Colac Otway Adaptable Precincts – Colac

Community update | How local input is shaping the emerging proposal

WHAT WE HEARD AND WHERE THE PROJECT IS NOW

Colac faces significant housing pressures, particularly for people who need to live locally, to work in and support the community. Modest household incomes, constrained rental availability, limited new supply and a housing stock dominated by larger detached dwellings can make it difficult for key workers and their families to find secure and suitable housing.

The Colac Otway Adaptable Precincts Project is exploring how affordable, adaptable and inclusive housing planning, design, and construction could respond to these challenges while supporting the long-term strength and resilience of the Colac community.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project is led by Colac Otway Shire in partnership with Deakin University and a range of design, research, housing and community partners.
The proposed Colac site is at 119–243 Hart Street
The project is investigating a new approach to key worker housing that responds to the surrounding neighbourhood and local housing needs.

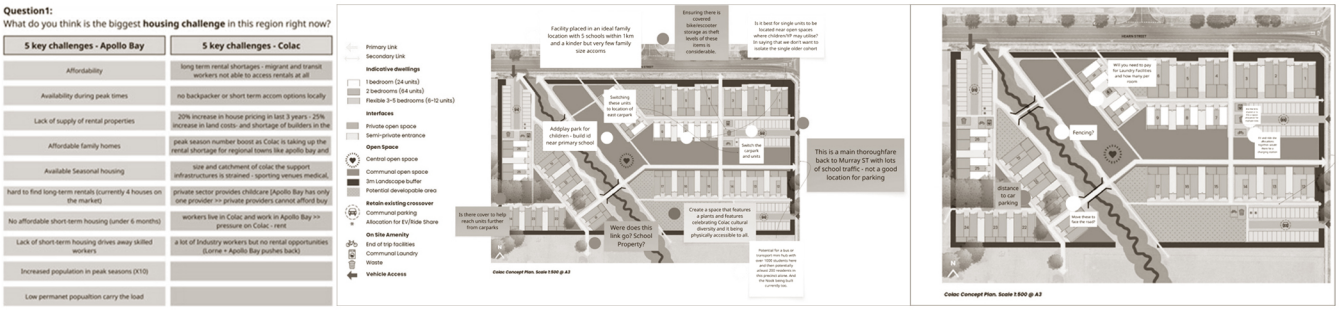
Site
119–243 Hart Street

Focus
Key worker housing

Engagement
Survey + advisory group + 1 co-design workshop



Community and stakeholder engagement has been an important part of the project, including a community survey, advisory group discussions and a colac co-design workshop.



Community co-design in Colac — testing priorities, trade-offs and the emerging layout

HOW WE WORKED TOGETHER

Community input was used throughout an iterative process — not simply to comment on a finished design.

We began by understanding local housing needs, then listened to the community about what matters most. These priorities informed a range of design ideas and options, which were tested through co-design workshops. The feedback from these discussions was then used to refine the emerging proposal, creating an ongoing process of listening, testing and improving.

The result is an emerging proposal shaped by evidence, local knowledge and community discussion.



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What the community told us

Six priorities emerged consistently across the survey, advisory group and co-design workshop — and were used to test and refine the emerging design.

1 Support different households and life stages

Provide a mix of homes for singles, couples, families and people whose circumstances may change over time.

2 Make housing safe, private and comfortable

Prioritise privacy and indoor comfort through acoustic separation, adequate spacing, good lighting and personal security as fundamental housing requirements.

3 Be affordable without compromising everyday quality

Prioritise affordability, practicality, financial stability and comfort, ensuring additional design features justify their cost and maintenance.

4 Make everyday access safe and convenient

Parking, deliveries, loading, bicycle storage and movement between vehicles and homes need to be practical and convenient.

5 Create welcoming shared spaces with room for different activities

Provide outdoor recreation, community gardens, children's play, culturally diverse planting, and indoor communal spaces.

6 Protect long-term community benefit

Participants wanted the housing to continue serving local workers and the community over the long term.

HOW YOUR FEEDBACK SHAPED THE DESIGN

Community feedback was used to test and refine the emerging proposal, not simply to comment on a finished design.

Understanding the design trade-offs

The community's priorities are not always straightforward to balance. The project explored a series of trade-offs and **relationships.** For example, between housing supply and liveability, privacy and community, affordability and quality, and stability and flexibility. These helped the project team understand where different needs may come into tension and how the emerging design could respond to them together.

Housing Supply
Higher density

Affordability
Lower cost

Household Diversity
Housing for many household types

Long-term affordability
Affordability for key workers

Liveability
Better amenity

Quality
Comfortable, energy -efficient homes

Standardisation
Replicable and cost-conscious approach

Financial viability
Sustainable delivery and operating model

Shared facilities
Opportunities for shared use

Privacy
Private outdoor space

Independence
Communal amenities should complement private living

Community
Shared social spaces

WHAT WE HEARD → HOW THE DESIGN RESPONDED

Balance housing capacity with liveability

Participants supported more diverse and compact housing, but questioned the concentration and perceived density of some building groups. They wanted better relationships between homes and open space.

→ Buildings have been redistributed around an expanded open-space. Some building blocks have been staggered, and some areas remain open initially for potential future

Make access work across the whole site

Participants questioned the distance between some dwellings and parking, the accessibility of bridges and paths, and whether the layout would work for wheelchair users, people with prams and households without cars.

→ Three distributed parking areas and connected paths have been incorporated into the revised arrangement to improve movement across the site.

Make shared spaces welcoming, useful and affordable

Participants supported communal open space, gardens, children's play and indoor shared facilities, while emphasising privacy, acoustic separation, independence and manageable ongoing costs.

→ The proposition retains communal open space, private and semi-private areas, and family-oriented accommodation. A communal laundry and undercover drying are also retained in the current concept.

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The emerging concept and what happens next

The current proposal remains indicative while planning, feasibility, funding and delivery questions are worked through.



THE CURRENT CONCEPT

The current concept envisages approximately 116 dwellings, including one- and two-bedroom housing and some larger family homes. Homes are arranged around communal open space, with pedestrian connections, landscaping, shared facilities and 90 car spaces.

A MIX OF HOMES
1–2 bedroom homes + larger family homes

100+ HOMES
Indicative number of dwellings

90 PARKING SPACES
Located towards the site edges

A SHARED GREEN
Communal open space alongside private areas



CURRENT CONCEPT DESIGN — INDICATIVE ONLY. Subject to further design, planning, feasibility and funding.

WHERE IS THE PROJECT UP TO?

The project is currently developing the proposal towards a planning application.

The proposal remains subject to planning, detailed design, feasibility, funding and future delivery decisions.

! A Planning application does not mean construction is confirmed. A commitment to utilise the site for housing and funding to build the project has not yet been secured.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

1 → 2 → 3 → 4

Finalise
the current concept and supporting technical work.

Progress
the proposal towards a planning application.

Continue
work on funding, tenure, governance and delivery arrangements.

Keep you informed
as the project develops.

Thank you to the Colac community members who contributed to the surveys, advisory group and co-design workshops. Your local knowledge and experience have directly influenced the emerging proposal.

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