

Environment and Leisure Direction

PLANNING, PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SHIRE'S GREEN SPACES



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The Environment and Leisure Direction was adopted by Council on 12 August 2008 Minute No.602.

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Executive Summary

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

The Environment and Leisure Direction provides a statement of Council's desired approach for the planning, protection and management of the Shire's environment and leisure spaces.

The Direction identifies opportunities and mechanisms (both regulatory and non regulatory) to improve the means by which environment and leisure spaces are planned and managed. It contains six Key Directions, supported by objectives, strategies and actions. It also identifies responsibility for each action identified.



KEY DIRECTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

EL1 Protect and manage the Shire's environment and leisure spaces

- Ensure that planning controls effectively provide for a diverse range of open space settings and recreation opportunities.

EL2 Provide high quality spaces for community recreation and enjoyment

- Ensure that diverse and high quality open space facilities are provided to meet the needs of residents.
- Provide for efficient use of available resources in providing quality open space facilities.
- Protect community interests in Council owned open space land by accurate classification under the *Local Government Act 1993*.

EL3 Improve the accessibility and connectivity of environment and leisure spaces

- Provide an accessible network of well-located and connected walking and cycle trails.
- Facilitate greater use of trunk drainage land for recreation purposes and to link with the wider track network.

EL4 Provide for public domain spaces that encourage community interaction

- Make the public domain more attractive to encourage community use.
- Improve environmental sustainability in planning for public domain spaces.
- Provide opportunities to integrate cultural expression into the public domain.

EL5 Conserve the Shire's unique diversity of plants and animals

- Provide for the protection of flora and fauna in land use planning.
- Provide for ongoing effective management of environmentally significant lands.
- Plan for the conservation and protection of wetland ecosystems.

EL6 Protect Aboriginal cultural heritage

- Plan for the protection of Aboriginal heritage from the impacts of development.

Introduction

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

The Environment and Leisure Direction aims to give Council and the community a clear strategy for the future planning and management of land that has been identified as having leisure, scenic, recreation, environmental or heritage conservation value.

The Hills 2026 Community Strategic Direction looks towards a future of resilient local leadership, vibrant communities, balanced urban growth, a protected natural environment and a modern local economy. The Environment and Leisure Direction will be one of a number of Council strategies to assist with achieving this vision.

The term environment and leisure spaces encompasses environmentally significant land such as National Parks, State Forests, bushland, wetland ecosystems and land available for public and private recreation such as local parks, sporting fields, golf courses and walking and cycling tracks. The Direction also applies to public domain spaces which provide space for social interaction.

The Direction reviews the policy framework for environment and leisure spaces and addresses key issues such as provision, quality and connectivity of open space, biodiversity conservation and Aboriginal heritage.



Coolong Reserve, Castle Hill



Recreation track, North Rocks



Drainage Reserve, Samantha Riley Drive
Beaumont Hills

Challenges

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

The size and unique diversity of the Shire's landscape presents many challenges for the management of environment and leisure spaces.

Council's primary challenge is to balance the needs of the community and the environment, whilst managing development pressures created by Sydney's increasing population.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Tailoring responses to suit the wide range of land and ecosystems which make up environment and leisure spaces.
- Coordinating the management of public domain spaces, particularly in centres where ownership is fragmented.
- Obtaining coordination and cooperation of a number of parties to achieve improved outcomes across administrative boundaries.
- Meeting recreation needs of the current and future population in an economic and timely manner.
- Ensuring appropriate local responses to opportunities provided by environmental and planning legislation.
- Balancing housing needs and bushfire protection requirements with environmental objectives.
- Achieving a balance between the requirements of heritage, tourism, environmental and other uses of land.



Outdoor Piazza, Castle Hill



Heritage Park, Castle Hill

Trends

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

The residents of Baulkham Hills Shire have always enjoyed a strong relationship with the natural environment. This trend has continued with the "Garden Shire" image maintained and projected through agriculture, rural vistas, nurseries and an extensive network of parks and open space.

The rise of the 'café culture', where leisure, lifestyle and recreation are increasingly mixed is impacting on how the public domain is utilised. We have heard from people that the strengths of the local area are local community spirit, the natural environment and setting, local facilities and services as well as business and employment opportunities.

There is an increasing recognition of the links between involvement in recreational activities and good health. The physical environment and the quantity and quality of environmental and leisure spaces can have a significant influence on the health of a community. The community expressed a clear desire to see the natural character of our Shire preserved and protected. They aspire to be an active, safe, culturally rich people enjoying community life together.

Walking is the Shire's most popular recreation activity. As the Shire's population ages there is likely to be an increase in demand for appropriate facilities and services including unstructured (informal) leisure facilities, and open space (parks) with activities such as walking, golf, and low impact physical activity related social activities. (pp 9 Stratcorp Consulting)

Each year Council undertakes a Community Survey to provide a reliable basis for gauging broad community opinion. The 2007/2008 Survey identified the need to place a greater emphasis on lighting of public areas, public toilets, provision of footpaths and cycleways, and the preservation of permanent open space and sensitive environmental areas.

Baulkham Hills Shire Council is committed to preserving the amenity of the Shire and the high quality of life that residents enjoy. The Environment and Leisure Direction must acknowledge and respond to these trends and challenges.

KEY TRENDS

- Desire to maintain 'Garden Shire' image.
- Increased recognition of health benefits.
- Diverse use of public domain spaces.
- Increase in passive recreation such as walking.
- Open space seen as 'new backyard' for higher density developments.
- Increased expectations for higher standards in provision of indoor facilities with flexible opening hours.

Aims and Objectives

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

AIM

To provide direction for the planning and management of land identified as having leisure, scenic, recreational, environmental or heritage conservation value, to meet the existing and future needs of the population.

The objectives of the Environment and Leisure Direction are to:

- a *Identify and plan for the ongoing protection and management of environment and leisure spaces;*
- b *Respond to, and implement, State Government legislation, policy and plans;*
- c *Complement and guide other programs and projects of Council regarding the planning and management of environment and leisure spaces;*
- d *Inform the drafting of Council's Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan with regard to environment and leisure spaces; and*
- e *Plan for a built and natural environment that caters for community needs and values and reflects the garden image of the Shire.*

This Direction identifies key direction areas, objectives, strategies and actions to meet the above aims and objectives.



Turkeys Nest Reserve, Beaumont Hills



Cattai National Park, Cattai

Context

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

It is important to understand the context within which the Environment and Leisure Direction operates as shown in Figure 1.

A summary of relevant State Government programs and major Council projects is provided over the page.

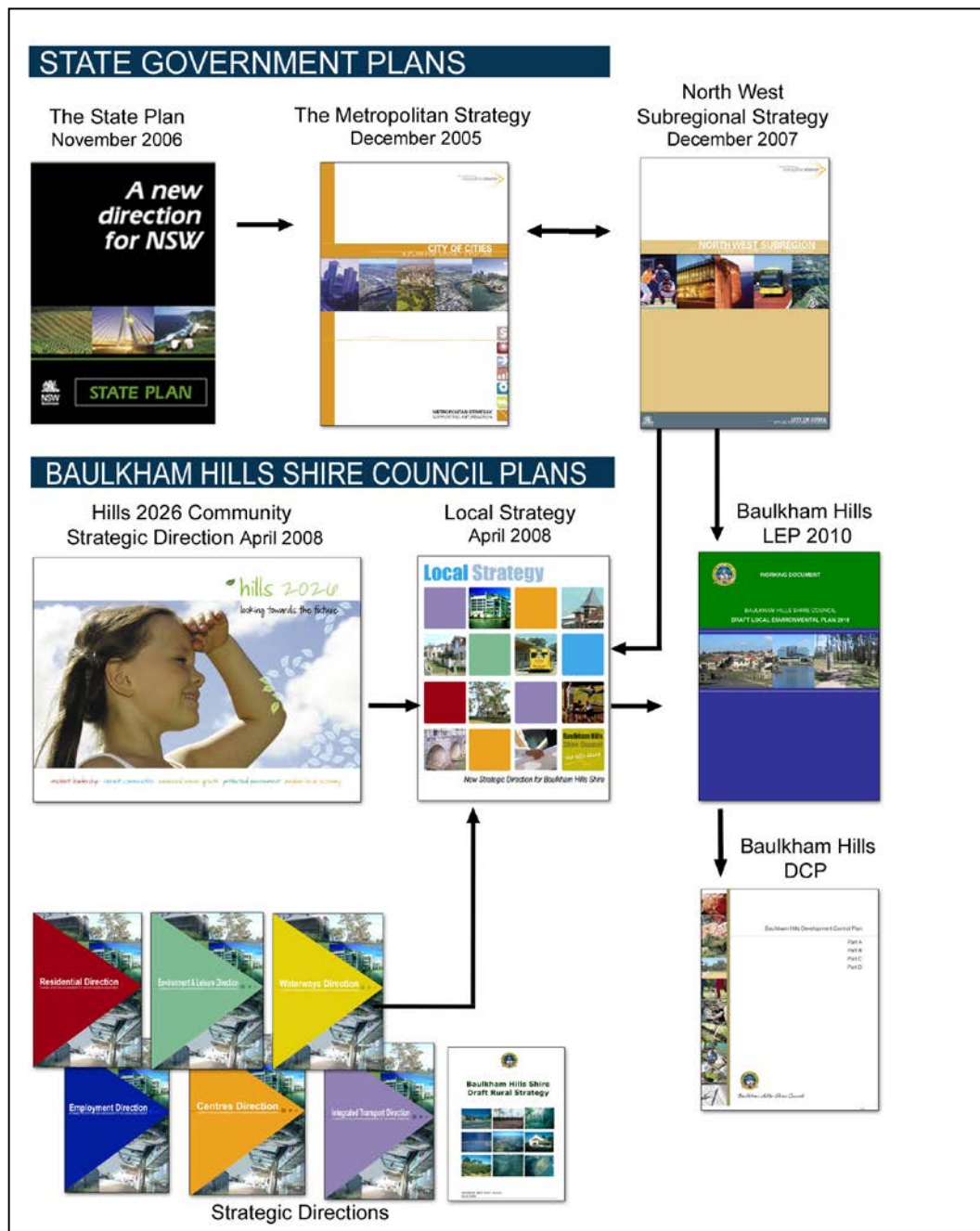


Figure 1: Context of Environmental and Leisure Direction

THE STATE PLAN

The NSW State Plan was launched by the Premier on 14 November 2006 with the overall purpose being to deliver better results for the NSW community from government services. The State Plan identifies 34 priorities under five broad areas of activity and sets targets, actions and new directions for each priority area.

The State Plan contains four targets relevant to the formulation of Council's Environment and Leisure Direction, which include:

R4 Increase participation and integration in community activities
(Lead Agency: NSW Premiers Department)

The State Plan target includes increasing the proportion of the community involved in volunteering, group sports and recreation activity by 10% by 2016 and to halve existing gaps in participation rates for key groups.

S3 Improved health through reduced obesity, smoking, illicit drug use and risk drinking
(Lead Agency: NSW Department of Health)

This State Plan Priority aims (in part) to reduce childhood obesity levels to 22% by 2016, and seeks to improve physical activity, exercise and health in young people and adults.

E4 Better outcomes for native vegetation, biodiversity, land, rivers and coastal waterways
(Lead Agency: NSW Department of Water and Energy)

The State Plan sets targets for improvements in 13 areas of natural resource management, generally by 2015. A number of agencies are currently working to establish a system of monitoring, evaluation, and reporting on natural resource condition in line with the 13 targets.

E8 More people using parks, sporting and recreational facilities, and participating in the arts and cultural activity
(Lead Agency: NSW Department of Arts, Sport and Recreation)

The State Plan target aims to increase participation in sporting activities and physical exercise by 10% by 2016 and increase the number of visits to State Government parks and reserves by 20% by 2016.

METROPOLITAN STRATEGY

The Metropolitan Strategy 'Cities of Cities: A Plan for Sydney's Future' was launched by the Department of Planning in December 2005.

Sydney's population is expected to grow by about 1.1 million people to a total of 5.3 million people, resulting in a need for an additional 640,000 new dwellings by 2031.

Part E of the Metropolitan Strategy addresses Environment and Resources. Its vision in relation to the environment is to create a sustainable city with a small environmental footprint, high quality of life and preservation of unique, natural and scenic beauty.

Part F addresses Parks and Public Places. Its vision is to provide fair access to quality parks and public places for leisure, sport and recreation and a network of recreation trails for walking and cycling by linking centres and parks.

Local Government's role in addressing the Metropolitan Strategy objectives for the environment, parks and public spaces:

- Consider whether it is appropriate to pursue biodiversity certification of LEPs.
- Consider State guidelines when planning for local open space in release areas and walking and cycling tracks.
- Consider Aboriginal heritage values in planning and decision making.
- Work in partnership with other government agencies for the improvement of local and regional walking and cycling trails.
- Improve local walking and cycling infrastructure.
- Investigate funding options to improve existing open space.

Context

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

NORTH WEST SUBREGIONAL STRATEGY

The North West Subregional Strategy provides implementation information for the Metropolitan Strategy. It was placed on public exhibition in December 2007. The North West subregion consists of the Baulkham Hills, Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Penrith local government areas. By 2031 this subregion is to accommodate 130,000 new jobs and 140,000 new dwellings.

The Subregional Strategy recognises that the region contains an extensive range of national parks, bushland and conservation areas and sets out actions to protect and enhance these assets. The network of parks, public places and urban civic spaces in the region also plays a major role in meeting the recreational, cultural and entertainment needs of the population.

A key focus of the Subregional Strategy is to continue to improve access to quality leisure spaces to meet the needs of the growing population and enhance the cultural life of the region. Council's role in addressing the North West Subregional Strategy in relation to environment and leisure spaces includes:

- Cooperate with the RTA in continuing to upgrade walking and cycling facilities, including cycleway development in Castle Hill (NW D3.1.1).
- Work with the NSW Government to align local walking and cycling networks with public transport routes (NW D3.1.2).

The above two strategies are primarily related to transport planning and will be further addressed as part of the Integrated Transport Direction.

- Consider regional biodiversity matters when preparing Principal LEPs and seek Department of Environment and Climate Change advice on biodiversity information and mapping (NW E2.2.1 and E2.2.2).

- Consider the need for a review and assessment of Aboriginal cultural heritage values in the preparation of Principal LEPs (NW E2.4.1 and NW E2.4.2).
- Work with NSW Government to protect and manage regionally significant open space, bushland and foreshore reserves (NW E3.5.2).
- Work with NSW Government to explore opportunities to improve access to waterways and links between bushland, parks and centres (NW F1.3.1 and F1.3.2).
- Maintain or enhance the provision of local open space, particularly in centres and along transport corridors (NW F2.1.1).
- Consider a range of mechanisms to improve the quality of local open space and encourage increased use (NW F2.1.2, F2.1.3, F2.1.4 and F2.1.5).
- Consider the need for civic spaces in planning for the future growth of centres (NW F2.3.1).
- Investigate the provision of additional multipurpose indoor and outdoor sports facilities (NW F3.1.1).



Heritage Park Castle Hill

HILLS 2026 – COMMUNITY STRATEGIC DIRECTION



Our Vision

Resilient leadership creating vibrant communities balances urban growth protecting our environment and building a modern local economy

Hills 2026 Community Strategic Direction: Looking Towards the Future identifies the community’s vision for the Shire and demonstrates how Council will align its delivery of services and facilities to support this vision. The preparation of the Hills 2026 Community Strategic Direction involved an extensive community visioning and consultation process which indicated that monitoring and managing impacts on the environment is considered essential.

- Enhance and protect the Shire’s biodiversity.
- Encourage and facilitate community contribution to environmental protection.
- Manage the rehabilitation of local bushland and protect local flora and fauna.
- Ensure environmentally sustainable development practices are implemented.

Theme 2: Vibrant Communities	“There are places to play and be active” “I can feel safe” “I feel connected to the community” “There are services and facilities that suit my needs”
Theme 3: Balanced Urban Growth	“I can get where I need to go” “The built environment blends with our natural beauty”
Theme 4: Protected Environment	“Our Shire is green and pollution free” “I can feel close to nature” “Our resources are used wisely”

Context

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

BAULKHAM HILLS SHIRE LOCAL STRATEGY

To build on the Hills 2026 Community Strategic Direction, a Local Strategy has been prepared. The Local Strategy is the principal document for communicating the future planning of the Shire in order to guide future decision making.

The Local Strategy is the key document articulating Council's response to State plans and strategies, and implementing key outcomes of the Hills 2026 Community Strategic Direction, within the context of land use planning in the Shire.

There are seven individual strategic Directions relating to the key components of the natural and built environment, including:

- Employment Lands Direction
- Centres Direction
- Residential Direction
- Integrated Transport Direction
- Environment and Leisure Direction
- Rural Lands Strategy
- Waterways Direction

The Environment and Leisure Direction, together with other strategy work, will inform the Local Strategy.

It is recognised that some aspects of the Environment and Leisure Direction will overlap with other Directions, including the Waterways Direction, the Residential Direction, the Integrated Transport Direction, the Employment Lands Direction and the Rural Lands Strategy. Elements such as the protection of water and riparian vegetation, residential development pressures, and the growth of employment areas all impact upon how environment and leisure spaces function and are managed for the future. The Environment and Leisure Direction will support but not replicate the strategies and actions contained in these Directions.



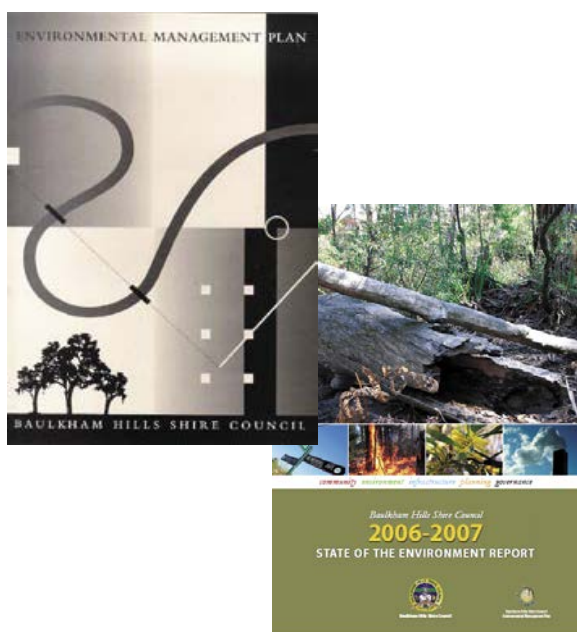
Figure 2: Context of Environmental and Leisure Direction

BAULKHAM HILLS LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN

Baulkham Hills Council is required to prepare a new LEP in accordance with the State Government's Standard Instrument – Principal Local Environmental Plan, by March 2011. The LEP will reflect Council's desired strategic direction for environment and leisure spaces. In this regard, the Environment and Leisure Direction will inform the drafting of the LEP zones, objectives and clauses and will guide future land use zonings.

The Standard Template prescribes a number of different zones with set objectives, permissible and prohibited uses, standard definitions, and special clauses. The following zones are relevant to the Shire's environment and leisure spaces:-

- Zone SP2 Infrastructure
- Zone SP3 Tourist
- Zone RE1 Public Recreation
- Zone RE2 Private Recreation
- Zone E1 National Parks and Nature Reserves
- Zone E2 Environmental Conservation
- Zone E3 Environmental Management
- Zone E4 Environmental Living
- Zone W1 Natural Waterways
- Zone W2 Recreational Waterways



BAULKHAM HILLS DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PLAN

The Baulkham Hills Development Control Plan provides detailed controls to guide development within the Shire. The Environment and Leisure Direction will inform the drafting of the Baulkham Hills Development Control Plan for issues such as the design of public domain spaces and the protection of bushland and biodiversity.

BAULKHAM HILLS ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Baulkham Hills Environmental Management Plan (EMP) provides an overview of Council's goals and objectives in relation to key environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity conservation, ecologically sustainable development (ESD), sustainable land use, pollution abatement, waste management, care of open spaces and heritage conservation.

The Environmental Management Plan was developed through community consultation and is linked to Council's Management Plan to provide an integrated approach to the management of the Shire's natural and built environment. It is important to recognise that the EMP is a first step in a long term direction towards ecological sustainability. Action strategies are being developed to assist in working towards identified goals and objectives.

Baulkham Hills State of the Environment Report is prepared annually in accordance with the Local Government Act and outlines Council's achievements in relation to environmental targets set out in the Management Plan. It contains data such as length of cycle tracks constructed and hectares of endangered ecological communities.

The Environment and Leisure Direction complements and supports the goals set out in the Environmental Management Plan and the measuring of achievements towards sustainability.

Methodology

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

The Environment and Leisure Direction has been prepared based on a review of existing Council and State Government planning policies and legislation, stakeholder consultation and assessment of existing planning controls.

The review has required consideration of the implications of existing policy and legislation and assessment of a range of regulatory opportunities for improving environment and leisure spaces.

The Direction has taken a whole of Council approach to the planning and management of environment and leisure spaces to meet the needs of the community and the environment. To this end, briefings and consultation have been undertaken across all areas of Council to assist in understanding community concerns, clarifying issues and refining directions to be pursued.

The Environment and Leisure Direction has been prepared based on these investigations and analysis. It has been publicly exhibited and feedback sought from external stakeholders such as the community, government departments, infrastructure providers, other Councils and other interested parties.

Following consideration of feedback, the document was amended and reported to Council for adoption in August 2008. The Direction will be used to assist with the drafting of the relevant components of LEP 2010 and ongoing strategic direction.



Wisemans Ferry

Key documents reviewed during preparation of the Environment and Leisure Direction:

- Baulkham Hills Open Space Strategy: Stage 2 – Final Report, 1997.
- Baulkham Hills Open Space Strategy, 2004.
- Baulkham Hills Shire Bike Plan, 1994.
- Baulkham Hills Shire Rural Lands Study, 2000 – 2004.
- Baulkham Hills State of the Environment Report 2006 – 2007.
- Bushfire Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan for Council's Managed lands – Stage 1, 2005.
- Recreation Strategy (Vol.1 – 3) for Baulkham Hills Shire Council, 2007.
- Environmental Management Plan, 2005 – 2010, 2005.
- Hills 2026 Community Strategic Direction (Draft), 2008.
- Kellyville / Rouse Hill Open Space and Recreation Plan, 1998.
- Metropolitan Strategy: City of Cities: A Plan for Sydney's Future, 2005.
- North West Subregional Strategy (Draft), 2007.
- NSW State Plan, 2006.
- NSW State of the Environment Report, 2006.
- Outdoor Recreation and Open Space: Planning Guidelines for Local Government, 1992.
- Planning Guidelines for Walking and Cycling, 2004.
- Proposed National Parks Additions in the Sydney Region (2nd Edition), 1999.
- Regional Recreational Trails Framework, (Final Report), 2005.
- Rural Resource Lands Study, 2006.
- Urban Bushland Biodiversity Survey, 1997

Structure Plan

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

A Structure Plan supports the findings and key directions of the Environment and Leisure Direction. It illustrates how environment and leisure spaces will change over the next twenty five years.

The Structure Plan and the urban area Connectivity Plan are intended to be conceptual in nature, and are provided to communicate those aspects that currently exist in the Shire and future directions that are anticipated. The Structure Plan is not a zoning map.

In order to provide the strategic planning context for environment and leisure spaces, the Structure Plan shows:

- the hierarchy of current and planned centres.
- existing and planned urban areas, including the North West Growth Centre.
- existing and planned public transport such as the North West Metro.
- extent of vegetation in the Shire, including the general location of critically endangered communities of Blue Gum High Forest and Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest.
- National and regional parks such as the Cumberland State Forest, the Maroota Ridge State Conservation Area, Cattai National Park, and the Wisemans Ferry Historic Site.
- land used for public recreation, such as local parks and Council-owned recreation facilities.
- private recreation facilities such as golf courses.
- Crown land that has a recreation, open space or bushland function that is accessible to the public.
- Hawkesbury River, major tributaries and wetlands.
- selection of existing and proposed pedestrian/cycle paths.
- the extent of zoned trunk drainage land in the Shire.













The Structure Plan also highlights areas where Council will need to undertake more detailed mapping or planning in the future, to accommodate open space and recreation needs, and to protect biodiversity.







Brampton Drive Reserve, Beaumont Hills

BAULKHAM HILLS SHIRE ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE STRUCTURE PLAN








KEY

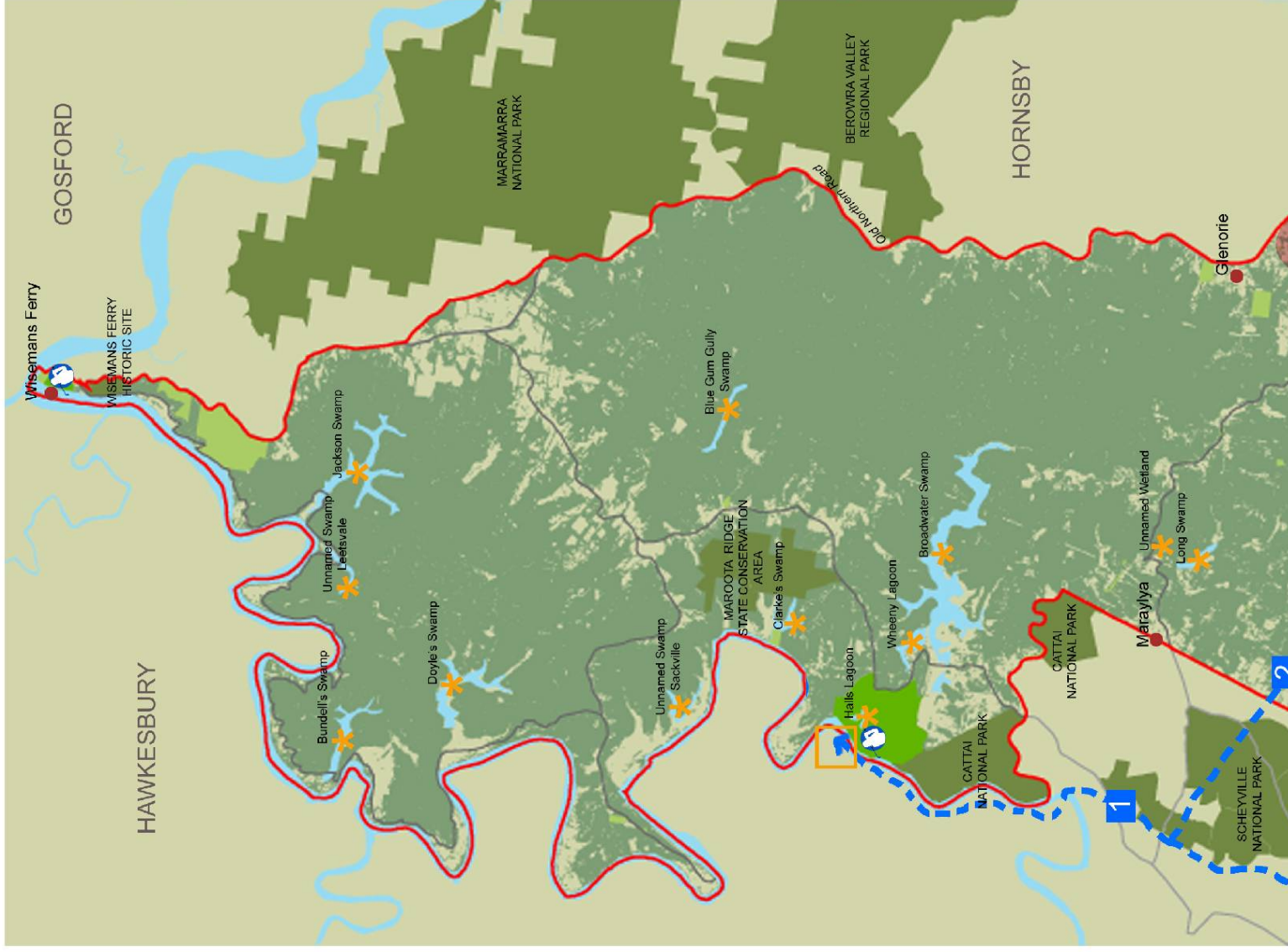
-  LGA Boundary
-  Rural Land
-  Urban Land
-  Drainage Land
-  Water Bodies
-  Major Roads
-  Rail Line
-  Proposed North West Metro
-  Potential Rail Line
-  Growth Centre Precinct
-  Mapping Work Required
-  Further Investigation of Route Required

VEGETATION

-  Bushland
-  Critically Endangered Communities
-  Blue Gum High Forest
-  Sydney Turpentine-Ironbark Forest

OPEN SPACE

-  National and Regional Parks
-  Local Parks
-  Golf Courses
-  Proposed Regional Recreation Trail
-  Great River Walk
-  Cattai Creek Trail (North West)
-  Cattai Creek Trail (North West)



Playground



Recreation



Aboriginal heritage












Cycleways

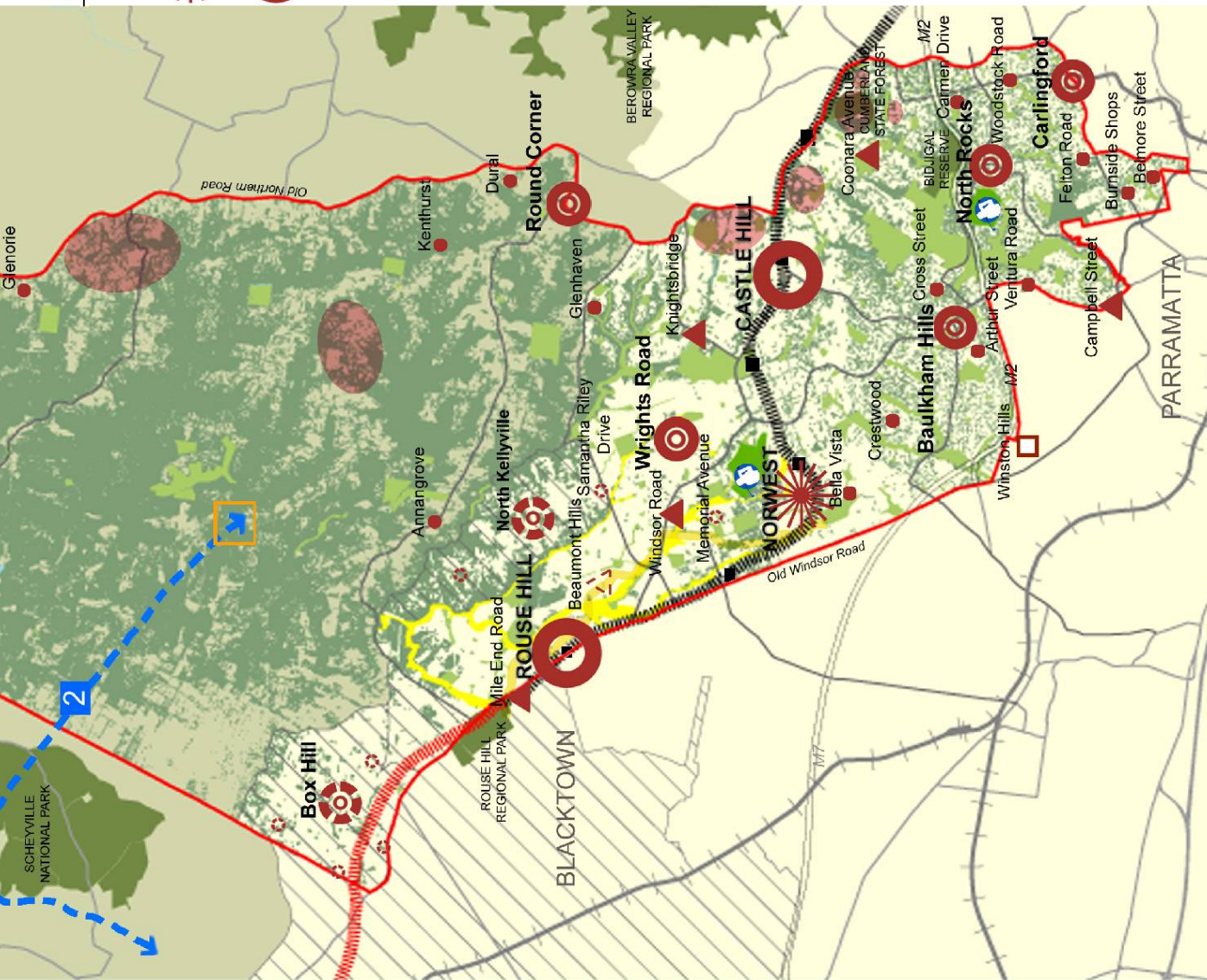


1 Great River Walk

2 Cattai Creek Trail (North West)

CENTRES

-  Specialised Centre
-  Major Centre
-  Town Centre
-  Planned/Potential Town Centre
-  Village Centre
-  Planned/Potential Village Centre
-  Stand Alone Centre
-  Neighbourhood/Rural Centre
-  Planned/Potential Neighbourhood



Heritage areas



Outdoor Plazas



Creeks and streams



Construction of new track



Bridge over Smalls Creek



Cattai Creek Trail



Carrington Road, Castle Hill

BAULKHAM HILLS SHIRE CONNECTIVITY PLAN

KEY

- LGA Boundary
- Rural Land
- Urban Land
- Major Roads
- Rail Line
- Proposed North West Metro
- Potential Rail Line
- Transport Interchange
- Growth Centre Precinct

OPEN SPACE

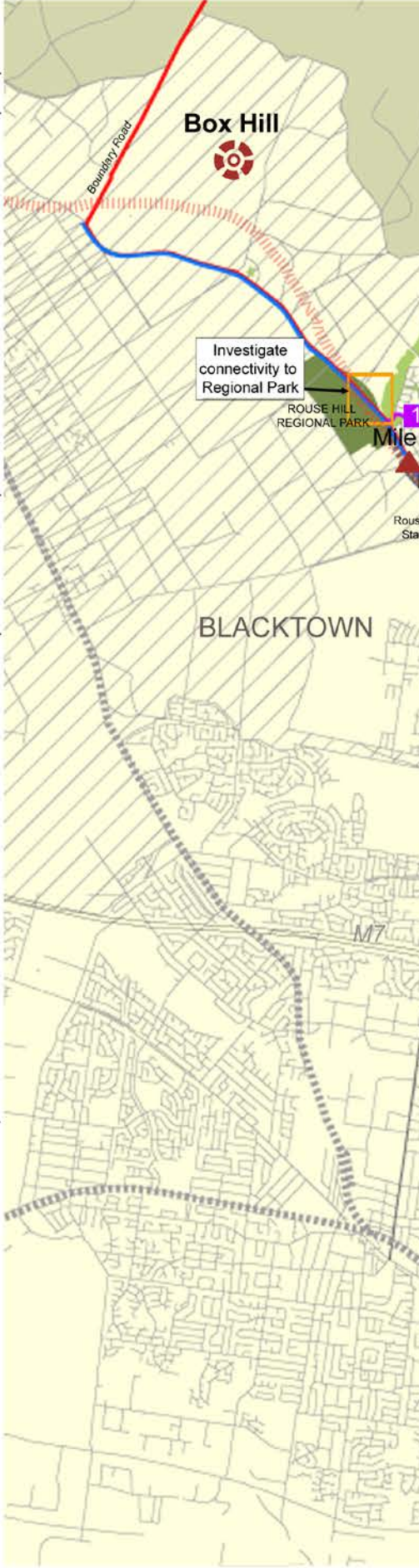
- National and Regional Parks
- Local Parks

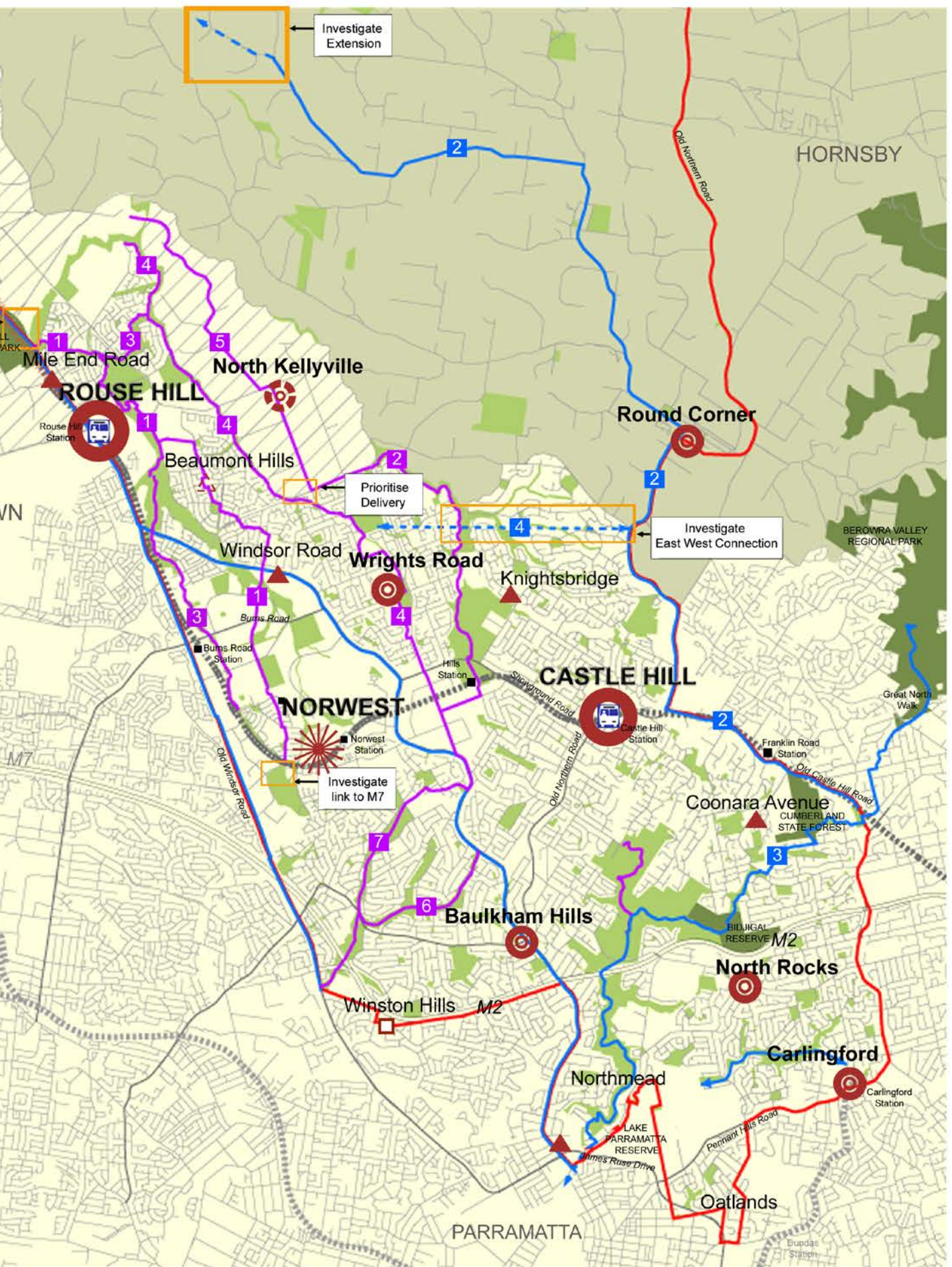
PEDESTRIAN AND/OR CYCLE LINKS

- Regional Links
 - Great River Walk (Refer to Structure Plan)
 - Cattai Creek (North West) Trail
 - Links to Great North Walk
 - East West Trail
- Local Links
 - The Greenway Link
 - Cattai Creek Trail
 - Caddies Creek Trail
 - Smalls Creek Trail
 - North Kellyville Link
 - Toongabbie Creek Cycleway
 - Crestwood Reserve Cycleway
- Strategic Planning
The development of these areas requires further strategic planning

CENTRES

- Specialised Centre
- Major Centre
- Town Centre
- Planned/Potential Town Centre
- Village Centre
- Planned/Potential Village Centre
- Stand Alone Centre





Findings

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

The analysis work highlighted a range of issues requiring strategic responses. This section of the Direction sets out the findings of the analysis which underpin the formulation of strategies for environment and leisure spaces in the Shire. It addresses key issues of provision, quality, connectivity, public domain, biodiversity conservation and aboriginal heritage.



Heritage Park Castle Hill

PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE

Baulkham Hills Shire has a diverse range of environmental and leisure spaces including local parks, sporting fields, National Parks, bushland and wetland ecosystems.

Council's Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan are the main regulatory mechanisms that are used to manage land use planning in the Shire. Approximately 5.8% of the Shire's land area is specifically identified through zoning, for an open space or environmental purpose. In addition, there is a significant proportion of land that is not identified by a specific zone but that contains bushland or is used for private open space or recreational purposes.

Type of Land	Area (ha)
Public open space	1,057
Public conservation area	35
Private open space	114
Drainage	221
Wetlands	130
National Parks	572
Forestry	89
TOTAL	2,218
AREA OF SHIRE	38,000

Figure 3: Land identified in BHLEP 2005 for open space or environmental purposes

Public open space

The North West Subregional Strategy recommends that councils develop regional open space strategies to inform Principal LEPs, assess the amount, type, accessibility and distribution of local open space, and require local open space when planning for growth (F2.1). The preparation of a formal regional open space strategy is not proposed for LEP 2010, however this Direction will assist with future planning for regional and local open space land in the Shire.

There are currently 325 reserves in the Shire under the care, control and management of Council comprising natural areas, sportsgrounds, parks, areas of cultural significance and areas for general community use. There are a total of 38 active sports reserves in the Shire.

Public open space in the Shire has been provided based upon a range of factors including population projections, recreation needs analysis, conservation value and site suitability in terms of accessibility, topography and size. The identification of public open space land seeks to provide for recreation needs, protect bushland and important fauna habitat corridors, enhance environmental quality and protect culturally significant sites.

Council's Recreation Strategy Implementation Plan (2007) recommends the development of a policy to guide open space acquisition to ensure appropriate parcels of land are provided. There is also a need to improve identification of site constraints such as contamination, flooding, geotechnical hazard, threatened species, biodiversity needs, vegetation linkages and heritage, prior to acquisition by Council.

Similar issues can arise where an owner or developer seeks to dedicate land which has not been previously identified by Council for open space. There is a need to establish a clear criteria for decision making in such circumstances that has regard to site constraints, evaluation of community benefits, consistency and integration with the planned open space network and ongoing maintenance costs.

Additional public open space is available on land in Council's ownership that is zoned for 'special uses' in LEP 2005. This includes Bella Vista Farm Park and Balcombe Heights Estate Reserve which are currently identified as 'conservation area' to recognise and manage the heritage conservation value of these areas. Under the Template LEP, specific heritage mapping will enable the ongoing identification and protection of such areas. However, the Template LEP moves away from traditional special uses zoning and consideration is required to ensure that any alternative zone, such as public recreation, will allow for the types of uses anticipated in these areas.

Private open space

Private open space land is privately owned and is generally used for commercial purposes such as golf courses, bowling greens, and sports clubs. There are nine sites that are specifically zoned for private recreation including:

- Muirfield Golf Club
- Baulkham Hills Sporting Club
- Hills District Bowling Club
- Wirreanda Retirement Village (part of site)
- Castle Hill Country Club (part of site)
- Castle Pines Retirement Village
- Castle Hill RSL Club
- Castle Hill Bowling Club
- Castleridge Retirement Resort (part of site)



Castle Hill Bowling Club

Private recreation facilities are particularly important in higher density areas where residents have limited access to their own private recreation space. Uses such as golf courses can also provide an important visual 'green oasis' within the urban area, as well as supporting local biodiversity through the continuation of the tree canopy and provision of habitat for fauna. The recognition of such sites in the urban area through zoning, is appropriate.

The zoning of private recreation land that forms part of a retirement village, may be more appropriately zoned to be consistent with the primary residential use of the site. Development controls or environmental overlay can also be used to recognise any particular constraints applying to the land.

Private recreation facilities are also located within centres, employment areas, and rural areas. Golf courses at Wisemans Ferry and Riverside Oaks and indoor recreation facilities such as Dural Sport and Leisure Centre are located on land zoned for rural purposes. In such locations they can contribute to economic development and growth of tourist activities, however careful consideration is required to ensure such development is in keeping with amenity, rural character and biodiversity conservation objectives.

Drainage land

Land required for drainage purposes by Sydney Water or Council has historically been zoned 'special uses'. The Department of Planning advocates a new zoning approach to provide for greater flexibility and management of government land. This approach moves away from zoning public infrastructure land as 'special uses' and recommends that where the infrastructure type is permitted on all land, existing 'special uses' zones should be rezoned the same as the adjacent zone.

Under State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007, which came into effect on 1 January 2008, stormwater management systems may be carried out by a public authority without consent on any land. Therefore a special use or infrastructure zone is not necessarily required to enable the continuation of drainage functions.

Findings

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

For Baulkham Hills Shire, current drainage zones are located in Kellyville/ Rouse Hill and Balmoral Road release areas (refer Structure Plan). These lands are subject to acquisition by Sydney Water. In the short term, zoning of such land should recognise the infrastructure role to ensure timely delivery of development. In the longer term, further consideration will be required of the location, role and particular characteristics of the land to determine an appropriate zoning framework.

Wetlands

The identification of a wetlands zone in the LEP seeks to conserve and enhance the ecological, scenic, and environmental attributes of wetlands and to permit development only where it will not have a significant detrimental effect in such areas. Sydney Regional Environmental Plan No. 20 Hawkesbury – Nepean River (SREP No. 20) also identifies a number of wetlands and contains strategies that seek to conserve and enhance the diversity of species and genetics within the catchment.

Currently, land zoned specifically for wetlands in the Shire is limited to the areas of Broadwater Swamp and Wheeny Lagoon. Issues relating to wetlands are discussed further in the findings on Biodiversity Conservation and Key Direction 5.



Webbs Creek Crossing

National Parks

Specific zoning is used to identify land that is reserved or dedicated under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NPW Act) and to only allow development that is authorised under this Act. Within the Shire there are currently two National Parks - Cattai National Park and the Wiseman's Ferry Historic Site and one State Conservation Area (Maroota Ridge).

The Department of Environment and Climate Change have provided updated General Guidelines for Strategic Planning for the Metropolitan Sydney Area (March 2008) which indicate that conservation reserves are subject to a wide range of threats including bushfire, vandalism, pest species, visitors, climate change and impacts from surrounding uses. Apart from identification of existing or proposed areas under the NPW Act, the Department recommends land uses adjoining or likely to impact on conservation reserves be subject to zoning or development controls that avoid or limit potential impacts. These guidelines will be considered as part of the detailed preparation of LEP 2010.

Forestry land

Special uses zoning is also used to identify forestry land within the Shire including part of Cumberland State Forest and Bidjigal Reserve. This special uses zone also spans the M2 Motorway with land to the south predominantly owned by the RTA.

The land provides limited actual forestry but has passive recreation opportunities in the form of bushwalking tracks and picnic areas. Additionally, a range of educational programs and excursions are offered at the Cumberland State Forest site.

Further investigation and liaison with the stakeholders will be required to determine the extent of specific forestry zoning or alternative zones to be applied.

Other environment and leisure land

It is important to note that not all environmental and leisure land is zoned specifically for such purposes. As previously discussed, this includes some private recreation and wetland areas. Additional lands which form part of the environmental or leisure spaces in the Shire include Crown lands, vegetation on private property, pedestrian and cycle links and public domain spaces.

There are several parcels of Crown land under Council's care, control and management that are not currently zoned to reflect their environment and/or leisure space role. The majority of these are zoned rural. Further consultation is required with relevant government agencies to determine the most appropriate zone for such properties.

There are also many areas of privately owned land in the Shire that contain threatened species or their habitats which are not specifically zoned or protected. Such areas require careful management to protect native bushland and habitat corridors and to minimise conflicts with development. Further biodiversity mapping is required to clearly identify areas in need of greatest protection. Issues relating to conservation of biodiversity on private land are discussed further in findings on Biodiversity Conservation and Key Direction 5.

Other areas which make up the open space network in the Shire include walking and cycle tracks which provide links between spaces including residential areas, open space reserves, employment areas, schools, centres and the public domain. The provision and improvement of pedestrian and cycle links and public domain spaces is discussed further in findings on Connectivity and Public Domain and Key Directions 3 and 4, respectively.



Hawkins Lookout

Findings

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

QUALITY OF OPEN SPACE

Open space provides opportunities for families, individuals and groups to participate in a range of activities. The provision of well planned and accessible parks can encourage greater community involvement with health, social and quality of life benefits. Factors which contribute to how open space areas are perceived and used by the community include ease of access, choice of facilities, attractiveness of the setting and opportunities for involvement and interaction.

In assessing the quality of open space provision, key considerations include:

- Means by which community needs are identified and addressed;
- Opportunities for improvements to recreation and open space facilities; and
- Means by which community participation is facilitated and maintained.

Each of these key areas are discussed below.

Needs of the community

Planning and funding of open space land and recreation facilities are critical components to effectively meeting community needs.

- **Planning**

Open space planning in Baulkham Hills Shire, particularly in new release areas, is based on an analysis of recreation needs. Such analysis considers research relating to participation and the likely demographic mix of the incoming population. The needs based approach ensures a focus on people and their use of spaces thereby facilitating the achievement of quality outcomes.

For planning purposes, recreational and open space needs are generally grouped into three broad functional categories of district open space, local open space and open space links. District open space comprises active playing fields and larger parks which include less structured recreation such as informal play, picnicking, walking and cycling.

Local open space is necessary for play opportunities and is planned to be accessible to residents and of a useable size.

Open space links are an integral part of the network and provide for scenic and landscape quality and the opportunity for residents to move easily between parks and activity nodes.

This methodology provides for clear identification of local and district open space and recreation needs, however it does not provide for facilities that are more regional in nature.

Open space planning for North Kellyville is being undertaken by the Growth Centres Commission in consultation with Council. The North Kellyville Community Facilities and Open Space Assessment was undertaken in March 2008. Council's role is to ensure compatibility of relevant Council controls and integration of open space areas with the surrounding network.



Kings Road, Castle Hill

- **Funding**

The provision of regional facilities by Council is limited by the infrastructure funding framework. The North West Subregional Strategy includes an action for the NSW Government's Metropolitan Greenspace Program (MGP) to investigate opportunities to improve the quality and accessibility of existing regional open space.

In the past Council has received funding towards Heritage Park and the Governor Philip Arm of the Great North Walk. Based on current guidelines, any future applications would need to demonstrate the benefits of the project to residents of the wider region. Further investigation is required to determine potential eligible projects and whether application is viable given that any MGP funding is conditional upon matching dollar for dollar funding and funded projects are required to be completed within two years from acceptance.

The infrastructure funding framework can also impact on the timeliness of addressing community needs. This is predominantly because sufficient developer contributions are generally not available up front to fund facilities in line with the growth in population. This issue was exacerbated within the Kellyville/Rouse Hill release area by factors such as escalation of land acquisition costs over time and appeals to the court, resulting in a projected shortfall of developer contributions funding to meet community needs.

A strategic focus is required to address funding deficits whilst ensuring a reasonable level of service and amenity is maintained. This requires ongoing monitoring of the status of contributions funding, continuation of longer term financial planning and ongoing lobbying of State Government whenever the opportunity arises to improve the legislative framework.



Heritage Park, Castle Hill

Findings

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

Opportunities for improvement

The Hills 2026 Community Strategic Direction consultation process indicated that residents consider the recreation areas and facilities in the Shire as being of a high standard. Key issues include continued provision of passive recreational space and balancing demand for facilities to ensure fair and equitable access.

Similarly, Council's Recreation Strategy (2007) indicated a high level of community satisfaction with existing recreation facilities, services and open space. There is a need to continue to identify and respond to demographic changes, recreation/leisure trends, and residents needs and expectations in order to ensure a high level of satisfaction is maintained.

Ways in which open space can be improved are identified in Council's Recreation Strategy and the North West Subregional Strategy. Consideration is also given to development controls and non regulatory measures to facilitate improvements to the quality of open space.

- **Recreation Strategy**

The vision of the Strategy is to provide for:

"A healthy, vibrant and active community participating in a range of recreational opportunities."

An ongoing process of improvement will assist with meeting the vision statement and maintaining the high level of satisfaction. It should be noted that this Direction does not seek to replicate the findings of the Recreation Strategy, however, it is important to have an understanding of the principles and recommendations as they will contribute to the quality of spaces provided for community recreation and enjoyment.

Principles underpinning Council's Recreation Strategy

- Diverse range of accessible open space settings, recreation facilities and services across the Shire.
- Planned approach to delivery.
- Provide facilities to assist delivery of organised sports to service the needs of residents.
- Maintain playing surfaces to a level commensurate with the level of competition and use.
- Provide access for people with a disability.
- Cater for both Shire wide and local needs.
- Equitable provision and allocation across a range of formal and informal participation opportunities.
- Encourage participation for health, well being and social benefits in partnership with other agencies.
- Provide safe and supportive environments for participants.
- Maximise shared usage and flexibility to meet changing community needs and aspirations.
- Collaborative approach with community groups, government agencies and the private sector.



Berne Mullane playing fields

The Recreation Strategy Implementation Plan includes 43 recommendations with the highest priority actions as follows:

- Developing monitoring systems to measure community satisfaction and participation.
- Tailoring the works program to reflect the recreation preferences of the community.
- Reviewing the Allocations of Playing Fields Policy.
- Continuing with the development of an Asset Management Strategy.
- Developing leisure programs for a variety of target groups.
- Providing support to clubs and groups to enhance management and services.

These actions will provide the framework for responding to recreation needs efficiently and equitably and ensuring well maintained and managed facilities and services. In addition, Council is working in partnership with the Sydney West Area Health Service (SWAHS) to develop a collaborative approach to protecting and promoting community health. The memorandum of understanding between the two parties elevates the priority of developing a Shire-wide Tracks and Trails Strategy given the obvious health benefits of physical activity.

Medium and longer term strategies contained in the Recreation Strategy Implementation Plan include:- responding to the needs of specific sports, promoting recreation opportunities, catering for new and emerging sports, analysing the needs of higher density populations and exploring a new Council funding program.

The Strategy undertook a demand assessment by each sport and made strategic recommendations to address issues in relation to individual sports to 2021. Strategies relevant to land use planning are reviewed and considered below:

Recommendation 7: Review of planning controls to ensure opportunities for private sector health and fitness facilities.

Private recreation facilities include indoor facilities such as swimming pools, gymnasiums, health and fitness facilities, indoor sports courts for cricket, netball, basketball, squash, rock climbing, ice and roller skating, ten pin bowling and numerous others. The Shire has a significant number and wide range of indoor private recreation facilities scattered throughout the whole of the Shire. The continuation of the permissibility of these private facilities in various employment, business and some rural zones is appropriate. Rural zones where such uses would not be appropriate are zones that seek to facilitate and protect primary industry production.

Recommendation 9: Investigate opportunities in new release areas for a dedicated athletics track and field.

The demand assessment had regard to relatively low participation rates, likely slow growth in participation and the availability of only three grass athletics tracks in the Shire, but recommended that high standard synthetic track facilities not be provided. However, it recommended that opportunities be investigated for future development of an additional grass athletics track in the release areas to cater for possible future demand associated with population growth in these areas. It was anticipated that the future facility would be shared with other users such as AFL or cricket.

Findings

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

The Open Space Assessment for North Kellyville found that two local active recreation parks with eight playing fields (four ovals) are required to satisfy the local outdoor sports needs of North Kellyville's future residents. Whilst the incoming population will participate in athletics, the level of demand does not justify dedicated local facilities. The assessment notes that athletics facilities draw from a wider catchment.

A draft Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Bill 2008 released in April 2008 proposes to limit the levies for public amenities and services to key local community infrastructure. Therefore whilst there may be justification for an athletics track in the longer term given growth in Kellyville/Rouse Hill and the North West Growth Centre, the provision of such is constrained by the infrastructure funding framework. Determining an approach to Recommendation 9 of the Recreation Strategy requires more detailed analysis including further consideration of needs, locational requirements and funding options.

Recommendation 35: When planning for future rail proposals on Castle Hill Showground site, consider options to relocate or re-establish existing activities at alternative locations.

This recommendation recognises the activities undertaken upon the Showground are an important link to the Shire's rural heritage. Responding to this recommendation requires a clear understanding of the timing and design of proposals for a Hills Centre station. Council will liaise with relevant State Government agencies at the masterplan stage to enable options to be fully investigated.

- **North West Subregional Strategy**

A key focus of the North West Subregional Strategy is to continue to improve access to quality parks and public places, and community facilities to meet the needs of the growing population. The Strategy indicates that the Department of Planning are updating the Outdoor Recreation and Open Space Planning Guidelines for Local Government 1992 to assist Councils in planning for open

space. Once released these will be reviewed and implemented where relevant.

The particular Subregional Strategy actions for improving the quality of local open space are reviewed and considered below:

NW F2.1.1: Maintain or enhance provision in centres and along transport corridors where growth is located.

It is recognised that increased housing densities in established areas can place additional demands upon existing open space and recreation facilities. Whilst there is limited opportunity to provide additional public open space given funding constraints, there is a need to ensure that planning for higher densities has regard to infrastructure provision and investigates opportunities for enhancement of provision, for example by way of planning agreements.

NW F2.1.2: Consider improvement programs with better facilities to encourage use.

The vision, objectives and recommendations of the Recreation Strategy are consistent with this action. A range of improvements are recommended relating to both facility provision and promotion of recreational opportunities. The progressive implementation of the Strategy will be supported by more detailed specific planning where appropriate and will encourage increased use and participation by residents in recreation activities.

Trends such as increasing demand for a greater diversity of recreational activities and the rise of the 'café culture' warrant further investigation of more innovative opportunities that may be available to broaden and improve the recreation and leisure experience. This could include trialling the provision of a community garden within a park in a medium/high density part of the Shire (e.g. Carlingford). Additionally it is recommended that the public recreation zone allow for a diverse range of leisure related uses such as cafés.

Field investigations have also highlighted the need for improved protection from the sun for spectators at some active sportsgrounds such as Bernie Mullane Sports Complex. The Recreation Strategy requires consideration of shade in the design of new facilities. In this regard, review of development controls to address sun protection objectives is recommended. For existing facilities a coordinated approach is required to investigate the availability of shade and identify options for addressing shortcomings in provision.



Bernie Mullane Sports Complex - limited shade

NW F2.1.3: Consider mechanisms to increase capacity of local sports fields to a district level.

Council has a total of 38 active sports reserves accommodating 82 playing fields. A further 6 active sports reserves accommodating 21 playing fields are planned for the Kellyville/Rouse Hill, Balmoral Road and North Kellyville release areas. The reserves are planned and designed as district level facilities and are predominately multi purpose venues catering for a range of activities. In rural areas reserves such as South Maroota Reserve and Sackville North reserve have a local focus reflecting the lower population density in these areas.

The Recreation Strategy has identified an issue of overuse of playing fields due to high level of demand, the introduction of new sports and delays in the delivery of new infrastructure in the release areas. Consequently, there is limited opportunity to increase the capacity of existing sporting fields. The Environment and Leisure Direction supports the proposed review of the Allocation of Playing Fields Policy and investigations to facilitate timely delivery of new infrastructure.

NW F2.1.4: Develop links between smaller reserves to create diversity and broader user experience.

A coordinated tracks and trails network for the Shire is a key priority of the Recreation Strategy and the Environment and Leisure Direction. This is addressed further in the findings on connectivity and Key Direction EL3.

NW F2.1.5: Consider modifying underutilised open space for informal activities such as skating, basketball, netball and cafes.

Whilst overuse of playing fields has been identified as an issue, there may be opportunities to better address the informal recreation needs of the community. Appropriate strategies have been identified in the Recreation Strategy to facilitate walking, cycling and bushwalking activities. Further investigation is required of opportunities for provision of skate facilities, informal basketball courts or other similar facilities for informal use by young people.

NW F3.1.1: Investigate the provision of additional multipurpose indoor and outdoor sport facilities to meet the needs of the current and future populations of the subregion.

This action seeks to improve Sydney's major sporting and cultural event facilities and refers to planning for additional uses at locations such as Blacktown Olympic Park, Penrith Lakes site and Western Sydney Parklands.

Whilst Council does not have similar scale facilities, it does seek to optimise the use of existing resources through planning for multi use and design flexibility. The capacity of sports reserves has been addressed in discussion on North West Subregional Strategy NW F2.1.3.

Findings

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

In terms of indoor facilities, Council provides access to four multi purpose indoor facilities:

Hills Sports Stadium Fred Caterson Reserve	4 courts
Bernie Mullane Sports Complex Kellyville	2 courts
Kellyville Park	1 court
Dural Recreation Centre	1 court

There are also private sector facilities including Dural Sport and Leisure Centre (4 courts) and Castle Hill Indoor Sports Centre (4 synthetic surface courts). These facilities provide for a range of activities including basketball, netball, soccer, badminton, table tennis, volleyball and other health and fitness programs. In the longer term, additional courts are proposed at Kellyville Park and Bernie Mullane Sport Complex to respond to the needs of the incoming population at Balmoral Road Release Area and North Kellyville.

The Recreation Strategy identifies issues in relation to the lack of programming flexibility where single courts are provided and potential longer term shortfall in provision. Larger multi court facilities are more economically viable given economies of scale and the Strategy recommends an in-house review of provision and lease arrangements to seek greater opportunities for a range of activities. The Environment and Leisure Direction supports this approach together with maintaining permissibility for private facilities in a range of zones. This approach provides for efficient use of existing resources whilst seeking to meet the indoor sporting needs of current and future populations.

- **Review of planning controls**

Apart from possible changes identified in the previous discussion, there are opportunities to further facilitate achievement of quality outcomes by way of planning controls. This includes specific controls for private recreation facilities and review of the Baulkham Hills Development Control Plan.

By their nature, private recreation facilities are generally high traffic generating activities, with obvious peak use periods at weekends or at match start and finish times. They can also experience a high turnover of patrons. Other issues such as noise generation, parking, lighting, advertising signage and hours of operation, can impact on the suitability of these facilities. Review of development controls relating to private recreation uses needs to be undertaken to ensure that the size and scale of operations is compatible with surrounding areas.

Baulkham Hills Development Control Plan provides a range of objectives and development controls for development on recreation land relating predominately to traditional requirements such as site constraints, landscaping, carparking, amenity for adjoining developments, and provision of services. It is timely to review and expand upon these controls to address recreation and leisure trends and provide for a wider range of activities.

- **Non regulatory measures**

A range of non regulatory measures are included in the Recreation Strategy and many of these have been described in the foregoing discussion. In summary, non regulatory measures for improving the quality of open space include:- review and development of policies, facility management, promotion of opportunities, development of leisure programs, investigation of funding opportunities and provision of support to clubs and sporting groups. These measures are comprehensive and supported by the Environment and Leisure Direction.

Facilitating Community Participation

The Local Government Act 1993 requires all land vested in a Council to be classified as either 'operational' or 'community'. It provides for land that is kept for use by the general public (such as a public park) to be classified as 'Community', which must be regulated via a plan of management.

There are some properties within the Shire that are classified as Operational Land which have a clear public open space function for example part of the Balcombe Heights Estate and Bella Vista Farm Park. In such cases land was transferred to Council as Operational Land, pending refinement of proposed uses. Review of classifications is required to recognise spaces intended for ongoing use for community purposes. Consideration of the relevant Section 117 Direction 6.2 Reserving Land for Public Purpose must be taken into account when amending land classifications through the LEP process.

Whilst planning, delivery and availability of public spaces are critical, attention also needs to be given to factors which ensure that people will continue to use and appreciate the public open space network. Spaces should be well maintained, attractively landscaped and safe for children with fenced play areas, shade and seating provided where needed.

Again, such measures are addressed in the Recreation Strategy objectives, principles and recommendations. Of particular note is a new initiative that seeks to address anti-social behaviour in open space and will involve regular forums between stakeholders, working with local youth organisations and investigating potential for paid rangers in parks.



Bella Vista Farm Park

Findings

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

CONNECTIVITY OF OPEN SPACE

A network of pedestrian and cycle paths that link parks, waterways, bushland and centres, is crucial to encouraging community use of the recreation, leisure and scenic opportunities within the Shire.

In assessing the accessibility and connectivity of environment and leisure spaces consideration has been given to both regional and local links. The focus of the findings is recreation links rather than commuter links such as the cycleways along Windsor Road and Old Windsor Road. Such links will only be addressed in terms of connection to the recreation network. Further consideration of any improvements to commuter links will be undertaken as part of the Integrated Transport Direction.

The Recreation Strategy (2007) recommended that a Tracks and Trails Strategy be developed for the Shire identifying a comprehensive network of walking trails, including bushwalks, on-road cycle routes, off-road cycle tracks and possible new routes. Preliminary review of recreation links has been undertaken for the Environment and Leisure Direction. It is envisaged that the Tracks and Trails Strategy will address recreation and commuter pedestrian/cycle links on a more comprehensive basis, and will map those recreation tracks that are more minor in scale.

This connectivity information has been based on a variety of sources, including Development Control Plan maps, the Draft North West Subregional Strategy, aerial photography and consultation with Council staff. The identified links and their status are shown in the Connectivity Plan and discussed below:

Regional links

The North West Subregional Strategy (Department of Planning 2007 - Figure 30) indicates the location of existing and proposed regional trails. It is understood that such trails are based upon the Sydney Metropolitan Regional Recreation Trails Framework prepared for the then Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources in 2005.

Key regional trails identified as passing through or close to the Shire include the Cattai Creek (North West) trail, the Great North Walk, the Great River Walk (Hawkesbury Nepean River) and an east west trail from Old Northern Road, Glenhaven to Rouse Hill. The North West Subregional Strategy seeks to improve access to waterways, bushland, parks and centres via the continuation of these trails.

Cattai Creek (North West) trail is shown as extending from Thompsons Corner to Rogans Hill then to Round Corner Dural with proposed extension to Scheyville National Park and the proposed Great River Walk. The length of constructed trail extends along Old Northern Road from Glenhaven Road to Round Corner Dural, then along Kenthurst Road and Pitt Town Road ceasing near Burrell Road, Kenthurst (Refer Connectivity Plan). The remainder of the trail to the north has not been completed. There also does not appear to be a continuous link to the south along Old Northern Road and Castle Hill Road. Field investigations are required to identify gaps and establish priorities and funding for completion.



Planning for Cycleways

The Great North Walk is a 250 kilometre bush walking track linking Sydney city with the Hunter Valley and Newcastle. The Department of Lands estimates that more than 40,000 local, interstate and international visitors use the walk annually, either taking the full 12-16 day hike, or enjoying shorter walks in different sections of the track.

Within Baulkham Hills Shire links to the Great North Walk extend from Mount Wilberforce Lookout at West Pennant Hills to the boundary with Parramatta LGA, traversing Mt Wilberforce Reserve, Cumberland State Forest, Richard Webb Reserve, Excelsior Reserve and Bidjigal Reserve. Funding under the Metropolitan Greenspace Program has previously been provided for upgrade and interpretive overlay to the Governor Phillip Arm.

The overall track within the Shire is in place however access can be restricted, particularly during and after heavy rain. Possible improvements include bridges or a boardwalk to overcome the access issue and interpretive signage and brochures to facilitate community use.

The Great River Walk is ultimately intended to follow the Hawkesbury Nepean River system from south of Goulburn to its mouth at Broken Bay just north of Sydney. Part of the Penrith to Windsor section has been constructed. The diagrammatic representation included in the Subregional Strategy (Department of Planning 2007 Figure 30) does not clearly identify the location of the route however it appears to enter the Shire at Cattai National Park. It is unclear how the Walk will be achieved given the private ownership of much of the land along the Hawkesbury River.

An East West trail is shown in the North West Subregional Strategy extending from Rouse Hill to Old Northern Road. A recreation trail, does not exist in the alignment shown in the Strategy. There is a cycleway constructed partway along Glenhaven Road and as part of the Greenway Link in Kellyville/Rouse Hill, however clarification is required as to the existence and location of a fully connected east west trail. An east west link is desirable to provide connections across the Shire given that existing and proposed major links within the release areas predominately have a north south alignment. However field investigations are required to identify the actual location and any gaps and improvements required to facilitate community use. This action will require particular attention as part of the Tracks and Trails Strategy.

Beyond the Shire's boundary is a wider network of parks, leisure spaces and activity nodes. The following National and Regional Parks are located in the vicinity of the Shire boundary:-

- Scheyville National Park, Cattai
- Part of Cattai National Park, Cattai
- Marramarra National Park, Wisemans Ferry
- Berowra Valley Regional Park, Berowra
- Rouse Hill Regional Park, Rouse Hill.

A strategic and collaborative approach is required to improve accessibility and links to such parks outside the Shire.

Local links

In 2006, the Shire's residents rated walking, jogging and cycling among their top ten most popular recreation activities in response to a survey undertaken for the Recreation Strategy, as shown in Figure 4 below:

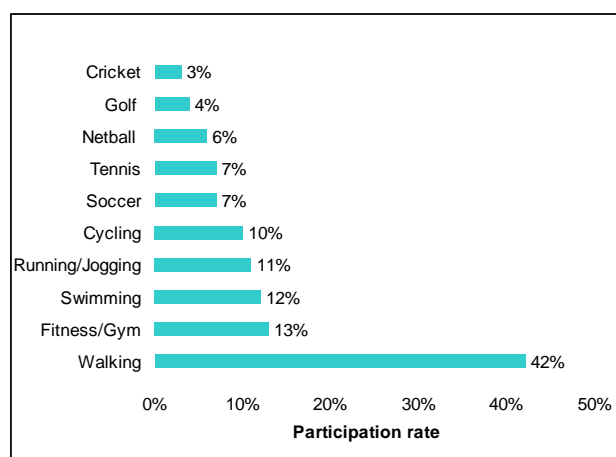


Figure 4: Participation in popular recreation activities 2006
Source data: Stratcorp Consulting, 2007

The totals in the above figure exceed 100% as many of those surveyed participated in more than one activity. In view of the high levels of participation in non organised recreation activity, opportunities exist for improvement in the existing path network.

The Connectivity Plan shows the location of major existing and planned recreation links within the Shire. Whilst referred to as 'local links' for the purpose of this Direction, it should be recognised that the links can play an important role in facilitating access to regional as well as local facilities.

Findings

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

The North West Subregional Strategy identifies a need to continue the Greenway Link and investigate opportunities for links and natural corridor development along Cattai, Caddies and Smalls Creeks (NW F1.3.1).

The Greenway Link when completed will provide a shared pedestrian and cycleway from Bella Vista Farm Park, through the Balmoral Road Release Area to Rouse Hill. It is the major off-road open space link proposed within the release areas. The concept is one of protected linear corridors of open space, managed for conservation and recreation purposes linking parks, natural features and historic sites.

This link has already been partially completed. The completion through Rouse Hill and Beaumont Hills will partly be via works by developers, including construction along Caddies Creek in the eastern part of the Rouse Hill Centre development. The construction of the link through Balmoral Road Release Area hinges on the timing of development and associated infrastructure programming.

There may be potential to improve connectivity between the Greenway link and the M7 Motorway. An off-road pedestrian/cycle path, has been constructed as an integral part of the M7. It provides recreation, transport and health benefits with the opportunity for uninterrupted travel for nearly 40 kilometres from Baulkham Hills to Prestons. Access is provided from Francesco Crescent Reserve. Investigation is required of the availability and/or viability of continuing the Greenway Link further to the south or providing a link along Norwest Boulevard footpath from Bella Vista Farm Park through to the existing cycleway on Old Windsor Road.

Cattai Creek Trail has been planned as part of the Kellyville/ Rouse Hill release area and is intended to provide recreational access along Cattai Creek from Glenhaven Bridge to the Castle Hill light industrial area through the Fred Caterson Reserve. Ultimately, this link will provide access to the Hills Station site with the construction of the rail link.



Bush Walking

Much of this trail is not constructed at this stage given the status of land acquisitions and infrastructure funding in the Kellyville/Rouse Hill release area (refer findings on Quality of Open Space).

Caddies Creek Trail utilises the drainage corridor in Rouse Hill. When completed, this track will run from the junction of Caddies Creek with Smalls Creek in Rouse Hill, sharing the Greenway Link through Rouse Hill Centre, continuing south under Windsor Road then along Elizabeth Macarthur Creek through the Balmoral Road Release Area and Norwest to Bella Vista Farm Park. The completion of this trail depends on negotiation with Sydney Water and the timing of development in the Balmoral Road Release Area.

Using trunk drainage land for recreation and leisure in addition to drainage provides for multipurpose functionality. Such land may be used as part of the recreational track network either as formal pathways or informal tracks, as leash-free areas for dogs or biodiversity corridors, providing an additional educational benefit. Examples of drainage land that has been embellished for use as passive open space already exists in Norwest.

Smalls Creek Trail is a partially completed, shared pedestrian and cycleway which extends from Mile End Road Rouse Hill along the Smalls Creek drainage corridor to Kellyville High School then to the Wrights Road town centre. Links are then available to the Castle Hill light industrial area via Harrington Avenue (cycleway not yet constructed) and Green Road.

The link between Carnival Way across Samantha Riley Drive to Acres Road/ Marella Avenue has not been constructed at this stage. A partial alternative route is available via James Mileham Drive and the pedestrian bridge at Geewan Avenue. However field investigations have revealed that connection from the formed cycleway in Carnival Way to James Mileham Drive is problematic requiring travel via an unformed track and travel across, and close to, the carriageway of Samantha Riley Drive.

Given obvious safety concerns completion of the planned link in the vicinity of Samantha Riley Drive is a priority. This will require liaison with Sydney Water and investigation of, and application for, grant funding opportunities.

North Kellyville precinct planning has included consideration of existing trails in Kellyville and the need for linkages to and across Smalls Creek. Extension of the Cattai Creek cycleway to provide a continuous link to the north is not viable given the infrastructure funding framework which does not enable acquisition of land for riparian corridors unless it will satisfy the need for local parks or is required for drainage or stormwater management purposes.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, consideration has been given to pedestrian/cycle connections around the precinct, linking to Smalls Creek, the town centre and playing fields. An ongoing strategic focus is required to ensure an integrated network is achieved.

Other major local trails include Toongabbie Creek cycleway which extends from Old Windsor Road under the M7 motorway north through Col Sutton Park, William Joyce Reserve, Sophia Doyle Reserve and Torry Burn Reserve to Windsor Road near Roxborough Park Road. A link is also available through Crestwood Reserve and MacKillop Drive Reserve to Windsor Road near the Castle Hill light industrial area.

In the southern part of the Shire a link is partially constructed and is intended to connect Lake Parramatta to Carlingford via Hunts Creek Reserve. In considering proposals for higher density development in Carlingford, connection with the proposed cycleway network is desirable.



Pedestrian link to Bernie Mullane Reserve, Kellyville

Overall a good network of recreation links exist and are proposed in the release areas. The cycleways have been constructed in ochre coloured concrete which helps to direct and guide cyclists and pedestrians. Signage throughout the pedestrian and cycleway network could be improved to enhance community use.

Within the established parts of the Shire major cycleways exist along Toongabbie Creek and Crestwood Reserve, with further works proposed from Lake Parramatta to Carlingford. Further investigation is required as part of the Tracks and Trails Strategy, particularly in relation to areas where urban renewal is proposed such as Castle Hill and Carlingford. Opportunities to add to or enhance the cycleway network should be a key consideration for major development proposals.

Findings

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

PUBLIC DOMAIN

The public domain is the community realm. It is the space where civic life takes place. Parks and walking tracks are examples of public domain, as are main streets, outdoor plazas and meeting places in centres. These spaces in centres are the focus of this section of the Environment and Leisure Direction.

Public domain spaces that are attractive, vibrant, safe and well-linked to adjoining land uses can play a key role in fostering community pride, as well as providing a focal point for community interaction. The community engagement process associated with the Hills 2026 project, identified 'poor links to centres within the local area', 'dependence on private motor cars' and 'lack of visibility of community arts and cultural activity' as being among the perceived weaknesses of Baulkham Hills Shire. Nevertheless, people also said that they feel safe in public spaces and such spaces are free of graffiti and vandalism. People are confident of a visible and consistent police presence that is available when needed.

In planning for public domain spaces, key considerations include design, connectivity, delivery and management. These are further considered below.

Design

The design of a space can have significant impact on how people feel about, and use a place. The nature of people's perceptions of, experience of, connections with, or impacts on the natural and built environments are particularly important to their enjoyment of the public domain.

High quality and consistent design can be achieved by incorporating appropriately located footpaths, lighting, street furniture, signage, paving, street trees, and shade structures. Effort to integrate utilities such as overhead cabling, will help create high quality spaces and minimise visual and accessibility impacts. Incorporating crime prevention through environmental design measures can make spaces feel safer and more accessible for the whole community.

In addition, encouraging the use of sustainable and long lasting designs and materials, with low maintenance requirements will ensure the investment in public domain spaces is enduring and environmentally responsible.

Public domain in town and major centres provides the opportunity to display public art and other aspects of cultural expression. In some instances the provision of children's play areas together with the use of different sensory and tactile materials may be appropriate. Iconic features and gateway architectural features can help to create a sense of identity. Generally, public domain space should provide for a diversity of uses, including casual meeting places and civic event space.

The North West Subregional Strategy identifies the need to plan for good quality urban civic space in the North West Growth Centre, Rouse Hill Major Centre, and around stations along the proposed North West Metro. New infrastructure, in particular the public transport interchanges and stations provides Council the opportunity to work with the State Government to improve the public domain spaces in and around these sites.

Castle Hill Mainstreet and Baulkham Hills Town Centre are current projects that incorporate public domain principles. In the remaining established parts of the Shire many public domain spaces are ageing and in need of revitalisation. There is opportunity to review development controls and provide further guidance to ensure consideration of public domain criteria.



Old Northern Road Baulkham Hills

Connectivity

Connectivity to surrounding land uses, with provision for cycleways and pedestrian paths is another key element in providing public domain spaces that encourage community interaction. The community through the Hills 2026 process expressed a clear desire to be connected to local facilities and services via safe, well designed, and integrated transport links. In this regard, it is important that the public domain integrates with links by way of clearly defined and visible entry points.

Opportunities to create and improve linkages between spaces and enhance the design, layout, connectivity, pedestrian accessibility, and landscaping of major centres is addressed in Key Direction EL3 (Connectivity of Spaces) and will be further explored in the formulation of the Integrated Transport Direction.



Castle Hill Piazza

Delivery and Management

Some of the difficulties of achieving good design for public domain space is fragmented and private ownership, development occurring over a long timeframe, the lack of an overall and coordinated vision for a space, and competing access requirements for people, vehicles, goods and services.

Currently there are limited requirements within the regulatory framework to require a coordinated approach to the development of public domain spaces. In planning for the Balmoral Road Release Area, the DCP requires potential developers to prepare an

overall scheme to provide an attractive and cohesive development for the design of the commercial centres. Further review of development controls could assist in clearly articulating the outcomes sought.

A similar approach is proposed for North Kellyville Release Area where the DCP includes site specific controls and an indicative layout. This will ensure that parks and plazas act as a focal point for the community and ensure that the design is adaptable and flexible in use and function over time.

The North West Subregional Strategy seeks to recognise night economies to protect entertainment and nightlife clusters, and enhance the vibrancy and liveability of centres. Castle Hill is recognised as a well functioning night life cluster in the North West. The Strategy includes actions for Council to plan for enhancements to this area (NW F4.2.1) and consider opportunities for entertainment and nightlife clusters in other centres (NW F4.2.2).

Implementation of proposed design principles will assist with building a viable and vibrant night economy. Special consideration will be required of how the physical environment operates at night such as lighting, passive surveillance, safety and access. Management considerations include provision of security, hours of operation, availability of a police presence and controls regarding crime prevention through environmental design.

Council has a protocol for the review of development applications, including new retail developments, by the Hills Local Area Command of the NSW Police. Further awareness and status can be given to this process and Designing Safer Communities Safer by Design Guidelines by review of planning controls.

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) may provide a non planning mechanism to implement coordinated management of a public domain space.

Findings

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

Biodiversity within the Baulkham Hills Shire is significant, with both public and privately owned land providing habitat for numerous species of native animals and plants, including endangered ecological communities and threatened species. Wetlands also provide important habitat for many of the Shire's plants and animals.

The community has expressed their concern regarding the preservation of important natural and cultural assets, the retention of scenic beauty and recreation opportunities, and the need to practise sustainable development. During the Hills 2026 community engagement process, the need to monitor and manage the future impacts of humans on the environment was seen as essential for the Hills area.

It is important that the remaining biodiversity within the Shire is retained for future generations. This requires careful planning to achieve protection of the natural environment.

This section of the Environment and Leisure Direction examines the need for conservation, the current approach, opportunities to improve biodiversity conservation and the special needs of wetlands.

SNAPSHOT Baulkham Hills Shire – Threatened Species

- Threatened fauna – 38 Species
- Threatened flora – 24 species
- Threatened populations – 4 populations
- Threatened ecological communities – 10 ecological communities

(Source: State of the Environment Report, 2006 – 2007, p.21.)



Cumberland Plain Woodland

Conservation Needs

The North West Subregional Strategy recognises that the greatest areas of open space in the subregion is sensitive bushland and rugged terrain. However, development has placed pressure on the Shire's plants and animals in terms of the distribution, quality and quantity of native species and the natural environment. Development pressure includes vegetation removal (in both rural and urban areas), bushfire/asset protection requirements, land clearing for agriculture, mining, bushfires, domestic pets and feral animals, weed incursion and climate change. These, and other actions can result in the loss and fragmentation of native bushland in the Shire, with long-lasting consequences for flora and fauna.

The protection of the Shire's natural assets, including landscapes and vistas, bushland, wetlands, and flora and fauna is instrumental in maintaining biodiversity.

The following ecological communities, present within the Shire, are listed as 'endangered' in the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 (the TSC Act) :

- Cumberland Plain Woodland
- Maroota Sands Swamp Forest
- River-flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains
- Shale/Sandstone Transition Forest
- Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest
- Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains
- Sydney Freshwater Wetlands and/or Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains
- Sydney Turpentine-Ironbark Forest
- Western Sydney Dry Rainforest

(Source: BHSC State of the Environment Report 2006-07, p.57)

Blue Gum High Forest is listed in the TSC Act as a Critically Endangered Ecological Community, giving it the highest conservation status of any ecological community in New South Wales. As further evidence of their importance, both Blue Gum High Forest and Turpentine-Ironbark Forest of the Sydney Basin Bioregion are listed as critically endangered ecological communities under the Commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

One of the challenges of addressing conservation needs is that the majority of bushland and therefore threatened species and endangered ecological communities are located on land in private ownership. Bushland within rural areas and on larger urban properties can make a valuable contribution to the green 'feel' of the Shire. They also provide vital vegetation corridors for wildlife foraging and habitat.

Ecological communities listed as critically endangered face an extremely high risk of extinction in NSW in the immediate future. Ecological communities listed as 'endangered' face a very high risk of extinction in the near future in NSW.



Darwinia biflora

Findings

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

Current planning approach

Council can play a role in the identification and protection of areas that are of special environmental value. Baulkham Hills Local Environmental Plan 2005 (LEP 2005) is fairly limited in its use of zoning to protect biodiversity. It does not contain any specific environmental protection zones or overlays. The current LEP does contain special provisions regarding tree and bushland management, environmental management and monitoring and clearing of bushland.

Additionally, State Environmental Planning Policy No. 19 - Bushland in Urban Areas (SEPP 19) seeks to protect bushland zoned or reserved for public open space and adjoining land. However the provisions of the LEP and SEPP 19 are generally aimed at requiring development consent and stipulating additional criteria for consideration. SEPP 19 requires draft LEPs to have regard to the aims of the State Policy and the retention of bushland in urban areas.

Given that detailed mechanisms are not available in the LEP, the current approach is for consideration of biodiversity conservation to occur at the development assessment stage at an individual parcel level. This is addressed through requirements of Section 79C of the EP&A Act 1979 and the TSC Act 1995. Where a threatened species or community is identified applicants are required to undertake an assessment to determine the likely impact.



Opportunities to improve biodiversity conservation

There are mechanisms available to improve biodiversity management in the Shire, including:-

- Planning framework
 - Management of environmentally significant lands
 - Biodiversity certification
 - Biobanking
-
- **Planning framework**

The identification of land of environmental value on LEP or DCP maps can communicate to landowners the extent of environmental constraints on their land, identify suitable and appropriate landuses, and identify issues for special consideration in planning development and during development assessment.

Council is currently undertaking a Biodiversity Mapping project. The aim of the project is to identify areas requiring greater management or restricted development in order to ensure the persistence and adaptive capacity of all naturally occurring species, communities and habitats in the Shire. The project will involve data collection, analysis and biodiversity planning, including selection of areas to meet targets for retention of vegetation communities, fauna and flora.

The completion of the Biodiversity Mapping project will assist in the achievement of more strategic and improved conservation outcomes for the Shire. In this regard, use of the Environmental Protection zones in the Standard Template such as the E2 Environmental Conservation Zone or the E4 Environmental Living Zone can be considered in the future. The use of such zones would allow identification of particularly significant areas, communication of specific objectives for those areas, restriction of detrimental land uses and scale of development to be appropriately managed within a statutory framework. Consideration must be given to the provisions of SEPP 19 and relevant Section 117 Direction 2.1 Environment Protection Zones and 4.4 Planning for Bushfire Protection when drafting LEP 2010.

Council can also minimise the impact of development on the natural environment by more rigorous consideration at the development assessment stage of the vegetative, landscape, drainage, scenic and environmental constraints of the land. There are also opportunities to strengthen development controls relating to land that is of biodiversity value as set out in Key Direction 5.



Privet infestation along Cattai Creek

- **Management of environmentally significant lands**

Council can also play a key role in how vegetation is managed on public and private land, through non-regulatory means.

Communication with adjoining councils provides an opportunity to improve the connectivity of vegetation corridors across local government area boundaries. Working together with adjoining local councils also provides the opportunity for joint lobbying of government agencies for the acquisition of key habitat areas and provides added 'weight' to grant funding submissions for environment and leisure space improvements.

Regular monitoring of grant funding opportunities, such as the Metropolitan Greenspace Program for use in parks and reserves that contain threatened species will also assist with conservation and achieving more sustainable land management.

Improving dialogue within Council regarding the development of specific Plans of Management for open space and bushland is important in minimising the potential for conflicts now and in the future. Additional planting within parks and reserves to widen vegetation corridors and improve their viability will improve habitat areas and reduce the effects of weed incursion.

It is important to encourage landowners to undertake sustainable management of environmentally significant land, including wetlands, bushland and riparian corridors. Opportunities include providing advocacy and education to achieve improvements in land management, monitoring the success of Voluntary Conservation Agreements on private land, and taking legal action in cases of unauthorised land clearing. Voluntary Conservation Agreements are agreements between landowners and the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment included on the title of the land to contribute to the protection of landscapes.

Council has an Education for Sustainability Strategy 2006, which is currently linked to the Environmental Management Plan Action Strategy 2005 – 2010. The current Strategy divides educational aims, objectives and outcomes into Sustainability Themes for four broad target audiences including schools, community, industry/business and government (education and training of internal staff).

It also outlines programs that focus on enhancing and protecting biodiversity, water conservation, waste minimisation and energy reduction. Council is in the process of developing a new Strategy which will better reflect the educational needs of the community.



Glossy Black Cockatoo (threatened species)

Findings

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

- **Biodiversity Certification**

The Metropolitan Strategy requires councils to consider pursuing biodiversity certification of their Principal LEP. Biodiversity certification of an instrument such as an LEP removes the need to undertake detailed threatened species impact assessments in areas identified as Certified at the development application stage. Certification effectively 'switches off' the operation of the Threatened Species Conservation (TSC) Act for future development, promoting strategic conservation outcomes and streamlining the development assessment process. This helps provide certainty in relation to both conservation and development outcomes. For areas identified as Non-Certified, the existing threatened species assessment provisions still apply.

This process has been applied in the planning for the Growth Centres. A Conservation Plan was prepared to assist with the proposed biodiversity certification of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Sydney Region Growth Centres) 2006 (SEPP) by the Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water under Section 126G of the TSC Act.

The Conservation Plan identifies a loss of 1,867 hectares of high quality native vegetation in the Growth Centres. The biodiversity certification order for the Growth Centres SEPP requires that this loss be offset with a minimum of 2,000 hectares of existing native vegetation required to be retained and protected within the Growth Centres, either within the certified areas and/or the non-certified areas. Additional areas of high quality native vegetation will be acquired outside the Growth Centres which will utilise funds collected from the Special Infrastructure Contribution over the 30 – 40 year timeframe of the development of the Growth Centres.

Within the Shire, biodiversity certification currently applies to the North Kellyville, Box Hill and Box Hill Industrial Growth Centre Precincts. The Growth Centres Commission's 'Report on Consistency of Proposed North Kellyville Precinct Plan with the Biodiversity Certification Order' (May 2008) indicates that at a minimum, 34 hectares of Non-Certified vegetation within the North Kellyville Precinct must be retained or offset. Further areas within the Box Hill Precinct have not been certified

and will thus be subject to conservation and offset requirements once this Precinct is released for development. Through the Precinct planning process, the Growth Centres Commission is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of the biodiversity certification are met.

Biodiversity certification can apply to all or part of the Shire or apply to specific species or Ecological Communities. The certification process is particularly effective when extensive masterplanning, such as in Growth Centres, is being undertaken. However, the complexity of issues and extent of data required means that it is not appropriate to pursue certification for all parts of the Shire at this time.

The outcomes of the biodiversity mapping work may provide a basis for consideration of future LEPs. The effectiveness of biodiversity certification in the North West Growth Centre will be monitored, in conjunction with data collection requirements, for potential implementation in future LEPs, either for parts of the Shire or for specific ecological communities.



Orchid, Annangrove Park

- **Biobanking Scheme**

The Department of Environment and Conservation's Biodiversity and Offsets Banking Scheme allows owners of land that has been identified as having high conservation value, and who have committed to enhancing and protecting biodiversity

values, to generate 'biodiversity credits'. These credits can then be sold to developers to offset the likely biodiversity impacts associated with developing land at another site.

However, there are some limitations with the use of biobanking to achieve improvements in conservation including the geographical area within which credits can be traded, with the potential benefits of the system being reduced if biobanked land becomes isolated by development.

The effectiveness of the Biobanking Scheme will be monitored, with particular regard to the suitability of using biobanking on Council owned land. This system may provide an alternative way to achieve the conservation of a viable sample of the Shire's endemic biodiversity and minimise the potential for local extinctions.

Wetlands

The Shire's wetlands are a unique and precious natural asset. A floristic assessment of the Shire's wetlands was undertaken in May 2002. The Study identified the boundary of wetland areas from existing maps and aerial photographs, inspection of the sites, recording of vegetation community type and dominant species where appropriate, and an assessment of condition of the vegetation.

The condition of wetlands varied considerably and was closely related to the extent of agricultural activities, particularly grazing. Many of the wetlands directly adjoin pastureland with no buffer zones. However, the study also found that unsympathetic activities in the upper swamps such as Jackson Swamp, Blundells Swamp and upper parts of Broadwater Swamp appear to be declining as landowners actively promote regeneration and habitat restoration.

Currently, only one of the Shire's wetlands, Broadwater Swamp, is zoned to reflect its function. The remainder are zoned rural which permits activities such as agriculture as development without consent. In drafting a landuse zone for wetlands, highly restricted land uses and activities that minimise the need for land clearing or filling should be included to reflect the environmentally sensitive nature of the land. Exceptions may apply where clearing is required under the Rural Fires Act

1997. The LEP should identify, conserve, enhance, and protect all wetland ecosystems and restrict development that may adversely affect the waterway ecosystem.

The Standard Templates defines wetland as:

wetland means:

- (a) *natural wetland, including marshes, mangroves, backwaters, billabongs, swamps, sedgeland, wet meadows or wet heathlands that form a shallow waterbody (up to 2 metres in depth) when inundated cyclically, intermittently or permanently with fresh, brackish or salt water, and where the inundation determines the type and productivity of the soils and the plant and animal communities, or*
- (b) *artificial wetland, including marshes, swamps, wet meadows, sedgeland or wet heathlands that form a shallow waterbody (up to 2 metres in depth) when inundated cyclically, intermittently or permanently with water, and are constructed and vegetated with wetland plant communities.*

Biodiversity mapping will assist with further refining the boundaries of the wetlands in the future and will ensure consistency with the criteria used to define a wetland.

Development controls concerning the management and ongoing monitoring techniques for water quality, soil erosion, noise, flora and fauna, bushfire hazard, and salinity should also be developed. Priority areas for wetland management will be identified in association with Catchment Management Authorities, to provide a more regional approach to wetland management.



Broadwater Swamp

Findings

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE

Aboriginal heritage is “a living, ongoing thing. It’s deeply linked to our entire environment – plants, animals, landscapes...The land and waterways are associated with dreaming stories and cultural learning that is still passed on today. It is this cultural learning that links Aboriginal people with who they are, and where they belong.”

(Source: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/nswcultureheritage/AboriginalPeopleandCulturalLife.htm).

A large part of the Baulkham Hills Shire occupies the Dharug country. The Dharug Aborigines lived in the Shire from 40,000 BC until the early 1800’s making use of both the rich diversity of the Hawkesbury River food supplies and the land, animals and plants of the adjacent valleys and hills. There remains archaeological evidence of Aboriginal occupation throughout the Shire today. This evidence provides insight into the unique and complex nature of the Dharug people’s relationship to the land as maintained through the mythologies of ‘the Dreaming’, whereby all parts of the local landscape had cultural significance and meaning.

The Dharug’s practices of hunting, making tools and weapons and ceremonies were based on an intricate knowledge of, and relationship to, local land and ecology. This knowledge and practice have been handed down over time via cultural protocol involving kinship, story, song, art and language.

The early pattern of European settlement in the Shire was also influenced by Aboriginal culture. For example the two main road systems, such as the road to Windsor, and the road to Wisemans Ferry were based on Aboriginal trails used for trade and visiting ceremonies.

The North West Subregional Strategy reinforces the Metropolitan Strategy aims by requiring councils to consider a review and assessment of Aboriginal cultural heritage during the preparation of Principal LEPs. Guidance is to be provided to councils by the Department of Planning and Department of Environment and Climate Change.

The NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change has statutory responsibility for the identification, management and conservation of Aboriginal heritage under the NPW Act. The Revised LEP Guidelines for Strategic Planning have been prepared by DECC to assist council in preparing their Principal LEP with regard to biodiversity, Aboriginal culture, environmental protection, natural resource management and natural hazard. The guidelines recommend that an archaeological assessment and a cultural assessment be prepared to inform the preparation of the LEP.



The location of Aboriginal heritage sites are not currently publicly identified in Council’s LEP. The Department of Environment and Climate Change maintains the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System which includes a database for all Aboriginal objects, places, and other heritage values that have been reported to the National Parks and Wildlife Service. However, the DECC Guidelines recommend that use of Environment zones and overlays be considered to identify areas of sensitivity i.e. where Aboriginal cultural heritage is likely to occur.

Additionally, Section 117 Direction 2.3 Heritage Conservation requires that draft LEPs shall include provisions that facilitate the conservation of items, areas, objects and places of indigenous heritage significance. Consideration must be given to the provisions of this Direction when drafting LEP 2010.

The precinct planning for North Kellyville provides a good model in terms of protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage in new release areas. The planning process included the preparation of an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment. The purpose of the assessment was to gather and analyse existing documentation, identify and assess Aboriginal cultural heritage values including identification of Aboriginal sites and areas of archaeological potential, and develop conservation and management options. The Assessment recommended that areas of high or moderate potential be included in conservation zones, riparian corridors or open areas. Many of these were contained within already constrained land, such as steep land adjacent to Cattai Creek, effectively facilitating their ongoing protection.

The recommended approach for achieving the protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage is set out in Key Direction EL6.

Key Directions

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

In developing objectives, strategies and actions to respond to these issues, six key directions emerged relating to:

- EL1: Protecting and managing the Shire's environment and leisure spaces.
- EL2: Providing high quality spaces for community recreation and enjoyment.
- EL3: Improving the accessibility and connectivity of environment and leisure spaces.
- EL4: Providing for public domain spaces that encourage community interaction.
- EL5: Conserving the Shire's unique diversity of plants and animals.
- EL6: Protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Focus for development of environmental and leisure spaces

- Functionality
- Choice of facilities close to residents
- Accessible and connected spaces
- Responsive to changing community needs
- Amenity of open space settings
- Community interaction and connection
- Respect for environment and heritage



Wattle Walk, Hunts Creek, Carlingford

EL1 PROTECT AND MANAGE THE SHIRE'S ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE SPACES

The protection and management of the Shire's environment and leisure spaces involves balancing the needs of the environment, the community and the economy to achieve equitable and sustainable outcomes.

The zoning framework is the primary planning mechanism to protect and manage environment and leisure spaces. This allows clear identification of the intended role of different spaces by way of zone objectives and identification of uses as either permissible with consent, without consent or prohibited. Relevant objectives for environment and leisure spaces seek to protect bushland and important fauna habitat corridors, provide for the recreation needs of residents, enhance environmental quality, and protect culturally significant sites.

Zoning for environment and leisure spaces should have regard to the following criteria:

1. Continuation of zoned public open space to communicate its role, land use and public ownership.
2. Continuation in the short term of the specific identification by zone of drainage land to facilitate the orderly and timely delivery of release areas and communicate its role, land use and public ownership. Council will liaise with the Department of Planning to confirm this approach in LEP 2010.
3. Rezoning of land currently identified for drainage purposes in the longer term to be consistent with the adjacent zone or to recognise the environmental, scenic or recreation value of the land. Further measures such as an environmental overlay may be required to identify particular development constraints applying to the land.
4. The identification of land that contains the attributes of a wetland to conserve, protect and enhance the ecosystem.

5. The identification of land that is reserved under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and consideration of the need for environmental protection zoning on adjacent lands.
6. The identification of land that is used for forestry purposes to communicate its role and ownership. Further consultation with the owners of such land may be required.
7. Continuation of identification of golf courses as private recreation land to communicate the role, land use and private ownership.
8. Identification of golf courses on rural land by zoning (Wisemans Ferry and Riverside Oaks) to communicate their function as private recreation land.
9. Rezoning of private recreation land where it forms part of a retirement village to be consistent with the adjacent zone or to recognise the environmental, scenic or recreation value of the land. Further measures such as an environmental overlay may be required to identify particular development constraints applying to the land.
10. Publicly owned conservation areas (Bella Vista Farm Park and Balcombe Heights) be zoned to reflect their ownership, recreation and community function. The range of permissible uses in these areas should consider the relevant Plan of Management and current use.
11. For other environment and leisure spaces, consider the characteristics of the land and its environmental, scenic and recreation value, its function and intended use.

In order to facilitate the timely development of high quality open space facilities following land acquisition, Council's process of identifying and zoning open space land will be reviewed and updated where required.

Close liaison with Sydney Water will be required in relation to item 3 above to ensure that any drainage land identified for recreation purposes does not result in a significant financial impact to Council. To this end a specific action is included to ensure

appropriate consultation and assurance from Sydney Water.

As set out in the findings there are several examples of Crown land under Council's care, control and management that is not currently zoned to reflect their environment and leisure space role. Council will liaise with relevant State agencies regarding the appropriate future zoning of these lands.



Dural Leisure Centre

Key Directions

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

EL1.1

Objective: Ensure that planning controls effectively provide for a diverse range of open space settings and recreation opportunities

Strategy	Action	Lead Team
1.1.1 Draft appropriate zonings, objectives and provisions for environment and leisure spaces in Council's LEP.	(a) Use the public recreation zone to clearly identify existing and proposed public open space land.	Forward Planning
	(b) Use the private recreation zone to clearly identify existing land used for golf courses.	Forward Planning
	(c) Zone land currently identified for private recreation as part of a retirement village consistent with the adjoining zone or to recognise the environmental, scenic or recreation value of the land.	Forward Planning
	(d) Zone land currently identified for drainage purposes to clearly identify its infrastructure function, in the short term.	Forward Planning
	(e) Zone land currently identified for drainage purposes consistent with the adjoining zone or to recognise environmental, scenic or recreation value of the land, in the longer term.	Forward Planning
	(f) Liaise with Sydney Water to minimise financial impact to Council of zoning changes for trunk drainage land.	Forward Planning
	(g) Zone State and National Parks to identify the reservation of such lands under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 and consider DECC guidelines in drafting zones for adjacent land.	Forward Planning
	(h) Liaise with relevant State agencies regarding the zoning of forestry land and Crown-owned properties.	Forward Planning

**EL1.1
(Cont)**

Objective: Ensure that planning controls effectively provide for a diverse range of open space settings and recreation opportunities

Strategy	Action	Lead Team
1.1.2 Plan for the inclusion of environmental overlays in the LEP.	(a) Refer Key Direction 5.	Health and Environment
1.1.3 Facilitate the timely provision of open space facilities.	(a) Review and update Council's process of identifying, zoning and acquiring open space land to ensure appropriate parcels are provided and site constraints are appropriately considered.	Forward Planning Parks and Reserves Property



Key Directions

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

EL 2 PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SPACES FOR COMMUNITY RECREATION AND ENJOYMENT

Recreation has a positive influence on the quality of life and health of the community, with active and passive recreation spaces and facilities in high demand by the community. A number of factors contribute to how open spaces areas are perceived and used by the community.

Quality Open Spaces:

- Functional, flexible, and diverse
- Attractively landscaped and embellished
- Well maintained
- Safe for users

As set out in the findings, the process of planning for open space provides for clear identification of local and district needs. To ensure provision of high quality spaces within new release areas there is a need to continue to work with the Growth Centres Commission and ensure compatibility of Council's development controls and integration of open space areas with the existing and proposed network of open space.

If Council is to play a role in the provision and improvement of facilities that are more regional in nature, there is a need to address funding constraints. The Department of Planning provides funding for the improvement or enhancement of regional open space through programs such as the Metropolitan Greenspace Program. The ongoing monitoring and application for such funding opportunities will assist with Council's program of improving the standard of open space facilities and integrated recreation networks in the Shire.

For timely provision of local facilities, limitations are created by the infrastructure funding framework. Strategies to address such limitations include monitoring grant funding opportunities, undertaking long term financial planning to address shortfalls in funding and monitoring and responding to legislative change.

Council's Recreation Strategy adopted in August 2007 includes a number of recommendations that seek to respond to the sport and recreation needs of the community and ensure facilities are well maintained and managed. The Environment and Leisure Direction supports the implementation of these actions. Proposed actions to assist with implementation include continuation of the permissibility of private recreation facilities in various employment, business and some rural zones, assessing future opportunities for an athletics track and liaison with State Government as to rail proposals and activities at Castle Hill Showground.



Lavender Avenue Reserve Kellyville

The North West Subregional Strategy contains a number of actions relevant to improving the quality of local space. These actions relate to considering open space improvement programs with better facilities to encourage greater use by the community, investigating mechanisms to increase the capacity of local sports fields to a district level, and maintaining and enhancing the provision of local open space particularly in centres and along corridors where urban and residential growth is being located.

There are opportunities for more innovative use of public open space land to attract broader community use and to provide more diversity in the types of open spaces that are available. The findings document a number of areas for improvement having regard to what has already been identified in the Recreation Strategy and actions required under the North West Subregional Strategy. Review of planning controls is proposed to ensure uses in public and private recreation land reflect the function of the zone and private recreation uses are compatible in size and scale with surrounding development.

Suggested improvements include trialling the provision of a community garden, addressing shade availability at active playing fields, providing facilities for informal use by young people and seeking open space for large scale development proposals. As set out in the findings, review of operational and community classifications of Council Land is required to clearly identify spaces intended for ongoing use for community purposes.

Overall, the strategies seek to address key factors of functionality, flexibility, accessibility, amenity and safety of open space to provide spaces that meet community needs and encourage community participation and enjoyment.



Commercial Road Netball Complex

Key Directions

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

EL2.1

Objective: *Ensure that diverse and high quality open space facilities are provided to meet the needs of residents*

Strategy	Action	Lead Team
2.1.1 Broaden and improve the recreation and leisure experience for residents.	(a) Allow for a diverse range of leisure related uses in the public recreation zone.	Forward Planning
	(b) Continue to allow private recreation facilities in employment, business and appropriate rural zones.	Forward Planning
	(c) Implement and monitor the Recreation Strategy actions.	Community Planning Technical Services Corporate Communications Economic Development Forward Planning
	(d) Investigate the viability and public interest in trialling the provision of a community garden.	Parks and Reserves
	(e) Audit shade availability for spectators at active sporting fields and determine locations and a program for improvements.	Parks and Reserves Community Planning

**EL2.1
(Cont)**

Objective: Ensure that diverse and high quality open space facilities are provided to meet the needs of residents

Strategy	Action	Lead Team
<p>2.1.1 Broaden and improve the recreation and leisure experience for residents.</p>	<p>(f) Investigate locations and funding for provision of facilities for informal use by young people such as skate facilities, informal basketball courts.</p>	<p>Parks and Reserves</p>
	<p>(g) Advocate enhancement or additional open space provision in established areas where large scale development is proposed.</p>	<p>Forward Planning Development Control</p>



Lavender Avenue Reserve Kellyville

Key Directions

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

EL2.1 (Cont)

Objective: *Ensure that diverse and high quality open space facilities are provided to meet the needs of residents*

Strategy	Action	Lead Team
2.1.2 Provide high quality open space within new release areas.	(a) Continue to work with the Growth Centres Commission to ensure high quality open space outcomes in new release areas.	Forward Planning
	(b) Assess proposed open space and recreation facilities within the Growth Centre for useability and compliance with Council's development standards.	Parks and Reserves
	(c) Work with the Growth Centres Commission to integrate new open space areas with the surrounding open space network.	Forward Planning
	(d) Undertake a needs analysis and assess planning and funding opportunities for an athletics track in future release areas.	Forward Planning Community Planning
2.1.3 Draft planning controls to ensure amenity in public spaces and surrounding areas.	(a) Determine permissible land uses for public and private recreation land that reflect the function of the zone.	Forward Planning
	(b) Review development controls for public recreation land to address sun protection needs and facilitate a wider range of leisure activities.	Forward Planning Parks and Reserves
	(c) Determine development controls so that private recreation uses are compatible in terms of the size and scale of operations.	Forward Planning

EL2.2

Objective: Provide for efficient use of available resources in providing quality open space facilities

Strategy	Action	Lead Team
2.2.1 Facilitate improvements to local open space.	(a) Monitor and apply for grant funding for the enhancement of open space areas and facilities.	Parks and Reserves
	(b) Continue with monitoring and long term financial planning to address funding shortfalls in contributions plan areas.	Forward Planning Corporate Strategy
	(c) Monitor and respond to legislative changes to contributions planning.	Forward Planning
2.2.2 Facilitate improvements to regional open space.	(a) Determine eligible projects for Metropolitan Greenspace funding and apply for funding if viable.	Parks and Reserves

EL2.3

Objective: Protect community interests in Council owned open space land.

Strategy	Action	Lead Team
2.3.1 Ensure that all of Council's parks and reserves are appropriately classified according to the Local Government Act 1993.	(a) Review the classification of relevant Council-owned open space land.	Property Development

Key Directions

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

EL 3 IMPROVE THE ACCESSIBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY OF ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE SPACES

The Shire is richly provided for in terms of environment and leisure spaces with 325 formal parks and reserves in both the urban and rural areas. Connectivity between, and accessibility to, these spaces is an important aspect of their functionality and use.

The provision of a well located pedestrian and cycleway network and greater use of existing trunk drainage land will improve connectivity and access both within and external to the Shire's environmental and leisure spaces.

Regional Links

The North West Subregional Strategy seeks to improve access to waterways, bushland, parks and centres by the continuation of regional links located within or close to the Shire including:

- Cattai Creek (North West) Trail
- The Great North Walk
- The Great River Walk
- East West Trail (Rouse Hill to Glenhaven)

The findings set out the status of these trails and possible improvements. Areas for particular attention include:

- Coordination and funding of the northern extension of the Cattai Creek (North West) trail.
- Clarification of the route and gaps for the southern extension of the Cattai Creek (North West) trail.
- Upgrade of parts of the track to the Great North Walk.
- Clarification of the route of the Great River Walk and coordination of planning, delivery and funding.
- Clarification of route, improvements and funding needed for the East West trail.

The completion of gaps in the proposed network of regional links will require significant resources to coordinate, and funding to complete. The Metropolitan Greenspace Program (MGP) has been identified in the Metropolitan Strategy as a key initiative for improving links between bushland, parks, waterways and centres. Building Sydney's Recreation Trails is the strategic priority for MGP funding for the 2006–08 period.

The North West Subregional Strategy requires Council to work with the Department of Planning, the Department of Environment and Climate Change and the Roads and Traffic Authority to explore opportunities to improve access and links. Liaison will also be required with adjoining Councils to ensure coordinated planning, design and delivery. Development controls will also be reviewed to ensure consideration of connectivity.

As set out in the findings, Metropolitan Greenspace funding is conditional upon matching funds and a two year timeframe for provision. In working with State agencies, further discussion is required on additional funding options available. Joint lobbying for State and Federal Government funding to reduce gaps in cross regional links should also be investigated. Opportunity is also available to work with the Growth Centres Commission to facilitate connectivity to Rouse Hill Regional Park as part of the planning for future development in Box Hill.

Local Links

The North West Subregional Strategy also identifies a need to continue the Greenway Link and potential for natural corridor development and linking opportunities along Cattai, Caddies and Smalls Creeks.

The findings sets out the status of these links and other major links within the Shire and identifies opportunities for improvements including the potential for an additional connection to the cycleway on the M7 Motorway, greater use of trunk drainage land and completion of priority areas such as the Smalls Creek cycleway in the vicinity of Samantha Riley Drive.

Opportunities for the greater use of trunk drainage land for recreational purposes or for improvements to the wider track network will be investigated. This will involve consultation with Sydney Water and other stakeholders regarding options available. Detailed consideration will be required of the following factors:

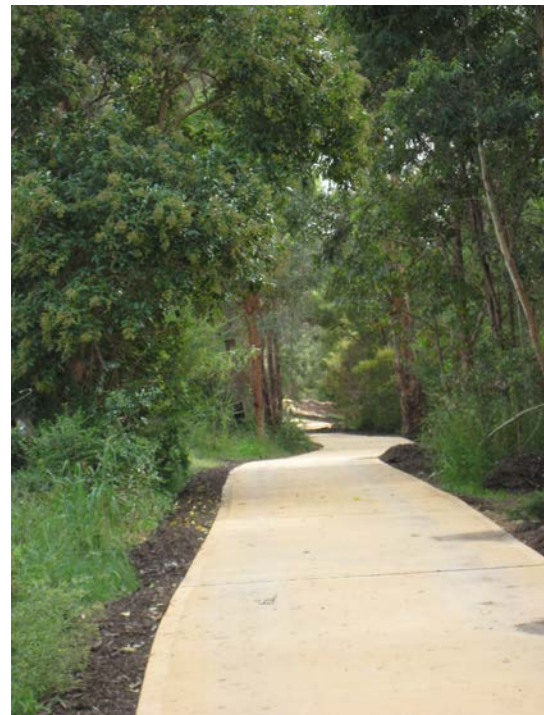
- potential impacts to riparian vegetation and connectivity
- potential to improve open space accessibility and connectivity
- measures to ensure ongoing access and availability for public use
- potential waterways and flood impacts up and downstream

Council will need to work with the Growth Centres Commission in order to achieve an integrated and accessible network. Particular focus will be required of the connections required along and across Samantha Riley Drive.

Council's Recreation Strategy recommends the preparation of a Tracks and Trails Strategy which will consider accessible, safe and quality environments responsive to community needs and interests in the planning of corridors and linkages. The Strategy will involve a more detailed exploration of the need for any improvements, opportunities for shared paths and trails and consideration of support infrastructure needs such as signage, interpretive elements, rest stops, drinking water and shelter areas.

It is recommended that a key focus of the Tracks and Trails Strategy include investigation of improvements in areas where urban renewal is proposed such as Castle Hill and Carlingford. When considering development plans for major sites Council can play a role in advocating for the development of linear links and open space corridors to/from key activity nodes.

Funding should continue to be regularly sought from State and Federal sources to reduce gaps in the Shire's recreation tracks and to continue to meet connectivity and accessibility goals.



Local link, Kellyville

Key Directions

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

EL3.1

Objective: Provide an accessible network of well-located and connected walking and cycle trails

Strategy	Action	Lead Team
3.1.1 Plan for a comprehensive network of walking and cycle tracks throughout the Shire.	(a) Undertake the Tracks and Trails Strategy as a priority and include a detailed audit of existing and proposed trails.	Community Planning Parks and Reserves Forward Planning
	(b) Investigate opportunities to improve connectivity between the Greenway Link and the M7 Motorway.	Traffic and Transport Forward Planning
	(c) Work with the Growth Centres Commission to achieve a network integrated with existing walking and cycle tracks.	Forward Planning
	(d) Continue current programs for the planning and delivery of walking/cycle links.	Traffic and Transport Parks and Reserves
	(e) Prioritise the delivery of the Smalls Creek cycleway in the vicinity of Samantha Riley Drive.	Technical Services Traffic and Transport
	(f) Seek funding opportunities from the State and Federal Governments to assist with reducing gaps in pedestrian and cycle links.	Traffic and Transport Parks and Reserves
	(g) Advocate the development of linear links and open space corridors for major development proposals.	Subdivision Control Development Control Forward Planning

EL3.1
(cont)

Objective: Provide an accessible network of well-located and connected walking and cycle trails

Strategy	Action	Lead Team
3.1.2 Facilitate improvements in open space and cycleway connectivity between local government areas.	(a) Liaise with adjoining councils and relevant State Government agencies to improve planning, funding and delivery of cross-boundary links to open space and regional facilities.	Forward Planning Traffic and Transport
	(b) Review development controls to require consideration of the connectivity between local government areas.	Forward Planning
	(c) Work with the Growth Centres Commission to facilitate connectivity to Rouse Hill Regional Park as part of the planning for Box Hill precinct.	Forward Planning

EL3.2

Objective: Facilitate the greater use of trunk drainage land for recreation purposes and to link with the wider track network

Strategy	Action	Lead Team
3.2.1 Investigate opportunities for the greater use of drainage land for recreational purposes.	(a) Consult with Sydney Water and other stakeholders regarding options for enhancing trunk drainage land for recreational use.	Parks and Reserves Waterways
	(b) Negotiate with Sydney Water to ensure recreation facilities in Sydney Water land are accessible and continue to be available for ongoing community use.	Parks and Reserves Waterways

Key Directions

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

EL 4 PROVIDE FOR PUBLIC DOMAIN SPACES THAT ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY INTERACTION

The provision of conveniently located and attractive public domain space that is appropriately landscaped is an important consideration when planning for the revitalisation of existing centres and in establishing a sense of place in new centres.

The desirable elements of public domain design are described in the findings and summarised in the Key Direction. There are considerable opportunities to seek improvement of public domain spaces through development of a Civic Design Manual and review of development controls. Such review will include improvements to ESD provisions and facilitating the provision of public art. The Centres Direction will examine opportunities to revitalise and improve the quality, design, and accessibility of centres. This will also include consideration of public domain space.

The findings demonstrate that connection to, and integration with surrounding land uses, through appropriate links is another key element in providing public domain spaces that encourage community activity and connection.

The coordinated delivery and management of public domain is critical to achieving well used and vibrant spaces. Strategies include review of development controls, formulation of a Civic Design Manual, reinforcement of crime prevention through environmental design, and focus on the function of viable night economies. Alternative funding opportunities and non planning mechanisms such as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) need to be investigated to enhance the existing public domain and provide new civic spaces.

Desirable Elements of the Public Domain

- Connected to surrounding areas
- Convenient access
- Helpful signage
- Iconic or gateway architecture
- Identifiable paths
- Landscaping that is low maintenance
- Lighting
- Materials that are sustainable
- Mature trees
- Opportunities for passive surveillance
- Public art to enjoy
- Shade structures
- Space for children to play
- Somewhere to hold civic events
- Casual meeting places
- Seating
- Surrounding landuses that generate pedestrian activity
- Utilities that are unseen

Objective: Make the public domain more attractive to encourage community use

Strategy	Action	Lead Team
4.1.1 Improve the safety of the public domain and make such spaces 'people places'.	(a) Review development controls to reinforce principles and actions for crime prevention through environmental design measures (CPTED).	Forward Planning
4.1.2 Improve the urban design and legibility of public domain and civic spaces.	(a) Plan for connectivity to public domain spaces.	Forward Planning
	(b) Monitor funding opportunities to enhance existing and provide new civic spaces.	Forward Planning
	(c) Prepare a Civic Design Manual and review development controls for public domain space and other civic areas.	Forward Planning



Rouse Hill Centre

Key Directions

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

EL4.2

Objective: Improve environmental sustainability in planning for public domain spaces

Strategy	Action	Lead Team
4.2.1 Draft planning controls to recognise the importance of environmental sustainability within the public domain.	(a) Review development controls to improve ecologically sustainable design provisions, particularly in relation to the public domain and public infrastructure.	Forward Planning

EL4.3

Objective: Provide opportunities to integrate cultural expression into the public domain

Strategy	Action	Lead Team
4.3.1 Investigate ways to develop a greater sense of place within public domain spaces.	(a) Prepare development controls to guide the provision of public art in public domain spaces.	Forward Planning Community Planning
	(b) Investigate mechanisms to develop and promote night economies.	Forward Planning Economic Development

Key Directions

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

EL5 CONSERVE THE SHIRE'S UNIQUE DIVERSITY OF PLANTS AND ANIMALS

The abundance and diversity of the Shire's biodiversity requires careful stewardship by Council to ensure the natural character of our Shire is preserved and protected.

The findings set out conservation needs, the current planning approach and opportunities to improve biodiversity conservation. The short term focus areas include review of the land use planning framework and the management of environmentally significant lands.

Whilst the findings examine biodiversity certification of LEPs and the biobanking scheme, it is not recommended that either of these options be pursued in the short term. Rather, the biodiversity mapping project and monitoring the effectiveness of the biobanking scheme will facilitate future decision making in relation to the use of these measure to achieve conservation objectives.

Planning framework

The identification of key areas for conservation will involve the completion of biodiversity mapping which will assist with identifying opportunities to improve links between identified natural corridors. The longer term intention is to develop a 'web' of environmentally significant habitats and corridors throughout the Shire for protection by zoning or overlay.



Fred Caterson Reserve

Council can also minimise the impact of development on the natural environment by review of development controls relating to land that is of biodiversity value. This will include consideration of provisions regarding matters such as:-

- The use of restricted development areas to improve the retention of native trees and vegetation, and protect environmentally sensitive land;
- Managing development and site coverage on large-lot urban land that contains native vegetation;
- Suitable setbacks to vegetation;
- Managing development in the vicinity of riparian corridors, wetlands, and the Hawkesbury River;
- Development on land that has, or is adjacent to, bushland and biodiversity value; and
- The preservation of vegetation understorey.

Management of environmentally significant lands

Apart from the use of biodiversity mapping to determine appropriate zones and/or environmental overlays, the mapping project can also be used as a tool for future planning. This can further strengthen the framework of protection, facilitate movement of species and provide the basis for joint funding and lobbying with adjoining Councils.

The development or review of Plans of Management for open space and bushland provides a mechanism for conserving a viable sample of the endemic population. This could include additional planting within parks to widen vegetation corridors and improve habitat areas.

Education and promotion of owner responsibility for land management, particularly of bushland with high environmental value, is another key area where Council has a role. This would include monitoring the implementation and success of Voluntary Conservation Agreements on private land.

Key Directions

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

Wetlands

The Shire's wetlands are an important aspect of the natural and scenic environment. There are twelve individual wetlands identified in the Shire. Broadwater Swamp is currently the only wetland identified and protected through a specific zoning. The findings summarise the assessment of wetlands undertaken in May 2002 which point to the need for more specific zoning and development controls to protect the environmentally sensitive nature of the land.

The Template LEP includes a number of standard environmental zones with varying degrees of protection as reflected in the mandated objectives and prohibited land uses. The identification and zoning of wetlands was identified in the draft Rural Lands LEP endorsed for exhibition by Council on 7 June 2005. The location of such wetlands is shown on the Structure Plan. Further mapping work will assist in refining the boundary of the wetlands. Given that nine of the wetlands in the Shire are also identified in SREP 20 Hawkesbury-Nepean River, liaison with the relevant Catchment Management Authorities to coordinate a regional approach for wetland management is also required.



Broadwater Swamp

EL5.1

Objective: Provide for the protection of flora and fauna in land use planning

Strategy	Action	Lead Team
5.1.1 Identify key areas for conservation.	(a) Complete biodiversity mapping in the short term.	Health and Environment
	(b) Work with the Growth Centres Commission to retain key vegetation corridors and links between native habitat areas in the Box Hill precincts.	Forward Planning
5.1.2 Consider flora and fauna protection measures in the land use planning process.	(a) Use environmental protection zones and/or overlays for areas identified as having particular significance as part of the biodiversity mapping project.	Forward Planning Health and Environment
	(b) Review development controls to improve the connectivity, conservation, and management of native vegetation, on public and private land.	Forward Planning Health and Environment
5.1.3 Monitor the effectiveness of biodiversity certification	(a) Review the use of biodiversity certification in the North West Growth Centre.	Forward Planning Health and Environment

Key Directions

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

EL5.2

Objective: Provide for ongoing effective management of environmentally significant lands

Strategy	Action	Lead Team
5.2.1 Appropriately manage unauthorised land clearing and tree removal.	(a) Consider and improve LEP controls regarding unauthorised land clearing and tree removal.	Forward Planning
5.2.2 Encourage land owners to preserve and enhance the environmental quality of their land.	(a) Monitor and review the implementation and success of Voluntary Conservation Agreements on private land.	Health and Environment
	(b) Advocate and educate landowners and developers.	Health and Environment
	(c) Continue with formulation of a new Education for Sustainability Strategy.	Health and Environment
5.2.3 Develop specific Plans of Management for public land containing significant bushland.	(a) Facilitate a multidisciplinary approach across Council when developing specific Plans of Management.	Parks and Reserves
5.2.4 Improve the viability of vegetation corridors.	(a) Conserve and plant endemic vegetation in public land to widen and improve the viability of adjoining vegetation corridors.	Parks and Reserves
	(b) Liaise with adjoining councils to link vegetation corridors across local government boundaries and lobby government agencies to seek grant funding.	Forward Planning Health and Environment Parks and Reserves

EL5.3

Objective: Plan for the conservation and protection of wetland ecosystems

Strategy	Action	Lead Team
5.3.1 Draft planning controls to facilitate the protection of wetlands.	(a) Zone wetland areas based on the areas in the draft Rural Lands LEP.	Forward Planning
	(b) Develop development controls for wetlands and surrounding areas to minimise the impacts of development.	Forward Planning
	(c) Liaise with Catchment Management Authorities to establish priority areas and coordinate a regional approach for wetland and waterway management.	Waterways



Broadwater Swamp

Key Directions

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

EL6 PROTECT ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE

A key focus of the Environment and Leisure Direction is the preservation of the archaeological and cultural significance of land containing Aboriginal cultural heritage and the protection of Aboriginal heritage items and cultural heritage values. Consideration of Aboriginal cultural heritage is particularly important in the vicinity of riparian land, waterway corridors, undeveloped bushland areas, wetlands and lakes. The Waterways Direction provides specific actions with regard to protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage in the vicinity of waterways.

The findings outline the significance of Aboriginal heritage and culture in the Shire and the State government approach for the protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage. Aboriginal heritage within the Shire is currently investigated by Council during the assessment phase of development applications.

Strategies to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage include consideration of Aboriginal heritage issues early in the land-use decision-making process, undertaking Aboriginal heritage surveys at the development application preparation phase and supporting the Department of Environment and Climate Change's Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit process.

Facilitating the ongoing participation of Aboriginal communities in the decision-making process is also important. A review of development controls is proposed which will include examination of the extent and requirements for consultation.

At this stage there is no need for a Shire-wide review of Aboriginal heritage sites for inclusion in LEP 2010 as all future land releases are contained within the North West Growth Centre. It will therefore be important to ensure that adequate studies such as an Archaeological Assessment and Cultural Heritage Assessment are undertaken in future urban release areas such as Box Hill. Council has a role in working with the Growth Centres Commission to identify and protect areas likely to contain Aboriginal Cultural Heritage.

Note: European heritage is considered in the Residential Direction.



EL6.1

Objective: Plan for the protection of Aboriginal heritage from the impacts of development

Strategy	Action	Lead Team
6.1.1 Protect Aboriginal sites and artefacts from the impacts of development.	(a) Consult with the Department of Environment and Climate Change in the preparation of LEP 2010 to ensure areas of sensitivity are appropriately zoned.	Forward Planning
	(b) Work with the Growth Centres Commission to identify and protect areas likely to contain Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, in future release areas.	Forward Planning
	(c) Review development controls and identify opportunities to improve consultation with Aboriginal communities.	Forward Planning

Work to be Done

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

Review Development Controls

Baulkham Hills Development Control Plan will be reviewed to support LEP 2010. Areas identified for particular attention include:- improving amenity of public spaces; improving the compatibility of private recreation uses; improving the connectivity of trails between local government areas; reinforcing measures to achieve crime prevention; improving public domain spaces and other civic areas; improving flora and fauna protection measures; minimising the impacts of development on wetlands; and improving consultation with Aboriginal communities.

Timeframe: Completed March 2011

Prepare the Tracks and Trails Strategy

The Environment and Leisure Direction supports Council's Recreation Strategy (2007) in the preparation of a Tracks and Trails Strategy. The Tracks and Trails Strategy will build on the research and mapping undertaken for the Environment and Leisure Direction, and will identify the Shire's network of walking trails, on-road cycle routes, off-road cycle tracks and possible new routes. The Tracks and Trails Strategy will also consider commuter cycle routes, prepare new mapping and provide strategies to develop safe, accessible and enjoyable environments and experiences appropriate to the community through quality infrastructure such as paths, signage, rest areas and interpretive elements. The Strategy will also explore processes for improving the promotion and enhancement of the community's awareness and use of tracks and trails within the Shire.

Timeframe: Completed June 2009

Prepare a Civic Design Manual

The Civic Design Manual will be developed to facilitate the coordinated delivery and management of the public domain and achieve well used and vibrant spaces. The Manual will reinforce the need for consideration of key planning principles in the design, connectivity, delivery and management of public domain spaces. This project will ensure that planning for civic spaces encompasses the broader context of centres and their integration with surrounding land uses.

Timeframe: Completed late 2009

Complete Biodiversity Mapping

Completion of the biodiversity mapping project will assist with identifying land that has a particularly significant environmental value and will identify areas that warrant environmental protection under Council's planning framework. The project will identify opportunities to improve links between natural corridors and provide for a more strategic approach to improving conservation outcomes in the Shire.

Timeframe: Completed mid 2009

Monitoring and Review

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

Evaluation and review of the Environment and Leisure Direction will be vital to its implementation and effectiveness. As a dynamic document, its content will be continually revised and amended to ensure innovation in the planning, management, and design of environment and leisure spaces.

Mechanisms for monitoring and measuring the progress of implementation for the Environment and Leisure Direction is essential. Much of the work anticipated in the Direction will form the core business and work program of Forward Planning and other Sections of Council. It is anticipated that an annual report will be formulated commenting on the progress in Key Direction areas, objectives, strategies and actions.

It is intended that a major review of the Local Strategy and supporting Directions will be undertaken every five years in line with the regular review of Council's Community Strategic Direction and the LEP. Periodic review may also be appropriate as a result of changes to metropolitan planning policy, new infrastructure projects or completion of new strategic work by Council.

This will provide Council with an opportunity to monitor the status of completed actions and where targets are met, and will allow the Direction to be tailored to address changing demographic situations, State Government planning policies, and new or updated Council strategies.

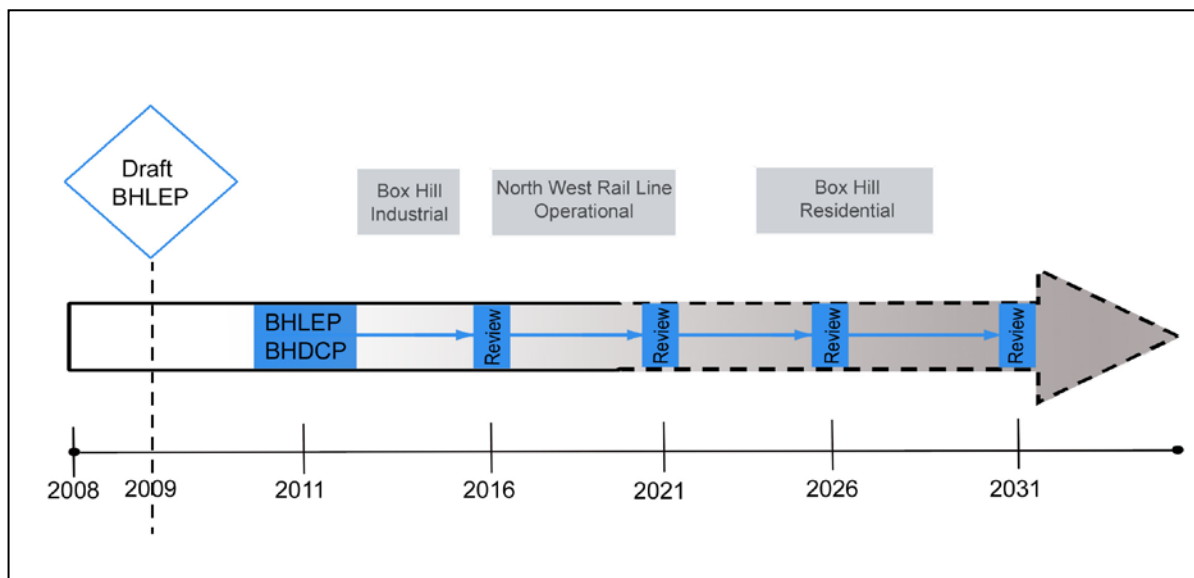


Figure 5: Timeline of LEP Review

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Glossary

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE DIRECTION

Aboriginal cultural heritage	Aboriginal cultural heritage refers to an archaeological site, land or place with ancestral, spiritual or historical connections or significance for Aboriginal communities.
BHDCP	Baulkham Hills Development Control Plan
BHLEP 2005	Baulkham Hills Local Environmental Plan 2005
BHSC	Baulkham Hills Shire Council
BID	Business Improvement Districts are a concept that aim to increase investment within defined areas such as major centres. Typically managed by Chambers of Commerce (or similar), funds may be collected by Councils for uses such as capital works, security or marketing.
Biodiversity	Biodiversity is the variety of all life forms: different plants, animals, the genes they contain, and the ecosystems in which they live. ^{iv}
Biodiversity and conservation land	Includes land containing wetlands, National Parks and Nature Reserves, and land used for forestry purposes. It also applies to Crown land that provides a conservation role, and bushland in public and private ownership.
Biodiversity certification	Provides a certification process for new LEPs and aims to maintain or improve biodiversity.
Biobanking	A market-based scheme of the NSW Government, biobanking aims to address the loss of biodiversity values and threatened species by providing incentives ('biodiversity credits') for landowners to protect areas of high biodiversity value. ^{viii}
Catchment	An area of land draining to a particular waterway or location.
Catchment Action Plan	A document prepared by Catchment Management Authorities that highlights environmental issues of a regional area and identifies actions to address those issues.
Centre	Centres are places where services and facilities are concentrated to meet peoples needs. They may include shopping, office based employment, recreation, leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities, health and community services.
Centres Direction	One of the strategic directions that form the basis of the key directions in the Local Strategy.
Connectivity Plan	The Connectivity Plan provides a graphic representation of the Environment and Leisure Direction written text in relation to pedestrian and cycle tracks and indicates areas requiring further strategic planning.

Contributions Plans	A Contributions Plan sets out the levies a Council may collect under Section 94 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979 for public amenities and services that are required because of development.
CPTED	Crime Prevention through Environmental Design uses principles of natural surveillance, access control, ownership and maintenance to lower the occurrence of crime and reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour.
Crown Land	Land that is owned by the Government. Council has care, control and management of some Crown Land.
DCP	A Development Control Plan is a Council document incorporating development controls to guide the preparation and assessment of development applications.
DECC	Department of Environment and Climate Change (New South Wales).
Development Application	Application for consent to carry out development.
District open space	Traditionally accommodates a wider range of recreational opportunities and incorporates both active and passive open space functions such as sports fields, sport complexes, and less structured recreation including informal play, picnicking, walking, and cycling.
DoP	Department of Planning (New South Wales)
Drainage land	Land specifically identified for major stormwater management.
Ecosystem	A system of interacting and interdependent relationships between a community of organisms and their physical environment.
EMP	Environmental Management Plan. It forms an integrated approach to the management of the natural and built environment and outlines Council commitment to, and policy towards, the environment. ^{vii}
Employment Lands	Employment Lands include traditional industrial areas, business and technology parks. They incorporate light industries, heavy industry, manufacturing, urban services, warehousing and logistics and high-tech based activities.
Employment Lands Direction	One of the strategic directions that form the basis of the key directions in the Local Strategy.
Environment and Leisure Direction	One of the strategic directions that form the basis of the key directions in the Local Strategy.
EP&A Act	Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (New South Wales)
EP&A Regulation	Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000 (New South Wales)

ESD	Ecologically sustainable development means using, conserving and enhancing resources in such a manner as to ensure that ecological processes are maintained and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be improved. ^{iv}
European heritage	European heritage means a building, work, archaeological site, tree or place that is of particular significance to the community. Examples could include evidence of European settlement, significant landscapes, and developments in architecture that are of historical, scientific, cultural, social, archaeological, architectural, natural or aesthetic value.
Floristic assessment	An assessment of the plant species and characteristics that are present in a defined area.
GCC	The Growth Centres Commission has been established by the NSW Government to ensure that new development proceeds with infrastructure and services planned, funded and linked to the sequence of land release.
Growth Centres Development Code	The Growth Centres Development Code was prepared by the Growth Centres Commission to guide planning and urban design in the North West and South West Growth Centres. ⁱⁱ
Hills 2026	Hills 2026 Community Strategic Direction: Looking Towards the Future.
Integrated Transport Direction	One of the strategic directions that form the basis of the key directions in the Local Strategy.
LEP	Local Environmental Plan.
LEP 2005	Baulkham Hills Local Environmental Plan 2005, as amended.
LEP 2010	Council's new template LEP, known as Local Environmental Plan 2010.
LGA	Local Government Area
Local Government Act, 1993	This Act provides for the system of local government in New South Wales. ^{vi}
Local open space	Primarily provides informal play space and opportunities for supervised play within a convenient walking distance from any given residence.
Local Strategy	The Local Strategy is the principle document for communicating the future planning and growth of the Baulkham Hills Shire to the year 2031.
Major Centre	A major centre usually comprises a transport interchange, taller commercial buildings, higher order retail and destination shopping, higher density residential development, community services and facilities, civic services and facilities and entertainment and cultural facilities.
Masterplan	A masterplan provides a site-specific framework for development on a site and sets key guidelines and planning principles for development.

Metropolitan Strategy	The Metropolitan Strategy: City of Cities 'A Plan for Sydney's Future' was prepared by the NSW Department of Planning, to plan for Sydney's growth over the next 25 years. The Strategy has five overarching aims: enhance liveability, strengthen economic competitiveness, ensure fairness, protect the environment, and improve governance.
MGP	Metropolitan Greenspace Program is a funding program managed by the Department of Planning to assist local councils in improvements to the quality and accessibility of green space in the Sydney metropolitan area.
NPW Act	National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974.
Neighbourhood Centre	A neighbourhood centre is the smallest centre containing low scale strip retailing that meets daily convenience needs. Facilities may include post box, public phone and public open space.
North West Growth Centre	The North West Growth Centre, comprising sixteen precincts, is approximately 10,000 hectares and will contain about 60,000 new homes in Baulkham Hills, Blacktown and Hawkesbury Councils.
North West Subregion	The North West Subregion includes the local government areas of Baulkham Hills, Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, and Penrith. ^{iv}
North West Subregional Strategy	The North West Subregion: Subregional Strategy has been prepared by the Department of Planning to translate the Metropolitan Strategy into a specialised strategy for each local government area grouping in Sydney.
NWM	North West Metro.
Open space and recreation land	This includes land that is identified in a planning instrument for uses such as parks, sporting fields, and general active and passive recreation and leisure activities, and land within identified heritage conservation areas or public domain space, such as outdoor plazas and main streets in centres.
Overlay	LEPs may, where appropriate, set out additional 'overlay' controls as local provisions that apply to land that has particular environmental, hazard or design constraints (e.g. flood prone land, wildlife corridors and catchments). ^x
Precinct	Defined area smaller than a suburb.
Principal LEP	Refers to Council's new template LEP, known as Local Environmental Plan 2010.
Private recreation land	This includes land that contains privately owned recreation facilities, such as golf courses, sporting clubs and leisure centres.
Public domain	The public domain is the community realm and is the space where civic life takes place. The public domain includes parks, walking tracks, main streets, outdoor plazas and meeting places in centres.
Recreation tracks	This includes land used for walking and cycling.

Regional open space	An open space area that serves users from a wider area, usually more than one local government area.
Regionally significant riparian corridors	Areas of riparian land thought to be of regional significance due to a high level of aquatic and terrestrial ecological value.
Residential Direction	One of the strategic directions that form the basis of the key directions in the Local Strategy.
Riparian land	Area of land adjacent to a waterway that influences or is influenced by the waterway.
Rural Centre	Rural Centres are located in rural lands on a regional road with services and public open space.
Rural lands	Non-urban land, located in the north of the Shire.
Rural Lands Strategy	Prepared as part of the Rural Lands Study and adopted by Council in August 2003.
Section 117 Directions	Section 117 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, gives the Minister for Planning the authority to incorporate specific directions into Local Environmental Plans. ^{iv}
SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy.
SEPP 19	State Environmental Planning Policy No. 19 – Bushland in Urban Areas.
Shire	Means the Baulkham Hills Shire Council local government area.
Special Infrastructure Contribution	A special State Government levy to support the provision and extension of regional transport and other infrastructure.
Specialised Centre	A specialised centre includes a landscaped business park, accessed by major transport infrastructure and characterised by large office floorplates and a commercial built form.
SREP	Sydney Regional Environmental Plan.
SREP 20	Sydney Regional Environmental Plan No. 20 – Hawkesbury-Nepean River (No2 -1997) .
Stand alone shopping centre	An internalised, privately owned centre located away from other commercial areas, containing many of the attributes of a Town Centre but without housing or public open space ^{iv}
Standard template	Standard Instrument (Local Environmental Plans) Order 2006, as amended.
State Plan	Launched in November 2006 by the NSW Government, the State Plan identifies 34 priorities under five broad areas of activity: 'Rights, Respect and Responsibility', 'Delivering Better Services', 'Growing Prosperity Across NSW', 'Environment for Living', and 'Fairness and Opportunity'.
Strategic Centre	Castle Hill, Rouse Hill, Norwest.

Structure Plan	The Structure Plan provides a graphic representation of the Local Strategy's written text and illustrates where growth and change will occur in the Shire.
Sustainability	Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. ^{iv}
SWAHS	Sydney West Area Health Service.
Template LEP	Refers to the Standard Instrument (Local Environmental Plans) Order 2006, as amended.
Town Centre	A town centre is located at a transport node and contains local scale built form with civic amenity. It includes services and community facilities with retailing meeting weekly shopping needs.
TSC Act	Threatened Species Conservation Act, 1995.
Village	A village has low scale built form, with retailing that meets residents weekly shopping needs.
Voluntary Conservation Agreement	Voluntary Conservation Agreements are agreements between landowners and the Minister for the Environment included on the title of the land to contribute to the protection of landscapes.
Waterways	Any natural or constructed form which serves a water quality, quantity or conveyance purpose, including but not limited to, natural watercourses, piped drainage, channels, detention basins, and wetlands.
Waterways Direction	One of the strategic directions that form the basis of the key directions in the Local Strategy.
Wetlands	A natural wetland includes marshes, mangroves, backwaters, billabongs, swamps, sedgeland, wet meadows or wet heathlands that form a shallow waterbody (up to 2 metres in depth) when inundated cyclically, intermittently or permanently with fresh, brackish or salt water, and where inundation determines the type and productivity of the soils and the plant and animal communities. ^{ix}
Zoning	Utilising the Local Environmental Plan, zoning maps graphically depict the application of various zones to specific areas of land.

Sources:

- ii Growth Centres Commission
- iii North West Subregional Strategy & Department of Planning website
- iv North West Subregional Strategy
- v Baulkham Hills LEP 2005
- vi Local Government Act 1993
- vii Baulkham Hills Shire Council, Environmental Management Plan
- viii Department of Environment and Climate Change
- ix Standard Instrument (Local Environmental Plans) Order 2006
- x Department of Planning, LEP Practice Note PN06-002.



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