CITY OF BALLARAT

Draft Ballarat CBD Urban Design Framework

Proudly working with and for our community



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The City of Ballarat acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land we live and work on, the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung People, and recognises their continuing connection to the land and waterways.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend this to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

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How to read this document:

1

Introduction

The introduction explains the purpose of the document and answers the question: What is an urban design framework?
Why we need to create one to guide the future evolution of the Ballarat CBD?

2

CBD Vision

This section explains the context of the CBD, both geographical and from a strategic and policy context, describing the current policy settings in the Ballarat Planning Scheme and existing Council strategies, relevant to the project.

This is the basis for the work that informs the key direction and future outcomes.

3

CBD Analysis: Key Findings

The analysis and key findings is a summary of the research that has gone into developing the UDF, explaining the key issues and constraints that will inform urban design responses across the CBD.

The analysis is expanded in Appendix A to the UDF.

4

The Framework

The framework section primarily focusses on future built form, setting out guidance for future buildings in terms of how buildings address the street and respond to both heritage and non-heritage settings (contextual response).

The section also sets out key directions for strengthening the network of public spaces and the movement network across the CBD.

5

Precinct Directions

This section sets out the direction for each of the seven identified precincts that make up the Ballarat CBD. Future character, built form and public realm opportunities are described in more detail.

Ballarat Community Vision

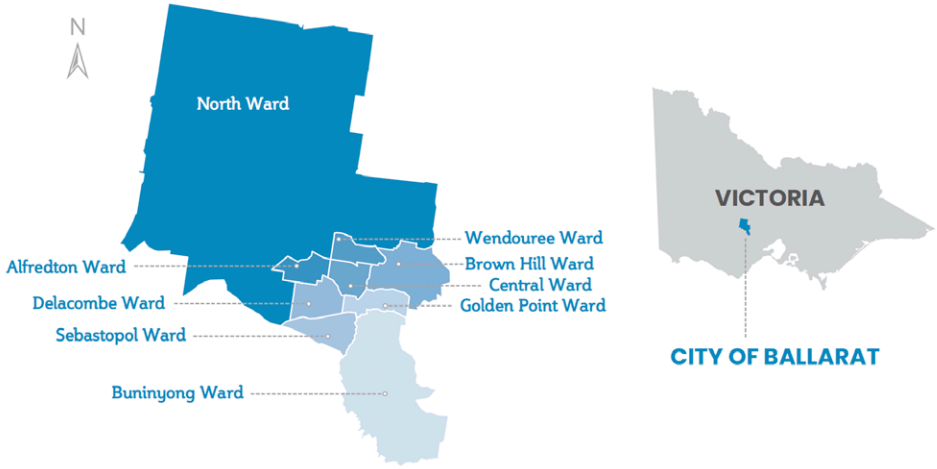
Ballarat, Victoria's heritage city: leading the way as a safe, sustainable, innovative and inclusive community, that is a great place to live. Our city strives towards sustainable living with ecologically-sound neighbourhoods where people can meet their daily needs within a short walk, ride or bus trip. We have easy access to parks and gardens, community facilities and education for all ages.

Our health and community services are proactive in responding to community needs. We have a community where people feel safe, valued and welcomed in our city. We celebrate our diversity, everyone in our community is well-informed, treated equitably and can participate fully in life. We engage challenges and opportunities with a creative and innovative approach to get the best result for our people.

Our city works towards expanding our local economy by attracting a diverse range of industries. We embrace our rich heritage and we continue to preserve our links to the gold rush era. We recognise and respect the long Aboriginal history and community, and the breadth of cultural heritage. We balance the need to conserve our historic places and spaces with the need and desire to progress as a modern regional city.

Ballarat or *Ballaarat* (Historical Spelling)
740km2 and the 3rd largest city in Victoria

'balla' meaning *'elbow'* or *'reclining on the elbow'* + *'arat'* meaning *'place'*: from two Aboriginal words signifying a camping or resting place.



124,543
Population in 2025*

9.8%
Population growth 2021-2025*

164,365
Population forecast for 2025-2046 a growth of 31.97%*

11.3%
Population born overseas as at 2021^

Our top industries 23/24
- Health care and social assistance
- Education and training
- Construction
- Retail trade
- Manufacturing#

1.8%
Population identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander as at 2021^

10,133
Businesses in 2024#

63,084
Jobs in 2024#

$7.80B
Gross Regional Product in 2024#


STURT St
Allan Bros.
WATCHES
JEWELLERY
DIAMOND RINGS
WEDDING RINGS

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

The Ballarat CBD Urban Design Framework (UDF) provides a framework to guide development and investment in the Ballarat CBD. In this section you will find an introduction to the study area, the strategic context, and how the framework was developed.

The UDF intends to:

- *Protect and complement heritage places and values*
- *Encourage a well-designed, high quality and sustainable built environment*
- *Enable growth of the Ballarat CBD population through increased development density*
- *Protect and complement heritage places and values*
- *Protect the amenity of the public realm and private property*
- *Promote the expansion of public spaces and a network of walkable streets*
- *Support new commercial and retail activity, as well as residential accommodation close to services and amenities*
- *Support the activation, vibrancy and safety of public streets and spaces*
- *Increase freedom of movement for pedestrians*
- *Provide guidance for decision-makers and designers, property owners and occupiers, and the broader community*

Introduction

What is an Urban Design Framework?

Urban design is essentially about bringing a design approach to how towns and cities are analysed and developed. It provides a useful tool to enable performance-based planning to be implemented. A design approach unlocks creativity and allows physical design outcomes to be given a higher profile in planning. It also allows ideas to be tested through design and reviewed for their possible impacts or potential synergies.

Urban Design Frameworks involve the generation of ideas and the preparation of realistic design concepts based on consultation, research and analysis. Concepts may be drawn or computer modelled, illustrating how a future outcome will look, to enable communication and testing with stakeholders and the local community.

About the Framework

The Ballarat CBD Urban Design Framework is a strategic planning tool that guides the physical and spatial evolution of Ballarat's Central Business District. It supports Council, the community, and stakeholders in shaping a shared vision, ensuring that future development and investment is coordinated, place-specific, and responsive to Ballarat's unique heritage, character, infrastructure needs, and public realm opportunities.

The UDF provides analysis and built form guidance for the Ballarat CBD and has been developed in accordance with Planning Practice Note 17 (PPN17) - Urban Design Frameworks. The UDF will be implemented through a future planning scheme amendment and the be translated into built form controls and design guidance within the Ballarat Planning Scheme.

CBD Study Area

The Ballarat CBD study area includes approximately 157 hectares of land and generally takes in the full extent of the Commercial 1 Zone in central Ballarat, as well as some peripheral residential areas under the General Residential Zone and Residential Growth Zone. The area within the Commercial 1 Zone is considered to offer significant opportunities for urban growth in the coming years.

The study area also includes a large area of land currently under the Industrial 1 Zone, towards the north of the study area, which is considered to be a future urban renewal opportunity as the area transitions away from industrial use.









LEGEND / Ballarat CBD Study Area

- Study Area Boundary
- Ballarat Railway Station
- Open Space / Reserves

SCALE
0 200m 400m

Figure 1: CBD Study Area

Purpose

Why do we need an Urban Design Framework for the Ballarat CBD?

Ballarat is Victoria's third largest city and the largest city in the Central Highlands region of Western Victoria. It is located between important regional and metropolitan centres including Melbourne CBD (approximately 115km north-west), Bendigo (117km south-east and Geelong (approximately 90km south-west).

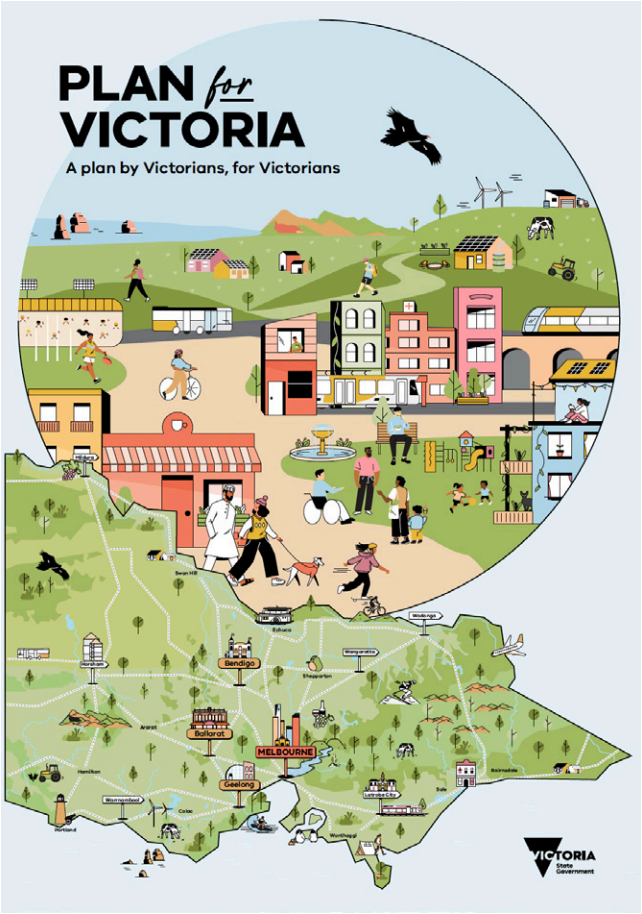
The Ballarat CBD has a highly valued and intact heritage core and other areas that present significant development opportunities. The Ballarat CBD Urban Design Framework identifies the different parts (precincts) of the city centre in terms of their ability to accommodate change and some key public space and access opportunities that will support future residents of the CBD.

Plan for Victoria (2025)

The state government released Plan for Victoria in 2025. The plan sets the scene for the growth of Victoria until the year 2051. It states that Ballarat will accommodate 46,900 new dwellings, with a split between "greenfield" and "infill" areas. The Ballarat CBD will play an important role in accommodating a proportion of those new dwellings.

To support this, the City of Ballarat adopted the Ballarat Housing Strategy 2041 in 2024, which identifies areas that will accommodate "substantial change" in the form of higher densities of housing in established areas that can accommodate urban growth, with good access to public transport, shops, services and community infrastructure.

Plan for Victoria sets out population targets for all regions across Victoria. Ballarat is one of three large regional centres (the other two being Geelong and Bendigo) identified for significant change and population growth. One of the key policy positions of Plan for Victoria is the prioritisation of infill development over greenfield development and the establishment of "settlement boundaries".



Front cover: Plan for Victoria (DTP)

Where Victoria will change?

More homes will be built in regional Victoria in well-connected, well-serviced locations. The three major regional cities of Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong will accommodate the most homes

Well serviced activity centres – where a substantial proportion of future housing and employment growth is expected – are typically areas where there are identified heritage values. This includes Ballarat, where heritage places within, and adjacent to, the Study Area is highly valued and is a key consideration when planning for future growth – as the UDF identifies elsewhere.

Ballarat: A Major regional city

"Major Regional City" is a new designation in this plan (Plan for Victoria) for a regional city with more than 100,000 people. A major regional city has sufficient public transport, facilities and services to be the location for large numbers of new homes. Victoria has three major regional cities – Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong – and they will accommodate the most new homes built outside Melbourne.

Ballarat has a target of 46,900 new dwellings (at the time of publication in 2025) with a higher proportion of new dwellings to be delivered through infill (non-greenfield) development, which is set at 28,000 new dwellings by 2051. This equates to 1,120 dwellings per year over a 25 year period (in established or brown-field areas).

The Ballarat CBD is expected to accommodate some of this housing growth in the form of medium and higher density development, in addition to other areas of urban renewal identified in the Ballarat Housing Strategy.



Nightingale development



The Gov-Hub building on Mair Street

Local Context

History

Central Ballarat is rich in history and the extent of intact heritage fabric is evidence of the city's evolution during the Gold Rush period which commenced in the 1850s. Prior to European settlement, the Yarrowee was an important place for the Boro Gundidj, a clan of the Wadawurrung People.

Present Day

Today, the Ballarat CBD is characterised by well preserved and highly intact heritage streetscapes. The modern city continues to evolve and grow with strong links to the past, visible in the buildings and streets.

There are several key areas that accommodate a range of activities including:

- Retail areas
- Cafes, restaurants and bars
- Art galleries
- Commercial and office
- Education
- Community services
- The hospital precinct
- Gyms and recreation


Shops and cafes along Sturt Street



Shops along Main Road



Retail and eateries, Armstrong Street N


Retail shopping strip, Bridge Mall

Regional Context

The Ballarat CBD services the surrounding region in terms of jobs, health and community services, education, in addition to the retail and creative sectors, plus restaurants, cafes and bars. The diverse cultural identity and history of the city makes it a highly popular tourist attraction.

The City of Ballarat extends across parts of the Traditional Country of the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation, who have lived in the region for at least 50,000 years and continue to care for it today. The name 'Ballarat' originates from two Wadawurrung words: 'balla' meaning elbow or reclining on the elbow, and 'arat', meaning place.

Ballarat is part of the Central Highlands Region which spans the east-west transport corridor connecting Melbourne to western Victoria. Ballarat is the major centre of the Central Highlands region and has the fastest growing population of any regional city in Victoria.

The region includes six municipalities - Ararat Rural City, City of Ballarat, Golden Plains Shire, Hep-burn Shire, Moorabool Shire and the Pyrenees Shire. The region has a population of 203,600 and 54% of the population live in the City of Ballarat.



Figure 2: Regional Context

Developing the Framework

Strategic Basis

The Urban Design Framework has been developed in response to a range of inputs (strategic work) and analysis.

Previous community feedback has been factored in regarding heritage, skyline and views, and also a desire to see the Ballarat CBD evolve and grow in a sustainable way that can embrace new development while respecting the highly valued heritage character of the city.

State Government planning policies play a key role in how regional cities, like Ballarat, will grow and accommodate future population and housing, as well as economic growth.

2010 - Adoption of *Making Ballarat Central: the CBD Strategy*

2015 - Adoption of *Today, Together, Tomorrow: the Ballarat Strategy 2051*

2017 - Adoption of (revised) *Making Ballarat Central: CBD Action Plan 2017-21* (A planning scheme amendment to implement building height controls has still not been undertaken)

2019 - Adoption of *Bakery Hill Urban Renewal Plan*

2021 - Community Engagament on a *Draft CBD Urban Design Framework* & *Draft Skyline & Views Study*

2023 - Community Engagament on the *Bridge Mall Built Form Framework* (Amendment C243ball)

2024 - Adoption of the *Ballarat Housing Strategy 2041*

2025 - Release of the state government's *Plan for Victoria* which includes new housing targets for Ballarat

NOW

2026 - Release of Update Paper and *Draft Ballarat CBD Urban Design Framework* for Community Engagement

NEXT

2026/27- Preparation of *Ballarat CBD Urban Design Framework* and undertake planning scheme amendment to implement built form controls and policy into Ballarat Planning Scheme.

Community Engagement Process

In 2021, the Ballarat community were asked to provide feedback on a Draft Urban Design Framework and Draft Skyline and Views Study. Since that time, there have been shifts in both state planning policy and direction, and the Ballarat Housing Strategy was adopted in 2024.

In the first half of 2026, the City of Ballarat began to reconnect with past submitters. Following on from the previous engagement, a number of themes have been consulted on to gauge community sentiment for the direction the UDF is now taking.

Three stages of engagement:

- *Stage 1 - Reconnecting*
- *Stage 2 - Thoughts on the Draft UDF*
- *Stage 3 - Planning Scheme Amendment*

Key project themes being consulted on:

- *More housing and investment within the CBD.*
- *Providing clear built form controls and design guidance for new development and development in heritage areas.*
- *Proposing a mandatory maximum building height for the “heritage core” of the CBD.*
- *Providing guidance on where taller buildings are more suitable and will have less impact on important views and heritage character.*
- *Encouraging new, well-designed & sustainable buildings with ground floor activation*
- *Identifying opportunities to improve connections within the CBD, with a focus on walking, cycling and other sustainable modes of transport.*
- *Identifying opportunities to improve the public realm and create new public and open spaces.*

Strategic Context

Council Strategies & Plans

The UDF has been informed by a number adopted strategies and plans, and builds upon the oppoeruntiies and strategic directions within the following City of Ballarat documents:

- *The Ballarat Housing Strategy 2041 (2024)*
- *The Ballarat Strategy (2015)*
- *Making Ballarat Central: The Ballarat CBD Strategy – Action Plan (2017-21)*
- *Heritage Action Plan (2017-30)*
- *Bakery Hill Urban Renewal Plan (2019)*
- *Draft Ballarat Skyline and Views Study (2021)*

The Ballarat Housing Strategy (2024)

The Ballarat Housing Strategy (2024) provides the overarching strategic direction for housing growth until 2041. Housing growth will occur within the following three key categories of change areas:

- Growth Areas
- Established residential areas
- Substantial change areas

Undertake urban design analysis and planning to determine an appropriate scale for future buildings across the various parts of the CBD, balancing heritage objectives.

Heritage Action Plan (2017)

The Heritage Action Plan sets out a range of actions that seek to support renewal and activation of the heritage buildings and streetscapes within the CBD, and these include:

Integrating the Urban Forest Action Plan into CBD streetscape projects;
Promoting the use of upper levels in existing heritage buildings; and
Facilitating new development is a sustainable and respectful manner, preserving the existing character whilst allowing the city to continue to grow.

Bridge Mall Built Form Framework (2023)

The Bridge Mall Built Form Framework was undertaken to assess the built form and heritage context of Bridge Mall (the area currently affectecd by DDO1 - Bridge Mall and Bakery Hill Precinct. The work is not formally adopted but has assisted in undertaking further analysis and refinement of the built form direction for the precinct.

Ballarat Skyline & Views Study (2021)

The Ballarat Skyline and Views Study (2021) identifies key views to identified landmark buildings and natural features (Mount Warrenheip) within the document.

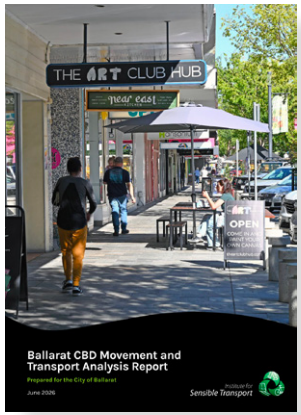
Whilst not currently adopted by Council, the study is intended to inform further work (such as this UDF) to further test future built form outcomes in the context of those identified views, in order to protect and manage the views when development occurs. The study identifies 12 viewing locations and 19 heritage buildings, some of which are distinguished landmarks, like the Ballarat Town Hall, while others are prominent heritage buildings within the streetscape.

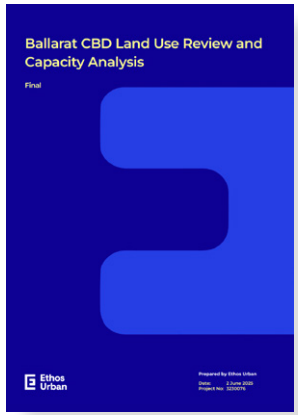
In developing the UDF, the proposed future built form outcomes have been tested against the views identified in the study and the view locations have also been assessed. Some views are considered impractical or unreasonable to protect, balanced against the policy settings for the CBD, but most views can be managed from a future built form perspective.

Background Reports

Supporting this document are the following two background studies, providing recommendations for the Ballarat CBD:

- *Ballarat CBD - Land Use Review and Capacity Analysis* (Ethos Urban, 2025)
- *Ballarat CBD Movement & Transport Analysis* (Insititute for Sensible Transport, 2026)





Ballarat CBD Land Use and Capacity Analysis (Ethos Urban)

The Ballarat CBD Land Use and Capacity Analysis was undertaken to provide analysis on the current land use and economic conditions, and the likely future development scenario for the Ballarat CBD.

Key findings of the report are that the CBD is likely to experience a continuing, slow pace of residential development for the immediate future until economic conditions change. However, the study highlights that investment in the public realm will increase the attractivenes of the Ballarat CBD for future investors.

The delivery of currently approved planning permits could also encourage further investement and development.

Ballarat CBD Movement and Transport Analysis (Institute for Sensible Transport)

The Ballarat CBD Movement and Transport Analysis assesses the current movement and transport networks that make moving around the CBD possible.

The success of the CBD in the future relies on the city facilitating sustainable transport modes and improved transport infrastructure. The streets in the CBD provide opportunities to enhance walking and cycling networks and improved public realm around public transport stops and the Ballarat Railway Station.

Planning Policy Framework (Ballarat Planning Scheme)

State Planning Policy (Planning Policy Framework)

State planning policy is aimed at creating and facilitating orderly and sustainable urban settlement patterns that are liveable, sustainable and economically viable, with access to services and infrastructure. This includes encouraging higher densities of residential development and a range of land uses that make a place liveable and sustainable. The following clauses need to be balanced and considered against each other:

- *Clause 11.01-1S - Settlement*
- *Clause 11.03-1S - Activity Centres & Precincts*
- *Clause 15.03-1S - Heritage Conservation*

Ballarat Planning Scheme (Local)

State Planning Policy filters down to the local level and identifies the Ballarat CBD as a location to focus investment to support the growth of the city centre in terms of commercial and residential development, consistent with activity centre policy in metropolitan Melbourne.

- *Clause 11.03-1L-1*

The Ballarat Planning Scheme provides the policy direction and the specific rules and provisions that developers need to respond to in the planning permit application process. The planning scheme sets a clear direction for the Ballarat CBD (Clause 11.03-1-1L) from a housing and economic growth perspective, which filters down from state planning policy level, which idenfies Ballarat as a *Major Regional City.*

Clause 11.01-1R Settlement - Central Highlands

- *Support Ballarat as the Major regional city for regional growth, services and employment with major growth focussed to the west.*
- *Support urban consolidation, particularly in Ballarat's Central Business District.*
- *Maintain Ballarat's Central Business District as the primary focus for commercial, retail and service activity in the city and region.*

Clause 11.03-1S Activity centres

- *To encourage the concentration of major retail, residential, commercial, administrative, entertainment and cultural developments into activity centres that are highly accessible to the community.*

Clause 11.03-1-1L CBD

- *Facilitate higher density infill housing within the Ballarat CBD.*
- *Facilitate significant new mixed-use development in the CBD.*

15.03-1S Heritage conservation

To ensure the conservation of places of heritage significance.

- *Identify, assess and document places of natural and cultural heritage significance as a basis for their inclusion in the planning scheme.*
- *Provide for the conservation and enhancement of those places that are of aesthetic, archaeological, architectural, cultural, scientific or social significance.*
- *Encourage appropriate development that respects places with identified heritage values.*
- *Retain those elements that contribute to the importance of the heritage place.*

15.03-1L Heritage conservation

- *Encourage sympathetic forms of development adjacent to heritage sites.*
- *Ensure alterations to heritage places are carried out in a sympathetic manner with consideration to the 'Burra Charter'.*
- *Discourage the demolition of buildings and other elements of identified local, state and national heritage significance.*



Lydiard Street N - looking south


Lydiard Street S - looking north

Planning Zones & Overlays

Zones

The Ballarat CBD is generally zoned as Commercial 1 Zone, allowing a mix of uses including commercial, retail, restaurants, cafes and higher density residential development.

There are also a number of other zones applied to various sites and areas throughout the CBD such as:

- Special Use Zone (SUZ)
- Mixed Use Zone (MUZ)
- Public Use Zone (PUZ)
- Transport Zone (TZ)
- Industrial 1 Zone In1Z)
- General Residential Zone (GRZ)
- Residential Growth Zone (RGZ)

Commercial 1 Zone

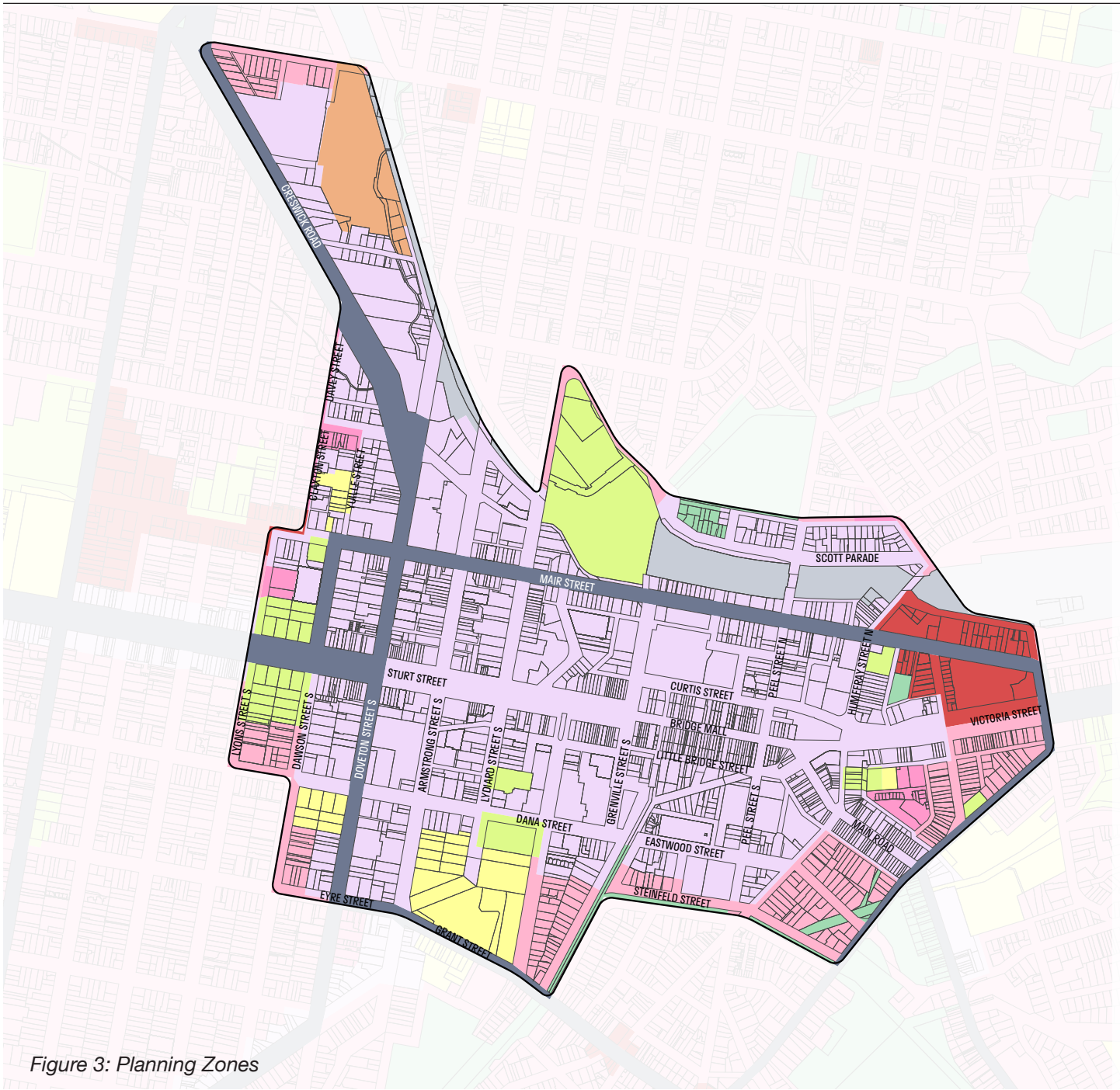
The Commercial 1 Zone is the most prevalent zone across the CBD and allows for a mix of uses that is suitable for the current and future mix of uses that the CBD is envisaged to accommodate. This includes, retail, office, and higher density residential use and development (apartments).

- *To implement the Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.*
- *To create vibrant mixed use commercial centres for retail, office, business, entertainment and community uses.*
- *To provide for residential uses at densities complementary to the role and scale of the commercial centre.*

Mixed Use Zone

The Mixed Use Zone is one of the suite of resdiential zones and encourages higher densities of residential development.

- *To implement the Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.*
- *To provide for a range of residential, commercial, industrial and other uses which complement the mixed-use function of the locality.*
- *To provide for housing at higher densities.*
- *To encourage development that responds to the existing or preferred neighbourhood character of the area.*
- *To facilitate the use, development and redevelopment of land in accordance with the objectives specified in a schedule to this zone.*



LEGEND / Zones Plan

- Commercial 1 Zone
- General Residential Zone
- Residential Growth Zone
- Industrial 1 Zone
- Mixed Use Zone
- Public Park & Recreation Zone
- Public Use Zone
- Special Use Zone
- Transport Zone 1
- Transport Zone 2

SCALE
0 200m 400m

Figure 3: Planning Zones

Heritage Overlays

The Heritage Overlay covers large areas of the Ballarat CBD with two precinct overlays in particular, the Lydiard Street Precinct (HO171) and Bridge Mall & Bakery Hill Precinct (HO176). There are also numerous individual overlays and buildings/properties listed on the Victorian Heritage Register.

A number of large precint heritage overlays overlap the the study area from all directions, and these include:

HO166 - Central Ballarat Precinct
HO167 - Sturt Street Precinct
HO168 - South Ballarat Precinct
HO171 - Lydiard Street Precinct
HO175 - Humffray Street Precinct
HO176 - Bridge Mall/Bakery Hill Precinct
HO177 - Victoria Street Precinct
HO178 - Ballarat East Civic Precinct
HO187 - Creswick Road/Macarthur Street
HO188 - Barkly Street/Humffray Street Sth

HO171 Lydiard Street Precinct

Within the Lydiard Street Precinct precinct are concentrations of highly intact and many state-listed (Victorian Heritage Register) properties, particularly on Lydiard and Sturt Streets. This area forms a concentration of highly intact and many prominent heritage buildings where the city's most significant buildings are located.

The Lydiard Street Precinct (HO171), and in particular Lydiard Street itself, is a highly intact and significant heritage precinct for Ballarat, currently being considered for higher level heritage listing including state, national and also world heritage (through a different process via UNESCO).

Sites listed on the Victorian Heritage Register are recognised as having the highest level of heritage value, warranting strong protection and a built form response that respects their heritage significance. Development proposals for these sites are assessed by Heritage Victoria.

HO176 Bridge Mall & Bakery Hill

HO176 applies to Bridge Mall and Main Road at Bakery Hill. The precinct consists of mainly double storey Victorian shopfronts with some single storey and also a number of not contrinutory properties. The statement of significance for the precinct was revised under Amendment C243ball Part 2 in 2025.

DDO1 - Bridge Mall Precinct

The Bridge Mall Precinct went through an amendment process (C243ball) recently and the amendment was split into two parts. Part 1 that addresses the Heritage Overlay (HO176) has been approved and gazetted, while Part 2 (a review of DDO1) "lapsed" and has been incorporated into the UDF project.

DDO1 is considered to be an "anomaly" in the Ballarat Planning Scheme due to its restrictive nature when set against the existing planning policy for the CBD at Clause 11.03-1-1L.

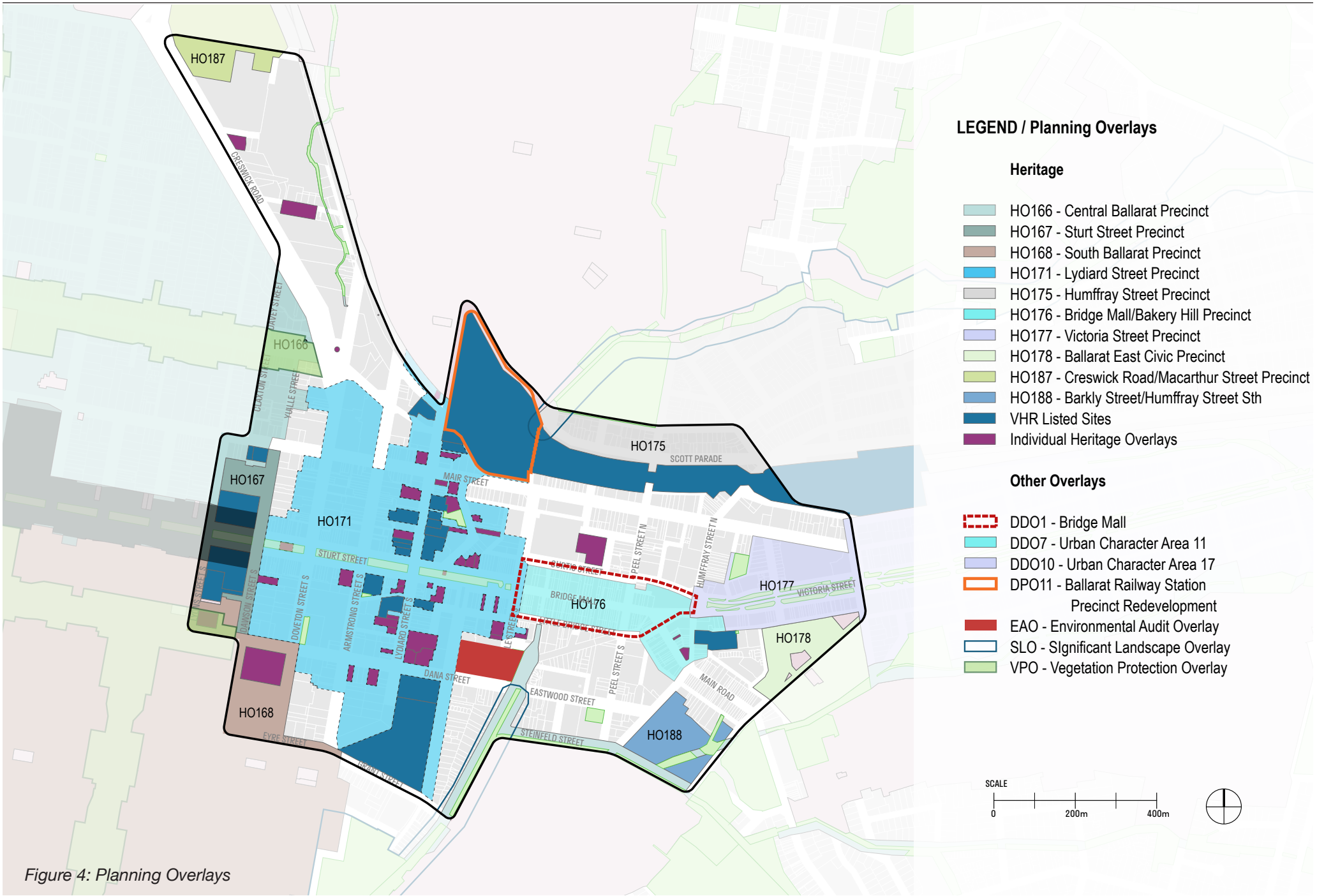


Figure 4: Planning Overlays

Amendment C217ball – 11 Waterways Flood Amendment

City of Ballarat is currently undertaking Amendment C217ball to implement the 11 Waterways Flood Study into the planning scheme. The amendment, which will affect some areas of the Ballarat CBD, proposes to apply the Flood Overlay and Land Subject to Inundation Overlay, as required to flood affected areas.

Floodway Overlay (FO)

The FO applies to mainstream flooding in both rural and urban areas. These areas convey active flood flows or store floodwater in a similar way to the UFZ, but with a lesser flood risk. The FO is suitable for areas where there is less need for control over land use, and the focus is more on control of development.

Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO)

The LSIO applies to mainstream flooding in both rural and urban areas. In general, areas covered by the LSIO have a lower flood risk than UFZ or FO areas.

