
ORDINARY COUNCIL

ORD06

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SUBJECT: CAMDEN TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS
FROM: Director Works & Services
TRIM #: 14/100528

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement for a range of upgraded works for the Camden Town Centre, and to undertake community consultation following the recent adoption of Council's four year delivery plan, which includes:

- \$1.754M towards Stage 1 Camden Town Centre Improvements; and
- \$3.6M for the construction of a decked car park.

The proposed key initiatives are to:

- introduce traffic signals on Argyle Street at the intersection of Oxley Street and pedestrian signals between John and Hill Street, on Argyle Street;
- increase the footpath width on Argyle Street by 1 metre;
- locate a decked car park at the existing Council car park on Oxley Street;
- improve the footpath slope;
- upgrade furniture and paving material; and
- to advise Council of the Communication Strategy for this project.

BACKGROUND

In the year 2040, Camden is set to be a dynamic, modern, urban place which is defined by its unique history and rural backdrop and has realised the many opportunities presented by urban development and population growth. Camden Council will experience considerable pressure from urban growth associated with the significant urban release areas, identified in Sydney's South West Growth Centre.

Camden's country town feel is greatly valued by both residents and visitors and is an important part of the place and the economy of the town. Also of importance to many in the community is Camden's main street.

The Town Centre of Camden has a distinctly different character and townscape than other more recent nearby centres, with a semi-rural setting, an attractive tree lined main street (Argyle Street), a coherent, human scale built form and extensive heritage, all contributing to the creation of a centre that people spend time in.

In 2012, Council resolved to relocate to Oran Park in 2016. In mid 2013, Council established an internal committee to develop a range of strategies and options to enhance the Camden and Narellan commercial precincts by the time Council relocates.

This committee is about to undertake a Retail & Commercial Study of the Camden Town Centre. This Study will deliver a sustainable vision for Camden Town Centre which clearly defines its form, focus and function.

In addition to this, for over twelve months, Council has been undertaking detailed reviews of the important infrastructure elements of the Town Centre, including traffic movements, car parking, drainage, street lighting, paving and furniture. These reviews will update the findings of the Camden Town Centre Strategy (2008), which was the vision Council endorsed for the upgrade of the Town Centre.

In March 2013, Council engaged a consultant to undertake a traffic study for Camden Town Centre. The Camden Town Centre Traffic and Transport Study 2013 focused on transport infrastructure necessary to achieve greater accessibility for all pedestrians and road users, whilst also seeking to retain the unique aspects that the Town Centre currently provides, in terms of its heritage and 'country town' environment.

Previous studies and periods of consultation have highlighted the need to respect, protect and build on the area's unique history, while recognising the area's contribution to the rapidly growing vitality and diversity of the remainder of the LGA. As a first step in this process, Council has prepared a strategy that begins to give physical form to the detailed planning undertaken over the past years. The initial focus of these works will be an upgrade of Argyle Street and the construction of an open top decked car park.

Council has developed an Argyle Street Concept Plan which builds on the 2008 Camden Town Centre Strategy, and the Camden Town Centre Traffic and Transport Study 2013. This is a Plan for Argyle Street which will be implemented in stages. This includes the construction of traffic lights, upgraded pavement alignments and finishes to create a pedestrian friendly environment which will complement the outcomes of the Retail & Commercial Study of the Town Centre, and respect the town's unique character. This upgraded environment will be furnished with lighting, furniture, landscaping, signage as appropriate to each place in the street and its planned activity. The extent of Stage 1 works will be determined through the detailed design process in the coming months.

In November 2013 and June 2014, Council held workshops to examine the proposed works. The next phase of the project is an extensive consultation with all stakeholders, including resident and business stakeholders.

The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement from Council for the works proposed for the Camden Town Centre.

MAIN REPORT

The current suite of works proposed for the Camden Town Centre, draws upon the detailed reviews of the important infrastructure elements of the Town Centre, which have been carried out by Council Officers. This suite of proposed works is the beginning point in realising a vision for Camden that has been developing over a number of years.

The aim of these works are to:

- create an environment that will encourage slower speed vehicular transit;
- create an environment which upgrades and enhances pedestrian mobility safety and access;
- enhance the main street of Camden so that it can continue to be relevant in a growing and changing LGA, as well as the broader region;
- create additional parking close to Argyle Street; and
- facilitate the continued retail and commercial success of the Town Centre.

The Camden Town Centre Traffic and Transport Study 2013 (**Attachment 1**) focused on transport infrastructure necessary to achieve greater accessibility for all pedestrians and road users, whilst also seeking to retain the unique aspects that the Town Centre currently provides, in terms of its heritage and 'country town' environment.

The study recommended a range of potential upgrades to be implemented in the short, medium and long term, covering the road network, pedestrian network, bicycle networks, public parking, town square, public transport operations, potential bus terminus locations, road geometry, speed limits, street lighting and streetscape works.

Council has since undertaken an analysis of these recommendations to determine the items of highest priority and greatest community benefit. The recommendations Council are seeking to implement as part of Stage 1 works are to:

- signalise Argyle Street at the intersection of Oxley Street (removing the existing pedestrian crossing west of John Street, subject to RMS approval);
- signalise the existing marked foot crossing in Argyle Street between John Street and Hill Street (subject to RMS approval);
- narrow all lanes in Argyle Street, allowing for a wider footpath;
- construct a decked car park, serving the long term needs of the town; and
- upgrade the Streetscape on Argyle Street.

The remainder of the recommended upgrades in the Traffic and Transport Study 2013, will be reviewed and considered at a later date with a further package of works.

The report suggested that a decked car park is a longer term option, however Council is committed to the provision of this facility and are seeking to bring the construction of this facility into the short term Capital Works program (2016/2017). The provision of such a facility, close to Argyle Street, in the short term will complement the developing commercial and retail vision of the Town Centre and lead to long term community benefits.

The proposed key initiatives are:

1. Introduction of Traffic Signals on Argyle Street

The Camden Town Centre Traffic and Transport Study 2013 recommends the introduction of traffic signals on Argyle Street, at the intersection of Oxley Street, as well as the introduction of pedestrian signals at the existing pedestrian crossing, east of John Street. Traffic signals at these locations will improve traffic flow and pedestrian connectivity within the Camden Town Centre. Following a Councillor Workshop in

November 2013, Council engaged a specialist signal designer to fully test the intersection design and performance.

The consultant has confirmed through detailed investigation, to the satisfaction of Council Officers, that there are traffic signal layouts which satisfy the level of service requirements at both locations.

a. Oxley Street and Argyle Street (Figure 1)

It is proposed that Oxley Street become a fully signalised intersection. The major additional traffic movement would be a right turn out of Oxley Street onto Argyle Street. This would relieve pressure from the surrounding network and improve traffic flow at the John Street/Argyle Street intersection. Signals also facilitate improved pedestrian and traffic movements in all directions. The signals design would not allow a right turn movement from Argyle Street into Oxley Street. As part of this work, the existing pedestrian crossing outside the Camden Post Office will be relocated to this signalised intersection.

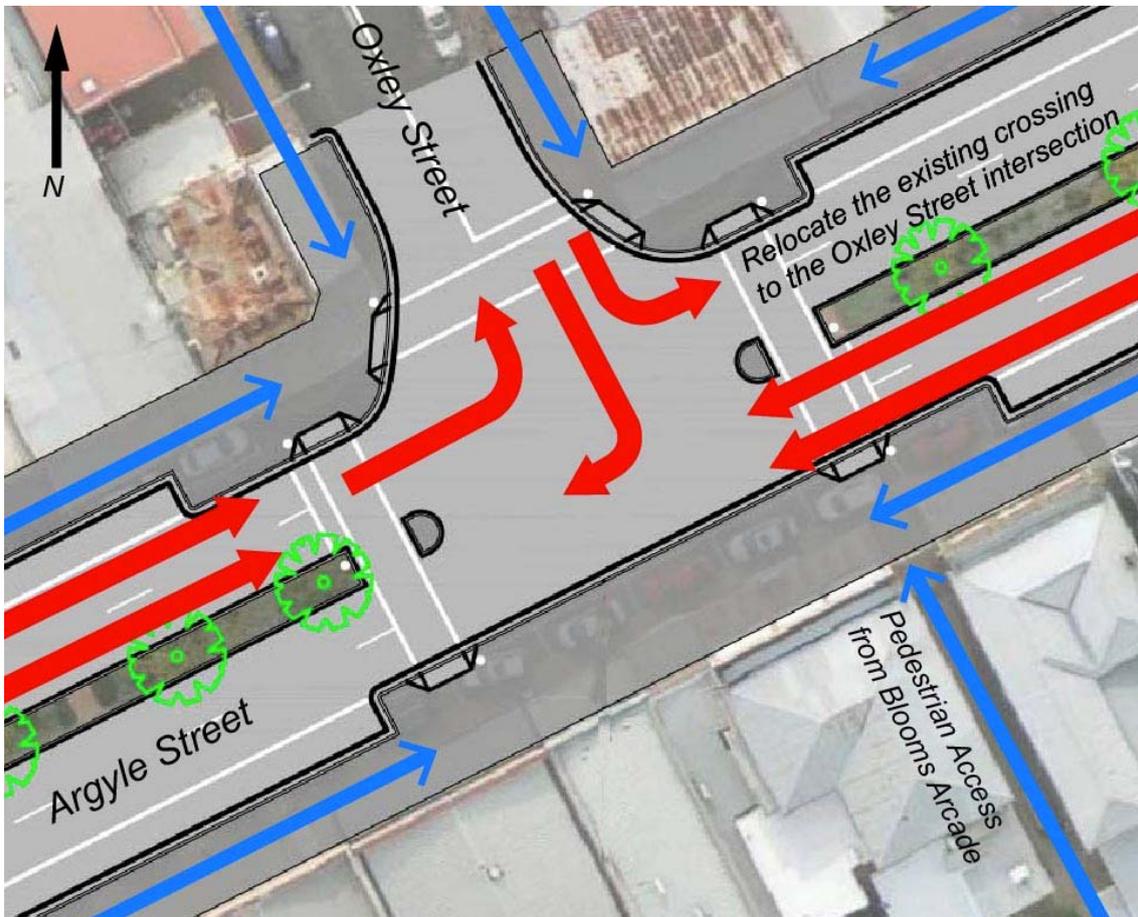


Figure 1 - Proposed signalised intersection corner Argyle Street and Oxley Street

b.

Pedestrian Signals (Figure 2)

It is proposed that the existing pedestrian crossing, east of John Street become a signalised pedestrian crossing. This would create a safer pedestrian environment through a controlled crossing point. The most effective location for this crossing is approximately five (5) metres to the east of the existing crossing point. This brings the crossing closer to the existing pedestrian arcade as well as taking it further from the John Street roundabout, reducing the impact of traffic queuing on the roundabout. Council is satisfied that the criteria for RMS approval has been met, but ultimately the detailed location of the crossing point is subject to RMS approval.

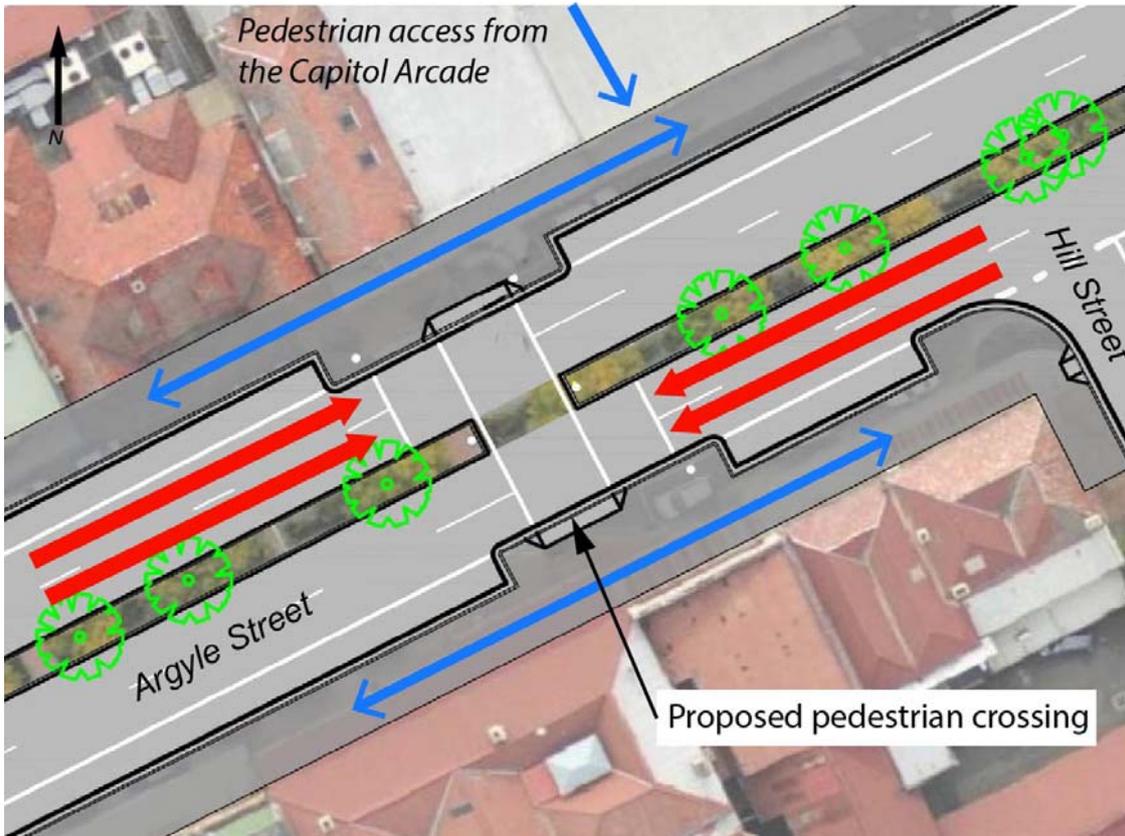


Figure 2 - Mid Block pedestrian crossing between John Street and Hill Street

2.

Decked Car Park in the Camden CBD

Following a Councillor Workshop in November 2013, Council engaged a consultant to undertake an assessment of potential decked car park locations within Camden. The sites reviewed (Figure 3) were:

- 1 - John Street / Murray Street
- 2a - Oxley Street
- 2b - Oxley Street / Mitchell Street
- 3 - Larkin Place
- 4 - Hill Street / John Street



Figure 3 - Five potential car park sites

Four of the sites identified are in the current ownership of Council and one (Larkin Place), is a dedicated road reserve. A detailed comparative assessment of each site was undertaken to determine the most appropriate location (**Attachment 2**).

Based on the assessment undertaken, Site 2a Oxley Street Car Park and Site 3 Larkin Place Car Park are the most cost effective options with the highest overall scores respectively. However, it should be noted that there are additional constraints on the Larkin Place site, such as:

- conflict with pick up/drop off facilities associated with the adjacent school;
- may require new associated pedestrian facilities;
- restrict access to the rear of the existing shops; and
- that the road reserve would reduce the available car park footprint.

Taking these constraints into account the cost per additional space would increase.

The Oxley Street Site 2a is not affected by the same constraints associated with Larkin Place. Further, as Council reassesses its service provision within Camden, the potential creation of a civic precinct on John Street, as well as further utilisation of Council's assets in and around Oxley Street, the option recommended to be the most effective is Location 2a on Oxley Street. The reasoning is summarised below.

a. Site 2a – Oxley Street Car Park

- i. The site is very close to Argyle Street (45 metres from the nearest point of the car park) and would link directly to the proposed crossing of Argyle Street at Oxley Street.
- ii. All pedestrian links associated with this location are owned and maintained by Council, providing good public access to Argyle Street.
- iii. The car park is clearly visible from Oxley Street and will therefore require minimal sign posting to advertise motorists of its location.
- iv. It will rarely be underutilised due to its location adjacent to Argyle Street and the Civic Centre.
- v. Council own the entire block of land on which the car park would be located, as well as some surrounding and adjacent properties.
- vi. There are no heritage properties that would be immediately impacted by the location of this car park.

Stage 1 of the decked car park is intended to be a single deck car park **with no roof**. It is proposed to design the car park to allow for an additional deck in the future should the need arise. The design will also ensure a façade treatment that is **sympathetic to the nature and character of Oxley Street and Camden**.

3. Reduce Vehicular Travel and Parking Lane Widths and Increase The Footpath Widths

As a way to calm traffic throughout the Town Centre, the Camden Town Centre Traffic and Transport Study 2013 suggested that it would be possible to narrow the existing traffic and parking lanes on Argyle Street. The existing traffic lane widths are well above the minimum national standards.

The effect of this road narrowing would be to increase the width of the footpaths by one metre, greatly improving the slope, while at the same time slowing and calming traffic.

Council have since tested this recommendation and have determined that it is possible to extend the footpath from the existing 3.66m to approximately 4.66m and greatly improve the footpath slope. This recommendation is illustrated in the following Figures 4 and 5.

This would not only provide a more pedestrian friendly environment, but also has the potential to encourage the greater utilisation of the footpath, creating an active street environment.

Typical section – Argyle Street existing

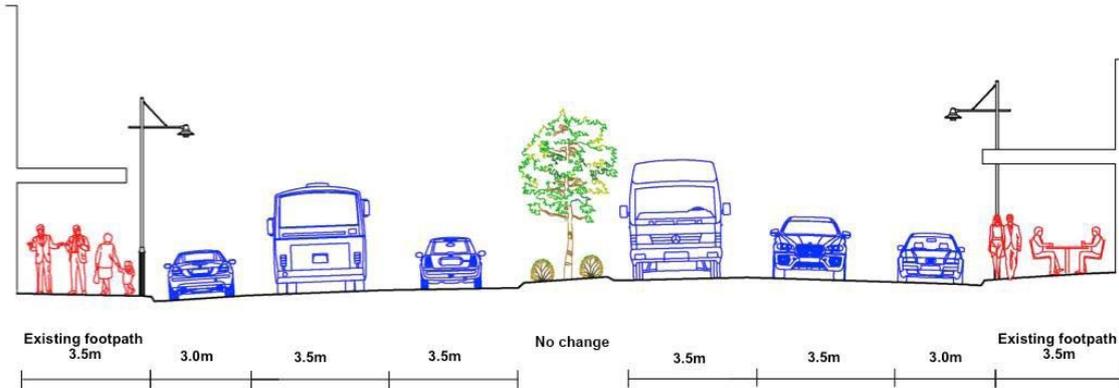


Figure 4

Typical section – Argyle Street proposed

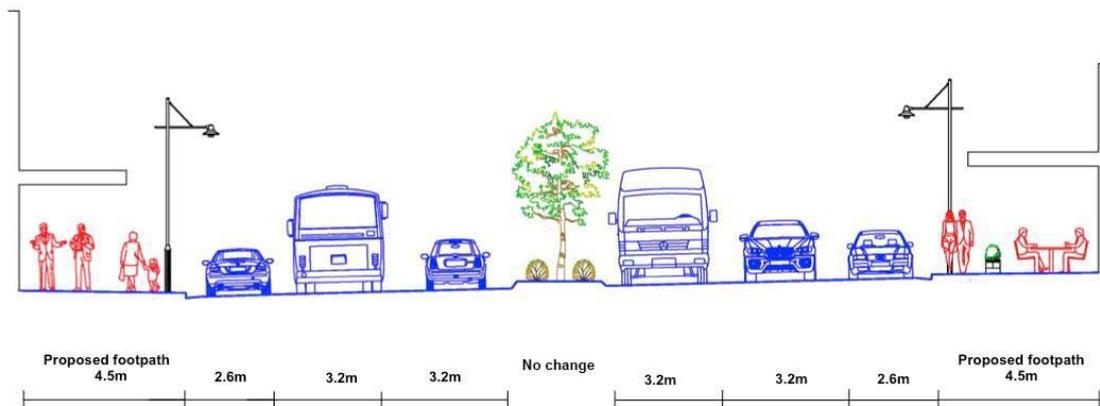


Figure 5

4. Footpath Paving Material

As part of Council’s review it is proposed to upgrade the pavement material on Argyle Street. The proposed widening of the footpath provides Council with an opportunity to upgrade the paving material to achieve a consistent finish.

This will include upgrading of footpath subsurface materials as well as drainage and service relocations.

Council considered the following paving materials:

- Grey granite pavers
- Grey concrete composite pavers
- Clay brick pavers
- Concrete

Council undertook an assessment of each material to determine the most appropriate paving material selection for Argyle Street (**Attachment 3**). From the assessment, the option of **grey granite pavers** as the primary paving material for Argyle Street, is recommended to Council for their consideration. A dark grey paver is also supported as an appropriate heritage response.

Grey granite provides a paving surface that does not make a feature of itself. It will provide the base for the architecturally and historically important elements of the town to come to the fore, and be a recessive element of the street. When materials become old and worn, they tend to be noticed more often. The durability of granite affords the best opportunity to get the most effective long term solution.

Suppliers of the granite have advised Council that due to the durability of the product, the maintenance of the finished surface will be reduced over the life of the product. Whereas, other pavement selections will require a greater intensity of maintenance, for example, resealing at approximately 5 year intervals.

Though there is a greater initial capital investment required to procure the granite, as there is a higher base rate cost per m², it is anticipated that the longevity and durability of the product, as well as the ease with which the product can be maintained, justifies the selection over the long term. This product has also been used in most major city centres, such as City of Sydney, further proving its long term durability.

5. Street Furniture

Camden's existing street furniture is characterised by inconsistent furnishings and finishes. In addition, many of the existing pieces of furniture are nearing the end of their life and need replacing.

In order for streets to remain uncluttered and usable, furniture selections need to be simplistically styled in a basic and consistent colour scheme. Different materials can be introduced as necessary for comfort and durability. However, by deliberately limiting the range of elements, uniformity in street character and maintenance practices is achieved.

Council reviewed a number of furniture styles. They are:

- Existing – Maintain existing furniture style and selection
- Customised – Design furniture which references specific features of Camden
- Historically Sensitive – Simplistically styled – neutral selection which recedes into the backdrop of the town
- Modern – Modern materials and design adding an additional layer of history to the town

Council undertook an assessment of each style to determine the most appropriate furniture selection for Argyle Street (**Attachment 4**). From the assessment, the *Historically Sensitive* option is recommended as the primary furniture selection for Argyle Street.

Heritage policies developed in Australia do not specifically refer to street or park furniture. However, the common urban design and heritage planning response for places of historical significance is to follow the Guidelines of the Australian International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (known as The Burra Charter).

The most relevant sections of the Burra Charter in relation to street furniture:

“22.1 New work such as additions to the place may be acceptable where it does not distort or obscure the cultural significance of the place, or detract from its interpretation and appreciation”.

“22.2 New Work should be readily identifiable as such”.

Alongside Article 22 the Explanatory Note offers further clarification of this article. This Explanatory Note states that:

“New work may be sympathetic if its siting, bulk, form, scale, character, colour, texture and material are similar to the existing fabric, but imitation should be avoided”.

As an attempt to draw on the characteristic of the township, some of the existing furniture elements are themselves features rather than acting as part of a simple palette of public domain elements. This detracts from the items of real historical value in the township.

Camden’s value and historical importance comes from its strong street grid and its diversity of architectural styles. The street furniture should not compete with this, and as such it is recommended that it needs to be simplistically styled in order to allow the items of true heritage importance be presented in the most appropriate way. The *Historically Sensitive* option is recommended as the primary furniture selection for Argyle Street, as approved by Council’s Heritage Consultant.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED WORKS

Traffic Signals

Council has undertaken an assessment to determine the most appropriate location for the introduction of traffic signals on Argyle Street.

The assessment of the street indicates that traffic signals on Argyle Street at the intersection of Oxley Street, as well as the introduction of pedestrian signals at the existing pedestrian crossing between John Street and Hill Street, are the most appropriate locations, providing improved pedestrian safety and traffic flow within Camden. It is recommended that Council endorse the progression of the traffic light locations to community consultation, based on:

- the Camden Town Centre Traffic and Transport Study 2013 and pedestrian connectivity.

The signalisation of both the pedestrian crossing and intersection facilities are subject to final RMS approval.

Decked Car Park

Council has undertaken an assessment to determine the appropriate location for the development of a decked car park as an extension of the Camden Town Centre Traffic and Transport Study.

Of the five potential sites, Site 2a Oxley Street is the most functional and cost effective for the development of a decked car park. Accordingly, it is recommended that Council adopt Site 2a Oxley Street as the preferred site to community consultation, based on:

- the Decked Car Park Assessment matrix (scoring the highest);
- increased car park capacity in close proximity to Argyle Street; and
- minimal impact on adjoining sites.

Footpath Width

Council has undertaken an assessment to determine the feasibility of increasing the width of the footpath from 3.66m to 4.66m. This has shown that it is possible to extend the footpath width and greatly improve the footpath slope. Accordingly, it is recommended that Council endorse the progression of a wider footpath for Argyle Street, to community consultation, based on:

- improving footpath slopes;
- the opportunity for greater Town Centre activity; and
- providing additional space for pedestrians.

Paving Material

Council has undertaken an assessment to determine the most appropriate paving material for Argyle Street, Camden.

The assessment of the material choices indicates that grey granite is the most appropriate long term paving choice for Argyle Street. Accordingly, it is recommended that Council endorse the progression of the material selection to community consultation, suggesting grey granite as the primary paving material for Argyle Street, based on:

- the durability of granite affords the best opportunity to get the most effective long term solution; and
- based on Heritage advice, granite is an acceptable option.

Furniture

Council has undertaken an assessment to determine the most appropriate furniture style for Argyle Street, Camden.

The assessment of the furniture choices indicates that a selection that is simple and historically sensitive is the most appropriate long term furniture choice for Argyle Street. Accordingly, it is recommended that Council endorse the progression of the furniture selection (Historically Sensitive) to community consultation, based on the most historically appropriate response to the town, based on:

- the street furniture nominated does not compete with Camden's current historical and architectural elements as confirmed by Council's Heritage Consultant.

Proposed Staging and Timing

The upgrade of Argyle Street is a long term project for Council, with staff currently detailing plans for the implementation over a number of years.

At Council’s Ordinary Meeting of 24 June 2014, Council approved a budget allocation of \$1.754M for the implementation of **Stage 1** Camden Town Centre upgrade. The focus of this work will be between John Street and Oxley Street, with the final extent of Stage 1 works being subject to detailed design investigation. This location has been selected due to recommendations by Council Officers, based on the steeper footpath slopes, high pedestrian volume and proximity to the proposed decked car park. Further, it is envisaged that Stage 1 works will be undertaken between the months of May and November 2015. This construction period is scheduled to fall outside of major events planned in Argyle St (e.g. Camden Show, Anzac Day & Light Up Camden).

The proposed decked car park is planned for construction in 2016/17. Detailed designs will commence following public exhibition.



Figure 6 - Works Summary

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

It is proposed to undertake extensive public exhibition, inviting feedback from the community over an eight (8) week period, commencing second half of July.

It is recommended that the exhibition occur in conjunction with the community engagement phase of the Retail and Commercial Study for the Camden Town Centre. The goals of this package of works and the Retail and Commercial Study are closely linked.

During the exhibition phase, the views of stakeholders, including business and community stakeholders, will be sought. The exhibition will include:

- advertisements in local papers, road side banners;
- stakeholder engagement events;
- surveys with business and community representatives;
- information and regular updates on Council's website, Facebook, media releases; and
- information displays at various locations including Council Offices and Libraries.

On completion of the public exhibition, a further report will be submitted to Council to consider feedback and submissions received.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

At the Ordinary Council Meeting of 24 June 2014, Council adopted its revised Delivery Program 2014/15 Operational Plan (including budget).

In the budget, Council has allowed \$1.754M towards Stage 1 Camden Town Centre Upgrade. The extent of Stage 1 works will be determined through the detailed design process.

In addition, Council has adopted a \$3.6M allocation to be funded from Section 94 and Reserve Parking funds, for the construction of a decked car park in Camden (Construction 2016/17).

Officers will continue to explore other funding opportunities to progress future stages of the Camden Town Centre Improvement project.

CONCLUSION

In 2012, Council made a decision to relocate its administration offices to Oran Park in 2016.

In making that decision Council has always been committed to ensuring that it leaves Camden as a viable Town Centre with a strong and sustainable future. To support this, an internal committee has been working to develop a range of strategies and options to enhance the Camden and Narellan commercial precincts.

As part of this work, a Retail and Commercial Study of the Camden Town Centre is being prepared. This Study will deliver a sustainable vision for the Camden Town Centre which clearly defines its form, focus and function.

Supplementing this, for more than twelve months, Council has been undertaking detailed reviews of the important infrastructure elements of the Town Centre, including traffic movements, car parking, drainage, street lighting, paving and furniture. These reviews update the findings of the Camden Town Centre Strategy (2008).

Whilst this work is ongoing, we are at an important stage of these projects. This report presents the findings of a number of these reviews and seeks Council's support for a range of works and projects. Subject to Council's endorsement of these works and projects, an extensive public exhibition phase is proposed to be held in conjunction with the stakeholder engagement phase of the Retail and Commercial Study.

RECOMMENDED

That Council:

- i. endorse the key initiatives as recommended (Items 1 – 5 of this report) for public exhibition, including:**
 - **traffic lights and pedestrian lights on Argyle Street;**
 - **a decked car park located in Oxley Street (Site 2a);**
 - **reduced traffic lanes and increased footpath width;**
 - **footpath paving material; and**
 - **street furniture.**
- ii. undertake an eight (8) week public exhibition as outlined in this report; and**
- iii. be provided with a further report detailing the results of the public exhibition.**

ATTACHMENTS

1. Camden Town Centre - Traffic and Transport Study 2013
2. Camden Town Centre Decked Car Park Study
3. Argyle Street - Paving Material Selection Assessment
4. Argyle Street - Street Furniture Selection Assessment
5. Argyle Street Plan