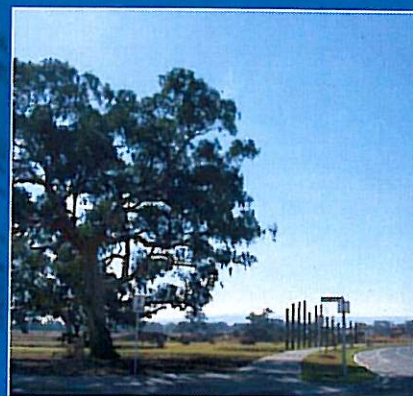


A connected, memorable and diverse Neighbourhood Centre as a focus for the emerging community of Mernda Villages.



Stockland

MERNDA VILLAGES

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE - MASTERPLAN

Prepared by: Stockland - Group Design & Delivery July 2008



Site photograph: a major River Red Gum in the Village Green forms a central element of the future Mernda Villages Neighbourhood Centre.

01. INTRODUCTION

The Vision: A Community Heart
Purpose of this document

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Accessible and connected
Diverse Mix of Uses
Memorable Character
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Masterplan Example

06. KEY USES

Community Activity Centre (CAC)
Mixed Use / Retail Precinct
Childcare Centre
Medical / Business Facility
Built Form to Village Green
Schools



01 INTRODUCTION



A small centre creates a focus for the community and gives people a place to spend time within their neighbourhood, a place where they can meet, shop and be proud of.



The Vision: A Community 'Heart'

Mernda Villages is an emerging community of over 1,800 homes with a population of approximately 6,000 people. The Mernda Villages Neighbourhood Centre is proposed in proximity to the future Mernda Town Centre but more compact in scale that will cater for the needs of the surrounding community. It will offer education, community and service facilities.

The Centre will provide:

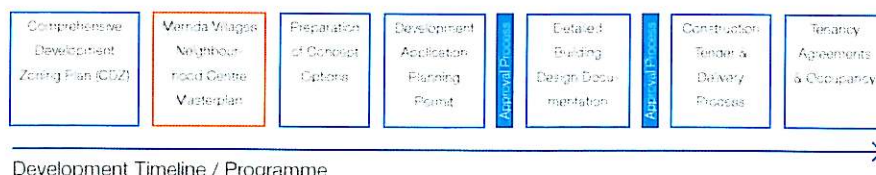
- A focus for the emerging community of Mernda Villages,
- A location to encourage community events and informal interactions,
- A destination that is pedestrian-orientated and well connected,
- A place that is safe and memorable.

Purpose of this document

The 'Mernda Village Neighbourhood Centre Masterplan' has been prepared to create a framework that will ensure that the design of buildings and spaces will complement one another and create an attractive environment that supports the character and aspirations of the community at Mernda Villages.

The document outlines the Key Design Principles which will be used to guide future planning permit application assessments.

The need for this Masterplan was identified during the preparation of the Comprehensive Development Zoning (CDZ) and is intended to set the framework for the Neighbourhood Centre, allowing the final design to respond to evolving needs and future market demands.



The above programme demonstrates that this document provides the first stage in the overall design review and approval process for the delivery of the Mernda Village Centre by establishing the principles for detailed design outcomes of the Development Application and Building Approval stages.

CONTEXT 02

Regional & Local Context

Mernda Villages is located approximately 30km north of Melbourne in the Northern Growth Area. The Western Ring Road provides access to the airport (~ 17 minutes by car) and the CBD (~ 30 minutes by car).

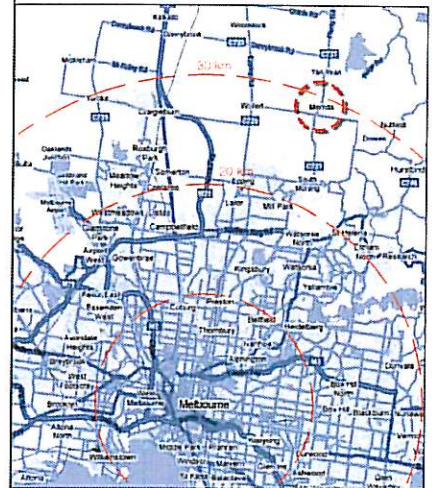
The Mernda Villages Neighbourhood Centre adjoins future district open spaces to the east and lies north-west of the proposed Mernda Town Centre (estimated 27,500m² retail, 77,500m² commercial GLA).

Relationship to the MSP and the MDVP

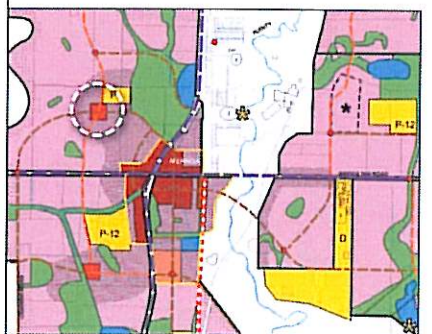
Whittlesea Council's 'Mernda Design Strategy' (MSP) and Structure Plan provided the planning guidelines and strategic framework for the Mernda Villages masterplan document:

- Existing and proposed site features
- Zoning and statutory planning requirements,
- Road hierarchy and circulation,
- Site design requirements and
- Open space and landscape character.

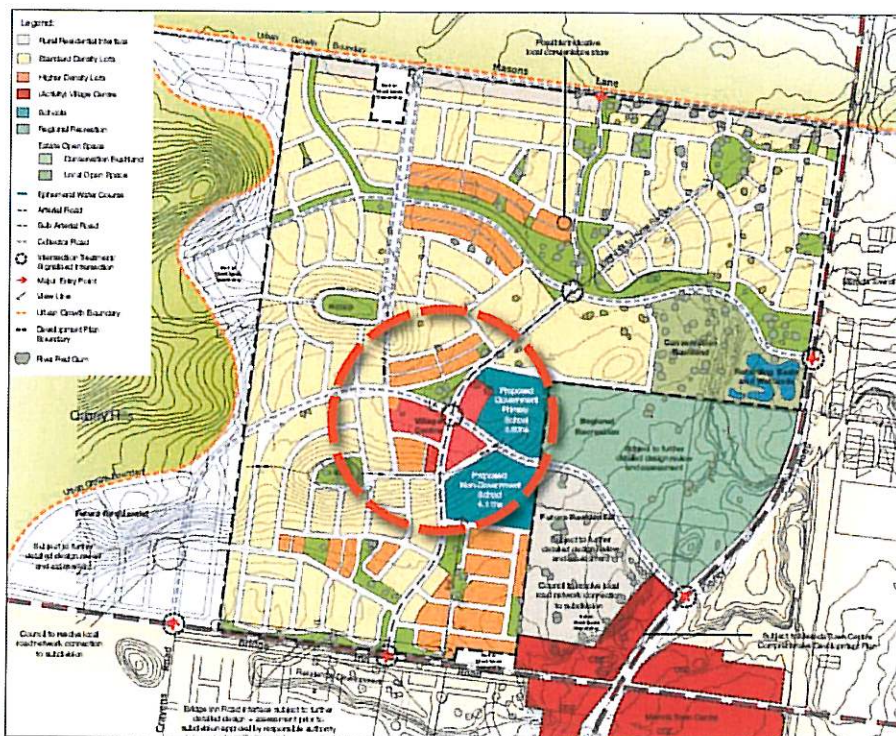
The Neighbourhood Centre is embedded in the Mernda Villages Development Plan (MDVP) as shown below.



Regional Context Plan



Mernda Strategy Plan (extract)



Mernda Villages Development Plan

03 FRAMEWORK



The centre will provide a clearly defined public realm and high-quality streetscapes.



Best practice: retention of trees, inclusion of public art and a clear definition of the public domain through built form and landscape.

Overview of Key Objectives

Following seven key objectives will help to ensure a high-quality design outcome for the Mernda Villages Neighbourhood Centre (refer to chapter 4 for a detailed description & plans):

I) Community Heart

The centre will become a hub for community activities. It will provide possibilities for people, to gather, communicate, shop, learn and spend time in their neighbourhood.

II) Accessible and connected

The centre will be embedded in a network of pedestrian and cycle routes, making it accessible for all age groups. It's location at a cross roads maximises the 'movement economy' and will allow the centre to be viable in the future.

III) Diversity of uses

The centre will provide a mix of community, education, commercial and residential activities. Synergies between the range of different uses will foster high activity and viability.

IV) Memorable Character

The Centre will support the desired contemporary character of Mernda Villages while intensifying scale and mass to reflect a more urban feel in comparison to the residential areas.

V) Quality Public Realm

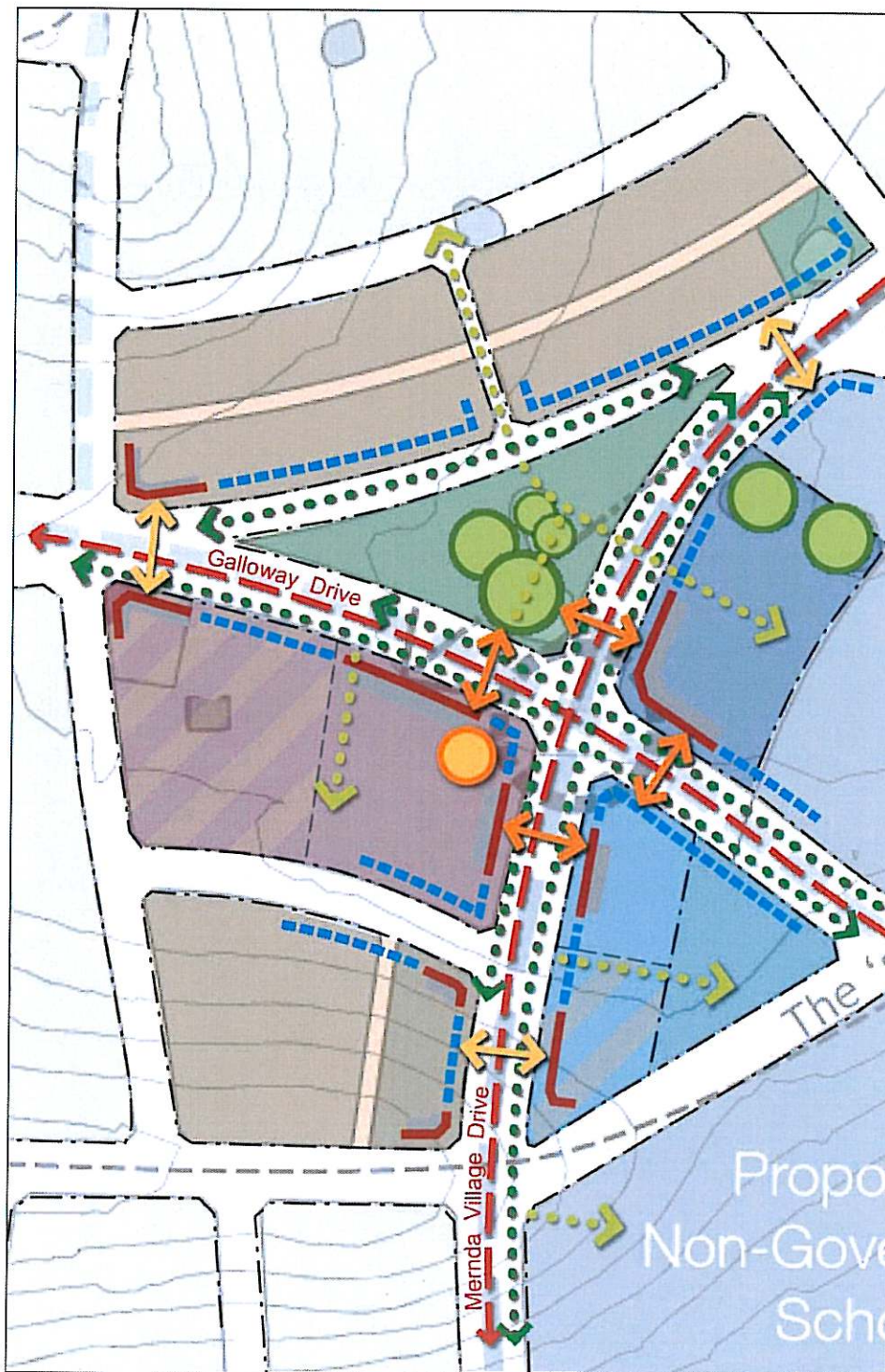
The centre will provide a high-quality, clearly defined public realm and well-designed streetscapes to support a safe and welcoming feel.

VI) Responsive to the Landscape

The centre will be responsive to the landscape of the place and support a high quality landscape design that emphasises principles of sustainability, functionality and connectedness.

VII) Environmental Responsibility

The centre will be designed to ensure appropriate microclimates and minimise energy and water consumption.



Key Urban Design Principles Plan

- Strong consideration of Built Form Edge
- - - Definition through Built Form or Landscape
- ↔ Cross Roads Gateway
- ↔ Secondary Gateway
- Retained Tree
- Proposed Activity Node
- ... Pedestrian Connection
- ... Potential Pedestrian Link
- - - Collector Road

Note: The diagram represents envisaged uses & principles for each site according to Stocklands aspirations for the neighbourhood centre. The final uses may be different due to market demands.

04 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

I) Community Heart

Objective

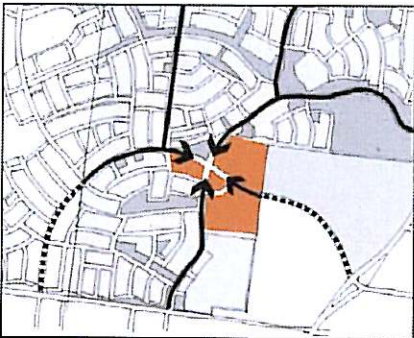
To deliver a centre that will become a hub for community activities. The centre will provide possibilities for people, to gather, communicate, shop, learn and spend time in their neighbourhood.

Principles

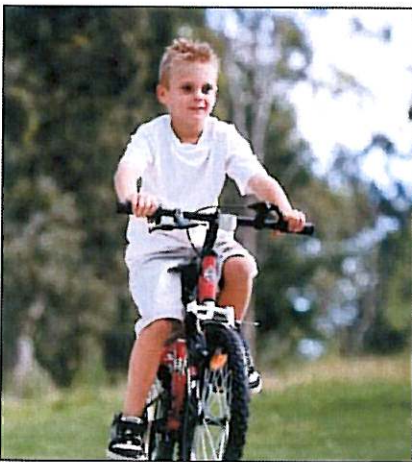
- Provide environments that encourage social interactions and engagement through built form and landscape settings.
- Ensure built form outcomes and the relationship between buildings become a catalyst for interaction in the community.
- Identify and enhance the sites' natural features including topography and existing trees through the design of streets, buildings and landscape.
- Provide convenient services to cater for the daily needs of residents.
- Orientate activity towards the focal cross roads: a destination with a memorable sense of place.



A successful 'community heart' allows for people to gather & communicate.



The centre will be well connected to the surroundings and easy to find.



The hub is in walkable / cycleable distance of residential areas, parks and two schools.

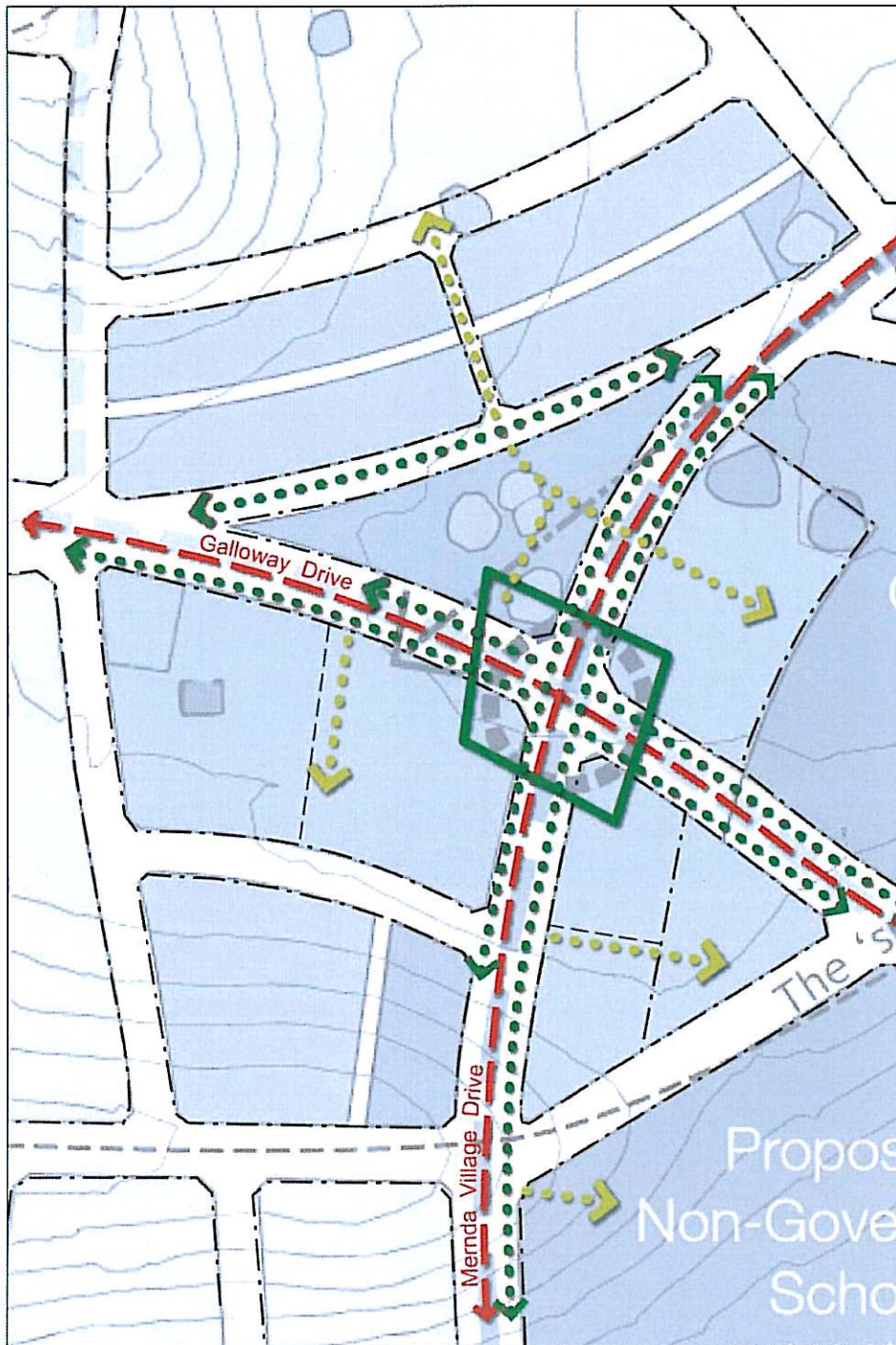
II) Accessible and connected

Objective

The centre will be embedded in a network of pedestrian and cycle routes, making it accessible for all age groups. The location at a cross roads maximises the 'movement economy' and will allow the centre to be viable in the future.

Principles

- Attract people into the centre with a permeable network of streets and access routes that connect well to the surroundings.
- Ensure the centre is easily accessible for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people.
- Provide good accessibility for all age groups and minimise potential conflicts between users.
- Provide appropriate and convenient parking for both vehicles and bicycles.
- Connect to trails for walking and cycling, in particular to schools and regional open spaces.
- Design for a high level of pedestrian amenity within the centre to encourage and promote a healthy lifestyle.



Movement Networks Plan

Note: The diagram represents envisaged uses & principles for each site according to Stocklands aspirations for the neighbourhood centre. The final uses may be different due to market demands.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

III) Diverse Mix of Uses

Objective

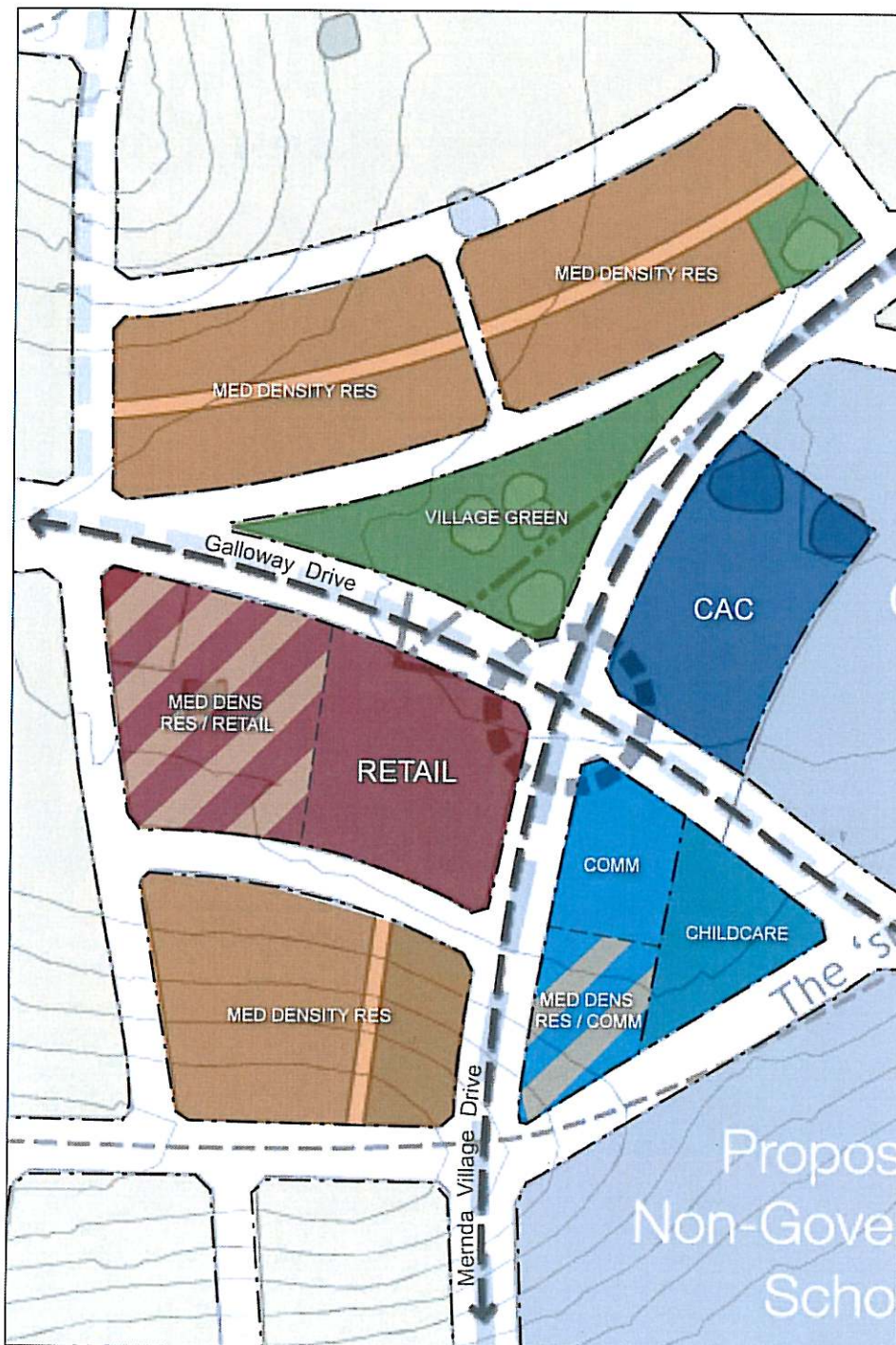
To provide a centre that will deliver a mix of community, education, commercial and residential activities. Synergies between the range of different uses will foster high activity and viability.

Principles

- Provide a mix of community, education, commercial and residential uses in the centre.
- Intensify residential densities around the Centre and provide greater housing choice. Explore alternative housing types including town houses and/or SoHo (self occupied home office).
- Incorporate a range of compatible uses such as take away shops to encourage activity at different times of the day, in particular use after dark.
- Provide convenient links between these uses to increase synergies and activity.



A mix of residential, commercial and community uses create synergies & activity



Proposed Land Use & Lot Boundaries

- Residential Medium Density
- Residential Standard
- Community Activity Centre
- Commercial (potential Medical Centre)
- Potential Commercial or Residential Medium Density
- Childcare
- Retail
- Retail / Res Med Density

Note: The diagram represents envisaged uses & principles for each site according to Stocklands aspirations for the neighbourhood centre. The final uses may be different due to market demands.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

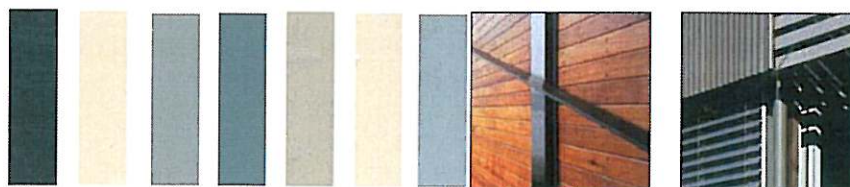
IV) Memorable Character & Sense of Place

Objective

To deliver a centre that supports the desired contemporary character of Mernda Villages while intensifying scale and mass to reflect a more urban feel in comparison to the residential areas.

Principles

- Orientate buildings and public spaces towards the focal cross roads to create a memorable destination.
- Encourage buildings with an increased scale and height to give importance to the centre (ie 2-storey buildings or single storey buildings with large roof forms).
- Create an edge and scale to the Village Green and reinforce the feeling of enclosure through the height and massing of adjoining buildings.
- Promote a sense of intimacy and human scale, in particular for pedestrian 'slow-speed' environments.
- Design for a robustness that promotes long term adaptive reuse.
- Reflect the desired built form character of Mernda Villages through a contemporary style with elegant structures and simple building shapes.
- Roof designs are to take inspiration from rural buildings:
 - o Simple pitched roofs
 - o Dramatic roof forms
 - o Large roof forms
 - o Light weight metal roofs
- Create strong connections between indoor and outdoor spaces through building transparency and opening locations.
- Provide intimate internal spaces for community buildings.



- Ensure a sense of cohesion in the centre due to a consistent palette of materials and colours.
 - o Incorporate timber cladding, screens and pergolas.
 - o Include solid materials including brick, stone and rammed earth.
 - o Display a richness of different materials and textures.
 - o Consider a building language of robust/solid corner elements linked by open, transparent lightweight elements.



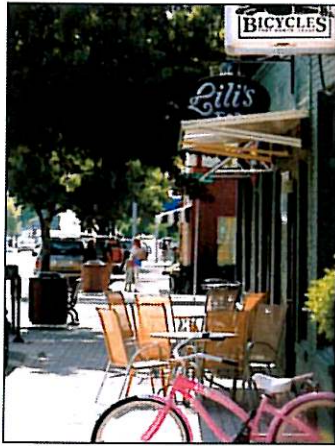
Aim for a contemporary country style with elegant structures and simple building shapes.



Good practice: strong connections between indoor and outdoor spaces.



Encourage buildings with an increased scale and height to give importance to the centre



Small centres should express the character and aspirations of a community.



Well designed covered areas in front of a row of shops offer high amenity for pedestrians.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

V) Quality Public Realm

Objective

To provide a quality centre that delivers a clearly defined and safe public realm which will link the different parts and uses together.

Principles

- Clearly delineate between public and private spaces.
- Emphasize elements that are pedestrian-oriented, not car-dominated.
- Connect pedestrian and open space networks to help create a sense of place and keep pathways clear, simple and safe.
- Maximise opportunities for passive surveillance and enhance safety by:
 - locating facilities and services in areas that are highly visible
 - fronting houses, shop fronts, windows and front doors onto streets and open spaces
 - avoiding poorly surveyed areas and areas of concealment
 - providing appropriate lighting, in particular for carpark areas.
- Identify and enhance key views and vistas to:
 - significant landscape elements (e.g. major trees)
 - landmark buildings and public spaces
 - entries to buildings.
- Provide visually interesting elevations to the public realm through:
 - articulation of architectural elements, e.g. awnings, shading devices, accent materials and colours
 - projections and indentations in the floor plan
 - roof elements that create shadow effects.



Plant street trees to form continuous avenues and enhance view lines.

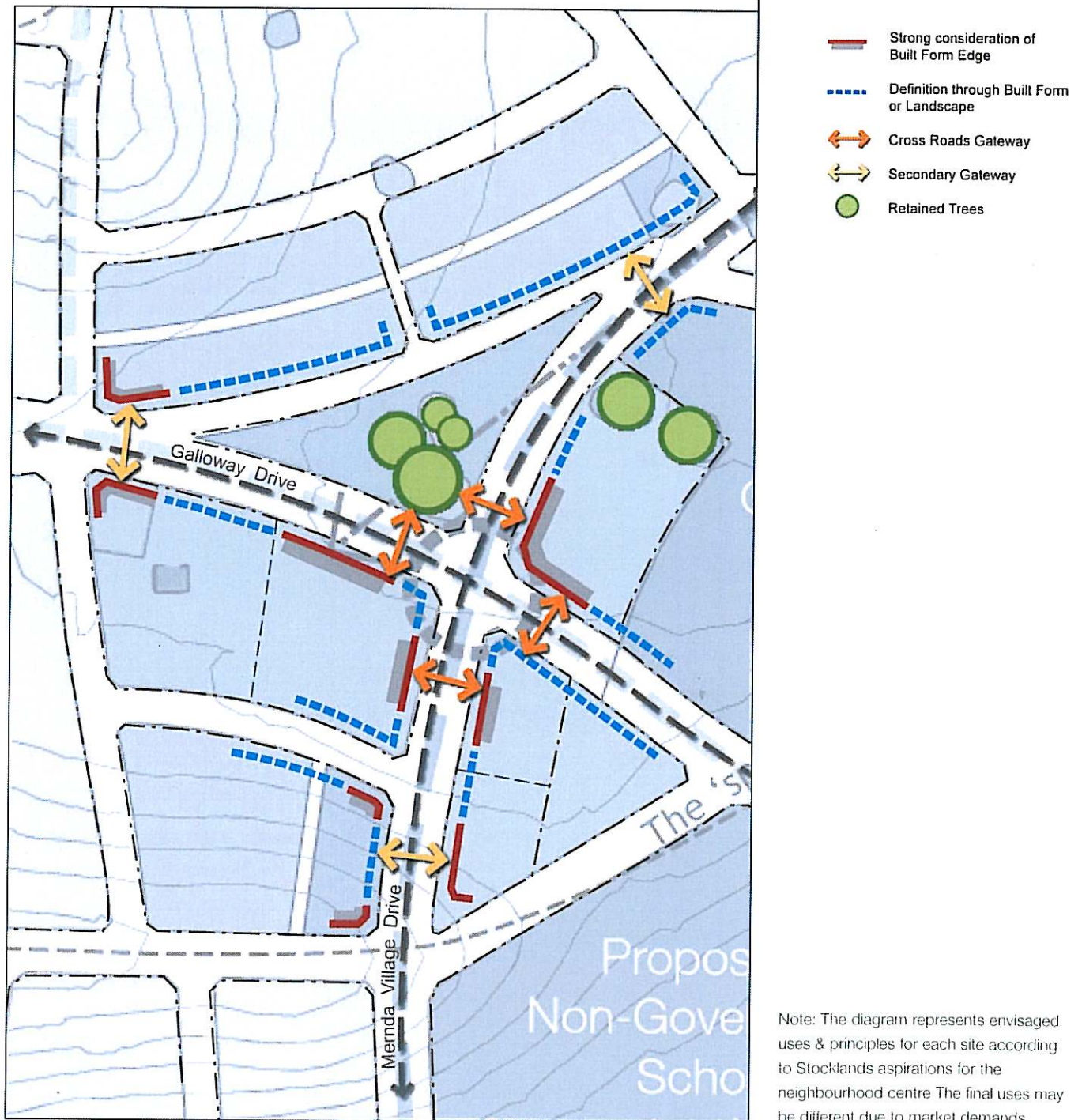


Provide visually interesting elevations to streets, rear lanes and public open spaces.



Signage and street furniture should reflect the contemporary feel of Mernda Villages.

- Design buildings that respond to pedestrian needs (ie weather protection).
- Provide robust and durable street furniture.
- Incorporate public art into the design of public spaces.
- Minimise streetscape clutter by careful selection and placement of signage and street furniture. Locate signage on buildings and walls where possible.
- Plant appropriate street trees to form continuous avenues and provide on-street parking in between trees.
- Use landscape design to soften the visual impact of off-street carpark areas.



Defined Edges & Public Domain Plan

Note: The diagram represents envisaged uses & principles for each site according to Stocklands aspirations for the neighbourhood centre. The final uses may be different due to market demands.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

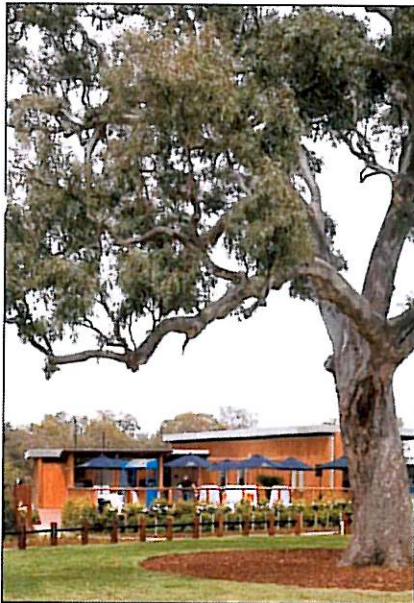
VI) Responsive to the Landscape Character

Objective

To create a centre that is responsive to the landscape and landform of the place. A quality landscape design will emphasise principles of sustainability, functionality and connectedness.

Principles

- Maximise visual and physical connections to the eastern recreational reserve.
- Foster a sense of ownership, sense of place and pride through the design of streets, squares and open space.
- Design the built form and land uses to be compatible with the landform.
- Maximise views which assist in the legibility of the centre and ensure built form responds to key views and vistas.
- Provide a selection of plants that are suited to public buildings and also respond to the character envisioned for the area.
- Select materials that are simple and robust.
- Integrate individual and stands of mature trees, particularly indigenous River Red Gums where possible.



Ensure built form responds to key views and incorporates the specific landscape setting.



Buildings & structures need to be responsive to their landscape setting and landform.



Select materials and plants that respond to the character envisioned for the area.

VII) Environmental Sustainability

Objective

Design the centre to minimise impact on the environment, create appropriate microclimates (temperature, humidity, light, air movement and acoustics) and minimise energy and water consumption.

Principles

- Provide appropriate microclimates through retention and planting of trees and careful building siting and design.
- Orientate buildings and streets to maximise solar access to private and public open spaces.
- Incorporate water sensitive urban design measures (WSUD), e.g. in the design for parking spaces at the Village Green.
- Utilise the north aspects and maximise potential for natural light to reach the interiors to minimise energy use.
- Maximise cross ventilation and incorporate solar shading within designs.
- Incorporate energy and water efficient initiatives.
- Use plants that require low maintenance and minimum water supply.
- Consider wider aspects of sustainability in the detailed design including:
 - o Energy management
 - o Site planning
 - o Water & construction management
 - o Design to promote security
 - o Noise attenuation



Rainwater tanks make an important contribution towards reducing the water demand.



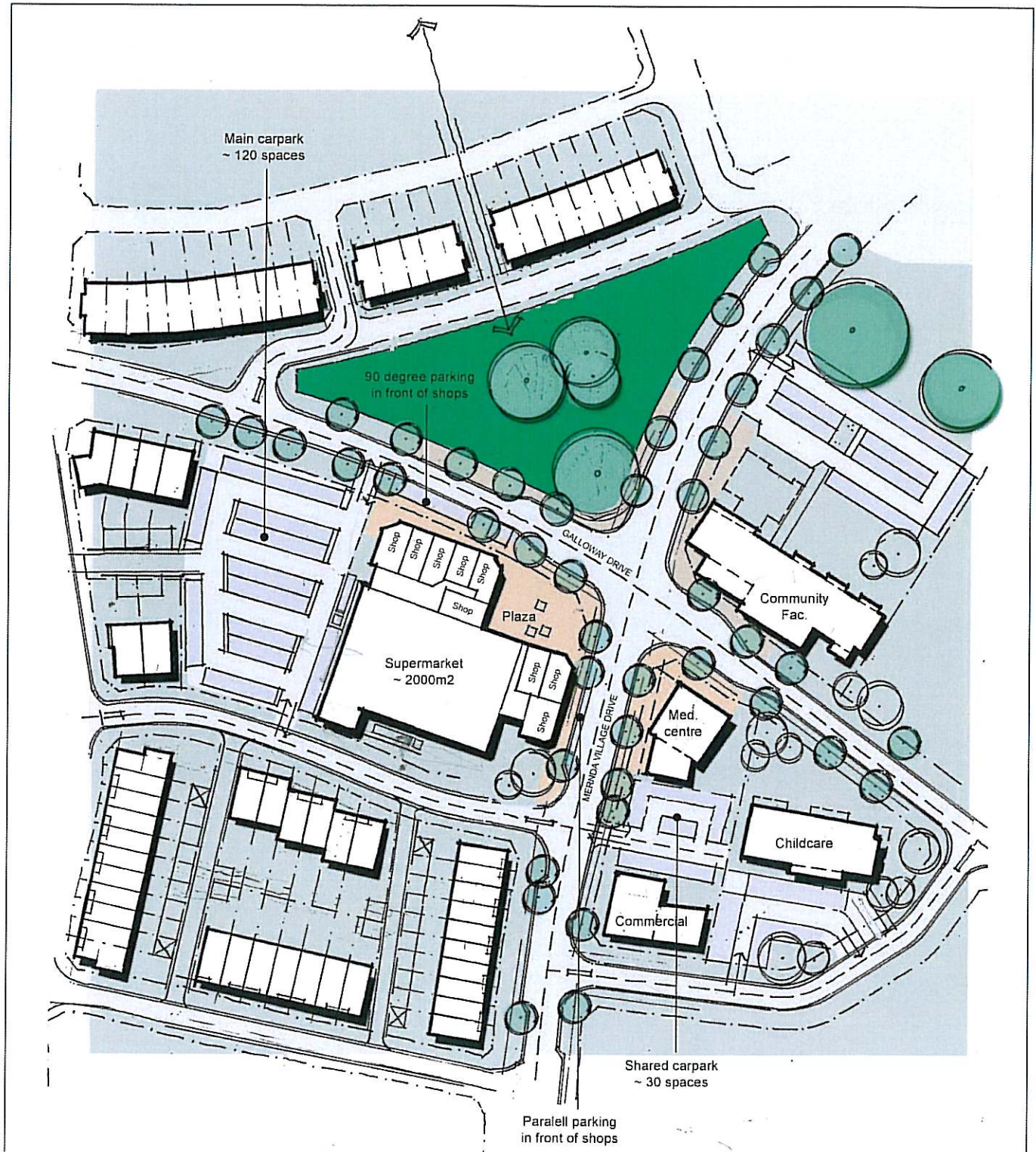
Incorporate water sensitive urban design (WSUD), e.g. in the design for parking spaces at the Village Green.



Cross ventilation and sun shading reduce the energy consumption of buildings.



Use plants that require minimum maintenance and water supply.



Illustrative Masterplan (example)

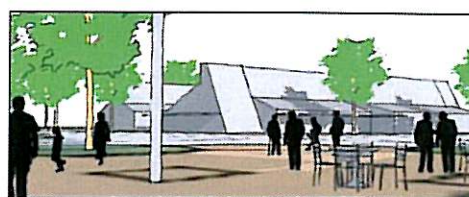
05 ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE

Masterplan Example

This illustrative masterplan represents an example of a built outcome for the Mernda Villages Neighbourhood Centre. It follows the Key Urban Design Principles outlined in this document and is intended to give an indication of how these principles can be applied in the next design phase.



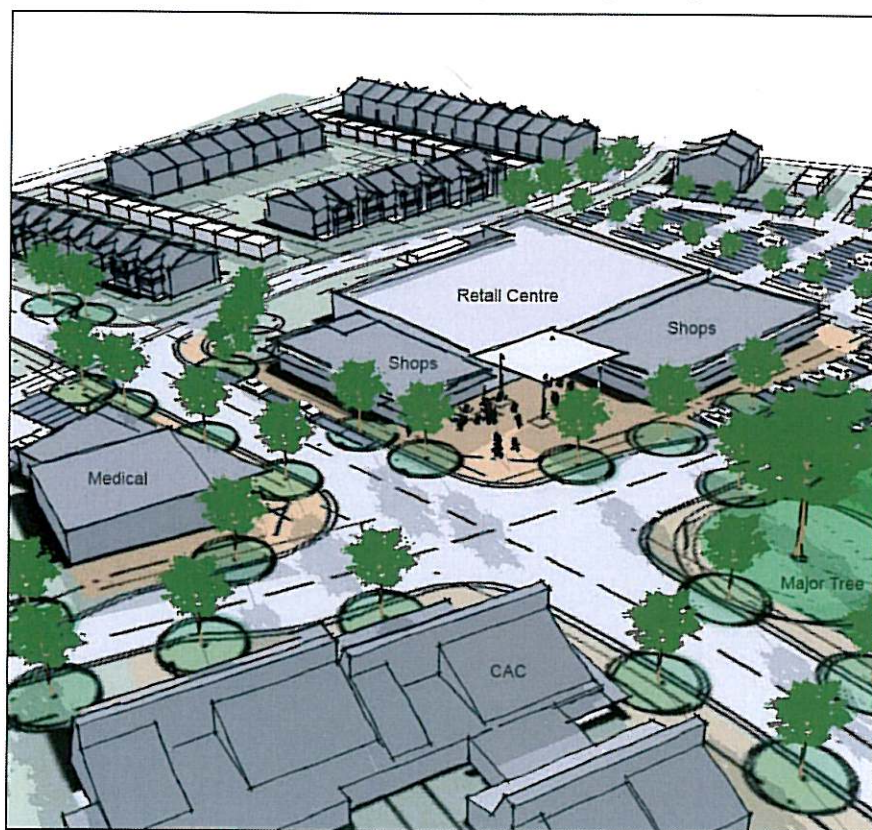
Aerial view



View to Community Activity Centre



View to plaza and along Galloway Drive



Aerial view of the centre: CAC in the foreground, behind a retail centre & public square.

06 KEY USES

Community Activity Centre (CAC)

Objectives

To ensure the Community Activity Centre will be an iconic built form in the Mernda Villages Neighbourhood Centre and a focus for community events. The built form will emphasise the crossroads and form a key gateway.

Principles

- Address the corner location at the crossroads through the placement of the building with minimal setback to the street.
- Locate the main entry close to the cross roads and pedestrian crossings.
- Ensure high visibility of the entry from Mernda Villages and Galloway Drive and maximise visual connectivity with the Village Green.
- Break-up the bulk of the built form so that it is well proportioned and corresponds to internal uses.
- Incorporate pitched roofs to reflect surrounding residential building design.
- Provide good solar access into exterior spaces and pre-school areas.
- Provide verandahs as a:
 - transition between indoor and outdoor areas,
 - shading device particularly on the western orientation and
 - a vernacular to fit in with the local character.
- Use the landscape design to enclose play area for the Pre-School and increase the visual privacy of these outdoor areas.
- Preserve and incorporate existing trees in the north of the site.
- Use landscape to soften the visual impact of off-street carpark areas.
- Provide disabled parking close to the entry of the CAC.



<< Address the corner location at the cross roads through the placement of the building and main entry.

Mixed Use / Retail Precinct

Objectives

Create a commercially viable retail centre that provides an active focal point, caters for the needs of Mernda Villages community and forms an integral part of the building ensemble around the cross roads.

Principles

- Maximise visual connections with the Village Green, the community activity centre and the medical/commercial use across the road.
- Address the corner at the crossroads opposite the major tree. This could be achieved through:
 - o the placement of a public space on the corner,
 - o the location of the main entry to a potential supermarket / general store,
 - o an iconic built form or vertical element (e.g. clock / ESD tower) and
 - o a combination of above elements.
- Design each building elevation to create an inviting positive interface to adjacent lots and surrounding streets.
- Use building design and detail to create a human scale.
- Allow for appropriate and safe pedestrian circulation zone adjacent to the retail.
- Provide verandahs as a transition between indoor and outdoor spaces, a shading device and a vernacular to fit in with the local character.
- Avoid blank walls facing the street. If inevitable provide appropriate setbacks and landscape to screen and soften the elevation.
- Encourage active uses and late hours economy for the centre: e.g. take away food premises.
- Locate off-street car parking to the rear or side of buildings.
- Use landscape to soften the visual impact of off-street carpark areas. In addition:
 - o Provide clearly visible signage to indicate entry and exit points.
 - o Ensure adequate parking and loading facilities.
 - o Locate loading facilities where possible at the rear of the buildings.



Good address: a small plaza and the architectural expression of the entry open this retail centre to the street.



A high-quality pedestrian environment: allow for awnings, tree planting and street furniture.



Carefully design each building elevation to create an inviting and active centre.

KEY USES

Childcare Centre

Objective

Create a high quality childcare facility in a landscape setting close to the heart of the Mernda Villages Neighbourhood Centre which is easily accessed from the surrounding community by all modes of transport.

Principles

- Focus attention to landscape and building design response at the north east of the building, the direction from which the building is most prominent. Locate the entry off this landscaped corner at the north east of the building.
- Locate the playground to the north of the site to maximise solar access.
- Use the landscape design to create privacy and enclosure to playground areas whilst still creating a high quality public realm.
- Sensitively consider the landscape interface between adjoining sites.
- Consider the visual impact of the shaded play areas on the public realm and design a high quality response to these views.
- Minimize windows in west façade in order to reduce sun exposure.
- Use landscape to soften the visual impact of carpark areas. In addition:
 - Locate parking off the less busy road,
 - Ensure vehicles enter and exit the site in a forward direction and
 - Provide clearly visible signage to indicate entry and exit points.
- Reinforce the visual link to the Catholic School to the south on the site in the landscape treatment

Consider the visual impact of the shaded play areas on the public realm and design a high quality response to these views. >>



Medical / Business Facility

Objective

Provide an appropriate use and built form on this gateway location that will assist in activating the focal cross roads for the Neighbourhood Centre and provide a link between community and retail uses.

Principles

- Address the corner location at the key cross road through the placement of the building and the location of the main entry.
- Promote security and visual interest for this prominent corner lot and address both the primary and secondary street elevations
- Provide shading along the west facade of the building through the inclusion of verandahs, awnings etc.
- Provide good solar access to any external public spaces.
- Design the building to read as a public building and contribute to the desired character of the Mernda Villages Neighbourhood Centre.
- Promote adaptive reuse by considering potential uses over a longer term period in the building design and accommodate a staged building program (if required).
- Maximise visual and physical connections with the retail uses.
- Use landscape to soften the visual impact of carpark areas. In addition:
 - Locate parking behind the building to the rear or side of the site and away from the key north west corner,
 - Ensure vehicles enter and exit the site in a forward direction and
 - Provide clearly visible signage to indicate entry and exit points.



Address the corner location at the cross roads through the roof form and main entry. >>



KEY USES

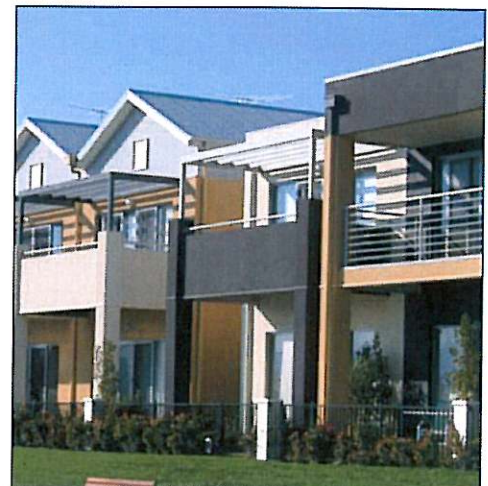
Residential Built Form to Village Green

Objective

Define the edge of the Mernda Villages Neighbourhood Centre through a residential built form which encloses and activates the Village Green.

Principles

- Buildings and building entries are to be orientated towards the street and public open space.
- Building facades are to be softened by:
 - pitched roofs
 - alternating adjacent types
 - balcony widths
- Provide a minimal setback to the Village Green (ie 2m) to create a strong built form along this edge.
 - The small front setback between the house and the front boundary should include small scale planting.
 - A low fence is permitted
- Rear lanes are to be landscaped, articulated through:
 - the alternating width of garages
 - small set back to rear gates
 - pronounced entry to garages
- Visitor parking is to be well landscaped and provided along the Village Green.
- Landscaping is to compliment and enhance the natural features of the site.



These houses create a clearly defined edge to the public domain.

Schools

Objective

Locate schools and school buildings close to the Mernda Villages Neighbourhood Centre with strong pedestrian connections to activate and enliven the centre.

Principles

- Buildings should be located on the higher land with ovals and parking on the flatter land to minimise cut and fill & maximise views to and from the school buildings.
- Provide good solar access into interior and key exterior spaces and utilise the north aspect in the detailed building design to ensure passive solar design and views to the north east.
- Provide verandahs as a:
 - o transition between indoor and outdoor areas,
 - o shading device particularly on the western orientation and
 - o a vernacular to fit in with the local character.
- Use landscape to soften the visual impact of carpark areas. In addition:
 - o Locate parking off less busy roads,
 - o Set parking down off the higher ground,
 - o Ensure vehicles enter and exit the site in a forward direction and
 - o Provide clearly visible signage to indicate entry and exit points.
- Locate ovals on the flat and lower parts of the site to minimise cut and fill.
- Retain existing trees where possible.
- Use the landscape design to create privacy and enclosure to playground areas whilst still creating a high quality public realm through the careful design of fencing, outdoor furniture and playground equipment.
- Provide strong pedestrian & cycle paths that are safe and connect well to the Neighbourhood Centre.



Ovals are best located on the flat and lower parts of the site.



Good practice: a clearly visible entrance to a school building.



Provide good daylight access and a relationship of indoor and outdoor spaces.



Allow for safe walking routes to schools.

