



**CHARACTER ASSESSMENT AND URBAN DESIGN REVIEW
OF LOT 1 & 6 1082382 ISLAND POINT ROAD, ST GEORGES BASIN
FOR SHOALHAVEN CITY COUNCIL**

9TH OCTOBER 2017

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CERTIFICATION

This report has been authorised by Atlas Urban Design & Strategy Pty Ltd. The accuracy of the information contained herein is to the best of our knowledge not false or misleading. The comments have been based upon information and facts that were correct at the time of writing this report.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Atlas Urban has been commissioned by Shoalhaven City Council to undertake a Character Assessment & Urban Design review to support a current Planning Proposal (PP) that is considering the reduction of mapped building heights for the site shown.

Council recently lodged a Planning Proposal (PP023) for Gateway determination with the NSW Department of Planning & Environment (DP&E). This PP seeks to amend the Height of Building (HOB) maps in the Shoalhaven Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2014, applying to Lots 1 and 6 in DP1082382 Island Point Road, St Georges Basin. This would potentially see the HOB map amended over Lot 1 and Lot 6 DP 1082382, removing the current 13 metre height and replacing it with an 8.5 metre height limit.

The DP&E has since requested information to justify the proposed height controls in relation to urban design considerations, including the existing character of the area, for the subject lots and adjoining land zoned B4 Mixed Use and R1 General Residential under the LEP.

This report examines the character of the areas surrounding the subject site. It also examines relevant planning documents applicable, in order to establish the attitude towards height and the desired future character of the area. Finally this report makes a height recommendation for the Subject Site, in-line with the Character and Planning context.

Council has provided the following advice for this body of work;

1. To consider St Georges Basin Centre as a Town. This is in-line with the Jervis Bay Settlement Strategy which identifies St Georges Basin-Sanctuary Point as a Town. Pursuant to this the St Georges Basin urban area has been referred to in this report as the 'Township', and the commercial centre as the 'St Georges Basin Town Centre' or the 'Town Centre'.
2. Regarding the Shoalhaven LEP 2014 height of buildings, that *"11 metres is a catch all generic provision. No detailed work was done to set it. It came from the 11 m requirement in the former Illawarra REP where Council could deal with anything up to 11m and then after that the concurrence of the Department of Planning was needed. Under this body of work, Council has the opportunity to set the height for these blocks consistent with the character of the area."*

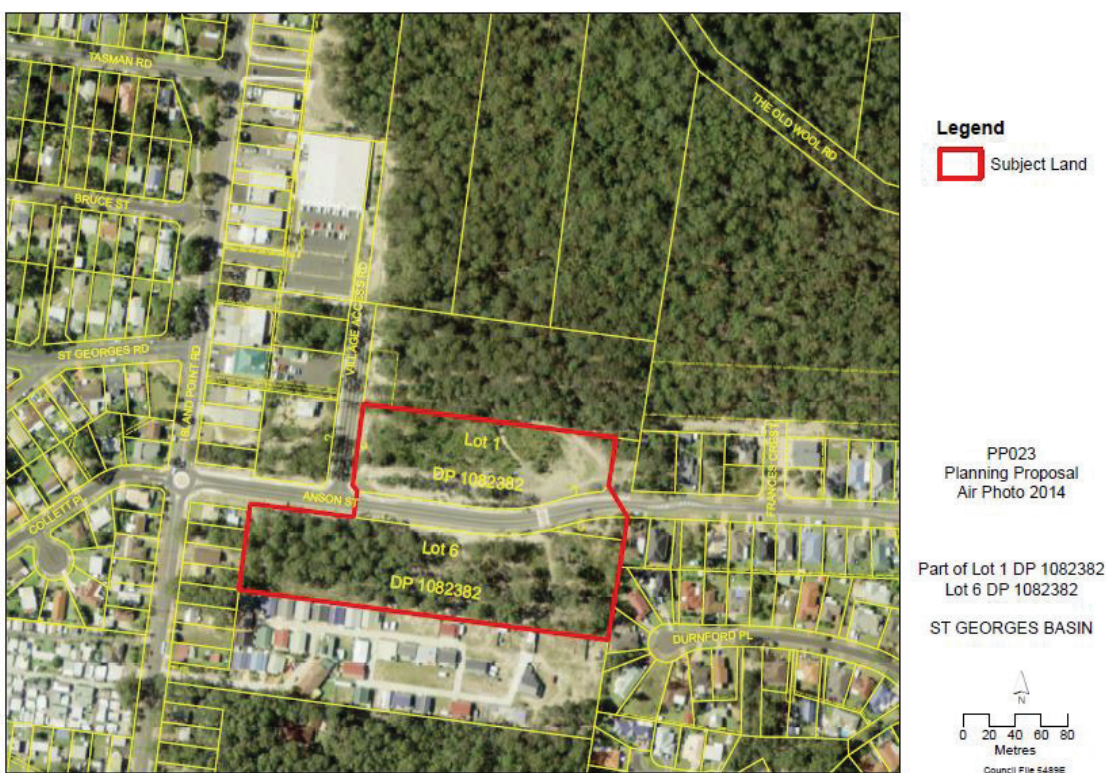


Fig. 1: Subject Site
Source: Planning Proposal PP023

1.1 Methodology

Good design goes beyond simple compliance with planning controls. Careful consideration and analysis of a site and of its relationship with adjoining development and the surrounding area, is an essential starting point. Character analysis helps ensure that new development is the best possible solution for the site and the immediate locality, fitting in with both the existing and desired future character of an area.

The Character Assessment and Planning Review was undertaken in the following stages;

1. Character Assessment. Photographic analysis of the site and township, noting three distinct urban character areas. This included written analysis of key character elements of the streetscape in the Township examining;
 - The relationship between buildings and surrounds (character elements such as: the character of spaces between buildings, including vehicular entries and front setbacks, street width, vegetation, fencing and front garden characteristics),
 - Character of buildings (e.g.. Architectural character, dominant materials/finishes, typical roofscape).
2. Planning Review. Desktop review of relevant planning documents in order to establish the existing and the desired future character of the area, and the controls which support these character conditions.
3. Determination of appropriate height based on the Planning Review and Character Assessment.

1.2 Background - Extract From Planning Proposal (PP023)

Prior to the preparation of the Shoalhaven LEP 2014, building height controls largely sat outside the LEP and were generally controlled via Development Control Plans (DCP's) and a provision in the previous Illawarra Regional Environmental Plan (REP) that enabled Council to consider development up to 11 metres. Any development above 11 metres required the concurrence of the NSW Planning Minister (or a delegate).

With the move to the new Standard LEP Instrument in NSW, Council was required to include 'height of building' controls in its new LEP. This occurred in Shoalhaven LEP 2014 in two ways:

- Zones, areas or sites were mapped at a specific height based on existing controls that may have been in place in existing DCP's.
- Provisions included in Clause 7.3 Height of Buildings in the LEP instrument for those areas that are not mapped, requiring the height of buildings on the land to not exceed 11 metres.

Throughout the LEP preparation and exhibition processes, the 'height of building' control was an issue of general community concern throughout Shoalhaven.

Specific 'height of building' decisions were made during the LEP preparation process and in respect to the land which is the subject of this proposal, these are summarised below.

Draft LEP 2011 Exhibition – two submissions were received that commented on the proposed height controls in the vicinity of the St. Georges Basin Village Centre.

- Submission 1 supported the proposed mapped height limit of 8 metres for the St. Georges Basin Village Centre (note not all the zoned area) that was consistent with the former DCP No.17 that covered this area.
- Submission 2 requested a 13 metre building height for lot 1 and 6 DP1082382 to ensure that a realistic development opportunity for the subject land was economically feasible (Note: an economic feasibility study was included with the submission).

It was noted in the Council report following the exhibition that changing the height of buildings map for lots 1 and 6 DP1082382 to 13 metres would be inconsistent with the DCP and maybe inconsistent with the existing and desired future character for the area.

The report went on to note that the submission argued that higher density residential development, as per the master plan that the landowner had developed for the site, was only economically viable if the height of buildings for the two sites were increased to 13 metres. The submission acknowledged that this was not likely to be popular with the community.

Staff noted that should a future development proposal warrant heights that are inconsistent with the DCP then a future PP could be considered for the site and this would enable specific dialogue with the community on the proposal. As a result, the report recommended that the height of buildings remain unchanged in this location – 8 metres for the village centre as per the DCP and the 11 metres general maximum elsewhere.

Council, however, ultimately resolved on 30 May 2012 to:

Change the maximum height of buildings for lots 1 and 6 DP 1082382 St. Georges Basin to 13 metres to facilitate the feasibility of higher density development on the site.

Draft LEP 2013 Exhibition – during this exhibition five submissions (including one from the Basin Villages Forum) were received on the changes that were made to the height of buildings for lots 1 and 6 DP 1082382, Island Point Road, St. Georges Basin, noting that it was a significant change that was contrary to the LEP ground rules and as such should not be supported.

One submission was also received on behalf of the owners who requested that the height for lot 1 DP 1082382 be increased from 13 metres to 14 metres to enable buildings up to four storeys and to enable a commercial component consistent with the zoning provisions.

The Council report following the exhibition again recommended that the exhibited maximum 8 metre height of building overlay for the western portion of lot 1 DP 1082382 be retained and that the overlay be removed from the remaining eastern portion of lot 1 DP 1082382 and entirely from lot 6 DP 1082382.

Council however ultimately resolved on 17 July 2013 as per minute MIN 16.943 to:

- Retain the exhibited maximum 8 metre Height of Building overlay for the western portion of lot 1 DP 1082382, and the Height of Building overlay for the remaining eastern portion of Lot 1 DP 1082382 and Lot 6 DP 1082382 be retained at 13 metres.

As such the Shoalhaven LEP 2014 was finalised and ultimately notified on 8 April 2014 with the following 'height of building' controls detailed on the Height of Buildings Map Sheet HOB_014F:

- Western portion of Lot 1 DP 1082382 – mapped at 8 metres.
- Eastern portion of Lot 6 DP 1082382 – mapped at 13 metres.

The current 13m maximum building height standard applied to the Subject Site is significantly higher than the surrounding area, and not found anywhere else in the wider surrounding area.

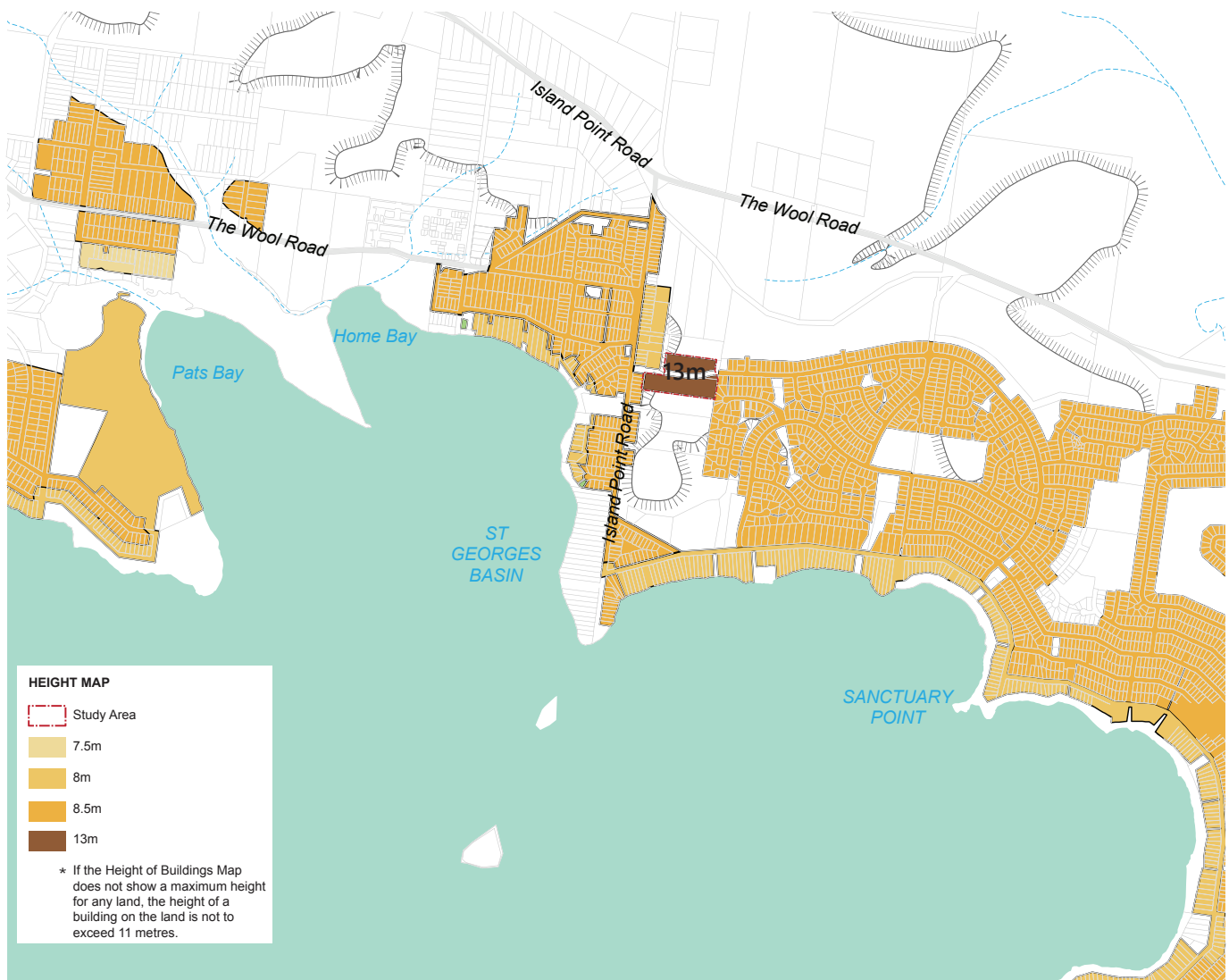


Fig. 2: Wider Area and Height Intensity
Information source: Shoalhaven Local Environmental Plan 2014

2. CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

The character of an urban area can create positive, negative or neutral experiences for residents and visitors. Character elements such as the relationships between buildings, presence or absence of vegetation, architectural character and so on, all contribute to the character of an urban area. The character of residential areas is primarily shaped by the presentation of houses to the street. Development that bears no relationship to surrounding forms can erode these character elements that have grown over time within an area to create a distinct sense of place. New development must therefore be sensitive to the existing character, both built and natural, while still allowing for future growth and opportunity where appropriate.

2.1 St Georges Basin Township Context

St Georges Basin is a large but shallow lake situated 27 kilometres south of Nowra on the south coast of New South Wales. Many settlements along its 12 kilometre shoreline developed as holidaymakers discovered the regions natural beauty and the array of leisure pursuits that it afforded. The St Georges Basin Township is one of the larger settlements along the lagoons tree-lined shores.

The character of the Township has developed over a long period of time, often reflecting the aspirations of past and present residents. The character differs from many other settlements in the area, because of the predominance of owner-occupiers and a relatively low proportion of holiday-letting accommodation. This influences the character, so that many houses, yards and gardens have the idiosyncratic character of long-term residency rather than the more generic or pared-back character of rental properties. Also the retail offer focuses on local needs rather than specifically tourism trade.

There are three distinct urban character areas in the Township that impact on the Subject Site; 1. Town Centre Character Area, 2. Lakeside Residential Character Area, and 3. Inland Residential Character Area (Figure 3). Identifying the character elements of these areas is important in relation to the Subject Site, as *"the scale of new development (should be) compatible with and sympathetic to the scale and bulk of existing development in the locality, particularly on the perimeter of the development site"*, (Extract: Shoalhaven DCP, 2014, Chapter G14: Other Residential Accommodation).

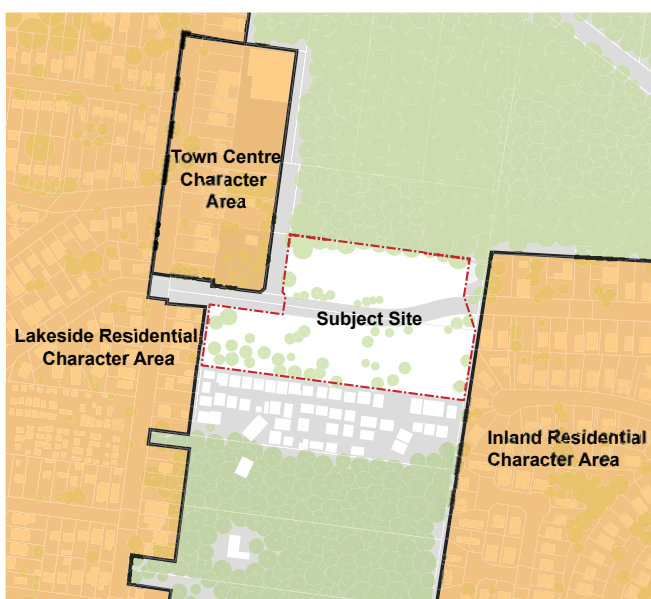


Fig. 3: Town Centre Urban Character Areas

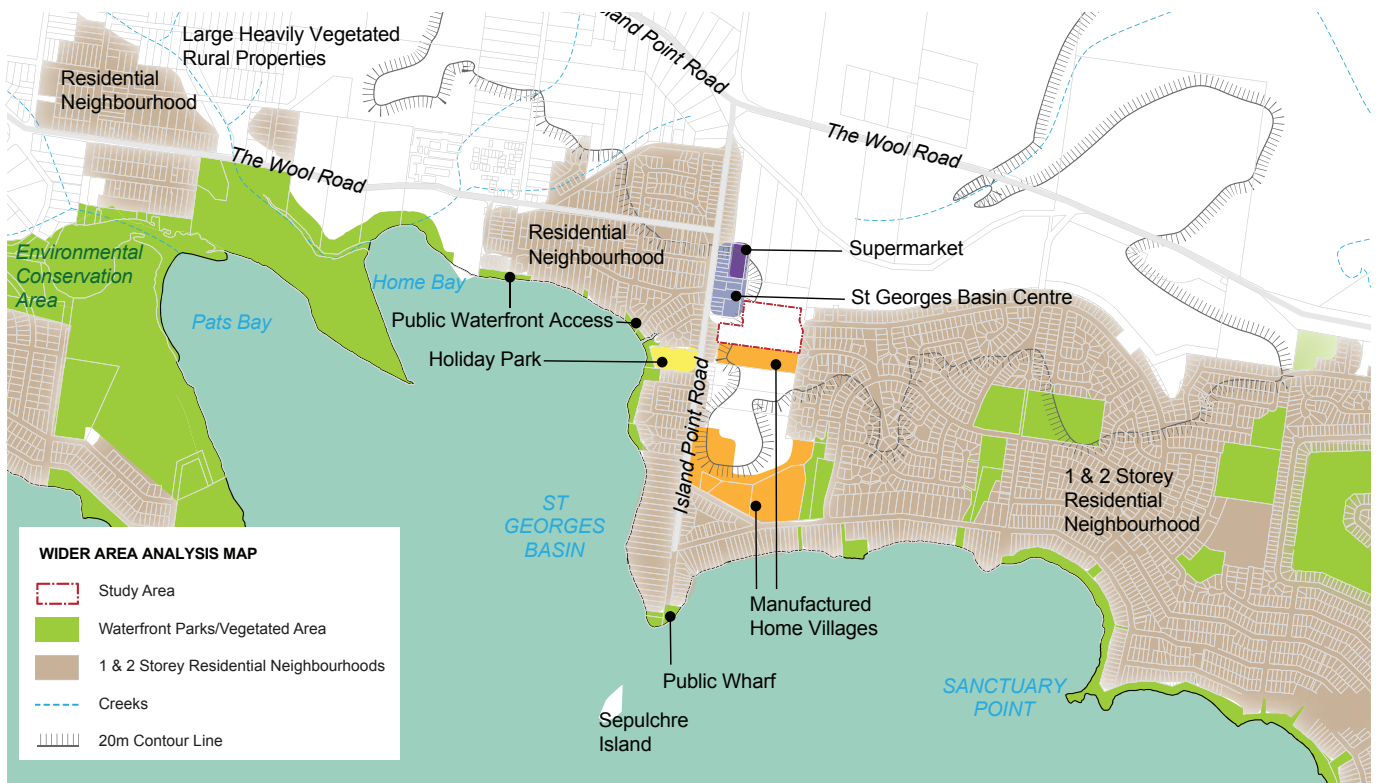


Fig. 4: Wider Area Analysis Map

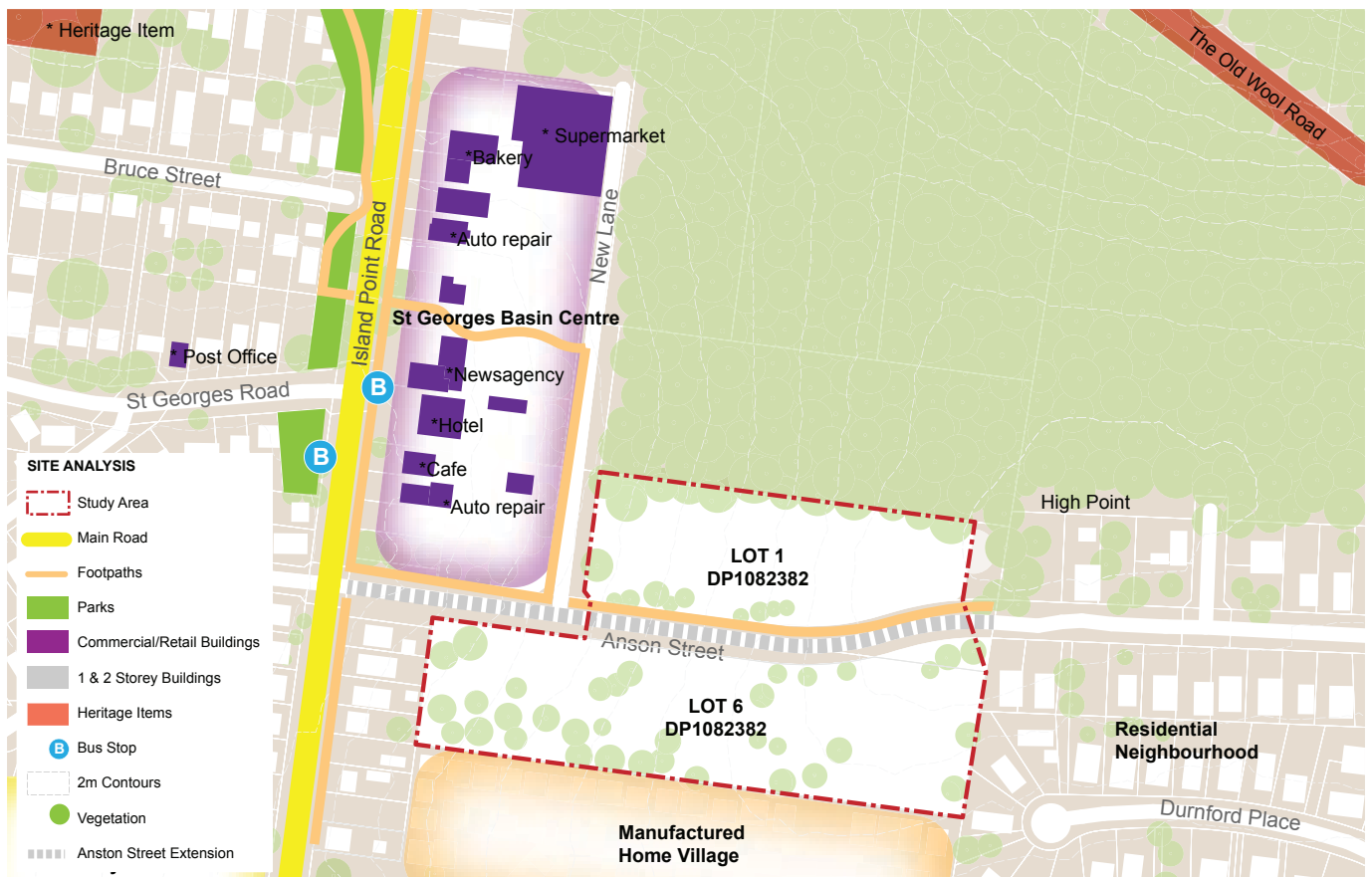


Fig. 5: Site Analysis Map

2.2 Town Centre Character Area

The Town Centre was established in the in the geographic centre of St Georges Basin. The IGA supermarket in the centre significantly helps to build the 'critical mass' of activity, by providing a retail anchor that in future will most likely help the existing businesses attract more trade. The IGA is larger than the older store at Sanctuary Point, though a new shopping centre has been built at the higher order centre of Vincentia. The prospects for growth of St Georges Basin are helped by its closer proximity to the Princess Highway, Island Point Road and The Wool Road, it also has a substantial supply of undeveloped and zoned land (B4 Mixed Use) which could support a growing range of goods and services in the centre.

Relationship between buildings and surrounds

The St Georges Basin Town Centre is comprised of a mix of developed and undeveloped commercial lots against a backdrop of undulating woodland with mature trees. The centre lies on the eastern side of Island Point Road forming a one-sided commercial street, with land sloping down towards the south. On the opposite side of the road there is a linear park of around 18m by 250m that is complimented by mature street trees. This adds to the native bushland character. The street has a single lane of traffic in each direction, with mid-block footpath blisters helping pedestrians cross Island Point Road.

Continuous footpaths run on both sides of Island Point Road near the commercial area. The road has both native trees and a number of palms, grass and other vegetation located along the verges. This defines the streetscape as the commercial buildings are set back behind their carparks. Wide vehicular driveways break the footpaths and vegetation regularly, leading to carparks, and present a fairly undesirable element in the character of the street.

Island Point Road runs half way up a small ridge line and falls from the northern end of the commercial zone to the south between 14-24m from Island Point Road. Commercial buildings are irregularly placed and without a clear street wall.

Character of buildings

Architectural styles are highly varied, including 1980's post-modern (curved and circular forms), colonial style with bull nosed verandahs, simple sheds, spanish mission and late 20th century commercial, presenting an inconsistent but low scale style. Roof types vary between gabled roofs, flat roofs and parapet roofs. Signage both on the buildings and on freestanding signage boards addresses those traveling along Island Point Road. Dominant materials and finishes include face brick construction with terracotta tiled roofs, rendered facades with oversized parapets (to support signage), verandas and awnings with decorative painted timber posts, and corrugated metal. Generally glazing is limited.

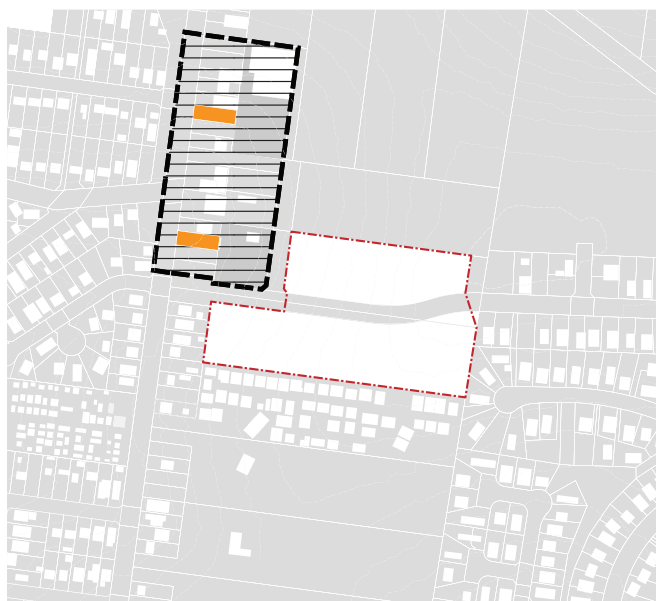


Fig. 6: Town Centre Character Area (orange = case study properties)

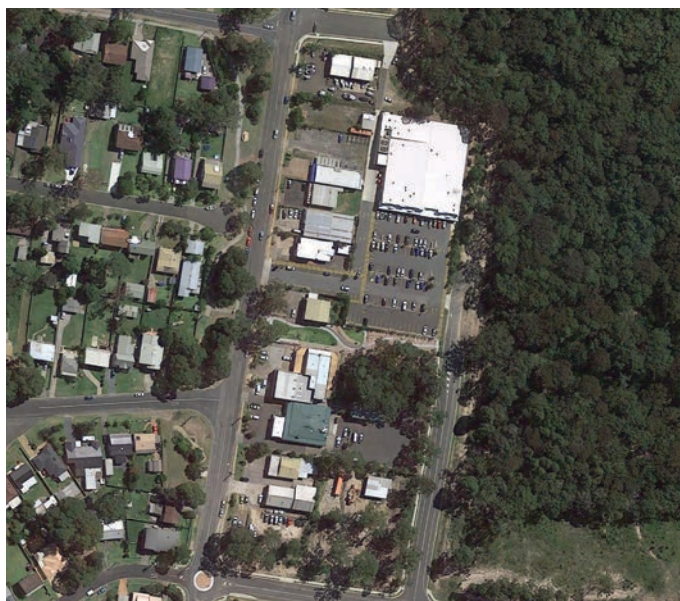


Fig. 7: Aerial View of the Town Centre



Fig. 8: View of the Town Centre

BUILDING CASE STUDY - COMMERCIAL AREA



Address: 95 Island Point Road
 Storeys/Height (A): 1 Storey/ approx 5.5m
 Facade width (B): 14m
 Front setback (C): 18m
 Side setbacks: 0m, 1m
 Block size: 700m²
 Roof type: Gable
 Materials: Rendered Board, face brick



Address: 138 Island Point Road
 Storeys/Height: 2 Storey/approx 7m
 Facade width: 11m
 Front setback: 12m
 Side setbacks: 0m, 4m
 Roof type: Hip & Gable
 Block size: 700m²
 Materials: Corrugated metal

2.3 Lakeside Residential Character Area

This area displays a highly mixed variety of architectural styles as houses have been built over decades, many as holiday homes. There are manufactured home villages and holidays parks in the immediate area. The scale of these homes is modest. Near the waterfront, narrow fronted blocks share long side boundaries and views across the Basin. Other culdesacs and streets end in parklands, jetties and views over the water. These characteristics combine to give the residential area a quiet coastal suburban character. The case study diagrams adjacent show a variety of roof forms, styles, materials, and eras, though all are of a modest scale.

Relationship between buildings and surrounds

The Lakeside Residential Area lies to the west of the Subject Site over Island Point Road. The streetscape is part of a traditional suburban residential subdivision with generally medium sized allotments (around 700m²) with one and two storey detached dwelling houses with grassed/landscaped front setbacks.

Many streets are only 8m wide with street parking, this ensures slow moving traffic. Many do not have kerb and guttering and footpaths are absent. Grass and vegetation along the verges creates a positive and unifying visual effect and though driveways break this feature regularly they do not dominate the overall character of the street.

The residential neighbourhood is interspersed with eucalyptus trees. Smaller trees such as callistemon (bottle brush) and wattle are also common. Only certain streets have views across the Basin (Graham Avenue and Collett place end in parkland with views out over the water) as many properties back onto the water and as such access to the waterfront is limited, with much of the waterfront in private ownership.

Character of buildings

As mentioned, a variety of architectural styles are present as residences have been built over time. Buildings are predominantly detached one and two storey houses with single or double frontages. A wide variety of roof forms include gables, skillions, hips and parapets. Dominant materials and finishes include face brick construction with terracotta tiled roofs, weatherboard, corrugated metal cladding. Large areas of render do not generally feature in the streetscape.

Front and side setbacks vary significantly, though older houses generally have more generous side setbacks. Most homes provide parking in the front in single/double garages or carports.

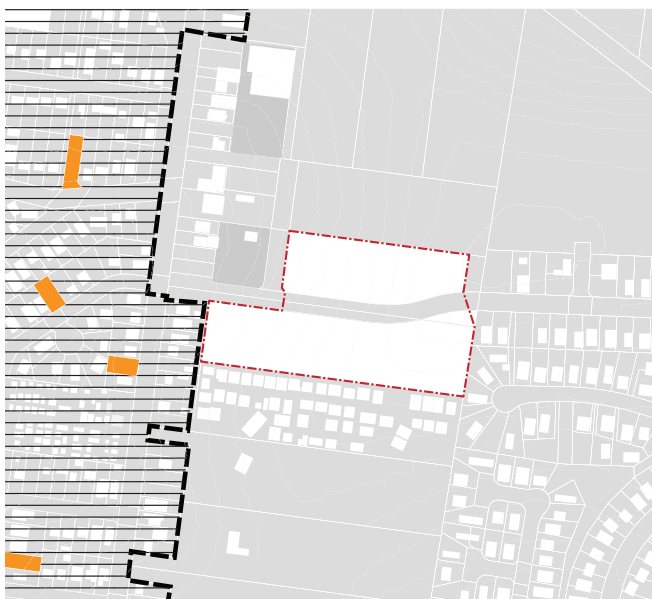


Fig. 9: Residential Character Areas (orange = case study properties)



Fig. 10: View down Graham Avenue, St Georges Basin

BUILDING CASE STUDY - Lakeside Residential Character Area



Address: 6 Collett Place
 Storeys/Height (A): 1 Storey/ approx 5m
 Facade width (B): 18m
 Front setback: 11m with lawn and garden
 Block size: 650m²
 Roof type: Hipped terracotta tile roof
 Materials: Face brick with weatherboard trim



Address: 60 St Georges Road
 Storeys/Height: 2 Storey/ approx 6.5m
 Facade width: 13m
 Front setback: 17m with lawn and double driveway
 Block size: 850m²
 Roof type: Flat metal roof
 Materials: Weatherboard, face brick, timber trim



Address: 16 Lachlan Crescent
 Storeys/Height: 2 Storeys/ approx 7.5
 Facade width: 12m
 Front setback: 7m with garden and some lawn
 Block size: 750m²
 Roof type: Pitched metal roof
 Materials: Corrugated metal cladding, rendered board, metal trim



Address: 89 Island Point Road
 Storeys/Height: 1 Storey/ approx 3.5m
 Facade width: 9m
 Front setback: 7m with lawn
 Block size: 650m²
 Roof type: Gable metal roof
 Materials: Weatherboard

Fig. 6: Existing Housing Stock in St Georges Basin

2.4 Inland Residential Character Area

The majority of this quiet residential area was developed at the end of the 20th century and as such the style, form and siting of the buildings is fairly consistent. While the majority of houses in the streetscape are single storey there is also a sprinkling of larger houses. There are pockets of tall eucalyptus trees that give the area a bushland character. The area sits at a higher elevation than the Lakeside Character Area, but does not enjoy views to the tree lined waterfront because of vegetation coverage.

Relationship between buildings and surrounds

Large pockets of eucalyptus and paperbark are dotted throughout the area, in both green corridors and undeveloped blocks. The existing streetscape is part of a traditional suburban residential subdivision of streets and culdesacs. The street is approximately 6m wide and has kerb and guttering, but no footpaths. Driveways are usually paved and service double garages. The landscape character is generally consistent within the streetscape. The front setbacks are predominantly landscaped, except when paved for driveways and paths and front gardens consist mainly of lawns, small trees and shrubs. There are no front fences and dwellings are consistently set back between 12-16m. There are no front fences in the streetscape.

Character of buildings

Generally, single storey brick dwellings form the dominant character, though there are a number of larger two storey homes. Roofs have predominantly pitched and hipped forms. Gables and dutch gables are common. Garages have complimentary roof forms and do not present as dominant features. Most dwellings have articulated façades with windows proportionate to the front façade, as illustrated in the case studies below.

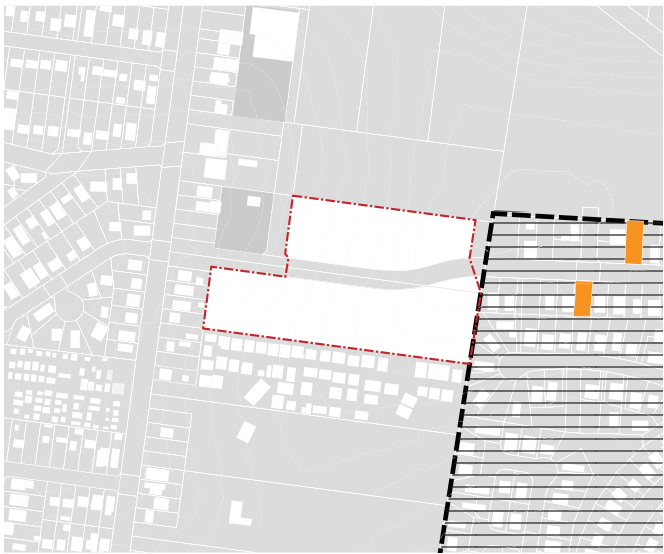


Fig. 11: Residential Character Areas (orange = case study properties)

BUILDING CASE STUDY - RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER AREA			
			
Address:	176 Anston Street	Address:	147 Anston Street
Storeys/Height (A):	1 Storey/ approx 5m	Storeys/Height:	2 Storeys/ approx 7.5m
Facade width (B):	17m	Facade width:	15m (inc garage)
Front setback:	18m with lawn and garden on side boundaries	Front setback:	7m with lawn
Block size:	700m ²	Block size:	700m ²
Roof type:	Hipped terracotta tile roof with gables and dutch gable over garage	Roof type:	Hipped terracotta tile roof with portico and gable
Materials:	Rendered blockwork	Materials:	Face brick

2.5 Subject Site Character

The Subject Site fronts Anson Street on the eastern edge of the St Georges Basin Centre. The 3.59ha site is composed of two parcels, bisected east to west by Anson Street. The site is bounded by private property. To the immediate west is the partially developed Town Centre Character Area (with a back lane connecting the commercial lots to Anson street). Further to the west, on the opposite side of Island Point road lies the Lakeside Character Area. To the immediate east is the Inland Residential Character Area and to the south is a new manufactured home village.

To the direct north of the Subject Site is densely vegetated undeveloped private property. Mature eucalyptus and paperbark trees create a highly visible canopy that is a pleasant backdrop to both the Subject Site and the Town Centre. Though vegetated areas like this contribute to the character of the wider St Georges Basin Area, this land has not been examined as an urban character area as it is not urban and is also zoned B4 for Mixed Use development. This means that the land is likely to be cleared at some point in future to accommodate the expansion of the Town Centre.

The site itself is predominantly clear, with scattered canopy trees and patches of vegetation remaining. The site slopes down to the west, directing views across the lower laying residential neighbourhood to the lake. The residential areas to the east lie over the ridge and are not as visually dominant. A footpath links the site to the Town Centre and limited public transport along Island Point Road.



Fig. 12: Views across the Subject Site and Anson Street

3. PLANNING REVIEW

3.1 Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan, 2015

This document provides a regional level context to planning and development in St Georges Basin. Though it does not provide urban design analysis or guidance specific to building height controls, the following two directions pertain to housing mix and centres are relevant.

Direction 2.1, to *"Provide sufficient housing supply to suit the changing demands"* pertains to the need to plan and provide a mix of housing types that suit projected growth rates and changing demography (i.e. an aging population) in the region.

Direction 2.2 is to *"support housing opportunities close to existing services, jobs and infrastructure in the regions centres"*. Though the St Georges Basin Town Centre is not named, the general principle of providing more housing close to existing centres is relevant.

3.2 Shoalhaven Integrated Strategic Plan, 2017

Building on the Community Strategic Plan which identifies objectives and strategies for place, people, prosperity and leadership in Shoalhaven, this document develops the Plan further with a delivery and operational program. It identifies issues important to the community including to *'retain amenity of the area'*, and *'restrict over-development'*. It does not provide further urban design analysis or guidance specific to building height controls.



Fig. 13: Jervis Bay Settlement Hierarchy
Information Source: Jervis Bay Settlement Strategy

3.3 Jervis Bay Settlement Strategy, 2003

This document classifies the combined St Georges Basin-Sanctuary Point as a 'Town', providing convenience shopping and a small variety of retail uses (Figure 13). The strategy has a broad objective of supporting urban renewal to ensure that *"opportunities for alternative development forms are investigated in order to meet future settlement needs for the region"*. It describes the need for infill development and urban renewal to occur in existing centres, due to limited opportunities in some existing settlements for expansion. The document also states that *"there is potential for existing urban areas of the Region to provide higher density development in order to increase dwelling yields. However, this has traditionally been resisted by the community because of rapid changes to and impacts on the character of towns and villages"* (Extract: Jervis Bay Settlement Strategy, 3.3 Population Growth and Dwelling Demands, Urban Renewal, p. 21). This conflict is evident in St Georges Basin.

3.4 Coastal Design Guidelines for NSW, 2003

The NSW Coastal Design Guidelines (CDG) establishes a hierarchy of settlements: Coastal Cities, Coastal Towns, Coastal Village & Coastal Hamlets. These settlement types are identified and the discussion of broad characteristics for each settlement type offers a framework for future planning. The position of St Georges Basin in the urban hierarchy is an important consideration in determining the appropriate height. Generally, the higher the settlement is in the hierarchy, the greater the building height. Following Councils advice, consistent with the Jervis Bay Settlement Strategy, St Georges Basin Township falls under a Coastal Town. Coastal Towns are identified as small centres that vary in size and have a population ranging from 3,000 to 20,000 people.

The CDG recognises that towns are under pressure to expand, but they are less able to accommodate large-scale new buildings than higher order centres. It states that *"the existing character of towns can easily be lost to suburban sprawl or tall buildings"*, and highlights as a challenge the degradation of the economic viability of the town centre by caused by commercial development away from the existing centre.

The CDG describes a Coastal Town as *"accommodating growth predominantly within their boundaries without compromising ecosystem functions and biodiversity values. Town centres are reinforced, strengthening the main street so that social, cultural and employment benefits are provided for the community and vibrant centres are created. Infill development enhances the town centre whilst reducing the need for urban expansion and environmental impacts of large residential subdivisions on the outskirts of the town"* (Extract: CDG, Coastal Towns, Desired Future Character, p.16).

The CDG provides guidance of the desired future character of towns, detailing a number of elements, including building height, as key to achieving this character. The CDG identifies a town as being predominantly low scale, with height at its core. For Towns up to 4 stories in the centre and up to 2 storeys in surrounding suburban areas may be appropriate, though heights are subject to place-specific urban design studies. Importantly it states that new development must be appropriate to the *"predominant form and scale of surrounding development (either present or future), surrounding landforms and the visual setting of the settlement"*.

The CDG identifies a wider range of appropriate residential building types for Coastal Towns than currently exist in St Georges Basin. These include small apartment buildings, mixed-use, shop-top housing, town houses, terraces, semi-detached and detached dwellings.

3.5 Shoalhaven Local Environmental Plan 2014 (SLEP)

Land Zoning

Land within the Study Area is zoned B4 Mixed Use, and R1 General Residential (Figure 14). Regard must be had to the zone objectives as building heights must be consistent with and facilitate the relevant zone objectives. The objectives of the height standard clearly identify the factors influencing the determination of appropriate LEP building heights for specific areas within the local government area, including the Study Area. As such, they establish the context for the determination of appropriate height standards.

In relation to the B4 zone, building heights will need to accommodate (where appropriate) the wide range of uses permitted. In relation to the R1 zone, the focus is on providing a variety of housing types and densities to the community, and to identify land suitable for future growth. This is important as St Georges Basin does not have a large diversity of housing types or density. Residential flats and multi dwelling housing are specifically permitted along with other forms of development, and as such appropriate residential floor to ceiling heights and the number of storeys desired will be key considerations for appropriate building heights.

Height of Buildings

The LEP provides a mapped maximum building height standard of 13m on the subject site and varying lower building heights in the surrounding areas (Figure 15). The SLEP also establishes objectives for the building height standard and for the zones within the Study Area, which provide guidance as to what the height standard aims to address. A key 'height of buildings' objective and objective of this study is *"to ensure that buildings are compatible with the height, bulk and scale of the existing and desired future character of a locality"* (Extract: LEP, Clause 4.3, 1a).

Importantly, the height standard also states *"If the Height of Buildings Map does not show a maximum height for any land, the height of a building on the land is not to exceed 11 metres"* (Extract: LEP, Clause 4.3, 2a). This means that any area shown without a mapped height limit, defaults to the 11m maximum height limit.

Maximum building heights are also specified for land surrounding the Study Area. These heights are not proposed to be altered. As previously stated, council has advised that; *'11 metres is a catch all generic provision. No detailed work was done to set it'*. As the advice of council is that the 11m is a default height throughout Shoalhaven, rather than from a strategic or character based decision on height, building heights in the Study Area should have an appropriate relationship with other surrounding area heights, specifically 8m and 8.5m.

The existing land zoning and height surrounding the subject site sets up contradictory cues for height over the site. The existing mixed use retail core (which includes Lot 1) has a height limit of only 8 metres over most of the land. However, the height limit of residential areas (low density residential zoning) surrounding the retail core is mapped at 8.5m. Therefore, the more intensive land use zoning (mixed use) has a lower building height (8m) than nearby lower intensity zoning of Low Density Residential (8.5m). This is somewhat anomalous as greater building height generally corresponds with greater land use intensity.

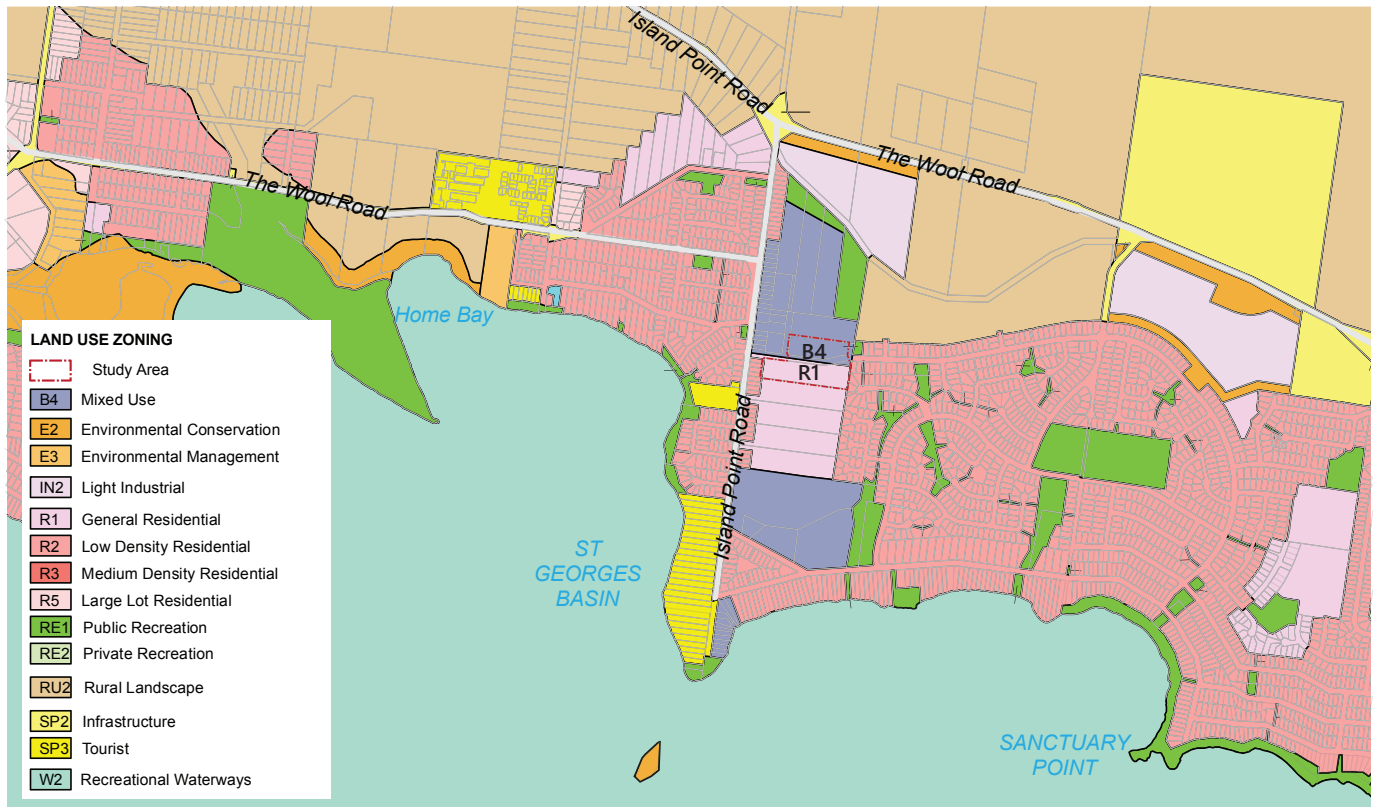


Fig. 14: Land Use Zoning Map
Information Source: Shoalhaven Local Environmental Plan 2014



Fig. 15: Height of Buildings
Information Source: Shoalhaven Local Environmental Plan 2014

3.6 Shoalhaven Development Control Plan, 2014

Chapter N23: St Georges Basin, Village Centre

The Shoalhaven DCP refers to the St Georges Basin centre as a Village Centre. Chapter N23 defers to the height in section 4.3 of the LEP, provides a building height guideline of two storeys over the village centre. This two storey guideline is consistent with the SLEP 8m height limit of land fronting Island Point Road, but not the 11m default or 13m height limit in the remainder of the mixed use zone.

A key objectives is to *"Encourage and develop a special identity for the neighbourhood centre and adjoining B4 areas by establishing an appropriate scale of urban development which is in keeping with the surrounding natural features"* (Extract: Chapter N23, Section 4, Objective 1, p.4). This objective is reflected throughout Chapter N23 of the DCP, in 5.3.2 Building requirements, which states that the *"Height of development within the Neighbourhood Centre is to be of a bulk and size that relates to the existing surrounding development and the natural attributes of the area"*. A specific metric is not given for what an appropriate scale is considered to be outside of the 2 storey guideline in the village core, but chapter G14 speaks to this in DCP Figure 2: Streetscape Compatibility (Figure 12).

Chapter G14: Other Residential Accommodation

This chapter applies to all land (in this case the R1 General Residential and B4 Mixed Use zones) where multi dwelling housing, attached dwellings, semi detached dwellings, residential flat buildings, shop top housing, seniors housing, boarding houses, group homes and hostels are permissible with development consent, in the Shoalhaven area. The purpose of this Chapter is to *"outline controls that ensure buildings are compatible with the scale and bulk of the existing and likely future residential development of adjacent lands"* (Extract: Chapter 14, 1. Purpose, p.3).

The specific objective (Section 5.3. Scale and Density) is to: *"Ensure that the building bulk of new development is compatible with the existing or desired future character of the area."* This is illustrated in DCP Figure 2: Streetscape compatibility below, which shows a transition of a one storey between old and new development.

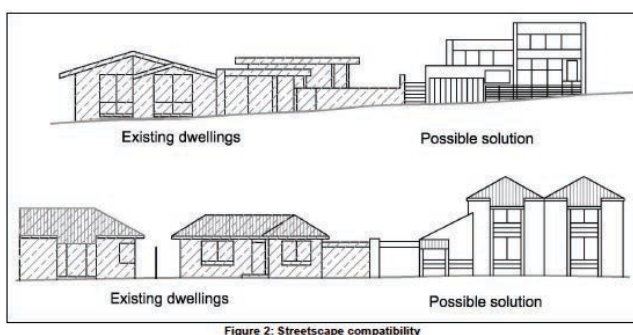


Fig. 16: Streetscape Compatibility
Source: Shoalhaven DCP, Chapter G14: Other Residential Accommodation

3.7 State Environmental Planning Policy No 65 (SEPP 65) - Design Quality of Residential Flat Development and Apartment Design Guide

SEPP 65 sets out the NSW Government's policy direction for residential apartment development in NSW. It applies to development three storeys or over, for the purpose of a residential flat building, shop top housing or mixed use development with a residential accommodation component.

There are ten Design Quality Principles that sit within SEPP 65. These are used in the assessment of proposed development. Principle 1: Context and Neighbourhood Character describes good design as responding and contributing to its context. It states; *"Responding to context involves identifying the desirable elements of an area's existing or future character. Well designed buildings respond to and enhance the qualities and identity of the area including the adjacent sites, streetscape and neighbourhood"* (Extract: SEPP 65, Schedule 1 Design Quality Principles, p.9).

Principle 2: Built Form and Scale reinforces the relationship between character and scale, stating that *"Good design achieves a scale, bulk and height appropriate to the existing or desired future character of the street and surrounding buildings. Good design also achieves an appropriate built form for a site and the building's purpose in terms of building alignments, proportions, building type, articulation and the manipulation of building elements"* (Extract: SEPP 65, Schedule 1 Design Quality Principles, p.10).

Principle 8: Housing Diversity and Social Interaction keys into the need to provide a mix of housing types that suits projected growth rates and changing demography in the region (Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan Direction 2.1), and states that *"Good design achieves a mix of apartment sizes, providing housing choice for different demographics, living needs and household budgets. Well designed apartment developments respond to social context by providing housing and facilities to suit the existing and future social mix"* (Extract: SEPP 65, Schedule 1 Design Quality Principles, p.11).

The Apartment Design Guide (ADG) is applicable to residential development over three storeys and is to be used in conjunction with SEPP 65. It is an important link between the provisions of SEPP 65 and more detailed design guidance.

3.8 Better Placed - A Strategic Design Policy for the Built Environment of NSW, 2017

Better Placed is NSW's first state-wide integrated design policy, developed by the Government Architect's Office. This policy is aimed to ensure the delivery of high quality urban design and better places for people across NSW, and to provide clarity on what the NSW Government means by 'good design'. It describes good design as contextual, local and ultimately 'of its place', in the objective *"Good design in the built environment is informed by and derived from its location, context and social setting. It is place-based and relevant to and resonant with local character, heritage and communal aspirations. It also contributes to evolving and future character and setting"* (Extract: Better Placed, Objective 1, Better Fit, p.38).

The policy defines undesirable design outcomes as having a poor 'fit' with their context, and goes on to say that a community's sense of place can be undermined and existing attractors devalued when *"design has little sense of the 'local' character, materials or landscape"* or *"buildings mimic neighbouring buildings, or clumsily reference local character"* (Extract: Better Placed, Section 2.2, What we don't want, p.23). These statements place great importance on the careful reading of existing and desired future character, and responsive design.

4. FINDINGS

St Georges Basin is at an important stage in its development. The few remaining un-developed sites, such as the Subject Site, are zoned to allow uses which differ from the standard residential pattern of detached houses that make up the majority of the existing township. Recent developments within these undeveloped areas have been for retirement villages. These are generally single-storey detached or semi-detached dwellings for independent living.

The LEP zoning applicable to the Subject Site permit more intensive forms of residential development which could represent a significant change in the character of the township if fulfilled. The findings of the Character Assessment and the Planning Review must therefore both be taken into account when considering the scale of development appropriate, to ensure that any new development is sensitive to the existing character, while still allowing for future growth and opportunity where appropriate.

4.1 Planning and Character Summary

In summary, the Planning Review section highlights a number of key objectives and directives applicable to the site including;

- The need to provide a mix of housing types and to support housing opportunities close to existing centres. **Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan, 2015**
- The potential for existing urban centres to provide alternative development forms and infill developments in existing centres, while recognising the resistance of community to rapid change in relation to such developments. **Jervis Bay Settlement Strategy, 2003**



Fig. 17: St Georges Basin Scenic Views from around the Area
Source: www.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au

- Retaining the amenity of areas to keep 'the village feel', and restricting over-development in the coastal centres. **Integrated Strategic Plan, 2017**
- Accommodating (where appropriate) permitted consistent uses with the LEP zoning, and facilitating the relevant zone objectives. In relation to the R1 zone, the focus is on providing a variety of housing types and densities to the community, and to identify land suitable for future growth. In the B4 Mixed Use zone the objective is to *'integrate suitable business, office, residential, retail and other development in accessible locations'*. **Shoalhaven Local Environmental Plan, 2014**
- Fulfilling objectives for the LEP building height standard, including ensuring that "buildings are compatible with the height, bulk and scale of the existing and desired future character of a locality". Building heights applicable to the Subject Site should have an appropriate relationship with other surrounding area heights, specifically 8m and 8.5m. **Shoalhaven Local Environmental Plan, 2014**
- A DCP building height guideline of two storeys over the village centre, with importance placed on ensuring *"development within the Neighbourhood Centre is to be of a bulk and size that relates to the existing surrounding development and the natural attributes of the area"*. **Shoalhaven Development Control Plan, 2014, Chapter N23: St Georges Basin, Village Centre**
- Reiteration of the need to ensure that *"the building bulk of new development is compatible with the existing or desired future character of the area"*. **Shoalhaven Development Control Plan, 2014, Chapter G14: Other Residential Accommodation**
- The need to protect the existing character of Coastal Towns, such as St Georges Basin, against suburban sprawl or tall buildings. It states that new development must be appropriate to the *"predominant form and scale of surrounding development (either present or future), surrounding landforms and the visual setting of the settlement"*. **Coastal Design Guidelines for NSW, 2003**
- That development in Coastal Towns should be predominantly low scale with height at its core. Specifically with a height of *up to four storeys in the town centres and up to two storeys in suburban areas*, though heights are subject place-specific urban design studies. **Coastal Design Guidelines for NSW, 2003**
- The CDG identifies a wider range of appropriate residential building types for towns than currently exist in St Georges Basin including small apartment buildings, mixed-use, shop-top housing and town houses. **Coastal Design Guidelines for NSW, 2003**
- If development is 3 storeys or over, to follow the provisions of SEPP 65 and the more detailed design guidance contained in the Apartment Design Guide in relation to good design. Specifically Context and Neighbourhood Character, and Built Form and Scale, and Housing Diversity and Social Interaction. **SEPP 65, Amendment 3, 2015**
- That 'good design' should be informed by and derived from it's physical and social context. **Better Placed, 2017**

The above objectives from relevant planning documents have strong themes around recognising and respecting the existing character of St Georges Basin. The character areas surrounding the subject site, investigated in the Character Assessment section, share a number of characteristics, indicative of the wider character of the St Georges Basin Township. In the three surrounding character areas both residential and commercial buildings are low scale, between one and two storeys. Buildings are predominantly detached with an overall facade width of between approximately 8 and 18 metres.

Another theme of the planning objectives applicable to St Georges Basin, is the need to provide alternative forms of development than currently exist close to existing centres, specifically a greater mix of housing types. There is the opportunity to provide a more intensive forms of residential development on the subject site, provided it is compatible with the existing character and scale of the area.

4.2 Determining an Appropriate Height Scale

Successful scale relationships between buildings work together to create a contiguous sense of place. The buildings in the St Georges Basin Township are single and two storey residential and commercial. The diagrams below show potential scale relationships between the existing building scale and new development, up to a maximum of four storeys which is the maximum height stated in the CDG.

Heights illustrated below are based on;

- Ceiling heights of 2.7m (with 0.4m per floor for structures and services, except for immediately under a pitched roof where structure is within the roof structure);
- Pitched roofs of 3m for one and two storey buildings, flat roofs of 1m articulation for flat roofs (from Apartment Design Guide, 2C Building Height, P. 31).
- It should be noted that the Apartment Design Guide also directs to *"add 2m to the total to allow for topographic changes where appropriate"*. This has not been included for the purposes of these calculations. Furthermore the heights illustrated below are for residential buildings and commercial floor to floor heights are generally greater, with a ceiling to ceiling height of between 3.7m and 4.3m.

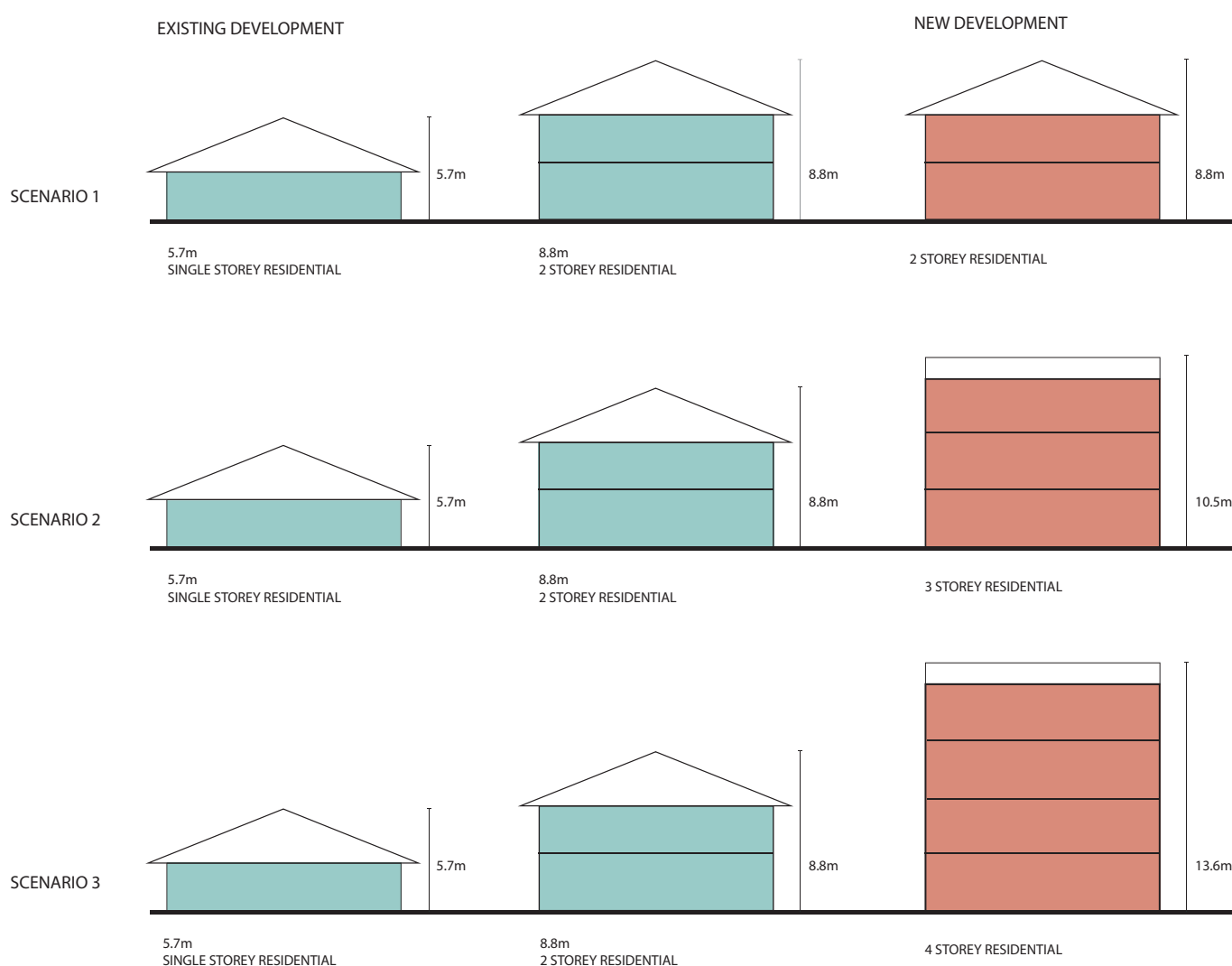


Fig. 18: Scale Relationships between Residential Typologies and Heights

Scenario 1

- Same scale as existing one and two storey low scale development, with a maximum transition of one storey.
- Compliant with the DCP maximum height of 2 storeys in the Town Centre and mapped LEP heights in the surrounding area.
- Potential residential building typologies are more likely to be townhouses, shop-top housing or terraces, rather than small apartment buildings.

Scenario 2

- This scale of development does not currently exist in the St Georges Basin Township. This is a break from the established height environment. Though the change in scale between two storeys and three storeys is relatively modest, the transition between one storey and three storeys is more significant.
- Opportunity to provide a more intensive type of housing development, such as small apartment buildings, close to the Town Centre.
- Not compliant with the DCP maximum height of two storeys in the Town Centre (referred to as the village centre in the DCP), but potentially permissible in CDG after place-specific urban design study.
- Architectural character and articulation, materials, facade widths and siting would be key in making sure that new development of this scale is sympathetic to the scale and character of existing buildings.

Scenario 3

- This scale of development does not currently exist in the St Georges Basin Township. Four storey development requires a significant step of two storeys or three storeys between existing and new development. This is a dramatic break from the established height environment.
- Not compliant with the DCP maximum height of two storeys in the Town Centre. Not compatible with the existing low scale character of the St Georges Town Centre.
- Opportunity to provide a more intensive type of housing development, such as small apartment buildings close to the centre.

4.3 Conclusion

This report sets out an objective assessment of the surrounding character environment for the purpose of assessing what is an appropriate height on the subject land. The height of three storeys could be contemplated (this being a step of one or two stories from the surrounding heights of one or two stories), if there was a clear strategic planning directive to increase height in the area. However, no such strategic planning directive exists.

The location-specific planning work including LEP mapped heights (excluding the 13m on the subject site), and the DCP propose a two storey height in the area. The two storey height limit creates a modest transition of a maximum of one storey between existing and new development which is consistent with the existing character of the area surrounding the Subject Site. Therefore, the maximum height for the subject lands should be in-line with the surrounding height environment which is two storeys, as illustrated in Scenario 1.