

Housing & Neighbourhood Character Preliminary Discussion Paper

April 2022

Introduction

Banyule's recently adopted *Community Vision 2041* (October 2021) places a strong emphasis on meeting not just our current needs, but those of our emerging communities. It includes a desire to provide more diverse, affordable and sustainable housing to 'meet the mixed needs of our diverse community'. Liveability and enhancing our local character are also integral objectives.

Council adopted the current Banyule Housing Strategy in 2009 to manage the City's population and housing growth to 2030. The Neighbourhood Character Strategy was prepared in 2012 to ensure this housing growth was balanced with the protection of the valued character of Banyule's neighbourhoods. Since that time, metropolitan Melbourne has seen significant changes to population growth and projections, while Banyule will see major transport projects, such as North East link, bring greater regional accessibility to our doorstep.

As Banyule continues to attract more residents, its existing residents choose to age in place and new household needs begin to emerge, it is now time for Council to revisit that work and start planning for the city's changing housing needs. This means building suitable homes as well as communities. Affordability, housing choice, rental housing, social connectivity and sustainability are also some of the important topics of conversation in relation to our housing needs.

This Preliminary Discussion Paper is part of the background work needed to start a conversation and consider how the housing and policy landscape has changed since 2009 and investigate whether our housing aims are being achieved and if not, how we might better adapt our thinking and approach.

A small number of key questions are included at the end to start a conversation with you about our housing needs looking forward to 2041.

What is the State Government and Banyule City Council's role in Housing?

Council's role is to help deliver on the State policy objectives for housing at a local level. It is also to work with the development and construction industry to improve the overall design, quality and sustainability of our homes and neighbourhoods using a range of planning tools.

The State Government's Metropolitan planning policy, *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*, directs population and new housing within the existing Urban Growth Boundary, in defined and planned housing change areas in existing communities and around activity centres. It seeks to provide long term housing growth, diversity and choice in locations that capitalise on existing infrastructure, jobs, services and public transport. It also seeks to increase the supply of social and affordable housing by calling for a range of housing types to be developed within suburbs across Melbourne, rather than being focussed in outer areas, so that local affordability for homeowners and renters can be improved.

Plan Melbourne is reflected in State Policy in the Planning Scheme. Key State policy on housing in the Planning Scheme is summarised in **Table 1** below:

Table 1: Key State Housing and Settlement Policies

Clause	Policy
11.01-1S	<p>Ensure regions and their settlements are planned in accordance with their relevant regional growth plan, or Plan Melbourne.</p> <p>Develop compact urban areas that are based around existing or planned activity centres to maximise accessibility to facilities and services.</p>
11.02-2S	<p>Plan to accommodate projected population growth over at least a 15-year period and provide clear direction on locations where growth should occur.</p> <p>Residential land supply will be considered on a municipal basis, rather than a town-by-town basis.</p> <p>Planning for urban growth should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opportunities for the consolidation, redevelopment and intensification of existing urban areas • neighbourhood character and landscape considerations • the limits of land capability and natural hazards and environmental quality • service limitations and the costs of providing infrastructure.
15.01-5S	<p>Ensure development contributes to existing or preferred neighbourhood character.</p>
16.01-1S	<p>Increase the supply of housing in existing urban areas by facilitating increased housing yield in appropriate locations, including under-utilised urban land.</p> <p>Ensure that an appropriate quantity, quality and type of housing is provided.</p>
16.01-2S	<p>Increase the proportion of new housing in designated locations within established urban areas and reduce the share of new dwellings in greenfield and dispersed development areas.</p> <p>Encourage higher density housing development on sites that are well located in relation to services, jobs and public transport.</p> <p>Ensure an adequate supply of redevelopment opportunities within established urban areas to reduce the pressure for fringe development.</p> <p>Identify opportunities for increased residential densities to help consolidate urban areas.</p>
16.01-3S	<p>Ensure housing stock matches changing demand by widening housing choice.</p> <p>Facilitate diverse housing that offers choice and meets changing household needs.</p>

Source: Planning Practice Note 90: Planning for Housing, DELWP, Dec 2019

All Victorian Councils are responsible for the long-term planning for housing within their local government area. Council is expected to facilitate State policy through its own long-term strategies and plans that are reflected in its local policies, zones and overlays in the Planning Scheme. These should encourage housing supply and diversity and guide new development into sustainable locations with access to services, transport and facilities, whilst also ensuring the unique features that make each municipality unique, such as neighbourhood character, landscape, vegetation and heritage are respected. This provides the community with certainty about where housing change will occur and the level of change.

Council must also act on the **Banyule Community Vision 2041**, which has a renewed call for affordable housing and establishment of 20-Minute neighbourhoods. This should have an impact upon how we plan for and accommodate our future population adopting a place-based approach to our neighbourhoods.

One of its priority themes is **'Our Well Built City'**. It envisages Banyule as:

A well planned, sustainable and liveable place that caters for all our current and emerging communities; where our local character and environment is protected and enhanced.

We are a city with diverse, affordable, and sustainable housing solutions that meet the mixed needs of our diverse community.

Our City is a network of 20-minute neighbourhoods, connected through a range of transport options and we have easy access to places to live, work and play. We discourage car use and use active and sustainable forms of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport.

Other relevant priority themes include:

- **Our Sustainable Environment**, which highlights the need for environmentally sustainable design to be at the core of planning and development, the need for abundant natural open spaces, and maintaining tree canopies in local streets.
- **Our Valued Community Assets**, that should be evenly distributed across the municipality, safe and accessible to all residents.

What is a Housing Strategy?

A **Housing Strategy** is a Council's long-term plan to manage future housing growth and change so that it best meets the ongoing needs of the community. It allows Council to plan for the future. A Housing Strategy should show the locations for new residential development and identify how new development can be managed to protect valued and unique attributes of the municipality and its neighbourhoods.

The **Housing Strategy** informs how Council applies the zones and overlays in its residential areas, which guide the location and intensity of new housing development.

State Policy (see Table 1) requires Council to review their Housing Strategy every 15 years so changes in the municipality can be considered and planned for. This includes changes to population and households, the natural and built environment, accessibility to infrastructure and services, and housing affordability.

A housing strategy should, amongst other things:

- Plan to accommodate projected population growth over at least a 15-year period and provide clear direction on locations where growth should occur.
- Outline the strategies and actions to accommodate the projected population and household needs.
- Ensure a range of diverse housing opportunities are available across the municipality to meet the needs of the current and future population and provide choice for changing demands.
- Balance the need to protect valued landscapes and neighbourhood character with the need to ensure housing growth and diversity.

Fundamental to the review and the preparation of a new housing strategy is a review of neighbourhood character. The overarching aim of the housing strategy is to plan for housing growth that contributes to the existing or preferred neighbourhood character.

This means that while we are planning for housing, Council must also revisit its existing *Neighbourhood Character Strategy 2012*.

What is a Neighbourhood Character Strategy?

Neighbourhood character is the look and feel of a place. It is the combination of unique features that make one place different from the next. These features may include vegetation, topography, streetscape, building styles, the spaces between buildings, colours and materials. Some features are more important than others in creating this distinctive character.

The need to protect neighbourhood character must be balanced with the need to provide more diverse housing across the municipality.

A **Neighbourhood Character Strategy** is a major piece of strategic work that should be delivered alongside the Housing Strategy. It involves assessing the existing residential neighbourhoods and preparing preferred character statements that outline whether it is the existing character that should be respected, or a defined preferred new character. Design guidelines then describe how developments can achieve this. The preferred character statements for each neighbourhood should be considered when identifying housing change areas in the municipality.

A Neighbourhood Character Strategy should:

- Identify the significance of each neighbourhood area.
- Identify key issues and threats to neighbourhood character.
- Provide strategic direction for neighbourhood character to guide future development.
- Form the basis for any variations to the Planning Scheme, such as policies or objectives for neighbourhood character or changes to a residential zone schedule.
- Demonstrate that housing objectives will not be prejudiced when deciding on how neighbourhood character will be protected.
- Draw on community views.

Neighbourhood Character Strategies are not intended to prevent change or require new development to copy the design of existing housing. They should promote housing design that is inspired by the existing or preferred new character of a place.

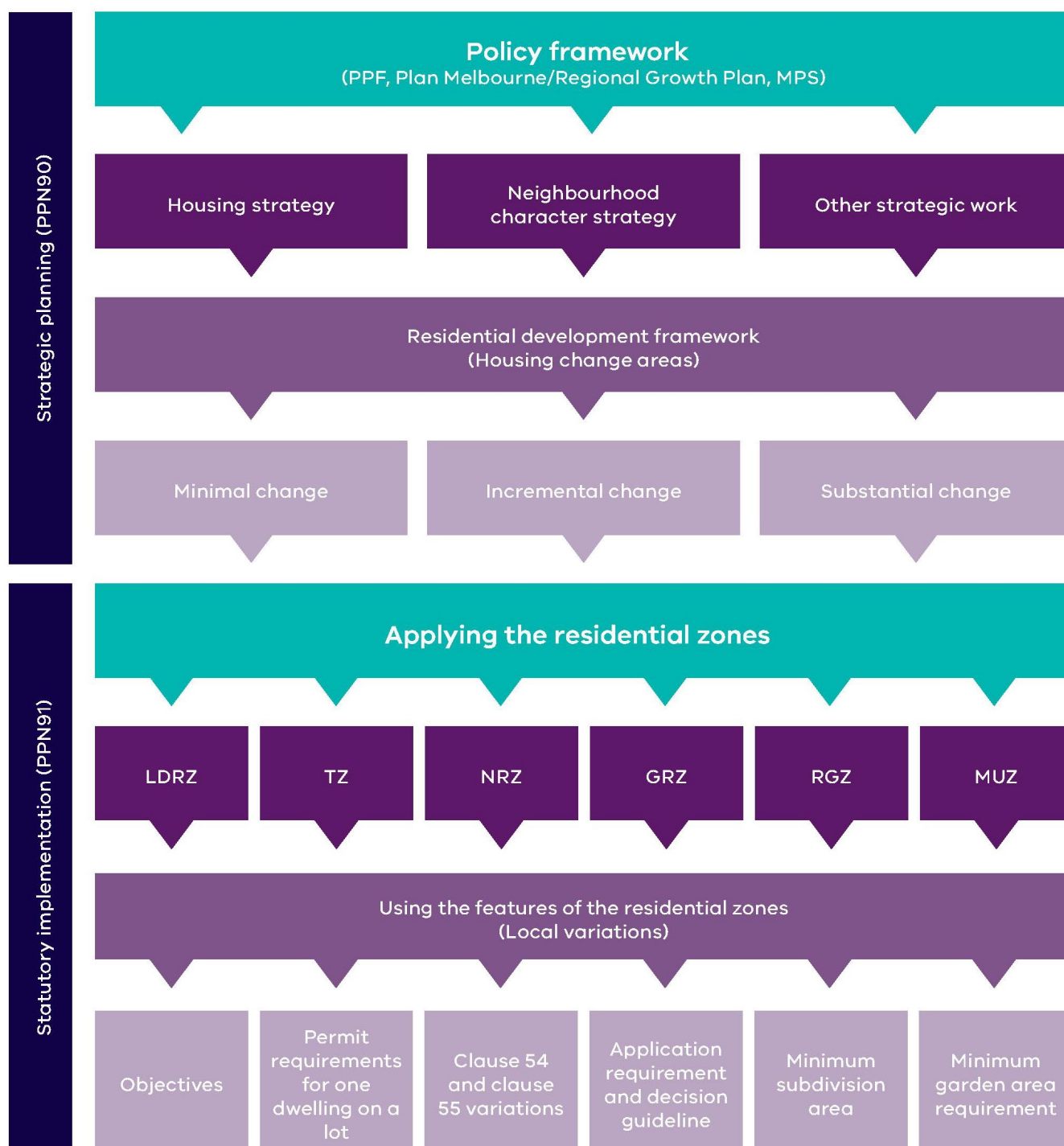
State Requirements for Reviewing Housing and Neighbourhood Character

The State Government's *Planning Practice Note 90 - Planning for Housing* and *Planning Practice Note 91 – Reforms to the Residential Zones* recommends a Neighbourhood Character Strategy be prepared to support other relevant strategic work when preparing a new Housing Strategy. The two strategies need to align so that Council is giving a consistent message about the outcomes it is seeking to achieve in particular locations.

Inconsistencies between housing and neighbourhood character objectives create confusion about whether housing growth or the protection of existing neighbourhood character is to be prioritised in a defined area or neighbourhood.

Figure 1 below outlines the steps that should be taken when considering any changes to housing and character policies, and the order that these steps must proceed in. This process must be followed before Council can consider implementing any changes to local policies for neighbourhood character or urban design or making any changes to local schedules of a residential zone for features such as site coverage or design detail like fencing.

Figure 1: Balancing Housing Growth and Protection of Neighbourhood Character



Source: Planning Practice Note 90 – Planning for Housing, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, December 2019

What has changed and why do we need a review?

Banyule's Housing Strategy was adopted in 2009 and is nearly 13 years old. The Neighbourhood Character Strategy was prepared in 2012. Since then, metropolitan Melbourne has seen unprecedented population growth and, with it, emerging pressures in housing delivery and our built environment. Substantial changes are occurring within our activity centres, significant State Government investment in city shaping infrastructure and policy, issues are emerging through population and household change and there is continued feedback regarding housing in Banyule. As such, it is timely that the strategies be reviewed and updated to plan for future housing growth and protect neighbourhood character.

Banyule Housing Strategy 2009

The current Banyule Housing Strategy in 2009 set out to manage the City's population and housing growth to 2030.

The priority actions of the Housing Strategy 2009 have been acted upon through:

- Structure Planning for our three major activity centres – Ivanhoe, Greensborough and Heidelberg.
- An updated Neighbourhood Character Strategy to support a permanent local policy in the Banyule Planning Scheme.
- The introduction of a local policy on Environmentally Sustainable Development.
- The development of Banyule's Liveable Housing Design Guidelines.

The Housing Strategy was also implemented in the Planning Scheme through Amendment C63 which introduced Clause 21.06 Built Form in the Banyule Planning Scheme. This includes a Residential Areas Framework Map (See **Figure 2** below) which shows the preferred housing outcomes for various locations across the municipality. The map was used as the basis for the introduction of the State's new residential zones in 2013.

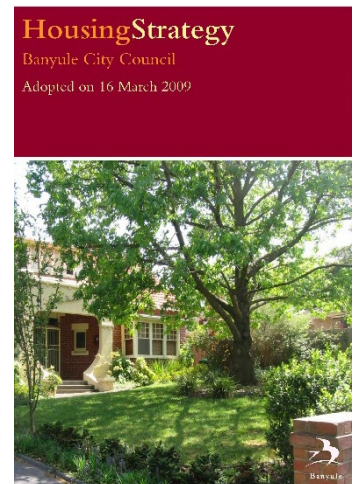
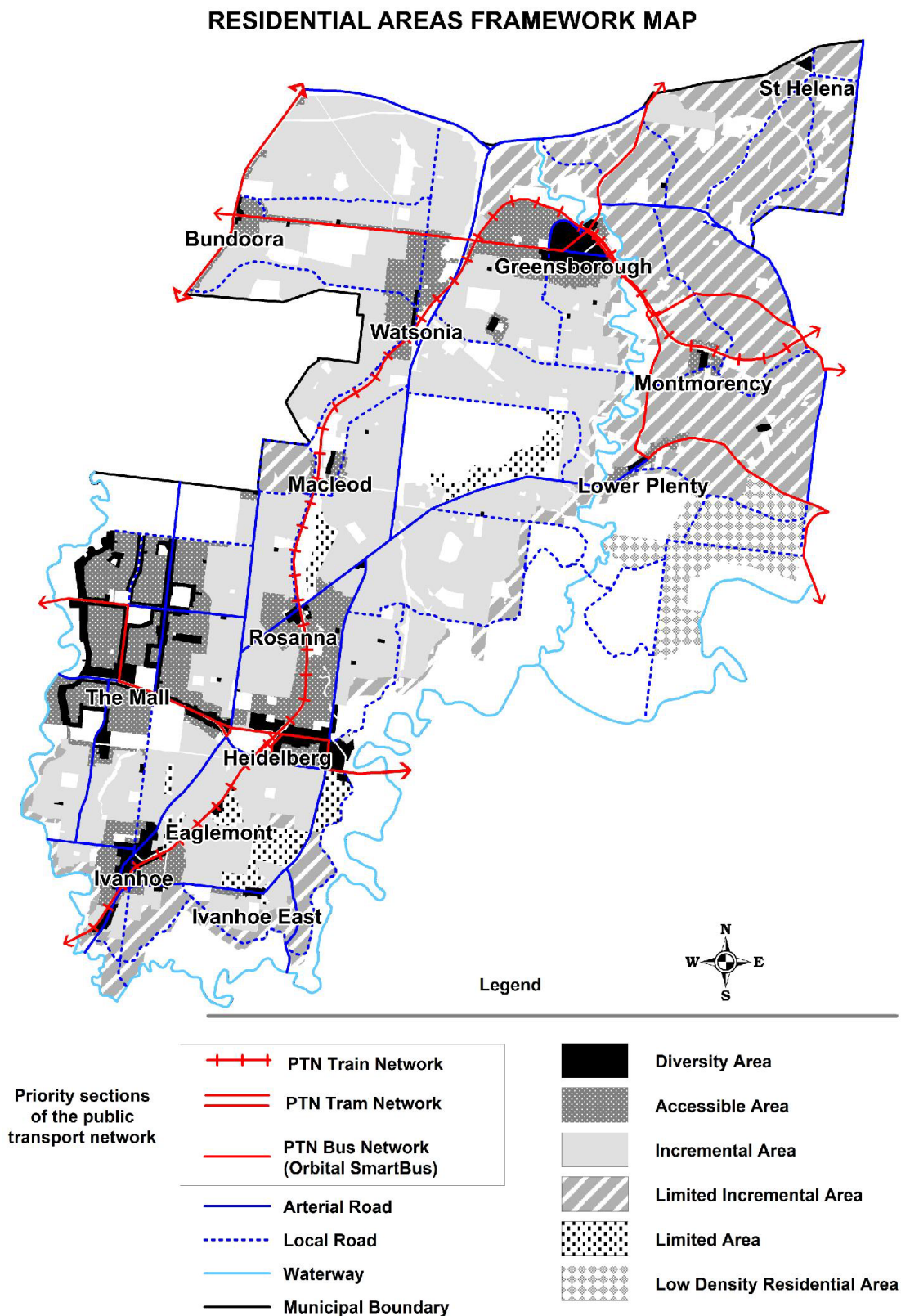


Figure 2: Residential Areas Framework Map from Clause 21.06 of the Banyule Planning Scheme



This map shows the indicative location of the Residential Areas described in the Residential Areas Framework.

At the time the Housing Strategy was written, dwellings in Banyule were generally single family detached houses. New residential opportunities generally consisted of subdividing the backyard of existing house blocks for a second detached dwelling.

Banyule's population growth was slow, well below average for the State. The analysis that informed the 2009 Housing Strategy showed a declining population in the early 2000s that was projected to slowly increase by 2.4% over 20 years to 121 533 residents in 2021. The real population growth has exceeded these projections. Banyule's population is now at around 129 387 (ABS Estimated Resident Population 2021). This is an increase of 9.7% over 20 years.

Dwelling types have not changed significantly, with separate dwellings remaining the dominant housing type.

In 2016, housing types in Banyule consisted of:

- 76% Single dwellings
- 21.8% Medium density dwellings (an increase of 1% in 10 years)
- 1.7% High density dwellings (an increase of 1.4% in 10 years)

The analysis that informed the 2009 strategy also noted that growth was occurring most significantly in large separate dwellings (4+ bedrooms). This trend has continued. In 2016, dwellings with 3 bedrooms remained the most common in Banyule, but their representation in new developments continued to decline. New dwellings with 4+ bedrooms however have increased by 1622 dwellings over the last 10 years.

The number of bedrooms per dwelling in 2016 were:

- 18.7% - 2 bedroom dwellings (no change)
- 46.7% - 3 bedroom dwellings (3% decrease in 10 years)
- 21.6% - 4 bedroom dwellings (1.2% increase in 10 years)
- 4.8% - 5 or more bedroom dwellings (0.8% increase in 10 years)

(Note - There was also an increase in responses that did not state bedroom numbers in the 2016 census.)

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing 2006 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id (informed decisions).*

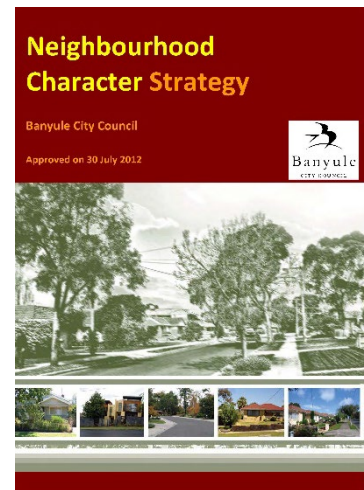
Dwelling type and bedroom number is an important indicator of Banyule's residential role and function. Banyule's dominant larger single dwelling type is more likely to attract families. Medium or higher density dwellings typically attract young adults, small households and renters. These dwelling types reflect market opportunities, but also planning policy and the type of housing that is encouraged across the municipality.

With the benefit of more than a decade of development since the last Housing Strategy to inform a review, Council must now begin to consider what needs to be addressed and how we can provide improved and more sustainable housing into the future.

Neighbourhood Character Strategy 2012

This strategy was an update to the Banyule Neighbourhood Character Strategy prepared in 1999. The Neighbourhood Character Strategy lists 5 types of character areas:

- Garden suburban
- Garden court
- Bush Garden
- Semi Bush
- Bush Woodland



Each character area contains a number of precincts, with preferred Neighbourhood Character Statements and Design Responses that are intended to guide new development.

Since the 2012 Strategy was prepared, changes in Council's vision for areas in and around our Major Activity Centres and the Postcode 3081 Urban Renewal Area, has meant that our Neighbourhood Character Strategy 2012 and Housing Strategy 2009 no longer align. Our housing needs across the municipality are changing as more people seek to live in Banyule, and some existing residents choose to stay and age in place in smaller homes near friends and family. Younger residents who would like to continue living in Banyule as they build their own families need more affordable housing options. A revised Neighbourhood Character Strategy would ensure any future housing growth is balanced with the protection of the valued character of Banyule's neighbourhoods.

State and Local Policy changes since 2009

The Housing Strategy 2009 was prepared prior to significant State investment in infrastructure and policy that will influence where more housing is needed in Banyule, including:

- Introduction of new residential zones by the State Government in 2013, and their reforms in 2017 and 2018.
- The State's release of Plan Melbourne 2017 – 2050.
- The Draft Northern Region Land Use Framework Plan 2021, which guides the application of Plan Melbourne at a regional and local level. It requires Councils to prepare up-to-date housing strategies.
- Introduction of the Better Apartments in Neighbourhoods Design Standards and the Apartment Design Guidelines for Victoria.
- City shaping infrastructure projects, including the:
 - Construction of the North East Link between Greensborough and Heidelberg.
 - M80 upgrade.
 - Hurstbridge Line Upgrade (including the duplication of tracks in sections, and a new Greensborough Railway Station).
 - Level crossing removal at Rosanna and construction of a new railway station.
 - Planned Suburban Rail Loop (North) which is to run through Heidelberg and include the construction of an interchange station in the longer term (by 2053).

Development of New Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategies

Council now needs to review the existing strategies and prepare new long-term plans that provide an updated consideration of recent housing development and demographic trends, Council's current planning framework, and recent State government policy changes.

This Preliminary Discussion Paper is the first step in reviewing the Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategies. It starts to consider how the current strategies and controls are performing, and how they can be better aligned to achieve the desired housing and neighbourhood character outcomes. The next step will be to undertake a 'health check' analysis of our housing situation as a key background document.

This Preliminary Discussion Paper will then be expanded using the background analysis and become a more detailed final Housing Strategy and Neighbourhood Character Discussion Paper. In turn, this will then be used for broader community consultation.

The Final Discussion Paper will need to consider:

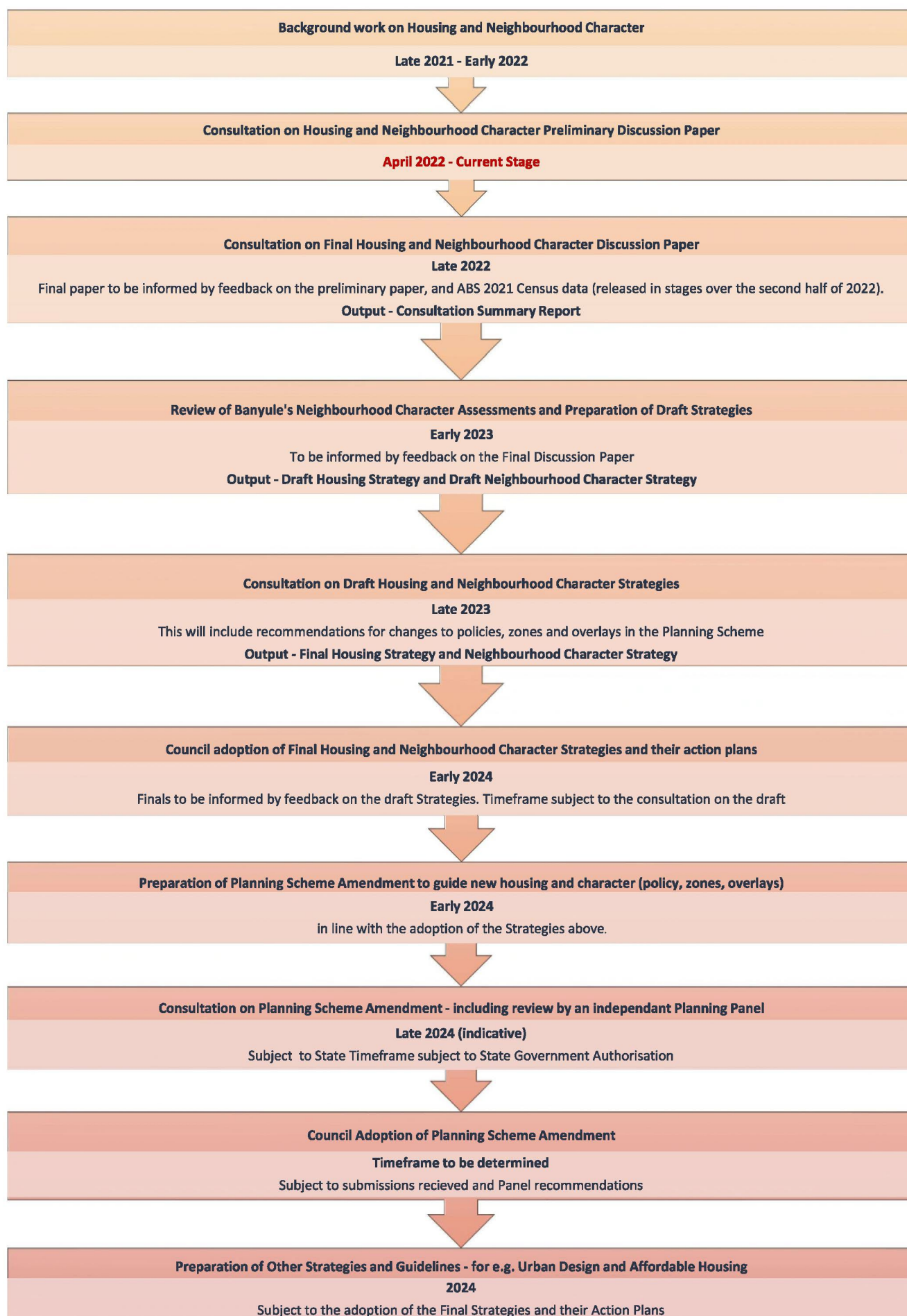
- How has policy changed since 2009? What is the role of different levels of government in influencing outcomes, and what is being done by governments to address current and future housing needs?
- Have the housing needs changed? Is current housing supply responding to community need and changes in demographic?
- Is there sufficient land, appropriately zoned, to meet housing demand? Are there areas which could provide for housing need or to diversify housing? What degrees of change are considered appropriate?
- How is development affecting our neighbourhoods? What are the impacts of new developments on existing neighbourhoods?
- What effects are current planning controls having on housing delivery, diversity, quality and character?
- How can Council improve the provision of social and affordable housing?
- Is new housing sustainable?

The Final Discussion Paper will inform the preparation of a Draft Housing Strategy and Neighbourhood Character Strategy. Once the final strategies are adopted, they will be used as the strategic basis for refining the residential planning controls in the Planning Scheme.

Housing Strategies and Neighbourhood Character Strategies are significant pieces of strategic work that take time to prepare and discuss with the community.

Banyule Council's plan to review Housing and Neighbourhood Character and reflect this review in the Planning Scheme, is outlined in **Figure 3** below:

Figure 3: Roadmap for the Review of Housing and Neighbourhood Character



Any proposed Planning Scheme Amendment would need to consider the emerging State Planning reforms, including the outcomes of the Improving the Operation of Rescode Review and the Environmentally Sustainable Development Roadmap. The amendment may need to adapt in response to any reforms as they are introduced.

Any residential zone and schedule changes proposed would need to give effect to the housing and neighbourhood character objectives. It should be noted that all residential zones support and allow for some increase in housing.

What role will the community play and how can I get involved?

Council will now begin preparing a 'health check' analysis that will look at how we are going in terms of meeting our housing needs and what our future requirements will be. This will help to inform detailed consultation later in this project.

In the meantime, Council would very much like to start a conversation with you about housing and neighbourhood character. Shaping Banyule will be the home for this project and will detail the program, key information and documents, how we are tracking and details of future engagement.

The following discussion questions may help to informally kick-start your thinking about what is important to you about where and how you live and what our future needs might be. We would love to hear your thoughts on some or all of these right now, as this will help us to shape the project.

Neighbourhood character

- How would you rate the neighbourhood character in your area (between 1-10, where 1 = poor, 10 = excellent) and the way new developments fit in?
- Why did you choose this rating?
- What is it about your local area that is important to you and the overall character, amenity and feel of your neighbourhood?
- What are some examples of neighbourhood character you would like to see more of in Banyule?
- What is it about your local area that is important to you when it comes to housing change?

Housing

- Do you feel that Banyule's housing provides sufficient choice, affordability, design quality and options to meet the needs of all of our people? Why/why not?
- If you think forward five, ten or 15 years, do you think your housing needs, or those of your family, will be met in Banyule? Why/why not?
- How important is it for you to have future housing choices (including rental) that will allow you to continue to live in your local area and close to family and friends?
- Would you be open to move from a house into an apartment or townhouse to stay in the area? Why/why not?
- What are good examples of the housing you would like to see more of in Banyule? Are there examples of housing you don't like?
- If you own an investment property in Banyule that you plan to redevelop in the future, what are the challenges to development in your area?
- If you rent a property in Banyule and would like to stay in your local community, are there barriers to you buying a home or finding a different rental property in your area?

Responses can be provided on Shaping Banyule or by emailing strategic.planning@banyule.vic.gov.au

We also want to hear about community stakeholder groups or individuals who want to be engaged in this project by registering your details with us.

Don't worry if you miss this early stage, a fully detailed Discussion Paper is to be prepared once we have undertaken technical background work, including analysis of housing delivery and census data. The main

engagement for this project will be centred on the Discussion Paper and then again on the draft strategies later in this project.

What happens next?

Community insights on this Preliminary Discussion Paper will help inform the focus of a fully detailed Discussion Paper. This Final Discussion paper will also be informed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census data, which will be released in stages over the second half of 2022.

Further consultation on the Final Discussion Paper will help Council to prepare the new Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategies. The preparation of these strategies will involve an inclusive and deliberative community engagement process.

The Final Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategies will include action plans that may include making changes to the Banyule Planning Scheme or the development of other strategies that will guide future housing growth that is more sustainable, affordable and respects neighbourhood character.