St Leonards & Crows Nest 2036
Stage 02 Urban Design Study
At SJB we believe that the future of the city is in generating a rich urban experience through the delivery of density and activity, facilitated by land uses, at various scales, designed for everyone.
Report Overview and Key Findings

St Leonards and Crows Nest will play a significant role in achieving the NSW Government’s vision for the ‘Harbour City’, as identified in A Plan for Growing Sydney. The area will support new jobs in close proximity to public transport, homes and will provide a high level of amenity, whilst being connected to nearby centres at Chatswood, North Sydney, Macquarie Park and the Sydney CBD.

The proposed Crows Nest Sydney Metro Station will be a catalyst for bringing new life into the area, strengthening the characteristics that make it a great place, while also delivering new experiences and services for existing and future residents.

St Leonards and Crows Nest has a strategic role within the Sydney metropolitan area. It provides a unique opportunity to strengthen and develop many of the existing qualities that attract people to live, work and relax here. Future development will be responsive to a clear identity and purpose, which is inspiring, enjoyable and rewarding.

About St Leonards and Crows Nest
Located 5km north-west of the Sydney Central Business District (CBD), St Leonards and Crows Nest covers an area that includes three local government areas; Lane Cove, North Sydney and Willoughby Councils.

The area spans approximately 271 hectares. It provides a unique urban condition, comprising a variety of land uses, including low, medium and high density residential, commercial, retail, light industry, education establishments, major health precincts and sport and recreation facilities. All of this is provided across undulating topography and a movement network that features a range of transport options; train, bus, cycle, walking and soon metro.

Starting with Place
To achieve the objectives, vision and underlying aspirations for St Leonards and Crows Nest, a careful recognition and understanding of place is required. We recognised that the area includes a number of distinct neighbourhoods, each with their own unique identity, built form and place-making qualities. Outlined in our Stage 1 Report, this appreciation of the defining characteristics of St Leonards and Crows Nest has been informed by community and stakeholder feedback, to form the basis of this study.

The urban design strategy has carefully considered the impact of development pressure on retaining local character and a sense of place. Within the strategy, these qualities are preserved and enhanced through the strategic location, internalisation and integration of proposed new development into the existing urban fabric.

Objectives
The key objectives for St Leonards and Crows Nest area are as follows:
1. Preserve, strengthen and enhance the existing diverse character areas through careful consideration of place.
2. Leverage world-class health and education uses to provide opportunities for future employment growth.
3. Protect and strengthen the area’s commercial role supported by complementary uses to capitalise on renewed confidence in the commercial market.
4. Create a network of new and existing usable, public and diverse open spaces which prioritise walking, cycling and access to transport, promote a healthier urban environment and encourage social interaction.
5. Incorporate opportunities for transit oriented development including commercial and mixed use development that takes advantage of existing and future transport.
6. Create future employment opportunities leveraging off the increased transport capacity of the new metro station.
7. Strengthen and enhance opportunities in the Artarmon employment area to fulfil the important urban service needs of the wider North District.
8. Develop high quality and diverse residential areas that create sustainable and liveable communities.

Strategic Framework Influencing the Area
In delivering an urban design approach, the team has considered a range of strategic drivers, which have been underpinned by state and local planning policy, economic drivers, and development capacity. These include:
- The Greater Sydney Region Plan (GSRP) vision for St Leonards as a Strategic Centre and Collaboration Area.
- Employment targets set by the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC), and subsequent floor space requirements.
- Residential capacity, influenced by the announcement of the Crows Nest Sydney Metro Station.

Delivering the Concept
A primary concept was established for the area and builds off the analysis undertaken in Stage 1 of the project. The concept aims to unify the various character areas through an expanded green network of open spaces, active frontages and vibrant environments. Some key priorities included:
1. Consolidate commercial development around St Leonards and Crows Nest Stations.
2. Increase the amount of open space and plazas.
3. Improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity.
4. Preserve character of Willoughby Road.
5. Retain Artarmon Industrial sub-precinct.

Preparing the Framework Plans
Building from the analysis and conceptual framework presented in Stage 1 additional inputs, strategic drivers and place making factors have been layered and distilled into a suite of Structure Plans to support the vision. The Structure Plans address:
1. Land Use
2. Built Form
3. Environment, Public Domain and Community
4. Movement and Access
5. Activity
Environment, Public Domain and Community

Create an integrated network of green spaces and connections that build on the existing open space

1. Provide pedestrian and cycleway improvements to St Leonards Centre from surrounding suburbs, including on-road and off-road cycleways.
2. Provide priority landmark street trees and avenue plantings along Pacific Highway between St Leonards Station and Crows Nest Sydney Metro Station.
3. New street/pedestrian connections, including active street frontages within Artarmon Industrial Area around Frederick, Herbert and Waltham Streets.
4. Explore new street connections east-west to Newlands Park in St Leonards South.
5. Upgrade and expand Home Street Park and investigate relocation of sports facility in adjoining building.
6. Provide an open space link adjoining the rail line south of St Leonards Station towards Floor Road.
7. Retain green edge and vistas to Gore Hill Park and Cemetery, as well as investigate enhancement of Gore Hill Oval and facility upgrade in accordance with Council’s masterplan.
8. Investigate opportunity for a sports facility in Artarmon Industrial Area (active facility).

Movement and Access

Prioritise pedestrian amenity and connectivity to the high-quality public transport networks operating in the area

1. Enhance pedestrian and cycling links from the surrounding suburbs into St Leonards Centre.
2. Investigate crossing points and upgrade existing crossings, particularly around the proposed Crows Nest Sydney Metro sites.
3. Improve the place function of roads where appropriate.
4. Upgrade key intersections to assist vehicles whilst implementing traffic management calming where appropriate to reinforce the hierarchy and improve pedestrian safety.
5. Strengthen the importance of pedestrian access and shared paths adjacent to Gore Hill Freeway.
6. Consider pedestrian and cycling bypass links on the northern side of Pacific Highway across the rail line to support cyclist and pedestrian movements away from Pacific Highway and St Leonards.
7. Establish a car parking policy to reduce parking rates for residential and commercial developments in close proximity to public transport.

Land Use and Activity

Enhance and strengthen the existing employment, health services, retail and diverse housing choices

1. Focus commercial uses in the area between and immediately surrounding St Leonards and Crows Nest Stations, in the form of standalone developments integrated into mixed-use proposals.
2. Protect the fine grain character of Narrabeen and Helensburgh Estate Conservation Areas.
3. Encourage renewal of the commercial strip along the Pacific Highway, west of St Leonards Station.
4. Enhance the Health and Education Precinct.
5. Retain the function of Artarmon as one of the region’s key population serving precincts for essential urban services.
6. Potential medium density residential development in St Leonards South with strong focus on transition to existing residential neighbourhoods.
7. Expand mixed use activities east towards Willoughby Road, articulated through scale and form that is sensitive to the existing context.
9. Alternatively, allow for evolution of higher order high tech industrial urban services.

Built Form

Building form, scale and location to reflect the existing urban conditions, character and amenity

1. High-density commercial and mixed use development concentrated in the area along Pacific Highway, immediately surrounding and between the two stations.
2. Height transitions away from the stations, particularly towards Willoughby Road, ensuring the low scale and fine grain character, along with high level of amenity is preserved.
3. Clearly define the edges of character areas through the scale and setback of buildings, such as Chandos and Oakey Streets separating St Leonards from Narrabeen and Crows Nest respectively.
4. Preserve and enhance the distinctive neighbourhood characters, including the conservation areas to the north and west of the study area.
5. Enhance the quality and scale of built form with industrial employment generating uses throughout the Artarmon Industrial Area.
6. Health and education precinct to evolve and intensify within a walking catching to the station.
The Draft Plan for St Leonards and Crows Nest

The Draft Plan for St Leonards and Crows Nest illustrates a unified and over-arching plan for the study area. It combines and distils the actions and directions identified in a series of Framework Plans, which cover a number of key themes. The Plan focuses on improving connectivity across and between the identified character areas through a network of green streets, activity areas and public spaces.

The greatest focus of development will be within St Leonards Centre and along Pacific Highway to the Crows Nest Sydney Metro sites. Sites in these locations can embrace the close proximity to public transport and existing density to provide additional commercial and residential floor space, enhance the quality of the streetscape and support activation of the centre.

Existing residential neighbourhoods and conservation areas of Narrabeen and Crows Nest will be protected, undergoing no change as a result of this Plan. Land in St Leonards South will transition from Canberra Avenue to Park Road ensuring solar access is maintained to surrounding low scale residential areas and to Newlands Park. The Artsanion Industrial Area in the north-west will be preserved for employment opportunities, continuing to provide essential urban services in line with the current zoning controls. Industrial jobs will be facilitated east of Herbert Street and South of Frederick Street to support existing intensification and evolution of the industrial area, for sites within a close proximity to public transport.

Consequently, public domain improvements will be focused on enhancing the functionality and accessibility of the areas immediately surrounding the two stations, and the integration with existing open spaces. Efforts should also be made to provide active transport and pedestrian safety within the Herbert and Frederick Street areas to support existing and emerging employment uses in the area.

The proposed Centre will be defined by Chandos Street to the north, Oxley Street and the Crows Nest Sydney Metro sites to the east and Oxley Street south of the Pacific Highway to the south, anchored by St Leonards Station in the north-western corner. This Central Precinct will serve as a new heart for the area connecting to the surrounding character areas. This precinct will encapsulate the areas of greatest development upfit, activation and public domain improvements.
Purpose of Report

The District Plan (GSC 2018) identifies the St Leonards and Crowes Nest Station as a Strategic Centre, Health and Education Precinct and Collaboration Area, playing a central role to the growth of Sydney’s Global Arc. The St Leonards and Crowes Nest 2036 Stage 2 Urban Design Study has been prepared by SJB on behalf of the NSW Department of Planning and Environment to underpin the directions outlined in the North District Plan.

The information outlined in this study will inform the draft Plan for St Leonards and Crowes Nest and builds on the findings from the Stage 1 Preliminary Urban Design Analysis, which established a high level conceptual strategy and vision.

Stage 2 explores the strategies outlined in the Interim Statement, and accompanying Stage 1 Study in greater detail, including the identification of how job targets can be delivered whilst responding to the existing character and place that is established within the area. A series of framework plans have been developed to guide future development within the area, drawing upon urban design principles established in stage 1, desired built form and character statements, site specific design testing, and technical inputs from the broader consultant team (open space, social infrastructure, heritage and transport).

A central component of Stage 2 has been the iterative and collaborative design testing of the proposed built form. This process has involved members of Lane Cove, Willoughby and North Sydney Councils, in addition to a number of state government agencies, who have assisted the team from SJB and the DPRS in refining the approaches to built form, including the consideration of visual and character impacts, heritage conservation interfaces, solar impact and view sharing, amenity streets and spaces, movements and connectivity, and provision of social infrastructure, to name a few.

The findings and outcomes of Stage 2 will inform the next stage of planning, which may include a review of local planning controls and policies, provision of infrastructure and staging.

Consultant Team

- Transport Study
  Consultant: Cardina
- Social Infrastructure and Open Space Study
  Consultant: ARUP
- Economic Feasibility
  Consultant: SGS Economics & Planning
- Urban Design Study
  Consultant: SJB Architects
- Heritage Study
  Consultant: Weir Phillips Architects
- Utilities Study
  Consultant: Mott MacDonald

Project Staging

Stage 1
Strategic Review

Stage 2 Draft St Leonards and Crowes Nest 2036

- Consider Submissions on Stage 1
- Consider Feedback from Local Character Consultation
- Finalise Technical Studies
- Exhibit Draft Plan
- Consider Submissions
- Finalise Plan

Stage 3 Delivery
Stage 2 Process

The iterative design process that underpins Stage 2 of the project is outlined below and includes three key steps, which are based on the NSW Government Architect’s document, ‘Better Place’. It includes the continual loop of refinement between the various stakeholders, facilitated by the DPE, with assistance from SJB and the consultant team.

1 - Preliminary Urban Design Analysis
Stage 1 was based on an analysis of the study area, including its immediate and broader urban contexts, constraints and opportunities. This stage provided the baseline analysis of social, environmental and statutory planning issues.

The process involved ongoing collaboration with the three Councils, workshops with key stakeholders, and synthesis of the preliminary findings into a robust and clear vision.

2 - Draft Plan for St Leonards and Crows Nest
Stage 2 builds upon the preliminary analysis in Stage 1 and transforms these ideas into a number of land use, urban and built form options that deliver employment in line with the job targets outlined by the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC).

A major focus of this stage and the preparation of the Plan has been the built form testing and synthesis of urban character throughout the area. The final built form scenarios have been informed by input from consultation with the Government Architect NSW (GANSW) team. This will be an ongoing process that continues into Stage 3.

Each iteration of the urban design has been assessed and refined against the proposed vision, and the principles identified in Stage 1.

3 - Delivery
Stage 3 is likely to begin after the release of the draft Plan and review of the various submissions and feedback from the community and stakeholders. This final stage of the process will include the ongoing testing and refinement of the various mechanisms required to create a network of amenity spaces, provision of open space and social infrastructure, amenity of streets and spaces, securing and strengthening local character, meeting job targets and ensuring excellent design outcomes.

As the approaches to built form, land use, open space, sense of place, character, connectivity, etc. become finalised, work will begin on the mechanisms to deliver these outcomes - planning controls, infrastructure delivery.
**Approach to Stage 2 - The Framework**

The framework outlined below illustrates how the vision has been identified, refined and referenced throughout the design process. The framework also focuses on meeting the objectives of the area, which includes significant employment targets, improving amenity and strengthening local character.

1 - **Understand Place and Future Vision**

The first step in the Structure Plan process was to recognise the place, goals, aspirations and objectives articulated by a vision. The vision seeks the creation of a resilient, liveable, responsive, equitable and integrated environment that builds on existing place making qualities.

2 - **Identify Key Factors**

The second step was to identify the key factors that have informed our understanding of the key opportunities and challenges. Key challenges include lack of open space and provision of future commercial floor space.

3 - **Create a Concept**

The third step involved the creation of a Concept Plan, which has been informed by a vision incorporating existing and future character elements, public domain, traffic and transport, heritage and economic consultant input. The concept plan identifies priority actions and directions to ensure the vision is achieved.

4 - **Refine through Framework**

The Framework Plans convey how the priorities for the Concept can be achieved by addressing key issues through responsive principles and criteria.

5 - **Design Testing and draft Plan**

Built form outcomes were tested against the design principles outlined in the framework plans to establish a preferred approach to built form that aligns with the vision and principles.
Setting the Scene

This section provides an overview of St Leonards and Crows Nest, including an analysis of the existing area, strategic drivers, challenges and opportunities.
1.1 Creating the draft Plan

This section provides an overview of the internal and external factors influencing the future of St Leonards and Crows Nest, most notably the various tiers of planning policy that relate to the area, the objectives to deliver new jobs and the pressures from increased housing and population.

Central to this is our understanding of local character and the unique place making qualities that make St Leonards and Crows Nest a memorable and enjoyable place to live, work and play.

The key factors reflect a combined ‘bottom up’ and ‘top down’ approach, with the aspiration and vision coming together to form the draft Plan. Key factors that have shaped the vision include:

- Recognition of existing character and how to enhance it.
- Crows Nest Sydney Metro Station, which presents structural change to the area through new transport infrastructure and a new focal point within the public domain.
- The Greater Sydney Region Plan (GSRP) vision for St Leonards as a Strategic Centre and Collaboration Area.
- Employment targets set by the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC), and subsequent floor space requirements.
- Residential capacity within the area, influenced by the announcement of Crows Nest Sydney Metro Station.

These factors have been considered in relation to ‘place’, referring to the Government Architect NSW’s (GANSW) document ‘Better Placed’ and the process it outlines to achieve better design outcomes, some of which are noted above.
1.2 Strategic Setting

St Leonards and Crows Nest Hierarchy
The Greater Sydney Region Plan identifies St Leonards as a collaboration area, with a mix of uses and activity.

The area supports:
- High density residential;
- Office-based employment hub, including high-rise office developments;
- Health and medical uses at the Royal North Shore Hospital, North Shore Private Hospital;
- Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE and technology industries; and
- Consolidated industrial sub-precinct in Artarmon providing essential urban services to the broader area.

St Leonards and Crows Nest is situated within the Eastern Economic Corridor as defined by the Greater Sydney Region Plan, and is located between two other main employment centres, North Sydney and Chatswood, and connected to the Sydney CBD by road, rail, and bus.

In November 2015, Crows Nest was announced as the location for a metro station.