

# Wheelers Hill Neighbourhood Activity Centre Structure Plan





CITY OF MONASH

# Wheeler's Hill Neighbourhood Activity Centre Structure Plan

September 2007

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH

DAVID LOCK ASSOCIATES  
URBAN DESIGN AND TOWN PLANNING



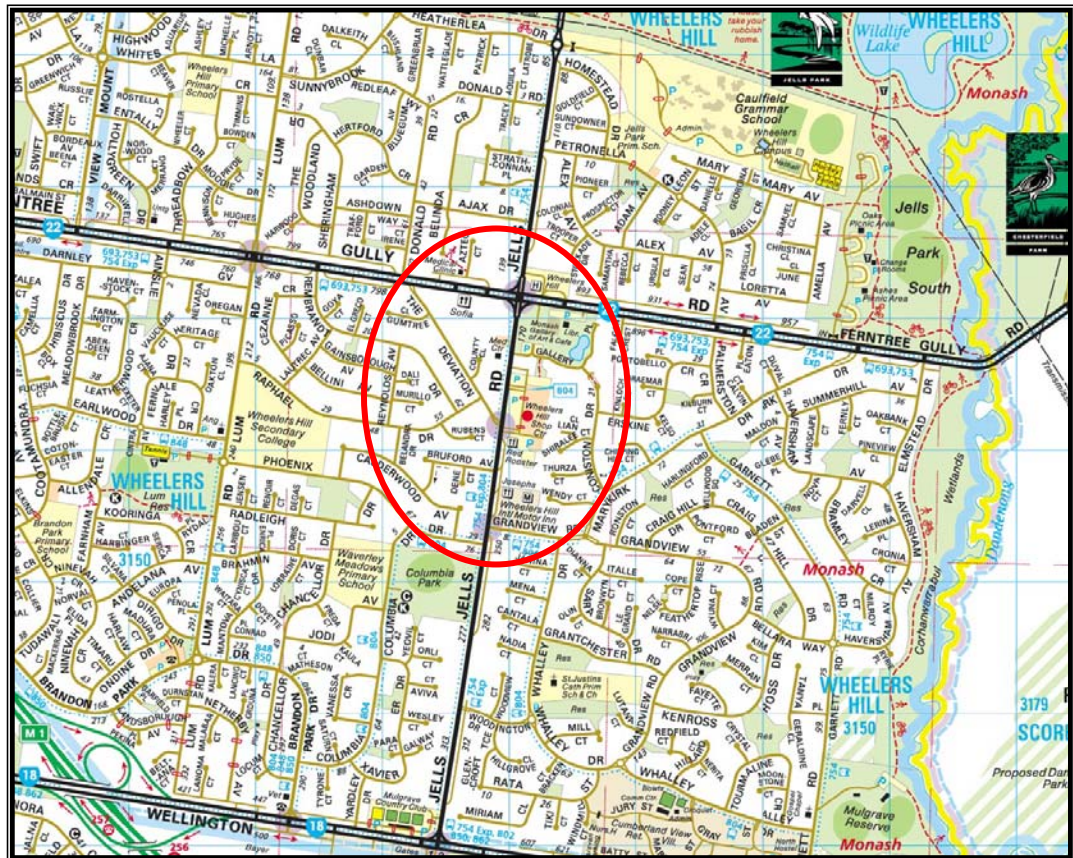
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## I INTRODUCTION

### I.1 What is the scope of this Structure Plan?

The Wheelers Hill Neighbourhood Activity Centre (WHNAC) is located approximately 22 kilometres to the south-east of Melbourne's Central Activities Centre. Part of the centre is located at the crest of a significant ridge that provides sweeping views to central Melbourne and the Dandenong Ranges. It comprises a modest local shopping centre, and a mix of medical and fitness facilities, restaurants and Council facilities that primarily serve the local community. Surrounded by prestigious dwellings in garden settings, Wheelers Hill is a settled, affluent and attractive neighbourhood, expecting to experience only limited change.



A recent proposal to develop a tall apartment building on the crest of the ridgeline has highlighted to Council and the community that the Centre includes significant vacant and under developed lots, and there are major opportunities for change in the centre. The discussion of the proposed residential apartment building has contributed to Council's decision to engage a Project Team to prepare a Structure Plan to provide certainty for stakeholders, residents and investors regarding appropriate development in the Centre.

The Planning Group, in conjunction with David Lock Associates and Grogan Richards has prepared this Structure Plan to provide an integrated framework to guide changes in the Wheelers Hill Neighbourhood Activity Centre.

## **1.2 What is an Activity Centre Structure Plan?**

Melbourne 2030 (the Plan), the State Government's long term planning strategy for the metropolitan area proposes, amongst other things, that the suburbs should not continue outwards in the same way that they have in the past. Over the next 30 years, the Plan advocates that more people should use public transport and have convenient access to the many services, recreation facilities and employment opportunities that are often located in suburban shopping centres. The Plan proposes that many of the new households that will want to live in the metropolitan area should be able to locate in, or close to Activity Centres that are the focus for public transport services, retailing, employment and services. Activity Centres are to be the focus for much of Melbourne's new development.

This significant amount of new development needs to be carefully planned. Melbourne 2030 defines Structure Plans as:

*"A planning tool that sets out an integrated vision for the desired future development of a place, and establishes a planning and management framework to guide development and land-use change in order to achieve stated environmental, social and economic objectives".*

Structure Plans aim to provide a long term framework to guide development in and around each of the centres that are designated as the preferred focus for additional development. The scope and content of Structure Plans has been set out in the General Planning Practice Note *Structure Planning for Activity Centres (December 2003)*. The Practice Note provides that;

*“Structure Plans will guide the major changes to land use, built form and public spaces that together can achieve economic, social and environmental objectives for the centre.”*

In achieving this aim, Structure Plans should give effect to the planning policies and objectives set out for activity centres in Melbourne 2030, as well as the State and Local Planning Policy Frameworks in the Monash Planning Scheme. The Practice Note indicates that the Structure Plan should indicate how the centre will develop, and the actions that are needed to implement the preferred policies.

A Structure Plan provides an overall framework to guide decisions about development, land use and change in the Activity Centre. The Structure Plan can set out the expectations of the community in respect of preferred land uses and activities, built form (building heights, setbacks, architectural styles and landscaping) and the management of traffic and car parking. It can also set out proposals for government authorities to implement. A Structure Plan aims to enable all the stakeholders interested in an Activity Centre to have a shared view about the types and changes that are likely to be supported.

A Structure Plan recognises that change occurs through the actions of the many stakeholders that regularly make decisions about land use, capital works and development. A Structure Plan is likely to recommend ways to improve the range of land uses, the built form, accessibility and circulation, and the provision of public transport in the activity centre. A Structure Plan is likely to particularly recommend ways to improve the amenity of the centre for its users, including the design of civic spaces and streets to enhance community life and a sense of identity.

Many of the recommendations will be implemented through the works programs of Council and other public authorities. Some recommendations are the responsibility of State Government, and Council may need to advocate that the recommendations are implemented.

### **1.3 Why is this Structure Plan needed?**

Council has intended to prepare Structure Plans for all the Neighbourhood Activity Centres in the City of Monash. A recent proposal to develop the land on the south west corner of Ferntree Gully Road and Jells Road (the present petrol filling station) for a higher rise residential apartment building has made all stakeholders aware that the Wheelers Hill Neighbourhood Activity Centre contains a number of sites that could possibly be redeveloped. These include the land presently used for the fitness centre, the Wheelers Hill Hotel, Sofia restaurant, the International Motel and land immediately to the south of the shopping centre. The Shopping Centre itself has under-

utilised land and therefore has potential for further redevelopment. The Minister for Planning, on the advice of a Priority Development Panel determined that the proposed residential development was premature until a Structure Plan is prepared for the wider centre to guide any development in, and around the centre. This Structure Plan has been prepared to guide consideration of development proposals on the Peak site and other sites in the Centre.

Town Planning Application TPA 33330 was lodged in late 2005 to develop a four storey retirement village on the petrol filling site and Council has determined to issue a Notice of Decision to grant a town planning permit. Council has also proposed Amendment C59 to the Monash Planning Scheme to introduce built form controls over land in the Wheelers Hill NAC. The amendment was referred to the Priority Development Panel which has provided recommendations on the preferred built form in the centre.

Council has also proposed Amendment C59 to the Monash Planning Scheme to introduce built form controls over land in the Wheelers Hill NAC. The Amendment was referred to the Priority Development Panel (PDP) which has provided recommendations on the preferred built form in the centre. The Authorisation by the Minister for Planning to prepare the amendment has now lapsed and Council proposes to request the Minister to authorise the preparation of an amendment to introduce various controls including a Design and Development Overlay into the Monash Planning Scheme to give effect to this Structure Plan.

#### **1.4 How was the Plan developed?**

This Plan includes information and comment from a range of sources. Council held community forums in late March 2005 with representatives of resident groups, traders and residents living close to the centre. Council met with key stakeholders (owners and tenants) who may also be affected by changes in the Centre. Members of the Project Team attended the meetings with residents and traders. The Project Team also reviewed the community submissions made in response to the proposed residential Peak development, and has noted the recommendations of the Priority Development Panel in respect of the proposed development on the Peak site and in respect of Amendment C59.

The Project Team has reviewed a wide range of statistical information to identify key trends and issues. The Team has also visited the Activity Centre and prepared an analysis of the urban design, overall accessibility of the centre, and the current land uses and development opportunities. The Team has been briefed on community, recreation and open space facilities and services in the centre, and has reviewed a range of Council and other publications regarding the provision of services in the Wheelers Hill area.

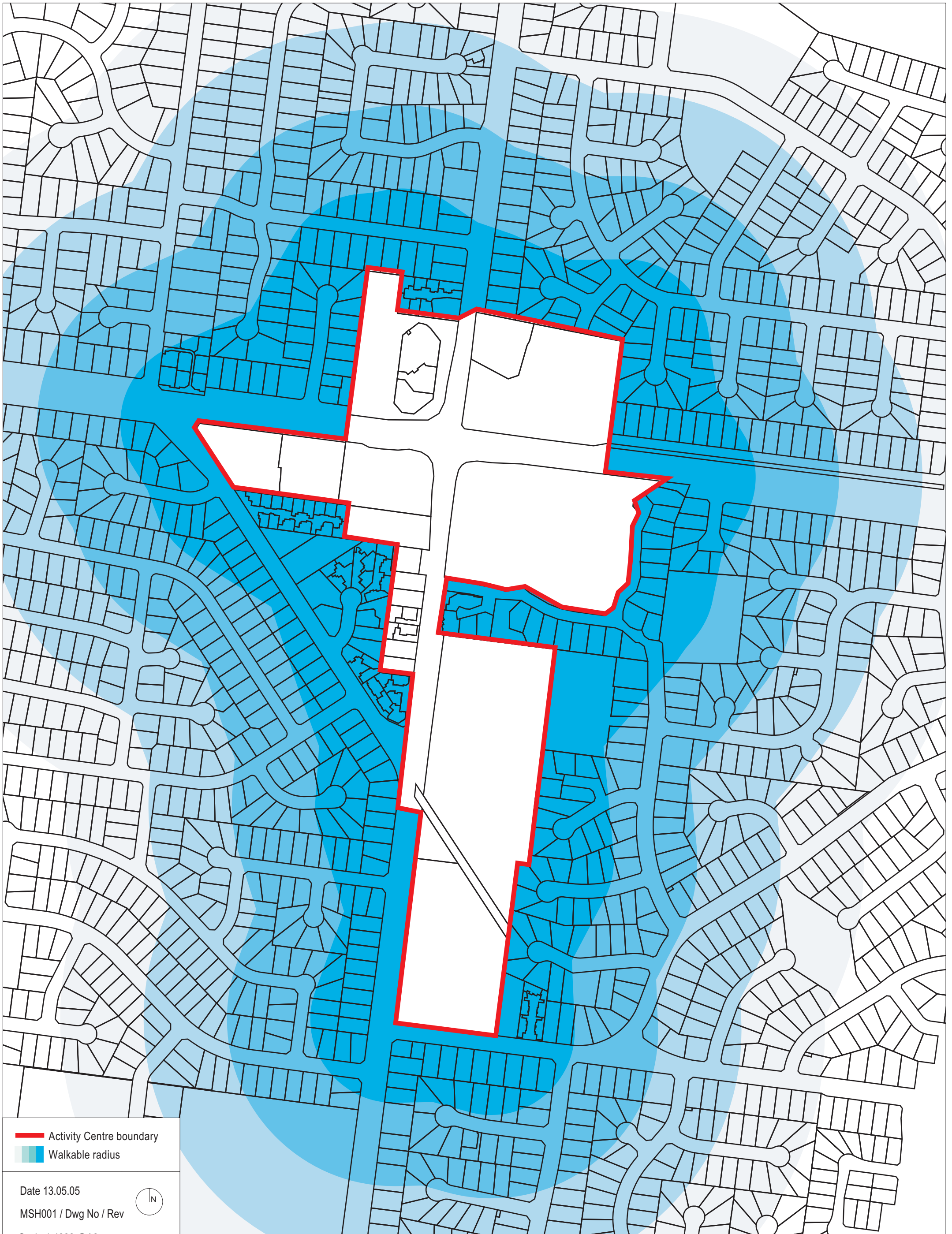
### **1.5 What are the Boundaries of the Study Area?**

The WHNAC generally comprises the land that is presently used for non residential purposes and that that is likely to be the subject of proposals for further development. It should be noted that inclusion within the Activity Centre boundary does not imply additional development rights, nor suggest that land must be redeveloped. Changes to land uses and the built form on land within the centre should be consistent with an approved Structure Plan and the relevant planning controls in the Monash Planning Scheme.

Melbourne 2030 proposes that Structure Plans should be prepared for Activity Centres. The General Practice Note recommends the process for the preparation of Structure Plans. The Practice Note suggests that the Study Area should be sufficiently large to allow for growth and to manage the impacts beyond the centre. Over time the area within 400 metres (a convenient 5 to 7 minute walk from the edge of the centre) may become the focus of possible development pressures. In order to provide the maximum certainty for residents, Council and potential investors, this Structure Plan considers the interface area around the WHNAC and proposes policies to manage this area. It should be noted that the inclusion of these areas in this Plan does not imply that Council is considering changes to its current planning policies.



# STUDY AREA



- Activity Centre boundary
- Walkable radius

Date 13.05.05

MSH001 / Dwg No / Rev

Scale 1:4000 @A3



## WHEELERS HILL

DAVID LOCK ASSOCIATES  
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## 2 WHEELERS HILL TODAY

### 2.1 The Regional Context

The City of Monash is located in Melbourne's eastern suburbs and includes the suburbs of Glen Waverley, Mount Waverley, Clayton, Oakleigh, Mulgrave and Wheelers Hill. These areas were primarily developed in the period from the 1950's to the 1980's when the prevailing housing comprised single family homes on generous sized allotments. The municipality is well serviced with activity centres and a wide range of recreation, education and community facilities. The municipality also has an extensive employment base comprising commercial offices, light industry, research, education and commercial and community services.

The hierarchy of activity centres in Monash comprises one Principal Activity Centre, four Major Activity Centres and many Neighbourhood Activity Centres. Glen Waverley is the Principal Activity Centre, and Mount Waverley, Oakleigh, Clayton and Brandon Park are the Major Activity Centres. Waverly Gardens, Pinewood, Syndal, Hughesdale and Wheelers Hill and many other smaller centres are designated as Neighbourhood Activity Centres.

Principal Activity Centres are the largest activity centres with a full range of retailing, commercial services, entertainment, community facilities and public transport services. They comprise a large built form with multi storey buildings, heavily trafficked roads and a constantly busy, active environment.

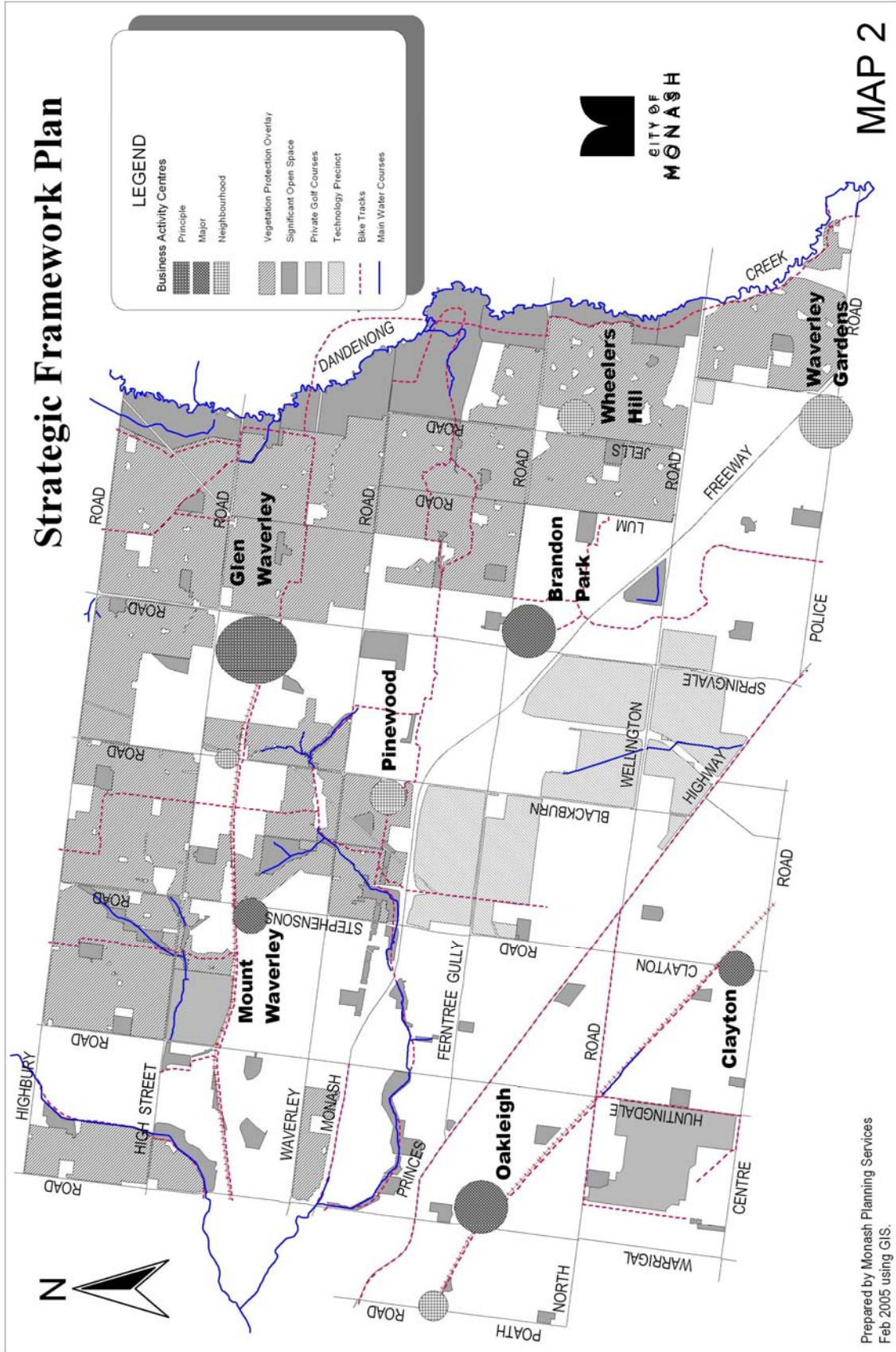
Major Activity Centres also contain a wide range of retailing, commercial services and community facilities but are generally smaller than the Principal Centre in size. They also have good public transport services. Their built form is multi storey, and they enjoy an active, vibrant street life.

Neighbourhood Activity Centres are a focal point for a limited range of community facilities at a local level. They are generally small in size and scale, providing access, via public transportation, to other larger activity centres.

Planning policies intend that developments such as large offices, cinemas, specialty shops and other major services be contained within Principal and Major Activity Centres. Services that attract large numbers of people should be located in the Principal and Major Activity Centres to contribute to the efficient use of public transportation and associated benefits outlined in Melbourne 2030.

The Wheelers Hill Neighbourhood Activity Centre is located around, and to the south of the intersection of Ferntree Gully Road and Jells Road, Wheelers Hill. Other activity centres located nearby include Brandon Park (2km west of Wheelers Hill) The Glen (approximately 3.5km to the north west of Wheelers Hill) and Waverly Gardens (3.5 kilometres to the south).

Wheelers Hill is well situated to provide day to day services to local residents, and complements the higher order facilities and services located within the nearby Principal and Major Activity Centres. Council advises that it is considering proposals to provide additional retail and commercial activities at Glen Waverly, Brandon Park and Waverley Gardens, and such expansion means that Wheelers Hill Shopping Centre will have a role restricted to that of a Neighbourhood Activity Centre..



Prepared by Monash Planning Services  
Feb 2005 using GIS.

## **2.2 The Wheelers Hill Activity Centre**

The Wheelers Hill Neighbourhood Activity Centre (the Centre) is located generally at the intersection of Ferntree Gully Road and Jells Road, Wheelers Hill. The Centre generally extends westward along Ferntree Gully Road to The Deviation, and hence includes non residential activities such as the Wheelers Hill Hotel, the Monash library and art gallery, the fitness and health centre, Sofia's Restaurant, and the Mobil petrol station. The Centre also includes the non residential uses on both sides of Jells Road, to the south of Ferntree Gully Road, such as the Wheelers Hill Shopping Centre, the International Motel, and several medical centres. There are several vacant lots in this general area, and as the Structure Plan aims to guide future development, these are to be included in Structure Plan.

The residential areas adjoining the Centre are not included in the scope of this Structure Plan. These areas comprise large, prestigious residential dwellings that are largely no more than 20 to 30 years in age, and in excellent condition. There are few vacant lots and hence there are very limited opportunities for change in these areas. The Monash Planning Scheme provides an extensive planning framework to consider proposals for change in these areas, and this Structure Plan does not contemplate any changes to the current planning policies.

The Structure Plan considers the connectedness between the centre and its surrounding areas. It is desirable that residents living in the adjoining areas can enjoy safe and convenient access to the centre, particularly pedestrian and cycle access. Hence the Structure Plan considers ways to improve access between the Centre and its adjoining areas.

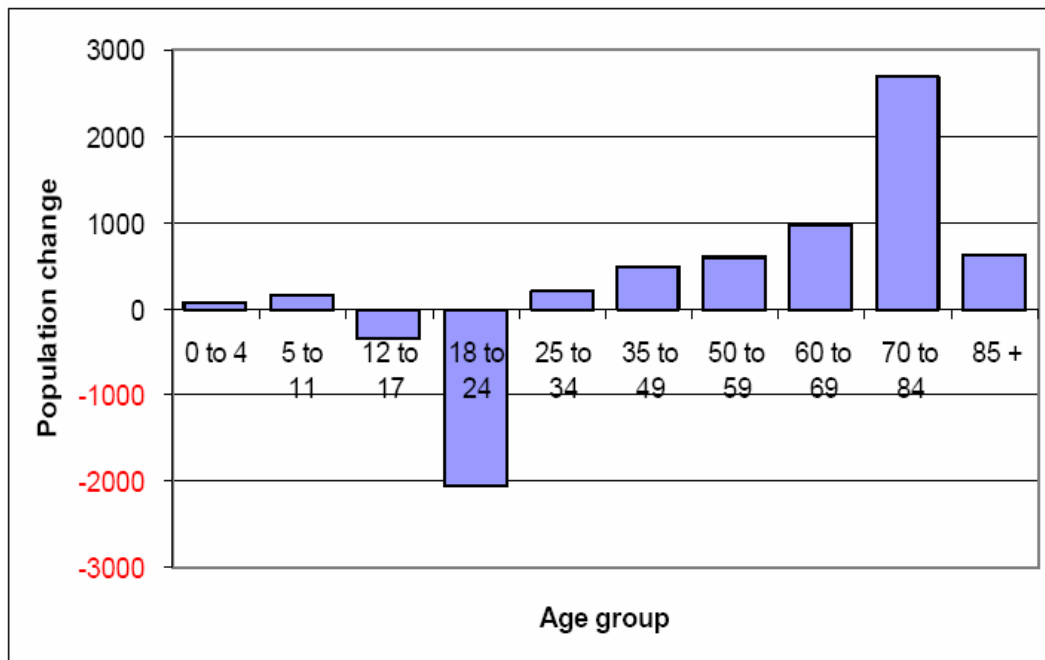
The characteristics of a Neighbourhood Activity Centre are to provide for the community's day to day requirements. The Activity Centre has a distinct suburban character which is highly valued by the community and reflected in the City of Monash's Municipal Strategic Statement. Public transportation is limited to buses which provide access to other nearby, and larger, activity centres. The private vehicle is the primary source of transportation. Council provides some community buses that are generally available to community groups.

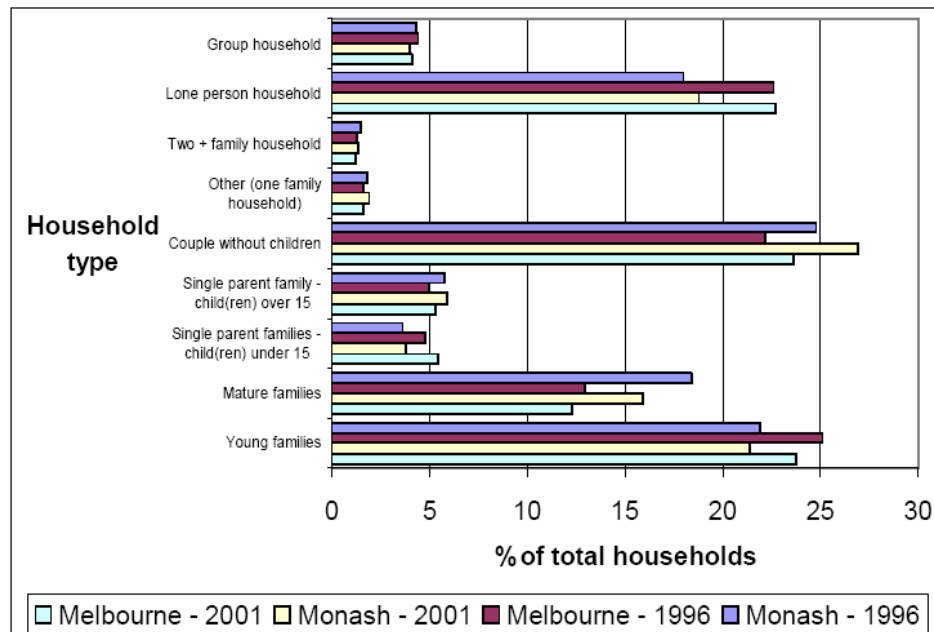
## **2.3 Population and Households.**

The City of Monash has a population in the order of 162,000 persons, living in 60,000 households, with an average size of 2.7 persons. The City of Monash has experienced a relatively stable population size over the past fifteen years. Monash's population grew by just under 3,500 since 1996. The increase in population has been accommodated in new residential

areas, as well as in existing residential areas through dual occupancy and other infill development.

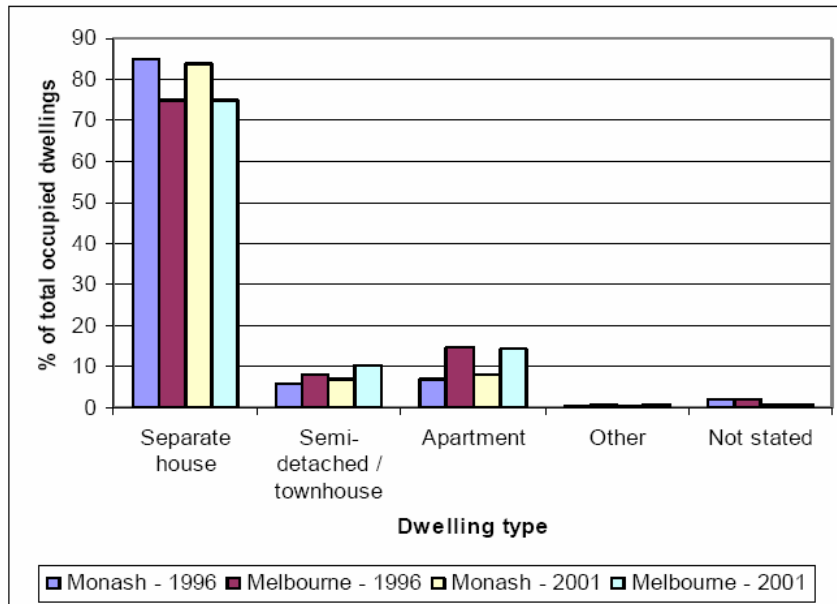
The population in Monash is noticeably ageing, with a large proportion of the population over the age of 55. The figure below highlights a significant trend evident in the Monash population's age structure with recent population increases largely driven by older age groups, particularly the 70 to 84 age group whilst the number of younger people has fallen. In the past five years the capacity of younger households (25 – 34 years) to purchase dwellings in the City has declined.





Household and family type in Monash and Melbourne, 1996 and 2001.

The Figure above shows that households in the City of Monash can be grouped into four main types, each of which comprises in the order of 20 to 25 percent of total households. The four main groups are single person households, couples without children, mature families and young families. The number of single person households and couples without children has increased between 1996 and 2001, and now comprise approximately 45% of all households. In Monash, on average nearly every second dwelling has one or two persons living in them, despite the dwellings being designed to accommodate families with 4 to 6 persons. The number and proportion of households with young or older children has declined as a proportion of all households.

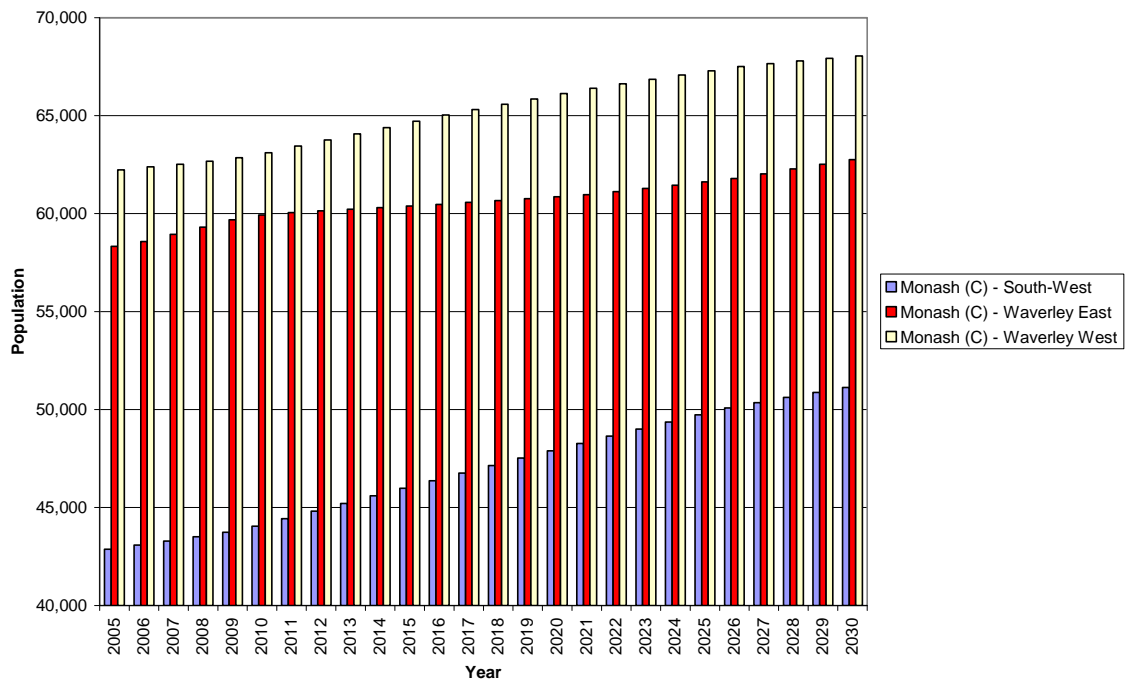


Dwelling structure in Monash and Melbourne 1996 and 2001.

The Figure above shows that approximately 85 percent of all dwellings in the City of Monash comprise detached houses on single lots. There has been some increase in the proportion of apartments and medium density dwellings between 1996 and 2001, reflecting the demand for more diverse housing as the population changes.

Council advises that it has noted a change in the types of dwellings being built within the municipality. The trend in Monash is that for every 100 dwellings built, 50 are part of a dual occupancy development, 30 are part of 3 or more dwellings, 15 are detached dwellings on one site, and 5 are 'other' such as shop tops, apartments and granny flats.





Population Growth in the City of Monash.

Due to the established nature of the suburban area, Monash has a generally older population that is ageing in place. Almost one fifth of the population is aged over 60 years old. The population's average age is increasing, with older empty nesters preferring to remain in the family home, or requiring aged accommodation. In the thirty years from 2001 an additional 12,541 persons who are over 60 years old will live in Monash.

The Monash Housing Strategy and Victoria in Future forecast that the population of the municipality will increase to between 172,000 and 182,000 persons or by 19,380 people between 2001 and 2031. Over the projection period natural increase (births minus deaths) will account for an approximate increase of 3,650 persons. Net migration will account for an approximate increase of 15,730 persons, and most of this migration will be moves within Melbourne, and often to or from adjacent municipalities.

The total number of households in Monash is projected to increase from 60,540 households in 2001 to 74,005 households in 2031. This represents an increase of 13,465 households over the 30 years from 2001 to 2031.

The profile of the Wheelers Hill community is generally consistent with the characteristics and trends seen in the City of Monash. The population and households are predominantly the middle

age and older families, mainly comprising households with teenage or older dependent children, and couples whose children are leaving the family home. There are few households with younger children. Most of the dwellings are medium to large detached houses on single lots.

The average age of Wheelers Hill residents is forecast to age, with a growing proportion in the active aged category. Households will become smaller as the children leave home to establish their own households (often in other municipalities). There is likely to be an increased demand for smaller dwellings from one and two person households who are attracted by the lower maintenance of a smaller dwelling, and closer proximity to the facilities in an activity centre. There is also likely to be an increased demand for supported accommodation for frail aged people.

In meeting future housing needs, the challenge is to provide for site responsive residential development in appropriate locations that respect the residential character and amenity valued by existing residents. This suggests the need to maintain the 'status quo' in the majority of the residential areas of the City, permitting changes to neighbourhood character only the new developments make a positive contribution to the built environment.

### 3 THE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Melbourne 2030 is the metropolitan strategy to guide future development in ways to achieve a more sustainable future; environmentally, socially and economically. Structure Plans should be prepared to guide development around Activity Centres to ensure that an appropriate balance is reached between the metropolitan objectives and the aspirations of the local community.

#### 3.1 Melbourne 2030

Melbourne 2030 proposes that Melbourne should continue to grow outwards in clearly defined growth corridors, but at a slower rate than in the past. Over the next 30 years, more people should use public transport and have convenient access to the many services, recreation facilities and employment opportunities that are mainly located in existing suburban shopping centres. The strategy proposes that many of the new households that will want to live in the metropolitan area should be able to live close to the main public transport stations and bus routes. These households should have the opportunity to choose to live in smaller dwellings, close to public transport, entertainment and shops if these meet their lifestyle.

Melbourne 2030 identifies the Wheelers Hill as a Neighbourhood Activity Centre. Under Melbourne 2020, activity centres are to be the preferred location for further residential, commercial and retail development, including mixed use buildings, and community facilities and services. The capacity of activity centres to accommodate additional development, and the scale and form of further development, is to be guided by Structure Plans.

Melbourne 2030 establishes a hierarchy of centres that include Principal Activity Centres, Major Activity Centres and Neighbourhood Activity Centres. Appendix A provides a comprehensive comparison of the distinctions between Major and Neighbourhood Activity Centres. Using the categories and concepts set out in the table above, the WHNAC could be expected to include the following features:

- A range of retail premises mainly providing daily and weekly convenience shopping to the local community.
- Small and medium sized commercial businesses that provide services primarily to the local community.
- Small and medium sized buildings that may include a mix of uses.
- Residential developments such as apartments and townhouses that can provide alternate housing choices.
- Convenient and safe access to frequent public transport services that connect to Principal and Major Activity Centres and the Principal Public Transport Network.

- Safe and convenient walking and cycling paths that connect the Neighbourhood Activity Centre and the adjoining residential areas.
- Open space and civic places that are designed to be safe and to encourage community interaction.
- Building design and technologies and landscaping that minimise energy use, maximise water re-cycling and use of natural daylight and minimise garden maintenance.
- A built form comprising building heights, setbacks, landscaping, building materials and architectural styles that has a somewhat more intense scale than the adjoining areas, but which respects and relates to the built form of these areas.

### **3.2 State Planning Policy Framework**

The State Planning Policy Framework (SPPF) in the Monash Planning Scheme reflects the policies of Melbourne 2030. It must be considered when decisions are made with regard to land use and development. The policies in the SPPF that are relevant to this Neighbourhood Activity Centre include:

- Encouragement of residential development and employment within existing urban areas, including higher land use densities and mixed use developments near railway stations and principal bus routes with respect for neighbourhood character in existing residential areas.
- Concentration of major suburban retail, commercial, administrative, health, education, entertainment and cultural developments in and around activity centres with good access to integrated transport nodes.
- Encouragement for medium density housing that respects neighbourhood character, improves housing choice, makes better use of existing infrastructure and improves energy efficiency.
- The need for activity centres to be planned to:
  - Provide a range of shopping facilities in locations that are readily accessible to the community.
  - Include a variety of land uses and activities.
  - Provide good accessibility to all modes of transport.
  - Facilitate easy pedestrian movement.
  - Maximise opportunities for the co-location and sharing of facilities.
  - Minimise the impacts of increased development on the amenity of nearby residential and parkland areas.
  - Provide for community activities.
  - Location of major health facilities such as hospitals in areas highly accessible to public transport, with adequate car parking facilities for staff and visitors.

Clause 12 sets out the planning framework for development in metropolitan Melbourne. The Clause proposes that Neighbourhood Activity Centres (NAC's):

- Have a mix of uses that meet local convenience needs.
- Are accessible to a viable user population by walking and cycling.
- Are accessible by local bus services with public transport links to Principal and Major Activity Centre.
- Are an important community focal point.

Clause 12 also proposes that:

- Higher density housing be encouraged in and around Neighbourhood Activity Centres provided that it is designed to fit the context and enhance character of the area while providing a variety of housing options for different types of households.
- Strategic redevelopment sites adjacent to NAC's and wells served by public transport be identified.
- A substantial proportion of new housing be located in or close to activity centres that offer good access to public transport and services.

In respect to urban design, the SPPF proposes that new developments should contribute positively to the environment by:

- Ensuring that new development contribute to community and cultural life.
- Requiring development to respond to its context in terms of urban character, natural features and surrounding landscape.
- Ensuring that new development responds and contributes to an existing sense of place.
- Encouraging the use of walking and cycling by creating environments that are safe and attractive.

### **3.3 Local Planning Policy Framework**

The Monash Planning Scheme the Local Planning Policy Frameworks, and Zones and Overlays and special provisions to control particular uses and development. The Monash Planning Scheme sets out Council's vision for the future character of the City. The vision for the City is:

*To lead the development of the City of Monash as a place where people prefer to live, work and conduct business.*

Clause 21.03 sets out the Strategic objectives for the municipality and a Strategic Framework Plan to guide future development. The Strategic objectives relevant to Wheelers Hill include:

- To provide for and manage the changing residential requirements of the municipality's population.
- To maintain and enhance Urban and Garden City Character of Monash, particularly streetscapes.
- To enhance accessibility to services and facilities.
- To maintain the road and public transport system.

The major strategic directions underpinning the Strategic Framework Plan include:

- Identification of existing treed environments where the special leafy character valued by the community is to be protected by a Vegetation Protection Overlay.
- Identification of the hierarchy of the existing activity centres and promotion of the development and expansion of retail and related facilities appropriate to the centre's role.
- Conservation of locally significant residential, commercial and industrial heritage buildings, places, streetscapes and natural environments.
- Maintenance of visually significant sites that enhance the image of Monash.
- Maintenance and enhancement of the established Garden City Character of Monash on both private and public land including along main roads.
- Integration of land use and transport planning around major arterial roads, fixed public transport routes and bicycle paths, in commercial, residential and industrial land use areas.

The Strategic Framework Plan identifies Wheelers Hill as one of a number of activity centres that form a hierarchy of centres in the municipality. The focus for intensive retail and commercial development will be located at Glen Waverly and Oakleigh activity centres. The municipal strategic statement has identified that development will be encouraged up to ten stories in height at the Glen Waverly activity centre and up to eight stories in height at the Oakleigh activity centre.

In addition, the planning framework indicates that it is considering proposals to expand the Brandon Park and Waverley Gardens shopping centres, and as such the expansion of further retail or commercial development at Wheelers Hill is unnecessary. Hence, Wheelers Hill is well situated to provide day to day services to local residents, and complements the higher order facilities and services located within the nearby Principal and Major Activity Centres. Clause 21.03 includes a Strategic Framework Plan which designates Wheelers Hill as a sub regional centre, which is a centre between regional and neighbourhood centres.

Clause 21.04 of the Municipal Strategic Statement sets out the objectives and polices for residential development in the City of Monash. One of key objectives for residential development is to:

*Encourage the provision of a variety of housing types to accommodate the changing housing needs and preferences of residents that will also complement and enhance the Garden City Character of Monash.*

The residential objective has been more specifically defined through the preparation of the Monash Urban Character Study and Neighbourhood Character Guides. The Garden City vision aims to maintain and enhance the established canopy treed environment throughout the municipality, continuing its significance in defining the character of Monash. This vision covers all land use types including residential, industrial, business, commercial, public land, special purpose, transport and open space uses. It includes the following elements:

- Landscape areas within residential, industrial, business and commercial building setbacks.
- Landscape areas associated with highways, roads, streets and railway lines.
- Reserves, open space corridors and easements.
- Identified significant landscape areas.

The Scheme notes that it is policy that new developments complement the current character and contributory elements, that the quality and style of surrounding development be respected and the treed character and Garden City character be complemented and preserved.

The Character Typology is a central framework to guide new residential proposals especially when considering aspects such as:

- Setbacks of buildings from roads, public spaces and other buildings.
- Mass and scale of building envelopes.
- Well designed building facades.
- Quality building materials.
- Location of car parking and access ways.
- Canopy tree landscaping.
- Location of services.
- Street planting.
- Front fencing.

The Monash Urban Character Study and Neighbourhood Character Guides identified 5 residential character types across the municipality, each distinguished by its period of

development, topography, and subdivision pattern. Wheelers Hill is included in Character Type E which is characterised by *"a character derived from post 1965 development, sloping topography and a curvilinear subdivision pattern"*.

Clause 21.06 (Retail) sets out Council's approach to further retail and commercial development:

*"Council intends to maintain and enhance a cosmopolitan range of business activity centres to continue to meet the community needs and preferences for retail, entertainment, office and other commercial services. These activities will contribute to the level of economic activity and employment, and provide attractive environments for the community."*

*Some smaller centres are declining in retail activity. Their changing role in the economy should be supported through appropriate planning provisions.*

The primary focus for the Wheelers Hill shopping centre is to provide weekly convenience shopping with a supermarket as the main draw card of the Centre. Clause 21.06 in the revised MSS clearly expresses Council's policy intent which is to encourage higher rise residential buildings to be located in The Glen and Oakleigh. The planning provisions contemplated in the revised MSS indicates that Council will generally support residential buildings in the order of 10 storeys in The Glen, and between 4 storeys and 8 storeys in Oakleigh. Council is properly providing for higher rise residential development in locations that are supported by public transport, employment and shops and services. The planning policies also properly indicate that Neighbourhood Centres are places in which development should reflect and reflect the prevailing built form of the locality.

### Zones and Overlays

Land in and close to the Wheelers Hill Neighbourhood Activity Centre is included in various Zones and Overlays under the Monash Planning Scheme.

Most of the land in and close to the WHNAC is included in the Residential 1 Zone. The objective of this Zone is to provide residential development at a range of densities with a variety of dwellings to meet the housing needs of all households, and to encourage development that respects the neighbourhood character.

The Wheelers Hill Shopping Centre is included in a Business 1 Zone. The objective of this Zone is to encourage the intensive development of business centres for retailing and other complementary commercial, entertainment and community uses.



The Monash Gallery of Art and Library is located in the Public Use Zone 6 which is the Zone that is usually applied to land used exclusively for Local Government purposes. The objective of this Zone is to recognise public land for public utility, community services and facilities.

The land adjacent to the Monash Gallery of Art and Library comprising the open space area is included in the Public Park and Recreation Zone. This Zone is typically applied to land that is used for public open space, and the objective of this Zone is to recognise areas for public recreation and open space and to protect and conserve areas of significance where appropriate.

Both Jells Road and Ferntree Gully Road are included in the Road Zone Category 1 which designates these roads as major roads in the metropolitan road network.

In addition to the Zones, some of the land within the WHNAC is affected by Overlays. The Heritage Overlay applies to the Monash Gallery of Art and the treed area on the south east corner of Jells Road and Ferntree Gully Road. The original front section of the Wheelers Hill Hotel, adjacent to the corner of the two main roads is also included in a Heritage Overlay. The Heritage Overlay aims to ensure that the special features of the place are conserved for future generations.

Most of the residential areas are included in a Vegetation Protection Overlay. This Overlay is applied to protect areas of vegetation significance and to ensure that development minimises the loss of vegetation. It should be noted that the Monash Gallery of Art and Library site, the shopping centre, and the land on the south side of Ferntree Gully Road, west of Ferntree Gully Road are not included in the Overlay.

The Minister for Planning has recently approved Schedules 5 or 6 to the Design and Development Overlay. This Overlay aims to identify areas which are affected by specific requirements relating to the design and built form of new development. The recently approved controls have been introduced on an interim basis to provide certainty about development throughout the Study area whilst the Structure Plan is being prepared. The Interim controls cease to have effect after 31 December 2007.

Schedule 5 to the DDO applies to sites that could be considered as having some development capacity and that are presently included in a Residential or like Zone. The DDO Schedule applies to Sofia's Restaurant, the fitness centre and Hotel, land to the east and the south of the shopping centre.

Under this control, development should be compatible with the character of the neighbourhood centre and adjacent areas. The maximum height of development must not exceed 9 metres, or 10 metres where the slope of the land is 2.5 degrees or more. It should be noted that the Peak development site has **not** been included in this Overlay.

Schedule 6 to the DDO has also been applied to the WHNAC, specifically to the Shopping Centre. Under this control the maximum building height must not exceed 12 metres, or 13 metres if the natural ground level is on a slope greater than 2.5 degrees.

### **3.4 Relevant Planning Decisions**

A substantial residential development proposed on the current Mobil petrol station site has been considered by the Priority Development Panel (PDP). In its recommendations to the Minister for Planning, the Panel proposed some planning guidelines that are relevant to this draft Structure Plan.

The residential development, known as 'The Peak' at Wheelers Hill was lodged with Monash City Council (Planning application TPA/31767). The application proposed to develop a nine (9) storey residential building with 116 dwellings and 266 car parking spaces on the south west corner of Fern Tree Gully Road and Jells Road, Wheelers Hill. The Planning application was refused by Council, who also requested the Minister for Planning to determine the application rather than have the likely subsequent appeal determined by VCAT. The Minister referred the matter to the Priority Development Panel.

The PDP identified the main elements of this development to comprise a significant increase in the number of dwellings and a significant change to the diversity in housing choice in Wheelers Hill. The proposal also contributed to a substantial modification to the character of the area. The issues of concern to the PDP included the relatively poor access to public transportation, and the lack of a structure plan to guide such intensive development.

In relation to the increase to the amount of dwellings the PDP concluded that the development enhanced, facilitated and was consistent with the directions of Melbourne 2030. The increased variety of housing stock further enhanced the diversity of the housing stock located within the Wheelers Hill Neighbourhood Activity Centre.

The increase in diversity within the Wheelers Hill Neighbourhood Activity Centre will impact on the character of the area. The PDP noted that the development was a significant variance from the prevailing character of the area, but concluded that the application could not be refused as it

would not detrimentally impact on the area. The PDP concluded that the development reflected the principles of Melbourne 2030. The location of the development on a key site at the crest of the ridge did not cause the Panel any concerns.

The Panel considered the Wheelers Hill Neighbourhood Activity Centre is not a major public transportation centre, nor is it likely to have a significant upgrade in the public transport infrastructure in the near future. Existing and anticipated bus services to the area are inadequate to sustain an increase in the population of the area and there is the notable absence of a fixed rail transport service. The PDP recommended that significant increases in activity should be supported by improvements to the necessary infrastructure, particularly public transport. Until such improvements are to be provided in this (and other areas) the proposal should not be supported.

The PDP also recommended that development of the proposed scale should not be supported in centres that lack a structure plan. Development of this scale, in the absence of a structure plan, has the potential to encourage ad hoc development within the Wheelers Hill Neighbourhood Activity Centre. The Panel recommended that until a structure plan is implemented, development of this scale should not be approved.

Monash City Council sought the approval of the Minister for Planning to prepare Amendment C59 to introduce controls on built form and development in the Wheelers Hill NAC. The Minister for Planning referred the proposed amendment to the Priority Development Panel (PDP). The PDP generally supported the recommendations of the draft Wheelers Hill Structure Plan subject to some greater flexibility in the provisions of the amendment to allow for some greater height on the frontages to Jells Road and Ferntree Gully Road. In particular the PDP report (PDP/11, 12 September 2005) recommends that development be permitted to be three storeys and up to four storeys on the frontages to the main roads on the Peak site (161-169 Jells Road) and the Wheelers Hill Hotel (871-881 Ferntree Gully Road). The increased height should be supported where it achieves articulation of roof lines and more interesting architectural outcomes. It might also allow development on the frontages to the main roads to take advantage of the topographical features of the site, whilst having minimal impacts of the residential interfaces.

Monash City Council issued a Notice of Decision (Application TPA/33330) to grant a town planning permit, subject to conditions that required some changes to the bulk and massing of the proposed building. The applicants applied for the matter to be reviewed by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT case P3030/2005 and P3331/2005). VCAT determined in April 2006 to grant a planning permit for the development subject to changes to the bulk and massing of the building generally consistent with Council's Notice of Decision. The proposed development

will have a height up to 4 storeys to the Ferntree Gully frontage, reducing in height to 2 storeys to the interface with residential dwellings to the south of the site.

In 2002, Council granted a Planning Permit for a large three storey commercial building to be developed in the southern section of the site, between the Shopping Centre and the southern property boundary. This Permit remains operational.

### **3.5 Implications**

Melbourne 2030, the State and Local Planning Policy Frameworks and the objectives of the relevant Zones create an integrated and largely consistent policy framework to guide development in the WHNAC. This policy framework guides the consideration of particular development proposals, and these must also be considered to appreciate the recent interpretation of the framework. The key planning principles that arise from the policy framework and that underpin this Structure Plan are considered to be:

- Wheelers Hill NAC is, and will continue to be a Neighbourhood Activity Centre that provides services to its local community.
- The Centre should feature high levels of accessibility, safety and convenience, and provide places that enhance local connectedness and community life.
- There is a need for a more diverse housing stock in the Wheelers Hill area generally and particularly within walking distance to the NAC.
- Further development in and around the WHNAC should be supported by improved public transport services.
- The Monash Urban Character Study and Neighbourhood Character Guides indicate that new residential development should generally be low density and low rise, whilst Melbourne 2030 and The Peak decision indicates that some higher density residential development may be appropriate.
- Ferntree Gully Road and Jells Road are regional roads; however they should be managed in ways that complement the amenity and safety of an activity centre.

## 4 LAND USES AND ACTIVITIES.

The Wheelers Hill Neighbourhood Activity Centre is a modest sized shopping centre that has a range of complementary activities located nearby, all of which generally provide services to the local community.

The following land uses and activities are located in the Centre:

### Wheelers Hill Shopping Centre – 190 Jells Road



The Wheelers Hill Shopping Centre is located at 190 Jells Road. It comprises a single level integrated retail centre located on the eastern boundary of its site. The centre has 7,285 square metres of retail floor area, including a supermarket, and 718 square metres of offices. The centre also includes a Red Rooster fast food outlet located adjacent to Jells Road. The centre provides off street parking, generally located between Ferntree Gully Road and the shopping centre.

The loading bays are located at the rear of the building. The centre has sufficient land to accommodate a substantial expansion of the floor area.

As a result of adjustments to the size and function of shopping centres in the past two decades, there now exists a strong hierarchy of centres serving the municipality. Glen Waverley Shopping Centre with the addition of The Glen is now designated as a Principal Activity Centre, while Brandon Park functions as a Major Activity Centre. Wheelers Hill Shopping Centre has maintained its originally intended function as a Neighbourhood Activity Centre. All of these centres perform clearly defined and valued roles in this hierarchy and provide a diverse range of retail services and experiences to surrounding communities. The Wheelers Hill Shopping Centre has experienced only moderate change but remains important nevertheless as a strong supermarket based centre. Coupled with the construction of the new multi level office building (recently approved) a number of upgrading projects have been undertaken.

Long term commitments have recently been made in regard to tenancing of the centre which offer good prospects for the long term survival and prosperity of the centre.

Following the issue of a Planning Permit for an office building at the southern end of the Shopping Centre, a subsequent Planning Permit Application was lodged in October 2004 to convert the approved building envelope for a mixed use office and residential building.

Council determined to refuse this application in December 2004 and requested the Minister for Planning to “call in” the application. The Minister advised that the call in powers would not be exercised. In March 2005, Amendment C61 was approved and limits development on the land to a maximum height of 12 metres. As the proposed alternative development could not comply with these restrictions the project was abandoned and the approved office development proceeded. The building is currently under construction and has attracted strong interest from prospective commercial tenants.

#### Petrol Station - 212-216 Jells Road

A petrol station is located on the southern side of a narrow, vacant land parcel. The station is operated by Caltex/Safeway Petrol Company.

#### Vacant land - 218 – 240 Jells Road

This land located between the petrol station and the International Motel. It is largely flat, and could be readily developed for a wide range of uses.

#### International Motel - 242 Jells Road

This Motel is a two storey building constructed in the 1980's. It has been located close to its northern boundary, allowing the southern side to be used for at grade car parking. The Motel provides 40 rooms for guests and can cater for meetings and conferences up to 150 people. The hotel also has a restaurant and bar of which both are open to the public. The site could be redeveloped for a range of uses including renewal and expansion of the current use, commercial offices or residential.

Abutting to the east of the Motel, with frontage to Grandview Road is a rectangular lot that was developed for one detached house. This lot could be consolidated with the Motel site to create a larger development site.

#### West side of Jells Road between The Deviation and the Aged Persons Home - 179 to 191 Jells Road

This area comprises 8 lots that were subdivided to be developed for a detached house on each lot. Land on the north-west corner of The Deviation and Jells Road (193 Jells Road) has been developed for six dwellings on one lot. Nos 181, 185 and 187 Jells Road have been developed for dual occupancies comprising two dwellings on each lot. Nos 183, 189 and 191 Jells Road are used for health clinics currently providing dental, physio therapy and medical services. No 177 – 179 Jells Road contains a florist and a natural healing clinic. All these buildings are single storey, have access to Jells Road and have off street car parking.

Most of these buildings in this group are reaching 40 years of age. The lots could be consolidated into larger redevelopment sites that could be capable of containing medium sized consulting clinics, small professional offices or residential apartment buildings.

Supported Accommodation - 171 Jells Road.

The Wheelers Hill Hostel is located on a long rectangular lot that has a frontage to Jells Road. The land is used for a supported accommodation hostel with 60 beds. The current building was developed recently and have would be expected to continue with only minor modifications and upgrades.

Petrol Station – 161 – 169 Jells Road.



A Mobil petrol filling station is located on the south west corner of Jells Road and Ferntree Gully Road. The facility has access to both roads, and the building is set back approximately 100 metres from the Jells Road frontage. The setback area is attractively landscaped. This site is on the crest of the ridge that traverses the intersection. This site is the location of the application to develop The Peak residential apartment building.

Application TPA 33330 was lodged to develop a four storey retirement village on this site. Following modifications to the design of the proposed development, Council has determined to issue a Notice of decision to Grant a Planning Permit for this development.

Sofia's Restaurant - 830 Ferntree Gully Road.



This restaurant is located on the south side of Ferntree Gully Road, east of The Deviation. The restaurant comprises a single storey building with at grade car parking predominately to the east and south of the building. The building and landscaping are dated and the site could be regarded as an attractive redevelopment site.



#### Fitness and Health Gymnasium – 869 Ferntree Gully Road.

A large fitness and health centre is located on the north-west corner of Ferntree Gully Road and Jells Road. The fitness centre comprises a health centre, gymnasium and a swimming pool with a 25 metre, four lane pool. The swimming pool is available for lessons and health classes, and does not provide any general swimming for the public.

The centre includes a large at grade car park, located on the western side of the health centre. The car park slopes away from the ridgeline towards the north-west. The car park could be redeveloped for residential or commercial development and the car parking be retained as undercroft parking.



#### Wheelers Hill Hotel – 871-881 Ferntree Gully Road

The Wheelers Hill Hotel is located on the south east corner of Ferntree Gully Road and Jells Road. It comprises the original Hotel which is a single storey weatherboard building located close to the front property titles at the corner of the two main streets. This building has heritage value and is protected by heritage planning controls. The Hotel has been substantially

expanded and comprises a large structure along the Ferntree Gully Road frontage with full length glass windows that provide panoramic views to the east and north. The Hotel also includes a bottle shop and extensive car parking.

#### Monash Gallery of Art, Library and public open space.

The Monash Gallery of Art, the Wheelers Hill branch library and an area of open space with significant trees are located on the south east corner of Ferntree Gully Road and Jells Road.

The Regional Art Gallery was designed by world renowned architect, Harry Seidler and has heritage significance. Council recently modified the building to include a Branch library and community meeting rooms in the building, providing a focal point for local community activities. The library and Monash Gallery of Art have significant areas of at grade car parking located adjacent to and accessed from both main roads.

The land on the corner of Ferntree Gully Road and Jells Road is used as an area of locally significant open space, containing mature pine trees that are remnant vegetation from the area's orchards, vegetables and grazing era. The remnant pine trees are approximately 25 metres in



height and provide an important local landmark. Council advises that the trees are nearing the end of their natural life and replacement vegetation will need to be considered in the next 10 to 20 years.

Council facilitated the development of land on the eastern and southern boundaries of this site for 22 single dwellings. Council has created a prestigious residential enclave comprising architecturally designed residences and attractive landscaping that would positively complement the unique architecture of the building, and ensure that the gallery and its environs continue to be a leading example of high quality and innovative design.

#### Land Uses adjoining the Centre

The interface area around the WHNAC predominantly comprises one and two storey dwellings on each allotment. There are some multi residential developments and some accommodation for aged people. The relatively newness of the housing in the area, and its relatively high price means that few lots will be redeveloped in the medium term future.

There is a large parcel of land (21 Coniston Drive) located on the eastern boundary adjacent to the supermarket. This land is presently used for a dwelling with associated gardens, tennis courts and swimming pool. There is pedestrian access from this lot to the retail centre. If this site was to be redeveloped, it could be used to provide housing for older people.

## 5 TOPOGRAPHY, VIEWS, VISTAS AND BUILT FORM

The following section describes the existing conditions and identifies the urban design implications for the study area. This is done under the following headings:

- Land use
- Built form character
- Legibility
- Views and vistas
- Building height
- Public realm quality
- Pedestrian activity and movement
- Vegetation and landscape; and
- Development opportunities

### Land Use

#### Introduction

The spatial location of activity centre type land use has direct influence on the vitality and viability of a centre. The development of a 'good' place, with respect to movement, access, trade, activity, amenity, comfort etc. is in part, dependant upon the range and appropriate location of the land uses within it.

#### Existing Conditions

There is a diverse array of land uses within the study area. The range of town centre retail, community and services type land uses are dispersed over a large area for 100m along Jells Road and 70 metres along Ferntree Gully Road.

There are core retail, service, community and recreation land uses abutting Ferntree Gully and Jells Roads. This is surrounded by residential land uses - both low and medium density - in the form of single detached houses and unit development on multiple occupancy sites. The Wheelers Hill Hotel is located near the intersection of Ferntree Gully Road and Jells Road. Residential development is physically separated from the commercial land uses with no mixed use buildings or sites in the study area.

Significant areas of land within the study area are devoted to retail land uses. Of that land a large proportion is given over to car parking. The largest concentration of retail land use is located at the Wheelers Hill Shopping Centre. The Wheelers Hill Shopping Centre is comprised of specialty shops and large format shops including Safeway. Specialty shops are located both

within the centre and externally facing Jells Road. Some office uses are located on the 1st floor of the centre. There are few uses within the Shopping Centre that are active outside normal business hours.

A considerable amount of land is devoted to community uses in the form of the Monash Gallery of Art. The building that houses this use is a feature pavilion building located in space surrounded by car parking and significant landscape.

Some medical facilities are located primarily along Jells Road in converted single detached houses. There is a relationship between those uses and the uses of the Wheelers Hill shopping centre which is located across Jells Road from the medical facilities.

The intersection of Ferntree Gully and Jells Road is characterised by a range of dispersed town centre land uses such as hotel, art gallery, library and café and recreation centre. As with the shopping centre, these land uses are surrounded by car parks and landscaping.

#### Urban Design Implications

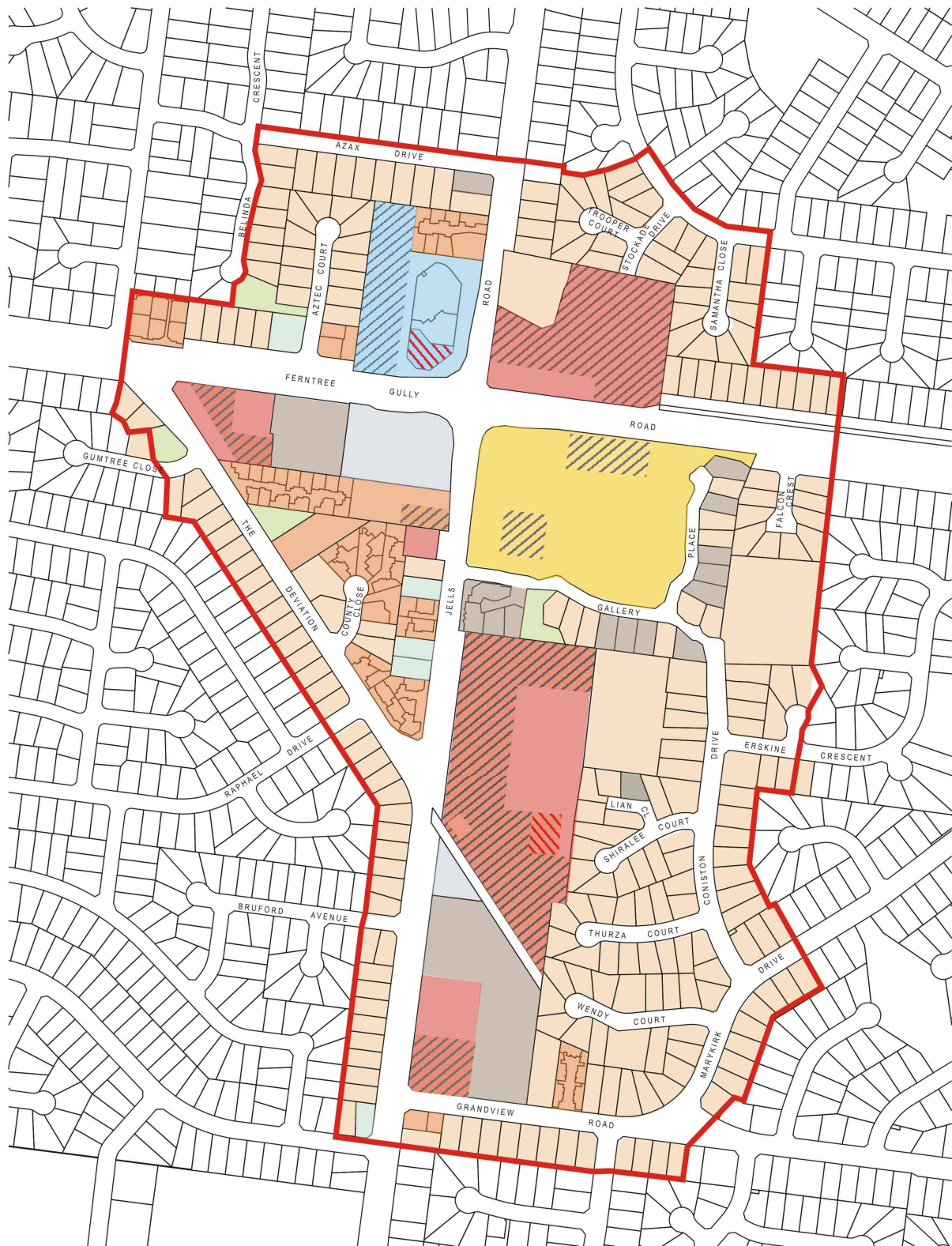
Land uses such as those found within the Wheelers Hill centre can provide a critical mass of development and centre 'energy' that allows for the creation of a 'good' place with respect to movement, access, trade, activity, amenity and comfort. In particular, one of the primary values of successful activity centres is that, in locating a number of different uses together, they enable one visit to serve several purposes. The pedestrian traffic that this creates, as people walk between different activities, creates a sense of vitality, supports smaller shops that rely on passing trade and offers the potential for spontaneous social interaction.













A vibrant town centre would typically have an integrated mix of mutually supportive activities, however in Wheelers Hill these are dispersed across a large area. This dispersal of uses, in part caused through the large expanse of car park, reduces the opportunities for synergies and relationships between land uses. There is a need to consolidate the activity centre functions in order to better integrate them with each other.

A mix of different activities can also create a safer public realm by injecting life into it at different times of the day and week. The relatively 'mono-functional' nature of the Shopping Centre means that it is dormant outside business hours, detracting from the safety of the public realm. While not directly affecting the success of the shops, this detracts from the potential success of evening activities such as restaurants, and the safety of staff leaving after work – particularly in winter when it is dark at that time.

Therefore, the Shopping Centre would benefit from the introduction of more activities that are active outside business hours – such as housing, dining and community activities.

# LAND USE



- |   |                            |   |                       |
|---|----------------------------|---|-----------------------|
|  | Project area               |  | Recreational          |
|  | Retail                     |  | Medical facilities    |
|  | Office                     |  | Petrol station        |
|  | Community use              |  | Landscape/ open space |
|  | Low density residential    |  | Car park              |
|  | Medium density residential |  | Vacant                |

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## WHEELERS HILL

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## Building Height

### Introduction

Building heights are influenced by a number of factors. Typically these may include market demand, urban character, access to light, services and infrastructure capacity.

Activity centres are retail, entertainment, services and transport nodes that are characterised by higher built forms stepping down to lower buildings in residential areas.

Melbourne 2030 "*encourages concentration of new development at activity centres near current infrastructure, in areas best able to meet [changing needs of the population] while meeting the objective of sustainable development*" (p30). It directs that "*Existing activity centres... will be the focus of much new development*" (p. 31). This implies an increase in development intensity within activity centres including potential development above the prevailing building height. Melbourne 2030 notes that the implementation of its policies on activity centres may result in a change to form of those centres (p52).

Determining the appropriate building height for an area such as an established neighbourhood activity centre includes consideration of the following:

- Existing heritage and local character (including the sense of openness to the sky).
- Important views of the site.
- Housing diversity.
- Public and private amenity.
- Local traffic and parking.
- Access to public transport.
- Services capacity.
- The viability of adjoining commercial uses (this is only affected by residential development).
- Local and regional legibility.
- Viability of urban renewal.

### Existing Conditions

All buildings in the study area except for one are 1-2 storeys in height. However, there is a significant amount of vegetation within the study area that is taller than the buildings, and therefore obscures them from many viewpoints.

### Urban Design Implications

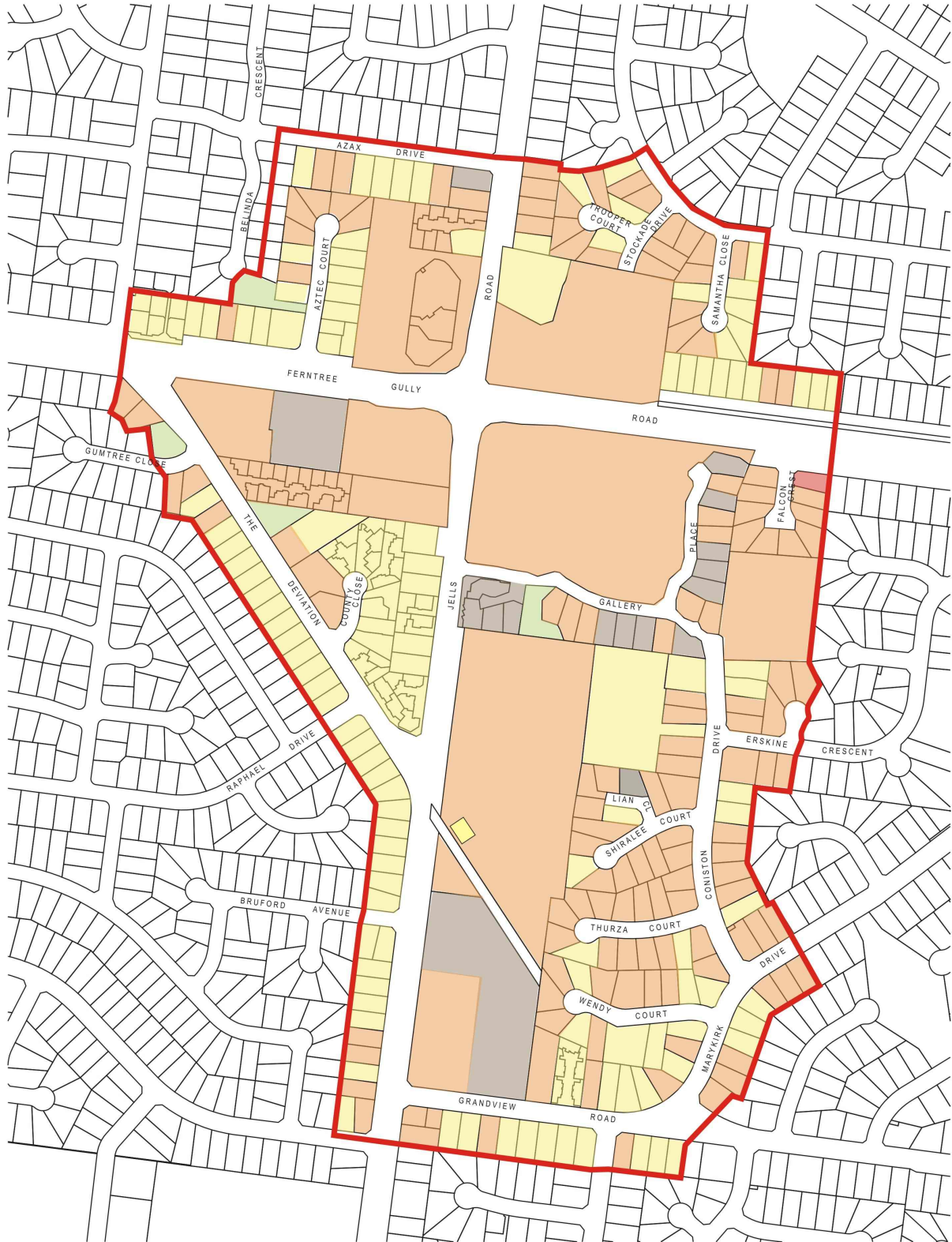
Melbourne 2030 seeks to concentrate development in activity centres, particularly those on the PPTN. However, Wheelers Hill is not currently nor likely to ever be on the Principal Public Transport Network (PPTN). Therefore it is considered inappropriate for substantial amounts of development to be introduced.

Tall buildings are also considered inappropriate at the interfaces with adjoining residential areas, due to their generally adverse impact on character and amenity. Further, the prominence of the study area from the north-east means that tall buildings could potentially detract from the predominantly vegetated skyline (although examples do exist of slender structures such as church spires contributing to an interesting skyline in such cases).

There is no particular need to emphasise the presence of the neighbourhood centre to viewers far afield, given its local role and lack of regional importance. Equally, the centre's regular patrons know where it is, and do not need tall or dominant structure to enhance the local legibility of the centre. Hence new development can meet local needs and respect the prevailing built form. Should a more diverse housing mix be desired to meet social objectives, this can be achieved through encouraging a built form comprising well designed buildings that balances built form height, massing, site coverage and landscaping to provide a built form that delivers higher densities, greater housing diversity without tall buildings.

Therefore, new development should be limited to the height of the vegetation in the Wheelers Hill locality – approximately 3-4 storeys – and step down from the highest points on a site to the interface with surrounding residential uses. While scope may exist for building features to exceed the preferred height limits, any such proposals should only be considered where they will contribute to the centre through articulation of the roof line and interesting architectural form.. This means that any part of a building above 4 storeys will be minimal, and only comprise a design feature or articulation of the building.

# BUILDING HEIGHT



- Project area
- Single storey
- 2 storey
- 3 storey
- Vacant
- Greenery

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## WHEELERS HILL

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## Neighbourhood character

### Introduction

Distinctive patterns in the physical environment – such as those formed by topography, subdivision, vegetation, building siting, building form and building detail – can create a particular neighbourhood character, which in turn contributes to the identity of a place. Where these patterns are particularly distinctive or consistent, they can be highly valued by the community and can be reflected in land values.

Some of the patterns that contribute to neighbourhood character are not necessarily highly valued, and can sometimes detract from the function of a place. For example, high front fences may be characteristic, but do not support a good public realm. In addition, urban areas sometimes need to evolve in order to meet contemporary accommodation needs or wider strategic planning imperatives. Therefore, local characteristics can be viewed as something to be respected and complemented, and some change in the urban fabric may be desirable as the community changes. .

### Existing Conditions

Clause 22.01 of the Monash Planning Scheme provides a concise statement about the desired future character for the area within which the study area sits. The Garden Character is defined as an important element in the built form of the City of Monash. It has evolved through the consistent development of generous residential and industrial frontages, the retention of existing vegetation and extensive new plantings on both public and private land.

This Garden character has been recognised by the community in numerous studies, and in the consultation for this Structure Plan as an important element to retain within the neighbourhood.

### Desired future character statement

The urban character of this area will evolve within a landscape that has a large number of native trees spread throughout both the public and private domain providing an overhead canopy visually unifying the diverse built-form of some neighbourhoods and providing a strong relationship with the semi-natural landscape of Dandenong Creek.

Dwellings should be designed to sympathetically integrate with any existing native vegetation and relate in form and siting to the topography of the Character Type. Architecture of contemporary excellence that is energy efficient and sustainable will be encouraged. Building scale, height and bulk will be generally similar within neighbourhoods. Large scale contrasts

between buildings will be discouraged except where existing trees and shrubs soften the junction between buildings or where there is a graduated change in scale.

Setbacks will be varied in many neighbourhoods but will be consistent within individual streets and will be sufficiently generous to enable the development of significant native tree canopy and vegetation. The main unifying element will be the canopy of native trees in both the public and private domain. Most gardens will be open to the street with no walls or fences, allowing the soft naturalistic qualities of most neighbourhoods to be retained. Large walls and fences will be discouraged except where they are already a visually dominant streetscape element.

The soft quality of the street that is derived in part from the nature strips will be maintained by ensuring that there is only one single crossover per lot frontage.

Planting will generally enable filtered views of the architecture and engender a sense of visual continuity with the street and adjacent properties.

It should be noted that this statement is intended for residential land uses. Therefore, it may not be appropriate for development in an activity centre. In particular:

- By their nature, commercial, community and higher-density residential development may not necessarily be able to have a building scale, height and bulk that is similar to that in the surrounding residential areas.
- Commercial development needs to have a closer relationship with the footpath, both for its economic vitality and to provide the level of pedestrian amenity demanded in an activity centre. This is not compatible with the front setbacks typically found in the surrounding residential areas.
- The majority of non-residential buildings in the study area are large format pavilion type buildings, typically surrounded by large expanses of car park or landscape. The majority of other buildings are single detached dwellings sitting within landscape. The majority of buildings are low in scale.

Although there is some commonality of building form within the commercial precincts of the centre, any sense of character arising from this is diminished by their dispersal across a wide area.

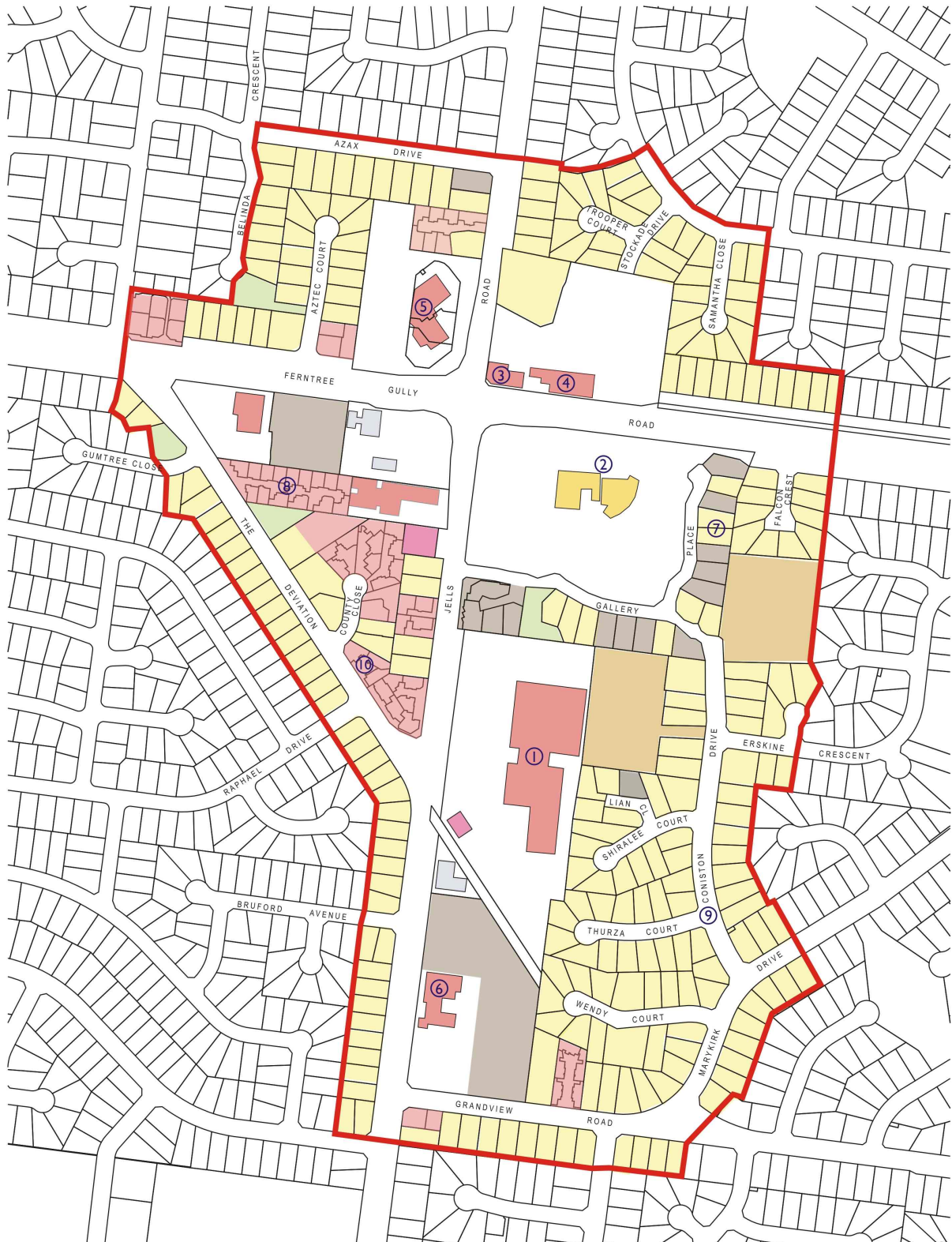
#### Urban Design Implications











The centre requires a desired future character for itself – one that reflects and complements the surrounding residential areas. This may incorporate some of the characteristics of the broader area – such as the prevailing native tree canopy – and the desire for contemporary and environmentally sustainable buildings. It may also be sensitive to the low-rise nature of the

surroundings, while allowing taller development to reflect the centre's locally-important role and the different function of its buildings.

The future character of the centre should also be mindful of its functional needs, such as a high level of pedestrian amenity, requiring well-defined and active building fronts, rather than landscaped setbacks. A more compact urban form, with buildings clustered closer together, would also help to create a more identifiable character.

# BUILT FORM CHARACTER



- |   |   |   |                           |
|---|---|---|---------------------------|
|  | Project area  |  | Single detached house     |
|  | Large format retail/commercial/recreation/community building  |  | Multi unit attached house |
|  | Small format retail   |  | Petrol station            |
|  | Building within landscape with modern architectural character |  | Greenery                  |
|  | Large scale single detached house                             |  | Vacant                    |

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# BUILT FORM CHARACTER



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# WHEELERS HILL

## Legibility

### Introduction

Legibility is the quality which makes a place easy to understand. Successful activity centres have strong legibility. Some centres are arranged around one or two primary main streets lined by commercial uses, with smaller streets leading off to residential areas. They are easy to understand because they have a familiar pattern. Public buildings and neighbourhood shopping centres are often located at or near junctions or nodes within this built landscape in recognisable locations often acting as landmarks to further define the physical landscape.

The Study Area provides an opportunity to build upon an already successful framework. Improving the legibility of the site will improve the functionality and people's perception of Wheelers Hill.

Associated with the concept of legibility are the qualities of richness and personalisation. Richness is the creation of a variety of sensory experiences including motion, smell, hearing and touch that users can enjoy. Personalisation is the extent to which people put their own stamp on a place. Both richness and personalisation contribute to legibility through highlighting patterns of activity and sensory experiences that define a place. Some buildings and locations in the Wheelers Hill lack richness and personalisation. This detracts from the legibility of the Centre.

### Existing Conditions

The study area contains a number of features that contribute to or detract from legibility: The study area is highly visible from outside of the site. In particular, the intersection of Ferntree Gully Road and Jells Road is highly visible being at the crest of the prominent hill. This contributes significantly to the legibility of the place, although the existing built form does little to reinforce this important focal point.

The key features that contribute to the legibility of the WHNAC include:

- The only buildings of note that are readily visible from the public realm is the Shopping Centre and the original part of the Wheelers Hill Hotel (the Monash Gallery of Art is hidden by trees).
- There are a number of distinctive buildings; however they are typically set back from the street and/or hidden by landscape.
- Strong movement paths dissect the study area in the form of Ferntree Gully Road and Jells Road. These contribute to the legibility of the locality.
- There is some distinctive residential development.

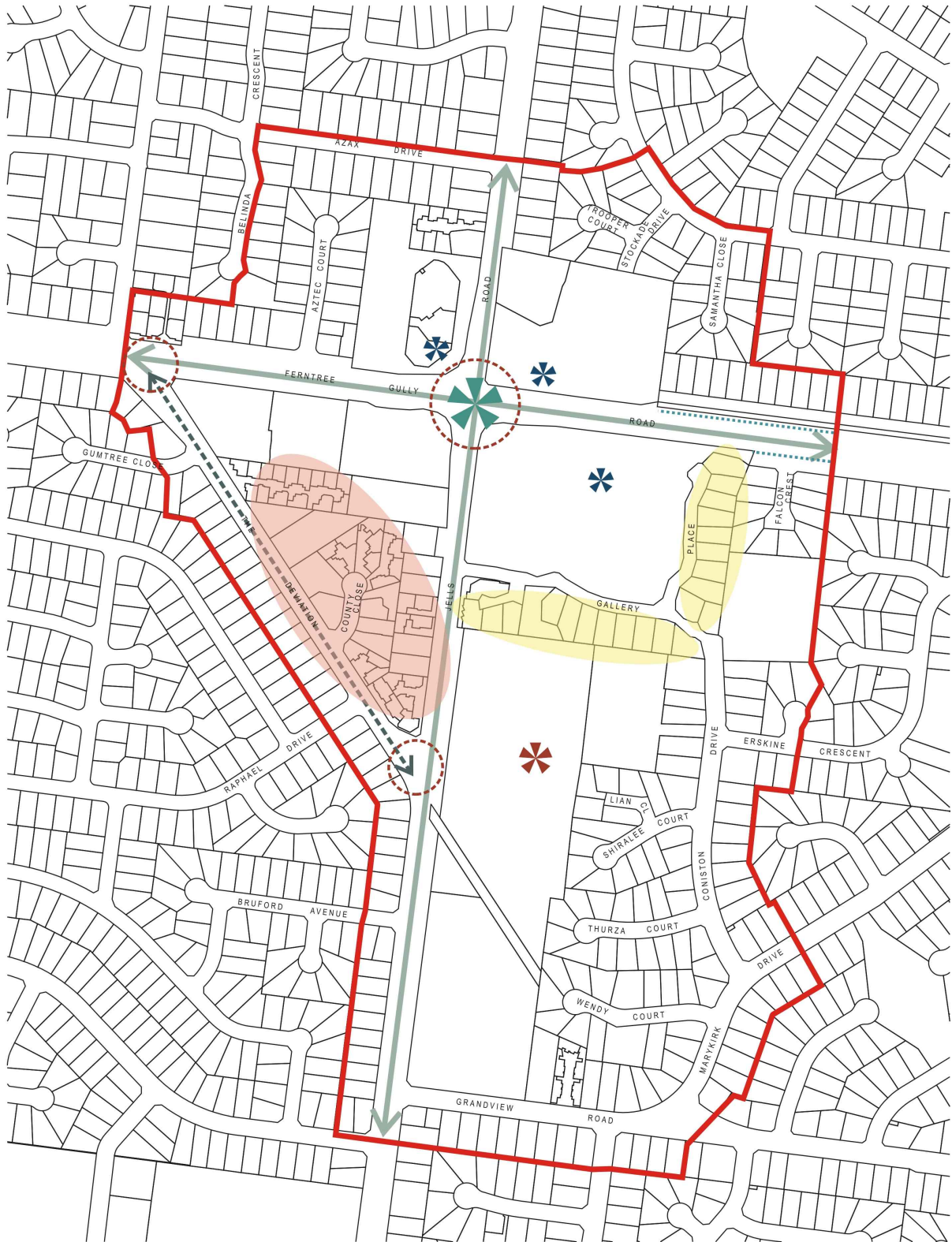
- Some buildings and locations in the study area lack richness and personalisation. This detracts from the legibility of the study area.












#### Urban Design Implications

The legibility of the area can be improved by:

- Strengthening visual connections throughout the study area.
- Promoting a variety of built form, including differences in building design and height to reinforce different nodes and precincts.
- Introducing high quality buildings and streetscape enhancements at the entrances and nodes.
- Introducing distinctive streetscape enhancements.
- Allowing for more richness and personalisation of buildings and places within the study area.
- Allowing development to define and reinforce the prominence of the intersection of Ferntree Gully Road and Jells Road.

# LEGIBILITY



-  Project area
-  Primary path
-  Secondary path
-  Bike route
-  Major traffic node
-  Minor traffic node
-  Landmark building
-  Distinctive land use
-  Hilltop
-  Strong medium density Residential character
-  Distinctive low density residential character

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## WHEELERS HILL





## Views and Vistas

### Introduction

The availability of views and vistas from a place contributes to its attractiveness and memory, and to the legibility of the broader urban structure. They also contribute to the likelihood of renewal.

The presence of development within views or vistas from distant vantage points can contribute or detract from those views or vistas, depending on its appearance. Attractive, elegant buildings can contribute to the overall composition of a view or vista, while unattractive, bulky buildings can detract from them.

### Existing Conditions

Key views and vistas available from, and into the Study Area include:

- Far reaching north-easterly views and vistas from the site.
- Significant vistas through the centre of the Study Area along Ferntree Gully Road and Jells Road, which can be enhanced to improve its image. This can be achieved through plantings, varying the built form, and public art trails.
- Views of Wheelers Hill from the north-east, made prominent by its location on elevated land, which is relatively rare within Melbourne.
- Clusters of trees exist around the study area, forming a significant component of the views and vistas.

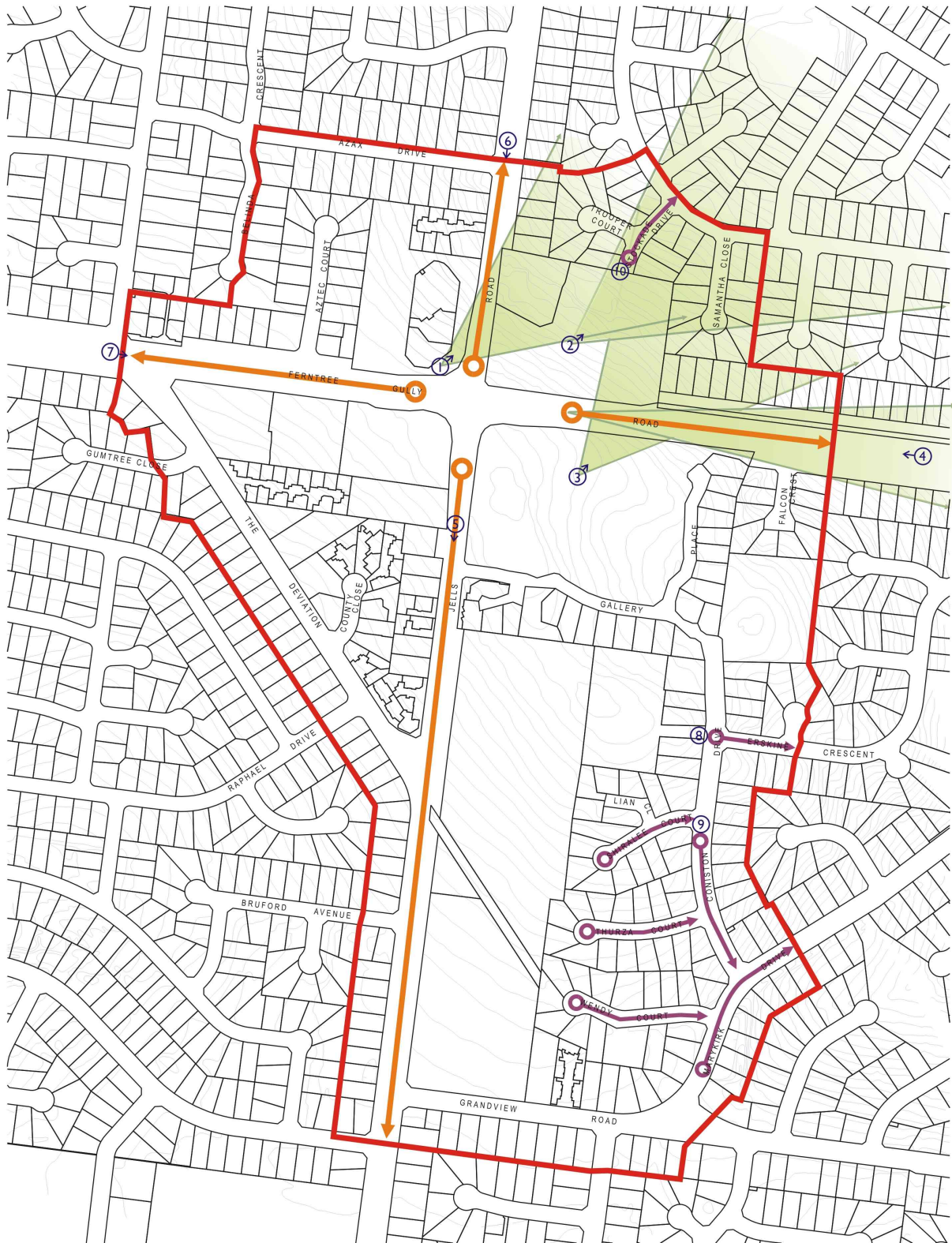
### Urban Design Implications

The availability of attractive views and vistas from public vantage points within the study area should be maximised. This can be achieved by maintaining existing view corridors from ground level vantage points, and creating vantage points in new buildings.

The prominence of the site – particularly from the north-east - due to its location on elevated ground, means that particular care must be taken with the form of new buildings on the hilltop or its north-easterly slopes. As noted in the Building Height section above, the skyline in this area is predominantly defined by vegetation at present. Therefore, buildings should not encroach upon the skyline. They also need to be of particularly high design quality to ensure that they positively contribute to the character of the area.

The views through the centre of the study area can be enhanced by introducing high quality streetscape and landscape enhancements.

# VIEWS AND VISTAS



- Project area
- Urban view
- Significant long view
- ▲ Expansive view
  - Of green topped landscape
  - Industry
  - Dandenong
- Contour

\* Note: From ○ point is the best view of landscape

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# VIEWS AND VISTAS



①



②



②



③



④



⑤



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⑦



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# WHEELERS HILL

## Public Realm Quality

### Introduction

The quality of the public realm (streets, parks, front gardens, civic places) can either be an incentive or a deterrent to people who want to engage with their local area. Poor public realm quality is experienced when users of an environment feel unwelcome or unsafe. This can occur due to a number of environmental or design factors. A high quality public realm invites people to stay and enjoy their surroundings.

The nature of the edges of public spaces is the most critical factor in enhancing the quality of the public realm, which is now understood to be a major factor in attracting new investment. All public streets and spaces should be defined by active building fronts rather than blank walls or leftover space, to create an interesting, attractive and safe environment for pedestrians.

### Existing Conditions

The high quality landscape in some locations positively contributes to the quality of the public realm within the Study Area:

A number of features contribute to a poor quality public realm environment:

- Significant amounts of poor quality open space in the form of exposed, uninviting, unsafe and uncomfortable car parks
- A significant number of blank and inactive building edges to the public realm - particularly around the Wheelers Hill Shopping Centre - which not only present an unattractive and uninteresting façade, but also reduce the sense of personal security
- Ferntree Gully Road and Jells Road are car-dominated environments - and intersection in particular - which creates unfriendly and hostile spaces for pedestrians directly into the Centre.

As a consequence of these factors, pedestrians feel like second-class citizens and people with limited mobility are strongly deterred.

Further, despite the dispersed nature of the centre, there are no successful public open spaces in the heart of the centre for incidental, unstructured activities - such as people-watching, chatting with friends, eating lunch or reading a newspaper in the sun - that are an essential ingredient of any successful activity centre. The only genuine public open space that exists - the park around the art gallery and library - is separated from the commercial components of the centre. Unlike traditional activity centre streets, the pedestrian concourses in enclosed shopping centres are carefully managed, not particularly adaptable, and typically only provide for a very

narrow range of activities. They often lack the spontaneity and human energy of the public realm of traditional strip centres.

### Urban Design Implications

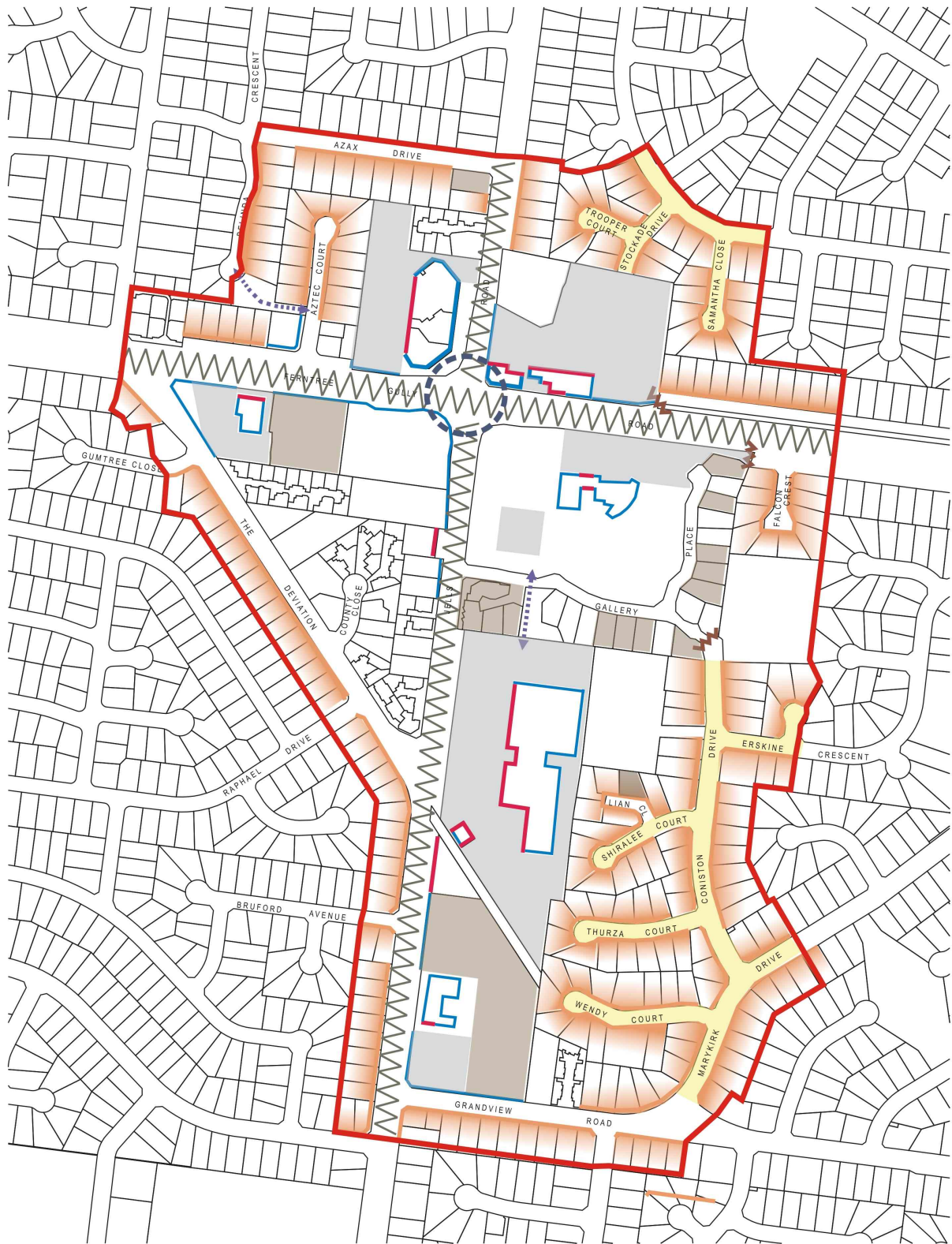
Opportunities exist to improve the quality of the built environment and streetscape such that it:

- Encourages movement by walking and cycling through and within the Study Area.
- Enables a variety of experiences whilst in the Study Area – a place to rest, a place to conduct business, and a place to call home.
- Provides an easily understood area that people feel comfortable moving through.
- Is visually pleasing and enriching.
- Accommodates many lifestyles and age groups.
- Is safe.

In particular:

- New development should present active frontages to the public realm.
- The potential should be explored for at grade car parking to be relocated into basement or upper levels, consolidated into car park buildings or screened from primary public spaces by buildings.
- The balance of provision for different modes of travel and other street activities in each street and public space should be reviewed, to identify opportunities to make people feel more comfortable in the public realm.
- New public spaces should be created at the heart of the centre to accommodate a wide range of incidental, unstructured activities.

# PUBLIC REALM QUALITY



- |  |                                      |  |  |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|--|
|  | Project area                         |  | Poor local pedestrian connection & quality |
|  | Active edge                          |  | Vehicular blockage                         |
|  | Inactive edge                        |  | Pedestrian link                            |
|  | Detached residential character       |  | Car park                                   |
|  | Local street with high quality views |  | Vacant site                                |
|  | Car dominated environment            |  |  |

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## WHEELERS HILL



## Pedestrian access and movement

### Introduction

*"Local facilities bring people together, reinforce community and discourage car use. To give walking priority means putting the everyday experience of the street first on the agenda."*

*Urban Design Compendium, Llewelyn Davies, English Partnerships, August 2000.*

Walking is the 'lifeblood' of activity centres, supporting local businesses and creating a focal point for social activity. Walking is supported by permeable and legible spatial networks, along with a welcoming and safe public realm (see Public Realm Quality above). Importantly, pedestrian-only links are rarely safe – or perceived to be safe – at night. Therefore, streets with vehicular activity and development frontage are needed to make effective linkages.

### Existing Conditions

The various activities in the Wheelers Hill Activity Centre are dispersed spatially (see Land Use, above). This is exacerbated by the topography, which results in steep paths, and the spatial structure, which does little to connect the disparate functions of the activity centre in a direct or legible way, discouraging people from moving between them. The links do not have particularly interesting activities on them, to draw people along them.

This contributes to a relatively poor pedestrian environment. Movement on foot is not encouraged with large distances required to be traversed to get from place to place of activity. In some circumstances footpaths do not exist, making movement on foot difficult and dangerous.

There are also significant blockages to pedestrians and vehicles movement between the centre and its immediate surroundings, brought about both by busy roads, and the predominance of culs-de-sac. Anecdotal information suggests that people prefer to cross Jells Road between the Shopping Centre and the physiotherapy clinic on the west side of Jells Road. Crossing Jells Road at this point is dangerous due to vehicle speeds, and sight distances. This section of Jells Road may need to be managed so that it complements a character of a Neighbourhood Activity Centre, rather than being a regional high volume road.

Most of the commercial activities in Wheelers Hill also have large expanses of car parking, which separate active uses and create unattractive, lifeless and sometimes hostile environments for pedestrians. Some footpaths terminate at these car parks, with no comfortable, covered or clear route to the other side. Other pedestrian links such as that between Belinda Crescent and Aztec

Court, to the north of the study area, are of a poor quality due to being unpaved and through spaces that are not under surveillance and consequently feel unsafe.

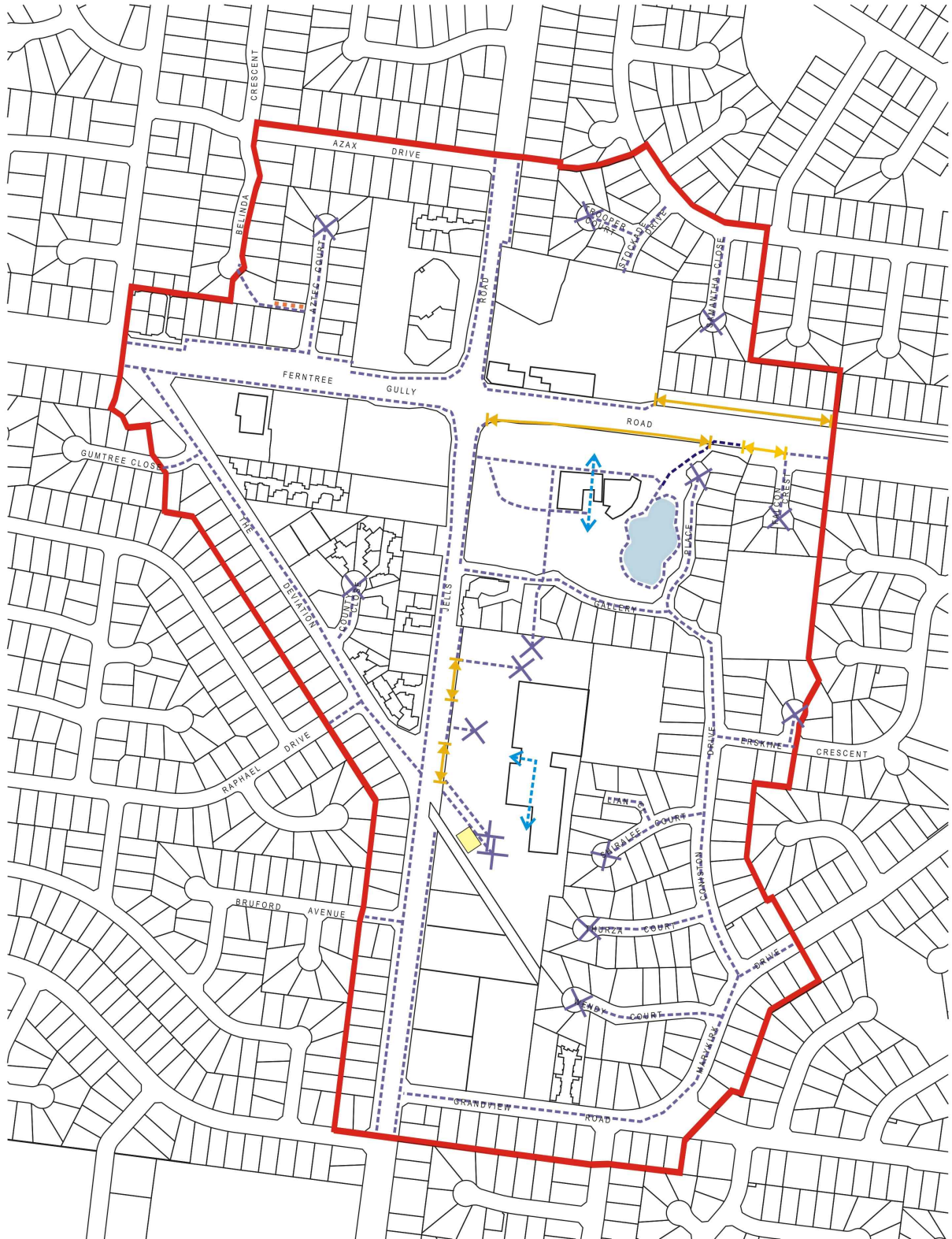
#### Urban Design Implications

There is a need to establish a new, legible spatial structure for the centre that links its main components in as direct a way as possible, both in terms of movement and visibility. In particular, there needs to be a clear link between the shopping centre and the library and art gallery precinct. There is also a need to explore opportunities to improve connectivity between the centre and its residential surroundings through improved pedestrian crossing opportunities and the creation of new links.

Direct, comfortable and preferably covered footpaths could be provided across the larger at-grade car parks. Alternatively, the grades of many sites offers the opportunity for at grade car parking to be relocated into basement or upper levels or consolidated into car park buildings. Activation of the public realm through built form orientation will improve safety and comfort (see Public Realm Quality, above).



# PEDESTRIAN ACCESS & MOVEMENT



- Project area
- - - - - X Movement blockage
- - - - - Existing footpath
- <--> Internal pedestrian access
- <--> No footpath
- - - - - Poor quality footpath

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## WHEELERS HILL

## Vegetation and Landscape

### Introduction

Vegetation and landscape serves many functions in an urban environment. It can contribute to:

- Microclimate – keeping built-up areas cool in summer and allowing sunlight through winter
- Visual amenity
- Comfort and shelter; and
- Legibility

### Existing Conditions

There are a number of different landscape features and characteristics in the Study Area:

- Mature street trees, on Jells Road and Ferntree Gully Road are placed randomly and comprise various species and heights. These trees do not have high amenity and are not of a high quality, however they provide a buffer between buildings and the busy traffic edge.
- A significant stand of mature trees is located at the south-east corner of the intersection of Jells Road and Ferntree Gully Road associated with Monash Gallery of Art. This stand contributes to the environmental quality and character of Wheelers Hill. This group of trees is a local landmark.
- Small landscaped gardens in front of residential lots contribute to the public realm quality in some locations.
- Groups of mature trees and vegetation that are associated with commercial buildings offer a buffer between buildings and the road corridor.
- Groups of trees located along the edges of public car parks provide some screening of inactive edges.
- Grass nature strips in residential areas contribute to the environmental quality of the study area.

### Urban Design Implications

The landscape qualities of the centre can be maintained and enhanced by the following measures:

- Protect and integrate valued existing vegetation into future landscape plans.
- Ensure the valued green space within the WHNAC is not reduced.
- Retain and enhance all public spaces in and near WHNAC.
- Explore opportunities for increasing public open space in and near to the WHNAC.
- Enhance the links to and from the public open space.