Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What has the State Government announced about fast tracking?**

The State Government’s Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) has included the Preston Market Precinct on a list of development projects to be fast-tracked, which they define as “accelerated the progression of projects through the planning and development pipeline”.

Council has asked the State Government to give us full details of their plans to fast-track this project, to make sure the things that are important to our community are included and full consultation is undertaken at an appropriate time.

The State Government have responded, stating the new fast track process for Preston Market will include:

* a briefing to Councillors following the election
* a tailored community engagement process on the structure plan and accompanying planning scheme amendment, but have removed an additional earlier stage of check-in consultation with the community
* the opportunity be referred to the VPA Projects Standing Advisory Committee (where appropriate)
* additional resources, effort and priority from the VPA and across government.

**2.**     **What’s the role of Council in a fast-tracked process?**

The State Government’s decision ends the current process, where Council and the VPA were working together to draft planning guidelines for the site for the Planning Minister to approve. Fast-tracking means Council does not have the opportunity to influence the process.

Council will be briefed by the VPA following Council elections. Then Council and the community will have a chance to write a formal submission during the formal consultation process led by the VPA. Council will continue to advocate for the best outcomes for the community during this process.

**3.**     **Who will make the final decisions on what happens to Preston Market?**

The Planning Minister will make decisions on recommendations by the VPA. The fast-tracking process hasn’t changed this.

**4.**     **Will the community still get to comment on the fast-tracked plans?**

The VPA had previously committed to two more chances for the community to have their say, one on the draft plans when they can still be meaningfully changed, and one in the formal process of exhibition when plans are more set.

The State Government have stated the earlier check-in with the community will no longer go ahead and the formal consultation process will occur after the October 2020 Council election.

Council will continue to advocate for the State Government to ensure the check-in consultation they previously committed to is honoured*.* Consultation should be at a time when community and Council can participate properly and lockdown rules allow.

**5.**     **What are the risks of a fast-track process?**

Council has concerns a fast-tracked process could compromise on what’s important in planning the Preston Market precinct, such as proper community consultation, protecting the existing traders, protecting the market’s unique cultural and architectural heritage and ensuring fresh affordable food for the community, as captured in Council’s *Heart of Preston*. If these critical matters are not properly addressed, a fast-track process could benefit the developer at the expense of the community and traders.

**6.** **Who benefits most from the fast-track process?**

The Preston Market Precinct is complex and traditional town planning requirements alone will not adequately protect what is important about Preston Market. This includes things like the existing traders, the market’s unique cultural and architectural heritage and ensuring fresh affordable food for the community are all vital for our market to thrive into the future.

The developer has not made a commitment to protecting these and the State Government’s fast-track process risks losing the opportunity to secure a commitment during the planning process.

A commitment from the developer needs to be in place before the project is fast-tracked or the community may miss out.

**7.**     **Who will make the decisions on the rules at the market site?**

The fast-track process does not change who makes the decision on the plans – it’s still the State Government. The Planning Minister will make the decision after a recommendation from the Victorian Planning Authority.

The State Government took over as the planning authority for the Preston Market precinct more than two years ago.

The Planning Minister tasked the VPA to review the planning controls and plans for the site and make decisions addressing complex issues such as height, environmentally sustainable design, heritage, open space and affordable housing. 

**8.** **What’s a Standing Advisory Committee and who is on it?**

The State Government’s announcement from the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) references the creation of a Standing Advisory Committee (SAC). The VPA are yet to confirm if the Preston Market project will be heard by a SAC.

Standing Advisory Committees are bodies set up to review issues on planning projects that cannot be easily resolved.

If a SAC is put in place for Preston Market, we don’t know who will be on it or what their expertise will be. Council is concerned the make-up of the committee won’t reflect experts in marketplaces, heritage, and community benefit.