ETHOS URBAN

4 November 2021

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Director, Social and Infrastructure Assessments
School & Infrastructure Assessments
NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
4 Parramatta Square, 12 Darcy Street Parramatta 2150

Dear Karen

RESPONSE TO COUNCIL LETTER
UNSW HEALTH TRANSLATION HUB (SSD-10822510)

This response has been prepared to address the letter received from Randwick City Council dated 14 October 2021.

Following issue of the Response to Submissions (RTS) package in September 2021, and after further consultation with Council officers on 23 September 2021, Council has provided additional comments around the width and design of the High Street footpath. Council has also provided a series of recommended conditions.

Council has maintained that the High Street footpath should be widened to a minimum of 3m, and that it should be redesigned as a shared path to accommodate increased pedestrian and bicycle movements along High Street. Council has put forward a suggested design for the shared use path.

As outlined in the RTS and subsequent consultation with Council, UNSW and its design team believes that the proposed design represents the optimal design outcome for the site and the broader precinct. Further, the construction of a shared use path on the southern side of High Street would introduce a number of safety and practicality issues.

A response to these urban design and safety considerations is outlined below. A response to the recommended conditions is provided in the table at **Attachment A**.

1.0 Footpath Width and Urban Design Considerations

1.1 Council Comments

Council has maintained that the High Street footpath should be widened by 500mm to the south, to provide a footpath with a minimum width of 3m. Council has provided a draft sketch showing how this could be accommodated. Council has also provided a response to each of the points put forward in the RTS, and has suggested that the changes required to accommodate the widened pathway could be managed and would not hinder the successful delivery of the project.

1.2 Response

UNSW believes that the proposed design is the optimal outcome, and that widening the footpath would significantly reduce the public amenity offered by the proposal. UNSW has also assessed this outcome with Health Infrastructure, both UNSW and Health Infrastructure are supportive of this consistent precinct approach to maintain the UNSW proposal as submitted. In summary:

- The proposed introduction of a wider footpath would not meet the fundamental best practice universal access and design principles that have been established across both sites to deliver a seamless, welcoming and appropriate landscape approach to the public domain. These project principles have underpinned the

successful collaboration between the SCH Stage 1 and CCCC and the UNSW HTH, and have been informed by advice received from the NSW Government Architect State Design Review Panel (SDRP) to ensure that design excellence is realised. Advice received from the SDRP has informed the landscape design and has helped achieve the proposed interface between High Street and the public plaza. Altering the design would be contrary to guidance provided by the SDRP, which included:

- The need to consider levels and connections to ensure that permeability can be realised;
- That there should be a focus on landscape as a unifying element of the public domain;
- The need to explore permeability to the plaza and landscaping at the main entry;
- The importance of balancing soft to hard landscaping, deep soil zones and tree canopy cover targets;
- The suggestion to reduce the use of 1:14 ramps to allow for better permeability;
- The need to provide connectivity at the ground plane, and remove level changes to the plaza; and
- The need to integrate ramps and stairs within the overall landscape.

- Widening the footpath would result in the introduction of a 650mm retaining wall, visual clutter from additional handrails and balustrades, and the loss of trees from the landscape design. This would negatively impact the quality of the public domain, creating a series of hostile conditions on High Street which would diminish the seamless landscape transition from the High Street footpath to the public plaza. The trees that would be lost cannot be accommodated elsewhere in the site, and so canopy coverage would be reduced on the site.
- Widened the footpath would remove the landscape setback between the plaza pathway and the High Street footpath, creating a poor urban condition for the building entry as well as creating confusing and unclear precinct wayfinding.
- Widening the footpath would expose existing stormwater infrastructure that is unsightly and a potential safety hazard for pedestrians, introducing a liability risk (refer to inset image at **Figure 1**). The physical design of these inlets is unsightly and is best concealed by landscaping, as is the case with the proposed design solution. The introduction of cyclists to this pathway would heighten this risk (refer to discussion at **Section 2**).
- Given the constraints of the site and its sloping nature, necessary to accommodate flood mitigation requirements, a wider footpath would reduce the amount of deep soil available along the site's interface with High Street. This would result in a reduction of the proposed tree canopy cover and a reduction in the proposed soft landscaping along the site's High Street interface. This reduction would result in a very poor outcome for both the streetscape and the public domain, leaving very little buffer between the street and the plaza.

As noted, Council has provided a sketch indicating how the widened footpath could be accommodated. A mark-up of the sketch, demonstrating the implications of the suggested design, is provided at **Figure 1**. The existing stormwater infrastructure that would be exposed is shown in the bottom right of the image. For comparison, the UNSW HTH landscape response is provided at **Figure 2**.

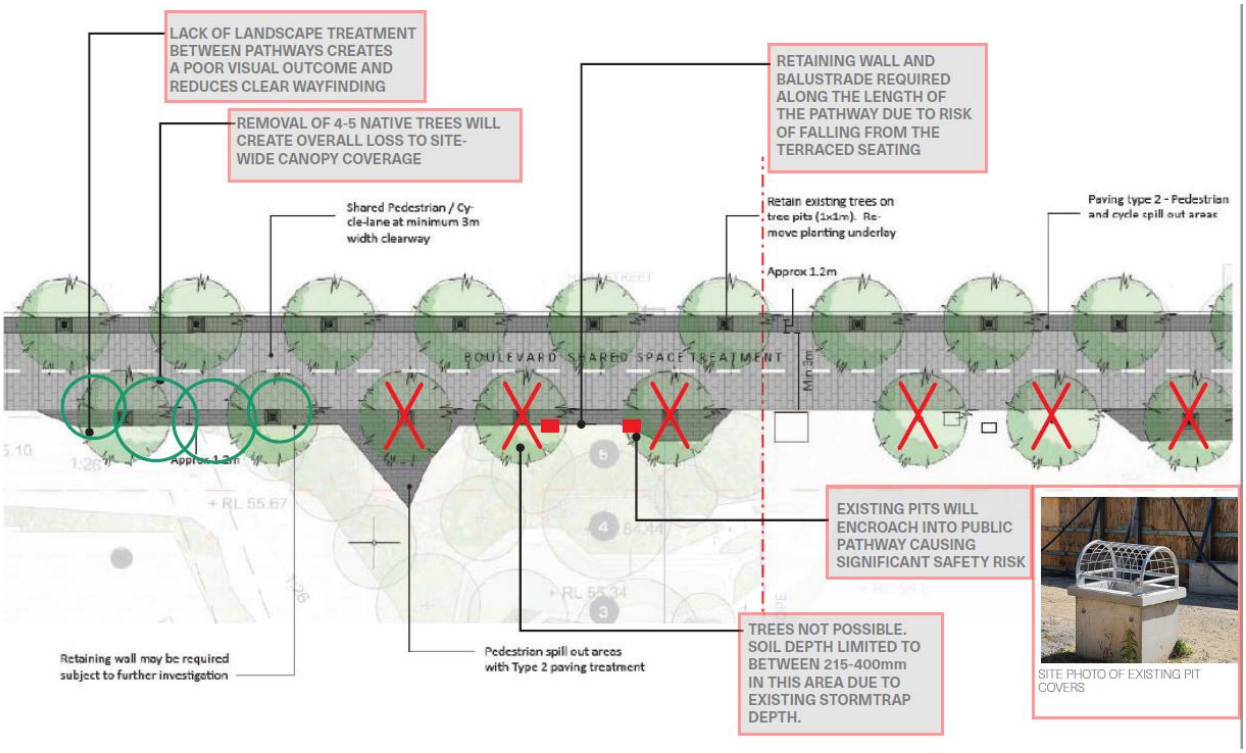

Figure 1 – Response to Council's footpath design

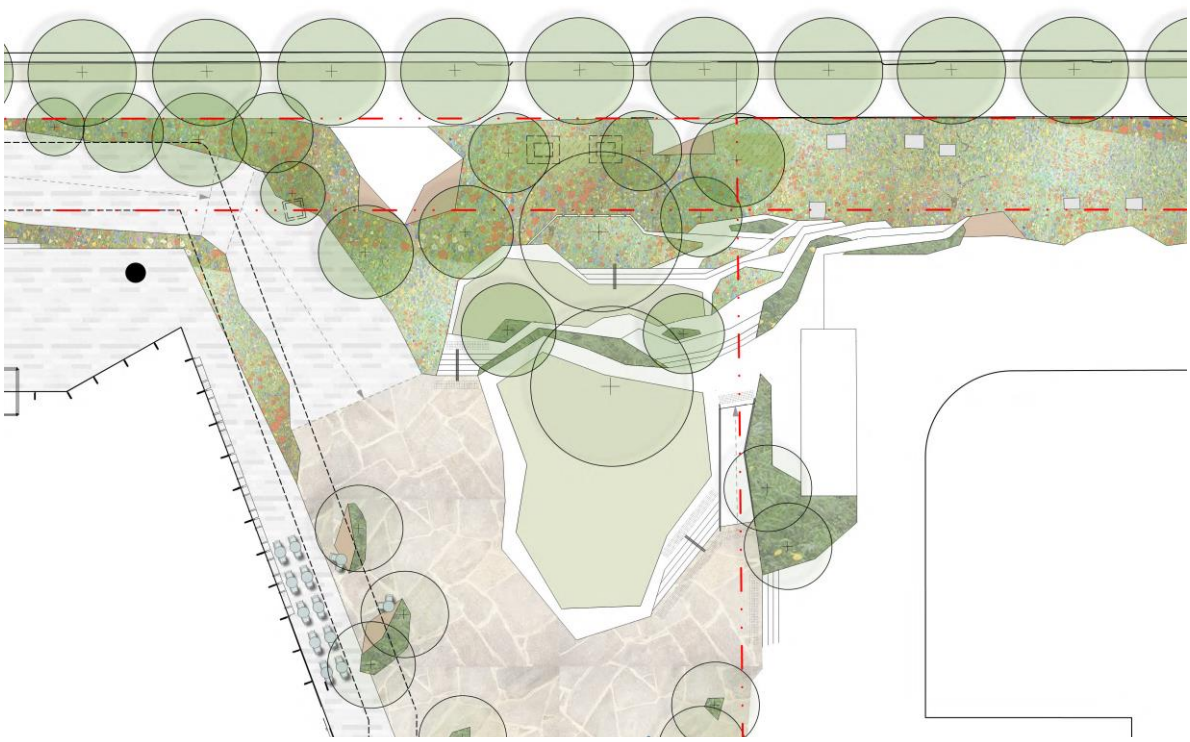

Figure 2 – UNSW HTH landscape response

2.0 Shared Use Path and Safety Considerations

2.1 Council Comments

Council has suggested that the path be redesigned as a shared use path for pedestrians and cyclists.

2.2 Response

Pedestrian safety is paramount and at the forefront of thinking for all UNSW and Health Infrastructure projects. UNSW has received further Traffic and Transport advice from JMT Consulting, refer to **Attachment B**. Introduction of a shared pathway on the southern side of High Street would result in significant safety concerns for footpath users for the following reasons:

- Cyclists using a shared pathway on High Street would have the ability to travel at high speeds given its steep gradient. This would increase both the likelihood and severity of conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians, particularly given the high proportion of children and mobility impaired pedestrians using the High Street footpath. In their response, Council note that High Street will be a 'high volume link' for cyclists and therefore, given the significant level of pedestrian movements (including vulnerable users) a shared path is not considered to be a safe outcome.
- The widening of the High Street footpath by 0.5m would require the introduction of a retaining wall approximately 650mm in height. Studies and observations have demonstrated that pedestrians and cyclists do not travel directly adjacent to structures and obstructions, instead typically leaving a minimum gap of 300mm. This is known in pedestrian analysis as the 'edge effect'. Therefore, the widened footpath would largely result in redundant space being created adjacent to the retaining wall which will not be utilised by pedestrians or cyclists. The exposed stormwater pits would have a similar impact on pedestrian and cyclist movements.
- The exposed stormwater pits and retaining wall that would need to be constructed to facilitate the widening of the High Street footpath would act as a safety hazard for cyclists – particularly those travelling at high speeds down the hill.

In addition to these safety concerns, the introduction of a shared pathway on the southern side of High Street would not provide a practical and legible connection for cyclists, given:

- The footpath on the southern side of High Street does not align with the existing cycleway which is located on the northern side of High Street which currently terminates at Wansey Road. Cyclists would have to cross over to the other side of the street which does not provide for a good level of continuity or legibility.
- A shared pathway on the southern side of High Street would require cyclists to traverse multiple (high volume) vehicle crossover points into the existing Sydney Children's Hospital and adult hospital porte-cochere.
- The extension of the cycleway along the southern side of High Street towards Randwick Junction would require cyclists to travel past the existing Randwick light rail stop near Avoca Street. As seen in **Figure 3** this area generates significant levels of pedestrian activity as people travel to and from the light rail platform. Further, the footpath width in the vicinity of the light rail stop narrows to less than 2m which is not wide enough to accommodate a shared path.

Figure 3 – Existing Randwick light rail stop

For the reasons outlined above, it is considered that the proposed design represents the optimal design and safety outcome for the site and the broader precinct. We trust that this information is sufficient to assist DPIE's assessment of the proposed development. Should you have any queries about this matter, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours sincerely,

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