These guidelines provide guidance to local councils, the Victorian Government, golf courses and clubs and the development sector on the key planning steps and considerations for the future development of surplus golf course land.

The guidelines include a planning decision framework for assessing planning applications.

**PLANNING DECISION FRAMEWORK**

The planning decision framework outlines the key planning steps for developing golf course land in a sustainable way to support the land use and infrastructure objectives for Victoria and enhance open space, environmental and landscape values.

The framework has been developed to reflect a review of relevant planning panel reports and follows an extensive consultation process with stakeholders and community.

The framework supports the existing statutory planning and legislative processes.

- **Step 1:** Golf course land development proposals will be required to follow the relevant planning processes, and applications that involve rezoning may require ratification by both Houses of Parliament.

- **Step 2:** Golf course land development proposals will be required to respond to the planning decision framework for golf course land development proposals.

- **Step 3:** Future golf course land development proposals will be required to provide a net community benefit and high level of sustainability. The location of the golf course is an important consideration in the assessment of the proposal.

Golf course land within the Urban Growth Boundary can be considered for rezoning, subject to all the overlays and issues being investigated and resolved. Rezoning land outside of the Urban Growth Boundary involves an authorisation process requiring approval by the Minister and ratification by both Houses of Parliament in accordance with the Planning and Environment Act 1987.
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KEY PLANNING STEPS

- The history of how the land was originally provided for a golf course is considered.
- A golf demand assessment is completed that considers whether the golf course is located in an area currently under- or over-supplied with golf courses.
- A Cultural Heritage Management Plan is recommended for golf course land.
- A recreation and open space assessment is completed. The assessment should consider local and regional sport and open space planning strategies, the Victorian Planning Authority Metropolitan Open Space Portal to see whether the golf course is within an area short of open space, and the demand for sport and recreation facilities in the area.
- An assessment is conducted against relevant Plan Melbourne 2017–50 actions or regional growth and land use plan actions, including those identifying the need for community, education, health and legal services, and those relevant to the environment and biodiversity.
- The proposal must have a net community benefit and achieve a high level of environmental sustainability.

DEFINING NET COMMUNITY BENEFIT

Assessment of a proposal’s net community benefits should consider:

- strategic planning objectives
- environmental factors such as the rehabilitation of land and the mitigation of existing effects
- social factors including the provision of publicly accessible open space, sporting facilities and affordable housing
- economic factors including the economic activity and employment opportunities generated by the proposal.
The following guidelines should be considered when designing a proposal's net community benefit:

- Open space is provided in the proposal that offsets the space that has been lost and provides open access to public and environmental benefits. The level of open space provided should be informed by local and regional open space strategies. This can be captured by:
  - a substantially higher public open space provision in new housing development on golf course land of 20 per cent unencumbered open space for sport and social recreation play and retention of high-value environmental assets and biodiversity corridors due to the site’s proximity and landscape amenity value to existing residential and environs
  - public open space contributions (either land or financial) directed to improve or develop regional and local sport facilities and open space in line with regional or municipal open space strategies

- Providing a replacement golf course of like-for-like size and quality.

- The proposal supports other state, regional or local public policy objectives, such as contributing to social and community infrastructure such as libraries, medical or education facilities housing or other strategic or local housing priorities such as social housing, sheltered housing or crisis accommodation.

- The proposal complies with Plan Melbourne 2017–2050 principles including access to transport and activity centres.

All of these factors will be considered and weighed up when determining if, on balance, the proposal provides a positive net community and environmental benefit.

ASSESSMENT METHOD FOR PLANNING AMENDMENT OR PERMIT APPLICATIONS

When assessing the merits of golf course land proposals, there are three questions that arise from the planning decision framework.
STEP 1:

**Is there strategic merit in the proposal?**

Strategic planning policy issues must be considered, along with the consistency of the proposal with various state and local policies and relevant legislation.

Establishing the level of ‘in principle’ strategic merit is the key first step. If there is support, then the details of the site and proposal will be worthy of further detailed assessment.

Is the proposal consistent with:

- *Plan Melbourne 2017–2050* or a relevant regional growth plan
- key directions in the State Planning Policy Framework
- relevant directions in the Local Planning Policy Framework?

Is it consistent with other relevant local or state strategies, such as:

- any council open space strategy
- any council housing strategy
- Active Victoria Framework
- Water for Victoria Water Plan
- Victorian 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy
- Creating Places for People
- Healthy by Design Guidelines?

Is there strategic support for the proposal in the relevant legislation, including:

- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*
- *Environmental Protection Biodiversity and Conservation Act 1999*
- *Environment Effects Act 1978*
- *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*?
STEP 2:

Are there particular site values or constraints?

The nature and values of the site itself must be considered and whether there are environmental or other factors that constrain its development potential and, if so, whether these can be adequately addressed or mitigated.

- Does the golf course site have a high landscape value, and is it defined in the planning scheme (e.g. Significant Landscape Overlay)?
- Does the site accommodate important biodiversity or wildlife assets and, if so, are they capable of being protected or enhanced through the development?
- Does the site form part of wider greenspace network or wildlife network and would the proposed redevelopment harm this network?
- Does the site have Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity and has this been fully assessed?
- Does the site provide public access and informal recreation opportunities in addition to its golf course functions?
- Does the site have a private amenity value to neighbouring properties that would need to be considered in a development proposal?
- What is the history and origin of the golf course? Was the land purchased by the club, or was the land was previously public or gifted to the club?
**STEP 3:**

**Does the proposal deliver net community benefits?**

Assessment of the proposal should identify what other benefits might be provided by the development.

- Does the proposal provide additional public open space, sports or recreational facilities?
- Does the proposal deliver improved golf facilities with public access?
- Does the proposal provide other social or community infrastructure such as libraries, medical or education facilities?
- Does the proposal contribute to other strategic or local housing priorities such as the provision of social housing, sheltered housing or crisis accommodation?

All of these factors will be considered and weighed up when determining if, on balance, the proposal provides a positive net community and environmental benefit.

Other factors may also be relevant considerations depending on the circumstances of the golf course site and the proposal.
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