

General Manager City of Ryde Council Locked Bag 2069 North Ryde NSW 1670

7th February 2022

Dear City of Ryde Council,

RE: Green Links Draft Masterplan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the City of Ryde's Green Links Draft Masterplan. Bicycle NSW has been the peak bicycle advocacy group now in NSW for over forty-five years, and has over 30 affiliated local Bicycle User Groups.

Our mission is to 'make NSW better for all bicycle riders', and we support improvements to facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. We advocate for new cycling routes that incorporate dedicated paths within both green corridors and the road environment, to provide connections to jobs, schools and services for daily transport and recreation trips. Bike riding provides a healthy, congestion-reducing, low-carbon form of travel that is quiet, efficient and attractive for all ages with the correct infrastructure design.

Green Links Draft Masterplan sets out **an excellent vision** for the development of important active transport connections in the City of Ryde, utilising the open space networks to create a diverse, vibrant, healthy and resilient city. The three Green Links will establish blue and green biodiversity corridors, offer multiple recreational opportunities and act as a focal point for community and culture.

Our submission to the Stage One community consultation in June 2021 set out Bicycle NSW's support for this project and it is fantastic to see the plans evolve. Developing the routes in detail ensures that the Green Links are 'shovel-ready' when funding becomes available, an increasingly important pre-requisite for NSW Government support.

The masterplan strives to complete 'missing links' in the existing bicycle network to ensure that continuous green corridors connect the employment and education hub at Macquarie Park with Ryde's town centres, the Parramatta River to the south and the Lane Cove National Park to the north, the Meadowbank education precinct, major urban renewal corridors, several train and bus interchanges, Ryde Riverwalk and other key active transport routes.

Bicycle NSW would like to highlight the significance of the project for the development of an integrated **regional bicycle network**. Not only will the Green Links support local journeys to work, school, shops and public transport, but their strategic location between the Parramatta River and Lane Cover River will help facilitate longer trips across Sydney for commuting and recreation.

We have reviewed the masterplan alongside other relevant plans that relate to the City of Ryde and the proposed Green Links align well with the high-level ambitions outlined in:

<u>Transport for NSW Future Transport 2056 Plan</u>ⁱ, which commits to provide a regional cycle network in Greater Sydney. Future Transport 2061 is currently being prepared following stakeholder consultation and will put an even greater emphasis on sustainable mobility.

Greater Sydney Region Plan, A Metropolis of Three Cities (2018)ⁱⁱ contains 10 directions to create "three cities where most residents live within 30 minutes of their jobs, education and health facilities, services and great places". Increased liveability will be delivered by focusing on walkability, with a network of green corridors for active transport. The Green Links will make a significant contribution to the plan's vision for connecting Parramatta with the strategic centres of Macquarie Park and Rhodes. The plan locates Ryde on the border of the Eastern Harbour City and the Central River City and identifies Macquarie Park as a major Health and Education Precinct.

North District Plan (2018)ⁱⁱⁱ set outs how integrated land use and transport planning can help achieve the 30-minute city through increasing development density near public transit corridors in Planning Priorities N1 and N12. The need for better accessibility, connectivity and amenity for pedestrian and cyclists is also emphasised in Planning Priorities N3, N4, N19 and N21. The three Green Links are collectively referred to as the 'Eastwood to Macquarie Park Open Space Corridors' and there is a commitment to develop these active transport links over 20 years. In addition to the Health and Education Precinct at Frenchs Forest, local centres are identified at Eastwood, Marsfield, Ryde and West Ryde.

Sydney Green Gridiv, developed by the NSW Government Architect in 2017 and reflected in the district and region plans, proposes an interconnecting network of open spaces that support walking and cycling. The Ryde area is covered by the North District document which identifies all three Green Links (Figure 1). The Green Links also have the potential to be an exemplar of the Green Grid due to its strategic location between Lane Cove River and Parramatta River, providing connection to education facilities, major business centres and urban renewal corridors.

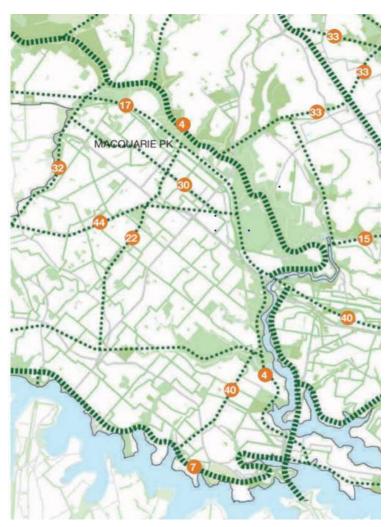


Figure 1: Extract from the Green Grid showing project opportunities in the Ryde area.

(Source: Tyrrell Studio / NSW Government Architect)

Key

- 22. Shrimptons Creek Green Link: Eastwood to Macquarie Park
- 32. Terrys Creek Bushland Link
- 44. Road Reserve Corridor: Macquarie Park to Eastwood

Our Vision for Ryde 2028 Community Strategic Plan^v includes a survey that showed 72% of residents considered walking and cycling paths in urban areas to be very important. There is overwhelming support for better bus and train services and the delivery of an integrated bicycle network.

<u>City of Ryde Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020</u> which expresses an aim to encourage walking, cycling and public transport use as the key vision for transport (Part 2.3)

<u>City of Ryde Integrated Transport Strategy 2016-2031</u> contains a target of a 60/40 private vehicle vs active/public transport modal split of total journeys to and from work. The <u>draft 2041 Integrated Transport Strategy^{vi}</u> is currently on exhibition and contains a revised target of 50/50 for Ryde residents, increasing to 40/60 for journeys terminating at Macquarie Park. Priority projects are identified and two of the Green Links made the list of key area-wide projects to be delivered in the short term (Figure 2).



<u>City of Ryde Sustainable Transport Strategy 2021 - 2031</u> aims to reduce City of Ryde's emissions from transport, improving air quality, urban mobility, health and well-being. The strategy proposes new active and public transport, shared mobility solutions and emerging low-emission transport modes to give future travellers access to a broader range of transport options for all types of trips.

In addition, <u>City of Ryde's new Bicycle Strategy 2021-2031</u> will be released shortly and will highlight the Green Links as key cycling routes.

We applaud the City of Ryde's efforts to develop the Green Links Draft Masterplan in the same timeframe as other important transport strategies. Council have ensured that each document aligns with the others to support a unified approach to the delivery of new active transport infrastructure.

Opportunities:

In 2016, City of Ryde recorded a population of 116,300. This figure is estimated to increase by 44% to 167,100 by 2036. Macquarie Park is expected to experience the largest population growth^{vii}.

Congestion is a growing problem. City of Ryde residents use their own car for approximately 70% of trips that they make while almost 80% of people coming to City of Ryde use their car^{viii}. Cycling trips have scope for significant growth as two major destinations for work trips (Macquarie Park and Parramatta) are within cycling distance for many people. 11% of Macquarie Park employees want to walk or cycle to work.

Improving active and public transport infrastructure and increasing the take up of people walking, cycling and catching public transport, will ultimately reduce the number of people choosing to drive.

There has never been a better time to build infrastructure for bike riding and active transport. The new <u>Minister for Infrastructure, Cities and Active Transport has recently confirmed</u> that the Principal Bike Network is a priority for Transport for NSW. In early 2021, Transport for NSW published two policies that require State projects to prioritise road space for active transport:

- Providing for Walking and Cycling in Transport Projects Policy CP21001^{ix}
- Road User Space Allocation Policy CP21000^x

The policies establish a road user hierarchy that considers pedestrians first and private cars last, as shown in Figure 3.

Order of Road User Space Considerations



Figure 3: Diagram expressing Transport for NSW's road user priority. (Source: Transport for NSW)

NSW Government has committed to provide a regional cycle network in Greater Sydney, as outlined in the Future Transport 2056 Plan^{xi}. The Principle Bike Network (PBN) is being finalised by Transport for NSW and should align with the Green Grid and include the three Green Links.

The Green Links will provide safe cycling infrastructure that is completely separated from vehicles and caters for riders of all ages and abilities, as preferred by Bicycle NSW. According to the best practice 'cycling segmentation' model, developed in Portland USA to identify the type and needs of existing and potential bike ride riders^{xii}, such cycle paths will allow 70% of local residents to consider journeys by bike (Figure 4). The area has some steep inclines but the increasing use of e-bikes and other micromobility devices will ensure that active transport options are accessible to all residents.



Figure 4: Four general categories of comfort levels for cycling as transportation. Source: North Sydney Council The Bicycle NSW *Build it for Everyone* policy pillar^{xiii} sets a standard that bicycle infrastructure should be fit for eight year old children or elders to ride on. The Green Links aspire to this standard and will not include 'door zone' bike lanes, bike stencils on the road or dangerous intersections that deter the 48% xiv of people who are 'interested but concerned' from making the switch to bike riding.

Recommendations:

Bicycle NSW has several specific recommendations for each of the three Green Links. These are followed by a series of general recommendations to inform the detailed design of each project.

Shrimptons Creek Green Link

This Green Link will realise a major missing link of local and regional strategic significance. The extension of the current shared path from Santa Rosa Park through to West Ryde and Meadowbank to connect Macquarie Park with the Parramatta River through the integration of the Sydney Water corridor and a range of other local improvements will achieve very positive open space, recreation and active transport outcomes.

The opportunities for interchange with public transport are excellent, with ferry, metro, train and bus all easily accessed from the Green Link.

The proposed treatment for the Sydney Water corridor is supported by Bicycle NSW. The focus on movement will ensure activation of the corridor with high levels of passive surveillance. Effective lighting, low vegetation, no seating and uninterrupted sightlines will ensure that there is minimal chance of anti-social behaviour. City of Ryde could introduce CCTV cameras if any issues arise but experience on similar well-used cycle paths shows that this is unlikely to be necessary.

Please note that the alternative to opening the Sydney Water corridor to active transport is the current route via Heath Street and Rickard Street. Heath Street is narrow and lined with parked cars, forcing cyclists to ride in a double 'door zone'. There are many driveways that would compromise safety if a shared path was constructed. And there is no safe crossing of Blaxland Road at the end of Rickard Street. This is not a suitable route for less confident cyclists and children.

It is not ideal that the proposed route involves a detour via Beattie Park to cross Blaxland Road and we encourage City of Ryde and Transport for NSW to rigorously investigate changes to the junction of Blaxland Road and Anzac Avenue to allow people riding bikes to use a direct route. New signals, traffic calming, kerb extensions or a cycle bridge should be considered. Remember that the Transport for NSW must now place the comfort and convenience of pedestrians and cyclist above those driving cars.

Final points:

- Access from Bay Drive to the Riverwalk needs to be improved to provide a direct step-free route for people riding bikes.
- Bicycle NSW support advocacy for a bridge over Victoria Road to provide direct access to West Ryde
 Station
- The underpass under Epping Road often becomes flooded and work to mitigate this and improve the safety and comfort of the underpass should be undertaken as part of the project.

County Green Link

The County Green Link will also complete a **highly significant missing link** in the active transport network, making use of the County Road reserve and connecting existing short sections of shared user paths to form a continuous route from the Eastwood Station to ELS Hall Park, with onwards connections to Macquarie Park via the Shrimptons Creek Green Link. The plans include safe road crossings for people walking and cycling and involve general park, recreation and environmental improvements.

As requested by Transport for NSW, the shared user path sits along the north side of the reserve, ensuring that future mass transit infrastructure can be accommodated in the County Road corridor.

Bicycle NSW would like City of Ryde to explore alternative options to the convoluted route around Kent Road Public School. We urge Council to work with the Department of Education and the school to run the shared user path through the school grounds, maintaining its alignment. This would provide better access to the school for students and reduce conflict on the footpaths. A new public car park in the reserve on the other side of Kent Road has been proposed as part of the masterplan. If the school could use this car park to formalise kiss-and-drop parking and reduce pressure on the footpaths around the school, the loss of a strip of the playing field may be more palatable.

Another awkward detour arises at the junction of Welby Street and Graham Avenue. Again, we encourage City of Ryde to consider changes to the junction that will allow people riding bikes to use a direct route. New signals, a raised crossing, narrowed lanes to calm traffic and kerb extensions to reduce turning radii should be considered.

It is very important that bike riders of all ages and abilities can reach Eastwood Station safely. This area has been neglected in the masterplan with the existing on-road mixed traffic cycle route indicated for East Parade and Railway Parade. This is not suitable for less confident cyclists or children. Bicycle NSW would like City of Ryde to consider a separated on-road bicycle path or a shared user path along widened footpaths. An on-road mixed traffic solution for Railway Parade and East Parade is only suitable if the speed limit is reduced to 30km and traffic filtering supports reductions in traffic volume.

Terrys Creek Green Link

Terrys Creek forms an important and well established ecological and recreation corridor linking Eastwood to the Lane Cove National Park. The adjacent cycle route is via Vimiera Road to Browns Waterhole and onwards to Turramurra with new connections across Terrys Creek to the bicycle network in the Parramatta LGA to strengthen local and regional routes.

Bicycle NSW is delighted to see that the Terrys Creek Green Link addresses a critical missing link between Epping Road and the Waterloo Road shared path.

An important connection is at Abuklea Road where an upgraded path through Pembroke Park will create an active transport link to the shops, services and train and metro station in Epping. Bicycle NSW also suggests upgrading the Abuklea Road for 1.4km south of Vimiera Road with an on-road separated bicycle path or a shared user path to create another connection between County and Terrys Creek Green Links.

The development of the Terrys Creek Green Link should occur in parallel with renewed conversations about a long-term solution for an active transport route across Browns Waterhole. Browns Waterhole is where Terrys Creek and the Lane Cove River converge. On both sides of Browns Waterhole, the shared user path travels down a modestly wide ravine within a relatively steep topography. The concrete path

crosses the low point at Browns Waterhole via concrete pipes and weir, which are prone to flooding, result in the regular closure of the path.

The Greater Sydney Commission has identified Browns Waterhole as a future planning priority for improvement in its North District Plan. Recognising that this area involves multiple landowners and multiple Council areas, Bicycle NSW would like to support City of Ryde to work collaboratively with relevant stakeholders to strengthen and improve the connection via Browns Waterhole. This could involve new lighting and flood-proofing, a high-level bridge to Kissing Point Road or an alternative route to the north.

Some more general considerations for the development of the Green Links:

Future proof the regional active transport network

The status quo of walking and cycling activity in the City of Ryde is likely to change rapidly. The density of walkers will increase when new housing and retail is delivered as proposed. An upswing in travel by bikes has occurred recently due to COVID-19 responses, the expansion of the active travel network, individual reactions to climate change, a surge in online delivery services and the growing popularity of e-bikes. In addition, State policies to address climate change and urban liveability will add to pressures on councils to secure a much bigger modal share for walking and cycling.

It is important to future proof the cycle network by allowing for increased demand at the outset. Paths should be wide enough for overtaking and must accommodate a range of mobility options such as cargo bikes and disability scooters. A minimum width of 3m should be achieved at all times with extra width considered where volumes of people walking and cycling may be high^{xv} (see Figure 5). It is important that faster cyclists can overtake and that pedestrian comfort is never compromised. In busy areas, or on steeper sections, paths should be wide enough to provide separate space for pedestrians. We are pleased to see such separation proposed for the steep section of the Shrimptons Creek Green Link Benson Lane.

Bicycle NSW recommends referring to the new Cycleway Design Toolbox^{xvi} and the 2017 Austroads Cycling Aspects of Austroads Guides (AP-G88-17) to ensure that the paths are constructed to current best practice.

Figure 5: Suggested shared user path widths (Source: Austroads Guide to Road Design Part 6A: Paths for Walking and Cycling AGRD06A-17

	Suggested path width (m)		
	Local access path	Regional path ⁽³⁾	Recreational path
Desirable minimum width	2.5	3.0	3.5
Minimum width – typical maximum	2.0 ⁽¹⁾ - 3.0 ⁽²⁾	2.5 ⁽¹⁾ - 4.0 ⁽²⁾	3.0 ⁽¹⁾ - 4.0 ⁽²⁾

^{1.} A lesser width should only to be adopted where cyclist volumes and operational speeds will remain low.

^{2.} A greater width may be required where the numbers of cyclists and pedestrians are very high or there is a high probability of conflict between users (e.g. people walking dogs, in-line skaters etc.).

^{3.} May be part of a principal bicycle network in some jurisdictions.

• Ensure that new cycle infrastructure is inclusive

All types of bikes should be accommodated by the cycling infrastructure, including cargo bikes and tricycles. Again, the width of the paths is critical and it is important to consider turning radius, dropped kerbs, ramps and the design of modal filters to ensure that non-standard bikes not excluded from the network. Cargo bikes will increasingly be used for deliveries and have huge potential to play a key role in a sustainable transport system. Non-standard bikes such as hand-cycles, recumbents and wheelchair bikes offer disabled people independent mobility but are a rare sight on urban streets due to barriers caused by poor urban design. Any measures enabling cycling by disabled people will support a growth in cycling by novice cyclists, children and older people, and improve conditions for those using mobility scooters^{xvii}.

• Consider separated bicycle paths for on-road sections of the Green Links

Where the Green Links use road corridors, there is a choice of treatments. Although the plans generally indicate shared paths in the form of widened footpaths, there are locations where on-road separated bicycle paths may be more appropriate. Shared paths are currently shown along First Avenue, Ford Street, Scott Street, Hermitage Road, Woorang Street, Welby Street and Vimiera Road.

There are several reasons why **a shared path** is not appropriate for important and well-used sections of the cycling network. These include conflict between people walking and cycling, which will get worse as population and active travel increase; the loss of verges, vegetation and, in some instances, mature trees; the uncomfortable pinch points caused by bus stops, power poles and retained trees; and constant interruptions when crossing side streets where vehicles effectively have priority. Importantly, no attempt is made to change the dial on car use when bicycles are squeezed into pedestrian spaces. By leaving the road between the kerbs as the unchallenged domain of private cars, with wide vehicle lanes and ample parking, car travel is encouraged, unsafe speeds are common and the modal shift needed to meet climate, health and liveability imperatives may not occur.

Segregated bi-directional paths have many benefits over shared paths:

- People riding bikes are separated from pedestrians and vehicles, reducing conflict.
- Street trees and green verges are not impacted.
- The narrower vehicle lanes will slow traffic, reducing noise and improving safety for all road users.
- No additional asphalt is required, reducing issues with urban heat and stormwater.
- Sufficient space is created to enable a significant modal shift to active transport.
- New landscaping and important pedestrian safety features such as kerb extensions can be incorporated into the buffers and the parking lanes.
- The cycle paths can be prioritised over driveways and minor road intersections.
- Motorists exiting driveways have a better sightline to approaching cyclists, improving safety.

The new Transport for NSW Cycleway Design Toolbox^{xviii} and Austroads Cycling Guide recommend a minimum width of 3.0m for a bi-directional bicycle path. A 3.0m wide path will be comfortable for bike riders of all ages and abilities, allows for faster riders to overtake, accommodates innovative and emerging forms of micromobility such as cargo bikes and e-scooters, and caters for future growth in ridership.

City of Ryde must initiate brave discussions with Transport for NSW and the community about reallocating road space from private cars to reflect the priorities set out in the Road User Space Allocation Policy and Council's own policies. Any increase in inconvenience to car drivers, created by reducing road space for driving and parking private vehicles, will incentivise the mode-shift that Transport for NSW and Council seek. This will benefit local residents with quieter streets, and less pollution, noise and through-traffic.

Many councils, including Randwick, Parramatta and City of Sydney, have installed pop-up cycleways to expand the network quickly. These lanes have demonstrated the importance of physical separation to the usability of bike infrastructure, while showcasing less expensive ways to provide it (Figure 6). Permanent changes to kerbs, parking and landscaping can then be made when funds allow.

Bicycle NSW has drawn together the relevant standards, policies and resources on our <u>website</u> and we are happy to support Council's efforts to test and implement cycle paths and new treatments.





Figure 6: Pop-up infrastructure in Sydney (Source: Bicycle NSW / Randwick Today)

• Reduce speed limits to 30km/h on local streets

Residential streets form a critical part of any active travel network, connecting homes to the Green Links. 30 km/h speed limit reduce the need for separate bicycle infrastructure on local residential roads. 30 km/h has been shown as an optimal speed limit to allow people driving and cycling to share the road safely^{xix} and is becoming a standard speed limit in many parts of the world. All single lane roads in Spain have been under a 30km/h limit since May 2021 and 30% of UK residents live in 20mph areas^{xx}.

The Western Australian Department of Transport has rolled out several 'bicycle boulevards' using residential streets as part of its Safe Active Streets programme^{xxi}. In addition to a 30 km/h speed limit, a range of physical interventions support slower speeds and reduce traffic volumes and rat running. Sections of the Green Links, such as along Vimiera Road, would benefit from a similar treatment if a separated bicycle path cannot be achieved.

Lower speed limits are an important building block for Vision Zero, an approach to road safety that was launched in Sweden in 1994 with the simple premise that no loss of life is acceptable. The Vision Zero approach has been highly successful and has spread to many other countries. The key policies include prioritizing low urban speed limits, pedestrian zones, physical separation between bicycle and car traffic, data-based traffic enforcement and behaviour-change education^{xxii}.

Prioritise pedestrians and cyclists at all intersections

Traffic light phasing and sensors must favour active modes to encourage more people to walk and cycle. In line with the Road User Space Allocation Policy and other State and local strategies, small delays to vehicle traffic should never prevent the delivery of safer, more efficient and more attractive active transport infrastructure. Raised crossings at unsignalised intersections will slow cars and improve safety. Bicycle paths must continue across the raised crossings so people riding bikes are not required to dismount.

Maintain a focus on the important details of the cycle network

While creating a regional network is the focus of the Green Links, it is the detailed design of cycle routes, end of trip facilities, wayfinding and education that will encourage the uptake of cycling and reduce dependence on private vehicles.

It is essential to ensure that popular daily destinations such as town centres and schools are easy to reach by bicycle for all residents of all ages and abilities. In particular, safe connections with all education facilities along the routes must be incorporated. Cycling infrastructure needs to be safe and continuous to increase the mode share of cycling and reduce congestion associated with school journeys. Without proper separation from vehicles and safe intersections, parents will still feel driving their children to school and activities is the only way to keep them safe from being hit by cars.

Integration of the routes with bus stops is essential to ensure easy access by bike and foot. All public transport journeys start and finish with a walk or cycle. Providing high-quality, safe conditions for active travel to bus routes will break down the first/last mile barrier which can inhibit take-up of public transport.

Parking and other end of trip facilities should be provided at journey end locations to further support riders and encourage participation. Future iterations of the City of Ryde DCP must ensure that sufficient cycling parking is provided in future developments, including facilities for charging e-bikes.

Wayfinding supports visitors by clearly articulating and communicating the most efficient and safest route. Signage style for wayfinding should be consistent throughout the LGA and reflect the diversity of the community. Figure 7 shows a great example from the UK!



Figure 7: Fabulous graphics by advocacy group Walk Ride Bath that celebrate the diversity of people cycling (Source: Wheel for Wellbeing)

Finally, education, information and events to promote walking and bike riding as a form of transport are an important part of any plan to increase participation in active travel.

Conclusion:

Bicycle NSW is excited by the Green Links Draft Masterplan which proposes game-changing upgrades to the active transport network in the City of Ryde. Safe infrastructure to support walking and cycling will benefit everyone in the community, reducing congestion, noise and pollution while improving public health and providing more equitable access to employment, businesses, services and public transport.

The three Green Links represent a vital element of the emerging regional network of active transport corridors across Greater Sydney, connecting residential areas to the north, south, east and west of the City of Ryde with employment hubs, education facilities, waterways, public transport and town centres. Cycle paths offer the greatest mode-shift potential when riders are able to connect their whole journey safely. The City of Parramatta and City of Sydney have demonstrated that building safe, well-connected cycleways works to induce more people to travel activelyxiii.

Bicycle NSW looks forward to working with City of Ryde Council to progress the detailed design of the three Green Links and with an explicit focus on delivering access to closed sections of the corridors as soon as

possible. Please reach out to Bicycle NSW with any questions or help needed. If requested, we would be delighted to assist with advocating for the Green Link though our connections with politicians, Transport for NSW and neighbouring metropolitan councils.

Yours faithfully,

Sarah Bickford

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Bike Planner Bicycle NSW Peter McLean

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