

# What is a planning scheme?

A local planning scheme is a document that the community, the development industry and governments all look to in order to understand the local government plan for managing growth and change, including what sort of development they can expect in a local area.

For example, when purchasing a house, looking at the 'zone' the planning scheme has applied to land helps residents understand the likely uses that may occur in their street and neighbourhood.

A planning scheme is a legal document - it is the main 'rule book' for regulating development.

Each local government prepares its own planning scheme in consultation with the local community. In drafting a planning scheme, local government are required to address some state and regional policy matters. For this reason, the state government is closely involved in the process.

## What a planning scheme does

A planning scheme sets out the future vision for the local government area in a strategic plan or strategic framework. This is the 'big picture' part of a planning scheme that maps out the intentions for the area in 20 to 30 years time. It contains a series of strategies to manage future growth and development to achieve this vision.

The planning scheme guides what land can be used for (e.g. apartments, shops and industry) and how land may be developed (e.g. construction of a new building or subdividing land into smaller lots), to help achieve that vision. Planning schemes set the direction for new development and seek to balance competing objectives. They aim to:

- make sure there is enough land and spaces available in the right locations to support communities' needs (including housing, services and business areas)
- maximise the liveability of our communities by ensuring there is green space, community facilities, places to work and shop and housing options
- ensure infrastructure is planned for and used efficiently
- protect natural and manmade features such as heritage buildings
- make communities more resilient to natural hazards such as floods and bushfires.

The planning scheme attempts to achieve this by regulating:

- **what development should occur where and when** – by including each parcel of land in a zone
- **how development should occur** – by outlining the provisions against which development must be assessed
- **what assessment process is required** – by stating whether a development application is required, and if so, what process needs to be followed.

## What development occurs where and when

Planning schemes allocate zones to land to allow for different types of development in different areas. These zones describe the mix of uses (such as houses, shops or warehouses) intended in each zone or area. This provides the community with certainty about the types of development and land uses that can be expected on each parcel of land.

In some areas, a planning scheme may restrict development opportunities, for example to protect valuable resources such as native vegetation and agricultural land, or to avoid more people living in areas where there is a higher potential for hazards such as floods or bushfires. Often these characteristics are mapped in the planning scheme so you can clearly see where they are.

Any development proposal may be put forward to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. A planning scheme cannot prohibit development by stopping a development application from being made, even if the proposal is not compatible with the intent for the area. This means every development proposal has the chance to be assessed against the intent and provisions in the planning scheme.

## How development should occur

The planning scheme contains 'assessment benchmarks' which identify the requirements that new development is expected to meet. Many planning schemes typically express these assessment benchmarks as Performance Outcomes (PO) and Acceptable Outcomes (AOs).

Typically, assessment benchmarks will deal with:

- the mix of land uses on a site
- the type or scale of buildings
- what development should look like
- the way in which potential impacts (like noise or stormwater run-off) should be managed.

The assessment benchmarks must clearly articulate the outcomes required by the planning scheme.

Assessment outcomes may include matters like:

- how tall and how close to side boundaries buildings should be
- the size of lots that development may occur on.

In character areas new development might be required to 'fit in' with the existing look and feel of the area.

A planning scheme helps ensure a development operates safely and does not impact on the surrounding community. For example, by specifying the number of parking spaces and vehicle access arrangements, managing odours, fumes, light and noise, requiring landscaping or protecting privacy through the location of balconies.

## What assessment process is required

The planning scheme will determine which types of development require a development application and development approval before they can occur. If a development application is required, the planning scheme will also identify the development assessment process required, either code assessment or impact assessment.

- **Code assessment** is when a proposed development is assessed against the (typically limited number of) assessment benchmarks within the planning scheme.
- **Impact assessment** can be a broader assessment and requires public notification of the development application to allow people to make submissions.

The planning scheme may specify that some development does not require a development application. In some cases, this may be conditional on meeting certain requirements. This is called **accepted development**. For example, running a small business from home or changing a tenancy from a shop to an office or a doctor surgery.

## How to get involved in plan-making

The state government's **Minister's Guidelines and Rules** sets out what councils are required to do when involving their community on proposed changes to a planning scheme, including:

- consulting the community on proposed changes to the planning scheme
- advertising consultation periods so communities know how long they have to submit their feedback
- considering all properly made submissions
- letting people know how their feedback informed the next version of the planning scheme.

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