CAMWEST
CYCLISTS' ACTION MOVEMENT
www.camwest.org.au cycling@camwest.org.au

30th August, 2023

Parramatta Bike Plan Refresh Feedback

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Parramatta Bike Plan Refresh – herein referred to as the Plan.

These comments have been prepared on behalf of CAMWEST, a Bicycle NSW affiliated Bicycle User Group with a focus on advocating for and encouraging cycling in Western Sydney.

We wish to commend Council on what we believe is a reasonably thorough and comprehensive Plan. There are a few areas that we are disappointed with and a few points that aren't defined explicitly, which we would like to see more attention focused on.

We're aware that some of the comments provided below may fall outside Council's immediate jurisdiction. An example is the crossings of the light rail line. We've mentioned them here because we're not 100% sure of where the demarcations lie, or whether they may change when the project is completed, but whatever the case they have an impact on how people move around the LGA.

➢ Plan Design and Presentation Deficiencies:

- One major disappointment with the Plan is declaring North Rocks Rd a regional route, but for the most part only offering the current on-road solution. This route is predominantly used by more confident riders – and then often reluctantly. We believe that with the current road configuration this route cannot realistically be designated a regional route; it's unsuitable for a significant cohort of the cycling community.

- Although more of a comment on the presentation in the Plan document and interactive map than a complaint with the designated routes, we were disappointed to see that there was no differentiation between existing and proposed routes. This made determining what is currently on-the-ground and what is proposed difficult and time consuming. Some of the comments made by others on the interactive map reflect this confusion. To cite one example, the proposed bridge which roughly parallels the existing Noller bridge in Parramatta Park drew the following comment: 'There is no bridge here, the line is an error.'

- For those who are conscious of trying to ride on designated shared paths rather than footpaths or paths that look like they could be shared paths, Olympic Park has always been a challenge with its plethora of wide paths. Some are marked on some of the maps and not on others, while on-the-ground signage or lack thereof doesn't always assist. The Plan doesn't add any clarity, as there are several existing marked shared paths within the Olympic Park precinct missing from the Plan maps. At least one of the marked routes has some minor inaccuracies to boot.

➢ Infrastructure Comments:

Some of the following points were hinted at in the 'Infrastructure for a cycling city' section of the Plan. As the following can be significant barriers to cycling for some, we wanted to single them out for emphasis.

- Paths should be adequately lit, particularly pre-dawn from around 5am and well into the evening to give path users an improved sense of safety. One approach would be to incorporate sensor activated lighting through reserves and green spaces which are illuminated to a default dimmed brightness level, but with an increase in brightness when a path user is detected nearby.

- The number of times riders need to dismount and re-mount their bikes should be minimised. Apart from being an annoyance for most riders, dismounting and remounting can be a real barrier for some who experience certain types of restricted movement. We have one rider in our group who must lie the bike on the ground before stepping into the frame and remounting. As well as taking longer to perform this action, the process needs to be moved away from other riders and pedestrians to minimise trip hazards.

- Options need to be explored so riders can safely cross tram tracks without dismounting. Options may include track insert devices or painted on-road arrows encouraging riders to cross perpendicular to the tracks. Although we believe it could be improved upon, there is a recent example of this approach at Newington Armory. Riders in other cities (e.g., Melbourne) seem to be able to negotiate track crossings successfully.

Painted guidance for crossing the tracks at Newington Armory.
Photo by Charlene Bordley.

- Mention is made of reducing speed on some streets, but no figures were given. We would like to see Council aim to reduce speed limits to 30kmph in line with the asks of Better Streets [1].

- For those using paths rather than roadways, signalised crossing lamp timings need to be addressed so that path users are not waiting significantly longer than roadway users to cross at intersections. We would like to see the introduction of smarter technologies which detect the presence of path users and automatically adjust traffic light phasing. Countdown timers can also work well assuming the crossing lights have already been triggered. These steps would go a long way to elevating active transport in line with the Road User Hierarchy.

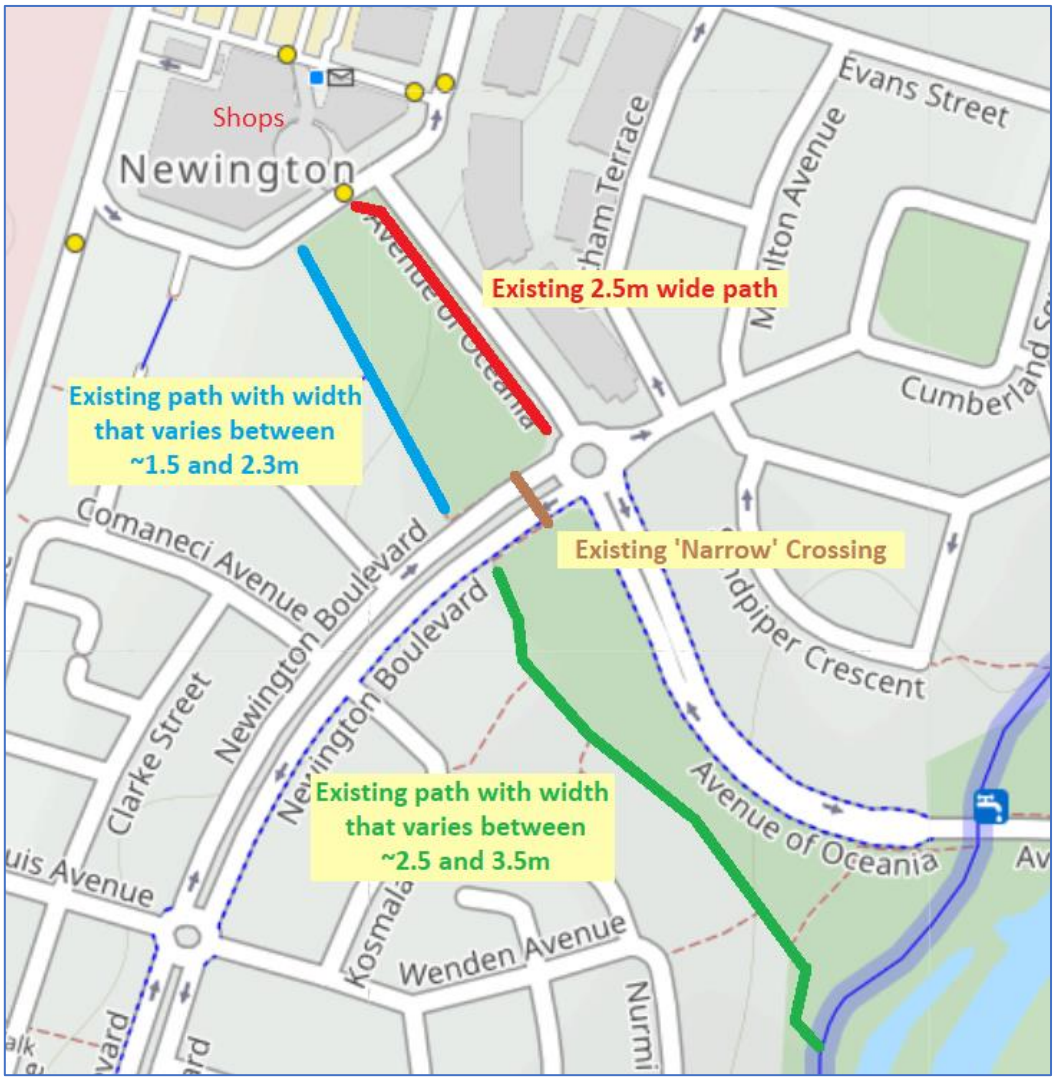
- One of the barriers for those wishing to commute to shops and other facilities is the security of their bike while parked. A lot of riders prefer to keep their bike within full view, as they perceive other security measures as inadequate. Some riders, particularly those who prefer to ride 'light weight', don't carry bike locks as any half decent lock is quite bulky and heavy. Consequently, current bike parking areas are underutilised. Bike parking areas need wayfinding signage, be readily accessible to riders, be secure, and be relatively handy to the shops or facilities that riders wish to use. Related to this but probably more for those riding longer distances is the ability to stop and enjoy food or drink in pleasant surroundings – again within full view of their bike. Service stations are handy places to grab something to eat or drink but are an unattractive setting to consume the purchased product.

In our experience riders are sensitive to the number of 'perceived barriers or annoyances' they encounter. We all put 'weightings' on different barriers. While some of us may be willing to cope with a few of those mentioned above per trip, others may not be as accommodating. Most of us arrive at a point where we've reached our 'barrier limit' and say it's just too hard – and either find a different route (if one exists) or choose a different mode of transport.

➢ Interactive Map Comment Highlights:

We've made numerous comments around the LGA on the interactive map. The following are some in the south-eastern part of the LGA that we'd like to elaborate on or highlight.

1. There's one additional route that we'd like to see proposed in the Plan. The route is from the Louise Sauvage pathway to the Newington Shopping centre. Paths that meet the minimum 2.5m width exist for most of the length accept around Newington Blvd. The route is currently well used by riders. There is potential to utilise the 'blue' segment on the below map, but this would need to be widened and kerb ramps provided to cross Newington Blvd. The preferred route however is probably to link the green segment with the red and widen the crossing of Newington Blvd (brown segment). Note that a narrow section of the path leading from the crossing of Newington Blvd (brown line) into the path alongside Ave of Oceana (red line) would require widening. See photos on next page.



Marked-up rendering of Newington from the cycling layer of Open Street Map [2].

View along existing 2.5m wide path alongside Ave of Oceana (red line on above map).

Existing 'narrow' crossing of Newington Blvd, shown as brown line on the above map

Looking from existing wide path (green line on above map) across Newington Blvd to narrower path (blue line on map). There are no kerb ramps to cross Newington Blvd, but an apparent well-worn pedestrian path exists none-the-less.

2. We note that the proposed Pippita trail is shown as ending at Edwin Flack Ave. We believe that with the existing height of the embankment, a bridge across Edwin Flack Ave virtually at level would be preferred than trying to build a ramp down to the roadway with riders needing to cross Edwin Flack Ave, and then having to partially ascend the hill on the other side. The following comments are taken from feedback that CAMWEST submitted to Cumberland Council on the Pippita Trail [3]:

The rail embankment finishes on the south-western side of Edwin Flack Ave. There is a fair height differential between the top of the embankment and the path along the SW side of Edwin Flack Ave, meaning a steep ascent/descent would be required if terminating the Trail here.

The path along the SW side of Edwin Flack Ave is currently only 1.8m wide in places, and there are no ready crossings to get to:

- The path alongside Shane Gould Ave (3 way crossing at signalised intersection required),
- Sarah Durack Ave (4-way crossing required), and
- The wider path running alongside the NE side of Edwin Flack Ave.

If possible, a bridge across Edwin Flack Ave to join up with the existing path around the Warm-Up Arena would be the ideal – but the existing narrow embankment along the NE side of Edwin Flack Ave may present some challenges.

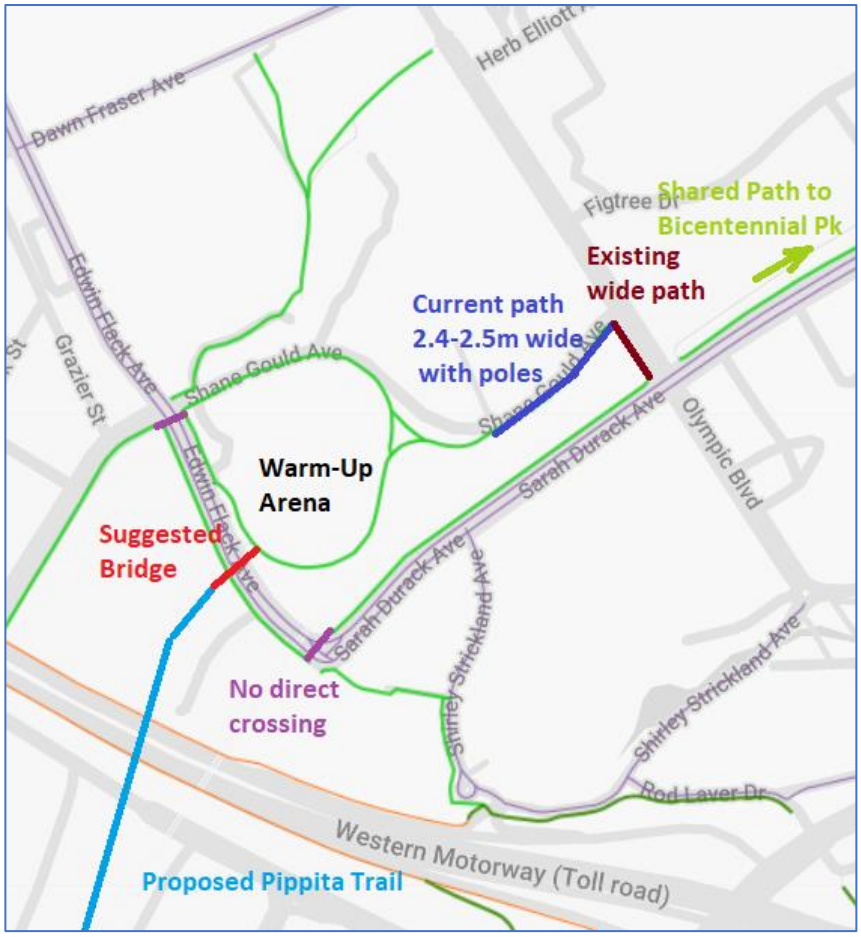
If planning to use this route around the Warm-Up Arena, some of the existing path alongside Shane Gould Ave would probably need to be widened as the current path varies between 2.4 and 2.5m wide with lamp posts in the middle.

Top of rail embankment, looking NE across Edwin Flack Ave to the narrow embankment on the other side and beyond to the Warm-Up Arena.

Embankment between wider path alongside NE side of Edwin Flack Ave and path around the Warm-Up Arena.

We believe this route would create the most attractive and least hilly option between the Pippita Trail and the existing shared path alongside Sarah Durack Ave NE of Olympic Blvd. Ease of access to Bicentennial Park and the other Sydney Olympic Park facilities would be maximised if these connections could be created.

Note that the RMS Cycleway Finder page lists the SW side of Edwin Flack Ave as a shared path. As mentioned above, this path is narrower than the path on the other side of the road and has no easy crossing points.

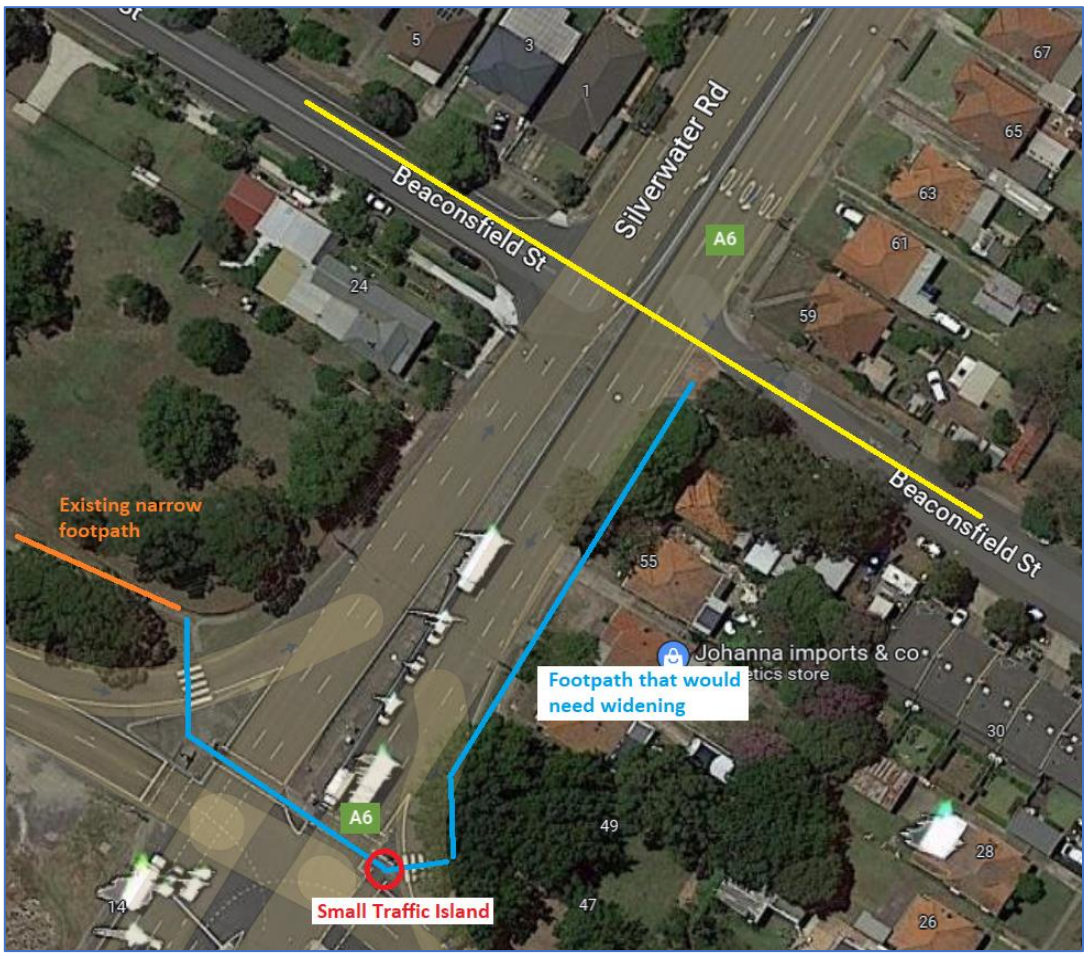


Marked up map from the RMS Cycleway Finder [4]

Marked-up section of the Plan with the proposed section of the Pippita Trail within the Parramatta LGA circled.

3. The plan shows a proposed crossing of Silverwater Rd at Beaconsfield St just north of the M4 entry and exit ramps (Yellow line in below image). We don't see this as realistic unless a bridge is built to span Silverwater Rd.
    a. To cross Silverwater Rd at this point involves crossing 3 lanes of traffic in each direction with a posted speed limit of 70kmph. A refuge island could probably be created in the middle, but even then, it's incredibly dicey for riders.
    b. A signalised crossing here is unlikely as the M4 entry and exit ramps signalised crossing is just over 80m to the south.
    c. Paths could be widened on one or both side of Silverwater Rd between Beaconsfield St and the signalised intersection. However, the traffic island on the eastern side is small – pretty much mirroring the problematic island on the south side of the M4 (in Cumberland LGA) that is part of the existing M4 cycle route between Adderley Streets East and West.
    d. Although CAMWEST wouldn't object to two bridges being built across Silverwater Rd, we feel that the crossing on the southern side between Adderley Streets East & West would get more use than one crossing at Beaconsfield St.

    Along with the Bicycle NSW CEO, we recently met with the Cumberland Council Mayor and a couple of staff from their planning section and presented a document [5] which highlights the safety issues for cyclists and other path users that are posed by the crossing of Silverwater Rd at Adderley St, just south of the M4. We also offered several potential solutions. When preparing the document, one of the alternatives that we considered was crossing on the northern side of the M4. We didn't think this was really a viable alternative for the reasons listed above.



Marked-up Google Satellite view image of the Beaconsfield St crossing of Silverwater Rd.

4. Although not new infrastructure, the road crossing of Bennelong Parkway with the Parkway Circuit/Powells Ck Shared Path (East of Haslams Ck) is quite dangerous. We're not sure whether that comes under Council's or SOPA's jurisdiction – but believe making it safer should be a priority. While the proposed bridge across Haslams Ck on the north side of Bennelong Pkwy will be a welcome addition, we believe a safe crossing of Bennelong Pkwy will still be required. The crossing forms a link in a popular route between Wentworth Common & the Bay Marker and the main cycling route into Bicentennial Park.

Marked-up rendering from the cycling layer of Open Street Map [2]

We have made additional comments on the interactive map relating to accessing Ave of the Americas in Newington and routes around the southern edge of Silverwater near the M4. These probably don't need to be elaborated on further here.

➢ Closing Comments:

- Apart from the above points, we're impressed with the Plan. It's quite ambitious, with several of the proposed routes hard to visualise given the current industrial use of the land which they pass through. We can see that it's going to take a number of years to make some of the corridors a firm reality.

- We would encourage Council to take on as many of the 'asks' of Better Streets as practicable, like building refuge islands to assist in crossing roads etc. We believe that improvements like this could have a positive effect on the uptake of active transport.

- We are happy to clarify or elaborate on any of the points or suggestions outlined in this feedback.

- We look forward to commenting on or assisting in any other way as the plans for the various corridors develop.

- This feedback was prepared by Rob Kemp (with contributions from others) on behalf of CAMWEST.

References:

[1] https://www.betterstreets.org.au
[2] https://www.openstreetmap.org/#map=15/-33.8377/151.0591&layers=C
[3] https://camwest.org.au/docs/CAMWEST-PippitaRailTrail-Feedback.pdf
[4] https://roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au/maps/cycleway_finder/index.html
[5] https://camwest.org.au/docs//CAMWEST-M4-Path-intersection-improvements.pdf