 homes in Loddon, and 140 homes in Goulburn.

More local funding

The Government will create a simpler, fairer system for property developers to contribute to funding for local infrastructure, parks and services in the areas where they build more homes.

This means a developer contributions system would – for the first time – serve all communities in regional Victoria, not just some.

A review will specifically look at **unique infrastructure needs** of regional Victoria – so those needs can be met.

More planning work

To **boost planning capacity in regional councils**, the Government will contribute \$500,000 towards a Regional Planner Cadetship Program.

The program will directly address a state shortage of planners that is slowing planning processes in many councils in rural and regional areas – and slowing down new homes.

A Regional Planning Hubs program also helps regional and rural councils to plan their local communities.



Social and affordable home plans in regional Victoria

More Homes More Opportunity



Buildings get fast-tracked if they are designed and built well

The Victorian Government will change planning rules to promote, reward and speed up townhouses and apartment buildings that are designed and built the best.

The Government will turbocharge its Future Homes program for more affordable, high-quality, architecturally designed homes by:

- Rewarding affordable, well-designed buildings – and developers who put in the effort to build them – by granting them a **fast track through the planning system**
- Expanding the ‘design book’ of great designs by including existing buildings that have made a mark and are loved by residents and the community
- Letting Victorians have their say for the first time on how Victoria’s streetscapes and buildings should look
- Building real life examples of ‘design book’ homes on government land so Victorians can explore them – and then move in.

The goal is a new era of housing design that **looks great on the outside and feels solid as a rock on the inside.**

Grand designs, without the grand cost

Victorians deserve homes that are affordable to build, buy and live in - and which will stand the test of time in quality, design, look and sustainability.

All homes are beautiful, but the system shouldn’t be set up to reward buildings that detract from Victoria’s stand-out history of architectural diversity or won’t hold up in quality or sustainability.

Great design fast track

The Government will introduce a new, fast-tracked pathway for buildings with homes that meet the test of build quality, good design and sustainability – **so developers can build better homes** without the additional costs and delays.

The Great Design Fast Track will focus on townhouse and apartment projects of three to six storeys in height.

Locals would retain the right to know what’s going on and have their say. It would apply statewide and work similar to existing current development facilitation pathways.

An example of a well-designed home project in East Brunswick.



www.vic.gov.au/more-homes

More Homes More Opportunity



Buildings get fast-tracked if they are designed and built well

State Design Book

The Government will expand its State Design Book of 'future homes' by introducing the **best examples of good, affordable designs** that are already built. It will be a showcase of great buildings that were viable to deliver.

Eligible designs will encourage sustainable, family friendly and accessible homes, with communal spaces and gardens.

Have Your Say

The design book will also be thrown open to the public for them to **nominate great buildings they live in or love** – which they think meet the good design criteria and deserve to be replicated across the state.

Never before have Victorians had this kind of say on the future architectural 'look and feel' of their streets.

Design Displays

The Government will secure government-owned land for innovative 'demonstration' housing developments.

They will showcase high quality design, liveability and sustainability.

Victorians can also have a chance to explore these buildings in person before they become homes to buy or rent.

A well-designed, high-quality building in South Melbourne that could be included in the State Design Book.



More Homes More Opportunity



More rights for renters to make the system fairer

Stop landlords making dubious bond claims without providing evidence

So many renters have a story about their bond being withheld for no good reason.

Sometimes they've been told there's damage to a wall or floor, but there's no photos provided and no receipts for repair attached.

Even if the damage is real, tenants still deserve to know it's been properly recorded and costed.

The Victorian Government will **crackdown on a culture of dubious bond claims.**

It will do this by mandating requirements for evidence – and imposing financial penalties for people doing the wrong thing.

Ban the extra fees that get charged when tenants pay their rent

More and more renters are paying on third-party 'rent tech' apps.

These platforms can make paying rent more convenient, but **if there are hidden fees and charges, tenants end up paying more than what they owe.**

There is currently a fee-free option required under the law, but often this is made highly inconvenient for the renter – like having to pay in person at the Post Office.

The Victorian Government will ban apps, agents and providers from charging tenants a fee just for paying their rent – regardless of the payment method used.

Ban 'no fault' evictions

Under the Victorian Government's changes, all remaining 'no reason' notices to vacate in the law will be removed.

It means **'no fault' evictions for fixed-term agreements will not be permitted.**

A tenant can still be evicted for the usual reasons such as damage, not paying rent or if the owner is moving back in.

But with this change, a tenant can't be evicted without a valid reason.

Ban apps from charging 'background check' fees for rental applications

It isn't fair if tenants must pay an extra fee as part of the application process because the agent or provider wants to check their rental 'blacklist' history.

The Victorian Government will **prohibit a rental provider, their agent or a third party app from passing these costs onto tenants.**

If an agent wants to check a residential tenancy database, they still can do so, but at their own cost.

More Homes More Opportunity



More rights for renters to make the system fairer

Cap costs for breaking a lease

If a tenant breaks a rental agreement, the rental provider is entitled to compensation for lost rent. But this **compensation should be fair and reasonable**.

For fixed term agreements of five years or less, the Victorian Government will set a cap: for example, one week's rent based on the proportion of remaining months of the agreement, up to a maximum of four weeks.

If that cap was in place, it would mean a tenant in this situation won't pay more than four weeks' rent for breaking the lease.

The Government will consult further before legislating, to make sure this is the right limit.

Clarify that you can have an extra key or fob if you need it

If you live in a secure apartment building, losing your fob can be very disruptive if you weren't previously allowed to have a spare.

The Victorian Government will clarify that when you request an additional electronic key or security fob for a tenant or someone else who lives at the house, the **agent should provide it – and can't unreasonably deny it**.

It will also be an offence under the law for an electronic key or security device to be terminated unless it's part of the process of terminating a rental agreement.

Nation-leading change

The Victorian Government has implemented more than **130 nation-leading rental reforms** to restore fairness and respect for renters.

Other reforms include creating **Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria**, creating a portable bonds scheme, and establishing the renting taskforce to crack down on dodgy landlords.

To learn about what's changed, visit consumer.vic.gov.au/housing/renting

How more homes helps renters

The Victorian Government's plan to build more homes - whether near train stations, across established suburbs, and in growing outer-suburban and regional areas - is about providing **more homes to buy or to rent**.

Increasing the number of properties available for tenants to rent will keep downward pressure on rent prices, and **give tenants more choices where they want to live** - near the things they need, the lifestyle they lead, and the people they love.

More Homes More Opportunity



\$30 million for more parks and you tell us where they go

The Victorian Government will launch **Pick My Park**, a program that will create and upgrade more green spaces in growing suburbs and let you vote on where to spend \$30 million worth of grants to deliver them.

Pick My Park will let Victorians 16 and over to **propose ideas for new parks or park upgrades** in their growing community and then submit them to the public for their vote.

When the votes get counted, **the most popular ideas will get a grant** to deliver the local project.

That could be a new park, a green space, a 'pocket park', a park upgrade, a playground, a basketball court, a sporting field, a BBQ, fitness equipment, tree planting, accessibility upgrades, new landscaping, shade and seating, and more.

Submit your idea, cast your vote, pick your park. It's that simple.



Parks like this one in Surrey Hills are an essential part of a growing community.

Where will the parks go?

Pick My Park will target **areas that are building more homes** – particularly those that have less access to open space.

Geographical quotas will apply so all growing areas share in funding, and a set portion of the funding pool will be reserved for growing urban areas in regional Victoria.

When will Pick My Park start?

Next year, and final program guidelines will be released ahead of submissions opening.

There will be guidelines to make sure ideas submitted to the public for their vote are sensible and able to be delivered.

Councils and local groups can also submit ideas. All projects will need the support of landowners, such as council, to proceed.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and pay our respect to them, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

To receive an accessible version of this document, visit www.vic.gov.au/more-homes

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