



Two Things

Social Needs Assessment

Seniors Housing development: 60 Witton Pl, Orange



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Two Things is a policy and social planning consultancy, with expertise in finding opportunities to make positive change to policy and urban redevelopment schemes. Positive social outcomes for people are realised in every project we deliver, enabling healthy thriving communities.

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Executive Summary

This Social Needs Assessment has been prepared for BZ Capital Pty Ltd to support the redevelopment of 60 Witton Place, Orange for the delivery of seniors' housing consisting of 4 separate buildings with capacity for 82 independent living units for residents over the age of 60 years. The development will also result in the provision of a resident clubhouse and car parking for staff and residents, the provision of a 14-seater community bus to assist residents with easy access to the local Orange town centre.

Background, proposed development, and site context

The development concept addresses the growing need for innovative housing solutions in the Orange region, particularly for seniors who wish to remain living independently and connected to their local community. It aims to offer a progressive co-living solution with premium accommodation, community facilities, and services at an affordable price point.

The proposal seeks to provide housing security through long-term rental offerings, with rental prices aligned with the aged pension. This approach will empower more residents to age gracefully within their community, fostering enduring relationships and deep connections.

The vision of the “Bingara Gardens” development is to *pioneer an alternative to traditional retirement village living by introducing a purpose-built co-living seniors housing model*. This model aims to redefine seniors living through the creation of a vibrant, inclusive environment where residents can thrive and continue to contribute to the community. The development will help address the cost-of-living crisis impacting seniors in regional areas by providing bespoke rental housing, enabling older community members to downsize from larger homes and potentially increasing the availability of housing stock for younger residents.

The site is located at 60 Witton Place, Orange within the Orange local government area (LGA). The site is located approximately 5km south-west of the Orange City Centre. The site's immediate urban context includes a low-density residential precinct known as “Ploughmans Valley.”

Purpose and structure of the report

The purpose of the social needs assessment, as outlined in the conditions of consent, is to evaluate how the development will impact the demand for community, cultural, and recreational services and facilities in the locality. The assessment also addresses residents' access to daily supplies and provides recommendations for improving the service offerings to meet the social needs of residents.

The findings of this report are to be used to inform the development of the Operational Management Plan, which will be submitted for Council approval and adhered to for the life of the seniors housing development.

The report is structured as follows:

- Introduction and overview of the report
- Scope of the assessment including social needs analysis methodology
- Site context and surrounding development
- Details of the proposed development
- Strategic policy context
- Local social context
- Community views expressed throughout the exhibition of the proposal
- Social needs analysis
- Social outcomes and strategic directions

Strategic policy context

The assessment reviews various state and local policies and strategies relevant to the ageing population of Orange, highlighting the need for housing that supports ageing in place through universal design features and easy access to services. Orange City Council supports a housing market that meets the changing needs of the community, with a significant portion of the population expected to be over 65 years by 2041. There is an increased need for smaller dwellings, retirement villages, and nursing homes to allow people to remain in the Orange region and be close to family, friends, and services.

Affordability is a key concern for the region, with the Orange City Council prioritising affordable housing options for seniors to alleviate financial pressures. The rising cost of housing has led to increased housing stress, and the council is focusing on enabling a greater mix of housing types to be provided in the area to cater to diverse needs, including those of seniors. The assessment highlights the importance of considering ways in which developments for seniors can be designed and operated in ways that combat issues of isolation and loneliness for older people to enable individuals, as they age, with independence to continue to actively participate in their communities.

The assessment takes into consideration important aspects of health and proximity to essential services for ageing residents. Sustainable and liveable design practices are also highlighted, with a focus on creating comfortable and environmentally friendly homes that are cost-effective.

For the key conclusions of the policy context for the ageing population of Orange, the assessment outlines the following:

- Housing design should enable ageing in place with universal design features and easy access to services.
- There is a need for more housing options for the ageing population of Orange, including smaller dwellings, retirement villages, and nursing homes.
- Affordability and cost-effectiveness are prioritised, with a focus on providing affordable housing options for seniors.
- Social engagement and community inclusion are essential to combat isolation and ensure active participation in the community.
- Access to health services and other essential amenities is crucial to support ageing residents.
- Sustainable and liveable design practices should be used to create comfortable and environmentally friendly homes.

Community profile

The proposal aligns with the demographic needs of the broader Orange community. The population of Orange LGA is projected to grow and change significantly over the next 20 years. By 2041, the proportion of residents over 65 will increase from 17% to 23%, with women comprising about 55% of this group. Orange will have a higher proportion of residents over 65 than the state average, along with more couple-only and lone-person households, indicating a demand for smaller homes.

Over 80% of homes in Orange LGA have three or more bedrooms, compared to the NSW average of 68%. This suggests a need for more diverse housing to accommodate the aging population. Median rental prices for detached homes rose by over 40% from \$370 per week in early 2020 to \$520 per week by late 2023. Apartment rents increased by 50% during the same period, from \$260 to \$390 per week.

The 2021 Census found that about 30% of renter households spent more than 30% of their income on rent, a measure of housing stress. Since August 2019 median rental prices for detached homes have risen 44% over the past five years from around \$380 per week to \$548 per week (as at August 2024). Meanwhile rent

for multi units has increased from around \$275 to \$430 per week over the same period, an increase of 56%. The recent rise in rental prices will likely increase the number of people experiencing rental stress in Orange.

Social needs assessment

The assessment has taken into consideration key social planning outcomes related to:

- People's **way of life**, how they live and work, play and interact with each other on a day-to-day basis
- The **community and its cohesion**, stability and character, services and facilities
- The **environment** in particular consideration of the quality of the natural environment, the availability and quality of food and physical safety and ability to control their resources
- **Health and wellbeing** as a state of complete physical, mental, social, and spiritual wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity
- **Personal and property rights** and
- **Fears and aspirations**

The proposed development is expected to deliver positive way of life impacts for the Orange community and aligns with the demographic demand offering greater diversity of housing choice for an ageing Orange population.

The assessment provides a response to the request for a review of the resident social infrastructure needs and relationship to the local community and the Orange CBD. The assessment notes the availability of social infrastructure within 5km of the site, including a range of recreation and community and civic facilities as well as a variety of healthcare facilities and specialist practitioners. The availability of a range of transportation options, including the local public bus services, the community bus that will be available through the facility operator as well as the options for private vehicle use will ensure residents can easily access the main Orange City Centre within a 10-minute drive.

Overall, the provision of more long-term leasing opportunities within the Orange LGA helps to ensure housing security for seniors on fixed or low incomes, fostering stronger social cohesion and a sense of community. The design of the facility, providing space for residents to invite guests into their own private living rooms combined with access to a range of indoor and outdoor communal spaces will help to support social interaction, combat any issues of loneliness and isolation for older residents.

Recommended initiatives to enhance the achievement of high-quality outcomes

To ensure effective operations with high-quality outcomes for residents and operators, the following key initiatives have been identified for consideration. These initiatives aim to address the needs of the ageing population while providing a sustainable and supportive living environment for the long term.

There is potential to build a socially cohesive neighbourhood, which will be important in fostering relationships among tenants and creating a sense of connection and place.

Enhancing community cohesion, health and wellbeing

Whilst the development's current design already supports a cohesive community by providing shared communal spaces and clearly defined private, semi-private, and public areas the following recommendations have been made to ensure high quality outcomes for residents.

Key recommendations:

- **Kitchen Garden Spaces:** Incorporate kitchen garden spaces in the landscaping to enable residents to grow their own fresh produce, fostering physical activity and providing access to healthy food.
- **Private Kitchenettes:** Include kitchenettes within units, allowing residents to prepare meals in their private spaces to promote health and independence.



- **Outdoor Seating Areas:** Design outdoor seating areas in the landscape plan to encourage social interactions and offer shaded spots for relaxation in a natural setting.
- **Flexible Use of Resident Clubhouse:** Ensure the resident clubhouse can accommodate visiting specialists and practitioners, with management regularly engaging residents to identify valuable programs and services for optimal use of the space. Furthermore, the communal kitchen and dining area should be utilised for community cooking classes, enabling residents to enhance their culinary skills and foster connections with their neighbours.

Effective communication strategies for resident engagement

Providing a variety of communication tools ensures residents can access necessary information and support frameworks, enhancing their connection and active participation within the local community and maintaining resilience during any unforeseen events.

Key Recommendations:

- **Early Tenancy Introductory Sessions:** Incorporate sessions to help new residents form early connections during the initial stages of occupancy.
- **Resident Feedback Mechanisms:** Include provisions in the operational management plan for residents to provide feedback on activities, events, and the overall operation of the site.
- **Collaborative Relationships:** Engage and collaborate with local medical practitioners to raise awareness of available services and strengthen opportunities for residents to seek appropriate healthcare and preventive health advice. Additionally, foster collaboration with aged care housing providers to support residents' transition to higher care housing if needed.

Smart home technology and sustainable practices for resident support

The development aims to enhance the living environment for an ageing population of Orange. Given the expected rise in temperatures and extreme weather events, the facility should prioritise energy-efficient solutions and native landscaping to mitigate climate change impacts. Smart home technology can support residents' independence and safety, while sustainable practices will ensure a healthier living environment.

Key recommendations:

- **Implement Energy-Efficient Solutions:** Install energy-efficient air conditioning systems and appliances in both private units and communal spaces to provide comfort and reduce costs amid rising temperatures.
- **Incorporate Smart Home Technology:** Utilise where possible smart home solutions such as virtual assistants for medication reminders, appointment scheduling, and social activity notifications to enhance resident independence and safety.
- **Adopt Sustainable Practices:** Integrate renewable energy sources, water conservation systems, and native landscaping to create a resilient and environmentally friendly living environment.

Strategic Social Directions

The following social strategy directions are recommended to guide the operation of the development in order to deliver positive social outcomes.

- **Deliver an inclusive, welcoming, and accessible community on site.** Focusing on high quality spaces, safe design, flexible usage, intergenerational programming, welcoming communal spaces, healthy and active lifestyles, and informal gathering spots.
- **Deliver contemporary, innovative seniors housing and associated services that supports the growth and ageing population of Orange.** Incorporating spaces and programming for visiting healthcare services, physical activity opportunities, social engagement, mental health support, nutrition, transportation options and community connections.

- **Increase social connections with the surrounding neighbourhood and Orange city commercial centre to sustain a connected and cohesive community.** Enhancing community connections and engagement with local stakeholders, facilitating seamless resident transition to higher care when required,

These key themes and directions are discussed in further detail in the body of the report, helping to inform subsequent operational management procedures for the site. Recommendations have been made to inform the operational management of the proposal in relation to flexible use of spaces and intergenerational programming, programs and design elements that promote healthy and active lifestyles. In addition, methods of engagement and communication with residents and the local community are proposed.

Longitudinal studies are recommended to assess the positive impacts of the innovative housing model on the long-term health and wellbeing outcomes for older individuals and the local community in Orange. Overall, the assessment concludes that the proposal, when operated in accordance with an operational management plan aligned with the key strategic social directions of the development, will deliver positive outcomes for residents and the broader Orange community in terms of health, wellbeing, community cohesion and liveability.

Introduction

This social needs assessment has been prepared by **Two Things** to support a development application for the proposed development of a 4-lot residential subdivision of 60 Witton Place Orange, which would result in the delivery of an innovative seniors co-living housing model known as “Bingara Gardens” for people aged 60 + years.

Requirement for the assessment

In determining the development application (DA 480/2024(1)) for 60 Witton Place, Orange, the Western Region Planning Panel granted deferred commencement consent subject to conditions being satisfied. This included the requirement to:

“Submit to the Manager Development Assessments an Operational Management Plan and a social needs assessment report that informs that plan which has been prepared by a suitably qualified person that addresses the socially responsive and equitable provision of on-site communal amenities and facilities (including recreation facilities) to be used by residents of the seniors housing (hostel) development.

As outlined in the condition of consent the social needs assessment report is to include an assessment of:

“How the development will increase or change the demand for community, cultural or recreational services and facilities in the locality, and how on-site facilities (including outdoor meeting spaces and recreation infrastructure, library and gym facilities, dining facilities, and bus transport services) will operate to ensure residents have equitable, age appropriate and convenient access to shops, public amenities and services. The social needs assessment is to address how residents will have access to daily supplies (e.g. milk, bread) and the management of such provisions.”

In addition, the assessment is to include recommendations as to how the service offering may be improved to meet the social needs of the residents.

As a result of the assessment recommendations are to be incorporated into an Operational Management Plan and to be submitted for Council approval, with adherence to the plan for the life of the seniors housing development.

Proposed development

As stated in the Statement of Environmental Effects (updated), the development application seeks approval for the following:

- Construction of a seniors housing 'hostel' comprising 82 rooms across 2 x single storey building and 2 x two storey buildings. The existing dwelling is to be converted into a Residential Clubhouse with communal resident and staff facilities.
- A car parking area with 4 carparks, for residents, staff, servicing, waste collection and ambulance bay will be constructed as well as communal outdoor areas with accessible paths and landscaping throughout the site.
- A public bus service operates within approximately 250m of the site and an additional 14-seater community bus service to be provided on site to assist residents with transportation to and from the local Orange town centre
- The co-living design is to be restricted to residents aged 60 + years.

- The resident clubhouse will comprise a living, dining and kitchen room with a library and lounge room, reading room and associated amenities. In addition, the clubhouse will contain an administration office, resident mailboxes, a gym, external storeroom, and bin bay as well as outdoor dining.
- A daily meal service is to be provided to residents
- Daily resident activities are to be provided, coordinated from the clubhouse which will include games, classes and resident services including welfare officer, visiting health consultants.
- Each resident building (two single storey and two two-storey buildings) will include resident rooms accessed off communal corridors, communal laundries with 1-2 laundry per floor, communal seating areas (1 per floor) external stairs and two internal lifts.
- Each resident room will contain a living room, bathroom and bedroom and the ground floor rooms will have a small external patio area which will connect to the communal open space areas.

Background

The development concept arose from the recognition of growing need for more innovative housing solutions to the Orange region, in particular the inadequate supply of purpose-built seniors housing for residents who seek to remain living independently and continue to age in close connection to their local community. The development recognises the growing pressure on affordability of housing in the local area, with increased market rents for freestanding houses, making private rental opportunities more unaffordable for local seniors.

The development seeks to offer a progressive co-living solution for seniors, typically single occupants, with premium accommodation that includes community facilities and services for an independent community whilst operating at an affordable price point. The proposal seeks to offer residents with housing security through a long-term rental offering. Rental prices are to be appropriately matched to a reasonable expected payment schedule for individual residents. For example, for eligible residents, fortnightly rental payments are to align with the aged pension.

The vision and mission of the “Bingara Gardens” development is:

To pioneer an innovative alternative to traditional retirement village living with the introduction of a purpose-built co-living seniors housing model for the Orange community. The visionary approach will empower more residents to age gracefully within their local community, fostering enduring relationships and deep connections. The model aims to redefine seniors living through the creation of a vibrant, inclusive environment where residents can thrive and continue to contribute to the community they cherish.

The development will help to address the growing cost of living crisis that is acutely impacting seniors in regional areas of NSW through the provision of a bespoke seniors rental housing. The concept recognises more and more older community members are less able to afford the high cost of buying into retirement villages and as a result the proposal allows for seniors to rent high quality housing that is appropriate to their needs. In addition to the provision of more diverse housing options for the local Orange region the proposal the introduction of smaller rental housing options for seniors will enable people to downsize from their existing freestanding larger homes and as a result increase the availability of housing stock for younger residents, including young families and key workers in the Orange region.

Purpose, objectives, and scope of the assessment

Social Needs Assessment

The objective of this social needs assessment is to evaluate factors to inform the operational management plan, ensuring effective and safe management of housing and environmental surroundings.

This report supports the Development Application for the redevelopment project to address the specific requirements articulated in the conditions of the deferred commencement.

The social needs assessment includes an analysis of social change and considers the needs of the prospective residential community expected to inhabit the new development.

Methodology and assessment framework

The assessment has been prepared by **Two Things**, a strategic policy and social planning consultancy led by experts in social planning, social policy research and social needs assessment as well as economic and demographic analytics.

The social needs assessment involves a number of steps, including the scoping of issues; identifying and assessing social needs and determining the significance of these with measures to manage and mitigate potential impact and enhance potential benefits proposed.

The methodology employed in preparing this needs assessment is designed to ensure the social environment of the communities potentially impacted as a result of the redevelopment are properly accounted for and recorded, and anticipated impacts (whether positive or negative) are adequately considered and assessed.

The assessment has taken into account the principles within the NSW DPHI Social Impact Assessment Guide as well as the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) *International Principles for social impact assessment* (Vanclay 2003) to ensure the assessment of the proposed development and in particular, the operating model takes into account:

- The Way of life for the community, including how they get around, access to adequate housing, how people will access recreation activities and interact with one another on a daily basis.
- The community, including its composition, cohesion, character and how it functions as well as sense of place
- Access to and use of infrastructure, services, and facilities
- Culture including shared beliefs, customs, values and stories and connections to land, places, and buildings
- Health and wellbeing including physical and mental health
- Surroundings, including access to and use of ecosystems, public safety and security and access to and use of the natural and built environment and its aesthetic value and/or amenity
- Personal and property rights including whether the economic livelihoods are affected and whether people may experience personal disadvantage or have civil liberties affected
- Decision making systems, particularly the extent to which people can have a say in the decisions that affect their lives.
- Fears and aspirations related to one or a combination of the above or about the future of their community.

Stages in the preparation of the assessment are as follows:

- Baseline analysis of the existing socio-economic environment, involving:
 - Study area definition, including primary and secondary geographic areas related to the proposed development



- Review of relevant background studies and technical reports, along with relevant local and state policy frameworks
 - Demographic analysis, including current and forecast communities
- Findings of stakeholder engagement, including submissions received in relation to the proposed development application.
- Scoping of issues: including the analysis of the likely residential community, other stakeholders that will have a relation to the local residents and consideration of operational procedures and relationship with staff and managers on the premises.

Information sources and assumptions

Information sources used to prepare this social needs assessment include:

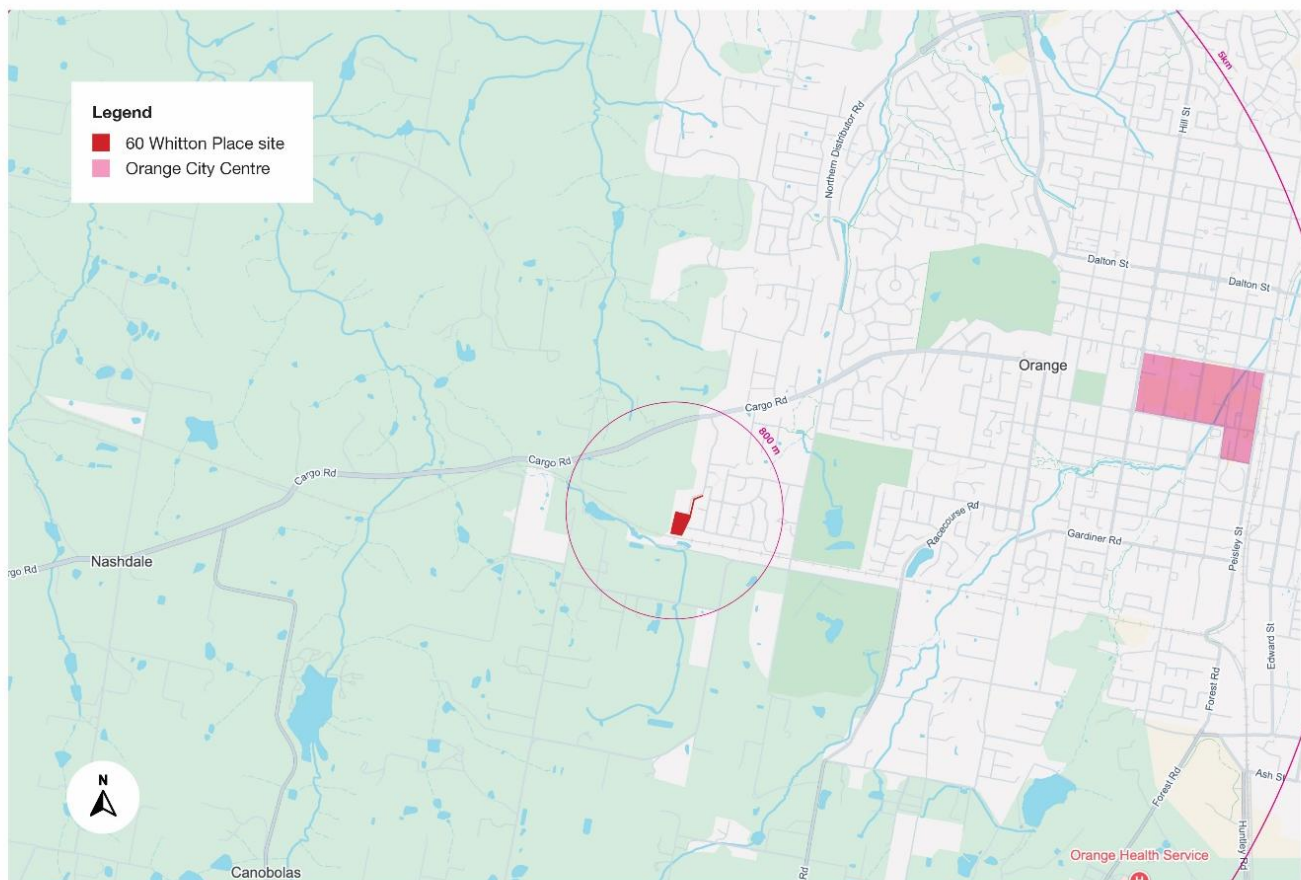
- ABS Census of Population and Housing (2021)
- Other ABS publications as referenced
- Orange City Council: Orange Housing Strategy (2021)
- Ageing Well in NSW: Seniors Strategy 2021-2023
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing) 2021
- Orange City Council Community Strategic Plan 2022 – 2032 (noted to be under review)
- Orange Local Strategic Planning Statement (2020)
- Key findings of the background studies and technical reports to support the development application are accurate
- Outcomes of the engagement and response to submissions accurately reflect community views

Site context

Site description

The site is located at 60 Witton Place, Orange within the Orange local government area (LGA). The site is located approximately 5km south-west of the Orange City Centre. The site's immediate urban context includes a low-density residential precinct known as "Ploughmans Valley" with the land located at the southern end of Witton Place. Rural land to the west and south of the site comprises rural-residential dwellings, orchards, and grazing land.

Figure 1 Site context



Existing development

The site, of 2.175ha, comprises an existing dwelling with attached garage towards the northern end of the site, with an existing shed and swimming pool to the west of the dwelling. Existing vegetation consist of introduced mature trees originally planted as a wind break for privacy as well as exotic grasses.

The site is accessible from Witton Place however, due to the redevelopment access will be increased with Bowman Avenue extended from the eastern boundary to the western boundary as a full 18m wide public road.

Surrounding development

Consistent with the documentation of the Orange Council assessment report, the site is located on the outskirts of Orange with rural land to the west and south. The Orange-Broken Hill rail line is towards the



south of the site, separated through mature vegetation and residentially zoned land. The Orange Bus lines depot is located nearby to the south-east over the railway line. Wentworth Golf Course is nearby to the east (approximately 1.4km) with Ploughmans Wetland towards the north-east of the site. Towac Park Racecourse is towards the south-east (approximately 2.5km). The closest retirement village is Oak Tree Retirement Village, 1.7km towards the east, neighbouring Melview Greens Garden Apartments tourist accommodation, also 1.7km from the site.

The area is serviced by a regular public bus route to the Orange town centre (route 537).

Proposed development

A brief description of the proposed development has been extracted from the final Statement of Environmental Effects as amended in accordance with feedback throughout the development assessment process. The development concept seeks to deliver a progressive new age co-housing opportunity for seniors that will help to address the cost-of-living crisis that is disproportionately affecting seniors. The increase in supply of tailored seniors housing helps to address the issues of inadequate supply of appropriate independent living options for older residents in the area. The Bingara Gardens development will offer a unique alternative to retirement living with high quality homes for residents who are not seeking to own property or buy into a retirement scheme.

The proposal is designed for people who are aged 60+ years with the expected resident likely to be women aged 70-80 years. The proposal is consistent with the local and strategic objectives to increase the supply of well-designed seniors housing and aligns with the redevelopment of Bowman Avenue in alignment with the desire for further residential accommodation in the local area. The site is located within close proximity to the Witton Place Candidate Area (slightly west of Witton Place) and forms part of the Development Control Plan Matters for the North Corridor Candidate Area. Future development of the local area is to include:

- The consideration of off-road pedestrian and cyclist connections to existing active transport routes
- Provision of passive and active recreation network
- Public services and facilities including playground upgrades and new playground within Witton Place release area that is to be co-located around pedestrian cyclist networks.

Description of the proposed development

The proposal seeks development for:

- The construction of a seniors housing development, comprising 82 rooms across 2 x single storey buildings and 2 x two-storey buildings.
- Conversion of the existing dwelling into a resident clubhouse with communal resident and staff facilities.
- A car parking area for residents, staff, servicing, waste collection and ambulance bay (total of 43 carparks). It is noted a 14-seater community bus has been proposed (with provision for community bus parking).
- Communal outdoor areas including accessible paths and landscaping throughout.
- Subdivision of the land into four lot Torrens subdivision, to create three vacant lots for future residential dwelling houses and one lot for the proposed seniors hostel.
- An extension of Bowman Avenue as a public road

The proposal seeks to offer the local Orange community with an architecturally designed seniors development with a focus on accessibility and purpose-built rooms and facilities for older residents with significant amenity. Institutional ownership is considered to provide security of tenure to residents with a focus on long term tenure security through secure leasing arrangements. The development outcome will achieve a low cost built to rent seniors housing solution designed to offer an affordable rental alternative to existing market housing.

Resident clubhouse

The resident clubhouse is to comprise:

- Living, dining and kitchen room
- Library and lounge room
- Reading room
- Amenities
- Administration office
- Resident mailboxes
- Gymnasium

- External storeroom and bin bay
- Outdoor dining area

Daily meal services will be provided to all residents with meals offered within the dining room of the clubhouse. Daily activities are coordinated from the clubhouse including games and classes. Resident services such as a welfare officer, visiting health consultants will also operate from the building.

Resident apartments

The 82 senior housing rooms will be provided across new buildings consisting of 2 x single storey buildings and 2 x two storey buildings. Each building will be comprised of resident rooms accessed off communal corridors, communal laundries (1-2 per floor), communal seating areas (1 per floor) and external stairs and two internal lifts for each of the two storey buildings. Ground floor rooms will have external patio areas that connect to and overlook the communal open space areas.

Residents will lease apartments/rooms through fortnightly “rooming/occupancy agreement” payments with access to facilities and services that are managed by the onsite manager. The proposal offers longer term leases to residents with security of tenure as the entire facility will be owned by a single institutional investor. Noting high market rents on offer in the Orange area are not able to be met by capped income aged pensioners the proposal offers to peg resident payments to the aged pension. As a result, allowing for more affordable and regulated rental options for the Orange community.

The accommodation is to be provided under a standard “Occupancy Agreement” in line with co-living arrangements and not via the residential Tenancies Act. As a result, the owner and operator have the ability to relocate residents within the facility or remove residents and add restrictions on use. In return the occupancy agreement can be established on flexible lease terms.

Outdoor communal spaces

Outdoor communal areas total of 886.78m² and include:

- Outdoor dining areas
- Outdoor open space areas
- Open car park area
- Waste storage areas
- Landscaping and accessible paths across the site

Design rationale

The proposal is in keeping with core design principles with the development centred around a common core of the resident clubhouse. The design refers to the existing residential pattern to be in keeping with bulk and scale of the area. The design of the dwellings keeps in mind the importance of enhancing feelings of home and comfort with unrestricted access to gardens and a de-institutionalised design concept. The internal and external spaces are to encourage social interactions with accessible links to key areas throughout including the car park, pick up and drop off areas.

Outdoor spaces have been carefully considered with the intent to encourage outdoor activity and promotion of physical and mental health and wellbeing. High levels of existing vegetation are to be retained with the design taking into consideration the visual and acoustic privacy of adjacent neighbours through orientation of balconies away from sensitive locations or on adjacent properties to avoid direct overlooking neighbours.

Aligned to core aspects of health and wellbeing in housing design is the strong intent to prioritise access to sunlight and airflow.



Consideration of safety and security has been given as part of the design context ensuring passive surveillance throughout with internal and external lighting ensuring easy access and clarity of space and navigation to enable safe movement throughout day and night.

The proposed development will be the first of its kind in Orange, a bespoke architecturally designed seniors housing model that encourages health and wellbeing at its core to deliver homes for people who seek independent living well into their later years of life.

Operation

The proposed development is to be operated by a “best in class” full time on-site manager. The manager is to coordinate key services including resident experiences (health, activities, tours) waste collection and mail distribution. In addition, there will be access for regular healthcare providers, fitness instructors, cleaners, and gardeners as well as ad-hoc tradespersons for repairs and maintenance as required.

Whilst cleaners will be responsible for all communal areas, all residents will be responsible for cleaning their own apartments.

Access for residents is 24 hours a day, 7 days per week with access control measures adopted for each building and individual apartment. The clubhouse is to be open to residents as needed with hours for visiting consultants generally during business hours on an as needs basis.

Communal outdoor areas are not restricted for time of use however it is anticipated they will be primarily used during daylight hours with occasional evening community gatherings.

The facility will offer all meals to residents in the communal areas and clubhouse. Communal laundry facilities are provided on each floor of the building with residents having access to a communal kitchen and dining room, library and reading room and indoor and outdoor communal facilities.

Strategic context

The following section identifies a series of social drivers relevant to the proposal, based on a review of relevant state and local policies and strategies.

Key policy themes and drivers

The following section identifies the key social drivers for the site, based on a review of the key state and local policies and strategies. A summary of the key themes relevant to this review is provided in Table 1 below.

The following documents have been included in the review:

- Orange City Council: Orange Housing Strategy (2021)
- Ageing Well in NSW: Seniors Strategy 2021-2023
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing) 2021
- Orange City Council Community Strategic Plan 2022 – 2032 (noted to be under review)
- Orange Local Strategic Planning Statement (2020)

Table 1 Strategic policy review

Theme	Alignment and implications for the development
Accessibility and Adaptability	Housing design should enable aging in place through universal design features and easy access to services. Diverse housing choices and opportunities to meet changing demographics and population needs are to be provided. Orange City Council supports a housing market that meets the changing needs of the Orange community noted to be ageing with 23% of the population by 2041 expected to be over 65 years. Orange residents are looking to downsize from rural properties and large family homes with some forced to downsize due to disability and increased accessibility needs. There is an increased need for more housing options for the aging population with more smaller dwellings, retirement villages and nursing homes to allow people to remain in the Orange region and be close to family, friends and services and facilities. NSW promotes ageing in place and for older residents to live in a safe suitable environment. Homes and services are to enable continued mobility and help people to remain independent and with a community of choosing.
Affordability and Cost-Effectiveness	Orange City Council prioritises a focus on affordable housing options for seniors to alleviate financial pressures. The increase in the cost of housing and consequently rising rates of households in housing stress is a key issue and as a result Council is prioritising a mix of housing types to cater for diverse needs, including seniors. NSW prioritises increased affordable and accessible housing options that are close to transport, recreation, and community services.
Social Engagement and Community Inclusion	Promotion of community spaces and social engagement features to combat isolation is a core consideration. It is increasingly important to continue to actively participate with liveable and supportive communities to ensure older people enjoy being part of an inclusive society where everyone can have access to information and engage and contribute to community life and civic participation. Whole of life approach to ageing is important and people should be encouraged to live in environments that value diversity and are not limited by stereotypes or assumptions about capabilities. NSW prioritises encouragement of older people to be engaged and active in their communities, doing things that are valued and enjoyed either recreationally, socially, culturally, creatively, educationally, and spiritually. Consideration to be given to communication methods and information to ensure older people can access information they need with support frameworks provided to help older people remain resilient in unforeseen events. Access to tools that help with informed decision making and appropriate supports is prioritised.
Health and Proximity to Essential Services	The development is to ensure access to health services and other essential amenities to support ageing residents. An identified need within the Orange Housing Strategy is the need for greater housing choice to enable older residents to remain close to familiar health and essential services. Access to telehealth services has increased in recent years helping to reduce traditional healthcare barriers. NSW prioritises the encouragement of older people to actively participate in employment, training, lifelong learning, and volunteering opportunities. Active partnership approaches between community support and health services to help older people stay safe, healthy, active, and independent is encouraged. Initiatives that improve physical health and mental wellbeing for older people are to be prioritised as are services that help ensure older

	people live safely free from abuse, fraud, and exploitation. NSW prioritises independence and accessibility with housing that promotes autonomy and preference for aging in place.
Sustainable and Liveable Design	The development should use sustainable practices to create comfortable and environmentally friendly homes that are also cost effective. Orange City Council Housing Strategy prioritises the delivery of neighbourhoods that are well-planned, socially inclusive, and sustainable. The effects of climate change on older people can be significant as can they be for people on fixed incomes. Older people may have less capacity to adapt to rising costs associated with extreme weather and environmental changes.

Australia's ageing population

Australia's population in 2021 was just under 26 million and is projected to reach around 32 million in 2041, representing an annual growth rate of around 1.3%.

While Australia's population is projected to grow, it is also expected to age. Australia's population aged 65+ years is projected to grow to 6.66 million by 2041, from an estimated 4.31 million in 2021, which is an increase of 54%. Greater proportional population growth is projected at the highest ages. Australia's population aged 85 and above is projected to increase in number from 534,000 in 2021 to 1.28 million by 2041 – an increase of 140%.

The rapid projected increase in the 85+ population is due to projected mortality decline plus larger cohorts reaching age 85 due to past mortality declines and increasing numbers of births many decades ago. In addition, the uptick in growth from around 2031 onwards is the result of the larger baby boom generation entering the 85+ age group¹.

Trends in aged care provision

Increasing demand for tailored and greater diversity of housing options for older persons

In 2013 the Living Longer Living Better aged care reforms were passed into legislation in Australia to deliver more support and care at home, with additional care places, responding to the changing needs of older Australians. Whilst the passing of the reforms was some 10 + years ago they recognised a significant step of the growing longer-term need for higher care residential services in Australia.

In Australia, housing trends for older residents have shifted towards models that support greater independence, affordability, and adaptability, particularly due to rising housing costs for the older generations. Co-housing models and village-style living arrangements have grown in popularity with the ability for residents to maintain privacy but have shared amenities and services. Studies from the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) show that lower-income older Australians often favour shared equity and long lease arrangements due to their affordability and flexibility. With significant national housing supply and affordability pressures there is greater demand for more secure long-term rental housing options for older persons. This is particularly relevant where age-appropriate housing is lacking and the increase in universally designed homes and housing typologies that suit the lifestyle and physical needs of older populations have not kept up with the pace of demographic change. In simple terms the growth rate in the number of dwellings that suit the living needs of older generations has not matched the growth rate of people aged 60+ years. The shortage has pushed many older persons to remain living in larger family sized homes that do not suit their day-to-day needs. This also has flow on impacts of reducing the overall availability of housing stock for younger generations in need of appropriate housing.

The rising costs of living and limited housing options has also been acknowledged to place financial strain on older persons living on fixed incomes. There is also an increasing demand for flexible care options that allow older residents to remain at home or in community-based settings helping people to avoid institutionalised

¹ Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing Research (CEPAR)



care environments and remain living with independence whilst having access to care and supports when required. ²

Ageing in place and age-friendly communities

As reported by the Productivity Commission, older Australians prefer to age in place, with assistance for home care less costly than that of residential aged care. *The quality and location of housing can influence the physical and psychological health for an ageing population.*

Many older individuals have formed attachments to their neighbourhoods or family homes, which provide a significant source of security and comfort. While it has been shown that housing and care needs change as a person ages, there is a significant period in the life of an older person where there is a need for comfortable living in a home where a person can be self-sufficient.

Many people will live in conventional housing for the majority of their life (up to the age of 90 years) with the capacity of a person to age in place determined by the appropriateness of the family home to their changing needs. The study found that many who move to age-specific accommodation do so much later in life. ³ There is an important element to consider in the way any development for older persons is managed that being the understanding of place attachment within ageing in place. Studies show preferences amongst older adults to experience old age independently and termed “ageing in place” which is based on place attachment being the home and the neighbourhood in which a person resides. Whilst time spent in a place increases an individual’s attachment, enhanced attachment can be achieved through strong emotional significance of the place. An aspect useful for consideration when designing and operating a new housing typology for older residents to ensure strong emotional attachment can be made to the place and neighbourhood through strong social connections and personal meaning.⁴

The growing regional ageing population now demands greater housing choice with the need for smaller sized dwellings and a housing network that builds resilience and connection for elderly residents. There is a severe shortage of accessible homes in NSW ⁵ and as a result increasing the supply of universally designed homes that suit the physical needs of an older person will enable more people to remain living with greater independence well beyond current rates. There is growing interest nationally for more innovative co-living housing models for older Australians, helping to address the significant shortfall of housing options for older Australians.

Trends in co-housing for seniors

With a rapidly increasing ageing population greater choice of housing is required for those aged 60 + years. It is relevant for the purposes of the proposed development to draw from research of alternate seniors housing models. Shared independent rental housing for older persons has been shown to offer several advantages in relation to affordability, social connection, and support for healthy ageing.

Cohousing has been an alternative seniors housing model adopted throughout northern Europe and the USA with the following documented benefits:

- Provision of informal care through community contact leading to reduced social isolation that can often be experienced by seniors
- Providing alternatives for older persons to downsize without having to move to a retirement village or nursing home
- Increased opportunities for learning through shared activities

² Joint Centre for Housing Studies of Harvard University. 2023 *Housing America's Older Adults*.

³ Commonwealth of Australia, Productivity Commission. 2015 *Housing Decisions of Older Australians*.

⁴ Lebrusan I. Gomez V. 2022. *The Importance of Place Attachment in the Understanding of Ageing in Place: “The Stones Know Me”* International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health.

⁵ Kate McIntyre. 2022. *Renters with disability face severe shortage of accessible homes*. Realestate.com.au

- Active participation with the community in older years
- Reduction in living costs and relieving the pressure of broad housing supply through alternative forms of housing

More and more people, as they age, are less likely to want to move into traditional retirement villages as the new seniors generations seek to maintain independence and have improved levels of health and wellbeing well into the late stages of life. The growing generation of seniors are less likely to seek and be offered support from adult children, due to a range of factors. People will continue to seek to downsize however there is a strong desire for seniors to maintain manageable spaces and participate in leisure activities, seeking appropriate low level and occasional care that complements an independent lifestyle. ⁶

Cohousing for seniors allows for residents to have access to both private and communal spaces, '*combining autonomy of private dwellings with the advantages of community living*'⁷ The strong focus of community interaction with cohousing models directly responds to issues of concern in relation to loneliness with literature noting the benefit of cohousing design can help to reduce feelings of isolation. A key difference between apartment living and co-living arrangements is the emphasis on social interaction through design and operational management. Traditional cohousing is often designed and managed by the residents themselves where residents are actively involved in organising and running community activities. Relevant to the proposed development is a Developer-led cooperative housing model that addresses the need for more affordable rental housing that is suitable for seniors particularly where vacancy rates for market housing where seniors seek to downsize and move close to centres to be in closer proximity to services are low. The lower rental seniors designed housing solution can offer an alternative for people who do not wish to own assets as they age.

Research has found that, "*cooperative housing has seen success in providing affordable, manageable housing with the additional benefit of community for those who want or need it.*" In addition, research has found that the support for residents in cooperative housing projects reduces the dependence of seniors on government health services⁸. It is noted that low-income tenants of cooperative rental housing are generally eligible for the Commonwealth Rental Allowance to help residents meet the costs of housing.

The social, economic, and environmental benefits of cohousing of seniors have been documented with acknowledgement that:

- Models incorporating participatory decision making helps to keep residents actively involved in the community including decisions on the neighbourhood. The strength in the connected community contributes to improved sense of well-being helping to bring like-minded people together.
- For vulnerable older individuals, the cohousing arrangements help to enhance feelings of safety and security.
- Cohousing allows for the total useable liveable area for all residents to increase and as a result lowers the total cost of operation of the home. The co-living model has been shown to reduce the overall cost of care for seniors with pooled resources and facilities that can cater for a larger group of independently living residents.
- The shared common spaces and clustering of dwellings increases the total access to liveable areas for a larger number of older residents that can minimise the physical and environmental footprint required to house older persons. Shared facilities improve resource efficiency and communal use of gardens and shared spaces can lead to more sustainable outcomes. For example, reduced dependency on cars through community transport services helps to address sustainability goals.

⁶ Riedy, C., Wynne, L., Daly, M. and McKenna, K. 2017. *Cohousing for Seniors: Literature Review*. Prepared for the NSW Department of Family and Community Service and the Office of Environment and Heritage, by the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney.

⁷ Williams, J. 2005. *Designing neighbourhoods for social interaction: The case of cohousing*, *Journal of Urban Design* vol. 10 no.2, pp.195-227.

⁸ Schwartz, H. n.d, '*Cooperative housing for an ageing Australia*', Melbourne University.

Risks and opportunities with co-living housing models for seniors

The implementation of more innovative co-living style housing models for seniors can potentially provide significant benefits to local communities as well as paving the way for greater housing choice for a growing cohort with increased diversity of housing needs. Careful planning and compatibility assessments are required to ensure the solutions are effective and sustainable option for ageing populations.

Effectively management plans must take into consideration potential risks in relation to the design and operation of a co-living seniors housing model relate to:

- Health and emergency response challenges to ensure adequate support for residents who require medical assistance is effectively managed. Effective management strategies will be required to appropriately care for residents with chronic health conditions or mobility issues. This may come in the form of partnerships with local healthcare providers to ensure resident safety in emergencies as well as effective transition programs for when people are unable to maintain independent living arrangements.
- Potential for interpersonal conflict is a consideration to ensure high compatibility of residents. Unresolved interpersonal conflicts have been documented to impact negatively on residents' well-being where there are settings with limited privacy. Careful support systems to help resolve disputes will be a consideration for any management plan.
- Regulatory and safety considerations are necessary to ensure residents are provided with consistent high-quality service. Clear policies around accountability for resident well-being is necessary as is outlining clear expectations of responsibilities of both tenant and operator. Where residents have chronic health conditions or mobility issues there needs to be effective management strategies in place to appropriately care for residents.

Opportunities of co-living housing models for seniors offer significant benefits that can outweigh any managed risks. These include:

- **Enhances social well-being and reduced loneliness** with studies consistently finding co-living environments can reduce loneliness amongst older adults. It has been found that shared living arrangements support social connections, creating a sense of belonging and strong social bonds can enhance mental and emotional well-being, linked to lower risk of depression and cognitive decline.
- **Increased affordability and resource sharing** which enables housing to be more affordable than a traditional aged care facility as it enables shared expenses. Shared amenities and utilities as well as healthcare support in communal environments can help to reduce individual costs which is beneficial for older residents on fixed incomes.
- **Support for ageing in place and autonomy** is promoted through co-living with greater independence the core outcome of the development than traditional assisted living. Residents are able to maintain control over their daily routine and personal spaces whilst benefiting from community networks. The model aligns with aging in place preferences where people seek to maintain living in familiar settings with ongoing autonomy. As a result, there can be delayed need for intensive care housing requirements.

Housing and living arrangements as people get older

Broader research on housing needs as people age emphasises the importance of accessibility, social connectivity, healthcare access, affordability, and adaptability of design to accommodate ageing related changes. The following components are important to enhance the quality of life for older residents:

- **Accessible and adaptable design** to enable older residents to maintain independence. This may include single level living spaces, wider doorways and hallways, step free access, grab bars and non-slip flooring. Adaptable housing supports both physical accessibility and minimises the need for future renovations as residents age or require greater physical mobility supports.⁹
- **Communal spaces including shared gardens, lounges and activity rooms** that help foster social connections amongst residents has been shown to reduce isolation and improve mental health. Developments are recommended to include safe, accessible communal spaces that encourage

⁹ Olsberg, D. Winters M. 2005 *Ageing in place: intergenerational and intrafamilial housing transfers and shifts in later life*, AHURI Final Report No. 88, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited.

community interaction and combat loneliness. Co-located services or partnerships with local organisations for activities and events are recommended.

- **Ease of access to healthcare and support services**¹⁰ including clinics, pharmacies and physiotherapy as well as having on-call emergency response systems is a key requirement of housing older persons. Regular scheduled visits from caregivers and health professionals are beneficial. Noting affordability is a growing concern for older persons on fixed incomes the offering of low-cost or flexible pricing for services is beneficial. A multi-tiered pricing structure or link to government subsidies to ensure affordability across income levels is recommended. This may include flexible long term lease models to enable residents to maintain housing security and easy transition to more supportive housing care arrangements if and/or when required.¹¹
- **Technological adaptation**¹² including emergency call systems, motion sensors and smart home technology help to monitor safety and allow for easy communication with caregivers and family members. Energy efficient design and green spaces will also contribute to the quality of life and have well documented positive contributions to physical and mental health. Studies have shown that technology may help older people to become more active as they become more aware of and motivated to increase their daily physical activity. Virtual assistants, such as smart speaker technology can offer support for older persons who may face difficulty in engaging with technology. Research has found that low-income older residents in using smart speaker technology can more easily be reminded of daily activity needs, including reminders for social activities, medical appointments, and medication reminders.

¹⁰ Van Gaans. D, Dent E. 2018 *Issue of accessibility to health services by older Australians: a review*. Public Health Reviews 339(article number 20).

¹¹ Veeroja P., Hulse K. 2024 *Hybrid housing models for older Australians: institutional framework and policy challenges*. International Journal of Housing Policy

¹² Marston H., Musselwhite C. 2021 *Improving Older People's Lives through Digital Technology and Practices*. Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine Volume 7: 1-4. Sage Journals

Local social context

Key findings:

The population of Orange Local Government Area (LGA) is expected to grow and change over the next 20 years. Between 2021 and 2041 the proportion of the population of Orange LGA aged over 65 will increase from 17% to 23%, with women making up around 55% of the population aged over 65.

Orange is projected to have a higher proportion of its population aged over 65 than the State as a whole by 2041.

Orange will have a higher proportion of couple only and lone person households than NSW as a whole in 2041, indicating an aging population and potential demand for smaller homes. The number of lone person households is expected to exceed 30% of all households in Orange by 2041 (compared to 28.6 % in 2021).

Over 80 % of occupied private dwellings in Orange LGA are three bedrooms or more, compared to the NSW average of approximately 68 %. There will be a need to provide more diversity moving forward to meet the needs of an aging and changing population.

Median rental prices for detached homes have risen from \$370 per week in Quarter One 2020 to \$520 per week in Quarter Four 2023, an increase of just over 40 %. Meanwhile rent for apartments has increased from \$260 to \$390 per week over the same period, an increase of 50 %.

The 2021 Census found approximately 30 % of renter households were spending more than 30 % of household income on rent (a potential measure of housing stress). The significant increase in rental prices over the past 4 years of more than 40 %, will see an increased proportion of persons in rental stress in Orange.

Community profile

Population and age structure

The population of Orange Local Government Area (LGA) in 2021 was around 43,750. This is projected to increase to around 48,657 by 2041. A growth of 4,907 people. The annual growth rate of 0.5% is below the NSW expected annual rate of growth of 1.1%. However, this is stronger growth than the surrounding LGAs of Blaney, Cowra and Cabonne.

Population growth over the next 20 years will be driven by a mix of natural increase and migration to the area. Around 54% of the growth will come from migration to the area.

Over the next 20 years, Orange will see an increase in both young people and older age groups. Orange as a major regional centre, with employment opportunities and education institutions, attracts young families to the area. It also attracts older age groups from the surrounding rural areas and those seeking a lifestyle destination. Like most of regional NSW, there is a significant population that is aging in place as people live longer. The median age in Orange LGA is expected to increase from 36.86 in 2022 to 42.35 in 2041.

Between 2021 and 2041 the proportion of the population of Orange LGA aged over 65 will increase from 17% to 23%, with women making up around 55% of the population aged over 65. The LGA of Cowra, located nearby, will see its proportion of the population aged over 65 reach approximately 30% of the total population by 2041. For NSW as a whole, the proportion of the population aged over 65 is projected to increase from 17% of the State's population in 2021 to 21% in 2041.



Household and dwelling characteristics

Between 2021 and 2041 the implied dwelling demand for Orange LGA (number of dwellings required to house the projected population) is expected to increase from 19,469 homes to 23,535 homes. This represents, on average, an additional 203 new homes per year.

It is worth noting in the 2024 NSW Population projections, that DPHI uses data from the 2016 Census to set assumptions about living arrangements by age. This is because the 2021 Census was taken during an atypical period affected by COVID-19 restrictions on both domestic and international travel. Many Australians adjusted their living arrangements in response to these restrictions. The DPHI analysis of 2021 Census data on living arrangements found it contains short-term COVID-19 effects that do not represent longer term shifts in how people in each age group form households.

Orange has a higher proportion of 2 person households, making up 33.5% of the total households for Orange. This is followed by lone person households (28.6 %) then 3 and 4 person households at 14.2 % and 14.0 % respectively (ABS, 2016). It is worth noting that in the 2021 Census, the proportion of lone person households was very similar to the 2016 census. Compared to NSW as a whole, Orange has a higher proportion of lone person households. This could be representative of persons aging in place.

Looking to the future, DPHI projects that the average household size in Orange will reduce from 2.45 people in 2016 to 2.27 people in 2041. This shift in demographics indicates that alternative housing choices are required, as people will have less need for detached 3 and 4-bedroom homes.

DPHI predicts changes in the type of households in Orange LGA with the number of lone person and couple only households projected to increase, and the number of couples with children and single parent households projected to decrease. Orange will have a higher proportion of couple only and lone person households than NSW in 2041, indicating an aging population and potential demand for smaller homes. The number of lone person households is expected to exceed 30 % of all households in Orange by 2041.

An aging population will consequently require housing that meets their needs and be located in close proximity to services and facilities. While not adding to population growth an ageing population may nonetheless add to demand for smaller homes as well as new or refurbished homes that can address their specific mobility, security, and independence needs.

Cultural and linguistic diversity

Orange LGA has a slightly higher proportion of women to men than the State average. At the 2021 Census, the proportion of women to the total population was 51.3 %. This compares with the State average of 50.6 %.

Around 45 % of persons aged over 15 years living in the Orange LGA are married. A further 18.5 % of the population is either separated, divorced, or widowed. This is higher than the State average of 16.9 %. A further 36.6 % of persons aged over 15 years in Orange LGA have never been married.

In terms of cultural diversity, 83.7 % of persons living in Orange LGA were born in Australia. This is significantly higher than the NSW average of 65.4 %. Only 8.6 % of households spoke a language other than English at home compared with the NSW average of 29.5 %.

Relative advantage and disadvantage

In terms of relative advantage and disadvantage, Orange LGA ranks as relatively advantaged on the ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA). The ABS broadly defines advantage and disadvantage based on people's access to material and social resources, and their ability to participate in society. On the Index of Relative Socioeconomic Advantage or Disadvantage (IRSAD), Orange ranks relatively high being in the 7th

decile. The score calculation includes factors such as income, education, and employment. An area with a low IRSAD score indicates relatively high disadvantage, due to factors such as a high proportion of households with low income or a high proportion of people with low education levels, for example. An area with a high IRSAD score reflects factors such as high income or a high proportion of people in skilled occupations.

On the index of Education and Occupation (IEO) Orange LGA again ranks relatively high being in the 7th decile. IEO is concerned with education and occupational aspects of advantage and disadvantage. Education indicators include the highest level of study undertaken by residents. Occupation indicators include unemployment levels and the skill levels of jobs. A high IEO score could reflect an area with a high number of people working in skilled jobs and high incidence of educational qualifications.

On the Index of Economic Resources (IER), Orange LGA again ranks relatively high being in the 7th decile. IER is about the financial aspects of advantage and disadvantage. It focuses on direct measures of economic resources collected in the Census, such as income and housing. It also includes some variables usually associated with high or low wealth. A high IER score indicates that an area has greater access to economic resources and a low IER score indicates more limited access. A high IER score may reflect high proportions of high-income households, larger homes and homes owned outright.

However, while Orange LGA itself can be considered to be of relative advantage, based on the SEIFA index the surrounding regions are not as advantaged, particularly Cowra LGA which is an area of relative disadvantage and to a lesser extent Blayney. Even within Orange LGA itself are areas of greater and lesser disadvantage. Orange SA2 (Statistical Area 2) ranks relatively low on the IRSAD being in the 3rd decile. Thus both from within orange LGA itself, but also from the surrounding regions, are areas of disadvantage who are likely to be on low incomes or have few assets, and hence the supply of affordable rental co-living accommodation will be important to meet the needs of this cohort of people as they age.

Tenure and housing costs

In terms of housing tenure, around 65 % of occupied private dwellings in Orange LGA are either owned outright or with a mortgage. This is similar to the NSW average. Approximately a third of occupied private dwellings are rented. This is very similar to the NSW average.

In terms of dwelling structure, over 86 % of private occupied dwellings were detached homes in the 2021 Census, significantly greater than the NSW average of around 65 %. On the other hand, flats or apartments made up just 3.6 % of private occupied dwellings compared to the NSW average of 21.7%. In the neighbouring LGAs of Blayney and Cabonne, detached homes made up 95 % and 93 % of occupied private dwellings, respectively.

This high proportion of detached homes in Orange LGA is also reflected in the number of bedrooms. With over 80 % of occupied private dwellings being dwellings of three bedrooms or more, compared to the NSW average of approximately 68 %. One-bedroom homes make up just over 3 % of occupied private dwellings in Orange LGA, much lower than that for NSW.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, median house prices in Orange LGA have risen around 43% to approximately \$700,000. Meanwhile median rental prices for detached homes have risen from \$370 per week in Quarter One 2020 to \$520 per week in Quarter Four 2023, an increase of just over 40 %. Meanwhile rent for apartments has increased from \$260 to \$390 per week over the same period, an increase of 50 %.¹³

¹³ source: <https://heatmaps.com.au/>.



Since August 2019, median house prices in Orange LGA have risen around 63% to approximately \$650,000 and multi units are up 85% to \$463,000. Meanwhile median rental prices for detached homes have risen 44% over the past five years from around \$380 per week to \$548 per week (as at August 2024). Meanwhile rent for multi units has increased from around \$275 to \$430 per week over the same period, an increase of 56 %.¹⁴

Weekly household income

Around 62 % of persons aged over 15 years of age in Orange LGA are in the labour force, higher than the NSW average. Around 32 % of persons aged over 15 years of age reported to not be in the labour force. Of those persons who reported being in the labour force, 61 % worked full time and around 30 % part time.

In terms of industry of employment, health care and social services, mining, public administration and safety and education and training were the key industry sectors.

Medium weekly incomes for persons aged 15 years or older in Orange LGA at the 2021 Census was \$842 per week, higher than the NSW average of \$813 per week. Medium family and household weekly incomes were \$2,133 and \$1,665 respectively, slightly below the NSW average. Meanwhile in the surrounding LGA's of Blayney and Cabonne, median weekly incomes for persons aged 15 years or older were \$765 and \$768 respectively, below the State average.

Need for assistance

In terms of housing stress, approximately 30 % of renter households are spending more than 30 % of household income on rent. Spending greater than 30 % of income on housing expenses is a potential measure of housing stress. While the neighbouring LGAs of Blayney and Cabonne have a smaller % of households in potential rental stress, it is still not insignificant at over 20 % and given the increase of more than 40 % in rents across the region since the 2021 Census, it is likely that the proportion of households in rental stress has increased.

Forecast community profile

Forecast growth and development

In terms of building approvals, for Orange LGA in 2023-24 there were 163 residential building approvals, of which 141 were detached houses and 22 were townhouses. No apartments were approved in the financial year (*source: ABS Building Approvals Australia September 2024*). This compares with the implied dwelling demand over the next 20 years of 203 homes per annum.

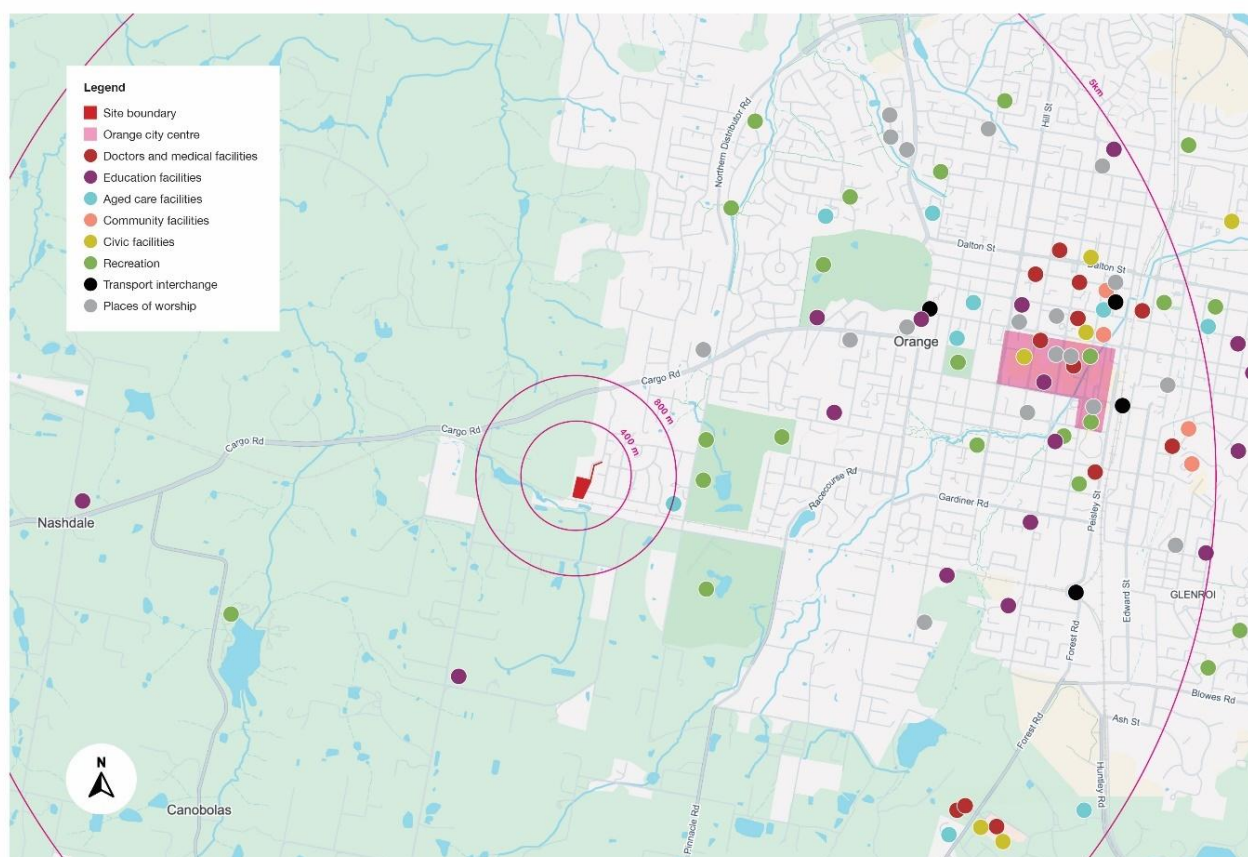
For a longer time series, looking at the three combined SA2 regions within Orange, ABS residential building approvals were 273 in 2021-22, 257 in 2022-23 and 180 in 2023-24. This level of approvals will need to be maintained into the longer term to deliver the homes to meet the demand of a growing and aging population.

Local social infrastructure

A review of local social infrastructure has been undertaken to inform the social needs assessment. Social infrastructure has been mapped within a local catchment of 400m, 80m and a 5km radius, taking into consideration local walking and driving distance.

¹⁴ source: SQM Research accessed December 2024.

Figure 2 Social infrastructure map



The social infrastructure relevant for the proposed development has identified:

Social infrastructure	Details
Aged care facilities	10 aged care facilities are located within 5km radius of the site, not including retirement villages. These include: • Uniting Wontama residential aged care offering 148 beds for permanent, respite and specialist dementia care. • Bolton Clarke Gosling Creek with 77 beds offering permanent aged care, dementia care and respite care. • Ascott Gardens offering 78 beds for residents with access to Synergy Active Ageing Centre as well as bus outings and visiting beauticians, podiatrists and hairdressers. A separate dementia wing is offered at the Poppy Cottage. • Orange Grove Care Community • Uniting Home Care Central West • Catholic Healthcare St Francis Aged Care • Astill Court, UPA Retirement Village • Uniting Care Ageing • Uniting Carinya Orange • Bolton Clarke Calare Orange
Medical facilities	There are 12 medical facilities located within a 5km radius of the site including general and specialist medical practitioners as well as hospitals. These include: • Orange Square Medical Centre, a general practice and skin cancer clinic • Orange Family Medical Centre, offering a range of general practitioners • Apple City Family Medicine • Colour City Medical Practice • Anson Medical • Dr. Tim Kirchler (General Practitioner) • Dr. David Howe (General Practitioner) • Bloomfield Medical Group

	• The Wellness House • Dr Ruth Fuller • Bloomfield Hospital, Orange • Orange Private Hospital • Orange Health Service
Additional note: Oak Tree Retirement Village	The Oak Tree Retirement Village is within a 1km radius of the site and 3km from the Orange City Centre. The village offers independent living for people aged 55 years and over. With 93 two- and three-bedroom units with associated parking the village offers lease and licences for residents with an up-front entry price for each villa. Pets are allowed upon completion of a pet application form and agreement to the pet policy. The village offers a community centre for residents including an outdoor bowling green and indoor games area.
Community and Civic Facilities	Several community and civic facilities are located within a 5km radius of the site. These include: • Orange City Council Community Services Centre • Orange Function Centre • Orange Ambulance Station • Orange Police Station • Fire and Rescue NSW Orange Fire Station • Orange City Centre • Orange Regional Gallery • Orange Visitor Information Centre • Orange City Council • Orange Local Court • Orange Railway Station and Orange East Fork railway station • The Country Club Orange • Orange City Library
Recreation	The following recreation opportunities are located within a 5km radius of the site. • Sport and Recreation Orange • Moulder Park, with works underway to upgrade for new sports courts • Robertson Park, local Orange City Centre park • Borenore Picnic area, NSW Parks, and Wildlife Service picnic area with a walk to Arch Cave • Orange Aquatic Centre • A series of connecting parklands including Pitcher Park, Elephant Park, and Moulder Park Picnic Area • Local parks including Robertson Park, Cook Park, and Memory Park • Lake Canoblas Reserve, with a cafe and kiosk, with events and activities often held at the lake including New Year's Eve celebrations • The country club Orange, offering barefoot bowls and a bistro and cafe and live music • Ploughmans Wetlands • The Wentworth Orange Golf Course offering cafes and restaurants, golf simulators and indoor playground, function room as well as TAB and Keno facilities • The Orange Pony Club • Towac Park Racecourse (renowned horse racing track with event facilities) It is noted the Orange Botanic Gardens is located just outside the 5km radius (5.4km) from the site. The gardens offer a natural and exotic plant collection, sculptures as well as picnic, playground, and function room facilities.
Education	Several primary and high school facilities are located within 5km radius of the site. Of relevance to the residents is the proximity to Orange TAFE which offers courses in information technology, music, painting and decorating, accounting, automotive, business administration, creative arts, health, and horticulture.

Community views

Matters relevant to this social needs assessment arising from submissions and discussions at the public meeting of the Western Regional Planning Panel (15 October 2024) related to:

Issue	Design response	Social needs considerations
Carparking, traffic and safety	Whilst the development complies with the required parking requirements the proposal has been updated to offer a private 14-seater commuter bus service to enable residents to more easily access the Orange CBD from the facility.	It is noted the proposal exceeds the minimum carparking requirements of the SEEP (Housing) and that there will be reasonable opportunity for on-street parking without impacting current parking levels. The provision of the 14-seater communal bus is a positive contribution to enable residents to easily access the Orange CBD.
Characterisation of the development	The proposal is noted to be housing for independent seniors who do not require high care support on site.	Given the proposal is designed for independent living no high care support is required on site. It is recommended the operator consider establishing relationships with nearby higher care facilities to create a continuum of care for residents as they look to transition from independent living to higher levels of support when required.
Density and alignment with the Local Housing Strategy	The development is consistent with the key objectives of the Orange local housing strategy including the provision of purpose-built housing for seniors and improved housing typology.	The offering provides a positive diverse housing contribution to the local Orange housing market helping to enable more seniors to continue to live independently with high quality health and wellbeing outcomes through access to affordable housing options with strong community connections.
Security	The development is consistent with the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design	There is no anticipated security risk because of the development and it is noted that measures to ensure a safe living environment such as emergency response systems, good lighting and non-slip flooring are essential components for the physical design and construction as well as operational management plans. It is also documented that cohousing arrangements also help to enhance feelings of safety and security for older individuals through the building of strong connections to a cohesive local community.
Social isolation and community connection	Matters raised at the public hearing related to questions of the facility operation and how the proposal will offer an enhanced experience for residents.	It is noted that the resident clubhouse will offer several activity spaces including a gym, dining hall and library room. In addition, individual buildings will include common spaces for neighbours to connect and socialise on an informal basis. The proposal emphasises active community engagement and wellbeing for residents, addressing the critical issue of loneliness in the ageing population. By adopting a co-living model, it fosters strong connections later in life. The facility's design and operation must include spaces for both organised and informal gatherings, accommodating active and passive recreation to suit individual social needs. Equally, providing quiet indoor and outdoor areas is essential, ensuring a complementary mix of high-energy and calm spaces through thoughtful design and activity management. Design layout of the individual rooms is also important to ensure there is enough space for people to invite guests into their own private space.
Accessibility and isolation	Matters raised at the public hearing related to questions of access for residents to the Orange City Centre with reference to loneliness and details of the public and community bus service and reliance on existing bus services.	A key consideration is that the development provides an affordable downsizing option for current Orange LGA residents who are capable of independent living. The car parking provision meets standard requirements, and a community bus service will be provided to balance transportation needs. Although the bus route and hours of operation are not yet finalised, it is recommended that the operator engage with residents to ensure the service is flexible and meets their needs.

Social Needs Assessment

This assessment provides a response to the request for a needs assessment to be undertaken to identify the local resident social infrastructure needs and the relationship to the local community and Orange CBD.

Whilst this is not a comprehensive social impact assessment the analysis takes into account the *International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) International Principles for Social Impact Assessment* and principles to guide the consideration of social elements.

The following provides an assessment of the key social needs of the development with the assessment taking into consideration the following principles as they relate to the proposed development and in particular the social infrastructure needs of the future residents of the locality:

- People's **way of life**, how they live and work, play and interact with each other on a day-to-day basis
- The **community and its cohesion**, stability and character, services and facilities
- The **environment** in particular consideration of the quality of the natural environment, the availability and quality of food and physical safety and ability to control their resources
- **Health and wellbeing** as a state of complete physical, mental, social, and spiritual wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity
- **Personal and property rights** and
- **Fears and aspirations**

Recommended responses have been provided – including enhancement or mitigation measures that may be adopted within any Operational Management Plan once operational.

Theme	Comment on issues including mitigation or enhancement measures
Way of Life: How people live, access to housing, how they get around, how people work, how they play and interact on a day-to-day basis including: - Amenity - Access to property - Community services and facilities - Housing	The proposed development is expected to deliver positive way of life impacts for the Orange community with improved housing supply designed for the ageing population and greater diversity of housing stock through the provision of smaller homes for residents seeking to downsize for more appropriate form of housing to suit their changing needs. The demographic analysis indicates demand for increased diverse housing choice within the Orange LGA, particularly for older residents with the forecast trend showing the population of the Orange LGA is expected to become much older and as a result there would be increased demand for housing for seniors over the next 20 years. It is understood the proposal will result in long term leasing opportunities for residents, with the project identified as a build to rent housing model designed to deliver housing security for an ageing population on fixed and potentially low incomes. It is anticipated the development could potentially house residents with rental agreements that allow for extended tenancy with extended lease terms of 5-year leases and the opportunity for renewal. The long-term leasing arrangements will help to provide security in how people live and access housing in the Orange area, resulting in stronger social cohesion, connection to place because of low resident turnover. Due to the range of services and social infrastructure, commercial and retail opportunities within a 5km radius of the site and availability of a range of transport options to the Orange City Centre the location of the site will be suitable for residents to access many daily living needs. The opportunity for easy transportation through use of the community bus, private vehicle and public bus will help to maintain resident independence, improved physical health, and maintain social connections beyond their

Theme	Comment on issues including mitigation or enhancement measures
	immediate context. It is also noted residents will be able to access fresh produce and groceries via delivery services that operate in Orange. The provision of high-quality rooms with bathrooms and kitchenettes as well as semi-private spaces through the small break out areas, lounge, library, and dining rooms as well as use of the garden spaces will support residents and their friends and families to enjoy social connection whilst maintaining privacy and control over social interaction. The resident clubhouse will feature a library lounge, a reading room, a gym, and kitchen and dining areas. It is recommended that flexibility be incorporated into the use of these spaces, particularly the reading room, to accommodate visiting specialists and practitioners as needed. The operational management plan should require the operator to engage regularly with residents to identify valuable programs and services, ensuring optimal use of the shared spaces. It is recommended that the operational management plan include a requirement to engage with aged care housing providers in the local Orange centre to establish collaborative relationships and proactively connect residents with facilities if there are changes to resident care needs. The strong connections with aged care housing providers in the area will help to support residents transition to higher care housing if needed. Overall, the proposal creates a new innovative housing model for seniors in a relaxed urban environment that will achieve positive outcomes for residents and the surrounding community in terms of health and wellbeing, community cohesion and liveability. The new housing solution will be socially, environmentally, and financially sustainable with rental housing provided to support ageing residents with their independent living needs.
Community as it relates to community cohesion, character and sense of place, stability, and character as well as services and facilities.	The initiative to build a socially cohesive resident population, attracting older residents on fixed incomes will promote equitable access to quality housing designed specifically for unique needs of the ageing population of Orange. The design of the proposal will enable the creation of a cohesive community strengthened using the shared communal spaces. The design offers clearly defined types of spaces including private, semi-private and public spaces to allow for residents and visitors to interact and engage with shared amenities. There is significant potential to build a socially cohesive neighbourhood, focusing on encouragement of connectivity and cohesion between residents through the provision of high-use communal spaces (internal and external). This will be particularly important regarding the tenant profile to foster strong relationships that build a strong sense of connection and place. Flexible communication tools should be adopted to ensure residents are able to access the information they need with support frameworks provided to help older residents remain resilient in unforeseen events. Access to tools that help with informed decision making and appropriate support is to be prioritised. It is recommended early tenancy introductory sessions are incorporated, as part of a management engagement program to enable potential residents to form early connections in the early occupation stages. To ensure ongoing community cohesion and high-level sense of place for all residents it is recommended the operational management plan articulates provisions for ways in which residents can provide feedback to the operator in relation to activities, events, place and operation of the site to continually ensure programs and services are best catered to the needs of residents. To better integrate the new residents with the existing community it is recommended an engagement program be established to educate the local community about the proposed changes, including staging of the construction program.
The environment in particular consideration of the quality of the	The development supports ageing in place, allowing residents to stay in familiar settings with ongoing autonomy, thereby delaying the need for intensive care housing.

Theme	Comment on issues including mitigation or enhancement measures
natural environment, the availability and quality of food and physical safety and ability to control their resources	The development adopts a whole-of-life approach to ageing, promoting social engagement and connection amongst residents to combat isolation and loneliness. As seniors are nowadays less likely to rely on support from adult children, they seek manageable spaces with low level occasional care to complement an independent lifestyle. The proposal allows for a blend of private and communal spaces, combining the autonomy of private dwellings with the advantages of community level. Eating well and cooking at home is crucial for healthy ageing which results in the promotion of good dietary habits, increased physical health and mental alertness as well as social interaction. Many older people enjoy cooking for themselves and others. Given the preference for people to maintain independence as they age and continue to enjoy daily routines it is recommended the development include kitchenettes in each unit, allowing residents to prepare food independently and share meals with others in a private small group setting. The kitchenettes will complement the full meal service offered in the shared dining space within the resident clubhouse, supporting residents' preferences and independence. It is recommended leasing arrangements are made for the option of either the full meal service or partial meal service depending on residents' desire for independent preparation of some small meals within their own units. It is recommended that the community bus provide regular trips to the Orange CBD, ensuring residents have convenient access to fresh produce from the Orange City Centre. However, it is noted fresh produce and other groceries would be available to residents via delivery. Additionally, establishing a kitchen garden in the communal outdoor areas will empower residents to prepare fresh meals using home-grown produce. Furthermore, the communal kitchen and dining area should be utilised for community cooking classes, enabling residents to enhance their culinary skills and foster connections with their neighbours. Smart home technology is recommended to be considered in the detailed design considerations which can help residents through virtual assistants to be reminded of medication, appointments, and social activities to enhance independence and safety. In addition, technical home design features such as circadian lighting to mimic natural daylight cycles can help with resident sleep patterns and overall mood.
Health and wellbeing as a state of complete physical, mental, social, and spiritual wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity	The proposed development will deliver a new form of independent housing for seniors in Orange helping diversify housing choice for people as they age. It is anticipated that because of the development there will be positive health and wellbeing outcomes associated with the increased availability of appropriate housing choice with easy access to services. The proposal aligns with NSW priorities to support ageing residents with greater housing choice that enables residents to remain close to familiar health and essential services. The proposal will align with priorities for independence and accessibility with an innovative housing model that promotes autonomy whilst enhancing connection and community as people age. It is noted that active partnership approaches between community support and health services is a key component to help older people stay safe, healthy active and independent. It is recommended the operator as part of the management plan builds connections and partnership opportunities with local community support and health services to enhance access and information for residents. It is recommended to further enhance the health and wellbeing of residents the outdoor landscaped areas incorporate space(s) for a communal/kitchen garden to enable residents to connect with others, build community cohesion and foster an increased sense of community pride and achievement. The incorporation of outdoor gardening enables residents to participate in whole-body activity that can help increase physical fitness, maintain mobility and flexibility. In addition, connection with outdoor spaces has been shown to reduce stress and anxiety and promote a sense of well-being, decreasing feelings of isolation and boosting self-esteem. The incorporation of communal/kitchen garden space(s) can also help to reduce food waste and cost of fresh produce. The incorporation of communal garden spaces also allows for the opportunity for garden workshops and learning. It is also recommended the landscaping incorporates areas for outdoor seating to encourage small group gatherings as well as space for individual quiet reflection in the natural landscape setting.
Personal and property rights	A note on co-living: early co-living models emerged amongst high-cost markets where there was a necessity for young professionals to share amenities under a cohesive community assisted by skilled



Theme	Comment on issues including mitigation or enhancement measures
	operators. With housing pressures continuing to mount the co-living model continues to evolve with offerings for more diverse cohorts. Through co-living arrangements people can gain high quality homes at a lower price point where the additional services are incorporated into a housing package that can typically reduce the overall cost of living alone. With the high demand for more affordable housing options for seniors the proposal offers a unique positive solution to help residents independently age well. With the increasing number of older Australians, especially women, facing the threat of homelessness, the implementation of co-housing models for older residents is crucial. Such models provide significant benefits to communities grappling with an ageing population and the urgent need for more affordable housing options. Co-housing emerges as a pivotal solution, prominently championed as a key pathway to secure affordable housing for older women.
Fears and aspirations	The effects of climate change on older people can be significant, coupled with those on fixed incomes a growing cohort of older Australians are likely to have less capacity to adapt to rising costs associated with extreme weather and environmental changes. The development is recommended to incorporate sustainable practices to ensure the homes are cost effective for the operator and residents. Trends show an increase in average temperature of +0.8 degrees Celsius over the next 10 – 15 years for the Central West and Orana region with a higher increase in average temperatures over the summer months. Average annual rainfall is expected to decrease by -7.3% per annum over the next 10-15 years. Over the same time there is expected to be an increase in the number of severe fire weather days of +1.3 days.¹⁵ Studies have shown that people over the age of 60 years are among the worst affected by extreme heat with a higher mortality risk during heat waves. Importantly investigative studies have found that direct effects of heat alone are not the primary cause of death with the likelihood of cardiovascular disease the underlying cause.¹⁶ Given the expected steady increase in temperatures for the Orange area, coupled with the ageing population it is recommended the facility takes into consideration the need for energy efficient air conditioning for units and shared communal spaces as well as incorporating native landscaping solutions that help to offer shade and cooler respite in outdoor settings. Enhancing resident connections to support the creation of strong networks will be a mitigating factor that will enable the resident community to be more resilient in the face of climate change¹⁷.

¹⁵ NSW Government *Interactive climate change projections map* (accessed November 2024).

¹⁶ Nomagugu N. and Chungag B.N. (2024) *Impacts of heat stress on cardiovascular health outcomes of older adults: A mini review*

¹⁷ Klinenberg E (2018) *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*.

Strategic Social Outcomes

As a result of the social needs analysis the following strategic social outcomes have been identified to inform the development of the Operational Management Plan.

Key directions for delivering social outcomes through the scheme

The following social strategy directions are suggested to guide the development:

- Deliver an inclusive, welcoming, and accessible community on site.
- Deliver contemporary, innovative seniors housing and associated services that supports the growth and ageing population of Orange.
- Increase social connections with the surrounding neighbourhood and Orange city commercial centre to sustain a connected and cohesive community.

These key themes and directions are explored in further detail below and will inform subsequent operational management procedures for the site.

Deliver an inclusive, welcoming, and accessible community on the site

The project offers a unique opportunity to create a vibrant and dynamic site that fosters an innovative new housing development, welcoming and inclusive for future older residents of Orange. Several strategies can be employed to ensure the development is both welcoming and accessible, promoting social interaction and community connections among residents, visitors, and staff:

- **High-Quality Spaces:** Develop high-quality indoor and outdoor areas that enable social interactions while prioritizing the safety of older residents.
- **Aesthetic and Safe Design:** Design aesthetically pleasing communal spaces that adhere to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, ensuring ongoing maintenance so all residents feel safe accessing communal and open spaces.
- **Flexible Usage:** Create opportunities for residents to use the development's spaces for informal gatherings and programmed events, both during the day and at night.
- **Intergenerational Programming:** Provide spaces and programs that foster intergenerational connections, such as community gardens, gender-appropriate spaces, storytelling opportunities, and cultural links.
- **Welcoming Communal Spaces:** Ensure communal areas are inviting and accessible to residents' families and friends.
- **Healthy and Active Lifestyles:** Design spaces that encourage healthy and active living by integrating elements that support both physical and mental health, such as fitness centres and well-designed green spaces for quiet reflection and connection to nature.
- **Informal Gathering Spots:** Offer informal seating and gathering areas throughout gardens and interior buildings, encouraging residents and visitors to meet and interact. Strive to balance and integrate both communal and private outdoor spaces.

Deliver contemporary innovative seniors housing and associated services that supports the growth and ageing population of Orange

The development is an opportunity to align a new form of seniors housing to the growing need of alternative forms of housing for the ageing population of Orange. The result being a contribution to the increase in the supply of greater diversity of housing in Orange. The proposal is not expected to have a significant impact on the overall community profile of Orange. Enhanced community interactions at the site may result in improved community cohesion.

The following considerations are recommended to be integrated with the activities and services offered to residents as part of the operational management to ensure the development provides for an enhanced, healthy, and fulfilling life of residents.

- **Healthcare services:** regular access to medical care, including preventative screenings, vaccinations, and management of chronic conditions.
- **Physical activity:** opportunities for physical exercise, such as programs through the fitness centre and group exercise classes and walking programs.
- **Social engagement:** spaces and programs that encourage social interaction, such as communal gardens including kitchen gardens, social events that are coordinated at the resident clubhouse.
- **Mental health support:** access to mental health resources, including counselling services, support groups and activities that promote mental well-being.
- **Nutrition:** healthy meal options and nutrition education to support a balanced diet. This may include the ability for residents to prepare their own meals using produce from the kitchen garden or participating in nutritional cooking classes that may be offered on site with use of the commercial kitchen facilities.
- **Transportation:** reliable transportation options are essential for accessing medical appointments, social activities, and other vital services. The provision of a 14-seater community bus will significantly benefit residents who prefer not to drive to the Orange CBD.
- **Community connections:** programs that facilitate connections with the broader community, including volunteer opportunities and partnerships with local organisations are supported.

The development will include high quality design, activation, semi-private and private spaces to encourage social connection, selective social interaction. Ongoing consultation with residents, visitors and staff is recommended to ensure the services and activities offered align with the resident expectations and needs.

It is recommended that longitudinal studies be conducted to evaluate the positive impact of the innovative housing model on the long-term outcomes for older individuals and the local Orange community.

Increase social connections with the community and local centre and sustain a cohesive community

The development will support the diversity and socially sustainability of the Orange community in the long term. The benefits of delivering a seniors housing community at the site can be maximised by ensuring residents and visitors are able to interact and meet within both the indoor and outdoor communal spaces.

To ensure the successful integration and acceptance of the proposed development within the local community it is recommended that a comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement and Communications plan be developed. This plan should aim to:

- **Enhance community connections:** Identify and engage with key local stakeholders, including residents, community groups, local businesses, and service providers. The plan should outline how community consultation and information sessions will be conducted to gather feedback, address concerns, and inform the community about the benefits and features of the facility. Additionally, ongoing engagement and involvement of the surrounding Orange community, including local businesses, will be integral to the development process. This ensures that the facilities and services offered on-site reflect community values and aspirations. Engagement may include the exploration of opportunities to enhance connections between the facility and surrounding social infrastructure, such as local healthcare practitioners, the local library, botanic gardens, and the commercial district of Orange. Communication channels, such as newsletters, social media updates, and a dedicated project website, are recommended to provide regular updates and facilitate ongoing dialogue with the community.
- **Facilitate seamless transition to higher care:** establish partnerships with nearby higher care facilities to create a continuum of care for residents. It is recommended clear pathways and protocols for transitioning residents from independent living to higher levels of support when required, ensuring that residents are well informed and supported throughout the process. shared activities and programs with nearby care facilities should be encouraged to foster relationships and familiarity, easing the transition for residents who may need increased care in the future.