

## 1.8 DRAFT STUDENT AND SHARED ACCOMMODATION GUIDELINES AND POLICY

Responsible Director: Peter Panagakos

### **RECOMMENDATION**

*That Council:*

- 1. Notes the content and recommendations of the Draft Monash Student and Shared Accommodation Guidelines and Policy.*
- 2. Notes that broad community consultation on the revised Student and Shared Accommodation Guidelines and Policy is proposed to be undertaken jointly as part of the formal planning scheme amendment process.*
- 3. Request the Minister for Planning to authorise Council, pursuant to Section 8A of the Planning and Environment Act, to prepare Amendment C171*
- 4. Authorise the Director City Development to prepare and finalise the planning scheme amendment documentation in accordance with this report.*
- 5. Upon receiving authorisation from the Minister for Planning, prepare Amendment C171 and exhibit the Amendment in accordance with Section 19 of the Planning and Environment Act (1987).*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Monash Student and Shared Accommodation Guidelines and Policy and to seek Council's endorsement to request authorisation from the Minister from Planning to prepare and exhibit an amendment to introduce the revised policy.

The proposed Amendment would amend the Monash Planning Scheme by replacing the existing Local Planning Policy at Clause 22.10 with a new Student and Shared Accommodation Policy.

In addition, this report seeks endorsement to proceed to community consultation as part of the exhibition of the amendment to the Monash Planning Scheme.

### **BACKGROUND**

Council has a long-standing policy that is supportive of purpose-built student accommodation, with the formal planning scheme policy introduced in 2010.

Since that time there has been a significant increase in the provision of student accommodation, often with poor outcomes for both the students and the local neighbourhood.

The project is a jointly funded between Council and the Victorian Planning Authority.

### ***DISCUSSION***

The existing Student Accommodation Policy at Clause 22.10 is no longer considered fit of purpose and does not provide adequate direction for modern student accommodation.

Consequently, much of the privately provided student accommodation, whilst meeting the current basic standards of the policy, does not provide acceptable amenity outcomes for occupants and is not fit for purpose as long-term student or short-term shared accommodation in the Monash National Employment Cluster (MNEIC).

Additionally, the varied standards that apply often result in poor-quality built form outcomes that have a detrimental impact on the amenity of the area. The substandard accommodation works against the Cluster developing as a world class place for education and research and results in poor student experiences.

The project reviews and updates the existing Student Accommodation Policy at Clause 22.10 of the Monash Planning Scheme. It includes appropriate standards for built form, layout, on-site amenities and landscaping so that student or shared accommodation remains affordable, is fit for purpose, provides enhanced living conditions for the occupants and improves of the amenity of the surrounding neighbourhood.

The Project also includes development of a training/education program to increase the skills of statutory planners when assessing Students Accommodation proposals. This training program will occur concurrently with future consultation on the Draft Guidelines and Policy.

### **Draft Policy and Guidelines**

The draft documents have been prepared by SGS Planning and Economics and Hodyl and Co.

The preparation included workshops and consultation with key stakeholders including members of the student body and staff of Monash University. Feedback from the forum informed the finalisation of the Background Report.

The Background Report and the initial stakeholder consultation informed the preparation of the draft Student and Shared Accommodation Guidelines.

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The role of the guidelines will be to provide greater detail and guidance when applying the local policy in the assessment of planning applications for student or shared accommodation.

The finalised Draft Guidelines and Policy for Student and Shared Accommodation are included as **Attachment 1**.

The Policy in the Appendix to the Draft Guidelines has been translated into the new Student and Shared Accommodation Policy at Clause 22.10, which will replace the existing policy. The Draft Policy at Clause 22.10 is included as **Attachment 2**.

#### Application of the Draft Student and Shared Accommodation Policy

This policy would apply to all proposals to use or develop land for student or shared accommodation in the City of Monash. In addition to buildings to be used specifically for student accommodation, it also applies to rooming houses.

#### Principles underpinning the new policy

The policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- To provide high quality and well-located student and shared accommodation that meets the needs of its residents.
- To direct student and shared accommodation to locations where residents have walking access to:
  - high quality and frequent public transport options connecting them to employment and education institutions, and
  - activity centres with a range of local services and facilities to meet their daily needs.
- To provide flexible, functional, well-located, and well-designed communal indoor and shared outdoor open spaces on site.
- To manage onsite car parking and waste collection so that these do not have adverse effects on the amenity of adjoining properties.
- To encourage the reuse of furniture and other household items, to avoid illegal rubbish dumping during tenant changeover.
- To ensure residents and neighbouring residents have access to clear information to seek help or report complaints to building management.

#### Key elements of the new policy:

The new policy makes the following changes to the existing Clause 22.10 (Student Accommodation) in the Monash Planning Scheme:

- Expands the policy's application to **include** rooming houses. (*Note: the policy would only formally apply when a planning permit was required for a rooming house*)
- Updates the preferred location for student and shared accommodation buildings.
- Updates references to new development's neighbourhood character response, based on whether a building is located within or outside the Monash NEIC.
- Updates and adds greater guidance on the design and location of open space.
- Introduces a recommended 12 square metre area for rooms without a self-contained kitchen and bathroom.
- Updates requirements for internal common areas.
- Updates application requirements to require applicants provide plans with room dimensions, square metre area and furniture to indicate that a functional layout can be achieved.
- Requires a waste management plan to be submitted with an application.

### ***POLICY IMPLICATIONS***

This project will update the existing Student Accommodation Policy with a new Student and Shared Accommodation Policy at Clause 22.10 of the Monash Planning Scheme.

The guidelines would also be used as information and guidance to any persons seeking advice on establishing student or shared accommodation.

### ***PROPOSED CONSULTATION PROCESS***

Should Council endorse the draft documents for consultation, then formal consultation will be undertaken as part of a formal amendment to the Monash Planning Scheme and in accordance with the requirements of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

Subject to authorisation from the Minister for Planning to prepare and exhibit the draft Amendment (C171), it is proposed to undertake consultation on the amendment and draft guidelines for a period of 5 weeks. Consultation will include:

- Direct notification to key stakeholders including Monash University, student & shared housing providers, developers and consultants, industry stakeholders;
- Information on Council's website and the Shape Monash website;
- Distribution of information with notices in The Age and the Government Gazette, and an article in the Monash Bulletin;
- Feedback encouraged through an online survey or in writing.

### ***SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS***

The Student and Shared Accommodations Guidelines and Policy provides updated standards to improve living conditions for future students and residents of shared accommodation. It also recognises the importance of providing high quality housing that encourages social cohesion amongst residents.

### ***HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS***

It is considered there will not be any human rights implications as a result of this project.

### ***GENDER EQUITY ASSESSMENT***

A Gender Impact Assessment is required for the Draft Student and Shared Accommodation Guidelines and Policy. A Gender Impact Assessment has commenced on the Draft Student and Shared Accommodation Guidelines and Policy. This has identified that there are different levels of safety and the perceptions of safety between different user groups which may lead to additional requirements relating to access, security and lighting for student and shared accommodation in Monash. Additional measures to address these concerns will be investigated during the consultation of the Draft Student and Shared Accommodation Policy.

An intersectional approach has also been considered, which recognises that there are a large number of international students, who may speak a language other than English, who live in Monash. The Monash Student and Shared Accommodation Background Report identifies that students who are born overseas remain vulnerable to exploitative behaviours by their landlords. To address this, the Student and Shared Accommodation Policy proposes to include that student and shared accommodation applications must submit a management plan which:

- Provides arrangements for providing international, interstate or country students with access to welfare support.
- Provides contact details for a suitably responsible person, who is available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, that are displayed in a manner that is visible to any person entering the site.

***FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS***

The project was funded in part by the 2021/22 Council Budget, and a matching grant from the Victorian Planning Authority under the Streamlining for Growth project fund.

***CONCLUSION***

The updated Student and Shared Accommodation Guidelines and Policy provides appropriate and modern policy support and guidance for the development of Student and Shared Accommodation in Monash. It is now considered appropriate to proceed to broader community consultation on the draft policy and the changes proposed as part of Amendment C171 to the Monash Planning Scheme.

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**Attachments**

Attachment 1: Draft Guidelines and Policy for Student and Shared Accommodation

Attachment 2: Clause 22.10 Draft Student and Shared Accommodation Policy