

Part 1

The Basin Background Report

MAY 2016





Acknowledgements:

Realm Studios
Mesh Planning
Draft Upper Gully Strategic Plan (September 2015)

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Contents

1.	Introduction.....	5
1.1	Background.....	5
2.1	Purpose of Background Report.....	5
2.	Setting the Scene – The Basin.....	6
2.1	The Basin study area.....	6
2.2	Demographics.....	10
2.3	Development Activity.....	11
2.4	Existing Land Use.....	12
2.5	Strategic Planning Policy Framework.....	12
2.5.1	State Government Policy.....	12
2.5.2	Knox Planning Scheme.....	13
2.5.3	Knox studies and strategies.....	16
2.5.4	Zones.....	17
2.5.5	Overlays.....	17
2.5.6	Other considerations.....	20
3.	Built Form Analysis.....	22
3.1	Role of The Basin.....	22
3.2	Existing built form and land use patterns.....	22
3.3	Precinct Analysis.....	24
3.4	Views Analysis.....	27
3.5	Summary of built form analysis.....	29
4.	Engagement.....	31
5.	Built form scenarios.....	32
5.1	Built form assumptions.....	32
5.2	Summary of Built Form Scenarios.....	41
6.	Conclusion.....	42

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Basin is designated as a Neighbourhood Activity Centre (NAC) within Knox located at the base of the Dandenong Ranges. The study area comprises existing commercial and public use areas.

The centre is surrounded by predominantly residential areas that include overlay provisions that aim to protect the Dandenong Foothills character and vegetation cover. These controls place limitations on the scale and intensity of development and reinforce a relatively low density of residential housing.

In relation to the commercial and public zoned areas of The Basin, an absence of enough clarity regarding building scale, led (in 2014) to a three year interim application of a 7.5 metre height limit to enable sufficient time to undertake the necessary strategic work to determine appropriate permanent built form controls.

In November 2014, the Minister for Planning approved, through Amendment C130 to the Knox Planning Scheme, an interim Design and Development Overlay Schedule- 10 (DDO10) with a mandatory height limit of 7.5 metres on the condition that further strategic work, and a following full Planning Scheme Amendment were undertaken to include permanent built form controls into the scheme.

This Background Report outlines the strategic assessment done and recommends built form guidelines be prepared for the centre and a subsequent amendment to the Knox Planning Scheme to apply design guidance for the centre, including heights. The study area is confined to the commercial and public use zone areas of the NAC. The study area does include a small portion of residentially zoned land, arising from the part commercial and part residential zoning of 1325 Mountain Highway.

2.1 Purpose of Background Report

Part 1: The Basin Background Report has been prepared by Knox City Council to provide built form analysis to inform *Part 2: The Basin Built Form Guidelines*. These documents will form the strategic basis for permanent built form controls for The Basin Activity Centre: a new Schedule 11 to the Design and Development Overlay (DDO11) which is to be included in the Knox Planning Scheme through Amendment C137.

The *Built Form Guidelines* aim to encapsulate community values and Council aspirations and will provide clear direction about future development opportunities and design outcomes within The Basin to protect the centre's valued village character into the future.

The project scope deals solely with built form outcomes within the centre.

2. Setting the Scene

– The Basin

2.1 The Basin study area

The Basin is a local service and convenience centre located in the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges in the north eastern corner of the Knox municipality in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne.

The Basin, along with the neighbourhood centres of Alchester Village, Ferntree Gully and Upper Ferntree Gully, represents one of the gateway centres en route to the Dandenong Ranges, a State Significant landscape as identified in Plan Melbourne, the State Government’s primary planning document for Melbourne.

As seen in Figure 1, the Boronia Activity Centre, located 2.5 km to the south west of The Basin, is the closest major centre and railway station. In the context of these major and neighbourhood centres, The Basin is positioned as a local shopping centre providing everyday necessities. The NAC also services the suburbs of The Basin, Boronia and Sassafrass and has an approximate pedestrian catchment area of 500m.

The study area covers an area of 3.7ha and comprises existing commercial areas to the west of Forest Road and to the east of Mountain Highway. The ‘Basin Triangle’ is located at the heart of the study area, bound by Forest Road, Mountain Highway and Basin Olinda Road and comprises public uses.

The study area is predominantly surrounded by low density residential uses within a heavily treed environment with extensive paddocks (Salvation Army land, referred to as ‘basin paddocks’ in this report) to the north of the centre. The basin paddocks are a pastoral landscape of rolling green hills, containing indigenous and exotic trees, creeks and the close backdrop of the heavily vegetated hills of the Dandenong Ranges National Park. The basin paddocks are registered with the National Trust, a non-statutory body with an interest in preserving local and state cultural heritage.

In October 2011, Council endorsed *The Salvation Army Site (The Basin) Planning Study (May 2011)* to commit to continuing to protect this important landscape. These views of the Dandenongs and basin paddocks (Salvation Army land) contribute significantly to a unique, semi rural village atmosphere.

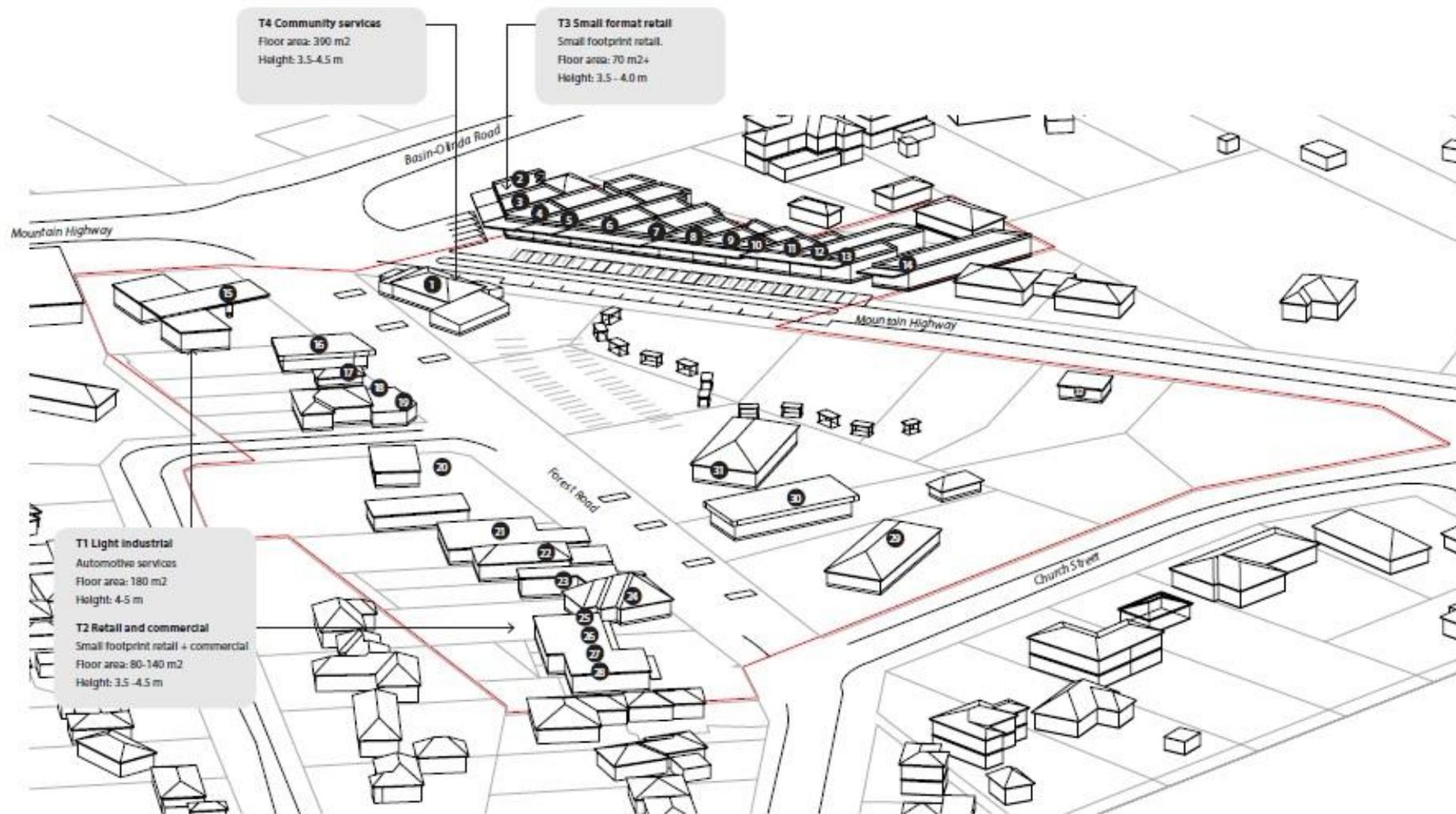
Built form within The Basin is low scale, allowing the hills and vegetated backdrop to dominate the built form. These characteristics, accompanied by a small number of shops and restaurants and a generous amount of public uses within the ‘heart’ of the centre, contribute greatly to the centre’s ‘village’ like atmosphere (refer to Figure 2). The Basin is a lively village, playing host to a number of community groups including The Basin Theatre Group, Senior Citizens and The Basin Scout Group.

The Basin Music Festival is held annually each March. Mountain Highway between The Basin and Olinda is a popular and challenging route for cyclists and groups of cyclists

frequently stop at The Basin for refreshments at one of the cafes or the park, particularly on weekends.



Figure 01 – Study Area



Existing conditions and uses

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. The Basin Progress Hall | 9. The Wedding Brand Company | 17. Private dwelling? | 25. En Bon Sainte Massage Therapy |
| 2. Rainy Day Book Shop | 10. The Chocolate Dragonfly Cafe | 18. New & recycled fashion boutique | 26. Whispers hair designs |
| 3. Post office | 11. The Basin Meat Supply | 19. Kubochi designers of hair | 27. Rustad |
| 4. The Basin Mixed Business | 12. The Basin Fish and Chip Shop | 20. The Basin Pre-School | 28. Oak tree tavern |
| 5. The Basin News Agent | 13. Pinnacle Cycles | 21. Hand me downs | 29. The Basin Scouts |
| 6. The Basin Liquor Store | 14. Passion for Cake and Coffee | 22. Thai Square Restaurant | 30. The Basin Volunteer Fire Brigade |
| 7. The Basin Fruit Market | 15. Hillview motors and tyres | 23. Rosedale motors | 31. The Basin Senior Citizens Centre |
| 8. The Basin Bakery | 16. Black Dog | 24. Acon on Forest | 32. Toilet block |

Typology inventory

- T1. Light industrial
- T2. Retail and commercial
- T3. Small format retail
- T4. Community services

Figure 02 – Land uses within the centre

2.2 Demographics

The demographic catchment area for The Basin covers the suburbs of The Basin and Sassafras, covering a total area of 573ha. The Basin NAC covers 3.7ha of this area.

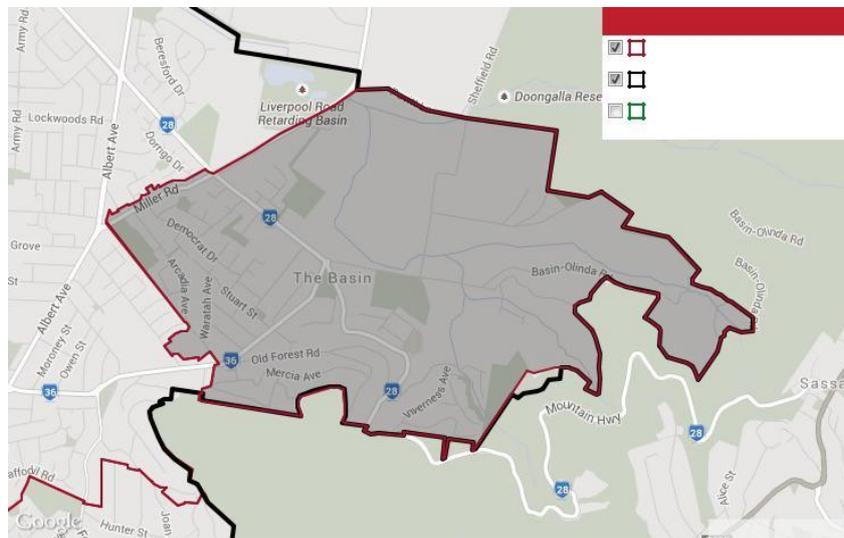


Figure 03 – The Basin demographic catchment area

Demographic analysis shows the following context for The Basin demographic catchment:

Population forecast - In 2011, the total population of The Basin was estimated to be 4,523 people. It is expected to decrease by over 150 people to 4,364 by 2026, at an average annual growth rate of -0.24%.

Age - An even spread of age groups across The Basin suggests that provision is required for all age groups and that affordable housing opportunities are required as younger people enter the housing market.

Household - In 2011, the dominant household type in The Basin was couples and families with dependents, which accounted for 39.0% of all households. The largest increase between 2011 and 2026 is forecast to be in couples without dependents, which will increase by 62 households and account for 31.4% of all households. In contrast couples and families with dependents is forecast to decrease by 55 households, to comprise 34.4% of all households in 2026, compared to 39.0% in 2011.

More broadly, the Knox Housing Strategy notes that couple only households will represent 32% of all households by 2021, indicating future opportunity and demand for varied housing typologies and sizes within Knox, particularly located in activity centres.

Economy - There are equally weighted numbers of employed and non-employed persons, suggesting a need for daytime services, shops and recreational spaces.

Education, healthcare services, manufacturing, construction and retail are the dominant employment sectors across The Basin, indicating a working population which moves out of the area during the day.

Dwellings - There is limited dwelling diversity across The Basin, with low density detached houses forming the highest percentage of dwelling types and very small

percentages of flats, units or apartment structures occurring in the area. Occupied private dwellings are the predominant form.

Housing projections for The Basin indicates that the number of dwellings in The Basin will increase from 1,662 in 2011 to 1,708 in 2036 representing a growth rate of 2.8% over 25 years.

When read in conjunction with age and household trends, demographic analysis suggests that there is limited current capacity and future demand for increased housing diversity within the study area.

2.3 Development Activity

Assessment of planning and building permits issued between 2005 and 2016 in the Basin NAC shows only minor upgrades to commercial premises and occasional signage upgrades, changeover of uses to cafe or convenience restaurants and liquor license approvals. No extensions to the fabric of the Village or increase in floor space have occurred in recent history.

Council's Place Program team has been active in The Basin since 2005 years, prefacing any future improvement works by engaging with traders and the broader community to find out what short, medium and long term initiatives will have an impact on the overall performance and success of The Basin.

Council initiatives for the Village include:

- Mountain Highway Shops – new pedestrian pavement, street tree planting, park upgrade;
- Installation of pedestrian crossings on Mountain Hwy adjacent to roundabout and on Forest Road adjacent to Conyers Street;
- Installation of footpaths in The Basin Triangle to improve access to the Forest Road Bus stop and car park area;
- Installation of custom built community group badge signage (north of Mountain Highway);
- Removal of public toilets (north of Mountain Highway) and installation of a new public toilet facility in The Basin Triangle Park;
- The Basin Triangle Park – preparation of masterplan and progressive implementation. Includes playground, plantings and sound shell;
- The Basin Progress Hall – ongoing refurbishment;
- Activity Centre Entry signage; and
- The Basin Seniors Hall – refurbishment (Planning underway).

2.4 Existing Land Use

There is a diverse range of land uses within the study area, ranging from retail through to recreational services, community facilities through to light industrial.

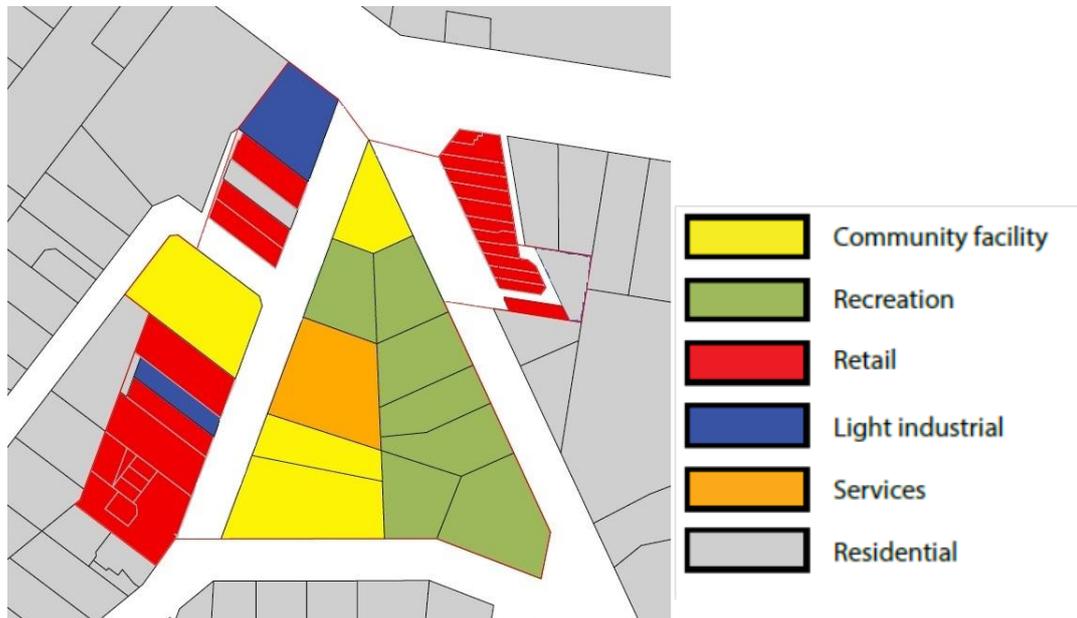


Figure 04 – Land Uses

2.5 Strategic Planning Policy Framework

Several policies exist for guiding development in The Basin, from the State to the municipal level. These relevant policies are outlined below.

2.5.1 State Government Policy

Plan Melbourne

Plan Melbourne was released in May 2014. The document is Melbourne’s metropolitan planning strategy for the next 40 years and will guide Melbourne and its suburbs’ development and growth, including matters such as infrastructure, housing, employment, transport and environment.

Directions relevant to The Basin in Plan Melbourne include:

- Direction 2.2 – Reduce the cost of living by increasing housing supply near services and public transport.
- Direction 4.1 – Create a city of 20 minute neighbourhoods.
- Direction 4.2 – Protect Melbourne and its suburbs from inappropriate development.
- Direction 4.5 – Make our city greener.
- Direction 5.1 – Use the city structure to drive sustainable outcomes in managing growth.
- Direction 5.2 – Protect and restore natural habitats in urban and non-urban areas.

The *Basin Built Form Guidelines* and the Knox Planning Scheme must be consistent with State Government strategies and policies such as Plan Melbourne.

2.5.2 Knox Planning Scheme

State Planning Policy Framework

Clause 11 Settlement - Provides strategic direction for future land uses within The Basin. The Basin is identified in the hierarchy of Activity Centres as a Neighbourhood Activity Centre (NAC).

Clause 13 Environmental Risk - Encourages future planning and design in The Basin to appropriately respond to hazards and minimise risks from landslip, bushfire and flooding.

Clause 15 Built Environment and Heritage - Encourages the future planning and design in The Basin to provide high quality urban design - design that responds to the needs of the community and the intrinsic qualities of the place.

Clause 16 Housing - Encourages future planning and design in The Basin to provide for potentially increased housing supply and diversity within the NAC.

Clause 17 Economic Development - Provides the strategic direction to ensure future planning and design for The Basin provides a range of land uses within the NAC that provide for both local and tourist needs.

Clause 18 Transport - Encourages future planning and design in The Basin provides a range of integrated and sustainable transport systems to make it easy and safe for people to get around.

Clause 19 Infrastructure - Encourages the location of community resources that are highly accessible by public transport and walking and cycling paths. It also encourages the provision of water supply, sewerage and drainage services to efficiently and effectively to meet State and community needs and protect the environment.

Local Planning Policy Framework

The Local Planning Policy Framework (LPPF), at Clauses 21 and 22 of the Knox Planning Scheme, sets a local and regional strategic policy context for a municipality.

Clause 21.01 Settlement - specifies that *“Urban consolidation objectives must not outweigh the environmental and landscape objectives for the foothills”*.

Clause 21.04 Urban Design -Provides the strategic direction for the provision of built form that is ecologically sustainable and site responsive.

A key objective of this clause is to *“Protect and enhance the aesthetic, environmental and landscape values and vistas of the Dandenong Foothills, Dandenong Creek Valley, local and national parklands”*.

Clause 21.04-2 seeks to ensure that development responds positively to the local context including and encouraging new development to be adaptable and flexible.

The clause also notes that built form is a major contributor to long-term sustainability objectives through the use of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) principles.

Clause 21.05 Housing – Provides direction for the provision of housing in The Basin. In particular, Clause 21.05-1 seeks to support residential development in accordance with the Knox Housing Strategy 2015, which identifies a scaled approach to residential development, including directing housing growth towards Local Living and Activity Areas.

Clause 21.07 Economic Development - Provides direction for The Basin in terms of its economic activity and its broader economic role within the municipality, including its role as a gateway to the Dandenong Ranges.

In particular, Clause 21.07-2 seeks to support appropriate development in the Dandenong Foothills that responds positively to the landscape and environmental sensitivities of the area, is well designed and respects and complements the local character, including height. It seeks to ensure that development and use in shopping centres is appropriate to the role and function of the centre.

Clause 22.01 Dandenong Foothills - Provides direction for The Basin in terms of the design of buildings in order to retain key views and aims to protect and enhance the landscape significance of the Dandenong Foothills.

The policy designates the study area as being located within the 'Dandenong Foothills, Foothills Backdrop and Ridgeline Area' (refer to Figure 5).

Design responses for development in this area are that:

- The design and siting of buildings, works and landscaping minimises the threat associated with bushfire.
- The design and siting of buildings, works and landscaping protects and enhances the visual dominance of vegetation, including canopy trees and native understorey plants, to ensure that:
 - There is a continuous vegetation canopy across residential lots and roads.
 - Development blends with vegetation on the hillsides to maintain and enhance the appearance of the area as an extension of the Dandenong Ranges National Park.
 - There is effective screening of development and use of suitable colours and materials to maintain distant views and the appearance of a heavily vegetated natural hillside.
- Development does not rise above the tree canopy height to maintain the significant landscape character of the area and near and distant view lines.
 - The significant landscape character of the area is protected and enhanced by retaining existing vegetation and planting indigenous canopy and understorey vegetation.
 - Buildings and works located on sites at high points and along ridges are designed, finished and sited so that they are not highly visible from the valley area below.

Clause 22.12 Residential Land Use and Development within the Commercial 1 Zone - Provides direction for the provision for residential land use and development within activity centres is consistent with the role of the centre and that development is appropriate within its context. Within Dandenong Foothills Centres, development should maintain the low-rise character of the surrounding area and ensure that the landscape character of the Foothills area is protected. This policy applies only to residential development in a Commercial 1 Zone where locally specific design guidance has not been adopted.

It is envisaged that the proposed Clause 22.12 will only guide activity within The Basin until such time as *Built Form Guidelines* are incorporated into the Knox Planning Scheme and provide tailor made, locally specific guidance to residential development within the Centre.

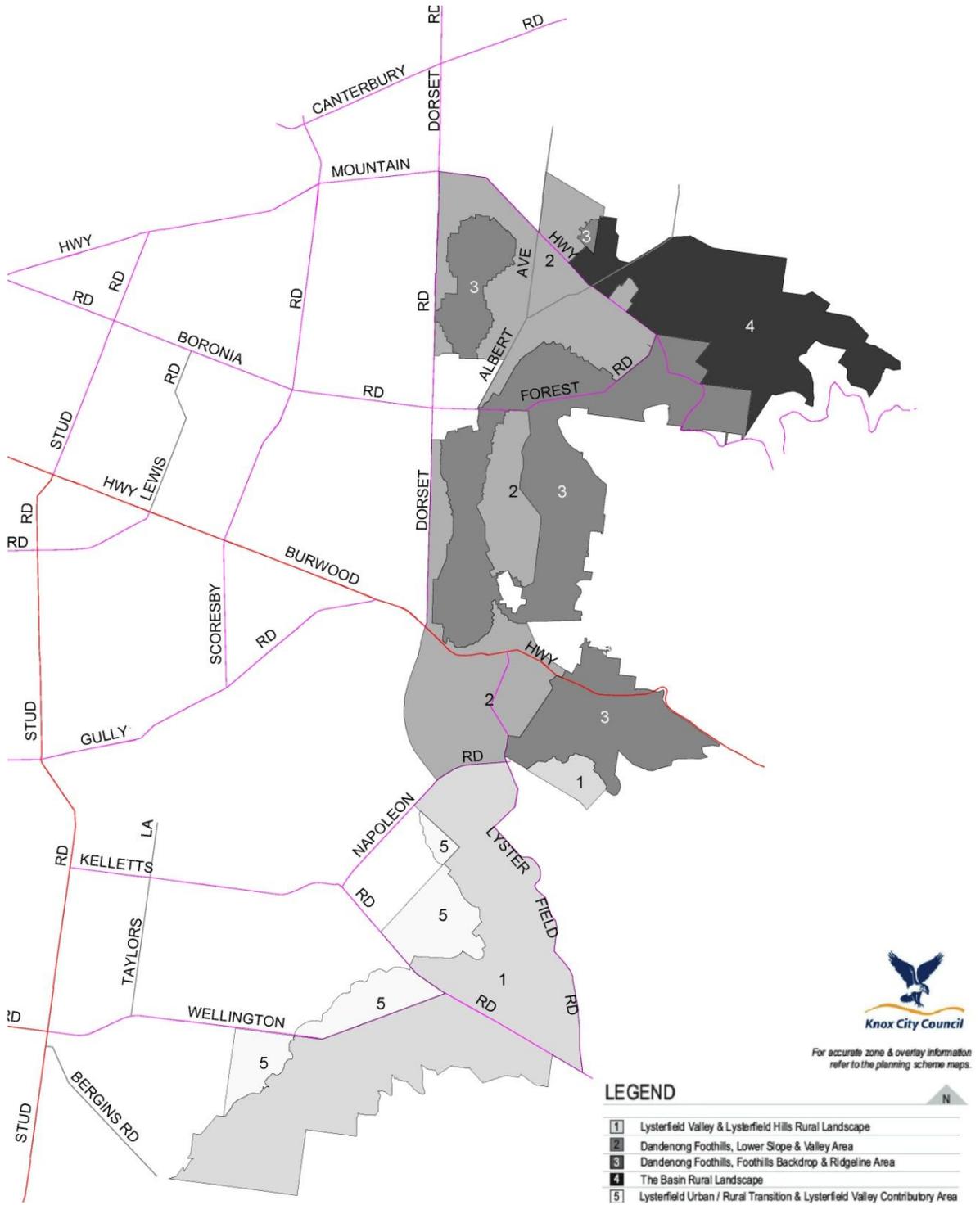


Figure 05 – Dandenong Foothills Policy map

2.5.3 Knox studies and strategies

Knox Vision and City Plan (adopted June 2013)

The Knox Vision provides a shared vision for the future of Knox that will deliver the lifestyle, jobs and industry, health and wellbeing desired by members of the Knox community. The vision is outlined under five themes, each containing a description of the ideal future, and identifying the features that will be in place when that future is achieved:

- Healthy, Connected Communities
- Prosperous, Advancing Economy
- Vibrant and Sustainable Built and Natural Environments
- Culturally Rich and Active Communities
- Democratic and Engaged Communities

These themes are used as indicators to monitor the community's wellbeing and achievement toward the broader Vision for Knox.

Knox Housing Strategy 2015

The *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* (the Housing Strategy) aims to balance the changing housing needs of current and future residents while ensuring that important aspects of Knox are retained and enhanced. The major trends which the Housing Strategy aims to respond to include:

- An aging population;
- Growing lone person households; and
- Growing couple only households and small drop in households with children.

The significance of the Dandenong Ranges as a backdrop to the whole municipality is also reflected in the Housing Strategy.

The Housing Strategy utilises a scaled approach to housing development, setting out the preferred types of housing in four different areas. The surrounding residential areas of The Basin are considered part of the Bush Suburban category, i.e. areas which have significant biological and landscape values.

The Housing Strategy indicates that the surrounding residential area will continue to be low-scale neighbourhoods, characterised mostly by detached houses, where significant indigenous and native vegetation is retained and complemented. It also indicates that the preferred housing types in this area are detached dwellings and dual occupancies.

Amendment C131 to the Knox Planning Scheme, gazetted in March 2016, to implement the Knox Housing Strategy, included a new policy at Clause 22.12: Residential Land Use and Development within the Commercial 1 Zone. This proposed policy seeks to ensure that residential land use and development within activity centres is consistent with the role of the centre and that development is appropriate within its context. This policy applies only to residential development in a Commercial 1 Zone where locally specific design guidance has not been adopted. It is envisaged that this policy will only guide development for a short while until the built form guidelines are incorporated into the Knox Planning Scheme.

Planning Scheme Amendment C130 – Interim Building Height controls

Amendment C130 was approved on 20 November 2014 and applied interim controls to the commercial zoned areas of The Basin, Alchester Village and Upper Ferntree Gully. The Amendment introduced mandatory building height controls of 7.5 metres which aim to ensure that new development responds to the low-scale character of the centres, and that height and visual bulk of new development is minimised in order to maintain views between properties to the Dandenong Foothills.

The interim controls are to allow Council time to undertake detailed planning work for these centres.

2.5.4 Zones

There are a number of zones within the study area. The predominant private land zoning is Commercial 1 Zone (shown on the map as C1Z). On the edge of the centre (1325 Mountain Highway, The Basin) is residentially zoned property (NRZ1) containing a single storey shopfront with residence to the rear? In addition there is a Public Park and Recreation (PPRZ) and Public Use (PUZ6 and PUZ7) zones providing for various community facilities.



Figure 06 – Zoning

2.5.5 Overlays

The study area is subject to a number of overlays, many of which aim to protect the foothills character. Overlays comprise:

- Design and Development Overlay Schedule 10 (DDO10) applies to the whole study area and enforces a mandatory 7.5 metre interim height limit to protect views of the foothills and ensure new buildings are compatible with the scale and character of the Village.
- Design and Development Overlay Schedule 1 (DDO1) applies to land east of Forest Road and Design and Development Overlay Schedule 2 (DDO2) applies to the west of Forest Road. These overlays contain minimum subdivision requirements and maximum site and impervious surfaces coverage requirements.
- Vegetation Protection Overlay Schedules 2 and 3 (VPO2 and VPO3) and Environmental Significance Overlay Schedule 2 and 3 (ESO2 and ESO3) protect existing vegetation and/or habitat.
- Significant Landscape Overlay Schedules 2 and 3 (SLO2 and SLO3) seek to protect and enhance the visual, natural and cultural values of the foothills landscape with requirements around height, materials and colours, vegetation and fencing.
- Heritage Overlay Schedule 51 (HO51) applies to The Basin triangle including the Progress Hall.
- The Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) applies to land east of Forest Road within the study area and seeks to manage development within high bushfire risk areas.

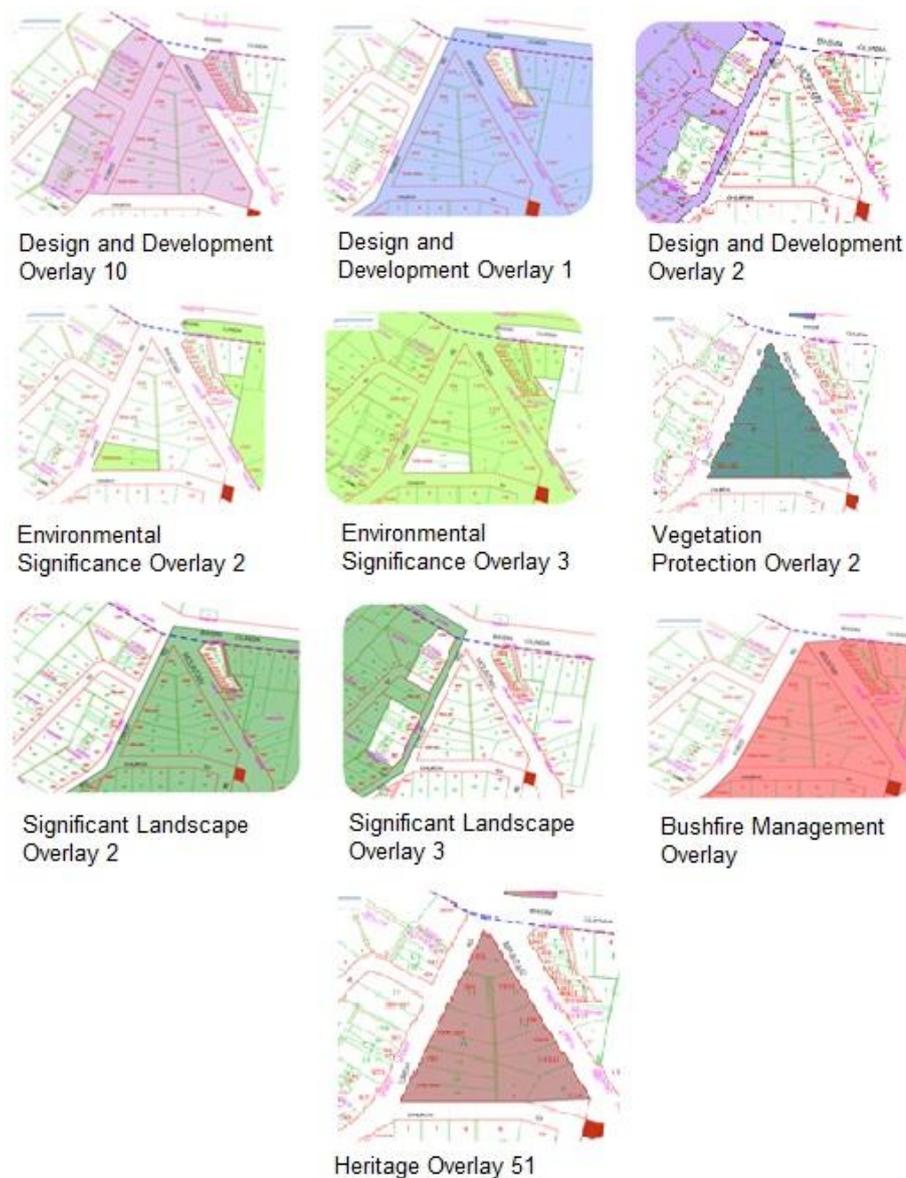


Figure 07 – Overlays

Summary of Policy Framework for The Basin:

The Basin is a low scale centre located at the base of the Dandenong Ranges. Future planning of the centre will need to achieve a balance between providing additional scope for development to ensure the centre continues to thrive economically and the desire to retain the low scale character and views. The centre’s location within a bushfire prone area also requires careful consideration.

Opportunities exist within the centre for flexible commercial spaces to cater for office, retail, restaurants, performance and gallery spaces.

Strategically, The Basin is not anticipated to accommodate the demand for alternative forms of housing, as this is expected to occur within larger local centres, such as Boronia, located outside of the Dandenong Foothills policy area.

Additionally, population and household forecasts for The Basin indicate that there are limited opportunities and demand for alternative forms of housing in the centre. Despite this, some opportunities do still exist for some shop top housing within the centre.

2.5.6 Other considerations

Bushfire risk

The CFA's Community Information Guide for The Basin identifies the township as having 'extreme' bushfire risk. This classification is based on high fuel loads in the bordering forest, the hilly terrain, a lack of accessibility with narrow dead-end roads and homes nestled into bushland.

The Community Information Guide also states that there are no designated 'Neighbourhood Safer Places – Places of Last Resort' in The Basin. It is currently unlikely that a refuge area will be provided within The Basin given its risk status and topography and its close proximity to places not at risk of bushfire.

The Bushfire Management Overlay applies to the study area east of Forest Road and is located within a designated Bushfire Prone Area under the Building Act. Bushfire risk must be considered from a strategic perspective in the preparation of the built form design guidelines. In consultation with CFA, it is considered that bushfire risk for the study area is mitigated by:

- The centre's separation from the nearest hazards, with bitumen surfaces and residential development between the hazards and the centre;
- Fire protection and escape standards under the Building Regulations associated with commercial developments;
- Sound road infrastructure, with sealed pavements and multiple access and egress points to the centre;
- Reticulated water supply, including fire hydrants within the area; and
- The proposed *Built Form Guidelines* and subsequent Design and Development Overlay Schedule 11 (DDO11) will not result in a significant increase in development potential to what presently exists; rather it will provide certainty and built form guidance for future development.

Heritage

The automotive garage, the kindergarten and maternal child health centre and the post office were highlighted as significant to the community of The Basin during community consultation. As a result, heritage assessments have been undertaken for these sites, as well as the Progress Hall. The assessment revealed:

Automotive Garage – the building is not significant at either a state or local level and as such a Heritage Overlay cannot be applied.

The Basin Progress Hall – The Triangle is protected under the Heritage Overlay to the Knox Planning Scheme (HO51), and has been determined to have local significance to the City of Knox. The Progress Hall was separately recommended as a place of local significance (McInness,1993) but was not included in the citation for The Triangle. It is recommended that the Heritage Overlay Schedule for The Triangle be updated to specifically include the Progress Hall and its trees as a key feature of the site.

Shops on eastern side of Mountain Highway (including Post Office) – While the buildings are not significant enough at a state or local level to have a Heritage overlay applied, the retention of the Basin Shops, in particular the remaining metal framed shopfront windows, at 1301-1323 Mountain Highway should be encouraged to be retained where possible. Any changes to the verandah should take account of its consistency throughout the row of shops. Restrained signage should be encouraged.

Kindergarten and Maternal Child Health Centre – the buildings are not significant enough at a state or local level to have a Heritage Overlay applied.

Potentially Contaminated Land

Ministerial Direction No. 1 (Potentially Contaminated Land) requires planning authorities to satisfy themselves that the environmental conditions of land proposed to be used for a 'sensitive use' – such as residential or child care centre – are, or can be remediated to be, suitable for that use. It is recommended that the Environmental Audit Overlay (EAO) be applied to 1300 Mountain Highway, The Basin - based on its previous land use as a service station, which may have allowed industrial activity on the site. The EAO ensures the requirement for an environmental audit is met before the commencement of any sensitive uses.

3. Built Form Analysis

The built form analysis considers the context of existing built form and land use patterns and identifies key views through the centre to the basin paddocks and Dandenongs. Potential building heights have been modelled to consider the impact of future development on these key views. This section provides the context from which *Part 2 - The Basin Built Form Guidelines* will be developed.

3.1 Role of The Basin

The Basin is a gateway centre en route to the Dandenong Ranges. It has a number of roles, including providing everyday necessities and specialties to locals, as well as a tourism role. Mountain Highway between The Basin and Olinda is a popular and challenging route for cyclists and groups of cyclists frequently stop at The Basin for refreshments at one of the cafes or the park, particularly on weekends. The Basin is a lively village, playing host to a number of community groups including The Basin Theatre Group, Senior Citizens and The Basin Scout Group. The Basin Music Festival is held annually each March.

3.2 Existing built form and land use patterns

Built form within The Basin is low scale (principally single storey), allowing the hills and vegetated backdrop to dominate the built form and create a village atmosphere.

Vegetation

The study area maintains a good coverage of tree canopy due to the location of the park within the centre, as seen in Figure 8. Vegetation within private lots is sparse given the commercial nature of these properties. Vegetation within the centre consists primarily of native plantings with some remnant trees located within the park. There is an opportunity to improve the tree canopy by additional planting within the road reserves, particularly along Forest Road and Mountain Hwy.

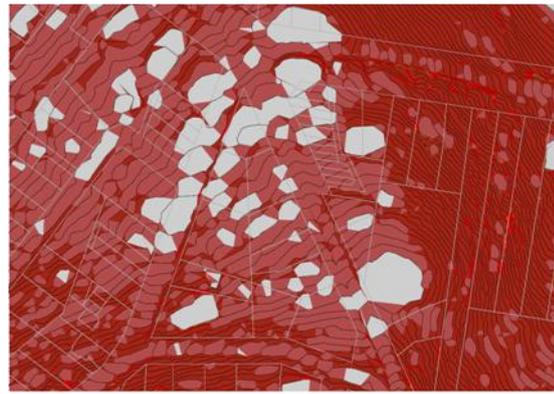


Figure 08 – Existing Canopy Tree Cover

Topography

The topography in the study area is north facing and at a steady gradient of 5% (refer to Figure 9). Flatter zones across the site represent building platforms, carparks or modified groundplane.

Generally, areas to the west of Forest Road fall away from the centre and can visually accommodate increased building height without significant impact.



4-7% is the mean slope across the study area

Figure 09 – Topography across study area

Transport and access

The centre is connected by pedestrian pathways along retail frontages and through The Basin Triangle. The centre is highly accessible by vehicle due to its location on the juncture of Mountain Highway, Forest Road and Basin-Olinda Road. The Mountain Highway shops can be accessed by a laneway to the rear (refer to Figure 10). Public car parking exists in front of shops and within The Basin Triangle. There is opportunity to also provide rear loading for the retail properties on the western side of Forest Road to ensure a hard edge of built form along the street frontage.



Figure 10 – Vehicle access and public car parking

The Basin is serviced by one bus route (route 755) which connects the site to Boronia (8-12 minutes) and Bayswater (13 minutes) and the adjacent suburban and industrial areas (refer Figure 11). Boronia and Bayswater are both serviced by heavy rail and the Melbourne CBD can be accessed in approximately 45 minutes.

Mountain Highway, between The Basin and Olinda, is a challenging and popular bicycle route for cyclists.



Figure 11 – Bus route no. 755

3.3 Precinct Analysis

The study area can be broken into three distinct precincts separated by roads: the western precinct; the Triangle precinct and; the eastern precinct (refer to Figure 12).

Eastern Precinct

The eastern precinct comprises a group of shops on the eastern side of Mountain Highway which were built in the 1940-1950s (see Figure 14). Key characteristics include:

- Single storey buildings, height 3.5-4 metres;
- Small building footprints built to the front boundary;
- Narrow, tiled shopfronts with metal framed windows. Many original shopfronts are still intact and these features, coupled with recent mural additions, contributes greatly to the character of The Basin;
- Continuous awnings and signage features to front facades;
- Existing ceiling heights are varied, as some of the internal spaces of the shops have been modified over time. However, original ceiling heights are higher than the standard 2.4 m;
- Rear loaded access via private laneway;
- A mixed use property at the southern end of the group of shops containing a shop fronting Mountain Highway and a residence to the rear of the property, accessed via the laneway; and
- Views to Dandenong Ranges over single storey form from the Triangle precinct.



Figure 12 – Precinct definition



Figure 13 – Retail on Eastern side of Mountain Highway

Triangle Precinct

The Triangle precinct is central to the study area and is bound by Forest Road, Mountain Highway and Church Street. This public space contains a number of services including the CFA, Progress Hall, The Basin Scout Hall, The Basin Senior Citizen Centre, a soundshell and a playground (see Figure 16). Built form characteristics include:

- Single storey buildings, heights between 3.5 and 4.5 metres;
- Progress Hall, a 1929 timber building in fairly original condition (see Figure 14). Highly visible within the centre, the building is located on the roundabout and is considered a contributory building to the character of The Basin; and
- CFA, Senior Citizens and Scout hall - all brick buildings setback from the road and framed by large canopy trees (see Figure 15). These buildings are orientated to Forest Road (setback between 6.5 and 12 metres) and have a poor address to the park.



Figure 14 – The Basin Progress Hall



Figure 15 – The Basin CFA



Figure 16 - Playground

Western Precinct

The western precinct consists of an eclectic and inconsistent range of small retail premises, motor vehicle repairs, restaurants and The Basin Pre-School and Maternal Child Health Centre (see Figures 17, 18 and 19).

Built form characteristics include:

- Inconsistent building setbacks on the low side of the centre have created a lack of 'edge' to this side of the centre.
- The kindergarten is a weatherboard building with an open adventure playground at the rear and was seen to be a quite progressive design when constructed in 1958. The Maternal Child Health Centre is a brick building circa 1950s.
- Building heights vary between 3.5 and 5 metres.
- Buildings are generally constructed of a mixture of brick and timber with colourbond roofs in muted tones and colours.



Figure 17 – Retail on western side of Forest Road



Figure 18 – 1300 Mountain Highway (former service station)



Figure 19 – View to the north on Forest Road

Condition of buildings

Most buildings within the centre were constructed between the 1960s and late 1990s. Building stock is in good condition, with excellent occupancy rates across the centre and minimal permit activity and turnover of uses within the last ten years. Commercial uses are largely independent with minimal franchises represented in the centre.

3.4 Views Analysis

Key view lines have been identified as important to maintain the village atmosphere of The Basin, capturing the association between built form, the Dandenong Ranges and the existing canopy trees and the park. In particular, it is noted that:

- Despite close proximity to the Dandenong Ranges, views are limited and filtered;
- Built form on Mountain Highway is oriented away from the Dandenong Ranges and provides a low-scale consistent edge to the village;
- Views into the Triangle and playground significantly contribute to the village character;
- Views to the basin paddocks are important in establishing the semi-rural feel of the centre;
- The retail strip on Mountain Hwy is a consistent frontage framed by a backdrop of trees and views through to the Dandenong Ranges; and
- Significant views to the Dandenong Ranges from the park are important to the character of the village and the park as part of the village.

View 1 – Views to Dandenong Ranges



The view towards the Dandenong Ranges backdrop is significant. Canopy trees in the foreground and middle distance provide the sense of location within the Dandenong Foothills.

View 2 – Views to the basin paddocks



The view to the basin paddocks is significant and creates a semi rural presence for the centre.

View 3 – Views to Eastern precinct retail



From street level, while quite filtered, there are significant ridgeline views of the Dandenong Ranges ridgeline over the Eastern precinct. This backdrop provides a strong sense of the Village’s location within the Dandenong Foothills.

View 4 – Views to The Basin Triangle



Views to The Basin Triangle provides a strong civic heart to the centre. Canopy vegetation and low scale buildings frame the open public space.

View 5 – View north up Forest Road



Entry into The Basin from the south on Forest Road captures distant views of the Dandenong Ranges ridgeline. From this perspective, the centre is seen as nestled within the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges.

Summary of views analysis:

- Key views 1 and 2 as seen in Figure 20 below are selected as significant views from public places which require protection.
- Unlike the other view points within the Village, these two perspectives are able to capture visually dominating, views of the Dandenong Ranges backdrop and the basin paddocks and are the main viewpoints from which users of The Basin are able to form a sense of the foothills identity of the centre.



Figure 20 – Significant views

3.5 Summary of built form analysis

Built form within the centre is contained and comprises low scale single storey built form.

There are opportunities to redevelop properties in the western precinct, along Forest Road, to create a defined hard edge to the streetscape and provide access and parking to the rear of buildings.

Conversely, the eastern precinct is a well established group of shops with narrow, fine grain frontages, metal frame windows and continuous awnings. These elements should be retained and complemented. There may be opportunity for double storey built form at the northern end of the precinct.

Limited opportunities exist for redevelopment in the Triangle precinct which plays an important community use function and is a civic 'heart' for The Basin centre. Future redevelopment may include a new fire station or ancillary buildings for existing community uses.

Particularly, future development within the centre should consider the following design elements to complement and enhance the contained, village like atmosphere of the centre:

- Identify opportunities for appropriately scaled gateway or landmark buildings, such as the northern end of the eastern precinct (above the post office);
- Ensure buildings address multiple street frontages;

- Ensure buildings within the western precinct create a 'hard edge';
- Use materials and colours innovatively to reduce the apparent scale of larger buildings. A non reflective and natural colour and material palette should be adopted to complement the surrounding natural environment;
- Ensure the scale and setbacks of buildings protect identified key views;
- Improve activation of retail uses at ground level;
- Include and maintain a variety of awnings within a structured framework;
- Include parapets to single storey built form to maintain edge to street;
- Maintain existing trees and include substantive tree planting to promote scale;
- Provide for tree planting where possible to soften built form;
- Maintain pavement widths to achieve a tighter streetscape;
- Clearly mark traffic and other movement lanes to slow traffic and to create a more intimate scale;
- Encourage rear lane access to shops in western precinct; and
- Integrate servicing and car parks to the rear and integrate them into a building's design.

4. Engagement

Community engagement to inform the development of *Built Form Guidelines* for The Basin was undertaken in April-June 2014 under the following methodology:

Stage 1 - A mail out survey to 1,929 surrounding land owners and occupiers to reveal issues surrounding built form at The Basin NAC.

Stage 2 - Key themes arising from the survey were put to community groups who attended three consultation meetings held from April to June 2014, each of which explored and refined the community's responses.

Stage 3 - The final consultation session included testing of built form scenarios and demonstrating the impact of those scenarios.

Research, precedents and built form modelling options were presented to the community. Issues such as form, height and depth, views, traffic and parking, were explored in the context of the current and future prevailing conditions.

Of important note was the desire to see a built form that was appropriate to the village like setting of The Basin, distinguishing it from a regular suburban form through provision for articulated roofs, better internal spaces with better access to natural light and ventilation, increased internal volumes and greater opportunity to maximise on the views to the Dandenongs.

Specific outcomes included:

- Single storey (existing condition) to remain for the eastern strip of shops on Mountain Highway to protect the views to the Ranges from the park;
- 2 storeys were supported to northern end of the Mountain Highway shops to frame the view of the Ranges and to take advantage of the northern sunlight opportunity;
- 3 storey option was not supported anywhere within the centre;
- 2 storeys was supported for the sites west of the Forest Road but with increased floor to ceiling heights to provide flexibility for future uses;
- There was no support for increased built form volume in the Triangle;
- The centre should have a consistent (but not uniform) colour palette where colours are consistent across a colour range sympathetic to the foothills treed setting;
- Traffic investigation and management required to slow traffic through the centre and increase pedestrian movement;
- Where possible, provide for onsite parking, accessed from the rear of properties; and
- The garage site requires further exploration to determine opportunity for development whilst maintaining views to the basin from the park area, and retaining the valued histories.

5. Built form scenarios

5.1 Built form assumptions

Community engagement, the planning policy framework for the centre, and analysis of key views in Section 3.1 of this report highlight that views to the surrounding Dandenong Ranges and foothills landscape are a high priority in contributing to the identity and attractiveness of The Basin.

Built form modelling has been undertaken to test built form scenarios at different heights throughout the centre. The view cones were selected to best demonstrate the impact of increased height and bulk both looking into and out of the village. These views are different to the 'key views' at Section 3.1 and were chosen to consider the impact of future development on both key views and the village atmosphere of the centre. *(Please note that the visualisations are used to demonstrate an indicative built form and do not represent intended land use)*

The models are based on the following parameters and assumptions:

Building height

Development from a single storey up to a three storey scale. Scenarios are limited to three storeys given the lower scale of existing residential dwellings surrounding the centre.

Building heights assume increased internal ceiling heights of a minimum 3.6 metres finished floor level (FFL) to finished ceiling level (FCL) at ground floor and a minimum 2.7 metres at first floor to provide greater amenity to internal spaces, and to allow for adaptation between uses.

Building heights at different scales are based on:

- Existing single storey heights of 5.4 metres;
- Double storey buildings at approximately 8.5 metres height, excluding allowances for architectural features and roof forms;
- Three storey buildings at approx. 12 metres height, excluding allowances for architectural features and roof forms;

Roof forms

A mix of roof forms were modelled in accordance with *the Built Form Guidelines*. Flat roof forms were integrated within the above floor to floor heights and pitched roof forms extended above the floor to floor heights.

Methodology

The 3D topographic models were developed using 0.5 metre interval Lidar contours for the Activity Centre and immediate surrounds, drawn from Council mapping information. VicMap contours at 1 metre intervals (State Government mapping information) were used for the surrounding areas. A Nearmap aerial photo was then draped over the 3D topographic model to provide the base images for the 3D modelling.

The surrounding topographic model was elevated by 15 metres to account for the existing tree canopy on the Dandenong Ranges foothills and ridgelines.

Photos and Google Maps Streetview images have been selected to show the existing view from approximately the same area as the modelled viewpoints. The photos and Streetview images may vary slightly from the modelled viewpoints in some instances, but this does not affect the accuracy of the 3D modelling.

Viewpoints

A range of viewpoints have been selected to reflect key publicly accessible viewing locations in The Basin, refer to Figure 21. The viewpoints were selected by Knox City Council officers. Analysis of these viewpoints is provided at Figures 22-28.

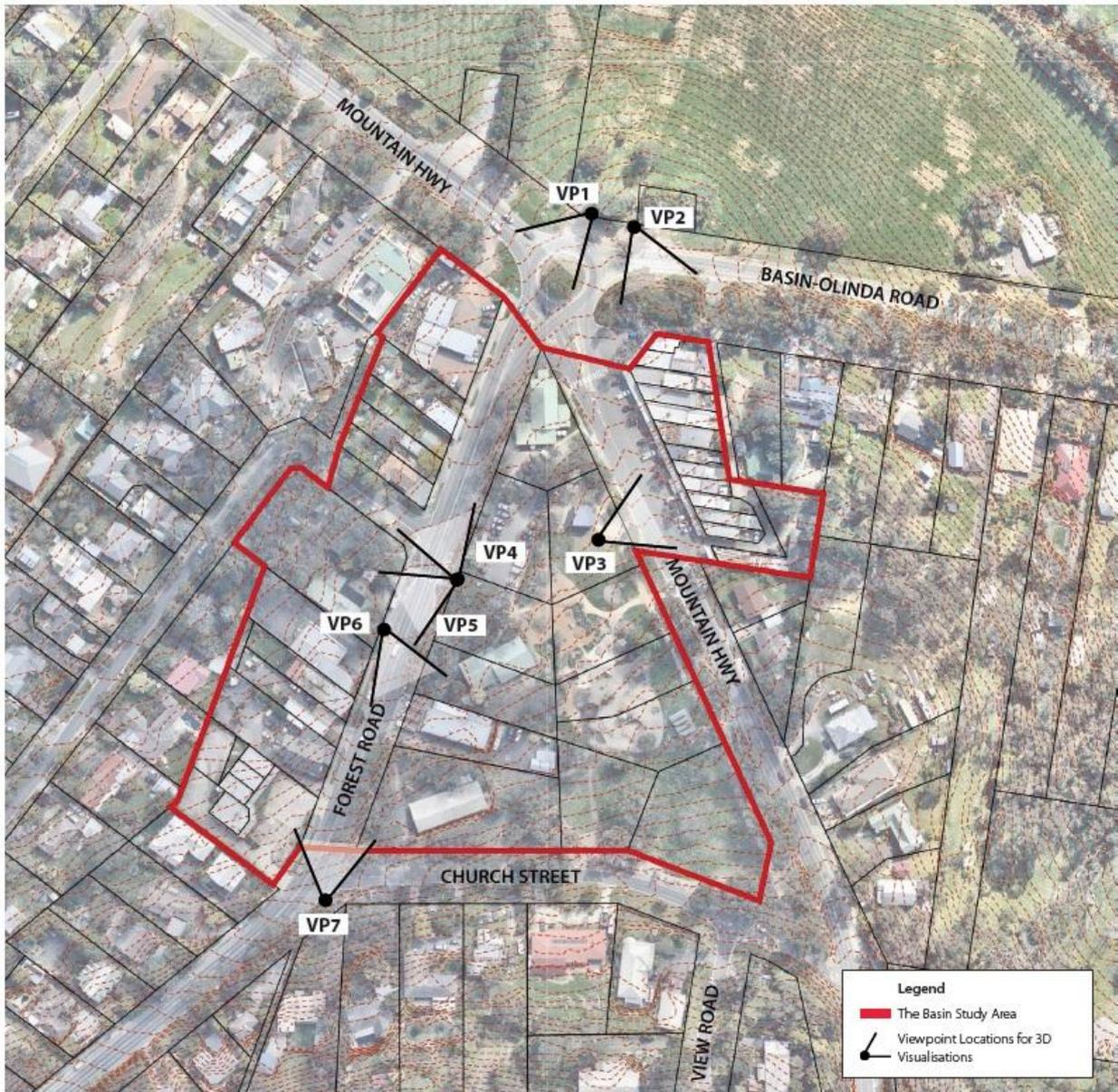


Figure 21 – Viewpoint plan

Figure 22 – View 1: From roundabout looking southwest



VIEWPOINT 1 - FROM BASIN-OLINDA ROAD LOOKING SOUTH WEST:
EXISTING (GOOGLE STREETVIEW)



VIEWPOINT 1 - FROM BASIN-OLINDA ROAD LOOKING SOUTH WEST:
ONE AND TWO STOREY SCENARIO (6m GROUND FLOOR SETBACK ON THE EAST SIDE OF FOREST STREET & 6m FIRST FLOOR SETBACK ON THE WEST SIDE OF FOREST STREET)



VIEWPOINT 1 - FROM BASIN-OLINDA ROAD LOOKING SOUTH WEST:
TWO AND THREE STOREY SCENARIO (6m GROUND AND FIRST FLOOR SETBACK ON THE EAST SIDE OF FOREST STREET & 6m FIRST & SECOND FLOOR SETBACK ON THE WEST SIDE OF FOREST STREET)

Analysis:

- Two storey built form to the Western Precinct represents a low-impact change scenario.
- Three storey built form significantly detracts from the visual dominance of the surrounding tree canopy and represents unreasonable visual bulk within the centre.
- Upper levels along Forest Road should be setback to enable expansive views to the basin paddocks while travelling north along the road. An upper level recessed by 6.0m increases the views to the paddocks and retains a stronger sense of openness than the scenario with no upper level setback. The upper level setback also supports opportunities for upper level useable balcony spaces.
- Built form of two storeys to the Western Precinct improves visibility of the Centre to surrounding roads. However, building frontages should avoid long, unarticulated facades to road frontages which might reduce attractiveness of the Centre and incorporate awnings.

Figure 23 – View 2: From the roundabout looking southeast at the Post office/bookshop corner



VIEWPOINT 2 - FROM THE MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY / BASIN-OLINDA ROAD ROUNDABOUT LOOKING SOUTH EAST:
EXISTING (GOOGLE STREETVIEW)



VIEWPOINT 2 - FROM THE MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY / BASIN-OLINDA ROAD ROUNDABOUT LOOKING SOUTH EAST:
ONE AND TWO STOREY SCENARIO



VIEWPOINT 2 - FROM THE MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY / BASIN-OLINDA ROAD ROUNDABOUT LOOKING SOUTH EAST:
TWO AND THREE STOREY SCENARIO

Analysis:

- Two storey built form to the northern end of the Eastern Precinct represents a low-impact change scenario. Views to, and the visual dominance of, the Dandenong Ranges remain intact. Three storey built form significantly detracts from the visual dominance of the Dandenong Ranges backdrop.
- Increased built form helps to provide a greater street presence to mark the centre from further afield. Development should activate any blank walls facing the road.
- Stronger built form provided to the northern end of the Eastern Precinct could provide this 'landmark' presence without detracting from views of the Dandenong Ranges from within the centre.

Figure 24 – View 3: From park on Forest Road looking east



VIEWPOINT 3 - FROM PARK ON FOREST STREET LOOKING EAST:
EXISTING (GOOGLE STREETVIEW)



VIEWPOINT 3 - FROM PARK ON FOREST STREET LOOKING EAST:
ONE STOREY SCENARIO



VIEWPOINT 3 - FROM PARK ON FOREST STREET LOOKING EAST:
TWO STOREY SCENARIO

Analysis:

- Two storey built form to the Eastern Precinct (excluding the northern end) represents an unacceptable impact on views to the Dandenong Ranges. Future development should be constrained to the existing height of 5.4 metres so as not to impact on this important view.

Figure 25 – View 4: From Forest Road near Conyers Street looking northwest



VIEWPOINT 4 - FROM FOREST ROAD NEAR CONYERS STREET LOOKING NORTH WEST:
EXISTING (GOOGLE STREETVIEW)



VIEWPOINT 4 - FROM FOREST ROAD NEAR CONYERS STREET LOOKING NORTH WEST:
TWO STOREY SCENARIO (6m FIRST FLOOR SETBACK)



VIEWPOINT 4 - FROM FOREST ROAD NEAR CONYERS STREET LOOKING NORTH WEST:
THREE STOREY SCENARIO (6m FIRST & SECOND FLOOR SETBACK)

Analysis:

- Two storey built form to the Western Precinct represents a low-impact change scenario. Views to, and the visual dominance of, the Dandenong Ranges in the distance, remain intact. Built form of 3 storeys overwhelms the public realm and diminishes the intimate dimensions of the centre.
- Any redevelopment of the automotive garage site on the corner of Mountain Highway and Forest Road should be stepped and setback at both the ground and upper level to retain the openness of the intersection and views to the basin paddocks.

Figure 26 – View 5: From Forest Road near Conyers Street looking southwest



VIEWPOINT 5 - FROM FOREST ROAD NEAR CONYERS STREET LOOKING SOUTH WEST:
EXISTING (GOOGLE STREETVIEW)



VIEWPOINT 5 - FROM FOREST ROAD NEAR CONYERS STREET LOOKING SOUTH WEST:
TWO STOREY SCENARIO (6m FIRST FLOOR SETBACK)



VIEWPOINT 5 - FROM FOREST ROAD NEAR CONYERS STREET LOOKING SOUTH WEST:
THREE STOREY SCENARIO (6m FIRST & SECOND FLOOR SETBACK)

Analysis:

- Two storey built form to the Western Precinct represents a low-impact change scenario. Views to, and the visual dominance of, the Dandenong Ranges in the distance, remain intact.
- Built form of 3 storeys, even with generous setbacks, overwhelms the public realm and diminishes the intimate dimensions of the centre.

Figure 27 – View 6: from Forest Road looking southeast



VIEWPOINT 6 - FROM FOREST ROAD LOOKING SOUTH:
EXISTING (GOOGLE STREETVIEW)



VIEWPOINT 6 - FROM FOREST ROAD LOOKING SOUTH:
ONE STOREY SCENARIO WITH GROUND FLOOR SETBACK



VIEWPOINT 6 - FROM FOREST ROAD LOOKING SOUTH:
TWO STOREY SCENARIO WITH GROUND AND FIRST FLOOR SETBACK

Analysis:

- Two storey built form to the Triangle precinct impacts upon views to the Dandenong Ranges. A flexible, single storey height limit of 8 metres should be applied to all land within the Triangle, with the exception of the CFA building, as this area is limited to public uses and facilities and a flexible single storey limit would allow for other ancillary buildings and works to existing public uses. A two storey height limit of 8 metres should be applied to the CFA site for future redevelopment of the site for CFA purposes (this will allow for a second storey training room or a new fire station etc). Any second storey of the CFA building should be setback a minimum of 3 metres from the facade of the building to ensure development does not dominate the streetscape. It is important to note that the modelled built form represents a 'worst case' scenario and given that land within the Triangle is under public ownership and will continue to be used for public uses into the future, a single storey height limit of 8 metres will allow for instances such as a new fire station without creating an outcome such as that shown above.

Figure 28 – View 7: from Forest Road looking north



VIEWPOINT 7 - FROM THE CHURCH STREET / FOREST STREET INTERSECTION LOOKING SOUTH:
(DISTING GOOGLE STREET VIEW)



VIEWPOINT 7 - FROM THE CHURCH STREET / FOREST STREET INTERSECTION LOOKING SOUTH:
(TWO AND THREE STOREY SCENARIO - GROUND FLOOR SETBACK ON THE EAST SIDE OF FOREST STREET & 1st FLOOR SETBACK ON THE WEST SIDE OF FOREST STREET)



VIEWPOINT 7 - FROM THE CHURCH STREET / FOREST STREET INTERSECTION LOOKING SOUTH:
(TWO AND THREE STOREY SCENARIO - GROUND & FIRST FLOOR SETBACK ON THE EAST SIDE OF FOREST STREET & 1st & SECOND FLOOR SETBACK ON THE WEST SIDE OF FOREST STREET)

Analysis:

- Two storey built form to the Triangle precinct impacts upon view to the Dandenong Ranges. A flexible, single storey (and two storey for the CFA site only) height limit of 8 metres should be applied within the Triangle as this area is limited to public uses and facilities and a flexible single storey limit would allow for a new fire station in the future or other ancillary buildings and works to existing public uses.
- Three storey built form to the Western Precinct results in excessive visual bulk and detracts significantly from the character of the centre. It also has an impact upon distant views to the Dandenong Ranges.

5.2 Summary of Built Form Scenarios

The 3D built form scenarios enable the following conclusions to be drawn about future development within The Basin:

- Single storey heights to the Eastern and Triangle precincts enable views to the Dandenong Ranges to be protected and the centre to retain its compact, intimate feel;
- Two storey development to the western precinct enables additional development within the centre while continuing to sit below the surrounding canopy tree height; and
- Three storey built form results in an unacceptable level of visual bulk which detracts from the sense that the Village forms part of the Dandenong Foothills landscape.

6. Conclusion

The Basin Neighbourhood Activity Centre has a mixture of community service, tourism, entertainment and commercial roles. Drawing from the planning policy framework at Section 3, community consultation, and built form analysis at Sections 4 and 5, the following priorities have been identified for The Basin NAC.

Built form priorities for The Basin:

- The centre's location and setting within the Dandenong Foothills landscape is a highly valuable part of its appeal and character;
- Retain the centre's 'local,' 'village' atmosphere;
- Views to the Dandenong Foothills and basin paddocks are protected;
- The environmental sensitivities of the centre's setting are protected;
- The 'everyday' service offering of the centre is not compromised;
- The protection of existing heritage and locally significant buildings which contribute to the character of the centre;
- The location of the centre within a bushfire prone area;
- The location and extent of advertising signage is managed appropriately;
- Support Knox-wide demand for increased housing diversity;
- Support Knox-wide trends towards an ageing population;
- Improve the centre's presence from road approaches;
- Improve accessibility across the centre;
- Manage car parking within the centre; and
- Retain public uses within the Triangle.

This *Part 1 - Background Report* forms the strategic basis for *Part 2 - The Basin Built Form Guidelines, May 2016*. The *Built Form Guidelines* will then be implemented through Planning Scheme Amendment C137 which will introduce a Design and Development Overlay – Schedule 11 (DDO11) to include height, setback and design controls for the centre. This will ensure the centre maintains a contained and low scale village feel, set within the treed environment of the Dandenong Foothills, while allowing the centre capacity to develop and grow into the future.