

Understanding the planning process

Information for residents



If your neighbour or someone nearby is building on their land, a planning permit might be needed.



This information may help you understand the process, how you can become involved and influence the outcome of a development.

STEP 1

Pre-application meeting



A voluntary meeting between Council officers and the developer. We explain the planning process and review the project against the objectives of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme. This step helps better shape a proposal before it is seen by the community.

STEP 2

A planning application is submitted to Council



Council officers make an initial assessment of the proposal against the Merri-bek Planning Scheme, a legal document.



This requires balancing the relevant and sometimes competing planning policies. The planning system calls for 'acceptable' rather than 'perfect' outcomes.



Council will advise the applicant of any issues that require fixing and ask for missing information, necessary to make a decision and inform the community.

STEP 3

Public notice of the application



You might receive a letter or see a 'Notice of an Application' sign on a property.



Proposals are available on Council's website or you can speak with the Council officer in charge of the application.



You may object to the proposal in writing, explaining why you object and how you are impacted. Council officers can help by explaining what things we can consider.



Practical suggestions in your objection – such as more trees or adding screening to a window — is a useful way to have a say in how you think a development can be improved.

STEP 4

Your opportunity to influence the outcome



Council officers may contact objectors to discuss your concerns and any possible solutions.



We may arrange a meeting with objectors and the applicant to understand concerns, share information or discuss possible solutions.

STEP 5

The decision

A report assessing the proposal and considering objections is written.

Council then makes a decision to approve or refuse the application. Sometimes, this is at a Council meeting, which objectors may attend.



Objectors and the applicant are notified of this decision.



If Council decides to approve an application, an objector can appeal this decision to VCAT.

STEP 6

VCAT (Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal)

This step only happens if Council's decision is appealed by the applicant or objectors.



You may be asked to attend a Compulsory Conference to discuss solutions.



If no agreement can be made, all parties present their views to VCAT in a hearing.



VCAT will make the final decision.

What happens next?

After a permit is issued, the developer usually needs to first satisfy conditions of the permit and then get a building permit. Objectors are not part of the process of satisfying permit conditions. Neighbours may be further notified when building works are about to commence. Sometimes, this might happen quite quickly, other times the project might not start for a few years. You can call Council to find out about the status of a project.

www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/building-and-business/planning-and-building/planning/planning-application-process/

For more information call: 03 9240 1111