



Neighbourhood Activity Centre Urban Design Guidelines

ADOPTED BY COUNCIL

28 APRIL 2014

It is acknowledged that the City of Whitehorse is on traditional lands of the Wurundjeri tribe of the Kulin Nation. We offer our respect to the Elders of these traditional lands, and through them to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

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PROJECT CONTROL

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Preliminary Draft	1	CR	LR	01/05/13
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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The *Whitehorse Housing and Neighbourhood Character Review* involves a reappraisal and updating of the Whitehorse Housing Strategy 2003 and the Neighbourhood Character Study 2003. Elements of both documents are contained in the Whitehorse Planning Scheme.

These documents together set a hierarchy of preferred locations for growth – substantial change, natural change and minimal change – and preferred design objectives that respond to desired housing outcomes throughout Whitehorse. Both documents have been reviewed to ensure that they are still relevant and provide appropriate direction for future housing development. The *Review* recommends changes to the Whitehorse Planning Scheme that will direct residential development in the most suitable forms and locations, and strengthen neighbourhood character.

The study area for the *Review* includes all residentially zoned land within the City of Whitehorse, as well as the commercial zoned land within the Neighbourhood Activity Centres (NAC).

The Neighbourhood Activity Centre Guidelines component of the *Review* required design guidance for the neighbourhood activity centres across the city (centres currently without applicable Structure Plans or Design Guidelines) by:

- Determining the thresholds or catchments that constitute the various neighbourhood activity centres.
- Identifying the key commercial strengths and opportunities for all centres.
- Identifying the future role and development capacity of these centres to determine which of them have the capacity and scope for more intensive residential development.
- Quantifying the amount of residential development capacity within these NACs.
- Preparing built form guidelines to apply to the various types of neighbourhood activity centres.
- Recommending any changes or additions to the MSS, Local Policy, zones, planning overlays or any other implementing mechanism to reflect the future character, role or built form of each Neighbourhood Activity Centre.

PROCESS

The preparation of the Neighbourhood Activity Centre Guidelines involved the following stages:

- Review of background information including previous Activity Centre Strategy and Council public domain guidelines for centres.
- Site survey of all neighbourhood activity centres.
- Development of criteria for the categorisation of centres.
- Categorisation of centres.
- Development of preliminary Draft Guidelines by Category of centre.
- Review of preliminary Categories and Draft Guidelines by Council officers and internal groups.
- Review of Categories and Draft Guidelines.
- Release of Draft Guidelines for community comment
- Review of comments.
- Revision of Categories and Guidelines.
- Council briefing.
- Release of revised Draft Neighbourhood Activity Centre Urban Design Guidelines for community comment.
- Review of community comments, and revision of the Guidelines.
- Council briefing.
- Release of Final Draft NAC Guidelines for community comment.
- Review of comments, and revision of Guidelines.
- Preparation of final documents and implementation of recommendations.

An Internal Working Group comprising officers from a range of Council departments has overseen and inputted into the preparation of the NAC Guidelines.

An External Reference Group has provided some community input into preparation of the Guidelines, and includes members representing residential, commercial and other broad interests from the Whitehorse community.

CONSULTATION

PHASE 1 CONSULTATION

The Neighbourhood Activity Centre Guidelines were exhibited in a draft form during Stage 2 of the overall *Review* project. As a result of the release of the Draft NAC Guidelines for comment, a total of 44 submissions were received providing feedback on the categorisation of the centres and the guideline content. Of these 25 related to Rangeview shopping centre, 8 to Vermont East and 6 to Mitcham Road / Andover Street centres.

Changes were made to categorisations and to the detail of the Guidelines as a result of comments. In addition the Guidelines were simplified with the reorganisation of the common aspects and inclusion only of the heights and setback requirements specific to each Category within this section.

PHASE 2 CONSULTATION

The revised version of the NAC Guidelines was exhibited in September / October 2013 as part of the Stage 4 consultation for the *Review* project. As a result 17 submitters made comment in relation to the Guidelines. These submissions related again to the inappropriate classification of centres, Thames / Station Street shops and Blackburn South centre in particular, and general comments about the proposed maximum heights, or other issues related to the future intensification of the centres.

The classification of the centres was reviewed again, and Wattle Park, Surrey Hills was reclassified due to its size, and Inglisby Road shops added. In addition, the upper level setbacks for buildings in Category 2b centres were increased.

PHASE 3 CONSULTATION

The NAC Guidelines were once again exhibited in February/March 2014 as part of the Phase 3 consultation for the *Review* project. As most submissions related to the Housing, Neighbourhood Character and proposed planning scheme amendment C160, only minor changes were made to the NAC Guidelines.



PREPARATION OF THE GUIDELINES

In preparing these Neighbourhood Activity Centre Urban Design Guidelines an assessment considered each NAC to determine the form of development that may be appropriate for the type of centre. The assessment examined factors like availability and proximity to existing facilities, development opportunities and constraints, and the appropriate scale of development.

The Guidelines aim to both encourage residential uses that complement existing retail and business functions and integrate development in the NACs with neighbouring residential precincts.

HOW THE NAC URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES WORK

The Guidelines comprise two key parts:

- **Chapter 2:** General NAC Urban Design Guidelines, include general design guidelines that apply to all Neighbourhood Activity Centres throughout the City of Whitehorse. These provide generic guidelines that apply to each of the 60 centres identified in this study.
- **Chapter 3:** NAC Built Form Guidelines, which classify each of the NACs into one of five categories and propose building heights and setbacks, as well as design objectives and built form guidelines for each category of centre. The proposed height and setback controls have been determined following urban design and context analysis from the Project Team.

THE CATEGORIES

The NACs are categorised utilising three primary criteria:

- 1 The width and role of the road on which they are located i.e. whether they are on a standard width road (local or main) or a wide main road. The width of a road provides a measure of the potential capacity of the centre to accommodate higher buildings from an urban design perspective.
- 2 Approximate size of the centre and the range of services. The size and functions of a NAC indicates its role and capacity to accommodate future growth. This often correlates with the built form of the centre.
- 3 Location of the NAC in relation to public transport options. The accessibility of the centre adds to its likely future potential to accommodate development. This often correlates with the type of road on which the centre is located.

The five categorisations are therefore:

- Category 1A includes small-medium local service centres, on a standard width road
- Category 1B includes large sized centres on a standard width road
- Category 2A includes small-medium local service centres on a wide main road
- Category 2B includes large sized centres on a wide main road
- Category 3 includes large, car based centres on a wide main road

HOW WILL THE GUIDELINES BE USED

The General NAC Urban Design Guidelines and the Built Form Guidelines for each category of NAC address issues such as residential interface, adjoining neighbourhood character type, height and setbacks of new development or extensions to the existing buildings.

Once finalised and in the planning scheme, the Guidelines will be used to assess planning applications and advise owners and developers of the preferred form of buildings in these centres.

OVERVIEW OF THE GUIDELINES

WHAT IS A NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTIVITY CENTRE (NAC)?

NACs are defined as small shopping areas located in the heart of established residential areas, and generally close to existing public transport infrastructure and community facilities.

The City of Whitehorse has identified 60 NACs that all play an important community role in providing a mix of uses to meet local convenience needs.

NACs offer many services to local residents and promote walking, cycling and local public transport use, as well as developing and enhancing community hubs.

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES

The strategic direction articulated in *Plan Melbourne* is for a more compact and intense form of development within activity centres.

As such, many of the NACs throughout the City of Whitehorse have been subject to recent development applications, but in most cases, do not have specific guidelines to direct appropriate scale and form of development.

The purpose of the guidelines is to provide more definitive guidance regarding the development of land within NACs throughout the City of Whitehorse.

The guidelines will help to encourage more housing, employment and community services in centres that are well served by public transport, while ensuring the valued characteristics of traditional low-rise neighbourhoods are protected and reinforced.

HOW TO USE THE GUIDELINES

This document comprises two key parts:

- Chapter 2: General NAC Urban Design Guidelines, which apply to all Neighbourhood Activity Centres throughout the City of Whitehorse.
- Chapter 3: NAC Built Form Guidelines, which classifies each of the NACs into one of five categories and outlines specific building heights and setbacks for each centre.

WHY HAVEN'T ALL CENTRES BEEN INCLUDED?

This Review does not include centres that are classified as Central Activities Areas, Major Activity Areas and some very small centres.

The Neighbourhood Activity Centre Urban Design Guidelines do not override the direction for centres such as Burwood Village, Mitcham and Blackburn Village which already have specific Structure Plans or Urban Design Frameworks in place.