Fact sheet #2

Mount Alexander Shire Council

Issues and Opportunities Paper feedback: survey responses and how feedback will be considered

This fact sheet has been prepared to accompany the community feedback summary report, to provide additional detail regarding the feedback received during consultation on the Issues and Opportunities Paper.

Survey feedback received:

We asked a number of questions within the survey relating to housing and neighbourhood character. Below we have highlighted some of the key themes and information contained within these responses.

What is important when assessing neighbourhood character and planning for future housing?

- Respecting heritage values and sympathetic design within heritage areas
- Bushfire and flood prone areas and appropriate planning responses
- Environmentally sustainable design
- Design that respects its surrounding neighbourhood character
- Walkability and access to services and facilities

What is valued about where you live and its neighbourhood character?

- Sense of community and connection, and the diverse community members that make up the area
- The landscape and living amongst the trees, the natural environment and the bush, the connection and links to natural assets and the biodiversity
- Historic feel of the area
- The sense of space and openness between housing
- Country town feel and the rural character
- The small-scale nature of housing and the streetscape
- Views to the town and to the surrounding bush
- The variety and mix of housing styles and eras
- Trees and vegetation along the streets
- Spacing between houses and sense of openness
- Trees, landscaping and vegetation along the street
- Design and style of the houses
- Views from the area

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What you would like to see into the future?

- Individualistic and well-designed, quality houses

- Infill development within the established residential areas, and limited development on the outskirts of town

- A diversity of housing that suits the needs of the community, including different housing style options such as co-housing, small-scale housing, medium density housing

- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity, and the links to the natural environment

- The protection of views

- Affordable and social housing, with good access to facilities and services

- Co-ordination of infrastructure to match future development, including encouraging active transport and walkability

- Better protection of existing vegetation and encouraging planting of new vegetation

- Use of local and sustainable resources and materials

What you have concerns about?

- Housing and development:
  - o Uniformity
  - o Blocks that are dominated by built form (high site coverage)
  - o Fencing that is not permeable and 'dominates' the streetscape

- Removal of vegetation, and the lack of protection for vegetation

- Natural disasters, such as bushfires and floods

- Climate change

- Lack of clear and strong guidance and policy relating to neighbourhood character and preferred built form outcomes, and outdated studies, strategies and planning scheme policies.

- Housing affordability

Consideration of feedback received:

Following a review of the feedback received, we have provided a bit of background as to how this will be considered.

We will continue to look further into the detail of the feedback received to help inform the preparation of the draft strategy.

The design, siting and appearance of housing matters. It is important that future development respects and contributes to neighbourhood character.

The project will identify the area's existing and preferred neighbourhood character, and help to make clear what the expectations are for housing siting and built form in different areas depending on the neighbourhood character of that area.

This will be achieved in different ways within the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme, such as the schedules to residential zones, potential application of planning overlays, local planning policy, and design guidelines for different areas.

Encouraging infill housing development within the existing urban areas which enjoy good access to services and facilities, and avoiding 'urban sprawl'.

The project will include the preparation of a 'housing change area' plan, which will identify appropriate levels of housing change for different areas, depending on their neighbourhood character values, heritage significance, and the environmental context. Areas of housing change also takes into the account the location and access to services and facilities, including public transport.

Encouraging a diverse and innovative range of housing that responds to the needs of the community and the variety of household types and people that live in the area. Supporting ageing in place and group housing, and encouraging smaller-scale homes are priorities for the community.

This project will look at ways to encourage and facilitate housing diversity through tools within the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme.

Housing and rental affordability is an ongoing issue and needs to be addressed.

Council recognises that housing affordability is an important issue to the community, and is working on a number of ways to address this. This is being led by Council's dedicated Housing Solutions Broker, and is not within the scope of this Strategy.

However, throughout the preparation of this Strategy, we will seek to understand the ways in which the planning system (at the local government level) can assist in addressing the housing affordability issue.

Within the planning context, Council's role in housing is to help to facilitate the orderly provision of housing, through mechanisms within the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme.

Local governments also have the ability to facilitate 'inclusionary zoning' for the provision of affordable housing, however without state legislation that mandates inclusionary zoning, it can only be achieved through voluntary negotiation with developers (as identified within the Planning and Environment Act 1987).

Environmentally sustainable development is very important in helping to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of a changing climate.

We will seek to identify ways in which encouraging and promoting environmentally sustainable development (ESD) can be incorporated into this project.

Council also participated in stage 1 of the Elevating ESD Targets project, a joint project involving many Councils across the state. Council is not involved in stage two of the project, but will continue monitoring the progress of the project.

The Victorian State Government is also working on the ESD Roadmap project in an effort to update planning schemes across Victoria to help further support ESD.

The National Construction Code has been updated to increase the minimum energy efficiency standards for new homes from 6 to 7-star ratings. The new NCC will come into effect next year.

Heritage is valued by the community, and it is important that future development respects heritage and integrates well within its heritage context.

The Strategy will have regard to heritage places when it comes to planning for future housing, so that the heritage values of a place or area are not compromised.

This will include places of heritage significance that are already identified, and also places that are identified as part of the concurrent Castlemaine Heritage Study (including a heritage gap analysis).

The appreciation and importance of protecting and enhancing the landscape, natural environment and biodiversity in planning for housing. Future development should be designed to sit within its environmental context.

Throughout the preparation of the Strategy we will seek to uncover ways in which the natural environment and its habitat can be protected through mechanisms available within the Mount Alexander Planning Scheme.

The co-ordination and planning of infrastructure that meets the needs of the community, and matches future development.

We recognise that the growth of areas needs to be planned in a way that allows for the logical and efficient provision of infrastructure. While the provision of and planning for infrastructure is not part of the scope of this Strategy, the Strategy will help in identifying where growth is to be expected, so that we can work to understanding what infrastructure is needed to support this.