2 Fraser Drive Aireys Inlet Community Engagement

Final Engagement Report

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Authorship & acknowledgements

Definitions

Term	Definition
Affordable housing	Housing, including social housing, that is appropriate for the housing needs of very low, low and moderate-income households (as set by the *Victorian Planning and Environment Act 1987*). Affordable housing rent is defined as/capped at 30% of tenants' incomes.
Community housing	Affordable Housing managed by not-for-profit organisations.
Housing provider	A registered housing agency that owns and manages community housing on smaller (provider) or larger (authority) scale.
Housing stress	The housing cost burden, particularly for households in the lowest 40 per cent of incomes, who are paying more than 30 per cent of gross household income on housing rental or mortgage repayments.
Homelessness	a person is homeless when their current living arrangement: • is in a dwelling that is inadequate to meet their needs • has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or • does not allow control of/access to space for social relations.
Public housing	Social housing that is owned and/or managed by the Victorian Government.
Registered housing agency	A rental housing agency, registered under Part VIII of the *Housing Act 1983* and subject to regulation overseen by the Victorian Housing Registrar.
Social housing	Public housing (owned/managed by the Victorian State government) and housing owned, controlled or managed by a participating registered agency. People on very low to moderate incomes and people living with disability are eligible for Social Housing. Rent is capped at 30% of household income.

(source: adapted from Hornby & Co. 2020)

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Introduction & Background

Background

The adoption of the Surf Coast Shire Council Affordable Accommodation Action Plan in January 2022 signalled the intention for Council to facilitate the development of social and affordable housing on suitable Council owned land.

A key opportunity for developing social and affordable housing exists at 2 Fraser Drive, Aireys Inlet (pictured below). This site is located a block east of the Great Ocean Road, behind a small shopping precinct known locally as the 'top shops'. The total land area of 2 Fraser Drive is 6,669m2 and is made up of two sections of vacant land, existing social housing dwellings and a well-established Community Garden. The site is connected to reticulated sewerage and services (electricity, NBN, etc.).

Stage one engagement

In mid-2022[1] Council embarked on the first stages of a deliberative community engagement process concerning the possibilities for social and affordable housing on this site This phase of consultation has comprised of the following activities:

| Survey | an online survey completed by 42 Surf Coast Shire residents. |

| Pop up Sessions | a series of four pop up information and engagement sessions attended by around 100 people |

| Design In workshop | a three-hour deliberative workshop involving 19 community members and a range of Surf Coast Shire staff |
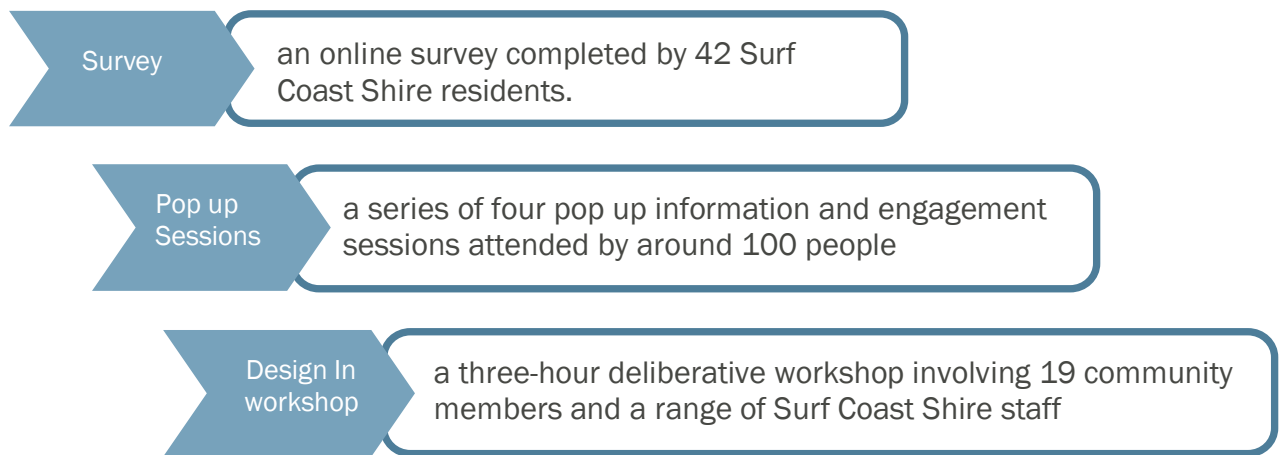
The goals for the first stage engagement activities for this project were to:

- Generate participation by a diverse range of residents, community groups, education and health services, businesses, etc.
- Deepen community awareness of housing affordability issues and the role that social and affordable housing has in addressing local housing need
- Inspire increased confidence that the concept design reflects the social, environmental and heritage values and unique character of Aireys Inlet
- Positively contribute to the business case for detailed design and construction
- Contribute to the evidence-base regarding key risk and protective factors to the development of social and affordable housing in regional communities.

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[1] these engagements also build upon previous conversations with the community about this site and about the strategic goals for Aireys Inlet (e.g. the 2015 Structure Plan, etc.)

The key messages from this engagement process were:

1. The process needs to take a long-range view and develop ecologically sustainable housing that will meet the community needs now and into the future.
2. The process of developing the site should inclusive of different tenant needs and viewpoints (e.g. accessibility, codesign).
3. The design must respond to local need.
4. The buildings should be highly sustainable and beautiful and fit into the local environment.
5. There will be a need to manage objections and perceptions throughout the project.
6. The project provides an opportunity to showcase a housing response and can act as a demonstration project for how social and affordable housing can be.
7. The project needs to happen as a matter of urgency.

A findings and recommendation report outlining the results of the previous engagement can be found at [here](#).

Stage two engagement

The second stage of the community engagement process was designed to build on the broad engagement outlined above. This process, outlined in detail, in this report, synthesised the ideas gathered in the previous engagement to develop specific design recommendations.

The Community Advisory Process

The Community Advisory Group (CAG)

Community members and other stakeholders were invited to nominate to join the Community Advisory Group. Potential members were asked to commit to attending a series of meeting over approximately three months. The meeting would focus on the key design issues of the proposed development. Members were selected, by Council, based on local knowledge, lived experience and understanding of design and social housing. The CAG comprised of 11 members.

The principles

The following overarching principles guided the project:

- that the housing matches the scale and informality of existing development in Aireys Inlet avoiding a "them and us" scenario in which the housing appears institutional and different
- that the housing provides residents with a sense of security and place within the community that meets their physical and emotional needs
- that the housing enhances the natural environment of Aireys Inlet and complies with the Neighbourhood Character Overlay of the Surf Coast Shire Planning Scheme.

The process

The original plan was for the housing provider to attend all CAG meetings to build their understanding of the key community idea, issues and concerns. This idea had to be adapted due to delays in appointing a housing provider. A new approach was developed to work with the CAG to develop broad principles which could then be tested with the housing provider at a workshop towards the end of the process.

The CAG met on six occasions with each meeting focusing on one element of the project. The elements to be discussed were developed in consultation with the CAG members.

The meetings

The focus of each meeting and the issues discussed are outlined on the table below. Meetings three and four included a special guest with particular skills, knowledge and experience. In addition to the focus areas all meeting provided an opportunity to discuss any areas that were unclear or ideas that had come up in the preceding weeks.

Meeting	Focus area	Issues discussed
One and two - establishment	Reviewing the process and developing an approach	• what the group want to embed in CAG and Codesign workshop sessions (what they want to learn about) • the CAG Terms of Reference and scope (including priority or hierarchy of design principles established) • limiting factors (e.g. parking, heritage, character, etc.) • any additional information the CAG would like to source (e.g. site survey, profile of key workers, etc.) • a skills audit of CAG members identifying a range of technical and lived experience expertise • anyone that the CAG would like to hear from (e.g. Surf Coast Shire Council Planner).
Three – Traditional Owners	Traditional Owner advice (Wadawurrung Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation)	• Cultural knowledge sharing session about the Country (Mangowak in Wadawurrung language) in which this housing will sit • decolonising planning & design • the use of appropriate materials (sourced locally/ ethically) • designing to be part of the local environment and using design to provide opportunities to connect to Country • designing for all the senses and all ages, considering the 'butterfly height' eye line of children • planting local native plants to be more climate resilient and habitat for native fauna • potential site constraints **Key question:** how do the considerations of Traditional Owners influence our design principles?
Four – process and principles	The process of planning	• Surf Coast Statutory Planner outlined some of the relevant planning provisions, referencing development site issues (overlays, planning and site constraints); and the planning process – time, considerations • broader discussion on Community Housing sector, the EOI process for this

		project and the criteria by which a Registered Housing Agency will be chosen • right to housing principles and how it impacts on this project **Key question:** how will the planning process influence our design principles?
Four - place	Developing in 'place'	• Surf Coast Shire Strategic Planner outlined place characteristics of Aireys Inlet which included • Space around buildings/opportunities for nature • Setbacks to avoid imposing visual bulk. Vegetation to screen and soften built form • Informality – buildings are not uniform, have individuality and authenticity • Other spatial and local considerations - ecologically sensitive design principles (e.g. north facing to optimise passive solar, etc.) bushfire resistant, traffic movement and parking, managing the impact of construction • creating a place within the town – Community Garden and pathway to shops have an important role **Key question:** how will 'place' influence our design principles?
Five - people	Thinking about the people who will live here	• Discussion on the design needs of the cohorts who might be living in these homes, (e.g. universal accessibility • Flexible and adaptive design. Designing with the knowledge that needs will change, ie. As families grow and as residents age • 'lived experience' perspectives: accessibility and inclusivity • Designing to optimise opportunities for both privacy and conviviality • community development and neighbourhood cohesion **Key question:** how does our understanding of the needs of people influence our design principles?

Emerging design principles

During the meetings all participants were asked to consider how the discussion could be lead to design principles. Over the course of the meetings a series of principles emerged. These were ideas that the CAG found particularly engaging or came up several times. The eight emerging design principles were:

1. source local (and Indigenous- sensitive) materials in the build

2. apply best use of the site shade and orientation for passive solar design

3. ensure it is 'nestled in nature' and protect existing nature (trees, gardens)

4. blend into the surrounding town's aesthetic (light, natural, organic)

5. comply with policy and guidelines (BAL, DDA, etc.)

6. be flexible and adaptive in design

7. minimise build time inconveniences (without reducing quality)

8. empower tenants to feel 'ownership' of and security in their properties.

The workshop

The 4.5hour workshop was held two weeks after the final CAG meeting. The workshop provided an opportunity for all key stakeholders to come together and work through how the emerging design principles would be incorporated into the project design. The workshop was attended by:

- All CAG members
- Three representatives from Housing Choices Australia
- The President of the Community Garden
- Five Surf Coast Shire staff from the planning department
- Three Surf Coast Shire Councillors.

The workshop focused on developing potential design solutions for elements of the project. Participants were encouraged to enter discussions with a sense of curiosity to understand different viewpoints and work towards solutions. Participants were encouraged to move between groups and share ideas. The workshop was divided into a series of facilitated activities being:

1. An introduction to the project and the workshop

2. A site visit to understand how the site works. Participants were divided into four groups and asked to focus on one element of design:
   - Group 1 – building mass
   - Group 2 – entries and through movement
   - Group 3 – landscaping
   - Group 4 – interfaces and connections

3. A design brainstorm to look at potential design options for the four elements

4. A review of ideas by other participants

5. The development of design ideas/ principles/ options for each of the four themes.

Workshop outcomes

Across each of the groups there were a range of ideas, some were agreed while others remained unresolved. The unresolved issues related to issues of detailed design which cannot be resolved until the detailed design phase.

Group results

Building mass

Building massing refers to how the buildings would be placed on the site. This group felt that to be in keeping with the neighbouring buildings it might be better to build larger buildings that could house a number of individual units. These buildings would be a mix of single and double story.

Elements to consider include:

- The informal placement of buildings to maintain local character (not in row)
- The importance of dwellings being north facing to maximise solar potential
- A preference for mixed density
- The need for the placement of double story buildings to be considerate of existing residents views
- The potential to utilise 'road' as a shared community space – a place to meet – common space
- The potential to include outdoor living space – including the community garden (while maintaining a fence for pest control)
- The need to ensure a sense of address for each dwelling
- The potential to include options for outdoor storage
- The potential to use the community garden as greenspace when deciding on plot ratio
- The need to avoid uniform or blocky housing design
- The potential to blur boundaries between private and public.

Interfaces
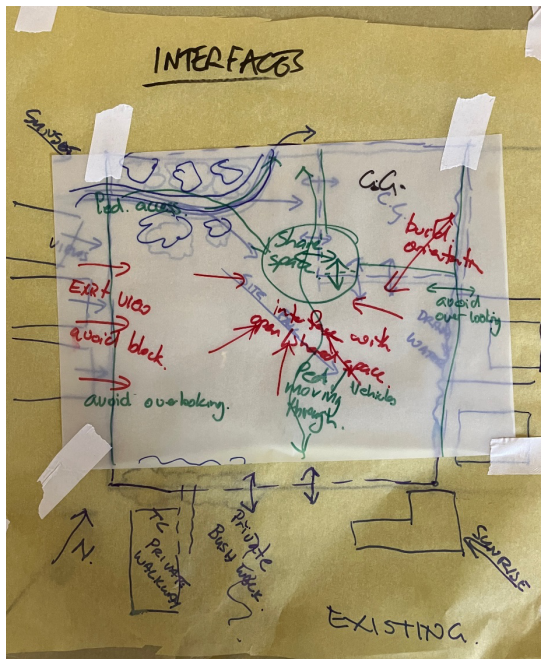
The site has a number of interfaces with surrounding areas, this includes the community garden, the neighbours surrounding the site and the walking track to Albert Avenue. These provide both opportunities and challenges in the design of the site.

Elements to consider include:

- The relationship with the community garden – an asset to the site
- The opportunity to extend the concept of the community garden into the site to encourage active use of shared spaces
- The option to use wet area at northern end for parking
- The importance of designing the southern interface to avoid overlooking by/to existing dwellings
- The need to maintain mature trees
- The opportunity to consider the continuation of bush vegetation in the approach from Fraser Walk.

Roads and parking

Parking on the site will provide some challenges. The need for parking is erratic in nature and will need to be planned.

Elements to consider include:

- Consider how the road layout looks, the opportunity to improve road aesthetics
- The potential to move the entry to the site – could it be from another street?
- The need for communal and private parking
- The need to avoid a 'bitumen jungle'
- The need for delivery space – for residents and the community garden
- The potential to make the most of parking on site, which may require modification of existing streets
- The option to run the road to the south and push the community garden north – this would cause a disruption to the community garden.

Interface and landscaping

The interface to the existing community will be key to integrating the site into the town. The site has challenges but also a number of opportunities around the community garden and the planting near Fraser Walk.

Elements to consider include:

- The interface the landscaping with open space and common areas
- A preference for an alternative option of entry.
- The need for a northerly orientation to make the best use of solar
- The potential to offset private gardens and create more public open space
- The need to reinforce the positive elements of the site like existing trees and planting.
- The opportunity to create a seamless streetscape – integrated through landscaping
- The potential to increase social interaction and connection through pathways and open space.

Recommendations

There was considerable agreement across all groups the points outlined below.

- Consider clustering dwellings into larger buildings to fit in with existing housing in the area. This also has the potential to provide more room for landscaping. Dwellings within a larger building should maintain a sense of address (have their own front door).
- Placement of the building should maximise solar potential and be informal (don't create rows).
- Use and enhance the existing community space for social interaction, blur the boundaries between private and public. Utilise the community garden as a major asset for the site, minimise the social boundaries between the site and garden while maintaining while maintaining a formal boundary to protect the garden form pests (rabbits).
- Maintain and enhance existing trees and landscaping.
- Use landscaping to create seamless streetscapes and pathways through the site.
- Use the slope of the site to avoid overlooking.
- Consider the options to change the entry point of the site, entering the site from another street may allow for the damp shade areas to be a car park or access road. If access is through Fraser Drive, consider creating a shared space for car access which can also be used for social activities.

References

Hornsby & Co. for CHIA and MAV. (2020). Affordable Housing Agreements: Advice for local government and community housing organisations.
http://www.mav.asn.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/24796/Affordable-Housing-Agreements_DIGITAL.pdf.