

Section 21 – Commercial Area

21.1 Background

The District's economic wellbeing relies on its functional and vibrant commercial centres, collectively referred to as the Commercial Area. This is made up of the Commercial Zone, the Pedestrian Core Zone, and the Gateway Zone in Whitianga. The Commercial Area caters for the District's three largest commercial sectors: business services, retail, and distribution. In some settlements small tourism and accommodation businesses are also important contributors. This commercial activity needs to be encouraged while carefully managing potential conflicts associated with residential activity. Dwellings near or in commercial zones may have reduced amenity from light spill, low-frequency noises and building bulk, but have increased amenity from accessibility to shops and services, and use of nearby community facilities.

21.2 Issues

1. The economic viability and vitality of the Commercial Area is at risk from changes in demand from traditional retail activities towards online and large format retail and from commercial activities that establish outside the Commercial Area.
2. Commercial development that is not designed to enhance the street environment reduces the quantity and extent of pedestrian traffic in these areas, reducing the amenity and economic viability of the Commercial Area.
3. Poorly planned infrastructure, particularly vehicle access, parking and manoeuvring can reduce pedestrian safety, amenity and commercial activity.
4. Commercial activities located near residential activities may adversely affect the amenity of the residential activity. Conversely, residential activities may affect the commercial function.
5. Reverse sensitivity effects can result from inappropriate subdivision, land use and development that compromises the safe and efficient operation of network utilities in the Commercial Area.

21.3 Objectives and Policies

Objective 1

A wide variety of commercial and community activities and residential activities in appropriate locations occur at varying scales within the Commercial Area for visitors, and seasonal and permanent residents.

Policy 1a

A wide variety of commercial and community activities shall be provided for to satisfy the diverse needs of residents and visitors.

Policy 1b

The ground floor of buildings that front the street should be used for publicly accessible activities (e.g. retail stores, restaurants or service centres).

Policy 1c

Residential activities should be located above the ground floor with separate service spaces, car parks and living areas from the commercial activities and should use noise-reducing building materials.

Policy 1d

Commercial and community activities in the Pedestrian Core Zone shall have a pedestrian focus and convenient public access.

Policy 1e

Commercial activities in Whitianga that require a large site and a large parking area (excluding visitor accommodation) should be located in the Gateway Zone. Small-scale retail and services to the public should not be located in this Zone.

Objective 2

Pedestrian Core Zones, as collections of small-scale service and retail shops, remain commercially viable and vibrant with compatible, pedestrian-focused activities.

Policy 2a

Activities that generate pedestrian movement and commercial activity in the Pedestrian Core Zone should be encouraged.

Policy 2b

Buildings in the Pedestrian Core Zone should be at a greater density than in the Commercial Zone, with a mix of activities located in close proximity to each other.

Objective 3

The Commercial Area has adequate infrastructure and services for a wide range of activities.

Policy 3a

Activities that require water and wastewater services shall connect to the Council's utility networks where they are available.

Policy 3b

Stormwater discharge should, to the extent practicable, incorporate low impact urban design and development methods to minimise runoff volume and increase soil recharge.

Policy 3c

Commercial development's location, vehicle parking, access and manoeuvring should be consistent with the function of the road and connect with existing transportation infrastructure to maintain the safety and efficiency of the transportation network.

Objective 4

Buildings, structures and publicly accessible spaces have a high level of visual amenity and are designed for safety, pedestrian interaction and pedestrian connectivity and views between the street, buildings and public spaces.

Policy 4a

Buildings on street corners in the Pedestrian Core Zone should be architectural focal points and generate pedestrian activity and interest on both street fronts.

Policy 4b

Buildings should be in accord with neighbouring commercial and community buildings and activities. If they appear large and bulky compared to adjacent buildings, they should be visually broken up through design and by pedestrian access.

Policy 4c

Pedestrian routes and viewshafts should connect commercial activities with:

- a) Public spaces;
- b) Significant landscapes and building/structural landmarks;
- c) Existing pedestrian routes and nodes;
- d) The coast (in the Pedestrian Core Zone).

Policy 4d

The street-to-building interface in the Gateway Zone shall facilitate pedestrian and vehicle movements and shall enhance the image of the Zone as a gateway to Whitianga's central area.

Policy 4e

Buildings and open spaces in the Pedestrian Core Zone should encourage pedestrian use and enjoyment of publicly accessible spaces and building areas.

Policy 4f

Ground level building facades in the Pedestrian Core Zone adjacent to public space should include visual architectural features such as large windows, vertical facade breaks, verandas, doors and doorway recessions to provide visual interest between public and private space.

Policy 4g

Buildings in the Pedestrian Core Zone should provide for changing uses and conversion of buildings over time, through design elements such as:

- a) Higher than standard floor to ceiling heights, particularly at ground level;
- b) Minimising structural wall frames within new buildings so that internal walls can be changed;
- c) Location of separate entrances to ground and upper floors at the street;
- d) Sufficient building depth for multiple uses;
- e) Windows and skylights for light and ventilation to habitable rooms.

Policy 4h

Residential activities and dwellings should be provided for in the Commercial Area, provided they are located above the ground floor and adverse effects between the residential and commercial activities are minimised or mitigated.

Policy 4i

Outdoor waste disposal, waste storage and car parking should be located at the side or rear of buildings.

Objective 5

The location of large-scale retail outlets promote the growth and consolidation of other activities in the Commercial Area.

Policy 5a

Retail with a gross floor area greater than 500 m² should be located within or adjacent to existing Commercial Areas, except where the large format retail store primarily services farming, forestry or marine activities.

Objective 6

The safe, secure and efficient use and operation of network utilities is protected from the adverse effects of other land use activities in the Commercial Area.

Policy 6a

Subdivision, use and development shall be designed and located to avoid activities and vegetation close to network utilities where they may compromise the ability of the network utilities to be operated, maintained and upgraded safely and efficiently.