

**Neutral Bay Alive Community Consultation Group (NBACCG)**  
**Meeting 2 Minutes (Draft)**  
**Tuesday 22 Aug 2023**  
**6.00pm start, Supper Room**

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**Neutral Bay Alive Community Consultation Group (NBACCG)**

**In Attendance (in-person):**

- Alison Bentley (AB)
- Anna Summerhayes (AS)
- Candice Tabone (CT)
- Fiona Gracie (FG)
- John Lucas (JL)
- Meredith Trevallyn-Jones (MTJ)
- Rob McKay (RM)
- Peter Marshall (PM)
- Peter Moor (PMo)

**Apologies:**

- Kristina Kazmer (KK)

**North Sydney Council (NSC) Staff**

**In Attendance (in-person):**

- Neal McCarry (NMc), A/Manager Strategic Planning
- Jing Li (JLi), A/Team Leader Design
- Solmaz Khabir (SK), Strategic Planner – Urban Design

**Presiding: PM**

The meeting started at 6.00pm

**1. Introduction**

**1.1 Acknowledgment of Country**

PM opened the meeting by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land and paid respects to the elder's past, present, and future.

**1.2 Welcoming and Apologies**

An apology from Kristina was noted. All other attendees were present.

**2. General Update**

**2.1 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Meeting 1 (25.7.23) minutes had been drafted and would be issued to Group members and their adoption would be held over to the next meeting. With regards to the draft minutes:

- The actions from the previous meeting were confirmed completed.
- NMc (NSC) explained that due to technical glitches on the Have Your Say system, the requested Community Consultation Outcomes Report and Draft Economic Analysis and Financial Feasibility Test Report needed to be issued via email before the meeting.

**Actions:** NSC to advise on usage of the Have Your Say platform for the group.

**3. Neutral Bay Town Centre Planning Study Objectives (NBACCG Position)**

NMc (NSC) provided a briefing of the Neutral Bay Town Centre Planning Study ('NBTCPS' or 'Planning Study') objectives, highlighting the project's history with the rescinded Military Road Corridor Planning Study (MRCPS). Referring to the Council report of May 2022, the first four objectives of the NBTCPS remain aligned with those of the rescinded MRCPS. In addition, a new objective was included in NBTCPS, which is:

*"To achieve a better balance between building height and the provision of additional public open space".*

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PM distributed a summary of the Group's position on the Planning Study objectives with information from the Meeting 1 minutes and proposed that the Group further discuss and expand on the Group's position.

A summary of the Group's draft position, as at Meeting 2, is provided below.

**3.1 Local Centre Character - Height, density & heritage character**

- Option A represented the existing LEP height with max.16m and equivalent to 4-5 storeys.
- Village Atmosphere/Retail Vitality: the importance of preserving the unique character of the centre and supporting small businesses to maintain a vibrant village atmosphere.
- Key elements to preserving the village atmosphere include walkability, accessibility, local businesses, community spaces, shaded areas, seating opportunities and unique heritage shopfronts.
- The history of Neutral Bay is important to the Town Centre, and the study should use history as a storytelling, and bring the history to life in future planning.
- Connectivity was important (both spatially and socially).

**3.2 Employment and Economics**

- The role of the local centre, and how the study aims to bring activity to the Centre.
- The current Town Centre is tired, and there is a need to make it better.
- The ideal mix of businesses should be promoted in Town Centre, considering the balance between essential personal services, and enhancing community social interaction.

**3.3 Land Uses - Residential and non-residential floorspace**

- There are concerns about the recent mixed-use developments that include a large residential component and its potential adverse impact on the village character. The Group agreed that achieving a balance between housing and retail/commercial spaces is critical for a vibrant town centre.
- The challenges of having a commercial level on top of a retail level within the mixed-use development vertical circulation, servicing, and access, which may impact the usability were raised.
- The absence of FSR controls in the Council's Local Environmental Plan (LEP), could potentially challenge desired built form outcomes and lead to poor built form. NMc (NSC) clarified that the Council's current LEP primarily employs building height and non-residential FSR controls, while more detailed prescriptive provisions that guide the built form design are contained in the Development Control Plan (DCP) and Apartment Design Guide (ADG).

**Action:** *NSC and NBACCG to research successful examples of mixed-use developments with ground floor retail, commercial space, and residential units above.*

**3.4 Public Domain - public open space, landscaping, and solar access**

- The previous public community consultation has established that more trees and landscaping were crucial, particularly given the Town Centre and density of the area.
- Grosvenor Lane Plaza Option C with a fully pedestrianised plaza is preferred over a linear plaza (Option B) or no change (Option A)
- Rangers Road Plaza Alternate Scheme is preferred due to its higher visual connection, larger plaza and through-site link to Yeo Street.
- Crossing of Military Road remain a significant concern and challenge, and as a result, it

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divides the town centre into two parts (North and South).

- Potential solutions discussed included the installation of additional at grade pedestrian crossings to connect both sides of the Town Centre were preferred over footbridges or tunnels. NMc (NSC) clarified that while the planning study aims to improve the pedestrian experience for the whole town centre, the challenges of the traffic and pedestrian crossing issues across Military Road will be considered in the study, however, may not ultimately be resolved within this Planning Study.
- There is potential to provide more area for public open space adjoining the proposed Rangers Road Plaza by the closure of Rangers Road, between Military Road and Yeo Street. However, the Rangers Road closure may cause potential issues regarding vehicle access and circulation to existing and the new development in the area.

### **3.5 Public Benefits - Community facilities and community centres**

- The preferred location of the Community Centre is on the northern side of Military Road.
- The importance of May Gibbs Place was noted and that any future development around the place should protect the existing character and encourage community activities. The relocation of the Post Office to the Big Bear was noted.
- NMc (NSC) clarified that 'public benefits' include elements such as footpath widening, new plazas, public domain works, landscaping, though site links, community facilities, etc.
- A query was raised about the adequacy of any infrastructure contribution plan and its functioning on new developments in the Neutral Bay Town Centre. The concern is that the value of the public benefits is deemed small in comparison to the value of the redevelopment. NMc (NSC) briefly explained the Local infrastructure Contribution process, and how the contribution funding collected from new development is pooled for community facilities projects based on the categories and priorities identified in the Contribution Plan. NMc (NSC) also explained the key differences between Local Infrastructure Contributions and Voluntary Planning Agreements (VPA).

***Actions: Members to discuss the public domain options proposed by Coles and Arkadia at the next meeting.***

### **3.6 Traffic, Transport and Parking**

- Concerns were expressed about potential additional traffic congestion and parking demands resulting from increased density.
- Members reiterated the challenges caused by Military Road's heavy traffic movements. There was a need to address pedestrian safety and the division of the Town Centre by the busy Military Road.
- The group raised concerns about potential traffic congestion in Yeo Street due to the proposed vehicle access location in the Woolworths proposal.

## **4. Neutral Bay Town Centre Planning Study Updates**

### **4.1 Planning Study Program**

- NMc (NSC) presented the slides about NBTCPs updates, he emphasised that the various aspects of the planning study were supported by background studies conducted by external consultants including SMM, Stantec, HillPDA, and PlanCom.
- A query was raised regarding the tight timeframe for the public exhibition and how to ensure the group can review the Draft Planning Study before the exhibition and provide comments. NMc (NSC) noted that there should be two NBACCG meetings before the public exhibition – in September and October. Council staff will continue to provide project updates to the group to ensure members have opportunities to make comments on the study.

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- The group agreed discussing the proposed public domain elements in the next meeting would be preferred.

#### **4.2 Young Street Plaza**

- This item was deferred to the next meeting due to time constraints.

### **5. Neutral Bay Town Centre Planning Study Background Information**

#### **5.1 Economic Analysis & Financial Feasibility Test Report (HillPDA)**

- The Economics Analysis and Financial Feasibility Test Report prepared by HillPDA was issued to Group members.
- NMc (NSC) presented the key findings from the Economics Analysis and Financial Feasibility Test Report prepared by HillPDA (Consultant). The key findings are:
  - The current retail and commercial floorspaces within the Town Centre do not meet the current demand and the projected future demand.
  - With any future developments in the Town Centre just needing to provide one level of retail/commercial under the existing LEP control (0.5:1), this will lead to even more undersupply.
  - The study should aim to protect the existing Town Centre retail/commercial supply to ensure that a vibrant Local Centre environment can be retained.
- A query was raised regarding splitting the usage for 'non-residential' land uses with separate controls for retail and commercial uses. NMc (NSC) clarified in the current LEP system, both commercial and retail are considered as non-residential uses and there is no split non-residential FSR approach within an LEP. The aim is to provide a balance between allowing flexibility and not being overly prescriptive or limiting.
- Concern was expressed regarding the vacant retail/commercial floorspaces along Military Road, highlighting the Military Road corridor environment needs to be improved.
- The members noted the impact of successful revitalisation projects, for example, the Canopy at Lane Cove (previous land use was a car park), noting their positive effects on the areas.
- Members discussed challenges faced in different sections of Military Road. The southern side, between Ben Boyd Road and May Gibbs Place, was described as unattractive and lacking pedestrian access. The northern side had some success with gyms, cafes, and bars, while the challenges of balancing office and residential spaces were highlighted.
- A question was raised as to why the Planning Study was focussed on a few specific key sites (i.e., Sites 1, 2A, 2B, 3A, 3B) and whether a broader area assessment is required. For example, why wouldn't the Site 2B area, be extended to Waters Road. NMc (NSC) clarified the challenges related to achieving a balanced outcome that works for all stakeholders/owners and discussed the role of planning study in setting a framework for all development.
- The importance of community centre and its role in providing services for different age and user groups were emphasised.

#### **5.2 Community Engagement Outcome Report (PlanCom)**

- NMc (NSC) explained the key points and outcomes from the Community Engagement Report which was discussed in the previous NBA CCG meeting (25 July). The community engagement outcome report was issued to members via email.

#### **5.3 Neutral Bay Demographics – ID Profile**

- NMc (NSC) shared a link to the Profile ID platform regarding extracting demographic data for Neutral Bay. The ID Profile includes data such as population density, journey-to-work data, economic profiles, and social indicators.

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**5.4 Case Studies**

- NMc (NSC) presented some precedents in different areas of Sydney and discussed different aspects and relationship between and use of public spaces. The presentation covered spaces like The Canopy in Lane Cove, Friedlander Place in St Leonards, Lindfield Village Green, and Rouse Hill Town Square. These examples provided insights into the design, layout, and functionality of different public spaces.
- Each space had its unique characteristics, including factors like size, surrounding development, landscape design, community facilities and parking area. Useful exercise to examine the more successful elements of these spaces when planning the development of public spaces in the NBTC study area.
- NMc (NSC) raised members welcome to share their own ideas or examples of other public spaces they visit.

**6. Proposed Development Update**

NMc (NSC) provided updates on ongoing developments in the area.

- The Coles site (41-53 Grosvenor Street) has submitted a Development Application (DA) with a concept plan for an underground car park and a new plaza.
- The Woolworths site (1-7 Rangers Road and 50 Yeo Street) has submitted a planning proposal that was rejected by the council and will now be considered by the Rezoning Review Panel (6 September 2023).
- The site 12-14 Waters Road is in the DA assessment stage and an appeal has been lodged with the Land and Environment Court.
- The planning proposal for 183-185 Military Road is still under assessment. The outcome of the rezoning review for 1-7 Rangers Road will have some bearing on aspects of this Proposal.
- The site 165-173 Military Rd is in the DA assessment stage and an appeal has been lodged with the Land and Environment Court.

**7. General Business**

**7.1 Coles Presentation (24 August)**

PM reminded the group about the upcoming Coles presentation at Neutral Bay and Cremorne Progress Association on 24 August and some members expressed their interest in attending the meeting.

**7.2 Neutral Precinct Email (17 August)**

An email of 17 August from Neutral Precinct to the NBACCG had been received and was noted.

**8. Next Meeting**

NMc (NSC) confirmed the next meeting will be held in Council's Supper Room on 12th September.

PM and NMc (NSC) thanked the Neutral Bay Alive Group members for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.