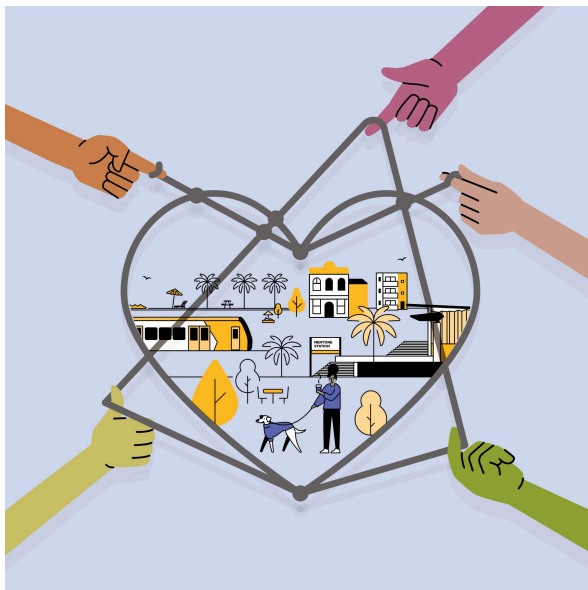




DTP Community Reference Group

STATEMENT OF

ADVICE

Activity Centre

Mentone

22 March 2026

REMIT

How do we plan for more homes in and around Mentone while strengthening the things that make it unique?

1. INTRODUCTION

The Mentone Community Reference Group is a collective of local residents, business owners and community members who care deeply about the future of Mentone. This statement reflects the shared views developed through group discussion, lived experience and active participation. Together, we are committed to ensuring that planning for more homes strengthens rather than diminishes the qualities that make Mentone unique.

Across all conversations, the group expressed a strong and heartfelt attachment to Mentone's village character, heritage buildings, walkable streets, green spaces and coastal atmosphere. The iconic Kilbreda Tower, the heritage station precinct, and the converging village streets are central to Mentone's identity and must be protected. We value the openness, sunlight, sea breeze and family-friendly feel that define the suburb.

The group holds significant concerns about the draft Activity Centre Plan, particularly the proposed building heights of 6–8 storeys in the village core. Members consistently felt these heights would irreversibly damage Mentone's character, overshadow heritage landmarks, create wind tunnels, worsen traffic around the seven local schools, and reduce access to sunlight and green space. The core area is too small and its streets too narrow to absorb high-density development without losing what the community cherishes.

We support growth - but growth done well. The group proposes alternative approaches, including locating taller buildings along the Nepean Highway, expanding catchment boundaries more logically, strengthening mandatory setbacks and transitions, and ensuring proactive planning for infrastructure, environment and liveability. We also strongly support converting 79 Balcombe Road into public parkland to enhance the station precinct.

Our overarching message is clear: we offer this advice in good faith, trusting it will not be selectively used to justify maximum development, for example the proposed higher density zone on Nepean Hwy is offered not as additional development but to offset proposed density in the core area. We ask planners to walk the streets with us and understand why protecting Mentone's character is not resistance to change, but stewardship of a place whose identity cannot be rebuilt once lost.

2. WHAT WE LOVE AND VALUE ABOUT THESE ACTIVITY CENTRES

The layout of the streets in Mentone village is quite unique and needs to be visited in person, and we respectfully request the planners to meet us on-site and learn about its special character and understand our passionate love of the area.

What we love and value

Village, suburban spirit and community feel

We value Mentone's village lifestyle, its community feel, and the sense that it is family friendly and safe. Mentone is a place where you can go to the city for work – but come back to Mentone to be able to breathe. Mentone has a unique sense of arrival due to its pedestrian-friendly streets converging towards the centre.

Sense of arrival - like all streets lead to Rome, all streets from Parkdale, Cheltenham, Beaumaris are leading to Kilbreda Tower and Mentone centre.

Heritage, history and character buildings

Mentone is rich in heritage and history, it was born out of the marvelous Melbourne era (the 1880's gold rush) and it was a holiday destination for Melbourne. Kilbreda College was originally a coffee palace until the Mentone Hotel was built - both of Italianate design and both now state heritage listed.

The street names being named after Italian cities adds to the coastal resort feel.

The community values the Mentone Heritage station and gardens, in 2006 obtaining another Heritage listing for the Mentone Edwardian Station and associated gardens.

We love the varied architecture throughout the catchment area, including Californian bungalows and everything incrementally built since, for example the large number of single storey villa developments adds to the overall character.

Green space, open space and local parks

We value green spaces, and the local open areas that give Mentone breathing room. This includes the Heritage listed station precinct, Keith Styles Park, local gardens, and the beach.

We strongly feel that the small triangular area at 79 Balcombe should be converted to public parkland as this would complement the re-activated old station plaza and gardens, and given that there are very few other council owned tracts of land left for this purpose.

Much green space is private property, front and back yards of house blocks.

Walkability and easy movement through the centre

7000 students pass through Mentone on a daily basis and we love children gathering in the centre of Mentone.

We value Mentone as a place with **walkable streets** and connected bike paths. The responses point to a centre where being able to move around easily on foot or bike is a core part of what people love.

The sky, sea and fresh air

We value **the sky, sea and fresh air**, and the coastal feeling that gives Mentone a distinct atmosphere. Importantly, the **sea breeze** flows across the whole area. Openness and the natural setting are part of the place's identity. The sun path from sunrise to sunset over the historic precinct is a key directional feature of the centre of Mentone.

What would need to remain for it to still feel like this place

Open spaces, green space and the sky

No matter what happens Mentone would still need **open spaces, preserve the green space**, and not just the landmarks themselves but **the sky around** them. This includes keeping the **sunlight path that lights up the centre of Mentone**, recognising that openness, light and green space are part of how the place feels.

Heritage, old villas and local landmarks

Mentone needs **Kilbreda Tower** and the **view to the tower** from all approaching streets protected. **To preserve the old villas**, and keep its **heritage train station**. Heritage is more than one building, with older places and local landmarks continuing to define the area.

Low level buildings and village scale

Mentone would still need **low level buildings in the village centre** and **village-scale shops**. This was reinforced by calls to **avoid more than 2 storeys over main streets** and keep the built form at a scale that still feels like Mentone.

Walkability, the village centre and the suburb as a whole

Walkability needs to remain, and **the village centre is a critical destination**. This also extends beyond the centre, with the idea that **the whole suburb is our garden**, pointing to a broader walkable suburban structure, not just one strip.

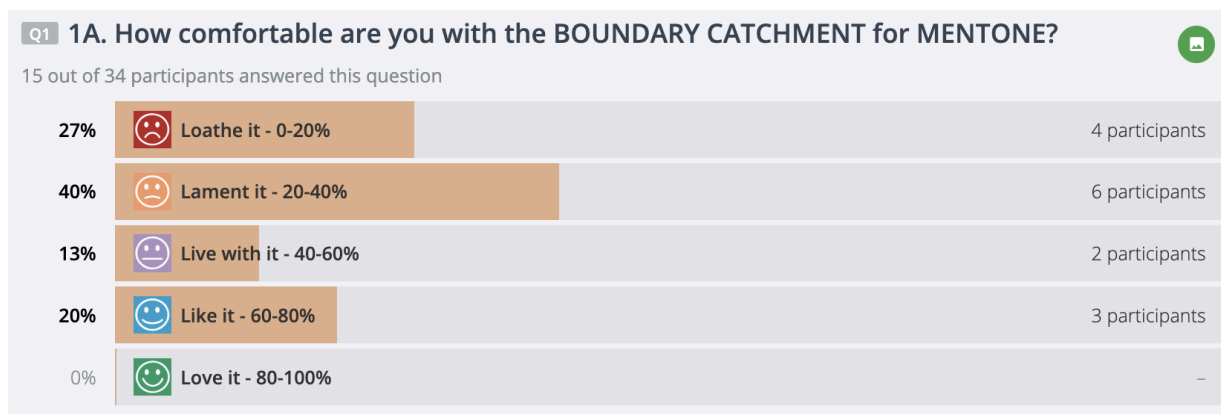
Character, community feel and family homes and gardens

Mentone would still need to **keep community feel**, along with **schools family homes & gardens**. This is linked to preserving what is already here and keeping a place that still feels recognisable, lived-in and suited to everyday family life.

Housing diversity and preserving character without overshadowing

Mentone would need to **maintain diversity of housing and character** and **preserve everything here**. At the same time, we need to **avoid any overshadowing of the centre**, showing that change is seen as possible, but only where it protects character, light and the feel of the village centre.

3A. MENTONE - KEY CONSIDERATION NO. 1 – THE CATCHMENT BOUNDARIES



Concerns about impacts on village character and heritage

We often felt the core boundary would negatively impact the “village” feel and historic character of Mentone. Some of us were worried that changes would detract from what makes the area unique, including heritage elements and established identity. There was a strong desire to protect these qualities.

We feel that the identified core is a very small area with a number of small relatively narrow streets. Concentrating high density development in this area will change the village feel irreversibly.

We feel strongly that the setback limit should be applied to all of the following areas in the core:

- The whole north side of Brindisi St
- Both sides of Mentone Pde
- Both side of Florence St
- The part of Como Pde opposite the gardens

In view of this, we found the necessity to consider and decided that setback should be applied entirely across both catchments. This would be better in keeping with the character of the residential area and allow better transition between existing buildings and new developments, providing an outcome where livability is preserved regarding concerns for overcrowding, overlooking, overshadowing, and allowing natural spread of tree canopies. This would encourage a more cohesive streetscape in keeping with the established residential feel of Mentone and mindful neighbourly development.

We are very concerned about the possibility of developing up to 8 storeys in the area that is currently occupied by Kilbreda, particularly the prospect of the heritage bell tower (which is approximately 4-5 stories) being overshadowed. The area immediately adjacent to the bell tower should be no more than 4 stories.

Concerns about density being pushed into the wrong areas

We questioned how the core boundary and catchment boundaries had been drawn, including why some areas that meet the criteria are excluded and others included. Some of us felt the shape is “wrong”, not suitable to the village feel, out of scale or inconsistent with desirable planning outcomes, while others suggested expanding or shifting parts of the catchment. There was a clear call for more logical and transparent boundary decisions.

We propose that a higher density zone be deviated from the village centre of Mentone (being the bell tower, shopping precinct, Mentone Parade and heritage gardens) creating a more graduated building scale, low in the village centre and graduated higher towards the outer catchment e.g. from 4 to 6 to 8 i.e. lower in the centre for everyone to enjoy the village and higher where it could be better utilised for all types of residences with views to the sea and village.

Explore the potential regarding opportunities established on the west side of the Nepean Highway between Balcombe Rd and Latrobe St to reduce the pressure on the very small core in Mentone village.

Add the area on the east side of the Nepean Hwy to the catchment, and consider one or more shared user overpasses, between Warrigal Road intersection and Oak Street.

We would like investigation about the area enclosed by Plummer Road, Kelso Street, Catania Street and Milan Street to be considered as part of the foreshore/beach overlay limited by 2 storeys.

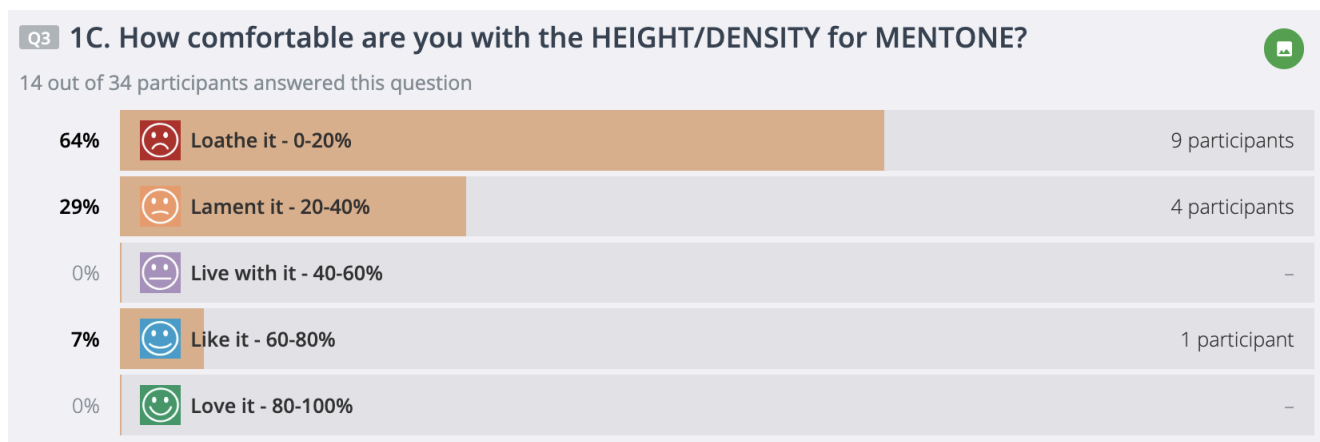
Need for better planning controls and design responses

We need stronger and more sympathetic planning controls to be applied to individual location, including setbacks, transitions and better design outcomes. We expressed a consensus that more consideration is needed for how development integrates with the existing area. There was a focus on improving how growth is managed to satisfy across a broad demographic and lifestyle requirements.

Careful planning of the catchment boundaries across the broader area of Mentone has the potential to capture supplemental opportunities, seeking advice from Council or committee with discretionary knowledge, experience and powers.

We invite the opportunity for Senior Planners to meet on site and discuss how the advice is interpreted for further discussion and review of any ambiguous detail.

4A. MENTONE KEY CONSIDERATION No. 2 – BUILDING HEIGHTS AND DENSITY



Strong concern that heights are too high for Mentone

The proposed heights are too high, particularly within the Core because they overcrowd the heritage feature of Mentone - Kilbreda Bell Tower and surrounding state heritage sites. 6 to 8 storeys would encroach on the key areas and fundamentally change the skyline of Mentone. The group strongly felt a good alternative is the Nepean Highway precinct between Lower Dandenong Road and Oak Avenue.

Proper planning for infrastructure of all types must be done to ensure liveability with increased density

Infrastructure of all types (public spaces, parks, sports, roads, recreational facilities, public transport, police, schools, hospitals and other) was brought up by the group as an essential requirement to maintain liveability.

Planners indicated a very limited scope of infrastructure planning done so far and such planning was limited to several transport considerations only. Planner indicated that a reactive planning will be in place with some minor contribution from each developed property.

The group had a consensus that infrastructure of all types must be planned proactively with the funds made available to allow for increased density. Thus, the group felt that maximum heights in all areas, especially in the Core, must stay at the current levels to maintain the necessary levels of liveability.

Desire to protect village character and identity

Altering the 8 storey maximum to 4 storey maximum within the Core is essential to maintaining Mentone's "village feel", unique architecture, relaxed suburban character, and the open skyline. These changes would remove what makes it special. There is cafe

culture and relaxed village feel; having buildings infringe on this is going to break its identity as a gathering hub, and will reduce the access to open space.

Schools in the area must be considered

The group highlighted that there are currently 7 schools with approximately 7,000 students in the suburb with a large portion of the students coming from other suburbs and often driven on private transport. A number of streets are disproportionately busy during school time already. That includes Balcombe Road, Swanston Street, Como Parade, Venice Street and Mentone Parade. Adding new high rise buildings on the same streets will drastically worsen traffic conditions, which are already not sustainable.

The plan must accommodate for a safe passage of a large number of school students and include sufficient pathways and bike lanes.

An alternative is to put high rise buildings along Nepean Highway as indicated in another item or other opportunities to spread population growth.

Impacts on amenity including overshadowing, loss of light and wind tunnel creation.

We have serious concerns about the 8 storey buildings (6 on narrow streets in the inner catchment) overshadowing the streets, loss of sunlight to residents within the homes, and street front. There will be a significant impact on how people experience the area in winter as the sun sits lower, these taller buildings will make the area feel cold and dark. The tall building creates a huge potential for wind tunneling, which many local residents have experienced nearby in Cheltenham, as well as Frankston, Caulfield and South Yarra.

Preference for alternative approaches to density

We suggest different ways to accommodate growth, including spreading density more evenly, lowering heights, or locating taller buildings away from the core. We propose focusing development along highways or outside key village areas. There was a clear interest in alternative models. This offers the opportunity to explore expanding the public transport bus network that would bring people and students into the area.

Concerns about impacts on green space and environment

There is going to be a loss of access to green open spaces, an increased density will mean less green space per square meter per person. There will be pressure on existing green areas. The group raised that it is essential for environment assessment to be completed prior to rezoning to ensure there will be no negative environmental impact or mitigation plans.

The group is concerned about climate change and a long-term reduction of foliage in the suburb. Corresponding measures must be included in the design controls.

There is a desire to retain greenery and space (per resident) where residents can walk their dogs, exercise away from main roads, and gather for family parties. The group proposed 79 Balcombe Road must be designated as a green space.

Need for stronger planning controls and design responses

Height alone is not the issue, but how buildings are designed and integrated to the area. There need to be mandatory controls around street setbacks, transitions and building placements to reduce impacts. Narrower streets must be treated differently from the wider ones.

Organic population growth outside of activity centre must be taken into account when planning the centre of Mentone

The group raised a necessity to plan for additional demand of infrastructure in Mentone centre due to the organic population growth outside of the activity centres (e.g., subdivision of blocks to build townhomes, apartment buildings, etc). Planners haven't indicated such planning done so far.

The group had a consensus that infrastructure of all types must be planned proactively with the funds made available to allow for increased density. Thus, the group felt that maximum heights in all areas, especially in the Core, must stay at the current levels to maintain the necessary levels of liveability.

Diversity of dwellings and dwellings for growing families

The group raised a need for a diversity of dwellings to be built and respective controls implemented by the government. There must be a sufficient number of dwellings for growing families.

5. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

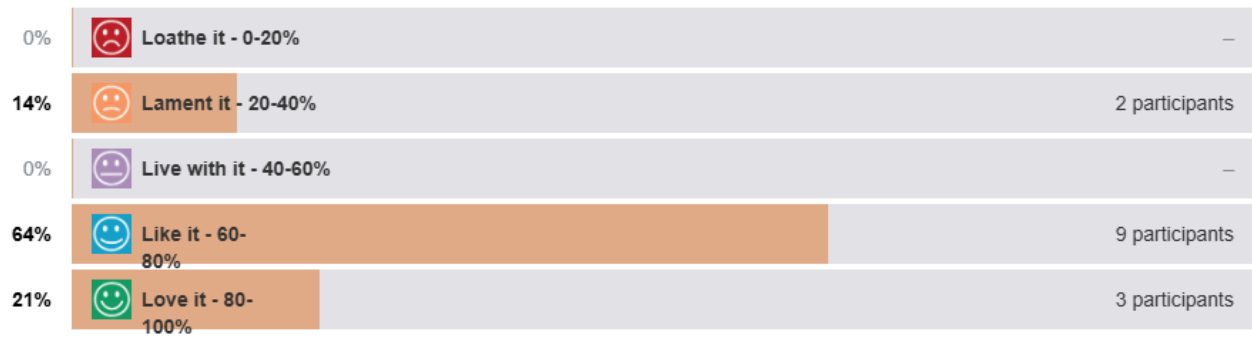
- Summary of CRG overarching comfort level with the draft Activity Centre PlanS
- Raw output aligned to CRG comfort levels and responding to what would increase their level of acceptability for the draft plan overall
- Raw outputs of 'how comfortable are you with the Statement of Advice?'

6. APPENDIX

- Raw output of 'what we love about the activity centre' (both questions)
 - Raw output for consideration no. 1 rationales
 - Raw output for consideration no. 2 rationales
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- Raw outputs of 'how comfortable are you with the Statement of Advice?'

Q1 How comfortable are you with your Statement of Advice as its written?

14 out of 60 participants answered this question



Q2 Why did you choose this level of comfort?

14 out of 60 participants answered this question

While I agree with many of the statements in the document, a crucial planning step related to modelling of the infrastructure capacity was not done by the department rendering the proposal unsubstantiated.

Previous initiatives of Kingston City Council in the past aimed at the sustainable density increase in the area are not recognised and their impact is not assessed.

Altogether, I oppose the proposed boundary catchment for Mentone and to any increase in building heights beyond those currently set by Kingston City Council due to:

No comprehensive modelling demonstrating the sufficiency of infrastructure to support projected population growth while maintaining liveability outcomes was presented to the group. In response to direct questions in the meeting (including prior written requests to the Department), no evidence of such modelling being undertaken was presented to the group.

Department planners indicated that infrastructure pressures are likely to increase, with no clearly articulated mitigation strategy presented to the group.

The proposed changes are not considered to be consistent with the village character of Mentone and risk undermining the key attributes of the area identified by the group.

The alternative proposals from the group around changing the structure of the proposed zones (e.g., placing the high rises alongside the major roads as opposed to the Department's current plan of placing them adjacent to smaller already congested roads) were indicated as unlikely to be considered, on the basis of alignment with a standardised planning model and implementation complexity.

Department planners outlined the infrastructure funding mechanism currently considered, however, the group was not provided with sufficient detail to demonstrate how this mechanism would offset the additional demand on infrastructure and amenities in the area (including, but not limited to, additional open space, transport, and safety).

Based on the above I am confident that the proposed changes should not proceed in their current form, and that planning settings revert to the current Kingston City Council framework, which already allows for considerable but sustainable growth.

In the short space of time given to the group to question, discuss, propose and write this submission, it captures the discussion well. There is still room to go through further detail and to capture ambiguity, but overall a good team effort. Everyone integrated well and tried to consider all demographic groups.

It reflects my core values and vision for the future of Mentone

The advice is reflective of the discussions that were had in the room over the weekend. Where we have disagreed with the Planners advice have found alternatives to assist with spreading the density, and it's reflective of most of the people in the room's opinion and advice.

I think it captured almost all of the content and viewpoints the group wanted to get across, as well as the strong feelings the group has about our area.

Given the limited time and constrains on the access to planners to explain there reason for design of activity centre. I'm overall happy the statement we were able to create together

It would have been nice to have had more time to finesse the document and reduce the areas of repetition.

Given the time constraints and the setting, the statement put forward by Mentone CRG is acceptable. Tweaks and more details could have been better articulated if the group had more interaction.

There's too much duplication, and I would move entire paragraphs between sections, and so on. But the gist of everything in the document is pointing in the right direction.

The document would have been more thoughtful if more information was made available. Many of us wanted more than the vibe of it.

Fitted group responses

Mostly happy with the document put forward by Mentone Community Reference Group but it still needs minor adjustments.

The statement has accurately captured everything I feel about the proposal for Mentone and only requires a few minor tweaks

Because it would dramatically change our suburb's character and cause much shade and wind tunnels. Our traffic is already bad so more houses means more cars in our already difficult streets to drive through. We have historic and unique character and feel which needs preservation. Any buildings should not be over 6 storeys, be sympathetic to the area, 6-8 storeys should be in Nepean Highway not in Mentone village area. Previous Council height determination has to be respected. No 4-6 storey buildings in Elizabeth and Collins Streets which are designated residential areas. Buildings should have stepback storeys over 3storeys so they are not so imposing.

Good collaboration and valued feedback through out the process and feedback respecting each others roles and values thank you for the opportunity to take part and see info on planning strategies and planning information