



Epping Activity Centre Plan

WURUNDJERI COUNTRY

MARCH 2025



Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

We proudly acknowledge Victoria's First Peoples and their ongoing strength in practising the world's oldest living and continuous culture.

The Epping activity centre is located on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung People of the East Kulin Nation and we acknowledge them as Traditional Owners. We pay our respects to their Elders both past and present, and we acknowledge that they have never ceded their sovereign rights to lands and waters.

We recognise their unbroken connection to Country, we celebrate their culture and history, and we honour their rights as custodians.

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1 A network of activity centres

1.1 Strategic context

In September 2023, the Victorian Government released *Victoria's Housing Statement – The Decade Ahead 2024–2034*^{*} which identified 10 activity centres and their surrounds as key locations for a pilot program. This builds on existing policy encouraging more homes and increased housing diversity in activity centres in *Plan Melbourne 2017–2050*^{**} and in *Plan for Victoria*^{***}. Epping is one of the 60 Housing Choice and Station centres with sufficient public transport, facilities and services to be the location for large numbers of new homes. The distribution of the centres is shown at [Plan 1 Regional Context](#).

The pilot program's seven objectives aim to facilitate increased housing supply through:



Built form controls tailored to place with guidance for ensuring place identity (public realm, amenity and heritage)

The Activity Centre Program delivers a coherent, clear and consistent planning approach. This includes implementing a tailored suite of tools and planning controls to ensure local areas of significance are recognised and enhanced.



A new and simplified approach to infrastructure contributions

A simple developer contribution approach will be introduced commencing on 1 January 2027 providing funding for infrastructure such as open space improvements, parks, walking, cycling and transport infrastructure.



Focus on catchments, encouraging new housing types and diversity

As well as providing clearer controls to facilitate more homes in the activity centre areas, the program provides guidance for the catchment of the centre, supporting greater housing diversity and choice in areas that are within close distance of jobs, services and amenities.



Transparent plans that set out place objectives, local values, built form requirements, growth expectations and future vision

An activity centre plan has been prepared for each activity centre and has clear planning controls that provide certainty of the built form outcomes. This will drive investment into the centres and provide the community with certainty of the long-term development expected. Introducing deemed to comply standards provides greater certainty on the supported built form outcomes for each centre. These built form outcomes have been tailored to the local context and ensure development expectations are known.

* State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet), *Victoria's Housing Statement – The Decade Ahead 2024–2034*, 2023.

** State of Victoria (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning), *Metropolitan Planning Strategy: Plan Melbourne 2017–2050*, 2017.

*** State of Victoria (Department of Transport and Planning), *Plan for Victoria: A plan by Victorians, for Victorians*, 2025.



Shorter amendment pathway and streamlined approvals

Streamlined planning scheme amendment processes ensure development-ready land is made available as soon as possible. Coupled with efficient planning permit processes, this means more homes for Victorians sooner.



Affordable housing

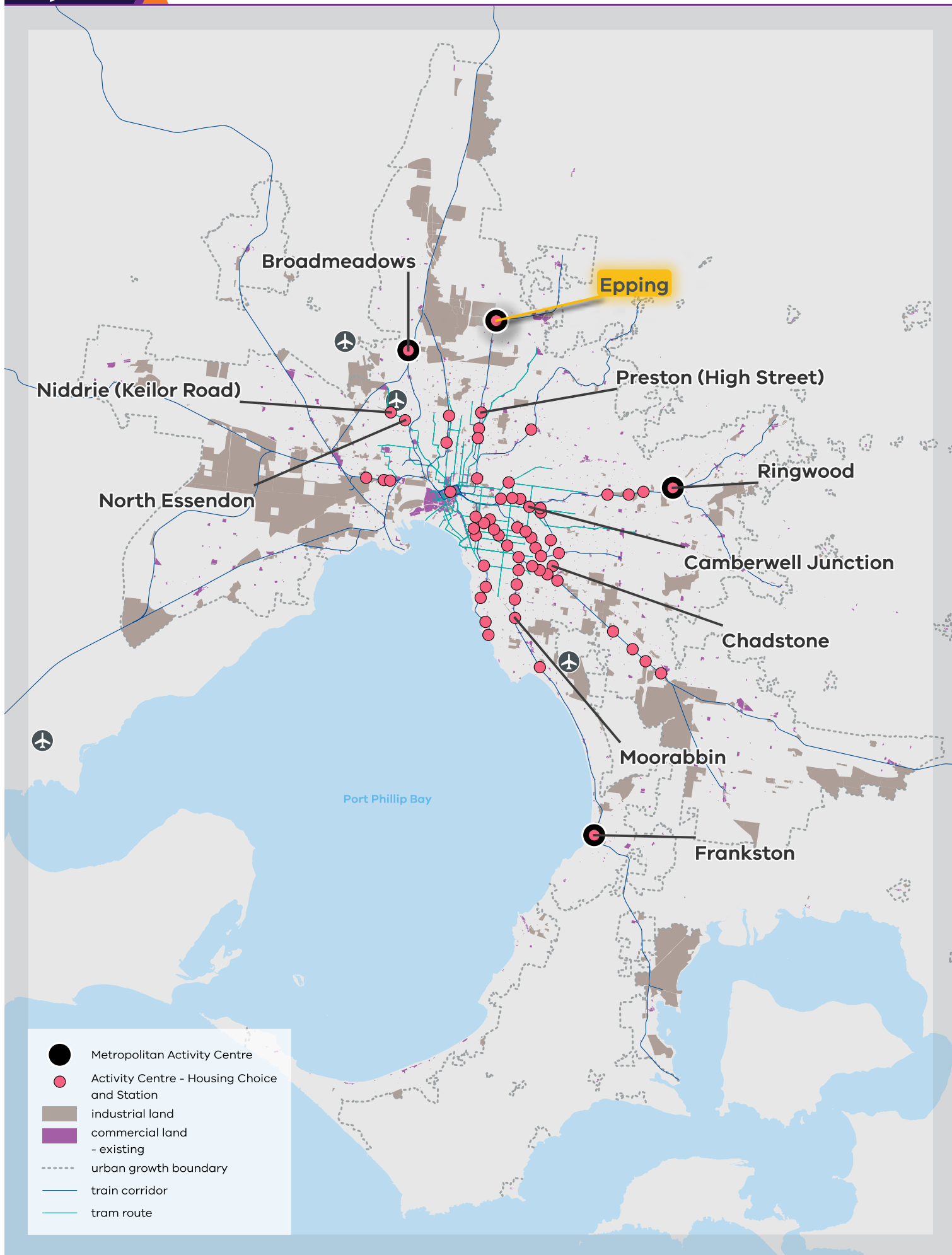
Activity centre planning improves housing affordability by increasing the supply and diversity of homes.

Under *Plan for Victoria*, the Victorian Government will consider developing locally-specific targets for social and affordable housing and explore simpler rules for obtaining a fair and equitable affordable housing contribution from new development as part of the review of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.



Using State Government landholdings to showcase new approaches and deliver housing and services

Utilising existing State Government landholdings within the centres provides an opportunity for the government to lead the sector in innovative ways to provide greater housing choice and services.



2 Purpose of this Activity Centre Plan

The *Epping Activity Centre Plan* addresses development outcomes within the Epping Activity Centre and surrounding catchment areas, shown in [Figure 1 Epping Activity Centre and catchment area](#).

2.1 The Activity Centre Program

The purpose of the Activity Centre Program, as identified in *Victoria's Housing Statement – The Decade Ahead 2024–2034*^{*}, is to unlock 60,000 new homes by 2051. These homes are to be located in 10 pilot activity centres that have been identified as having great access to services, jobs and transport.

The Activity Centre Program forms part of Victoria's commitments under the *National Housing Accord 2022*^{**} (the Accord). The Accord is an agreement across all levels of government, institutional investors and the construction sector to address housing supply and affordability. As part of the Accord, all states and territories committed to undertaking expedited zoning, planning and land release to deliver the joint commitment on social and affordable housing in well-located areas.

This activity centre plan outlines how the Epping Activity Centre and catchment area can contribute **at least 9,800 new homes**.

2.2 Epping Activity Centre

Activity centres are the heart of local businesses, community, transport, leisure, and more intensive styles of housing. They are the places where people come to shop, work, meet, relax and live. State planning policy recognises that activity centres are ideal places to support more homes.

2.3 Epping Central Structure Plan

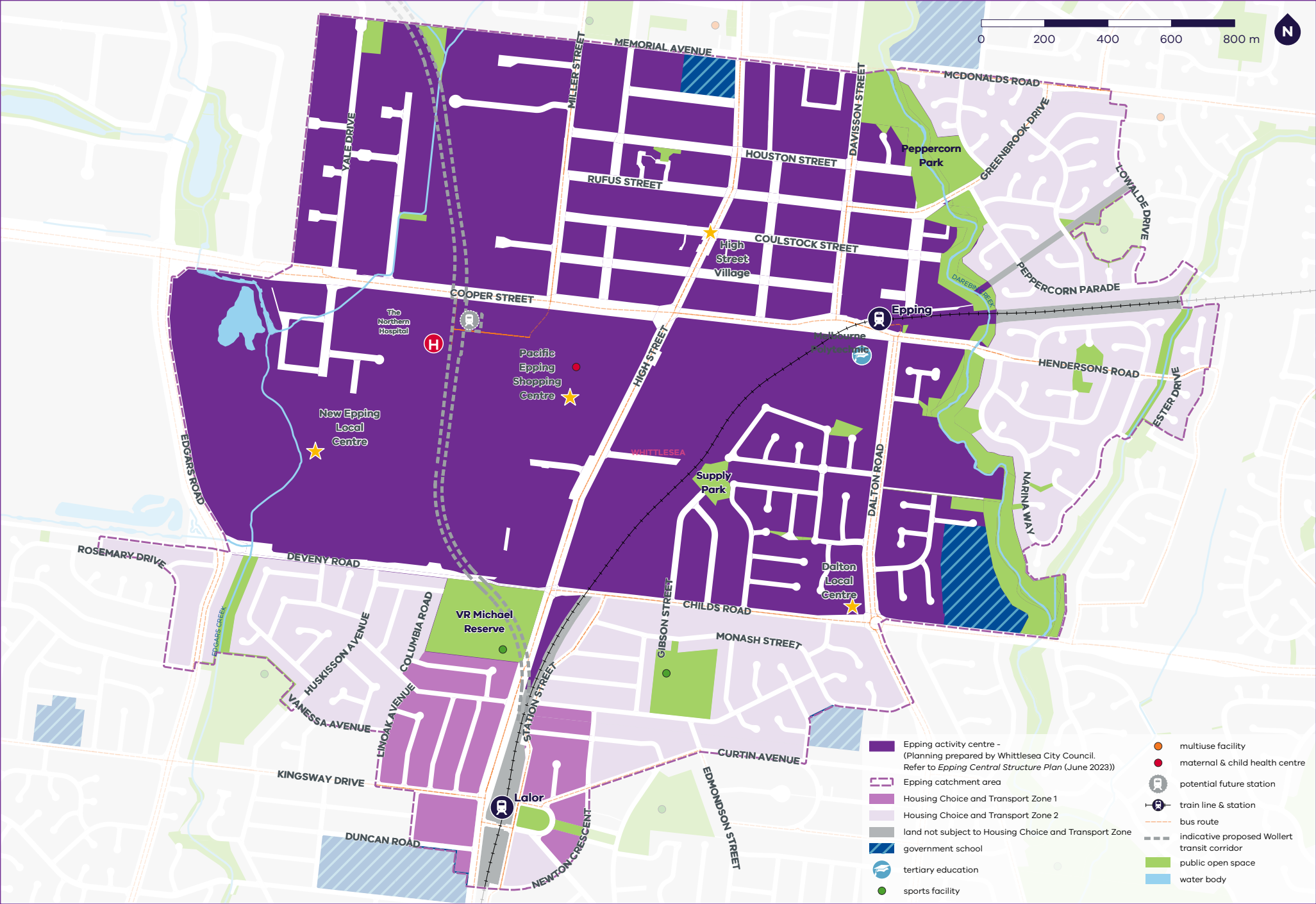
Whittlesea City Council has consulted with the Epping community to prepare the *Epping Central Structure Plan* (adopted 2023). The structure plan seeks to enhance the role and function of Epping through updated built form planning controls that will accommodate more homes, supported by better design outcomes.

The structure plan identifies areas for growth in the activity centre and is generally aligned with State planning policy for activity centres. Built form outcomes in the Epping Activity Centre will be guided by the structure plan. The *Epping Central Structure Plan* (2023) and the *Epping Central Built Form Guidelines* (2024) and the *Epping Activity Centre Plan* are background documents at Clause 72.08 of the *Whittlesea Planning Scheme*.

* State of Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet), *Victoria's Housing Statement – The Decade Ahead 2024–2034*, 2023.

** Australian Government (The Treasury), *National Housing Accord 2022*, 2022.

Figure 1 Epping Activity Centre and catchment area



2.4 Stakeholder and community engagement

Whittlesea City Council undertook two stages of community engagement on the *Epping Central Structure Plan* in 2020 and 2022. Stage 2 consultation in 2022 sought community and stakeholder feedback on the draft *Epping Central Structure Plan*.

The Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) in partnership with the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) undertook engagement as part of the Activity Centre Program in March to May 2024* ('Phase 1') and August to September 2024** ('Phase 2') for the Epping Activity Centre.

The overall purpose of the VPA/DTP broad public community engagement was to build community understanding about what will change in local neighbourhoods and the new planning controls and also to learn from the community to inform our plans.

Phase 1 sought to build understanding about what the community can influence and ensure the community's knowledge of local places of significance, localised information about the centre and ideas for its future informed our plans.

Phase 2 sought to understand community and stakeholder views on the draft Activity Centre Plan to inform updated planning controls.

The *Epping Activity Centre Plan* builds on the strategic work undertaken by Whittlesea City Council. The initial findings from consultation were considered in establishing the catchment area, which was refined following phase 2 consultation.

During community engagement, we heard from the community on what was important to them and their feedback on the draft activity centre plan. We also received feedback from key stakeholders including the council, government agencies, community and trader groups, landowners and peak industry bodies. This feedback was collated, analysed and informed updates to the final activity centre plan.

Following phase 2 community engagement, DTP referred specific matters to the Activity Centres Standing Advisory Committee for advice. The Standing Advisory Committee considered key issues raised across key stakeholder submissions relating to all activity centre plans and then prepared recommendations for the Minister for Planning. These recommendations were considered, and the activity centre plans were updated accordingly.

Refer to *Community Consultation Phase 1 Engagement Summary Report* and *Community Consultation Phase 2 Engagement Summary Report* on the VPA website: <https://vpa.vic.gov.au/project/epping/>

* Victorian Planning Authority, *Epping Activity Centre Program, Community Consultation Phase 1 Engagement Summary Report*, August 2024.

** Victorian Planning Authority, *Epping Activity Centre Program, Community Consultation Phase 2 Engagement Summary Report*, December 2024.

3 Catchment area

The catchment is the residential area within walking distance of the local jobs, services and public transport of the Epping Activity Centre commercial and community core. Building more homes here is a good way to create a more lively, inclusive and sustainable local community.

The *Epping Activity Centre Plan* makes sure the right types of homes are built in the places people want to live.

The plan encourages greater housing diversity and choice to meet the community's changing needs. The plan also encourages more efficient use of land through site consolidation, creating space for trees and greenery, as well as liveable and sustainable homes and neighbourhoods.

The catchment provides an opportunity to increase accessibility for more people to meet most of their daily needs within a close distance to and from their home.

The extent of the catchment area is shown at [Figure 1 Epping Activity Centre and catchment area](#).

3.1 Defining the catchment area

The catchment area generally extends up to 800 metres from the edge of key commercial areas and community amenities within the Epping Activity Centre.

Key commercial areas include those which people will access regularly for employment, services and everyday needs. Key commercial areas generally include the land within the activity centre, usually Commercial 1 Zone or Activity Centre Zone, but excluding open space and Commercial 2 zoned land where it is located at the periphery of the activity centre.

The catchment area applies to whole blocks and follows roads or other discernible and consistent boundaries, such as waterways, planning scheme zones, and future project boundaries.

3.2 Residential change

Encouraging more homes in catchment areas around the commercial and community cores of activity centres is a longstanding state policy. Government is now seeking to give clearer direction on the level of growth needed in these locations in alignment with our housing needs as identified in *Victoria's Housing Statement*.

The catchment provides an opportunity to facilitate a gradual change in scale, increasing the amount of homes and provide for more housing diversity and choice including quality social and affordable housing, medium- and higher-scale apartments, townhouses and semi-detached houses close to the activity centre.

Planning controls for the catchments will allow for graduated building heights, based on levels of access to the activity centre and public transport.

Most of the catchment is covered by Housing Choice and Transport Zone 2, which is based on the 800 metre distance outlined in [3.1 Defining the catchment area](#) and allows for building heights up to three storeys. Where a lot is at least 1,000 square metres in size and has a 20-metre frontage, buildings up to four storeys are allowed. These areas support a mix of low-rise apartments, townhouses, detached, and semi-detached houses. Housing Choice and Transport Zone 2 will apply to land covered by Heritage Overlay precincts. The overlay will continue to protect places of heritage significance, while allowing three to four storey development on sites where the heritage significance of places will not be adversely impacted.

The Housing Choice and Transport Zone 1 allows for building heights up to four storeys. Where a lot is at least 1,000 square metres in size and has a 20-metre frontage, buildings up to six storeys are allowed. The areas to which it is applied are identified by locational criteria, including closer proximity to the activity centre's commercial and

community facilities and public transport services. These are preferred locations for mid-rise/medium-scale apartment developments. The size and height of buildings will need to respond to standards to:

- Ensure good internal amenity within the new homes
- Maximise opportunities for planting of canopy trees
- Provide an appropriate provision of car parking and storage facilities
- Minimise impact on neighbours.



4 Implementation

4.1 Built form control – activity centre

The built form outcomes in the Epping Activity Centre are guided by the *Epping Central Structure Plan* (adopted 2023) prepared by Whittlesea City Council and the *Epping Central Built Form Guidelines* (2024) prepared by Hodyl & Co for Whittlesea City Council. This has been introduced as a background document at Clause 72.08 in the *Whittlesea Planning Scheme*.

The Built Form Overlay (BFO) has been introduced into the *Whittlesea Planning Scheme* for the Epping Activity Centre to implement new built form and height controls and to support growth in the activity centre. The activity centre is the preferred location for more development.

4.2 Built form control – catchment

The Housing Choice and Transport Zone (HCTZ) has been introduced to residential land close to the activity centre to support greater housing growth. Land in closer proximity to the activity centre and public transport services is rezoned to HCTZ1 and is the preferred location for medium-rise apartments. A maximum building height of four storeys applies in the HCTZ1. Buildings up to six storeys can be supported on lots that are equal to or greater than 1,000 square metres in area and have a street frontage of at least 20 metres. This also applies to buildings constructed on two or more contiguous lots that meet the same site dimensions.

The remainder of the catchment (including all land in the catchment affected by the Heritage Overlay) is rezoned to HCTZ2 and is intended to support a mix of low-rise apartments, townhouses, detached, and semi-detached houses. A maximum building height of three storeys applies in the HCTZ2. Buildings up to four storeys can be supported on lots that are equal to or greater than 1,000 square metres and have a street frontage of at least 20 metres.

The Built Form Overlay does not apply to catchment areas.

4.3 Land use control – activity centre

The land use outcomes described in the *Epping Central Structure Plan* (2023) have been implemented through an amendment to the Activity Centre Zone in the *Victorian Planning Provisions*.

4.4 Aligning existing controls

4.4.1 Activity Centre

The planning controls that have been replaced by the new land use and built form controls were removed in order to streamline planning application assessments, implement more consistent built form standards and make the planning scheme clearer. No planning overlays have been removed from the activity centre.

The planning overlays that have been retained in the activity centre are:

- Development Plan Overlay (Schedule 39 – Epping Renewal Site)
- All heritage overlays
- Land Subject to Inundation Overlay
- Special Building Overlay
- All Specific Controls overlays
- All Development Contributions Plan overlays
- Environmental Audit Overlay
- Parking Overlay (Schedule 1)
- Road Closure Overlay.

4.4.2 Catchment

In Epping, no planning controls have been removed from the catchment, other than where the Housing Choice and Transport Zone has replaced existing residential zones.

4.5 Infrastructure delivery

As more people call Epping home, it is important that they have the services and community infrastructure they need to maintain their liveability and connectivity. During consultation the community has been clear that vibrant places with green parks and local community facilities are important to support housing growth.

4.5.1 A fairer approach to infrastructure contributions

A simplified infrastructure funding mechanism will be introduced to fund the public infrastructure Epping will need into the future.

This mechanism will directly result in more funding for things like roads, paths, and public transport services, new and upgraded schools, upgrades to health and community facilities, plus parks, playgrounds, sport and recreation, open space, and more.

4.6 Affordable housing

Affordable housing is defined in the *Planning and Environment Act, 1987* (The Act) as “housing, including social housing, that is appropriate for the needs of very low-, low- and moderate-income households.” The Act specifies annually updated income range classifications for very low- to moderate- income households.

Under *Plan for Victoria*, the Victorian Government will consider developing locally specific targets for social and affordable housing and explore simpler rules for obtaining a fair and equitable affordable housing contribution from new development as part of the review of the Act.

Applications for residential subdivision and development should consider how they contribute to meeting the need for affordable housing.

Where affordable housing is provided, it should contribute to meeting the needs of very low- to moderate-income ranges.

This is in conjunction with the other local, state and federal government initiatives aimed at delivering more affordable housing such as:

- Unlocking surplus government land (State)
- The *Development Facilitation Program* (State)
- The *Short Stay Levy* (State)
- The *Regional Housing Fund* (State)
- The *Big Housing Build* (State)
- The *Public Housing Renewal Program* (State)
- The *Affordable Housing Investment Partnership* (State)
- The *Social Housing Accelerator* (Federal)
- The *National Housing Accord* (Federal).

4.7 Environmental constraints

The *Whittlesea Planning Scheme* includes policy, zones, overlays and other provisions requiring development to identify and respond to environmental impacts. Local conditions that may result in adverse impacts on amenity and human health in and around activity centres may include increased flood risk associated with climate change, sources of potential noise and vibration (including aircraft noise), as well as the potential for land use conflict due to the presence of existing industry or industrial zoned land.

4.7.1 Flood risk

Flood risk is an important consideration when planning for new development across the entire Greater Melbourne area. This includes risks associated with waterways, stormwater drains and sea level rise in line with climate change forecasts to the year 2100.

Melbourne Water is remodelling riverine/waterway and stormwater flood risk and factoring climate change forecasts to the year 2100. As each new modelling project is completed (projected by 2026), they will be translated into planning controls that will play an important role in identifying future risk/hazard. In the interim, the planning scheme includes policy at Clause 19.03-3S (Integrated Water Management) to minimise flood risk, protect waterway health and guide appropriate development outcomes.

4.7.2 Amenity (dust and odour)

The *Whittlesea Planning Scheme* includes policy at clauses 13.06-1S (Air Quality Management) and 13.07-1S (Land Use Compatibility) designed to protect community amenity, human health and safety while facilitating appropriate development. Clause 53.10 identifies land uses and activities, which if not appropriately designed and located, may cause offence or unacceptable risk to the community.

4.7.3 Noise

This activity centre plan does not facilitate any new noise sensitive uses in this centre; however, the application of the BFO will support the intensification of already permitted residential uses in areas where there may be impacts from nearby major roads/freeways and rail corridors. As such, where applicable, the design of new apartments will be required to comply with Standard D16, Clause 58.04-3 Noise Impacts Objectives.

4.7.4 Protection of nearby airports

Several considerations apply to construction of new homes in areas that are in proximity of the flight paths of Melbourne's airports. These considerations are set out in the *National Aviation Safeguarding Framework* and Clause 18.02-7S of the *Whittlesea Planning Scheme*, and include aircraft noise, height controls and limits on residential density.

N-contours that apply to Epping are set out in the approved *Melbourne Airport Master Plan*. While these conditions are not translated into a specific planning control, clause 18.02-7S addresses N-contours in the context of encouraging measures to reduce the impact of aircraft noise in planning for areas within the urban growth boundary. This can be achieved through measures such as construction techniques for noise mitigation and disclosure of impacts to future residents (See NASF Guideline A).

