A Review

The following study is a revision of the Urban Design Report for the Cowes Foreshore Precinct 2000. This report builds on the earlier work that was adopted by Council in April 2000, providing a critique, a new perspective and new recommendations.

The report has two functions; firstly, it is designed to stand alone as a self contained body of work that is specific to the Cowes Foreshore Area, and may be used as a strategic tool to shape the future of development, investment and urban design in this area.

Secondly, it forms part of the Phillip Island and San Remo Design Framework, and should be read in conjunction with it. As a key precinct study it adds a finer level of detail to this broader work.

The Existing Framework

Successful urban design is responsive to the physical opportunities and constraints of a place and the community’s aspirations. The purpose of analysis is to acknowledge the existing framework of urban, environmental, social and economic conditions and note key contextual elements. The aspirations of the community are added to the mix, leading to an overall consideration of the potential impacts on the precinct.

This information is only of use when it can help inform decisions about a place. With this in mind, the following is more than a commentary about the current state of play. It analyses the existing conditions and identifies key implications, which are then addressed by the goals, strategies and design guidelines in the later sections of the report.

Cowes in Context

Cowes is a significant place for many reasons and plays important local, regional, state, national and international roles.

Cowes' most immediate local role is as a home, a meeting place, and a setting for day to day life for the local population. It is also the commercial centre of Phillip Island. It has a well frequented retail strip in Thompson Avenue and provides the whole Phillip Island community with municipal, retail, service, recreational and health facilities.

At the regional level, Cowes provides a focus for Western Port's attractions, and a ferry connection links Cowes with Stony Point and French Island. In addition, there is the possibility of a car ferry link in the future which would link Cowes and Phillip Island with the other Victorian coastal destinations such as the Mornington and Bellarine Peninsulas. A location for the infrastructure required to accommodate a car ferry is yet to be identified, and an assessment of all associated opportunities and threats would need to be conducted prior to such a project being undertaken.
As Phillip Island’s commercial centre, Cowes represents a significant tourism resource for the whole state, providing Victoria with an international profile and access to valuable international and domestic tourism markets.

The roles and functions of Cowes have changed over time. Once ferries would arrive at the jetty carrying visitors ready to explore Phillip Island. These days, Cowes is the final point of destination by road from the mainland.

**Foreshore Precinct**

The Cowes foreshore precinct is bounded by the coast, Chapel Street, Osborne Avenue and Steele Street.

It is perhaps characterised by the concentration and mix of land uses that occur within it. While occupying less than three percent of Cowes’ land, the foreshore precinct includes most of Cowes’ accommodation, restaurants, health care providers, shops and car parking. It also contains significant trees and Cowes’ most used open spaces, the foreshores, urban beaches and jetty. Vacant lots and older housing in the precinct will come under increasing development pressure in the future due to the proximity to the centre of town, sea views, large blocks and direct beach access.

At the north of the precinct is a mixed use zone which contains a high concentration of hotels, restaurants and cafes that are positioned mainly on The Esplanade. This zone has an important people-focused role and facilitates links between the town centre and the foreshore.

In the context of the whole of Cowes and Phillip Island, a tourism focus and higher density of development is considered appropriate for the foreshore precinct. To ensure that development has a positive impact on the people, the built form and environment of Cowes, it is very important to strike a balance between new development and the existing qualities of Cowes.

**Implications**

Cowes plays an important role for many different groups within the community. There should be an appropriate balance between local, regional, state and national needs.

As the commercial centre for Phillip Island, Cowes should remain the focus for urban tourism on Phillip Island.

Creating transport links between Cowes and other parts of Victoria including Melbourne, Mornington and Bellarine Peninsulas, Wilson’s Promontory and Gippsland would add value to state and national tourism markets.

There is potential to benefit the growing local community by making Cowes a better place to live and work.

There is widespread community concern about the impact on the public realm by inappropriate development and the changing character of Cowes.

There is the opportunity for new development to vastly improve the function and appearance of Cowes, and it is important that positive development that caters for tourists as well as the local community is encouraged.

The west end of The Esplanade, between Warley and Osborne Avenues, is likely to come under particularly strong pressure for development due to vacant land and older residential properties on large lots, with water views and access to the town centre.
Land Use Patterns

Historically, the key function and use of the area has been based around holiday accommodation. Guesthouses, boarding houses and holiday homes are still common, however the area has changed over time and now includes a wider variety of permanent and temporary accommodation with a bustling retail strip along Thompson Avenue merging into a growing tourist precinct along The Esplanade.

It is widely accepted that the Cowes Foreshore Precinct should be the focus for tourism uses attracting hotels, restaurants and cafes, tourist residential, tourist retail and entertainment uses. It is also a hub for the local population who use all of these establishments with the exception of the tourist accommodation. The precinct also includes key local and regional facilities including healthcare providers, retail outlets, services, a police station and kindergarten.
Retail, restaurants and entertainment

The northern end of Thompson Avenue between Chapel Street and The Esplanade is a key area for retail and commercial activity and has a concentration of shops and businesses that service both the local community and visitors. The buildings are one or two storeys, and generally extend to the width of the block. Upper levels appear to be underutilised in many cases and could be appropriate for some commercial uses to ensure consolidation of the retail precinct. Shop top style dwellings in situations where commercial or retail development is not feasible would also increase the presence of people and activity, particularly at night.

At the top of the Thompson Avenue retail spine, the section north of Chapel Street offers opportunities for improved retail outlets such as specialised, higher-end shops, galleries and cafes. The compact and concentrated nature of the retail area is a positive attribute and should be maintained to ensure the commercial uses do not bleed into surrounding residential areas.

The Esplanade, between Warley and Bass Avenues has developed into a dining and entertainment strip supporting several restaurants, cafes and bars. The holiday apartment complexes on The Esplanade between Bass Avenue and Steele Street add to the dining options provided along the waterfront.

Implications

Retail activity mixed with tourism-related uses should remain a major focus for Thompson Avenue to maintain the vitality of the centre and should not be permitted to "bleed" into the residential areas.

An opportunity exists to develop a distinctive tourism strip along The Esplanade. It should be developed with local residents and visitors in mind to create an entertainment focus that is active all year round and is designed to be responsive to its surroundings. It should be attractive to a wide range of users and encourage longer visits.

Accommodation

Accommodation options in the precinct are varied and mainly concentrated in the east between Steele Street, Bass Avenue, The Esplanade and Chapel Street. There is also a recently developed cluster of apartments in Warley Avenue. The mix of accommodation types includes self-contained apartments, units, townhouses, motels, hotels, serviced apartments and bed and breakfasts. The precinct is well suited to accommodation as it is within walking distance of the beach and the central retail area, but the area can appear desolate during winter when the holiday apartments are largely unoccupied.

Implications

Accommodation for visitors to Cowes is appropriate in the area, particularly along The Esplanade (east of Bass Avenue), providing that greater activity during the winter months can be encouraged.

Land uses such as indoor/outdoor cafes and bars along The Esplanade would add to the vibrancy of the public realm, encouraging activity all year round.

Community services & health

Community and health services tend to be located in areas peripheral to the retail and business areas of Thompson Avenue and The Esplanade.

A kindergarten and maternal and child health centre are located on Chapel Street, east of Thompson Avenue. Transport services, the taxi rank and bus stop are located on Chapel just west of Thompson Avenue.
Implications

Access to community and health services is important to all residents and visitors and these services should be maintained within the precinct.

Residential

The pattern of residential use favours the western area between Osbourne and Warley Avenue, The Esplanade and Chapel Street. It is unclear what proportion of these properties are occupied on a permanent, occasional or weekend basis.

Residential properties appear to be under development pressure in the east as more houses and lots are redeveloped as short-term accommodation. The blocks in this area are generous in size and are elevated, allowing bay views. It is likely that the remaining residential properties on The Esplanade will be desirable to developers due to excellent views and ease of access to the beach and retail area.

The central zone of Cowes around Thompson Avenue is not used for residential purposes, and as the retail area has expanded along streets like Chapel and The Esplanade, residential areas have moved further away from the centre of town.

Implications

The residential development clustered around the western end creates a positive community environment with a high level of amenity, which should be maintained.

There is pressure on the residential area of the western end of The Esplanade.

Open space & recreation

The foreshore is well landscaped with mature trees and is a popular location for visitors and local people. It is used mainly for walking, picnicking and other passive recreational uses. Apart from the jetty shed - kiosk and the rotunda - now used for selling ferry tickets - the area has no entertainment or retail activities, of either permanent or temporary nature and has not been designed to accommodate such uses. As a result of this absence of active land use, the area is under-utilised.

The current use of the jetty triangle for car parking has a major impact on the opportunities for the whole foreshore. Considering the popularity of the jetty and foreshore with visitors and local people, the site does not function effectively. It blocks the pedestrian movement between The Esplanade/Thompson Avenue retail district, affecting the viable use of the area as a hub for people and a central focus for recreational activities. Additionally, the car park affects the natural pedestrian flow from the town to the jetty and its unsightly nature detracts from the appearance of the public realm.

A run down set of tennis courts exists on Bass Avenue, behind the Isle of Wight Hotel site and Thompson Avenue. While the tennis courts were once well used by the community, this land is now under-utilised and weed-infested.

Implications

Removing the car parking and redeveloping the jetty triangle would allow for greater pedestrian movement and provide a focus for the township, designed as a meeting place and centre of recreational activity.

Future design and upgrade of the foreshore and jetty should be focused on encouraging a more active recreational use of this important open space.
Movement Patterns

Pedestrian access and movement
During the summer period, the beach and jetty are the main focus for residents and visitors to Cowes. Pedestrian movements flow from the retail areas of Thompson Avenue and The Esplanade, and also from the side streets that access The Esplanade and the beach between Steele Street and Osbourne Avenue.

This peak activity creates conflict between pedestrians and vehicles, as there is no perceived safe pedestrian crossing. Most side streets leading to the foreshore are steep and do not have footpaths, which limits access for those with reduced mobility.

These issues limit the interaction between the north and south sides of The Esplanade and effectively detach the foreshore from the town itself. The conflict is of major concern to the community, who would prefer this area to be made more pedestrian-friendly.

The jetty itself is a major attraction for pedestrians and also attracts significant vehicle numbers. The location of car parking in front of the jetty causes conflict, reduces the visual quality and function of the location as a potentially significant public space.

The landform offers an opportunity to create significant linear parkland stretching from the yacht club to Erehwon Point. However, the jetty triangle car park blocks movement between the east and the west foreshores and pedestrian activity is further limited by a lack of well-developed paths.

For major celebrations and festivals, sections of The Esplanade and Thompson Avenue are closed to vehicle traffic creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

Away from the foreshore, pedestrian links between rear-of-shop car parks and the retail strip require upgrading to facilitate safe and efficient pedestrian movement. This will ensure that these car parks are better utilised.

Implications
Conflict between pedestrians and vehicles along The Esplanade is a real concern to the community. There is no perceived safe crossing point for pedestrians and the town seems detached from the foreshore as a result.

A more pedestrian-focused jetty triangle would improve the image of Cowes to visitors arriving by sea.

Improved walking paths and promenades on the foreshore would enhance the function and appearance of the beach and foreshore parkland.

Improved footpaths leading from the residential streets to the foreshore would provide safer and more direct access for residents and visitors.

Better pedestrian links between car parks and the Thompson Avenue shopping strip would significantly improve the amenity of the precinct.

Vehicle Movements and Parking
The foreshore is a busy area for parking vehicles and accessing the open space, restaurants and retail outlets of Thompson Avenue and The Esplanade. This activity leads to congestion and parking problems during the peak summer periods, and conflict with pedestrians accessing the beach. Tourist coaches and buses visiting Cowes add to the congestion and visual clutter, block pedestrian access and present difficulties for pedestrians trying to cross Thompson Avenue and The Esplanade safely.

The function and appearance of the foreshore area would be improved if car, bus and coach parking were relocated away from the jetty. The site would need to be convenient, with equitable pedestrian access to the foreshore and retail area, and largely concealed from the visually important
area of the foreshore.

To alleviate seasonal conflicts between traffic and pedestrians, Council could consider traffic calming measures and better pedestrian links for The Esplanade and Thompson Avenue. A dedicated study by a traffic consultant would need to be undertaken to balance the need for traffic access to and from the area with the safe movement of pedestrians.

There are several car parks located to the rear of shops along Thompson Avenue, which accommodate much of the overflow traffic during the summer months. These car parks assist in reducing the congestion and demand for parking in the main street, and remove many cars from the public realm, however they are not well sign-posted. They present a number of safety issues as pedestrian links are often concealed and unpleasant for pedestrian use, or are simply not provided.

The development of the foreshore precinct will attract more vehicles and place greater pressure on the existing infrastructure. Future developments will need to provide adequate and appropriate car parking for patrons and limit vehicle access directly off The Esplanade.

The potential introduction of a car ferry and associated infrastructure raises further issues for movement patterns in Cowes. While a location is yet to be identified, should it occur in this precinct there would be a significant impact on traffic conditions for cars and pedestrians. Any traffic and parking strategy should consider the potential car ferry link and its location.

**Implications**

The jetty triangle is currently a car-dominated place that poses safety concerns for pedestrians and detracts from the visual appearance of the whole foreshore. This area could become a focal point in Cowes as a space designed for people rather than cars. To achieve this, car parking would need to be relocated, and bus parking moved to another site.

Further development within the precinct will attract more vehicles. New development should incorporate accessible parking facilities where practical, rather than placing greater pressure on the existing infrastructure and increasing conflict with pedestrians.

Reducing vehicular traffic along The Esplanade, particularly at peak periods and during festivals and celebrations, would stimulate pedestrian activity and create an attractive and vibrant meeting place for local people and visitors.

Reducing traffic volume and speed will improve the sense of linkage between the foreshore and the town centre. This will also provide greater safety and a more enjoyable experience for pedestrians. A dedicated traffic and parking study would be required to identify possibilities for balancing the conflicting uses.

**Urban Environment**

**Built Form**

The twentieth century was a period of gradual but significant change for the built form of Cowes. The most notable change has been a move away from guesthouse accommodation to the current mix of houses, holiday apartments, units and motels of recent times. Throughout most of this period the buildings have remained relatively small in scale and of one or two storeys in height, however this is changing as comparatively large buildings have been added to the mix in recent years, particularly along The Esplanade. It is considered that before World War II the main guesthouses were of a high quality for the period, and displayed a more authentic use of an Isle of Wight style than is apparent today.

Traditionally, the urban fabric of Cowes foreshore precinct could be described as being of fine ‘grain’ with an eclectic mix of building styles, materials and types. Fine grain size refers to the Cowes’ pattern of blocks,
lots and buildings, which is quite small, varied and frequent. Increasingly, properties are being redeveloped into large blocks of apartments, holiday accommodation, restaurants and retail buildings. There is widespread concern within the community that the scale and character of Cowes is on the cusp of being forever transformed. The Cowes Foreshore Precinct is an appropriate location for urban consolidation. The objective of urban consolidation is to ease some of the pressure that has seen Cowes (and the other townships on Phillip Island and San Remo) rapidly expanding at the rural edges in recent years.

Being so close to amenities, the precinct could support a higher concentration of permanent and part time residents. It is very important however, that a balanced, strategic approach to development is taken, to allow for an increase in density while maintaining the scale and character of this seaside town.

**Implications**

New development that is mindful of the public realm and attempts to incorporate some public space would add to the sense of quality and variety of opportunities for public use.

A continuation of the trend to large buildings with a single design character will lead to a loss of the variety and complexity that underpins the present character.

Higher concentration of residents will enliven the area with more activity, particularly during the winter months.

**Thompson Avenue - Retail Spine**

Thompson Avenue is the centre of commercial activity in Phillip Island, and the foreshore precinct contains the northern end of the retail spine. The built fabric is relatively concentrated and presents a finer grain around the commercial core of the first two blocks of Thompson Avenue, and this is recognised within Council’s Municipal Strategic Statement.

Buildings are mostly one or two storeys in height and the lots are smaller, with buildings occupying close to the entire width of the lot. The heights of the shops and the gaps between buildings allow glimpses over the roofs to the bay from within the shopping strip. Importantly, these views bring the sea right into the town, reinforcing the coastal setting. These views are an important and defining element of Cowes, and the protection of them should be a primary requirement for any redevelopment, particularly of properties on the Thompson Avenue and Esplanade corners.

Most shops along the strip are occupied, although the general standard of presentation is not high, and often the upper storeys appear to be underutilised.

There are limited pedestrian links from Thompson Avenue to the car parks, residential and accommodation facilities located immediately to the east and west. Movement between these areas could be improved by upgrading links, drawing residents and visitors directly into the retail spine of Cowes.

**Implications**

A better standard of visual presentation to the shops would lift this precinct, and encourage higher-end specialist retail, creating positive outcomes for tourism and local amenity.

An intensification of development around the Thompson Avenue retail area, including shop top dwellings will bring a greater residential population to the centre which will add to the activity after dark, and reduce pressure for outward growth of the town.

Views to the sea from Thompson Avenue are a defining feature of Cowes and should be retained.

Better pedestrian links from the car parks, residential and accommodation areas would increase accessibility to the retail area of Thompson Avenue.
The Esplanade – Facing the Foreshore

The Esplanade has buildings on the south side only, facing the foreshore, and provides the main east/west link for visitors and residents located in the residential and accommodation areas wanting to access the jetty area and the foreshore.

From Osborne to Warley Avenue, buildings are residential, one or two storeys and of various styles. The buildings occupy a small footprint relative to the size of the lot. These properties are expected to come under increasing pressure for development due to their bay views, proximity to the foreshore, yacht club, and central Cowes. In particular, two vacant lots opposite Mussel Rocks are currently for sale and when developed will have a significant impact on the built form along The Esplanade.

From Steele Street to Bass Avenue the building footprints are larger than in most of Cowes. Large holiday accommodation developments dominate this area. As well as larger footprints, the buildings tend to be three storeys, which is higher than most buildings in Cowes. The result is a stretch of solid, relatively large buildings that do not generate much activity at ground level, especially during the off season.

The buildings are more concentrated and generate more activity around Thompson Avenue. East, between Thompson and Bass Avenues, is a cluster of attractive buildings that are in keeping with the surroundings, in scale, form and use of colours and materials. Dominating this area from the foreshore is the landmark Isle of Wight Hotel site, which is visually prominent due to its elevated position. It is clearly in need of a redevelopment that is sensitive to its historic, social and physical context and its landmark status. (Refer Landmark Sites)

Recent five storey developments have transformed the Esplanade between Thompson and Warley Avenue. A benefit of this development is the use of glazing, decks and awnings to maximise potential for indoor/outdoor dining, and the active frontages at street level. While the restaurants and cafes have contributed a sense of vitality to the area, the retail outlets are underutilised, and the bulky building forms are a serious detractor from the visual quality of Cowes.

The combination of bulk, size of footprint, height and heavy, solid materials (often brick or concrete block) in many buildings along The Esplanade indicates a shift away from the high quality of built form that was established between-the-wars. If the trend continues, The Esplanade will be lined with homogenous, bulky buildings, at odds with the coastal context, the fine grain appearance and the variety of styles that now characterise Cowes.

The larger recent developments still appear to be no higher than the current dominant tree line. The mature trees that comprise this tree line on the foreshore are an essential element of the urban environment in Cowes, but should not be considered a useful measure of appropriate height for new development. While most built form in Cowes falls beneath the adjacent tree line, it should be noted that the trees are mature and senescent, and that the inevitable decline of individual trees will result in a less defined tree line, offering less visual ‘cover’ for poorly scaled, inappropriate or unattractive buildings.

Implications

It is important for the scale and character of Cowes that the current trend for bulky, homogenous buildings does not continue. Instead, new development should aim to reflect the traditional fine grain of Cowes.

While buildings standing above the tree canopy would reduce the impact of the dominant and valued landscape that underpins the present character, the treeline is not a reliable benchmark against which to set building height limits.
Osbourne to Warley & Bass to Steele

Outside of Thompson Avenue and The Esplanade, the majority of built form in the foreshore precinct is detached housing, with some unit developments and other buildings including a church, small hospital and police station. The scale is domestic, with generously sized lots and buildings limited to one or two storeys. There is a gardenesque character, with most houses having a small footprint relative to the lot size, landscaped setbacks and established and well-maintained gardens.

The Quest Apartment complex on the corner of Bass Avenue and Chapel Street is an example of higher density apartments within the otherwise traditional residential fabric. The building is responsive to its surroundings however, employing highly articulated facades, a variety of materials, landscaping and internal car-parking to successfully integrate the development into the surrounding residential streetscape.

Implications

An increase in residential density is appropriate for this area, however new developments should be carefully designed to fit within the existing residential fabric. Issues of scale, setback, landscaping and car parking will need to be carefully addressed.

Public Space

The public spaces within the Cowes Foreshore Precinct are concentrated around the waterfront with the linear parkland either side of the jetty and the beaches. These spaces are used primarily for passive recreation and the layout, access, facilities and overall design are not conducive to more organised recreational activities, or to the festivals and celebrations that are held along the foreshore.

The footpaths along most of the north-south streets (Osbourne, Walpole, Bass, Findlay and east side of Steele) leading down to The Esplanade are mainly grassed nature strips and can at times be steep and difficult for some members of the community to negotiate. More formal pedestrian paths allowing safe and convenient access to Chapel Street and The Esplanade would greatly enhance the public amenity of Cowes.

Implications

The foreshore precinct could develop a more coherent sense of place, with a distinctive public and seafront character distinct from the mainly retail nature of Thompson Avenue.

The public spaces could be made more adaptable and able to accommodate a wider range of activities.

The footpaths in Cowes need to be improved to provide suitable pedestrian access to the shops and foreshore.

Microclimate

The northern aspect of Cowes is a valuable asset, and it means that the beach and foreshore are free from overshadowing issues. However this northern aspect also means that Cowes is vulnerable to wind exposure, particularly to summer northerlies and winter winds off the sea.

The microclimate along The Esplanade would be enhanced by improvements to the built form. Sheltered areas would allow outdoor diners to access views and contribute to the vitality of the public realm, but in a more pleasant environment. A number of shops on Thompson Avenue have awnings and some newer commercial establishments on The Esplanade are taking advantage of the aspect with indoor/outdoor dining areas, deck levels, balconies and awnings.

Developments within the foreshore precinct should provide for indoor and outdoor activities for all seasons. This existing building offers decks and awnings to improve the microclimate and present an active frontage to the street.
Implications

Future developments within the commercial and public areas of Cowes should consider opportunities for improving the microclimate, offering shelter from winds and maximising the northerly aspect to encourage longer stays, year-round use and a more comfortable environment for people.

Landscape

Cowes’ landscape is characterised by gentle hills, large introduced trees along the foreshore and within the town, and some areas of remnant coastal vegetation to the east beyond Erehwon Point, and the west beyond Walpole Avenue.

The land rolls quite steeply down towards the coastal edge in Cowes. In Thompson Avenue particularly, the grade is a considerable obstacle to walking. The land drops down at the Chapel Street roundabout marking the beginning of the main retail strip, and allowing sea views above the mainly single storey rooftops of the buildings.

The town is oriented towards the foreshore to the north, and the streets run in a rectangular grid with the north-south streets running between Chapel Street and the coast.

From long distances and from the sea and jetty the landscape appears low and horizontal. The Cowes Foreshore Precinct juts into the bay on a headland between Erehwon Point and Mussel Rocks.

The town’s buildings are mainly hidden from this view, apart from where a break in the trees, planting caused by the open space around the jetty, allows glimpses of the Isle of Wight Hotel. The Hotel is considered a landmark, and as a first impression, particularly from the sea, it is vital to the image of Cowes and Phillip Island. It is important to acknowledge that while the site is prominent from the sea, has historical and social significance and has a direct physical relationship with The Esplanade, jetty and foreshore, the Isle of Wight is not visible from within the Thompson Avenue commercial spine.

The foreshore consists of a wide grassy bank above the beach and is Cowes’ primary open space. Large introduced trees are a feature, and the jetty separates each side and is the town’s central attraction for local people and visitors alike.

The twin headlands of Mussel Rocks and Erehwon Point are used for picnics and playgrounds, and visually define the two ends of the urban foreshore. Both areas are well utilised, and are popular with local and visiting families. These areas have excellent views, access to the beach and mature introduced trees, mainly conifers and Eucalypts. Both sites are somewhat run-down, and disconnected from each other. They are both in need of upgrading to improve their function and appearance. In particular, the paths, furniture, signage and planting would benefit from improvement.

Implications

The mature trees on the foreshore are an important and defining element of Cowes, and these should be protected, maintained with a regular pruning program and replaced where necessary.

Maintenance and replanting is required if trees in the landscape are to remain healthy, safe and attractive.

The picnic and playground areas of Mussel Rocks and Erehwon Point are run-down and would be improved if they were upgraded.

Connecting the nodes of activity along the foreshore, including Mussel Rocks, The Jetty and Erehwon Point with pathways would create continuous, linear parkland.
**Streetscape**

**Thompson Avenue**

The retail strip of Thompson Avenue has recently been modified to include ramps, steps, furniture and planting beds. The community supports these initiatives in the main, and the general feeling is that the streetscape is 'better than it was'.

The series of ramps on the western side of Thompson Avenue, between The Esplanade and Chapel Street were obviously designed to negate the effect of the slope in this area and improve equitable access. However the footpath is cluttered and now difficult for many people to negotiate. The handrails, changes in level, planting beds, litter bins and signs make it difficult to cross the road and pose potential hazards for the visually impaired.

At this end of Thompson Avenue, the Golden Cypress trees have been removed and replaced with Chinese Elms. It is considered that this provides further opportunities for sea views from the town, and that the Golden Cypress play more of a role to the south of Thompson Avenue, where they are an important gateway feature, the repetition of the trees pulling together an otherwise disparate streetscape.

Pedestrian links between the retail strip and the residential and accommodation land uses located immediately to the east and west are minimal and should be reviewed to allow better access and movement of people directly into Thompson Avenue.

**Implications**

The streetscape on the western side of Thompson Avenue is cluttered, and poses difficulties for movement.

The Golden Cypress avenue, a signature element of Cowes, does not continue down to the northern tip of Thompson Avenue. Public opinion should be canvassed to determine whether the avenue should be reinstated to the length of the street, or whether the available views are more important.

**The Esplanade**

The foreshore on the northern side, which contains a significant collection of mature conifers and Eucalypts, dominates the streetcape of The Esplanade. The eastern end is visually strong with palm trees (Phoenix canariensis) offering contrast and visual structure on the south side.

The western end of The Esplanade lacks street trees, and its appearance would benefit from an organised program of street tree planting.

The streetscape between Bass Avenue and Thompson Avenue is a hard, urban edge, and would benefit from an upgraded pedestrian pavement and small to medium sized street trees in the pavement.

**Implications**

Street trees and an upgrade of pedestrian pavement would improve the appearance of The Esplanade streetcpace between Bass Avenue and Thompson Avenue.

Street trees would improve the appearance of the western end of The Esplanade.

**The surrounding streets**

Street trees are generally of a high quality in the surrounding streets. Each street exhibits a different character and a variety of tree species have been used, but the effect is unified and consistent. The general appearance of the streets would benefit from regular tree maintenance to ensure their long-term health, and reinforcing the streetscape by replanting any gaps.

Any further planting should be in keeping with the existing style and the
same species should be used where possible. In areas where native plants are appropriate, indigenous species should be utilised to provide maximum habitat value for local wildlife.

Walpole Street, Warley Avenue and Findlay Street have avenues of Araucaria heterophylla (Norfolk Island Pine), which present a strong, architectural appearance and frame the view of the sea at the northern end of the street.

Chapel and Steele Streets both have mature Eucalypts and other native trees which offer habitat for birds and wildlife as well as providing a casual and authentically local character.

Steele Street, in particular has a secluded appearance due to the informal tree plantings, the dense plantings of the adjacent private gardens and the absence of footpaths.

Chapel Street is a wide and undulating road forming the southern boundary of the precinct. To the east and west it has wide, grassy footpaths and mature Eucalypts that frame views of the sky. Near the intersection with Thompson Avenue, Chapel Street takes on a more urban character with hard, paved edges and fewer trees.

Footpaths along these surrounding streets are an issue. Most side streets do not have any paved footpaths for pedestrian use. To equip these streets as functional pedestrian links, each street should have a paved footpath to at least one side of the street, where sufficient room exists.

Most streets have overhead power lines which detract from the otherwise attractive streetscapes.

**Implications**

Any additional street tree planting should be in keeping with the existing styles, and the same species used where possible.

Using indigenous species where appropriate would have additional benefits, providing habitat for local wildlife and improving bio-diversity.

Many of the side streets in Cowes do not have footpaths which poses difficulties for many people, particularly those with limited mobility.

Overhead powerlines detract from the streetscapes and would be improved with under-grounding or aerial bundle cabling.

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**Landmark Sites**

When thinking about the future of a place, it is important to identify landmark sites and to anticipate what type of development may be best suited to the particular location.

- a landmark site;
- represents a point of departure or difference within an existing context.
- is important relative to other urban elements and components
- is visible and prominent
- is generally capable of making a substantial contribution to the image, identity and legibility of a place
- should have an opening for discretion so that it can be considered on its merits.

**1 Landmark Site: The Isle of Wight**

This site has particular historical, geographical and social importance to the town and people of Cowes.

The Isle of Wight has landmark status for the following reasons:
- Positioned opposite the foreshore and prominent from the sea
- At the end of a key axis that includes the jetty, the jetty triangle and the hotel
- On a corner site with two street frontages
- Located within a break in the foreshore tree line meaning that the site is the first glimpse of Cowes seen from the sea
- Higher than the surrounding land - even the existing two storey building is imposing from the jetty carpark opposite
- Historical significance. The original hotel stood from 1870 to 1925, and a historically significant Moreton Bay Fig tree on the corner of the site was supposedly planted by Baron Ferdinand von Mueller of the Royal Botanic Gardens in the 1860's
- The existing Moreton Bay Fig tree which frames the site on the northeastern corner, is a landmark in itself, further adding to the profile of the site
- Social and cultural significance. It has always been a popular meeting place and destination for local people and visitors.
- The tennis courts to the south are also part of this property, and the size of the combined site will reinforce its landmark status within Cowes.

The successful redevelopment of the site has the potential to make a substantial contribution to the image, identity and legibility of Cowes. To ensure this outcome, future development will need to address important urban design issues that will impact on the functioning and appearance of the Cowes Foreshore Precinct and the town as a whole.

Due to its highly visible location and its high social profile, it is crucial that new built form is compliant with the design guidelines outlined in this document.

Review of the Cowes Foreshore Precinct Urban Design Report (April 2000) in relation to building heights on Isle of Wight site:

The Cowes Foreshore Precinct Urban Design Report, (April 2000) implied that new development of the Isle of Wight site recommended a preferred height of 5 storeys, however stated that development could be as high as 7.5 storeys, provided it met key strategic objectives. It also recommended that height is only one consideration and argued that a landmark development "would be expected to be two or so storeys above the general building form."

The analysis undertaken by the project team concurs that while the Isle of Wight site is acknowledged as being a landmark site, building heights should not exceed five storeys mid-block, with a maximum of two storeys at street level.

The following points provide further rationale for this position:
- The fine-grained character and human scale of Cowes' traditional built form is considered to be the key to ensuring that future development is reflective of the heritage, sympathetic to the context and appropriate in scale. It is considered that any development above five storeys would be unable to provide these qualities.
- The Isle of Wight site is already visually dominant and imposing due to its aspect and position on high ground. From the foreshore the existing building appears much bigger than two storeys due to this.

- As the previous Cowes Foreshore Urban Design Report noted, "tallness is not the only way in which a landmark development can demonstrate a point of difference and contribute towards the image and identity of a place."

- Other ways to highlight the site's landmark status would be more appropriate in the Cowes context. These would include: High quality architecture, arrangement of activities that contribute to an attractive context and incorporation or interpretation of local heritage and culture, are considered as important.

**Key Sites**

When thinking about the future of a place, it is important to identify key sites and to anticipate what type of development may be best suited to the particular location.

A key site has a degree of importance, due to its location, relative value or perceived significance. The development of such a key site has an impact, whether negative or positive, on the environment and community beyond the site itself and therefore it is highly desirable to have site-specific design guidelines in place to maximise the potential for a positive outcome.

In Cowes, there are several sites that might be considered key sites and their future development would undoubtedly impact on the whole precinct. It is vitally important that these sites are developed to maximise opportunities and to ensure that they make a positive contribution to the precinct, town and island as a whole.

2 **The Continental**

The Continental was among the first of the guesthouses on the foreshore and is a key site due to its part in the cultural heritage of Cowes. It also occupies a substantial site close to the town centre and facing the foreshore. Its position ensures that it is a high-profile site and that its redevelopment would impact on the whole of Cowes.

The redevelopment of this site should provide active frontages to The Esplanade and Bass Avenue and be undertaken to comply with the relevant guidelines outlined in this report.

3 **The Jetty Triangle**

The jetty triangle is currently used for car parking and for pedestrian access to the jetty and beach. The mix of uses causes significant conflict between cars and people, and detracts from the otherwise visually important surrounding landscape.

The redevelopment of this key site must be undertaken with pedestrians in mind. This area could be transformed into a public square for Cowes – a key location for public events, festivals and a place for people to meet.

4 **Corners of Thompson Avenue and The Esplanade**

Single storey buildings currently occupy these prominent corners allowing views down Thompson Avenue and towards the jetty and the water. These buildings currently do not actively address both street frontages and do not contribute greatly to the public realm. It is likely that these sites will come under development pressure in the near future. Their visibility and high profile make them key sites. Any development should be carefully designed to present active frontages to the public realm, maintain views to the sea from Thomson Avenue, and provide an appropriate use that will contribute to the vibrancy of Cowes as well as maintain views to the sea from Thompson Avenue.
Implications

It is important that distinctive, harmonious and contextual designs are achieved for high-profile key and landmark sites, in order to enhance the image and identity of Cowes and Phillip Island.

The Isle of Wight is a Cowes landmark and any future development of this site will need to address important design issues that will impact on the functioning and appearance of the Cowes Foreshore Precinct and the town as a whole. Development here should aim to raise the benchmark of building design in Cowes.

The old tennis courts adjacent to the Isle of Wight Hotel are unused and present a run-down appearance to the street. Appropriate development on this site will improve Bass Avenue’s general functioning and appearance, but will result in an increase in building density and a reduction in open space. It will be important that porosity is maintained by incorporating pedestrian links through the site to Thompson Avenue and The Esplanade.

The Continental Hotel occupies a significant site opposite the Cowes Foreshore and further development of this site will need to conform with the relevant design guidelines.

The corner sites of The Esplanade and Thompson Avenue do not adequately address both street frontages and any future redevelopment of them should improve the interaction at street level, and preserve sea views from within the town.

Views

The views that can be experienced around Phillip Island are valuable and include picturesque rural scenes, the land-water edge, rugged cliffs and coastline and casual fishing village scenes.

Cowes is a town with expansive sea vistas, which add to its appeal for locals and visitors alike. ‘Viewing’ from and within a town aids navigation and allows the viewer to understand their surroundings, and this is an important part of the visitor’s experience. From Cowes one can view Flinders on the Mornington Peninsula, French Island and the Strzeleckis which reinforces the ‘Island’ location.

Historically, the view of the town from the end of the jetty and from the water was considered significant, as it was the visitor’s first image of Cowes. This view was the visual ‘gateway’ to Phillip Island.

Visitors and local people who walk along the foreshore and the jetty now enjoy this view which is dominated by trees and the topography, rather than the built form which is only partly glimpsed through the trees. Buildings are secondary to the view, reinforcing the image of a small coastal town.
Erehwon Point is a natural landmark, which physically and historically has been seen as an important feature on the horizon when approaching Cowes by sea.

Each of the secondary north-south streets has views to the bay, often framed by an avenue of trees.

The view down Thompson Avenue presents an open feeling to the town, dominated by the avenue of Golden Cypress trees. From Chapel Street though, several of the golden cyresses have been removed from Thompson Avenue and replaced by young Chinese Elms, which has allowed even more expansive views of the sea.

The water is visible at the end of the street and over the rooflines of the mainly one and two storey shops. This visual access to the water from within the town is a defining feature of Cowes, and maintaining these views will become a key to retaining Cowes' coastal character into the future.

**Implications**

If the current trend for large new developments on the Esplanade continues, Cowes' small coastal town image will be undermined, and views of the town from the jetty and sea will be characterised by built form rather than the treed parkland landscape.

Future developments will need to include open space between buildings and variations in height if these important glimpses of sea are to be retained for all.

New built development should be designed to maintain the present visual dominance of the landscape.

The views within Cowes could be greatly enhanced in the future if the visual quality of the built form is improved. New built form should be responsive to the coastal context in form, scale and materials.

Redevelopment of the jetty triangle should recognise the important role of "viewing" the surrounding landscape and seascape as an intrinsic part of the amenity of Cowes.
Heritage

The building forms of the Cowes Foreshore Precinct are limited in their architectural and cultural heritage. However the buildings and structures which have recognised significance include:

Isle of Wight Hotel Site (original hotel 1870 – 1925)
2 Fig trees on the corner of the Isle of Wight hotel site (planted by Baron Ferdinand von Mueller in the 1880s) and Findlay Street behind the Continental Hotel.
Jetty (1870) ferry arrived here from Stony Point, and jetty shed
Band Rotunda (built in 1935 now used as a ferry ticket office)
Sea wall built with blocks from Pentridge Prison
The Sea Baths (1893)
The cenotaph
Site of the first chicory klin on the island (1870)
Legacy of guesthouses and hotel accommodation including the Bayview guesthouse (1911-1948), The Continental guesthouse (1923-1976), and the Erewhon guesthouse (1923-1963)
Conservation and protection of these historic structures and their settings is imperative to ensure the timeline of development and social history, which is an essential element of the identity of Cowes.

Historical significance in Cowes is not limited to built form. The historic avenue of golden cypress trees, the mature trees along the foreshore and the Isle of Wight’s Moreton Bay Figs are important cultural features.

A number of the individual trees are approaching the end of their lives and replacement planting will become increasingly important together with a regular and judicious maintenance program.

Implications

Cowes has a rich social and cultural history that is interesting to visitors but not effectively communicated in the public realm.

Heritage is more than buildings and artifacts. Cowes’ significant trees and landscape are important heritage assets that should be protected and enhanced for continued appreciation in the future.

New building development and planning should be mindful of Cowes’ historical context, eg guesthouse legacy, tourism and public use of the foreshore for leisure.

Redevelopment of the Isle of Wight Hotel site should embrace the historical, geographic and social significance of the site, and incorporate a high level of interaction with the public realm as key design principles.

A heritage study would benefit Cowes, and allow for the identification and protection of heritage assets. Once identified, a heritage trail could be incorporated into the public realm of Cowes, centred on an improved jetty area.
**Cowes: the community's vision**

A shared vision for Cowes will involve a collective reflection of all that is valued of the past, which also carries the aspirations of the whole community into the future.

The following points form the basis for this vision and were identified by the community as being significant:

**What does the community value about Cowes today?**

*The community raised the following points as things that they value about Cowes today:*

Cowes is a major commercial centre and the largest coastal town in the Bass Coast Shire: a living town providing important retail and services to Phillip Island’s local population.

The point of arrival is significant - Cowes is a seaborne gateway to one of Victoria’s most recognised and unique tourism icons, Phillip Island.

Cowes’ image is that of a seaside holiday town for visitors and residents alike.

Cowes’ heritage provides an important context for new development.

Characteristic elements include:

- Northerly aspect
- Picnic parkland
- Historic sea wall
- Lovers walk
- Variety of architectural styles
- Iconic Isle of Wight
- Erewhon Point
- Jetty
- Historic trees
- Dramatic topography and views
- Fine 'grain size' of built form
- Guest house heritage

**What could Cowes become?**

*The community identified the following points when thinking about what Cowes could become in the future:*

Cowes has the potential to play an important role in supporting Phillip Island in its aim for international standard nature-based tourism.

Cowes could be a high quality urban destination on Phillip Island.

Its coastal location offers the opportunity for its waterfront character to be enhanced.

The Cowes Foreshore Precinct has the potential to develop an enhanced tourism focus that will complement its waterfront location and benefit the local population as well as visitors.

Local people and visitors would be able to better enjoy what Cowes has to offer in a more pedestrian-focused environment.
Design Framework

Goals

To encourage development that will benefit the people of Cowes and provide a safe, vibrant and attractive place in which people can live, work and holiday.

To cultivate an image for Cowes based on strong local themes such as ‘seaside’ and ‘holiday’.

To develop a high quality urban environment, with built form that is responsive to Cowes’ coastal setting.

To develop and promote Cowes as a unique town with a strong sense of cultural and social heritage, a parkland environment and a special relationship with the sea.

To achieve a successful and appropriate design solution for the Isle of Wight site that is fitting of its landmark status.

To ensure that key sites are developed sensitively, so that they make a positive contribution to the urban environment and do not impinge on views and the quality of public space.

To encourage development that benefits people of all life stages and abilities.

To encourage development that is environmentally sustainable.

To foster a range of tourism opportunities for Cowes that complements the well-recognised attractions of Phillip Island.

To develop and improve the public spaces of Cowes for community events throughout the year.

Actions

Develop a strategy for signage, street furniture, public artworks and structures in the public realm. Use contemporary, custom design and coordinated furniture and signage along the foreshore that is appropriate for the seaside context.

Design and implement a coordinated lighting strategy to maximise opportunities for night-time activity, increase safety and help orient the visitor. Use contemporary lighting methods to highlight key features and avoid heritage-style fixtures.

Establish water links between Cowes, Melbourne, the Mornington and Bellarine Peninsulas, San Remo and Stony Point and encourage more water-based activities.

Develop a calendar of tourism events for all seasons to minimise the impact of peak activity during the summer months only.

Introduce a shuttle bus around Phillip Island to provide an affordable and environmentally preferable transport option for people coming into the Cowes Foreshore Precinct.

Undertake a neighbourhood character study for Cowes.

Undertake a heritage study to identify Cowes’ cultural and social heritage.

Promote the cultural and social heritage of Cowes through the development of a heritage interpretation strategy. Include high quality, contemporary and coordinated interpretive signage as part of the heritage trail.

Establish a heritage trail throughout the town, and investigate the possibility of a shipwreck diving tour off the coast of Cowes, ie the ‘Vixen’ that is registered on the Victorian Heritage Register.

Maintain and reinforce Cowes’ traditional coastal town scale that is characterised by its ‘fine grained’ building form.

Design new buildings to reflect the intimate, small-scale character and landscape surrounds of Cowes.

Avoid bland building forms that are out of scale with their surroundings, and ensure that the tree line along the foreshore is not dominated by built form.

Identify the Isle of Wight as a landmark site that has the potential to make a significant impact on the whole precinct, particularly the foreshore, and the mixed use zone of The Esplanade.
Identify the Jetty Triangle, Corners of The Esplanade and Thompson Avenue and The Continental site as key sites for development that have the potential to make a positive impact on the whole precinct.

Concentrate mixed use and tourism friendly developments within the area north of Thompson Avenue and along The Esplanade from Warley Avenue to Steele Street.

Consolidate the commercial area to the existing retail spine along Thompson Avenue.

Improve the car parking facilities in central Cowes.

Upgrade Cowes’ public spaces with a particular focus on the jetty triangle.

Design Guidelines

Public Realm and Landscape

Use building materials that reflect, reinforce and complement the local seaside character and the context of the public spaces. Utilise timber, concrete, stone, galvanised steel and stainless steel.

Refer to design strategies for signage, street furniture, lighting, public art and structures in the public environment of the foreshore. (See Strategies)

Design to cater for equitable access wherever possible.

Ensure that new developments within the public realm are able to demonstrate that they cater to local people as well as visitors.

Use water-permeable paving materials where possible when upgrading or constructing new pathways and pavers near the foreshore to reduce adverse environmental effects caused by increased storm water runoff.

Use different paving materials to clearly identify pedestrian spaces and vehicular areas, especially in transitional or shared spaces such as pedestrian links to car parks at rear of shops.

Discourage clutter and in particular, intrusive advertising on footpaths and in the public realm.

Key Sites

The development of key sites identified in the Cowes Foreshore Precinct will have an impact on the whole town. It is important that these high profile sites are well designed and contribute positively to the environment.

As part of the design process, establish a design committee made up of design professionals (include architects, urban designers, landscape architects, urban planners) to review planning applications for identified key sites, to ensure that high quality and appropriate development is achieved.

Consider conducting a design competition for key sites, to ensure that the best possible built outcome is achieved.

Ensure that designs for key sites, whether public or private, utilise materials and land uses that are in keeping with Cowes’ coastal setting.

Ensure that designs for key sites conform with the relevant design guidelines, eg for residential, commercial developments, etc. unless otherwise stated.

Carefully design new buildings to ensure that they are appropriate for the highly visible nature of the location.

Provide car parking as part of the development, but ensure that it is not visually dominant and locate it towards the rear of the sites.

Ensure that signage associated with developments at these sites is low-key and subdued.

Incorporate glazing to maximise the opportunities for views between the building and the outside.
Ensure that the developments present active frontages to The Esplanade. Introduce uses that will contribute to community and social life, and add to tourism opportunities. Reflect the site’s history within the architecture of any new development, with an interpretive, contemporary and high-quality approach.

Commercial Development

Encourage the use of footpaths for outdoor dining in commercial areas to maximise the opportunities for interaction between commercial developments and the public realm.

Widen footpaths where possible to increase the area of the public realm available for pedestrian activity.

Design buildings to encourage a high level of pedestrian activity at street level.

Employ a variety of profiles and finishes to visually break up the dominant built form.

Use timber, metal and glass as the primary building materials, and design to reflect the coastal context.

Utilise verandahs to maximise the connection between the upper floors of a building and the street, however ensure that the verandahs do not become intrusive in themselves.

Use verandahs and awnings to improve microclimate, to maximise year-round use and to present a unified appearance to the streetscape.

Design to cater for equitable access where possible.

Ensure that new developments are able to demonstrate that they cater to local people as well as visitors.

Encourage developments to provide for indoor and outdoor activities for all seasons.

Design new buildings to make a positive contribution to the landscape by being responsive to the scale and context of Cowes and ensure the landscape retains its visual dominance.

Minimise crossovers and service entries into new developments, including side streets.

Articulate the frontages of new buildings to avoid long stretches of homogenous facades.

Design new buildings to be consistent in height and bulk with the surrounding urban fabric.

Maintain the existing common parapet line along Thompson Avenue.

Maintain zero setbacks from the street in the retail strips of Thompson Avenue and The Esplanade.

Encourage the use of windows and glazing in the design of new buildings to allow a greater level of interaction between outside and inside. Ensure buildings actively address all views; avoid blank walls facing side streets, roads, lane ways, car parks, open space or pedestrian links and surrounding residential and commercial.

Aim to provide adequate, accessible and safe car parking facilities within new developments where possible.

Residential Development

Avoid massive building forms that are out of scale with their surroundings. Consider all new residential developments in the context of nearby dwellings...
and avoid unreasonable impact on neighbouring properties, i.e. overshadowing, noise, etc.

Limit development in residential areas to a maximum of 2 storeys (7 metres) in height.

 Undertake and respond to a thorough site and context analysis prior to designing new houses.

 Design new houses to complement the existing coastal and landscape context of Cowes.

 Provide landscaped setbacks that are consistent with those of surrounding properties to present a unified appearance to the street.

 Avoid fences that are higher than 1 metre to maintain a sense of openness.

 Encourage substantial landscaping to the front of new residential developments, and use the surrounding context as a guide, e.g. street trees.

 Note: If a property boundary dissects 2 or more precincts the frontages of the site should reflect the recommendations pertinent to that precinct

1 Jetty & Foreshore
2 West Esplanade
3 The Esplanade
4 Osbourne & Waipole
5 Warley
6 Thompson
7 Bass, Findlay & Steele

Landmark Site

Encourage articulated facades and avoid large expanses of blank walls.

Incorporate off-street parking that does not dominate the front of the building.

Encourage thoughtful, contemporary design, and avoid the inauthentic replication of heritage styles in the residential environment.

Ensure that residential development complies with Res Code, and all relevant design guidelines.

Ensure that new residential buildings along The Esplanade are designed to a high architectural standard and are in keeping with the foreshore context.

Aim to conceal new buildings from views that are enjoyed from the foreshore and the sea.

Retain important established vegetation on site when designing new residential development.
Precinct Area 1 – Foreshore and Jetty Triangle

Precinct Areas

In addition to the general goals, strategies and design guidelines, the Cowes Foreshore Precinct has been divided into smaller precinct areas. The goals, strategies, precinct plans and design guidelines that follow outline urban design programs for seven distinct areas within the precinct.

Goals

To improve the image, function and appearance of the foreshore and jetty areas, which are the signature open spaces of Cowes.
To encourage pedestrian circulation and safety and reduce the impact of car parking on the area.
To encourage vibrant and memorable public spaces that are active year-round, day and night.
To minimise impacts of development on the dynamic coastal environment.
To provide clear connections between the foreshore and jetty, and the Esplanade and Cowes town centre.
To provide robust and attractive recreational facilities for continued use.
To protect and maintain the existing vegetation along the foreshore.
To re-establish communities of indigenous vegetation where appropriate along the foreshore.
To place positive emphasis on historical items including the cenotaph.

Actions

Key Site for Development: Jetty Triangle

Create a clear vision for the jetty area in consultation with the local community. Redevelop the jetty triangle as a pedestrian-focused, public space and a centrepiece for public life in Cowes.
Remove car parking from the jetty triangle and relocate to another location within the town.
Use artistic collaborations to develop street furniture and public art that reflect past and present uses of the foreshore and jetty area.
Encourage art & craft markets around the jetty triangle at weekends and at night during summer.
Provide safe links between the jetty triangle and the commercial area for pedestrians.
Utilise changes in level to create a dynamic space, adaptable to suit different uses from informal recreation to organised markets, festivals and events of different scales.
Take advantage of the sea views and ensure that they are not obscured.
Acknowledge the relationship between the jetty triangle and the Isle of Wight site. Consider pedestrian spaces, links, access, views and traffic issues that will be common to both sites.
Introduce integrated, creative and high quality lighting to maximise the opportunities for use of the jetty area after dark. Install pedestrian scaled lights to pedestrian paths and subdued feature lighting to the jetty, stone wall, rotunda building and key trees.
Acknowledge historical items including the cenotaph and emphasise their historical and monumental features.

Foreshore

Create continuous linear parklands by linking foreshore nodes at Mussell Rocks, the jetty and Erewhon Point with paths and boardwalks.
Improve the foreshore facilities for viewing, picnicking, boating, fishing, walking and swimming.
Upgrade facilities at Mussell Rocks and Erewhon Point, including picnic shelters, barbecues, playgrounds, signage, car parking, landscaping, lighting and furniture.
Provide new, coordinated signage throughout the Cowes Foreshore Precinct to assist navigation and educate visitors about the area. Information would include place names, history and heritage, relevant laws on dog access to the beach, litter etc.

Provide safe links between the foreshore and the commercial area for pedestrians.

Reinforce the beach and foreshore environment to ensure that it is robust enough to withstand the year-round recreational needs of the local population, and the higher summer impact of visitors.

Conduct and implement a management plan for public space between Mussell Rocks and Erehwon Point.

Identify and protect significant landscape and historic features within the foreshore area for future users.

Retain, protect and replant significant existing trees in the foreshore reserve and begin a program of maintenance and replacement planting.

Develop a comprehensive strategy for foreshore vegetation, including a survey of existing vegetation and a planting plan.

Identify and protect existing communities of indigenous coastal vegetation along the foreshore, particularly to the west of Mussell Rocks.

Establish communities of indigenous groundcover species at the interface between the foreshore and the beach.

**Potential Car Ferry and Associated Infrastructure**

Investigate the reintroduction of the car ferry from Stony Point to Cowes, allowing visitors and residents to arrive at Cowes by sea.

Determine a location for the jetty that does not impinge on the pedestrian scale and functioning of The Esplanade and foreshore area.

Should the development of a car ferry link and associated infrastructure occur in this area, the following should be provided:

- Provide high-quality pedestrian access from Thompson Avenue and The Esplanade.
- Establish The Esplanade and the jetty as a pedestrian priority zone.
- Minimise visual intrusion.
- Provide high-quality public facilities and services at the end of the jetty.
- Minimise impact from vehicles (including coaches) and from parking areas on The Esplanade.
Precinct Area 2 – The Esplanade - West

Goals
To develop The Esplanade, west of Warley Street, as an attractive and dynamic residential area facing the foreshore.
To upgrade the appearance of the streetscape.
To encourage built form of a high quality.
To allow for increased residential density.

Actions
Identify The Esplanade, between Warley Avenue and Osbourne Avenue, as having opportunities for increased residential density, provided development meets all other urban design objectives.
Encourage high quality residential development of the lots in this area.
Introduce street trees to The Esplanade between Warley Avenue and Osbourne Avenue, to help present a more unified streetscape appearance.
Limit buildings to two storeys (7 metres to top of wall and 8 metres to the ridgeline) along The Esplanade from Osbourne to Walpole.
Limit buildings to three storeys (10.5 metres to top of wall) along The Esplanade from Walpole to Warley with a maximum of two storeys at the front, stepped back to three storeys mid building lot.

Ensure that the development presents active frontages to The Esplanade and Bass Avenue.
Introduce uses that contribute to community life and tourism opportunities.
Reflect the site’s history within the architecture of any new development, with an interpretive, contemporary and high-quality approach.

Relevant Design Guidelines
Residential, Key Sites, Public Realm & Landscape
Precinct Area 3 – The Esplanade

Goals
To create a vibrant street that attracts a wide range of local people and visitors, all year round
To improve pedestrian and visual connections between the Cowes commercial area and the foreshore
To improve the appearance of this high-profile streetscape
To maximise interaction between indoors and outdoors at ground level
To improve opportunities for night time activities

Note: If a property boundary dissects 2 or more precincts the frontages of the site should reflect the recommendations pertinent to that precinct

Actions
Encourage commercial establishments that promote activity such as cafes, galleries and restaurants at ground level along The Esplanade, between Bass Avenue and Warney Avenue.
Retain significant cultural and heritage features on the foreshore.
Widen footpaths between Bass Avenue and Thompson Avenue to encourage outdoor café style seating.
Upgrade pedestrian pavement and street furniture between Bass Avenue and Thompson Avenue.
Provide new street tree planting within the widened footpath areas as part of an organised planting program.
Incorporate safe, pedestrian-friendly links within new developments from The Esplanade through to car parking areas at the rear of shops.
Investigate traffic calming measures on The Esplanade through a dedicated study to reduce conflict points and congestion during summer, and to ensure the safety of pedestrians.

Guidelines
Ensure that any new buildings along The Esplanade are designed to a high architectural standard. Make use of the design committee recommended in this document.
Maximise opportunities for active street frontages with pedestrian focused uses and activities.
Encourage the use of decks to upper storeys, and animate the buildings through active uses such as dining.

Ensure that buildings actively address all facades that are visible from the public realm; avoid blank walls facing side-streets, roads, lane ways, car parks or pedestrian links.

Maintain the existing common parapet line along Thompson Avenue and the Mixed-Use zone of The Esplanade.

Limit development on The Esplanade between Warley and Bass to a maximum of five storeys in total, with a maximum of two storeys at the street level and stepped back to five storeys mid building lot.

Limit development on The Esplanade between Bass and Findlay to a maximum of four storeys in total, with a maximum of two storeys at the street level and stepped back to four storeys mid building.

Limit development on The Esplanade between Findlay and Steele to a maximum of three storeys in total with a maximum of two storeys at the street level and stepped back to three storeys mid building lot.

Ensure building setbacks that are consistent with the existing character of the street.

Widen footpaths between Bass Avenue and Thompson Avenue to encourage outdoor cafe style seating.

Upgrade pedestrian pavement and street furniture between Bass Avenue and Thompson Avenue.

Provide new street tree planting within the widened footpath areas as part of an organised planting program.

Retain, protect and maintain existing street trees.

Incorporate safe, pedestrian-friendly links within new developments from The Esplanade through to car parking areas at the rear of shops.

Promote a safe place for pedestrians and foster pedestrian links between the Esplanade and the foreshore - consider using contrasting feature paving in the road surface.

Investigate traffic calming measures on The Esplanade through a dedicated study to reduce conflict points and congestion during summer, and to ensure the safety of pedestrians.

Underground powerlines on the south side of the Esplanade.

Identify The Esplanade, between Warley Avenue and Osborne Avenue, as having opportunities for increased residential density, provided development meets all other urban design objectives.

Encourage high quality residential development of the lots in this area.

Introduce street trees to The Esplanade between Warley Avenue and Osborne Avenue, to help present a more unified appearance to the streetscape.

**Relevant Design Guidelines**

Commercial, Landmark Site, Key Sites, Public Realm & Landscape
Landmark Site: The Isle of Wight Hotel

The Isle of Wight Hotel site is considered to be Cowes’ most significant site. It is imperative to the image of Cowes that any new development on this site:
- makes a positive contribution to its setting
- is responsive to the coastal context in form, materials and use
- is a significant attraction in its own right
- raises the benchmark for built form and provide Cowes with a landmark of international quality
- contributes successful public spaces at ground level
- reflects heritage and past uses within the architecture
- maximises pedestrian activity at ground level on both frontages

Guidelines

Built form on the Isle of Wight site should not exceed 2 storeys (7 metres to top of wall and 8 metres to the ridgeline) at the street interface. At mid building lot the height should not exceed 5 storeys (17.5 metres maximum overall building height)

Encourage the use of materials that complement and are sympathetic to the coastal setting such as timber, stainless and galvanised steel and stone.

Acknowledge the relationship between the jetty triangle and the Isle of Wight site. Assess and respond to pedestrian spaces, links, access, views and traffic issues that will be common to both sites.

Retain and protect significant trees on the site including the Moreton Bay Fig on the corner of The Esplanade and Bass Avenue.

Avoid, where possible, obscuring glimpses of the sea that can be viewed from within the town.

Maximise opportunities for a high level of activity at ground level including open shop fronts, balconies and street vendors where appropriate.

Provide pedestrian links and spaces through the site at ground level to link the site to the public realm and to encourage movement through the site. Provide open pedestrian access through to Thompson Avenue and The Esplanade.

Provide vehicular access to the rear or side of the site to avoid numerous vehicular crossovers on The Esplanade.

Employ highly articulated facades to provide visual interest and to compliment the existing 'fine grain' and varied character of Cowes’ built form.

Ensure that proposed development is of an international standard, in keeping with Phillip Island’s significant tourism role within the state.

Incorporate glazing to maximise the opportunities for views between the building and the outside.

Ensure that the development presents active frontages to The Esplanade and Bass Avenue.

Undertake a traffic study to consider the treatment of the road area and relationship between the Isle of Wight and the jetty precinct.

Introduce uses that will contribute to community and social life, and add to tourism opportunities.

Reflect the site’s history within the architecture of any new development, with an interpretive, contemporary and high-quality approach.
Precinct Area 4 – Osborne Avenue and Walpole Street

Goals
To improve the appearance of these residential streetscapes
To provide better amenity for pedestrians, with improved access to the foreshore and the commercial centre of Cowes
To allow for an increased residential density
To encourage high quality residential development

Actions
Identify this area as having opportunities for increased residential density, providing development meets all other design objectives.
Introduce street trees to Osborne Avenue to help present a more unified appearance to the streetscape. Utilise indigenous trees if possible, to maintain the present landscape character.
Reinforce the street tree planting in Walpole Street by planting Norfolk Island Pines in gaps within the existing avenue.
Plant additional trees to reinforce the streetscape in Chapel Street, between Osborne Avenue and Thompson Avenue. Use Eucalyptus sp. west of Warley Avenue.
Construct a pedestrian footpath to at least one side of Walpole Street, to the eastern side of Osborne Avenue and to Chapel Street, between Osborne Avenue and Warley Avenue.
Improve the entrance to the Yacht Club at the north of Osborne Avenue. Provide signage and planting to improve the appearance of the car park in this location.

Relevant Design Guidelines
Residential, Public Realm & Landscape
Precinct Area 5 – Warley Avenue

Goals
To recognise Warley Avenue’s current role as a key location for health services
To identify Warley Avenue as a potential area for higher density residential
To improve pedestrian access and amenity within this area
To improve the appearance of the streetscape
To reduce conflict between pedestrians and vehicles

Actions
Reinforce the streetscape in Warley Avenue by planting Norfolk Island Pines in gaps within the existing avenue.
Continue to encourage the establishment of health care and service providers in this area.
Formalise the car parking area on the east of Warley Avenue to improve the appearance and functioning of the car park. Include a pedestrian route through the car park from Warley Avenue to Thompson Avenue.
Use feature paving to indicate pedestrian priority zones, to reduce conflict between vehicles exiting and entering, and between vehicles and pedestrians.
Incorporate planting within the car park, particularly at the interface between car park and street to improve its appearance and to provide some shade in summer.
Install signage to the car park to reduce conflict between vehicles exiting and entering, and between vehicles and pedestrians.
Ensure suitable access to key health services for those with limited mobility.

Relevant Design Guidelines
Residential, Commercial, Public Realm & Landscape
Precinct Area 6 – Thompson Avenue

Goals
To strengthen the northern tip of the Thompson Avenue commercial spine
To establish Thompson Avenue as a destination in itself
To create a comfortable and accessible environment for pedestrians
To improve the image of the town
To create a vibrant and safe environment, day and night and for all seasons

Actions
Establish a high level of interaction between indoors and outdoors by encouraging commercial development such as cafes and convenience retail at ground floor along Thompson Avenue.

Maintain the existing views of the sea that are enjoyed from within the town, and ensure that new developments on Thompson Avenue are able to demonstrate that they do not impinge on these views.

Recognise the importance of Cowes’ avenue of Golden Cypress trees.

Remove the Chinese Elms at the northern end and replace with Golden Cypress.

Promote improved opportunities for specialist and boutique shopping facilities within Thompson Avenue that will benefit existing residents and attract visitors.

Improve the safety and accessibility of pedestrian links from Thompson Avenue to the car parking areas at the rear of shops and the residential areas to the east and west.

Provide nominated bus and car parking away from Thompson Avenue to cater for nightly tourist buses. Investigate the use of the tennis courts site in Bass Avenue for this purpose.

Concentrate all new retail development within the existing retail area of Cowes.

Develop a lighting strategy to maximise opportunities for night-time activity and to increase safety within the foreshore area.

Encourage active retail and entertainment uses at street level to create a vibrant pedestrian environment.

Ensure that any new buildings along Thompson Avenue are designed to a high architectural standard that maximise opportunities for active street frontages.

Key Development Site: Corners of Thompson Avenue & The Esplanade

Ensure that any redevelopment of these sites is carefully designed to protect, enhance and maximise the existing views of the water from within the town.

Make a feature of the public realm at the corners at The Esplanade as part of any redevelopment of the corner sites. Aim to provide maximum interaction at the interface between the street and the built form, replace the existing pavement with high quality paving materials and introduce public artworks.

Maximise opportunities for activity at ground level by ensuring that buildings actively address and open onto both The Esplanade and Thompson Avenue.

Building heights should be 2 storey maximum at the street level and stepped back to 5 storeys mid lot.

Aim to create vibrant and successful spaces, and to maximise interaction between the public realm and new development.

Ensure that new developments contain uses that will enliven the area such as cafes, restaurants, and galleries.
Relevant Design Guidelines

Commercial, Key Sites, Public Realm & Landscape
Precinct Area 7 – Bass Avenue to Steele Street

Goals
To improve the appearance of the streetscapes
To provide better amenity for pedestrians, with improved access to the foreshore and the commercial centre of Cowes
To allow for an increased residential density
To encourage high quality residential development

Note: If a property boundary dissects 2 or more precincts the frontages of the site should reflect the recommendations pertinent to that precinct.
Actions

Aim to retain the fine grain of development and mix of residential and boutique accommodation establishments that exist on Steele Street, Findlay Avenue, Bass Avenue and Chapel Street.

Bass Avenue

Provide a footpath to the western side of Bass Avenue, from Chapel Street to The Esplanade.
Plant street trees on the western side of Bass Avenue, where the existing grassed edge is wider than usual.
Activate the eastern side of Bass Avenue by ensuring that any new buildings present an active frontage to the street, and that car parking is located towards the rear of the site.
Replace existing overhead power lines in Bass Avenue with underground cabling or aerial bundled cabling.
Improve signage and create pedestrian links if possible, between the car park on the west side of Bass Avenue, near Chapel Street, and the Thompson Avenue shopping precinct.
Recognise that appropriate development of the Isle of Wight tennis courts site will improve Bass Avenue's general functioning and appearance but will result in an increase in building density and a reduction in open space.
Ensure that porosity is maintained by incorporating pedestrian links through the site to Thompson Avenue and The Esplanade.

Findlay Street

Provide footpaths to at least one side of Findlay Street, from Chapel Street to The Esplanade.
Maintain the existing avenue of Norfolk Island Pines in Findlay Street.
Activate Findlay Street by ensuring that any new buildings present an active frontage to the street, and that car parking is located towards the rear of the site.
Replace existing overhead power lines in Findlay Street with underground cabling or aerial bundled cabling.

Steele Street

Maintain the grassed edge to the eastern side of Steele Street, and the footpath to the western side.
Maintain the plantings of native trees in Steele Street and encourage new developments to use a similar plant palette.

Chapel Street, from Steele to Bass

Maintain and supplement the plantings of native trees in Chapel Street and encourage new developments to use a similar plant palette.
Replace existing overhead power lines in Chapel Street with underground cabling.

Relevant Design Guidelines

Residential, Key Sites, Public Realm & Landscape