



FAIRFIELD VILLAGE BUILT FORM GUIDELINES BACKGROUND REPORT

February 2017

This document was originally produced on behalf of the City of Darebin by Hansen Partnership Pty Ltd in July 2008.

The original content has been modified and added to in preparing this 2017 update.

Please note that information used and/or referred to in this report including source material for illustrations, was correct at time of writing.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2008 Darebin City Council developed design guidelines to direct appropriate built form within the Fairfield neighbourhood centre (known as 'Fairfield Village'). These were prepared on Council's behalf by Hansen Partnership.

Since that time, the locality has been attracting increasing development activity, particularly for apartment style developments. There have also been numerous changes in state and local planning provisions.

Council has undertaken a review of the 2008 guidelines in the context of current planning policy, recent development approvals in the locality and identification of likely future development demands. The ongoing role and valued characteristics of the centre have also been revisited and confirmed.

The review will result in revised guidelines which appropriately respond to current context and issues and promote best practice outcomes.

This background report has been prepared as an update from its 2008 version and documents the background analysis and rationale underpinning the revised guidelines.

1.1 Why are revised Guidelines required?

Currently Fairfield Village does not have any enforceable built form controls or height limits. The 2008 design guidelines were never formally incorporated into the Darebin Planning Scheme and therefore can only be given limited statutory weight in decision making.

It is recognised that formal statutory development controls are needed to reliably manage change in Fairfield Village given current and expected development pressure. The revised guidelines provide an up to date basis for formal controls to be introduced into the Darebin Planning Scheme.



1.2 Study area profile

The study area consists of the Fairfield Village neighbourhood centre and a portion of the surrounding residential area, stretching north from Heidelberg Road up to Mitchell Street, as illustrated in Figure 1.

The focus of this report is on the Commercial 1 zoned land that defines the Fairfield Village neighbourhood centre. The overall study area boundary has no formal planning status, but rather is an arbitrary method of considering the surrounding residential area as a broader area of influence in relation to the centre.

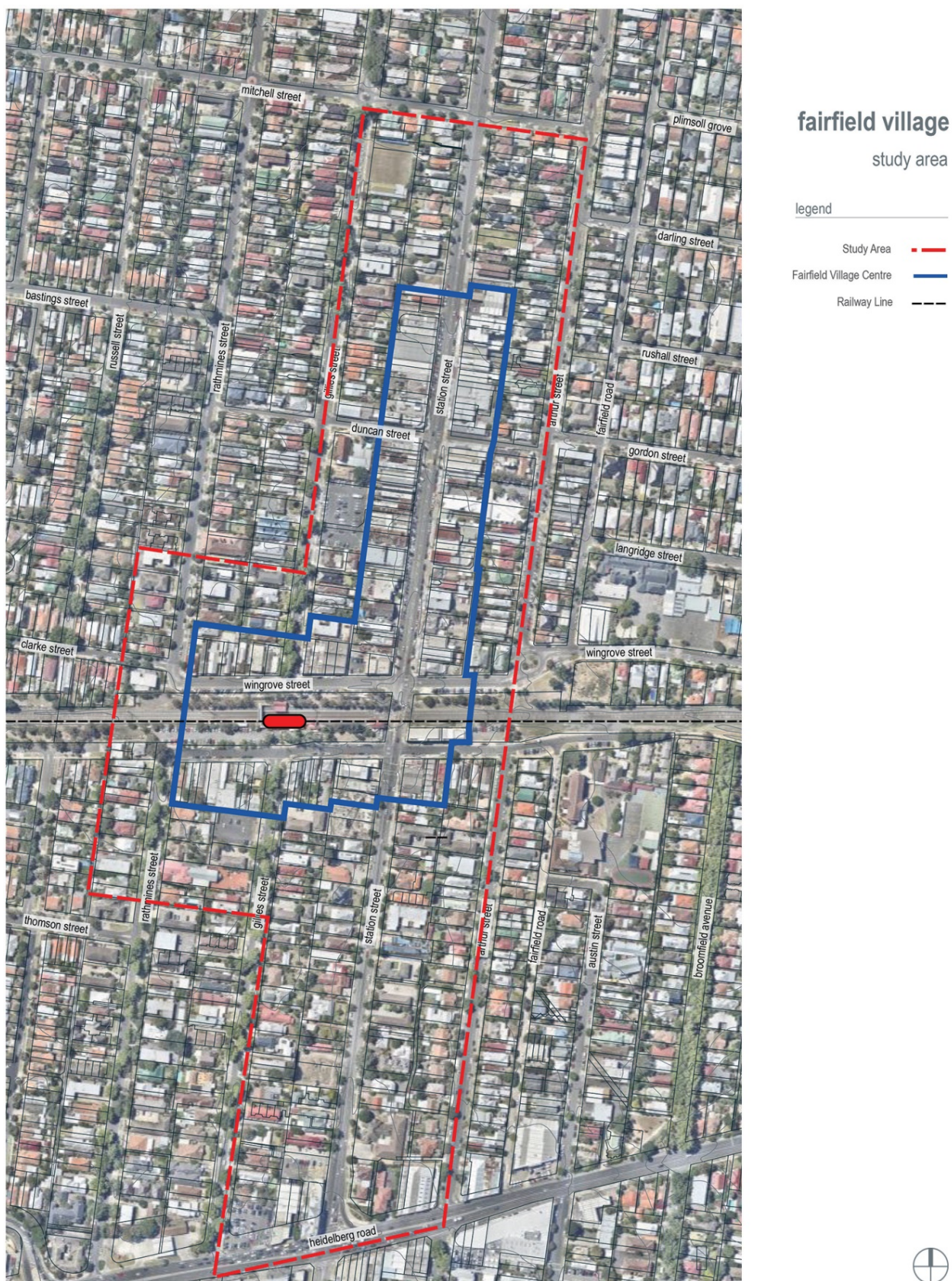
Fairfield Village is a traditional street-based centre, with a typical 'main street' retail spine running approximately 500m in a north-side direction along Station Street and wrapping around the Fairfield Station area along Wingrove Street and Railway Place on either side of the railway line.

The core retail spine is mixed use in nature, and provides a range of retail/commercial outlets, offices, and community facilities. It is well connected with regard to public transport services and major vehicular routes. The centre features a range of architectural styles and building materials. The combination of such elements ensures the vibrancy of the centre attracts a wide catchment area, yet is small enough to retain a valuable community atmosphere.

Fairfield Village is formally defined as a neighbourhood centre within the City of Darebin hierarchical network of activity centres. Larger activity centres are located at Preston, Northland, Reservoir and Northcote. Other neighbourhood scale centres are found at Miller/Gilbert Street Preston, Westgarth Village, Summerhill Village, Thornbury Village and Lancaster Gate (Polaris). These are complemented by a broader network of 55 small local convenience centres.



view of station street



2. PLANNING CONTEXT

The guidelines will encourage new development to respond to the directions of state and local planning policy as well as the objectives of applied zones and overlays. Relevant policies outlined include those incorporated with all Victorian Planning Schemes and policy documents that sit outside the Planning Scheme.

2.1 State Planning Policy

2.1.1 *State Planning Policy Framework*

The State Planning Policy Framework (SPPF), included in the Darebin Planning Scheme (the Scheme) contains State-wide planning policies and strategies which must be taken into account by Council when preparing amendments to the Scheme or making decisions under the Scheme.

Clause 11 Settlement

Clause 11.01 seeks to build up activity centres as a focus for high-quality development, activity and living for the whole community. This can be achieved by developing a network of activity centres which:

- Provide a focus for business, shopping, working, leisure and community facilities
- Provide different types of housing including forms of higher density housing
- Is connected by public transport and cycling networks
- Maximise choices in services, employment and social interaction

Clause 11.04 Metropolitan Melbourne

Clause 11 implements the metropolitan strategy, *Plan Melbourne* (2014) which outlines the objectives and vision for Melbourne's growth to the year 2050. In summary, Clause 11.04 outlines the following objectives for metropolitan Melbourne:

- Deliver jobs and investment (Clause 11.04-1)
- Provide housing choice and affordability (Clause 11.04-2)
- Encourage a more connected Melbourne (Clause 11.04-3)
- Create liveable communities and neighbourhoods (Clause 11.04-4)

In October 2015, the State Government announced a review of the *Plan Melbourne* strategy. To date, recommendations for changes are yet to be publically released.

Clause 15 Built Environment and Heritage

Clause 15.01-1 Urban design seeks to create environments that are safe, functional and provide good quality environments with a sense of place and cultural identity, including:

- *The public realm*: Protecting and enhancing main pedestrian spaces, streets, parks and walkways.
- *Safety*: New development should create urban environments that enhance personal safety and personal security and where people feel safe to live, work and move in at any time.
- *Landmarks, views and vistas*: Protect and enhance landmarks, views and vistas.
- *Pedestrian spaces*: Design of interfaces between buildings and public spaces, including the arrangement of adjoining activities, entrances, windows and architectural detailing to enhance the visual and social experience of the user.
- *Heritage*: New development should respect, not simply copy, historic precedents and create a worthy legacy for future generations.
- *Consolidation of sites and empty sites*: New developments should contribute to the complexity and diversity of the built environment.
- *Light and shade*: Desirable balance of sunlight and shade on the public realm.
- *Energy and resource efficiency*: All buildings should include efficient use of resources and energy efficiency.
- *Architectural quality*: New development should achieve high standard in architecture and urban design.

Clause 15.03-1 Heritage conservation seeks to identify, assess and document places of cultural heritage significance as a basis for their inclusion in the planning scheme, to retain those elements that contribute to the importance of the heritage place, and to encourage the conservation and restoration of contributory elements.

Clause 16 Residential Development

Clause 16.01-2 seeks to locate new housing in or close to activity centres and employment corridors and at other strategic redevelopment sites that offer good access to services and transport.

Clause 16.01-3 seeks to identify strategic redevelopment sites in or beside activity centres that are well serviced by public transport.

Clause 16.01-4 seeks to encourage residential development that improves housing choice, makes better use of existing infrastructure and improves energy efficiency of housing.

Clause 17 Economic Development

Clause 17.01-1 seeks to encourage commercial development and services that meets the needs of the community in relation to accessibility, efficient infrastructure use and the aggregation and sustainability of commercial facilities.

Clause 18 Transport

Clause 18.02-1 seeks to encourage walking by creating environments that are safe and attractive, high quality pedestrian environments that are accessible to footpath-bound vehicles such as wheelchairs, prams and scooters, and ensure opportunities are created to encourage sustainable transport options such as walking and cycling through provision of infrastructure and appropriate facilities.

Clause 18.02-5 seeks to ensure an adequate supply of car parking is provided and to protect the amenity of residential precincts from the effects of road congestion created by on-street parking.

Clause 19 Infrastructure

Clause 19 seeks to ensure that social and physical infrastructure is provided in a way that is efficient, equitable, accessible and timely.

New Better Apartments Design Standards

The State Government recently announced new Design Standards for all apartment developments in Victoria. These are expected to be implemented in all Victorian Planning Schemes in March 2017.

The new Standards will apply to all future apartment developments in the Commercial 1 Zone in Fairfield Village, and all residential developments of four or more storeys in the residential zones around the centre.

The Standards are intended to address concerns about the quality and livability of apartment design. Measurable minimum standards are aimed at improving elements of internal apartment amenity, including sizes/depths of habitable rooms, ceiling heights, windows, daylight and outlook, storage and cross ventilation. Other measures relate to building setbacks, noise impacts, accessibility, private open space and communal open space for larger developments.

2.2 Local Planning Policy

The Local Planning Policy Framework (LPPF) of the Darebin Planning Scheme contains the Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) and Local Planning Policies (LPPs).

The LPPs include specific local requirements for issues that must be considered in decision making under the Planning Scheme. Each LPP gives the responsible authority an opportunity to state its position on a planning issue in the local context, and provides guiding principles for the consideration of planning permit applications.

2.2.1 *Municipal Strategic Statement*

The Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) contained within the Darebin Planning Scheme provides the planning policy framework and a vision for the future development of the municipality. To inform the background and overall context of the Fairfield Built Form Guidelines study, a summary of a number of sections of the MSS are highlighted as follows:

Clause 21.01 Introduction

Clause 21.01 identifies Fairfield as a ‘neighbourhood centre’ which primarily accommodates convenience retail needs for the local catchment, supporting local living and providing space for small business. The MSS also provides support for the revitalisation of neighbourhood centres through encouraging new shops and services, improved pedestrian links, higher-density housing in and around the centres, public realm improvements and programs to promote local purchasing.

Clause 21.02 Environment

Clause 21.02 promotes urban environments and open spaces designed for liveability and environmental sustainability, and making a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of Darebin residents, workers and visitors.

Clause 21.02-3 (Built Environment) identifies key challenges in areas of urban development around achieving high quality design, managing the impact and relationship of new development on streetscapes and strengthening requirements for Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) at planning permit stage.

Clause 21.02-3 encourages development that makes a positive contribution to activity centres through:

- building to a scale which is appropriate to the role and function of that centre

with consideration to managing amenity impacts on surrounding sensitive land uses.

- promoting visual and physical improvements to the public realm and incorporating elements that promote safety, such as clear sightlines, safe movement, passive surveillance, good connections, good access, mixed use and activities that promote public use/ and day-evening activity.
- providing active frontages and a high level of pedestrian amenity and accessibility at ground level, with verandahs over footpaths where appropriate.

Clause 21.02-3 also includes strategies for Council to encourage best practice environmentally sustainable design and promote sustainable living and business practices. A key strategy is building requirements for Sustainable Design Assessments and Sustainability Management Plans for residential, mixed use, industrial and commercial developments into the planning permit approval process. This is now being pursued via a new local ESD local policy (see discussion below).

Clause 21.03 Housing

Clause 21.03-1 (Strategic Housing Framework) earmarks Fairfield and other activity centres as lower order *Substantial Housing Change Areas*. Characteristics of Substantial Change Areas are:

- Incorporate an evolving character where there is an eclectic mix of new and old forms of architectural style and housing typologies. This includes more recent apartment developments at higher densities and in mixed-use formats.
- Are within or immediately adjacent to activity centres that possess superior access to the Principal Public Transport Network.
- Are generally within 400 metres of a train station or tram route.

The scale and intensity of residential growth anticipated within activity centres will largely differ and will depend on the strategic context of each centre. Strategic Opportunity Sites are identified within the MSS as characteristics that make them suitable for residential or mixed use redevelopment, where land is greater than 1000sqm, permits residential use, is not constrained by a Heritage Overlay, and is located within close proximity of public transport. Where appropriate, site consolidation is encouraged to accommodate greater mixed-use densities.

The *Darebin Housing Strategy 2013-2033*, which forms a reference document in the MSS, seeks:

- To provide for substantial housing growth and diversification over time.
- To encourage a variety of different housing typologies at medium to higher density. This includes a mixture of medium to high density apartment dwellings, townhouses and shop-top dwelling, with a scale dependent on specific precinct characteristics and context.
- For neighbourhood centres, urban design studies will inform ultimate design and development outcomes to be implemented through appropriate controls. A Fairfield Urban Design Framework is identified as 'Future Strategic Work'. The Fairfield Built Form Guidelines, in conjunction with broader streetscape and transport improvements being developed for the centre at the time of writing, will fulfil this strategic goal.

Clause 21.04 Economic Development

Clause 21.04 recognises that increasing economic activity and promoting diversity in economic activity will provide broader benefits to the community. The Strategic Economic Development Framework Plan and the *Darebin Economic Land Use Strategy (2014)* identifies a retail activity centre hierarchy where Fairfield is nominated as a neighbourhood centre. Clause 21.04-3 (Retail and Commercial Activity) further identifies key challenges for neighbourhood centres, including:

- Challenges for established retail centres to accommodate increasing demand for new retail floor space along with higher density residential development.
- Accommodating larger format retail opportunities in established activity centres given limited availability of land and the high level of land fragmentation.
- Local centres are in a state of flux, with some small centres barely playing a retail role while others, after a period of decline, are beginning to show signs of rejuvenation.

To address these issues, Clause 21.04-3 encourages:

- Focus on future retail expansion around identified activity centres.
- Encourage where appropriate complementary mixed uses in and around activity centres.
- Facilitate a higher intensity of activity in and around neighbourhood centres and local centres.

The *Darebin Retail Activity Centres Strategy 2005*, a reference document in Clause 21.04, was prepared to guide the ongoing development of retail activity centre and to present a strategic basis for future Council programs and policies. The report identifies Fairfield Village as a strongly performing and vibrant neighbourhood centre with a good mix of retail uses but with a relatively weak supermarket offering. It also highlights the need to further investigate opportunities for creating and building rear laneways.

Clause 21.05 Transport and Infrastructure

Providing the necessary infrastructure to support Darebin's growing population, economic activity and resilience to broader environmental impacts and congestion and central to maintaining Darebin's high standard of liveability and amenity by virtue of its good access to transport, services and facilities.

Clause 21.05 recognises challenges for activity centres including traffic, congestion, loading issues, pressures on car parking, and quality of access and facilities for employees, visitors and residents as these areas intensify.

Clause 21.05-2 (Integrated and Sustainable Transport) advocates an integrated approach to transport and land use planning as set out in *Going Places, Darebin Transport Strategy 2007-2027*. It includes encouraging new development into well serviced locations such as activity centres and the improvement of streets, open spaces and transport related facilities in these localities and surrounding catchments to cater for greater uptake of walking, cycling and public transport. Managing car parking is facilities by balancing the provision of sufficient car parking in new developments and encouraging use of sustainable transport modes to also reduce car parking demand.

Clause 21.05-3 (Physical and Community Infrastructure) recognises that planning for urban growth requires consideration of the ability of existing infrastructure to service new and more intensive development, and to identify upgrades and investments where existing capacity is expected to fall short of anticipated requirements.

2.2.2. Local Planning Policies

Clause 22.06 Multi Residential and Mixed Use Development

These guidelines further build on the design and built form objectives of Clause 15.01-2 and implements the strategies for housing diversity and urban design in the Municipal Strategic Statement. This Clause seeks to facilitate mixed use development which promotes housing choice, displays a high standard of urban design, limits off-site amenity impacts and provides on-site amenity for residents. It also seeks to facilitate new developments that demonstrate

environmentally sensitive design principles.

The local policy will complement the State Government's new Better Apartment Design Standards that will apply to all new apartment developments in the Fairfield Village commercial area.

Proposed Clause 22.12 Environmentally Sustainable Development Policy

Council recently submitted to the Minister for Planning proposed local planning policy Clause 22.12. Proposed Clause 22.12 seeks to achieve best practice in environmentally sustainable development from the design stage through to construction, and encourage innovative technology, design and processes in all developments to positively influence the sustainability of buildings through improving energy performance, water efficiency, indoor environmental quality, storm water management, transport, waste management and urban ecology.

While this local planning policy has not yet been approved by the Minister for Planning, it is considered to be a highly entertained document.

2.3 Land Use Zoning

The variety of uses found within the study area is reflected within the mixture of applicable zoning and overlay controls. Refer Figure 2.

The study area is characterised by a north-south linear strip of Commercial 1 Zone (C1Z), which extends along Station Street Road Zone 1 (RDZ1) and then as a short connected east-west strip along Wingrove Street and Railway Place around the railway line, terminating at the end of Fairfield Railway Station.

The Public Use Zone Transport (PUZ4) reflects the linear form of the railway, and intersects Station Street. A small pocket of Public Use Zone Local Government (PUZ6), accommodating the Fairfield Library and Community Centre complex, interrupts the C1Z on the east side of Station Street.

Directly south of the C1Z are along Station Street is a corridor of Residential Growth Zone 3 and 4 (RGZ3/4) with four storey height restriction, extending to Heidelberg Road.

The residential hinterland beyond these areas is generally a consolidated precinct of General Residential Zone 2 (GRZ2) with pockets of Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ1).

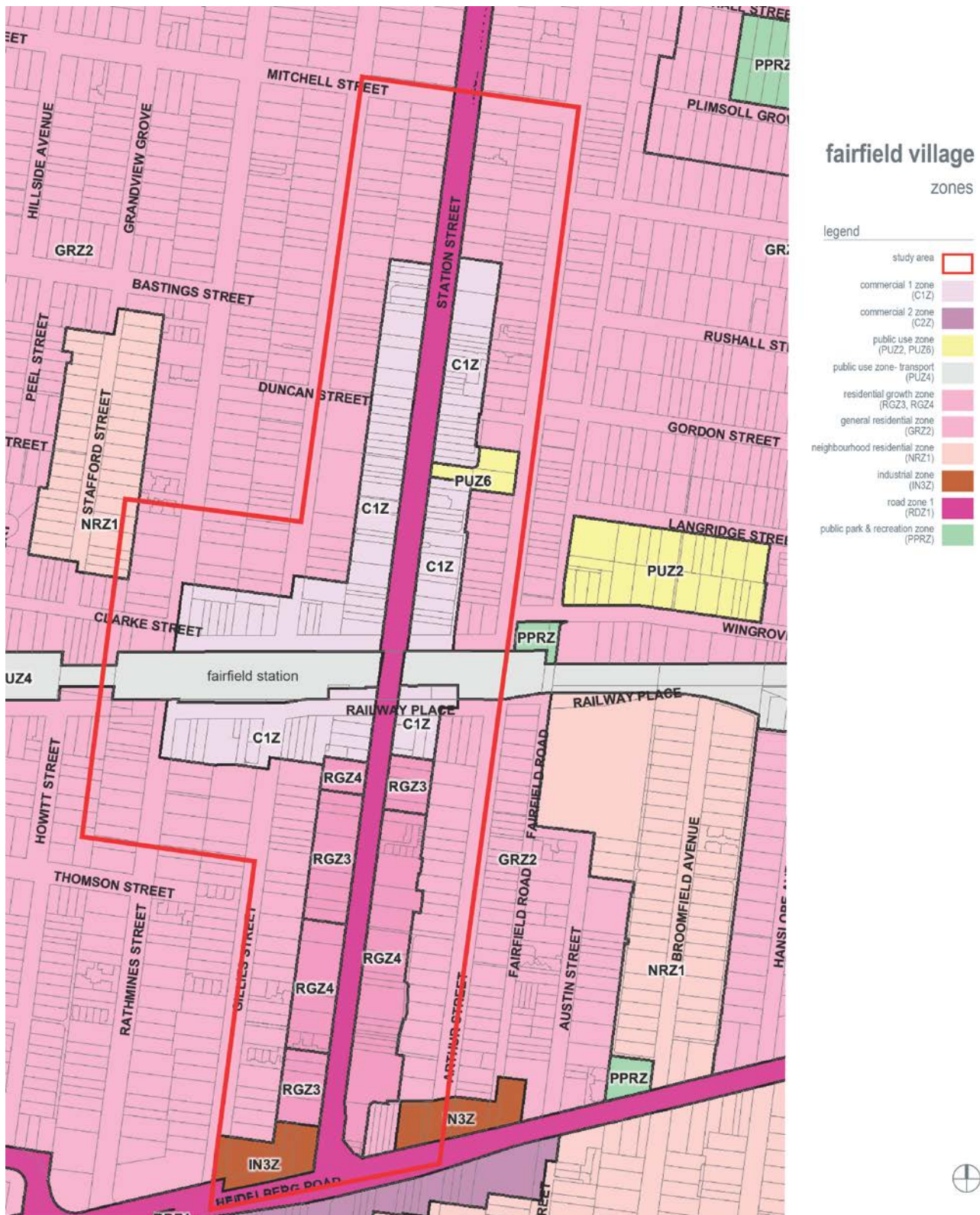


Figure 2: Zoning Map

Table 1: Summary of zones and implications

Zone	Primary objective	General Uses Permitted	Uses Prohibited	Implication
Commercial 1 (C1Z)	Encourage mixed use of commercial centres for retail, office, business, entertainment, community uses, and residential uses at densities complementary to the role and scale of the commercial centre.	Retail Accommodation Office Entertainment Community some Industrial uses (except uses listed in Clause 52.10)	Corrective institution Extractive industry Major sports and recreation facility	Consolidate mixed use development in the centre focusing on retail and employment generating uses. No limitations on maximum retail floor area. Allows 'shop top' style residential development in the centre at appropriate scale.
Public Use Zone 4 (PUZ4)	Recognise areas for public use and provide for associated uses (in this case, associated with transport).	Road Uses which are associated with transport	Nil	While no uses are prohibited, PUZ4 facilitates use of land for transport purposes.
Public Use Zone 6 (PUZ6)	Recognise areas for public use and provide for associated uses (in this case, associated with local government).	Road Uses which are associated with local government	Nil	While no uses are prohibited, PUZ6 facilitates use of land for local government purposes.
Road Zone 1 (RDZ1)	Identify significant existing roads	Road Railway Tramway Minor utility installation	Nil	While no uses are prohibited, RDZ1 typically facilitates the use of land for the purposes of major road transport routes
Residential Growth Zone 3 and 4 (RGZ3/4)	Encourages residential development at increased densities and diversity (up to a maximum of 4 storeys) in locations offering good access to services and transport including activity centres	Dwellings Home occupation Food and drink premises Residential Aged Care Place of worship	Office Retail Premises Saleyard Nightclub Warehouse	Opportunity for some mix of uses as appropriate. Will facilitate boutique style apartment development with good access to services.
General Residential 2 (GRZ1)	Encourages moderate development of diverse housing types whilst respecting the neighbourhood character.	Dwelling Home Occupation Place of Worship	Office Retail Premises Saleyard Nightclub Warehouse	There is limited potential for a mixture of uses. Medium density development should be supported in RGZ2 areas closer to the shops and public transport.
Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ1)	Limited opportunities for increased residential development which respects neighbourhood character, heritage, environmental or landscape values	Dwelling Home Occupation Place of Worship	Office Retail Premises Saleyard Nightclub Warehouse	Minimal change residential precincts, with maximum of 2 dwellings on a lot and 8 metre height restriction.

2.4 Overlays

Additional to the statutory controls imposed by land use zonings, the study area is affected by a number of overlays (refer Figure 3).

The Heritage Overlay applies to a number of individual sites within the study area. Within the Fairfield Village C1Z area, there are heritage overlays in place related to the Fairfield Railway Station and Signal Box (HO106) and St Paul's Anglican Church and Organ at 84 Station Street (HO190). It should also be noted that the old Post Office site at 92 – 96 Arthur Street, Fairfield (HO112) abuts the commercial zone. The purpose of the HO is to appropriately protect relevant sites in the context of natural or cultural heritage.

At time of writing, Council has commissioned the assessment of buildings in the Fairfield Village commercial zoned area to determine whether any have heritage significance (individually or as part of a precinct) which warrant application of the Heritage Overlay.

The Special Building Overlay (SBO) affects part of the study area. The overlay identifies land that is subject to inundation as a result of urban drainage system overflow in major rainfall events, up to 1 in 100 year flood level. The overlay generally is plotted to reflect the natural drainage line as a response to topography. Much of the C1Z along Station Street falls within this area, as does a portion of surrounding residential zoned land. The SBO triggers planning permit requirements for most buildings and works in the overlay area so responsible authorities (Council and Melbourne Water) can require measures that address and mitigate impact of flooding. New buildings in the overlay are generally required to be constructed with finished floor levels sufficiently clear of the 'applicable flood level'. Flood levels can vary from property to property.

The Design and Development Overlay (DDO20) is applied to Residential Growth Zone area south of the centre. The overlay facilitates high quality apartment design and imposes a maximum four storey building height limit.

The whole of the study area falls within the Development Contributions Plan Overlay (DCPO1), which ensures that development is consistent with any relevant development contributions plan for the purpose of levying contributions for the provision of works, services and facilities.

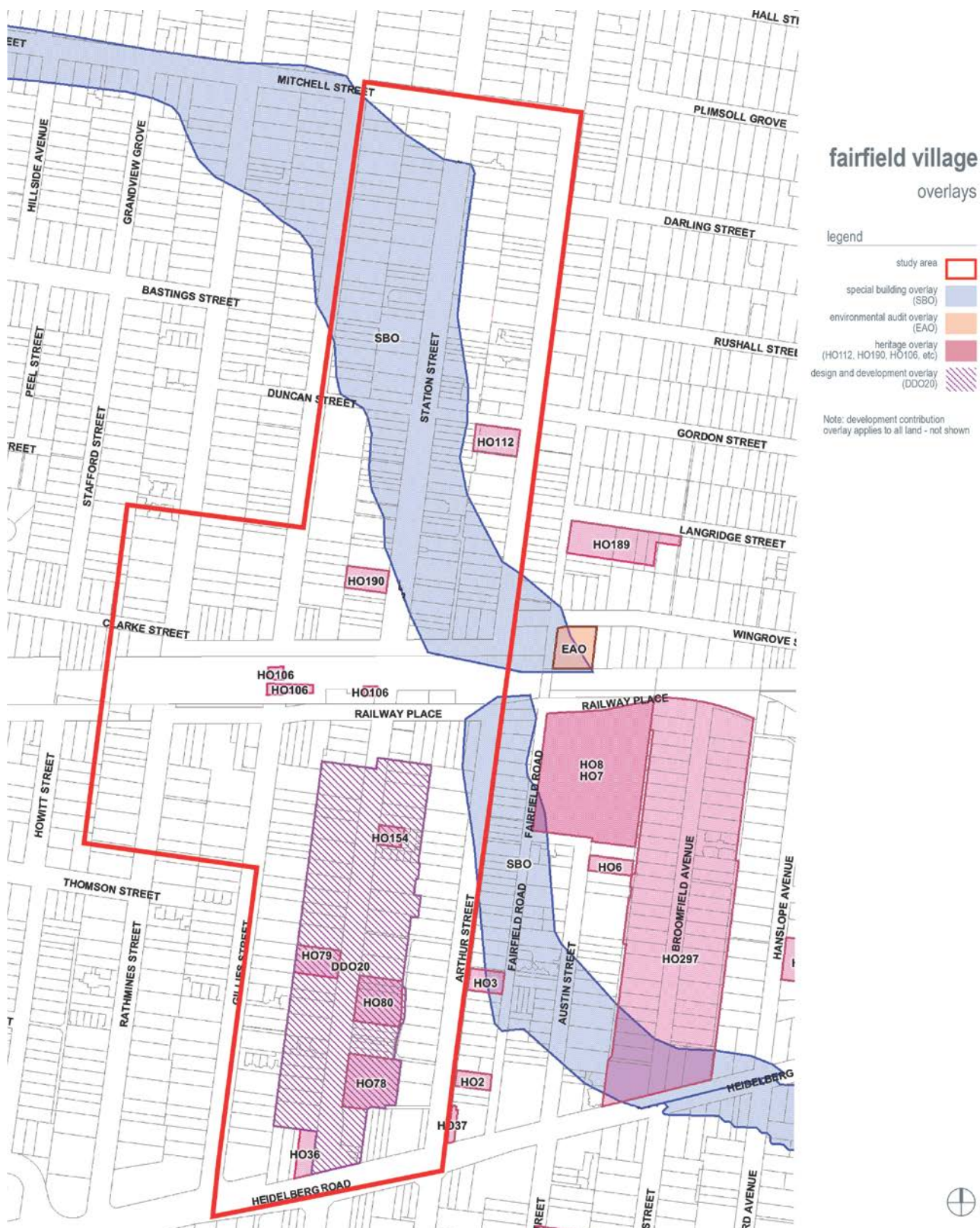


Figure 3: Planning scheme overlays

3. URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

3.1 Overall Structure

The overall urban design structure of the centre is framed around the commercial spine of Station Street and the Hurstbridge train line, which has a north-south and east-west orientation respectively. Refer to Figure 4.

The diversity of the retail and commercial core encourages a vibrant and well used central activity zone. The compact nature of the centre and access to public transport promotes good connectivity. The railway crossing junction at Fairfield Railway Station forms a node and focus point for the precinct.

Main sight and view lines are along Station Street. The topographic profile of the land, rising slightly along Station Street to the north, allows potential views across the city.

The surrounding residential area consists of well-maintained detached dwellings and unit developments, complimented by large canopy street trees and well maintained gardens occupying the public/private interface zone.



commercial core: railway station area



commercial core: library and community centre area / Station Street viewlines



Figure 4: Activity Centre Structure

3.2 Building Scale and Form

The centre mostly comprises a combination of single and two storey buildings, with isolated higher forms of three to four storeys representing more recent infill development.

Commercial buildings are generally built to front and side boundaries. The majority of the two storey buildings are attached clusters and feature strong vertical lines, clearly demarcating allotment boundaries. The older style parapets can reach heights on par with modern three storey forms. The majority of such buildings are concentrated along Station Street.

Isolated three and four storey buildings are found at 83 Station Street, 118 Station Street and at 149-153 Station Street. These are contemporary developments which have been designed to present as one-two storey forms to Station Street with graduated upper levels.

Other notable buildings in the centre include St Paul's Church and the Library/Community Centre.

The greater surrounding residential area predominantly consists of single storey detached dwellings but with frequent higher forms including attached unit developments and large dwelling additions. Building styles are highly varied, with a mixture of traditional and contemporary architecture.

Figure 5 illustrates current and emerging built height and form.

The centre and its surrounds have experienced a degree of intensification in recent years, with significant redevelopment of sites for larger forms having occurred on sites just outside of the centre or behind the core retail spine.

The RGZ corridor just south of the C1Z is attracting a notable amount of development activity. Four storey apartment buildings have recently been constructed on consolidated sites at 28-30 and 62-64 Station Street. At time of writing, two further applications for four storey buildings have been lodged for 32-40 and 71-73 Station Street. A smaller site at 60 Station Street is the subject of a three storey proposal.

Other four storey development has occurred immediately adjacent to the former Post Office Site at 92 Arthur Street.



Figure 5: Building height and form

Note: diagram shows planning approvals and applications at 23 February 2017

Traditional Built Form



Emerging Built Form



84 Station Street



149-153 Station Street



92 Arthur Street (post office site)



119 Station Street



72A Station Street ('Nightingale 2')



5-7 Railway Place (RSL site)



28-30 Station Street (RGZ area)



62-64 Station Street (RGZ area)

While relatively limited development has occurred within the C1Z zoned core retail spine to date, a number of permit approvals exist for larger building forms as follows:

- Four to five storey mixed use development on the 2400sqm RSL site at 5-7 Railway Place at the south-west edge of the centre. Approximately half of the consolidated site is within the C1Z while the remainder is in the GRZ2 with secondary frontage to Gillies Street.
- Five to six storey mixed use development (known as 'Nightingale 2') on a former VicTrack site at 72A Station Street adjacent to the railway crossing. The site has two street frontages and direct rail corridor abuttal. A previous permit approval had existed on this site for a five storey office building.
- Four storey mixed use development on a consolidated site at 29-30 Railway Place at the south-east edge of the centre.
- Four storey mixed use development at 137 Station Street (north east corner of Duncan Street intersection).

The recent RSL and Nightingale approvals in the C1Z area set a precedent for maximum building height within Fairfield Village and will introduce a significant change in scale in the centre. However both developments should be distinguished for having unique site conditions – the former being exceptionally large in size and the latter for having no direct residential interfaces.

Broadly, the emerging scale of development in the locality is considered to be up to four storeys. In the instances where taller forms such as RSL and Nightingale have been accepted, favourable site characteristics combined with sensitive design has persuaded Council and VCAT that impacts on amenity of surrounding land uses and on the centre were acceptable.

It is possible that further developments in excess of 4 storeys could be achieved in Fairfield Village in the future; however, this would be dependent on specific site size and conditions, site context and the proposed design response. Designers would need to balance change with respect for identified valued elements of Fairfield Village's character. Height potential in some areas of the centre could also be affected by the outcomes of heritage assessments and application of any heritage overlay controls.

3.3 Building Details and Interfaces

Commercial buildings are characterised by large windows presenting active frontages at street level, prominent parapets and weather protection awnings over footpaths.

As a response to flooding issues, many buildings feature a raised floor level relative to footpaths, and this level change is generally accommodated with ramps, as opposed to steps.

The precinct features a range of external materials and colours but brick and render dominate.

First impressions of Fairfield Village, in particular Station Street, are that the building forms lack a cohesiveness – this is largely due to the profusion of business advertising placed over the frontages of buildings and the mix of building forms.

Closer analysis reveals striking building features that, while eclectic, contribute to giving Fairfield Village a strong character and sense of place. These include:

- decorative cornicing
- distinctive single and double storey parapet forms
- concealed pitched roof forms – concealed behind parapets
- large shop windows at the ground floor
- some balconies and window seats at the second floor / or feature curved windows
- awnings and strong horizontal features
- a variety of materials but features defined in render and distinctive brickwork

- canopies that extend from awnings to the kerb line
- strong horizontal connection along the commercial area despite the staggered one and two storey staggered building heights

These features are important in considering appropriate future design responses.

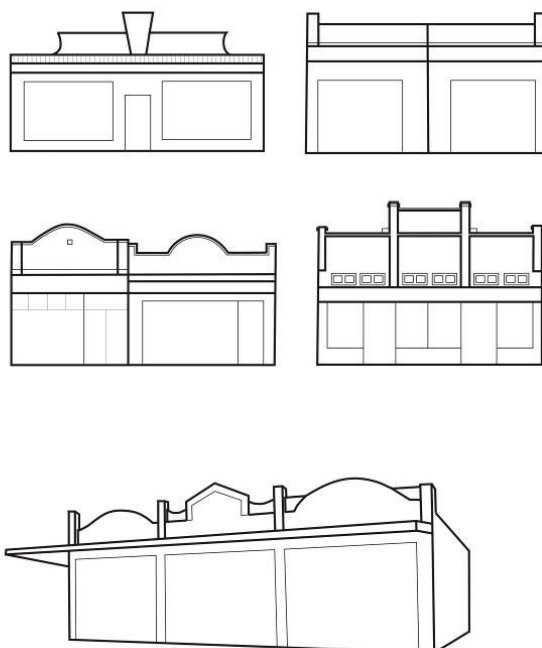
In Station Street, notable consistent attached facades with traditional built form characteristics, representing an initial era of development from the 1910s to 1930s, are most evident in the block between Wingrove Street and Duncan Street. Street facades in this precinct make a strong and valued contribution to local character and should be retained and enhanced.

North of Duncan Street, most buildings lack the strong parapets due to the later period of development in favour of modest single storey profiles. Built form guidelines may place less emphasis on protecting existing parapets in this section but ensure key features are incorporated into any redevelopment.

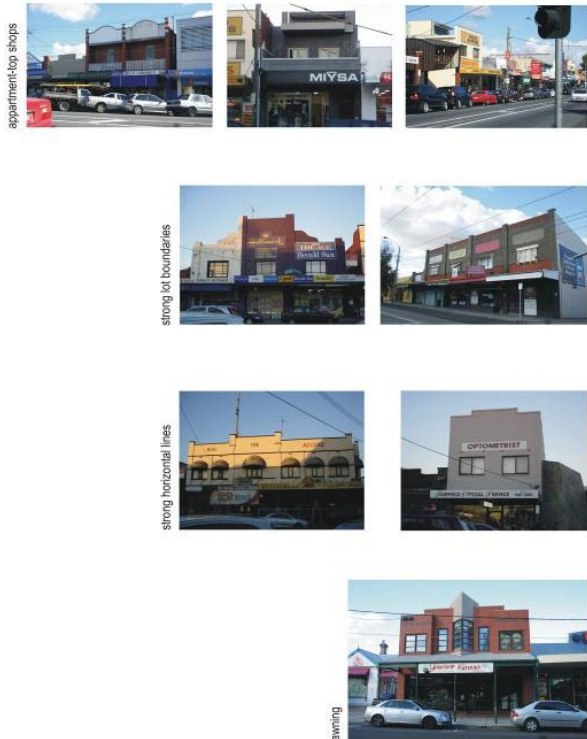
In Railway Place, clusters of traditional building forms with strong parapets create a sense of place. The character of the buildings is enhanced by the amenity provided by the open northern orientation with vegetated outlook across the railway corridor and less traffic, in contrast with the more urban character of Station Street. The valued character should be protected and enhanced.

The following sketches illustrate the prevailing built form features in Fairfield Village and the surrounds.

Shop front building- one storey



Shop front building – two/three stories



residential buildings



3.4 Siting and Intensity of Development

Figure ground patterns illustrate the intensity of development and siting of buildings on allotments, in relation to building envelopes or footprints.

Within the retail core, particularly north of the train line, buildings are consistently set hard to front (street) and site boundaries and most with high level of site coverage. This format of development is typical of a traditional street-based centre.

Residential areas are characterised by somewhat varied setbacks which are generally graduated. Garden areas and dominance of freestanding house styles mean site coverage is generally much lower compared to commercial land, with, although coverage varies depending on lot size and era of the building.

There are varied spaces at the rear of both the commercial and residential buildings and the future use of this land is an important design consideration.



retail: high site coverage, zero setbacks



residential: lower site coverage, larger setbacks

Figure 6 graphically demonstrates the streetscape presentations a result of site coverage shown in the figure ground:



Figure 6: Figure ground

3.5 Land use

Fairfield Village is a traditional street-based neighbourhood centre with a strong emphasis on meeting the needs of the surrounding resident population. With approximately 11,000sqm of retail floor space and an additional 8,000sqm of non-retail commercial uses, the centre is mid-sized in the context of other neighbourhood centres around Melbourne.

The centre contains a diverse range of uses, with retail uses concentrated north of the railway line in the 500m strip along both sides of the main vehicular route of Station Street.

In this precinct the centre has a strong range of neighbourhood-level retail and non-retail uses. It is 'anchored' by three supermarkets and provides a notable range of independent fresh food and grocery (including fruit and vegetable, bakery, butchers, delicatessen and organic grocery outlets, etc.).

The Station Street strip also provides a range of convenience retail and services (including dry cleaners, newsagent, hairdressers, pharmacies, banks, real estate, etc). Cafes, restaurants and bars are an increasing land use in the strip. The growth in these uses has generally been accompanied by a decline in apparel and other non-food retailing. Office uses are found scattered throughout the strip.

A key focus facility north of the railway line is that of the Community Centre, which contains the local library, community meeting rooms, maternal and child health, activity rooms, and public toilets.

South along the railway line, Wingrove Street and Railway Place contain a more eclectic mix of businesses, including consulting rooms, business services and independent retailers. Some vacant shops also appear to be occupied for a residential or other non-commercial uses.

Six open surface car parking areas are located within the precinct, generally associated with community facilities and supermarkets, plus angle and parallel parking is provided along street edges. Parking facilities associated with the Fairfield Railway Station are also located along the south side of Wingrove Street.

Around the commercial area, land use is predominantly residential, occurring at a range of densities, but generally decreasing further from the centre. Boutique apartment style developments are occurring along Station Street, particularly in the Residential Growth Zone land south of the centre towards Heidelberg Road. Beyond Station Street is relatively low scale residential use, which can be described as medium density in places. The area is notable for its proximity to

the passive recreational areas of Darebin Creek to the east and parkland of the Yarra River riparian zone to the south.

Figure 5 illustrates land use pattern of the study area and surrounds.



Mixed uses with close spatial relationships: commercial, community services and facilities, and residential



Figure 7: Land uses and activity

3.6 Access and movement

This analysis addresses the key infrastructure elements relating to transport and mobility in and around the centre, including vehicle movement, public transport and pedestrian access. This is an important consideration for key movements, location of parking and highlighting the high accessibility of the centre by public transport – and its associated development potential.

The centre's access and movement network is dictated by the main road, Station Street, which has a north-south orientation, and the railway line with an east-west orientation.

Surrounding secondary roads are based on a grid structure, generally orientated north-south or east-west. Two 'gateway' entry points to the centre are located on Station Street to the north and south respectively. The southern gateway is located at the traffic light controlled intersection of the major transport route of Heidelberg Road. Duncan Street and Wingrove Street provide east-west entry points directly into the core retail spine.

Pedestrian access is provided along wide footpaths that flank both sides of the core retail spine. East-west movement is encouraged via three additional key dedicated pedestrian crossings within the centre; two located either side of the railway line, and one further to the north which is controlled by traffic lights.

The centre is well served by public transport. The Fairfield Railway Station (Hurstbridge Line) provides high order public transport services directly to the centre. Numerous bus services also dissect the area, with various bus stops located on Station Street, and surrounding major residential roads.



Wingrove St ped access to railway station



Wingrove / Station Street intersection

Cycling in the precinct is encouraged within the local street network. North-south cycling movements are promoted along Gillies Street (and further west along Victoria Road) rather than Station Street for safety reasons. Wingrove Street operates as a major east-west cycling link in the area, although there are access and safety issues at the intersection with Station Street that require improvement.

Provision of public car parking is made along both sides of Station Street (parallel and angle parking), and within several open surface parking areas behind the main retail spine, as previously mentioned.

Provision of on-site parking to commercial properties varies. Most properties in the centre have vehicular access from rear service laneways, obtained through a variety of formal and informal access arrangements. There are some 'landlocked' properties which currently cannot provide any on-site car parking.



Gillies Street car park, connected via pedestrian walkways from Station Street

Figure 8 demonstrates the access and movement network structure relevant to the area:



Figure 8: Access and movement

3.7 Propensity to change

A place's propensity for change is a product of the extent to which buildings are valued, intactness of character, apparent development pressure, and the economic feasibility of various typologies of development. It can be determined by assessing:

- Underutilised premises
- Likely development sites
- The presence of notable buildings
- The amount of recent planning applications
- Evidence of maintenance, upkeep and investment
- Economic considerations such as the market for housing

Overall, Fairfield Village appears to have a medium propensity for change.

The centre is performing well and there is a low vacancy rate. As discussed earlier in this report, there has been considerable development activity in areas just outside or behind the core retail area. There are existing planning permits in the retail core which have yet to be enacted. Overall it is expected that interest in the retail core will increase as availability of more convenient development sites in the area lessen.

Relatively high property values in the area and ongoing demand for housing favour the feasibility of redevelopment of commercial sites for mixed use/shop top housing style development. There are numerous buildings in the centre, including some adjacent sites in same ownership, which have not been well maintained and could be candidates for urban renewal.

However, development interest will be tempered by the fact that:

- the majority of lots in the retail core, particularly in the area between Wingrove and Duncan Street, are small deep and narrow sites;
- several sites in the retail core do not have established rear laneway access which hampers their ability to accommodate on-site car parking; and/or
- several sites are in areas of significant flooding risk, which presents challenges in designing ground floors areas with elevated floor levels – a likely requirement in the event of redevelopment or significant extension.

All of the above adversely affects the attractiveness and feasibility of land for redevelopment.

At present there is only modest potential for site consolidation to occur in the centre to create larger parcels of land.

It is also expected that valued historic buildings in the centre such as the church and potentially, further buildings to be identified through the heritage assessment work, will be preserved.

Further, a number of sites in Fairfield Village are owner-occupied (i.e. land owner also operates the business). Land owners are typically more focused on continued business operation rather than pursuing disruptive redevelopment.

4. ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

4.1 Assets

Existing land use, activity, and built form within the Fairfield Retail Activity Centre and surrounds indicate that it is a highly valued, active and vibrant centre with the following assets:

- A 'village' atmosphere and active main street that is enhanced by the eclectic mix of traditional older buildings which make a fine grained, positive contribution to the streetscape experience and should be retained.
- A strong economic role as a neighbourhood hub, with a particularly diverse range of food convenience and local produce stores in tandem with civic and community destinations.
- Excellent public transport linkages and grid street pattern that enhances walkability.

4.2 Key Built Form Design Challenges

Managing building scale and the relationship between new and old development is key to retaining the village character of the Fairfield Village.

The constrained narrow lot configuration in the centre and potential application of heritage overlay controls can be seen as positive in this respect as these conditions generally promote a modest scale of development. However, there will inevitably be less constrained sites or multiple sites consolidated into larger parcels with somewhat greater capacity for height and mass; therefore clear guidance on managing transitions in height and form will be required.

New building forms need to respond appropriately to context. This includes:

- Responding sensitively to the existing scale of the street as set by the valued traditional buildings described in section 3.
- Where new street frontages are created, reflecting the characteristic active, fine-grain shop fronts through appropriate building rhythm, proportions and detailing. This is particularly important for wider infill development sites.
- Responding positively to prominent locations, such as the railway crossing nodal point, with high quality building form, aiding place-making and legality.
- Responding to the requirements of the Special Building Overlay, which has implications for floor level requirements and other design elements. Development will need to address flood risk without compromising the need

for active frontages and ease of pedestrian movement in the centre.

- Providing suitable interface conditions to residential properties behind commercial sites fronting main streets. Conditions vary depending on whether there are rear laneways separating the commercial from residential buildings.

4.3 Community Expectations

4.3.1 2008 Community Engagement

When design guidelines were initially prepared for the centre in 2008, community consultation revealed a number of key preferences for consideration which were factored into the guidelines at the time:

- strong direction for limited change in height
- support for modest building forms which protect and respect existing streetscape form and character
- increased height may be located along the railway line
- residential amenity should be protected at the interface with commercial buildings
- concerns over traffic, including managing car parking and speeds, and the overall impacts of intensification
- support of the centre's diversity of facilities and vitality

4.3.2 November – December 2016 Engagement

In late 2016, Council engaged once again with the Fairfield community as part of the 'Our Fairfield Village' initiative that, in addition to guidelines for development, will also inform the preparation of a streetscape masterplan and transport improvements for the centre. Participants were asked about design principles and what was important to them regarding new buildings.

Direct community feedback confirms Fairfield Village is highly valued for its distinct 'local village feel', which comes from its convenience and accessibility, strong local business presence, 'artistic' flavour (notably FIDO), the character of its buildings and friendly community. The community is keen to ensure this unique character and feel is captured and maintained in improvements and development, both in public and private space.

In relation to building design and new development, there is consistent and strong support for:

- Maintaining the traditional facades of the shopping strip, with new buildings to be of a modest scale and form which respects local heritage and character and incorporates traditional/heritage style features.
- Development heights which do not take away from the 'local' (read to be fine grained, small, intimate) feel and character of the centre. Participants supported the idea of front setbacks in relation to the street.
- Use of natural or traditional materials, such as wood or brick, rather than highly-contemporary materials like metal cladding, and inclusion of green and living elements such as green walls. A large number of people identified 'sustainability' as a critical element of new building design details and facades.

There was significant concern that new residential development would exacerbate existing car parking pressures in the centre. In this regard, most people felt new development should be required to provide sufficient on-site car parking for new residents. There was openness to the provision of car-share or other services, including bike facilities, to reduce the pressure on local roads and parking and to promote more sustainable lifestyle. There were mixed opinions on the cost and benefits of the recently-approved Nightingale development which targets reduced car ownership and does not provide any on-site car parking.

Overall, the 2016 results were broadly consistent with the feedback received in 2008, with the addition of heightened expectations about sustainable living and building design.

Community concerns and priorities around design and development will be considered and incorporated where possible in the preparation of the revised guidelines.

5. CONCLUSION

With state and local planning policy directions encouraging the intensification of activity centres, clear and contemporary guidelines are needed to manage future development in the Fairfield Village centre.

The following key aspects will be addressed:

- Retention of valued elements of built form, such as historical parapets and design details, the moderate streetscape scale and key buildings to be retained.
- Incorporation of existing building elements in new development to ensure consolidation of architectural forms and continuity of character.
- Identification of appropriate scale and setbacks to preserve the streetscape character.
- Identification of appropriate architectural design techniques to promote contemporary design that is sensitive to existing features and character.
- Promotion of environmentally sustainable design (ESD) and facilities which encourage a sustainable lifestyle for residents (without duplicating existing local policies in the Darebin Planning Scheme).
- Direction on the design and provision of appropriate car access and parking facilities in the centre.
- Strong direction that the main retail spine remains confined within existing boundaries, and does not encroach into residential land.
- Strong direction that the built form within the Commercial 1 Zone should respect adjoining residential land, with graduated heights and particular emphasis on solar access and overshadowing issues, ensuring the protection of adjoining residential amenity.

The resulting guidelines will appropriately respond to the above considerations within current context and issues, and seek to provide clear built form directions that promote best practice.