



Neutral Bay Town Centre Planning Study

Prepared November 2022

Updated May 2023

North Sydney Council is committed both in principle and in practice, to engaging on matters affecting the North Sydney community.

1. Introduction

This Community Engagement Strategy outlines the steps Council will take to engage stakeholders in the preparation of the *Neutral Bay Town Centre Planning Study*. Council is committed to engaging stakeholders to prepare a Planning Study that retains and strengthens employment characteristics of the Centre, embellishes and improves the public domain, whilst striking a balance between these factors and any additional density and height associated with private development. Community engagement opportunities will be provided across a range of 'engagement' levels.

1.1 Council's Community Engagement Protocol

This Engagement Strategy has been prepared in accordance with Council's *Community Engagement Protocol*. The Protocol is used to determine the level of 'level(s) of impact' applicable to this project/decision (proposal). This proposal has been determined as:

LEVEL OF IMPACT	LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT
Local - High	Inform/Consult

Council used the framework shown below in Table 1.1 to select the most appropriate 'level(s) of engagement' for this proposal to ensure an appropriate range of engagement 'levels' and methods were offered:

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
Inform	Providing balanced and objective information to help the community understand problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions
Consult	Obtain public feedback on alternatives and/or decisions
Involve	Work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered
Collaborate	Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution

Table 1.1 Derived from the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

2. Background

In May 2018, Council resolved to prepare a Planning Study for the Military Road Corridor. The first phase of the project included a community survey seeking preliminary feedback about what local stakeholders value about the centre and initial views about its future form and function. The survey was open to the public through July and August 2018. A total of 497 responses were received. The feedback was reported to Council in September 2018 providing valuable input into the preparation of several Discussion Papers.

In July 2019, Council resolved to place the Military Road Corridor Planning Study, Stage 1 - Discussion Papers on public exhibition between August and September 2019. The outcomes were reported to Council in October 2019. A total of 268 responses/submissions were received.

In April 2020, Council endorsed the *Future Direction Report for the Military Road Corridor Planning Study* for public exhibition, which ran from April to July 2020. This third public exhibition/engagement process occurred over an extended period of 14 weeks, extended in response to the first wave of the COVID pandemic. A total of 435 submissions/responses were received.

The *Military Road Corridor Planning Study* (MRCPS) was subsequently endorsed by Council at its meeting in February 2021. However, on 24 January 2022, the new term of Council subsequently rescinded the MRCPS and resolved that Council “engage with the community and relevant stakeholders to prepare a revised recommendation that has a better balance between development height and the provision of additional public open space”.

In May 2022, the Council resolved to commence a revised planning study for the Neutral Bay Town Centre, known as the *Neutral Bay Town Centre Planning Study*. The new Planning Study seeks to:

1. address the decline of employment land in the centre which result from Council’s current planning controls and encourage a greater degree of housing mix;
2. facilitate carefully planned development which may include targeted modest increases in height and density while maintaining and enhancing the village atmosphere of the centre; and
3. secure a range of public benefits from planned and limited growth.

The project’s progress was presented to the Council in November 2022, including initial options and the proposed approach to stakeholder engagement.

On 12 December 2022, Council adopted the project-specific Engagement Plan for this project.

On 27 March 2023, Council resolved to establish a community consultation group, to be modelled on the “Lane Cove Alive” process, comprising community representatives to work in association with Council to drive the plan for Neutral Bay Village:

1. *THAT Council establish a community consultation group titled “Neutral Bay Alive” as part of the revised Neutral Bay Town Centre Planning Study, modelled on the “Lane Cove Alive” group set up by Lane Cove Council to inform the revitalisation of Lane Cove town centre.*
2. *THAT Council notes that the community consultation group is not a decision-making group and the group will augment the adopted community engagement plan for the study.*
3. *THAT Council call for Expressions of Interest for members and delegate selection of group members to the General Manager consistent with the process Council adopts for local planning panels.*
4. *THAT Council note that the establishment of the group will be funded by the existing budget allocation for the Planning Study.*

3. Community Engagement Strategy

3.1 Who are our community stakeholders?

The Engagement Strategy identifies the following groups to engage within the local community:

- Local residents
 - Property owners and tenants within the Neutral Bay Town Centre
 - Property owners and tenants immediately surrounding the Neutral Bay Town Centre
- Local business
 - Business owners and tenants within the Neutral Bay Town Centre
- Other community members
 - Submitters to the previous MRCPS engagement
 - Community members who registered interest in the previous MRCPS
 - Local workers
 - Local students
- Precinct Committees, in particular
 - Neutral Precinct
 - Brightmore Precinct
 - Harrison/Bennett Precinct
 - Parks Precinct
 - Willoughby Bay Precinct
 - Cremorne Point Precinct
- Other local groups
 - Neutral Bay Chambers of Commerce
 - Neutral Bay and Cremorne Streetscape Committees
 - Neutral Bay Progress Association
 - Cremorne Conservation Group
- Neutral Bay Community Centre
- Local schools
- North Sydney Council
 - Councillors
 - Project Control Group

3.2 Key Communication Messages

- Council is preparing a *Neutral Bay Town Centre Planning Study* (NBTCPS) to guide future development proposals within the Neutral Bay village which may include targeted modest increases in height and density while retaining the village atmosphere. The new Planning Study draws on the rescinded *Military Road Corridor Planning Study*.
- The NBTCPS will:
 - recognises the strong connection the community has to the village atmosphere of the town centre,
 - guide future development proposals within the Town Centre, which may include targeted modest increases in height density whilst retaining the village atmosphere,
 - better manage the development pressures within a consultative and informed development framework,
 - create an opportunity to improve the public domain and local facilities
 - strike the right balance between public benefits and any additional density or building height; and
 - retain and strengthen the employment opportunities within Neutral Bay in line with community desire to work close to home
- Council has previously consulted the community and
- Stakeholders will be engaged in the Planning Study's develop, with the key phases involving preliminary engagement via a mix of surveys, workshops and meetings, with oversight from a community consultative group (to occur April to June 2023); followed by the opportunity to provide feedback during the public exhibition of the draft Planning Study (expected to occur in Q2 2023/24).
- Following adoption of the NBTCPS by Council, a wide information campaign will be undertaken to explain the changes proposed and pathways for their achievement.

3.3 Timetable

Community and stakeholder engagement will occur at various times during the process. The targeted stakeholder workshops will provide feedback to refine the final set of draft recommendations for public exhibition. After the targeted workshops, the 'Neutral Bay Alive' group will provide advice to Council for the preparation of the planning study. The key project development phases are outlined in the following table:

Phase	Timing
1. Project Review and Gap Analysis	Aug - Sep 2022
2. Draft Planning Directions	Sep 2022 - Feb 2023
3. Early Engagement (Awareness)	Feb 2023
4. Draft Design Options Development	Feb - Apr 2023
5. Preliminary Engagement (Targeted)	Mar - May 2023
6. Draft Planning Study Preparation	May - Sep 2023
7. Public Exhibition of the Draft Planning Study	Sep - Dec 2023

Phase	Timing
8. Final Planning Study	Dec 2022 - Mar 2024

Note: In accordance with Council's Community Engagement Framework described on page 1, the 'level of engagement' per engagement method is indicated.

3.3.1 Phase 1 - Project Review and Gap Analysis

This phase involved the assessment of previous community submissions in the context of the Council's January 2022 resolution and the identification of gaps and work required.

3.3.2 Phase 2 - Draft Planning Directions

Between September 2022 and February 2023, Council will identify the opportunities and challenges based on the submission review in Phase 1 and develop draft planning directions for Neutral Bay Town Centre. This work will be built on the scoping conducted in Phase 1 and will rely heavily on a Project Control Group comprising various internal stakeholders.

Project briefs for the external engagement consultant, financial feasibility/economic analysis consultant and landscape architect will be prepared.

Method	Target Stakeholders	Engagement Level	Purpose
Councillor Briefing	Councillors	Consult	Seek feedback on the preliminary thinking/ideas and potential appointment of consultants
Workshops	Project Control Group (internal)	Involve	Develop draft design options and public domain opportunities

3.3.3 Phase 3 - Early Engagement (Awareness)

The goal of this Phase is to obtain community and landowners' feedback on draft design options and public space upgrade opportunities prior to inform the draft Planning Study. In February 2023, Council will undertake promotion and awareness of the revised Planning Study outlining the timeline and methodology to prepare the new Planning Study, and addressing the community's concerns that the feedback collated under the (now rescinded) *Military Road Corridor Planning Study* has been taken into consideration.

Method	Target Stakeholders	Engagement Level	Purpose
Webpage (Have Your say)	All	Inform	Inform the community that Council acknowledges the community's concerns and is preparing a revised Planning Study
Fact Sheet	All	Inform	
Social Media	All	Inform	
Information Stalls	All	Inform	Pop-up stall at the Grosvenor Lane car park site, with Council staff

<i>Method</i>	<i>Target Stakeholders</i>	<i>Engagement Level</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
			available to answer questions about the project and distribute the fact sheet (also available online)
Workshops	Project Control Group (internal)	Involve	Develop draft design options and public domain opportunities

3.3.4 Phase 4 - Draft Design Option Development

Between February and April 2023, Council will prepare draft design options and identify the potential public benefit, such as public open space upgrade and new community centre. This work will rely heavily on the Project Control Group.

Additionally, Council will engage consultants to prepare the Economic Analysis, initial public domain design and prepare for the Phase 5 Preliminary engagement (targeted).

<i>Method</i>	<i>Target Stakeholders</i>	<i>Engagement Level</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Workshops	Project Control Group (internal)	Involve	Develop draft design options and public domain opportunities

3.3.5 Phase 5 - Preliminary Engagement (Targeted)

Between March to May 2023, a range of opt-in and recruited representative methods will be employed to allow stakeholders input into the new Planning Study. This includes surveys seeking input as to current access and use of the Neutral Bay Town Centre and the Community Centre (respectively) and future considerations; workshopping the draft design options developed in Phase 2; meetings with landowners (as necessary and desirable) and formation of the Neutral Bay Alive community consultation group.

<i>Method</i>	<i>Target Stakeholders</i>	<i>Engagement Level</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Stakeholder Workshops	Representative sample	Consult	External consultant will recruit the workshop participants (25-30 per workshop) and facilitate the sessions. Seek feedback on the Phase 2 draft design options via two workshops: 1. Demographically representative sample (mix of random selection and self-nomination)

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<i>Method</i>	<i>Target Stakeholders</i>	<i>Engagement Level</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
			2. Community Groups including Precinct Committees
Survey 1 - Access & Uses	All	Consult	Mix of intercept surveys (conducted by Council's consultant) and opt-in, seeking input as to how stakeholders currently access and use the Neutral Bay Town Centre and identification of future considerations
Survey 2 - Community Centre	All	Consult	To understand how the community would use a new facility in Neutral Bay (e.g. community halls, workshop spaces, information hub, multifunction rooms)
Meetings with Landowners	Site 1, 2, 3 and other landowners with development aspirations ¹	Consult	Landowners to provide feedback on the draft design options and public space upgrade opportunities
'Neutral Bay Alive' Community Consultation Group	Representative sample	Consult/Involve	This Group will receive presentations of the outcomes of the Phase 5 engagement and provide feedback on the draft design options and public space opportunities
Councillor Briefing	Councillors	Consult/Involve	Councillors to provide feedback on the community engagement outcomes and the draft design options

At the end of Phase 5, a summary of consultation outcomes will be produced and the results of the previous work, including feedback received, will be presented to Council.

The following methods will be used to recruit members to the Community Consultation Group during May 2023. The Group's membership will be selected in accordance with the agreed terms of reference.

¹ Staff will meet with landowners. This includes the identified opportunity sites 1 (Coles), 2 (Arkadia and others) and 3 (Equitibuild and Woolworths) under the rescinded MRCPS and the active development applicants within the Town Centre.

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<i>Method</i>	<i>Target Stakeholders</i>	<i>Engagement Level</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Webpage (Your Say North Sydney)	All	Inform	To inform stakeholders of the opportunity to submit an expression of interest to join the 'Neutral Bay Alive' Community Consultation Group
Advertisement	All		
Media Release	All		
eNewsletters	All		
Social media	All		
Signage/noticeboards and bus shelters	All		
Schools	Workers and Parents		
Direct notification	MRCPS and NBTCPS keep informed list, Precinct Committees, Streetscape Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Neutral Bay & Cremorne Progress Association, Cremorne Conservation Group		

3.3.6 Phase 6 - Draft Planning Study Preparation

Between May and September 2023, all inputs from the preceding phases will be synthesised to create the recommendations for the Draft NBTCPS. This will include discussions with internal (PCG), external (consultant), 'Neutral Bay Alive' Community Consultation Group and Councillor Briefing. This refined draft work will be reported to Council for the purposes of endorsement for minimum 42 days public exhibition.

<i>Method</i>	<i>Target Stakeholders</i>	<i>Engagement Level</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Workshops	Project Control Group (internal)	Involve	Develop recommendations for draft Planning Study
'Neutral Bay Alive' Community Consultation Group	Representative sample	Consult/Involve	Provide input and feedback to the draft Planning Study
Councillor Briefing	Councillor	Consult/Involve	Provide a project briefing on the draft planning study for feedback

3.3.7 Phase 7 - Public Exhibition of the Draft Planning Study

Council will offer various methods by which all stakeholders can participate in this Phase, including in person and online, allowing participation at times that best suit their commitments. Not listed in priority order:

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Method	Target Stakeholders	Engagement Level	Purpose
Webpage (Have Your say)	All	Inform/Consult	To inform stakeholders of the opportunity to provide feedback and provide a central repository of information
Advertisement	All	Inform	To inform as widely as possible and direct to website as above.
Fact Sheet	All - in particular targeted to property owners, tenants, local workers and local school - students and parents		
Signage	All		
Video	All		
Media Release	All		
Social media	All		
Notification letters	Property owners, tenants, previous submitters, and local schools.	Inform/Consult	To notify stakeholders that may have a direct interest and encourage feedback.
Video Recording	All	Inform	To provide detailed and accessible explanation of the study to ensure a clear understanding among the viewers.
Online Forum	All	Inform/Consult	To provide direct communication to Council staff to pose questions/enquiries.
Precinct Committees	Precinct Committee members (esp. Brightmore, Harrison, Neutral, Parks)	Inform/consult	To provide Precinct Committees with an avenue to understand proposals and pose questions/discussion. Staff available to present to Committee meetings.
Submissions	All	Consult	Collect community inputs and feedback on the draft planning study via (online and hard copy) feedback form or free form submission.
'Neutral Bay Alive' Community Consultation Group	Representative sample	Consult/Involve	Provide input and feedback to the draft Planning Study

At the end of this Phase, a summary of consultation outcomes will be produced and distributed to participants and key stakeholders as well as posted on Council's website.

3.3.8 Phase 8 - Final Planning Study

Informed by the community feedback from Phase 7, the Planning Study will be finalised. At the end of this Phase, a summary of public exhibition outcomes and the final Planning Study will be reported to Council for adoption.

Method	Target Stakeholders	Engagement Level	Purpose
'Neutral Bay Alive' Community Consultation Group	Representative sample	Consult	Provide input and feedback to the final Planning Study inclusive of the post-exhibition feedback from all stakeholders
Councillor Briefing	Councillors	Consult	Present public exhibition outcomes and final Planning Study ahead of post-exhibition report seeking adoption

4. Opportunity Cost/Rationale

Engaging the community in this proposal may entail financial costs to Council to achieve a high-quality engagement process. If the process is robust community ownership of the decisions made will ensure efficient outcomes. Insufficient or poor-quality engagement can result in poor long-term decisions requiring further resources to rectify. The aim of a high-quality community engagement process is to make sustainable decisions. The engagement process will help Council staff and/or Councillors to understand the related recommendations rationale.

5. Further Information

For further information contact Council's A/Team Leader Design - Jing Li, Community, Planning and Environment

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