

3 community & stakeholder engagement

This section summarises the community and stakeholder engagement activities that have taken place in understanding the background and preparing the Structure Plan. Meaningful engagement with the community has been an important component of this project. A series of consultation events have been held to ensure that the community has had the opportunity to identify issues that currently affect the Centre, as well as actively participate in the generation of future direction and ideas for the Centre. Indeed it is the community's ideas and views that have helped shape the vision, objectives and strategies of this Structure Plan.

3.1 background

As part of the project's background stage, the first phase of stakeholder and community consultation was undertaken to find out more about the place and identify the key issues. This included meetings with Council officers and relevant authorities, targeted sessions with key stakeholders, a survey distributed to all businesses and residents within the study area and a 'walking workshop' was undertaken with the broader community. The 'walking workshop' involved the consultant team being taken around the Centre by members of the community in order to gain an understanding of issues 'on-the-ground'.

The following is a summary of the feedback received. These comments provide a summary record of feedback that was been received from the broader community, which combined with feedback received from other key stakeholders groups and the Community Reference Group, informed the underlying 'vision' for the Structure Plan.

- The importance of maintaining and enhancing the 'village image', scale and feel of Heathmont.
- The need to recognise that Heathmont is unique.
- The notion that Heathmont is clean, green and safe.

- Continuing to improve the quality of shops, and relevance to the local community.
- Welcoming a broad range of people to the Centre.
- Concern over heights within the residential hinterland away from the Canterbury Road commercial strip.
- Importance of clearly defining areas of future change, as 'go' and 'no-go' zones.
- The importance of managing conflicts between different land uses.
- Importance of ensuring the ongoing protection of the 'Harpers Bush' properties, in terms of potential adjoining uses and interfaces.
- Importance of the green backdrop to the landscape character of the Centre.
- Maintaining and enhancing community and environmental assets – eg. FJC Rogers Reserve.
- Maintaining and enhancing the bush character through the provision of new landscape planting in the public realm.
- General support for increase in housing density immediately surrounding the retail strip.
- Promoting shop-top housing to increase the vibrancy of Centre.
- Ensuring that new housing in residential periphery is sensitively designed to respond to the landscape character.
- Encouraging new development to achieve best practice in ecologically sustainable development.
- Ensuring that consolidation and tree protection imperatives are appropriately balanced.

- Creating a vision and aims for Heathmont that encompass the natural environment and sustainability.
- Need to encourage and prioritise alternative forms of transport (eg. cycling and walking).
- The importance of managing the conflict between pedestrian and vehicular movement networks.
- Need to evaluate the Canterbury Road speed limit, pedestrian operated traffic lights and lane configuration – continue to lobby VicRoads.
- Increasing numbers of trucks using Canterbury Road to access Eastlink.
- Concerns regarding the unsafe and narrow bridge crossing over the railway line.
- Improvements desired for the station precinct including connectivity and safety.
- Potential for bike path connection under Canterbury Road, along the railway alignment.
- Need to manage the provision of car parking within the Canterbury Road commercial strip.
- Most pressure for parking occurs on the south side of Canterbury Road and on Saturdays.
- Lack of youth space and opportunities without having to travel to Ringwood.
- Lack of sufficient space for on-street entertainment or informal opportunities for play.
- Lack of children's playgrounds.
- Need for landscaping and open space to be provided in new developments.



community survey

A community survey was distributed throughout the Heathmont area and feedback was sought on a range of issues. Over 120 responses were received. The following provides a summary of the feedback received:

- The majority of respondents wished to see more cafés, restaurants and coffee shops developed in the area, with additional parking and a supermarket also receiving support.
- The need for a community space (such as parkland, playground, library, meeting place, outdoor seating and BBQ areas) also ranked high in survey responses.
- Local services such as a delicatessen, shoe shop, fish monger, petrol station and doctors were also identified as being needed in Heathmont.
- The vast majority of survey responses wished to see slow and incremental growth in the Centre.
- The favoured form of housing to develop in the Centre was dual occupancies, followed by aged care and retirement living as well as mixed use development and townhouses.
- There were very small numbers of respondents who favoured apartment development.
- The preferred location for housing was away from ridgelines and heavily treed areas. Respondents instead favoured development adjacent to the rail station, on main roads and adjacent to the Canterbury Road commercial strip.
- The dominant concerns of respondents regarding elements of new housing design were landscaping and planting of vegetation and building height. This was followed closely by setbacks from neighbouring properties.
- Overwhelmingly the most important elements of the Heathmont NAC's character were identified as the village atmosphere with a great community and neighbourhood feel, the trees, leafy and green bush setting, and the low density character.
- The variety of shops and size and charm of the Canterbury Road shopping strip were also highly valued by respondents.
- The key issues for the Centre identified by respondents were traffic and car parking matters, followed by pedestrian safety and access to the Station and across the railway line.

3.2 visioning

principles survey

Following the background stage, a series of principles, which are documented in the following section of this report, were developed and circulated widely throughout the Heathmont community. This occurred through a direct mailout of a survey seeking to gauge the level of support for each of the 15 principles. In response to the survey the following is noted:

- Overwhelming support was provided in response to the principles.
- Most support was for protection of village feel, leafy backdrop and hilly setting.
- Considerable support for protecting Heathmont's environmentally significant assets.
- Least support for more housing around the Canterbury Road commercial strip.

scrapbooking

A series of 'scrapbooking' workshops were then held where the community was asked to come and provide the project team with photos, articles, examples from other places and ideas for how they would like to see the principles implemented. The response from the community was significant and some of the material they provided is shown below.

visioning workshop

The project team then worked hard to investigate how the multitude of ideas provided might be 'quilted' or 'knitted' together into a coherent whole. The first iteration of the key ambitions detailed in the following section was generated as part of these working sessions. A presentation to the community was held the following night demonstrating how the project team had pulled together the community's ideas.

Some of the additional ideas generated as part of the scrapbooking and visioning processes included:

- Pedestrian underpass for bikes and walkers to connect the Railway Station to Heathmont Road without needing to cross Canterbury Road
- Use of rooftop spaces on the south side of the shopping strip (cafes etc.) to take advantage of views whilst maintaining low – mid scale.
- Emphasis on streetscapes with active uses at ground and upper levels, outdoor seating and bustling commercial and mixed use areas.
- Public art informed by the myths of Heathmont to build a narrative about the Centre and reinforce a local identity.
- Support to higher density housing on the basis that it should be energy efficient and sensitive to the existing natural environment.
- Potential Barn Crossing configuration at Canterbury Road.
- Use of Copenhagen-style bike lanes on Canterbury Road.
- Improving laneways to encourage walking or cycling.
- Restaurant and community vegetable gardens being established within the Railway Station precinct.
- Underutilised car parking at Station being used for farmers / arts and crafts markets on weekends.
- A local bus service providing access from residential areas to the Canterbury Road commercial strip.

