

13 May 2026

The Hon. Sonya Kilkenney
Minister for Planning
GPO Box 4356
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Via email sonya.kilkenny@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Minister Kilkenney

Advocacy regarding the impact of planning reform on distinct Neighbourhood Character

I write following our recent meeting on 28 April 2026 where we discussed numerous matters associated with the State Government planning reform agenda. Thank you for taking the time to meet to discuss these matters.

It was encouraging to hear that you are seeking feedback on the practical application of the planning reforms and we will be seeking out opportunities to share examples with the Department. We are also pleased that our planning controls provide more than sufficient capacity for housing growth, meeting State Government's targets, although we are observing some concerning and perhaps unintended impacts from the reforms on parts of our local neighbourhoods.

Of particular interest to Council, we provided detail of a recent planning application that had been decided by Council at its meeting on 27 April 2026. The proposed development of land at 50 Murray Crescent, Rowville for the construction of nine double storey dwellings had been called-up for a Council decision by the Ward Councillor to highlight the impact of the implementation of the Townhouse and Low-Rise Code on land subject to the Neighbourhood Residential Zone, Schedule 9 (NRZ9). This followed a similar application at 24-26 Taylors Lane, Rowville considered by Council at its February meeting, for a 24-dwelling development, located within this same NRZ9 area. I have attached some images which show the site as it currently exists, along with an image of the proposed development.

Council's resolution of 27 April approved the proposed development subject to Conditions, however parts B and C of the resolution are detailed below:

That Council resolve:

...

- B To note previous advocacy to the state government in relation to the Townhouse and Low Rise Code (Clause 55 of the Knox Planning Scheme) including a prior submission to the Department of Transport and Planning in relation to the “deemed to comply” provisions, a prior submission to the “State Parliamentary Inquiry into Victorian Planning Provisions amendments VC257, VC267 and VC274”, and including through discussions with local Members of Parliament representing Knox.*
- C To advocate to the State Government for changes to the current planning provisions to provide for a re-instatement of the planning controls previously approved by Amendment C189knox for the Murray Crescent area.*

For context, Planning Scheme Amendment C189knox came into operation in September 2023 and introduced new planning controls to selected transitional properties in Rowville to better reflect their distinctive large-lot, landscaped character along Taylors Lane, Murray Crescent, Vista Crescent and Fordham Court, and their role as a transition between conventional residential areas and the Low Density Residential Zone (LDRZ) to the south and west.

Amendment C191knox was approved by the State Government in February 2025. This amendment made many changes to the Local Planning Policy Framework, including the removal of previous policy strategy to support appropriate transition in Rowville from smaller lots to the LDRZ.

Amendments VC267 and VC276 came into operation in March and April 2025 respectively. These Amendments made changes to all residential zone schedules and Neighbourhood Character Overlay Schedules to implement the new residential development planning assessment provisions. Specifically, the amendment changed the clause 55 (multi dwelling) requirements in all residential zone schedules by, amongst other things, removing variations to clause 55 standards that are less permissible than the new standards and rewording more permissible local variations to clause 55 standards to align with the new standard.

Therefore, the local variation schedule provisions that were introduced through the Neighbourhood Residential Zone (Schedule 9) as part of Amendment C189knox in September 2023 were removed from the Knox Planning Scheme by the state-wide changes introduced by Amendment VC276 in April 2025, only 18 months later.

As you would appreciate, this has been a bitter pill for local residents to swallow, following years of VCAT hearings and advocacy effort to have these controls established. Only to see them being removed so soon afterwards has created significant frustration in the community.

As discussed in our meeting, we are providing this information to highlight the localised impacts from the wholesale changes to planning schemes, with the intent to gain support for a further review of planning controls where a disproportionate impact on local character is evident.

I understand Alison McFarlane, Executive Director State Planning Services and Heritage, has contacted Council officers to follow-up on a number of the matters raised during the meeting, including the performance of the residential codes and noting the Murray Crescent example. I appreciate this proactive follow-up and would welcome any future opportunity to discuss these important concerns and opportunities with you in greater detail.

Should you or your office have any further queries at this stage please contact Bruce Dobson, Chief Executive Officer via Bruce.Dobson@knox.vic.gov.au or Jonathan McNally, Interim Director City Liveability via Jonathan.McNally@knox.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

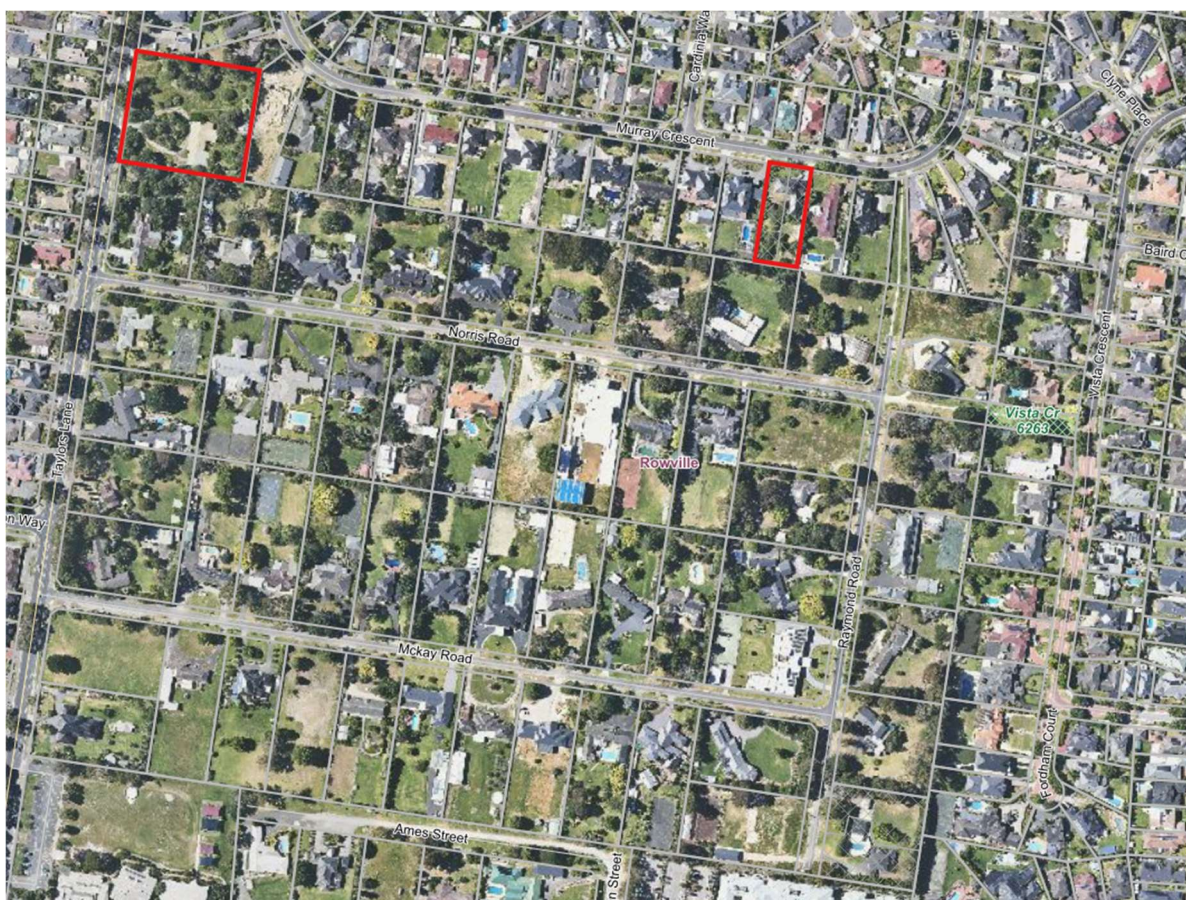
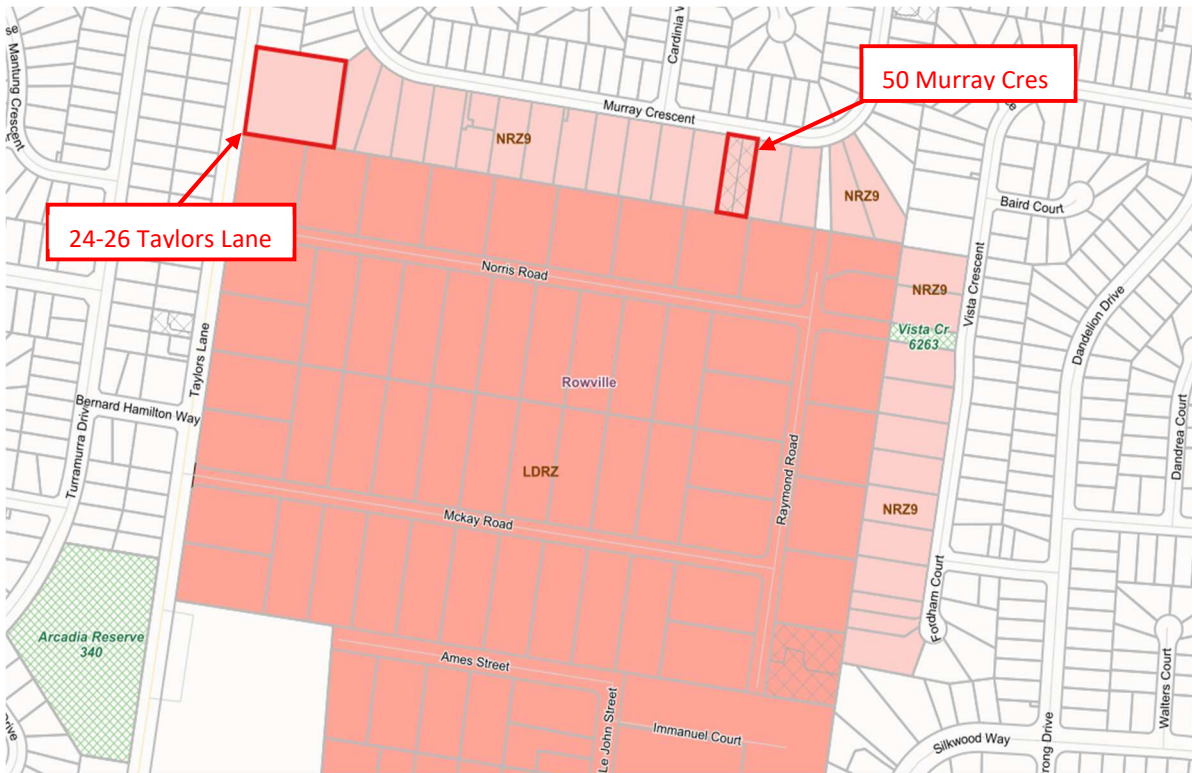


Cr Paige Kennett
Mayor

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Copy: Jackson Taylor MP, State Member for Bayswater
Hon Kim Wells MP, State Member for Rowville
Alison McFarlane, Executive Director, State Planning Services and Heritage, DTP



24-26 Taylors Lane, Rowville

