

Character

Ensuring new development contributes positively to the preferred character of Brimbank's diverse neighbourhoods, through better design and enhanced landscaping in areas targeted for growth, and by respecting and celebrating existing valued character across other neighbourhoods.

Lot sizes, eras of development and landscape interfaces are general influences on Brimbank's neighbourhood character. These patterns result in differences to dwelling massing, setbacks and landscaping and affect the housing typologies able to be developed on a lot. Eras of development in Brimbank span from the 1900s to contemporary development and redevelopment. Brimbank's traditional housing stock (i.e, the original housing of a given era

of development) is generally single or double storey across all zones, with infill development predominantly 1–2 storeys, and 2–3 storey development predominant in higher growth areas.

In planning for housing growth, it is crucial to recognise that neighbourhood character is subject to change. This section discusses Brimbank's current neighbourhood character and outlines strategies for development that aim to positively enhance and align with the preferred future character.



Key Issues

Key issues that have affected neighbourhood character in Brimbank since the release of *Home and Housed* (2014) include:

Minimal direction on preferred neighbourhood character in the context of growth

Current policy creates ambiguity about preferred neighbourhood character in areas designated for substantial growth. This has caused policy conflict, and in combination with other development and market forces, may have contributed to underdevelopment in areas where greater density and diversity of housing is encouraged.

Many of Brimbank's neighbourhoods will accommodate only incremental growth. At present there is a lack of clear direction about how incremental development should respond to neighbourhood character, and how the maximum height provisions will impact Brimbank's predominantly single- and double-storey built form character.

Conflicting policy regarding growth and heritage

State policy now clarifies a previously ambiguous approach to balancing heritage protection and housing growth. Planning authorities must now avoid conflicting policies. Heritage is considered under to be a major constraint on housing growth, and, as such, areas affected by the HO are designated as minimal change.

Aspirations for enhanced landscaping and quality development

Community engagement has indicated an acceptance that neighbourhoods will grow and change, but that this change should contribute positively to the public realm, provide more landscaping, and be high quality.⁴²

Limited analysis and preferred character direction.

Lack of policy in the past has led to uncertainty about how to balance growth and character. Analysis of the existing character of Brimbank's neighbourhoods undertaken in 2019 has required updating in the context of new State government guidance informing policy for preferred character outcomes.

Responses to these challenges are grouped into themes that bring together the growth objectives from the RDF and the preferred character of each area. These, together with the approach to existing and preferred character, are addressed under the headings of:

- Designing for density
- Respect for neighbourhood character
- Celebrate history and character.

⁴² Landscaping and quality of development is address in more detail under **Sustainability**).

Existing character

This Strategy has grouped together neighbourhoods that share common characteristics and attributes into six Existing Neighbourhood Character Precincts and considered them in the context of the opportunities for housing growth and change identified in the RDF (refer to Figure 10). The Appendices provide a detailed summary of each precinct and identify valued character attributes that have been considered when evaluating opportunities for growth and change and developing descriptions of preferred character.

While the existing features of neighbourhoods have been catalogued and assessed at a moment in time, it is normal for neighbourhood character to evolve. For some neighbourhoods, such as those with heritage dwellings or those areas that have been masterplanned, this will be a slow process. For neighbourhoods experiencing rapid redevelopment and growth, existing character will more quickly give way to a new character. Unless areas are affected by a constraint that prohibits or severely limits their ability to accommodate growth, State guidance indicates that they should support and allow for increased housing.⁴³

Changes to Neighbourhood Character Precincts

The *Mesh Draft Background Report* identified a series of emerging character types and precincts based on the findings in the Suburb Profiles. These precincts were defined based on the comparative differences of certain areas, and it was expected that the emerging character types and precinct boundaries would evolve during preparation of the Strategy.

This has been the case for the Petrik Drive area in Keilor, which was initially grouped into Precinct E. Upon further analysis, it was considered that this discrete area exhibited characteristics more representative of Precinct F, and as such, it has been re-categorised.

⁴³ Department of Transport and Planning (DTP), *Planning Practice Note 91: Using the residential zones*, 2023.

Areas of special character

Albion, Sunshine West, and select sections of Keilor were identified in the *Mesh Draft Background Report* as being potentially of special character. These areas underwent further investigation to determine if specific planning controls were needed to manage and enhance their existing character (see Figure 18). An NCO was considered (see call out box), as well as a more discrete, area-specific NRZ schedule.

The early 20th century traditional housing in Albion and Sunshine West was primarily what contributed to making these areas special. It has been determined that the neighbourhood character objectives and ResCode variations in the zone schedule (the Suburban Traditional NRZ1 described in the 'Respect for neighbourhood character' section), combined with the design response plan required under ResCode, will be sufficient to ensure new development respects neighbourhood character while also supporting incremental change.

A separate review of the potential heritage significance of the area is included as a recommended action for future work, where such a review has not already been undertaken. Should the area be designated as having heritage significance, the capacity to accommodate change will likely be reduced.

Petrik Drive in Keilor was identified in the Mesh Draft Background Report as a special character area, due to its strong landscape character, which includes generous setbacks and slope-responsive design. This area will accommodate incremental growth that respects the existing character (which is the preferred future character). This can be facilitated through neighbourhood character objectives in the NRZ schedule for the Landscape Suburban NRZ4 (described in the 'Respect for neighbourhood character' section).

Identified

Parts of Albion, Sunshine West and Keilor identified as potential areas of special character.

These were determined to warrant further investigation.



Investigated

Further site inspections refined potential special character area boundaries (see Figure 7).

Inspections in Albion and Sunshine identified intact architecture as key special features.

Inspections of Petrik Drive in Keilor identified a landscape setting (similar to Precinct F) as key special feature.



Potential planning tools

Planning tools to manage special character were reviewed and considered, including the NCO and discrete zone schedules.

Area-specific planning tools were not considered necessary to achieve the preferred neighbourhood character objectives.



Proposed response

Albion and Sunshine West special character areas are proposed to be managed via the Suburban Traditional NRZ1 (see 'Respect for neighbourhood character').

Heritage significance of Sunshine West is proposed to be further investigated.

Petrik Drive, Keilor, special character is proposed to be managed via the Landscape Suburban NRZ4 (see 'Respect for neighbourhood character').

FIGURE 18. ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL CHARACTER AREAS

Objectives

To respect the character of special character areas identified in this Strategy.

Actions

Prepare schedules that identify the preferred character of neighbourhoods that include the special character areas.

Investigate the heritage significance areas in Sunshine West to determine whether a HO would be an appropriate planning control.



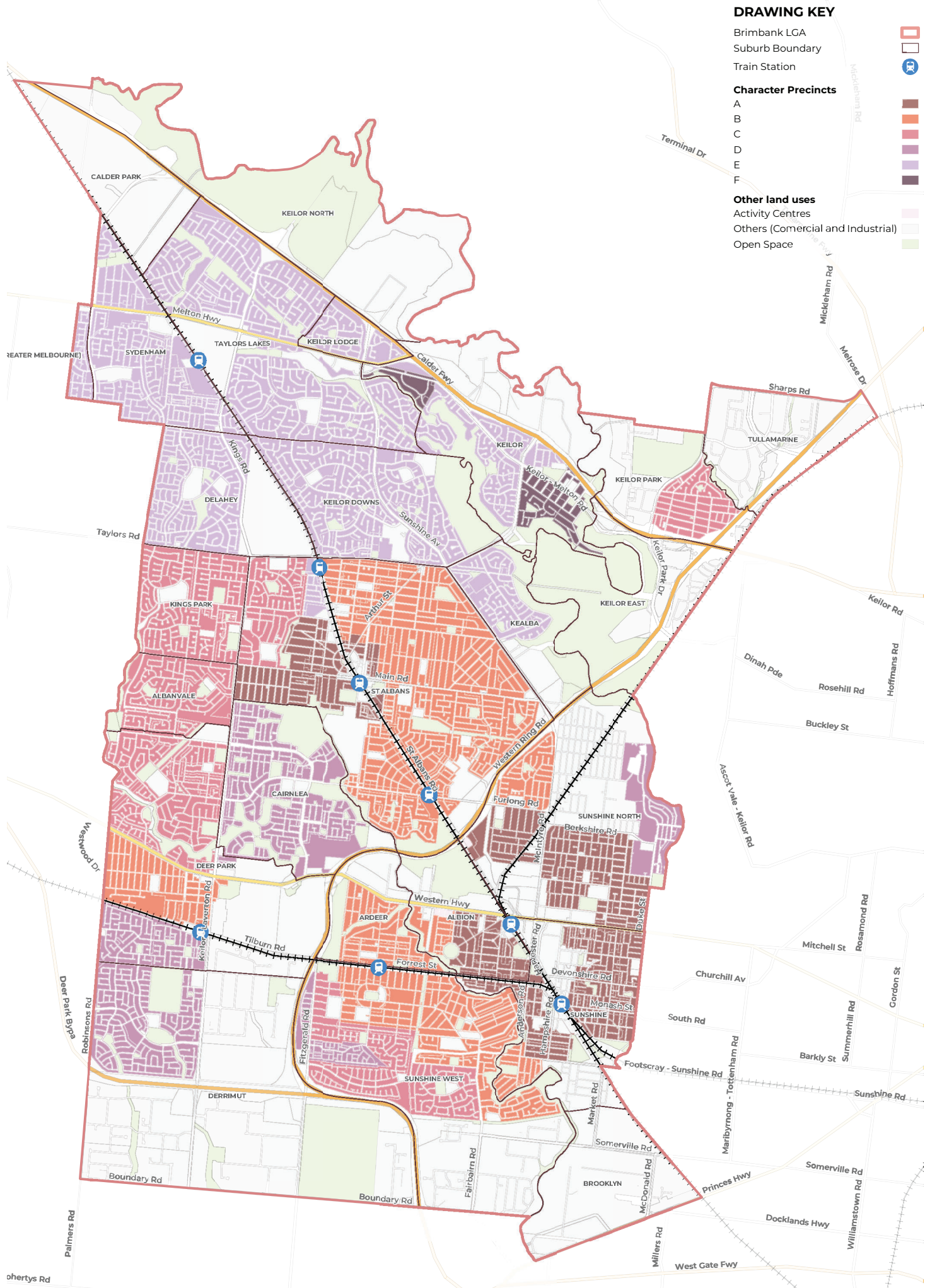


FIGURE 19. EXISTING NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER PRECINCTS AND CHANGE AREAS (RDF)

Existing character







Character Precinct	Description
Precinct A 	<p>Brimbank's most 'traditional' neighbourhoods developed around the Sunshine and St Albans train stations. They are characterised by low-scale housing in closely gridded streets. More than any other Precinct, Precinct A is currently undergoing change in the form of distributed infill development, resulting in a clear distinction between the character of traditional housing forms and newer development.</p> <p>The RDF identifies areas of substantial and increased change in areas around the stations and activity centres, with pockets of minimal change, where affected by the HO.</p> <p>Areas of incremental change are nominated outside walkable distances to the stations, and minimal change is nominated where affected by the MAEO.</p>
Precinct B 	<p>A precinct comprising many intact streetscapes with low-scale housing of consistent architectural style and detailing, interspersed with more contemporary redevelopment.</p> <p>Large parts of Precinct B are identified for incremental change, with a lesser amount of substantial and increased change near stations and activity centres and along major roads. Small pockets of minimal change are identified where the MHF safety area, MAEO and EAO apply and constrain intensification of development.</p>
Precinct C 	<p>Characterised by a sense of spaciousness between predominantly single-storey dwellings. Architectural styles are unassuming, with a diversity of materiality and detailing.</p> <p>Most of Precinct C is identified for incremental change. A small area is identified for minimal change, due to constraints from a nearby MHF.</p>
Precinct D 	<p>Characterised by contemporary masterplanned estates that offer a diversity of lot sizes, building forms and architectural styles.</p> <p>Most of Precinct D is identified for incremental change. However, given the recency of development, it is unlikely that redevelopment will occur in the near to medium term. A small area in Cairnlea is identified for minimal change, due to constraints from nearby industrial land and MHFs, as is a small area in Sunshine North affected by the MAEO, which limits growth.</p>
Precinct E 	<p>Characterised by the curvilinear masterplanned design approach of the late 20th century, neighbourhoods vary in terms of housing scale and design, but generally comprise larger homes, on large lots.</p> <p>Most of Precinct E is identified for incremental change. Areas west of Watergardens are identified for substantial change, and increased change is identified where the scale of existing development would support up to 3 storeys. Pockets of minimal change are identified where development is constrained by the MAEO.</p>
Precinct F 	<p>Characterised by diverse, grand homes situated in a landscaped setting, with the topography often shaping housing design and siting.</p> <p>Precinct F is identified for minimal change, primarily due to constraints from the MAEO.</p>

TABLE 4 EXISTING NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER PRECINCTS + POTENTIAL GROWTH

Preferred Character

When new development occurs, it must respect the existing neighbourhood character or contribute to a preferred neighbourhood character. This Strategy sets out the preferred neighbourhood character for areas across the municipality, having regard to proposed growth and change settings.

In substantial change areas, a fundamentally new preferred character will be created. The objective for these areas will be to **design for density**, to create denser, yet well designed and well landscaped neighbourhoods close to transport and services.

In increased and incremental change areas, and minimal change areas that are not constrained by the HO, new development will progressively contribute to an evolving preferred character that respects the existing character. The objective in these areas will be to **respect neighbourhood character** by supporting contemporary, well-designed infill development.

In minimal change areas that are affected by the HO, the existing character is the preferred character. In these areas, the objective will be to **celebrate history and character**, ensuring well-designed new development carefully integrates with and respects the special character and history of Brimbank in key locations.

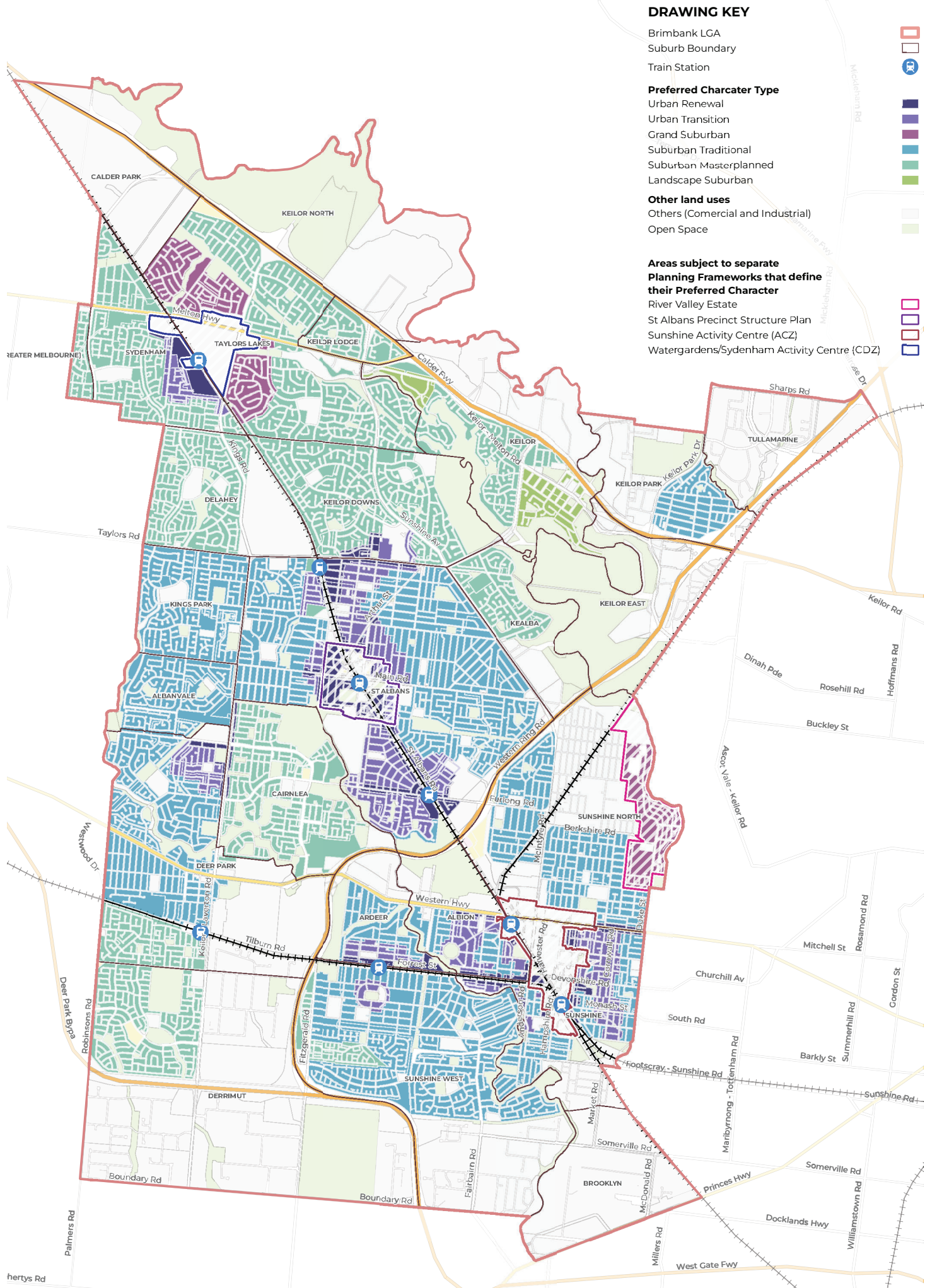
Six 'Preferred Character Areas' have been identified, based on consideration of existing neighbourhood character and the level of change identified in the RDF. For each of the six Preferred Character Areas, a preferred future character has been described in order to guide future development.

The boundaries of the Preferred Character Areas are based on:

- Similarities and differences in valued character attributes (as described in the Existing Neighbourhood Character Precincts).
- Likelihood that housing stock will be renewed or redeveloped in the short to medium term (i.e., recency of development).
- Extent to which the change settings in the RDF will shape the preferred character (i.e., substantial change areas will result in greater changes to neighbourhood character than other areas).

Each Preferred Character Area is proposed to be implemented through a zone that corresponds to its change setting and a schedule that identifies design or neighbourhood character objectives and other requirements (Table 5). Some Preferred Character Areas have more than one schedule.





Preferred Character Area	Description	Proposed Zone/Overlay
Urban Renewal	<p>Substantial change</p> <p>Areas where the preferred future character is relatively dense and urban, with taller building forms and greater levels of site coverage than the Suburban areas. This character will emerge over time as a result of infill development that replaces more traditional housing or new medium- to high-density housing on undeveloped sites.</p>	RGZ2
Urban Transition	<p>Increased change</p> <p>Similar to Urban Renewal, infill development will replace more traditional housing. However, the development will be at a lower scale than the Urban Renewal areas, acting as a transition between the areas that will fundamentally change (Urban Renewal) and surrounding neighbourhoods that will experience a more moderate, incremental change.</p>	GRZ2
Grand Suburban	<p>Increased change</p> <p>Areas of large, grand-scale homes—a relatively unique character in Brimbank. Change in the near term is likely to be limited due to the relative newness of homes, however any development that does occur can adopt a similar scale and bulk to the existing grand homes.</p>	GRZ3
Suburban Traditional	<p>Incremental and minimal change (MAEO, Interface areas, HO + special character areas)</p> <p>Older parts of Brimbank that have more traditional housing, some of which may be appropriate for modest⁴⁴ amounts of renewal and replacement with infill development.</p>	NRZ1 NRZ1 + MAEO NRZ1 + HO NRZ3 (interface areas)
Suburban Masterplanned	<p>Incremental and minimal change (MAEO, Interface areas)</p> <p>More recently developed⁴⁵ parts of Brimbank that are unlikely to undergo much change, as housing is relatively new. Any new development that occurs will adopt a similar character to the existing development in the area; however, new development may be denser and slightly taller than existing development.</p>	NRZ4 NRZ4 + MAEO NRZ5 (interface areas)
Landscape Suburban	<p>Minimal change (MAEO and special character areas)</p> <p>Areas where the existing strong landscape character, shaped by large lots, generous setbacks and slope-responsive housing design, will be preserved.</p>	NRZ6 NRZ6 + MAEO

TABLE 5. PREFERRED CHARACTER AREAS + CHANGE SETTINGS

Note: RGZ1, GRZ1 and NRZ2 are not listed as they apply to areas that are outside the scope of this study, including the St Albans Structure Plan area and the River Valley Estate.

⁴⁴ As compared to Urban Preferred Character Areas.

⁴⁵ As compared to the Suburban Traditional Preferred Character Area.

Design for Density

Creating denser, yet well designed and well landscaped neighbourhoods close to transport and services.

Designing for density refers to the **Urban Renewal Preferred Character Areas**, which will undergo substantial change and are proposed to be zoned RGZ2. Development in this zone does not need to respect neighbourhood character. Instead, it must achieve design objectives specified in the schedule. The preferred design outcomes and any associated ResCode variations for the RGZ2 are being informed by a separate project undertaken by Echelon Planning, in association with Hodyl & Co and Six Degrees Architects.

This Strategy seeks to:

- Facilitate well-designed neighbourhoods that provide for denser, high quality development outcomes.
- Incentivise and encourage, through variations to ResCode requirements, decision guidelines and planning decisions, development to make optimum use of a site’s development potential.
- Encourage development that contributes to an enhanced experience in the public realm, through improved landscape and development interfaces with the street and open spaces.
- Encourage 4 storey apartment style development as the preferred built form. Noting that some townhouse development will occur as the market for apartment development becomes more feasible. This will be monitored and inform any future review of the zones and schedules.

The outcomes sought in the Urban Renewal area are summarised in Table 6.

Zone/ Schedule Area

RGZ2 Urban Renewal

Preferred design outcomes

- Significant change to the density and character of the area.
- Apartment developments of up to 4 storeys.
- High quality design and form with materials that positively contribute to the public realm.
- Internal building layouts that provide elevated amenity for residents whilst respecting the amenity of adjoining neighbours.
- Incorporating separation between buildings to allow visual breaks in the streetscape and recognise adjoining development opportunities.
- Reduced street setbacks^[46] that promotes higher density development and increases passive surveillance of the street.
- Reduced^[47] side setbacks at upper levels to encourage orientation of buildings to the street or rear garden. These setbacks also encourage lot consolidation.
- Discourage the dominance of vehicle crossovers and driveways.
- Maximise landscaping within developments by retaining mature existing trees and incorporating deep soil areas for new small canopy trees in front and rear gardens (increasing with lot size).
- Walls on boundaries supported where good design outcomes can be achieved.
- Standard site coverage^[48] to achieve landscaping and permeability outcomes.
- Visually permeable front fencing.

TABLE 6. DESIGNING FOR DENSITY - PREFERRED DESIGN OUTCOMES

^[46] As compared to current or traditional front setbacks of the area (requirements of current RGZ).
^[47] to ResCode standard (no variations in current RGZ).
^[48] Current ResCode site coverage requirement is 60%. Note: current RGZ specifies site coverage of up to 70%.

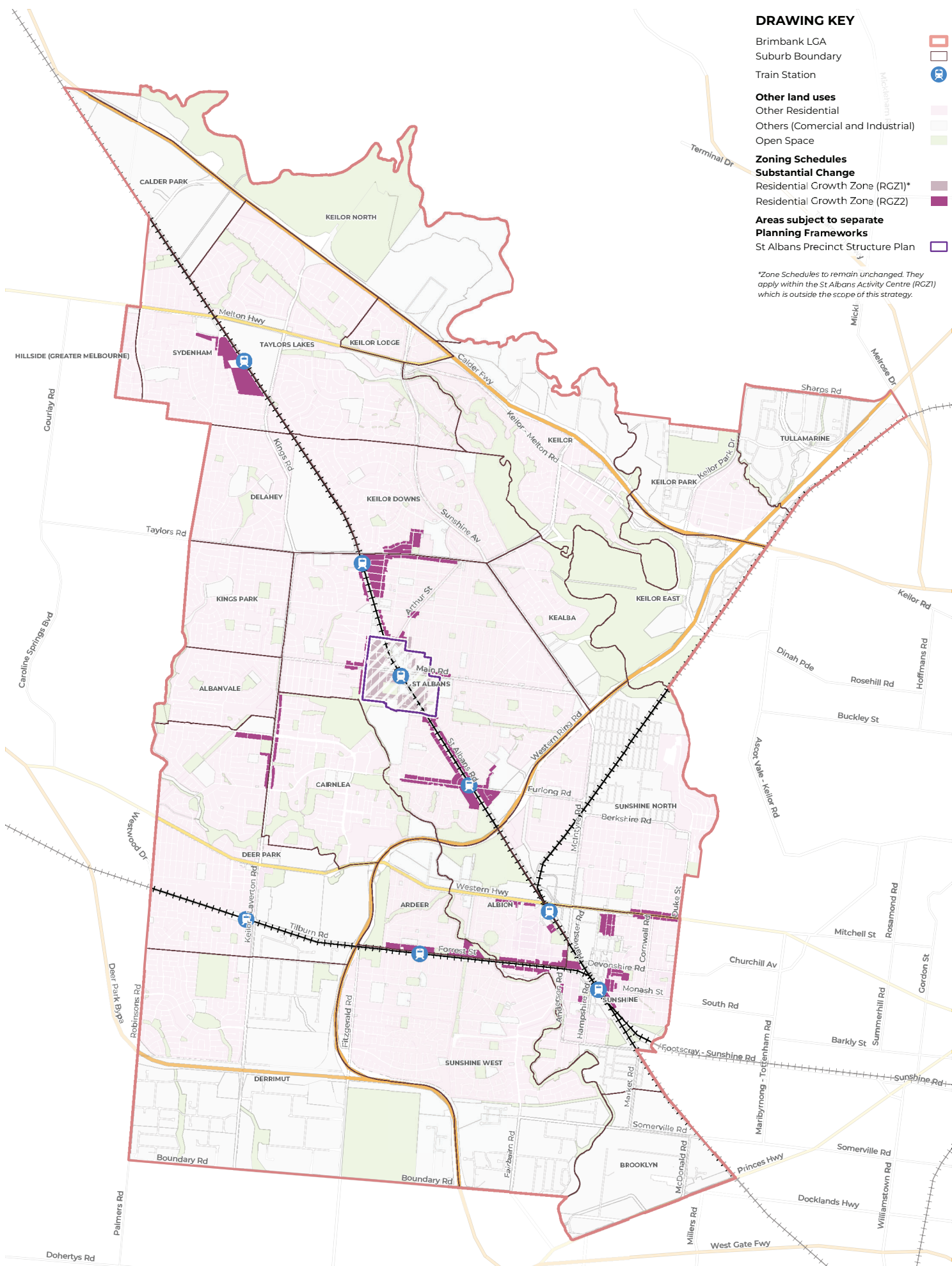


FIGURE 21. DESIGN FOR DENSITY

Design for Density

Objectives

To encourage new apartment development and other denser forms of development that makes optimum use of a site's development potential.

To encourage contemporary and innovative building designs and high quality development and materiality, that complements Brimbank's history and identity.

To encourage urban-scale landscaping, that supports canopy tree planting where possible.

To encourage development to have a strong and active relationship with the street and any abutting open space.

To encourage land assembly, including amalgamation and consolidation of lots.

Actions

Prepare schedules, including objectives, ResCode variations and other appropriate provisions, to implement the preferred character of Urban Renewal Precinct and the development outcomes sought in Table 6

Investigate future amendments to the zone schedule to incorporate any recommendations for landscaping and private open space ResCode variations that result from further landscape analysis (recommended in **Sustainability**).

Monitor development in RGZ areas to inform a 5-year review of the planning policy applying to Urban Renewal Areas (RGZ).

Respect for neighbourhood character

Supporting diverse, contemporary and well-designed infill development that respects neighbourhood character across most of Brimbank's neighbourhoods.

The 'Respecting neighbourhood character' theme applies to increased change, incremental change and some minimal change areas subject to the GRZ and NRZ zones. It excludes those areas subject to the HO (these are covered in the 'Celebrating history and character' section).

New development in these zones will contribute to the preferred neighbourhood character, as defined in the objectives and ResCode variations in the zone schedule, by providing high quality, contemporary redevelopment in accordance with the change settings. It is expected that the **Urban Transition** and **Suburban Traditional** character areas will experience greater change than the **Suburban Masterplanned**, **Grand Suburban** and **Landscape Suburban** character areas (regardless of change setting), given more of the housing stock in these areas is ready for renewal. Recently developed areas are unlikely to change much in the near to medium term.

Areas of minimal change in this category are also expected to evolve in character over time (as opposed to the areas identified in 'Celebrate

history and character'), albeit slowly. These areas are nominated as minimal change due to external factors (e.g., the MAEO and proximity to other sources of potential land incompatibility). Limitations on density are imposed either via an overlay (the MAEO) or via minimum subdivision size restrictions in a unique zone schedule (for the areas near the MHFs). Otherwise, all other factors that will influence character remain the same as in the neighbouring areas. It is not expected that a limitation on density will have a meaningful impact on how individual developments respond to character, but it is likely to reduce the scale and pace of change.

Areas near the Kealba landfill, at the interface of State significant industrial land and those affected by the EAO relating to the closed Sunshine landfill (as introduced by Amendment C212brim) are nominated as minimal change, as they are not suitable for housing growth. The existing suite of planning policies, regulation and related legislation will continue to manage how development responds to these constraints, including compliance with the requirements of the EAO, and referral requirements at Clause 66 of the Brimbank Planning Scheme.

The preferred neighbourhood character varies by precinct. The preferred character outcomes sought across each different precinct are summarised in Table 7.

Respect for neighbourhood character

Zone/Schedule Area

GRZ2 Urban Transition

Preferred character outcomes

- Respectful and progressive change to the character of the area.
- Development of up to 3 storeys, in a variety of architectural styles.
- Contemporary design encouraged to reference architectural features of traditional housing (where traditional housing is of a consistent style).
- Consistent street setbacks, slightly reduced from existing, but providing space for landscaping.^[49]
- Side setbacks to respect the rhythm and spacing of traditional development, including larger setbacks on one side (where this pattern predominates).
- Reduced upper-level setbacks.^[50]
- Discourage the dominance of vehicle crossovers, driveways and garages.
- Landscaping in front garden, including at least one canopy tree.
- Walls on boundaries supported on one side, where good design outcomes can be achieved and impacts on neighbours can be managed.^[51]
- Increased level of site coverage.^[52]
- Low front fencing.

Zone/Schedule Area

NRZ1 Suburban Traditional

Preferred character outcomes

- Modest growth and change that is respectful of the preferred character (except for areas affected by the MAEO, where new development will likely comprise only additions to or replacement of existing dwellings, and some limited additional dwellings where lot size and density requirements are met).
- Development of up to 2 storeys.
- Contemporary design encouraged to reference architectural features of traditional housing (where traditional housing is of a consistent style).
- Street setbacks that are consistent with existing housing.
- Side setbacks to respect the rhythm and spacing of traditional development, including larger setbacks on one side (where this pattern predominates).
- Moderate site coverage.
- Recessed upper levels.
- Discourage the dominance of vehicle crossovers, driveways and garages.
- Landscaping in front garden and side setbacks, including two trees.
- Walls on boundaries supported where good design outcomes can be achieved and impacts on neighbours can be managed.
- Low front fencing.

NRZ3 Suburban Traditional

- Interface

Preferred character outcomes

Preferred character outcomes as per NRZ1 except:

- Limitation on new dwellings (via minimum subdivision size). New development expected to be additions to or replacement of existing dwellings.

TABLE 7. RESPECT FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER - PREFERRED CHARACTER OUTCOMES

^[49] As compared to current or traditional front setbacks of the area (requirements of current RGZ).

^[50] As compared to normal ResCode standards.

^[51] Amenity impacts on neighbours is governed by ResCode Standards.

^[52] As compared to the average site coverage of current or traditional housing in the area, and as compared to normal ResCode standards. Note: Current GRZ does not specify a site coverage variation.

Respect for neighbourhood character

Zone/Schedule Area

NRZ4 Suburban Masterplanned

Preferred character outcomes

- Modest growth and change that is respectful of the preferred character, noting that housing stock is relatively new and unlikely to change much.
- Development of up to 2 storeys.
- Varied architectural styles.
- Development that sensitively responds to slope (where relevant).
- Street and side setbacks that are consistent with existing housing (minimal side setbacks).
- Moderate to high site coverage.
- Recessed upper levels.
- Vehicles/driveways do not dominate frontage.
- Landscaping in front garden and side setbacks, including two trees.
- Walls on boundaries supported where good design outcomes can be achieved and impacts on neighbours can be managed.
- No or low front fencing.

NRZ5 Suburban Masterplanned - Interface

Preferred character outcomes

Preferred character outcomes as per NRZ4 except:

- Limitation on new dwellings (via minimum subdivision size). New development expected to be additions to or replacement of existing dwellings.

Zone/Schedule Area

GRZ3 Grand Suburban

Preferred character outcomes

- Modest growth and change that is respectful of the preferred character, noting that housing stock is relatively new and not expected to change much.
- Development of up to 3 storeys.
- Varied architectural styles.
- Street and side setbacks that are consistent with existing housing (generous front + minimal side setbacks).
- Moderate to high site coverage.
- Landscaping in front garden and side setbacks, including two trees.
- Walls on boundaries supported where good design outcomes can be achieved and impacts on neighbours can be managed.
- No or low front fencing.

NRZ6 Landscape Suburban

Preferred character outcomes

- Modest growth and change (except for areas affected by the MAEO, where new development will likely comprise only additions to or replacement of existing dwellings, and some limited additional dwellings where lot size and density requirements are met). In other areas, further intensification will need to be considered in the context of the preferred character (refer to **Appendix 2**).
- Development of up to 2 storeys, but stepped to respond to topography (may result in greater wall heights).^[53]
- Varied architectural styles.
- Generous front and side setbacks.
- Generous space for landscaping, including multiple large canopy trees (of 12m or more in height) and retained mature vegetation.
- Low site coverage.
- No walls on boundaries.

^[53] Greater than the standard 9m maximum height in the NRZ.



Respect for neighbourhood character

Objectives

To encourage housing growth and diversification.

To ensure new development contributes to the preferred neighbourhood character.

To encourage landscaping that supports canopy tree planting.

To encourage development to have a strong and active relationship with the street and any abutting open space.

Actions

Prepare Schedules, including objectives, ResCode variations and other appropriate provisions, to implement the preferred character of the Urban Transition, Suburban Traditional, Suburban Masterplan, Grand Suburban and Landscape Suburban Precincts, and the development outcomes sought in Table 7.

Celebrate history and character

Ensuring well-designed new development carefully integrates with and respects the special character and history of Brimbank in key locations.

The 'celebrate history and character' theme applies to areas covered by the HO. In these areas, new development should focus on celebrating and enhancing the existing character. These areas are nominated as minimal change and include parts of the **Suburban Traditional** precinct (NRZ1 and NRZ3) and isolated sites in the **Landscape Suburban** precinct (NRZ6), where the HO applies.

The preferred character outcomes sought in these areas are as identified in the preferred character outcomes for these precincts, but new development will need to be sensitively designed to respond to the HO and the Brimbank Heritage Design Guidelines. This is expected to limit opportunities to intensify development.

Objectives

To support a limited amount of growth and diversity.

To ensure new development is compatible with the heritage and/or special character of the area and contributes to the preferred neighbourhood character.

Actions

No further action required. Use of NRZ in combination with the HO will support objectives.

Diversity

Facilitating different forms of housing to meet the diverse and changing needs of the community, including housing that offers greater choice, equity, adaptability and affordability.

A diverse housing market is one that provides a variety of housing sizes, typologies, tenures and price points. It is able to accommodate residents with different lifestyles, incomes, preferences and needs. A more diverse housing market also enables choice and supports affordability.

Key Issues

The key housing diversity issues that Brimbank experiences are:

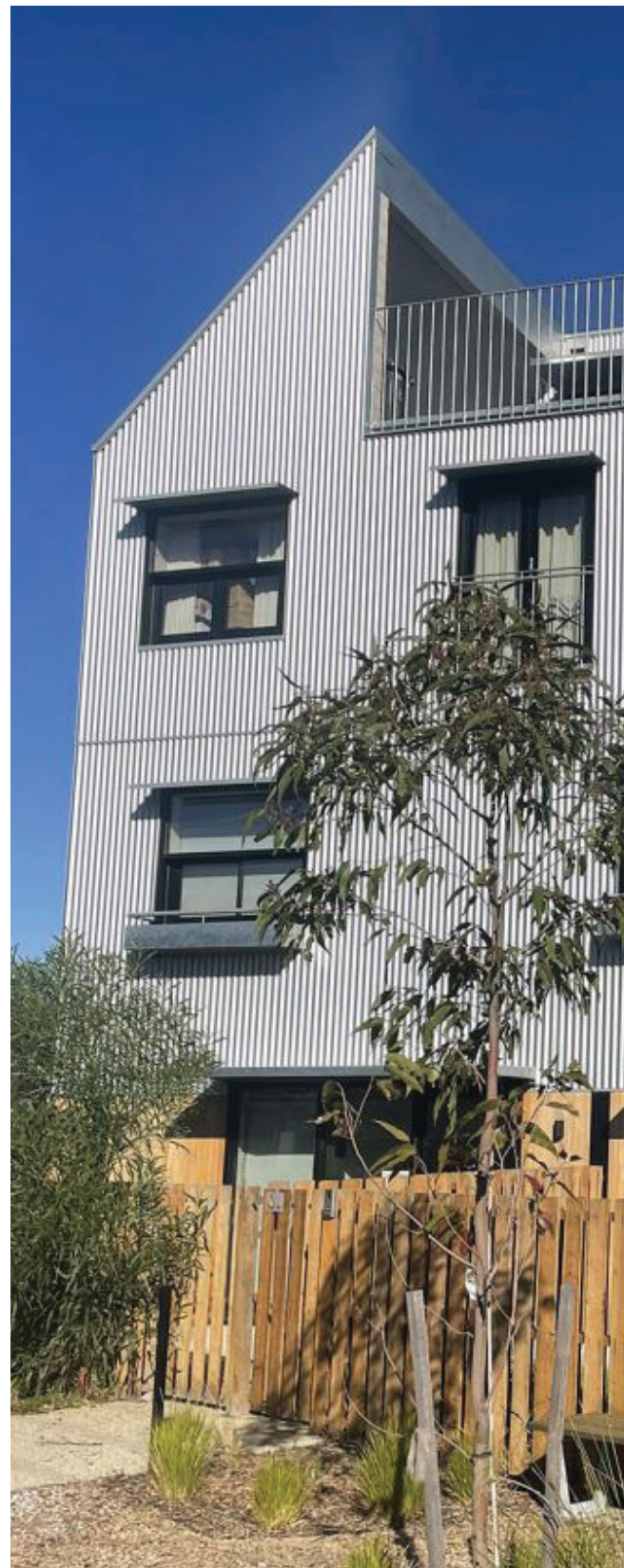
Declining affordability of market housing and limited social and affordable housing options.

Housing in Brimbank is becoming increasingly unaffordable. There is currently an estimated shortfall of more than 4,000 affordable housing dwellings, and this will increase to more than 5,000 by 2041 if supply shortages are not addressed.⁵⁴

Lack of choice of housing typologies (detached housing predominates).

Brimbank's current housing supply is very homogenous. Most dwellings are separate houses, and the market remains driven by demand for detached housing. However, this demand is changing and is anticipated to change further in the coming years as demographics shift⁵⁵ and as major public sector investments are realised. Single person households are increasing; however, the market is not consistently delivering the type of supply that meets the needs of this growing sector of the community.

The following sections provide more detail on how this Strategy will respond to these issues and improve housing diversity and affordability



⁵⁴ Affordable Development Outcomes, *Affordable Housing in the City of Brimbank: Final Research Report*, Brimbank City Council, 2020.

⁵⁵ Urban Enterprise, Background Housing Strategy: Background Analysis, Brimbank City Council, 2021 (updated 2022).

Affordable Housing

Access to safe, secure and affordable housing is a fundamental human right and key determinant of health and well-being. It is the responsibility of all levels of government to uphold this right.

Council is committed to encouraging and supporting an increased supply of social and affordable housing to meet the current and future needs of the Brimbank community.

Location of affordable housing

Homes for Victorians (2017), the State's strategy to guide the provision of a range of affordable and accessible housing, states that it is critical for new housing to be located close to jobs, transport and services.

This is reflected in *Plan Melbourne*, which includes affordable housing options as a component of 20-minute neighbourhoods.

Under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, affordable housing is defined as '...housing, including social housing, that is appropriate for the housing needs of any of the following—

- (a) very low income households;
- (b) low income households;
- (c) moderate income households.'

Income ranges for these three categories are published annually by the Victorian Government.⁵⁶

Households in Australia are considered to be in a state of rental stress or mortgage stress when they are in the bottom 40 per cent of Australia's income distribution and spending more than 30 per cent of their income on housing.⁵⁷

Increasing the supply of affordable housing is a complex challenge that requires a coordinated approach, involving all levels of government. Federal and State Governments have the most significant policy influence in this area. However, Council, as planning authority, plays a critical role in supporting and encouraging a variety of housing types and tenures to meet current and future need. Council also needs to ensure there is a sufficient supply of land for affordable housing close to jobs, transport and services.

Affordable housing

Comprises various types of housing including social housing and other housing initiatives and services that provide for the housing needs of very low to moderate income households.

Social housing includes public housing (owned and managed by the State government) and Community housing (owned and managed by a not-for-profit organisation).

Affordable housing may also encompass short-term housing, such as crisis, emergency and transitional housing, that include a range of specialist services to support and help those in need.

Affordable housing strategies may also target key workers, including those that provide essential human services to the community. The key worker definition may also encompass a broader definition of occupations who generally require an in-person presence at their location of employment and who earn a low to moderate income.

Brimbank's Position Statement on Social and Affordable Housing (2022) advocates for the provision of social and affordable housing to capture and share value created through development (often referred to as inclusionary zoning).

⁵⁶ Affordable Development Outcomes, *Affordable Housing in the City of Brimbank: Final Research Report*, Brimbank City Council, 2020.

⁵⁷ Urban Enterprise, *Background Housing Strategy: Background Analysis*, 2021 (updated 2022).

This is currently not a mandatory planning requirement and, as such, incentives and voluntary agreements negotiated on a case-by-case basis are the best mechanisms available to Council to secure affordable housing contributions in association with new development. In this context, this Strategy strongly encourages affordable housing as a discretionary component of well-located new development, and where landholders propose rezoning of a site for higher-value development outcomes.⁵⁸ A rezoning process gives Council a stronger position to negotiate for affordable housing contributions and can provide more certainty to developers, compared to voluntary negotiations through the planning permit processes. To support this, Council policy guidance⁵⁹ on how to negotiate for voluntary affordable housing contributions could assist officers and provide clarity to the development community.

The Position Statement also directs the Strategy to include guidance on housing need, policy objectives, potential locations and proposed planning actions to strengthen social and affordable housing outcomes through the Brimbank Planning Scheme.

This Strategy influences the spatial distribution of new housing and diversity of dwelling types through zoning and planning policy changes. An Affordable Housing Strategy would provide more detail about

other ways for Council to support affordable housing, including as an owner or investor in land, assets and funds, as a partner and facilitator, and as an advocate—as articulated in the Position Statement.

Preferred locations for affordable housing are those near activity centres and public transportation, with easy access to goods and services. This aligns with where substantial and increased change is indicated on the RDF . For new development proposals in these areas, Council will seek to negotiate a proportion of affordable housing during the planning permit assessment.

All housing types of increased densities are appropriate for these locations, from registered crisis and social housing to affordable market housing to luxury apartments. However, it is most important for crisis housing, social housing and affordable market housing to be located in these areas. Locating these kinds of housing near activity centres and transportation will enable residents with the least amount of discretionary income to spend on transport to take advantage of excellent access to existing amenities and services.

In addition to zoning and policy support, meeting Brimbank’s identified affordable housing need will require other interventions by all levels of government.

Objectives

To encourage new, well-located development to include affordable housing to be owned and managed by a registered housing association or registered housing provider.

To encourage public landowners to use surplus or underutilised land for the provision of social and affordable housing.

Actions

Include local policy to extend existing State policy at 16.01-2S on affordable housing to:

- Support affordable housing near activity centres, and where there is frequent, high quality public transport.
- Encourage affordable housing as a discretionary component of new development.
- Set an expectation for engaging in voluntary negotiations for all development in substantial and increased change areas.

Develop an internal planning policy to provide guidance on negotiating affordable housing contributions as part of new development and rezonings that will result in a significant value uplift to landholders.

Investigate further options, such as pilot projects, to encourage affordable housing (including social housing) in Brimbank.

⁵⁸ For example, where a non-residential site is no longer required for its current purpose and is proposed to be rezoned for residential purposes.

⁵⁹ This refers to an internal Council policy document as opposed to planning policy in the planning scheme.

Diverse housing typologies

Brimbank’s population is increasingly including couples, downsizers, empty nesters, small families and multi-generational families—each with a propensity for different housing types (see **Context**). It is also growing and ageing, and household size is declining. These trends are predicted to increase the demand for townhouses and apartments. Brimbank’s housing market will need to diversify both in typology, tenure and design to enable its population to find housing that meets their needs, including the ability to age in place. Table 8 identifies the projected proportions of different household structures in 2041 and the housing that is expected to be most suitable for them. At present, most households in Brimbank tend to preference separate houses, regardless of structure. This may be due to a combination of factors, including lack of suitable alternatives that meet their needs.

Child friendly apartments

Apartments that are able to be comfortably lived in with a family. May include flexible spaces that can be adapted throughout the day or over the years and more bedrooms than standard. They are designed with safety in mind (e.g., balcony safety), provide sufficient storage, and often provide visible, usable and safe outdoor play areas in communal spaces, generous accessways and lifts for prams.

Household type + projected % of market in 2041	Key housing preferences	Current availability issues
Families <i>(54% of the market)</i>	Separate houses and townhouses.	Lack of new separate house options, declining affordability.
Couples <i>(22% of market)</i>	Separate houses, townhouse and apartments.	Relative lack of smaller dwellings, limited options for downsizers prevent larger, separate houses being ‘released’ to market.
Singles <i>(20% of market - growing proportion or market)</i>	Townhouses and apartments. Some separate houses.	Lack of smaller dwellings, declining rental affordability, slow delivery of apartments.
Groups⁶⁰ <i>(3% of market)</i>	Townhouses and apartments. Some separate houses.	Lack of smaller dwellings, declining rental affordability, slow delivery of apartments.

TABLE 8. HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURES AND POTENTIALLY SUITABLE HOUSING TYPES (SOURCE: URBAN ENTERPRISE, 2022).

⁶⁰ Such as share houses.

With no new land supply to deliver more detached housing, the Strategy seeks to provide alternative options for those who currently prefer to live in detached homes, but would consider other options, and for residents seeking to downsize or move into aged care. Not only will this accommodate residents looking for diverse options, but it will release their existing detached housing to the market for households that need more space. This will ensure Brimbank will continue to accommodate households such as large and multi-generational families.

Specialised housing forms, such as student and key worker⁶¹ housing, will likely become more in demand as investment directed to university and hospital precincts increases the number of students and health workers in Brimbank. Alternative housing forms, including temporary portable housing (see call-out box), may be an option for meeting certain housing needs. These housing types will require further investigation to determine potentially suitable sites and to facilitate partnerships with delivery agents.

Diverse housing typologies also need to be mindful of accommodating a range of needs. These include diverse dwelling mixes (different numbers of bedrooms), varied tenure options (rent or buy) and child-friendly and pet-friendly designs. Brimbank currently has a low proportion of one- and two-bedroom dwellings (2% and 11% respectively).⁶²

Apartment buildings, which typically contain one- or two-bedroom apartments, should also offer bedroom configurations suitable for families (three plus bedrooms).

Increasing the supply of diverse housing is also an important factor in contributing to overall housing affordability. With an increase in the amount of high quality, smaller housing options on the market, renters and buyers will be more likely to find options that meet both their needs in terms of price and amenity.

Figure 10 presents the suitability and locational preference for the housing typologies that will be encouraged throughout Brimbank. This list of housing typologies is not exhaustive, and discussion of emerging and innovative housing forms and designs is encouraged.

MUZ sites present some potential opportunity for diverse housing forms. The stocktake of MUZ sites in the Mesh Draft Background Report noted that some MUZ sites are occupied by a range of non-residential uses such as commercial centres, carparks, schools, etc. Some are undeveloped or underdeveloped, and others have been recently developed as medium density residential housing. There is currently no overarching strategy to determine the potential of these sites and whether their zoning presents opportunities for additional growth and diversity.

⁶¹ Refer to call out box in Section 6.1 for discussion on Key Worker definitions.

⁶² Urban Enterprise, *Housing Strategy: Background Analysis*, 2021 (updated 2022), p.41.

Diverse housing typologies and designs

Typology	Demographic suitability	Locational preference
Apartment (with lifts - usually 4+ storeys)	Students, singles, couples, empty nesters, ageing, special needs, ⁶³ people with limited mobility, small families (for larger child-friendly apartments)	Within substantial change areas (RGZ), particularly large/prominent sites, along key roads and rail interfaces and shop tops. Apartments should be prioritised in these locations over other, less intensive development types to avoid underdevelopment.
Apartment (no lifts - usually up to 3 storeys)	Students, singles, couples, empty nesters, small families	Within substantial and increased change areas (RGZ and GRZ), including along key roads and rail interfaces, consolidated lots and shop tops.
Multi-unit/manor homes (single storey/ground floor)	Small families, empty nesters, couples, independent ageing, people with limited mobility.	Distributed within increased change areas (GRZ) + incremental change areas (NRZ) within walking distance of services. Manor homes are particularly suitable for corner lots.
Multi-unit/townhouses/manor homes (double storey/upper floor)	Small families, empty nesters, couples	Distributed within increased change (GRZ) areas + incremental change areas (NRZ) within walking distance of services.
Secondary dwellings (e.g., granny flats)	Multi-generational families, singles	Distributed within incremental change areas (NRZ), and as temporary dwellings in substantial and increased change areas (RGZ and GRZ).

TABLE 9. DEMOGRAPHIC SUITABILITY AND LOCATIONAL PREFERENCE FOR DIFFERENT HOUSING TYPOLOGIES

⁶³ People that may require additional services to support them in housing. This category includes people that may be homeless or at risk of homelessness, people who are indigenous, and people with disability.

Typology	Demographic suitability	Locational preference
Additional dwellings/ duplexes	Small families, empty nesters, couples	Distributed within incremental change areas (NRZ) and some increased change (GRZ). Not supported in RGZ (under development).
Separate/ Detached housing	Large families, multi-generational families New detached housing will be become increasingly scarce in Brimbank. Larger families may need to consider alternative options such as townhouses.	Throughout incremental + minimal change areas (NRZ). Discouraged in substantial and some increased change areas.
Specialised housing - large format (e.g. large residential villages)	Aging, students, key workers, special needs	Large sites near relevant services/institutions but avoiding substantial change areas.
Specialised housing - apartment format	Aging, students, key workers, special needs	Large sites near relevant services/institutions (universities/ health care), including in substantial change areas. Student and key worker housing may also be located close to railway stations and bus routes that provide access to the relevant institution.
Alternative housing forms (e.g., tiny housing/ temporary housing)	Special needs	Temporarily under-utilised sites.

Note: All other planning scheme requirements also need to be met when encouraging diverse housing types and alternative housing.

Diverse Housing Typologies and Designs

Local planning policy already encourages a mix of dwelling configurations and bedroom numbers in developments of three or more dwellings and encourages student accommodation near tertiary institutions. However, there is an opportunity to promote greater dwelling diversity, by encouraging appropriately located and designed specialised housing. As these forms of housing will often have specific design requirements, further investigation to identify how more of this housing type can be delivered in Brimbank is recommended.

New policy, including decision guidelines and voluntary targets,⁶⁴ can support increased housing diversity. Streamlined planning pathways (such as VicSmart) can also incentivise proposals for specific types of housing, however this would require further investigation and would only apply to straight forward application types. Recent announcements by State government in *Victoria's Housing Statement* propose to remove permit requirements for secondary dwellings (granny flats). This initiative, once implemented, will support more of this type of housing. Other incentives may include variations to car parking requirements, addressed under the **Sustainability** theme.

Targets can be used to encourage more accessible and adaptable housing in large developments. Benchmark targets from other jurisdictions/development types indicate that a 20-50% target of accessible/adaptable housing in large developments may be appropriate.⁶⁵ When applied to other kinds of developments and housing typologies, different benchmarks may be more suitable. Further investigation is required to identify the right targets for Brimbank.

Other options + ideas to encourage diversity

There are opportunities to explore other broader ideas to encourage diversity outside the planning policy framework. They may include looking to other jurisdictions, case studies and advocacy actions. These ideas require further investigation, and may be adopted in the future (where possible) if they are practical and considered beneficial to Brimbank.

State policy changes: Advocating to state government for state policy changes that give greater strength to and incentivise affordability, diversity and universal design requirements (such as Council's current advocacy for inclusionary zoning).

Government funded projects: Advocating to state planning and development agencies for enhanced diversity and universal design in state government funded projects (such as in the Sunshine Priority Precinct)

Training + support: Supporting Council planners to provide active direction to applicants and agencies to facilitate well-designed diverse housing.

Pilots: Exploring options to partner or pilot demonstration projects or new planning innovations that incentivise diversity.

Education + leadership programs: to demonstrate the benefits of prioritising housing diversity and universal design as part of development proposals and the actively take leadership on these issues through early design processes (for example, design excellence programs - refer to **Sustainability**).

⁶⁴ Unless otherwise legislated, targets contained in policy are voluntary only and subject to discretion under the integrated decision-making provisions of the planning scheme.

⁶⁵ NSW's Apartment Design Guidelines (20%) and Victoria's Clause 58 (50%).

Objectives

To facilitate a substantial increase in the diversity of Brimbank's housing stock, in terms of housing typology, dwelling mix (number of bedrooms) and tenure.

Actions

Update local policy to further encourage diverse housing typologies in preferred locations, in accordance with Table 9.

Prepare local policy that strengthens guidance regarding housing mix, accessible housing for older and less mobile people, and child-friendly housing.

Investigate use of VicSmart for straight forward application types.

Explore other ideas, case studies and advocacy actions which may contribute to improved housing diversity outcomes and adopt any that may offer benefits to Brimbank.

Undertake a holistic review of MUZ sites and develop a comprehensive strategy for their future planning and capacity to support growth and diverse housing typologies.

Investigate opportunities for alternative housing options, including pilot programs, within Brimbank.

Investigate needs and opportunities for specialised housing in Brimbank.

Universal Design

Universal design is a term used to describe housing that is accessible to people regardless of age, disability or other factors, and can be adapted as needs change. It is about accommodating people with a diverse range of needs.

The *Livable Housing Design Guidelines* 2017,⁶⁶ prepared by Livable Housing Australia, outlines voluntary performance levels that the building industry can use to incorporate easy living features into new housing design and construction. Seven core design features are defined for the first performance level.

Of these, the following are able to be determined at the planning application stage (the remainder are detailed design features):

- A safe continuous and step free path of travel from the street entrance and / or parking area to a dwelling entrance that is level.
- At least one, level (step-free) entrance into the dwelling.
- A toilet on the ground (or entry) level that provides easy access.

Clause 58 of the planning scheme provides for universal design in a narrow sense. It sets standards for apartment buildings over 5 storeys to incorporate 50% accessible dwellings for people with limited mobility. No such objective or standard applies to the types of apartments likely to be delivered in Brimbank's substantial change areas at present.⁶⁷

Objectives

To ensure a significant proportion of housing is designed to be accessible and/or adaptable to a range of different resident needs and their changing lifestyle needs.

Actions

Investigate appropriate targets for proportions of dwellings designed to universal design principles in multi-unit developments.

Prepare local policy that strengthens guidance regarding housing mix, accessible housing for older and less mobile people, and child-friendly housing.

⁶⁶ Liveable Housing Australia, *Livable Housing Design Guidelines*, 2017.

⁶⁷ This is because at a height limit of 4 storeys, Clause 58 does not apply.



Amenity

Minimising land use conflict between existing non-residential uses and areas identified for housing growth.

Brimbank's identity is intertwined within its industrial past and the ongoing significance of Brimbank's industrial areas to the local and state economy. There are many parts of Brimbank where residential and industrial areas interface, and often land uses are able to coexist without resulting in land use conflict. However, this legacy cannot be ignored. Particularly as residential areas intensify, the potential for land use conflict increases.

In this context, it is important to ensure suitable levels of amenity and reduced risks are afforded to residents of new development, while also protecting the ongoing viability of Brimbank's industrial land, particularly State significant industrial land, MHFs and current landfills.

Other factors that may impact residential amenity include Melbourne airport flight paths, as identified by the MAEO, and major road and rail corridors. There is scope to reduce the impacts of major rail and road corridors on residential amenity as they expand.

Key Issues

The key amenity issues that Brimbank faces are:

Potential conflicts *between industrial land and residential growth.*

Brimbank's industrial land affects its ability to accommodate housing growth, and residential development near industrial land needs to be carefully managed. WorkSafe Victoria provides guidance on sensitive uses near the two MHFs in Deer Park, EPA's landfill guidelines have been used to define the buffer for the open landfill in Kealba, and the EAO requires further analysis to be conducted before land can be developed on the Closed Sunshine landfill. *Plan Melbourne* also seeks to protect State significant industrial precincts from incompatible land uses (such as residential intensification on nearby land) to support their ongoing viability.

Potential for poor amenity along major roads and rail interfaces.

Major roads and rail services offer many economic benefits to Brimbank, and their interfaces are key corridors for movement of people. However, they also present a number of potential health and well-being issues, including issues from noise, dust, odour and air pollution. From a housing perspective, these interfaces present opportunities for a change in built form character, provided the present amenity challenges can be managed.

Proximity to the Melbourne airport creates noise impacts for dwellings.

Large areas of Brimbank, some of which would otherwise be suitable for incremental housing growth, are affected by flight traffic from the Melbourne airport. Dwellings within the flight path of the Melbourne Airport are already affected by the MAEO. This overlay restricts development intensification in order to minimise the number of additional dwellings affected by flight noise. These areas have been identified as minimal change areas in the RDF. As noted in under 'Ongoing Work that Affects this Strategy' (**Context**), the 2022 ANEF-affected areas may change as a result of ongoing work. This could require further investigation as to their impact on housing growth.

Community-raised concerns regarding increased traffic and carparking.

Development can increase traffic and impact parking supply, and this can also impact the amenity of neighbourhoods. Engagement with the community has identified concerns about traffic and parking supply in local streets. Encouraging more people to live in transport-rich locations where they have the option to make more of their daily trips using public or active transport is an important strategy to reduce car dependence and decrease congestion.

Interfaces with Industrial Land

Maintaining the economic viability of State significant industrial land and supporting the ongoing operation of industrial uses are key objectives of State and local planning policy. To support these objectives, the *Brimbank Industrial Land Use Strategy 2018-2030* and planning policy at Clause 17.03-2S and Clause 17.03-3S are clear that the location of new housing should not undermine the continuing operation of industrial uses.

These objectives are partially achieved through the application of buffer areas. For the MHFs, buffers advised by WorkSafe (referred to as advisory areas) indicate that it is inappropriate to increase housing within a certain proximity to these uses. The former Sunshine landfill, the open Kealba landfill and land interfacing with State significant industrial land also present potential, albeit different, constraints on development.

This Strategy seeks to direct growth away from these areas by designating them as minimal change areas, and to manage growth through planning

policies, regulation and related legislation as follows:

- For MHF advisory areas, a restriction on subdivision size in the schedule to the zone is proposed to limit further intensification of development,
- For the Kealba landfill and State significant industrial land, referral requirements of Clause 66 of the Brimbank Planning Scheme will continue to inform assessment of the suitability of new development.
- For the closed Sunshine landfill, the existing EAO (as introduced by C212brim) requires further assessment in accordance with Environment Protection Act 2017 to ensure that the land is suitable for development.

In the future, it may be appropriate to formalise buffers to MHFs, the Kealba landfill and to certain industrial land (including State significant industrial land). This is a complex process that is best undertaken separately from this project and led by the State, as both landfills and MHFs are State significant.

Objectives

To direct growth away from major sources of poor amenity and risk (MHFs, the former Sunshine landfill, the Kealba landfill and State significant industrial land).

Actions

Limit further intensification of housing in the advisory areas to the MHF by applying a minimum subdivision size.

Investigate application of additional planning policy and controls (e.g., application of the BAO) in areas within the buffer to the MHFs, open landfills and State significant industrial land.

Transport Corridors

Road and rail corridors are often areas identified for higher growth due to their proximity to public transport, but their amenity impacts, including those from dust, noise, odour and air pollution, must be appropriately managed. While low or no fencing is identified in **Character** as a valued neighbourhood character attribute, busy and noisy interfaces can often be managed with higher fencing and other noise mitigation measures. Where higher fencing is used, this should be balanced with other design features at upper levels to provide activation and surveillance of the street.

Planning policy to encourage alternative transport options to car ownership (including public and active transport) is also recommended. This is addressed in the next section.

Objectives

To ensure built form design along major road and rail corridors balances protection of internal amenity with activation of the public realm.

Actions
Provide planning policy and specific provisions regarding noise mitigation/attenuation, fencing and management of interfaces along major road and rail corridors.

Sustainability

Ensuring housing is sustainably designed, is located to minimise car dependence and contributes to the climate resilience of Brimbank's community.

Brimbank faces significant sustainability challenges. These challenges including a lack of canopy tree cover, vulnerability to the urban heat island effect, limited use passive design by developers, a prevalence of poor-quality building materials in new development and a legacy of car-centric development. Promoting well-designed, energy-efficient buildings is important for environmental sustainability and climate resilience, which in turn support the health and well-being of residents. Beyond sustainability, energy efficient buildings contribute to housing affordability, as they can reduce ongoing operational and maintenance costs.

The planning system plays an important role in addressing these challenges, through policies that encourage urban consolidation, the use of sustainable transport, water sensitive urban design, environmentally sustainable development, protection

of native vegetation and policies that seek to increase landscaping, greening and urban cooling. However, achieving meaningful sustainability goals requires a coordinated, integrated approach, involving all levels of government and the private sector. Council is committed to its role developing Brimbank into an environmentally sustainable city. To support this aim, Council has prepared and adopted a variety of strategies, plans, policy statements, and targets (see call-out box) and regularly advocates to the State and Federal governments on a range of issues, including building standards, biodiversity and waste management.

This Strategy aims to enhance sustainability through policy and planning controls where neighbourhood character and sustainable design intersect. This includes eaves, shading, and landscaping and parking policy (further details below).

Key Issues

The key issues related to housing and sustainability in Brimbank are:

A lack of quality landscaping + canopy trees *in new development.*

Newly developed areas of Brimbank tend to have larger houses that take up more space on the lot. New, denser forms of development, such as townhouses, duplexes, and low-scale apartments, also take up more space on the lot than traditional detached dwellings. This can make it challenging to incorporate canopy trees, gardens or landscaping in new development.

A lack of passive sustainable design responses *such as orientation, extent of glazing and use of eaves.*

Housing that is not designed to respond to the site context or that uses extensive glazing and lacks shading can be extremely inefficient to heat and cool. This impacts the health of residents as well as the cost of running the house.

Poor choice of building materials.

The most sustainable materials are those that are low impact to source and are high quality and durable, with the potential to be re-used after a building reaches its end of life. The higher quality and more durable the material, the easier it should be to maintain.

Development designed to prioritise cars *(driveways, number of car parks).*

Development across Brimbank is often designed to prioritise the convenient onsite parking of private cars. Combined with uneven access to public transport, many residents rely on private vehicles for daily transport. This comes at a cost to residents financially and from health and well-being perspective, and it comes at a big cost to the environment.

Brimbank's plans, strategies and other policy that support sustainability

- Brimbank Climate Emergency Plan 2020-2025
- Biodiversity Strategy 2012-2022
- Cycling and Walking Strategy 2016
- Greenhouse Reduction Strategy 2019-2023
- Greening the West - One Million Trees Project, 2015
- Sustainable Water Management Strategy, 2013-2023
- Transport Priorities Paper, 2022
- Urban Forest Strategy 20+-2046
- Waste, Recycling and Litter Strategy 2018-2028
- Brimbank Parking Strategy 2019-2029
- Brimbank Tree Policy, 2016
- Climate Change Adaptation Framework 2017-2022
- Environmentally Sustainable Design Framework, 2017
- Sustainability Policy and Sustainability Framework, 2017

Landscaping and canopy trees

Landscaping and canopy trees play an important role in the sustainability and amenity of neighbourhoods. They contribute aesthetically, cool neighbourhoods and help manage drainage. Brimbank does not currently have a highly treed or landscaped character; however, this is an aspiration of the community. A canopy tree cover target of 30% is set across the municipality⁶⁸ and will be achieved through a combination of public and private realm planting.

In the private realm, Standard B13 of ResCode requires provision of appropriate landscaping in new multi-unit developments. Variations to Standard B13 allow for the size, number and location of canopy trees to be specified as well as the location of various types of planting. ResCode can also indirectly influence landscaping by specifying the amount of space to be provided

around buildings, the level of site coverage and permeability and the amount of private open space.

Clause 55.07 (for apartments less than 5 storeys) and 58 (for apartments 5 storeys or more) currently sets objectives and provides guidance around landscaping for apartment developments. Existing ResCode variations set minimum expectations for canopy trees across all development types; however, implementation has been inconsistent (refer to Mesh Draft Background Report) and conventions for describing tree scale and requirements differ slightly from Clause 55.07 and Clause 58 (see Table 10). Existing variations also provide little guidance on sufficient deep soil requirements (a key determinant of whether a canopy tree will survive) and the implications of basement construction.

	Clause 55.07 and 58	Current Brimbank zone schedules
Tree types	Three types of trees (A, B and C) with minimum canopy diameter and height at maturity described, as follows: A - 4m canopy diameter and 6 m height B - 8m canopy diameter and 8m height C - 12m canopy diameter and 12m height	Two types of trees (small and medium) as follows: Small - 6m Medium - 6-12m Scale of tree at maturity does not define whether it refers to canopy diameter or height.
Canopy cover and deep soil requirements	Specified for different site areas. Canopy cover requirements range from 5% to 20% (depending on site area). Deep soil requirements range from 5% of site area or 12sqm (whichever is greater) to 15% of site area (depending on site area).	Not specified, but identifies that trees should be provided in private or secluded private open space greater than 25sqm and along driveways.
Soil requirements	Specified for different tree types (A, B and C) and for different planting conditions (in deep soil or in planters).	Not specified.

TABLE 10. TREE TYPES AND REQUIREMENTS - COMPARISON OF DESCRIPTIONS

⁶⁸ The target is contained in the MSS.

There is opportunity to provide more consistent requirements and terminology in the zone schedules to enhance landscaping and the treed character of the municipality, and to support Council's objective of 30% canopy cover. However, to provide more guidance on Brimbank-specific landscaping responses and private open space expectations, it is recommended that further analysis is undertaken.

The outcomes of this analysis should include:

- Preparation of Landscaping Guidelines to inform changes to the landscaping standards of the schedule.

- Revisions to private open space requirements in the zone schedules, noting that an analysis of private open space will also need to consider the amenity and recreation needs of residents in different change areas.

In all instances, existing mature vegetation should be prioritised for retention in development proposals. This requirement is captured in ResCode. It is noted though, that retention of mature vegetation has been identified as a key objective in the Suburban Landscape Precinct, where existing mature vegetation is a central influence on character.

Objectives

To encourage enhanced landscaping, appropriate to the level of development, that increases canopy tree coverage.

Actions

Undertake further landscaping analysis to develop a set of Landscaping Guidelines that will inform variations to ResCode standards as appropriate, including landscape and private open space Standards.

Building design

Building design that emphasises the use of siting, design and building orientation to reduce or even eliminate the need for mechanical heating and cooling is referred to as passive design. Passive design is key to achieving sustainable buildings. This commonly includes orientating living areas to face north and using shading and energy-efficient glazing (see call-out box).

Clause 15.01-2S 'Building Design' encourages passive design and seeks to achieve building design and siting that contributes to ESD.

The quality and durability of materials also contributes to a building's sustainability. Building materials have embodied energy (i.e., the energy used to produce the materials), and material choice impacts the durability and lifespan of a building. Robust and durable materials and finishes, that can be easily cleaned or repaired, extend the lifespan of buildings, saving energy by avoiding major renovations and delaying rebuilds.

Local planning policy (Clause 15.02-1L-02) requires residential developments of two or more dwellings to undertake a sustainable design assessment to demonstrate that they 'achieve best practice in environmentally sustainable development from the design stage through to construction and operation'. This involves not only considerations of energy performance, but also integrated water management, indoor environment quality, transport, waste management (addressing use of durable and reusable materials) and urban ecology. Specified types of development are also required by this policy to produce a Sustainability Management Plan.

Passive design

As the name suggests, passive design enables buildings maintain comfortable indoor temperatures through their design, rather than through 'active' (i.e., electricity or gas-powered) heating and cooling.

Key passive design elements include:

- North-facing living areas and windows
- Use of materials that have the ability to absorb, store and release heat (referred to as 'thermal mass')
- Insulation
- Energy-efficient glazing
- Shading designs and structures
- Reliable ventilation
- Air tightness

The clauses mentioned above have been significant in giving weight to sustainability considerations, yet there is still scope for improved outcomes. Planning policy can be championed through active leadership and encouragement of individual development proposals (refer to call-out box for examples). This Strategy recommends Brimbank explore a range of opportunities and mechanisms to scrutinise and shape sustainable outcomes through design leadership, particularly on larger-scale housing projects.

Design Leadership examples

Melbourne City Council and Casey Council have established Design Excellence Panels of independent experts who review and advise on significant development proposals, under an agreed terms of reference or set of guidelines. Experts are drawn from a variety of fields in private industry, academia and public service. Private and academic panel members are usually paid a nominal fee for their participation.

The panel review is a voluntary process for applicants and recommendations are not binding. Benefits include improved design outcomes, enhanced communication and collaboration with proponents, and elevation of the skills and capabilities of Council officers who observe the panel process.

Objectives

To encourage new development to demonstrate passive design principles (e.g., orientation of dwellings, internal arrangement of rooms/windows, use of eaves, etc.), to achieve ESD targets.

To encourage use of high quality, durable materials and finishes that can be easily maintained and repaired.

Actions

Amend local policy, schedule objectives and decision guidelines to encourage the use of high quality, durable materials and finishes and to encourage passive design outcomes.

Explore opportunities to shape and champion better and more sustainable design outcomes via a design excellence review panel (or similar), with ESD experts as members, to provide expert, independent design advice.

Car Parking

In residential areas located far from activity centres and public transport, and that have not benefitted from significant infrastructure investment, it is a reality that many people will continue to rely on cars for their daily transport needs. However, alternatives to private car ownership should be encouraged where there is walkable access to good quality public transport. Clause 52.06-5, of the Brimbank Planning Scheme establishes the minimum number of car parking spaces required for new dwellings. This minimum rate applies across Victoria and does not have regard to local conditions, including the quality or frequency of active and public transport options.⁶⁹

The *Brimbank Parking Strategy 2019-2029*, acknowledges issues associated with standardised minimum rates. These include added development costs and impacts on affordability. Minimum parking rates can incentivise car ownership and use, which impedes sustainable transport objectives.

The Parking Strategy seeks to ensure that on-site parking in new development meets the diverse needs of residents. This also means that where sustainable travel options are available, on-site parking could be reduced to offer residents greater choice. A Parking Overlay (PO) is the appropriate planning tool to set car parking rates that respond to the transport and land use context. Some municipalities in Melbourne that use POs in public transport rich locations⁷⁰ have opted for a maximum of one parking space per dwelling (often regardless of number of bedrooms).

In 2023, Brimbank applied POs the Sunshine and St Albans Activity Centres via amendment C216. As part of this amendment, parking minimums were reduced to reflect actual generated demand. The strategic work undertaken for the amendment suggested that applying a maximum rate in these areas would be premature. This Strategy therefore recommends investigating revised minimum rates in other substantial change areas.

Reduced parking rates may also be suitable for diverse housing typologies where residents are demonstrated to have a reduced levels of individual car ownership, such as young adults living out of home and older age groups.⁷¹ In circumstances where reduced parking rates are recommended, this should be accompanied by other statutory and non-statutory mechanisms to encourage sustainable transport choices including car share schemes, increased bicycle parking requirements, and on-street parking restrictions, as appropriate.

Further strategic work is needed to identify appropriate parking rates for each substantial change area. This should take into consideration the likely car parking demand generated by various dwelling typologies, the quality and accessibility (by walking and cycling) of the public transport in the areas and the availability of car parking in the area.

Development should also be located to take advantage of proximity to public transport and active transport routes (as per the RDF).

Objectives

To encourage and incentivise the use of sustainable transport options in public-transport-rich areas.

Actions

Investigate applying the Parking Overlay to set a reduced requirement for car parking in appropriate substantial change areas.

⁶⁹ A permit can be obtained to vary this minimum requirement, but this requires justification by the applicant to support the variation. A permit may allow more than the maximum. Decision-makers should take into consideration the particular characteristics of the development, the typical residents and likely car parking demands generated, the availability of car parking in the locality and whether the development includes bicycle and motorcycle parking.

⁷⁰ Melbourne City Council inner city areas, Moonee Valley's Moonee Ponds Activity Centre area, and Maribyrnong's Footscray Metro Activity Centre outer Parking Precinct specify a maximum and a minimum, with a maximum of 1 space per 1-2 bedroom dwellings, and 1.5 for 3 bedrooms or more.

⁷¹ Loader C 2021, 'How has motor vehicle ownership changed in Australian cities for different age groups?' Charting Transport blog, <https://chartingtransport.com/>.



Implementation

The objectives and actions of the Strategy will be implemented through a range of actions. The Implementation Plan and the associated Action Plan (Table 11) include many actions that can be implemented via the Brimbank Planning Scheme. As these plans reflect Council's current thinking of how the Strategy will be implemented, they are subject to change based on feedback received during the community consultation and further updates to the Strategy.⁷²

Council, as the planning authority, will lead preparation of a Planning Scheme Amendment (PSA). Planning Scheme changes must be strategically justified. This Strategy (along with the supporting background documents) provide much of this strategic justification for the PSA. In some instances, further investigation will be required before new policy can be strategically

justified. Where further investigation is required, it is identified in the Action Plan.

Other actions, such as advocacy actions, are identified in the Action Plan, but their implementation will require further consideration. Council will take a lead role in these advocacy actions; however, partnerships with government, agencies and the community will also be important.

Planning Policy Framework

Brimbank's PPF sets out Brimbank's Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) and provides State, regional and local policies relating matters relevant to housing and neighbourhood character.

Clause 21 is the MSS. It sets the context for planning and development in Brimbank, including Brimbank's vision and strategic directions. Strategic directions related to the built environment (Clause 21.06) and housing (Clause 21.07) and the Residential Framework (Clause 21.07-5) are most relevant to this Strategy.

These clauses and associated plans of the PPF will be updated to better reflect the vision and themes of the Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategy.

Policy within the planning scheme directs decision-makers and permit applicants to give weight to certain matters when considering how to use or develop land. It is important that local policy does not simply duplicate or restate State policy.⁶⁵ As such, policy changes are only recommended in the Action Plan where they will provide more locally specific guidance to decision-making.

New and amended policy will be prepared following consultation on this Strategy, and the new PPF will be exhibited as part of the formal PSA process.

Brimbank's Planning Scheme structure is due to be updated to the new format PPF. Currently, a PSA to update Brimbank's Planning Scheme is under consideration by State government.

Residential Zones and Schedules

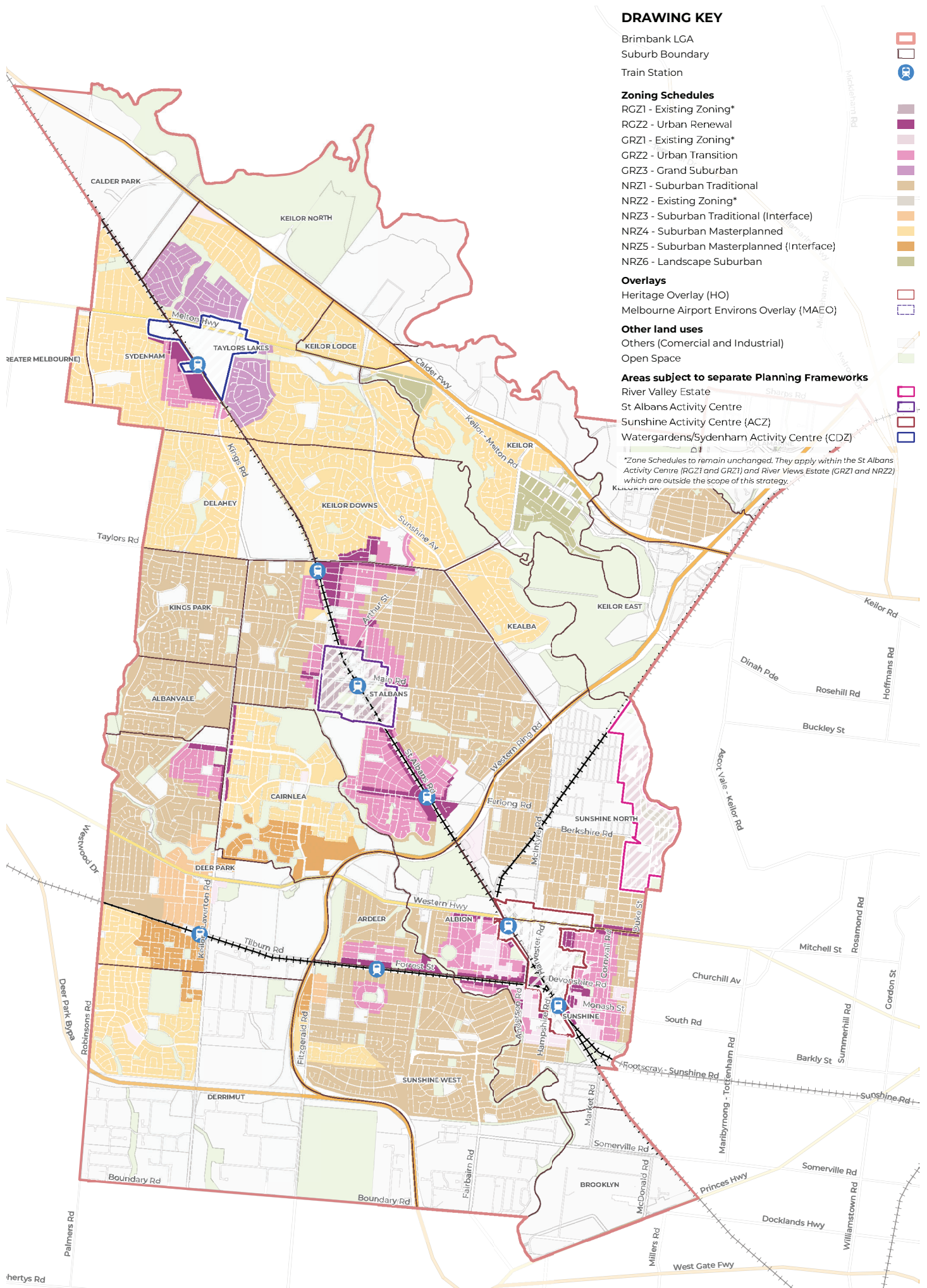
Residential zones and schedules are proposed to implement the change settings identified in the RDF and the preferred character of each neighbourhood precinct described in this Strategy.

Multiple zone schedules are required to reflect the different development outcomes expected when change and preferred

character objectives are brought together.

Individual zone schedules that set out objectives, ResCode variations and other requirements and guidelines will be prepared following consultation on this Strategy. The proposed schedules will be exhibited as part of the formal PSA process.

⁷² Brimbank's Planning Scheme translation to the PPF format is still pending approval by the Minister for Planning. The exhibited version of the PPF is used as the basis for this Implementation Plan.delivered across Brimbank.



Overlays

Overlays provide further control and guidance on specific matters. The HO and the MAEO are existing overlays that play an important role in the implementation of the Strategy.

Additional overlays applied to industrial land are not recommended at this time, but the Strategy recommends investigating the application of further policy and controls to prevent housing growth within a certain distance of industrial areas, landfills

and MHFs. Residential zone schedules are also proposed to be used to manage potential land use incompatibility in the advisory areas of MHFs.

In relation to car parking, this Strategy recommends investigating revised minimum rates in substantial change areas not already covered by POs.

Other Actions

Other actions that are not implemented via the planning scheme, such as advocacy, education, investment and demonstration actions are important.

These are identified generally in the Action Plan, but their implementation will require further consideration by Council.

Action Plan

The Action Plan identifies the following types of actions:

- **Action:** Can be actioned immediately, as part of the initial PSA to implement the housing and neighbourhood character objectives. The Strategy will provide the necessary level of strategic justification to support the PSA.
- **Investigate:** Requires further investigation to provide the necessary strategic justification to support a PSA.
- **Explore:** Non-planning-scheme-related actions that would contribute to the housing and neighbourhood character vision but that require further exploration and consideration.

Actions that are considered substantial (i.e., key actions that will implement the Strategy) are highlighted. All actions will be subject to obtaining budget and resourcing.

Please note that references to clause numbers use the current VPPF framework. Should the amendment to translate the VPPF to the PPF be approved before the implementation of this Strategy, the changes will be implemented according to the new format.

Action Plan

Action	Type
Planning Policy Framework	
Update Clause 21.01 to include updated demographic and forecast housing needs from the Urban Enterprise Background Analysis.	Action
Update the Strategic Directions relating to housing and built form at Clause 21.03, Clause 21.06 and Clause 21.07 to reflect the general themes and directions from the Strategy.	Action
Replace the Residential Framework at Clause 21.07 (Strategic Framework Plans) with the RDF.	Action
Update Clause 21.07 to include noise attenuation for residential development along major roads and rail interfaces.	Action
Update Clause 21.09 to discourage residential intensification within the buffers to the Kealba Landfill and the MHFs in Deer Park, respectively.	Action
Update Clause 21.06 to ensure that redevelopment sites that interface with open space provide an active frontage.	Action
Update Clause 21.06 and 21.07 to provide strengthened guidance regarding landscaping and open space expectations for different development types and high quality, durable building material and design features.	Investigate
Update Clause 21.07 to reflects the themes and high-level objectives of the Neighbourhood Character Strategy and to list the Strategy as a policy document.	Action
Update Clause 21.07 with new policy that reflects the relevant directions and objectives of the Growth and Diversity themes of the Strategy and to list the Strategy and Mesh Draft Background Report as a policy document. Policy will provide direction on preferred locations for diverse housing types and policy to discourage underdevelopment of land in substantial change areas.	Action
Update Clause 21.07 to provide guidance regarding the preferred locations for affordable housing.	Action
Prepare new policy at Clause 21.07 relating to residential aged care to provide guidance on preferred locations for aged care facilities (identified as large format specialised housing forms in the Strategy).	Action
Review other Clauses in the Brimbank Planning Scheme to remove any redundant or conflicting policies because of the Strategy.	Action
Investigate appropriate targets for proportions of dwellings designed to universal design principles in multi-unit developments.	Investigate

TABLE 11. ACTION PLAN

Action	Type
Zones / ResCode variations	
Apply zones and schedules to implement the change settings in the RDF and the Preferred Character outcomes in the Strategy	Action
Prepare zone schedules with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design/neighbourhood character objectives that reflect the Preferred Character descriptions in Appendix 2 - ResCode variations to reflect the development outcomes expected under Character. - Minimum subdivision sizes (where required to manage land use compatibility issues identified in the Housing Strategy) - Application Requirements and Decision Guidelines to support objectives and actions in the Strategy 	Action
Review zones schedules, once landscaping guidelines have been prepared, to update the landscaping and private open space ResCode variations.	Investigate
Overlays	
Investigate the heritage significance of Sunshine West to determine whether a HO would be an appropriate planning control.	Investigate
Investigate additional planning policies or controls (e.g., BAO) in areas within WorkSafe's Inner and Outer Planning Advisory Area to the Deer Park MHFs, EPA buffer to the Kealba open landfill	Investigate
Investigate applying the Parking Overlay to set a reduced requirement for car parking in appropriate substantial change areas.	Investigate
Other planning scheme changes	
Include the Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategy and the Mesh Draft Background Report and Urban Enterprise Background Analysis as background documents at Clause 72.08.	Action
Prepare specific controls (such as DDO or DPO controls) to guide preferred development outcomes for large scale sites currently used for other purposes but zoned for more intensive development.	Investigate
Investigate use of local Vic Smart provisions at Clause 59.15 to provide for a streamlined permit application pathway for straight forward application types.	Investigate
Review the St Albans Structure Plan and associated planning policies in the context of the Strategy to update the planning framework across the St Albans activity centre area and surrounding neighbourhoods.	Investigate
Undertake further landscaping analysis to develop a set of Landscaping Guidelines that will inform variations to ResCode standards as appropriate, including landscape and private open space Standards.	Investigate
Undertake a holistic review of MUZ sites and develop a comprehensive strategy for their future planning and capacity to support growth and diverse housing typologies.	Investigate

Action Plan

Action

Type

Non planning scheme-related actions

Develop an internal policy to provide guidance on negotiating affordable housing contributions as part of new development and rezoning that will result in a significant value uplift to landholders.	Explore
Investigate needs and opportunities for specialised housing.	Explore
Explore other ideas, programs and advocacy actions, through investigation of domestic and international case studies, to encourage diverse housing and more affordable housing. Seek to adopt those that would offer benefits to Brimbank.	Explore
Investigate opportunities for alternative housing options within Brimbank.	Explore
Explore opportunities to strengthen sustainable design outcomes via a design excellence review panel (or similar), with ESD experts as members, to provide expert, independent design advice.	Explore
Monitor development in RGZ areas to inform a 5-year review of the planning policy applying to Urban Renewal Areas (RGZ).	Explore

Monitoring and Review

Implementation of the Action Plan will be subject to available resources, priorities, and any emerging issues or opportunities. Where additional resources are required, these will be subject to Council's annual budget processes and/or external funding opportunities. The Action Plan will be reviewed annually to monitor progress.

The Strategy will be reviewed within 10 years from the date of Council adoption or if there is a significant shift to the planning policy or legislative landscape, to ensure it takes account of contemporary policy contexts and relevant Council plans, policies and strategies, and is meeting the housing needs of the Brimbank community.

