

Preston Market Precinct Structure Plan

Public Consultation Report



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2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Amendment C182dare to the Darebin Planning Scheme includes the Preston Market Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) and supporting documents. The amendment will provide a framework to guide the future growth of the Preston Market Precinct as a mixed-use area that includes a vibrant market, new housing, jobs, and infrastructure needed to support the growing community such as public open space, walking and cycling paths and improved public transport access.

Preparation of the draft documents has been led by the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) in consultation with Darebin City Council (Council), the precinct landowners, local traders, state agencies and the wider community.

This consultation report outlines consultation on the Preston Market Precinct since 2017 and summarises the final public consultation process for the draft amendment which commenced on 18 May 2021 and concluded on 13 July 2021. It provides a thematic overview of feedback received during final public consultation. The report also outlines changes made in response to Council and community submissions and describes the next steps to finalise the project.

The VPA's approach to final public consultation for this project in 2021 mirrored the key elements of the planning scheme amendment notice and submission process required under Section 19 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. It provided opportunities for the community, local businesses and market traders, key stakeholders, Council, government agencies and site landowners to understand the proposed planning changes for the precinct, discuss the planning concepts with the VPA planning team and make written submissions on the plan and draft amendment.

A total of 386 written submissions and an additional 250 questions/comments through phone, email and in-person were made to Amendment C182dare during the consultation period. The key topics of interest were building heights, traffic and parking, process and timing, market precinct amenity and community facilities, market operations, density, housing and open space.

The VPA has acknowledged the receipt of those submissions and, where possible in the time available, has worked to resolve the matters raised.

3 OVERVIEW

3.1 Project background

The Preston Market Precinct is approximately 5.1 hectares in area and located 10 kilometres north of Melbourne's Central Business District. It is bordered by Murray Road to the north, Cramer Street to the south, St Georges Road to the west (excluding the existing apartment building and rail corridor) and the rear of the High Street retail and commercial strip to the east.

The precinct is identified in the *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* metropolitan planning strategy as a Strategic Development Site in the Preston High Street Major Activity Centre. It has excellent access to public transport and a range of services, facilities and amenities. The precinct is in private ownership and accommodates the privately owned Preston Market, an Aldi supermarket, Centrelink office, Asian grocer and uncovered ground-level car parking area.

On 6 August 2017, the Minister for Planning asked the VPA to review planning controls across the Preston Market Precinct. The review assessed current controls against relevant local and state planning policy and the recommendations of a Community Reference Group established by the VPA during the first phase of community consultation. To provide protection to the market during the VPA's review, the Minister applied a nine metre Interim Height Control over the existing market buildings.

Following completion of the review the VPA commenced preparation of a structure plan and planning scheme amendment to protect the market use and guide future growth and development in the precinct. Amendment C182dare comprises the *Preston Market Precinct Structure Plan* (PSP) and an Activity Centre Zone Schedule and supporting documents.

The preparation of Amendment C182 was informed by a number of technical and background studies that address a range of matters including traffic and car parking, urban design, public open space and heritage. The amendment documents identified retention of the market on site with heritage protections and an opportunity for approximately 2,200 new dwellings in the precinct with supporting infrastructure such as public open space and community facilities. They also provide mixed-use land for employment and retail and commercial services, as well as integrating with the new Preston Station being built by the Level Crossing Removal Project (LXRP).

3.2 The VPA's Fast Track Program

The Preston Market Precinct project is part of the VPA Fast Track Program, an element of the Victorian Government's response to support a post-COVID economic recovery. The Fast Track Program provides planning certainty for communities and a pipeline of development that will assist in delivering future jobs and homes for Victorians as the economy recovers from the impact of the pandemic.

The Preston Market Precinct project qualified to be "fast tracked" for several reasons, including:

- Its well progressed nature and documented public consultation feedback received prior to the project's identification for fast tracking.
- The possibility of future development to commence immediately post-approval.

- The opportunity to create thousands of jobs and boost the Victorian economy through project delivery.

As part of the VPA Fast Track Program, the Preston Market Precinct project will be subject to the VPA Projects Standing Advisory Committee (VPA SAC). The VPA SAC has been established to provide independent advice on draft planning scheme amendments to the VPA and the Minister for Planning. More information on this process is available in Section 5.

3.3 Final public consultation overview

The draft PSP and planning scheme amendment documents were released for public consultation on Tuesday 18 May 2021. The consultation period ran for eight weeks, until Tuesday 13 July 2021. The identified stakeholders included the Preston community, local businesses, market traders, Darebin City Council, State Government agencies, service providers, landowners and the general public.

The consultation activities and collateral included:

- Three market pop-ups
- One drop-in session
- One market trader meeting session
- One-to-one discussions with market traders
- Phone calls
- A project brochure explaining the key elements of the draft structure plan and associated amendment documents.

The consultation activities were designed to respond to the relevant public health restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The activities also mirrored the requirements of the planning scheme amendment notice and submission process under Section 19 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

A complete suite of planning documentation was made available on Engage Victoria and the VPA website. A hardcopy version was offered to any person with limited access to the internet. Formal feedback was collected in the form of written submissions.

The key purpose of the final consultation process was to provide an opportunity for the local community and key stakeholders to consider the draft documents and make a submission before the amendment progressed through the planning system.

The VPA delivered a comprehensive communication strategy to alert the community to the consultation opportunity, which reached more than five million Victorians via traditional and social media.

The opportunity to get involved was promoted through direct mail to approximately 7,500 addresses located within approximately 800 metres of the precinct. A map showing the boundary of the mailout area is shown in Appendix 6.1 to this report.

The VPA also ran a location-targeted social media advertising campaign, installed posters at the market and worked with Preston Market centre management to provide a direct invitation to market tenants.

The Preston Market Engage Victoria webpage was visited 10,550 times by 8,338 visitors during the consultation period.

3.4 Previous community consultation

Community engagement informed the review of existing planning controls in the precinct and the preparation of Amendment C182dare. It helped shape the vision and objectives for the precinct and the strategies to achieve those objectives.

- In 2018, the VPA's review of planning controls in the precinct included community engagement between February and April (phase 1) and between July and August (phase 2).

The engagement program included interviews with market traders, an online survey, community drop-in sessions, and pop-up information and discussion sessions.

The purpose of the engagement was to understand more about the identity and character of the market. A Community Reference Group was established at that time to enable detailed discussions with community representatives regarding the future of the precinct.

- From 20 May to 13 June 2019, the VPA carried out a four-week engagement program to inform the community about the current stage of the project, explore different precinct scenarios and seek feedback about key aspects of the site that were being considered.

The engagement program included:

- Three deliberative workshops with a randomly selected, broadly representative cross-section of community members
- An online survey accessible via the VPA and Council websites
- Stakeholder meetings with precinct landowners, community action groups, market stall holders and business owners, local (non-market) business owners and operators, and the LXP
- Two daytime 'pop-up' displays at Preston Market, and intercepts with stallholders and owners and with High Street businesses
- One evening community 'display and discuss' session at Preston Town Hall
- Kitchen table discussions held by Council staff with culturally and linguistically diverse community members.

The VPA consulted government agencies and service providers throughout the development of the draft PSP and amendment, including the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP), Department of Transport and LXP.

3.5 Local council consultation

The VPA consulted with Darebin City Council throughout the preparation of the draft PSP and amendment. This included the establishment of regular meetings with a Project Working Group, Project Control Group and Project Steering Committee.

On 17 May 2021, as part of the final public consultation program, Councillors at the City of Darebin were briefed on the draft PSP and amendment by the VPA's CEO and Acting Executive Director Melbourne Renewal Precincts.

The VPA has responded to queries and provided clarifications throughout the final public consultation process.

3.6 Landowner consultation

The Preston Market Precinct is privately owned and its landowners were consulted throughout the planning process to ensure their views were known.

3.7 Market trader consultation

On 20 May 2021, VPA officers hand-delivered information on the draft PSP and amendment to traders in the form of a project brochure. The VPA worked in collaboration with the market's centre management to provide information and advice to traders about engagement opportunities.

Market traders were also invited to a dedicated meeting that was held on Wednesday 23 June 2021. There were 32 attendees from a range of market tenancies. The VPA provided an update about the planning process, explained key elements of the draft PSP and amendment, how to make a submission and answered questions about the draft documents.

4 CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY

4.1 Final public consultation program

The final public consultation period for draft Amendment C182dare ran from Tuesday 18 May to Tuesday 13 July 2021. The consultation activities and responses are summarised below.

During the consultation period, Melbourne experienced a two-week lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This postponed the delivery of face-to-face community engagement activities until restrictions were lifted.

Table 1: Summary of consultation activities during final consultation, May-July 2021

Frequency and date	Public consultation activity	Audience	Outcomes
18 May	Letters and project brochure sent to: properties within an area bounded by Bell Street to the south, Plenty Road to the east, Wood Street and May Street to the north and Gilbert Road to the west; Darebin City Council; relevant state government agencies and departments.	Property owners and occupiers	7,500+ delivered
18 May	Launch of Engage Victoria page	Community, landowners and agencies	8,338 visitors with 299 contributions
20 May	Hardcopy brochure hand-delivered to market traders	Market traders	Project brochure provided to all market traders with invitation to attend a trader information session
18 May - 13 July within business hours	Telephone calls	Community, market traders, landowners and agencies	12 calls
23 June	Market trader meeting	Market traders only	Market traders provided with a project update, information about how to make a submission and opportunity to ask VPA questions
19 June	Community drop-in session	Community and market traders	Three community members spoke with the VPA project team
20 May 1 July 3 July	Three market pop-up sessions	Community and market traders	100 community members spoke with the VPA project team
Offered on an as-needed basis	Government and agency meetings	Council and State Government agencies	VPA briefing of Darebin City Councillors (1) Various meetings with State Government agency and Council representatives
18 May - 13 July	Written submissions	All	386 submissions in total, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Government agency and service providers (4) • Council (1) • Landowners within the precinct (1).

5 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

A total of 386 written submissions and an additional 250 questions/comments through phone, email and in-person were made to Amendment C182dare during the consultation period.

An overview of the key themes raised through these submissions is outlined below.

5.1 Building heights and density

Submissions included feedback about the type of development that would be permitted under the draft amendment. Some community members voiced their concern about the maximum allowable density limits, while others were concerned future development would not or could not be guaranteed to be sensitive to the character of the current market and surrounds. Community members submitted that this increased density would significantly change the area.

Submissions also expressed concern about building heights. Concerns included:

- Proposed building heights are too tall
- They are out of character with the neighbourhood
- They will create unacceptable overshadowing of the market and other areas in the precinct.

Concerns were also raised about whether new buildings would adversely impact local amenity through poor building design, adverse wind impacts at ground level and inadequate waste management practices.

5.2 Market building and heritage

The VPA received many questions and submissions about the future of the market, including strong expressions of support for a market to remain in the precinct.

Community members also raised concerns about what a future market would look like and how it would operate. Many community members said they wanted the market to retain its unique character and identity. This included retention of its light open and airy feel, wide aisles that provide easy access for all levels of mobility, a variety of small traders, and places for people to meet and eat. Many community members noted the important role the market provides as a place for social connection and a welcoming space for those needing somewhere to spend time.

Submissions also expressed concerns regarding the protection of operations of the market during construction, and how existing market stall operators could be safeguarded during and after the development process.

The consultation process reconfirmed the desire for an active and functioning market that provides the community with fresh produce and goods to remain at the centre of any future development.

5.3 Transport and parking

Community members feel car parking is important to the market's viability and ease of access. Providing adequate car parking for the market and for future residential apartments in the precinct was a frequently raised concern.

Community members also expressed concerns about car parking in relation to the Preston Station upgrade occurring as part of the LXP work.

Community members acknowledged the precinct's high level of accessibility to different forms of public transport. However, concerns were expressed that increased density in the precinct could impact public transport and the surrounding road network through increased congestion.

5.4 Timing and construction

Community members raised many questions about the timing of future construction in the precinct, with many assuming there would be change occurring in the precinct quite quickly.

Community members also questioned how the draft PSP and amendment could inform and control future development applications for the precinct.

Some community members expressed concern about the impacts of construction vehicles on local roads, citing recent impacts from LXP construction vehicles parking in local streets and reducing access to resident parking during the day.

5.5 Infrastructure, community spaces and sustainability

Community members were often positive about the new connections in the draft plans with areas around the precinct (Preston Station, Preston City Oval, High Street shops) and the creation of new open spaces. Community members also reiterated the importance of delivering green open spaces and opportunities for more than what is included in the draft documents.

Community members were also interested to learn about the new community facilities provided for in the amendment and how they could benefit the diverse community that visits the market each day.

5.6 Written submissions

The VPA received 386 written submissions during the final consultation process. All submitters received an acknowledgement of receipt and the submissions are available (with personal details redacted) on the VPA's website.

The VPA will continue to respond to and resolve the key issues raised in the written feedback where possible. Unresolved submission will be provided to the Minister for Planning, who will consider whether to refer matters to the VPA SAC for independent advice.

The key issues raised by submitters have been grouped into the categories below and reinforce the feedback heard via other avenues throughout the consultation period:

- Future of the market, including the size, location, affordability, heritage and character of the market

- Traffic management and congestion
- Car parking provision for the market and other land uses
- Public open space provision and protection from overshadowing
- Sustainability, including greening, waste management, wind impacts, noise, solar access, renewable energy and COVID impacts
- Building heights and neighbourhood character
- Development density, including the number of residential apartments
- Affordable housing provision, including need and quantity.

6 POST CONSULTATION & NEXT STEPS

6.1 Direction from Minister for Planning

In September 2021, in response to Council and community submissions, the Minister for Planning and the VPA decided to revisit the plan and reduce overall building heights.

As a result of the feedback received through submissions, our updated plans include lower building heights, fewer new homes, reduced overshadowing, more open space and stronger walking and cycling connections.

6.2 Resolution of submissions

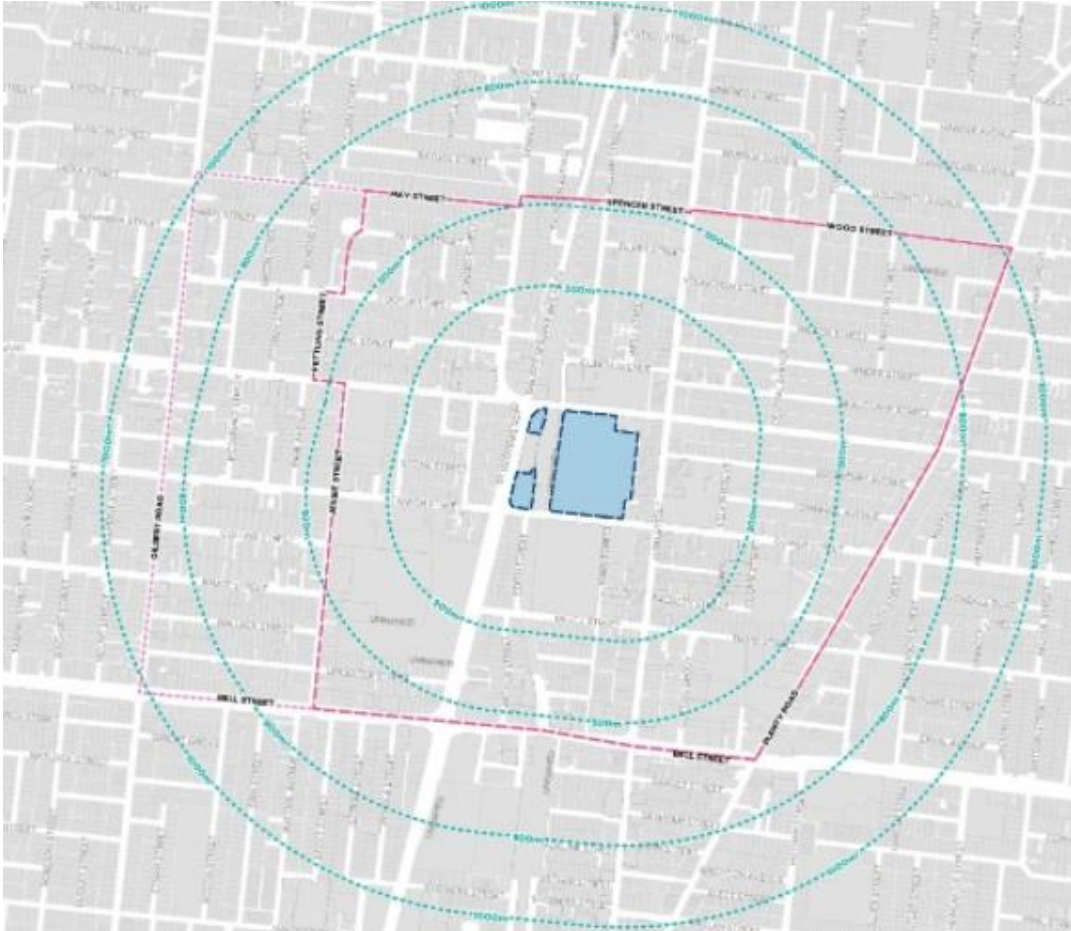
As part of the VPA Fast Track Program, Amendment C182 will be subject to the VPA SAC, which has been established to provide independent advice on draft planning scheme amendments to the VPA and the Minister for Planning.

While the VPA will seek to resolve issues raised by submitters within the time available, unresolved issues requiring further consideration may be referred to the VPA SAC.

Should the Minister for Planning seek to refer those matters, Planning Panels Victoria will contact affected submitters regarding next steps, process and timing. If applicable, the VPA will provide a written response to submitters whose submissions are not referred to the VPA SAC to ensure they are aware of the outcome of their submission.

7 APPENDICES

7.1 Mail out boundary map (in pink)



7.2 Project brochure

https://vpa-web.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Preston-Market-Precinct-Draft-Structure-Plan-Community_brochure-May-2021.pdf

7.3 Previous consultation reports

Phase 1 engagement report (2018)

<https://vpa-web.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Preston-Market-review-Phase-1-engagement-findings-May-2018.pdf>

Phase 2 engagement report (2018)

<https://vpa-web.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Phase-2-Engagement-Findings-report-Capire-September-2018-4.pdf>

Phase 3 engagement report (2019)

<https://vpa-web.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/19109-Preston-Market-Precinct-Engagement-Report-v2.00-final-100719-1.pdf>