

RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER STUDY



BLUE MOUNTAINS
CITY COUNCIL

2002

Blue Mountains City Council

Residential Character Study

**Supporting
Draft Local Environmental Plan 2002**

Sustainable Environmental & City Planning
City Sustainability Group

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
WHAT DO WE MEAN BY RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?	1
REVIEW OF DRAFT LEP 1997	2
HOW WERE THE RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER TYPES ESTABLISHED?	3
RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER TYPES	3
Residential Character in the Blue Mountains	3
Bushland Dominant Areas	5
Visually Prominent Areas	9
Garden Setting	11
Dominant Landscape Setting	14
Visually Significant Streetscapes	16
Areas of Older Housing	18
DRAFT LEP 2002: RESPONSES TO RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER	22
Principal Objectives	22
Living Bushland Conservation Zone	22
Living Conservation	23
Protected Areas - Period Housing Areas	24
Protected Areas – Escarpment Area	25
CONCLUSION	25
REFERENCES	27



INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of extensive investigations undertaken by Blue Mountains City Council into the character of residential areas within the Blue Mountains. This report is one of two primary elements of the Residential Character Study. The mapping of Residential Character types as presented within the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) 2002 map series (refer to Map Panel "I"), constitutes the other major component of the Residential Character Study. It is recommended that this report be read in conjunction with these maps.

The Blue Mountains has long been recognised as an area of great environmental value. It has significant appeal in the urban form of its village settlements, which are strung along a narrow ridge flanked by vast areas of natural wilderness. Much of the appeal of the village settlements is closely linked to the urban form that has developed over time. The protection of urban forms that contribute to the positive quality of many Blue Mountains towns and villages is important, both for its own inherent value to local communities, and as a major contributor to the local economy, which is largely based on tourism. This paper establishes residential character types that are distinctive to the Blue Mountains and relates how Draft Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2002 proposes to protect these character types.

Identifying a range of residential character types assists in the development of policies that help to retain and enhance valued urban forms. This residential character study provides detailed background information that has assisted in the application of zones under Draft LEP 2002. It has also provided a basis for the development of detailed provisions to protect physical character elements, which contribute to the amenity of many residential areas.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

All urban areas contain character elements of some sort. These create positive, negative or non-descript associations and experiences for residents and visitors. Character elements may include the way the buildings are juxtaposed, their forms and colours, the presence or absence of gardens, street plantings and street furniture, the width of streets, pavements, and so on. These elements all contribute to the atmosphere or character within an urban area.



Figure 1: Lemaires Ln, Glenbrook

The character of residential areas is primarily shaped by the presentation of houses to the street. As such the front garden and front façade of houses are of high importance, however subdivision patterns, side setbacks and the presence or absence of mature vegetation in rear gardens all have an impact on the view from the street.

The residential character of the Blue Mountains has developed over a long period of time and often reflects the aspirations associated with past and present residents. People choosing to live in the Mountains are generally looking for an alternative to the suburbs of Sydney. Many people move here for the fresh air, the bush, the space and the slower pace of life. As such, they choose to live in an area surrounded by bush or large gardens. This has resulted in the legacy of an urban form that is predominantly low density and well vegetated. Various architectural styles in the Mountains are often associated with an owner builder



tradition and the development of individual lots rather than large subdivisions. Over a long period of time these developments have acted as individual threads contributing towards a rich urban fabric that describes the evolution of towns and villages of the Blue Mountains.

Growing pressure for suitable land for residential development within the Blue Mountains threatens the complexity and coherence of this urban fabric. Development that bears no relationship to surrounding forms, both natural and built, erodes the small elements that have grown over time to create a distinct sense of place. This is especially so where a development dominates and overpowers a street. The loss of a sense of place or of a special residential character within an area can impact on the sense of identity for residents and can have the effect of creating "anywhereville" or what urban analysts have referred to as placelessness. In some ways, the places where we live tell us who we are and can give us insights into our own history. In short, the built form has strong associations with our culture and as such it should be respected and nurtured.

The aim of this particular study is not related to the identification of heritage items. The establishment of heritage values is a separate process that involves the adherence to an established procedure, which assesses broad aspects of cultural and natural significance. This Residential Character Study is concerned with identifying urban design elements that create a positive sense of place or add to the amenity of an area. Residential areas with particular character can be analysed so that we can understand the physical elements that contribute to this sense of place. From this understanding, we can take steps towards the development of controls to protect these elements.



Figure 2: York St, Glenbrook

REVIEW OF DRAFT LEP 1997

Part of the review of Draft LEP1997 has been to revisit the application of the Living Conservation zone. This zone was the primary mechanism for the protection of residential character in Draft LEP 1997. The Draft LEP aimed, in relation to character,

"To conserve the character of those residential areas which Council considers to have significant amenity because of their setting, or because they contain unique natural or other physical elements which are significant components of the City's landscape." (Draft LEP 1997, page 6)

The Public Hearing into Draft LEP 1997 found that the Living Conservation zone imposed by the draft plan was insufficiently justified and boundary alignments between Living and Living Conservation zones appeared arbitrary. The Commission also found that the objective of the Living Conservation zone to retain large lots was not sufficiently justified.

A review of Draft LEP 1997 was undertaken as a result of the Commissioner's findings. Part of this review included a reassessment of the application of residential zones. Residential character emerged as a definitive element as residential zones were reapplied. Where valuable and vulnerable character types were present, residential zones responding to these circumstances were applied.



HOW WERE THE RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER TYPES ESTABLISHED?

The review was undertaken in the following stages:

- A literature review was carried out in order to establish Council's previous approaches to the identification of character in planning reports and studies, including the *Blue Mountains Character Guidelines, DCP No. 10*. Alongside this a review of studies on the exploration and settlement of the Blue Mountains by Europeans, heritage studies and historical reports provided information on the context of character types within the Blue Mountains.
- Secondly an extensive investigation of residential areas within the Draft LEP 2002 area was completed. This involved analysis of all residential areas within the study area. A broad array of character types were identified and mapped for these areas. These character types were quite expansive and identified many variations on themes. The study was site specific and focussed on character types presented within local street contexts. The character patterns of this study were presented at stakeholder workshops for Draft LEP 2002 in May 2000.
- The expansive array of character types was then consolidated into five broad categories that reflected unified themes. This required a secondary examination of the study area. The findings were mapped.
- Finally, land use management responses were developed and incorporated into Draft LEP 2002.

RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER TYPES

Residential Character in the Blue Mountains

The Residential Character Study identified that there are a number of elements that combine to form positive residential character areas that can be particularly associated with the Blue Mountains experience. These elements are made up of and influenced by the following factors:

- Vegetation (gardens, landscape setting, bushland setting)
- Residential patterns (lot sizes, street layout, laneways)
- Residential development that reflects a range of architectural 'periods'

Settlement in the Blue Mountains is comprised of villages and towns. The villages reflect a historical pattern of settlement that in many cases has been retained as a result of physical and environmental constraints and minimal pressures for development. Small scale incremental development within the towns has also contributed to a patchwork of styles that often provide a varied and interesting experience.



Figure 3: York St, Glenbrook

There are considerable variances in character between the Upper, Mid and Lower Mountains. This is a result of differing topographies and climate,



and buildings and gardens that represent different settlement periods. It is also influenced by the distinct economic functions of each region. The Upper Mountains rely heavily on the tourist industry, and formal gardens, dramatic landscapes and heritage items contribute to the success of the industry. On the other hand, the Lower Mountains contain a large proportion of residents who commute outside the area for work and are attracted to the area for its bushland setting.

As the demand for housing increases and the availability of developable land decreases, there is increasing pressure to accommodate more housing in existing urban areas. Inappropriate infill development poses a threat to residential character. Council seeks to maintain the residential character unique to the Blue Mountains, and to ensure that the area can be differentiated from the greater metropolitan area of the Sydney basin. Various character elements have been identified and mapped in order to accomplish their protection through the provisions of Draft LEP 2002. These provisions will ensure new development enhances and contributes to existing residential character types. They allow for the sympathetic evolution of the urban form.



Figure 4: Walgett St, Katoomba



Figure 5: Highland St, Leura

The six residential character types identified as a result of this study are:

- Bushland Dominant Areas: areas dominated by native vegetation
- Visually Prominent Areas: residential areas within close proximity to escarpment areas
- Garden Setting: areas that present a unified streetscape characterised by formal and exotic vegetation
- Dominant Landscape Setting: areas where landscaped elements such as vegetation dominate the urban form
- Visually Significant Streetscapes: important streets that set a 'tone' for an urban area
- Areas of Older Housing: residential areas that are dominated by housing that pre dates 1946

These character types are discussed in the following pages.



Bushland Dominant Areas

The natural environment is the main factor shaping residential development patterns within the Blue Mountains. As a result a significant proportion of residential areas have a bushland setting.

This occurs where residential roads along spur lines provide views of bushland ridges; where a large natural feature or heavy native canopy dominates the streetscape; or where areas are within the urban/bushland interface. The urban/bushland interface is any area where developed towns and villages of the Mountains meet the area of bushland that surrounds them.



Figure 6: Queens Rd, Leura

Residential development within these areas tends to be sympathetic to the bush, with significant amounts of vegetation being retained on individual allotments. Outlying areas are characterised by large lot sizes, which contribute to the proportion of vegetation in these areas and their subsequent bush character. The type of bushland setting varies within the sub regions of the Upper, Mid and Lower Blue Mountains.

The Lower Mountains are typified by a series of rolling hills and ridges. As the slopes are not sheer, there is a relatively continuous soil cover and the area is well vegetated. Consequently this landscape lacks the dramatic contrasts found in the Upper Mountains. The area's attraction lies in its contrast to the flatness of the Cumberland Plain and the expansive views of the Sydney metropolitan area. The less dramatic topography of the Lower Mountains results in residential development being set within, rather than above, the landscape elements. Mitchells Pass Rd, Blaxland and Bruce Rd, Glenbrook provide typical examples of Bushland Dominant Areas, and are lined with heavy vegetation.

The Mid Mountains are less dramatic than the Upper Mountains and are typified by spurs of development encroaching into vast areas of bushland with views from the residential areas into gullies and rolling hills. The Springwood area is dominated by ironbarks, stringybarks and yellow bloodwood, whereas around Hazelbrook and Bullaburra red bloodwood predominates. The spurs of development can be seen in Valley Rd in Hazelbrook, Leumeah Rd in Woodford, Bee Farm Rd in Springwood and generally off Hawkesbury Rd in Winmalee. These areas have a bushland setting due to their proximity to the bush and their views across ridges and into the National Park.

Triassic rocks overlying soft permian sediments are typical of the Upper Mountains and produce more dramatic landscapes. The blue green of vegetation on the plateau is separated from the valley floor by sandstone bluffs. From the Upper Mountains, expansive views of unbroken bushland to the north and south are regularly available.



Figure 7: Winnicoopa Rd, Blaxland



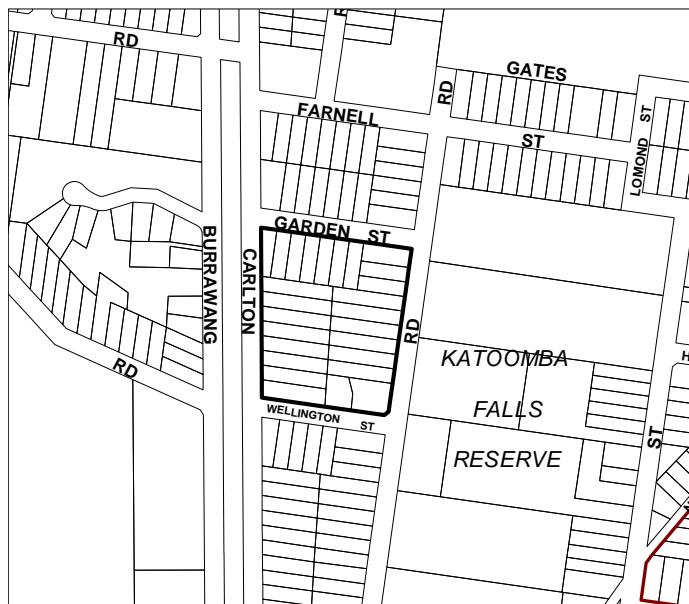
The dramatic landscape of the Upper Mountains often results in residential development perched high on flat plateaux with magnificent views. Views such as views seen across the Jamison Valley from Cliff Drive, Katoomba, have become iconic to the Blue Mountains visitor experience. Other areas are dominated by bushland streetscape elements such as the Mountain Ash along Queens Rd, Leura and North Victoria Street in Mount Victoria.

The following pages provide a block analysis of three areas that display bushland dominant character themes. This assessment demonstrates that the low site coverage of buildings, deep setbacks and retention of vegetation contribute to the amenity of the streetscape and provide an experience that is essentially linked to the Blue Mountains. Development of this scale and within a natural bushland setting of this quality is not regularly found in other local government areas. "Bushland Dominant Areas" are applied where native vegetation predominates the streetscape, and are the most prevalent residential character type in the Blue Mountains.



Site Analysis – Bushland Dominant: Katoomba

Location Map



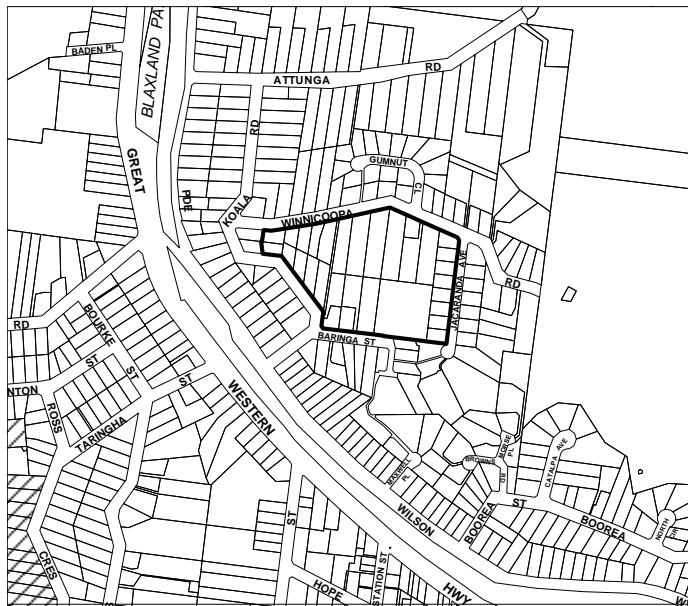
Site Analysis

ADDRESS	LOT SIZE (m ²)	SITE COVERAGE (m ²)	SITE COVERAGE (% of lot)	FRONT SETBACK (m)
8 Carlton St	658	160	24%	9
10 Carlton St	1142	238	20%	15
12 Carlton St	1125	320	28%	19
14 Carlton St	1106	225	20%	11
16 Carlton St	1089	157	14%	16
18 Carlton St	1073	238	22%	14
20 Carlton St	1055	-	-	-
22 Carlton St	1038	191	18%	15
24 Carlton St	1239	-	-	-
15 Peckmans Rd	996	188	17%	17
17 Peckmans Rd	766	126	16%	19
19 Peckmans Rd	765	160	21%	13
21 Peckmans Rd	1143	127	11%	20
23 Peckmans Rd	1126	255	22%	22
25 Peckmans Rd	1110	-	-	-
27 Peckmans Rd	1091	171	15%	19
29 Peckmans Rd	1076	188	17%	35
31 Peckmans Rd	1059	-	-	-
33-35 Peckmans Rd	1379	54	4%	22
4 Garden St	764	153	20%	15
6 Garden St	764	227	29%	15
8 Garden St	763	-	-	-
10 Garden St	764	265	34%	14
12 Garden St	765	123	16%	10
14 Garden St	765	118	15%	12
3 Wellington St	900	223	25%	7
AVERAGE	982	186	19%	16
MEDIAN	1057	188	20%	15



Site Analysis – Bushland Dominant: Blaxland

Location Map



Site Analysis

ADDRESS	LOT SIZE (m ²)	SITE COVERAGE (m ²)	SITE COVERAGE (% of lot)	FRONT SETBACK (m)
2 Baringa St	915	98	11%	7
4 Baringa St	960	139	14%	4
4a Baringa St	1817	271	15%	45
6 Baringa St	2690	258	9%	9
8 Baringa St	8219	184	2%	4
17 Jacaranda Ave	763	206	27%	5
15 Jacaranda Ave	753	197	26%	6
11 Jacaranda Ave	787	240	30%	7
9 Jacaranda Ave	764	168	22%	8
7 Jacaranda Ave	769	235	31%	7
5 Jacaranda Ave	776	127	16%	17
3 Jacaranda Ave	763	187	25%	14
1 Jacaranda Ave	803	150	19%	6
25 Winnicoopa Rd	2826	240	8%	52
23 Winnicoopa Rd	3086	309	10%	85
21 Winnicoopa Rd	3340	283	8%	8
19 Winnicoopa Rd	3384	425	13%	28
17 Winnicoopa Rd	3036	260	8%	40
15 Winnicoopa Rd	2109	197	9%	40
11 Winnicoopa Rd	2528	253	10%	25
11a Winnicoopa Rd	573	-	-	-
7 Winnicoopa Rd	898	128	14%	8
5 Winnicoopa Rd	663	191	29%	11
3 Winnicoopa Rd	790	156	20%	7
1a Koala	1451	186	13%	28
3 Koala	1401	168	12%	29
5 Koala	1161	232	20%	16
7 Koala	912	158	17%	9
9 Koala	675	135	20%	9
11 Koala	676	177	26%	7
AVERAGE	1676	205	17%	19
MEDIAN	914	191	15%	9



Visually Prominent Areas

The identity of the Blue Mountains is expressed through the topography of the region, with escarpments, sandstone bluffs and views to unbroken bushland. These features are also significant to the identity of the wider Sydney region, and even to the nation. For this reason it is essential that residential areas adjoining escarpment areas are identified and protected from inappropriate development.



Figure 8: Gordon Ave, Blackheath

for the extension of escarpment areas.

There has been long established recognition and protection of the major escarpment areas in the Blue Mountains. In the Upper Mountains, these include the escarpment on the north western side from Mt Victoria to the eastern end of Wentworth Falls. In the Lower Mountains the Eastern Escarpment extends from Hawkesbury Heights to Lapstone. These escarpments have been retained and enhanced where necessary. As part of the review of Draft LEP 1997 it was recognised that these escarpment areas required further review, with the northern and south eastern areas to be investigated

With the assistance of Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping, it was possible to identify the location of all escarpment areas in the Blue Mountains. These areas were then investigated through site inspections to identify the potential extent of the visually prominent area. This was dependant on a number of factors, including:

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

The existing escarpment areas were extended in some parts of Katoomba where it was identified that development would be visually prominent outside the established escarpment areas. New escarpment areas were identified in the following areas:

- Northern Blackheath,
- South Bullaburra,
- North Springwood,
- South Woodford,
- South Blaxland, and
- East Glenbrook.

These areas were identified due to their visual prominence as viewed from bushland areas. The range of visibility was important in establishing these locations. For example, land



Figure 9: Gordon Ave, Blackheath



that is visually prominent to another residential area less than 500 metres away requires less protection than areas that are visible from large areas within the National Park. For example, the former case occurs in Winmalee, between residential development located on adjoining ridges. In contrast, areas visible from the National Park are particularly sensitive to the height, scale and bulk of buildings. An accumulation or intensification of development along with associated land clearing can severely scar the natural qualities of escarpments. Measures are required to mitigate against this effect.

The images below provide examples of newly identified areas that are Visually Prominent, and indicate the extent to which the character type was applied.

Visually Prominent Areas - Examples



Figure 10: Ross Cres & Plateau Pde; South Blaxland



Figure 11: Kalinda Rd, Bullaburra



Garden Setting

Areas that are defined as having a “Garden Setting” residential character are typified by formalised gardens and exotic plantings. These types of gardens are mostly found in the Upper Mountains. Many of these significant gardens were established as a result of the area’s growing popularity as a health oriented tourist destination early in the 20th century, including those established by Paul Sorensen. Many gardens were also established as large estates for respite from the summer heat for “well-to-do” Sydney residents. These gardens and street plantings contribute to a legacy of mature vegetation and significant exotic canopy on streetscapes, lending much charm and contributing to the image of the Blue Mountains. It is important to note that individual gardens were not identified. Rather, unified streetscapes where there were consistent exotic garden themes within a streetscape were mapped as “Garden Setting” areas.

The contrast between the wild natural areas and the mature exotic vegetation is characteristic of many Upper Mountains villages. Towns such as Leura are renowned for their Spring and Autumn displays of exotic species which include deciduous trees and conifers dominating the tree canopy. Visitors seek out exhibition garden displays or simply drive or walk through the villages enjoying the ambience created as a result of the gardens and the historic built forms.

The “Garden Setting” character occurs where large lot sizes predominate the overall subdivision pattern allowing for the planting of trees in backyards that subsequently contribute to a landscape setting within an area. Higher densities threaten the “Garden Setting” character within these areas due to the reduction in available garden space, especially in relation to the large open spaces required for large trees. Another essential element in the character of these garden areas is that the site coverage of buildings is low, with the dwelling often secondary or at least responsive to the grandeur of the garden.



Figure 13: Kensett St, Leura



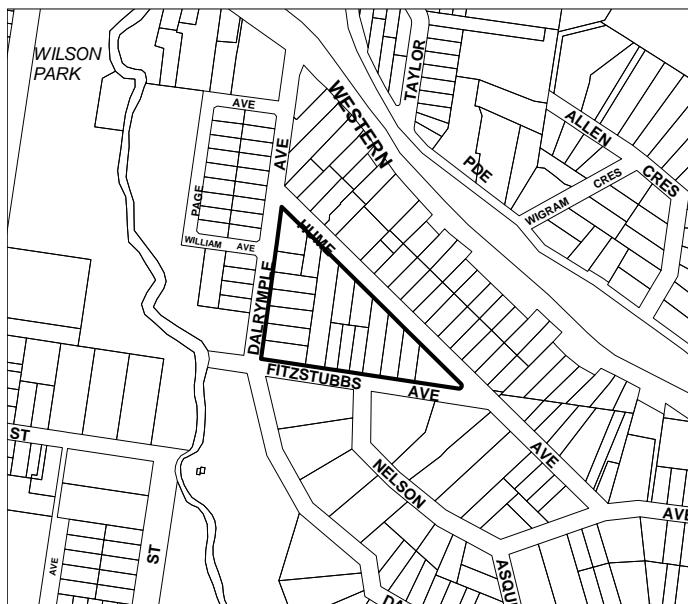
Figure 12: Luralla – Leura

“Garden Setting” differs from “Bushland Dominant Areas” in that there is a predominance of exotic species within the gardens and verges in “Garden Setting” areas. Similarly, “Garden Setting” differs from “Dominant Landscape Setting” in that “Garden Setting” reflects a more traditional, formal garden theme, and “Dominant Landscape Setting” is applied where a mix of vegetation types (both exotic and native) dominates the streetscape. The following pages provide block analysis that are indicative of a “Garden Setting” character. Note the large block sizes and the low site coverage of built forms. These examples demonstrate the importance of large blocks in creating the “Garden Setting” character.



Garden Setting – Wentworth Falls

Location Map



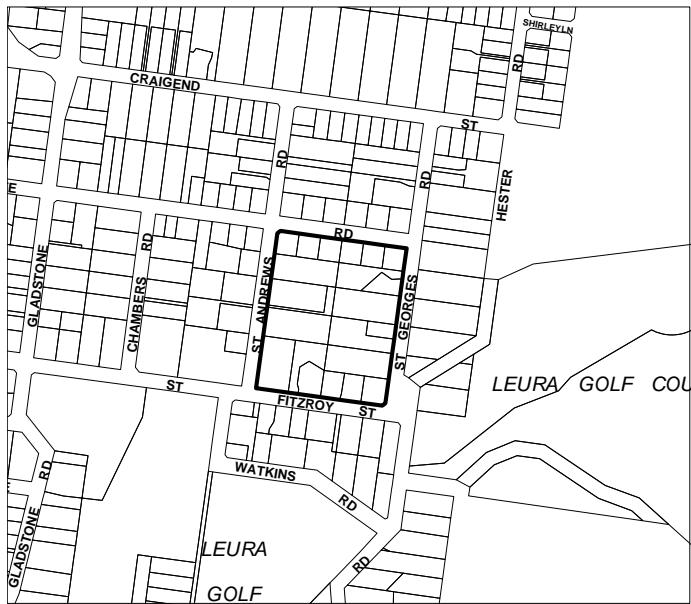
Site Analysis

ADDRESS	LOT SIZE (m ²)	SITE COVERAGE (% of lot)	FRONT SETBACK (m)	PROPORTION OF BUILDING TO LOT FRONTAGE (%)
1 Hume Ave	1314	19%	7	52%
3 Hume Ave	827	17%	20	47%
5 Hume Ave	2934	8%	30	53%
7 Hume Ave	1300	21%	30	53%
9 Hume Ave	1027	18%	30	66%
11 Hume Ave	1708	9%	23	36%
15 Hume Ave	1372	10%	33	65%
17 Hume Ave	1071	21%	17	64%
19 Hume Ave	1374	11%	11	28%
8 Dalrymple Ave	787	17%	10	37%
10 Dalrymple Ave	1018	23%	10	70%
12 Dalrymple Ave	1014	25%	14	70%
14 Dalrymple Ave	1068	17%	12	60%
14a Dalrymple Ave	1036	13%	20	66%
16 Dalrymple Ave	1153	14%	15	63%
9 Fitzstubbs Ave	773	-	-	-
11 Fitzstubbs Ave	775	18%	22	86%
15 Fitzstubbs Ave	826	24%	16	81%
AVERAGE	1188	17%	19	59%
MEDIAN	1052	17%	17	63%



Garden Setting – Leura

Location Map



Site Analysis

ADDRESS	LOT SIZE (m ²)	SITE COVERAGE (% of lot)	FRONT SETBACK (m)	PROPORTION OF BUILDING TO LOT FRONTAGE (%)
30 Fitzroy	3322	7%	5	37%
32 Fitzroy	1423	25%	20	78%
32a Fitzroy	1908	-	-	-
34 Fitzroy	1060	20%	5	57%
36 Fitzroy	1059	28%	5	43%
38 Fitzroy	1267	29%	5	50%
14 St Andrews	3150	6%	42	64%
16 St Andrews	2944	9%	18	54%
18 St Andrews	3640	16%	13	37%
22 St Andrews	3640	39%	19	5%
43 Northcote	967	20%	7	47%
45 Northcote	974	22%	17	53%
47 Northcote	973	-	-	-
49 Northcote	974	17%	10	33%
51 Northcote	973	-	-	-
53 Northcote	973	-	-	-
11 St Georges	3150	6%	60	35%
13 St Georges	1091	-	-	-
17-19 St Georges	4342	2%	76	27%
21 St Georges	797	19%	11	39%
23 St Georges	2846	12%	68	42%
25-27 St Georges	3281	11%	51	40%
AVERAGE	2034	17%	25	44%
MEDIAN	1345	17%	17	42%



Dominant Landscape Setting

These residential areas are typified by relatively small dwelling sizes, large lot subdivision patterns and the dominance of vegetation. This character type contributes to the setting of an area, with mature exotic or native vegetation that provides a landscape backdrop to development. Gardens are less formalised than those in areas identified as "Garden Setting", but contain a mix of plantings that become part of the streetscape character as a result of views into front and side gardens and the presence of trees overhanging the street and road carriageway. It is also the result of plantings in rear gardens which contribute to the canopy cover in an area.

"Dominant Landscape Setting" is important particularly in the Lower Mountains in terms of differentiating the Blue Mountains from the suburbs of Sydney. For example, Glenbrook is seen as the gateway to the Mountains. There is a marked increase in vegetation upon entry to Glenbrook, not merely as a result of being within a bushland setting but also as a result of the number and size of private gardens and their plantings which contribute to the overall character of the town. Significant threats to this character type include the subdivision of large lots and the development of residential dwellings with a large site coverage. These development types remove much of the canopy cover and erode the dominant landscape setting character.

A "Dominant Landscape Setting" has been identified in parts of the Upper Mountains, where mature vegetation contributes to the continuity of the canopy cover and creates landscape settings within towns. This is identified in Wentworth Falls where the dense gardens and radiata pines of Hume Avenue and Dalrymple Avenue create a magnificent backdrop upon entry to the village from the Great Western Highway. Similarly in Mount Victoria, a mature garden precinct exists in the core of the village area and contributes to the landscape setting of the town.

The block analyses on the following pages demonstrate the importance of large lots in the identification of "Dominant Landscape Settings". It is recognised that any streetscape is created by landscape and built form on both sides of the street. However for the purposes of this study, block averages were found to confirm the application of character types and the block analyses therefore focus mainly on one side of a street.



Figure 14: York St, Glenbrook



Dominant Landscape Setting - Glenbrook

Location Map



Site Analysis

ADDRESS	LOT SIZE (m ²)	SITE COVERAGE (% of lot)	FRONT SETBACK (m)
3 Kent	1273	15%	31.0
5 Kent	1192	32%	12.0
7 Kent	1211	19%	14.0
9 Kent	1204	34%	10.0
11 Kent	1195	25%	12.0
15 Kent	1201	18%	18.0
17 Kent	1218	16%	12.0
19 Kent	1229	14%	8.5
21 Kent	1247	20%	15.0
7 High	2558	6%	53.0
9 High	1875	11%	47.0
9A High	745	16%	15.0
11 High	2571	7%	47.0
36 Barnett	1749	20%	9.0
34 Barnett	920	19%	18.5
32 Barnett	928	17%	13.6
30 Barnett	1180	27%	17.5
28 Barnett	1203	16%	20.0
26 Barnett	1194	13%	23.0
24 Barnett	1233	18%	17.0
22 Barnett	618	33%	13.0
3 York	600	29%	7.5
5 York	2577	20%	17.0
7 York	2602	6%	13.7
9 York	1182	16%	16.0
9A York	1363	20%	61.0
AVERAGE	1387	19%	21
MEDIAN	1208	18%	16



Visually Significant Streetscapes

Main streets play a major role in the perception of an area. They often provide the gateway or entrance to a town and are therefore critical in terms of setting the tone or character of an area.



Figure 15: Lucasville Rd, Glenbrook

area be subjected to inappropriate infill development causing the loss of the overhead canopy, a significant aspect of the amenity of the town would be lost.

Many Mountains villages have developed around a number of main streets that access smaller localised roads. These main streets often have historic associations and reflect the historic development of a town. As a result these roads have an interesting mix of architectural styles and periods, the variety of which embodies much character within the Mountains.

Hare Street, Lucasville Road and Explorers Road in Glenbrook perform major road functions and contribute to the character of the area.

Residential allotments on these streets tend to be large, with mature gardens that contribute to the canopy cover. As these areas are often close to the core village area, a garden village atmosphere is created as a result of large allotments close to the commercial core. The Mall in Leura is a well known example of a visually significant streetscape. Higher densities are inappropriate within these locations as the character will be weakened due to a reduced canopy cover and increased hard surfaces. This in turn affects the synthesis between the built form and the natural environment, which is an essential component of the character of many Mountains villages.



Figure 17: Craigend St, Leura



Figure 16: Blaxland Rd, Wentworth Falls



Falls Road and Blaxland Road in Wentworth Falls are excellent examples of historic roads. Both are major link roads to the south and north of Wentworth Falls respectively. Falls Rd in particular is one of the most historic roads in the Blue Mountains, with many heritage items in this location.

Laneways are often important in contributing to a positive residential amenity. Lanes within Blackheath, Katoomba, Wentworth Falls and Glenbrook are at a scale which creates a sense of intimacy.



Areas of Older Housing

Many villages have a strong representation of housing pre dating the Second World War. In some instances this housing stock remains largely unchanged from the time of construction.



Figure 19: Lurline St, Katoomba

This often results in a strong streetscape character reflecting a particular architectural period, or a mix of historical architectural periods. Areas of older housing are significant for their aesthetic appeal and also importantly as a living connection to the history of development in the Blue Mountains. The character of areas of older housing could potentially be eroded through the demolition of existing housing stock or unsympathetic infill development.

Areas of older housing are predominantly located in the Upper Mountains, reflecting the impact of historical trends on development. For instance, the boom in tourism is reflected in the construction of holiday homes and caretakers dwellings in Leura and Blackheath; and the development of Katoomba as a mining town can be seen in the construction of workers cottages.

Areas of older housing are generally dominated by built form. They exhibit narrow setbacks, short frontages, and generally have no on site car parking. These older houses and cottages feature craftsmen styled decorative architecture, varied roof forms, verandas with elaborate posts, trims and balustrades. Some areas are distinguished by an astounding variety of building patterns as illustrated by windows, bays, window shades, verandas and complex roof forms. Heights within these areas are generally restricted to one storey, and dwellings often have pitched roofs which contribute to the pattern of the built form. The bulk and scale of many new residential styles impacts heavily on the streetscape within these areas and can detract significantly from the pattern created by the older styles of housing. Pre fabricated and mass produced housing components are the antithesis to the character of areas of older housing, and insensitive infill development can quickly erode the qualities that have been maintained over a significant period of time.



Figure 20: Leichhardt St, Katoomba



The images below demonstrate the scale of the built form in "Areas of Older Housing". Whilst front setbacks are generally small and frontages are narrow, the heights of the buildings are relatively low. The cumulative effect of these buildings within a streetscape can be quickly eroded when the pattern of the built form is broken up with large bulky developments. The level of articulation (or detail) on the exterior walls of these buildings enriches the streetscape and makes the streets interesting places to be.



Figure 21: Period Housing

The following pages provide two examples of block analysis within an area of older housing. These examples analyse urban design elements that contribute to "Areas of Older Housing" and demonstrate how these areas represent contiguous themes. Front setbacks are comparatively narrow and although site coverage of the buildings remains low, they are typically higher than other character types assessed.



Areas Of Older Housing – Site Analysis – Mount Victoria

Location Map



Site Analysis

ADDRESS	LOT SIZE (m ²)	SITE COVERAGE (% of lot)	FRONT SETBACK (m)	PROPORTION OF BUILDING TO LOT FRONTAGE (%)
82 Great Western Highway	615	51%	3	66
28 Montgomery	743	30%	3	41
30-32 Montgomery	1358	14%	23	48
80 Great Western Highway	1358	23%	23	88
78 Great Western Highway	679	25%	28	90
40-42 Montgomery	1358	20%	2	46
39 Montgomery	726	19%	3	68
41-45 Montgomery	2666	7%	3	35
26 Selsdon	1227	26%	1	46
20-24 Selsdon	1909	11%	7	55
16-18 Selsdon	1272	22%	9	32
12-14 Selsdon	1270	15%	9	40
8-10 Selsdon	1270	36%	9	43
AVERAGE	1265	23%	9	54%
MEDIAN	1270	22%	7	46%



Areas Of Older Housing – Site Analysis – Blackheath

Location Map



Site Analysis

ADDRESS	LOT SIZE (m ²)	SITE COVERAGE (% of lot)	FRONT SETBACK (m)	PROPORTION OF BUILDING TO LOT FRONTAGE (%)
1 Leichhardt	1232	21%	6.2	50
3 Leichhardt	800	31%	5.5	62
5 Leichhardt	1230	19%	5.7	49
7 Leichhardt	790	33%	7.0	55
83 Wentworth	1016	13%	9.0	61
81 Wentworth	1015	30%	9.7	94
79 Wentworth	1014	32%	4.5	80
77 Wentworth	1014	21%	10.5	64
73 Wentworth	1472	18%	9.0	59
69 Wentworth	1010	16%	5.5	44
67 Wentworth	1010	19%	5.5	52
65 Wentworth	1009	18%	6.0	52
63 Wentworth	927	26%	6.0	79
64 Clan William	1015	21%	9.5	81
62 Clan William	1014	23%	8.8	76
60 Clan William	2024	16%	7.5	35
58 Clan William	1135	16%	42	100
56 Clan William	1439	31%	6.7	54
52 Clan William	1009	13%	2.5	44
50 Clan William	1010	25%	8.1	84
48 Clan William	1007	30%	8.0	84
46 Clan William	568	43%	5.8	75
12 Prince George	520	27	4.6	50
AVERAGE	1056	24%	9	65%
MEDIAN	1014	21%	7	63%



DRAFT LEP 2002: RESPONSES TO RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER

The Residential Character Study prompted the inclusion of a number of measures within Draft LEP 2002 aiming to retain and enhance the residential character unique to the Blue Mountains. The Character Study clearly identified areas that required the protection of a range of land use management policies including:

- Principal Objectives within Draft LEP 2002
- The application of specific zones and corresponding provisions designed to retain and enhance significant character elements
- The application of "Protected Areas" that provide additional development controls for areas where particular residential character elements have been identified.

The identification of various character elements contributed to the justification for the application of two of the residential zones in Draft LEP 2002; the Living Conservation and Living Bushland Conservation zones. The zones were applied in accordance with the character mapping undertaken as part of the study. The following provides a detailed explanation of the measures that have been taken to retain character within Draft LEP 2002.

Principal Objectives

Specific objectives relating to character were included in the "Objectives for the Plan". These recognise the contribution made by varying types of residential character within the Blue Mountains to amenity, historical associations and the economy. These are:

- "(a) To maintain the unique identity and values of the City of Blue Mountains as a "City within a World Heritage National Park".*
- (d) To identify and conserve the distinct cultural heritage of the built forms and landscapes of the Blue Mountains.*
- (h) To identify and retain the diverse built and landscape elements that contribute to the character and image of the Blue Mountains"*

Living Bushland Conservation Zone

The primary role of the Living Bushland Conservation zone is to ensure development is within the environmental capacity of the land. In many areas, however, the zone was applied in response to the "Bushland Dominant" character. Objectives of the Living Bushland Conservation zone reiterate the importance of the character of "Bushland Dominant". Objectives relating to character in the Living Bushland Conservation zone are:

- "(b) To retain a predominantly bushland character by encouraging the retention and re-establishment of native bushland and the retention of large allotment sizes.*
- (c) To allow a limited range of non-residential land uses only where these are conducted in association with a predominantly residential land use and are consistent with the retention of the bushland character.*



- (d) To ensure that the form and siting of buildings, colours, landscaping and building materials are appropriate for and harmonise with the bushland character of the area.
- (e) To encourage the retention and re-establishment of native bushland along significant fauna corridors and in areas of high visual significance, including escarpment areas and along the Regional Transport Corridor".

The natural areas of the Blue Mountains are integral to the primary setting of the City. It is an important responsibility of Council's to ensure the impacts of development within areas with a bushland setting are minimised and the character type is retained. However the protection of the environment and limiting development density in areas particularly prone to bush fire is the primary motivator in applying the Living Bushland Conservation zone. The retention of the character type "Bushland Dominant" is a secondary prompt to protecting these areas. Within areas characterised by "Bushland Dominant", the proximity of development to bushland results in there being a greater risk to significant vegetation types and often watercourses and habitats associated with them. Studies and site analysis has been undertaken to assess which areas of the city are particularly sensitive to development, and additional tools such as Protected Area notations have been used to mitigate the impacts of development within sensitive habitats. Documentation of the environmental analysis can be found in Environmental Management Plan 2002.

In many cases the "Bushland Dominant" is formed by the presence of large blocks that allow indigenous vegetation to predominate the setting. Block analysis of random blocks designated with a "Bushland Dominant" character established that the average block size in these areas was above 1000m². Reference should be made to the Residential Character Study for further detailed consideration of lot sizes and environmental impacts within this zone. The low density will assist in the protection of the bushland character and will limit the effect of residential development in these areas on the environment.

Maximum site coverage within the Living Bushland Conservation zone is restricted to 300m² or 25% of the site area, whichever is the lesser. Again, this reinforces the importance of the predominance of the bushland setting over the built form within these areas.

A limited range of residential and non-residential land uses are permissible within this zone. This will limit the intensity with which these areas are utilised and recognises the importance of preserving the predominance of the bushland setting.

Bushland Dominant was often identified in areas located between the villages, which contain some element of bushland character in terms of their broader setting. The limitation of development in these areas will assist in maintaining a separation between towns and contributes to the impression of the National Park and natural areas as experienced from the transport corridor.

L i v i n g C o n s e r v a t i o n

The primary function of the Living Conservation zone is to protect areas containing significant residential character. The three character types included for protection under the auspices of this zone are the Garden Setting, Visually Significant Streetscapes and Dominant Landscape Setting. These areas were mapped as part of the character study and were transferred to the zoning maps as Living Conservation zones. These areas are not particularly extensive as they identify localities representing a unified theme of the abovementioned character types. In addition, areas that are vulnerable to inappropriate infill development have been identified for protection under this zone.



The objectives of the Living Conservation zone explicitly referring to the protection of character types are:

- "(a) To retain and enhance the character of residential areas that are formed by larger allotment sizes with a prominent traditional garden setting
- (b) To enhance the landscape character and setting along roads of heritage significance where the road forms a visually significant entrance to a village or a linkage/pathway between major visitor destinations.
- (c) To ensure development, including development within adjoining road reserves, retains the prominence of landscape elements and traditional garden settings.
- (e) To allow for a limited range of non-residential land uses where these are conducted in association with a predominantly residential land use and are consistent with the retention of a residential character based on a landscape or open space setting".

The minimum allotment size within the Living Conservation zone is 1200m². This recognises the significance of larger blocks in contributing to the character of these areas. Larger block sizes allow for the establishment of gardens and the retention of mature vegetation which contributes to the canopy cover. These features make an important contribution to the amenity of these areas. The minimum block size of 1200m² corresponds to the averages derived from a random block analysis, undertaken for this study.

The maximum site coverage for the Living Conservation zone is 300m² or 25% of the site area, whichever is the lesser. This seeks to encourage infill development that reflects the existing built form, which is characterised by smaller dwellings with a lower site coverage and the predominance of gardens. This has been illustrated in the block analyses undertaken for this paper.

Protected Areas - Period Housing Areas

Period Housing Areas were established to promote the conservation of existing areas of streetscapes identified as having "Areas of Older Housing" residential character themes. These areas contribute to the character of urban villages in the Blue Mountains. The character of these older housing areas could potentially be diminished through demolition of existing housing stock or unsympathetic infill development.

Demolition within a Period Housing Area will be not be consented to by Council unless:

- The building is not representative of the traditional older building fabric of the area; or
- The demolition proposed will retain the substantive appearance of the building when viewed from the street; or
- Documentary evidence demonstrates that the building is structurally unsound and not economically repairable; or
- The building is minor or ancillary to the main building on the site and its demolition will not affect the character of the main building or its setting when viewed from the street.

Period Housing Areas that have unifying themes, for example, cottages built of materials such as weatherboard and tin roofs, can be diminished through unsympathetic infill development. Therefore, proposals for infill development must demonstrate that the development will enhance the existing character and traditional building styles and retain and incorporate older buildings as part of any redevelopment. By the same token the provisions discourage new developments that create a pastiche of combined elements from various traditional



architectural styles. Instead the provisions confine any replication of building elements to a single traditional period, relying on the skills of the building designer to develop buildings that respect their context. Maximum height controls (6.5 metres maximum building height and 4.5 metres at eaves) have been incorporated into Draft LEP 2002 in order to ensure that new development does not dominate the streetscape.

P r o t e c t e d A r e a s - E s c a r p m e n t A r e a

Visually Prominent Areas have been protected by the Protected Area – Escarpment Area designation. This land use control incorporates additional development controls for height and built form.

The maximum height in these areas is 5.5 metres with a maximum height at eaves of 4 metres. Design of development must respond to the contours of the site and must not visually protrude above the skyline. Developments are also required to incorporate external surfaces that are finished in non-reflective coloured material to help blend in with the surrounding environment. These measures are aimed at ensuring new development within these sensitive areas does not dominate the ridgeline and that the integrity of the escarpment area as primarily a natural feature is maintained.

C O N C L U S I O N

Identifying and preserving residential character has been a cornerstone element in the preparation of Draft LEP 2002. It was recognised in the early stages of preparing the draft plan that residential character was important to many Blue Mountains residents because it provided a “sense of place”. The Residential Character Study sought to identify tangible urban design elements that provide some residential areas with a significant “character” that contributes to the local identity.

In working towards this outcome, the study has focused on two key elements. The first of these has been to document and categorise predominant character attributes, considering these in the context of settlement patterns within the Blue Mountains. Although the study identifies areas that share common attributes, it has also stressed the importance of recognising that it is often the individual or distinctive qualities of places that form the basis of character. It is retaining this balance that is one of challenges that emerges in developing planning regulations that aim to preserve character. The other key factor is providing scope for the natural evolution of towns and villages that respond to the needs of successive generations, as well as respecting the context provided by the existing built environment.

From this basis, the second component of the study has been the development of planning responses proposed under Draft LEP 2002, which seek to preserve and respond to the qualities of places in the Blue Mountains. This has been achieved by a combination of prescriptive controls based on site-specific assessments, coupled with performance measures. These measures rely on an assessment of existing character attributes as part of the development process, providing a platform for responsive design approaches that are sympathetic to these qualities.

The value that the community gives to residential character, and even those elements which are perceived as being important in defining the built and natural environment, change from era to era and from one person to another. It is with this in mind that the process of developing Draft LEP 2002 and its supporting studies has been directed to recording the assumptions that have informed the assessment of character. This enables the broader community to evaluate and further contribute to identifying and protecting the character of those areas in which they live and visit. As such, this study and the provisions proposed under



Draft LEP 2002 are seen as a part of an ongoing process for the long-term management and protection of residential character within the Blue Mountains.



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