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1. Executive summary

Council has been tasked to prepare new strategic planning documents that set the future direction of the City of the Blue Mountains. The vision for the next 20 years will be embodied in Blue Mountains 2040: Living Sustainably, the Local Strategic Planning Statement, which will be supported by a Local Housing Strategy and a Local Character Statement. The documents will align with the State government’s Western City District Plan 2018 and Greater Sydney Region Plan 2018, and also the Blue Mountains City Council’s Community Strategic Plan 2035.

The Local Character Statement celebrates the unique character of our distinctive towns and villages and our communities. The Local Housing Strategy supports the provision of our local housing needs. This Character Study supports the preparation of the Local Character Statement, and is part of the investigative background that supports all three documents.

This Character Study contains a detailed review of Council’s past approach to identifying and managing character. There is a strong and consistent history of Council and the community ensuring high levels of protection for character. Natural areas, scenic values, residential development in bushland, and historic sites of significance have been protected through a suite of mechanisms in Council’s Local Environmental Plans (LEPs) and Development Control Plans (DCPs). Identifying and protecting character underpins the success of our local tourism, and the amenity and lifestyles of Mountains residents.

This Study investigates and summarises the Blue Mountains overall character values, based on past work done by Council with accompanying community input. In defining Blue Mountains character, it must be noted that there are clear differences between Upper, Mid and Lower Mountains character, and between the character of various towns, villages and localities. The Study supports the approach that the best way to identify and plan for character is to consider each village as a separate and distinct entity with a unique character. A village by village character approach forms the basis for the draft Local Character Statement.

The Council has been tasked to balance character with a sound response to other strategic planning directives. These include providing housing choice and housing affordability in our towns. Other pressing issues include resolving the incorporation of the deferred ‘residential character conservation’ zone (the Living-Conservation zone) into LEP 2015; ongoing protections and support for heritage; and the challenge of maintaining and enhancing our unique identity. Many villages are small and no future changes are envisaged. Other villages are identified for some growth and change. A shared understanding of the key features of
each town and villages’ character is required in order that those features can be preserved and enhanced for residents and visitors. The Local Character Statement seeks to express and celebrate the most important features and characteristics of each village.

This Study includes a recommendation that Council prepare detailed design and character guidelines to assist with the future development of town centres. This would support the master planning work for certain town centres. The guidelines could include detailed design options for building height control and height mitigation (ensuring upper storeys are set back from the street if necessary), façade treatments, materials, forms and details. It is also recommended that design guidelines be prepared for residential dwelling types, to synthesise environmental considerations with preferred architectural forms, elements and details that are a contextual guide to what could constitute a ‘Mountains’ style.

The exhibition of the draft Local Character Statement, together with and supported by this Character Study, will be an opportunity to hear from local residents about what they think makes the Blue Mountains local character unique, what elements or areas should be preserved for future generations, and how our villages can acceptably change and grow.

Figures 1 to 4. Blue Mountains residential character areas; top, Lower Mountains (Glenbrook and Warrimoo), below, Lower Mountains (Blackheath and Leura).
2. Introduction

2.1 Overview

Our community is generally invested in the appearance and sustainability of our culture and our environment. Many residents have stayed or moved to the Blue Mountains because of its natural bushland, quiet streets, low-key environment, historic charm, and town character. Based on recent consultation in 2019, bushland setting and a proximity to nature is the biggest driver for why people chose to live in the Blue Mountains ("the Mountains").

There are major character challenges facing the City. In many ways this has always been the case. The sensitive and unique character of the Mountains is perpetually threatened by external influences. These are largely development pressures from Sydney, such as increases to urban density, vegetation loss, noise, pollution, additional traffic demands, heritage loss and character loss. These pressures also impact the social wellbeing of our communities.

Character loss in our towns also continues incrementally through small-scale changes to urban environments, roads, streetscapes, and landscapes. By understanding the things we value about our towns, villages and settlements, we can consolidating these characteristics into a 'Character Statement'. The Statement should express the shared vision of the Blue Mountains and its uniqueness, and how we might see it change in response to our communities' needs and increased visitation challenges. Character protections must respond to the community's needs, and also seek a balance between development and preservation.

Pressure for alternative forms of housing, housing choice and affordable housing is a growing need of the community, allowing increasing numbers of older people to age in place with independence and autonomy. Changes in housing types in town centres have the potential to impact on our experience of cherished local village character. It is critical that the potential for change is considered thoroughly and thoughtfully, so that change occurs in places where distinctive character is not lost or adversely impacted. New development should also reflect a high quality of design, and be respectful and responsive to the existing ‘Mountains style’ character.

There are three categories of environment within the Mountains:

- natural bushland and its scenic cultural landscapes,
- residential areas, and
- town centres.
Each category of environment has different types of character within it, such as the variety of residential character styles and periods. This Study focuses only on the latter two types, the residential and town centre areas, as these are urban areas subject to development control. Natural areas are managed under alternative regimes such as Plans of Management and are not the focus of this Study. Council plays a major role in preparing and executing such Plans for natural areas, and other organisations such as the National Parks and Wildlife Service also manage extensive natural environments within the Blue Mountains to ensure cultural and ‘character’ values are appropriately managed.

The urban areas of the Blue Mountains are predominantly low-scale residential neighbourhoods. Protection of the visual appearance and amenity of our residential areas, where identified as having a distinctive character, is a key aspect of our local planning framework. Currently, one of our key challenges is to resolve the incorporation of our residential character conservation zone (the Living-Conservation zone of Local Environmental Plan 2005) into our primary Local Environmental Plan, LEP 2015. This character zone has provided important protections for distinctive residential character areas of the Mountains since 2005, and needs to be translated into the Standard Instrument LEP set of zones.

### 2.2 Brief

Council is required by the State government to prepare a Local Strategic Planning Statement (or Local Planning Statement), that will set the future strategic direction and planning vision for the Blue Mountains. The Local Planning Statement will be accompanied by a Local Character Statement that sets out the special characteristics which contribute to local identity, and the shared community values to be maintained and enhanced. This study has informed the preparation of the draft Local Character Statement.

Council will exhibit a draft of the Local Planning Statement, along with the documents that support the Statement, including the draft Local Character Statement and the draft Local Housing Strategy in October 2019, along with other supporting documents such as this Study, seeking community input. The results of the public exhibition process will help Council further identify and address the communities’ values and aspirations. This will include character elements or atmosphere that the community wish to see preserved, enhanced or created. The feedback will ensure that the values and aspirations the community identifies form a key part of the final documents.

The aims of this study are:
• To investigate and document Council’s past work on the identification and protection of character, in order to demonstrate a solid foundation to Council’s ongoing elevation of character as a key factor in place-based local planning;
• To identify character elements and themes that are considered important to the community, as a basis for the preparation of the Local Character Statement;
• To identify any gaps in existing character protections, or where changing state legislation may require additional protections or changes in policy;
• To start a discussion about a Mountains identity in terms of existing and new architectural forms and details, in response to a strong community appreciation of the idea of a ‘Mountains style’ of house, and a desirable ‘village atmosphere’ to our town centres, being more than just the existing low-density and low-scale urban environment;
• To ensure that preservation of character continues to be a focus of Council’s planning approach, by identifying short, medium and long-term actions to protect character.

2.3 Methodology

The methodology for this study is as follows:

Review-based

1. To document the historical development of local character provisions in the Council’s planning schemes through a literature review of Council’s previous studies and LEP/DCP provisions. Extensive character work has been carried out in the past by Council to support the preparation of previous LEPs, particularly for LEP 2005.
2. To review previous and current community engagement results, with a focus on recent engagement for the Local Planning Statement, in order to identify ongoing community feedback about local character.
3. To summarise the range of values that create overall Blue Mountains character, and to identify the importance of differentiating the character of various areas.

Analysis-based

4. To analyse the success of the residential character zones in the 2002 Residential Character Study including the Living-Conservation Zone, through an analysis of the sample areas included in the 2002 Residential Character Study;
5. To make preliminary investigations into a range of existing residential building types and contemporary residential building trends in the Mountains that influence the ongoing consolidation of the ‘Mountains style’ and character;

6. To identify recommendations and actions required to ensure Council’s planning scheme continues to include up-to-date character protections;

7. To prepare the identified character qualities into a preliminary format that both responds to the State government’s model Local Character Statement example and also reflects the physical layout of the LGA as a linear city of villages. This will lead to the preparation of a draft Local Character Statement that identifies the unique and individual qualities of our towns and villages.

8. To clarify the aspects of local character that the community most value and wish to see preserved, by placing the study once completed on public exhibition, and then updating the study in response to the feedback once exhibited.

2.4 Scope and Limitations

Economic, social and environmental factors all contribute to the identity and character of an area. Character is generated by people and their economic resources. People who have lived in an area over time have created or modified their environment. However, for this Study, character is considered primarily as an environmental issue, as the Study focuses on the physical environment of our towns and villages, and their built character.

The Community Strategic Plan 2035 focuses in more detail on the plans for the economic and social wellbeing of our community and can be found on the Council’s website. The draft Local Planning Statement, exhibited with this study, also has a broader scope that includes consideration of all three factors.

This Study was limited by the following factors:

1. Fieldwork and field surveying were not part of this Study. Where the details of existing or new developments were required to be verified, this was done through desktop investigations including Google Maps, and Council’s photographic and map databases and other relevant files.

2. The scope and time-frame for this Study generally did not allow for a systematic property-by-property review of matters such as current zonings, character, heritage conservation areas or Period Housing Areas.
3. Public domain elements, whilst critical to local character and local streetscapes, are not the main focus of this Study, although it is noted that the heritage significance, amenity and landscape values of Blue Mountains streets rely on the contributions from the public domain. This includes street trees, remnant native canopy, kerbing, street width, garden verges, and street furniture. These will be discussed as relevant throughout this Study and incorporated into the Local Character Statement where notable.

Road reserves and all elements within the road reserve are managed by Council. The importance of road reserves, parks, public reserves and community and recreational land cannot be understated in terms of town character. These elements and realms are managed by Council according to Council’s policies and protocols, and through Council’s capital works program. These elements are likely to form a major aspect of the Local Character Statement when describing each village.

Links to Council’s management of the public domain are available in the reference section at the end of this study, with links included.

4. Aboriginal history and culture is not covered by this study. Further work is required to establish an updated framework for considering the importance of Aboriginal culture within the Blue Mountains. A separate study commissioned by Council will soon be undertaken to carry out research into Aboriginal history and culture of the area.

5. The scope of this study does not include a review of heritage items and heritage conservation areas. Whilst heritage can contribute to character, and does so in the Mountains in many towns, this study focuses on broader visual aspects of urban settings such as built form and landscape.

Council has carried out numerous heritage studies at key stages in the planning framework, and has listed many items of environmental heritage and a significant number of heritage conservation areas. Where relevant to character these past studies are referenced, however it is not the purpose of this study to focus on heritage protections.

It is however important to understand the differences between heritage and character, which are discussed in the next section of this report, ‘Understanding Character’.
3. Understanding character

This section considers the differences between character and heritage. The two are often confused, although they are strongly interrelated, particularly in the Blue Mountains.

3.1 Character

Local character is what makes a neighbourhood or place distinctive. It is a result of the mix of the people who live there and the ‘sense of place’ that has been created over time. It is the way a place ‘looks and feels’. It is defined by the community, and is often the result of a mix of tangible and intangible factors. It could be particular plantings commonly found in the area, or whether the place is well-cared for or not. It could be the sounds of insects and the aroma of eucalypt trees, or how generous the roads and footpaths are.

Character is a value-neutral concept that captures the interrelationship between elements in both public and private domains, and distinguishes one place from another. All urban areas contain character elements of some sort, and have a character that can be analysed and described. Every property, public place or piece of infrastructure makes a contribution, whether great or small.

Neighbourhood character elements of a physical and tangible type include the distances between buildings, their roof forms, house materials and paint colours, the presence or absence of gardens, front fencing, street trees, the treatment of street edges, the height of the tree canopy, and so on. These elements create positive, negative or non-descriptive associations and experiences for residents and visitors; they all contribute to the atmosphere or character within an urban area.

Attractive street environments can help to create a positive physical and social character. Positive street designs allow traffic to slow, foster the use of streets as places for social interaction between pedestrians and residents, and promote pedestrian and cycling activity.

The character of residential areas is primarily shaped by the presentation of houses to the street. As such the front garden and front façade of houses are of high importance, however subdivision patterns, side setbacks and the presence or absence of mature vegetation in rear gardens all have an impact on the view from the street. Neighbourhood character is not necessarily defined by a prevailing architectural style or era of development; this may be more indicative of historic values that may meet the criteria for a heritage conservation area.

Residential localities like Lapstone, Hawkesbury Heights, Mount Riverview, Yellow Rock, Sun Valley, and smaller villages such as Warrimoo and Winmalee have a bushland character,
also found in the fringes of our other larger villages. Our bushland character is an important aspect of living in the Mountains that requires character protections. These villages and localities have a positive and significant local character influenced by the bush setting, even though some individual houses may not be architecturally distinctive.

Local character is a critical element of design, and should underpin and inform the objectives and controls that guide the development of our towns and villages. The character of the environment is equally relevant everywhere, not just in retaining or improving a few select ‘special’ areas that already have high amenity values.

Character areas are protected via a range of different and interacting mechanisms in local and State planning instruments. These mechanisms can include zones, heritage protections, and map overlays. The State government has recently produced a Local Place and Character Guideline, which provides further information on character. It is available on the Department of Planning and Environment’s website here: https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Local-Character

The State government is proposing changes to the management of local character. This includes the requirement for local councils to identify and consider character in local planning, and to produce a Local Character Statement. These changes are discussed in the next part of this report, Part 4 State government planning framework.

The Blue Mountains area relies upon character values and character protections to support other values and activities in the Mountains, including natural processes, scenic landscapes, nature tourism, cultural tourism and nature-based recreation. Character is and always has been a central focus of strategic planning in the Mountains. This is particularly pertinent as the Blue Mountains experiences ongoing pressure for growth in tourism and housing. The Local Housing Strategy and the Local Strategic Planning Statement are documents that will set key directions for the future of Mountains tourism and housing.

### 3.2 Heritage vs Character

Both character and heritage make a significant contribution to local sense of place and quality of life. However, heritage and character are not the same thing. The terms ‘heritage’ and ‘character’ can appear to be similar, and are often intertwined, but have distinct meanings. The two are often confused in the appreciation of the visual appeal of our historic character areas.

There is a particularly strong relationship between heritage and character in the Mountains, as many of our villages are historic in nature and character. Historic villages such as Glenbrook, Springwood, Woodford, Hazelbrook, Lawson, Wentworth Falls, Leura, Katoomba,
Medlow Bath, Blackheath, Mount Victoria, Mount Wilson and the Megalong Valley make an enormous contribution to our local and tourist economies and resident enjoyment. Other villages have historic houses or a scattering of historically important sites.

There are strong relationships in the Mountains between various heritage values and the visual character of neighbourhoods in some villages. The inter-related nature of heritage and character are important for the Blue Mountains economy, as character and heritage are important attractions within the tourism industry.

Heritage and character may have common elements; however, local character identification and management is not an alternative form of heritage listing. The mechanisms that councils and the State government use to protect character are different to those used to protect heritage.

3.3 Heritage

Heritage has its own established international frame of reference (developed through the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) ‘Burra Charter’ for example). It is about how a place is important because it represents the history and evolution of an area, and its people, or activities that have taken place, according to specific themes and evaluation criteria that are consistent across the State.

Protection for European heritage (heritage items, archaeology, heritage conservation areas, cultural landscapes), as opposed to character, is covered by a well-established set of protection mechanisms under the Heritage Act 1977, and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

Places, buildings, trees, archaeology or other identified objects or areas that are found to meet the established criteria for heritage significance are protected via the listing of individual heritage items and heritage conservation areas, which are included on a local government’s Local Environmental Plan or LEP (for local significance) or on the NSW Government’s State Heritage Register (for state significance). Larger areas with strong historic character may fulfil the criteria for becoming heritage conservation areas, where heritage values and the associated character of those areas are given a strong level of protection under the Local Environmental Plan’s heritage provisions of Clause 5.10. Heritage and cultural significance is embodied in the fabric and setting of the place, and changes and additions are controlled to ensure that the fabric and setting of those places is not removed or degraded.

The development of Aboriginal heritage protections is managed differently under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974.
Council’s LEP 2015 and LEP 2005 contain Council’s heritage inventories of heritage items, heritage conservation areas and Aboriginal Places, and in LEP 2015 are protected under Clause 5.10 Environmental heritage and identified on the LEP maps.

Figures 5 and 6. Heritage items and heritage conservation areas are protected differently to character by specific heritage legislation in the local and state planning frameworks.
4. State government planning framework

4.1 Changes to the EP&A Act

In 2017 there were significant changes made to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (‘the EP&A Act’) which came into force on 1 March 2018. The changes are the most significant in the Act’s forty-year history and include a promotion of the importance of strategic planning at regional, district and local levels.

Two new ‘objects’ or objectives relevant to character have also been included in the Act:

(f) To promote the sustainable management of built and cultural heritage (including Aboriginal cultural heritage),

(g) To promote good design and amenity of the built environment,

The purpose of the new objects is stated as “to reflect the Government’s commitment to thriving, safe and well-designed communities with local character and heritage. The objectives are guiding principles that need to be considered by planning authorities including Council when making decisions.”

4.2 Elevation of character

The NSW Government has also elevated the consideration of character in NSW planning and decision-making. The stated purpose is to ensure that the planning framework provides capacity to maintain, enhance and cultivate the unique character and identity of places.

In proposing additional provisions for character, the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment is seeking to balance a spectrum of outcomes. The State government’s expectations of significant growth in the Sydney Region have given rise to pressure to allow an additional range of permissible land uses in some residential zones and faster development approvals to support growth and allow for increased density. The state government is also seeking to elevate the importance of local places through an increased focus on character. The framework is weighted towards ensuring new growth can be managed.

The State government has provided guidance on a number of ways that councils can integrate character into their planning documents, including the Community Strategic Plan, the Local Strategic Planning Statement, the Local Housing Strategy and the Local Character Statement, as per the diagram below.

As part of the elevation of character, the Government Architect’s Office of the State government has also recently prepared a number of guidance documents on character
Local Character Study

- Draft

October 2019

Blue Mountains City Council

identification and protection. Documents such as ‘Better Placed’ and the draft ‘Implementing Good Design’ encourage consideration of character values, the importance of design, and a ‘sense of place’ in design and development. The suite of documents from the Government Architect’s Office are important reference documents for local councils and planners. GAO policy documents are available on the GAO website here: https://www.governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au/policies

Figure 7. A framework for integrating local character within local planning. Source: Local Character and Place Guideline, NSW Government, February 2019, p. 11

4.3 Local Strategic Planning Statement

The State government’s Greater Sydney Region Plan (March 2018) and the Western City District Plan (March 2018) provide the detail of the vision for the growth of the Sydney Region including the Blue Mountains. These regional and district plans are the broader framework for the role of the Local Strategic Planning Statement and the Local Character Statement produced at a local government level. The Local Strategic Planning Statement will set out the 20-year vision for land use in the local area.

Details of the Local Strategic Planning Statement will identify the special character and values that are to be preserved, and how change will be managed in the future. The Local
Strategic Planning Statement will indicate any future changes to planning controls, or studies which may be needed to implement actions. This includes character and heritage considerations.

The Statement is an opportunity to continue to support and acknowledge key areas of focus for the Blue Mountains, including the protection of the environmental and cultural significance of the local area.

The Local Strategic Planning Statement, Local Housing Strategy and Local Character Statement will determine any future changes to existing zonings or other provisions as necessary. The Council’s Local Environmental Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plan (DCP) will be amended if necessary to continue to deliver the vision for the future of the City.

Figure 8. The influence of character within the Blue Mountains planning provisions and strategies.

4.4 Local Character Statement

The Local Character Statement will inform the finalisation of the Local Strategic Planning Statement along with the Local Housing Strategy. This Study supports the preparation of the Local Character Statement. It has been prepared with reference to the State government Local Character and Place Guideline, released on 26 February 2019. Council has engaged extensively with the Department to assist with the preparation of the Local Character Guidelines, and envisages ongoing consultation in this area.
The Local Character and Place Guideline has identified that areas that have a significant local character should still allow for some form of growth and change. In the Blue Mountains area it is particularly important to note that the community values its heritage, character and related lifestyle and tourism values, and therefore the emphasis on character protections for Blue Mountains villages is on maintenance and enhancement rather than significant growth and change.

Figure 9. Documents released by the State government to guide local Councils on character identification. Source: Department of Planning, Industry and Environment website

This Study makes use of the Local Character and Place Guideline as a relevant reference in the current process of preparing a Local Character Statement. The Guideline contains the following information that is relevant to Blue Mountains considerations:

1. Strategies for bringing character and place into plan-making, including a character assessment toolkit, to assist with preparing the format of the Local Character Statement.
2. Engagement strategies and community engagement to ensure that planning reflects the community’s needs and desires.
3. Attachment A to the Guideline (p.40-43) includes ‘How Local Character interacts with various State and local planning policies and plans’. This is important in understanding the relationship of character to other concerns, and the degree of character protections necessary.
4. Attachment B to the Guideline (p.44-54) includes considerations for local character where change is envisaged. This is relevant to the ongoing master planning in some of our larger town centres.
5. Attachment C to the Guideline (p.55-63) includes considerations useful for the preparation and structure of the Local Character Statement.
Local Character Statements define the existing character of a community and establish a vision and objectives for the future, including both preservation and change where appropriate. The Statement is prepared with the advice and input of the local community. Local Character Statements ensure that any proposals for change in the area acknowledge the character, vision and objectives that are important to the community.

Blue Mountains City Council has a detailed planning framework already in place to protect and enhance our urban and town areas. This has been defined and refined over decades into a fine grain approach to the important character of our local areas. Due to a historically slow rate of change in the Mountains, the emphasis has been on managing incremental changes in urban areas, and ensuring sound environmental policies are in place to protect the natural environment. However, the Mountains is experiencing higher development pressures, and Council is conscious of the need to remain aware and responsive in order to maintain and positively influence character. The Mountains is predicted to be subject to typically low levels of growth and change compared to other areas in the Sydney region. The emphasis is on protecting the existing established character from ongoing slow and incremental loss.

4.5 Local Character Overlay

The State government is in a preliminary phase of its proposal to introduce Local Character Overlays. The Planning Circular produced by the Department in January 2018 introduced the concept of Character Overlays within the Standard Instrument LEP ‘for additional consideration of local character in areas of significance’. However, the Character Overlays would only be permitted ‘in exceptional areas...where Council has demonstrated the character of a local area is significant... and ensured the LGA will meet the dwelling targets’.

Following the planning circular, the State government released a Discussion Paper on the introduction of Local Character Overlays, and sought submissions. Council has made a submission to the Discussion Paper on Local Character Overlays. The Council retains a preference for a zoning outcome, in line with the proposed R6 Residential Character Conservation zone put forward during the draft LEP 2013 process.

Figure 10. Discussion Paper on Local Character Overlays (cover page)
The changes to the Standard Instrument LEP format to introduce Character Overlays would consist of a new clause and a new map layer. Character Overlays would require any proposed new development include additional consideration of local character in areas identified as having a distinctive character of particular importance to retain or enhance. There may be additional objectives and controls in the DCP, or development applications may require an additional assessment of character report or component. The Local Character Overlay may be able to be justify some variations or even exclusions from some or all of the State government’s complying development codes, but only in exceptional circumstances and with extensive justification.

The State government has envisaged a Local Character Overlay in the Council’s LEP could be used to seek particular outcomes for those areas identified through the Local Character Statement. Council’s draft Local Character Statement will therefore be required to identify those character areas considered significant. This could relate to our residential character conservation zone (the Living-Conservation zone of LEP 2005) which is currently deferred out of LEP 2015 and awaiting a way forward, or could be broader in scope and include other residential areas considered ‘at risk’ or even commercial or recreational areas. The potential scope of the application of the Local Character Overlay to special areas of the Blue Mountains has not been fully considered, as the State government’s proposal is still preliminary and the details of how it would apply and operate are not yet known.

If the Overlay model is adopted by the State government, Council would need to prepare a Planning Proposal to amend its Local Environmental Plan to include Local Character Overlays over areas identified for protections.

To ensure adequate protection, the Character Overlays in the Blue Mountains LGA would likely require exclusion from existing state planning policies such as the State government Exempt and Complying Development Codes (‘the Codes SEPP’) which includes the Low Rise Medium Density Housing Code. These State policies allow certain housing types such as dual occupancies, manor houses (multi-unit dwellings) and other medium-density housing to be carried out as complying development in some areas, circuiting the development application process. This could have very significant implications for distinctive character areas in the Mountains.

The Local Character and Place Guideline, Local Character Collection (a series of articles) and the Discussion Paper on Local Character Overlays are all available on the Department’s website here: [https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Local-Character](https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Local-Character)
4.6 Character zone vs Overlays

The State Government has been considering the detail of enhanced residential character changes since at least 2012, when it proposed the introduction of three new zones. One of these was the ‘suburban character zone’ to give “greater certainty in areas where the local community want to preserve local character”. This proposal formed part of the 2012 Green Paper into the reform of the NSW planning system. The Government stated as part of its review of the planning system: “there is a need for a new zone that gives greater certainty about what can and can’t be developed in an area the local community want to preserve because of the importance of the urban character”. The Government carried a Suburban Character areas overlay into the subsequent White Paper, but the legislation did not progress beyond the concept stage.

Other states have already taken the lead on character protections. Victorian legislation has included statutory recognition of character since 2001. In 2013 the Victorian planning provisions were amended to include the Neighbourhood Residential zone. In 2014 the Queensland planning provisions included a Character Residential zone, and Brisbane City adopted a character zone in their Plan.

The NSW government has moved away from consideration of a new character zone for NSW, and has instead recently (February 2019) proposed that a ‘Character Overlay’ be applied over character areas. The details are yet to be finalised; however, the Local Character Overlay would be a component of the larger strategic planning framework currently being developed, that integrates plans at a number of levels to provide an integrated planning system for NSW.

Council’s ongoing responses to potential elevation of character through a zoning or overlay mechanism are touched on in this report, particularly in regard to Council’s ongoing preference for a zone-based outcome for our residential character conservation zone, the Living-Conservation zone. Various material is available from Council’s website that details Council’s proposals and ongoing negotiations with the State government over the resolution of the Living-Conservation zone.
5. Councils previous work on character

Blue Mountains City Council has adopted, as a guiding principle, the identification and retention of character in the Blue Mountains for many decades. Council’s work on character has evolved naturally out of an appreciation for the scenic values of the landscape and an awareness of the strong links to our colonial past. Later it became apparent that many of our villages contain intact historic town centres of attractive cottages with a materiality of charm and a traditional village atmosphere.

Council’s continuous commitment is to ensure that the sense of place valued by the community and of interest to tourists is preserved and enhanced. Retention of character has been consistently applied to strategic plan preparation and development assessment since town planning powers commenced, leading to a highly developed planning framework which seeks to balance the impacts of new development or change. Character protections are not just a statutory response but are derived from the community’s response to, and expectation of, an integrated planning approach to protect Blue Mountains’ multiple aspects of character.

This section of the report is based on a detailed literature review of Council’s earlier planning schemes, reports and studies. A summary table is provided in this section, with the detail of the literature review located in Appendix A at the end of this study.

The investigation seeks to find the common threads throughout each Plan or study, threads which highlight the challenges Council has faced and how Council has addressed those ongoing challenges to balance conservation and development.

5.1 How Council protects character

The preparation of Local Environmental Plans (LEPs) is the mandated process local councils use to control development in the local government area, with provisions to limit, control, assess or minimise adverse environmental impacts, including impacts upon character (and heritage).

Councils also prepare Development Control Plans (DCPs) which operate as detailed guidelines and provisions that support meeting the objectives and controls in the LEP.

Commissioned or in-house studies provide supporting research and review to support the objectives and development provisions in the LEP and DCP.
5.2 Summary of investigations

The planning controls introduced by Council over the years have been highly successful in ensuring sound protections of natural and cultural values. The protections for our residential and town centres areas have focused on:

- Early establishment of escarpment area protections to ensure scenic views from natural areas are visually undisturbed by urban development;
- Early identification and listing of heritage items and heritage conservation areas;
- Identification of town centre precincts, with provisions to maintain town centre identity and boundaries, and plan for consolidating new development such as commercial areas and medium-density housing;
- Residential character studies to identify and protect residential areas with important landscape settings, suburban bushland interface character, historic housing, low-density large lots with established gardens, and significant or important streetscapes.

Over time, Council has continued to identify, analyse and protect character in more detail (including where also meeting the criteria for listing as heritage items and heritage conservation areas), consolidating Council’s heritage and character protections. Continuous efforts have over time filled in the fine-grained detail about the physical elements that make up various character areas and types. These elements contribute to the Mountains’ unique sense of place, as a place to live, and as a tourist destination.

5.3 Summary of character protections

The following table provides a summarised chronology of Council’s character protections, both environmental and cultural.

The full investigation is located at the end of the study, at Appendix A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event, Plan or Document</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27 January 1961</td>
<td><strong>Council’s first Interim Planning Scheme</strong> under Section 342C of the Local Government Act, as a prerequisite to the granting of Town Planning powers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Establishment of Sydney Planning Authority to replace Cumberland and Northumberland local county councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1967 and 1968</td>
<td><strong>Council’s first proposed Planning Scheme</strong> submitted to State Planning Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1968</td>
<td>The Sydney Region Outline Plan sets broad directions for the Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1972</td>
<td>Interim Development Order No. 25 – Tree Preservation Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1973</td>
<td>Proposed Blue Mountains Planning Scheme placed on public exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1974</td>
<td>Alternative Futures report by Urban Systems Corporation, with four objectives: management, conservation, commercial development and living areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 August 1975</td>
<td>Interim Development Order No. 26 – Preservation of Eastern Escarpment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td><strong>Blue Mountains Structure Plan</strong>, with planning principles including: limits on residential development, reduce business areas on the Highway, acquire land for scenic and recreation purposes, provide a tourist zone. Includes a Design Principle that each town should have its own identity. Plan used for assessment and amendment of the certified Planning Scheme, and the development of local plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>NSW Heritage Act comes into force facilitating protection mechanisms tailored to a system of local and state listings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td><strong>Local Environmental Plan No.4</strong> gazetted. Based on State model provisions. Applied to urban areas only, and lacked a clear environmental base. Identified ‘escarpment preservation areas’ with specific protections. Limited number of heritage items identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td><strong>Blue Mountains Heritage Study</strong> by Croft and Associates and Meredith Walker. Comprehensive and detailed report on Blue Mountains heritage, including village by village analysis, thematic history, management policy and recommendations for new listings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-1989</td>
<td><strong>Environmental Management Plan (EMP1)</strong> begun in 1983. Principles for protection of town character included policy on new development and that residential styles should reflect and enhance Blue Mountains character. Focused on non-urban and environmentally sensitive areas as a priority as under greater threat. Part 1 of a 3-stage citywide investigation process, and Part of the 2-stage EMP process. EMP2 would consider the urban and village areas. Recognised the global significance of the Blue Mountains, and aimed to provide sensitive and appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td><strong>DCP 5 – Echo Point Precinct.</strong> Urban design guidelines to protect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>escarpment, heritage and character of large area of South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Katoomba as a scenic and cultural attraction. Proposed Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conservation Precinct along Lurline and Katoomba Streets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Detailed design controls to protect architectural values, building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and streetscape character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td><strong>LEP 1991 gazetted.</strong> Covered non-urban areas. First objective to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘maintain the unique character of the City’. Contained Protected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Areas, including canopy conservation, environmental constraint,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>escarpment areas, land between towns, water supply catchment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focused on primary importance of natural environment and need to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>visually and ecologically mitigate development impacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td><strong>DCP 10 – Town Character Guidelines.</strong> Acknowledged the identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of place through broad planning guidelines in both historic and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bushland residential areas. Sought better design outcomes through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>responsiveness to context. Included landscape controls. RAPI (Royal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Australian Planning Institute) award-winning and ahead of their time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in terms of identifying and managing character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>village areas. Included multiple studies as preparation for a new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LEP. Land use zoning structure for each town proposed. Objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>included developing an identity and character for each town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Character-specific zone proposed (Living-Conservation) to preserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bushland or heritage settings for large lots with visual or scenic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>amenity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td><strong>Draft Local Environmental Plan 1997</strong> placed on public exhibition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To replace LEP 4 for the urban areas of the City. Aims included to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>conserve the character of residential areas considered significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or unique components of the City’s landscape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Draft LEP 1997 subject to a public hearing conducted by Commissioner Carleton.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Public hearing results released. Recommendations included more detailed review of environmental factors including the character of residential areas. The Commissioner was supportive of the creation of the Living-Conservation zone to protect character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td><strong>Draft Local Environmental Plan 2000.</strong> Included a principle that greater housing choice occur through the redevelopment of existing residential areas and mixed use village centres. A character study was prepared to identify and analyse residential and town character, and included a village by village analysis. This study laid the ground work for specific residential character types.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td><strong>Draft Local Environmental Plan 2002.</strong> Brought forward the preparation of a new Local Environmental Plan as studies continued to contribute to the preparation of the draft Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td><strong>Residential Character Study 2002.</strong> Aimed to provide more in-depth analysis of character in residential areas to support the draft LEP and Living zones. This resulted in the incorporation of land use zones, protected areas and management provisions into Draft LEP 2002. The residential types are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Bushland Dominant Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Visually Prominent Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Garden Setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Dominant Landscape Setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Visually Significant Streetscapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Areas of Older Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Living-Conservation zone incorporated lots identified for Garden Setting, Dominant Landscape Setting and Visually Significant Streetscapes. Period Housing Areas incorporated lots identified as Areas of Older Housing. Protect Areas - Escarpment areas incorporated the Visually Prominent Areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2005</td>
<td><strong>Local Environmental Plan 2005 gazetted.</strong> Comprehensive and detailed protections for natural environment, heritage and character. Focus on a place-based approach to planning. Included Living-Conservation zone, Locality Management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Better Living Development Control Plan. Consolidated a number of existing DCPs. Councils first comprehensive DCP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Draft Local Environmental Plan 2013 exhibited. A ‘translation’ approach to converting LEP 2005 into the Standard Instrument LEP format. Excluded heritage updates, which were deferred to an LEP amendment (Amendment 5 see below). Required to convert Period Housing Areas to heritage conservation areas, which was deferred to an LEP amendment (Amendment 6 see below). Proposed a new standard NSW zone, the R6 Residential Character Conservation zone, a translation of the Living-Conservation zone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2016</td>
<td>Development Control Plan 2015. New objectives and provisions relating to urban design, heritage, infill development and medium-density housing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. The community’s vision

The community has traditionally had a very engaged and powerful role in the protection of the Blue Mountains character, particularly in regard to the natural environment. Protection of character stretches back to the awareness and identification of the wonders of the natural environment dating back to the nineteenth century. Charles Darwin visited in 1836 and was struck by the beauty and grandeur of the Blue Mountains. He described them as “stupendous… magnificent… profound… unforgettable… Nature, through a geological phenomenon, has confronted us with a landscape of such vast scale that it can transform our concepts of ourselves”. (Spiers, 1981, p. 9) Conservationists sought to protect the Mountains environments from farming and over-development in the early twentieth century, and a succession of local creatives have ‘captured’ the aesthetics and romance of the Mountains environment, re-presenting the landscape and encouraging tourism and recreation.

A community of dedicated environmental conservationists proposed the creation of the Blue Mountains National Park in 1934, which was eventually expanded into the Greater Blue Mountains National Park. The community has been instrumental in the creation of not only the Blue Mountains National Park but also the World Heritage listing of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. The nomination was prepared “following years of public concern for the recognition of the area and dedication to its conservation” [Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area nomination foreword].

The community has also expressed strong community support for the protection of the character of Mountains towns and villages, particularly during the preparation of LEP 2005 and LEP 2015. Active local Progress Associations, Historical Societies, and Chambers of Commerce have promoted village character, heritage protections, and boosts for tourism and our local economy, all interrelated concerns within the wider community.

Council has engaged extensively with the community in the past in regard to character, particularly at key points such as the preparation of our LEPs. The consultation process is a mandated requirement of the LEP-making process and legislated within the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. Consultation is a required element of all strategic and development planning policy-making and is an essential part of a place-based approach to planning.

Community consultation in the Blue Mountains consistently identifies the importance placed on our village environments, and conservation of the character of our towns and villages is a major and ongoing issue for residents. The community is also consistently concerned with
managing outside threats to the lifestyle, local character and heritage qualities of our environment.

The following provides a summary of key previous consultation processes in regard to character identification and protection, in order to identify ongoing community concerns.

6.1 Local Environmental Plans

LEP 2005


In October 1997, Blue Mountains City Council placed Draft Local Environmental Plan 1997 on public exhibition. Following the public exhibition, a public hearing was convened under section 68 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act) during June and July 1998. Commissioner Dr Mark Carleton, of the Commissioners of Inquiry for Environment and Planning, conducted the hearing. Commissioner Carleton prepared a report on the public hearing which was placed on public display in January 1999.


This consultation identified that the local community’s top priorities for the future were:

- Protection and restoration of the natural environment;
- The attainment of a more sustainable community lifestyle;
- Character was valued by residents and contributed significantly to residents’ enjoyment of the Blue Mountains.

Although no study had been undertaken to establish exactly what residents mean when they say character, recurring concerns included:

- A desire to retain the small size, friendliness and stability of villages;
- Concerns over new building styles which may attract people who do not share local values;
- Concerns about the loss of trees and shared garden settings;
- Fears about infill buildings and new areas which appear too ‘suburban’, with larger buildings, less variety in the buildings, and less screening of new buildings;
- New buildings which are too large, often have too much paving, and reduce the garden setting character of an area.
Katoomba Charrette (1999) and EMP 2002

This ‘place-based’ planning process engaged some 3750 people as part of both the Katoomba Charrette and local community workshops in 10 key villages. This enabled a set of planning controls to be produced for each village, focusing on the unique qualities and characteristics of the various village areas.

Exhibition of DLEP 2002

- DLEP 2002 was exhibited in October 2002 and attracted 1404 public submissions. 221 submissions were made to DLEP 2002’s approach to ‘Locality Management – Living zones’. This provision applied to the suite of three Living zones and its zone objectives, including the Living Conservation zone.
- Within those submissions, 189 matters (80.8%) were raised in support of the planning approach adopted for the Living zones, out of a total of 234 matters raised on that issue. This comprised over 120 individual submissions and 101 proformas. This was a significant public validation of the revised approach to the Living zones following the outcomes of the public hearing into DLEP 1997.
- Detailed issues with the ‘building envelope’ controls in the Living Conservation zone were raised in 46 submissions, two-thirds objecting to specific aspects. This led to refinements to DLEP 2002 in the areas of building height, setbacks, and width of buildings across the block within the Living Conservation zone.
- Given that the Living Conservation zone of DLEP 1997 was one of the most highly contested aspects of the public hearing, this outcome following a second major public exhibition process provided a solid foundation for the Living Conservation zone.

Local Environmental Plan 2005 was made by the Minister for Planning and gazetted on 7 October 2005. The Plan was founded on the outcomes of two major public exhibitions, the extensive public hearing by the Commissioners of Enquiry and subsequent studies and investigations in response to that hearing. The LEP and its studies were recognized as the ‘Land Use Planning’ category winner in the Federal Government’s National Awards for Local Government 2004. But moreover, the level of the community response to a local environmental plan was unprecedented in the Blue Mountains and provides the ‘strategic conviction’ for the achievement of the following Principal Objective:

12 (h) To identify and retain the diverse built and landscape elements that contribute to the character and image of the Blue Mountains.
LEP 2015

Draft LEP 2013 was exhibited between December 2013 and March 2014, and received 595 submissions, with 549 from the broader community.

One of the top five matters that received support from the community was the proposed R6 Residential Character Conservation zone and its objectives. The R6 zone would be a new standard zone to translate the Living Conservation zone of LEP 2005 and protect the amenity and character of those areas. 200 submissions raised the R6 Residential Character Conservation zone as an issue of concern; of those submission received, 84% supported the introduction of the zone. Support included the Blue Mountains Association of Cultural Heritage Organisations (BMACHO), the Blue Mountains Historical Society, the Nature Conservation Council of Australia, and the Leura Home Garden Club.

Another issue also in the top five issues supported by the community was the inclusion of Schedule 6 Significant Vegetation Communities. The importance of these issues demonstrated the high value the community places on our environments of natural and cultural significance that contribute to our local character.

The Office of Environment and Heritage and local conservation groups including the Blue Mountains Conservation Society also suggested that the R6 Residential Character Conservation zone objectives include protection for nearby bushland areas from the impact of invasive species.

The review of submissions for DLEP 2013 noted the strong support for the proposed R6 Residential Character Conservation zone. The review notes that “the protection of urban forms that contribute to the character of the Blue Mountains towns is important not only to the community and local identity and is a large contributor to tourism in the area. The area does have special qualities that justify a Character Conservation zone that protects the character attributes of the Blue Mountains.”

6.2 Community Strategic Plans

The purpose of the Community Strategic Plan is to identify the community’s main priorities and aspirations for the future and to plan strategies for achieving these goals.

Community Strategic Plan 2025

Sustainable Blue Mountains 2025 presented the community-endorsed vision and strategic plan for the City. The Community Strategic Plan 2025 was developed based on extensive research, analysis and community engagement, beginning in 2000 and then in 2012 and
2013 when the Plan was revised and updated. The Plan was a legislative requirement of the NSW Integrated Planning and Reporting framework which aims to ensure councils work with their communities to achieve sustainable local futures.

The city is described as ‘27 character-filled towns and villages… each with a distinctive character reflecting the varied climate, terrain and heritage of the area’. ‘Community pride and the unique historical features of many towns and villages contribute to the social and cultural richness of the City of Blue Mountains’.

Under ‘Community Priorities’ (p.39): In 2012, 1030 residents were surveyed about the top priorities for using land over the next 10 years. The top response was “Maintaining heritage and town character”.

At the ‘Our City, Our Future’ Community Forum, a priority noted was: “Continue to enhance the distinctive qualities of towns and villages, by addressing heritage and design”.

The Plan then contains strategic objectives for land use planning to:

- Ensure Council’s land use planning complies with legislation and facilitates development and renewal that supports quality urban design, environmental protection, heritage values, cultural landscapes and character of Blue Mountains towns and villages.
- Preserve and maintain the City’s unique character, and its built, natural and cultural heritage and local history.

An ongoing challenge is identified as retaining a Blue Mountains identity and character. Refer to Using Land (Key Direction 2).

The following strategy is included under key direction Civic Leadership (Key Direction 6):

- To advocate for the City of Blue Mountains to continue to be identified as a distinct region to support and promote the unique characteristics and values of the Blue Mountains.

Community Strategic Plan 2035

The Community Strategic Plan 2035 was developed through an extensive community engagement and research process, including key findings from consultation in late 2015 through to late 2016, and a community forum, Sustainable Blue Mountains Together, in February 2017.

The Community Strategic Plan 2035 outlines the Vision, Priorities and Aspirations of the Blue Mountains community for the future of the Local Government Area. It reiterates the concerns
of the Community Strategic Plan 2025, including the importance of identifying the Mountains as a series of communities, with each town and village having its own distinctive character and features, surrounded by a World Heritage bushland setting that underpins our quality of life.

The Mountains residential environment is, consistently, identified as a low density area with mainly single dwellings on large blocks. The community is identified as environmentally aware, and enthusiastic in lobbying for protection of our natural environment.

**Protect (Key Direction 2) – An Environmentally Responsible City**

Key values are described, including:

- Blue Mountains character and scenic views: outcome – mountains scenery is respected and maintained, and trees in urban areas are managed and preserved
- World Heritage Area: outcome – World Heritage Area listing maintained
- Aboriginal cultural heritage: outcome – significance of Aboriginal cultural heritage is respected and maintained
- Other cultural heritage: outcome – improve conservation and recognition of other cultural heritage assets in natural landscapes

**Live (Key Direction 4) – A Liveable City**

The vision statement includes: “Local heritage and places of natural, cultural and historical significance that have intrinsic value to the community, are retained and enhanced. Liveable cities promote development on a human scale and have distinct and attractive towns and streetscapes”.

“We take pride in the character and distinct identities of our towns and villages. Our cultural and built heritage is important. We use our land to live in harmony with our surrounding World Heritage environment.”

Key values are described, including:

- Character of our towns and villages: outcomes include – towns and villages with distinct identities
- Living in harmony with the environment: outcomes include – bushland between urban areas retained, and development on a human scale
- Cultural and built heritage: outcome – local heritage places and places of natural, cultural and historical significance are retained and enhanced by the active use of appropriate conservation methods
A major challenge is identified as the pressure for change and growth. In order to manage this, outcomes include: understanding the significant contribution of natural, built and cultural heritage in enriching our lives and the City; ensuring development is appropriate and minimises environmental impact; and that Blue Mountains character is retained.

A further challenge is ‘maintaining built character in the face of changing state government regulations’. The desired outcome is that local character values are maintained.

**Thrive (Key Direction 6): An Economically Sustainable City**

Key values are described, including:

- The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and the heritage character within the Blue Mountains towns, villages, built and natural landscapes as key tourism drivers: outcomes include – a high level of recognition of the World Heritage status of the Greater Blue Mountains by residents and visitors; and opportunities provided by the World Heritage Area and the heritage character of the Blue Mountains towns, villages, built and natural landscapes are realised.

Our local character is linked to our community members, who provide intangible and tangible character through “the rich creativity, culture and heritage of the Blue Mountains…” including through a diversity of people of all ages and cultural backgrounds, as well as an acknowledgement of the contributions of the Aboriginal people of the Blue Mountains and their knowledge and ongoing contributions.

In terms of our local character and its protection through a planning framework, the aspirations of the Community Strategic Plan require us to:

- Protect bushland around and between our settlements;
- Minimise impact upon the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area;
- Retain the distinctive character of our towns and villages;
- Enhance the identity of the Blue Mountains;
- Contain urban development;
- Ensure high quality outcomes for tourism management.

### 6.3 Community consultation – Local Strategic Planning Statement

As part of the preparation of the Local Strategic Planning Statement, Council recently conducted two stages of community consultation and carried out a Housing Survey.
Stage 1 consultation

The first stage of consultation ran through October and November 2018. The intention was to engage a broad cross-section of the community and seek input that would inform the early development of the Local Planning Statement.

Stage 1 consultation was primarily run through the Have Your Say section of Council’s website and an online engagement mapping tool, Social Pinpoint. The tool allowed dropped pins with comments to be added to a map of the Blue Mountains, and online conversations encouraged through reply options. The community was also asked to share their thoughts on what is valuable, what can be improved and what should be preserved and enhanced in the Blue Mountains. The community was also welcome to make submissions outside of this platform.

The community response was positive overall, with 134 respondents to the Social Pinpoint engagement exercise, and a total of 330 comments including replies to other comments.

![Number of comments by theme](image)

*Figure 11. The greatest proportion of comments were made under the themes of transport and housing and character, followed closely by Environment.*

![Number of comments and replies](image)

*Figure 12. The breakdown of comments and replies shows that whilst ‘transport’ and ‘environment’ generated more initial comments, ‘housing and character’ generated the greatest discussion with nearly 70% of initial comments being replied to resulting in the most comments overall.*
The two overwhelming reasons that people live in the Blue Mountains is primarily:

- To be close to bushland,
- The balance between quality of life and proximity to Sydney.

The character of the towns and villages was in the top three responses to the question of what was most valued about living the Mountains.

The biggest challenges identified by the respondents were:

- Pressure for growth from Sydney,
- Increased traffic on the Highway,
- Impacts of development upon surrounding natural areas,
- Increased bushfire risk from climate change.

The biggest drawcard for the Mountains was identified as the unique combination of:

- Cultural events and activities as a city of the Arts,
- The City within a World Heritage National Park,
- The historic tourist towns,
- Nature based tourism.

Many of the respondents wanted higher densities around town centres, and a diversity of housing choice. This included suggestions for more secondary dwellings, houses closer to town centres with smaller yards, smaller houses for the elderly, smaller lot sizes, and affordable housing for younger and older people. However, other contributors were against any increases in density, and were concerned about the negative impacts of more suburban development upon character.

However, the desire for smaller more dense housing was balanced with an awareness for the need to protect character. Feedback included the need to fit buildings appropriately and sensitively into the landscape, retain green spaces, and not to dominate neighbours through excessive height. There was a preference for smaller clusters of low-density dwellings surrounded by gardens, with plenty of amenity, sunlight and privacy. Generally, feedback was in favour of single-storey and double-storey medium-density housing where close to stations, with the architecture of new dwellings maintaining a village character.

There was a clear understanding that good design and ongoing relationships to green space around any new dwellings were important to maintain character and liveability. The importance of creating and keeping a ‘Mountains style’ or ‘Mountains friendly’ urban environment was a key concern.
Community feedback was particularly concerned with the World Heritage status and significance of the bushland areas surrounding our villages, with a strong focus on the need to protect these areas through development controls and other environmental protection mechanisms. There was a perception that without our bush setting, its unique vegetation, and its underlying topography, the Mountains could become just another suburban area, therefore we need to protect our natural environments such as our eucalypt forests, hanging swamps and natural springs.

Transport was found to be an issue of great importance to the Mountains community, and one that contributes to local character due to: transport modes, intensities and speeds; vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle numbers; patterns of use, driver behaviours, other modes such as skateboards, motorised bicycles, taxi use, as well as the physical elements that constitute roadways, footpaths, kerbs and so on. Many were concerned about the safety of various intersections, the local dependence on cars over walking and cycling, the impacts of the Highway and local road upgrades on driver behaviour, and the impacts of increased tourism and congestion on local roads and parking.

**Stage 2 consultation – community workshops**

Tailored workshops were hosted by Council in the Lower, Mid, and Upper Mountains in March 2019, facilitated by People, Place and Partnership. The two-hour workshops were designed to create an insight into the feedback, priorities and ideas of the local community. Responses to targeted questions and activities about the character of the Blue Mountains at workshops revealed positive perceptions of community, lifestyle and environment.

Bushland setting and a proximity to nature is the biggest driver for why people chose to live in the Mountains, and also what is seen as most important to the Blue Mountains identity and the most critical aspect to protect.

The following three categories summarise key perceptions about the Blue Mountains local character:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural environment</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Lifestyle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connection to nature and bushland</td>
<td>Unique character of each village</td>
<td>Dynamic specialty shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy air, sunsets and views</td>
<td>Accepting and friendly</td>
<td>Natural handmade food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-layered unique geography</td>
<td>Creative clusters</td>
<td>Cafe and food culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong landscape identity</td>
<td>Engaged community</td>
<td>Community markets, coop-ops and organic food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biodiversity</td>
<td>Diverse and layered community</td>
<td>Simple traditional and wholesome lifestyle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 13. Workshop participants were asked: ‘When thinking about the future of the Blue Mountains, what comes to mind?’

Participants considered the local character of town and village centres to be one of the top two future priorities. The design, character and heritage of our urban environments was a major discussion point in the development of village environments.

Housing discussion comments related to availability and affordability of different types of housing including housing for older people. Local character should be maintained through master planning, with a balance between heritage and development.

The diagram below represents an overview of the most consistent ideas raised by participants when considering the future of the Blue Mountains:

**Local character – key themes**

Key themes were raised during the ‘Local Character’ activity of the workshop as outlined below.

Local Character Study - Draft

Blue Mountains City Council

October 2019
Figure 14. Workshop participants were asked: ‘When thinking about the future of the Blue Mountains, what comes to mind?’

Conclusion

Consistent themes arose during the workshops, complementing each other and linking to the strong identity of the Blue Mountains. The unique character is felt to arise from the different towns and shops, the distinctive landscape and the passionate community, while the healthy lifestyle is a combination of the pure environment, the friendly community and local handmade production.

Stage 2 consultation – Housing Survey

Blue Mountains Council commissioned a Housing Survey, prepared by People, Place and Partnership, in June 2019, to understand community needs and perspectives on housing supply, demand and variety. The survey sought to understand views on housing now, and
how change may be accommodated in the future. 419 people completed the survey, via phone, email, website, face to face, social media or text.

Over half of respondents had lived in the Mountains for over 20 years, with another quarter more than 10 years. Half owned their house outright with another third having a mortgage. Over 85% saw themselves still living in the Mountains in another ten years. These statistics indicate the deep community roots within the Mountains, with many permanent, long-term residents intending to continue living in the area, which is very positive.

65% of respondents live in a freestanding house on a large lot, with most of those planning to continue living in the Mountains in the next 10 years planning to continue living in a freestanding house on a large lot.

Existing housing character

The most prevalent housing character words and themes identified clarify community perception, identity and important values.

There was a very strong emphasis on valuing the diversity of periods of housing, whether traditional Federation or European style cottages, cottage styles, or later project homes and contemporary homes. This reflects the value of the slow rate of development and layering of styles in most villages, especially residential areas closer to town centres. Neighbourhood character was described as ‘unique, eclectic, heritage or diverse’ relating housing to its interesting characteristics. This again reflects the diversity and layering of most village environments, providing support for the protection of older dwellings.

Figure 15. Respondents to the housing survey were asked to describe the character of their neighbourhood by providing three words that related to housing character. The image shows the 15 most frequently used words from respondents to describe housing character. Responses were then categorised into themes, represented below by the frequency that each theme was raised.

‘Nature’ was also an important characteristic of housing character, as was the density of neighbourhoods, expressed as descriptions of lots and houses as generous or medium-sized.
There was an awareness of traditional building materials widely used – brick, weatherboard, fibro and timber.

Local character was described as ‘traditional and rustic styles and materials combined with surrounding nature that creates a ‘Mountains’ atmosphere.

**New housing type alternatives**

There was strong objection to expanding urban areas and to the subdivision of land in existing residential areas. Rather, there was a general support for new housing such as medium-density developments in town centres, if of appropriate design. This includes well-designed townhouses or villas. Secondary dwellings (granny flats) were also strongly supported as a housing alternative for the Mountains.

There is an increase in respondents who would move into a townhouse or apartment, respectively 4.3% and 3.3%, with an existing supply of 1.2% of housing townhouses, and 0.7% apartments. This suggests some demand to increase the supply of townhouses and apartments.

**Style, scale and gardens**

A majority of respondents agreed with the preservation of existing scale and styles for new housing; new housing should match existing built form, the current size and scale of housing should be maintained, and new housing styles need to match existing architectural styles. Including modern styles in new housing was divisive, with equal amounts agreeing, disagreeing or neutral.

Most respondents agreed that new houses should have large gardens and landscaping, but almost a third of responses were neutral.

**Future ideas**

Key themes were around sustainability, overdevelopment concerns and character, signalling what needs to be considered in planning for the future of housing in the LGA.

Respondents were concerned about overdevelopment, that it would ‘ruin the place’, and that construction should be restricted, including to a height of no more than three stories.

Character should be maintained because of its unique qualities, including charming character homes, and friendly, sustainable materials, in order to keep the existing atmosphere.

Any increase in density should be medium-density with more apartments and shops in town centres. Housing should be affordable for local younger generations, with housing variety for
all age groups. Dwellings could be smaller and well-designed. Aged housing should be located close to amenities and be single level, with more options for over-55s.

The small town feel of the villages, with nature and beautiful environments all around, should be maintained.

**Character themes**

The words provided by respondents to describe housing in their neighbourhood were categorised into key themes that relate to different features of housing character, with the nature of these responses summarised below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period Style</th>
<th>Respondents highlighted the common construction styles of housing, whether it is the era of construction (seventies or eighties), the contemporary, federation, European or cottage styles houses present or simply if housing is more modern or traditional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Respondents described their neighbourhood with words as unique, eclectic, heritage or diverse, relating housing to its interesting characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>Respondents described housing character in relation to the natural surroundings of their neighbourhood, highlighting gardens and bushland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Descriptions of the size of houses or lots, as spacious or medium sized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Material</td>
<td>Respondents provided the building materials most used on housing in their neighbourhood, the most consistent being brick, weatherboard, fibro or wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>The age of housing in respondents neighbourhoods, commonly described as either old or new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>Respondents described houses in their neighbourhood regarding their level maintenance, from neglected to neat or well maintained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Descriptions of the variety of houses across different neighbourhoods with words such as varied or mixed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 16. Key character themes and community perceptions, highlighting the character perceptions of local neighbourhoods as of high character and heritage value, with a diverse and unique range of housing.*

**Conclusion**

Local character in the Blue Mountains is considered to be a high priority for the future of housing, integrating respect for existing built form and preserving housing styles that align with the unique character of suburbs.
Respondents reflected a positive perception of existing housing character and were conscious of their effort to maintain it. A strong sense of the community’s desire to protect the character of housing, villages and the overall feel of the LGA was gained through the survey.

Although many residents expressed strong opposition to overdevelopment, a high percentage of respondents felt that housing availability needs to be improved, and the majority of respondents agreed in principle to an increase in housing density, choice and supply.

The conversation around density requires further engagement to define what housing options for increased density may mean within the context of the LGA, particularly around the opportunity for townhouses and villas.

The importance of the tourism industry to the Blue Mountains was acknowledged by respondents, who highlighted the strong link between the character of villages and the visitor economy, as well as the World Heritage Area.

The preservation of housing character, as well as the revitalisation of the streetscape in town centres, was seen to be an important factor to benefit tourism.

Other important trends were the importance of protecting the World Heritage Area, general opposition to the subdivision of land for more housing, and support for more secondary dwellings for use as inter-generational spaces.

### 6.4 Master planning consultation

Council has been undertaking various master planning projects that aim to plan for the development of new higher-density housing and mixed use developments in certain town centres. This is in response to a need to provide for housing that meets the changing needs of the population, and to reinvigorate town centres that have clear potential for some growth and change: Springwood, Blaxland and in the future, Katoomba. These plans are underway but not completed.

**Springwood**

The draft Springwood Town Centre Masterplan was subject to community consultation from May 2015, and publicly exhibited late 2015. It was then adopted on 26 April 2016. The masterplan seeks to guide the development and management of public spaces and town assets, and also guide private development in the town centre. The vision of the masterplan is to create “a vibrant town centre that reflects Springwood’s welcoming community atmosphere and celebrates its natural bushland setting of the Lower Blue Mountains”.

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Blue Mountains City Council

October 2019

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609 community comments were received during early consultation in April – May 2015. Town centre character was one of the top four concerns, along with open space, economic mix, and traffic and circulation.

The details of the plan are here: https://yoursay.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/springwoodmasterplan

Blaxland

The Blaxland Town Centre Masterplan aims to meet the community vision for the Blaxland town centre, and includes an increase in car parking, improvements to pedestrian amenity, the provision of outdoor dining, and increases in building heights in the town centre to accommodate mixed-use development and new housing.

Significant community consultation occurred for the draft Blaxland Town Centre Masterplan, commencing in November 2016 with a community workshop, and through a second stage consultation process in April - May 2017. In August 2018, the Council endorsed the draft masterplan. A building envelope study was prepared and formed part of more recent community consultation, with a community workshop in November 2018.

The engagement with the Blaxland community identified broad community support for some growth and change in the town centre. A key principle emerging from the community consultation is to enhance Blaxland’s identity and visible character as a Blue Mountains village. The characteristic considered most important for local residents is ‘village atmosphere’, following by a ‘green’ environment, and community. There was acknowledgement of the need to provide an improved town centre environment and provide interest, choice and services.

The most significant challenge as the process moves forward is how to achieve the desired village atmosphere in terms of acceptable building heights, density, height mitigation (for example, through setting back upper levels and modifying building massing and forms), and ensuring that the ‘look’ of new development meets the desired ‘village atmosphere’ as expressed visually through forms, details and materials.

The details of the plan are here: https://yoursay.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/blaxland
7. Blue Mountains character summary

This section of the study is an overview of the broad character values of the Blue Mountains. The summary is based on information and views gathered from the literature review of the previous section. These values are well known and widely recognised and align with the recent community consultation results. This long-term appreciation of the Mountain’s unique qualities, and the recognition and popularity increasingly afforded to the Mountains environment, underlines why the Mountains have been settled, visited, and protected.

The character summaries in this section are organised into themes and elements. Some values are physical and able to be described, and some are intangible and thus relate to qualities. Although the natural bushland and scenic landscapes of the Mountains are paramount, it is the residential areas, and the town centres that are the focus of this summary, as these are urban areas subject to Council’s strategic and statutory planning guidelines. The natural environment will also benefit from the protections afforded by actively managing our urban areas.

This section begins with a historical summary that provides a background, followed by a more detailed analysis of physical and urban character. The analysis looks at elements that contribute to the distinctive character of the urban areas, including the consideration of architectural styles, building siting, landscaping, vegetation and public realm attributes. This includes elements which demonstrate significant and established neighbourhood character, heritage, environmental and landscape values. This summary demonstrates broad character values prior to establishing a more localised and defined character of each individual town, village and settlement for the Local Character Statement.

7.1 Historical summary

This study provides a historical summary, from which the threads of character can be traced back to the development of the Mountains and the villages and towns we know and experience today. The summary is mostly paraphrased from thematic material in the Blue Mountains Heritage Study by Croft and Associates and Meredith Walker, 1983, which is available here: https://yoursay.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/periodhousing/documents

This brief history encapsulates the events, people and stories that make up the social, economic and environmental factors that led to the development of the Mountains and its character. Many of the historic elements that have formed the character of the Mountains have remained intact or legible due to minimal development pressures over many decades.
Topics are organised by historic themes, which are aligned with the NSW historic themes provided by the NSW Heritage Council. The NSW historic themes are available on the Office of Environment and Heritage website. The historic themes underpin the development drivers of the Mountains, and provide a foundation for the evolution and understanding of Mountains character.

The full historical summary is at the end of this Study, in Appendix B.

Note Aboriginal history is not included as part of this summary, as aboriginal cultural heritage is beyond the scope of this Study.

The Natural Landscape

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State theme</th>
<th>Local theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The naturally evolved environment</td>
<td>Geological formations, fossil sites, ecological communities, mountain range, woodlands, valleys, evidence of bushfire and other natural occurrences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The character of the Blue Mountains is in the first instance determined by the topography and landscape that defines and supports that character.
- The landscape is made of well vegetated rolling hills and ridges or spur lines.
- Triassic rocks overlying soft permian sediments are typical of the Upper Mountains and produce dramatic landscapes. The blue green of vegetation on the plateau is separated from the valley floor by sandstone bluffs.

World Heritage Listing

- In 2000, the Blue Mountains Local Government Area became part of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, and was listed as of World Heritage significance by the United Nations Environmental Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).
- The character of the Blue Mountains as a unique and special place is supported by the World Heritage inscription.

Early European Exploration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State theme</th>
<th>Local theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European Exploration (myth of the explorers)</td>
<td>Explorer’s route, marked tree, camp site, explorer’s journal, surveyor’s notebook, mountain pass, water source, Aboriginal trade route, map</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The Blue Mountains story is woven into the colonial history of European settlement in Australia, with themes of exploration and settlement.
Twenty-five years after the First Fleet arrived in Port Jackson, European explorers found a way across the Blue Mountains.

The development of a transport corridor to the west began with this first road, the Great Western Road.

The principal surviving impact of the exploration period is the route itself, which is deeply embedded in the character of the Mountains as a string of villages and the City as a linear structure.

The Western Road

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State theme</th>
<th>Local theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convict</td>
<td>Convict labour (building of the Western Road)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport (east-west road</td>
<td>Railway station, highway, lane, train, carriage, dray, stock route,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>links 1814 onwards, and</td>
<td>bridge, toll gate, horse yard, coach stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railway from 1860's, east-west)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The road was completed in six months, with a graded surface and bridges and culverts constructed where necessary. Many road sections remained difficult to navigate and posed problems for many years.

A military depot, firstly near Glenbrook Lagoon and later Springwood, restricted traffic on the road to those with a written pass.

The character of Mountains towns and villages is founded on the choice of suitable stopping points along the new road over the Mountains. The early depots and checkpoints foreshadowed the development of the villages along the Mountains road.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State theme</th>
<th>Local theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>Bank, shop, inn, trade route</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As travellers increased in numbers over the Mountains, the development of inns, or ‘huts’ sprang up along the Western Road, as well as land reserved for travelling stock and public camping grounds.

After 1851 and the discovery of payable gold at Ophir, traffic on the Road became even heavier, with thousands travelling by foot, horseback or coach. In the ensuing decade, the population of Australia more than doubled, with many diverse nationalities arriving and passing to the Western Goldfields. At night, the inns and their surroundings were transformed into large, animated encampments.
The development of a number of the Blue Mountains towns can be traced back to the establishment of road construction depots, military posts to supervise traffic flow and convict road gangs, and inns to accommodate travellers.

The Railway

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State theme</th>
<th>Local theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transport (east-west road links 1814 onwards, and Railway from 1860’s, east-west)</td>
<td>Railway station, highway, lane, train, carriage, dray, stock route, bridge, toll gate, horse yard, coach stop.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The arrival of the railway in the Mountains in the 1860s had a dramatic impact, opening many areas to those with resources to enjoy the environment for leisure and recreation. It also provided the means to exploit coal and shale being discovered.

In the decades following the opening of the railway line, a large number of the townships emerged and took shape around the new railway platforms. Many early platforms were located close to existing inns, reinforcing the early stages of settlement.

Those working on the railway also contributed to the growth and development of the towns along its route. Services such as accommodation houses, hotels, stores, butcher’s and baker’s shops, and public schools for the children in the work camps sprang up.

Buildings that remain from these early days contribute to the character of some of our towns and residential neighbourhoods.

Coal and Shale Mining

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State theme</th>
<th>Local theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other minerals (stone quarries) Industry</td>
<td>Depot, industrial machinery, timber mill, quarry, private railway, kiln, brewery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>Mine, quarry, mining landscape, mining equipment, mining license, colliery, mine shaft, mineral deposit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The presence of coal and shale in the Mountains was known as early as 1841. The Katoomba area was exploited when Thomas Sulcliffe Mort established the Glen Shale Mine on the Megalong side of the Narrow Neck peninsula. Coal seams led to the establishment by John Britty North of the ‘Katoomba Coal Mine’ in 1872, and the ‘Katoomba Coal and Shale Co Ltd’ in 1885.

Various other coal and shale mines opened up in the Megalong and Jamison Valleys.
The collapse of the ‘Flying Fox’ elevated tramway on the Jamison Valley floor led to the liquidation and end of the company. The coal haulage system eventually became integrated into the booming Katoomba tourist industry of the 1920s and 1930s as the Scenic Railway.

The influence of the mining operations in Katoomba brought the area to wider attention and began to establish the town of Katoomba as a population centre.

Recreation, Health and Tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State theme</th>
<th>Local theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country towns</td>
<td>Town plan, streetscape, village reserve, concentrations of urban functions, civic centre, subdivision pattern, abandoned town site, urban square, fire hydrant, market place, relocated civic centre, boundary feature, municipal Coat of Arms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(commercial centres in townships)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns, suburbs and villages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land tenure</td>
<td>Fence, survey mark, subdivision pattern, boundary hedge, stone wall, shelterbelt, cliff, river, survey mark.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Mountains became increasingly accessible for settlement and leisure activities with the railway line. In the 1870s the Mountains became a destination to experience the invigorating fresh Mountain air and the beautiful scenery.

The Mountains began to have value for recreational pursuits, first by a wealthy and educated elite, and ultimately, following a shift of social and economic forces in Australian society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, of an affluent and mobile middle class.

The concept of healthy, enjoyable living has remained a strong motivating factor behind the rapid development of the Blue Mountains following construction of the railway.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State theme</th>
<th>Local theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Hospital, sanatorium, nurses quarters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The supposed hygienic qualities of Mountain air led to a faith in the climate of the Blue Mountains as an antidote to ill health. Mountain air was thought in medical circles to be of particular benefit to those suffering from tuberculosis and other chest complaints.

Sanitariums and convalescent homes became a feature of the Upper Mountains.

With the decline in demand for accommodation following World War Two, some guesthouses were converted to convalescent hospitals, such as The Ritz at Leura, and Anita Villa (the former Sans Souci Guest House) in Katoomba.
Intellectuals, artists, writers and photographers have been attracted to the Mountains, inspired by the elevated and distant location from Sydney, the inspiring landscapes and climate. They ‘captured’ the aesthetics and romance and served as mythmakers and interpreters of the environment, encouraging contemplation and inspiration.

The Mountains have a spiritual dimension and have a long association with symbolic and religious significance.

Many religious groups have established schools, colleges, and meditation and convention centres in the Mountains.

Community groups and organisations contribute to the social character of Mountains towns.

These groups are reflected in the buildings that represent or house these groups, and include churches, School of Arts buildings, community centres and halls and other civic buildings, all of which contribute to the fabric of our villages.

The Mountains have a further interest for scientific groups and are themselves of great scientific interest.

The natural history of the region was of great interest even before the railway, with Charles Darwin possibly the most famous visitor.
The Blue Mountains offers considerable scope for those interested in the natural sciences, with many walking guides and field guides to endemic geology, plants, birds, animals and other features.

The character of the towns is partially defined by the access points they provide to natural features such as waterfalls, swimming holes, creeks and lookouts. The setting of towns within the scenic natural environment contributes to their unique values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State theme</th>
<th>Local theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A place to live</td>
<td>Country estate, country retreat, dwelling, apartment, holiday houses and weekenders, hostel, bungalow, mansion, shack, caravan, cave, homestead, cottage, house site (archaeological).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life cycle, Birth and Death</td>
<td>Maternity hospital, nursery, baby clinic, nursing home, funeral parlour, cremation site, cemetery, burial register, memorial plantings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>Monument, memorial, honour board, blazed tree, obelisk, camp site</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the 1870s, the more reliable and rapid travel encouraged Sydney’s more affluent people such as judges, politicians and businessmen to purchase land and build gracious country residences in the Blue Mountains.

The ‘country estate’ trend soon attracted others, including the businesses and services required to satisfy the needs of these new communities.

Many grand estates and substantial residences survive, often hidden away behind large established gardens and grounds, away from the busy town centres.

Katoomba developed a diverse and enlarged permanent population, with schools, shops, churches and a local newspaper in the 1880s, and the town was appointed a municipality.

By 1912 there were some 5,000 permanent residents in Katoomba.

The few decades between c.1895 and c.1915 saw the extensive development of the residential areas of Upper Mountains particularly in the larger towns such as Wentworth Falls, Katoomba and Blackheath with streets of weatherboard cottages of a Late Victorian or Federation style, setting the scene for the long-term historic value of these residential areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State theme</th>
<th>Local theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tourism: Leisure</td>
<td>Resort, swimming pool, dance hall, hotel, caravan park, tourist brochures, park, clubhouse, lookout, bush walking track, fishing spot, picnic place, swimming hole.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the Mountains’ reputation grew, the desire for holiday accommodation began to make an impact upon the Mountain environment.

The 1880s onwards saw the appearance of gracious, even palatial hotels and guesthouses, principally in the Upper Mountains with a focus on Katoomba. Many other smaller establishments were offering accommodation in Katoomba and Leura.

The Municipal Council and the Katoomba and Leura Tourist Association promoted the area to attract tourists. Numerous lookouts, walking, and riding paths were constructed prior to the rise of the motor car.

The expansion of the middle class in Sydney beyond basic necessities led to an early to mid-1920s ‘boom’ period when the area became a honeymoon mecca for the middle class with a special ‘Honeymoon Train’ service in operation. Katoomba was widely publicised as a popular holiday resort.

Multi-storeyed guesthouses increased in numbers and Katoomba became distinctive in appearance. It became set apart from the more rural towns like Blackheath and Wentworth Falls where cottages and holiday homes on larger lots were typical.

New amenities began to reflect the demands of the new tourist; contemplation of nature was not enough to attract the new consumers. Sporting facilities such as golf, bowls and tennis rapidly appeared, the latter often attached to guesthouses.

Public swimming pools, theatres and skating rinks appeared, for example The Empire (Embassy) Theatre and the Kings Theatre (The Savoy) both in Katoomba Street.

Scenic drives were constructed, as well as the projecting platform of Echo Point in 1932. Cliff Drive opened in 1937 with panoramic views of the Megalong and Jamison Valleys.

### Rural Industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State theme</th>
<th>Local theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Rural landscapes, plantations, farms, shelter belts, fencing, sheds, orchards, kitchen gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>Forested area, forest reserve, timber plantation, forestry equipment, sawmill, arboretum, forest regrowth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoralism</td>
<td>Pastoral station, shearing shed, homestead, pastoral landscape, fencing, grassland, well, water trough.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sawmills and timber merchants were a common feature of many Mountains towns, for the exploitation of natural timbers for railway sleepers, houses and firewood. There were also small dairy farms, and small vegetable and poultry farms, important to local markets. Some big hotels like The Carrington had their own private farms.
The Mountains with its rugged landscape and limited flat land does not have a significant rural industry with the exception of the Megalong and Kanimbla Valleys and Shipley Plateau. Timber was a valuable industry for the Megalong, and the Kanimbla Valley possessed a fine fruit orchard. The Shipley Plateau in Blackheath has been a centre for small orchards, poultry farms, and some cattle grazing.

The Mount Wilson, Mount Tomah and Mount Irvine area has become known for its horticulture. The area contains magnificent English-style gardens which are a significant attraction for tourists.

Post-War Development

Following the Second World War, there was a slow and incremental approach to development, particularly in the Upper Mountains, and many sites remained undeveloped well into the 1940s and 1950s. Holiday homes remained vacant or rented to permanent residents.

In the Lower Mountains, populations expanded dramatically between 1950 and 1980. The improved transport times linked the Lower Mountains and reduced a sense of distance. Penrith continued to develop as a district centre, and more people were able to live in the bush setting of the Mountains and commute to work each day.

At the same time, the trend to retirement in the Blue Mountains, established earlier and in parallel to the development of holiday homes, particularly in the Mid and Upper Mountains, was strengthened.

While cheaper land and attractive living environments continue to attract people to the Blue Mountains, growth in population is not without its consequences. The increasing population puts pressure on the Blue Mountains environment. Uncontrolled expansion would have serious consequences on the natural landscape – the traditional and principal source of the Blue Mountains attraction and popularity. The resolve in the 1970s to protect the eastern escarpment from the encroachment of Sydney’s western suburbs is a reflection of this growing concern.

This themed historical narrative concluded in 1983 when it was written. Since then, incremental residential and commercial development of sites has continued, within the context of a strong and developed planning framework to protect historic sites and areas from inappropriate development. This is documented in the history of Council’s work on character in Part 5, with more detail in Appendix A.
The planning controls developed since this study have a focus on protecting and preserving the environment, historic sites, relics and areas, and the character of our town centres and residential neighbourhoods.

7.2 Summary of Blue Mountains character values

The Blue Mountains has long been regarded as a special place, first as a place of ongoing significance to Aboriginal people, and more recently as a positive lifestyle choice for residents and a popular tourist destination. The scenic qualities and grandeur of the natural landscape have encouraged both visitation and permanent settlement. Further unique qualities have developed through the distinctive character and heritage of the towns and villages, forming a cultural landscape that reflects the settled villages nestled within the dramatic contrasts of the wider environment.

Major influences include the presence and history of Aboriginal people in the area, the significant bush setting surrounding all urban areas, the presence of the transport corridor, and the valued historic aspects of European settlement. These are detailed in the earlier historic summary.

The Blue Mountains is an enormous area compared to local government areas in the urban parts of Sydney. It is so disparate that the character of various areas differs throughout the settlements because of factors such as elevation above sea level and climate. Blue Mountains urban environments are mostly low-key and low-scale compared to the high-density living of large cities.

The imagery of the Mountains as a ‘place’ has been defined in part by its difference from Sydney and the urban environment, particularly in the Upper Mountains, with its fundamental differences of topography and climate. These distinctions add great value to the character of our towns and the success of local tourism.

The Mountains is also identified with ‘natural wonders’, and the imagery of nature as mists, clouds, waterfalls and fern glades. These images resonate with nostalgia and romantic notions of the ‘lost Eden’ of primordial wilderness. The Mountains evoke notions of enclave, enclosure, focal points, indoor landscapes, handsome gestures, narrowing spaces, undulation, continuity, outdoor rooms, unsubstantial space, defining space, here and there, level changes, silhouettes, vistas, closure, mystery, hazards and adventure.

The perceptions of the nature of the Mountains and their character has not changed over the years. There is a remarkable consistency of attitude and identification of values over the preceding three or four decades, reiterated in every study and review, and by community
views. The following dot points summarise the views gathered from the literature review of Council’s past studies that is summarised in Part 5 and detailed in Appendix A.

**Unique and outstanding**

- The Blue Mountains is unique.
- Our environmental heritage encompassing natural and cultural values are outstanding.
- The scenic values are inspirational, romantic and ‘famous’.
- The Mountains is not Sydney, and is different from Sydney.

**Dominance of natural environment**

- The dramatic natural landforms and beautiful scenery are dominant and of exceptional importance and influence.
- The primary consideration is always the environmental quality and scenic grandeur of the natural landscape.
- There is a constant awareness of trees, topography, bushland and climate.
- There is a major community concern with protecting bushland and environment.
- The fundamentals of Blue Mountains character are its climate and geology. The mountains are at significant elevation for Australia - to over 1000m – and the climate is cold and moist. The basic geology is massive beds of sandstone. These combine to produce dramatic landforms of plateau/cliffs/steep-sided valleys, distinctive vegetation with higher trees in the valleys.
- The natural environment has shaped and determined settlement.
- The natural landscape has remained dominant despite development.
- The ‘City within a National Park’ encapsulates the importance of the natural setting.
- There is a predominance of a visual character relating to landscapes and scenic views, which evokes a response from the viewer.
- The escarpment views must remain undisturbed by urban development, through creating the character of the ‘invisible city’ with the objective of not detracting from the ‘wilderness experience’.
- Natural areas should be protected from the intrusions of urban development, and the interface zone managed to limit impacts.

**World Heritage listing**

- The City is subject to the responsibilities of the World Heritage listing of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (listed in 2000).
The importance of the ecological significance of the Blue Mountains within the Sydney region cannot be ignored, as an “outstanding natural resource” of over one million hectares of World Heritage and listed National Parks, many pockets having had little to no impact from European settlement, and providing a sanctuary for native wildlife and plants.

The World Heritage listing recognises the special nature of local plants and their origins in Gondwana and Pangaea, and the Blue Mountains is known internationally as a centre of eucalypt diversity.

Bushwalking tracks

- Bushwalking tracks are of high significance culturally, historically and for recreation and access to the bush.
- They provide an important interface with villages to ‘wilderness’ areas.
- They are identified in World Heritage nomination as significant element of the cultural landscape.
- They are threatened by urban fringe development that blocks track heads on private property.
- They are difficult to heritage list as can involve partial public access over private properties with access not legally formalised.

Heritage values

- The unique qualities of the built environment within the Blue Mountains have come to be recognised, particularly the historic towns of the Upper Mountains.
- A unique ‘cultural landscape’ has developed that is rich and diverse and also very different from the plains of Sydney and suburbia.
- The Mountains retains close links with early colonial history.
- Settlement in the Blue Mountains has evolved from early road stops, eventually leading to a string of 27 villages and towns over the ridges and high points of the Mountain range.
- The village locations and layouts reflect the historical pattern of settlement and in many cases are also a result of the particular physical and environmental constraints that limit development potential.
- The local economy is significantly influenced by historic and current imagery of the Blue Mountains, which continue to attract local and international tourists.
- Continuity of the historic image of the Blue Mountains underlies contemporary expectations of visitors and aspirations of residents.
Local people and places retain strong connections and links to earlier phases of European settlement.

Figure 17. Relationship of parts of the Mountains areas and experiences. Source: Blue Mountains Strategy Plan, Volume Three, Urban Systems Corporation, May 1974, Map A5

Urban character

- The city is defined clearly as a ‘linear city’ of villages and towns connected along the transport corridor, and clustered around railway stations crossing the mountains.
- The Blue Mountains has a very distinctive urban character with many streetscapes characterised by overhanging trees and lined with interesting buildings which provide good places for walking.
- Town centre streetscapes are generally characterised with wide footpaths, planting, paving, seats, pedestrian places and other features.
- The retention of older buildings, including cottages, immediately identifies older settlements.
- Older areas show earlier settlement patterns of increasing heritage value.
- Blue Mountains settlements are remarkable in the way that evidence of all major stages of development from earliest settlement are still visible. Towns and villages,
roads and laneways, buildings and landscapes, all illustrate successive stages of development and change whilst retaining a remarkable unity and character - particularly in the upper Blue Mountains.

- Large extents of quality vernacular buildings remain, including dwellings and shops and entire streets and precincts that are of historic interest and remain distinctive to Mountains towns and villages.
- Most town centres have some form of retail core, varying in size, but mostly modest in scale and historic in nature. The larger centres such as Katoomba, Blackheath and Leura, have sophisticated historic town centres of continuous parapeted shopfronts in a main street style representative of their Edwardian and Inter-War origins and of high local heritage significance.
- The exotic cool-climate tree species of the town areas evoke a nostalgia for European countryside and European forest trees.
- The dramatic relationship between the natural and cultural environments, of towns and their surrounding landscape, is very important. Also expressed as the contrast of towns with wilderness.
- Land between towns remains undeveloped and villages are contained.
- There is a sense of place which reflects the history of the settlements and evolving land uses and response to land form.
- The towns and villages, houses and gardens, have grown with distinctive charm and character.
- Each settlement has various memorable individual associations with Blue Mountains character and imagery.
- A rich weave of diverse yet linked village characters, each associated with natural features, town character, and iconic buildings.
- The relative distance from Sydney’s economic hubs has resulted in minimal pressures for development over many decades, preserving many historic areas and buildings in their original condition with minimal interventions.
- Small scale incremental development within the towns over decades, such as infilling vacant residential lots, has contributed to a patchwork of styles that often provide a varied and interesting experience.
- Character elements include the perceived small size of settlements and village centres, and the grid-like presentation of central town streets and roads.
- The Mountains displays varied interpretations of ‘cottage’ forms (small, modest, cosy, old-fashioned, rural houses) and ‘rustic’ construction (plain, simple, rural) in buildings and gardens,
There is a commonly understood idea of the ‘Mountains’ cottage’ as a residential building type, without a commonly understood meaning and physical attributes, and whether this is a typology distinct from heritage and landscaping features. Generally identified as a modest dwelling, surrounded by a setting of exotic gardens amongst established landscaping and within the wider bushland environment. Common materials are traditional timber weatherboards, fibro panels, or timber logs (lightweight materials as opposed to bricks and stone). Note ‘modest’ generally means simple in form, and not large in size or expense, although ‘modest’ can also mean well-screened by gardens or well set back from public view. The term ‘cottage’ often implies a smallness of scale in itself, and in current usage can be defined as “a modest, often cosy dwelling, typically in a rural or semi-rural location”.

Residential character

Within the unique natural bushland setting, towns and villages, houses and gardens have grown with distinctive charm and character, such that they are now as synonymous with the Blue Mountains as the natural landscape. Many dwellings are associated with the romantic notion of ‘country charm’ and ‘cottage charm’, being compact, ‘cosy’ and ‘charming’, romantic notions associated with sentimental values for simpler values of earlier times, including more modest proportions, natural materials and a simpler way of life.

Many residential buildings have ‘sheltering’ built forms - pitched overhanging roofs, porches and verandahs.

Many core village areas are typified by garden settings and significant streetscapes.

Buffering the town centres in many villages are residential neighbourhoods, many dating back to the early boom periods of the late Victorian, Federation, Edwardian and Inter-War periods.

Individual streets commonly have some continuity of architectural periods, but also an impressive range of diversity within the above styles, in terms of building details and forms. There is a complexity of character, with similarities yet subtle differences between recurrent elements in the residential streetscapes.

Materials are timber weatherboards, brick, sandstone and fibro walls, timber windows and doors, decorative glass, corrugated iron and Marseille tile roofs.

Traditional similarities include pitched roofs in traditional roof forms such as simple gables and hipped roofs, front verandahs with timber posts and skillion or bullnose roofs, bay windows, timber window awnings and traditional decorative detailing. (A style guide can be found in Council’s Development Control Plan in Part D Heritage.)
Building styles change with distance from the town centre, with some spur roads showing older cottages giving way to more recent houses and finally homes with a strong bushland setting as the road system gives way to the National Park.

**Residential bushland settings**

- Living close to bushland identified as major ongoing reason to live in the Mountains.
- Some newer areas have responded well to their bushland setting.
- Contact with nature is expressed through views, local bushland and native gardens, lack of boundary fencing and the retention of a canopy of mature trees.
- There is a Mountains theme of owner-builder traditions in the bushland interface, with an associated building construction of more rustic materials, alternative, unusual or highly personalised building designs or styles.
- Many houses are built to embrace the landscape setting and may have no fencing or transparent fencing.
- Bushfire threat is a common factor affecting residential development including house materials and landscape and garden outcomes.
- Suburban areas still mostly retain a bushland character due to vegetation remnants and canopy retention.

**Roads and scenic routes**

- Mountains roads dip and bend in character in response to the topography, opening up to vistas or enclosed by canopies of trees, creating distinctive Mountains streetscapes and experiences.
- The wild character of the bush permeates the towns with a mixture of vegetation and built forms in the transition zones although neither dominates. Many streets are narrow, verdant without kerbs and gutters and are frequently overgrown.
- Roads and streets in the Blue Mountains often evoke a sense of the English or Australian country lane, and also recall bush tracks or back roads, many with scenic outlooks. More peripheral streets, and indeed many streets in the town centres, particularly in villages such as Mount Victoria and Lawson, remain open, unsealed, or without kerbs and gutters, adding to the sense of a rural or bush informality. The rural village aesthetic of parts of Mount Victoria and Lawson villages, or the unsealed spur roads of many other villages, contribute positively to the Mountains character. There are also many significant laneways in both town centres and residential areas, for example, Katoomba town centre, and Wentworth Falls South. These laneways have a Victorian urban laneway aesthetic, typified by paling fences, retail service areas and
‘back of house’, views of rear garden vegetation, timber gates and narrow lane widths. Laneways in Katoomba have become identified with street art and contribute to the local sense of place and community, for example, Beverly Place.

- Some significant sections of roads are distinguished by streetscape features, such as continuous street tree plantings of one species, often deciduous trees. Older streetscape features such as the central island in San Jose and Honour Avenues, Lawson, and traffic-calming street improvements and street beautification in town centres contribute to the local character of some areas.
- Wider scenic landscape views within streetscapes, which frame local views and set them within the National Park, and increase awareness of the awe-inspiring setting, are part of the Blue Mountains visual and spatial experience, such as at Cliff Drive, Katoomba and many other spots around Katoomba and Leura and many other villages.

Gardens and landscape settings

- Landscaping and the retention of vegetation are a key contribution to the ‘Mountains style’ of residential character.
- The established character of the quintessential Mountains dwelling can be defined as a ‘house in a garden setting’.
- Most ‘town houses’ (houses in town areas) and cottages are set in established garden settings, with mature trees and shrubs and some stylistic association with cottage or picturesque gardens. These gardens create an attractive garden setting for the house that also contributes important landscape elements to the wider streetscape, creating a cultural landscape.
- Smaller dwellings are often complemented with ‘cottage gardens’, and larger dwellings on larger lots have park-like surrounds with large established cool-climate deciduous and evergreen exotic trees.
- The use of rows of conifers as windbreak rows and boundary line plantings are common.
- The spread of self-sown Radiata Pines from former pine plantations have led to the proliferation of pine copses and very large specimens throughout the Upper Mountains. Although distinctive and highly contributory to the cultural landscape, they are problematic as they are now often over-mature and have become identified as a locally invasive weed species.
- Some towns, most notably in the Upper Mountains, are renowned for spring and autumn displays of exotic species, which include the deciduous trees and conifers.
that characterise the tree canopies of upper Mountains villages. Trees such as crepe myrtle are spectacular in Lower Mountains towns.

- In some areas eucalypts and intimate cottage shrubbery dominate the streetscape, and in some villages the retention of the eucalypt canopy is common and part of the perceived local identity. Such villages include Warrimoo and Glenbrook.
- The use of native trees and shrubs to supplement the exotic landscape and some remnant taller eucalypts create a diverse vegetated environment of high aesthetic value with a distinctive tree canopy within the village environments, particularly the exotic cultural landscapes of the Upper Mountains.

Consistency of perception

- The character values are admired by residents and visitors alike.

Conservation challenges

- The significance of many aspects of the environment and the problems surrounding their conservation are such that they should not be considered the sole responsibility of the Blue Mountains City Council. Assistance from State and Federal Governments is warranted and required.
- There are ongoing development pressures that threaten the attractiveness of the Mountains and create environmental problems. Threats can cause loss to built heritage, scenic and natural values. Appropriate planning policy and development standards must continue to address and manage these pressures.
- There is an ongoing and heightened awareness of these threats and continuing community concern about the environment, and heritage and character being protected.
- The Blue Mountains is not another suburb of Sydney.
- There is an acknowledgement of the need to balance conservation and development.

Social character and values

It can be difficult to adequately summarise the social character of area, particularly one as large as the Blue Mountains local government area, where the community is socially and economically diverse and spread across a large area. Reliance can be placed on demographics and social data, but this is only one aspect of the character or composition of a community.
In the Blue Mountains, the perception is that social character varies widely, in line with the size of villages, climate, distance from Sydney, job availability, socio-economic status, reasons for living in the Mountains, and so on. Part of the value of the Mountains is that the community is socially and economically diverse, creating a wider inclusivity, with more opportunities to ‘fit in’. Our social value as a diverse community is highly important to retaining the environmental and physical character of our surroundings.

The Upper and Lower Mountains have distinctly different characters, and this needs to be taken into consideration. (The distinction between Upper and Lower could be either side of the Woodford Bends). The Upper Mountains rely heavily on the tourist industry, and the formal gardens, dramatic landscapes and heritage items contribute to the success of the industry. Many residents work in hospitality, accommodation, and tourism as these are the major economic drivers. Others work in health care and aged care, due to the older demographics of the Upper Mountains and the larger number of retirees. On the other hand, the Lower Mountains contain a large proportion of residents who commute outside the area for work and are attracted to the area for its bushland setting. The Upper Mountains has a higher proportion of retirees and single people, while the Lower Mountains has a higher proportion of young families.

The residential character of the Blue Mountains has developed slowly over a long period of time and often reflects the aspirations associated with past and present residents. People choosing to live in the Mountains are generally looking for an alternative to the suburbs of Sydney. Many people move here for the fresh air, the bush, the space and the slower pace of life. These trends have remained consistent for many decades, as demonstrated in the review of past studies and community vision in Parts 5 and 6. As such, they choose to live in an area surrounded by bush or large gardens. This has resulted in the legacy of an urban form that is predominantly low density and well vegetated. Various architectural styles in the Mountains are often associated with an owner builder tradition and the development of individual lots rather than large subdivisions. Over a long period of time these developments have acted as individual threads contributing towards a rich urban fabric that describes the evolution of towns and villages of the Blue Mountains.

Some general comments are noted here, as detailed research on the fine-grained social character of our community is not yet available. The recent community engagement for the Local Strategic Planning Statement has provided interesting demographics and responses. What has been identified is that managing town and village character is of particular importance to the community, to protect the environmental character and heritage in our care.
During Council’s past consideration of character, the work for Development Control Plan No. 10 identified some of the social aspects of Mountains character, which should inform the approach to managing character for the benefit of the community. These social themes as expounded in DCP No. 10 are still relevant three decades on:

- **Residents** develop an emotional attachment to their place in the Mountains probably more readily than those in anonymous suburbs. There is greater likelihood of community pride and involvement whilst distinctive character remains.
- **Householders** need a satisfying place, an environment for living that meets individual needs. The Mountains offer a range of quality living environments.
- **Visitors** require the Mountains to be different from elsewhere – or there’s no incentive to visit or stay. The Mountains economy depends upon retaining town character.
- **People** value highly what is distinctive and unique. The ‘special place’ is prized for its contribution to our feelings, our spirit, our life. The Mountains has many special places.
- **Business** relies upon having a product marketability different or better than competitors. The ‘cultural landscape of the Mountains’ is presently marketable – whilst it remains conserved.
- **Tourism** depends upon remaining special. Once the natural landscape has been inspected or the weather closes in, it is the charm and character of the towns and villages that is important.
- **Public interest** in the heritage of houses, gardens and regions like the Blue Mountains is on the rise. When one region so accessible to Sydney can link past and present so well its value is enormous.
- **Culturally**, at a time when much of society is seen to be becoming increasingly standardised and monopolized, it is increasingly important to maintain diversity and specialness in every way.

Recognition of social character through community engagement contributions and broad character identification leads to an enhanced appreciation of the environments we value, as the remainders of a past we can still enjoy today. In social terms, there are a number of benefits to character protection and management:

- There is increased recognition and appreciation of the legacy of the people who came before us, and respect for cultural traditions and physical reminders, some of which may no longer be in use. When we are considering changes it is important to
preserve reminders, evidence and spaces where important events occurred and where people lived in order to acknowledge and perpetuate memories;

- We recognise the opportunity to celebrate our social and environmental assets, values and legacies through special events. These include memorial services, garden festivals, art and food trails, outdoor running and cycling events, art and writing workshops where the community comes together to participate in larger groups with common interests.

- Through remaining evidence such as photos, news articles, oral histories, books and journals, we reflect on the past through research, storytelling and literary fiction, biographies, music, art, interpretive devices and information displays, and so on.

- We think beyond the physical realm to consider the cultural importance of the intangible values and intangible heritage of our places. This could include languages and rituals of the area, the sensory experiences of places such as smells, sounds and atmosphere, seasonal food collection practices, and fire management knowledge.

The upcoming Section 9 considers in the more detail the management of Blue Mountains physical and environmental character.
8. Threats to Blue Mountains character

Part of the significant and ongoing ‘story’ or narrative about the Mountains is the presence of various threats to the natural and cultural environment and the community’s way of life. There is a general recognition that there is the ongoing potential for substantial and irretrievable loss of unique values, whether environmental, character or lifestyle-based. The threats are well-known and have been consistently identified by both Council and the community over many decades. This has been an issue since the 1980s, when Council’s first heritage study in 1982 noted that

‘...the very attractiveness of the Mountains to residents and tourists has caused increasing development pressures ... much of the area’s built heritage has been lost or altered and the scenic and natural features come under threat. As a result, there has been a heightened awareness of environmental issues and community concern at what is happening to the heritage of the Blue Mountains’.

The community has remained highly active in its interest and commitment to the preservation of unique Blue Mountains’ values. Council has responded to those threats continuously through a strong and positive planning framework backed by supporting studies, as demonstrated earlier in Part 5 of this study. The Council’s planning framework has operated in a ‘protection’ mode for many decades, responding to those threats. This was described in the 1975 Structure Plan as environmental management through ‘conservation-oriented development’, and in Draft LEP 2000 as a major planning principle, ‘to place a limit on the extent of the potential urban footprint in the Blue Mountains based on the Sustainable Development Threshold’. The strength of the planning objectives of LEP 2005 were translated into LEP 2015. The aims of the Plan include “to maintain the unique identity and values of the ‘City within a World Heritage National Park’”, and “to identify and retain the diverse built and landscape elements that contribute to the character and image of the Blue Mountains”.

Threats to the environment, Mountains character and Mountains lifestyle remain a central issue for the community. The Mountains has become more desirable, partly due to increased property prices, congestion and higher costs of living in Sydney. During the preparation of DLEP 2013, community response to the need to ‘fit’ the Blue Mountains into a standardised LEP was influential in its demand that unique values such as vegetation communities, surrounding bushland and town character be preserved. It became clear that the State planning framework and legislation that seeks to fit the Blue Mountains into a standardised system of planning may not have sufficient flexibility and the protective mechanisms to conserve the Blue Mountains environment. This is reflected in the ongoing delays associated
with resolving with the State government a suitable translation for the Living-Conservation zone into LEP 2015.

THE BLUE MOUNTAINS IS NOT ANOTHER SUBURB OF SYDNEY

The Blue Mountains is a unique area — one that has been in the making for hundreds of millions of years. Its position on the system of National Parks that make up the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area which is globally recognised for its outstanding universal values by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

The Greater Blue Mountains represents one of the largest, most intact areas of protected bushland in Australia. It is a vast and beautiful area inhabited by Aboriginal people for millennia. It is also home to unique species found nowhere else in the world such as the Wollemi pine.

Few places in the world can boast of being surrounded by over a million hectares of wilderness. YNP, its varied ecosystems and biodiversity, 300 native species, canyons and waterfalls, the Blue Mountains region is regarded as the lungs of the Sydney basin.

Amongst its wild and rugged landscape, the famous Blue Mountains character townships and villages sit deliberately placed on the ridgeline above. With that rare combination of views and gardens, the towns and villages of the Blue Mountains evoke memories of a bygone era.

The Blue Mountains — with its Aboriginal and European cultural heritage and outstanding environmental and scenic values — attracts a large and growing number of domestic and overseas visitor. This contributes significantly to the economy of the Blue Mountains, where tourism and visitation is the largest economic sector.

We are sure you will agree that such an exceptional area deserves the utmost respect and protection to ensure its future preservation, as the NSW and Commonwealth Governments committed to the fate of the World Heritage Area.

In 2012 the NSW Government asked the Blue Mountains City Council to develop a new Local Environment Plan (LEP) consistent with the metropolitan and regional planning framework. In developing the new plan, one of the key objectives for the community was to conserve our beautiful World Heritage Area and character towns and villages.

The current planning provisions have successfully regulated the impact of urban development on the World Heritage Blue Mountains National Park, as well as ensuring our small Blue Mountains towns and villages are not subject to increasingly dense urban and high-rise development.

The previous Coalition Planning Minister Brad Hazzard promised that a special consideration would be given to the Blue Mountains in developing the new LEP. This commitment was reflected in the draft Blue Mountains LEP 2013, which was widely supported by the community during the public exhibition process. However, we understand that the NSW Department of Planning is now no longer supportive of the draft Plan and are advocating instead for high density and environmental provisions to be removed or downsized, as they do not fit the standard statewide planning model.

The local council and Council have worked hard for over a decade to develop an appropriate plan that will continue to protect the valuable Blue Mounts nature, environment and character towns and villages. UNESCO, too, recognises the threat that development on the ridgeline poses and the careful management required to protect the World Heritage Area.

We find it incomprehensible that an area of such outstanding natural and cultural value is required to fit neatly into a generic development plan, a plan suited to Sydney's urban areas. The future of a very ancient, sensitive and globally significant area is being jeopardised if this is the case.

So we ask you, Hon. Rob Stokes, Minister for Planning, to reconsider the ecological significance and cultural importance of the Blue Mountains. You must keep the commitment your government previously made to the community to preserve the current Blue Mountains planning framework. We respectfully request that you approve the draft Blue Mountains LEP 2013, as exhibited and endorsed by Council.

Yours faithfully,

Blue Mountains Conservation Society
Aunty Sharil Ho
Australian School of Mountaineering
Baron Flaxman Network
Blue Mountains City Council
Bob's Valley
Blue Mountains National Park
Blue Mountains National Park
Bob's Valley
Blue Mountains National Trust
Bob's Valley

We call on members of the public to email Mr Stokes office@stokes.minister.nsw.gov.au and support us with our plea to protect this valuable area.

Send copies of your email to
Josh Doyle, MP for Blue Mountains bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au
and to Stuart Ayres, MP for Penrith penrith@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Sponsored by Blue Mountains Conservation Society www.bluemountains.org.au

Figure 18. The community’s response to the draft Local Environmental Plan 2013

Local Character Study - Draft
Blue Mountains City Council
October 2019

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The community’s strong commitment to an LEP reflective of the unique character of Blue Mountains included acknowledgement not just of the natural environment, but also “...the famous Blue Mountains character townships and villages...delicately poised, on the ridgeline above...with their quiet tree-lined streets and large gardens, the towns and villages of the Blue Mountains evoke memories of a bygone era.”

The community remains actively engaged in responding to threats. Council has an ongoing and significant role in managing the impacts of an increasing demand and requirement to provide additional housing, increasing tourism loads, and the preservation of environmental and cultural values.

The threats can generally be considered to derive from the negative impacts of urban development, and require a positive response through continuing to promote good urban development. The community is sensitive to our shared responsibility to manage those threats and to protect the environment we value. However, the issues are complex, with pressures being applied external to the Mountains and thus often beyond local control.

Environmental threats

It is well-understood that the Blue Mountains is of exceptional and unique value. This has been acknowledged in many ways over time, by such protections as the creation of the Blue Mountains National Park, the World Heritage listing of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area in 2000 by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), and the recognition of the cultural heritage values of Aboriginal, archaeological and built heritage within the Mountains through local and state heritage listings and the creation of Aboriginal Places.

The most significant factor to consider when contemplating the threat to local character is the inscription of the Greater Blue Mountains as a World Heritage area and thus the acknowledgement at an international level of the area’s values. The listing of the area’s natural values, particularly the diversity of the eucalypt forests and significant rare or threatened species, can be threatened by urban development. The ongoing guardianship and responsibilities relating to the management of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area provides an important driver for continuous improvement at a local level. By ensuring good development planning and construction practices in the LGA we ensure we are taking responsibility for the protection and preservation of values through long-term strategic management. The outcomes that are desirable include weed control, protection of endangered flora and fauna species, erosion control, water catchment management, bushfire hazard reduction, appropriate land uses, and containment of urban areas.
Our state-led regional management plans identify as a key challenge the protection of the World Heritage Area, and a reliance on the proximity of the Blue Mountains areas for nature-based recreation and green space for a healthy environment. Within the urban areas of the City this includes minimising the impacts of development and maintaining and containing our distinctive towns and villages.

**State legislation**

The centralised (state) planning framework provides the mechanisms to protect character within the larger planning legislation. The mechanisms are set at a state level and are beyond the control of local Councils. Thus, state exemptions can apply to local development, including state policy such as the Exempt and Complying Development Codes (‘the Codes SEPP’), which includes many exemptions from the need for Council approval.

Many forms of development which make a meaningful contribution to the character of a particular location are not currently defined as development or are considered exempt from the need for consent, and are therefore not controlled by local planning legislation. This can include some forms of front fencing, garden areas and vegetation site, and driveways/crossovers.

Character areas often require some form of control over such elements which contribute to local character, however there would need to be additional triggers for development that can be applied to character areas to provide this level of control to such elements that may be of value.

**Residential character threats**

As the demand for housing increases and the availability of developable land decreases, there is increasing pressure to accommodate more housing in existing urban areas. Inappropriate infill development poses a threat to residential character. Council seeks to maintain the residential character unique to the Blue Mountains, and to ensure that the area can be differentiated from the greater metropolitan area of the Sydney basin.

Some urban development and development pressure is threatening the character and heritage values of the Mountains. A measure of further development is accepted, therefore the emphasis must continue to be on managing urban development at a local level to minimise or mitigate impacts, and to encourage the incorporation of good design into the protection of character.
This Study has demonstrated that Council has existing strong provisions for character protection that have kept up with best practice and continued to evolve. In particular the finalisation of LEP 2005 was highly detailed and specific about the conservation of natural and cultural values. Natural values, town character and heritage have been fundamentally retained over many decades through the preparation of environmental and character principles and provisions, and ongoing heritage studies and protections.

However, within our towns and villages, there is always ongoing potential for loss and change of character due to incremental development of individual sites. There is some inevitability about small losses that occur with redevelopment and renewal. Small changes and losses that occur over time can add up to significant changes in the character of neighbourhoods in the space of a few years. The emphasis must be on guiding change and ensuring that character values are retained overall and in the long term.

There are subtle demographic and social changes that are occurring in the Mountains, in the context of global trends and influencing factors, particularly increases in housing costs. These are long-term trends with a range of outcomes. The renewal of residential buildings is necessary; however, the impacts must be managed, to ensure the protection of the natural and cultural values of the environment, and also to protect the social and physical well-being and harmony of the community, meeting its diverse needs and aspirations.

Contemporary lifestyle factors

‘Escape from the City’ themes in the media suggest that the Mountains is increasingly desirable as a place to live. There is also an increasing perception of properties as investments or commodities, and as indicators of social status, due to lifestyle shows such as The Block. This is partially due to an ongoing national interest in property renovation and property investment. These factors place older residential properties in desirable areas as suitable material for redevelopment. The Mountains is affected by these larger and broader demographic trends.

Gentrification can also alter the character of Mountains towns and villages. The process of gentrification is related to social and economic factors, and refers to changing the character of a neighbourhood through the influx of more affluent residents and businesses. In the Mountains, more affordable property prices compared to Sydney have seen the Mountains become more attractive as a quiet and pretty place to live with a certain lifestyle whilst maintaining a proximity to Sydney. “Arty, quiet and full of cute cottages, the Blue Mountains offers an almost-doable commute to Sydney and the opportunity to live...

Updating and renovating of older buildings is common, and generally includes increases in floor space. Adverse outcomes from building renovations are more likely to affect areas that are not protected by planning provisions such as heritage conservation area protections or clear zone objectives that preserve landscapes or built form outcomes.

Contemporary building trends

Recent building trends, since the mid-1980s and the rise of Post-Modernism in Australia have seen a proliferation of building styles and designs, causing a loss of streetscape consistency in some areas, as infill development breaks up established patterns. The lack of a contemporary vernacular style, partly due to the wide range of available influences, has seen a range of forms and applications of materials become acceptable, as well as the ongoing use of ‘imitation heritage’ or ‘faux’ heritage, where past styles are reinterpreted.

Many new buildings in the Blue Mountains use some imitation of traditional styles, with varying success. The success of such buildings depends on the careful crafting of forms, and the restrained use of materials and details. Many are not an authentic response to urban context, particularly if too many modern materials are used, ‘faux’ heritage decorative details are superficially applied, and if the scale is oversized or the front contains dominating garages structures and doors.

Many traditional materials are no longer popular due to costs and maintenance. Weatherboard has become less popular, and alternatives in synthetic or composite materials have arisen, due to the maintenance required for regular repainting. Timber pickets are increasingly being replaced by metal and plastic imitation picket fencing.

A loss of coherence in the streetscape and a departure from traditional ‘rules’ as previously understood or available in vernacular development can be seen through the use of non-traditional application of materials, lack of visible roof pitches, very low pitches or random roof forms. Further, non-traditional window opening locations and sizes, large areas of gravel or concrete in the front setback are further departures from a residential traditional of simple building and construction techniques dating back centuries.

However, there are areas of the Mountains where there is a flexibility to create individual designs without reference to a built form context. Non-heritage and non-character building controls contain enough flexibility to allow a variety of appearances. The emphasis must remain on good design and a good response to contextual cues where it is appropriate to do so.
Loss of landscape and tree canopy

Landscaping and the retention of vegetated or garden settings is of critical importance in maintaining the character of the Blue Mountains in most residential areas. A variety of landscapes define the Mountains and are what make the area unique. Gardens and landscapes contribute to the established character of the quintessential Mountains dwelling, defined as a ‘house in a garden setting’.

Trends towards building larger houses, and additional areas of concrete paving threaten the character of often dense or shrubby gardens and large mature trees characteristic of Mountains residential areas, particularly those areas identified as having particular heritage, character and environmental values. Tree removal and loss of mature tree canopy without replacement plantings will result in adverse character changes within urban areas. The vegetated character of Mountains’ urban areas reflects a harmony with and respect for the wider bushland (provided invasive weeds are not present), which is an important reflection of Mountains identity. A dense mature tree canopy is also an important asset for shade and cooling in urban environments during hot seasons.

Our landscapes are one of the chief features potentially under threat. Threats derive from various sources not just residential and tourist development, but also the Rural Fire Service’s 10/50 Clearing Code and the changes wrought upon street trees when pruned by utilities contractors under the Infrastructure SEPP (State Environmental Planning Policy).

Development should not preclude the opportunity for substantial new trees and gardens consistent with our existing landscaped environment both in the town and fringe areas. The development controls that manage site coverage and pervious areas (ratio of building footprint to landscaped area) seek to maintain a vegetated and treed character.

It is acknowledged that the creation and maintenance of gardens is a time-intensive activity competing against the many other activities and responsibilities of contemporary life. However, trees and gardens are important spaces with many functions including recreation, sanctuary, play, food growing, flora and fauna habitat, and amenity (cooling, shading, beauty and so on).

Succession planting policies and tree canopy management are a shared responsibility between owners and consent authorities. Similarly, bushfire hazard reduction and landscaping outcomes must be a shared responsibility with a balanced outcome.

Development proposals for alterations and new development must be able to provide a good landscape outcome to balance the ratio of built form to trees and shrubs and result in an optimal landscape setting.
Bigger houses

Australia has seen a significant increase in the size of dwellings, dubbed ‘McMansions’, and an ongoing trend towards larger houses on smaller blocks with less garden and trees. These trends usually include larger garages for multiple cars, leading to a loss of garden areas and an increase in concrete driveway areas. On-site car access and parking is a contemporary expectation for new dwellings, with parking and garages close to the street to preserve side and rear areas (reasonably) for other functions. The demand for parking for multiple cars is accompanied by an increase in hardstand areas such as wider driveways. The increase in building footprint and height, and loss of garden areas is uncharacteristic of the traditional Mountains residential environment.

The preference for larger houses with less garden has led to a greater push against existing development controls. The provisions of height maximums, number of storeys, site coverage and landscaped area are being regularly pressured. The existing development controls, which were once not taken up to their maximums, are now working harder to retain the identified values within the zone objectives and numeric development standards.

Changes to road character

New houses are often accompanied by new kerb and guttering rather than a narrow soft-edged road with a woodland or garden nature strip. This changes the character of older residential areas with a rural feel, and suggests that road character influences residential character. Villages such as Mount Victoria and Lawson rely on a rural feel for much of their character, a major visual part of which is the soft grassed verges of unkerbed roads. Care with road detailing would assist with the conservation of character.

There are other factors that would also benefit from a careful consideration of the need for kerb and guttering, such as our water sensitive urban design principles (WSUD). Council has a Water Sensitive Strategic Plan in preparation to ensure our waterways and creeks are improved through careful management. The character and appearance of our village streets is a relevant factor in the management of our stormwater and drainage systems. (See more at https://yoursay.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/water-sensitive-strategic-plan)

Blocking of views

Areas with good views, usually with an existing older and modest dwelling, are attractive to buyers anticipating demolishing and/or substantially rebuilding. This results in larger houses in an area of smaller, less substantial modest homes in an area with a good view. In this case, the smaller houses which had previously had a gentle, cottage imagery have had their
character setting altered and are likely to be more attractive to buyers, also anticipating demolishing and rebuilding. This leads to the loss of character of the area, with smaller modest homes being replaced by a new aesthetic of larger houses. Increase in house sizes leads to less visual permeability through houses to the views beyond. Retaining views through houses to views beyond is important, and adds a sense of space and depth to streetscapes.

**Erosion of streetscape and built character**

The loss of evocative streetscape elements, (being those elements that call up strong or suggestive images, usually historic or romantic characteristics or period elements), over time causes a gradual erosion of character through new development. Some areas and properties contribute more strongly to the aggregate streetscape than others. These include the remnant more open rural-appearing areas, areas with views into natural areas, distinctive local landmark features or buildings on a corner or within a street. The loss of these elements can substantially alter the character of a larger area and if the process continues, erode the character of a village or town. The importance of these changes depends on whether the area is an established character area, or a newer more suburban area.

New buildings, including infill sites in town areas and recent areas of development, often use brick as the predominant building material, and this contrasts with the variety of materials common in the older developed areas. Newer houses are identifiably dominant and create a suburban environment when:

- Almost all buildings in a street are pale or mid-toned brick with minimal use of timber or fibro;
- Facades are large with relatively simple details, or imitation details;
- Garages in the front elevation change the scale and appearance and result in a house that is wider on the lot and not separated by a driveway space;
- Front verandahs are reduced to front door porches or are absent;
- Large areas of paving are installed in the front setback;
- Gardens are open turfed areas rather than cottage shrub beds and screening shrubs with trees dominating.

The only way to protect against gradual changes to streets by the accretion of more contemporary brick houses is to provide protections against demolition, and in support of particular character elements.
Loss of buildings

The State government has mandated that buildings can be demolished through a complying development process under the State government’s Demolition Code within the SEPP (State Environmental Planning Policy) Exempt and Complying Codes. The only exceptions, and the means to protect older dwellings from demolition under State codes, is to provide protection within a heritage conservation area. To successfully do this, there must be heritage values under particular set heritage criteria. This is not always an option for areas without heritage values, despite having a valued character made up of other distinctive elements. These areas require other forms of protection. The State government is currently considering options for character protection mechanisms. Meanwhile, there are some increases in pressure for demolition of existing buildings in the Mountains.

Changing community needs

The Mountains still contains significant vacant lots that are undeveloped, characteristic of the traditionally slow pace of development in the Mountains, and notably different from older parts of Sydney. Flat sites close to the town centre with services available and lower bushfire ratings are sought after, and are slowly being built on. Although knock down and rebuilds have been typically minimal in the Mountains, this type of development is now also increasing, as ordinary older housing stock continues to age, and modest run-down cottages, perhaps with asbestos or other issues, are earmarked for redevelopment.

The ideal would be the creation of a contemporary layer or mosaic of new development that could be clearly identified as a new layer sitting comfortably within existing older and historic layers. This coherence relies on a good ‘fit’, particularly in terms of setbacks, heights, and bulk and scale. Generally, these development standards are well established within Council’s planning controls; however, there is increasing pressures to build larger, brick dwellings which can be at odds with older, modest housing.

The designation of ‘character areas’, where the good fit of new dwellings requires a more detailed response, has been identified and addressed by Council. Council’s planning framework has identified for example, that in ‘Period Housing Areas’ (now heritage conservation areas) that a 6.5 metre height limit be adhered to, to retain a single-storey character.

To protect character in character areas could also require prescriptive controls, for example, that certain materials are mandated, such as weatherboards for walls. Council has not mandated such a detailed set of controls over materials.
Demographic change and need for housing choice

There is evidence from community feedback and demographic research that there is a demand for a range of housing choices and a diversity of housing forms as the Mountains communities evolve and change. This generally means some increase in medium-density residential dwellings, as the Mountains is mostly free-standing house. Medium-density dwellings in the form of smaller more affordable townhouses, apartments, and villas in appropriate areas would cater to the needs of younger and older residents who wish to stay in the area without the costs and maintenance associated with larger free-standing dwellings and gardens. There is a demand and need for higher density housing in areas close to retail and transport.

Smaller dwellings on smaller lots can have positive benefits for residents and the community in terms of less outdoor maintenance. Higher density living is not generally typical of the existing Mountains environment, and has the potential to impact upon existing character areas, both visually and in terms of density, parking requirements, building heights, architectural expression and so on. There would need to be a strong focus on good design in terms of context, materials, forms and details to ensure a sympathetic character is introduced.

It is important to identify areas where new housing developments may be appropriate. Town centre fringes, infill sites and redevelopment of neglected sites all provide opportunities to create dynamic and responsive new infill. Housing can be part of a mixed-use redevelopment, such as shop-top housing. Buildings with value, interest or character can be incorporated into new development. Before approving redevelopment, Council and the community need to have identified the type of redevelopment appropriate for the area, and the architectural qualities desired, such as heights, setbacks, garden types, roof forms, materials and so on.

It is recommended that further investigation be carried out into appropriate forms, details, bulk, scale and other detailed, technical options and solutions to suggest an appropriate building response to an increase in density. This should take the form of design guidelines for particular areas, which would support the provisions of the Local Environmental Plan (LEP) by inclusion in Council’s Development Control Plan (DCP). The toolkit and roadmap in the following section of this study provides a way forward for expressing the desired future character of our villages. Such guidelines would assist developers and assessors in understanding the desired characteristics of the particular area or village. This work should be identified as a future action within the Local Strategic Planning Statement.
9. Managing Blue Mountains character

The identification of character areas and elements has been a significant focus of Council in the past. Council has created a sophisticated and complex system of character protections that encompass the natural and cultural values of our areas. Council’s intention is to continue to identify and protect character in response to changes in legislation, building standards and lifestyle demands.

This section of the Study discusses contemporary ideas about managing character, including identifying guiding principles for the preparation of a Local Character Statement unique to the Blue Mountains environment. This section also uses the State government Local Character and Place Guideline to identify mechanisms and tools for a qualitative assessment of character. The Local Character and Place Guideline identifies the three factors that influence the character of a place:

- Social influences
- Environmental influences
- Economic influences.

Place is made up of interrelated elements and layers, both physical and non-physical: the physical form of a place – its environment; the activity – the use, vitality and diversity of a place; and the meaning – how a place is perceived and understood. How these factors influence place are synthesised in the following diagram.

Figure 19. How factors influence and create place. Source: Local Character and Place Guideline, NSW Government, 2019, p.56
In terms of the physical environment, the character of any urban area is established by the combination of the built form characteristics and the spatial relationships, and how both of these relate to the natural environment. This could be buildings and their spacing, and how they transition into areas of bushland, escarpment or hanging swamps.

Town and neighbourhood character must be managed along with other desirable or useful aspects of an area. Some change is to be expected over time, even if the desire is to ‘maintain’ and ‘enhance’ character, as is the case in the Mountains, rather than ‘change’ character (Note, these terms are derived from the classification in the Local Character and Place Guideline 2019, NSW government). Built fabric requires regular renewal and updating, whether maintenance, enhancement or growth. Policy objectives and provisions in the local planning system are the primary way Council can require that careful attention is given to ensure that desirable character aspects remain in balance with other requirements.

9.1 Current LEP and DCP provisions for character

The Local Environmental Plan (LEP) is the primary mechanism that sets the development standards and land uses within the Blue Mountains, and facilitates the assessment of development including issues and impacts related to character. Character is managed through the LEP, and in further detail by controls in the Development Control Plan (DCP), the guiding document that sits below the LEP in the planning document hierarchy.

‘Character’ is not mentioned in the State government’s NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. The most relevant object of the act seeks to ‘ensure good design and amenity of the built environment’. The policy controls and approach at a local government level should seek to ensure that character objectives equate to a management of character attributes (rather than a preservation of built fabric, which is more appropriate to heritage protections). Blue Mountains Council’s LEP contains Clause 6.17 Consideration of character and landscape which is an additional local clause that promotes character within residential and environmental zones.

‘Character Statements’ are already a common existing mechanism used in many NSW local council provisions, and often include ‘desired future character’ statements and supporting policies that create a vision for how development should occur to achieved a desired future outcome. Character Statements document important traits and how future development needs to be designed and located to respect and complement those important traits. Note that other policies within a planning framework may be in conflict with character policies (for example bushfire management) and a balance is required between various drivers to achieve the best outcome.
Another control mechanism now widely implemented (although not in NSW) is the Residential Character Zone or Neighbourhood Character Zone, which has been introduced in many Australian states. Only a zone has the ability to control the permissibility of land uses within that area or zone, which directly impacts character, for example, the density of land use on any given lot, including dual occupancy and subdivision.

Unlike, say, Victoria, which has mandated character and context provisions in Clauses 54, 55, and 56 of the Victorian Planning Provisions (the standard template clauses for local planning schemes), the NSW Standard Instrument LEP does not have mandated clauses for character protections. The Victorian planning scheme also contains a Neighbourhood Character Overlay as a further mechanism for character protection; New South Wales does not have any character overlays but is in the process of considering their implementation.

As a result of the high quantity and quality of valued character areas in the Blue Mountains local government area, Blue Mountains City Council has a long record of identifying and protecting character, as detailed earlier in this study. However, Council would welcome a greater emphasis on character identification and protection via the mandated clauses of the Standard Instrument LEP. This would provide a greater range of mechanisms to suit various situations and desired outcomes. Council is awaiting the outcome of the proposed Character Overlay as put forward by the State government, and has made a submission to the Discussion Paper exhibition.

Current LEP 2015 protections for character include the following local (non-State-mandated) provisions unique to the Blue Mountains LEP:

- 6.4 Protected areas – slope constraint area
- 6.5 Protected areas - landslide risk
- 6.6 Protected areas - vegetation constraint area
- 6.7 Protected areas - ecological buffer area
- 6.8 Protected areas – riparian lands and watercourses
- 6.12 Protected area - escarpment
- 6.13 Protected area – land between towns
- 6.17 Consideration of character and landscape
- 6.18 Period housing areas (now repealed as of July 2019)
- Development in villages (Part 7) – objectives for town centre and medium-density housing precincts (with controls and provisions in DCP)

These provisions have been in place for decades, as were translated from the previous LEP, LEP 2005, and were evolved during the preparation of that LEP, begun in 1997. The first five are primarily environmental protections, and the remainder more linked to built character.
and scenic outcomes. However, as a suite of local protections, they provide a system of protections that ensures that villages remain contained within existing urban areas, helping to shape the character of our built environment and its relationship to the surrounding environment.

The Blue Mountains local government area also contains many listed heritage items and heritage conservation areas due to many intact neighbourhoods with high historic values and high levels of authenticity. These items and areas have protections that also assist in preserving the character of these areas, where there is a strong historic component to that character. The heritage protections require the preservation of contributory housing, other building types, and original and early building fabric, trees and gardens where significant.

Further, the Blue Mountains local government area has a specific residential character zone, the Living-Conservation zone of LEP 2005, which is awaiting translation from LEP 2005 into LEP 2015. This zone provides protections for a particular residential character, as discussed in detail earlier in this Study. The protection given by a zone ensures that the permissibility of land uses is carefully controlled, which in turns protects characteristics such as the degree of site coverage and pervious area, maximum building heights and density of built form.

Council’s Development Control Plan also provides supporting guidelines for preserving and managing character in certain areas. Current DCP 2015 protections for character include the following sections:

- Part B3 – Character and Design, which includes:
  - B3.1 Character consideration within precincts (linked to mandated Clause 6.19 Design excellence of the LEP)
  - B3.2 Single dwelling design considerations
- Part C3 – Landscaping, which includes detailed objectives, requirements and guidelines
- Part C5 – Tree and Vegetation Preservation
- Part D – Heritage (which provides guidelines for historic character elements and areas)
- Part E8 – Public Domain
- Part G – Locality Management, which includes desired future character statements for all existing town centre and neighbourhood precincts

The following diagram illustrates the range of protections a village in the Mountains may include that influence the resulting character of that village. Character protections limit expansion and development within the town, and protect views of and from the town, heritage values, and environmental values.
9.2 Land use and development control standards

Land uses and permissibility

Local and state legislation plays a primary role in determining character through land use and permissibility, using land use zones.

A range of land use types are permissible under each zone, and those land uses will have a significant influence on character. For example, permitting other residential development types such as dual occupancies, Seniors Housing, manor houses, terraces, and medium-density housing can change the density and scale, and therefore character, of an area significantly over time. Such residential building types involve increases in site coverage and floor space, more hardstand and impervious areas, greater demand for services, additional fencing, more traffic and so on. The resulting increases in density over single lot housing affect the character of an area.

The State government’s standard LEP model and prescribed residential land use zones is arranged to permit a range of residential densities. The Blue Mountains local government...
area uses general residential (R1) and low-density residential (R2) zones, with only small areas identified for medium-density residential development (R3). Development in these areas, such as new dwellings, generally requires a development application to be lodged with Council. Note, the Environmental Living (E4) and Environmental Management (E3) land use zones also permit single residential development with Council approval, but are not generally considered standard residential zones.

The State government however has state-wide provisions which override local provisions, in particular the SEPP (State Environmental Planning Policy) Seniors Housing, and the ‘Codes SEPP’ (the Exempt and Complying Development Codes) which contains the Housing Code and the Low Rise Medium-Density Housing Code. While the Housing Code allows a single house to be approved as complying development if it meets a set of standard design outcomes, the other State codes allow higher density dwelling types (such as dual occupancies, manor houses, terraces and other medium-density housing) in the main residential zones to be approved as complying development, overriding the development application process with Council. At this stage, the Blue Mountains is somewhat protected, as our LEP limits the zones which permit such ‘code’ development. However, the State government is able to amend the Codes SEPP at its discretion, potentially changing the application of the exempt and complying development rules.

Overriding of local provisions by using State legislation to carry out development without the input of Council can negatively impact local character. The State legislation under the Codes SEPP is a one-size-fits-all set of rules which aims to speed up the construction process and is more suitable for growth areas. It does not suit the typical pattern of slow, incremental infill development that occurs in the Mountains which is generally of low impact upon character. The overriding of local provisions is underscored by the lack of provisions for character or context considerations within the development standards of the Codes SEPP generally.

The Blue Mountains has many environmental and character constraints that make development complex. The use of a dedicated residential character zone to control permissibility, and thus density and potential related adverse impacts, is the straightforward way to maintain the generally desired low-density character in the Mountains. The conversation with the State government is ongoing.

Development standards

Local and state legislation plays a role in determining character through the detail of development standards in local and state policies.
Key development standards such as building height and maximum floor space are imposed on development at a local level through the LEP and apply to all development applications processed by Council. These key development standards have a major impact on the character of an area. Consistent application of these standards over time creates a pattern, a density and a character.

Other development standards such as front, side and rear setbacks, site coverage, and landscaped area also play a role and are part of Blue Mountains Development Control Plan. For example, the depth of a front building setback determines the extent of front garden area, sense of privacy due to distance from the street, and ability to retain or establish large trees. These development standards at our local level are carefully crafted to achieve the desired character and environmental outcomes. Other more detailed considerations of forms, materials and colours also come into play in some of our residential areas in conjunction with other protections, for example escarpment protections.

The complying development policy of the State government’s Codes SEPP does not weigh in to the finer details of character management and local context. The development standards provided in the SEPP are limited to the basics of lot size, building height, maximum floor area, setbacks, dwelling configuration and landscaped area. There are also standards for decks and verandahs, and amenity and privacy. There are no context or character considerations such as local conditions, materials, forms or details.

The one-size-fits-all approach of the Medium-Density Code in particular is created to facilitate faster complying development approval for new buildings. When the State government controls override local controls, the development standards can also change, increasing heights, site coverage, reducing landscaped areas, and so on, and also reducing reasons for refusal.

It is important for the management of character that the local council retain control of the type of development appropriate and desirable within its local government area. If State policy can override local policy and permit a different set of standards for development, the character and context considerations of distinctive local areas are at risk.

9.3 Principles of character management

Management of character, like the development of any strategy or policy, should be based on clear guiding principles or aims. Urban design and architectural design guidelines can then evolve from the overarching principles that are relevant and as specific as necessary to the local context. A general set of urban design principles is included in Part B3 of the Blue Mountains Development Control Plan 2015, which aims to assist in the production of quality
urban design responses (currently limited to within town centre precincts but with broader application). See below, from Part B3.1.1 Urban Design of the DCP.

CI. Significant development within the identified precincts, where impacting upon significant public domain spaces, major roads, town centres and significant streetscapes, is to demonstrate consideration of the following urban design principles:

(a) structure and connections: organise places that are consistent with or improve the urban structure and are well connected, and

(b) accessibility: provide ease, safety and choice of access for all people, and allow for the smooth movement of vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles, and

(c) complementary mix of use and types: maintain and create a complementary mix of uses and types of buildings and spaces, and

(d) appropriate density: provide appropriate density, with the highest density focused on commercial centres and public transport nodes where accessibility is the greatest, and

(e) urban form: clearly define public and private space, create spaces that are appropriate to the hierarchy, function and character of places, and reduce opportunities for undesirable activities, and

(f) legibility: help people to understand places and find their way around, and

(g) activation: stimulate activity and a sense of vitality in public places, and

(h) sense of place and character in street and townscape: recognise, conserve and enhance the characteristics that give places a valued identity and create high quality and distinctive streetscapes and townscape, and

(i) settings: provide integrated landscaping, water, native bushland, interpretive devices and signage to enhance public spaces and places of cultural interest and tourism sites, and

(j) vistas: enhance vistas and street views that reveal the topography, and the relationship between the urban environment and important natural elements, and

(k) sensory pleasure: create places that engage the senses and delight the mind.
These urban design principles do not however extend to or expand upon the details of built form, for example, roof forms, materials, window proportions etc. This level of detail is technical and complex, and should instead take the form of detailed design guidelines. Such guidelines have been produced by a number of other Councils, both in Australia and internationally. It is recommended that Council prepare a set of guidelines for forms, materials and details, for residential and town centre developments, and include this in the Council’s DCP.

The investigations for this study have also revealed that there is a different character for each village and locality, and that guiding principles and detailed guidelines should take into account this difference and the need to reinforce each town’s sense of place. The relative remoteness of the Mountains and the need for a varied visitor experience is linked to providing a diversity of character, appearance and experience through each village.

Thus, it may be appropriate to include a set of broad principles to guide the character of our towns in a more holistic sense, including other urban design and environmental factors specific to our area. The following guiding principles could begin to offer a visioning framework for the preparation of the Local Character Statement, and potentially be included in the Statement as aims that reinforce the strategic planning policy:

- We as the community have special responsibilities to protect the local ecology and bushland character, and the character of our towns and villages.
- The emphasis should remain on protection of existing character and environmental values from destruction and erosion. There is a reasonable concern about loss and change, and an awareness of threats to natural and cultural environments.
- An appreciation for future growth can be fostered without detriment to the overall vision and character of each place.
- Some change in some places should be accepted as inevitable, but we should work towards positive change, not loss.
- The villages and towns should remain contained discrete elements each with its own character and individuality. Boundaries should remain firm to prevent sprawling suburban-type development.
- Visitors appreciate that the Mountains is different from elsewhere. Therefore there is great tourism value in remaining different from Sydney.
- Tourism is important to the development of existing assets such as the National Park, the local arts community, heritage awareness, significant parks and landscapes,
identity, place, and educational tourism, but must be balanced against the needs of the community and against environmental and cultural degradation.

9.4 Mapping local character

Local character can be expressed through words and also images. A description of the patterns of built form and the spatial context assists with analysis; this is known as ‘urban morphology’. (‘Urban morphology’ is the study of human settlements including their formation and transformation). To consider the character of an area, it is necessary to:

1. Develop a process and criteria for identifying special character areas. This will create clarity around expectations and where these areas apply, and provides transparency and consistency. This Study continues and reinforces Council’s work in this area, in conjunction with the State government’s Local Character and Place Guideline.

2. Use existing information and documents that provide further information on the area. Understanding the history and series of changes that have created a place can inspire and guide future decisions on the extent of change that can be accommodated. The information sources that can be used include: local population data, demographic data, local records, visual landscape studies, urban design studies, architectural studies, retail and employment land audits, material characteristic studies, Aboriginal history, local history, heritage studies (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal), historic maps or photographs, census records or engagement with the community to obtain local knowledge through social networks or community groups. This Character Study provides the preliminary material and direction that informs the drafting of the Local Character Statement.

3. Consider the distinctiveness of an area relative to surrounding areas, how consistent/intact the area is and whether the location is under threat or about to be under threat;
   a. How has the area already developed, what is the vision for the future, and what makes the area unique?
   b. Where do the boundaries of the area begin and end, and why?

4. Express the nature of the areas and desired future character through a range of techniques and visual tools to communicate character attributes and design responses.
   a. Illustrations, maps and diagrams analyse, synthesise, and communicate the character of an area;
b. Various attributes can be overlayed into a spatial framework to discover patterns, and opportunities. Example attributes include topography, circulation and transport patterns, vegetation, and density of built forms.

c. The desired future character statement should be supplemented with design guidelines, sketches, use of photos, and colour in mapping and format.

5. Differentiate those areas from heritage conservation areas so as not to reinforce the confusion between the two different concepts;

6. Elaborate the differentiation of these areas from those areas captured by the various state Housing Codes and their legislated provisions and exemptions;

7. Engage in local discussion and debate to ensure that the community and relevant professions have a shared understanding of the meanings and create better informed outcomes;

8. Consult with appropriate government or industry partners to assist with information gathering.

Note these processes are also useful for creating a detailed master planning process for a more contained area, and may be useful starting points for continuing the existing and future master planning processes.

9.5 Detailed character assessment

Urban character can be considered in detail under the following general criteria and values, when identifying and describing character:

- Lot size
- Site coverage, with sufficient pervious areas to support landscape
- Building height
- Building bulk and scale, including form and articulation treatments to mitigate bulk and integrate with landscape
- Building orientation and siting including front, side and rear setbacks
- Architectural styles
- Materials and detailing
- Landscaping and vegetation, including canopy trees, plantings and verge treatments
- Front boundary treatment
- Car parking structures
- Public realm such as street trees, road reserves and nature strips
The Local Character and Place Guideline provides the following diagram to indicate the factors influencing the understanding of place. This diagram is also a useful tool in understanding the urban morphology of place.

**UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT**

**SOCIAL**  
Population and people  
Culture and community  
History and heritage  
Politics and governance  
Place sentiment

**ENVIRONMENTAL**  
Climate  
Landform and landscape  
Ecology and wildlife  
Hydrology and waterbodies  
Human impacts  
Built environment

**ECONOMIC**  
Employment and income  
Industry and business  
Resources and value  
Investment and tenure

**URBAN DESIGN ELEMENTS**

**LAYOUT**  
The spatial arrangement of public space, services and connective infrastructure including:  
Movement networks  
Open space networks (green corridors, waterways, landforms)  
Utilities and services

**DIVISION**  
The subdivision of land and designation of its use including:  
Land parcels  
Ownership  
Land use zoning (density, building height, site coverage)

**BUILT FORM**  
Building types, structures, and their uses including:  
Street profiles  
Building envelopes  
Orientation  
Function  
Interfaces  
Landscaped area

**DESIGN VARIABLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALITY</th>
<th>QUANTITY</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>DISTRIBUTION</th>
<th>DIVERSITY</th>
<th>ACCESS + CONNECTION</th>
<th>MATERIALS + DETAILS</th>
</tr>
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Figure 22. How factors influence an understanding of place. Source: Local Character and Place Guideline, NSW Government, 2019, p.57

Some of these elements will be described in the Local Character Statement to identify the residential character of the villages.

**9.6 Managing change of character**

Respecting character does not mean preventing change. Rather, respect for the character of a neighbourhood means that the development should be designed in response to its context. Determining the right approach and the design response will depend on the features and characteristics identified in the neighbourhood and on the site. Respecting neighbourhood character does not mean mimicry or pattern book design, or limiting the
scope of design interpretation and innovation. Instead, it means designing the development in response to the features in that area.

The Blue Mountains planning framework is required to plan for some growth, although this is minimal compared to other Council areas in Sydney, due to our environmental constraints. These are limiting factors such as bushfire, slope, riparian corridors and other environmentally sensitive land. However, the local planning framework must still address the potential for some degree of change in appropriate areas. The foundation for these changes is consistent with larger national and global trends and includes:

- encouragement of urban consolidation,
- higher land-use densities near public transport routes,
- the need to improve housing choice,
- the better use of existing infrastructure and
- the provision of ecologically sustainable development.

These types of objectives are included in Blue Mountains’ local planning system and have been for decades, but also appear in the State government’s district and regional plans. They reflect a particular contemporary focus on current social, economic and environmental issues. In the Mountains there is an ongoing and particular environmental need to contain urban sprawl and protect our sensitive natural environment, which means any desired growth should occur in town centres, where there is accessibility to services. Social changes reflect an increased need for smaller dwellings and apartments to allow our population to age in place in dynamic community environments. The adaptation of older commercial and industrial buildings, and improvements to infrastructure and public spaces in town centres, increases our economic viability and can, with good design, create attractive and desirable places.

Character can make enormous contributions to the success of the above objectives; character is reflected in the physical environment of the places we inhabit; it is what we see around us. The broader social and economic conditions that drive the above objectives will impact character and can change the physical character of an area, sometimes in a short space of time, for example, a large new development within the streetscape. Character is therefore an important part of the broader strategic context and must be planned for. Council can influence the nature and extent of development that can occur in order to achieve a desired neighbourhood character outcome for an area (provided it retains the ability to assess and condition new development). It is important that Council, the community and developers of land have a common understanding about the key features
of neighbourhood character so that the design response addresses key features and respects existing or preferred local character.

The Government Architect’s Office (GAO) has provided the document ‘Better Placed’ to help inform and assist all those involved in the design process or the development assessment process about the importance of good design, not just how a place looks, but how it works and feels for people. It represents the overarching policy that outlines the State government’s position on design. ‘Better Placed’ has seven key objectives for good design, the first being ‘better fit’. ‘Good design is informed by and derived from its location, context and social setting. It is place-based and relevant to and resonant with local character, heritage and communal aspirations. It also contributes to evolving and future character and setting’ (page 36). The document is available here:

At this time of increased focus on strategic planning, local government must continue to navigate and position its relationship with State policies and State key directions, with both those that could potentially threaten our local character, and those that seek to assist and support it.

9.7 Master planning

Master planning is a long-term planning strategy that informs a document that provides a conceptual layout to guide future growth and development. It includes making connections between buildings, social settings, and their surrounding environments.

Master planning can assume some or all of these roles:

- Develop a phasing and implementation schedule and identify priorities for action
- Act as a framework for regeneration and attract private sector investment
- Conceptualize and shape the three-dimensional urban environment
- Define public, semiprivate, and private spaces and public amenities
- Determine the mix of uses and their physical relationship
- Engage the local community and act as builder of consensus

[From the World Bank website: https://urban-regeneration.worldbank.org/node/51]

Council has a master planning program to renew and key strategic town centres in the Blue Mountains. The current focus is on progression of the masterplans for Springwood and Blaxland town centres, through making necessary changes to relevant planning controls.
Master planning for each village could include public domain improvements such as:

- Improved landscaping;
- Promotion of greenways;
- Development of accessibility;
- Removal of unnecessary signs and billboards;
- Promotion of good graphics and signage;
- Improvement of street crossings;
- Provision of well-designed bus shelters;
- Improvement of streetscapes by removal of unnecessary and unsightly shopfront cladding;
- Provision of well-designed street furniture, bins, seats, etc.
- Improved street name signs;
- A coordinated village colour scheme;
- Further development of heritage aspects.

In the past (in earlier studies and strategic documents) it has been suggested that brochures could be prepared for individual towns, with a short history, character context for each area, and advice specific to each locality (vegetation, climate, notable buildings, streetscape values). This recommendation will be encapsulated in the village-by-village approach which forms the basis for the Local Character Statement, and will provide a major contribution to the Local Strategic Planning Statement. There is potential to further enhance the identity and character of Blue Mountains villages through promotion and education, heritage interpretation, coordinated design, and continuing high quality master planning.

**Conclusion**

This section has looked at the existing protections for local character in the Mountains, and suggests a variety of toolkits and roadmaps to approach the evolving character of some of our towns, where some change is envisaged. These tools and roadmaps should contribute to informing the future direction of Council’s ongoing approach to identifying, protecting and shaping the character of our towns and villages.
10. Analysis of character areas and types

This section investigates the residential and town centre character of the Blue Mountains to consider:

- The success of the residential character protections provided through LEP 2005 (the Living-Conservation and Living-Bushland Conservation zones, escarpment Protected Areas, and the Period Housing Areas), and how these areas are currently being affected by development;
- The need to provide guidance on secondary dwellings and dual occupancy development to ensure built and landscape character is retained;
- The need to provide clearer direction on character considerations, including how to define and protect a residential ‘Mountains’ character in our towns and villages;
- The need to provide a medium-density housing guideline to express desired architectural forms, materials and details that would protect our village character and identity within new development.

10.1 Residential character

10.1.1 Analysis of existing Residential Character Types

This section reviews the sample areas that formed part of the Residential Character Study 2002, to determine whether these sample areas have retained their values over the last 15 years under the current provisions and objectives. Note the objectives and provisions for the residential character areas identified in the Residential Character Study 2002 were contained in LEP 2005, and then translated into LEP 2015. No changes were made to objectives and development standards as part of the translation.

The six residential character types identified in the Residential Character Study of 2002 established the following protections:

1. The Living-Conservation zone of LEP 2005, for areas identified as Visually Significant Streetscapes, Garden Settings and Dominant Landscape Settings;
2. Period Housing Areas (originally Areas of Older Housing, with many now new heritage conservation areas in LEP 2015) for areas with significant historic dwelling types;
3. Protected Areas – Escarpment Areas for those areas identified as Visually Prominent Areas.
4. The Living-Bushland Conservation zone of LEP 2005, for areas identified as Bushland Dominant Areas.
The 2002 study included a sample map area for most of the six types of residential character areas, to demonstrate numeric relationship with the character themes through lot size, site coverage, setbacks and so on. The sample areas were chosen as they reflected the character qualities of each residential character type. Where a specific area was not identified on a map, the character area was identified by several example streets. Images were included to provide a visual clue to the type of character identified.

Note that in all cases, most lots were already developed with existing earlier housing. Thus the study created character types from existing residential environments.

This section interrogates the original study map areas, images and streets, and makes comparisons between the environments in 2002 and their current character.

The investigation has found that generally most areas have retained their values. The investigation has highlighted the threats to residential character (which are consistent with the themes in Part 8 of this Study) and which parts of the Mountains are experiencing the most impact. Of note is the tendency of the development standards to be pushed to their limits and at times beyond (through development standard variations) in recent development. An example is site coverage; the sample areas for the Residential Character Study in 2002 found site coverages of between 15% and 20%, and in Areas of Older Housing 20% to 25%. The maximum site coverage for residential areas has not changed since 2005; however, it is now common to meet or seek to exceed the 30% and 40% site coverage standards for site coverage. Increases in desired dwelling size require Council’s development standards to ‘work harder’ and cause a reduction in landscape setting. This is reflected in the increased contemporary sizes of dwellings.

**Bushland dominant areas**

**Definition:** Bushland dominant areas are defined as ‘areas dominated by native vegetation’, and ‘an experience essentially linked to the Blue Mountains’. They are the most prevalent residential character type in the Mountains. They contain:

- Native canopy in the streetscape and/or bushland views
- Urban/bushland interface landscapes
- Sympathetic residential development
- A character that contributes to the amenity of the streetscape and is unique to the LGA

**Character:** The areas were identified by low site coverage, deep setbacks and retention of vegetation.
Zoning: These areas became Living – Bushland Conservation in LEP 2005 and were translated to E4 Environmental Living in LEP 2015.

**Figures 23 and 24. Mountain Ash along Queens Road, Leura, and Highland Street, Leura in 2002 – images from original study**

**Development standards of LEP 2005 – Living-Bushland Conservation:**

- Site coverage: 30% or 160sqm <1000sqm lot, and 300-400sqm for >1000sqm lot;
- Front setback: 8 metres or 20% of average setback;
- Vegetation: compensatory planting and revegetation required to mitigate vegetation loss.
- Height: 8m (if in Period Housing Area 6.5m, if in Escarpment Area 5.5m)

**Sample Area 1: Upper Mountains - Katoomba**

**Original analysis:** The original analysis in the Residential Character Study looked at the block in Katoomba (shown in the aerial below), encompassing Garden Street, Carlton Street, Wellington Street and Peckmans Road. The study analysed lot size, site coverage in square metres and percentage, and front setbacks, to demonstrate a low site coverage (average 186 metres or 19%), and a deep setback (average 16 metres).

**Current analysis:** Analysis of the 2016 aerial imagery shows that four of the five remaining vacant lots have been developed since the 1999 aerial in the 2002 Study. The entire block mostly retains a bushland character apart from certain areas where there is less mature tree
canopy (refer image below). Only one lot remains vacant with a current DA for a dwelling. Some newer dwelling developments have removed the bush setting of mature trees, whereas other newer developments have substantially retained them.

New dwellings have a greater site coverage than earlier dwellings, and a lesser setback to the street, confirming a trend for larger dwellings in newer developments, consistent with general trends in residential development (although conforming to the relevant controls). There is also less tree canopy and more formal vegetation in the recent developments. Existing bushland trees have a limited life span, and removal of over-mature trees requires some replacement plantings to maintain cover.

![Image of study area](image)

**Figure 25. Study area for Bushland Dominant Areas in Katoomba in 2016. More recent development shows larger dwelling sizes, less vegetation and less traditional roof tile colours.**

![Images of older dwellings](images)

**Figures 26 and 27. Older dwellings in the study area and their settlings with a strong bushland dominant character to the rear (dense tree canopy) and to the street front. Source: Google Street View 2019**
Figures 28 and 29. Recent development (including alterations and additions) in the study area showing a scope for additional front tree plantings with more formal (hedged) vegetation in frontages. Canopy trees are retained to the rear. Retaining a mix of remnant trees across the site appears a key character element. Source: Google Street View 2019

Sample Area 2: Lower Mountains - Blaxland

Original analysis: The original analysis in the Residential Character Study looked at the block in Blaxland below, encompassing Winnicoopa Road, Baringa Street, Jacaranda Avenue and Koala Road. The study analysed lot size, site coverage in square metres and percentage, and front setbacks, to demonstrate a low site coverage (average 205 metres or 17%), and a deep setback (average 19 metres).

Figure 30. Study area for Bushland Dominant Areas in Blaxland. One new subdivision that will result in some loss of vegetation cover.
Figures 31 and 32. Winnicoopa Road, Blaxland in 2002 – images from original study

Current analysis: Analysis of the 2016 aerial imagery shows that one new battleaxe lot has been created through subdivision. A new dwelling has not been built on the lot yet and there is no application or approval to do so.

The outcome of the subdivision and future new dwelling will result in a loss of vegetation for the development site. Generally however, this sample area has retained its values, despite a few exceptions that have little vegetation on site or have an exotic landscape character.

Visually Prominent Areas (escarpment areas)

Definition: Visually prominent areas are defined as ‘residential areas within close proximity to escarpment areas’, which are important because they represent ‘the identity of the Blue Mountains expressed through the topography of the region’. Therefore it is important that residential areas adjoining escarpment areas are identified and protected from inappropriate development. Visually prominent areas are influence by a range of factors:

- Slope of land from escarpment
- Extent of escarpment
- Proximity of residential areas to escarpment, and
- Range of visibility.

Character: No sample areas or lots were provided for analysis. Instead two maps show hatched areas where escarpment protections are required.

Zoning: These areas became Living – Bushland Conservation in LEP 2005 and were translated to E4 Environmental Living in LEP 2015. Importantly, they are also covered by Protected Area – Escarpment Area protections which have been maintained in the LEP translation and are defined on the LEP maps.
Figures 33 and 34. Gordon Avenue, Blackheath in 2002 – images from original study. Area not assessed in detail in original study.

Development standards of LEP 2005:

For Living-Bushland Conservation:

Site coverage: 30% or 160sqm <1000sqm lot, and 300-400sqm for >1000sqm lot;
Front setback: 8 metres or 20% of average setback;
Vegetation: compensatory planting and revegetation required to mitigate vegetation loss.
Height: 8m (if in Period Housing Area 6.5m, if in Escarpment Area 5.5m)

For Living-Conservation:

Site coverage: 30% or 160sqm <1000sqm lot, and 300-400sqm for >1000sqm lot;
Front setback: 10 metres or 20% of average setback;
Vegetation: established front gardens are to be retained, landscape and character assessment required, detailed landscape plan required
Height: 6.5m, (if in Escarpment Area 5.5m)

Original analysis: While no analysis was undertaken as part of the 2002 Residential Character Study, two example Visually Prominent Areas were identified, as shown on the maps below, indicated by hatching.
Sample Area 1 - Near Ross Crescent and Plateau Parade Blaxland

Figures 35 to 37. Example area map near Ross Crescent and Plateau Parade, Blaxland with aerial comparison

Current analysis: Comparison between the 1999 aerial imagery and the 2016 aerial imagery (both above), indicates there have been many dwelling alterations and additions to substantially increase dwelling sizes; however, the bushland setting has been essentially retained. Building heights have remained generally low apart from a few exceptions, and in most cases allow permeability of views through, around and over dwellings to the bush views at the escarpment beyond.
Local Character Study – Draft
Blue Mountains City Council

Sample Area 2 – Near Kalinda Road, Blaxland

Figures 38 to 40. Example area near Kalinda Road, Bullaburra with aerial comparison

Current analysis: Comparison between the 1999 aerial imagery and the 2016 aerial imagery (both above), suggests that minimal development works or vegetation removal has been undertaken in the area in recent years. Two new dwellings are apparent, with several lots still vacant. Analysis suggests that the slope of the topography makes it necessary to build below road level, and making it unlikely that dwellings are able to reach heights that would obstruct views, with a building height maximum of 5.5 metres.

Garden Setting

Definition: Garden Setting areas are defined as ‘areas that present a unified streetscape characterised by formal and exotic vegetation’, and are mostly found in the Upper Mountains. They have an established aesthetic related to garden culture such as promoted by Paul Sorensen and the use of the Mountains for country estates. They include:

- A legacy of mature vegetation and significant exotic canopy
- A charm which contributes to the image of the Blue Mountains
- Unified streetscapes with exotic garden themes rather than individual garden identification
- Displays of Spring and Autumn colour
- Large lots sizes which allow for significant landscape settings

**Character:** The areas were identified by large block sizes and low site coverage, as well as traditional formal garden theme.

**Zoning:** These areas became Living - Conservation in LEP 2005 and are waiting to be translated into LEP 2015. Note specific lots are not identified as ‘Garden Setting’ within the Living-Conservation zone, which blends three of the residential character types.

*Figures 41 and 42. Leuralla, and Kensett Street, both in Leura in 2002 – images from original study*

**Development standards of LEP 2005 – Living-Conservation:**

- Site coverage: 30% or 160sqm <1000sqm lot, and 300-400sqm for >1000sqm lot;
- Front setback: 10 metres or 20% of average setback;
- Vegetation: established front gardens are to be retained, landscape and character assessment required, detailed landscape plan required
- Height: 6.5m, (if in Escarpment Area 5.5m)
The 2002 Residential Character Study included analysis of two (2) Garden Setting street blocks.

**Sample Area 1: Hume, Dalrymple and Fitzstubbs Avenues, Wentworth Falls**

![Aerial of sample area from 2002 Residential Character Study](image)

**Original analysis:** The street block encompassing Dalrymple Avenue, Hume Avenue and Fitzstubbs Avenue, at Wentworth Falls, was analysed in regard to lot size, site coverage, front setback and the proportion of building to lot frontage. The analysis demonstrated a low site coverage (median 17%), and generous front (median 17m) and side setbacks.

**Current analysis:** Comparison between the 1999 aerial imagery and the 2016 aerial imagery (above), and subsequent targeted review of Council’s approval register, has indicated the approved removal of a large number of radiata pines in the block. This highlights the tension between retaining our mature treed environments and the presence of many radiata pines that are now considered an environmental weed, despite their strong contributions to local landscapes. Further, many radiata pines are over-mature and can be a safety issue.

One site contains large alterations and additions with increased site coverage and reduced front setback, and another has been approved for multi-unit development under the older planning scheme of LEP 4. Vegetation within both street frontages is essentially limited to semi-established hedging. Otherwise, there are minimal changes to the sample area.

**Sample Area 1: Fitzroy St, St Andrews, Northcote and St Georges Road, Leura**
Original analysis: The street block encompassing Northcote Road, St Georges Road, Fitzroy Street and St Andrews Road, at Leura, was analysed in regard to lot size, site coverage, front setback and the proportion of building to lot frontage. The analysis demonstrated a low site coverage (median 17%), and generous front (median 17m) and side setbacks.

Current analysis: Comparison between the 1999 aerial imagery and the 2016 aerial imagery (above), suggests that minimal development works or vegetation removal has been undertaken in the area in recent years, with no noticeable or sizeable changes.

Dominant Landscape Setting

Definition: Dominant Landscape Setting areas are defined as ‘areas where landscaped elements such as vegetation dominate the urban form’. They contain:

- Contributions to the setting of an area through mature exotic or native vegetation
- Landscape which provides a backdrop to development
- Gardens which are less formalised
- Presence of trees overhanging the street and road carriageway
- Plantings in rear gardens which contribute to the canopy cover

Dominant Landscape Setting is particularly important in the Lower Mountains and differentiates the Mountains from the suburbs of Sydney. Glenbrook is the gateway to the Mountains and provides an increase in a vegetated setting. The original study in 2002 noted
the significant threats to character through large lot subdivision and new dwellings with a large site coverage, which remove the canopy cover and erode the dominant landscape setting.

**Character:** The areas were identified by small dwelling sizes, large lot subdivision patterns, and the dominance of vegetation.

**Zoning:** These areas became Living – Conservation in LEP 2005 and have not yet been translated into LEP 2015.

*Figures 45 to 47. York Street, Glenbrook in 2002 – images from original study*

**Development standards of LEP 2005 – Living-Conservation:**

Site coverage: 30% or 160sqm <1000sqm lot, and 300-400sqm for >1000sqm lot;

Front setback: 10 metres or 20% of average setback;

Vegetation: established front gardens are to be retained, landscape and character assessment required, detailed landscape plan required

Height: 6.5m, (if in Escarpment Area 5.5m)
Sample Area – York, Kent, High, and Barnet Streets, Glenbrook

Figure 48. Aerial of sample area from 2002 Residential Character Study

Original analysis: The 2002 Residential Character Study included analysis of a dominant landscape setting street block, encompassing High Street, Barnet Street, York Street and Kent Street, at Glenbrook. The street block was analysed in regard to lot size, site coverage and front setback. The analysis demonstrated a low site coverage (median 18%), and generous front (median 16m). The block analysis demonstrated the importance of large lots in the identification of Dominant Landscape Settings.

Current analysis: Comparison between the 1999 aerial imagery and the 2016 aerial imagery (above), has indicated multiple development application approvals and tree permits for tree removal. Development applications have included several battleaxe subdivisions, alterations and additions, detached studios/garages and swimming pools. Several houses present as two-storey due to large attic accommodation. Most new development has included substantial removal of vegetation. This has critically affected the appearance of the area and is likely to reflect an ongoing trend towards larger more intensive development on similar sites in the area.
Pressure for intensification of development

There are significant challenges maintaining the current development standards, particularly the existing single-storey character, in some areas with a Living-Conservation zoning and associated 6.5m height limit. A number of recent development applications have highlighted the primary issues. Recently in Glenbrook a modest building was proposed to be demolished and replaced with a new two-storey larger dwelling. It was refused by Council due to excessive bulk and scale, including its two-storey nature. Council required any attic accommodation to be visually integrated into a roof form. The refusal was the subject of an appeal in the Land and Environment Court. The primary contention from Council for the refusal was that the proposal was an inappropriate response to the single-storey character and height limits required within the Living-Conservation zone. During the conciliation process, the plans were amended to Council’s satisfaction. The case was a good outcome for the Living-Conservation zone and Council’s consistent application of the Living-Conservation controls, but also highlighted that the design of appropriate forms within the zone, where larger dwellings are desired, is not straightforward, and that further guidelines may be useful.

Tree permits for many properties in the sample area have resulted in some loss of the ‘dominant landscape setting’ considered to be the primary character driver for the area. Since the decade in which LEP 2005 was established, many blocks have become less typical of the primary characteristics of the Living-Conservation zone due to larger houses, increasing density due to subdivision, and loss of mature native trees.
Other recent developments in Glenbrook are similarly reflective of potential threats to the existing and expressed desired future character of the area. This is partly due to increasing development pressure. There is a requirement for houses to be larger, and desire for the inclusion of a second storey. Some of these issues have been discussed under Part 8 Threats to Blue Mountains character.

The single-storey height limit is expressed in the Living-Conservation zone as a 6.5m height limit at the ridge, and a 4.5m height limit at the eaves. This implies that the dwelling will have a pitched roof; however, some applications do not have eaves if designed without a pitched roof, such as a flat roof or low skillion design. Consideration needs to be given to whether Council should impose a requirement for pitched roofs to meet character considerations within character areas such as Period Housing Areas and the Living-Conservation zone. LEP 2015 does not enable a similar provision for an eaves height to be mandated by the LEP.

The objectives of the Living-Conservation are:

(a) To retain and enhance the character of residential areas that are formed by larger allotments and single dwelling houses within a prominent traditional garden setting.

(b) To enhance the landscape character and setting along roads of heritage significance where the road forms a visually significant entrance to a village or a linkage/pathway between major visitor destinations.

(c) To ensure development, including development within adjoining road reserves, retains the prominence of landscape elements and traditional garden settings.

(d) To ensure that established gardens are retained or landscape settings are re-established as part of any development of land, including development involving major alterations and additions.

(e) To allow for a limited range of non-residential land uses where these are conducted in association with a predominantly residential land use and are consistent with the retention of a residential character based on a landscape or open space setting.

Currently the focus of the objectives is almost exclusively on landscape and setting outcomes. It may be useful to review the zone objectives for the Living-Conservation zone (and any translation of the zone into LEP 2015) and include objectives for built form outcomes, as there is clearly a strong relationship between the built form (and associated structures) on any lot and the landscape it can support and maintain. A further issue to consider is the loss of bushland remnant trees once they are beyond their safe useful life.
expectancy. The ongoing loss of remnant eucalypt canopy will change the character of these areas over time unless new eucalypts are planted.

**Visually Significant Streetscapes**

**Definition:** Visually significant streetscapes are defined as ‘important streets that set a tone for an urban area’, and include:

- Traditional main streets with historic associations and an interesting mix of styles
- Scenic tourist routes
- Gateways or entrances to towns

The Great Western Highway has been identified due to the mix of dwellings fronting the Highway and the views, perceptions and experiences it provides as a major route through the Mountains. In the villages, these streetscapes include verge plantings and other landscape features that create a particular identity, such as a garden community or a village atmosphere.

**Character:** The areas were identified by large lots with mature gardens and canopy cover. Higher densities were identified as inappropriate.

**Zoning:** These areas became Living - Conservation in LEP 2005 and have not been translated into LEP 2015.

**Development standards of LEP 2005 – Living-Conservation:**

- Site coverage: 30% or 160sqm <1000sqm lot, and 300-400sqm for >1000sqm lot;
- Front setback: 10 metres or 20% of average setback;
- Vegetation: established front gardens are to be retained, landscape and character assessment required, detailed landscape plan required
- Height: 6.5m, (if in Escarpment Area 5.5m)

**Original analysis:** While no analysis was undertaken as part of the 2002 Residential Character Study in relation to Visually Significant Streetscapes, six (6) example areas were identified.

1. Parts of the Great Western Highway (unspecified)
2. Lucasville Road, Hare Street, and Explorers Road in Glenbrook (mostly Living-Conservation)
3. Oaklands Road, Hazelbrook (partially Living-Conservation)
4. Leura Mall, Leura (mostly Living-Conservation)
5. Falls Road and Blaxland Road, Wentworth Falls;
Current analysis: Comparison between the 1999 aerial imagery and the 2016 aerial imagery suggests that minimal development works or vegetation removal has been undertaken in these areas in recent years. Laneways in Katoomba have undergone some minor changes, including a number of mural projects, particularly the Street Art Walk in Beverly Place, which has been a highly successful intervention into essentially Victorian ‘back of house’ laneways.

The example Visually Prominent Areas encompassing Leura Mall, Leura, and Falls Road and Blaxland Road, Wentworth Falls, are relatively unchanged. These areas include the highly contributory elements of maturing street plantings, including large street trees.
Areas of Older Housing (Period Housing Areas)

Note: These areas were Period Housing Areas between 2005 and 2018, when they became draft heritage conservation areas. They then became new heritage conservation areas in July 2019.

Definition: Areas of Older Housing are defined as ‘residential areas that dominated by housing that pre-dates 1946’, and are present in many villages particularly in the Upper Mountains, where the housing stock often remains largely unchanged since construction. They contain:

- Strong streetscape presentation and character reflecting a mix of architectural periods or a particular architectural period
- Aesthetic appeal
- A living connection to the history of development in the Blue Mountains

These areas required protections from potential demolition of existing housing and other forms of unsympathetic development through alterations and additions. (These areas are now protected under heritage legislation.)

Character: The areas were identified by dominate built form, narrow setbacks, short frontages, no on-site car parking.

Zoning: These areas became overlaid as a type of Protected Area – Period Housing identified in the LEP mapping, and with an LEP clause. Underlying zonings were generally Living-General (now R2 Low Density Residential in LEP 2015), Living-Conservation (not in LEP 2015) or Village-Tourist (now R1 General Residential in LEP 2015). Occasionally zoning is Village-Neighbourhood (now R3 Medium-Density Residential in LEP 2015) or Employment – Enterprise (now IN2 Light Industrial in LEP 2015). The presence of historic housing in the latter two zones is currently being reviewed.

Figures 55 and 56. Walgett Street, Katoomba and Lurline Street, Katoomba in 2002 – images from original study
Development standards of LEP 2005 – Period Housing Areas:

- Site coverage: varies with underlying zone but generally 30% or 40%
- Front setback: varies with underlying zone but generally 8 metres (Village Tourist zone 3 metres)
- Vegetation: dependent on underlying zone, generally either concept or detailed landscape plan and retention of vegetation required
- Height: Specific height controls vary standard zone controls: 6.5m, if in Escarpment Area 5.5m)

Sample Area 1 - Montgomery, Selsdon and Great Western Highway, Mount Victoria

Original analysis: Looked at lot size, site coverage %, front setback, proportion of building to lot frontage. Also within an existing 2005 heritage conservation area.

Current analysis: The existing 2005 heritage conservation area would provide an additional layer of protection in terms of new development. Additionally, several properties in the sample area are heritage items. Comparison between the 1999 aerial imagery and the 2016 aerial imagery shows minimal changes to this area.

Sample Area 2 - Leichhardt, Wentworth, Clan William and Prince George Streets, Blackheath

Original analysis: Looked at lot size, site coverage %, front setback, proportion of building to lot frontage.

Current analysis: Comparison between the 1999 aerial imagery and the 2016 aerial imagery shows minimal changes to this area apart from minor ancillary additions within rear yards.
Period Housing controls protect against demolition of dwellings and this is likely to have been a contributor to consistency in built forms over the intervening years.

**Changing legislation for Period Housing Areas**

Areas of Period Housing (in the circumstances where the land has been incorporated into LEP 2015) are now protected as heritage conservation areas within LEP 2015. Land still zoned as Living-Conservation and remaining in LEP 2005, when also identified as Period Housing Area, will be brought as soon as practicable into LEP 2015 and is planned to also be converted to heritage conservation areas.

**Pressure for intensification of development**

There can be challenges maintaining the current development standards, particularly the existing single-storey character in Period Housing Areas (many now heritage conservation areas) in addition to the issues experienced in the Living-Conservation zone in Glenbrook (see previous section on Dominant Landscape Settings). The Period Housing Area provisions amended the Building Height map layers in LEP 2005 and LEP 2015 to require that generally a single-storey 6.5 metre building height be retained (this maximum building height is generally retained in the new heritage conservation areas). A number of recent development applications have highlighted this issue in former Period Housing Areas. The issue also emerged during the recent public exhibition of the Period Housing Conversion proposal in 2018.

In central South Katoomba, a recent application for alterations and additions to an intact Federation cottage included a two-storey rear addition. The application sought to rely on the exemption clause that allows a two-storey addition where there is an existing two-storey character. However, there were no two-storey forms on either side of the property. The two-storey addition would be visible from the street behind the main ridge, and would overshadow the neighbour’s principal open space. Council asked the applicant to remove the second storey and redesign the plans, seeking to preserve the single-storey presentation from the street. This was done, creating an outcome acceptable to the applicant and Council, and preserving the single-storey character.

In another part of South Katoomba, a second storey addition was proposed to a very small and narrow cottage, visible from the street, as the addition was proposed to spring directly from the central roof ridge of the cottage. The applicant sought to use the exemption clause because there was a two-storey building next door; however, the remainder of the area was single-storey. Council asked the applicant to set back the two-storey section well behind the main cottage, preserving the original cottage roof form. When the two-storey addition was
set back, it could not be seen from the street, and was sufficiently low to meet the 6.5 metre height maximum.

These two examples serve to demonstrate the potential for sympathetically arranging additional bulk and massing to a single-storey modest cottage to preserve streetscape values and achieve a positive outcome for all parties. Further, approving two-storey development in single-storey areas sets a precedent for further approvals, causing an incremental and ongoing loss of the single-storey character over time.

As with the Living-Conservation zone, and the associated character issues related to building height and roof form, consideration needs to be given to whether Council should impose a requirement for pitched roofs and certain roof form outcomes to meet character considerations within character areas such as Period Housing Areas and the Living-Conservation zone.

Conflicts between character (Period Housing Areas/draft heritage conservation areas) and zoning

The recent exhibition of the proposed conversion of the existing Period Housing Areas to heritage conservation areas in 2018, as required by the State government, highlighted a number of zoning conflicts in certain areas in North Katoomba. This were raised by community members during the public exhibition process. They include conflicts between land zoned for industrial use or for medium-density development that is also now within heritage conservation areas that require that contributory dwellings be retained. In the case of industrial lands there is also a 10 metre maximum building height that is inconsistent with the single-storey character of most former Period Housing Areas. This means that new dwellings on vacant lots are able to have up to a three-storey height in those industrial areas. The height limit of 10 metres makes it harder for Council to negotiate a better character outcome with the applicant. In the land zoned for medium-density development the development potential suggested by the zoning could be in conflict with the requirement to retain a centrally-sited single-storey dwelling, giving uncertainty to owners about development potential. It is recommended that further analysis be carried out in regard to the potential development conflicts for those affected lots within areas in North Katoomba.

Conclusion

This section of the Study has identified, assessed and analysed the success of particular past character protections in the local planning framework, and shown that this long and sustained focus on character has contributed to the retention of those character values, and thus the desirability and integrity of many Blue Mountains villages and residential areas.
The character types have generally retained their identified and desired character in the sample areas that were highlighted in the 2002 Residential Character Study. There is concern that the character is changing in the Lower Mountains, particularly Glenbrook, where considerable development pressure exists to demolish or enlarge modest dwellings, due to substantial rises in property values. This is resulting in significantly larger dwellings, where a two-storey character is desired, but compacted into large attic additions (where two-storey is not permitted in lots within the Living-Conservation zone). To accommodate the larger dwellings and ancillary development there has been a resultant loss of mature tree canopy and bushland setting. It may be that these character areas require review.

Incremental loss of trees is a common theme across a number of the residential areas. In the Upper Mountains, many radiata pines are now appropriate to remove, due to age and inappropriateness of species. This will however impact character values and consideration should be given to how to sustain an urban tree canopy. The 10/50 RFS Vegetation Clearing Code may also have impacted upon the character of some areas through loss of trees and vegetation allowed to be removed as exempt development.

There are minor incremental increases in density, due to subdivision and battleaxe development (also resulting in some loss of tree canopy).

Currently, the Living-Conservation zone, an important zoning mechanism to protect local character, has not been brought across into the current LEP 2015, and remains deferred land still operating under LEP 2005. This raises concerns across a range of related issues that impact character. The zone should be resolved as soon as possible, to bring the local planning framework into a holistic and aligned system under LEP 2015 that allows for the retention of the desired character.

Areas of former Period Housing have remained protected as new heritage conservation areas. Where Period Housing lots remain in LEP 2005, due to being also within the Living-Conservation zone, these lots require translation into LEP 2015 as heritage conservation areas as soon as possible to ensure ongoing protections.

**Actions and recommendations**

The following actions have arisen from the investigations within this section of the study.

- Review industrial and medium-density zonings where in draft heritage conservation areas in North Katoomba;
- Resolve the translation of the Living-Conservation zone in LEP 2015;
- Resolve the associated remaining Period Housing Areas where also within the Living-Conservation zone;
• Consider an Urban Tree Canopy strategy to map and monitor tree canopy, to create a policy for succession planting and retention of urban trees.

10.1.2 Residential ‘Mountains style’

This section introduces a range of existing residential building types that set the groundwork for a more detailed future investigation of a ‘Mountains’ typology or style. These are not necessarily in heritage conservation areas (although character older homes are likely to be), or in the Living-Conservation zone/Period Housing Areas. The aim is to look at design responses to the Mountains environment in terms of materials and details, and landscape outcomes.

The work of investigating a ‘Mountains style’ in the future should build on earlier work, such as DCP No. 10, which provided a broad analysis of various character influences on building outcomes.

What all the layers shown in the subsequent sections generally have in common is:

• a modest scale of building on a generous lot size (typically a traditional quarter acre block), or a generous ratio of garden to each dwelling,
• recessive or context-responsive forms and materials, and
• a resulting site coverage that allows a vegetated garden setting.

Historic residential areas (1800s to circa-1946 dwellings)

Existing patterns of development in historic residential areas of town centres are layered, sometimes with a complexity derived from many layers in one area or street. Significant areas that reflect this pattern are in many, mostly upper Mountains, towns, although the lower Mountains towns such as Glenbrook, Blaxland, Warrimoo and Springwood also have significant layers of older cottages.

Early Victorian, Federation and Inter-War buildings (c.1890-c.1945) are generally heritage significant, and many in town centre historic neighbourhoods have been incorporated into heritage conservation areas.
Figures 59 and 60. Traditional Federation and Inter-War cottages and bungalows are more prevalent in the Upper Mountains. There is a strong aesthetic of timber ‘stick’ construction – pickets, weatherboards, battens, fascias, framing and brackets.

Figures 61 and 62. Glenbrook has more relaxed and casual landscaping and settings for its older cottages. Despite the more natural bushland setting, the ‘house in a garden setting’ is retained. This type of street landscape is more typical of the Mid and Lower Mountains.

Figures 63 and 64. Vegetated settings on generous lot sizes; the house is not dominant, but is nestled in the mature landscape.
Heritage or traditional colours are warm and based on natural, earthy tones harmonious with a green landscape setting.

**Post-War infill layers and later project home types**

Distributed amongst these more historic buildings is a Post-War layer (c.1945-1960s) of modest or austere brick or fibro cottages, and also a 1970s-1980s layer of brick and concrete tiled project homes. These may or may not be in a heritage conservation area; many will not be. There are significant numbers of more modest, later-era dwellings throughout the Mountains. A key feature is the modest size of dwellings as apparent from the street.

New dwellings can replicate this context by breaking up dwelling envelopes into smaller modules, particularly where visible. Another feature is the often deeper setbacks on larger lots, creating room to locate the dwelling within a landscape of depth and complexity, facilitated by retaining and/or installing large plantings to front and rear gardens, as shown in the photos below.
Figures 69 and 70. Post-War dwellings retained the warm colours of heritage buildings. Windows are bigger and more complex which adds interest to the elevations. Forms remain derivative of historic forms. Houses are still essentially single-storey and responsive to the topography in terms of position and utilising slope.

Figures 71 and 72. Post-War and project homes can present a modest vernacular based on simplified traditional forms (left), or express a more individual or modern flair (right). The landscaped vegetated setting around the dwelling preserves the ‘modesty’ of the house presentation.

Figures 73 and 74. Project homes from the 1970s and 1980s often used brown roof tiles and unpainted brickwork. These are recessive and allow the generous garden setting to create cohesion across the streetscape. There are many examples in Wentworth Falls, which has a significant later (1970s-1980s) layer of development.
Residential infill has historically been an enriching process, with houses being constructed in a range of styles but maintaining the siting and size traditions of the street, or creating gardens with a similar level of screening. However this pattern is changing, and is discussed in more detail under the threats to residential character in Section 8 of this study.

Figures 75 and 76. Many residential areas in the Living-Conservation zone have a transitional landscape, being a mix of remnant native trees and a garden understory. This sympathetic mixed landscape character is a major aesthetic asset to the mountains residential environments, protected through the zone objectives.

**Bushland settings**

Many residential areas now zoned E4 Environmental Living have a dominant bushland setting. These types of areas were identified in the Residential Character Study of 2002 as ‘Dominant Bushland Setting’ areas/types. Due to the traditionally modest size and scale of these dwellings, and the retention of surrounding natural vegetation, these dwellings types express a ‘Mountains style’ partially due to their concealed presentation.

Figures 77 and 78. Modest dwellings in a bushland setting in environmentally sensitive areas with a dominance of the natural environment. Houses are nestled in the landscape and constructed of natural and recessive colours and forms, with generous front setbacks.
A ‘Mountains’ style

Note, this section is only intended as a basic consideration of some factors that may contribute to a Mountains identity. Further investigation would be required to define the topic more clearly, and would involve a more rigorous analysis, including a comparative analysis with other relevant places, the gathering and analysis of local data, and further literature review.

The literature review and recent consultation suggested that there is in the community a commonly understood idea of the ‘Mountains’ cottage’ or ‘Mountains style’ as a residential building type, without clarity about what this means, and whether it is a typology distinct from heritage and landscaping features. The development of a ‘Mountains style’ has traditionally referred to ‘a house within a garden setting’ according to the literature review. The house is generally a modest dwelling, surrounded by a mixed setting of exotic gardens amongst established mature trees and/or remnant bushland canopy. Consultation resulted in associations with the following diverse words to describe character: cottage, gardens, bushy, brick, single, large (house or lot?), diverse, old, green, period style, modern, nature, attractive and free-standing. Period style was the most common theme.

Part of the Mountains appeal, particularly for tourists to the Upper Mountains, is the sense of escape from the ‘hustle and bustle’ of the City. The Upper Mountains is still considered a ‘get-away’ location. This can be a vision or even an ideology of an associated simplicity, and is related to dwelling types such as the simple cottage form or the ‘cabin within the woods’ (reflective of an absorption within, and appreciation of the dominance of the wider landscape). These typologies are appealing as a point of difference for visitors, who may live in vastly different dwelling types and environments.

The ‘character cottage’ is part of this ‘mythology’ of cottages and cabins (which can also be identified with small rural dwelling types) in mountainous environments. ‘The ‘log cabin’ is set at a relatively high elevation in a scenic setting, and is removed physically from the larger community’ [Rees, 2014, p.58]. This trope or ideal exists commonly in European cultures, particularly in Scandinavian countries such as Germany, Norway and Sweden. ‘The mountains’ can be viewed symbolically as a place of ‘wild nature’, a place of traversal - ascent, descent, lingering at striking sights, weathering a storm in a tent or cabin’ (Ireton and Schaumann, 2012). The permanent settlement of those places creates a tension that should be respected, in favour of deferral to the prominence of nature upon ‘the Mountain’. The modest cabin in the woods represents a hungering for the moderation and simplicity of an idealised earlier way of life. Note that the trope of the ‘log cabin’ has translated well to the Blue Mountains; however, the ‘chalet’ as a mountain dwelling type has not, likely due to the
lack of a true alpine environment (such as we associate with the Snowy Mountains or Thredbo).

Contemporary concepts cluster around this idea of small dwellings, such as ‘tiny houses’, cabins in the woods, shipping container housing and similar concepts. These houses seek a vernacular of simplicity that builds upon architectural and building ideas in the popular imagination in the 1960s and 1970s including yurts, mud brick housing, geodesic domes and so on, where people longed for alternative ways of living, and connection with the landscape. As life becomes increasingly complex and busy, the simplicity of a cabin in the woods has become an icon of a farmer, idealised way of life. Our tourism and destination management, as well our character protection mechanisms, should address the resonance of these images as reflective of a human need that can be utilised to create and enhance private and public spaces.

The idea of ‘modest’ cottages in the Blue Mountains is reflective of the social and economic conditions under which such dwellings have been built: smaller historic worker’s cottages, bungalows with shady verandahs, modest 70s project homes, holiday houses, and so on. Land in the Mountains has been typically more affordable than Sydney.

Older houses from the Victorian, Federation and Inter-War eras are considered to have charm and character through their authenticity and simplicity. They evoke nostalgia and a sense of cosiness (amplified in the upper Mountains by the harsher climate and distance from the city). Later houses from the austere Post-War period remained modest, and many 60s and 70s houses were also generally modest in scale and subservient to or respectful of their landscape environment.

Common building materials are traditional timber weatherboards, fibro panels, or timber logs (lightweight materials), and also later dark, recessive brown brickwork and tiles. The Blue Mountains remains quite unique in its urban built form patterns; the historic town areas are remarkably intact overall, with a mosaic of layers of periods with consistent sizes and scales, with later layers from the pre-1990 era mostly recessive and not competing visually with the older buildings.

The reputation of the Mountains as a place of ‘peaceful escape’ for residents and visitors is part of what drives the attractiveness of the Mountains as a place to live, and a place to stay for visitors. It would require some of the following criteria to be met: that lot sizes allow sufficient space between dwellings for privacy (visual and aural), that dwellings remain well-separated from each other, and that vegetation screens, encloses, shades and diverts views and spaces. This can be expressed in new dwellings through a visual simplicity of forms and materials and a balance of site coverage that allow the landscape to express itself around
the building. Landscaping outcomes are also of course a key factor in retaining a Mountains style, and the appropriate species and design for Mountains gardens is a necessary ongoing conversation.

The community is understandably committed to retaining the simpler and relaxed quality of earlier housing types and settings, which are physical representations of human occupation of the land in a less intrusive and dominating way, allowing nature to filter through and the broader landscape to remain dominant.

It should be noted that there are other threads of residential settlement in the Mountains that do not relate to ‘modest’ housing. They include large hotels and guesthouses, wealthy country retreats and estates, and statements of individual creative expression (for example, various Tudor-inspired buildings, castle-inspired buildings, an oast house etc.). Despite this, these other residential threads or types have often included significant and at times extensive garden settings within which to set the buildings. The key identifying factor is again the dominant presence of the landscape in Mountains settlement.

As noted, this section is only intended to introduce the concept of a Mountains style as a potentially useful concept for identity and place-making. Further investigation would be required, which would form the background to the development of design guidelines for residential buildings. These guidelines would be located with the Blue Mountains Development Control Plan (DCP), and would respond to the existing content in the DCP, and the seminal work of earlier DCP 10.

**Landscapes and streets with a ‘Mountains style’**

The ‘Mountains style’ of dwelling mostly relies deeply on the landscaped, vegetated or garden setting, as previously noted. This was expressed in the Residential Character Study 2002, and the Living-Conservation and Living-Bushland Conservation zones which evolved from that Study. Mountains towns and villages have a particular and distinctive landscape character, whether ‘native’ bushland or exotic gardens of European trees and cottage garden-style shrubs, or a mixture. Some gardens are distinctive because of the mixture of native and exotic which can be casual and picturesque, whilst other gardens are more formal with ‘unified’ plantings and a geometric layout. Other lots have no garden as it has not been created or maintained, or been removed, however do not preclude the possibility of a garden due to available setting around the house.

Many streetscapes in the Mountains are also distinctive, due to a range of factors. Examples of a variety of streetscapes and garden settings are illustrated in the images below, to provide a visual guide to identifying distinctive Mountains residential landscape character.
Many streets and roads create the impression of being ‘on the Mountain’; either through distant views of Sydney or district bushland, rolling topography of hills, bends and gullies, or dramatic cool-climate landscapes. Lower Mountains streets generally contain more natural bushland and more informal plantings. Upper Mountains streets generally contain more exotic species and formal plantings.

Mountains streets do not generally contain the same street tree species as Sydney suburbs due to locality and climate differences. Bushland and cool climate landscapes often predominate, particularly in the cooler upper Mountains where there are streets with significant and distinctive street tree plantings such as London plane trees. Due to climatic differences within the Blue Mountains and also compared to Sydney, species selection needs to be appropriate to the local climate and also consider environmental appropriateness and avoid environmental weeds or invasive species.

Figures 79 and 80. Tidy bullnose brick kerbs and street verges, underground power lines and distant views of the Cumberland plain distinguish Lapstone.

Figures 81 and 82. Soft verges, generous road widths and remnant eucalypts in Glenbrook.
Figures 83 and 84. Soft verges, lane-like streets and leafy greenery in Warrimoo.

Figures 85 and 86. Mature exotic trees and low-density dwellings with generous setbacks and large gardens give the impression of a country town in Springwood.

Figures 87 and 88. A historic property with a character garden, left, and right, a mix of mature eucalypts and conifers dominate a heavily vegetated streetscape, both in Hazelbrook.
Figures 89 and 90. Lawson has a very pleasing mix of character dwellings in a series of informal and picturesque settings, lending the residential areas much ‘country charm’.

Figures 91 to 94. Above left, radiata pine groves dominate many parts of the mid and upper Mountains. Above right, formal line plantings of deciduous and conifer trees create distinctive streetscapes in Leura. Bottom left, mixtures of exotic species in Leura create a highly significant cool-climate cultural landscape. Bottom right, many streets contain exceptional views of the wider landscape forming a backdrop to streetscapes.
Figures 95 and 96. Katoomba’s historic town areas are higher density, but are punctuated by significant exotic specimens and rows of conifers.

Figures 97 and 98. The hilly topography allows many dramatic views of the escarpment and the sense of a hilltop village in Katoomba.

Figures 99 and 100. The varied expressions of deciduous trees in Blackheath, as a green veil.
Retaining residential area values

The residential areas of the Mountains are now mostly developed. Large new subdivisions are very rare, and most of the new dwellings in the Mountains are incremental single new dwellings on remaining vacant lots. The most critical issue for new residential dwellings is therefore one of context, as new dwellings are generally considered ‘infill’. Buildings without good contextual fit are one of the threats to the Blue Mountains built character and landscape values, which are both sensitive and of high local value.

Part B3 Character and Design of the Blue Mountains Development Control Plan (DCP) 2015 provides section B3.2 Single dwelling design considerations to assist with generating a design process that responds to the Blue Mountains context.

Conclusion

The residential ‘Mountains style’ is an area worthy of further detailed investigation and study, to inform clearer design guidelines on best practice and desired future character of the residential areas of our towns and villages. Note environmental considerations are not discussed here, but are also critical considerations in terms of siting, pervious area, provision of services, etc.

The most important aspects of the ‘Mountains style’ are usually the vegetated, garden or dominant landscape setting to dwellings, whatever their size or significance. The more characteristic dwellings in the Mountains are generally of a design and detail that differentiates them from the styles of Sydney housing; again the key component in their success is their deference to the broader landscape and context, allowing the cultural landscapes and natural features of the area to remain dominant and enclosing.

The tension between the sublime nature of the Blue Mountains landscape – the grandest aspects of nature, the escarpments, bushfires, storms – and those structures dwelling within it, deserves recognition through considered design, which is necessarily required to be embedded within a highly contextual design response.

Actions and recommendations

The following actions have arisen from the investigations within this section of the study.

- Undertake further investigation of the residential building styles of the Mountains’ villages;
- Create a residential design guideline that includes advice on forms, materials, details as well as contextual considerations for architecture and landscape.
10.1.3 Creating a policy for secondary dwellings

The permissibility to build a secondary dwelling in a large back yard could be a positive concept for increasing the number of smaller dwellings available in the Mountains without a loss of subdivision pattern and streetscape values. This has appeal in the Mountains, where lot sizes are large and can support a secondary dwelling (permitted to be generally a maximum of 60 square metres), provided important tree canopies and streetscape values are retained.

Secondary dwellings is a term that has replaced the term ‘granny flat’ in New South Wales, and refers to a similar type of dwelling that can be attached or detached to the principal dwelling.

The introduction of secondary dwellings is consistent with current trends that reflect contemporary fascination with simplified living, whether ‘tiny houses’, simple ‘getaway’ dwellings, or spaces for retreat (men’s sheds, men’s caves, parent retreats, teenager retreat, artists or writers studios and retreats). Secondary dwellings can provide smaller and simplified residential accommodation for a family member or tenant.

Secondary dwellings are allowed in many zones in the LGA, including business, residential, rural, industrial and environmental zones. Secondary dwellings are also covered under the State government’s SEPP (State Environmental Planning Policy) Affordable Rental Housing 2009. The SEPP is consistent with the Blue Mountains LEP 2015 relevant provisions, but is relevant only to residential zones.

Currently Blue Mountains planning provisions do not provide objectives and controls for secondary dwellings, other than the LEP requirement that any secondary dwelling be a maximum of 60 square metres or 25% of the dwelling’s floor area whichever is greater, (ref. Clause 5.4(9) of LEP 2015).

The SEPP Affordable Rental Housing 2009 provides in Schedule 1 development standards for secondary dwellings. These standards relate to calculations of lot size, site coverage, floor area, building heights, setbacks from boundaries, as well as building articulation, privacy, landscaping, and excavation. The SEPP does not contain any explicit character controls. Further objectives and controls that address character could be included in Council’s Development Control Plan, consistent and supplementary to these standards.

Conclusion

This study has identified that there are no character controls for the design and construction of secondary dwellings in the LGA. There may be character considerations for secondary
dwellings in some areas, such as within heritage conservation areas, the Living-Conservation zone and possibly further areas, subject to review and identification.

**Actions and recommendations**

The following actions have arisen from the investigations within this section of the study.

- Undertake an investigation into the requirements and future policy for the design and construction of secondary dwellings where affected by character considerations.

### 10.2 Town centre character

The Blue Mountains urban environments are low-key and low-scale compared to the high density living of large cities. Despite this, urban design issues are still of critical importance in town centres, where there are places of higher density and greater community atmosphere.

Redevelopment and renewal of parts of our town centres over time will likely include some additional growth. This approach is driven by the principle of urban consolidation, one of the aims of which is to reduce expansion on the fringes of urban areas. This is consistent with other Council policies to limit environmental impacts to natural areas. Global trends, in cities particularly, are towards urban consolidation as means of creating liveable and efficient urban environments. Another relevant factor to urban consolidation is changing social demographics, with more people living in smaller or single households, and an increasingly ageing population.

Urban consolidation and renewal of town centre buildings and areas will see changes in town centres that will impact upon town character. This requires careful consideration and management of change to ensure our towns and villages retain the look and feel that reinforces our local unique identity. Master planning programs are the ideal mechanism to consider any town centre character changes holistically.

The community has expressed the desire for both the protection of heritage and character as well as some development of and improvements to town centres, and also increased housing options. It will be necessary to manage development and provide an appropriate balance between growth and preservation.

The previous section of this study provided a toolkit and roadmap for the identification and management of character; this section considers the need for good design in town centres in the Mountains that may experience some change, and the challenges for maintaining town character.
Council has already implemented many strategies for town centre character preservation, most importantly the precinct objectives and controls for town centre management which were created for LEP 2005 and have now been translated into LEP 2015 and DCP 2015. These are contained within:

- Part 7 of the LEP and the accompanying Built Character Map of the LEP, and
- Part G of the DCP.
- Part B3 Character and Design in the DCP provides more general guidelines for good urban design.

A review of town centre precincts could be appropriate due to several factors:

- A number of precincts have now been developed since the precinct provisions were prepared, for example, the Cultural Centre precinct in Katoomba.
- Other small precincts were established for medium-density housing, and have not seen that type of development taken up over the last 15 years.
- Some precincts could be reviewed to provide more clarity about the key planning considerations and where existing precincts may be covered by existing heritage mechanisms, for example, the Hydro Majestic in Medlow Bath.

It is recommended that in the medium-term the town centre precincts be reviewed and updated in line with current opportunities and desired future town character outcomes.

**Town centre typologies and medium-density housing typologies**

The community has recently responded to consultation about housing and character. The responses included an expressed strong preference for any intensification of development to reflect local values and not look like ‘anywhere’. This has been a consistent theme through all community consultation, as identified earlier in this study, that the Mountains retain its own unique identity. There was also an expressed desire for housing choice in the form of smaller houses and/or smaller gardens. This could be realised in a variety of different housing typologies, whether apartments, townhouses/villas or smaller houses on smaller lots. More detailed investigations into these building typologies could clarify how these buildings types could look in a Mountains setting, to reflect a localised character and atmosphere.

There is a perception that character cannot coexist with growth or development; however some change is often desirable. What is important is that those elements or parts that are considered highly reflective of desirable character are kept.

It is not unusual for growth areas to be identified at locations that have an established and valued character, such as town centres, which initially appears to represent a conflict in objectives. In the Mountains some of our town centres require renewal and it may be
possible to provide smaller, denser housing types around these areas where there is accessibility to services, without losing overall character. The key is for new designs to be highly responsive to the context; this includes heights, density, streetscape rhythms and patterns, and roof forms amongst other things. Imitation is not required, rather interpretation and relationship between new and old.

Character locations can accommodate increases in density and alternative building forms and materials; however, good outcomes tend to be dependent on good quality design and construction. There needs to be an ongoing discussion and informed engagement about the potential positive relationship between character and growth, to the degree that the community accepts some growth is desirable.

In town centres where there is a demand for more affordable, diverse housing, the issue of design responses to medium-density housing opportunities becomes critical. The natural location for medium-density housing is in the town centres, which are central and accessible locations. Community feedback so far has indicated a level of support for this approach, and it is a commonly understood urban design response to access services and transport. A higher density of buildings requires more sophisticated design responses as building at a denser scale is more challenging, and requires consideration of the appropriate visual and architectural language.

With this in mind, it is important to consider that many our town centres do have an enviable character and atmosphere. Whether small or large, a significant number of our towns are defined by a historic atmosphere of old buildings, and a compact and contained town centre of a few streets of retail shops laid out in a traditional pattern. The larger villages of Glenbrook, Springwood, Hazelbrook, Lawson, Wentworth Falls, Leura, Katoomba, Blackheath, and Mount Victoria have areas of distinctive and appealing character. This should be reflected in the Local Character Statement.

The Blue Mountains is not simply cottages in landscaped settings. The town centres contain buildings of substantial size and scale, many of which are historic in nature. These include the early inns and hotels, later guesthouses, boarding houses and holiday rentals that were accessible to the transport and services of the town. Many are of significant height and density, and yet are highly attractive, well-designed and functional buildings. Analysis of the successes of older buildings, in terms of their plan layouts, materials, roof forms and other details is a useful beginning in the consideration of how to make taller and/or larger contemporary architecture that is suitable to the Mountains. This does not preclude the addition of contemporary requirements that ensure amenity and servicing to current standards.
Figures 101 and 102. Existing accommodation in Katoomba includes multiple storey buildings such as Federation guesthouses (left) and Inter-War apartment buildings (right. These buildings demonstrate that taller buildings can have character and appeal.

Figures 103 and 104. Newer medium-density development can be responsive to traditional forms thereby retaining a connection with the context of older buildings and Mountains character. These two examples are in Springwood.

Council has already made some preliminary investigations into the desirable characteristics of medium-density development in the Mountains. This is reflected in Part B3 of the Blue Mountains Development Control Plan 2015 (DCP 2015), which sets out guidelines for medium-density residential development in Part B3.1.4. It is recommended that these guidelines are enhanced with further detail in regard to architectural forms, details, proportions and so on.

A number of good examples of medium-density development exist, particularly in the Lower Mountains, in Springwood and Blaxland, which were analysed for developing the principles included in Part B3 of the DCP. Note this part of the DCP only applies to areas identified as specific precincts on the Built Character Map of LEP 2015 and managed by Part 7 of LEP 2015 Development in villages, and Part G Locality Management of the DCP. These precincts are also subject to the Design Excellence clause of the LEP, Clause 6.19, which requires a
high level of urban and architectural design. This part of the DCP is under-utilised, particularly as its application is limited to only the areas specified. Significant urban development occurs regularly outside of these specified precincts which should also be subject to design excellence requirements, consideration of character and context, and urban design principles to achieve highest quality outcomes for our villages.

Conclusion

There is scope to expand and improve upon the existing DCP guidelines for medium-density residential development. Further study should consider the architectural and urban design outcomes that are desirable, in order to promote the enhancement of existing village environments and the development of a distinctive village style of housing appropriate to the Mountains character. The level of detail can include guides to forms, layouts, proportions, materials, details, colours and other architectural elements.

Actions and recommendations

The following actions have arisen from the investigations within this section of the study.

• Undertake further investigation into appropriate town centre housing typologies (apartments, townhouses, villas etc.) in terms of building heights, envelopes and forms, landscaping potential, and materials, details and typologies for architectural expression of a Mountains style in medium-density housing and mixed-use development outcomes. This could include studies of specific areas and contexts. This work would build on and support existing and future town master planning processes.

• Create a medium-density design guideline that includes advice on forms, materials, details as well as contextual considerations for architecture and landscape, following the investigation above.

• Review the town centre precincts that were created for LEP 2005, and update as necessary to reflect current opportunities and desired future character outcomes.
11. Local Character Statement

The primary short-term outcome of this Study is to assist with the preparation of the Local Character Statement for the Blue Mountains local government area, which is part of the suite of strategic planning documents required by the State government, the primary document being the Local Strategic Planning Statement, *Blue Mountains 2040: Living Sustainably*. Other work identified in this Study, which is noted as recommendations throughout, with attached actions, should also be identified for implementation within Council’s programming. The resulting actions are summarised in Part 12 – Future Actions later in this Study.

11.1 Planning document relationships

The Local Character Statement supports *Blue Mountains 2040: Living Sustainably*, the Local Strategic Planning Statement, by identifying the character qualities of each village, and exploring a desired future character for areas that may be subject to some enhancement or emerging change, subject to the results of the community’s input.

The Local Character Statement will support the vision, priorities and aspirations of the Community Strategic Plan 2035, aligning with its principles, and contributing towards fulfilling the relevant actions in its six key directions. The main key direction relevant to the Local Character Statement is ‘Live’ – how we provide safe, healthy and vital spaces and places for our residents and visitors. “Through creative planning and design, the development of vibrant places is fostered. Liveable cities promote development on a human scale and have distinct and attractive towns and streetscapes... We take pride in the character and distinct identities of our towns and villages”.

The Local Character Statement aligns with the Western City District Plan 2018 and one of its key themes ‘Liveability’. Under Liveability, planning priority W6 is ‘creating and renewing great places and local centres, and respecting the District’s heritage’.

11.2 Statement framework

The preparation of a Local Character Statement for the Blue Mountains includes consideration of the appropriate framework to express and foster our unique identity. The State government has prepared a number of guidance documents, including:

1. Model Draft Local Character Statement for St Leonards and Crows Nest
2. Local Character and Place Guidelines

The Model Draft Local Character Statement relates to a Planned Precinct in a high-density urban area, encompassing only a few kilometres in diameter. This does not translate well as a
model for encapsulating the entire character of the ‘linear city’ of the Blue Mountains, a broad region of many connected villages.

The Local Character and Place Guidelines provide a classification of character elements similar to the Model Draft Character Statement. The Model Draft Local Character Statement organises the character elements into five themes (Place, Landscape, Built Form, Land Use, and Movement). In the Local Character and Place Guideline, the elements are arrayed around a wheel with slightly different categories (Open Space, Buildings and Structures, Infrastructure, Uses, and Movement). Refer to the image below.

These themes and the sub-theme character elements were explored in a preliminary analysis for this study and to test the viability of these themes as a preliminary framework for the preparation of the Local Character Statement. The information drawn from the literature review of past studies on local character in Part 5 and Appendix A was used to populate the sub-theme character elements.

Figure 105. Character Wheel with character elements arrayed by themes. Source: Local Character and Place Guideline, NSW Department of Planning and Environment, 2019
11.3 Consideration of State-led Character Statement themes

This section provides a summary of the sub-themes provided by the State government in the character wheel and supporting notes within the Local Character and Place Guideline. Together these sub-themes make up the array of local character elements that contribute to place.

Social

Public Space

The Blue Mountains provides a wide range of indoor and outdoor public spaces for interaction and enjoyment.

Outdoor spaces include main streets and town centre parks. These have an intimate atmosphere used for festivals and markets. Many towns have important scenic routes that require ongoing protections and will continue to be visually enhanced. Towns and villages are the access points for the National Park via lookouts and walking tracks.

Indoor spaces include various public libraries, visitor centres, Braemar Galley and the Blue Mountains Theatre and Community Hub in Springwood, and the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre in Katoomba.

Safety

The Blue Mountains is perceived as a relatively quiet and safe place to live compared to parts of Sydney or places with a higher density.

Safety in the public domain is a key issue with the Highway a busy route through most towns. Local roads will benefit from further safety improvements and traffic calming measures. The winter weather in the Upper Mountains can make the roads dangerous, with ice on the roads, and fog reducing visibility.

Access

Access between most villages is along the Highway. Katoomba and Leura are well-connected beside the Highway but most other villages are separated by bushland. Many towns are also split by the Highway into two parts, making access across the Highway necessary. Future improvements would provide enhanced local access and connections across the Highway.

Katoomba has a network of lanes and service areas behind Katoomba Street that adds complexity and interest to the town’s urban layout. These allow access from parking areas
off the main street into and around the shopping areas. Other villages have similar but smaller layouts.

Leisure

The Mountains is a major destination for leisure and recreation for visitors within New South Wales.

Walking tracks, lookouts and reserves provide a leisure environment focussed on the outdoors and appreciation of exceptional natural environments.

The economy can be enhanced as leisure opportunities within the town are diversified, building upon the creative communities and culture existing in the Mountains, and providing enhanced indoor leisure opportunities.

Housing

Housing is mostly free-standing dwellings, with minimal medium-density housing and apartments. There is community support for a better diversity of housing choice through alternative dwelling types in limited town centres areas, which would suit the ageing population and support younger people living the Mountains.

Many Mountains towns are characterised by historic buildings styles from the Victorian, Edwardian, Federation, Inter-War and Post-War periods particularly in the Upper Mountains. These provide a historic character to many towns which contributes to the attractiveness and appeal of the Mountains.

Many dwellings exist in harmony with the natural environment, with recessive colours and form, and native gardens which blend with the surrounding bush in fringe residential areas.

In general, dwellings have a high proportion of garden area compared to Sydney. Lot sizes tend to be around the typical quarter-acre block, with block sizes varying between 600sqm to over 3,000sqm.

Education

There is a wide range of public, private and independent primary and high schools. Schools are a focal point for local communities, and embedded in the community through fundraisers, presence at markets and festivals such as Winter Magic.

Two TAFE facilities in Katoomba and Wentworth Falls provide employment training. The Mountains could be capable of supporting a university campus in a major town.

Community facilities
The Mountains has a long history of excellent community facilities. Public land has been set aside for parks and reserves which support sporting clubs, general recreation, dog walking and children’s playgrounds.

The Mountains has a wide variety of public halls, libraries, and other community facilities, for example, the Schools of Arts in Wentworth Falls, the Mechanics Institute hall in Lawson, and halls in many other villages.

**Heritage and culture**

The Blue Mountains is of high significance for the local Dharug and Gundungurra Aboriginal people who are the original occupants of the area.

The Mountains is now renowned locally, nationally and internationally for its unique natural character and beauty and is protected by a World Heritage listing. The World Heritage listing is a source of pride and a sense of responsibility for the community.

There is much remaining evidence of the Mountains colonial history, and the intervening layers of European settlement. Many of our villages and towns along the Highway and in ‘the Mounts’ area have a historic character with a large proportion of heritage buildings and other heritage items.

**Public transport**

The train line provides the primary public transport service to access the Mountains, linking the string of villages through the historic Mountains railway line from Lapstone to Bell. The train service continues through to Central in Sydney and further west to Bathurst and Lithgow.

Local buses provide interconnecting services, including tourist services to destinations such as Echo Point, and school buses.

There are increasing demands on the public transport system, particularly due to tourism and visitors during weekends and holidays. Local train services are often overcrowded with tourists making day trips to the Mountains.

**Economic**

**Local Economy**

The Upper Mountains relies heavily on tourism as the main economic driver of the area, and is considered a significant tourist destination. Millions of visitors arrive in the Blue Mountains each year to enjoy the various outdoor recreation and leisure opportunities.

The Lower Mountains has more commuters travelling to Sydney each day, but commuting is still a major economic factor in terms of the self-containment aspirations of the community.
The Blue Mountains as a unique creative place supports many unique businesses, some of whom are aligned with a Mountains identity, for example Scenic World. There are also many family businesses in the Mountains. These business types contribute to a unique Mountains character.

**Employment**

Retail, hospitality and health care are the main employers in the area. The Council is one of the largest organisations in the Mountains.

The Blue Mountains aims to be more self-sufficient. More jobs and opportunities in the area are desirable, particularly for older and younger people. Many Blue Mountains residents commute out of the area for work.

Changing technology will provide more opportunities for home businesses and for working from home or remotely. This will have an ongoing positive impact on work for Blue Mountains residents. As Penrith continues to grow, more job opportunities will be available and accessible to Mountains residents.

**Road network**

The Blue Mountains is dominated by a through transport corridor consisting of the railway and Great Western Highway. The transport corridor has a strong aesthetic and character. Council policy has ensured that although the carriageway is regularly upgraded, development is contained to village areas, actively discouraging strip development along the Highway, and that green plantings beautify the village areas of the Highway. The Highway has retained the strong aesthetic of a regional highway, with consistent serial views out to bushland in every direction. This allows travellers on the road to experience the context of contained urban settlement with the natural ‘wilderness’ extending infinitely beyond.

Improvements to the Highway at Springwood and Katoomba entry points are under negotiation with the Roads and Maritime Services. Further upgrades to the Highway north of Katoomba are either underway or anticipated.

There are hierarchies of local roads in networks attached to the Highway in larger towns. In smaller towns, distributor roads run along ridge lines. Our local road network is important for emergencies, local traffic flow, and for pedestrian circulation.

Road treatments within villages have a distinct hierarchy, starting with busy main streets, tourist routes, and laneways with footpaths in the town centres, and leading out to suburban areas with kerb and guttering with lawn verges or picket fencing, then filtering out to more rural or bush road types with soft verges and native landscaping giving a more natural and relaxed feel.
Parking

Public parking is an important issue in retail and town centre areas. There are public parking facilities in the major towns. Tourism brings high numbers of visitors at certain times which causes traffic congestion in towns such as Katoomba.

Parking demand is also causing congestion and safety issues at cultural and natural sites, such as lookouts, campsites and heritage trails. This conflicts with the amenity and needs of local residents and requires an enhanced management strategy.

Retail

There are various commercial centres in the Blue Mountains each with their own character. The main commercial centres are Katoomba and Springwood, where clusters of services and facilities are located. Most retail areas service local residents and provide essential goods and services. Many towns also cater to tourists and visitors. Leura has a particular identity as a luxury shopping environment.

The Mountains does not have any centre-based shopping complexes, as most towns are based on traditional main-street retail patterns. Small industrial areas in Katoomba, Lawson and Blaxland support a variety of compatible uses.

Environmental

Configuration

The townships are spread along the transport corridor with town centres usually associated with the railway station.

Many of the larger towns have commercial centres which are typically compact and contained, and located on or adjacent the Highway. The exceptions are the small ‘villages’ which do not have commercial cores, such as ‘The Mounts’ on Bells Line of Road or small settlements such as Mount Riverview, Yellow Rock and the Megalong Valley. These places are areas or ‘localities’ rather than villages and are small in population but spread out over larger areas.

Most Mountains towns are small and low-density, with simple and functional land uses. Katoomba and Springwood are the largest centres but remain simply laid out, with residential land use around retail areas consistent with traditional town layouts.

Public/private domain

Most streets are dominated by the landscape, whether garden plantings, remnant native trees, exotic tree species, or areas of untouched bushland. Rather than swimming pools and
tennis courts, there are generally front gardens which complement houses and rear gardens with gardens or bushland. In older areas, fences to the street are timber pickets or low brick walls, while in bushland areas and more suburban areas, there is often no fencing on a grass verge with trees and landscaping.

Apartments in the town centre areas, and low-scale multi-unit housing developments may have balconies and small decks to access outdoor areas and connect with townscapes and bush settings.

**Density and height**

The towns and villages of the Mountains are low-density. The local community values the low density environment for its peace and quiet, and slower pace of life.

Some residents do not want extra density, due to the additional population, demand on services, traffic and other factors that would accompany more dwellings. However, some people do want to age in place and stay in the area, and would consider an apartment in town an attractive solution. Younger people and single people would also benefit from access to affordable apartment living in the Mountains. Making the Mountains a desirable and affordable place to live for younger people promotes positive economic and social activity.

Larger town centres can have high densities, such as existing in parts of Katoomba, due to large guesthouses and some Inter-War flat buildings.

There is some minimal opportunity for some urban consolidation around and in the major town centres. This would take the form of well-designed low-rise or medium-density apartments, in a style consistent with Mountains’ character. These would be expressed through a master planning process for those areas.

**Interface and transition**

Residential areas of the Mountains generally have passive frontages due to their private uses. Some residential buildings do however have a strong presence in the street, particularly when setbacks are reduced and landscaping minimised. Frontages with garages and large driveway areas are discouraged as these limit landscaping potential and obscure the presentation of houses to the street.

Active frontages are encouraged in the town centres, within the defined limits of shopping precincts. Active frontages include inviting pedestrian activity and interactions in areas protected from through traffic.

**Open space**
Parks are an important component of many towns and are a source of civic pride, and recreation and social activity. Types of parks range from bushland fringe areas and nature reserves, to sports ovals and formal town parks. Many town parks contain War memorials and commemorative plantings or features.

Town centre parks contain exotic trees such as pines and oaks and other deciduous species. Many public parks and nature reserves contain play equipment, for example Hinkler Park, in Katoomba, seating, and sculptures, for example, Neate Park, Blackheath. The Blue Mountains was the original home of the ‘rocket ship’ steel play equipment which is widely appreciated beyond the Mountains.

Comfort

Climate is an important factor in everyday living, particularly in the Mountains. The Upper Mountains climate can be challenging, with cold winters and potential for strong winds, mist and fog, and even light snowfalls. The Lower Mountains are more temperate.

Residential building development should include measures to improve the liveability of dwellings. This could include quality insulation to building cavities, orientation of rooms and window openings for maximising direct sunlight and so on.

Bushfire risk is an ever-present consideration in the design of buildings, the management of the environment, and in awareness and education in the Blue Mountains. Best practice hazard management continues to evolve and influence the patterns and detail of urban development. Bushfire risk contains our urban development and limits expansion.

Active transport

Cycling is a popular Blue Mountains activity and adventure sport. Cyclists can make use of many cycling trails and routes available. Cycling in the Mountains is mostly for recreational purposes. Additional cycle paths enhance the ability to travel along the Highway route between towns.

Walking is a major mode of transport, both by residents and tourists around town, and to connect to bushwalks along scenic routes. Some town centres experience high tourism and vehicle traffic congestion which creates potential conflicts and safety issues where these uses intersect, for example Leura Mall, parts of Katoomba town centre and tourist areas such as Echo Point. The existing road network has reasonable accessibility and connections to the local bus network but increasing tourism will require regular upgrades and improvements.

Topography
The natural landscape of the Blue Mountains consists of deeply dissected sandstone plateau topography clothed in open woodland and forest. The dramatic edge of the Lower Mountains is the Eastern Escarpment which rises steeply above the Cumberland Plain. The crests are dotted with look-outs commanding extensive views over the Cumberland Plain to Sydney.

The Upper Mountains is the most elevated area. The main plateau ridge and transport corridor straddles the Jamison Valley to the south and Grose Valley to the north. The topography has created dramatic views, a significant water catchment, and potential for exceptional walking trails and lookouts.

Tree canopy

The landscapes of the Blue Mountains are one of its major defining characteristics, clearly differentiating the area from Greater Sydney. The cultural landscapes of the Blue Mountains are exceptional, and include many large areas of natural bushland with cultural values, and village landscapes of exotic tree canopies and distinctive gardens.

The City of Blue Mountains is one of only two cities in the world surrounded by a UNESCO declared World Heritage Area, with natural values for its eucalypt diversity.

Much of the Mountains remains undisturbed even on private land. The bush interface still retains remnant eucalypt canopy in many places, which can be integrated with both native, exotic or mixed gardens, or as feature trees in the streetscape.

Historic village areas contain an abundance of exotic plantings, particularly conifers and deciduous trees. In areas such as Leura, Blackheath and the Mounts, gardens have been developed to particularly high standard utilising natural stone and a large variety of ornamental exotics. Other landmark trees, particularly conifers, are associated with many of the old properties.

A strong garden culture in the Mountains drives an ongoing community interest in gardening, native species, flower shows, garden open days, local produce, endangered flora and fauna and other nature-related activity.

11.4 A village by village approach

The structure and layout of the Blue Mountains urban areas can be described as villages arrayed more or less in a line along the transport corridor. Earlier studies, community feedback and the Community Strategic Plan all identify the importance of each town having its own character and identity, as well as the need for a village-based approach to preserving character. This approach is consistent with the important 'place-based
The approach identified as a priority in the Greater Sydney Region Plan 2018 and the Western City District Plan 2018 prepared by the State government.

The Local Character Statement provides the opportunity to identify for the first time in one place the rich diversity of the Mountains villages, and the way the individual village character can be preserved and enhanced.

The investigations into past character in this Study have resulted in a view that a village by village approach is more structurally appropriate to the Mountains, as the character varies significantly across the string of villages. The village by village approach is preferred, as it provides locally relevant character statements rather than trying to summarise the entire character of the Mountains at once.

Further, the character elements described in the character wheel of the Local Character and Place Guideline do not include sufficient or balanced consideration of landscape and vegetation. The only category within which to consider the natural environment directly within the character wheel is ‘tree canopy’ and ‘topography’. This does not take into account the weighting of landscape and its importance to almost all areas of the Blue Mountains. Thus the character wheel does not provide a representative template suitable for the Blue Mountains.

The Blue Mountains has its own urban structure that is strongly expressed through its linearity of distinct and contained villages, towns and settlements. The Local Character Statement structure should reflect this existing environment of a ‘linear city’ by demonstrating a village-by-village approach to character protection. This is consistent with Council’s approach to such issues as public domain improvements such as street tree master plans (which are reflective of different suitable species in the different climatic zones).

Each village or town has an existing unique character based on historic factors, demographics, size and layout, economics and climate amongst other things. It is important that these local snapshots are created to identify localised village character as these factors are extremely variable between villages across the Mountain range. The unique characteristics of each village create unique challenges.

Protection of character between 1991 and 2005 was covered by Development Control Plan No. 10 – Blue Mountains Character Guidelines; however, this document did not deal specifically with the individual characters of each town.

Work completed during the preparation of LEP 2005 included draft material on village by village character identification. This material, whilst requiring updating, has been used as a base to create a village-by-village Local Character Statement.
The approach and format is based on the consideration of the toolkits used to identify character, and the management mechanisms available to Council as identified throughout this Study.

Most villages are small and only ongoing small and incremental changes are likely to occur. Some larger towns, particularly Katoomba as our strategic centre, are earmarked for some form of change, whether targeted, such as traffic management or place-based improvements such as specific parks or areas, or more broad changes, such as that carried out through master planning. Private sector development will see the ongoing incremental redevelopment of individual sites, which will contribute to urban renewal and slow long-term change.

The format for the Local Character Statement identifies each village in a consecutive order beginning at the lowest elevation. Each village is identified, even where no changes are planned. The depth of detail is based on the size, complexity and degree of potential change likely for each village or locality.

The format for the Local Character Statement describes each village through:

- Village elevation and population
- Identified size in the strategic village hierarchy – whether centre, village, or locality
- A description of the town centre character (if existing) and residential character elements
- A desired future character statement or vision statement for larger villages
- Other future planning and protections as relevant
- Any particular special characteristics.

It is critical that the draft information presented in this Study, and the development of this information in the draft Local Character Statement is presented to the community for consultation and feedback, as the Statement is intended to be a reflection of the community’s identity, lifestyle, aspirations and likes and dislikes.

Council’s ongoing master planning work also supports the careful growth and enhancement of our village environments.

### 11.5 Village by village analysis

An analysis of the Blue Mountains villages was carried out, considering the primary features of each village. The table below represents a framework for considering the character of each of our towns and villages, including their historic and landscape values, as well as their size,
climate and location. The ‘diagrams of village types’ (final column) appear in the Local Character Statement.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village name</th>
<th>Elev.</th>
<th>Pop. size</th>
<th>Hierarchy</th>
<th>On the Highway</th>
<th>Town centre</th>
<th>Heritage items</th>
<th>Landscape type</th>
<th>Diagram type</th>
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12. Future actions

This study has identified the various aspects of Blue Mountains existing character that are important, and the protection mechanisms that support maintaining and enhancing that character.

A typical aspect of strategic planning work is the regular review process, which continues to address and carry out specific localised reviews of identified areas, and carry out broader or comprehensive reviews that revisit earlier fieldwork. This reflects external physical changes in built fabric and character over time, and changes in social, economic or environmental drivers.

A number of actions have been identified, where there is further work required on the identification and protection of character. The actions that are identified in this section have been translated into actions in Blue Mountains 2040: Living Sustainably, the Local Strategic Planning Statement.

The primary action, the creation of unique village character statements for each village to support the Local Strategic Planning Statement, has been carried out in a draft form as the draft Local Character Statement, to be exhibited with the Local Strategic Planning Statement.

Further actions are as follows:

1. Identify and resolve zoning matters within particular areas, reviewing the zoning, protections, or perceived conflicts within certain areas or precincts:
   - Resolve the translation of the Living-Conservation zone from LEP 2005 into LEP 2015 ensuring adequate protections are included to protect identified character;
   - Review identified zoning conflicts in parts of Katoomba between industrial or medium-density zonings and the new heritage conservation areas;
   - Review the town centre and neighbourhood precincts identified on the Built Character mapping of LEP 2015, and Part G of the Blue Mountains Development Control Plan where requiring updating.

2. Looking forward to a future vision of how the Mountains might respond to some demand for growth, change and alternative housing choice:
   - Continue the master planning processes in Blaxland, Springwood and Katoomba;
   - Carry out further study of a ‘Mountains style’ to guide development of town centre building forms and single dwelling style in the Mountains, leading to the
production of two sets of design guidelines to clarify bulk and scale solutions, height options, architectural character, forms, proportions, details and materials appropriate to the Mountains and reflective of a desired Mountains style. To support this, carry out a detailed investigation into building typology, with architectural details such as heights, setbacks, forms, materials, and roof forms visually explained by drawings and images, with options explored for new buildings in town centres and medium-density development. These guidelines would be placed with the Blue Mountains Development Control Plan.

3. Continue programmed work on review of heritage items and heritage conservation areas:
   - Review the contributory values of existing and new heritage conservation areas, and map individual properties through fieldwork, building on the work of the 2017 Contributory Mapping Study of Period Housing Areas [note this work is not discussed in this study in detail, but is included in Council’s programming, and will contribute to ongoing historic character protections];
   - Review the proposed extensions to the new heritage conservation areas in the 2017 Contributory Mapping Study of Period Housing Areas [note this work is not discussed in this study in detail, but is included in Council’s programming, and will contribute to ongoing historic character protections];

4. Review the potential use and outcomes of Clause 6.19 Design Excellence, and how the use of this clause can lead to better design outcomes.

Some proposed actions may lead to changes to the Blue Mountains Local Environment Plan and Development Control Plan; these will require amendment of those instruments through a formal process including public exhibition. Other actions may require that additional studies or guidance be produced to influence the design and character of our built form and urban areas. Programmed work on heritage conservation areas and heritage items will continue as part of the ongoing programmed resourcing to these areas.

13. Conclusions and recommendations

The Blue Mountains has an exceptional quality and quantity of character elements, both natural and cultural. The interplay between natural bushland and scenic values, and the urban environments of our villages is a key planning consideration as each enhances the appreciation of the other.
Council already has, as demonstrated throughout this Study, a sophisticated and complex planning framework to protect the character of both our natural and cultural environments. Decades of protections have contributed to the ongoing successes of our local lifestyle values and tourism economy. Council and the community have demonstrated strong commitments to continue to provide protections for our character and heritage values.

Council has an existing planning framework for some limited growth areas in town centres, to allow some considered and sympathetic changes. This enables Council and the community to plan for the growth of some areas of some town centres and some targeted medium-density housing precincts. Council’s master planning work and engagement with private sector developers in this area is ongoing.

This study recommends that the actions in Part 12 be undertaken following the resolution of the Local Character Statement and Local Strategic Planning Statement processes, to ensure that the character and identity of the Blue Mountains continues to be a focus and consideration in strategic planning, land use planning, and development assessment.

The unique qualities of our urban areas, and the decisions we make about how we care for those areas, are the key to our ongoing sustainability and liveability within a World Heritage class environment.
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Appendix A – Council’s previous work on character

This Appendix provides the results of a detailed investigation of Council’s previous work on character protections and provisions in its local planning framework. A more concise table summary of this Appendix is in Section 5 of this study.

Draft Planning Scheme (1968) and Blue Mountains Structure Plan (1975)

The submission of Council’s first ‘Proposed Planning Scheme’ to the State Planning Authority was in June 1967 and 1968. The Plan was placed on public exhibition in July 1973. At the time, The State government had produced the Sydney Region Outline Plan, March 1968, which promoted development along growth corridors along the rail network. Blue Mountains was effectively positioned as a fringe area by the urban complex of Newcastle/Sydney/Wollongong. The Blue Mountains was to remain primarily a living area but with strong and varied commercial development.

In May 1974, the ‘Alternative Futures’ report by Urban Systems Corporation was prepared, with four objectives: management, conservation, commercial development, and living areas. This report was used extensively in the preparation of the 1975 Blue Mountains Structure Plan. The Structure Plan contained certain planning principles that protected natural and cultural values and character, including:

- Limit residential development to serviced areas;
- Avoid premature subdivision of non-urban land;
- Reduce or eliminate business areas on the Highway;
- Acquire land for scenic and recreation purposes;
- Retain the Lapstone Monocline (Eastern Escarpment) for public recreation;
- Improve street patterns and facilitate the flow of local and through traffic;
- The provision of a tourist zone.

The report distinguishes strongly between the Upper and Lower Mountains in terms of socio-economic characteristics and general demographic. To some extent differences are due to historic locational choices based on climate, terrain and temporal settlement patterns. The differing roles of the Upper and Lower Blue Mountains is highly evident in patterns of tourism. The Upper Mountains are ‘remote’ and contain a far greater aggregation of attractions.
The report states that the lack of clearly stated and fully committed strategic policies is the single most important issue determining the future of the Blue Mountains.

The issue of self-containment, acknowledging the Mountains attraction to residents as a ‘dormitory’ area to Sydney, and the subsequent dependency on the Sydney region for employment is another important issue affecting character. The demand for increasing density will affect character and possibly create more demand for additional services, and more commuters.

The report concludes that an increased population and a balanced housing policy would encourage greater diversity, with the ‘village’ atmosphere retained overall. There would be positive increases in revenue, scale economics, reduced escape expenditure, and potentially higher levels of entertainment, community and cultural facilities would become viable. Local transport services could be improved without high subsidies. A greater diversity of housing types would ensure a more balanced population and a greater diversity in lifestyles.

Part 4.2 Policies and Action Priorities includes recommendations for environmental design policy, including ‘The Urban Experience’:

- Reinforce the ‘village character’ unique to each Mountains town by:
  - Concentrating new commercial, retail, social and cultural facilities around existing meeting and shopping points;
  - Create new focal points where existing patterns are unsuitable;
  - Implement comprehensive townscape plans in conjunction with the community, including landscape plans, urban parks and gardens, and historic sites and buildings;
  - Initiate streetscape improvement programs.

The environmental design policies also include the need to consider the impacts of views, and in fact focus on the need to enhance views from lookouts, road and rail and within urbanised areas. The control of signage and hoardings, and also development control of areas visible from lookouts are part of the focus on views.

The need for medium-density housing is acknowledged in the report. It is interesting to note that the alternative housing types include a need for retirement options, which are still relevant today.

The 1975 Structure Plan recognised the conflicts between preservation of the environment and uncontrolled urbanisation. It recognised that there are only discrete parts of the
Mountains that are suitable for urban purposes, mostly due to the environmental constraints of much of the land.

An extensive survey was undertaken covering environmental aspects on broad principles. A series of long-term goals was included in the earlier report and subsequent Structure Plan:

- Selection of suitable areas for addition to the National Park as the most effective method of ensuring their preservation;
- Special scenic areas to be acquired by Council;
- Introduction of a concept similar to the new system of State Recreation Areas;
- All significant natural, visual or historic escarpments to be in public ownership;
- Other escarpments to be enhanced as valuable active and passive recreation areas.

The Structure Plan contained a set of design principles (Part 1.4) including:

1.4.2 ‘Community Identity’ – the principle that each community or town should have its own individual identity, complete with a range of social facilities and employment opportunities.

1.4.4 ‘Conservation Oriented Development’ – the principle of conservation oriented development to maintain the basic attraction of the Blue Mountains both as a living area and a recreation area and to preserve the unique attributes of the City as related to the National Estate and its natural features.

1.4.5 ‘City Within a National Park’ – the principle that the City is within a Recreation Area governed by its topographical form and unique natural features, its general climatic stability and its geographic location to the massive Sydney population complex.

1.4.8 ‘Linear City’ – the principle of a linear city disposed in community units along a major transport route and aimed at the continuance of uninterrupted through traffic flow, whilst providing for inter-communication between individual towns.

**Local Environmental Plan No. 4 (1982)**

In 1982, Council prepared LEP 4, gazetted that year, and based on the State government’s model provisions of 1980. LEP 4 was one of the first city-wide planning instruments prepared under the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. LEP 4 used a concise LEP format based primarily on land use provisions, and the LEP applied only to the urban areas of the Blue Mountains.

The LEP had only one objective, which included a requirement that development occur in “in a manner consistent with the need to protect the environment”. The plan, however, lacked a clear environmental base and gave no clear directions for the future.
Of note, the LEP identified 'escarpment preservation areas' as of particular importance and worthy of specific protections and provisions, echoing the concerns of the 1974 report and 1975 plan and its focus on views in the environmental context. This included requirements for dark toned and coloured materials with low reflectivity that blend with the landscape of the site and surrounds, limits to clearing of trees and vegetation, and limits to building heights.

Heritage items were also identified and protected under Division 10 of the LEP, bearing in mind that the Heritage Act 1977 was put in place only five years previous, and that heritage protections were at that time enacted through the earliest protection models of the Register of the National Estate (now non-statutory) and the process of Interim and Permanent Conservation Orders. The provisions included consideration of "the desirability of preserving any stylistic or horticultural garden features of the site". Only a relatively small number of heritage items and heritage conservation areas were identified within Schedule 6 of LEP 4, consistent with the most obviously significant properties needing acknowledgement and protections, for example, Lennox Bridge and the Woodford Academy.

In summary, LEP 4 provided protections for certain escarpment areas to manage the visual importance of scenic area of high visibility. It also provided heritage protections for a limited number of local heritage items with clear high local importance and/or state significance for example Lennox Bridge.

Blue Mountains Heritage Study (1983)

This study was the first attempt to comprehensively identify the environmental heritage of the City (European built heritage, archaeology, landscape, natural areas, relics) to assess the heritage significance of each recorded item and recommend means of protecting the area’s heritage. An important component of the study was to ‘identify and describe the particular environmental qualities of the City of Blue Mountains, its unique and typical areas, assessing physical landscape, built environment and town scape which contribute to its recognised character’. This included the influence of the physical environment on land use and settlement, character analysis via survey sheets, and character surveys of each of the Blue Mountains towns including a comparative assessment and identification of important house styles.

The identification and assessment of character is an important procedural step in the purpose of the study, being to identify heritage significance; however, the study remains useful in terms of character in a long-term and broad sense, and is still relevant in the current review of character provisions.

The study made recommendations regarding:
management of items of natural heritage;
proposed extension of the escarpment protection provisions;
the introduction of new zones for environmental protection including:
  - scenic landscapes, natural areas, escarpments, ecologically important areas and scientific sites.
stressed the importance of ‘visually prominent areas’ such as:
  - escarpment areas and the bushland between towns, certain towns with a highly distinctive character and certain highly significant buildings such as the Carrington in Katoomba.

This seminal work was the first detailed consideration of Blue Mountains character. New heritage items and heritage conservation areas were listed in LEP 1991. The recommendations foreshadowed that future work was required to protect natural areas and escarpments, including scenic and visually prominent sites, bushland between towns, and town character. The village by village descriptions and analysis are still generally relevant and have been reviewed and incorporated into the background research for the preparation of the Local Character Statement.


Since the time that LEP No. 4 was gazetted, new ideas on zoning and planning controls had emerged, which required that environmental management objectives and strategies be clearly defined. Guidelines were also required to establish appropriate design and siting criteria for development in all environmental contexts.

Accordingly, in 1983 Council resolved to prepare a plan of environmental management which would assess the interaction between the natural and the built environment, consider the suitability of land for development and would give guidelines for future growth. This became known as the Blue Mountains Environmental Management Plan. The Plan was originally prepared as a series of ten separate studies organised by study areas based around village groups. This work was commenced but timing and resourcing required a rationalisation of the process, and consequently the study process was accelerated by considering instead the non-urban and environmentally sensitive areas of the City first, which were a priority as were experiencing higher levels of development pressure and tourism. This became the first stage of a two-stage Environmental Management Plan process, known as EMP1. This foreshadowed a second body of work, EMP2, which would review the planning controls and develop strategies for the urban areas (including the ten core village areas) and the City as a whole. EMP1 recognised the regional, national and international
environmental significance of the Blue Mountains, and aimed to provide sensitive and appropriate tourist development.

Principles for protection of town character included policy that sought to protect the unique character and landscape of the Blue Mountains townships by ensuring that new development contribute positively to the local environment, and further, encouraged the development of residential styles which reflect and enhance the character of the Blue Mountains towns and villages.

Blue Mountains City Council’s Environmental Management Plan was the winner of the 1987 Australian Heritage Award (national level) for outstanding contribution to the preservation and promotion of Australia’s heritage and environment (category – Nature Conservation).

**LEP 1991**

LEP 1991 covered the non-urban areas of the city as identified by EMP1, including all environmentally sensitive areas and areas of major environmental significance that required protection. It set guidelines aimed at ensuring appropriate development that is sensitive to the natural and cultural environment of the Blue Mountains. Note, once LEP 1991 came into force, LEP 4 only applied to the urban areas of the City.

The first objective of LEP 1991 is to “maintain the unique character of the City”; “to identify and protect the Blue Mountains’ natural and cultural heritage, and the distinctive character and amenity of local communities; to recognise and maintain the positive qualities of the traditional lifestyle enjoyed by the residents of the City; and to recognise the importance of the Blue Mountains National Park as the setting of the City.”

LEP 1991 introduced a wider suite of environmental protections in the form of Protected Areas, encompassing:

- canopy conservation;
- environmental constraint area;
- escarpment area;
- land between towns; and
- water supply catchment area.

These environmental provisions acknowledged the primary importance of the natural environment and the need to mitigate development impacts in terms of ecological and visual impacts. The importance of character as an element of environmental protection began to emerge as a statutory consideration.

The Heritage Study of 1982 supported further heritage listings that were added to Schedule 2 of LEP 1991.
**DCP 5 (1988) – Echo Point Precinct**

DCP 5 was created as a set of urban design guidelines, to ensure that further development in the precinct is sympathetic to the cultural and character values of the area. This included protecting and enhancing the visual, scenic and character elements of the area to cater to the high levels of tourism and recreation that the area depends upon as a scenic and cultural attraction. The Echo Point precinct encompasses much of central South Katoomba. Specific controls foreshadowed the future redevelopment of Lilianfels, additional works at the Three Sisters Emporium, and the upgrading of the Echo Point public reserves. The DCP also proposes the creation of an Urban Conservation Precinct along parts of Lurline and Katoomba Streets to recognise heritage and character values, although this was not a statutory heritage conservation area as we now understand heritage conservation areas, despite the obvious intentions for protection.

The DCP recognises the ‘predominant heritage and domestic character of the Lurline and Katoomba Streets Urban Conservation Precinct, particularly which typified by the numerous high quality Federation style houses present.’ Detailed design controls are provided to respect neighbouring buildings and context, existing heights, mass and scale, roof forms, fenestration, verandahs, colours, materials, fencing, landscaping, setbacks, and parking.

The DCP also included escarpment controls for areas at the perimeter of the Echo Point/South Katoomba area similar to the type of controls in LEP 1991, and included consideration of existing vegetation, landscaping, clearing, building materials (that must be dark toned and coloured and of low reflectivity), and building height.

**DCP 10 (1991) – Town Character Guidelines**

The concern to acknowledge place identity and maintain a sense of place in the towns and villages of the Blue Mountains was articulated by the adoption of Blue Mountains Character Guidelines DCP No. 10. The purpose of DCP 10 was to create a set of broad planning and design guidelines, to be incorporated into the LEPs and DCPs, to guide new developments, and create higher quality, more responsive designs, and more consistent planning outcomes. The guidelines were for:

- Design and management guidelines and controls for infill development, alterations and additions in conservation areas;
- Design and site development guidelines for development in newer residential areas to ensure existing town character is conserved and extended to the newer areas;

Landscape controls for:

- Main roads and approaches to towns;

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- Tree planting within shopping precincts, residential streets and conservation areas;
- Streetscape treatments and public domain elements including street furniture;
- A schedule of trees for particular uses and locations;

The background work for this DCP referenced the character identification work of the Blue Mountains Heritage Study by Croft and Walker of 1983, which provided a description of the visual character of each of the towns, and identified the original urban conservation areas. DCP 10 brief envisaged the need to expand the existing conservation areas to include expanded areas now considered to have conservation area status. This did not occur at that time, but further studies were commissioned by Council in 2000-2002 to continue to detail this work (Heritage studies were completed of each of the 10 core villages primarily by Ian Jack and his study team).

The DCP was produced as a set of six brochures. The brochures were produced and advertised as being to “highlight the unique character of the region, intended to give development guidelines to ensure the Mountains remains a special place”. The format was intended to be accessible and user-friendly.

The six brochures related to different development contexts in the Mountains, being:

1. Blue Mountains Town Character
2. Building in Bushland
3. Heritage Conservation
4. Infill Development
5. Site Planning and Subdivision Design
6. Streets in Our Town

The DCP became effective on 27 February 1991, and is still relevant today as it aligns with ongoing collective values which are not just social and cultural, but also economic. Our appreciation of place is intrinsically personal and subjective, but the DCP framed a number of first principles that began to frame the preparation of later planning instruments.

What is also remarkable about the DCP is that it identified these themes at a time when the planning orthodoxies and practices of the day were only beginning to recognize character values. The Council’s response to character through its DCP was seen by practitioners at that time as leading practice: the Blue Mountains Town Character Guidelines DCP was awarded the Royal Australian Planning Institute Commendation for Excellence in 1992. It provides a very early and solid foundation for the subsequent development of the Blue Mountains planning framework and its approach to managing character.
The DCP intentions were carried over into the Better Living DCP, when it repealed DCP 10. The preparation of DCP 2015 also included a review of DCP 10 to incorporate earlier first principles.

Many other projects on character identification and protection were contemplated in the mid-1990s, such as a Development Control Plan for the Katoomba Main Street Building Facades in 1992; a report on the town character of Katoomba at the Highway entry, between Yeamans Bridge and the Hospital, for future development of a masterplan or a DCP; and a town character forum in 1994 foreshadowed the need for the preparation of a broader Town Character Study, but lack of funding to carry out the work meant these studies did not eventuate. These are noted as they may yet be useful pointers to future studies.

**EMP2 (1994-1995)**

Following the gazettal of LEP 1991, work began immediately on further strategic reviews of a number of environmental factors. This took up the work foreshadowed earlier as EMP2, a review of the ten core village areas, being the urban areas of the City, including a review of the planning controls and the development of strategies for the urban areas and the City as a whole.

Council produced ‘The Blue Mountains Strategic Plan, Creating Villages with Life’, 1995, by the City Planning department of Council, as part of the work of EMP2 and as a core strategic study.

Multiple other studies were carried out on a range of issues including heritage, tourism and population growth. Planning reports were carried out, Local Environmental Studies, for each of the five study areas allocated. These reports were required under the *NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* as a prerequisite for preparing a new planning instrument (LEP). The reports assessed the capability and suitability of the natural, physical, social and economic environments to cater for existing and future development. From this information, certain issues relating to these components of the environment were identified as requiring resolution and land use zoning structure for each town and village were proposed.

A Cultural Plan was developed in 1994 which provided a foundation for interacting with the community in developing the cultural future of the Blue Mountains. This document was a very important instrument in enhancing the character and sense of place of the Blue Mountains and its communities.

A Town Character Strategy was also identified as an important study yet to be undertaken at that time, but the importance of such a study to the EMP2 process was noted.
The Strategic Plan had guiding objectives, including the “Development of a character for the built environment ...with emphasis on a sense of identity and character in each town and locality.” The title of the document recognises that the LGA comprises twenty-six settlements across the Mountains containing individual communities with unique and different characters. The document notes the importance of complementing and enhancing each village and settlements’ sense of place.

It was clearly understood at the time that without an integrated framework to guide development, identified and valued character can be compromised as evidenced incrementally through the development assessment process. It was acknowledged that the character guidelines of DCP 10 did not provide the full answer to conserving character. In the preparation of the new city-wide LEP it became evident that a zoning response is required to achieve that outcome. This realisation informed the Council’s identification of a character-specific zone as part of EMP 2.

In place of a conventional residential zone, EMP 2 proposed two zones:

- Living, and
- Living Conservation

This was a significant development, breaking the orthodoxy of the traditional Residential 2(a1) zone as used across NSW. It distinguishes between a base residential zone (Living) and a new zone aimed at character conservation (Living Conservation):

The Living Conservation zone would aim to satisfy the residential objectives which seek to conserve those residential areas with a bushland or heritage setting, located typically on large lots, and with significant scenic or visual amenity. (EMP: 2, 1997: 112)

The objectives for this new zone echo aspects of DCP 10 and include:

- To conserve the character of those residential areas of the City which Council considers to have significant amenity because of their bushland or heritage setting, or because they contain unique natural or physical elements which are significant components of the City’s cultural landscape.
- To ensure that building form, including alterations and additions are in character with surrounding development and does not detract from the amenity of adjoining residents or the existing quality of the environment.
- To provide for the residential housing needs within the City where the only type of residential development that can occur is single detached dwellings that match the capacity of the environment to sustain such development. (EMP: 2, 1997: 112)

The EMP goes on to state that the intention of the zone is to provide residential areas where:
- Bushland, heritage and other natural and physical features that provide character to a neighbourhood are conserved. (EMP: 2, 1997: 112)
- This zone was the primary mechanism for the protection of residential character in Draft LEP 1997, an objective of which was:
- To conserve the character of those residential areas which Council considers to have significant amenity because of their setting, or because they contain unique natural or other physical elements which are significant components of the City's landscape.

The Living and Living Conservation zoning was taken forward under DLEP 1997.


In October 1997, Blue Mountains City Council placed Draft Local Environmental Plan 1997 (DLEP1997) on public exhibition. This was a comprehensive planning scheme designed to replace the existing planning scheme, Local Environmental Plan No. 4 (LEP 4), for the urban areas of the Blue Mountains. It was intended that Draft LEP 1997 would complement Local Environmental Plan 1991 (LEP 1991), which applies to the non-urban areas of the city. The formal environmental study underpinning Draft LEP 1997 was Environmental Management Plan 2 (EMP2).

The Draft LEP aimed, in relation to character, “To conserve the character of those residential areas which Council considers to have significant amenity because of their setting, or because they contain unique natural or other physical elements which are significant components of the City’s landscape.” (Draft LEP 1997, page 6)

**Commissioners of Enquiry Public Hearing (1998)**

Following the public exhibition, the draft LEP was subject to a public hearing conducted by Commissioner Mark Carleton in 1998, which the Office of the Commissioners of Enquiry for Environment and Planning described as one of the largest hearings undertaken by the Commission into a local environmental plan in NSW.

The results of the hearing were released to the public in January 1999. The recommendations of the Commissioner included requirements for more detailed reviews of certain environmental factors and constraints, including a recommendation that Council make further investigations into the character of the residential areas of the Blue Mountains.

The Commissioner identified that the Living Conservation zone is a new low density zone introduced by Blue Mountains City Council that is designed to conserve areas with significant character value because of their setting or unique natural or physical elements. In order to
achieve this objective the Council has zoned such land to only allow single detached residential development, has limited the number of ancillary uses permissible in this zone and has imposed more restrictive provisions on subdivision and building heights in this zone than any other. (1998: 65)

The Commissioner also identified that the Living Conservation zone was the second largest issue raised in submissions to the Public Hearing, with 119 or 38% of submissions expressing support or objection to this zone. As the second largest issue with DLEP 1997, the Living Conservation zone was subject to extensive submissions, site inspections and review by an expert Commissioner. In providing an evidence base for the creation of a Living Conservation zone, the findings of that Commission remain significant:

The Commission generally agreed with the creation of the Living Conservation zone and its zone objectives. The Living Conservation zone, in its aims to preserve character, represented a significant change from existing zones. By its nature it is more restrictive than a conventional residential zone and was an important planning intervention in the Blue Mountains. The Commission’s endorsement directed the development of the Council’s planning framework in relation to this zone over the following years.

A review of Draft LEP 1997 was undertaken as a result of the Commissioner’s findings, including to revisit the application of the Living Conservation zone. A detailed review process took place, including extensive community consultation.

The review was subject to various other influences, including the nomination of the Greater Blue Mountains as a World Heritage Area in November 2000.

**Katoomba Charrette 1999**

The scale and relative importance of Katoomba as the principal tourist and district commercial centre warranted further analysis and community input. Accordingly, a separate, intensive series of planning workshops (or ‘charrette’) was undertaken for Katoomba. This work engaged over 2000 local residents, business owners and operators and other key stakeholders, and resulted in the adoption by Council of the Katoomba Town Centre Charrette Outcome Report and Revitalisation Strategy in June 1999. That report is supported and supplemented by a range of contemporary planning studies and other inputs for Katoomba including:

- The draft ‘village’ DCP that supported Draft LEP 1997;
- Commissioner Carleton’s review of Draft LEP 1997;
- A character analysis by urban design consultants;
- The Katoomba Retail Assessment undertaken by Hill PDA; and
The Katoomba Heritage Façade Improvement Study.

In combination, these processes have enabled significant community and professional input into both broader planning strategies and the development of draft planning provisions for Katoomba for inclusion in the proposed Draft LEP 2002.

The ‘place-based’ planning process engaged some 3750 people as part of both the Katoomba Charrette and local community workshops in the other Stage 2 villages. This enabled a set of planning controls to be produced for each village, focusing on the unique qualities and characteristics of the various village areas. The planning controls include the application of appropriate zones to control land use and the identification of individual precincts that display consistent function and/or design characteristics.

**Draft LEP 2000**

**Residential Character Conservation Strategy – Character Study and Discussion Paper, May 2000**

As part of the preparation of a revised planning instrument, Draft LEP 2000 (which became Draft LEP 2002) was prepared, and contained a major planning principle, ‘to place a limit on the extent of the potential urban footprint in the Blue Mountains based on the Sustainable Development Threshold (SDT)’. This SDT was based on the exclusion of land with a slope over 33%; land with significant vegetation; and land within a watercourse corridor. A further principle identified that the provision of greater housing choice should occur through the redevelopment of existing residential areas and mixed use village centres.

As part of the preparation of Draft LEP 2000, a character study was prepared by Council’s City Planning division in 2000, ‘Protecting the Residential Character of the Blue Mountains, Character Study’, to identify and map residential character. A discussion paper was prepared, in May 2000, to accompany the character study and present its findings for further consideration.

The purpose of the additional investigation was to support the Living Conservation zone, as Commissioner Carleton had suggested the zone be reviewed due to a lack of background studies used to support both conservation of character and environmental features, and that the boundaries be re-examined between Living and Living Conservation zones.

Although the character study was eventually superseded by the Residential Character Study 2002, the report laid the groundwork for the establishment of specific character types.

The character study provides a detailed assessment of the character of each village, and provides the following breakdown for each village:
- a character statement
- notable character areas and elements
- residential character
- issues

This information is generally still relevant and has been reviewed and incorporated into the background research for the preparation of the Local Character Statement.

**Draft LEP 2002**

As outlined previously, a full review of DLEP 1997 was carried out to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the many elements that contribute to urban character in the Blue Mountains, and to develop appropriate planning tools to protect and enhance that character. Further studies were prepared between 2000 and 2002.

Comprehensive heritage studies of the ten core village areas were carried out between 2000 and 2005 by an expert consultant team of heritage architects, landscape and archaeological experts, led by Professor Ian Jack. These studies led to the inclusion of new heritage items and heritage conservation areas within the village areas in LEP 2005.

Character studies and workshops with the local community identified town and residential character as an important component of local identity.

**Residential Character Study 2002**

Identifying and preserving residential character was a cornerstone element in the preparation of Draft LEP 2002. It was recognised in the early stages of preparing the draft plan that residential character was important to many Blue Mountains residents because it provided a ‘sense of place’. One of the most significant character studies carried out by Council was the Residential Character Study of 2002. This study built on the earlier work of DCP 10 and the Residential Character Study of 2000. The Residential Character Study 2002 sought to identify tangible urban design elements that provide some residential areas with a significant ‘character’ that contributes to the local identity.

The aim of the Residential Character Study 2002 was to establish what types of character are important and where they are found. The findings of this study were used to justify the application of residential zones and to develop provisions for the protection of residential character in Draft LEP 2002.

The character study was undertaken in several stages, leading to the establishment of definitive character types:

- a review of previous planning reports and studies to establish Council’s previous approaches to the identification of character; and a review of heritage studies to
provide information on the historical context and evolution of character types within
the Blue Mountains;

- an extensive character study involving site inspections and analysis of all residential
  areas within the DLEP 2002 area. A broad array of character types, including many
  variations on themes, was identified and mapped for these areas. The study was site
  specific and presented character types within local street contexts. The character
  patterns arising from this study were presented at stakeholder workshops for DLEP
  2002 in May 2000;

- a secondary examination of the study area, to consolidate the character types and
  identify areas that reflected these character types in a unified way. This consolidation
  made it possible to incorporate the findings of the character study into land-use
  provisions within DLEP 2002; and

- incorporation of land-use zones, protected areas and management provisions into
  DLEP 2002.

The character review process resulted in the identification of the following general character
types:

- **Bushland Dominant Areas**: areas dominated by native vegetation
- **Visually Prominent Areas**: residential areas within close proximity to escarpment areas
- **Garden Setting**: areas that present a unified streetscape characterised by formal and
  exotic vegetation
- **Dominant Landscape Setting**: areas where landscaped elements such as vegetation
  dominate the urban form
- **Visually Significant Streetscapes**: important streets that set a ‘tone’ for an urban area
- **Areas of Older Housing**: residential areas that are dominated by housing that pre-
  dates 1946

These character types are discussed in more detail below.

**Residential Character Types**

The Residential Character Study identified the elements that combine to form definitive
residential character areas that can be particularly associated with the Blue Mountains
experience. The elements identified are made up of and influenced by vegetation (gardens,
landscape setting, bushland setting); residential patterns (lot sizes, street layout, laneways);
and residential development that reflects a range of architectural ‘periods’

The six residential character types identified as a result of the study are summarised below.
The study itself provides further detailed analysis of each type.

**Bushland Dominant Areas**
The natural environment is the overarching factor that has shaped residential development patterns within the Blue Mountains, and a significant proportion of residential areas have a wider bushland setting, where:

1. Residential roads along spur lines provide views of bushland ridges;
2. A large natural feature or heavy native canopy dominates the streetscape;
3. Areas are within the urban/bushland interface.

Residential development within these areas tends to be sympathetic to the bush, with significant amounts of vegetation being retained on individual allotments. Outlying areas are characterised by large lot sizes, which contribute to the proportion of vegetation in these areas and their subsequent bush character.

“Bushland Dominant Areas” are applied where native vegetation predominates the streetscape, and are the most prevalent residential character type in the Blue Mountains.

**Visually Prominent Areas (escarpment areas)**

The identity of the Blue Mountains is expressed through the topography of the region, with escarpments, sandstone bluffs and views to unbroken bushland. These features are also significant to the identity of the wider Sydney region, and even to the nation. For this reason it is essential that residential areas adjoining escarpment areas are identified and protected from inappropriate development.

There has been long established recognition and protection of the major escarpment areas in the Blue Mountains. With GIS mapping, the locations of all escarpment areas in the Blue Mountains have been identified, and then investigated through site inspections. Existing escarpment areas in LEP 1991 were extended following the investigation. Criteria included the visual prominence from bushland areas and the range of visibility, particularly from the National Park, now of World Heritage significance. Areas visible from the National Park are particularly sensitive to the height, scale and bulk of buildings. An accumulation or intensification of development along with associated land clearing can severely scar the natural qualities of escarpments. Measures are required to mitigate against this effect.

**Garden Setting**

Garden Setting areas with a residential character are typified by formalised gardens and exotic plantings. These types of gardens are mostly found in the Upper Mountains. Many of these significant gardens were established as a result of the area’s growing popularity as a health oriented tourist destination early in the 20th century, or were established as large estates as summer retreats for wealthy Sydney residents. These gardens and street plantings
contribute a legacy of mature vegetation and significant exotic streetscape canopies, lending charm and contributing to the image of the Blue Mountains. Individual gardens were not identified; rather, areas contain unified streetscapes of consistent exotic garden themes.

The contrast between the wild natural areas and the mature exotic vegetation is characteristic of many Upper Mountains villages. Towns such as Leura are renowned for their spring and autumn displays of exotic species which include deciduous trees and conifers dominating the tree canopy. Visitors seek out exhibition garden displays or simply drive or walk through the villages enjoying the ambience created as a result of the gardens and the historic built forms.

The Garden Setting character occurs where large lot sizes predominate the overall subdivision pattern allowing for the planting of trees in backyards that subsequently contribute to a landscape setting within an area. The large lot sizes and low site coverage of built forms are important in retaining the Garden Setting character. Higher densities threaten the Garden Setting character within these areas due to the reduction in available garden space, especially in relation to the large open spaces required for large trees. Another essential element in the character of these garden areas is that the site coverage of buildings is low, with the dwelling often secondary or at least responsive to the grandeur of the garden.

Garden Setting differs from Dominant Landscape Setting in that Garden Setting reflects a more traditional, formal garden theme, and Dominant Landscape Setting is applied where a mix of vegetation types (both exotic and native) dominates the streetscape.

**Dominant Landscape Setting**

These residential areas are typified by relatively small dwelling sizes, large lot subdivision patterns and the dominance of vegetation. This character type contributes to the setting of an area, with mature exotic or native vegetation that provides a landscape backdrop to development. Gardens are less formalised than those in areas identified as “Garden Setting”, but contain a mix of plantings that become part of the streetscape character as a result of views into front and side gardens and the presence of trees overhanging the street and road carriageway. It is also the result of plantings in rear gardens which contribute to the canopy cover in an area.

Dominant Landscape Setting is important particularly in the Lower Mountains in terms of differentiating the Blue Mountains from the suburbs of Sydney. For example, Glenbrook is seen as the gateway to the Mountains. There is a marked increase in vegetation upon entry to Glenbrook, not merely as a result of being within a bushland setting but also as a result of
the number and size of private gardens and their plantings which contribute to the overall character of the town. Significant threats to this character type include the subdivision of large lots and the development of residential dwellings with a large site coverage. These development types remove much of the canopy cover and erode the dominant landscape setting character.

A Dominant Landscape Setting has also been identified in parts of the Upper Mountains, where mature vegetation contributes to the continuity of the canopy cover and creates landscape settings within towns such as Wentworth Falls and Mount Victoria with dense gardens and mature trees and gardens precincts that contribute to the landscape setting of the town.

The block analysis demonstrated the importance of large lots in the identification of Dominant Landscape Settings. It is recognised that any streetscape is created by landscape and built form on both sides of the street. However for the purposes of this study, block averages were found to confirm the application of character types and the block analyses therefore focus mainly on one side of a street.

**Visually Significant Streetscapes**

Visually Significant Streetscapes reflect and enhance the character of an area through the mix of dwellings and main streets play a major role in the perception of an area. They often provide the gateway or entrance to a town and are therefore critical in terms of setting the tone or character of an area. Many Mountains villages have developed around a number of main streets that access smaller localised roads. These main streets often have historic associations and reflect the historic development of a town. As a result these roads have an interesting mix of architectural styles and periods, the variety of which embodies much character within the Mountains.

Parts of the Great Western Highway are considered to be a Visually Significant Streetscape, providing a mix of dwellings and views out of the villages across escarpments to unbroken tracts of natural bushland and landscape features. More importantly, the Great Western Highway is the major route by which visitors travel and immediate perceptions of the Blue Mountains are formed from this experience.

In other villages a particular precinct sets the tone for a village, where verge planting and garden trees and shrubs create an atmosphere of a garden community. Should these areas be inappropriately development by infill, there will be a loss of the overhead canopy, and a significant aspect of the amenity of the town would be lost. These areas include Leura Mall, Hare Street, Lucasville and Explorers Roads, Glenbrook, Falls Road and Blaxland Road,
Wentworth Falls, and Oaklands Rd, Hazelbrook. Higher densities are inappropriate within these locations as the character will be weakened due to a reduced canopy cover and increased hard surfaces. This in turn affects the synthesis between the built form and the natural environment, which is an essential component of the character of many Mountains villages.

Laneways are often important in contributing to a positive residential amenity. Lanes within Blackheath, Katoomba, Wentworth Falls and Glenbrook are at a scale which creates a sense of intimacy.

Areas of Older Housing

These residential areas are those that are dominated by housing that generally pre-dates 1946.

Many villages have a strong representation of housing pre-dating the Second World War, much largely unchanged from the time of construction. This often results in a strong streetscape character reflecting a particular architectural period, or a mix of historical architectural periods. Areas of Older Housing are significant for their aesthetic appeal and also importantly as a living connection to the history of development in the Blue Mountains. The character of areas of older housing could potentially be eroded through the demolition of existing housing stock or unsympathetic infill development.

Areas of older housing are predominantly located in the Upper Mountains, reflecting the impact of historical trends on development. For instance, the boom in tourism is reflected in the construction of holiday homes and letting houses in Leura, Blackheath and Katoomba.

Areas of Older Housing are generally dominated by built form. They exhibit narrow setbacks, short frontages, and generally have no on site car parking. These older houses and cottages feature craftsmen styled decorative architecture, varied roof forms, verandas with elaborate posts, trims and balustrades. Some areas are distinguished by an astounding variety of building patterns as illustrated by windows, bays, window shades, verandas and complex roof forms. Heights within these areas are generally restricted to one storey, and dwellings often have pitched roofs which contribute to the pattern of the built form. The bulk and scale of many new residential styles impacts heavily on the streetscape within these areas and can detract significantly from the pattern created by the older styles of housing. Pre-fabricated and mass produced housing components are the antithesis to the character of areas of older housing, and insensitive infill development can quickly erode the qualities that have been maintained over a significant period of time. Front setbacks are generally small, frontages are narrow, and the heights of the buildings are relatively low. The cumulative
effect of these buildings within a streetscape can be quickly eroded when the pattern of the built form is broken up with large bulky developments. The level of articulation (or detail) on the exterior walls of these buildings enriches the streetscape and makes the streets interesting places to be.

Character and heritage management in DLEP 2002
The Residential Character Study prompted the inclusion of a number of measures within Draft LEP 2002 aiming to retain and enhance the residential character unique to the Blue Mountains. The measures utilised a range of planning tools to retain the contribution of the six typologies identified through Residential Character Study to the character of the Blue Mountains.

Character management
The Residential Character Study clearly identified areas that required the protection of a range of land use management policies including:

- Principal objectives relating to character:
  
  (a) To maintain the unique identity and values of the City of Blue Mountains as a “City within a World Heritage National Park
  
  (d) To identify and conserve the distinct cultural heritage of the built forms and landscapes of the Blue Mountains
  
  (h) To identify and retain the diverse built and landscape elements that contribute to the character and image of the Blue Mountains

- The application of specific zones and corresponding provisions designed to retain and enhance significant character elements:
  
  o Living- Bushland Conservation Zone – Bushland Dominant Areas
  
  o Living-Conservation Zone – Garden Setting, Visually Significant Streetscapes and Dominant Landscape Setting

The application of the Living – Conservation zone related to areas of important and vulnerable character characterised by large allotment sizes, dominant landscape settings and traditional gardens.

The application of the Living – Bushland Conservation zone related to, in addition to protecting areas of environmental sensitivity, the retention of residential bushland character.

The zones were applied in accordance with the character mapping undertaken as part of the study.
• The application of “Protected Areas” that provide additional development controls for areas where particular residential character elements have been identified.
  - Protected Areas – Period Housing
  - Protected Areas – Escarpment Areas

The Period Housing Areas were identified on the Draft LEP zoning maps, with provisions for the protection of pre-1946 housing stock including Victorian, Edwardian, Federation, Inter-war or Art Deco building styles from demolition and adverse changes. New development is required to complement the traditional streetscape character of these areas and promote sympathetic design for renovation or infill development;

The Protected Areas – Escarpment Area incorporated additional development controls for height and built form in visually prominent escarpment areas; and

• The provision of both general and precinct-specific controls on the design of village housing, site coverage, building height and vegetation retention.

Precinct planning – ‘Locality Management’

Part of the preparation of Draft LEP 2002 included consideration of areas of potential redevelopment and renewal, particularly in town centres. Submissions into the public exhibition and public hearing into Draft LEP 1997 raised a broad range of issues relating to the commercial centres and the immediate areas surrounding the main villages of the city. The various villages and townships of the Blue Mountains, each with its own unique character, are an important representation of that special character that makes the Blue Mountains ‘special’.

It was recognised that there is both a social and economic imperative to retain the sense of character and individuality of the villages. However, it was also recognised that this must take account of changing social, environmental and other economic considerations such as:
  - The increasing role of tourism;
  - The changing retail patterns;
  - The need to create employment opportunities;
  - The demand for diverse housing options;
  - The proximity of villages to the highway and rail corridor; and
  - The principles of ecologically sustainable development (ESD).

The Council adopted a ‘place-based’ approach to considering the management and planning issues for the town and village centres in the updated draft LEP.
Council subsequently undertook a ‘place-based’ planning process for each of the identified village areas. This involved:

- A detailed character analysis of the villages;
- A review of economic and retail dynamics, trends and projected demand for floor space in each village;
- Environmental analysis of the centres and their surrounding areas; and
- Local design-based community planning workshops to determine the local community’s own aspirations and values for each of the village areas.

Precinct planning has been introduced through Draft LEP 2002 and is an integral component of identifying important character elements within the Blue Mountains villages; it has been developed in collaboration with the community. Precinct planning has been applied to areas that are the focus of development pressures, or where the protection of character attributes is paramount, and provides the basis for protecting character in these areas.

Precinct controls were created to influence and shape the desired future character of town centre and higher density village housing areas. These objectives and controls applied to land zoned Village Town Centre (now B2 Town Centre), Village Neighbourhood Centre (now B1 Neighbourhood Centre), Village Tourist (now R1 General Residential), and Village Housing (now R3 Medium Density Residential).

The report Mountains Villages – Village Character and Planning Provisions, by Brett Newbold Planning, 2002 covered six core village areas: Blackheath, Blaxland, Hazelbrook, Mount Victoria, Springwood and Wentworth Falls. This report was part of the background to preparing the precinct controls of Schedule 1 of LEP 2005. Other villages given specific precinct controls were Katoomba and Lawson (with significant changes potentially proposed), and Glenbrook, Leura, Medlow Bath and Winmalee.

**Heritage conservation**

The heritage conservation provisions of Draft LEP 2002 acknowledge the sense of place and village character that is generated through the preservation of heritage items and areas. The approach adopted by Draft LEP 2002 in assessing heritage significance is consistent and compatible with contemporary heritage practice across the state, and provides a framework for sound decision-making regarding the management of heritage assets. The draft LEP and its provisions were supported by detailed studies and inventory data sheets, which qualify the listing of an item and provide a useful tool for the ongoing conservation and management of heritage items and heritage conservation areas.

**Living Conservation zone**
As a consequence of the Residential Character Study, the Living Conservation zone was applied to areas dominated by larger allotments (average size 1100m²) that are generally closer to the village centre, where there is no major servicing or environmental constraint, and where the dominant character is of single dwelling, traditional gardens and visually prominent streetscapes. The range of permissible residential development in the zone is restricted to dwelling houses and precludes dual occupancies and higher density development in order to preserve the character and amenity of these areas. These allotments are often located on historically significant tourist routes such as in Wentworth Falls, Leura and Blackheath. The protection of these areas contributes to the appealing quality of the villages and is important, both for its inherent value to the local community and as a major contributor to the local tourist based economy.

The Living Conservation zone, which was no longer also applied to areas with a bushland setting as the result of this detailed character analysis, was consequently limited to 4452 lots in the City.

**Period Housing Areas**

The Living-Conservation zoning approach worked in tandem with measures to protect areas of older housing, identified as Period Housing Areas. This overlay for Period Housing Areas was applied to 2932 properties and sought to protect these areas from demolition and inappropriate infill development. Those areas containing both older housing and being within a Living Conservation zone equates to 1024 parcels.

**LEP 2005**

Local Environmental Plan 2005, with its provision for a Living Conservation zone, was made by the Minister for Planning and gazetted on 7 October 2005.

The Residential Character Study made a major contribution to character management in the Mountains by identifying a range of residential character types to assist in the development of policies that have helped to retain and enhance valued urban forms.

The study outcomes were represented in the mapping of residential character that accompanied the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) 2002 map series, which became the LEP 2005 maps.

These studies and the final draft LEP led to significant protections for the environment through the gazettal of LEP 2005. These included additional heritage items and heritage conservation areas added to the LEP schedule, and a detailed consideration of town and residential character. These led to a detailed suite of provisions, including protection of established
landscapes and streetscapes, tourist routes, scenic values, historic housing, escarpment areas and transitional residential bushland settings.

Natural environment protections encompassed controls for development affecting water catchments and bushfire prone land, consideration of retention of vegetation and endangered species, and weed management. These types of considerations affect the wider natural and cultural environments that surround the towns.

The legitimacy of planning instruments and their technical approach relies on the public process of their formulation as much as the policy itself. The approach that led to LEP 2005 and its response to identifying and maintaining its residential character spans a decade. It is characterized by a deliberative process, building on previous initiatives, that is informed by the community’s expectation to achieve the protection of residential character.

As set out above, the preparation of that plan commenced with EMP 2 in 1995, was founded on the outcomes of two major public exhibitions, an extensive public hearing by the Commissioners of Enquiry and subsequent studies and investigations in response to that hearing. The completion of LEP 2005 represented the culmination of a significant investment by the Council, the Department and the Parliamentary Counsels Office. The LEP and its studies were recognized as the ‘Land Use Planning’ category winner in the Federal Government’s National Awards for Local Government 2004. But moreover, the level of the community response to a local environmental plan was unprecedented in the Blue Mountains and provides the ‘strategic conviction’ for the achievement of the following Principal Objective:

12 (h) To identify and retain the diverse built and landscape elements that contribute to the character and image of the Blue Mountains.

**Value of the Living-Conservation zone**

The Living Conservation zone provides its zone objectives, which derive from the Residential Character Study, and nominates the following outcomes:

- To preserve and enhance the character of residential areas that are formed by larger allotments and single dwelling houses within a prominent traditional garden setting.
- To enhance the landscape character and setting along roads of historic significance where the road forms a visually significant entrance to a village or a linkage between visitor destinations.
- To ensure development retains the prominence of landscape elements and traditional garden settings.
• To allow for a limited range of non-residential land uses where these are conducted in association with a predominantly residential land use and are consistent with the retention of a residential character based on a landscape or open space setting.

The Living Conservation zone forms part of an integrated framework to:

• Identify contiguous allotments with certain built and landscape elements
• Determine the range of permissible uses that are compatible with a given residential character typology,
• Prescribe objectives in relation those character types
• Define the building envelope (height, setback, building site coverage, density) that is compatible with any given character type,
• Provide design guidance, and
• Determine lot size and the potential subdivision to retain landscape setting.

This zone, its objectives and its related controls are an intrinsic part of the LEP 2005 planning framework.

Lawson Redevelopment
The core village area of Lawson was the only village centre for which specific design-based workshops were not undertaken for Draft LEP 2002. This was because the commercial centre of Lawson was to be subject to a significant redevelopment, as part of the state government’s upgrade of the Great Western Highway. Extensive planning studies and community consultation were undertaken over a number of years in relation to the nature and extent of the Highway widening and the future form of the town centre; however, the preferred option adopted by the Road and Traffic Authority (RTA) for Lawson had only recently been announced at that time.

Substantial planning and design work, environmental studies by the RTA and statutory processes for both the Highway and the Lawson Town Centre needed to be undertaken before precinct controls for Lawson could be developed. Precinct controls for Lawson were therefore required to be incorporated later, as an early amendment to the gazetted LEP 2005.

Nevertheless, Council recognised that deferring the zoning of land in the Lawson core village area until the precinct controls can be developed would leave Lawson as the only part of the city subject to the current outdated zoning and general provisions under LEP 4. Bringing Lawson under the proposed Draft LEP 2002 zones as an interim measure would afford it the same general protection as the other towns in the city. This approach was therefore adopted by Council on 18 September 2002.
Appropriate interim zones were selected for Lawson, according to the zone criteria applied across Stages 1 and 2 of Draft LEP 2002. Selection of zones was also influenced by:

- The Lawson Township Study (BBC Consulting Planners 1998) and the significant community input received on that study;
- The subsequent ‘preferred option’ for the Lawson Redevelopment Project, developed in response to community input on the Lawson Township Study and the Lawson Town Centre Retail Impact Assessment (Hill PDA 1999), and endorsed by Council and the RTA;
- Other supporting studies undertaken for both Lawson and Draft LEP 2002; and

A fine-tuning of zones or zone boundaries would be part of the LEP amendment required to introduce the specific precinct controls for Lawson, once developed in conjunction with the local community.

Amendment 1 to LEP 2005 encompassed the changes required to progress the redevelopment of Lawson town centre, and plan for revitalisation once the Highway works were complete.

**Escarpment areas**

As part of the review of Draft LEP 1997 it was recognised that existing escarpment areas required further review, with the northern and south eastern areas to be investigated for the extension of escarpment areas.

This work is still outstanding and Council has flagged the need for a current review of escarpment mapping and subsequent protections.

**Alternative housing supply**

The analysis of population trends from Draft LEP 2002 suggested that appropriate directions for the provision of alternative housing must be planned if the projected needs of households of the Blue Mountains are to be met.

The following types of alternative housing were promoted in Draft LEP 2002 and adopted in LEP 2005:

- ‘Granny flats’, in all Living and Village zones (except the Village – Neighbourhood Centre zone) and in the Employment – Enterprise zone;
Accessible housing, in a number of major service centres and in a limited number of other locations, where development is self-contained;

Medium-density housing and redevelopment at greater residential densities in Village – Housing zones, with a specified proportion of smaller dwellings, to provide affordable accommodation for smaller households;

Smaller dwellings, by permitting re-alignment of the public housing stock in a greater variety of situations; and

Mixed-use residential and commercial development and alternative housing types, within the Village – Town Centre (B2) and Village – Neighbourhood Centre (B1) zones.

Better Living Development Control Plan

Council prepared its first consolidated DCP to accompany LEP 2005. The DCP included specific principles for environmental and character assessment, and for the first time a specific set of guidelines for heritage conservation. The DCP identified the need for a focus on site specific analysis and context evaluation.

Draft LEP 2013

In 2012 Council was required to prepare a new LEP based on the Standard Instrument LEP template provided by the State government, to bring Blue Mountains LEP format into the standard format for all NSW LEPs. The approach adopted was that of a translation, as the time constraints did not allow a full-scale review. All existing provisions were ‘translated’ into a best-fit format under the State government standard template of provisions. Where no suitable translation existed, local provisions could be carried over if supported by the State government.

Because of the adopted translation approach to the new LEP, no new studies or investigations were carried out during the preparation of the draft LEP in regards to character.

A new standard zone to protect character

There was, however, a significant decision made by the Council in regard to the translation of Council’s LEP zones into the standard zones provided by the State government. The Living-Conservation zone of LEP 2005 was considered to have a strong established character that required protection from inappropriate development. As such, none of the standard zones provided by the State government were considered an appropriate translation.

As part of the preparation of the new LEP, the Council proposed to the State government the creation of a new state-wide zone, to allow the existing Living-Conservation zone under LEP 2005 to be appropriately translated. The proposed zone was titled R6 Residential...
Character Conservation, and fell under the suite of zones designed primarily for residential development.

Such a zone is consistent with the approach of other states such as Queensland and Victoria which have Neighbourhood Character zones. It is possible, and has been necessary, to disaggregate those components to comply with Standard Instrument formats. However, the underlying function of a character zone remains: to prescribe its purpose via zone objectives and to determine the permissibility of land uses that are compatible with its defined character.

Local provisions
A number of agreements were reached with the Department of Planning and Environment regarding the inclusion of local provisions. The objectives of the Locality Management provisions (for town centre precincts and areas identified for development) were to become Part 7 of the new LEP, (equivalent to and formerly Schedule 1 of LEP 2005), elevating the importance of the precinct objectives and

Heritage Review
The State government required that the existing Period Housing Area provisions either be removed, or the areas be converted to heritage conservation areas. This work was underway but incomplete during the preparation of the translation of LEP 2005 to a new LEP.

A significant review of Council’s heritage inventory was also underway during the preparation of the new LEP; however, this review was also incomplete during the preparation of the new LEP. The review had been conceived as the merging of the two heritage schedules of LEP 1991 and LEP 2005. This major updating of Council’s heritage inventory was partially progressed and involved a significant amount of change to the inventory and substantial community consultation which had not commenced.

LEP 2015
LEP 2015 was gazetted on 15 February 2016, and brought Council’s local planning framework into line with the standardised LEP template of the State government.

The proposed R6 Residential Character Conservation zone was formally proposed as Amendment No. 2 to LEP 2015, and a planning proposal including justification submitted to the State government for a new State-wide zone. This Amendment remained active for a number of years without a resolution from the State government. The affected land of the Living-Conservation zone remains deferred out of LEP 2015, and still active under LEP 2005. Lots in the Living-Conservation zone that were also in a Period Housing Area retain the Period Housing Area protections of LEP 2005.
The two heritage-related matters mentioned above were important components of the translation that were not able to be included due to time constraints. These two bodies of work remained outside of the new LEP in order that further work could be carried out to complete the reviews and resolve these matters into formal planning proposals.

Protections for Period Housing Areas were included as a local clause. Although the provisions were supported by the State government, there was a three year sunset clause included, after which the provisions would be automatically repealed. Council was required to convert Period Housing Areas to heritage conservation areas within that time or lose any protections. This required Council to carry out any additional work and submit a planning proposal to convert the Period Housing Areas to heritage conservation areas, to be gazetted within three years (February 2019). This is discussed further below.

**Development Control Plan 2015 (DCP 2015)**
The preparation of Blue Mountains DCP 2015 was a statutory requirement written to complement the new LEP 2015. This was an opportunity to benchmark Council’s new DCP against best practice and review the provisions of other Councils now widely available. Objectives and provisions were reviewed and brought up to date where necessary.

Part of the benefit of introducing a new DCP was the opportunity to include new objectives and provisions relating to urban design, infill development, and medium-density housing, which are found in Part B.

**Amendment No. 5 to LEP 2015 - Heritage Review**
Council is continuing to progress a large review of heritage items. In the Review, there are new items proposed, some modifications to existing items, and some items proposed to be deleted. The Amendment has progressed through two stages of public exhibition, and is awaiting finalisation and adoption. This work will bring Council’s heritage inventory up to date, and make changes in line with current best practice heritage management.

Future work includes a further stage of review, as per recommendations to carry out heritage management reviews every five years or so. This future review will incorporate more recent matters arising beyond the scope and timing of the current review. Further, some matters were deferred out of the current Review and require further research, for example additional information or documentary evidence, or peer review.

**Amendment No. 6 to LEP 2015 - Period Housing Area Conversion**
The Period Housing clause of LEP 2005 and LEP 2015 has provided long-term protection for ‘Period Housing Areas’ (originally Areas of Older Housing) by retaining the traditional
streeetscape character of older residential areas (pre-1946) which are significant to the town and village character of the Blue Mountains. The Clause prescribes certain design standards with which new development in Period Housing Areas must comply, and establishes standards for the maintenance of the character of existing older buildings in Period Housing Areas. Importantly, it protects our older building stock from demolition.

The State government required that Council make the conversion to heritage conservation areas before the expiration of the three year sunset clause in LEP 2015. The delaying of the resolution of these issues allowed further work to be carried out on the more detailed values of the Period Housing Areas through a Contributory Mapping Study of existing Period Housing Area properties, available here: https://yoursay.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/periodhousing/documents

This work has now been completed, and the areas of Period Housing that were in LEP 2015 have now been converted to 17 new heritage conservation areas.

A number of submissions during DLEP 2013 expressed support for Clause 6.19 Period Housing Areas as a means of protecting the historic character of the Blue Mountains towns and villages. A similar number of submissions were made in opposition to the clause, primarily objecting that Period Housing Areas (PHAs) have the capacity to restrict new development, particularly medium density development. However, medium-density development is effected through the permissibility of a zone, rather than halted by the protection of a heritage conservation area.

Recent studies have also identified the potential for expansion of the current Period Housing Areas beyond the current conversion of the areas to heritage conservation areas. This work requires peer review prior to preparing a proposal to create expanded areas.

Update on the proposed R6 Residential Character Conservation zone
The progression of the zone as an amendment to LEP 2015 has passed through many stages of negotiations with the Department of Planning and Environment and the Minister for Planning. The matter of the zone is not yet resolved, and land within the Living-Conservation zone is deferred from LEP 2015 and remains under LEP 2005. A future planning proposal will be required to bring the Living-Conservation zone forward into the state government standard LEP format under LEP 2015.
Appendix B – Historical summary of the Blue Mountains

Note: Aboriginal history is not included as part of this summary, as Aboriginal cultural heritage is beyond the scope of this Study.

Note: This summary is based on the Blue Mountains Heritage Study by Croft and Associates in association with Meredith Walker, 1983. This themed historical narrative concluded in 1983 when it was written. Since then, incremental residential and commercial development of sites has continued, within the context of a strong and developed planning framework to protect historic sites and areas from inappropriate development.

The Natural Landscape

The Lower, Mid and Upper Mountains were described in the 2002 Residential Character Study as follows, providing a good general introduction to the landscape and topographical character of the Mountains:

The Lower Mountains are typified by a series of rolling hills and ridges. As the slopes are not sheer, there is a relatively continuous soil cover and the area is well vegetated. Consequently this landscape lacks the dramatic contrasts found in the Upper Mountains. The area’s attraction lies in its contrast to the flatness of the Cumberland Plain and the expansive views of the Sydney metropolitan area. The less dramatic topography of the Lower Mountains results in residential development being set within, rather than above, the landscape elements.

The Mid Mountains are less dramatic than the Upper Mountains and are typified by spurs of development encroaching into vast areas of bushland with views from the residential areas into gullies and rolling hills. The Springwood area is dominated by ironbarks, stringybarks and yellow bloodwood, whereas around Hazelbrook and Bullaburra red bloodwood predominates. The spurs of development can be seen in Valley Rd in Hazelbrook, Leumeah Rd in Woodford, Bee Farm Rd in Springwood and generally off Hawkesbury Rd in Winmalee. These areas have a bushland setting due to their proximity to the bush and their views across ridges and into the National Park.

Triassic rocks overlying soft permian sediments are typical of the Upper Mountains and produce more dramatic landscapes. The blue green of vegetation on the plateau is separated from the valley floor by sandstone bluffs. From the Upper Mountains, expansive views of unbroken bushland to the north and south are regularly available.
The dramatic landscape of the Upper Mountains often results in residential development perched high on flat plateaux with magnificent views. Views such as views seen across the Jamison Valley from Cliff Drive, Katoomba, have become iconic to the Blue Mountains visitor experience. Other areas are dominated by bushland streetscape elements such as the Mountain Ash along Queens Rd, Leura and North Victoria Street in Mount Victoria.

**World Heritage Listing**

In 2000, the Blue Mountains Local Government Area became part of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, and was listed as of World Heritage significance by the United Nations Environmental Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

The summary listing states that “The Greater Blue Mountains Area consists of 1.03 million ha of sandstone plateaux, escarpments and gorges dominated by temperate eucalypt forest. The site, comprised of eight protected areas, is noted for its representation of the evolutionary adaptation and diversification of the eucalypts in post-Gondwana isolation on the Australian continent. Ninety-one eucalypt taxa occur within the Greater Blue Mountains Area which is also outstanding for its exceptional expression of the structural and ecological diversity of the eucalypts associated with its wide range of habitats. The site provides significant representation of Australia’s biodiversity with ten percent of the vascular flora as well as significant numbers of rare or threatened species, including endemic and evolutionary relict species, such as the Wollemi pine, which have persisted in highly-restricted microsites.”

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<tr>
<th>State theme</th>
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| The naturally evolved environment | (1) Features occurring naturally in the physical environment which have significance independent of human intervention  
(2) Features occurring naturally in the physical environment which have shaped or influenced human life and cultures. | Geological formations, fossil sites, ecological communities, mountain range, woodlands, valleys, evidence of bushfire and other natural occurrences |

**Early European Exploration**

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<th>State theme</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Geological formations, fossil sites, ecological communities, mountain range, woodlands, valleys, evidence of bushfire and other natural occurrences</td>
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</table>
European Exploration (myth of the explorers) | Activities associated with making places previously unknown to a cultural group known to them | Explorer’s route, marked tree, camp site, explorer’s journal, surveyor’s notebook, mountain pass, water source, Aboriginal trade route, map

The Blue Mountains story is woven into the colonial history that accompanied the first European settlement in Australia, with its themes of exploration and settlement. These Mountains were originally named by Governor Arthur Phillip as the Carmarthen and Landsdowne Hills; however within a few years these official names had faded from general usage and the range became generally known as the Blue Mountains.

Twenty-five years after the First Fleet arrived in Port Jackson, European explorers found a way across the Blue Mountains. The development of a transport corridor to the west began with the original crossing of the mountains by colonial explorers seeking the land beyond for agriculture and economic growth. Other motivations included the desire for knowledge of the interior, and the desire to extend the boundaries of scientific knowledge, stimulated by the influence of Joseph Banks. A number of failed attempts to cross the Mountains was due to the ruggedness of the terrain, and the inability to read the terrain and follow the ridgelines correctly. The first road was Cox’s 1814 road, followed by Mitchell’s 1830s road, which then became the Great Western Road.

Little physical evidence remains from the period of exploration, and some recorded relics may have more symbolic than historic value, such as Caley’s Repulse at Linden and Explorer’s Tree in Katoomba. Bushfires destroyed many marked trees. The principal surviving impact of the exploration period is the route itself, the discovery of which had immediate and far-reaching impacts.

The Western Road

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<th>State theme</th>
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<tr>
<td>Convict</td>
<td>Activities relating to incarceration, transport, reform, accommodation and working during the convict period in NSW (1788-1850) – does not include activities associated with the Convict labour (building of the Western Road)</td>
<td>Convict labour (building of the Western Road)</td>
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</table>
The road transformed the way the early colonists perceived the Blue Mountains. From being an insurmountable obstacle, the Mountains now became a key factor in the colony’s development, establishing an artery linking the coastal settlement with the rich western pastoral lands.

William Cox was appointed to construct the Western Road in July 1814. The road was completed in six months, with a graded surface and bridges and culverts constructed where necessary. Many road sections remained difficult to navigate and posed problems for many years, such as Lapstone Hill, the steep ridge near Linden, Hobby’s Reach at Wentworth Falls and Mount York.

Within a year, a road suitable for carts was built and the site of Bathurst proclaimed. Bathurst became a springboard for further western expansion. The new western grazing land became the foundation of a powerful pastoral gentry for whom the Mountains road was a life-line.

A military depot, firstly near Glenbrook Lagoon and later Springwood, restricted traffic on the road to those with a written pass. In the 1830s the restrictions were eased as the land grant system was replaced by land auction, and the wool industry continued to thrive in expanding settlement in the west.
As travellers increased in numbers over the Mountains, the development of inns, or ‘huts’ as they were known, sprang up to accommodate them at regular intervals along the Western Road. Sizeable areas of land were ‘reserved’ for travelling stock and for public camping grounds.

After 1851 and the discovery of payable gold at Ophir, traffic on the Road became even heavier, with thousands travelling by foot, horseback or coach. In the ensuing decade, the population of Australia more than doubled, with many diverse nationalities arriving and passing to the Western Goldfields. At night, the inns and their surroundings were transformed into large, animated encampments.

The development of a number of the Blue Mountains towns can be traced back to the establishment of road construction depots, military posts to supervise traffic flow and convict road gangs, and inns to accommodate travellers. Prior to the railway, settlement was sparse and, without exception, had a very close relationship to activity on the road. Main sites were Springwood’s military depot, the Woodford and Linden vicinity with its concentration of hostelry, military, police and toll-collecting activity, the Weatherboard Hut at Wentworth Falls, and the Scotch Thistle Inn and Blackheath Stockade at Blackheath.

A number of important relics and remainders of the early roads still exist, such as various early alignments of early roads and passes, including the State-listed remnants of Cox’s Road and its early deviations. There are archaeological remains in Faulconbridge, Linden, Woodford, and Mount York.

**The Railway**

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<th>State theme</th>
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<tr>
<td>Transport (east-west road links 1814 onwards, and Railway from 1860’s, east-west)</td>
<td>Activities associated with the moving of people and goods from one place to another, and systems for the provision of such movements</td>
<td>Railway station, highway, lane, train, carriage, dray, stock route, bridge, toll gate, horse yard, coach stop.</td>
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Improvements in transport and communications were vital for the development of New South Wales. In the 1850s travel and transportation was uncomfortable, hazardous and sometimes impossible. The construction of the railway was essential, and its arrival in the Mountains had a dramatic impact, opening many areas to those with resources to enjoy the
environment for leisure and recreation. It also provided the means to exploit coal and shale being discovered.

Extension of the emerging railway beyond Parramatta, Campbelltown and Maitland to the west to Bathurst was considered essential but was not to prove easy. By 1863 the Western Railway was completed as far as Penrith, which was the departure point for coaches to Bathurst. However, the completion of the railway over the Mountains posed similar problems as earlier, and the Mountains were again seen as a major barrier to westward progress. The difficulties of ascent and descent occupied the talents of those concerned for many years. The Lapstone Zig-Zag, designed by John Whitton and his staff, ascended the escarpment with two reversing points and incorporated a magnificent seven-arched sandstone viaduct across Knapsack Gully.

By July 1867, the railway was completed as far as Weatherboard (Wentworth Falls), and by May the following year had reached Mount Victoria. Whitton again employed the zig-zag technique to descend the Mountains, and the Lithgow or Great Zig-Zag is an impressive piece of engineering. A number of important features remain, such as the abandoned cuttings of previous alignments of the western railway line.

The top of the main ridge is the only viable route to cross the Mountains, therefore the railway and road shared this often narrow route. This resulted in the road and railway crossing at various points, with twelve level crossings between Emu Plains and Mount Victoria, and all except one provided with stone gatehouses. In 1902 when the line was duplicated, most of these crossings were removed and replaced by underbridges or overbridges. Springwood, Wentworth Falls and Mount Victoria were the only brick station buildings to survive the duplication, as many were demolished.

In the decades following the opening of the railway line, a large number of the present townships emerged and took shape around the new railway platforms. Many early platforms were located close to existing inns, reinforcing the early stages of settlement. These included the Pilgrim’s Inn at Blaxland, Boland’s Inn at Springwood, the King’s Arms Hotel at Woodford, the Blue Mountain Inn at Lawson, the Weatherboard Inn at Wentworth Falls and the Scotch Thistle Inn at Blackheath.

Water storage and reticulation facilities, essential to run steam engines until electrification was introduced, were established at Glenbrook, Woodford/Linden, Lawson, Wentworth Falls and Blackheath. The supplies eventually became public, servicing towns or being converted to lakes (Glenbrook and Wentworth Falls) or swimming pools (Lawson and Blackheath).
Those working on the railway also contributed to the growth and development of the towns along its route. Services such as accommodation houses, hotels, stores, butcher’s and baker’s shops, and public schools for the children in the work camps sprang up.

The division of towns through the road and rail corridor bisection also meant that different settlement patterns developed on either side, and different parish boundaries also bisected some towns. Towns such as Katoomba and Blackheath, where a Crown subdivision was established on one side of the railway, separate those areas from other parts of town that developed through the subdivision of earlier grants.

**Coal and Shale Mining**

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<tr>
<th>State theme</th>
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<th>Local theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other minerals (stone quarries) Industry</td>
<td>Activities associated with the manufacture, production and distribution of goods</td>
<td>Depot, industrial machinery, timber mill, quarry, private railway, kiln, brewery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>Activities associated with the identification, extraction, processing and distribution of mineral ores, precious stones and other such inorganic substances.</td>
<td>Mine, quarry, Mining landscape, mining equipment, mining license, colliery, mine shaft, mineral deposit.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The presence of coal and shale in the Mountains was known as early as 1824 for Hartley oil shale and coal in the Mountains noted in 1841. The imminent construction of the railway encouraged considerable exploration. The most successful operations were in Hartley, followed by the eventual expansion of the Hartley-Lithgow area as a large industrial centre.

The Katoomba area was next to be exploited, when Thomas Sutcliffe Mort established the Glen Shale Mine on the Megalong side of the Narrow Neck peninsula. The difficulties of transportation however appeared too daunting.

In the 1870s John Britty North purchased substantial land which later formed a large part of the Katoomba township. His early homes in Katoomba were Essendene (destroyed by fire) and Lassie Brae (in Katoomba Street now demolished).

Coal seams near Orphan Rock led to the establishment by North of the ‘Katoomba Coal Mine’ in 1872, and kerosene shale near outcrops near Ruined Castle led to another
company he formed, the ‘Katoomba Coal and Shale Co Ltd’ in 1885. Various other coal and shale mines opened up in the Megalong and Jamison Valleys, connected by tramways to North’s Siding, a loading depot on the Western Railway in Katoomba. The wreckage of the ‘Flying Fox’ elevated tramway still exists on the Jamison Valley floor, where it collapsed. This disaster led to the liquidation and end of the company and mining at Ruined Castle ceased.

In 1890 a new company, Australian Kerosene Oil and Mineral Company, took over the Glen Shale Mine and the Ruined Castle shale operation, and built new tramways, including a tunnel through Narrow Neck linking the operations in the Megalong and Jamison Valleys.

After 1895, mining activities decreased as the seams were spent and sales returns reduced. By 1903 the shale industry at Katoomba had ceased. In 1925 there was a brief resurgence, and the Katoomba Colliery Ltd resumed activities, supplying coal to the Katoomba Electric Power House and to local hotels, guesthouses and residents. During the Depression, costs increased and the local market subsided, however the mine continued to operate until the Second World War. The coal haulage system had been rehabilitated however, and became integrated into the booming Katoomba tourist industry of the 1920s and 1930s as the Scenic Railway.

The influence of the mining operations in Katoomba brought the area to wider attention and began to establish the town as a population centre.

**Recreation, Health and Tourism**

Following the establishment of the railway, the Mountains became increasingly accessible for settlement and leisure activities. In the 1870s the Mountains became a destination rather than a conduit. Rail travel became a means to experience the invigorating fresh Mountain air and the beautiful scenery. The Mountains began to have value for recreational pursuits, first by a wealthy and educated elite, and ultimately, following a shift of social and economic forces in Australian society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, of an affluent and mobile middle class. The motor car began to rival the train as the means to recreation.

While the promotion of health and recreation may have been elitist in the 1870s and 1880s, the basic concept of healthy, enjoyable living has remained a strong motivating factor behind the rapid development of the Blue Mountains following construction of the railway.

The prevailing conditions in Sydney in the late nineteenth century were grim; overcrowding, poverty, lack of sanitation and disease were becoming serious problems. Inadequate medical knowledge about cholera, typhoid and smallpox created widespread fear, and it was generally accepted by doctors that these diseases were spread over broad areas by
wind. The supposed hygienic qualities of Mountain air led to a faith in the climate of the Blue Mountains as an antidote to ill health. This was an important factor in the trend towards Mountains country estates and the early establishment of Katoomba as a tourist haven.

Over the years many have sought the lofty heights and invigorating atmosphere with expectations of healing. Mountain air was thought in medical circles to be of particular benefit to those suffering from tuberculosis and other chest complaints, and that convalescence would be enhanced by the Mountain environment.

Sanitariums and convalescent homes became a feature of the Blue Mountains, such as the Queen Victoria Hospital, 1903, and Bodington, 1908, both at Wentworth Falls. With the decline in demand for accommodation following World War Two, some guesthouses were converted to convalescent hospitals, such as The Ritz at Leura, and Anita Villa (the former Sans Souci Guest House) in Katoomba.

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<th>State theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Activities associated with preparing and providing medical assistance and/or promoting or maintaining the wellbeing of humans</td>
<td>Hospital, sanatorium, nurses quarters</td>
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Intellectuals, artists, writers and photographers have been attracted to the Mountains, inspired by the elevated and distant location from Sydney, the inspiring landscapes and climate. They ‘captured’ the aesthetics and romance and served as mythmakers and interpreters of the environment, encouraging contemplation and inspiration. Of the many academics, artists and writers who have resided in the Mountains over the years, the most famous include Norman Lindsay, Eleanor Dark and Harry Phillips amongst many more. The Mountains have a spiritual dimension and have a long association with symbolic and religious significance. Many religious groups have established schools, colleges, and meditation and convention centres in the Mountains.

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<tr>
<td>Creative endeavour</td>
<td>Activities associated with the production and performance of literary, artistic, architectural and other imaginative,</td>
<td>Theatre, writer’s studio, cinema, exemplar of an architectural style, work of art, craftwork, and/or public garden, rock art site,</td>
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interpretive or inventive works; and/or associated with the production and expression of cultural phenomena; and/or environments that have inspired such creative activities.

library, public hall; and/or a, particular place to which there has been a particular creative, stylistic or design response.

The Mountains have a further interest for scientific groups and are themselves of great scientific interest. The natural history of the region was of great interest even before the railway, with Charles Darwin possibly the most famous visitor. The Blue Mountains offers considerable scope for those interested in the natural sciences, with many walking guides and field guides to endemic geology, plants, birds, animals and other features.

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<tr>
<td>Scientific (natural geological elements)</td>
<td>Activities associated with systematic observations, experiments and processes for the explanation of observable phenomena</td>
<td>Observatory, botanical garden, arboretum, research station, weather station, fossil site, archaeological research site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment – cultural landscape</td>
<td>Activities associated with the interactions between humans, human societies and the shaping of their physical surroundings</td>
<td>Landscape types, bushfire fighting equipment, national park, nature reserve, gardens, evidence of Aboriginal land management, avenue of trees, place important for natural and cultural heritage conservation</td>
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During the 1870s, the more reliable and rapid travel encouraged Sydney’s more affluent people such as judges, politicians and businessmen to purchase land and build country residences in the Blue Mountains. The Linden-Faulconbridge-Springwood area was
particularly attractive in the 1870s and 1880s, and large areas were purchased and gracious
country homes erected. Some estates had private railway platforms, such as the Lucasville
platform and the Breakfast Point platforms both near Glenbrook, and the Eager’s platform in
Valley Heights. The most significant estates of this time include Wyoming at Valley Heights,
Moorecourt and Silva Plana both at Springwood (both demolished), Faulconbridge House
Numantia (now Weemala), Alphington (now Danville), and Eurama, all at Faulconbridge,
and Linden Lodge at Linden, Yester Grange at Wentworth Falls, Lilianfels at Katoomba, the
now Cooper’s Grand Hotel in Mount Victoria built by the Fairfax family, and many estates in
Mount Wilson. The ‘country estate’ trend soon attracted others, including the businesses and
services required to satisfy the needs of these new communities.

As the Mountains’ reputation grew, the desire for holiday accommodation began to make
an impact upon the Mountain environment. The 1880s onwards saw the appearance of
gracious, even palatial hotels and guesthouses, principally in the Upper Mountains with a
focus on Katoomba. The Carrington Hotel (Great Western Hotel, 1882) in Katoomba, The Ritz
(The Swiss Cottage, early 1880s) in Leura, the Hydro Majestic by Mark Foy, 1904, in Medlow
Bath were the largest and most well-known. Many other smaller establishments were offering
accommodation in Katoomba and Leura.

From a small mining community, Katoomba developed a diverse and enlarged permanent
population. Schools, shops, churches and a local newspaper all made their appearance in
the 1880s, and the town was appointed a municipality.

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<tr>
<td>Country towns</td>
<td>Activities associated with creating, planning and managing urban functions, landscapes and lifestyles in towns, suburbs and villages</td>
<td>Town plan, streetscape, village reserve, concentrations of urban functions, civic centre, subdivision pattern, abandoned town site, urban square, fire hydrant, market place, relocated civic centre, boundary feature, municipal Coat of Arms</td>
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<tr>
<td>(commercial centres in townships)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Towns, suburbs and villages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Land tenure</td>
<td>Activities and processes for identifying forms of ownership and</td>
<td>Fence, survey mark, subdivision pattern,</td>
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</table>
Prior to World War I, the Municipal Council and the Katoomba and Leura Tourist Association promoted the area to attract tourists. They sought to provide public services to match Sydney. A gas supply was provided in 1890, and telephone services by 1899, and a water supply with the construction of Cascade Dam by 1905. The Carrington Hotel installed its own electric lighting plant in 1911 and provided electricity to the town. Numerous lookouts, walking, and riding paths were constructed prior to the rise of the motor car. By 1912 there were some 5,000 permanent residents in Katoomba. These few decades between c.1895 and c.1915 saw the extensive development of the residential areas of Upper Mountains particularly in the larger towns such as Wentworth Falls, Katoomba and Blackheath with streets of weatherboard cottages of a Late Victorian or Federation style, setting the scene for the long-term historic value of these residential areas.

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<tr>
<td>A place to live (weekenders or residents on large blocks 1860’s onward) Accommodation</td>
<td>Activities associated with the provision of accommodation, and particular types of accommodation – does not include architectural styles – use the theme of Creative Endeavour for such activities.</td>
<td>Country estate, country retreat, dwelling, apartment, holiday houses and weekenders, hostel, bungalow, mansion, shack, caravan, cave, homestead, cottage, house site (archaeological).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social institutions</td>
<td>Activities and organisational arrangements for the provision of social activities</td>
<td>CWA Room, Masonic hall, School of Arts, Mechanic’s Institute, museum, art gallery, RSL Club, public hall, historical society collection, public library.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Blackheath had a similar pattern of growth to Katoomba albeit on a smaller scale, benefitting from the tourist boom. A very active Progress Committee promoted and maintained the sights and walking tracks, and published the hundred page booklet ‘Blackheath’ in 1903. They worked to establish a local government to ensure public services were developed, and instigated a local water supply from Medlow Dam in 1907. They gained municipal status in 1926, as well as reticulated water the same year, with telephone services from 1909 and electricity from the 1920s.

In the Inter-War period, tourism and leisure activities in the Mountains entered a new phase. The expansion of the middle class in Sydney beyond basic necessities led to an early to mid-1920s ‘boom’ period when the area became a honeymoon mecca for the middle class with a special ‘Honeymoon Train’ service in operation. Katoomba was widely publicised as a popular holiday resort. Multi-storeyed guesthouses increased in numbers and Katoomba became distinctive in appearance and sometimes congested. It became set apart from the more rural towns like Blackheath and Wentworth Falls where cottages and holiday homes on larger lots were typical.

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<th>State theme</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tourism: Leisure</td>
<td>Activities associated with recreation and relaxation</td>
<td>Resort, swimming pool, dance hall, hotel, caravan park, tourist brochures, park, clubhouse, lookout, bush walking track, fishing spot, picnic place, swimming hole.</td>
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| Life cycle (cemeteries, private and public along the Great Western Highway) Birth and Death | Activities associated with the initial stages of human life and the bearing of children, and with the final stages of human life and disposal of the dead. | maternity hospital, nursery, baby clinic, nursing home, funeral parlour, cremation site, cemetery, burial register, memorial plantings. |
New amenities began to reflect the demands of the new tourist; contemplation of nature was not enough to attract the new consumers. Sporting facilities such as golf, bowls and tennis rapidly appeared, the latter often attached to guesthouses. Public swimming pools, theatres and skating rinks appeared, for example The Empire (Embassy) Theatre and the Kings Theatre (The Savoy) both in Katoomba Street.

Visitors tried to see as many sights as possible in the time available. Seventeen tourist coach businesses flourished in the 1920s and 1930s in Katoomba, each with fleets of coaches manned by driver-guides. Scenic drives were constructed, as well as the projecting platform of Echo Point in 1932. Cliff Drive opened in 1937 with panoramic views of the Megalong and Jamison Valleys.

During the Great Depression and with the aid of the Unemployment Relief Scheme, work was carried out to improve and maintain tourist attractions such as the Giant Stairway, Prince Henry Cliff Walk, Marge and Elizabeth Lookouts in Glenbrook and Shipley Plateau in Blackheath. Bushwalking experienced a resurgence of popularity, and during the height of the Depression, the campaign to save the Blue Gum Forest was fought and won.

Other bush devotees including Miles Dunphy and local groups were active in promoting a scheme for a Blue Mountains National Park, originally formulated in 1922. The 1930s were formative in the emergence of the modern conservation movement, however it took until 1959 to gazette the first section of the Blue Mountains National Park.

During the Second World War, fear of invasion led to further waves of people moving to the Mountains. Some schools were temporarily transferred from Sydney. Large military camps were sited west behind the mountain barrier, and the RAAF base was established at Lapstone.

The ongoing trend towards shorter day visits to the Mountains continued in the 1950s, with faster travel times by car or rail. This was accompanied by a decline in demand for overnight accommodation. Guesthouses and the associated employment opportunities declined. The emphasis on day tripping and coach tourism is perhaps symbolised by the rise in popularity of the Scenic Railway and Skyway, which included a revolving restaurant.

The rise of national and international tourism have had their effect on the Blue Mountains’ reputation as a place to spend an extended holiday. Nevertheless, the Blue Mountains has not lost its attraction to the bushwalker and camper.

**Rural Industry**

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October 2019  
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Fertile lands lie on both sides of the Mountains, in the Nepean-Hawkesbury to the east, and the rich lands around Bathurst to the west. However, the Mountains with its rugged landscape and limited flat land does not have a significant rural industry with the exception of the Megalong and Kanimbla Valleys and Shipley Plateau.

The Megalong and Kanimbla Valleys have the only land suitable for grazing and fodder production. Settlement dates back to the 1830s. Timber was a valuable industry for the Megalong, and the Kanimbla Valley possessed a fine fruit orchard. The Shipley Plateau in Blackheath has been a centre for small orchards, poultry farms, and some cattle grazing.

Sawmills and timber merchants were a common feature of many Mountains towns, for the exploitation of natural timbers for railway sleepers, houses and firewood. There were also small dairy farms, and small vegetable and poultry farms, important to local markets. Some big hotels like The Carrington had their own private farms.

The Mount Wilson, Mount Tomah and Mount Irvine area has become known for its horticulture. The rich volcanic soils are particularly suitable for garden-planting. The area contains magnificent English-style gardens which are a significant attraction for tourists. The Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens and a number of small farms have established themselves as producers of seedlings and nursery requirements over the years. Timber was also an important industry in the area, with a number of established sawmills. The area around Berambing and Bilpin has become known for its apple orchards.
The Yellow Rock area northeast of Springwood has moderately fertile soils and supports a range of agricultural activities comprising several small farms and nurseries.

**Post-War Development**

Following the Second World War, there was a slow and incremental approach to development, particularly in the Upper Mountains, and many sites remained undeveloped well into the 1940s and 1950s. Holiday homes remained vacant or rented to permanent residents. However in the Lower Mountains, populations expanded dramatically between 1950 and 1980. The improved transport times linked the Lower Mountains and reduced a sense of distance. Penrith continued to develop as a district centre, and more people were able to live in the bush setting of the Mountains and commute to work each day. Increased subdivisions and lower land values than Sydney attracted people who might otherwise have lived closer to Sydney. The Lower Mountains continues to attract young families with children.

At the same time, the trend to retirement in the Blue Mountains, established earlier and in parallel to the development of holiday homes, particularly in the Mid and Upper Mountains, was strengthened. As Sydney expanded, areas used for vacations were swallowed up by suburban development.

The improved access to the city and its western suburbs also stimulated a trend for commuting from the Mountains and the creation of dormitory suburbs, particularly in the Lower Mountains. Post-War residential growth in the Lower Mountains has seen small towns focused on the Highway and railway expand along ridgelines and into dormitory suburbs such as Mount Riverview, Lapstone and Winmalee. Towns such as Glenbrook, Blaxland and Springwood have grown as major service centres to serve expanding populations. While some churches, schools and other buildings survive in the Lower Mountains, many facilities and shops are relatively recent (Post-War to contemporary).

While cheaper land and attractive living environments continue to attract people to the Blue Mountains, growth in population is not without its consequences. The increasing population puts pressure on the Blue Mountains environment. Uncontrolled expansion would have serious consequences on the natural landscape – the traditional and principal source of the Blue Mountains attraction and popularity. The resolve in the 1970s to protect the eastern escarpment from the encroachment of Sydney’s western suburbs is a reflection of this growing concern. How these issues continue to be managed will form important themes in the region’s development over coming decades.
Events | Activities and processes that mark the consequences of natural and cultural occurrences | Monument, memorial, honour board, blazed tree, obelisk, camp site

This themed historical narrative concluded in 1983 when it was written. Since then, incremental residential and commercial development of sites has continued, within the context of a strong and developed planning framework to protect historic sites and areas from inappropriate development.

The planning controls developed since this study have a focus on protecting and preserving the environment, historic sites, relics and areas, and the character of our town centres and residential neighbourhoods.