CPD Webinar series

Clause 57 – Mid Rise Code Technical Briefing

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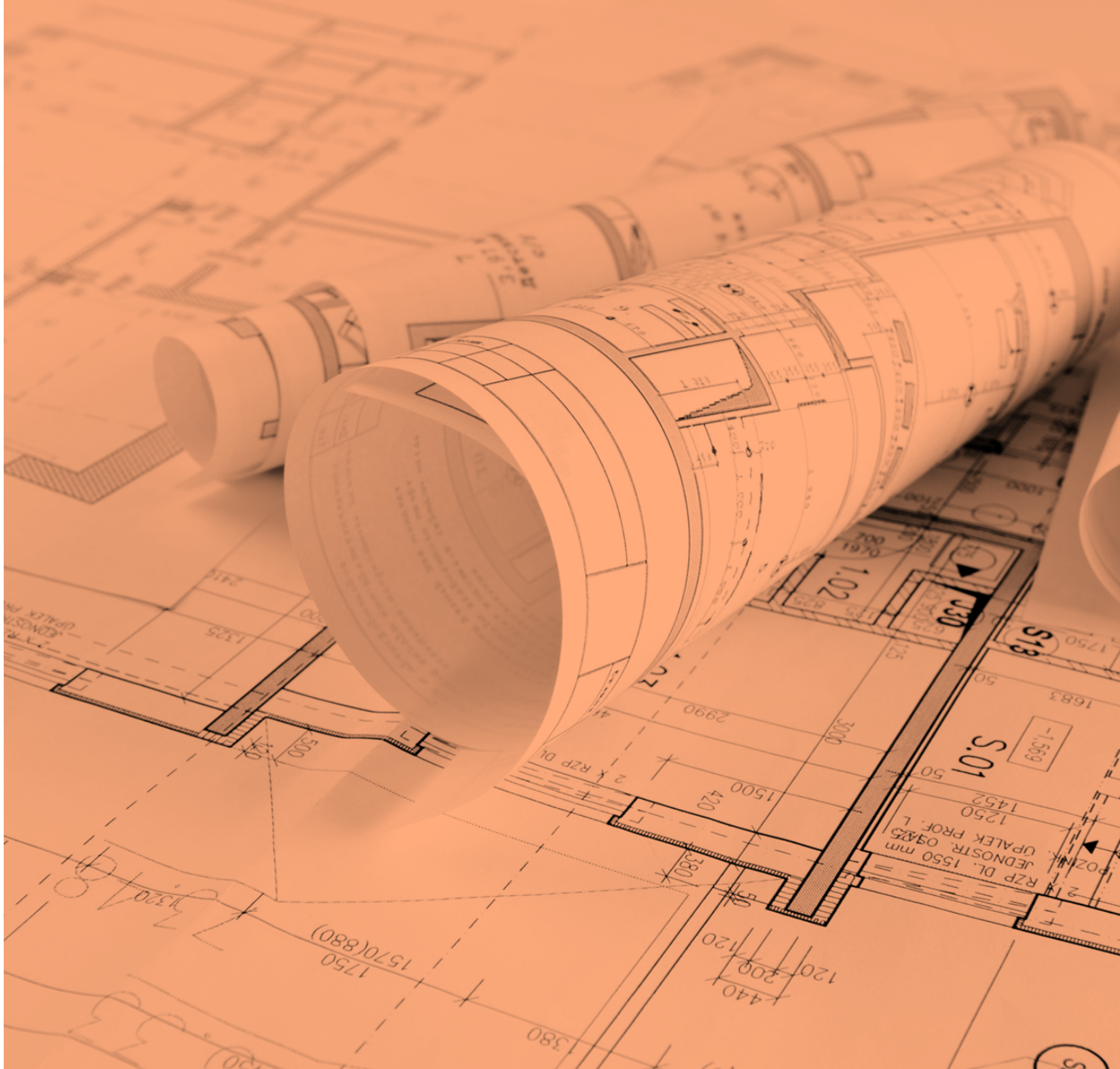
Architects
Registration Board
of Victoria



VICTORIA State Government | Department of Transport and Planning

Acknowledgement of country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Lands we are meeting on today and pay respects to their Elders past, present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today.

CPD Questionnaire

- Attending this webinar live and submitting this form will qualify you for 1 hour formal CPD.
- Certificates will be sent to the email address used to complete this form, please ensure your name and contact details are correct.
- This form will close 24 hours after the webinar has commenced.
- Certificates will be issued within 1 week of the closure of the quiz.

https://forms.office.com/r/U5wdAZ6dQY

ARBV CPD Webinar Quiz - Clause 57 - Mid Rise Code Technical Briefing

Agenda

What we'll cover today:

- Context and process to develop the code
- Standards in the code
- Operation of the code
- Tools and guidelines to support assessments

Contact us:

strategic.planning@transport.vic.gov.au

Context and process to develop the code

Government commitments

Victoria's Housing Statement

"We'll streamline assessment pathways with a range of new Deemed to Comply residential standards for different types of homes."

"We'll strengthen design standards to ensure high quality builds."

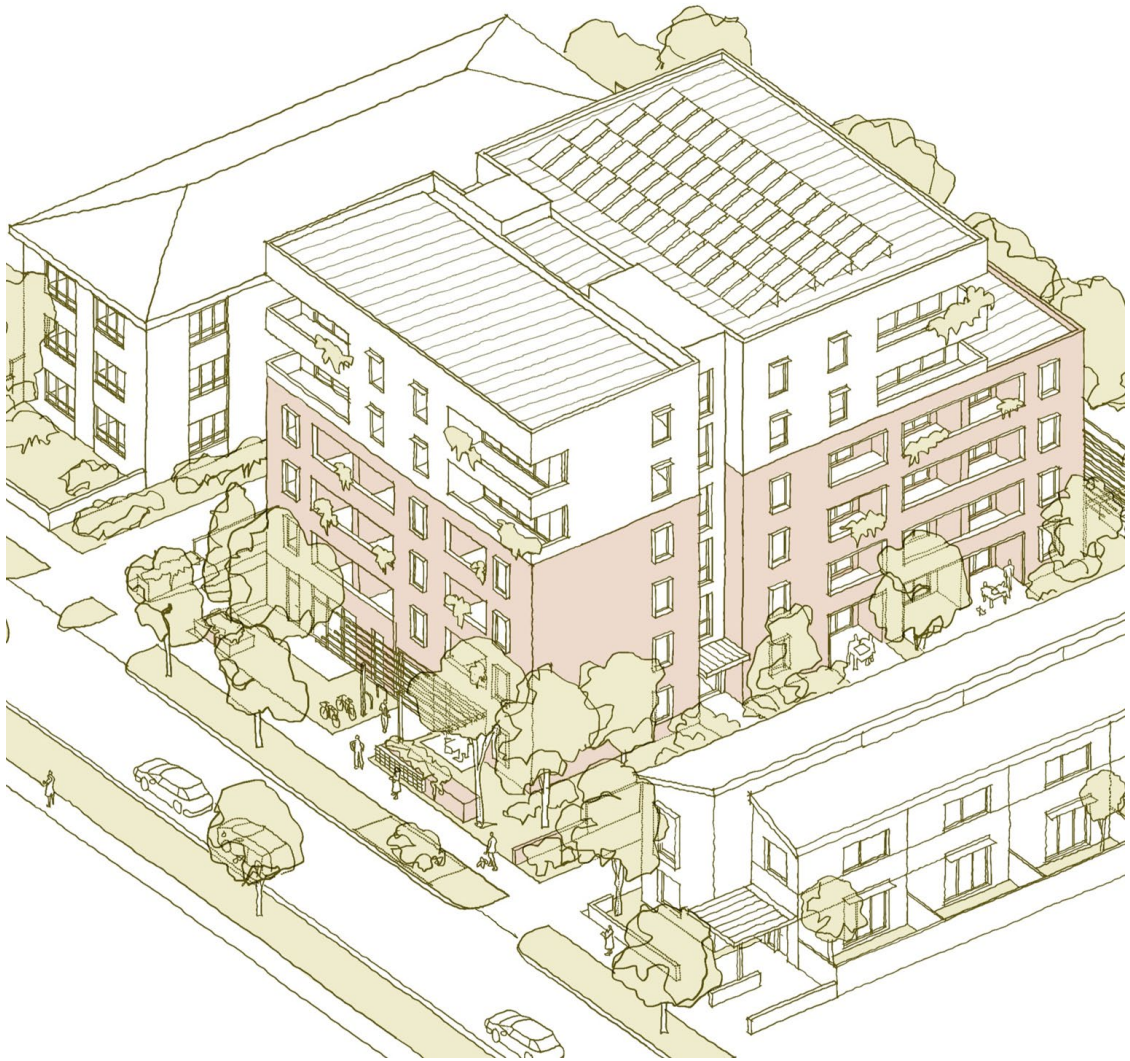
Train and Tram Zone Activity Centres Program

"We want to provide all Victorians with the choice of a well-designed home, at an affordable price, in a place where they can thrive."

Plan for Victoria

"We'll have a greater diversity of homes, so you have more choices and more opportunities to live where you want to live: close to your family, jobs, shops, public transport and community facilities and services at all stages of your life."

Mid-Rise Code benefits



More mid-rise housing in existing, well -located neighbourhoods

The needs of existing and future residents are better balanced

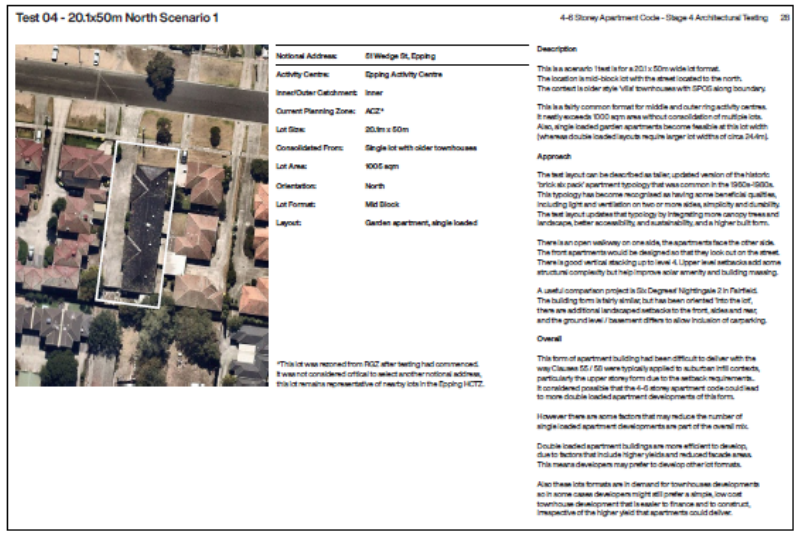
Homes are appealing, comfortable, liveable and sustainable

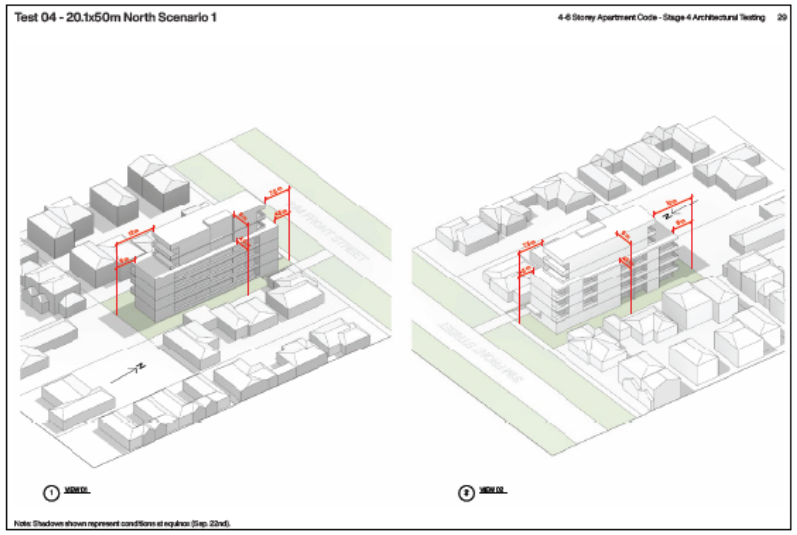
Building forms are simpler to improve construction efficiency and sustainability

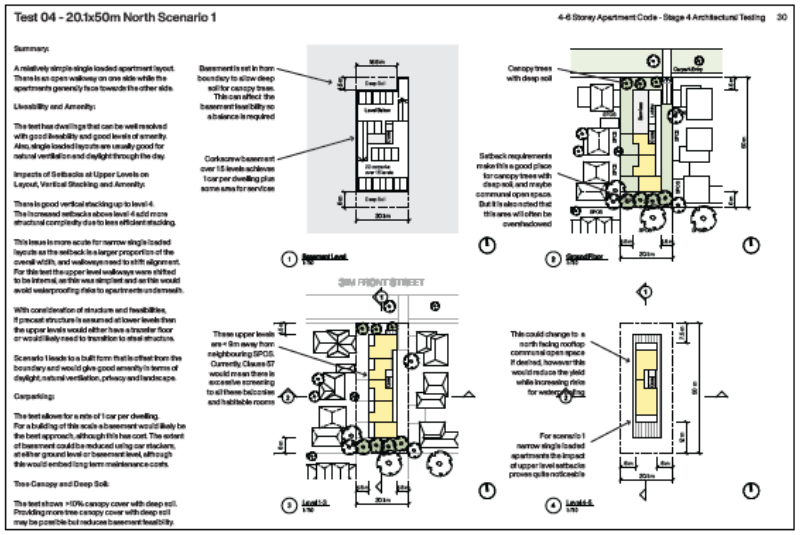
Trees have more space and deep soil to increase canopy cover, improve amenity and soften built form

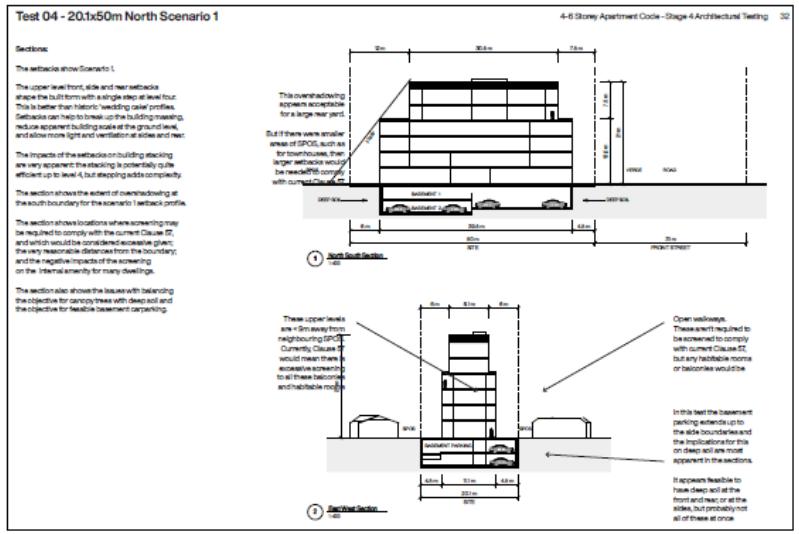
Community and developers have certainty with clear expectations for what is acceptable

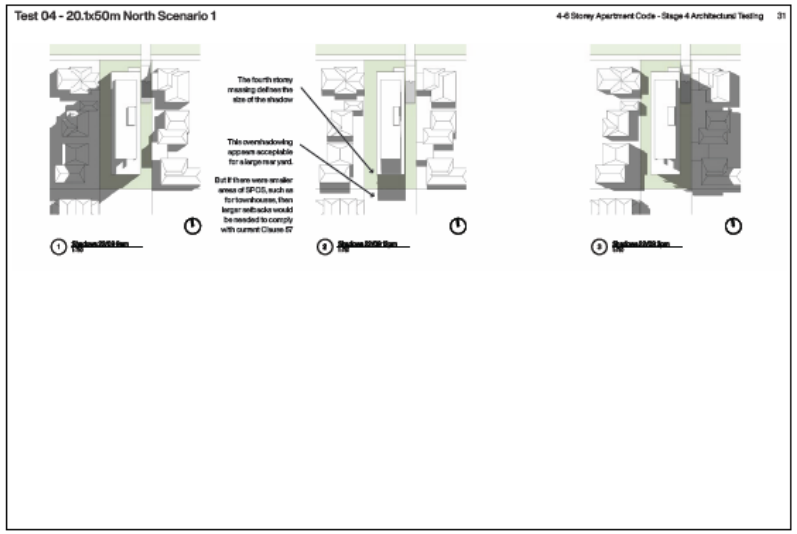
How the standards were developed

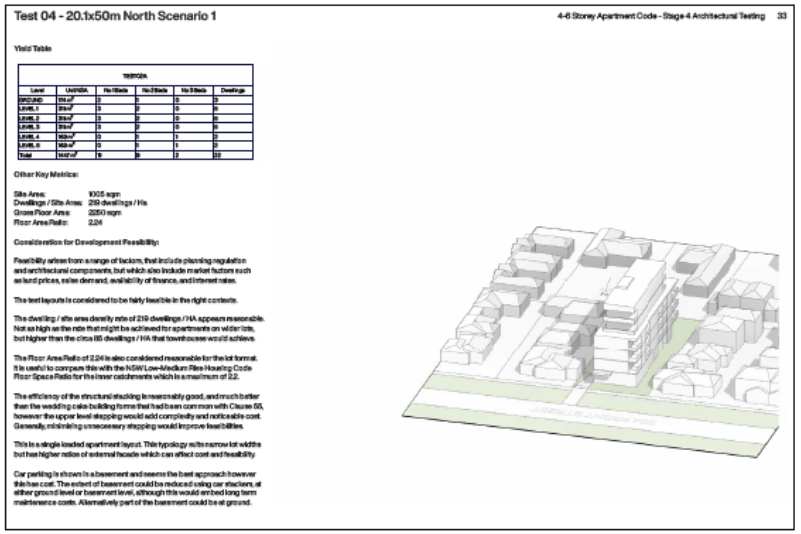












Targeted stakeholder consultation

Consultation held 25 August to 6 October 2025

42 submissions received

Feedback:

- The role of mid-rise development is important in achieving housing diversity
- Support for a targeted code at this scale
- The role of local planning policies
- Diverse views as to how the Mid-Rise Code should operate
- Consultation and community engagement should be undertaken

Type	Stakeholder
Municipal councils and associations	• Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) • Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) • 29 municipal councils (25 metro, 4 regional)
Development industry	• Housing Industry Association (HIA) • Master Builders Victoria (MBV) • Property Council of Australia (PCA)
Planning industry	• Victorian Planning and Environmental Law Association (VPELA)
Design Industry	• Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) • Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) • Urban Design Forum (UDF)

Introducing the Mid -Rise Code at clause 57

Before

3 storeys and less	4 storeys	5 storeys and more + commercial areas
Clause 55: Townhouse and Low-Rise Code	Clause 57: Four storey residential development	Clause 58: Better Apartments Design Standards

After

3 storeys and less	4 to 6 storeys	7 storeys and more + commercial areas
Clause 55: Townhouse and Low-Rise Code	Clause 57: Mid-Rise Code	Clause 58: Better Apartments Design Standards
No change	New deemed to comply operation	Application changed

Standards in the code

Mid-Rise Code

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS	Site description
	Design response

*Standard applies if Walls on boundaries and Side and rear setbacks standards are not met

**Standard applies if Side and rear setbacks standard is not met

URBAN CONTEXT	LIVEABILITY		EXTERNAL AMENITY
Street setback	Parking location	Room depth	Overshadowing secluded open space*
Side and rear setback	Street integration	Daylight to new windows	Overlooking**
Walls on boundaries	Building entry and circulation	Natural ventilation	SUSTAINABILITY
Site coverage	Private open space	Storage	Permeability and stormwater management
Access	Communal space	Accessibility	Waste and recycling
Tree canopy	Functional layout	Building separation within a site	Noise impacts
Front fences		Light courts	Energy efficiency

Mid-Rise Code

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS	Site description
	Design response

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Front fences		Light courts	Energy efficiency

Site description and design response

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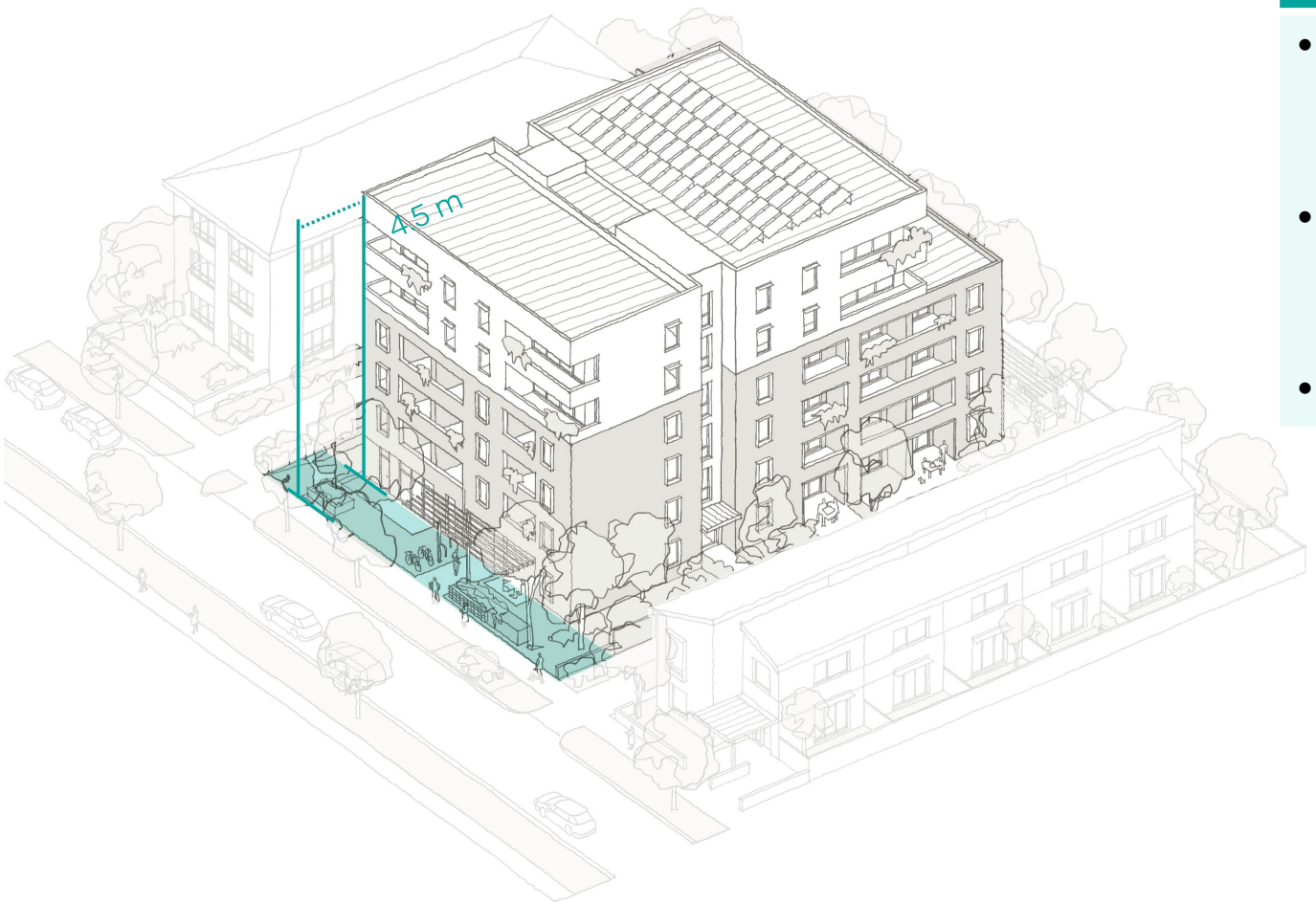
Key requirements

- Focus on future urban development to facilitate change
- Site description is to support assessment, where deemed to comply standards have not been met.

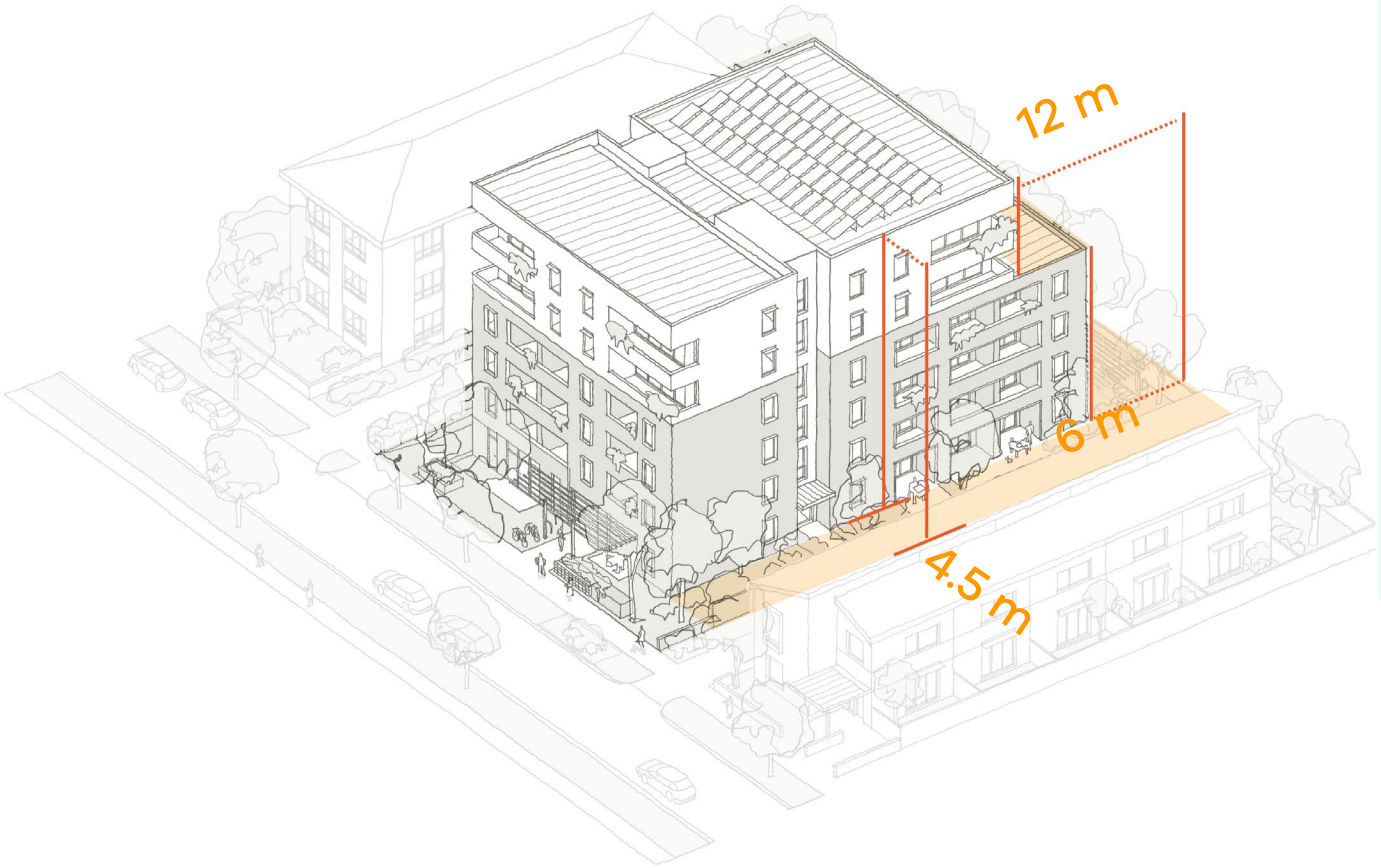
Street setback



Key requirements

- A minimum setback of 4.5 metres from front street.
- A minimum setback of 3 metres from side street.
- No upper-level setback required.

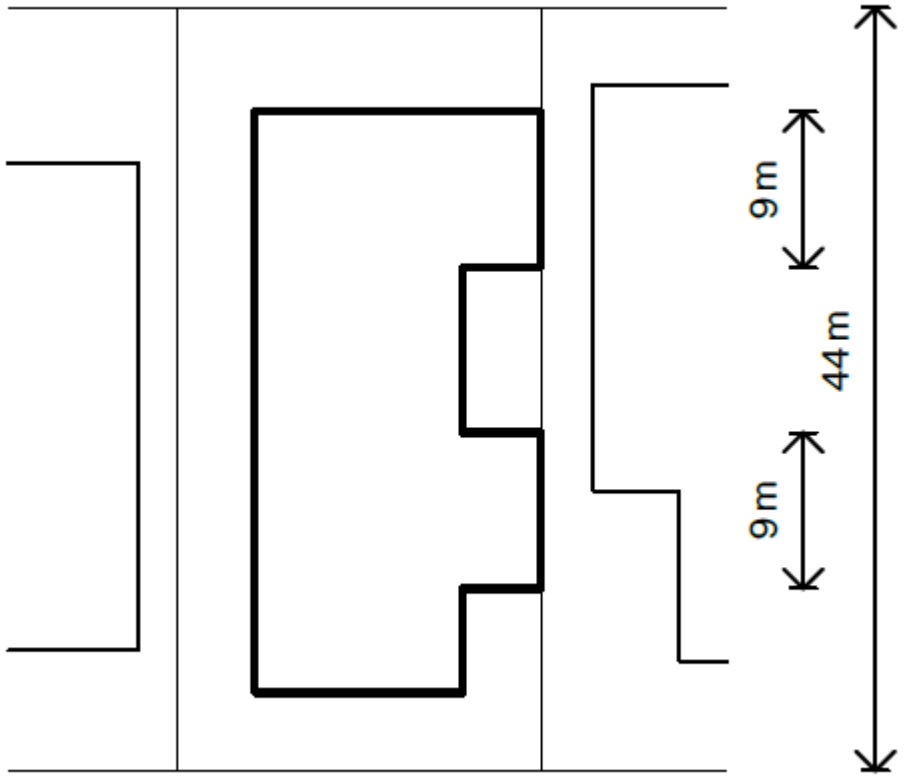
Side and rear setbacks



Key requirements

- A minimum setback of 4.5 metres from side or rear boundaries.
- A setback of least 6 metres up to 13.5 metres and 12 metres for a height over 13.5 metres, if setback to south boundary.
- If the side and rear setbacks are met, the overlooking standard does not apply.

Walls on boundaries



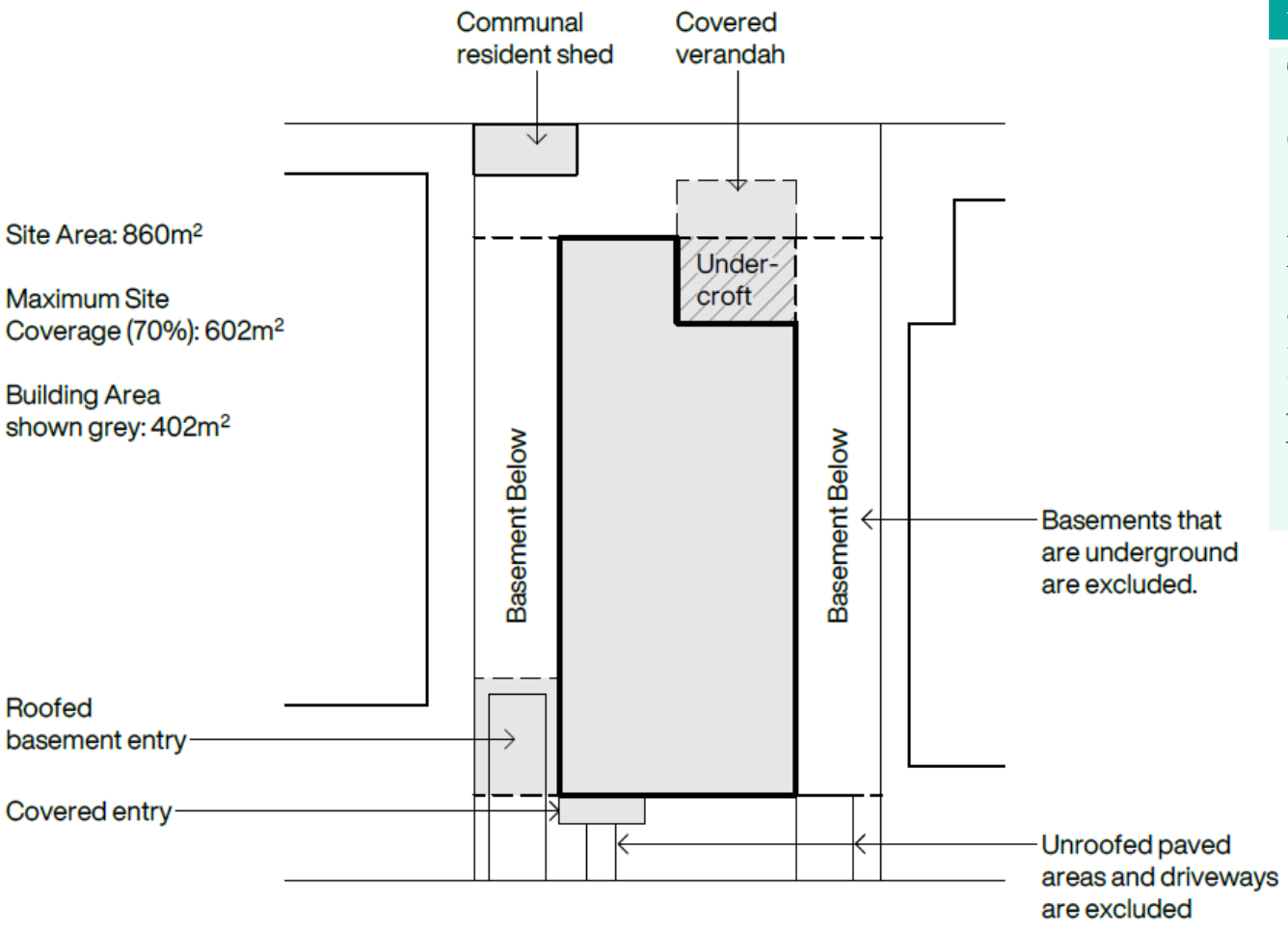
Key requirements

10 metres plus 25% of the remaining length of the boundary of an adjoining lot, or

The length of existing or simultaneously constructed walls or carports abutting the boundary on an abutting lot.

The height of a new wall constructed on the boundary does not exceed 3.6 metres unless abutting a higher existing or simultaneously constructed wall.

Site coverage

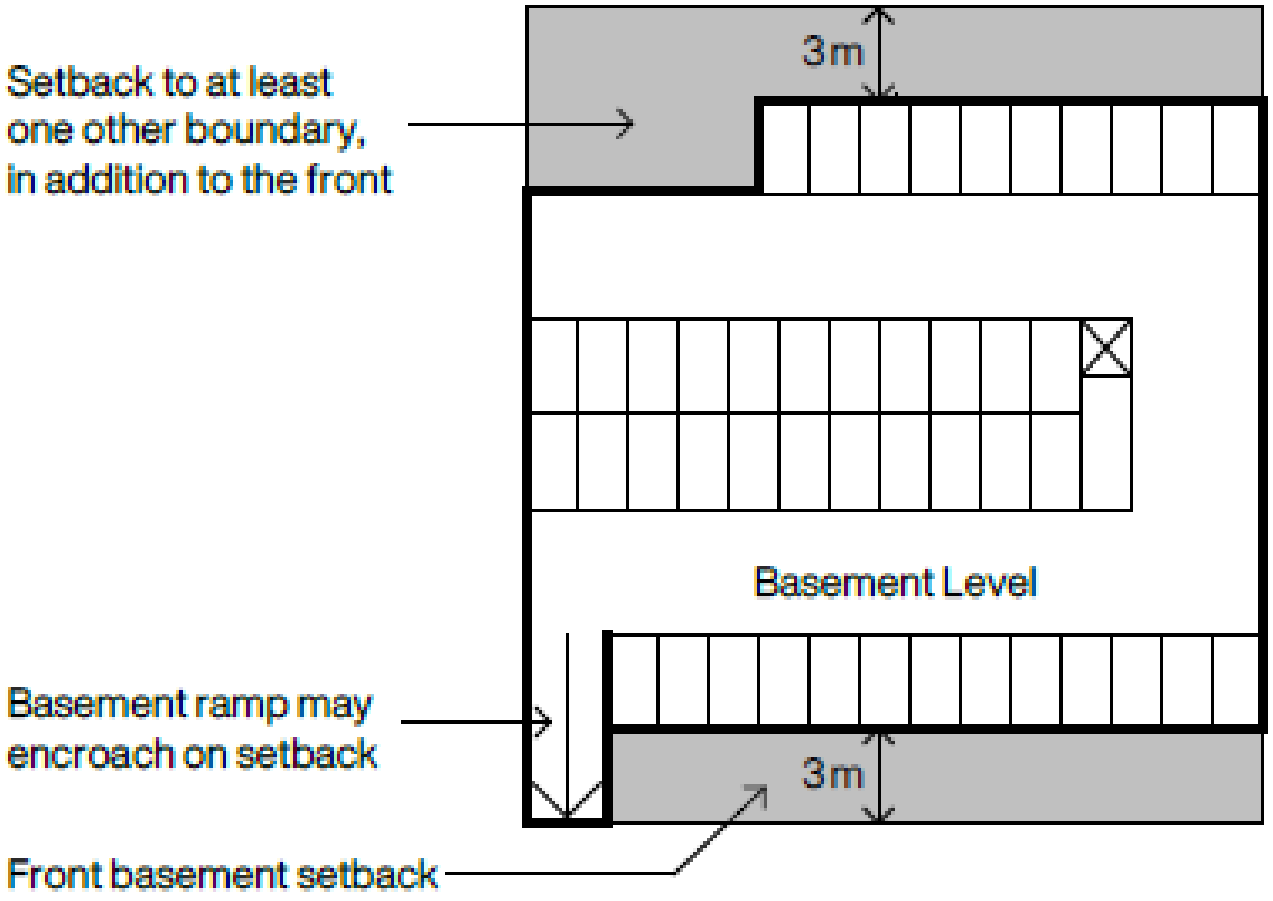


Key requirements

The site area covered by buildings does not exceed 70%

Limits overdevelopment at ground level and provides sufficient space for landscaping, deep soil, open space and permeability

Tree canopy



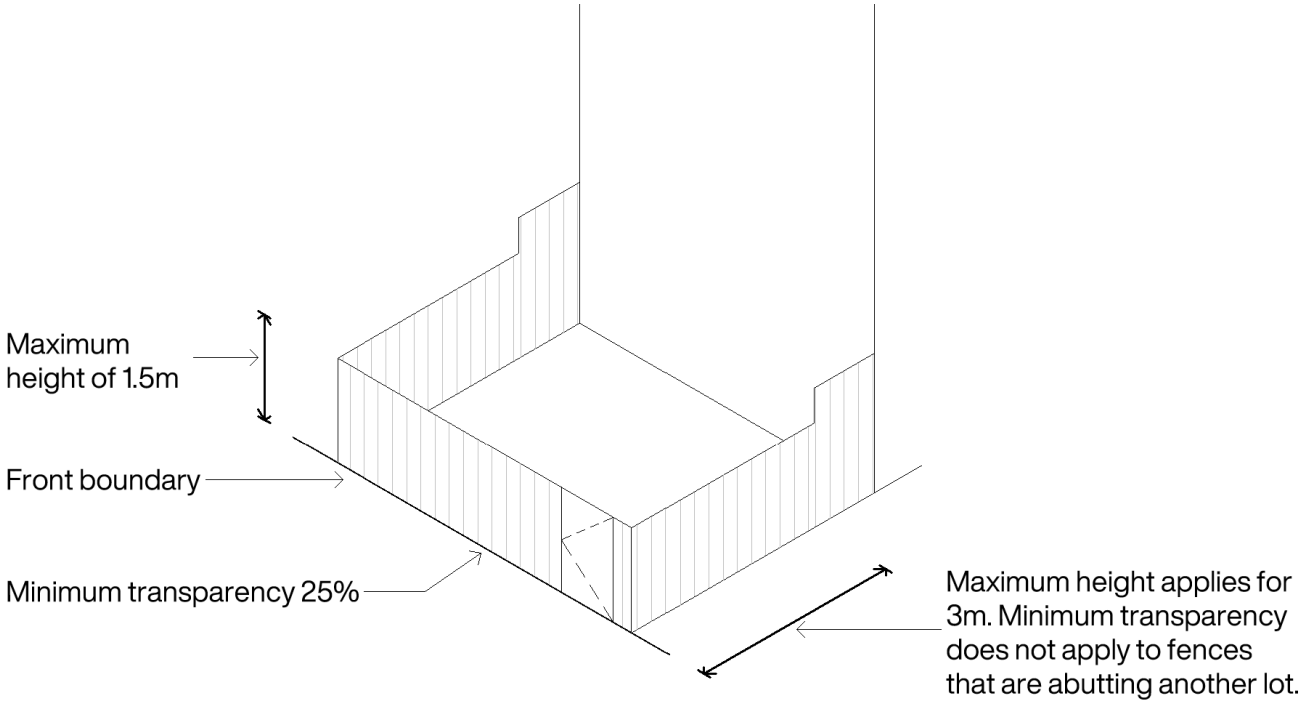
Key requirements

Basements of buildings are setback at least 3 metres from the frontage and at least one other boundary.

This increases area for deep soil planting, supports planting of larger canopy trees and improves long term landscaping outcomes.

DTP is currently reviewing the tree canopy requirements in response to significant stakeholder feedback.

Front fences



Street context	Maximum front fence height	Minimum front fence transparency
Streets in a Transport Zone 2	2m	25%
Other streets	1.5m	25%

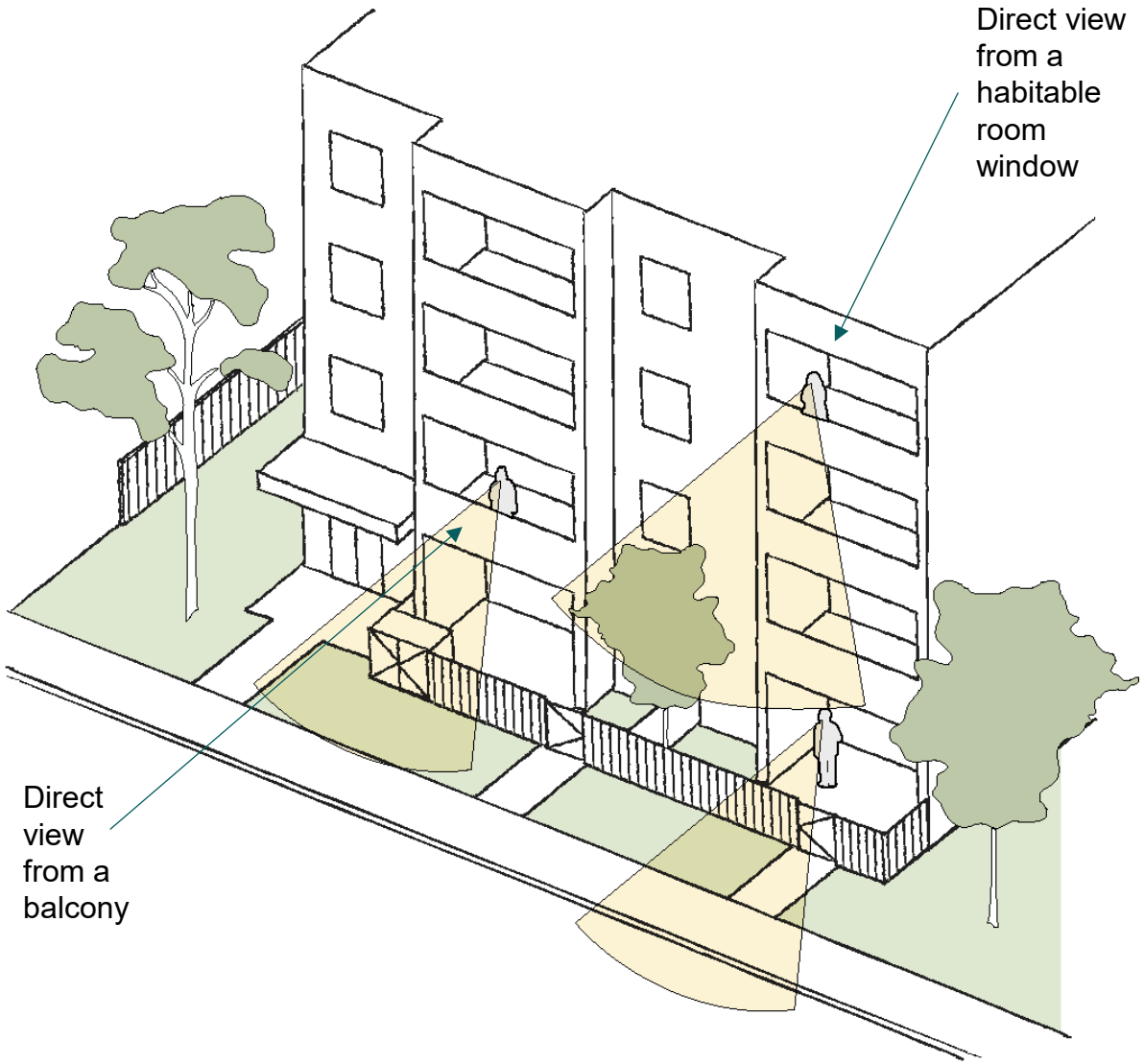
Key requirements

A minimum front fence transparency of 25% has been introduced.

Transparency is measured as the percentage of the fence that is open when viewed perpendicular to the fence line.

This improves visibility to the street, supports passive surveillance and enhances street interface.

Street integration



Key requirements

Development is oriented to front a street.

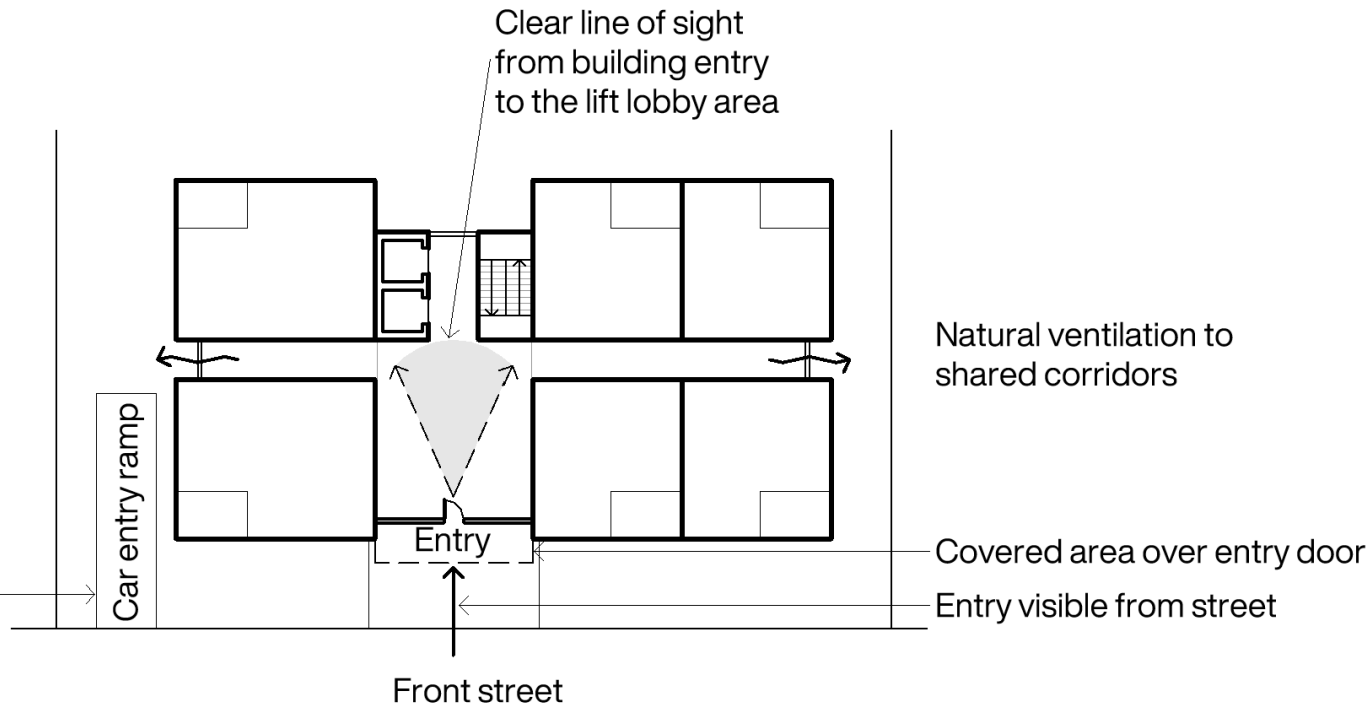
A direct view from at least one balcony or a habitable room window at each storey of the building to each street and public open space.

Pedestrian entries are located on street frontages.

Car parking and internal waste collection areas are visually concealed from the street.

One mailbox is provided for each dwelling, and at least one parcel locker is provided for every five dwellings. Mailboxes and parcel lockers are communally located.

Building entry and circulation



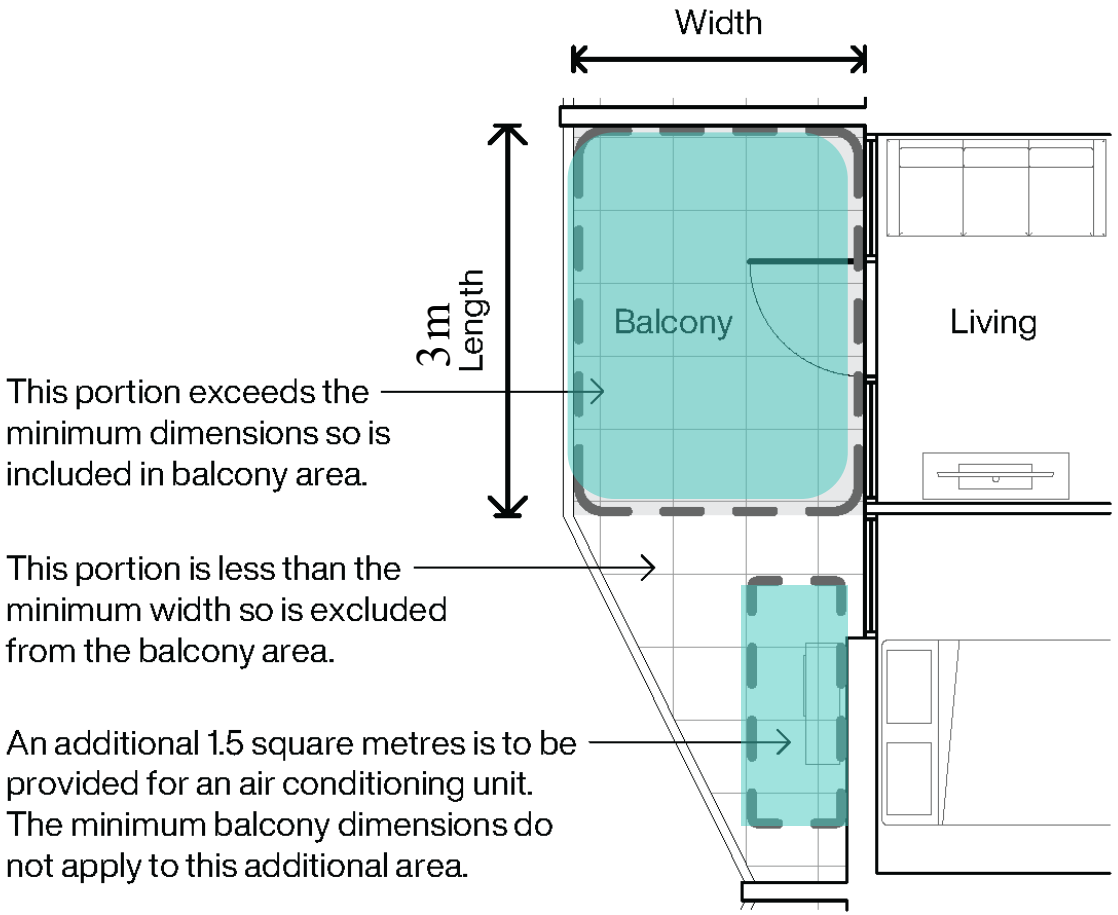
Key requirements

Pedestrian building entries are separated from vehicle entry points.

Shared corridors and common areas:

- Have at least one source of natural light and natural ventilation.
- Are unobstructed by building services; and
- Have a clear sightline from the building entry to the lift lobby area at ground level.

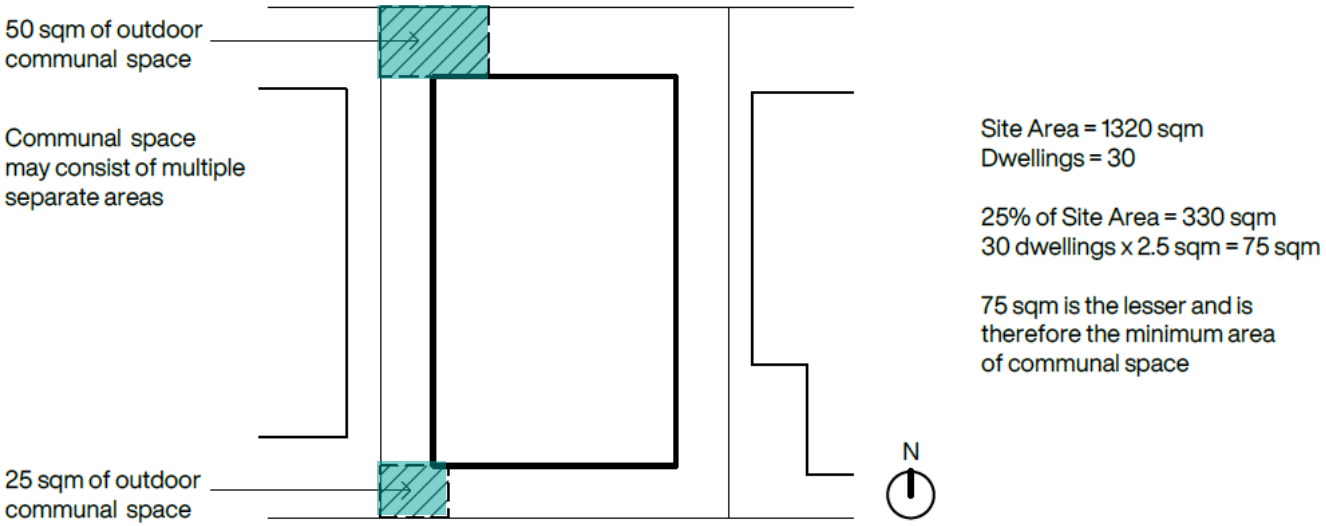
Private open space



Key requirements

- Ground level private open spaces is reduced to 15 square metres to align with balcony requirements and to support larger ground level outdoor spaces and opportunities for meaningful tree planting.
- A minimum length of 3 metres for a balcony.
- Options to provide a smaller balcony, if a dwelling faces north or south has been deleted.

Communal space



Site Area = 1320 sqm
Dwellings = 30

25% of Site Area = 330 sqm
30 dwellings x 2.5 sqm = 75 sqm

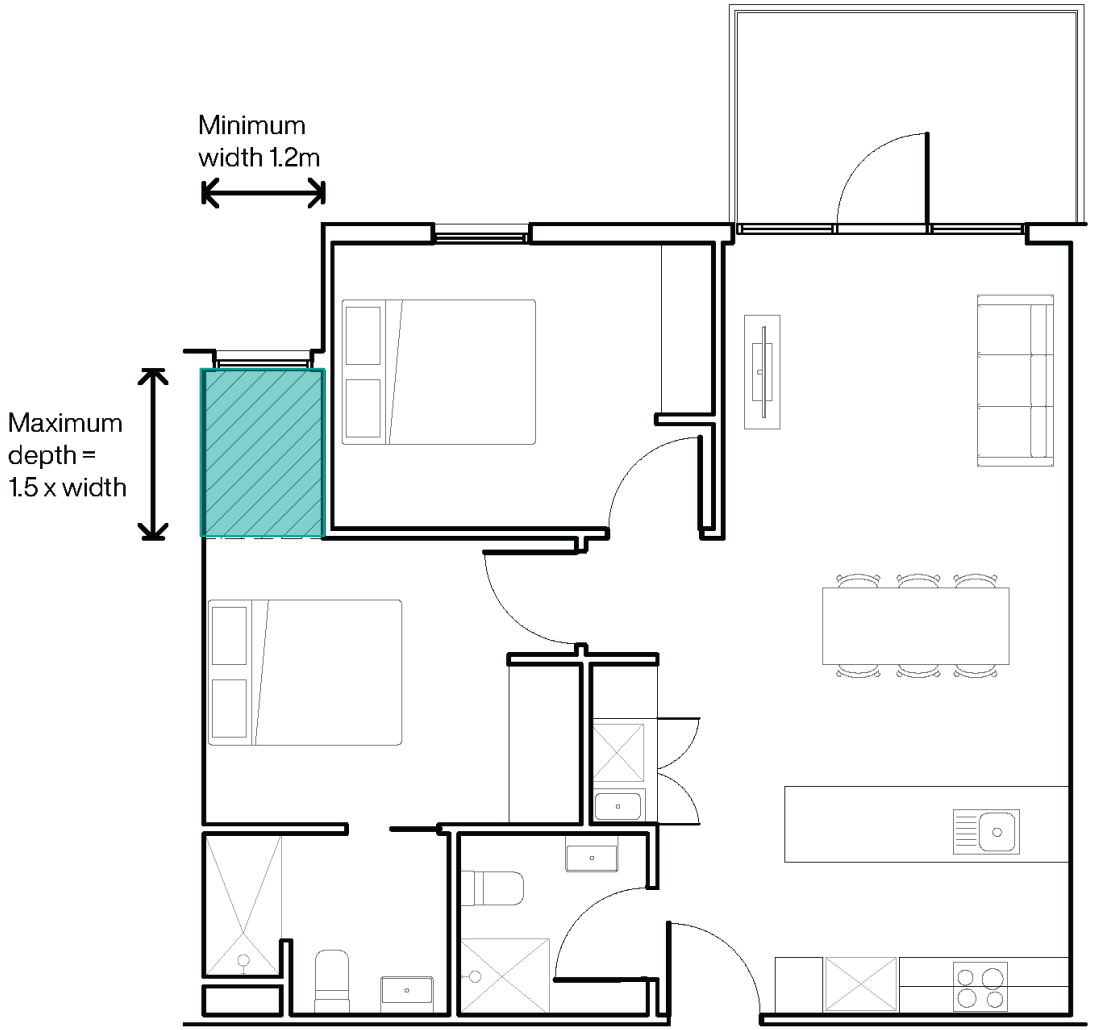
75 sqm is the lesser and is therefore the minimum area of communal space

Key requirements

A development of 10 or more dwellings is to include communal space accessible to all residents of at least:

- 2.5 square metres per dwelling; or 25 per cent of the site area, whichever is the lesser.
- If outdoor communal space is provided, 50 per cent of the area or 25 square metres whichever is the greater, is not to be overshadowed for a minimum of two hours between 9 am and 3 pm on 22 September.
- Changed from communal open space to communal space to provide flexibility for allowing indoor communal space.
- Deleted requirement that communal outdoor open space should be located on the north side of a dwelling.

Daylight to new windows



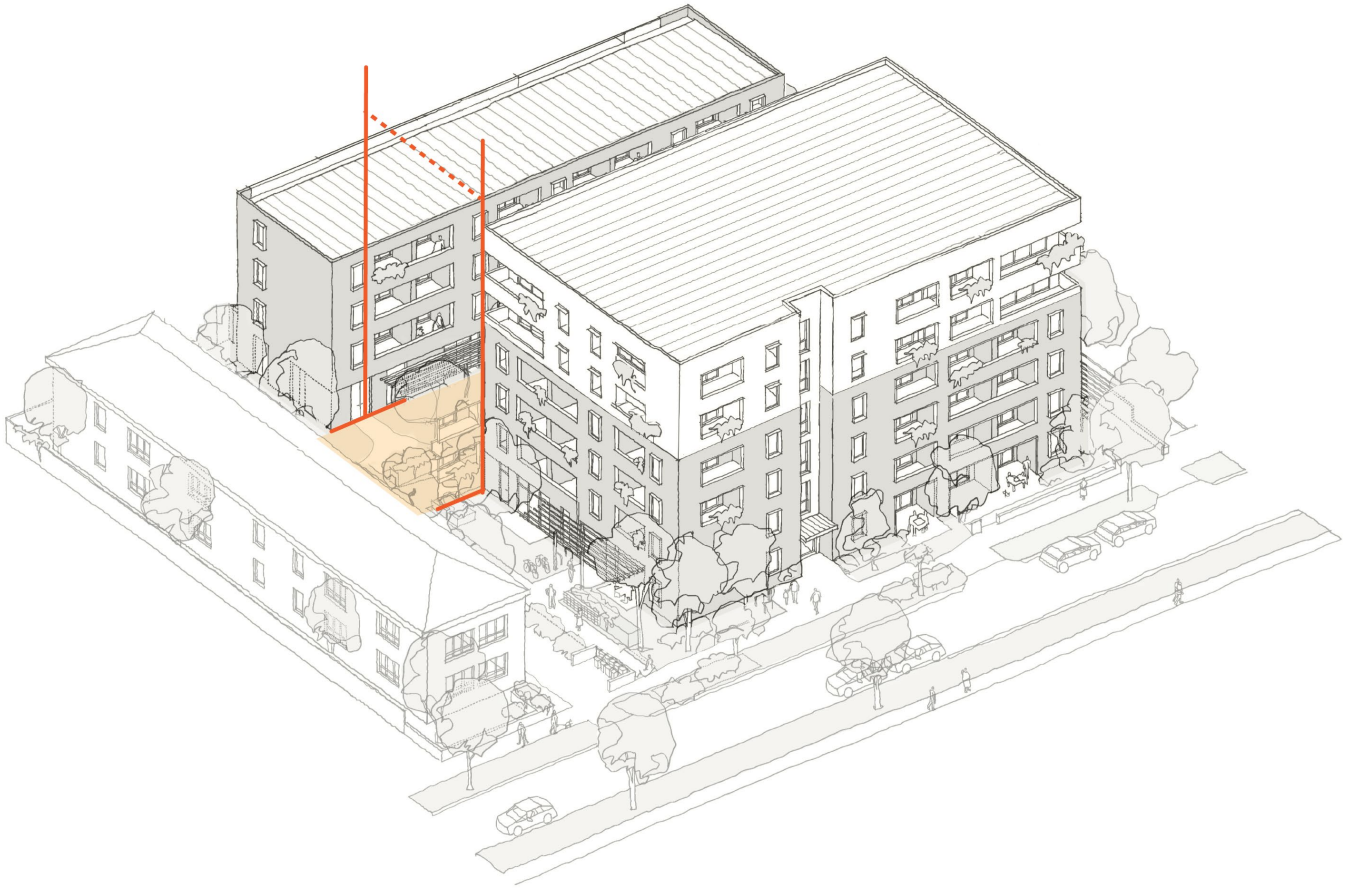
Key requirements

The standard has been updated to specify that a habitable room window is not located in a basement.

A habitable room window can be located in a basement noting this is not a deemed to comply assessment.

All bedrooms must require a window which is an existing requirement.

Building separation within a site



Key requirements

Standard manages internal views, daylight and outlook for living rooms and balconies.

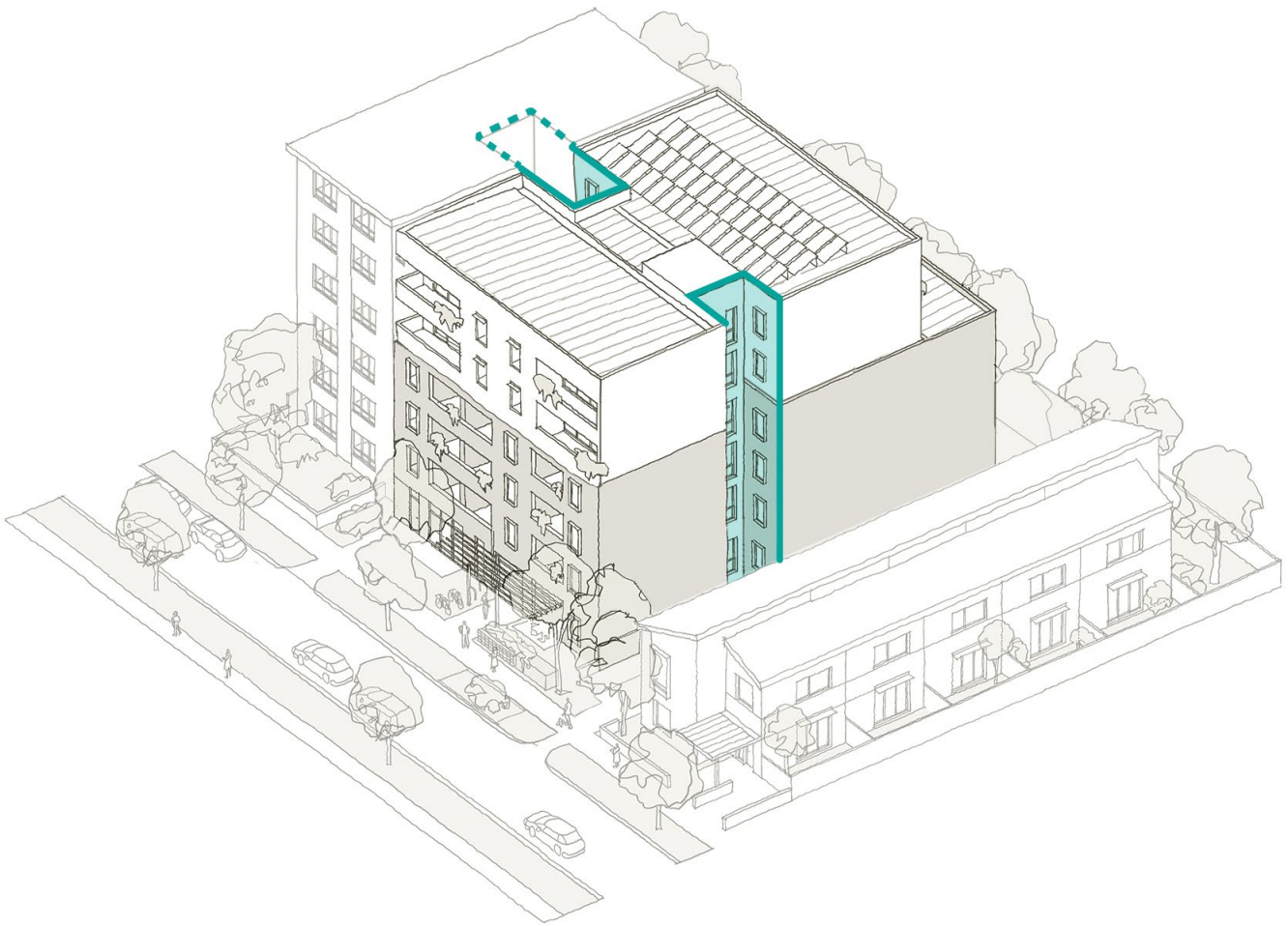
A new standard for building separation:

- Walls of buildings that contain a habitable room window or balcony are set back from other walls of buildings on a site by at least 9 metres.

This does not apply to a wall that forms part of a light court.

Deleted the 4.5 metre setback to bedrooms in response to stakeholder feedback.

Light courts

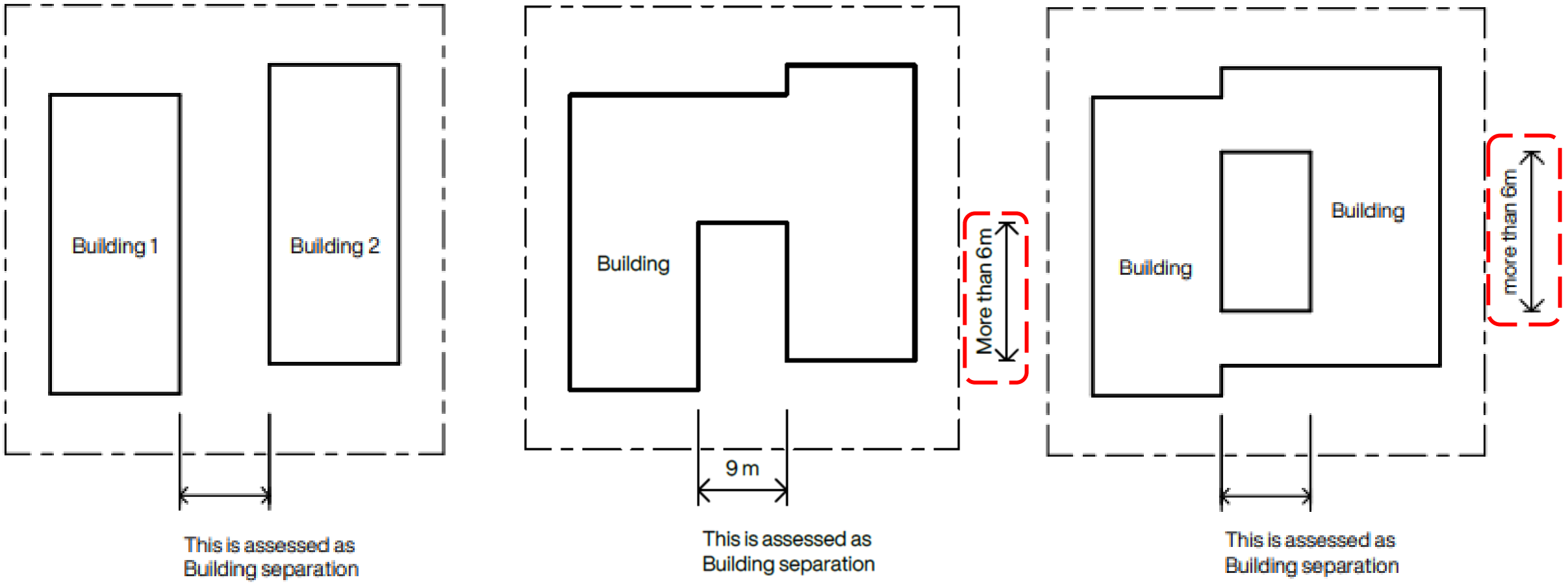


Key requirements

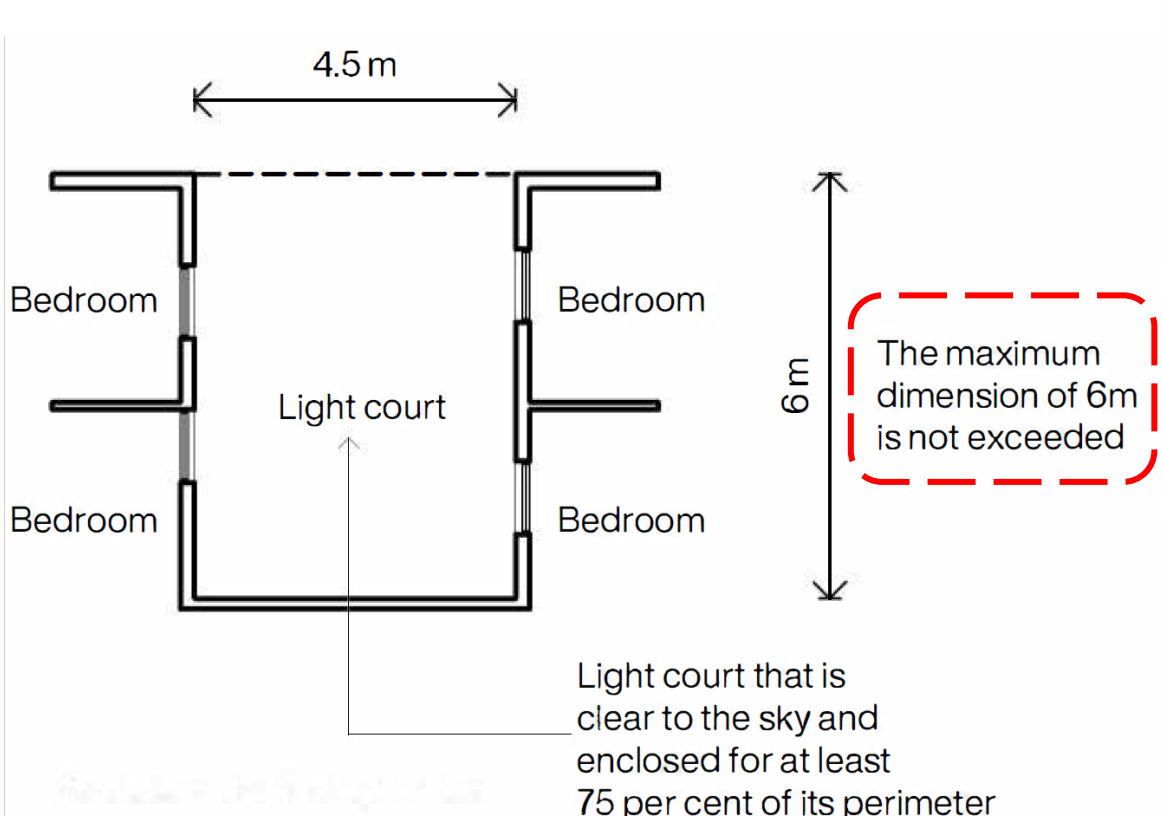
A new standard for light courts to:

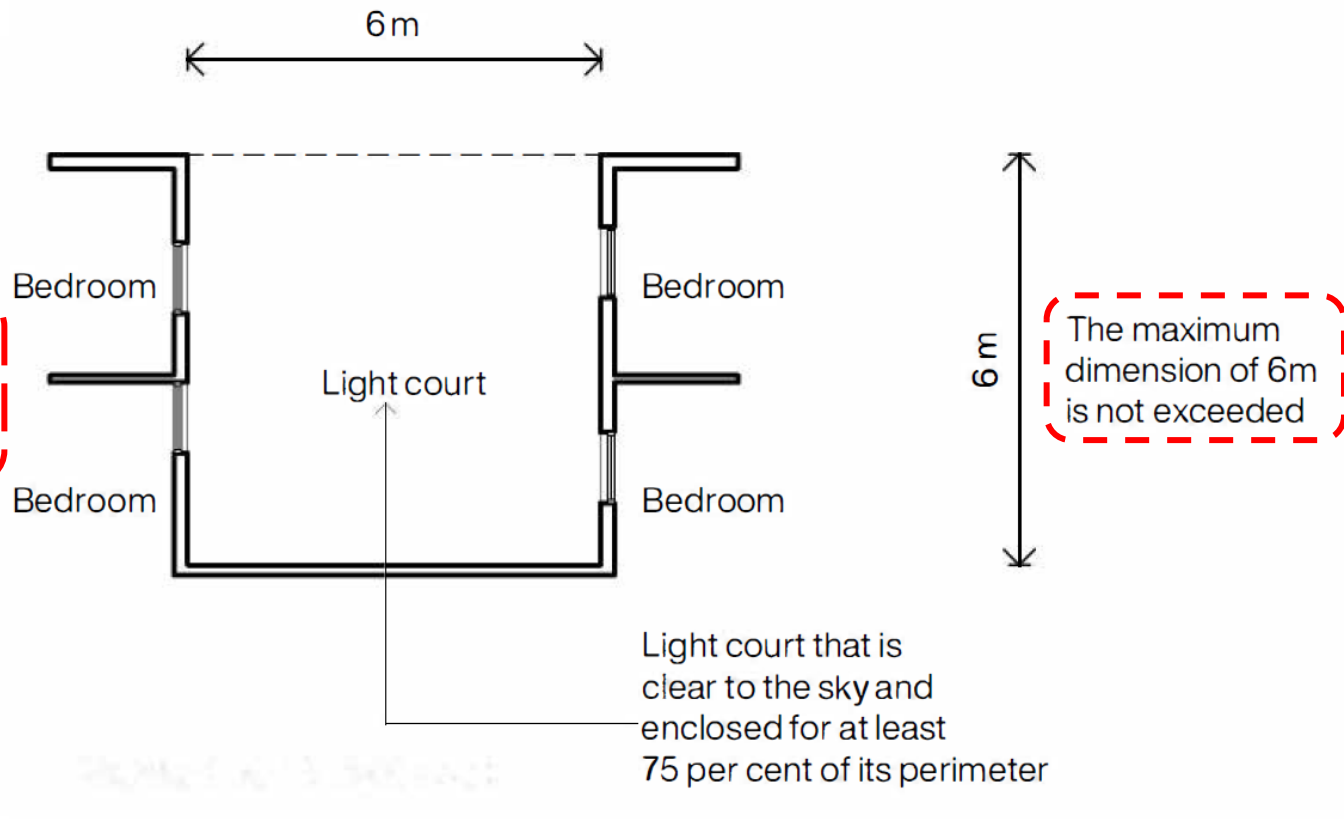
- Establish minimum dimensions of 4.5 metres x 4.5 metres
- A maximum dimension of 6m and a maximum area of 36 square metres to distinguish between a 'light court' and 'building separation'.

Building separation assessment

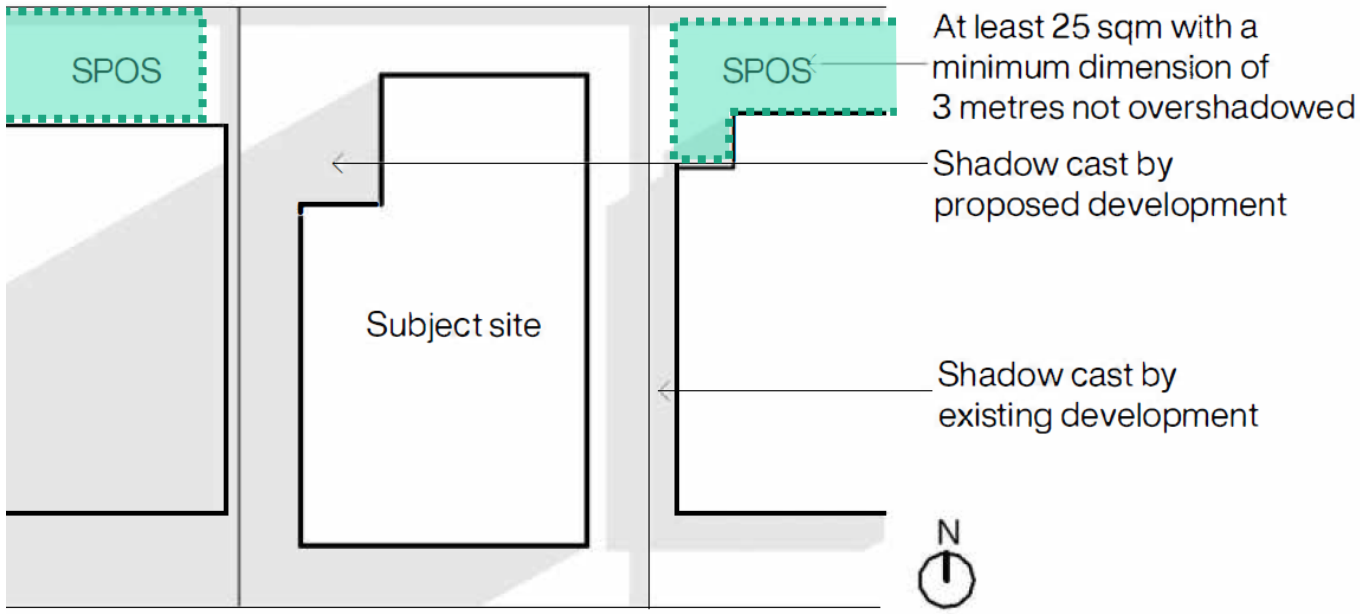


Light court assessment





Overshadowing secluded private open space

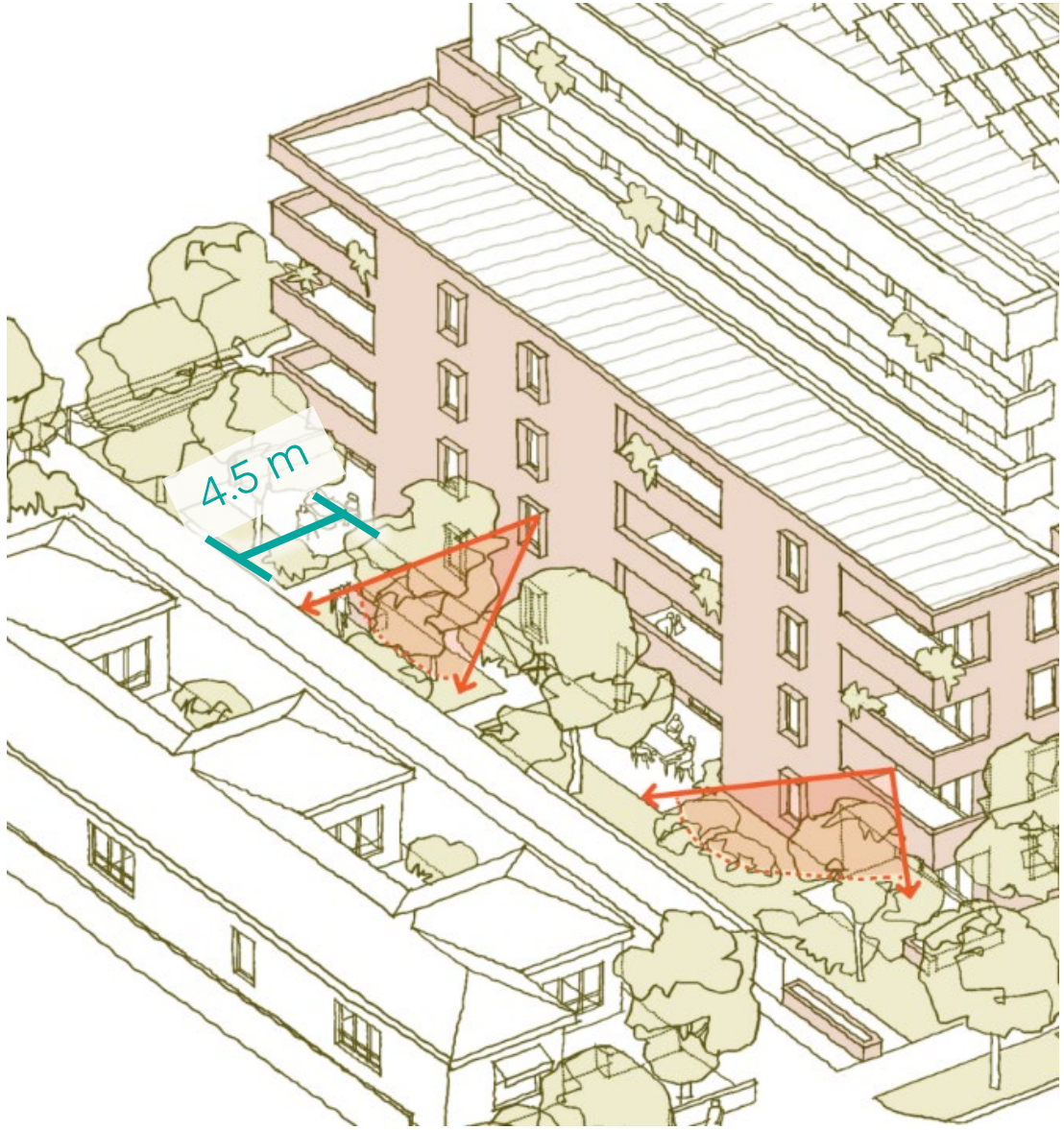


Key requirements

This standard does not apply to developments that meet the following standards:

- Side and rear setbacks
- Walls on boundaries

Overlooking



Key requirements

This standard does not apply if side and rear setback is met.

Overlooking standard:

- The horizontal distance measurement for overlooking is 6 metres.
- Sill heights and/or obscure glazing must be 1.5 metres.
- Bedrooms are included as a habitable room.

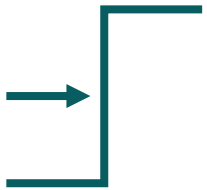
Application and operation

Application

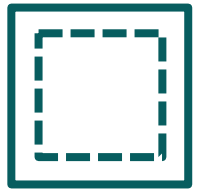
	Zone	3 storeys and below	4 to 6 storeys	7+ storeys
Residential	Neighbourhood Residential Zone Township Zone (outside UGB) General Residential Zone	Clause 55	Clause 57 considered as a decision guideline (if applicable)	Apartments = Clause 58 Note: In NRZ clause 58 is a decision guideline Other residential development = N/A
Residential	Mixed Use Zone Township Zone (inside UGB) Residential Growth Zone Housing Choice and Transport Zone		Clause 57	
Commercial	Commercial 1 Zone Commercial 3 Zone	Apartments = clause 58 Other residential development = clause 55/57 considered as a decision guideline (if applicable)		
Special purpose	Activity Centre Zone			
Special purpose	Special Use Zone Comprehensive Development Zone Capital City Zone Docklands Zone Priority Development Zone Precinct Zone	Apartments = clause 58 Other residential development = N/A		

Local variations in residential zone schedules

Less restrictive local variations* are allowed to the following standards:



Street setback



Site coverage

Front fences

*Variations only permitted to the Mixed Use Zone, Township Zone and Residential Growth Zone

Overlays

Overlays continue to apply, and their objectives and decision guidelines remain relevant.

The objectives and decision guidelines of the Neighbourhood Character Overlay continue to apply. However, the NCO cannot modify clause 57 standards.

Operation of clause 57 provisions

Code	Zone can modify standards	NCO can modify standards	Other overlays can specify different requirement
Townhouse and Low - Rise Code Clause 55	Yes*	Yes+	Yes
Mid - Rise Code Clause 57	Yes*	No	Yes

*only specified standards can be modified by a residential zone schedule; must be less restrictive
+only specified standards

Deemed to comply - Operation and requirements

Sections of each standard	
Objectives	An objective describes the outcome to be achieved in the completed development.
Standards	A standard contains the requirements to meet the corresponding objective.
Decision guidelines	If a standard is not met, the decision guidelines set out the matters that the responsible authority must consider before deciding if the corresponding objective is met.

A development must meet all of the applicable objectives contained in clause 57.

If a development meets a standard:

- The corresponding objective is deemed to be met;
- The responsible authority is not required to consider the corresponding decision guidelines.

If a development does not meet a standard:

- The responsible authority must consider the applicable decision guidelines in determining whether the corresponding objective is met.

Matters the Responsible Authority is not required to consider

In deciding an application under clause 57, the responsible authority is exempt from and is not required to consider:

- The **Municipal Planning Strategy and Planning Policy Framework**, unless an applicable decision guideline specifies otherwise.
- The **purpose or decision guidelines of the relevant zone**, unless an applicable decision guideline specifies otherwise.
- The **decision guidelines in clause 65**, unless an applicable decision guideline specifies otherwise.
- **Section 60(1), 60 (1A), 60 (1B) and 84 (B)** of the Planning and Environment Act.

Notice of an application

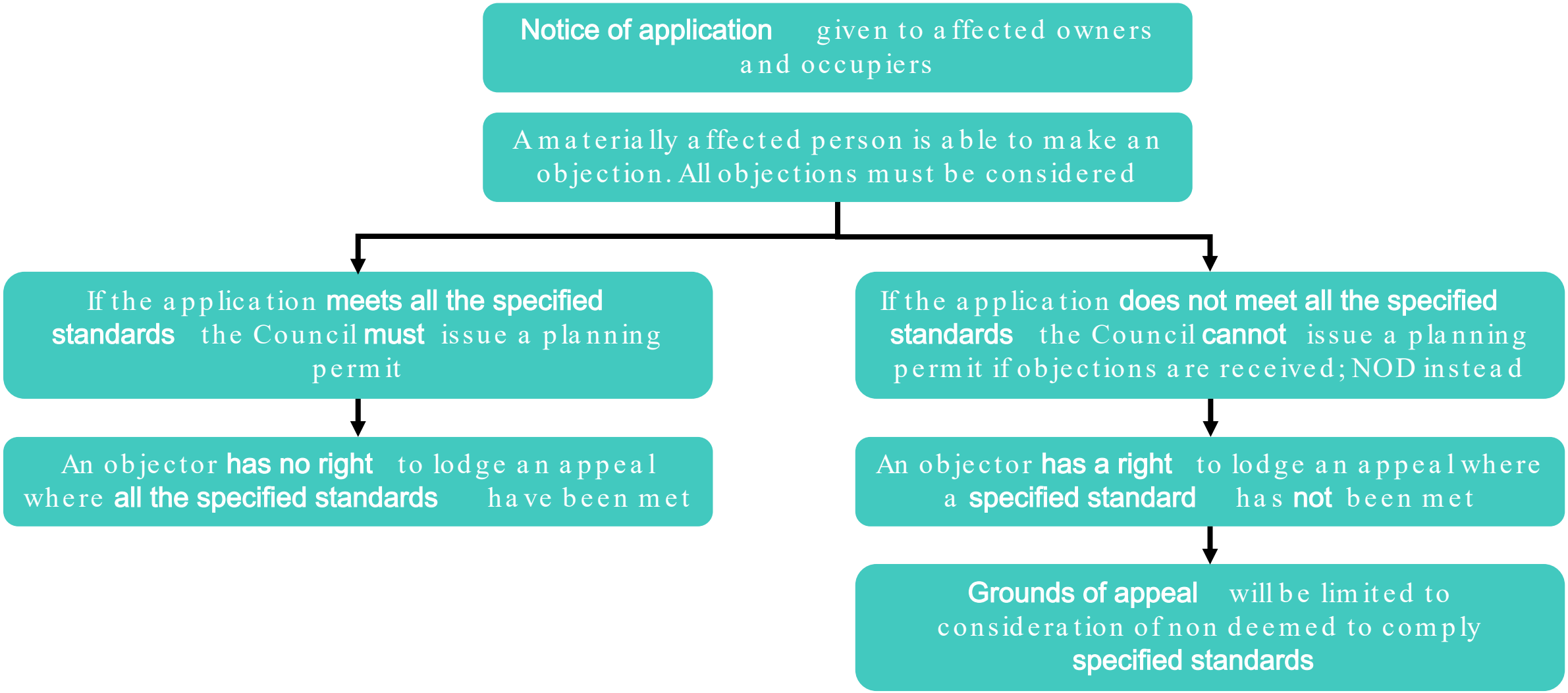
No changes to notice of an application

Notice of an application can continue to be given to affected to adjoining owners and occupiers and any other persons.

A **materially affected person** is able to make an objection. All objections must be considered.

Exemption from review

A deemed to comply development is exempt from third party VCAT review



Exemption from review

Exemption from review

An application is exempt from the decision requirements of section 64(1), (2) and (3) and the review rights of section 82(1) of the Act if all the specified standards under clause 57.02, and 57.04 are met.

Specified standards

URBAN CONTEXT
Street setback
Side and rear setbacks
Walls on boundaries
Site coverage
Access
Tree canopy
Front fences

EXTERNAL AMENITY
Overshadowing secluded open space*
Overlooking^

*Standard applies if Walls on boundaries and Side and rear setbacks standards are not met

^Standard applies if Side and rear setbacks standard is not met

Transitional provisions

Transitional provisions are specified in each applicable zone.

Previous provisions apply to applications lodged before the commencement date of VC300 on 16 April 2026. Mid-Rise Code applies to new applications lodged after commencement on 16 April 2026.

Application of transitional provisions

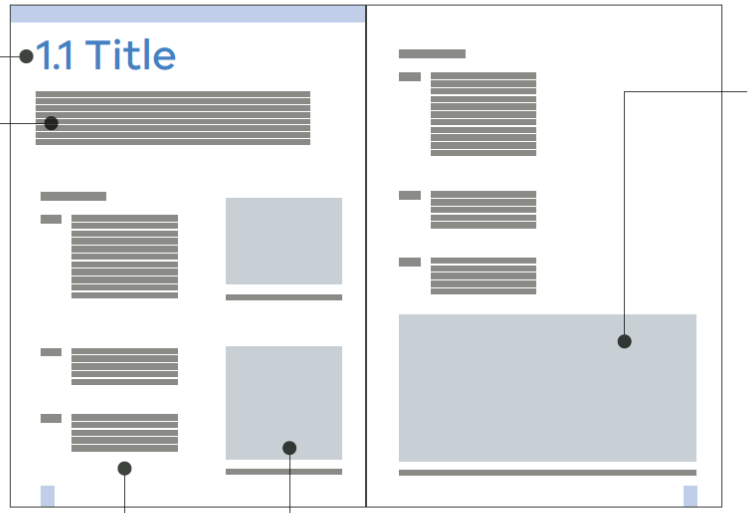
Application timing	Applicable provisions
Lodged before commencement of Amendment VC300	Clause 57 (pre -VC300)
Section 72 application to amend a pre -VC300 permit	Clause 57 (pre -VC300)
Lodged after commencement of Amendment VC300	Clause 57 (post -VC300)

Design quality

Tools and guidance

Mid-Rise Design Guide

Guidance page layout



Section & title

Preamble

A brief introductory text that sets the context for the section. It outlines key considerations and why the content of the section is important in achieving high-quality outcomes.

Precedent images

Precedent images drawn from built projects are used to illustrate real-world examples of design techniques. These provide inspiration, reinforce good outcomes, and demonstrate how the design techniques can be applied across different contexts.

Design techniques

Design techniques provide practical strategies to inform design responses. They provide a range of considerations for different elements of the design of a mid-rise residential building. Each technique has an individual identifying number.

Diagrams & sketches

Images to illustrate design techniques and potential outcomes.

Site design

1.1 Siting, massing and orientation

Siting, massing, and orientation involve arranging buildings on a site in response to its opportunities, constraints, and the anticipated future development of the area.

Well-considered siting and orientation greatly influences dwelling amenity, affecting the usability of spaces, accessibility, outlook, privacy, access to sunlight and daylight, natural ventilation, and energy efficiency. These design decisions are also essential for successfully integrating canopy trees and landscaping into developments, supporting urban cooling, improved microclimates, and broader greening objectives.

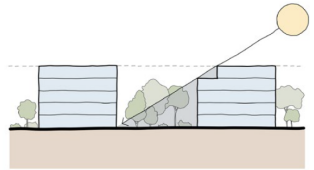
Sunlight and daylight

1.1.1 Consider the direction of sunlight during the day, across seasons, and contextual factors such as overshadowing.

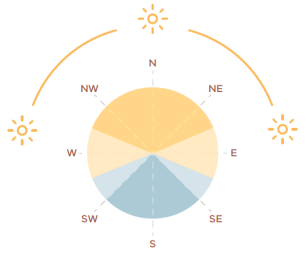
1.1.2 Orient buildings to the north to take advantage of direct sunlight, warmth from the sun and ambient daylight.

1.1.3 Avoid siting buildings in a way that will result in single aspect dwellings with all habitable rooms and windows facing south, except where they face a street or other part of the public realm.

1.1.4 Allow for shallower building depths to optimise solar access and natural ventilation.



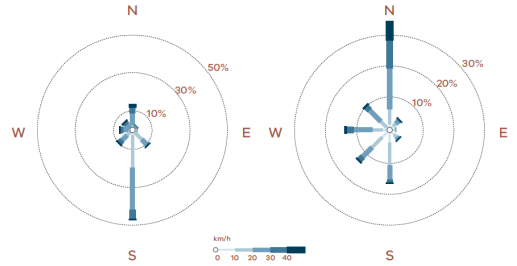
▲ 1.1.a Providing shallower building depths with increased building separation can deliver greater solar access, daylight, natural ventilation and views.



◀ 1.1.b Consider the direction of the sun during the day, to orient buildings and habitable room windows to take advantage of solar exposure and achieve more consistent daylight in dwellings.

Wind

1.1.5 Consider the prevailing wind directions, wind velocity and wind patterns for the site, across different seasons and times of the day.



▲ 1.1.c A wind rose illustrates the frequency, direction, and strength of winds at a given location; this example, drawn from Bureau of Meteorology data at Melbourne Airport, shows summer and winter afternoon wind speeds and directions.

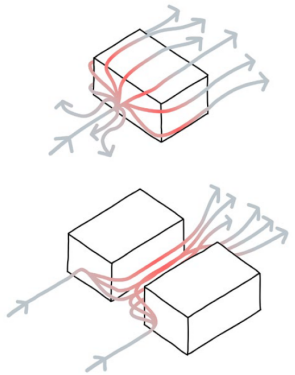
1.1.6 Locate and orient buildings to respond to prevailing wind directions, taking advantage of gentle prevailing breezes.

1.1.7 Locate and orient buildings, dwellings, landscape buffers and open spaces to minimise negative impacts from winds that are excessively strong, hot or cold.

1.1.8 Avoid long, consistent rows of buildings that could create wind tunnel effects.

1.1.9 Provide breaks between buildings, landscape and other elements to help disrupt continuous wind flows.

1.1.10 Provide chamfered or curved corners to buildings to help reduce wind turbulence, particularly where side streets intersect with the wind path.



▲ 1.1.d Consider wind direction and how breeze paths can be channeled through siting and massing.

Site design

Existing site features

1.1.11 Identify existing vegetation and local ecology on the site and adjoining properties. Consider opportunities to retain, enhance, or reconnect remnant native vegetation, habitat corridors, and other significant landscape elements.

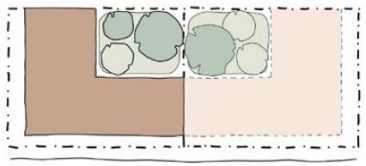
1.1.12 Arrange buildings to preserve and enhance mature trees and landscape features.

1.1.13 Consolidate and locate deep soil areas close to existing canopy trees. Larger areas of deep soil are better for soil health, ecology and water infiltration.

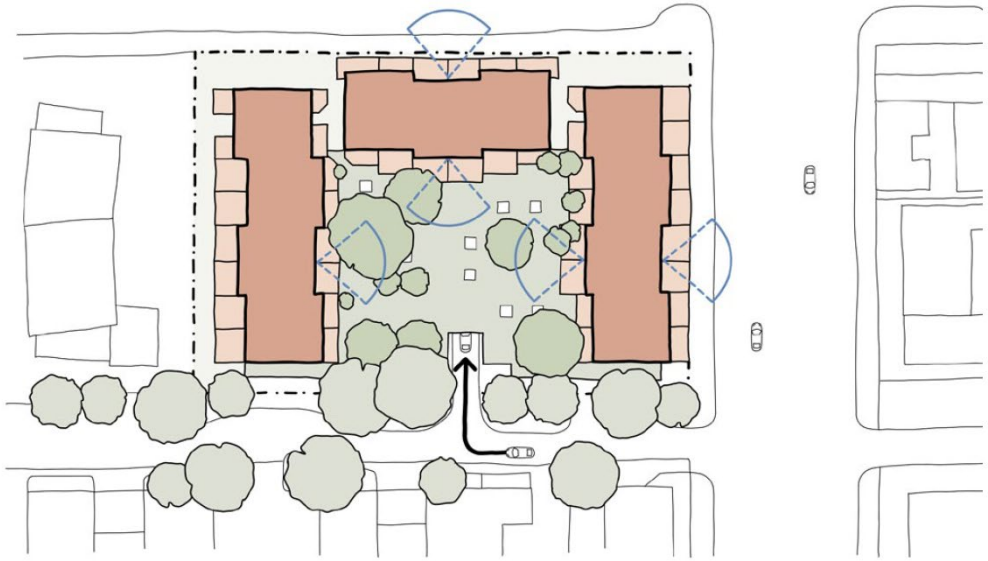
1.1.14 Preserve significant features such as heritage built form. Reuse existing building structures where possible, for environmental and cultural benefits.

1.1.15 Consider how buildings can be sited to mitigate the impacts of external noise sources, such as major roads, tram or rail corridors, garage entries, industrial buildings or entertainment venues.

▲ **1.1.e** Combining landscaping with the appropriate siting of buildings can protect and connect nearby patches of vegetation, enhancing their ecological function.



▲ **1.1.f** Deep soil areas and mature trees are consolidated and co-located on site and between neighbouring sites.



▲ **1.1.i** A well-sited development considers the relationship between buildings, communal open space and the public realm. Optimised building depths, orientation, appropriate separation and well-configured open spaces enhance dwelling amenity by improving access to daylight and natural ventilation, and strengthening outlook to green spaces and the public realm.

Urban interface

2.1 Activation

The human scale is where buildings are most directly experienced and where design has the greatest impact on the public realm. Creating inviting, accessible, and enjoyable environments for pedestrians ensures that buildings contribute positively to the streetscape, provide comfort, and enhance the everyday experience of those who use and pass by them.

Activation from visible activity and passive surveillance are central to creating a safe, welcoming and interesting place. Design should support opportunities for activation and passive surveillance where the development interfaces with the public realm, including streets, parks and public open spaces.

Activating public interfaces

2.1.1 Locate common areas, lobbies, stairways and communal spaces, to be visible from the public realm.

2.1.2 Arrange windows, balconies, yards or other habitable portions of dwellings to maximise views towards the public realm.

2.1.3 Design street interfaces and features within setbacks to respond to context and create a distinct transition between public and private spaces.

2.1.4 In mixed-use developments, provide active frontages from commercial or retail areas.

2.1.5 Consider locating front yards, private open space or communal space within setback areas that directly interface or have a visual connection with the public realm.

2.1.6 Incorporate seating, low walls or landscaped edges at pedestrian interfaces that support people to linger.

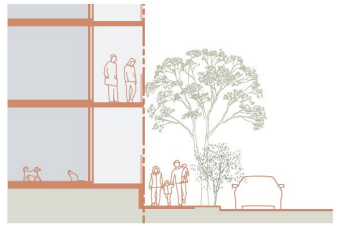
▲ **2.1.a** Maximise outlook and passive surveillance by orienting the development and dwellings to streets, parks and other public interfaces.

▲ **2.1.b** Design frontages with visible active uses, balconies and windows to contribute to a safer and more vibrant public realm.

▲ **2.1.c** Improve passive surveillance through raised floor levels and visually permeable fence treatments.

▲ **2.1.d** Enhance privacy and public realm greening through raised floor levels, planters and landscaping.

▲ **2.1.e** Enhance street tree canopy and shade through generous setbacks and on-site tree planting and landscaping.



▲ **2.1.f** Improve dwelling privacy through elevated floor levels where there is no setback alongside a public footpath.

▲ **2.1.g** A sheltered seating area which faces onto the street invites residents to spend time, activating the public realm.

St Marys Housing, St Marys NSW
McGregor Westlake Architecture

Urban interface

Façade ordering

2.2.9 Organise façade elements, including openings, balconies, reveals, recesses, and other forms of articulation, in a clear and cohesive manner that enhances the appearance of buildings.

2.2.10 Integrate projections such as awnings, eaves, shading devices, balconies, and pergolas in a manner that supports the overall façade ordering, environmental performance, and contributes to a human-scaled streetscape.

2.2.11 Provide eaves, awnings or other horizontal shading devices on north facing windows, that have a depth that will block sun in the summer but not the winter.

▲ **2.2.e** A consistent arrangement of windows and details along vertical and horizontal lines, are also organised into a clear bottom-middle-top hierarchy that creates a highly cohesive and appealing facade.

115 Camden High Street, Camden, UK
Morris + Company

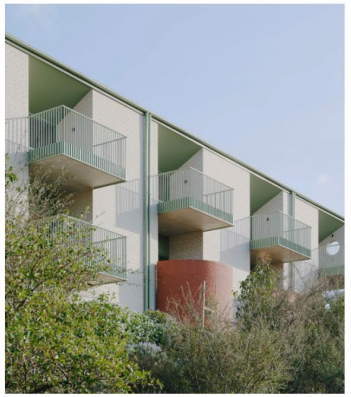
Materials and detailing

2.2.14 Use materials that have texture, warmth, provide visual interest and respond to the nearby built forms and natural environment.

2.2.15 Incorporate textures, articulation and detailing that create shadows across the façade to provide depth and contrast that varies across the day.

2.2.16 Use material contrast and colour accents sparingly to highlight key building elements.

2.2.17 Provide higher-quality materials, detailing and human-scaled elements where people interact with and experience the building up close.



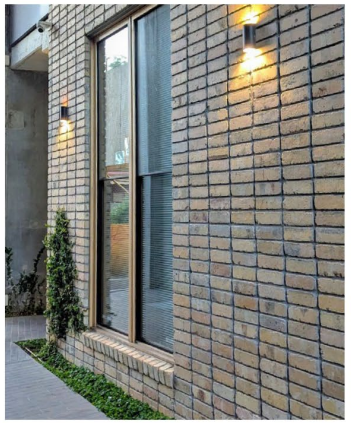
▲ **2.2.h** Semi-projecting balconies align with the building's vertical articulation, with green accents cohesively applied to soffits, balconies and downpipes.

Housing Choices, Belmont VIC
Kennedy Nolan Architects

2.2.18 Integrate lighting as part of the building design to gently highlight façade elements and textures, and enhance legibility of the building and its entries.

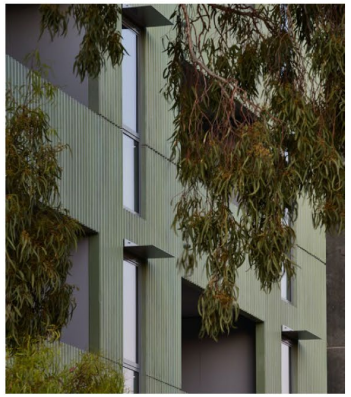
2.2.19 Manage the brightness and the direction of external lighting so that it does not cause unnecessary resource usage, light pollution or nuisance for residents, neighbours and pedestrians.

2.2.20 Incorporate greenery into the façade design, such as planters, climbers and vertical gardens.



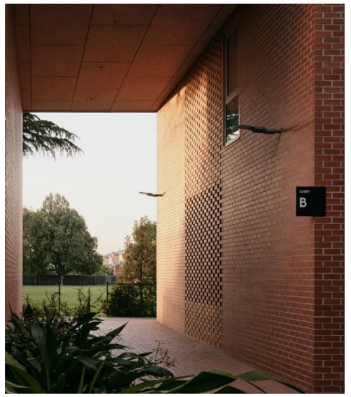
▲ **2.2.i** Lighting directed up and down produces diffuse reflections from the building façade which gently illuminates pedestrian areas while limiting glare.

Nightingale Anstey, Brunswick VIC
Breathe



▲ **2.2.j** Textured and coloured concrete panels blend in with the surrounding vegetation, and provides a clear ordering of the façade openings with clean lines reinforced by the discrete detailing at the joints and simple window shades.

Nightingale Bowden, SA
Breathe

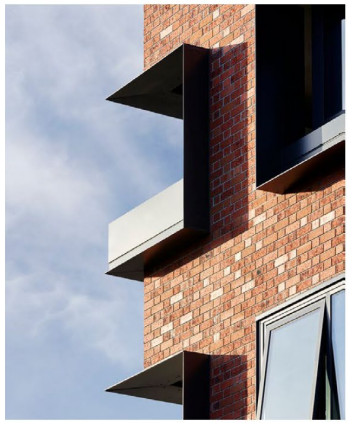


▲ **2.2.k** This pedestrian walkway features red bricks with hit-and-miss brickwork detailing to provide visual interest.

Balfe Park Lane, Brunswick East VIC
Kerstin Thomas Architects

▲ **2.2.l** Vegetation is incorporated into the design of this façade, cascading over balconies and emphasising the horizontal ordering of the façade.

97 Mathoura Road, Toorak VIC
Carr



▲ **2.2.m** The arrangement and detailing of windows and shading devices projections contributes to a cohesive façade design.

Alexandra, Clifton Hill VIC
Ola Studio

2.4 Entry & access

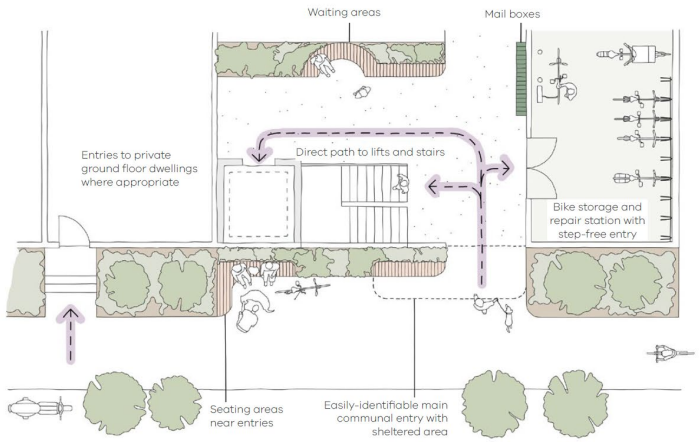
Entry and access strongly shape how residents and visitors arrive, move through, and experience a development. Well-designed access arrangements enhance safety, legibility, and provide a clear sense of address. Prioritising safe, convenient movement for pedestrians and cyclists also encourages active transport, supporting healthier lifestyles and contributing to a more human-oriented, welcoming streetscape.

Pedestrian entries

2.4.1 Provide pedestrian entries which are clearly visible from the public realm, with direct access from the street, parks and other public areas.

2.4.2 Ensure primary building entries and lobbies are visible from the public realm, and provide a direct path to stairs, lifts, and other building circulation areas.

2.4.3 Provide shelter at pedestrian entries by incorporating canopies and recessed doorways.



▲ 2.4.a Clear, intuitive connection from the street to internal circulation areas, including stairs, lifts, waiting areas, mail boxes and bike parking supports ease of access, wayfinding, safety, and encourages social interaction along entry points.

2.4.4 Articulate entries with visual cues in the building façade so that people know where they should access the development.

2.4.5 Use building signage and wayfinding to further improve the legibility of entries.

2.4.6 Where ground floor dwellings have individual entries from the public realm, allow adequate space for personalisation of frontages with patio furniture and gardens.

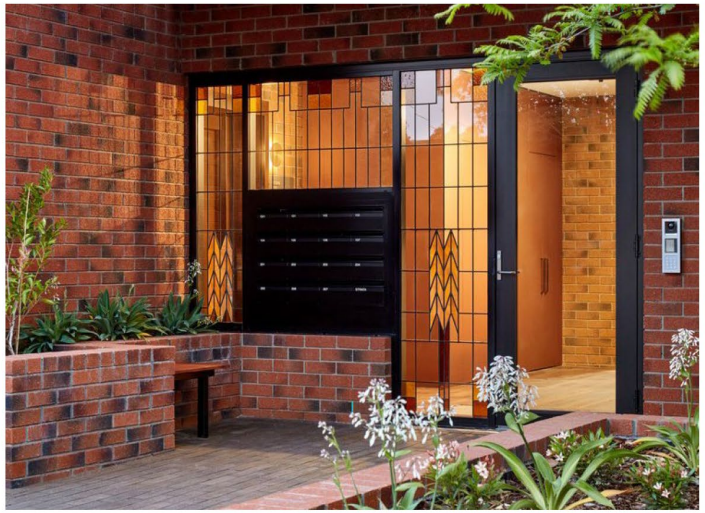
2.4.7 Provide comfortable lighting that assists people to locate building entries and encourages spending time in desired areas.

2.4.8 Minimise floor level differences between internal and external areas at entry points.

2.4.9 Integrate ramps, stairs, or other accessibility requirements into the overall building design. Avoid relying on wheelchair lifts.

▲ 2.4.b The recessed entry with a fine-grain textured wall, and a colour-accented doorway identifies the building's entry point, while providing amenity and visual interest.

115 Camden High Street, Camden, UK
Morris + Company



▲ 2.4.c Shelter, clear glazing, warm materials, lighting, garden beds and seating by the mailboxes provide a welcoming, comfortable and legible primary building entry.

Clifton and Central, Mt Lawley WA
MJA Studio

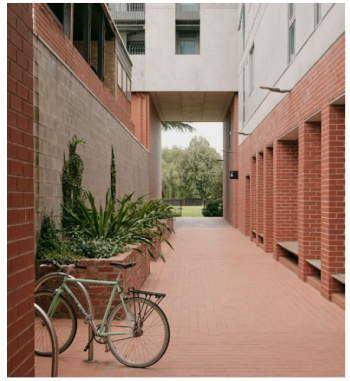
Cycling access and parking

2.4.10 Locate resident bicycle parking areas to be directly accessible from the public realm and near pedestrian entries, rather than in basements or in car parks.

2.4.11 Provide safe, direct and step-free cycling access through the site, with convenient circulation from the street and adjacent cycling paths to bicycle parking areas.

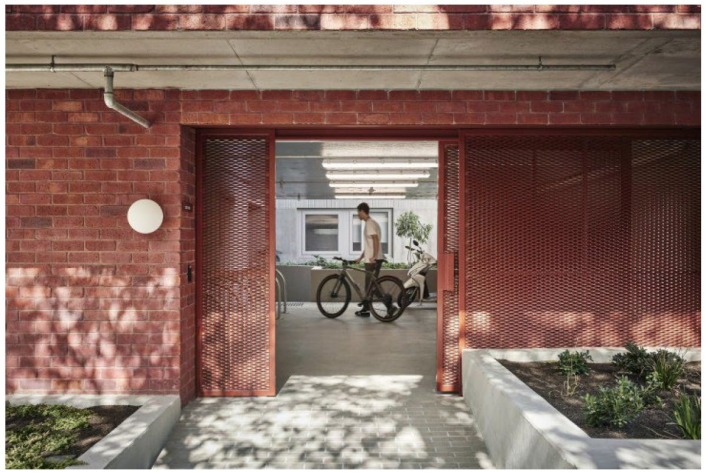
2.4.12 Separate cycling movement from primary pedestrian and vehicle areas wherever possible to minimise conflicts and avoid unnecessary wheeling of bicycles through pedestrian areas or vehicle accessways.

2.4.13 Provide convenient visitor and short-stay bicycle parking close to primary building entrances, in areas with visibility, lighting and weather protection.



▲ 2.4.d Visitor bicycle parking is conveniently located along the circulation route to the main building entry, with visibility from dwelling windows and balconies.

Balfe Park Lane, Brunswick East VIC
Kerstin Thompson Architects



▲ 2.4.e A wide entryway, with a continuous and step-free surface, allows bicycles to be conveniently wheeled from the street and into a secure bicycle parking facility.

HCA Shiel Street, North Melbourne VIC
Clare Cousins Architects

Building design

3.1 Building structure

Simple, well-considered building massing, layouts, and structural systems can streamline construction, improve durability, and reduce costs through repeated and efficient design solutions. These approaches also support better acoustic performance, enhanced thermal efficiency, and improved weatherproofing. In addition, simplified forms can lower embodied carbon and contribute to a cleaner, more coherent external appearance.

Efficient structure

3.1.1 Use well-resolved and simple building forms, limiting excessive variation and stepping in form.

3.1.2 Vertically align the building structure including columns, structural walls and cores.

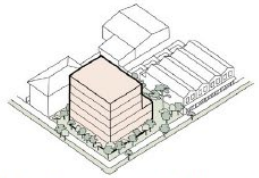
3.1.3 Avoid excessive articulation that results in overly complex building forms.

3.1.4 Adopt a consistent structural grid to improve layout efficiency and provide more opportunities for standardisation, modular components, and prefabrication.

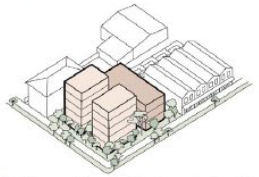
3.1.5 Simplify aspects of the building that would contribute to higher carbon impacts, such as complex structures, complex stacking or poor solar orientation.

3.1.6 Reduce the number of upper-level setbacks for improved building appearance, thermal performance, waterproofing, durability and constructability. If needed, a single upper-level setback is preferable to multiple stepped forms.

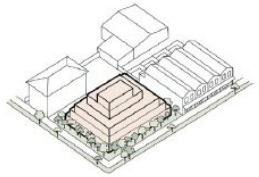
3.1.7 Use upper-level setbacks only where desired as part of the design approach or where needed to manage overshadowing, overlooking or wind impacts.



▲ 3.1.a Simplify massing to support efficient structures



▲ 3.1.b Where massing articulation is required, consider 'tooth and gap' arrangements to maintain structural simplicity.



▲ 3.1.c Avoid 'wedding cake' buildt forms with multiple stepped setbacks which can lead to overly complex structures.

3.1.8 Where upper-level setbacks are part of the design approach:

- Minimise the number of upper-level setbacks in building form.
- Consolidate setbacks to create larger areas of useable landscaped communal open space.
- Respond to the heights of other setbacks in the context, particularly if there are locally distinctive precedents. For example, a row of two storey high street shopfronts.

3.1.9 Articulate building forms with balconies, recesses, awnings or colonnades to help disrupt wind flows and create pockets of protected outdoors space.

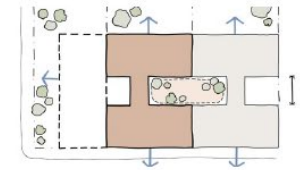
3.1.10 Provide breezeways or semi-external circulation spaces to improve access to daylight and natural ventilation where the site conditions support this typology.

3.1.11 Locate light courts to align with existing light courts in neighbouring buildings to improve daylight access and amenity for both buildings.

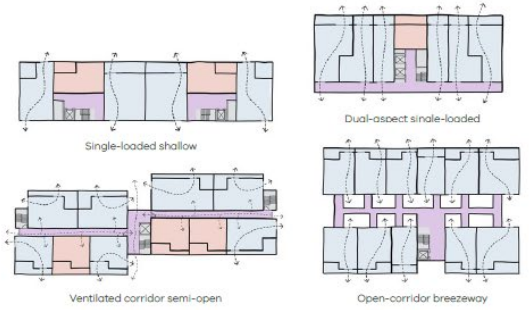
3.1.12 Consider the cumulative impacts of building layout, depth and structure on access to sunlight, daylight and natural ventilation.

▲ 3.1.d Simple forms are combined with a restrained material palette to create visual interest without over-articulating massing.

Loftus Apartments, Leederville WA
Carrier and Postmus Architects



▲ 3.1.e Aligning neighbouring light courts increases their effective area open to the sky, improving daylight outcomes for rooms which face the light court.



▲ 3.1.f The layout of a building impacts the available area for window location. Different arrangements will impact the number of apartments that achieve good cross ventilation and daylight.

Building design

3.3 Communal spaces

Communal spaces – both indoor and outdoor – play an important role in supporting the social, emotional, and physical wellbeing of residents. They provide places for children to play and socialise, and for adults to relax, connect, and build community.

Communal areas also enable residents to share resources that may not fit within individual dwellings, such as shared gardens, tool libraries, or hobby spaces. These spaces should be designed to suit the local context and climate, the scale and type of development, and the anticipated needs of future residents.

Communal spaces

3.3.1 Locate communal spaces to have convenient access from key circulation areas.

3.3.2 Provide safe access to communal space with accessible pathways, step-free thresholds, ramps and lifts. Provide sufficient space for prams and mobility aids.

3.3.3 Maximise visibility within communal spaces and avoid concealed nooks.

3.3.4 Ensure communal spaces are durable and low maintenance.

3.3.5 Design communal space to be inclusive and flexible to support use by people of all ages and abilities, and to encourage social interaction between residents. Consider inclusive features such as low planters that are wheelchair-accessible, standing planters that can suit older residents, accessible gates and taps, and sensory gardens.

3.3.6 Consolidate communal space into a single usable area in smaller developments.

3.3.7 Locate multiple communal spaces across larger development to increase the diversity of spaces and provide residents with more options.

3.3.8 Connect outdoor communal spaces to indoor communal spaces where both are present in a development.

▲ **3.3.a** A communal space with a well-equipped kitchen and large dining space can support shared events and gatherings. This is particularly beneficial for residents in smaller dwellings who may otherwise be unable to host larger gatherings.

Nightingale Marrickville, NSW
SJB

▲ **3.3.b** An indoor communal space that connects directly to an outdoor space enables greater flexibility, capacity, all-weather functionality, activation and visibility.

The Ninth Middle Ridge, QLD
Cox Architecture

Outdoor communal space

3.3.9 Maximise opportunities for passive surveillance of outdoor communal space from dwellings and from other active areas within the development such as lobbies.

3.3.10 Locate communal spaces to take advantage of solar orientation, views and breezes.

3.3.11 Ground level outdoor communal space is usually more convenient to access, can more easily integrate canopy trees with deep soil, and can create a better connection with the surrounding neighbourhood context.

3.3.12 Rooftop outdoor communal space can provide views, access to sunlight.

▲ **3.3.c** Consider location of access, lighting and passive surveillance to communal open space.

▲ **3.3.d** Robust furniture, canopy trees and visibility from dwellings provide greater amenity and activation of outdoor communal spaces.

Brighton Social Housing, Brighton VIC
SJB

▲ **3.3.e** Outdoor communal open space can provide shared spaces including gardens and dining areas, with infrastructure including taps, garden beds and furniture provided to facilitate this use.

Common Ground Dickson, Dickson ACT
David Pennington

3.3.13 Clearly define the boundaries of outdoor communal spaces, particularly where they abut the public realm or private open space. Low fencing, changes in paving materials, changes in landscape plantings, signage or other visual cues can all help to define the boundary.

3.3.14 Incorporate canopy trees, landscaping and weather protection in outdoor communal spaces.

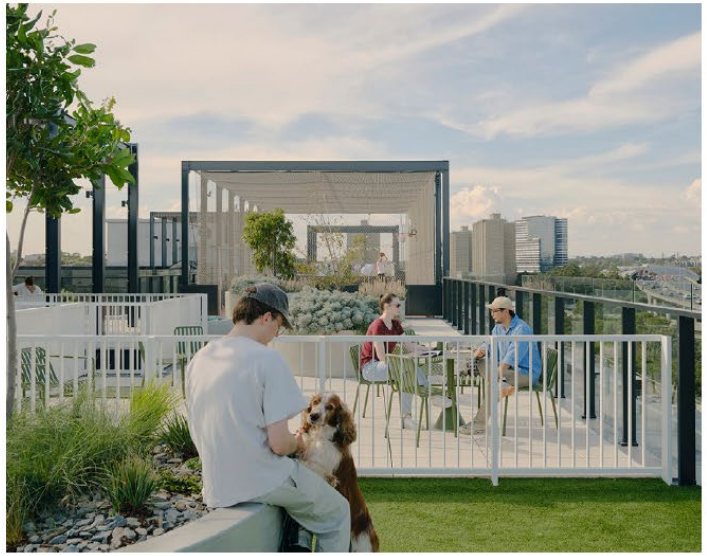
3.3.15 Provide external areas for drying clothes to reduce dependence on clothes dryers.

3.3.16 Orient outdoor communal spaces away from noisy or low amenity areas such as car parks, toilet exhausts, air-conditioning units, noisy equipment or power substations.

3.3.17 Reduce potential noise impacts from outdoor communal spaces on adjacent dwellings through separation, landscape buffers, screens or double-glazed windows.

▲ **3.3.f** Communal open space that makes use of views from the site, with low maintenance furniture and planting.

Ferrars & York, South Melbourne VIC
Six Degrees Architects



▲ **3.3.g** This rooftop communal open space supports multiple active and passive functions, incorporating a lawn area, small basketball court, and dedicated dining and seating areas

15 Thomspon Street, Kensington, VIC
Hayball

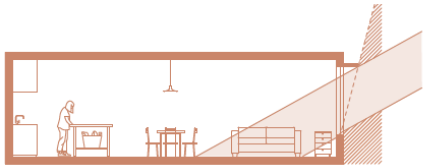
Dwelling design

4.1 Dwelling amenity

High-amenity dwellings play a vital role in enhancing the quality of life and overall wellbeing of residents. Amenity levels are shaped by multiple factors, including flexible internal layouts and access to natural daylight, sunlight, fresh air, and pleasant outlooks. Good daylight and sunlight access provide numerous benefits-such as natural illumination, warmth, improved health and wellbeing, better thermal comfort, and increased energy efficiency-helping create healthier and more enjoyable living environments.

Sunlight and daylight

4.1.1 Maximise access to natural daylight by using open layouts and generous windows with clear glazing.

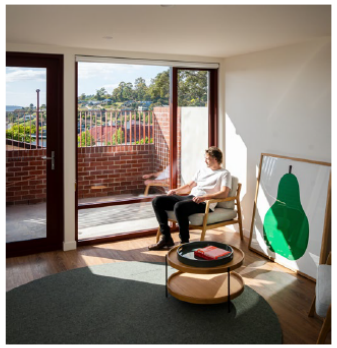


◀ **4.1.a** Ceiling height and window placement affect how deeply sunlight and daylight penetrate into a room.

4.1.2 Consider clerestory or highlight windows to increase daylight where standard windows cannot be provided.

4.1.3 Balance daylight needs with thermal performance. Larger windows admit more light but increase heat transfer.

4.1.4 Consider different glazing types to improve thermal performance. Clear glass allows more daylight transmission. Obscure, tinted or reflective glass reduces daylight transmission, in return for privacy benefits or other visual effects. Low-E glass also reduces daylight transmission in return for thermal performance.



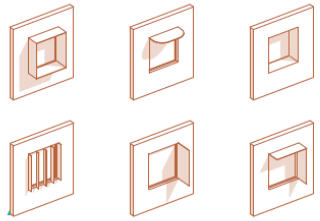
▲ **4.1.b** Access to daylight and sunlight improves the amenity, quality and environmental performance of a dwelling, and supports the comfort, health and wellbeing of residents.

Allunga Road, Chigwell TAS
Preston Lane Architects

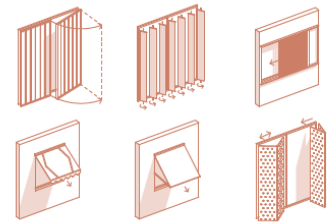
4.1.5 Use awnings or shading devices to support glazing performance requirements.

4.1.6 Provide vertical shading devices on east and west windows to block low angle sun. These could be rotating louvres, retractable awnings, shutters or other operable devices so that shading and privacy can be adjusted to preferences.

Fixed shading devices



Operable shading devices



4.1.c Fixed shading devices improve comfort and energy efficiciency for dwellings. The depth, length and placement of shades should be designed according to window size and building orientation to maximise their effectiveness.

▲ **4.1.d** Operable shading devices, such as rotating louvres, retractable awnings, shutters, and sliding screens, give occupants control over thermal comfort, daylight, and privacy.

4.1.7 Provide larger windows to maximise daylight where the window is to a habitable room at the base of a light court where light is lowest.

4.1.8 Use light-coloured materials within light courts for better reflectance and improved daylight amenity to dwellings.

▲ **4.1.e** Light courts with light-coloured materials achieve better reflectance of daylight and improved amenity.

Jorge Newbery 3136 Apartments, Buenos Aires, Argentina
Molinari Gorodner Spotorno

Dwelling design

4.3 Dwelling layout

Dwelling layout refers to the arrangement, connection, and proportion of spaces within a home. Well-designed layouts are fundamental to creating comfortable, functional, and liveable dwellings. By considering how spaces are used and experienced, layouts can support residents' daily routines while also accommodating changing household needs.

Flexible, adaptable layouts enable homes to function effectively throughout the day and over many years, supporting long-term tenure and helping communities remain stable as residents' lives evolve.

Dwelling entries

4.3.1 Provide dwelling entries with a clear, inviting presence that create a sense of arrival. This could include changes to material or colour, lighting, art or furniture elements.

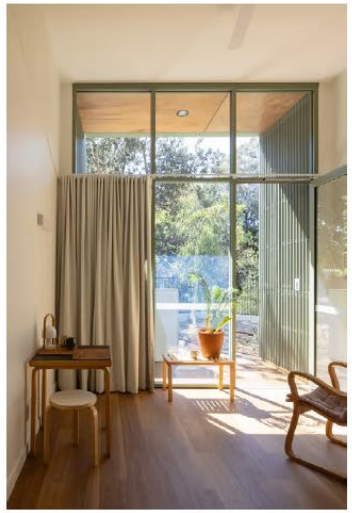
4.3.2 Differentiate or provide opportunities for personalisation of dwelling entries.

4.3.3 Integrate glazing into dwelling entries to improve the sense of arrival and connection.

4.3.4 Offset dwelling entry doors from corridor alignments or lift wells to prevent direct views and provide increased privacy.

▲ **4.3.a** A dwelling entry with seating and space for plants offers a functional, personal and welcoming sense of arrival.

38 Abermarle, Kensington VIC
Fieldwork



▲ **4.3.b** Full height windows at the entry provides a strong connection from the dwelling to the outdoors.

Habilis, Summer Hill NSW
Collins and Turner

▲ **4.3.c** The design of entry spaces can enhance the day-to-day functionality, comfort and convenience for residents and visitors

4.3.5 Design dwelling entry areas and doors to include enough space for the moving and turning of wheelchairs, prams, bicycles, mobility scooters and other mobility aids. Integrate this circulation area early in the design process to avoid later complexity.

4.3.6 Provide a functional entry area that includes seating, as well as space for storage such as shoe and coat racks or wall mounted hooks.

4.3.7 Define the transition between the entry and the main living areas to provide a sense of separation from shared circulation corridors. This can be achieved through changes in flooring material, screen dividers, or other cues.

4.3.8 Minimise direct views from the front door to other rooms to increase resident privacy.

▲ **4.3.d** Utilising wall space near dwelling entries for practical storage of everyday items, where floor space may be limited.

St Georges Road, Fitzroy North VIC
Fieldwork

Kitchens

4.3.13 Arrange kitchen layouts to allow convenient access to benchtops, fixtures and appliances.

4.3.14 Maximise benchtop space to provide opportunity for simultaneous cooking tasks.

4.3.15 Provide deeper kitchen benchtops of 800mm depth, particularly in smaller dwellings. This allows better integration of contemporary appliances, space for drainage cavities at the rear of joinery units, and additional food preparation space.

4.3.16 Avoid locating kitchen sinks in island benches to reduce plumbing complexity, increase flexibility for future adaptations, and allow opportunity for island benches to be used for alternative purposes such as dining or homework.

4.3.17 Provide waste bins and waste storage areas within the dwelling to support separate waste streams, including general waste, general recycling, glass recycling, and food waste.

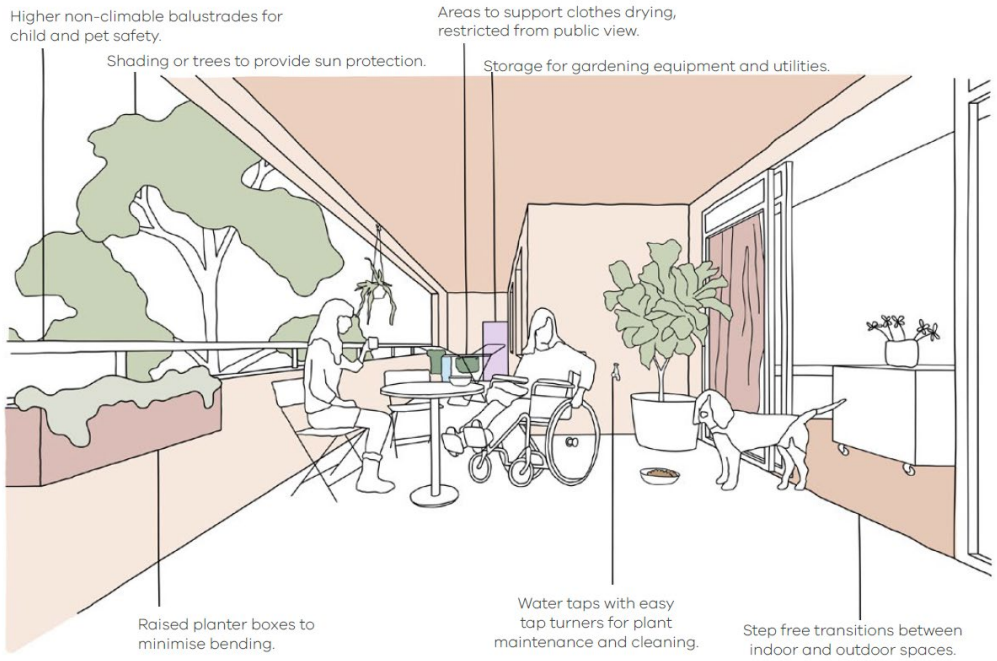
▲ **4.3.g** Generous storage adds to the functionality of this open kitchen and living area.

Markham Avenue, Ashburton VIC
Architectus

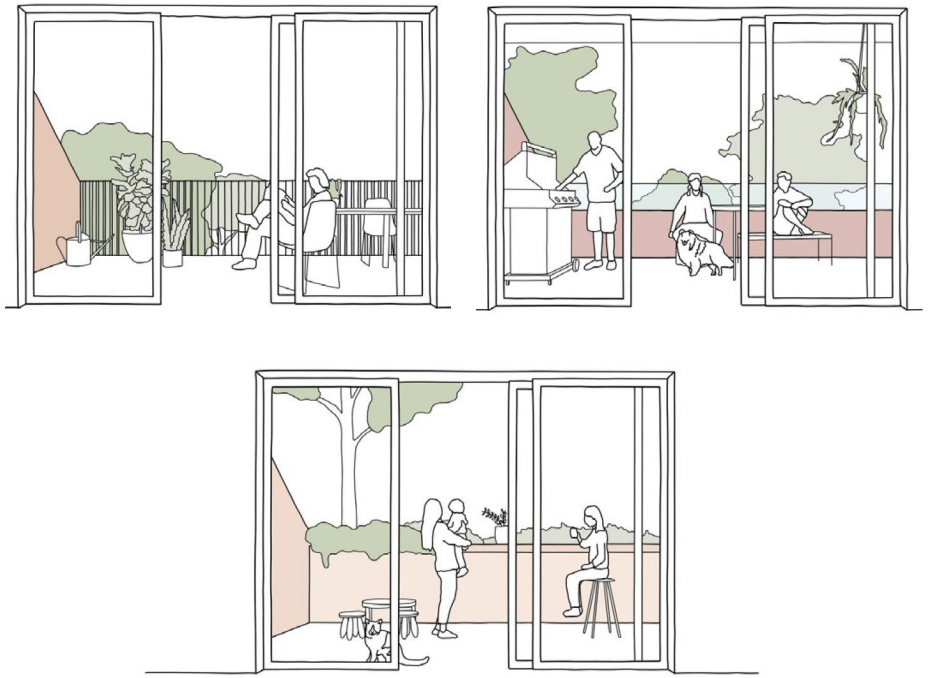
▲ **4.3.h** A large kitchen bench and space for a dining table provides greater functionality and opportunities for home cooking, food preparation and gatherings.

Nightingale Skye House, Brunswick VIC
Breathe

Dwelling design



▲ **4.4.c** Key features that contribute to the liveability and amenity of a private open space.



▲ **4.4.e** Balustrade types with different levels of transparency can affect privacy, views, acoustics and daylight access. The design of the balustrade should respond to the context and the position of the dwelling within the development.

Mid Rise Code Guidelines

Guidance document

Mid-Rise Code Guidelines

Version 1 – March 2026

Clause 57 Two or more dwellings on a lot and residential buildings of four to six storeys

VICTORIA State Government | Department of Transport and Planning

Standard E3-2 Street integration

Why this is important

This standard promotes innovative, high-quality design outcomes that enhance safety and the amenity of residents. The standard encourages passive surveillance and external lighting, while ensuring that site services do not dominate the development's frontage.

CLAUSE 57.03-2

Street integration objective

To integrate the layout of development with the street and open spaces to support the safety and amenity of residents.

To support development that activates and provides passive surveillance to streets and public open spaces.

Standard E3-2

Development is orientated to front a street.

Where a development fronts a street or abuts public open space:

- Passive surveillance is provided by a direct view from at least one balcony or a habitable room window at each storey of the building to each street and public open space.
- The total cumulative width of all site services located within 3 metres of a street, do not take up more than 20 per cent of the width of the frontage.

Pedestrian entries are located on street frontages.

Car parking and internal waste collection areas are visually concealed from the street.

Lighting is provided to all external accessways and paths.

One mailbox is provided for each dwelling, and at least one parcel locker is provided for every five dwellings. Mailboxes and parcel lockers are communally located.

Decision guidelines

Before deciding on an application, the responsible authority must consider:

- Any relevant urban design objective, policy or statement set out in this scheme.
- The design response.
- The design of screening for services.
- Whether the pedestrian entry is to an active frontage.

Applying the standard

Any adjoining streets, vehicle accessways and public open space should be clearly visible from adjoining balconies or habitable room windows.

At least one pedestrian entry should be from the front street. On sites with wider frontages, multiple entries may be appropriate.

Additional pedestrian entries from adjacent public spaces, such as shared walking and cycling paths may also be appropriate.

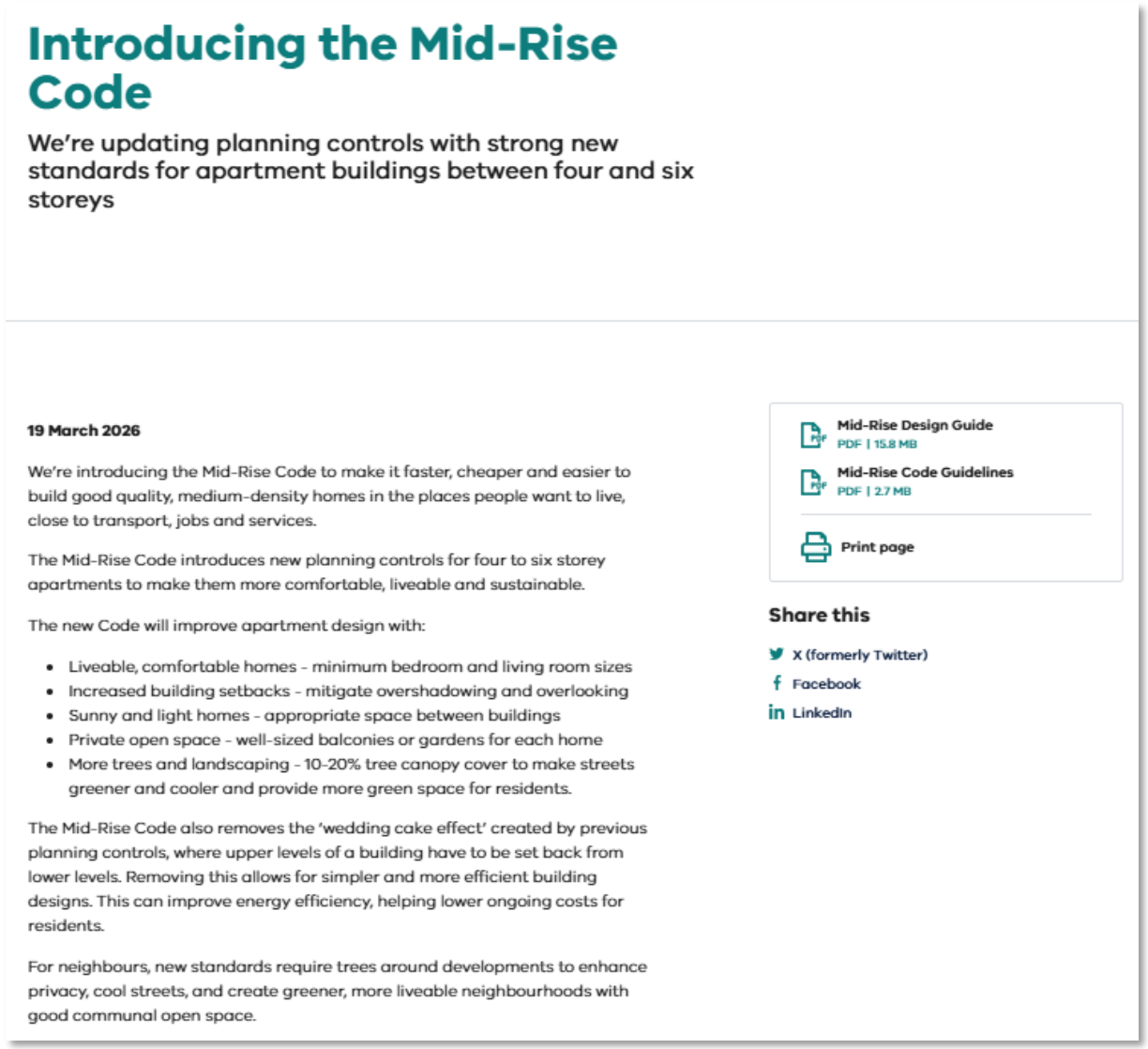
Direct views from habitable room window and balcony

Locate and arrange utility service installations to minimise their impact on the building's frontage.

Supporting documents

The location of windows, balconies, site services, lighting, footpaths and mailboxes must be shown on plans and elevations.

Website update and practitioner training



Introducing the Mid-Rise Code

We're updating planning controls with strong new standards for apartment buildings between four and six storeys

19 March 2026

We're introducing the Mid-Rise Code to make it faster, cheaper and easier to build good quality, medium-density homes in the places people want to live, close to transport, jobs and services.

The Mid-Rise Code introduces new planning controls for four to six storey apartments to make them more comfortable, liveable and sustainable.

The new Code will improve apartment design with:

- Liveable, comfortable homes - minimum bedroom and living room sizes
- Increased building setbacks - mitigate overshadowing and overlooking
- Sunny and light homes - appropriate space between buildings
- Private open space - well-sized balconies or gardens for each home
- More trees and landscaping - 10-20% tree canopy cover to make streets greener and cooler and provide more green space for residents.

The Mid-Rise Code also removes the 'wedding cake effect' created by previous planning controls, where upper levels of a building have to be set back from lower levels. Removing this allows for simpler and more efficient building designs. This can improve energy efficiency, helping lower ongoing costs for residents.

For neighbours, new standards require trees around developments to enhance privacy, cool streets, and create greener, more liveable neighbourhoods with good communal open space.

Mid-Rise Design Guide
PDF | 15.8 MB

Mid-Rise Code Guidelines
PDF | 2.7 MB

Print page

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Website update

More information, including Mid-Rise Design Guide and Mid-Rise Code Guidelines are available on planning.vic.gov.au

Practitioner training

DTP will be holding training sessions for practitioners in April 2026.

Q&A

ARBV CPD Webinar Quiz - Clause 57 - Mid Rise Code Technical Briefing

Architects Registration Board of Victoria

Contact us:

strategic.planning@transport.vic.gov.au

VICTORIA State Government | Department of Transport and Planning