Introduction

This document provides a summary of the Q&A session hosted by the Ascot Vale Stage One Action Group on 13 March 2018.

This document has been prepared by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Victorian Health and Human Services Building Authority (VHHSBA). The Ascot Vale Stage One Action Group was consulted on this document prior to publication.

Q&A session

**Time and date:** Tuesday 13 March 2018, 7.00 pm  
**Location:** Wingate Avenue Community Centre  
**Chair:** Richard Moody, Ascot Vale Stage One Action Group  
**Panel:**
- Fiona Williams, Director Property Asset Services, DHHS  
- Tony Clark, Head of Communications, VHHSBA  
- Hoang Nguyen, Manager of Relocations, DHHS  
- Jessica Cutting, Principal Project Manager, DHHS

Prior to the Q&A session, the community were asked to submit their questions to the Ascot Vale Stage One Action Group. Approximately 80 questions were received, and the Ascot Vale Stage One Action Group condensed these into 35 questions. To avoid repetition, the questions have been re-ordered under eleven themes based on the answer provided to each question.


Dunlop Avenue, Ascot Vale

The Ascot Vale Estate is one of eleven projects identified to be renewed as part of the Public Housing Renewal Program. Based on feedback received through consultations in 2017, we’re taking a staged approach to the redevelopment of the Ascot Vale Estate to ensure that we can deliver the best outcomes for residents and the broader community.

The land at 24-42 Dunlop Avenue has been identified to be redeveloped as the first stage of the Ascot Vale Estate renewal.
Facts

- The project site is 1.5 hectares in size, and is located at 24-42 Dunlop Avenue.
- There are 80 public housing homes currently located at 24-42 Dunlop Avenue.
- A minimum of 88 new public housing dwellings will be built; it is hoped there will be more.
- Construction of new buildings on the site is unlikely to commence until 2020-22.

Questions

Development timeline/project justification

1. What are the planning steps that will be taken between now and commencement of construction? What is the anticipated date for commencement of construction?

We are currently in the ‘information gathering’ stage of the process for 24-42 Dunlop Avenue. On 7 December 2017 we held two information sessions with the community. We also used an online survey to receive feedback; this was open from 7 December 2017 until 28 February 2018. Over 100 responses were received.

The estimated timeline for the 24-42 Dunlop Avenue project is as follows:

- **March to October 2018**: Options testing and re-design, followed by informal consultation to further refine the draft design.
- **January 2019 to March 2020**: Formal consultation and independent review and obtaining necessary town planning approvals.
- **Late 2020 to late 2022**: Any final tenant relocation (if necessary) will be undertaken before demolition and construction commences.

Figure 1: Development timeline

2. Are you able to say which parcels of land will be sold or leased to private developers? What is the rationale for this?

The proposal includes private and public housing. Where the private housing will be located has not been decided. Where the private housing will be located will be resolved after we have a town planning outcome. This is because we are designing equitable housing regardless of tenure or ownership. All housing on the site will be tenure blind and built to the same high standard.
The role of the Director of Housing is to get the best overall outcome for the public housing system and its tenants with the resources available. This includes buying, selling, building, renewing and redeveloping housing across the state. We believe that leveraging the underlying value of estates like Ascot Vale is the best way to retain, renew and grow public housing in its current location. We are getting a larger number of new public homes, in the same location, through prudent use of the resources we have available.

All public land sold in Victoria by government or government agencies is subject to the Government Land Transaction Policy. This requires the Office of the Valuer-General Victoria to set the market value of the land. The Victorian Government Land Monitor then considers and approves the market valuation and contract.

3. The report for the Kensington development, which the department commissioned, responded that the government had sold its publicly-owned land to developers for one twentieth of the market value of the land. Is there a policy to sell the publicly-owned land at Ascot Vale for at least its market value?

The report in question was never finalised or accepted by the Department of Health and Human Services. The claim that the government sold land at lower than market value is incorrect and was based on incomplete project information compiled by one of the report authors. This claim has never been supported by evidence from a professional valuer.

All public land must be transacted at market value as assessed by the Office of the Valuer-General Victoria and approved by the Victorian Government Land Monitor. This is the process we will follow for Ascot Vale.

4. Has the option of upgrading and renovating the existing buildings been considered?

Yes, upgrading or renovating the existing buildings has been considered. It was considered to not be a viable or cost-effective approach as it would not:
- create new or improved open spaces
- improve safety and surveillance on site by modifying sightlines and activating frontages
- improve unit layout or provide balconies/private courtyards
- improve cross ventilation and access to natural light.

5. Will any profit from the development be used for upgrades to the rest of the estate? That is, has stock transfer - rather than sale - been explored?

Stock transfer rather than sale has not been contemplated for 24-42 Dunlop Avenue.

Revenue from the development will be used to build public housing on the estate. The department is committed to providing at least 88 public housing dwellings at 24-42 Dunlop Avenue, but if revenues provide for more then we will build more.

If we were to refurbish these properties there would still be issues with estate design, layout, or dwelling configuration.

Types of housing/housing tenure

6. What is the proposed breakdown of public, private and low cost housing?

In December 2017, we consulted on a total yield estimate of between 220 and 240 units. The exact number of private housing to be built has not been decided and will be resolved through further consultation with the community and Council.

There are currently 80 units at 24-42 Dunlop Avenue; the department will replace the 80 units with a minimum of 88 public housing homes.

In addition to the minimum 88 public housing dwellings that will be provided, 10 per cent of all private housing will be prioritised to buyers eligible for the First Home Buyers Grant.
7. Does the policy for a 10 per cent increase in public housing apply statewide, or to specific sites? Will the renewal project see the development of more public housing units within Ascot Vale, and specifically within the Dunlop Avenue development?

The minimum 10 per cent increase in public housing is per site (and not statewide) for all sites in the Public Housing Renewal Program. The department will replace the existing 80 units at 24-42 Dunlop Avenue with a minimum of 88 public housing homes.

8. Will there be a mandated requirement to provide a minimum amount of ‘affordable housing’ as part of the private development? Will it be constructed to the same quality?

The minimum requirements for public housing and first home buyer housing are:

- at least 88 new public housing dwellings
- 10 per cent of private housing to be prioritised to buyers eligible for the First Home Buyers Grant.

The department will work with Development Victoria and any future development partners to exceed these targets and explore other opportunities to provide more affordable and low cost housing on site.

The development will be ‘tenure blind’, which means that the new public housing dwellings will be visually indistinguishable from the private dwellings on the site. The external elements of the buildings will be constructed with the same quality of materials across the site. Internally, the public housing dwellings will have an equal fit-out (kitchen, bathroom, floors and curtains/blinds) as the entry level private dwellings in the redevelopment.

The Public Housing Renewal Program should not be seen in isolation. It is just one of a number of initiatives under the Homes for Victorians housing strategy that are expected to deliver over 6,000 new social housing properties as a response to homelessness and the need for housing assistance. This includes over $2.1 billion in financial instruments to support growth in social housing.

It should also be noted that the Government recently introduced a definition of affordable housing in the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

This new definition has been introduced to make it easier for land owners (such as the Victorian Government) to negotiate affordable housing agreements as part of new developments.

The new affordable housing definition includes social housing, which is defined as including public housing and community housing. More information is available at dhhs.vic.gov.au/delivering-social-housing-affordable-housing-contribution.

Refer to the last page of this document for definitions of affordable housing, social housing and public housing.

**Mix of bedrooms**

9. What is the current breakdown of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom apartments across the estate? Will there be more bedrooms or more dwellings built?

At 24-42 Dunlop Avenue we have 80 two bedroom units.

On the whole of the Ascot Vale Estate (including Dunlop Avenue) there are 842 units comprising:

- 116 one bedroom homes
- 726 two bedroom homes.

The role of the Department of Health and Human Services is to ensure that the entire public housing portfolio is positioned to respond to the needs of existing tenants and applicants, both now and into the future.

One of the key findings of the Auditor General’s 2017 report was that current housing stock does not meet the demand of the majority of tenants on the Victorian Housing register. We need to build a greater number of one and two bedroom dwellings to meet this demand. The Public Housing Renewal Program is part of that response, as much as it is about addressing the specific needs of each site.
Current tenancy data tells us that we have an average occupancy of 1.7 people per household across the renewal sites. As a result, the Public Housing Renewal Program will focus on providing one and two bedroom properties, rather than three or four bedroom homes, which are not being fully utilised now, and don’t align with demand.

Demand for one or two bedroom properties makes up 80 per cent of our waiting list. Building three and four bedroom properties that are underutilised will not help us house more people from the waitlist; it will just mean housing the same number of people in larger homes.

That said, there are some existing families at the renewal sites and they have been given the guaranteed right to return to their estate if they choose to. We will include a number of larger homes to cater for their needs and also work with developers to ensure that new dwellings are built with flexibility in mind, allowing (for example) two smaller units to be converted into one larger family unit. It is about designing our stock so that it can continue to meet changing demand.

10. What percentage of one and two bedroom units will be built? What demographic evidence is being used as the basis for understanding who will fill those apartments?

Of the 80 two bedroom dwellings at 24-42 Dunlop Avenue, the current demand (as at 30 June 2018) for housing is as follows:

- 51 per cent demand for one bedroom
- 30 per cent demand for two bedrooms
- 16 per cent for three bedrooms
- 3 per cent for four bedrooms.

We are interviewing every household to confirm how many people live there, and to ask if their family situation has changed.

We realise that families are not static, and can grow or get smaller over time. This means that that the demand data we have today can quickly become out of date. That’s why we are looking at flexible unit design which will allows us to adjust our plans to ensure we can accommodate all families if they choose to return.

Flexible design allows us to modify the internal design to either combine smaller units to make one larger unit, or alternatively take larger units and make additional smaller units. This means we can guarantee that all families who, regardless of size, wish to return to the estate will be accommodated.

Along with current resident needs, the department analyses key data including; projected household growth and composition, projected social housing stock, housing affordability and rental costs, waiting times for social housing, and operational data. Data on socio-economic disadvantage and family violence incidents is also included in the analysis.

Height of development/distance from boundaries

11. Will the development be delivered to Residential Code?

Yes, we will comply with all Planning Scheme requirements including the Government’s Better Apartment Design Standards.

12. Is a site specific assessment of overlooking concerns going to be undertaken and taken into consideration as part of the development, regardless of the nine metre off set?

Yes, overlooking is a design consideration and captured in the Planning Scheme. The Planning Scheme seeks to limit views into existing secluded private open space (for example, backyard spaces) and habitable room windows (for example, windows to bedrooms and living spaces). The standard test uses a nine metre horizontal measurement. If new development is proposed within that nine metres, then measures such as screening windows and balconies must be used to avoid overlooking into adjoining properties. This test is used across Victoria and is the accepted test at VCAT.

Detailed plans will be provided during the next round of consultation showing the proposed distances between new buildings and existing properties.
13. What steps are going to be taken to protect the amenity of residences adjacent to the estate?

The Planning Scheme sets out how amenity impacts are to be addressed Victoria wide. This includes an assessment of overlooking (as above), overshadowing open space and windows, the extent of new walls on boundaries and noise impacts, to name a few. Once we have more finalised plans, we can seek comments from affected neighbours on each of these elements.

Development contributions/zones/overlays

14. Is the development likely to contribute to or cause the need for new or upgraded infrastructure for the area? Is there a Development Contributions Overlay considered for the site?

Development Contributions will be considered in consultation with Moonee Valley Council.

15. Will a Development Plan be required by the developer and open to community consultation?

At the time of the Q&A session, the appropriate planning tool (zone or overlay) or approach had not been resolved. Since then, a decision has been made to pursue a three storey option, which can be applied for under the current land zoning (General Residential Zone 1). A planning permit will be lodged with Moonee Valley City Council for their consideration.

It is noted that a Development Plan Overlay has been used for other sites in the Public Housing Renewal Program and is one of the tools we are considering.

16. Have any other land zonings been flagged (for example, mixed use) along Union Road?

The masterplanning for the broader Ascot Vale Estate will include consultation on any potential changes to planning controls, including the most appropriate zone for areas such as along Union Road.

Public housing/estate residents

17. Who will be the housing provider? Are any housing associations included? If so who?

We are proposing to replace the existing units with public housing homes to be owned and managed by the Director of Housing. In seeking innovation through the delivery of services, this may be reviewed at a future date.

If a developer or Development Victoria partners with a community housing organisation in their proposal, we will consider it on its merits.

While there are differences between public and community housing, the community housing sector is well regulated and tenants are protected under the Residential Tenancies Act.

For properties owned by the Director of Housing and managed by community housing organisations, rents and other key conditions are set by the Director of Housing through agreements.

Community housing organisations are required to have an internal complaints procedure and tenants can appeal to the Victorian Housing Registrar.

18. Where will the current tenants reside during the renewal project?

The department has appointed a highly experienced relocations team to work one-on-one with existing residents to support their move to another home while the renewal is completed.

The team has been meeting with the tenants of 24-42 Dunlop Avenue since mid-November 2017. We will continue working in 2018 with each tenant one-on-one to help them move to another home while the renewal is being completed.

The relocations team is interviewing every household to understand their individual circumstances and needs to ensure they are relocated to a place that suits their requirements.

These new homes may be locally within the Ascot Vale area or they may be elsewhere depending on the tenants’ needs. Tenants can request to be relocated in Ascot Vale, or anywhere in Victoria.
19. Do all public housing estate residents get the right to come back, regardless of how large the family is? How is this process being managed?

The Minister for Housing has made a public pledge that all existing tenants will be able to return to their current estate if they want to. This pledge has now been enshrined through a legally-binding deed poll attached to every tenancy agreement for tenants affected by the Public Housing Renewal Program. It was developed in consultation with the Federation of Community Legal Centres and the Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS).

We are using flexible design to ensure we can accommodate families, regardless of size, to return to the estate. Refer to question 9 for more details.

All relocated residents will be contacted three months prior to project completions with a proposed offer of return for their consideration. If they choose to return, all associated moving costs will be covered by the government.

Tenants will be able to make an informed choice of returning or not.

20. Will public housing rent remain capped at 25 per cent of personal income?

The current rate of rent for public housing tenants is capped at 25 per cent of personal income. Under the Deed formalised by the Director of Housing, tenants returning to the renewed estate will have rent calculated in accordance with the generally applicable rent calculation policies of the Director of Housing current at that time.

At no time in either the move out or move back relocation process will a tenant be made to accept a property that is not managed by Director of Housing (that is, they will not be forced to move into a community housing property).

Green space/open space/environmental impact

21. Evidence shows that a lack of accessible outdoor space leads to increased obesity, depression, and other mental health issues. How will you stop negative effects that will occur when the current open space is removed?

Many of the outdoor areas and open spaces on the Ascot Vale Estate are not well used because they are poorly designed, unsafe and uninviting. The renewal of 24-42 Dunlop Avenue will create a range of new, well designed outdoor areas that encourage community interaction, surveillance and use.

New outdoor open spaces will be situated at ground level and may also include roof-top or podium top gardens.

Each home will also have a private balcony, winter garden or courtyard.

Communal open space will be developed and include facilities and equipment that match the demographic profile of new residents. The department will consider the needs of public and private residents’ in the design of open spaces.

The masterplanning for the broader Ascot Vale estate will be an opportunity to consider the public open space needs of the Ascot Vale community and how new and open space can be designed in a way that encourages walking, cycling and recreation.

22. The current roof top drying areas are not being used. Rooftop gardens are also unsafe for women and children, and inaccessible to those with limited mobility. How does the current idea of rooftop gardens rectify this situation?

The Government’s new Better Apartment Design Guidelines require new developments to have communal spaces in addition to private spaces on balconies and courtyards. Rooftop gardens are a great way to achieve this requirement as these spaces are not intended to be publicly accessible. These areas will be safe and accessible for people with special needs via lift, security cameras and passes.

The rooftop gardens will have secure access and be designed to meet Crime Prevention through Environmental Design requirements to ensure that they are places that feel safe for all residents.
23. How does the decreasing of open space in the current sketch plans reduce the risk of black spot and high risk outdoor areas?

The renewal will ensure that tenants better utilise the outdoor areas and open spaces. This will be achieved by having a hierarchy of open spaces that include a range of activities that meet resident’s needs, will be better designed to meet Crime Prevention through Environmental Design principles concentration of open space areas will mean that there is greater usage and people will feel safer.

24. Will the six mature remnant Australian eucalypts trees (No’s 24, 26, 28, 34, and 44) along the laneway be retained?

We will work to ensure that as many trees of value are retained on the site. We will rely on advice from an arborist about the significance and health of all the trees on the site, including specific trees 24, 26, 28, 34 and 44.

If any significant trees are removed, they will be replaced at the ratio of 2:1.

Management and upkeep

25. What is the proposed model of managing the public housing within the development once construction has been completed?

The public housing will be managed much in the same way as it is now, and tenancy management will be done by the local housing office. Depending on the final design, we may need to be part of body corporate. We are yet to resolve how the general and common space is going to be managed.

26. Who is responsible for ongoing upkeep and maintenance for all parts of the estate?

When the Ascot Vale Estate is fully developed, there will be a variety of owners for open space, roads, and community facilities that include the department, residents, body corporates and Council.

Consequently, the ongoing upkeep and maintenance of these areas will be undertaken by a range of parties as identified in a future Estate Renewal Maintenance Plan.

Wingate Community Centre/infrastructure and services

27. What are the plans for the Wingate Avenue Community Centre?

The Wingate Avenue Community Centre will remain on the Ascot Vale Estate. The centre will be pivotal in providing supporting services for both public housing and private residents. It will also provide an opportunity for other programs and events to take place to integrate private residents and public tenants.

As part of the longer term masterplanning for the rest of the Ascot Vale Estate, we will work with local residents, current service providers at the centre and local and regional service community service providers to develop a new model of functions and services at the centre. This will include the provision of a new facility to be developed at the later stages of the renewal project.

We have made a commitment that there will be no disruption to the ongoing operation of community centre during the renewal. A plan for temporary facilities or location will be made down the track when needed, in consultation with the local community.

28. Is the existing infrastructure sufficient to cope with the increased population?

Infrastructure assessments will be undertaken to determine what upgrade and replacement work is required to ensure services, roads and community infrastructure can accommodate the increase in population. We will need to engage with the relevant agencies and authorities such as Council, VicRoads, Public Transport Victoria, Department of Education and Training and infrastructure providers.
29. Can the schools cope with the increased population, especially given the recent increase in population in the Ascot Vale area?

The redevelopment of the broader Ascot Vale Estate will provide an opportunity to review the impacts of the proposed population on the provision of education facilities in the area. We will work closely with the Department of Education and Training to determine whether upgrades to the existing schools or a new school is required.

Parking/traffic movement

30. Will the laneway behind Francis Street be acquired?

No, the laneway will not be acquired.

31. Will broader street networks be improved?

A detailed traffic impact assessment will be undertaken to determine what broader street network improvements need to take place. We will develop the plans for 24-42 Dunlop Avenue in collaboration with a traffic engineer who will recommend the appropriate traffic solution. The proposed traffic management response will also be in consultation with Council’s traffic engineering department.

Part of the next round of consultation will be to show the community what traffic management response we believe is best, and to seek comments.

32. Francis Street is a local road but in peak hour acts as a major conveyor of traffic from Epsom Road to Ascot Vale Road. Will the traffic analysis take this into account? What is proposed to alleviate impacts on surrounding streets and housing?

The specific traffic impacts of the development are not known yet. The traffic impact assessment will include a traffic volume count of existing conditions on nearby roads, specifically roads that will be used to gain access to the site.

When the report is finalised, it will be made available to the public.

Next steps

33. What is the consultation plan, and will you ensure residents and local community members will be listened to?

We value the contributions that local residents and local community members make to guide the preparation of plans for 24-42 Dunlop Avenue. A multi-stage process of consultation and engagement is proposed and will be ongoing and provides genuine opportunities for us to learn from those most affected and to adapt the plans, where appropriate.

In December last year, the department sought comments on high level ‘sketch plans’ sought feedback on landscape, amenity, traffic and car parking, including car share options and active transport. We received 101 responses to the online survey and the department will review the renewal plans based on this feedback.

Following the next round of informal consultation, there will also be an opportunity for the community to make a formal submission as part of the planning approval process. There is also the option for the community to be involved in an independent review if they choose.

34. Will specialist report (arborists, services, traffic) reports be made available?

Yes the department will make the background reports available during formal consultation.

35. How much input will the local council have?

We expect that the input from the City of Moonee Valley will be extensive. The department values highly the input of Council in ensuring that 24-42 Dunlop Avenue is designed, developed and managed to Council’s requirements.
Definitions

**Affordable housing** is housing, including social housing, which is appropriate for the housing needs of any of the following:

(a) very low income households  
(b) low income households  
(c) moderate income households.

*s.3AA Planning and Environment Act 1987*

**Social housing** is:

(a) public housing  
(b) housing owned, controlled or managed by a participating registered agency.

*s.4 (1) Housing Act 1983*

**Community housing** is secure, affordable, long-term rental housing managed by not-for-profit organisations for people on low incomes or with special needs. Community housing providers are registered and regulated by the state government.


**Public housing** means non-profit housing in the public sector.

*s.4 (1) Housing Act 1983*

In simple terms, **public housing** is housing owned and managed by the Director of Housing. The Government provides public housing to eligible disadvantaged Victorians including those unemployed, on low incomes, with a disability, with a mental illness or at risk of homelessness.

To receive this publication in an accessible format email [Property and Asset Services](mailto:property.renewal@dhhs.vic.gov.au)  

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