

The General Manager  
Hornsby Council  
PO Box 37  
Hornsby NSW 2077

28<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Dear Hornsby Shire Council,

**Re: draft Hornsby Town Centre Masterplan**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Hornsby Shire Council's draft masterplan for Hornsby Town Centre.

Bicycle NSW has been the peak bicycle advocacy group in NSW for forty-seven years, and has over 30 affiliated local Bicycle User Groups. Our mission is to *'create a better environment 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.

The draft masterplan presents an inspiring vision<sup>i</sup> for Hornsby as "a place for people that reflects the uniqueness of the bushland setting, integrated around key public spaces, where the city meets the bush. An active, thriving centre that exhibits economic diversity, design excellence, liveability and sustainability"

The population of the town centre precinct is projected to increase by approximately 11,000 to 11,445 residents housed in more than 4,500 new dwellings by 2036<sup>ii</sup>. The Hornsby Town Centre Masterplan aims to consolidate growth close to public transport services and deliver a full range of recreational, work and study opportunities within a 15-minute walking or cycling distance, reducing private vehicle travel<sup>iii</sup>. There are very few residents in the town centre at present. By focusing development in the town centre, Hornsby can meet the housing targets set by the district plan while maintaining the bush character of existing residential areas.

Bicycle NSW supports the draft masterplan's ambitions to create a liveable, green and accessible town centre, with an attractive public domain that establishes a strong sense of 'place' and prioritises active transport.

The redevelopment of the town centre and land adjacent to and over the rail tracks offers **exciting opportunities to repair missing links in the existing cycling network**, as highlighted in Figure 1. The masterplan addresses the need to provide safe connections across the CBD and promises to create linear landscaped links between the town centre and key destinations such as Hornsby Park, Hornsby TAFE, schools, Hornsby Ku-ring-gai hospital and Hornsby west side.

It is currently very difficult to access the town centre and railway station by bike from neighbouring suburbs. A very small proportion of cyclists are sufficiently 'strong and fearless' to attempt to ride on busy main roads (around 3% according to the 'cycling segmentation' model, developed in Portland, USA)<sup>iv</sup>. Bike riders who want a safer route can approach the west side of the town centre from the north along the new Peats Ferry Road shared user path (SUP) which extends from Hookhams Corner to Hornsby TAFE. From the south, bicycle riders can get close to the town centre via the Wanderers Way cycleway. The eastern approach has been improved by a new SUP along Edgeworth David Avenue but this currently terminates at Romsey

Street, a few hundred meters short the town centre. There are no off-road options from the west. To reach town centre destinations, less confident bike riders need to dismount and walk. Crossing the railway tracks requires using the station concourse and negotiating stairs and lifts.

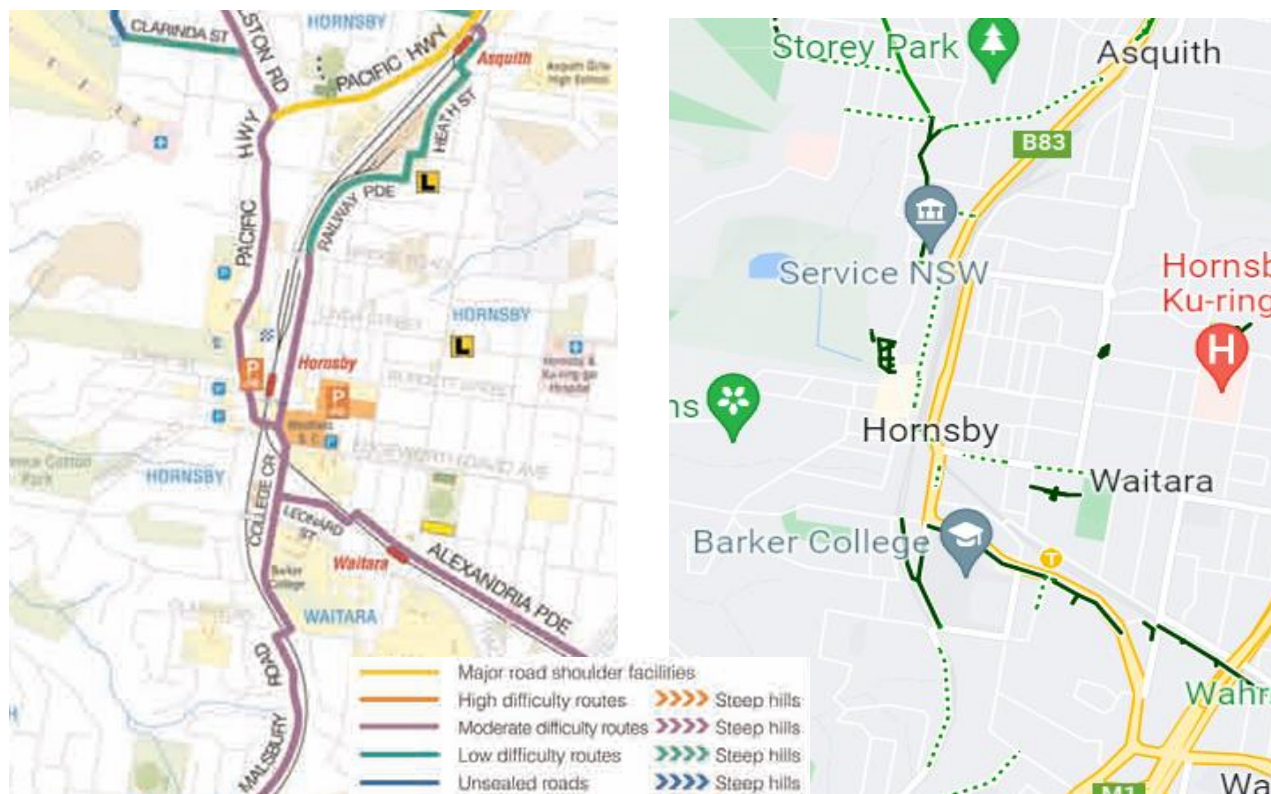


Figure 1: Existing bike network. The version shown on Hornsby Shire Council's 2008 Cycling Map<sup>9</sup> highlights how existing provision through the town centre relies on 'moderately' difficult on-road mixed traffic routes with limited connections across the rail tracks. The extract from Google Maps shows to current limited provision of shared paths (solid lines) in the vicinity of the town centre. (Source: Hornsby Shire Council / Google Maps)

Bicycle parking is non-existent on the east side, despite the presence of major destinations such as Westfield, the Events cinema and the library. There is bike parking provided on the west side near the station, but it is not convenient to use. Bike riders need to dismount well before reaching the lockers and then take an unnecessarily long walk to the platforms. This discourages multi-modal commuting. There are no public e-bike charging facilities in the town centre.

Unfortunately, Hornsby Shire Council has missed many chances to include bicycle infrastructure in recent developments and changes to the road network. Vehicle traffic has increased with the growing population but it is less viable than ever to reach daily destinations by bike.

This submission discusses the opportunities for active transport in a redeveloped Hornsby and some concerns that Bicycle NSW has around delivery of better infrastructure for cycling, before making a series of recommendations for Hornsby Shire Council for the next steps of the masterplanning process. Of course, there is much to be said about important elements such as built form, land use, social infrastructure, affordable housing or building heights but that is beyond the scope of our feedback at this stage.

We have consulted with local Bicycle User Group Bike North to better understand priorities and issues for bicycle riders in the area. Bike North has prepared its own submission, drawing on local knowledge and expertise to make detailed comments on routes into and through Hornsby Town Centre. Bicycle NSW aligns with their advocacy for new off- and on-road routes that would deliver a much more useful network for residents of all ages and abilities.

## Opportunities:

The population of Hornsby Shire is forecast to increase by 1% per annum, from 147,661 people in 2016 to 179,582 in 2036, requiring an additional 14,879 homes. Recent medium-density residential development has delivered new homes in Asquith, Waitara and Hornsby (outside the town centre area). By 2031, population growth will be concentrated in Hornsby Town Centre under the vision proposed by the draft masterplan<sup>vi</sup>.

**Congestion** is an escalating problem. To maintain lifestyle amenity as population grows, Council will need to balance transport options and ensure that the good access is provided to important destinations for all road users. It is imperative not to continue with a business-as-usual approach to transport where a high proportion of trips are made by private car. 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.

Cycling trips have scope for significant growth, particularly if journeys combining bikes with Hornsby's excellent train services can be facilitated with safe access to the station and secure bike storage. 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.

There has never been a better time to build infrastructure for bike riding and active transport. As the Minister for Infrastructure, Cities and Active Transport, Rob Stokes MP, set out in a recent speech<sup>vii</sup>, active travel projects that stitch the suburbs together and enable people of all ages and abilities to get around without a car are more sustainable than megaprojects. He stressed that the NSW Government will focus on completing active transport networks. Such projects have big benefits, and not only for reducing pollution and congestion. Active mobility improves public health, activates high streets, helps build social connections and addresses inequality.

Such ambitions are bolstered by the Road User Space Allocation Policy CP21000<sup>viii</sup>, published by Transport for NSW in early 2021. This policy establishes a road user hierarchy that considers pedestrians first and private cars last (Figure 2), and provides local and State governments with a **powerful lever** to prioritise road space for active transport.

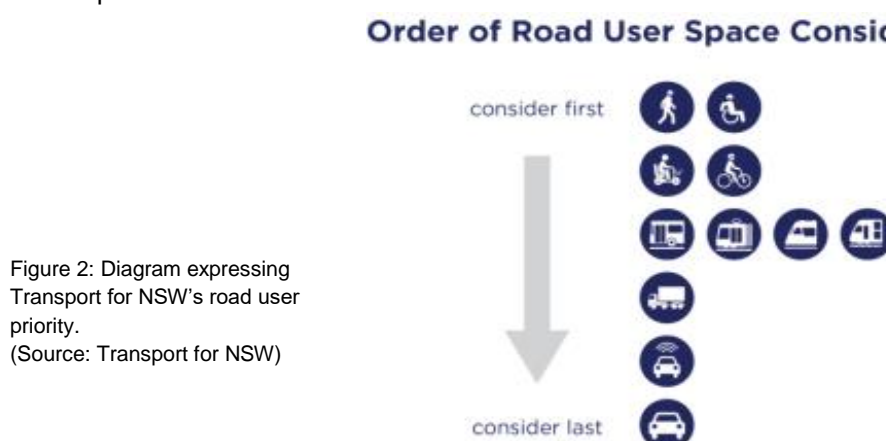


Figure 2: Diagram expressing Transport for NSW's road user priority.  
(Source: Transport for NSW)

The latest, and most exciting, document to be published by Transport for NSW under the direction of Minister Stokes is the Eastern Harbour City Strategic Cycleway Corridors<sup>ix</sup>. 30 strategic corridors have been identified for eastern Sydney, making up approximately 250 km of cycle network. The corridors will connect key centres and major points of interest. Exact routes will be subject to detailed design and

collaboration with councils and the community. The cycleways will be safe, protected and generous, suitable for use by bike riders of all ages and abilities. The corridors will form the backbone of the Principal Bicycle Network.

The Eastern Harbour City was the first of the 6 cities of the newly-defined sandstone megaregion to receive a cycleway corridors plan in April 2022; the other cities will follow by the middle of 2023. Strategic corridors linking Hornsby to Asquith, Wahroonga and Thornleigh will undoubtedly be included. The delivery of these regional cycleways must be a key focus when planning the town centre revitalisation.

We have reviewed the masterplan alongside relevant strategic plans for Hornsby Shire to understand if the Town Centre proposals maximise opportunities to improve the active transport network:

Transport for NSW Future Transport 2056 Plan<sup>x</sup>, which commits to provide a regional cycle network in Greater Sydney. The new Future Transport Strategy<sup>xi</sup> has just been released following stakeholder consultation. This document places even greater emphasis on sustainable mobility. There is a strong focus on reducing the dominance of vehicles in urban areas and reallocating road space to enable the most efficient transport modes.

Greater Sydney Region Plan, A Metropolis of Three Cities (2018)<sup>xii</sup> 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 plan locates Hornsby on the border of the Eastern Harbour City and the Central River City and identifies Hornsby as a Strategic Centre.

North District Plan (2018)<sup>xiii</sup> 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. It is essential to leverage the transport interchange to encourage greater connectivity between Hornsby and the Harbour CBD as a critical contributor to achieving the 30-minute city. The need for better accessibility, connectivity and amenity for pedestrian and cyclists is also emphasised in Planning Priorities N3, N4, N19 and N21. North District Plan set a new dwelling target of 4350 for 2016-2036 for Hornsby LGA. In addition to the strategic centre at Hornsby, local centres are identified at Asquith, Thornleigh, Westleigh and Turramurra.

Sydney Green Grid<sup>xiv</sup>, 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 Hornsby area is covered by the North District document. The Great North Walk is identified as a priority Green Grid link and the masterplan aims to increase access to this corridor from the train stations and town centre.

Hornsby Shire Council Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020<sup>xv</sup> includes *Revitalising the Hornsby Town Centre* and *Promoting the '30-minute City' by improving the walkability, connectivity and accessibility of our centres and neighbourhoods* as 2 of 10 key priorities. The tourism potential of cycling links to the iconic 3 Gorges Loop and the Great North Walk is highlighted.

Hornsby Shire Council Walking and Cycling Strategy 2021<sup>xvi</sup> provides a framework for the funding and delivery of improved infrastructure for active transport. The strategy cites a 2020 survey showing that 82% of Hornsby LGA residents rate the provision of more off-road paths and cycleways as a very high priority. However, fragmented implementation of the bike plan to date has resulted in a piecemeal network that is not very useful. The shared path network proposed by the strategy is shown in Figure 3.



A new bushwalking connection from Hornsby town centre to the Green Grid corridors at Berowra Valley and the Great North Walk is a key priority, traversing the new parklands that are being created on the site of the Hornsby Quarry. Unfortunately, the strategy is **less promising for bike riding**. There is no intention to develop separated infrastructure for bicycles. Off-road shared paths will only be considered 'where practical' - ie where the primacy of car movement is not disrupted. And the proposed shared path network skirts the town centre. This will not support the delivery of the connectivity promised by the masterplan or the future strategic cycleway corridors.

A review of the Hornsby Shire Bike Plan was begun in 2018 but a new bike plan has still not been finalised.

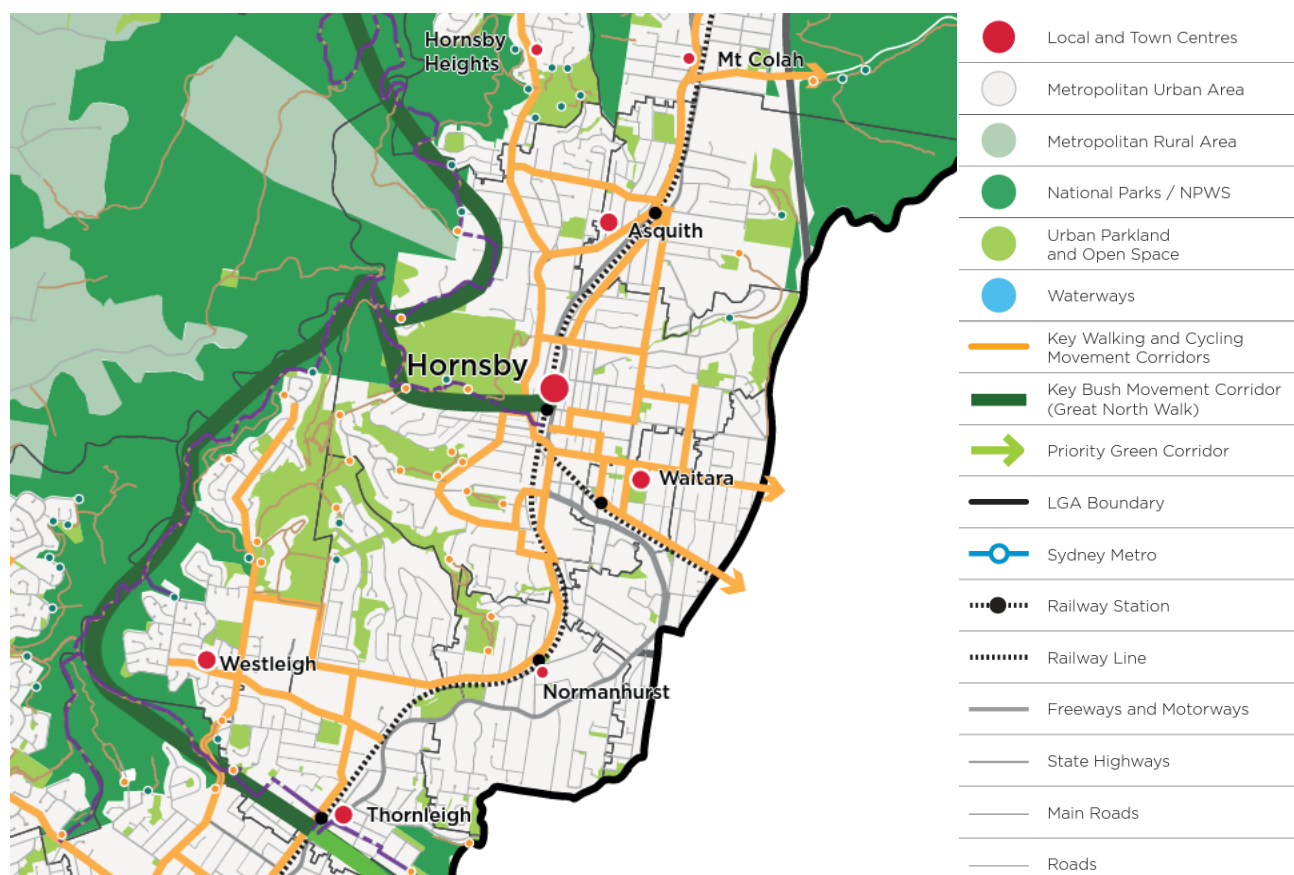


Figure 3: An extract from the proposed shared path network (Source: Hornsby Shire Council)

## The draft Hornsby Town Centre Masterplan

The Structure Plan developed to guide the town centre renewal (Figure 4) includes several important features that relate to active and public transport:

- A network of new, expanded and upgraded open spaces that greatly enhance the public domain
- A northern concourse for Hornsby Train Station to reduce the barrier impact of the rail line and improve capacity.
- A new pedestrian and bicycle connection across George Street and the rail corridor linking Burdett Street, Coronation Street and the new northern concourse.
- New pedestrian links to Hornsby Park
- New off-road cycling links on Peats Ferry Road, Burdett Street, Coronation Street, Edgeworth David Avenue, Florence Street and Sherbrook Road

- New on-road cycling links on Jersey, Hunter, William and Frederick Streets
- Rationalisation of the bus routes to simplify journeys and improve trip times.
- Redesign of the transport interchange, moving bus stops to George Street and Jersey Street and allowing a pedestrian-priority Station Street.
- The addition of new pedestrian links through the Westfield site, reducing block size and improving permeability and walkability within the town centre
- Diversion of through-traffic to George Street, allowing Peats Ferry Road (the Old Pacific Highway) to function as the primary north-south active and public transport spine.
- Reduced speed limits on key town centre roads
- New bike parking at the station

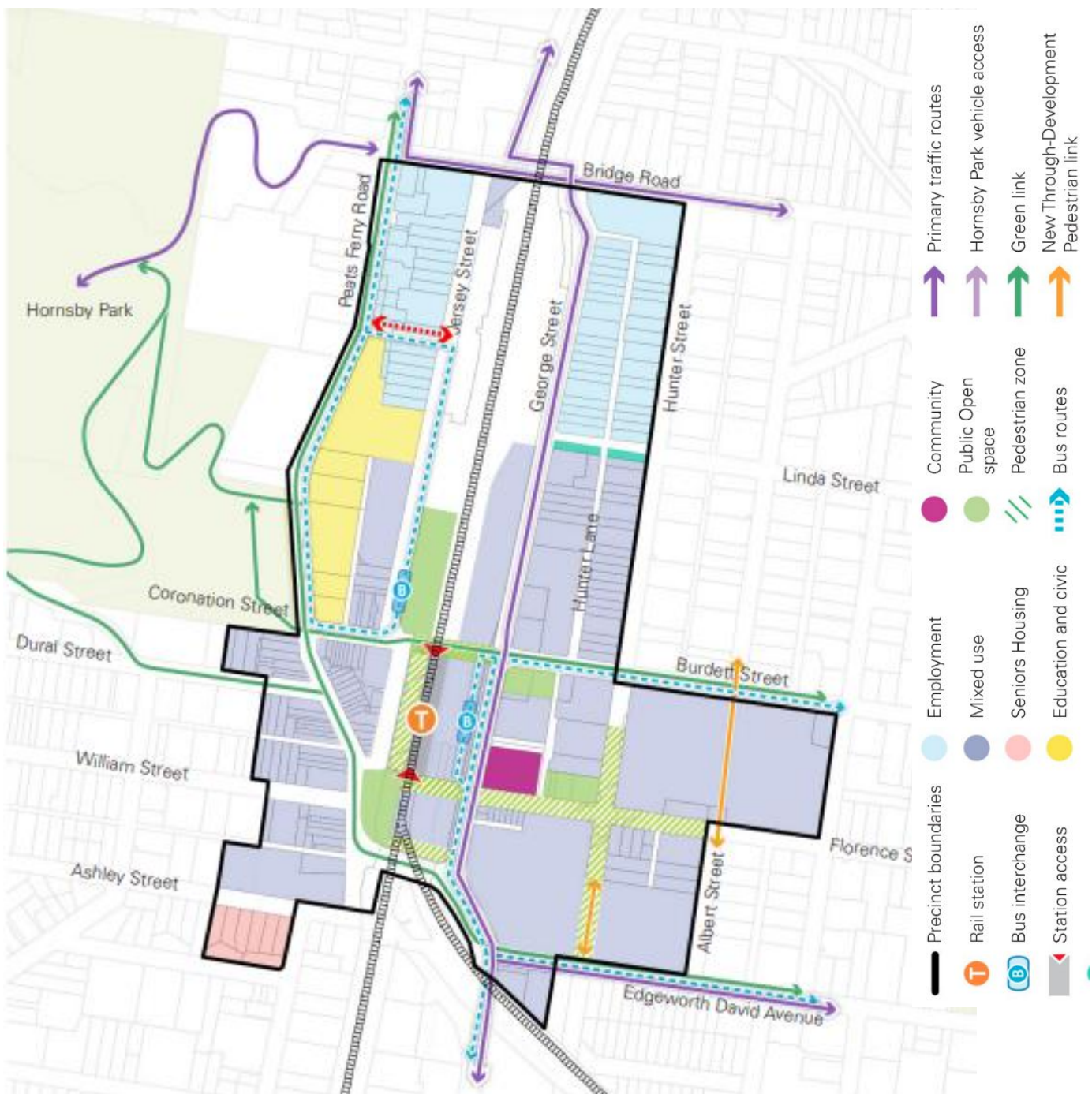


Figure 4: The structure plan for Hornsby Town Centre (Source: Hornsby Shire Council)

These elements will help achieve the key principles of the Movement and Place 'pillar':

- A centre that is viewed as a whole and integrates the east and west sides seamlessly
- A modal shift away from private vehicles

The current road network prioritises vehicular movement to the detriment of cyclists and pedestrians. In broadening our thinking about road networks beyond movement, there are opportunities to deliver social, environmental and economic improvements for the entire community<sup>xvii</sup>.

Figure 5 provides more detail about the proposed bicycle routes.

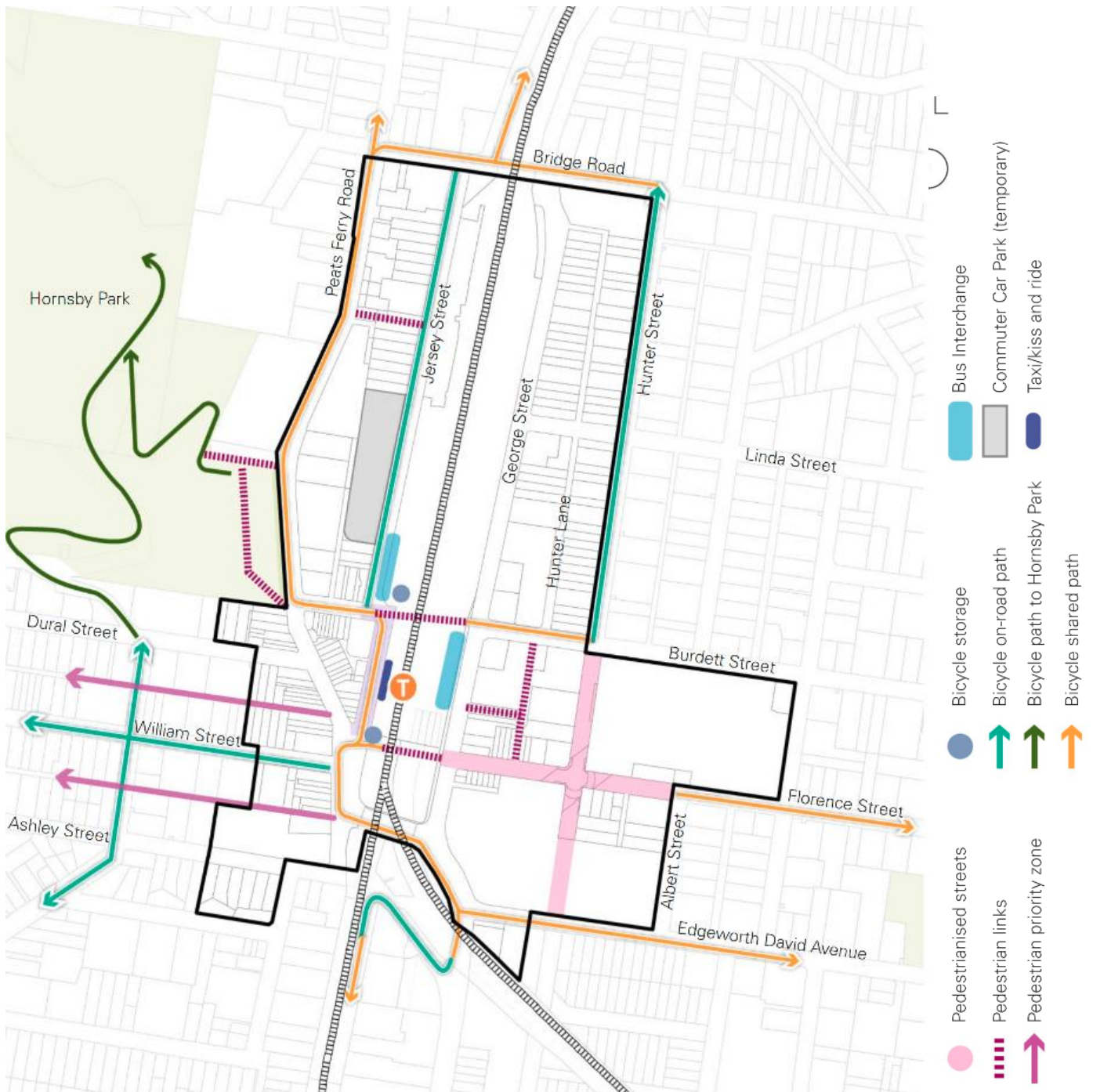


Figure 5: The walking and cycling links proposed for Hornsby town centre (Source: Hornsby Shire Council)



Although there are many excellent proposals for Hornsby outlined in the draft masterplan, Bicycle NSW would like to raise some **significant concerns** that need to be addressed before the redevelopment plans progress:

- There is very limited information about the **new bridge** linking Burdett and Coronation Streets. Although the masterplan promises a cycle and pedestrian connection across the bridge, the access for bicycles is downplayed at several points in the report. It is clear from the conceptual cross section in Figure 6 that level changes create a major challenge to the provision of ramped cycle access. In the movement network plan shown in Figure 5, the bridge is shown as pedestrian only, breaking the east-west cycle route and weakening an essential component of the masterplan.

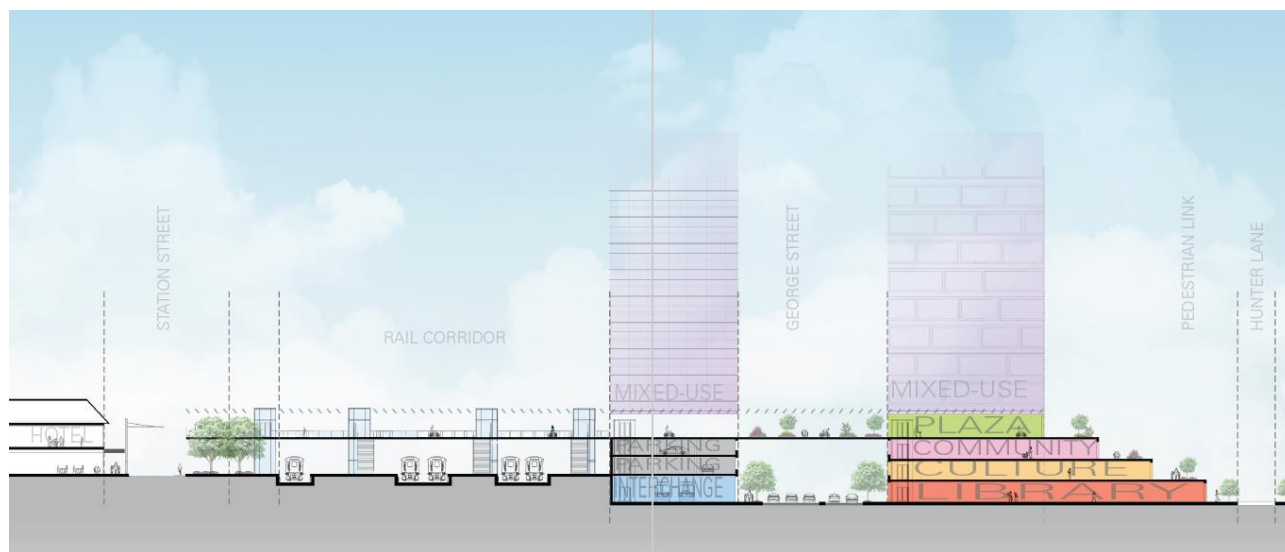


Figure 6: A preliminary cross section of the Burdett-Coronation Street bridge over the rail lines and George Street (Source: Hornsby Shire Council)

- **Shared paths** are suggested for all off-road cycle facilities. 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.
- The future role of **George Street** as the primary north-south route for through vehicles risks creating a fast-moving traffic sewer that bisects the town centre. Road widening and increased traffic make it very difficult to envision an inviting environment for pedestrians. There is little in the documents to show that thought has been given to reducing the barrier effect of George Street for east-west active transport.
- Another east-west link is indicated at **Florence Street** but there are no further details about the form or cross section of the bridge.



## Recommendations:

- **Prioritise the delivery of continuous off-road cycleways through the town centre**

Transport for NSW will soon release a network map for the strategic cycleway corridors in the Hornsby area. The creation of these regional cycleways must be a key focus when planning the town centre revitalisation. Routes will need to be separated from vehicles, sufficiently generous to accommodate desired future growth in cycling, and safe for bike riders of all ages and abilities.

The most likely north-south route will continue the Peat Ferry Road route south to meet the Wanderers Way cycleway.

An east-west route from Hornsby Park to Hornsby Hospital via the proposed Burdett Street and Coronation Street link would be optimal and aligns with the key masterplan move to reduce the historical barrier imposed by the rail lines. The Florence Street link, indicated on some plans, or a separated bicycle path on Peats Ferry Road bridge could also be considered to achieve a strategic cycleway corridor across the rail lines.

These cycleways should be conceived as the skeleton for new development. Regional active transport infrastructure cannot be delivered as an add-on 'nice to have' feature that is shoehorned into streetscapes without sufficient space. Hornsby is in an excellent position to design the new public realm to accommodate wide, future-proof cycleways.

Developing detailed plans for the cycleways at the outset ensures that they are 'shovel-ready' when funding becomes available, an increasingly important pre-requisite for NSW Government support, and reduces the risk of development pushing ahead without considering the spatial needs of the routes.

- **Aim for step- and lift-free access to the new east-west link bridge**

It is clear that designers will be dealing with some challenging level changes to create the bridge linking Burdett Street and Coronation Street. However, if the masterplan is to achieve its goals of overcoming the barriers that have long divided the two sides of the town centre it is essential to plan this link so that bike riders do not need to dismount and use lifts. This is especially critical if the link forms part of a strategic cycleway corridor.

Bicycle NSW urges Hornsby Council to work with the design team to include ramped access to the bridge from the outset. Ramps take space and must be carefully integrated into the built form and public domain. It will be impossible to deliver attractive ramps that make a positive contribution to the streetscape without early planning in consultation with all stakeholders.

- **Carefully balance the movement and place needs of each street in the town centre**

Since 2019, there has been a seismic shift in Transport for NSW policy direction, framed by innovative thinking around 'place' after 70 years of car-centric planning that focused on movement to the detriment of community, urban amenity, walkability, public health and air quality. The Movement and Place Framework takes a cross-governmental integrated approach to infrastructure projects and land use design.

Hornsby must work very closely with TfNSW to develop streetscapes that balance movement with place to integrate the needs of all roads users and reduce the dominance of vehicular traffic on the town centre. The NSW Government has explicitly stated in the new Future Transport Strategy<sup>xviii</sup> that road space should be

reallocated to favour active transport. The comfort and safety of pedestrians and cyclists is now a priority in urban settings.

For example, George Street will continue to be a regional road link through the town but treatments such as narrowed lanes to slow traffic, low 40km/h speed limits, generous landscaped buffers and regular mid-block pedestrian crossings will deliver acceptable pedestrian amenity with little impact on journey times.

- **Consider separated bicycle paths for key cycle routes**

The use of shared paths for the strategic cycleway corridors is a very sub-optimal solution. For example, on Peats Ferry Road, which will see a reduction in through traffic, a bicycle path should be located between the kerbs, leaving the footpath as the sole domain of pedestrians.

The reallocation of road space to create dedicated facilities for cycling is fully supported by the new Future Transport Strategy and will be an increasing focus for a NSW Government attempting to achieve its goals to shift journeys from private vehicles.

Segregated bicycle 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.

Bicycle NSW recommends referring to the new Cycleway Design Toolbox<sup>xix</sup> and the 2017 Austroads Cycling Aspects of Austroads Guides (AP-G88-17) to ensure that the paths are constructed to current best practice. The Toolbox suggests 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.

Hornsby Shire Council must initiate brave discussions with 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 7). 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 [website](#) and we are happy to support Council's efforts to test and implement cycle paths and new treatments.



Figure 7: Pop-up infrastructure in Sydney (Source: Bicycle NSW / Randwick Today)

- **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<sup>xx</sup>.

- **Reduce speed limits to 30km/h on most local and town centre streets**

30 km/h has been shown as an optimal speed limit to allow people driving and cycling to share the road safely<sup>xxi</sup> 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<sup>xxii</sup>.

The Western Australian Department of Transport has rolled out several 'bicycle boulevards' using residential streets as part of its Safe Active Streets programme<sup>xxiii</sup>. In addition to a 30 km/h speed limit, a range of physical interventions support slower speeds and reduce traffic volumes and rat running. Streets in the wider Hornsby area would benefit from a similar treatment, creating a much denser network of streets that are suitable for walking and cycling, and increasing options for connecting with strategic cycleways from residential areas of the LGA.

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<sup>xxiv</sup>.

- **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 Council strategies, small delays to





advocates and Bike North members are happy to mentor Hornsby advocates. The group should include urban designers and place experts. We understand that the Mayor has formalized an ongoing liaison with Bike North and the Strategy and Place team at Hornsby Shire Council. This is a great step but it is important for all traffic, transport and streetscape projects to be reviewed by a committee with a range of skills to avoid a one-dimensional outcome.

- **Finalise the Bike Plan and review the Walking and Cycling Strategy**

As discussed, the Walking and Cycling Strategy adopted in 2021 does not incorporate connections through the town centre or any aspirations to create separated strategic cycleway corridors. A review is required and should occur as the Bike Plan is finalised to reflect the masterplan for Hornsby town centre.

## Conclusion:

Bicycle NSW is excited by the potential of the draft Hornsby Town Centre Masterplan to deliver game-changing upgrades to the active transport network. The masterplan reflects a genuine attempt to address the barriers to cycling to and through Hornsby. 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.

It is essential that opportunities to prioritise walking and cycling are not missed as development picks up pace.

Bicycle NSW looks forward to working with Hornsby Shire Council to progress the next stage of the masterplanning process. Please reach out with any questions or help needed. If requested, we would be delighted to assist with advocating for optimal active transport infrastructure through our connections with politicians, Transport for NSW and neighbouring metropolitan councils.

Yours faithfully,



Sarah Bickford

Bike Planner  
Bicycle NSW



Peter McLean

Chief Executive Officer  
Bicycle NSW

<sup>i</sup> Hornsby Shire Council. 2022, July. Draft Hornsby Town Centre Review Recommendations.  
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