



Improving Victoria's planning system

Glen Eira City Council is calling on the State Government to improve the State's planning system to:

1. Strengthen local planning frameworks.
2. Strengthen discretionary height controls.
3. Protect social and cultural heritage.
4. Improve planning mechanisms for social and affordable housing.
5. Improve sustainability planning for new developments.

IMPROVE THE PLANNING SYSTEM

Under Victoria's planning system, local councils and the State Government develop planning schemes to control land use and development.

Planning schemes are also developed to ensure the protection and conservation of land in Victoria in the present and long-term interests of all Victorians.

The Glen Eira community feels let down by the planning system in the following ways:

- a lack of consistency in the application of local policies;
- a lack of certainty regarding the intensity of development allowed, particularly in regard to height;
- a lack of protection for sites of cultural and heritage significance;
- a lack of minimum level of social housing for new developments; and
- not enough focus on improving the environmental sustainability performance of new buildings.

Planning schemes are developed in accordance with planning policies and strategies. They contain planning policies, zones, overlays and other provisions that affect how land can be used and developed.

The objectives of planning in Victoria are set out in the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. The Act also provides for the Victoria Planning Provisions which is a template document of standard state provisions for all planning schemes to be derived from. The Victorian Government has also developed a series of planning practice notes and advisory notes to assist users of the planning system.

STRENGTHEN LOCAL PLANNING FRAMEWORKS

Council is seeking commitment from the State Government to elevate the status of local planning policy and enable local policy language to be directive and provide certainty in decision-making.

This will enable Council's strategic intent of approved planning policy to be delivered and improve the effectiveness of the local planning system.

The State Government planning system restricts how prescriptive or absolute local planning policies can be — resulting in applicants arguing and interpreting planning rules at Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

Victorian planning law only requires VCAT to consider local planning policy. It does not make it mandatory for VCAT to implement local planning policy. This situation negatively affects confidence and credibility of the planning system.



STRENGTHEN DISCRETIONARY HEIGHT CONTROLS

Council is seeking commitment from the State Government to strengthen height controls in the planning scheme in a way that:

- a. mandatory maximum height controls can be used as a legitimate planning tool to simplify the planning system and provide certainty for all involved; and
- b. where discretionary controls are implemented, clearer guidance is required for the 'exercise of discretion' (eg. criteria for when height limits can be exceeded and by how much. For example, a 10 to 20 per cent increase and not double as is sometimes sought by applicants).

This will address community dissatisfaction with the growing disregard shown by some applicants towards discretionary height controls, which Council invested significant time and resources to establish through structure planning and the planning scheme amendment processes.



PROTECT SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Council is seeking commitment from the State Government to work together to identify buildings or objects of value to the community to provide policy certainty for developers, owners and the community; and to enhance and protect the history and diversity of our neighbourhoods for generations to come.

This will address growing community concern about heritage protection of significant buildings, which has highlighted a lack of clear state guidance as to the threshold for local social or cultural significance.



IMPROVE PLANNING MECHANISMS FOR SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

There are currently 839 social housing dwellings in Glen Eira which accounts for around 1.4 per cent of all dwellings. This is significantly lower than the metropolitan average. The *Glen Eira Social and Affordable Housing Strategy* identifies that the unmet need for affordable housing is in the order of 6,061 dwellings. This will increase to approximately 7,500 dwellings by 2036.

Without an adequate housing mix, residents, including families with low incomes, students and vulnerable people, may not have sufficient income to cover vital needs such as food, utilities or health related expenses.

To ensure levels of social and affordable housing stock keeps pace with our growing community, Council is calling on the State Government to introduce a mandatory inclusionary zoning approach to support the delivery of social and affordable housing. This approach would see a minimum and consistent level of social housing requirements for all new major developments.

IMPROVED SUSTAINABILITY FOR NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Like many areas across Melbourne, Glen Eira is growing. Over the next 15 years, Glen Eira is expecting 22,000 new residents, 9,000 new households and 9,500 new jobs.

To keep our City liveable and sustainable, Council is calling on the State Government to adopt a comprehensive planning policy framework for Environmentally Sustainable Development to improve the sustainability and liveability of all buildings.

The *Glen Eira Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2016–2021* sets out how Council will support and advocate on behalf of the community on sustainability. It sets a long-term goal for community carbon emissions to be at net zero by 2050.

Council is also calling on State Government to improve the planning assessment framework to protect solar panels on existing buildings from overshadowing.

THE ASK

Commitment to:

- Elevate the status of the local planning policy and enable local policy language to be directive and provide certainty in decision-making.
- Change discretionary height controls so that they can be used as a legitimate planning tool to simplify the planning system and provide certainty for all involved.
- Work with Council to identify buildings or objects of value to the community and establish clear guidance of the threshold for local social or cultural significance.
- Introduce a mandatory inclusionary zoning approach to support the delivery of social and affordable housing.
- Develop and adopt a comprehensive environmental sustainability planning policy to improve the liveability and sustainability of all buildings.

MORE INFORMATION

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