

Cooks Cove Urban Design Report

Prepared for the NSW Department of Planning & Environment

September 2016





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This Urban Design Report has been prepared for the NSW Department of Planning & Environment as the preliminary stage in an ongoing process towards determining the highest and best use for the Cooks Cove Precinct in Sydney.

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Contents

Chapter 1: Urban Design Principles 7

Chapter 2: Structure Plan..... 23

List of Figures

Figure 1: Principle 1 – Define the role of Cooks Cove within its context, Source: AECOM, 2016 10

Figure 2: Principle 2 – Create a highly permeable precinct, Source: AECOM, 2016 12

Figure 3: Principle 3 – Deliver a vibrant social heart, Source: AECOM, 2016 14

Figure 4: Principle 4 – Establish a new green heart for Rockdale, Source: AECOM, 2016 16

Figure 5: Principle 5 – Build upon the existing water narrative, Source: AECOM, 2016 18

Figure 6: Principle 6 – Leverage the natural and cultural heritage, Source: AECOM, 2016 20

Figure 7: Cooks Cove Structure Plan, Source: AECOM, 2016 26



Urban Design Principles

01





01 Urban Design Principles

This chapter details six key urban design principles for the Cooks Cove precinct that establish a framework within which future development can be considered. The principles address issues of context, connectivity, activity, sport and recreation, open space, natural systems and heritage. The following pages articulate the primary purpose and aim of the principles, followed by a definition of the desired character for the precinct resulting from these principles. A series of recommended actions are then provided for each principle.

Principle 1

Define the role of Cooks Cove within its context



Principle 2

Create a highly permeable precinct



Principle 3

Deliver a vibrant social heart



Principle 4

Establish a new green heart for Rockdale



Principle 5

Build upon the existing water narrative



Principle 6

Leverage the natural and cultural heritage



1.1 Principle 1

Define the role of Cooks Cove within its context

Purpose

The primary purpose of this principle is to articulate a clear vision and defined role for Cooks Cove recognising its strategic location in Sydney. The precinct is uniquely positioned adjacent to Sydney Airport and the two identified growth centres of Arncliffe and Banksia. Significant changes are occurring in the surrounding context, both from a land use perspective and an aviation perspective, which impact the role Cooks Cove can play in the future. In Sydney, the trend towards vibrant, mixed use precincts optimises activity throughout the day and the week. Cooks Cove can capitalise upon its context to deliver a highly aspirational outcome that meets the strategic planning goals for the precinct. Cooks Cove has the opportunity to play a role as a vibrant, mixed use town centre contributing to the success of this region of Sydney.

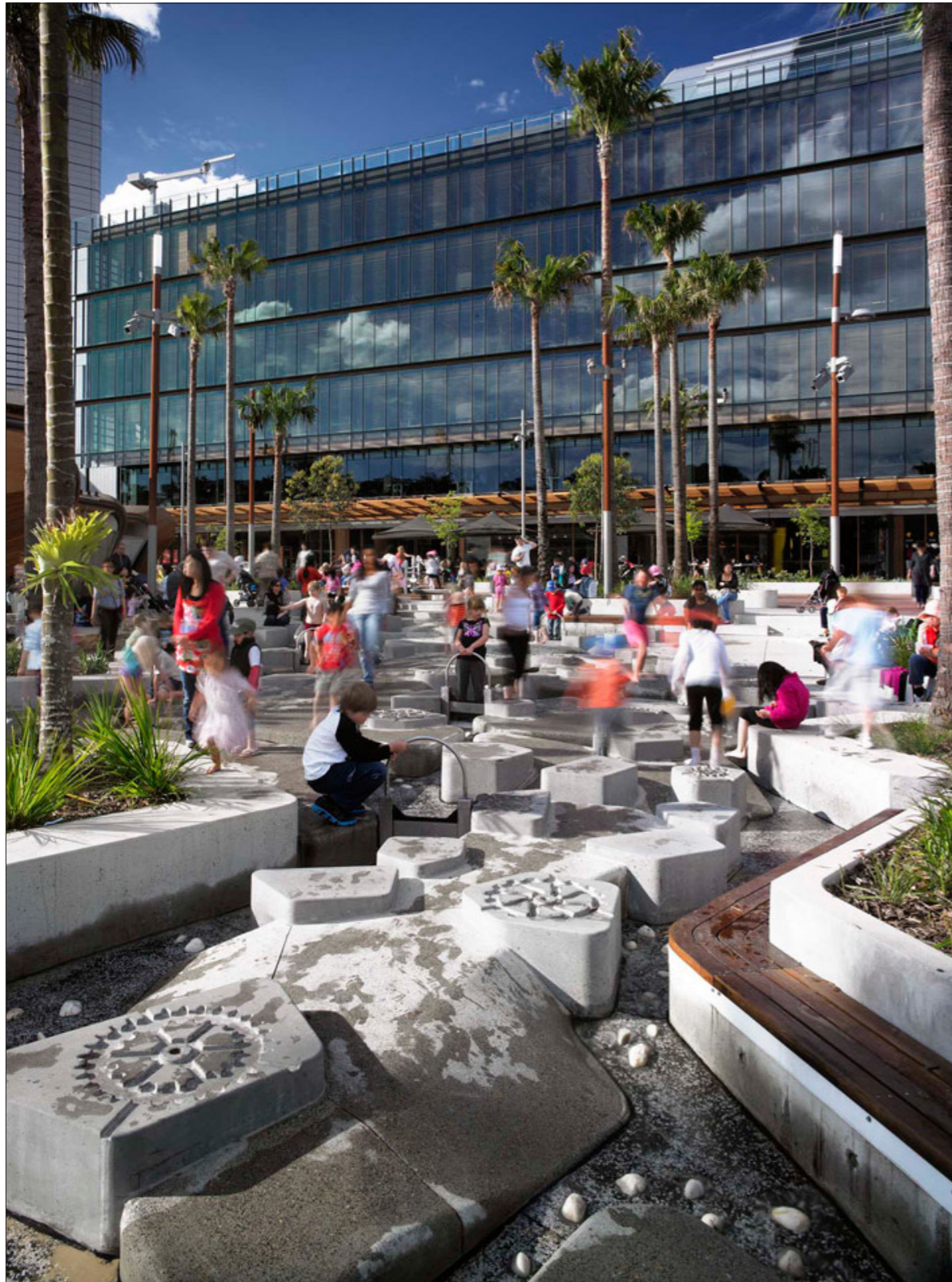
Aims

This principle is supported by the following aims:

- Understand the nearby land use transitions as Wolli Creek develops as a high density residential suburb and the industrial land in Mascot and Botany transitions to residential and commercial uses to position Cooks Cove with flexibility to respond to market drivers.
- Leverage the proximity to the airport by investigating opportunities for key worker housing for airport employees while also providing an attractive amenity for airport employees and visitors to recreate in.
- Consider complementary airport uses that may be incorporated into the Cooks Cove precinct and that are compatible with the precinct's broader context for metropolitan Sydney.



Figure 1: Principle 1 – Define the role of Cooks Cove within its context, Source: AECOM, 2016



These images are indicative character images illustrating what Cooks Cove might look like in the future as a vibrant centre with a high quality public domain that is pedestrian and cycle oriented.

Desired Character

This principle establishes a desired character for the precinct as a vibrant, desirable community which optimises its strategic location to deliver *A Plan for Growing Sydney's* ambition of a strong global city that is a great place to live. In the future, Cooks Cove will contribute to Sydney's competitive economy and deliver housing choice with homes that meet the needs and lifestyles of future residents. The community will be strong, healthy and well connected while protecting the natural environment with a balanced approach to land and resources. There is the potential for Cooks Cove to become an exemplar for sustainable and resilient development.

Recommended Actions

This principle recommends the following actions to define the precinct's role:

- Consult with key stakeholders and the community to discuss, evaluate and confirm the desired character for the precinct.
- Undertake a market assessment to determine a viable mix of land uses in the short, medium and long term.
- Investigate the potential to strengthen the precinct's relationship with the airport to complement its activities and maximise opportunities for success.
- Benchmark applicable mixed use precincts at a local, national and global scale to understand key drivers for their success and apply key learnings to Cooks Cove, including nearby land use transitions.

1.2 Principle 2

Create a highly permeable precinct

Purpose

The primary purpose of this principle is to overcome the existing barriers to access and connectivity into the Cooks Cove precinct. Permeability refers to the directness of links and the density of connections in a movement network. It is defined by the ability of the urban fabric to offer different routes into and through it. In the case of Cooks Cove, this applies to vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian movements within the precinct as well as broader connections to public transport adjacent to the precinct. A high degree of permeability translates to a precinct that is easy for all users to move through.

Aims

This principle is supported by the following aims:

- Mitigate the existing infrastructure barriers, including Marsh Street, West Botany Street and the M5 Motorway as well as natural barriers, including Cooks River and Muddy Creek, to provide enhanced permeability.
- Ensure a high degree of connectivity for all modes through footpaths, bicycle paths, efficient bridge links, signalised intersections where appropriate, as well as walkable block dimensions and configurations, to promote ease of access.
- Promote pedestrian and cycle access to nearby train stations, the airport and the Cooks River Cycleway to reduce dependency of the private vehicle and encourage active transport as a viable healthy lifestyle choice.
- Consider active street level uses fronting the southern side of Marsh Street to create a precinct that integrates with its surrounding context and provides a clear address for the precinct.



Figure 2: Principle 2 – Create a highly permeable precinct, Source: AECOM, 2016



These images are indicative character images illustrating what Cooks Cove and its riverfront might look like in the future as a publicly accessible pedestrian and cycle promenade with strong links to its context.

Desired Character

This principle establishes a desired character for the precinct founded on connectivity and accessibility. All future residents, workers or visitors should be able to navigate their way through Cooks Cove with ease, safety and efficiency. Where possible, active transport solutions should be encouraged through successful urban design outcomes supported by regular and reliable public transport solutions. The precinct can benefit from establishing and targeting a modal split that responds to sustainable 21st century city shaping initiatives.

Recommended Actions

This principle recommends the following actions to achieve a highly permeable precinct:

- Create two signalised intersections into the precinct on Marsh Street at Flora Street and Gertrude Street.
- Enable pedestrian connectivity across Marsh Street at these two intersections.
- Retain the existing connection under Marsh Street from Levey Street as a lower order connection. Levey Street under Marsh Street is a high order recreation connection and low order vehicle connection .
- Consider access into and out of the precinct at Spring Street.
- Consider access into and out of the precinct at Bestic Street.
- Provide the opportunity for a public promenade along the Cooks River waterfront.
- Consider a pedestrian and bicycle link across the Cooks River to the airport.
- Consider a pedestrian and bicycle link across the M5 Motorway providing more direct access to Arncliffe station.
- Provide a pedestrian and bicycle link across Muddy Creek to provide efficient and continuous access along the Cooks River from Botany Bay to Homebush.
- Provide connections to existing bike paths, such as Eve Street Cycleway and Bestic Street Cycleway.
- Provide connected and continuous footpaths throughout the precinct.
- Provide walkable block dimensions for all future development.

1.3 Principle 3

Deliver a vibrant social heart

Purpose

The primary purpose of this principle is to ensure that Cooks Cove considers the social needs of the people who will live in, work in and visit the precinct. This means creating a clearly identifiable place that is unique and memorable. As Cooks Cove grows into a significant precinct of medium density, the quality of the public domain, open space and community facilities becomes increasingly important. There is an opportunity to define a central gathering space which clusters uses such as a community park, civic space, neighbourhood serving retail and community facilities. The clustering of these uses will establish a critical mass that achieves the vibrancy of a successful community.

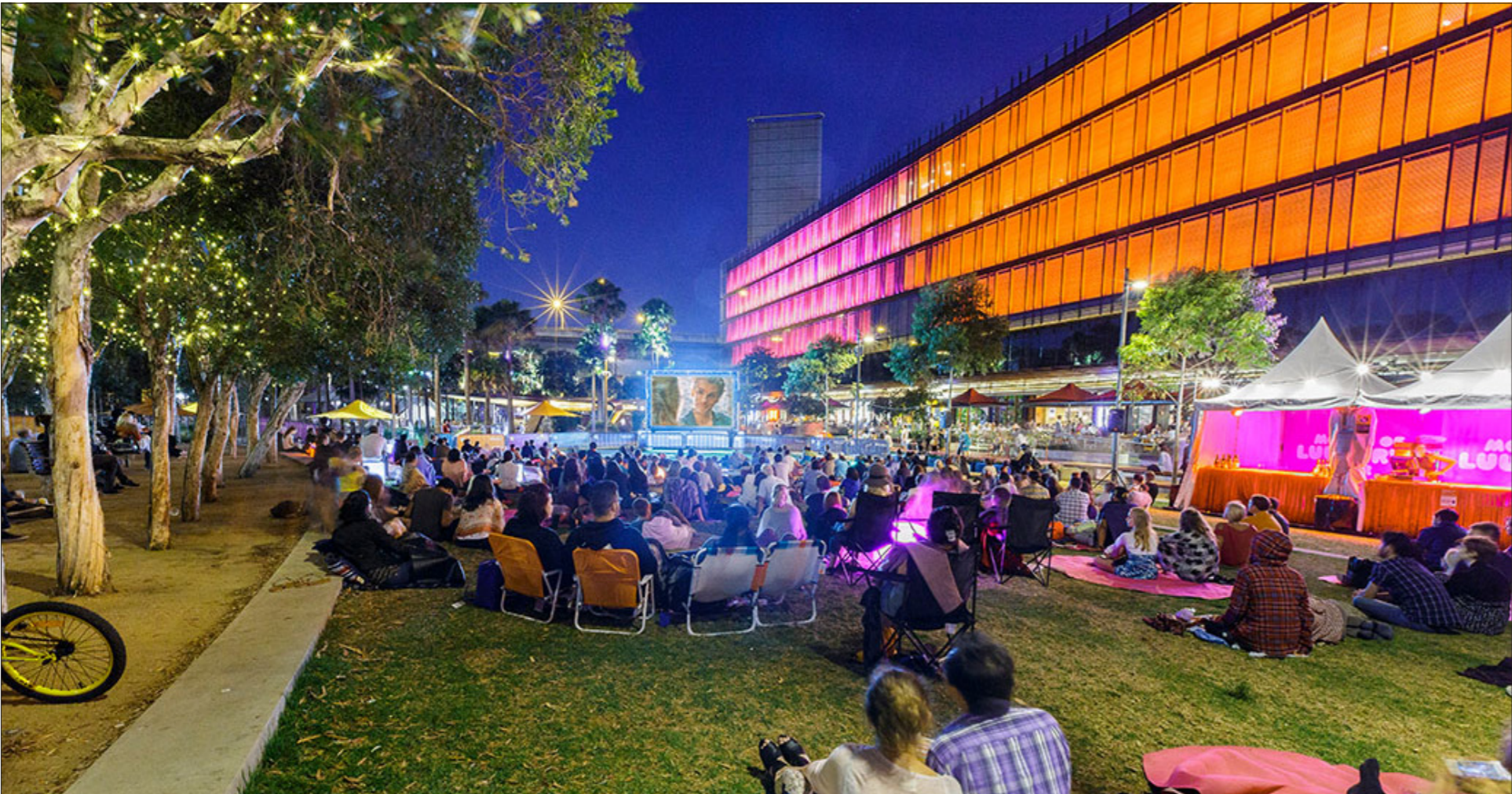
Aims

This principle is supported by the following aims:

- Provide for the needs of the Cooks Cove community in response to future population and land use projections to ensure facilities such as neighbourhood serving retail, primary schools, community centres, libraries and health services are planned for from the beginning.
- Understand the community facilities required not only by the Cooks Cove precinct, but also by the growing precincts of Arncliffe and Banksia to provide an integrated and holistic response to community and social infrastructure planning that benefits the broader community.
- Deliver a people-centred place with a high degree of amenity and a strong identity to make the future population of Cooks Cove proud to live or work here.
- Cater for a broad and diverse range of demographics to meet the needs of children, teenagers, families, key workers, professionals and the elderly from varying cultural and ethnic backgrounds who may choose to live in, work in or visit Cooks Cove.



Figure 3: Principle 3 – Deliver a vibrant social heart, Source: AECOM, 2016



Desired Character

This principle establishes a desired character for the precinct founded on equity, diversity and activity. All future residents, workers or visitors should feel a sense of inclusion and belonging in their community. An identifiable ‘centre’ for Cooks Cove should be established which provides clustered uses that meet the needs of the community. This may take the form of a ‘main street’ environment with active ground floor uses; it may face north to maximise solar access and provide amenity for a local cafe with outdoor seating; it may overlook significant open space to provide a pleasant outlook or a playground for children of all ages. This centre is the place where all members of the community can participate in the social life of Cooks Cove.

Recommended Actions

- This principle recommends the following actions to achieve a vibrant social heart:
- Understand the likely future demographics of the community.
 - Understand the specific social infrastructure and open space needs of the future community.
 - Introduce a ‘main street’ for Cooks Cove.
 - Locate active uses, such as a cafe, community centre, library or health services, on this main street.
 - Orient the main street to face north and maximise solar access.
 - Collocate a civic park or community open space with this main street.
 - Consider appropriate densities to achieve the desired vibrancy for Cooks Cove.
 - Establish a community based organisation for Cooks Cove.
 - Create an events overlay for Cooks Cove to activate public spaces, engage with the community and provide a rich social life.



These images are indicative character images illustrating what Cooks Cove might look like with new community spaces, facilities and events contributing to its vibrant social heart.

1.4 Principle 4

Establish a new green heart for Rockdale

Purpose

The primary purpose of this principle is to enhance the local and regional open space, sport and recreation offer for the broader Rockdale community. This includes providing regional accessibility to recreation opportunities such as walking and cycling. The precinct performs an important role in providing a broad range of sport and recreation facilities for Rockdale and there is an opportunity to reinforce Cooks Cove as the pre-eminent centre for sports excellence in the area. This means significant amenity for those living and working in Cooks Cove with direct access to ovals, playing fields, outdoor multi-purpose courts, regional bicycle trails and even a golf course. There is also a need to plan for a diversity of needs and abilities with regard to these open spaces, sports and recreation facilities. An enhanced green heart positions Cooks Cove with a diverse and competitive healthy lifestyle offer.

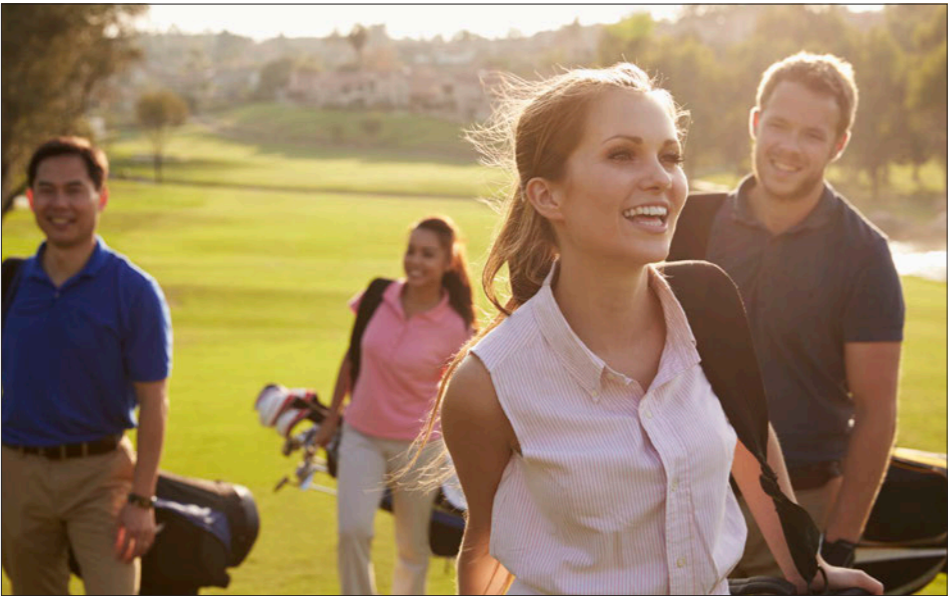
Aims

This principle is supported by the following aims:

- Confirm the regional sport and recreational facilities required to meet the needs of the community and address the aspirations of Rockdale City Council, then identify the most appropriate location for them considering availability of land and accessibility to the facilities.
- Provide local public open spaces and recreation amenity to service the new Cooks Cove community, the adjacent suburbs of Wolli Creek, Arncliffe and Banksia as well as a possible new primary school.



Figure 4: Principle 4 – Establish a new green heart for Rockdale, Source: AECOM, 2016



These images are indicative character images illustrating what Cooks Cove might look like with a publicly accessible pedestrian and cycle path on the Cooks River with enhanced open space and recreation facilities.

Desired Character

This principle establishes a desired character for the precinct founded on healthy living and access to amenities. There is a unique opportunity to define Cooks Cove as the regional sports and recreation hub for greater Rockdale. This provides a clear identity for the precinct as the new green heart where all your sport and recreation needs can be met. These facilities can be located to the south of the M5 Motorway or along the Cooks River foreshore where buildings are restricted due to infrastructure constraints. Future workers, residents and visitors to Cooks Cove will be able to stroll to soccer games, play tennis under the fig trees and kayak along the river.

Recommended Actions

This principle recommends the following actions to achieve a new green heart:

- Locate sports and recreation facilities adjacent to the Cooks River to provide a high degree of amenity and to take advantage of the utility easements.
- Reinforce the Cooks River waterfront as a publicly accessible edge with a significant public promenade and regional cycleways connecting Botany Bay to Homebush.
- Consider shared facilities between schools and the community to maximise their use during the day, in the afternoon and on weekends while also sharing maintenance costs.

1.5 Principle 5

Build upon the existing water narrative

Purpose

The primary purpose of this principle is to leverage the amenity and function of the existing water systems within and adjacent to the precinct to create a distinct identity for Cooks Cove. Natural systems in an urban setting can be the single most defining design element of a precinct and are very important to the liveability of a place. Successful precinct planning requires the integration of natural qualities to soften the urban built environment. For this reason, this principle works with the existing water systems of the precinct – the Cooks River, the wetlands and the overland flow paths – to promote a holistic water narrative that is visible and evident to the future residents, workers and visitors of Cooks Cove.

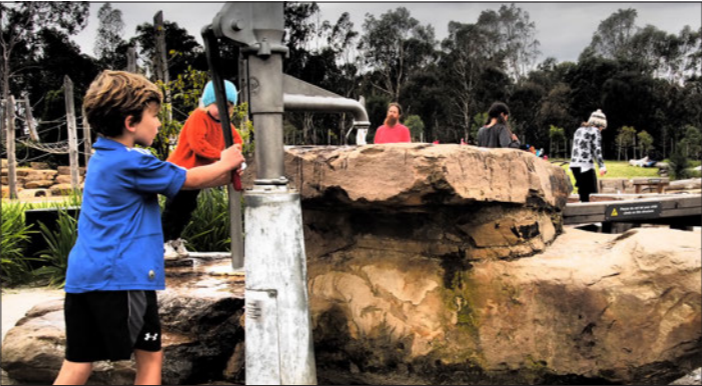
Aims

This principle is supported by the following aims:

- Use water as a defining structural character on the site to create legible connections between the existing wetlands and to integrate overland flow paths into the internal street network.
- Provide continuous public waterfront access to the Cooks River to ensure equity of access to this amenity, to take advantage of the utility easements and to reinforce connectivity and permeability for the precinct.
- Enable water sensitive urban design principles to be embedded into the design of the public domain and open space network.
- Integrate flood mitigation requirements, including a flood storage area and a flow path connecting the flood storage area to Marsh Street, into the public domain and open space network to offset residual flood impacts north of Marsh Street.
- Introduce elements of ‘water play’ into the public domain and open space network to reiterate the water narrative, to create a unique experience specific to Cooks Cove and to provide amenity on hot summer days.



Figure 5: Principle 5 – Build upon the existing water narrative, Source: AECOM, 2016



These images are indicative character images illustrating how the water narrative of Cooks Cove might be interpreted in the public domain with water play and water sensitive urban design elements.

Desired Character

This principle establishes a desired character for the precinct with water as a strong identifying element and functional requirement for Cooks Cove. Future residents, workers and visitors to Cooks Cove will be able to experience the water narrative in the precinct in the following ways: explore the wetlands through a connected wetland walk with interpretive signage; observe biofiltration occurring in the verge or median of designated streets; engage in water play activities at the vibrant social heart of Cooks Cove; and promenade along the Cooks River waterfront at sunset.

Recommended Actions

- This principle recommends the following actions to reinforce the water narrative:
- Create a wetland walk with interpretive signage.
 - Create a public promenade along the Cooks River waterfront.
 - Establish a public domain strategy focused on water sensitive urban design principles and 'water play' elements.
 - Continue to test flood mitigation requirements as the structure plan progresses.

1.6 Principle 6

Leverage the natural and cultural heritage

Purpose

The primary purpose of this principle is to maximise the existing heritage elements of the precinct that make Cooks Cove distinct and identifiable. This encompasses ecological, environmental and cultural elements which meaningfully contribute to the history of the precinct and its sense of place. Cooks Cove has a rich natural and cultural heritage to draw upon as the precinct undergoes transition. Through the recognition and celebration of these elements, Cooks Cove can reinforce an authentic identity for itself.

Aims

This principle is supported by the following aims:

- Integrate the natural heritage of the existing wetlands and fig trees into the precinct to celebrate these unique assets for Cooks Cove.
- Retain existing mature trees where possible, recognising that some fill will be required to mitigate flood impacts, to provide amenity and character on day one of the precinct's staged redevelopment.
- Consider the cultural heritage of the market garden as an opportunity to incorporate initiatives such as a local grower's market, a community garden or productive vegetation into the precinct to build upon the edible landscape narrative.
- Accommodate existing and future green and golden bell frog habitat as per the Environmental Impact Statement for the New M5 and any EPBC Approval requirements.
- Interpret the history and heritage of the Southern and Western Suburbs Ocean Outfall Sewer as an opportunity for an enhanced public domain element that provides an interface between the northern part of the precinct and the M5 Motorway.



Figure 6: Principle 6 – Leverage the natural and cultural heritage, Source: AECOM, 2016



Desired Character

This principle establishes a desired character for the precinct that is rich with heritage. An understanding of this heritage is accessible to residents, workers and visitors as the public domain communicates and interprets items of significance. Layers of heritage can be experienced in the public domain and open space network.

Recommended Actions

This principle recommends the following actions to leverage the heritage:

- Create an integrated heritage strategy for the precinct.
- Create a wetland management and interpretation plan.
- Undertake an assessment of existing mature trees on site to determine their condition and longevity.
- Create a landscape master plan and interpretation strategy for the Southern and Western Suburbs Ocean Outfall Sewer.



These images are indicative character images illustrating how the existing natural and cultural heritage of Cooks Cove might be interpreted in the public domain with public art and landscape elements.