Strategic Assessment Guidelines

September 2025

This practice note - the *Strategic Assessment Guidelines* provides a consistent framework for preparing and evaluating a proposed planning scheme amendment.

Minister's Direction No. 11 - Strategic Assessment of Amendments requires a planning authority to evaluate and document how an amendment addresses specified strategic considerations. These Strategic Assessment Guidelines are used to guide a strategic assessment under Minister's Direction No. 11.

Planning Scheme Amendment Strategic Considerations

Do I need to respond to every consideration?

If any of the strategic considerations are not relevant to your amendment, you should provide a brief reason why.

How do I decide how much justification is needed against each consideration?

The level of justification needed for each consideration and the amendment overall should be proportional to the impact the amendment will have. Minor amendments are not required to provide a detailed analysis against the guidelines and are generally not required to be supported by detailed strategic studies.

Which practice notes should be considered in preparing and assessing an amendment?

Some planning issues or *Victoria Planning Provisions* (VPP) tools have specific planning practice notes that provide guidance. All relevant planning practice notes should be considered in association with the *Strategic Assessment Guidelines* when preparing an amendment to ensure consistency and best practice.

The *Strategic Assessment Guidelines* checklist on page 11 is a handy tool that can be used as a guide when assessing an amendment.

Amendments that do not require an assessment against the strategic considerations

Minister's Direction No. 11 does not apply to classes of amendments prescribed in regulation 8 of the *Planning and Environment Regulations 2015*. This exemption applies regardless of whether the amendment is prepared under section 20A or another provision of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (the Act).

Although an assessment against these guidelines is not required, a planning authority must still have regard to the requirements of section 12 of the Act.

Amendments that *only* require a brief assessment against the strategic considerations

Types of amendments that may be suitable for a brief assessment include:

- changes in schedules that reduce permit requirements
- minor changes that involve a small number of lots or a minor ordinance change which is consistent with state and local policy
- applying a 'land management overlay' where there is a clear basis for its application, for example, the application of a Floodway Overlay where information is available to show that the land is subject to flooding
- rezoning of land to reflect its current use or ownership, for example, the rezoning of land into Public Park and Recreation Zone when the land has been acquired by local government or the rezoning of land from the Comprehensive Development Zone to an appropriate standard zone once the development is completed.

The strategic assessment should be straightforward and brief and only considerations that are relevant need addressing.

Amendments that *do* require a full assessment against the strategic considerations

A full assessment against the strategic considerations should be made for amendments that include:

- major changes in policy
- introduction or extension of a zone or overlay that would produce a different or new land use or development outcome
- major changes to the ordinance or mapping that involve a large number of lots.

Planning authorities can contact the relevant planning office of the Department of Transport and Planning for assistance when determining the level of justification required to support the amendment and which strategic considerations need addressing.

The strategic considerations

The questions under each strategic consideration are prompts to assist the response to the strategic consideration. It may not be necessary to respond to all the questions under each strategic consideration.

The checklist included in this practice note can be used to assist the preparation and assessment of an amendment.

1. Why is an amendment required?

- What does the amendment intend to do and what is the desired outcome?
- How does it intend to do it?
- Is it supported by or is it a result of any strategic study or report?
- Is the planning scheme the most appropriate means of controlling the issue or achieving the desired outcome, or can another existing regulatory or administrative process deal with the issue? For example, can the matter be dealt with by a local law or other non-statutory tools such as: pre-application meetings, community education, information sheets and council newsletters?

Guidance to planning scheme users such as 'how to make an application for a residential development' or 'best practice urban design guidelines' should be non-statutory documents rather than a planning scheme control.

- Will the proposed provision result in a good planning outcome?
- Will the amendment have a net community benefit?
- Will the community benefit outweigh the cost of the new requirements?
- Does the amendment repeat provisions already in the planning scheme? If so, what additional value will the amendment provide?
- Is the matter already dealt with under other regulations such as the *Building Regulations* 2018? For example, the energy rating requirement for residential dwellings.

The types of environmental, social and economic issues that need to be considered are dependent on the nature and scale of the amendment. Issues may include:

- the likely effect on air, land and water quality of the area
- potential impact on buffers and threshold distances, and the likely effect on community amenity
- the likely effect on the health of ecological systems and the biodiversity they support (including ecosystems, habitats, species and genetic diversity)
- the likely effect on sites with significant historic, architectural, aesthetic, scientific and cultural values
- the likely effect on natural resources including energy, water, land, flora and minerals
- the likely effect on the economic well-being of the community
- potential changes to the economic and social life of the existing community
- the vitality and viability of existing agriculture, industry, tourism and commercial or retail activity in surrounding areas
- the likely effect on future public and private sector investment in the immediate and surrounding areas
- the likely effect on the range of goods and services in the immediate and surrounding areas
- the likely effect on potential capacity for growth of the immediate and surrounding areas, including, opportunities for expansion, improvement or redevelopment
- the impact on employment in the area

- the impact of likely changes in travel patterns for shopping, employment, social and leisure activities
- the impact on transport movement, services and infrastructure, including public transport
- the likely effect on community infrastructure in the immediate and surrounding areas
- the likely effect on public infrastructure in the immediate and surrounding areas
- the impact on setbacks required for dam operation, maintenance and emergency access
- potential changes to the attractiveness and physical condition of the immediate and surrounding areas
- the likely effect on the attractiveness, amenity and safety of the public realm
- the achievement of high-quality urban design and architecture.

2. Does the amendment implement the objectives of planning and address any environmental, social and economic effects?

- Does the amendment implement the objectives of planning in Victoria (sections 4(1) and 12(1)(a) of the Act)?
- Does the amendment adequately address any environmental, social and economic effects (sections 12(2)(b) and (c) of the Act)? The normal way of assessing the social and economic effects is to consider whether or not the amendment results in a net community benefit.

An environmental, social and economic assessment should include an evaluation of the costs and benefits to businesses and the community arising from any requirement of the amendment.

Industrial land

Where an amendment results in the loss of industrial land, an assessment must be undertaken that evaluates:

- the economic costs and benefits of the proposal
- any implications for industrial land supply.

3. Does the amendment address climate change?

- Does the amendment consider climate change in accordance with the Ministerial Direction No. 22: Climate Change Consideration issued under section 12A of the Act?
 Certain types of amendments must consider climate change, as set out in the direction.
- Does the amendment have regard to the State's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets by considering minimising greenhouse gas emissions (section 12(2A)(a) of the Act)?
- A planning authority only has to have regard to greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. The Ministerial Direction does not require a planning authority to undertake quantitative assessments of abatement options against Victorian's emissions reduction targets, nor to set site specific abatement targets for precincts or land use change enabled by planning scheme amendments. Planning authorities must consider the likely extent to which the planning scheme or amendment minimises greenhouse gas emissions, through appropriate design measures.

- Does the amendment have regard to any significant risk that arises from, or is likely to arise from, the impacts of climate change by considering the impact on natural hazards, and increasing climate change resilience (section 12(2A)(b) of the Act)?
- Have the views of relevant emergency management and natural resources management agencies been sought in the preliminary assessment stage of strategic work?
- Is the amendment supported by a climate change consideration report (or suitable equivalent report). The statement in the explanatory report should be drawn from the prepared climate change consideration report or other technical reports.

4. Does the amendment address relevant bushfire risk?

An amendment must be assessed to determine whether the changes proposed will result in any increase to the risk to life as a priority, property, community infrastructure and the natural environment from bushfire.

- Does the amendment meet the objectives and give effect to the strategies to address bushfire risk in the Planning Policy Framework at clause 13.02 of the planning scheme?
- Has the view of the relevant fire authority been sought in formulating the amendment? If the relevant fire authority has provided advice this should be summarised in the explanatory report.
- If the planning scheme includes a Local Planning Policy Framework at clause 20, is the amendment consistent with the objectives and strategies that apply to bushfire risk?
- Is local policy for bushfire risk management required to support the amendment?

5. Does the amendment comply with the relevant Minister's Directions?

- Does the amendment comply with the requirements of the *Ministerial Direction The Form and Content of Planning Schemes* (section 7(5) of the Act)?
- Do any other Minister's Directions apply to the amendment? If so, have they been complied with?
- Is the amendment accompanied by all the information required by a direction?

6. How does the amendment support or implement the Planning Policy Framework (PPF)?

To ensure planning schemes further the objectives of planning in Victoria, planning authorities must take into account and give effect to the general principles and specific policies contained in the PPF.

- What objectives and strategies of the PPF are relevant and how are they relevant?
- Does the amendment or proposal support or give effect to the objectives and strategies of the PPF?
- Are there any competing PPF objectives? If so, how have they been balanced in favour of net community benefit and sustainable development (clause 71.02-3 of the planning scheme)?
- Does the amendment support or give effect to any relevant adopted state policy?

If the planning scheme includes a Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) at clause 02 and the amendment seeks to introduce or amend a local planning policy in the PPF:

- Does the new or amended local planning policy:
- o respond to a demonstrated need?
- o implement a strategic direction in the MPS?
- o relate to a specific discretion or group of discretions in the planning scheme?
- o assist the responsible authority to make a decision?
- o assist any other person to understand whether a proposal is likely to be supported?
- Does the amendment affect any other existing planning policy or tool?
- Is a local planning policy necessary or is the issue adequately covered by another planning tool (eg overlay) or decision guideline?

7. Is the amendment consistent with the delivery of the relevant housing target set out in the Planning Policy Framework?

An amendment must be assessed to determine whether the changes proposed will support the provision of housing capacity in a planning scheme.

- Will the amendment impact existing or new land available for housing in the municipality?
- Does the amendment or proposal support or give effect to the objectives and strategies at Clause 11.02 (Managing Growth) and Clause 16.01-15 (Housing Supply)?

8. How does the amendment support or implement the Local Planning Policy Framework (LPPF) and, specifically, the Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS)?

This strategic consideration only applies if the planning scheme includes an LPPF at clause 20.

The LPPF sets a local strategic policy context for a municipality. It comprises of the MSS and local planning policies.

Municipal Strategic Statement

The MSS contains the strategic planning objectives of the council and the strategies employed to achieve them. There should be a clear link between the objectives and outcomes sought by the MSS and the requirements applied in the planning scheme. When preparing an amendment to the planning scheme, the planning authority must take the MSS into account (section 12(2)(ab) of the Act). Questions that should be addressed include:

- How does the amendment seek to implement or support the MSS?
- Does the amendment seek to change the objectives or strategies of the MSS? If so, what is the change?
- What effect will any change to the MSS have on the rest of the MSS?
- o Is the amendment consistent with strategic directions elsewhere in the MSS?

o What is the cumulative effect of this amendment on the other objectives in the MSS? For example, how will the introduction of a Heritage Overlay affect the housing or economic development objectives of the municipality?

Local Planning Policy

A local planning policy is a tool for day-to-day decision making in relation to a specific discretion in the planning scheme. It helps the responsible authority and other users of the planning scheme to understand how a particular discretion is likely to be exercised.

If the amendment seeks to introduce or amend a local planning policy:

- Does the local planning policy:
- o respond to a demonstrated need?
- o implement an objective or strategy in the MSS?
- o relate to a specific discretion or group of discretions in the planning scheme?
- o assist the responsible authority to make a decision?
- o assist any other person to understand whether a proposal is likely to be supported or not?
- Does the amendment affect any other existing local planning policy or tool?
- Is a local planning policy necessary or is the issue adequately covered by another planning tool (eg overlay) or decision guideline?

The Practitioner's Guide to Victoria's Planning Schemes provides format, content and language guidance for introducing a new or changing an existing local planning policy.

9. How does the amendment support or implement the Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS)?

This strategic consideration only applies if the planning scheme includes an MPS at clause 02.

The MPS is a succinct expression of the overarching strategic policy directions of a municipality. It provides for the planning scheme's policy foundation, based on the municipality's location and regional context, history, assets, strengths, key attributes and influences. In answering this question consider:

- How does the amendment seek to implement or support the MPS?
- Does the amendment seek to change the strategic directions of the MPS? If so, what is the change?
- What effect will any change to the MPS have on the rest of the MPS?
- o Is the amendment consistent with strategic directions elsewhere in the MPS?
- o What is the cumulative effect of this amendment on the other directions in the MPS? For example, how will the introduction of a Heritage Overlay affect the housing or economic development directions for the municipality?

10. Does the amendment make proper use of the Victoria Planning Provisions?

The application of zones, overlays and local provisions must have a readily discernible basis in the PPF or LPPF.

- Does the amendment use the most appropriate VPP tool to achieve the strategic objective(s) of the planning scheme? (For example, is an appropriate zone or overlay used?) How does the selected tool give effect to the intended outcome?
- Does the amendment affect, conflict with or duplicate another existing provision in the planning scheme that deals with the same land, use or development? If so, have the provisions been reconciled?
- Does the control capture matters that do not specifically relate to the purpose or objectives of the control or matters that should not be dealt with under planning?
- Does the amendment make any existing provisions in the planning scheme redundant? If so, does the amendment remove the redundant provisions?
- Is the amendment consistent with any relevant planning practice note?

Planning practice notes provide best practice guidance about the use and application of many VPP tools, explanation and guidance about statutory processes and recommended structure and wording of statutory documents.

See also the *Practitioner's Guide to Victoria's Planning Schemes* for the planning scheme rules and other guidance about writing for a planning scheme.

11. How does the amendment address the views of relevant agencies?

The amendment must address the views of any relevant agency.

• How have the views of any relevant agency been addressed?

12. Does the amendment address the requirements of the *Transport Integration Act* 2010?

Planning authorities, acting under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, are an 'interface body' under the *Transport Integration Act 2010* (TIA).

The TIA requires a planning authority to have regard to a set of transport system objectives and decision-making principles where a planning scheme amendment is likely to have a 'significant impact on the transport system'.

• Is the amendment likely to have a significant impact on the transport system, as defined by section 3 of the TIA?

If so, explain how the amendment addresses the transport system objectives and decision-making principles set out in Part 2, Divisions 2 and 3 of the TIA. Document your assessment and provide a short summary in the explanatory report.

The TIA also requires a planning authority to have regard to any statement of policy principles:

- in which it is specified; or
- that specifies powers or functions which the planning authority is exercising.

A statement of policy principles would set out further objectives and decision-making principles for an interface body to have regard to.

• Are there any applicable statements of policy principles prepared under section 22 of the TIA?

If so, assess how the amendment addresses any specified policy principles that apply to the proposal. Document your assessment and summarise it in the explanatory report.

No statement of policy principles exists at the time these Strategic Assessment Guidelines were published. You can check if a statement of policy principles has been issued by going to the Department of Transport website at planning.vic.gov.au.

Further information regarding the interface body obligations is available at the same location.

13. How does the amendment have regard to the principles set out in the *Yarra River*Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murron) Act 2017 in relation to Yarra River land and other land, the use of development of which may affect Yarra River land?

This strategic consideration under Minister's Direction No. 11 applies to amendments affecting land in the hydrological catchment of Birrarung (Yarra River). This includes land identified as:

- Yarra River land under S.3(1) of the Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murron)
 Act 2017 (Birrarung Act), and
- other land that may affect Yarra River land through use and development.

Land within the hydrological catchment of Birrarung, including Yarra River land, is identified in the *Yarra River Land Web Map* at <u>spatial.planning.vic.gov.au/yarrariverland</u>.

If an amendment has the potential to affect Yarra River land, the planning authority must address the principles under the Birrarung Act. *Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo - Yarra Strategic Plan 2022–32* may assist when addressing the principles under the Birrarung Act, including when considering how Traditional Owners have been involved and whether the amendment results in a net gain for the environment in the area of Yarra River land.

Amendments affecting land outside the hydrological catchment of Birrarung are not expected to provide an assessment against the principles in the Birrarung Act.

14. What impact will the new planning provisions have on the administrative costs of the responsible authority?

The introduction of new or amended planning scheme requirements can often have significant resource implications for a council. Quantifying the resource implications of an amendment on the council is a relevant operational consideration.

Councils must be able to document the likely resource cost of implementing and administrating a proposed change to the planning scheme.

- What are the cost implications for a responsible authority in implementing and administrating the new planning provisions including:
- o the estimated increase in number of planning permit applications

- o planning staff resources
- o other miscellaneous costs including legal or other professional advice, for example, heritage advisers
- o capacity to consider the new application within the prescribed time.

Strategic Assessment Guidelines checklist

This checklist provides a quick snapshot of the above-mentioned information. It may be helpful to use while preparing an amendment assessment.

Strategic consi	ideration	Yes	No	N/A	Comment
Why is an amendment	What does the amendment intend to do and what is its desired outcome?				
required?	How does it intend to do it?				
	Is it supported by or is it a result of any strategic study or report?				
	Is the planning scheme the most appropriate means of controlling the issue or can other existing regulatory or process mechanisms deal with the issue?				
	Will the proposed provision result in the desired planning outcome?				
	Will the amendment have a net community benefit?				
	Will the community benefit outweigh the cost of the new control?				
	Does the amendment repeat provisions already in the planning scheme?				
	Is the matter already dealt with under other regulations?				
Does the amendment implement the objectives of planning and address any environmental, social and economic effects?	Does the amendment implement the objectives of planning in Victoria? (Refer to section 4 of the Act)				
	Does the amendment adequately address any environmental effects?				
	Does the amendment adequately address any social effects?				
	Does the amendment adequately address any economic effects?				

Strategic consideration		Yes	No	N/A	Comment
Does the amendment address climate change?	Does the amendment consider climate change in accordance with the Ministerial Direction No. 22: Climate Change Consideration issued under section 12A of the Act?				
	Does the amendment minimise greenhouse gas emissions (section 12(2A)(a) of the Act?				
	Does the amendment address significant risks arising from the impact of climate change (section 12(2A)(b) of the Act?				
	Have the views of relevant emergency management and natural resource management agencies been sought in formulating the amendment?				
Does the amendment address relevant bushfire risk?	Does the amendment meet the objective and give effect to the strategies to address the risk to life as a priority, property, community infrastructure and the natural environment from bushfire in the Planning Policy Framework (clause 13.02 of the planning scheme)?				
	Has the view of the relevant fire authority been sought in formulating the amendment?				
	If the planning scheme includes a Local Planning Policy Framework at clause 20, is the amendment consistent with the objectives and strategies that apply to bushfire risk?				
	Is local policy for bushfire risk management required to support the amendment?				
Does the amendment comply with all the relevant Minister's Directions?	Does the amendment comply with the requirements of the Ministerial Direction - The Form and Content of Planning Schemes?				
	Do any other Minister's Directions apply to the amendment? If so, have they been complied with?				

Strategic consideration		Yes	No	N/A	Comment
	Is the amendment accompanied by all of the information required by a Minister's Direction?				
Does the amendment support or	What objectives and strategies of the PFF are relevant and how are they relevant?				
implement the PPF?	Does the amendment support or give effect to any relevant adopted state policy?				
	 Are there any competing PPF objectives; and if so, how are they balanced? 				
	If the planning scheme includes a Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) at clause 02 and the amendment seeks to introduce or amend a local planning policy in the PPF:				
	Does the new or amended local planning policy:				
	- respond to a demonstrated need?				
	- implement a strategic direction in the MPS?				
	- relate to a specific discretion or group of discretions in the planning scheme?				
	- assist the responsible authority to make a decision?				
	- assist any other person to understand whether a proposal is likely to be supported?				
	- respond to a demonstrated need?				
	Does the amendment affect any existing local planning policy or tool?				
	Is a local planning policy necessary OR is the issue adequately covered by				

Strategic consideration		Yes	No	N/A	Comment
	another planning tool or decision guideline?				
Does the amendment	Does the amendment implement or support the MSS?				
support or implement the LPPF?	Does the amendment seek to change the objectives or strategies of the MSS? If so, what is the change?				
*This strategic consideration only applies if the planning scheme	What effect will any change to the MSS have on the rest of the MSS:				
includes an LPPF at clause 20.	- Is the amendment consistent/inconsistent with strategic directions elsewhere in the MSS?				
	- Has the cumulative effect of this amendment on the strategic directions in the MSS been considered?				
	Does the new or amended local planning policy:				
	- respond to a demonstrated need?				
	- implement an objective or strategy in the MSS?				
	- relate to a specific discretion or group of discretions in the planning scheme?				
	- assist the responsible authority to make a decision?				
	- assist any other person to understand whether a proposal is likely to be supported?				
	Does the amendment affect any existing local planning policy or tool?				
	Is a local planning policy necessary or is the issue adequately covered by another planning tool or decision guideline?				

Strategic consi	deration	Yes	No	N/A	Comment
Does the amendment	How does the amendment seek to implement or support the MPS?				
support or implement the MPS? *This strategic	Does the amendment seek to change the strategic directions of the MPS? If so, what is the change?				
consideration only applies if the planning scheme	What effect will any change to the MPS have on the rest of the MPS?				
includes an MPS at clause 02.	Is the amendment consistent/inconsistent with strategic directions elsewhere in the MPS?				
	What is the cumulative effect of this amendment on the other directions in the MPS?				
Does the amendment make proper use of the VPP?	Does the amendment use the most appropriate VPP tool to achieve the strategic objective of the planning scheme?				
	Does the amendment affect, conflict with or duplicate another existing provision in the planning scheme that deals with the same land, use or development? If so, explain how the provisions have been reconciled.				
	Does the control capture matters that do not specifically relate to the purpose or objectives of the control or matters that should not be dealt with under planning?				
	Does the amendment make any existing provision in the planning scheme redundant?				
	Is the amendment consistent with any relevant planning practice note?				
How does the amendment address the views of any	How have the views of any relevant agency been addressed?				

Strategic consideration		Yes	No	N/A	Comment
relevant agency?					
Does the amendment address the requirements of the Transport Integration Act 2010 (TIA)?	Is the amendment likely to have a significant impact on the transport system, as defined by section 3 of the TIA? If so, explain how the amendment addresses the transport system objectives and decision-making principles set out in Part 2, Divisions 2 and 3 of the TIA.				
	Are there any applicable statements of policy principles prepared under section 22 of the TIA? If so, assess how the amendment addresses any specified policy principles that apply to the proposal.				
Does the amendment address the requirements of the Yarra River Protection (Wilip gin Birrarung murron) Act 2017 (YRP)?	Does the amendment apply to land within the Birrarung (Yarra River) hydrological catchment? If so, explain how the amendment has regard to the river protection principles at Part 2 of the YRP. [Consider the Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo - Yarra Strategic Plan 2022–32 to assist your assessment].				
What impact will the new planning provisions have on the resource and administrative costs of the responsible authority?	Has the council considered the cost implications in implementing and administrating the new planning provisions? - including:				
	- estimated increase in number of planning permit applications				
	- planning staff resources				
	other miscellaneous costs including legal or other professional advice, for example, heritage advisers				
	- capacity to consider the new application within the prescribed time?				

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