

The St Leonards and Crows Nest Station Planned Precinct

GCA SUBMISSION ON PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE PATHS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Greenwich Community Association ("GCA") welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to guide a draft plan for the St Leonards and Crows Nest Station precinct (**Precinct**).

GREENWICH & THE PRECINCT

Greenwich is part of the Precinct – the area in the Precinct bordered by Pacific Highway, Greenwich Road, River Road and Park Road that is sometimes called “St Leonards South” is actually Greenwich.

More broadly, for planning purposes all of Greenwich is integrally connected with the whole of the Precinct. Schools, transport, open space, water and sewerage, telco and power infrastructure, community services, in the precinct – and the lack of them – all impact the whole of Greenwich.

WHAT ARE THE KEY PRIORITIES FOR PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE PATHS?

We ask that the Precinct Plan includes three initiatives:

- (1) **River Road crossings** – 4 more are needed between St Vincents Road, Greenwich and Shirley Road, Wollstonecraft
- (2) **Green pathways** – connected stretches of open space – between the centre of the Precinct and its surrounding peninsulas
- (3) **Supported by an integrated network of paths and facilities** – like veins to the green pathway arteries with plentiful bike racks and facilities to make the system work

The overriding theme of this submission is the Precinct Plan should create safe bicycle and pedestrian connections across the Precinct and with its surrounds.

WHAT IS REQUIRED?

Green pathways: the key priority is to create **green pathways** from the centre of the Precinct – particularly the St Leonards railway station and the Crows Nest Metro station – through to the peninsulas of Greenwich, Wollstonecraft and Waverton, as well as East/West from Waverton across to Lane Cove.

These green pathways will form the backbone of safe, liveable, productive pedestrian and bicycle access within the precinct and also between the precinct and the adjoining areas that feed into and are impacted by the precinct. They will link the precinct to, for example, the Bob Campbell oval, the foreshore bushwalks and the Harbour.

Integrated paths: they must form part of an **integrated** system of paths that ties in with existing parks, schools, shopping/restaurant areas and commuter routes – including, for bicycles, routes to the CBD, to Lane Cove and to Chatswood.

To make it a seamless network:

- all pavements across the area should encourage active transport by being designed to be wide enough (2.5 metres) for shared use where that is safe – and where it is not, there should be separated paths designed into every new development;
- accessibility should be a standard consideration in the design – stairs are a barrier for all types of active transport: wheelchair users, bicycle users, mobility scooter users and those using walking aids; and
- end of trip facilities should be built into all new developments – accessible and sufficient bicycle storage should be included in all new commercial buildings and residential complexes in the area

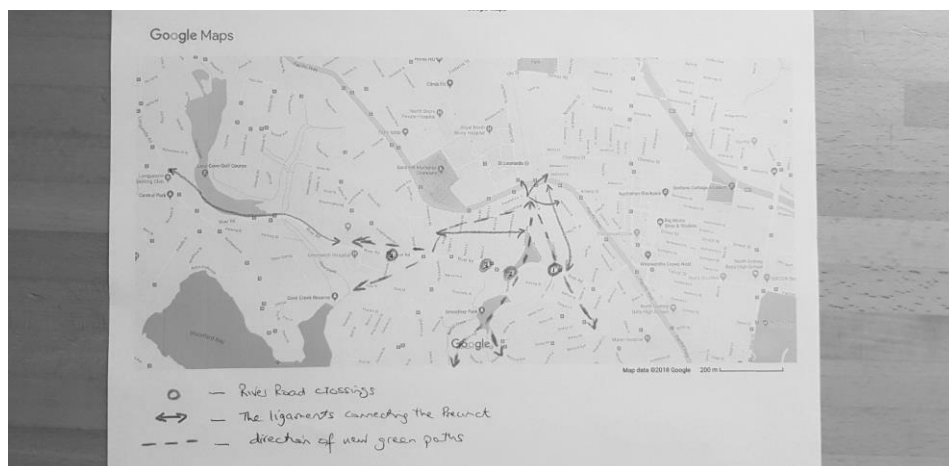
New crossings and paths should be created:

- River Road is currently dangerous and virtually impassable – green pathways across River Road need to be created for pedestrians and bicycles (1) at the River Road railway bridge, (2) at Canberra Avenue, (3) at Wilona Avenue/Eastview Street, and (4) at St Vincents Road –and they must be safe and separated from traffic; traffic islands are not safe, the crossings need to be underpasses (eg at the railway bridge) or overpasses,
- an East-West path is needed between Greenwich Road (between Pacific Highway and River Road) and Oxley Street/Nicholson Street,
- a safe path is needed from Greenwich Public School through or beside the Lane Cove Golf Course to Lane Cove shops,
- to the North, the connection from Canberra Avenue/Marshall Avenue to Herbert St needs to be improved – a tunnel passage under Pacific Highway could be a good solution here.

Safety is a key consideration in the design. High traffic areas need separated paths. So do hilly terrains where bikes can move too fast to be safe for fellow active travellers.

We have commented in more detail on these priorities in the attached submission. GCA would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Department to discuss this submission.

*An outline of the proposed new paths and River Road crossings (shown in larger format in **Attachment A** at the end of this submission)*



GREENWICH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Greenwich Community Association is a non-profit community forum dedicated to gathering and promoting the views and interests of the residents of Greenwich.

Greenwich has a population of approximately 5000 people with an average age of around 40 years. The community comprises residents of all ages with a wide range of work, social and sporting interests. There are many bicyclists in the community, representing all categories of bike users as discussed further below.

OUTLINE OF SUBMISSION

This submission sets out:

- **How active transport will help** restore a vibrant, diverse community and the employment and lifestyle objectives that have been identified for the Precinct – with a particular focus on the bicycle contribution
- **Opportunities and cost savings** that well-designed pedestrian and bicycle paths and facilities make available to the Precinct
- **Existing bicycle paths** and access points with which the new green pathways should be integrated
- **Key principles for path sharing and design** that should apply to any new development in this area
- **Specific priorities and issues** for the design of the pedestrian and bicycle network in the Greenwich part of the Precinct and adjoining areas.



(a "mama chari" from Japan – a welcome addition to the Precinct)



(New York, but it could be Greenwich, Crows Nest or St Leonards)

1. KEY THEMES

- 1.1 ***Greenwich and the Precinct are vital to each other.*** Greenwich is a source for St Leonards and Crows Nest of shoppers, employers and employees, rail and bus commuters, medical patients, restaurant and café clientele, and general street life. The Precinct is for Greenwich a medical and transport hub, a suburban shopping centre, a location for business and jobs, and a place of entertainment. Of course, part of the Precinct is in fact in Greenwich.
- 1.2 ***The Precinct needs connections and space to breathe.*** While St Leonards and Crows Nest have much to offer – both as a medical and transport hub and a shopping and restaurant destination – they are not well connected to their surrounding areas at a human scale. River Road is a barrier. There are few pathways out of the Precinct. The steep increase in density with the new high rise developments will put this in sharp relief. The new residents will want and need access to open space, nearby parks and the Harbour.
- 1.3 ***Active transport is part of the solution.*** Providing easy access and facilities for pedestrians, prams, wheelchairs and bicycles will extend the Precinct's catchment area for shopping and recreation to neighbouring suburbs. It will also promote the image of the Precinct as new, green, inner city urban living – a lower north shore hub servicing high-tech medical and wellness industries, minimising the adverse impact of cars and traffic with preferred and seamless alternative inner city transport options.
- 1.4 ***Bicyclists come in all shapes, sizes, ages and speeds.*** Sunday morning pelotons of Tour de France bicyclists are a popular image but only a very small proportion of the bicycle community. The bike users for the Precinct will be grandparents helping their 5 year olds ride to the park in the morning, young professionals shopping on a Saturday, primary school children hanging around with their friends on bikes after school, commuters going via St Leonards station or Crows Nest Metro, families going for an adventure on Sunday, tourists getting off the beaten track in Sydney and a myriad of other daytime and night time users. It is these bike users, rather than the pelotons, that the integrated bike paths need to serve.
- 1.5 ***Shared paths should be the default setting.*** The pedestrians and bicyclists going to and from the Precinct are for the most part going the same way. In any new development there is scope to set the footpath width wide enough to allow shared bike and pedestrian use. That should be the default standard. Any variation from that requirement should have to be well justified.
- 1.6 ***Designing safe solutions adds to the vibrancy of the community space.*** The pelotons can use the Pacific Highway but all other bike users want safety and, wherever possible, to be off-road. So do pedestrians. Provide safe paths and they will come – all of those daytime and night time users who want to shop, eat, work and play. They are the people who by their presence and activity will convert the aspirations for the Precinct into a reality.
- 1.7 ***Integration is easy – it just requires planning.*** St Leonards is already a transport hub and the Metro will make Crows Nest a complementary hub. There are already car and foot routes in and out. The main bike links between the Precinct and some of the neighbouring suburbs have already been established. The basic starting points for the design of a well-integrated system of pedestrian and bike paths and access are all in place. All that is needed is to include pedestrians and bikes in the planning in the same way as cars, and to have the commitment to make it work.
- 1.8 ***Separate to be safe.*** In any high traffic area bicycles and motor vehicles don't mix well. Proper separated bicycle paths are needed – for the benefit of the bicycles and the cars and the pedestrians.
- 1.9 ***E-bikes are coming.*** Sydney is a hilly city. Riding an e-bike up a hill is like riding on the flat. E-bikes are part of the design of a "30 minute city". The Precinct should be designed to meet their demands and to encourage their use.

2. THE BICYCLE CONTRIBUTION

There is a great opportunity to add value to the Precinct by making bicycles part of the image of the community.

- 2.1 **Aspirational:** For high density residential living, bicycles are an attractive image, especially for young singles and young families. They are ecologically positive. They create alternative commuter and recreational options. They offer a scope for shopping and café destinations that is much wider than by foot alone. There is a corridor of shopping, cafes and galleries developing from St Leonards station through Crows Nest to North Sydney – this is a natural bike route for weekend recreation.



(notice the high heels)

- 2.2 **Good for business:** From a local business point of view, bicycles fit well with both the image and the reality of the medical, fitness, therapeutic, naturopath and other wellness businesses that are developing in St Leonards around the anchor of Royal North Shore Hospital.

Seeing bicycles on the streets and in the parks will fit well with the personal trainers and fitness gyms that are already in St Leonards and Crows Nest. Making bikes part of the usual day to day life in the Precinct will allow the depth of the range of bike users to become visible and to feel comfortably accepted.

Bike retail and bike repair shops will be able to contribute to the local business community.



- 2.3 **Cost effective and improved amenity:** The reality is that bikes are also practical and cost saving. There will be less car parking required to be available in new residential developments under the new planning guidelines. Congestion along Pacific Highway is already bad. Street parking is already at maximum capacity.

Encouraging the use of bicycles by making them part of the Precinct's lifestyle and transport hub will not only improve transport connections, street level amenity and residential amenity, it will also save the Council money. Bike paths are cheaper to build and maintain than roads. Bikes do not create the unfunded externalities of cars – such as traffic calming, accident prevention, road closure constraints, and pollution costs.

With the extra flexibilities added by bikes, the Precinct may be able to extend the areas of pedestrian plaza available in the precinct, capturing the best of the urban living styles evident in the old European towns and the major cities around the world.

- 2.4 **The necessary solution:** the Precinct is facing a new high density future. With several thousand extra residents, cars are not an option. Bicycles are not just a preferred solution to congestion, gridlock, costs and pollution – they are an essential solution.



3. AN INTEGRATED BICYCLE PATH SYSTEM

- 3.1 **Routes already exist:** There are existing marked and unmarked bike routes between Greenwich and the Precinct, and to and from the Precinct, as shown in the map below. These would form the basis for an integrated system of bike paths.



- 3.2 **Linking paths and lanes:** The design would link the paths through the laneways, pedestrian plazas and other areas to those existing bike routes. In particular, it would link the paths to the station, including providing a safe route through the proposed new tunnel under the Pacific Highway.
- 3.3 **Bike racks and access:** The design must include bike racks and require access points to and from, and storage in, the new residential developments.
- 3.4 **Match solution to traffic:** The design should be flexible in the solutions it provides, taking into account at each plaza and on each route the different types of pedestrian, bicycle and other “active transport” users at those points.

For example, shared pathways will generally be the best solution for pedestrians, for the frail and disabled on motorised scooters, and for children and family bicyclists, along the linking routes between Greenwich and the Precinct.

However, where the pedestrian traffic is very heavy (eg at the entrance points to St Leonards station, and around schools), separate cycleways are a safer solution. In some places the separation can be indicated by a coloured lane (as with the green lanes currently in Crows Nest). In other places, a stronger separation is required. In plazas, the bike path would generally be on the edge or bicyclists would walk their bikes through.

- 3.5 **Standard 2.5m paths:** In all cases, the approach should be to create pathways that are wide enough (the standard is 2.5 metres), that have slopes not steps, and that maximise the connections with other paths and with other transport options.



3.6 ***Above all, safe:*** Most importantly, in all cases, the pathway must be *genuinely separated and safe* from cars, trucks and other vehicles.

It is not good enough, for example, to paint a line on the road where cars park and add an occasional painted bicycle icon, as in Greenwich Road (see below). That is not separated or safe. It is not an effective part of an integrated system of bike paths.

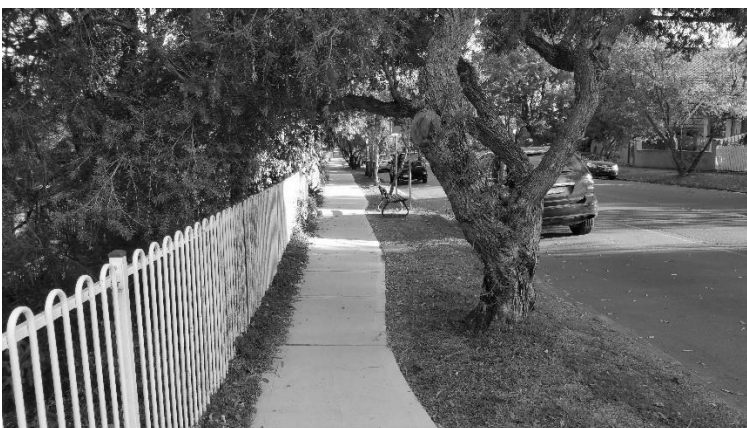


Greenwich Road “bicycle” lane – this is not safe – a real bike path must be separated from traffic as in the photo on the next page below



Similarly, a shared use path must be the appropriate width as well as in the right place. Below is another example from Greenwich Road of a path that was funded to be a shared user path but failed in implementation.

This started well - just on the 2.5 metre width



But then the purpose of the pathway was lost – it is less than a metre at this point – this cannot work safely as a shared use path

4. GREENWICH – CONNECTIONS TO THE PRECINCT ACROSS RIVER ROAD

- 4.1 To make the St Leonards & Crows Nest Station Precinct a true hub, there should be multiple pedestrian and bicycle path connections between Greenwich and the Precinct, reflecting the different users and different potential routes.

A critical requirement is to create new, safe pathways across River Road

- 4.2 River Road is currently dangerous and virtually impassable. There is no safe place for a pedestrian, wheelchair or bicycle to cross River Road between Greenwich Road and Shirley Road, a distance of more than 1 kilometre and effectively the whole of the alignment between St Leonards South and the rest of Greenwich.

Green pathways across River Road need to be created for pedestrians and bicycles:

- (1) at the River Road railway bridge,
- (2) at Canberra Avenue,
- (3) at Wilona Avenue/Eastview Street, and
- (4) at St Vincents Road.

- 4.3 The River Road railway bridge will enable a direct connection between the proposed pedestrian plaza across the railway line to the green pathway through Smoothey Park. It is also one of the major pedestrian routes for walkers from Greenwich and Wollstonecraft to St Leonards, who currently wait for breaks in traffic on the eastern side of the bridge and then risk a run across. There is space for a pedestrian and bicycle underpass making this a key connection point.
- 4.4 One of the main pedestrian and bicycle links from the St Leonards South side of the Precinct to Greenwich is likely to be down at the bottom of the valley below the railway bridge through Canberra Avenue, across Russell Street and along the path in Smoothey Park. This will require a safe way of crossing River Road at the Canberra Avenue intersection and widening of the path through Smoothey Park.
- 4.5 Another link further up River Road will be through Marshall Avenue and Berry Street. This will be at a higher point of the area. It will require a separate, safe crossing over River Road to Wilona Avenue (and thence Greenwich Road) or Eastview Street, giving access via Greendale Road to the Greenwich community hall and library, Greenwich shops, and the infants school, and via Smoothey Park to Wollstonecraft.
- 4.6 On the west side of the Precinct a link is needed directly through to Greenwich Road enabling passage across at the River Road traffic lights. This will give access through that side of the Precinct to the Greenwich peninsula.
- 4.7 Another link is needed on the west side of the Precinct for bicyclist and pedestrians travelling between the Precinct and Bob Campbell oval and the bushland trail through to Northwood. This requires a safe crossing at the River Road/St Vincents Road intersection – one of the ten motor vehicle accident hotspots in the Lane Cove LGA¹. This crossing will also service pedestrians and bikes travelling from Greenwich to the Greenwich Public School in Kingslingley Road and that part of Greenwich and Lane Cove.

¹ <https://inthecove.com.au/2016/04/06/council-names-top-10-motor-accident-hot-spots-in-lane-cove/>



5. CONNECTIONS TO THE PRECINCT – THE LIGAMENTS

5.1 As well as passage across River Road several new connections are needed to enable the Precinct and its surrounding areas to form part of an integrated framework of pedestrian and bicycle routes:

- (1) *East-West path*: an East-West path is needed between Greenwich Road (on the west side, in the section between Pacific Highway and River Road) and Oxley Street/Nicholson Street (on the east side) – currently the only east-west routes are along the Pacific Highway or River Road, neither of which is safe or separated;
- (2) *Lane Cove Golf Course*: a safe path is needed from Greenwich Public School through or beside the Lane Cove Golf Course to Lane Cove shops – currently there is no safe way along River Road to Lane Cove or to Northwood or Longueville. Indeed there are parts of the pavement where it is not even possible for two pedestrians to pass. The only safe route to Lane Cove is to go inland around the other side of the Lane Cove Golf Course which is not practical for many destinations;
- (3) *Herbert & Chandos Streets*: to the North, the bicycle connection from St Leonards South to Herbert St and Chandos St needs to be improved – a tunnel passage under Pacific Highway could be a good solution here, either a new tunnel or re-opening the former underpass that was blocked when the Forum was developed. This could be incorporated within the planning for the pedestrian plaza over the railway line;
- (4) *Christie St and Christie Lane*: the redesign of these streets in light of the new high rise developments should ensure there is legal bike access to the Pacific Highway from the River Road end of Christie Street to the highway, and that the bike access is 2-way; and
- (5) *Nicholson St*: to the east, the Precinct routes need to link into the North Sydney bike route along Nicholson St.

The diagram in **Attachment A** illustrates the proposed new River Road crossings, “Ligament” connections and Green Pathways.



- 5.2 These are only some of the key connection points. To make the Precinct a true transport hub, the paths must be part of an integrated lower north shore system of pedestrian and bicycle routes.

GCA would be happy to provide more detailed input on the upgrades and improvements required for these connections.



CONTACT

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. The GCA contact person for any queries or further information on this submission is Michael Ryland T: 04 1919 2727

Greenwich Community Association
27 March 2018

ATTACHMENT A

