



Social Impact Assessment for Significant Residential Developments

Policy & Guidelines

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Purpose of the Policy & Guidelines

The Social Impact Assessment Policy and Guidelines outlines Council's commitment to social consideration in land use planning, and a requirement for all significant residential developments and rezoning to follow the guidelines in preparing social assessment reports as part of the planning application process. Significant developments means:

- *Major residential projects which will have significant population increase (as determined by Council)*
- *Multi-storey residential developments*
- *Where there is a change in land use to facilitate residential development*
- *Rezoning from industrial use to residential use*
- *Rezoning of Public Open Space*

Social Impact Assessment may also be required for use & development other than significant residential, such as applications for gaming machines.

Council's officers will be responsible to advise applicants whether their proposal is subject to social impact assessment.

The Social Impact Assessment must be undertaken by a professional with expertise in social impact assessments. It is the applicants' responsibility to fund the project.



Social Impact Assessment Requirements

The Process Council Will Use

STEP 1

Council will encourage a Pre – application meeting with the developer and Council officers to discuss the proposed development and to determine the nature of the social impact assessment required in terms of the issues and areas it needs to address.

STEP 2

Following the pre-application meeting, it will be the developers responsibility to engage a professional with expertise in social impact assessment, to undertake the study.

Council will make available relevant data and information to assist in the assessment process.

STEP 3

Social Impact Assessment must inform the development plan, and be submitted with the planning application for Council's assessment of the overall proposal.

STEP 4

The Social Impact Assessment report, together with the overall development proposal, will be assessed by Council's internal officers which will comprise staff from the following function areas: urban planning, community development, recreation, social planning, economic development, health & safety and open space planning.

STEP 5

Following the assessment of the report, Council will advise the applicant if further information is required.



What is Social
Impact
Assessment?

The Local Government Association of Queensland emphasise the importance of integrating land use planning with social issues by stating that:

“Physical or land use planning has significant effect on the social development of the affected communities. These matters cannot be isolated from the planning process and addressed just by having a social planning components in the planning process – social implications permeate whole planning process.”

There are many definitions of social impact. A contemporary definition (Armour 1992) defines social impacts as changes that occur in:

- People’s way of life, including people with a disability (how they live, work, play and interact with one another on a day-to-day basis)
- Their culture (shared beliefs, customs and values)
- Their community (its cohesion, stability, character, services and facilities)

And further,

Social Impact Assessment is defined as ‘*a method of analysing what impact aaction may have on the social aspects of the environment.*’

The purpose of Social Impact Assessment is to identify whether developments will:

- Generate demand for increased community facilities and services
- Provide adequate facilities and services
- Meet needs for facilities and services already known to be deficient
- Improve or reduce accessibility to social and community services
- Provide greater or lesser choice in housing, shopping, recreational and leisure services
- Improve or reduce accessibility to social and community facilities
- Meet the needs of targeted population
- Be substantially detrimental to existing residential amenity



Purpose of the Guidelines

The general objective for the Social Assessment Guidelines is to ensure that, where relevant, social considerations are an integral part of the development assessment process.

In particular, the Guidelines seek to:

- Indicate which residential development applications need to consider undertaking social [impact] assessment
- Provide clear guidelines how social impact assessments should be conducted
- Enhance consistency, certainty and transparency in Council's assessment of the social impact of development applications
- Assist Council staff to improve their understanding and assessment of social issues relating to development applications.

Policy Basis

The City of Maribyrnong is undergoing major redevelopment, unique to Inner Melbourne, and in order to achieve sustainable developments, Council is committed to ensure social issues are integrated with land use planning and that the relationship between land use and social issues be given equal recognition. It is a requirement by Council that Social Impact Assessment is considered and undertaken with all significant proposals.

The Maribyrnong City Council's '*Principles for the Planning of New Residential Developments*' policy states:

- With any planning of residential developments, Council will adopt a holistic approach linking related physical, environmental, economic, social and cultural issues (rather than treating them separately), and which focus on key local issues.
- Social impact assessment for large developments ...should be undertaken by the developer, in close collaboration with Council.

Rapid development can have significant impacts on the social fabric, capacity of services, facilities, networks and information exchange, and hence upon the quality of life of people in local areas. It is therefore vital that the relationship between land use development and social quality be given **equal** recognition.



Council's policy
in achieving
sustainable
community

Social Impact Assessment will assist Council in determining whether the following is achieved by the proposed developments:

- encouraging intensified residential development in locations close to transport, activity centres and services;
- designing walkable and accessible neighbourhoods with opportunities for social exchange, and for services and jobs within walking distance;
- designing neighbourhoods which engender feelings of security and safety;
- integrating new developments with the surrounding community.
- achieving access and equity between new and existing residents, between groups of residents, and between residential and other land uses, including people with a disability.
- providing choice in housing which encourages social mix and integration between areas

Reference should be made to the Following Council's Policies

1. Principles for the Planning of New Residential Developments
2. Municipal Strategic Statement
3. Municipal Housing Strategy



State
Government's
Legislative
Framework

Although not mandatory, the State Policy Framework does allow for social impact assessment.

The Planning and Environment Act 1987 Section 60 states that

“before deciding on an application, the responsible authority- “

must consider

S. 60 (1)(a)(iii)

“any significant effects which the responsible authority considers the use or development may have on the environment or which the responsible authority considers the environment may have on the use or development”

may consider

S. (1) (b) (i)

“any significant social and economic effects of the use or development for which the application is made.”

Community
Engagement

Council is committed to facilitate community participation by giving the opportunity for people to affect the way their local area develops and assist residents to link into decision-making process. Consultation should occur at the very early planning stage to provide the community with an opportunity to be informed and to influence decisions which affect them.

Reference should be made to Council's Community Engagement Framework.

When is Social
Impact
Assessment
Required – A
guide only

Social Impact Assessment will be required, and requested by Council, in the following circumstances:

- Multi-storey residential developments
- Where there is a change in land use to facilitate residential development
- Significant residential developments with significant population increase (as determined by Council)
- Significant change in land use (as determined by Council)
- Rezoning from industrial use to residential use
- Rezoning of Public Open Space

It will be the responsibility of Council to determine which proposals are required to undertake social impact assessment, and the level of detail required.



What should be included in Social Impact Assessment – a guide only

Description Of The Development:

- What type of housing is proposed for this development?
- How many dwellings are being proposed?
- Will it offer greater or lesser choice in housing?
- The type of people that are likely to live in this new housing (eg. age groups, family types, educational / income status etc...)
- The likely number of people that will live in this housing development?

Affordable Housing

- Will opportunities for the provision of affordable housing and / or community housing be explored?

The Proposed Development In Relation To The Neighbouring Area

- What are the key demographic and economic characteristics of the surrounding neighbourhood:
 - Population
 - Age
 - Ethnic make up
 - Educational background
 - Socio-economic status (eg. income, employment, housing)
- How accessible is the development to existing services/facilities (eg. Wheelchair access, pedestrian, public transport)?
- How is the development going to integrate with the existing neighbourhood (eg. connectiveness, pathways, open space)?
- What community services and facilities are available within the neighbourhood – ie within 400 metres radius or 5-10 minutes walking distance (eg. child care centre, kindergartens, schools, health care, access to adequate supply of healthy food, shops, public transport, parks, playgrounds etc)?
- What recreation facilities are available within the neighbourhood? (eg. sporting clubs, reserve, recreation centre)
- How accessible is the development to people with a disability?

Public Transport

- What public transport is available within a 500 metres radius of the development?
- How accessible is public transport to the proposed development?
- Are there plans to incorporate public transport into the proposed development (if applicable)?

A site analysis plan is required to be submitted by the developer.



Safer Design Principles

Council recognises that the incorporation of good design principles from the outset in the design process has long term benefits to both the developer and the local community. The inclusion of Safer Design principles into the Social Impact Assessment Guidelines provides guidance on how to include improved community safety measures into development proposals.

Elements of Safer Design:

- Surveillance and sightlines
- Safe Movement and Access
- Overall Design and Legibility
- Clear definition of ownership/boundaries
- Activity Mix and Generation
- Concealment Reduction

Physical Features:

- Building Design
- Integrated Lighting
- Appropriate Signage and Symbolism
- Landscaping/Fencing
- Appropriate Streetscape

Supportive Environments for Physical Activity (SEPA) principles

Council also supports the Supportive Environments for Physical Activity (SEPA) principles developed by the Heart Foundation which promote:

- *Community Spirit:* People need to feel safe and part of the community in order for them to be out and about in their environment.
- *Sharing the Road:* Designing roads and road networks for pedestrians, wheelchair users, cyclists and public transport users, in addition to motor vehicles.
- *Destinations:* People need safe, accessible and attractive local destinations (eg: shops, post box, park or activity centres) that are linked to and within walking distance of homes, schools and workplaces, in order to encourage them to be more active.

In summary, SEPA principles encourage the creation of environments that facilitate physical activity, choice and opportunities.



Culture and community values

Will the development:

- Alter or affect culture or religious values?
- Enhance or detract from the existing cultural heritage of the locality?
- Encourage acceptance of diversity of cultures and multiculturalism?
- Enhance or detract from the cultural life of the community?

What Is Being Proposed In Terms Of Facilities

- What recreation facilities are (if any) proposed for the new development?
- What type of open space is being proposed for the development?

What open space is being proposed for the development?

- What is the likely population change as a result of the new development?
- Will the development generate demand for increased community services and facilities? (child care centre, kindergartens, schools, health care, shops, public transport, parks, playgrounds etc).

Economic Effects

- Are there economic effects of the development (positive/negative)?
 - Will the proposal be likely to give rise to an increase or decrease in employment opportunities in the locality?

Proposed Framework For Community Consultation

- What mechanisms will you use to involve the community in understanding the proposed development?
- How will you provide information about the proposed development to the community?



Reference to
Council's policies

The Social Impact Assessment Guidelines should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

Municipal Strategic Statement

This document provides a vision for the future land use within the City, and identifies areas for encouraging residential developments.

The Physical Framework Plan within the MSS shows broadly what we want to happen, where we want development and change to occur and how we want the City's broad structure to be in about 15 year's time - after the redevelopment of surplus Commonwealth and other industrial land, after the operation of the new planning scheme over that period, and following the development of new, and the upgrading of old major infrastructure. This plan is a broad statement of intent and direction.

Development Contribution Plans for Community Infrastructure (DCP's 1, 2 & 6)

DCP's requires that all each net new dwelling within the City of Maribyrnong contribute a levy of \$450 towards the required community infrastructure, as identified in each DCP. These plans have assessed the impact of various forms of development on the future demand for these services.

Principles for the Planning of New Residential Developments

The *Principles* Policy will guide future residential developments within the municipality to ensure the six ideals in residential developments are achieved: quality, affordability, equity, diversity, integration and sustainability.

The developer will be expected to meet all relevant *Principles* in relation to the proposed development.

Housing Strategy

The Housing Strategy recognises that housing is a basic and important need; that Council plays an important role in influencing housing outcomes in the City such as quality, diversity, mix, affordability and accessibility; and provides clear policy statements to guide future housing development.

In line with State Government policies, Council will continue to promote urban consolidation and housing diversity to ensure that the needs of a changing and diverse population are met.



Community Engagement Framework

The Community Engagement Framework outlines Council's commitment to actively engaging the Community in the decision-making activities of Council and in decisions that directly impact upon the community; on how they live, recreate, work, study, use services and do business. It describes how Council will ensure the active engagement of its community in information gathering and provision, and in community consultation and participation.

Guidelines for providing disabled access to new developments

Developments in the City of Maribyrnong will conform to the following guidelines, where appropriate to the nature of the development:

Disabled access: Guidelines for proposed new or refurbished buildings (2000). This document, which has been produced by the City of Maribyrnong, is applicable to the development of new or refurbished commercial, public and residential buildings, including nursing homes, children's homes, guest houses, hostels, hotels, motels, backpacker accommodation, boarding houses and residential parts of a school or a health care/hospital facility. This document is available from the City of Maribyrnong, and also includes contact details for consultancies which can provide further information.

- Australian Standards.
- Building Code of Australia
- VicRoads guidelines



References

1. Supportive Environments for Physical Activity: Guidelines for Local Government
Heart Foundation, 1999
2. The Guidelines: Social Planning Guidelines for Queensland Local government
Local Government Association of Queensland, 1996
3. Social Impact Assessment Policy for Development Applications
The City of Newcastle, 1999

