

6.4 Built Form and Heritage

Built form and heritage are intrinsically linked within the Newport Activity Centre. Heritage buildings of varying value are located throughout the Centre, providing foundational elements which define Newport's character. New built form needs to be conscious of these and provide appropriate design responses through massing and detailed design. Likewise, adaptive reuse and/or redevelopment of heritage buildings needs to occur in a manner that respects and re-interprets the built form elements.

In determining the future of built form for the Activity Centre, it is useful to observe the historic pattern of iconic developments in the area. TMA major heritage features and building clusters tend to announce their presence through building and/ or parapet height. When these features are viewed from a landscape/ macro perspective, a narrative emerges of how built form character has developed. While single storey development also occurred, this would not have been the dominant characteristic of the Activity Centre prior to the 1960s, when the Activity Centre's presence was highly discernible. This presence has been blurred since the construction of the Melbourne Road overpass and low scale modern development, which has become a disproportionately prominent feature at the gateways to the Centre.

There is accordingly a case for drawing on the previous pattern of urban development for setting an overarching built form strategy for the Activity Centre. Specifically, the Activity Centre should feature built form that creates mass and renders the urban core as readily discernible, while simultaneously responding to heritage buildings and features in accordance with best practice design. This measure can be expected to improve the spatial relationships between Precincts, while also enabling individual Precincts to develop their specialty characteristics.

It is also important to note that the most comfortable spaces in the Activity Centre have a village feel and sense of intimacy (such as Paine Reserve, Hall Street, and parts of Mason and Market Streets). The Structure Plan celebrates the contributions these spaces make towards a sense of place and proposes to implement measures that propagate and enhance the village feel.

Other than Centre-focused measures, this Structure Plan also gives attention to the residential interface, much of which comprises heritage precincts. The built form strategies that follow are devised on the basis of reasonable expectations for Activity Centre mass, as well as other important considerations, such as solar access and privacy.

These overarching measures align with the level of growth that is anticipated and able to be captured, considering the growth:

- > Will be relatively modest in comparison to higher order Centres surrounding Newport;
- > Will provide sufficient impetus to implement a massing strategy that involves developing a taller urban core;
- > Can be balanced with the need to protect heritage values and the neighbourhood/ village scale of the Activity Centre.

What's Missing?

- > A consistent and discernible urban character;
- > A coherent strategy for how built form will respond to growth and manage emerging demand; and
- > Guidance on how to conserve and address heritage through new development/re-development.

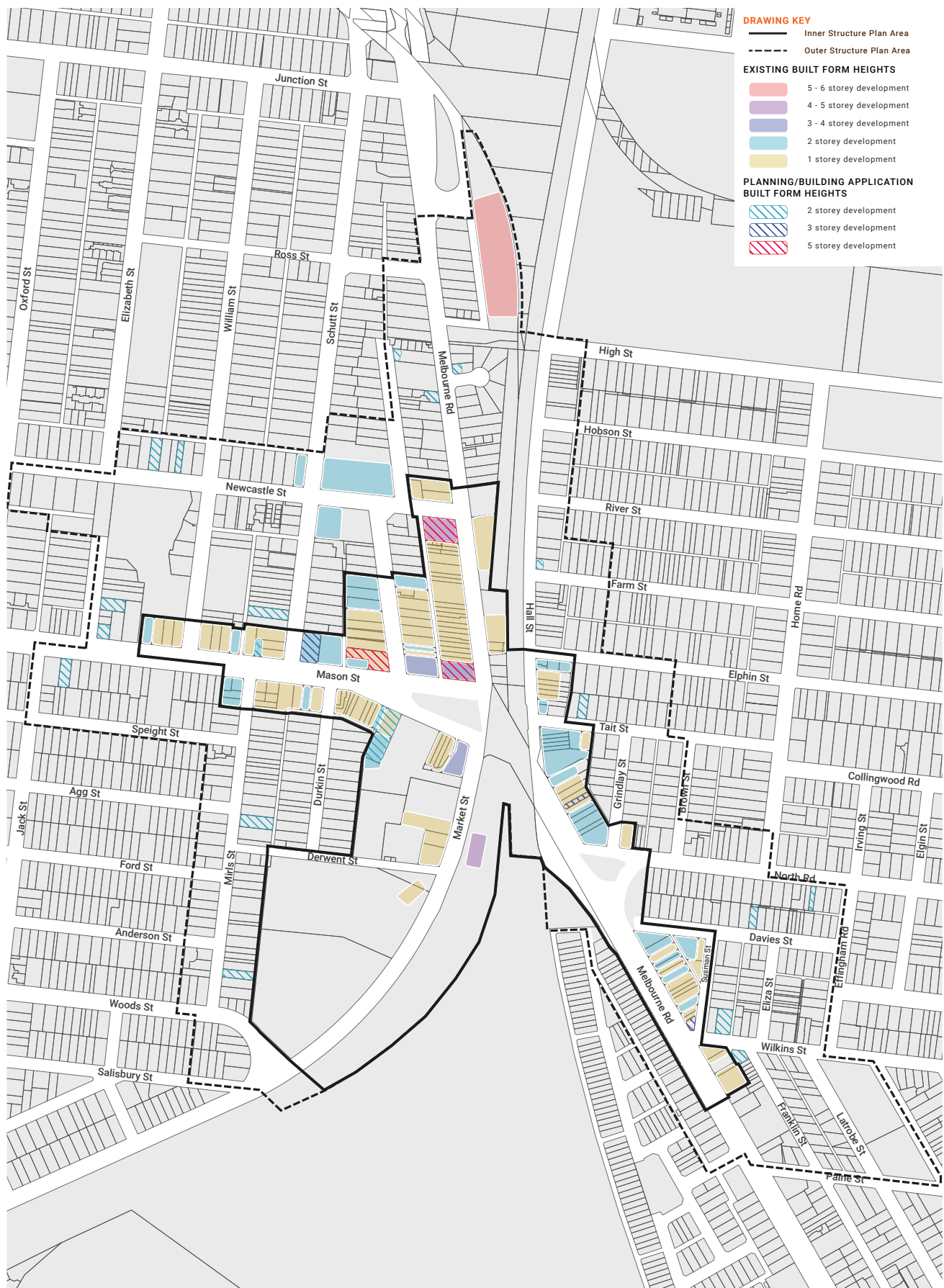


Figure 16 - Newport Activity Centre - Existing Built Form

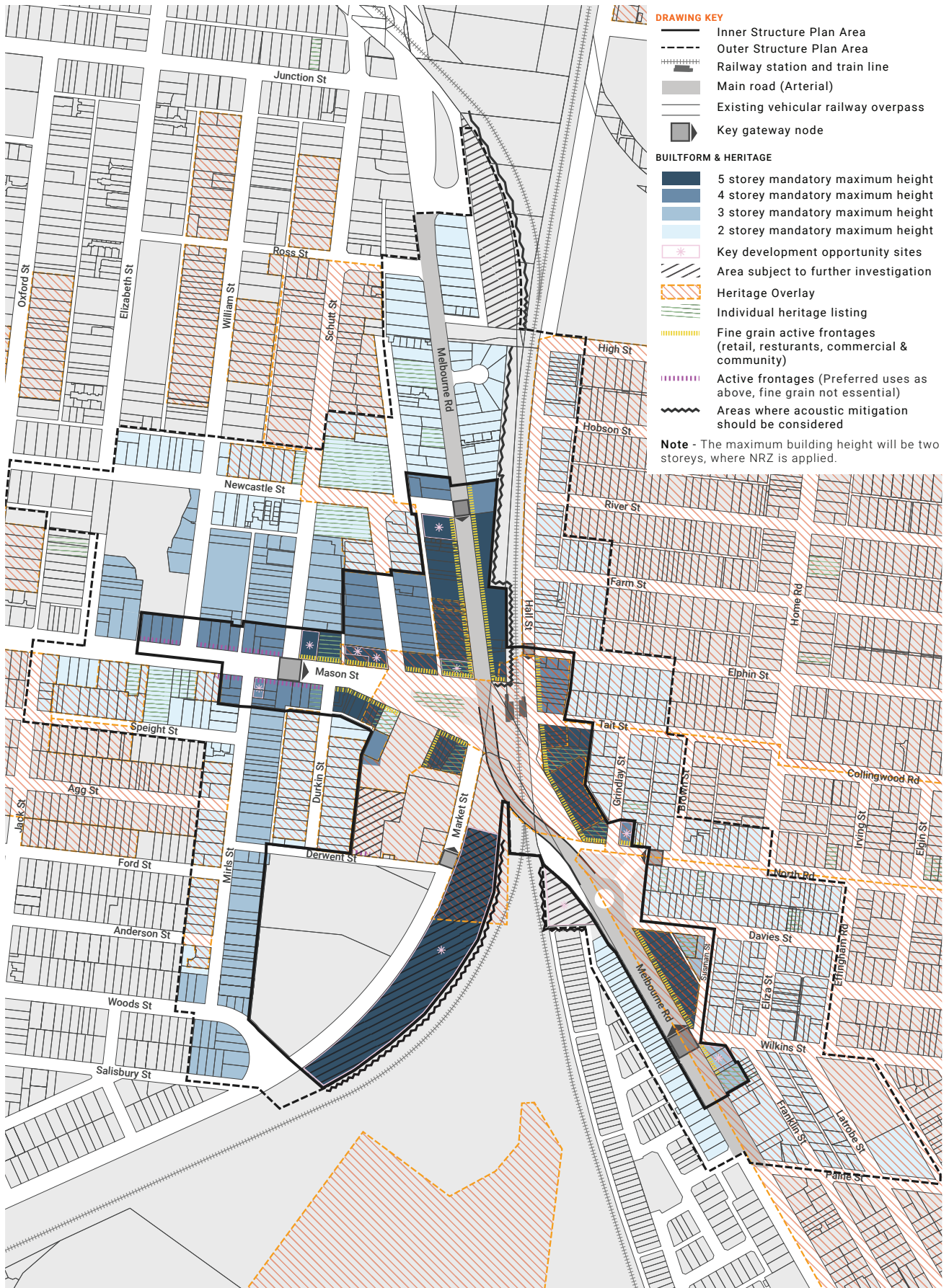


Figure 17 - Newport Activity Centre - Built Form and Heritage Plan

OBJECTIVE

BFH-1 To preserve and draw on local heritage for new built form, adaptive re-use, and redevelopment.

STRATEGIES

- BFH-1.1 Respect heritage through preservation and design responses which have regard to the architectural elements of heritage buildings, such as the urban grain, parapets, horizontal & vertical lines, windows, and other such aspects of design.
- BFH-1.2 Ensure new development and redevelopment does not feature imitation heritage features, and instead interprets the adjoining heritage characteristics in a contemporary manner as part of their architectural form.
- BFH-1.3 Encourage restoration of heritage features as part of permit applications for the re-use and/or redevelopment of heritage buildings within commercial areas, proportionate to the scale of the proposal.
- BFH-1.4 Maintain single and double storey development within residential heritage precincts to preserve the heritage character of these neighbourhoods.

OBJECTIVE

BFH-2 To develop coherent massing and activation across the Activity Centre, while enabling Precinct-based land use and development responses (see Figure 17).

STRATEGIES

- BFH-2.1 Support multi-storey development in accordance with the maximum building heights specified in Figure 17.
- BFH-2.2 Require new development on Melbourne Road, Mason Street, Hall Street, and Market Street to provide at least 70 percent glazing and activation on the primary street frontage, unless it can be demonstrated that the proposed use and design will contribute equivalent activation or otherwise provides sufficient justification.
- BFH-2.3 Encourage high quality architecture at the gateway nodes shown in Figure 17.
- BFH-2.4 Ensure new development provides appropriate setbacks from the street wall.
Note Refer to the built form guidelines, in Chapter 7.
- BFH-2.5 Facilitate and guide the re-development of sites identified as having strategic redevelopment opportunity in the short term, in accordance with the maximum building heights and recommended articulation specified in Figure 17.
- BFH-2.6 Manage the transition in buildings heights on the periphery of the inner boundary through specific built form controls (such as DDOs).



OBJECTIVE

BFH-3 To protect the amenity of public spaces within and adjoining the Activity Centre.

STRATEGIES

- BFH-3.1 Require new development to address public spaces through orientation, view lines, passive surveillance, and built form measures which account for landscape and character.
- BFH-3.2 Require new development and redevelopment to provide awnings on Melbourne Road, Mason Street, Hall Street, and Market Street (within the section of the street that runs east-west).
- BFH-3.3 Require acoustic mitigation from railway noise sources as part of new development in accordance with current standards.
- BFH-3.4 Require new development/redevelopment to provide appropriate setbacks from adjoining residential uses.
Note Refer to the built form guidelines, in Chapter 7.
- BFH-3.5 Prepare and implement a Design and Development Overlay to guide built form outcomes within the Centre, taking into account the Built Form and Heritage element, as well as the Built Form Guidelines provided in Chapter 7.

OBJECTIVE

BFH-4 To promote sustainability and innovation in built form.

STRATEGIES

- BFH-4.1 Encourage sustainable and innovative building design as a means of improving the environmental performance of buildings, and utilising sustainability as a point of difference over buildings in other areas.
Refer to Chapter 7 Built Form Guidelines.

ACTIONS

- BFH-A.1 Prepare a Design and Development Overlay that will guide built form outcomes with the Centre to work in conjunction with the Heritage Overlay to ensure development is of an appropriate scale and design.
- BFH-A.2 Implement the Newport Structure Plan Urban Design Guidelines through local policy and planning controls such as Design and Development Overlays (DDOs).
- BFH-A.3 Implement the recommendations of the heritage gap study by applying HO22 and HO23 to identified heritage areas or buildings west of Melbourne Road, which have heritage significance warranting heritage protection. In addition, apply HO322 to a new ecclesiastical and residential heritage precinct for sites along Mason Street which are associated with the Christ Church complex.

6.5 Public Realm and Open Space

The public realm within and surrounding the Activity Centre features both appealing and under-whelming elements.

At a suburban level, dominant features that contribute positively include the Newport Lakes Reserve (which is of local and regional significance due to its amenity and history), and the network of open spaces and sporting reserves abutting the Yarra River (which are of value to both the community and visitors). Closer to the Activity Centre, positive contributions are made by Paine Reserve, Brian Martyn Oval (and its surrounds), Leo Hoffman Reserve, and Kohry Reserve, although certain spaces within these reserves can be improved. At a more centre-focused level, elements such as the heritage trees adjoining the train station, the cenotaph, and the landscaped spaces at the Melbourne Road/North Road roundabout add value.

Despite the positive elements, however, the overall impression is one of scattered public spaces with inconsistent levels of amenity within streetscapes and public areas. The lack of gateway treatments at both the northern and southern ends of the Activity Centre is evident. This combines with poor quality built form and some inefficiently located land uses to create an impression of neglect for passers-by travelling through Newport. Likewise, from the perspectives of residents and visitors, the Activity Centre appeal is impaired due to spaces which prioritise movement function and ignore place-based characteristics. One area that merits specific attention is the eastern interface between Hall Street and the railway line. This presents very poorly, especially at the southern end where Hall Street passes under the Melbourne Road overpass. The poor appearance conveys a lack of civic pride and diminishes the experience of Hall Street patrons / visitors. Design measures that can be implemented in this location are limited by the need to retain space and avoid obstructions to how the Metro 2 project may be delivered in the long term (assuming this project proceeds). However, not undertaking any design interventions is not a desirable approach due to the visual impact created by the railway interface.

The Structure Plan seeks to draw on the desirable elements of the public realm and individual open space areas to create a positive network of spaces within and surrounding the Activity Centre.



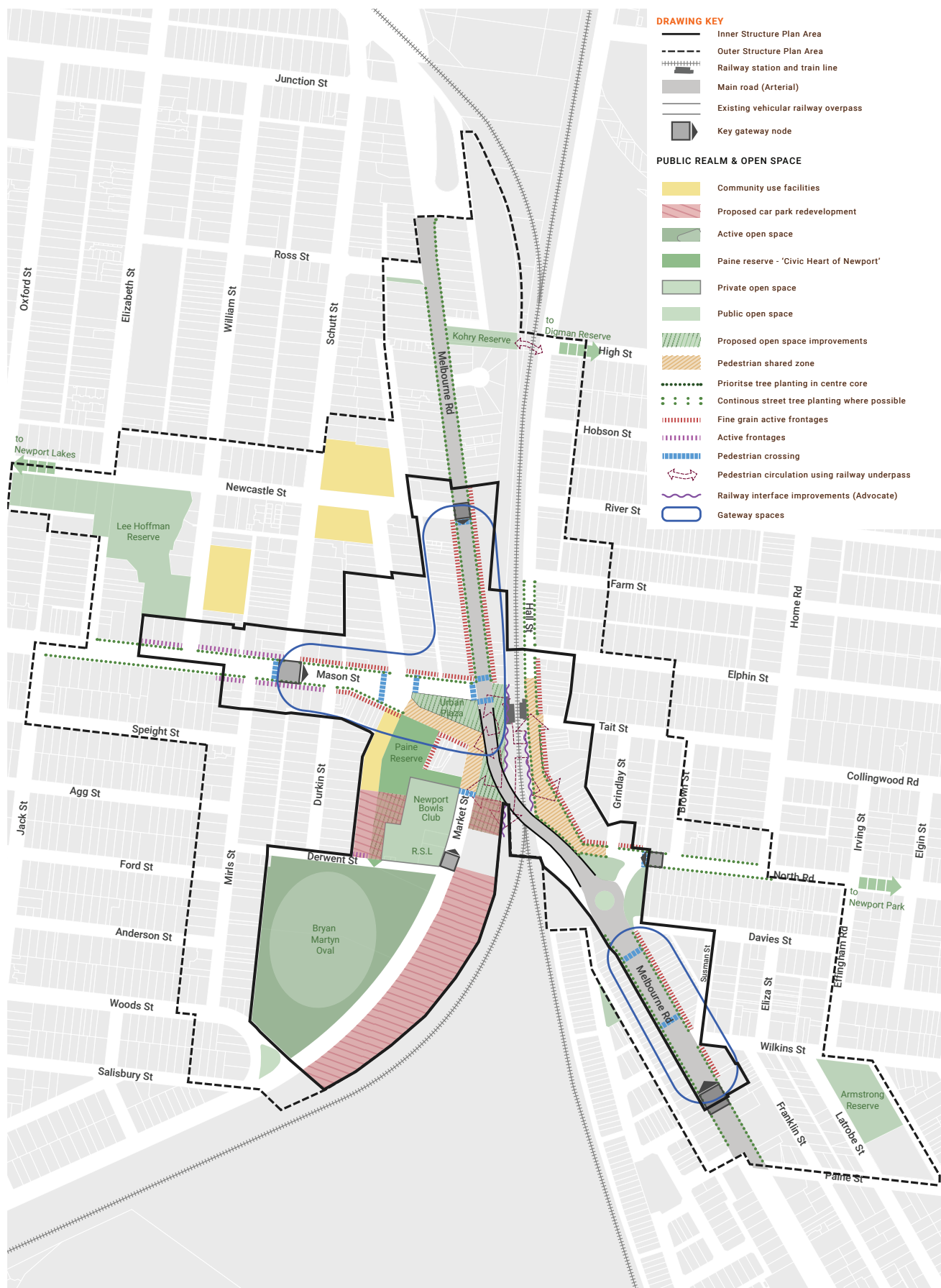


Figure 18 - Newport Activity Centre - Public Realm and Open Space Plan

OBJECTIVE

PROS-1 To strengthen the sense of place for residents and visitors, as a thriving urban village.

STRATEGIES

- PROS-1.1 Enhance the sense of arrival by providing landscaping and other streetscape enhancements at the Activity Centre gateways at Melbourne Road North, Melbourne Road South, Mason Street, and North Road and the railway station area.
- PROS-1.2 Strengthen the role of Paine Reserve as the green heart of Newport, and enhance its connections to the Market Street transit plaza, Bryan Martyn Oval, and the Substation arts complex.
- PROS-1.3 Revitalise the transit plaza on Market Street and elevate its role from a highly transport focused space to a high amenity civic space, catering for both transport patrons and the wider public.

OBJECTIVE

PROS- 2 To enhance linkages between open spaces and key public realm areas, improve spatial legibility, and facilitate natural wayfinding.

STRATEGIES

- PROS-2.1 Enhance visual and physical connections to public open spaces in Newport such as Newport Lakes and Newport Park at the waterfront.
- PROS-2.2 Provide shared zones, paths, landscaping, street furniture and public art in association with the bus and rail transit spaces.
Note refer to Figure 18.
- PROS-2.3 Provide streetscape improvements in the sections of Melbourne Road, Mason Street, Market Street, Hall Street, and North Road shown in Figure 18 to convey a sense of being within the urban core.
- PROS-2.4 Provide streetscape improvements, as shown in Figure 18, to connect Activity Centre areas to major open spaces outside the centre.



OBJECTIVE

PROS-3 To ensure urban spaces are designed for appeal, visitation, lingering, and functionality.

STRATEGIES

PROS-3.1 Facilitate outdoor dining and hospitality in Hall Street and Mason Street through calmer pedestrian environs, and streetscaping/ landscaping which creates attractive settings to linger.

PROS-3.2 Create a new shared zone between the renewed transit plaza and Paine Reserve, extending to parts of Market Street.

PROS-3.3 Create a new shared zone between Hall Street commercial tenancies and the Newport Railway Station.

PROS-3.4 Increase the proportion of soft landscaping in spaces such as the transit plaza, and utilise water sensitive urban design to increase permeability and control run off.

PROS-3.5 Advocate for the enhancement of internal railway reserve spaces, and the interfaces between the railway reserve areas and key adjoining areas. Refer to Figure 18.

PROS-3.6 Ensure all public open space areas meet DDA requirements and incorporate the principles of universal design.

ACTIONS

PROS-A.1 Prepare a detailed design to enhance the civic & transit core, building on the concepts provided in the draft Urban Design Guidelines. Update conceptual drawings as appropriate.

PROS-A.2 Liaise with VicTrack regarding short term railway interface treatments and internal enhancements.

PROS-A.3 Prepare a streetscaping pallet for the urban core to achieve a consistent style of landscaping, materials, paving, street furniture and other embellishments.

PROS-A.4 Prepare a streetscaping pallet for areas between the Activity Centre and key open spaces outside the Centre to create a sense of connection through landscaping and other elements, as appropriate.

PROS-A.5 Prioritise continuous street tree planting and public art within the structure plan area.

Potential railway interface and internal enhancements include:

- > Creating a public forecourt to the north of the Substation building;
- > Improving the quality of stairs and bicycle storage when entering the rail reserve from the north of the Substation building;
- > Explore opportunities to provide additional bike storage in appropriate locations;
- > Providing landscaping and other enhancements within the rail reserve to the east and north of the Substation;
- > Providing improved lighting under Melbourne Road overpass and within the subway tunnels;
- > Creating a plaza space at the eastern end of the intersection between Melbourne Road and Mason Street;
- > Considering whether local artists and designers can be engaged to improve the quality of railway spaces;
- > Providing a new entry into the railway station to the south of Platform 2 directly from Hall Street;
- > Providing 1-2 entries directly onto platform 2 to the north of the station building on the platform;
- > Planning for DDA and urban design improvements as part of the potential Metro 2 project;
- > Preparing alternative plans for DDA and urban design improvements in the long term, should the Metro 2 project be abandoned; and
- > Investigate opportunities for access to the north end of Platform 1.



6.6 Access and Movement

Access and movement are among the primary issues within the Activity Centre. Pedestrian and cyclist movements in the Northern Gateway Precinct and between Precincts are severely impaired due to the combined effect of the railway infrastructure and the Melbourne Road overpass. Access to the railway line is also very poor due to uninviting spaces, safety risks, lack of universal access, and poor relationships with spaces to the west of the railway line. Likewise, internal circulation spaces within the rail reserve are currently sub-standard. However, these also provide opportunities for significant improvements to the user experience.

Further afield, opportunities exist for creating pedestrian priority where civic and cultural uses are clustered.

Other influences on access and movement include the Westgate Tunnel project, which has undergone an Environmental Effects Statement process and has been supported by an Inquiry and Advisory Committee, and later approved by the Minister for Planning (with refinements to certain components). While this project does not have direct relevance to Newport, it will result in improvements to the vehicular network surrounding the study area, and improvements to the cycling network that Newport will be able to connect to.

At the State level, it is also noted that the metropolitan train network may be enhanced through the potential Metro 2 project, which would physically and perceptibly improve the accessibility between Newport and Melbourne and consolidate Newport's role as a gateway Centre. While it is not presently possible to plan for this with any certainty, it is important to ensure that Structure Plan proposals do not preclude or impact this potential project. Additionally, it is relevant to identify spatial and functional improvements that can be made in connection with Newport railway spaces, as some key shortcomings may be resolved in the medium to long term as part of the Metro 2 project, whereas other matters may be able to be addressed sooner. Clarity will be achieved over time, and it is important to commence dialogue to meaningfully develop core concepts in due course.

In terms of access and movement improvements that should be delivered in Newport, modal priority needs to be considered. The principal that commonly applies to centres of this scale is to prioritise pedestrians, followed by cyclists, public transport, taxis, and cars (in that order). This prioritisation principal is applicable to Newport as a whole. However, there are complexities within the Melbourne Road corridor, which plays a significant movement function for cars and buses.

Cyclist links on Melbourne Road exist to the north and south of the Activity Centre, but are absent from the Activity Centre core. This is evidently due to a lack of space on the overpass, and within the Melbourne Road reserve. Having regard to these conditions, pedestrian and cyclist priority on this corridor will likely remain curtailed into the future. Strategies will be required to improve conditions, while working within the limitations of the corridor.

Car parking will continue to have an important role in the Centre, providing for visitor and commuter convenience. However, the manner in which parking is provided requires significant re-consideration. The at-grade commuter car park on the western side of the rail reserve occupies the single largest site in Newport, and represents a substantial underutilisation of valuable Activity Centre space. To a lesser extent, the at-grade car parking to the south of Paine Reserve presents an opportunity for parking structure to better utilise the space that is otherwise lost to purely functional Centre needs.

Public transport availability in Newport provides the Centre with a significant advantage due to there being excellent railway access into Melbourne, as well as a bus transport plaza adjoining the civic heart. Nonetheless, the quality of these spaces and their interfaces with the wider public realm require improvement.

Industrial transport needs are addressed by road connections beside the river, and a rail route that passes through Newport and diverts to the north-west at Spotswood/South Kingsville, heading towards Sunshine. The road connections do not place significant demands on the Activity Centre road network, and the rail route's implications for this project are generally limited to noise mitigation needs.

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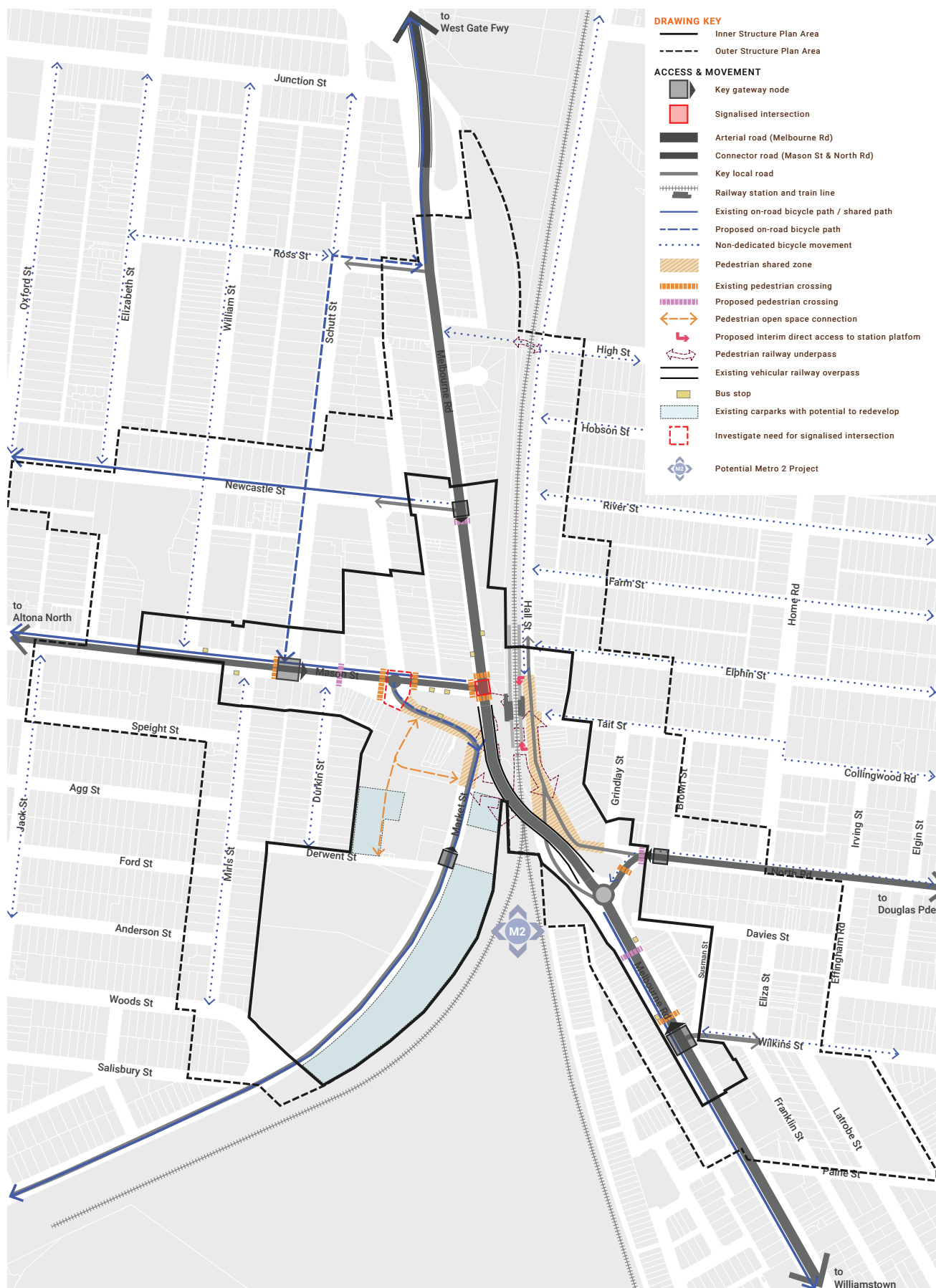


Figure 19 - Newport Activity Centre - Access and Movement Plan

OBJECTIVE

AM-1 To leverage Newport's public transport advantages and plan for potential enhancements to the movement network.

STRATEGIES

AM-1.1 Improve the connections to the bus transit plaza and train station, and plan for long term improvements, such as the potential Metro 2 or other opportunities that may arise.

OBJECTIVE

AM-2 To enhance the integration of public transport and related spaces into the wider public realm.

STRATEGIES

AM-2.1 Create a new shared space on Market Street, from the western end of Paine Reserve to the edge of the street abutting the Melbourne Road overpass.

AM-2.2 Facilitate improved utilisation of the parking to the north of the Substation building by creating a public forecourt that integrates with the proposed shared zone and improves spatial linkages to activity and circulation spaces to the west, north, and east.

AM-2.3 Liaise with VicTrack to advocate for the entrance to the railway station on Hall Street to be integrated with the proposed shared zone.

OBJECTIVE

AM-3 To increase the efficiency and convenience of pedestrian and cyclist movement within the Activity Centre.

STRATEGIES

AM-3.1 Investigate the potential of upgrading the intersection of Melbourne Road and Mason Street into a multi-directional crossing, as shown in Figure 19.

AM-3.2 Investigate the potential of providing a pedestrian crossing:

- At the intersection of Newcastle Street and Melbourne Road;
- On Melbourne Road to the south of the roundabout within the Southern Gateway Precinct.

AM-3.3 Investigate the removal of pedestrian fencing and provide a new pedestrian crossing to connect the northern and southern sections of Mason Street, as illustrated in Figure 19.

AM-3.4 Address the break in cyclist movement within the inner structure plan area of the Activity Centre by:

- (a) (i) Maintaining the existing movement of cyclists riding to Melbourne from the catchment to the north-west of the Melbourne Road/Newcastle Street intersection via the existing bicycle lanes on Melbourne Road; and
- (ii) Directing cyclists from all other parts of Newport towards the riverside cycle network at the eastern end of the suburb.

Or

- (b) Liaise with VicRoads to investigate whether the Melbourne Road profile can be modified between Newcastle and Masons Streets to accommodate cyclists within the inner structure plan area of the Activity Centre, and then direct cyclists towards the eastern riverside network via plaza and subway spaces.

Note For western sections of Newport, cyclists are likely to access the city via a bicycle route that passes through Altona North. This is likely to be preferred, as it is proximal to the western areas of Newport and does not experience interruption issues such as at Melbourne Road, Newport.

OBJECTIVE

AM-4 To prioritise pedestrian movement and comfort within key commercial and civic areas.

STRATEGIES

- AM-4.1 Provide a new shared space on Hall Street between Elphin Street and Grindlay Street to improve the pedestrian priority within the eastern section of the Activity Centre.
- AM-4.2 Advocate for direct pedestrian access onto platform 2 in the northern section of Hall Street, between Tait and Elphin Streets.
- AM-4.3 Investigate direct pedestrian access onto platform 2 in the southern section of Hall Street, preferably adjoining the station building, or alternatively at the southernmost end of the platform via the car parking area, as shown in Figure 19.
- AM-4.4 Investigate the potential to provide a new pedestrian path on the western boundary of the Bowls Club and RSL site to connect Paine reserve and Bryan Martyn Oval.
- AM-4.5 Ensure driveway access within the commercial core is obtained solely via rear laneways, where applicable.
- AM-4.6 Ensure all shared spaces are designed to be universally accessible, incorporating measures such as contrasts for people with vision impairment, appropriate signage, and minimal level changes.

OBJECTIVE

AM-5 To ensure the quantity and design of car parking are in accordance with Newport's role as a Neighbourhood Activity Centre with convenient public transport access.

STRATEGIES

- AM-5.1 Explore the feasibility of potential retail or commercial development including a green link between Paine Reserve and Bryan Martyn Oval to efficiently utilise space within the civic core.
- AM-5.2 Advocate for the release and redevelopment of VicTrack land to the south of the Substation for alternative uses including offices, residential and associated parking to meet the needs of the Activity Centre and future uses.
- AM-5.3 Require new development to utilise existing laneways for parking and waste access, and require setbacks or road reserve dedication in cases where lanes are not sufficiently wide.

ACTIONS

- AM-A1 Liaise with VicRoads to develop a user hierarchy strategy for the Newport Activity Centre
- AM-A2 With regard to exploring the feasibility of the car park redevelopment to the south of the library as a parking and commercial building:
- Liaise with the relevant government body as Committee of Management to facilitate redevelopment, with no net loss of parking; and
 - Investigate commercial partnerships for redevelopment.
- AM-A3 Explore opportunities to acquire land to the east of the Paine Reserve car park to improve public realm and pedestrian connections in the civic core.
- AM-A4 Prepare a car parking strategy, taking into account the potential demand based on the land use and built form recommendations of this Structure Plan. The strategy should consider multiple scenarios modelling the extent to which land uses such as retail and offices may establish within the Centre.
- AM-A5 Consider an infrastructure funding scheme for public realm and access improvements.
- AM-A6 Identify levels of contamination and other requirements for enabling VicTrack land to be developed.
- AM-A7 Continue to advocate for improved public transport and plan for the M2 project, and seek opportunities to achieve spatial improvements in advance of the project, or in the event of the project not being pursued. Given the extensive non-compliance with DDA requirements, as well as the poor wayfinding, circulation, amenity and safety, it would be reasonable to require significant revisions to the Station's circulation and access patterns as part of the potential Metro 2 project. This could include pedestrian access changes through an overpass or underpass, and the associated decommissioning of selected tunnels, additional tunnelling, the creation of a new entry onto Hall Street, or a combination of measures. Measures which can be undertaken in advance of the potential M2 project relate to the interface of the Station with the Centre.
- AM-A8 Further evaluate and advocate for improved connections to the bus transit plaza and train station and/or increased service levels.
- AM-A9 Provide additional bicycle storage in appropriate locations.
-