

**DECISION OF 3626<sup>th</sup> COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON 13 MAY 2013**

**265. G04: Legal and Planning Committee Minutes - 6 May 2013**

**9. LP03: Education Precinct Planning Study**

Report of Emma Booth, Senior Strategic Planner - Urban Design

Strategic Planning has prepared the draft Education Precinct Planning Study. The purpose of the draft study is to initiate community and other stakeholder discussion about the future planning framework and public domain projects in the area.

The draft study aims to enhance the area's identity, character and function as an education precinct. It outlines the impetus for the work, current and future trends for education within North Sydney and presents an analysis of the area. Following a brief review of relevant national and international precedents, the draft study then articulates a vision for the area and a suite of strategies aimed at:

Improving pedestrian connectivity between the centre and the education campuses;

Enabling more efficient traffic circulation;

Protecting the amenity of surrounding residential properties and heritage value of the precinct;

Improving urban design and street level amenity; and

Identifying any future public benefits that can be delivered with new development.

The draft study is underpinned by a traffic study that has been prepared by a consultancy.

It is recommended that the draft Education Precinct Planning Study, and supporting documents, be placed on public exhibition. Following public exhibition of the study, the strategies will be refined and a masterplan prepared that will inform amendments to Council's statutory controls and capital works program, subject to approval.

**Recommending:**

**1. THAT** the draft Education Precinct Planning Study and supporting documents be placed on public exhibition for 28 days.

**2. THAT** key stakeholders be thanked for their input to date and notified in writing of the exhibition period.

**Resolved to recommend:**

**1. THAT** the draft Education Precinct Planning Study and supporting documents be placed on public exhibition for 28 days.

**2. THAT** key stakeholders be thanked for their input to date and notified in writing of the exhibition period.

**3. THAT** author of the Study be congratulated on the quality of the document.

The Motion was moved by Councillor Baker and seconded by Councillor Marchandea.

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Gibson	<b>Y</b>		Morris	<b>Y</b>	
Reymond	<b>Y</b>		Clare	<b>Absent</b>	
Carr	<b>Absent</b>		Baker	<b>Y</b>	
Bevan	<b>Absent</b>		Robertson	<b>Absent</b>	
Butcher	<b>Absent</b>		Marchandea	<b>Y</b>	
Burke	<b>Absent</b>		Beregi	<b>Absent</b>	
Barbour	<b>Absent</b>				



**Report to General Manager**

Attachments:

1. Draft Education Precinct Planning Study
2. Traffic Study - Key Findings
3. Design Excellence Panel comments

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**SUBJECT:** Education Precinct Planning Study

**AUTHOR:** Emma Booth, Senior Strategic Planner - Urban Design

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** the draft Education Precinct Planning Study and supporting documents be placed on public exhibition for 28 days.
2. **THAT** key stakeholders be thanked for their input to date and notified in writing of the exhibition period.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Endorsed by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Manager Strategic Planning

## **LINK TO DELIVERY PROGRAM**

The relationship with the Delivery Program is as follows:

Direction: 2. Our Built Environment

Goal: 2.2 Improve mix of land use and quality development  
2.4 Encourage sustainable transport  
2.5 Improve traffic management

Direction: 3. Our Built Environment

Goal: 3.1 Ensure a vibrant, strong, and sustainable local economy

Direction: 4. Our Social Vitality

Goal: 4.1 Promote diverse, dynamic and connected local economies  
4.5 Improve community safety and accessibility  
4.6 Promote affordable housing and accommodation

## **BACKGROUND**

At its meeting on 13 February 2012, Council resolved:

***THAT*** Council undertake a planning study to provide an integrated planning approach to the emerging educational precinct adjoining the North Sydney CBD to develop new strategies and initiatives that will provide for the following:

- *defined public benefits to be provided as part of any new development;*
- *improved urban design and street level amenity;*
- *improved connectivity between the CBD and the various educational campuses (ACU, SCEGS, North Sydney Demonstration School);*
- *improved traffic planning and conditions in the precinct; and*
- *protection of residential amenity.*

***THAT*** Council undertake a detailed traffic study to underpin the planning study.

***THAT*** Council create a working party with educational institutes, Mary McKillop Place and residents to discuss interface issues with residents.

This work was subsequently scheduled for 2012/13.

At its meeting on 5 November 2012, Council resolved to adopt the proposed methodology for the planning study.

Strategic Planning has prepared the draft Education Precinct Planning Study (the 'draft study', Attachment 1). The draft study has been informed by preliminary consultation with Sydney Church of England Grammar School ('Shore'), the Australian Catholic University ('ACU') and Edward Precinct Committee; and the Traffic Impact Study (the 'traffic study') prepared by Arup, the key findings of which are provided at Attachment 2.

On 11 April 2013 the Design Excellence Panel undertook a site visit and commented on the draft study (Attachment 3).

## **SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT**

The sustainability implications were considered and reported on during the initiation phase of this project.

## **DETAIL**

### **1. Purpose**

The purpose of the draft study is to initiate community and other stakeholder discussion about the future planning framework and public domain projects for the education precinct (Figure 1).

The draft study aims to enhance the area's identity, character and function as an education precinct. It outlines the impetus for the work, current and future trends for education within North Sydney and presents an analysis of the area. Following a brief review of relevant national and international precedents, the draft study then articulates a vision for the area and a suite of strategies aimed at:

- Improving pedestrian connectivity between the centre and the education campuses;
- Enabling more efficient traffic circulation;
- Protecting the amenity of surrounding residential properties and heritage value;
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- Identifying any future public benefits that can be delivered with new development.

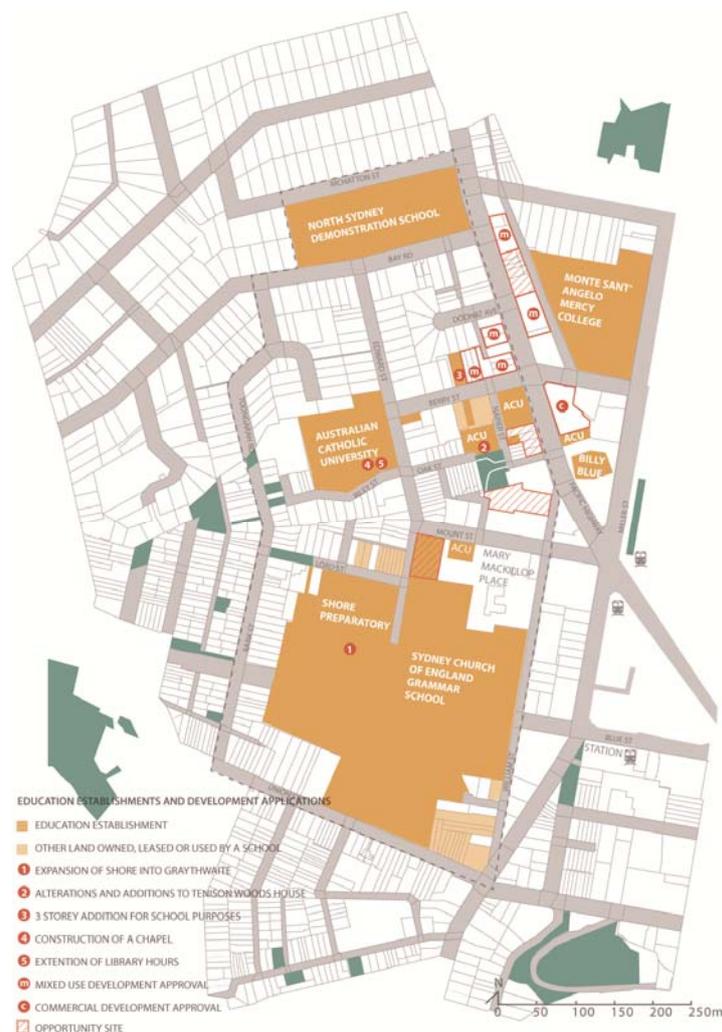


Figure 1. Map showing the education precinct and relevant development in the area

## 2. Opportunities

The precinct is located along the western edge of the North Sydney Centre, which forms part of 'Global Sydney' under the State Government's recently released draft Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney. Its prime location suggests a significant opportunity exists to enhance its regional function as an education hub within the metropolitan area.

The projected increase in student enrolments at the ACU and trends in the education sector generally, present a significant opportunity to deliver a lively public realm, enhance cultural and night time activities in the North Sydney Centre and strengthen economic development, benefitting the broader community.

Both Shore and ACU are significantly investing in the precinct. Shore is undertaking conservation works to expand its education facilities into the Graythwaite complex. The ACU is upgrading facilities at Berry Street and Napier Street. Upgrades to the public domain would enable the schools to capitalise on their investment by improving their profile and competitiveness in the region.

## 3. Issues

There are a number of issues identified in the draft study that are a consequence of the

historical development of the precinct.

In relation to traffic and pedestrian circulation, local streets temporarily exceed recommended performance levels during school drop off and pick up times. This affects residential amenity and potentially causes issues for students accessing the schools on foot. Key pedestrian links within the area are of poor quality or obstructed by private driveways, notably along Napier Street, Berry Street and the link to Oak Street.

There is limited green space or quality public domain in the precinct, and very few opportunities for new areas, suggesting streetscape improvements will best enhance the image and amenity of the precinct.

Over 80% of the precinct is covered by heritage items or within a heritage conservation area providing distinct character to the precinct but limiting redevelopment opportunities.

#### **4. Key Initiatives**

Initiatives under the draft study include transforming Napier Street into an active hub of the education precinct through streetscape works and redevelopment of an 'opportunity site' at 9 Napier Street and associated buildings fronting the Pacific Highway. Napier Street has the potential to transform into a lively laneway due the existing student population, limited traffic, good access to sunlight and proximity to the Don Bank museum and green space.

The draft study also proposes establishing a 'Living Campus Program.' The schools will be invited to work with Council to develop master plans aimed at transforming the main pedestrian paths into quality public domain to form an 'urban campus'. As education establishments are not currently required to pay developer contributions or rates, funds are proposed to be raised via an agreed, voluntary contribution from key establishments. Projects may include Wheeler Lane, Berry Street, and Napier/Charles/Oak Streets. Pending interest and funding, Mount Street and Edward Street could also be included in the program.

To achieve an appropriate building form and encourage suitable activities that enhance the education function of the precinct, a new Area Character Statement is proposed for Council's development control plan.

Traffic related initiatives are broadly aimed at reducing traffic off Edward Street via a combination of traffic control measures and demand management initiatives.

#### **5. Consultation**

Preliminary consultation with representatives of Shore and ACU suggest the schools are willing to work with Council to explore further opportunities to engage with the community and address the issues raised in the draft study.

Discussions with community representatives of the Edward Precinct Committee confirm that traffic levels during school drop off and pick up times is a key issue affecting residential amenity. The Committee suggests that the future intensification of education function, such as extended hours, should be focused within the mixed use area (predominantly Napier Street), and expressed their support for student accommodation in well located areas near public transport. Improvements to the public domain are considered highly desirable.

Strategic Planning staff have discussed the project with the Relieving Principal of the North

Sydney Demonstration School over the phone and are meeting with the School Council on 9 May 2013.

## **6. Traffic Study**

Arup was engaged to undertake a Traffic Impact Study (the 'traffic study') in March 2013 following a competitive tender process. The key findings and recommendations informed the draft study, a summary of which are provided at Attachment 2.

## **7. Design Excellence Panel**

The draft study was forwarded to the Design Excellence Panel for comment. The Panel supported the issue and strategies proposed by the draft study (Attachment 3).

## **8. Way Forward**

It is recommended that the draft Education Precinct Planning Study, and supporting documents, be placed on public exhibition for 28 days.

Following public exhibition of the draft study, the strategies will be refined and a masterplan prepared that will inform amendments to Council's statutory controls and capital works program, subject to approval.

### **Key findings of the traffic study**

#### Objectives

Arup was engaged to undertake a Traffic Impact Study (the ‘**traffic study**’) in March 2013 following a competitive tender process. The objectives of the brief were to:

- Assess the schools’ operations on pedestrian safety and amenity, traffic flow, parking and residential amenity in the education precinct;
- Test and determine the capacity of the road network to accommodate known, and any future intensification of education functions; and
- Recommend strategies that:
  - Improve the safety and amenity of pedestrian linkages to the centre;
  - Encourage high public transport use of students, workers and residents;
  - Reduce the impact of traffic on the surrounding residential area; and
  - Improve private vehicle use and public transport movements through the site.

#### Findings – transport and traffic

The traffic study confirms that the precinct is well connected to public transport with information provided by education establishments suggesting a high proportion of students use the bus and train services.

The local road network is generally working well but comes under pressure during drop off and pick up times which last roughly one hour in the morning and afternoon. Traffic counts indicate Bay Road and Edward Street exceed the environmental maximum for local residential streets, with generally higher traffic flows experienced in the morning peak. The Bay Road/Edward Street intersection can become congested due to traffic volumes peaking just as school children enter and exit North Sydney Demonstration School via the pedestrian crossing. This can affect residential amenity but may also potentially cause issues for students accessing the schools on foot.

Edward Street and Bay Road experience the highest traffic load in the morning peak because private vehicles using the Edward Street driveway of Shore Preparatory School are obliged to use the Bay Road right hand turn onto the Pacific Highway to head into the city, rather than exiting quickly through the mixed use area via Berry Street which restricts traffic movements to left turn (i.e. northbound) only.

Private bus servicing Shore and Mary Mackillop Place contribute to the congestion.

Overall, the traffic modeling indicates increased traffic volumes in the precinct will not cause the local road network to fail, with all intersections still operating at a high level of service. Traffic levels outside drop off and pick up times are low.

#### Findings – Pedestrian connections

The traffic study concludes there are a number designated walking and cycling routes through the precinct, however conflicts with traffic can occur at the Edward Street/Bay Road intersection, as detailed above.

Other problems stem predominantly from double parking near Shore and North Sydney Demonstration School, causing temporary blocking of residential streets and obstructing pedestrian movement. Private buses along Mount Street were observed loading children away from the kerb due to cars not observing parking restrictions.

## **EDUCATION PRECINCT PLANNING STUDY – ATTACHMENT 2, 30 APRIL 2013**

Finally, narrow footpaths along Charles and Napier Streets, and sections of Berry and Edward Streets were observed to not adequately cater to pedestrian volumes.

### Recommendations

Arup has recommended a suite of strategies broadly aimed at reducing traffic off Edward Street via traffic control measures and demand management initiatives. Some of the traffic control recommendations are long term initiatives that will require working with the Roads and Maritime Services. Others support the traffic related projects being undertaken by Shore as part of the approval relating to the Graythwaite site.

To improve pedestrian connectivity, the traffic study recommends Oak Street, Napier Street and Charles Street are converted into a shareway. The report suggests these streets meet the site criteria for shared zones under the *Safer Speeds Policy* by Transport for NSW.

Table 1 provides a summary of the main recommendations of the traffic study. Key recommendations have been included in the draft report, noting that the projects will require further investigation and approval.

*Table 1. Key recommendations of the Traffic Impact Study*

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Comment/Action Required</b>	<b>Priority (based on likely impact)</b>
<b>VEHICULAR IMPROVEMENTS</b>		
All movements interchange at Berry Street/Pacific Highway.	Lobby RMS	High
(Reliant upon above junction improvement) Removal of traffic from the northern section of Edward Street through the closure of Edward Street between Berry Street and Bay Road to northbound vehicles.	Consultation with residents	High
Provision of a shared area within the Oak Street, Napier Street and Charles Street area incorporating possible parking amendments and possible road closure	Consideration of options for new configuration of this area as detailed in section 5.3.1	High
Keep clear at the junction of Edward Street/Bay Road	-	High
Additional drop off and pick up facilities on William Street to share the impact of school buses and encouragement of drop off and pick up away from Edward Street and Union Street	Short term measure	High

## EDUCATION PRECINCT PLANNING STUDY – ATTACHMENT 2, 30 APRIL 2013

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Comment/Action Required</b>	<b>Priority (based on likely impact)</b>
<b>WALKING AND CYCLING IMPROVEMENTS</b>		
Promote additional cycle parking within developments	-	High
Target the pedestrian route from Charles Street to Napier Street to Oak Street for improvement	Consideration of options for new configuration of this area as detailed in section 5.3.1	High
Pedestrian safety improvements at: Miller Street/Blue Street intersection; and Pacific Highway/Miller Street intersection.	Lobby RMS	Medium
<b>PUBLIC TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS</b>		
Consideration of additional southbound bus stops on the Pacific Highway	Lobby RMS and Bus Operators	Low