CITY OF
WHITEHORSE

Neighbourhood Character Study

PREFERRED CHARACTER STATEMENTS & 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.

PROJECT CONTROL

STATUS	NO.	PM APPROVED	PD APPROVED	DATE
Preliminary Draft	1	CR	LR	01/05/13
Draft for Consultation V1 - Council Endorsement	2	CR	LR	26/05/2013
Draft for Consultation V2 – Council Endorsement	3	CR	LR	01/07/2013
Draft for Consultation V3	4	CR	LR	05/07/2013
Final Draft	5	LR	LR	15/01/2014
Final Draft Adopted by Council	6	DF	LR	01/05/2014

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INTRODUCTION

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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 and responses to ensure that the desired housing outcome is achieved. The content of these documents has now been reviewed to ensure that they are still relevant and provide appropriate direction for future housing development. The Review will recommend changes to the Whitehorse Planning Scheme that will direct residential development to the most suitable locations, and strengthen protection of neighbourhood character.

The study area for the Review includes all residentially zoned land within the City of Whitehorse, as well as the business zoned land within the neighbourhood activity centres. Figure 1 (Neighbourhood Character Precincts) illustrate the areas of Whitehorse surveyed for this Review.

There are three components of the Review:

- A review of the Neighbourhood Character Study that recommends new Precincts and Preferred Character statements for all residential areas, with Guidelines for residential development within each Neighbourhood Character Precinct (This document).

- Urban Design Guidelines for development in Neighbourhood Activity Centres.

- A revised Housing Strategy that utilises information from both the Neighbourhood Character Study and NAC Assessment to provide direction for meeting Whitehorse's housing needs for the next 20 years, including proposed alterations to the existing designated substantial change, natural change and minimal change areas.

PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

In the ten years since the Council prepared the current Neighbourhood Character Study and Housing Study, much has changed. Melbourne is now anticipated to grow to a population of around 5.5 million by 2031, with each local Council anticipated to grow in both its population and the number of homes it will accommodate. Council needs to prepare for the change that Whitehorse is likely to experience by directing where, and in what circumstances, development should occur – and in particular, how it can occur in a way that respects the desired future character of our neighbourhoods.

THE NEW PLANNING ZONES

The State Government recently released new residential and commercial zones with changes to the existing industrial and mixed use zones. These new residential zones will enable the desired scale of development to be more effectively identified and future preferred character to be more clearly specified. Councils must define boundaries to apply these new residential zones. The Review will prepare proposals for implementing these new residential zones so that the Whitehorse community gains the maximum benefit from them.

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NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER STUDY REVIEW

NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER STUDY REVIEW

The *Neighbourhood Character Study* 2014 updates the *Whitehorse Neighbourhood Character Study* 2003 to make it more effective and to align it with the provisions of the new Residential Zones.

Community and stakeholder feedback received during Phases 1, 2 and 3 of consultation informed changes to the Neighbourhood Character Precinct boundaries, and the Preferred Character Statements and Guidelines.

The purpose of the Neighbourhood Character Study is to describe the valued characteristics of each residential neighbourhood in Whitehorse (known as character precincts), and to propose a means of protecting valued characteristics via the Whitehorse Planning Scheme. In locations expected to experience greater housing change, it specifies the desired future characteristics of those locations. The Preferred Character Statements, contained within this document, will provide policy direction for each of the character precincts. Guidelines and controls, designed to be incorporated into the planning scheme through zone schedules, will then be formulated to give effect to the Preferred Character Statements, taking into account the wider context provided by Council's housing policies. These guidelines and controls will then be used to assess new residential proposals which require planning approval.

HOUSING CHANGE AREAS

As part of the broader Housing Strategy preparation, the existing housing change designations contained in the Whitehorse Planning Scheme have been reviewed. These have been informed by, and in turn inform, the Neighbourhood Character Statements and Guidelines.

The Neighbourhood Character Statements note the various new change areas within each Character Precinct, and the differing standards, where appropriate, that are proposed.

The Housing Strategy contains more information about these change areas and their implications for housing type. Three categories of change within residential areas have been identified:

- **Limited Change areas** enable specific characteristics of the neighbourhood, environment or landscape to be protected through greater control over new housing development. These areas represent the lowest degree of intended residential growth in Whitehorse. Individually significant Heritage Overlay sites are included, but not illustrated on maps.

- **Natural Change areas** allow for modest housing growth and a variety of housing types provided they achieve the preferred future neighbourhood character.

- **Substantial Change areas** provide for housing growth with increased densities, including inside designated structure plan boundaries and opportunity areas, in accordance with the relevant plans as well as around most train stations, adjoining tram routes and around larger Activity Centres.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER STUDY REVIEW CONTINUED

NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER TYPES

Three character types have been identified to encapsulate the landscape and built form elements considered important in the municipality. The three character types are as follows:

Garden Suburban Areas generally have the following characteristics:

- Formalised streetscapes comprising grassy nature strips, concrete footpaths, kerbs and channels.
- Modified grid road layout and subdivision pattern is common, particularly in the western side of the municipality or within the vicinity of the rail-line, reflecting the timing of the original land subdivisions.
- Buildings are generally visible along streets behind low front fences and open garden settings.
- Established exotic gardens with canopy trees, lawn areas, garden beds and shrubs.
- Generally well defined property boundaries (fencing / boundary treatments).
- Generally consistent building siting, parallel to the road.

Bush Suburban Areas generally have the following characteristics:

- Mix of formal and informal streetscapes with wide nature strips.
- Some areas have curvilinear road layouts and subdivision patterns.
- Vegetation dominated streetscape with buildings partially hidden behind tall trees and established planting.
- Gardens are less formal, consisting of many canopy trees.
- Mixed property boundary definition, which can be nonexistent or fenced.
- Buildings appear detached along the street.
- Buildings generally comprise pitched rooftops, with simple forms and articulated façades.

Bush Environment Areas generally have the following characteristics:

- Generally informal streetscapes with swale drains.
- Vegetation dominant streetscapes with buildings partially or completely hidden behind established planting and / or generous setbacks.
- Informal native gardens comprising established canopy trees and vegetation.
- Nonexistent or unobtrusive boundary definitions.
- Predominantly detached buildings constructed sensitively within the landscape.
- Buildings appear detached along the street

Smaller precincts were delineated under each of these types, where preferred character statements were reviewed and developed as part of the wider neighbourhood character review project. The intention of the preferred character statements is to guide the future design and appearances of new developments, including buildings and landscaping.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER STUDY REVIEW CONTINUED

INVESTIGATION AREAS

Two Precincts have been identified during Stage 2 of the Neighbourhood Character Review that are recommended for future investigation:

▪ Precinct Garden Suburban 16 (GS16), which includes two areas that require detailed survey and analysis to determine their suitability for further Neighbourhood Character Overlay controls; and

▪ Precinct Bush Suburban 9 (BS9), which includes several areas that may be suitable for further Significant Landscape Overlay controls

It is recommended that these two character precincts should be implemented as recommended by this study until the further investigation is carried out.

METHODOLOGY

The 2003 Neighbourhood Character Study has been reviewed through the following steps:

▪ Meetings with Councillors, Council officers, a steering committee, and an external reference group to discuss draft material.

▪ Identification of areas that have undergone development in the last 10 years.

▪ A site survey to review the previously identified character precincts in the 2003 study, identify areas of change, reassess precinct boundaries and to confirm the key characteristics of each precinct.

▪ Release of the preferred character statements and precincts for comment during Phase 1 in April / May 2013.

▪ Review of all feedback received and review of the exhibited material in Phase 1.

▪ Preparation of revised Neighbourhood Character Statements for all precincts, including Guidelines for development.

▪ Release of revised Statements and Guidelines for comment during Phase 2 consultation in September / October 2013

▪ Review of all feedback and revisions to precinct boundaries, category of change designations and consequent changes to Guidelines.

▪ Development of planning scheme implementation details, including zoning, zone schedules and policy changes.

▪ Release of revised Statements, Guidelines and planning scheme implementation details for comment during Phase 3 consultation in February / March 2014

▪ Review of all feedback and revisions to planning scheme implementation details, precinct boundaries, category of change designations and consequent changes to Guidelines

CONTENT OF THE STATEMENTS

The information and findings of the background analysis, survey work and the consultation have informed the Neighbourhood Character Statements. Each character statement includes:

▪ A Precinct Map, which shows the Character Precinct boundaries and the housing change level/s from the Housing Strategy within each, as well as context.

▪ Key Existing Characteristics

▪ Preferred Character Statement

▪ Guidelines for development

IMPLEMENTATION

This report includes recommendations for planning scheme changes to implement the Character Statements and Guidelines, providing them with statutory weight. A planning scheme amendment will be required to make changes to the Whitehorse Planning Scheme.

HOW WILL THE CHARACTER STATEMENTS BE USED?

Once finalised and in the planning scheme, the Neighbourhood Character Statements and Guidelines will be used in the assessment of planning applications in residential areas.
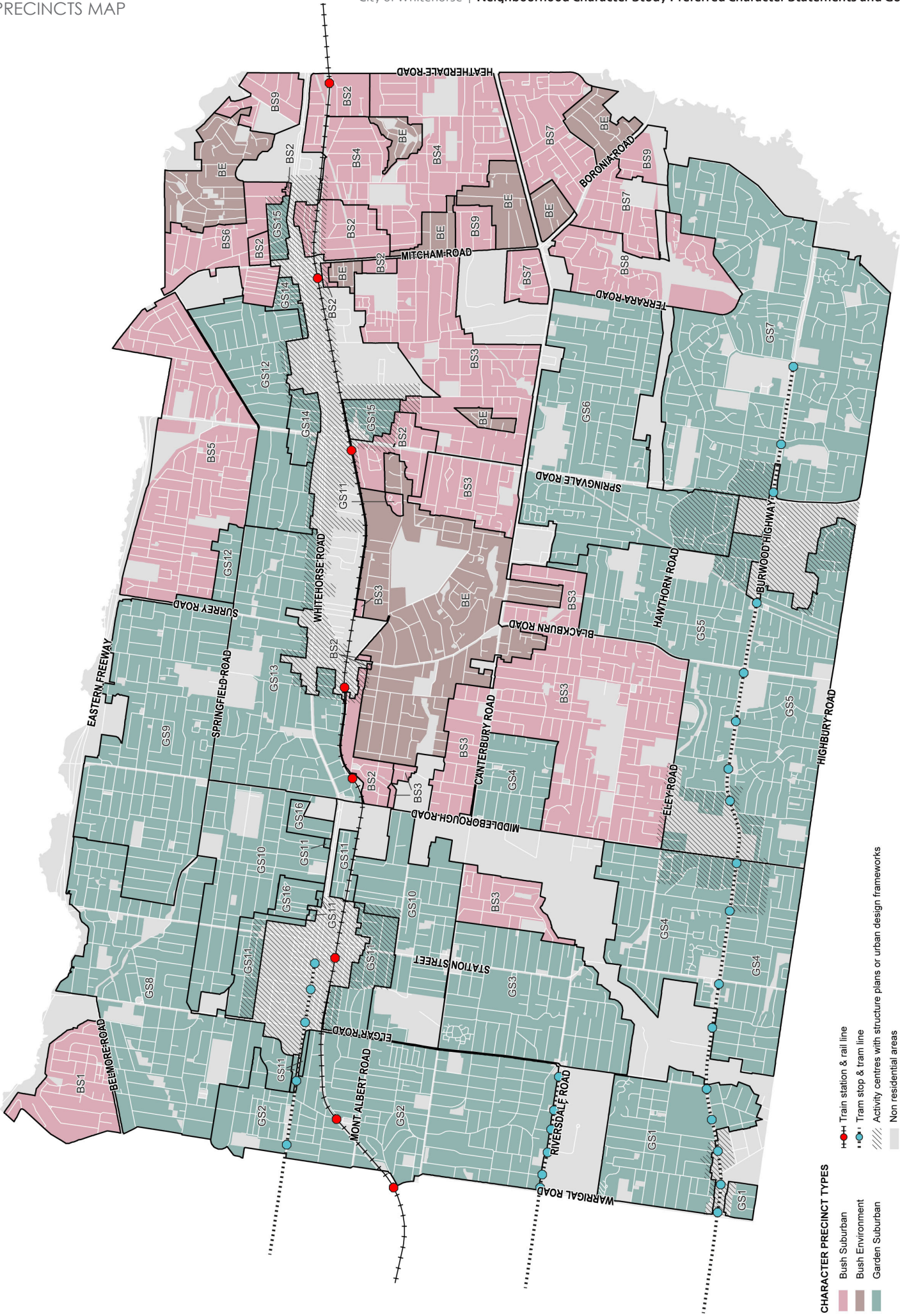
CHARACTER PRECINCT TYPES

Bush Suburban

Bush Environment

Garden Suburban

Train station & rail line

Tram stop & tram line

Activity centres with structure plans or urban design frameworks

Non residential areas

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NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER GUIDELINES