



# Epping Planning Review

## Executive Summary

June 2017

## How do I make a submission?

This Discussion Paper is being exhibited from Wednesday, 21 June 2017 to Wednesday, 19 July 2017. You can make a submission during this time.

Please quote reference no. **F2017/000210** in your submission.

### **SUBMISSIONS CAN BE POSTED TO:**

Epping Planning Review  
City of Parramatta Council  
PO Box 32  
PARRAMATTA NSW 2150

### **SUBMISSIONS CAN BE EMAILED TO:**

[placeservices@cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au](mailto:placeservices@cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au)

### **YOU CAN ALSO CALL US:**

If you have accessibility concerns, please contact the National Relay Service on <http://relayservice.gov.au/> and provide them with the City of Parramatta number you want to call.

### **WHAT HAPPENS TO MY SUBMISSION?**

All submissions will be carefully considered by senior staff and reported to Council in August 2017, prior to commencing Stage 2. Letters of acknowledgment will be provided for written submissions.

### **WHAT IS ON EXHIBITION?**

The Discussion Paper is being exhibited in conjunction with the following supporting information:

1. **Technical Studies:**
  - a. Heritage Review (prepared by City Plan Services).
  - b. Commercial Floorspace Study (prepared by SGS Economics & Planning).
  - c. Social Infrastructure Study (prepared by Council's Social Outcomes team).
  - d. Interim Traffic Modelling Report (prepared by EMM).
2. **Phase 1 Consultation Report** (prepared by Straight Talk).

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Epping Town Centre has straddled two different local government areas, Parramatta Council and Hornsby Shire Council. Following the Council mergers, all of Epping Town Centre is now under the control of the new City of Parramatta Council.

Recent development and significant new transport projects, such as the North West Metro, are changing the way that the Epping Town Centre functions. How people walk, drive, visit and work in Epping is changing due to pressure from increased residents, traffic and changing business patterns.

The community have been concerned about these changes and this, coupled with the need for planning requirements for the Epping Town Centre to be reviewed so they are consistent, has led to the City of Parramatta undertaking the Epping Town Centre Review.

This Summary Document explains the review, its findings and recommendations, to help the community and stakeholders in making informed comment on what they believe Council should take into account when making decisions about the future planning for Epping Town Centre.

### What did the Review cover?

The Review included technical studies on:

- **Heritage** – looking at specific areas on the northern and eastern sides of the Epping Town Centre that have new development close by, and whether this has changed the character and nature of those Heritage Conservation Areas (HCAs).
- **Commercial floorspace** – identifying how much area is currently available for business and retail use, how other local centres are developing and what the future for Epping Town Centre needs to be in order to have a thriving, vibrant centre.
- **Social infrastructure** – understanding what facilities and programs are available within Epping Town Centre now and what will be needed in the future. This includes halls and meeting rooms, parks, playgrounds and sporting fields and libraries.
- **Traffic** – a review of current conditions and future requirements is underway. Preliminary findings have been included in the Epping Town Centre Review Discussion Paper.

In addition, City of Parramatta Council knew it was important that the community – residents, stakeholders, businesses – had the opportunity to say what they thought was important for Council to consider. A number of workshops, website and a feedback survey were all undertaken to hear directly what the concerns and issues for the community were.

### What will the Review do?

The Review will look at all the technical information – the facts, the rules and legislation, policies etc – and the feedback from the community. All of this is brought together in the Discussion Paper, together with key recommendations and questions.

The community – residents, stakeholders, businesses – have a chance to tell City of Parramatta what they think of the recommendations and why.

These responses will then assist Council in formulating broader policy position on infrastructure and planning and in particular guide the development of a new set of LEP, DCP and Developer Contributions policies for Epping.

### What are the major issues?

Recent development in Epping has seen higher buildings. This is bringing more people into Epping but has also had an impact on nearby houses, some of which are in areas designated as Heritage Conservation Areas. There has been some loss of privacy for these local residents and homes.

Demand for housing in Sydney is at its highest and this is reflected in the large amount of development occurring in Epping. But shops, businesses and professional services such as accountants, dentists, physiotherapists and solicitors are also important as they provide much needed services and jobs. It is important that Council has a clear plan that encourages the right amount of floor area for future businesses and services.

More people mean more demand on services, particularly social infrastructures such as parks, swimming pools, halls, meeting rooms and libraries. Epping's community facilities are very well used but some facilities are old, not in great repair or are not well located.

Increased traffic is seeing local residents experiencing delays in the peak hours and difficulty parking in their streets or accessing their driveways.

City of Parramatta is not responsible for everything and therefore cannot fix everything. Traffic, for example, is an area that Council cannot control directly – the major roads in Epping are under the control of NSW Roads and Maritime and trains and buses are managed by Transport for NSW. But Council can and does play an important role in understanding local issues and making sure these State government agencies are aware of what is happening and what needs to be done. The Epping Town Centre Review is an important part of this process.

### Heritage and planning controls

The technical study has found that while there has been a lot of development, it does not impact on the integrity of existing Heritage Conservation Areas. However, some local landowners and residents have identified some significant impacts, particularly through loss of privacy, and the need for some changes to be made.

The Discussion Paper identifies a range of options which respond to the breadth of opinion received to date. The Discussion Paper seeks feedback on the following:

- For sites at the **Rosebank Avenue and Essex Street HCA** interfaces, the Discussion Paper proposes seven options which range from no change to allowing redevelopment. Council Officers subsequently recommend three of those seven options be investigated further. The consultation question seeks the community's preferred option (refer to **Question 7a**).
- For sites at the **interface with the East Epping HCA** interfaces:
  - At **Rockleigh Park** currently zoned R4, the Discussion Paper recommends rezoning to the R3 zone along with a master plan process and would like to know your views on this recommendation.

- In relation to **No.s 25 Pembroke Avenue and 1, 3, 3A, 5, 7, 7A Norfolk Road**, the Heritage Study recommends that the HCA notation be removed from those affected properties within this group .

Council would like know what your preference is for the future development outcomes for this site ranging from apartment buildings to dual occupancy development. (Refer to **Questions 7b and 7c**) identified different zoning options for these sites.

- For the **Rose Street Precinct** the Discussion Paper recommends rezoning to the R3 zone with a master plan process to determine appropriate density controls. The question asks whether you agree with the recommendation (refer to **Question 7d**).

## Commercial floorspace

The study finds that the Epping Town Centre should develop into a Sub-District Town Centre. However, this is not likely to happen unless the planning framework encourages it through requirements for commercial and retail floorspace. What this means is that every option for Epping will involve a trade-off – between more or less commercial and retail and/or residential; but also potentially enabling the change in land use within the current building heights or allowing higher building heights. This is because the costs of building commercial, retail and residential are different; but also because the financial returns are very different. To encourage more commercial and retail, it may be necessary to provide additional residential floorspace. These are some of the challenges which Council is seeking the community's views about, before it balances everything up and makes final recommendations.

Key questions for the community to answer are:

1. Should Epping become a **Sub-District Town Centre**? This would mean that additional commercial and retail floorspace needs to be developed (refer to **Question 8a**).

2. If Epping becomes a **Sub-District Town Centre**, should that be by:

Keeping the heights of buildings at the same level, but requiring a higher proportion of commercial and retail and thus reducing the amount of residential? (Developers will say this will cost them more, as they cannot get the same return for commercial as they can for residential. It may result in no development at all as developers wait for the market to improve before they build). (Refer to **Question 8b**).

Or

Allowing additional floor space by way of building heights so the commercial floorspace targets can be met (this encourages developers to build as they access better returns, but it will mean higher buildings in the Epping Town Centre) without it impacting on the current amount of residential which developers can currently get. (Refer to **Question 8c**).

3. **240 – 244 Beecroft Road** is owned by the State government and is being used for the North West Metro Rail line, but if developed under the current controls, the site only needs to deliver some ground floor retail with the rest as residential. However, Council Officers see there are three options for this site;
  - Leave it as it is (no additional commercial)
  - Rezone to allow a mix of retail and commercial
  - Amend the controls so that no residential is allowed, only commercial.

4. As with the previous question, this is about trade-offs – what will give the best outcome for the community but is still attractive enough so that the site is redeveloped and doesn't remain undeveloped. (Refer to **Question 8d**).
5. The **Epping Station site** has been suggested as an opportunity to provide a link between both sides of Epping by allowing development over the top of the site. Do you think this is a good idea as it will provide both the link but also more commercial opportunities? (Refer to **Question 8e**).
6. **Council car park site – Rawson Road** – Council has already been approached by a number of developers with suggestions for using this site as part of a larger development. Should Council use its site to deliver the additional commercial floor space the Epping Town Centre will need to become a Sub-District Town Centre? (Refer to **Question 8f**).
7. **Epping Library, Chamber Court Epping**. Prior to the Council amalgamations, Hornsby Council had planned to develop a partnership with a developer with a view to delivering a new library as part of a residential development. Council could use the site to contribute additional commercial floorspace for the Epping Town Centre. Alternatively, it could require three levels of commercial floor space but accommodate non-government organisations and community service providers on the lower levels; or thirdly, Council could require additional commercial floorspace.  
  
Should Council consider this site for additional commercial floor space? (Refer to **Question 8f** which also ties in the Rawson Street car park site, as per above).  
  
If this does happen, should the amount allocated to community uses and commercial be the same or greater than those required on adjoining sites? (Refer to **Question 8g**).
8. **Encouraging a supermarket on the eastern side of the town centre**. Getting the right mix will greatly influence the success of the Town Centre. Council can do this by providing incentives (through additional floor space and height). A suitable site has been identified at 38-48 Langston Place and 2 Pembroke Street – should Council do this to encourage a supermarket on the eastern side of Epping Town Centre? (Refer to **Question 8h**).
9. **Large floorplate retail**. Some retail operators also need 'large floorplates' – that is, lots of space for a larger retail model. These include department stores and large retailers selling electronics, appliances and furnishings, for example. Gyms and fitness businesses also need larger floorplates. Should Council consider providing additional floorspace incentives to encourage these uses in Epping Town Centre? (Refer to **Question 8i**).

## Social Infrastructure

With the pace of redevelopment and change occurring within and around the Town Centre, Council needs to understand whether the existing social infrastructure (community halls, pools, parks and other recreational open spaces and facilities) can meet the needs of the community to the year 2036. The *Epping Social Infrastructure Study* has found that certain approaches are required so the Epping community is served with the appropriate infrastructure:

1. **Options for expanding open space**. Council Officers have looked at the most feasible approach to improving the role of open space. They see that the principle behind expanding open space is to consider a number of options instead of 'hedging its bets on purchasing new land. (Refer to **Question 9a**).
2. **Former bowling club site for open space**. Funding is not currently available to purchase this site which is zoned for open space. With a planning proposal process in

place that could deliver a form of open space at little or no cost to Council, Council Officers are wondering whether the community could accept the trade off of allowing additional residential density over the site in return for an equivalent amount of open space being provided back to the community as part of redevelopment (Refer to [Question 9b](#)).

3. **Process for acquiring open space.** Land is expensive and existing parks generally adjoin residential properties, which means that future expansion of existing parks or playing fields would require Council to acquire private residential properties in order to meet the needs of a growing Epping population. Once these private properties are zoned for open space, Council can legally acquire the properties via compulsory acquisition or via negotiated agreement. Council is very aware that acquiring private land for open space can be an emotional process for land owners and it is therefore Council's preference that this be carried out via a process of negotiated acquisition rather than compulsory acquisition (Refer to [Question 9c](#)).
4. **Utilising existing land more effectively.** Changes to the way local parks or sports fields are embellished (such as synthetic surfaces) can improve the longevity of these facilities in meeting the needs of the community or sporting groups who use these spaces. Should Council can also invest in improved landscaping and equipment within parks to accommodate a wider range of needs of residents who want to use these parks (Refer to [Question 9d](#)).
5. **Establishing partnerships to make better use of existing facilities.** Council is in the process of entering into arrangements with the Department of Education to enable use of school facilities outside of school hours such as flexible use of schools' sporting fields. Which schools should Council target in order to improve the availability of sporting fields? (Refer to [Question 9e](#)).
6. **Location of potential future Civic Focal Point.** The Study recommends the provision of a 3,500sqm multi-purpose facility based on the Community Facility Hub Model (involving a library and community floor space). Ideally this Community Facility Hub would be co-located with the Civic Space (a public urban plaza) in order to create a Civic Focal Point (combined urban plaza and community hub) for the Epping Town Centre. Council has 2 major land holdings within the Epping Town Centre for where this might be located – Rawson Street Council car park site and the Epping Library site.

Accordingly, what is your preferred location for a Civic Focal Point (Rawson Street Car Park site or Epping Library site) and why? An alternate option is whether there should be 2 Civic Focal Points within the Epping Town Centre (Refer to [Questions 9f and 9g](#)).

7. **Options for funding and delivering a potential future Civic Focal Point.** Community feedback is required on the mechanisms that might be used to develop a Civic Focal Point regardless of the site. Council would like your feedback on the following funding or delivery options:
  - Selling Council owned land/sites that become surplus to requirements for the purpose of funding the delivery of a single Civic Focal Point (Refer to [Question 9h](#)).
  - Redevelop Council owned sites in accordance with current planning controls and ensure that the financial return be used to fund the new Civic Focal Point. This may also include partnering with a developer to ensure they deliver the required community floor space as part of future redevelopment (Refer to [Question 9i](#)).

- The two preliminary planning proposals (for the sites adjoining the Rawson Street Car Park) are both seeking to underground Council's Rawson Street car park and deliver community facilities and civic space subject to additional density be granted (Refer to **Question 9j**).
8. **Dence Park Aquatic Centre.** The Epping Aquatic and Leisure Centre is a beloved community asset to sections of the Epping community. However, usage level of this facility have been in decline over the years. The technical reports also acknowledge that the facility is in need of significant upgrading and has accessibility issues which means it does not meet the modern day standards for this type of facility. Accordingly, Council is seeking your feedback from the community on what should be the future use of the Dence Park Aquatic Centre site (Refer to **Question 9k**).

## Public Domain

Although there has not been a community workshop held specifically on urban design issues, numerous urban design themes have been consistently raised through the consultation process to date. Recent feedback suggested improvements to connectivity and accessibility throughout the centre which include the creation of new or improving existing pedestrian connections between or through blocks especially where building length was especially long. Council's urban designers have reviewed the structure and layout of Epping Town Centre and suggest opportunities to improve pedestrian connections and footpaths within the centre to improve the pedestrian experience as well as activate the Centre.

Chapter 10.0 contains two consultation question on through site links (Refer to **Question 10a**) and ground floor setbacks (Refer to **Question 10b**) that will contribute towards improving access and convenience for pedestrians as they move through Epping Town Centre.

## Traffic

Council officers acknowledge that traffic congestion and car parking are significant issues affecting the Epping community. The reason for this lies primarily in the fact that two major arterial road routes converge at the Epping Bridge. The east-west Carlingford Road/Epping Road route and the north-south Beecroft Road/Blaxland Road routes converge at the Epping Bridge. This is the reason why 89% of trips that cross the bridge are through traffic trips where the origin and destination of those trips is outside the Epping Town Centre. The through trips are a significant barrier to improving the traffic flow around the Epping Town Centre.

Council has therefore engaged specialist traffic consultants (EMM) to carry out a Traffic Study for Epping based on current development take up and informed by more realistic growth forecasts.

While the final Traffic Study is still yet to be completed interim modelling suggests that regardless of what land use density options or road works improvements are put in place there is little scope for significant improvements to the way the road network operates in the Epping Town Centre unless new policies are pursued to reduce car usage and shift more trips that currently come through the centre by car onto public transport modes.

Council officers acknowledge that while traffic network improvements are not the sustainable answer to reducing traffic congestion, but are an important tool to manage and mitigate congestion. Specific traffic improvements will be able to be tested as part of the final Traffic Study as well as factor in the impact of policy changes that shift a great proportion of vehicles towards public transport.

Given the interim findings, Council is seeking feedback on the following questions which will inform the final Traffic Study to be completed for Epping:

1. **Proposals for additional uplift.** It is Council officers recommendation that Council not support any additional density within the Epping Town Centre above and beyond what the current planning controls permit until the impact of these densities can be modelled through the completion of the Epping Traffic Study; and until car parking and other policies are resolved to ensure the impact of the density is clearly and transparently understood (Refer to **Question 11a**).
2. **Car Parking Rates Review.** Car Parking rates across both sides of Epping Town Centre are currently inconsistent. The Hornsby planning controls contain minimum parking rates while the Parramatta planning controls contain maximum rates. These rates should be made consistent and a maximum parking rate should be applied so that development provides less parking to discourage local car ownership and use. Given interim traffic findings, should Council consider further reducing car parking rates as a means of further reducing traffic and encouraging public transport use? (Refer to **Question 11b**).
3. **Commuter Parking.** Council has received a number of submissions from the community suggesting that Council should either provide or lobby the State Government to provide commuter parking near Epping Station. The basis of this argument is that this would clear surrounding streets of commuter parking and improve access to local shops for residents. However, the provision of commuter car parking can also have unintended impacts which result in additional trips into Epping for the sole purpose of using the car park as well as discouraging people from catching a bus close to their home or to the station in order to continue their public transport journey. While Council officers have concerns about the impact on commuter parking station in Epping, is there a suitable site for which Council should lobby the State Government to have a commuter parking station near Epping Station? (Refer to **Question 11c**).
4. **Policies to manage local parking and access to private motor vehicles.** A common concern put forward in response to any proposal to decrease parking rates is that residents will still own cars but they will just park in local streets. Considering the previous question regarding decreasing parking rates, what do you think about additional measures to decrease motor vehicle use and minimise car ownership such as the roll out of a resident parking scheme (Refer to **Question 11c**) and/or a car share scheme (Refer to **Question 11d**) as a mechanism that will discourage further residents in Epping from owning a car?
5. **Policies to manage local traffic congestion.** An issue raised during a previous consultation at Epping indicated that there is concern over the amount of traffic backing up on Rawson Street near the pedestrian crossing in front of Council's car park due to the constant stream of people crossing during peak times. Should Council employ crossing attendants during peak times at the Rawson Street pedestrian crossing to manage the flow of pedestrian and vehicles? (Refer to **Question 11f**).

### Conclusion and next steps

The purpose of the Discussion paper is to assist Council in setting the future direction for Epping so that it provides the highest possible quality of life for its residents. However, there are policy decisions to be made and potential trade-offs between further growth and provision of community and public benefits that will impact on how the evolution of a future Epping will proceed.

The Epping community are encouraged to comment on any aspect of, or all of, the Discussion Paper. Details of how to lodge a submission are provided at the front of this Summary.