

Charing Cross Streetscape Upgrade Review of Environmental Factors (REF) Community Engagement Summary



Background

The initial community consultation for this project took place between 21 April and 19 May 2021.

Over this period, feedback from the community on the initial design plan was received via the Have Your Say (HYS) page survey, emails to Major Projects and notes taken by Council Officers at three outdoor stalls.

Of the 200 people who participated in the HYS online survey:

- 58% supported the proposed design with no changes
- 36.5% supported the proposed design with changes
- 5.5% did not support the proposed design

The consultation report showed that the following components of the upgrade were supported:

- Charing Cross village centre to become a 40km/h traffic speed zone
- Slip lane turning left from Bronte into Carrington Road to be removed and signalised
- Powerlines to be moved underground
- Widening and upgrading footpaths
- Installing street furniture
- New trees, garden beds and plantings

The report concluded that other aspects of the project should be investigated further as the community had concerns regarding them:

- A change in parking arrangements to allow for a safer crossing
- New multifunction street poles and upgraded lighting
- Historical features to be highlighted throughout the design

REF Community Outreach

Once the second round of community consultation concluded with a report to Council in June 2021, Council Officers began working with urban designers and landscape architects on updated, detailed design plans, taking into account suggestions/concerns from the community.

In April 2023, the Finance, Operations and Community Services Committee endorsed the detailed design intent, and that the Charing Cross Precinct had been consulted with in the recent months. They noted the detailed design would progress to completion and for Council Officers to advertise a tender for the project. They also noted that the REF will be publicly advertised, with the General Manager making a decision on the project proceeding following this exhibition period.

Together with the detailed design plans, Council received the peer-reviewed REF report from external consultants in late October 2023.

Council staff used a number of methods to inform the community that the REF had been received and was open to feedback from **2 – 29 November, 2023**. This included:

- Notification letter to businesses and residents in a two-block radius from the main strip
- Business walk-through and flyer drop by Council Officers
- Story in Waverley Weekly e-newsletter
- Story in November monthly Engagement e-newsletter
- Email to project followers on HYS
- On-site 'Meet the Mayor' community information session at Grain Bakery
- Social media posts by Council and the Charing Cross Precinct Committee

The complete REF and detailed design plans were uploaded to the Charing Cross project HYS page. All community outreach efforts were aimed at getting people to review the documents and submit their feedback online or via the Major Projects email.

Results

886 HYS page visits

207 Complete REF downloads (including the detailed design plans)

70 Appendix F (detailed design plans only) downloads

37 online submissions through HYS

11 emails submitted to majorprojects@waverley.nsw.gov.au

Multiple notes taken by Council Officers during the Meet the Mayor community information session on 24 November.

When looking at the formal submissions of HYS entries and emails to Major Projects, the breakdown is as follows:

Positive = 15

Neutral = 13

Negative = 18

Mixed = 2

Total = 48

It's important to note that after 886 HYS page visits and 277 total document downloads, Council only received 48 submissions. We can assume this means that in-general, people were comfortable with the plans. Only highly motivated people, or those with strong feelings about the project, made the effort to submit their feedback. Further to this, Council only received 18 negative submissions. This is a low number considering the number of document downloads and the size of the project. Council received 28 positive or neutral submissions and most of these provided thoughtful feedback, which will be forwarded to the consultants for consideration where feasible.

Feedback Summary

When taking into account all the feedback from HYS, emails and the Meet the Mayor community information session, more respondents were either positive or neutral about the project than negative. Council received some constructive feedback and requests through these submissions including that Council should:

1. Consider provision for disabled parking
2. Ensure trees and garden beds be of indigenous plants
3. Ensure that the heritage significance of Charing Cross is respected when choosing pavers, lighting, street furniture and poles.
4. Install 'Open for Business' signage along Charing Cross throughout the construction period
5. Install signage on Carrington Road to advise passersby that there is walk-way access to Bronte Road from Carrington Road
6. Mail a notification letter to surrounding residents advising that Charing Cross shops will remain open during construction works and encourage them to keep supporting local businesses through this period.
7. Ask the Council Traffic Committee to change the parking arrangements outside St Catherine's School to 2hr instead of 5hr parking to free up spots during the day for shoppers.
8. Consider approaching St Catherine's school to ask them to encourage teachers and Year 11/12 drivers to catch public transport instead of taking parking spots in the surrounding streets

Major Projects staff are committed to implementing points 4-6. The other points will be forwarded to the project consultants or to Traffic Committee to consider.

Of the submissions expressing a negative sentiment toward the project, some common concerns emerged:

- That the heritage character of Charing Cross wouldn't be upheld with the new streetscape
- Narrowing of the road would lead to accidents between moving and parked cars and buses and trucks struggling to fit through.
- The narrowing of the road will make on-road bicycle riders less safe, as well as the project having no provision for cyclists
- Loss of parking spaces having a negative impact on shoppers, businesses and crowding in the surrounding streets
- The new, elevated pedestrian crossing will further increase traffic jams along Bronte Road during peak periods
- Businesses not surviving the perceived disruption of the construction period
- Greater consideration should be given to where green electricity boxes are placed along the footpath

All feedback has been collated and will be forwarded to the consultants for consideration where feasible.

Based on the feedback collected through the REF public exhibition period, Council Officers have created a new document highlighting the project benefits and including answers to several FAQs that address the concerns of community members. This was handed out at the Charing Cross Precinct Committee meeting on Wednesday 29 November, attended by the Mayor and Project Manager. It has also been placed on the HYS page and Council website.