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20. CONSERVATION AREAS

In New South Wales it has been possible to identify and protect conservation areas for over twenty years. Based primarily on areas of distinctive built form, an additional layer of planning controls enables closer control of change than is possible elsewhere. As the designation of Conservation Areas has become more popular and widespread, the statutory definition is increasingly familiar to local authorities. Generally, conservation areas are defined as areas of special architectural and historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is

desirable to preserve or enhance. Thus in designating such areas, local authorities appreciate the particular qualities or characteristics which make these areas special. Designation also brings a duty to consider how these qualities should be protected or enhanced, and to prepare policies to secure this aim. However, designation is complicated by the fact that as living components of dynamic urban complexes, many 'conserved' areas must continue to adapt and change. There is therefore a need to manage change

within conservation areas by balancing the competing private and public interest. Pressures of a social, political, commercial and environmental nature combine to bear heavily on cogent planning policy. Any tendency of stagnation and fossilisation of the physical fabric must be resisted with vitality and growth. Change must be allowed to flourish without degrading a conservation area's intrinsic heritage significance.