

5. Challenges and opportunities

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5.1 Growth and development

Dickson operates as a major convenience shopping centre for its primary catchment population and as a metropolitan destination for eating out/entertainment for the wider community. The multi-cultural focus of the eating out/entertainment function contributes to the distinctive character of the centre and is highly valued by the community.

The continued growth of the catchment population will generate a demand for additional services and facilities in the centre. In addition the ongoing growth of Civic will have spill over effects on Dickson.

The Dickson Centre Planning Project has identified several opportunities for the centre to respond to changing requirements which if adopted would establish a platform for the future growth of the centre and strengthen its current role and functions.

5.1.1 Additional supermarket space

One of the objectives of the project was to assess options for the location of additional supermarket space in the centre.*

ACT Supermarket Competition Policy

The ACT Supermarket Competition Policy was reviewed in 2009 by Martin Stone Pty Ltd. The review examined the dynamics of the ACT supermarket sector, likely future trends and an overarching policy framework to guide development of the supermarket sector.

The review notes that the supply of supermarket capacity has fallen behind demand in central Canberra and that the competitive situation 'has deficiencies in terms of choice and diversity' (p63).

The report recommends that the shortage of full-line supermarket in some group centres, including Dickson, should be addressed.

Floorspace demand

Recent retail studies undertaken by ACTPLA indicate that given the expected population growth in north Canberra, there will be a demand for an additional 5,700m² of supermarket space in 2010 increasing to 8,100m² by 2017. This suggests that north Canberra can support two to three additional full line supermarkets by 2017.

The intent in identifying a site(s) for additional supermarket space is to meet the unmet needs ACTPLA has identified in north Canberra.

Based on the results of the demand estimates two supermarket options were assessed:

- a major full line supermarket with a gross floor area of about 4500m² plus speciality retailing, , and
- a smaller supermarket with a gross floor area of about 1500m² to 2000m².

Options

The project investigated several opportunities to locate new supermarket facilities in the Dickson Centre (Figure 24).

Figure 24: Supermarket location options



Figure 25: Potential supermarket site



Assessment - full-line supermarket

The assessment took into account the principle of concentrating major retailing in the retail core and the principle of encouraging anchors to be located such that pedestrian traffic between is maximised.

The assessment considered the impact of developing a supermarket outside the retail core, the extent to which different sites would anchor retailing and the capacity of the alternate sites to accommodate either a full line or a smaller supermarket.

The assessment concluded that a new supermarket(s) should be located within the existing retail core area (that is, east of Badham Street) in order to support existing retail activity, especially independent retailers. While it is recognised that retailing is located outside the core, locating a supermarket space elsewhere in the centre would reduce pedestrian movement in the retail core. It would also increase pedestrian movement across Badham Street, resulting in potential traffic/pedestrian conflicts.

One of the reasons that the centre has been relatively successful is that retail anchors have been located on the eastern (department store) and western (supermarket) edges of the retail core with smaller retailers between. This arrangement is widely recognised as maximising the amount of pedestrian traffic past the smaller shops. Ideally this pattern can be retained.

Within the existing road configuration only one site was large enough to accommodate a full line supermarket. The site was the existing car park to the north of Woolworths (Block 21 Section 30) (Figure 25). This site will generate additional pedestrian traffic that should percolate throughout the centre.

* On 6 May 2010, Chief Minister Jon Stanhope announced the release of new supermarket sites, including Dickson. For more details refer to this report's foreword or the following internet link: <http://www.chiefminister.act.gov.au/media.php?v=9505>

Full-line supermarket

The preferred site currently provides 237 car parking spaces and has a site area of 7,867m². The site is large enough for a full-line supermarket of about 4000m² and associated uses. The existing car parking would have to be replaced on-site.

Several issues will have to be resolved prior to sale of the land:

- A parking management strategy should be development that aims to provide some car parking to replace that on Block 21 Section 30 during construction in order to minimise the disruption to businesses in the Dickson Centre.
- The development should face the retail core and therefore the rear of the development would face Antill Street. It may be necessary to prepare guidelines to ensure that the appearance of the rear of the building is consistent with the prominent location.
- Service access would be from Antill Street. The traffic impacts should be assessed in more detail than was possible in this project and any mitigation measures identified.
- The economics of constructing a multi-level basement will influence the potential scale of development. If the development capacity is to be determined prior to sale the feasibility of constructing two or more basements should be assessed.
- The preferred amount of speciality retail floorspace should be determined taking into account the desirability of it to ensure that existing retailers benefit from the additional trade that will be generated.

- The development should be integrated with the centre. This will be best achieved if floor levels are similar to external levels, pedestrian access from basement parking is to the public realm and active frontages are maximised.

The scale of the proposed development will be larger than other developments in the retail core. Unless the built form is fine grained the development could compromise the character of the retail core. The urban design considerations referred to above are intended to break down the apparent scale and create a place in which the pedestrian walkways are extended from the core to the proposed development.

The community has expressed their strong preference for an open development rather than the development of a mall.

Site planning consideration and traffic impacts are considered in section 3.6.

Smaller supermarket

It was not possible to identify a suitable site at this time for a smaller supermarket even though several of the sites are the required size.

Notwithstanding the current lack of space it would be desirable to identify a site for another new supermarket in the Dickson Centre. There will continue to be unmet demand for additional supermarket space even after a new full-line supermarket is development. The extent of unmet demand will increase. Preferably the site should be located in the eastern part of the retail core.

Community voices

We need a second supermarket, especially to create competition, however it needs to be attractive and should not create additional traffic problems.

There is a definite need for a second supermarket in the area.

We do not want a retail mall.

I do not mind where the supermarket is located. It is more important that it has good pedestrian, cycle, bus and car access.

The design of the shopping precinct could be improved – currently it does not encourage shoppers to migrate from the Woolworths end to the Harris Scarfe end of the precinct.

Dickson needs more than one supermarket, including a fruit and vegetable market.

The lack of competition is a real problem and it would be great to have another supermarket.

5.1.2 Northbourne Avenue precinct

The Northbourne Avenue precinct consists of large office buildings, landscaping and surface parking areas. By current standards the density of development is relatively low and the precinct is substantially underdeveloped. The precinct is not well connected to the centre.

The Motor Registry facilities are no longer used as originally intended and much of the site is underutilised. More intensive development of this site would enhance the character of the Northbourne Avenue corridor and support the centre.

One of the three options for the bus station in Dickson involves the Motor Registry site. Once the location of the station is determined the balance of the site could be released for commercial or residential development.

5.1.3 Residential development

The Spatial Plan identifies Dickson as a location with the highest priority for residential intensification. Residential densities in the suburb are lower than in newer areas such as Gungahlin. The Dickson community has also proposed that higher density development should be located in the centre.

There are numerous opportunities for residential development in the centre. These include the area south of Dickson Place and Cape Street and the northern edges of the centre such as the proposed new supermarket development (a northern edge location). The centre could accommodate over 1000 people.

Residential development would increase the diversity of uses in the centre, increase safety and support public transport objectives.

The lack of residential development in the centre is the major gap in what is otherwise a very mixed use centre. For this reason residential development should be encouraged and given some priority over land uses. From a planning perspective two approaches would encourage residential development:

- allow developments that are predominantly residential (upper levels) to be higher than developments that could be proposed for other uses on the same site, and
- allow residential development on the ground floor where blocks are oriented away from the centre and/or where blocks are too deep for commercial development on the whole ground level.

Blocks in Section 32 fronting and Antill Street service road and blocks in Section 34 that would front an extended Cape Street (through the Tradies Club) are examples of blocks where residential development on the ground floor would be compatible with the role of the centre.

To maximise surveillance and the relationship with the public realm ground floor residential development in these and similar locations should be required to address the street.

As noted previously Dickson is a major metropolitan eating out/entertainment destination and many facilities operate into the early hours of the morning. In some locations conflicts have arisen between entertainment uses and residential uses located in close proximity. Issues of concern have included noise and antisocial behaviour.

While these issues are not a reason to restrict residential or entertainment activities, adequate controls should be included in the planning framework to minimise the potential impacts of collision. In other jurisdictions, such as Brisbane City, computer based information is available so prospective residents can better understand the impact of living near eating out/entertainment uses. Such a system could be considered for Dickson.

Community voices

Could have limited residential in centre around courtyard area or where current loading docks are – like the residential on Captain Cook Crescent.

Don't agree that residential should be in the centre – will limit night time Civic – there is enough residential in adjacent suburbs.

Dickson is an ideal place to further intensify residential density while at the same time strengthen its vital role as a retail/community service hub, as it is within inner north, yet a fair distance from the Civic and also next to a major public transport corridor.

It [Dickson] is a far more logical location for high density dwellings than north Watson.

5.1.4 Sites for community facilities

As a group centre, Dickson is the natural location for many community facilities. Numerous community uses are already located in the suburb with several located in the centre, including arts facilities, churches, sporting facilities and health facilities. These facilities serve local, district and metropolitan populations.

Notwithstanding the range of community facilities located in the area there is an ongoing demand for additional, centrally located sites. The 2003 ACT Community Facilities Needs Assessment (the latest available) estimated that there was less than 1ha of community facilities land remaining in inner north Canberra.

This Planning Project has identified that there is an opportunity to release land in the recreation precinct for community uses. The land is in the vicinity of Block 13 Section 72. The area is not serviced and fronts Antill Street but does not have vehicular access. More detailed site investigations would be required prior to release.

The land is currently zoned Commercial CZ6 (Leisure and Accommodation). Community uses are permissible in the zone. Nevertheless it may be appropriate to rezone the land so that it is not ultimately used for a higher order use.

5.1.5 Southern car park (adjacent to the Tradies Club)

It is probable that in the longer term the Tradies Club site (Blocks 28 and 29 Section 34) will be redeveloped. The site is very deep and without additional road frontage would be difficult to develop. Redevelopment would present an opportunity to introduce new vehicular and pedestrian connections

through the site which in turn would increase the frontage of the site and also improve permeability in the centre. Furthermore, a better outcome could be achieved if the southern car park (Block 20 Section 34) which is adjacent to the Tradies Club site was amalgamated with it.

Similarly the amalgamation could provide an opportunity to obtain public benefits. The nature of any benefits is likely to change but could include:

- replacement of existing parking in accordance with the Territory Plan
- development of a small public open space on part of the car park in order to introduce 'green' areas into the centre, and
- transformation of Dickson Place from a service road to an address road (in conjunction with redevelopment of blocks in the retail core).

Achieving these or other benefits should be a condition of any site consolidation.

5.1.6 Redevelopment within the retail core

The buildings in the retail core were developed in the 1960s and are old and maintenance has often been deferred. Although the public realm has been refurbished, in general buildings have not been upgraded.

Building heights could be slightly increased in the retail core without adversely affecting its amenity or character. Development of a new supermarket and general revitalisation of the centre may facilitate refurbishment of existing buildings. Increasing permissible building heights in the retail core may also encourage refurbishment and upgrading.

Redevelopment up to a maximum of three (3) storeys would be appropriate where solar access to public spaces is not reduced below the existing levels and parking can be addressed. This could be achieved by reducing provision rates, waiving the requirement to provide parking, introducing a parking bank to meet demand or a combination of these options.

It is anticipated that it would be easier to meet the solar access requirements on the southern edge of the retail core and that these blocks would be redeveloped before other blocks. Redevelopment along the southern edge would also enable the rear of blocks to Dickson Place to be upgraded. Ideally, active frontages should be established to this road.

5.1.7 Office development

The Group Centre Development Code permits office development of up to 4000m² per lease in the Dickson Centre. This control is based on the former employment location policy in the National Capital Plan. The employment location policy has since been amended and office floorspace can be the equivalent of retail floorspace in centres that do not form part of the employment corridors. This policy may allow additional office development in the centre.

A variation to the Territory Plan will be required if the various opportunities identified in this planning study are to be implemented. It would be appropriate to review the existing office floorspace controls as part of further assessment required for a variation to the Territory Plan.

5.2 Connectivity

Centres depend on the ability of people to move around easily, safely and comfortably. A connected centre is internally permeable and well linked to the areas it serves.

The community commented on the poor legibility of pedestrian and cycle routes through the centre and the barriers to movement.

5.2.1 Possible new pedestrian connections

Pedestrian permeability varies throughout the centre. It is high in the retail core with alternative routes and frequent intersections. Some if not all routes are varied and interesting but legibility could be improved.

Permeability in the Woolley Street precinct is low reflecting the large size of the blocks in this area and the absence of mid-block connections. Movement is around the perimeter. The distance between east-west roads is about 200m.

The main issues associated with the main east-west route (Figure 22) include:

- Pedestrian connections between Northbourne Avenue and Challis Street are informal, not well delineated and pass through leased land and private car parks.
- The route between Challis Street to Woolley Street is varied and passes areas of activity but the quality of landscaping, including materials, paving and path width varies. The area adjacent to Challis Street could be improved given the high volume of pedestrian traffic.
- The link between Woolley Street and the retail core in the vicinity of Badham Street passes through leased land (McDonald's car park) and includes blank frontages in the core.

- The recreational precinct is not well linked to other parts of the centre and uses within the precinct are not well connected.

The pedestrian route from the Dickson Drain to the centre is narrow and is not overlooked. It is a place that many people in the community indicated that they felt unsafe.

Pedestrian movement could be enhanced by improving the legibility of existing routes and introducing new routes.

Existing routes could be improved:

- widen the Badham Street footpath (by increasing building setbacks)
- widen the width of the walkway from the Dickson Drain and introduce new connections, and
- visually strengthen the existing east-west connection (refer to section 5.3).

It is generally recognised that a spacing of about 80 metres to 100 metres between pedestrian connections allows adequate pedestrian permeability and choice.

A new pedestrian connection between Challis Street and Northbourne Avenue will be established as part of a proposed subdivision of Block 4 Section 33.

Opportunities to establish additional routes are located on leased land. They are most likely to be achieved through redevelopment of various sites in the centre (Figure 26). Improved pedestrian connectivity should be encouraged in the following locations:

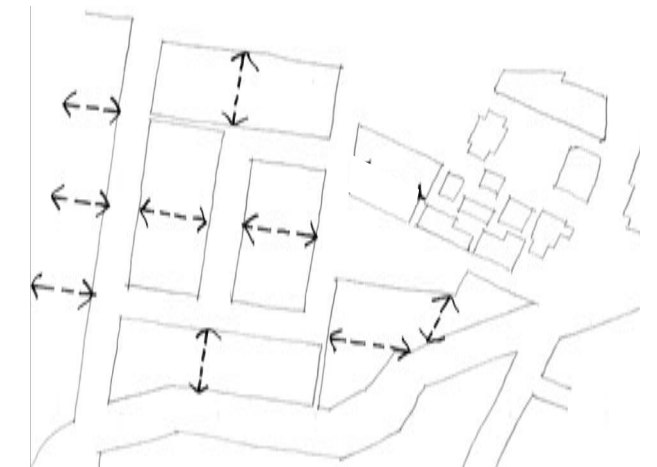
- as part of the redevelopment of the Motor Registry office site
- mid-block between Woolley Street and Challis Street

- mid-block between Badham Street and Woolley Street
- between Cape Street and the Dickson Drain to the south
- between Challis Street and Northbourne Avenue to be co-ordinated with the location of bus routes
- mid-block between Woolley Street and the unnamed service road to the north and Antill Street
- across Cowper Street and within the recreation precinct.

Planning controls should encourage (generally) mid-block pedestrian connections to be included in redevelopment proposals, including in Section 33.

Apart from encouraging improved connectivity via the planning guidelines, cooperation between lessees will be required to introduce mid-block connections. However lessees would also benefit from these connections as they would improve access to the rear of deep blocks.

Figure 26: Potential new pedestrian connections



5.2.2 Possible new vehicular connections

There are currently several entry points into the centre, nevertheless connectivity, especially from the south could be improved. There are several opportunities to improve the road network (Figure 27):

- Cape St western extension (new road link from Northbourne Avenue) – A new entry from Northbourne Avenue into the centre would reduce the pressure on Morphett Street and Antill Street. It would provide greater flexibility for managing public transport and access to the centre. This connection could also improve the legibility of the centre by opening up a new entry from Northbourne Avenue to the southern areas of the group centre.
- Cape Street eastern extension (new road through the Tradies Club site).

Extending Cape Street would create a new and legible east west route through the centre from Northbourne Avenue to Cowper Street.

Both opportunities to enhance vehicular connections are located on leased land. It is anticipated that lessees would not want existing development rights reduced.

5.2.3 Public transport

The ACT Strategic Public Transport Network Plan proposes that a bus station be constructed at Dickson and identifies three possible configurations:

- Option 1 - locate the station on both sides of Challis Street
- Option 2 - northbound buses would stop on Challis Street and southbound buses would stop on Northbourne Avenue with a pedestrian connection between the two stops. Local services would connect to the Rapid and Express on Challis Street.

- Option 3 - Rapid and Express services would remain on Northbourne Avenue and local services would loop through an off-street station between Challis Street and Northbourne Avenue.

Having regard to the principles presented in this report, Option 2 best achieves the objectives of this planning project.

Challis Street would be an ideal location for a bus station as it is located within easy walking distance of other parts of the centre and Northbourne Avenue. Local services could use the Antill Street service road to access the facility, without the need to enter the traffic stream on the arterial road network.

In order to facilitate a bus station in this location, several changes would be required to the pedestrian and parking arrangements along Challis Street and the surrounding streets.

These changes include:

- reduction in on-street parking enables bus bays to be constructed
- construction of pedestrian refuges provides safe pedestrian crossing points
- construction of a legible pedestrian connection between the retail core and other precincts and the station
- construction of a pedestrian pathway between Challis Street and Northbourne Avenue
- introduction of pedestrian wayfinding signage to direct pedestrians to the main attractors in the centre and to guide pedestrians to the station.

An alternate approach could be to develop a station on the motor registry site with a bus only break in the median to provide direct bus access to and from the station. Local services could also use the station via Challis Street. This option should be investigated.

Figure 27: Potential new road connections

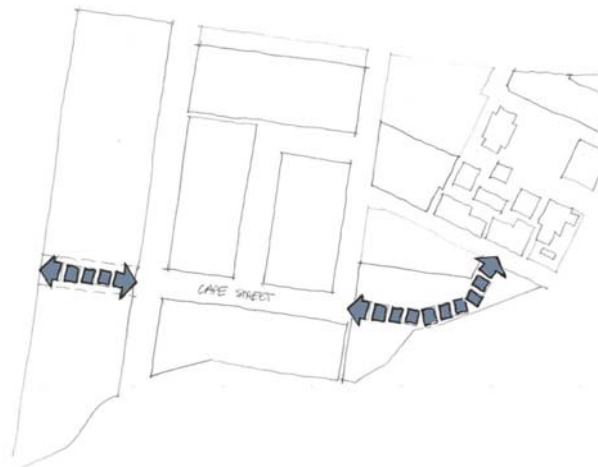
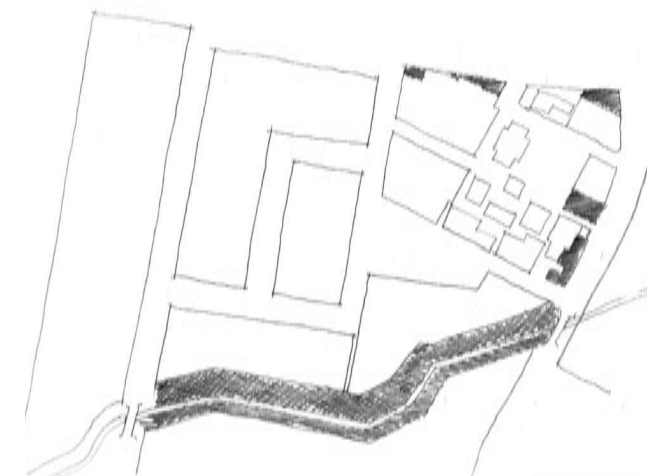


Figure 28: Existing open space areas



5.3 Public realm

5.3.1 Green space and outdoor meeting areas

There are few green spaces in the centre. With the exception of the Dickson Drain the existing spaces are small, scattered residual areas that are generally not intended to be open spaces (Figure 28).

The community considers that the centre could be improved and its character more strongly established if a focal point were developed. Some members of the community consider that this could be achieved through the development of a park within the centre.

There is an opportunity to create a linear open space extending from Cowper Street in the east and connecting with the existing outdoor plaza adjacent to Woolley Street and Challis Street using existing but underdeveloped routes (Figure 29). The space could be extended into the proposed bus station and the recreation precinct. It would provide a well defined focal point in the centre and link the four precincts (Figure 29).

Figure 29: Major public realm opportunity

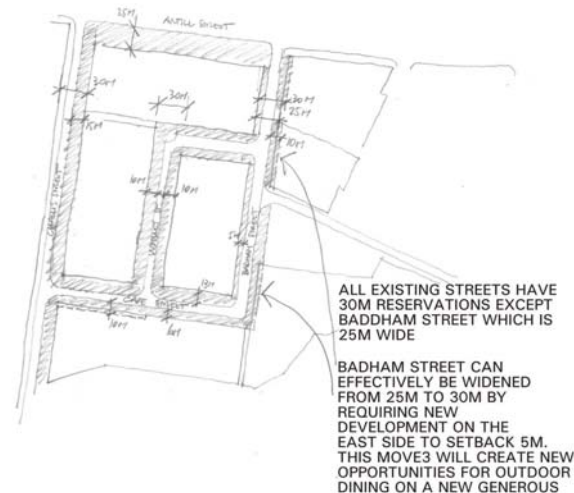


This space would encompass the plaza adjacent to the library and could be extended into some retail courtyards. It would include the proposed pedestrian area separating the existing and proposed supermarket sites. Ideally it would also include the area within the McDonalds lease that is currently used as a pedestrian route but the linear open space would not be compromised if this area was not available.

Depending on the detailed design the space could be a combination of green and paved areas, linked by a common landscape theme.

In the event that the car park adjacent to the Tradies Club was redeveloped, part of the site could be developed as a small park and focal point at the intersection of Badham Street and Dickson Place. Such a park would also improve the appearance of Dickson Place.

Figure 30: Potential streetscape enhancement



5.3.2 Streetscapes

The main issues associated with the public realm are:

- the streetscapes in parts of the Woolley Street precinct are well established with extensive plantings of oriental plane trees and use of brick paving. Other areas are less well established and there are gaps in the tree planting that detract from the quality of the area
- landscaping in the retail core is dated and maintenance could be improved, and
- the streetscape of the Northbourne Avenue precinct, especially the western verge of Challis Street is not consistent with the treatment on the eastern verge of that street.

The quality and attractiveness of the public realm of the centre, including the Northbourne Avenue precinct and the recreation precinct would be improved if:

- streetscapes were improved
- gaps in street plantings were replanted, and
- a common theme was adopted throughout the centre, especially for paving and street furniture.

5.3.3 Address and identity

Even though the centre is adjacent to two major roads, it does not address the surrounding streets.

The four precincts adjoin Antill Street. Buildings in each precinct are set a considerable distance back from Antill Street. Existing development is predominantly small scale and part of the frontage is surface parking.

Redevelopment of sites in the northern part of the centre, including Blocks 6 and 7 Section 32 and the potential development of Block 21 Section 30 (existing car park) will progressively establish a stronger address to the centre.

The centre lacks a well defined identity that is exacerbated by the presence of unnamed roads in the centre including:

- the access road to the northern car park off Badham Street
- the access road adjacent to the health centre off Antill Street and Cowper Street, and
- the road providing access to the eastern car park (Block 19 Section 30).

Naming these roads would reinforce the identity of the centre and assist way finding.

The entries to the centre from Antill Street Street were initially marked by plantings of prunus trees that have since been removed. The relationship between the centre and Antill Street could be improved if these entry points were replanted with the same or a similar species, thus providing a symbolic link to the history of the centre.

5.3.4 Dickson Drain

The Dickson Drain extends along the southern edge of the centre and includes pedestrian/bicycle paths on both sides and mature trees (Figure 28). The drain is the most direct route between Northbourne Avenue and the centre, Daramalan College and Dickson College.

During the day this area is well used, however the community has indicated that during the evening the area does not feel safe because of poor lighting and the absence of passive surveillance.

The Dickson Drain separates the centre from areas to the south and there are few opportunities to cross. Pedestrians cross the actual Dickson Drain rather than divert to bridge crossings on Challis Street and Cowper Street.

There are few physical or visual connections between the centre and the drain. Development in the centre backs onto the drain and hence overlooking (passive surveillance) is limited. The single pedestrian path located to the west of the Tradies Club is very narrow, unattractive and flanked by blank walls discouraging pedestrian use and reducing perceptions of safety.

The Urban Waterways Program is investigating the establishment of naturalised stormwater detention of the drain upstream in Hackett and downstream in Lyneham. As part of the current project the feasibility of naturalising the drain in the vicinity of the centre was investigated. Because land adjacent to the drain is narrow in the vicinity of the centre it is not possible to adopt this approach. Nevertheless other approaches to improving the drain should be explored with the objective of improving the amenity of the area as an open space.

As noted elsewhere, visually extending Woolley Street and Badham Street towards the drain would improve pedestrian connections. This is considered in section 5.4.



5.4 Built form

Buildings are the most prominent element of the urban environment. They shape and articulate the public realm and the relationship between the built form, land use and the public realm affects the success of a centre as a place to be.

It is generally recognised that Dickson is distinctive. However unlike many other centres this distinctiveness is related to the mix of uses rather than the built form. The planning framework provides an opportunity to create a more distinctive built form.

5.4.1 Building heights

The existing built form planning controls (Group Centre Development Code and Leisure and the Accommodation Zone Development Code) determine maximum building heights in the centre (and other centres).

The outcome is that permissible heights are standardised across Canberra. This approach limits the potential for place-making and the opportunity to build on what exists to create a distinctive place.

The scale of development currently permissible is not appropriate to the central location and role of the centre.

There are several reasons why building heights in the centre should be increased:

- The Spatial Plan identifies Dickson Centre as a preferred location for higher density housing but the codes restrict the location of higher buildings.
- The centre is centrally located and has limited

undeveloped land. Development pressures are likely to intensify over the longer term and available land should be efficiently used.

- Higher building heights would not impact adversely on surrounding areas because of the physical separation between the centre and the immediate area.
- Provided that adequate consideration is given to overshadowing, increased building heights would not adversely affect the centre.
- It is timely to move from a standardised approach to built form across the city to a more place-specific approach that recognises the differing scale and complexity of group centres.

The planning framework represents an opportunity to introduce new height controls that encourage efficient use of land to meet emerging pressures for change and to ensure Dickson develops as a distinctive centre in terms of built form as well as function.

The relationship between the height of buildings and the width of the street influences the character of the built environment. Current design and planning approaches recognise that building height should be set in relation to street width, among other factors. Wider streets can successfully accommodate higher buildings.

Buildings that are between 0.5 and 1 times as high as a road is wide will generally be in scale with the immediate environment.

With the exception of Badham Street, reservations are 30m wide. Therefore building heights of between 15m (4-5 storeys) and 30m (10 storeys) would be consistent with the scale of the public realm provided that taller buildings do not overshadow public spaces.

The assessment concluded that in the retail core buildings of up to three storeys (12m) would be consistent with the scale of the public spaces, would retain the general character of this area and minimise overshadowing.

In the Woolley Street precinct, buildings up to 20m (i.e. up to six (6) storeys) would be consistent with the scale in locations that do not overshadow public areas. These areas would be predominantly on the edge of the centre.

5.4.2 Building setbacks

Buildings built to the front boundary effectively define and enclose the public realm.

Although the planning controls do not specifically require buildings to be built to the front or side property boundaries, this pattern of development has generally been adopted. Ideally future development should follow this pattern. To ensure this outcome continues to be achieved future planning controls should require specifically require a zero setback to the front boundary. The only exception would be the eastern side of Badham Street, which is considered below.

The Badham Street reservation is 25m compared with 30m for other roads in the centre. The public realm would be improved with further opportunities for outdoor dining, if the pavement was a similar width to other footpaths in the centre. This could be achieved if future development fronting the eastern side of Badham Street was required to be set back 5m from the front property line. To maximise the benefits of the increased setbacks, the setback area would be landscaped and form part of the public realm.

5.4.3 Active frontages and address frontages

Active frontages add interest and life to the public realm and contribute to community safety. In commercial areas, active frontages are achieved when there are frequent doors and windows opening onto the street, few blank walls and ground floor internal uses are visible from the street.

The current planning controls seek active frontages by restricting the uses permissible on the ground floor.

As a consequence pedestrian generating commercial uses are located on the ground floor. However the

frontages are not necessarily activated. For example in parts of the centre opaque or translucent glass blocks the relationship between internal and external spaces.

The introduction of built form controls that encourage active frontages would complement the existing land use controls. More importantly these controls would assist in extending existing active areas and contribute to more interesting streets.

As noted previously, residential uses could be located on the ground floor on the edges of the centre. In these areas the objective should be to ensure that buildings address the street, that is, address frontages rather than active frontages would be required.

Address frontages would be achieved through maximising windows and doors facing the street, encouraging balconies and bay windows and maximising the number of entries from the street. Privacy could be protected while retaining passive surveillance by allowing level changes between the street and residential development. If courtyard walls were to be permissible their height should not limit overlooking and passive surveillance.

5.4.4 Awnings

Awnings are a feature throughout the centre including the retail core and much of the Woolley Street precinct.

Awnings add visual interest to building facades, protection from wet and hot weather and enable activities to extend onto the footpath. Awnings can also be a powerful unifying element.

Awnings should be encouraged in future redevelopment within the retail core and Woolley Street precincts.

5.5 Parking

The centre has considerable potential to grow within its existing boundaries. Its location and the increasing population within its catchment suggest this will occur. Realising this potential is linked to the provision of sufficient parking.

Much of the growth potential is embedded in the surface car parks and the under-utilised sites. Over time surface public car parks are likely to be replaced by basement and/or parking structures. Larger blocks in the centre could accommodate basements but they are not feasible on smaller sites such as in the retail core.

5.5.1 Meeting increasing parking demand

Parking requirements arising from small-scale redevelopment within the retail core cannot be met on-site and have generally been provided communally.

A review of on-site parking capacity in the Woolley Street precinct has concluded that most blocks are large enough to accommodate basements and that a high proportion of parking could be located on-site (Figure 32). Nevertheless additional off-site parking will be required. There are numerous situations where parking requirements could be reduced:

- Supermarkets rather than specialty retailing are the major generators of retail traffic. Parking rates for specialty retailing could be reduced.
- Parking generation rates are usually lower in multi-unit housing that is close to public transport. Parking rates for developments that are close to public transport could be reduced.
- Rates of provision could be reduced in recognition that many trips to the Dickson Centre would be multi-purpose trips.

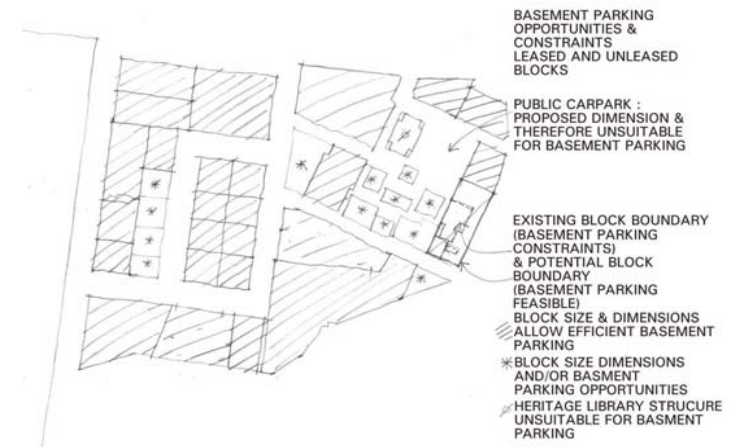
- Rates of parking provision could be reduced because the centre is a day and night-time destination and the parking spaces are used sequentially rather than concurrently and at different times of the day.
- The amount of employment in the centre supports increased public transport use.

Demand could be met in several ways including:

- investigate the establishment of a parking bank as part of future developments
- maximise on-street parking, especially short-stay parking.

Further investigations are required to assess the most appropriate combination of the above strategies.

Figure 31: Basement parking opportunities



5.5.2 Access to public parking

Throughout Canberra several surface public car parks in centres have been redeveloped. These areas have provided public and communal parking for retailing and other uses that have not been required to provide parking on-site. Although the land is unleased Territory land, retailers and other businesses generally have a strong ownership of the spaces.

In some cases the parking provided is not easily accessible:

- parking is often not well signposted and many people are unaware of its availability and consequently it is underutilised
- access to parking areas has generally been provided via the development, especially when enclosed malls have replaced surface parking
- entries to the parking areas are often not visible from the public realm, and
- businesses in the 'older' part of a centre can feel disenfranchised from public parking.

In situations where public parking is provided on leased land as part of a new commercial development, businesses that are not located in the new development can be disadvantaged.

The Territory Plan and/or sale documents for sites in the Dickson Centre should address this issue and ensure that existing retailers in the centre are not disadvantaged by the sale of former surface car parks and the way that replacement parking is provided.

This is likely to be achieved if:

- access to basement parking is from the public realm and not from within a development, and
- parking areas are well signposted.

5.5.3 Investigate a parking bank

The Government is investigating the establishment of a parking contributions scheme to fund off-site parking. Under such an arrangement, developers pay into a public parking fund when (re)development consent is granted in lieu of providing parking on-site. Theoretically this approach could fund off-site parking demand arising from the redevelopment of buildings in the retail core and elsewhere in the centre.

An alternative approach where a parking contribution scheme is not feasible would be to introduce a 'parking bank'. In this approach parking spaces would be developed ahead of the actual requirement and developers would 'purchase' these spaces as part of a development approval. A parking bank could be established on Block 20 Section 34 should it be redeveloped. The requirement to develop a parking bank could be included in the sales documents or in the Territory Plan.

This approach would facilitate redevelopment in the centre but has several implications:

- initial revenue from the sale of the existing car parks would be reduced if a developer had to provide additional parking spaces (in excess of demand from the proposed development and replacement parking), and
- the revenue foregone may not be recouped for several years.

The number of spaces and the likely timing of demand have not been estimated. Further investigations are required to assess demand, cost and recoupment time.

5.5.4 The eastern surface car park

The car park between the library and the Baptist Church (Block 19 Section 30) provides parking in proximity to the eastern part of the centre. This area is separate from other surface parking.

The potential to develop a small scale supermarket on this site was assessed. However, it was considered that this area should be retained as a surface car park for the following reasons:

- it is adjacent to facilities used by older people and people with disabilities who require accessible parking
- the site is too small for a full line supermarket, and
- redevelopment of the site would change the character, scale, openness and pattern of the retail core.