

22.14 STUDENT ACCOMMODATION POLICY14/07/2016
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This policy applies to all planning permit applications for student accommodation in the City of Whitehorse. All facilities that provide accommodation for students are encouraged to comply with the standards in this policy.

Student accommodation can be either informal or purpose built. Informal student accommodation involves students occupying dwellings (shared housing), as defined within the planning scheme, that have not been specifically built as student accommodation. Dwellings can be used by students for shared housing etc at times without the need for a planning permit.

Purpose built student accommodation is accommodation that is specifically built for occupation by students having regard to their specific needs. If the accommodation comprises fully-self contained units that meet the definition of a dwelling, and satisfy all the associated requirements in the planning scheme, a planning permit may not be required for the use, but a planning permit will still be required for the construction of buildings and works. A permit may also be required for a reduction in standard car parking requirements if located in a business zone or other zone to which Clause 55 does not apply.

If a student accommodation development does not comprise fully self-contained apartments that come within the definition of a dwelling, the use will be defined as a residential building and a planning permit will be required for the use, as well as for the construction of the buildings and works. A permit may also be required for a reduction in standard car parking requirements if located in a business zone or other zone to which Clause 55 does not apply.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the following local policies:

- The Residential Development Policy at Clause 22.03.
- The Tree Conservation Policy at Clause 22.04.
- The Activity Centres Policy at Clause 22.06.
- The Box Hill Activity Centre Policy at Clause 22.07.

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The City of Whitehorse is home to two major tertiary education facilities: Box Hill Institute of TAFE in Elgar and Whitehorse Roads, Box Hill, and Deakin University in Burwood Highway, Burwood. These institutions have created education precincts with thriving student populations. With a dramatic increase in international student enrolment over the last 10 years, demand for student accommodation has lead to a considerable number of planning permit applications for a range of different types of student accommodation in Whitehorse. The demand for purpose built student accommodation is anticipated to continue into the future.

The impact of purpose built student accommodation on the character and amenity of residential areas has raised concerns. Aspects of Clauses 19 and 55 that relate to neighbourhood character and infrastructure, site layout and building massing, and off-site amenity impacts, remain relevant to proposals for student accommodation within the residential areas of Whitehorse. Some aspects of Clause 55 are less relevant to student accommodation because of the specific needs of students. These include car parking, private open space and storage requirements. This policy will provide guidance in relation to these and other matters.

The needs of students is a particular focus of this policy. Students have different needs to many other residents. There are also additional matters that need to be taken into consideration in the design of student accommodation that are not relevant to other types of dwellings. Much purpose built student accommodation is occupied by international students. Domestic students are more likely to occupy informal types of student

accommodation such as shared housing. Regard also needs to be given to the fact that students may be living away from family and friends, in an unfamiliar culture, and subject to considerable pressure as a result of their studies, expectations, the high cost of studying overseas and isolation.

It is important that in addition to the practical needs of students, the social and emotional needs of students are considered in locating and in designing appropriate purpose built student accommodation facilities.

From a location perspective, convenient access to their respective education institution, and easy access to a wide range of shops, restaurants, financial, social, entertainment and leisure facilities and public transport is particularly important. Locations in or close to their institutions, that are within major, principal and specialised activity centres, or within 500 metres of a tertiary education institution or along the Principal Public Transport Network are the preferred locations for student accommodation facilities.

From a design perspective, it is important to provide a facility that is supportive of students' practical, social and emotional needs. Students need a quiet and studious environment, but also one that provides a collegiate atmosphere with the opportunity for students to meet with others and to avoid social isolation and exclusion. Students generally require a bright and well lit room, with either sufficient space to cook, meet, eat, and socialise, or smaller rooms designed to accommodate sleep and study with the provision of shared or communal areas and facilities that provide for these needs. Safety, security and affordability are also particularly important considerations.

Many of the modified requirements associated with student accommodation, for example car parking, private open space and a smaller room size, can only be justified when student accommodation is well located within identified preferred locations. Support for reduced requirements becomes less justified as the distance from preferred locations increases.

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Objectives

To ensure student accommodation is subject to appropriate on-going management.

To conveniently and appropriately locate student accommodation.

To ensure the design of new student accommodation does not degrade privacy and amenity of abutting residential land uses and respects the existing or preferred character of the area.

To provide appropriate car parking.

To create facilities that enhance the safety and amenity of abutting streets and the neighbourhood.

To ensure that the design of new student accommodation demonstrates flexibility for future adaptation to alternative uses.

To encourage practical landscape solutions that complement the design of open space areas and respond to the valued character of the neighbourhood.

To ensure new student accommodation embodies principles of good urban design, sustainability, affordability and durability.

To develop practical and efficient unit designs that meet the living requirements of tertiary students.

To provide shared communal spaces that contribute to the functioning and amenity of student accommodation and promote interaction between students.

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Policy

Use

It is policy that:

Any planning permit issued for the use or development of student accommodation or for a waiver or reduction of car parking associated with a student accommodation use, will include a condition that the owner enter into an agreement under section 173 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* requiring that the development can only be used for the purpose of student accommodation. This will include a requirement for an appropriate management plan to be prepared.

Management

It is policy that:

- Ongoing management arrangements are in place to enable the proper and appropriate use of a student housing facility.
- Landowners will be required to enter into an agreement with the responsible authority under Section 173 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 that includes the following:
 - Car spaces must be associated with the use of student housing and must not be subdivided, sold or used separately from the student housing.
 - The number of students residing on site who own cars must not exceed the number of on-site car spaces provided by the development.
 - Should the land cease to be used for student housing, a new planning permit or variation to the Section 173 Agreement may be required for an alternative use. Any dispensations for on-site car parking given to the student housing use will not be transferable to any proposed alternative use of the land. Any subsequent use will be assessed in accordance with the planning scheme car parking requirements.
 - The owner of the land to be developed or used as student housing must pay all of the responsible authority's reasonable legal costs and expenses of the agreement, including preparation, execution and registration on title.
 - A Management Plan must be approved by the responsible authority and form part of the agreement prior to the use of the student housing commencing.

The Management Plan should include any requirements of the responsible authority depending on the individual circumstances of the particular student housing use, including but not limited to:

- The contact details of a suitably responsible contact person who shall be available 24 hours per day, seven days per week and whose contact details are to be displayed in a manner that is visible to any person entering the site.
- The means by which car spaces are to be allocated and a register that documents allocation of these spaces.
- Rules regarding behaviour of residents and visitors.
- A procedure for dealing with complaints from persons not resident on the site.
- Areas where washed clothes may or may not be dried.
- Rubbish bin storage and collection.
- Permanent display of the approved Management Plan in a common area accessible to residents of the student housing facility.
- Provision of information to student residents regarding public transport and other non-car based transport modes.

Location

It is policy that:

The preferred location for new student accommodation is:

- Within a Principal, Major or Specialised Activity Centre.
- On sites that are within 500 metres of a tertiary education institution.
- On sites abutting the Principal Public Transport Network.

Student accommodation is discouraged in minimal change areas as designated in the residential development policy at Clause 22.03.

Built form and assessment

It is policy that:

In the General Residential Zone and parts of the Mixed Use Zone designated as natural change in Clause 22.03:

- Proposals will be assessed using the residential development policy contained in Clause 22.03 and Clause 55. Standards may be reduced in relation to those elements of Clause 55 that relate to car parking, private open space and storage.
- Buildings are encouraged to be one to two storeys.
- Buildings of four storeys or more will not be supported.

In the Residential Growth Zone and parts of the Mixed Use Zone identified as substantial change in Clause 22.03:

- Proposals of up to four storeys will be assessed against the residential development policy contained in Clause 22.03 and Clause 55. Standards may be reduced in relation to those elements of Clause 55 that relate to car parking, private open space and storage.
- Proposals of five storeys or more will be assessed using the urban design principles contained in Clause 19.03, the Design Guidelines for Higher Density Residential Development, Clause 22.03, and Clause 52.35.
- Proposals must be consistent with any structure plan or other strategic work prepared for a Substantial Change Area.

Proposals in a business zone within a principal or major activity centre, in addition to this policy, may be assessed using the principles contained in Clause 19.03, the Design Guidelines for Higher Density Residential Development, Clause 52.35 and the Activity Centre Design Guidelines.

Proposals of four storeys or more may be appropriate in a business zones and within a principal or major activity centre, depending on the location within the zone, abuttals to other uses and to other zones, and any structure plan prepared for those zones or activity centres.

Car parking

It is policy to:

- Encourage the provision of car parking in accordance with the needs of students. Council will consider the special circumstances of each proposal on its merits.

Generally:

- For developments designed as residential buildings (student accommodation) within a principal activity centre, provide car parking at a rate of at least 0.1 spaces per bed.
- For developments designed as residential buildings (student accommodation) within major or specialised activity centres, within 500 metres of a tertiary education institution or on a site abutting the Principal Public Transport Network, provide car parking at a rate of at least 0.25 spaces per bed.
- A higher rate of car parking will be required as the distance from the preferred locations increases.

Bicycle parking

It is policy to:

- Ensure the provision of adequate areas for short term (visitor) and secure long term (resident) bicycle storage.
- Provide one long term (resident) bicycle parking space per 3 beds.

Street safety and amenity

It is policy to:

- Ensure the creation of an attractive interface of habitable rooms, balconies and terraces with adjacent street frontages.
- Encourage active ground floor uses such as retail shops or entry lobbies along the street perimeter in business and mixed use zones.
- Promote personal safety in public spaces in the daytime and evening through the organising of units so they provide visual surveillance of those spaces.
- Encourage the creation of clear physical and visual links to entries from the street.

Flexibility for future adaptation

It is policy to:

- Encourage, where appropriate and practicable, buildings that are adaptable in their future for use by other uses with low car parking demands.

Landscape and streetscapes

It is policy to:

- Ensure that sustainable landscaping is an integral part of the design solution.
- Encourage the creation of high quality private and shared open spaces.
- Encourage the permeability of external ground surfaces.
- Ensure that exposed at grade car parking is minimised.
- Ensure new setbacks incorporate canopy screening trees or equivalent screening protection where trees characterise boundary abutments.

Design and sustainability

It is policy to:

- Require major proposals to submit an Environmentally Sustainable Design plan.

Facility Sharing

It is policy to:

- Encourage the sharing of facilities, amenities and open space between educational providers and new student accommodation through reductions in requirements for shared recreational and study space where they are demonstrably within easy walking distance of the institution.

Meeting the needs of tertiary students

It is policy to:

- Require the following facilities in each unit:
 - A minimum of 16 square metres floor area.
 - A bathroom with shower, hand basin and WC.

- A separate sleeping area.
- A cooking area with dual hotplate or gas stove and a sink, microwave and fridge.
- A study area with a desk and table with seating provision.
- A robe /drawer unit for storage of clothing and personal items.
- Internet and TV connection and power points.
- Require the provision of direct natural light and ventilation to living / bedrooms in the form of openable windows.
- Encourage where possible, the provision of natural light and ventilation to circulation spaces.
- Require provision of access to areas of private open space such as a small balconette or terrace, a minimum of 8 square metres in area for each unit unless appropriate shared or communal spaces are provided.
- Encourage the provision of a range of room types including bed-sitter, one bedroom and where possible provide at least one disabled unit and one two bedroom unit.

Shared spaces for interaction between students

It is policy to:

- Encourage the provision of communal areas such as indoor spaces, ground level open space, balconies or terraces to the street, or rooftop zones.
- Encourage the provision of foyers and mail collection areas.
- Encourage the provision of storage lockers in a central location.
- Encourage the provision of laundry, washing and drying facilities.

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Decision Guidelines

In assessing applications the responsible authority will consider:

- The extent to which the use and development meets the objectives and requirements of this policy.
- Whether the use and development is appropriately located in relation to the preferred locations as nominated in this policy.
- The potential of the proposal to ensure a safe, pleasant environment for students and to minimise negative off-site impacts.
- Whether the design and built form of the development meets the objectives relating to personal safety included in the Safer Design Guidelines for Victoria and the Design Guidelines for Higher Density Residential Development.
- Whether the development includes the provision of communal areas that promote social interaction, for instance through common rooms and open spaces.
- Whether the development is sustainable.
- Whether there is adequate car parking provision.
- Any traffic impacts.

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Reference documents

Student Accommodation Study, MacroPlan 2006

Whitehorse Housing Strategy 2014