



our future
Camden

Camden Town Centre Vision

December 2014



“I love that Camden is different to other towns in Sydney. We need to give locals and tourists more reasons to visit Camden”



Image Source: Camden heritage church building

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Executive Summary

The Camden Town Centre (the town centre) is the heart of the Camden Local Government Area. It is valued not just by the local community, but also by others for its unique and attractive character. Despite this, the town centre is currently facing challenges that if not addressed threaten to undermine its economic vitality. Doing nothing in the face of these challenges is not an option. However, out of challenge can come growth and renewal, and Camden now has the opportunity to rethink the town centre and create a guiding blueprint for its future. This vision is this blueprint. It is a blend of technical research and analysis and community engagement. It is robust and evidence based and is informed by the views of the local resident, business and stakeholder community

The intent of this vision is to protect and strengthen the town centre's valued and distinct character while at the same time facilitating appropriate change and growth. This is not a vision for radical change. Rather it's a guide for the gradual and measured evolution of the town centre to something better and stronger.

This intent can be encapsulated in to the following vision statement:

By 2031, Camden will be:

- **a distinct town centre** – a town centre that embraces its unique character and sense of place
- **a prosperous town centre** – a town centre that has a strong, thriving and resilient economy
- **a vibrant town centre** – a town centre that is lively, exciting and interesting
- **an accessible and connected town centre** – a town centre that people can readily access through a number of transport choices and is easy, safe and comfortable to move around
- **a town centre for all** – a town centre that is welcoming and offers something for everyone.

Underpinning the achievement of this vision are the following principles:

- attract more people
- revitalisation
- evolution
- establishing the right conditions

The recent loss of large, stable employers from the town centre will be compounded in 2016 by the relocation of Camden council and its administrative staff to Oran Park. This will lead to the loss of a further 100 workers, which will have an adverse flow on impact on weekday trade for business such as restaurants, cafes, convenience and comparison retail. Attracting more locals will help fill the hole left by the departure of these businesses and sustain the lifeblood of the town centre during weekdays. Attracting more visitors will increase higher value expenditure in the town centre, and has the potential to generate and catalyse demand for different, higher impact business such as food and wine premises and boutique accommodation. More people attract more business in a positive cycle of growth.

Revitalisation is a multi-faceted approach that seeks to integrate economic, social and environmental initiatives to create better places. Initiatives for revitalisation, rather than simply enabling property development, should underpin Camden's approach to sustainability and resilience.

Evolution recognises and builds on the strengths of a place in a measured manner rather than seeking to make radical, disruptive changes based on ideology or what has worked somewhere else.

Economic success and prosperity is the result of government, in particular council, setting in place the right conditions so that when an opportunity arises, business can establish and grow. This involves identifying barriers and putting in place a co-ordinated strategy and range of actions that together send the right signals to the market, and provide an environment where it is easy to do business.

This vision and principles are supported by 15 strategies:

- 1 strengthen Argyle Street
- 2 balance character with development
- 3 protect and strengthen heritage
- 4 create well designed buildings and places
- 5 promote a complete town centre
- 6 develop a diverse business base
- 7 connect and engage
- 8 a dedicated resource
- 9 make it easy to do business
- 10 sell the message
- 11 facilitate development of catalyst sites
- 12 celebrate and interact
- 13 improve carparking
- 14 encourage alternative movement choices
- 15 establish a central gathering place.

A number of initiatives underpin these strategies, and complete the vision.

The vision proposes an implementation plan identifying responsibilities and timeframes to promote people and agencies to take action. The success of the vision doesn't just rely on council, rather it relies on the co-ordinated effort of a range of partners.

Timeframes and proper sequencing is critical. Quick wins can be achieved through prioritising over the short term:

- implementing strategic public domain upgrades
- planning for and facilitating the future renewal of council owned catalyst sites
- connecting and engaging with key local institutions such as Camden Hospital and University of Sydney to bring their customers, visitors and employees into the town
- appointing a co-ordinator to drive the implementation of strategies and initiatives
- developing an integrated program of business incentives
- selling the message by better marketing the town centre
- preparing a revised planning framework to better protect the town centre's character and facilitating appropriate development opportunities, including an urban design framework, public domain and streetscape plan, and updated LEP and DCP.

Over the longer term, releasing opportunities for more people to live, work and play in the town centre through the quick wins will start to attract more business, including high impact retail that has the potential to draw in more visitors from outside the local area. The evolution of Camden into a destination location can be supported through complementary initiatives such as reinvigorating forgotten or underused spaces and improving public transport connections.





Introduction

1.0 Introduction

Why is a vision needed?

Our cities and towns are constantly changing and evolving. Therefore, a plan for the future that worked 5 years ago may not work now. Camden sits within one of the fastest growing parts of the Sydney Metropolitan Area. Growth has not only seen more people call the Camden local government area (LGA) home, but also a broader range of people who often have different views and expectations of the way things should be. It has also seen the emergence and rise of nearby centres such as Narellan. These changes can have both positive and negative impacts.

One of the critical challenges is the changing retail landscape driven by changing consumer needs and preferences relating to how and where people spend their money. Due to high cost of living, consumers have less to spend, in particular in discretionary items. The 2008 Global Financial Crisis compounded this, resulting in many taking a more cautious approach and further reducing spending.

People are also increasingly preferring to shop at large shopping centres and clusters of bulky goods retailers. Key reasons for this include the type and diversity of retail offering, and convenient access and parking. With the recent approval of a major extension to the nearby Narellan town centre, Camden will face increasing competition for retail expenditure.

On top of this, people are increasingly turning to online retailers. This results in less demand for physical space in town centres for merchants to sell their products.

More particular to Camden are some other challenges. Camden has recently seen the relocation of a number of government and community assets such as the local police station and high school to other areas. Camden council, which is the largest single employer in the town centre, will also vacate its current premises and move to nearby Oran Park

in 2016. There are a number of other community identified challenges as well, including a perceived shortage of convenient carparking and the rise of chain and 'dollar' shops.

Taken together with other identified weaknesses and constraints, this means that traditional main street focussed town centres such as Camden cannot continue to rely on what has previously been successful, and certainly not rely simply on retail, to sustain them into the 21st century.

Doing nothing in the face of this challenge is not an option.

However, out of challenge can come growth and renewal, and Camden now has the opportunity to rethink the town centre and create a guiding blueprint for its future.

In its stewardship role for the Camden Town Centre, council made a decision to invest in the preparation of this document to guide the future of the town centre. It builds on the foundation set by the current Camden Town Centre Strategy 2008 and is informed by technical research and analysis and community and stakeholder input.

This blueprint will build on and leverage the town centre's strengths and opportunities, in particular its distinct character, to achieve future resilience and sustainability.

It will be used by council to inform its current and future planning, public domain and investment activities.

The vision aims for a time horizon of up to 10 years. During this time, in response to changing circumstances and new information, from time to time the vision will be reviewed and updated. A complete review will occur close to the expiry of a 10 year time horizon.

How did this document come about?

Key steps in the planning process included:

- **Understanding place** - effective strategy is based on a clear understanding of place. This step investigated three of the building blocks of Camden – its place, people and planning
- **Building the evidence base** – undertaking research and analysis into the key technical matters of transport and traffic and the retail and commercial economy
- **Engaging the community** – increasing community and stakeholder awareness of the vision process and providing them with meaningful opportunities to get involved and help shape the direction of the vision
- **Defining the challenge** – clearly identifying the challenge so that development of the vision is focussed on tackling the right issues
- **Developing a vision and key outcomes** – developing an aspirational but pragmatic vision and key outcomes for the future of the town centre
- **Developing and weighing up choices** – developing and considering the relative strengths and weaknesses of different ideas in relation to economic, social and environmental criteria
- **Generating strategy and initiatives** – working up the most beneficial ideas into strategy and initiatives
- **Implementation** – preparing a comprehensive implementation strategy that outlines responsibility, timeframes and sequencing.

The Study Area

The study area covers the Camden Town Centre in its entirety. It is generally bounded by the Nepean River floodplain to the north, east and west, and Barsden Street, Park Street and St Johns Church ground to the south.

Structure of this document

This document is structured as follows:

- **Part 1** – provides an introduction to the vision, outlining its purposes and how it was prepared
- **Part 2** - provides an overview of people, place and planning
- **Part 3** – outlines the technical evidence base that helped inform development of the vision
- **Part 4** – discusses how the community helped shape the direction of the vision
- **Part 5** – identifies the constraints, opportunities and issues that are unique to the Town Centre and have a bearing on its future
- **Part 6** – presents the vision and supporting principles
- **Parts 7 to 12** – presents the strategies and initiatives that are designed to help achieve the vision and key outcomes
- **Part 13** – contains an indicative implementation plan that maps out a framework for putting in place the strategies and initiatives
- **Part 14** – identifies how this vision can be reviewed to ensure it remains relevant to changing trends and circumstances.







Understanding Place

The Camden Town Centre has a rich and unique sense of place. Understanding the essence of this sense of place is a critical first step in developing effective, robust and authentic strategy. This section looks at three important elements of place – place itself, people and planning.

2.0 Understanding Place

Place

Camden is located at the heart of the Macarthur region approximately 65km to the south-west of the Sydney CBD. The aerial photo below shows some key features of the town centre.

Originally home to the Gundungurra people, Camden was established as a town by Europeans in 1840 with the first sale of township allotments. Camden has strong connections with the Macarthur family, whose family home Camden Park is still located to the south-east of the present day town. It was the efforts of the first European settlers that Camden hinterland became the birthplace of the Australian wool, wheat and wine industries.

Camden today retains strong connections to its surroundings. Its natural setting surrounded on three sides by the expansive Nepean River floodplain provides it with vistas to pastureland, and provides a strong delineation between it and growing suburban communities to the north such as Narellan and Spring Farm. This natural setting is further enhanced by a number of other attributes that together work to create a distinct, semi-rural character.

These elements include:

- a traditional, wide main street with a Jacaranda planted median in the form of Argyle Street
- a largely human scale, fine-grain and eclectic but coherent main street built form
- a walkable, square grid of streets and pedestrian laneways
- dominant built form landmarks in the shape of St Johns church, the National Australia Bank building on the corner of Argyle and John Streets and Macaria on John Street
- a wealth of heritage buildings.

Importantly, the Town Centre is compact, with most of it being contained within a 400m radius (5minute walk) of the intersection of John and Argyle Streets. This is a major contributor to its highly walkable character.



People

The Town Centre has a population of 3,244 persons (2011). This comprises 1,543 males (47.6%) and 1,701 females (52.4%). Compared to the typical characteristics set for town centres by the state government, this population is relatively small.

The median age (40) is older than the Sydney average of 36 years. Children aged 0 - 14 years make up 17.4% of the population and people aged 65 years and over make up 21.8% of the population.

The majority of residents are born in Australia (80.7%). This is high compared to the Sydney average of 69.8%. The most common ancestries are Australian 30.9%, English 30.1%, Irish 9.0%, Scottish 8.0% and German 2.7%. 90.6% of residents only speak English at home compared to 76.8% of Sydney residents.

1.8% of the population identifies as either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Other languages spoken at home include Italian 0.7%, Spanish 0.4%, Indonesian 0.3%, German 0.3% and Greek 0.2%.

More people work full-time in Camden (65.7%) compared to Sydney (59.7%). However this is reversed in relation to part-time work, with fewer Camden residents working part-time (23.8% vs 28.7%).

Camden residents live in 799 dwellings. 72.2% of dwellings are separate houses, with close to a third of dwellings being medium density.

Other facts include:

- the average children per family is 1.8
- the average people per household is 2.4
- the median weekly household income is \$1,188
- the median weekly rent is \$320
- the average motor vehicles per dwelling is 1.7



Planning

The current NSW planning framework has a number of different levels, each with a different sphere of influence and level of detail. The levels that are relevant to planning for the town centre are:

- Metropolitan and sub-regional
- Local

Metropolitan and sub-regional

Planning at the metropolitan level in Camden is covered by 'A Plan for Growing Sydney'. It sets a co-ordinated and high level strategic direction for the entire city, and seeks to achieve the following goals:

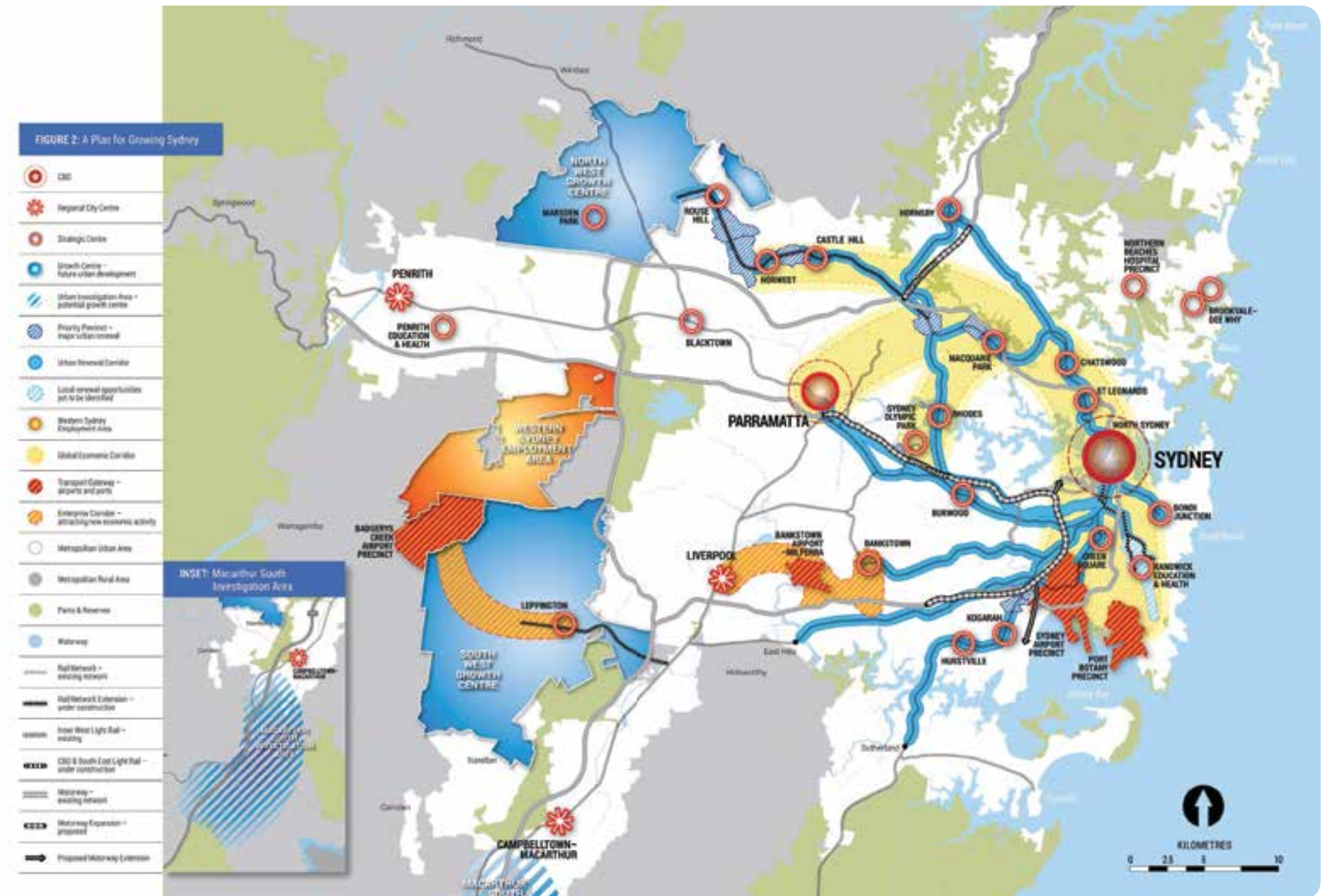
- a competitive economy with world-class services and transport
- a city of housing choice, with homes that meet our needs and lifestyles
- a great place to live with communities that are strong, healthy and well connected
- a sustainable and resilient city that protects the natural environment and has a balanced approach to the use of land and resources.

Under the draft Metropolitan Strategy, Camden is included in the South West Subregion. The draft plan contains specific priorities for this subregion, including promoting growth in the South West Growth Centre, supporting Liverpool as a regional city and supporting urban renewal in strategic centres and along corridors.

The draft South West subregional strategy prepared under the former metropolitan plan also provides strategic planning direction for Camden.

The draft strategy identifies Camden as a Town Centre. Under this classification, Town Centres have a catchment of 800m (where town centre uses such as retail, office and higher density residential is supported), have one or two supermarkets,

community facilities, medical centre, schools and similar uses, contain between 4,500 and 9,500 dwellings and are usually a residential origin than employment destination.



Local

Local planning is administered by Camden Council. The main local planning controls are the Camden Local Environmental Plan 2010 (LEP) and the Camden Development Control Plan 2011 (DCP). The LEP is a legally binding document and provides rules for what can be developed where as well as how development is to function and look.

Key controls for the town centre are for:

- Zoning
- Height
- Heritage

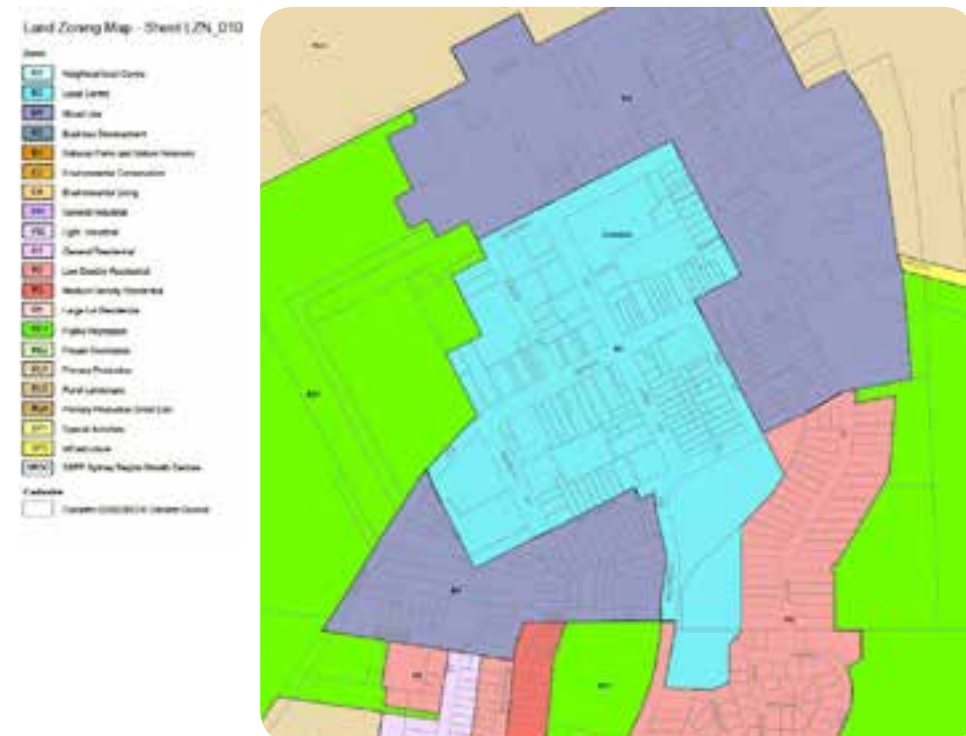
The Town Centre is included in the B2 Local Centre and B4 Mixed Use zone. The primary intent of the B2 Local Centre zone is to promote business and complementary uses. A broad range of commercial uses such as retail, offices, restaurants, cafes, medical centres and schools are allowed in this zone. Shop-top housing is the only permissible residential use.

The intent of the B4 Mixed Use zone is to provide a mix of compatible uses including commercial and residential. Multi-dwelling housing, senior housing and shop-top housing are permitted residential uses.

The maximum building height in the town centre is 7 metres. This will typically allow for a two storey building with minimal roof pitch. Maximum building heights in both nearby Narellan and Mount Annan are higher, largely due to their different character that does not include a large number of heritage items and views to heritage items. Adjoining land included in the R2 Low density residential zone has a maximum height of 9.5m.

The entire town centre is included within a heritage conservation area. This means that proposals for any new building, as well as demolishing, moving or altering the exterior of existing buildings required prior approval from council. Additionally there are a number of listed local heritage items in the town centre. For these items, in addition to the requirements for the heritage conservation area, council approval is also required before internal changes. There is a concentration of heritage items along John and Hill Streets.

Zoning Map



Height Map



Heritage Map





A photograph of a residential street lined with trees. A silver SUV is parked on the grass next to a wooden fence. The sky is blue with some clouds. A dark grey banner with white text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

Building the Evidence Base

The investigation of key issues is critical to inform the development of robust solutions. This section outlines investigations into transport and traffic and the retail and commercial economy that been undertaken as part of the vision.

3.0 Building the Evidence Base

Transport and traffic

Council commissioned Brown Consulting to undertake two transport and traffic studies for the Town Centre:

- Camden Town Centre Traffic & Transport Study in September 2013
- Camden Town Centre Multi-Storey Car Park Study in April 2014.

Camden Town Centre Traffic & Transport Study

This study undertook a comprehensive investigation into transport and traffic in the town centre and surrounding area, investigating matters such as existing conditions and future development potential to identify key areas for improvement, consider options for improvement and recommended a set of short, medium and long term initiatives.

Initiatives include the following:

- maintain the existing dual lane roundabout at the intersection of Argyle Street and John Street
- explore the feasibility of signalling the intersection of Argyle Street / Oxley Street to allow vehicles to exit Oxley Street and travel west / south
- signalise the intersection of Argyle Street / Oxley Street and remove the existing pedestrian crossing west of John Street
- consider identifying an on road cycle path around the town centre using Edward Street / Mitchell Street / Oxley Street
- consider increasing the number of bicycle racks with the possible provision of higher order parking facilities such as lockers
- enforce existing restrictions

- convert existing parking restrictions in Argyle Street between Murray Street and Elizabeth Street to seven (7) day restrictions maintaining the current one hour limits
- wider footpaths and narrower traffic lanes on Argyle Street to encourage a slower speed vehicular movement.

Camden Town Centre Multi-Storey Car Park Study

This study provided an overview of previous studies into carparking in the town centre and assessed the relative suitability of 5 possible locations for a future carpark:

- John Street
- Oxley Street
- Oxley Street/ Mitchell Street
- Larkin Place
- Hill Street

The study recommended that the Oxley Street location is the most suitable of these locations.

It recommended that the car park be designed to accommodate 184 spaces over two levels (an additional 86 spaces).

To confirm suitability of the site, investigation and design needs to be undertaken by an architectural firm with heritage experience to ensure appropriate address of heritage design guidelines for Camden Town Centre. The report concluded that if the design satisfies these guidelines and can facilitate the appropriate amount of car parking spaces, it is recommended that the Oxley St car park be adopted as the preferred car park location.

Council at its meeting of 25 November 2014 agreed to proceed with the decked carpark in Oxley Street.



Economy

Council commissioned JBAUrban to undertake a retail and commercial study for the town centre. This retail and commercial study was carried out in two parts:

- Opportunities and Issues Paper
- Economic Feasibility and Recommendations Report.

Opportunities and Issues Paper

This study provided a review of Camden's demographic and economic structure, the nature of retail and commercial activity and identified the Town Centre's key challenges and opportunities.

The Camden Town Centre had an estimated 2,175 workers in 2011, which is about 13% of the Camden LGA total employment.

The top industries of employment are:

- retail trade (17.4% of employment).
- accommodation and food services (16.5% of employment).
- health care and social assistance (12.8% of employment).
- professional scientific and technical services (9.2% of employment).
- public administration and safety (9.0% of employment).

There is an estimated 358 businesses with a shopfront presence in the town centre.

The employment structure is typical of a service centre that caters for the local population. However the relatively high representation in retail, accommodation and food services suggests a tourism component is already present in the Town Centre's economy.

Research identified that the Town Centre is busy during the week mainly with local activity, while the weekends attract a higher proportion of visitors. The retail and commercial property market is tightly held with the majority of businesses well established in the area for many years.

There is currently demand for additional smaller good quality commercial office suites, and residential uses in the town centre.

Key challenges to future economic prosperity include:

- competition from other nearby centres such as Narellan
- loss of major local employers
- limited development in the town centre's catchment and modest population growth
- planning and environmental constraints such as heritage and flooding which cumulatively limit the Town Centre's potential to develop and grow.

Key opportunities for future growth include:

- capturing more local spend from visitors to existing institutions within Camden (e.g. Camden Hospital, Sydney University)
- leveraging the unique semi-rural and heritage character of the town centre to capture visitation from the growing South West Growth Centre.

Fundamental to Camden's future economic success is retention of its distinct character. However, opportunities for additional development, in particular commercial office and higher density residential uses, are important.

Recommendations suggest a focus on expanding its catchment by engaging in activities that seek to increased overall visitation and patronage in both the weekday (local) and weekend (tourist) market

Economic Feasibility and Recommendations Report

This study built on the Opportunities and Issues Paper by investigating potential development opportunities within the town centre and provided a series of recommendations to help accommodate growth and facilitate renewal.

To obtain an understanding of development feasibility to inform potential land use choices, this study tested the generic feasibility of residential-only and mixed use development scenarios. Residential and mixed use scenarios were selected as there is demand for them in the current market, and they positively contribute to the desired future of the town centre.

Key findings from the study include:

- in the current market, despite underlying demand for retail, commercial and residential floorspace, residential and mixed use development is unviable in the town centre due to a range of constraints such as LEP height limits
- tourists from outside the catchment will become increasingly important for the Town Centre's future resilience and sustainability
- the need to bolster patrons from the local catchment to fill gaps in the weekday economy left by the departure of larger employers such as council
- attract higher impact retail
- leverage council land assets
- explore business investment initiatives
- revise the planning framework to make it more conducive to development, including facilitating opportunities for renewal where development can be intensified to accommodate a mix of new uses.
- undertake an urban design to identify opportunities for development

- opportunity sites can be examined to establish minimum density thresholds required to be an attractive proposition to stimulate private investment
- council to provide support for local business, including flexibility that will assist businesses to remain competitive as well as encourage new businesses to start up.







Engaging the Community

Engaging the community is fundamental part of any planning process. Council sought the input of the community and stakeholders from the outset, and has used their comments to inform and set the direction for the vision.

Community engagement was designed to be generally consistent with the parameters for the 'consult' and 'involve' levels of the IAP2 spectrum.

I hope to see Camden keep its small country town look and feel

We need to give locals and tourists more reasons to visit Camden

I love that Camden is different to other towns in Sydney

Shops should be open 7 days a week

I love the sense of community

We need viable niche business that will attract people to town

I think we need to add cycle lanes in the town centre

We need 'pop up' stores and events like in Sydney





Constraints and Opportunities

Identification and analysis of constraints and opportunities helps to inform authentic solutions that are responsive to the unique attributes of a place.

5.0 Constraints and Opportunities

Weaknesses and Constraints

Analysis has identified the following key constraints affecting the Town Centre:

- changing consumer needs and preferences
- competition from newer and larger centres such as Narellan
- planning controls such as heritage and height that constrain development
- perceived shortage of convenient carparking
- loss of major employers such as RMS and council
- inconsistent trading hours
- limited residential catchment with minimal new growth
- shortage of accommodation options to cater for or prompt overnight visitor stays
- lesser performing eastern end of Argyle Street
- flooding from the Nepean River
- through traffic using Argyle Street
- imbalance in activity between the eastern and western end of Argyle Street, with the eastern end proving relatively less than the eastern end.



Opportunities

Analysis has identified the following opportunities affecting the Town Centre:

- dominant employment centre in the surrounding region
- strong employment base
- demand for commercial floorspace
- demand for residential floorspace
- unique and attractive character with traditional main Street, heritage values and a semi-rural setting
- presence of major institutions and facilities nearby (Camden Hospital, Sydney University campus, Camden airport)
- presence of major recreational and strategic assets, including the Camden Showground, Bicentennial Equestrian Park, Civic Centre
- presence of major supermarkets close to Argyle Street
- strong central node in the form of the intersection of Argyle and John Streets
- existing roster of events and festivals
- attractive hinterland
- accessibility to Sydney, which supports day trips
- proximity to the South West Growth Centre which is home to significant development and population growth
- differentiation of retail offer compared to Narellan Town Centre, Campbelltown, Mount Annan and Oran Park
- ageing population increasing demand for certain business and different housing options
- strong health and medical centre
- presence of well-located government owned sites
- sites potentially suitable for catalyst development





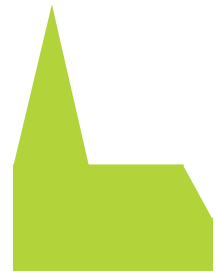


Vision and Principles

The intent of the Camden vision is to protect and strengthen its existing valued and distinct character while at the same time facilitating appropriate change and growth. This is not a vision for radical change. Rather it is a guide for the gradual and measured evolution of the town centre to something better and stronger.

6.0 Vision and Principles

Camden in 2031 will be



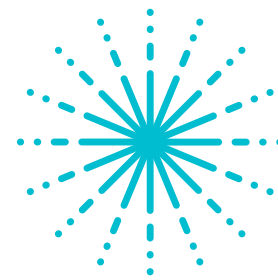
A Distinct Town Centre

a town centre that embraces its own unique character and sense of place



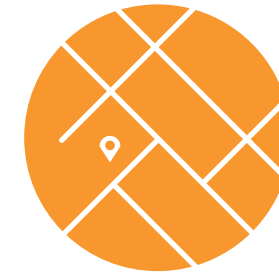
A Prosperous Town Centre

a town centre that has a strong, thriving and resilient economy



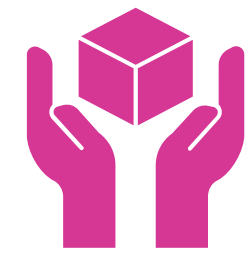
A Vibrant Town Centre

a town centre that is lively, exciting and interesting



An Accessible and Connected Town Centre

a town centre that is easy to get to and move around in



A Town Centre for All

a town centre that is welcoming and offers something for everyone

Underpinning the achievement of this vision are four overall principles:

- attract more people
- revitalisation
- evolution
- establishing the right conditions

Attract People

Attracting more locals will help fill the hole left by the departure of key employers and sustain the lifeblood of the town centre during weekdays. Attracting more visitors will increase higher value expenditure in the town centre, and has the potential to generate and catalyse demand for different, higher impact business such as food and wine premises and boutique accommodation. More people attract more business in a positive cycle of growth.

Revitalisation

Revitalisation is not just about enabling property development, but is rather a multi-faceted approach that seeks to integrate economic, social and environmental initiatives to create better place.

Evolution

Camden has a lot of strengths. Evolution recognises and builds on the strengths of a place in a measured manner rather than seeking to make radical, disruptive changes based on ideology or what has worked somewhere else.

Establishing the right conditions

Economic success and prosperity is more than just about hanging your hat on the next new big thing. Rather, it is the result of government, in particular council, setting in place the right conditions so that when an opportunity arises, business can establish and grow. This involves identifying barriers and putting in place a co-ordinated strategy and a range of actions that send the right signals to the market, and provide an environment where it is easy to do business.





COMMERCIAL
BANKING CO. LTD.

the epicure store

The Cottage, 88 John Street, Cairns

- Gourmet Food Products
- Confectionary
- Gifts & Homewares

Strategies





WHITEMAN'S ARCADE

SPECIALTY COFFEE, GELATO AND AMERICAN C...

7.0 Strategies



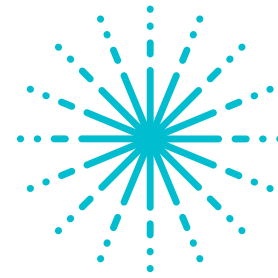
A Distinct Town Centre

- strengthen Argyle Street
- protect and strengthen heritage
- balance character with development
- create well designed buildings and places



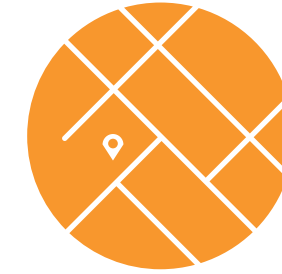
A Prosperous Town Centre

- promote a complete town centre
- facilitate development of catalyst sites
- develop a diverse business base
- connect and engage
- a dedicated resource
- make it easy to do business
- sell the message



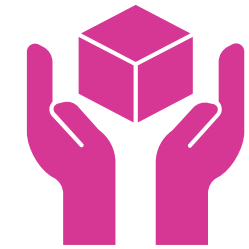
A Vibrant Town Centre

- celebrate and interact



An Accessible and Connected Town Centre

- improve carparking
- encourage alternative movement choices



A Town Centre for All

- establish a central gathering place



COURT

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A photograph of a classical building facade, likely a town hall or government building, featuring a prominent archway and a large column. The building is made of light-colored stone or concrete. A green banner with a white border is overlaid across the middle of the image. The text "A Distinct Town Centre" is written in white, sans-serif font on the banner. The background shows a clear blue sky and some bare tree branches.

A Distinct Town Centre

A distinct town centre is one that is different to others. It embraces its own unique sense of place to create a source of competitive strategic advantage that creates strength in its economic, social and environmental dimensions.

8.0 A Distinct Town Centre

Strengthen Argyle Street

The Importance of Argyle Street

Argyle Street is the heart of the Town Centre. What goes on in Argyle Street is what goes on in the Town Centre – it is a reflection and a barometer of the overall health of the Town Centre.

Traditional main streets such as Argyle Street are not just corridors for movement. They also provide opportunities for casual and informal community gathering, interaction and engagement for both planned and unplanned such as coffee catchups or just running into friends or neighbours. In this regard, they function as community living rooms.

Cultivating a Point of Difference

The key to maintaining this function is to encourage richness of activity. Retail has a key part to play in this, and this strategy seeks to consolidate and strengthen Argyle Street's retail role. Despite its current strength, Argyle Street faces strong and increasing competition from other centres such as Narellan, Mt Annan and Macarthur Square. To successfully diffuse the impact of this competition, a different shopping experience is needed. This can be done by:

- utilising heritage assets as a unique and positive point of attraction
- investigating a main street program to provide advice and incentives to owners to reduce clutter on their building, provide appropriate signage and paint in appropriate colour schemes
- offering unique, smaller, locally based speciality stores
- providing a richness of retail through clustering tenancies in a tight, walkable catchment
- providing an attractive, comfortable outdoor environment in a real, multi-functional town centre setting

Council has a role to play in making this happen. Its primary ability to influence is through the planning framework. It is recommended that council:

- ensures that retail remains concentrated on Argyle Street enabling retail on intersecting streets, where it supports and complements Argyle Street
- ensures that proposed development be compatible with the existing and desired future human scale, fine grain streetscape character
- investigate ways in which ground floor activation can be further encouraged.



The East End

The east end of Argyle Street generally from Elizabeth Street to the Edward Street roundabout is of poorer visual quality than the balance of the street, and generally has lesser footfall, which is a key indicator of vibrancy. This is a challenge as this is the principal entry to the CBD from the north, and is in particular the first impression that visitors travelling from Sydney obtain of the CBD. It is difficult to facilitate development of this area due to the presence of significant flooding constraints.

There is an opportunity to showcase the heritage items at this entry including Cowpasture Bridge, the former Milk Depot and former Clintons Motor garage as well as the silhouette of heritage items at the top of Hill Street that are visible from the entry point.

On this basis, it is recommended that council focus on considering over the longer term a public domain upgrade as a step towards encouraging the improvement of this precinct.

Together with revised planning controls requiring new buildings to be built to the street frontages and consequent provision of awnings as well as possible future development of the former Old Dairy Farmers Co-op Depot, this could see the transformation of this part of the street.



Balance character with development

A Special Character

The Town Centre has a distinct and attractive character that is formed by the integration of a number of different attributes. The location of the town above and adjoining the Nepean River floodplain provides it with a semi-rural setting, with opportunities for expansive vistas from terminating streets over open space and pastureland, and a sense of arrival as you cross over Cowpasture Bridge into the town from the north. The town's built form, in particular the eclectic, human scale and fine grain collection of buildings in the traditional main street setting of Argyle Street, further adds to this character. Finally, the rich heritage of landmarks such as St Johns Church atop its hill, completes this character. Together, this gives the town centre a distinct country town feel.

It is recommended that council undertake a detailed urban design study to identify opportunities to further enhance this character and sense of place. This would result in an urban design framework to update the existing Camden Town Centre Strategy and a supporting set of DCP amendments to insert clear, place and performance based provisions specific to the Camden Town Centre. Key parts of this DCP should seek to protect and strengthen the low rise (2 storey), human scale, fine grain active frontage character of Argyle Street.

Considering Opportunities

There may also be opportunities to refine the existing heritage conservation overlay as part of this process to facilitate appropriate development without compromising the key, most valued elements of the town character. Existing LEP heritage controls require that all proposed development, except minor development, obtain council approval prior to commencement.

This can add significant time and cost to the development process, and can frustrate and act as a disincentive for those who are not familiar with the development approval process. There may be some areas where sensitive redevelopment can yield better overall outcomes for the future of the town centre rather than the retention of existing low density streetscapes, particularly areas where there is an existing intrusion of business uses or a non-

intact or inconsistent streetscape. On this basis, it is suggested that council also consider undertaking a detailed heritage study as part of the broader urban design framework to determine the various degrees of significance and the most appropriate controls to respond to this significance. It is not recommended that any change be made to the listing of heritage items.



Protect and strengthen heritage

The Camden Town Centre has a wealth of local heritage buildings. Many of these buildings are landmarks within the town centre such as St Johns Church and the Court House, while others are smaller and lower impact but no less important such as the cluster of early residential cottages on View Street. This heritage makes a key contribution to the character and sense of place of the Town Centre, and is highly valued by the community.

Adaptive Re-use

The retention of these buildings is critical. However, due to the potential high cost of maintenance, economically viable uses of these buildings are needed to encourage their long term retention. The adaptive re-use of some of these buildings that have ceased to perform their originally intended function is key to this. This has already been undertaken successfully in the Town Centre with the conversion of workers cottages on John Street to business premises.

It is recommended that council, in consultation with the community, investigate options for the adaptive reuse of key local heritage items that are no longer being used for their originally intended purpose.

It is also recommended that Council consider allowing alternative land uses within the heritage conservation area where heritage conservation is carried out and the amenity of the area is not adversely affected.



Create well designed buildings and places

Public domain

Studies both nationally and internationally have shown that government investment in public domain, which is the publicly accessible spaces between buildings such as streets and parks, can have a positive flow on effect and encourage greater patronage and stimulate private sector investment.

Council is proposing to undertake a major overhaul of the Argyle Street streetscape by:

- replacing existing worn, tired and dangerous paving with new granite pavers
- undertaking drainage work to rectify existing deficiencies
- providing new Street furniture, including places to sit and rest, and new signage
- installing traffic lights to make it easier and safer for people to cross the road
- specific details about signage in DCP controls
- tidying up the clutter of unauthorised signs, shutters and colour schemes.

It is recommended that after the initial upgrade near Oxley Street, council further consider upgrading the balance of the street.

Over the longer term, consideration should also be given to upgrading the streetscape, in particular footpaths, in other key parts of the town centre such as John Street. This should be done in accordance with an integrated and co-ordinated strategy. On this basis, it is recommended that council prepare a detailed streetscape plan for all streets in the town centre that addresses the carriageway, footway and transition spaces with buildings considering predominant land use type and anticipated pedestrian usage.

Specific details about the required paving finishes, street tree planting, street furniture, awnings, footpath dining and public art should be provided, as well as typical layout considerations and illustrations.

Other initiatives that council can consider include replacement of existing street lighting.



Buildings

Well-designed buildings positively contribute to the character of a place and provide a level of internal amenity, be it for residents, workers or visitors. They respond well to context and the individual attributes of sites, and are both attractive and functional.

The interface between buildings and places is also critical. Buildings that are setback too far or present blank facades can weaken the sense of attractiveness, comfort and safety of the public domain.

It is recommended that council prepare a detailed DCP, based on an urban design framework that will provide strong and clear guidance on the appropriate form and design of new buildings in the town centre. These details are lacking in the current DCP and are not fully explored and articulated in the Camden Town Centre Strategy.



Well-designed buildings and places create assets that draw people in and make them want to spend time in.





A photograph of several sheep in a barn. The sheep are covered in thick, woolly coats of varying colors, including white, tan, and grey. They are standing on a floor of straw and hay. The background consists of dark wooden planks. A semi-transparent yellow banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text "A Prosperous Town Centre" in white, sans-serif font.

A Prosperous Town Centre

9.0 A Prosperous Town Centre

A complete town centre

Successful and sustainable town centres blend a mix of compatible land uses, including not just retail but also office, community and residential uses, providing a place to live, work and play. Despite it having a significant retail and office presence, the town centre currently has a relatively small residential population catchment.

Residential

Market research suggests the local residential market is strong and that there is a demand for additional residential accommodation in the town centre. In particular, high quality multi-unit dwellings are likely to be attractive to the growing local older population looking to downsize in a convenient and attractive location and potentially business and creative professionals attracted to the character of the town centre.

Increasing the residential population within an easy walking distance of Argyle Street (up to 10 minutes or 800m) will have a number of economic benefits. Increasing local residents will increase the local expenditure pool and potentially contribute to increasing viability and mix of the retail offer. Beyond increasing the local expenditure pool and increasing economic activity directly, the changing residential and demographic dynamics could also provide for a shift in the makeup of the local retail provision, thereby contributing to the attraction of additional visitors.

In addition to positive economic outcomes, an increased residential catchment can have a number of other benefits, including:

- greater take-up of walking to access facilities and a corresponding decline in the use of private motor vehicles to access these facilities.
- the release of additional housing, can help place downward pressure on housing prices.
- if done well, affordable housing can appeal to a diverse cross section of the community, resulting in a more diverse community.



However, to date, widespread residential redevelopment has not occurred due to a number of reasons. Critically, there is an inability to physically expand the town centre footprint to create more land for housing due to the Nepean River floodplain. Similarly, most existing land in the town centre designed as being suitable for residential development is constrained by height and heritage conservation restrictions.

Analysis has shown that residential development is only feasible in most situations in the current market with an FSR of greater than 2:1, which equates to buildings of around 4 storeys in height. Given this is likely to have a major impact on the existing Camden character, there is minimal support for facilitating this scale of change. Consequently, council needs to make the most use of sites that have attributes that contribute to making a lower scale of renewal feasible. These attributes include large site area and council ownership.

Residential feasibility

Many factors interact to influence development feasibility. It is not sufficient to just have market demand. Most forms of new development are currently not feasible in the town centre due to a combination of small, fragmented land holdings in multiple ownership, high land prices relative to sales prices, planning controls that limit yield and on-site carparking requirements.





Retail and Employment uses

The current length of retail in Argyle Street is largely a by-product of when it was the only centre in the surrounding area. However, as competition increased and consumer preferences changed, a long retail focused main street became less attractive to shoppers. Consequently, the street cannot sustain a high level of pedestrian and shopper activity for its entire length. As evidence of this, business located away from the current concentration of popular shops in the western part of the street can sometimes struggle to attract business, in particular passing foot traffic.

There is also currently limited demand in the current market for additional retail in the town centre. In this context, to maximise the likelihood of maintaining and strengthening Argyle Street, it is important to concentrate retail activity on Argyle Street. Even though land may be cheaper to develop away from Argyle Street, allowing retail to bleed out into other streets has the potential to weaken this retail core. On this basis, land outside of Argyle Street should be protected for residential and employment uses such as office and service industry.

The only exception to this is where co-ordinated development is proposed in accordance with this vision, such as renewal along John Street up to its intersection with Mitchell Street in association with redevelopment of strategic sites such as Macaria.

Edward Street also presents challenges in effectively managing commercial development and addressing flooding issues. It is recommended that Council exercise consistency in its approach to these two matters to encourage an attractive and functional precinct that continues to provide local employment opportunities and activation of the eastern end of the town centre.

Community and other uses

Successful town centre centres are the heart of their communities and give their community reason to visit, engage, interact and linger. Community facilities are an important part of making this happen. The town centre already has a number of community facilities, in particular the Civic Centre, library and museum. Council should look out for and encourage opportunities for other uses that facilitate community interaction and entertainment, including arts and cultural facilities and cinemas, particularly those in heritage buildings or buildings that may not be suitable for residential or other more sensitive uses due to constraints such as flooding.

Development of catalyst sites

Catalyst sites are those that due to their location or scale have the potential to have a major impact on the town centre as a whole. In particular, appropriate development on these sites can catalyse the surrounding area, breathing new life into formerly underutilised places. Therefore careful consideration needs to occur of these sites. There are a number of catalyst sites located in the town centre:

- 1 **Macaria and council administration building** – council owned and strategically located close to the pivotal Argyle and John Street intersection and across from the museum
- 2 **Former SES building** – is owned by council and located on a prominent corner. This site could potentially be used for mixed use, residential or community uses, or turned into a new park.
- 3 **Former Camden High School site** – a large site strategically located at the northern end of the town centre on the John Street axis adjacent the Nepean River floodplain and Town Farm. The site is currently approved for residential and support uses
- 4 **Old Dairy Farmers Co-op Depot** – a large site and strategically located at the north entrance to the town centre that is occupied by a heritage listed building. Although privately owned, it's prominent location and size in the east end provide it with substantial potential.
- 5 **Former Clinton Garage** – this landmark building occupies a strategic waterway site at the eastern entrance to the town centre.



Although not a catalyst site, the Town Farm site is also important to the future of the town centre, providing opportunities for the adaptive re-use of existing heritage buildings on the site.



COUNCIL OF CAMDEN

Council owned land assets

Due to their strategic location, cumulative size and council ownership, Macaria and the council administration building and the former SES building provide a significant opportunity to revitalise the town centre. This opportunity is further strengthened when consideration is also given to the future of the Civic Centre and adjoining carpark on Oxley Street. Together these sites form a key precinct for the town centre.

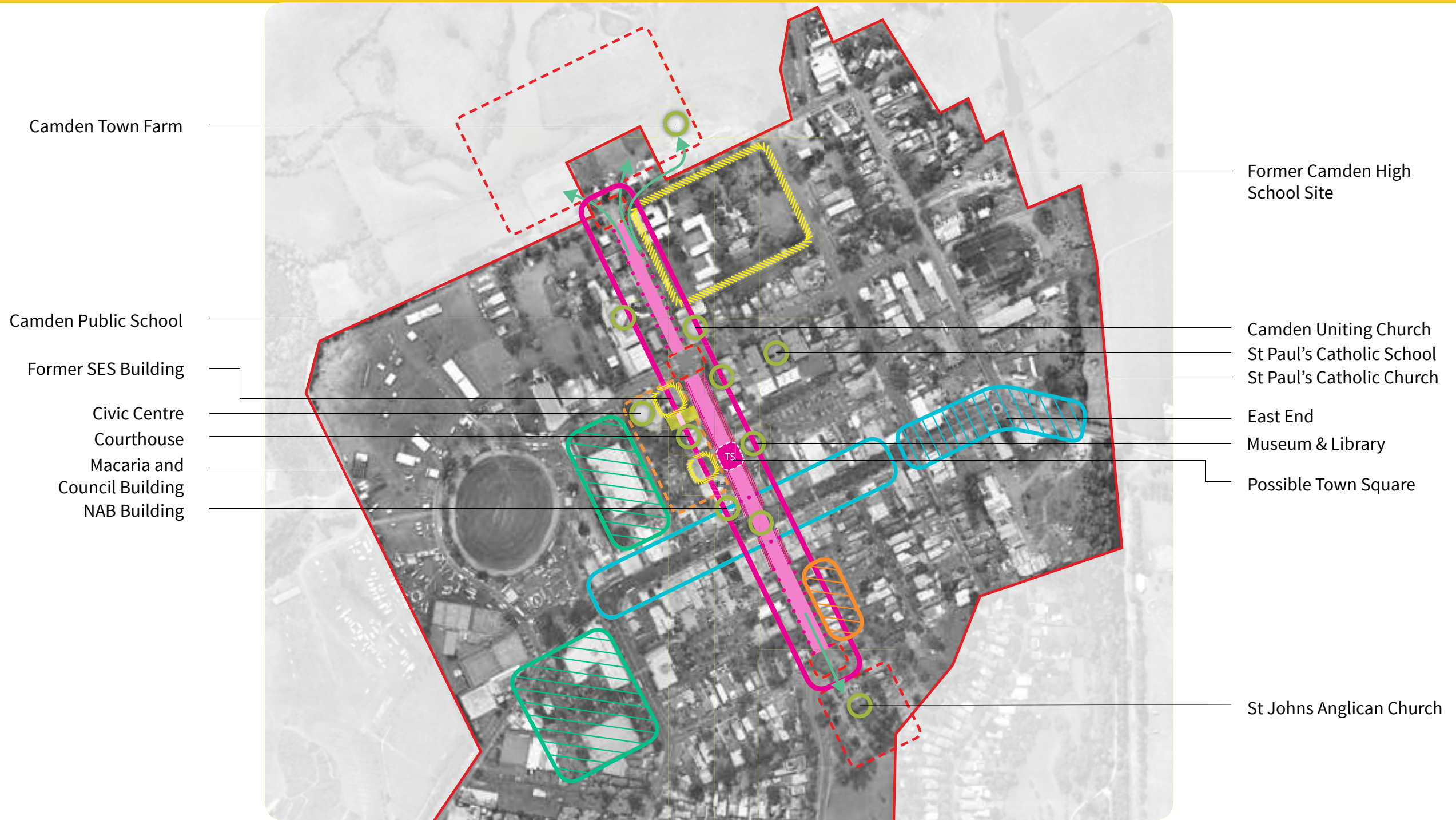
It is recommended council commence investigations and master-planning for this precinct in the short term.

Renewal of this precinct has the potential to strengthen the John Street axis to better complement and enhance Argyle Street. John Street runs perpendicular to Argyle Street, connecting the local character landmarks of the Nepean River floodplain with St John's church and intersecting Argyle Street to create a recognisable focal point for the town centre. The Street touches on a number of community assets, including Camden Public School, the courthouse and two churches. The imminent redevelopment of the former Camden High School site at the streets western end for residential and related purposes will provide a concentration of new residents and activity.

The figure on the next page shows these existing assets lined up along John Street and shows how the redevelopment of the former high school site and Council sites contribute to the activation of the Street.

In particular, the location of Macaria and the council administration building opposite the museum and library provide an opportunity for the further exploration of what John Street could be in the future in this location. The possibility of using part of John Street for a town square is discussed in part 12 of this vision.





| LEGEND | | | | | |
|--------|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| | Town Centre | | Protect and improve views/connections | | Argyle St axis |
| | High visual amenity | | Council precinct | | East end |
| | Landmark or community focal point | | Potential catalyst site | | John Street axis |
| | | | | | Town Square |
| | | | | | Retail centre |
| | | | | | John Street Professional |
| | | | | | Possible long term improved public domain |
| | | | | | Possible long term pedestrian improvements |
| | | | | | Improve public open space |

Develop a diverse business base

It is important that the town centre continues to develop a diverse business base that attracts both locals and tourists. This will provide a key point of difference from other centres that primarily provide a standard retail offer of chain stores in an indoor environment.

In particular, council should focus on the following target business sectors:

- Retail
- Food and wine
- Arts and culture
- Professional services
- Medical and health
- Education
- Accommodation

These business sectors are either in demand or have been identified as a good strategic fit with the town centre now and into the future, particularly as it seeks to reposition itself to make the most of the large and growing local and regional tourism market.

Retail

The town centre currently performs a local convenience retail role, including premises that are used on a daily or weekly basis to purchase essential items such as clothing and food. With the exception of Coles, Woolworths and Target, larger, chain retailers are not currently present in the town centre, preferring instead to locate in enclosed shopping centres such as Narellan. Consequently, higher order comparison retail is not a large feature of the town centre.

It is important that council engage in activities that support this role and strengthen existing business. However, to effectively compete with Narellan and other nearby centres for the local consumer and to attract the tourist market, the town centre needs to further develop a different retail offer. This in particular means supporting the emergence of a niche retail offer based on small local business with strong connections to the town centre and surrounding community offering lifestyle goods and services. High impact retail uses are particularly important, as they have the ability to draw large numbers of visitation from beyond the local area and as such have a meaningful impact on trading levels. This does not mean that support should not be extended to existing local service business. Both niche and local service retail has a place in the town centre, and can have a number of synergistic benefits and provide a strong, diverse retail experience that caters for both locals and visitors.



Food and wine

Camden has strong connections with the surrounding Macarthur region. This region pioneered a number of national agricultural firsts, including being the place where the wool, wheat and wine industries began in Australia. Building off this heritage, Camden has the potential to create a sophisticated and authentic food and wine culture. In 2009 there were 1.5 million wine visitors to NSW, and food and wine can be a major drawcard to regions. Established examples include the Hunter Valley, and emerging areas include Mudgee and surrounds. Both regions are within easy driving distance of the large Sydney market. Food and wine is a good companion to other attributes of the town centre, including the heritage values of the town centre and its relaxed, walkable character with easy access to an attractive hinterland. It can also support other business sectors, including accommodation providers. The existing 'TASTE' Food, Wine and Music Festival is held each year in September at the Town Farm. It is recommended that council consider investing additional resources into growing this event to expand it and draw people towards the main street.



Arts and culture

Arts and culture can be a valuable tourism attractor. In 2008, 8.5 million day trips were undertaken by Australians whose primary purpose was for cultural and heritage purposes. Places that fall within the arts and culture category include:

- theatre, concerts and performing arts
- museums or art galleries
- art and craft workshops or studios
- festivals and fairs or cultural events
- art and craft and cultural displays
- historical or heritage building sites or monuments

There is a particular opportunity to explore the future use of heritage buildings that have the large size and space required to make a memorable cultural or performing arts venue. Some of these premises may be located in areas that constrain or prevent their use for other activities such as residential uses.

Due to their location in the Nepean River floodplain and distance from Argyle Street, premises on Elizabeth and Edward Street in the eastern end of the town centre are unable to command as high a rent premium than comparable premises in flood free parts of the town centre on or closer to Argyle Street.



Professional services

Research has shown a strong demand for professional office accommodation in the town centre. In particular, small high quality professional suites in the range of between 15m² and 30m² are the most marketable and command the highest per square metre rents. To illustrate the relative strength of the Camden commercial market, gross rents of between \$300/ m² and \$700/ m² are typical, while in Narellan they typically range between \$250/ m² and \$350/ m² (gross) and for \$400/ m² gross for newer space. Capital values could be sufficient to encourage refurbishment and expansion of premises, or indeed new development on suitable sites subject to heritage and other constraints

Catering for this demand would result in a number of benefits. It will increase both visitation to and the number of workers in the town centre, increasing the patron pool which is likely to support business activity in other sectors such as retail. It will also further consolidate the Town Centre's role as the main business centre for the Camden LGA, providing a point of difference between it and other more, retail dominated centres.

Medical and health

For a number of reasons, in particular the presence of Camden Hospital, the healthcare sector is already an important economic aspect of the Town Centre. With the Town Centre already hosting approximately 30% of Camden LGAs over 60's population and the continued ageing of the population, the demand for health services will increase, providing an opportunity to increase local provision of medical and health related facilities and services. In addition to this, given the unique and 'small town' feel of Camden, opportunities to develop additional aged care facilities may also exist subject to appropriate sites and planning controls. In particular, aged care facilities would generate employment that would help to address the recent loss of jobs and impacts on local retailers, particularly cafés and restaurants.

Education

According to government figures, education is Australia's second largest services export sector and the third largest export overall, contributing \$17.2 billion in export income to the economy in 2008-09. This represented an increase of 23.2 percent from the previous financial year.

In particular there is increasing demand for global international higher education.

There is already an established and strong tertiary education presence in Camden with the agricultural campus of the University of Sydney being located about 5km to the north-west of the Town Centre.

Due to its proximity to Sydney, lifestyle and relative affordability, the town centre is well placed to capitalise on the increased demand and cater for additional higher education facilities. There is in particular an opportunity to encourage University of Sydney investment to have a presence in the Town Centre.

Accommodation

There is currently limited accommodation in and surrounding the town centre. However, research has indicated that due to a number of factors including low overall room occupancy, establishment of new accommodation would be financially challenging. Reasons driving this lack of accommodation are likely to include proximity to Sydney which does not warrant an overnight stay and the limited number of attractions and the overall visitor offer of establishments. It is possible that there is a latent demand for overnight accommodation that would be realised if a certain type, style and quality of accommodation was provided. Furthermore, the establishment of a greater number of high impact attractors in the town centre such as high impact retail or a festival or event also has the potential to generate increased demand. One particular option for increasing accommodation in the town centre and surrounds is to encourage bed and breakfast or home-stay accommodation.



Make it easy to do business

Making it easy for people to do business is important to attract, retain and grow business. Government can establish a supportive business environment through the use of incentives and the streamlining of regulation. Such initiatives should be considered for target business sectors.

Incentives

Council can consider providing non-financial and financial incentives to attract, retain and grow business.

It is recommended that these incentives be made available for prospective and existing businesses in target sectors subject to them being able to demonstrate that they will be able to deliver economic outcomes that will be of benefit to the broader community. Examples of such outcomes include:

- creating new jobs
- catalysing additional investment
- supporting the growth of other businesses
- Heritage conservation.

Examples of non-financial incentives focus around providing information to business, and include:

- collecting and analysing data and making it freely available to prospective business to help them in making informed decisions
- facilitating introductions
- advising on the local market and helping to source premises
- providing advice on grants and incentives
- free heritage advice from Council's heritage officer.

Financial incentives include grants to help in establishment costs.

Regulation

Streamlining regulation for the business environment can also assist in stimulating business. Council already has a number of effective systems in place to make it easier for business to navigate the at times complex regulatory environment. It is recommended that council further explore opportunities to improve and complement these existing initiatives through exploring:

- continue to explore ways to make council's overall assessment processes more efficient
- continuing its existing pre-lodgement advice service
- review car parking provisions in the Camden Town Centre.

Connect and engage

Camden is surrounded and accessible to a number of facilities that have relatively large worker and visitor numbers, including:

- Camden Hospital
- University of Sydney Camden Campus
- Carrington Centennial Health Campus
- Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute
- Camden Airport
- Camden Bicentennial Equestrian Park.

Many people who come to Camden visit these facilities. However, only a small proportion of these visitors come into the Town Centre and spend money, indicating a failure to fully leverage potential benefits to business associated with local event tourism. These facilities provide a potential source of new income spend.

On this basis, immediate initiatives are recommended to strengthen relationships with these facilities to leverage visitation from on-site workers and residents to increase patronage.

A dedicated resource

The existing town centre environment is a complex and challenging one. To address this, it is proposed that council engage a co-ordinator for the town centre. Co-ordinators have been successfully established in many town centres throughout Australia, including in the Greater Sydney Region such as at Parramatta. The focus of this role is to be the first and key point of contact in council who co-ordinate and integrate all of council's strategic and day to day activities in relation to the town centre. Co-ordinators also:

- build partnerships between all stakeholders
- coordinate key projects and initiatives, including public domain upgrades and community events
- establish and maintain a positive relationship between the community, stakeholders and council.
- are active in the area on a daily basis out on site on a daily basis, inspecting the neighbourhood and proactively report any infrastructure issues such as pot holes, cracked footpaths and dumped rubbish
- measure performance and monitor success across initiatives.

This heightened level of focus on the town centre afforded by the engagement of a co-ordinator will enable the town centre to be managed similar to the concept behind the running of shopping centres, where a skilled and effective manager makes sure the place runs smoothly.

Sell the message

The Town Centre has a strong, positive message to sell. Communicating this message will contribute to repositioning peoples perceptions of Camden as a place in which to visit and do business.

Camden council has an established marketing program, and partners with the adjoining Campbelltown Council to produce a tourism plan for the broader Macarthur region. However, it is recommended that council invest further into marketing and publicity to better sell the message about the town centre. This marketing and publicity should seek to position the Town Centre as a key place to do business and a highly desirable local and regional tourist destination in its own right and the gateway to a rich natural heritage landscape.

Tourism

Increasing awareness amongst target markets, such as greater Sydney and the South West Growth Centre, is particularly important. This can positively influence preference and intention to travel, increasing visitor expenditure and the value of tourism to the town centre. Increasing awareness can in part be driven by establishing a recognisable brand and supporting tagline and using different media to communicate the message, such as via radio, television and internet.

Council should seek to partner with state government tourism bodies, including growing its presence on websites such as visitnsw.

It is also suggested that council consider the relocation of the existing visitor information centre, or the establishment of a complementary visitor information centre, in the heart of the town centre.

Case Study – Love Lorne

The Victorian regional town of Lorne, situated on the Great Ocean Road, has established a co-ordinated strategy to attract tourists called ‘Love Lorne’. Focussed around a web-presence, Love Lorne presents a range of tourist activities that can be pursued around the themes of Stay, Taste, Shop and Play. The website is simple and easy to use, and makes full use of engaging imagery. It also provides updated and information on local events, offers, promotions and news.



Business

It is suggested that council also invest in strategically shaping the future of the town centre's business environment and helping deliver long-term economic results by selling the message about Camden's competitive advantages and engaging with potential business. This can be achieved through the production and distribution of high quality marketing collateral for potential business.

Case Study – Investment attraction in Cairns

Cairns Regional Council publishes high quality material that communicates its commitment to helping business establish and grow in the LGA. It provides an overview of its range of support strategies and initiatives, and provides a clear outline of how Council can help business considering investment in Cairns.

OUR COMMITMENT

Cairns Regional Council is committed to realising a strong, diversified and sustainable regional economy that supports the growth of new and existing industry and business activities whilst enhancing local lifestyle and providing long term employment opportunities

THE INCENTIVES

This Investment Incentives Package is complimentary to a suite of economic development programs and services delivered by Council; each designed to assist businesses wishing to locate, expand and retain their operations in the Cairns region

The type and level of Council support will be determined by the type and scale of proposed investment and its alignment with Council's goals and objectives. The greater the investment proposed and more significantly, its estimated value-add for the economy, the higher the level of investment support. The following incentives are available to approved applicants.

IN-KIND SUPPORT INCENTIVES

Approved applicants can expect to receive priority local government support through the appointment of a dedicated Case Manager. Your Case Manager will serve as the single point of contact in Council and will:

- Assist with identifying potential investment opportunities
- Arrange site visits and meetings with key stakeholders and Government representatives
- Facilitate local introductions with key stakeholders as well as finding potential joint venture partners
- Work with State and Federal Government agencies to provide advice on investment regulations
- Assist with arranging pre-approval meetings to provide clear guidance for the development application process and more efficient development approvals
- Assist with the search for special uses or buildings within the Cairns region
- Offer expert advice on Cairns' industry capabilities and strengths
- Provide local economic and research data for project analysis and website studies

DIRECT FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

Approved applicants may also apply to receive direct financial incentives for strategically significant projects identified as having the most significant economic impacts and broader community benefits. These projects will add real diversity to the economy, support jobs and investment growth and provide a net community benefit. Financial incentives may take various forms, such as:

- Financial incentives for infrastructure costs
- Financial grants for establishment costs

NOTE
Financial assistance cannot be provided retrospectively

CAIRNS REGIONAL COUNCIL INVESTMENT INCENTIVES

THE INVESTMENT INCENTIVES PACKAGE WILL SUPPORT BUSINESSES TO:

- CREATE NEW JOBS
- CREATE DIRECT VALUE-ADD THROUGH CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATIONS
- CATALYSE ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT
- GENERATE GROWTH IN A KEY STRATEGIC AREA
- SUPPORT GROWTH OF OTHER COMPANIES

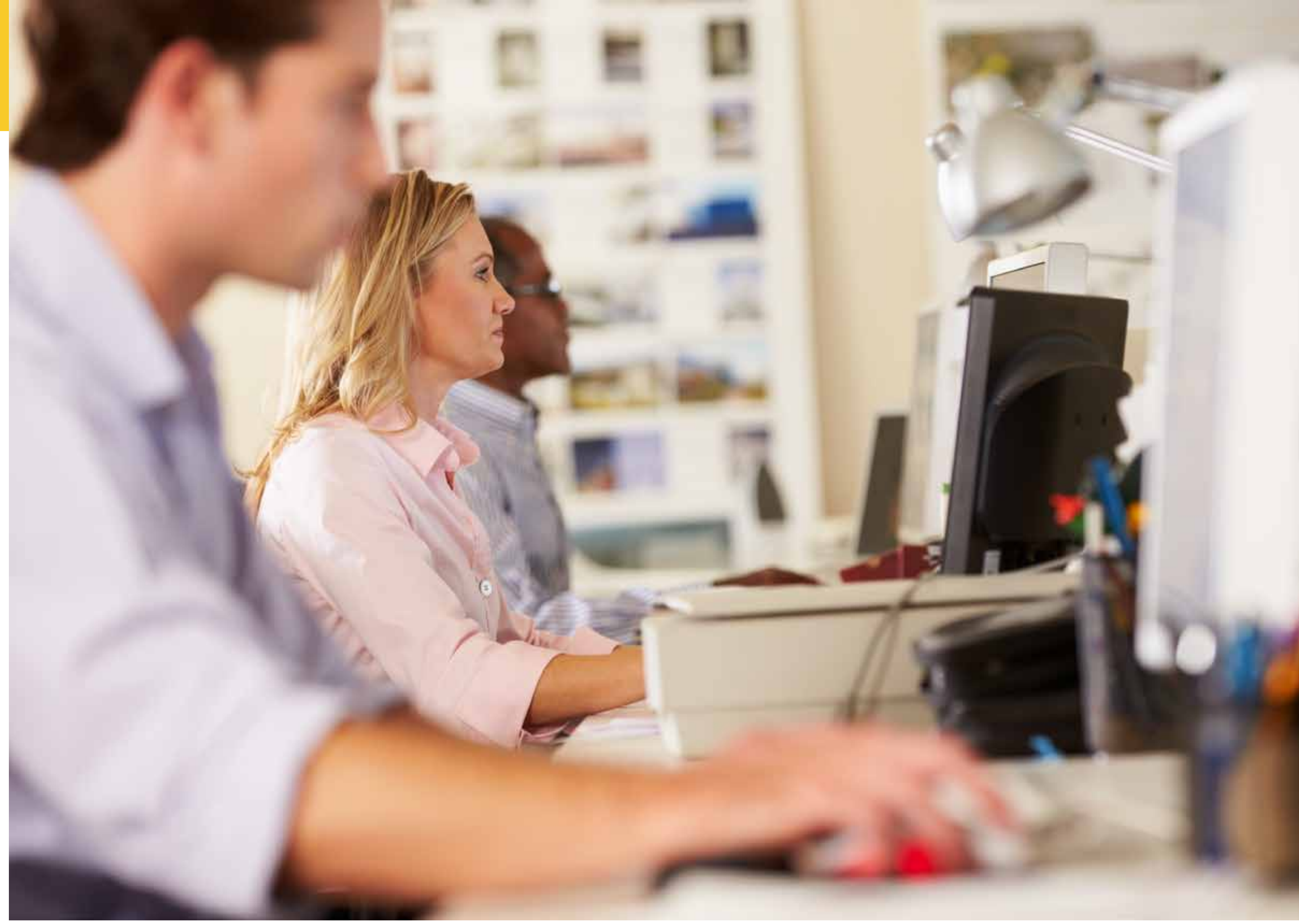
INVESTMENT INCENTIVES ARE AVAILABLE TO BUSINESSES SEEKING TO INVEST IN OUR REGION'S FUTURE IN KEY STRATEGIC INDUSTRIES.

Cairns Regional Council will provide discretionary support to projects where the nature and scale of investment will stimulate significant economic and community benefits, diversity and value-add to the wider regional economy beyond the growth of the business itself.

KEY STRATEGIC INDUSTRIES

- Tourism
- Advanced manufacturing
- Mining
- Aviation
- Marine
- Value-adding agricultural production
- Creative industries
- Professional and business services
- Tropical services and products

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A Vibrant Town Centre



10.0 A Vibrant Town Centre

Support festivals and events

The Camden LGA already has a well-established, large and diverse roster of events and festivals. Keynote events include:

- Camden Festival
- Light Up Camden
- Paws in the Park
- TASTE Food Wine and Music Festival

The TASTE Food Wine and Music festival, which is held at the Town Farm on an annual basis, has particular potential to grow and attract more people into the town centre. On this basis, it is recommended that council consider investing additional resources into nurturing and growing this event, in particular in ways where the festival can be better integrated with the town centre.

Together with the Camden Museum, the civic centre is Camden LGA's key cultural and performing arts asset. While offering a good level of functional utility with its multiple rooms and meeting spaces, the civic centre is not utilised to capacity. Initiatives to increase utilisation to 'fill calendar gaps' could help raise the profile of the Town Centre and increase the visitor patronage pool.

Longer and more consistent opening hours

The town centre currently has a combination of traditional business opening hours on weekdays and inconsistent opening hours on weekends.

If the town centre is to be repositioned to maximise the benefits of tourists, business needs to consider opening for longer on weekends, in particular those that service the tourism trade such as lifestyle uses.

With its existing concentration of hotels, the town centre has an existing well patronised night-time culture. This offers a potential platform for other complementary uses to establish. Consistent with the image that the town centre is seeking to establish these premises should be smaller more intimate premises such as wine bars with live music.

A trial of expanded opening hours on a weeknight, aligned to a major shopping event such as Christmas or Mother's Day, could potentially be trialled to co-ordinate with an existing large event.







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An Accessible and Connected Town Centre

11.0 An Accessible and Connected Town Centre

Improve car-parking

In places like Camden where the primary mode of transport is by private motor vehicle, the provision of sufficient, conveniently located carparking is important to economic competitiveness. Lack or shortage of such carparking has the potential to act as a disincentive for visitation to the town centre, particularly when shoppers have the option of visiting nearby other non-traditional centres such as Narellan where there are large amounts of such carparking.

To address this issue, council is proposing to establish a new decked carpark in Oxley Street within a 200m walking distance of Argyle Street and close to other key destinations such as Woolworths, Target and Coles.

Design is key. Careful consideration is needed of matters such as type, scale, design, crime and safety and impact upon character. There is a growing number of examples nationally where innovative design has been used to ensure that above ground carparking can be accommodated within urban areas without detracting from the character and image of the place. Two ways in which this can be done are sleeving or screening of carparking. Sleeving is where the carpark is hidden behind a facade that is occupied by uses such as offices, cafes and shops. Sleeving typically works where the site has sufficient dimensions to make such uses as well as the carpark work.

Screening is where the face of a carpark is made up on an interesting architectural design feature. Examples include the use of innovative, contemporary materials, public art or a green wall.

Incorporation of environmental sustainability measures such as solar panels can also be used to improve the performance of the carpark.

In short, a well designed carpark will provide the opportunity to both satisfy the need for vehicle spaces and also make a positive contribution to the built fabric of places. It is recommended that council prepare a detailed design brief when taking the next step of undertaking a concept design for any new public carpark.

Supporting this, it is recommended that council maintain existing off-street carparks. These carparks provide a large amount of carparking that is well distributed relative to Argyle Street, which is critical to the perception of convenience for visitors.

The design of carparks should provide disabled spaces in accordance with relevant legislative requirements.

Encourage alternative movement choices

Walking and cycling

Walkability is an important part of successful town centres. With its regular grid street pattern and number of fine grain arcade and laneway connections, the town centre has a strong foundation for walkability. This is a key influence on the character of the town centre, and differentiates it from other centres such as Narellan that are dominated by vehicle movement and are not pedestrian friendly.

However, there are a number of deficiencies in the existing street network for pedestrians that need to be addressed.

Safety and useability for pedestrians

The existing un-signalised pedestrian crossings of Argyle Street pose a risk to pedestrian safety due to poor sight distances associated with crossing of a four lane road with kerbside parking and a planted centre median. It is therefore recommended that council pursue its current plan to relocate and signalise these pedestrian crossings.

The existing condition of parts of the Argyle Street footpath are generally of a poor standard, with maintenance having been undertaken in an ad-hoc manner that has resulted in inconsistent quality and look. Some parts also pose a safety hazard, and pose a challenge for persons who are mobility impaired. In addition, parts of the footpath have a steep cross fall and are as such unsuitable for footpath dining, which is key source of activation of the street. On this basis, it is recommended that council continue with its plan to upgrade the existing footpath to address these issues.

Throughout other areas of the town centre pedestrian facilities are often limited. The Camden Town Centre Traffic and Transport Study noted that the wide roads of John Street, Elizabeth Street and Edward Street are not user friendly and require pedestrians to cross long lengths in the path of traffic, and that there are generally poor pedestrian connections between the public car parking areas in Oxley Street and Larkin Place.

It is recommended that as part of any future detailed urban design framework for the town centre that detailed consideration be given to investigating and developing options for the resolution of these issues. Particular consideration should be given to John Street, which is and will likely be consolidated as an important secondary movement axis for the town centre, and safety improvement to connection to carpark areas and consideration of extension of public domain improvements beyond Argyle Street in the longer term to provide a consistent, co-ordinated streetscape palette.

Wayfinding

As Camden becomes more attractive to visitors, there is a need to make getting around the town centre more legible. It is recommended that council consider investing in a wayfinding strategy to help people orient themselves within the town centre and provide directions to key locations such as landmarks, parking areas and public transport. Wayfinding should be designed in a co-ordinated way, and provides the opportunity to further consolidate or enhance the character of the town centre through reflecting a heritage theme or providing an opportunity for an artistic interpretation of signage. It also provides opportunities to reduce existing signage clutter.

Examples of where art has been used to enhance the character of communities include the City of Vincent in Perth's street sign program and the Artforce program in Brisbane where local artists paint their original works on traffic signal boxes.

Public transport

Despite relatively good bus services, there is minimal direct connectivity to the South West Growth Centre. With the forecast growth in the SWGC and its importance to Camden as a potential major source of visitors, it is recommended that council investigate ways in which better, more convenient services can be provided in the future between Camden and SWGC, in particular key centres such as Oran Park and Leppington. This will also provide another way of accessing suburban rail as an alternative to Campbelltown. Better connections to key business assets, such as Badgerly's Creek airport and the South West Employment Lands should also be investigated. Exploration will need to be undertaken in conjunction with Transport for New South Wales.

In addition to this, it is recommended that council investigate ways in which better access can be provided between key local employers that provide a source of visitors to the Town Centre such as the Camden Hospital and University of Sydney campus. For example, the Camden Hospital is a 20-25 minute walk from the John Street bus stop, and the primary bus routes (895 and 896) operate approximately every 30 minutes at peak times and approximately every 60 minutes at off peak times and on weekends. This may not offer sufficient convenience to encourage visitation to the town centre. A more frequent general bus service running every fifteen minutes instead of thirty minutes may be an appropriate way in which to address this issue.

Reinvigorate forgotten spaces

Camden has a number of smaller, intimate publicly accessible spaces that are currently underused. These spaces include both those in public and private ownership such as:

- the small park next to the courthouse
- the entrance to the showgrounds
- the lane connecting Larkin Place with John Street
- arcades and laneways along Argyle Street.

Some of these spaces have inherent attributes that have the potential to make them attractive places. For example, the entrance to the showgrounds is directly accessible from Argyle Street, is located adjoining a landmark heritage building and has pleasant views and ample solar access. The arcades also provide important pedestrian connections between Argyle Street and nearby public car parks.

Examples from other Australian cities and towns have shown that government leadership in investing in programs such as capital works upgrades or providing grants for refurbishment have had positive impacts on the quality of spaces.

It is suggested that as part of the recommended urban design framework, council consider the possibilities for these spaces. Options will depend on the nature of the spaces, and may include landscaping, outdoor art galleries or possibly even allowing small, commercial premises such as a coffee shop or cart to occupy part of the space to attract people and enliven the spaces. Due to their private ownership, the arcades will be challenging to revitalise, however council should consider pursuing a partnership approach with landowners and business operators driven through the co-coordinator for these spaces.





A woman with dark hair and sunglasses on her head is smiling warmly. She is wearing a dark blue t-shirt with the text 'PRETTY PICNICS' on it. She is holding a white basket filled with a variety of flowers, including white daisies, orange gerberas, and white chrysanthemums. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a path, suggesting a park or festival.

A Town Centre for All

Once we invest in and create social capital in the heart of our communities the economic capital will follow - Mary Portas

PRETTY PICNICS

12.0 A Town Centre for All

A central gathering place

Successful town centres often have great central gathering places at their heart. This often takes the form of a square or plaza. For example, most of Australia's capital cities, and many of its larger regional centres have gathering places in their CBDs, including Melbourne with Federation Square, Brisbane with King George Square and Sydney with Martin Place. Even though Argyle Street performs a role of a central place of interaction, it has some limitations that prevent it from being a place in which a larger number of people can gather in a single, compact area.

It is recommended that council investigate the potential for a new town square within the town centre. This square should be an open, flexible space that is a focal point for the town centre and performs the function of a place for gathering and interaction. It should be physically close and visibly connected to Argyle Street. The space could also be used for events, markets and even innovative ideas such as an outdoor cinema.

Due to its proximity to Argyle Street and a location adjoining existing and proposed high impact destinations, the most suitable location is likely to be on John Street between Macaria and the Museum. The space could be around 1,000m², with dimensions of approximately 30m x 35m. Design could enable the continued use of the John Street for vehicles, with the road being closed off at certain times during the weekend to facilitate activities.

It is acknowledged that the existing Camden Town Centre Strategy proposed a similar town square in the same location in the late 2000s. It is also understood that a key issue that prevented further development of the concept was concern about the impact on the existing bus interchange. Further investigation should address this issue in detail, however, the square would only be closed to vehicles during events and measures could be implemented to temporarily re-route buses and ensure that safety of patrons was not compromised.



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Implementation



13.0 Implementation

This vision is the critical first step in updating the Camden Town Centre Strategy 2008. It will also be used to guide council decisions on development, public domain and investment activities.

Council has limited funds available and its decisions should be in the long term interests of the community. Council can influence three key areas:

- Development
- Public domain
- Its own investment activities.

It cannot make development happen. It is about setting in place the right conditions to attract, retain and support the growth of business and the well-being of the community.

Effective implementation requires strong leadership and co-ordinated action. This part of the vision proposes an implementation plan that identifies lead responsibilities and indicative timeframes for each of the initiatives.

Cumulative change

Change will not happen overnight. Rather, action must be co-ordinated based on the short and longer term. Short term actions comprise quick wins that seek to maintain the town centre's current level of activity. Longer term actions use the momentum of these short term initiatives and set the foundation for future growth.

Timeframes and proper sequencing is critical. Quick wins can be achieved through prioritising over the short term (now – 2 years) the following:

- implementing strategic public domain upgrades
- planning for and facilitating the future renewal of council owned catalyst sites
- connecting and engaging with key local institutions such as Camden Hospital and University of Sydney to bring their customers, visitors and employees into the town
- partner by appointing a co-ordinator to drive the implementation of strategies and initiatives
- developing an integrated program of business incentives
- selling the message by better marketing of the town centre
- preparing a revised planning framework to better protect the town centre's character and facilitating appropriate development opportunities, including an urban design framework, public domain and streetscape plan, updated LEP and DCP.

Over the longer term (2 years plus), realising opportunities for more people to live, work and play in the town centre through the quick wins will start to attract more business, including the potential for high impact retail that has the potential to draw in more tourists from outside the local area. This can be supported through complementary initiatives such as reinvigorating forgotten or underused spaces and improving public transport connections.



The following is a full list of suggested priority initiatives for the town centre recommended under this vision:

A Distinct Town Centre

- 1 Implement strategic public domain upgrades
 - widen and repave footpaths
 - undertake complementary drainage upgrades
 - provide new Street furniture
 - install traffic lights at Argyle and Oxley Street intersection
 - Install signalised traffic crossings
- 2 Prepare an urban design framework
- 3 Prepare a public domain and streetscape plan
 - consider improvements to the balance of Argyle Street, in particular the east end
 - consider improvements to other key Streets in the town centre such as John Street
 - investigate options for forgotten spaces
- 4 Prepare a place focussed, performance based DCP based on the findings and direction of the above studies

A Prosperous Town Centre

- 5 Investigate current zoning and height and consider amending the LEP in response
- 6 Investigate preferred future uses and development strategy for council land assets
- 7 Undertake master planning for the John Street Precinct
- 8 Connect and engage with key local employers and institutions such as Camden Hospital
- 9 Appoint a co-ordinator
- 10 Prepare and implement a marketing strategy with a dedicated, stand-alone website
- 11 Consider developing an integrated program of business incentives
- 12 Consider longer, more consistent opening hours, including a trial aligned with a major local event
- 13 Consider relocation of the visitor centre to a town centre location



A Vibrant Town Centre

- 14 Invest additional resources into the TASTE Food, Wine and Music Festival
- 15 Investigate initiatives to increase utilisation of the Civic Centre

An Accessible and Connected Town Centre

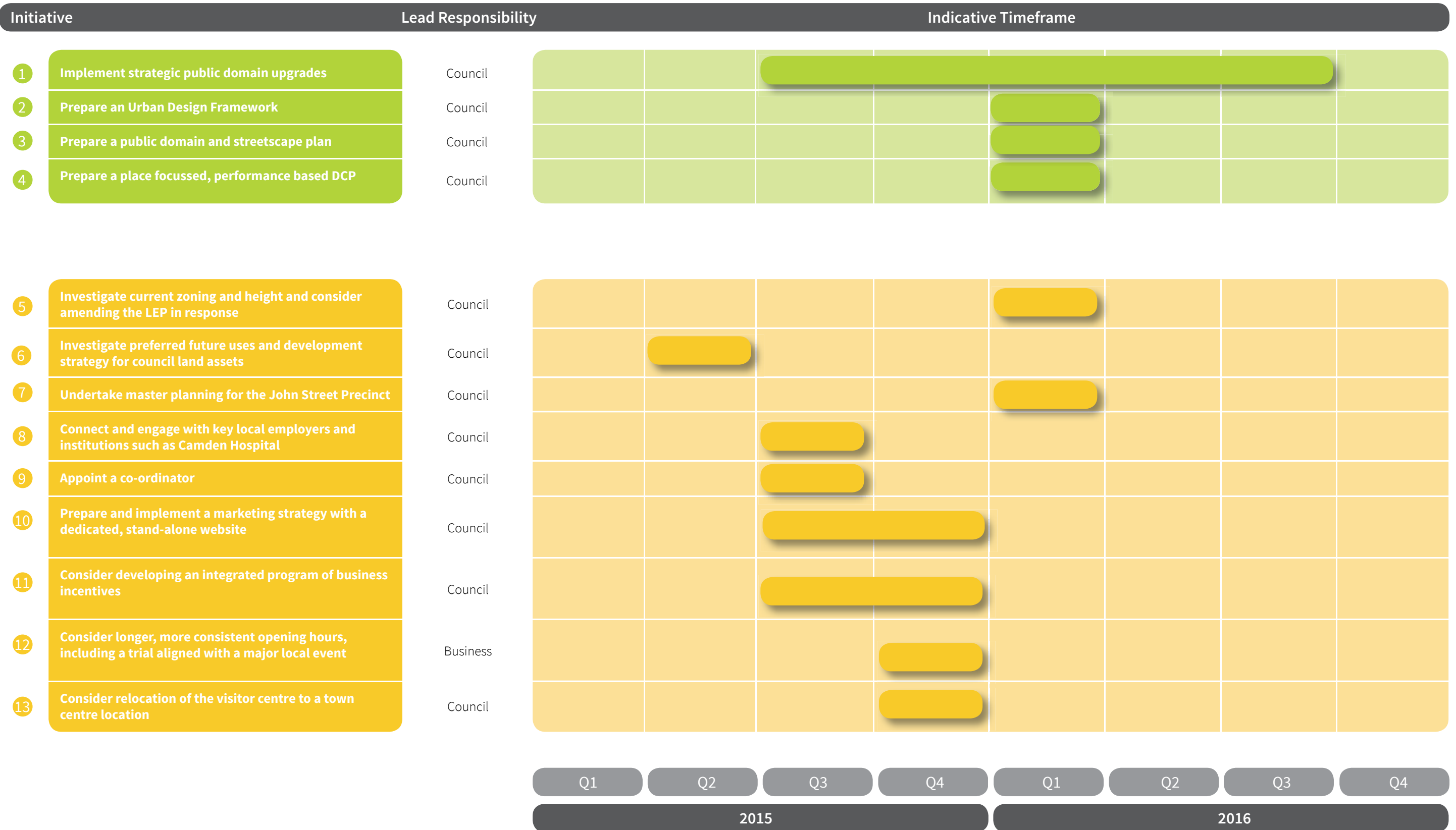
- 16 Undertake detailed concept design of decked carpark
- 17 Prepare a wayfinding and signage strategy
- 18 Investigate better public transport connections to the SW Growth Centre

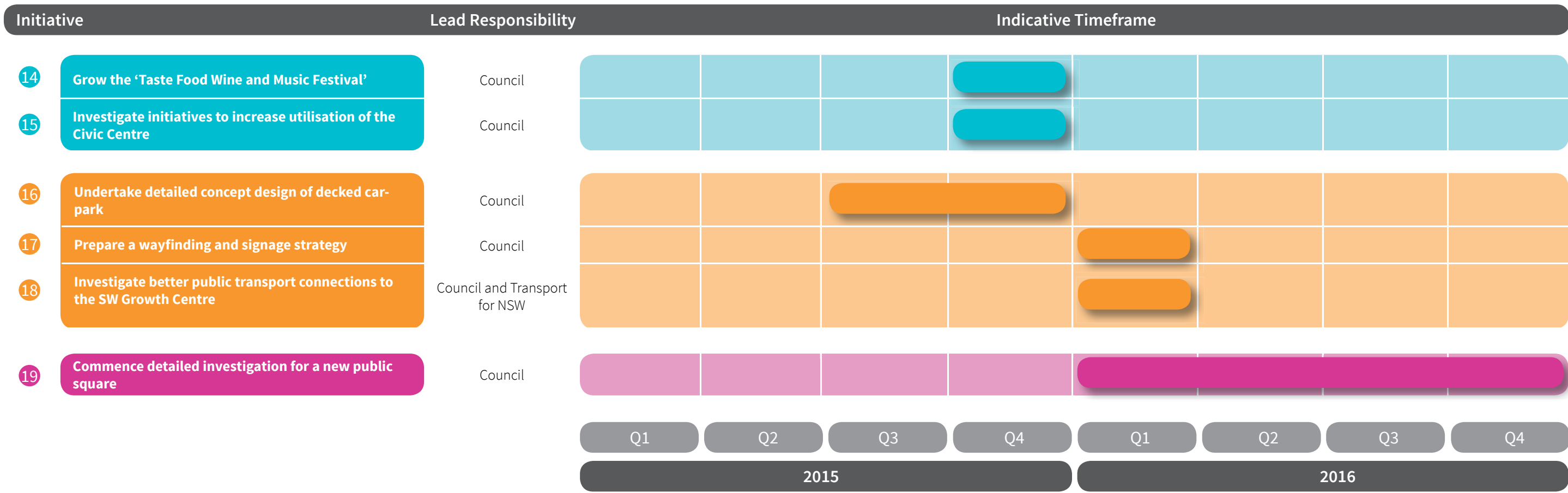


A Town Centre for All

- 19 Commence detailed investigation for a new public square







Roles and responsibilities

The success of implementation will rely on co-ordinated, sustained and co-operative action by a number of parties.

Council

Council will drive the implementation process. It will commit human and financial resources, including the creation of a co-ordinator role, to the task. Council's leadership will take responsibility for advocating for the town centre and removing obstacles that impede action. It will seek and represent the views of the Camden community. Council will exercise its planning, design and construction functions to create physical change and ensure a positive climate for business.

State Government

The State government can provide support for initiatives that are outside the sole control of council. For example, it will ensure that future subregional planning recognises the importance of the town centre and provides supportive planning policy.

Business and Community

The role of business and the community is to get behind council and support its initiatives, be a champion for the town centre and to actively seek out and participate in future engagement activities.

Relationship to Camden LEP and Camden DCP

Camden LEP 2010

One of the main aims of the vision is to encourage growth and development while protecting the town centre's character that provides it with its competitive strategic advantage. The planning framework has a key role to play in achieving this outcome.

Zoning

Most of the town centre is included in the B2 Local Centre and B4 Mixed Use zone. The spatial pattern of these zones creates a distinct core and a frame, with the B2 Local Centre zoned being focussed around Argyle Street and the Mixed Use zone in peripheral areas. Other small areas are included in residential and recreation zones. The intent of the B2 Local Centre zone is to cater for retail, business, entertainment and community uses. The only form of residential use that is permitted is shop top housing, which requires housing to be located above a commercial use. The B4 Mixed Use zone allows the same commercial uses, however is more flexible with residential uses, allowing stand-alone apartments (Residential Flat Buildings).

Research has shown that in the current market there is demand for both additional office and residential uses in the town centre. However, due to the typically greater costs (often due to challenges in leasing ground floor retail) shop-top housing is often perceived as a less desirable option for many developers. Therefore the requirements for residential in the form of shop-top housing in the B2 Local Centre zone may be precluding greater take-up of residential in parts of the town centre included in this zone.

Part of the town centre included in the B2 Local Centre zone that may be appropriate for small scale residential flat buildings include areas away from Argyle Street such as along John, Broughton and Hill Streets. It is suggested that as part of its urban design framework, council investigate whether there are opportunities to rezone these parts to the B4 Mixed Use zone to encourage additional residential development, provided that it is can be complementary to the desired future character of these streets.

FSR

FSR is a measure of the amount of floorspace a development is able to provide. It is expressed as a ratio of gross floor area to site area. FSR works together with other controls to control building bulk and scale. However, unlike some other controls such as height and setbacks, it is not a form based control or a critical determinant of bulk and scale. Rather, it is most usually a by-product of a detailed design exercise that considers the unique attributes of a site. Consequently, while imposing an FSR maximum in advance of undertaking detailed design work may be useful as high level guidance for site yield and therefore real estate value, it is a poor indicator of design quality. For these reasons it is not proposed to introduce an FSR control for the town centre.

Height

The maximum building height under the LEP is currently 7m, which equates to 2 storeys. In general, ground floor heights should be set around 4.2m floor to floor (or 3.6m floor to ceiling) to accommodate a range of active uses such as shops, restaurant and cafes. The first floor should then be set at 3.7m floor to floor (3.3m floor to ceiling) for commercial uses such as professional office space, or 3.1m floor to floor (or 2.7m floor to ceiling) for residential. Height allowances for a pitched roof and elevation above the floor planning level should also be factored in. Therefore, the current LEP height for 2 storeys is overly restrictive and may constrain the form of development desired in the town centre. On this basis, it is recommended that council investigate increasing from 8.5m or 9.5m as part of the urban design framework. Provisions in the existing DCP will continue to protect view corridors.

Key Sites

Key sites are those that due to their location or scale have the potential to have a major impact on the town centre as a whole. In particular, appropriate development on this site can catalyse the surrounding area, breathing new life into formerly underutilised places. Therefore, the planning framework needs to provide special direction for these sites. It is recommended that the LEP be reviewed to refer to the following three sites as key sites:

- Macaria
- Old Dairy Farmers Co-op Depot
- former Camden High School site.

Complementary provisions will be inserted in the DCP to guide future development on these sites in accordance with the vision.

Good Design

The Camden DCP requires that development be consistent with the Camden Town Centre Strategy and objectives and controls for built form and appearance, light industrial development and heritage and character.

Apart from the heritage conservation provisions, this content provides high level strategic direction and does not provide sufficient detail to effectively manage specific development. The supporting DCP provisions for land use such as residential development are generic and do not adopt a place based approach. It is recommended that a new, performance based DCP planning framework be prepared for the town centre that supports the LEP, is place specific, embraces good design and is simple and easy to use for the community, industry and council. Particular elements that should be addressed include sustainability, built form and the relationship between the private and public domain, particularly at the ground level.

A pre-requisite for producing a robust, place based DCP is first undertaking an urban design framework. It is recommended that council consider investing in the commission of an urban design framework, and also consider supporting this with a public domain and streetscape plan.

Part of this work would include addressing existing commercial signage controls for the town centre.

Camden DCP 2011

The Camden DCP contains three parts that deal specifically with the Camden Town Centre:

- *Heritage conservation area*
- *Camden – B2 Local Centre*
- *Camden – B4 Mixed Use.*

In addition to this, supporting objectives and controls are contained in other parts of the DCP such as those for residential development.



A photograph of a swimming pool with clear blue water. In the background, there is a building with a corrugated metal wall and several white utility boxes. A blue umbrella is visible on the left. A grey semi-transparent text box is overlaid on the water, containing the text "Monitoring, Review and Updating".

Monitoring, Review and Updating

14.0 Monitoring, Review and Updating

Monitoring, review and updating of the vision is important to ensure continued effective action.

It is recommended that Council establish a framework to collect, analyse and report on data that seeks to measure progress towards the aims of the vision. Data should be collected on key indicators such as:

- Development and building applications received and determined
- Number, types and distribution of business
- Change in the number of business
- Business, resident, worker and community satisfaction
- Length of time for development and building applications to be determined
- Residential population.

The results of this data should form the basis of an annual report that can be integrated into council's existing reporting frameworks.

Analysis of this data will help to identify what is going well and what can be improved upon. This will inform a review and update of the vision. Review and update should occur regularly, with a complete review, informed by detailed economic assessment, undertaken at least every 3 years to ensure the vision remains current and can continue to effectively respond to changing conditions



Acknowledgements

This vision has been produced by Camden Council in partnership with JBA and AEC Group. The vision is developed with advice and input from a range of stakeholders, including the Camden Chamber of Commerce, Camden Historical Society and Camden Police. Many residents and businesses also freely gave their time to participate and contribute to the vision process. Council thanks all who have been involved in this process.

