2.1 Sydney Region

Hurstville is located 15km south west of Sydney and is the main regional centre for southern Sydney. Hurstville CBD has close access to the M5 and is 7km away from the Kingsford-Smith International Airport and Port Botany.

Hurstville sits at the southern end of the global arc that begins with Macquarie University and ranges over the CBD and the airport to Hurstville.

The Hurstville City Centre is described as an emerging regional centre with multi-purpose retail, financial, commercial, community, recreational and residential uses. It is the major transportation interchange in the region and enjoys views to Sydney City, Botany Bay and the Blue Mountains.
2.2 St George Region

Hurstville is located in the heart of the St George region which comprises the Hurstville, Kogarah and Rockdale local government areas. Hurstville is the main centre in a suite of suburban centres focussed on the rail line from central Sydney to the Illawarra. All centres are located on the relatively high ground of the rail line; all have denser commercial retail development around the stations, in many cases backing onto the rail line. Hurstville is the city centre on the highest ground.

Two major railway lines, the Illawarra and the East Hills lines transect the region. Hurstville Station is the major public transport hub on the Illawarra Line. There is a future plan for a Hurstville-Strathfield Rail Link which will provide easy access to the western and northern lines of the rail network.

The southern part of Hurstville Town Centre is in the municipality of Kogarah. It would seem more appropriate that the whole of the Town Centre be in one local government area rather than using the railway line as a divider.
2.3 Local Context

The Hurstville CBD area is defined in the Hurstville LEP as an elongated east-west shape with the Hurstville Railway Station and retail hub at its centre. Most of the CBD area is within a 5 minute walking distance, with the edges of the city centre within a 10 minute walk from the railway station and major bus routes. The nearest adjoining railway stations are Allawah and Penshurst.

Forest Road is the main street running parallel to the railway line. It is the traditional shopping street lined with 2-3 storey buildings with shops on street level, awnings and buildings creating a well-defined spatial character for the city centre's main street. Westfield Hurstville lies in a valley to the north of the railway station and has a number of pedestrian paths in the form of arcades and laneways leading through the central retail area to the main shopping centre.

The centre’s urban form is characterised by the hilltop location, the clear street grid and the traditional main street with the retail and commercial activities.

All the major public open spaces in Hurstville skirt the city centre and are not within the CBD area. Hurstville Oval, Penshurst Park, Woodville Park, Croot Park and Kempt Field lie outside the boundary of the CBD and are within a 10 minute walking distance. Within the city centre there are very few public squares or parks with the exception of the recently refurbished Memorial Square and the small grassed area on the corner of Park Road and Woodville Street.

Many local schools are located close to the Hurstville city centre. They are Penshurst Girls High, Danebank School, St Declans Catholic Primary School, Hurstville Boys High, Hurstville Primary, Bethany College and Sydney Technical High.
Pedestrian access to Westfield Shopping Centre is unattractive and confusing.

Pedestrian access to the railway station is limited, congested and confused due to significant level change.

Many sites in the CBD are dominated by surface car parks.
2.4 Local History

The first land grants in Hurstville were given in 1804 to Hanna Laycock, in 1807 to Robert Towson and in 1809 to John Towson. The area was opened up by Major Sir Thomas Mitchell, Surveyor General of the colony, connecting Sydney with the Illawara district. Mitchell’s Road, the new Illawara Road, apart from a few slight deviations, essentially followed the alignment of Forest Road. Forest Road followed the ridges and hills from the Cooks and Georges River, it served to open up the Turpentine, Blackbutt and Ironwood forests of the district to timber cutters.

It was the coming of the railway in 1884, which began the nucleus of growth for the city centre. The railway line came in from the east and intersected Forest Road. This meeting of the two main routes made Hurstville the major city centre for the Region. Hurstville became a municipality soon after the arrival of the railway, in 1887.

The Council Chambers were established on the corner of Forest Road and MacMahon Street in 1890. The chambers were later moved to the Old Fire Station on the corner of Dora and MacMahon Streets.

MacMahon Street became Hurstville’s second most important street after Forest Road due to its early settlement and its location on the ridge. Its major civic role was reinforced between 1900 and 1920, with the location of the Fire Station, Police Station, the Presbyterian, Baptist and Church of Christ Churches and other Civic buildings, before the present Civic Centre was built in 1962.

A description of the town in 1900, by Alderman E R Fripp, reveals the pattern of early development. “The town consisted of a string of shops extending from Gloucester Road to what is now known as Diment Way, and a post and rail fence was erected to protect people from falling into the natural watercourse and the surrounding swampy land.” The description again reinforces the importance of the natural terrain in the development of Hurstville. The high locations were the most desirable and shops were located from Gloucester Road to Diment Way and on either side of MacMahon Street.

The swampy land east of Diment Way took many years to develop, and was eventually occupied by Westfield Hurstville.

Electrification of the Illawarra Railway line to Hurstville in 1926 provided a faster link to central Sydney. This period saw Hurstville established as a major retail centre. The rapid building to the street alignment of many art deco buildings in the 1920’s and 1930’s largely formed the character of Forest Road, with the southern side of Forest Road being developed as retail strip during this period.

The post war years saw rapid growth in population. Entire streets of medium density walk-up apartment buildings were rapidly built, mainly to the north and south of the centre. Office buildings were built, mainly on the south side of the railway and Hurstville was consolidated as a major retail centre with the construction of the Super Centre in 1965 and Westfield Hurstville in 1978.

More recently, high rise office buildings and residential towers have been built along Forest Road on the western end and the northern side of the City Centre.

Source: Hurstville DCP 4 Vol: 1, May 1998