CM^+

Ashfield Town Centre Renewal - Public Domain Strategy





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Cover Image: Artist's impression of proposed Fox's Lane public domain upgrade and Chinese lantern theme lighting installation.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Study

Ashfield Council (AC) commissioned Conybeare Morrison (CM⁺) in May 2013 to prepare the Ashfield Town Centre Public Domain Plan. The project brief was developed to include a broader masterplanning and community engagement program and the study became known as the Ashfield Town Centre Renewal.

1.2 Multi-disciplinary Team

The Consultant Team draws upon CM⁺ in-house expertise in Urban Design, public domain design, heritage and community consultation. Context Landscape Design's landscape planning expertise, and BDA Consultants cost estimation experience.

1.3 Project Objective

To project objective is "...to establish a specific prioritised set of public domain improvement works for Ashfield Town Centre that addresses the community's aspirations and priorities".

1.4 Study Area

The Study Area is illustrated on the adjoining map, and generally falls within a 400m radius, equivalent to a 5 min walking distance, of Ashfield Station.

1.5 Public Domain Design Issues

The key urban design issues addressed in the study include:

- Reinforcing a 'sense of place and character'.
- Activating and capitalising on the unique character and qualities
 of the Town Centre including the potential for a vibrant network
 of streets, plazas and laneways.
- Maximising accessibility and safety within the Town Centre for pedestrians, cyclists, wheelchair, seniors and pram users.
- Establishing a coordinated 'family' of public domain elements paving, planting, lighting, furniture, colours and finishes.
- Repair areas that are deteriorated, to attract people to the Town Centre and to promote a sense of pride and community establishing an integrated and high quality public realm.
- Identifying priority areas for upgrade works.
- Establish the best implementation process for the upgrade works

Study Area

1.6 Urban Design Approach

Ashfield Town Centre performs an important urban role in metropolitan Sydney's Inner West, and the proposed upgrade works are an opportunity to enhance and consolidate the Centre's urban and landscape qualities.

There is an opportunity to improve the amenity and safety of the street level experience, building on the existing positive attributes of good urban scale, attractive heritage buildings and streetscapes, access to public transport, walkability, and the existing successful street tree plantings and town square spaces. There is an opportunity to consolidate the coherence and identity of the existing streetscape and to compliment the urban qualities of Ashfield Town Centre.

A Unique Identity

The proposed streetscape improvements have the potential to highlight the unique identity of Ashfield - drawing inspiration from the locality and retaining those successful aspects of the existing streetscape. The aim is to keep the streetscape design outcome 'real', and ensure that the streetscape is integrated, and sits comfortably, in the existing urban fabric.

'Greening' the Town Centre

The proposed consolidation of street tree planting would improve the appearance of the street and help unify the various scales of architectural frontages. Street trees provide important shade and shelter from summer sun and improve the microclimate, through modifying the heat island effect.

A Pedestrian Focus

Introducing new Shared Zones, High Pedestrian Activity Areas improved pedestrian crossings and proposed footpath widening will improve pedestrian safety and will allow additional cafe seating areas to be provided. This will contribute to activity in the street, enlivening the pedestrian experience and thereby improving pedestrian safety and security, through an increase in passive surveillance. Special attention has been paid to ensuring footpaths and all crossings provide for all users: pedestrians, cyclists, pram and wheelchair users - footpaths that are even, and free of clutter or un-necessary obstacles.

Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD)

A more sustainable approach to water management is embraced in the urban design proposals, through the introduction of Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) measures (expertise provided by Alluvium) that reuse stormwater runoff and provide a stormwater filtering and cleaning function, improving water quality, downstream.

Lighting and Safety

Lighting of the Town Centre's streetscapes and laneways for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicular traffic is an important consideration in the streetscape design. An attractive and well-lit night-time environment is crucial to ensure pedestrian safety, and in order to minimise the incidence and fear of crime.

Looking to the Future

Our inner city residential communities, such as Ashfield Town Centre, fortuitously located within easy walking distance of public transport, are growing, as they have become sought-after locations in which to live, work and socialise. As more people are attracted to live in Ashfield Town Centre, the increased dwelling density needs to be complemented with an improved public domain, offering vibrant and distinctive local streets, laneways, plazas, parks and social destinations.

A continuous renewal of Ashfield's public realm and design quality, sustainability, safety and amenity will keep Ashfield an important urban hub, vital and relevant into the future.



2.0 Planning Background

2.1 Metropolitan + Subregional Context

Metropolitan Plan for Sydney 2036 (2010)

The Metropolitan Plan, drafted in 2010, projects that Sydney's population is expected to grow to 6 million by 2036, and half of this population will live in Western Sydney. Employment is projected to grow by 760,000 in Sydney over the same period. Again half of this growth is planned for the cities and centres of Western Sydney. Over the 2006 to 2036 period, employment growth for the Inner West Subregion that includes the Ashfield LGA is projected to be 25,000 - a 25% increase.

The Metropolitan Plan sets as a key planning challenge, to "... grow sustainably, to improve economic and social outcomes whilst protecting our natural environment and containing its urban footprint." As a result, of the target of 770,000 additional homes in metropolitan Sydney by 2036 (from 2006 base), it is planned to build at least 70% of these within existing urban areas, at least 80% within walking catchments of existing or planned centres with good public transport. Over the 2006 to 2036 period, an additional 35,000 dwellings are planned for the Inner West Subregion.

2.2 Ashfield Council Planning Policy

A series of relevant Council (and UTS) planning studies have guided the masterplanning and urban design of Ashfield Town Centre, including:

Ashfield Town Centre - Town Planning Strategy (2008)

This Ashfield Council review of the Town Centre Strategy and Development Control Plan, involved community consultation during 2007. The Strategy was adopted in 2008 and provides a framework for the future planning and growth of the Town Centre.

Community Strategic Plan – Ashfield 2022 'Our Place, Our Future' (2009)

Incorporating "Ashfield's Biggest Conversation", an extensive community engagement process, to capture the community's values, expectations and ten year vision for Ashfield's future.

Ashfield Council - The Esplanade Redevelopment (2009)

A design study for The Esplanade undertaken by Council, including analysis, a review of relevant policy, a schematic design proposal and illustrative perspective.

DOC Winter School – Reconnecting Ashfield's Laneways Project (2012)

A study undertaken by the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) Designing Out Crime (DOC) Winter School exploring the design opportunities and potential for the network of laneways within Ashfield Town Centre.

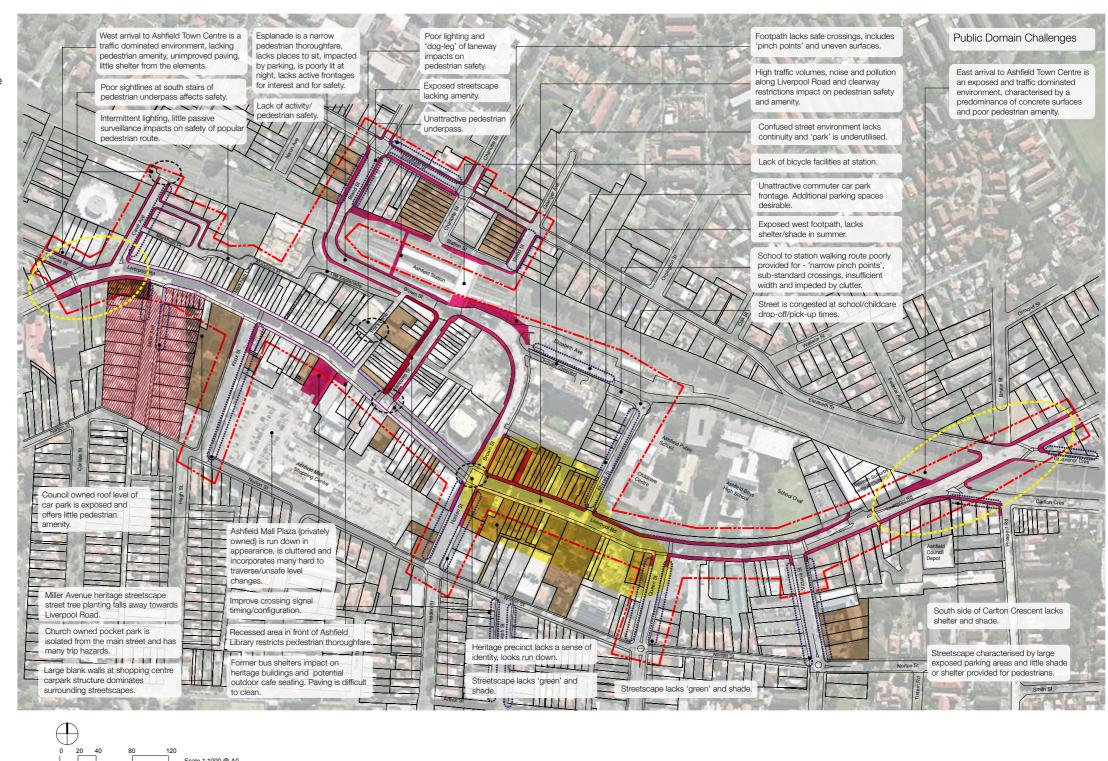


Liverpool Road Crossing



3.1 Public Domain Challenges

The Urban Design constraints and issues analysis for Ashfield Town Centre included mapping existing heritage properties and Conservation Zone. A 'heritage precinct' (a concentration of heritage properties) was identified along Liverpool Road between Holden Street/Brown Street and Queen Street. The analysis identified areas where pedestrian safety and amenity, and where the identity and arrival points to the Centre, the 'front door' to the Centre, could be improved and made more welcoming. Locations in streets where there was a lack of tree planting and where the overall aesthetic appeal of the Centre could be improved were also identified. Based on work by Council officers and site inspections the extent of unimproved footpath was mapped, as were issues such as congested footpath areas or where pinch points occurred.



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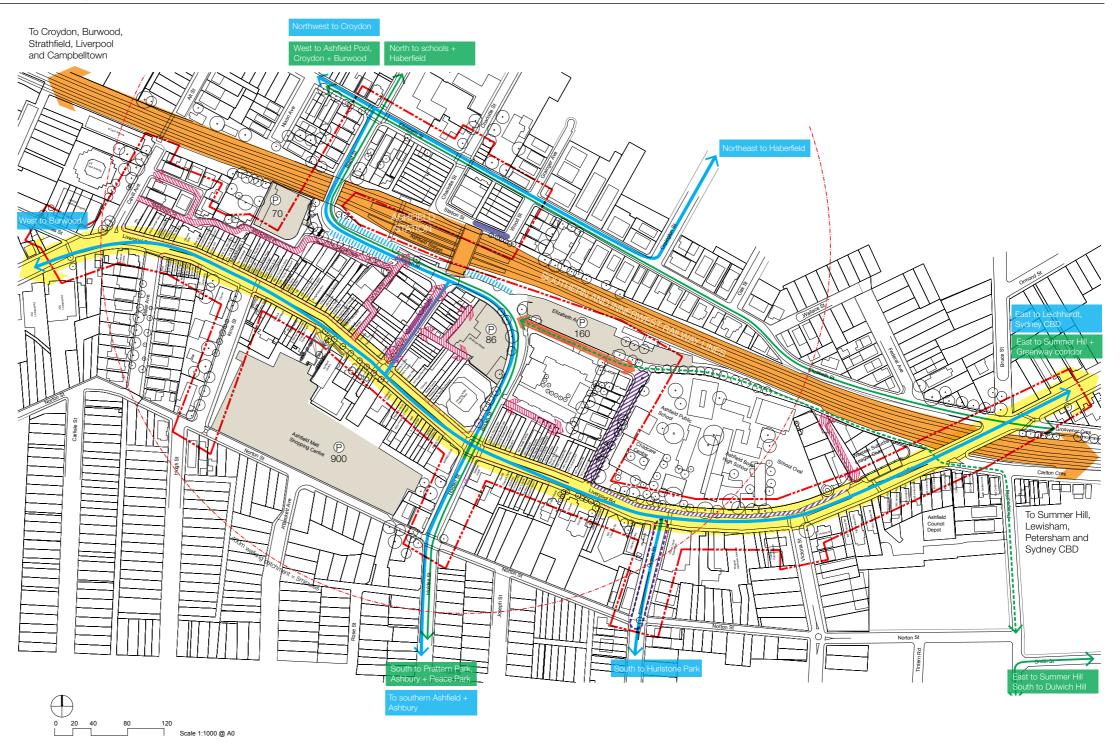


3.2 Rail, Bus, Cycle + Vehicle Movement Opportunities

The urban design analysis mapped all modes of movement throughout Ashfield Town Centre, including the rail corridor, bus routes and stops, existing and potential cycle routes, taxi ranks, existing and potential school drop-off/pick-up areas, the extent of the primary Main Street shopping precinct, public off-street car parking facilities and the number of spaces available. The primary retail and commercial core of Ashfield Town Centre occurs within a convenient 5 minute walking catchment of Ashfield Station. Town Centre streets and laneways that would benefit from special traffic management provisions to enhance pedestrian safety and amenity were identified.

The key urban design principles guiding the analysis were to, wherever possible, look to improve the safety and amenity, ability for interchange between transport modes and the overall connectedness throughout the Centre.







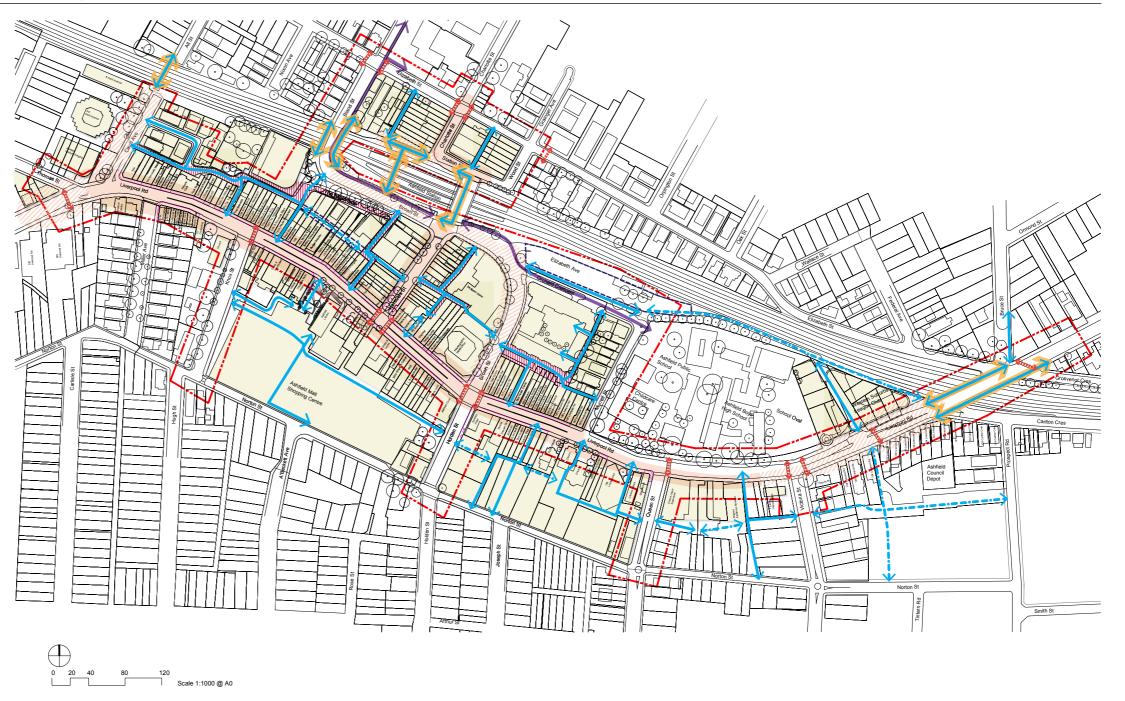
3.3 Pedestrian Access Opportunities

The main challenges for pedestrian access within Ashfield Town Centre are the railway corridor and Liverpool Road. Pedestrian underpasses, tunnels and overpasses are provided at Ashfield Station, linking the Town Centre, to the north and south of the Station. Further crossings of the rail corridor include a pedestrian underpass to the west, at Cavill Avenue/Alt Street, and the Liverpool Road bridge over the railway corridor in the east. Along Liverpool Road, signalised pedestrian crossings are provided at major cross streets. The quality of these crossing points is crucial to the functionality and to pedestrian safety in the Centre.

School-to-station walking routes, potential new short and long-term opportunities for improved pedestrian links, and potential for special pedestrian priority zones within Ashfield Town Centre were identified.

A key outcome of the analysis was identifying the potential to develop a secondary, finer grained pedestrian access network based on the mid-block laneways within the Town Centre.



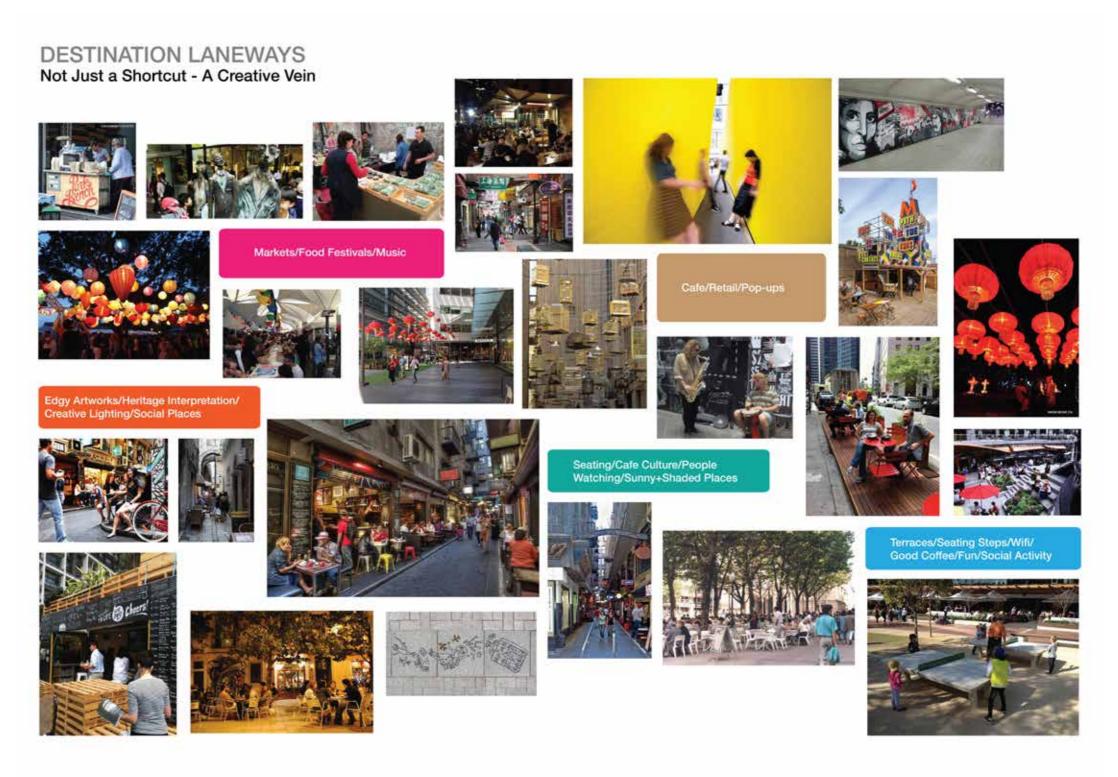




3.4 Town Centre Laneways

The network of laneways, particularly to the north of Liverpool Road, improve accessibility and connectivity within the town centre and provide an optional route, to and from Ashfield Station.

There is an opportunity for Ashfield's laneways to become something special, a destination in their own right, to complement the Liverpool Road shopping Main Street experience. Cities, such as Sydney and Melbourne, have discovered the potential for these more intimate mid-block connections as vibrant and creative urban spaces. To be successful these laneways connections need to be pedestrian prioritised and to have as many active retail and commercial frontages as possible. They have the potential to host a new flourishing pedestrian life, and to become a cultural and arts focus – a draw card for the Inner West.



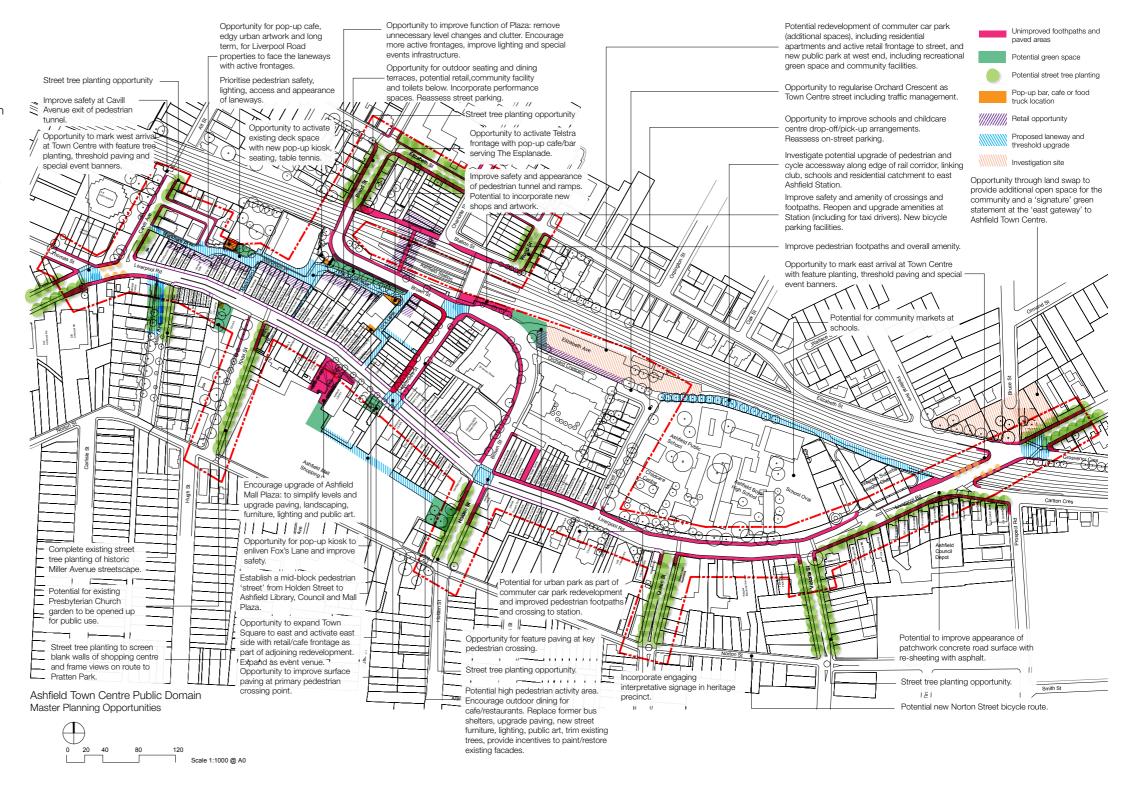


4.0 Town Centre Public Domain Masterplan

4.1 Public Domain Masterplan

The masterplan illustrates a comprehensive program of public domain improvements and associated planning initiatives, with the potential to transform our experience of Ashfield Town Centre.

New green spaces, street tree planting, cycle connections, footpath and crossing upgrades are proposed, along with improvements to Ashfield Station and parking facilities. A number of Investigation Sites and projects are identified that will require more detailed technical study and one-to-one consultation with key stakeholders. The retail opportunities and proposed new mid-block pedestrian links will need to be considered as part of future Town Centre LEP and DCP planning reviews, or negotiated as part of the Development Application (DA) process.





5.1 Priority Upgrade Areas

The implementation of the Public Domain Masterplan will prioritise five public domain upgrade areas:

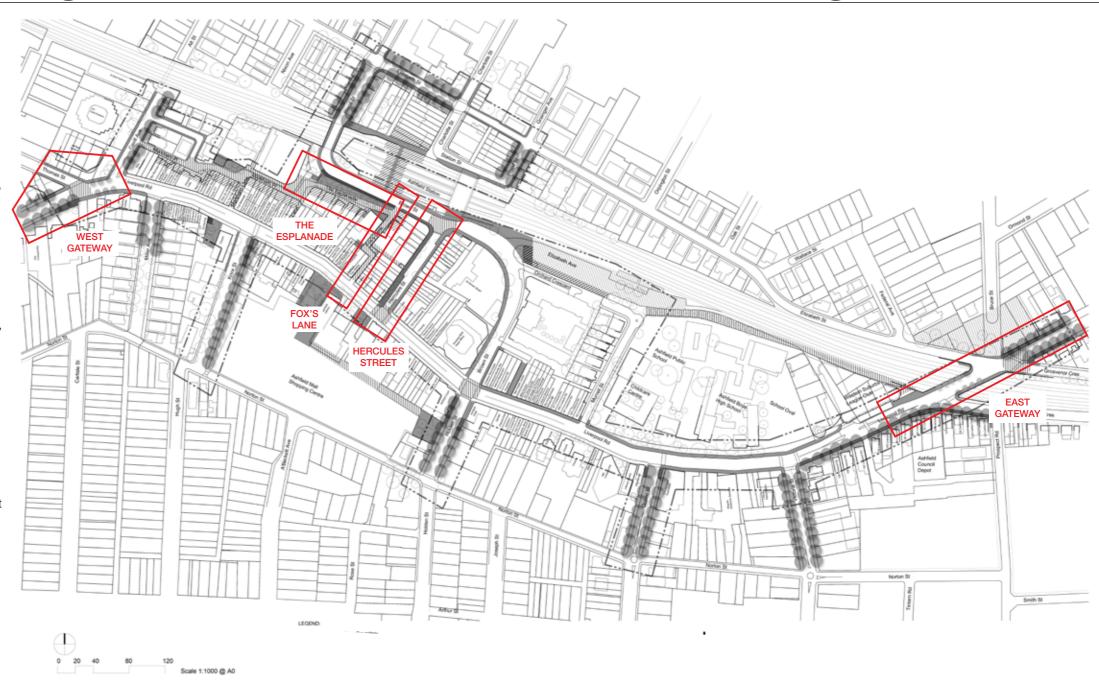
- West Gateway
- The Esplanade
- Fox's Lane
- Hercules Street
- East Gateway

The urban and landscape upgrade of the West and East 'Gateways' to Ashfield Town Centre will better define the urban extents of the town centre, and provide a more attractive first impression on arrival along Liverpool Road.

The interconnected town centre upgrade areas of The Esplanade, Fox's Lane and Hercules Street form a key group at the core of Ashfield Town Centre. The Esplanade is an opportunity to provide a new promenade and seating areas, and Fox's Lane a key first stage, 'model' for the renewal of the overall town centre laneway network.

The public domain upgrade works will integrate a Hercules Street development currently under construction, that provides a new pedestrian link to Fox's Lane, and a new cafe, bar and restaurant at ground level. Hercules Street is a key retail and pedestrian street - connecting Ashfield Station to the Liverpool Road Main Street retail, civic and community hubs, and to Ashfield Mall Shopping Centre.

Potential town-centre-wide public domain upgrade works include street tree planting in side streets, WSUD initiatives, improved cyclist facilities, street lighting upgrades and improved incentives for repair and painting of heritage building facades.







5.2 West Gateway

The western approach to Ashfield Town Centre is currently dominated by traffic, hard paved surfaces and overhead power lines.

Existing Views







Liverpool Road- View West



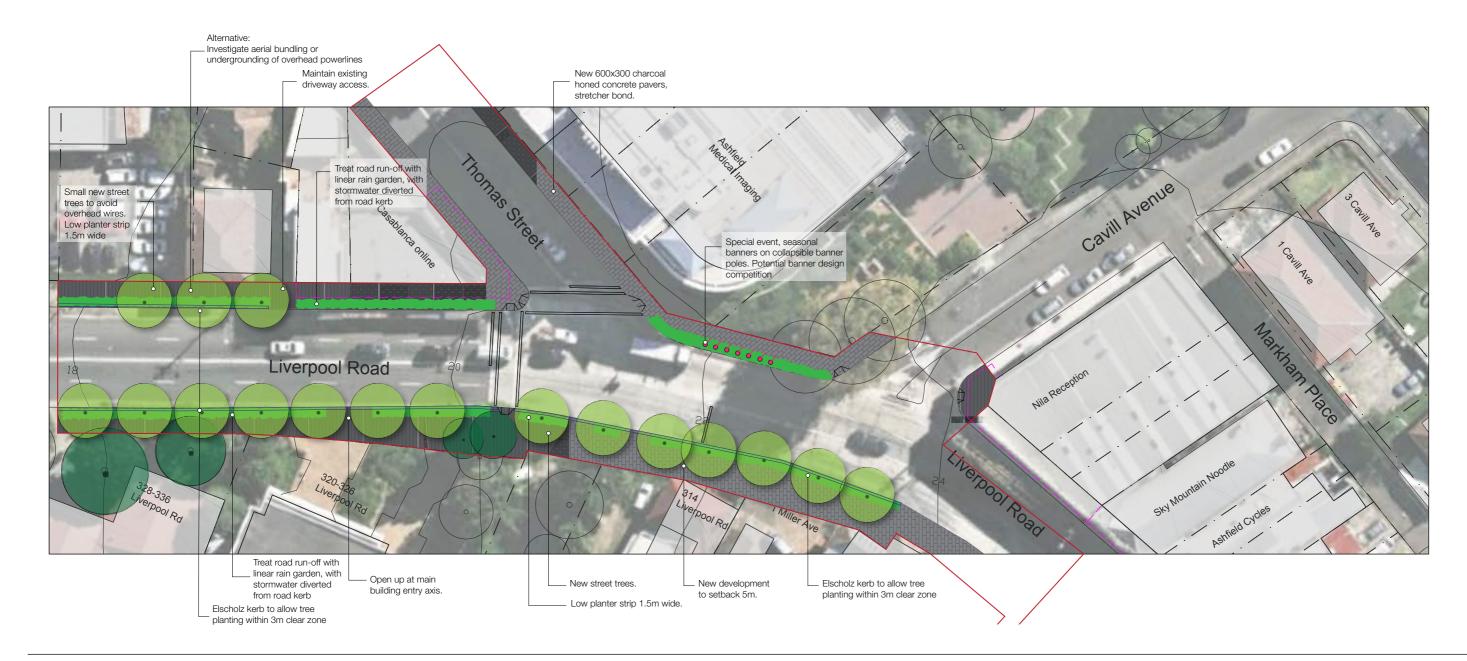
Liverpool Road- Thomas Street Intersection



5.2.1 Concept Plan

There is an opportunity to improve the appearance and pedestrian amenity on arrival to the town centre, including new street tree planting and kerb side planter beds to 'green' the streetscape and to mask overhead wires and poles, and new footpath paving. Colourful banners are proposed to advertise upcoming community events or simply to celebrate the changing seasons.









5.2.2 Existing View

The current view on approach to Ashfield Town Centre from the west along Liverpool Road.

5.2.3 Proposed View

Artists impression of the proposed streetscape improvement works.



Artists Impression of the Proposed Western Gateway



5.3 The Esplanade

The Esplanade is currently narrow and dominated by parked cars, is hidden from view, is poorly lit and therefore feels unsafe and uninviting at night. Pedestrian footpaths are uneven and cluttered. The Esplanade lacks activity, engaging street frontages and comfortable seating. Positives include a row of mature shade trees and a favourable northerly aspect.

Existing Views



Vehicular Dominated Environment



Markham Place



Awkward Pedestrian Access



Views From the Deck



Existing Mature Trees



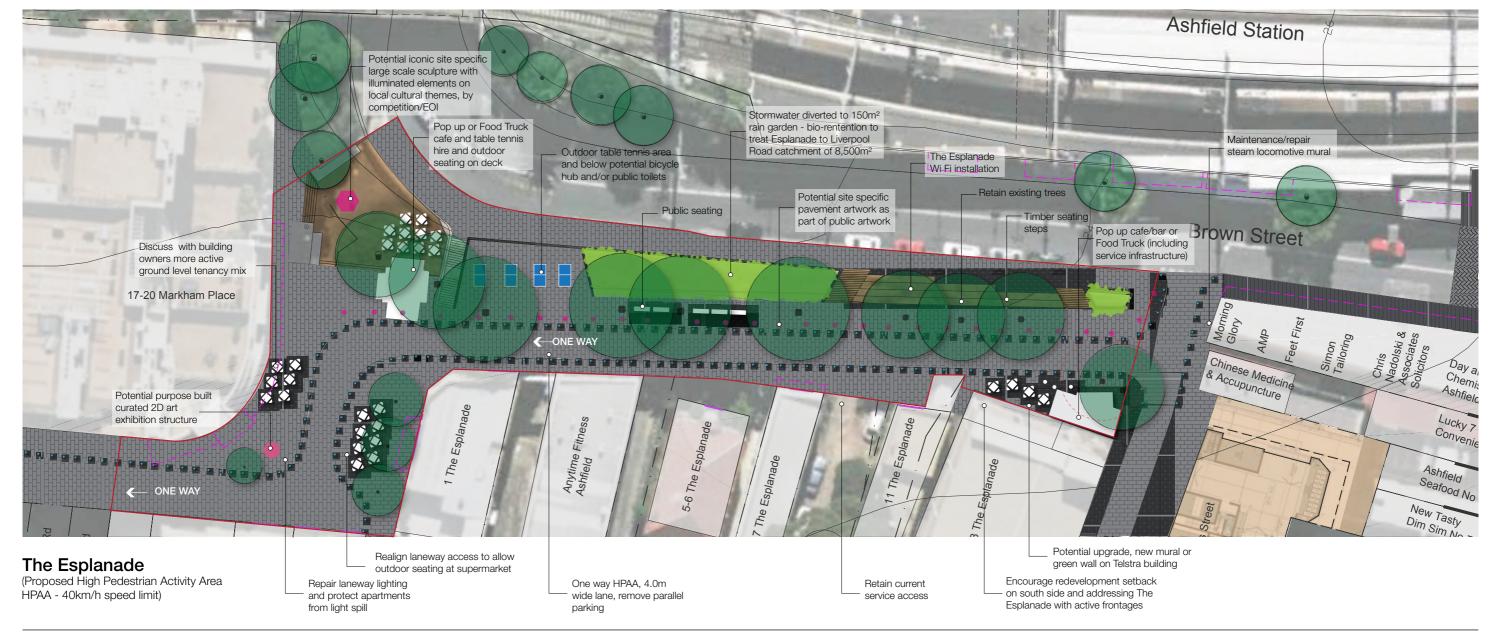
Brown Street - North Elevation



5.3.1 Concept Plan

Designation as a High Pedestrian Activity Area (HPAA), includes the removal of kerbside parking (new public parking is being provided in the basements of adjoining developments) to provide a much improved pedestrian environment. There is an opportunity to improve the appearance and pedestrian amenity of the promenade, to introduce new activities such as cafe and outdoor seating, an outdoor table tennis area and seating steps with WiFi access. New paving, signage, street furniture, improved lighting, public artworks, and Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) measures are proposed.









5.3.2 Existing View
The current view along The Esplanade.

5.3.3 Proposed View
Artists impression of the proposed improvement works.



Artists Impression of The Esplanade



5.4 Fox's Lane

Fox's Lane provides service vehicle access to the 'back of house' of businesses along Liverpool Road, Hercules Street and The Esplanade. 11-13 Hercules Street is currently under construction.

Existing Views



Fox's Lane - View North



Fox's Lane - View to The Esplanade



Fox's Lane - View from Liverpool Road



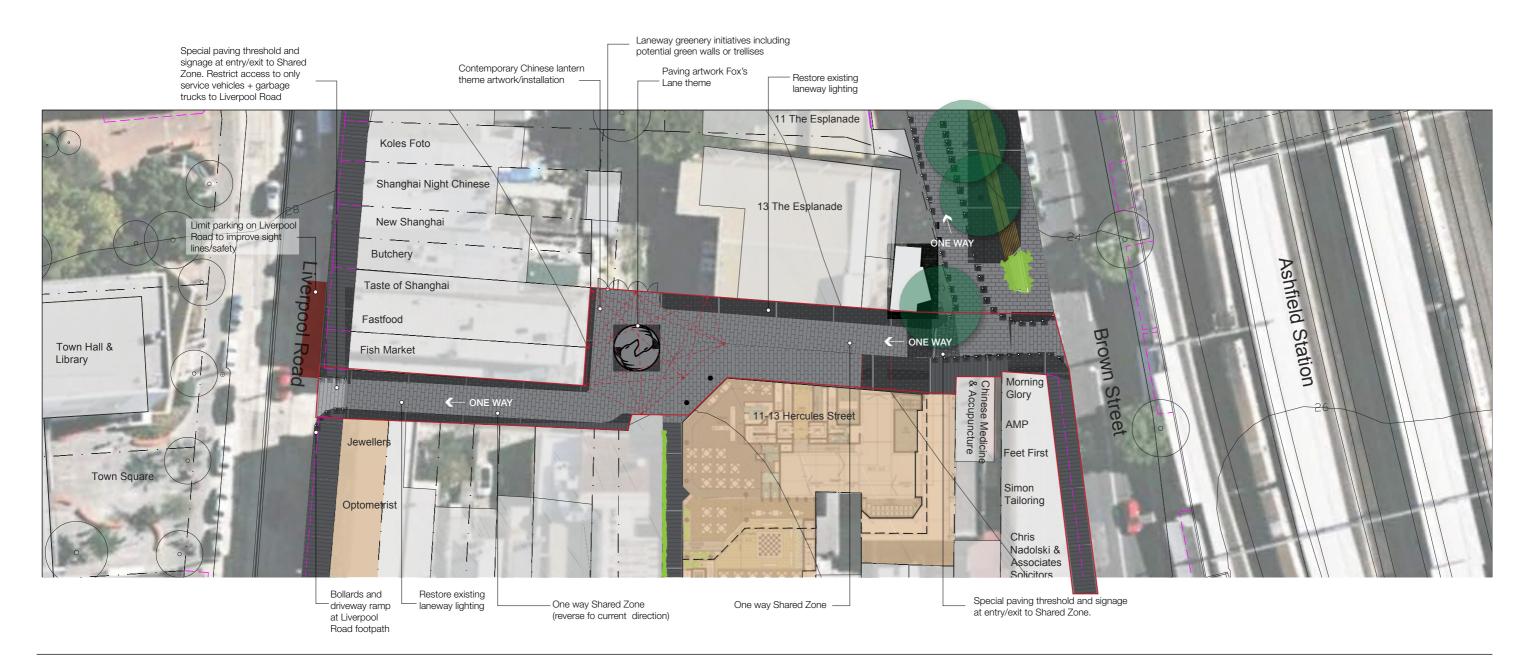
Fox's Lane - 'Dog Leg'



5.4.1 Concept Plan

It is proposed that Fox's Lane is designated a Shared Zone (10km/h speed limit) and that the one way system is reversed in direction. The Shared Zone will improve pedestrian safety and upgraded paving and lighting and new feature artworks will transform the appeal of the laneway, whilst retaining its service functions and city laneway character.









5.4.2 Existing View

The current view at the 'dog-leg', at the middle of the laneway. 11-13 Hercules Street is under construction.

5.4.3 Proposed View

Artists impression of the proposed laneway improvement works, including the feature lighting artwork inspired by a Chinese lantern theme.



Artists Impression of Fox's Lane Proposal



5.5 Hercules Street

Hercules Street was upgraded in the 1990's, however now looks tired and run down. Inappropriate paving adjoining shop frontages (difficult to clean), redundant bus shelter structures, and narrow footpaths detract from an otherwise well-scaled streetscape with attractive buildings and street trees.

Existing Views









Hercules Street - View South

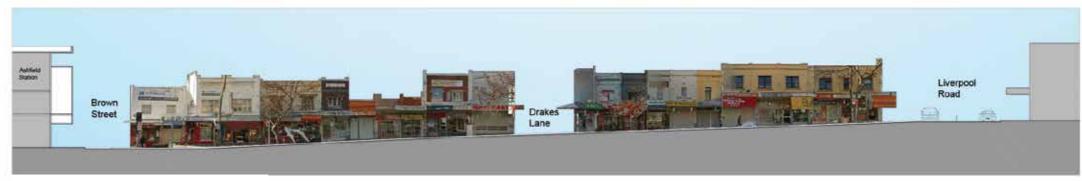
Former Bus Shelters

Narrow Footpaths

Mei Quong Tart Sculpture



Hercules Street - West Elevation



Hercules Street - East Elevation

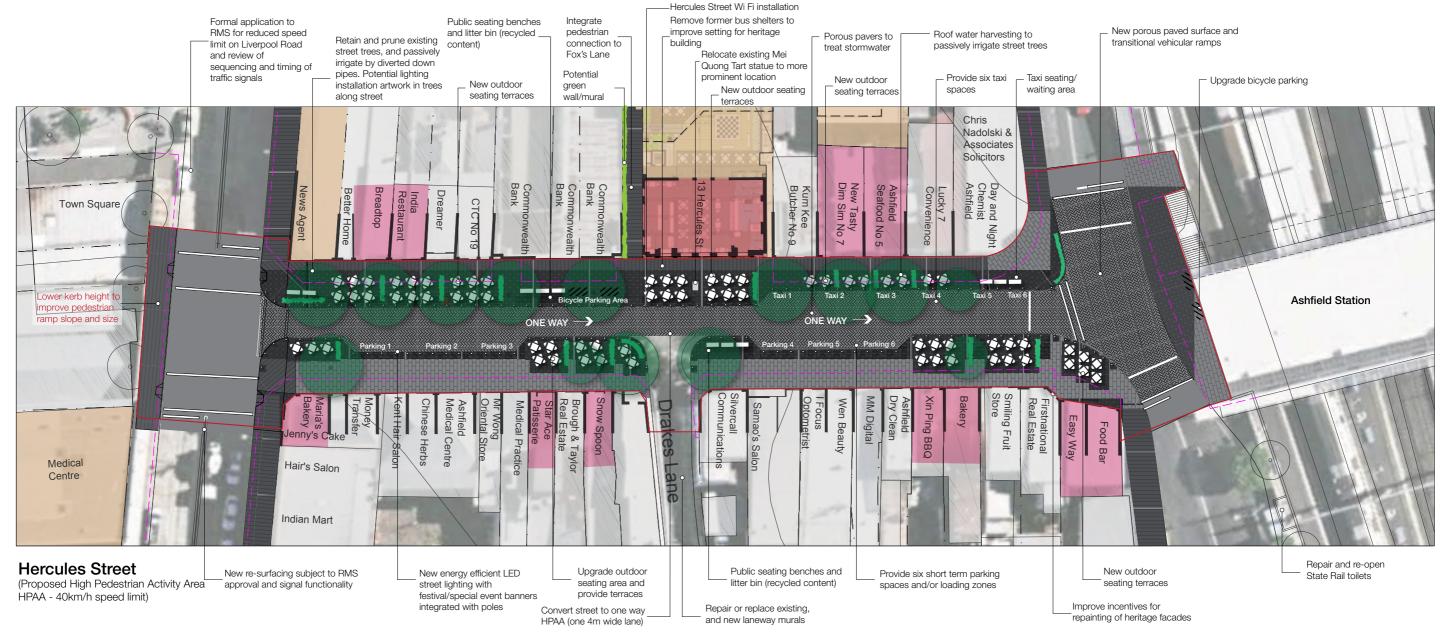


5.5.1 Concept Plan

A High Pedestrian Activity Area (HPAA) is proposed with associated upgrading of footpath paving and introducing porous paving to the central vehicular path. The important crossing facilities at Liverpool Road and at Brown Street are proposed to be upgraded. Increased outdoor seating areas are proposed, with a narrowing of the existing carriageway and removal of some car parking and taxi waiting spaces.

Public and cafe seating areas are proposed, as are bicycle parking facilities. New street furniture, including new light poles with energy efficient, long life LED fittings, and integrated banners are proposed. Special feature lighting of the street trees will highlight their forms and create a special nighttime ambiance.









5.5.2 Existing View
The current view of Hercules Street from Liverpool Street looking north to Ashfield Station.

5.5.3 Proposed View

Artists impression of the proposed streetscape improvement works.



Artists Impression of Hercules Street



5.6 East Gateway

The eastern approach to Ashfield Town Centre is currently dominated by traffic, hard paved surfaces and overhead power lines.

Existing Views



Liverpool Road - Grosvenor Crescent Intersection



Wests Club on Liverpool Road



Existing Street Trees on Liverpool Road at Wests Club



Legend

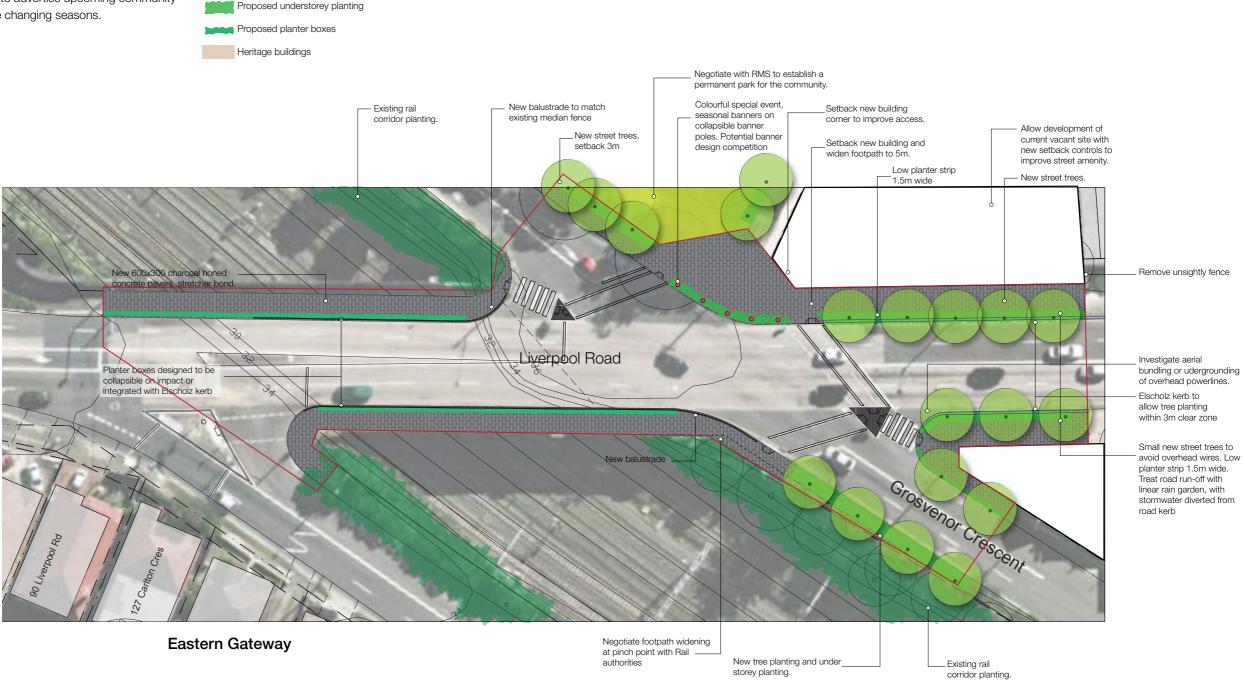
Existing trees

Proposed trees

Tree to be removed

5.6.1 Concept Plan

There is an opportunity to improve the appearance and pedestrian amenity on arrival to the town centre, including new street tree planting and kerb side planter beds to 'green' the streetscape and to mask overhead wires and poles, and new footpath paving. Colourful banners are proposed to advertise upcoming community events or simply to celebrate the changing seasons.







5.6.2 Existing View
The current view on approach to Ashfield Town Centre from the east along Liverpool Road.

5.6.3 Proposed View

Artists impression of the proposed streetscape improvement works.



Artists Impression of the Proposed Eastern Gateway



6.0 Public Domain Elements

6.1 Public Domain Improvement Program

Ashfield Council has undertaken a number of upgrades to the public domain over the past decade, including to the Liverpool Road footpaths, in town centre retail streets north of the station, in association new residential apartment developments on Brown Street and with the creation of the Town Square in the civic precinct, adjoining Ashfield Library, Council Chambers and Offices. The public domain improvements, particularly the new Town Square have set a new standard for access, amenity, ease of maintenance and aesthetic appeal in Ashfield Town Centre.

Ashfield Town Centre is growing, and recently completed apartment buildings, and those under construction, reflect the attraction of the Centre to residents looking for modern apartment living within an established urban 'village' setting, convenient to public transport, and with a lively multicultural retail and café/restaurant offer. Increased dwelling density should be balanced with improvements to the public domain and to the provision of green space. A well designed public domain has the potential to strengthen local identity and a 'sense of place'. A coordinated public domain palette of paving, furniture, lighting, street tree planting, planter beds and planter boxes, WSUD initiatives, signage and a unique program of public artwork is proposed.

6.2 Public Domain Elements

A simple, clean and uncluttered aesthetic is recommended for the upgrade of public domain paving areas, including for footpaths along main roads and streetscapes, and for Shared Zones and High Pedestrian Activity Areas proposed within the Town Centre. A hard wearing, slip resistant, and easy to clean and maintain, 'flagstone' charcoal coloured paver concrete unit paver, with a honed finish and in a stretcher bond pattern, is proposed for general footpath areas. A smaller porous paver, of brick dimensions, also of charcoal colour, and in a herringbone pattern is proposed as a WSUD measure, and to identify the central vehicular route in the Hercules Street HPAA.



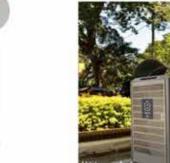












Recycle / Litter Bin

















6.0 Public Domain Elements

Landscape

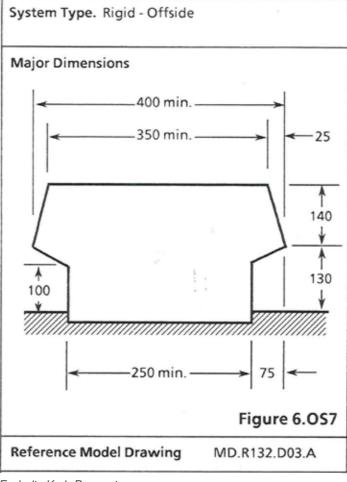
Planting selections for street tree planting, planter beds and planter boxes should suit the soils and climatic conditions of the Town Centre. Selections should be low maintenance, hardy, suited to their urban context, and limited in height if located beneath overhead power lines.

Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD)

Guided by expert advice provided by Alluvium, WSUD initiatives, including rain gardens, porous paving, subsurface irrigation of street trees and planter beds from stormwater run-off, have been incorporated in the Concept Designs.

Escholtz Kerb

A 270mm high concrete kerb known as an Escholtz Kerb is proposed in locations where trees are proposed along Liverpool Road within the designated clear zone (3.0m setback from the kerb line). To be confirmed through formal application to the RMS.



Escholts Kerb Parameters



Example of an Escholts Kerb installed in Moore Park Road, Sydney



Example of Flagstone Charcoal Paver - Glebe Point Road, Sydney



6.0 Public Domain Elements

Lighting

Street lighting has been considered in regards to Hercules Street and further consideration should be given to incorporating special feature lighting, to highlight heritage buildings, seating areas, stairs, sculpture, or feature trees within the public domain. LED light sources should be considered for long life and low energy consumption.

Street Furniture

A 'family' of coordinated bench seats, signature bollards, drinking stations and recycle litter bins, should be introduced throughout the Town Centre.

Bicycle Facilities

Bicycle parking areas with secure hoops should be located at the key destinations within Ashfield Town Centre. Bicycle lockers should be provided when warranted at Ashfield Station.

Way-finding + Interpretive Signage

Way-finding and interpretive signage make first time visitors welcome to Ashfield and can bring to life cultural or heritage items of interest within the public domain.

Festival/Seasonal Banners

Banners located on dedicated poles in groups or integrated on light poles provide an opportunity to 'advertise' upcoming community events and festivals, and add colour and movement to the public realm.

Public Art

A program of Public Artwork is proposed within the public domain. Proposals include large sculptural pieces that act as landmarks, a Fox's Lane lighting installation inspired by Chinese lanterns and associated paving insert, an art trail marked by inserts in the paving, a permanent 2D exhibition pavilion and also temporary installation pieces that would change over time.

Materials + Finishes

The proposed materials and finishes form a coordinated palette, derived from an understanding of the unique features of Ashfield Town Centre - its heritage, landscape and urban features that are the essence of the place.



Evergreen Australian native trees species



G = Brachychiton acerifolia





I = Corymbia citriodora 'scentuous' – dwarf grafted.



7.0 Stakeholder Consultation

7.1 Community Engagement Program

A feature of the project has been the extensive community consultation and engagement program that has informed the Ashfield Town Centre public domain masterplanning and the preparation and refinement of the five priority upgrade area Concept Plans.

Along with more 'tried and true' community engagement processes, a feature of the engagement has been the Collaborative Map website, accessed from Council's Project Website that allows the community to add comments to a 'live' webpage were you can read other people's comments as they are made. A broad range of community engagement approaches were employed to maximise community involvement, including:

- Project Website
- Collaborative Map
- Stakeholder Meetings
- Town Centre Walks
- Project Information Flyers
- Public Exhibitions/Open House
- Ashfield Boys High School Laneways Project
- In-house Council Multi-disciplinary Workshops

Collaborative Map

The Collaborative Map website, managed by Arup, was open for approximately 6 months (June to November 2014) and received over 120 comments. The overwhelming majority of the comments were thoughtful and considered. Initial comments were received on the aerial photo of the study area, in response to the opportunity to add comments according to three categories: 'Things I Like', 'Things I Don't Like' and 'My Idea'. A subsequent iteration of the site included the Urban Design Analysis and the draft Concept Designs for the Priority Upgrade Areas with the opportunity to leave comments.

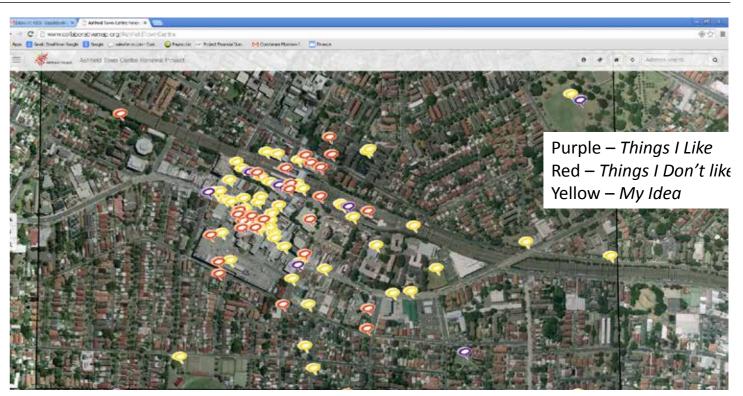
Technical + Stakeholder Review

Once draft Concept Designs for the five Priority Areas were prepared, these were then reviewed by key stakeholder groups and organisations, utility and service authorities, specialist consultants and by Council department heads, to ensure the designs satisfy technical requirements and were straightforward to implement. The draft Concept Designs were scrutinised in the following areas:

- Planning (Ashfield Council)
- RMS Standards
- WSUD Assessment (Alluvium)
- DPE Comments
- Chinese Business Feedback (Steve Khouw)
- Taxi Council
- Cycle Route Assessment + Provisions (Ashfield Council)
- Brown Street/The Esplanade/Fox's Lane Intersection Survey (Junek + Junek)
- Accessibility Report (Accessibility Solutions)
- Power Supply Investigations (Ausgrid + HighCo)
- Street Tree Assessment (Harry Diversi, Overseer Trees)
- Public Art Strategy (Jane Pollard, Team Leader Community Programs)
- Ashfield Station (State Rail)
- Sydney Buses
- Telstr
- WiFi Assessment (Ashfield Council)
- Cost Estimates (BDA Consultants)

Councillor Presentations/Workshops

Three Councillor presentations were given in August, September and November 2014 at which valuable feedback was provided by Ashfield Council on the evolving planning and urban design proposals.



Collaborative Map - Comments Page



Collaborative Map - Example Comment