

Liveable Neighbourhoods Framework

East Port Urban Regeneration

For Port Macquarie - Hastings Council
30 September 2014

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Introduction		4
1	Purpose and Background	5
1.1	Study Area	6
1.2	Project Methodology	7
1.3	Project Objectives and Principles	8
2	Planning Context	9
2.1	Existing Policy Framework	10
2.2	Existing LEP - Key Considerations	11
2.3	Existing DCP - Key Considerations	12
2.4	Population and Housing	13
3	Setting and Urban Structure	14
3.1	Urban Context - Setting	15
3.2	Landform	18
3.3	Heritage	19
3.4	Significant Views and Vistas	20
3.5	Significant Places	21
3.6	Connectivity	22
3.7	Open Space and Watercourses	23
3.8	Streetscapes	24
3.9	Built Form - Potential for Change	28
3.10	Opportunities and Constraints	29
4	East Port Neighbourhood Recommendations	30
4.1	Neighbourhood Structure	31
4.2	Integrated Neighbourhood Structure Plan	33
4.3	Town Beach Neighbourhood	34
4.4	Oxley Park Neighbourhood	36
4.5	Windmill Hill Neighbourhood	38
4.6	Lord Street	40
4.7	Wrights Creek Neighbourhood	42
4.8	Civic Precinct	44
4.9	Overview of Key Public Domain Opportunities	46
5	Planning Recommendations	48
5.1	LEP - Land Use Zoning	49
5.2	LEP - Height of Buildings	52
5.3	LEP - Floor Space Ratio	58

Introduction

This report has been prepared by Architectus for the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council. The purpose of this report is to present planning and urban design options and strategies for the areas to the east of the Port Macquarie Town Centres.

A previous study, *Liveable Neighbourhoods: An Urban Regeneration Framework for Port Macquarie* was prepared by Gallagher Ridenour in February 2014. It identified three neighbourhoods: Aston Hill, Westport and Town Beach West and recommended public domain and built form opportunities for their regeneration.

This report is Stage 2 of the study and follows on from the findings, focusing on the area east and south-east of Town Beach West Neighbourhood, identified as East Port.

The strategies and recommendations in this report aim to achieve urban regeneration with a focus on creating liveable neighbourhoods:

- places that people want to live and visit
- which builds on existing neighbourhoods and address the needs of current and future residents
- in proximity to shopping, services and jobs the Port Macquarie and Settlement City Town Centres and the Gordon Street local centre
- with easy access to the Hastings River foreshore, Town Beach, open spaces network, and cultural facilities;
- with attractive streets and useful public spaces;
- with reduced car use and a preference for walking and cycling;
- with increased housing capacity and diversity, which also supports a growing aged population.



Study Area and Location Plan

1 Purpose and Background

1.1 Study Area

The East Port study area is located within the Port Macquarie - Hastings Council local government area and is situated to the east and south-east of the Port Macquarie Town Centre. The study area is bounded by Stewart and William Streets to the north, Hill Street to the south, Pacific Drive to the east, and Kooloonbung Creek to the west. The study area encompasses the Civic Precinct, but detailed recommendations for the public land in this precinct are subject to a separate study.



Study Area and Location Plan

1.2 Project Methodology

1.21 Methodology

The East Port project adopts the same project methodology as the previous Liveable Neighbourhoods study. In general the project follows the following steps:

- review of existing planning policies and Council's background information;
- study area visit and photographic documentation;
- analysis of existing urban elements;
- structure plan - synthesise the key elements that spatially define the whole study area and characterise each neighbourhood / precinct;
- neighbourhoods and precincts - existing and desired future character for each neighbourhood and precinct provides a succinct statement about the future vision, which is reinforced in both the public domain and planning recommendations.
- public domain - identifies opportunities and ideas for enhancing the appearance of streets and parks, their use, and for place making and community engagement. Ideas for public art are also provided.
- planning provisions - Recommendations for revisions to both the LEP and DCP reinforce the urban structure and neighbourhood characters described in this report.

1.22 Site Testing of Planning Recommendations

To confidently recommend revisions to the current planning provision, a site testing methodology was developed. Because the study area has a diversity of lot sizes, shapes and orientations, common lot types were identified to test their development capacity. Building envelopes and indicative parking layouts were prepared to assess the capacity of the current height and floor space to deliver realistic building forms for each site.

The community generally evaluates the appropriateness of development based on height and bulk, while the development industry establishes feasibility based on permissible floor space. It is important that building heights and FSR are coordinated to ensure all stakeholders are evaluating the same outcomes. To ensure space is available within the building envelope for building articulation, the building envelope floor space is discounted as 75% of the envelope area.

The building envelope testing considers:

- minimum lot sizes and amalgamation requirements
- building uses, i.e. residential dwellings, commercial suites, retail, parking
- street setbacks in relation to street character and ground floor uses
- side and rear setbacks in relation to neighbouring impacts and residential amenity; building separation (SEPP 65) and fire safety are also considered
- deep soil/landscaping in relation to building envelope and car park footprint
- building height in relation to neighbourhood character; the spatial definition of streets or areas within the broader urban structure; transition of height with adjacent areas; and residential amenity.
- floor space ratio in relation to the preferred building envelopes and height.

The testing of existing height and floor space ratios found a mismatch between the controls on some sites. Where the current FSR is too high for the permissible height, redevelopment may not occur as the FSR is unachievable. If redevelopment does occur, it is often poor, because of design strategies, such as deep floor plates and/or siting the buildings below the street level, are used to achieve the permissible FSR. Both scenarios result in poor apartment designs with compromised daylight and natural ventilation; awkward room layouts that may be difficult to furnish or use; and often negative impacts on neighbours or the streetscape.

1.3 Project Objectives and Principles

1.3.1 Project Objectives

The following Project Objectives were established to guide the study:

- To locate more housing in central, well-connected locations that provides services and amenity for residents.
- To effectively utilise existing infrastructure and/or augment infrastructure where it is relatively cost effective.
- To increase the desirability for living adjacent the Town Centre and Settlement City.
- To acknowledge the aging population and their needs for housing diversity and accessibility.
- To improve housing and lifestyle affordability.
- To review uses and consider opportunities for home business and home offices and for mixed use in specific locations.
- To accommodate demand for tourist accommodation.
- To improve pedestrian and cyclist connectivity to the Town Centre and Civic Precinct and along the river foreshore and coastal edge.
- To improve the public realm including; streetscapes, open spaces and new laneways.
- To align public domain opportunities with realistic implementation strategies.
- To review and simplify existing development controls.
- To give consideration of design quality outcomes. (SEPP 65)
- To promote viable development opportunities.
- To review parking requirements and explore alternative parking arrangements, including the relationship to the town centre parking strategy.

1.3.2 Guiding Principles

The project is organised around four guiding principles to facilitate the successful urban regeneration of the study area:

Neighbourhood Identity

- Acknowledge and build upon the unique attributes of each neighbourhood and precinct to create distinctive places within the broader Port Macquarie locality.
- Enhance public life, sense of community and belonging to each neighbourhood by facilitating opportunities for gathering, meeting, walking and relaxing within public spaces and streets.

Connectivity

- Increases the desirability to live in these neighbourhoods by leveraging proximity to the coastal and river setting and to the Port Macquarie Town Centre with its shopping, community services and cultural facilities.
- Ensure easy access, particularly for pedestrian and cyclist, within each neighbourhood and to centres and open spaces.

Liveability

- Enhance each neighbourhood's streets and spaces to improve their use and amenity for residents and visitors.
- Create desirable places to live, by promoting high quality housing design which facilitates good amenity for residents.
- Support the needs of the existing and future community through appropriate housing types and tenures.
- Promote environmentally responsible design within the public spaces and streets and within buildings.

Delivery

- Prioritise recommendations to assist Council in targeting resources and to stage improvements in the public realm.
- Provide built form recommendations that are grounded in detailed testing of sites to ensure the best alignment between desired future form and its delivery.

- Assist in implementing recommendations through Council's planning policies.

2 Planning Context

2.1 Existing Policy Framework

2.1.1 Planning Context

The following existing planning policies and studies inform this study:

Regional Context

- Mid North Coast Regional Strategy 2006
- North Coast Urban Design Guidelines

Local Government Area Context

- PMHC Urban Growth Management Strategy 2011-2031
- PMHC Community Strategic Plan 2030
- PMHC Parking Strategy 2011

Background Local Studies and Policies

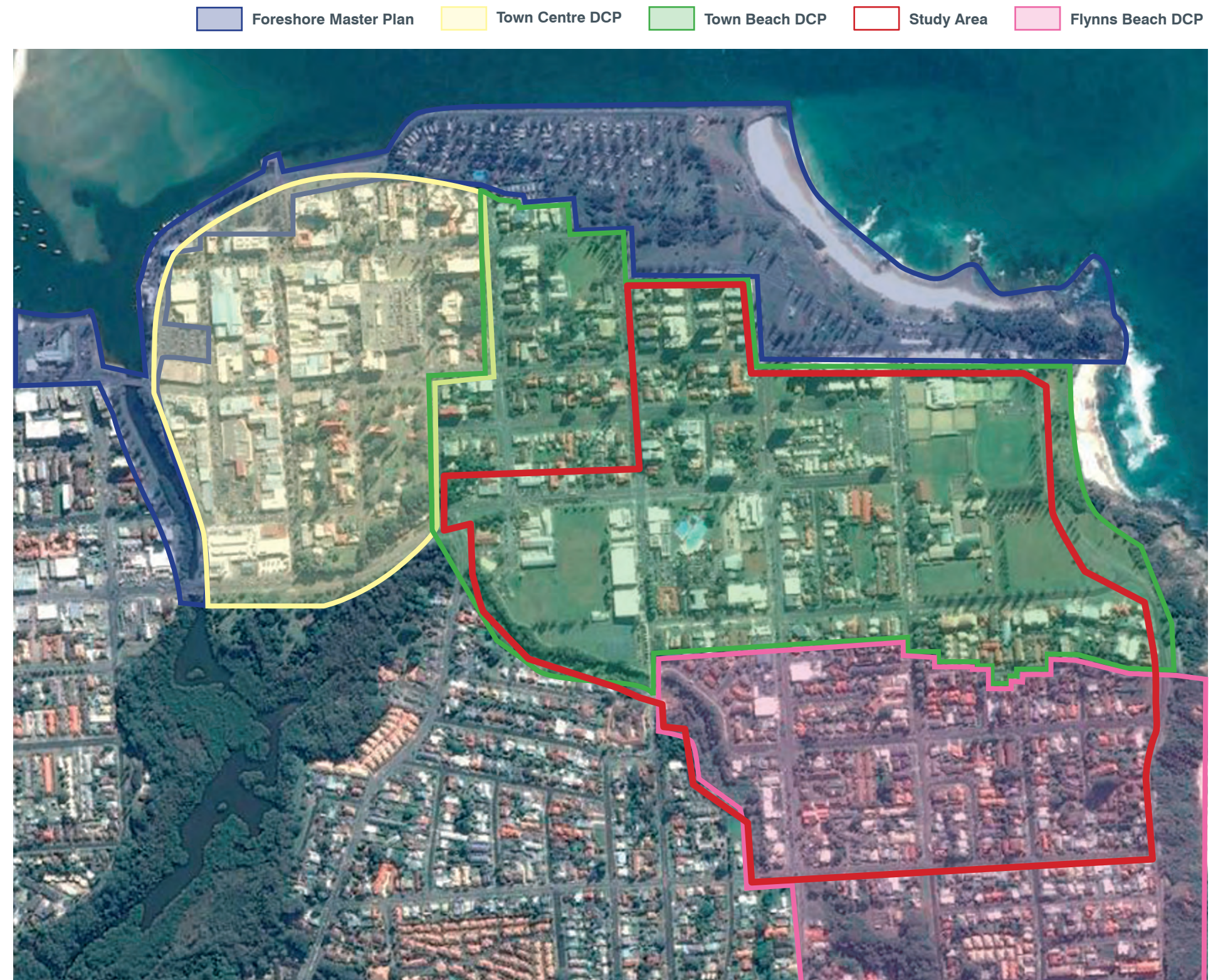
- Draft Port Macquarie Greater CBD Master Plan 2003
- Port Macquarie Greater CBD Beyond 2010
- Port Macquarie Foreshore Master Plan 2009
- PMHC Development Control Plan – Town Centre 2009
- PMHC Development Control Plan – Town Beach 2005

Current Planning Provisions

- PMHC Local Environmental Plan 2011
- PMHC Development Control Plan 2011

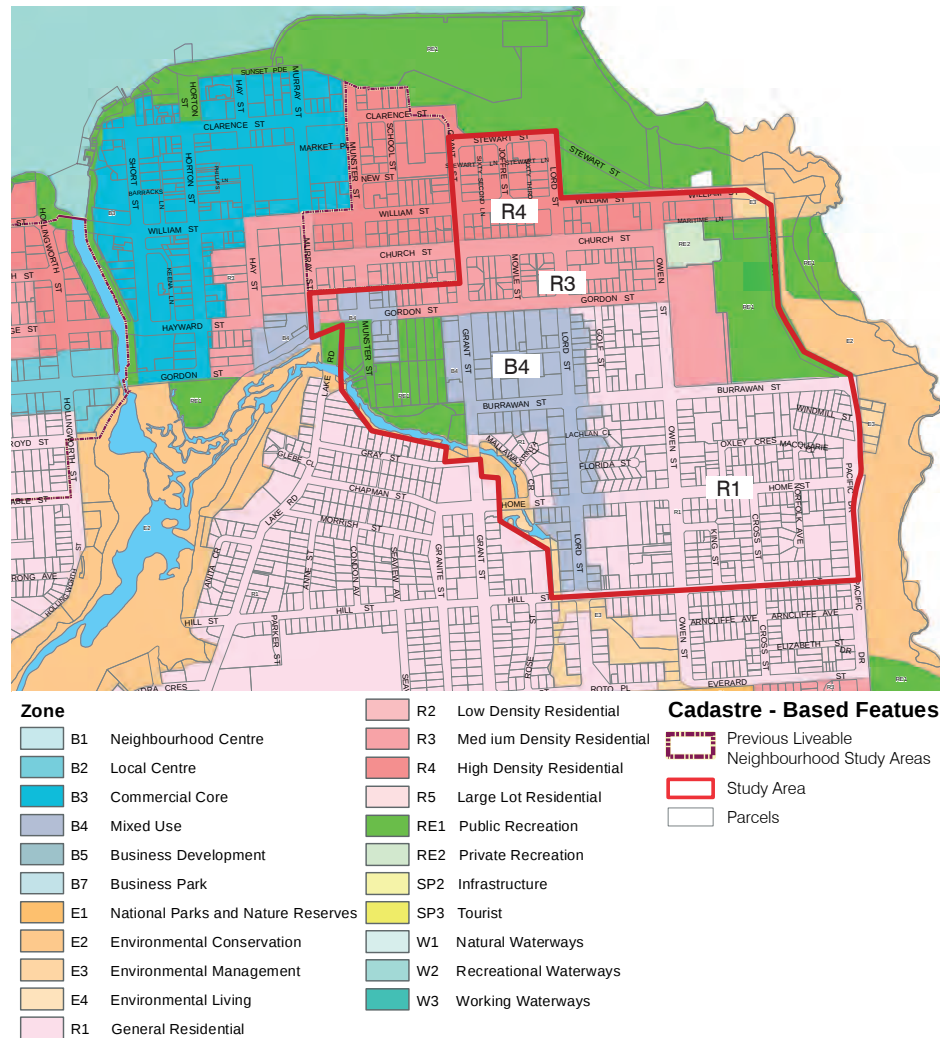
Urban Consolidation Research

- PMHC Town Centre Urban Consolidation - Housing Needs Analysis 2012
- PMHC Town Centre Urban Consolidation - Literature Review 2012



2.2 Existing LEP - Key Considerations

2.2.1 Land Use

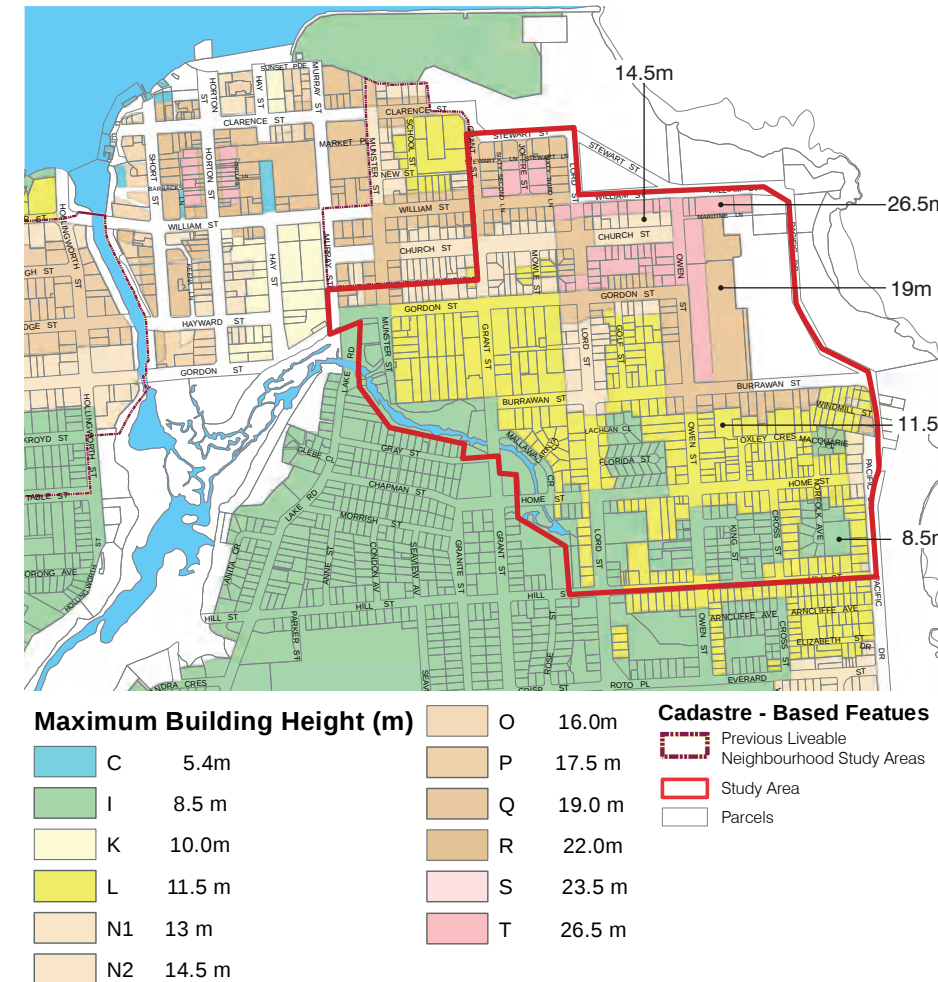


LEP Provisions

PMHC Local Environmental Plan 2011 (LEP) includes statutory provisions governing the type and amount of development permissible on a site. The LEP specifically addresses:

- Zoning (Land Use) - which establishes the permissible uses on a site
- Height of Buildings - which limits the overall height, measured in metres, of a building on a site
- Floor space ratio (FSR) - which establishes the amount of floor

2.2.3 Height of Building



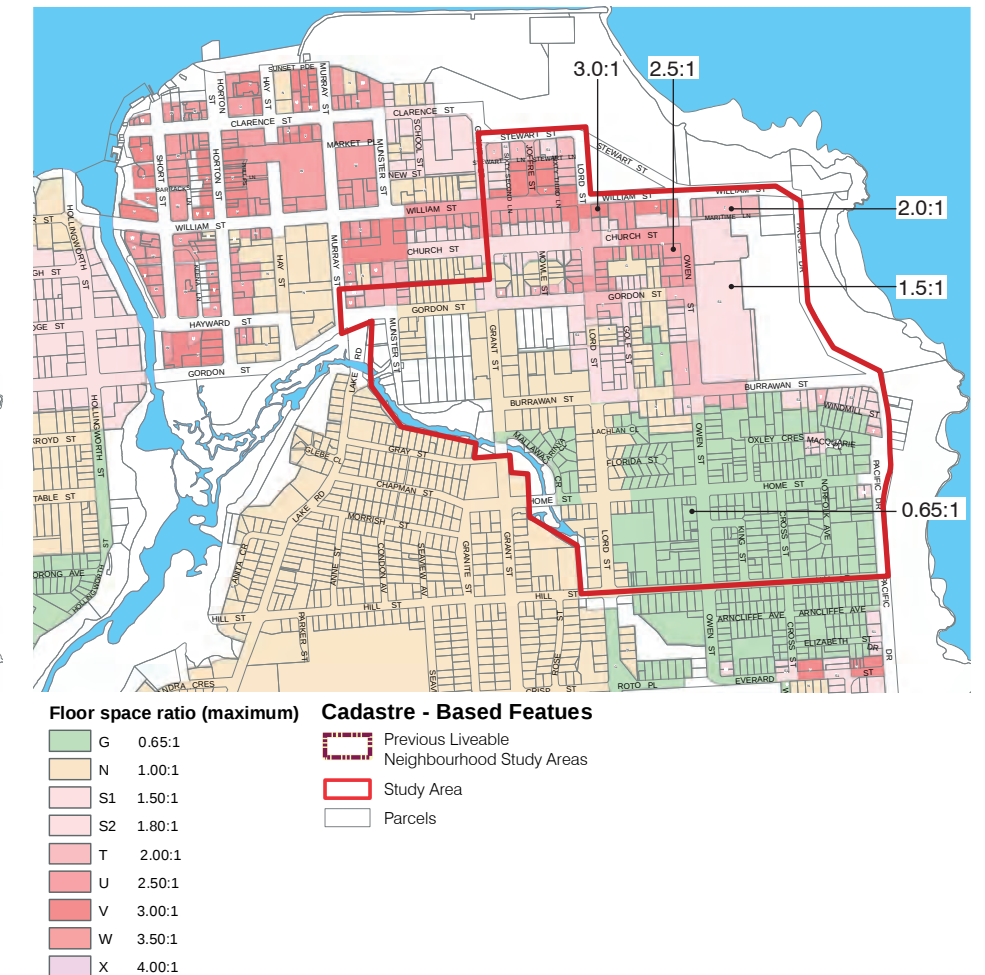
space that is permissible on a site in proportion to the site area.

- Council's LEP is based on the NSW State Government Standard Instrument LEP, which standardises land use zones and established consistent definitions across the State for height of buildings and floor space.

Key consideration for the study include:

- generally residential uses with B4 Mixed Use at the Civic Precinct and along Lord Street. Shop top housing is permissible within the residential zones.

2.2.2 Floor Space Ratio



- greater heights and development capacities are located adjacent the Port Macquarie Town Centre and in the north-east portion of the study area in proximity to Town Beach and coastal views.

- heights are generally higher along the 200m x 200m street grid which transitions to lower heights in the middle of the super grid. The distribution of height is complicated by lot sizes and smaller streets within the super grid.

- the minimum lot size for subdivision in the R1 General Residential zone is 450sqm. This limits opportunities for small lot housing, which could assist in achieving greater housing diversity and modest density in proximity to centres and services.

2.3 Existing DCP - Key Considerations

2.3.1 Town Beach



2.3.2 Flynns Beach



DCP Guidelines

PMHC Development Control Plan 2013 includes development controls which guide development within the broader LEP provision in response to:

- Local character - place-specific considerations for building scale; frontage to streets and ground floor use and activation,
- Amenity - for neighbours, within the public realm, and within a development. This includes consideration for privacy, view sharing, and outlook.
- Environmental performance - including access to light and air and the capacity for tree growth and storm-water management.

Development Control Plan 2011 Part 5 addresses area based provisions within Town Beach and Flynns Beach precincts (refer to above diagrams) being relevant to this study. Many of the provisions in the previous DCP were incorporated into the general DCP provisions. Remaining area based provisions describe the desired neighbourhood character and promote through site links or roads. Of note is the vision of the DCP diagrams to promote street edge buildings with landscaped gardens in the rear of lots.

2.4 Population and Housing

In 2036, the population of the Port Macquarie - Hastings Council area is forecast to be 102,925, an increase of 27,969 persons (37.31%) from 2011.

- average annual growth rate of 1.3%
- 12,046 new households – average of 482 per year
- 20% expected to be urban infill – 2,409 households – average of 96 per year

Between 2006 and 2011, the greatest increase in population was in the 50 to 69 age group. Population projections further reinforce this trend. By 2036, every third person in Port Macquarie-Hastings is likely to be aged over 60 years.

A mix of housing types and lifestyle choices will continue to be important across the area. Expansion of the Port Macquarie Base Hospital and establishment of a new Charles Sturt University Campus catering for up to 3,000 students is likely to increase demand for affordable rental accommodation. The growing population of older people will increase the demand for housing which is conveniently located and suitable for aging in place. The demand for both accessible and adaptable housing will increase.



Source: Population and household forecasts, 2011 to 2036, prepared by .id the population experts, January 2014.

3 Setting and Urban Structure

3.1 Urban Context - Setting

The setting of the study area is its greatest attribute with proximity:

- to the Port Macquarie Town Centre and Settlement City
- to Macquarie Park and Macquarie Park Trail, Oxley Oval and Oxley Park, Macquarie Nature Reserve, Sea Acres Nature Reserve, Kooloonbung Creek, Wrights Creek, Town Beach, Oxley Beach and the Coastal Walk.
- Port Macquarie Private Hospital, Charles Sturt University, Mid-North Coast Maritime Museum, Port Macquarie Library, and the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council.

Easy access to these places makes the neighbourhoods in the study area an attractive place to live and will contribute to their success as areas of urban regeneration.

Key urban structure elements that define and organise the broader Port Macquarie context and contribute to the character of each neighbourhood include:

- open spaces and landform
- urban grid
- centres, and
- major movement network.



Study Area showing major streets



Pacific Drive approaching Burrawan Street showing coastal view to the north



Pacific Drive at Windmill Street showing coastal view to the north



Pacific Drive south of Home Street showing coastal view to the south



Pacific Drive at Oxley Oval showing the coastal views to the north and east



View of Port Macquarie Bowling Club at Owen Street showing Norfolk Pines bordering Oxley Oval to the east



View of Town Centre from the headland



View of buildings and Norfolk Pines along William Street from Town Beach



View from Hill Street looking north-west towards the mountains of the Cairncross State Forest



View from William Street at juncture of Pacific Drive, showing coastal views to the east and the heritage structures of the Mid-North Coast Maritime Museum

3.2 Landform

The study area is situated in a valley with ridges to the south-east, south-west and north-west of the area. This allows for hilltop views to the mountains and coast particularly from Pacific Drive.

The creek along the western boundary of the study area is prone to floods during extreme weather conditions (100 year floods) and should be taken into account when planning urban strategies in this area.

Steep west-facing slopes east of Lord Street afford view sharing to mountains in the the west, and creates stepped building forms.

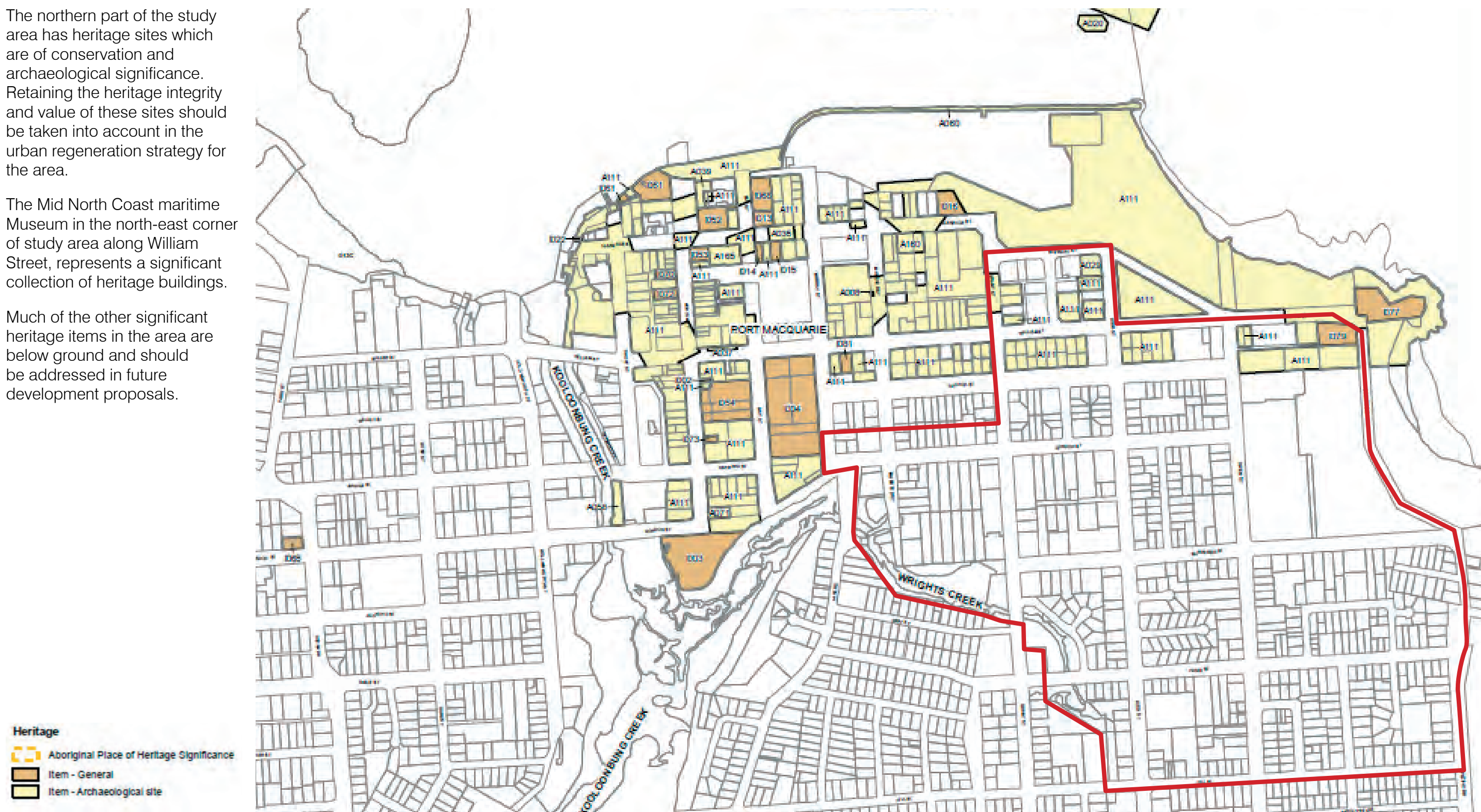


3.3 Heritage

The northern part of the study area has heritage sites which are of conservation and archaeological significance. Retaining the heritage integrity and value of these sites should be taken into account in the urban regeneration strategy for the area.

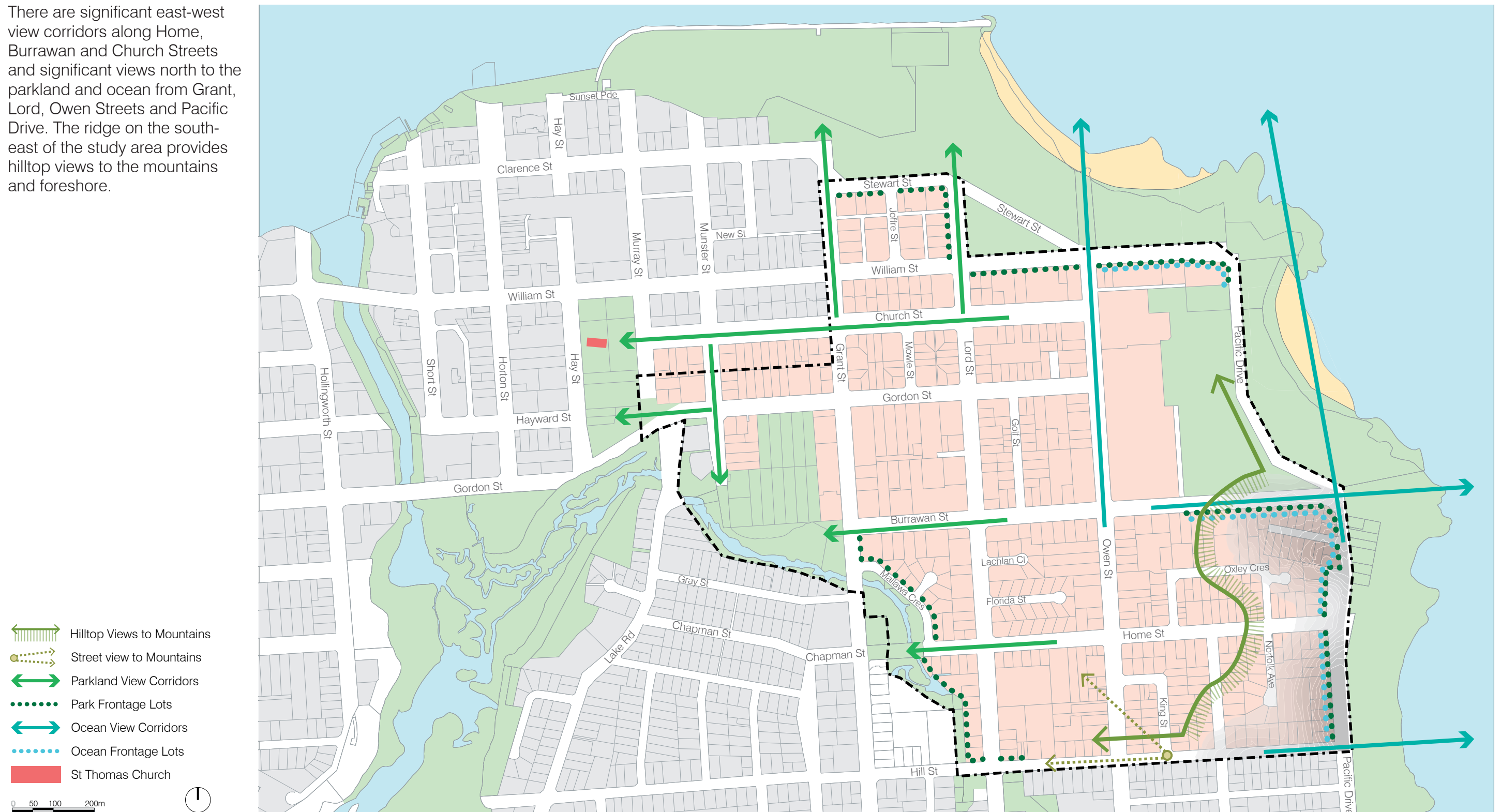
The Mid North Coast maritime Museum in the north-east corner of study area along William Street, represents a significant collection of heritage buildings.

Much of the other significant heritage items in the area are below ground and should be addressed in future development proposals.



3.4 Significant Views and Vistas

There are significant east-west view corridors along Home, Burrawan and Church Streets and significant views north to the parkland and ocean from Grant, Lord, Owen Streets and Pacific Drive. The ridge on the south-east of the study area provides hilltop views to the mountains and foreshore.



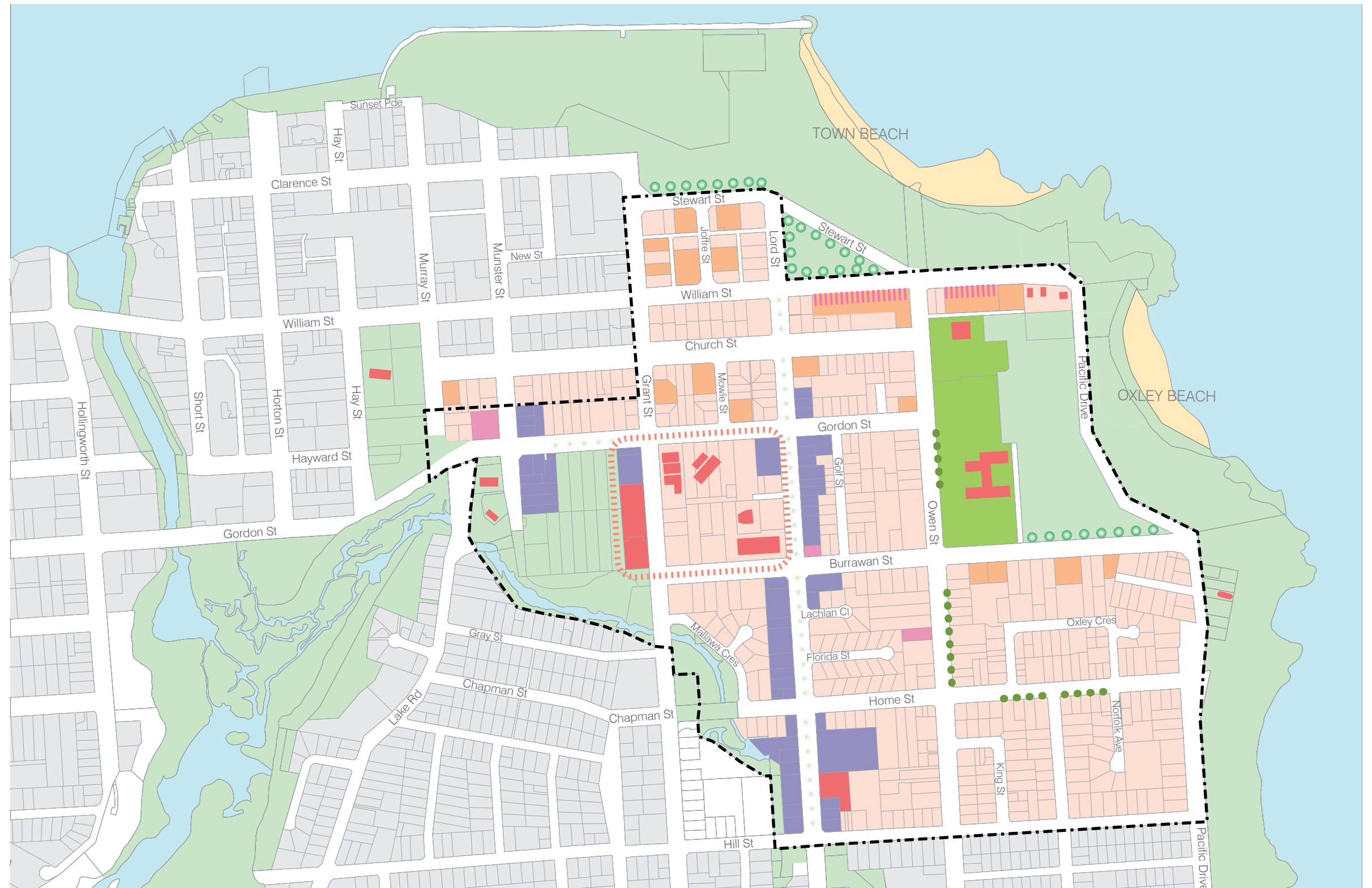
3.5 Significant Places

The majority of tall buildings are located on the northern part of the study area with a restaurant street edge on William Street. The commercial and retail spine is situated on Lord and Gordon Streets. The Civic Precinct is located in the centre of the study area and many of the community places of significance are located within this precinct.

Significant parks and open spaces in the east of the study area are Oxley Park and Oxley Oval, and to the west are Macquarie Park and Wrights Creek Reserve.

- Significant Pine Trees
- Significant Street Tree Planting
- Medians with Palm Tree Planting
- High School / Bowling Club
- ||||| Restaurants to Street Edge
- Commercial / Retail uses
- Convenience Shopping sites
- ▭ Civic Precinct
- Community / Educational / Heritage uses
- Tall Buildings

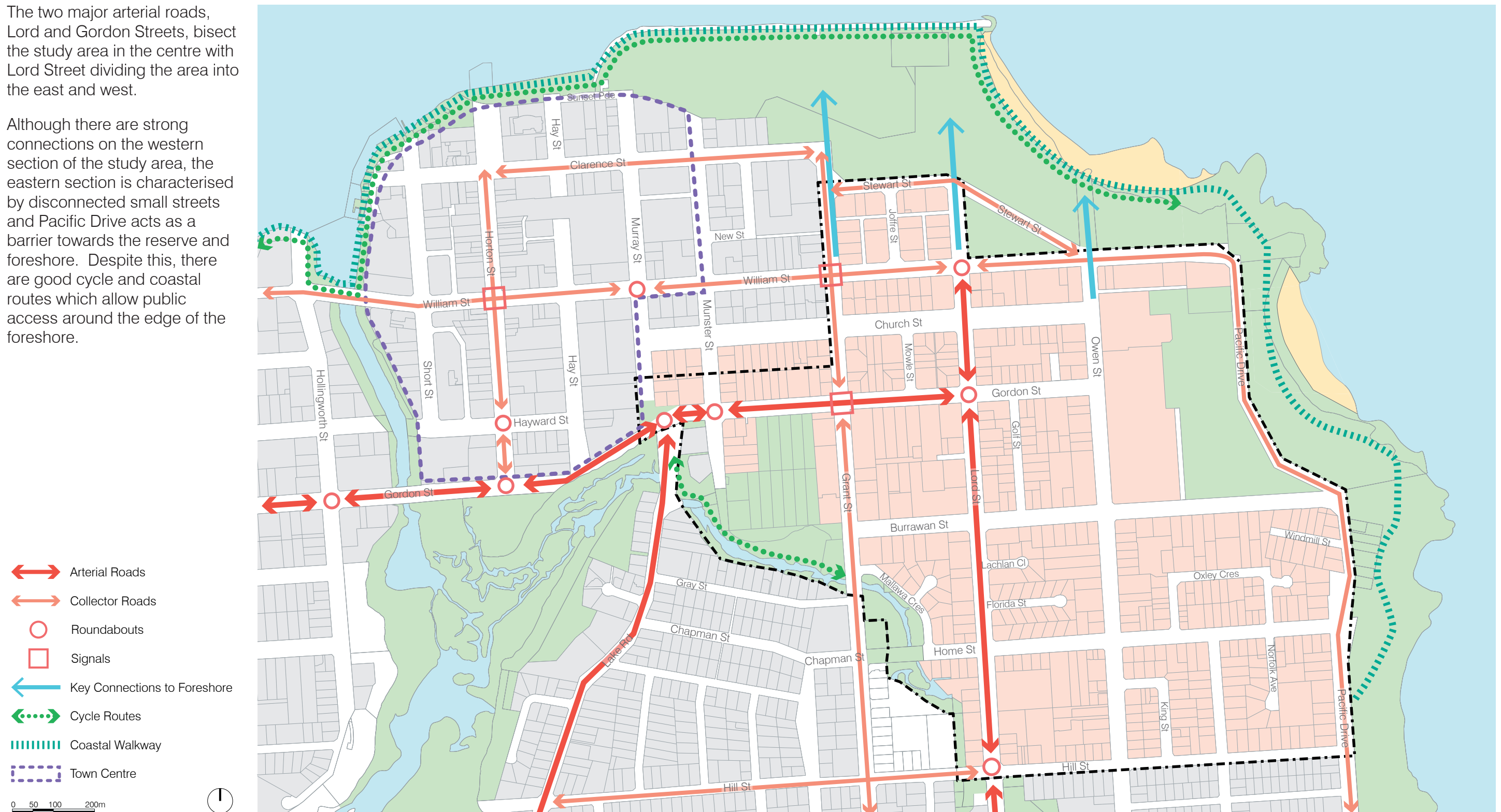
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3.6 Connectivity

The two major arterial roads, Lord and Gordon Streets, bisect the study area in the centre with Lord Street dividing the area into the east and west.

Although there are strong connections on the western section of the study area, the eastern section is characterised by disconnected small streets and Pacific Drive acts as a barrier towards the reserve and foreshore. Despite this, there are good cycle and coastal routes which allow public access around the edge of the foreshore.



3.7 Open Space and Watercourses

East Port is surrounded by a green belt of open spaces and waterways. The variety of open spaces is important to the natural landscape diversity of the area and includes; sporting grounds, recreational use, nature reserves and conservation management areas.



3.8 Streetscapes

Key Findings

- The street pattern of east Port Macquarie is a loose grid system with a 200 metre grid block pattern, into which a further layer of streets have been added, often in response to the topography. The result is a creation of a range of lots sizes and shapes with few clear pattern layouts.
- There are a range of different street types. The main arterial streets are Lord Street (north-south) and Gordon Street (east-west) and intersect in the centre of the study area. These main roads connect the precinct of Towns Beach to the rest of Port Macquarie. They are 30m wide and absorb most of the traffic capacity within the area.
- The range of different street types provide the area with a clear street hierarchy, together with the gridded block system and distinct views create a strong urban structure. Whilst the hierarchy creates a well-connected network, the topography and large grid pattern impacts the ease of pedestrian mobility.
- In the East Port Neighbourhood, the pedestrian connectivity both east-west and north-south are constrained in the area bounded by Hill Street and William Street, Pacific Drive and Lord Street. These streets lack safe pedestrian crossings and limits access to the town centres and to the foreshore parklands.
- There are significant pine trees located on Burrawan, Stewart and William Streets which are to be retained and future tree planting strategies should compliment the existing streetscapes.



Corner of Burrawan Street and Pacific Drive



Corner of Burrawan Street and Pacific Drive



View looking west down Hill Street



View looking west down Mallowa Crescent showing view of nature reserve



View of Oxley Park looking east



View of Home Street



View along Lord Street at Gordon Street showing views to the north



View along Oxley Crescent



View along Lord Street at Burrawan Street showing views to the north



Restaurant street frontages along William Street at the Observatory Resort



View along William Street looking east showing mature Norfolk Pines



View along Burrawan Street looking east showing mature Norfolk Pines



View along Owen Street showing mature street trees



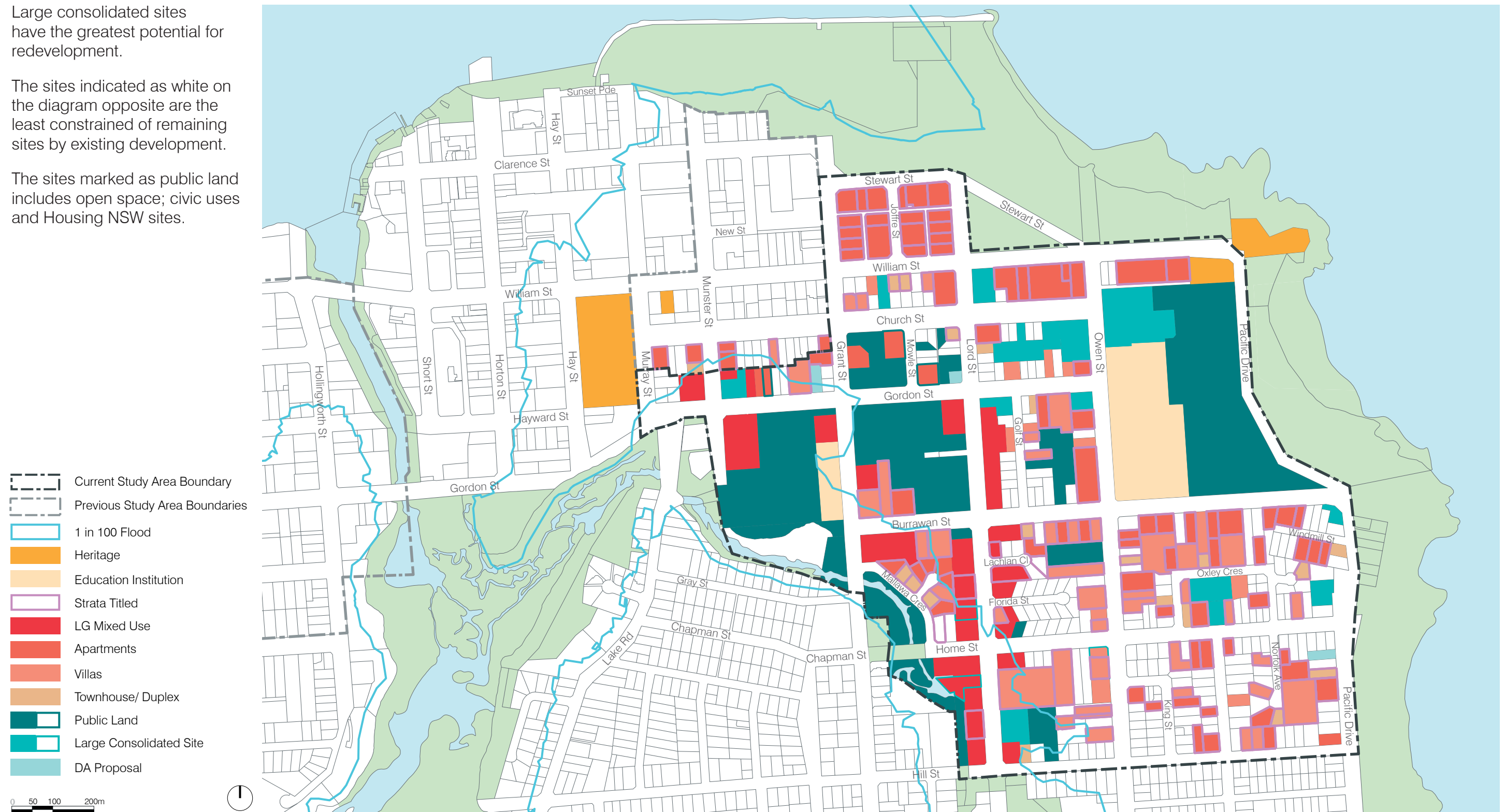
View along Home Street showing mature street trees

3.9 Built Form - Potential for Change

Large consolidated sites have the greatest potential for redevelopment.

The sites indicated as white on the diagram opposite are the least constrained of remaining sites by existing development.

The sites marked as public land includes open space; civic uses and Housing NSW sites.



3.10 Opportunities and Constraints

During the Stage 1: Analysis of the project a number of key opportunities and constraints were identified to guide the project recommendations.

Opportunities

- Identify opportunities for place-making in locations that enhance the quality and use of public spaces within the study area, for example Oxley Park south of Oxley Oval and parts of Macquarie Park.
- Acknowledge the value and amenity of the coastline, while improving the amenity and desirability of living in adjacent hinterland areas.
- Improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity from the study area to the Port Macquarie Town Centre, Flynn's Beach Small Village Centre and existing neighbourhood convenience shopping.
- Enhance view corridors to the coastal foreshore and associated open spaces; to hinterland parks; and the distant mountains.
- Promote view sharing across properties, particularly those on sloping sites with views to the western mountains and to the coast.
- Improve the quality of streetscapes and build on the significant clusters of tree planting in some streets.
- Improve the relationship between buildings and the street to support activation, to promote safety and to create better quality streetscapes.
- Promote good residential amenity for both existing and future residents, particularly for attached housing typologies such as town-houses and villas.
- Increase housing diversity and capacity in proximity to centres. Review opportunities for increased housing capacity in key locations with high amenity and value, for example potentially along the coastal foreshore and adjacent public spaces.
- Review redevelopment opportunities for existing vacant sites.
- Improve redevelopment potential by providing easier to use and

coordinated development controls.

- Review future laneway or road connections to ensure they are beneficial and can be delivered.

Constraints

- Walkability to centres and services is not ideal in some parts of the study area. The area east of Owen Street and south of Gordon Street is greater than 800m walk to the Port Macquarie Town Centre.
- Limited public transport.
- Sloping streets with limited footpaths constraint safe pedestrian connectivity and accessibility.
- Sloping sites in the eastern part of the study are well suited to smaller footprint buildings. More spread out residential building typologies, such as villas may not be suitable on some sites.
- Visual impacts of new buildings on existing private views and views within the public domain.
- Narrow or shallow small sites require amalgamation to support apartment buildings and their associated parking. Existing vacant sites and larger consolidated sites are likely to redevelop first.
- Council has limited funding for public domain improvements.
- A diversity of lot sizes and shapes, which may not deliver consistent floor space or building typology expectations.
- Lack of redevelopment activity in the study area over the past few years.