



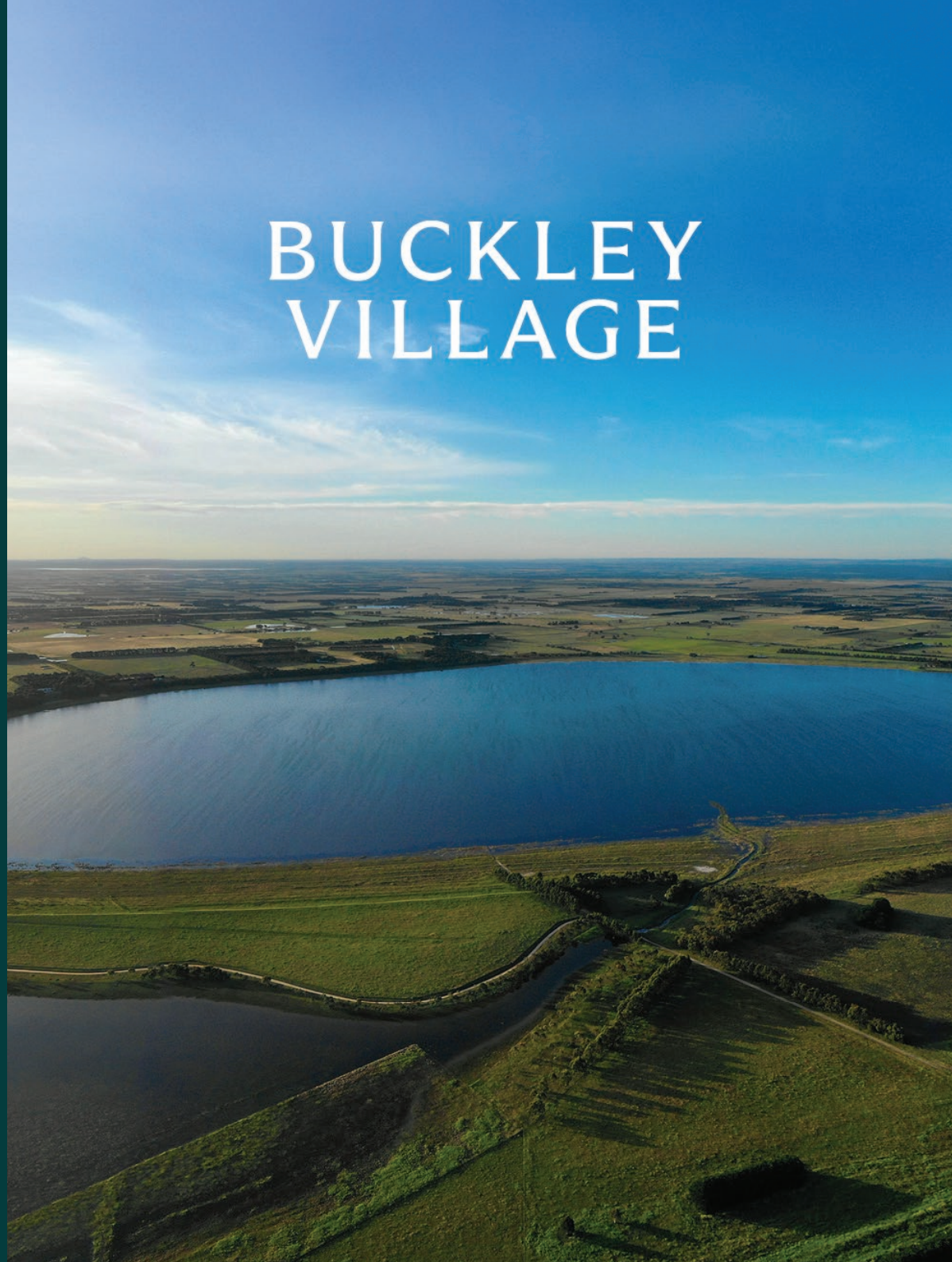
Buckley Village Engagement Report

August 2025

premierstrategy.com.au

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BUCKLEY VILLAGE



About this document

This document provides a summary of communication and engagement activities that were conducted for Ample Investment Groups (Ample) proposed Buckley Village community housing project.

Communications and engagement consultants from Premier Strategy were engaged to provide independent services to manage Community Townhall Information Sessions and the community engagement survey in April and May 2025.

This report provides key insights from community engagement activities and is a publicly accessible document, in line with Ample's commitment to an open and transparent engagement process.

Executive Summary

Ample has undertaken extensive research and community engagement on the Buckley Village project, dating back to 2022. This report focuses on activities between April and May 2025, which provide momentum for continued exploration and dialogue.

Feedback from over 600 survey respondents, well-attended Townhall Information Sessions and broad online engagement indicates community support. Overall, 61% support the project, 14% were neutral, 16% oppose and 9% did not provide a response to this question.

At a local community level, the majority of individuals living within the Surf Coast Shire expressed support for the project (54%), 15% were neutral, 22% oppose and 9% did not respond.

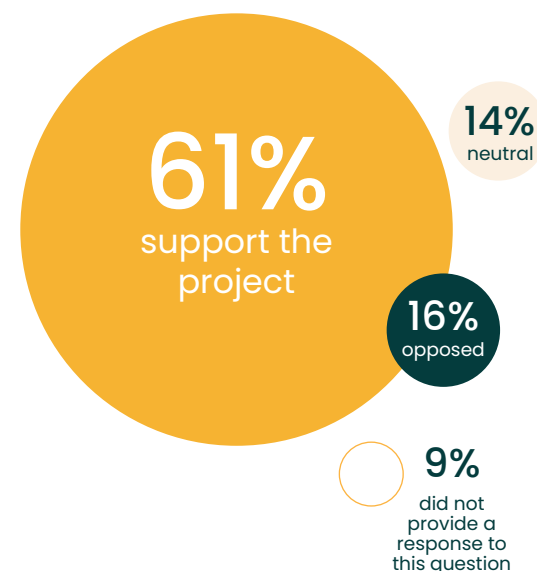
The primary driver of support is the urgent need for affordable housing that allows local families to remain connected to the Surf Coast region, and for businesses to attract key workers.

At the same time, preserving the unique hinterland character and the health of Lake Modewarre, is seen as essential.

Community members have expressed interest in learning more about the project's not-for-profit model, particularly its economic and governance structures to ensure long-term affordability. Frequent requests were also made for additional information on environmental impacts, infrastructure, and the planning and approvals process. These areas should be addressed in future communications and engagement activities.

Opposition voices, while acknowledging housing needs, express concerns about the rural location, infrastructure constraints, and need for trust to be established with decision-makers. Neutral feedback reflects this tension between growth and preservation. Affordability remains the central theme uniting all perspectives, despite differing views on how and where development should occur.

Overall, the 2025 engagement highlights support for the project's goals alongside a clear call for robust safeguards, open communication, and transparent information about how Buckley Village will operate as a community asset. Ample's early engagement positions it well to respond to these expectations.



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About the proposed project

Buckley Village is a not-for-profit affordable housing project proposed for the banks of Lake Modewarre, 20 minutes west of Geelong. Buckley Village is proposed to be a new community in the Surf Coast Shire Hinterland that delivers sustainable and affordable housing for future generations through an innovative non-for-profit structure.

Buckley Village aims to preserve the region's distinctive Hinterland character and will achieve the following:



Deliver affordable homes to keep young people and key workers in the area



Preserve the Surf Coast Shire's unique character



Create jobs and opportunities that benefit the entire Shire



Protect regional towns

Community and stakeholder engagement timeline



2022 – 2023

May 2023

First engagement with Surf Coast Shire Council Planners

2022/2023

Meetings with various landowners

July 2023

First group meeting with Buckley Village landowners

October 2023

First meeting with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation



2023 – 2024

2023/2024

First meeting with Victorian State Government representatives

July 2024

Meeting with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

August 2024

Meeting with Surf Coast Shire Council Planners to present the Buckley Village concept

September 2024

Group Meeting with Buckley Village landowners

Formal submission to Council's Urban Futures Strategy

October 2024

Meeting with Barwon Water to inform the Buckley Village servicing report

Engagement with civil engineers and various authorities

2025

March 2025

Presented to Surf Coast Shire Councillors at the Hearing of Submissions for the Urban Futures Strategy

March – April 2025

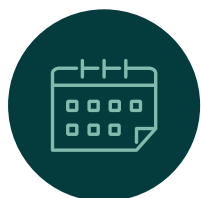
Meetings with neighbouring landowners who share a boundary with the Buckley Village target area

Engagement with various local community groups in Moriac, Modewarre, Winchelsea, Torquay, Jan Juc and Anglesea

Seeking community feedback

Throughout April and May 2025, Premier Strategy conducted a series of community engagement activities on behalf of Ample to gather feedback and better understand local sentiment, values, and concerns related to the future of the Buckley Village project.

These activities included four public Townhall Information Sessions and a Community Survey, both online and on paper, designed to give community members a chance to share their perspectives and help inform decision-making.



7 weeks

community engagement period



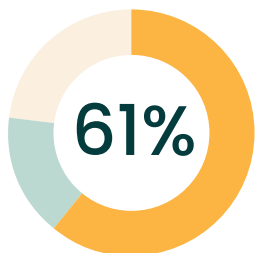
232,990

reached through online engagement



6,213

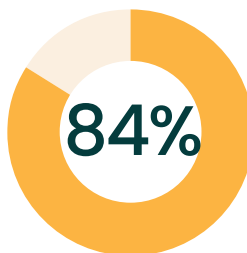
Website visits



61% support

the project

16% oppose the project



84% of respondents who oppose Buckley Village own their own home



The majority of survey responses were from people

aged 30–59



Recommended next steps



Provide transparent, accessible information addressing key community concerns, including the planning and approvals process, environmental impacts, infrastructure, and governance.



Determine where community-led aspects of the project can be made, to embed local input into design and decision-making.



Continue ongoing, inclusive engagement, particularly with Modewarre and Moriac residents who bring valuable local insight and connection.

Community engagement purpose

Gather meaningful community feedback to assess support for progressing the Buckley Village project.



Communication goals



Inform the community about the Buckley Village project.



Educate residents on our unique regional housing supply challenges, and Council's Urban Futures Strategy.



Promote engagement activities and opportunities for community involvement.



Provide clear, prompt and relevant communications to stakeholders.



Build a sense of trust and confidence in Buckley Village and the principles behind its intent.



Undertake a community survey about Buckley Village, with independent feedback and results analysis.

Buckley Village key messages

Key messages focus on the following key themes:



The Surf Coast Shire Council's long-term housing strategy was adopted in April 2025 but leaves critical questions unanswered.



Buckley Village is a complementary, not-for-profit solution putting outcome before profit.



Buckley Village only happens with community support.



We will gather as much feedback as possible from the community.

The following messages were provided throughout communication and engagement activities:

BUCKLEY VILLAGE Shaping our future together

The Surf Coast Shire Council's long-term housing strategy was adopted in April 2025, prioritising growth in Torquay–Jan Juc and Winchelsea through to 2051, but leaves critical questions unanswered, particularly around protecting towns from overdevelopment and housing affordability.

We're proposing a complementary solution – Buckley Village. A not-for-profit community-led project designed to help ease housing stress and growth demands for Surf Coast Shire communities.

BUCKLEY VILLAGE Buckley Village only happens with community support

We call on everyone with an interest in the future of our region to complete the Community Engagement survey, and to share your ideas.

Our aim is to gather as much community feedback as possible. All community feedback is collated by an independent consultant and will form the basis of our Engagement Report, to be presented to Council.

Buckley Village key messages (cont.)

What will Buckley Village look like?

This new community will be designed to mirror the Surf Coast Hinterland's regional character that we know and love. Good Urban Design will control estate presentation, and mandatory Design Guidelines will control private built form and landscaping. These elements are designed to avoid urban style development that is common in the growth areas of Melbourne and Geelong; there's nothing wrong with urban style development, but it is not reflective of Surf Coast Hinterland character.

How is Buckley Village more sustainable?

Let's be clear: growth presents environmental challenges, but we also have a responsibility to deliver homes for current and future generations. Our focus is ensuring growth happens sustainably and Buckley Village offers a model to achieve this.

How is Buckley Village going to help the housing crisis in our region?

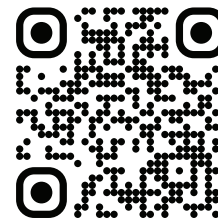
We have made a commitment to deliver Buckley Village using a Not-For-Profit (NFP) model so we can prioritise community outcomes over development profits. Development-ready land (2024 pricing) trades at a cost base of around \$130,000 per residential allotment. Buckley Village has been secured at a fraction of this price which means over \$500 million in surplus development proceeds can be deployed to tackle our region's housing crisis through discounted land, social and crisis housing for the region, and build-to-rent accommodation for key workers.

How big will Buckley Village be?

This isn't our decision. We have secured sufficient land to create a village township of around 3,000 homes supported by a retail high street, education facilities, healthcare, a jobs precinct, and 30% parks and open space. There is a planning process that Buckley Village will go through to determine its makeup, including an extensive community engagement phase. The size of Buckley Village will be a collective decision between our region's key stakeholders.

How will Lake Modewarre be restored?

Lake Modewarre has a long and rich history. Historically, Lake Modewarre was a vibrant hub of biodiversity and recreational activity, featuring an active fishing club and an operational boat ramp. However, in recent times, the lake has fallen into neglect. During the 1990s, community-based action programs emerged to address these issues, aiming to restore damaged environments and raise awareness about the problems and their solutions. Buckley Village will work with existing stakeholders to further these efforts.



Your feedback is important.

Please join the conversation and complete the survey.

Timeline of activities

Community engagement for Buckley Village took place in stages throughout April and May 2025.

Stage 1: Community engagement

18 April – 20 May, 2025

- **Website launched**
Opened by 6,213 new users
- **Digital engagement**
Social media – Meta and Instagram campaign
- **Advertising and promotion**
Surf Coast Times
- **Online engagement**
420 individuals registered their interest for the project
- **Online survey**

Stage 2: Community engagement and Community Townhall Information Sessions

20 May – 6 June, 2025

- **Community Townhall Information Sessions**
- **Digital engagement**
Social media – Meta and Instagram campaign
- **Advertising and promotion**
Surf Coast Times
- **Online and in-person survey**
Completed by over 600 people total, between April – June 2025

Editorial, Media and Advertising

The Buckley Village media and promotion campaign consisted of full-page advertisements and advertorial relating to project specifics and benefits.

The Surf Coast Times also published two articles on the project, which included coverage of the community information sessions and Ample's position on Council's Urban Futures Strategy.

Surf Coast Times

Ample pitches Buckley Village to Surf Coast communities

May 31, 2025 • BY James Taylor



Ample's Gareth Bellchambers and Simon Keyte speak about the Buckley Village project at a meeting at the Eastern Reserve clubrooms in Winchelsea. Photo: JAMES TAYLOR

THE proponents of the Buckley Village concept are seeking public views about the proposal, whether positive or negative, and are stressing the development will not go ahead without public support.

Ample's Gareth Bellchambers and Simon Keyte have held four meetings across the Surf Coast Shire over the past fortnight to outline their vision and answer questions, including to about 60 people at Winchelsea's Eastern Reserve on Thursday last week.

Earlier this year, Ample unsuccessfully asked the Surf Coast Shire council to modify its draft Urban Futures Strategy to designate land near the locality of Buckley as a Future Investigation Area to allow Buckley Village.

The development, proposed for the north-west corner of Lake Modewarre, has a target size of about 500 hectares and about 3,000 homes, though the final size would be subject to planning processes.

Opening the Winchelsea meeting, Mr Bellchambers acknowledged Ample had heard differing views about Buckley Village in the community over the past six weeks.

"We've had stories passed to us that some people have not liked the idea and don't like change and we totally understand that. So, we really would like to apologise if that's caused anyone discomfort," he said.

"We want to assure everyone that Buckley's not a done deal. This will only happen if there's community support."

"We hope you can listen to what we've got to say and understand what we think the problem is – we think it [Buckley Village] is a solution. You might agree that it's the right solution or the wrong solution. That's up to you."

Ample continues to argue the shire's UFS restricts growth across the Surf Coast too tightly and will result in the municipality falling thousands of homes short of the Victorian government's housing targets.

Mr Keyte said this would also make most homes unaffordable to local workers and the next generation of homeowners, including his children.

"Where this started for us was in 2021 – we're looking around the Surf Coast Shire, house prices have jumped 60 per cent, rental vacancies were down to less than 1 per cent and all of our towns are being constrained, and we're just thinking 'Where are they going to go?'"

In response to a question about building on farmland, Mr Bellchambers said the Surf Coast Shire was about 1,556sqkm in size, and Buckley Village would represent less than 2.4 per cent of the shire.

"We think there's a trade-off to be made against losing farming land to provide houses for the next generation who support our communities. But, again, that's why we're here to have this discussion."

Editorial, Media and Advertising (cont.)

Surf Coast Times

Shire urged to rethink Urban Futures Strategy

March 24, 2025 • BY James Taylor



Part of the map of land supply in Winchelsea in the Surf Coast Shire's draft Urban Futures Strategy. Image: SURF COAST SHIRE

A DEVELOPER is urging the Surf Coast Shire to rethink its proposed Urban Futures Strategy (UFS), arguing growth across the shire will be constrained too tightly and will result in the municipality falling thousands of homes short of the Victorian government's housing targets.

Councillors held a hearing of submissions meeting about the UFS on Tuesday last week.

When finished, the UFS will establish a policy framework to guide sustainable urban growth within the shire and guide future land use planning at the township and precinct level.

Its key directions include strategically identified locations for infill development within the protected settlement boundary of Torquay and Jan Juc, planning for the majority of longer-term urban growth to be accommodated in Winchelsea, and ensuring urban development occurs within designated settlement boundaries and discouraging proposals outside of the locations identified in the UFS.

Under the Victorian government's target, announced in June 2024, the shire must build an extra 7,800 homes by 2051.

Speaking about his company's submission, Gareth Bellchambers from Ample said the developers supported the Distinctive Areas and Landscape process for Torquay and Jan Juc, but this meant the entire shire now only had one growth front – Winchelsea – and this was not enough.

He said there were 1,700 lots across the shire's eight townships, and another 3,000 in Winchelsea, and the total of 4,700 was "not even half of what we need, and the lion's share of them are not affordable".

"Infill development is not commercially viable, unfortunately. We'd like it to be, but it's not – even if it was, it's totally unaffordable to the people who needed it the most."

"The end of supply is in sight."

He said there were, as of his presentation, only 626 lots in Winchelsea and 26 in Deans Marsh to cater for the estimated 11,500 people in the shire aged 19 or under who would be looking for a home over the next 25 years.

"By the time the UFS is approved and housing under it is brought to the market, 3,000 to 4,000 of our own [children] will have been forced into the housing market and there'll be nothing there for them."

Ample is asking the shire to modify the UFS to designate land near Buckley as a Future Investigation Area to allow its not-for-profit "Buckley Village" development, which Mr Bellchambers said would provide "several thousand homes that will be affordable".

"The historic thinking that got us into this housing crisis is not the thinking that will get us out of it," he said.

The public exhibition period drew 54 submissions, with 19 of the 34 individual submitters being residents and landowners in Winchelsea, or those with an interest in the town.

The shire will adopt the final UFS by the middle of this year.

For more information on the UFS, head to: yoursay.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/UFS



Online and Digital

The Buckley Village digital campaign was structured around Meta and Instagram lead generation and awareness. In summary, the campaign effectively used awareness ads to build reach and lead-focused ads to drive action, with video content emerging as the strongest engagement driver.

18 April – 28 May, 2025

20,974 total engagements

123 reactions



12 saves



21 comments



18 Facebook likes



54 shares



Please note this information has been compiled from data provided by Digital Deluxe.

Stage 1: Community engagement

Community voices leading the way

BY SIMON KEYTE AND GARETH HILL-COMMERES

Over the coming weeks we will be hearing from the community about the future of Buckley Village. We will be hearing from the community about the future of Buckley Village. We will be hearing from the community about the future of Buckley Village.

With the Urban Future Strategy adopted by the Surf Coast Shire Council in April 2025, we have a critical role to play in the future of Buckley Village. We will be hearing from the community about the future of Buckley Village.

By 2030, we will have a new township. We will be hearing from the community about the future of Buckley Village.

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By 2030, we will have a new township. We will be hearing from the community about the future of Buckley Village.

A crisis we can't ignore

BY SIMON KEYTE AND GARETH HILL-COMMERES

The Surf Coast Shire is a place of unique beauty, light, and community. We will be hearing from the community about the future of Buckley Village.

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ample

9. The creation of a new township as a not-for-profit community-led project is a world first that allows outcomes to be prioritised over profits, and because of this Buckley Village can be the world's most sustainable community: environmentally, socially, and financially. What outcomes do you believe Buckley Village needs to deliver to achieve this?

Community Support
Clear outcomes as how this can be achieved.
Good financial competition for land owners having to sell their land for this project.

10. Do you support the creation of Buckley Village as a new township and secondary growth front for the Surf Coast Shire?

☒ Yes
☐ Neutral
☐ No

11. Why?

There is a need for more housing. Young people & families need affordable housing in the surfcoast area.

12. Community support is vital to this project's success. What final thoughts or suggestions would you share with the Surf Coast Shire Council and Victorian Government, when considering the Buckley Village proposal?

Make sure all areas are covered properly. Strong clear examples of what can be achieved. Land owners must be compensated if land has to be acquired. Must be done fast.

13. We are with your privacy statement your details will only be used for the purposes of gathering community sentiment and providing updates on the Buckley Village project. Please return your completed survey to our team here today or post to:

Preprint Strategy
c/o Surf Coast Shire Council
c/o Surf Coast Shire Council
c/o Surf Coast Shire Council

BUCKLEY VILLAGE

“Shaping our future together”

The Surf Coast Shire Council's long-term housing strategy was adopted in April 2025, prioritising growth in Torquay-Jan Juc and Winchelsea through to 2031, but leaves critical questions unanswered, particularly around protecting towns from overdevelopment and housing affordability.

We're proposing a complementary solution - Buckley Village. A not-for-profit community-led project designed to help ease housing stress and growth demands for Surf Coast Shire communities.

We're encouraging all those with an interest in the future of our region to attend an upcoming community information session to:

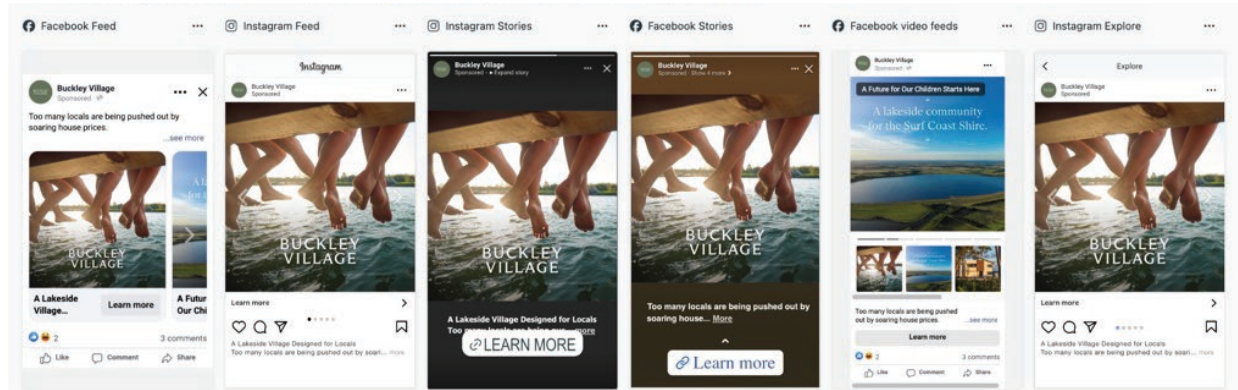
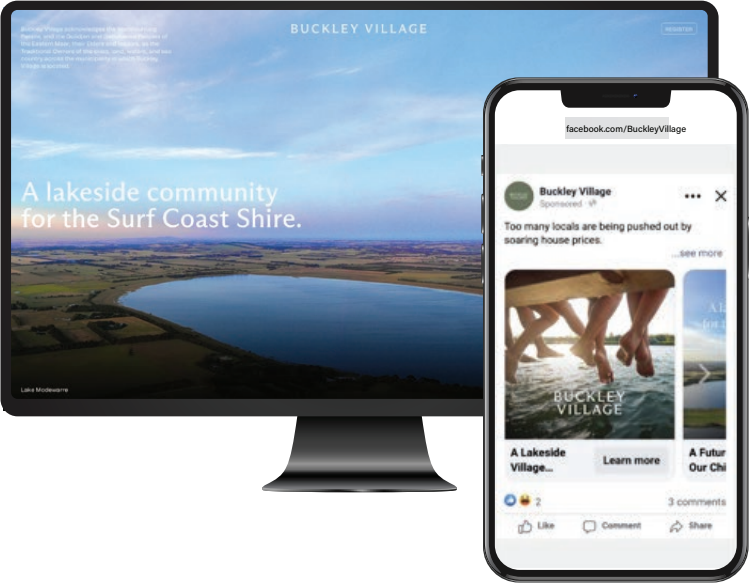
- Learn more about the housing challenges facing our Shire
- Discuss Buckley Village's potential role in addressing affordability
- Provide feedback for an independent Community Engagement Report

Buckley Village only happens with community support.

Please join the conversation. Connect with the team, find out more, and share your ideas:

- MODEWANE** - Maroon Community Centre, Tuesday 20 May @ 7pm
- WINCHELSEA WARD** - Eastern Reserve, Community Bank Room, Wednesday 21 May @ 7pm
- TORQUAY WARD** - Angelsea Memorial Hall, Thursday 22 May @ 10am
- TORQUAY WARD** - Torquay Surf Life Saving Club, Sunday 25 May 2025 @ 2pm

ample www.buckleyvillage.com.au





Stage 2: Community Townhall Information Sessions

Between Tuesday 20 May and Sunday 25 May, Community Townhall Information Sessions were held in Moriac, Winchelsea, Anglesea and Torquay for the Buckley Village project, representing the specific region of Buckley Village, and the three wards of the Surf Coast Shire. The sessions were led by independent community engagement consultants from Premier Strategy.

These sessions had been promoted online and via traditional media from April 18 – May 28, targeting all towns where information sessions were scheduled. Registrations were also available via the Buckley Village website buckleyvillage.com.au.

All promotional materials encouraged community members to attend sessions and to provide their feedback via a survey.

The information sessions provided valuable learnings and insights into community views, attitudes and sentiment about the Buckley Village project. These insights are outlined in the following pages.

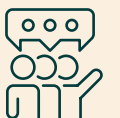
4 community information sessions



4 towns: Moriac, Winchelsea, Anglesea and Torquay



256 attendees



Community Townhall Information Sessions

Key messages focus on the following key themes:



Inform the community about Buckley Village and the Surf Coast Shire’s current housing state.



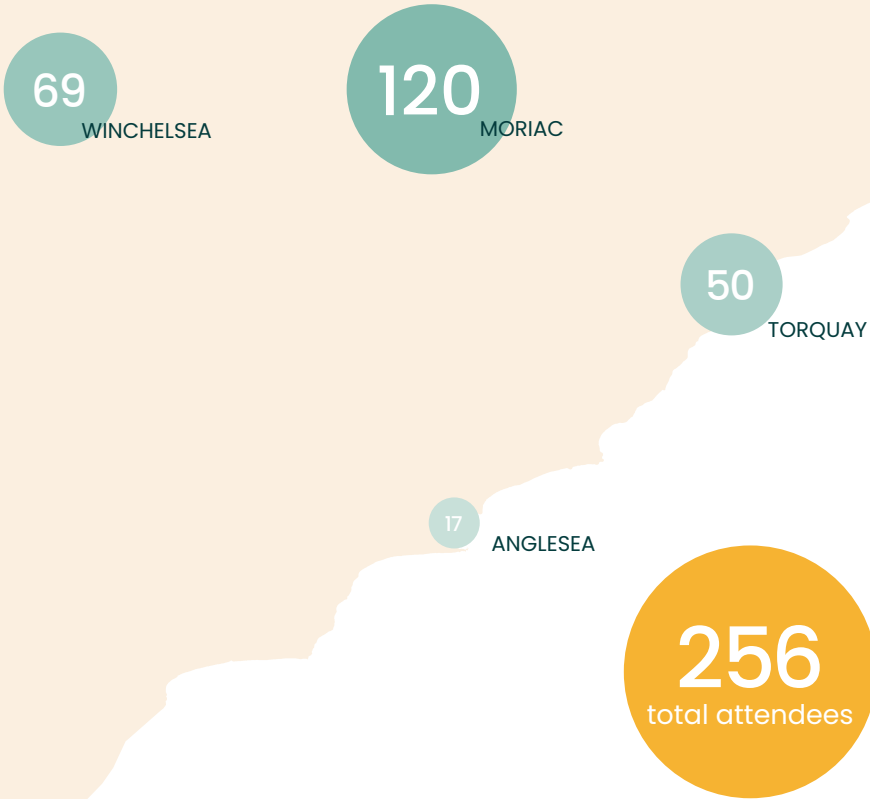
Gather feedback through surveys and discussions.



Build positive relationships with individuals, communities and stakeholders.

Information session attendance

Location	Date and time	Venue	Attendance
Moriac	Tuesday MAY 20, 2025 7:00pm	Moriac Community Centre	120
Winchelsea	Wednesday MAY 21, 2025 7:00pm	Winchelsea Eastern Reserve Community Bank Room	69
Anglesea	Thursday MAY 22, 2025 10:00am	Anglesea Memorial Hall	17
Torquay	Sunday MAY 25, 2025 2:00pm	Torquay Surf Lifesaving Club	50



Outcomes

Key themes and topics of discussion

20 – 25 May, 2025

4 Townhall Community Engagement sessions



256 people attended



60+ questions raised across four townships



Current Land Supply (zoned)

1,500 Torquay + 181 Winchelsea + 59 Other = 1,740 TOTAL

Our shire's only 'affordable' supply... 181 lots

Feedback from those who were vocal at the meetings revealed polarising opinions.

Of those who raised questions, 40% expressed support for addressing housing affordability while 60% percent raised concerns about issues including infrastructure, environmental impacts, and governance.



40% supported

addressing housing affordability

60% raised concerns



infrastructure



environmental
impacts



governance

Key themes and sentiment analysis



Affordable housing

Potential for price inflation of cheaper blocks
Affordable housing benchmarks
Re-sale controls and title covenant to lock in affordability
Support for key worker accommodation



Infrastructure and environment

Drought vulnerability, water supply and sewage treatment
Questions about flood risk and flood mitigation planning
Ecosystem and Lake Modewarre degradation
Electricity, road, and rail infrastructure costs and funding



Governance and Transparency

Committee selection and lot allocation
Not-for-Profit model and cost control mechanisms
Clearer definitions and criteria around community support



Endorsements

Innovation praise
Walkability advocacy
Support for housing as a “right”

Key themes and recurring mentions at Information Sessions:

2
mentions
flooding

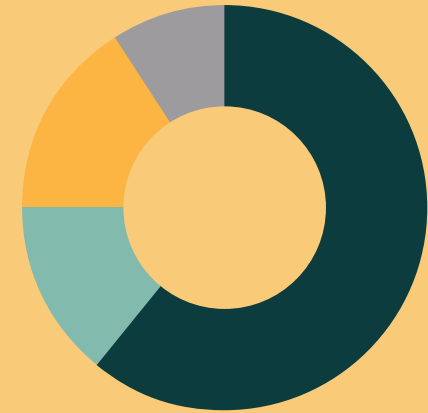
11
mentions
infrastructure

28
mentions
Housing
affordability

Survey Results

More than 600 survey responses were received for the proposed Buckley Village project.

The survey collected demographic information, as well as insights into community values, attitudes, and levels of support for the project.



- 61% support
- 14% neutral
- 16% oppose
- 9% did not provide a response

The total level of support for Buckley Village is 61 percent

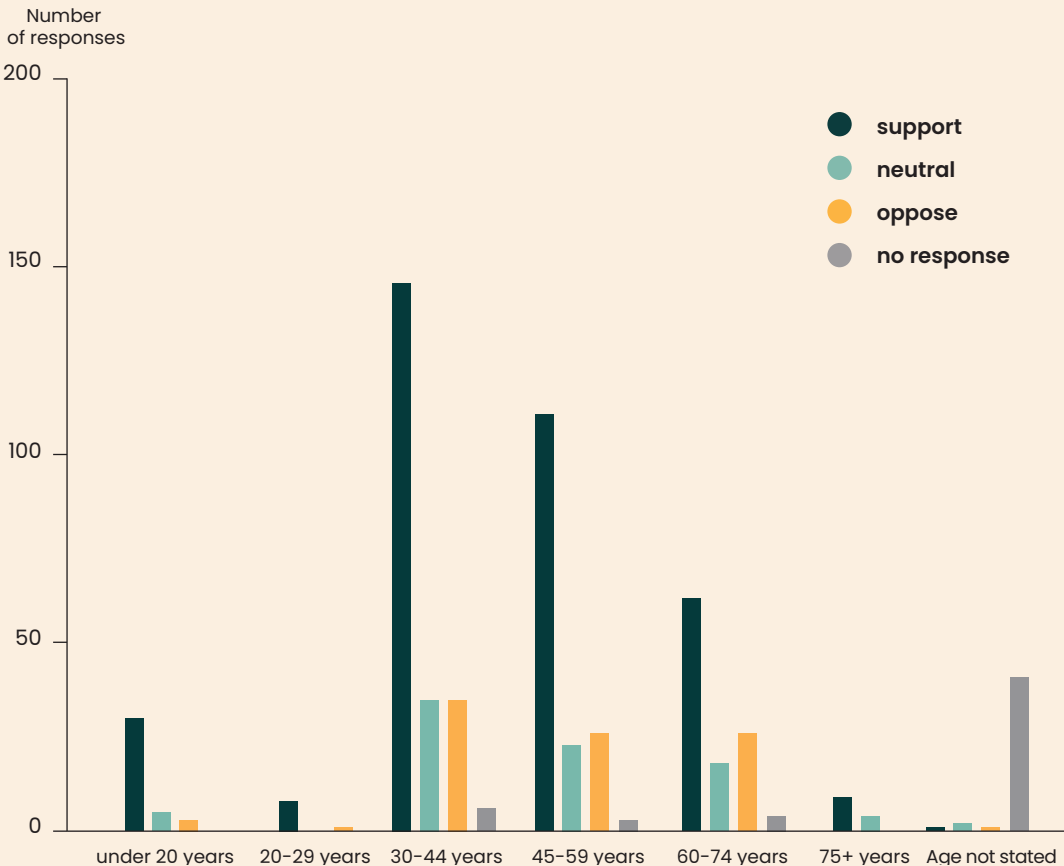
From all survey responses (Surf Coast Shire and beyond) the **total level of support for Buckley Village is 61 percent**. 14 percent of responses were neutral, 16% opposed and the remaining 9% did not respond to the question.

Those who were 'neutral' (14%) or did not provide a response to this question (9%) make up 23% of total survey responses. This indicates that there is a significant percentage of individuals who are neutral or undecided, requiring more information about Buckley Village, and also make up a greater percentage than those who 'oppose'.

61%

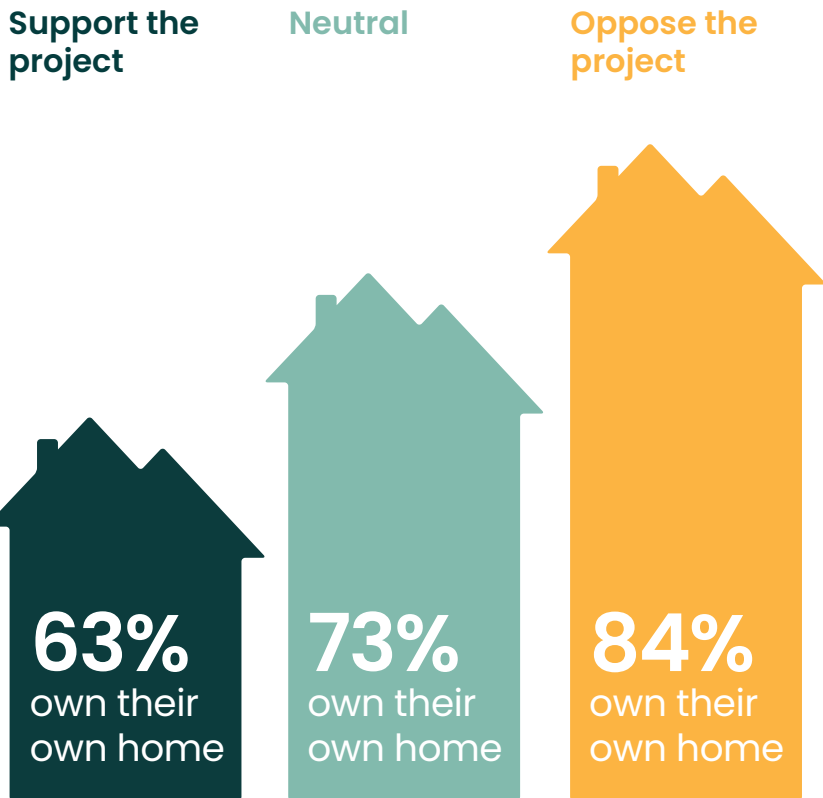
Level of project support by age

For every age group, the majority support the project



Living situation and level of support

Living situation by level of support for the project suggests a positive correlation between home ownership and opposition to the project:

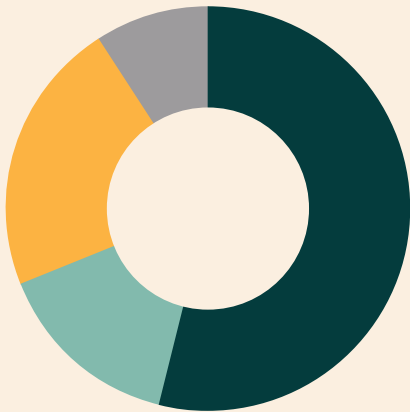


Level of support –Surf Coast Shire only

The majority of individuals living within the Surf Coast Shire expressed 'Support' for the project (54%)

15% were neutral, 22% opposed and 9% did not provide a response to this question.

Those who are neutral or did not respond, make a combined total of 24%, which is almost equal to the percentage of those in opposition (22%).



- 54% support
- 15% neutral
- 22% oppose
- 9% did not provide a response to this question

What do survey respondents value most in Surf Coast Shire (top 3)?

70
responses

Proximity to essential
services like schools
and healthcare

111
responses

Environmental
conservation and
biodiversity

117
responses

Protecting towns from
over development

Survey respondents seek more information on the following topics:



Economics and project structure, such as the not-for profit model

Housing and land details

Sustainability and environmental details, including how the lake will be rejuvenated

Township and community design

Infrastructure, utilities and services, including planned commercial services, such as supermarkets and fuel stations

Employment and educational opportunities

Community transparency

Timelines and project stages

Information sources and preferred methods of communication:



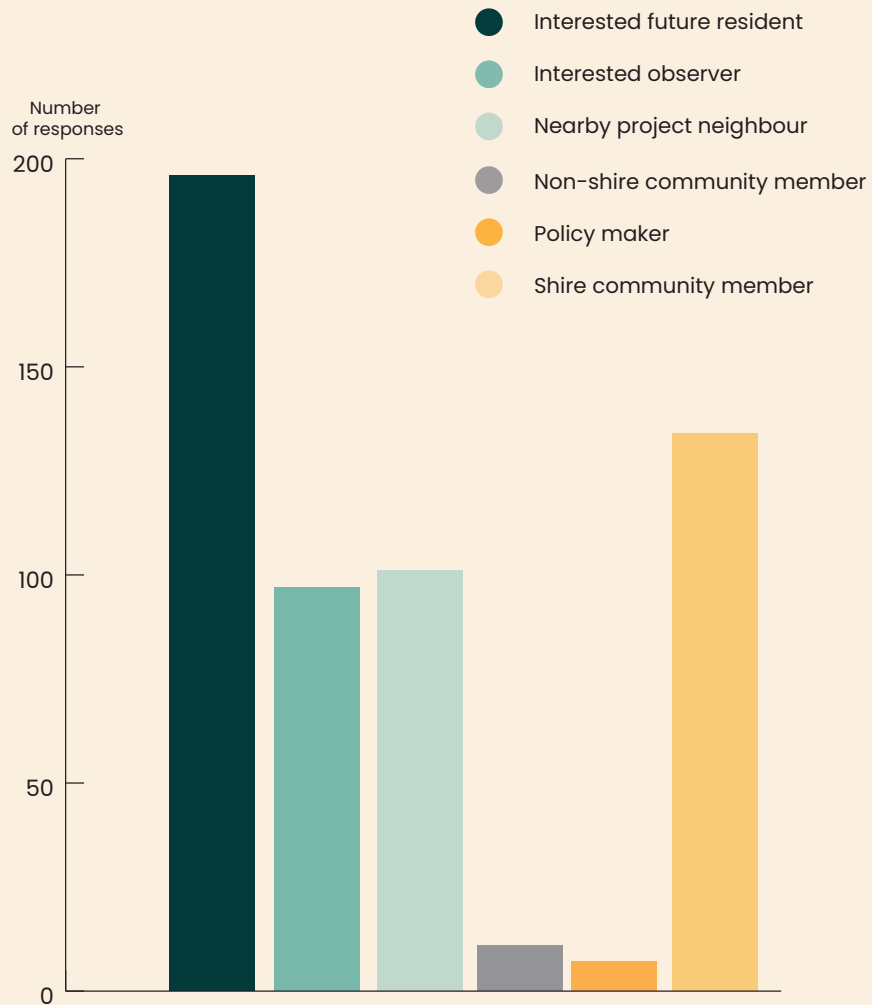
Social media and word-of mouth were the most common sources of information about Buckley Village

For future correspondence, email is overwhelmingly the preferred method of communication.

Social media, website and community Townhall Information Sessions should be considered in future on an as-needs basis.

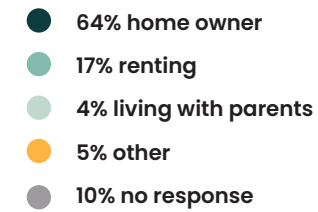
Demographics

'Shire Community Members' and 'interested future residents' formed the majority of responses. The majority of survey respondents were aged between 30 and 59 years.



Current living situation

Survey respondents were predominantly homeowners (64%) followed by renters (17%).



Community Sentiment – Supporters

Supporter



Strong need for affordable housing

Supporters highlight housing pressures, limited alternatives, and want affordable options for local families and future generations.



Positive view of the project's purpose and approach

They value the sustainable, community-led model and support initiatives like the Lake Modewarre revitalisation.



Desire for connection and clear information

Many want to stay local or return, and are seeking more detail on planning, environmental impacts, and governance.

"Perfect spot to do it. Train line is already there, easy access to highway, not far to travel to Geelong or Colac for work."

— Interested observer, 3084

"If the long term population forecasts are accurate it will be needed."

— Nearby project neighbour, 3241

"We are looking for a tree type community close to where we live now and grew up."

— Shire community member, 3228

"Would love to see the lake full again. Also, could benefit having water filtration go into Lakes Gherang and Dubbans. This would keep the fishermen/women happy at Lake Modewarre and the hunters to the other lakes. I am also thinking for my grandchildren, a chance for them to live close to me if they so desired."

— Nearby project neighbour, 3240

Community Sentiment – Neutral

Neutral



Balancing rural lifestyle with housing need

Neutral respondents recognise the tension between protecting the rural lifestyle and addressing the need for more housing.



Interest in affordability and alternatives

They want housing that is genuinely affordable for future generations and are open to considering alternative housing models.



Concerns about impacts and information gaps

They are wary of traffic and overdevelopment and feel they need more detailed information to form a clear position.

“Neutral leaning to the Yes side. Currently there is too little information to make an informed decision... While you indicate decisions such as restoring the lake will depend on what the community wants, we need to be given a better idea of which options are achievable.”

— Nearby project neighbour, 3240

“Population growth is inevitable and new homes are required desperately.”

— Interested observer, 3216

“It is an option for my kids who are early 20s and are priced out.”

— Interested future resident, 3227

Community Sentiment – Opposed

Opposer



Concerns about rural location and character

Opponents are strongly against large-scale development in a rural area, worried about losing the existing rural landscape and community feel.



Scepticism about infrastructure and trust

They question whether roads, public transport, and services can cope, and express distrust towards developer or decision makers.



Desire for appropriate, unifying growth

While they acknowledge the need for housing, they want it done 'properly' and worry this project could cause community tension or division.

"We enjoy our rural lifestyle, and if I wanted to live in suburbia I could have stayed in Geelong."

- Shire Community Member, postcode 3240

"I don't agree in destroying a remote, untouched, biodiversity space. I believe this project would be more successful in an already somewhat established area such as Winchelsea that has some infrastructure that could actually be enhanced with this project."

- Shire Community Member, 3240

"There is no guarantee that these houses will accommodate those who have grown up in the area and wish to stay. Also the workforce will not be local as always promoted. They will be driving in and out probably."

- Nearby project neighbour, 3240

"Will over develop the area and drop our house prices if you put a bunch of cheap houses in amongst our sort-after properties."

- Nearby project neighbour, 3241



Conclusion

Based on comprehensive data gathered through surveys, Community Townhall Information sessions and digital engagement, evidence indicates adequate community support to proceed with next steps for the Buckley Village project, highlighting the importance of due diligence in the process.

During April and May 2025, more than 600 survey responses were received, and 256 individuals attended four Community Townhall Information Sessions. In addition, digital engagement reached more than 230,000 people.

The overall engagement and survey results reveal a majority support (61% in support; 16% in opposition), with strong local backing in key localities of Torquay/Jan Juc and Winchelsea. Community support specifically highlighted housing pressure, limited housing alternatives, housing affordability, a desire to 'stay local', and support for Lake Modewarre revitalisation.

While legitimate concerns about infrastructure, environmental safeguards, governance, and long-term affordability were prominently raised, particularly by residents in the Modewarre/Moriac area (which recorded the highest proportion of opposition), these concerns may reflect key implementation challenges rather than outright rejection of the project's objectives.

It is also important to note that the community's expressed values, such as protecting the township, supporting the local community, and providing access to affordable housing, are consistent with the goals and mission of the Buckley Village project.

We recommend advancing to the next phase of the project, provided there is a clear commitment to genuine collaboration with the community, grounded in ongoing, honest, and transparent two-way communication.

The early stages of community engagement have revealed information gaps, as previously detailed throughout this report.

Ample must openly engage with residents and key regional stakeholders, providing clear, informative, and transparent information on key areas of community concern. This clarification will shed light on the value and benefit of Buckley Village as a not-for-profit affordable housing model within the Surf Coast Shire community

A crisis we can't ignore

OPINION

BY SIMON KEYTE AND
GARETH BELLCHAMBERS

The Surf Coast Shire is a place of unique beauty, tight-knit communities, and an active lifestyle. Yet, like many regions across Australia, we face a growing challenge – ensuring everyone who lives and works here can continue to find a place to call home.

Twenty-five percent of our region's population is aged under 19 and without immediate action these 9,524 young people, including our own children, risk being priced out of their own communities.

This crisis impacts us all. Local employers are struggling to find staff to operate their businesses, essential workers often commute for hours, and families face impossible choices.

Our region now has eight townships that are no longer able to accommodate growth, leaving Winchelsea as the single long term growth front.

In 2021, the Surf Coast Shire Council declared an accommodation crisis and promised solutions. Council is now finalising its Urban Futures Strategy, intended to "provide adequate land supply for housing and employment through to 2051".

This Strategy will shape housing decisions for the next three decades.

We cannot overstate the importance that this policy has on addressing the accommodation crisis facing our region. There is growing concern that the Strategy may fail to address the scale and urgency of our housing emergency and preserve the character of our Shire and regional towns.

As Council finalises its Urban Futures Strategy, we ask: Will it go far enough?

This is why Buckley Village matters

Buckley Village is being put forward as a complementary solution to our accommodation crisis.

A community-centred not-for-profit project on the banks of Lake Modewarre, in the Surf Coast hinterland, 20 minutes west of Geelong. Its purpose is to deliver truly affordable housing, with mandatory design guidelines on all homes to preserve the distinctive hinterland character that we know and love.

Buckley Village leverages existing transport links and natural assets to create accessible homes for families and workers - now and into the future. It will restore Lake Modewarre as a biodiversity and recreation hub and create jobs that benefit the entire region.

Buckley Village only happens with community support

The finalisation of the Surf Coast Shire Council Urban Futures Strategy is imminent, and its implications will ripple through generations.

We cannot afford to contemplate short-sighted measures that don't create a resilient future.

Directly or indirectly, this impacts you, and now is the time to take transformative action

and prove what's possible when communities lead.

We invite the community to attend one of our town hall information sessions to understand the challenge and ensure the solution reflects our shared values, to:

- Preserve the Surf Coast Shire's unique character.
- Deliver affordable homes to retain our youth and key workers.
- Create jobs and opportunities that benefit the entire Shire.
- Protect our regional towns.

Please join the conversation. Connect with the team, find out more and share your ideas:

- MODEWARRE – Moriac Community Centre, Tuesday 20 May @ 7pm
- WINCHELSEA WARD – Eastern Reserve, Community Bank Room, Wednesday 21 May @ 7pm
- OTWAY WARD – Anglesea Memorial Hall, Thursday 22 May @ 10am
- TORQUAY WARD – Torquay Surf Life Saving Club, Sunday 25 May 2025 @ 2pm

For more information visit our website www.buckleyvillage.com.au and register your interest to stay informed.

Community voices leading the way

OPINION

BY SIMON KEYTE AND
GARETH BELLCHAMBERS

Over the coming weeks we will be asking Surf Coast Shire communities to share their thoughts on the region's housing affordability crisis.

With the Urban Futures Strategy adopted by Surf Coast Shire Council in April 2025, now is a critical time for residents and businesses to learn about the region's growth plans, and to provide input into solutions.

Protecting our future is simple. We need affordable housing for young people and businesses, while preserving the character of our region that we all love.

There is a viable plan, but it is not what the Surf Coast Shire Council has adopted.

Council's Strategy prioritises growth in Torquay-Jan Juc and Winchelsea through to 2051, but leaves critical questions unanswered, particularly around protecting towns from over development and housing affordability.

Urban Futures Strategy:

TOWNS	LAND SUPPLY IDENTIFIED
Anglesea, Aireys Inlet, Moggs Creek, Lorne	21 new homes
Deans Marsh	26 new homes
Moriac	Undefined
Bellbrae	12 new homes
Torquay, Jan Juc	2,639 new homes
Winchelsea	3,000 new homes
TOTAL	5,698 new homes

Council's own Strategy acknowledges that 5,700 new homes is not enough.

In order to meet demand, the Strategy identifies additional areas in Torquay for increased density, with most new development directed to activity centres, tourism precincts, designated future urban areas and substantial change areas.

Increasing housing supply in Torquay, without addressing the issue of housing affordability, only compounds the problem by bringing more people into town and increasing pressure on businesses.

This leaves Winchelsea as the Shire's only 'affordable' growth front.

With an aspirational target of 10,000 people (up from 2,500 in 2021), the Strategy indicates Winchelsea could have a population of 18,500 by 2051 with 7,500 permanent dwellings.

"Winchelsea take on a role as a second District Town within the municipality."

- URBAN FUTURES STRATEGY

By way of reference, the Spring Creek Urban Growth Zone had an aspiration target to deliver 1,800 new homes.

This isn't just about housing. It's about people, place and community.

500 young people join our workforce each year, and yet over 50% of local businesses still struggle to find staff (2024 Business Survey).

Families are priced out, forcing young people of working age to leave and seek opportunities elsewhere (2021 Economic Development Strategy).

A complementary solution

We're proposing a complementary solution - Buckley Village - that enhances Council's Strategy and helps ease the growth burdens on Torquay-Jan Juc and Winchelsea.

Buckley Village is a not-for-profit project at Lake Modewarre 20 minutes west of Geelong,

that will mandate the delivery of affordable homes and preserve the character of the region through strict design guidelines.

We believe that Council may have underestimated the accommodation crisis in our region and believe their Strategy does not offer an appropriate solution. We'd like to know if others feel the same way.

Share your ideas and contribute to our future

We encourage residents to attend upcoming townhall information sessions to ensure our collective views are represented.

Initial survey feedback indicates 71% of respondents view the Buckley Village concept positively, citing 'protecting towns from overdevelopment' and 'access to housing for youth and workers' as key values, and this is just the start.

We're offering people the opportunity to learn more, ask questions and provide feedback at one of our engagement sessions, or to participate in our online survey.

All community feedback will be collated by independent engagement consultants for a Community Engagement Report that will be presented to Council.

If there is no appetite for an alternative solution, we'll respect that, but we'd like to ensure families and businesses in the region understand the critical housing situation we are all facing because as a Shire, we believe we can do significantly better for all stakeholders.

This isn't about us. It's about ensuring the Surf Coast Shire remains a place where everyone—from healthcare workers to tradies, young families to retirees — can thrive.

Please visit the website for more information about our townhall events next week – www.buckleyvillage.com.au

"While a lesser degree of change can be expected in other areas of Torquay-Jan Juc, the designation of a substantial change area means that new and higher density development is encouraged and can be expected to result in a substantially different scale and intensity of housing compared to other areas in Torquay-Jan Juc." - URBAN FUTURES STRATEGY

Tuesday, August 26th, 2025

Ample pitches Buckley Village to Surf Coast communities

May 31, 2025 BY James Taylor (<https://timesnewsgroup.com.au/surfcoasttimes/author/jamestaylor/>)



Ample's Gareth Bellchambers and Simon Keyte speak about the Buckley Village project at a meeting at the Eastern Reserve clubrooms in Winchelsea. Photo: JAMES TAYLOR

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THE proponents of the Buckley Village concept are seeking public views about the proposal, whether positive or negative, and are stressing the development will not go ahead without public support.

Ample's Gareth Bellchambers and Simon Keyte have held four meetings across the Surf Coast Shire over the past fortnight to outline their vision and answer questions, including to about 60 people at Winchelsea's Eastern Reserve on Thursday last week.

Earlier this year, Ample unsuccessfully asked the Surf Coast Shire council to modify its draft Urban Futures Strategy to designate land near the locality of Buckley as a Future Investigation Area to allow Buckley Village.

The development, proposed for the north-west corner of Lake Modewarre, has a target size of about 500 hectares and about 3,000 homes, though the final size would be subject to planning processes.

Opening the Winchelsea meeting, Mr Bellchambers acknowledged Ample had heard differing views about Buckley Village in the community over the past six weeks.

"We've had stories passed to us that some people have not liked the idea and don't like change and we totally understand that. So, we really would like to apologise if that's caused anyone discomfort," he said.

"We want to assure everyone that Buckley's not a done deal. This will only happen if there's community support.

"We hope you can listen to what we've got to say and understand what we think the problem is – we think it [Buckley Village] is a solution. You might agree that it's the right solution or the wrong solution. That's up to you."

Ample continues to argue the shire's UFS restricts growth across the Surf Coast too tightly and will result in the municipality falling thousands of homes short of the Victorian government's housing targets.

Mr Keyte said this would also make most homes unaffordable to local workers and the next generation of homeowners, including his children.

"Where this started for us was in 2021 – we're looking around the Surf Coast Shire, house prices have jumped 60 per cent, rental vacancies were down to less than 1 per cent and all of our towns are being constrained, and we're just thinking 'Where are they going to go?'"

In response to a question about building on farmland, Mr Bellchambers said the Surf Coast Shire was about 1,556sqkm in size, and Buckley Village would represents less than 2.4 per cent of the shire.

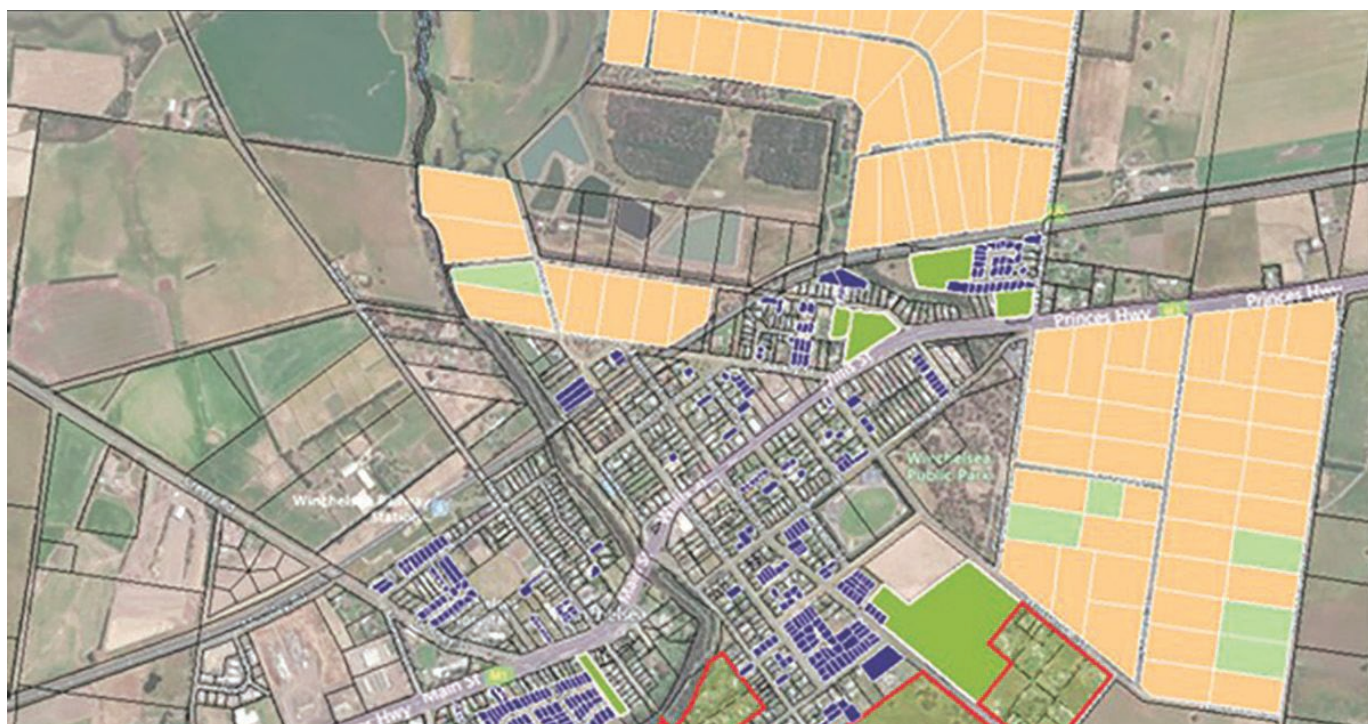
“We think there’s a trade-off to be made against losing farming land to provide houses for the next generation who support our communities. But, again, that’s why we’re here to have this discussion.”

Tuesday, August 26th, 2025

Shire urged to rethink Urban Futures Strategy

March 24, 2025

BY James Taylor (<https://timesnewsgroup.com.au/surfcoasttimes/author/jamestaylor/>)



Part of the map of land supply in Winchelsea in the Surf Coast Shire's draft Urban Futures Strategy. Image: SURF COAST SHIRE

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A DEVELOPER is urging the Surf Coast Shire to rethink its proposed Urban Futures Strategy (UFS), arguing growth across the shire will be constrained too tightly and will result in the municipality falling thousands of homes short of the Victorian government's housing targets.

Councillors held a hearing of submissions meeting about the UFS on Tuesday last week.

When finished, the UFS will establish a policy framework to guide sustainable urban growth within the shire and guide future land use planning at the township and precinct level.

Its key directions include strategically identified locations for infill development within the protected settlement boundary of Torquay and Jan Juc, planning for the majority of longer-term urban growth to be accommodated in Winchelsea, and ensuring urban development occurs within designated settlement boundaries and discouraging proposals outside of the locations identified in the UFS.

Under the Victorian government's target, announced in June 2024, the shire must build an extra 7,800 homes by 2051.

Speaking about his company's submission, Gareth Bellchambers from Ample said the developers supported the Distinctive Areas and Landscape process for Torquay and Jan Juc, but this meant the entire shire now only had one growth front – Winchelsea – and this was not enough.

He said there were 1,700 lots across the shire's eight townships, and another 3,000 in Winchelsea, and the total of 4,700 was "not even half of what we need, and the lion's share of them are not affordable".

"Infill development is not commercially viable, unfortunately. We'd like it to be, but it's not – even if it was, it's totally unaffordable to the people who needed it the most.

"The end of supply is in sight."

He said there were, as of his presentation, only 626 lots in Winchelsea and 26 in Deans Marsh to cater for the estimated 11,500 people in the shire aged 19 or under who would be looking for a home over the next 25 years.

“By the time the UFS is approved and housing under it is brought to the market, 3,000 to 4,000 of our own [children] will have been forced into the housing market and there’ll be nothing there for them.”

Ample is asking the shire to modify the UFS to designate land near Buckley as a Future Investigation Area to allow its not-for-profit “Buckley Village” development, which Mr Bellchambers said would provide “several thousand homes that will be affordable”.

“The historic thinking that got us into this housing crisis is not the thinking that will get us out of it,” he said.

The public exhibition period drew 54 submissions, with 19 of the 34 individual submitters being residents and landowners in Winchelsea, or those with an interest in the town.

The shire will adopt the final UFS by the middle of this year.

For more information on the UFS, head to yoursay.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/UFS ([http://yoursay.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/UFS](https://yoursay.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/UFS))



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