

CM13.1. Albury Local Housing Strategy - Project Scope and Stakeholder Engagement Plan

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Purpose of Report

To present the proposed scope, timeframe, and Stakeholder Engagement Plan for the development of the Albury Local Housing Strategy.

Background

Our Local Strategic Planning Statement (endorsed 14 September 2020) established that “Diverse, well designed and affordable housing” is a planning priority for Albury and set an action to prepare a comprehensive Local Housing Strategy to guide future housing directions across the Local Government Area (LGA).

AlburyCity has also made it a priority to address the issue of homelessness. The Albury Prevention of Homelessness Strategy (endorsed 28 October 2019) included a commitment to develop an Affordable Housing Strategy, where “affordable housing” is defined as low income or social housing. It was envisaged that an Affordable Housing Strategy would “look at suitable housing options across the LGA in order to better cater for the demands and needs of the community and to ensure that a variety of suitable housing is available”.

Since March 2020, the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in new and unanticipated pressures on the local housing market across the spectrum of housing types. This has particularly affected the availability of housing to rent that is affordable to people on low and very low incomes. Recognising the importance of this strategy, it has been brought forward from 2022-23 to 2021-22.

This project will assist AlburyCity to meet these existing policy commitments as well as respond appropriately to the heightened level of community concern about rising housing affordability pressures. The development of a comprehensive Local Housing Strategy will examine the future housing needs of Albury with a particular focus on ensuring an ability to maintain access to safe, secure, and affordable housing to our most disadvantaged residents.

Issues

The NSW Government Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) provide detailed guidelines and templates to support local government to prepare local housing strategies. All local governments within Greater Sydney are required to submit their local housing strategy to DPIE for assessment and approval. However, this process is optional for regional Councils.

In March 2021, the NSW Government released Housing 2041, a state-wide strategy that sets a long-term vision and objectives for better housing outcomes in NSW. The 2021-22 Action Plan contained in Housing 2041 notes a commitment to work with local government and communities to achieve the NSW Government housing priorities, which includes to:

- *5.1.2 Partner with councils to develop modern, fit-for-purpose social and affordable housing on Land and Housing Corporation land and support implementation of local housing strategies.*
- *5.1.3 Support councils to explore potential use of under-utilised operational land for the purposes of housing where this is deemed appropriate by local communities.*
- *5.2.1 Encourage all NSW councils to develop an affordable housing contribution scheme.*

Albury 2030 Plan

The development of a Local Housing Strategy aligns to the following outcomes:

- *1.3.1 – Encourage residential diversity around the Albury and Lavington CBDs; and*
- *1.3.2 – Provide housing choice opportunities.*

The development of a Local Housing Strategy also relates to other Council strategies including:

- Local Strategic Planning Statement; and
- Albury Prevention of Homelessness Strategy.

Developing an Albury Local Housing Strategy provides the opportunity for a detailed planning framework to assist in the delivery of housing that better meets the needs and preferences of our growing population.

Project Scope

The Local Housing Strategy is proposed to be delivered in two parts:

1. Housing Discussion Paper (analysis of housing supply, demographics and gaps); and
2. Local Housing Strategy (identifying stakeholder priorities, evaluating options for housing, implementation, and action plan).

The project is anticipated to include (but not limited to) the following:

- undertake a housing market needs analysis identifying the current housing supply gaps and needs, capacity, and projected demand;
- engage with stakeholders and community (Refer Stakeholder Engagement Plan in attachment 1)
- analysis of planning and non-planning intervention options available to address identified local housing needs;
- demonstrate and quantify the need for affordable housing across the Albury Local Government Area;
- identify and recommend appropriate short, medium, and long-term housing schemes, incentives and planning mechanisms and/or targets to increase the supply of affordable housing stock;
- recommend other potential schemes, incentives, and planning mechanisms (including LEP and DCP controls) to encourage a range of housing options; and
- assess the general feasibility of any recommended affordable housing initiatives.

The Local Housing Strategy will identify top-level actions and priorities. The scope excludes detailed studies, including business cases or economic feasibility studies, of any suggested or recommended housing initiatives (including affordable housing schemes), but these may form subsequent projects as required. Minor scope adjustments may also result from the Request for Quotation and consultant appointment processes.

For strategic alignment, it is proposed the Local Housing Strategy will be structured around the same four 'housing system pillars' adopted in the NSW Government 'Housing 2041 – NSW Housing Strategy'.

1. Affordability – housing is affordable and secure.
2. Diversity – housing is diverse, meeting varied and changing needs of people across their life.
3. Supply – housing is delivered in the right location at the right time.
4. Resilience – housing is enduring and resilient to natural and social change.

Stages and timing

The aim is to complete the project as soon as possible while also providing suitable opportunity for community and stakeholder input and appropriate consideration of housing issues, experiences, and aspirations.

The proposed timeframe also seeks to align with consultation activities currently being undertaken by the Regional Housing Taskforce established by the NSW Government in June 2021. This taskforce is charged with investigating regional housing issues, including planning barriers to housing supply, and will provide independent advice on ways to deliver more housing. It is understood the taskforce will deliver their reports to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces in September and October 2021, allowing the taskforce recommendations to be considered in our Local Housing Strategy.

A project of this significance may also identify additional scope, or areas that would benefit from further investigation or consultation as the project is undertaken and may require a corresponding extension to the project delivery timeframe. However, where possible, any additional tasks will be undertaken concurrently with other phases to complete the Local Housing Strategy as soon as possible.

It should be noted that this report is being presented concurrent to the Request for Quotation being considered.

The proposed project stages and timeframes are:

Preliminary: Consultant appointment and commencement (September 2021)

- Close advertised Request for Quotation (RFQ).
- RFQ assessment, awarding and commencement meeting.

Stage 1: Discussion Paper preparation (October to November 2021)

- Community and Stakeholder Engagement (Have Your Say #1).
- Meetings and interviews with targeted stakeholders.
- Prepare Housing Discussion Paper.

Stage 2: Issues and Opportunities (December 2021 to March 2022)

- Community and Stakeholder Engagement (Have Your Say #2).
- Councillor Pre-meeting Briefing Session.
- Housing Industry Forum or similar event.

Stage 3: Draft Local Housing Strategy (April to June 2022)

- Councillor Pre-meeting Briefing Session.
- Council Meeting seeking endorsement to exhibit draft.
- Public Exhibition.

Stage 4: Final Local Housing Strategy (July 2022)

- Consideration of submissions.
- Finalise Local Housing Strategy.
- Council Meeting for adoption.

Risk

- **Business Risk** – It is proposed to appoint an external consultant to lead the preparation of the Local Housing Strategy. Community consultation will be primarily led by staff within the City Planning and Community & Place teams.
- **Corporate Risk** – This project is anticipated to invite considerable public interest. It will be guided by a Stakeholder Engagement Plan. Refer Community Engagement section below.
- **WHS and Public Risk** – Community and Stakeholder engagement methods will need to comply with any COVID-19 restrictions and social distancing requirements. Engagement approaches will include online meeting arrangements as needed.
- **Environmental Risk** – This project will include the housing theme of 'resilience'. Under this theme, the project will consider high-level directions for how housing design should respond to its environment, and integrate green infrastructure, the changing climate, and natural hazards.
- **Delivery Program Risk** – Recognising the importance of this strategy, it has been brought forward from 2022-23 to 2021-22 and this will be formalised through the September quarterly budget review. The proposed timeframe aims to complete the project as soon as possible. Any changes to the scope or additional stakeholder and community engagement may require an extension to the project delivery timeframe.

Community Engagement

Access to safe, secure, and affordable housing is an issue that affects everyone, so it is likely that there will be considerable community and stakeholder interest in the project. Effective engagement will be key to the success of the Local Housing Strategy.

It is proposed that key stakeholder groups be identified as per the approach taken by the NSW Regional Housing Taskforce, being:

1. Our community, representing a range of demographics, ages, suburbs, and tenures.
2. Government representatives, including AlburyCity Councillors and staff, Wodonga Council, NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and NSW Land and Housing Corporation.
3. The development and construction industry, including builders, developers, real estate agents and planning consultants.
4. Community sector organisations that work with special populations including Community Housing Providers (CHPs), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, aged care providers, disability providers, services who work with rough sleepers, youth in and out of home care, women's refuges etc.

A Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been prepared and is included in attachment 1. This proposes three key stages of consultation summarised as follows:

Stage 1: Have Your Say #1

- Opportunity to raise awareness of the project.
- Initial input on housing experiences, issues, and aspirations.

Stage 2: Have Your Say #2

- Gain further insights and ideas on possible solutions, interventions, and priorities.
- Potential housing summit or forum (or similar event).

Stage 3: Exhibition

- Public Exhibition opportunity for formal feedback on the draft Local Housing Strategy.

Refinements may be made to the Stakeholder Engagement Plan as the project progresses to maximise input from stakeholders and our community and encourage continuous improvement of consultation techniques.

It is also identified that the project will benefit from clarity in communications material regarding areas of housing supply that are the primary responsibility of local government (such as zoning, rates and infrastructure servicing) as distinct from areas of housing supply that are the primary responsibility of other levels of government (such as social housing, stamp duty, negative gearing, commonwealth rent assistance).

Options

1. Endorse the Local Housing Strategy project scope and approach.

This is the preferred option and aligns with the NSW Department of Industry, Planning and Environment's Local Housing Strategy Guideline. It includes a focus on affordable housing within the scope while also investigating other related themes of diversity, supply, and resilience for a more comprehensive strategy.

2. Amend the Local Housing Strategy project scope and approach.

This option could include changes to the scope or timeframes. For example, Council may seek to exclusively focus on an Affordable Housing Strategy and defer investigation of the related housing themes of diversity, supply, and resilience to alternate projects.

3. Not proceed with a Local Housing Strategy project.

This is not the preferred option and would rely on the NSW Government implementing actions contained in 'Housing 2041 – NSW Housing Strategy' as the primary way of alleviating pressures being experienced currently by the Albury local housing market.

Conclusion

This report outlines the proposed scope, timeframes, and Stakeholder Engagement Plan for undertaking the development of an Albury Local Housing Strategy.

The development of a Local Housing Strategy will provide additional guidance to help achieve the housing related objectives contained in Albury 2030, Local Strategic Planning Statement, and the Prevention of Homelessness Strategy. The project will respond to growing community interest in the provision of more affordable housing options across the Albury Local Government Area.

Recommendation

That Council endorses the general project scope and Stakeholder Engagement Plan for developing a Local Housing Strategy.

Attachments

1. Stakeholder Engagement Plan (DOC21/177452).