

PSP Guidelines 2020

Guidelines for Precinct Structure Planning in Melbourne's Greenfield

Stakeholder consultation report

June 2021

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Prepared by	Rachel Wilton	May 2021
Support from	Tess Grimmond and Katherine Smith	May 2021
Reviewed by	Brent McLean	May 2021
Authorised by	Tess Pickering	May 2021

1.0 KEY TAKEAWAYS

The Victorian Planning Authority (VPA)'s extensive consultation on the *Guidelines for Precinct Structure Planning in Melbourne's Greenfields* (the Guidelines) proved there is strong support within the planning and development industry for the refresh of the Guidelines, and that the updated objectives and greater focus on the 20-minute neighbourhood principle will enable improved planning outcomes in Melbourne's Greenfields. Achieving the right balance between certainty and flexibility will be imperative to the success of the Guidelines.

The VPA received in-depth feedback from more than 50 professional bodies throughout its consultation process and have provided a detailed overview of this feedback in Section 5 of this report.

Several key takeaways from the detailed feedback will drive the next steps in refreshing the Guidelines.

Overall



- Continue to advocate for better collaboration and partnering with councils, agencies and industry within the precinct planning process, including partnering with Aboriginal stakeholders to recognise, celebrate and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage and connection to country, and provide greater opportunities for sites and values to be reflected in place-based planning
- Ensure there is an appropriate balance of certainty and flexibility in the Guidelines' performance targets, including the need to allow for site responsive flexibility and innovation
- Work with local councils through project partnering to ensure the intent of the Guidelines is understood and the desired outcomes are clear
- Empower councils to seek justification from developers where the targets and principles in the Guidelines are not being met
- Provide more context on how targets are reflected in the Precinct Structure Plan and how this is achieved in post PSP phases
- Identify and address the interventions required to other areas of the planning system to achieve the intent of the Guidelines' objectives and performance targets.

Implementation

- Determine how the implementation of the targets and principles in the Guidelines can be strengthened – should vs must
- Provide stakeholders with more information about the relationship between the Guidelines targets and existing statutory measures
- Provide further opportunity for stakeholders to inform the development or refinement of future practice notes that support the interpretation and implementation of the Guidelines.

Innovation Pathway

- Provide clearer direction on the process for supporting innovations in PSPs, including the governance arrangements for projects delivered through the Innovation Pathway.

Density and diversity

- Further investigate how higher density targets can be nuanced to provide better place-based outcomes
- Consider how the PSPs can guide the delivery of more diverse housing typologies
- Investigate how density and diversity may impact amenity provision and development sequencing.

Activity centres

- Provide more guidance on the desired outcomes for the various hierarchy of activity centres and outcomes sought through detailed design.

Sustainability and greening

- Review the target for 30% tree canopy coverage and test the feasibility of implementing the target with the location and spacing requirements of underground services and vehicle access
- Review how PSPs address sustainability as well as climate and environmental resilience to ensure best practice.

Regional Victoria

- Provide clearer direction on how the Guidelines can be applied in a regional setting and identify appropriate performance targets for regional Victoria.

2.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 Purpose of this report

This purpose of this report is to provide an overview of what was heard throughout the public stakeholder consultation process on the refreshed Guidelines through interviews, surveys, briefings and written submissions.

This report aims to update stakeholders on 'what was heard' to provide a greater understanding of what will be considered as the VPA works to finalise the Guidelines, and what feedback cannot be addressed in the scope of this work

2.1.1 Reader's note

This report is a high-level summary of key feedback heard and many submissions went into greater detail than is provided in this report. This report includes a focus on comments relating to the Performance Targets, particularly density and diversity. The VPA has summarised key ideas in this report for ease of communication, though will continue to consider and respond to feedback in its entire detail.

Furthermore, not all matters raised in submissions or ideas captured in this report will be reflected in the next iteration of the Guidelines, as some issues may be out of scope of what the VPA and/or a PSP can deliver. The VPA will work to resolve all relevant issues where possible.

2.2 Project background

In September 2020, the VPA, in partnership with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), publicly consulted on a refreshed version of its *Guidelines for Precinct Structure Planning in Melbourne's Greenfields*. The updated Guidelines build on the success of the original Guidelines that were released over ten years ago and provide consistency with current state planning policy and global context.

The refresh of the Guidelines delivers on *Plan Melbourne 2017 – 2050* Action 20 and addresses the need to reflect step changes in industry best-practice to improve liveability in Melbourne's future greenfield neighbourhoods.

While the review of the Guidelines initially looked to incorporate precinct planning guidance for both Melbourne Greenfields and urban renewal areas, this work has been separated into two parts to respond to changes in precinct governance and the complexity of the urban renewal setting.

The content of this report relates to greenfields planning only for a metropolitan and regional setting.

The main goal of the updated Guidelines is to provide clear structure, ambitions through performance targets, and a practical toolbox for preparing successful PSPs. The document includes updated principles and performance targets to guide new minimum standards for PSPs based on the State Government's 20-minute neighbourhood policy.

The Guidelines also reflect VPA's PSP 2.0 process which embeds greater collaboration in PSP preparation and places a stronger emphasis on 'place' in the technical assessment. Early issues validation is prioritised in the PSP 2.0 process to more effectively define resolution pathways and deliver plans in a timely manner to support growth.

Throughout the updating of the Guidelines, consultation has been undertaken with the key stakeholder groups, including State Government agencies, local councils, key industry bodies and the broader planning and development industry.

3.0 OVERVIEW OF THE CONSULTATION

The Guidelines were made available for public comment through an extended eight-week exhibition period, with feedback sought through various engagement channels, including stakeholder interviews, briefings, surveys and submissions.

The VPA also participated in several industry events throughout the consultation process to promote the proposed changes to the Guidelines and provide the opportunity to receive and document feedback.

The full consultation approach and participation numbers are detailed in Section 4.

3.1 Consultation purpose and objectives

The stakeholder consultation process sought to communicate the proposed changes to the Guidelines and confirm stakeholder views on whether the updates achieve the intent of the 20-minute neighbourhood policy outcomes whilst balancing the needs of the planning and development industry. The VPA invited stakeholders to critically review and feedback on the updated principles and performance targets proposed throughout the Guidelines.

Through this process, the VPA aimed to:

1. Update stakeholders and industry on the VPA's reform program and raise profiles of both the PSP Guidelines and PSP 2.0 process, and showcase the VPA's expertise and leadership in growth area planning
2. Raise the profile of DELWP's 20-minute neighbourhood policy through the PSP Guidelines, and ensure the Guidelines will achieve the policy intent and its translation supports improved outcomes
3. Check-in with stakeholders who participated in the refresh to ensure all feedback has been understood
4. Consult with councils, agencies and industry stakeholders to gather feedback on the effectiveness of the proposed principles and targets and provide further opportunity to inform the final version of the updated Guidelines.

3.2 Promotion and reach

The opportunity to provide feedback on the Guidelines was promoted to a wide range of industry stakeholders through email, a promotional video, summary brochure and via a major update to the VPA's website.

- 557 direct email invites were sent to identified stakeholders of the VPA
- A further 33 emails were sent to people who had registered their interest in the Guidelines through the online subscription form on the VPA website
- VPA website was updated with the revised Guidelines, an introductory video, instructions for reading the Guidelines, and a summary brochure and received.

To ensure maximum participation, the VPA also worked with several industry bodies, including the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA), Housing Industry Association (HIA), Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA), the Property Council of Australia (PCA) and Planning Matters to further promote the consultation opportunity.

Reach

As a result of this promotion, the updated website received a total of 5,487 page views and the Guidelines were downloaded 1,802 times during the consultation period. In addition, the following views and impressions were received across the VPA's social media channels:

- 2,292 total video views (across all channels)
- 7,038 Twitter impressions
- 7,213 LinkedIn impressions.

3.3 Previous consultation – development of the revised Guidelines

3.3.1 Guidelines workshops

At the commencement of the review process, the VPA held four joint workshops with local council, industry professionals and developers and heard that the biggest priorities for renewing the Guidelines are the need to guide improved outcomes for future communities, particularly in density, diversity and sustainability; strike the right balance between certainty and flexibility; ensuring consistent assessment of 'generally in accordance with' and the coordination of State Government agencies through early identification of roles and responsibilities.

3.3.2 Expert Review Panel

As part of the initial review of the previous Guidelines, the VPA engaged an Expert Review Panel, who provided a short review of the guidelines and outcomes currently being delivered. They provided areas of focus for the updated guidelines and suggestions as to how to ensure best practice planning.

The Expert Review Panel was made up of senior industry experts and academics with knowledge and expertise in urban planning and Greenfields development.

3.3.3 Guidelines Reference Group

A Guidelines Reference Group (GRG) was established to provide advice and options on how the Guidelines could be revised to deliver structure plans that facilitate growth and achieve wider economic, social and environmental objectives. The GRG included members from peak industry bodies. The VPA project team meets regularly with the GRG to hear expert advice about the proposed changes to the document.

3.3.4 State Agency Committee

A State Agency Committee was established to provide advice on relevant policies applicable to the Guidelines and to ensure changes align with government policies and directions. The State Agency Committee comprised members from relevant Victorian Government departments and agencies.

4.0 CONSULTATION PARTICIPATION

4.1 Consultation program

The consultation period ran from Friday 18 September – Wednesday 11 November 2020, with submissions accepted until Wednesday 22 November 2020. The activities and responses are summarised below.

Frequency or Date	Public Consultation Activity	Audience	Outcomes
18 September 2020	Email notification of Exhibition sent	All stakeholders	557 delivered
18 September 2020	Two online surveys launched	Industry stakeholders and general public	9 responses
Offered and advertised via exhibition	Stakeholder interviews	Any interested stakeholder	26 interviews
Offered and advertised via exhibition	Briefings	Any interested stakeholder group	9 briefings
Tuesday 20 October 2020	Regional workshop	Peri-urban and regional stakeholders only	1 workshop
18 September – 22 November 2020	Written submissions	All	56 received
18 September – present	Submission review and discussions	Submitters	12 focus sessions

4.2 Virtual meetings

Through its consultation activities, the VPA met virtually with 36 different organisations, including:

- 18 local councils
- 8 State government agencies and service providers
- 4 industry body groups
- 3 planning consultancies
- 3 development groups

4.3 Submitters

The VPA received submissions from 56 different organisations, including:

- 13 councils
- 10 State government agencies and service providers
- 4 industry body groups
- 5 planning consultancies
- 9 developers
- 15 other organisations with an interest in planning for Greenfields.

5.0 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

The timely refresh of the Guidelines received complete support from stakeholders throughout the consultation process, and in-principle support was shown for its updated objectives and focus on planning for 20-minute neighbourhoods. Participants felt it was “sensible to align the Guidelines with Plan Melbourne and updated Victorian planning policies” and said the refresh reflects the need to integrate lessons learnt in Greenfields planning over the past 10 years. It was agreed that to achieve better on-the-ground outcomes through the Guidelines, the VPA needs to consider what the necessary changes are for new precincts and work back to initiate these changes through the Guidelines and early planning.

The emphasis on place-based planning and greater capacity for innovation are welcomed improvements in the Guidelines.

It was generally agreed that the transition from “in-principle” ideas to implementation is the key struggle experienced by planners currently, and that supporting practice notes and/or other interventions outside of the direct scope of the Guidelines must address this challenge in order to be useful.

Participants expressed concerns around the difficulty of enforcing or mandating the desired outcomes of the Guidelines while maintaining flexibility and providing opportunities for innovation.

Ensuring that PSPs ultimately provide a good variety of lifestyle amenity and services and ensuring a place-based planning approach is taken was highly important to stakeholders, and some feedback suggested that the Guidelines may prevent place-based planning outcomes if they are too prescriptive.

Participants requested the VPA to include an indicative timeframe for the preparation of PSPs in the Guidelines to provide more clarity for users.

5.1 Certainty vs flexibility

Throughout the consultation process, the VPA heard one of the key challenges that should be addressed within the Guidelines is balancing certainty and flexibility to provide high quality, place-based design outcomes. Several stakeholder groups said that the updated Guidelines generally allow for flexibility and could foster innovation, however the more prescribed the Guidelines become the more challenging it is to provide innovative design responses.

To strike the right balance and enough certainty in planning outcomes, stakeholders suggested that the Guidelines look to embed thresholds instead of specific targets or introduce “minimums” to ensure new Greenfield developments achieve the hallmarks of a 20-minute neighbourhood in a way that is responsive to and celebrates the unique attributes of a place.

Many participants also questioned the use of language such as “should” instead of “must” and pointed to the difference between mandatory items in planning schemes and voluntary opportunities and questioned where the Guidelines sit along this spectrum. Some stakeholders suggested the targets required to achieve 20-minute neighbourhoods should be mandated to implement the Plan Melbourne Action 20. However, this position was contested by other stakeholders, who queried whether mandating targets would be beneficial if it impacted the opportunity to promote innovation and respond to site specific challenges or market needs.

Where are we heading?



- *Providing further clarity where targets are requirements defined by Victorian Planning Provisions.*
- *Continuing the promotion of the Generally in Accordance Practice Note and greater acknowledgement that site specific requirements may result in the need to propose alternative performance outcomes.*
- *Enable tools in the PSP document where site based flexibility is available.*
- *Enabling councils to seek justifications as to where applicants propose to depart from the desired outcome and/or propose an appropriate alternative.*

5.2 The document itself – intent, language and structure

Some participants provided feedback on the layout, structure and language of the updated Guidelines. Specifically, some people felt that the structure of the document was overcomplicated, and that it should be simplified to facilitate implementation, especially as a ‘user guide’. The inclusion of case studies illustrating both successful and unsuccessful planning outcomes would help users understand its intent and the motivation behind some changes to the Guidelines.

Stakeholders strongly agreed with the intent of the document to improve liveability and planning outcomes in the Greenfields by setting the right benchmarks through the targets. It was stressed that to be successful, all stakeholders involved in the planning process must understand the intent of the document, and that the principles and targets must be interpreted accurately by agencies and councils. Providing a hierarchy of targets and principles at the start of the document may assist with understanding and clarify intent for users.

Other improvements were suggested around the use of words such as “exemplary” and “innovation”, which could be finessed throughout the document to provide more clarity. Similarly, the language around “resilience” in the document was often linked with biodiversity, but participants felt the concept of resilience is applicable to other areas such as economic and community outcomes.

There were several comments made about the need to ensure the Guidelines encourage place-based planning outcomes that respond to site-specific conditions, and stakeholders had mixed views about whether the current iteration of the Guidelines will achieve this.

Where are we heading?



- *Providing accessible versions of each part of the Guidelines to support the end user.*
- *Restructuring content to support readability, particularly Part 3 “Constructing a PSP”.*
- *Exploring further exemplary case studies to illustrate the ambitions and desired outcomes.*
- *Ensuring the intent of outcomes are clearly articulated in the PSP document, or where innovation is encouraged, by placing more emphasis on the focus of key outcomes sought.*

5.2.1 Practice notes

Stakeholders expressed high levels of interest in viewing and reviewing the practice notes associated with the updated Guidelines. It was stressed that these practice notes will be incredibly important in clarifying the intention and application of the Guidelines. The most sought-after practice notes were the provision of affordable housing in greenfield precincts, preparing a compact PSP, implementing Movement and Place framework and coordinating the delivery of infrastructure and staging provisions.

Keen interest was shown in the practice note on the provision of social and affordable housing. Some concern was expressed around mandating affordable housing and whether these costs would be passed down to the homeowner. Better distinction in the Guidelines between “affordable” and “social” housing was also requested as some readers found these terms ambiguous.

The VPA also heard suggestions for various additional Practice Notes which it will be considering in the finalisation of the Guidelines and beyond, including:

- Affordable Housing.
- Planning alongside Extractive Uses.
- Innovation Pathway.
- Aboriginal and European Cultural Heritage.
- Sustainability, Greening, Biodiversity and Resilience.
- Planning for Greenfield PSPs in Regional Victoria.

Where are we heading?



- *Preparing a comprehensive set of new and updated practice notes to support PSP preparation as part of a Guidelines Implementation Strategy.*

5.3 Innovation – future proofing, PSP 2.0 and pathways, and partnering

The VPA received in principle support from all stakeholders for facilitating innovation through the Guidelines. However, more information on the scope and process for accessing the innovation pathway was requested.

Stakeholders across industry and council raised that clarity is needed to determine situations where the innovation pathway should be used. Industry called for clearer steps for qualifying and accessing the innovation pathway, including incentives for developers to undertake an Innovation Pathway PSP and indicative timeframes for these PSPs. Stakeholders raised the need for clear governance arrangements for reaching agreement and approval for innovation from various stakeholders during the planning and implementation process. A process for agreement on the use of the Innovation Pathway and dispute resolution was requested by industry and will be investigated by the VPA.

Industry suggested further consideration of other mechanisms/interventions, including providing clear incentives for developers to undertake this pathway, such as:

- Facilitating 96A applications
- Ensuring amendments are undertaken via 20(4)
- Ensuring flexibility with engineering standards
- Guaranteeing planning permits and certification within a specific timeframe.

Several recommendations were made about additional innovations to be considered in the Guidelines, including how planning can enable land uses to change over time as market demand evolves and reserving spaces for future uses, such as solar, battery and electric cars and sustainable features as they emerge.

Councils raised the need to ensure the Guidelines do not exclude creative outcomes from being delivered when a PSP is delivered through the standard Coordination Pathway and clarification was sought as to how the 'waiving' of subsidiary regulatory requirements will be implemented.

All stakeholders were supportive of the co-design and visioning approach of the PSP 2.0 process but raised the importance of finalising the technical planning reports prior to the delivery of any consultation processes to ensure timely and informed engagement can occur.

5.3.1 Focus on partnering

All stakeholders agreed that partnering is key to achieving improved outcomes in Greenfield planning and that bringing servicing agencies along on the journey to achieve shared goals was paramount.

Furthermore, the VPA heard that the Guidelines must empower councils and delivery agencies to be flexible to deviate from existing provisions to enable better outcomes where justified.

Community engagement was also raised as imperative to the success of PSP planning, and stakeholders suggested that the Guidelines should give more direction on including existing and future communities in decision-making processes for future places.

The VPA also heard that early engagement with Traditional Owners and the Registered Aboriginal Parties should be specified, and more work is needed to improve the reflection of history in the future place.

Overall, participants in the consultation felt that more clarity and consistency on stakeholder input points in the PSP 2.0 process would be beneficial.

Where are we heading?



To respond to issues raised by stakeholders, the VPA is reviewing this section of the Guidelines with the aim to restructure for clarity. We will look to provide more detail on assessment and agreement processes for the Innovation Pathway and better define the expectations for innovation outside the Innovation Pathway PSP. Other key focus areas include:

- *Exploring the existing mechanisms available to determine how these could be applied to facilitate PSP delivery (e.g. S96A Applications).*
- *Coordinating a 'PSP Innovation Pilot' in collaboration with agency, council, and industry partners to trial cross-government consideration and authorisation of innovation proposals.*
- *Restructuring content to emphasise that general place-based innovations are to be delivered through the 2.0 process and considered as part of Pre-commencement, Pitching and Co-design processes.*
- *Commitment to improving outcomes for reflection of cultural heritage values in the PSP and relationship with the Cultural Heritage Management Plan with Traditional Owners and Registered Aboriginal Parties.*
- *Embedding improved community engagement throughout the 2.0 process, including the use of web based interactive technology and tools.*
- *Preparing key 'recommendations and interventions' required to support the intent of the Guidelines for the Minister's consideration.*

5.4 Principles and targets

Mixed feedback was received throughout the consultation about the principles and proposed targets in the Guidelines.

In general, stakeholders emphasised the importance of setting minimum targets to facilitate good planning outcomes and to indicate where and how discretion should be applied at the planning permit stage so that this is transparent to all stakeholders.

The implementation of the 20-minute neighbourhood policy via the Guidelines was well supported. Overall, it was agreed that good access to schools, community infrastructure and activity centres will improve the overall living conditions of communities and must be a priority. Street-orientated, walkable design should be at the forefront of the Guidelines' targets.

It was suggested the Guidelines should acknowledge the varying landform and physical site constraints in PSPs as land constraints impact the deliverability of densities and other outcomes.

Some participants thought that allowing flexibility in relation to some metrics or the location and delivery of some land uses (road sizes, etc) would encourage innovative outcomes in other aspects of the PSP, though this idea was not supported by all participants.

Where are we heading?



- *Ensuring there is sufficient clarity on how the targets are expected to be implemented, including those that are requirements by Victorian Planning Provisions (future Compact PSP Template).*

5.4.1 Density targets

There was overall support from stakeholders to increase densities in the right locations to achieve the hallmarks of the 20-minute neighbourhood if density is delivered well. Academics, public health and planning professionals all agreed that the proposed density targets (T1, and T2) are consistent with current best practice and align with research confirming that 20 dwellings/hectare is the minimum density required to allow people to live locally and support healthy and active lifestyles.

The VPA heard requests from some academics and public health professionals to mandate minimum density requirements and to increase the target average to 25 dw/ha to deliver wider economic and health benefits in new growth areas.

Industry stakeholders indicated they are currently delivering up to 18 dw/ha in greenfield areas and could readily adapt to provide an average of 20 dw/ha in new PSPs. However, the VPA heard some concern from industry and industry bodies that the draft 30 dw/ha target (T1) could result in its application to 75 per cent of a PSP, and this outcome could impact housing diversity, market preferences, the quality of the public domain, and broader sustainability outcomes if current design and engineering standards are not updated.

Industry stakeholders advised there are significant design and engineering challenges that need to be addressed before densities can be readily increased to the Guideline's proposed 30 dw/ha around activity centres and public transport nodes. Stakeholders requested that the VPA further test the outcomes of this performance target specially to ensure there is strategic justification for applying a 30 dw/ha target within 800m of activity centres and public transport facilities.

To overcome aforementioned design and engineering challenges, industry called for a commitment from all tiers of government to initiate the essential changes to design and engineering standards required to deliver densities over 30 dw/ha, with preference shown for the VPA to lead this process. Some industry stakeholders also requested the 30 dw/ha target is "phased in" to provide time for developers, councils and servicing authorities to work through these issues, and allow the development industry to factor these changes into its feasibility and development models.

Industry and peak bodies also called for a more nuanced response to density distribution to manage challenges with aligning community services, facilities and critical infrastructure with growth over the life of a PSP.

It was also suggested that a greater emphasis be placed on coupling density with housing diversity to support objectives such as aging in place and affordability, as promoted in other parts of the Guidelines.

What has testing shown to date?

The preliminary results of performance target testing for density (shown in Figure 1) indicate that 30 dw/ha is achievable and that more than half of the product mix could be delivered as a typical house/land package with independent dwelling construction and no further planning approval.

However, the testing indicates a more nuanced approach may be required to ensure the Guidelines further support density in the right locations, encourage high quality design outcomes, and housing diversity across a PSP (refer to Figure 2). Preliminary testing also indicates other interventions, such as changes to Victorian Planning Provisions, building codes and engineering standards may be required to deliver increased density and diversity, and improved urban form recommended in the Guidelines.

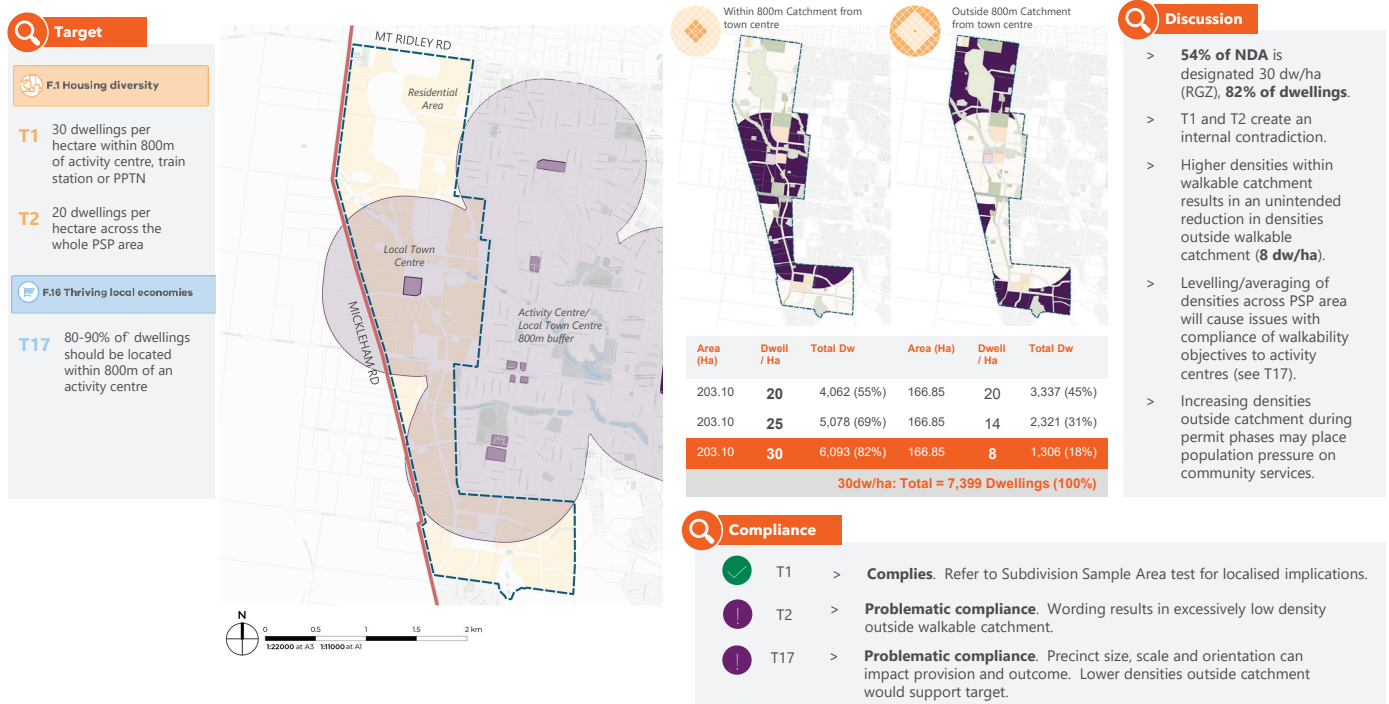
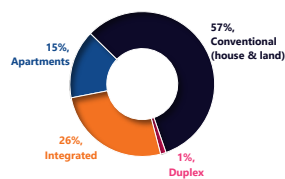


Figure 1: Housing density spatial testing outcomes based on exhibited targets – Craigieburn West PSP Test (Source: Mesh Planning and VPA)

Dwelling type

- Apartment
- Conventional (house & land)
- Duplex
- Integrated



Apartment	No = 2	Units, 73
Conventional	No = 280	Dwellings, 280
Duplex	No = 6	Dwellings, 6
Integrated	No = 127	Dwellings, 127

*Average 80m2 with 1-3 bedrooms per unit



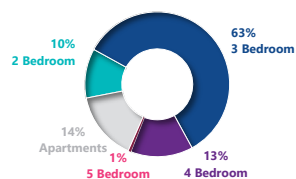
Discussion

- > Half of the product mix could be delivered as a typical house/land package with independent dwelling construction and no further planning approval (SLHC)
- > Almost half of the dwellings (43%) would require integrated development with:
 - > site-specific builder product development
 - > coordinated/integrated construction methods
 - > Additional planning approvals (permits)
- > Subdivisions within the higher density area will need to consider building typology options and street scape design more collectively.

Dwelling size

- 2 Bedrooms
- 3 Bedrooms
- 4 Bedrooms
- 5 Bedrooms
- 30 Units
- 45 Units

No. of Storeys	Count
1	276
2	137
3	2
COUNT	415



2 Bedrooms	Dwellings, 54
3 Bedrooms	Dwellings, 288
4 Bedrooms	Dwellings, 68
5 Bedrooms	Dwellings, 3
Apartment	Units, 75



Discussion

- > Density target will not achieve enhanced diversity in housing typologies without intervention – predominantly single storey/3+ bedrooms.
- > Market generally expects 3-4 bedroom dwellings. This can be accommodated under current requirements (ResCode/SLHC).
- > Single/two bed units generally require an accompanying Affordable Housing requirement to incentivise diversity.

Figure 2: Dwelling type subdivision / built form testing outcomes (500m sample)
– Craigieburn West PSP Test (Source: Mesh Planning and VPA)

Where are we heading?



- Exploring desired subdivision layouts and housing typology outcomes under the proposed density bands to test effectiveness under current conditions.
- Testing an 'Amenity-based' density model which may more effectively guide density to the right locations (town centres, parks, PPTN, community facilities and key destinations) and is better aligned with market and industry preferences.
- Exploring how the PSPs could drive greater housing diversity in the right locations through a Target or other tools.
- Defining a key list of interventions outside of the scope and remit of the guidelines required to achieve the intent and desired outcomes of the guidelines for the Minister's consideration.

5.4.2 Safe, accessible and well connected – access and movement

In general, stakeholders welcomed the improvements to targets around arterial roads and street networks and layouts. The promotion of public transport, cycling and walking opportunities was considered highly important to stakeholders, who suggested that improved access to non-car related movement should be prioritised in Greenfield areas. It was noted that the implications to the streetscape will need to be considered, as impacts such as wider streets may lead to adverse outcomes.

Walkability was raised as a key priority throughout the consultation, and it was suggested that cyclable and walkable neighbourhoods should be considered as separate priorities in the Guidelines. It was also suggested that walkable neighbourhoods should consider both walking and public transport networks, with stakeholders advocating for separated paths for walking and cycling to ensure vulnerable people can walk safely. There were requests for further clarity on whether shared paths were to be considered and whether on-road, separated bike paths would be allowed.

The VPA heard that more focus should be given to the design and quality of the arterial roads on the 1.6km grid rather than the structure of the grid itself.

There was mixed feedback on the target (Target 6) requiring "pedestrian and cyclist crossings to be provided every 400-800m along arterial roads, rail lines, waterways and any other accessibility barriers". Some stakeholders said it was excessive and that "the 400m for buses has the potential to increase connector roads and land take", while others said it was too infrequent. There were suggestions that this target could be more nuanced, for example shorter distances between crossings near activity centres.

In the greenfield context, stakeholders felt that targets around train and tram access were unlikely to be met in all instances. A more coordinated government approach to planning for public transport overall was also raised as important.

Furthermore, the VPA heard that the challenge of coordinating activity centres and arterial roads is currently overlooked in the Guidelines. It was recommended that improvements such as lowering car speeds in residential areas and avoiding large, at grade car parks between activity centres could be exemplified in the Guidelines as key improvements in the Greenfields.

Where are we heading?



- Piloting approaches for increased focus on movement and place under the 2.0 co-design process and as part of the future compact PSP document and plan set.
- Recommending a proposal for government to re-examine street layout cross sections and engineering standards to facilitate greater housing diversity.

5.4.3 High quality public realm - open space, tree canopy and water

The VPA heard general support for the intent of the high-quality public realm targets relating to open space (T10 and T11), canopy trees (T12 and T13) and Integrated Water Management (IWM) (T15). However, there were concerns relating to the delivery and maintenance costs and the practicalities of delivering these targets.

There was strong support for greater flexibility in the size and split between local parks and active open space, enabling plans to respond to local needs. However, there was concern among local and state government stakeholders that the 10% provision of open space (T10) may not be commensurate with the higher housing densities sought by the Guidelines. Further, some industry stakeholders questioned the validity of the distribution targets set by T11 (A sports reserve or open space larger than 1 hectare within an 800m safe walkable distance of each dwelling and a local park within a 400m safe walkable distance of each dwelling), suggesting these may be too ambitious.

There was support across a cross-section of stakeholders for greater flexibility in provision of open space - for example the co-location of infrastructure (e.g. electrical kiosks) in open space and crediting of encumbered land towards open space contributions. Stakeholders sought that the Guidelines better integrate open space with community facilities and schools. However, some local councils stressed that planning for open space must ensure that spaces are safe and fit-for purpose and that any applied flexibility does not undermine the fundamental functioning of open spaces.

The feasibility of the 30% tree canopy coverage target (T12) received a mixed response. Whilst there was some recognition that the public realm will play a more significant role in providing canopy cover for increased residential density, there was concern from both government and private industry stakeholders that the target may be impractical. This is largely due to increased competition for space for service infrastructure and vehicle crossovers. Stakeholders also suggested that additional direction about how to accommodate street tree plantings with infrastructure and maintenance requirements, as well as species selection, would be useful.

There was general support for the Integrated Water Management (IWM) principles proposed in the Guidelines due to its positive effect on urban greening and amenity. It was suggested there could be a target for open water allocation. Clearer direction was sought to ensure IWM opportunities are being considered at the beginning of the PSP process and whether all PSPs could prepare IWM plans in line with current policy and design guidelines.

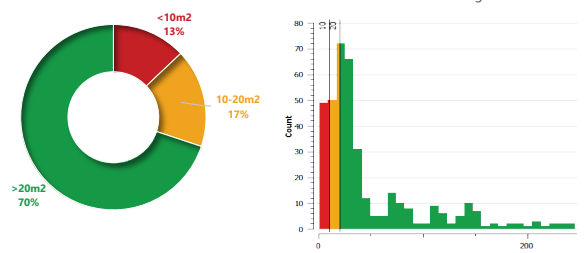
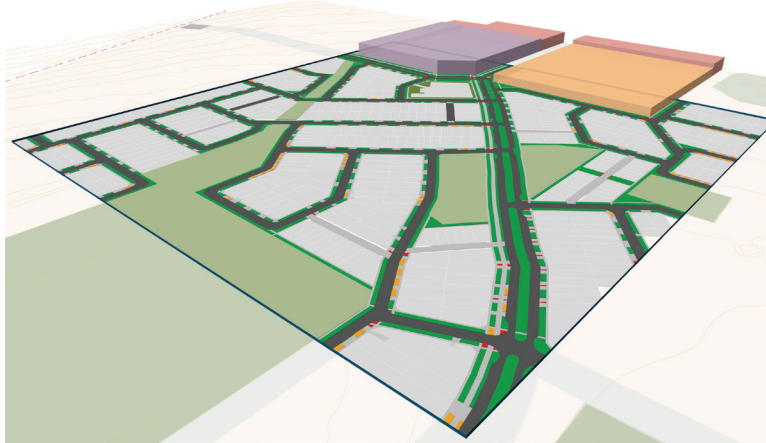
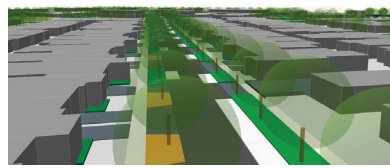
What has testing shown to date?

The preliminary test results show that the open space targets (T10 and T11) are feasible and can be met in a typical PSP (see Figure 3). However, further consideration may be required in relation to provision ratios at higher dwelling densities, both within PSPs and adjoining areas.

Testing also shows that the 30% tree canopy target (T12) is achievable, subject to species selection and subdivision design (e.g. number and spacing of vehicle crossovers). Additional considerations include council maintenance schedules, underground servicing, and soil conditions, all of which can restrict ultimate tree size. The method for measuring tree canopy needs to be defined to ensure the target is achievable at permit stage.

Verge Area

- >20 m²
- 10-20 m²
- <10 m²



Discussion

- > Verge size is key driving factor for canopy tree potential.
- > Larger verge areas allow for trees with larger canopies.
- > 30% canopy tree cover is technically achievable in green and yellow areas.
- > Council maintenance schedules, restrictions on species, underground servicing and soil conditions can restrict the ultimate tree size. Key barrier is electrical.
- > Fragmentation of nature strip in front loaded streets would add complexity and require careful species selection and passive watering design (often constrained by Council requirements).

Figure 3: Canopy tree potential – subdivision / built form test (500m sample)
– Craigieburn West PSP Test (Source: Mesh Planning and VPA)

Where are we heading?



- Including recommendations, as part of a future Guidelines Implementation Strategy for:
 - » a review of public realm outcomes for the street and open space typologies and provision ratios to support liveability and access to public open space.
 - » preparation of greater advice on tree species and canopy to achieve the desired greening and shading outcomes.
- Ensuring greater alignment with Melbourne Water's IWM review and design requirements for drainage and waterway assets.

5.4.4 High quality public realm - biodiversity and sustainability

Feedback highlighted that currently, the Guidelines only focus on preservation of habitat and biodiversity in conversation and that an area may provide other opportunities to support good biodiversity and habitat outcomes. It was suggested the language used in the Guidelines when referencing biodiversity could be amended to include these opportunities.

The VPA heard that the Guidelines do not focus enough on sustainability nor encourage sustainable innovations to be delivered in Greenfields areas. It was suggested that the Guidelines include “clearly stated minimum standards for sustainability of new buildings...to create an incentive for sustainable living.” In addition, it was suggested that a greater emphasis on how PSPs address climate and environmental resilience including, flash flooding, bushfires and the urban heat island affect could be included in the Guidelines.

It was suggested that the Sustainable Subdivisions Framework is a useful tool that could be greater referenced in the Guidelines to address issues of sustainability and public realm. Stakeholders rightly raised the need to include solar orientation in the Guidelines, and the VPA had committed to address this in the next iteration of the document.

Where are we heading?



- Ensuring the Guidelines work to align with government policy intentions:
 - » DELWPs Environmentally sustainable development of buildings and subdivisions roadmap;
 - » draw from existing supporting frameworks implemented by local councils, like the Sustainable Subdivisions Framework; and
 - » improve guidance on subdivision design and responsiveness to key sustainable features.
- Further enhancing the scope of PSP technical studies to reflect policy objectives and consider environmental and climate resilience, including urban heat impact.

5.4.5 Thriving local economies – activity centres

More background information on activity centres, their detailed design, and the hierarchy of activity centres (aligning with Plan Melbourne) was requested from stakeholders to be included in the Guidelines. Further to this, feedback suggested that the feasibility of T17 (80-90% of dwellings should be located within 800m of an activity centre) needs to be tested.

A strong case was made for main street designs that support more multi-modal transport options as opposed to malls and off-street shopping complexes. This needs to be balanced with allowing for innovative shopping complexes. It was suggested that new centres should not be located on high traffic thoroughfares and the design of arterial roads near any centres should allow easy pedestrian movement to the centre.

The VPA heard that the short and long-term implementation of activity centres needs to be better considered in the Guidelines, including making provisions for interim uses to activate spaces as delivery of activity centres are often delayed until population thresholds are met. It was suggested that the Guidelines consider how libraries can be used as an anchor tenant in the early activation of activity centres.

Where are we heading?



- Clarifying the provision requirements for future town centres to meet desired objectives, including clear guidance on urban design outcomes expected as part of a forward Implementation Program.
- Exploring the current Urban Design Framework process and ways to allow for greater innovation and flexibility in detailed town centre planning whilst delivering core objectives.

5.4.6 Connect people with jobs and services – employment areas

The principles and performance targets around connecting people with jobs and services were generally supported but more clarity and detail were requested about the planning and implementation of employment areas in PSPs. This includes the consideration of identifying subregional opportunities or directions for employment and their role and relationship to envisaged uses in the PSP. Stakeholders noted recent strategic planning investigations, like the South East Economic Context report (VPA 2020) that establishes a corridor-level plan for economic growth that consolidates and builds on existing and future employment uses.

The delivery of employment in activity centres was a concern for many stakeholders, who told the VPA that delivery to date has been too slow. Stakeholders raised concerns about how to balance the need for flexibility to respond to changing market needs while ensuring long-term outcomes are met in employment centres.

There were high levels of interest shown in how the Guidelines address agricultural and rural land, with stakeholders requesting clarity on the protection of existing agricultural land and recognition of the employment generated in peri-urban areas.

More clarity was also sought on the planning for areas of State and Regional Industrial Precincts and their ability to achieve the breadth of 20-minute neighbourhood objectives.

The VPA noted that the interaction of employment centres with transport was important to stakeholders, including maximising active transport and public transport. The importance of the consideration of the freight network was also noted.

Further information was sought on the breadth of zones applied in employment centres.

Where are we heading?



- *Providing clarity on the interaction between the Guidelines performance targets and government policy directions for State and Regionally Significant Industrial Precincts, in line with MICLUP.*
- *Ensuring the guidelines reflect the intent that future employment areas are supported by high amenity outcomes for employees and visitors, whilst balancing the needs of end users and market feasibility.*
- *Supporting measures to provide greater certainty on expectations for transitional uses in future town centres, including consideration of the likely timing of infrastructure sequencing and the planning for public transport networks.*

5.4.7 Services and destinations – education and social infrastructure

The VPA heard that although the Guidelines adequately address the amount of social infrastructure needed for new Greenfields communities, the issues of timing and staging remained unresolved. The inclusion of a community infrastructure needs assessment in the Guidelines was widely supported by participants.

The VPA heard that there were other facilities that should be considered more thoroughly in this section, including optional facilities (such as cemeteries, places of worship, justice, and health centres) and aged and supported care.

It was noted that consideration of planning for other education facilities could be better recognised in this section, for example, non-government schools, TAFEs and kindergartens. There were also suggestions to consider traffic and pedestrian-friendly environments around schools and that a greater level of clarity should be provided about co-locating kindergartens and schools.

The need for flexibility to achieve innovation for community services and facilities was also noted.

Where are we heading?



- *Requesting the preparation of a more comprehensive community infrastructure needs assessment to accommodate an evaluation of infrastructure and community services.*
- *Working with the Department of Education to consider alternate school infrastructure models, including planning assessment, co-location priorities, land take and urban design outcomes in line with the Department of Education's policy and forward program planning.*

5.4.8 Infrastructure coordination

The VPA heard that coordination and delivery of infrastructure is a significant issue for the broader implementation of growth area communities. Councils were particularly interested in ensuring the timely delivery of infrastructure in line with population growth.

Principles provided in the Guidelines around staging and sequencing were welcomed by stakeholders, however more clarity was sought, including clarification of trigger points and examples. Industry noted that possible adverse impacts, including constraining development should be considered in the preparation of a staging plan.

There was a lot of interest and suggestions from stakeholders on how to ensure the timely funding for the purchase of land and provision of services. This includes calls for stronger and/or statutory mechanisms (e.g., Public Acquisition Overlays) to reserve land for needed public uses, which are currently simply shown as a 'potential location' as well as how to use GAIC and ICPs differently.

Where are we heading?



- *Piloting an improved assessment of infrastructure sequencing in the future compact PSP and ICP to support integration with state and local government budget and delivery programs.*

5.5 Implementation - assessing outcomes and post-completion

The VPA heard that implementation poses the biggest risk to achieving good outcomes in greenfield precincts.

All participants agreed that the Guidelines must support councils and delivery agencies in assessing plans against the proposed targets and desired outcomes, including assisting statutory planners in councils with how to interpret a PSP. One submitter suggested that this might be achieved through permit conditions. The VPA notes that planning reforms such as this are outside of the scope of the Guidelines.

Buy-in and agreement from councils and delivery agencies will be key to the success of the Guidelines. It was even suggested the mandating the involvement of key stakeholders in the PSP process could result in better outcomes and quicker delivery post-approval. Another suggestion was to explore the option of delivery criteria post-approval.

Stakeholders hoped that the refresh of the Guidelines would provide more clarity around planning outcomes, not just the process for preparing a PSP.

The VPA also heard that the process for reviewing previously completed PSPs needs to be reconsidered.

It was acknowledged that while it is difficult to have a readymade place for community at the beginning of development, there is a need to determine clear delivery times for residential areas to set good behaviours and ensure social infrastructure, transport and other critical elements are delivered.

Where are we heading?



- *Developing a template for a new compact PSP which articulates the expected achievement of the PSP against the defined performance targets and outcomes.*
- *Developing guidance and an approach for PSP evaluations.*

5.6 Peri-urban and regional context

The VPA received feedback and submissions from peri-urban and regional stakeholders, which will be considered in detail in the development of the VPA's approach to adapting the Guidelines for regional settings.

A "deep dive" into the specific needs of peri-urban and regional planners occurred as part of the broader consultation on the updated Guidelines, with the aim of testing the proposed targets and principles in a regional setting. The outcomes of the workshop are detailed in Appendix A.

Where are we heading?



- *Recognising the framework and focus areas, including replicable process under 2.0, that is provided by the Guidelines and how it can be utilised in preparing place-based plans in a peri-urban and the regional setting.*
- *Highlighting where performance targets may vary throughout different development settings in peri-urban and regional settings.*

6.0 POST CONSULTATION AND NEXT STEPS

6.1 Finalisation of *Guidelines for Precinct Structure Planning in Melbourne's Greenfields*

Thank you to all stakeholders who took the time to participate in this consultation and contribute to improving the Guidelines as the document is prepared for finalisation.

The VPA has reviewed all submissions received and where necessary, is contacting stakeholders for more information or clarification about certain aspects of their feedback and to discuss potential solutions to issues raised.

The current performance targets are undergoing further testing and refinement. As part of this process, the project team will work with key agency, council and industry partners to inform key changes to the Guidelines. The project team will also continue to work with regional partners to inform suitable targets in the regional setting.

It's clear that the effective implementation of a new set of principles and targets for Precinct Structure Planning in Melbourne's Greenfields requires pilots and testing throughout the forward PSP program to ensure the VPA successfully guides reform and achieve the intended outcomes.

In response, the VPA is now developing recommendations to inform a broader PSP Reform Agenda and implementation strategy for the Guidelines. This strategy is intended to:

- Continue the finalisation of the PSP Guidelines and preparation of practice notes to support PSP preparation.
- Finalise key enhancements to the PSP 2.0 collaborative process, including preparation of a new compact PSP
- Undertake an innovation pilot to test and promote the coordination of ambitions that may sit beyond the targets set by the Guidelines
- Inform the Minister for Planning of the key interventions outside of the remit of the guidelines that are required in the planning system to achieve the intent of the Guidelines.

As the next iteration of the Guidelines is developed, the VPA will prepare a "Key Changes" document which outlines the main updates to the Guidelines following stakeholder consultation. The Key Changes report and finalised PSP Guidelines document are expected to be delivered in mid-2021.

For more information or feedback, please contact Brent McLean, Director Outer Melbourne (PSP Reform) at brent.mclean@vpa.vic.gov.au or on (03) 9651 9600.

7.0 APPENDICES

7.1 Appendix A –

Peri-urban and Regional Stakeholder Consultation - Workshop Summary March 2021

