

## Submission:

# Draft Carrick Structure Plan 2026 - 2046

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## 1. Overview

COTA Tasmania supports the overall direction of the Draft Carrick Structure Plan 2026 - 2046 and welcomes its recognition that future planning for Carrick must respond to demographic change as well as settlement growth.

The draft identifies an ageing population, smaller households, increasing housing affordability pressure, and the need for housing, services, pathways, and local infrastructure that better support changing community needs. These are important issues for older Tasmanians and directly relevant to ageing in place, social connection, and continued participation in local community life.

The key challenge for the plan is to balance housing and service needs arising from growth and ageing with the protection of Carrick's distinctive village character.

We support a planning approach that enables a broader range of suitable and manageable housing options, improves walkability and access to local services, and strengthens the conditions for healthy ageing, while also respecting the low-density form, streetscape qualities, and sense of place that residents value.

## 2. About COTA Tasmania

COTA Tasmania (Council on the Ageing Tasmania) is Tasmania's peak body representing older Tasmanians. For more than 60 years, we have been a trusted voice for older people, promoting positive attitudes to ageing, advancing social inclusion, and championing the rights, interests, and value of people as they age.

We provide independent, evidence-based policy and advocacy informed by the lived experience of older people and engagement with stakeholders across government, community services, and industry. Our focus is on improving outcomes for older Tasmanians and supporting ageing as a time of opportunity, contribution, and security.

## 3. Why this matters

Planning in smaller towns and villages has a direct bearing on whether people can age well in the communities they know and value. The Draft Carrick Structure Plan is relevant from this perspective because it identifies an ageing population, smaller households, housing affordability pressure, and the need for housing, services and infrastructure that respond to changing needs.

COTA Tasmania commends Meander Valley Council on its use of current demographic data to develop future plans.

The plan notes that about 18% of Carrick’s population was aged 65 and over in 2021, that the median age was 44, and that as the population continues to age and households become smaller, new forms of housing, aged and health care services, and infrastructure will be needed.

It also records growth in one-person households, from 20.4% in 2011 to 26.3% in 2021. If, however, the reforms strengthen integrity outcomes while remaining accessible - and avoid unintended “gag” effects or cost deterrents - they will improve public confidence in the institutions older Tasmanians rely on every day.

#### **4. Summary of recommendations**

COTA Tasmania recommends that Meander Valley Council:

1. retain an explicit age-friendly planning lens in the final Structure Plan and its implementation
2. support a broader range of smaller, manageable, and well-located housing options to enable ageing in place and local downsizing
3. prioritise safe, accessible walking and pathway connections between homes, services, community facilities, and activity areas
4. support the gradual development of local medical, allied health and community services as population thresholds are reached
5. ensure that housing and infrastructure responses to growth respect Carrick’s village character, amenity, and sense of place
6. recognise that older residents may be disproportionately affected by transport disadvantage, and continue to plan for accessibility, walkability, and service proximity accordingly.

#### **5. Detailed comments**

COTA Tasmania welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Carrick Structure Plan 2026 - 2046.

We support the plan’s recognition that Carrick is changing and that future planning must respond not only to growth, but also to demographic change. The demographic profile in the draft is an important starting point. Carrick is already older than the Tasmanian average, with a growing proportion of residents aged 65 and over, and the plan anticipates that future growth will continue to be driven in part by older workers and retirees moving to the area. These trends point to the need for a deliberate focus on age-friendly planning, including housing choice, service access, mobility, and opportunities for social participation.

COTA Tasmania supports the plan’s recognition that new forms of housing will be needed. Carrick’s housing stock remains overwhelmingly detached housing, while household sizes are getting smaller and one-person households are increasing. At the same time, the draft identifies worsening affordability pressures, with the median house price rising from \$545,000 in 2021 to \$665,000 in 2025.

In this context, it will be important for the final plan to support a broader range of housing options that can accommodate older residents who wish to downsize locally into more manageable homes, while remaining close to familiar places, community networks, and services.

At the same time, COTA Tasmania considers it essential that housing diversification in Carrick be handled carefully and in a way that respects local character.

The Carrick Character Study makes clear that the township's identity is strongly linked to its low-density village form, larger lots, open gardens, established trees, narrow carriageways, grassed swales, and distinctive heritage setting.

The study also warns that unmanaged higher-density development could significantly alter the township's character, streetscape, and amenity. From an ageing perspective, this is not simply a heritage issue. Familiarity, village identity, visual amenity, and an attractive streetscape all contribute to belonging, confidence, walkability, and social connection for older residents.

COTA Tasmania therefore supports a balanced approach: one that allows more diverse and suitable housing over time, but does so in a way that is consistent with Carrick's valued village character. We note positively that the draft implementation framework proposes adopting the Character Study and implementing its recommendations, including a Specific Area Plan to limit multiple-dwelling developments where these would undermine the intended character outcomes.

We also welcome the draft's attention to community services and facilities. The plan notes that, while Carrick is reasonably well served for its size, future growth may make additional privately delivered services viable, including visiting or locally based medical professionals. It identifies that, under medium growth projections, Carrick could support a general practitioner, physiotherapist, and psychologist; and under higher growth projections potentially also a dentist, pharmacist, and occupational therapist. For older residents in particular, closer access to primary care and allied health can make a substantial difference to wellbeing, prevention, and the ability to remain living independently in the community.

COTA Tasmania strongly supports the emphasis on accessibility and local movement. The structure plan includes a dedicated Pathway Network Plan and implementation actions to develop that network over time, while the broader planning framework for Carrick recognises that local centres should be accessible by walking and cycling and ideally connected to bus services.

These principles are especially important for older people, including those who do not drive, drive less as they age, or are at greater risk of transport disadvantage. In a village setting, the practical ability to move safely between home, services, meeting places, and recreation can make the difference between independence and isolation.

We also note the value of making better use of existing community infrastructure. The draft sensibly proposes maximising the use of existing venues such as Carrick Hall and Quercus Park through community events and activities, rather than assuming that growth must automatically lead to new built facilities. From our perspective, this is a useful age-friendly principle: activating existing local places can support connection, participation and belonging, particularly in smaller communities where social infrastructure is often as important as physical infrastructure.

Overall, COTA Tasmania encourages Council to keep an explicit age-friendly lens on the finalisation and implementation of the Structure Plan.

That means not only asking how much growth Carrick can absorb, but what kind of growth will best support healthy ageing, inclusion, and independence.

In practical terms, this means attention to smaller housing choices, local health and community services, safe and attractive walking routes, and design responses that do not unnecessarily urbanise the township at the expense of the very qualities that make it a good place to live.

## **6. Conclusion**

COTA Tasmania supports the overall direction of the Draft Carrick Structure Plan and welcomes its recognition of demographic change and the implications this has for housing, services, infrastructure, and accessibility.

We encourage Meander Valley Council to strengthen the plan's age-friendly dimensions in the final version, with particular attention to housing choice, ageing in place, local access to health and community services, walkability, and the protection of Carrick's distinctive village character.

Done well, these measures will help ensure Carrick remains a community in which people can age with dignity, independence, and connection.