Brimbank City Council

Draft Brimbank Housing + Neighbourhood Character Strategy

Brimbank
City Council

CLIENT	Brimbank City Council
PROJECT	Brimbank Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategy
VERSION	1.0 Initial draft issued for PWG/PCG review
	2.0 Revised to consolidated 3 documents into one
	3.0 Edits following second substantive review by Council
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Council respectfully acknowledges and recognises the Kulin Nation including the Wurundjeri, Bunurong and Boon Wurrung Peoples as the Traditional Owners of the land in the City of Brimbank, and pays respect to Elders past, present and future. For the Traditional Owners the lands in the City of Brimbank have always been a significant trading and meeting place.

Executive Summary

The City of Brimbank is growing and changing.
A new approach to planning for housing is needed.

The City of Brimbank (Brimbank) is a growing and changing municipality. By 2041, there will be an additional 34,000 residents, and at least 14,000 new homes will be needed to accommodate this growth. Brimbank's population is not only increasing, but it is also ageing and becoming more diverse—bringing changes to household structures and housing needs. While families will continue to make up the majority of households, single person households and households with people over 65 will increase significantly over the next 20 years.

Brimbank's community is one of the most socio-economically disadvantaged in metropolitan Melbourne and has the highest instance of people experiencing homelessness in Greater Melbourne's west. Like other major cities around Australia, housing in Brimbank is becoming increasingly unaffordable, and this threatens the security and well-being of current and future residents.

These are significant challenges to address. Brimbank needs more housing, and it needs to be diverse, affordable and well-located.

Currently, Brimbank's housing stock is relatively homogenous—comprising over 80% separate housing—and it will not meet the needs of the future population. Units and townhouses are gradually emerging, yet the feasibility of apartment developments remains hindered by site conditions, market preferences and economic considerations. Even as the demand for separate houses persists, the limited availability of greenfield land precludes detached housing as an option for accommodating the anticipated population growth.

The Sunshine Metropolitan Activity Centre (MeAC) and St Albans Major Activity Centre (MAC) have the capacity to accommodate a significant portion of Brimbank's new apartment developments and housing growth. Sunshine MeAC in particular is set to transform, with Council anticipating significant infrastructure enhancements and higher density housing as a result of significant State government investment in infrastructure and planning and Council's own Transforming Brimbank agenda.

Outside of these areas, in established neighbourhoods, Council needs a plan to accommodate a pipeline of new housing. This needs to include a mix of detached homes, townhouses, apartments and other diverse forms of housing. There also needs to be a mix of tenures (owned and rented) and affordable housing, including social housing and other low-cost options. The location and design of new housing needs to enhance sustainability and liveability, offer convenient access to services and infrastructure and contribute to the valued character of Brimbank's local neighbourhoods.

The purpose of this Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategy is to establish a long-term, shared vision for the future of housing in Brimbank and to set out a plan to realise it.

DISCLAIMER

This Draft Strategy was prepared prior to the release of Victoria's Housing Statement (Released September 20th 2023). It will continue to be reviewed and updated to reflect changes in this evolving policy space.

The draft vision for consultation with the community is:

By 2041, Brimbank will be a city of green, connected and diverse neighbourhoods, offering a range of high quality, sustainable housing choices for everyone at every stage of their life.

To accomplish this vision, the Strategy recommends denser housing of up to four storeys in transport-rich locations, particularly within and around activity centres. Development will contribute to a new character in these areas and feature high quality, sustainably designed contemporary buildings.

Outside these areas, development will transition to lower-scale townhouses and apartments of up to three storeys within walking distance of transport, shops, and services. This housing will offer high quality alternatives to a variety of household structures, including singles, couples and families, freeing up existing separate housing across Brimbank for those that have the greatest need for more space, such as large and multigenerational families. While development will respect existing character, it will also bring changes, including more diverse housing options, enhanced landscaping, tree planting and high quality development. Facilitating affordable housing supply will be a priority in these

areas, given their proximity to transport and services.

In most of Brimbank's remaining residential areas, change will be incremental and of a lower scale. This will include units and townhouses of up to two storeys, designed to respect the preferred character of Brimbank's diverse neighbourhoods. This housing is anticipated to meet the needs of the majority of Brimbank's family households.

Some parts of Brimbank will experience development at a slower pace, due to constraints such as airport noise or other environmental factors. Other parts of the municipality will evolve gradually because of heritage values. Development in these areas will still be possible, but it will occur at a scale and intensity that celebrates and enhances Brimbank's history and character.

Planning for housing is complex and challenging, and Federal and State governments hold many of the levers that affect housing supply and affordability. However, Councils have a significant role to play in planning for housing through the application of residential zones, overlays and policies. State government provides clear direction on how to use these tools in order to create certainty about development outcomes in each zone and liveable neighbourhoods .

This Strategy aligns with those directions and lays the groundwork for a local planning framework to deliver the housing growth and diversity Brimbank needs.

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Abbreviations

ACZ	Activity Centre Zone
CBD	Central Business District
CDZ	Comprehensive Development Zone
CZ	Commercial Zone
DCPO	Development Contributions Plan Overlay
DDO	Design and Development Overlay
DELWP	the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
DoT	the Department of Transport
DPO	Development Plan Overlay
DTP	the Department of Transport and Planning
ESD	Environmentally Sustainable Development or Design
ESO	Environmental Significance Overlay
GRZ	General Residential Zone
HO	Heritage Overlay
LSIO	Land Subject to Inundation Overlay
MAEO	Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay
MeAC	Metropolitan Activity Centre
MUZ	Mixed Use Zone
NCO	Neighbourhood Character Overlay
NEIC	National Employment and Innovation Cluster
NRAS	National Rental Affordability Scheme
NRZ	Neighbourhood Residential Zone
PPF	Planning Policy Framework
PPN	Planning Practice Note
PPTN	Principal Public Transport Network
PSA	Planning scheme amendment
ResCode	Residential Code
RGZ	Residential Growth Zone
SBO	Special Building Overlay
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
SHWEP	Sunshine Health, Wellbeing and Education Precinct
SLO	Significant Landscape Overlay

Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
20-minute neighbourhood	A neighbourhood in which residents can access most of their daily needs (e.g., via shops, services, parks, healthcare facilities) within a 20-minute return walk from home.
Activity centre	Areas that provide a focus for services, employment, housing, transport and social interaction. They range in size and intensity of use from smaller neighbourhood centres to major suburban centres and larger metropolitan centres.
Adaptable housing	Housing that is designed to be used by everyone and accommodate changes in family size or family member mobility over time.
Affordable housing	Housing that is appropriate for the needs of a range of very low to moderate income households, and priced (whether mortgage repayments or rent) so these households are able to meet their other essential basic living costs.
Australian Noise Exposure Forecast (ANEF)	The ANEF system is the approved aircraft noise exposure metric for use in land use planning across Australia. ANEF contours are a way to describe the measure of aircraft noise exposure levels around airports.
Contemporary development	New housing development that has replaced traditional housing stock in older suburbs, or that has been recently developed in newer suburbs.
Contributory heritage buildings	Buildings that make a significant contribution to the heritage character of an area.
Community housing	Refers to a type of not-for-profit social housing. Community housing offers secure, affordable, rental housing for very low to moderate income households with a housing need
Crisis and emergency housing/ accommodation	Includes a range of specialist services for people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, escaping family violence, or in other emergency situations. It includes women's refuges, youth refuges and major crisis supported accommodation services.
Greenfield land	Undeveloped land identified for future residential, industrial or commercial development and use.
High density development	As used in this Strategy, development of four or more storeys, containing apartments or units.
Higher density development	As used in this Strategy, a descriptor that encompasses both medium density development (2–3 storeys) and high density development (4+ storeys).
High scale development	As used in this Strategy, development of three or more storeys. (In contrast to 'low scale development' – see below.)
Housing diversity	A variety of housing sizes and types. Seen as desirable due to the premise that people need different types of housing depending on their lifestyle and life stage.
Housing location	Where a dwelling is within a geographical area. Often thought about in association with proximity to desired features or attractors.
Housing scale	Refers to the size of a dwelling. Measured by floor area, number of bedrooms, and/or size of lots.
Housing tenure	Ownership status of a dwelling, typically either homeownership or rental.

Housing typology	The physical type of dwelling. Includes detached homes/separate houses, semi-detached, townhouses, unit, apartments, and specialised housing (e.g., retirement villages, aged care facilities, student housing).
Inclusionary zoning	A land use planning intervention by government that either mandates or creates incentives so that a proportion of a residential development includes a number of affordable housing dwellings.
Infill development	Development of vacant or under-utilised land in within an area that is already largely developed.
Liveable/liveability	A measure of a city's residents' quality of life, used to benchmark cities around the world. It includes socioeconomic, environmental, transport and recreational measures.
Low scale development	As used in this Strategy, development of one to two storeys.
Metropolitan activity centres (MeACs)	As used in the Victorian Planning System, higher-order centres with diverse employment options, services and housing stock, supported by good transport connections. Plan Melbourne identifies 9 existing MeACs (including Sunshine) and two future centres.
Major activity centres (MACs)	As used in the Victorian Planning System, suburban centres that provide access to a wide range of goods and services. They have different attributes and provide different functions, with some serving larger subregional catchments. Plan Melbourne identifies 121 major activity centres.
Medium density development	As used in this Strategy, development that has dwellings or apartments in buildings of two to three storeys. This can include townhouses, unit developments and low scale apartment buildings.
Minimal housing change	As used in the Victorian Planning System, this describes areas unsuitable for housing growth due to their constraints.
National Employment and Innovation Cluster (NEIC)	Designated concentrations of employment distinguished by a strong core of nationally significant knowledge sector businesses and institutions that make a major contribution to the national economy and Melbourne's positioning in the global economy
Neighbourhood character/ character	As defined by DTP, 'Neighbourhood character is essentially the combination of the public and private realms. Every property, public place or piece of infrastructure makes a contribution, whether great or small. It is the cumulative impact of all these contributions that establishes neighbourhood character.' (PPN43)
Neighbourhood character precincts	Areas identified by this Strategy, areas having qualities (similarities and comparative differences) that give them a unique character from other parts of the municipality.
Non-contributory heritage buildings	Buildings that do not make a significant contribution to the heritage character of an area but that still fall under a HO.
Planning authority	Any person or body given the power to prepare a planning scheme or an amendment to a planning scheme. A council is planning authority for its municipality and for any area adjoining its municipality that the Minister authorises.
Planning Permit	In Victoria, a legal document that allows a certain use or development to proceed on a specified parcel of land.

Planning scheme	A planning scheme is a statutory document that sets out objectives, policies and provisions relating to the use, development, protection and conservation of land in the area to which it applies. A planning scheme regulates the use and development of land through planning provisions to achieve those objectives and policies.
Planning Scheme Amendment (PSA)	Involves a change to a planning scheme map, a change to the written part of the scheme, or both. The Minister for Planning may authorise the preparation of a PSA by a municipal council.
Planning Policy Framework (PPF)	The policy content of the planning scheme that provides state, regional and local context for spatial planning and decision making by planning and responsible authorities.
Priority precincts	In Victoria, areas around transport nodes that will be a focus of employment and housing growth.
Public housing	Long-term rental housing that is owned by the government. Its purpose is to accommodate very low to moderate income households that are most in need.
ResCode	The collective name for Clauses 54, 55, 56 and 58 in the Victorian Planning Scheme. These clauses set objectives and standards for residential development for one dwelling on a lot (Clause 54), two or more dwellings on a lot (Clause 55), subdivision (Clause 56), and apartment buildings (Clause 58).
Residential Development Framework (RDF)	As used in the Victorian Planning System, identifies housing change areas, typically as minimal, incremental or substantial change.
Rezoning	The statutory process of changing the zone of land to another zone. In Victoria, this requires a Planning Scheme Amendment.
Schedule	As used in the Victorian Planning System, a set of objectives, standards, and requirements and decision guidelines attached to either a zone or an overlay.
Social housing	A type of rental housing that is provided and/or managed by the government or by a not-for-profit organisation. Social housing is an overarching term that covers both public housing and community housing.
Special character	As used in this Strategy, areas that have a unique and valued character that is differentiated from surrounding neighbourhoods. This may include an intact, prevailing architectural style from a certain decade or a distinct landscaped setting.
Substantial housing change	As used in the Victorian Planning System, this describes areas where development will occur at a substantially different scale and intensity compared to other areas of a given municipality.
State significant industrial precinct/land	Strategically located land available for major industrial development linked to the Principal Freight Network and transport gateways.
Universal design	Design that is accessible to all people, no matter their age or ability.
Value uplift	The uplift in future economic and social value created by the construction of significant infrastructure or rezoning land. Value uplift is often referred to in the context of capturing some of the value to deliver broader public benefits.
'Your Say' website	A website run by a Council or State government that allows residents to give input into proposed plans, strategies and initiatives.

Introduction

The Draft Brimbank Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategy (the Strategy) is a long-term plan to manage housing growth and change across the municipality. By 2041, Brimbank's population is projected grow by 33,964 people, and it is estimated that the municipality will need an additional 14,000 dwellings to meet its forecasted need. Brimbank has more than enough theoretical capacity to meet this need. This Strategy seeks to direct the right type of growth to the right locations and to provide housing that supports and enhances neighbourhood character, diversity, amenity and sustainability.

Introduction

Brimbank is set to transform over the coming decades. Brimbank's population is increasing, getting older and becoming more diverse. As such, Brimbank will see not only a greater demand for housing, but a demand for different types of housing to suit a wide range of residents.

The Strategy has been prepared to:

- Support **growth** and enhance liveability.
- Respect and celebrate neighbourhood **character** and facilitate high quality new development that contributes positively to the public realm.
- Enhance housing **diversity** to meet changing community needs and respond to an urgent need for more affordable housing.
- Manage potential **amenity** conflicts between residential and other incompatible land uses.
- Improve the **sustainability** and climate resilience of new housing development.

Brimbank is also the focus of substantial government and private industry investment and urban renewal. This will encourage new residents and workers to move to Brimbank and will catalyse new development opportunities.

These opportunities are primarily located in the Sunshine Priority Precinct, which includes the Sunshine MeAC and Albion Quarter, and also within the Sydenham/Watergardens MAC. Growth and change within these centres will be significant and will provide excellent opportunities for large-scale housing growth, transit-oriented development and high quality mixed-use urban renewal.

Planning for growth within the Sunshine MeAC, Albion Quarter, Sydenham/Watergardens and the St Albans MAC does not form part of this Strategy, as growth within these areas is either already guided by separate, tailored planning frameworks, or these areas are actively being planned as part of separate strategic planning processes. Land within the Mixed Use Zone (MUZ) will also be looked at separately.

Brimbank's established residential neighbourhoods are the focus of this Strategy. Controls and policies affecting these areas will have a significant impact on the quantity and quality of future housing growth.

Overview

The Strategy is an integrated plan for housing and neighbourhood character. It sets out how Brimbank can meet housing need over the next 20 years and serves as a framework to provide a broad mix of housing in the most suitable locations. It details what is driving and influencing housing change in Brimbank, provides a long-term vision and outlines strategic directions and recommended actions.

Brimbank has the capacity to meet its housing demand the coming years. The Strategy provides direction to ensure that the type and location of new housing will meet residents' needs. It will be used as the basis for introducing changes into the Brimbank Planning Scheme to implement its vision and directions.

Context

Provides an overview of policy, demographic trends and housing supply factors that will drive housing change in Brimbank in the coming years. Identifies the primary opportunities and constraints on housing growth and change and key influences on neighbourhood character.

Vision and themes

Presents a long-term vision for housing and neighbourhood character in Brimbank and outlines strategic directions organised around five themes.

Growth

Directs housing growth to appropriate locations to accommodate identified housing need. The Residential Development Framework (RDF) contained within this section identifies areas of substantial, increased, incremental, and minimal change and determines the appropriate residential zones to implement these growth directions.

Character

Describes the preferred future character of Brimbank's residential areas in the context of proposed growth and change and identifies residential zone schedules to implement these character objectives.

Diversity

Sets out objectives and actions to ensure new housing growth meets the needs of the population, including high-level directions to support housing affordability.

Amenity

Outlines how residential zones and schedules are proposed to be used to direct housing growth away from major sources of amenity conflict, including major hazard facilities (MHFs), industrial areas and where airport noise is a constraint.

Sustainability

Proposes objectives and actions to improve the sustainability of Brimbank's new housing by enhancing canopy tree coverage, improving quality of design and materials, and being more strategic about car parking requirements.

Implementation

Consolidates all actions contained within each of the Strategy's sections. Implementation will primarily be achieved through residential zone changes and supported by policy changes and a range of other actions.

Appendices

Provide greater detail on how growth settings have been determined and on the existing and preferred character across all of Brimbank's neighbourhoods.

The Strategy builds upon a previous 2019 Draft Neighbourhood Character Study, while taking into consideration changes to State planning policy. It has relied on background work, including the following analysis and technical inputs:

Brimbank Housing Strategy Background Analysis (Urban Enterprise, 2022)

Brings together and analyses demographic and development information, including forecast population growth and current and projected housing supply and demand. In this Strategy, this report is referred to as the Urban Enterprise Background Analysis.

Draft Brimbank Housing and Neighbourhood Character Background Report (Mesh, 2022)

Outlines Brimbank's residential context, analyses housing opportunities and constraints, and presents emerging neighbourhood character precincts. In this Strategy, this report is referred to as the Mesh Draft Background Report.

Suburb Profiles (Mesh, 2022)

Detail key characteristics of each suburb in Brimbank and the main contributors and threats to their neighbourhood character. These are contained within the Appendices of the Mesh Draft Background Report.

In addition to the above, guidance has been provided by Echelon, Hodyl & Co and Six Degrees Architects in relation to development outcomes in proposed Residential Growth Zone (RGZ) areas.
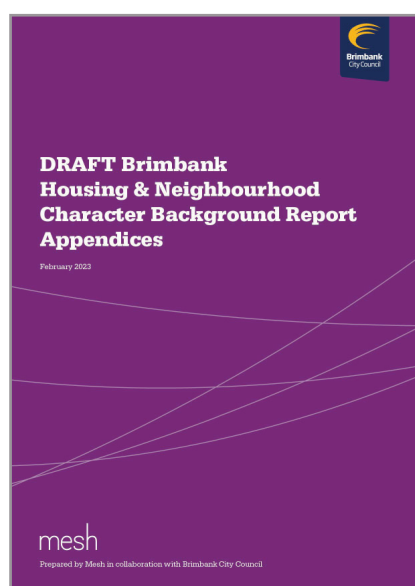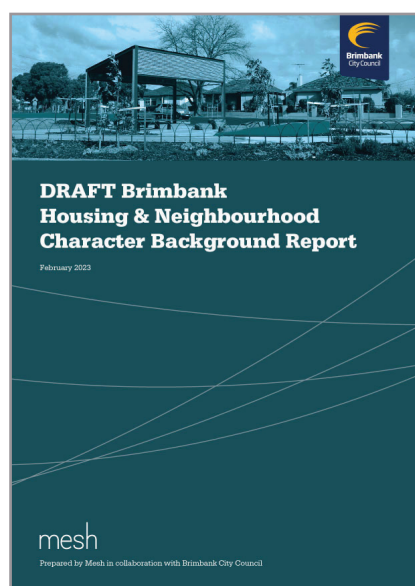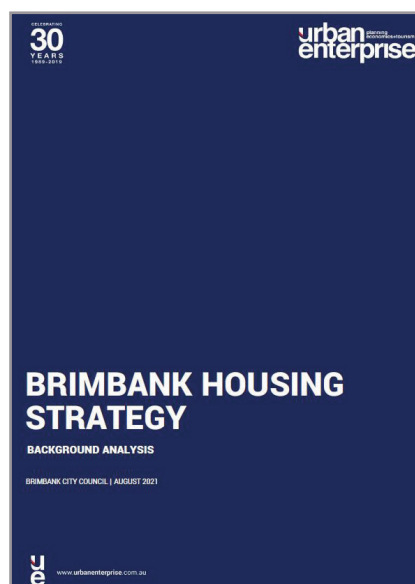
Strategy Preparation + Scope

The Strategy is being prepared in four key phases:

Strategy process

Phase 1 Project Planning	Phase 2 Research + Analysis	Phase 3 Strategy Preparation (current phase)	Phase 4 Finalisation + Implementation
INITIAL PROJECT SETUP ⊕ REVIEW OF PREVIOUSLY PREPARED URBAN ENTERPRISE BACKGROUND ANALYSIS	PRELIMINARY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT VIA 'YOUR SAY' WEBSITE **MESH DRAFT BACKGROUND REPORT PREPARATION**	TARGETED ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS ⊕ COMMUNITY VOICE PANEL ⊕ UPDATES TO COMMUNITY VIA 'YOUR SAY' WEBSITE **DRAFT STRATEGY PREPARATION** BROAD COMMUNITY CONSULTATION (SUBJECT TO COUNCIL ENDORSEMENT)	**FINALISATION OF STRATEGY** **PREPARATION OF PLANNING SCHEME AMENDMENT DOCUMENTS** STATUTORY EXHIBITION OF PLANNING SCHEME AMENDMENT

FIGURE 1. STRATEGY PROCESS

The focus of this project is residentially zoned land, excluding zones for mixed uses, other specialised development areas, the area surrounding St Albans MAC that is part of the St Albans Activity Centre Structure Plan[1] and the River Valley Estate, which is currently under development and subject to an existing planning framework.[2]

This project has also had regard for parts of the municipality that will accommodate substantial housing growth (e.g., the Sunshine Priority Precinct and Watergardens Major Activity Centre), in terms of the likely effects on development and population growth. State plans for the development of Sunshine and associated public infrastructure upgrades have been taken into consideration in assessing the suitability of different building heights for nearby residential areas.

While MUZ areas are not a focus of this Strategy, the Mesh Draft Background Report provided a 'stocktake' of these sites, and the 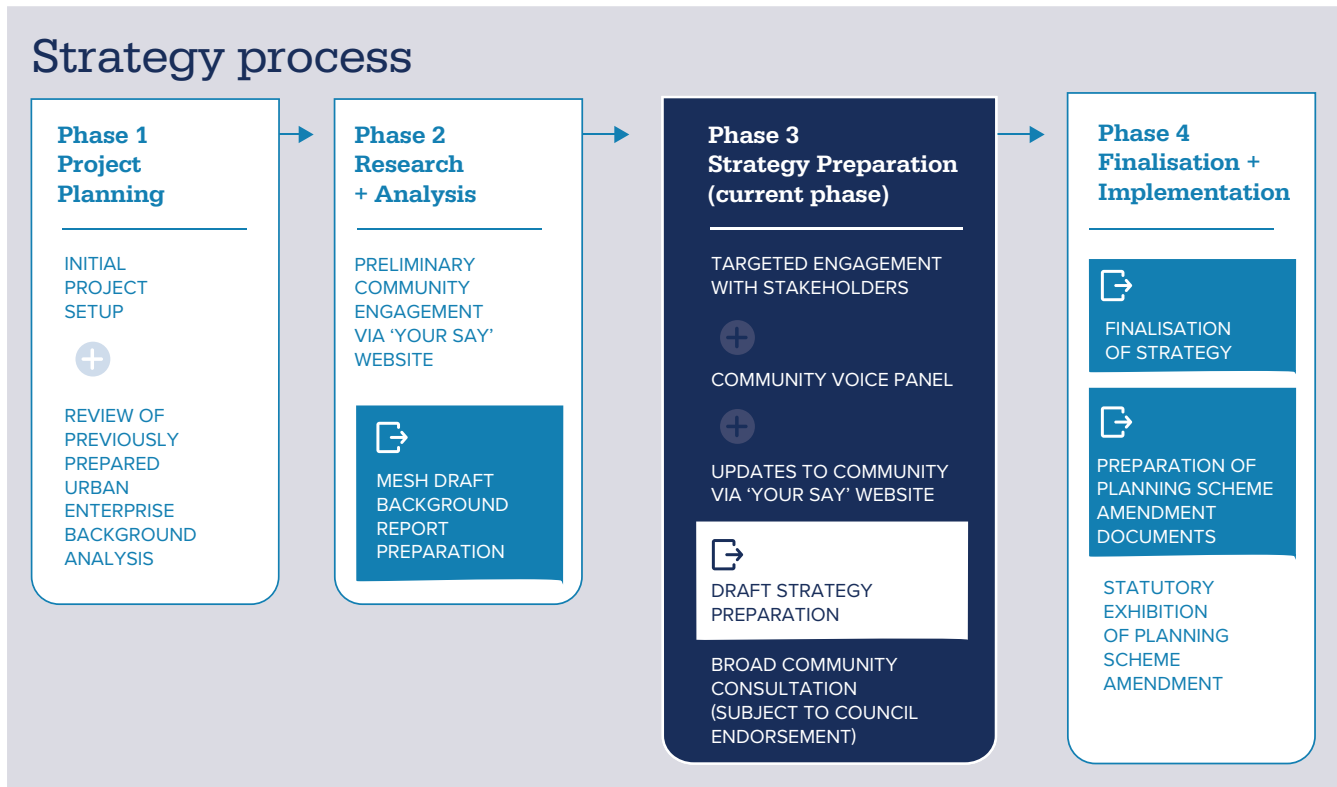Strategy (refer to the 'Growth' theme) recommends investigation of a comprehensive strategy for MUZ zones across Brimbank.

Considered as part of background analysis

MUZ – Mixed Use Zone

ACZ – Activity Centre Zone

CDZ – Comprehensive Development Zone

Land within the St Albans Activity Centre Structure Plan and the River Valley Estate (which are subject to existing planning frameworks).

Focus areas

RGZ – Residential Growth Zone

GRZ – General Residential Zone

NRZ – Neighbourhood Residential Zone

[1] This project analysed the St Albans Activity Centre area and recommended zoning to facilitate the vision for St Albans to 'develop into a high quality, people-focused activity area, with a defined sense of place, maintaining the 'feel' of a local community hub'. The recommended zoning was subsequently adopted into the Brimbank Planning Scheme.

[2] The exisitng zones and schedules that apply to the River Valley Estate are not proposed to be amended as part of this Strategy.

Engagement

The draft Strategy has been shaped by community input at key stages.

These have included:

- Consultation on the Draft Neighbourhood Character Study 2019 (July – August 2019).
- Preliminary engagement on Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategies via 'Your Say' (October – November 2022).
- Community Voice engagement on the themes and vision of the Draft Housing and Neighbourhood Character Strategies (July 2023).

Key ideas that emerged from engagement activities are summarised under 'Vision + Themes'. The following provides a summary of the key feedback:

Embracing diversity with quality: Community feedback has generally indicated that residents are open to increased housing diversity and welcome change in their neighbourhoods. However, there was a desire that new development to be high quality.

Inclusive housing: Residents expressed a desire for housing that caters to the needs of all members of the community, including older residents and those with various abilities.

Proximity to infrastructure and amenities: There was broad support for housing growth and diverse housing types to be located near existing infrastructure and amenities. Participants expressed a preference for housing to be located away from industrial areas.

Architectural diversity: There was an appreciation of a mixture of architectural styles and housing types in Brimbank's neighbourhoods. There was a sense that this architectural diversity adds to the overall character and vibrancy of a neighbourhood.

Green spaces and landscaping: Trees, landscaping and green spaces were highly valued by residents, and a stronger treed character was repeatedly raised as an aspiration.

Quality concerns: There were concerns raised about the quality of new housing developments, including the durability of materials and implications for ongoing maintenance.

Housing types in high-growth areas: In high-growth areas,[3] such as in and around activity centres and public transport, residents were generally open to a range of housing types, including townhouses, mixed-use developments and apartments up to four storeys. There was a preference against taller apartment buildings of 10-15 storeys.

Detached housing in low-growth areas: When asked about low-growth areas, residents tended to prefer detached housing with large backyards that cater specifically to families.

Diverse housing in medium-growth areas: When asked about medium-growth areas, residents tended to prefer a mix of family homes and diverse housing. pes. This generally reflects a desire for variety and inclusivity within new and existing neighbourhoods.

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[3] 'High-growth areas', 'medium-growth areas' and 'low-growth areas' were not defined for the engagement participants; rather, participants were asked to consider these however they envisioned them.

Methodology

This Strategy has been prepared in accordance with Planning Practice Notes (PPNs) 90 *(Planning for housing)*, 91 *(Using the residential zones)* and 43 *(Understanding neighbourhood character)* prepared by the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP). These PPNs collectively provide technical guidance about how to plan for and balance housing growth and neighbourhood character, and how to implement growth and character objectives through residential zones.

The methodology employed to produce the Strategy incorporated a range of inputs and used a balancing framework called the Residential Development Framework (RDF) to balance housing and neighbourhood character objectives and to identify preferred development outcomes, through designating minimal, incremental, increased and substantial housing change areas. The RDF is proposed to be implemented using zones and schedules to facilitate appropriate development. A more detailed breakdown of the methodology is provided in Figure 2.

Methodology for Strategy

Inputs

HOUSING SUPPLY + NEEDS

OPPORTUNITIES + CONSTRAINTS

EXISTING NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER

Balancing Framework

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

PREFERRED CHARACTER PRECINCTS

Implementation
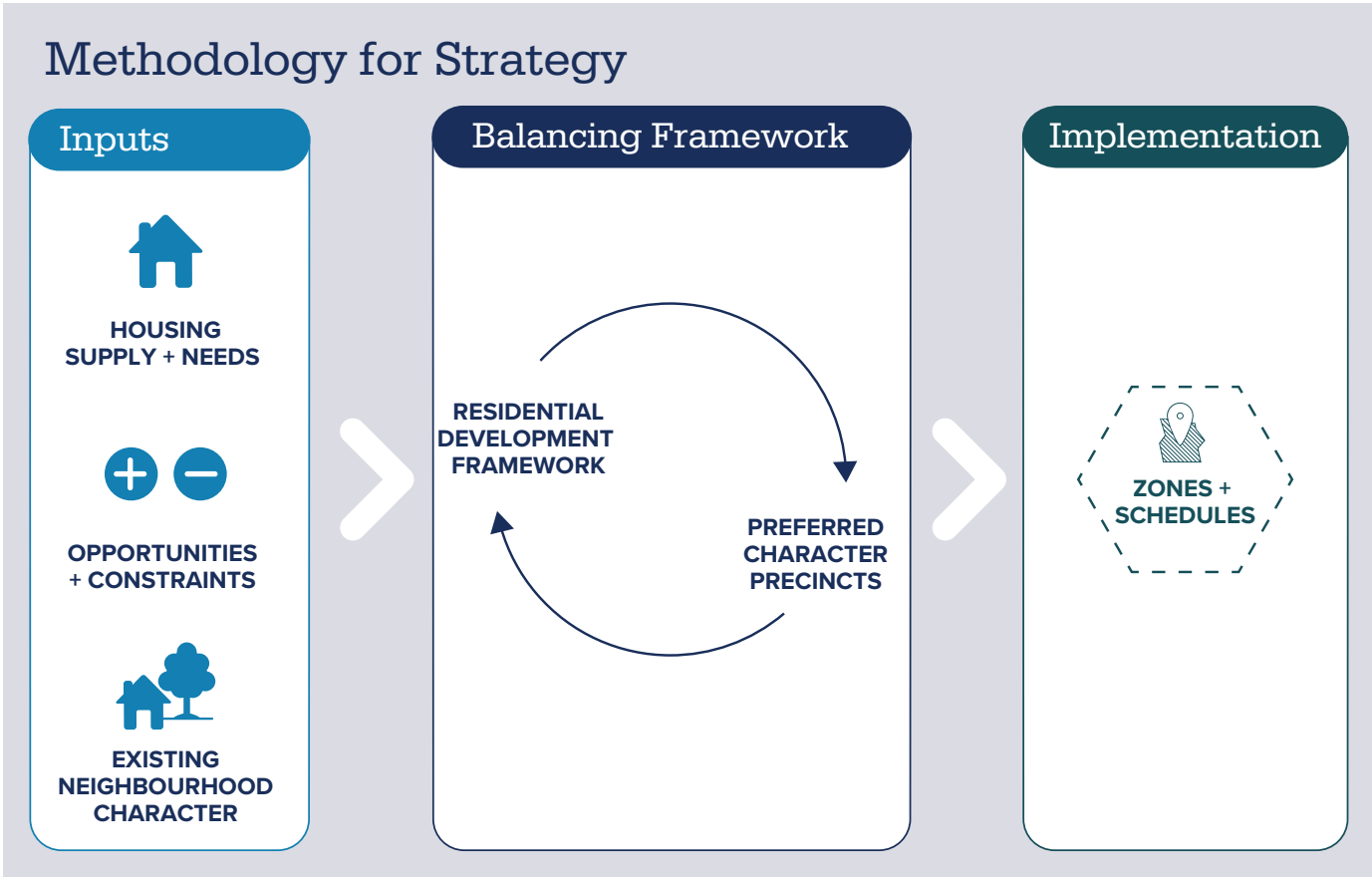
ZONES + SCHEDULES

FIGURE 2. METHODOLOGY FOR STRATEGY - BALANCING HOUSING AND CHARACTER

Inputs

HOUSING SUPPLY + NEEDS

Data about housing supply and needs informed the change area designations of the RDF and the ensuing strategic directions of the Strategy. According to the Urban Enterprise Background Analysis,[4] Brimbank has more than enough supply under the current zoning framework to meet housing needs. However, greater direction is required to ensure housing growth is appropriately directed and that the types of new housing provided meets an ageing and diversifying population. Housing supply and needs are described in detail in the Urban Enterprise Background Analysis and summarised in the Context section under **Drivers of Housing Change.**

OPPORTUNITIES + CONSTRAINTS

Opportunities and constraints to housing growth were identified and then spatially analysed to understand what levels of change would be appropriate for each area. This process recognised that some opportunities and constraints have greater weight than others. Opportunities and constraints are described in detail in the Mesh Draft Background Report and summarised in the Context section under **Opportunities** and **Constraints**.

EXISTING NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER

Existing neighbourhood character was identified and taken into account when making decisions about levels of change and preferred neighbourhood character. Neighbourhoods were grouped into precincts with similar characteristics, derived from detailed desktop analysis and site visits described in the Mesh Draft Background Report. The Character Precincts were further reviewed and refined through preparation of the Strategy. They are summarised in **Appendix 2.**

Balancing Framework

RDF – Change areas were identified, having regard to the above inputs and PPNs 90 and 91. Change areas were categorised as either substantial, increased, incremental or minimal. The resulting RDF can be seen in the **Growth** section. **Appendix 1** provides a summary of opportunities, constraints and neighbourhood character considerations that informed decision making on substantial and increased change areas.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

PREFERRED CHARACTER PRECINCTS
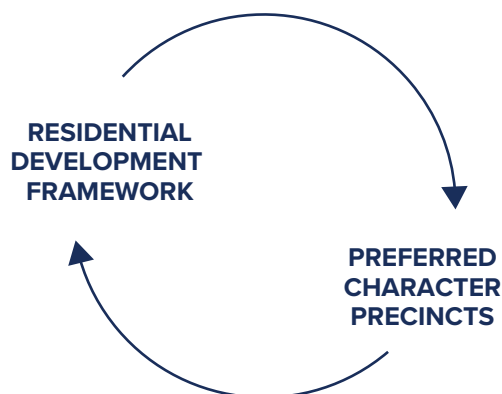
Preferred Character Precincts describe what an area will look and feel like as it grows and changes (as guided by the RDF). The Strategy seeks to guide and shape change in a way that positively contributes to character of the public and the private realms, while also facilitating appropriate development in suitable locations. This is outlined under **Character**, and more detail is provided in **Appendix 2**.

Implementation

The RDF will form the basis for the statutory tools used to manage and facilitate development, primarily through zones and zone schedules.[5] The proposed zones and schedules are outlined in the **Implementation** section, with supporting detail under **Growth** and **Character**.

ZONES + SCHEDULES

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[4] Urban Enterprise, *Housing Strategy: Background Analysis,* 2021 (updated 2022).
[5] Within the current planning system structure, planning controls within zones and overlays, rather than policy statements, are the most effective way to implement neighbourhood character objectives. This is the approach that is adopted in this Strategy.

The process of developing the RDF and the Strategy took place according to the following steps:

1. **Background Analysis** - The Draft Housing and Neighbourhood Character Background Report was undertaken to detail housing supply and needs and describe existing neighbourhood character. This report also identified and mapped a set of opportunities and constraints for housing growth in Brimbank.

2. **Draft RDF** - A Draft RDF was prepared, informed by the identification of opportunities and threats from the Draft Background Report and discussion between Mesh and Council about the relative importance of major vs. minor opportunities and threats. This provided a framework for refinement of opportunities, constraints, potential changes areas and precincts.

3. **Neighbourhood Character Directions** - General ideas of potential change areas (minimal, incremental and substantial), were used to target on-site verification of existing neighbourhood character (as defined in the Background Report), and as a basis for workshopping to determine proposed preferred neighbourhood character. This step included refinement of the Draft RDF (change area boundaries and proposed schedule precincts).

4. **Housing Strategy Directions** -The Draft RDF was used as the basis to assess theoretical yields and capacity from the proposed changes areas. Housing Strategy Directions were developed to give more detail to the housing themes of Diversity, Amenity and Sustainability. These were then workshopped with the Council Project Team before preparing the Strategy documents.

5. **Neighbourhood Character + Housing Strategy Document Preparation** - The above steps resulted in a refined RDF and Housing + Neighbourhood Character Strategy Directions for each theme. Once these were generally agreed with the Project Team, Mesh drafted the text of the Strategies (originally two separate Strategies) and prepared updated mapping. This step also involved lot coverage and lot frontage analysis for each Character Precinct.

6. **Community Voice Consultation** - A selection of residents from the Brimbank Community Voice consultation group provided feedback on the themes of the strategies and voiced their desires for housing growth in Brimbank. This was used to shape the Vision of the Strategy.

7. **Final Draft Strategy** - The Council Project Team Provided comments on the Draft Strategy, and a Final Draft Strategy was prepared by Mesh.

8. **Next Steps** - The draft Strategies will be taken to Stakeholder and Community Consultation (in accordance with engagement plan as determined by Council Project Team).

Through this process, the Strategy has sought to balance a range of strategic considerations in order to support and encourage new housing that meets the needs of Brimbank's growing community.

A number of other factors have also influenced the proposed zone and schedule boundaries:

- In accordance with PPN90, change is considered relevant to its context, and the existing built form context is the 'starting point' when planning for change. Most of Brimbank's residential areas are single storey. Therefore, in most instances of established, single-storey residential neighbourhoods, the Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ), with its maximum two-storey height limit, represents 'incremental change'. The 'incremental change' NRZ was considered to be the most appropriate zone to achieve housing growth and neighbourhood character objectives in the absence of an identified 'opportunity' to support higher change or 'constraint' that required minimal change.

- Both sides of the street were placed within the same zone wherever possible.

- Where possible, properties in the NRZ and RGZ were configured so that they do not have a direct interface. They have been separated by a road, lane or a General Residential Zone (GRZ) transition area. However, in some instances this separation was not appropriate. For example, in Sunshine, heritage constrains growth on certain properties (requiring an NRZ) in areas that are otherwise suitable for substantial change (RGZ). Other provisions in the zones (such as the zone purpose and decision guidelines) will be relied upon to ensure that appropriate consideration is given to the design of interfaces between the RGZ and NRZ.

- Existing zoning was a consideration, but it was not a determining factor in making decisions about change areas or proposed zoning.

- The existing zoning of large sites used for other purposes (such as schools) has not been recommended to change as part of this Strategy. Rezoning may be considered in the future, but this is likely to require a masterplanning (or similar) process.

- Some areas affected by specific constraints, such as proximity to industrial land, will have additional overlays or controls.

Context

Brimbank is an established middle-ring municipality in western Melbourne with a population of 193,256 people.[6] It is experiencing steady population growth, and this is forecasted to continue over the next decade. It is one of the most culturally diverse municipalities in Australia[7] and the 2nd most socio-economically disadvantaged local government area in metropolitan Melbourne.[8]

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[6] .idcommunity, *City of Brimbank*, .idcommunity website, 2022.
[7] Brimbank City Council, *Brimbank Community Profile* 2023, 2023.
[8] Urban Enterprise, *Housing Strategy: Background Analysis*, 2021 (updated 2022).

Brimbank Context

The municipality comprises a mix of established residential neighbourhoods, large-scale employment and industrial areas (including State significant industrial land), and a network of activity centres, including the Sunshine MeAC, St Albans MAC, Sydenham/Watergardens MAC, Deer Park MAC and Brimbank Central MAC. Residential development has tended to be low-scale, with development outside of activity centres generally 1–2 storeys and some instances of three-storey development.

There is very little vacant residential land in Brimbank, meaning the majority of new housing development will be achieved through renewal and replacement of existing housing stock with medium and higher density[9] infill development.

Brimbank is served by an extensive road network and two major train lines, yet many of its residential areas remain poorly served by public transport and are car dependent.

POPULATION + AGE

194,618
estimated resident population in 2021.

Median age of 37 in 2021 (comparable to metropolitan Melbourne).

Ageing population

HOUSEHOLD SIZE + TYPE

71,810
total dwellings in 2021.

Average household size of 2.9 per dwelling (larger than Melbourne average).

80% separate houses

82% of dwellings have 3 or more bedrooms

CULTURAL + LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

194,618
Attractive location for overseas migrants (particularly form Asia), resulting in a diverse community.

Vietnamese, Australian, and English were the top ancestries in 2021.

EDUCATION + EMPLOYMENT

$1,506
average weekly household income.

(notably less than metro Melbourne average of $1,901).

11% unemployment rate

(considerably higher than metro Melbourne average of 7%).

Second most disadvantaged municipality in metropolitan Melbourne (930 Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas [SEIFA] Score).

HOUSING TENURE AFFORDABILITY

Fairly even split of housing tenures

full ownership **31%**

ownership with mortgage **31%**

renting **26%**

More affordable housing than neighbouring inner metro municipalities. Median rent $380 per week (slightly lower than Melbourne average).

Affordability decreasing

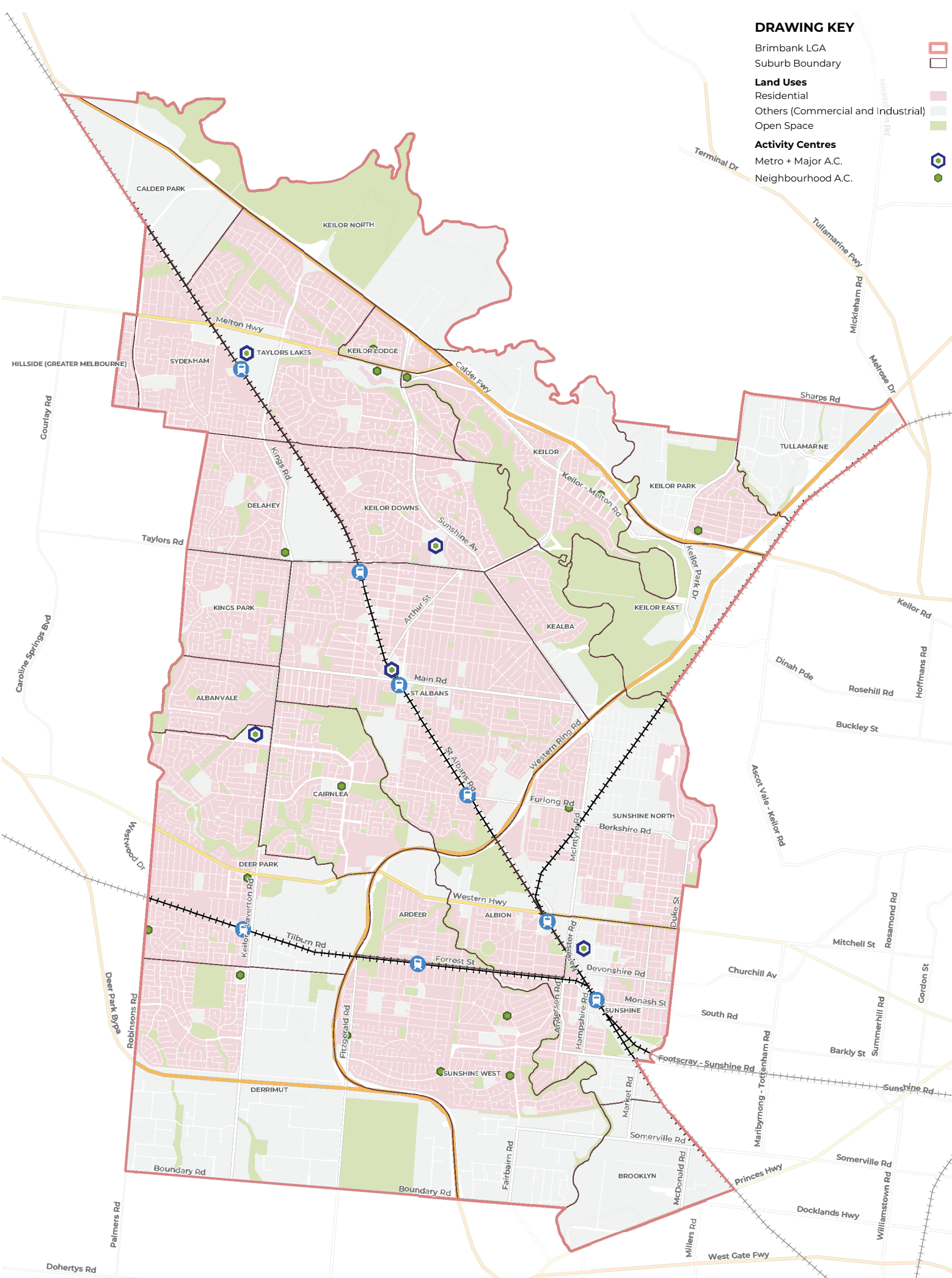[9] As compared to exisitng densities currently delivered across Brimbank.

FIGURE 3. STUDY AREA

Policy Context

State policy within the Planning Policy Framework (PPF) of the Brimbank Planning Scheme directs Council, as planning authority, to plan for housing that:

- Is well located to infrastructure and services (Clause 11.01-1S).
- Delivers affordable and specialised[10] supply (Clause 16.01-1S, Clause 16.01-4S and 16.01-5S).
- Facilitates growth around major precincts and activity centres (e.g., the Sunshine MeAC), in accordance with *Plan Melbourne* (Clause 11.01-1R).

Planning authorities are required to ensure there is at least a 15-year supply of land (Clause 11.02-1S) to accommodate projected population growth. Brimbank already has sufficient supply, but State policy requires a review of zoning to consolidate existing urban areas and ensure development contributes positively to preferred neighbourhood character (Clause 15.01-5S) and responds to any constraints on development, including heritage (Clause 15.03) and land use incompatibility (Clause 13.07-1S). In Brimbank, land use compatibility issues include proximity of new housing to major industry, MHFs (Clause 1307-2S) and the Melbourne Airport (Clause 18-02-7R).

Brimbank's current planning scheme[11] includes a range of local policies that provide greater detail regarding State policy. The Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) identifies an increasing demand for housing, to meet the needs of an ageing population and to accommodate smaller household sizes (Clause 21.02). This housing, as envisaged by the strategic land use vision (Clause 21.04) and the PPF, is to be in the form of well-designed, high quality, sustainable development (Clause 21.07-3, 22.02) that contributes to the desired neighbourhood character and respects heritage and landform (Clauses 21.07-3, 21.06-1, 21.06-3). Increased residential densities are to be in and around activity centres that are serviced by the principal public transport network (21.08-1).

Many of these policies, as well as the current zoning framework, were implemented as part of Brimbank's previous Housing Strategy, *Home and Housed* (2014). They are being reviewed as part of this Strategy.

Key areas of focus relate to:

- Encouraging denser and more diverse housing typologies in preferred areas around the Sunshine MeAC, MACs and transport, in accordance with State policy directions, particularly where planned State government investment is expected to lead to residential growth and improve the commercial viability of higher density housing forms.
- Supporting more incremental infill development of single dwellings, townhouses and units in other neighbourhoods.
- Strengthening guidance around how development should respond to neighbourhood character (currently there is limited guidance).[12]
- Ensuring zones and schedules are designed to achieve their full growth potential (analysis in the Mesh Draft Background Report demonstrates that similar development outcomes are being delivered across broad areas of Brimbank, regardless of zone).

Further detail on policy is provided in the **Mesh Draft Background Report.**

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[10] Such as community care accommodation and residential aged care

[11] For the purpose of this section, we have referred to the existing planning scheme format (the LPPF). In the Implementation section, reference is made to the proposed new Planning Scheme format (the PPF), as it is expected that this will be gazetted by the time this Strategy is implemented.

[12] As noted in VCAT decisions—see the VCAT analysis section of the Mesh Draft Background Report for more detail.

Drivers of Housing Change

In the context of this Strategy, housing change refers to a change in the amount and/or type of housing provided within the municipality.

There are range of factors that are driving housing change in Brimbank, including:

- State planning directions for housing.
- A growing and changing population profile.
- A requirement to align housing supply with needs and market expectations.
- Declining affordability.
- Investments in infrastructure and precincts.
- Expectations for enhanced character and sustainability.

Each of these are discussed in turn.

**State planning directions for housing**

Changes to metropolitan population projections,[13] which see Melbourne reaching 8.4 million by 2050, have focussed State government policy (including *Plan Melbourne*[14]) on accommodating more housing within established areas like Brimbank. This, and other factors, have driven a change in State direction on how housing and neighbourhood character policy should be developed and how residential zones are to be used and implemented.

Changes to State policy direction contained within *Plan Melbourne*, including those relating to major transport infrastructure investment, the Sunshine Precinct, and the 20-minute neighbourhood framework (see call out box), will affect how Brimbank plans for housing. There is now an increased emphasis on achieving 70% of new housing development in established suburbs,[15] meaning that more infill development will need to occur in Brimbank, particularly in areas rich in transport, social and other infrastructure. *Plan Melbourne* is currently being reviewed and refreshed to be a plan for all of Victoria.

20-minute neighbourhoods

A 20-minute neighbourhood is one in which residents can access most of their daily needs (via shops, services, parks, healthcare facilities, etc.) within a 20-minute return walk from home. The idea of the 20-minute neighbourhood is to support local communities and business with viable densities and to give people the option to walk or cycle for transport.

Plan Melbourne contains direction to '*Create a city of 20-minute neighbourhoods*'. Melbourne is to become a city of connected 20-minute neighbourhoods, with connections between neighborhoods and the central city.

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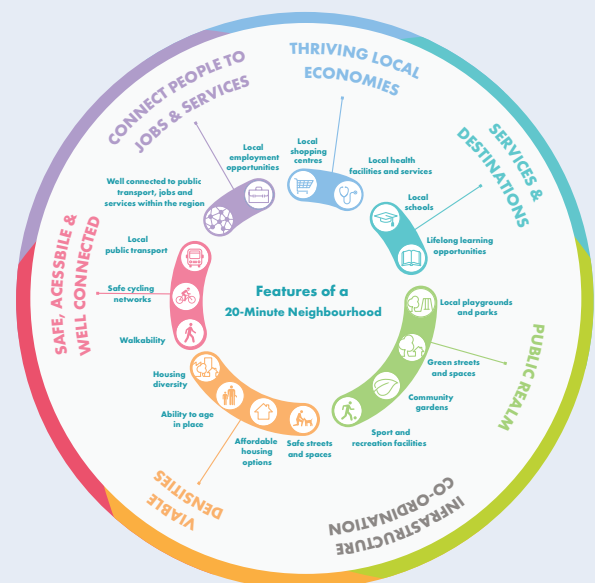
[13] Victorian Government, Victoria in Future, 2019.

[14] *Plan Melbourne* was originally released in 2017, and an addendum was released in 2019 following updated population projections. *Plan Melbourne* is currently being reviewed in accordance with the 5-year review schedule.

[15] Victoria State Government, *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*, 2017.

A growing and changing population

Brimbank's population is growing and ageing, and its household size is declining. This combination of factors will drive Brimbank's housing need over the next 20 years. The population is anticipated to grow by almost 34,000 people to 2041 creating a demand for almost 14,000 dwellings.[16]

While families are still predicted to generate the greatest housing demand in the future, the demand from couples (including downsizers), singles, and groups is forecast to proportionally increase (Figure 5). Members of the community, at different stages in their lives, will have demands for different forms of housing. This Strategy must anticipate those needs, whilst also accommodating a greater population.

Population projections and housing needs

PROJECTIONS [17]

33,964	**ADDITIONAL POPULATION (2021 TO 2024)**
1,698	**ANNUAL INCREASE (AVERAGE)**
13,771	**ADDITIONAL DWELLINGS NEEDED (2021 TO 2041)**
689	**ANNUAL INCREASE (AVERAGE)**
2.4	**AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE**
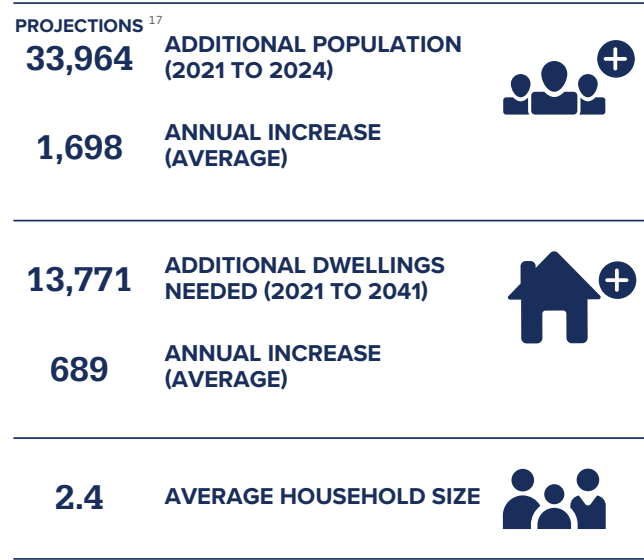
FIGURE 4. POPULATION PROJECTIONS AND HOUSING NEEDS

Change in Brimbank's household composition over the next 20 years

FAMILIES: 56.5% (2021), 53.8% (2041)
COUPLES: 21.6% (2021), 22.2% (2041)
SINGLES: 18.4% (2021), 20.4% (2041)
GROUPS: 3.4% (2021), 3.5% (2041)

■ **2021 %**   ■ **2041 %**
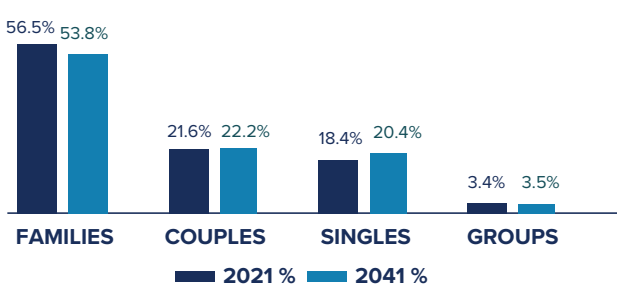
FIGURE 5. CHANGE IN BRIMBANK'S HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION OVER THE NEXT 20 YEARS (SOURCE: URBAN ENTERPRISE, 2022)

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[16] Urban Enterprise, *Housing Strategy: Background Analysis, 2021* (updated 2022).
[17] Populations and dwelling projections are based on Forecast .id scenarios, rather than VIF, given they take into consideration the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the temporary closure of Australia's international borders.

Aligning housing supply with needs and market expectations

According to analysis undertaken by Urban Enterprise,[18] under its current residential zoning Brimbank has a sufficient supply of zoned land available for housing redevelopment to accommodate its projected population growth (capacity for more than 63,000 homes). The Sunshine MeAC alone is theoretically capable of accommodating all projected population growth. However, significant housing growth in the Sunshine MeAC is a long-term proposition that will take time to come to market. It will also likely comprise apartment-style development, and will therefore be unlikely to meet the needs of all sectors of the community.

Housing in other neighbourhoods will be infill development—development of vacant or under-utilised land in within an area that is already largely developed. This infill development will depend on the willingness, expertise and financial capacity of landowners to sell or develop, and it will also take time.

This Strategy will aid Brimbank in aligning housing supply with the needs of the market by introducing strategic directions and actions to support a diverse range of housing growth across well-located areas. This will enable Council to make the most efficient use of existing infrastructure, to provide a higher degree of liveability, and to ensure that housing types and forms match need.

Brimbank's current housing supply is very homogenous. Most dwellings are separate houses (80%), and the Brimbank housing market remains driven by demand for detached housing,[19] particularly for families. As an established municipality, Brimbank has no further greenfield land to support substantial supply of single detached housing.

Townhouses are a secondary option for many in Brimbank. This housing form is particularly attractive to first home buyers and downsizers. Apartments and other denser and more diverse forms of housing are in lesser demand at present, and their delivery is limited due to a combination of market preferences and development forces.

Different household types have propensities to live in certain dwelling types (see 'Housing Propensity' call-out box). However, *Victoria's Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051*[20] notes that many people may make different housing choices when presented with other benefits, such as access to transport, employment, services and/or recreation. Given constraints on the supply of the preferred form of housing in Brimbank (separate/detached), this Strategy seeks to provide alternative options that meet the changing needs and expectations of the community and that support the market to deliver this supply (refer to **Growth**).

Dwelling Structure 2021

80%
SEPERATE HOUSE

14%
SEMI-DETATCHED, TOWNHOUSE ETC

5%
APARTMENT OR FLAT

<1%
OTHER DWELLING
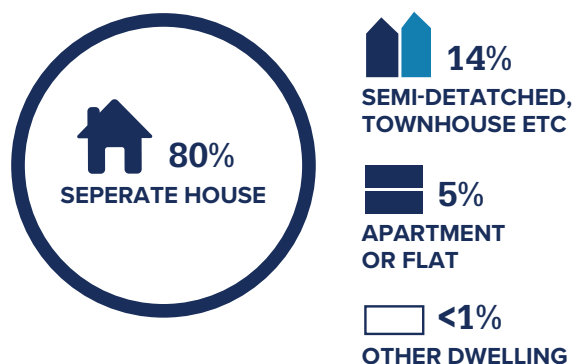
FIGURE 6. DWELLING STRUCTURE IN BRIMBANK
(SOURCE: URBAN ENTERPRISE, 2022)

Housing Propensity

- Families, one parent families and adult couples have the greatest propensity to live in separate houses.

- Group households, single person and adult couples have the greatest propensity to live in townhouses.

- Group and single person households have the greatest propensity to live in flats and apartments.

SOURCE: URBAN ENTERPRISE, 2022

[18] Urban Enterprise, *Background Housing Strategy: Background Analysis, 2021* (updated 2022)
[19] Urban Enterprise, *Background Housing Strategy: Background Analysis,* 2021 (updated 2022).
[20] Infrastructure Victoria, *Victoria's Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051,* 2021.

Declining affordability

Brimbank has one of the most socio-economically disadvantaged populations in metropolitan Melbourne, with increasing instances of people experiencing housing stress and homelessness.[21] As of 2021, Brimbank had the second highest instance of people experiencing homelessness in the Melbourne's west, after Maribyrnong.[22]

Brimbank's housing, like many areas, is becoming less affordable, and people on lower and middle incomes are expected to experience increasing affordability challenges when seeking to purchase a home in Brimbank.

In 2016, approximately 6,478 households in Brimbank needed affordable housing. This equated to more than 9 per cent of all dwellings. As Brimbank only had 2,091 dedicated affordable housing dwellings (all provided as social housing), there was an estimated gap of approximately 4,387 affordable housing dwellings in Brimbank.[23]

Well-located, affordable rental and social housing is an urgent need, and increasing supply is critical to supporting the social and economic well-being of communities in Brimbank (refer to **Diversity**).

Investment in infrastructure and precincts

Significant investment in infrastructure and precinct planning will provide health, well-being, employment, and housing growth opportunities to Brimbank and will be a catalyst for further housing growth and change.

A third of the municipality has been designated a National Employment and Innovation Cluster (NEIC) for employment, innovation and health-related uses. Within the NEIC, Sunshine and surrounds have been designated a priority precinct for urban renewal (one of only a handful across Metropolitan Melbourne). The Sunshine Priority Precinct includes the Sunshine MeAC and surrounding areas such as land around Albion Station, the Victoria University Sunshine and St Albans campuses, and the Sunshine and the Western Centres for Health Research and Education. This precinct can accommodate substantial housing growth (potentially 21,000 higher density homes), including social and affordable housing. It will also become a hub for health care, education and new business investment.

Planned nvestment in major transport infrastructure, including the Metro Tunnel, level crossing removals, regional train services, station upgrades and the airport rail[24] will further enhance the connectivity and activation of this cluster.

These investments will enhance the amenity of key activity centres in Brimbank by providing additional goods and services as well as housing and transport. It is likely that this will have flow on effects that will lead to increased demand for housing in residential areas nearby but not considered to be part of these centres.

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[21] Brimbank City Council, Brimbank Community Profile 2023, 2023.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Affordable Development Outcomes, Affordable Housing in the City of Brimbank: Detailed Needs Assessment, July 2020.
[24] Pending further State government decisions.

Expectations for enhanced character and sustainability

Increasing emphasis on climate resilience and sustainability has an impact on how we plan for housing. Experiences of flooding and bushfire in recent years and rising electricity prices have led to an increased awareness of the need for climate resilient communities and more sustainable housing. Insurers are also beginning to raise premiums for housing at a high risk of climate-related disasters,[25] drawing into question the continued viability of residing in some established areas.

Brimbank already has a suite of policies that address sustainability and climate change. Brimbank's *Greenhouse Reduction Strategy 2013-2023* seeks to introduce stronger environmentally sustainable development (ESD) requirements for new housing as part of its emissions reduction target. Brimbank's *Urban Forest Strategy 2016-2046* seeks to increase canopy tree cover across the municipality not only within the public realm, but also within private open space. For more information on this Strategy and a list of other strategies in Brimbank related to sustainability or the environment, refer to **Sustainability**.

As part of consultation for this Strategy and others, Brimbank's community has expressed a strong desire to enhance the character of its neighbourhoods through high quality new development and increased landscaping and tree planting (refer to **Character**). Both of these have the potential to impact the sustainability of housing and the climate resilience of neighbourhoods.

Summary of how the Strategy relates to drivers of housing change

The Strategy will address the issues of a growing and changing population, aligning housing supply with needs and market expectations and declining affordability through its recommended strategic actions, which include additional policy guidance and zone changes. These have been developed with regard to State planning directions and the likely timeline of infrastructure enhancements and development of the Sunshine Precinct. In relation to sustainability, it will address aspects of sustainability and climate resilience that planning for housing has the ability to influence. These are further explored under the themes of **Growth**, **Diversity** and **Sustainability**.

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[25] Climate Council, *Uninsurable Nation: Australia's Most Climate-Vulnerable Places*, 2022.

Opportunities

Opportunities for housing growth are concentrated around activity centres, public transport, accessible open space, higher-order community facilities, and where existing neighbourhoods are walkable and have access to high quality cycling and pedestrian infrastructure.

These areas are mostly located in the southern and central parts of the municipality, in particular within the walkable catchments of Sunshine MeAC and St Albans MAC. In alignment with State policy, walkable catchments have been defined as within 800m of a point of interest.[26]

This development of this Strategy considered opportunities in terms of major opportunities and minor opportunities (see Table 1).

Major opportunities were defined as areas with one or a combination of factors that could support substantial growth on their own. These are areas around activity centres and train stations that could support 20-minute neighbourhoods, with residents able to meet most of their daily needs within an 800m walk.

Minor opportunities were defined as areas with one or a combination of factors that do not warrant substantial change on their own, but that present opportunities for incremental change. These are relatively isolated or less accessible activity centres, areas with infrequent or less accessible public transportation, and areas near Neighbourhood Activity Centres (NACs) or significant Local Activity Centres (LACs). These opportunities enable a degree of local living, but residents are not able to meet all of their needs within 800m.

The supporting factors of walkable street networks and capacity for redevelopment were also factored into decision making about the potential to accommodate change.

In the course of developing this Strategy, some areas with minor opportunities were nominated for more substantial growth. This happened in cases where substantial growth was appropriate when considered in the context of preferred neighbourhood character and/or in areas where there was a desire to encourage increased density that could potentially support future improvements to services.

Constraints

Housing constraints are factors that limit the ability or suitability of residential land to accommodate future housing growth.

Constraints that limit or preclude housing growth include residential land in close proximity to State significant industrial land (some of which contain MHFs), where the Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay (MAEO) applies, adjacent to road and rail barriers, that contains a Heritage Overlay (HO), and—to a more limited extent—environmental constraints, including the Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO) (which affects only a very limited area in Brimbank) and the Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO).

Areas of 'special' neighbourhood character may also be considered a constraint, provided their degree of 'specialness' merits application of discrete planning controls to restrict or shape development. In Brimbank, it was considered that the observed special character could be managed through general planning tools, and as such,

special neighbourhood character has not been considered to be a major constraint on growth.

Major constraints are factors that prohibit or significantly impact development potential and are therefore unmanageable. Major constraints include the MAEO, the HO, land adjacent to State significant industrial land and land within identified buffers to MHFs and open landfills.

Minor constraints are factors that are manageable. While they may constrain some parts of the development process, there are often design responses to overcome them. Minor constraints include land affected by the EAO (associated with the former Sunshine Landfill, as introduced by Amendment c212brim), the SBO and areas of special character that warrant protection through planning controls.

See Table 2 for an explanation of major and minor constraints.

[26] Victoria State Govenment, *20-Minute Neighbourhoods: Creating a more liveable Melbourne,* 2019.
[27] A 'pedshed' is a term that describes the pedestrian catchment (i.e., reasonable walking distance, usually defined as 400-800m) of a location.
[28] Determined through GIS analysis and site visits.

Opportunity	Major or Minor	Reason
Within 800m pedshed[27] of highly accessible[28] MeACs and MACs.	Major	Residents can access shops and services to cover all of their daily needs within a 5–10-minute walk.
Within 800m pedshed of train stations.	Major	Residents can access public transport that meet their daily needs within a 5–10-minute walk.
Directly adjacent to a principal public transport network (PPTN) bus route.	Major	Residents can access public transport likely to meet their daily needs within a 5–10-minute walk.
Within 400m pedshed of less accessible MACs.	Minor	Residents live near shops and services to meet their daily needs, but it may be difficult or unpleasant to reach these via active transport.
Within 400m pedshed of NACs with significant activity.	Minor	Residents can access some shops and services, but these may not meet all their daily needs.
Within 400m pedshed of LACs with significant activity.	Minor	Residents can access some shops and services, but these may not meet all their daily needs.
With 400m pedshed of train stations that are less accessible and/or have less frequent services.	Minor	Residents can access public transport within a 5–10-minute walk, but the transport may not meet their needs.
Within 400m of a bus route.	Minor	Residents can access public transport within a 5–10-minute walk, but the transport may not meet their needs.

Constraint	Major or Minor	Reason
State significant Industrial Land, MHFs and open landfills.	Major	Operations of nearby industrial uses may potentially have adverse amenity impacts (e.g., noise, odour) on residential amenity. Separation distances from to State significant industrial land, and buffers areas associated with MHFs in Deer Park (Elgas Limited and Hexion Pty Ltd) and an open landfill (Kealba) are considered major constraint to housing growth.
MAEO	Major	Areas affected by the MAEO are exposed to noise from flight paths. Development that results in an increase of people affected by aircraft noise is generally not possible and noise attenuation measures are required for new development.
HO	Major	The HO limits the ability to demolish homes and undertake certain types of redevelopment. Intensified development is often not possible, or difficult, in most HO areas.
LSIO	Major	The LSIO designates areas prone to flooding. Design interventions are likely not suitable or cost-effective in these areas. However, the LSIO affects a very limited amount of residential land in Brimbank.
EAO associated with the Former Sunshine Landfill and surrounds, introduced via Amendment C212brim	Major	The EAO associated with the former Sunshine landfill requires analysis to ensure the potentially contaminated land is suitable for sensitive uses. Depending on the outcomes of this analysis, sensitive uses, including housing, may be permitted.
Other EAO land	Minor	Other EAO land will need to have a further assessment of land on a case-by-case basis. Land use constraints may be able to be mitigated during development (subject to further assessment), and as such, are not considered a major constraint.
SBO	Minor	The SBO identifies land liable to inundation by overland flows from the urban drainage system. It requires an assessment of the potential effects of flooding on development, and vice versa, for proposed development.
Areas of special character	Minor	Areas of 'special' neighbourhood character are areas that were identified in the Mesh Draft Background Report to exhibit intact, consistent character-related qualities and include areas in Sunshine West, Albion and Keilor. Intensified development in these areas is considered undesirable (refer to **Character** for further detail).

TABLE 1. EXPLANATION OF MAJOR AND MINOR OPPORTUNITIES
TABLE 2. EXPLANATION OF MAJOR AND MINOR CONSTRAINTS

DRAWING KEY

Brimbank LGA
Suburb Boundary
Urban Growth Boundary

Land Uses
Residential
Others (Commercial and Industrial)
Open Space

Opportunities
Pedestrian Shed to Train Stations +
Metro/Major A.C. (800m)

Train Station

Activity Centres
Metro + Major A.C.

Neighbourhood A.C.

Constraints
State Significant Industrial Land + Open Landfill
Buffer to Major Hazard Facility (MHF) and Open Landfill
Areas of Special Character

Overlays
Environmental Audit Overlay (EAO) -
Associated with the closed Sunshine Landfills
Heritage Overlay (HO)
Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay (MAEO)

FIGURE 7. HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

Ongoing Work that Affects this Strategy

In addition to the above opportunities and constraints, this Strategy is being prepared in the context of ongoing strategic planning work at the State government level and anticipated announcements regarding housing. This will have an impact on planning for housing in the future. These are expected to include the Australian Noise Exposure Forecast (ANEF) 2022 contours associated with the Melbourne Airport Masterplan and the future planning for the Sunshine Precinct, specifically Albion Quarter. These areas are shown in Figure 8.
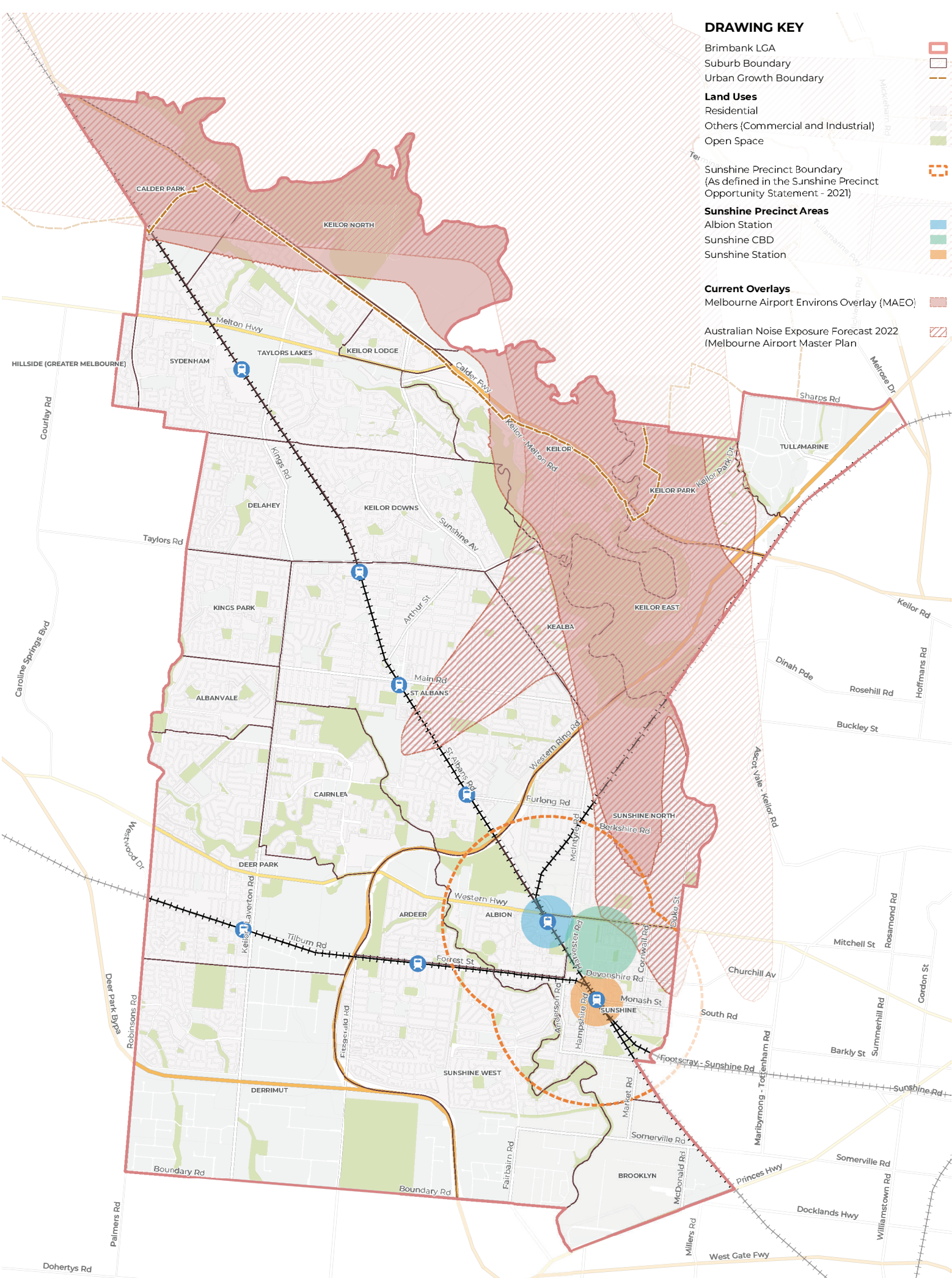
DRAWING KEY

Brimbank LGA

Suburb Boundary

Urban Growth Boundary

Land Uses
Residential
Others (Commercial and Industrial)
Open Space

Sunshine Precinct Boundary
(As defined in the Sunshine Precinct
Opportunity Statement - 2021)

Sunshine Precinct Areas
Albion Station
Sunshine CBD
Sunshine Station

Current Overlays
Melbourne Airport Environs Overlay (MAEO)

Australian Noise Exposure Forecast 2022
(Melbourne Airport Master Plan

FIGURE 8. ONGOING WORK THAT AFFECTS THIS STRATEGY

26

Neighbourhood Character

Neighbourhood character is another important, and required, consideration when planning for the future of residential areas. By requiring certain types of development to have regard for neighbourhood character, the planning system works to ensure that new development meets the expectations and desires of the community. For Brimbank in particular, which is set to experience residential growth in the coming decades, identifying the neighbourhood character that exists and defining the character expectations for the future is critical to retaining valued aspects of the municipality while paving the way for high quality growth.

As defined by DTP, 'Neighbourhood character is essentially the combination of the public and private realms. Every property, public place or piece of infrastructure makes a contribution, whether great or small. It is the cumulative impact of all these contributions that establishes neighbourhood character.'[29]

In Brimbank, there are several aspects of character that are commonly valued and others that many would like to see change. The following outlines some influences on character that are specific to Brimbank that provide context for this Strategy. Where planning frameworks, such as zones, overlays and policy, can influence outcomes, this has been identified.

Infill development forms: New infill development varies across the municipality, but there are several consistent typologies that predominate, including villa units and townhouses (refer to Figure 9). As the housing market matures, and as new housing and character policy is implemented, it is expected that more typologies and variations on existing typologies will emerge. These will each impact character differently. It is important that zones give appropriate guidance on the key matters that will influence amenity for future residents and neighbours (e.g., the building footprint, heights and bulk) and neighbourhood character (e.g., landscaping, building materials, roof forms and built form spacing). Zones and policy should support respectful and high quality infill design, while also allowing space for architectural innovation.

Era of development: All of Brimbank has generally been subdivided, save for some remaining strategic development sites. Some subdivisions, particularly those around Sunshine and Albion, are historical (pre-1900s), while other areas are more recent, such as the masterplanned communities of the late 20th century (Taylors Lakes) and 2000s (Derrimut). Some neighbourhoods are only just nearing completion (Cairnlea). Older areas are more likely to experience change, as traditional housing is replaced with newer, and often denser, development. More recently developed neighbourhoods are less likely to undergo change, as housing is generally still fit for purpose, and there are fewer market incentives to intensify development. Zones and policy must take a long-term view of how all areas may change. Planning frameworks are not static, however, and will be reviewed over time to respond to changing conditions.

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[29] Department of Transport and Planning, *PPN43: Understanding Neighbourhood Character,* 2023.
[30] When applying normal ResCode standards.
[31] In fact, many areas of Brimbank already permit development of 2 or 3 storeys, yet single-storey development remains dominant.

Existing subdivision patterns: The existing patterns of streets and lots influence the form and character of new development. Lot dimensions strongly influence development types. While older parts of Brimbank comprise generous lot sizes and depths, their relatively narrow frontages can make it challenging to achieve well-designed and efficient multi-story development.[30] Excessive tiering of upper storeys can give a 'wedding cake' appearance, which is often a poor and out-of-character development outcome. To avoid this, zones can vary side setback standards within reason; however, variations coupled with policy that supports consolidation of adjoining lots will enable better design outcomes.

Predominant heights: Brimbank is a predominantly single-storey municipality, with double-storey development a consistent feature only in northern neighbourhoods. In this context, new development of 2 or 3 storeys (the maximum heights of the NRZ and GRZ, respectively) may be perceived as an unwelcome change to character. It is important to remember that change in many neighbourhoods is likely to occur gradually.[31] While the first few examples of taller development in single-storey neighbourhoods may feel out of place, character will evolve. Zones will guide decision-makers to ensure that taller development is designed respectfully.

Architectural styles: While many areas of Brimbank are valued for their diversity of housing styles, there are some areas where consistent architectural forms, designs and materiality are valued. This includes streetscapes of uniform inter-war homes that are particularly intact but not considered suitable for heritage protection.[32] Certain zones and overlays can require that any new development respects the valued features of these homes (including architectural style and bulk and form), but they cannot prevent the progressive demolition and replacement of these homes unless included in an HO.[33]

Landscape: Brimbank does not currently have a strong landscape character (with a few exceptions).[34] Gardens are generally low scale, and streetscapes often do not comprise any canopy trees other than those in the nature strip. Nonetheless, a treed character is an aspiration for Brimbank's community, both for character and sustainability reasons. Zones can set objectives for development to progressively contribute to a new preferred character. It is important, however, to remember, that space for landscaping will need to be balanced with growth directions. It is challenging, but not impossible, to achieve extensive landscaping in mid-scale medium and higher density development while also delivering efficient building and private open space objectives.[35]

Interface with public realm: How housing interfaces with the public realm (usually the street), influences character but also amenity and perceptions of safety. Brimbank's housing generally has a strong, active relationship to the street, with low or no front fencing, clear delineation between the public and private realm through landscaping (with some exceptions),[36] and front doors and windows facing the street. However, the dominance of driveways and garages, high front fencing, and development oriented away from the street, can erode this relationship. Zones can set objectives for how development should interface with the street, but there may be occasions where an alternative relationship with the street is preferred to mitigate issues (e.g., higher front fencing along major roads to manage the amenity impacts of traffic).

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[32] This is surmised given they have not been included in a Heritage Overlay to date.
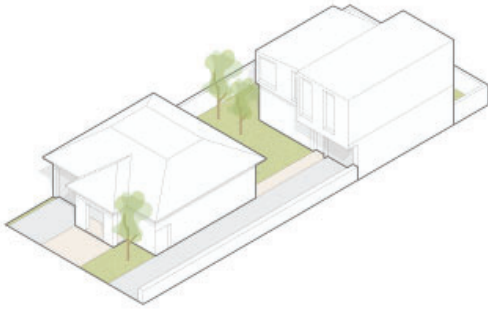[33] Review of heritage significance is not within the scope of this Strategy.
[34] Character Precinct F is an example of an exception.
[35] A key finding of the VCAT review in the Mesh Draft Background Report and recent Panel
[36] Character Precinct F is an example of an exception.

### Additional dwelling (original retained)

Typical site

Single lot with small existing dwelling + large backyard

Heights Original dwelling height + single
or double storey addition to rear.

Setbacks All sides, with original. front and
side setbacks usually retained.

Carparking Side driveway.

Private open space Rear setback + courtyard to side.

Location for landscaping Front, side and rear.
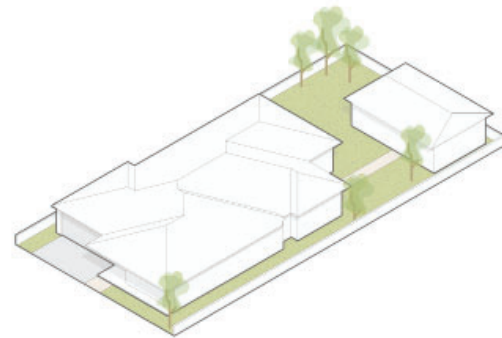
Secondary dwelling (granny flat)

Typical site

Single lot

Heights Single storey.

Setbacks As per original dwelling + addition
of small unit in rear.

Carparking As per original dwelling.

Private open space As per original dwelling.

Location for landscaping As per original dwelling.

Change to character
Medium change
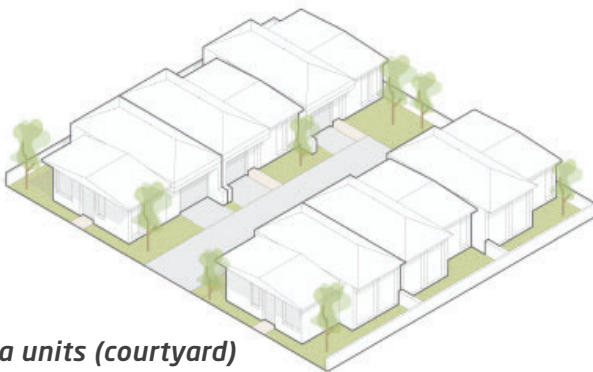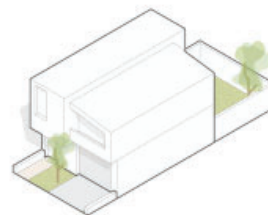
Villa units (courtyard)

Typical site

Consolidated lot (2+)

Heights Single or double storey.
Double storey usually at front.

Setbacks Front and rear (usually reduced
from original). Side boundary walls.

Carparking Central driveway.

Integrated garages not prominent from street.

Private open space Rear setback + courtyard.

Location for landscaping Front, side and rear.

Limited space along driveway.

Townhouse (front carparking)

Typical site

Wide single, corner or consolidated lots

Heights Double storey.

Setbacks Front, one side and rear
(usually reduced from original).

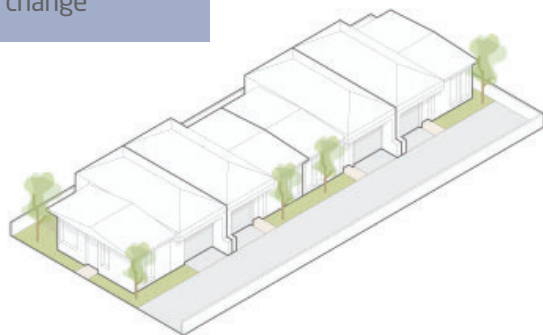Boundary wall between townhouses.

Carparking Integrated garages at front.

Private open space Courtyard within dwelling or rear.

Balcony to upper levels.

Location for landscaping Front.

Change to character
Very minor change

Villa units (gun barrel)

Typical site

Single lot

Heights Single or double storey.
Double storey usually at front.

Setbacks Front, one side and rear (usually reduced from original). Boundary wall on one side.

Carparking Side driveway.
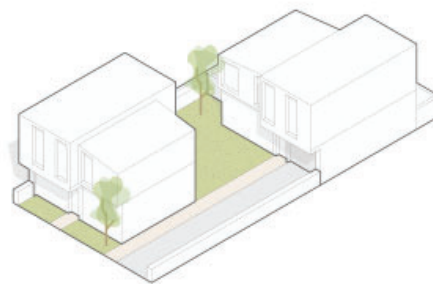Integrated garages not prominent from street.

Private open space Courtyards to side.

Location for landscaping Front, side and rear.
Limited space along driveway.

Change to character
Minor change

Dual occupancy (original replaced)

Typical site

Single lot

Heights Single or double storey.
Double storey usually at front.

Setbacks All sides, with minor reductions to original front + side setbacks.
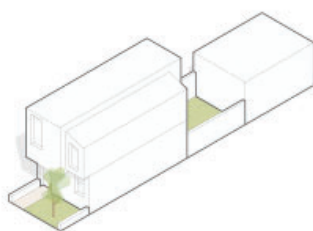
Carparking Side driveway.
Integrated garages not prominent from street.

Private open space Rear setback + courtyard to side.

Location for landscaping Front, side and rear.

Change to character
Medium change

Townhouse (rear carparking)

Typical site

Wide single or consolidated lots with laneway.

Heights Double storey.

Setbacks Front and one side (usually reduced from original). Boundary wall between townhouses.
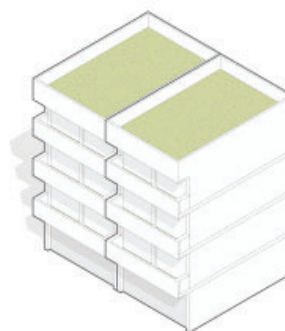
Carparking Rear garage access from laneway.

Private open space Courtyard within dwelling or between dwelling and garage. Balcony to upper levels.

Location for landscaping Front.

Change to character
Major change

Apartments

Typical site

Consolidated lots, large sites

Heights Three or more.

Setbacks Varied.

Carparking Undercroft/ ground level.
Basements for newer apartments.

Private open space Balconies/ rooftops.
Courtyards to ground floor.

Location for landscaping Front (limited).

*OTHER DIVERSE HOUSING FORMS IDENTIFIED UNDER **DIVERSITY** MAY NOT BE LISTED HERE, AS THEY ARE NOT COMMONLY FOUND IN BRIMBANK YET.

Vision + Themes

The vision and themes for this Strategy have been identified through research and analysis undertaken for the Draft Background Report (Mesh 2023) and engagement with the community and key stakeholders.

Vision

> *By 2041, Brimbank will be a city of green, connected and diverse neighbourhoods, offering a range of high quality, sustainable housing choices for everyone at every stage of their life.*

Themes

The Strategy themes are:

Growth

Providing the right amount of housing at the appropriate location, typology and scale to enhance liveability and affordability within Brimbank.

Sustainability

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

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.

Amenity

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

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.

Growth

Providing the right amount of housing at the appropriate location, typology and scale to enhance liveability and affordability within Brimbank.

The RDF (Figure 10) identifies areas for substantial change, increased change (considered by this Strategy to be a subset of substantial change),[37] incremental change and minimal change. All of these areas are expected to accommodate a degree of housing growth. According to State planning policy, all land can accommodate growth unless there are major constraints preventing this.[38]

The most intensive housing growth in Brimbank will occur in the activity centres of Sunshine MeAC, the Albion Quarter in the Sunshine Priority Precinct, and in an around Sydenham/Watergardens MAC. This will take the form of apartment development and will be planned and managed through other planning frameworks. This Strategy focusses on growth in the established residential areas outside of activity centres.

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[37] This has been included as a sub-designation to reflect the fact that the substantial change category includes both RGZ areas and GRZ areas. The increased change areas are those that are substantial change GRZ.
[38] Department of Transport and Planning, *Planning Practice Note 91: Using the residential zones*, 2023.
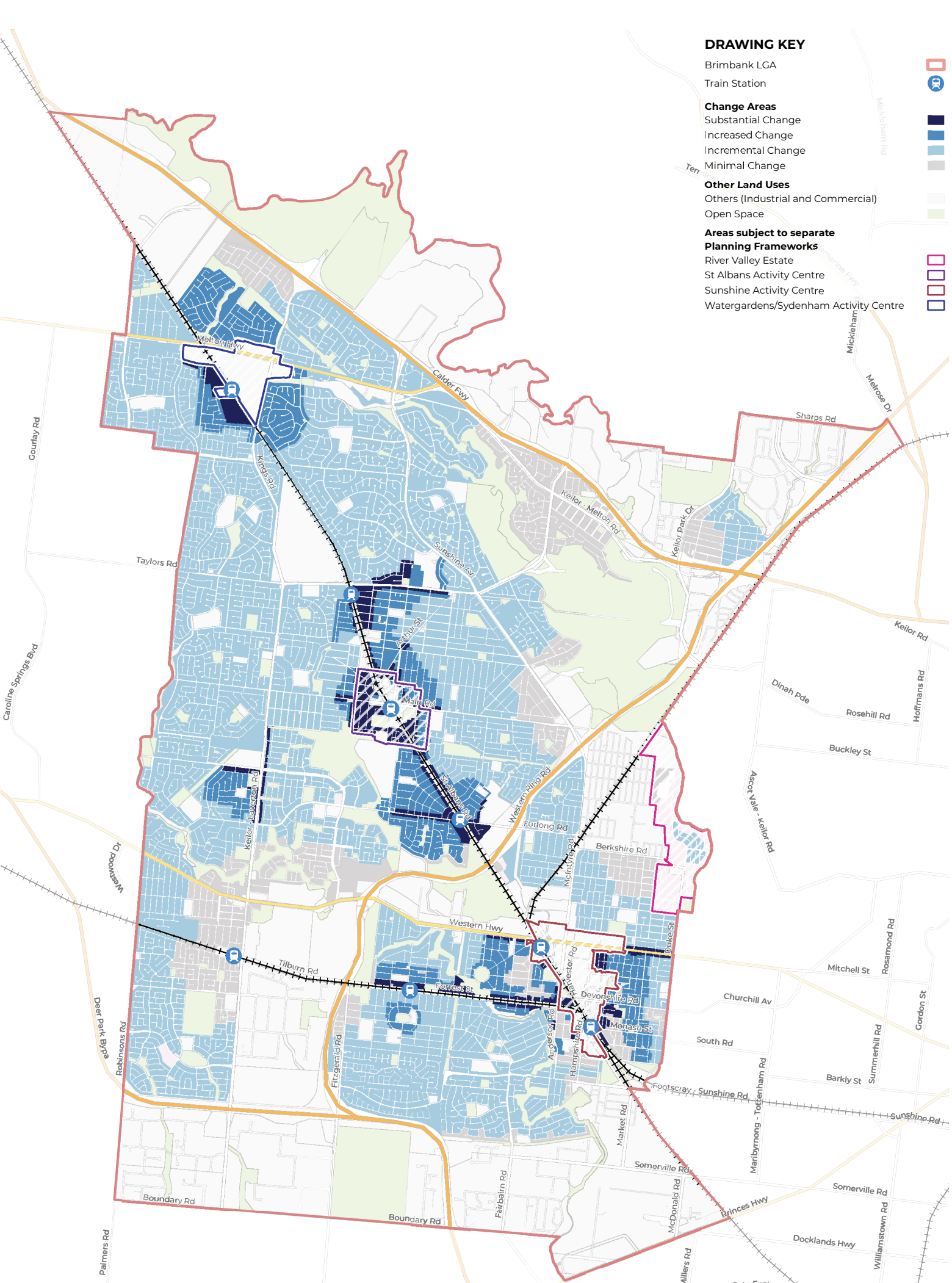
DRAWING KEY

Brimbank LGA

Train Station

Change Areas
Substantial Change
Increased Change
Incremental Change
Minimal Change

Other Land Uses
Others (Industrial and Commercial)
Open Space

Areas subject to separate Planning Frameworks
River Valley Estate
St Albans Activity Centre
Sunshine Activity Centre
Watergardens/Sydenham Activity Centre

FIGURE 10. RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CHANGE AREAS

34

Growth

In Brimbank, change areas will consist of the following:

Substantial change areas *are those where the most growth should occur due to their proximity to jobs, services, facilities and transport. Growth in these areas will result in a higher scale and intensity of housing compared to other area neighbourhoods. Development will create a new built form character that incorporates high quality design responses.*

Included in the substantial change category are **increased change areas**. *These areas will also change, but to a lesser extent than the substantial change areas. While existing character is likely to change over time, new development will still be respectful of the preferred neighbourhood character.*

Incremental change areas *are those with the capacity for varied levels of growth and diverse housing types. Development in these areas should have regard for existing valued qualities, but these areas are expected to evolve over time.*

Minimal change areas *are those without much capacity for growth. They are constrained by characteristics that warrant protection or environmental or landscape characteristics that affect their capacity for change. Some change will occur in these areas, but it will be limited.*

Each change area will accommodate a range of housing typologies to suit different household structures. However, some housing typologies will appeal to certain household structures more than others (refer to Table 4). Housing typologies are therefore best directed to change areas as follows:

Separate houses – *These will primarily be delivered through the replacement of existing dwellings in minimal and incremental change areas. There is limited future supply of separate houses.*

Townhouses – *Suitable in increased change and incremental change areas. Generally discouraged in substantial change areas where they are demonstrated to be an underdevelopment of the site.*

Apartments – *Suitable in substantial change areas and increased change areas, where appropriate. Strongly encouraged in activity centres.*[39]

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[39] Subject to other planning frameworks, outside the scope of this Strategy.

Key Issues

Key issues that have affected residential growth in Brimbank since implementation of the previous housing strategy are:

Challenges achieving housing growth *objectives in preferred locations.*

Over the past 10 years, similar multi-unit development has generally occurred across the municipality, regardless of zoning or character differences. For areas zoned GRZ and RGZ, which allow for 3 and 4 storey development, respectively, this is often underdevelopment (see Table 3).

Mixed messages *regarding extent of change that is acceptable and the influence of neighbourhood character, especially in RGZ areas.*

The current zone schedules contain mixed messages regarding support for denser development. In RGZ areas in particular, ResCode variations appear to protect existing patterns of development while simultaneously encouraging higher density.

There is also a lack of clear guidance around expectations for character and change. Currently levels of change are specified, but there are no accompanying descriptions of the character expectations for different areas of the municipality.

The Strategy will clarify neighbourhood character expectations in each change area, and it will provide certainty that neighbourhood character is not a consideration in RGZ substantial change areas. Other amenity factors, such as impacts on adjoining properties, will still be a consideration and will be addressed under ResCode provisions.

Conflicts between growth expectations and heritage protection *around Sunshine and Albion (part).*

The suburbs of Sunshine and Albion are well-positioned for housing growth. They have easy access to train stations and are located within close proximity to the Sunshine MeAC, which has a wide range of shops and services. While the Albion Quarter Structure Plan is expected to further intensify the area, outside the MeAC and Structure Plan boundary there are large areas of traditional housing that are protected by a HO.

The HO has been applied to a large number of properties in Sunshine and Albion, limiting the opportunity for redevelopment and growth surrounding these well serviced centres.

Members of the Albion community have long advocated for protection of Albion's character. The Albion Neighbourhood Plan was a policy document that was developed to help guide Albion's development in a way that retains and enhances its character. A recommendation to investigate a Neighbourhood Character Overlay (NCO) in that plan was assessed by a planning consultant who confirmed it was not justified.

Conflicts between growth opportunities and MHFs *in Deer Park*

Deer Park has access to a MAC, a train station, community facilities and several open spaces. While its transportation network is reliant on a north-south bus line to reach some parts of the municipality, plans for train station upgrades may improve the quality of public transportation in the area in the future.

However, Deer Park also contains two MHFs. The current advisory areas that apply to each of these sites extends up to 1,000m. WorkSafe has indicated that within these advisory areas, any intensification of sensitive uses should be discouraged.

Directing growth *to meet changing housing needs and preferences.*

Brimbank's future supply of single, detached homes is limited. While there is a current preference for this type of housing, if alternatives are provided that offer other benefits (e.g., affordability, proximity to services and infrastructure), market preferences will likely adapt over time. Coupled with changes to household structures and demographics, demand for a diversity of housing types is expected to increase. At present, Brimbank's Planning Scheme provides limited direction on where different housing types to meet community needs will be directed.

> The next sections give a more detailed explanation of substantial, increased, incremental and minimal change areas, the types of housing and community needs they are intended to accommodate, and the objectives and recommend actions for each level of change.

Directing growth in Brimbank

Brimbank requires 14,000 new homes to meet the needs of its growing population. As outlined in **Context**, there is sufficient capacity for Brimbank to accommodate more than 63,000 dwellings under the current zoning framework. This demonstrates that, theoretically, Brimbank does not have a capacity constraint. Instead, there is a need to better direct growth. This Strategy provides the framework to do that, and to facilitate the right kind of growth in the right locations (see Table 3). However, it is noted that this Strategy is not able to dictate where development occurs.

Changes to zone schedules will clarify growth and character expectations in each change area. A key change will be to remove ambiguity around neighbourhood character expectations in RGZ substantial change areas to better support more intensive forms of development. However, these areas comprise only a small proportion of Brimbank's residential land.

If capacity assumptions for the NRZ and GRZ identified by Urban Enterprise in their Background Analysis are extrapolated, most growth, in terms of dwelling numbers, is expected to occur in areas planned for incremental and increased change. These areas alone would be sufficient to accommodate the 14,000 required dwellings. However, changes to the approach to neighbourhood character, particularly for the NRZ (see **Character**), and an increase in areas subject to subdivision restrictions (see **Amenity**) is expected to result in developments with fewer dwellings.

Areas identified for the most change also have the capacity to accommodate more than the required 14,000 dwellings. The Sunshine MeAC alone is being planned to accommodate up to 21,000 homes. However, this growth will take time, and the development typologies (primarily apartments) are not expected to meet the needs of all household types (refer to **Diversity**).

The capacity of change areas to support the required number of dwellings will be tested in more detail following community engagement.

	Levels of change		
Proposed Zone	**Area + %age of total residential area**	**Expected heights**	**Expected Growth outcomes of this Strategy***
Most change Activity centres + strategic development sites such as Sunshine Precinct and Sydenham/Watergardens.			
Subject to separate planning frameworks, with site specific zones/overlays	Subject to separate detailed planning processes but expected to include denser housing forms such as apartments (at varying heights, including greater than 4 storeys), particularly in the Sunshine Precinct.		These areas alone have more than enough capacity to meet growth projections, but the typologies provided are unlikely to meet all needs.
Substantial Immediately surrounding MACs and train stations, and along key transport corridors that do not have significant heritage or environmental constraints.			
RGZ	177ha (4%)	Up to 4 storeys (preferred max. height)	Changes to RGZ schedules are expected to support higher levels of growth than the current schedule. While apartment development is not necessary to meet growth needs in terms of dwelling numbers, low-scale apartments are a key contributor to diversity.
Increased change Within walkable distances to activity centres and train stations that do not have significant heritage or environmental constraints. These areas will form a transition between substantial change and incremental or minimal change areas.			
GRZ	567ha (13%)	Up to 3 storeys	While the Strategy has reduced the extent of GRZ, the proposed schedules will clarify neighbourhood character requirements in the context of increased change expectations. This is expected to result in more development, and more intensive development on each site.
Incremental Neighbourhoods that do not have walkable access to major opportunities, such as MACs and transport. These areas may have access to NACs and LACs and/or less frequent transport. Any constraints, such as environmental constraints, can be managed through design responses.			
NRZ	3,010ha (69%)	Up to 2 storeys	Incremental development of townhouses in these areas alone would likely meet almost all Brimbank's housing growth needs. Neighbourhood character requirements introduced in this Strategy may have some minor impacts on capacity.
Minimal Areas where new development will be limited by the HO and/or site conditions and those areas affected nearby MHFs or noise from the Melbourne airport.			
NRZ + overlays or minimum subdivision sizes	587ha (14%)	Up to 2 storeys	This strategy introduces an additional 204ha (less than 5% of total residential land) that will be unsuitable for intensificaiton. This is considered to have a minor impact on overall capacity to accomodate growth.

TABLE 3. LEVELS OF CHANGE IN THE CONTEXT OF BRIMBANK

Substantial and Increased Change Areas

Substantial and increased change areas are areas within the walkable catchments of MACs and train stations, without any major constraints. As such, they already exhibit some characteristics of 20-minute neighbourhoods. Substantial and increased change areas are considered suitable for intensified development including apartments (in substantial change areas) and townhouses (in increased change areas). Housing of these types is likely to appeal to single and couple household structures, but it may increasingly become a viable option for families if housing is appropriately designed and offers other locational benefits (refer to **Diversity**).

Substantial change areas will be zoned RGZ where fundamental change is expected to the character of the area and where it is appropriate for heights to exceed 3 storeys. Increased change areas will be zoned GRZ where change will still need to be respectful of neighbourhood character and where development up to 3 storeys is appropriate. GRZ areas will also act as a transition between taller and more intensive development in activity centres and the RGZ, and the surrounding lower-scale neighbourhoods.

Addressing underdevelopment

Over the past decade, Brimbank has experienced underdevelopment in areas zoned RGZ and GRZ. The redevelopment of these areas is typically in the form of 1–2 story units, townhouses and dual occupancies. These typologies have also been occurring throughout the NRZ, in areas further from transportation, activity centres and other opportunities.

Several factors have contributed to this trend. They include unclear policy direction, perceived lack of demand for higher density housing typologies, lot dimensions in more established areas not supporting greater heights and densities (i.e., with higher density forms requiring the assembly of multiple parcels), and general lack of development feasibility for apartments (land values being a key factor).

The Strategy and any associated planning scheme changes will seek to address this issue of underdevelopment through planning controls in the form of zone schedules and clear policy direction. These will provide certainty to the development community regarding development expectations, incentivise land assembly, and change the permit assessment process so that development capacity of parcels is a consideration.

In areas where zones permit heights of 3+ storeys, the character will change, in some cases dramatically. However, this change will occur over years or even decades. In fact, many of Brimbank's single-story neighbourhoods already allow for 3 storeys, but this level of development has not yet occurred.

Analysis plans demonstrating how opportunities, constraints and neighbourhood character have been balanced to define zone boundaries in substantial change areas are provided throughout the next sections.

Sunshine/Albion

The greatest concentration of opportunities is in Sunshine, specifically the Sunshine MeAC, which is located within the Sunshine Priority Precinct (Priority Precinct). The Priority Precinct is an area of land within a 1600m radius of both Sunshine and Albion Stations where substantial government investment has been promised. Also within the Priority Precinct is Albion Quarter, which has been identified for long-term strategic planning, with a Structure Plan process currently being led by State government.

Both Albion Quarter and areas zoned Activity Centre Zone (ACZ), while not within the scope of this Strategy, are expected to support higher density housing outcomes as well as business, retail and civic uses. Development is expected in and around the centre, surrounding the two train stations and potentially on land north of Ballarat Road.

These areas are well serviced by public transport (trains and busses) and have access to opportunities for shopping, civic engagement, community services, employment and education. There is also a range of nearby open spaces, including small parks, playgrounds, current and future sporting fields and linear links (e.g., Kororoit Creek). The neighbourhoods are highly walkable due to their gridded street network and connections to broader pedestrian and cycling networks.

However, some areas within Sunshine/Albion are limited in their ability to support growth and change due to heritage and neighbourhood character constraints. These are excluded from the substantial change areas. Interfaces to these areas will need to ensure that any new development is respectful of the character of this these areas, through zone schedules.
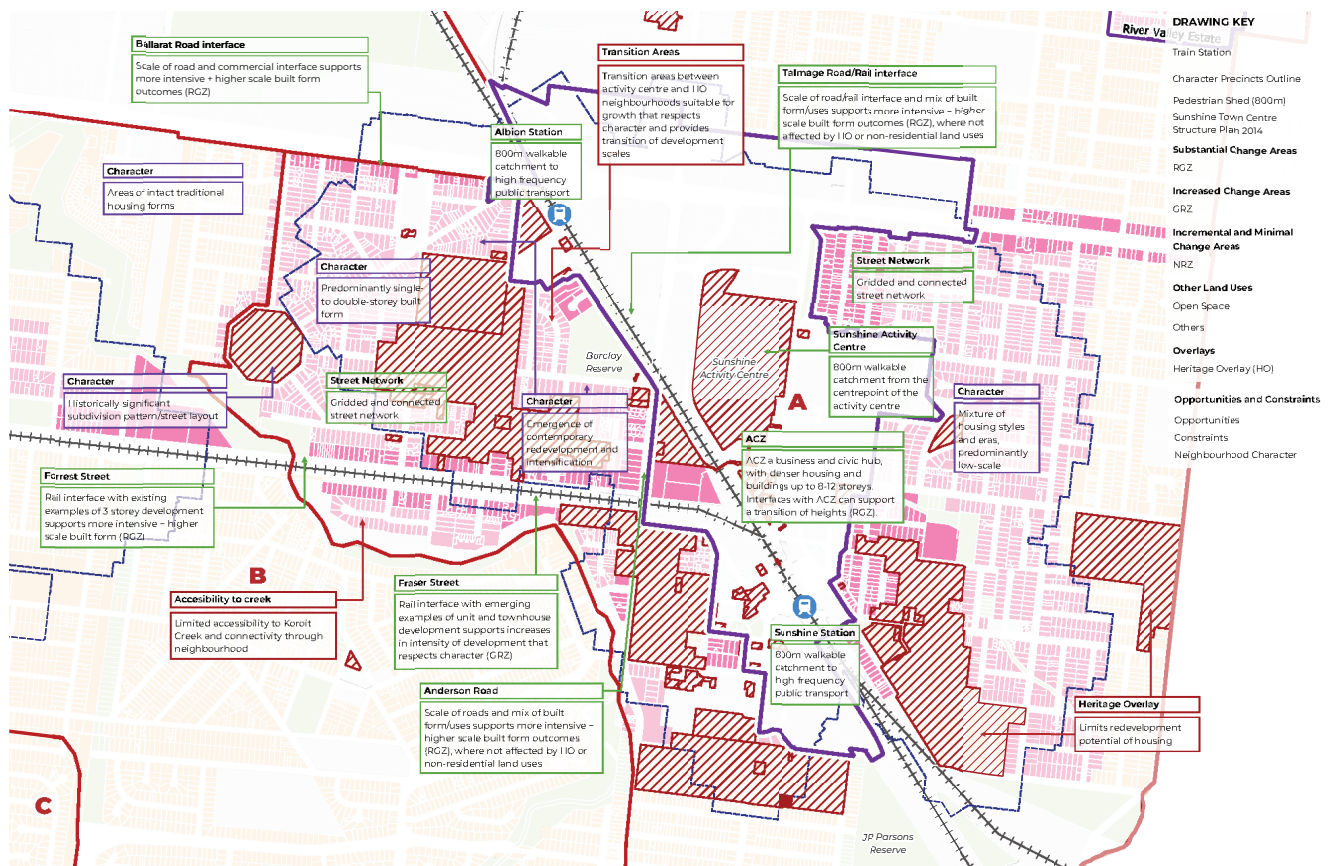

FIGURE 11. SUNSHINE/ALBION SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE AREA

[40] Australian Unity, *Sunshine Private Hospital, a world class private hospital, opens its doors in Melbourne's West,* Australian Unity website, 31 March 2023.

St Albans

St Albans has a high concentration of opportunities for housing growth. Features that support increased housing in this area include the St Albans MAC and St Albans train station, a gridded street network and access to local open space, schools and other civic facilities.

The area is subject to a Structure Plan that identifies areas of change (implemented via RGZ1 and GRZ1) as well as a preferred structure and built form for the area (implemented via DDO9). As such, its zoning and overlays are not proposed to change through this Strategy. However, this area still plays an important role in accommodating housing growth.

Outside the Structure Plan boundary, areas for substantial and increased change have been identified. These areas will have new schedules defined for them (refer to **Implementation**), resulting in some locations where existing zone schedules and new zone schedules will abut. Although simply a result of the Structure Plan boundary, this something that would benefit from further review, to ensure that there is consistent and holistic approach across St Albans.

Interfaces along Arthur Street, Main Road and the rail line present opportunities for more intensive development, as they already demonstrate a diversity of uses and built form, and the scale of road and rail corridor lends itself to a higher scale of built form. These have been designated as substantial and increased change areas.
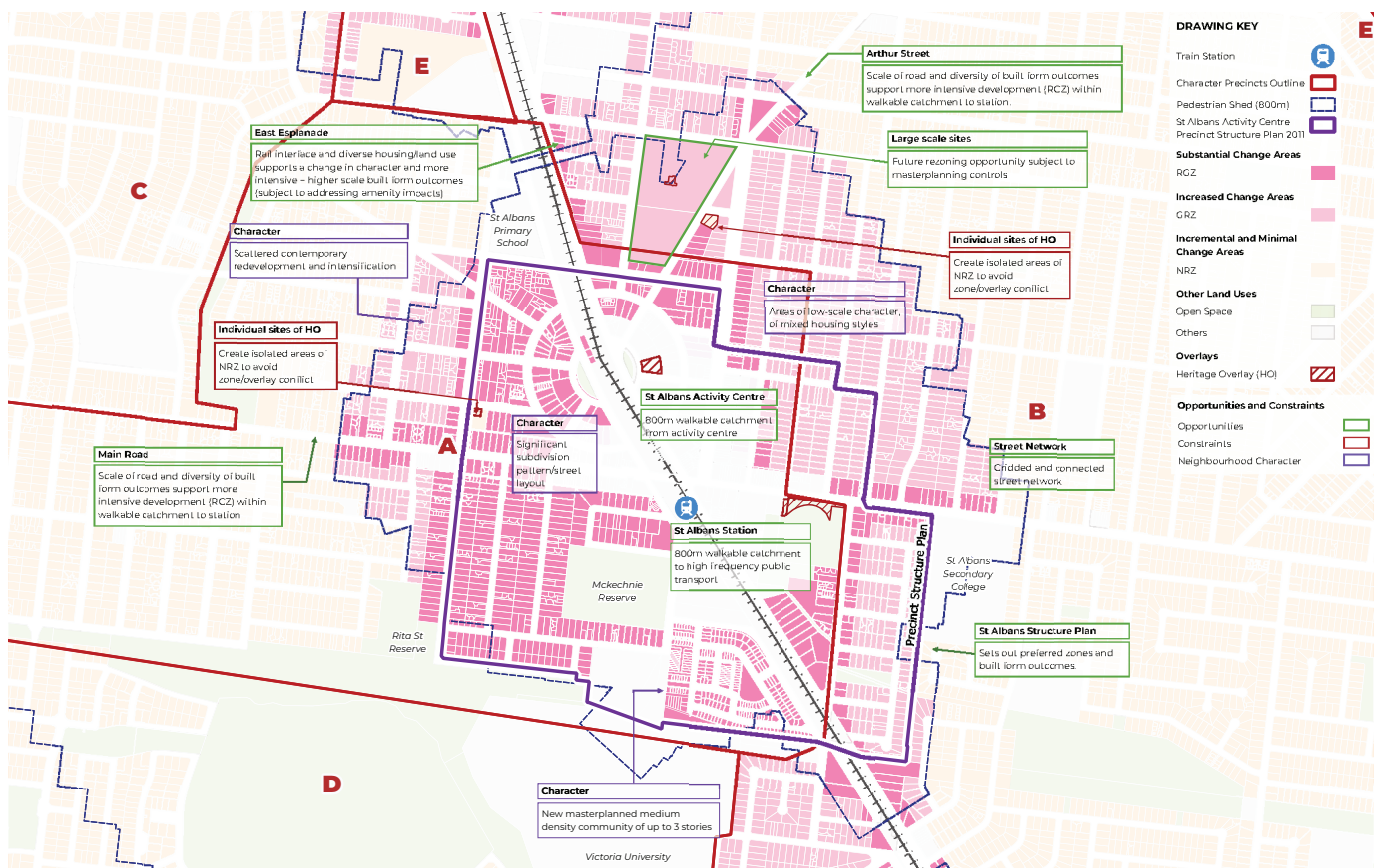

FIGURE 12. ST ALBANS SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE AREA

Ginifer Station area

The area surrounding Ginifer Station benefits from access to buses and a train station one stop away from both the Sunshine MeAC and St Albans MAC. The area has a small LAC, comprising a few shops located directly across from the station and along Furlong Road.

To the east of Ginifer Station is 67 hectares of land that makes up the Sunshine, Health, Wellbeing and Education Precinct (SHWEP), which is a focus of State investment as part of the Sunshine National Employment and Innovation Cluster (NEIC).

With Sunshine Private Hospital having been completed in February 2023 and more healthcare-related development proposed within the area,[40] including south of Furlong Road, this area is already undergoing significant development that supports housing intensification.

The majority of the area down to the interface with Jones Creek was also considered to be an opportunity area (excluding areas affected by the ESO). Even though it falls outside of the walkable catchment from Ginifer Station, this area benefits from its proximity to green space and already contains examples of 3-storey development. Continued opportunity for intensified development would fit in with the change occurring and provide an opportunity to improve on design outcomes by orienting development toward open space.
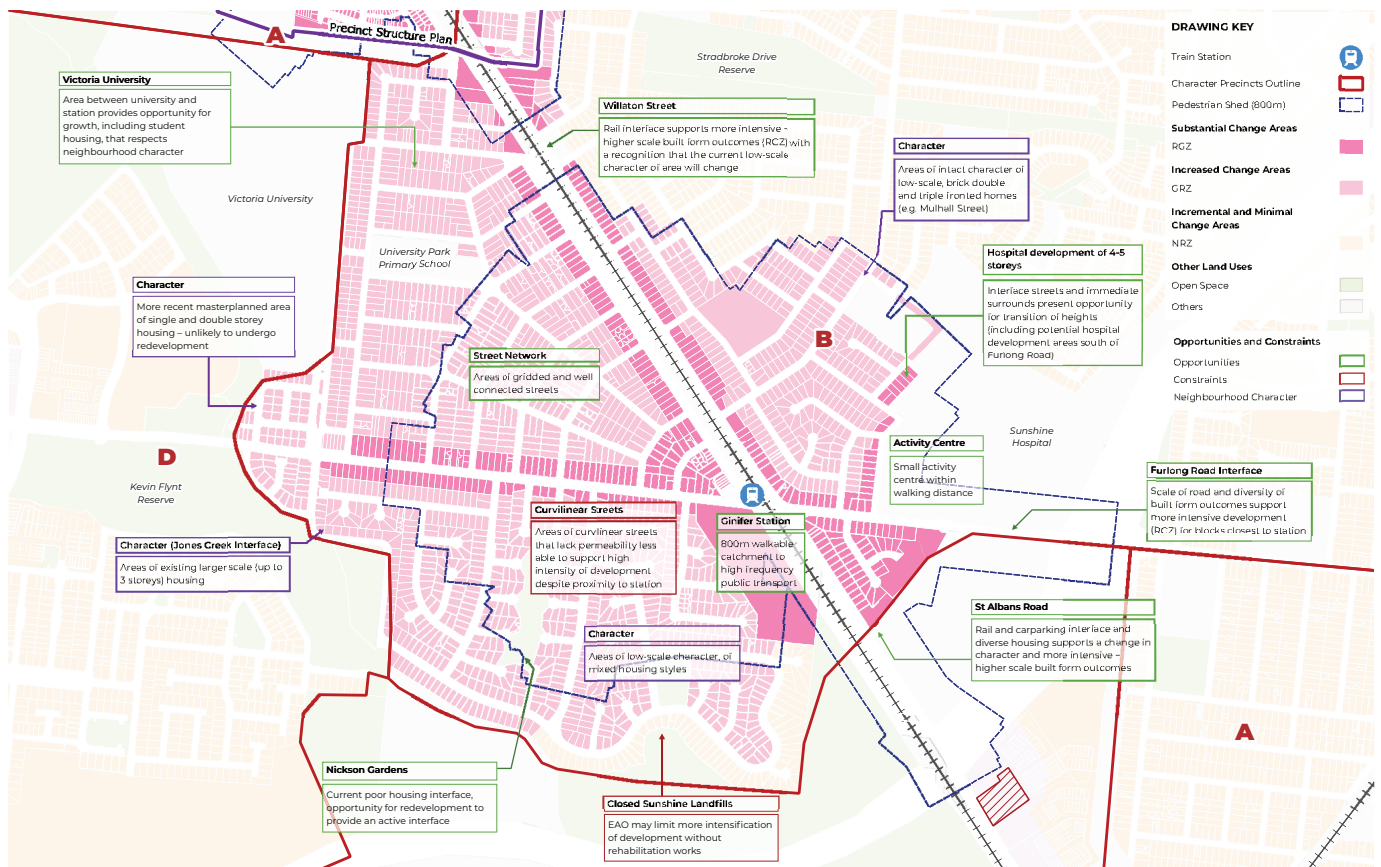

FIGURE 13. GINIFER SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE AREA

Ardeer Station area

The area surrounding Ardeer Station has access to a train service (currently V/Line services) as well as bus services and a cycling route along Forrest Street, which provide connections to metropolitan train services at Sunshine Station. Ardeer Station itself is does not have any facilities and is surrounded by high noise attenuation fencing. The area does not have an activity centre, but there is the presence of some non-residential uses, including a primary school, a convenience store, active open space and a community park. It also has access to linear trails and green spaces along Kororoit Creek to the north.

These factors generally support growth and change; however, neighbourhood character is also a consideration. The areas north and south of the train line exhibit markedly different character. The area to the north contains a mix of housing styles, with emerging 2-storey development. The area to the south exhibits a consistent housing style, with single-storey, brick housing with low fencing characteristic of the area.
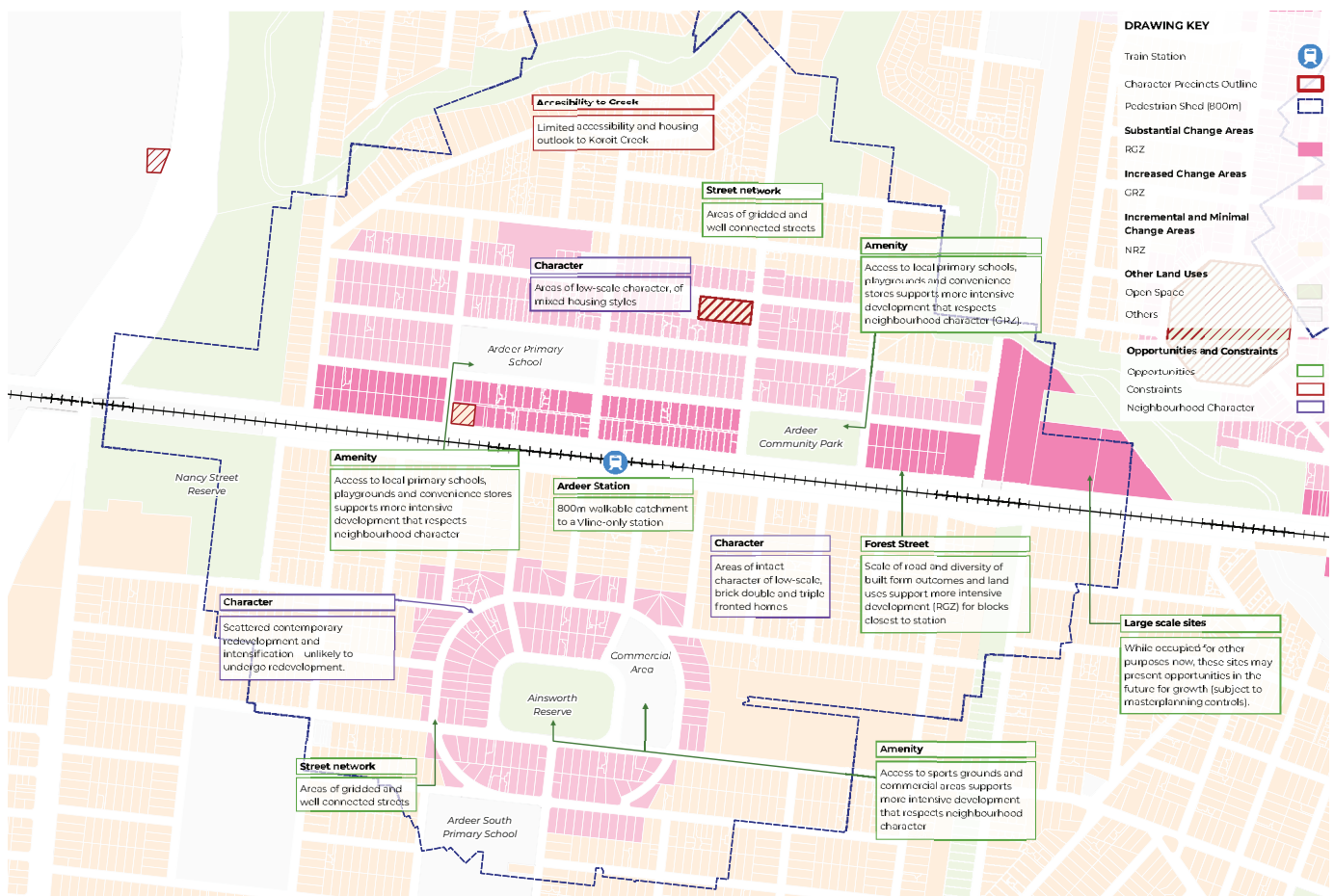

FIGURE 14. ARDEER SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE AREA

Brimbank Central (Deer Park) area

Brimbank Central MAC is a car-based centre, anchored by Brimbank Shopping Centre. It is serviced by several bus routes along Station Road with connections to train stations. While each individual route runs fairly infrequent services, combined they provide a service generally every 20 minutes or less to Sunshine Station.

The scale of Station Road, and the diversity of built form, supports more intensive development, however this development may be limited in the short to medium term due to the recency of housing already built.

Barriers to walkability, including a transmission easement and low-permeability subdivision design, directs most opportunities for change south of Neale Road.
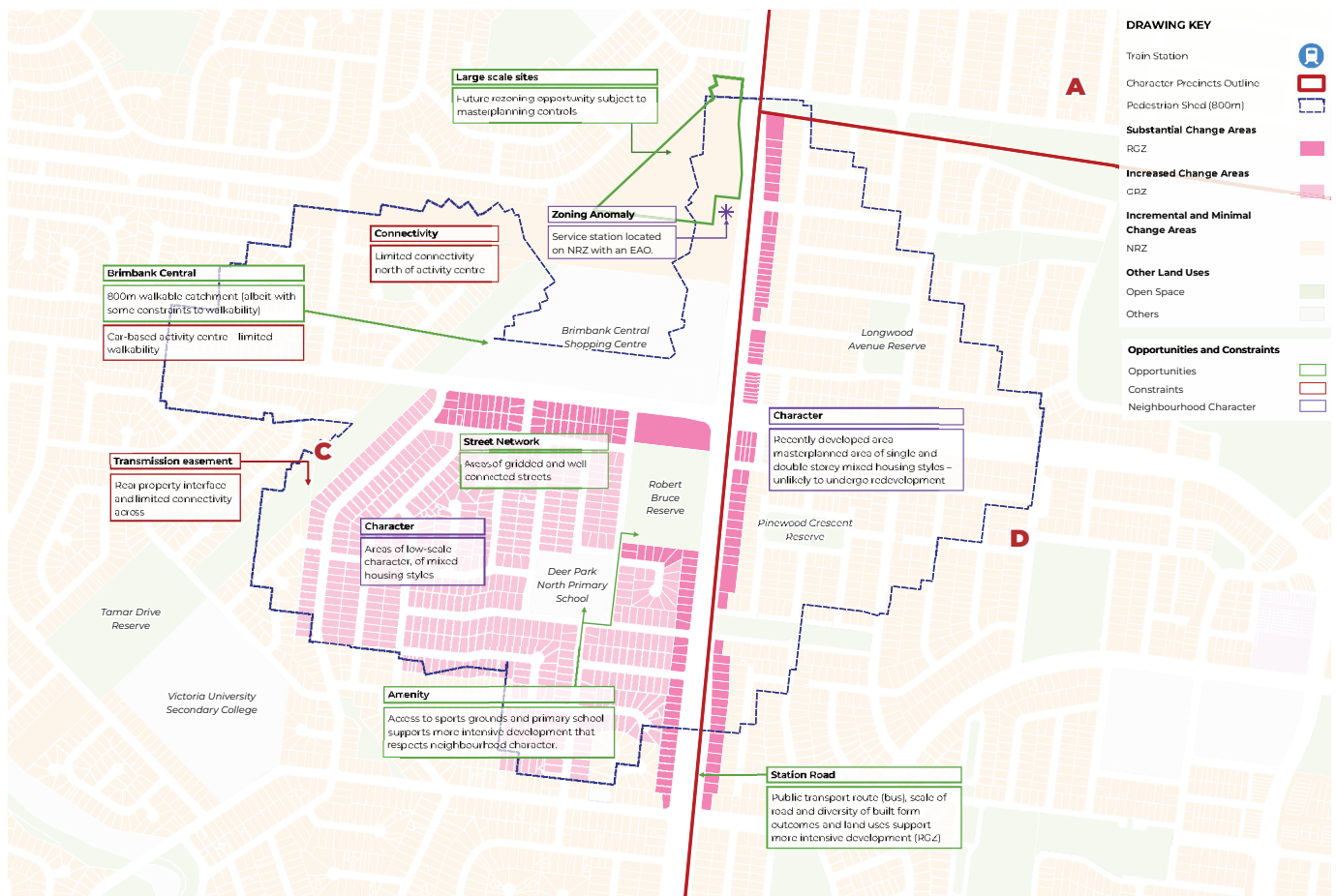

FIGURE 15. BRIMBANK CENTRAL SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE AREA

Keilor Plains Station and Keilor Downs

The area surrounding Keilor Plains Station benefits from access to the train station, but it has no activity centre. The station is located between two neighbourhood activity centres: Delahay Village to the west (corner of Kings Road and Taylors Road) and Keilor Downs to the north-east. The Keilor Downs Activity Centre contains the newly built Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre, a major attractor.

The Keilor Downs Activity Centre is connected to some residential areas, including a higher density development at Kavanagh Crescent. Yet the major road corridors of Taylors Road and Sunshine Avenue function to disconnect it from other nearby residential neighbourhoods.

Despite this, the presence of a train station, and the extensive redevelopment that has occurred in the station's surrounds to date (mainly to the east of the rail), supports and increased change to the east and west of the rail line.
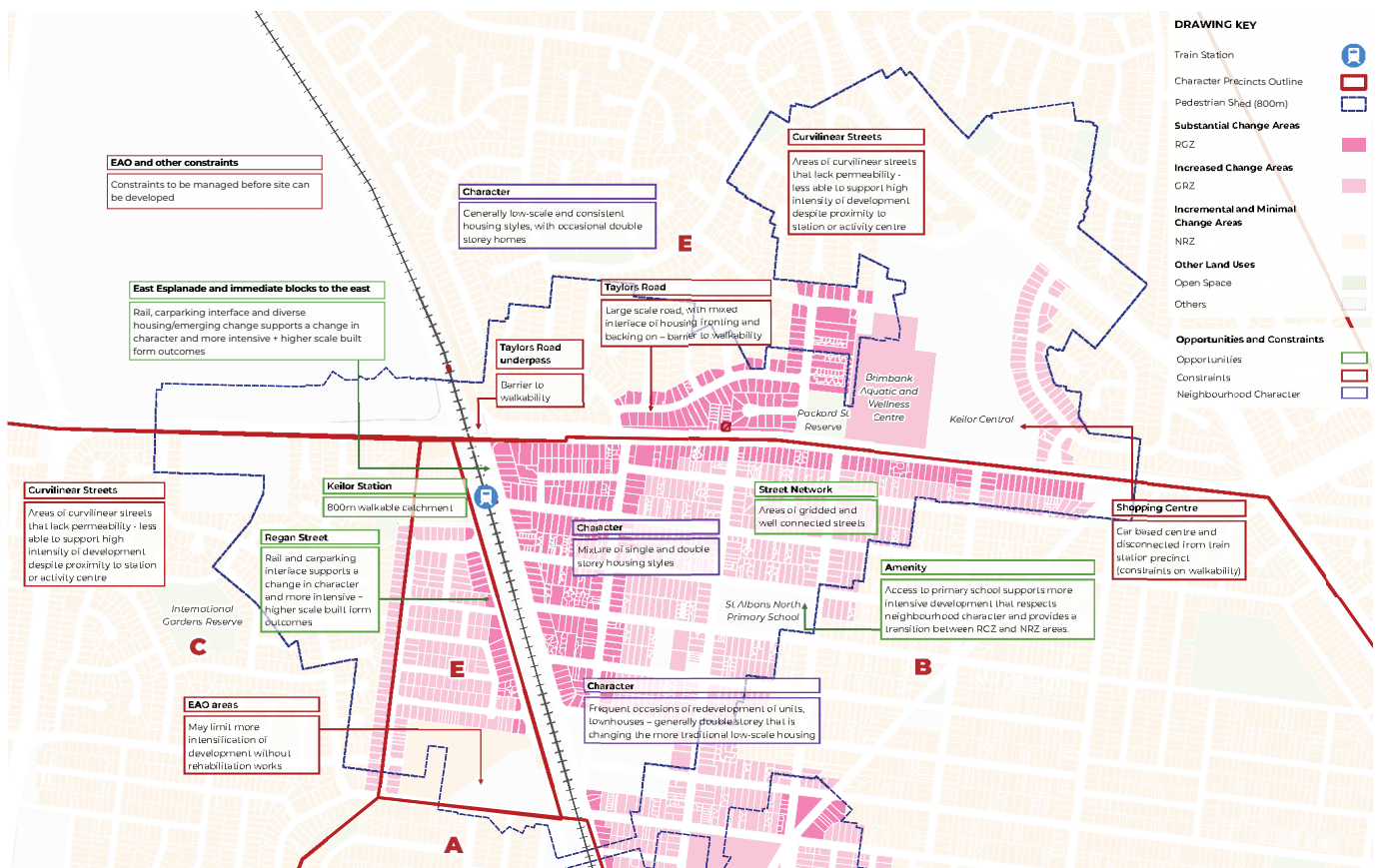

FIGURE 16. KEILOR PLAINS SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE AREA

Sydenham/Watergardens

The Sydenham/Watergardens MAC is a large activity centre with a regional catchment (due to the lack of services in the growth areas of Melton) and significant growth potential, as it benefits from access to a train station. However, this activity centre is largely car-based, with shops surrounded by expansive parking lots. Melton Highway, Kings Road and the general layout of the activity centre present major barriers to walkability. Access between western neighbourhoods and the train station/activity centre is limited to a single pedestrian crossing at the station.

As residential development in this area has been more recent, it is unlikely that there will be much growth and change in the near future. Large scale sites developed as residential and retirement villages will also present challenges to redevelopment along the key Sydenham Road, Kings Road and rail interface. However, there are diverse examples of medium density development located west of Watergardens, including villa units, townhouses with rear lane access, townhouses with front access and apartments of up to 3 storeys.

Despite its challenges, the core area of Watergardens, zoned CDZ, presents opportunities for major redevelopment, including high density housing. While outside the scope of this Strategy, the diverse housing opportunities this area presents play an important role in accommodating potential housing growth.
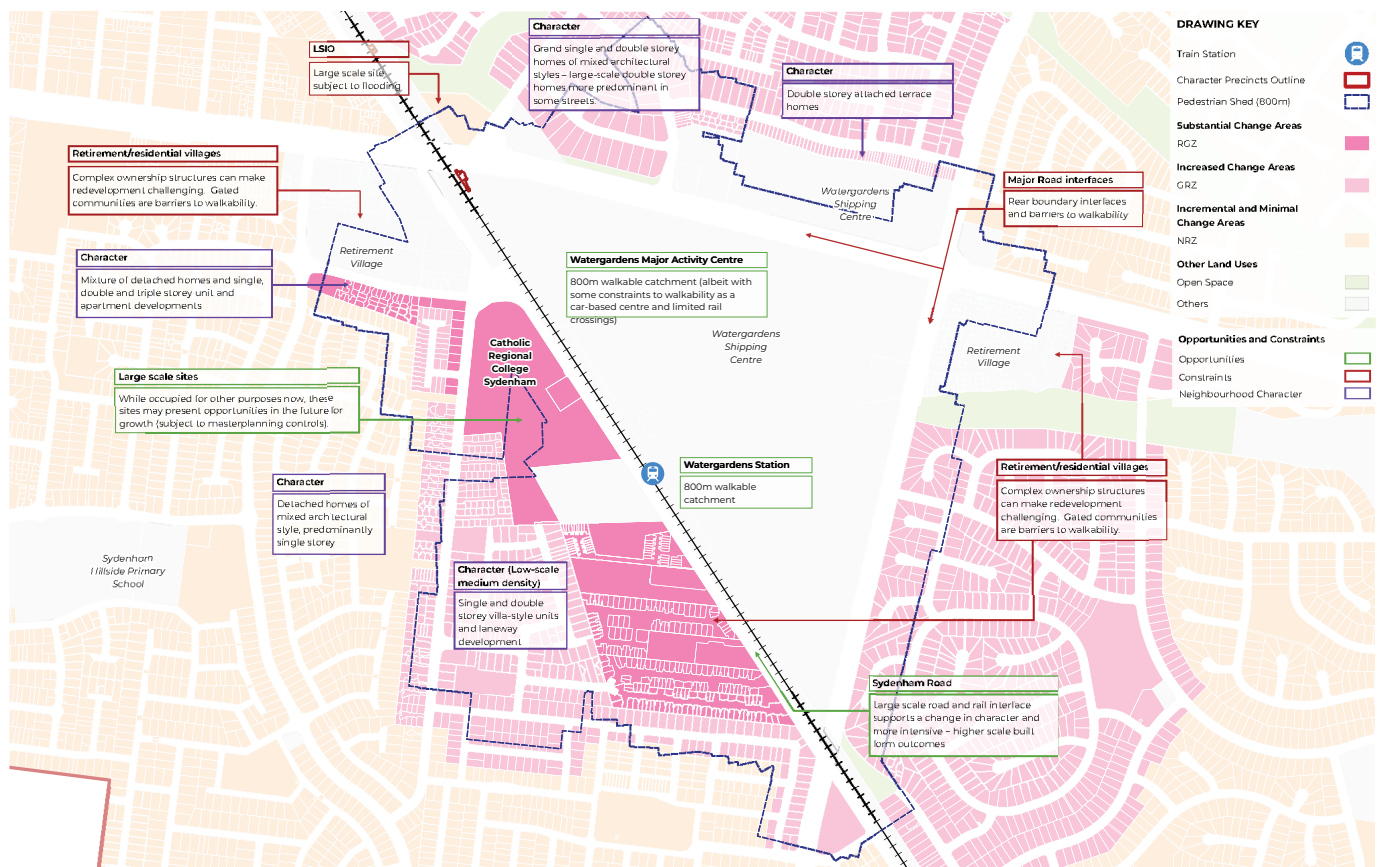

FIGURE 17. WATERGARDENS SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE AREA

Objectives

To encourage housing growth of 3+ storeys in areas immediately adjacent to significant and highly accessible activity centres and train stations (substantial change areas).

To encourage development of up to 3 storeys in areas accessible to activity centres and train stations, but where a more sensitive built form response is required (increased change areas).

To ensure development of 2–3+ storeys provides a sensitive interface to adjoining change areas and provides a transition to areas of lesser change.

To ensure new development is respectful of existing or preferred neighbourhood character in increased change areas (GRZ).

To avoid underdevelopment of land in substantial change areas.

Actions

For areas where a higher density of growth is encouraged and where the form of growth will set a new preferred character for the area:
• Zone to RGZ.
• Apply RGZ schedules that identify the scale of development and design outcomes expected.

For areas where 3 storeys is suitable and where neighbourhood character will still need to be considered:
• Zone to GRZ.
• Apply GRZ schedules that will ensure housing growth is respectful of neighbourhood character.

Incorporate provisions in policy and the RGZ and GRZ schedules to encourage development typologies appropriate to the site and zone. This is expected to include an emphasis on encouraging land assembly and discouraging underdevelopment of the site.

Require specific controls (e.g., DDO or DPO) for large scale sites that may redevelop in the future, to guide preferred development outcomes.

Incremental change areas

Incremental change areas are most of Brimbank's neighbourhoods. These are areas where the mix of minor opportunities and constraints makes gradual evolution of the built form and character of the area appropriate.

Given the prevailing heights of 1–2 storeys in Brimbank, the majority of incremental change areas are proposed to be NRZ, which restricts development to 2 storeys. For areas of Brimbank where the prevailing style of housing is smaller in scale, with housing from the 1950s to 1970s, 3 storeys would be considered a substantial change.

For some areas in northern parts of the municipality, where the prevailing style of housing is larger 2-storey houses that take up significant space on the lot, the incremental change areas are proposed to be GRZ. For these areas, 3 storeys would be an appropriate level of change.

Objectives

To encourage housing growth of up to 2 storeys in areas with a mix of minor opportunities and manageable constraints where the prevailing style of housing is smaller in scale.

To encourage housing of up to 3 storeys in areas with a mix of minor opportunities and manageable constraints where the prevailing pattern of development is large 2-storey houses.

To encourage housing to be oriented toward and/or connect to areas of minor opportunities, including open space, transport routes, and local or neighbourhood activity centres.

To ensure the design of new development to appropriately respond to the existing or preferred neighbourhood character of the area.

Actions

Zone incremental change areas to NRZ and some limited areas to GRZ (refer to Implementation Plan).

Apply schedules that will ensure housing growth is respectful of neighbourhood character.

Amend decision guidelines of incremental change GRZ and NRZ Schedules to encourage development oriented toward and/or connected to open space, transport routes, and local or neighbourhood activity centres.

Review the St Albans Structure Plan and associated zoning/overlays in the context of the Strategy to provide a consistent planning framework across the St Albans MAC area and surrounding neighbourhoods.

Minimal Change

Minimal change areas are those where increased growth and higher densities are not appropriate or desirable. These areas either have something special that warrants protection, such as a well-defined character, or are affected by an environmental constraint, such as flight paths or proximity to industrial land.

In Brimbank, minimal change areas include those with heritage value affected by an HO, as well as the Petrik Drive neighbourhood, which was identified by the Mesh Draft Background Report as having a well-defined special character (see 'Respect for Neighbourhood Character' under **Character** for more detail). In these areas, intensified development would be out of place and detract from the existing character of the area.

Minimal change areas also include land adjacent to State significant industrial land, land impacted by MHF Safety Areas, areas affected by the MAEO (impacted by airport flight paths), land directly impacted by former landfill operations and open landfills, and areas that are relatively isolated or cut off due to highways or rail lines (with few to no crossing points). In these areas, higher levels of growth are not appropriate due to the potential impact on human health and well-being.

According to State guidance, the residential zones suitable for minimal change areas are the Low Density Residential Zone (LDRZ), Township Zone (TZ) or Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ).[41] As a metropolitan municipality, Brimbank does not employ the LDRZ or TZ. Thus, minimal change areas within Brimbank should be zoned NRZ.

As NRZ still accommodates growth, there may be further planning tools required to limit intensification where there are specific risks. This already exists on land impacted by the Melbourne Airport flight paths, where the MAEO restricts further development. In the areas near the MHFs, a restriction on minimum subdivision size in the zone schedule (so as to prevent further development) is proposed. These areas are referred to as the 'interface areas' in the proposed schedules.

Some minimal change areas are in locations that would otherwise be incremental or substantial change if not for heritage restrictions (e.g., around Sunshine and Albion). This makes it even more critical to ensure that well-located areas without restrictions are zoned to accommodate growth.

The RDF clarifies expectations around areas that need to balance protection and growth.

Objectives

To avoid increased density of housing in areas that are affected by the MAEO and near MHFs (referred to as 'interface areas').

To encourage the retention of housing that positively contributes to the heritage character of areas subject to the HO.

To ensure the design of new development has regard to any identified special characteristics of the neighbourhood.

Actions

Zone all minimal change areas NRZ.

To further limit change:
- Apply a minimum subdivision size to prevent further intensification of housing in areas near the MHFs.
- Investigate ways to strengthen planning policy and/or controls (i.e., application of a Buffer Area Overlay [BAO]) in order to respond to areas where there is an identified amenity and/or safety risk (e.g., Public Safety Areas for the MHFs). Refer to the **Amenity** section for further detail.

No further action required for:
- Areas subject to the HO and the MAEO.

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