POLICY FOUR: HOUSING DESIGN, FUNCTIONALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY
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Housing design, functionality and sustainability considers the built form aspects of housing. Built form considerations are an important part of the Housing Strategy as they impact on neighbourhood character, residential amenity, functionality, liveability and environmental sustainability associated with residential land uses.

POLICY AREAS:

4.1 Housing design, heritage and neighbourhood character
4.2 Housing design and functionality
4.3 Housing and sustainability

Consideration of both the external and internal areas of housing design is important. Three key areas of housing design have been identified in the Housing Strategy which new housing should consider, these include:

1) Housing design, heritage and neighbourhood character
2) Housing design and functionality
3) Housing and sustainability

KEY CHALLENGES:

- respecting existing heritage areas and preserving neighbourhood character whilst also planning for increased housing growth
- having clear planning controls that shape and protect neighbourhood character
- achieving good design outcomes for high density residential development
- managing internal amenity in residential development, particularly for medium and high density housing
- managing amenity issues associated with non-residential uses in residential areas
- designing homes which can meet the changing needs of occupants over their lifetimes
- reducing the environmental impacts associated with residential development and uses including reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing community resilience
- promoting more sustainable living and affordable living through reducing household utility costs and car ownership

To encourage housing that fits in with the preferred neighbourhood character, is designed to meet the needs of residents throughout all stages of life and to increase the energy efficiency of homes to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote sustainable living.
4.1 Housing design, heritage and neighbourhood character

Hobsons Bay is a diverse municipality with housing stock representing all eras. The eastern side of the municipality has older housing stock than the western side.

The community values the character of their neighbourhoods and there is some concern regarding inappropriate development impacting on existing character, particularly in the eastern parts of the municipality where there are higher development pressures and significant heritage areas.

One of the key challenges of the Housing Strategy is to respect existing heritage areas and preserve neighbourhood character whilst also planning for housing to accommodate an increasing population.

What is neighbourhood character?

Neighbourhood character is about the look and feel of the streets in a neighbourhood. Many features contribute to neighbourhood character including building height and form, vegetation and materials.

With the expectation for established neighbourhoods to accommodate more medium and higher density infill development, it is imperative that new housing is designed to a high quality and appropriately responds to neighbourhood character.

The key housing design elements are in relation to the external built form include building setbacks, building height, front fence height and private open space.

Neighbourhood character and amenity are often the major factors in determining whether a permit should be granted, and they are often the main points of contention in the community.

Key design issues

The Background Report identified the following key design issues for new housing in Hobsons Bay21:

- domination of frontages by garages, hard surfaces and driveways
- intrusions into the ‘backyard zone’
- inadequate space for canopy trees and unsympathetic landscaping
- unenforceable provisions on side setbacks

Other design issues adversely impacting on neighbourhood character in Hobsons Bay include:

- use of colour and materials
- the way pitched roofs and semi-basement car parking are accommodated
- interfaces with parks and laneways

This strategy considers the outcomes of the revised Neighbourhood Character Study (2019) which identifies 28 precincts and six neighbourhood character types.

New residential development must meet the Neighbourhood Character Precinct Guidelines and the proposed schedules to the New Residential Zones.

The Neighbourhood Character Precinct Guidelines and proposed schedules play an important role in shaping the residential built form and give better guidance.

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to the community and developers as to the expected design response of new housing in an area.

It is anticipated that Hobsons Bay will experience the addition of more high density development (i.e. three or more storey apartments) over the next 20 years. Achieving quality design outcomes for these development types is highly important due to the visual prominence on existing streetscapes.

**Recommendation**

To address housing design and character issues through the use of the New Residential Zone schedules and Neighbourhood Character Precinct Guidelines (as recommended by the Neighbourhood Character Study 2019) and the Better Apartment Design Standards (for higher density dwellings).

The preparation of future structure plans and urban design frameworks should also provide further guidance for high density built form.

**4.2 Housing design and functionality**

Housing design and functionality is an important aspect of housing. Homes should not be built as a short term provision but with consideration of occupants needs within the community.

Homes that are well-designed provide good internal and external amenity and are versatile to meet the changing needs of occupants over their lifetimes (‘lifetime homes’) and contribute to health and wellbeing.

Another key area of housing design which needs to be considered based on the fact that Hobsons Bay has an ageing population, is older persons housing (e.g. aged care facilities).

The key issues regarding housing design and functionality in Hobsons Bay include:

- residential amenity
- waste management and resource recovery
- lifetime homes (accessible for all, adaptable and universal design)
- older persons housing

**Residential amenity**

There is no formal definition of ‘residential amenity’ but in basic terms, it is about the pleasantness of a place or area.

The current planning controls in place to manage amenity impacts are contained in Clause 54.04 (one dwelling), Clause 55.04 (two or more dwellings) and Clause 58.04 (apartment developments) are primarily concerned with addressing access to daylight, restricting overshadowing and protecting overlooking/privacy to the private open space areas and habitable room windows.

Residential amenity however also includes other factors such as the internal layout of a dwelling and the size of the rooms, as well as environmental conditions such as noise and odour/air quality. These matters go beyond the remit of ResCode.

The increase in medium and high density infill development is impacting on residential amenity as some developments are pushing the boundary to accommodate the maximum number of dwellings on a lot.

The internal amenity of a residential dwelling is often compromised when lot yield, size or site constraints apply, impacting on outlook, access to daylight, privacy, noise and room sizes. This is an issue with apartments (particularly high rise) leading to the development of apartments which provide poor residential amenity for the occupants.
This issue has been acknowledged by the Victorian Government with the release of the Better Apartments Design Standards\(^{22}\) with new guidelines around internal design, amenity and functionality to address these issues.

Internal amenity issues however are not just related to apartment developments, other housing types can also be subject to poor internal amenity and there is currently no planning controls to guide this.

**Reverse living**

Within Hobsons Bay, there has been an increase in the number of applications for new housing with ‘reverse living’ arrangements (where the kitchen and living areas are located on the upper floor(s) and the bedrooms are on the ground floor).

These types of developments are adopting ‘balcony open space’ which under the planning scheme is a lower area requirement and generally an indication that the developer is pushing the limit resulting in an overdevelopment of the site. The introduction of the minimum Garden Area requirements in the Neighbourhood and General Residential Zones should help alleviate this issue.

Whilst reverse living arrangements can be acceptable in some instances for example where there is a view, or an opportunity for greater surveillance adjacent to open space and parkland, these types of dwellings do not support accessible homes/universal design requirements or allow ageing place and should be discouraged.

**Internal layout**

The internal layout and size of rooms should provide sufficient space, storage and amenity for the housing type and size and for the intended occupant. For example, a new house which is proposed to have three bedrooms and be targeted towards families should have appropriately sized living areas and private open space and storage areas to provide amenity and functionality for the reasonable requirements of a family.

In some instances, households which lack appropriate storage space (either in the home or through a garden shed) use the garage space for storage, forfeiting a place to park the car. The result of this is that more cars end up parked on the street which were not originally accounted for when the dwelling was planned and constructed.

Minimum internal room dimensions for bedrooms and living areas in apartments have been introduced through the Better Apartment Guidelines Design Standards, but there are no equivalent standards or guidelines for other dwelling types. The Building Regulations 2018 (which adopts the National Construction Code) contains minimum standards for the design and construction of buildings including requirements for ceiling heights for habitable and non-habitable rooms, natural light, ventilation and some sound insulation but not for room sizes.

As demand for housing continues to increase within established suburbs like Hobsons Bay and land values increase, there is likely to be more applications for dwellings with reduced internal spaces. This could compromise the amenity and functionality of dwellings.

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that council explore opportunities (which may include an advocacy role to the Victorian Government) to introduce guidelines/internal space standards into the planning system to better manage internal amenity for key parts of new homes (excluding apartments), notably bedrooms, storage and floor to ceiling heights\(^{23}\).

**Non-residential uses in residential areas**

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\(^{22}\) Better Apartments Design Standards (December 2016).

\(^{23}\) Similar to the Space Standards used in the UK planning system.
Within residential areas, there are a range of non-residential uses that do not require a planning permit that can be accommodated, which provide services to the local community (e.g. medical facilities, place of worship).

In some areas of the municipality, the encroachment of non-residential uses in residential areas has raised some amenity issues, for example, traffic and parking issues and noise on neighbouring properties. In addition, the issues can also impact on neighbourhood character.

There are opportunities to address potential adverse amenity impacts (for example, through the preparation of a local planning policy), however this would only be useful where a permit is triggered for the use.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council continue to monitor the impacts of the encroachment of non-residential uses in residential areas and investigate options to manage such impacts if required.

Waste management and resource recovery

An important area of housing design and residential amenity which is often given little consideration is how waste management and recycling services (resource recovery) are incorporated into new housing design and development, particularly for apartments and mixed use developments.

The issues with the provision of waste management and resource recovery services in higher density developments include the appropriate number of bins and collections, on-site bin storage space, kerbside bin presentation space and access to roads and buildings by collectors. Access to and knowledge of the waste systems by occupants is also a significant issue.

The location of street furniture and trees, on street parking, power and light poles and overhead wires may also affect waste and resource recovery collections.

Assessments of waste and resource recovery provisions in a development are most often provided prior to a planning permit being issued. This includes an assessment of a Waste Management Plan for the development proposal.

In Hobsons Bay, there has been an increase in the number of planning applications requiring a review of waste and resource recovery provisions for proposed residential developments, particularly for higher density housing.

Along with the increasing growth in the number of planning applications, there is an increasing number of developments that Council is unable to service because access arrangements, bin sizes and collection frequencies that are suitable for higher density development are often not compatible with Council collection services. In these instances private waste and resource recovery operators are required to service the developments.

There is potential that the increasing number of high density developments and the number of private waste and resource recovery operators may have a detrimental effect on particular neighbourhoods due to an increase in truck movements, noise from the use and collection of bins, and bins in public thoroughfares and streets. The extent of this impact is unknown and currently being managed through reviews of Waste Management Plans for proposed developments.

Existing policy and guidance

The following provides an overview of state planning policy and guidance material and local planning processes that address waste management in housing:

- the Victorian Governments’ Better Apartments Design Standards

24 Better Apartments Design Standards (December 2016) was implemented in April 2017.
planning approvals for higher density developments of four storeys and above (Clause 55.07-11 and Clause 58.06-3). There are no formal requirements for developers to prepare a Waste Management Plan for higher density developments below four storeys (unless there is an application requirement in local policy).

- the Apartment Design Guidelines for Victoria (Design Guidelines)\(^{25}\) support the Better Apartments Design Standards. In addition, Clauses 11.03-2 (Activity Centre Planning) and 15.01-2 (Urban Design Principles) of the State Planning Policy Framework (SPPF) require planning to consider the Apartment Design Guidelines for Victoria.

- the Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Group (MWRRG) established a toolkit\(^{26}\) to assist councils to adopt and implement waste management planning considerations for residential developments that are three storeys and below, into their planning approvals process.

- Sustainability Victoria’s Better Practice Guide for Waste Management and Recycling in Multi-unit Developments (Better Practice Guide)\(^{27}\) assists those involved in designing, planning, developing, building and managing all types of developments to incorporate better practice waste management and recycling into all stages of a development’s life. It also includes design options for residential developments that are up to four storey.
  - the Better Apartments Design Standards requires waste and recycling management facilities to be designed to be consistent with Sustainability Victoria’s Better Practice Guide. The MWRRG toolkit and Better Practice Guide are very similar in terms of the guidance material, checklists and Waste Management Plan templates.

**Internal review processes**

- Council reviews waste management proposals for developments, particularly for higher density housing and mixed use developments. Currently developers are required to provide a Waste Management Plan for developments of 10 dwellings and above. This trigger aims to address servicing issues associated with a large number of bins placed out on a kerb at any one time and that there are appropriate internal storage facilities for these number of bins. Standard conditions of permit provide guidance on elements of a Waste Management Plan that an applicant must consider.

- Clause 22.13 of the Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme - Environmentally Sustainable Development, sets out a number of policy objectives under key sustainability categories, including waste management. This local policy applies to new residential or mixed use development with two or more dwellings and requires a Sustainable Design Assessment (SDA) or Sustainability Management Plan (SMP) and that the policy objectives should be met. Applicants can use the Built Environment Sustainability Scorecard (BESS) tool to assess development applications at the planning permit stage. Waste is identified as one of the nine environmental categories BESS assesses and provides actions regarding building re-use, food and garden waste and convenience of recycling. Generally an SDA/SMP will refer to basic waste and recycling provisions of the building and its operations with less detail that a Waste Management Plan will provide. A SDA/SMP will often refer to further details provided in a Waste Management Plan if one is required.


\(^{26}\) Improving resource recovery in multiunit developments toolkit (September 2017).

There is some existing state policy relevant to planning for waste and resource recovery in high density housing. However, a key issue is that there are a number of planning tools available to guide waste management in housing and potentially unclear local triggers and processes. This may cause confusion with applicants and Council’s statutory planning team.

Therefore it is recommended that the Sustainability Victoria’s Better Practice Guide and/or the MWRRG toolkit including guidelines and templates are integrated into Hobsons Bay’s planning processes.

There is also an opportunity for Council to explore extending its waste and recycling collection services to cater for high density and mixed use developments with smaller trucks, onsite collections and varied bin sizes and collection frequencies. This would require further assessment and a business case for consideration by Council.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Sustainability Victoria’s Better Practice Guide and/or the MWRRG toolkit including guidelines and templates are integrated into Hobsons Bay’s planning processes.

Council should explore extending its waste and recycling collection services suitable to high density and mixed use developments.

Lifetime homes

Homes should be designed as a long term provision i.e. designed to meet the changing needs of occupants over their life stages (‘lifetime homes’).

There is a 60 per cent chance that a house will be occupied by a person with a disability at some point over its life\(^{28}\). Longer life spans and higher proportions of older people in our community make it more likely that every home will be required to respond to the needs of a person with a physical limitation whether they are the primary resident or a visitor\(^{29}\).

As the needs of individuals are specific to their personal circumstances there is no single solution to designing a home to meet changing needs, however several approaches exist\(^{30}\):

- accessible homes
- adaptable homes
- universal homes

The terms accessible, adaptable and universal design are often used interchangeably but there are differences between the three meanings as outlined in Table 16.

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\(^{28}\) Livable Housing Design Guidelines, p.10 (2012).


Table 16: Definitions of accessible, adaptable and universal design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessible home</td>
<td>Designed to meet the needs of people requiring higher level of access from the outset, and usually designed and built with a specific person’s needs in mind. An accessible house meets Australian Standard AS1428.1-2001 (Design for access and mobility) and is able to accommodate wheelchair users in all areas of the dwelling. The Standards only apply to public buildings and common areas and not private housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptable homes</td>
<td>Designed to meet the changing needs of most home occupants throughout their lifetime but are not initially accessible however, can be easily adapted to become an accessible house if needed. For example, ensuring that there is the scope in a multi-level house to allow for the future installation of vertical lifts or staircase lift should they be required. Other modifications include for example, introducing grab rails in bathrooms and increasing lighting levels in response to vision impairment. An adaptable home meets Australian Standard AS4299-1995 (Adaptable housing).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal homes</td>
<td>Designed to meet the changing needs of most home occupants throughout their lifetime without the need for specialisation. This is based on principles not rules through technical standards. They are built to meet the changing needs of residents across their lifecycle and allows people to age in place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hobsons Bay has an ageing population and around 18 per cent of the population has a disability, this creates a demand for housing which can cater for residents of all abilities.

The Hobsons Bay Disability, Access and Inclusion Strategy includes a key direction to improve access of housing beyond minimum accessibility compliance requirements. Housing should therefore be encouraged to incorporate universal design principles.

Although there are several approaches to designing homes to meet residents’ changing needs, the universal design approach is the one that benefits the majority of residents over their lifetime and can deliver ‘lifetime homes’.

**Universal homes**

There is a misconception that universal housing is obtrusive and unattractive only benefitting a minority of the population and that it will increase costs and impact on affordability.

However, universal housing has many benefits. Homes which are designed with comfort, safety and ease of access as core design features benefit everyone, including people with disabilities, an ageing population, people with temporary injuries and families with young children. Universal housing also promotes social cohesion as it provides lifetime homes within communities.

There are also cost benefits – incorporating universal design features and fittings during construction reduces the need for later retrofitting. It is estimated that it is 22 times cheaper to incorporate liveable design principles into new housing than retrofitting later.

There is currently no universal design regulation for private housing in Victoria. The lack of universal design requirements in the Victorian Building Codes means

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the majority of private residents are not ‘liveable homes’ and do not support ageing in place.

There are however ‘Livable Housing Design Guidelines’ prepared by Livable Housing Australia in 2012, as a way to encourage developers to incorporate inexpensive universal design elements in to new homes in Australia. The guidelines provide technical advice and guidance on the key living features that make a home easier and safer to live in for all people of all ages and abilities.

Given that there is no requirement in the VPP for private housing to comply with universal design standards, local Councils can only encourage developments to include universal design.

There is an opportunity for Council to work with developers at the early stages of a development application to encourage universal design to be incorporated into new homes.

Council can play a greater role in educating and informing developers of the benefits of universal design within new private residential development based on the Livable Housing Design Guidelines.

There is also an opportunity to strengthen this requirement in the local planning scheme and require that a proportion of dwellings in a multi-unit development incorporate the guidelines into the design.

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**Recommendation**

It is recommended that Council prepare information and guidance material for applicants of residential developments to educate and encourage the benefits of incorporating universal design principles based on the ‘Livable Housing Design Guidelines’.

The option to include a local policy in the Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme should also be investigated.

The Hobsons Bay SIA Applicant Guidelines (2011) should be updated to include reference to any guidance material/factsheets and any local policies in relation to universal design requirements.

**Older Persons Housing**

Hobsons Bay has an ageing population (like many other municipalities in Melbourne), it is estimated that the number of residents aged 55 years and over will be 44 per cent higher in 2036 compared to 2016.

Older persons housing has different needs to conventional housing (e.g. aged care facilities). There is concern that there is a mismatch (shortfall) in the type of homes suited to older persons (aged 55 years and over), as the majority of the existing housing stock would require significant modification and cost to be made accessible and useable to ageing residents.

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**Notes**

33 Livable Housing Australia is a partnership between community and consumer groups, government and industry.

34 The Guidelines should only be applied to the parts of the building classes not covered by Disability Standards and the Building Code of Australia (Volume 1 and 2).

35 Council currently requests a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) for applications of 20 or more dwellings. However, the SIA guidelines (Preparing Social Impact Assessments Applicant Guidelines, 2011) are concerned with the accessibility of the proposed development i.e. for people with a disability, rather than the broader requirements of universal design for all occupants.

36 Example: Clause 21.06 (Built Environment), Objective 4 – Housing Change of the Banyule Planning Scheme
Whilst the preference for many older residents is to age in place within their own home, this may not be an option for the older residents requiring some form of care or assistance. This can range from:

- minimal care/assistance with a high degree of independence of residents such as independent living units and retirement villages
- accommodation which offer some level of care/assistance such as serviced apartments, retirement villages and low care hostels
- accommodation providing maximum care/assistance to residents such as nursing homes

The location and design of older persons housing is particularly important. New housing intended for older/ageing residents should be located in residential areas which are within reasonable walking distance to public transport, shops, community facilities and open space/recreational areas to encourage social cohesion within the community. The design of this housing type should be catered towards the needs of this demographic profile.

The Housing Strategy identifies three key components in terms of supporting an age friendly municipality, these include:

1) **Housing diversity** – ensuring there is a diversity of housing across Hobsons Bay to enable residents to downsize to a more suitable type of home within their community

2) **Housing location** – ensuring that housing is well located with access to community services and infrastructure including public transport

3) **Housing design** - encouraging housing that is accessibly and universally designed to accommodate residents as they age in place

There is currently no specific guidelines or standards in relation to the siting (location), internal layout and design of aged persons housing.

In response to the need to accommodate an ageing population, a number of Councils in Victoria have prepared individual local policies and guidelines to guide the provision of older persons housing, including objectives around preferred locations, amenity, design and car parking requirements for aged persons housing.

The purpose of the policy is to guide applicants at the earliest stage of the planning application process and to assist planners with assessing such applications.

**Recommendation**

Given that there still remains a lack of information/guidance available at the state level on the development of older persons housing and that Hobsons Bay has an ageing population, it is recommended that Council considers preparing an Older Persons Housing policy for inclusion in the local planning scheme.
4.3 Sustainable design and sustainable living

Residential buildings are a major contributor of greenhouse gas emissions. Greenhouse gases contribute to climate change – this change is evident in events such as incidents of extreme flooding, fire, heat and drought events and sea level rise. Typical sources of these greenhouse gas emissions include the generation of electricity and the use of fuel for private vehicles.

Hobsons Bay is a low lying coastal municipality and is vulnerable to climate change-induced sea level rise. There is a need to address potential mitigation measures, such as sustainable housing and promoting sustainable living, that reduce the likelihood of adverse climate change impacts.

The municipality is also experiencing an increase in infill development. This not only increases the demand for water supply but also increases the coverage of hard surfaces, reducing permeability and resulting in more stormwater run-off, and increasing the risk of flooding.

Responding to climate change can lead to reductions in the burden of ill-health, enhance community resilience, and improve air quality by reducing pollution.37

In Hobsons Bay, it is estimated that around nine per cent of total greenhouse gas emissions are from residential buildings and a further 11 per cent from residential transport.38

With around 20 per cent of total greenhouse gas emissions attributed to residential activity, there is a significant opportunity to reduce these harmful emissions from these uses through improving the energy efficiency of homes, and through reducing car dependency.

Sustainably designed homes improve the energy efficiency of buildings which not only assists in reducing greenhouse gas emissions but also helps reduce utility bills, promoting affordable living. The benefits of environmentally sustainably designed buildings are not just confined to the environment, but also have a wider range of health, social and economic benefits.39

The location of housing can also influence sustainable outcomes, for example, locating housing near to a train station and other community services can reduce car dependency.

The Background Report (Volume One) identifies that opportunities to improve sustainable design and promote more sustainable living exist at three main levels in planning:

1) planning for land uses and settlement patterns which integrate with existing infrastructure and services to achieve sustainable outcomes

2) incorporating Environmental Sustainable Design (ESD) into residential buildings

3) promoting the inclusion of integrated water planning in new developments

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37 DELWP, Climate Change and Victoria.
38 Data from Low Carbon West Strategy, Arup (2012).
Housing location and sustainability

Locating housing and future population growth to areas with suitable access to existing public transport infrastructure and community services is a key policy basis for the Housing Strategy.

This opportunity aligns with Plan Melbourne (Direction 2.1) which reinforces sustainable outcomes through managing the supply of new housing in the right locations to create a sustainable city.

The Hobsons Bay Community Greenhouse Strategy (2013-30) identifies opportunities and actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions arising from residential travel (primarily through the promotion of active transport, travel behaviour change programs and the development of an Integrated Transport Plan). There is scope for the Community Greenhouse Strategy to be reviewed to recognise the importance of locating new residential development in proximity to existing public transport infrastructure and services.

While directing future housing growth to areas with existing infrastructure and services is a key policy basis for the Housing Strategy, it is important that those infrastructure and services are maintained or upgraded to ensure capacity to serve a growing population.

There is scope to align broader sustainability planning in Hobsons Bay with planning the Housing Strategy. For example, constraint mapping from electricity providers may identify areas where the electrical grid is at capacity. There is an opportunity in these areas to promote solar panels/energy to reduce the peak load in summer and avoid black outs.

ESD and new housing

Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) in residential development is about reducing the environmental impacts associated with the construction and operation of dwellings and holistically about minimising the environmental footprint.

The Background Report (Volume One) identified that Council has an opportunity to influence the design of new developments to be more sustainable in its role as a planning and building regulator. Up to 70 per cent of the energy efficiency of a building is determined by its design.

With the forecasted increase in the construction of new housing, the opportunity to incorporate ESD into residential buildings is significant.

As the VPP currently plays a limited role in achieving sustainable development for new housing, many councils have prepared a local ESD policy to effectively influence ESD in new housing. Council has followed suit by implementing an ESD policy at Clause 22.13 of the Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme, with the overarching objective that development should achieve best practice in environmentally sustainable development from the design stage through to construction and operation. The policy provides objectives and application requirements for specified types of development, including new residential or mixed use development with two or more dwellings, to demonstrate performance across areas of environmental sustainability.

Planning and building systems

There is some overlap between the role that planning and the building systems play in ESD. The building system plays a significant role in implementing sustainability through the building approval process to ensure that developments achieve a minimum energy rating. The building system role is particularly important as a building permit is required for all new dwellings where a planning permit is not always required.
The building regulations however do not cover the wider area of environmental sustainability (e.g. indoor environment quality). They only deal with the thermal energy rating of the building envelope.

The Building Code of Australia (BCA) contains energy efficiency provisions that are to be met in satisfying legislated energy ratings. This means that new homes must be built to a minimum six star energy rating. Single dwellings (Class 1) must also either have a rainwater tank connected to all sanitary flushing systems, or a solar water heater system installed.

However, the building regulatory system is generally not involved at the initial design stage of development where many of the key opportunities of incorporating ESD into buildings occur. This is why ESD policies through the planning system are important as they influence the design stage at the start of the process.

In addition to including an ESD policy in the local planning scheme, there is also an opportunity to advocate for a review of the Building Regulations to determine how they can achieve more in terms of sustainability.

Integrated water planning

The Background Report (Volume One) identified that Council also has a prominent role in promoting the inclusion of integrated water planning in new developments to help improve the management of water. Plan Melbourne includes a direction (Direction 6.3) to ‘Integrate urban development and water cycle management to support a resilient and liveable city’.

New housing development should have consideration of best practice stormwater management in accordance with Council’s Integrated Water Management Plan including the use of rainwater tanks, stormwater harvesting systems or passive irrigation systems to reduce stormwater run-off and better manage water resources.

ESD in existing housing

The majority of homes in the municipality were constructed prior to any ESD or minimum energy rating requirements. With sustainable technologies becoming more accessible to households (e.g. solar panels), there are opportunities for existing homes to minimise greenhouse gas emissions and to minimise the environmental footprint.

As part of Council’s commitment to assist the community to reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2030, Hobsons Bay has participated in a number of initiatives and programs to assist households including the solar panel buy program and offering energy advice.

Council should continue to explore opportunities to assist existing households to maximise the energy efficiency and environmental sustainability of their homes and to reduce their energy bills and living costs.

Recommendation

There are significant opportunities in Hobsons Bay to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with residential buildings and residential transport to promote sustainable living. Given the wider environmental, economic and social benefits of incorporating ESD, it is a key policy area which Council should be strengthening and including within goals and objectives relating to sustainability.

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40 In line with the findings from the Environmentally Efficient Design Local Policies Advisory Committee (p.74).

41 Integrated Water Management Plan, Hobsons Bay City Council (2014-19).
In terms of achieving more sustainable outcomes through managing the locations of housing growth, it is recommended that the Housing Framework Plan be implemented to guide future housing densities and location.

Council should monitor the effectiveness of the ESD policy that has been introduced into the local planning scheme to influence ESD in new housing.