

- Discussion Paper -
Housing



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Housing demand and diversity.....	4
Key facts.....	4
Residential Demand	5
Residential Supply	6
Special needs housing.....	8
Affordable Housing	10
Key issues/ challenges	11
3. Neighbourhood Character and Heritage Conservation.....	12
Key Facts	12
Residential character and amenity.....	12
Heritage.....	13
Bushfire Threat	16

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 Census
 ID Profile Willoughby Community Profile

1. Introduction

Willoughby's usual residence population is approximately 67 000, within close to 26 000 households. Almost half of the land in Willoughby is occupied by residential development. In the decade from 2001-2011, Council approved an additional 1456 dwellings to cater for its growing population.

Willoughby City Council has enabled the development of a variety of multi-unit housing types which are complementary to the urban scale and character of the City and take account of environmental constraints while meeting the diverse housing needs of the community.

Willoughby has also responded to its role in the Metropolitan Region and the Metropolitan Plan for Sydney by planning residential growth through the preparation of draft Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 2012, and facilitating higher residential densities around local centres, along public transport corridors and around the major public transport interchanges of Chatswood and St Leonards.

The City caters for a diverse mix of residential accommodation ranging from relatively new high rise apartment buildings located in the Chatswood and St Leonards CBDs, to medium residential density in areas surrounding the CBD and Artarmon railway station, to lower density housing (including dual occupancy and secondary dwellings) in the majority of the City. The number of high rise (4 or more storey) dwellings in Willoughby City increased from 1931 to 6154 between 1986 and 2011. This occurred principally in the areas near to public transport at St Leonards, Artarmon and Chatswood.

48% of all dwellings are separate houses, 13.8% are medium density (1-2 storey) and 37.5% are high density (2011 Census). Between 1971 and 2001, the number of occupied private dwellings increased from 17 449 to 26000.

The suburbs of Willoughby each have distinctive environmental qualities and attributes that characterise the area. Those attributes contribute to the amenity of the area and are reinforced through Council's Local Environmental Plan and the Willoughby Development Control Plan (WDCP). There are a number of conservation areas designed to protect the heritage housing and streetscape forms featured in some of the City's residential areas. The City boasts some important historic sites including the Walter Burley Griffin buildings and housing estate in Castlecrag.

Housing within the City comprises not only private residential dwellings, but residential care facilities for older people and for people with a disability providing specialist care. There are also a number of boarding houses, public housing units and community housing and a small number of affordable housing units within the City that accommodate people on lower incomes.

A major review of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (1979) is underway and it is anticipated that 2013 will see changes to how Council does business in the areas of environmental planning, building and development. This will have significant impact on staff and customers as new legislative requirements and related processes are rolled out.

This issues paper addresses housing demand and diversity and neighbourhood character and heritage conservation, which are the two subthemes in the Willoughby City Strategy.

2. Housing demand and diversity

Willoughby City Strategy Goal:

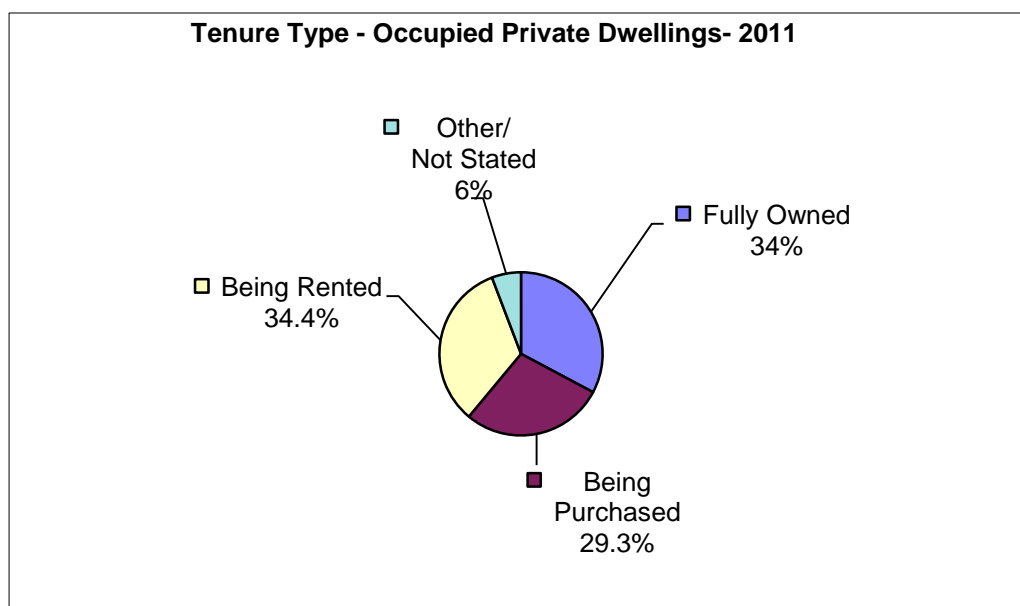
To be a place with a diversity of housing options to suit different needs through our residents' life stages, our changing population, people with special needs and different lifestyle choices and to improve the sustainability of our City within a compact metropolis.

Willoughby City Strategy outcomes:

- 3.1.1 A range of housing choices for all household types and age groups.
- 3.1.2 Ensure adequate provision of housing for older people and people with individual needs.
- 3.1.3 New housing is located in areas where housing densities are appropriate to the infrastructure and services and where quality living amenity for residents is ensured.

Key facts

- In 2011 there were 26,000 private dwellings in the Willoughby Local Government Area.
- 49.8% of dwellings comprise separate houses, 42.2% of dwellings are flats, units or apartments and 7.8% are semi-detached, row or terrace houses, townhouses etc.
- Approximately 34% of dwellings are owned outright and 29.3% are purchasing a home (2011 Census).



- The percentage of households renting rose from 29.5% in 1991 to 34.4% in 2011.
- Willoughby has a low proportion of public housing stock compared to other areas. This means that residents have a reduced housing choice and have difficulty in staying within their neighbourhood should their life circumstances change.

Residential Demand

Sydney is the largest city in Australia with a population of approximately 4.6 million, and experiences high levels of growth. Sydney continues to grow at a rate of approximately 50 000 persons per year. This increase combined with changing demographic factors means that Sydney will need approximately 570000 new homes by 2031 (Sydney over the next 20 years: a discussion paper). Some of this growth will occur in urban fringe areas and some will need to be accommodated in existing urban areas such as Willoughby.

The demand for housing in Willoughby is driven by a number of key factors, including:

- Location of the local government area relative to major employment zones, Sydney CBD and the economic Global Arc of industry and business stretching from the Airport to Ryde;
- Availability of transport infrastructure including the North Shore and Chatswood to Epping Rail Lines, Gore Hill Freeway and Pacific Highway;
- Physical characteristics of the area e.g. foreshore, bushland and heritage qualities; and
- Access to quality shopping, recreational, educational and health services.

Willoughby's population is increasing as the dwellings have increased.

	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011
Population	51893	51454	53735	59354	64858	67356
Occupied Dwellings	19498	19329	20561	22863	25230	24700
Occupancy Rate	2.66	2.66	2.61	2.60	2.57	2.73
Aged 65+	8323	7955	7904	7966	7977	8489

Willoughby's population is predicted to continue to increase by approximately 25% over the next 30 years:

2006	2011	2016 (projected)	2021 (projected)	2026 (projected)	2031 (projected)	Inc 2006-31	Total % Inc
64,856	67,356	72,109	75,923	78,612	80,632	15,776	24%

Source: ABS Census population & Forecast.id

However the projected population for 2011 (70,700) was not met, with the population in the Census being 67,356.

There is some concern within the community over whether changes in population will be matched by social planning considerations for increased child care, schools, youth services etc. (Willoughby Cultural Policy 2004) and improved infrastructure. It is predicted that in future, population will continue to grow and age and average household size will continue to decrease.

The last housing review was the residential background paper for the draft Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 2012 which was written in 2008. The NSW Government has released a Green Paper reviewing the NSW planning system, which proposes to involve the community

in planning decisions such as where housing growth will occur and what it will look like at an early stage.

In order to update this information and to develop a policy context for discussions in relation to the new planning system, it is necessary for a new Housing Strategy for Willoughby City to be prepared in 2013. The Strategy will inform future planning and identify areas for potential future housing growth.

Residential Supply

As the population of Metropolitan Sydney increases through natural growth, immigration and inter-City population movement, it is essential that an adequate supply of residential dwellings is provided to meet the growing need. An issue underlying this Discussion Paper is the role that Willoughby should take in accommodating residential growth having regard to the social, environmental and infrastructure costs of that growth. Since 1981 the State Government has been mandating urban consolidation through various policies and strategies. In 1995 the State Government introduced changes which required all councils to comply with a new state policy for urban consolidation. In order to gain an exemption from this Policy, councils were required to submit a Residential Development Strategy outlining how they would accommodate urban growth within their area.

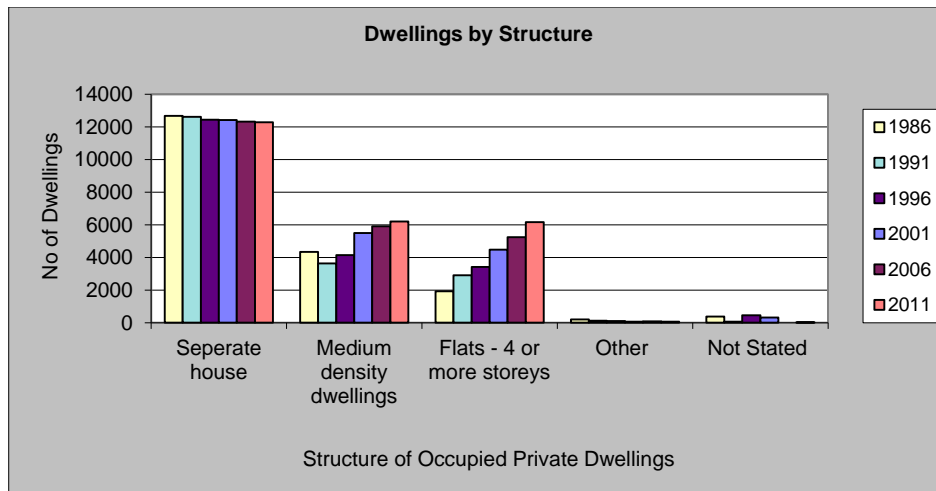
Willoughby Council prepared a Residential Development Strategy in 1996 which was endorsed by the State Government. It aimed to provide for urban growth through rezoning certain land, “upzoning” particular areas, and through other initiatives including removing floor space limits for residential development in business zones.

Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 1995 provides for a variety of housing types including higher density residential flat buildings in appropriate areas, medium density villas and townhouses and retains areas for dwelling house development.

Draft Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 2012 is a comprehensive planning guide for development across the City. The WLEP has been completed following extensive consultation and liaison with the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure and aims to enable job creation as well as the development of new dwellings. Council is now waiting for the Minister for Planning to make the plan.

As shown in the graph below, while the vast majority of dwellings within Willoughby City are free standing dwellings, there has been an increasing number of medium density dwellings and high rise development within the City over the past 25 years. The majority of this new residential development has occurred around existing centres including the Chatswood CBD, Artarmon and St Leonards.

In urban planning, there has been a move away from the traditional model of single-use neighbourhoods to the concept of the urban village where commercial, retail, residential, recreational, social and cultural uses are mixed. This is to make more efficient use of land and transport, more closely linking housing to employment and to create a richer, more interesting urban lifestyle. In these areas, it is important to consider the balance between these uses and to mitigate any negative amenity impacts between uses.



In the past 10 years there have been a number of developments which have contributed substantially to the supply of residential housing in the City. Draft Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 2012 identified additional areas for growth close to employment opportunities and public transport and will create the opportunity for a further increase in the supply of dwellings in Willoughby City.

There have also been a number of residential dwellings provided as shoptop housing since the introduction of controls which encouraged the development of dwellings in business zones in 1997. Dual occupancy development and secondary dwellings are permitted in certain circumstances which also contributes to the supply of housing stock.

Future dwelling forecasts for Willoughby provided through the Metropolitan Urban Development Program indicate that approximately 1730 new dwellings can be anticipated in the next 5 years. However this included residential development on the Royal North Shore Hospital site which has been deferred.

The Chatswood City Centre Vision and Strategic Plan 2008 estimated that the number of residential dwellings will increase 35% from 2600 in 2008 to 4000 in 2031. It also predicted that the residential population of the Chatswood Town Centre will increase from 5500 to 8500 during this period of time.

In assessing the supply of residential dwellings, there is a need to consider the relative developable land areas remaining, by excluding land reserved on environmental, employment and community grounds, and other constraints on residential growth. Opportunities for growth in the number of residential dwellings is restricted in certain areas of the City by the presence of important features such as bushland, heritage conservation areas and topographical constraints. In addition, the desire to continue to meet the demand for low density areas further restricts the locations in which residential development can occur. Therefore the majority of new residential development occurs around existing centres such as Chatswood and St Leonards, and in some centres along major road corridors with public transport services (such as Victoria Avenue, Penshurst Street, Eastern Valley Way and Sailors Bay Road).

The majority of new development should occur in locations that are in close proximity to sufficient educational, transport, health, social, cultural and employment services. New residential development needs to be adequately serviced by infrastructure. There is a restriction on the amount of redevelopment that may occur without significant additional infrastructure improvements. Impacts of development on traffic movements and arterial road networks, and the improvement of public transport services need to be considered. The

adequacy of existing water supply, stormwater, drainage, open space and community facilities are important considerations in permitting additional development to take place.

There is a need to balance the proportion of new dwellings which are provided within major centres such as Chatswood with the number to be provided in smaller urban villages and within existing suburban neighbourhoods.

The main issues with regard to supply in Willoughby appear to be:

- Ensuring an adequate supply of sites for new residential dwellings in suitable locations;
- Providing a mix of housing types to meet community needs in a sensitive and sustainable manner;
- Ensuring that new housing is designed with consideration of environmental sustainability principles;
- Provision of adequate and appropriate social/ cultural infrastructure and open space to meet the needs of residents;
- Affordability of the residential market; and
- Constraints of strata title legislation limiting the potential for existing older apartments to be redeveloped.

It is imperative that new residential development is well designed, responds to the context and contributes in a positive way to the public domain. Council's existing development controls for multi-unit dwellings aim to ensure that development is well designed and appropriate for each site. Multi-unit development is also designed to meet the requirements of State Environmental Planning Policy 65 (Design Quality of Residential Flat Buildings) which is currently under review by the State Government. Council's controls will be reviewed in light of any changes to SEPP65.

Special needs housing

State Environmental Planning Policy (Seniors Living) 2004 aims to increase the choice of residential accommodation for older people and people with a disability by permitting development for this purpose in specific areas. Whilst Willoughby has not experienced many developments under this Policy, there have been some issues associated with the medium density character of such projects being introduced to low density suburban locations.

The Social Plan for Older People 2005-2009 identified the needs for suitable and affordable nursing home accommodation in the Willoughby area such that people can stay in familiar environments close to family and support networks in close proximity to centres.

Council's existing planning controls permit a diverse range of housing types to meet varying needs. These range from detached dwelling houses, villas and townhouses to multi-storey flat development, including apartments in town centres which provide good access to services.

State Environmental Planning Policy (Seniors Living) aims to increase the supply and diversity of housing that meets the needs of older people or people with a disability, by overriding existing local planning controls to permit this form of housing in areas where it is not permitted.

The Social Plan for Older People 2005-2009 recommended that Council co-operate regionally to acquire appropriate support and accommodation for people with a diverse range of needs.

Forecasts of immigration numbers will have an influence on the demand for dwellings and tenure type. One recommendation of the Social Plan for people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds 2005-2009 was that the needs of new migrants and emerging migrant communities should be monitored and supported. This is relevant for the provision of new residential accommodation and the diversity of housing sizes, types and styles. In particular, the needs of older migrant communities need to be considered in the provision of appropriate support and accommodation.

There is a high rate of home ownership for those over 65 which can be attributed to the conditions in the post-war period that facilitated home ownership, including strong economic growth, tax deductions and subsidies on home mortgage interest rates.

The housing preferences of older people will have a significant impact on housing demand as Willoughby's population ages. In recent years there has been a move away from institutionalised care for people with a disability. The accommodation needs of people with a disability also need to be catered for. The Social Plan for People with Disabilities 2005-2009 reinforces the need to promote design concepts that meet diverse accommodation needs. Housing designs can be modified inexpensively to cater for this demand. Council requires a proportion of new residential development to be constructed as adaptable housing.

Adaptable housing is housing that is designed in such a way that it can be modified easily in the future to become accessible to both occupants and visitors with disabilities or progressive frailties. Council requires up to 50% of new residential units to be adaptable. These requirements assist in meeting the housing needs and choice for Council's growing ageing population and the needs of people with disabilities, and to provide greater flexibility of housing stock to change to meet people's needs generally.

There needs to be a diversity of accommodation for older people to suit their varying needs. In addition, there needs to be support for older people living in their home. However, it must be recognised that some forms of housing redevelopment such as villas and townhouses are not economically viable in most parts of Willoughby due to the high land values of property.

In 2010, 1.1 million adults (7% of the 16.8 million adult population living in private dwellings) had experienced homelessness at some time in the previous 10 years (ABS). Factors that contribute towards homelessness are social breakdown, people with mental health issues, an inability to obtain appropriate housing in a highly competitive market, limited supply and high demand for social housing.

The 2006 Census identified that of those that are homeless, approximately 40% are staying temporarily with relatives and friends, 28% are living in boarding housings and other temporary accommodation, 13% are sleeping rough on the streets of our cities and towns and 19 % find a bed in the homeless service system.

In the 2006 Census, 6 people were identified as sleeping in an improvised home, tent, or sleepers out in the Willoughby LGA. This number was 0 in the 2011 Census.

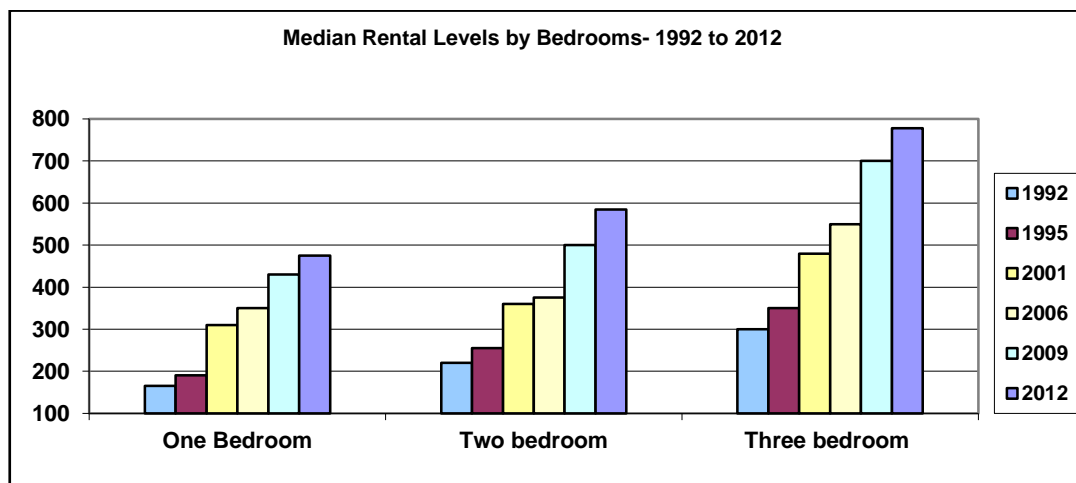
Affordable Housing

A significant percentage of Australians are in need of affordable housing options. Housing affordability is defined by the National Housing Strategy as the payment of no more than 30% of household income in accommodation costs. The affordability of housing in Sydney continues to decline. The significant social and economic changes over the past two decades have strengthened the prevalence of disadvantage and the emergence of social exclusion in Sydney. There is both a severe shortage of affordable rental housing and an emerging deposit gap in relation to home ownership. In 2011, a median priced dwelling in Sydney was 9.2 times the median annual household income, in the 1970's it was approximately three/ four times¹.

Suburb	Dwelling type	Median Sale Price 2003	Median Sale Price 2011	% increase
Chatswood	House	\$938 000	\$1 220 500	30
	Unit	\$476 650	\$610 000	28
Northbridge	House	\$1 422 500	\$1 622 500	14
Willoughby	House	\$870 100	\$1 250 000	44
	Unit	\$415 000	\$555 000	34

In Willoughby City, increasing property values above the Sydney Metropolitan average have exacerbated housing affordability, and rental stock at the lower end of the market is disappearing and rents are significantly increasing. This places pressure on many residents on lower incomes and in particular, on families. Rising house prices on the North Shore over the past decade has meant that many employees can no longer afford to live close to their work and many employers are seeking to fill lower paid jobs from outside of the area.

In 2011, 10% of residents were in housing stress, with 9% in mortgage stress and 21% in private rental stress (Source: Australians for Affordable Housing).



The graph above shows the continual increase in median rents from 1992 to 2012 for 1, 2 and 3 bedroom dwellings in Willoughby (Rent and Sales Reports 1992-2012). It shows that the increased supply of one and two bedroom units in Willoughby has not had a flow on effect in reducing rental costs. Furthermore, the graph indicates that the limited supply of 3

¹ Birrell (2011). The End of Affordable Housing in Melbourne? Monash University Centre for Population and Urban Research.

bedroom accommodation has made them increasingly expensive and this will have the greatest impact on families who rent.

There is a limited supply of social housing within Willoughby City and waiting list demand far outstrips supply. Most of the people who are housed are on the priority waiting list. Applicants for public housing on the Lower North Shore wait up to 10 years to be housed. In 2011 social housing stock in Willoughby made up only 1.6% of total dwellings in comparison with the NSW state average of 4.4%.

Another form of social housing is community housing. Community housing is similar to public housing, but is run by community housing organisations, which are non-Government, non-profit, independent organisations. Link Housing is the local community housing provider and has over 1000 dwellings in the Lower Northern Region.

In response to decreasing housing affordability in the City and the limited availability of social housing, Council implemented the Willoughby City Housing Policy which examines social housing demand and levels of unmet housing need within the City, and provides the context for Council's involvement in housing issues.

In 1999, Council adopted controls in the Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 1995 and Development Control Plan which aim to provide affordable housing for special needs housing groups in Willoughby City. Affordable Housing is rented by people from special needs housing groups within the City of Willoughby, at rents which do not exceed a benchmark of 30% of their actual household income. Council currently owns 10 Willoughby Local Housing units in St Leonards which were dedicated to Council following the rezoning of former State Rail land to a residential zone. A number of cash contributions for affordable housing have also been received. A number of new affordable housing sites were identified in draft Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 2012.

Household demographics are changing considerably and this is increasing the demand for a diverse range of dwelling types and tenures. This diversity is in terms of both dwelling size, dwelling type and the characteristics of the dwelling.

Additionally there is a need to retain a mix of household types to support local employment centres. Facilitating a mix of different household, income and cultural groups within an area leads to vibrant and sustainable local communities.

The provision of appropriate housing provides a foundation for family and social stability, and contributes to improved health and educational outcomes and a productive workforce. Thus it enhances both economic performance and social capital².

Key issues/ challenges

- In increasing densities- maintaining attractive neighbourhoods with residential amenity and regard for the private domain
- Develop and expand Affordable Housing Programme
- Implement affordable housing projects with Link Housing
- Provide seniors housing choices
- Increasing housing supply and the community desire for no change
- Economic viability of planning controls for medium density housing
- Precinct planning for regional areas

² Productivity Commission (2004). First Home Ownership, Report No. 28, Melbourne.

3. Neighbourhood Character and Heritage Conservation

Willoughby City Strategy Goal:

To value and enhance Willoughby's neighbourhood characteristics and heritage through quality design and construction that respects heritage values and allows change and adaptation to reflect modern living.

Willoughby City Strategy Outcomes

3.2.1 The heritage of Willoughby is identified and protected.

3.2.2 Aboriginal heritage is acknowledged and respected.

3.2.3 Neighbourhood character and natural heritage is maintained and enhanced.

Key Facts

- 49.8% of dwellings comprise separate houses, 42.2% of dwellings are flats, units or apartments and 7.8% are semi-detached, row or terrace houses, townhouses etc.
- Willoughby has over 200 heritage items, and 12 conservation areas.
- Approximately 30% of land is exposed to bushfire risk.

Residential character and amenity

Willoughby City has a variety of residential development including multi-storey flat development in the Chatswood Town Centre, St Leonards, Artarmon and urban villages with a mix of commercial, retail and residential uses, and single dwelling houses in suburban streets and on peninsular ridgelines and plateaux. The types of residential development also vary significantly between suburbs e.g. the Griffin designed homes of the Castlecrag peninsular in comparison to the Californian Bungalows of the "flower streets" in Chatswood.

Residents of Willoughby are increasingly concerned with maintaining the character of their suburbs. There is a need to recognise, retain and enhance the character and attributes of the City that make it an attractive and liveable environment. It is considered that there is a need to retain those attributes of local neighbourhoods which are considered to be unique or significant to Willoughby. It is recognised that there is a need to balance the demand for residential development to meet demographic changes with the retention of valued neighbourhood attributes into the future.

The encouragement of good quality urban design and development of attractive streetscapes is essential. The Locality Specific controls for the low density residential areas in the Willoughby Development Control Plan outline the character, streetscape elements, landscape and vegetation characteristics of each locality and identifies the desired future character. In order to recognise the City's diverse housing forms, the locality specific development controls should be further developed to recognise the important characteristics of the local areas.

Distinctive natural boundaries such as public reserves and the bushland of the Middle Harbour and Lane Cove River are integral to the character of certain suburbs and these

natural areas are retained through their recreation and environmental protection zonings under Draft Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 2012. Within the City there are several areas of the “Environmental Living” zone which aims to accommodate housing such that the scenic qualities and ecological values of environmentally sensitive natural areas are maintained by protecting land from overdevelopment or visually intrusive development. These zones help to ensure that dwellings located on foreshore land (i.e. Northbridge, Castle Cove, Middle Cove, Chatswood West, Lane Cove North and Castlecrag) should be designed to minimise potential environmental impacts on water quality and disturbance to bushland and to protect views.

In certain areas where the land meets or is in close proximity to the water, Council imposes a foreshore building line (FBL) below which only certain development is permissible. The aim of the FBL is to preserve and enhance the natural features and vegetation of those localities.

Willoughby is well known as a green and leafy area, and street trees play a central role in contributing to this landscape quality. Trees are considered to be very important in the urban context. They provide a wide range of environmental, functional and aesthetic benefits that contribute greatly to the urban environment. In recognition of the benefits of trees in the urban environment, Willoughby City Council has controls in Willoughby Local Environmental Plan to provide a regulatory framework for the preservation and management of trees as well as bushland. This prohibits certain activities such as the cutting down or lopping of trees except with the approval of Council.

It is important that street tree plantings are selected which reflect local character and soil conditions as well as being mindful of the overshadowing of properties. Council is currently developing a new street trees policy.

Residential development at any scale needs to be managed to minimise negative impacts on amenity and the environment. Council’s Willoughby Development Control Plan outlines requirements which aim to minimise the impacts of loss of sunlight, overshadowing, privacy and view loss from surrounding development and retain residential amenity, for both low density and medium density housing.

Council should continue to improve urban design, planning and sustainability requirements for key town centres and new development of increasing densities.

Council must endeavour to ensure that the new character of areas changing due to rezonings is not compromised by poor design. SEPP 65- Design Quality of Residential Flat Development aims to improve the design quality of residential flat buildings in NSW by identifying the issues that consent authorities must consider when assessing development applications and requiring the involvement of a qualified designer in the design of each building.

Heritage

Heritage is evidence of our history and culture. Conserving our heritage helps us to understand our past, and to contribute to the lives of future generations. It gives us a sense of continuity and belonging to the place where we live.

Heritage consists of those places and objects that we as a community have inherited from the past and want to hand on to future generations. Our heritage gives us a sense of living history and provides a physical link to the work and way of life of earlier generations. It enriches our lives and helps us to understand who we are today.

Heritage in NSW is diverse and includes buildings, objects, monuments, Aboriginal places, gardens, bridges, landscapes, archaeological sites, shipwrecks, relics, bridges, streets, industrial structures and conservation precincts. Heritage items are protected by the provisions of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and the Heritage Act 1977. Council's Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan outline controls for local heritage items.

An awareness of the importance and benefits of sound heritage conservation practice has grown in recent times because of the community's concern about the loss of our heritage. Heritage within Willoughby comprises both State and local heritage items, heritage conservation areas, natural heritage and Aboriginal heritage sites.

Heritage items within Willoughby comprise dwelling houses from a diverse range of architectural styles, churches, and schools, in addition to more unusual items such as bridges, paving, an open air theatre and gates.

Pressures on built heritage are:

- Increasing land values resulting in a push to maximize development potential of sites and for demolition in Conservation Areas, and loss of vegetation on sites;
- Development reflecting new trends, rather than existing character;
- Increasing car ownership resulting in garages and carports replacing garden settings; and
- Potential land use conflicts with the location of heritage items and conservation areas along railway lines/ public transport corridors along ridges, which are the most suitable locations for higher density residential development.

The first Willoughby heritage study was completed in 1989 and identified potential heritage sites and a number of heritage conservation areas. Since this time, a number of reviews have occurred resulting in additional properties being listed and conservation areas being formed where considered appropriate. Heritage items may be nominated for consideration by local residents or are identified by Council staff.

Council undertakes a review of heritage items once in each Council term (i.e. every 4 years).

In the future, it is important that Council and the community continue to conserve places and structures that contribute to the character, heritage and cultural values of the City. However, not all "old" places warrant conservation and Council must carefully consider heritage being used as a reason for preventing development.

Aboriginal heritage consists of those places and objects that contribute to the story of Aboriginal people in NSW. It can help identify the links that places may have with each other. Aboriginal people moved around NSW and passed on stories, information and knowledge by going to these special places.

Aboriginal heritage includes places and items that are important to the local Aboriginal community or to Aboriginal people of NSW. These are places or objects that people have a connection to, both physically and spiritually.

Aboriginal heritage can include natural features such as creeks or mountains, ceremonial or story places or areas of more contemporary cultural significance such as Aboriginal missions or post contact sites.

Aboriginal heritage places and objects are protected by the provisions of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974, Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and the Heritage Act 1977. Aboriginal heritage sites are a constant reminder that Aboriginal people of the Guringai tribe occupied this area in harmony with the natural surroundings.

Within Willoughby City there are approximately 150 sites which are registered on the Aboriginal heritage register. It is expected that there are a number of sites which are yet to be identified.

The Office of Environment and Heritage requires applicants for development applications to obtain an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit.

Natural heritage incorporates a spectrum of values, ranging from existence value at one end to socially based values at the other. The fundamental concept of natural heritage, which most clearly differentiates it from cultural heritage, is that of:

- Dynamic ecological processes;
- Ongoing natural evolution; and
- The ability of ecosystems to be self-perpetuating.

Willoughby has a Natural Heritage Register which identifies key natural heritage areas within the City and promotes broader community understanding of natural heritage values.

The vision for the conservation of natural heritage for the next 10-20 years is:

“To ensure the conservation of Willoughby’s scheduled natural heritage places and items, on public and private land, in a way which will protect community values, encourage partnerships with the local community and return a positive outcome for future generations³”.

The vision for the protection of built, natural and Aboriginal heritage is to:

- Continue to identify and protect the natural and built heritage of the City through Heritage Items and Conservation Area Reviews where necessary and ensure their significance is not compromised by adjoining development;
- Increase awareness and understanding of Aboriginal heritage;
- Further develop the Aboriginal heritage inventory;
- Continue to ensure heritage controls and incentives protect sites of heritage significance; and
- Continue to promote community awareness of heritage values through identification projects and education such as the Heritage Festival and Heritage Awards.

³ LandArc Pty Ltd. (2002). *Natural Heritage Study*.

Bushfire Threat

Bushfire poses a significant threat to certain residential areas within the City as was most recently evidenced by the 1994 bushfires in the Lane Cove National Park when homes in Chatswood West were threatened and residents evacuated. With the application of planning precautions and appropriate design features, it is possible to significantly reduce the potential impact that a bushfire will have on residential properties.

Bush fire prone lands are generally those forest or grasslands that, by virtue of their bushfire hazard and proximity to existing and proposed development, pose a significant risk to property in the event of a bushfire.

In 2001 the State Government introduced legislation to bring about a development regime in areas of high bushfire risk. The legislation's intent is to ensure that residential and other developments are not unduly exposed to risk from high intensity bushfires. Areas which are prone to bushfire are identified on a map prepared by each local council in collaboration with the NSW Rural Fire Service.

The State Government requirements outline certain protective measures to render a building less susceptible to damage or destruction from bushfires. If the siting and nature of the building being proposed does not meet the minimum requirements as contained in the guidelines, councils need to refer the application to the NSW Rural Fire Service for advice.

It is not the intention to prevent the development of land in bush fire prone locations. However, in order to provide adequate protection from bushfires, it may be necessary to modify the style, construction material or siting of a building. It is also the intention not to intensify development in bushfire prone locations (e.g. aged persons housing) without adequately considering the potential for bushfire.

Factors that will be considered with regard to developments in bush fire prone areas include:

- access to and from the property for evacuation and firefighting;
- the provision of an adequate water supply for firefighting;
- building setbacks, including the provision of "Asset Protection Zones"; and
- construction standards.

Asset Protection Zones provide a buffer around residential properties by requiring that bushfire fuels be progressively reduced as they get closer to the dwelling. Asset Protection Zones are therefore made up of sections described as inner and outer protection areas. These areas allow flexibility in the design and construction standards that might apply.

In future, residential character should continue to be protected from the threat of bushfire by ensuring that new dwellings are designed considering potential bushfire impacts. Residential areas should also be protected through the continuation of Council's hazard reduction burning programs.