



Gregory Hills Town Centre

Design Review Report

Prepared for
Dart West Developments

21 September 2012



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Report Prepared for Dart West Developments Pty Ltd

Report Prepared with assistance from:



Report Prepared 21 September 2012



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gregory Hills Town Centre was rezoned in 2007 as part of the Turner Road Precinct. The Turner Road DCP identifies the town centre as needing a Part B DCP prior to any development application being lodged.

Preparation of the Part B DCP commenced in 2011 and reached the stage of a draft set of controls being prepared for consideration by Camden Council and the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. This draft was prepared after a two day planning workshop attended by Dart West Developments, Camden Council, various specialist consultants and chaired by an independent urban designer.

DoPI reviewed the draft and outlined some concerns with the proposed concept design and associated controls. Additional design work by AECOM was commissioned by DoPI, although this led to a design which was not supported by the various parties.

To assist in driving the process towards a conclusion, Dart West felt it was necessary to prepare a design report which examined the factors shaping the concept design in more detail than is possible in a formal DCP. This report therefore explores:

- the site constraints and opportunities;
- the economic drivers underpinning the proposed concept design;
- the various options considered in the evolution of the concept design; and
- an assessment of the proposed design against the Part A DCP objectives set out for the site.

In considering the findings of this report, it is important to note that the manner in which the design can respond to the Part A DCP objectives is constrained by the fact that the town centre site has fixed zone boundaries and is bounded by roads on three sides for which the alignment is already determined by the development which has already taken place. The fourth boundary of the site is also defined by a fixed riparian corridor zone. The shape and location of the site is therefore not able to be modified, and the design needs to work within this framework, as well as the vertical levels imposed by the topography of the land surrounding the site.

It is also important that the development controls facilitate a design which is economically viable in the long term. The key driver in this regard is ensuring that the design facilitates the delivery of shopping centre tenancies which will support rents which are sufficiently high to support a return on the development costs involved in the delivery of the centre. The design must also be attractive and easily accessible for customers.

This report demonstrates that the concept design proposed by Dart West will support the achievement of the financial objectives while still achieving the majority of the design principles established in the main Turner Road DCP. The report also demonstrates that the concept design has evolved after consideration of a wide range of design alternatives. While some of these alternative concepts did involve greater presentation of buildings to street frontages, these options were considered on balance to be inferior given their inability to address the financial objectives adequately and because of impacts on surrounding streets. In particular, the slope characteristics of the site mean that buildings which were at street level on the north-south collector road ended up being well below street level at the south-western corner of the site.

Importantly, the report also demonstrates how the town centre fits into its wider context at the heart of Gregory Hills, enjoying excellent proximity and links to the proposed primary school, community centre, child care centre, medium density housing and frequent bus services linking the town centre to its surrounding environment, including Campbelltown Railway Station and Oran Park Town Centre.

The concept design seeks to provide a dynamic outdoor dining precinct which links the town centre site to the riparian corridor, while at the same time ensuring that the necessary loading facilities have as small an impact as possible on adjoining residential land.

In summary, Dart West believes that the proposed concept design is the best possible design response taking into account the objectives outlined in the Turner Road DCP, the financial imperatives and the site characteristics.

We seek the in-principle endorsement from both Camden Council and the Department of Planning and Infrastructure of the concept design outlined in this report. If this is achieved, Dart West would then seek to recommence the formal documentation of the Part B DCP so that public exhibition can be undertaken prior to adoption of the Part B DCP.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Gregory Hills was rezoned as part of the Turner Road precinct planning process which concluded in December 2007. Along with Oran Park, Turner Road was rezoned in less than 18 months and was the focus of an accelerated process for land release initiated by the then Growth Centres Commission.

Turner Road precinct was identified to provide 4,020 new dwellings, over 100 hectares of employment land and a 15,000m² town centre.

The Indicative Layout Plan (ILP) for the precinct located the town centre within the Gregory Hills project adjacent to a tributary of South Creek and immediately south of Gregory Hills Drive, a key sub-arterial link through Gregory Hills to Campbelltown. The site was also located in close proximity to the future Gregory Hills primary school (which will serve the wider Turner Road precinct), thereby forming a strong community heart. The Turner Road DCP also identified two child care centres and a community centre as being suitable uses in close proximity to the town centre.

The Turner Road DCP identified the need to prepare a Part B DCP for the Gregory Hills Town Centre, based on a recognition that this central feature of the precinct warranted closer consideration of detailed planning controls than was possible at the time of the initial rezoning process.

Dart West Developments initiated this Part B DCP process with Camden Council in 2011, and a comprehensive and collaborative workshop process was initiated to enable draft development controls to be prepared. These controls were then presented to the Department of Planning for review and the Department identified a number of concerns with the proposed controls and design outcome.

As a result, the Department then initiated a design review undertaken by AECOM and an alternative design was prepared. This design was prepared by AECOM based on then unpublished guidelines being prepared by the Department which were not made available at the time the Part B DCP workshop was held. The Department of Planning's alternative design, based on the guidelines, was submitted to Dart West and Council for review and was considered by both Council and Dart West to be significantly flawed in both design and commercial terms.

Dart West then determined that a fundamental review of the design parameters for the town centre needed to be undertaken. This review was designed to inform a report summarising the design intent, and constraints and opportunities available at the site.

This report has now been prepared by Dart West Developments and Development Planning Strategies for consideration by Camden Council and the Department of Planning and Infrastructure prior to moving forward with revised detailed development controls. The intent of the report is to provide a more comprehensive basis and justification for the proposed design and associated controls than was possible through the Part B DCP documentation alone.

After feedback is provided on the report, it is intended to prepare a new set of detailed DCP controls to enable the Part B DCP process to proceed to exhibition and finalisation.

THE ROLE AND CONTEXT OF GREGORY HILLS TOWN CENTRE

2.1 Regional Role

The South West Growth Centre Structure Plan incorporated a strong emphasis on local centres underpinning the urban structure so that communities would have a wide range of facilities in their local area to support daily needs.

Gregory Hills Town Centre fulfils that role in the Turner Road precinct. The centre has been located and sized to play an important role as both a neighbourhood centre for the wider Turner Road precinct and as a convenience centre for the relatively high level of traffic that is likely to use Gregory Hills Drive once it is connected through to Campbelltown.

At a maximum floor area of 15,000m², the centre will complement rather than compete with existing and proposed larger centres at Narellan and Oran Park.

2.2 Urban Design Principles

In a number of respects, the ILP location for the town centre is highly suitable. A wide range of urban design principles have underpinned its location.

The town centre is located at the heart of the future Gregory Hills community, with excellent public transport, cycling and pedestrian access from large parts of the community, including use of the adjoining riparian corridor as a key pedestrian and cycle link to the centre. Gregory Hills Drive will also form a significant part of the wider bus service network providing excellent public transport access to the centre.

It also has good prominence and road accessibility to the wider precinct by virtue of its location on Gregory Hills Drive. However, it should be noted that the relatively high volumes of traffic likely on this road (forecast to be more than 28,000 cars per day) reduce the ability to provide an activated street frontage on Gregory Hills Drive.

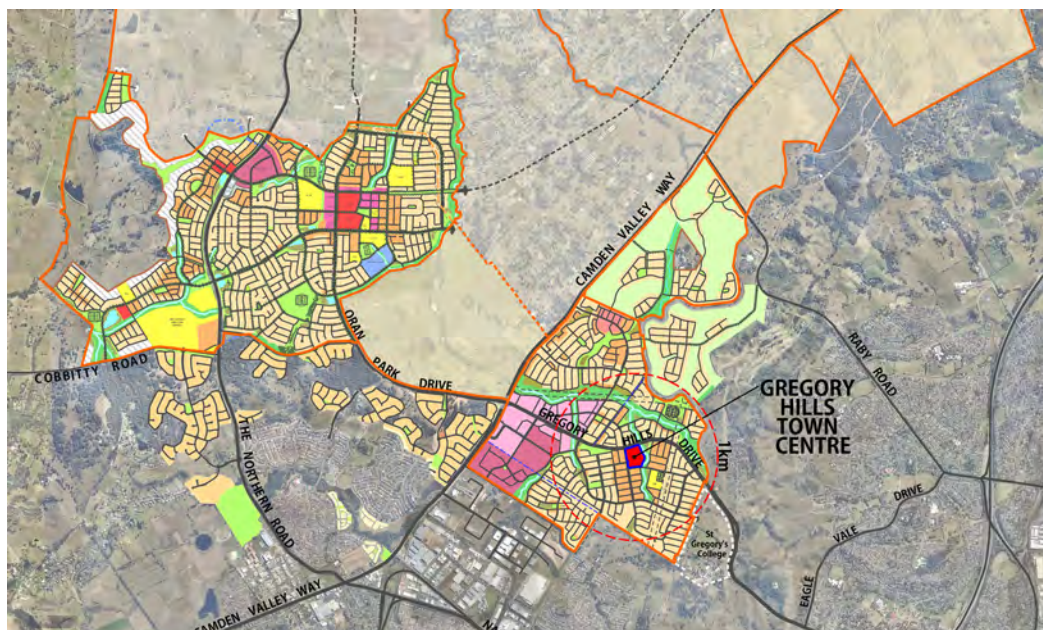


Figure 1: Regional Context

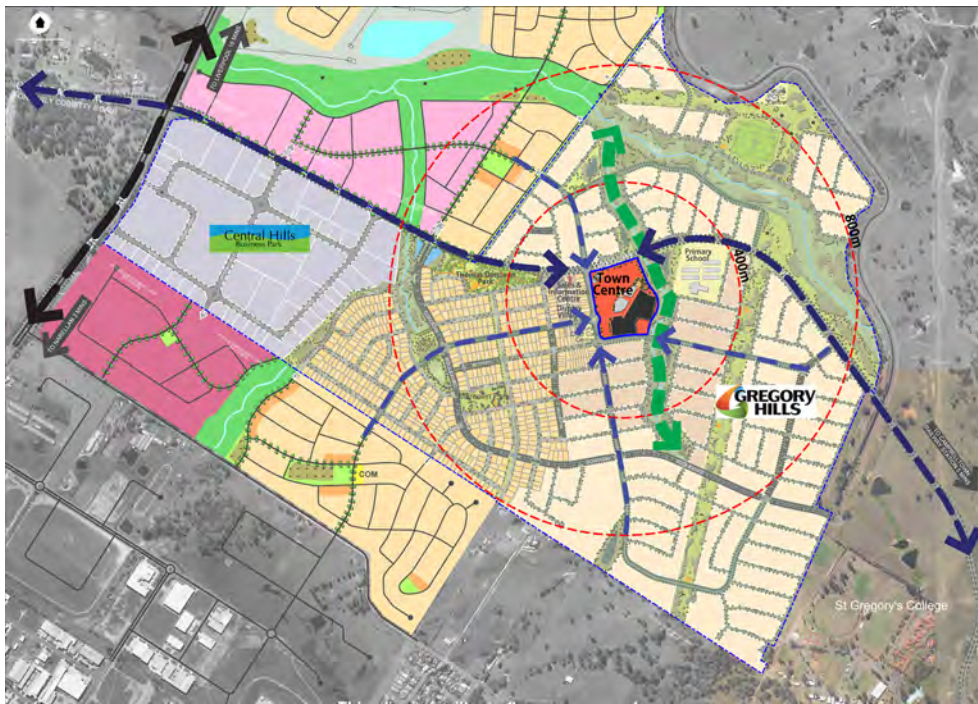


Figure 2: Local Context and Connectivity

As noted in the introduction, the ILP location for the town centre is ideally integrated with the proposed locations of the primary school, community centre and child care facilities. This part of Gregory Hills will truly function as a genuine heart of the community.

Importantly, it also sits at the heart of the proposed medium density housing precincts in Gregory Hills, thereby reinforcing the viability of the centre and concentrating activity around the various proposed community facilities and in close proximity to the key public transport route.

The centre will also play an important role in providing local jobs and underpinning the economic viability of Gregory Hills, particularly in light of the complementary role it will play with the nearby Central Hills Business Park.

Firstly, the site is specifically zoned B1 Neighbourhood Centre. The site boundaries are therefore fixed, and full or partial relocation of the centre is not practical and would involve a rezoning and significant alterations to the masterplan.

In addition, the adjoining riparian corridor to the east is zoned B4 Environmental Living, and its boundaries are not easily altered given the natural watercourse in that location.

The alignment of Gregory Hills Drive is also now fixed in on the northern boundary by virtue of the existing constructed section immediately west of the town centre. The north-south road on the western edge of the town centre is also fixed by surrounding development and its associated road network.

2.3 Consideration of Alternative Sites

As noted above, the ILP location for the town centre is considered ideal for a number of reasons, particularly given its ability to function as a central heart for the future community with excellent transport access by a range of modes.

However, as part of the Part B DCP process, it was appropriate to reconsider whether the location is the best available given the range of planning objectives set out in the main Turner Road DCP for the Part B DCP to address. This review built on work undertaken by Dart West Developments in its original concept design for the centre, where several variations to the current site were considered.

This consideration concluded that there are a number of reasons why alternative locations for the centre are impractical.



Figure 3: Current Site Zoning and Aerial Photo

THE COMMERCIAL CONTEXT FOR THE PART B DCP PLANNING CONTROLS

There is a strong underlying link between the application of planning principles and medium to long term planning benefits and commercial objectives for the town centre.

The ongoing economic viability of the centre is essential to the sustained achievement of the wide range of planning objectives associated with the role Gregory Hills Town Centre will play.

A centre which trades well and is cost efficient to own will ensure that the planning benefits of the centre are able to be maintained in the medium to long term.

Such a centre will also be maintained in better condition and be able to adapt to changing retail trends through reinvestment. Such a centre will continue to serve the changing needs of the wider Turner Road precinct community as the community matures and evolves over the longer term.

The development controls applicable to the centre also have a significant impact on the ability to build the town centre in the first place. Retail centres as an investment option need to deliver a projected return which reflects both the costs of constructing the centre and a return over time on the capital invested. The financial return from a retail asset is simply a function of the rents it can achieve from tenants. These rents in turn are highly dependent on the attractiveness of the tenancy to a business which in turn relies on the tenancy being attractive to potential customers.

The design of the town centre, influenced by the development controls, needs to ensure that each and every tenancy is as attractive as possible to potential shopkeepers and their customers. This attractiveness effectively means maximising the number of customers who are likely to pass the particular tenancy and on a broader scale find the overall centre a safe, convenient, desirable, and attractive place to shop.

It is therefore critical that the design requirements contained in the Part B DCP ensure that a commercially viable design can be achieved.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR GREGORY HILLS TOWN CENTRE

This section of the report describes the design principles for the town centre, and demonstrates that a wide range of factors need to be, and have been, taken into account in determining a preferred design which best balances the various planning objectives and the commercial objectives for the centre.

4.1 Part A DCP Design Principles

The Part A DCP provides guidance as to what overall objectives are in place for the town centre and what therefore needs to be addressed in the Part B DCP. This section provides a summary of the key objectives and controls.

The two objectives for the town centre are to create a vibrant, mixed use neighbourhood centre providing a range of retail and community services and to ensure that the design is undertaken in a coordinated manner to achieve high quality urban design outcomes.

These objectives are then supported by a number of controls, the most relevant of which include:

- the centre being a central focus for the community and being supported by higher residential densities;
- maximising exposure to Gregory Hills Drive while incorporating an active focal point in the form of a civic square, plaza or main street;
- taking into account the impact of the centre on surrounding land uses, particularly in terms of noise;
- the need to ensure buildings are visible from and have a presence to street frontages;
- the need for buildings to take advantage of proximity to open space and riparian corridors;
- ensuring blank walls are minimised either through the use of sleeve buildings or careful building design and landscaping treatments;
- the architecture is to be contemporary in nature;
- pedestrian and cyclist access is to be convenient and of a high quality and is to take into account CPTED principles;
- waste and service areas are to be designed to minimise visual and noise impacts;
- a coordinated approach to landscape design, signage and street furniture is to be implemented; and
- the visibility of parking areas adjoining street frontages is to be minimised through appropriate landscaping and parking layout and design, and on-street parking is to be used to activate streets.

4.2 Site Attributes

The design evolution also needs to take into account a number of site attributes. These are shown in the figure below and explored in more detail.

Site Topography

An efficient centre needs a site which is as level as possible to enable ease of pedestrian movement and vehicle access, as well as efficient construction methods. A strategic approach to bulk earthworks is being implemented across Gregory Hills to ensure cut and fill across the site is balanced, negating the need to either import or export fill.

The town centre's needs in this regard have been taken into account, and a platform will be established which both provides a level site and maximises the ability of the site to integrate well with surrounding streets and the adjoining riparian corridor in terms of levels.

This is likely to lead to the centre sitting about 5m below surrounding street levels in the south-west corner of the site so that levels in other parts of the site can be better integrated with roads and the adjoining riparian corridor.

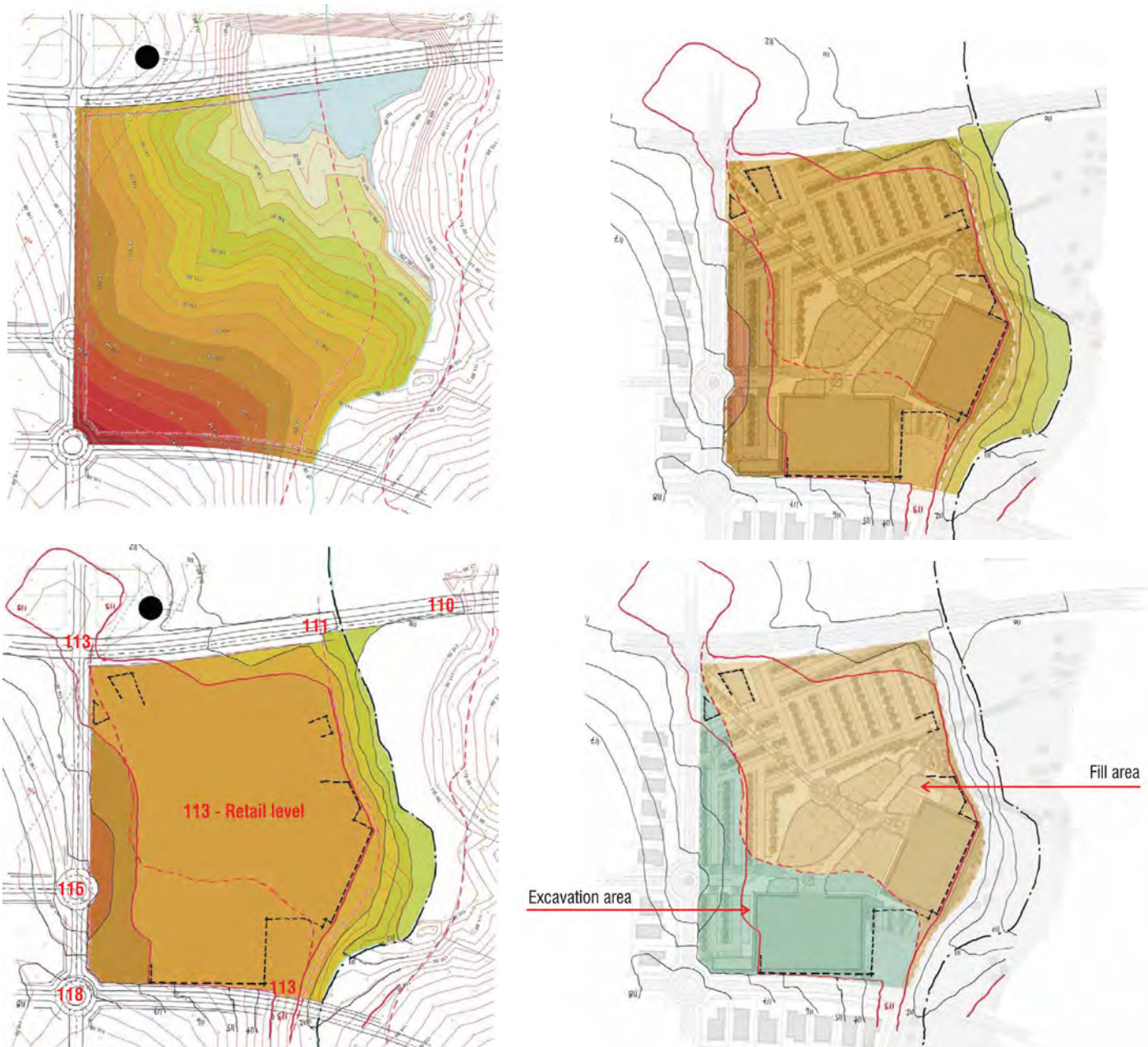


Figure 4: Site Contours / Slope

Solar Access and Prevailing Winds

A key principle driving the design objectives of Dart West Developments for the centre has been to take advantage of the northerly aspect of the site and particularly the north-easterly aspect adjoining the riparian corridor. This part of the site will capture the morning and midday sun, while being shielded from the prevailing hotter westerly and south-westerly winds.

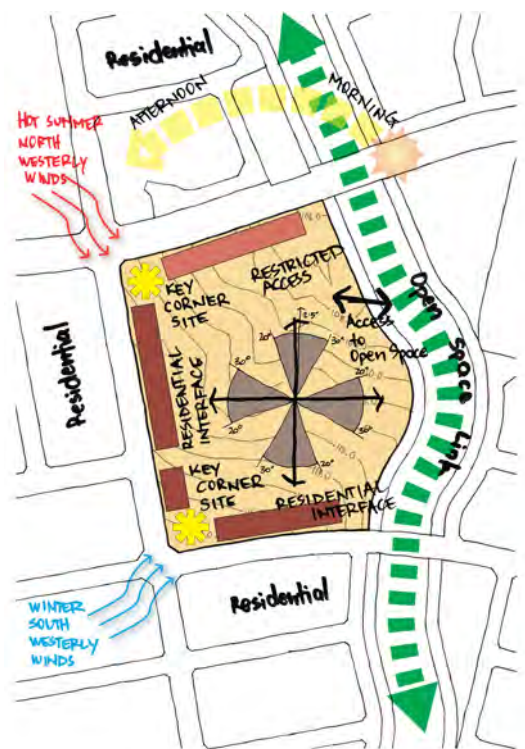


Figure 5: Site Conditions



Road Frontages and Pedestrian Linkages

The town centre site is fronted on its northern, western and southern edges by roads and on its eastern edge by a riparian corridor.

Gregory Hills Drive forms the northern boundary of the site. This road will play a significant local and regional role, serving both as the primary road within Gregory Hills but also as a key regional link road connecting the southern part of the South West Growth Centre and the Campbelltown area, including its transport infrastructure such as the F5 freeway and Campbelltown railway station.

While providing excellent access to the centre, the forecast traffic volumes for the road of more than 28,000 cars per day will mean that the centre will not be suited to direct retail frontage. Instead, this frontage will play an important access role for both vehicles (via a left in only slip lane) and a central public transport and pedestrian entry point.



Figure 6: Pedestrian & Vehicular Access

The north-south road on the western side of the centre will act as the primary entry for vehicles, as identified in the Turner Road ILP. Road infrastructure approaching the centre on this side is already in place and features a wider collector road (Healy Avenue) approaching the centre's main vehicular entry point.

Land adjoining this road is also already partially subdivided, including for a proposed child care centre site adjacent to the main site entry. Housing is proposed opposite the town centre and a development application for this land is soon to be lodged. This subdivision will deliver medium density housing in accordance with the intentions of the ILP and the DCP.

This road provides the opportunity for a high quality streetscape consistent with Dart West's intentions for the wider town centre precinct. Footpaths would be widened, and high quality street furniture provided. Indented parking would be made available as part of efforts to ensure the road carriageway is effectively narrowed to slow traffic speeds and to provide a safe and comfortable pedestrian environment.

The east-west road on the southern boundary of the centre offers an opportunity to address the delivery needs of the town centre while still reinforcing a consistent and high quality approach to landscaping. This street would also reinforce the pedestrian link between the riparian corridor and its large pedestrian catchment, as well as the primary school and the town centre.

Riparian Corridor

The eastern boundary of the town centre adjoins a 60m wide riparian corridor. This corridor is the central design feature of the overall town centre precinct and will play a crucial role in defining the urban character of Gregory Hills. It will also provide a very attractive pedestrian linkage to the town centre from a significant portion of the overall Gregory Hills community.

It is imperative that the design of the town centre addresses this natural asset in a meaningful way. The centre's design should facilitate access between land uses on both sides of the riparian corridor. In this case, Dart West has successfully negotiated the relocation of the primary school from its ILP location to be immediately east of the town centre adjoining Gregory Hills Drive.

This offers the opportunity for these two highly active land uses to be co-located and integrated.

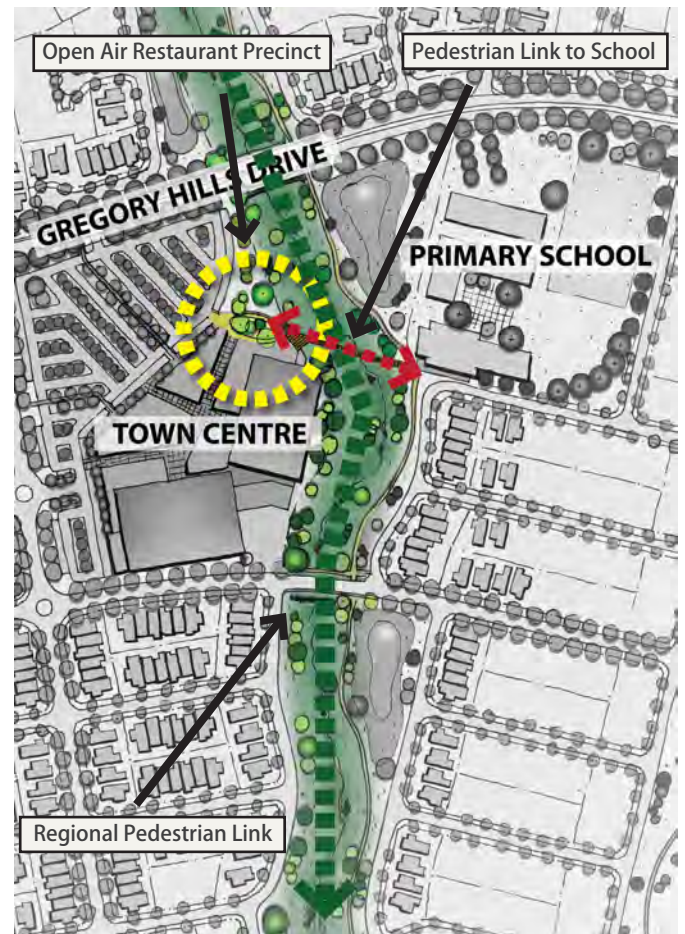


Figure 7: Riparian Corridor Interaction Principles



DESIGN EVOLUTION FOR GREGORY HILLS TOWN CENTRE

Dart West has undertaken an evolving design process for the centre over the last four years.

In 2009, The Buchan Group was engaged to prepare a concept design with the objective of preparing a design which would be able to be used for indicative marketing purposes for prospective customers at Gregory Hills looking to buy land.

This concept design drew on the requirements outlined in the Part A DCP and balanced these planning requirements with the opportunities offered by the site and the commercial objectives which would underpin the viable delivery and long term operation of the town centre.

Buchan's work involved consideration of a range of designs and layouts, as shown in the figures on this page.



Figure 8: Gregory Hills Town Centre Design Evolution

The Buchan Group was then engaged in 2011 as part of preparations for the Part B DCP workshop process. This work involved a review of the 2009 strategy as well as updating the design.

In both 2009 and 2011, Buchan's were instructed by Dart West to address the Part A DCP objectives and controls as much as possible while also designing a centre which reflected contemporary retail design trends and which addressed the commercial imperatives of ensuring a centre would be viable to initially develop and ultimately own over time.

The 2011 design review led to a preferred design being adopted for consideration during the Part B DCP workshop process. This design is shown below.

The next step in the evolution of the design was the comprehensive two day Part B DCP workshop process. This important step in the process is summarised in the following chapter.



Figure 9: Preferred Pre-DCP Workshop Town Centre Layout

THE PART B DCP WORKSHOP

6.1 Workshop Process

After consultation with both the Department of Planning and Infrastructure and Camden Council, it was agreed that an intensive two day workshop process was the best way to address the wide range of design issues and to facilitate the preparation of the first draft of the Part B DCP planning objectives and controls.

This workshop was held in July 2011 and was attended by:

- multiple representatives of Camden Council including staff from both the Strategic Planning and Development teams;
- Council's independent urban design consultant, Paterson Design Strategies;
- Council's consultant project manager, employed by APP and appointed by both Council and the Department of Planning;
- several specialist consultants, including transport and traffic (Brown Consulting),
- Buchan Group (Dart West's project Architects) and DPS (Dart West's town planners); and
- Dart West Developments representatives.

A detailed report from Jeremy Spinks of APP (the consultant project manager for Council) is attached to this report at Appendix 1. This report summarises the process for the workshop and highlights the comprehensive assessment of the opportunities and constraints associated with the site.

The workshop was informed by an assessment of current practice in the Australian retail industry for comparable centres to Gregory Hills which was undertaken by Council's independent urban designer, Garth Paterson of Paterson Design Strategies. This review examined a number of similar sized centres around Australia including Stanhope Gardens and Ropes Crossing in NSW, and Laurimar in Victoria.

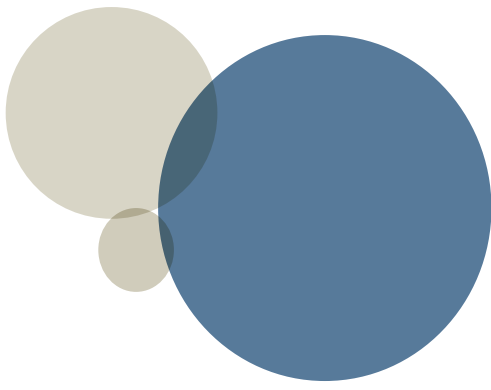
Elements which underpinned the success of these centre were highlighted, and these included green links, hovering spots, play spots, spill out eateries, public art, well located free seating and shade trees. Garth also noted the importance of aggregating elements such as shade, seating, bins and planted areas to provide an attractive and functional public domain.

Buchan Group then presented an updated version of their 2009 concept design drawing on a collaborative review with DPS of the statutory planning framework for the town centre and the overall Gregory Hills masterplan.

The Buchan Group identified key constraints and desires for the site.

Constraints

- Slope – the site slopes gently from the SW corner to the NE corner. There is a 10m level difference across the site. Therefore despite the gentle gradient, there are still significant level changes to accommodate in order to provide a pleasant retail experience. The grade is also relatively fixed (within a metre or two) along the western site edge due to existing development and existing road construction.
- Loading access – loading access off Gregory Hills Drive is constrained by traffic volumes, aesthetics and the proposed bridge over the riparian corridor.



Desires

- Single loading area – more efficient use of space and minimises unattractive areas
- Northerly aspect open air plaza with eateries fronting the riparian corridor, acting as focal point for the centre
- Relate strongly to the riparian corridor
- Parking area relates to retail entry points
- Active linkage or relationship to NW corner
- Strong pedestrian links to surrounding land uses, including the adjacent primary school

Based on these constraints and desires, the design evolved into a model with the retail area and loading bay located at the south east corner of the site, and the public plaza towards the north east interacting with the riparian corridor. This resulted in car parking areas along the northern and western site frontages.

The Buchan Group presented a modified version of the 2009 concept.

This option has the retail consolidated in the south-east corner served by a single loading bay. The open air plaza area is located adjoining the riparian corridor towards the north-east corner of the site, to provide a high quality, iconic visual element closer to Gregory Hills Drive. The north-west corner features a landscaped entry feature.

This option represented Dart West's initial preference for consideration by the workshop. Over the next two days, significant testing and refining of this option was undertaken and the various Part A DCP controls were considered in detail.

As is noted in the workshop summary report prepared by APP, a hybrid main street option was also considered which placed a strong emphasis on having retail development fronting the north-south street which borders the western side of the site. This option had the advantage of providing more activated street frontage on this street, but resulted in separate loading docks (including one fronting Gregory Hills Drive) and a very poor relationship with the riparian corridor (Refer to Figure 10).

This option, while having some merit, was considered unsatisfactory given the poor relationship with the riparian corridor. It was therefore recognised as another option to be added to the long list of site layout options considered for the centre, including those considered in Buchan's 2009 work.

It was then agreed by the workshop participants, including Council planning staff and the independent urban design consultant, that the Buchan concept design reflected the best opportunity to achieve a balancing of the Part A DCP planning controls and the site opportunities and constraints. However, it was felt that additional measures could be employed to enhance the updated Buchan concept design, particularly with regard to pedestrian access and the relationship with the riparian corridor.

The workshop then explored ways in which the Buchan preferred concept could:

- strengthen the street address to Gregory Hills Drive and the north south collector road;
- provide an active outdoor retail edge; and
- minimise the perceived visual dominance of car parking when viewed from the street edges.

It was agreed that a range of landscape design and streetscape design measures should be implemented to better manage the interface between the car park areas and the north – south collector road and Gregory Hills Drive. These are set out in more detail in the APP report in Appendix 1.

The centre would also be designed so that its frontage to the car park area featured an active retail edge and high quality landscaped areas linking the public plaza proposed at the north-eastern corner with the remainder of the front of the centre.

The design would also incorporate covered pedestrian walkways and some additional retail on the north-south collector road (Refer Figure 10).



Figure 10: DCP Workshop Town Centre Layout

6.2 Workshop Outcomes

After two days, the workshop reached a consensus view of the preferred design on which the Part B DCP controls would be based.

This design achieves a variety of key urban design outcomes as demonstrated on the adjoining figure.

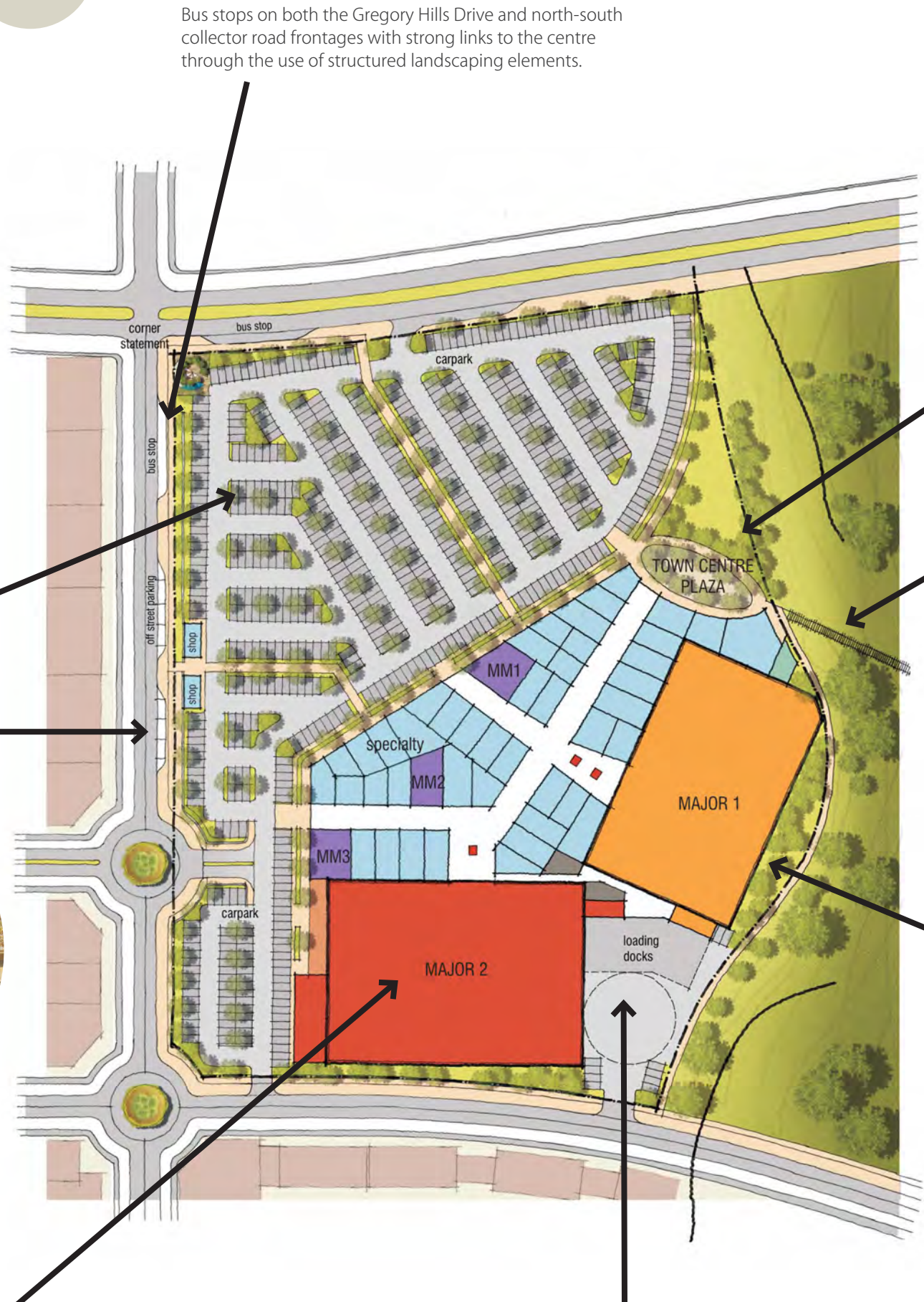


Parking areas would be easily accessible from both Gregory Hills Drive and the north-south collector road.

On-street parking on the north-south collector road to slow traffic and assist to create a conducive pedestrian environment, particularly when integrated with the overall approach to street furniture.



The main shopping centre building is located in the south-eastern corner of the site.



Bus stops on both the Gregory Hills Drive and north-south collector road frontages with strong links to the centre through the use of structured landscaping elements.



The north-eastern corner of the centre features an open plaza focused on dining and children's play to present an active frontage in a landscape design sense to the adjoining riparian corridor and capitalising on the excellent solar access in this location.

The riparian corridor provides a key pedestrian access point at both the south-eastern and north-eastern corners of the centre, including a direct link between the town centre and the primary school.



Controls requiring a suitable screening treatment of the 80m section of wall facing the riparian corridor.



A single consolidated loading dock in the south-eastern corner, minimising the impacts to surrounding land uses associated with splitting into two docks.

6.3 Town Centre Precinct Master Plan

The Town Centre Master Plan shown on this page demonstrates the key urban design principles in relation to the surrounding Gregory Hills Town Centre Precinct.

The progression of the Town Centre Master Plan has been undertaken in a manner which responds to and respects the key structural elements of the Part B DCP.

The Master Plan demonstrates a superior urban design and place making outcome, enhancing the integration of the retail core with key civic and community facilities and surrounding residential development to create a vibrant Town Centre heart for future residents.



6.4 Design Perspective

The perspective shown on this page demonstrates pictorially the key urban design principles in relation to the surrounding Gregory Hills Town Centre Precinct, which are embodied in the Town Centre Masterplan.




6.5 Compliance with Part A DCP Objectives and Controls

As part of the DCP process the preferred design outcome was reviewed against the Part B DCP requirements for the centre.

The results were then summarised by APP as shown in the table below.

DCP Control	Extent to which provision is met		
	High	Medium	Low
15,000sqm GFA	✓		
Central focus for the community	✓		
Supported by higher residential densities	✓		
Maximise exposure to Gregory Hills Drive		✓	
Provide vibrant and active civic square, plaza or main street	✓		
Consider future noise conflicts	✓		
Consider future amenity conflicts		✓(trucks)	
Allow a range of building heights	✓		
Buildings to be visible from and have a presence to street frontages.		✓	
Where buildings are not built to street frontages, minimise setbacks			✓
Buildings to take advantage of proximity to open space areas, including riparian corridors	✓		
Building and landscape design is to be complementary to ensure legible, safe access for pedestrians from the street frontages, within the centre and to adjoining land		Detailed design	
Blank walls visible from principal streets and the public domain are to be limited		✓	
Large format retail uses to be sleeved with active uses			✓
In other circumstances, building design and landscaping shall minimise extent and visibility of blank walls		Detailed design	
High quality built form and energy efficient buildings that promote a sense of place and contemporary character		Detailed design	
Waste storage and collection areas are to minimise impacts, particularly within mixed use developments	✓		
Provide high amenity pedestrian streetscapes to and within the centre		Detailed design	
Walking and cycling to and within the centre is to take priority over traffic circulation		✓	
Provide continuous weather protection for pedestrians	✓		
Provide adequate solar access to key pedestrian streets	✓		
Design site servicing and loading to minimise visual impact on public domain and neighbours	✓		
Incorporate CPTED and Safer By Design		Detailed design	
Provide high quality landscape including street furniture and lighting that enhances the character of the centre		Detailed design	
Provide street tree and open space planting to provide generous shade for pedestrians		Detailed design	
Coordinate signage and advertising		Detailed design	



This table shows that the preferred design addresses either very well or reasonably well almost all the design criteria established in the Part A DCP.

The two areas where there is a lesser degree of compliance relate to minimising setbacks where buildings are not built to the street and sleeving large format retail uses.

While it is recognised that these are important objectives, it is considered that fully addressing these controls is not possible or preferable on the site because the implications of doing so would fundamentally compromise the ability to achieve a range of other planning objectives, and would compromise the economic viability of the centre to the extent there is a significant risk it would not be built. These issues are explored in more detail below.

Minimising setbacks for buildings which are not built to the street would have the following impacts.

It would require buildings to be built closer to the north-south street or Gregory Hills Drive, resulting in parking being located behind these buildings and thereby resulting in parking dominating the interface with the riparian corridor.

It would also result in design outcomes which would be significantly less efficient from a retail viability perspective. This is shown in some detail in Appendix 2 where the design proposed by AECOM, which sought to address these controls, is discussed.

Sleeving of large format retail uses is an appropriate strategy for shopping centres which are part of a larger commercial centre and where a number of street blocks are proposed for retail and commercial uses. Higher levels of pedestrian activity associated with these higher order mixed use centres allow sufficient levels of passing trade to support the viability of the tenancies which are located on the periphery of the centre and more remote from the bulk of the available car parking.

The Turner Road ILP and DCP do not envisage the Gregory Hills Town Centre being this sort of larger, more intensive mixed use town centre across a number of street blocks. Instead, its scale is limited by both its land area associated with the B1 zoning and the fact that it is contained to one street block.

Sleeving in this circumstance would simply result in too many tenancies being located in areas of comparatively low pedestrian activity, resulting in a reduced likelihood that the town centre would be delivered in the first place because it would not attract sufficient tenants at sufficient rents to warrant construction.

For these reasons, the design which was agreed at the workshop strikes the right balance between achieving as many of the planning objectives as possible while still delivering a centre which:

- integrates well with the riparian corridor;
- functions as part of a wider town centre precinct;
- achieves a design which reflects current retail design approaches; and
- maximises the viability of the centre.

CONCLUSION

This report has attempted to summarise the design and planning process which has been undertaken for the Gregory Hills Town Centre.

The centre requires a Part B DCP to be prepared and this amendment to the Turner Road DCP needs the support of both Camden Council and the Department of Planning and Infrastructure.

Significant work has been undertaken on concept designs for the centre, both by Dart West in its own right and as part of the collaborative Part B DCP process undertaken in 2011 with Council and its independent urban designer.

Dart West is committed to delivering and owning a town centre which:

- reflects contemporary retail design trends;
- acts as a vibrant and viable heart for the Gregory Hills and wider Turner Road Precinct community;
- capitalises on the site's proximity to the riparian corridor which will function as an open space spine for Gregory Hills;
- responds to opportunities to link and integrate a number of land uses such as the town centre itself, the primary school, community centre and child care facilities; and
- responds to as many of the planning principles set out in the Part A DCP as possible while still ensuring that a commercially viable centre can be delivered and maintained over time.

Multiple design options have been considered over the last three years as part of efforts to address a wide range of planning objectives. The most important of these objectives is to ensure that a suite of development controls is prepared which facilitates a vibrant and viable centre being developed and sustained over the medium to long term.

- By focusing on this medium to long term sustainability, residents of Gregory Hills and the wider Turner Road Precinct will benefit from having a centre which is close to where they work and live, and which thereby supports reduced travel demand and increased local employment opportunities.
- As with all planning processes, the preferred outcome for the design of Gregory Hills Town Centre reflects a balancing of a range of competing objectives. The site's location and its surrounding land uses present both opportunities and constraints which shape the design outcome.
- This report has demonstrated that a wide range of the planning objectives set out in Part A of the Turner Road DCP should be able to be achieved. Where some objectives have not been fully realised through the proposed design, it is only because to do so would undermine the achievement of a number of other important planning objectives.
- Dart West now seeks feedback from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure and Camden Council as to the arguments laid out in this report. Pending that feedback, Dart West would then intend to recommence discussions with Council about finalising a draft DCP amendment which could be placed on exhibition.

APPENDIX 1 – PART B DCP WORKSHOP SUMMARY

The following reports which form part of the Part B DCP Workshop Summary can be provided upon request:

1. Summary Report produced by Jeremy Spinks, APP
2. Gregory Hills Town Centre Design Workshop presentation, prepared by Jeremy Spinks, APP
3. Turner Road DCP Part B DCP presentation, prepared by Jeff Williams, Camden Council
4. Gregory Hills Town Centre Part B DCP Workshop presentation, prepared by Nigel McAndrew, DPS
5. Gregory Hills Town Centre Design Charrette, Traffic and Transport presentation, prepared by Dean Broadie, Brown Consulting
6. Gregory Hills Town Centre Charrette presentation, prepared by Garth Paterson, PDS

APPENDIX 2 – ASSESSMENT OF AECOM DESIGN

As noted in the body of the report, AECOM was commissioned by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure to prepare an alternative design for the Gregory Hills Town Centre which addressed both the Part A DCP objectives and draft Guidelines for Successful Town and Village Centres.

AECOM's design report was prepared in November and December 2011 following the Department's initial consideration of the Part B DCP workshop outcomes and its associated documentation.

The AECOM design report was provided to both Camden Council and Dart West Developments for review and consideration. AECOM prepared three options which are attached in this Appendix.

The three options prepared by AECOM were carefully considered by both Camden Council and Dart West Developments. Neither Dart West nor Council was able to support any of the three options.

While Dart West recognised the design intent of the options, and their broad consistency with the draft guidelines (also prepared by AECOM), Dart West believed that there were several major flaws with the design.

Firstly, there was an over-emphasis on specialty tenancies which were located such that pedestrian traffic accessing the major tenancies (supermarket and discount department store) would not pass in front of those specialist tenancies, thereby fundamentally compromising the ability of the centre to be leased at rents which would support the investment necessary to deliver the centre.

Secondly, all three options placed substantial amounts of car parking adjacent to the riparian corridor, thereby significantly compromising the interface between the centre and this important area. This is particularly exacerbated by the fact that the parking areas closest to the riparian corridor are those farthest from the shops, and are therefore likely to be less utilised.

Thirdly, the designs resulted in inefficient splitting of loading dock arrangements, resulting in negative impacts arising from the docks being spread to two locations rather than concentrated, and more effectively managed, in one location. In each case, one of the loading docks was proposed to be located on the visually prominent Gregory Hills Drive frontage.

Fourthly, the design incorporated layouts of major tenancies, mini-majors and specialty shops which are wholly inconsistent with current trends in retail design. In particular, mini-majors and majors are used to draw passing pedestrian traffic past specialty shops to support the overall viability of the centre. The AECOM design instead shifted the mini-majors to the periphery, both negating their ability to support the specialty shops, and also isolating them in their own right.

Finally, the design proposed by AECOM did not adequately take into account the challenges presented by the levels on the site. Tenancies were proposed in some locations which would sit well below street level.

It is not intended that the above comments be interpreted as rejections of the underlying design principles in the guidelines prepared by AECOM for the Department. The comments instead are an attempt to balance these planning principles with the commercial perspective which is necessary to ensure that planning controls do not unintentionally undermine the viability of the investment necessary to support the delivery of the centre.



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