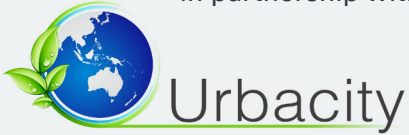




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THE OAKS CENTRE DETAILED REPORT

DECEMBER 2020



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1 The Oaks

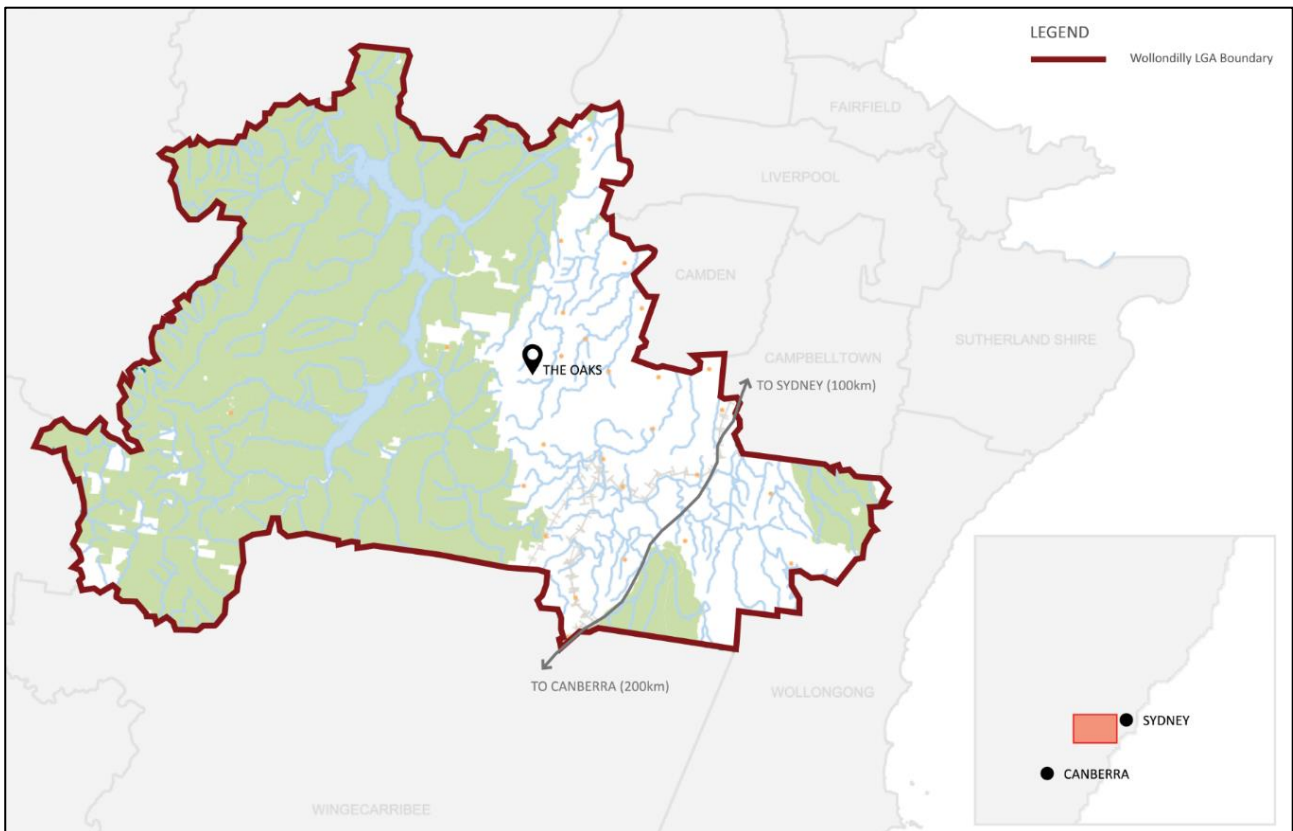


Figure 1-1 The Oaks Locality Map.

1.1 The Oaks Village, Activity Core and Edges

The key characteristics of The Oaks are listed in the table below:

Population	2016 Census	3,335	Projected increase of 595 persons by 2041 (17.8% decrease on 2016 population size)
	2041 Projection	3,930	
Centre Typology	LSPS: Larger Centre		Centres Study: Village
Centre Functions	Retail – Local convenience and services, lifestyle centre Education – Primary school Recreation – Sportsfields, parks and playgrounds, hotel, museum, airstrip Civic and community – Community hall (not located in activity core) and pending relocation to sportsground Employment – local scale, small scale Capacity – 4,000m ² + of commercial gross floor space potential under current LEP		
Centre Special Features	Heritage items Fine-grained frontages, sense of enclosure for pedestrians on main street Variety of uses in walkable compact centre The centre represents the ideal notion of a village centre and is representative of an aspirational mix and style appropriate for other Wollondilly centres		
Edges	Centre edges adequately frame the centre Footpaths in the surrounding street network almost non-existent		
Future focus	Retain heritage and village character and compact Activity Core Investigate additional mixed use development and public parking opportunities on land north west of the Activity Core Tourism related to heritage and aviation		

The Oaks is a village serving the daily convenience needs of local residents and residents of Oakdale, Belimbla Park, Werombi, Orangeville and Nattai. The Oaks benefits from being at the intersection of collector roads used daily by local residents. It is located on the main north-south road route connecting the southern and northern localities of the LGA. The Oaks centre has a role in the daily activities of many residents and is seen as a place shared by the local community to experience a variety of activities.

The commercial centre is vibrant and interesting with a diverse range of land uses and activities within easy walking distance. The shop fronts are varied in design, generating interest for pedestrians in the centre. The desire to walk further along John Street, both north and south of Burraborang St is enhanced by the fine grain and overall quality nature of the street's buildings. The main pedestrian route on the west side of John Street is safe and continuous and is unified with awnings.

The centre represents a classic example of the importance of quality buildings and grain in enhancing walkability. The Oaks also demonstrates that not all buildings need to be high quality. At The Oaks, only half of the buildings exhibit the visual qualities necessary for enhanced walkability. This is enough to carry the centre as an experience and not just a utilitarian function-only destination.

Improvements to the formal footpath network will further enhance walkability to the centre and village character an activity.

1.2 Treatment in the LSPS

The Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) describes The Oaks as a small village at the cross roads between the northern localities, Camden and Picton.

The LSPS identifies the following community values and needs for The Oaks:

- *better road infrastructure that builds stronger connections.*
- *the new master-planned park and improvements to other green spaces and active connections will help people to feel happier and healthier.*
- *improved public spaces.*
- *improved public domain that focuses on how The Oaks looks and feels will build pride in the neighbourhood.*
- *sporting and community facilities help people to build connections with others.*

In accordance with Action 14.2 of the LSPS the Master Plan for Dudley Chesham Sportsground has been adopted.

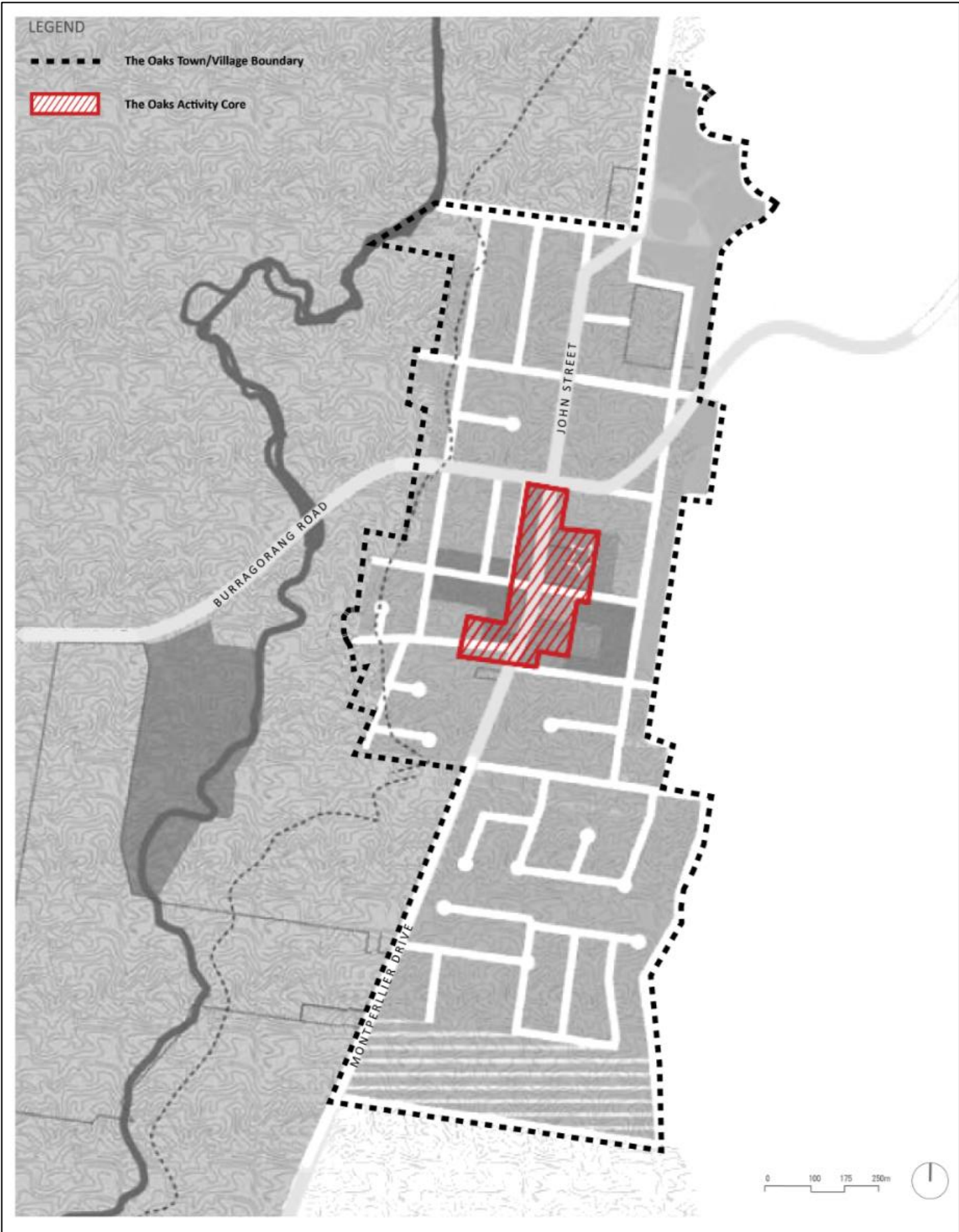


Figure 1-2 LSPS representation of The Oaks boundary, with activity core in red.

2 Centre Appraisal and Opportunities

2.1 History

The locality is the traditional Country of the Tharawal Aboriginal people. The Gundungurra Aboriginal people also occupied the land more recently.

Botanist George Caley recorded the locality as “Oaks” naming it after the She-Oaks (Casuarinas) dominant in the native vegetation. Timber felling was the initial reason for settlement followed by clearing of land for farming and cattle grazing on land grants created by surveys between 1822 and 1827. The first European settlement was established adjacent to Werriberri Creek but was moved to the elevated ridge of the current village due to flooding.

The Oaks Hotel commenced operation in 1863. The Catholic Church opened in 1865 and St Lukes Anglican Church was constructed in 1892. The Oaks was a centre for storage, trade and transport of a variety of local primary produce being on the intersection of a route to Camden and a route to Picton (and rail transport). The Oaks settlement grew with coal mining operations in Nattai from the 1930s to 1980s and the majority of residential subdivision occurred during this time.

2.1.1 Heritage items and Heritage Conservation Areas

The Oaks settlement has a long history, with several heritage buildings remaining in and near the centre as indicated in **Figure 2-1**. The Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum is located in Edwards Street. The locally listed heritage items in Schedule 1 of Wollondilly Local Environmental Plan (WLEP) 2011 which are in close proximity to the centre of The Oaks are:

Item Name	Address	Property Description	Item no.
Principal’s House (former)	Burragorang Street	Lot 1, DP 795174	I236
The Oaks Schoolhouse	Burragorang Street	Lot 1, DP 795174	I237
The Oaks Airfield	955 Burragorang Road	Lot 1, DP 586257	I238
Noakes Store	81–83 John Street (corner McIntosh Street)	Unit 1, SP 68338	I241
St Aloysius Catholic Group— Church, Presbytery, Convent, Schoolhouse	5–13 Merlin Street	Lot 1, DP 235099	I242
St Luke’s Anglican Church	26–30 Merlin Street	Lot 3, DP 999552	I243
Rose Cottage	795 Montpelier Drive	Lot 2, DP 574901	I244
Settler’s Cottage	869 Montpelier Drive	Lot 250, DP 1006306	I245
The Oaks General Cemetery	Corner Silverdale Road and Timothy Lacey Lane	PT 1, DP 526457	I247

The provisions for The Oaks centre contained in WLEP 2011 and Wollondilly Development Control Plan (WDGP 2016) adequately identify and protect the integrity of these heritage items.



Figure 2-1 The Oaks heritage map.

2.2 Primary Production Influences

The original activity in the locality was timber felling with timber being cut by convict labour. Cleared land was then used for a variety of farming particularly orchards and cattle grazing. Timber and fresh produce were transported along Barkers Lodge Road to the rail connection at Picton from 1862 and to settlements in Sydney.

The airstrip was constructed for training airforce personnel for WWII and saw a temporary increase in the local population and business activity.

Farms in the immediate locality are mostly horticulture based.

2.3 Natural, Cultural, Community and Scenic Assets

Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum

The Heritage Centre, which is operated by volunteers of The Oaks Historical Society, contains a museum with permanent and special exhibitions displaying Indigenous and Non-Indigenous information of the Wollondilly and Camden areas.

Historic Churches

St Lukes Anglican Church was constructed in 1892.

Church of St Aloysius was constructed in 1865. This site contains the first public school for The Oaks which was used between 1880 to 1902 and which is now the church hall. In 1905 a school house was constructed and used as a girls boarding school until 1964.

St Matthews Anglican Church, which was constructed in 1838 using local timber felled by convicts, is considered to be the oldest slab wall church in Australia. The church grounds contain grave sites related to the original settlers.

Local Parks

Dudley Chesham Sportsgrounds is a multipurpose public recreation facility, which includes rugby league fields with lighting, cricket pitch and practice net, two netball courts, four hard court tennis courts, pony club and clubhouse and skate park. Council recently adopted a master plan including a new multipurpose building, dog off leash and obedience training areas, new tennis practice wall, upgraded parking and spectator areas and general improvements to existing facilities.

W.S. William Park is the northern gateway to the commercial centre of The Oaks and includes a memorial and childrens playground.

Barralier Park is south of the primary school and adjacent to the public car park in Burragorang Street.

The Oaks Hotel

The original buildings on the site, which were constructed in 1863, were destroyed by fire in 1940. The hotel was rebuilt and renovated in 2019 and provides indoor and outdoor dining, takeaway services, bar facilities, outdoor eating and function rooms and entertainment.

The Oaks Airstrip

The airstrip, which was constructed in WWII for airforce training, is suitable for ultralight and small planes, with two grassed runways and hangars for private planes.

Viewlines to Sydney CBD

From Silverdale Road and Browns Road immediately north of The Oaks urban area there are views east to the Sydney CBD skyline.

Opportunities:

- > The objectives in Section 6.5 of Volume 1 of WDCP adequately require new work to reflect the heritage features. No changes to the DCP are recommended in relation to heritage conservation.

2.4 Infrastructure and Utilities

The wastewater infrastructure serving The Oaks, Oakdale and Belimbla Park is limited in its capacity. The residential subdivisions to the south of the centre are anticipated to be the only significant expansion of the urban footprint of The Oaks to 2041. There is significant utilities and infrastructure capacity for residential infill.

2.5 Special and Regular Community Events and Activities

Dudley Chesham Sportsground is used for a wide variety of community events and is an appropriate place for informal and organised gatherings and activities. The upgrading works in the adopted master plan will improve the range of facilities, including a multi-purpose meeting and function building.

The Oaks Community Hall in Russell Street has been closed for some time and Council is considering future options for the site, including relocating the activities to the upgraded multi-functional building at Dudley Chesham Sportsground.

Opportunities:

- > The community hall is isolated from the main activity sites of The Oaks village. The previous functions of the community hall would be more appropriately conducted at the new facilities at Dudley Chesham Sportsground along with improvements in pathway connectivity to the Activity Core.

2.6 Community

2.6.1 Who uses the Centre and why?

The Oaks commercial centre is used by residents of The Oaks, Oakdale, Nattai and Belimbla Park as it is located to capture through traffic from Camden, Picton and the northern localities of the Shire. The Oaks serves regular daily shopping needs and some entertainment and convenience needs. Residents typically visit Camden, Narellan, Campbelltown and Picton for full line groceries and larger household purchases, health services, employment and a wider variety of entertainment options

2.6.2 PlaceScore Engagement Survey

The following is a collection of the responses to Council's PlaceScore Engagement Survey from residents in the The Oaks, Oakdale, Belimbla Park, Nattai, Glenmore Park and Mount Hunter, noting that such results may not be specific to Oakdale residents given the amalgamation of localities.

- Local residents value the cohesive spirit in the community.
- The natural setting of the village, which is within a protected drinking water catchment and dense bushland, is also highly valued by residents.
- Interestingly, residents note the protection of the natural environment to be a negative attribute of the locality, possibly due to the cost of living within a bushfire hazard area.
- Residents note there is a lack of evening entertainment opportunities and employment options.
- Burratorang Road is a vital connection between Oakdale and Camden. The car trip is 20km and takes 17min, which is within the 30-minute connectivity goal for future urban growth planning.

2.7 Land Uses, Open Spaces and Community Services and Facilities

There is an excellent variety of land uses and activities within The Oaks village and within walking distance of the commercial centre, including a supermarket and a variety of speciality shops and personal services, a gym, a primary school, a hotel, child care centre, service station and mechanical repairs, as shown in **Figure 2-2**. There is one vacant commercial zoned site at the north east corner of the commercial centre.

Land in the R3 Medium Density zone immediately adjacent to the commercial centre largely still contains the original detached dwelling stock. Home occupations, home industry and businesses are also permitted in the R3 and B2 Local Centre zone. There are also opportunities for shop top housing and first floor office premises within commercial zoned land. There are new greenfield residential lots south of the village and well connected by shared pathways to the centre.

The Dudley Chesham Sportsground is a 600m walk along McIntosh Street from the southern edge of the village centre.

The light industrial complex at the south east corner of the commercial centre accommodates a variety of uses that include a charity shop, bulky goods and motor bike repairs and sales.

The Oaks airstrip is a heritage item constructed in 1942 to train RAAF personnel. It is currently privately owned and used as a Flying School and for recreational flying as well as training by NSW Police, National Parks and Wildlife and NSW RFS. There is potential for the site to be investigated for enhancing its recreational and tourism capacity in terms of an aviation museum and tourism accommodation.

Opportunities:

- > Pedestrian connectivity to the Dudley Chesham Sportsground and the Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum to be improved by providing the following paved pathway links:
 - from John Street along McIntosh Street to the pathway crossing the creek to Dudley Chesham Sportsground.
 - from John Street along Edward Street to the Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum.
- > The airstrip is privately owned and used for pilot training and hobby flights. There may be potential to investigate opportunities for limited tourism accommodation linked to recreational flights and an aviation museum

2.8 Urban Structure and Built Form

The Oaks commercial centre is focused on the main through road of John Street. Smaller speciality and service premises are clustered on the western side of John Street and the primary school, hotel and service station as well as a large public car park are on the eastern side.

The continuity and design of shop facades and awnings are effective in creating interest for pedestrians and providing a sense of enclosure for pedestrian activity. There is typically a good mix of glazing and solid elements to shop fronts and a variety of window forms, doorways and minor articulations. The awning posts along John Street provide a physical separation from the kerb side parking to create a pleasant and safe sense of separation between pedestrians and vehicles. Two storey built form is appropriate throughout the centre.

The provisions of the *Section 4.7 of Volume 5* of WDCP 2016 address the use of Benton Lane, front setbacks, continuity of awnings to the John Street footpath and acknowledge the availability of parking in John Street.

Figure 2-2 provides a visual representation of the urban structure, built form and access arrangements for The Oaks.

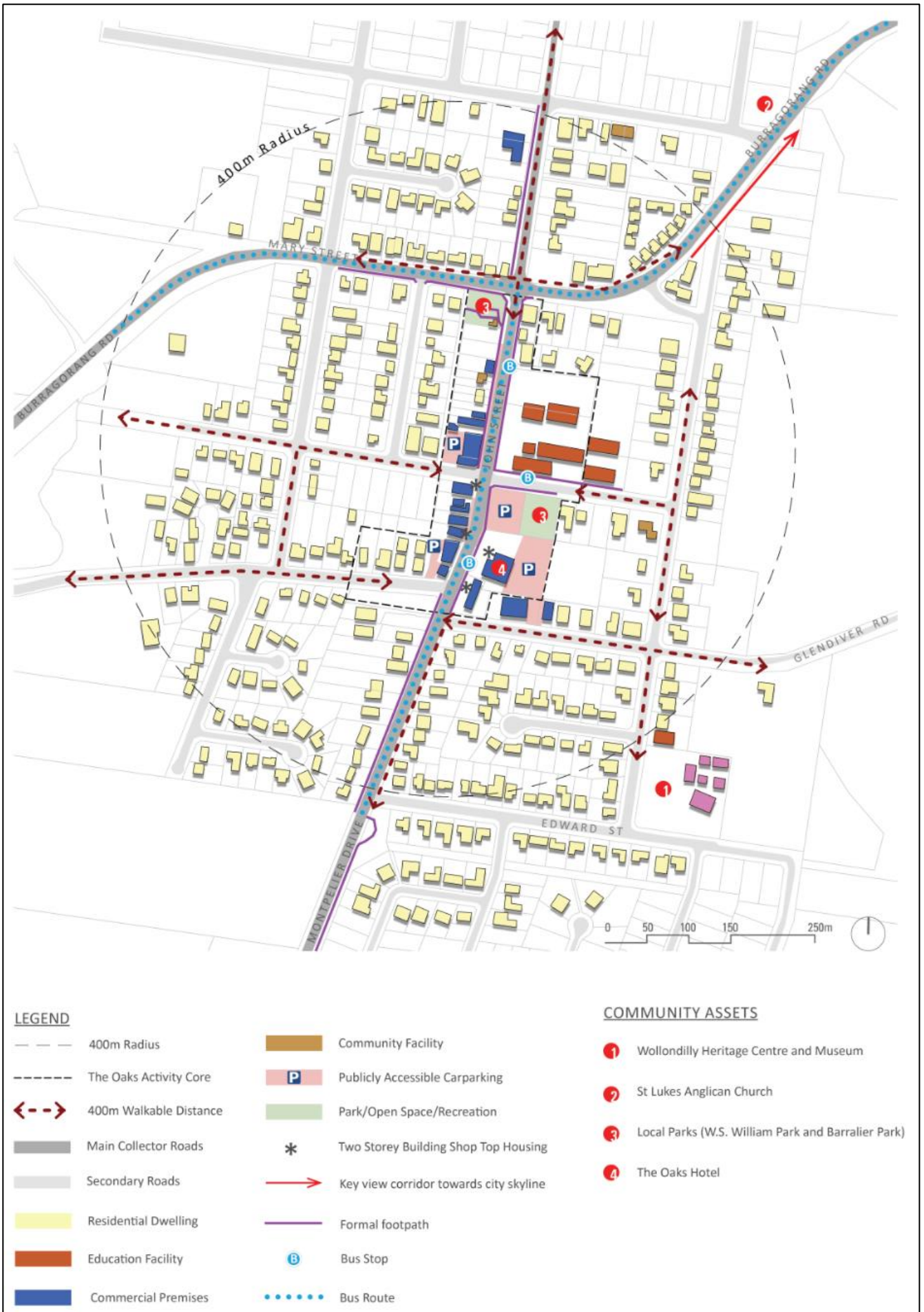


Figure 2-2 Urban structure, built form and access analysis for The Oaks.

2.9 Commercial Floor Space and Capacity for Growth

The Commercial Centres Study 2006 and Draft Towns and Villages Study 2008 identified the following for The Oaks commercial land:

Total commercial floor space of 2,250m² (representing 4.15% of total floor space in the LGA)

1 supermarket and 24 specialty shops (6.6% vacancy)

Total 1,500m² of vacant commercial zoned land

1 full line supermarket approved at 43-45 John Street (1,300m² of commercial floor space).

There has been little change in the floor space within the commercial-zoned land since the 2008 study. The supermarket premises approved at 43-45 John Street was not constructed and the site remains vacant.

There is an estimated capacity for approximately 4,000m² of infill commercial floor space within commercial zoned land at The Oaks. This includes the long term vacant site at 43-45 John Street and several dwellings that are currently used for commercial purposes that have potential for redevelopment. This also includes the potential for first floor office premises.

The Oaks is a vibrant, well patronised centre and benefits from its compact form, fine grained building scale and wide variety of commercial premises. It plays an important local role for residents of Nattai, Belimbla Park and Oakdale. The edges of the commercial centre are well defined.

Opportunities:

- > Future expansion of a mix of commercial and residential uses in The Oaks could be considered for the land between Benton Lane and Vanderville Street. This land has advantages including the service function of the laneway and will encourage activity in the northern portion of the centre – potentially encouraging the infill of the vacant site and underdeveloped land north of the supermarket and post office. This would add a further 6,400m² of land area to the Activity Core, excluding recent new dwellings fronting Burragorang Street. The same land could include the provision of a public parking area adjacent to Burragorang Road and west of W.S. Williams Memorial Park which would be conveniently located for visitors approaching the Activity Core from the north, south and west. Mixed use buildings with designs adaptable for residential and non-residential uses would encourage additional activity in the northern portion of the centre and create a flexible and adaptable transition in uses between the commercial strip oriented to John Street and residential land uses to the west.
- > Negotiate with the owners and tenants of 65-71 John Street to elevate the awning above the current common, outdoor display / dining space, taking the notional 'village square' close to the street edge and in the design solution, offering more natural light and space to the square. Council to consider providing assistance to source funding from the State Government to contribute to the design solution and capital cost for the structure (examples of funding programs include Streets as Shared Spaces and My Community Project). The qualities inherent in 'stepping out' and containing the footpath within the space is evident in much of the rest of The Oaks public realm and improves walkability.

2.10 Housing Within and at the Edges of the Centre

There has been recent redevelopment of some land in the R3 Medium Density Residential zone adjoining the commercial centre. The compact, main street layout and character of The Oaks village centre should remain intact as it functions vibrantly, is appealing to pedestrians and offers a wide variety of activities and services in a compact, walkable network.

There are opportunities for infill shop top housing above existing commercial buildings. Shop top housing and first floor office space or adaptable home office premises at first floor level are viable options for redevelopment of some commercial properties fronting John Street.

Opportunities:

- > Incorporate additional provisions within WDCP 2016 to include adaptable building typologies on Key Sites.
- > Consider change to zoning and/or land use for land between Benton Land and Vanderville Street to facilitate a mix of residential and non-residential uses as well as a public car parking area adjacent to Burragorang Road and W.S. Williams Memorial Park. This land can be a mixed use transition from the commercial core fronting John Street to the residential area and would introduce new housing within convenient walking distance of both the commercial centre, primary school and Dudley Chesham sportsground.

2.11 Access and Movement

The Oaks commercial centre is focused on John Street and attracts visitation from through traffic along both John Street and Burraborang Road. On-street parking and public parking is well distributed through the centre. The paved footpath network and controlled crossing points support the movement of pedestrians in a safe and efficient manner.

Kerbside parking in John Street and road speed controls in the school zone are effective in slowing traffic and improving conditions for pedestrians. Benton Lane is an important service road for back of house activities for commercial premises.

Bus routes 39 and 40 connect The Oaks to Camden and operates Monday to Saturday. There is a bus stop in John Street adjacent to the commercial centre.

An analysis of access and movement routes for The Oaks has been included in **Figure 2-2**.

Opportunities:

- > Improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity through the provision of additional footpaths in McIntosh Street and Edwards Street.
- > Investigate opportunities to direct vehicle traffic along Burraborang Road to convenient publicly accessible parking at the northern end of the commercial centre adjacent to W.S. Williams Memorial Park, with visitors able to walk through the centre without creating additional traffic and parking demands in John Street.

2.12 Street Appeal – Public Realm and Pedestrian Experience

The Oaks has a highly appealing public realm, with continuous awnings and shopfronts and few driveway interruptions. The shop frontages are variable in width and mostly fine-scale which adds interest and is a more 'human-scale'. The building facades also have interest for pedestrians with variable combinations of glazing and solid materials fronting the footpath.

The footpath is suitably wide for shop fronts to catch the interest and attention of passers-by. The awning posts effectively separate pedestrians from kerb side parking. These features enhance comfort and sense of safety for pedestrians.

The larger activity sites of the Hotel, School, public car park and service station are located on the eastern side of John Street. These sites are typically visited by drivers. Parking capacity is adequate in this part of the centre. There is a safe pedestrian crossing in John Street.

Street appeal analysis is displayed in **Figure 2-3**.

Opportunities:

- > *Section 4.7 of Volume 5 of WDCP 2016* includes adequate controls and objectives for new works in the commercial precinct to maintain the continuity of the footpath, awnings and on-street parking and retain interest in building facades. However, it is recommended that Section 4.7 be amended to incorporate diagrams and graphics which display the positive features of existing buildings and the public realm, to guide future development in The Oaks centre.



Figure 2-3 The Oaks street appeal assessment.

3 Current Commitments to Works, Adopted Plans and Strategies

3.1 Previous Centres Study

The Commercial Centres Study 2006 and the Towns and Villages Study 2008 included the following objectives for future development at The Oaks:

- *To improve economic performance in The Oaks*
- *To preserve and enhance The Oaks urban structure and built form*
- *To provide open space and recreational spaces throughout The Oaks to reinforce the family oriented character and focus within the village*
- *To improve access to, from and within The Oaks.*

The previous studies made recommendations for street trees, upgrading of the surface of Benton Lane and relocation of the public car park in Burragorang Road to increase the size of Barrallier Park.

This current Centres Study does not support street trees in John Street as there is insufficient space in the footpath reserve for street tree planting. The existing pedestrian environment in John Street is appealing and functional for pedestrians and encourages walking through the commercial centre.

Upgrading of Benton Lane will occur as land north of the post office is redeveloped and the laneway use is intensified.

The car park in Burragorang Road is well located and easily accessible for drivers to park and walk through the commercial centre. Barrallier Park is of adequate size and does not need street frontage to John Street.

3.2 WLEP 2011 Provisions



Figure 3-1 Current land use zoning for The Oaks, with recommended investigation areas for “Adaptable Building Typologies”.

Opportunities:

- > An increase in the area of commercial floor space at The Oaks should be investigated on the land between Benton Lane and Vanderville Street. It is recommended that this land be considered for a mix of residential and non-residential uses to create a transition between the existing commercial centre focussed on John Street and the residential land to the west.

3.3 WDCP 2016 Provisions

The current provisions of WDCP 2016 for the use of Benton Lane, dispensation for on-site parking and the provision of awnings to the John Street footpath have the intention of sustaining the character of the existing strip of shops and protecting a positive pedestrian experience.

Opportunities:

- > The provisions of the DCP could be updated to better sustain and protect the character of buildings and the pedestrian experience for the commercial centre of The Oaks. Graphics and diagrams identifying the positive characteristics of built form and the public realm would improve the effectiveness of the DCP.

3.4 Council’s Current Commitments

Council is committed to the following works relevant to The Oaks village centre:

- > Cycle and pedestrian links to Dudley Chesham Sportsgrounds
- > Implementation of the master plan for Dudley Chesham Sportsgrounds
- > New community facilities floor space at Dudley Chesham Sportsground

4 Summary of Opportunities

The following opportunities have been identified for The Oaks, as shown in the Structure Plan in **Figure 4-1**:

Opportunities for LEP Changes:

- > Consider expansion of a mix of commercial and residential uses in The Oaks on land between Benton Lane and Vanderville Street. This land has advantages including use of the service function of the laneway, dual frontage redevelopment sites and more diversity of activity in the northern portion of the centre. It has the potential to encouraging infill of the vacant site and underdeveloped land north of the supermarket and post office. This would add a further 6,400m² of land area to the Activity Core. The land could include a public parking area adjacent to Burragorang Road and west of W.S. Williams Memorial Park conveniently located for visitors approaching the Activity Core from the north, south and west. Mixed use buildings with designs adaptable for residential and non-residential uses can create a flexible and adaptable transition in uses between the commercial strip oriented to John Street and residential land uses to the west.
- > Investigate options for tourism related uses of the airfield such as accommodation related to recreational flights and aviation museum to generate employment, land use diversity, potential entertainment available to locals as well as visitors

Opportunities for DCP Changes:

- > Amend *Section 4.7 of Volume 5* of WDCP 2016 to incorporate diagrams and graphics which display the positive features of existing buildings and the public realm, to guide future development in The Oaks Activity Core.
- > Adaptable building typologies on Key Sites

Opportunities for Future Works Programs:

- > Improve pedestrian connectivity to the Dudley Chesham Sportsground and the Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum by providing the following paved pathway links:
 - From John Street along McIntosh Street to the pathway crossing the creek to Dudley Chesham Sportsground.
 - From John Street along Edward Street to the Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Museum.

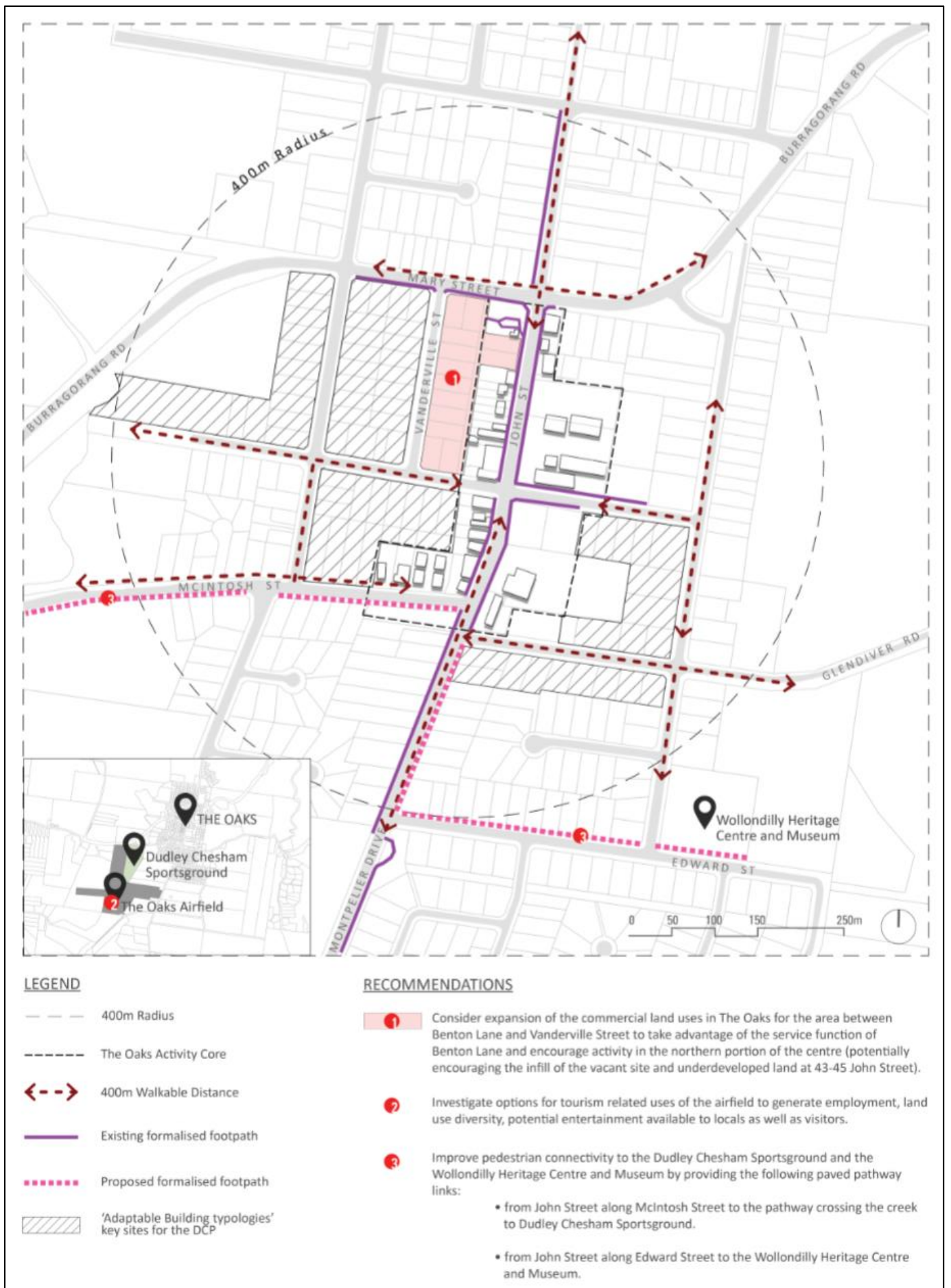


Figure 4-1 Structure plan for opportunities for The Oaks.