Local and Neighbourhood Centres

Ku-ring-gai Local Planning Priorities

K6. Revitalising and growing a network of centres that offer a unique character and lifestyle for local residents

This priority will support and build a sense of community identity by recognising and protecting local characteristics and qualities of the centres that residents value while offering a range of shops and new homes where people can live, work, shop and spend leisure time.

K7. Facilitating mixed use developments within the centres that achieve urban design excellence

This priority will support delivering safe, inclusive and walkable mixed-use areas that exhibit urban design excellence and are connected to transport, social infrastructure and open spaces.

BACKGROUND

Ku-ring-gai’s urban centres first developed in the early 1900s as a series of villages along the main North Shore rail line; later more centres were developed coinciding with extensive residential subdivision that took place in the post-war period. Over time each centre has developed their own unique character reflecting their history, location and context. The physical appearance of Ku-ring-gai, the connectedness of green leafy areas encompassing both public and private lands and the physical location of urban areas within a well-defined geographic boundary, have been critical contributory factors to the areas sense of place. Today Ku-ring-gai’s centres play a vital role in the local economy; they provide a diverse mix of office and retail uses, support services and community facilities and are a focus for public transport and road connections.

The North District Plan identifies four Local Centres in the Ku-ring-gai LGA namely, Turramurra, St Ives, Gordon and Lindfield. Since 2008, Council has been actively undertaking placed-based planning for these centres; this has included master plans, public domain plans and site-specific development control plans (DCPs).

Over the last 15 years, there has been significant development of high and medium density housing around the edges of the centres. This development has generally been on easy to consolidate, large-lot residential land that has been up-zoned. In the commercial areas of the Local Centres there has been very little development of mixed use buildings, as it is more difficult to consolidate viable sites for redevelopment given the pattern of small lots in fragmented ownership and very high land values.

While new residential development has strengthened the role of the Local Centres over recent years it has resulted in the creation of a ‘hole in the donut’ situation where large numbers of new residents are living close to the centres which have seen very little change in amenity, services and infrastructure. One exception to this situation is a new mixed use development on Lindfield Avenue, Lindfield which has introduced a contemporary retail environment to the area and has become popular with the local community.

Overall the lack of interest shown by the development market in mixed use typology has become a key issue for Council with a growing population and high community expectations.

Revitalisation of the Local Centres was identified by residents as a key issue during preparation of the Community Strategic Plan - Our Ku-ring-gai 2038 (CSP). A long-term goal in the CSP is to ensure “Our centres offer a broad range of shops and services and contain lively urban village spaces and places where people can live, work, shop, meet and spend leisure time”.

Council has taken a proactive place-making role by creating ‘Activate Ku-ring-gai’ which is a staged program of urban renewal lead by Council across the four Local Centres. The program will lead to the implementation of ‘on-the-ground’ projects that will make a real difference to the quality, safety and amenity of the centres.

The program leverages off Council’s land ownership in the centres to deliver much needed community infrastructure, such as parks, town squares and libraries; alongside new shopping, dining and leisure experiences; and delivered through innovative mechanisms and development partners. The projects are the result of careful planning and strategic
land acquisitions over many years by Council; the sites are well located within close proximity to rail stations.

Council’s Delivery Program 2018-2021 and Operational Plan 2018-2019 sets 13 term achievements and tasks related to revitalisation of the Local Centres. Key amongst these are:

- commencing construction of Lindfield Village Green;
- securing a development partner for Lindfield Community Hub and the Turramurra Community Hub;
- design and planning for new parks and streetscape improvements in the centres of Gordon, Lindfield and Turramurra;
- continuing to plan for, and deliver, new parks; and
- preparing a strategy to guide the delivery of libraries, community centres and cultural facilities across the LGA.

**STRATEGIC RESPONSE**

In the short term, to align with Ku-ring-gai Local Environmental Plan Amendment 2021, Council will prioritise a place-based planning process and preparation of structure plans for the four Local Centres identified in The North District Plan. The process will include targeted engagement and collaboration with residents, businesses, state agencies, land owners and other stakeholders. A placed-based planning approach will safeguard the unique and valued characteristics of each centre, whilst providing the potential for additional housing and local jobs. Key liveability improvements should include:

- increasing walking and cycling to reduce car dependency;
- providing new parks and civic spaces as locations for exercise, meeting and socialising;
- co-location of new community facilities including libraries, community centres and cultural facilities to encourage and maximise opportunities for social interaction;
- new commuter car parking facilities to increase public transport usage;
- protection of heritage, biodiversity, tree canopy and other notable features to maintain local character;
new shopping, dining and leisure experiences to improve the vitality and viability of the centres and meet the day-to-day needs of residents;

• increasing the number and quality of crossing points over both the arterial roads and rail corridor for all forms of transport to connect the separate parts of the centres; and

• connecting the centres to the surrounding areas via green grid corridors to improve walkability and cycling in the area.

As a first step in the place-based planning process, Council has prepared draft planning priorities for each of the four Local Centres for community comment. The priorities are based on current and past research, community surveys, other community consultation and independent studies. The planning priorities are to support the growth and revitalisation of:

• Turramurra Local Centre as a family-focused urban village;

• Lindfield as a thriving and diverse centre;

• Gordon Local Centre as the civic and cultural heart of Ku-ring-gai; and

• St Ives Local Centre as an active green lifestyle and shopping destination.

In addition to this, Council has prepared draft documentation relating to local character on Turramurra and Lindfield Local Centres. This documentation includes:

• What gives the Local Centre its unique character?

• What detracts from the Local Centre’s unique character?

• What are the opportunities to improve and enhance the Local Centre?

• Draft design principles as the basis for place-based planning.

This material will form the foundations for targeted engagement with the community to assist with the preparation of the housing scenarios, and explore potential locations for new housing and Local Centre Structure Plans. During this process there will be further refinement of the character statements, opportunities and design principles for the four centres.

Revised Public Domain Plans (PDPs) will be prepared for the centres to capture and integrate the proposed new community infrastructure such as cycleways, parks, walkways and the like. The PDPs will be fully costed so that the works can be captured in Council’s new development contributions plan (Ku-ring-gai Local Planning Priority K1). At the same time detailed guidelines and building envelope controls will be prepared for the centres to ensure new developments protect and enhance the local character while providing opportunities for new housing and jobs. The site-specific DCP will be aligned with KLEP Amendment 2021, and provide LEP provisions relating to building height, floor space ratio, site coverage and others.

A key component of achieving liveable centres is urban design excellence. Great places recognise local characteristics and the qualities people value; mixed-use areas that exhibit urban design excellence are a critical ingredient of great places. Council will also prepare an urban design excellence policy and statutory provisions to ensure new developments on key sites within the Local Centres meet stringent design excellence standards.
## Local and Neighbourhood Centres - Ku-ring-gai Local Planning Priorities and Actions

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Gordon Local Centre

Ku-ring-gai Local Planning Priority
K8. Promoting Gordon as the centre for business and civic functions and as the cultural heart of Ku-ring-gai

This priority will support the growth and revitalisation of Gordon Local Centre incorporating a diverse mix of uses including civic and cultural, business and retail, entertainment and leisure and residential uses. Council will be a key catalyst in this process through the provision of a community hub that will provide contemporary public facilities including an auditorium, art gallery and central library, alongside new parks and public spaces. This priority will also strengthen and support Gordon as an important Local Centre for business activity and employment.

BACKGROUND

Historically Gordon has provided a range of social and civic functions. The heritage-listed Ku-ring-gai Council Chambers has been the centre of the administration of local government since 1928. Located in the geographical centre of the local government area, the building has served as the centre of decision-making relating to the whole of the municipality over generations and has provided a local landmark given its location and orientation. The War Memorial at the front of the building provided a focus for the community’s commemoration of the sacrifices of past wars; in earlier times the Pacific Highway was temporarily closed for commemoration ceremonies.

Other important public buildings in Gordon include:

- Iolanthe, built in 1870, is a heritage-listed former residence and post office located at 691 Pacific Highway, Gordon;
- Tulkiyan, a state significant heritage item and house museum owned and managed by Council (currently closed for conservation works);
- St Johns Church which opened in 1872;
- St Johns Cemetery which opened in 1867;
- The Gordon Public School, a heritage-listed former government public school, located at 799 Pacific Highway. The school was opened in 1871 and closed in 1989;
- The Gordon railway station, a heritage-listed railway station located on the North Shore line. The station was designed and built by the New South Wales Department of Railways in 1909; and
- Gordon Library and Gordon Police Station, relatively recent public buildings built in the 1980s on the site of the former Gordon Public School.

LANDFORM AND TOPOGRAPHY

Gordon Local Centre is located on a narrow ridge which falls away steeply on the western side of the Pacific Highway; to the east the land is undulating with small areas of flat land. Generally streets to the east offer gentle to moderate slopes and invite walking and cycling, while streets to the west of the centre, such as Dumaresq Street are steeper. Local highpoints are marked by the St Johns Church and the Gordon Library (former Gordon Public School).

A number of major riparian corridors extend to within close proximity of the ridge on both the eastern and western sides; the most significant of these is the Stony Creek catchment which extends to the north-east corner of the area at the intersection of the Pacific Highway and Mona Vale Road; and Blackbutt Creek catchment which extends to the Pacific Highway between Dumaresq and McIntyre Streets.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Urban development has responded to the landscape and underlying geology. East of the railway development is typified by housing dating from the late 1800s to early 1900s, some of which are protected within Heritage Conservation Areas (HCAs) or as Heritage Items. The more challenging terrain to the west has resulted in a lower scale pattern of development, more characteristic of the mid to late 20th century, which has in turn helped to retain a significantly denser tree canopy.

In recent years the western side of Gordon has seen significant development of apartment buildings and town houses.
URBAN DEVELOPMENT (CONT.)

Commercial and retail land uses in the Gordon Local Centre are primarily clustered along the Pacific Highway. Strip retail lines both sides of the Pacific Highway and St Johns Avenue in the form of fine grain, shop buildings in an array of typologies and styles, ranging from 19th Century-style, two storey brick commercial buildings, single storey retail shops and more modern, two to four storey commercial buildings. Food and beverage operators dominate and the presence of such retailers is indicative of the high-level of foot traffic and custom associated with the Gordon Local Centre.

Gordon Centre, located on 802-808 Pacific Highway, is a two level retail centre anchored by major tenants Harvey Norman and Woolworths as well as over 20 specialty retailers ranging from personal services, pharmacies and banks. Gordon Village Arcade is located on 767 Pacific Highway, directly across from Gordon Centre and connected by a sky pedestrian bridge over the Pacific Highway. The arcade comprises a mix of health service providers, cafes and specialty retail.

Employment uses have been a characteristic of Gordon over recent history however over the last five years there has been a decrease as a consequence of the extensive redevelopment of the commercial office precinct around Fitzsimmons Lane on the northern edge of the centre; and the pending redevelopment of 810 Pacific Highway by ALDI who intend on redeveloping the site as a mixed use building with residential dwellings and a supermarket.

Gordon Private Hospital in the centre’s south opened in 2018 and is an independent teaching hospital with affiliations to the University of NSW. It has 57 beds and caters specifically for mental health.

TREE CANOPY

The eastern side of Gordon supports a mix of remnant native and exotic specimens. Overall the canopy coverage is dense, with the majority of streets having mature street trees, and many private properties also including large, well-established trees. The western side of Gordon lacks mature street trees.

There are a few areas around the Gordon Local Centre which support remnants of the Blue Gum High Forest. These tend to be concentrated along the riparian corridors on the western and eastern sides of the centre.

ACCESS NETWORK

The Gordon Local Centre is centred around Gordon train station and along the Pacific Highway which bisects the centre. The centre extends from the Ryde Road and Pacific Highway intersection in the north to Bruce Avenue in the south.

The centre is accessible via Gordon train station, which is serviced by the T1 North Shore line and the inter-city train line, as well as major arterial roads Pacific Highway, Ryde Road and Mona Vale Road. Chatswood CBD is approximately 8 kilometres south, and Sydney CBD is 12 kilometres south.

Gordon is close to major employment hubs including Chatswood, St Leonards Health and Education Precinct, North Sydney CBD, and Macquarie Park.

The Pacific Highway, with its heavy traffic, is a major barrier to east-west pedestrian access between the two sides of the centre. Crossing opportunities are limited to signalised intersections, and only one offers all four ‘legs’. The Gordon Centre provides a pedestrian bridge connection; however, this is not well used due to poor connectivity with the street.

Mona Vale Road/Ryde Road, a major north-south road on the northern edge of the centre, is another barrier for pedestrians. The road has limited signalised crossings, making it unpleasant and difficult for pedestrians to access the area from the north.

OPEN SPACE

Residents in Gordon have good access to extensive natural areas via the Stony and Rocky Creeks on the eastern side and via Blackbutt Falls and Links Creek on the western side. The Gordon Golf Course also provides open space for local residents.

There are few urban parks within close proximity to the centre. There are two parks within the area that provide playgrounds and other facilities; these are Gordon Recreation Reserve on Werona Avenue and Gordon Glen on Dumaresq Street.

Council has acquired land on Dumaresq Street for a new park and upgrade works are soon to commence on the Gordon Recreation Reserve to provide improved play facilities. Despite this, the significant population growth over the last 10 years means there is a lack of local parks in the area and the provision of additional parkland in Gordon is a planning priority for Council. (Refer Open Space Network Planning Priority K27).
HERITAGE

There are a number of significant Heritage Conservation Areas (HCAs) in the Gordon Local Centre. The most extensive areas are on the eastern side and include:

- The Gordon Park Estate;
- Gordondale Estate;
- Robert Street/Khartoum Avenue; and
- Smith Grant.

HCAs on the western side are:

- Yarabah Avenue; and
- St John's Park Estate.

ACTIVATE GORDON

Ku-ring-gai Council is committed to revitalising key centres in the LGA through a series of urban revitalisation programs, known as ‘Activate Ku-ring-gai’. The Activate Gordon precinct is identified in the Ku-ring-gai Development Control Plan (2016) and is a revitalisation and beautification initiative focused largely on Council-owned sites which include the former school, Gordon Library and the Council Chambers.

Activate Gordon seeks to leverage Council-owned sites to develop a Civic Hub Precinct in the centre which will incorporate a cultural centre and art gallery, new council chambers and administration offices, a library and a civic and ceremonial space.

STRATEGIC RESPONSE

As a first step in the place-based planning process, Council has prepared a draft planning priority for Gordon Local Centre for community comment. The priority is based on current and past research, community surveys, other community consultation and independent studies. The draft Local Planning Priority aims to support the growth and revitalisation of:

“Gordon as the centre for business and civic functions and as the cultural heart of Ku-ring-gai”

This priority will support the growth and revitalisation of Gordon Local Centre incorporating a diverse mix of uses including civic and cultural, business and retail, entertainment, and residential uses. Council will be a key catalyst in this process through the provision of a civic hub that will provide contemporary public facilities including an auditorium, art gallery and central library, alongside new parks and public spaces. This priority will also strengthen and support Gordon as an important Local Centre for business activity and employment.

The next step will be to undertake targeted engagement with the community to assist with defining:

- What gives Gordon Local Centre its unique character?
- What detracts from Gordon Local Centre’s unique character?
- What are the opportunities to improve and enhance Gordon Local Centre?

This material will form the foundations for further engagement with the community to assist with the preparation of the housing scenarios, and explore potential locations for new housing and Local Centre Structure Plans.
St Ives Local Centre

Ku-ring-gai Local Planning Priority
K9. Promoting St Ives Local Centre as an active green lifestyle and shopping destination

This priority will support the growth and revitalisation of St Ives Local Centre as a unique place offering extensive shopping and outdoor dining opportunities. The Village Green will be improved and enhanced building on the green character and continuing to offer a diversity of recreation and leisure activities. The interface between the Village Green and the shopping centre will become a broad tree-lined promenade with cafes and restaurants; and new parks and a community hub will provide a strong family and youth focus. This priority will also build on the potential for the centre as a destination for short-term visitors passing through on their way to the Wildflower Garden and the St Ives Showground.

BACKGROUND

The St Ives Local Centre is bisected by Mona Vale Road, extending from the St Ives Shopping Village in the south-west to the Killeaton Street/Mona Vale Road intersection to the north-west. The St Ives Local Centre additionally encompasses the residences and local parklands straddling Mona Vale Road.

St Ives is located approximately 15 kilometres north of Chatswood and 20 kilometres north of the Sydney CBD; and 3km from the closest railway station at Pymble and 3.7km away from the railway stations at Turramurra and Gordon. St Ives is only serviced by local bus services and is not serviced by rail. Local buses provide a service to Gordon train station and then onto the Sydney CBD.

The centre is also within 4km of the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden and 6.4km to the St Ives Showground both of which form part of a developing tourism and entertainment precinct well-known as the venue for the successful annual ‘Medieval Faire’ which attracts national and international visitors.

LANDFORM AND TOPOGRAPHY

The core of the St Ives Local Centre is located on relatively flat land which gently falls to the east. Generally streets to the north offer gentle slopes and invite walking and cycling, while streets to the south of the centre area are steeper. Local highpoints and a ridgeline separate the central Shopping Village and Village Green precinct from Pymble Golf Club to the west and Dalrymple-Hay Nature Reserve to the south.

TREE CANOPY

The impression of St Ives is of a very verdant setting, providing a lush landscape character to the suburb. The trees are often very large, at over 20m+, and are a mix of remnant native and exotic specimens. Overall the canopy coverage is dense, with the majority of streets having mature street trees, and many private properties also including large, well-established trees. New residential developments have supported this character with tree planting in front setbacks.

A striking characteristic of the St Ives Local Centre is that it is located amongst tall trees including surviving remnants of the Blue Gum High Forest. There are a few areas of particularly dense coverage, including an area to the south that spreads to form part of the Dallymple-Hay Nature Reserve, and another at the eastern edge of the Village Green, fronting onto Memorial Avenue. This ‘bush’ setting contains a variety of remnant tree species, providing considerable screening to the road.
**ACCESS NETWORK**

Mona Vale Road is the main access route through the St Ives Local Centre. The classified road is six lanes and approximately 30m wide and in 2017, the NSW Road and Maritime Services (RMS) introduced new northbound and southbound extended clearways in order to reduce congestion and delays for through-traffic. Other major streets in the study area are Killeaton Street to the north, Memorial Avenue and Cowan Road in the centre, and Horace Street/Link Road to the east. The intersection of Link Road and Mona Vale Road is the largest in the study area.

St Ives is serviced by Sydney Buses with seven routes operating along its key streets. The nearest train station is Pymble Station 3km to the south-west with Turramurra and Gordon Stations 3.7km to the west and south-east respectively. Marked cycle routes exist along Killeaton Street, Links Road and Rosedale Road.

Mona Vale Road with its heavy traffic is a major barrier to north-south pedestrian access. Crossing opportunities are limited to signalised intersections, and only two of those (at Memorial Avenue and Link Road) offer all four ‘legs’. Village Green Parade and adjoining parking areas between the Shopping Village and the Village Green are also significant barriers to pedestrians; this situation is slightly improved by two ‘zebra crossings’. Killeaton Street, a major east-west road, is another barrier for pedestrians. The road has limited signalised crossings, making it dangerous for pedestrians to access the shopping centre from the north.

**OPEN SPACE**

The St Ives Local Centre is encircled by broad areas of open space with the Village Green to the north, the Pymble Golf Club to the east and the Dalrymple-Hay Nature Reserve to the south.

The largest areas of open space are the St Ives Village Green and the William Cowan Oval, to the north of the shopping centre. There are numerous smaller parks and reserves spread throughout the study area, including the triangular shaped St Ives Memorial Park at the intersection of Mona Vale Road, Porters Lane and Rosedale Road, and the St Ives Rotary Park at the corner of Mona Vale Road and Memorial Avenue.

There are also numerous small reserves for environmental protection, such as the Ivor Wyatt Reserve, Turpentine Forest at the end of Gillott Way, Seven Wives Wood on Richards Avenue, Bedes Forest Reserve and Huntleys Forest off Lynbar Avenue to name a few.

There are few urban parks within close proximity to the centre. The significant population growth over the last 10 years and heavy sporting use of the Village Green means there is a lack of local parks in the area. Putarri Avenue Reserve is the only park on the southern side of the centre with playground facilities and the closest to the north is Memorial Avenue Reserve.

Council has recently acquired land on the east of the study area on Carcoola Avenue (Lapwing Reserve) and created a new park; Council is also in the process of acquiring land adjoining Bedes Forest Reserve for a new park. In addition, extensive work is soon to commence on the St Ives Village Green to provide improved play facilities and a new skate park.

**HERITAGE**

The only significant heritage listing is former St Ives Public School buildings (now a Community Centre and restaurants) at the intersection of Rosedale and Mona Vale Roads. There is a concentration of heritage dwelling houses to the south-west of the centre in the area between Pentecost Avenue and Greendale Avenue.

St Ives was the one area in Ku-ring-gai not affected by the opening of the steam railway in 1890. For the first half of the 20th century it remained an isolated, largely self-sufficient rural community. From the 1950s this situation changed rapidly as described by the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society:

“In the early 1950s, St Ives began its phenomenally rapid transformation into a dormitory suburb. Unlike most of Ku-ring-gai it is relatively flat and lends itself to residential development. This growth was spurred by a number of factors – great improvement to the roads and particularly the opening of the Eastern Arterial Road between Boundary Street, Roseville, and Mona Vale Road, increased car ownership, Sydney’s growth and the post war need for more homes. The area was rezoned in 1959 from ‘rural’ to ‘residential’. In 1954, its population was under 3,000. Between 1961 and 1976 the population trebled from 5,247 to 18,521.”
ACTIVATE ST IVES

Ku-ring-gai Council is committed to revitalising key centres in the LGA through a series of urban revitalisation programs, known as ‘Activate Ku-ring-gai’. The Activate St Ives precinct is identified in the Ku-ring-gai Development Control Plan (2016) and is a revitalisation and beautification initiative focused largely on Council-owned sites adjoining the St Ives Shopping Village. Activate St Ives seeks to leverage Council-owned sites, in collaboration with private land owners, to develop a Community Hub which will incorporate an integrated district library and community centre, and new public domain areas adjoining the Village Green.

STRATEGIC RESPONSE

As a first step in the place-based planning process, Council has prepared a draft planning priority for the St Ives Local Centre for community comment. The priority is based on current and past research, community surveys, other community consultation and independent studies. The draft Local Planning Priority aims to support the growth and revitalisation of:

“St Ives Local Centre as an active green lifestyle and shopping destination”

This priority will support the growth and revitalisation of St Ives Local Centre as a unique place offering extensive shopping and outdoor dining opportunities. The Village Green will be improved and enhanced building on the green character and continuing to offer a diversity of recreation and leisure activities. The interface between the Village Green and the shopping centre will become a broad tree-lined promenade with cafes and restaurants; and new parks and a community hub will provide a strong family and youth focus. This priority will also build on the potential for the centre as a destination for short-term visitors passing through on their way to the Wildflower Garden and the St Ives Showground.

The next step will be to undertake targeted engagement with the community to assist with defining:

• What gives St Ives Local Centre its unique character?
• What detracts from St Ives Local Centre’s unique character?
• What are the opportunities to improve and enhance St Ives Local Centre?

This material will form the foundations for further engagement with the community to assist with the preparation of the housing scenarios, and explore potential locations for new housing and Local Centre Structure Plans.