WHITEHORSE
CITY COUNCIL

Whitehorse Planning Scheme Review 2026

OCTOBER 2026

Planning scheme review pursuant to Section 12B of the

Planning and Environment Act 1987

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACP	Activity Centres Program
BFO	Built Form Overlay
BMO	Bushfire Management Overlay
CZ	Commercial Zone
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
DDO	Design and Development Overlay
DPO	Development Plan Overlay
DTP	Department of Transport and Planning
EAO	Environmental Audit Overlay
ESD	Environmentally Sustainable Development
ESO	Environmental Significance Overlay
GRZ	General Residential Zone
HCTZ	Housing Choice and Transport Zone
HO	Heritage Overlay
INZ	Industrial Zone
LDRZ	Low Density Residential Zone
LPPF	Local Planning Policy Framework
LSIO	Land Subject to Inundation Overlay
MAC	Major Activity Centre
MPHWP	Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
MRDAC	Managing Residential Development Advisory Committee
MAV	Municipal Association of Victoria
MPS	Municipal Planning Strategy
MSS	Municipal Strategic Statement
MUZ	Mixed Use Zone
NAC	Neighbourhood Activity Centre
NCO	Neighbourhood Character Overlay
NRZ	Neighbourhood Residential Zone
The Act	Planning and Environment Act 1987
PAO	Public Acquisition Overlay
PCRZ	Public Conservation and Resource Zone
PO	Parking Overlay
PPF	Planning and Policy Framework
PPN	Planning Practice Note
PPRZ	Public Park and Recreation Zone
PSP	Precinct Structure Plan
PUZ	Public Use Zone
PRZ	Precinct Zone
RGZ	Residential Growth Zone
RDZ	Road Zone
SBO	Special Building Overlay
SLO	Significant Landscape Overlay
SPPF	State Planning Policy Framework
SP	Structure Plan

SRL	Suburban Rail Loop
SUZ	Special Use Zone
TPZ	Tree Protection Zone
UDF	Urban Design Framework
UFZ	Urban Floodway Zone
VCAT	Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
VPA	Victorian Planning Authority
VPO	Vegetation Protection Overlay
Planning Scheme	Whitehorse Planning Scheme

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1. Executive summary

The Whitehorse Planning Scheme (Planning Scheme) guides decisions relating to land use and development within the City of Whitehorse. Under section 12B (1) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (the Act), Council must review its Planning Scheme within one year of each date it is required to approve a Council Plan under section 125 of the *Local Government Act 1989*, unless the Minister determines a longer period.

In January 2026, the Minister for Planning wrote to Council and requested that the outcomes of the Planning Scheme review be reported to them by the end of October 2026.

The State Government's housing targets, released in June 2024, allocated Whitehorse a target of 76, 500 new homes by 2051.

On February 4, 2026, the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) advised that *'your Council's planning scheme will be likely to have sufficient capacity to meet its housing target however DTP will provide a final assessment once the state-led planning initiatives in your municipality are finalised and dwelling yields for these areas determined'*. Further, DTP advised that Council *'should still review policy, zones and overlays to ensure increased housing is enabled in appropriate locations, particularly where access to opportunities and services is highest'* as part of its Planning Scheme review.

In July 2026 Council was advised that '*DTP has assessed the capacity of the Whitehorse Planning Scheme, determining that there is sufficient capacity to meet your housing target*.'

In September 2026 Council was granted access to the State Government's Housing Capacity Assessment Platform (HCAP). This confirmed that Whitehorse has sufficient capacity to meet the State Government's housing target and moreover had a housing capacity surplus of more than 9,000 compared to the *Plan for Victoria* housing target.

This review covers the period from January 2022 – December 2025. It includes an assessment of the Planning Scheme's performance to evaluate its effectiveness and operation.

This report fulfils Council's statutory obligations to review the Planning Scheme under section 12(B) of the Act and will be forwarded to the Minister for Planning upon completion.

1.1. Top priorities for Council

The review has identified the following priorities for Council over the next four years:



2. Introduction

2.1. Background

The Planning Scheme was approved on 5 August 1999 as part of the introduction of Victoria's 'new format' planning schemes between 1997 and 2000. The Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) and Local Planning Policies was reviewed in 2001 and 2002. Amendment C50 (part 1), which implemented the outcomes of the MSS review, the Housing Strategy, two Character Studies, the Box Hill Urban Design Framework and Melbourne 2030, was gazetted in August 2006. This amendment significantly improved the structure, content, and operation of the Planning Scheme.

A second review was undertaken in 2010 following the 2008 Council election and adoption of a new Council Plan in 2009. The review resulted in two Planning Scheme amendments. Amendment C132 (Stage one) which was gazetted in February 2011 updated the Planning Scheme and corrected a range of issues. Amendment C133 (Stage two), gazetted in March 2012, reviewed and updated the schedules to the Scheme's eight Significant Landscape Overlays.

A third review was undertaken in 2014 following the 2012 Council election and adoption of a new Council Plan in 2013. The review resulted in Amendment C177, gazetted in July 2016, which made a range of corrections and updates to the Planning Scheme.

A fourth review of the Planning Scheme was undertaken in 2018 following the 2016 Council election.

In July 2018 the Victorian government introduced a new Planning Policy Framework (PPF) through Amendment VC148 as part of the Smart Planning Program. The new PPF was intended to better align state and local policy and make planning schemes more accessible and transparent.

The new PPF introduced an integrated structure based on state, regional and local policy and reorganised policies under a series of planning themes. As a result of the PPF translation process, planning scheme provisions were reorganised, with clauses repositioned, deleted, or edited.

Planning schemes were also required to include a Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS), which provides the strategic foundation for local policy by municipality's key characteristics, opportunities and strategic directions.

Given the substantial structural changes arising from the translation to the new PPF and introduction of the MPS, a Planning Scheme review was commenced in 2022, but not completed.

2.2. Methodology and scope

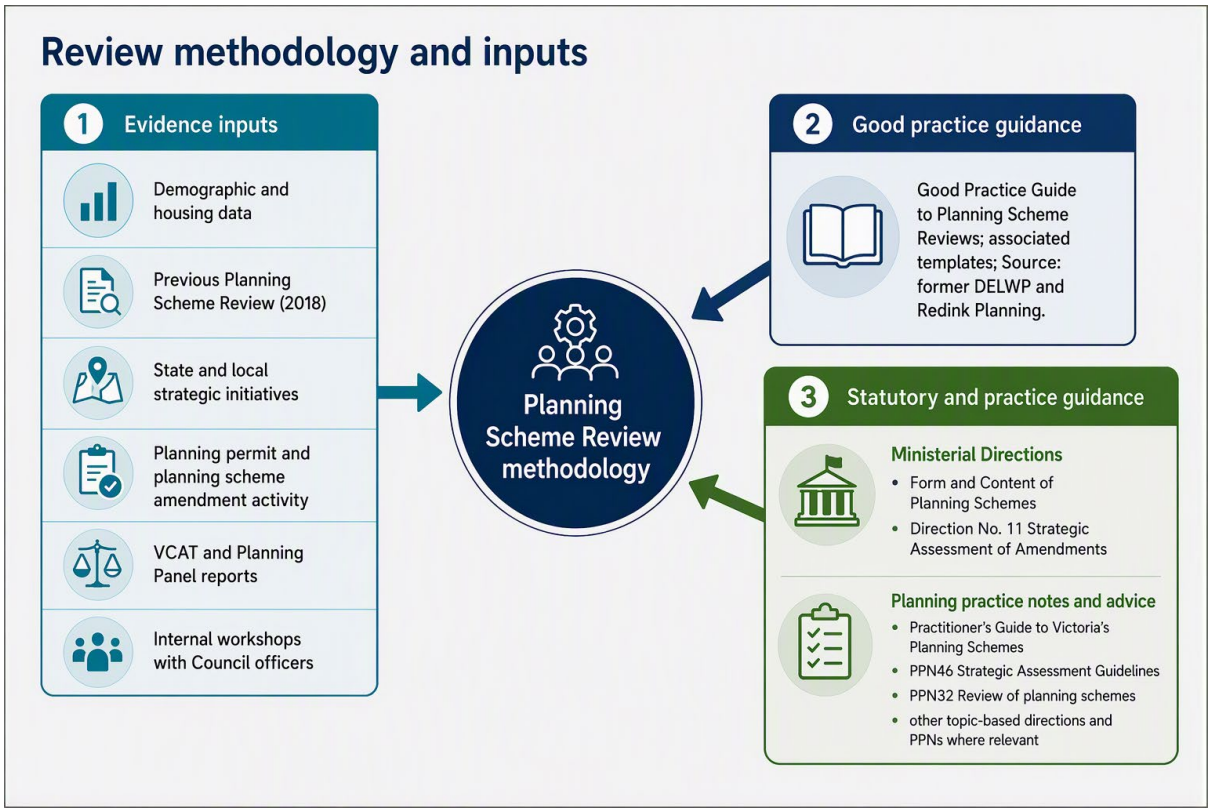
Council, as the planning authority for the Planning Scheme, is required under Section 12(B) of the Act to review its Planning Scheme every four years, or within such longer period as is determined by the Minister for Planning. In January 2026, the Minister requested that the outcomes of the Planning Scheme review be reported by the end of October 2026.

The scope of the review is established under section 12(B) of the Act and should focus on identifying opportunities to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the planning scheme in achieving the objectives of planning in Victoria and the planning framework established in the Act.

Planning scheme reviews also provide the opportunity to:

- Align Council's strategic policy position with the planning scheme.
- Remove outdated, redundant or superseded information.
- Inform stakeholders about how the planning scheme operates and the processes available to review and improve it.

This review was undertaken by Council officers with guidance from the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP). Specifically, an Advisory Note was sent to Council in March 2026 which set out the matters recommended by DTP to be addressed in a review undertaken in 2026.



2.3. What happens after the review?

Council will consider a report on the review prior to it being sent to the Minister for Planning for consideration. Sending the report to the Minister finalises Council's obligations under the Act. The review will largely be implemented using existing officer resources. Additional Council funding may be required to implement some of the recommendations, which will be the subject of future budget considerations.

3. What's driving change

3.1. Physical context

The City of Whitehorse (Whitehorse) is a diverse and thriving middle ring municipality covering approximately 64 square kilometres. Strategically located between Melbourne's CBD and outer east and south-east suburbs, Whitehorse is well positioned for businesses and industry, with access to major employment, consumer and labour markets. The municipality also benefits from extensive public transport connections and significant health and education institutions.

Whitehorse is predominantly suburban in character and contains several major commercial centres, including the Box Hill, Nunawading/MegaMile, Forest Hill Chase, Burwood Heights, and Tally Ho activity centres. The municipality will also accommodate two proposed Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) stations at Box Hill and Burwood, with associated higher density development precincts. In addition, Blackburn, Nunawading and Mitcham railway stations and their surrounding precincts have been identified as Train and Tram Activity Centres as part of the State Government's Activity Centres Program (ACP).

Outside of the major commercial centres, Whitehorse is characterised by neighbourhoods that are recognised and valued for their leafy and green character. The municipality contains more than 250 individual heritage places and 16 heritage precincts, which contribute to local identity and neighbourhood character. Residential areas remain predominantly detached housing, however, there has been an increase in medium and higher density housing such as townhouses and apartments since the adoption of the 2014 Housing Strategy. The municipality's landscape character is highly valued and is reflected in the application of various overlay controls across residential areas.

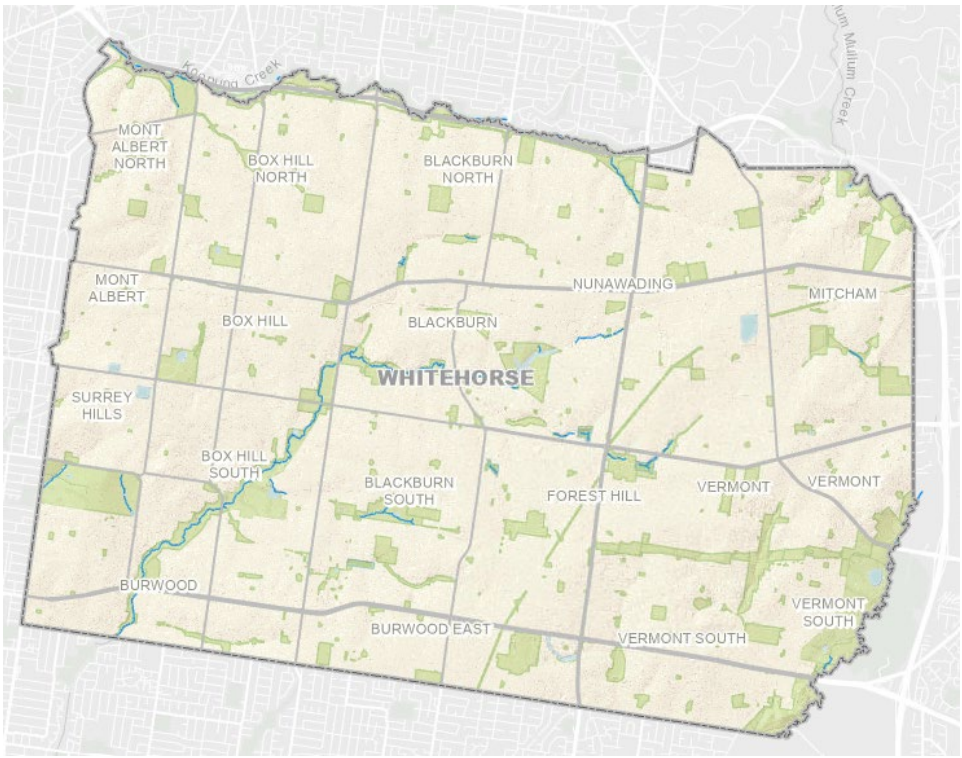


Figure 1: Map of Whitehorse (Source: Whitehorse Maps)

3.2. Demographic context

Whitehorse has a population of 183,462 as of 30 June 2024.

At the 2021 Australian census:

- The median age was 39 years. In Greater Melbourne, this figure was 37.
- Twenty-four per cent of residents were aged 60 plus; this compares with 20 per cent for Greater Melbourne.
- Ten per cent of residents are aged 75 years and over. This compares with 7 per cent for Greater Melbourne and 8 per cent for Victoria.
- Whitehorse has more residents aged 20-24 than Greater Melbourne.
- The biggest growth between 2016 and 2021 in Whitehorse was in the 70-84 age group, which experienced a 12 per cent increase. This was followed by growth in the 35–49-year age group (5.4 per cent increase).
- Box Hill and Burwood (suburbs) have larger concentrations of residents aged 18-29 (30 per cent and 29 per cent respectively compared with 17 per cent for the municipality).
- Nineteen per cent of the population are aged under 18 years.
- Fifty-two per cent of the population were female.
- There were more males than females in all the five year age increments under 30 years (apart from 10 to 14 year olds). There are 600 more males than females aged 20-24 in the municipality.
- For every five year age increment from 30 years there are more females than males. This is particularly so for the older age groups; there are 43 per cent more women than there are men aged 75 plus.

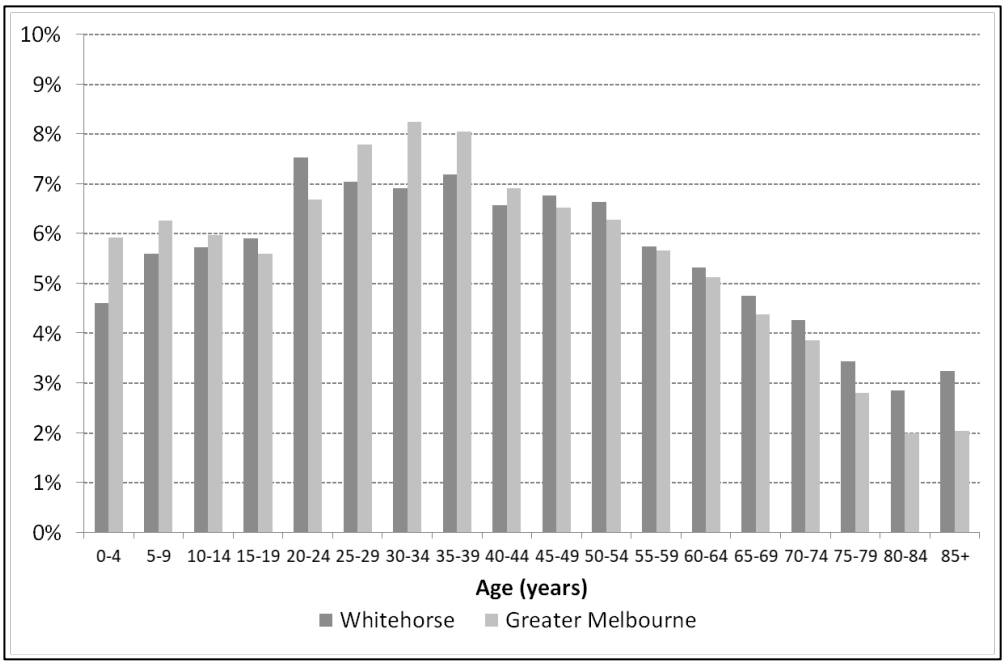


Figure 2: Age Structure of Whitehorse vs Greater Melbourne 2021 (Source: Whitehorse City Council website)

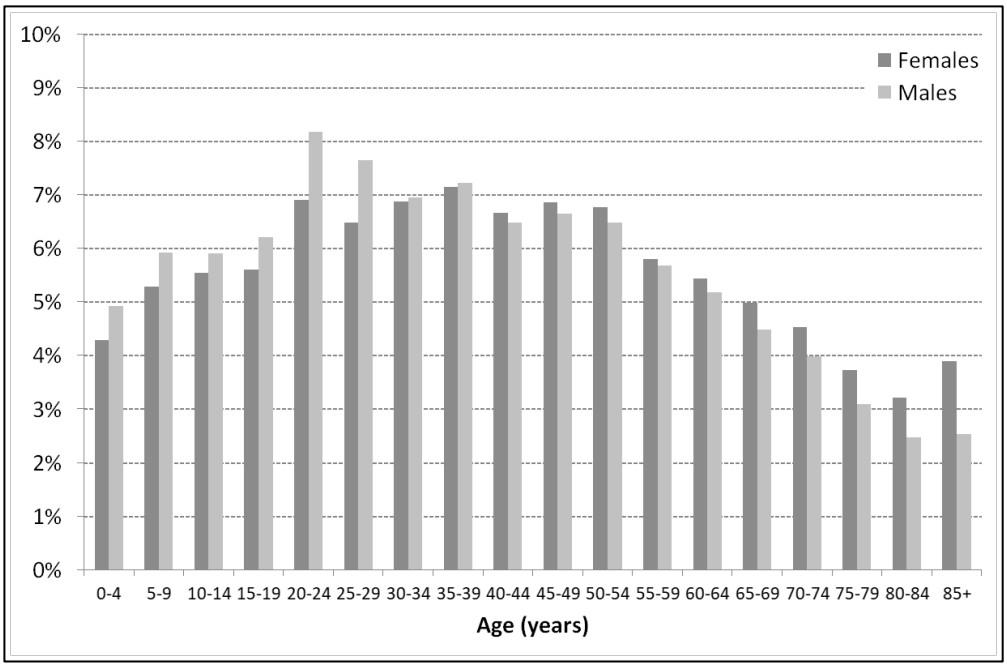


Figure 3: Age Structure by Gender 2021 (Source: Whitehorse City Council website)

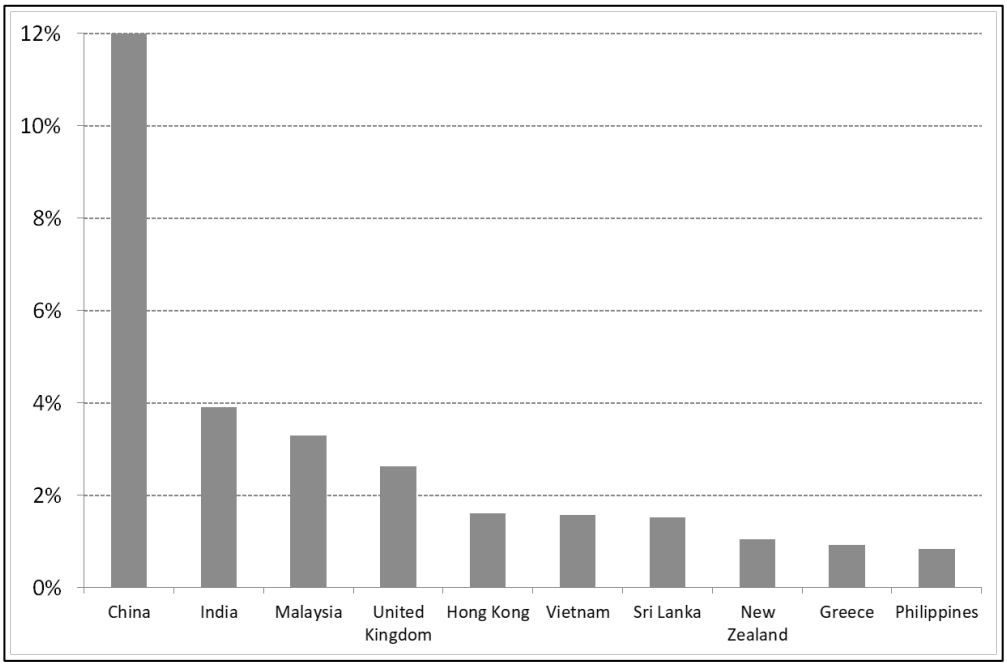


Figure 4: Top Ten Overseas Countries by Birth 2021 (Source: Whitehorse City Council website)

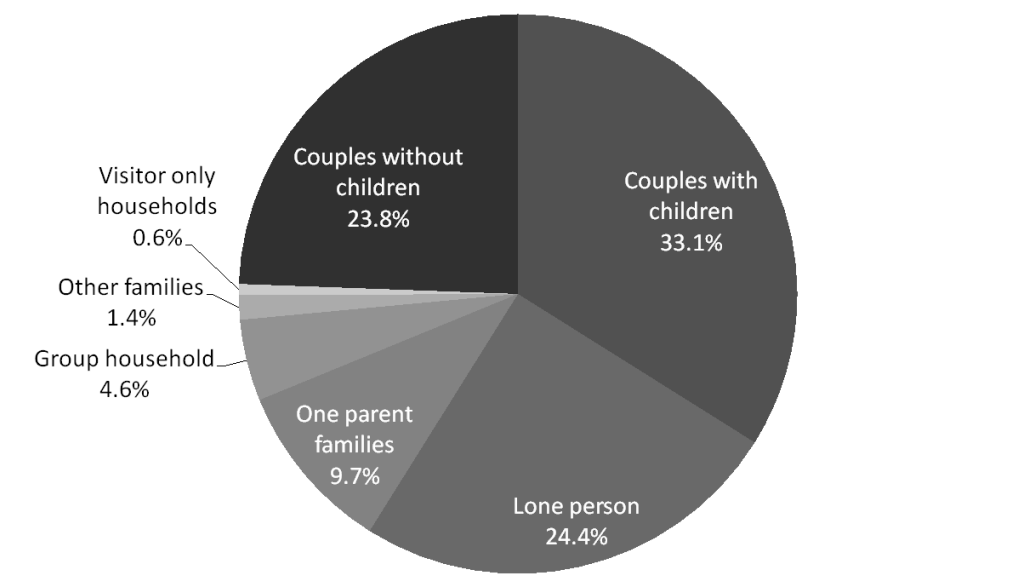


Figure 5: Household Types 2021 (Source: City of Whitehorse website)

It is anticipated that there will be a 25 per cent increase in those aged 60 or more by 2031, alongside a substantial increase in persons aged between 20 and 39 that can be attributed to Whitehorse's housing opportunities and tertiary education facilities.

In 2023 the median house price in Whitehorse was $1,376,000. This is considerably higher than the equivalent for the Melbourne Metropolitan area ($860,000). Whitehorse has the 10th highest median house price of the 79 local governments in Victoria.

A total of 34.8 per cent of households in Whitehorse own their own home. This is considerably higher than Greater Melbourne at 28.7 per cent. Such an elevated level of home ownership means there are fewer households renting or purchasing homes.

However, the number of households owning their own home has fallen since the 2006 Census, continuing a trend both in Whitehorse and Greater Melbourne. The number of people purchasing homes has fallen slightly, but there has been a continuing rise in the number of people entering the rental market. This is significant as it means an increase in the number of households susceptible to housing stress.

Clause 02 of the Planning Scheme (MPS) provides a general demographic profile of the municipality. This profile includes data relating to population, housing and economic activity and is based on information from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), as well as data analysis commissioned by Council. Since the last Planning Scheme Review in 2018, new demographic data has become available based on the 2021 Census.

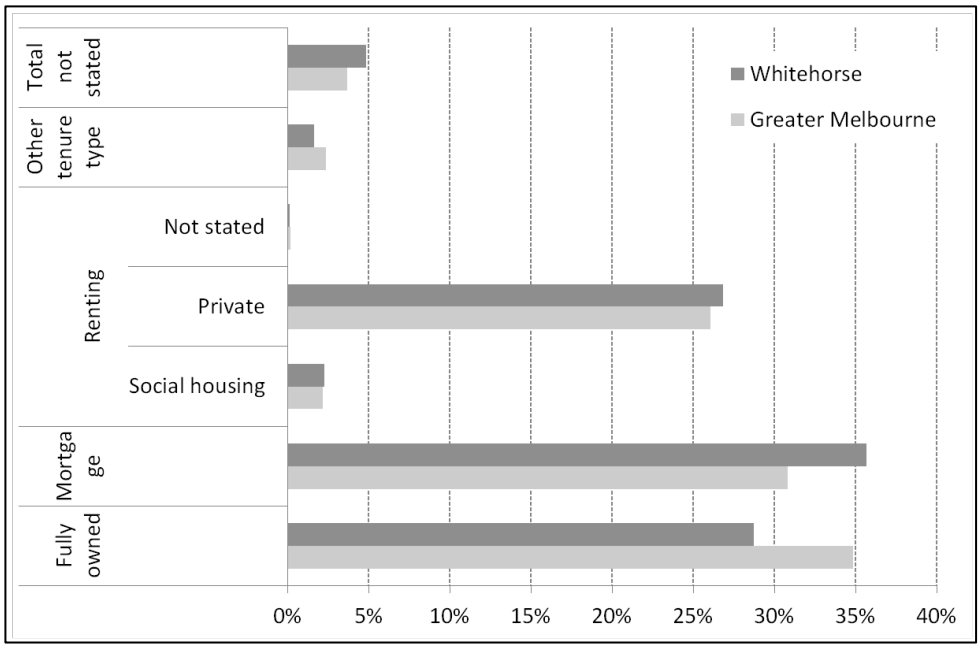


Figure 6: Housing Tenure (Source: ABS, 2021 Census of Population and Housing)

3.3. Economic context

Whitehorse is home to 19,243 local businesses, supports 87,988 jobs and had a gross regional product of $13.17 billion in 2024.

The Health Care and Social Assistance industry sector makes the greatest contribution to economic output in the region, which at $1.949 billion accounts for 18 per cent of total output. With 20,441 jobs representing 23.2 per cent of total employment, Health Care & Social Assistance is the industry sector that is the region's largest employer.

The most popular industry sectors for the resident population in Whitehorse to work in were:

- Health care and social assistance (12,183 people or 14.6 per cent)
- Professional, scientific and technical services (9,780 people or 11.7 per cent)
- Education and training (8,573 people or 10.3 per cent)
- Retail trade (7,985 people or 9.6 per cent)

3.4. Climate change

The Victorian government has identified climate change as one of the biggest threats to the future of the State; with warmer and drier conditions projected to have negative consequences for health, infrastructure, agriculture, water and biodiversity.

Climate change impacts are being felt across the Whitehorse community and are forecast to increase. According to the *Whitehorse Climate Response Strategy 2023-2030*, local climate impacts include:

- Increased damage to buildings and infrastructure, leading to higher maintenance costs
- Stress and demand on energy and communication networks
- Increased stormwater runoff and flash flooding
- Loss of biodiversity due to decreased habitat quality and availability

- Loss of service from sports fields being too dry or too wet
- Reduction in open space amenity due to vegetation decline
- Insurance cost increases and coverage decrease
- Changed distribution of pests and diseases
- Damage to popular environmental sites
- Increased pressure on emergency services
- More heat-related deaths, particularly among the elderly and other vulnerable members of the community
- Interruptions to supply chains and food production.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports that '*heat is the most frequent cause of extreme weather related injury hospitalisations and deaths in Australia*'. Data indicates that extreme heat accounted for 7,104 injury hospitalisations and 293 deaths between June 2012 and 2022 and those aged 65 and over were the most hospitalised.[1]

Greenhouse gas emissions from human activities are the dominant cause of climate change. Figure 7 highlights the proportion of community emissions attributed to each sector. A reduction in emissions is required to reduce the cause and impacts of climate change.

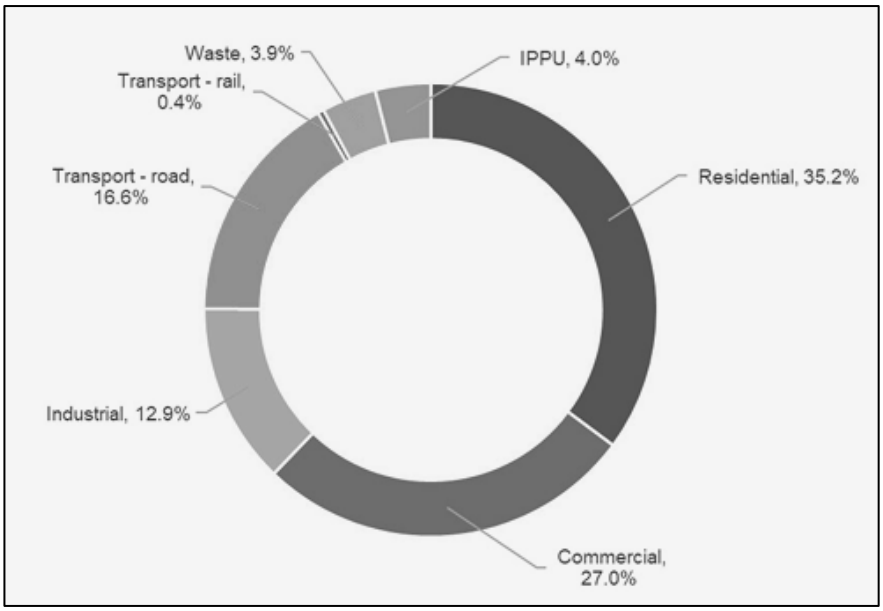


Figure 7: Proportion of emissions by sector 2020/21 (Source: Whitehorse Climate Response Strategy 2023-2030)

3.5. COVID-19

Domestic and international measures in response to COVID-19 have had a large economic and financial impact on Victoria, Australia and the rest of the world. Whitehorse is not immune to these impacts, including social, health, education and employment impacts.

Since COVID-19, household size, dwelling bedroom needs, feelings of inclusion, health behaviours, environmental preferences, and employment and education patterns have

[1] *Let's talk about the weather: injuries related to extreme weather* (Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/injury/extreme-weather-injuries/contents/summary)

shifted. Working from home has changed transport patterns, the amount of space needed in dwellings, and access to services and shops in local neighbourhoods.

According to the ABS working from home had increased to 40% in August 2021. In August 2024, 36% of employed people usually worked from home.

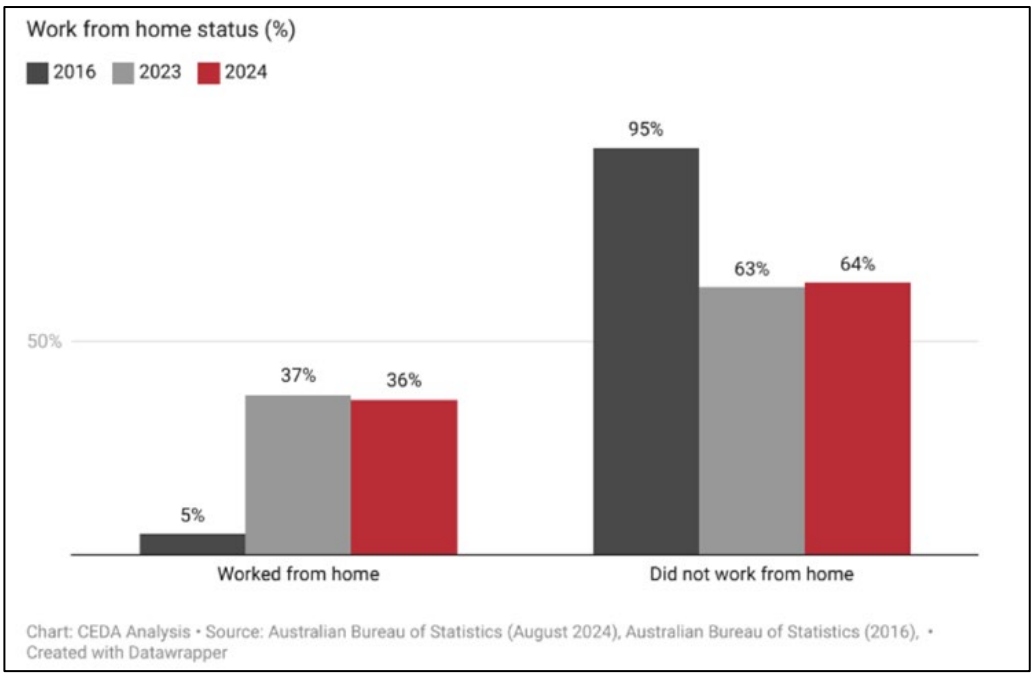


Figure 8: Work from home status (Source: Committee for Economic Development Australia [CEDA])

3.6. Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029

The Integrated Council Plan was adopted by Council on 16 June 2025. The Council Plan sets out the five strategic objectives that Council will pursue over the next four years:

1. **Community**: We aim to foster a connected, inclusive, safe and active community where everyone feels a sense of belonging.
2. **Built**: We aspire to develop safe, accessible, and attractive public spaces and infrastructure that meet community needs and adapt to growth.
3. **Economy**: We are prioritising a resilient and dynamic economy, with support for local businesses, diverse opportunities, and job and investment attraction.
4. **Natural**: We are committed to protecting natural areas, promoting environmental sustainability, building climate resilience, and managing waste responsibly.
5. **Governance**: Strong governance will be achieved through transparent, accountable management and the efficient and financially sustainable delivery of valuable core services.

The Council Community Vision 2040 states that "*Whitehorse is a resilient community where everyone belongs. We are active citizens who value our natural environment, history and diversity. We embrace sustainability and innovation. We are dynamic. We learn, grow and thrive.*"

The Council Plan integrates the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP) ensuring community health and wellbeing is a key part of the strategic approach.

The Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029 meets the all the requirements of the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic)* which requires Councils to develop a MPWHP every four years following Council elections. The plan identifies 5 key focus areas:

1. Strategy 1: Foster social connections and a sense of belonging
2. Strategy 2: Support community initiatives to promote health and prevent disease
3. Strategy 3: Precent and respond to family violence (including elder abuse)
4. Strategy 4: Partner to enhance mental health and build resilience
5. Strategy 5: Partner with the community to achieve positive environmental and health outcomes that reduce climate change impacts

3.7. Recommendations

1. Update the MPS to reflect updated data on population, housing and economic activity.
2. Amend all references to the Council Plan and Council Vision to reference and reflect the Vision, Strategic Objectives and Strategic Directions of the current Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029.
3. Review local planning policies to ensure their alignment with the Strategic Objectives and Strategies of the Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029.
4. Continue to advocate for a permanent Environmentally Sustainable Development policy.

4. Previous review

The Planning Scheme was last reviewed by Council in 2018. The previous planning scheme review identified further strategic work to be undertaken to strengthen the overall operation of the planning scheme. Since this review, many of these pieces of work have been actioned or are ongoing, while others have not yet begun. The Figure below provides an overview and further detail is below.

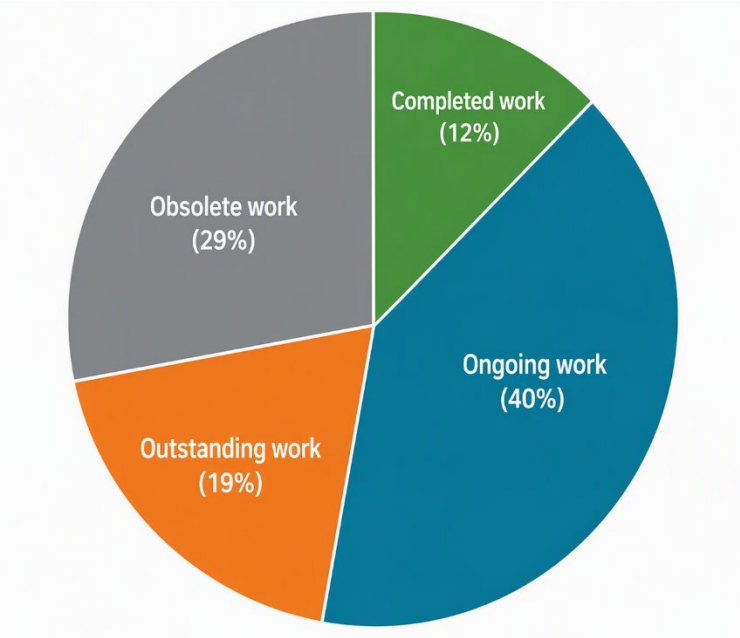


Figure 9: Status of actions from the 2018 Planning Scheme Review

4.1. Progress since last review

4.1.1. Completed work

Council has implemented several of the recommendations from the last review:

- Finalise the Residential Corridor Built Form Study.
- Update the relevant mapping in the Planning Scheme to better identify the land for the Tally Ho Activity Centre.
- Investigate the impact of the reformed zones on development in the Tally Ho Business Park, and to a lesser extent the MegaMile Activity Centre, particularly in terms of new developments falling under Section 1 Uses (not requiring a permit).
- Review the Box Hill Transit City Activity Centre Structure Plan and the merits of undertaking additional strategic work to guide the development of the Box Hill MAC.
- Progress further strategic work to apply SLO9 on a permanent basis.

4.1.2. Ongoing work

Several of the recommendations from the last review are ongoing:

- Monitor Planning Panel reports for implications and directions regarding the future application of policy, and to resolve any outstanding issues that arise from their recommendations.
- Review the Whitehorse Planning Scheme for compliance with the Ministerial Direction on the Form and Content of Planning Schemes.
- Monitor, and review where required, the ongoing impact of the reformed residential zones.
- Advocate to the State Government to include a state-wide policy, objectives and strategies that address healthy and universal design principles.
- Monitor the criteria for the Heritage Assistance Fund.
- Monitor the provision of car parking for development located in Activity Centres.
- Continue to advocate for the upgrading of the Box Hill transport interchange.
- Continue to monitor the outcomes of existing structure plans and urban design frameworks with a view to reviewing these documents if/when their recommendations are complete or redundant.
- Advocate to the State Government for the appropriate tools/mechanisms to include affordable housing in future development and potentially establishing relationships with registered housing associations to undertake developments and manage low cost rental accommodation.
- Continue to review the VicSmart process, particularly relating to the interim SLO controls, relating to the resourcing requirements and whether Council would seek specific types of applications that can be assessed under VicSmart.
- Continue to advocate for a permanent ESD policy at the local level, if not implemented state-wide.
- Continue to advocate for a permanent Environmentally Sustainable Development policy.
- Investigate policy and control measures to provide increased flexibility for signage associated with sporting clubs on Council-owned land.
- In any future review of the Nunawading/MegaMile Major Activity Centre Structure Plan (and other structure plans across the municipality) consider the importance of providing guidance for signage and make consequential changes to Clause 22.02 (Visual Amenity and Advertising Signs) to implement any future recommendations.
- Progress the development of an infrastructure contributions scheme for the Box Hill MAC.
- Continue to review residential development within activity centres because of the implementation of Amendment C160 and the new residential zones.
- Monitor the application of the Better Apartment Design Guidelines. If these fall short of addressing issues facing Whitehorse, Council should consider preparing additional guidelines for the municipality.

4.1.3. Outstanding work since last review

Items that are outstanding from the last planning scheme review are:

- Review the wording about height and setbacks in DDO4.
- Review the policy position of NRZ5 compared to GRZ4.
- Undertake a corrections amendment to the Planning Scheme.
- Review any inconsistencies between the Planning Scheme and the Building Regulations as they relate to single dwellings on allotments which do not trigger a planning permit.

- Investigate how larger developments could include public housing units and accessible units to allow aging in place.

4.1.4. Obsolete work

Some recommendations from the last review are obsolete because of changes that have been implemented by the Victorian government, including the introduction of the new PPF. These include recommendations relating to:

- In the drafting of new or revised plans and policies for places such as activity centres, consider Plan Melbourne and how its vision, directions, initiatives, and actions will impact on planning across the municipality.
- Update the targets and indicators in relation to the strategic policy directions of the scheme at Clause 21.09 to reflect the strategic directions and actions included in the Council Plan 2017-2021 (as relevant to planning policy).
- Amend Clause 21.03 A Vision for the City of Whitehorse reference and reflect the Vision, Strategic Objectives and Strategic Directions of the Council Vision and Council Plan 2017 – 2021.
- Review subsequent Clauses 21.05 Environment, 21.06 Housing, 21.07 Economic Development, 21.08 Infrastructure and 21.09 Monitoring and Review to ensure their alignment with the Strategic Objectives and Strategies of the Council Vision and Council Plan 2017 – 2021.
- Update Clause 21.01 to reflect updated .id Consulting data on population, housing, and economic activity.
- Amend Clauses 21.05-6, 21.07-6 and 21.08-6 of the MSS to remove reference to work completed.
- Review Clause 22.05 Non-residential uses in a residential zone
- Define neighbourhood character and design objectives for schedules to the residential zones because of the residential zone reforms.
- Consider including a discussion about cultural heritage in Clause 22.01 (Heritage Buildings and Precincts).
- Review the objectives under Clause 21.0-6 (Housing Design) to ensure they relate to built form.
- Review Clause 21.05 (Environment), to ensure that the nexus between development and environment is fully explained.
- Review controls relating to hoarding of construction sites and how this is managed across the municipality.
- Review the tree replacement requirements.
- Implement the final outcomes of the Smart Planning program into the Whitehorse Planning Scheme and refer to a future budget process and/or to advocate for resourcing from the State Government to resource accordingly.
- Review controls relating to hoarding of construction sites and how this is managed across the municipality.
- Identify and document the preferred neighbourhood character for sites that because of recent Amendments have now been included in a residential zone.

4.2. Recommendations

5. Review the wording about height and setbacks in DDO4.
6. Review the policy position of NRZ5 compared to GRZ4.

7. Review any inconsistencies between the Planning Scheme and the Building Regulations as they relate to single dwellings on allotments which do not trigger a planning permit.
8. Investigate how larger developments could include public housing units and accessible units to allow aging in place.
9. Amend clauses to remove reference to work completed.

5. State Government initiatives

5.1. Housing Statement

In September 2023 the State government released *Victoria's Housing Statement - the decade ahead 2024-2034*. The Housing Statement includes the following five focus areas, including several actions relevant to Whitehorse:

Good decisions, made faster	**Cheaper housing, closer to where you work**	**Protecting renters' rights**	**More social housing**	**A long-term housing plan**
Expanding Development Facilitation Program Introduction of planning controls in designated activity centres Second dwellings as of right under 60sqm Deemed to comply standards	Unlocking surplus government land New standards for apartment buildings	Restricting rent increases between fixed term agreements Banning rental bidding	Build more homes through the Social Housing Accelerator	Plan for Victoria Review of the Planning and Environment Act 1987

5.2. Plan for Victoria

Plan for Victoria is the State Government's statewide strategy to accommodate population growth and increase housing supply. The strategy aims for 70 per cent of new housing to be delivered within established urban areas and 30 per cent within growth areas.

The strategy places responsibility on councils to help deliver key actions relating to housing targets, tree canopy and walking and cycling infrastructure, including reviewing planning schemes to ensure sufficient housing capacity is available in appropriate locations.

For Whitehorse, *Plan for Victoria* presents significant opportunities and challenges. Council will need to facilitate substantial housing growth while maintaining the municipality's liveability, character and access to services. However, there is currently no corresponding commitment from the State Government to fund the significant social and physical infrastructure required to support this growth, including open space, community facilities, sporting facilities, schools, healthcare services, drainage and transport infrastructure. In a rate-capped environment, Council has limited capacity to fund the infrastructure needed to support the projected increase in population.

A key concern is the provision of affordable and social housing. Whitehorse already faces a substantial shortfall of social and affordable housing, which is projected to worsen without intervention. The review of the 2014 Whitehorse Housing Strategy will examine this issue in more detail.

While Whitehorse supports the need for additional housing, Council advocates that growth must be planned and delivered in a logical and sustainable manner. Without adequate infrastructure investment and appropriate consideration of neighbourhood character, heritage, open space and environmental values, there is a risk that the qualities that contribute to Whitehorse's liveability and identity could be diminished.

5.3. Housing Targets

The State Government's housing targets, released in June 2024 as part of *Plan for Victoria*, allocate Whitehorse a target of 76, 500 new homes by 2051.

The implications for Whitehorse are significant. Council's previous and recent housing capacity assessments indicate that substantial housing growth can be accommodated under existing planning frameworks, including areas protected by environmental and landscape controls. However, there is concern that the State Government's housing target methodology places insufficient weight on liveability, neighbourhood character, heritage values, tree canopy, and environmental outcomes. In particular, the treatment of Significant Landscape Overlays, Vegetation Protection Overlays and Heritage Overlays within the target calculations may place pressure on areas that have been specifically identified for protection, potentially undermining long-standing strategic planning work and community expectations.

Council also notes that housing approvals are already occurring at a high rate, with approximately 92% of planning applications approved over the past five years, suggesting that housing supply challenges cannot be addressed solely through changes to planning permit processes. Rather, broader factors affecting housing delivery must also be considered.

A further concern is the potential impact of the housing targets on Council's strategic planning work, infrastructure planning and service delivery. Existing strategies and projects relating to open space, transport, recreation, community infrastructure, water management, affordable housing and early years services are based on current population projections and planning settings. Significant increases in housing growth may require these strategies to be reviewed and updated, creating additional costs and resource pressures for Council.

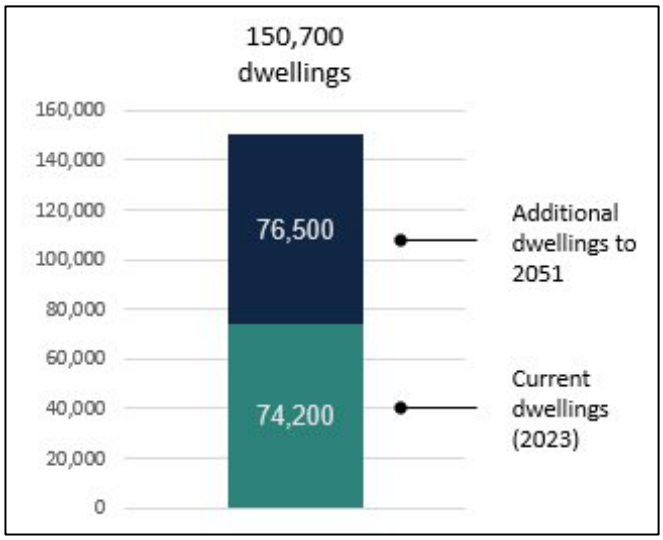


Figure 10: Whitehorse dwelling target

5.4. Suburban Rail Loop

The Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) has two stations proposed within Whitehorse at Box Hill and Burwood. As part of the SRL project, precinct planning has been undertaken by the SRL Authority for the neighbourhoods surrounding the stations. It is expected that the precinct planning will guide an increase in housing around the stations and hinterland areas.

Amendment GC248 gave effect to the SRL East Burwood Structure Plan and Amendment C255 gave effect to the SRL East Box Hill Structure Plan. The amendments are supported by approved Structure Plans and introduce new PRZ, BFO, Parking Overlay and associated planning provisions. The final approved plans incorporate several changes sought by Council, including reductions in building heights in sensitive locations, stronger solar protection of public open spaces, improved interfaces with surrounding residential areas, additional public-open-space outcomes, further community-infrastructure planning requirements and commitments to Infrastructure Contributions Plans.

However, several Council concerns remain unresolved. These include retention of the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) framework, broad exemptions from third-party notice and review rights, the absence of mandatory affordable-housing requirements and uncertainty regarding infrastructure funding and deliver.

The absence of mandatory requirements relating to affordable housing is of particular concern, particularly given the numbers of households owning their own homes have fallen since the 2006 Census and there is an increase in the number of households susceptible to housing stress. Furthermore, affordable housing for key workers in Box Hill and Burwood is paramount given the educational and health facilities located in these two SRL precincts.

5.5. Activity Centres program

The State Government's ACP for ‘Train and Tram Zones’ is intended to increase housing supply in locations with strong access to public transport, jobs and services. Blackburn, Nunawading and Mitcham were included in the ACP in February 2025.

For Whitehorse, the program represents a significant shift in planning policy. Blackburn and Mitcham have historically been planned as Neighbourhood Activity Centres, with adopted

structure plans and local planning controls that support a more modest scale of development. Through *Plan for Victoria*, the State Government has reclassified these centres and has replaced existing planning controls with new planning tools that facilitate substantially higher development densities both within the activity centres and across surrounding 'walkable catchments'. This level of potential intensification extends beyond the growth anticipated through Council's existing strategic planning framework.

There is uncertainty about the operation of the Built Form Overlay (BFO) and Housing Choice and Transport Zone (HCTZ), including how these controls may interact with or override existing protections such as Significant Landscape Overlays (SLO) and Neighbourhood Character Overlays (NCO). Council has raised that a standardised, metropolitan-wide approach may not adequately reflect local conditions, community expectations and the distinctive character of individual centres and neighbourhoods.

There is a risk that the focus on rapidly increasing housing supply could reduce the effectiveness of planning controls designed to protect Whitehorse's valued leafy character, landscape features and neighbourhood identity.

5.6. Residential development provisions

As part of the Victorian Government's broader housing reform agenda, a series of significant changes have been made to residential development provisions to facilitate increased housing delivery and streamline approval processes. Key reforms include the introduction of deemed-to-comply standards for single and multi-dwelling developments, expanded fast-track assessment pathways, reduced third-party appeal rights, and new provisions supporting higher-density housing, including four to six-storey residential development. Many locally developed planning controls, including schedule variations that reflected neighbourhood character objectives, have been removed or diminished as part of these reforms.

For Whitehorse, these changes have substantial implications. The reforms significantly reduce Council's ability to apply locally tailored planning controls that have been developed through extensive strategic work, including neighbourhood character studies and housing strategies. The removal of local variations to Clauses 54 and 55 of the Planning Scheme is of particular concern, as these controls previously helped manage development outcomes in accordance with local character and landscape objectives. The introduction of deemed-to-comply assessment pathways also means that permits must be issued where prescribed standards are met, limiting Council's discretion and removing appeal rights for affected residents in many cases.

Council is concerned that the cumulative effect of these changes may lead to significant impact on the character and liveability of established neighbourhoods across Whitehorse. Reduced requirements for elements such as building setbacks and private open space, combined with expanded opportunities for higher-density development, may place increased pressure on areas valued for their leafy character, lower scale built-form and residential amenity.

5.7. Planning reforms

During the review period (2022-2025), the Victorian planning system has undergone a significant program of state-led reform through successive Ministerial (VC) amendments to the VPP. Appendix Two highlights the VC amendments related to this review and collectively demonstrate a strong policy emphasis on:

- Increasing housing supply and housing choice.
- Facilitating higher density development in activity centres and well-serviced locations.
- Standardising residential assessment provisions across Victoria.
- Expanding fast-track and VicSmart approval pathways.
- Reducing planning permit and infrastructure contribution requirements for certain housing types.
- Limiting complexity and increasing consistency in planning decision-making.
- Removing third-party review rights.
- Increasing the role of the Minister for Planning in decision making.

Many reforms have introduced Victoria-wide provisions that apply consistently across municipalities rather than focusing on local planning controls. This reflects an increasing emphasis on state-led responses to housing supply and development challenges.

Future Council led projects should therefore focus on those matters where Council retains a meaningful role in policy development, strategic planning and local implementation. Recommendations therefore provide an opportunity to ensure local planning policies remain relevant and responsive within an increasingly standardised state planning framework.

5.8. Recommendations

10. Complete the review of 2014 Whitehorse Housing Strategy
11. Review local policy alignment with State planning policy
12. Advocate to State Government for infrastructure funding
13. Monitor implications of new residential development provisions.
14. Continue to advocate for the upgrading of the Box Hill transport interchange.
15. In the drafting of new or revised plans and policies for places such as activity centres, consider Plan for Victoria and how its vision, directions, initiatives, and actions will impact on planning across the municipality.
16. Monitor the planning reforms for implications and directions regarding the future application of policy, and to resolve any outstanding issues that arise from their recommendations.

6. Planning scheme performance

This section contains an analysis of:

- planning permit activity
- Victorian Civil Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) cases
- Planning Panel's Victoria (PPV) recommendations.

6.1. Planning permit activity

6.1.1. Number of permits assessed

This section contains an analysis of planning permit activity that has taken place during the last four years. It draws on both publicly available Planning Permit Activity and Reporting System (PPARs) data and data provided by Council.

Table 1 shows the number of permit applications received between January 2022 and December 2025. Permit activity in Whitehorse has been generally steady over the last four years.

Permits	2022	2023	2024	2025
Received	1302	1213	1238	1218
Decided	1408	1352	1242	1231

Table 1: PPARS report for permits issued January 2022 - December 2025

6.1.2. Service performance

Councils are assessed against specific performance indicators including the percentage of VicSmart planning applications made within 10 days and regular planning application decisions made within 60 days.

In 2024/25 Council met the target with 69% of applications made within the required timeframes. This is generally on par with the 'all Council' average. In 2024/25 the median number of days taken to determine an application was 50.5 days which is lower than the 'all Council' average.

Councils are also assessed against the percentage of Council planning application decisions that were upheld by VCAT. In 2024/25 71.4% of Council planning decisions were upheld, which is well above the state and metropolitan average.

6.1.3. Most common permit triggers

The five most common application types in Whitehorse are:

- Permit amendments
- VicSmart – tree removal
- Vic Smart – general
- Significant Landscape Overlay
- Subdivision, following from permits issued from medium density development

Application Type	2022	2023	2024	2025	Total
Advertising Sign	22	43	49	45	159
Business	17	6	10	9	42
Child Care Centre	3	0	1	1	5
Education	2	0	0	1	3
Heritage	17	17	17	6	57
Industrial	7	5	3	6	21
Liquor Licence	15	6	8	0	29
Multiple Dwellings	169	139	125	147	580
Native Vegetation Removal	0	0	1	2	3
Neighbourhood Character Overlay	1	1	0	1	3
Other	24	16	15	10	65
Permit Amendment	178	221	218	216	833
Public Open Space	2	5	1	5	13
Residential (Other)	6	4	3	9	22
Single Dwelling	73	50	17	45	185
Special Building Overlay	9	9	4	4	26
Significant Landscape Overlay	203	177	178	153	711
Subdivision	147	156	170	148	621
Telecommunications	1	2	1	1	5
Vegetation Protection Overlay	0	1	2	2	5
Use	41	41	46	39	167
VicSmart - general	156	148	164	157	625
VicSmart – tree removal	209	166	205	211	791
TOTAL	**1302**	**1213**	**1238**	**1218**	

Table 2: Application types January 2022 - December 2025

6.1.4. VCAT appeals

Table 3 outlines the level of VCAT activity. It is important to note that set aside' decisions also includes outcomes mediated prior to reaching a full hearing.

VCAT Applications	2022	2023	2024	2025	TOTAL
Affirmed	21	19	12	7	59
Varied	13	5	1	5	24
Set aside	25	42	22	17	106
Withdrawn/struck out	7	3	10	8	28
Remit	1		1	1	3
TOTAL	67	69	46	38	220

Table 3: VCAT applications January 2022 - December 2025

6.1.5. VCAT cases reviewed

There has been a reduction in VCAT appeals for residential development due to the introduction of deemed to comply pathways, as well as market demand and conditions for

development. The full implications of the State Government initiatives and planning reforms on permit applications and VCAT appeals are expected to emerge over several years.

As part of the review process a cross section of VCAT cases has been selected to demonstrate how local planning policies have been tested at the Tribunal. Seven VCAT cases were assessed to gain a better understanding of the level of support for the various local provisions of the planning scheme. The implications of these decisions are summarised in Table 4 below.

Application	Date of decision	Policy Issue	VCAT Decision	Implications
146-148 Middleborough Road, Blackburn South	15 October 2024	Whether a public open space contribution must be made for subdivision of land into four lots	VCAT affirmed Council's decision to require a 4% public open space contribution for the four-lot subdivision, finding that the proposal constituted a single four-lot subdivision and was not exempt under Clause 53.01.	The decision confirms that public open space contribution requirements are to be assessed based on the overall subdivision outcome rather than existing title boundaries or ownership arrangements, supporting Council's administration of Clause 53.01 and its approach to multi-lot residential subdivision proposals.
6 Tarrangower Avenue, Mitcham	12 April 2024	Development of 4 dwellings	VCAT affirmed Council's refusal of a permit for four dwellings, finding that the proposal failed to achieve the preferred neighbourhood and landscape character outcomes for the Bush Suburban Character Area.	The decision reinforces the importance of landscape-dominated design outcomes, substantial canopy tree planting opportunities, and built form that responds to site topography in the Limited Change Areas. It confirms that character and landscape objectives may outweigh housing density outcomes where a proposal results in excessive building bulk, inadequate landscaping opportunities, and adverse amenity impacts.
303-313 Burwood Highway, Burwood East	7 May 2025	2 lot subdivision	VCAT set aside Council's refusal and granted a	The outcome does not establish a substantive planning precedent, as it was resolved by consent.

			permit for subdivision and easement changes following a full settlement reached between the parties at compulsory conference.	However, it confirms that Council's concerns regarding access, servicing, easements and subdivision design were satisfactorily addressed through permit conditions, while retaining the requirement for a 4% public open space contribution.
225 Canterbury Road, Blackburn	10 January 2022	Construction of a second dwelling at the rear of an existing dwelling in the SLO2	VCAT upheld Council's refusal and determined that no permit should be granted for the construction of a second dwelling at the property.	This decision reinforces Council's ability to rely on neighbourhood character and landscape policies when assessing development in Limited Change areas. It confirms that a development can be refused where a proposal fails to maintain a vegetation-dominated character and provide meaningful canopy tree outcomes.
260 Mitcham Road, Mitcham	9 October 2024	Removal of a tree in SLO9	VCAT upheld Council's refusal and determined that no permit should be granted for the removal of a tree	This decision demonstrates the balancing that is required when considering an application to remove a tree, particularly where there is tension between landscape character, structural impacts site services and risk to pedestrians. The decision affirmed Council's position that alternative options are often available to mitigate risk and impacts to domestic services from trees.
171 Springvale Road, Nunawading	22 August 2022	Construction of an electronic promotion sign	VCAT upheld Council's refusal and determined that no permit should be	The decision highlights the importance of built form context when assessing promotional signage above buildings.

			granted for the construction of an electronic promotional sign	Whilst the sign was proposed within a predominantly commercial area within the MegaMile precinct, the member recognised the lower-scale built form character of this part of Springvale Road and found that the sign would not relate appropriately to its context and is not supported by the local signage policies.
793-797 Whitehorse Road, Mont Albert	16 August 2023	Use of land as a service station (including ancillary automatic drive-through car wash); Associated buildings and works.	VCAT upheld Council's refusal and determined that no permit should be granted for the use of land as a service station	The decision affirms Council's concerns that a non-residential land use for a service station would undermine the purpose of the zone and the relevant policy framework which supports housing intensification. The member concluded that the market need for a service station did not outweigh the housing policy objectives that supported increased residential densities in this location. It is noted that the permit applicant appealed the decision to the Supreme Court, which was subsequently dismissed.

Table 4: VCAT cases reviewed January 2022 - December 2025

6.2. Planning Panels Victoria

6.2.1. Summary of planning scheme amendments

Over the review period Council participated in four planning panels. The recommendations of PPV were generally favourable, recommending adoption as exhibited with only two recommending additional changes.

To gain a better understanding of how well PPV consider the current Planning Scheme sets the policy and strategic direction for the City, the panel reports received during the review period have been summarised. A review found that all changes had been adopted and

undertaken. Generally, PPV have been supportive of our processes and implementation of the Planning Scheme. Table 5 provides a full list of Panel Hearings with summarised recommendations.

The following Council led planning scheme amendments were considered by a Panel during the review period:

- Amendment C220 (Residential Corridors Built Form Study)
- Amendment C230 (ARRB site)
- Amendment C231 (Moore Road, Vermont)
- Amendment C241 (Development Contributions Plan Overlay)

Amendment	Panel recommendations	Implications
Amendment C220 - Implementing the Whitehorse Residential Corridors Built Form Study	The Panel supported the intent of the amendment, but rejected the proposed mandatory controls in favour of a more flexible, performance-based approach while still endorsing the overall vision of six-storey mid-rise development along the residential growth corridors	The final amendment resulted in greater flexibility than originally proposed. Developers can justify alternative heights and setbacks, potentially achieving outcomes beyond the preferred standards where it is supported by good design. Adjoining residents still receive protection through discretionary setback, amenity and interface controls, together with existing Clause 55 and Clause 58 provisions.
Amendment C230 – Rezoning and overlay controls at 490-500 Burwood Highway, Vermont South (ARRB site)	The Panel found the amendment strategically justified and providing a net community benefit but sought stronger controls and greater clarity around built form, heritage, landscaping and traffic outcomes before implementation.	The former ARRB site can be redeveloped for a substantial residential project, with buildings ranging from 3 to 6 storeys. Heritage values will continue to be protected through retention of the Administration Building, its landscape setting and courtyard. Significant vegetation and landscape character will be retained through mandatory setbacks, tree protection and the Significant Landscape Overlay. Traffic concerns raised by residents were acknowledged with access and safety issues on Burwood Highway remain to be fully resolved at the permit stage.
Amendment C231 - Rezones the land at 34-40, 37-43 and 42-50 Moore Road, Vermont	The Panel recommended that the amendment be adopted as exhibited, with no changes.	The rezoning shifts the land from a growth-oriented residential zone to a neighbourhood character-focused zone, reducing the development potential and likely dwelling yield compared with the existing GRZ5.

Amendment	Panel recommendations	Implications
	The Panel concluded the amendment would deliver a net community benefit by prioritising neighbourhood character, landscape and heritage protection while still allowing for some housing growth and redevelopment opportunities.	Future development will need to respond to the Bush Suburban character of the area, with greater emphasis on canopy trees, landscaping, lower site coverage, increased permeability and two-storey built form. The Panel found the NRZ3 better reflects the site's established vegetation, landscape character and heritage context, particularly around the heritage-listed Mirrabooka property. While development potential is reduced, the NRZ3 still allows for medium-density housing outcomes on these large sites where appropriately designed. The amendment removes what the Panel considered an anomaly by applying the same residential zoning as neighbouring residential areas and aligning the land with Council's Housing Strategy and Character Study. Issues such as traffic, vegetation removal, neighbourhood amenity and emergency access were considered matters for future planning permit applications rather than reasons to oppose the rezoning.
Amendment C241 - Development Contributions Plan Overlay	The Panel recommended that the amendment be adopted, subject to mostly minor changes, The Panel concluded that it provides a fair and transparent mechanism for funding infrastructure needed to accommodate future growth across Whitehorse.	A municipal-wide DCP will be introduced, requiring most new residential, commercial, retail and industrial development to contribute towards local infrastructure. The Panel found the DCP is strategically justified and consistent with State planning policy. Developer contributions are expected to fund about 15% of the $211.6 million infrastructure program, with the remaining funding to come from other sources. The levies are considered modest and unlikely to significantly affect development feasibility, housing affordability, or the attractiveness of development sites in Whitehorse.

Amendment	Panel recommendations	Implications
		Affordable housing (other than social housing) would not be exempt from contributions. Major developments that already provide site-specific infrastructure would still be required to contribute to broader community infrastructure through the DCP. Future reviews will allow Council to adjust projects, growth projections and levies if circumstances change.

Table 5: Planning Panel recommendations January 2022 - December 2025

6.2.2. Summary of Standing Advisory Committees

Over the review period Council participated in two standing advisory committee planning panels:

Priority Projects Standing Advisory Committee – Referral 34: Box Hill Central North Master Plan (Planning Scheme Amendment C245whse)

The proposed Box Hill Central North Master Plan sought to facilitate the redevelopment of the northern part of the Box Hill Central shopping centre, including substantial mixed-use high rise development comprising new housing, commercial floorspace, public realm and connections to the future SRL.

Council generally supported the redevelopment of the site but sought improvements to the built form, public realm outcomes, infrastructure provision and community benefits for the Box Hill community.

The Advisory Committee concluded that the proposal was strategically justified and generally supported the continued growth of the Box Hill Activity Centre. However, it recommended several modifications before approval, including improved public realm outcomes, stronger pedestrian and cycling connections, affordable housing provision, public open space contributions, and design changes to address amenity and development equity considerations.

Suburban Rail Loop East Precincts Standing Advisory Committee: Box Hill Precinct and Burwood Precinct

The Advisory Committee considered new precinct plans and planning controls for the future station precincts at Box Hill and Burwood. The precinct plans intend to accommodate significant housing and employment growth around the future SRL stations through higher-density development, public transport, walking and cycling networks, new public realm and community infrastructure.

Council generally supported the intent of the precinct plans but advocated for open space, community infrastructure, transport connections, housing diversity, affordable housing, tree canopy and community amenity. Council also sought greater certainty around how supporting infrastructure and community benefits would be delivered.

The Advisory Committee broadly supported the precinct plans. However, it concluded that key elements of the proposed planning framework were not yet sufficiently developed, particularly the Voluntary Public Benefit Uplift Framework, open space planning, community infrastructure planning and pedestrian link delivery. The Committee recommended further work and changes before broad implementation of the planning controls, including identifying future open space and community infrastructure needs, strengthening affordable housing and sustainability measures, and reviewing transport and pedestrian connections.

6.3. Recommendations

17. Continue to review VCAT decisions for implications regarding the future application of policy, and to resolve any outstanding issues that arise from the decisions.
18. Continue to monitor Planning Panel reports for implications and directions regarding the future application of policy, and to resolve any outstanding issues that arise from their recommendations.

7. Assessment of the Planning Scheme

7.1. Local policy and planning tools

A review should be undertaken of the MPS, PPF and relevant local schedules to identify any inconsistencies arising from amendments to the VPPs since the previous planning scheme review, particularly Amendment VC283, which implemented key elements of *Plan for Victoria*.

VC283 introduced substantial changes to state planning policy, including new housing targets and revised housing, urban forest and urban heat policies.

The review should assess whether local policy:

- Remains consistent with new state housing supply and housing target policies.
- Continues to rely on superseded strategic documents or terminology.
- Adequately responds to new policy directions relating to urban forests, canopy cover, urban heat mitigation, climate resilience and housing delivery.
- Contains objectives, strategies or decision guidelines that duplicate, conflict with, or are inconsistent with amended state policy provisions.

7.2. Housing and residential development

7.2.1. Housing targets

The DTP Advisory Note stated, *where DTP has advised that the scheme is likely to have capacity to meet its housing target, review policy, zones, and overlays to ensure increased housing is enabled in appropriate locations, particularly where access to opportunities and services is highest*.'

In February 2026, DTP advised *'your Council's planning scheme will be likely to have sufficient capacity to meet its housing target however DTP will provide a final assessment once the state-led planning initiatives in your municipality are finalised and dwelling yields for these areas determined'*.

In July 2026 Council was advised that *'DTP has assessed the capacity of the Whitehorse Planning Scheme, determining that there is sufficient capacity to meet your housing target.'*

In September 2026 Council was granted access to the State Government's Housing Capacity Assessment Platform (HCAP). This confirmed that Whitehorse has sufficient capacity to meet the State Government's housing target and moreover had a housing capacity surplus of more than 9,000 compared to the *Plan for Victoria* housing target.

In July 2026 Council commenced a review of the 2014 Housing Strategy. The Strategy will be a 15-year plan building on the success of the 2014 Housing Strategy and responding to the State Government's housing targets, as well as Council's responsibilities to plan for housing under the Act. The review is Phase 2 of the project, with Phase 1 being the completion of a State of Play report in December 2025.

The Phase 1 State of Play report concluded that the 2014 Housing Strategy is a product of its time, and that even though it is only part way through its intended lifespan of 20 years, it is now due for review given the recent significant changes in state planning. In terms of the strategy's performance to date, it appears to have been successful in achieving its key objectives of directing growth to activity centres and other locations identified for growth.

The Preferred Neighbourhood Character policy is at Clause 15.01-5L. It seeks to ensure that development contributes to the preferred neighbourhood character of the area and it details the strategies for the Bush Environment, Bush Suburban and Garden Suburban character areas. The local Housing Change policy is at Clause 16.01L of the planning scheme which includes strategies for changes areas.

Many of the local variations to the Housing Change and Neighbourhood Character schedules were removed by Amendment VC255 on 3 May 2024. Elements of local schedules that were more restrictive than the revised quantitative standards of the standard residential development provisions were deleted. While some elements such as decision guidelines have been retained, most customised standards have been removed.

With the recent changes in State planning policy there is a need to review the current policy against *Plan for Victoria* and the overall objective of increasing housing supply in established areas of Melbourne in accessible locations, while simultaneously balancing Council's aspirations. The Strategic Framework Plans at Clause 02.04 also require review to align with Plan for Victoria and other revisions to specific land uses such as significant landscape areas, parks and reserves, activity centres, and strategic redevelopment sites.

Given that Whitehorse has demonstrated sufficient capacity to accommodate growth, the review of the Housing Strategy is intended to focus on creating a liveable municipality. Council expects the review to be delivered by the end of June 2027.

7.2.2. Application of residential zones

The DTP Advisory Note advised Council '*to review the application of residential zones considering Planning Practice Note 90 Planning for Housing and Planning Practice Note 91 Using the residential zones*'.

The current PPN90 outlines the state government approach to preparation of a housing strategy. This includes the preparation of a residential development framework informed by work addressing housing, neighbourhood character, and land constraints such as heritage, landscape, and environmental factors. This work then informs the identification of change areas in the residential development framework. This approach was followed in the preparation of the 2014 Housing Strategy.

PPN91 includes guidance regarding the application of zones. These show only a loose alignment between zones and change area categories under current guidance, especially for incremental change areas (equivalent to Whitehorse's "natural change areas.") Partially because of this loosening of alignment between zones and change areas, PPN91 does not include statements regarding expected outcomes in residential zones that are directly comparable to those in the former PPN78.

Both PPN90 and PPN91 remain in force. However subsequent reforms raise questions about the applicability of this approach in the future. In particular:

- The neighbourhood character elements may have limited applicability given the codification of residential development standards.
- There may be less use for the identification of change areas given the change areas identified through DTP's activity centre program

The current review of the 2014 Housing Strategy will address PPN90 and PPN91 and contain at a minimum:

- A housing vision
- Housing target implementation
- A municipal wide strategic framework plan or Residential Development Framework
- Proposed policy changes, including any relating to neighbourhood character, and
- Proposed planning scheme implementation

7.2.3. Neighbourhood character policy

The DTP Advisory Note recommends reviewing '*any neighbourhood character policy in the context of the reforms to the residential development provisions*.'

The review of the Housing Strategy includes assessing the implications of recent planning reforms on planning controls to protect neighbourhood character. The review will:

- evaluate the effectiveness of the current controls
- assess the boundaries of the sub-precincts
- analyse the impact of planning reforms on neighbourhood character
- provide recommendations for reframing the approach to neighbourhood character
- identify areas where targeted planning responses (for example, planning controls or policy) may be needed to strengthen the protection of character.

7.3. Form and content

Mitcham, Nunawading and Blackburn have now been identified as 'Train and Tram Zone Activity centres.' This designation is intended to recognise their capacity to accommodate additional housing where it is supported by public transport, facilities, and services.
As directed by Section 12 of the Act, Council regularly reviews the provisions of the Planning Scheme and keeps a record of errors and anomalies that have been identified. The corrections relate to mapping anomalies, text errors, removing redundant controls or amending overlay provisions to reflect their intent.

7.4. Removing roadblocks to improvement

The review considered whether recently introduced VPP tools, including the BFO and PRZ, would provide a more effective mechanism for implementing planning objectives.

The BFO was assessed as a suitable replacement for existing built form controls contained within the current DDO that applies to the Tally Ho Activity Centre and is proposed to be implemented through a future planning scheme amendment. The BFO provides a contemporary and purpose-built framework for managing matters such as building height, setbacks, site coverage, landscaping, interface treatments, and building design.

The application of newer VPP tools will be considered as part of future strategic planning and planning scheme amendment processes where they are warranted by specific

circumstances, otherwise existing planning controls remain fit for purpose and continue to effectively implement Council's strategic objectives.

7.5. Environmental risks

The DTP Advisory note recommended identifying '*where mapping of environmental risks should be updated.*'

Melbourne Water is in the process of updating the flood maps of municipalities throughout Melbourne, and due to the characteristics of the newer models (which also account for climate change impacts), there will be an increase in properties in Whitehorse affected by the updated mapping.

Once the flood mapping has been implemented into the Planning Scheme, they will start to trigger planning permits for residential land. For developers of residential buildings, responding to requirements of the Special Building Overlay or Land Subject to Inundation Overlay may increase their costs due to raising floor levels, contracting additional assessments, and paying for drainage infrastructure for development.

7.6. Recommendations

19. Review local planning policy and relevant schedules to ensure consistency with changes introduced through Amendment VC283 and other recent amendments to the VPPs, including Clauses 52.06, 52.27, 52.37, 54, 55 and 57.
20. Review the MPS, specifically the Strategic Framework Plans, to ensure consistency with current land uses and policy.
21. Review the Planning Scheme for compliance with the Ministerial Direction on the Form and Content of Planning Schemes.
22. Review inconsistencies in terminology with *Plan for Victoria* activity centres hierarchy.
23. Prepare corrective planning scheme amendments where inconsistencies, duplication or conflicts are identified.

8. Work underway

The following planning scheme amendments are underway:

Amendment	Description	Status
Amendment C253	Makes administrative and technical corrections to Schedule 1 to Clause 42.02 (Vegetation Protection Overlay) (VPO1), the VPO1 planning scheme maps and Incorporated Document No. 10 – City of Whitehorse – Statements of Tree Significance – 2005 (Updated September 2016).	Awaiting authorisation by the Minister for Planning
Amendment C256	Rezones land at 110 Albion Road, Box Hill from Special Use Zone Schedule 1 (SUZ1) to General Residential Zone Schedule 1 (GRZ1) and apply the Significant Landscape Overlay Schedule 9 (SLO9).	Abandoned by proponent
Amendment C259	Implements the Tally Ho Activity Centre Structure Plan (MGS Architects, October 2025) in the Whitehorse Planning Scheme by rezoning land within the Tally Ho Activity Centre and applying the Built Form Overlay to guide development across the centre and making consequential changes.	Exhibition
Amendment C260	Applies Category 3 signage controls (High Amenity Areas) to specified Council-owned and/or managed land in the Public Use Zone – Local Government (PUZ6). The amendment replaces the current Category 4 (Sensitive Areas) signage controls that apply to nine specified sites.	Awaiting authorisation by the Minister for Planning
Amendment C261	implements the Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2024 (WOSS) adopted on 28 July 2025 by updating the public open space contribution rate in the schedule to Clause 53.01 and making local policy changes to support the WOSS.	Awaiting authorisation by the Minister for Planning
Amendment C262	Facilitates the redevelopment of land at 69 - 79 Mahoneys Road, Forest Hill (existing office building) and the adjoining car park, both of which are located within the Forest Hill Chase Activity Centre. The amendment removes the existing Development Plan Overlay – Schedule 1 (DPO1) from these sites and introduces a new Design and Development Overlay (DDO12).	Awaiting authorisation by the Minister for Planning

Council is currently undertaking the following strategic planning projects.

- Whitehorse Housing Strategy Review

Council is currently scoping the following projects

- Whitehorse Heritage Review

9. Recommendations

The summary of recommendations includes all the actions throughout the report:

Recommendation	
1	Update the MPS to reflect updated data on population, housing and economic activity.
2	Amend all references to the Council Plan and Council Vision to reference and reflect the Vision, Strategic Objectives and Strategic Directions of the current Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029.
3	Review local planning policies to ensure their alignment with the Strategic Objectives and Strategies of the Integrated Council Plan 2025-2029.
4	Continue to advocate for a permanent Environmentally Sustainable Development policy.
5	Review the wording about height and setbacks in DDO4.
6	Review the policy position of NRZ5 compared to GRZ4.
7	Review any inconsistencies between the Planning Scheme and the Building Regulations as they relate to single dwellings on allotments which do not trigger a planning permit.
8	Investigate how larger developments could include public housing units and accessible units to allow aging in place.
9	Amend clauses to remove reference to work completed.
10	Complete the review of 2014 Whitehorse Housing Strategy
11	Review local policy alignment with State planning policy
12	Advocate to State Government for infrastructure funding
13	Monitor implications of new residential development provisions.
14	Continue to advocate for the upgrading of the Box Hill transport interchange.
15	In the drafting of new or revised plans and policies for places such as activity centres, consider Plan for Victoria and how its vision, directions, initiatives, and actions will impact on planning across the municipality.
16	Monitor the planning reforms for implications and directions regarding the future application of policy, and to resolve any outstanding issues that arise from their recommendations.
17	Continue to review VCAT decisions for implications regarding the future application of policy, and to resolve any outstanding issues that arise from the decisions.
18	Continue to monitor Planning Panel reports for implications and directions regarding the future application of policy, and to resolve any outstanding issues that arise from their recommendations.
19	Review local planning policy and relevant schedules to ensure consistency with changes introduced through Amendment VC283 and other recent amendments to the VPPs, including Clauses 52.06, 52.27, 52.37, 54, 55 and 57.

Recommendation	
20	Review the MPS, specifically the Strategic Framework Plans, to ensure consistency with current land uses and policy.
21	Review the Planning Scheme for compliance with the Ministerial Direction on the Form and Content of Planning Schemes.
22	Review inconsistencies in terminology with *Plan for Victoria* activity centres hierarchy.
23	Prepare corrective planning scheme amendments where inconsistencies, duplication or conflicts are identified.

Appendix One

Summary of Statutory and Strategic Planning workshop

A workshop between Statutory Planning and Strategic Planning was held on 16 October 2025. Council officers raised numerous matters influencing the operation of the Planning Scheme.

Issue	Planner survey feedback
Vegetation and trees	• There is a need for a definition of permeable/impervious/hard surfaces SLO2-8 • Formatting SLOs to ensure correct and consistent drafting e.g. SLO2 drafting need to be reviewed for correct formatting • Setbacks to houses (through a buildings and works trigger) should be aligned with Clause 52.37/Clause 55 • Planting area – distinguish between Bush Suburban and Bush Environment • Review SLO exemptions • SLO1-8 (4 and 6) - consistency in buildings and works triggers • SLO 1-8 - consistency of exemptions and weed list • Truck circumference guidance
Car parking	• Lack of parking requirements for rooming houses, small second dwelling, leisure and recreation • VicSmart - ramp grades and internal turning area not covered • Requirements for car stackers (model, dimensions) • Requirements for car charger spaces and share cars (dimensions) • Parking Overlays – different hierarchy for activity centres
Signage	• Local policy has been watered down and requires updating • No policy for Major Promotional Signage • Lack of guidance in residential areas e.g. medical centres
Local policy	• Tree Conservation policy – how does this dovetail with recent tree controls? Consistency and update UF 30%. Refer to local / indigenous species, native as per old version • Policy guidance to reflect contemporary land use pressures. • Review Environmentally Sustainable Design policy • Update Water Sensitive Urban Design • Get ahead of future flooding controls • Housing diversity and affordability policy guidance • Remove student housing policy • Non-residential development in Residential Areas policy • Have regard to Clause 54 standards and other state standards • Reflect contemporary issues (e.g. light and noise)

Issue	Planner survey feedback
	• Industrial zones and uses policy – broaden to allow consideration of industrial uses elsewhere
Scheme administration	• Application requirements - explore opportunities to be more explicit, clear in application requirements • Clause 52.37-9 – exemption is not clear in dot point 3 ("in accordance with the application that was made before the approval date of the amendment") • SLO2 – permit trigger. Move the comma, as it doesn't make sense and causes confusion. Works needs to be on a new line. • Maps – clearer, better especially circles around activity centres • Add driveways to VicSmart • Clause 52.06 – design standard variation shouldn't be VicSmart (i.e. two dwellings on a lot)
Further work	• Consider more Neighbourhood Character Overlays instead of character policy • Use of objectives in residential schedules • Residential policy – emerging issues • Apartments – issues about waste and noise • Strength of limited and natural change areas

Appendix Two

State Government amendments and planning practice notes

The Victoria Planning Provisions are constantly reviewed and updated at a state level with numerous VC amendments occurring each year. The State also provides advice to planners in updates to the Practitioner's Guide and new planning practice notes.

During the review period (2022-2025) the following VC amendments introduced new policy into the Planning Scheme that are directly relevant to this review:

Amendment	Description	Gazetted
VC243	Makes changes to the Victoria Planning Provisions (VPP) and all planning schemes to codify residential development standards, implement the Future Homes project across Victoria, remove permit requirements for single dwellings on lots of 300 square metres or more and introduce VicSmart permits for single dwellings on lots less than 300 square metres. These changes support the delivery of housing in Victoria.	22 September 2023
VC253	Introduces a new land use term and siting, design and amenity requirements for a small second dwelling into the VPP and all planning schemes to implement Victorias Housing Statement: The decade ahead 2024-2034 by making it easier to build a small second dwelling.	14 December 2023
VC249	Changes the VPP and all planning schemes in Victoria by exempting development for a small second dwelling from Development Contributions Plan requirements and correcting typographical errors related to small second dwellings.	15 January 2024
VC259	Changes the VPP and all planning schemes in Victoria by extending the transitional arrangements for a dependent person's unit for a period of 12 months.	28 March 2024
VC261	Expands the operation of the existing Development Facilitation Program (DFP) planning provisions that fast-track the assessment of significant economic development by enabling an application for renewable energy facility, utility installation and associated subdivision to be assessed.	04 April 2024
VC269	Makes changes to the VPP and all planning schemes to improve the operation of clause 53.24 Future Homes.	03 December 2024

Amendment	Description	Gazetted
VC273	Makes changes to clause 52.20 to apply to housing development that are wholly or partly funded by the Victorian or Commonwealth governments.	19 December 2024
VC257	Makes changes to the VPP and all planning schemes to introduce Clause 32.10 Housing Choice and Transport Zone (HCTZ) and Clause 43.06 Built Form Overlay (BFO) to support housing growth in and around activity centres and other well-serviced locations in line with Victorias Housing Statement, The Decade Ahead 2024-2034	25 February 2025
VC274	Introduces the Precinct Zone (PRZ) at Clause 37.10 to support housing and economic growth in priority precincts across Victoria in line with Victorias Housing Statement, The Decade Ahead 2024-2034 and the Victorian Governments vision for priority precincts, including Suburban Rail Loop precincts.	28 February 2025
VC267	Implements new residential development planning assessment provisions to boost housing construction to meet the housing needs of Victorians.	06 March 2025
VC276	Makes changes to the VPP and all planning schemes to amend all residential zone schedules and Neighbourhood Character Overlay schedules to implement the new residential development planning assessment provisions and correct technical errors resulting from Amendment VC267.	02 April 2025
VC280	Introduces the Great Design Fast Track into the VPP and all planning schemes in Victoria. The Great Design Fast Track implements a new planning assessment pathway to facilitate the delivery of high-quality townhouse and apartment developments.	07 April 2025
VC258	Improves the operation of the existing Development Facilitation Program (DFP) planning provisions at clauses 53.22 and 53.23 and expands the program eligibility to include gas projects and saleyards.	04 July 2025
VC282	Changes the VPP and all planning schemes in Victoria by introducing a new clause 54 (One dwelling on a lot or a small second dwelling on a lot), making consequential changes to give effect to the new residential development planning assessment provision and correcting technical errors made by Amendment VC267.	11 August 2025

Amendment	Description	Gazetted
VC283	Changes the VPP and all planning schemes in Victoria to implement Plan for Victoria (Department of Transport and Planning, 2025), update and introduce policy, remove reference to Plan Melbourne 2017-2050: Metropolitan Planning Strategy and make general drafting improvements and clarifications.	02 September 2025
VC289	Introduces a planning permit requirement to remove, destroy or lop a canopy tree in residential areas at clause 52.37 (Canopy trees) into the VPP and all planning schemes. Minimum canopy tree replacement requirements will apply to an application to remove a canopy tree. The amendment is required to implement Action 12 of Plan for Victoria to protect and enhance canopy trees.	15 September 2025
VC288	The amendment extends the streamlined VicSmart assessment process to include planning permit applications for the construction of two dwellings on a lot and the subdivision of land into two lots.	18 September 2025
VC277	Amendment VC277 amends car parking requirements to align car parking rates with demand and reduce the number of car parks required in locations well-serviced by public transport.	18 December 2025

During the review period, several Planning Practice Notes (PPNs) have been introduced:

- PPN03 - Applying the Special Use Zone
- PPN22 - Using the Car Parking Provisions
- PPN23 - Applying the Incorporate Plan and Development Plan Overlays
- PPN24 - Shipping Container Storage
- PPN27 - Understanding the Residential Development Standards (ResCode)
- PPN57 - Parking Overlay
- PPN59 - The Role of Mandatory Provisions in Planning Schemes
- PPN81 - Live Music and Entertainment Noise
- PPN84 - Applying the Minimum Garden Area Requirement
- PPN85 - Applying the Commercial 3 Zone
- PPN88 - Planning for Domestic Rooftop Solar Energy Systems
- PPN90 - Planning for Housing
- PPN91 - Using the Residential Zones
- PPN95 - Local Heritage Provisions
- PPN96 - Planning considerations for Reflected Sunlight Glare