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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Gold Coast is committed to protecting areas on the Gold Coast with a particular local identity, natural resource base or development character.

The primary intent of this place analysis is to provide a resource to ensure character elements are appropriately considered in future development decisions at the neighbourhood centre of Nobby Beach, which form part of the southern Gold Coast strip.
KEY URBAN CHARACTER ELEMENTS

The key character elements and special qualities identified for Nobby Beach are summarised below.

- The traditional high street format and spatially defined commercial centre activities.
- North Nobby is a city-significant topographic feature of the flat, highly urbanised coastal strip.
- The historic pattern of growth and settlement structure.
- The highway deviation around North Nobby.
- Low scale and density of commercial and residential development.
- The relaxed, informal place character and authentic place qualities.
- The north Nobby backdrop and highway arrival views, particularly from the north.
- The vegetated edge along the highway approaching from the south.
- Glimpses of Norfolk pines.
- Hinterland views along east-west beachside streets.
- Pedestrian connectivity to the beach from the highway and centre.
- The highway deviation around North Nobby.
- High levels of connectivity for all forms of movement east of the highway.
- Limited active transport connectivity from the west.
- Recreation and active movement opportunities of the beach and Albatross Avenue.
- The early history of tourist attractions on North Nobby.
- Remnant commercial and residential buildings from the 1950s and 1960s.
- Remnant stock of original holiday homes in the beachside neighbourhood.
- The active streetlife and emerging night time activators.
- Traditional commercial high street building typologies.
- The characteristic low scale of the centre and surrounding neighbourhoods.
- Original beach house stock east of the highway.
- High levels of investment in new beachside development.
- The visual interest and colour of traditional high street awning signage.
The Gold Coast’s history, natural setting and distinctive linear form have structured a network of unique places. The coastal strip concentrates all the colour, energy and visual qualities synonymous with the city into a narrow, highly urbanised coastal corridor. While the major tourism and lifestyle destinations of Surfers Paradise, Broadbeach, Burleigh and Coolangatta have largely shaped perceptions of the city, it’s the coastal neighbourhood centres which deliver essential local amenity and offer a community-focused layer of social richness to the city.

**Purpose of place analysis**

The purpose of this place analysis is to understand the physical and cultural heritage components of local character at the neighbourhood centre of Nobby Beach to achieve place-responsive and high quality urban design outcomes. The intent is to provide a resource to inform decisions on development.

Place analysis objectives include:

- identify landscape, built environment and heritage elements that contribute to the character of the neighbourhood centres
- understand the visual setting and key views; and
- identify a spatial boundary as the focus of future urban design, public realm and planning strategies.

This place analysis presents a strategic level analysis of elements that influence place character. It should be used as a guide and terms of reference for further more detailed investigations regarding the future shape of the neighbourhood centres. This study does not explore pre-European history or the relationship to place that would have been held by the original peoples.
METHODOLOGY

This place analysis follows a four stage process that looks at the city and village context to prepare a concise summary of place defining urban elements.

STAGE 1
City context
An analysis of the coastal strip from Broadbeach to Miami to establish an appreciation of centre context and strategic influences on place character.

Three scales of mapping

STAGE 2
Suburb context
An analysis of the broad range of physical and cultural elements that can influence the shape and character of a place, drawing on site visits, research and City workshops.

STAGE 3
Village elements
An assessment of place analysis elements identifying how they collectively contribute to the function, urban form and character.
Neighbourhood centres

Neighbourhood centres are to comprise a mix of small scale uses and services in response to the specific needs of their immediate neighbourhood. The place analysis of Nobby Beach reinforces that neighbourhood centres grow and develop place character as a direct response to local need but also historical influences.

Neighbourhood centres are defined as:

- pedestrian-orientated areas with smaller scale concentrations of business, employment, community, cultural, retail and residential uses
- providing a focal point for the local community and support neighbourhood identity and sense of place.

In neighbourhood centres, building form is more intensive than surrounding neighbourhood areas, but provides a sensitive transition to nearby residential areas. Building height complements the surrounding neighbourhood.

The central Gold Coast strip

The activity centre structure identifies the highway strip as a coastal tourism/urban strip which responds to the unique linear structure of activity centres and strip commercial which have formed with the growth of the city.

Its role in the city’s history and strong linear structure connecting distinct activity nodes, supports the strip being considered as a ‘place’ in its own right, albeit one that comprises a number of individual centres and highway commercial contexts that will continue to grow and change in response to localised influences.
Figure 1.11: The Coastal Strip Activity Centre Structure - Pacific Fair to Burleigh
HISTORY

Urban structure

The City of Gold Coast grew from the original coastal resort townships of Southport and Coolangatta. From the 1920s onwards the area between Coolangatta and Southport has gradually been filled in with a city. The primary catalyst was the construction of the highway which had to overcome early constraints in the form of numerous river and creek crossings. But gradually the highway formed a series of villages which led to weekender localities like Burleigh Heads, Palm Beach and Broadbeach.

The city’s morphology is uniquely characterised by the connection of these early settlements, rather than typical radial growth from a centre or single village. The development was linear, formed in one continuous band alongside the beach. It was also highly automobilised given the city’s rapid grow in the post-war period when private car ownership surged.

The coastal strip

By the early 1950s, the coastal strip’s structure had largely been created and sustained as a place distinctively different from other cities in Australia. The highway became the primary access to the coast and a strong movement emerged. Commercial businesses focused on the highway frontages - all competing for visual exposure and passing trade - and formed a strip or ribbon development that is still evident today.

Running parallel to the beach, it is an important character area of the Gold Coast. Neon signs, motels, hotels, leisure attractions and shops line the highway from Southport to Coolangatta. It is symbolic of the primary period of growth of this part of the Gold Coast when, in the wake of post war austerity, the motor car became in itself a symbol of affluence and personal freedom.

In the corridor between Mermaid Beach and Miami there is still remnant evidence of its car-based tourism heyday in the 1960s and 1970s. In the surrounding neighbourhoods, there remains a valuable stock of the original holiday homes dating from the 1950s.

Both at the scale of the highway corridor and neighbourhood centre, these historic influences and the strip’s traditional visual qualities are worthy of referencing in future urban renewal. It is truly a unique story of urbanism worth celebrating.
DEFINING CHARACTER PRECINCTS OF THE STRIP

This analysis identifies character precincts at a strategic level along the coast strip to identify possible influences on character.

1 BROADBEACH
- A principal centre offering the full range of commercial and tourism functions.
- High-rise development comprising tourist accommodation and apartments.

2 PACIFIC FAIR
- Part of the Broadbeach centre, a regional shopping centre and tourist destination in its own right.
- G:link station on the Gold Coast Highway.

3 GOLD COAST HIGHWAY STRIP COMMERCIAL
- Wide range of mixed commercial and retail businesses.
- Wide range of building forms and commercial typologies predominantly one and two storey.
- Characteristic signage ‘clutter’ and inconsistent streetscapes and built form relationships to highway.
- Remnant uses such as motels, leisure attractions and retail buildings reference its former role as a tourism strip.

4 MERMAID BEACH CENTRE
- Low-scale mixed commercial and retail businesses focusing predominantly on food/beverage
- Anchors the highway commercial strip.
- Remnant commercial buildings from 1960s or early 1970s.

5 MERMAID BEACH & NOBBY BEACH NEIGHBOURHOODS
- Low and medium density housing and tourism accommodation.
- Hedges Avenue beachfront well known as ‘Millionaires’ Row’.

6 GOLD COAST HIGHWAY MIXED ACCOMMODATION
- A mix of motels, new and old houses, apartments and short term accommodation.
- Three-storey ‘resort’ tourist accommodation.
- No intensive commercial uses.

7 NOBBY BEACH NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE
- Low scale high street style mixed retail/commercial centre accessed by a highway service road access.
- ‘Santorini’ mixed use development at the foot of North Nobby.

8 MAGIC MOUNTAIN APARTMENTS & MIAMI STATE HIGH SCHOOL
- Both uses integrated with the headland topography.
- Former theme park now apartments and holiday units.
- Miami High sign on local heritage register.

9 COMMERCIAL, LIGHT INDUSTRY AND GATED ACCOMMODATION
- Mixed commercial and low impact industrial uses.
- Chamonix and Nobby Holiday Village ‘gated’ accommodation and caravan park.

10 MIAMI RESIDENTIAL AND ACCOMMODATION
- Broad mix of low scale detached houses, older unit blocks and new apartment buildings.
- Ocean Beach Tourist Park at the foot of South Nobby.
- Beachfront open space along Marine Parade.

11 GOLD COAST HIGHWAY MIAMI
- Broad mix of low scale retail/commercial businesses, motels, detached houses and unit blocks.

12 SOUTH NOBBY HILL RESIDENTIAL
- Detached residential and multi-dwelling buildings on the western slopes of the hill.

13 MIAMI LOCAL CENTRE
- Large format uses - Coles and Aldi, Miami Hotel.
- Mixed use centre - internalised format with poor street relationships.
- Traditional high street retail forms.
- Mix of old and new holiday accommodation.

14 BURLEIGH HEADS ESPLANADE
- Predominately high density residential development consisting of medium and highrise apartments.
- Beachfront open space.

15 LOWER GOLD COAST HIGHWAY
- Lower Gold Coast Highway - service road to highway.
- Low and medium density housing.
- Small cluster of food/beverage and local businesses.

16 BURLEIGH HEADS
- District centre and tourist destination.
Figure 1.12: The Coastal Strip Character Precincts
03 SUBURB CONTEXT
**EXTENT OF SUBURB ANALYSIS**

The study area encompasses a walkable catchment of 400 metres focused on existing commercial activity of the centre.
HISTORY OF THE SUBURB

Nobby is part of the suburb of Mermaid Beach and its low scale built environment and relaxed coastal atmosphere have been formed by the same historic influences. Much residential development and investment has occurred on the beachside while the neighbourhood centre has retained a traditional appeal through its aging built form. Its mix of retail, service and food/beverage businesses, with few franchises present, give it a genuine character. It feels like a locals’ place.

HISTORY

The City of Gold Coast’s website documents that “the Nobbies was the late nineteenth century name for Little Burleigh Head - and a local reference to Fowler’s head bullock, Nobby, which once went missing and was found there.” The name Nobby Beach was approved in 1982 as an unbounded neighbourhood name within the suburb of Mermaid Beach (source: Queensland Place Names website).

Settlement of the wider district dates from the late 1800s, with land used mainly for timber-getting and later quarrying of the headland and sand mining which ceased in the 1950s.

The first estates of Nobby Beach were surveyed in the 1920s. There is a noticeable change in the orientation of the street grid structure to Mermaid Beach. Rapid development of holiday homes and tourist accommodation did not occur until the 1950s with the lifting of post-World War II building restrictions. Today, numerous original holiday homes are scattered through the neighbourhood.

The current Nobby Beach SLSC was built in 1954 but there has been a patrolled beach since 1922.

North Nobby had been extensively quarried for road base up to 1961 when Council approved a tourist attraction on the headland. By 1962 a chair lift took visitors up to a cafeteria on top of the hill. Miami High was officially opened in April 1963 and was the first high school established between Southport and Tweed Heads. Its landmark ‘MIAMI HIGH’ sign on the quarry face is now on the city’s Local Heritage Register.

The current sites of Chamonix and Nobby Beach Holiday Village were being used for holiday cabins and caravanning by the 1960s (see image opposite).

In 1976, the medieval castle of the ‘Magic Mountain’ theme park was constructed on North Nobby. Its success saw intensive re-development of the site in 1983 to the Magic Mountain Adventure Park. It closed in 1987 and the land was later developed as the Santorini development and, on top of the hill, the Magic Mountain Resort.

Through the 1980s to the present, Nobby Beach’s central location and residential amenity have seen it become a popular beachside holiday destination and place to live. With the wider Mermaid Beach area, it retains a scale that readily differentiates it from the highly urbanised centres north and south.

The neighbourhood centre

Commercial uses of the neighbourhood centre commenced in the late 1950s or early 1960s at the corner of Chairlift Avenue, accessed by a service road. It had fully form to the extent we know it today by the mid-1970s (see images opposite).

Today, Nobby’s neighbourhood centre is a well established local service centre with a wide range of businesses providing convenience retail, takeaway food and restaurants, community services and leisure commercial. There is a growing cafe and bar culture that maintains activity into the evening.

There has been little redevelopment of the commercial area and much of the built form is the original incarnation of the high street. The general absence of franchise or chain business and age and form of commercial buildings together contribute towards a relaxed and informal atmosphere.

1980s The Magic Castle (J. Pritchard, photographer)
What’s special about Nobby’s place character?

- The traditional high street format
- The early history of tourist attractions
- Remnant commercial and residential buildings from the 1950s and 1960s
- The Nobby Beach SLSC

Images courtesy of City of Gold Coast Local Studies Library
TOPOGRAPHY AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Nobby Beach and its neighbourhood centre are synonymous with their ‘Magic Mountain’ or North Nobby backdrop. While this coastal knoll doesn’t match the scale of the southern headlands, it is nonetheless a defining characteristic of Nobby Beach and a city-significant urban break in the flat, continuously developed coastal strip.

TOPOGRAPHY

The neighbourhood centre sits approximately 400 metres from the beach on low flat terrain characteristic of the coastal plain.

Lava flows from the long extinct Mount Warning Shield volcano formed the headlands of the Gold Coast coastal strip including the rock formations of North and South Nobby. North Nobby rises to an elevation of approximately 40 metres and is significant in terms of the visual relief it offers the highly developed flat coastal strip.

Areas west of the highway were originally occupied by swamps and lowland forest communities prior to draining and development for canal estates and associated waterways, open spaces and the Burleigh Golf Course.

Moving east of the highway, the terrain would have transitioned from swamps and lowland forests to coastal dunal systems, foredunes and the beach.

LANDSCAPE AND OPEN SPACE

Open spaces and parks

Open space or park is not an integrated element of the centre, but significant open spaces surrounding the neighbourhood centre contribute to the Nobby Beach’s broader character, and include:

- North Nobby Hill which provides its characteristic backdrop
- Lions Head Park, a local park on Chairlift Avenue
- Thorn Park along the beachfront at Miami
- Sports fields of Miami State High School.

Water

While the beach is only a short walk away, water is not a visual or physical influence on the centre’s character.

Vegetation

North Nobby, Lions Head Park and a small green space separating Miami High from the highway accommodate significant stands of vegetation which are particularly valuable in the context of the urban character of the coastal strip.

The centre is generally devoid of vegetation and the visual character of the retail area is dominated by built form and hardscape surfaces of footpaths and road carriageway.

Vegetation immediately around the commercial centre is generally limited to:

- Norfolk pines in Wave Street
- isolated sections of street trees of varied species along the highway;
- informal mix of sparse street planting in the east-west streets
- a broad variety of garden planting and trees of private development, holiday apartments visible from the public realm.

What’s special about Nobby’s place character?

North Nobby is a city-significant topographic feature usually prominent in the flat, highly urbanised coastal strip

Views to North Nobby and vegetation as an important urban break

Connections to the open spaces – the beach, Lions Head Park and Thorn Park
Figure 3.3: Nobby Beach Topography, Landscape Character and Open Space

The north Nobby backdrop

Norfolk Pines in Wave Street

Remnant native vegetation along the highway (see page over)

Lions Head Park
VIEWS AND VISUAL SETTING

The backdrop of North Nobby and its significant vegetation dominates the local urban landscape and offers interest and an important point of reference along the central coastal strip. The low scale commercial and residential environment supports its visual prominence.

North Nobby

The significance of North Nobby’s visual qualities is revealed in a study of the arrival experiences from the highway.

North Nobby’s visual relationships with the highway are significant and clear viewing opportunities are supported by:

- the flat terrain
- the existing low scale built form of the neighbourhood centre and surrounding residential areas
- the linear highway corridor offering a long vista when approaching from the north
- the deviation of the highway around the foot of the hill
- Miami High’s sports fields when approaching from the south.

For highway users, the simple experience of having to deviate around the hill in contrast to the gun-barrel approaches north and south supports a sense of place and arrival at Nobby.

Locally, there are vistas through local street corridors as well as many glimpses and spot views to the hill and its vegetation.

As a dominant visual element in the urban landscape, North Nobby offers:

- a landmark and point of reference in the flat, highly urbanised coastal strip from Broadbeach to Burleigh
- a sense of spatial definition between Mermaid Beach and the Miami to Burleigh strip
- a characterising visual backdrop to the neighbourhood centre and surrounding residential areas.

The neighbourhood centre

Nobby’s centre is a single-sided high street format accessed by a service road for most of its length. It has the visual qualities of a traditional high street:

- low scale single and two storey buildings
- the consistent edge of the built form to the street
- a continuous awning to the street for the majority of its frontage
- the visual clutter of signage including awning signs and billboards.

The separation from the highway afforded by the service road minimises the impact of the high traffic volumes on the centre. However, the combined visual effect of the highway and the service road with its extensive car parking contribute to a vehicle dominated visual quality to the neighbourhood centre.

The low scale built environment plays a fundamental role in maintaining visual access to North Nobby, particularly the long view heading south along the highway and localised views.

Landscape visual qualities

Landscaping within the public realm is minimal and does not contribute to place character. Outside of North Nobby, the most significant vegetation is a cluster of Norfolks in the vicinity of Wave Street that can be see in the image opposite.
Figure 3.5: Key Views (see page over for arrival views to centre)

1. View north along the highway to Broadbeach
2. Views along towards the beach (Wave Street shown)
3. Visual dominance of car parking on the service road
4. The view from the highway's opposite footpath

Neighbourhood centre signage
Highway Arrival from the North

1500 metres from Nobby Beach: Annette Kellerman Park

1000 metres from Nobby Beach: Seashell Ave

500 metres from Nobby Beach: Between Surf and Wave Streets

250 metres from Nobby Beach Shops. View from the highway immediately adjacent the centre.
Highway Arrival from the South

The deviation in the highway (near Kallay Street) with the dense edge of vegetation

View over Miami High campus

Approaching the Chairlift Avenue intersection

What’s special about Nobby’s place character?

- The North Nobby backdrop and highway arrival views
- The visual clutter and colour of traditional high street signage
- Views to North Nobby from the highway and surrounding areas
- Built form is secondary to the scale of natural features
URBAN STRUCTURE

Nobby Beach's neighbourhood centre is a single-sided, traditional high street retail format accessed by a service road for most of its length. It forms part of the coastal strip, but in contrast to the continuous linear commercial structure north at Mermaid Beach, it has a defined spatial boundary and a distinguishable character.

SETTLEMENT FORM

Urban structure

Nobby’s neighbourhood centre is characterised by:

- a regional road corridor - the highway - as a north-south arterial spine running parallel to the beach
- its location at the point where the highway deviates from its characterising linear form to pass North Nobby
- its single side high street retail format accessed via a service road
- low commercial development scale
- an absence of significant commercial development on the western highway frontage
- significantly different street structure east and west of the highway due to the age of development and the topographic contexts
- a beachside block structure that runs parallel to the beach and highway (a point of difference to Mermaid Beach)
- direct beach connections through Wave Street, Lavarack Road and Chairlift Avenue.

North Nobby and the Miami High campus together establish an important urban break and a moment of diversion from the highly urbanised coastal strip.

Development intensity and form

Nobby Beach is historically a low-scale residential environment comprising predominately detached dwellings. Higher density three storey walk-up apartments and medium rise apartments buildings on the beachside have steadily increased in number from the late 1980s.

The neighbourhood west of the highway is predominately detached housing with the notable exception of:

- Chamonix apartments
- Nobby Beach Holiday Village
- a mixed-use area of low-impact industry and commercial businesses.

The core commercial area is not significantly higher in development intensity to the surrounding residential areas and the one and two storey buildings blend seamlessly with adjacent residential development. Built-to-boundary building forms and higher site coverage are the main points of differentiation.

The strip and spatial definition

In terms of land use, the centre has clear spatial definition formed by:

- a predominately residential and short stay accommodation strip along the highway to the north
- North Nobby to the south
- residential areas to the east
- the highway and residential areas to the west.

There is potentially a strong relationship to the Nobby Beach SLSC through Lavarack Road.

Open Space

Open space is not an integrated structural element of the centre but there are significant open spaces and parkland nearby that contribute to the visual character and amenity of the area, including:

- Lions Head Park, a local park on Chairlift Avenue
- Thorn Park along the beachfront at Miami
- Miami High sports fields
- Open space of North Nobby.
Legend
Generalised Land Uses
- Mixed Highway Commercial and Retail
- Mixed Residential and Holiday Accommodation
- Mixed Low Impact Industry and Commercial Uses
- Low and Medium Density Residential Development
- Open Space

What’s special about Nobby’s place character?
- The historic pattern of growth and settlement structure
- The high street format commercial development
- The highway deviation around North Nobby
- North Nobby green space
- Beach and open space connections through the streets
- Highway vista to North Nobby from the north

Figure 3.6: Nobby Beach Urban Structure
Figure 3.7: Nobby’s beachside showing the high street commercial format and direct linking streets to the beach.

Figure 3.8: Looking north towards Mermaid Beach shows the characterising deviation of the highway around North Nobby.
ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

Similar to Mermaid Beach, the movement network is structured around the Gold Coast Highway which deviates around North Nobby after long linear approaches from the north and south. The street pattern reflects two distinct development waves - the early grid networks of the beachside and Dolphin Avenue, and the characteristic loop roads and culs-de-sac of 1970s estate development to the west.

ROAD NETWORK

The road network is characterised by:
- the structuring influence of the highway connecting major centres north and south
- the significant highway deviation around North Nobby
- the strong grid network on the beachside
- loops roads and culs-de-sac of the western canal estates.

Public transport

Current bus routes utilise the Gold Coast Highway. The accessibility and walkable scale of the beachside negates the need for routes to the east.

Mermaid Waters is serviced by both the highway routes and services along Sunshine Boulevard. The road structure of the canal development greatly reduces the effectiveness of services and convenience for users.

A bus stop is located for southbound services at the front of the centre. Northbound services stop just north of the Chairlift Avenue intersection which commuters must use to cross the highway.

Car parking

Car parking in the neighbourhood centre includes:
- formalised on-street parking on the service road
- informal on-street parking in residential streets
- off-street surface car parking in some commercial developments
- basement parking in the larger holiday apartment developments.

On-street parking is a dominant visual characteristic of the centre.
- Dedicated cycleways.
- Public transport integration.

ACTIVE NETWORKS

Pedestrian and cycle network

There are high levels of pedestrian/cycle permeability east of the highway.

Neighbourhoods west of the highway are more challenging and inconvenient for pedestrians and cyclist due to the canals, the road network structure and lower levels of connectivity through to the highway.

Footpaths are present on both sides of the highway. The highway, with safety fencing along its median strip, establishes a barrier for informal road crossings in response to the high traffic volumes.

Formalised pedestrian crossings at controlled intersections are very far apart:
- Chairlift Avenue intersection to Heron Street intersection is over 700 metres.
- Chairlift Avenue intersection to Pacific Avenue intersection is 400 metres.

There are footpaths on Lavarack Road, Wave Street and Chairlift Avenue connecting to the beach. Albatross Ave has a dedicated on-street cycleway. A comprehensive active transport strategy is required to support future transport investment, addressing:
- connectivity and wayfinding
- footpath and pedestrian path safety and comfort
- strengthened connections to the beach and surf club
- dedicated cycleways.
What's special about Nobby's place character?

The deviation of the highway
High levels of connectivity for all forms of movement east of the highway
Active transport connections to the beach
LAND USE AND LOT STRUCTURE

Nobby Beach extends the land use and development density themes of Mermaid Beach with its broad area of detached and medium density housing. The continuous highway commercial strip is replaced by a defined neighbourhood centre. On its southern boundary, North Nobby and a mix of non-residential uses signifies the end of the Mermaid-Nobby strip and the start of Miami.

LAND USE

Existing patterns

The plan opposite maps an analysis of building use or function. There are clear precincts:

• A residential area of low and medium density residential between the beach and the highway. In recent decades medium density apartment buildings have become more common.
• The defined commercial area fronting the eastern highway edge.
• A mix of older detached houses and new medium density building fronting the west highway edge.
• Homogeneous detached housing west of the highway.
• A mix of uses to the south including open space of North Nobby, Miami High, large sites of Chamonix and the Nobby holiday Village and light industry.

Sharp transitions exist between detached residential area and commercial centre but there is not a significant difference in development intensity other than the greater site coverage and built-to-boundary envelopes of commercial buildings.

Open space and park associated with North Nobby are significant in the context of the coastal strips urbanised character.

References to a past era

The broader highway corridor, from the edge of Broadbeach to Nobby Beach centre, still has remnant activities from its original role as a tourism commercial strip which rapidly developed from the 1960s.

These include:

• motels
• mixed-use buildings of traditional coastal form and design
• tourist attractions
• retail shops, eateries and restaurants
• holiday units.
Figure 3.11: Nobby Beach Land Use

Legend
- Low Density/ Detached Residential
- Medium Density/ Multi Unit Residential
- Holiday Apartments/ Motels
- Mixed Use
- Commercial/ Retail
- Low impact Industry
- Community Use
- Holiday Park
- Open Space

What’s special about Nobby’s place character?

Predominance of detached houses
The well defined commercial centre activities
LOT SIZES

The Neighbourhood Centre

Standard lot sizes in the commercial area are 10 metres by 43 metres, but there are a number of large blocks and non-regular configurations.

Residential Areas

East of the highway on a north-south orientation is a structure of blocks generally 65 metres by 190 metres. The blocks comprise a standard lot size of 12.5-metre frontage by 32 metres deep. Amalgamations of these blocks for medium density buildings are evident.

Lots west of the highway are mixed in configuration and size but typically range from 400 to 800 square metres. Three large sites are associated with medium density and tourist accommodation/caravans.

Ownership Pattern

Generally, the lot structure in residential areas suggests a highly fractured ownership pattern which presents a barrier to significant consolidation of lots.

Chamonix appears to be a group titled multiple ownership structure while the Nobby Holiday Village is assumed to be under single ownership.
BUILT FORM AND ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

The low scale built environment is a fundamental determinant Nobby Beach’s place character and its atmosphere. The building stock of the centre is aging, but it sustains good levels of streetlife and the archetypal high street building forms capture all the visual qualities and interest of a traditional shopping strip.

SCALE AND MASSING

City context

At a city-wide scale, the development intensity of the Mermaid Beach to Miami corridor is an important contrast to the major tourism destinations of Broadbeach and Burleigh Heads at either end. It’s characteristic lower scale and density provides both interest to the city skyline and visual relief and variety to the experience of travelling along the Gold Coast Highway.

Future built form should focus on the value of this skyline character, balanced against opportunities to increase centre building heights and massing that would:

- enhance centre identity and sense of place
- support greater local economic activity and employment
- support future infrastructure investment through transit oriented design initiatives.

Neighbourhood centre context

The massing and height diagrams illustrate the built form character of the area.

In the commercial area, single and two storey mixed use retail/commercial buildings establish a built form edge to the highway and service road. These traditional high street style buildings dating back to the 1960s and 1970s are generally built to the front and side boundaries with a predominance of narrow shopfronts. There is a mix of narrow (5 metres) and wide (10 metres) shopfronts and a high proportion of glazing to the footpath.

In terms of contribution to place character, the active streetlife and traditional forms of these buildings override their aging qualities.

The low development intensity of commercial development has minimised the impact of sharp transitions to adjacent residential development.

The mixed use Moroccan/Mediterranean themed Santorini and holiday apartments atop North Nobby are not typical of the wider suburb’s character or scale.

Residential built forms

The beachside neighbourhood, unlike the commercial area, has experienced ongoing investment and there is a wide variety of building ages, styles and quality. The detached house remains the dominant building form.

On the western edge of the highway facing the centre, three storey apartment buildings have recently been developed on the amalgamation of two blocks. The western neighbourhood remains a predominantly ‘brick and tile’ detached housing environment typical of 1970s and 1980s estate developments.

(See Built Form Character assessment two pages over.)

The strip and views to North Nobby

The existing low-scale built environment plays a fundamental role in maintaining visual access to North Nobby, particularly the view heading south along the highway and localised views in the centre and wider neighbourhood (see page over). At the broader scale of the highway, there is no definition of centre in terms of its height or massing.

Looking ahead, with increased development pressures driven by light rail access and increasing property values, there will need to be a balance achieved between:

- protection of key North Nobby views
- accommodating growth and achieving greater transit supportive development densities
- greater definition of the neighbourhood centre through increased heights of buildings. (See building height discussion page over).
Figure 3.12: Building Scale and Massing

Legend

- Low Density/ Detached Residential
- Medium Density/ Multi Unit Residential
- Holiday Apartments/ Motels
- Mixed Use
- Commercial/ Retail
- Community Use
- Open Space

- Santorini: Apartments and ground floor commercial
- Magic Mountain: Nobby's Bluff Apartments and Magic Mountain Resort
- Miami High: Including extensive open space
- High Street: Mixed use - retail, commercial
- One and two storey

City of Gold Coast Place Analysis Study - Nobby Beach
What’s special about Nobby’s place character?

- Single sided traditional commercial strip with narrow shopfronts
- High street function and character
- Views to North Nobby headland
- Relaxed coastal character in built form

Figure 3.13: Nobby Beach Existing Building Heights
STREET LIFE AND ACTIVATION

The centre has high levels of retail/commercial street activation. Tenancies along the retail edge are predominantly 5 metres or 10 metres wide, with the standard lot width being 10 metres.

With the exception of the commercial premises of Santorini and a cafe on Lavarack Road, the majority of retail activation is focused on the highway/service road edge of the neighbourhood centre. The western edge of the highway has no active edges.

A break of approximately 60 metres in the continuous active edge occur in the middle of the centre where a cluster of larger format uses with greater setbacks (restaurants, vet, jewellery and furniture store) and a driveway are located.

Billboard Signage

Billboards or large advertising signs have a comparable impact on views to the built form. The scale and location of these signs should similarly be subject to visual impact assessments and height or size limitations. Sky and roof type signs are a negative character element.

The middle section of the centre where the built form is set back from the boundary and there is a loss in the continuity of the built form edge and awning cover.
Figure 3.15: Nobby Beach active street frontages

Legend
- Active: Narrow retail frontages, food and beverage (e.g. boutique retail, outdoor dining, takeaways)
- Semi-Active: Larger commercial frontages and service uses (e.g. banks, real estate, medical services)
- Non-Active: No activation of footpath (e.g. Residential, blank walls, car parking)

Figure 3.16: Nobby Beach day-time and night-time activation

Legend
- Retail
- IGA
- Supermarket
- Night Time Activation
- Restaurant/Bar
- Cafe
- Service/Commercial
BUILDING TYPOLOGIES AND CHARACTER

The neighbourhood centre
- Traditional high street mixed retail/commercial buildings interspersed with other small commercial forms.
- A mix of older building stock including original 1960s and 1970s buildings.
- One and two storey heights.
- Continuous awning to street with the exception of a central section comprising the vet and two restaurants.
- High levels of facade glazing.
- Visual dominance of signage facing the service road and highway.
- The Moroccan/Mediterranean themed Santorini.

The beachside
- A mix of detached and multi-dwelling buildings.
- Remnant original beach holiday houses dating from the 1960s.
- A broad mix of detached homes dating from the 1970s to the present.
- Newer houses are typically large and many reference traditional beach house forms and details (skillion roof forms, materiality).
- A broad mix of multi-dwelling building characters and ages including both permanent and holiday apartments.
- Some beachfront mid-rise apartment buildings.

The western highway edge
- A mix of detached housing styles and ages;
- New multi-dwelling buildings developed on amalgamations of two lots.

West of the highway
- Typical ‘brick and tile’ detached dwellings from the 1970s to the 1980s.
- Many have undergone significant renovations.

The mixed-use Santorini building and its Chairlift Avenue frontage
Commercial and Retail Buildings

The commercial high street building typologies

Other stand-alone commercial building forms
Holiday Accommodation and Motels

Remnants of the motel strip

The themed apartments

Beachfront mid-rise apartments

Magic Mountain Apartments
Apartments and Houses

New multi-dwelling buildings and the mix of housing styles and ages on the western frontage of the highway

A walk-up unit building from the 1980s and a detached house

The beach house vernacular - old and new - that is common within the suburb
PUBLIC REALM

There is nothing shiny or new about Nobby’s local centre and there’s much more land dedicated to cars than people. Nevertheless, it’s got a distinctive charm and its mix of businesses satisfies a broad range of local convenience shopping, service commercial, cafés and social activities. To visit, it’s got streetlife, visual interest and social opportunity. It’s an authentic local centre in every sense.

PUBLIC REALM STRUCTURE

The neighbourhood centre is a single-sided high street accessed by a service road. The footpath of this commercial strip, its the service road and the street connections to the beach are essentially the centre’s public realm.

The beach is approximately 400 metres from the shopping area via Wave Street, Lavarack Road or Chairlift Avenue. The Nobby SLSC and BSKT Cafe anchors Lavarack Road at the beach end and this relationship should be considered in future public realm strategies.

While there are accessible nearby parks - Lions Head park and Thorn Park - they do not contribute directly to the centre’s public realm character, quality or function.

North Nobby gives the centre its characterising green backdrop and this is integral to the visual experience of a visit to Nobby.

PUBLIC REALM QUALITY

The retail/commercial environment

The centre functions as a traditional high street and is characterised by:

- A predominance of active street frontage commercial uses, including:
  - small retail shops
  - food/beverage businesses
  - cafes/ bars
  - commercial and service businesses.
- An uninterrupted commercial edge to the service street - there is only one driveway break next to the vet.
- The majority of the footpath is under awning which allows for street dining and shaded seating.
- The typical clutter of business signage and advertising.
- Direct shop-front car parking via the service road.

Cars vs people

Notwithstanding the active streetlife and the general health of the retail environment, there is a significant proportion of the public realm dedicated to cars. The service road has 24 metres of parking and carriageway and the highway is typically wide. The retail strip’s footpaths are typically 4.5 metres wide. This imbalance has obvious visual implications (see page over).

There is an opportunity to re-profile the service road and deliver more footpath space that can support footpath dining and streetscape embellishments such as seating, shade trees and planting.

Pedestrian and cycle environments

The centre has had recent landscape enhancements on the corner of Lavarack Road but generally the streetscape draws character from its informality and activity. The uninterrupted retail edges contribute to its function and the diverse architectural qualities deliver interest and character.

The centre is spatially and visually divorced from the highway for most of its length by the service road and associated perpendicular parking. This is a car dominated space with only one formal pedestrian crossing. High volumes of cars use this space at peak times on week days and weekends.

High levels of pedestrian/cycle accessibility to the centre is enjoyed by beachside residents but west of the highway the street structure and highway itself present significant inconveniences and barriers to the local community west of the highway.
The wide service road and perpendicular parking that retail and commercial use front onto.

Cafe on Lavarack Road

Recent streetscape enhancements on the corner of Lavarack Street

The bus stop on the western side of the highway

Footpath dining fronting the service road

The wide service road and perpendicular parking that retail and commercial use front onto.
STREET PROFILES AND STREETSCAPE CHARACTER

Gold Coast Highway
- A typical reserve of 40 metres generally dominated by carriageway (not including the service road).
- Varying carriageway, median and footpath widths as it passes through the study area due to the presence of turning lanes.
- Formal and informal on-street parking.
- No bike lanes.
- No activation by retail/commercial businesses (see over).
- Absent of any consistent streetscaping that establishes centre character or identity.

Service Road and Car Park
- Typically 30-metre reserve from the kerb of the highway.
- 24 metres of parking and carriageway.

Lavarack Road
- 20 metres wide with generally 4-metre wide footpaths.
- Informal on-street parking.
- Generally, informal and scattered street tree planting with a footpath on one side.
- Footpath to beach on both verges.
- Absent of any consistent streetscape treatment but they ‘borrow’ character from the addressing housing and apartment developments and associated private landscaping.

Aerial of the centre showing the service road configuration.
What’s special about Nobby’s place character?

- The retail strip and active streetlife
- The North Nobby backdrop from north and south approach on Gold Coast Highway
- The relaxed, informal character and authentic place qualities
- Proximity to the beach, Nobby’s SLSC and parks

Looking north, Gold Coast Highway near Wave Street intersection (View AA)

Looking north, Gold Coast Highway in front of the neighbourhood centre (View BB)

Looking east down Lavarack Road

Figure 3.17: Nobby Beach Road Profiles (continued over)
Wave Street

- Reserve 20 metres wide, carriageway 11 metres wide with 4.5-metre wide footpaths.
- Informal on-street parking.
- Generally, informal and scattered street tree planting with a footpath on one side.
- Absent of any consistent streetscape treatment however they ‘borrow’ character from the private landscaping of addressing housing and apartment developments, particularly the Norfolk pines.

Chairlift Avenue

- Reserve 20 metres wide, carriageway 13 metres wide with 3-metre and 4-metre wide footpaths.
- A mix of formal parallel and angle on-street parking and informal on-street parking at the residential end.
- Formal streetscaping associated with the Santorini development.
- The road terminates after 130 metres with a pedestrian link at the base of North Nobby joining it to the eastern section of the street.

Looking west, the pedestrian link at the base of North Nobby linking both sections of Chairlift Avenue.
Looking east down Wave Street

Looking east along Chairlift Avenue. The Road terminates after 130m, interrupted by North Nobby.

Figure 3.17: Nobby Beach Road Profiles (continued)
History

The first estates of Nobby Beach were surveyed in the 1920s with rapid development of holiday homes and tourist accommodation starting in the 1950s. Today, a valuable stock of the original holiday homes remain scattered through the beachside neighbourhood.

In 1962 a chairlift opened which took visitors to the top of the hill. By 1976, the medieval castle of the ‘Magic Mountain’ theme park took its place atop the hill. These are among the first tourist attractions of the city. The commercial strip was fully formed by the mid-1970s. Higher density three-storey walk-up apartments and mid-rise apartment buildings on the beachside have steadily increased in number from the late 1980s. The western neighbourhood remains a predominantly ‘brick and tile’ detached housing environment typical of 1970s to 1980s estate development.

As part of the wider Mermaid Beach suburb, Nobby Beach retains a scale that readily differentiates it from the highly urbanised centres north and south.

North Nobby

North Nobby is a significant landscape character area within the city and a valuable urban break along the highly urbanised coastal strip. It provides a characterising backdrop to the centre and wider neighbourhood.

The low scale built environment plays a fundamental role in maintaining visual access to North Nobby, particularly the long view heading south along the highway. The scenic amenity and landscape character value of the hill are worthy of protection.
The Neighbourhood Centre

The centre is a single-sided high street format accessed by a service road for most of its length. It has the functional and visual qualities of a traditional high street including its low scale, activated street edge, continuous awning to footpath and the colour and clutter of awning signs.

Single and two storey mixed use retail/commercial buildings establish a built form edge to the service road. These traditional high street style buildings dating back to the 1960s and 1970s are generally built to the front and side boundaries with a predominance of narrow shopfronts. The commercial area is not significantly higher in development intensity to the surrounding residential areas.

Notwithstanding the active streetlife and the general health of the retail environment, there is a significant proportion of the public realm dedicated to cars. There is an opportunity to re-profile the service road and deliver streetscape enhancements that establish more footpath space to support the retail function and footpath dining and streetscape embellishments such as seating, shade trees and planting.

The Future

The backdrop of the hill and its associated remnant vegetation is the defining visual quality of the neighbourhood centre and a key contributor to the place character of the wider Nobby Beach area.

Given the visual significance of North Nobby, it is critical that future built form scale and massing take into account the potential for impacts on localised views and approach views from the highway.
FOR MORE INFORMATION

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