

Referral 6: Epping Activity Centre
Activity Centres Standing Advisory Committee Report

12 November 2024

Planning Panels Victoria acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People as the traditional custodians of the land on which our office is located. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Planning and Environment Act 1987

Activity Centres Standing Advisory Committee Report

Referral 6: Epping Activity Centre

12 November 2024



Con Tsotsoros, Chair



Kate Partenio, Member



Rebecca Finn, Member



Rodger Eade, Member

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Glossary and abbreviations

the Activity Centre	Epping Activity Centre
Committee	Activity Centres Standing Advisory Committee
DTP	Department of Transport and Planning
Minister	Minister for Planning
VPA	Victorian Planning Authority

Overview

Referral summary	
Referral	6: Epping
Subject land	See Figure 1
Referred submissions and information	See Appendix C
Referred issues	Advice sought on changes to the extent of the proposed catchment boundary Advice not to be provided on any other matter

Committee	
The Committee	Con Tsotsoros (Chair), Kate Partenio, Rebecca Finn, Rodger Eade
Supported by	Georgia Brodrick (Planning Panels Victoria)
Site inspection	Unaccompanied, 31 October 2024
Date of this report	12 November 2024

1 Introduction

1.1 Terms of Reference and referral letter

The Minister for Planning (Minister) appointed the Activity Centres Standing Advisory Committee (Committee) on 22 August 2024. The purpose of the Committee is set out in its Terms of Reference dated 22 August 2024 (see Appendix A):

... provide timely advice to the Minister for Planning on specific matters referred to it relating to strategic and built form work undertaken in relation to the [Activity Centres Program] ACP to inform the preparation of clear new planning controls in and around the 10 activity centres identified in *Victoria's Housing Statement, The decade ahead, 2024-2034* to deliver 60,000 more homes.

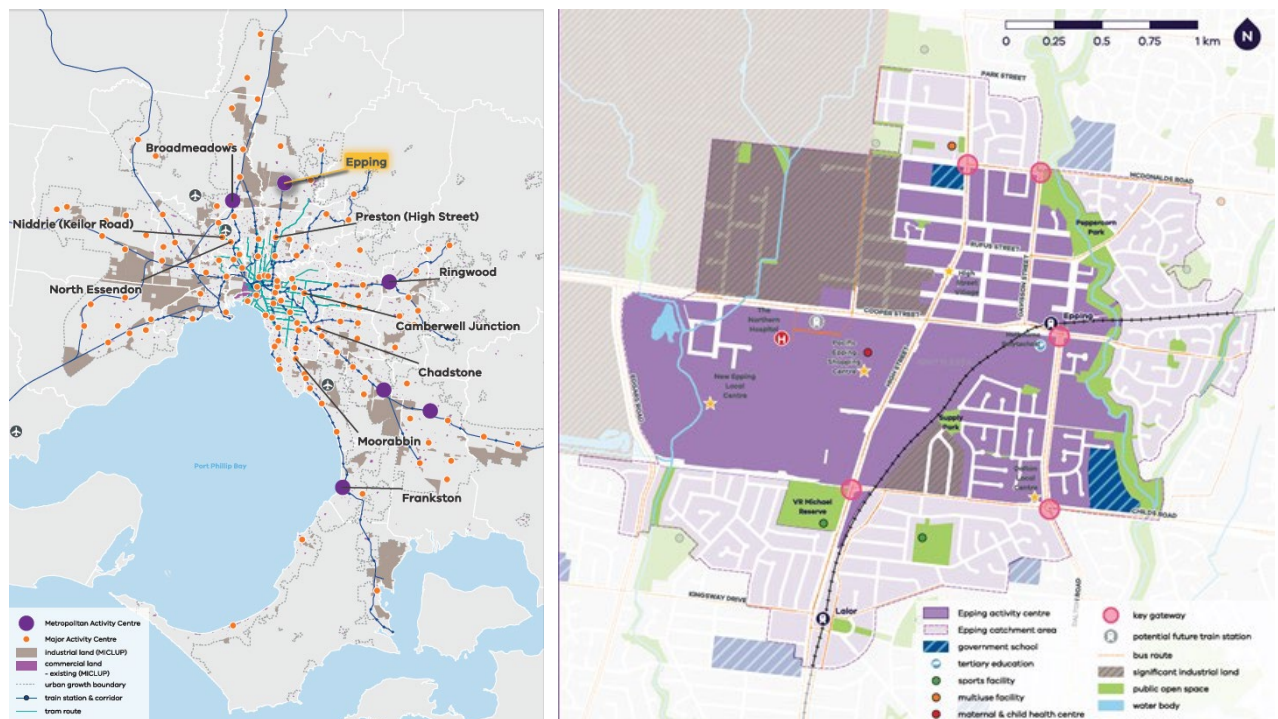
This is Referral 6. The Minister's referral letter for Epping dated 25 October 2024 is included in Appendix B.

The Minister for Planning seeks the Committee's advice on a specific issue as outlined in the referral letter and shown in the Overview.

1.2 Epping Activity Centre

The Epping Activity Centre (Activity Centre) is located around 21 kilometres from the Melbourne Central City. The Activity Centre, shown in dark purple in Figure 1, is the commercial core of the precinct. The walkable catchment is shown in light purple.

Figure 1 Epping Activity Centre regional context and extent of Activity Centre



Source: Draft Epping Activity Centre Plan, Figure Plan 1 (left) Figure 1 (right)

1.3 The Committee's approach

The Committee has conducted its assessment process in accordance with the procedural requirements of the Terms of Reference, in particular Clauses 9, 10, 12 and 18. It has reported on all relevant matters in accordance with its Terms of Reference, particularly Clause 16.

Not all submissions were referred to the Committee for consideration and the Committee has only considered those which were referred. Matters not referred to the Committee are listed in the Overview.

Clause 12 of its Terms of Reference require the Committee to:

... conduct its work with a view to maximising efficiency and timeliness. This may include conducting reviews 'on the papers' without oral hearings where the Committee considers it appropriate depending on the nature of the matter referred.

Clause 18 requires the Committee to submit its report to the Minister and the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) no later than 10 business days from receipt of the referral. This timeframe did not allow for a Hearing to consider oral submissions or evidence on the Referral.

Given the very targeted nature of the Committee's scope, issues to be considered and advice required, and reporting timeframes, the Committee considered an on the papers process to be appropriate.

1.4 Limitations

The Committee has confined its consideration to the referred matters, as directed in the referral letter (see Appendix B). The Committee did not have the benefit of:

- a public Hearing or any discussions
- any evidence (in support or contradictory) that may have assisted it to better understand the strategic basis of the planning documents which support the proposed standards and provisions
- hearing from those in State Government who prepared the proposed planning provisions
- discussion with the consultants who prepared the supporting documents.
- discussing any aspect of this work with the relevant local Council officers.

The Committee has prepared this report taking these limitations into account within the 10-day timeframe available to it. It has had to accept the material before it at face value.

2 Summary of referred issue and finding

The issue and summary of the referred matters is taken directly from the referral letter.

Table 1 Summary of referred issue and finding

Issue	Summary	Recommendation
Catchment boundary	Having regard to the advice sought on the catchment boundary in the common matters (Referral 2), please advise if the extent of the proposed catchment boundary for Epping is consistent with the intended purpose.	<p>Having regard to the advice sought on the catchment boundary in the common matters (Referral 2), the proposed catchment boundary for Epping is inconsistent with the intended purpose.</p> <p>To achieve the intended purpose, the 800-metre (10-minute) walkable catchment should be measured from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- entrances from the shopping centre building in the area shown as 'Enclosed Shopping Centre'- the Costco building entrance- the Epping Train Station entrance.

3 Analysis

3.1 Key policy drivers

The Terms of Reference (in Clause 16) require the Committee to address the referred matters and its recommendations in the context of:

- Victoria's Housing Statement, The Decade Ahead 2024-2034
- Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 or any equivalent replacement planning strategy.

Key policy drivers in the Housing Statement relevant to planning for activity centres include, to:

- introduce clear planning controls to deliver an additional 60,000 homes around an initial 10 activity centres across Melbourne: Broadmeadows, Camberwell Junction, Chadstone, Epping, Frankston, Moorabbin, Niddrie (Keilor Road), North Essendon, Preston (High Street) and Ringwood
- introduce activity centre plans to guide investment in the things a growing suburb needs like community facilities, public spaces and parks
- incentivise affordable housing.

Key policy drivers in Plan Melbourne relevant to planning for activity centres include, to:

- encourage increased housing diversity and density in activity centres
- create inclusive, vibrant and healthy neighbourhoods
- provide a diverse range of jobs, activities and housing in centres that are well served by public transport
- provide certainty about the scale of growth in the suburbs
- support a network of vibrant neighbourhood activity centres Support new housing in activity centres and other places that offer good access to jobs, services and public transport
- facilitate housing that offers choice and meets changing household needs.

3.2 Catchment boundary

Having regard to the advice sought on the catchment boundary in the common matters (Referral 2), please advise if the extent of the proposed catchment boundary for Epping is consistent with the intended purpose.

Section 3 in the draft Epping Activity Centre Plan (Activity Centre Plan) sets out how the catchment boundaries were determined:

- the residential and non-residential areas in the Activity Centre were identified
- an 800-metre walkable catchment was identified from the edge of the non-residential areas of the Activity Centre, using streets rather than 'as the crow flies'
- the catchment area was then refined to apply to whole blocks, and reduced to remove:
 - areas separated by natural and physical barriers
 - areas where planning controls or environmental constraints make the intensification envisaged under the Walkable Catchment Zone
 - inappropriate areas subject to future planning investigations.

The Activity Centre Plan under 'Strategic context' includes an objective to support housing diversity in areas that are within walking distance of activity centres. The Activity Centre Plan identifies the catchment provides an *"opportunity to increase accessibility for more people to meet most of their daily needs within a walkable distance to and from their home"*. It further identifies that for Epping it is the area within walking distance of the local jobs, services and public transport of the Activity Centre. The Committee has assumed this is its purpose.

The catchment area is identified as *"generally up to 800 metres from the edge of the non-residential areas of the activity centre"*. It is understood this represents a 10-minute walk. The metric is also consistent with *Planning Practice Note 58: Structure planning for activity centres* and the 20-minute neighbourhood principles of Plan Melbourne. A 20-minute return journey (10-minutes each way) being the maximum walking time people are willing to walk to meet their daily needs including supermarkets and health facilities and services.

The Referral 2 report found the Victorian Planning Authority's (VPA's) methodology for defining catchments to be generally sound and generally consistent with Planning Practice Note 58, but it has not been applied consistently across all centres. It found boundaries:

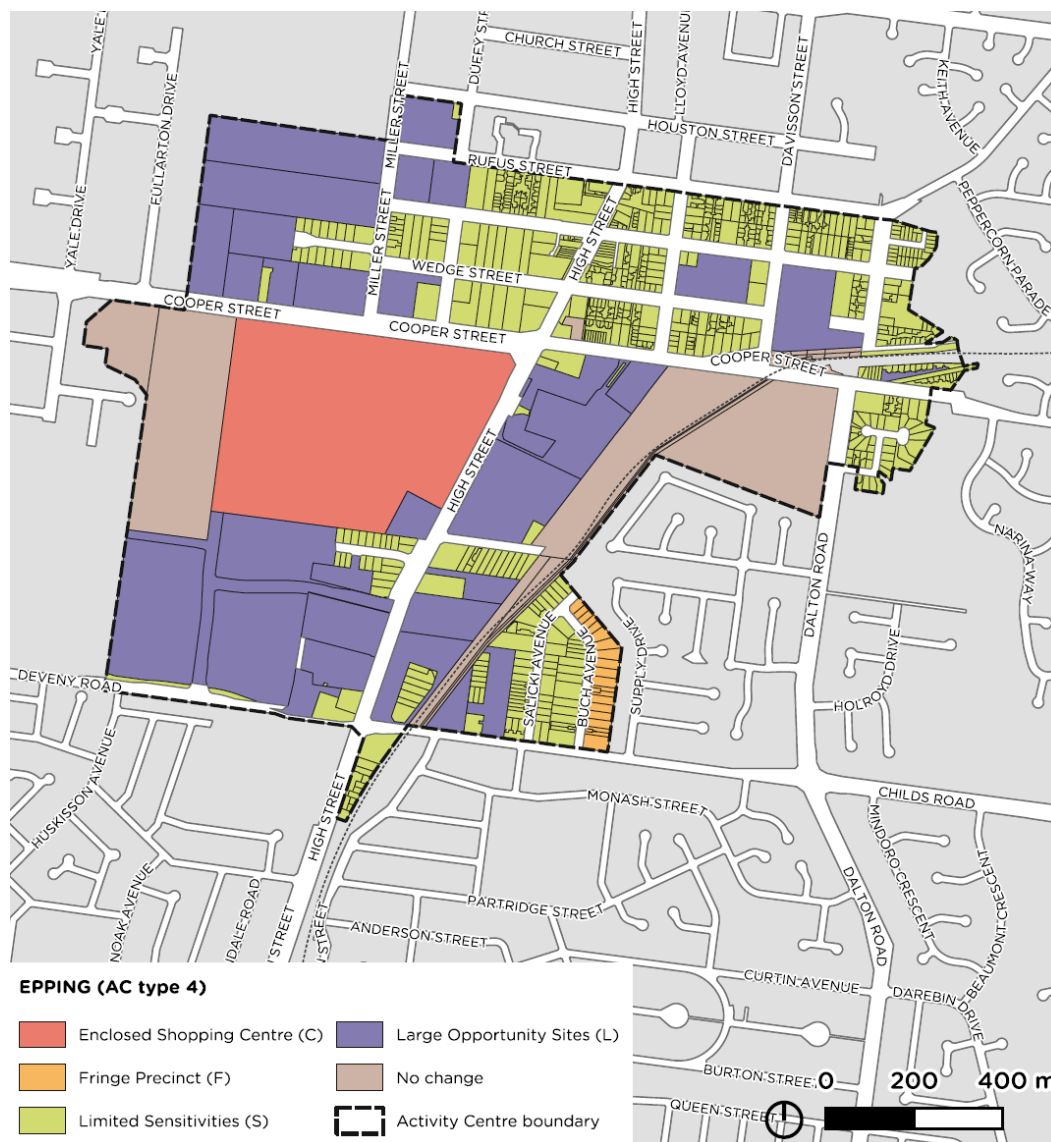
- should be measured 800 metres (walkable distance) from the Activity Centre 'core', which is the 'Heritage Main Street Core' and the 'Non-Heritage Main Street Core' precincts
- should not be measured from the edge of the whole Activity Centre area, as these include land uses that do not relate to the need for day-to-day walkability
- should be measured from points that exclude:
 - fringe precincts
 - large opportunity sites and areas with limited sensitivities (depending on their current land use)
 - residential areas
 - public open space located on the periphery of the Activity Centre core.

Activity centre plans that do not show any Built Form Typologies should be revised to define the Main Street Core. This will enable their walkable catchment areas to be measured.

Epping, like Chadstone and Broadmeadows, comprises a freestanding centre surrounded by large opportunity sites and land with limited sensitivities and determining appropriate catchment boundaries requires site-specific contextual consideration.

Applying these principles to Epping

The City of Centres Report includes a plan which shows the Epping Activity Centre typologies, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Epping Activity Centre Typologies

Source: City of Centres Report, p64

Consistent with the Committee's findings in the Referral 2 report, the 800-metre (10-minute) walkable catchment should be measured from:

- entrances from the shopping centre building in the area shown as 'Enclosed Shopping Centre'
- the Costco building entrance
- the Epping Train Station entrance.

All other proposed areas should be excluded because they would not achieve the intended purpose.

Appendix A Terms of Reference

Relevant clauses are extracted below.

Purpose

4. The purpose of the Committee is to provide timely advice to the Minister for Planning on specific matters referred to it relating to strategic and built form work undertaken in relation to the ACP to inform the preparation of clear new planning controls in and around the 10 activity centres identified in *Victoria's Housing Statement, The decade ahead, 2024-2034* to deliver 60,000 more homes.
5. The objective of the Committee is to provide consistent advice for activity centre planning and outcomes in relation to the Activity Centres Program in a transparent, timely and cost-efficient process on any matter referred to it.

Referral

14. A referral may be provided by the Minister or delegate. A referral letter will set out the specific matters on which the Committee is to provide advice, as well as any specific matters on which advice is not to be provided. The referral letter to the Committee will be a public document.
15. Any referral must be accompanied by relevant information to assist the Committee's review provided by DTP and/or the VPA. This may include (but will not necessarily be limited to):
 - a. Relevant strategic work undertaken by Council, DTP or VPA for the relevant activity centre
 - b. Referred submissions
 - c. A summary of key issues raised in submissions
 - d. Proposed changes in response to issues raised in submissions
 - e. An index listing each document referred to the Committee.

Advisory committee report and recommendations

16. For each matter referred, the Committee must produce a written report that provides a succinct summary of the key issues and its recommendations. The report must address the referred matters and its recommendations in the context of:
 - a. *Victoria's Housing Statement, The Decade Ahead 2024-2034*;
 - b. Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 or any equivalent replacement planning strategy;
17. The Committee may address more than one referred matter and combine its assessment of these in a single report.
18. The Committee is required to submit each report to the Minister and DTP no later than 10 business days from receipt of the referral and all accompanying information required by clause 15. DTP must give at least five business days' notice of each likely referral to ensure the Committee is able to source appropriately skilled Members.

Appendix B Referral letter

25 October 2024

Sarah Raso
Lead Chair
Activity Centres Standing Advisory Committee
Planning Panels Victoria
planning.panels@transport.vic.gov.au

Dear Sarah,

Referral No. 6: Epping Activity Centre Referral to the Activity Centres Standing Advisory Committee

I refer to planning matters that form part of the Activity Centres Program (ACP), an initiative from *Victoria's Housing Statement, The decade ahead, 2024-2034*.

This referral relates specifically to the Epping Activity Centre Plan. The Epping Activity Centre Plan will be implemented through a forthcoming Planning Scheme Amendment to introduce new planning controls for the activity centre.

Background

The Activity Centres program is included in the Victorian Government's Housing Statement and seeks to deliver an additional 60,000 homes around an initial 10 activity centres across Melbourne. The Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) is leading the Activity Centres Program in partnership with the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA).

The VPA has prepared draft Activity Centre Plans that will form part of the Activity Centre Program amendment package along with new ordinance including a Built Form Overlay schedule. The draft Activity Centre Plan consolidates the strategic work undertaken to prepare new planning controls for activity centres.

On 22 August 2024, the Minister for Planning appointed the Activity Centres Standing Advisory Committee (the Committee) to provide consistent advice for activity centre planning and outcomes in relation to the Activity Centres Program in a transparent, timely and cost-efficient process on any matter referred to it.

The project has generated significant community interest and a total of 480 submissions, including survey responses (numeric and free text), in-person feedback at consultation events, and written submissions were received for the Epping activity centre. Responses were received from current and potential future residents, businesses, government agencies, authorities, community groups, members of the development industry and City of Whittlesea.

A summary of the targeted engagement undertaken and analysis of the matters raised following the targeted engagement is included with the referral of documentation.

Referral

In accordance with Clause 14 of your Terms of Reference (August 2024), and delegation provided to me, I have determined to seek advice and recommendations from the Committee on activity centre planning matters. Only select submissions received during consultation which are relevant to the matters listed in the table below are being referred to the Committee. The Committee's advice is only sought on the matters listed in the table below.

MATTER	ADVICE TO BE PROVIDED
Catchment boundary	Having regard to the advice sought on the catchment boundary in the common matters (Referral 2), please advise if the extent of the proposed catchment boundary for Epping is consistent with the intended purpose.

In accordance with Clause 12 of your Terms of Reference, the Committee must conduct its work with a view to maximising efficiency and timeliness. As such, I look forward to the Committee providing its report to the Minister for Planning no later than 10 business days from receipt of this referral, in accordance with Clause 18 of the Terms of Reference.

Please find enclosed the supporting documents required by Clause 15 of the terms of reference.

If you have any questions about this matter, please contact Stefan Bettiol, Planning Manager at the Department of Transport and Planning.

Yours sincerely,



Natalie Reiter
Deputy Secretary Strategy & Precincts
Department of Transport and Planning

Encl. Att A: Report addressing matters

Att B: Urban Design Draft Background Summary Report

Att C: Urban Design Draft Background Summary Report (Engagement version)

Att D: City of Centres Report

Att E: Epping Draft Activity Centre Plan

Att F: Submissions

Att G: Document list

cc. Stuart Moseley, CEO, Victorian Planning Authority

Emily Mottram, Executive Director - Activity Centres, Department of Transport and Planning

Appendix C Referred information

No.	Date	Description	Provided by
1	28 Oct 24	Referral letter dated 25 October 2024	Department of Transport and Planning (DTP)
2	28 Oct 24	Epping Key Matters Report, VPA, 2024	DTP
3	28 Oct 24	Epping Draft Activity Centre Plan, VPA, 2024	DTP
4	28 Oct 24	<i>City of Centres: Development of typology-based built form controls</i> , Sheppard & Cull, May 2024	DTP
5	28 Oct 24	<i>Activity Centre Program Urban Design draft background summary report</i> , VPA, August 2024 (engagement version)	DTP
6	28 Oct 24	<i>Activity Centre Program Urban Design draft background summary report</i> , VPA, October 2024 (Committee version) including Appendices	DTP
7	28 Oct 24	Universal Submissions Key Matters Report	DTP
8	28 Oct 24	Submission – Whittlesea City Council	DTP
9	28 Oct 24	Submission – VicTrack	DTP
10	28 Oct 24	Submission – Riverlee	DTP
11	28 Oct 24	Submission – Forza Capital	DTP
12	28 Oct 24	Submission – Pacific Epping	DTP
13	28 Oct 24	Epping Document List	DTP