

UNDERSTANDING YOUR LOCAL CONTEXT

It is a good idea to familiarise yourself with the physical, policy and social context of the locality in which your site is situated as early as possible, and preferably before making firm decisions about site selection or commencing detailed planning and design.



In a physical sense, things you could explore include:

- Nature and history of surrounding development;
- Extent of recent and planned redevelopment;
- Nature of surrounding land uses;
- Distance to transport and services (providing for daily, weekly and broader needs);
- Walkability in relation to distances, topography and provision of footpaths, etc;
- Existence of any sensitive land use (e.g. hotels, restricted premises, industrial uses).

In a policy sense, things you could explore include:

- Any relevant State or Regional Planning Policies that apply;
- The local or district growth context (see [Regional Growth Plans](#)¹, [Plan Melbourne](#)² and [Victorian Government population projections](#)³);
- Zoning and controls that apply to the site;
- Any Affordable Housing Policies or Strategies adopted by Council, and its action on these policies;
- Council's reaction to previous affordable housing developments that have come before it.

In a social sense, things you could explore include:

- A basic demographic and housing profile of the locality at a relatively fine scale (i.e. at SA1 ABS Census scale, the smallest published unit of analysis and normally around 200 households), including:
 - SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage;
 - SEIFA Index of Education and Occupation;
 - Age profile (e.g. median age, % older people, % children);
 - Income profile;
 - Tenure profile (e.g. % private renters, % social housing, % paying a mortgage, % owned outright);
 - Household composition (e.g. % family households, % lone person households);
 - Ethnicity (e.g. % CALD, % speaking little or no English, main languages spoken);
 - Employment profile (e.g. % unemployed, % on high or lower skilled occupations).
- In larger or more sensitive developments, it is often a good idea to have a **Social Impact Assessment** completed by a qualified and respected practitioner.

¹ Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Regional Growth Plans, available online <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/policy-and-strategy/regional-growth-plans>.

² Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Plan Melbourne 2017-2050, available online <https://www.planmelbourne.vic.gov.au/>.

³ Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (2019) Victoria in Future: Population Projections 2016 to 2056, available online <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/land-use-and-population-research/victoria-in-future>.