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Attention: Kate Rintoul, Coordinator Strategic Planning (krintoul@wollongong.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Kate,

**Submission: Flinders Street Precinct Urban Design Framework
4-4A Flinders Street, North Wollongong and 120-122 Smith Street, Wollongong 2500**

1.0 Introduction

This submission is provided on behalf of Urban Property Group (Urban) in response to the Flinders Street Precinct Review which is currently on exhibition. As a major landowner within the Flinders Street Precinct, Urban has a strong interest in the future planning of the Precinct and welcomes the opportunity to offer feedback on the draft Urban Design Framework (draft UDF). Urban supports the overall intent of the Flinders Street Precinct Review to unlock the Precinct's full potential and deliver a vibrant, connected, and sustainable mixed-use neighbourhood that capitalises on its strategic location and existing transport infrastructure.

On 3 June 2025, following an early community consultation session, Urban provided a submission to Council outlining their support for the foundational aspects of the draft UDF as expressed, however provided constructive feedback addressing the following matters:

- Permissibility of shoptop housing: the role of residential development in the Precinct is required to be further considered.
- Scarcity of less constrained land: the approach to land use planning on flood prone land and the delivery of density with consideration of this constraint across the precinct should be reconsidered.
- Opportunity of single, consolidated land holdings: the draft UDF does not consider consolidated land holdings.

In providing this preliminary submission, Urban expressed a willingness to continue to be involved with the preparation of the draft UDF. While it is understood that engagement can be challenging, no further consultation has taken place, and the draft UDF lacks consideration of the issues raised in the early submission.

In this context, while Urban is broadly supportive of the foundational principles of the draft UDF, we raise several matters in the draft UDF which require reconsideration as they pose a direct impact to achieving the principles of the Flinders Street Precinct Review. Following a detailed review of the draft UDF, we have outlined a series of recommendations in this submission that will strengthen the framework and ultimately contribute to a higher-quality urban outcome for the Precinct's future.

These recommendations build on the preliminary work completed by Wollongong City Council (Council) and provide additional rigour to the draft UDF.

2.0 Urban Property Group Landholdings

2.1 Overview of Landholdings

Urban is a major landowner within the precinct, with two significant landholdings at 4-4A Flinders Street and 120-122 Smith Street (refer **Figure 1**). Together, these landholdings comprise a total area of approximately two hectares. **Figure 2** shows where these sites sit within the UDF Structure Plan.



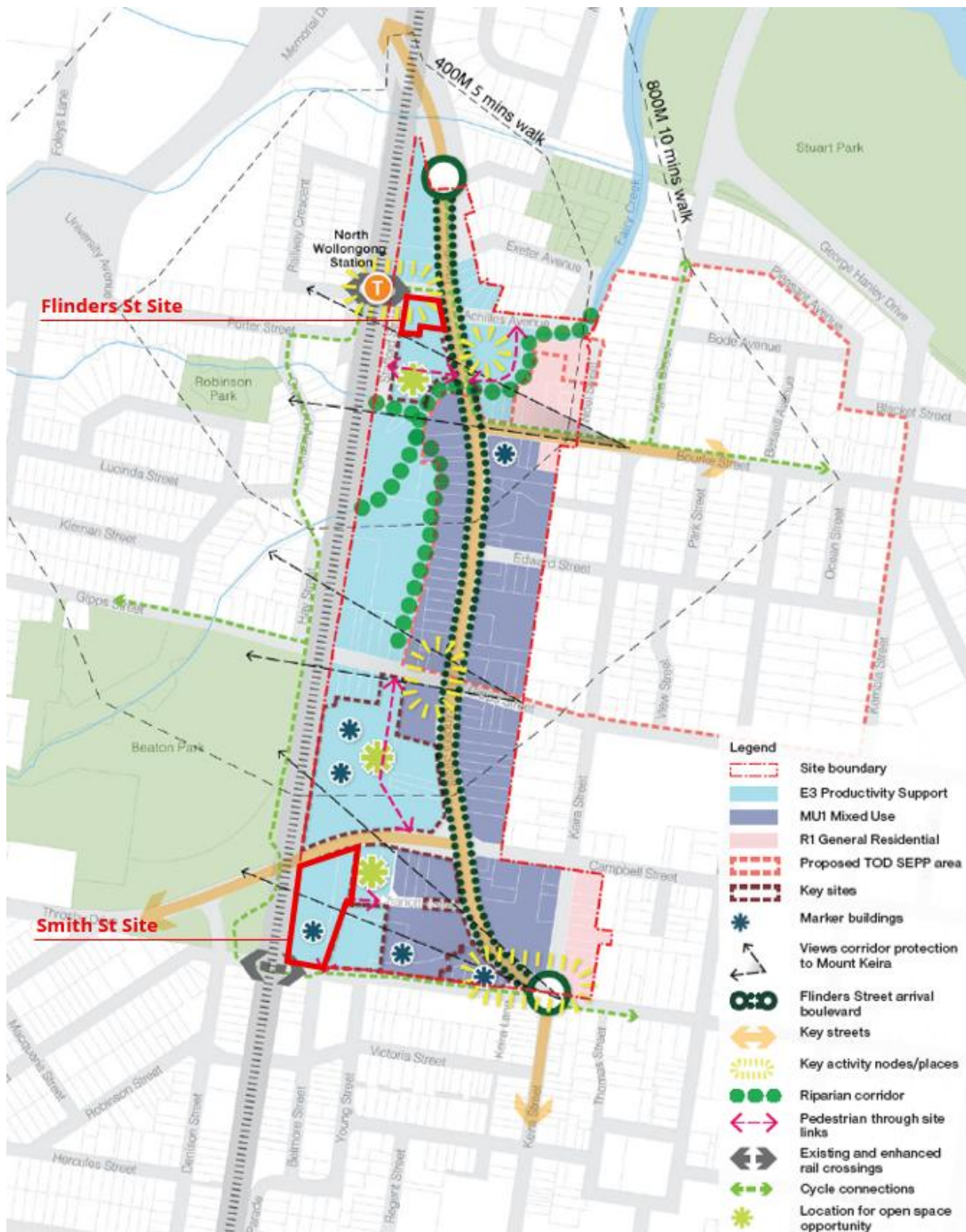
Flinders Street site



Smith Street site

Figure 1 Urban Landholdings [NOTE WE NEED TO OUTLINE THE WHOLE SITE – CAN UPG PROVIDE]

Source: NSW Spatial Portal edited by Beam Planning



2.2 Status of Planning Applications

As outlined in the introduction of this submission, planning and design work has progressed on both sites under the HDA pathway. In respect of the Smith Street site, the project was declared as SSD under SSD Declaration Order 2025 (No 6) published 29 April 2025. Since this declaration, the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) were issued on 15 May 2025, and the proposed scheme has been reviewed twice by the State Design Review Panel (SDRP).

The Flinders Street site is currently at a similar stage, having been declared as SSD under SSD Declaration Order 2025 (No 8) on 27 May 2025. SEARs have been issued for this project on 11 June 2025, and the scheme has been reviewed by the SDRP in December 2025.

Lodgement of both SSDAs is currently targeted to be in line with the expectations of the HDA pathway, being 9-months from issue of the SEARs.

3.0 The Draft Urban Design Framework

On 27 October 2025, Wollongong City Council resolved to endorse the draft UDF for public exhibition. The draft UDF seeks to guide future growth and is structured with an overarching vision, a set of design principles, an overall structure plan, and more detailed direction on eight sub-precincts. It is understood that the draft UDF has been prepared by Council staff to help inform controls relating to land use planning, building heights, floor space ratio and other minor controls such as setbacks.

The overarching vision, design principles and position statement of the draft UDF's Structure Plan are generally supported in-principle, and provide a positive structure to how the Precinct may grow into the future. While not all elements of the position statement are supported, the general sentiment is sound and the vision for the Precinct to be the key arrival boulevard into the Wollongong City Centre is supported, with Urban landholdings anchoring the entry and exit thresholds of the Precinct.

The following section outlines a review of these key components of the draft UDF, and recommendations are provided to further strengthen the Framework. As outlined above, while Urban is supportive in-principle of the foundation of the Framework, there is further work required to achieve the full potential of the Precinct and Urban landholdings.

3.1 Treatment of Flood prone land

Draft UDF Review

Council's preliminary analysis identifies flood constraints across several areas, confirming that much of the Precinct is affected by flooding. A large portion of the Precinct, which includes the Flinders Street site, falls within the high-hazard flood risk area and is therefore deemed to be more constrained.

The flood mapping considers access and evacuation challenges, however, fails to also consider opportunities to manage flooding impacts where large and consolidated sites can provide solutions to these challenges. Respecting the local planning directions under section 9.1 of the *Environmental Assessment and Planning Act 1979*, the draft UDF takes a black-and-white approach to flooding, effectively removing consideration of flood prone sites for uplift as a gateway matter, opposed to taking the time to analyse sites on an individual basis and consider opportunities to provide design solutions to manage and mitigate flooding.

In respect of the Flinders Street site, and to a lesser extent the Smith Street site, flooding has been considered in a preliminary manner in the HDA EOI process, and deemed to be acceptable with a pathway to resolve this challenge given the SSD declaration. In both instances, the sites are large enough to accommodate design solutions which enable habitable levels and access above the probable maximum flood level, and to allow for evacuation solutions in catastrophic events. It is understandable that the draft UDF does not delve into this level of detail on a site-by-site basis, but it is short-sighted to have blanket restrictions on sites and not consider the potential for density on sites so well-located and suitability sized sites to deliver density around existing transport infrastructure.

Additionally, in the context of other considerations of the draft UDF, such as views, etc., less-constrained sites provide important opportunities to accommodate greater density and support residential uplift, enabling a balanced planning approach that responds to both environmental considerations and the pressing need to deliver new development, particularly housing.

The approach to both sites with consideration of their flood prone nature highlights the need for a more nuanced assessment of flood affected land to determine where uplift is appropriate, particularly where opportunities for lot consolidation exist, allowing future development to incorporate integrated solutions to address flooding constraints and provide an appropriate density.

Recommendation

It is strongly recommended that Council staff reassess the approach to flood affected sites, particularly given the extent of flood prone land across the Precinct. Opportunities exist for appropriately designed development (especially on land with lower flood sensitivity or on larger sites) to support increased density. A more detailed analysis of these areas would help identify where additional uplift could be accommodated to balance areas that Council staff deem unsuitable for intensification.

3.2 Introduction of View Protections

Draft UDF Review

It is acknowledged that the Wollongong LGA has had a longstanding appreciation of the beautiful natural landscape within which the city sits and the views gained from the city to the surrounding escarpment. In particular, those views outlined in the Wollongong DCP 2009 (Wollongong DCP) from Flagstaff Hill to Mount Kiera are longstanding and important. These types of views, being from a prominent and important public space within a city, towards a key natural feature, are commonplace in planning frameworks. Protecting such views so they can be enjoyed as the built environment evolves is important.

In contrast to this longstanding view, the draft UDF identifies three new 'public' views which are gained from the east looking west to the escarpment over the Precinct. These views are suggested to be important and informed by consultation, particularly with local Aboriginal community representatives, yet there is no evidence or content of this consultation provided in the draft UDF.

These views are from various locations in the general street network, and none are located in prominent, important or well-used public spaces. This conflicts with widely accepted practices of identifying views from such locations. In short, there is a lack of adequate reasoning in the draft UDF behind the position of the viewpoints, especially the Smith Street/Kiera Street viewpoint.

The Smith Street/Kiera Street viewpoint is located in the centre of Smith Street, west of its intersection with the Princes Highway. Smith Street in this location is a one-way road heading east, meaning motorists will not actually appreciate this view given their orientation is to the east. Furthermore, given the view is taken from a roadway, no pedestrians would appreciate this view.

It is presumed that the viewpoint is a proxy for the view which may be obtained heading northbound on the Princes Highway exiting the Wollongong City Centre. In this location, the Princes Highway is a busy road, and therefore the interest or attention in views and visual amenity of most people exposed to the view is likely to be relatively low (given the fast nature pace of a vehicle passing the view).

In addition, there is a large, well established, spreading, healthy tree located in the direct line of sight of this view. While acknowledging the tree is deciduous, when the tree is full of leaves, this will significantly screen the view, and at other times it will partially cover the view to Mount Kiera (refer to **Figure 3**).

In addition to these key shortcomings of the view, Council has not undertaken any detailed surveying of the viewpoint or proper photography which would ordinarily be expected for identifying and stipulating such viewpoints. Views should be accurate and reliable, therefore it would be expected that policies such as the Land and Environment Court *Policy on Use of Photomontages and Visualisation Tools (PPL-15)* would be adopted to prepare views which inform planning controls. This is not the case in the draft UDF.

In lieu of such rigour, the draft UDF relies on a July 2024 'Google Streetview' image (refer **Figure 4**). This is not considered reasonable or accurate to use such an image given the height and width of the camera lens. Importantly, it is not appropriate to use such an image to shape the future planning controls for such an important Precinct.



Figure 3 View of the deciduous tree blocking Mount Kiera
Source: Urban Property Group



Figure 44 View captured in the draft UDF being Google Imagery
Source: Google Streetview

In light of this lack of rigour, Urban has engaged Rock Hunter and Colliers Urban Planning to undertake a preliminary investigation into a potential view traversing the Smith Street site. This investigation is on the basis that a view of the escarpment and Mount Kiera in this location is important, despite there being no detail to support this assertion.

Colliers Urban Planning identified that the viewing characteristics of the proposed viewshed traversing Smith Street were subpar, including by consideration of the deciduous tree which screens the view during specific times of the year, and the use of the space by the public (as outlined above).

Colliers instead identified the viewing location shown in **Figure 5** based on a number of factors, including

- The view is taken from a footpath which will be utilised by pedestrians, moving at a slower pace and therefore able to appreciate the view and visual interest of Mount Kiera.
- The space is a generous sized and high-quality public space that is aligned with a signalised crossing of the Princes Highway, and a marked pedestrian crossing of Keira Street.
- As a public space, this viewing location will be well used, and accessible by pedestrians therefore it has greater weight than a view obtained from roads.
- The view is sufficiently proximate to the current viewpoint to reasonably represent the general location.
- A more generous view to Mount Kiera can be obtained from this location, both by pedestrians and drivers, and the characteristics of the viewing location displayed in **Figure 6** are far more likely to facilitate greater access to views from within this general area to Mount Kiera.



Figure 55 Alternate viewing location in the adjoining public space

Source: Colliers Urban Planning



Figure 6 Proposed view corridor with Impression of Stage 1 Smith Street Development

Source: Colliers Urban Planning

Recommendation

Based on the above analysis, the current view from the Smith Street/Kiera intersection as proposed in the draft UDF is not appropriate and insufficient evidence is provided to support this view, particularly given the significant restrictions resulting to development potential of sites affected by the view. It is strongly recommended that Council staff review this view, and adopt the alternate location recommended above given it provides a better opportunity to appreciate of Mount Kiera, and is from a public space that is likely to benefit more people.

3.3 Application of Building Controls

Draft UDF Review

In the context of the analysis provided in the draft UDF, and in light of the current Wollongong DCP guidelines, a combination of setback and street frontage height controls are recommended in Section 3.0 of the draft UDF for each sub-precinct. In respect of the Urban landholdings, the draft UDF recommends the introduction of new setback and street wall provisions, including a 4m front setback to the Smith Street site and a 4m setback to the Princes Highway frontage of the Flinders Street site.

The Smith Street site, being partly captured within the Smith Street View Corridor, is limited to a maximum height of 24m. However, the remaining site area, located outside the view corridor, has been afforded a modest uplift to 40m. Similarly, the Flinders Street site, despite lying entirely outside any identified view corridor, has not been provided with any uplift at all given flood considerations (discussed above).

Recommendation

In light of the significant reconsideration which is required across the Precinct for key matters such as flooding and the introduction of new view corridors, it is pre-mature to impose such prescriptive controls such as setbacks and street wall provisions on sites. The draft UDF should be a principles based document, and therefore it is recommended that all prescriptive detailed built form controls are removed from the UDF.

3.4 Better Consideration of Identified Sites for Redevelopment

Draft UDF Review

While the draft UDF acknowledges proposed and pending significant developments within the Precinct, these projects are afforded limited consideration in the framework. It is important to recognise that both Urban landholdings have been accepted into the HDA pathway and have been declared SSD by the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. This declaration confirms not only the suitability of these sites for residential development but also their potential to contribute to the rapid and efficient delivery of housing in line with the objectives of the National Housing Accord.

Although it is understood that the draft UDF cannot be tailored to every preliminary design currently under assessment or in the development pipeline, insufficient consideration of major forthcoming projects risks weakening the strategic integrity of the finalised framework and may diminish its influence when informing future Planning Proposals.

Recommendation

Council staff should give greater consideration in the draft UDF to development sites and opportunities currently in-progress. Incorporating these sites into the framework will help ensure the draft UDF remains effective, and the vision of the UDF is able to be realised. By factoring in proposed developments, Council can better achieve the objectives of the framework by recalibrating the built form controls and other guidance where necessary.

It is recommended that Council undertake more detailed consultation with landholders within the Precinct to gain a comprehensive understanding of development intentions that may affect the strategy. This approach would allow Council to view high development interest as an opportunity rather than a constraint and ensure that the key design principles of the draft UDF are supported by controls that are not compromised by existing or emerging developments.

4.0 Conclusion

As outlined above, we appreciate the opportunity to provide comment on the draft UDF and recognise the potential the draft UDF has in shaping the future of the Flinders Street Precinct. We commend Council staff and their consultant team for a forward-looking vision and proactive approach to shaping the future of the Precinct.

Despite this positive intent, as described in the preceding sections of this submission, the draft UDF in its current form contains significant missed opportunities to holistically consider the role of the Flinders Street Precinct, and the ability for large, consolidated, and individually held sites to contribute to the realisation of the vision and deliver of jobs and housing. While grounded in positive intentions, the draft UDF is restrictive and limited in its foresight on the contribution which the Flinders Street Precinct can make, in particular to tackling the housing crisis. Overall, the Flinders Street Precinct has tremendous potential to contribute housing on an existing railway line with capacity, and the draft UDF does not capitalise on this potential.

Urban is of the strong opinion that the draft UDF will significantly benefit by:

- Implementing a more appropriate approach to consideration of flood prone land, and providing for flexibility which will allow design solutions to be provided that unlock land and deliver density.
- Carrying out a proper assessment of significant views traversing the Precinct so that the framework can lay the foundation for more appropriate building controls that deliver density, in particular adopting viewpoints that are grounded in commonly held principles and provide the greatest benefit to users of the space to appreciate the view.
- Removing prescriptive built form controls, including setbacks and street wall provisions.
- Better considering existing proposals within the Precinct to give effect to the vision and design principles of the draft UDF.

We encourage Council and its consultant team to carefully consider the recommendations outlined above, and welcome the opportunity to continue to engage and be involved in shaping the final UDF.

Given the scope of changes, we anticipate further consultation and engagement is required, in particular to the potential contribution the Flinders Street Precinct may make to delivery housing during the Housing Accord. The draft UDF should not be finalised until such time as these key matters are addressed.

Kind regards

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