

Convenience Retailing

Convenience retailing may be attached to service stations, be independent of any other retailing or be part of a mixed use development.

Service station convenience stores are generally located on major road corridors and provide accessible options for motorists on the way to / from work or social events to pick up basic goods such as milk and bread. Local convenience stores take the form of corner stores with extended opening hours or 24 hour shops such as 'Seven Eleven' stores. In some Sydney suburbs, mixed use developments can contain ground floor convenience stores to serve the needs of residents.

The Standard Template mandates the permissibility of 'neighbourhood shops' in the medium and higher density residential zones. The definition of 'neighbourhood shop' means *"retail premises used for the purposes of selling small daily convenience goods such as foodstuffs, personal care products, newspapers and the like to provide for the day-to-day needs of people who live or work in the local area, and may include ancillary services such as a post office, bank or dry cleaning, but does not include restricted premises"*.

The Standard Template also allows for the imposition of a floor space cap for neighbourhood shops which would ensure that they provide for small scale convenience retailing only. In this regard, a cap of 100m² may be considered reasonable in order to minimise impacts on nearby centres.

Such a limitation should also assist with preventing a proliferation of neighbourhood shops where they are proposed within medium and higher density residential zones.

It is important that convenience retail facilities do not adversely impact upon the economic viability of established centres, particularly neighbourhood centres which would be in direct competition for market share. In order to minimise the impact of any such development, the provision of convenience retail and ancillary grocery and goods stores to service stations should be minimised in out-of-centre locations.



Burnside Neighbourhood Centre, Oatlands

Neighbourhood Centres

There is considerable debate that the planning framework may inhibit competitive entry by new retailers and lack flexibility by constraining retail development.

The approach taken in this Direction seeks to achieve sustainable planning outcomes that respond to the community's variety of retail needs and to provide a place within the Shire for all retailers, from major supermarket chains down to specialty retailers.

For the purposes of this Direction, the following definitions are used:

- Supermarket: provides a comprehensive selection of food and household items for shopping on a weekly scale.
- Grocery store: provides for the daily convenience needs of the surrounding community on a small scale.

Neighbourhood centres are an important part of the overall hierarchy of centres in the Shire. These smaller, walkable centres have an important role to play in local neighbourhoods by providing for the daily needs of the community, for example buying milk or a newspaper or a place for residents to meet at the local café. They are generally easily accessible, suitable in scale and design for their location in the vicinity of dwellings, they have minimal traffic generation, and low impacts on the amenity of surrounding residents. Ease of access, attractive landscaping, type and presentation of individual shops and the inclusion of a place for the community to meet (such as a café) are key factors that can influence the success of neighbourhood centres.

The Standard Template provides for a hierarchy of centres, including zone B1 'Neighbourhood Centre'. The mandated objective of zone B1 is *"To provide a range of small-scale retail, business and community uses that serve the needs of people who live or work in the surrounding neighbourhood."*

Under the Standard Template, neighbourhood shops are to be permitted with consent in the B1 zone, however retail premises (which includes supermarkets) are not mandated as a permissible use in this zone. Therefore the zone provides an opportunity to identify those centres designated in the hierarchy as neighbourhood centres and rural centres and distinguish such smaller scale centres from other local centres.

Retail premises (including supermarkets) will be prohibited in the B1 zone. This approach will effectively prevent all forms of supermarkets above the size of a small grocery store which provides for the daily convenience needs of the surrounding community.

Use of the B1 zone and the capping of shop floor space to say 100m² will limit the scale of grocery stores occupying neighbourhood centres and rural centres, thereby facilitating the provision of a variety of retail services to meet the needs of the local residents.

The range of permissible land uses and zonings and the appropriate area for a neighbourhood shop will be further considered and refined during preparation of LEP 2010. The current area of business zoned land within the Balmoral Road Release Area should be carried over in LEP 2010.

Specific development controls should be prepared to manage the potential impacts of both convenience retail and neighbourhood centres on local neighbourhoods. This should include consideration of aspects such as built form, streetscape, amenity of adjacent areas, parking and access, hours of operation, signage, lighting and security. The DCP controls should aim for quality urban design for centres that address local character and provide an attractive and welcoming approach for the community. In this regard, 'big box' style centres are inappropriate for local centres.



Bella Vista Neighbourhood Centre

Development Proposals Inconsistent with the Centres Hierarchy

For development proposals that are inconsistent with both the centres hierarchy and the zone such as a neighbourhood centre, a rezoning application accompanied by the detailed Economic Impact Assessment (EIA) will be necessary.

All proposals for development that is inconsistent with the centres hierarchy, for example a supermarket in a neighbourhood centre or a department store in a village centre will require formal consideration that includes the submission of an EIA. The EIA should show that there is sufficient demand for the proposal without compromising the ability of other existing or proposed centres to fulfil their roles in the hierarchy. The EIA should address criteria such as:

- Justification for the proposed retail type, scale and quantum within the proposed centre as opposed to an alternative centre;
- Quantification of the level of unmet demand in the locality for the retail type proposed;
- Description of how the proposal would support the social, economic and environmental viability of the centre, and the potential impact on other centres; and
- Demonstration that there is sufficient demand for the proposed retailer to operate within the centre without compromising the ability of alternative centres in the hierarchy to achieve their objectives and fulfil their role in the centre hierarchy.

A review of development controls will ensure that quantitative and qualitative measures as set out above, are clearly communicated to future proponents for development proposals that are inconsistent with the Centres Hierarchy.

Zoning Discrepancies

Council's current planning framework permits and encourages a variety of uses to be developed on business zoned land. There are a number of centres where residential and other uses have been developed on business-zoned land, in some cases demonstrating a higher and better use of the land than retail. In the case of residential development, the housing stock is relatively new.

This following table illustrates some of the centres and properties where this situation occurs:-

Centre	Property
Campbell Street Shops:	Part of Nos. 14-16 Campbell Street, Northmead (SP 63949).
Coonara Avenue Shops, West Pennant Hills:	No. 10 View Street, West Pennant Hills (SP 44708).
Bella Vista Shops:	No. 107 Bella Vista Drive, Bella Vista (SP 64822) and No. 103 Bella Vista Drive, Bella Vista (SP 64813).
Glenhaven Shops:	No. 53-83 Hyde Avenue, Glenhaven (SP 74524).
Carlingford:	Residential uses on sites from Nos.1 – 15 Lloyds Avenue, Carlingford.

Where business zoned land is unavailable to accommodate increased retail floorspace to meet future demand, these sites should be zoned appropriately to reflect their use. Section 117 Direction 1.1 'Business and Industrial Zones' should be considered when rezoning business land.



Belmore Street, Oatlands Neighbourhood Centre



Maraylya Rural Centre

MAKING CENTRES MORE ATTRACTIVE

In their evolution from being simply a place to shop or work, many centres are increasingly becoming a destination in their own right, with a diverse mix of uses and functions. Larger centres in particular are becoming a destination for people to live, work and play. A focus of the Centres Direction is achieving centres that are vibrant, attractive places to visit whilst achieving their full potential in serving the retail needs of the community.

Encouraging the clustering of uses within centres has many benefits including reducing the number of trips and car usage, improving the viability of public transport, fostering innovation and healthy competition between businesses, and encouraging growth and investment in centres by the private and public sectors.

However, as centres become older, their maintenance requirements increase, landscaping may require replacement, and their general appearance often requires updating. The field work highlighted a number of physical elements that make centres unattractive or support the perception that a centre may be unsafe, run down or deteriorating, which may contribute to a pattern of declining patronage. Some of these include: -

- Inappropriately located or unclean loading facilities and waste storage areas.
- Odours from food premises, garbage etc.
- Proliferation of signage, inappropriate signage or lack of any signage.
- Lack of, or unmaintained landscaping, (both soft and hard landscaping) such as paving. Dangerous and uneven surfaces and trip hazards.
- Lack of, or unmaintained street furniture i.e. seating, bins, lighting etc.
- Presence of graffiti, vandalism, bars on shop fronts etc.
- Poor general appearance and evidence of lack of building maintenance.

All these elements can be ameliorated through thoughtful initial design, integrated development assessment, improved monitoring and compliance with conditions of consent, public domain improvements and regular building maintenance programs.

Council's Local Commercial Centres Streetscape Audit commenced in 2003 to revitalise local shopping centres, reduce opportunities for vandalism, graffiti and pollution, increase community partnerships and improve community safety. The audit involved a review of thirteen centres, the development of a priority list of actions and upgrade requirements, and undertaking rectification works.

The assessment was based against a criteria of visual appeal, public safety, accessibility, lighting and landscape design. The centre audit highlighted a number of common issues that needed to be addressed, including disabled access, disabled car parks, ramps, tactile indicators, street lighting and shop awning lighting. The streetscape environment of the following centres have been upgraded:

1. Arthur Street, Baulkham Hills
2. Carmen Drive, Carlingford
3. Lawndale Avenue, North Rocks
4. Glanmire Road / Crestwood, Baulkham Hills
5. Ventura Road, Northmead

Work is continuing on this project which has achieved positive outcomes for older centres, for example the provision of additional landscaping at the Carmen Drive shops in Carlingford. Improvements to the neighbourhood centre at Woodstock Avenue, Carlingford are due to commence soon.



Landscaping Improvement Work
Carmen Drive Neighbourhood Centre

There are numerous opportunities across Council's various business programs including Forward Planning, Development Assessment, implementation of the Capital Works Program, Traffic and Transport, Community Planning and Compliance, to provide an integrated built form outcome for the benefit of the community.

Council's vision of creating vibrant communities is being realised with the planned revitalisation of Castle Hill's main street. The Castle Hill Main Street Project incorporates the creation of an urban transport hub and beautification of Old Northern Road.



The storage of bulk waste bins within front setback areas can reduce the visual appeal of a centre

CASE STUDY – CASTLE HILL MAIN STREET

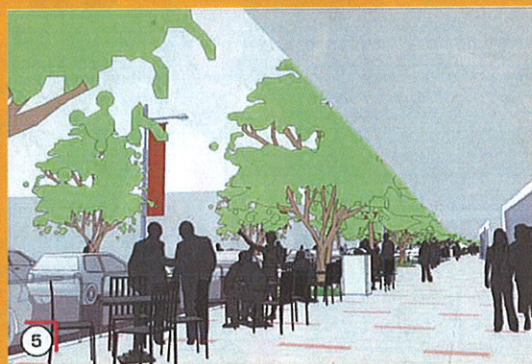
Vision: 'The CBD as the heart of the community should be a vibrant and energetic place with pedestrian activity, restaurants, cafes, retail services and places for people to enjoy and meet taking full advantage of existing and proposed public transport opportunities and significant heritage items' (Draft Contributions Plan No.9, p.31).

The completion of the Eastern Ring Road will allow the majority of traffic to be diverted around the CBD. The Castle Hill Main Street will then become a multi-functional public space with improvements including:

- The provision of pedestrian priority crossings;
- Footpath widening to accommodate alfresco dining and plantings;
- Provision of parallel parking bays;
- Multi-function smart poles providing lighting, signage, traffic signals and banners;
- New pavement material;
- New street tree planting; and
- New street furniture.



Castle Hill Main Street Project Concept
Old Northern Road



Castle Hill Main Street Project Concept
Old Northern Road

There are many mechanisms both regulatory and non regulatory that provide opportunities to improve the appearance and atmosphere of centres such as:

- Development of civic spaces
- Design guidelines and public art
- Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)
- Place managers and place making
- Outdoor dining
- Developing night economies

Development of Civic Spaces

The provision of high quality civic spaces is one aspect that can attract people and enhance the amenity of a centre. The establishment of a 'sense of place' and cultural identity is an important aspect of centres and the public domain. Civic spaces include town squares, widened footpaths and boulevards, main streets, malls, outdoor plazas and other meeting places. High quality and appropriately located civic spaces are vital in achieving vibrant and appealing centres. Civic spaces not only provide areas for people to meet, they often provide a venue for cultural activities such as markets, festivals and public performances / theatre.

The outcomes of the field work suggests that many of the Shire's existing centres lack quality civic space. The Draft North West Subregional Strategy requires Councils to consider the need for civic space in planning for the future growth of centres (NW F2.3.1).

There are opportunities to improve existing public domain / civic spaces within centres, and to plan for the provision of additional parking spaces where needed. In planning for the future growth of Castle Hill and Rouse Hill, and larger centres such as Baulkham Hills and Wrights Road, opportunities exist to enhance existing and identify new civic space.

The Environment and Leisure Direction sets out desirable elements of the public domain and requires the preparation of a Civic Design Manual to guide the development of the public domain within centres. The Centres Direction supports the development of a Civic Design Manual for centres. Development controls will also be reviewed to require appropriately located civic space within centres.

"Strengths of smaller centres often include their outdoor environments, boutique or varying range of locally owned shops and their 'village atmospheres'."

Baulkham Hills Retail Floorspace and Demand Analysis pp 100



Street festivals provide opportunities for cultural expression

Design Guidelines

The development of specific and clear urban design guidelines for centres can assist in the planning and assessment of new developments.

As part of the Rural Lands Study, consultants Woods Bagot Pty Ltd prepared the "Village Character Analysis Urban Design Guidelines" in July 2003. This Study considered each rural village and prepared development principles and design guidelines for building form, heights, roof treatments, signage, and design elements. Guidance is also provided for streetscape revitalisation works, such as street tree planting, footpaths and landscaping. The principles relate to village structure, land use and activities, built form and style, landscape, views and village character. These Guidelines will be considered in the assessment of Development Applications for rural centres.

Council's Public Art Procedure and Guidelines provide a criteria for the development of public art in The Hills Shire to enhance the built and natural environment and involve and reflect community identity and expression.

Business Improvement Districts (BID)

Business Improvement Districts are a recognised worldwide framework used for beautification, safety measures, infrastructure, marketing and maintenance of facilities for centres. Through a BID system, a Council collects funds through an agreed rate or levy scheme to improve existing features or provide new benefits on public land. By making centres more attractive places to visit, BIDs may improve the viability of businesses by attracting more shoppers to an area. Such a scheme involves working directly with local property owners and businesses, and generally requires Council maintenance of works on public property.

A similar scheme has been implemented by Brisbane City Council, called the Suburban Centre Improvement Projects (SCIPs). Council works with business owners who contribute to a fund via payment of an agreed levy or 'benefited area special rate'. Council pays the up-front cost of improvement works and recoups a percentage of costs from property owners via the levy.

Smaller programs that aim to work with property and business owners and Chambers of Commerce to develop a cohesive approach to landscaping, building appearance, signage, and vehicular access can also be successful.

This is discussed further in the findings on revitalising and developing centres.

The Metropolitan Strategy B3.2 indicates that a working group will be established to prepare guidelines for the use of BID funds which should be considered by Council when released. The Draft North West Subregional Strategy action NWB3.2.1 suggests that BIDs can be valuable in improving the amenity, safety, infrastructure, maintenance and marketing of centres.

Appropriate centres where the consideration of a BID or similar pilot program include Castle Hill, Baulkham Hills, and Round Corner.

Place Managers

Council invests significant funds in the public domain improvement of centres, such as the Castle Hill Main Street Project. However, the physical appearance of centres is not the only factor which will influence a centres success. In order to support this investment and achieve positive social and economic outcomes for centres on an ongoing basis, a program focusing on economic sustainability is also needed.

A 'Place Manager' or similar role can provide a facilitation service to assist businesses to work together to achieve coordinated building improvements and marketing plans, as well as provide business advice, mentoring and information.

Liverpool Council employ a 'CBD Place Manager' to help shape the future of the City centre by providing a direct link between Council and the City Centre community including local business people, retailers, shoppers and residents.

The Liverpool CBD Place Manager's role involves ensuring carefully guided planning for the City Centre, improving the streetscape, the development of more pocket parks, and managing programs such as the 'Shopfront Façade Program' which encourages businesses to paint the exterior of their premises, funded by a Council subsidy.

Council's Economic Development Team already has a significant role in supporting the business community. This could be further developed to provide assistance in the specific marketing, branding and management of a centre. Provision of free business advice to small business owners on matters such as the importance of attracting the right retail mix and

its implications for ongoing centre viability should also be provided.

Placemaking combines visioning, community cultural development, cultural mapping and multi-disciplinary project teams to plan and implement urban development within specific sites. The goal is to achieve "place identity" in collaboration with stakeholders and assist built outcomes to achieve the desired character.

Outdoor Dining

Alfresco dining and outdoor cafes are a popular trend. Use of footpath areas for outdoor seating and dining provides benefits such as the activation of spaces and passive surveillance. However, this use also has specific management issues which need to be considered including public liability, safety, maintaining pedestrian flow and access, and increasing leaseable floorspace and associated parking demands.

In 2007 Council adopted the 'Guidelines for Activities in Public Roads' which addresses footpath dining, public liability, the tidiness of outdoor dining areas, the use of amplified music, consumption of alcohol and pedestrian access.

Generally, outdoor dining should continue to be encouraged especially in smaller village and neighbourhood centres which can provide opportunities for social interaction and can be important economically by attracting regular customers. Council can encourage this use by devising a formal pavement leasing program, particularly in smaller centres and continue to enforce the Guidelines for Activities in Public Roads.

Night Economies

When planning for strategic centres, the Draft North West Subregional Strategy (NWF4.2.1 and F4.2.2) recommends the recognition and enhancement of existing nightlife and entertainment clusters. Within Castle Hill, nightlife and entertainment primarily focuses around the Castle Towers Piazza and cinema complex.

Rouse Hill also has a small but developing night economy in conjunction with its cinema, restaurants and town square. This will grow as the surrounding population increases and as employment grows in the centre.

There are opportunities to build on the current nightlife and entertainment facilities within the two major centres, particular with any future expansions and public transport improvements. This could occur by encouraging 'clusters' of uses such as restaurants, cafes, bars, hotels, theatres, and cinemas in close proximity, providing attractive settings for outdoor restaurants, having regard to Safer by Design Principles, and marketing these centres as a nightlife and entertainment 'hub'.

Council's involvement in the encouragement of night economies may include liaising with business owners for the creation of restaurant or bar 'precincts'. This would be facilitated by a Place Manager. Consideration of noise impacts, safety, hours of operation and proximity to residential development would need to be considered on a site by site basis. Strategy 4.3.1(b) of the Environment and Leisure Direction also involves the investigation of mechanisms to develop and promote night economies.



Carmen Drive Neighbourhood Centre, Carlingford

Sustainability of Centres

An important part of the Centres Direction is to provide 'sustainable' centres for the residents of the Shire in terms of economic, social and environmental outcomes. Environmental sustainability is concerned with protecting the natural environment, containing environmental impacts and reducing reliance on non-renewable resources.

Landscaping is an important component of centres and provides a valuable contribution to streetscapes. Deciduous trees can provide shade in summer, filtered light and warmth in winter and can soften the visual appearance of the built form. Water features can also assist in passive cooling.

Sustainable and 'eco-friendly' building materials also can contribute to the sustainability of a centre. Materials that are durable, recycled or have low maintenance requirements may reduce the lifecycle building maintenance requirements and ecological footprint.

The newly developed 'Rouse Hill Town Centre' shopping centre has several innovative and environmentally sustainable initiatives and targets built into the development. These include: -

- Target: Use 60% less water than average retail centres in NSW.
- Installation of water tanks collect 20% of centre's needs.
- Target: Use 40% less energy than average retail centre in NSW.
- Retailers to complete Ecological Footprint calculations.
- Street trees provide shade in summer.
- 130,000 indigenous seedlings planted.
- Integrated network of foot and cycle paths with parking for 300 bicycles.
- Target: 60% waste to be recycled.

The Environment and Leisure Direction recommends a review of development controls to improve ecologically sustainable design provisions, particularly in relation to the public domain and public infrastructure.

The location of centres is often historic, being founded on original settlements and transport routes and growing into flourishing villages and towns.

Baulkham Hills and Castle Hill are such examples, both of which now contain important heritage buildings and sites.

Whilst heritage is an established part of the Shire's identity, it presents a unique challenge in terms of balancing preservation and growth. Older buildings can add vibrancy and character in the built form of centres, becoming a unique attractor to a centre.

A sustainable centre is one in which a 'sense of place' and heritage is retained through adaptive reuse, sympathetic development or high quality interpretation of heritage items.



Former Castle Hill Public School
Source: Baulkham Hills Heritage Study 1993-1994

ACCESSIBILITY OF CENTRES

The accessibility of a centre and the ability to move easily between different spaces within a centre can be an important contributor to its success.

Access To and From Centres

Accessibility to centres by walking, cycling and public transport is also important for the reduction of traffic, vehicular conflict and air pollution. It provides a healthy lifestyle choice, and reduces the reliance on private vehicles for local travel. The availability of public transport can also empower community members such as the aged to visit centres easily and independently.

Some key infrastructure projects currently underway or planned for the Shire include:

- Bus Interchange in Castle Hill
- Strategic bus corridors
- Eastern Ring Road in Castle Hill
- Potential rail to North West Sydney

These projects will assist in cementing Castle Hill as the major centre and transport hub for the Shire, particularly for commuters and in attracting employment.

Lower order transport networks or services are equally important in making a centre accessible. Most centres are served by the local bus network and should incorporate a bus stop with appropriate facilities within the centre footprint. The provision of taxi ranks within centres is another important part of providing access for all members of the community.

An accessible centre should also be supported by a well designed local road network. Traffic management measures such as signalisation, left in / left out and median barriers need to be balanced with the needs of the community to access centres. This is particularly important for village and town centres which meet the weekly shopping needs of the community. Suitable vehicular access to car parking facilities and separate access for pedestrians is also important.

The Integrated Transport Direction will further explore opportunities to improve transport throughout the Shire. This may include consideration of the availability of heavy rail and potential for upgrades or expansion of Carlingford Station, which will be important in the future functioning of the centre.

The timely delivery of public transport is important in supporting the development and continued economic viability of the Shire's centres. Strategies to achieve this include:

- Continuing to lobby the State Government for a rail link to the North West.
- Lobbying for the timely introduction of strategic bus corridors.
- Working with local bus companies to ensure timely new bus routes in release areas.



Bus stop outside Knightsbridge shops

Pedestrian access to and from centres is particularly important for the success of villages and neighbourhood centres in terms of meeting the convenience needs of local residents. The Shire has a strong pedestrian network, with 300 kilometres of footpaths and 241 kilometres of cycleways in the Shire (104 kilometres off-road). This network provides a high level of access within the urban fabric, particularly in release areas. However, there remains opportunities to improve pedestrian access, particularly to centres in the older established areas of the Shire.

Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plans (PAMPs) are developed as a partnership between the Roads and Traffic Authority and local councils. PAMPs provide a basis for the development of pedestrian routes or those areas that the community identifies as important for safety, convenience and mobility. The Roads and Traffic Authority provides funding for successful PAMP applications on a 50:50 basis with local councils. Council submits PAMP applications on an annual basis for centres which have identified access issues. This process should be continued to ensure that pedestrian access improvements can be funded and implemented.

The Draft North West Subregional Strategy looks to improve links between bushland, parks and centres (NW F1.3.1). The Environment and Leisure Direction contains actions to improve connectivity and accessibility by walking and cycling and recommends the preparation of a Tracks and Trails Strategy. The Centres Direction supports this action. Additional links between residential areas and some centres, such as Glenorie, Ventura Road, and Woodstock Road neighbourhood centres should be considered in this strategy.



Accessibility with the Round Corner Town Centre warrants improvement

Movement within Centres

The design of centres plays an ongoing role in how people use centres and how they move between spaces. The permeability of a centre is concerned with pedestrians and their access between carparking areas, public transport drop-off points and different buildings.

Fragmented development, grade changes and retail developments that have occurred over time are often characterised by a lack of permeability. This is often compounded for the aged and people with disabilities as well as those moving between spaces with shopping trolleys.

For example, within the Mile End Road Village, the retail uses are spread over a distance of approximately 450 metres which encourages car usage or accessing only a limited part of the centre in a single visit.

The Retail Study also identified the benefits of enhancements to North Rocks Town Centre to *"better integrate all components of the centre through enhanced pedestrian connectivity."* (Retail Floorspace and Demand Analysis pp 140).

Round Corner Town Centre is another centre that would benefit from measures that improve permeability. This centre is spread over a wide area with walking between the various areas made difficult due to grade changes, lack of logical linkages and fragmented ownership. Observations made during the field inspection showed pedestrians (often aged) walking along the internal road carriageway to access different areas of the centre.

In the redevelopment of existing centres and the planning of new centres, consideration should be given to the consolidation of land uses to minimise the centre 'footprint', connectivity between centre activities, separation of vehicular and pedestrian functions, footpath provision, minimal grade changes to encourage walking, and clear signposting of walkways and access points. It is also important to integrate desired lines of travel with safe road crossings. A case study of the Castle Hill Main Street Project, which incorporates many of these qualities, is provided earlier in the Findings.

Development controls will be reviewed to improve the permeability and legibility of centres. This may include consideration of grade changes, the need for ramps, potential vehicular and pedestrian conflicts, and integration with surrounding land uses. These matters should be considered in development assessment. For new centres, Council will promote the consolidation of sites to achieve integrated development.

Legibility is about the visual cues that help people understand a place. Elements of legibility include directional signage and maps, design elements which indicate building entrances, and clearly identified paths of travel which help in navigating a centre. Poor legibility may result in a centre becoming unpopular for shoppers even though it may have an appropriate range of retail offer. This is often exemplified by 'big box' shopping centres and their lack of integration with the rest of the centre.

TRANSFORMING OLDER EXISTING CENTRES

Some centres in the Shire are performing strongly in terms of economic performance. For example Castle Towers Shopping Centre in Castle Hill is one of the highest performing shopping centres within Australia, currently ranked 10th with respect to net annual turnover. This makes the Castle Hill centre a major drawcard to shoppers and visitors beyond the Shire boundary. Other centres such as Rouse Hill are also trading well owing to their fresh approach to the urban shopping environment. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that residents of other LGAs are accessing Council's services such as the Library within the Rouse Hill centre.

Centres such as Baulkham Hills have a mixed performance. The recently refurbished Baulkham Hills Stockland Mall appears to be trading well with three major supermarket anchors, however the vitality of street front retail areas are affected by their location at the intersection of major roads, and their poor streetscape amenity and pedestrian appeal.

Some other centres are experiencing economic challenges. These are often smaller neighbourhood centres which may lack an anchor tenant or a sufficient range of specialty retail to attract shoppers. A low vacancy rate is a good indicator of a centres economic strength. The Retail Analysis identified that the following centres may be experiencing some economic difficulties or high vacancy rates:

- Baulkham Hills retail shopfronts
- Cross Street, Baulkham Hills
- Woodstock Road, Carlingford
- Glenorie rural centre
- Bella Vista

The Retail Analysis identifies the importance of providing a range of specialty retail to support the performance and attraction of centres.

The field work undertaken during preparation of the Direction revealed a number of environmental factors that may indicate that a centre is currently or is likely to experience some economic difficulty in the future. These included poor visual appearance and streetscape, age of building stock, shop vacancies, public domain space that requires upgrading (such as footpaths), or lack of connectivity between areas within a centre.

Whilst the Streetscape Audit has made significant physical improvements to the public domain within some centres (refer Findings on Making Centres More Attractive), some may benefit from a process of targeted revitalisation or redevelopment of the building stock to improve economic performance as well as better meet the needs of surrounding residents. These centres include:

- Belmore Street, Oatlands
- Cross Street, Baulkham Hills
- Dural Rural Centre
- Round Corner Town Centre
- Glenorie Rural Centre



Cross Street, Baulkham Hills. Revitalisation strategies to improve the streetscape may benefit this and similar centres.

The fragmented ownership of land within a centre can significantly impact upon a centre's ability to revitalise or redevelop in order to respond to the changing retail environment. This also presents a particular challenge in new release areas where new centres are planned. Gaining agreement between land owners in order to work towards a common direction is challenging, especially if the number of owners is high and the land has other constraints.

An example where this is the case is the Windsor Road, Kellyville Village. A portion of this centre was rezoned in April 2006 as part of the Balmoral Road Release Area, however the current subdivision pattern and vehicular access from Windsor Road present constraints to owners developing on an individual basis. To assist the transitioning of the Windsor Road, Kellyville centre to a village and to facilitate redevelopment (particularly of the southern portion of the centre), a masterplan will be prepared by Council to guide development.

Strata title laws also present a particular difficulty in redeveloping and to a lesser degree revitalising centres. Strata titling has provided a way for a small investor or owner-occupier to own an individual commercial or retail property within a larger complex. However, as buildings age and needs change, refurbishment or redevelopment becomes not only an economic consideration, but also impacts upon the attractiveness, amenity, safety and ability of centres to evolve and grow. Even where a building is at the end of its physical or economic life, it is extremely difficult, and often impossible in practice, for all strata owners to agree to a future strategy (whether it be for revitalisation or redevelopment).

In these circumstances, opportunities may exist for Council to provide leadership, business advice and technical services to assist owners in facilitating future plans. In some cases, more direct involvement such as the preparation of a masterplan and design principles may be an appropriate way to facilitate cohesive redevelopment in existing centres.

The Draft North West Subregional Strategy (NWC3.1.1) requires Councils to identify opportunities to renew local centres and facilitate renewal through planning for increased housing densities and improved public amenity. The Strategy highlights the

benefits of renewing existing local centres through the development of higher density housing, including improved economic and public transport viability. The Residential Direction highlights the potential for increased residential densities within centres such as Baulkham Hills and Carlingford to play a role in centre revitalisation and renewal.

In addition, Draft North West Subregional Strategy actions NWC3.1.2 and NWC4.1.1 indicate that the Department of Planning will be preparing centre design guidelines with strategies for the revitalisation and redevelopment of centres. When released, these guidelines should be utilised in Council's planning where appropriate.

There are a number of ways that centres can be revitalised:-

1. Working with businesses and landowners to encourage the refurbishment of centres to improve appearance, quality of design and the provision of civic space.
2. Liaising with the business community to improve the retail mix to suit the needs of the community.
3. The use of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) or similar schemes, as detailed earlier in the Findings.

Some methods for encouraging redevelopment within centres include:

1. Zoning additional retail land where there is an identified need, to provide an incentive.
2. Increasing density controls to encourage land owners to redevelop.
3. Encouraging mixed use development in suitable areas (i.e. ground floor commercial & retail and upper floor residential uses).
4. Preparing masterplans to guide the redevelopment of older centres.
5. Preparing development controls to include design elements appropriate for each centre typology.

An action of the Environment and Leisure Direction involves the preparation of a Civic Design Manual and review of development controls for public domain space and other civic areas.

PLANNING FOR NEW CENTRES

The Hills Shire is a growth area, containing major greenfield sites which will accommodate a significant amount of Sydney's growth in the next twenty five years. Growth will be focused in three main precincts: the Balmoral Road Release Area and two North West Growth Centre Precincts being North Kellyville and Box Hill. In addition, there is potential for a new centre at the Hills Centre Station if a rail link proceeds in the longer term.

Balmoral Road Release Area

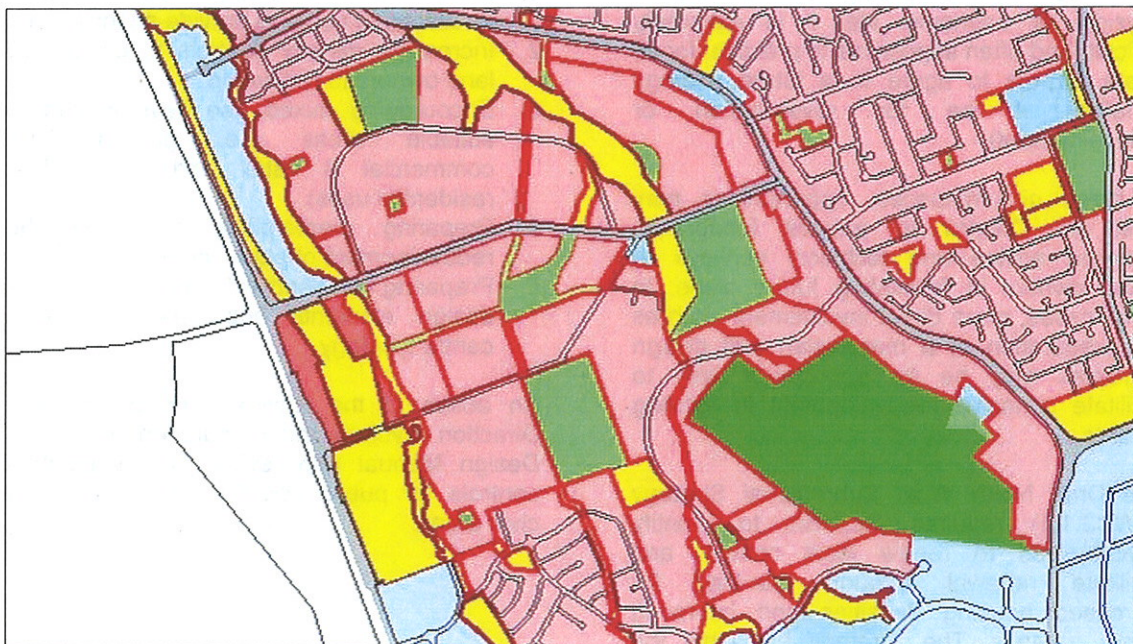
The Balmoral Road Release Area is a 522 hectare site and was rezoned in April 2006. The release area will ultimately accommodate an additional population of 13,000 people with an additional 5,600 dwellings. A range of dwelling types are proposed including high density apartments and town houses, as well as traditional suburban detached dwellings. The majority of development is targeted to occur between 2012 and 2021.

Earlier planning for this release area envisaged the creation of 'walkable' neighbourhoods through the creation of small local neighbourhood shops.

The release area currently identifies three areas of land zoned for retail uses: Windsor Road, Kellyville, Memorial Avenue, and Stone Mason Drive. Windsor Road currently functions as a neighbourhood centre and is planned to transition to a village centre in the future.

The Retail Analysis identified a significant demand in the Release Area sector over the next twenty years, particularly for additional supermarkets and specialty retail. Given the central location of the release area, surrounding centres are likely to provide the range of retail needs required by the incoming population. These centres include Windsor Road, Kellyville as it transitions to a village with a main line supermarket, Wrights Road Town Centre, Norwest Marketown (which has the potential to grow to a Town Centre) and Rouse Hill for higher order shopping as the emerging Major Centre.

Accordingly, the Retail Analysis recommended that *"a range of specialty retail should be provided within the Balmoral Road Release Area Neighbourhood Centres in order to minimise the need for future residents to travel for their daily convenience needs. The retail provision should be of a scale however that does not generate significant traffic or compete with the higher order centres such as the surrounding / proposed village of Windsor Road and town centres such as Wrights Road."* (Retail Floorspace and Demand Analysis pp138).



Extract of Baulkham Hills Shire Council LEP 2005 Zoning Map