

Consultation Summary Report

Draft Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategies

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Introduction

This report summarises the findings from the engagement process that will inform the final version of Banyule's new Housing Strategy and Neighbourhood Character Strategy (the Strategies). It provides an overview of the engagement activities conducted for 6 weeks in April and May 2024, key findings from all activities, and detailed findings of the activities other than the surveys. This report has been prepared with the assistance of i.e. Community, a specialist community and stakeholder engagement consultancy.

Background

The Housing and Neighbourhood Character Review considers Council's land use planning related to residential development. The existing *Housing Strategy (2009)* and *Neighbourhood Character Strategy (2012)* are over 10 years old, and Council has a legislative requirement to review these documents regularly, ensuring that the strategies and policy are up to date and working well. Community consultation on the draft Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategies is the third stage of community consultation for the project.

In 2022 the subject was raised with the community through a Preliminary Housing Discussion Paper, which introduced the project, explained changes to the policy context since the existing Strategies were adopted, and asked the community what they value about their residential areas.

In 2023, the community were consulted on a Housing Discussion Paper, which pulled together the feedback to the Preliminary Housing Discussion Paper, peer review of other Council Strategies and policy, population and housing data analysis, findings from a Housing Capacity Report (Charter Keck Cramer, 2023) and Banyule Census Data Analysis (Charter Keck Cramer, 2022). The Housing Discussion Paper presented a number of options for how to manage Banyule's residential development into the future and consultation asked the community to comment on those options.

New draft Housing Strategy and draft Neighbourhood Character Strategy were then prepared, using the community feedback to the Housing Discussion Paper. The draft Neighbourhood Character Strategy also had technical input from the Neighbourhood Character Strategy Review Report (Plan2Place, 2023).

Engagement Plan

Community consultation on the draft Strategies tested if we heard correctly through previous consultation stages, to further refine how Banyule manages residential development for the next 10-15 years.

Engagement Objectives

Objective 1	To enable a wide range of people across the community to understand the draft Strategies, including a diverse range of locations, housing tenure, backgrounds, ages, and abilities.
Objective 2	To test that we heard correctly from the community through previous engagement stages.
Objective 3	To understand the level of support and receive feedback on the draft Strategies.

Key Messages

1	As Banyule's population is changing, so too are our housing needs. Council needs to review changes over the last 13 years (including population, built environment, policy) to understand how future policy can deliver on the diverse housing needs of our community while also protecting the valued features of our neighbourhoods.
2	The draft Housing Strategy and draft Neighbourhood Character Strategy have been built up from two previous rounds of community consultation (Preliminary Housing Discussion Paper in 2022 and the Housing Discussion Paper in 2023). Other inputs include census data analysis, population trends and projections, and an expert review of Banyule's neighbourhood character.
3	Together the draft Strategies will manage Banyule's housing development in a way that is inclusive to all members of the community, encourages a good design-led approach to development, and manages impacts on neighbourhood character.
4	We are required by State Government to allow for housing growth in Banyule in the right locations. We have an opportunity to decide which way we plan for that growth that best suits the Banyule community.
5	We want to know if we heard you correctly through the previous community consultation. We want to hear your feedback on how the strategies propose to manage housing growth.

What We Did and Who Participated

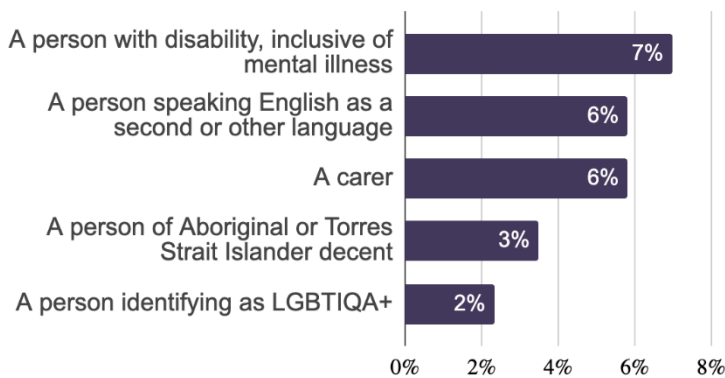
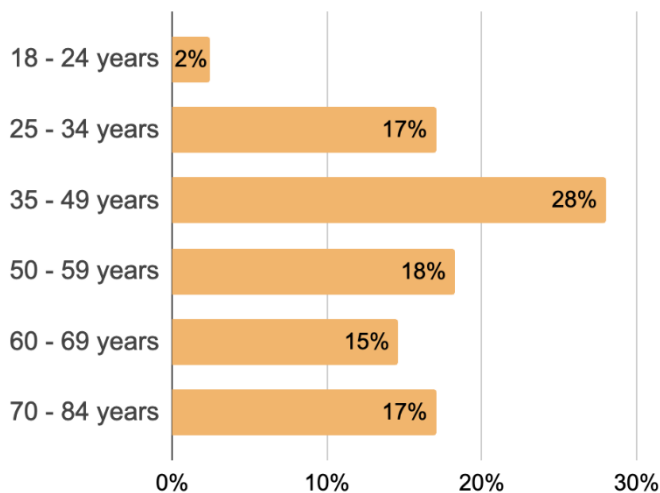
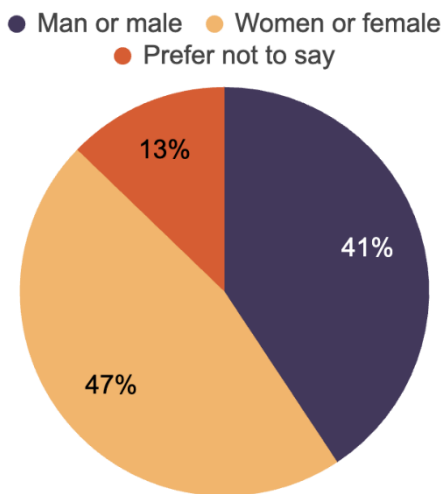
Survey

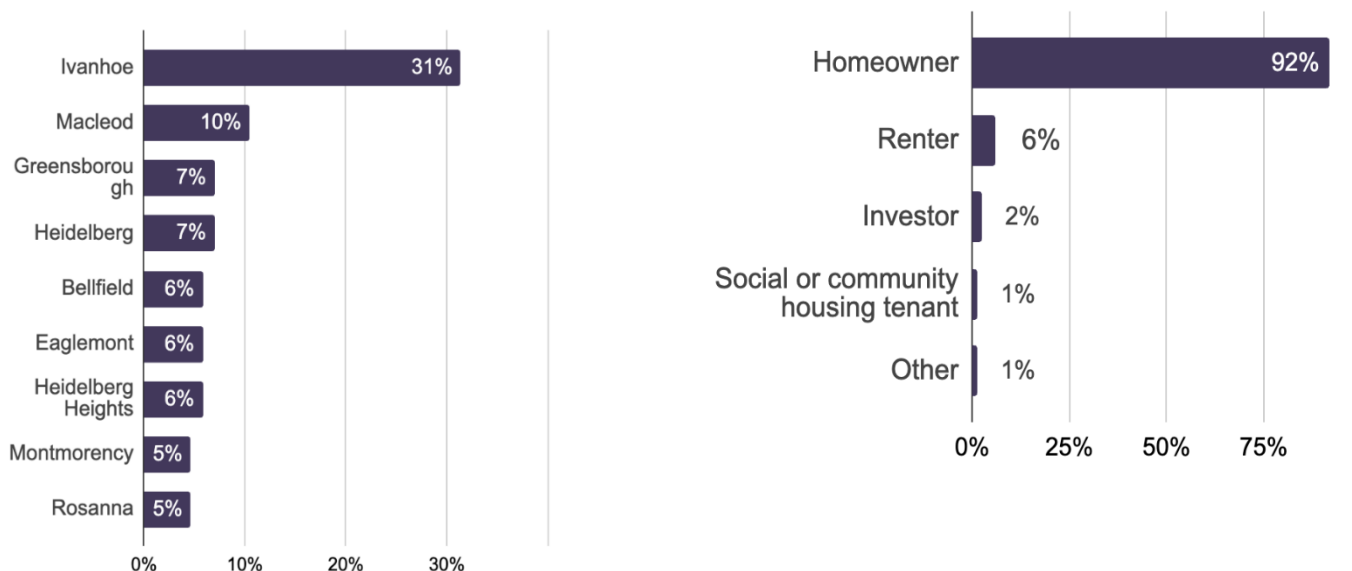
An online survey was distributed through Council’s Shaping Banyule page, open from 12 April to 26 May 2024. 87 people provided responses to the survey. In total, 86 people responded to the survey. The survey allowed respondents to choose which strategies they would like to provide feedback on. In total, 79 people provided feedback on the draft Housing Strategy and 74 provided feedback on the draft Neighbourhood Character Strategy.

The questions were designed to be straightforward and direct with just three questions about each strategy:

- 1. Do you support the strategy?
- 2. Why?
- 3. Is there anything else you would like Council to consider in the Strategy?

These questions were followed by demographic questions. A summary of demographic data provided by respondents has been provided in the following graphs.





Pop-Ups

Eight 3-hour pop-up sessions were held to promote the project and encourage people to go online and fill out a survey. Pop-ups also provide an opportunity for the community to ask questions and provide general feedback about the strategies. Throughout the process, an estimated 375 people were engaged in conversation through the pop-ups at eight locations across Banyule.

- Watsonia Library (inside entryway), Watsonia
 - Tuesday 30 April, 10am - 1pm
 - About 25 people engaged
- Bell St Mall (outside Shop 48), Oriel Road and Bell Street, Heidelberg West
 - Thursday 2 May, 12 midday - 3pm
 - About 45 people engaged
- Yulong Reserve (near Bundoora Bowling Club), 11 Cameron Parade, Bundoora
 - Saturday 4 May, 9am - 12 midday
 - About 50 people engaged
- Greensborough Walk (outside WaterMarc), 1 Flintoff Street, Greensborough
 - Tuesday 7 May, 3pm - 6pm
 - About 35 people engaged
- Were Street Village (Were Street Reserve), Were Street, Montmorency
 - Wednesday 8 May, 3.30pm - 6.30pm
 - About 30 people engaged
- Leos Supermarket (outside), 133 - 137 Burgundy Street, Heidelberg
 - Friday 10 May, 10am - 1pm
 - About 90 people engaged
- Ivanhoe Library and Cultural Hub (foyer), 275 Upper Heidelberg Road, Ivanhoe
 - Wednesday 15 May, 10am - 1pm
 - About 50 people engaged
- Macleod Market, Aberdeen Road, Macleod
 - Saturday 18 May, 9am - 12 midday
 - About 50 people engaged

Intercept Survey

At the pop-ups, people had the opportunity to fill out an “intercept survey”. The intercept survey provided an opportunity for people who didn’t think they would be able to fill out the survey online. 9 people filled out an intercept survey. The majority of people preferred to talk with officers and ask questions.

The intercept survey was drafted assuming limited knowledge about the strategies because it was unlikely that people at pop-up’s had read the draft Strategies.

Information Sessions

Two information sessions were run, one in Ivanhoe and one in Greensborough. The information sessions provided an opportunity for people to spend time with officers to gain a deeper understanding of the Strategies and ask detailed questions.

At Ivanhoe 25 people attended while only one person attended the Greensborough session. At each session, summary of the project was presented, and attendees then had an opportunity to discuss the project and ask questions of the officers. At the Ivanhoe session, participants discussed the Strategies at smaller tables, and were encouraged to write on post-it notes to provide feedback.

On-on-One Meetings

A booking form was provided on the Shaping Banyule website for people to talk directly and in depth with officers about how the draft Strategies affect them. Four people engaged in one-on-one meetings and one community group (of 7 people).

Long-Form Feedback

Some respondents preferred to provide written feedback in the form of a letter or email, referred to in the document as “long-form feedback”. Council received 10 long-form feedback responses, including 3 from State Government Authorities.

Promotion

The project was promoted on Shaping Banyule, Banyule Banner, and via social media on Instagram and Facebook. An email was also sent to known stakeholders at the beginning of the project.

The Shaping Banyule page included a summary of the main points of each Strategy and had links to sections of the Strategies for those who wanted to read more. Over the engagement period the Housing and Neighbourhood Character Review Shaping Banyule page had 3,596 views. The project was also promoted to Shaping Banyule members via an email, encouraging members to engage.

A notice was provided in the April-May edition of the Banyule Banner. 28% of survey respondents said they heard about the project via the Banyule Banner.

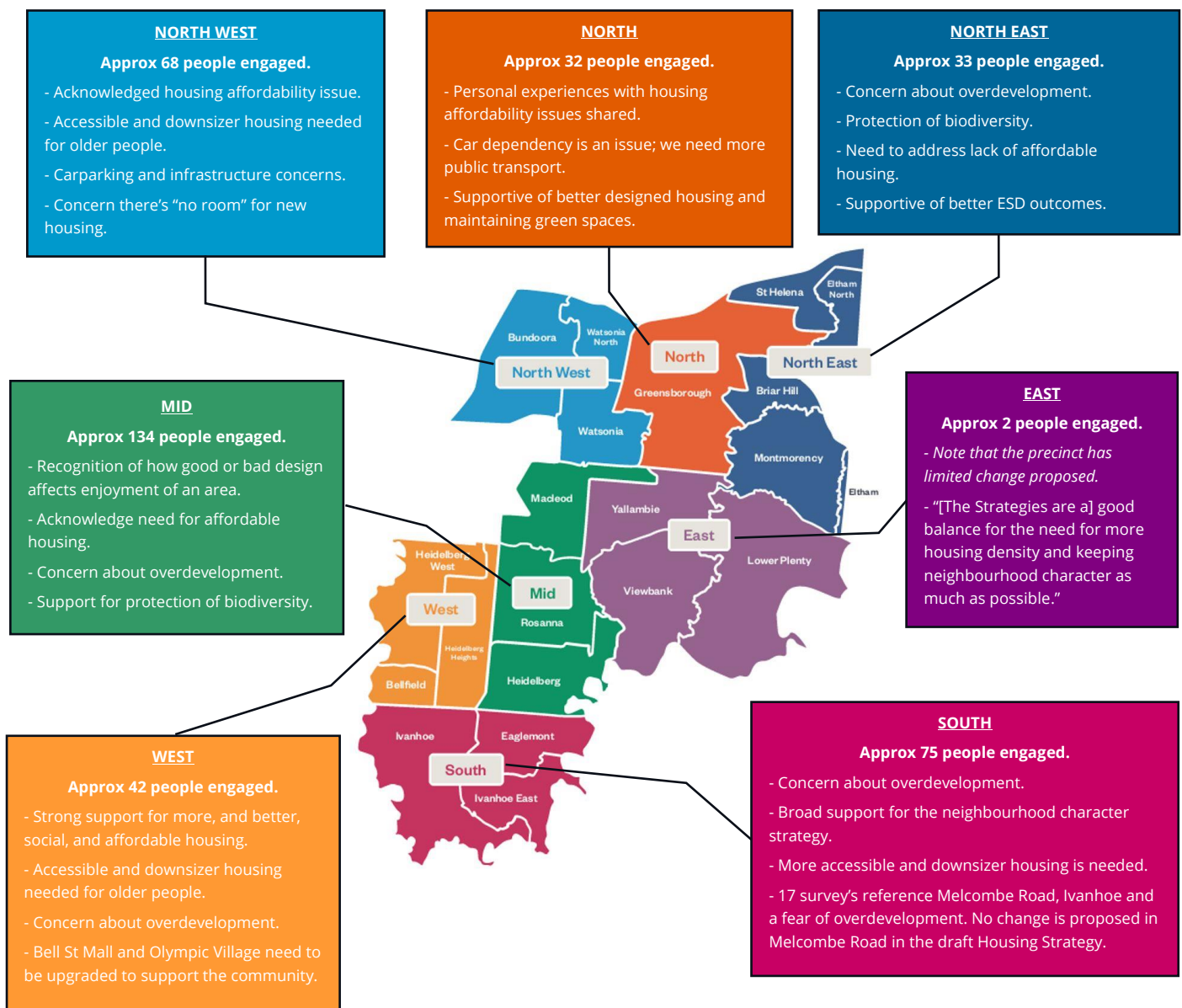
The social media campaign included an Instagram and Facebook post on each of 26 April and 7 May 2024 (total of 4 posts). Over the campaign, 16,900 people saw the project on Facebook and 806 people on Instagram. 23% of survey respondents said they heard about the project via Facebook.

What We Heard Summary

Across all of Banyule, respondents generally acknowledged the need for more housing in Banyule, and the declining affordability of housing. There were also strong themes of environmental protection, with an emphasis on retaining existing vegetation.

For the Housing Strategy, supporters appreciated that it addressed housing affordability / supply issues and struck a balance between density and character. Key concerns raised were that increased housing density can impact on neighbourhood character, building densities will be too high/dense, environmental impacts will result from development, and concern about infrastructure constraints resulting from increased housing in some locations.

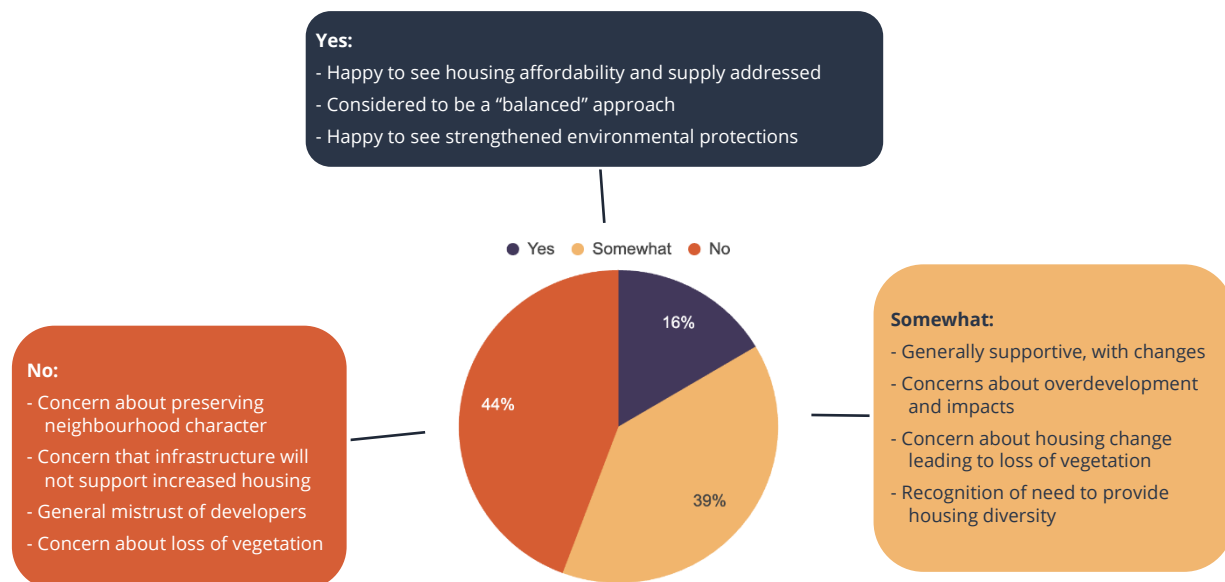
For the Neighbourhood Character Strategy, supporters felt it balanced maintaining valued character with some change, protected the environment, and enabled housing diversity. Concerns about the draft Strategy centred around it not adequately preserving existing character, concern about impacts of development on specific character precincts, and a desire for requirements to be clearer and more accessible for the average person to understand.



Detailed Findings

Survey

Housing Strategy



Do you support the draft Housing Strategy?

Support for the draft housing strategy was mixed. 55% supported the strategy (16% in full and 39% somewhat), while 44% did not. In total, 79 people responded to this question.

Why did you choose this response?

Reasons for Support

For those who supported the Strategy (13 people), their main reasons were:

- *Housing affordability and supply:* Supporters of the strategy expressed concern about the high number of homeless people or those struggling to enter the housing market. They believe that the strategy addresses the issue of housing affordability, supply and design requirements, which are desperately needed in the community.
- *A balanced approach:* There is a perception that the strategy achieves a good balance between the need for more housing density and preserving the neighbourhood's character. They appreciate the efforts made to maintain greenery, control medium-density housing, and limit high-density housing, which are key factors that attract people to live in the area.
- *Environmental considerations:* Some supporters were glad to see that the strategy strengthens environmental protections.

“Common sense approach to maintaining the character of the area with an increased variety of housing” - Survey respondent

“It finally addresses housing affordability and design requirements. Banyule needs this desperately.” - Survey respondent

Somewhat support

For those that somewhat supported the Strategy (31 people), their main reasons were:

- *Preserving neighbourhood Character:* There is a strong sentiment for the protection of the unique character of these neighbourhoods, with some individuals citing the loss of canopy and vegetation due to the construction of larger homes and townhouses. There is a call for greater respect for existing neighbourhoods and the preservation of their charm and greenery. Responses also expressed concerns about the preservation of specific heritage areas and the potential impact of more intensive development on these areas.
- *Concerns with medium—and high-density development:* There are worries about the potential impact on neighbourhood character, loss of green spaces, and the overall feel of the community. Some respondents feel that the strategy allows for buildings that are too high, which could drastically change the community's landscape.
- *Environmental considerations:* Concerns are raised about the destruction of vegetation, tree loss, and the impact of increased development on the environment. Respondents emphasise the importance of preserving the area's green and leafy character and call for stricter protections for vegetation and harsher punishments for tree removal.
- *A need for housing diversity:* There is recognition of the need to provide a range of housing options to accommodate different types of households and lifestyles. Respondents suggest that infill housing and multi-residences could be solutions to meet the community's needs and prevent the endless expansion of the metropolitan area. However, they also stress the importance of ensuring that new developments are in harmony with the existing environment.

“I broadly support the Housing Strategy. I strongly believe that the larger Melbourne metropolitan area should not continue to expand endlessly to the west, north, and southeast. Therefore the Banyule area should provide some scope for increased infill housing where appropriate (as should other parts of Melbourne)” - Survey respondent

“The “incremental” strategy allows for residences that are too high. 3 stories will change the landscape of the community too greatly. A 3 bed 2 bath can fit in a double story townhouse. Already the feel of the community is changing rapidly, with houses being replaced by townhouses. Trees are disappearing quite drastically and being replaced by rendered brick veneers. Please keep Banyule green, it's why the vast majority of us live here.” - Survey respondent

Do not support

For those that did not support the Strategy (35 people), their main reasons were:

- *Preserving Neighbourhood Character:* Those who did not support the strategy feel that it disregards the unique character of certain locations and that the proposed changes could destroy this character. The proposed changes to zoning and planning overlays are seen as not aligning with the heritage protections and conservation efforts in certain areas. The strategy is also criticised for not adequately considering the unique architectural and historical significance of certain areas.
- *Concerns with increased housing density:* There are concerns about the proposed increase in mid-high-density housing, as some believe the existing infrastructure may not be able to support these changes. They worry about the loss of open space and the lack of balance between density and amenities.
- *Impacts of development:* Respondents were also concerned with the impacts of development, including the loss of existing character and impacts on canopy cover and biodiversity. Additionally, there is a general mistrust of developers.

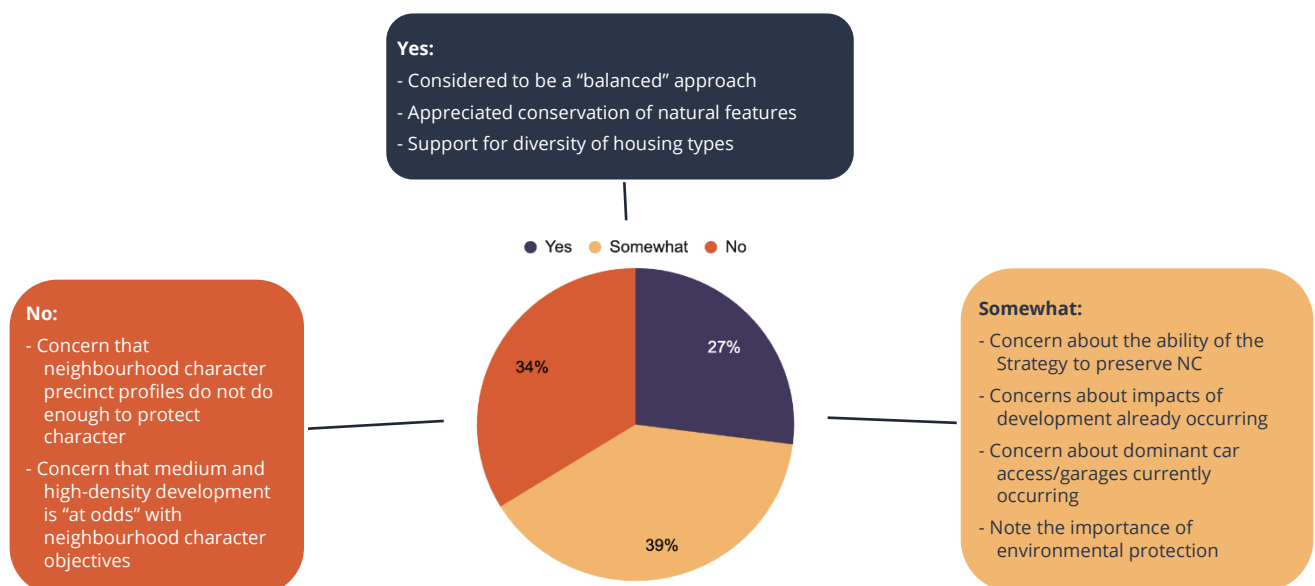
“This is a significant change to not only local streets but also the whole suburb. I’m concerned as to what impact this will have on suburbs such as traffic, character, access to amenities, and tree cover/canopy” - Survey respondent

Is there anything missing or that you would like Council to consider for the Housing Strategy?

An analysis of the responses identified the following key themes (58 people responded to this question):

- **Concerns with high-density development:** Including immediate disruptions such as noise, traffic, and exposure to chemicals and dust during construction. Once the development is complete, concerns shift to issues like congestion, lack of privacy, noise and light pollution, and loss of tree cover and natural light. Respondents also worry about the loss of open spaces and gardens.
- **Neighbourhood Character:** Respondents emphasised the importance of maintaining the unique character of their neighbourhoods and ensuring that future developments align with the existing architectural style and natural environment. The loss of trees, gardens, and permeable spaces due to development was another major concern, as these elements contribute significantly to the neighbourhood's charm. Respondents also pointed out inequity in zoning, with less affluent areas expected to accommodate more change, potentially impacting their character. They highlighted the need to preserve historical streets and housing styles and expressed concerns about potential changes to heritage overlays.
- **Housing affordability and diversity:** Respondents felt that the housing strategy should prioritise the development of affordable housing to provide affordable options for those in need. They also expressed concern that the strategy did not adequately address the need for social and affordable housing for different demographics, such as families, singles, retired individuals, or the aged. They also highlighted the difficulty in finding newly built three-plus bedroom accommodations and single-level housing for medically impaired and/or aged residents.
- **Environmental impact:** Respondents voiced concerns about the impact of climate change and expressed a desire for more sustainable design policies, including permeable driveways and Indigenous plantings.

Neighbourhood Character Strategy



Do you support the draft Neighbourhood Character Strategy?

There was a relatively high amount of support for the strategy, with 66% supporting it either in full (27%) or somewhat (39%), while a significant amount, 34%, did not support the strategy. In total, 74 people responded to this question.

Why did you choose this response?

Reasons for Support

For those who supported the Strategy (20 people), their main reasons were:

- *A balanced approach:* The strategy was seen as striking a good balance between the valued character of the neighbourhoods and the preferred character, maintaining a cohesive look and feel within neighbourhoods. The careful thought and proper categorisation of different areas in the strategy were appreciated. Respondents saw this as a sign of strong policies and proactive fairness from Council.
- *Environmental conservation:* Respondents appreciated the protection and conservation of natural features. They valued the inclusion of properties along waterways and the retention of the neighbourhood character to protect and conserve the canopy, understorey, and green spaces.
- *Housing diversity and design:* Some respondents highlighted the importance of maintaining the diversity of housing types. Others raised specific concerns related to energy-saving measures and sustainability. They advocated for wider eaves, exterior canvas blinds, and the inclusion of solar panels.

“There has been much careful thought behind this document.” - Survey respondent

“It's largely encouraging, a well-thought-out strategy that recognises our community's love of Banyule's natural beauty. It also captures (to some extent) stewardship to our local biodiversity important for guarding and enhancing Australia's unique natural heritage at a broader level, particularly in current challenging times of global overpopulation and the Climate Crisis. The success of the implementation of the strategy remains to be seen and will require a commitment to follow through on its commendable elements.” - Survey respondent

Somewhat support

For those that somewhat supported the Strategy (29 people), their main reasons were:

- *Preservation of neighbourhood character:* There are concerns about the ability of the strategy to preserve current neighbourhood character adequately. Many respondents feel that the current draft of the Neighbourhood Character Strategy does not clearly define what constitutes neighbourhood character and how it should be preserved. This lack of clarity leaves room for error, inconsistency, injustice, and a long debate, which can result in a loss of time and resources. Another concern is that the requirements of neighbourhood character in each area are not easily accessible and understood by everyone.
- *Impacts of development:* Respondents were concerned with impacts of development on neighbourhood character, and well-being of residents. Furthermore, there are concerns about inappropriate scale, loss of vegetation, inappropriate materials and finishes, and dominant car access/storage in contemporary infill development.
- *Environmental impact:* Respondents emphasise the importance of preserving wildlife corridors and ensuring that housing developments, roads, parks, and fencing are wildlife friendly. They also express concerns about the destruction of the urban canopy due to development, insufficient allowance for tree replanting, and the loss of older mature and valuable trees.

“I agree with the strategy in principle and understand that there are requirements set by the State government for Council to consider neighbourhood character alongside housing. Neighbourhood character is basically good design, and if Council (and the State Government) focused its efforts on guidelines and requirements to support good design, this would be much more beneficial. Implementing built-form controls to support the implementation of ESD into new development would be much more beneficial.” - Survey respondent

“I broadly support the Neighbourhood Character Strategy and the protection of my local area's garden suburban setting.” - Survey respondent

Do not support

For those that did not support the Strategy (25 people), their main reasons were:

- *Neighbourhood Character Precinct Profiles:* Respondents who did not support the strategy largely disagreed with the proposed changes to neighbourhood character areas, raising concerns about the negative impacts of these, with a perception these changes will lead to a loss of existing character, a loss of community feeling and overdeveloped neighbourhoods.
- *Impacts of development:* Some respondents were concerned with medium and high-density housing developments, believing they are at odds with the preferred character of neighbourhoods. They believed that the strategy included unrealistic high-density housing zones, which could lead to cramped multi-story buildings replacing single-story dwellings.

“I want to retain the character of the pocket of Ivanhoe in which I live. We must ensure that any changes are sympathetic to the overall feel and look of the area.” - Survey respondent

“The consistency between the housing and the neighbourhood strategy is misaligned especially when the housing strategy is assuming a certain level of expansion when the neighbourhood category cannot deal with that.” - Survey respondent

Is there anything missing or that you would like Council to consider for the Neighbourhood Character Strategy?

An analysis of the responses identified the following key themes (50 people responded to this question):

- *Neighbourhood Character Precinct profiles:* Respondents saw the changes to Neighbourhood Character profiles as a disruption to existing characters. While some interpreted the profiles to mean restrictions of vegetation and increased density limits, others opposed the changes because of their perceived negative impact on the existing character of areas. Some urged Council to make decisions based on community need rather than class.
- *Vegetation and canopy cover:* There were concerns with the loss of vegetation and canopy cover, with respondents desiring stronger controls and policies around the felling of significant and native trees and planting of native vegetation, particularly in relation to medium and high-density developments. Some concerns were also raised about potential fire risk and the risk of falling tree limbs associated with gum trees and suggested looking for alternative native tree options to plant close to homes.
- *Overdevelopment concerns:* There is a desire to stop high-rise developments and a preference for townhouses and mid-density residential buildings due to the perceived loss of Neighbourhood Character and a distrust in developers. There was also a concern with the size of developments in relation to the size of the block, they recommended considering minimum lot sizes for subdivisions and new lots to preserve the neighbourhood's character.
- *Design guidelines:* Respondents expressed scepticism about how well the design guidelines would be adhered to, with some fears raised that VCAT could override them. Some respondents hoped to see

Analysis by "High Change Area"

The Housing Strategy identifies residential land "change areas" to determine the type of development that is suitable. Areas which have good access to public transport and shops were designated for higher change than area where there is limited or no access.

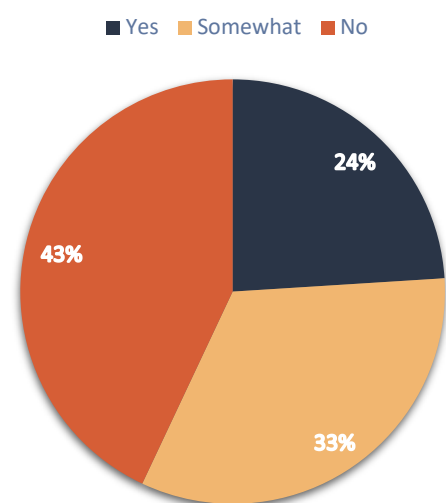
The survey asked respondents what suburb they live in. Suburbs which have high change areas in them include Bellfield, Bundoora, Greensborough, Heidelberg, Heidelberg Heights, Heidelberg West, Rosanna, and Watsonia. Only parts of each suburb are designated for high change. Note that exact addresses were not collected, and respondents may not be located within the high change area of the suburb.

Housing Strategy - Level of support

An analysis of respondents located in suburbs with some areas identified for high change found that 57% support or somewhat support the Housing Strategy while 43% do not support the Strategy. 30 surveys from the above listed suburbs responded to the Housing Strategy questions and are being considered in this analysis.

Respondents located in suburbs which include high-change areas have the following concerns:

- *Inadequate infrastructure and amenities to support higher density:* Respondents are worried that increased housing density is not being matched with upgrades to public transport, roads, parks, playgrounds and other community facilities to support the growing population.
- *Negative impacts on neighbourhood character:* Some feel that higher-density housing like multi-story apartments and townhouse developments are out of character with the existing neighbourhoods of detached single-family homes. They are concerned it will ruin the leafy green suburban feel.
- *The concentration of housing density in certain areas:* Some responses indicated that the higher density zoning seems to be disproportionately concentrated in certain areas like Rosanna, while other parts of Banyule are protected. There is a perception of unfairness in how the density is being distributed.

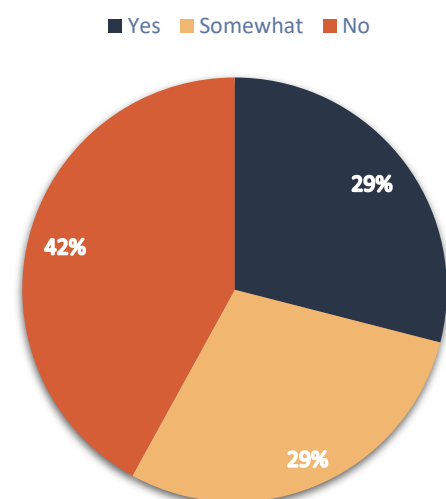


Neighbourhood Character Strategy – Level of Support

An analysis of respondents located in suburbs with some areas identified for high change found that 58% support or somewhat support the Neighbourhood Character Strategy while 42% do not support the Strategy. 28 surveys from the above listed suburbs responded to the Neighbourhood Character Strategy questions and are being considered in this analysis.

Respondents located in suburbs which include high-change areas have the following concerns:

- *Loss of vegetation and tree canopy:* A concern is that higher-density development will lead to blocks being cleared of trees and gardens to maximise the building footprint.



- *Inconsistent application across neighbourhoods:* Similar to the Housing Strategy, some felt that the neighbourhood character protections were stronger in some areas than others. With a belief that streets with similar character should have consistent zoning and controls.
- *Lack of specificity in the guidelines:* Residents wanted the preferred character objectives and design guidelines to be more prescriptive and measurable to avoid ambiguity and ensure they are upheld in new developments. Vague language leaves too much open to interpretation.

Analysis by Age Group

Respondents were grouped by age group. Given the low sample number of responses, ages were grouped into three broad categories, Under 35 years, 35 to 59 years, and 60 years and over.

Housing Strategy

Do you support the draft Housing Strategy?	Under 35 years old	35-60 years old	Over 60 years old	Benchmarking - All responses (not all respondents provided their age)
Yes	23% (3)	11% (4)	25% (6)	16% (13)
Somewhat	31% (4)	47% (18)	38% (9)	39% (31)
No	46% (6)	42% (16)	38% (9)	44% (35)

An analysis of the comments identified the key concerns for age groups:

Under 35 years old

- Need for more affordable and diverse housing options, especially higher density near public transport.
- Concerns about overdevelopment and loss of neighbourhood character.
- Importance of sustainable design and green space in new developments.

35 - 60 years old

- Concerns about high-density development and impacts on infrastructure, parking, congestion.
- Need for housing diversity for different life stages - families, downsizers, etc.
- Importance of quality design and materials in new housing.

Over 60 years old

- Concerns about high-density development and loss of neighbourhood character.
- The desire for more age-friendly housing options located close to services.
- Importance of retaining and increasing public and social housing.

Neighbourhood Character Strategy

Do you support the draft Housing Strategy?	Under 35 years old	35-60 years old	Over 60 years old	Benchmarking – All responses (not all respondents provided their age)
Yes	43% (6)	20% (6)	31% (8)	27% (20)
Somewhat	21% (3)	43% (13)	42% (11)	39% (29)
No	36% (5)	37% (11)	27% (4)	34% (25)

An analysis of the comments identified the key concerns for age groups:

Under 35 years old

- Desire to protect the unique character of different areas while allowing some change.
- Importance of tree canopy, vegetation and open space.
- Concerns about inappropriate development not fitting existing character.

35 - 60 years old

- Strong desire to protect the heritage and character of established areas.
- Concerns about loss of vegetation, gardens and tree canopy to development.
- Need for new development to respect existing neighbourhood character.

Over 60 years old

- Strong attachment to preserving green, leafy character of Banyule neighbourhoods.
- Concerns about loss of vegetation and tree canopy, importance of gardens.
- New development should match existing heritage and character.

Analysis by Gender

Housing Strategy

Women were more likely to support the Housing Strategy, with 60% supporting or somewhat supporting the Strategy compared to 48% of men.

Do you support the draft Housing Strategy?	Man or Male	Woman or female	Benchmarking – All responses (not all respondents provided their gender)
Yes	14% (5)	20% (8)	27% (20)
Somewhat	34% (12)	40% (16)	39% (29)
No	49% (17)	30% (12)	34% (25)

Top concerns for Women

- A desire for more affordable and diverse housing options, including social housing and options suitable for families, the elderly, and those with disabilities.
- Importance of sustainability, energy efficiency, and environmentally-friendly design in new housing developments.
- Concerns about overdevelopment and increased density negatively impacting neighbourhood character, green spaces, and infrastructure

Top concerns for Men

- Opposition to rezoning certain areas for higher-density housing, especially in established neighbourhoods.
- Scepticism about the strategy's ability to deliver housing affordability and diversity goals.
- Need for better infrastructure, parking, and public amenities to support population growth.

Neighbourhood Character Strategy

Women were more likely to support the Neighbourhood Character Strategy as well, with 75% supporting or somewhat supporting the Strategy compared to 62% of men.

Do you support the draft Neighbourhood Character Strategy?	Man or Male	Woman or female	Benchmarking – All responses (not all respondents provided their gender)
Yes	28% (8)	31% (11)	27% (20)
Somewhat	34% (10)	44% (16)	39% (29)
No	38% (11)	25% (9)	34% (25)

Top concerns for Women

- Importance of preserving and enhancing green spaces, canopy trees, and vegetation in neighbourhoods.
- Desire for new development to respect existing architectural styles and neighbourhood character.
- Need for design guidelines that promote sustainability, accessibility, and social interaction.

Top concerns for Men

- Concern that the strategy will be too prescriptive and limit architectural creativity and diversity.
- Importance of allowing for some degree of change and evolution in neighbourhood character over time.
- Need to balance character preservation with the demands of population growth and housing needs.

Analysis by Renters

There was a very low participation rate for renters. Comments should not be considered representative of renters in Banyule.

Renters accounted for five responses to the survey, given there were very few qualitative responses provided by renters, a brief summary of what was heard is provided below:

Housing Strategy

Two renters did not support the draft Housing Strategy, two indicated they somewhat supported it, and one was in support.

Renters' concerns include inadequate public transport, insufficient infrastructure and services, outdated facilities, a lack of street parking, and anticipated congestion.

Neighbourhood Character Strategy

Two renters indicated they did not support the draft Neighbourhood Character Strategy, while one indicated somewhat support, and one indicated they supported the strategy.

Renters were concerned that the draft Neighbourhood Character Strategy lacked encouragement for higher-density dwellings, focusing on areas already developed with little room for new apartments. Other concerns include maintaining Banyule's character, preserving trees, and considering the needs of older residents with pets who cannot afford new units.

Melcombe Road, Ivanhoe

Analysis of survey responses identified that Melcombe Road was commonly mentioned. An analysis was undertaken to identify how many respondents mentioned Melcombe Road.

- 14 people indicated they were notified about the survey from a neighbour. They are all residents of Ivanhoe.
- 11 respondents specifically mentioned Melcombe Road in Ivanhoe.

The key concerns raised by these respondents were:

- Concerns were raised about the perceived inconsistent 'zoning' proposed in the draft strategy and there was a desire for Council to protect the heritage character of the entire street by classifying it as a minimal change area.
- The draft strategy proposes classifying one side of Melcombe Road as a Minimal Change Area and the other side as an Incremental Change Area. Many respondents felt this was inconsistent and would negatively impact the character of the street. Respondents wanted both sides of Melcombe Road to be classified as Minimal Change Area to preserve the heritage and character of the entire street.
- There were concerns that allowing 3-storey townhouse developments on one side of Melcombe Road would be out of character, devalue properties, and fundamentally change the street, which is seen as an important part of Ivanhoe's history.

Pop-Ups

Watsonia Library (inside entryway), Watsonia

Tuesday 30 April, 10am - 1pm, about 25 people engaged.

- *General support:* Most people were supportive of the draft Strategies, after officers provided an overview.
- *Watsonia Town Square:* Some concerns were raised about the Watsonia Town Square project.
- *Need for more housing:* Most participants agreed on the need for more housing. One person highlighted the difficulty in finding suitable accessible housing for downsizing.

Bell St Mall (outside Shop 48), Oriel Road and Bell Street, Heidelberg West

Thursday 2 May, 12 midday - 3pm, about 45 people engaged.

- *Green/open space needed:* Many people expressed the need for more green open spaces in the area, highlighting the importance of environmental and recreational areas.
- *Bell Street Mall:* Concern about the state of Bell Street Mall, with many acknowledging its potential and emphasizing the need for upgrades and better maintenance.
- *Downsizing:* There is a need for more options for older people to downsize. Some people pointed out the lack of suitable housing for seniors in the 3081 area, emphasizing the desire for developments that cater to downsizing without being assisted living or care homes.

Yulong Reserve (near Bundoora Bowling Club), 11 Cameron Parade, Bundoora

Saturday 4 May, 9am - 12 midday, about 50 people engaged.

- *Carparking and traffic impacts:* Several people raised issues with car parking due to increased density.
- *Affordable housing:* There is significant concern among the community about declining affordability of housing and cost of living.
- *Fight urban sprawl:* There was a fear expressed that Australia might follow the USA's path of urban sprawl, with one person advocating for a more European approach to housing development, which includes acceptance of up to six-story buildings across the board.

Greensborough Walk (outside WaterMarc), 1 Flintoff Street, Greensborough

Tuesday 7 May, 3pm - 6pm, about 35 people engaged.

- *Design and development standards:* People talked about poor aesthetic standards of new housing, noting its negative impact on the streetscape, and expressing support for better design standards. There was a recognition that large houses are unnecessary, especially when there are abandoned houses that could be utilized for those in need.
- *Concern about car dependency:* Significant worry about overdevelopment and the resulting car dependence. The importance of access to public transport was emphasized.
- *Affordability:* A few people commented on the difficulties faced by people struggling to find housing.

Were Street Village (Were Street Reserve), Were Street, Montmorency

Wednesday 8 May, 3.30pm - 6.30pm, about 30 people engaged.

- *Overlooking and amenity impacts of townhouse development:* Townhouse redevelopments causing overlooking issues into backyards and people commented on how the developments seem to pack in as many houses as possible.
- *Housing Diversity:* Difficulty in finding larger townhouses with 4 or 5 bedrooms in Montmorency, as most new builds are 2 or 3 bedrooms. Accessibility for older people to downsize is also limited in Monty.
- *Environmental concerns:* Participants expressed strong support for protecting biodiversity, maintaining open spaces, retaining trees, and ensuring sustainable development. There was also a call for nature strips to enhance biodiversity with continuous canopy cover along streets.

Leos Supermarket (outside), 133 - 137 Burgundy Street, Heidelberg

Friday 10 May, 10am - 1pm, about 90 people engaged.

- *Infrastructure and services:* People shared concern about impact of housing on infrastructure, carparking and traffic. Among these conversations, people shared the desire for a community orientated approach to planning.
- *Tree removal:* Tree removal and inadequate replacement emerged as a significant issue, reflecting community concern for environmental impact and urban aesthetics.
- *Social and affordable housing:* Social and affordable housing was highlighted by about 25% of respondents, indicating a recognized need and community interest in addressing housing affordability.
- *Transparency:* Some people expressed frustration and a sense of powerlessness regarding Council projects.

Ivanhoe Library and Cultural Hub (foyer), 275 Upper Heidelberg Road, Ivanhoe

Wednesday 15 May, 10am - 1pm, about 50 people engaged.

- *Increased canopy cover:* Appropriate setbacks and landscape planning is needed to increase greening, in line with Council's objectives in these and other Council Strategies.
- *Upper Heidelberg Road:* Some people shared concern about the impacts of development along Upper Heidelberg Road. Some people feel it is becoming "canyon" like.
- *Support for Neighbourhood Character Strategy:* Many people were most interested in the neighbourhood character strategy and were happy to hear that outcomes of this review will lead to stronger neighbourhood character controls.

Macleod Market, Aberdeen Road, Macleod

Saturday 18 May, 9am - 12 midday, about 50 people engaged.

- *Victoria Cross Estate (VCE):* Support for the VCE being designated as minimal change to protect a biodiversity corridor and the valued vegetation.
- *Walkability:* People like the Macleod shops, access to the train station and the general amenity of the area.
- *Need for more housing:* Most participants agreed on the need for more housing.

Intercept Survey

Nine people responded to the intercept survey in total. Given the small number of responses, the following analysis should be considered exploratory rather than representative of the broader community.

Improving housing choice

Respondents broadly supported the goals of enhancing housing diversity, expanding accessible design options, and promoting innovative housing models. There was a strong desire to see an increase in social and affordable housing supply. Effectively integrating public housing into neighbourhoods to avoid stigmatisation was emphasised.

"These [summary of the Strategies] are excellent, however, there should be an emphasis on young and first homeowners, with alternative pathways being a suggestion. Such as priority for people who are local. Advocating and providing support for loans." – Intercept Survey Respondent

"I have been on the housing register for 13 years, terrible experience. Need to increase social housing. We should be using unoccupied houses." – Intercept Survey Respondent

Directing housing growth

Respondents emphasised the critical role of access to key services like transportation, healthcare, shopping, and community centres in directing housing growth.

"Access to services is key: transport, Banyule health etc. Help for people who need it." – Intercept survey respondent

Prioritising good design and sustainability

Respondents emphasised the importance of using sustainable design features in affordable housing. Some recognise this may require financial incentives and regular updates.

“Design guide should follow passive house principles, double glazed windows & insulation as standard. Mandate sustainable choices in buildings. Financial incentives are the only way to achieve this.” – Intercept survey respondent

Valuing Neighbourhood Character

Respondents emphasised the need to protect and enhance green space, both in new developments and in the public realm. Some comments highlighted the importance of preserving and defining neighbourhood features like native gardens.

“Want to preserve native gardens. Recognise the need for unit development, but they have to have an attractive design.” - Intercept Survey Respondent

Information Sessions

Participants communicated an understanding that housing growth must occur in Banyule, but that it must occur with careful consideration of biodiversity, vegetation retention and impact on neighbourhood character. Participants shared generally positive feedback, with some people commenting that “it’s clear officers have listened to community feedback [to the Housing Discussion Paper (2023)]”.

Environment and sustainability came through as a very strong priority of participants. Conversation centred around setbacks and minimum permeable areas, which allowed for meaningful vegetation planting including a healthy canopy cover tree, as well as protection of existing vegetation on development sites. There was a strong desire that biodiversity and sustainability lead outcomes of the Strategies, rather than just be a component of them.

“Tree planting ratios and front setbacks [should be] within this process and defined in requirements” – Ivanhoe participant

There was also a lot of conversation about the limitations of the Strategies in the context of the planning and development process. For example, participants acknowledging that there’s limited action that Council can take to protect existing vegetation more forcefully (as illegal tree removal cases are heard by the courts, rather than considered at Council), despite the desire to protect existing vegetation. Other examples raised were the perception that housing is becoming a political issue and therefore State and Federal policy impacts the Strategies, and that there may be a disconnect between planning permits and building permits, noting that building surveyor’s are now privatised and outcomes are not in Council’s control.

“You have to manage the disconnect between the issue of planning permits and building permits which are out of Councils control. Neighbourhood character will remain at significant risk unless the problem is solved” – Ivanhoe participant

Some discussion centred around design and diversity of dwellings and the importance of cohesive landscaping. A couple of people commented on new houses being too large. Meanwhile apartment development lacks diversity of dwelling size, with an oversupply of 1 bedroom dwellings.

Submissions

Overview of Submissions

An analysis of the submissions on the draft Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategies reveals mixed levels of support and key themes and issues.

Levels of support

- There is general support for the Housing Strategy, with recommendations for improvement, particularly regarding single-dwelling covenants and infrastructure support. Concerns were raised about readiness for future growth and maintaining open spaces.
- The Neighbourhood Character Strategy received mixed support, with significant concerns about preserving neighbourhood character and heritage protections.

Key themes

- *Preservation of Neighbourhood Character:* Concerns about disregarding single-dwelling covenants and the need for better tree protection measures.
- *Infrastructure and housing density:* There are concerns about the infrastructure capacity to support increased housing density and the need for improved public transport.
- *Impacts of development:* Concerns about negative impacts on neighbourhood character, canopy cover, biodiversity, and coordination with state projects.
- *Community involvement:* Calls for more community involvement and extended consultation processes to refine strategies and guidelines.

Submission #1

This submission on the draft Neighbourhood Character Strategy primarily expresses concerns about the disregard for single-dwelling covenants in the strategy. The respondent believes these covenants are essential for preserving the unique character of the neighbourhoods and suggests using mapping overlays to indicate these covenants, preventing costly errors. While the respondent supports the draft housing strategy, they believe it needs to be scrutinised and corrected, especially concerning the disregard for single-dwelling covenants. They recommend integrating these covenants into the strategy and using mapping overlays for their indication. The respondent argues for the protection of these covenants and the inclusion of measures in the strategy to prevent the construction of multi-dwelling units or granny flats without appropriate planning applications. The respondent also suggests incorporating Melbourne Water Flood mapping projections overlay into the strategy and avoiding basement car parks in flood-prone areas.

Submission #2

The submission discusses the noticeable housing disparities within a community. The author appreciates the community's inclusivity and expresses a desire to contribute more. An innovative solution proposed is the use of art to address these housing issues, possibly through fundraising initiatives. The submission suggests that these housing challenges could be turned into opportunities to raise awareness and funds through art. The recommendation is to explore the potential of art in addressing housing issues and consider organising art exhibitions or similar events as fundraisers to support those struggling with housing.

Submission #3

This submission on the draft Strategies expresses satisfaction with the designation of Victoria Cross Estate as a minimal change area and raises concerns about the potential for large units to limit space for vegetation. The

submission also questioned the completeness of the map on page 37 and the provision for increased open space with population density. Additionally, doubts were raised about the adequacy of a 10% quota for affordable housing. In terms of the neighbourhood character strategy, changes were suggested to the descriptions and emphasised the importance of considering remnant gum trees in development plans. Concerns were raised about the removal of indigenous canopy trees and the objective of minimising excavation. Furthermore, the submission expressed confusion over the preferred character statement on page 116 of the Neighbourhood Character Strategy and asked about coordination between Banyule Council and other entities regarding tree cover on the ridgeline.

Submission #4

The submission provided a detailed perspective on the draft Strategies. The submitter expressed significant concern about the rapid erosion of treescapes in southern Banyule, emphasising the importance of preserving the treed character of the area. They suggested implementing better tree protection measures to address this issue. Another concern raised was the impact of housing growth on existing infrastructure. The submission highlighted the potential strain on infrastructure due to the increased population and suggested that this issue needs to be addressed to ensure the infrastructure can support the growth. The need for improved public transport was also a key point in the submission. Participants stressed the importance of having accessible and efficient public transportation options to support the growing population and reduce reliance on private vehicles. To ensure community involvement in the planning process, participants suggested the formation of small working groups of residents. These groups would refine design guidelines and character statements, ensuring that the perspectives and preferences of the community are considered in the planning process. The submission highlighted the community's concerns about preserving treescapes, managing housing growth, and improving public transport.

Submission #5

The submission expresses general support for the aims of both the Housing and Neighbourhood Character strategies but suggests extending the current consultation process to more clearly establish the preferred future neighbourhood character with input from experienced community members. Infrastructure provision alongside housing growth is emphasised as critical for quality of life. Specific feedback is provided on many aspects of the draft strategies. Including concerns about recent single-dwelling replacements being out of character, suggestions to tighten the wording of preferred character statements and design guidelines with resident input, and an emphasis on retaining and planting native and exotic vegetation, with incentives and enforcement. The submission provides recommendations to strengthen ridgeline protections and cut/fill restrictions, as well as demonstrates support for proposed actions on open space levies, tree canopy targets, and illegal tree removal. The submission provides detailed comments on specific sections and wording throughout the documents. It encourages robust controls and community involvement to ensure new development respects and enhances Banyule's valued neighbourhood character.

Submission #6

The submission commends Council for their diligent work in preparing the lengthy strategy documents and engaging with the community. However, it expresses significant concerns that the State Government and YIMBY groups are undermining Council's efforts to protect neighbourhood character. It proposes that the State Government is forcing increased housing density in inner suburbs, eroding previous planning protections. The submission is concerned that 'YIMBY groups' are pushing to rewrite planning rules to enable more apartment developments. The submission argues the strategy documents are overly long, difficult to read and respond to meaningfully in the short timeframes allowed. It criticises aspects like illegible maps, unclear wording, and weak policy language that is unenforceable. The submission highlights threats to open space, gardens and wildlife habitats from overdevelopment and McMansions that are out of character. It calls for stronger involvement

from Council with the State Government to achieve successful outcomes, and improvements to Rescode, increased enforcement, and mandated good design. Specific feedback is provided on the neighbourhood character strategy, questioning how proposed guidelines will be enforced.

Submission #7

The submission focuses mostly on neighbourhood character. The submitter emphasizes the critical nature of a recent case before VCAT, highlighting its potential precedent-setting impact on future development in GRZ2 sites. Central to their submission is a detailed list of attributes defining neighbourhood character, including single dwelling frontages, spacious streetscapes, robust gardens, large canopy trees, and ample landscaping, which the submitter argues should guide development evaluations. The submission advocates for clearer definitions and stricter guidelines within the Banyule Planning Scheme to preserve and enhance neighbourhood character, particularly emphasizing the protection of large canopy trees. Furthermore, they propose amendments to the draft Neighbourhood Character Strategy to safeguard against threats like dual dwelling frontages and advocate for stronger safeguards and narrative clarity. Their engagement with the planning process is framed by a commitment to maintaining and strengthening the unique character of East Ivanhoe amidst contemporary development pressures.

Summary of Authority Feedback

Feedback was sought from the Department of Transport and Planning, CFA, Melbourne Water, Yarra Valley Water, the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions, Suburban Rail Loop, and Major Roads Projects Victoria. Feedback was received from three Authorities.

Department of Transport and Planning

The Department of Transport and Planning provides feedback on both the housing strategy and the neighbourhood character strategy. For the Housing Strategy, the feedback acknowledges that constraints such as flooding, and bushfire risk have been well addressed. However, there is a concern about the lack of future projections data for housing capacity and population needs, which is seen as crucial for better planning for future growth. In terms of the Neighbourhood Character Strategy, the feedback suggests that while all Neighbourhood Character (NC) areas largely share the same characteristics, there are nuances that make them slightly different. The respondent suggests consolidating different NC areas and precincts to eliminate confusion and technicalities. There is also a concern about the repetition of the same three city-wide objectives in each NC area, with a recommendation to mention these objectives only once as an overall objective for the whole municipality to streamline the strategy and reduce redundancy.

Major Roads Projects Victoria

Feedback from Major Road Projects Victoria to the Housing Strategy Team requested minor changes to the housing strategy maps.

CFA

Feedback from the CFA noted that much of Banyule is urbanised, however that there are still pockets of public reserves, creeks and drainage areas that can create bushfire risk. The feedback noted the importance of careful management of these areas. For housing development, the feedback reminds Council to incorporate bushfire design standards into its strategies.