

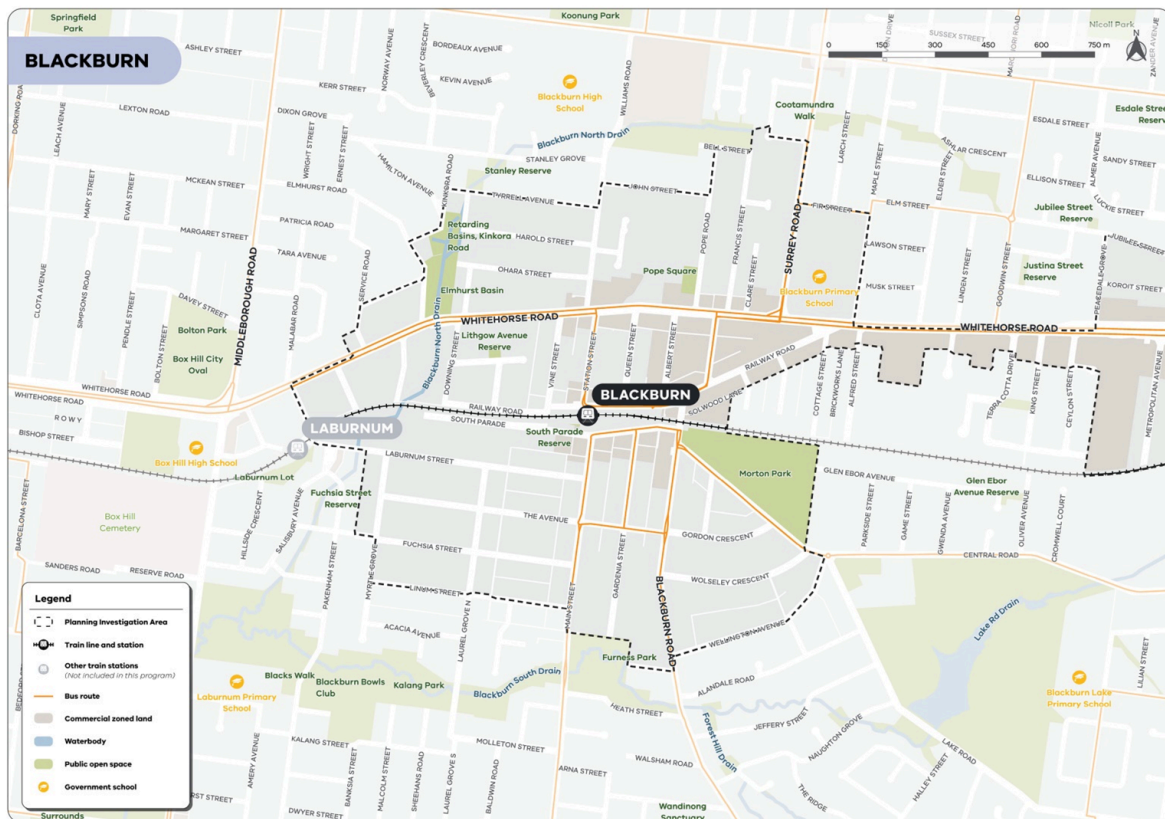


Bellbird Residents Advocacy Group

SPECIAL Update - October 2025 **Blackburn Activity Centre Launched!**

What a difference 2 weeks makes! Our Spring 2025 Update highlighted that we had been busy preparing for the State Government's launch of its Phase 1 public "consultation" about its re-zoning and re-development of Blackburn, Nunawading and Mitcham Activity Centres, and their associated "walkable catchment areas". The government announced the opening of this Phase 1 consultation on 20th October! This consists of a [survey](#), an online information [session](#) tonight, plus the opportunity to join a [Community Reference Group](#) to "shape" the Activity Centre.

Firstly, below is a **map of the proposed boundaries of Blackburn's Activity Centre**. Unlike the previous 25 Activity Centres' first consultation phases, Blackburn, Nunawading and Mitcham Phase 1 "consultation" has opened with an "investigation" map. This outlines streets that personnel from government, who walked the area, have determined should be considered for inclusion in the Activity Centre as they are a nominal 800m walk from Blackburn's railway station. As you can see, it includes large parts of our Bellbird area, including the significant National Trust streets - Linum St (north side) and both sides of Laurel Grove North Nth of Linum St. Also, the "buffer" SL02 streets - Myrtle Grove Nth of Linum St, all of Fuschia St and relevant parts of Main St are also incorporated. Interestingly, many streets to the Northeast and East of the station have been excluded, possibly because they are more than 800m from Blackburn station? Also, industrial areas are specifically excised from Activity Centres.



Secondly, a recap on what it means for streets to be within an Activity Centre. The Activity Centre will consist of 2 parts, with different zoning. The **inner core - the “Built Form Overlay” (BFO)** is anticipated to be similar to the existing boundary of the current council designated Activity Centre - Blackburn’s commercial area, including South Parade and the non-industrial parts of Railway Rd. The BFO will facilitate developments of up to at least 12 storey buildings as-of-right, through a new streamlined planning pathway that allows more dwellings to be built faster. If an application is ‘deemed to comply’ to the BFO “fast-tracked” standards, it cannot be refused a permit on the basis of those standards.

Surrounding the BFO, is a **walkable catchment** or “**Housing Choice and Transport Zone” (HCTZ)**. The objective of this zone is to facilitate the development of townhouses and apartment buildings (3-6 storeys, depending on block size and distance from the station). It only applies to residentially zoned land and has specific planning rules that enable development with minimum “red-tape” including only requiring 10% of sites to have some vegetation/open space. Once the Activity Centre is in place, all streets within the final boundary will be rezoned to HCTZ, which will focus on growth and development, very different to the existing Neighbourhood Residential zoning that is focused on protecting vegetation and neighbourhood amenity. BRAG is currently seeking confirmation from the Minister whether the existing Significant Landscape Overlays (SLO) will still apply in the HCTZ. However even if they do, the conflict in objectives between SLO and HCTZ limits the SLO protection previously provided.

What Can You Do?

Obviously the Blackburn Activity Centre proposal threatens the important environmental values of the SLO1 and SLO2 areas that the Blackburn community and Whitehorse Council has fought to enhance and protect over decades. **It is important that as many members of the community as possible provide feedback to the government on their thoughts about the proposal.**

- 1) To help you, BRAG has published a simple page: <https://bit.ly/m/savethebellbird> with links to the key resources all in one place, for you to learn as much as possible about what is proposed **and take action**. This includes the Phase 1 Consultation [survey](#). We are currently developing information that you might like to use in your survey responses which will be available soon on [BRAG’s](#) website.
- 2) BRAG, in partnership with fellow volunteer local community organisations CROWAG and BVRG have organised a **public information forum on 9th November at Blackburn’s RSL Hall, 2 Diggers Way** to provide quality information to all community members about the impact of the Activity Centre. **We strongly urge you, our mailing list members, and everyone else you can get involved, to register for this [event](#)**. Even if you can not come, you can register your interest and all registrants will be kept informed of what is happening.



Importantly, we all need to recognise what the government is trying to achieve with this proposal i.e. more housing. We suggest you highlight in your responses that it is possible to achieve housing goals whilst not destroying the significant ecological and historical values that generations of our community have protected. Implementing the Activity Centre proposal as it stands would destroy much of the remaining vegetation in the SL01/SL02 areas, which currently make a valuable contribution to the canopy cover goals of Whitehorse’s Urban Forest Strategy and provide habitat for native birds and animals, whilst improving the wellbeing of community members who visit regularly. Sacrificing this important vegetation for additional dwellings does not make sense, especially when there are many other parts of Whitehorse with less vegetation and ecological value, some of which are already designated for growth.

We suggest you recommend that the SLO1/2 areas be protected from inappropriate development, by being excluded from the Blackburn Activity Centre “walkable catchment” boundary.