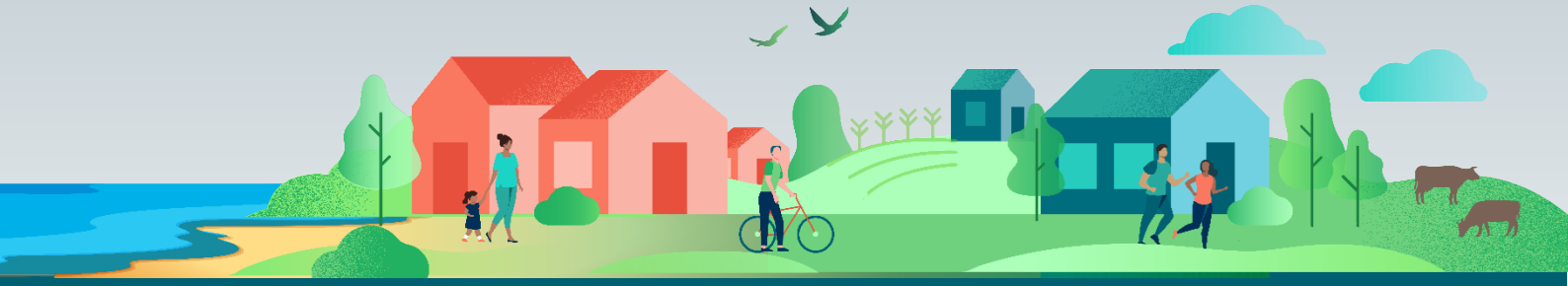

Engagement Summary Report

COMBINED URBAN FUTURES STRATEGY AND PLANNING SCHEME REVIEW

MARCH 2024

Surf COAST SHIRE

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1.0 Executive Summary

Surf Coast Shire council is currently undertaking two key placemaking for the future projects that will impact on land use planning for the Surf Coast Shire: The Urban Futures Strategy (UFS) and Planning Scheme Review (PSR).

The Urban Futures Strategy will guide urban growth and development in the Surf Coast Shire to meet the housing needs of the growing population. The Planning Scheme Review is a legislated 'health check' of the planning scheme that seeks to enhance the effectiveness of the scheme in achieving the objectives of planning in Victoria.

While the UFS and the PSR are two separate projects, there are shared themes that arise and an evident relationship between the projects. In light of this, Phase 1 of Community engagement for the UFS was integrated with the Planning Scheme Review (PSR) consultation to enable the community to view both key documents together. A range of engagement activities were undertaken to provide Surf Coast Shire residents and non-residents, community organisations, and other key stakeholders various opportunities to provide feedback on the projects.

A fairly strong level of participation was recorded through the completion of the online survey with 59 responses received, as well as 14 individual submissions. Community groups and organisations also showed strong interest in the projects through attendance at targeted community information sessions. Residents from Torquay-Jan Juc accounted for the highest proportion of survey participants and were well represented in the survey.

1.1 Background: Urban Futures Strategy

The Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) have provided Council with a grant from the Streamlining for Growth Program to assist in delivering an UFS for the whole of Surf Coast Shire.

The UFS project commenced in November 2022 following the gazettal of the Surf Coast Distinctive Areas and Landscapes Statement of Planning Policy. The purpose of the UFS is to provide an updated growth framework for the Surf Coast Shire to endeavour to meet the housing needs of the growing population.

A Background Context Report has been prepared by consultants Spatial Economics Pty Ltd. It represents one of the first significant outputs from the Urban Futures Strategy (UFS) project and will be used to inform and guide the development of the UFS. It has also been used to inform the community and other stakeholders about the scope and parameters for consideration in preparing the UFS.

To ensure that bushfire risk is properly considered as an input to the Urban Futures Strategy Council engaged consultant Kevin Hazell Bushfire Planning to prepare a municipal wide assessment of bushfire risks. Importantly, the Background Report references the findings of the Surf Coast Shire Strategic Bushfire Assessment, July 2023.

In considering the impacts of urban growth on both urban and rural landscapes, the Shire has been broken up into 8 districts, each incorporating a township). Information from the Background Report has been used to build a profile for each district. The Map below shows the Surf Coast Shire Districts and key urban areas. The District Profile document identifies urban growth-related opportunities and constraints, as well as key data on population, housing, the role of the township, community infrastructure services and utilities, environmental hazards and assets.

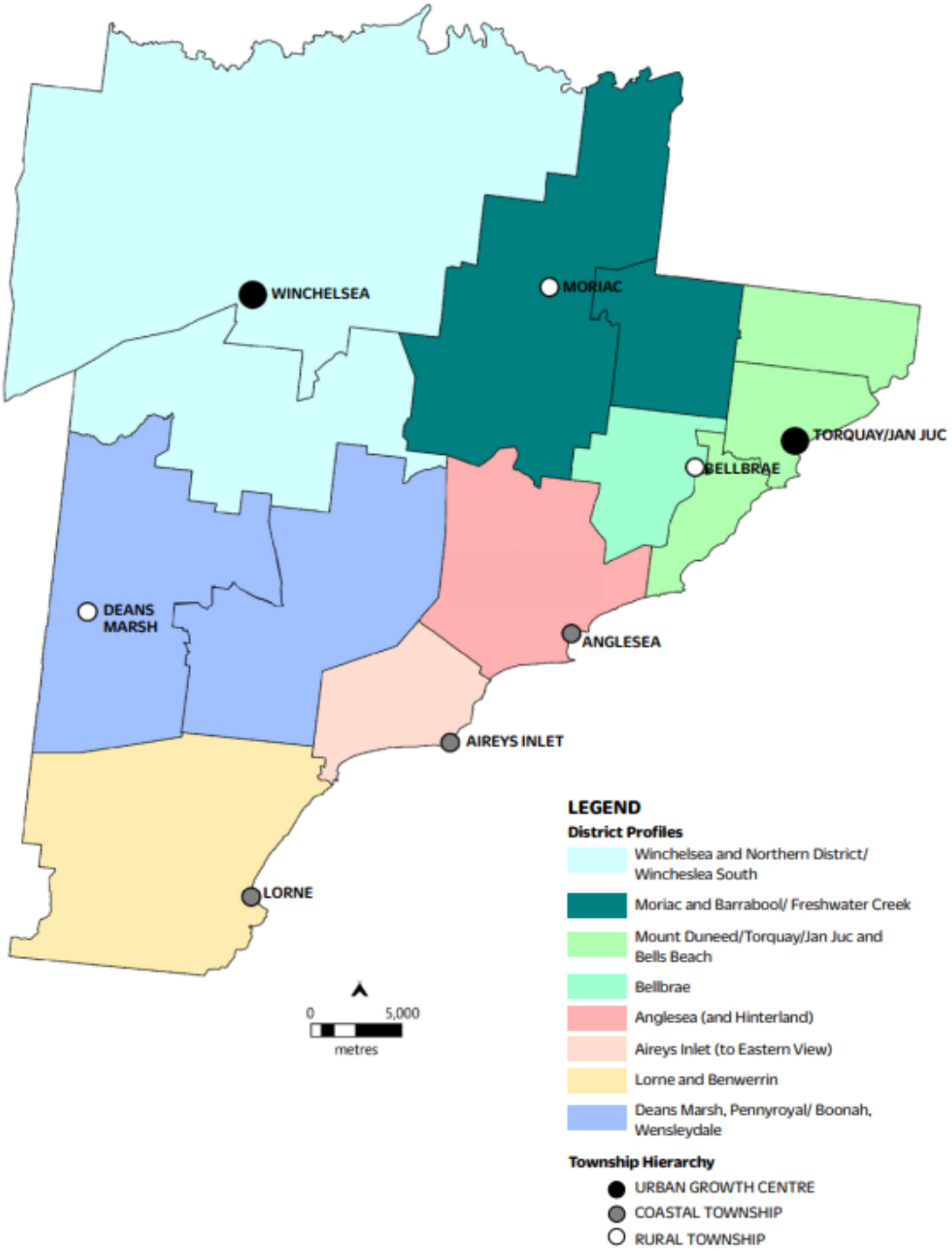
The first phase of community engagement utilised the Background Context Report, District Profiles and the Strategic Bushfire Assessment to introduce the UFS project to the broader community.

1.2 Background: Planning Scheme Review

Council has prepared a review of the Surf Coast Planning Scheme as required under Section 12A of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. A planning scheme review is essentially a 'health check' to ensure that a scheme is functioning in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Environment Act 1987. More specifically the purpose of this planning scheme review is to:

- Identify matters that require updating or correcting
- Integrate recently completed strategic work into the planning scheme
- Identify further strategic work that should be undertaken to ensure the planning scheme reflects community needs.

Surf Coast Shire Districts and Key Urban Centres



1.3 Urban Futures Strategy: summary of key findings

- There are strong community views regarding the need to provide additional housing for future permanent residents (specifically key and essential workers). Submissions support the development of a growth strategy that prioritises affordable, low-cost housing for those most in need.
- A diversity of housing was identified as a key requirement, including community and social housing, houses to suit an aging population, downsizers, and young families. Smaller housing types to provide more affordable options were recognised as an important need.
- The Torquay community have expressed discontent with the past planning of Torquay and problems associated with its recent rapid growth and development including car dependency, lack of public transport and lack of services and infrastructure. There is a prevailing view that the character, environment, identity, and amenity of the township has been negatively impacted in recent years due to its rapid overdevelopment and high levels of tourism.
- Concerns were expressed regarding new recent development in Winchelsea, which is considered unsustainable. A lack of services and other infrastructure to meet the needs of the increased population was also highlighted.
- The community has expressed a range of opinions about future growth. A minority of respondents recorded a complete anti-growth/development sentient in relation to Torquay (predominantly) and the coastal towns. Some expressed a view that Torquay has reached its maximum population and sustainable limit and therefore should not accommodate additional growth.
- There is strong community support for limiting the outward growth of the coastal towns and containing growth within the established settlement boundaries. Bushfire risk was identified as one of the most important issues for the coastal townships and a key factor in limiting their outward growth.
- Protection of the environment was identified as one of the highest priorities in terms of accommodating growth. There is strong opinion that there should be no compromise of native vegetation and wildlife habitats to accommodate future development, and areas of high ecological, cultural and environmental values should be preserved and enhanced at all costs
- In contrast, there is some opinion that providing additional suitable land supply in Torquay is urgent to meet the high demand, and to provide affordable and social housing opportunities, and that this land should be prioritised for permanent residents.
- There is a high level of support from the community for directing a higher share of growth away from the coast to the hinterland townships, with areas other than Torquay being opened up for housing, and the majority of future growth directed to hinterland towns such as Winchelsea and Moriac.
- The existing neighbourhood character of Winchelsea was identified as a feature of high regard for the Winchelsea community which should be preserved and enhanced as Winchelsea grows. It was identified that a key growth outcome for Winchelsea should be to achieve a diverse township to accommodate all types of residents and housing needs.

- Greenfield development is not supported by some community members and is considered an unsustainable option that does not adequately consider the impacts of climate change. Others consider that, where allowed in the future, it should be of the highest sustainability standards, protect the environment, and only occur in locations where active and public transport services are provided.
- Activity centres were identified as priority locations for providing significant opportunities for redevelopment/infill including shop top housing and a residential component to create mixed use developments. A number of locations in Torquay have been identified as potential opportunities.
- There is some acknowledgement that there are opportunities for infill development and making better use of larger lots, specifically in Torquay and Anglesea, and to make more efficient use of existing land in some areas. The potential for infill housing opportunities in Lorne was identified by some community members.
- There is a prevailing lack of support for increasing density through smaller lot sizes in new greenfield development. Whilst the need for smaller dwellings and lots is acknowledged and supported by some, caveats for acceptability were cited.
- There is also an opinion that there is and will continue to be, demand for larger lots and these should be retained and provided in new developments, particularly in Winchelsea.
- Community opinions regarding increasing density in appropriate locations within established townships were fairly evenly divided. Opinions range from the need for a dramatic increase in density in all existing urban areas, to a lack of support for higher densities and/or higher buildings (in coastal townships). The responses also captured locations that are considered appropriate for higher densities in both Torquay and Winchelsea.
- There is a strong sense that better use should be made of the existing underutilised housing stock in the coastal townships prior to increasing housing density and undertaking further subdivision and development. A number of incentives to increase supply through this method were suggested such as financial schemes.
- The provision of larger 'lifestyle blocks', LDRZ land and rural areas for future housing were also identified as a future demand by some community members.
- Some insight into what community members consider important outcomes for future growth other than issues previously raised was provided, including improved services and infrastructure to meet the needs of existing and future populations, improved public transport and active transport options, provision of parks and open spaces, access to local job opportunities.
- Key issues that should be considered when planning for growth and preparing the UFS have been identified.

1.4 Planning Scheme Review: summary of key findings

- The Further Strategic Work priorities set out in the Planning Scheme Review report were generally supported and highly rated.
- Settlement and growth: The submissions to the Planning Scheme Review indicated a high level of understanding among the Surf Coast community about the complex settlement issues that must be balanced. Concern about the prospect of growth in some districts was evident with neighbourhood character, capacity and environmental concerns being influencing factors.
- Environment: The natural environment and the need to protect native vegetation, the health of waterways and other natural assets featured strongly in submissions.
- Environmental risks: Increasing climate and biodiversity hazards were identified as very important, and the high bushfire risk in much of the municipality was widely acknowledged. Stormwater management and the potential impacts on receiving waters also featured strongly in submissions.
- Sustainability: Sustainability related matters were raised in some submissions which indicated support for the use of Environmentally Sustainable Design principles, the *Build Environment Sustainability Scorecard* (BESS), and adoption of the Sustainable Infrastructure Guidelines.
- Neighbourhood and landscape character: Comments about neighbourhood character featured strongly, with concern raised about recent developments and whether these were consistent with planning scheme provisions and local character. The Distinctive Areas and Landscapes (DAL) Statement of Planning Policy (SPP) also drew comment about the need to adhere to the SPP.
- Housing: Common themes raised in relation to housing included affordability, accommodation shortages and a lack of housing availability, and a need for diversity.
- Infrastructure: Car dependency and the lack of public transport featured in many submissions, as did recognition of the importance of infrastructure to serve diverse needs in existing communities as well as new growth areas.
- Other matters: Many submissions called for increased clarity in the Planning Scheme, including through the use of mandatory limits as opposed to discretionary ranges.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Overview

This report provides a summary of community engagement activities undertaken for both the Urban Futures Strategy and the Planning Scheme Review, as well as a summary of the key feedback. This relates to Phase 1 of community engagement for the UFS which provides an introduction to the project. Phase 2 of engagement will provide an opportunity for community members to provide feedback on the draft strategy.

The Urban Futures Strategy will guide urban growth in the Surf Coast Shire to meet the housing needs of the growing population. The Planning Scheme Review is a 'health check' of the planning scheme in order to enhance the effectiveness of the scheme in achieving the objectives of planning in Victoria.

The Urban Futures Strategy Background Context Report, September 2023, District Profile document and Surf Coast Shire Strategic Bushfire Assessment, July 2023 were endorsed for the purpose of public consultation at the October 2023 ordinary Council meeting. Similarly, the Planning Scheme Review Consultation Report was endorsed for the purposes of public consultation at the October 2023 Ordinary Council meeting. All reports were subsequently published on Council's website.

Community engagement on the UFS was integrated with the Planning Scheme Review consultation, and the reports for both projects were publicly released together to enable the community to view key documents simultaneously as the projects closely inter-relate with each other.

2.2 Methodology

Community engagement for both projects was conducted over an eight-week period (to reflect the resolution of Council) commencing on the 30 October 2023 and concluding on the 29 December 2023. Community engagement sessions occurred in November for both projects.

In relation to the UFS, engagement activities were designed to communicate the objectives of the strategy, and to explore the issues that will need to be addressed in determining the Shire's urban future. The project team sought feedback on the district profiles and provided an opportunity for the community to provide their initial attitudes to growth through a project survey.

A summary of key engagement activities undertaken is provided in the follow table:

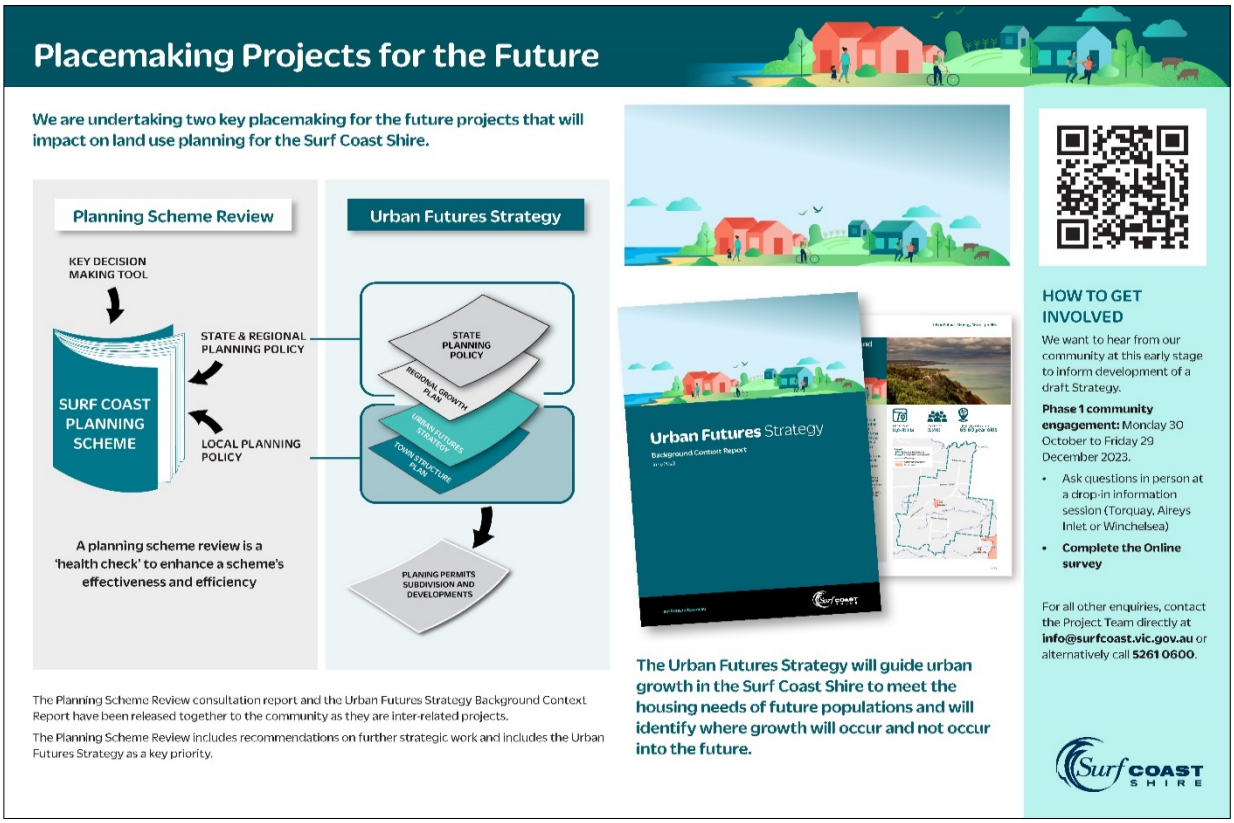
Engagement Activity	Overview	Relevant Dates & Locations	Attendance/Response
Council's Website	The UFS and PSR have been promoted on Council's website under the banner of Placemaking for the Future projects. Links to all of the background documents for the UFS and the PSR Consultation Report have been provided, including 2 short webinars explaining the Strategic Bushfire Assessment and Planning Scheme Review. The dedicated webpages for the projects are linked to each other and each one contains a 'Frequently Asked Questions' feature and a direct link to the project surveys and submission portal (for the PSR).	30 October - ongoing	
Newspaper Advertisements	The drop in sessions were promoted in advertisements published in the Winchelsea Star, Surf Coast Times and Lorne Independent. The advertisement also provided a link to the projects webpages.	Winchelsea Star – 31 October 2023 Surf Coast Times – 3 November 2023 Lorne Independent – 1 November 2023	
Online Survey and Submission Portal	A project survey was designed to capture feedback on both the Urban Futures Strategy and Planning Scheme Review with a link provided on Council's website. The Survey consisted of 16 questions; 7 of which related to the UFS and 2 to the PSR. An opportunity was also provided for a more detailed submission to be made in relation to the PSR. The survey was designed to complete all questions and fields	The community survey was open from 30 October 2023 to 29 December 2023.	A total of 59 responses to the survey received. Specific information on survey respondents is provided below. A total of 14 individual submissions were received. These include 4 individual submissions from community organisations in relation to both projects.

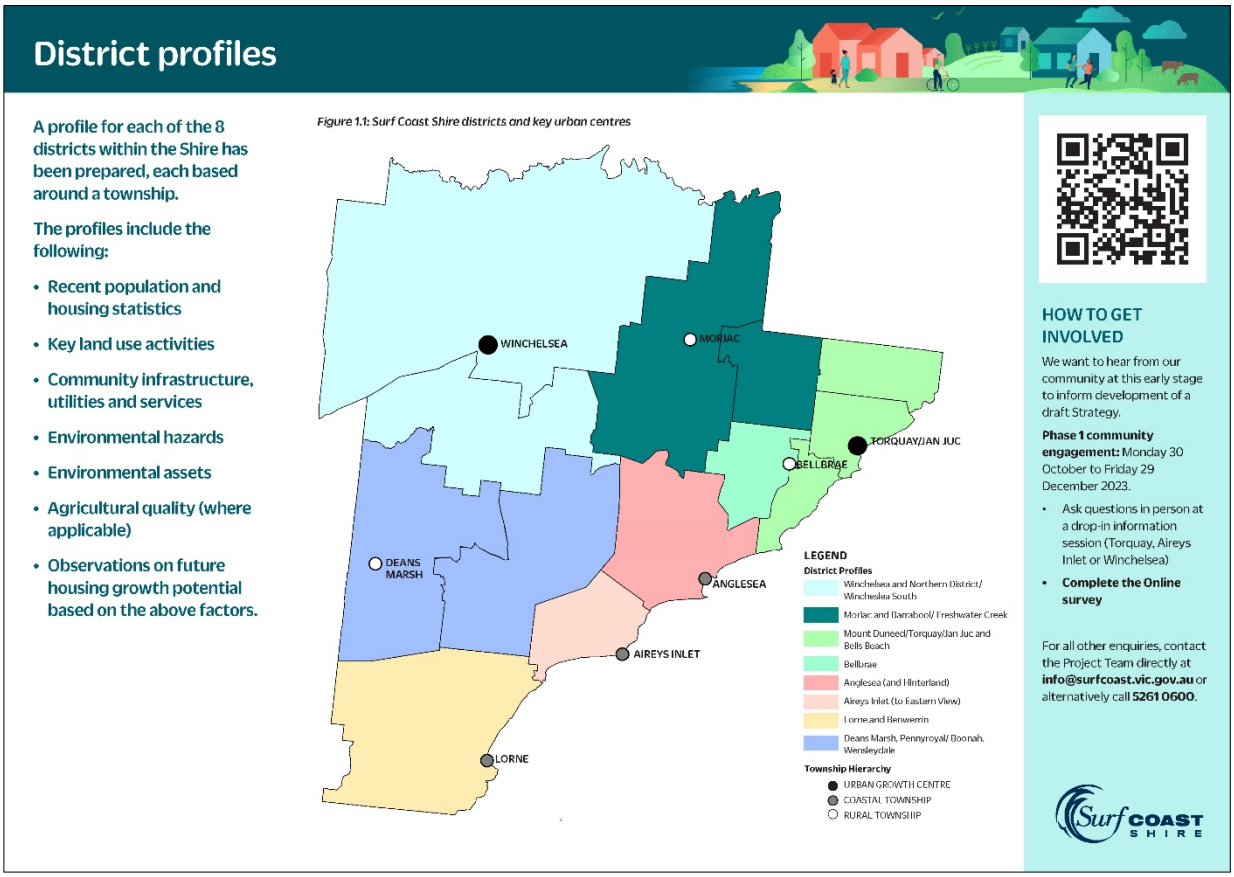
Engagement Activity	Overview	Relevant Dates & Locations	Attendance/Response
	within a 10 minute window. Participants were permitted to leave questions blank and still progress through the survey.		
Social Media Post	The projects were advertised on the Surf Coast Shire's Facebook page.	30 October 2023 plus other targeted ads.	
Community information drop in sessions	Three information drop in sessions (2 hours each) were held at Winchelsea, Torquay and Aireys Inlet. A series of nine storyboards were provided to provide information on both of the projects. Examples are included below. Council Officers were available to answer questions and assist members of the public to complete the survey if required. In relation to the UFS these provided the following: • Background information about the project and its objectives • A snapshot of recent growth • Current and recent policy changes • Understanding Bushfire Threat • Key messages from the Background Report relating to future options for growth • Information about the district profiles and individual township profiles. • Project phases and timelines In relation to the PSR these provided: • Overview of the PSR • Heath check results and opportunities for improvements • Further strategic work recommendations	Winchelsea, Winchelsea Shire hall – 18 November 2023 Torquay. Civic Centre Council Chamber 22 November 2023 Airey's Inlet Community Centre– 24 November 203	13 Attendees 7 Attendees 11 Attendees

Engagement Activity	Overview	Relevant Dates & Locations	Attendance/Response
	• Project Phase • Two short webinars were also available for viewing regarding the Strategic Bushfire Assessment and Planning Scheme Review. These sessions were designed to provide community members with key information about the inter- related projects. Attendees were encouraged to complete the online survey, as well as ask questions and provide feedback in the sessions A QR code was provided on each storyboard providing a link to the online survey. Laptops were available for attendees to complete the survey at the session with guidance from Council Officers if required.		
Targeted community information sessions	Five targeted engagement sessions were held across the Shire with community groups. Members from a range of community groups were invited to attend to provide a variety of opinions. Two sessions were held in the coastal townships (Aireys Inlet and Lorne), as well as in Torquay, and two sessions were held in the hinterland townships of Winchelsea and Moriac. This provided an opportunity to gain insight into the issues and opinions of community members in different locations across the Shire. The targeted sessions were aimed at providing a dedicated time for direct and uninterrupted communication between council officers and members of community groups with limited numbers to enable an open discussion. The groups provided an opportunity for community members to answer questions and raise issues or concerns with the projects.	Aireys Inlet – 8 November 2023 Lorne – 4 December 2023 Torquay – 20 November 2023 Winchelsea – 15 November 2023 Moriac – 23 Novemer2023	**Community Organisation Attendees:** AIDA, Anglesea Streetscape Group, Friends of Lorne Committee for Lorne 3228, Greater Torquay Alliance Growing Winchelsea Moriac Community Network

Engagement Activity	Overview	Relevant Dates & Locations	Attendance/Response
	The groups were also made aware of the community drop in sessions.		
External stakeholder briefing session	A presentation was provided by Council providing information on the projects including background information and objectives of the projects, key work that has been undertaken so far, key messages and findings, and next steps. A question-and-answer session was also included.	14 November 2023	19 representatives from 12 different organisations attended an online briefing session from the following external stakeholders: • City of Greater Geelong • Department of Transport and Planning • DEECA (Great Ocean Road Management Reform) • Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation • Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism • Barwon Water • Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority • Golden Plains Shire Council • Colac Otway Shire Council • CCMA • CFA • DEECA (Planning & Approvals Program Forests, Fire and Regions)
Internal stakeholder briefing.	A briefing session was provided both online and in person.	22 November 2023	17 attendees

Examples of Storyboards





Growth towns

Torquay - Jan Juc

Township role
Urban Growth Centre

Population*
22,998

Population change 2016 – 2021
+35.7%

10,449
Dwellings*

29.4%
Dwelling vacancy rate

Reticulated sewerage
Available

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE:

2 Primary Schools and **2** Catholic Primary Schools
1 Secondary School

Kindergartens

Health and Community Services (Planned Community Hospital)

Sports Ground and Recreation Reserves

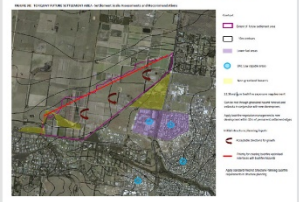
Parks and Open Spaces

1 emergency services (Police CFA, SES, Ambulance)

UTILITIES AND SERVICES:

Bus services to Geelong and along the Great Ocean Road to Apollo Bay.

Settlement Scale Bushfire Assessment



Torquay-Jan Juc is a popular destination for surfers, tourists, young families and retirees and is valued for its coastal lifestyle. Together the two towns provide a range of retail and entertainment services for the growing local and subregional population. The economy of Torquay-Jan Juc is largely based on tourism and the surfing industry. The Surf City tourist precinct is a primary destination for many visitors to Torquay.

Torquay-Jan Juc is one of two towns in Surf Coast Shire designated in both regional and local planning policy as locations for substantial urban growth. In the last two decades the population of Torquay-Jan Juc has grown by almost 15,000 residents with the construction of 5500 new homes.

Growth potential

Over the last five financial years Torquay-Jan Juc was the location of 83% of all residential subdivision activity across Surf Coast Shire, with residential lot construction averaging 310 lots per annum. Of this total, 77% was urban 'greenfield' (i.e. new residential subdivisions at normal suburban densities. Dwelling construction has been equally strong with an average annual growth of 385 dwellings (4.3%) per annum. With an undeveloped capacity of around 2,400 lots, Torquay-Jan Juc currently has the largest supply of undeveloped residential land across the Surf Coast Shire. Of this supply, two thirds (1,600 lots) are already zoned for residential development and the balance is identified in the planning scheme for future urban development.

In September 2019, the north-east portion of Surf Coast Shire, which includes Connewarre, Mt Duneed and Torquay-Jan Juc, was declared a Distinctive Area and Landscape (DAL). The declaration recognised the landscape and other significant attributes of the area and a guiding framework, in the form of a Statement of Planning Policy (SPP), was developed and approved by the State Government.

The DAL project implemented protected settlement boundaries around the declared area towns thereby limiting outward growth. The declaration also brought the Torquay-Jan Juc settlement boundary back to Duffields Road, which removed Spring Creek growth area, and set expectations in relation to neighbourhood character. All of these matters have implications for the future growth potential of Torquay-Jan Juc.

Although Torquay-Jan Juc is currently identified as being Surf Coast Shire's major focus for growth, its future capacity is declining.

Winchelsea

Township role
Urban Growth Centre

Population*
1586 in 2016 to 2032 in 2021

Population change 2016 – 2021
+28.12%

919
Dwellings*

7.6%
Dwelling vacancy rate

Reticulated sewerage
Available

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

1 Primary Schools

1 kindergarten

Health and Community Services (including hospital)

Sports Ground and Recreation Reserves

Parks and Open Spaces

Emergency services (Fire station, Ambulance station, Police, SES)

UTILITIES AND SERVICES:

Train services to Melbourne, Geelong and Warrnambool.

Coach services to Geelong and Melbourne

Winchelsea township is located on the Princes Highway, 37 kilometres west of the regional city of Geelong and 37 kilometres east of Colac. The township is situated on the banks of the Barwon River and surrounded by open farmland. The Barwon River flows through the town in a northern direction and provides a focal point for a range of recreational activities. The town is intersected by the Geelong to Warrnambool rail line and has an active railway station.

Winchelsea is one of only two urban centres in Surf Coast Shire identified for substantial growth in both the G21 Regional Growth Plan and Surf Coast Planning Scheme local policy. Over the past two decades the population of Winchelsea has grown by 1,200 people and 560 dwellings.

Winchelsea township has a country village character and a wealth of heritage buildings.

Winchelsea's heritage and environmental assets provide an opportunity for further tourism growth in the town.

Growth potential

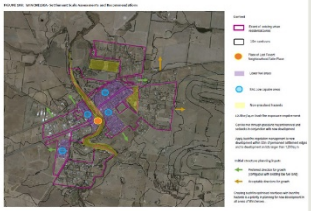
The G21 regional strategy contained an aspirational target for Winchelsea to grow to 10,000 people by 2050.

In recent years Winchelsea has seen steady growth with significant residential subdivision and housing construction activity.

Over the past five years an average of 42 residential lots were constructed per year.

Winchelsea has a significant supply of undeveloped residential land and is likely to continue to see strong housing growth.

Settlement Scale Bushfire Assessment



Planning Scheme Review

What is a Planning Scheme review?

A Planning Scheme Review (PSR) is a 'health check' of the planning scheme in order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the scheme in achieving the objectives of planning in Victoria.

This is required to be undertaken every 4 years.

A comprehensive review of the Surf Coast Planning Scheme has been undertaken and a consultation report prepared.

HEALTH CHECK RESULTS

- ✓ The planning scheme is robust
- ✓ The statutory planning processes are performing well

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT...

- ✓ A planning scheme amendment to fix us drafting errors, streamline the scheme and introduce recently adopted Council policy.
- ✓ Further strategic work to reflect changes in the municipality and update the scheme.
- ✓ Advocacy actions.

Has anything important been missed in the review?

FURTHER STRATEGIC WORK RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Plan for and improve resilience to climate change and other environmental risks.**
- **Finalise the Urban Futures Strategy to determine how growth will be accommodated in the municipality.**
- **Subject to the outcomes of the Urban Futures Strategy undertake further strategic work in Winchelsea and Torquay, consistent with the Statement of Planning Policy (DAL).**
- **Review and consider refinements to the planning controls for coastal townships from Anglesea to Lorne, to ensure the right balance between preserving significant landscapes, preferred character outcomes and managing bushfire risk.**
- **Undertake infrastructure planning in response to planned growth.**

These priorities set the strategic workplan for the next 5-10 years and the community are encouraged to provide feedback.

Have the 'next step' priorities been correctly identified and prioritised?

PROJECT PHASES

Preparing the draft
Feb - Oct 2023

- ✓ Checked the drafting of each policy
- ✓ Reviewed 5 years of planning decisions
- ✓ Reviewed recently adopted Council policies and strategies
- ✓ Checked progress since last review
- ✓ Considered recent consultation outcomes
- ✓ Reviewed VCAT and Planning Panel decisions
- ✓ Surveyed planners
- ✓ Talked with referral authorities
- ✓ Talked with Councillors and council staff

Community consultation
Nov - Dec 2023

You can read the Planning Scheme Review Consultation Report by Visiting councils webpage

Finalising and implementing
Early - mid 2024

- Consider Community feedback
- Finalise review
- Adoption by Council
- Implementation

WE ARE HERE

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

We want to hear from our community at this early stage to inform development of a draft Strategy.

Phase 1 community engagement: Monday 30 October to Friday 29 December 2023.

- Ask questions in person at a drop-in information session (Torquay, Aireys Inlet or Winchelsea)
- **Complete the Online survey**

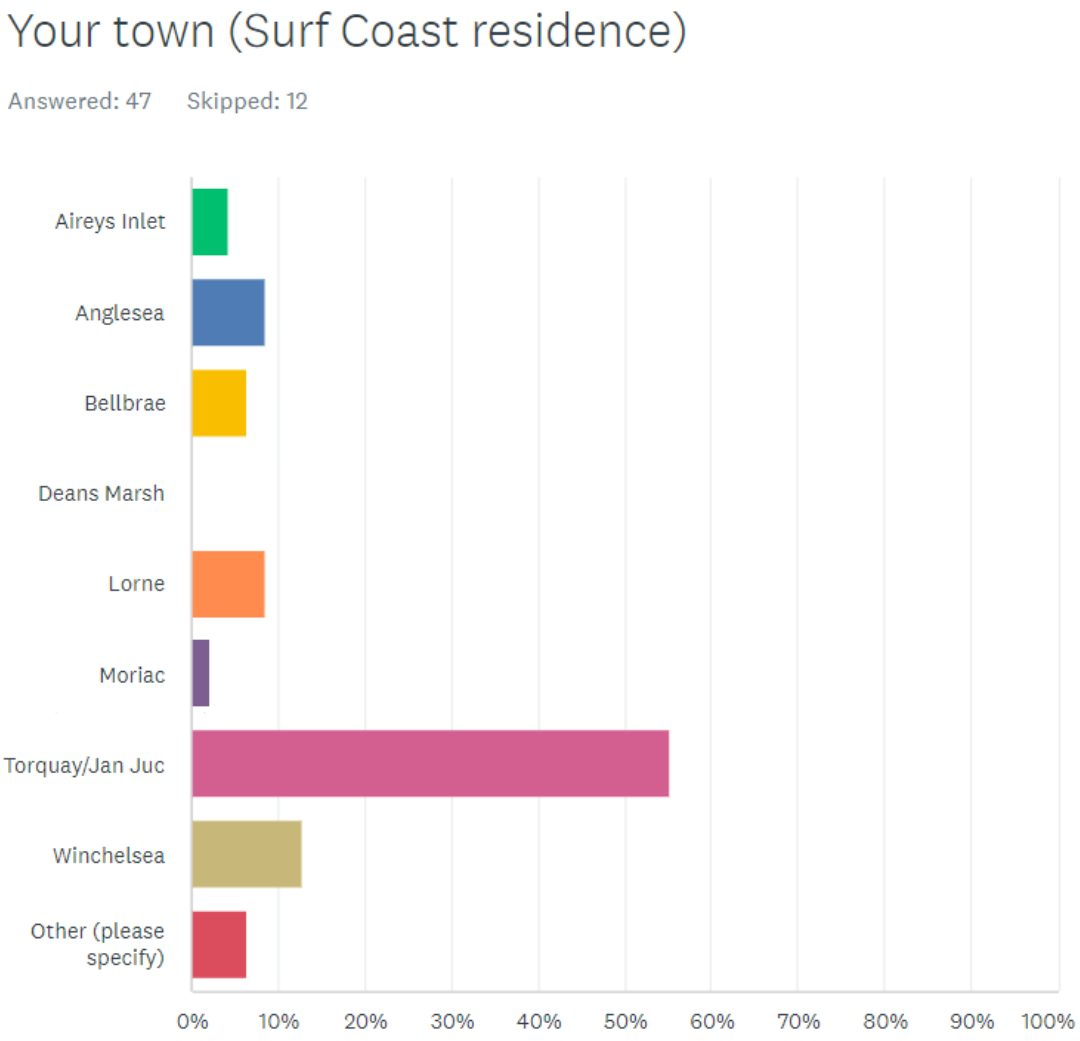
For all other enquiries, contact the Project Team directly at **info@surfcoast.vic.gov.au** or alternatively call **5261 0600**.

Surf COAST SHIRE

3.0 Profile of Survey Participants

Out of the 59 responses received, less than half of participants were willing to share full contact details. The majority of respondents (41 of the 47 people who responded to the question) indicated that they were full time residents of the Shire, with 4 participants living in the area part time. Residents from Torquay Jan Juc accounted for the highest proportion of survey participants accounting for 55% of respondents to this question (26 people) and were well represented in the survey. A much smaller number of people identified the other coastal townships of Lorne, Anglesea and Aireys Inlet as their place of residence (4, 4 and 2 persons respectively). The next most common place of residence was Winchelsea with 6 people identifying the township as their home. There were also 3 participants from Bellbrae.

3.1 Participant numbers by location



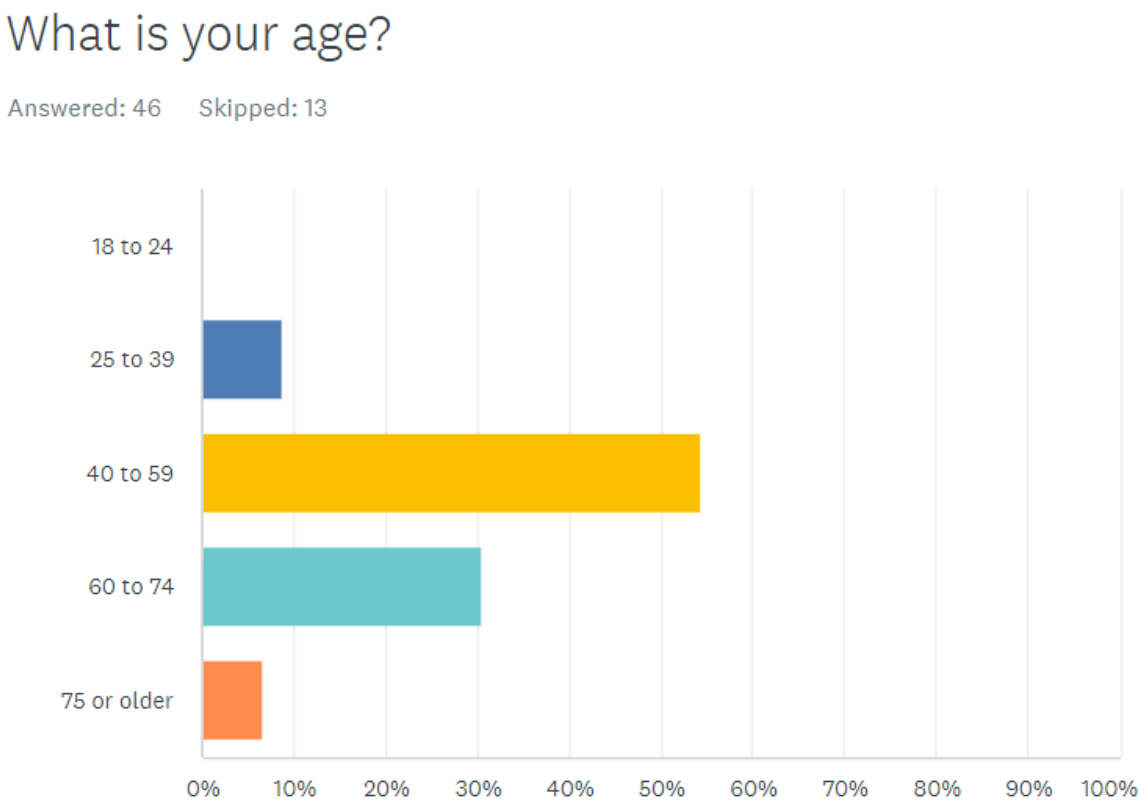
5 participants indicated they were intending to become a full-time resident in the future, but housing affordability, car dependency, lack of housing in the hinterland, access to work opportunities and lack of essential services (in Lorne) were cited as barriers.

3.2 Participant numbers by gender

55% of the 47 respondents to the question relating to gender identified as male and 38% identified as female.

3.3 Participants numbers by age

The largest cohort of survey participants came from the age bracket of 40-59 years, with the 60-74 age bracket also well represented (see figure below).



3.4 Participants numbers by identified district

All respondents identified a relevant district profile with by far the greatest number of people choosing Torquay/Jan Juc and Bells Beach/Mount Duneed (59% or 35 people), and then Winchelsea being the next most popular choice (7 people), and then Lorne and Benwerrin (6 people). 4 people each chose Aireys Inlet (to Eastern View) and Anglesea.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Aireys Inlet (to Eastern View)	6.78%	4
Anglesea (and Hinterland)	6.78%	4
Bellbrae	1.69%	1
Deans Marsh, Pennyroyal/ Boonah, Wensleydale	0.00%	0
Lorne and Benwerrin	10.17%	6
Moriac and Barrabool/ Freshwater Creek	3.39%	2
Torquay/Jan Juc and Bells Beach/ Mount Duneed	59.32%	35
Winchelsea and Northern Distict/Wincheslea South	11.86%	7
TOTAL		59

4.0 Key Findings

The varied engagement activities undertaken including the targeted community sessions, drop in sessions, individual submissions and online survey has enabled emerging key themes and issues to be identified.

It is recognised that whilst the views expressed by community organisations in submissions and at the targeted information sessions represent some opinions of local residents, there may well be differing individual sentiments that exist in the wider community.

4.1 Urban Futures Strategy

4.1.1. Opportunities and Constraints (District Profiles)

The survey asked participants to identify whether there are any other opportunities and constraints that had not been identified in the profiles, as well as an opportunity for other feedback (on the profiles). The majority of information provided in relation to this question about general and specific issues and opportunities relating to growth has been utilised in other sections of the report.

District /Town	Opportunities /constraints not currently identified
Torquay/Jan Juc and Bells Beach/ Mount Duneed	• Settlement Background paper and the Surf Coast Character Assessment produced as part of the DAL which identify many of the constraints. • Separate description of Jan Juc should be provided which has its own individual character. • Other beaches should be highlighted (not just Bells Beach) in profile to identify it as a coastal town rather than a suburb of Melbourne. • Local town/coastal character (no emphasis on this in recent study and DAL process). • Failure to include and recognise the coast as an environmental and landscape asset contributing to the uniqueness of the shire which underpins demand for housing and drives tourism economy. • Interrelationships between private and public land should be made clear. • Lack of information about coastal erosion and other climate-change affected coastal processes as an environmental risk. • Profile provides very limited information on which the community can provide informed feedback. • Environmental risks. • Deep Creek and Karaaf Wetlands not shown on Environmental Assets and Landscape Assets Map in DP.
Deans Marsh and Pennyroyal/ Boonah and Wensleydale	• No mention of Bambra or the community infrastructure including the community hall, playground and tennis courts.
Anglesea	• Alcoa land use opportunities for residential and commercial use.
Lorne	• Scant attention to problems in Lorne detailed, including the implications for a town with an ageing population and a high dwelling vacancy rate (affordability and essential workers).
Winchelsea and Northern District/Winchelsea South	• Dual carriageway through town biggest threat; noise, pollution and amenity impacts.

4.1.2. Future Housing Needs

The survey also provided an opportunity to identify future housing needs in the Shire's townships. The identification of specific housing needs primarily stems from the current issues experienced by communities in the municipality, particularly surrounding the underutilised existing housing stock (used as holiday homes or short-term rentals) and high dwelling vacancy rates in the coastal townships, and associated lack of affordable housing for permanent residents, including essential and key workers.

4.1.3. Housing Types and Diversity

The provision of housing for permanent residents, specifically key and essential workers (and particularly in Lorne and the coastal towns), and affordable, low cost housing in all townships was identified as a key priority by a large proportion of respondents. There is a general consensus that a growth strategy must prioritise those most in need of housing, as opposed to providing short term holiday accommodation and unaffordable options.

A diversity of housing was identified as a key requirement, including community and social housing, houses to suit an aging population/downsizers, and housing for young families. Smaller housing types to provide more affordable options were also recognised as an important need.

It was identified that a key growth outcome for Winchelsea should be to achieve a diverse township to accommodate all types of residents, housing needs and businesses. The importance of understanding housing needs and dwelling sizes people are comfortable with/require should determine what additional growth looks like. Specific housing projects such as the women's affordable housing project were cited as assisting in creating a sense of community.

4.2 Growth

4.2.1. Attitudes to Growth

Questions 4, 5 and 6 of the survey were designed to gain an insight into community member's attitudes towards where, and in what form urban growth should be accommodated. The questions indicated different options for accommodating future growth and provided a sliding scale for participants to indicate their support from 1 (no support) to 10 (strong support). The open field questions gave valuable insight into opinions regarding previous growth and development, as well as future growth. These are discussed below.

4.2.2. Attitudes to Recent growth

There is a prevailing view from residents in Torquay that the character, environment, identity and amenity of the township has been severely impacted, particularly in recent years, due to its rapid growth and overdevelopment, and high levels of tourism. There is general discontent with the past planning of Torquay and problems associated with recent growth and development were noted including:

- overpopulation
- lack of public transport
- car dependency and parking issues
- lack of services and infrastructure to service the population

- lack of investment in streetscapes
- a negative impact on the coastal environment
- health and wellbeing issues
- small lots with large houses overshadowing outdoor space (such as Torquay North).
- Inefficient energy features on new houses such as black roofs and lack of garden/permeable areas.

"Torquay development is out of control. Big houses on tiny lots needs to stop."

Failure to recognise community support for low levels of development in past 20 years (first captured in the *Sustainable Futures Plan –Torquay-Jan Juc 2040* and other subsequent strategies) was cited. Some respondents indicated that a low growth scenario has been supported by community members in the past and is the preferred community option.

There are similar opinions regarding recent development in Winchelsea, with sprawling car-dependent suburbs considered unsustainable with no regard to the climate emergency. A lack of retail and medical services and other infrastructure to meet the needs of the increased population was also noted. A lack of industrial land with highway exposure, as well as light industrial opportunities to enable living and working in the same town was also mentioned.

There is also an opinion that housing need should be considered differently to housing demand, with recent demand for houses larger than reasonable household needs a key issue (small households choosing to live in large houses).

4.2.3. Attitudes to Future Growth

The community expressed a range of opinions about future growth.

> *"It is not just where we build that matters, but importantly what we build, how we build and who we are building for."*

4.2.3.1 Opposition to Future Growth of Coastal Towns

A small number of respondents recorded a complete anti-growth/development sentiment in relation to Torquay (predominantly) and the coastal towns; these towns were considered overpopulated and under resourced, and locations where no further development or housing should be allowed. Some submitters consider that Torquay has reached its maximum population and sustainable limit and cannot accommodate additional growth. There was some opinion that the township should not continue to provide the majority of future housing for the Shire.

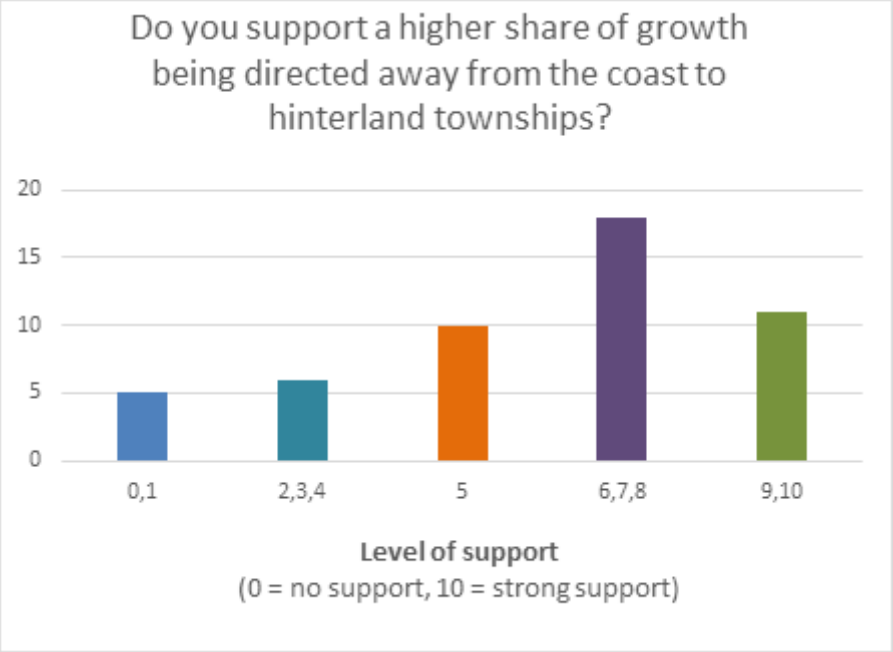
> *"Torquay's character and amenity has been dramatically eroded, particularly over the last 10-15 years because of the rapid overdevelopment. Torquay /Jan Juc should not have to continue to provide the majority of housing - hopefully the implementation of the SPP will go a long way to ensure this."*

Many submitters referenced the Distinctive Areas and Landscape SPP (DALSPP) and the importance of adhering to this policy in planning for future growth (and using it to determine future growth), and the importance of retaining and protecting the "green break" between the urban area of Geelong and Torquay/Jan Juc which should be a key priority.

Specifically, the UFS should ensure that the residential development of land north of Grossmans Road and Messmate Road (known as the Messmate Road Growth Area) is restricted so that no further compromise of the "green break" occurs. The development of Spring Creek and the Flower Farm land was not supported.

There is strong community support for limiting the outward growth of the coastal towns and containing growth within the established settlement boundaries. Some community members cited alternatives to further subdivision and development to meet housing needs (discussed below) in order to protect the environment and character of the towns.

Question 6 sought to understand respondents support or otherwise for directing growth away from the coast to the hinterland townships.



The average response was 6.3 with 28 people having a high level of support (choosing 6 or above), 11 of which choosing 9 or10 (the highest level of support) and only 4 people having a very low level of support and choosing 1 or below. This reflects the apparent lack of support for further growth of Torquay and the coastal towns that was reflected in the commentary.

A future growth strategy capped at 40,000 was cited by one respondent as appropriate which would also support community values and growth expectations.

4.2.3.2 Bushfire

Bushfire risk was identified as one of the most important issues for the coastal townships and a key factor in limiting the outward growth of the towns. A need to ensure all future planning related decisions look at bushfire prevention at a landscape level was identified.

The increasing risk of fire in the Torquay-Jan Juc area reinforces the need to limit growth.

Well managed farmland was identified as a potential protective element to towns and settlements.

4.2.3.3. Protection of the Environment

Protection of the environment (including the health of the waterways) and biodiversity was identified in multiple submissions as one of the highest priorities in terms of accommodating growth as opposed to economic and growth objectives. There is strong opinion that there should be no compromise of native vegetation and wildlife habitats to accommodate future development, and areas of high ecological, cultural, and environmental values should be preserved and enhanced at all costs.

The tree canopy and landscape setting of Lorne were commonly cited by residents as a key priority to maintain in respect of any future growth.

The possibility of multi-faceted climate change events occurring in the coastal areas was highlighted.

4.2.4. Strategic Locations for Growth

In contrast, there is some opinion that the rezoning of suitable land for housing is urgent to enable supply to meet the high demand, and to provide affordable and suitable social housing opportunities in Torquay, and that this land should be prioritised for permanent residents rather than visitors.

It was submitted that the provision of land supply should not be at the expense of the existing town character in Torquay.

This response to question 6 (above) reflects commentary in the survey responses that areas other than Torquay should be opened up for housing and that the majority of future growth should be directed away from Torquay and the coast to hinterland towns such as Winchelsea and Moriac (both of which were identified as suitable for growth due to the existence of a trainline). Indeed, one submitter identified Winchelsea as the Shire's best opportunity to provide land for urban growth, providing there is a long-term vision that considers optimal size and carrying capacity. Deans Marsh was also identified as a possible location for growth.

The existing neighbourhood character of Winchelsea was identified as a feature of high regard for the Winchelsea community which should be preserved and enhanced as Winchelsea grows. The character is considered to promote the 'feeling' of the town and this should be identified. It was highlighted that it is important for the community to have the opportunity to have their say on the character of Winchelsea to inform future growth and development.

4.2.5. Options to Accommodate Growth

4.2.5.1. Greenfield versus infill

Greenfield development (and its association with poorly planned 'sprawling suburbs') is not supported in any form by a number of respondents, and is considered an unsustainable option that does not does account of the impacts of climate change.

Reference was made to the DALSPP and its direction to accommodate further residential development in activity centres, through infill in strategic areas and with limited expansion of greenfield sites, which was considered by some respondents as an appropriate response.

There is opinion that any future greenfield development in the Shire must be of the highest sustainability standards, must protect the environment, and should only occur in locations where active and public transport services are provided at the outset.

The land at Briody Drive West (Torquay) was identified as an area which should set an example of the highest level of sustainability in a greenfield development, and future development should protect both Deep Creek and Spring Creek, as well as tree cover and wildlife.

There was some support for development in the Coombes Road/Messmate Road area (Torquay), and there is opinion that the land at Messmate Road identified for further growth should only be developed for residential purposes if part of a transit corridor, and must retain a wide wildlife corridor to Grasstree Park. The importance of a Precinct Structure Plan to guide development was raised.

There was commentary around any further development of Torquay North (the Stretton Park Estate) needing to protect the Karaaf Wetlands and consider opportunities for essential workers (along with the nearby hospital site), as well as access to public and active transport.

Land at 140 Duffields Road, Torquay (in the current UGZ) was identified as an opportunity to provide community facilities (including a school), in conjunction with tourism related development and sustainable residential development.

Community members from Winchelsea identified the UFS as an opportunity to review policy that currently does not direct development to the West of Winchelsea (which would provide additional greenfield land), and identified the current opportunity to rezone and develop a large area of land on both sides of Batson Street that is currently within the settlement boundary.

Activity centres were identified as priority locations for providing significant opportunities for redevelopment/infill including shop top housing and a residential component to create mixed use developments that are more affordable. A common response was that Infill development should be prioritised above shops and offices.

Torquay North (Dunes Village) was one centre identified as having potential for expansion which should include a residential component, as well as the Surf City and Baines Crescent precincts. Opportunities to provide housing above car parks was also cited, as well as along the active transport corridor of the Surf Coast Highway/Geelong Road in locations close to bus stops. One community member expressed that the development of the horse paddock site should have included mixed-use development.

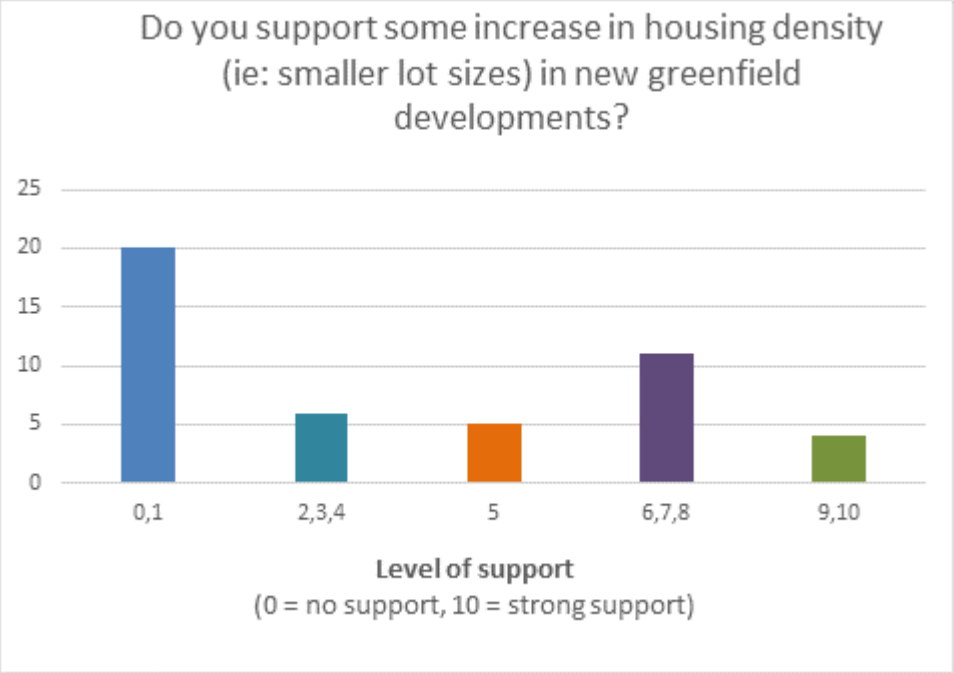
There is some acknowledgement that land in Old Torquay is inefficiently used and offers opportunities for residential development within close proximity to essential services. However, infill development should be managed sensitively and look to meet housing needs by minimising the increase in footprint, as well as any impact on neighbouring properties and neighourhood character. The land at 2 Pimelea Way was identified as a potential opportunity to incorporate existing community services and community housing.

The potential for infill housing opportunities in Lorne was identified including the sale of Council owned land parcels to fund community housing development, consideration of the slaughterhouse paddock and former quarry site and the relocation of the kinder to the school precinct.

The train station environs in Moriac was identified as an opportunity for development.

4.2.5.2. Higher Density

Question 4 sought to explore the participant's level of support for an increase in housing density (such as smaller lots) in new greenfield development. A sliding scale from 1(no support) to 10 (strong support) was provided.



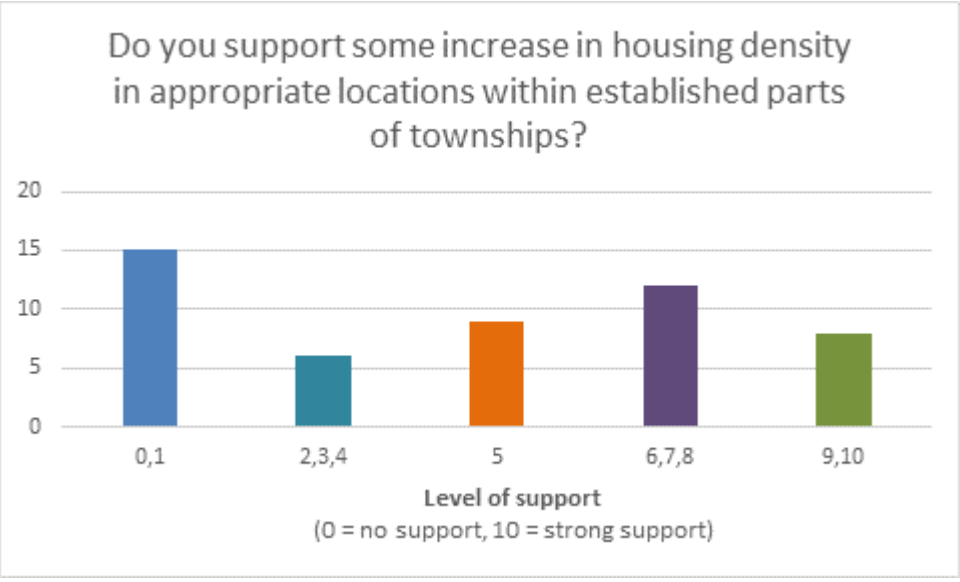
The average response for increasing density through smaller lot sizes in new greenfield development was 3.9, thus indicating a lack of support. 19 responses had a very low level of support (choosing 1 or under)and only 3 people had a very strong level of support (choosing 9 or over). It is acknowledged that to some extent the answer choices are likely to be influenced by participants overall opinion of greenfield development.

Whilst the need for smaller dwellings and lots was acknowledged and supported by some (as well as town houses and terraces), caveats for acceptability were cited from survey participants including the importance of providing public open space within developments, community gardens, high environmental standards, integration with public and active transport, requiring small lots to only accommodate small houses, and requiring adequate vegetation on lots. Large houses on small lots tightly packed together (with no tree or vegetation coverage) are identified as creating urban heat sinks. There is opinion that smaller lot sizes are not the answer to accommodate additional growth and that to mitigate the impacts of climate change, large lots with adequate vegetation are needed to reduce greenhouse emissions.

There is also an opinion that there is, and will continue to be demand for larger lots and these should be retained and provided in new developments, particularly in Winchelsea.

Specific opportunities identified for the provision of larger lots in Torquay include the remaining land within the protected settlement boundary in the Karaaf wetlands catchment. It was recognised that an Integrated Water Management Plan will be required for the Messmate Road Growth Area (which may have implications for growth/lot capacity).

Questions 5 sought to explore opinion regarding an increase in housing density in appropriate locations within established townships. A sliding scale from 1(no support) to 10 (strong support) was again provided.



The average response for increasing density in appropriate locations within established townships was 5 indicating mixed opinions between community members. However, 14 people indicated a very low level of support choosing 1 or below compared to 8 respondents choosing 9 or above indicating a very high level of support.

The open field questions support this divided opinion, with one response indicating that a dramatic increase in density is needed in all existing urban areas (especially coastal towns) and other responses indicating a lack of support for higher densities and/or higher buildings in coastal townships. In respect of the coastal townships there is a strong sense that better use should be made of the existing underutilised housing stock prior to increasing housing density. Alternative solutions that were cited to achieve this are discussed below.

> "*I believe that we need to restrict the building of both high density and high rise buildings. In reality, the region is already growing beyond capacity and needs more core services to support the existing footprint of people and transport requirements.*"
>
> *"The Torquay/Jan Juc district is unaffordable, car-dependent, high per-capita CO2 emitting, very low density and has low public investment in its streetscapes. These things are all connected. Urban density should be dramatically increased. Stop (literally) fearing shadows.*"

The responses also captured locations that are considered appropriate for higher densities by participants including:

Torquay

- Along the Surf Coast Highway

- Torquay Heights.
- Centred around Gilbert Street and Bell Street Activity Centre (with opportunities in the town centre for housing above shops and offices and subdivision of existing lots)

Winchelsea

- Land that is in close proximity to the shopping area and other key services.
- Train Station environs.

The provision of open space in development is considered a key element of 'density done well', as well as providing higher buildings that are appealing to the community.

It was noted by some community members that density needs to be determined through carrying capacity studies which would identify the appropriate level of growth for Surf Coast Shire townships.

Increasing density through the reduction of existing minimum lot sizes in Aireys Inlet and Lorne was not supported by some respondents, although was cited as an opportunity in Lorne by others.

The opportunities to make better use of larger lots (some with restrictive covenants) in Anglesea and Torquay were identified.

4.2.6. Alternative Solutions

4.2.6.1. Second Dwelling and THOW Opportunities

Opportunities to make better use of larger lots to accommodate multiple houses or second dwellings (without subdivision) particularly in Old Torquay and other estates in Torquay and Jan Juc, as well as Lorne, were raised. The use of tiny houses on wheels (THOW) and modular homes to help with housing demand was also highlighted.

4.2.6.2. Low Density Residential Zone and Rural Land

The provision of larger 'lifestyle blocks', Low Density Residential Zone (LDRZ) land and rural areas for future housing were also identified as a demand by some survey participants, with a view that rural land should be assessed as part of the strategy.

70 hectares of flat land on the southern side of Grossman's Road (Torquay) was identified as a potential opportunity for LDRZ land due to it being unproductive. It was cited as an ideal opportunity to provide Torquay with future supply of LDRZ land whilst having no impact on Great Ocean Road viewsheds and State Significant Landscapes. There is opinion that this type of development has more appeal than the denser development such as Torquay North and that to reasonably achieve growth to the numbers predicted this land is required.

There is opinion that unproductive land should be utilised instead of productive land.

4.2.6.3. Incentives to increase Land Supply

Some respondents cited alternative solutions to further development and subdivision, that could go some way to assisting in meeting future housing needs and particularly in the provision of affordable housing for essential workers. This centred around making better use of existing under-utilised housing stock and land and providing financial incentives. These include:

- Stamp duty cuts to enable downsizing.
- Financial schemes (Shared equity and housing co-operatives) to enabling essential workers to buy properties

- Sale of council land to start a not-for-profit entity
- Encouraging short term rentals to long term rentals
- Use of land leased to Mantra in Lorne for aged persons /down sizers and for key/essential workers.

"*We don't have a shortage of houses in Torquay. We have a shortage of homes.*"

It is generally recognised by the community that more creative solutions are needed with support from the State government.

4.2.7. Key Principles and Outcomes for Future Growth

The open field questions also gave some insight into what community members consider important outcomes for future growth (other than those discussed above):

- Improved services and infrastructure to meet the needs of existing and future populations in townships (to include schools, and retail precinct in Winchelsea).
- Identification of a definite school site in Winchelsea
- Protection of services and public spaces in Aireys Inlet.
- Provision of parks and open spaces, and wide treed streets within new developments (specifically mentioned for Winchelsea).
- Improved transport options (roads and train services) particularly in Winchelsea and Torquay.
- Improved public transport links (fast, frequent and reliable services) between surf coast towns and Geelong (job opportunities), as well as safe, off-road cycling route from Torquay to Geelong.
- Provision of train services to Moriac and re-instatement of station.
- Walking and cycling trails to provide access to services including shopping, schools, sporting facilities etc. (specifically mentioned for Winchelsea).
- Provision of local job opportunities (in Winchelsea specifically through provision of light industry and opportunities for dual purpose developments to live and work in same place).
- Extension of industrial estate to ridgeline (in Messmate Road).
- Stronger controls for the types and design of houses.
- Provision of high quality, sustainable housing.
- Incorporation of ESD principles with new development to enable capture of solar and rainwater, and re-use of wastewater.
- Overhead power lines underground.

'"*We need to get clever, creative and future-thinking when it comes to residential development.*"

4.3 Other Matters

4.3.1. Community Engagement

The importance of ongoing engagement with the community to identify their needs during the planning process was highlighted; ensuring there is a broad demographic captured and engaging broadly and robustly.

It was indicated that the community want more empowerment in the planning and development process and that more meaningful and palatable communication and engagement from the Shire is required. Face to face interactions are considered important, as well as addressing and engaging with different demographics, businesses and organisations. An opportunity to increase communication regarding the drop-in sessions in November 2023 was highlighted.

Lack of direct and meaningful consultation with the community regarding past long term strategic planning decisions was cited.

4.3.2. Omissions from Background Report/ UFS Development

The survey responses identified key considerations that community members consider important when planning for growth and preparing the UFS. There was also some concerns raised with the work undertaken so far and that some considerations have been omitted. These include:

- Lack of linkages and references between the profiles and background report.
- Currently minimal consideration to the impact of growth on the environment and the documents do not give appropriate consideration to what these environmental risks are.
- Incorrect references to sea level rise estimations in the documents as 0.8m by 2100 (latest IPCC reports estimates 1.2m). Error bands should be taken into account as sea level rise will provide many infrastructure challenges.
- Role of Regional Growth Plan.
- Lack of carrying capacity studies of public land in the entire Surf Coast Shire particularly in coastal areas. Gap in data on the impact of population growth which challenges integrity of UFS.
- Population target should be set by the Shire rather than state government.
- Lack of study into impact of overdevelopment on the community, environment and economy of Torquay and the Surf Coast as part of the project.
- Lack of focus on beaches and coastline in background report; strategy should take this context into account.
- UFS should recognise and refer to the Marine and Coastal Act 2018 (and Marine and Coastal Policy 2020 which implements the Act). This should be the foundation of for all decision making in the coastal towns.
- All relevant parts of Torquay-Jan Juc 2040 Plan relating to population should be retained (which is not superseded by the SPP which has no population targets).
- Future population should not be determined by past growth rate.
- Undertake investigations to determine the impacts of different future growth scenarios to community values.

- Engagement with key agencies such as Barwon Water and CCMA in planning for growth.
- Consideration of collective impact of developments and overall catchment management. Impact of stormwater runoff on Karaaf wetlands catchment.
- Provision of an adequate supply of drinking water as sources of environmental water reduce and population grows (lack of discussion in current documents).
- Work with private landowners to identify best areas for growth.
- Determine how the VIF2023 population projections will be considered alongside other forecasts.
- The Community Wealth and Wellbeing Analysis should be recognised as important in progressing discussion around sustainable growth opportunities.
- Contention with the name of the Urban Futures Strategy and specifically the reference to 'urban'.
- Concerns about language in survey; planning for growth rather than protecting the environment and meeting the needs of the community.
- Cultural Values Assessment Timing.

5.0 Key findings: Planning Scheme Review

5.1 Survey Responses

5.1.1. The importance of Recommendations

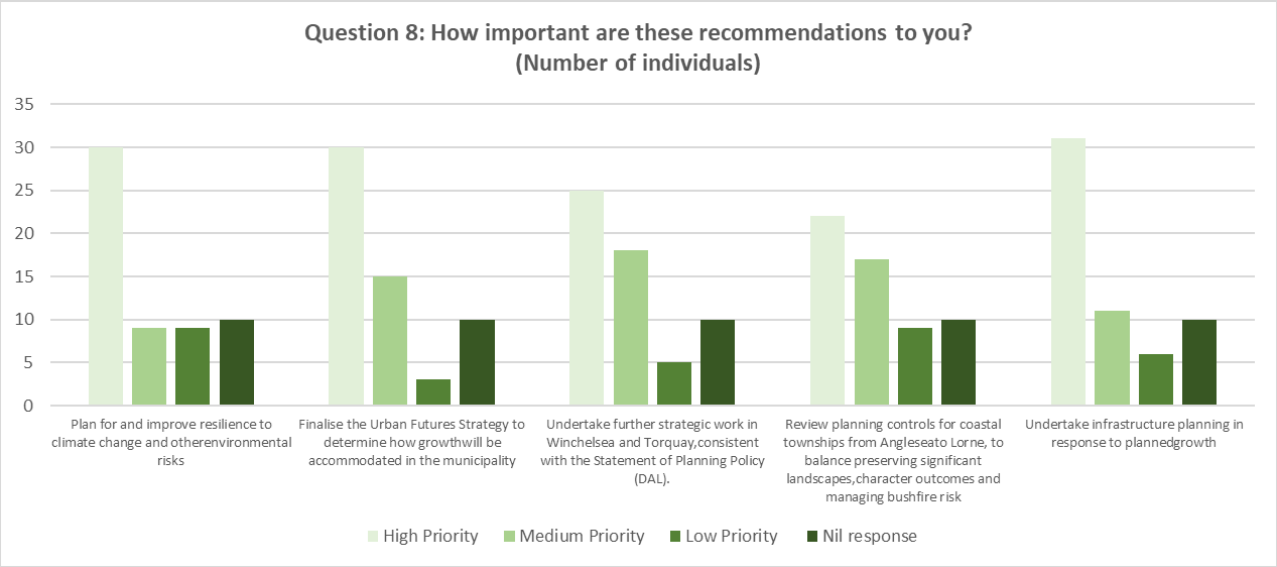
Tables 1 and 2 below set out the key points taken from the survey responses received for Questions 8 and 9 of the survey.

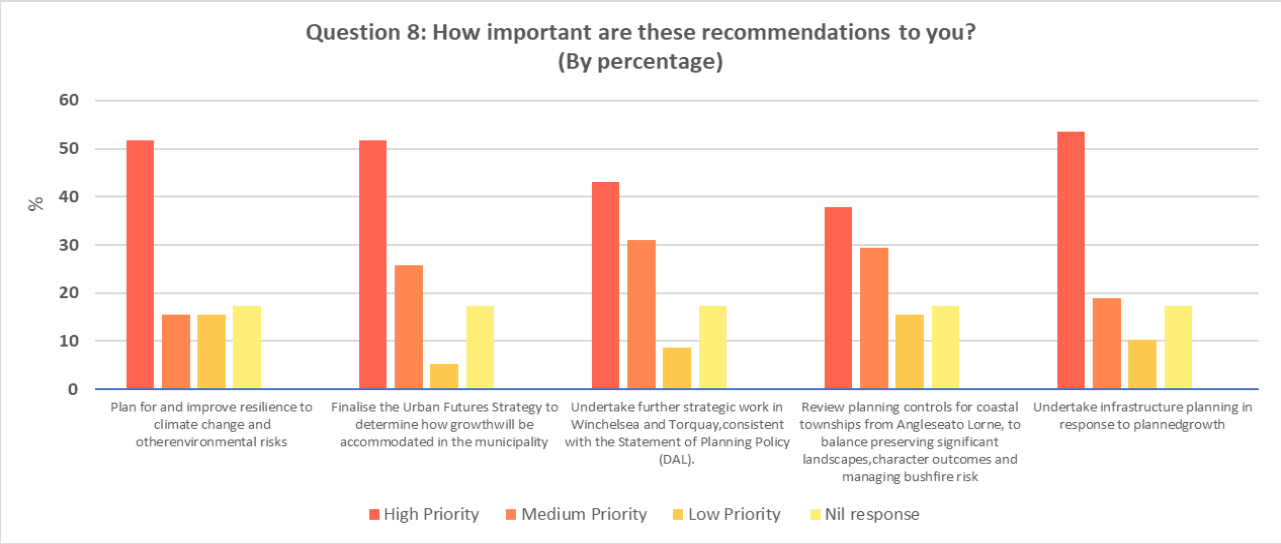
Question 8 of the survey asked, "how important are these (below) recommendations to you?"

These recommendations were:

Plan for and improve resilience to climate change and other environmental risks.
Finalise the Urban Futures Strategy to determine how growth will be accommodated in the municipality.
Undertake further strategic work in Winchelsea and Torquay, consistent with the Statement of Planning Policy (DAL).
Review planning controls for coastal townships from Anglesea to Lorne, to balance preserving significant landscapes, character outcomes and managing bushfire risk.
Undertake infrastructure planning in response to planned growth.

Participants chose either High Priority, Medium Priority or Low Priority as measures to rate the above priority items. The ratings are represented in the graphs below.





5.1.2 Comments

The next survey question, also part of survey question number 8 was, "Do you have any comments about the planning scheme review recommendations?"

Table 1 below shows the key points drawn from participant responses, grouped according to District or Town.

Table 1: Key points by township about planning scheme review recommendations

District or Town	Do you have any comments about the (PSR) recommendations?"
Torquay/Jan Juc and Bells Beach/ Mount Duneed	▪ The planning scheme should be clear, and outcomes should be monitored. ▪ The Distinctive Areas and Landscapes Statement of Planning Policy should be adhered to. ▪ The environment and community values are of high importance (multiple submissions). ▪ Housing affordability should be of primary importance (multiple submissions). ▪ There is a need for more social housing. ▪ Make more land in Torquay-Jan Juc available for housing to help drive affordability (multiple submissions). ▪ Growth estimates need to be realistic. ▪ No more growth in Torquay-Jan Juc (multiple submissions). ▪ Open up other areas of the municipality to growth. ▪ Infrastructure to support existing areas, in addition to Growth Areas, is important (multiple submissions). ▪ The road network in Torquay needs improvement. ▪ The lack of good public transport is an issue. ▪ Planning for the transport corridor should be brought forward.
Winchelsea and Northern District/Winchelsea South	▪ There should be a greater emphasis on the industrial centre (of Winchelsea) and the growth of light industry.
Lorne and Benwerrin	▪ The liveability of towns is of primary importance. ▪ Growth should not be at the expense of the environment and the wellbeing of people. ▪ There should be a greater focus on improving the occupation of existing dwellings (multiple submissions). ▪ Further strategic work to balance landscape, character and bushfire risk should be thorough and evidence based.
Aireys Inlet (to Eastern View)	▪ No more growth. ▪ There should be a focus on making the town sustainable without relying on growth.

District or Town	Do you have any comments about the (PSR) recommendations?"
Anglesea (and Hinterland)	Nil comments
Bellbrae	Nil comments
Moriac and Barrabool/ Freshwater Creek	Nil comments

5.1.3. Additional Priorities

Question 9 asked, "are there any additional priorities you think need to be added?"

Table 2 below shows the key points drawn from participant responses, grouped according to District or Town.

Table 2: Key points by townships about priorities

District /Town	Are there any additional priorities you think need to be added?

Torquay/Jan Juc and Bells Beach/ Mount Duneed	▪ Include planning controls to help reduce car dependency across the municipality.
	▪ Improve facilities that support elderly residents.
	▪ More commercial shopping should be made available in Torquay North.
	▪ Stronger protections for native vegetation and wildlife habitat are needed.
	▪ Native vegetation should not be cleared to make way for housing.
	▪ Future growth. Consider:
	  ▪ Impacts of future growth on community values.
	  ▪ Impacts on public land from residents and visitors.
	  ▪ Carrying capacity of the foreshore and coast.
	▪ No more growth.
	▪ Need more infrastructure investment from Federal and State governments.
	▪ There is a need to regulate the short-term rental market.

Winchelsea and Northern District/Winchelsea South	▪ The town should cater for diverse needs, including across different life stages, household types, all abilities and the like. ▪ The planning scheme should not prevent future industrial or commercial development on the highway, west of Winchelsea.

	▪ There is a need to improve infrastructure, including the school and shopping centre. ▪ The Barwon River should be a focus for community, tourism, and economics.
Lorne and Benwerrin	▪ Creative problem solving (multiple). ▪ Housing affordability and housing diversity (multiple). ▪ Essential workers' accommodation (multiple). Including: ▪ Improved use of existing housing stock. ▪ Greater flexibility in allowing multiple dwellings. ▪ Prevention of the loss of canopy trees, which is important to the character of Lorne, to tourism and to climate change.
Aireys Inlet (to Eastern View)	▪ Inland roads
Anglesea (and Hinterland)	Nil comments
Bellbrae	Nil comments
Moriac and Barrabool/ Freshwater Creek	Nil comments

The written responses to the survey questions have been included in the following thematic summary where all consultation responses have been considered.

5.2 Planning Scheme Themes

This section report summarises the feedback from the survey, submissions, and community meetings by theme. In the text these are all referred to as submissions. Direct quotes from respondents are included in italics.

5.2.1. Settlement and Growth

Settlement and growth were key themes raised in submissions, although it should be acknowledged that the Planning Scheme Review report was exhibited alongside the Urban Futures background documents. Irrespective, it is evident that there is a high level of understanding among members of the Surf Coast Shire community about the complex settlement issues that must be balanced and the strength of submissions in this area indicate that settlement issues are a high priority planning issue.

Balancing growth with the preservation of neighbourhood character outcomes (a town's look and feel), is highly rated as a key issue in multiple submissions. In relation to character, multiple submissions echoed the following sentiment:

> *"... high regard for character and want the existing [town] character preserved and enhanced as an important growth consideration".*

Housing affordability was a repeated theme, although only one submission prioritised housing affordability over neighbourhood character.

Submissions relating to Lorne were received that emphasised the need to better utilise existing housing stock for permanent accommodation, including essential workers' accommodation.

> *"... we must be looking at ways to use those homes for our permanent population, especially for our key and essential workers".*

Submissions also encouraged the Shire to incorporate clever and creative solutions for development, housing, and infrastructure, with one submission stating:

> *"it's time to shake up thinking".*

One submission advocated for a review of the zoning of (specific) land in Grossmans Road; the land specified is currently outside of the settlement boundary.

5.2.2. Environmental Values

> *"We expect that the Environment will be given the highest priority."*

Most submissions highlighted the importance of the environment, and some called for stronger protections for native vegetation, biodiversity, and wildlife habitat.

Submissions also drew attention to importance of the natural environment for its intrinsic value and the role vegetation and landscape plays in contributing to the unique identity of the Shire, to incomes, and to the wellbeing of the community.

Multiple submissions indicated a concern that increasingly, development was adversely affecting the environment, including native vegetation, waterways, and water bodies.

> *"...it will be detrimental to the town with adverse impacts to the coastal environment and liveability of the town."*

The protection of coastal ecosystems was raised, and a concern was expressed regarding a perceived lack of focus on beaches and coast in the Planning Scheme Review.

Two submissions also raised concern about inconsistencies between the language used in the *Marine and Coastal Act* and planning scheme provisions, and the affect that this has on the consideration of cumulative impacts.

> *"...the planning scheme says to minimise impacts... the MACA says cumulative impacts need to be considered."*

While only one submission called for the Shire to develop a Significant Tree Register, multiple submissions were concerned about the preservation and native vegetation, including canopy trees, in townships.

> *"Tree destruction around [the town] has become a major issue. We cannot lose the canopy that makes up the character...(i)t is vital for tourism, as a bulwark against climate change and as a support for our environment.*

Further comments about environmental values are addressed in the character section.

5.2.3. Environmental Risks and Natural Resource Management

Increasing climate and biodiversity emergencies were identified as a very important by most respondents. Support was given to the Shire's declaration of a Climate Emergency.

The risk of bushfire to the wider environs of the Shire was widely acknowledged with the need to balance significant landscape, preferred character outcomes and bushfire risk as well as manage the quantity of vegetation on private property, nature strips and public land against the risk of bushfire. One submission requested that scientific evidence about vegetation types and their fire risk profile be used by the Shire.

> *"Towns and settlements within the Surf Coast Shire are recognized as being among the highest bushfire prone areas in the world."*

Multiple submissions raised concern about the adequacy of stormwater infrastructure and the impact on receiving waters and one of these submissions also raised concern about floodplain management practices.

A lack of public discussion about future supplies of drinking water in Anglesea was also raised as a concern.

Submissions also raised concern that further development in Torquay North would irreversibly damage the Karaaf wetlands.

5.2.4. Sustainable Design

Submissions endorsed the use Environmentally Sustainable Development principles to, among other factors, ensure future residential developments have the minimum possible impact on infrastructure e.g. energy and water demands, wastewater and stormwater.

Aligned to this, another submission supported the Shire adopting the Built Environment Sustainability Scorecard (BESS) for medium to large non-residential developments, apartments, and townhouses.

> *"In line with the growing climate and biodiversity emergencies, residential planning will need to achieve new standards."*

Submissions were also received that indicated support for the adoption of the Sustainable Infrastructure Guidelines with one submission noting that:

> *"... adoption of the Sustainable Infrastructure Guidelines will achieve a more sustainable outcome."*

Another submission encouraged the use of stormwater runoff to be used as irrigation for street trees and local food growing areas.

5.2.5. Character

Submissions across various districts raised concerns about new buildings that appeared to be inconsistent with the requirements of the Neighbourhood Character Overlays.

> *"Overall, too many bulky and visually prominent homes are being built, with scant attention to landscaping."*

The importance of buildings in contributing to the character of a town or area is reflected in multiple submissions and across all districts.

Various concerns and recommendations were listed relating to:

- The space between buildings (not too close together).
- Maximum building heights.
- Buildings complementing the natural environment.
- Buildings footprints (should be of modest size).
- Style, shape, and bulk of buildings.
- External materials (blending into the surroundings).
- Maintaining the small town or village feel.

Submissions raised other factors that were felt to impinge or degrade the character, including:

- Tree destruction.
- Over-development.
- Large blocks being subdivided.
- Disappearing road verges and road verges having their vegetation removed or heavily cut back.

One submission focussing on Aireys Inlet-Eastern View, requested that Council develop a Surf Coast Lighting Policy based upon *International Dark Sky Guidelines*. To support the request, the submission cited studies previously undertaken by Surf Coast Shire that refer to the dark night sky as being a valued character attribute in the area.

Concern was raised about the impact of the "small second home' provisions on the Neighbourhood Character Overlay (neighbourhood character).

The recent planning application seeking approval for a retirement village near Cypress Lane and the associated consideration of the sale of public land was referenced in multiple submissions with submitters feeling that the proposal did not have appropriate regard to the DAL Statement of Planning Policy (SPP).

> *"The decision ... was against the objectives and intent of the SPP."*

Fencing in coastal towns was also raised by submitters with comments indicating a preference for maintaining low or no fences in residential areas.

Other submissions drew attention to the coast and surf as integral to Torquay-Jan Juc's character, as well as to the economy of the Shire.

> *"... we live on the coast where there is a lot of open space and much-loved beaches, surf breaks and foreshore areas."*

5.2.6. Housing

Common themes relating to concerns about housing were raised across multiple submissions and included:

- affordability
- accommodation shortages
- short term rentals and underutilisation of existing housing stock
- a need for greater diversity
- density
- housing design

Many submissions relating to housing affordability suggested various solutions, including changes to planning controls and more strategic work, rezoning of suitable land, flexibility for permits for multiple dwellings, sensitive infill development and tiny homes.

Multiple submissions also raised the acute lack of housing available for key and essential workers, citing a need for greater regulation of the short-term rental market. The underutilisation of existing housing stock in coastal towns was also raised as an issue.

Submissions raised diversity in housing as a priority in order to accommodate the needs of, for example, people with disabilities, down-sizers, elderly residents and retirees, low-income earners, and young families.

The potential for shop-top housing was also raised as a solution to increasing housing stock in an affordable and sustainable manner.

One submission suggested that shop-top housing for any redevelopment of Torquay's Surf City or Baines Crescent should also be considered.

> *"Any redevelopment of Surf City should include a residential component to the height of existing buildings."*

Many submissions relating to housing affordability and availability proposed that Council looks to other regions, states and overseas, for appropriate, adaptable solutions already implemented.

One submission requested that reference to Torquay as a growth node be removed.

5.2.7. Transport and infrastructure

Multiple submissions raised concern about a culture of car dependency in the Shire, requesting transport infrastructure to support alternative transport modes. Reference was made to improved public transport and safe, all-weather, off-road cycling routes.

One submission stated that the role of the existing infrastructure, such as the V/Line route through Winchelsea, provides an opportunity for transit-oriented development in the region of the Winchelsea train station.

A number of submissions referred to the need for infrastructure to service existing communities.

> *"Infrastructure planning for planned growth needs to be replaced with infrastructure provision for the current context."*

Multiple submissions raised concern that infrastructure has not kept pace with growth and felt that it was not supporting existing communities.

Submissions also highlighted that additional development would put pressure on existing infrastructure.

One submission suggested that by constraining growth largely to existing housing stock more fully (as discussed in Housing, above), the demand for new infrastructure might be limited.

Collectively, submissions called for more or improved infrastructure across most services, including:

- Bicycle and carparking, and electric vehicle charging
- Childcare, schools, medical services, and community centres
- Community gardens, public parks, and communal spaces, pool
- Shopping precincts
- Stormwater, wastewater, and water supply
- Transport (public transport and roads)

One submission requested that the planning scheme to include provisions to prohibit live stream broadcasting infrastructure from private property where it provides a view of the surf breaks.

5.2.8. Other Matters

Submissions also contained more general feedback relating to the process of developing the planning scheme review, general planning scheme improvements, planning process and Council's role.

Some submissions suggested that the Planning Scheme offered too much discretion, particularly in relation to neighbourhood character performance measures, with one submission also putting forward the view that the planning process was "not performing uniformly well".

One submission felt that the Planning Scheme Review should canvas a broader range of issues.

Another submission expressed disappointment that while the Planning Scheme Review identified areas of conflict within the planning scheme, the report did not detail how these might be resolved.

5.2.9. Consultation Process

Submissions expressed appreciation for the consultation process and the Shire was commended for engaging the community in the review of the Planning Scheme.

One submitter expressed disappointment with the Shire's communication and felt that many in the community were unaware of it.

Multiple submissions expressed an ardent hope that the Shire would leverage community participation, engendered to date into formal or continuing relationships of community consultation.

> *"These relationships are with people who are committed to a sensible evolution of our Planning Scheme that will reflect current community wishes..."*

5.2.10. Statement of Planning Policy

Multiple submissions referred to the Statement of Planning Policy (SPP), which is the output of the Surf Coast Distinctive Areas and Landscape (DAL) process led by the State Government. Concerns ranged from a perception that the SPP might not be adhered to, through to concerns about the lack of its implementation into the planning scheme to date.

5.2.11. Clarity in the Planning Scheme

Many submissions called for increased clarity in the Planning Scheme, for example, using mandatory 'limits' instead of discretionary 'ranges', as well as a greater use of prescriptive language.

5.2.12. Further Strategic Work

A general support was extended for the Council to press forward with further strategic work.

Many submissions requested that there be opportunities for broad community participation when the further strategic work was undertaken, particularly in the areas of planning for growth and coastal town character.

Concern was also expressed about how long the proposed further Strategic Work could take.

5.2.13. Evaluation and Monitoring

Submissions were received that raised concern about evaluation and monitoring practices in the Shire. An example was given of the population forecasts of past strategic plans being exceeded.

Submissions requested that the Shire consistently employ robust quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate planning decisions.

5.2.14. Advocacy

Some submissions suggested that the Council should operate more strongly as an advocate, alongside other LGAs, for shared equity schemes, reclaiming state housing assets, and lower levels of growth.

5.2.15. Council Role vis a vis State and Federal Governments

One submission lodged a strong objection to the administration of the Surf Coast Shire Planning Scheme by the Minister for Planning.

Another submission highlighted that the State Government is the housing authority, not the Shire, and took the view that advocacy is a more appropriate role for the Shire.

Several submissions pointed to a tension between the local and State policy in relation to the Neighbourhood Character Overlay objectives.

One submission raised concern about the potential influence of developers who are allowed to donate to State and Opposition parties.

6.0. Next Steps

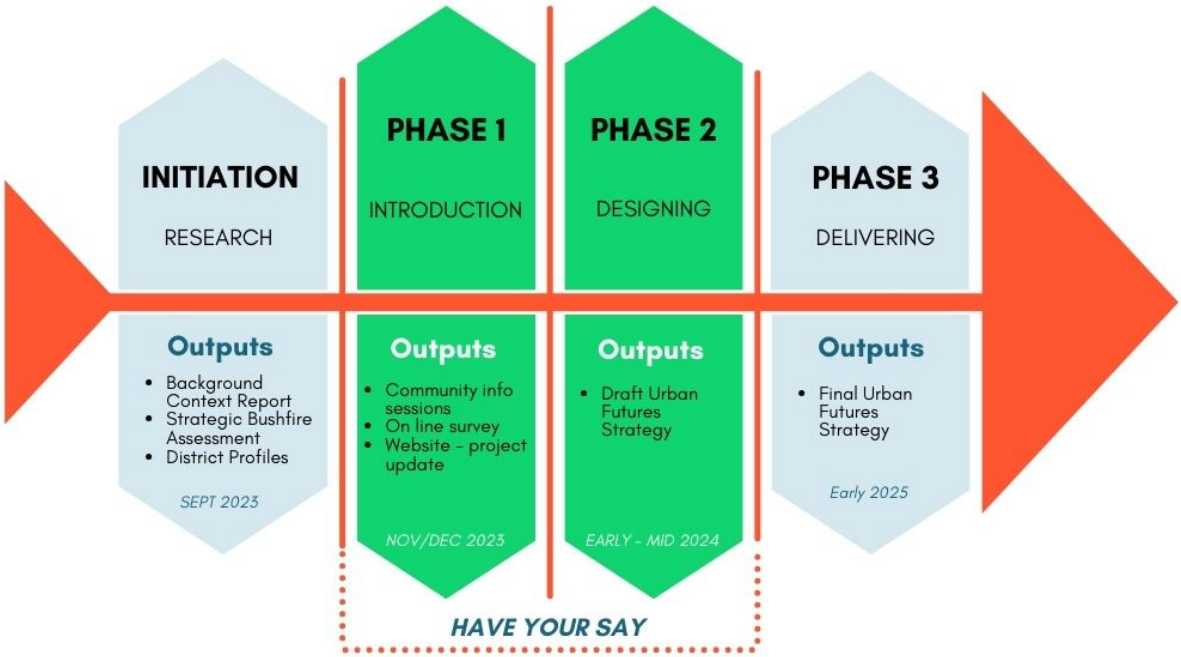
6.1. Urban Futures Strategy: next steps

The next important stage of the project will see the project team working through the issues and opportunities identified through the Phase 1 community engagement. The findings from the phase 1 engagement will be used to inform the preparation of the strategy.

Project Phase 2 – Draft Urban Future Strategy

Once prepared the draft Strategy will be presented to the community and stakeholders for review and comment. This will form part of the phase 2 community engagement. Submissions to the draft will inform the final preparation of the Urban Futures Strategy which will be presented to the Surf Coast Shire Council for adoption.

Project Phases



Further Information

All contact details provided during the engagement will be included on a project update list. Contact details can be registered on the project landing page accessible from the following link: https://yoursay.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/UFS or https://yoursay.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/Planningschemereview.

A direct link to a copy of the Community Engagement Summary Report will be sent to all participants who have provided email contact details to Council. The Project Teams are available to discuss all elements of the process. Contact us by email at info@surfcoast.vic.gov.au or ph: 5261 0600.

6.2 Planning Scheme Review: next steps

Once community feedback has been collated, and changes made as necessary to the Planning Scheme Review (the report), the report will be finalised for Council's consideration along with a Planning Scheme Amendment (the Amendment).

The purpose of the Amendment is to implement the changes to the Surf Coast Planning Scheme recommended in the report. It will not, however, include items of the Further Strategic Work list as these are separate pieces of work that will be undertaken separately in the future.

Council is anticipated to consider the final Planning Scheme Review in May-June 2024.