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St Leonards Crows Nest Draft Planning Package
St Leonards and Crows Nest 2036 Draft Plan
Proposed Special Infrastructure Contribution – St Leonards and Crows Nest

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the St Leonards Crows Nest Planned Precinct draft planning package. Bike North has over a hundred members in the Willoughby, North Sydney and Lane Cove local government areas, with a local and significant interest in the St Leonards Crows Nest planned precinct. Bike North is a volunteer run bicycle user group, affiliated with Bicycle New South Wales and Cycling New South Wales, with a membership of over 500. We work with many councils in northern Sydney, including these three councils, towards creating a bicycling friendly environment for all who want to use a bike for transport or recreation in northern Sydney.

Our members would have varying opinions on many aspects of *St Leonards and Crows 2036 Draft Plan (2036 Draft Plan)*, such as rezoning and building height proposals, so we comment specifically on areas within this package that are within our specific expertise, which is cycling infrastructure on the lower North Shore, in areas of Willoughby, North Sydney and Lane Cove. Our submission is in respect to the urgent need for an upgraded network plan of cycling routes within and surrounding the precinct together with adequate funding to deliver those routes. The proposals which are conceptually identified within the *2036 Draft Plan* make an initial attempt to address the cycling network requirements, but they are inadequate and need much further refinement and detail, especially to ensure they are **consistent not just with current local council plans but are consistent with Transport for NSW's developing plans for a Principal Bicycle Network**. The **proposed contribution of \$3,437,000 for pedestrian and cycle improvements is welcome**, although further funding avenues will be required to fully deliver the bicycle network. We also recommend that the list of Pedestrian and Cycle Improvements itemised in the *Proposed Special Infrastructure Contribution (Infra. Cont.)* be reviewed once the proposed network is finalised. Mechanisms also need to be in securely in place to ensure the contributions are collected and allocated to the final itemised improvements.

The realisation of *2036 Draft Plan* and recent developments already underway will result in a significant population increase particularly in Lane Cove, North Sydney and even Willoughby. This population increase cannot be sustained within our current car dominated society. Hand in hand with these developments must be the realistic option for every resident of this entire precinct to live a car free lifestyle and for every worker in this precinct to have excellent walking and cycling options within the region and to frequent public transport.

The underlying requirement for *2036 Draft Plan* are safe and attractive walking and cycling routes from all residential and commercial properties within the precinct to the following but not restricted to:

- All public transport nodes including St Leonards Railway Station, Crows Nest Metro Station and frequent bus services
- Employment and educational centres within and just beyond the precinct including St Leonards Commercial Centre, Royal North Shore Hospital, North Shore Private Hospital, Greenwich Hospital, Mater Hospital, North Sydney TAFE, Artarmon Industrial Area, Greenwich School

- Recreational and sporting parks in the district including Naremburn Park, Bicentennial Reserve, Gore Hill Park, Smoothey Park, Berrys Creek, Berry Island
- Employment centres within the neighbouring Strategic Centres of North Sydney and Chatswood
- Major regional cycleways such as the Gore Hill Cycleway, the proposed North Shore Link Cycleway and other priority proposed cycleways connecting Chatwood to St Leonards and St Leonards to North Sydney – these provide excellent the option to make active travel journeys to further afield.

Gore Hill and Epping Road Cycleway

The Gore Hill Freeway and its extension along the Epping Road Cycleway to Macquarie Park is the only high quality regional cycleway that passes through the lower North Shore and is in close proximity to the St Leonards Crows Nest area. By using this cycleway people have access to the local suburbs of Naremburn, Artarmon, Lane Cove and other centres toward the strategic centre of Macquarie Park, including the business park and university. There are numerous exits and entrances along this cycleway, including several within close proximity to the planned precinct in Artarmon Reserve, Artarmon Park and suburb and Naremburn shopping village. Developing new and enhancing existing routes to and from this cycleway to many locations within the precinct is a very cost effective way to enable people to walk or use a bike for many of their journeys. Major destinations at St Leonards that require quality connections are St Leonards Station, the neighbouring Commercial Centre and the Hospital precinct at Royal North Shore.

These destinations require access from both east and west of the railway line.

East of the railway line there is already a bike route along Francis St, crossing busy Dalleys Road and continuing to St Leonards using a narrow and windy shared path ending in a car yard requiring a convoluted on-road detour to the station. The *2036 Draft Plan* does appear to indicate improvements to this route, at least via future development of the car parking land and car yard next to St Leonard Station at the railway line. This is welcome but we would also recommend an alternative to Francis St that could be considered. There is ample space beside the railway line for the a full walking and cycling corridor to St Leonards Station. A diagram to illustrate this is attached to this letter of submission. A walking/cycle path along this section would go under Dalleys Rd and provide total separation from traffic. A safe secure route to St Leonards commercial centre and railway station which would attract people to use instead of a car.

Ample bike parking is needed at this major destination of St Leonards Station. There are already 4 bike lockers that are usually fully booked with a number of casual bike rails in frequent use in the vicinity of the car parking site. This should be an excellent location for what is now best practice bike parking at Sydney train stations – the bike shed or compound. One shed should be installed now, with capacity to extend to several more once developments are realised.

Equivalent bike parking facilities are of course also required at the Crows Nest Metro Station.

West of railway line there is already an on-road route along Herbert Street and this also appears on the 2016 Plan. While there is a bike lane on Herbert Street, it is very close to parked cars and there is no physical separation from cars. There is an exit from the Gore Hill Cycleway at Punch Street, which intersects with Herbert Street and we strongly recommend that the section of Herbert Street between Punch Street and the Pacific Highway (at least) should be upgraded to provide a separated bike lane or shared path. This will finally provide safe, excellent access for the large workforce and visitors to Royal North Shore and North Shore Private hospitals either along the

Westbourne Street (within the hospital grounds) or via Frederick Street and Reserve Road, using shared paths proposed by Willoughby Council.

St Leonards and Chatswood are both strategic centre and our understanding is that the highest priority and quality routes connect strategic centres. These routes outlined above between the Gore Hill Cycleway and St Leonards Station would most likely form part of the priority routes.

Link Bridge Herbert St to Chandos Street

The *Infra. Contr.* identifies a link across the railway line from Herbert Street to Chandos Street which, including the route along Chandos Street has been allocated nearly half the funds available under the Contribution Scheme. This appears to use an existing bridge that connects an otherwise isolated development on the eastern side of the railway line to Herbert Street. We agree there is a definite need to connect bike routes east and west of the railway line and this link may eventually be the best way to make that connection, but alternatives should be considered given the high estimated cost. Another site that could be considered would be at the bridge over the railway line at Ella Street.

North Shore Link Cycleway

The North Shore Link Cycleway is a long proposed high quality cycleway that connects the Sydney Harbour Bridge to the Gore Hill Cycleway at Naremburn. It would also form the priority bike route between the City, North Sydney and Chatswood. It is anticipated that this cycleway will primarily be direct along the Pacific Highway and then West Street. Just as the many access points along the Gore Hill Cycleway provide potential routes to the St Leonards Crows Nest planned precinct for connections from the north, so too do link routes from the future North Shore Link Cycleway provide connections from the east to St Leonards and Crows Nest.

The *2036 Draft Plan* and *Infra. Contr.* appear to show Chandos Street as the main eastern bike route. North Sydney Council's current bike route from St Leonards Station uses Atchison Street (to Crows Nest and Cammeray) whereas North Sydney Council uses Henry Lane to access Naremburn Shopping Village. It is our understanding that North Sydney and Willoughby Council are planning a separated cycleway along Chandos Street only as far as Oxley Street at which point the main easterly route would deviate to Atchison Street. The Council proposal appears to provide a reasonable alternative to using the section of Atchison Street between St Leonards Station and Oxley Street due to the major hill. Our primary concerns though would be the high traffic along Chandos street and the roundabout at the intersection of Chandos Street and Northcote Street which is often totally choked. Extensive work would be required to provide separation along Chandos Street and a solution must be found to the impossible situation at that roundabout where traffic is funnelled onto the Pacific Highway right on the pedestrian access to St Leonards Station. Ideally through traffic should be redirected completely away from what should be a pedestrian precinct.

A further link from the North Shore Link Cycleway is required to Crows Nest commercial centre. This best candidate for this link would be Burlington Street.

From Atchison Street, the bike route along Oxley Street can also be extended to the Crows Nest Metro station, to cross the Pacific Highway and join the existing Clark Street cycle path access to Willoughby Road.

Pacific Highway

The Pacific Highway is already a popular cycling route for experienced bike riders as it follows the gentlest gradients, is fairly continuous and provides many connections to local streets to reach a desired destination or link up with local bike routes. There is no adequate infrastructure for bikes, except for minimal sections of shared path or discontinuous bike lane. It is therefore not currently suitable for the 60% of the population who would be *interested but concerned* about riding bikes. The Pacific Highway upgraded with either shared or separated bike paths would be an excellent candidate as the primary bike route to connect North Sydney and St Leonards. Bike North strongly recommends that, a separated bike facility be provided along the Pacific Highway within the scope of this precinct including between the Mater Hospital and Greenwich Road.

St Leonards Station – Pacific Highway Crossing

A major failure of the *2036 Draft Plan* and *Infra. Contr.* is the failure to provide a safe, direct and rideable crossing of the Pacific Highway. Despite developments already underway and proposed planning, despite repeated requests, no provision has been made to cross the Pacific Highway at St Leonards Station.

There is a critical need for a crossing of the highway both to the west, between Herbert Street and Canberra Avenue and east, across Christie Street. We appreciate that there are complications due to the number of local government areas involved, but under an overall precinct planning exercise, this should be the time to achieve this major disconnect. We strongly recommend that a continuous rideable bike link be provided across the Pacific Highway on both sides of the railway line.

South of Pacific Highway – west side

The largest population increase arising from the proposed new planning regime will come from Lane Cove, south of the Pacific Highway including the planned St Leonards South Area.

To the west of the railway line there are a large number of streets that run in a north south direction between the Pacific Highway and River Road (not all connecting), which is the boundary of this planned precinct. There are no connections between most of these north south streets. River Road is a heavily trafficked regional road. While large sections are signposted at 50kph, speeds are often higher. It's windy and hilly and motorists have low expectations that people will cross. There is no safe place for anyone to cross River Road between Greenwich and Shirley Road.

There are three major issues for people walking and cycling to the south of the Pacific Highway:

1. New walking and cycling connections provided in a new planning area
2. Safe crossings required across River Road
3. Reducing through traffic through Safe Active Streets

New walking and cycling connections

It is disappointing that no attempt has been made to provide new walking and cycling connections in an area that will be totally redeveloped. The layout of the existing streets does not provide for easy people connections between streets. Providing cross walking and cycling route between streets is strongly recommended. One option may be to provide a diagonally directed route from the south on Park Avenue and the north on Berry Street. This would bring the community together and provide more efficient walking and cycling routes.

Safe Crossings of River Road

To the south of River Road are the suburbs of Greenwich and Wollstonecraft, including Wollstonecraft Railway Station, and the immediately adjacent recreational parklands of Smoothey Park and Berry Creek and further afield to Berry Island. There are numerous reasons why people need to cross River Road, from recreational journeys in the park and creeks, journeys to schools on the opposite side of the street, access to commercial centres, railway stations and even just visiting other members of the community, including friends and family, who happen to live on the other side of this very busy road. South of River Road there are also pedestrian and bicycle routes along Russel Street and beside Greenwich Scout Hall that link up these many destinations. Unfortunately through given the lack of any safe crossing of River Road, people generally feel safer to drive the car these short distances.

The *2036 Plan* does consider the potential for a signalised crossing at Canberra Avenue. Unfortunately this is not a safe crossing of River Road. Located in a dip of Reserve Road, compliance would be low. River Road requires a grade separated crossing and there are several locations that could be assessed. An overhead bridge could be provided from Canberra Ave/Newlands Park toward Eastview or Russell Streets. Alternatively perhaps this crossing could be more practically achieved at other crossing points such as Berry Road, which does not directly connect by car with River Road and terminates high above that road. This later location though requires better east west walking and cycling connections as described above. The existing bike route connects directly at the Newlands Park site.

A grade separated crossing of River Road would make a wonderful Foreshore Link which would be an excellent amenity to residents of St Leonards, Crows Nest, Wollstonecraft and Greenwich.

Reducing through traffic

We would further recommend that steps should be taken to make these local streets into Safe Active Streets, that encourage walking, cycling and even playing and discouraging through traffic. This can done by low speed design and elements to encourage people use and discourage car use.

South of Pacific Highway – east side

South of the Pacific Highway, on the east side of the railway the *2036 Plan* shows a walking and cycling connection along Lithgow Street. There are good opportunities for an off-road cycleway along Lithgow Street, with useful easements along the railway line. This route though terminates at River Road at a park near the road bridge. To be useful this would need to continue under the road bridge to cross River Road.

In summary Bike North considers that bicycle planning for the St Leonards Crows Nest planned precinct area is at a very immature stage and that we need a coordinated project involving Transport for NSW, Planning NSW, Willoughby, North Sydney Council and Bike North to develop a overall bike network that fits within the over Principal Bicycle Network. We have made a number of suggestions that can provide input to that project, but the best result would be achieved with all parties working together and then supporting a preferred bike network plan.

Yours sincerely

Carolyn New and Ian Meller
On Behalf of Bike North

Proposed Share Path Gore Hill cp Francis St to St Leonards Station

