



# BARWON HEADS

residential & landscape character assessment

MARCH 2017

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# introduction

## What is the project?

Hansen Partnership has been engaged by the Greater City of Geelong to assess the residential and landscape character of Barwon Heads.

The purpose of this assessment is to determine if there is a need for new planning controls or guidelines for residential development in Barwon Heads, in order to protect or enhance the existing character of the town in the face of new residential development.

The output of this work will be used by the City of Greater Geelong in a review of the existing *Barwon Heads Structure Plan* (2010). That review is being undertaken by Council, concurrent with this project.

### what are the objectives?

The objective of this project is to identify the residential and landscape built form qualities of private property within Barwon Heads where this is considered to be unique and of particular **significance to the context of Barwon Heads and Greater Geelong**.

The project brief issued by Council required the project to:

- **Confirm the identified Study Area.**
- Undertake an analysis of the existing residential character statements from 2001.
- Identify what has changed, if anything, from the character statements using site analysis observations.
- **Analyse site development characteristics on private property within the study area using GIS, aerial photography, site inspections (from public land only), such as setbacks, site coverage, level of useable private open space, private vegetation cover.**
- Make observations in relation to development in the area and the impacts this may have had on residential character based on land development data and trends.

- **Identify the threat of continued infill development on the established neighbourhood character and the potential need for planning controls.**
- Utilise existing Council data on street trees such as location, species, height, age to build up a picture of how vegetation plays a role for character in the study area;
- **Analyse the findings and make recommendations including potential planning controls for these areas, such as overlays, residential zone schedules, local variations or zones.**
- If planning controls are recommended, clearly identify the design or character objectives and guidelines that form the basis of them at either the precinct or township level.

## Why does Barwon Heads need a character assessment?

Barwon Heads is a very attractive, small coastal village, in an idyllic setting on the southern Bellarine Peninsula, on the banks of the Barwon River, at the back of the Thirteenth Beach surf beach, and within picturesque rural and wetland surrounds. It is only 18 kms from the centre of Geelong and is close to three **designated growth areas** in Armstrong Creek, Torquay / Jan Juc (in Surf Coast Shire) and Ocean Grove. It is also within commuter distance of Melbourne. Being a small coastal town, close to major and growing urban areas, Barwon Heads is becoming an increasingly attractive place to live. It provides a small town sense of community, with access to a full range of urban services and facilities, and jobs, in Geelong. This increased demand and interest in the town is leading to rising **land prices, increasing affluence and a growing permanent population.**

With virtually no remaining opportunities for new residential subdivision on the edge of the town, pressures for redevelopment within existing residential areas are increasing.

The previous Residential Character Study for Barwon Heads was prepared in 2001. That document is referred to in the current Structure Plan for Barwon Heads but is no longer referenced. The guidelines in that document were relatively generic and in many cases are now out of date given the new development that has occurred since that time.

## What is the study area?

The study area for this purpose of this project involved the majority of residential zoned land in Barwon Heads (it excludes land along Stephens Parade). The exact area is shown on Figure 1 opposite.

It is important to note that this project also excluded consideration of commercial and mixed use areas along and around Hitchcock Avenue. Built form controls (implemented through Design and Development Overlay Schedule 25) affecting the Town Centre are being considered as part of the broader Structure Plan Review. It will be important to consider recommendations contained in this document in balance with existing or proposed controls for the Town Centre.



Figure1: Study area

## What was the process?

The process which underpinned the content of this report included the following tasks:

- A review of all relevant planning policies and controls that presently apply to Barwon Heads, as well as benchmarking of these controls against relevant other settlements in Victoria.
- A desktop review of GIS mapping data sets available from Council and of aerial photos.
- Field work that involved an assessment of the character of all streets in Barwon Heads.
- Documentation of a Character Assessment involving
  - Preparation of analysis diagrams based on GIS and aerial data.
  - A 'Street Assessment' that looked at what elements had the greatest influence on the character of each street, and how much the 'public' vs the 'private' realm contributed.
  - A 'Character Matrix' which combined GIS mapping and sought to identify any key commonalities which may define particular areas of the township.
  - A review of the existing character precincts to cross reference the elements identified as defining each with on the ground observations.

- Input into the *Barwon Heads Structure Plan Review Issues Paper*, prepared by the Greater City of Geelong
- Attendance at a community consultation day and the gathering of feedback from the participants about their views on residential character in Barwon Heads.
- The preparation of draft recommendations regarding the preferred future character of Barwon Heads and recommendations on how to manage residential character in the planning scheme.
- Documentation of findings and recommendations for input into the Structure Plan Review (this document).

### what is the report structure?

This report, which collates all the findings from the character assessment with subsequent recommendations is structured around four key areas:

- Section 1: Understanding the policy context in which 'character' is managed;
- Section 2: Understanding the existing character of Barwon Heads and how that is valued by its residents;
- Section 3: Understanding any threats to the valued character attributes; and
- Section 4: Understanding what options exist for managing these and recommendations for how these should be utilised.

## Barwon Head's history

The broader area around Barwon Heads was known to have been inhabited by the indigenous Bengalat Clan of Wathaurung people. The name 'Barwon' is believed to derive from their language ('Barra Warre N Yallok' which means "the great river which flows from the uplands (or Otways) to the sea").

There are records of Europeans settling on the Ocean Grove side of the Barwon River around 1854, but Barwon Heads didn't see settlement until about 1875 when fishing attracted residents to the western side of the estuary.

In the 1890's an influx of hunters started to visit Lake Connewarre for hunting, leading to greater demand for recreation. The fishing village also started to grow and by the 1920's the township had good facilities like boarding houses, school, golf course and a pub. The Flinders Estate subdivision, which occurred in 1887 was one of the earliest 'planned' parts of the township, followed by further subdivision by the Barwon Heads Estate Company in 1981 and 1901. These estates were notable in containing the holiday cottages of many of the more prominent Western District families.

Much of the 'character' of the township is derived from older weatherboard cottages from this period, as well as the subsequent waves of 'holiday houses', particularly the modest fibro shacks that proliferated in the township in the 50s and 60s.



## Barwon Head's recent evolution

As described in the Brief for this project, over the past 20 years or so Barwon Heads has changed from a predominantly holiday town and retiree town, with a significant part-time population, and has a growing permanent resident population of some 4,159 persons (2015), comprising largely families and commuters to Geelong and further afield.

The increased desirability of the town as a place for permanent living, coupled with lack of opportunities for new greenfield subdivision on the edges of the town due as a result of existing planning policies and controls, has resulted in increasing levels of infill development, usually involving in the demolition of existing dwellings and their replacement by a much larger single house or multi-dwelling development. In the previous 10 years, three new estates have become available within the township boundary (Seabank Estate, Midden Terrace and Eddystone Court) but these are almost completely developed (with 21 lots available at the time of writing). With the subdivision and development of those areas, there is now virtually no greenfield land available around Barwon Heads for new residential subdivision. As a consequence, unless there is a change to the settlement boundary (a matter being considered as part of the Structure Plan Review) the majority of new housing will be infill developments.

### where has development been occurring

At present there are some 2,200 dwellings in Barwon Heads (2015). Over the ten years from 2006 - 2015, 512 new dwellings were constructed (51 per year). Many of those dwellings were constructed in the new residential subdivisions outlined above.

However, it is also notable that around 106 dwellings were demolished between 2006 and 2015 (11 per year). This is reflective of the level of new development that is occurring within the existing residential areas of Barwon Heads.

The majority of new dwellings constructed were single houses. Importantly, there has also been a high level of renovation and extension to existing dwellings in the township leading to much larger building footprints, which continues unabated.

Only around 25% of new development has been multi-dwelling development. Most of this has been in the form of dual occupancies, some smaller unit developments on single or consolidated lots, and the re-subdivision of existing larger blocks into small lots.

As such, one of the major influences on the character of Barwon's Heads has been the construction of single dwellings. Currently a planning permit is not required to construct a single dwelling in most parts of Barwon Heads so any planning controls or guidelines seeking to protect or enhance any particular local characteristics would not apply.

Figure 2 (on following page) shows the distribution of new development around Barwon Heads. It can be seen that:

- The majority of new development has been in 'old' Barwon Heads, to the south of Geelong Road and east of Golf Links Road. This development has included replacement houses and well as unit development. This is the area in which most multi-dwelling developments have occurred but by far the most common development (including within the Residential Growth Zone) has been replacement single dwellings.
- Relatively little new development has occurred to the north of Geelong Road, and that which has largely been for single dwellings on vacant lots, and a small number of dual occupancies. Only two development providing more than 3 dwellings have established and both these have been on Golf Links Road. The concentration of new dwellings in the north-western part of this area relates to the relatively new subdivisions of Eddystone Court and Midden Terrace.

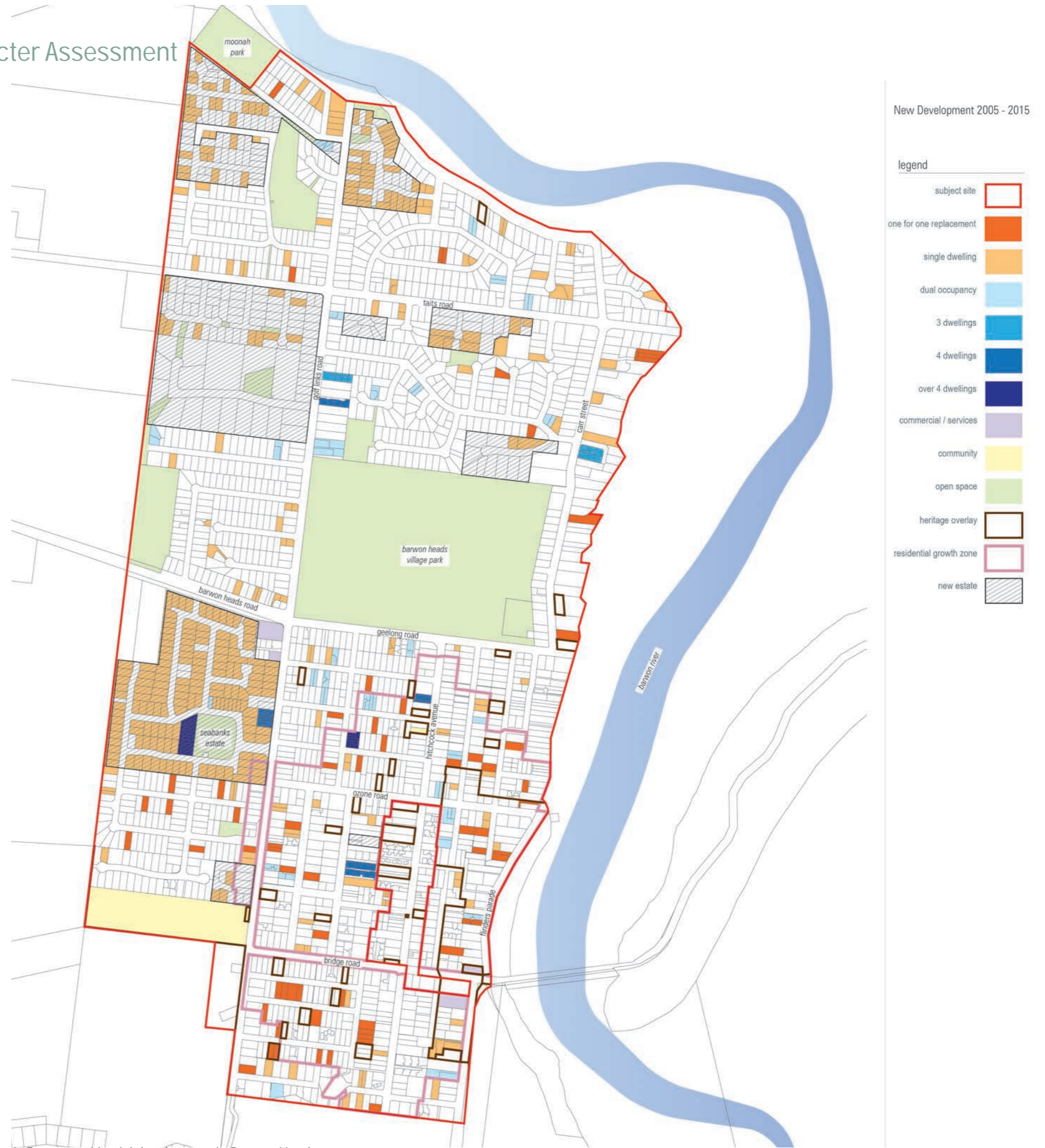


Figure 2: Recent residential development in Barwon Heads

## what type of development has been occurring

The project team undertook a visual review of recent residential developments in Barwon Heads using data on the location of new development outlined in the previous section. Two distinct 'styles' of new development have been identified as occurring within Barwon Heads. These are outlined below and are illustrated by the accompanying photographs.

### *recent development trend A - large project or pre-designed homes*

These developments tend to be characterised by:

- Larger footprints and much smaller side setbacks.
- More dominant sealed crossovers.
- Larger garages, often set forward of, or in line with, building frontages.
- More frequently double storey.
- Increased use of render and a greater mix of materials on individual dwellings.
- Less vegetation in front setbacks.
- Heavy framing and an emphasis on entries.
- Frequently, 'standard' or 'catalogue' dwellings.

### *recent development trend B - 'one-off' architecturally designed homes*

These developments tend to be characterised by:

- Architecturally designed / bespoke.
- Very strong emphasis on vertical timber cladding.
- Steeply pitched roofs or skillion roofs.
- Simple material palettes.
- No fencing or permeable timber fencing.

Trend A



Trend B



## Character & the planning system

### how is residential character addressed by planning?

Residential or neighbourhood character is a key consideration in planning policy and the assessment of planning permit applications in residential zones, in most planning schemes.

It has become increasingly important, and at times a controversial issue over the past 20 years, due to the increasing tension between planning policies that seek to consolidate and intensify existing urban areas, and local community desires to retain and protect the existing character of the residential areas in which they live.

Neighbourhood Character is usually dealt with in the planning process as follows:

- A neighbourhood character study is prepared that identifies the existing and future character of precincts within a town or a municipality, and which provides design guidelines for new development.
- A planning scheme amendment is prepared that includes neighbourhood character policies derived from the neighbourhood character study, into the local section of the planning scheme. This amendment may also rezone land to various residential zones or apply overlay controls, to implement the recommendations of the neighbourhood character study in a statutory way.
- Council applies the neighbourhood character policies, guidelines and controls, in assessing planning permit applications. Usually planning permit applications in

residential areas are only needed for multi-dwelling development and not for single houses. As such, neighbourhood character policy and controls often do not apply to detached houses.

Fundamental to the concept of residential character or neighbourhood character, is the distinction between the *existing* character of an area and the *future* character of area:

- The existing character of an area is the character that exists in an area at present.
- The future character of an area is a description of what the character of an area will be like in the future. It describes how an area is expected to change in the future.

Given State planning policy, there is a general expectation that the character of most residential areas will evolve and change over time. The degree to which they change and the difference between the existing and the future character of an area, will depend on how the broader range of planning policies affect the future planning and development outlook for particular residential areas. Generally higher levels of change can be expected close to activity centres and areas with good public transport, unless they are constrained by heritage, environmental or unique neighbourhood character considerations.

As this assessment considers both the 'residential' character and the 'landscape' character, the terms 'neighbourhood character' is used throughout as it encompasses both matters.

### what is actually looked at?

Neighbourhood character is the combination of the 'public' and the 'private' realms. It relates primarily to how an area is perceived from the street, although the character of an area from the rear yards of dwellings is also a relevant consideration. The kinds of things that are considered in defining an area's character are illustrated in the diagram on the following page.

Planning controls generally relate to development on private land. However, Council decisions on public land, such as infrastructure upgrades within the street reserve, also affect character. The type and style of street tree planting, the use of curb and channel or less formal drainage, the type of crossovers allowed, the need for footpaths, and the existence of above ground electricity and telephone phone lines etc, can significantly impact on the character of a street.

Unless there is clear policy that outlines an existing or preferred future character for an area, then an assessment will occur on a site-by-site basis and only the adjoining area / nearby properties will generally be considered in assessing the 'fit' of new development into the existing character of an area. This has significant implications for Barwon Heads, as in many places the character is quite mixed. This means that those buildings that do not make a *positive* contribution to the character of the area are considered in any assessment process, which may lead to an unintentional, progressive loss of character over time.

There are both quantitative and qualitative aspects of a residential building design that relate to neighbourhood character:

- Quantifiable aspects are easy to manage through the planning process. They relate to *measurable* factors such as building height, setbacks, site coverage, permeability and the like.

- Qualitative aspects relate to factors such as architectural style, building materials and colours, and value judgments about what constitutes good design. These are difficult to deal with in the planning process, unless a planning permit is required for all development and an assessment is undertaken of the design merits of each application.

### what tools are available?

There are a number of options available for managing neighbourhood character within Barwon Heads in the future. These fall into two main categories:

- Through the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme (which provides legal status);
- Outside the planning scheme.

Options for controls within the Planning Scheme include:

- Requiring a permit for all development in the residential areas through Overlay controls. This would mean that anyone undertaking a renovation or building a new dwelling(s) would need to get a planning permit as well as a building permit. This would have significant cost and time implications both for developers and Council. However it would provide the greatest potential to implement policies and guidelines regarding residential design.
- Requiring a permit for development that doesn't meet certain specified requirements (i.e. site coverage, setbacks, building height etc). This is a 'middle ground' approach, that would allow Council to assess planning permits for only that development that did not meet quantifiable requirements relating to residential developments. The more qualitative aspects of design could be considered for that development that trigger the need for a permit, but not for developments for which a planning permit was not required. This is the approach used in the existing Significant Landscape Overlay that applies along the river frontage.
- Adjusting the schedules to the residential zones (this can control only certain elements such as site coverage and setbacks). This would only be useful if a permit is already triggered by the zone, for example in relation to multi-unit developments. It would not apply to single houses.

#### CONTRIBUTORY 'PRIVATE' ELEMENTS

##### BUILDING SITING:

-  Front setbacks
-  Spacing between buildings / Rhythm
-  Lot size and site coverage
-  Car parking / Garages

##### BUILDING FORM:

-  Building height
-  Building mass
-  Building materials
-  Architectural details / consistency
-  Roof form

#### OPEN SPACE AND INTERFACES:

-  Amount of open space
-  Landscaping within the front setback, relationship to street
-  Presence of canopy trees in private realm
-  Fences (style and height)

#### 'PUBLIC' ELEMENTS INCLUDE:


-  Topography
-  Natural features such as rivers
-  Road widths and types
-  Footpaths and verges
-  Street trees

Figure 3: Character elements

- Adjusting subdivision controls could restrict the ability of people to subdivide lots in some areas, however, lot sizes are fairly mixed already.
- Applying overlay controls to protect existing vegetation. This form of controls exists along the Barwon River as Significant Landscape Overlay Schedule 9. It is understood Council is assessing whether such a controls is appropriate in the Warrenbeen Court area as part of the broader Structure Plan Review.

Options for controls outside the Planning Scheme include:

- Design guidelines for new buildings, or for landscaping and fences. This would be useful in providing a clear understanding for applicants as to a 'preferred future character' but may be difficult to enforce. Design Guidelines can also be used as a public education tool, provided to land owners, designers and builders who regularly work in Barwon Heads, with the aim of promoting good design generally.
- Streetscape design guidelines. Changes to the streetscape would have a significant impact in some parts of the town and ensuring that there is a consistent approach could reinforce some character attributes.

### what is the current planning context?

There is a planning policy context within which an assessment of neighbourhood character must be considered in Barwon Heads. It is not just a matter of saying that this is an attractive area, with a strong neighbourhood character, and that it should be protected from change for that reason. There are a raft of planning policies at the State, regional and the local level that talk about how towns should be planned and developed into the future, and how to balance often competing issues between growth, change and protection and enhancement of the environment and character of an area.

#### policies

There are numerous planning policies that influence the future planning for residential development in Barwon Heads, and which will inform the future character of the township.

#### state planning policy

In relation to broader settlement issues, State policy (Clause 11) identifies:

- Planning anticipates and responds to the needs of existing and future communities through the provision of zoned and serviced land for housing, employment, recreation and open space, commercial and community facilities and infrastructure.
- Council's should ensure that housing supply can accommodate population growth for 15 years. This should be determined on a municipal basis rather than a town by town basis (report emphasis).
- Planning for urban growth should consider opportunities for the consolidation, redevelopment and intensification of existing urban areas, as well neighbourhood character, landscape and environmental considerations.

Regional planning policies derived from the G21 Regional

Growth Strategy are included at Clause 11.09:

- Identify major urban growth areas in the vicinity of Barwon Heads, such as Torquay / Jan Juc, Ocean Grove, Leopold and Drysdale.
- Do not identify Barwon Heads as a growth area or provide any specific direction regarding the future growth and development of the town.

The Bellarine Peninsula is also recognised in Clause 11.05 as one a five 'distinctive' areas in Victoria needing to be 'protected' and 'enhanced'. This State level recognition of the characteristics of the Peninsula provides an important context for considerations of the development of Barwon Heads.

#### local planning policies

Local planning policies include specific policies in relation to Barwon Heads (Clause 21.14) which seek to:

- Protect the unique character of Barwon Heads as a coastal village located within a sensitive environment and significant landscape setting.
- Ensure new housing development complements the character of Barwon Heads and provides for a variety of housing sizes and types.
- Maintain a compact urban form and avoid outward sprawl.

Also relevant is the Housing Diversity policy found at Clause 22.63. This policy seeks to identify areas which have "significant capacity" to absorb growth. A sub-clause of this policy moderates these expectations within Coastal settlements of differing scales.

This sub-clause contains a number of more specific built form related design objectives including:

- openness: fencing is discouraged
- landscaping: canopy trees and shrubs in the front setback

- architectural expression: “innovative architecture that responds to a coastal setting” with the following elements specifically encouraged - simple detailing, lightweight materials including extensive glazing and building elements and higher building elements that capture views.

It is noted that neither extensive glazing nor higher building elements are part of the existing character of Barwon Heads.

### zoning

There are two residential zones that apply to the residential Study Area:

- General Residential Zone Schedule 2; and
- Residential Growth Zone Schedule 3.

The zones have been applied to implement the planning policies contained within Clause 22.63.

The General Residential Zone has been applied to the majority of residential areas in the town. The purpose of this zone is to allow for ‘moderate’ housing growth and diversity in appropriate locations, whilst continuing to ‘respect the character of an area’. Schedule 2 to this zone sets a mandatory height limit of 9m, and requires additional open space and the planting of a canopy tree.

The Residential Growth Zone has been applied around the Barwon Heads town centre, in areas identified through the 2008 *Housing Diversity Strategy*. The purpose of this zone is to facilitate a higher level of new residential development, and to allow a *new* character to emerge for land within the zone, rather than to respect the existing character of the area. Whilst a purpose statement for this zone refers to buildings of up to four storeys, Schedule 3 which is applied in Barwon Heads only allows for a maximum of three storeys, coupled with the increased site coverage of 70%.

The Neighbourhood Residential Zone has not been applied within the town. The Neighbourhood Residential Zone is usually applied in locations of special or a unique character, where new residential development and change needs to be carefully managed.

### overlays

There are a number of Planning Scheme Overlays that apply throughout Barwon Heads. These Overlays include:

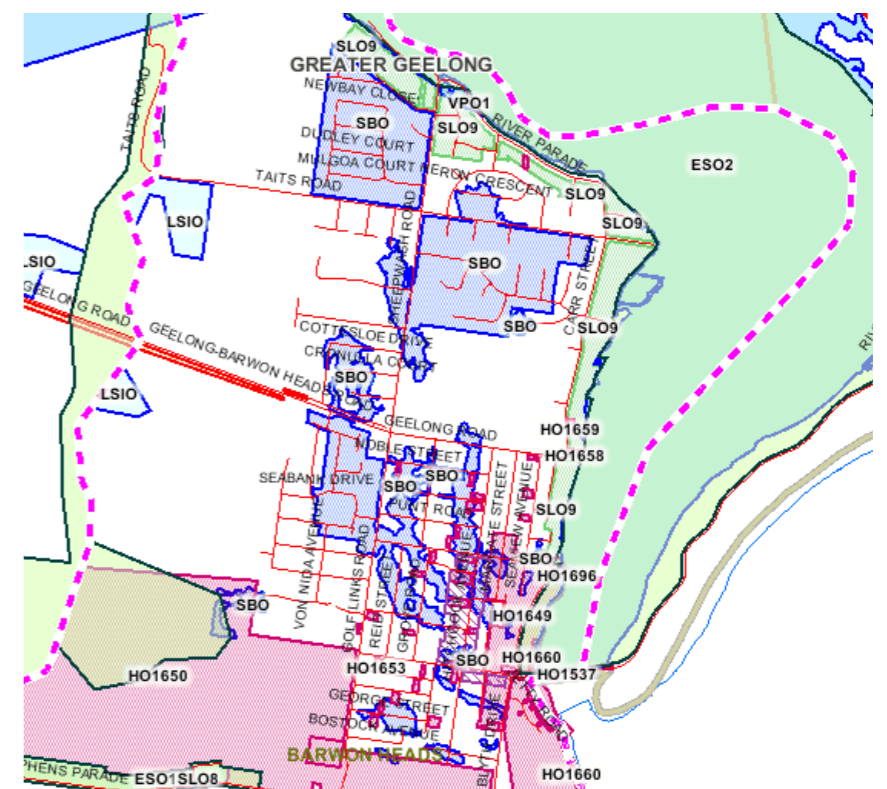
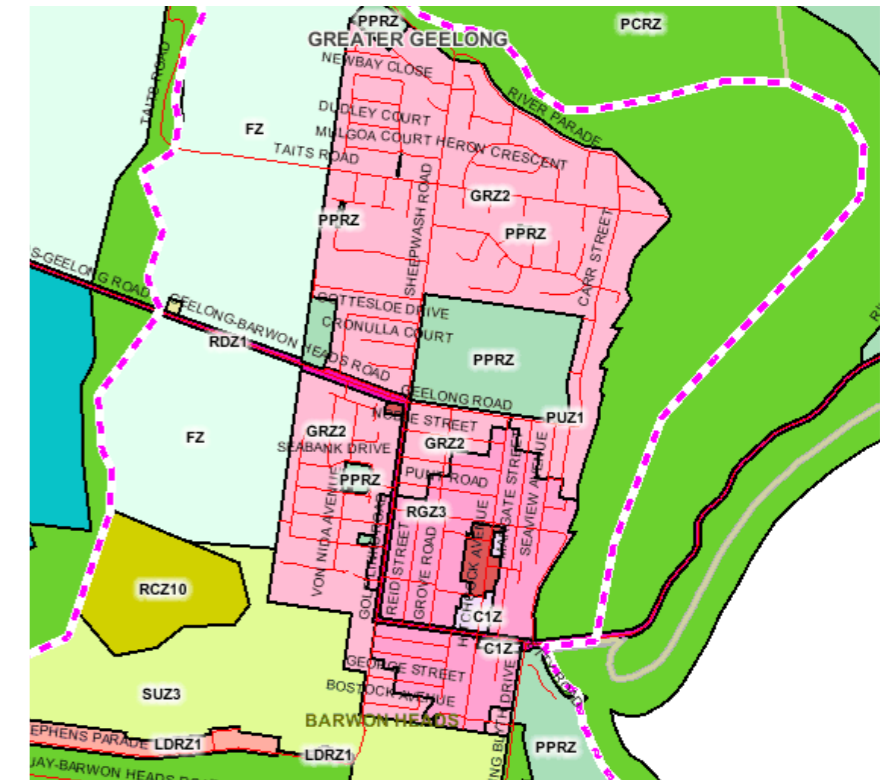
- Heritage Overlay 1649 – ‘Flinders Heritage area’. Which applies to the area bounded by Margate Street, Ozone Road, Grandview Parade, Golightly Street, Ewing Blyth Drive, Barwon Heads Park and the Barwon River.
- Significant Landscape Overlay Schedule 9 – ‘Barwon River Environs’. Which applies to land along the Barwon River.

Heritage Overlays require a planning permit to both demolish and to construct buildings. This Overlay provides the opportunity to consider heritage related built form and design matters in considering planning permit applications for new development in this area. This area is identified as being significant because it represented one of the earliest subdivisions. It is noted the Overlay controls contains very specific policy guidelines on design elements such as materials, window forms etc.

The purpose of the Significant Landscape Overlay 9 is largely to protect the open landscaped character of the river frontage. However it also relates to the compatibility of new buildings with existing buildings and streetscapes in the area. The SLO requires a planning permit to remove vegetation, and to construct buildings more than 7.5 m in height, closer than 5 m to the river bank, and closer than 2 m to both side boundaries. If these requirements are met a planning permit is not required, and there is no opportunity to influence other aspects of dwelling siting or design.

There is also a Special Building Overlay that applies to much of Barwon Heads. This Overlay is reflective of drainage issues that affect much of the town, given its location on relatively flat land adjacent to the Barwon River.

A Vegetation Protection Overlay also covers some significant patches of remnant vegetation in the north of the township. Outside the Study Area, a Design and Development Overlay controls built form in the Town Centre.



Figures 4 & 5: Existing zoning and overlays

### the 2010 barwon heads structure plan

The existing strategic framework for future development in Barwon Heads is provided by the *Barwon Heads Structure Plan 2010*, which is incorporated into the Greater Geelong Planning Strategy at Clause 21.14.

The current Structure Plan:

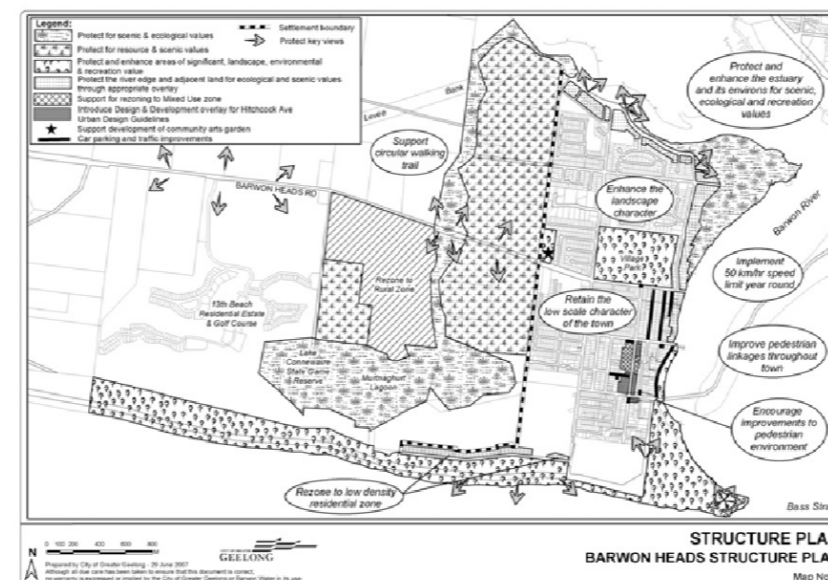
- Recognises the *Housing Diversity Strategy*.
- Encourages appropriate infill development and medium density housing in residential zones where infrastructure can be managed and development respects the low scale character of the township.
- Supports a mix of housing types, particularly around the Town Centre, including the provision of housing choices designed for elderly persons.
- Ensures that development does not occur outside the defined Settlement Boundary.

The existing Structure Plan identified areas within Barwon Heads with specific landscape and built form qualities. Two specific areas were singled out for an assessment to be undertaken following adoption of the last structure plan – the Ewing Blyth and Golf Links Road area (south of Bridge Road) and Warrenbeen Court area (see attachment 1). Qualities of these areas were recommended for protection through an appropriate planning mechanism following a landscape / residential character assessment. Council is undertaking a separate vegetation and significant tree assessment for the Warrenbeen Court area.

Changes to zoning which have occurred since the Structure Plan was adopted include:

- Changes to zoning and housing policy, such as the introduction of the Residential Growth Zone 3, within 400m of much of the Town Centre and the Mixed Use Zone with it.
- Introduction of other planning controls, including Significant Landscape Overlay – Schedule 9: Barwon River Environs and Heritage Overlay H01649: Flinders Heritage Area.

Map 2 - Structure Plan



Barwon Heads Structure Plan March 2010

Figure 6: existing Barwon Heads Structure Plan

### the 2001 neighbourhood character study

The *Geelong Neighbourhood Character Study* prepared in 2001, identified neighbourhood character precincts for Barwon Heads. The document is referred to in the current Structure Plan for Barwon Heads but is no longer a reference document in the planning scheme. The study divided Barwon Heads into seven different neighbourhood character precincts. For each precinct it provided a preferred character statement and guidelines. The guidelines for different Precincts contained in the document had significant overlap and were relatively generic. As mentioned, in many cases they are also now out of date given the new development that has occurred since that time.



Figure 7: Previous character study precincts

Key elements of character identified in the Residential Character Study across the Precincts were:

- Retained vegetation / Established gardens;
- Low building scale;
- Low / no fencing;
- Mix of materials;
- Flat / skillion roofs;
- Informal streets; and
- Mix of building forms.

When the assessment of the existing character of Barwon Heads undertaken as part of this study was compared with the key elements of the character identified in the previous study, there were noticeable differences. In assessing the relevance of the existing character statements, it was identified that many of the elements identified in the earlier study as 'key elements' of the character of Barwon Heads are no longer evident. Examples of this are:

***The 'blending' of public and private space through the integration of landscaping and absence of high fencing***

Many houses in Barwon Heads have high fences. Many dwellings also have a more formal front landscape character and while there are some with an informal character, in many cases this is hidden behind high fencing and does not contribute significantly to perceptions of a streets character.

***Modest building footprints, single storey forms***

Many newer dwellings are double storey forms and dwellings appear to be getting much larger.

***Flat & skillion roofs.***

While some flat and skillion roofs are evident, the majority of roof forms within Barwon Heads are pitched, and there has been a notable trend towards a more steeply pitched roof forms among recent development.

***Informal streetscapes***

There is a mix of streetscapes across the town, with some newer areas including rollover kerbs and swales, and the area to the south of Bridge Road having a more informal character. Streetscape throughout much of the remaining areas of the town are mixed.

It is also notable that the previous study placed a strong emphasis on *existing* character rather the *future* character of Barwon Heads. The seven Precincts identified in the study generally related to different eras or phases of development that occurred in Barwon Heads in the past. In terms of the directions for future development given in relation to each Precinct, it is difficult to determine how new dwellings in one Precinct need to be designed differently to dwellings in another Precinct to meet the character description and guidelines provided for each Precinct.

The study did identify a couple of areas which do have a distinctly different character and which need to be further addressed through any recommendations. These are highlighted on Figure 9 and include:

- The Warrenbeen Court area. This is a larger lot, lower density residential area in the north-west part of town, with substantial native vegetation. It is clearly different to other residential areas within Barwon Heads. Council is investigating specific controls for this area.
- The area to the south of Bridge Road. This area has been included in a Residential Growth Zone as an outcome of the *Housing Diversity Strategy*. Such a zone, which encourages higher density residential development, without regard to the existing character of the area, may be inappropriate for this area.

These areas are addressed further on Page 41 of this report.



### the 2008 housing diversity strategy

The *Housing Diversity Strategy* was a municipal wide study undertaken in 2008. The fundamental aim of the study was to provide for the future housing needs of the Greater City of Geelong's rapidly expanding and diverse population.

In the face of significant population growth, significant demand for smaller dwellings into the future (especially single bedroom dwellings), and strong planning policies to intensify development in existing urban areas and to reduce the outward growth of urban areas into new greenfield locations, the strategy largely reviewed opportunities to encourage infill development in appropriate locations within existing urban areas.

It took the approach of focusing new diverse infill residential development into designated 'key development areas' and into designated 'increased housing diversity areas'. Increased diversity areas were identified as area within 400 to 800 metres of activity centres. Outside of those areas the strategy promoted as lesser level of change referred to 'incremental change'. Inherent in the strategy was a desire that all settlements make a contribution to accommodating future housing needs in the long term.

The *Housing Diversity Strategy* was undertaken at a municipal level and as a consequence was not based on a detailed review of the existing character of individual settlements like Barwon Heads. As a consequence the above categorisations were applied uniformly to settlements across the municipality. The result is that land around the Barwon Heads was identified as a 'increased housing diversity area' and was subsequently zoned Residential Growth Zone.

The review of the Barwon Heads Structure Plan, of which this study is part, provides the opportunity to undertake a more focused planning assessment of the opportunities and constraints for future infill residential development in

Barwon Heads than was undertaken as part of a municipal wide assessment.

This opportunity was explicitly acknowledged in the Housing Diversity Strategy - "Subject to...specific studies undertaken by Council, consider of the use of Significant Landscape, Design and Development or similar Overlays to protect areas of specific urban design...notably specific areas of...Barwon Heads (RCS Precinct 2, 4, 5 and 6)". These areas are shown in pink on Figure 9. It is noted that Precinct 5 does not form part of the Study area and Precinct 6 is variously covered by existing overlay controls. Precinct 4 does not currently have any overlay controls.

Particular considerations in any review of the zone include:

- The appropriateness of the Residential Growth Zone in Barwon Heads, given the absence of any reference to respecting the character of the area in the purpose of the zone.
- The inclusion of the area to the south of Bridge Road into the zone (as mentioned previously).



Figure 8: Barwon Heads increased housing diversity area

2

existing  
character

## Township Characteristics

Township character is different to neighbourhood character and is very important in the context of Barwon Heads. It is a broader concept that relates to the setting and regional context in which the overall township is located, rather than to the design or character features of individual or clusters of residential buildings throughout the town. Yet the character of residential areas throughout the town and the design and appearance of residential dwellings, can enhance or detract from this wider concept of township character.

Current planning policy identifies a key strategic objective related to the character of Barwon Heads:

*To protect the unique character of Barwon Heads as a small coastal village located within a sensitive environmental and significant landscape setting.*

Key contributing factors identified in current vision are:

- The surrounding landscape – this is not part of the *Residential & Landscape Character Assessment*, but which should be considered as part of broader Structure Plan update.
- The designation as a “Small Coastal Village” – the key question for this project is: what does this mean in terms of specific built form outcomes?

Barwon Heads’ township character relates to things such as:

- Its coastal location near a surf beach and its location on the Barwon River.
- Its clearly defined urban edges and entries and approaches to the town.
- Its clearly defined Town Centre and ‘heart’ of the town.
- Its location within a rural and wetlands setting.
- Its separation from other towns.
- Its size and scale, being only a small village, with a relatively small population and with limited opportunities for substantial population growth.

- The relatively limited range of services and facilities available within the town.
- Its dual roles as the home of a permanent population, with ties back to its holiday centre and its strong tourist role.
- Natural vegetation, landscapes and building style reflective of its coastal location.

This township character is considered an important element to take forward into identifying the future neighbourhood character. Some areas may also have a greater influence on the ‘township’ character given their level of exposure. These include areas around key gateways, as well as the Town Centre.





Framework Plan

legend















- subject site 
- key entrance node 
- key views 
- key road 
- town centre 
- commercial / services 
- community 
- estuarine / river and wetland 
- rural hinterland 
- historic links to golf course 
- caravan and camping grounds 
- precincts recommended for review by Housing Strategy 
- existing open space 
- river 

Figure 9: Barwon Heads township framework

## Existing Character Analysis

### GIS mapping

A series of analysis maps were prepared to aid in the assessment of the existing character of Barwon Heads. This analysis has been undertaken from GIS data provided by Council supplemented by analysis of aerial photography. The following maps are contained in Appendix 1. They relate to the following elements of character:

- Building age;
- Building height;
- Building materials;
- Building typologies;
- Front setbacks;
- Front setback vegetation;
- Lot size;
- Site coverage;
- Street trees;
- Street typology;

For the purposes of analysis, the township has been divided into a number of indicative precincts, purely for the purpose of analysis. These precincts are shown on Figure 10.

Following is a discussion about key findings from each of the analysis maps.



Figure 10: Assessment precincts

### building age

- A very mixed age of building in old Barwon Heads, to the south of Geelong Road and east of Golf Links Road (Precincts 11,12, 13, 15 and 16), with many buildings dating from the 1940s, 50s and 60s, but with a reasonable proportion of new residential redevelopment as well.
- A more consistent age, of relatively newer development, in the northern parts of Barwon Heads to the north of Barwon Heads Village Park and to the east of Sheepwash Road, generally from around the 1980s and 90s (Precincts 9, 10 and 14).
- A very consistent age of new development, from the 1990 onward, to the west of Golf Links Road and Sheepwash Road in the Seabank Estate and to the north of Warrenbeen Court, other than for Thomson and Hogan Drive (to the south of the Seabank Estate) and land to the south of Warrenbeen Court, which was generally developed between the 1960s and 80s.

### building height

- The vast majority of buildings are single storey with only a scattering of two storey buildings and no three storey buildings.
- Locations in which there is a higher presence of two storey buildings includes the area along the Barwon River, especially in the northern parts of the town in River Parade to the north of Tait Street and in Carr Street (Precincts 9 and 14), and in the old parts of Barwon Heads, especially to the east of the town centre (Precinct 15) and to the south of Bridge Road (Precincts 13 and 16).

### building materials

- Building materials throughout most parts of Barwon Heads are quite mixed, with the exception of the Seabank Estate, in which building materials are almost exclusively brick.
- Old Barwon Heads has a larger proportion of weatherboard dwellings, especially to the north and east of the Town Centre (Precincts 11 and 15), although weatherboard dwellings exist throughout the town.
- Whilst not many older style fibro dwellings remain, those that do are concentrated in Precinct 6, and to the north of the town centre (Precinct 11).

### building typologies

- Barwon Heads has traditionally had a strong detached house character. This has started to change, with the highest concentration of dual occupancies and units being located around the Town Centre, to the south of Geelong Road and east of Golf Links Road.

### front setbacks

- The majority of setbacks in the township are over 6m with a large proportion over 8m. This is consistent across the township, although the side setbacks of corner allotments also influence the perception of setbacks.
- Newer areas such as the Seabank Estate and the north-west parts of the town have a notable, lesser setback of around 4m.
- The vast majority of frontage setbacks throughout the town involve grass lawns and garden beds, and informal vegetated front yards with canopy trees. This is one of the more consistent patterns in Barwon Heads.
- There are slightly more open or paved front yards (that do not make a significant landscape contribution to the street) in the more recently development areas to the north of Barwon Heads Village Park..

### lot size

- The vast majority of lots are suburban lots of less than 1,000 sqm.
- There is quite a mix of lots sizes through the whole town, but the area with the most consistent lot size is to the north-west of the town centre, where the majority of lots are in the 500 to 700 sqm range (Precinct 11).
- Larger lots of more than 1,000 sqm are concentrated along the Barwon River, especially to the north of Geelong Road (Precinct 14). A mix of large lots also exists to the south of Bridge Road (Precincts 13 and 16) and to the north of the Barwon Heads Village Park in (Precinct 9 and 10).
- Warrenbeen Court has a consistent pattern of large lots of around 0.4 hectares.

### site coverage

- Site coverage is almost entirely 'less than 50%', throughout the whole township, with the site coverage of many lots being less than 20%.
- Only a scattering of lots have a higher site coverage of between 50% and 70%, with virtually none having a site coverage of more than 70%.

### street trees

- Strong patterns of street tree plantings exist throughout most of the town, which is one of the most consistent character features of Barwon Heads.
- Streets that are particularly notable as have a strong presence of street trees include Tait's Road (Precinct 9), Grove Road (Precinct 12), Margaret Street (Precinct 15) and Ramsgate, Campbell and George Streets in Precinct 13.

street typology

The existence or the lack of curb and channel, and footpaths within streets has a significant impact of the formal or informal nature of their appearance. This is especially the case when considered in conjunction with landscaping. For the purpose of this assessment:

- An informal typology - means no kerb and channel or footpaths.
- A semi-formal typology – means either kerb and channel, and footpath, but not both.
- A formal typology – means both kerb and channel and footpaths.

The older part of Barwon Heads, to the north and west of the town centre (Precincts 12 and 11) have a consistent semi-formal street typology, with curb and channel, but no footpaths.

Areas with a strong informal character include areas to the south of Bridge Road (Precincts 13 and 16), areas along the Barwon River generally (Precincts 9, 14 and 15), Warrenbeen Court (Precinct 5) and areas immediately to the north (Precinct 4).

character matrix

A process of cross referencing was also undertaken utilising the findings of the GIS analysis. This involved identifying three categories (generally associated with soft / rural, mid and hard / urban character) across key elements. These were then inputted into a matrix allowing further understanding of which areas demonstrate characteristics which are comparable.

	<b>brick</b>	<b>weatherboard</b>	<b>other</b>
built form material			
site coverage	<b>high</b>	<b>medium</b>	<b>low</b>
streetscape	<b>formal</b>	<b>mixed</b>	<b>informal</b>
street tree planting	<b>not much</b>	<b>dense exotic</b>	<b>dense native</b>
front setback character	<b>paved</b>	<b>grassed</b>	<b>vegetated</b>
level of medium density	<b>high</b>	<b>medium</b>	<b>low</b>

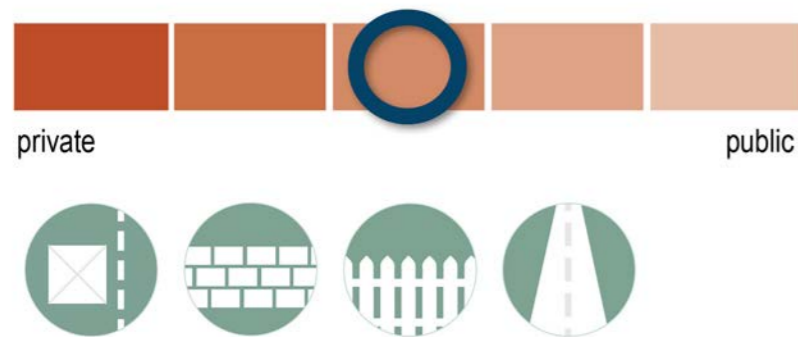
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
<b>built form material</b>																
<b>site coverage</b>																
<b>streetscape</b>																
<b>street tree planting</b>																
<b>private landscape</b>																
<b>level of medium density</b>																

Figure 11: Character assessment matrix

## public / private realm contribution assessment

As part of the background assessment undertaken, the project team also assessed the contribution elements of the 'public' realm (such as roads, street trees etc) made to perceptions of each street within Barwon Heads, vs that made by the 'private' realm (including fencing, building form etc). This allowed the project team to understand areas in which the 'public' realm had more influence on the character of the place, and where controls relating to built form would have the greatest

### Geelong Road



influence.

The findings are contained in full at Appendix 2 but an example is shown above. In summary it was found that:

- Newer estates that have been developed (Precincts 2, 3 and 7) are strongly influenced by the private realm, in particular the dominance of garages when viewed from the street.
- North-western areas (Precincts 4 and 6) are influenced by both the public and private realms with vegetation across the public and private realms having a strong influence

on the character of these streets and the modest building forms in Precinct 6 particularly notable.

- Areas north of the Village Park and in the south west (Precincts 8, 9 and 10) share similar characteristics and despite some variation in road treatments, are most heavily influenced by the private realm, particularly fencing (much of which is high), although to the north vegetation also has a strong influence on perceptions of the area.
- The area to the immediate south of the Village Park (Precinct 11) is 'read' in a similar fashion from public spaces, with high fencing the most dominant characteristic, although materiality and the road typology also exert an influence in these areas.
- The remaining parts of the township are more strongly influenced by the public realm, with a balance between private development and the characteristics of the public spaces. Areas along the estuary edge (Precinct 14 in particular) are influenced strongly by vegetation present in both the public and private realms as well as the larger setbacks of dwellings in these areas.
- To the east of the commercial area (Precinct 15) building forms and fencing begin to have a stronger influence, in part as a result of the topography. While to the east of the commercial area (Precinct 12), the setbacks of the buildings and the vegetation across private and public spaces exerts the strongest influence.
- Precincts 13 and 16, south of Bridge Road are also influenced by both the public and private realms, with the topography of the area and the road treatments particularly influential. However, these features are also associated with a greater prominence of roof forms. Vegetation across both the public and the private realms in these areas is also notable.
- Also notable is the Warrenbeen Court area to the north-west (Precinct 5) which is characterised primarily by the strong vegetation across both the public and private realm.

These findings serve to illustrate the careful management needed in some parts of the township to ensure that development within the private realm does not become overly dominant to the detriment of valued character elements of Barwon Heads.

### summary of analysis

Figure 12 includes a summary of the observations from the analysis maps. The table has been coded to identify precincts with either a ‘very consistent’, ‘consistent’ or a ‘mixed’ response to the particular element mapped.

For Street Typology (where this coding did not make sense) alternative coding has been used (Informal; Semi-formal Formal and Mixed)

What is clear is that the residential and landscape character of Barwon Heads is very mixed. Whilst there are a number of Precincts which have discernibly similar character traits, these generally relate to the time when they were subdivided and the era of the dwellings that were originally constructed in them. These two factors have a particularly strong bearing on the character of the areas. There is very little consistency in building design, which suggests that controls over building design are less relevant.

One of the most noticeable trends apparent is the mix of development that occurs in areas in older areas, closer to the town centre. This is particularly apparent in the area to the south of Geelong Road, east of Golf Links Road and north of Bridge Road (Precincts 11 and 12, and to a lesser extend 15). These Precincts represent some of the older areas of Barwon Heads. They have a consistent, semi-formal street typology based on a regular grid street pattern, with strong landscaping within the streets. Because they are some of the older areas within the town, they have the widest mix of housing, as housing encompasses original houses from the late nineteenth century, through the more recent eras of housing. The age of the original building stock and the proximity of these Precincts to the Town Centre also means that this area has been subject to the highest level of change, as older buildings have been demolished and replaced with new buildings that are conveniently located close to the Town Centre.

Precinct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Age	VC	C	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	C	C	M	M	M	C	M	M
Height	C	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	M	VC	M	VC	VC	C	M	C	M	M
Materials	M	M	M	M	M	M	VC	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
Typology	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	C	C	M	M	M	C	M	M
Front setback	VC	VC														
Front setback character	VC	VC	C	C	VC	VC	VC	C	M	M	M	C	M	C	M	C
Lot size	C	C	C	C	VC	VC	M	M	M	M	VC	M	M	VC	M	M
Site coverage	C	VC	VC	VC	VC	C	M	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Street trees	VC	-	M	C	-	VC	C	C	C	C	C	VC	VC	C	C	C
Street typology	I	I	M	I	I	SF	SF	SF	SF	F	SF	SF	I	I	I	I

Figure 12: Character consistency matrix

Whilst the age of buildings in this area is very mixed, strong character traits that continue to unify this area are a low site coverage, a building height of generally no more than two storeys, and semi-formal street typology with street trees and landscaped front gardens which continue to provides a balance between built form and landscaping.

The area to the south of Bridge Road is a bit different. Large lots, narrower informal roads a mix of buildings from all eras, including some notable architecturally designed homes.

Whilst the remaining areas all have differences in their character, other than for the new development areas, they are unified by the overall character of the town and a generally low site coverage, building height of no more than two storeys, landscaped front setback and separation between buildings.

## Observations & Conclusions

The first step in the process of determining the need for built form controls relating to neighbourhood character is to assess and define if possible, the 'existing character'. An important part of this is to look past *perceptions* of character to objectively assess existing built form. As with many small coastal settlements, there is a clear 'perception' of character which differs somewhat from the 'existing' character. There are still examples of the 'traditional' Barwon Heads buildings (see highlight box below) but these are in the minority.

In assessing character, particular attention has been paid to how much the private realm contributes to the character of each street in order to allow the team to understand how much impact on character changes in the private realm would have (and therefore how important controls would be).

Particularly notable is that in older areas the public realm has the greater influence on character, with informal streetscapes and vegetation minimising the impact of 'private' development.

### The 'traditional' Barwon Heads

- Much smaller building footprints
- Generally informal entries with a greater engagement with the street, and unsealed accessways
- Informal landscaping
- Much less brick, majority are fibro or weatherboard



Whilst there are differences in the existing character of residential areas through Barwon Heads, other than for a couple of areas (discussed in the following Section), the neighbourhood character is very mixed and does not warrant individual statements of future character. The majority of the town should evolve in a similar way in terms of future character. There is no need for Precinct based character statements to try to retain distinctions between particular areas. The aim should be to provide high quality 'coastal' design in all parts of the township.

### area specific observations

Despite the above, as noted throughout, some areas of the township do have particular characteristics that are clearly observable. These areas include:

- The area to the south of Bridge Road, which is strongly influenced by the informal nature of the public realm, and topography.
- New estates to the west and north-west have a more 'suburban' character, typical of many new growth areas.
- Areas to the estuary edge also tend to have lower site coverage and a greater propensity for two storey forms. These are covered by Significant Landscape Overlay.
- The areas immediately north of Barwon Heads Road and around the Town Centre have a greater proportion of streets with 'traditional' built form.
- There are few remaining 'fibro' shacks in the township, with the greatest concentration in the pocket to the north of Geelong Road at the town entry (Precinct 6).
- Warrenbeen Court has a distinct low density, vegetated character.



## What the community thinks

The following is a summary of feedback received as part of the consultation undertaken on the 26th and 27th October 2016 for the *Barwon Heads Residential & Landscape Character Assessment*. A summary of feedback on relevant matters received as part of a broader survey undertaken by Council as part of the Structure Plan review is also included.

The consultation event included:

- An invitation only workshop attended by over 100 stakeholders
- More informal 'drop-in sessions across the two days
- Feedback sheets to enable 'private' contributions

### workshop session

Workshop sessions began with an introduction to character and a discussion of some of the key findings of background analysis undertaken by the project team. There was general consensus in the room as to the findings of the project team.

The session then broke into groups who were asked to consider a random selection of dwellings from within Barwon Heads to indicate whether they 'fit' with the group's perception of Barwon Heads' character. Groups were requested to consider the 'elements' of those houses to report back what made them 'fit' or not. Attendees were asked not to consider whether they thought the dwellings were 'good' or not but their appropriateness within Barwon Heads. Robust and productive discussions took place before all groups reported back to the larger group.

The dwellings identified as a good 'fit' or not fitting are identified below but the key elements of character the community felt were important in ensuring a dwelling fitted with Barwon Heads character were as follows:

#### most important

- Landscape (lack of landscaping was a key concern, retention of trees);
- Materials (no face brickwork, weatherboard, timber);
- Site Coverage / Permeability;
- Avoiding 'boxy' or 'heavy' forms;
- Dominant garages and accessways; and
- Front setback (to allow for landscaping).

#### somewhat important

- Response to context, (i.e. not houses you could find anywhere);
- Side setbacks;
- Height (human scale);
- Low fences; and
- Informal streetscapes.

Interestingly there was general consensus that roof form was not a defining character element despite it having been identified as such in the previous character study.

#### Houses that 'fit':

- Dwellings that most respondents considered 'fit' (i.e. identified by 3 or more groups) are shown opposite.
- Notable features of these dwellings are no dominant garages (where these do front the street, they are open), vegetation characterises many of them, and pitched roofs are also strongly represented. With one notable exception there are no fences provided.





#### Houses that don't 'fit':

- Dwellings that most respondents considered did not 'fit' are illustrated to the left.
- These dwellings are predominantly characterised by a lack of landscaping, solid forms or dominant garages.

Interestingly, a low height or modest footprint were not sufficient guarantees of 'fit' with Barwon Heads' character from a stakeholder perspective, nor was a particular roof type.

Notable was the broad range of dwellings which the attendees identified as 'fitting', and the greater consistency among responses as to those which did not 'fit'.

An open discussion was then had around how character could be controlled. Key messages from that discussion were:

- Residents currently feel frustrated with the management of character, given there are no current controls, and expressed concern that they would be going through another round of consultation only to see no change.
- While some residents appeared to believe there should be no increase in density, the majority of the group appeared to accept that the diversification of Barwon Heads' housing stock and the provision of some smaller dwellings close to the Town Centre was acceptable, but that the form this took needed to be appropriate.
- Some concern was expressed around introducing onerous controls but there appeared to be general consensus that controls which addressed the most important things but provided flexibility within that would be a balanced approach.
- Suggestions were made about setting minimum standards and then triggering a permit for anything outside this, although some community members were concerned this would not achieve anything and wanted more concrete controls.

- The diversity of housing styles was appreciated by most community members.
- Some discussion was had around the Residential Growth Zone. These issues were the potential for apartment forms which would be out of character, and the currently allowable height (10.5m) and site coverage controls (70%) which were felt to be too much.
- It was also noted that the RGZ was encouraging significantly larger and bulkier single residences more than the intended medium density development.

#### drop in sessions

A series of 'drop-in' sessions were also held across the two days. Similar to the workshop session, attendees were asked to identify elements they felt were most important.

##### *most important*

- Permeability / Site Coverage;
- Materials / Simple material palette;
- Landscaping: lack of landscaping, needs to be informal, and should reflect the surrounding environment, retention of trees; and
- Modest size / Upper level setback to reduce bulk / not bulky.

##### *somewhat important*

- Side setbacks (no boundary to boundary development);
- Height (no three storey);
- Simple forms / coastal themes; and
- Fencing.

Attendees were also asked to mark on a scale what level of control they would be comfortable with, from 'lots' of controls meaning a planning permit for everything, to no change from the current controls. One attendee preferred not much

control, and a couple identified 'lots', however, the majority of attendees felt there was a need for 'some' controls but that this should be targeted to key areas.

A range of other comments and discussions were also held which were documented in the Consultation Summary released by Council.

### feedback sheets

Community members who did not have the opportunity to participate in the workshop also had the opportunity to identify individually houses they felt 'fit' or didn't 'fit', to flag key elements they felt contributed to the character and identify the amount of controls they would be comfortable with. Seventeen additional sheets were returned.

Findings from these sheets were as follows:

- Houses that 'fit' with the most responses were numbers 8 and 39 (seen on Page 29).
- Houses that don't 'fit' with the most responses were numbers 17 and 33 (seen on Page 30), number 25 and 56 (see below).



Valued elements of character identified on these feedback sheets were as follows:

- Landscaping;
- Materials (limited / lighter palettes / natural);
- Site coverage;
- Articulated second storeys / bulk;
- Height; and
- Façade width / size / appearance / blank walls.

When asked what level of control they would be comfortable with the majority identified 'some' with 'lots' a close second.

### summary of community views

Neighbourhood character has been confirmed as a key issue for the community. The desire to retain an 'informal coastal' character, clearly differentiated from a 'suburban' character was also confirmed.

Most community members support or understand the need for a diversity of dwellings within Barwon Heads, consistent with Council existing policies, but are concerned that the scale / form or development allowable under the current controls is out of character. Diversity is an important part of the character.

The broad sentiment expressed was that some control was needed, but that this needed to be reasonable and not too onerous. This would indicate a likely level of support for controls only triggered beyond certain parameters. Not applying any controls means that the 'valued' character elements identified by the community and the 'low scale' 'coastal village' feel identified through visioning and within local policy will be incrementally compromised. It also has the potential to exacerbate the current lack of trust in Council decision making and the intent of consultation.

Key elements of the character which were identified as important through consultation included:

- Site coverage, and in particular permeability.
- Materials: weatherboard, timber, avoid face brickwork, simple palette.
- Vegetation: retention / protection and inclusion of new landscaping.
- Building forms, simple structures, but avoid 'boxy forms'.
- Front setbacks needed to allow for landscaping and reduction in the dominance of garages in exposed frontages.
- Building heights, 3 storeys - concern even with single dwellings at this height.

3

future  
change

## Preferred future character

As identified previously, the character of new built form can either respond to an *existing* character or to a *preferred* future character. Given the diversity of the existing built form 'on-the-ground' in Barwon Heads, relying on existing buildings to guide future development may not meet community expectations in relation to character.

It may therefore be necessary to define a preferred future character which reflects the elements of selected development within the township in order to more accurately reflect what the community values about Barwon Heads' character.

Consultation with the community was important in drawing out what key elements of character they would prefer to see in future built form. Having identified these, the role that planning has to play in achieving this can be further explored.

As part of broader strategic planning objectives, Council planning policies are seeking to diversify the types of housing available within Barwon Heads to make sure there are options available to residents within their existing communities (for example, smaller dwellings for people as they age). Policy identifies that development in areas closest to shops and services must 'evolve' but should still 'complement' the character of Barwon Heads.

So while there is likely to be change that occurs in some areas of the township, it will be important for this assessment to explore if there are ways that the aim of developing a greater diversity of housing close to facilities can be achieved while still reflecting the preferred character outcomes identified through this process.

### key character elements

Key elements of character identified by the project team as defining Barwon Heads which reflect the community aspirations and broader 'vision' for the township include:

- A modest site coverage and retention of side setbacks.
- A mix of dwelling types, single and double storey dwellings with modest medium density development that presents to the street as single dwellings rather than apartment forms.
- Larger front setbacks for double storey forms to avoid dominance.
- Garages to be set behind building frontages and not dominate the public interface.
- Simple material palletes, with a strong focus on timber / weatherboard.
- Low or no fencing. If fencing is provided it should be visually permeable and reflect recent fencing (e.g. permeable vertical timber fences).
- Sufficient front setbacks to provide meaningful landscape with a strong preference for native and indigenous plantings in an informal setting.
- Accessways to remain unsealed where possible and streets to retain an 'informal' character (noting that there may be other policy imperatives that influence this, for example, providing formal sealed footpaths along key pedestrian routes).

While there is a diversity of existing built form, much of which has been established over the last 30 years, there are clear parameters around a preferred character to reinforce the township identity as a 'coastal village' which can be advanced through the application of planning controls.

Barwon Heads has seen significant incremental erosion of its 'coastal' character over the last few decades. This trend will continue without the application of controls to manage built form.

It is also noted that a benchmarking of controls that currently apply to Barwon Heads with comparable townships indicates that almost every comparable township has detailed design controls applied through the planning scheme, making Barwon Heads an anomaly in the current lack of built form controls. It is considered that there is strong strategic justification for the application of design controls to the township and that this would likely be supported by any Panel should the matter progress to that forum.



## Future Development

### policy / expectations

Barwon Heads is not a designated growth area that is expected to undergo significant growth and change, as are nearby coastal towns such as Torquay / Jan Juc and Ocean Grove and other settlements on the Bellarine Peninsula such as Leopold and Drysdale.

Planning policy expectations for the existing established areas of Barwon Heads are for a “moderate” degree of new residential development, which respects the existing character of the town. Consistent with planning policy, a higher level of change is to be expected close to the Town Centre. However in the context of Greater Geelong, the Barwon Heads Town Centre does not provide the range of services and facilities common in other town centres throughout the municipality, or the same level of public transport access.

This, however, is not reflected in the current planning controls that affect the township. While the identification of an ‘increased housing diversity area’ is justified, the current scale of change envisaged for this area does not appear to account for the above factors.

The application of the Residential Growth Zone in Barwon Heads appears to focus more on an *intensification* of the built form in these areas, rather than the *diversification* of housing stock. As a result the area is accommodating single dwellings with much larger footprints and taller forms as opposed to smaller or diverse dwellings which would meet the policy objectives underlying the application of that zone.

While housing diversity should be encouraged in Barwon Heads, controls need to acknowledge that the scale and type of development in this township will be noticeably different, not only from ‘suburban’ areas, but also from other coastal settlements such as Ocean Grove which have a much greater range of services and facilities available. The quantum of the difference in scale between the housing diversity areas and

the remainder of the township will therefore be lesser than in other parts of the municipality.

From a character perspective, the application of this zone is problematic for the following reasons:

- It allows site coverage of up to 70% in an area which currently has around 30% site coverage.
- It encourages building heights of up to three storeys in streetscapes which are primarily single storey, and which have no visual relationship to the more intense built form that would be anticipated in the Town Centre.



### development trends

As evidenced by the earlier discussion on the type of recent development within Barwon Heads (Page 9), there are two distinct trends of development occurring, one of which is very much in keeping with the existing character of the township, and the other, which is more reflective a standard ‘suburban’ response.

The development of single dwellings remains the most dominant development trend and, partly as a result of the socio-economic profile of the area and partly reflecting broader housing trends, these dwellings are getting much larger. The potential influence of these new, larger, dwellings on the character of the township will need to be carefully managed but current controls do not trigger a permit for this type of development.

The triggering of permits and higher level of scrutiny associated with medium density developments have led to a number of quality outcomes. These however, generally do not match the outcomes possible through the RGZ controls. Instead, they are generally 1 - 2 storeys and include generous open space and unsealed accessways. This character is unlikely in a more intense development where the sealing of driveways and paving of open space areas (which are often over basements which compromise the ability to integrate meaningful vegetation) is more typical. The trend and scale of diverse housing forms noted above is appropriate for Barwon Heads in a way that ‘standard’ 3 storey apartment buildings may not be (other than as part of mixed use developments in the Town Centre).

## Key issues & threats

### 'default' residential zones

Each of the residential zones trigger the application of default, **State-wide siting and design requirements for residential development**. Typical default requirements include:

- Front setback (existing areas) – the average of adjoining lots or 9m, whichever is the lesser.
- Site coverage – 60%
- Permeable space – 20%
- **Allows walls to be constructed on side and rear boundaries**, subject to requirements regarding the height and length of the wall.

The above standard requirements are commonly applied in inner and middle ring suburbs of Melbourne and Geelong, and in new residential estates in major urban growth areas such as Armstrong Creek.

The character of residential development that eventuates from the application of the default standards is very different to the existing or preferred character of residential development in Barwon Heads. Application of the default standards over time, would lead to a very significant change to the existing character of the township.

Given the strong coastal township character of Barwon heads, justification exists to vary the default provisions of the General Residential Zone to achieve a less intense form of development than would eventuate by applicant of the default statewide requirements.

***note: The State government has recently introduced new residential zones which include a new 11m mandatory height limit in the GRZ, a mandatory 9m height limit in the NRZ and the introduction of mandatory 'garden areas' (noting these may be paved). This may require reconsideration of the current zoning regime across the 'incremental change' areas of the broader Barwon Heads township.***

The elements of the existing neighbourhood character of Barwon Heads that are most inconsistent with, and most at risk, if the Statewide default provisions of the zone continue to be applied include:

- The low site coverage.
- The high proportion of permeable space on lots, which is suitable for gardens and landscaping.
- The separation between dwellings on adjoining lots and relative lack of buildings built to the boundaries of lots.
- The generous landscaped front setbacks of lots and the contribution this makes to the character of the street.
- The predominance of single storey buildings, generally with a maximum building height of only 2 storeys.

These elements are those which are most consistent with the preferred future character and, as such, need to be protected.

The reason why the current mix of dwelling styles does not overly impact on the character of the town, is due to the more modest scale of older dwellings (regardless of their design) and the opportunity that exist for landscaping to mitigate the impacts of built form on the streetscape and on surrounding properties.

The 'risk' confronting Barwon Heads is that new development is generally larger, taller, built closer to boundaries, with higher site coverage, more paved areas, and considerably less garden space. Greater opportunity exists for large and more prominent buildings to dominate the streetscape and less opportunity exists to achieve a balance between built form and landscaping, which is a key characteristic of Barwon Heads at present. While there may be a 'desire' and demand for the construction of larger (and taller) single dwellings, this should not be facilitated to the detriment of the broader township character.

In the Barwon Heads context, drainage issues can combine with neighbourhood character issues, to suggest a residential development outcome that includes sustainability and water sensitive design features. Matters such as site coverage and permeable space on sites are initiatives that would be appropriate to consider in the design of residential development in Barwon Heads.

The main threats to the preferred neighbourhood character of Barwon Heads includes the following:

- The consolidation of individual house lots and the development of those lots with large, bulky buildings that are inconsistent with **the existing pattern and rhythm of detached houses and multi-unit developments** existing throughout the township.
- **A high site coverage of buildings and the consequent loss of space on sites for landscaping and tree planting**, especially within the front setbacks of residential lots.
- The formalisation of streetscapes through increased curb, channel and footpaths, and driveway crossings as well as the loss of informal tree plantings.
- **Poorly designed dwellings that do not reflect the coastal character of Barwon Heads.**
- Dwellings that dominate the streetscape and which do not have a balanced landscape outcome, due to dominant built form viewed from the street, in terms of garage doors, excessive paving, high front fences.
- Side by side development which does not allow views to rear yard vegetation and which dominate the streetscape.

The development of sites with more than one dwelling is not, in itself a threat to the neighbourhood character of Barwon Heads, provided that the design of the development is appropriate. All multi-dwelling developments require a planning permit. This enables all issues regarding the site layout, design, buildings materials and colors and landscaping to be assessed.

4

# managing change

## The approach

Neighbourhood character has been confirmed as a key issue for the community. The desire to retain an 'informal coastal' character, clearly differentiated from a 'suburban' character was also confirmed. While there are some precincts within the town which have 'more' character than others, the 'protection' of the whole township 'feel' was seen as important by the community.

The character of the town is also seen as critically important for tourism purposes. If there is no difference from suburban areas of Geelong then there is the potential for the attractiveness of the township as a destination to be reduced.

While there is a diversity of existing built form, much of which has been established over the last 30 years, there are clear parameters around a preferred character to reinforce the township identity as a 'coastal village' which can be advanced through the application of planning controls.

There is a need to manage residential development in Barwon Heads, not only to maintain the existing character of the town, but to *enhance* that character. Given the outstanding small town coastal character of Barwon Heads, almost regardless of the mix of dwelling types that presently exist, the opportunity exists to improve the overall design of residential infill development to achieve a more consistent sustainable, coastal design theme in the future.

Key elements of the character which were identified as important through consultation which need to be considered in the drafting of controls are:

- Site coverage, and in particular permeability;
- Materials: weatherboard, timber, avoid face brickwork, simple palette;
- Vegetation: retention / protection and inclusion of new landscaping;
- Building forms, simple structures, but avoid 'boxy forms';
- Front setbacks needed to allow for landscaping and reduction in the dominance of garages in exposed frontages; and
- Building heights, 3 storeys - concern even with single dwellings at this height.

As outlined in the earlier Sections of this report:

- Barwon Heads is a 'special' place. This is recognised through both State and Local policy.
- It is different in scale and expectation to larger coastal settlements such as Ocean Grove.
- It has significant environmental and character sensitivities which should be reflected in built form outcomes.

As such, a 'standard' approach is not appropriate and design controls are needed. If the current planning controls are not sufficient to protect the valued 'coastal' character of the Township, then new controls must be considered.



## do the current planning controls support the preferred character?

It is firstly noted that Barwon Heads is anomalous in a planning sense in not having any design controls which apply to the township. In undertaking a benchmarking exercise of relevant coastal townships, Barwon Heads was notable in its absence of built form controls. Without built form controls, the only development which requires consideration of character will be medium and higher density developments. And within the township those are primarily governed by the existing Residential Growth Zone. Without a permit trigger to allow assessment of new single dwellings against a preferred character outcome, the incremental suburbanization of Barwon Heads is considered likely to continue.

As identified earlier, the implications of the use of the Residential Growth Zone within Barwon Heads is that significant change can occur in the areas to which the zone applies. There is a local policy in the planning scheme (Clause 22.63) that tempers the application of the Residential Growth Zone in coastal townships in the Greater City of Geelong, and a schedule to the zone (Schedule 3) that reduces buildings height from four storeys to three storeys. However, inconsistencies remain between the fundamental purpose of the zone and the character outcomes sought to be achieved in Barwon Heads. The application of the Residential Growth Zone in Barwon Heads is not considered appropriate given the coastal character attributes of the town and its broader planning policy context. Notwithstanding the above, the underlying policy intent of the Residential Growth Zone, of achieving an increased diversity of housing types close to the Town Centre, remains relevant, albeit at a reduced level that would result from the continued application of the Residential Growth Zone.

It is therefore recommended that:

1. The Residential Growth Zone be removed from Barwon Heads; and
2. Built form controls be introduced across the township area.

## zone schedules or overlay controls?

The current suite of Residential Zones allows variations to be made to the default requirements for residential development presently contained in Clause 54 and 55 of the planning scheme. The underlying provisions of the zone limit the matters that can be varied by way of the schedule to the zone.

No opportunity exists via the schedule to the zone to address more subjective matters regarding building design such as architectural style, materials or the like, to identify specific objectives to be achieved in relation to the neighbourhood character of Barwon Heads, or to refer to residential design standards to be considered in assessing planning permit applications.

No opportunity exists within the General Residential Zone to exempt planning permit applications from advertising and third party appeal rights.

For these reasons applying Design and Development Overlays is the preferred approach to implementing the recommendations of the study, rather than variations to residential zone schedules (noting that building height will now need to be specified in the zone schedule as well).

The existing variations to the GRZ which apply through a zone schedule to Geelong's 'incremental change' areas could be retained in the broader township area and a new GRZ schedule, which addressed only building height could be introduced to the IHDA area.

## increased housing diversity areas

From a planning policy perspective, a distinction should continue to be made between potential residential redevelopment outcomes in 'increased housing diversity areas' close to the Town Centre, and other residential zoned land throughout the remainder of the township. However, the differences in the built form that eventuate between these two areas should be less significant than permitted by the existing zoning pattern. Increased diversity of housing stock is still encouraged but at a lower intensity commensurate with the scale of the township, associated availability of services and facilities, as well as the preferred character. All new development in both areas, should have regard to the existing character of the area.

Merit is seen in reviewing the existing boundary between the two areas to devise a boundary between the two schedules proposed to the DDO (see Page 41).

It is considered that the planning policy intent for Barwon Heads can be better achieved by applying General Residential Zone to all residential areas in Barwon Heads including the IHDA, and by using the proposed Overlay controls to make a policy distinction between land close to the Town Centre identified for 'increased housing diversity', and other residential zoned land within Barwon Heads. This would result in *two schedules*:

- One schedule applying to remaining residential areas throughout township (Schedule 'A township area').
- A second schedule applying to the increased housing diversity areas around the Town Centre (Schedule 'B IHDA').

## DDO structure / permit triggers

DDO controls should be framed as an 'opt out' control, meaning they are only triggered if particular parameters are not met. A series of 'minimum standards' should be set out which approximate the preferred character, and go some way to reflecting the important structural elements of the existing character (such as site coverage and building setbacks).

These standard should be accompanied by clear Objectives and explicit Decision Guidelines to ensure that where a development proposes to exceed the standards, the right questions are asked to ensure a design outcome which is consistent with the preferred future character for Barwon Heads.

It is important to note that the proposed 'standards' set out in the Overlays constitute only permit triggers. They are not mandatory but set a bar below which design should be subject to increased scrutiny to ensure it is in keeping with the preferred character of the township. It will ideally also encourage the modification of plans in some cases in order to avoid the planning permit process.

### third party involvement

Also relevant to the level of planning control that may be applied is the opportunity for third party involvement. Unless specifically exempt in the planning scheme, planning permit applications need to be advertised. This then provides the opportunity for objections to be lodged and planning appeals to be initiated by objectors. Third party involvement adds significant time and cost to obtaining a planning permit. In situations where a planning permit may be desirable to allow a professional assessment by Council staff, the option exists to exempt an application from third party advertising, objection and review rights. The use of a Design and Development Overlay provides the ability to exempt third party involvement. The intention of this new policy approach to protect character is not to provide an opportunity for third party involvement in planning permit applications for detached houses, where no such opportunity presently exists. Accordingly, the provisions of the DDO schedules should be worded to exempt any applications for detached houses from the need for advertising or any third party involvement in the planning permit application process.

### building design and materials

Materials were of key concern to the community, and are acknowledged as a key influence on the preferred future character of the settlement.

There is general consensus that buildings which have a primary focus on timber / weatherboard which can soften and weather as it ages (as well as reflecting the 'original' building materials) are preferred. However, the ability for interesting and innovative architecture which responds to its context through the use of other materials, needs to be retained.

Consensus also exists around the desire to avoid the proliferation of more 'suburban' materials such as composite panels or the excessive use of render or 'stackstone'. Face brickwork was considered particularly problematic in the context of a 'coastal' character which is generally associated with more lightweight building materials. However, there are clear opportunities for 'brick' to be used in an appropriate way if the quality of the design is appropriately high. Indeed, the thermal qualities of brick have seen it used more extensively in quality contemporary architecture over the past few years.

In the context of the proposed controls, setting a permit trigger around materials is somewhat problematic. A permit trigger needs to be quantifiable and balancing the desire for flexibility in the use of materials with this is difficult.

Having consideration for the other permit triggers, it is envisaged that if built form meets the identified requirements of the DDO controls (and therefore does not trigger a permit), the built form (and its associated materiality) will have a lesser impact on the character of the area. When a permit is triggered, the choice of materials becomes of greater importance and this should be reflected in the Decision Guidelines of any control.



### landscaping and vegetation

Landscaping and vegetation make a very important contribution to the character of Barwon Heads. Other than for land along the sensitive Barwon River frontage, where an existing Significant Landscape Overlay is applied, and in the Warrenbeen Court area which is being separately assessed by Council, no need is seen to apply either a Significant Landscape Overlay or a Vegetation Protection Overlay to the residential areas of Barwon Heads.

The main reason to apply of such Overlays would be to protect existing vegetation from removal, by requiring a planning permit to remove existing trees etc.

From a planning perspective, the importance of existing vegetation throughout Barwon Heads results from its interaction with built form, and the balance that is achieved between buildings and landscaping within the town. Existing vegetation within the township has not been identified by a ecological study as being a significant in its own right, or to warrant protection by an Overlay control.

The most important planning initiative resulting from this study in relation to vegetation and landscaping, is to ensure that new residential development provides sufficient space for substantial landscaping, both in front and rear yards. Where a development may not meet the standards set within the DDO controls, proposed landscaping will be critical to determining the responsiveness of any design. As such, if a permit is triggered then a suitably detailed landscape plan should be provided to assist any decision maker.

Design guidelines should encourage the retention of existing significant trees and the planting of coastal species to enhance new developments. Public education should be used to encourage the retention of significant trees and the use of appropriate coastal species for developments that do not require a planning permit.

### DDO content

In light of the above, the following matters should have 'standards' identified to serve as permit triggers within the proposed DDO controls:

- Site Coverage;
- Permeability;
- Front setbacks;
- Side Setback;
- Landscaping;
- Garages; and
- Fencing.

It is considered that if appropriate standards for these key matters are met, development of single dwellings should occur as of right.



# proposed controls

## schedule boundaries

While the current boundaries between the General Residential Zone and the Residential Growth Zone have been the starting point for consideration as to where the two proposed DDO schedules should be applied, there are potential adjustments to these boundaries which may be warranted. Council may chose to test these changes with the community as part of the broader consultation process. These are as follows:

1. Delete the area to the south of Bridge Road from the IHDA. This area has a particularly strong informal coastal character through the unformed nature of roadside and vegetation which would be significantly compromised by more intensive development.
2. Delete the area on the west side of Golf Links Road. Golf Links Road is a main entry into the Barwon Heads. Development along the road will impact on the overall impression of the character of Barwon Heads when entering the town along this route. Ensuring that the 'open' and less intense style of coastal development is visible along this key entry route is noted as important to the overarching 'identity' of the township. The road also forms a key 'barrier' for pedestrian movement into the Town Centre.
3. Extend the IHDA north to Geelong Road (other than where SLO9 applies). This part of Barwon Heads, extending north to Village Park, has been the focus of new infill residential development of recent times, of both new detached houses and also new multi-unit developments. Its existing character has been influenced by that redevelopment and the grid pattern of the streets makes the proposed extent logical from a character perspective as development is consistent up to the Village Park.

legend

- subject site
- apply DDO schedule A "Barwon Heads residential areas"
- apply DDO schedule B "Barwon Heads IHDA"
- apply DDO schedule A and adjust SLO9
- rezone and apply vegetation controls

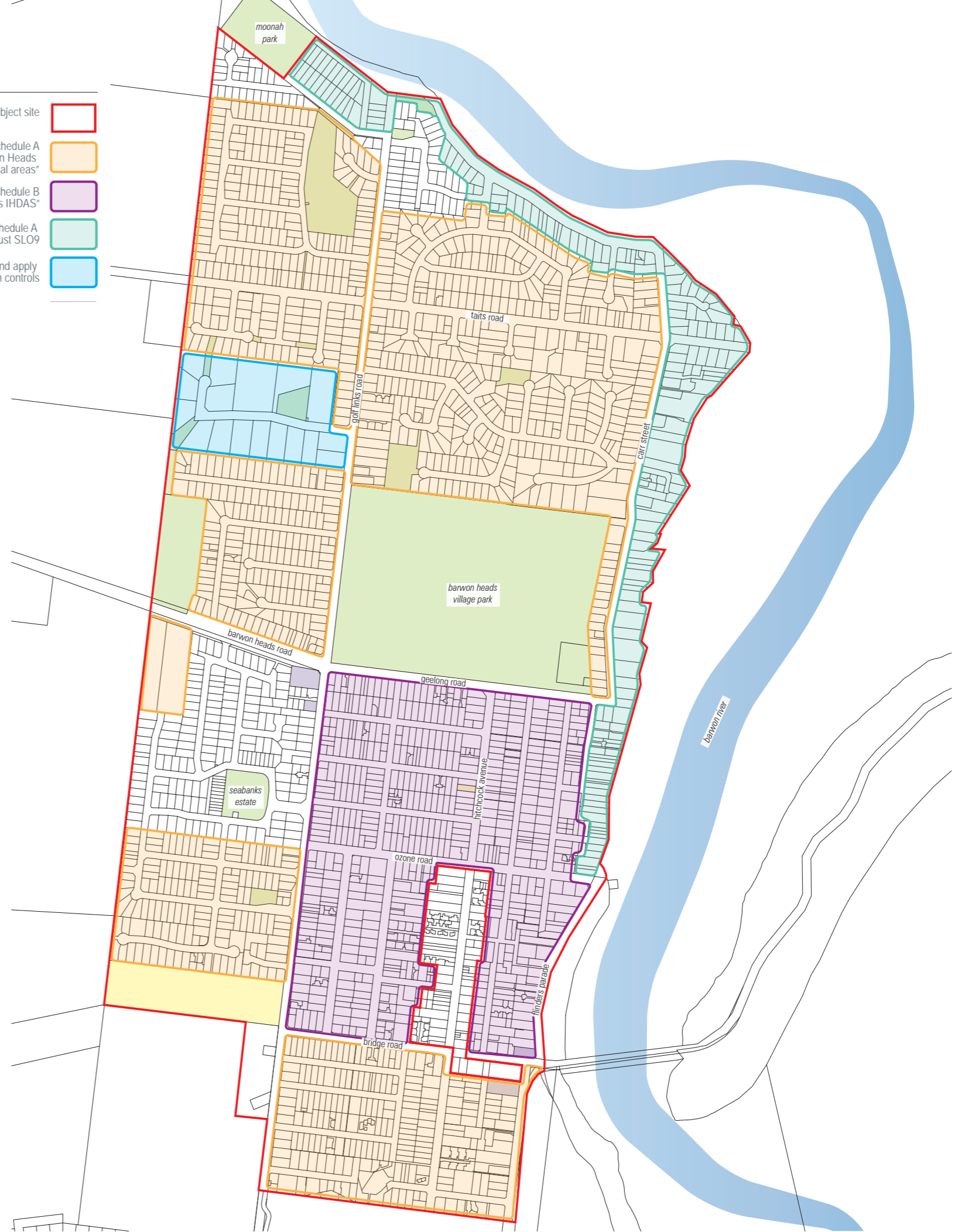


Figure 13: Recommended schedule boundaries

## area specific approaches

There are a small number of areas within Barwon Heads that require a different approach and these are discussed below.

### warrenbeen court

Warrenbeen Court has a distinctly different character to other residential areas throughout Barwon Heads and warrants site specific planning controls in recognition of that character. The features that distinguish Warrenbeen Court include:

- Large lot size – generally greater than 0.4 hectares.
- Very low site coverage.
- Low density, landscaped character.
- Covered by restrictive covenant.

Council is further investigating the zoning and planning controls applicable to Warrenbeen Court through the Structure Plan Review. A Low Density Residential Zone or Neighbourhood Residential Zone may be appropriate, along with vegetation controls.

### new residential areas

As outlined previously, there have been three new residential subdivisions that have occurred in Barwon Heads recently:

- The Seabank Estate;
- The Midden Terrace area; and
- The Eddystone Court area.

The housing that has been established on the lots in those three areas were established on the basis of new standards and requirements that did not apply at the time the older parts of Barwon Heads were established. As such, they display a notable character difference. Key differences include lesser front setbacks, higher site coverage, buildings allowed on side and rear boundaries and reduced space for landscaping.

Development within these areas is generally consistent with the default provisions of the General Residential Zone that presently applies. No need is seen to introduce more stringent planning controls that could trigger the need for planning permits that are not required by the existing zoning of the land.

Accordingly, it is not appropriate or necessary to the proposed new DDO over these three areas (see Figure 13 for specific areas).

### the estuary edge

Significant Landscape Overlay Schedule 9 contains specific objectives and permit requirements in relation to land along the Barwon River. The Overlay relates to both built form and to landscaping objectives and requirements and is primarily framed around view sharing. It introduces three key built form triggers (as well as vegetation removal):

- A height of 7.5 m;
- A setbacks of 2 m from at least one side boundary; and
- A 5 m setback from the river.

The neighbourhood character objectives, requirements and guidelines proposed to be included in the DDO controls will be as applicable to properties within SLO9 as they are to the broader areas. The 'Barwon Heads residential areas' DDO addresses a number of matters not covered by the SLO, as well as including associated Objectives and Decision Guidelines. It is also noted that the SLO control also applies to some newer residential areas which are identified as being excluded from the proposed DDO control.

Therefore, while the 'township area' DDO should be applied to the SLO9 area, that control should be retained to ensure permit triggers for vegetation removal and decision guidelines related to view-sharing remain in the Planning Scheme. However, consideration should be given to adjusting the building height trigger to avoid contradiction in terms of preferred heights (from 7.5m to 8m).

Alternatively, Council could consider two other options, although these are not preferred:

- Drafting a separate DDO control which applies to this area and condensing the built form controls of the SLO and the proposed DDO control. Built form related matters could then be removed from the SLO.
- As above but, rather than drafting a separate DDO control, the area could be identified as a 'sub-precinct' of the broader residential areas, with the additional controls relating to the river and view-sharing incorporated into the township wide DDO control.

### flinders heritage precinct

A precinct wide Heritage Overlay applies to the older parts of town, between the Town Centre and the Barwon River. This Overlay applies to all dwellings within this area, regardless of their heritage qualities. Much of the area covered by the Heritage Overlay is currently included in a Residential Growth Zone. As discussed, the Residential Growth Zone is not appropriate and should be reviewed in the area as with other parts of the township.

However, given the mixed built form character in the area, this area continues to have potential for infill development, provided that development is respectful of the heritage qualities of the area, as well as the neighbourhood character of Barwon Heads. The Heritage Overlay will continue to ensure that new development is respectful of its heritage context.

As such it is considered that the proposed DDO Schedule B which supports increased housing diversity be applied to the area covered by the Heritage Overlay that are currently in the Residential Growth Zone. It may also be useful to prepare mapping which clearly identifies those buildings within this area which are considered 'significant' or 'contributory' to ensure that opportunities for diversification of housing stock in this area is directed towards non-contributory properties.



## permit triggers

As outlined in the earlier section of this report, the proposed DDO controls would only trigger a permit if certain 'baseline' standards are not met. It is important to note that permit triggers already exist under the residential zones for multi-unit development. So, in reality, these permit triggers will impact on the need for approvals only for single dwellings which do not meet the identified design standards. Nonetheless, the permit triggers will serve as the benchmark for all development, and variations to them will need to demonstrate how a specific design response to site context achieves the character objectives contained within the Schedules.

Specific recommendations regarding 'permit triggers' for Barwon Heads under the proposed DDO controls are addressed below.

### building height

#### *traditional residential areas*

Building heights are proposed at 2 storeys.

#### *increased housing diversity area*

In the IHDA, a 9m height limit should be introduced to allow for some additional flexibility to accommodate the desired diversity. Heights in this area should be specified in meters, rather than storeys

Under the new zone changes any building height must also be introduced through an adjustment to a zone schedule as well as through the proposed DDO.

### site coverage

#### *traditional residential areas*

Site coverage is proposed at 40% for most residential areas. This not only reflects the existing character of the township (which remains overwhelmingly less than 40%) but in addition, the

identification of a site coverage that is lesser than the 'standard' serves to reinforce the unique context of the settlement and its associated 'coastal' character.

#### *increased housing diversity area*

In IHDA there will obviously be a higher site coverage, and 60% is considered an appropriate figure. This provides significantly more scope for development than the remainder of the township while not fundamentally changing the character. Innovative or particularly high quality designs may exceed this, and Decision Guidelines should reflect this. While it is acknowledged that 60% is the 'default' under ResCode it is important to recognise that those are statewide controls and a 60% site coverage in the context of Barwon Heads is a substantial change from the 'traditional' form of development. It is also only a permit trigger, and (depending on the proposal) a higher site coverage may be possible. Decision Guidelines will be critical in assisting decision makers - for example, a development that genuinely increases housing diversity by providing smaller units (in a site responsive manner) may have a higher site coverage, but a single dwelling which does not contribute to the mix of housing this area would need a much greater justification to exceed the identified site coverage.

### permeability

#### *traditional residential areas*

Permeability is another critical element in the character of Barwon Heads, with unsealed accessways and large areas of space available for landscaping noted. A high permeability requirement (40%) serves to deter the excessive use of paving and is also critical given the significant flooding issues which will continue to affect the township. Ensuring that built form responds to this environmental context, as well as character, through the application of appropriate controls is therefore recommended.

*increased housing diversity area*

A reduced permeability would be expected in IHDA areas commensurate with the increased site coverage, and the default permeability trigger of 20% should apply in these areas, noting that controls relating to vegetation discussed below will likely ensure a higher level of permeability than 20%.

## side setbacks

*traditional residential areas*

The importance of spacing between buildings and availability of land for meaningful landscaping has been documented, along with the potential impacts of 'side-by-side' development. A 2 m side setback is considered appropriate in allowing for the introduction of meaningful landscaping, including potential trees in the side setback, and would also allow for the introduction of relatively 'simple' forms without upper level setbacks.

*increased housing diversity area*

Even within the IHDA separation between buildings is crucial to ensure that the character of the township is not eroded. A single, more generous setback is preferred to two smaller setbacks on each side of the building given the greater chance of meaningful landscaping within this area.

## front setbacks

*traditional residential areas*

The presence of landscaping within front setbacks and the role this plays in concealing building forms and reflecting the informal nature of the township also serves to highlight the importance of 'non-standard' controls relating to front setbacks. The vast majority of the township has front setback of over 6m. The only areas where setbacks are consistently less than this are in new residential estates and at the side frontages of corner blocks. 6 m is therefore a justifiable benchmark for front setbacks.

*increased housing diversity area*

Given the current characteristics of the IHDA within Barwon Heads, a 6m front setbacks is considered warranted as a permit trigger. Multi-unit development will already trigger a permit and there are limited circumstances where a single dwellings (which would potentially trigger a permit under this proposed control) would have justification for encroaching on this consistent character element. Decision Guidelines again will be critical in allowing consideration of anomalous situations, for example, where both adjoining properties are set further forward than 6m.

## garages

*traditional residential areas*

The dominance of garages within new developments is clearly 'out of character' with both the existing and preferred character for the settlement. As such, the location of these needs to be controlled. A sliding scale which sets a maximum percentage of the frontage would be appropriate, along with requirements for garages to be set behind the main building line. These measures, along with the proposed side setbacks should ensure that garage forms do not evolve to dominate the streetscapes of Barwon Heads.

*increased housing diversity area*

Similar permit triggers and objectives will be relevant in the IHDA as apply to the broader residential areas.

## fencing

*traditional residential areas*

While there is consensus as to desirability the informal blending of the public and private realms which is reflective of the 'traditional' development the township, more recent front fencing has been generally high. Ensuring new fencing is more permeable is important to the evolution of the preferred character. As a permit trigger, a fence forward of the front wall of a dwelling over one metre in height or less than 80% permeable should be included.

It is noted that controls should only apply to fencing forward of the building line to ensure that residents are able to sufficiently screen and secure backyards. This will ensure and appropriate balance between the openness of front yards and usable private open space to the side and rear of dwellings.

*increased housing diversity area*

Similar permit triggers and objectives will be relevant in the IHDA as apply to the broader residential areas.

## landscaping

### *traditional residential areas*

In line with the proposed controls for Ocean Grove (currently on exhibition) additional direction regarding landscaping should be provided to ensure that planting is provided in addition to the provision of permeable space. Permeable areas can include permeable paving etc and it is consequently necessary to also specify associated garden requirements. It is noted that 'garden areas' within the new residential zones can include paved areas and therefore do not supplant the need for this control. Therefore at least 40% of the site should be available (free from hard surfaces) for soft landscaping (i.e. vegetation). Additional requirements for a trees within the front setback as per the proposed landscape plan requirement should also be included as a permit trigger.

### *increased housing diversity area*

Similar permit triggers and objectives will be relevant in the IHDA as apply to the broader residential areas. However, in IHDA's, a lesser percentage of 25% may be appropriate, noting that a greater area than this will be required for open space under the new residential zones in most cases, based on existing lot sizes.

As noted, given the significance of landscape character and vegetation in the township, it is considered appropriate that any application which does not meet the required benchmarks and which triggers a permit should provide a landscape plan which can be used in the assessment of the responsiveness of the proposed design.



## objectives and decision guidelines

Of particular importance in the formulation of controls for Barwon Heads in response to the character issues identified in this paper will be the careful drafting of both Objectives and Decision Guidelines.

Decision Guidelines in particular, need to be detailed enough to ensure that any person assessing an application which seeks to exceed the identified design standards has a clear understanding of what needs to be achieved in order to vary the 'default'. These must be specifically related to the preferred character sought for the township.

Decision Guidelines are also critical in ensuring that the controls are robust when challenged in forums such as VCAT. Examples of where Decision Guidelines will be particularly important in relation to the following:

- Increased site coverage in the IHDA, if objectives relating to housing diversity are met.
- Front setbacks in the IHDA where there are lesser setbacks on adjoining lots and housing diversity is facilitated.
- Fencing, where living areas and POS are orientated to the north.

## other recommendations for consideration

### sustainable coastal design

Sustainability should be an important part of any residential building design style promoted in Barwon Heads. Barwon Heads is located in a particularly sensitive coastal location and has the potential to be significantly impacted by climate change and rising sea levels in the future.

The low lying nature of the town, and its abuttal to the Barwon River estuary and wetlands, has led to drainage issues within the existing urban area. A sustainable response to these issues includes measures such as reduced site coverage, greater permeability, and the capture and reuse of rain water.

Use of natural building materials that have low levels of embodied energy and which complement coastal vegetation in and surrounding the township, also have positive residential character implications in terms of responding to the coastal landscape character of the town. All of these sustainability initiatives complement the future neighbourhood character identified for Barwon Heads.

The residential development design style to be encouraged in Barwon Heads could be termed a 'sustainable coastal style'. Council could also use a public education campaign in an effort to encourage development that does not require a planning permit to adopt and sustainable coastal design.

### design guidelines

Design guidelines have a role to play in managing more subjective 'design elements' of future residential development, such as architectural styles, building materials, roof form, colour and the like. To assist permit applicants, Council should consider the preparation of design guidelines for the two residential areas which contain a range of photographic examples and sample materials and building details which are reflective of the 'preferred future character'.

Any design guidelines prepared in relation to building design, should be aimed at identifying a design styles that are reflective of the general concept of a coastal village, and about identifying what should be avoided. It is not about identifying a style that is consistent with an existing predominant building design types that characterise in Barwon Heads. It is about encouraging a more consistent style into the future; a style that responds in a positive way to the character and qualities of Barwon Heads as small coastal town.

These guidelines would not form part of the Planning Scheme but should be developed as a tool to support the development of appropriate housing, and to broaden the development community's understanding of preferred outcomes

### the public realm

Street tree planting and engineering design standards for roads, stormwater drainage, footpaths, driveways and street furniture within road reserves and parks, makes a very important contribution to the character of Barwon Heads. As identified, incremental upgrades of streetscapes for one-off projects could unintentionally undermine the character of the township.

Works undertaken by Council or other Authorities throughout Barwon Heads should be guided by a focus on:

- The protection of existing street trees and the introduction of additional street trees;
- The introduction of additional informal landscaping in streets, including support for appropriate 'soft edges' between the public and private realms;
- Water sensitive urban design treatments in streets;
- Avoiding hard curb and channel treatments in favour of 'soft edges'; and
- The gradual removal of overhead powerlines, wherever and whenever possible.

Council may wish to consider the preparation of a Coastal Streetscape Design Guide to assist with the above.

## summary of recommendations

Following is a summary of the recommendations that underpin the changes to the planning controls recommended by the *Barwon Heads Residential & Landscape Character Assessment*:

- Rezone land currently zoned Residential Growth Zone 3, to a General Residential Zone.
- Apply two Design and Development Overlay's to all identified residential zoned land in Barwon Heads, generally reflecting the difference between the 'incremental change areas' and 'increased housing diversity areas' identify in the *Housing Diversity Strategy*. The controls should be written to only trigger the need for a planning permit if certain key requirements are not met. Decision Guidelines should be worded to ensure that there is potential for approvals (for example for larger building footprints) if the overall quality of the design and integration are in keeping with broader objectives. Permits required for detached houses should be exempt from advertising and third party appeals.
- DDOA should apply all "incremental change areas" within Barwon Heads - the 'township' area.
- DDOB should apply to 'increased housing diversity areas' close to the town centre, but Council should considered modifications to:
  - To delete land from to the south of Bridge Road.
  - To respond to key barriers to movement, logically reflect existing character and subdivision patterns and recent development patterns by deleting land to the west of the Golf Links Road and extending the area north to Geelong Road.

This may be tested with the community through any exhibition process.

- New residential subdivisions in the west and north-west should not be covered by the DDOs.
- Rezone the area known as Warrenbeen Court to a Neighbourhood or Low Density Residential Zone, apply vegetation controls (specific controls to be determined by Council) and do not permit further subdivision.
- Consider the merits of preparing of design guidelines for the public and private realms.
- Remove the map identifying Barwon Heads and other references to the township from the IHDA Policy (Clause 22.63) or otherwise adjust policy content to avoid contradictions in terms of built form outcomes. To maintain consistency the DDO control for the inner areas of the township could be identified as 'Barwon Heads – Increased Housing Diversity Area'.
- If Council has undertaken the grading of buildings within the Flinders Heritage Precinct, this should be mapped and made available for reference.





# APPENDIX 1









## public realm assessment



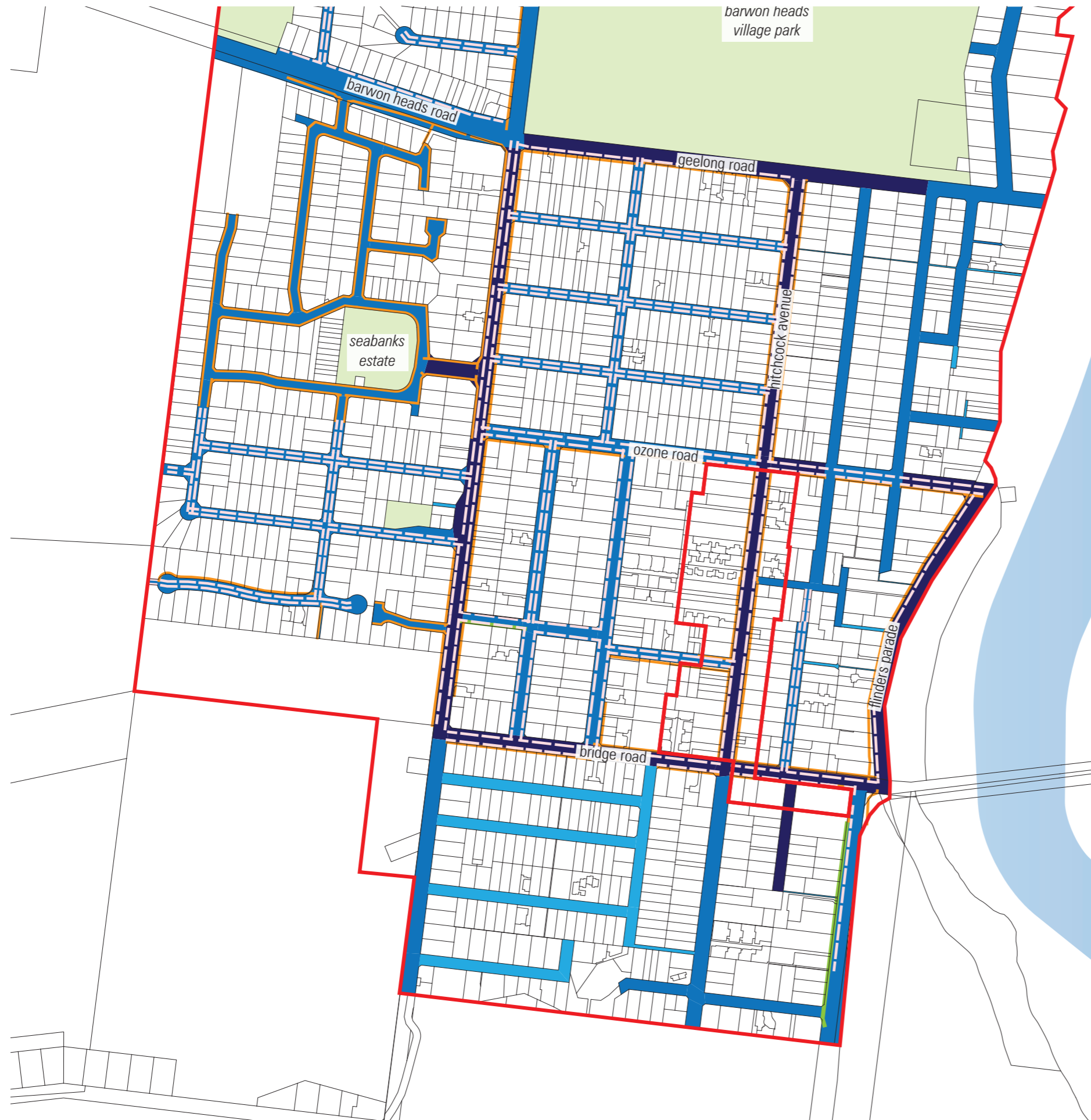
hansen

# roadway analysis

## legend







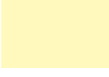
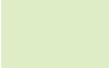
- subject site 
- kerb 
- formal footpath 
- informal footpath 
- road pavement width <3.5m 
- road pavement width 3.5-7m 
- road pavement width 7m+ 
- open space 



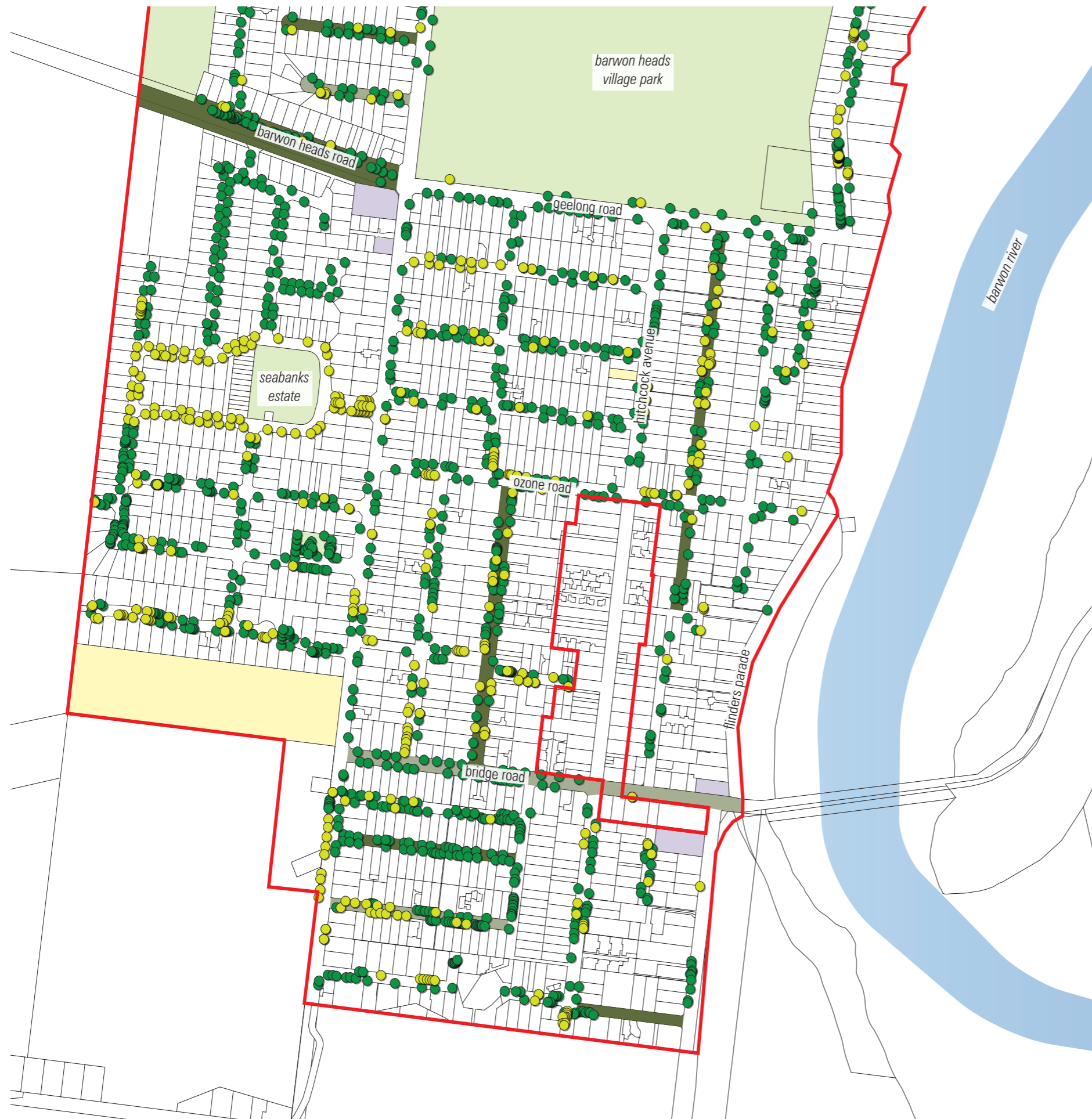


# vegetation analysis

legend

- subject site 
- native tree 
- exotic tree 
- very dominant street tree character 
- dominant street tree character 
- commercial / services 
- community 
- open space 

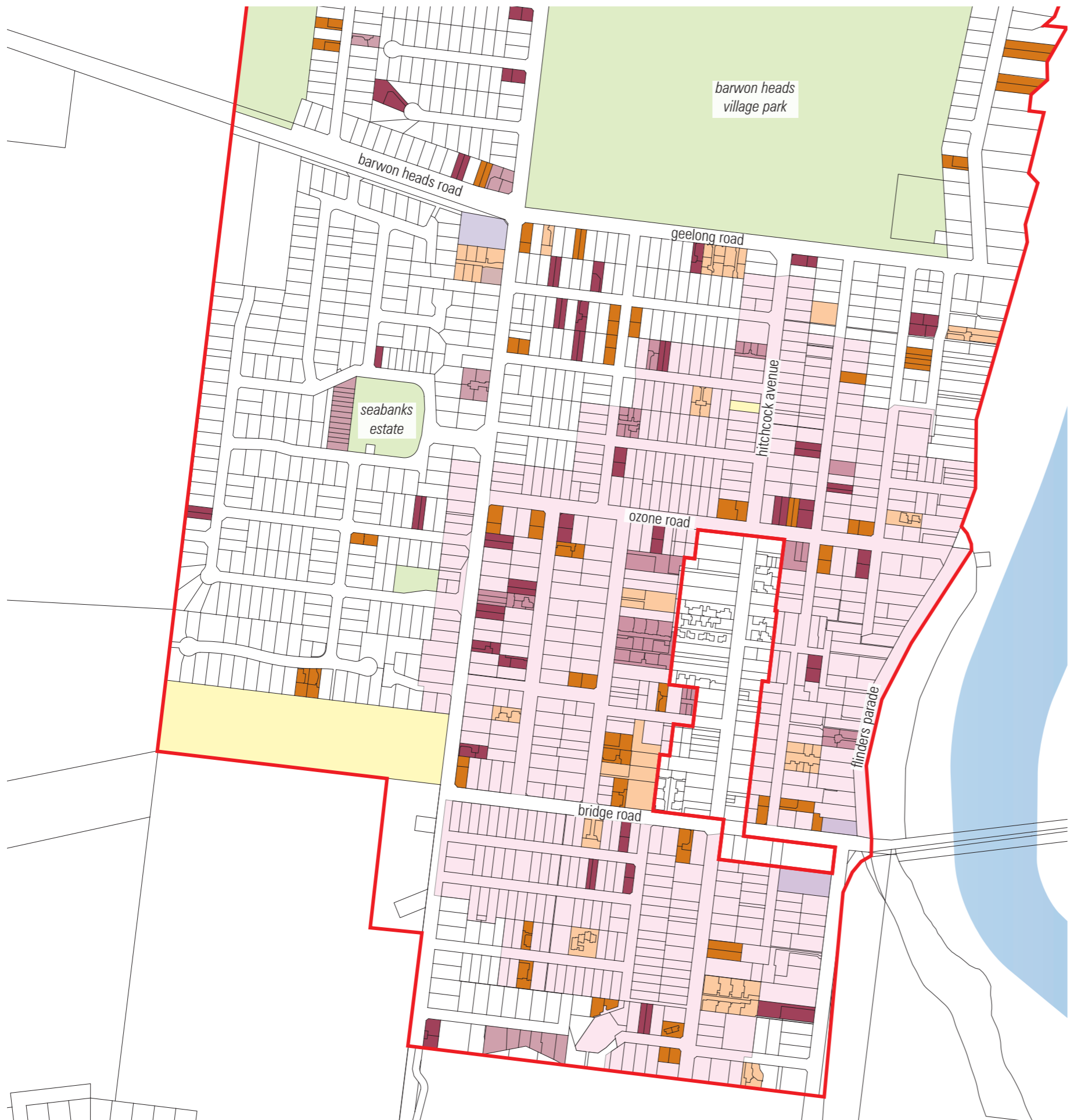




# medium density typology


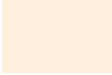





- legend
- subject site
  - pre 2005 dual occupancy
  - pre 2005 medium density (3 or more)
  - post 2005 dual occupancy
  - post 2005 medium density (3 or more)
  - residential growth zone (RGZ3)
  - commercial / services
  - community
  - open space

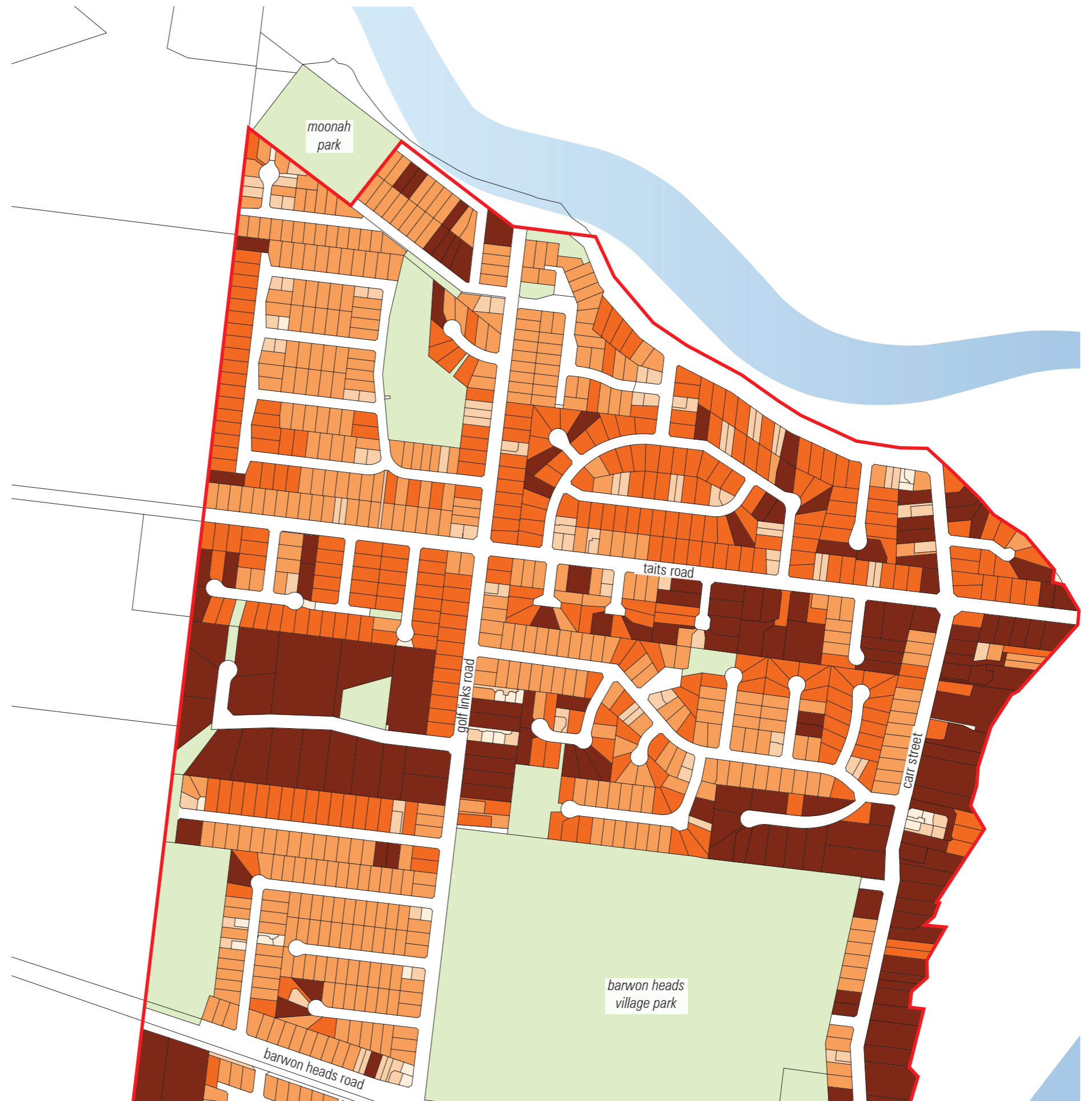


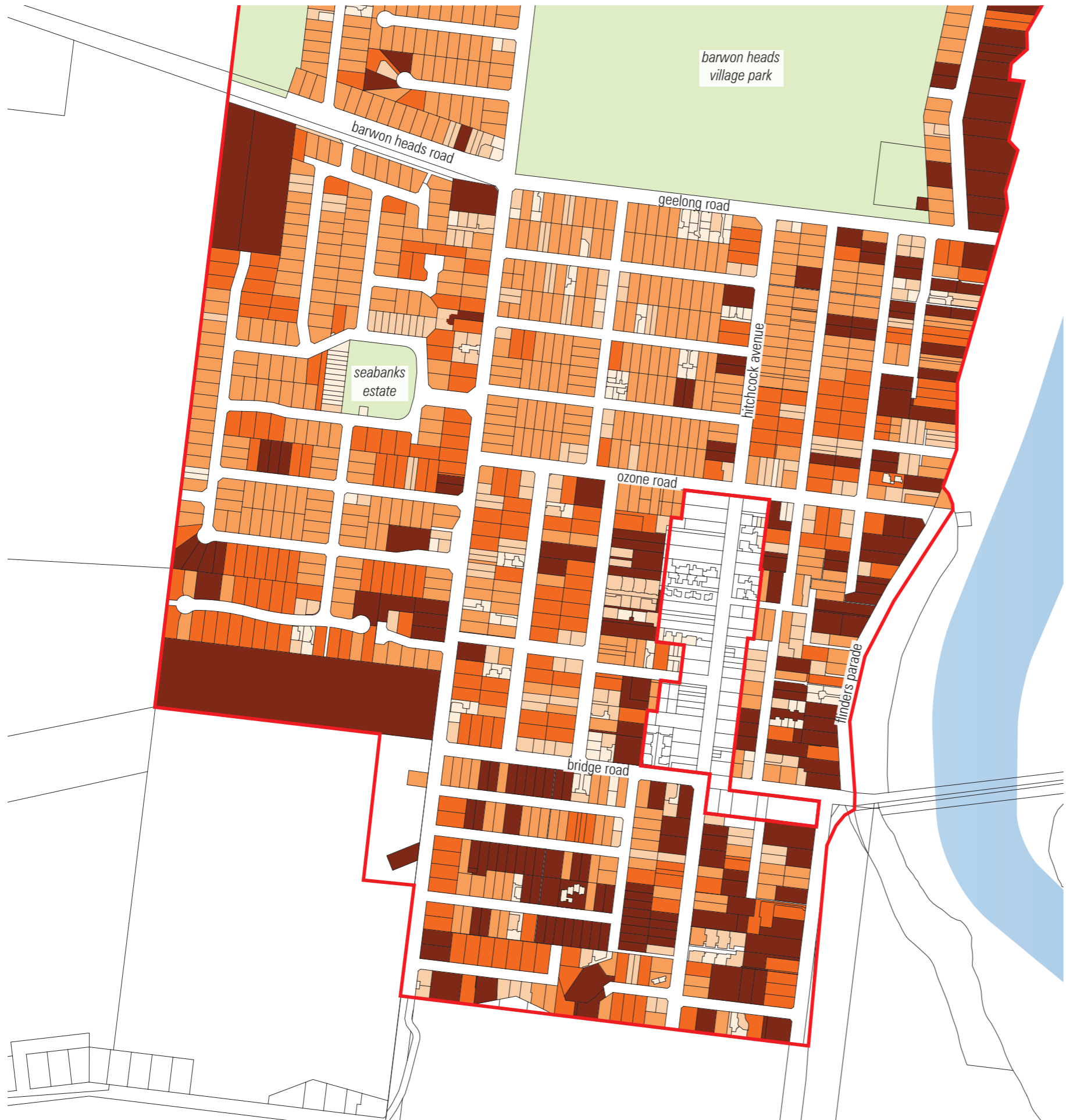


# lot size

## legend








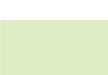
- subject site 
- <300sqm 
- 300-500sqm 
- 500-700sqm 
- 700-900sqm 
- >900sqm 
- open space 



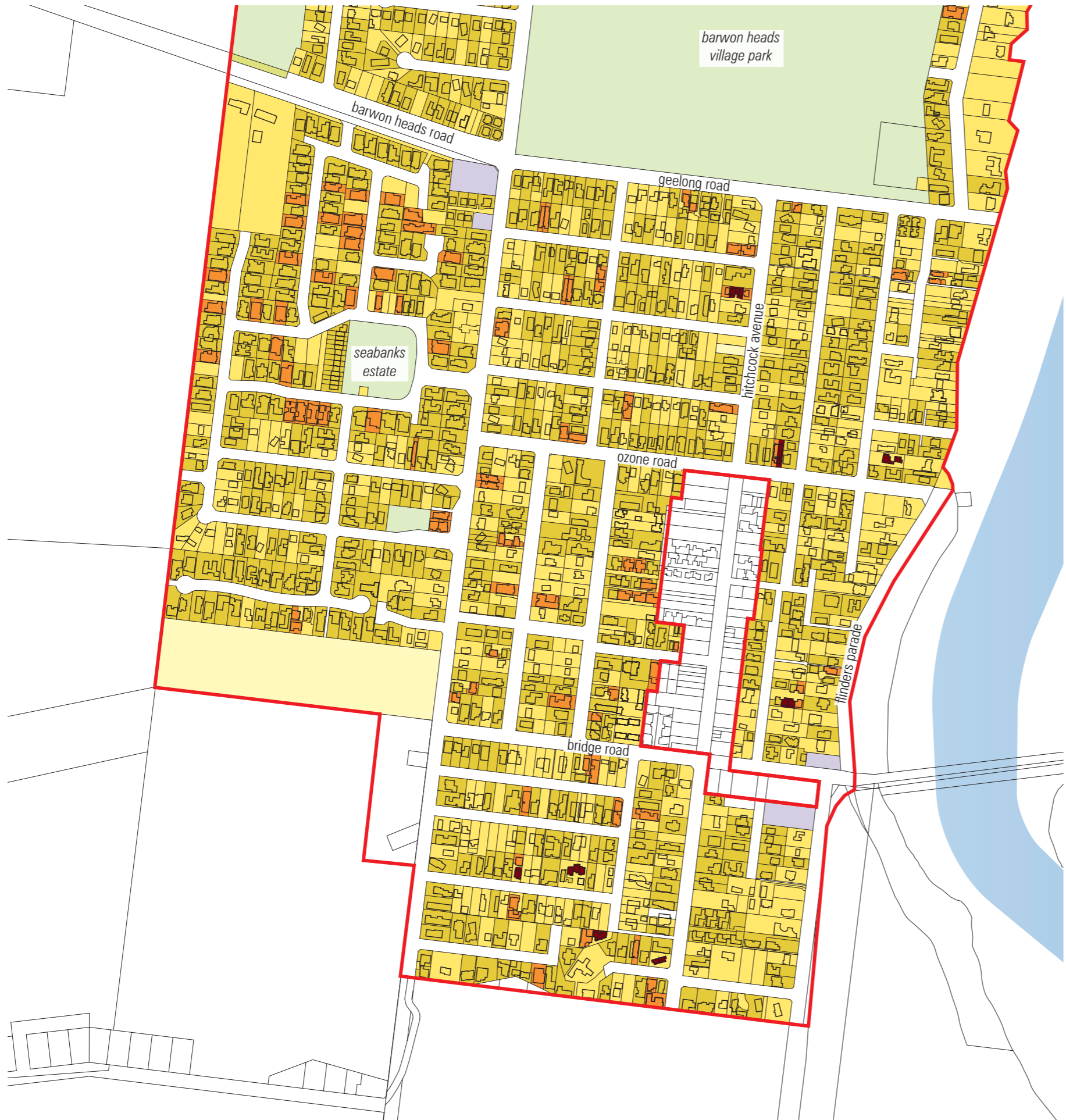


# site coverage

## legend















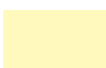
- subject site 
- 20% and less 
- 20-50% 
- 50-70% 
- over 70% 
- commercial / services 
- community 
- open space 



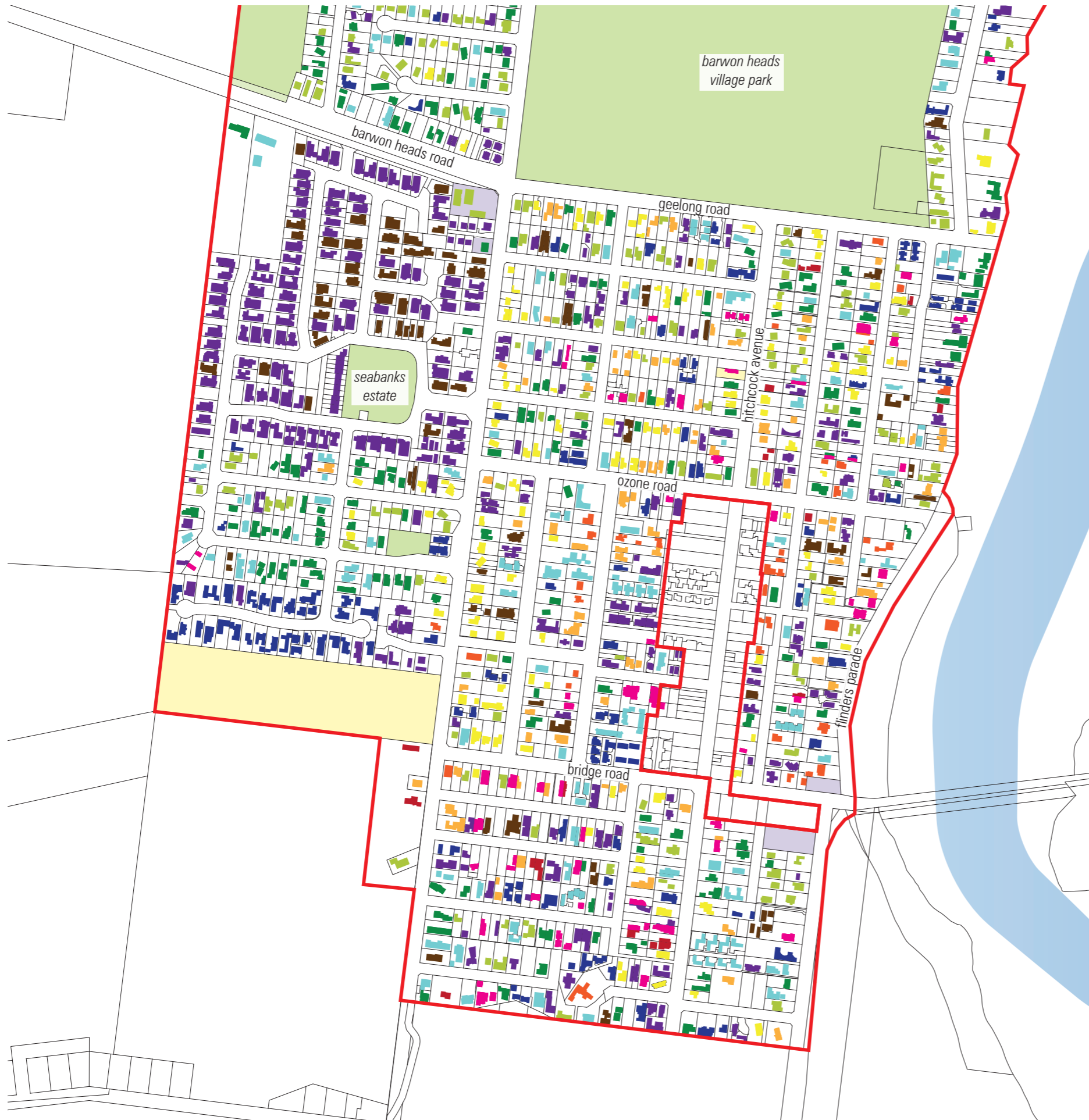


# building age

## legend




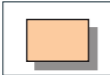

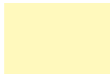
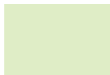
- subject site 
- pre 1920's 
- 1920's 
- 1930's 
- 1940's 
- 1950's 
- 1960's 
- 1970's 
- 1980's 
- 1990's 
- 2000's 
- 2010's 
- commercial / services 
- community 
- open space 



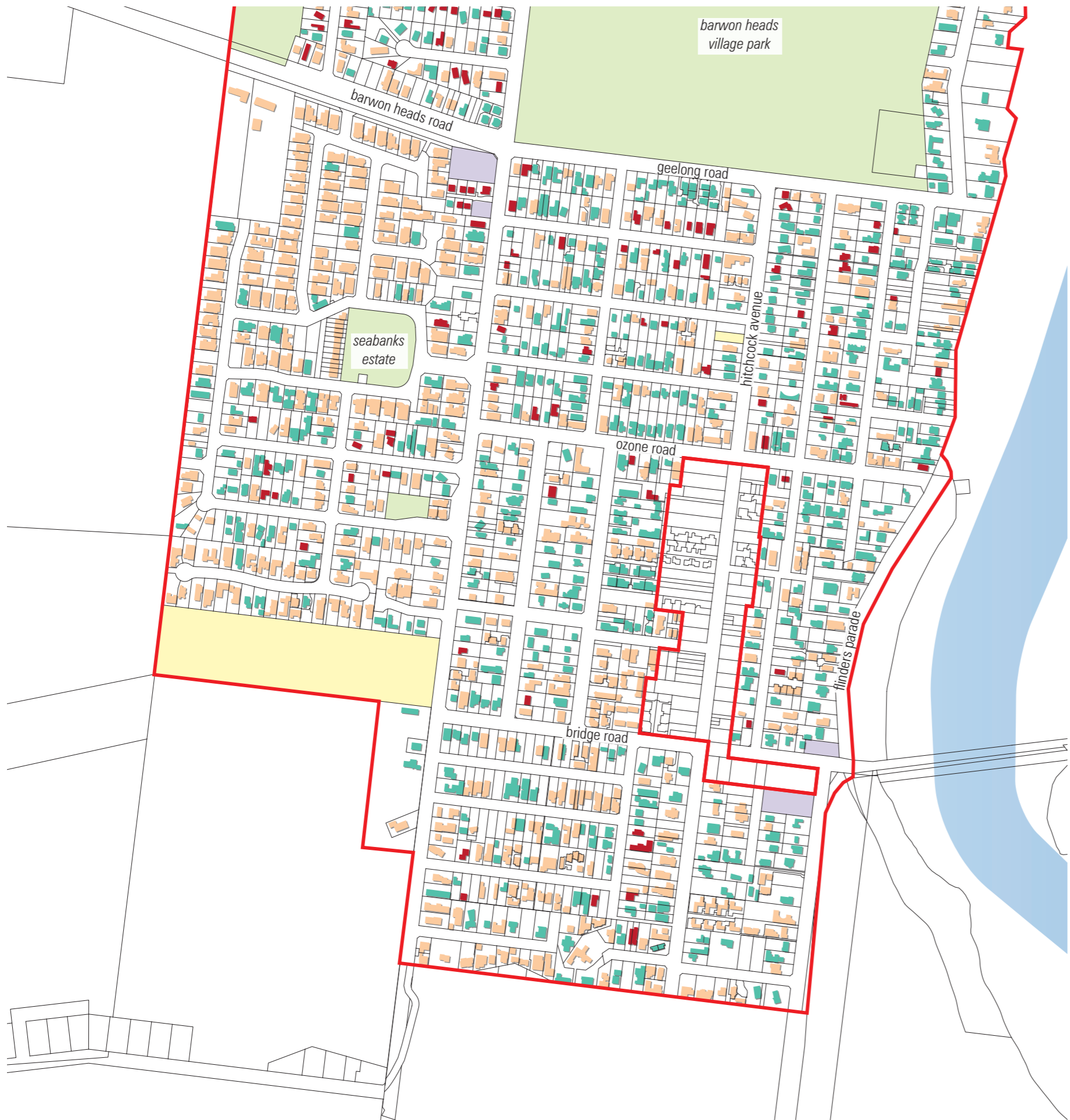


# building materials

legend





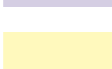
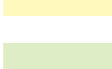
- subject site 
- fibro cement 
- weatherboard 
- brick 
- commercial / services 
- community 
- open space 



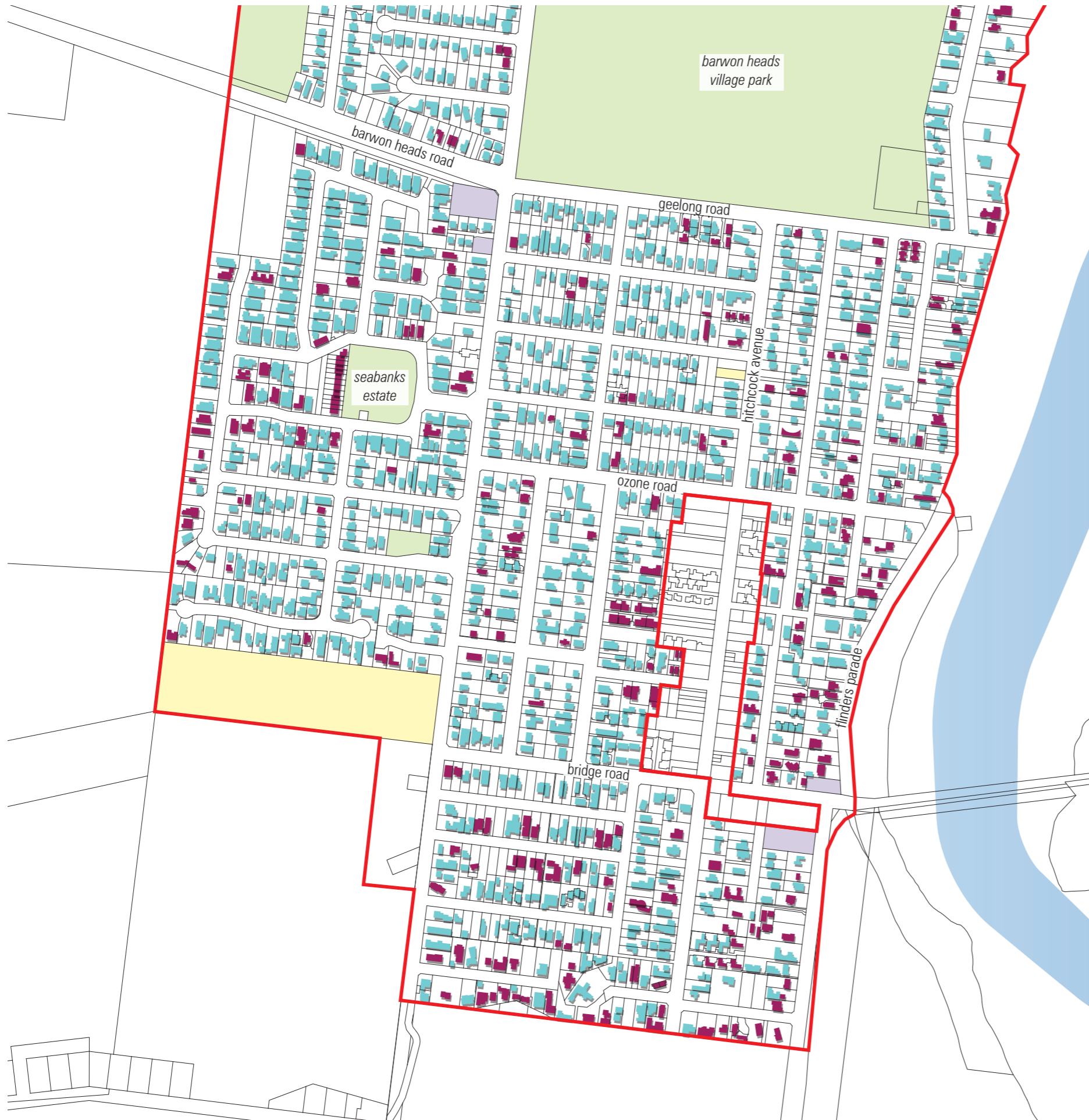


# building height

## legend





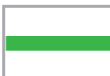


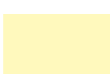
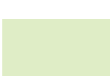
- subject site 
- 0-5m 
- 5m+ 
- commercial / services 
- community 
- open space 

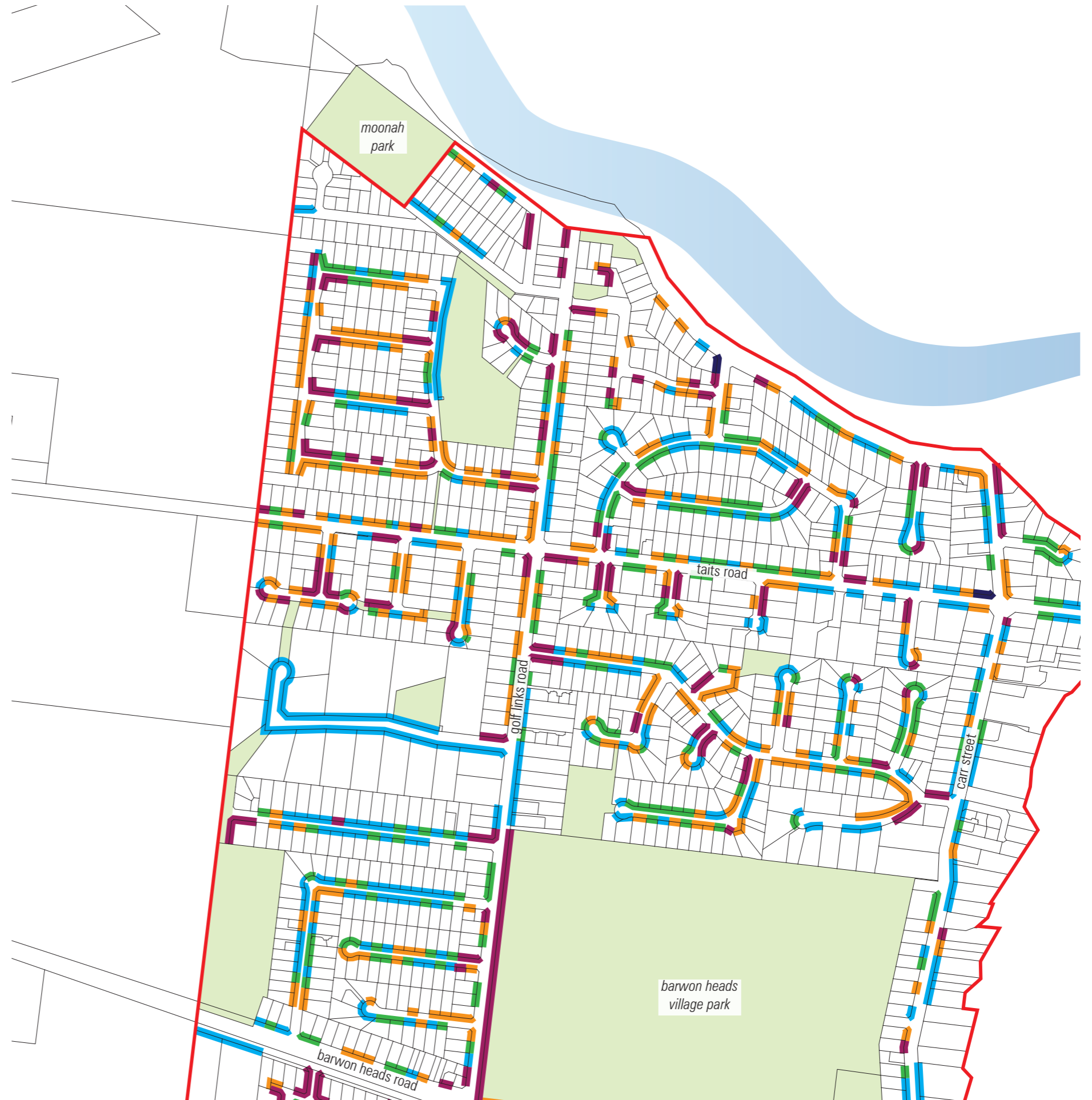


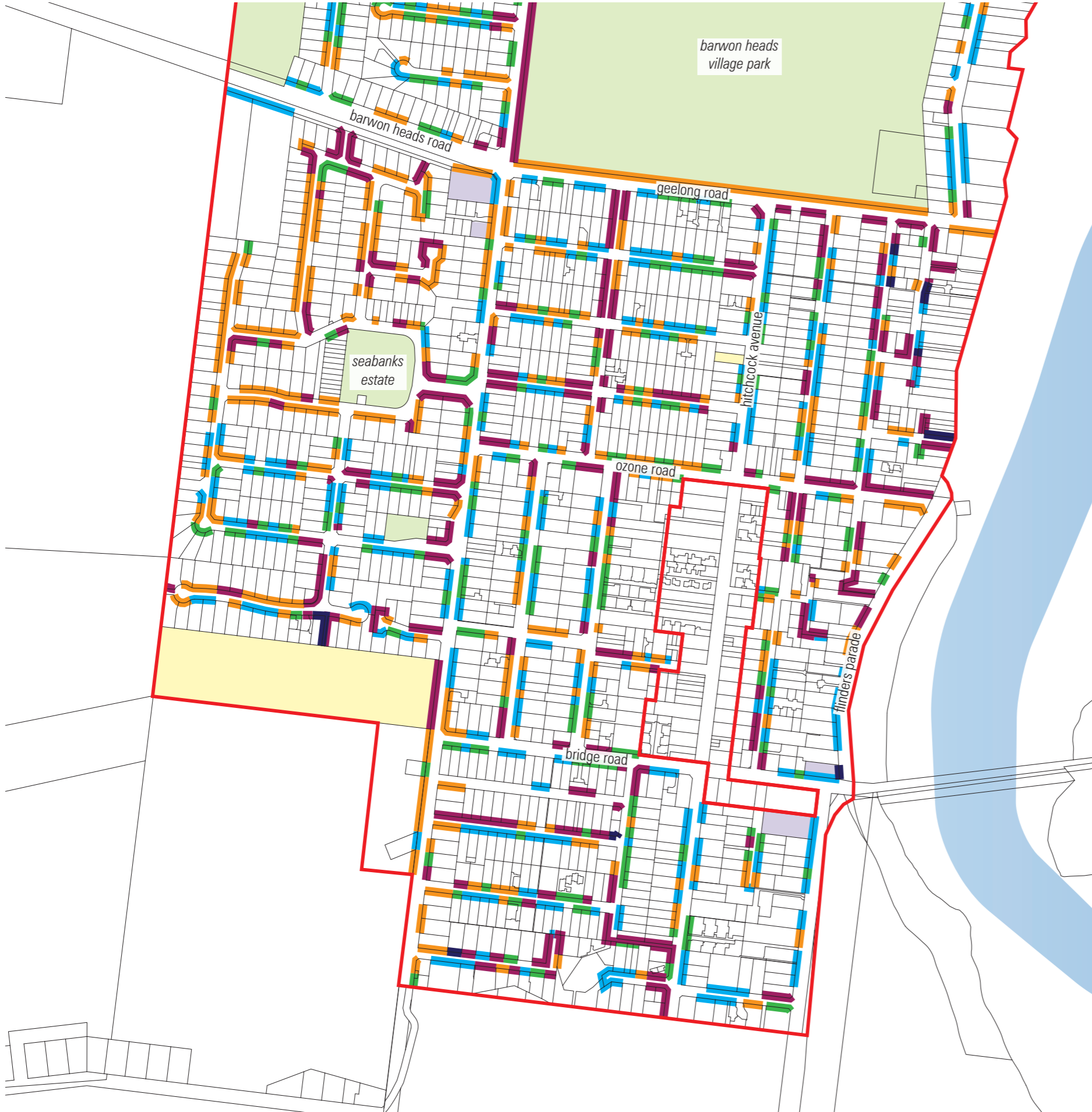


# front setbacks

## legend








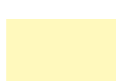

- subject site 
- 0m 
- 1m - 3.9m 
- 4m - 5.9m 
- 6m - 7.9m 
- 8m+ 
- commercial / services 
- community 
- open space 



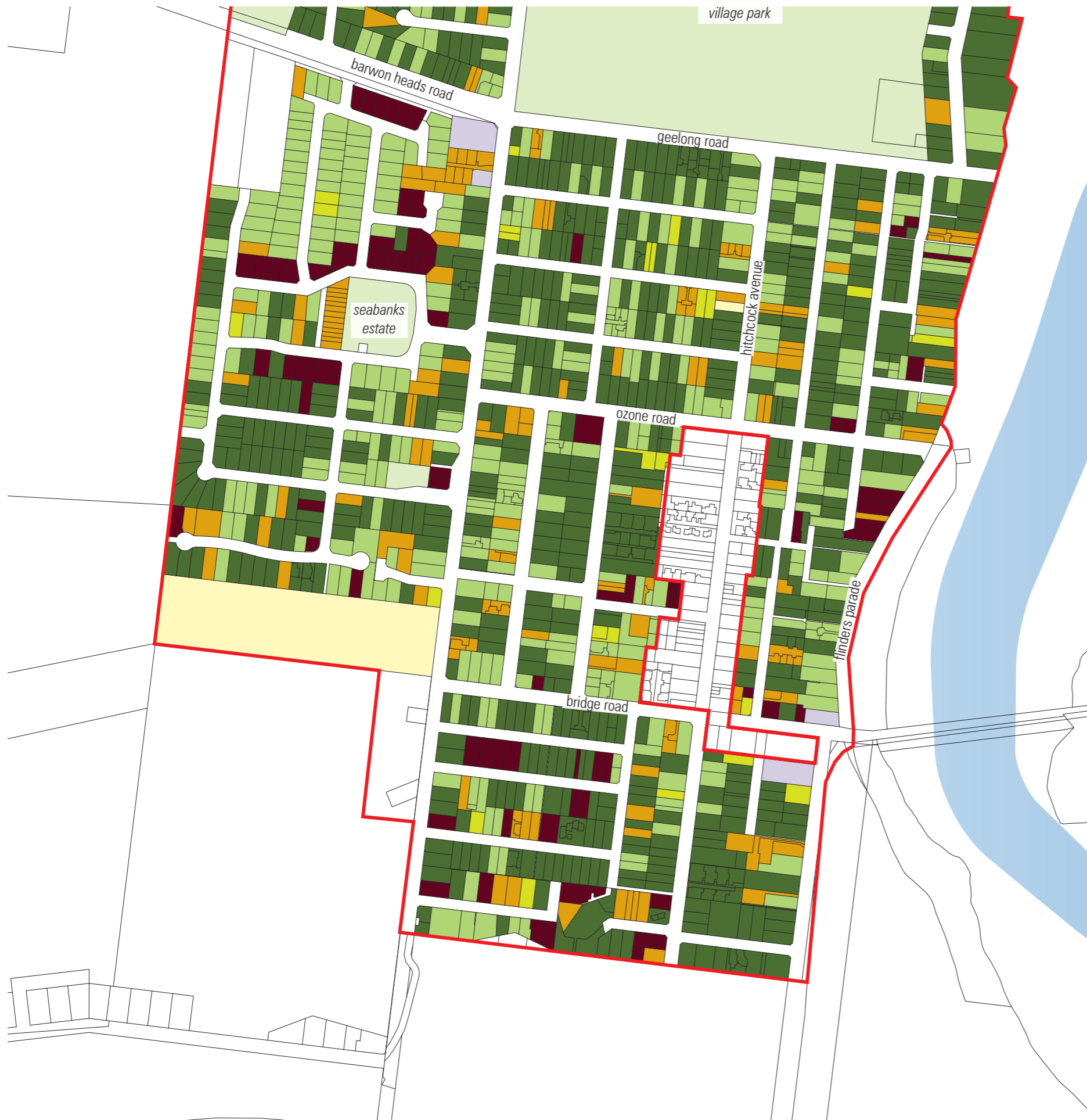


# private landscape character

## legend

- subject site 
- building set close to boundary 
- grassed / garden beds 
- paved / low landscape contribution 
- informal vegetated / canopy trees 
- other 
- commercial / services 
- community 
- open space 







# APPENDIX 2

## street assessment



hansen

### precinct 1

Barwon Terrace



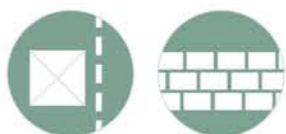
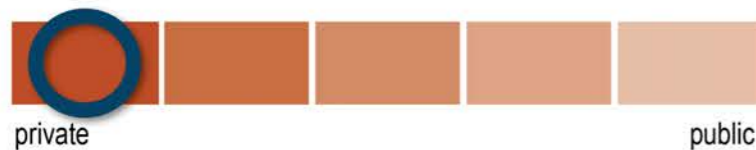
### precinct 2

Eddystone Court



### precinct 3

Newbay Close



Cosham Court



Glyndon Court



Dudley Court



Mulgoa Court



### precinct 4

Lawrenny Court



Affleck Court



Furneaux Close



Taits Road (West)



### precinct 4

Lawrenny Court



### precinct 5

Warrenbeen Court



### precinct 6

Cottesloe Drive



Cronulla Court



Coogee Court



Saratoga Avenue



Black Swan Court



### precinct 7

Mooroopna Court



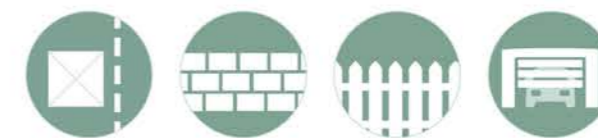
Corymbia Circuit



Chanticleer Place



Seabank Drive



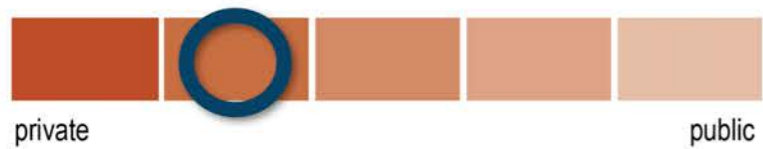
Barwon Heads Road



**precinct 8**  
Thomson Drive



Von Nida Avenue



Hopgood Place



Barnet Close



Hogan Drive



**precinct 9**  
River Parade



Sheepwash Road



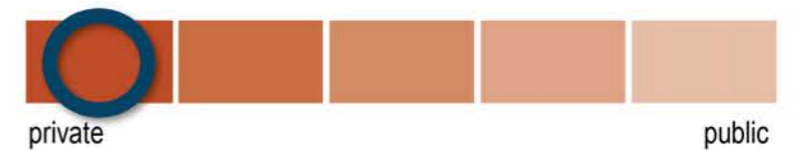
Midden Terrace



Minah Street



Ibis Court

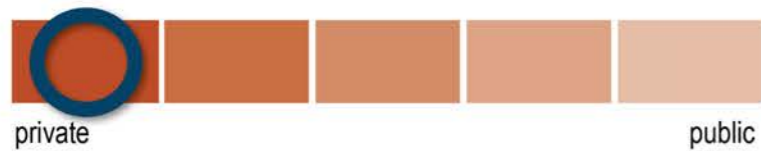


## precinct 9

Taits Road (East)



Wattle Bird Crescent



Heron Crescent



Culdee Court



Fishermans Walk



Curlew Court



Plover Court

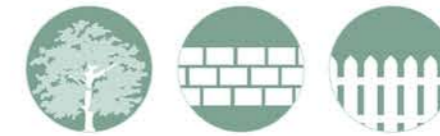
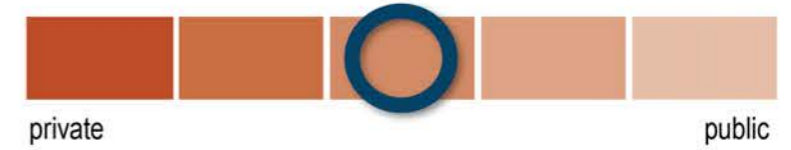


Pelican Court



## precinct 10

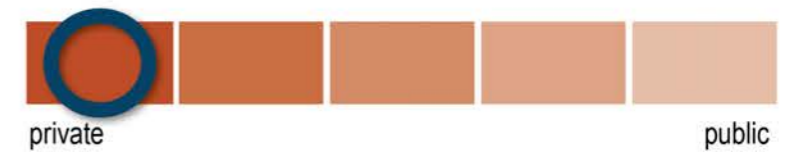
Baytown Close



Hampden Close



Knox Drive



Wandin Court

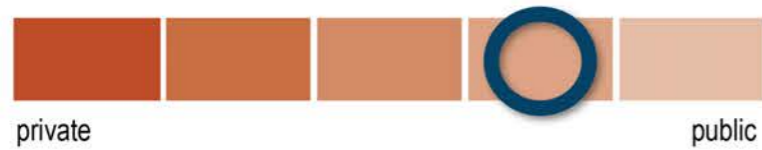


## precinct 10

Galveston Court



The Mews



Selby Close



Tremont Court



Araluen Court



## precinct 11

Golf Links Road (North)



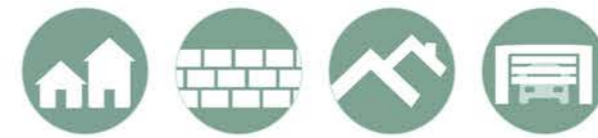
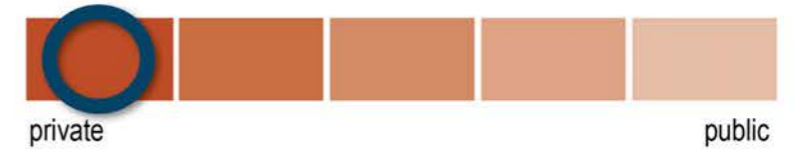
Geelong Road



Thorn Street



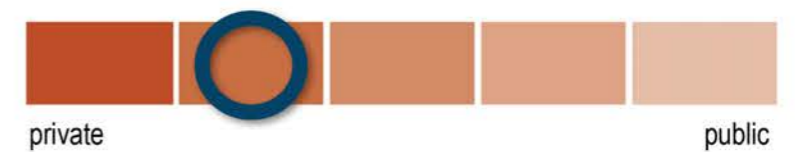
Punt Road



Jasper Avenue



Noble Street



## precinct 12

Ozone Road



Bridge Road



Clifford Parade



Grove Road



Reid Street



## precinct 13

Golf Links Road (South)



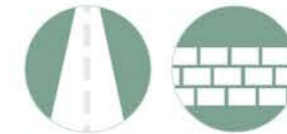
George Street



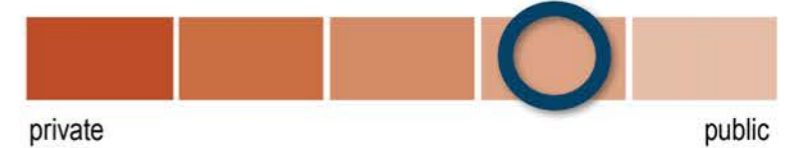
Henley Street



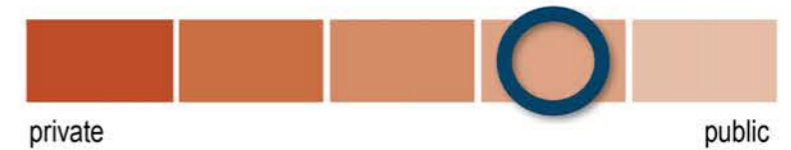
Humble Street



Ramsgate Street



Campbell Street



Bostock Avenue

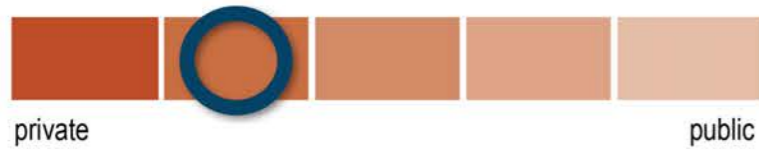


## precinct 14

Carr Street



Haynes Court



## precinct 15

Colite Street



Flinders Parade



Hitchcock Avenue



Margate Street



Margate Street (South)



Grandview Parade



Seaview Avenue (South)



Talbot Street



Riversdale Terrace



**precinct 16**  
Ewing Blyth Street



Golightly Street



Bell Street



