

**Place AU**

Planning & Investment Intelligence

METHODOLOGY & DATA STATEMENT

Development Alignment Brief

How the Development Alignment Brief is built: the planning and decision data behind every control, how permit and appeal signals are read, the role of AI, and what the brief cannot tell you.

DOCUMENT

Methodology & Data
Statement v1.0

ISSUED

August 2026

NEXT REVIEW

February 2027

CONTACT

info@placeau.com

01 Purpose of this statement

This statement sets out how the Development Alignment Brief is built: where every figure comes from, how it is calculated, what role artificial intelligence plays, and what the product cannot tell you. It is written so that a developer, planning consultant, landowner or lender can assess the method before relying on the output, and so that any figure in a delivered report can be traced back to a named public source.

Place AU publishes this statement because a report is only as useful as the confidence you can place in it. Where a method involves a judgement, that judgement is named here rather than buried. Where a limit exists, it is stated rather than glossed.

STATUS OF THIS DOCUMENT

This is a methodology statement, not a warranty of outcome and not professional advice. It describes the process Place AU follows. It does not guarantee that any particular decision made in reliance on a report will be correct. Section 09 sets out the limits of the product and Section 10 explains how errors are corrected.

02 What this product is, and what it is not

The Development Alignment Brief sets out the controls that apply to a site, the overlays that constrain it, and how the responsible authority has actually decided comparable applications nearby. It is a due diligence starting point, produced before capital is committed.

WHAT IT IS NOT

- It is not a planning permit application and it is not lodgement-ready documentation.
- It is not legal advice and it is not a substitute for a town planner, heritage consultant, traffic engineer or other specialist.
- It is not a prediction. Permit and appeal history indicate how an authority has behaved, not how it must behave.
- It does not value the site, test development feasibility or model build cost.
- It is not a guarantee that any application will succeed.

03 Site and scheme resolution

The site or study area is matched to the responsible authority and the relevant planning scheme. Controls are read from the scheme in force at the date of preparation, together with the state provisions that apply to it.

- Site controls are read from the mapped zone and overlay layers and the ordinance text of the relevant schedules, **not from a summary**.
- The study area for permit and appeal signals is the surrounding locality, chosen to be large enough to give a meaningful count of comparable decisions and small enough that the decisions are genuinely comparable. The area used is stated in the brief.
- Amendments on exhibition that would change a control are identified where they are publicly notified, and are clearly labelled as proposed rather than in force. Gazetted amendments are identified with their gazettal date.
- Boundaries are read from official mapping. Where a site straddles a zone or overlay boundary, the brief says so rather than assigning the whole site to one control.

WHERE A SCHEDULE IS SILENT, THE CLAUSE DEFAULT GOVERNS

A control that no schedule specifies is not a control. Where a schedule specifies nothing for a standard, the brief states the clause default that applies in its place and names the clause. Where a claim about a site circulates in the market but cannot be verified against the scheme, the brief marks it **not substantiated** and states what the scheme actually says. This is a named step, because an unverified control repeated confidently is the most expensive kind of error in site due diligence.

04 Data sources

Every figure and control in a brief is retrieved from one of the sources below. No figure is sourced from a commercial data provider, a proprietary panel, a subscription database or an aggregator, and no figure is estimated by Place AU where a published figure exists.

SOURCE	PUBLISHER	WHAT IT SUPPLIES	LICENCE
Planning scheme and schedules	Responsible authority / DTP (Vic)	Zones, overlays, schedule requirements and the ordinance text read directly	Crown copyright, reuse per publisher terms
Victoria Planning Provisions	Department of Transport and Planning (Vic)	State standard provisions and the clause defaults that apply where a schedule is silent	Crown copyright, reuse per publisher terms

SOURCE	PUBLISHER	WHAT IT SUPPLIES	LICENCE
Vicmap Planning (VMPLAN)	Department of Transport and Planning (Vic)	Spatial zone and overlay extents	CC BY 4.0
VicPlan	Department of Transport and Planning (Vic)	Property level control confirmation	Crown copyright, reuse per publisher terms
Planning Permit Activity Reporting System	Department of Transport and Planning (Vic)	Decision volumes, timeliness and outcomes for the study area	Crown copyright, reuse per publisher terms
VCAT Planning and Environment decisions	Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal	Appeal volumes, outcomes and reasoning for comparable proposals	Crown copyright, reuse per publisher terms
Flood and environmental mapping	DEECA and catchment management authorities	Flood, erosion and environmental constraint extents	CC BY 4.0
Infrastructure contributions schedules	Responsible authority	Contribution rates per additional dwelling where a plan is in force	Crown copyright
ABS ASGS 2021, Edition 3	Australian Bureau of Statistics	Boundary geometry for the study area and its context	CC BY 4.0

Licence column records the terms under which Place AU reuses the material. Where a publisher applies Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0), attribution is carried in the report source list. Where a dataset is published under other Crown terms, reuse is limited to what those terms permit. Place AU does not reuse any dataset whose terms prohibit commercial reuse.

SOURCES WE DELIBERATELY EXCLUDE

Place AU does not use commercial demographic providers, automated valuation model outputs, proprietary consumer panels, scraped listing data or third-party aggregators. This is a sourcing rule, not a cost decision. It means the analysis is reproducible by anyone with access to the same public datasets, the sources can be named in a public forum without a licensing dispute, and no figure depends on a commercial arrangement that could lapse.

05 How a report is produced

Place AU follows a retrieve-first architecture. Figures are retrieved from source and validated before any narrative is written. This ordering is the single most important control in the system and the reason the product behaves differently from a general purpose AI assistant asked to write a report.

- 1. Site resolved.** The address is resolved to parcel, then to the zone and overlays recorded in the scheme and the mapped spatial layers.
- 2. Controls read.** Each applicable schedule is read directly. Every requirement is recorded as specified or as none specified.
- 3. Defaults applied.** Where a schedule specifies nothing, the governing clause default is applied and the clause is named.

4. **Amendments checked.** Recent and gazetted amendments affecting the site are identified, with gazettal dates, and anything on exhibition is labelled proposed.
5. **Behaviour retrieved.** Permit outcomes and VCAT decisions for comparable proposals in the study area are retrieved and the comparability criteria are recorded.
6. **Claims tested.** Assertions about the site that circulate in the market are checked against the scheme and marked substantiated or not substantiated.
7. **Reviewed.** Every control and figure is checked against its source by a person.
8. **Narrative written.** Only once the controls and counts are locked does the brief explain the realistic pathway for the site.

Vintage handling

Every retrieved figure is stamped at runtime with the release or vintage it came from, and that vintage is carried through to the delivered report. Where two figures in a report come from different vintages, both are shown rather than silently harmonised to the newer one.

Failing visibly

If a source cannot be reached or returns an unexpected structure, the pipeline stops and reports the failure. It does not substitute a cached figure, a prior-year figure or an interpolated value. A missing figure appears in the report as missing, with the reason. This is a deliberate trade: an incomplete report is recoverable, a silently stale one is not.

06 How permit and appeal signals are read

The brief's distinguishing measure is the gap between what is permitted and what is approved. That gap is read from counts of actual decisions, not from the ordinance.

APPROVAL RATE

$$\text{approval \%} = \left(\frac{\text{permits granted in the period}}{\text{applications determined in the period}} \right) \times 100$$

Calculated on determined applications, so withdrawn and lapsed applications do not inflate or deflate the rate. The period and the study area are stated in the brief, and counts are shown alongside the rate because a rate on a small base is misleading on its own.

APPEAL RATE

$$\text{appeal \%} = \left(\frac{\text{appeals lodged}}{\text{decisions made}} \right) \times 100$$

Read as a measure of how contested a class of proposal is locally. A rising appeal rate over several years is reported as a trend rather than as a single-year figure.

COUNCIL POSITION UPHELD AT VCAT

$$\text{upheld \%} = \left(\frac{\text{determinations upholding the council position}}{\text{determinations handed down}} \right) \times 100$$

Calculated only on appeals actually determined. Matters settled, withdrawn or resolved by consent are excluded from the denominator and the exclusion is stated, because counting them would understate how a contested matter is likely to run.

Control coverage

Where the brief reports the share of an area subject to a zone or overlay, it is measured on mapped area from the authoritative spatial layer, and the basis of measurement is stated with the figure so the reader knows whether the share refers to land area or parcel count.

Comparability

A count is only useful if the decisions being counted are alike. Comparable decisions are selected on the class of proposal, the applicable zone and overlay, and scale, and the selection criteria are stated. Where the number of genuinely comparable decisions is small, the brief says the sample is small and treats the signal as indicative rather than reliable. A small sample is reported as a small sample. It is not padded by widening the study area until the count looks respectable.

Infrastructure contributions

Where an infrastructure contributions plan is in force, the rate per additional dwelling is taken from the schedule as published and the schedule and its indexation date are named. Place AU does not estimate a rate where none is in force.

WHAT A PRIOR DECISION DOES AND DOES NOT TELL YOU

Recent decisions show how a responsible authority has weighed the discretion available to it, and what evidence carried weight when a matter was contested. They do not create a precedent. Each application is decided on its own merits and on the material before the decision maker, and a change in scheme provisions, policy or tribunal reasoning can move the position. The brief reads the pattern and states the limits of reading it.

Issues and evidence gaps

The brief identifies what is likely to be contested and ranks those issues by severity. That ranking is an explicit professional judgement by Place AU, informed by what has been contested in comparable matters. It is labelled as a judgement, and the evidence that would address each issue is named so the reader can scope the specialist work required before lodgement.

07 Use of artificial intelligence

AI is used to explain retrieved data in plain English. It is not used to produce, estimate, infer or recall any figure.

What the model does

- Writes the plain-English interpretation of figures that have already been retrieved and validated.

- Structures the narrative into the report's fixed section format.
- Summarises what a validated figure means for the decision the report supports.

What the model does not do

- It does not generate statistics. Every number in a report enters the process before the model is called and is passed to it as validated input.
- It does not recall figures from its training data. The system prompt prohibits this explicitly, and figures are supplied in the request rather than requested from memory.
- It does not select or rank sources. The source list is fixed by the sourcing policy.
- It does not decide anything about an identified individual.

WHY THE ORDERING MATTERS

The common failure mode in AI-written analysis is asking a model to produce numbers. Models are fluent, so invented figures read as confidently as correct ones, and they drift and date without warning. Place AU removes the failure mode rather than managing it: by the time the model is invoked, the figures are already fixed, sourced and vintage-stamped, and the model's only task is explanation. A model that is never asked for a number cannot fabricate one.

Human oversight

Consulting briefs are reviewed by Place AU before delivery. Every figure is checked against its source and every statement of interpretation is read and approved by a person before the brief is issued. Nothing is delivered to a client without that review.

Model and processing

Narrative generation uses the Anthropic Claude API. Geography and order metadata is passed to the API to generate report content, as disclosed in the Place AU privacy policy. Client material is not used to train models. Payment processing is handled by Stripe and Place AU does not store card details. Report delivery uses Resend. Each of these providers operates under its own privacy policy and some process information outside Australia.

Automated decision-making

Place AU reports are decision-support documents about places, not decisions about people. The product does not make, or substantially assist in making, a decision about an identified individual, and it does not assess, score, rank or profile individuals. Reports are produced from aggregate published statistics.

Place AU notes the automated decision-making transparency obligation inserted into the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) by the Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024 (Cth), which commences on 10 December 2026 and requires affected entities to describe in their privacy policy the kinds of personal information used in, and the kinds of decisions made by, qualifying automated decision-making. Place AU maintains its privacy policy against that obligation.

Regulatory context

Australia does not currently have AI-specific legislation. The National AI Plan released in December 2025 confirmed a technology-neutral approach relying on existing law, supported by the National AI Centre's Guidance for AI Adoption and the Australian AI Safety Institute. Place AU's controls are built to the substance of that guidance: accountability is held by a named person, impacts are assessed, the system is tested and monitored, and human control is retained over what is published.

08 Data governance

Sourcing policy

Reports are built exclusively on open government data licensed for commercial reuse. There are no proprietary data dependencies, which means no figure in a report can become unpublishable because a subscription lapsed or a licensor changed its terms.

Traceability

Every figure can be traced to a named, publicly available source. Source and vintage are stated in the report itself, not held separately. A reader with access to the same public datasets can reproduce the figures.

Accuracy over completeness

Where a figure cannot be sourced, it is omitted and the omission is stated. Place AU does not fill a gap with an estimate presented as a fact. A shorter correct report is preferred to a longer one padded with inference.

Conflicting sources

Where two government sources disagree, Place AU verifies against the primary source and states which was adopted and why. Where a primary source is itself ambiguous or a figure is proposed rather than in force, both readings are named and neither is adopted silently.

Suppression

Small-area statistics are sometimes suppressed by the publisher for confidentiality. Where that applies, the report says the figure is suppressed. It is not interpolated, modelled or inferred from a larger geography.

Personal information

Reports are built from aggregate published statistics. They do not contain personal information about identified individuals. Personal information collected from clients is limited to what is needed to scope, deliver and invoice the work, and is handled under the Place AU privacy policy at placeau.com/privacy-policy.

Unverified controls

Where a control cannot be verified against the planning scheme it is disclosed as unverified rather than assumed in either direction. The brief states what was checked, what the scheme says, and what could not be confirmed, so a reader can commission the specific confirmation needed rather than inheriting an assumption.

09 Limitations

- **Schemes change.** The brief states the date the scheme was read and is a position at that date. An amendment gazetted afterwards can move the position.
- **History is not prediction.** Permit and VCAT history describes past behaviour. It does not bind the authority and does not predict any outcome for any specific application.
- **Spatial extents are indicative at boundaries.** Where a parcel boundary is marginal against an overlay extent, the brief says so and recommends survey confirmation.

- **Small samples stay small.** Where comparable decisions are few, the brief reports individual decisions rather than computing a rate.
 - **No feasibility or value.** The brief does not assess build cost, feasibility, market absorption or land value.
 - **Not legal advice.** The brief is a sourced starting point for due diligence, not a legal opinion on any control or any application.
 - **Victorian depth.** Planning depth is currently the Victorian framework. Interstate sites are taken on request and scoped to the equivalent state framework.
-

10 Currency, versioning and corrections

Currency

Each Development Alignment Brief states the vintage of every figure it uses. A report is a point-in-time document. Government sources are revised and reissued, and a figure correct at the date of issue may be superseded later. The report date on the cover is the date the figures were retrieved.

Corrections

If an error is identified in a delivered report, whether by Place AU or by the client, Place AU will verify it against the primary source and, where the error is confirmed, issue a corrected version at no charge, marked with a revision number and a short note describing what changed. Clients are told when a correction affects a figure they may have already relied on or published.

Methodology changes

This statement is versioned. Where a method changes in a way that would alter a previously reported figure, the change is recorded in the version history and clients who received an affected report within the preceding twelve months are notified.

Raising a question

Questions about any figure, source or calculation described here can be sent to info@placeau.com. Place AU will identify the source and the calculation behind any figure in a delivered report on request.