

George Dedes
General Manager
City of Ryde Council
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Copy to: Meredith Gray

11th February 2022

Dear Mr Dedes,

Re: Green Links Draft Masterplan - City of Ryde

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the City of Ryde Green Links Draft Masterplan.

Northern Sydney Local Health District (NSLHD) Health Promotion is committed to ensuring that the built environment has a net-positive impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals and the wider community. We congratulate the Council on making active transport and access to green space a priority in the Masterplan. The Masterplan facilitates connections to and between key destinations including parks and other public open space, local centres, public transport and regional routes via walking and cycling.

In this submission, we provide further comments and suggestions for consideration to maximise the potential health benefits of the Masterplan.

Benefits of Active Transport and Green Links

NSLHD Health Promotion commends Council's intent to provide active and green transport through this Masterplan. In addition to the obvious physical health benefits of walking and cycling, active transport in green spaces also provides social wellbeing and mental health benefits.¹ Indeed, the health-related benefits of walking and cycling are costed at \$1.04 to \$2.08 for each additional kilometre walked and \$0.02 to \$1.12 for each additional kilometre cycled.¹

Reducing car dependency also produces co-benefits by reducing emissions from cars and mitigating the effects of climate change. Active transport for local and short trips can help to reduce traffic congestion. The figure below, which compares the road space used by 69 pedestrians and 69 cyclists versus 40 cars, shows that active modes of transport uses considerably less road space



Figure 1: 69 pedestrians, 69 bicycle riders and 40 cars, Canberra ACT. Courtesy Cycling Promotion Fund²

¹ NSW Health (2020), Healthy Urban Development Checklist. 2020 Healthy Built Environment Checklist A guide for considering health in development policies, plans and proposals.

² Australian Government, (2013). Walking, Riding and Access to Public Transport, Supporting Active Travel in Australian Communities, Canberra: Department of Infrastructure and Transport, pp.4-10.

With higher density living increasing in the Ryde area, the provision of accessible green space is of paramount importance. The Masterplan will help improve residents' access to open spaces along and near the Green Links. This aligns well with the Premier's Priority to ensure that housing is located within 400m of quality open spaces.

Supporting Active Travel through the built environment

Transport for NSW research³ suggests that cyclists who are already confident commuters will continue riding in challenging conditions. However, in contrast, infrequent bicycle riders, who form the majority of the bicycle user population, will benefit the most from dedicated infrastructure that supports active travel. Transport for NSW research confirms the key needs of infrequent bicycle riders, including:

1. Safe connectivity and flow of street space and cycle paths
2. Safe behaviour of other road users
3. Supporting facilities during and at the end of the trip
4. Health, wellbeing and knowledge of road rules

Addressing these needs directly, may persuade more people to ride a bicycle more often and/or further, resulting in positive physical, social, environmental and economic outcomes associated with improved health and wellbeing, social/community connection, reduced traffic connection and pollution, and increased local economic activity.

Safe connectivity and flow of street space and cycle paths

Creating local and regional routes which are continuous, fit for purpose and connect to key destinations are essential to improving actual and perceived safety as well as overall usability. This, in turn, removes significant barriers for walkers and cyclists. For instance, if walkers or cyclists have to wait too long at intersections, they are more likely to risk injury and ignore traffic signals. Similarly, if routes fail to connect to key destinations such as local centres and transport hubs, users are forced off dedicated paths and onto local streets, which are often unsafe and serve as a deterrent to walking and cycling.

Recommendations:

1. Implement best practice using the NSW Movement and Place Framework tools and guidance on Cycleway Design and Road Space Design⁴
2. Create path continuity to reduce the number of stops commuters need to make and improve safety. Work to create paths and cycle linkages which avoid steep gradients.
3. Work with Local Traffic Committee and Transport for NSW on jointly funded projects to minimise conflict of Green Links user with vehicles and improve safety and relevant crossings.
 - a. These may include refuge islands, pedestrian crossings
 - b. These need to be aligned with updated guidance on pedestrian crossings to ensure warrants are not unnecessarily placed on crossing requests by local councils
4. Ensure tree plantings do not uproot causing safety issues to on and off-road cycle ways.

Safe behaviour of other road and link users

Recommendations:

5. Include Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) guidelines by ensuring adequate lighting, eliminating dark and secluded sections, and planting either low-lying shrubs or high canopy trees that maintain sightlines and maximise passive surveillance

³ Transport for NSW (2021) Cycling Transport for NSW Cycling Customer Value Proposition (CVP) Research

⁴ Transport for NSW (2021) The Movement and Place Framework <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/industry/nsw-movement-and-place-framework>

6. To increase cycling numbers at night, Council may consider introducing energy-saving lighting triggered by movement along popular bike paths.
7. City of Ryde Council commits to enforce the proposed Alcohol free and Smoke-Free Policy under the Local Government Act 1993
8. Consider access by emergency vehicles and services in the event of injuries sustained by users

Supporting facilities during and at the end of the trip

Recommendations:

9. Provide end of trip facilities at key destinations, particularly parks and local centres e.g. West Ryde town centre, which would also activate the centre.
10. Provide picnic shelters and rest stops, which allow users to rest and linger, at appropriate locations such as parks
11. Provide sufficient way-finding signage to guide pedestrians and cyclists towards entrances to trail paths, key sites including toilets and parenting rooms. This should include distances to key destinations.
12. Create a QR Code to access the Green Links map and report maintenance issues; promote this near local businesses and local parks.
13. Install water fountains in strategic locations, on accessible pathways, to encourage water consumption by all user groups e.g. users in wheelchairs and young children.
14. Adequately shade paths and key rest points – continue to prioritise the preservation of trees and where trees may be removed, plant new trees.
15. Strategically locate waste and recycling bins to discourage littering.

Wider policies and programs to support Active Travel

Recommendations:

16. Collaborate with schools, walking and cycling groups to promote the Green Links.
17. Increase awareness of links through events such as cycling events
18. Update Transport Access Guides for schools and around the LGA
19. Encouraging visitors to use Green Links when coordinating Council events such as the Ryde Wharf Markets
20. Partner with businesses and local organisations in local centres which form part of the corridors to co-design incentive programs for people with use active transport
21. Wider support for workplaces to encourage active transport using these corridors for their commute to work e.g. provide end of trip facilities such as showers, bicycle parking
22. Programs to support skills in bicycle maintenance
23. Conduct monitoring and evaluation to provide evidence on Social and Health Returns on Investment. This may include qualitative and quantitative evaluation, use of community engagement and citizen science strategies.

In addition to the recommendations above, NSLHD Health Promotion offers the following comments on the three green links outlined in the Masterplan: Shrimptons Creek, County and Terrys Creek.

Shrimptons Creek Green Link

The Shrimptons Creek Green Link represents an important step towards improving both local and regional recreation and active transport connections.

The Meadowbank Education and Employment Precinct is a significant precinct that will benefit from greater access facilitated by the Green Link. In particular, NSLHD Health Promotion commends Council's plans to build a new pedestrian and cycle overpass above Victoria Rd. This overpass will

provide a direct and safe link between the Meadowbank Education and Employment Precinct and West Ryde Town Centre, including West Ryde Station.

NSLHD Health Promotion also commends Council on maximising the use of underutilised land to create an off-road shared user path and native vegetation corridor along the existing Sydney Water land reserve between Goodwin Street/Carara Reserve and Quarry Road/Santa Rosa Park. This corridor addresses a key missing link the existing cycling and pedestrian network and provides a more direct connection to destinations such as West Ryde Town Centre and Macquarie Park. The link has the potential to create a safer and healthier environment for all users of the Green Link compared to more hazardous on-road alternatives, where pedestrians and cyclists are required to navigate local traffic and parked cars on relatively narrow streets. It should be noted that the corridor be designed with Crime Prevention Through Environment Design (CPTED) and other best practice urban design principles in mind. This includes appropriate lighting and landscaping.

The Shrimptons Creek Green Link presents opportunities to improve surrounding open space (e.g. parks) and community facilities (e.g. halls and gardens). NSLHD Health Promotion encourages Council to work with the community on prioritising future investment. The plans to active the grounds surrounding ELS Hall with a youth zone are supported and will provide much needed open space and recreational opportunities for this demographic. However, NSLHD Health Promotion recommends Council investigate an alternate crossing point – ideally above Epping Road – as the existing underpass is susceptible to flooding and may limit access between the Green Link/ESL Hall Park and Macquarie Park during high-rain events.

Further, NSLHD Health Promotion recommends Council explore ways to strengthen connections between the Shrimptons Creek Green Link and key pedestrian and cycling links at the southern end of the Link. This includes the regionally significant Ryde River Walk, which provides strategic connections to Sydney Olympic Park and Parramatta.

County Green Link

NSLHD Health Promotion commends Council on the plans for the County Green Link, particularly the collaboration with TfNSW to ensure existing and underutilised land can be made available to facilitate a more direct, safer and aesthetically pleasing corridor.

At the north-easterly end of the corridor, NSLHD Health Promotion suggests Council relocate the path to the most northerly boundary of ELS Hall Park (near the existing dog park and proposed new car park), so to provide a safer and more seamless connection beyond Kent Road. As it currently stands, walkers and cyclists will be forced to cut across the entrance of the proposed car park when they reach Kent Rd. Relocating the path to the north boundary would minimise potential traffic conflicts. Further, NSLHD Health Promotion encourages Council to investigate whether an alternative route, utilising the land along the northern border of Kent Road Public School, could be sought for the path. This has the potential to improve safety and continuity, avoiding the need for users to navigate multiple road crossings.

NSLHD Health Promotion advises against terminating the Country Green Link at its proposed location at Frist Avenue in Eastwood Town Centre. This has the potential to create significant safety and usability issues as users are forced to navigate their way to the town centre, including the railway station, buses and shops, on existing roads. A more desirable option would be to provide an off-road shared user path along East Parade and Railway Parade, connecting directly to Eastwood Train Station. This may require reorientation the existing parking on East Parade to angled or parallel parking. Further, given Eastwood's significance as a major destination and transport interchange, Council should also consider extending this off-road shared user path along May Street, connecting to Blaxland Road. This would ensure users have safe and convenient access to Eastwood Train Station and Eastwood Town Centre East from both First Avenue to the south and Blaxland Road to the north-east.

Terrys Creek Green Link

The Terrys Creek Green Link provides an important connection from Eastwood Town Centre to Macquarie Park and surrounding bushland.

NSLHD Health Promotion supports Council's plans to formalise the pathway between Forrester Park and both sides of Forsyth Park, as well as providing a link from Pembroke Park to Epping Aquatic Centre in Parramatta LGA. This will provide local residents with improved access to natural areas and valuable recreational facilities that support their physical and mental health. Council may also want to investigate/provide a connection across the Lane Cove River to the Ku-ring-gai LGA, to further enhance connections with surrounding LGAs.

NSLHD Health Promotion appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the City of Ryde Green Links Draft Masterplan. Should you have any queries about this submission please contact Queeny Stafford on queeny.stafford@health.nsw.gov.au.

We look forward to continuing our work with the City of Ryde Council to support projects that benefit the health, wellbeing and safety of the community.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Wheeler
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Northern Sydney Local Health District