

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The City of Sydney is in the process of preparing a new City Plan. This plan will comprise a single Local Environmental Plan (LEP) and a single Development Control Plan (DCP), and will provide a comprehensive planning framework across the whole Local Government Area (LGA).

With boundary changes in 2003 and amalgamation of LGAs in 2004, the City of Sydney has expanded significantly. Land formerly within Leichhardt and South Sydney Council areas is now within the boundaries of the City of Sydney. The urban design studies have been commissioned because, with the expansion of the City of Sydney LGA, the Council of the City of Sydney has inherited a diverse set of planning controls of varying age, methods and approaches covering different areas. For example, the Erskineville, Alexandria (West) and Newtown (South) study area was formerly under the control of South Sydney City Council (SSCC). The City is now seeking to create a consistent planning framework for the expanded LGA, to be known as the "City Plan". Preparing the City Plan involves reviewing, coordinating, and where necessary revising a wide range of statutory documents, design controls and guidelines developed in the past, to provide an integrated, place-based planning framework for the whole LGA. The City Plan will contain two levels of control documents, the LEP and a supporting DCP. Recommendations from this study will be fed into both of those documents.

Controls in the LEP are 'primary controls'; that is, they contain the key development standards of floor space ratio, building height, heritage and car parking rates. The supporting controls in the DCP will add a level of refinement to the built form controls in the LEP, including provisions that take account of the particular characteristics of each neighbourhood.

This Report represents the second stage of works for the Urban Design Study commissioned by Council. The Report includes an examination and review of existing LEP and DCP controls for the Study Area and recommendations for revisions of the existing controls based on the findings of the comprehensive survey and urban structure analysis in Stage 1.

Studies have been completed for seven areas: Glebe and Forest Lodge, City East, Darlinghurst and Surry Hills, Waterloo and Redfern, Green Square; Paddington, Centennial Park and Moore Park; and Chippendale, Camperdown, Darlington, Redfern (west) and Newtown (north).

The urban design studies are important tools that provide Council with a deeper understanding of the urban character of each area, and with appropriate recommendations to support their desired future character. There is a focus on the three dimensional built form, to assist with developing appropriate and workable planning controls that can support the desired future character.

The process depends on comparative review of all relevant documents, of information gathered on site, and of inputs from the stakeholder and community consultation workshops. There is a strong emphasis on very detailed analysis of the existing conditions, to provide a firm foundation for future controls and guidelines.

1.1 THE STUDY AREA

The Study Area comprises the suburbs of Erskineville, Alexandria (west), and Newtown (south), covering approximately 203 hectares of land. The area is bounded by:

- King Street and Barwon Park Road (west);
- Campbell Road (south);
- Euston Road, McEvoy Street and the Green Square Urban Renewal Area and Waterloo suburb (east);
- Redfern Waterloo Authority Area/ATP and the Inner West Rail Line (north).

The Study Area contains the village of Erskineville, with neighbourhood shops and restaurants, major recreational resources at Erskineville Oval and Sydney Park, a mixed use/ light industrial district in the Ashmore precinct, higher density housing near Sydney Park and medium density residential development elsewhere.

Much of the Study Area is incorporated in Heritage Conservation Areas, as identified in the South Sydney LEP 1998, although this status does not preclude locally appropriate re-development.

1.2 STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of the urban design study is to inform the new City Plan, through:

- Detailed analysis and assessment of the existing area conditions against the existing controls; and
- Preparation of an urban design study report including recommendations for controls for future development.

The urban design study report is the vehicle by which the built form recommendations are delivered. It helps to set a framework for development through describing the future structure, form and quality of the urban environment. The report is not itself a control document. It does not constitute a draft LEP or a draft DCP. Rather, the recommendations are for consideration by the City of Sydney for inclusion in the City Plan.

1.3 STUDY OBJECTIVES

The outcomes of this study will feed into the new City Plan. The over-arching objective therefore is to provide Council recommendations that are strongly grounded in analysis of the study area: its character, its heritage, its existing built form, and its role and function. The objectives for the study are to:

- Achieve a consistent approach, process and structure to built form controls within the LGA
- Review the existing LEP and DCP controls governing the study area to ascertain whether they are relevant/appropriate
- Review selected development applications that are practical examples of both positive aspects of the existing planning controls and their interpretation

- Rectify identified issues with built form controls including height and floor space ratio to achieve viable development of appropriate massing, scale and grain
- Respect the heritage character within the study area and develop approaches that ensure the integration of that character, drawing on the depth of existing research
- Achieve and reinforce a sense of place that identifies and defines character and how future development should respond to it, including future character statements and principles and strategies
- Identify a desired future character for the area and its neighbourhoods, develop strategies, guidelines and controls to achieve it, and create opportunities for high quality urban and landscape design
- Reinforce the importance of the public domain, including the identification and protection of significant places, and views and vistas
- Inform and be informed by the City of Villages, including the identification of opportunities to adjust land use mix to assist development of activity centres
- Incorporate and address the strategic directions and targets of the State Government Metropolitan Strategy
- Incorporate strategic directions from the City of Sydney Sustainable Sydney 2030 Strategy.

1.4 STUDY APPROACH

The urban design study is the outcome of a logical and expanding process, building from work with City of Sydney staff, key stakeholders and the community. Key to this is understanding the structural, character and built form context that makes each place unique. The project approach is therefore contextual and responsive; that is, it identifies, protects and builds on the positives of the area to support a high quality, high amenity, and vibrant place.

The steps in the process move from 'broad brush' to detail:

- Determine vision / desired future character statements
- Develop key objectives and strategies for the study area and its identified precincts
- Establish an urban structure or framework
- Prepare and test built form controls and guidelines.

The outcome is a set of recommended changes or refinements to development controls, particularly building height and floor space ratio, for consideration by the City of Sydney for inclusion in the City Plan.

1.5 STUDY PROCESS

The study has been undertaken in three stages. Stage 1 comprised the analysis, resulting in identification of vision statements for neighbourhoods, and over-arching design principles. This draft Urban Design Study Report concludes Stage 2 and contains character and built form recommendations. After review by Council, it will be finalised as Stage 3.

The study process involved the following stages and steps:

1.5.1 Stage 1: Start Up, Control Review and Analysis of Context and Study Area

This stage focused on information gathering and interpretation of the key issues informing the study. It involved review of existing controls, analysis and documentation of existing built form and character, and field survey. Community consultation was undertaken at the conclusion of Stage 1 and is described separately below. Stage 1 included the following key steps:

Document review

A systematic review of the regulatory and policy framework for the study area, including state and local planning instruments and environmental controls, previous site studies, and relevant Development Applications with their officers' reports, to identify the urban design implications that these documents have upon Erskineville, Alexandria (West) and Newtown (South), and a review of the existing heritage classifications and objectives against existing built form.

Documents reviewed that were important to the study were:

NSW State Government controls:

- State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Projects) 2005
- Redfern Waterloo Authority (RVVA) Built Environment Plan
- City of Cities - NSW Government's Metropolitan Strategy

City of Sydney controls:

- South Sydney Local Environmental Plan 1998 (SSLEP 1998 including Amendment 16 and Draft Amendment 9)
- South Sydney Development Control Plan 1997: Urban Design (SSDCP 1997 as amended by the following DCPs including City of Sydney DCPs)
- South Sydney Exempt and Complying Development DCP 1999
- South Sydney DCP 11 Transport Guidelines for Development 1996
- South Sydney Development Control Plan 1997: Urban Design Amendment - Part G Special Precinct No.7 - Ashmore Precinct
- City of Sydney Heritage DCP (draft) 2006

City of Sydney Plans and Studies:

- Open Space and Recreation Needs Study Volume 1 and 2
- Local Action Plan 2006 Inner West and Local Action Plan 2007 City South
- Sustainable Sydney 2030 - Vision
- Recent urban design studies for adjacent areas that have a bearing on this study are:
 - Waterloo / Redfern Urban Design Study (bordering South Dowling Street)
 - Chippendale, Camperdown, Darlington, Redfern (west) and Newtown (north) Urban Design Study

Analysis and mapping

An overview of the important contextual issues, urban design analysis based on mapping, site visits, historical research and photography provided an understanding of the overall structure of the project area, key urban design elements for each study area, and identification of opportunities and constraints.

Lot-by-lot survey of the existing built form was based on detailed data collection. The analysis is presented in maps showing building height in metres and storeys, existing development FSR and site cover, and building types. The information was also compiled into a spreadsheet format compatible with Council's GIS system for ease of mapping in the future.

1.5.2 Stage 2: Neighbourhood Character Strategies and Draft Built Form Controls

This stage involved determining the future urban structure, refining desired future character statements for neighbourhoods, and developing appropriate strategies and built form controls to support the desired future character. Stakeholder and community consultation was undertaken during Stage 2 and the process is summarised separately below. Stage 2 involved the following key steps:

Desired future character strategies

The study area was divided into 11 character neighbourhoods, determined through fieldwork and community and stakeholder consultation, and taking consideration of Heritage Conservation Areas. The introduction to Section 3.0 below describes the process in more detail.

Urban structure plan

The urban structure plan supports the desired future character and identifies the key structuring elements that will shape the future form and functionality of the study area: activity centres, land uses and important connections; and built form and open space

Development potential

The capacity of a wide variety of different lot shapes and sizes for development was tested against the existing controls, to evaluate the impact of both new and infill buildings, and of additions and alterations in terms of floor space, site cover, private open space, and privacy and overshadowing impacts on neighbours. This testing resulted in recommended controls for height and FSR.

Concept masterplans for potential redevelopment sites

Sites whose development has the potential to significantly change the area character and have an impact on the viability and amenity of the neighbourhood were looked at in more detail, including developing building envelopes, proposing through site links, public domain treatment and built form design strategies.

Design guidelines

To support the LEP and DCP recommendations more detailed guidelines for height in storeys and streetwall heights add a layer of refinement to the building massing controls, to help guide development to achieve the desired future character.

1.5.3 STAGE 3: FINALISATION OF THE URBAN DESIGN STUDY REPORT

The investigation of the built form within the strategic planning context of the Study Area culminated in recommendations for revision of the existing LEP and DCP controls governing development within the Study Area. These recommendations were based upon:

- the relevance of the existing controls;
- the existing built form;
- the context of the Study Area locally and regionally; and
- the heritage and conservation context of the Study Area (see section 4 of this report).

The detailed examination, findings and recommended LEP and DCP provisions are discussed in section 5.0 of this report.

1.6 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Residents, business owners, community groups and stakeholders were invited to three dedicated community meetings. Two community workshops held on August 7th, August 22nd and a presentation of preliminary recommendations on September 26th 2007. The workshop was to create an opportunity for comment on the draft neighbourhood character strategies and the draft controls for building height and FSR. The meeting was structured around a welcome and introduction by the Lord Mayor, a powerpoint presentation by the consultant, a question and answer session, and time for individual questions of Council officers and the consultant. A feedback form was provided for people to provide supplementary information. The content of the meeting included:

- an outline of the City Plan and urban design study process,
- presentation of the draft neighbourhood strategies and supporting future characters,
- an explanation of the key controls and how they relate: floor space ratio, building height (overall) and building height in storeys
- a presentation and comparison of the existing controls for height and FSR, the existing development height (metres and storeys) and FSR, and the proposed height (metres and storeys) and FSR.
- exhibition of draft neighbourhood strategies and built form controls in the lobby area for inspection, individual discussion and comment.

All information that has been presented at community meetings has also been available on the Council website on the City Plan web page.

1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report is structured into the sections detailed below.

Section 1: Introduction briefly explains the project, outlines its purpose and objectives, the project approach and outcomes, and the structure of this report.

Section 2: Structure Plan describes and illustrates the key physical elements that make up the area and provide the overall organising principles that underpin the character strategies and built form recommendations.

Section 3: Neighbourhood Character Strategies describes the existing character, and describes and illustrates the strategies to support the desired future character for each neighbourhood.

Section 4: Building Types provides a description of the common building types and uses in the study area together with objectives and guidelines for better practice in designing each type.

Section 5: LEP Recommendations defines and illustrates (in area-wide maps) the proposed LEP recommendations for building height, floor space ratio and land use.

Section 6: Significant Sites provides a greater level of detail including design principles and envelope controls for those 'opportunity sites' whose development would have a significant impact on the adjacent and surrounding area.

Section 7: Neighbourhood Provisions gives recommendations for consideration in the new DCP, and includes more detailed development controls and design guidelines to support the LEP recommendations in Section 3. The provisions are relevant to the Erskineville area and its desired future character. Built form controls for other issues including sloping sites, front setbacks, rear setbacks, side setbacks, upper level setbacks, site cover, street address, building depth, building separation, open space, roof form, rear extensions, garages and parking, deep soil landscaping, laneway development and subdivision/amalgamation have been provided in other studies and are not repeated here.

Section 8: Potential Redevelopment Neighbourhood provides a greater level of detail for the Ashmore neighbourhood. Includes: design principles and LEP controls (proposed FSR and building heights); 3D modelling; sun-shadow diagrams, flood modelling impacts and concept design of the proposed N-S green link.

Section 9: Development Capacity and Change documents the change in FSR between existing and proposed controls (change mapping) and the estimated change in capacity (population) for the Erskineville area.

Appendix A provides a detailed description of the testing that was carried out to determine recommended heights.

Appendix B documents the detailed testing that was carried out on a range of different lots to determine the appropriate FSR for each site and guide FSRs for other sites.

2.0 URBAN STRUCTURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The urban structure considers and brings together the land uses, function and viability of neighbourhood centres and activity nodes, access and open space networks in the context of the area's setting, topography and character. It forms the basis of the neighbourhood character strategies in Section 3.0.

The urban structure is made up of the key physical elements that have shaped and continue to shape the study area. These elements include the subdivision pattern, transport corridors, street and lane networks, open spaces and how they are connected, heritage and the three dimensional quality of the place given by the built form. It is important to note that the study area has changed over time, as buildings and streets have been adapted over the years to different family types, density and lifestyles. It is the versatility and flexibility of the block and subdivision pattern, and of the resulting terrace building type, that have enabled change and contribute to the popularity of the area for living, working and visiting.

The major 'drivers' that underpin the existing urban structure of Erskineville, Alexandria (west) and Newtown (south) are:

- Topography: an east-west ridge defines Erskineville Road and a north-south ridge defines King Street, with a mix of institutional and civic buildings, traditional retail strip and businesses massed up to and along the ridge; rows of terraces stepping up south-side of Erskineville Road and east and northeast-side of King Street; and the Alexandria Park and Erskineville Oval subdivision ranging terraces and workers cottages on lower ground overlooking parklands. To the south, the lowest, more swampy areas, and therefore more flood prone, have historically been utilised as an industrial area including factories, clay extraction and waste disposal. The King Street/Enmore Road ridge road links the city with the western and southern suburbs. High points generally have institutional (heritage) landmark buildings atop them or in the case of Sydney Park present panoramic views north and south to the City and Airport.
- Open space:
 - Sydney Park establishes the southern edge and constitutes almost one third of the study area;
 - Erskineville Oval/Harry Noble Reserve is the next largest parkland area located to the east of the study area;
 - Alexandria Park, while not technically part of the study area, is a major asset for the Alexandria Park community;
 - Numerous smaller parks, often the result of amalgamation of subdivisions, are dotted throughout Erskineville North, Erskineville South, Pleasant Ave/Macdonald and Erskineville Oval precincts ;
 - Street closures have been developed as pocket parks that green streets in the Erskineville South and Pleasant Ave/Macdonald St precincts
 - Parks along Erskineville Road create an open character along the northern side of Erskineville Road.