



Development Assessment and Planning

11/03/2013 **DAP070-13**

Urban Activation Precincts Update

File Number: LP/06/67969

Director: Environmental Services (MC)

Councillor Comment:

▼ Report Item

REPORT IN BRIEF

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on council's two nominated areas for the State Government Urban Activation Precincts program, being the Caringbah-Miranda area and the Sutherland area.

Summary

Council considered a report on 12 November 2012 (DAP024-13 ) which outlined the State Government's new Urban Activation Precincts program. This report explored the potential of an area focused on the Caringbah and Miranda centres as an urban activation precinct under the NSW State Government Urban Activation Precinct program. On consideration of this report, council resolved to also nominate Caringbah, Miranda and Sutherland for the Urban Activation Precincts program. The report to council detailed the development concept and scope of the Miranda-Caringbah initiative and this has been conveyed to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure (DP & I). Further analysis was needed to form a development concept to support council's decision to also nominate Sutherland as an Urban Activation Precinct.

Sutherland Centre currently has relatively limited potential for growth. It is essentially ringed by Strata Title residential flat buildings and the core area is constrained by small lot sizes and viable existing businesses. The potential for growth has been fully explored in the Housing Strategy, but the extent falls short of that envisaged by the Urban Activation Program. However, if Sutherland is considered in a wider context, it takes on greater strategic potential.

This report discusses the potential of extending the Sutherland Urban Activation area to incorporate Loftus and Kirrawee. If Sutherland is considered in a wider context, it takes on greater strategic potential. With this approach Sutherland can begin to be seen as a place that benefits from three railway stations with existing magnet infrastructure and facilities, and one where there are underdeveloped precincts. This potential could be built upon to ultimately deliver a major centre to Sutherland Shire.

This matter is being reported to widen the nomination for Sutherland centre as an Urban Activation Precinct to include both Kirrawee and Loftus.

REPORT IN FULL

Background

Urban Activation Precincts are a new initiative of the State Government that seeks to facilitate growth in housing and jobs through a strategic, precinct based approach to planning. The aim is to create capacity for significant growth in locations that benefit from public transport and to deliver quality living environments and more employment opportunities. Growth will be backed up by State investment in infrastructure and grants to local government to meet local infrastructure needs.

The preparation of the planning framework for an urban activation precinct will be determined by the State government. While the guidelines state that councils will be part of the working party, it does not appear that council will have a determining role. The DP&I will become the planning authority for the Urban Activation Precinct. The assessment, exhibition and determination of the proposal are the responsibility of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure.

What are Urban Activation Precincts?

Urban Activation Precincts are areas that the Minister considers have redevelopment significance and can make a significant contribution to the State's planning objectives to restore economic growth in NSW and provide more housing and jobs. Nominations for precincts may come from the DP&I based on research and empirical data, councils, State agencies or the private sector. The Department will review nominations and chair a committee that will give advice to Government on whether nominated precincts should be investigated. Local councils will be consulted in this process. The updated Sydney Metropolitan plan, regional, subregional strategies and the transport master plan, will provide strategic guidance and a framework for the identification of precincts.

Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

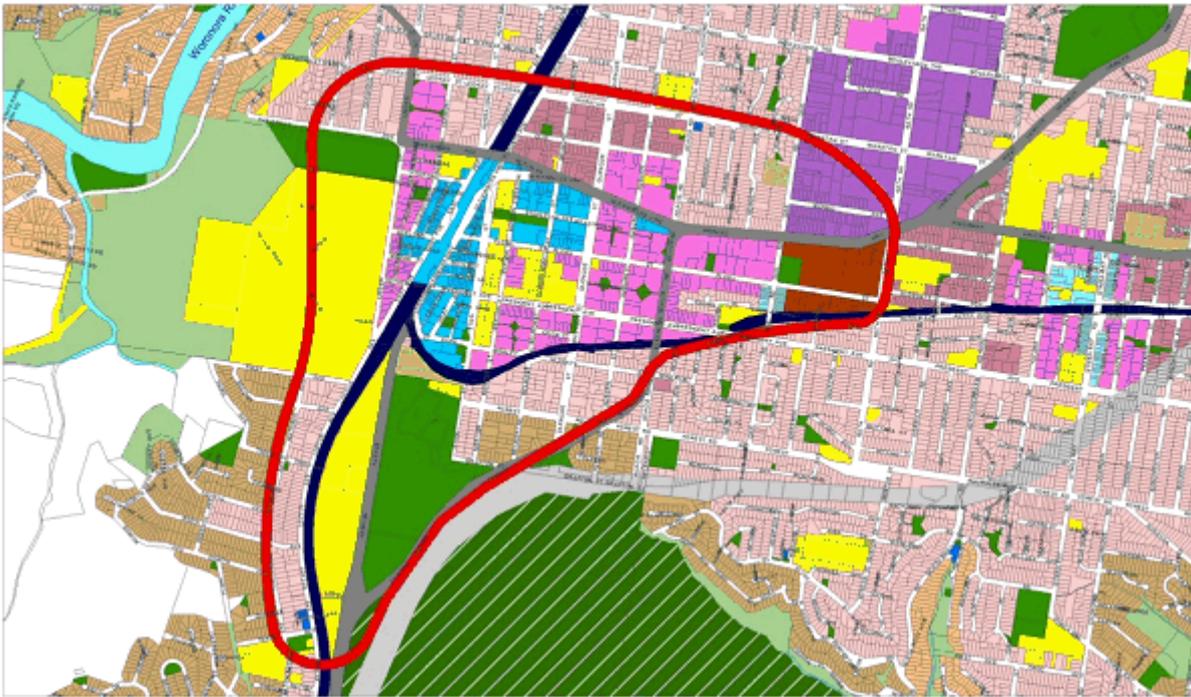
- Is the precinct consistent with State, regional and/or local strategies, particularly relating to housing and employment? or**
- Does the precinct support or maximise the use of existing and planned infrastructure, especially transport? or**
- Is the precinct important to more than one local government area and/or has support from the local council? and**
- Is the precinct environmentally, socially and economically sustainable and viable? and**
- Is the development of the precinct financially viable and consistent with market demand?**

Potential Urban Activation Precincts in Sutherland Shire

On 12 November 2012 (DAP024-13 ) , council resolved to nominate Caringbah, Miranda and Sutherland for the Urban Activation Precincts program. The report contained a detailed analysis of how the growth potential of Caringbah-Miranda could be optimised if the two centres were seen as a single large centre using the hospitals as a catalyst for growth. This concept has been submitted to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure as a formal nomination for consideration under the Urban Activation Precincts program.

The nomination of Sutherland was added by resolution of council. However, the report did not contain any detail on how this concept may meet the criteria set by the program.

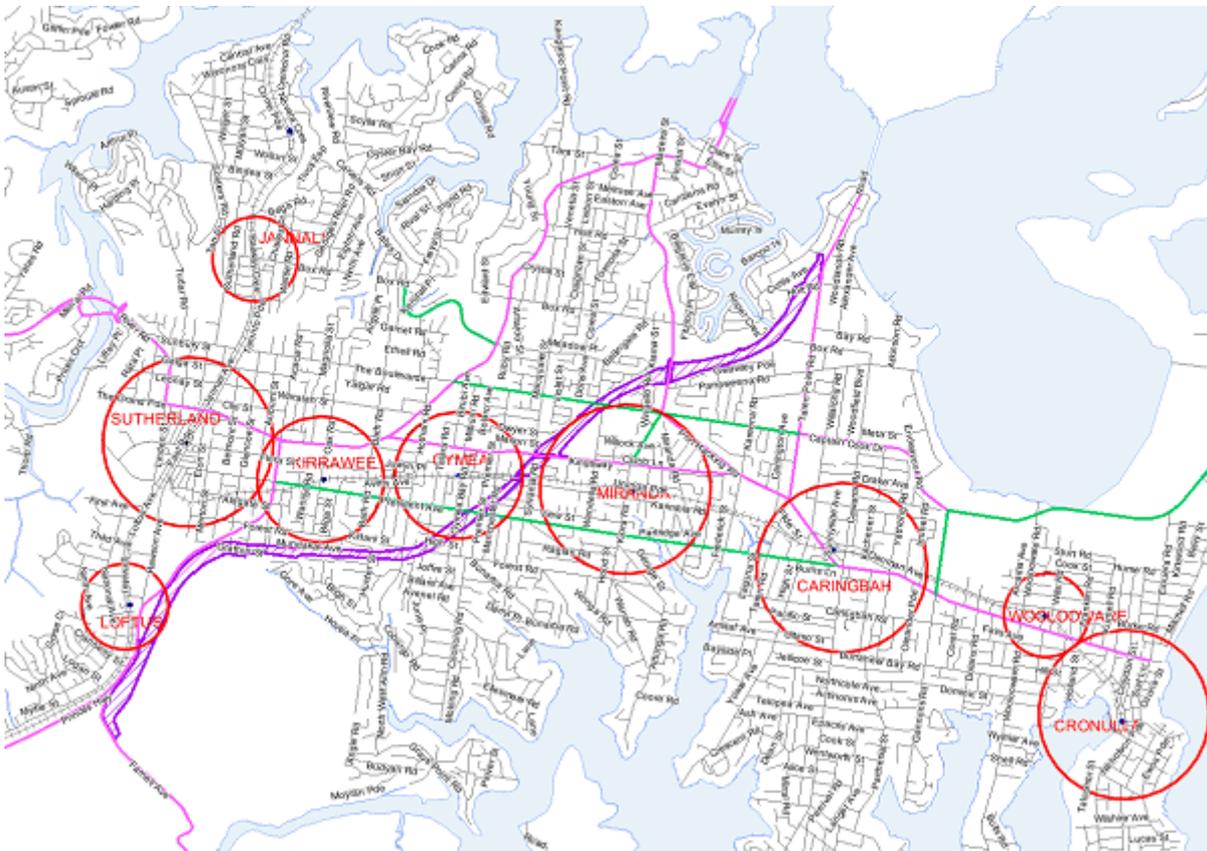
The current extent of Sutherland Centre has potential for growth, but not to the extent envisaged by the Urban Activation Program. However, if Sutherland is considered in a wider context, it takes on greater strategic potential. This report recommends the nomination of an extended area around Sutherland Centre incorporating Loftus and Kirrawee Centre. With this approach, Sutherland can begin to be seen as a place that benefits from three railway stations, existing magnet infrastructure and facilities, and precincts with clear potential. These elements could be built upon to ultimately deliver a major centre to Sutherland Shire. The area under consideration is shown in Map 1 below.



Map 1: Area under consideration for nomination as an Urban Activation Precinct

Map 2 below shows the centres of Sutherland Shire with the circles reflecting their current classification under the Draft South Subregional Strategy. The map shows radii of 800m for town centres (Sutherland, Miranda, Caringbah and Cronulla), 600m for villages (Kirrawee and Gymea) and 400m for small villages (Loftus, Jannali and Woolooware). The circles show the scale of influence of each centre. It is within this area that the Department of Planning and Infrastructure directs council to consider increasing density because of the ease of access to the railway station and local services.

The key point in terms of a potential urban activation precinct is that the areas of influence for Sutherland and Kirrawee currently overlap, and the importance of Loftus is underestimated by the Draft South Subregional Strategy because it does not reflect the TAFE, the University of Wollongong or the SSHED. If it was given a 600m radius, it would also overlap with Sutherland centre. This report explores the long term growth potential of the area that comprises the three centres and recommends that this form council's nominated Urban Activation Precinct for Sutherland centre.



Map 2: Classification of centres under the Draft South Subregional Strategy

Strengths of the Precinct's Location

Much of Sutherland Shire occupies a peninsula location between the Georges River and Botany Bay to the north and the Hacking River and Port Hacking to the south.

The highest point (122m) is adjacent to Sutherland Centre near the corner of Flora Street and Belmont Street. The land slopes down from a ridge line to a series of smaller peninsulas and a jagged shore. This landform and topography has resulted in the location of the main roads and the railway line being located along the relatively level ridge. As a result the centres are in the most readily accessible locations along the ridges.

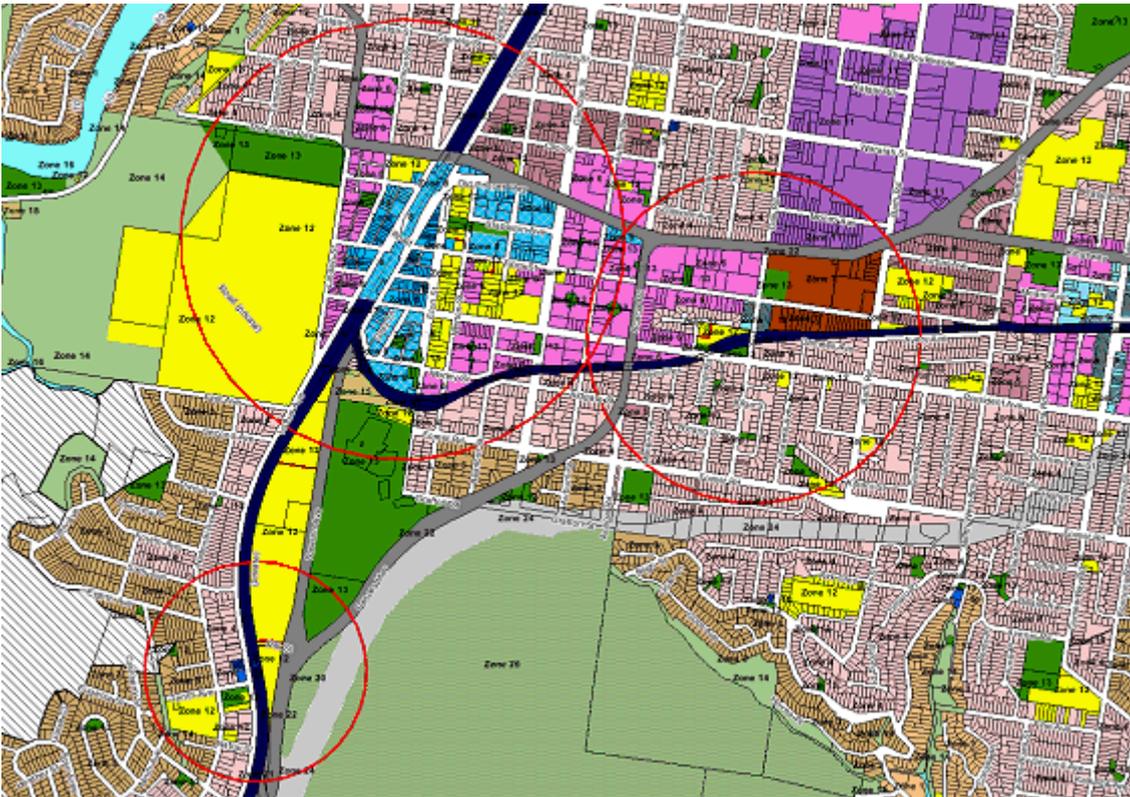
The main ridge runs east-west, where the Kingsway connects Sutherland, Kirrawee, Gymea, Miranda, Caringbah and Cronulla. The principal north-south access road is the Princes Highway, connecting Sutherland Shire with the rest of Sydney to the north via Tom Uglys Bridge.

Sutherland is the primary centre of Sutherland Shire and is where the Cronulla railway line branches from the main Illawarra line. The Princes Highway has bypassed the centre sparing it from the impact of heavy traffic. The centre sits at the top of the ridge which falls to the Royal National park to the south, the Woronora River to the west and the Georges River to the north. This topography results in attractive district views for the centre.

Kirrawee Centre is located just off the Princes Highway and is only 1.4 km to the east of Sutherland Centre.

Loftus Centre is located 1.7 km south of Sutherland Centre along the Illawarra railway line. It is not as readily accessible as the other centres by road, being separated from the Princes Highway by the railway line.

Map 3 below shows the relative proximity of the three centres.



Map 3: Sutherland, Kirrawee and Loftus centres. Circles show radii of 800m for Sutherland, 600m for Kirrawee and 400m for Loftus

Existing Land Uses

Sutherland Centre is the administrative centre of the Sutherland Shire, being the location of the Council Chambers, Sutherland District Courthouse, Sutherland police station and Centrelink offices. The centre also has Sutherland Library, the Entertainment Centre, Sutherland Leisure Centre and sporting fields, and several schools and churches. The centre provides a range of medical services, shops, restaurants and cafes, banks and hotels.

Sutherland Centre is zoned Urban Centre under SSLEP2006 and is characterised by mixed-use development, with shops or businesses on the ground floors and flats or offices above. Recent redevelopment consists of mixed use residential buildings to heights of 8 storeys with shops, restaurants and other businesses at street level.

The commercial core of Sutherland remains relatively underdeveloped as a centre despite an allowable height of eight storeys since the adoption of SSLEP2006. The slow rate of development can be attributed to the economic climate since 2008, combined with the expense and difficulty of amalgamating small commercial sites. The major supermarkets have not been able to find suitable sites within the centre. However, two recent developments have invigorated the southern edge of the commercial core and include a smaller supermarket and new shops and businesses.

Residential development surrounds the centre, with some high density flat developments which are of a reasonably high quality. The quality of the architecture, and public domain improvements in the flat zone on the eastern side of the centre, including street tree planting, paving and embellishment of parks, creates an attractive environment and demonstrates the positive effects of redevelopment.

Kirrawee Centre is a small commercial centre which is adjacent to an employment area. The Kirrawee employment area is the second largest cluster of employment land in the Sutherland LGA and is over 47.5 ha in size. The cluster of related land uses includes car sales yards on the Princes Highway, car repairs, and a mixture of heavy industry, engineering and storage companies.

While Loftus comprises only a few shops, it is the location of TAFE NSW Loftus campus, University of Wollongong Southern Sydney campus and the SSHED (the Sutherland Shire Hub for Economic Development). The SSHED was established in 2003 and operates as a business accelerator for small businesses in the Sutherland Shire.

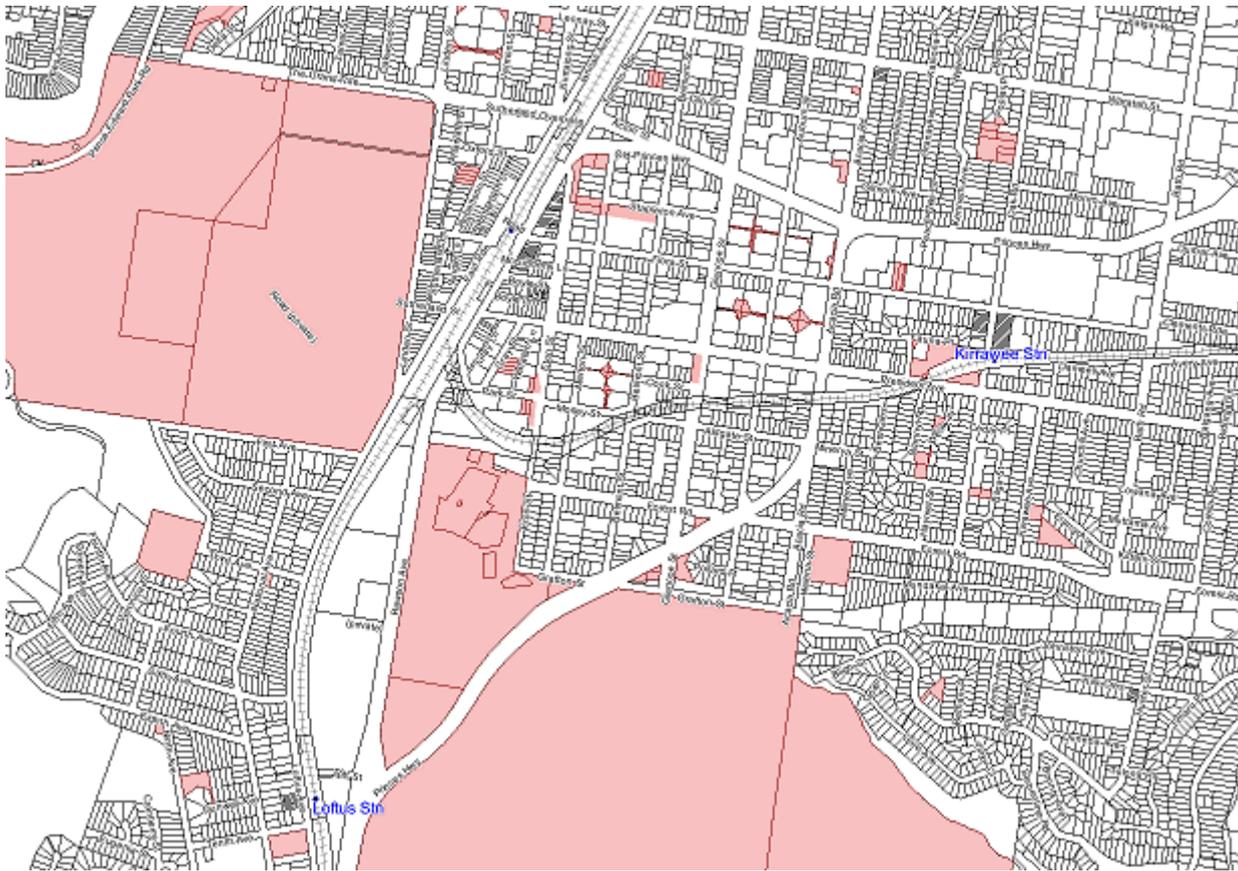
Recreational facilities and areas of public open space

Peace Park and Forby Sutherland Park are attractive and well maintained landscaped spaces of great value to the centre. Both spaces contribute to the civic focus of the centre and provide well-used open space for workers, shoppers and residents of the centre. Sutherland Shire Council has also provided smaller parks through the residential precincts that surround the centre. These form important leisure and play spaces for residents living in higher density development.

The Sutherland Shire Leisure Centre is within Waratah Park which is a regional recreational facility. Waratah Park is at the southern edge of Sutherland Centre and effectively forms a link between Sutherland and Loftus. Waratah Park is more than 20 hectares in size and provides a cycle facility, soccer fields, AFL fields, tennis courts, athletics field, basketball courts, PCYC and the leisure centre which has 50m and 25m heated outdoor pools, 25m heated indoor pool, indoor children's pool and gym facilities.

Other large areas of open space in close proximity to Sutherland commercial centre also contribute to the amenity of the area. They include Sutherland Oval, Sutherland Park and Woronora Cemetery and surrounding bushland. The heritage listed cemetery is planted with many established trees and, with adjacent parks and bushland, provide areas of open space in close proximity to the centre. A bushland walk down to the Woronora River is readily accessible from the commercial centre.

The edge of the Royal National Park is located just over a kilometre from Sutherland Centre, and is even closer to Loftus. The National Park offers beautiful outlooks and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors to the area. This close proximity to the National Park is a great asset for this area and access from the commercial centre could be made more convenient. For example with a tram connection into the park from Sutherland Station could increase use. A tram museum is located beside Loftus Station, which offers occasional trips into the National Park, stopping at the rangers' station. The concept of continuing this tram line a short distance north to Sutherland Station has previously been promoted by the Tram Museum and supported by council, but the plan has not been pursued due to cost. Currently, most people access the Royal National Park using private vehicles. If access via public transport was made convenient, Sutherland could be marketed as the gateway to the National Park and more people could enjoy this public asset. A weekend shuttle bus connecting Sutherland commuter car park and Audley in the Royal National Park is another option which would increase the role of Sutherland as a gateway to the park and not require the construction of any infrastructure.

**Map 4:**

Areas of open space around Sutherland Centre

Access

Sutherland Centre is important as the major public transport interchange of the Sutherland Shire, being the location where the Cronulla railway line branches from the main Illawarra line. The recent Cronulla line duplication has improved railway service from the city to Sutherland.

The Southern Sydney Regional Action Plan lists as ‘priority actions’ the projects to upgrade public transport facilities in Sutherland. Transport NSW is proceeding with an upgrade of the Sutherland Transport Interchange, with the intention to improve accessibility between different transport types, alleviate existing traffic congestion and provide a safer environment for pedestrians around the station. These works will include construction of a new bus interchange on the western side of the station, new pedestrian ramps from the station, road works on the western road ramp and the installation of a new lift from the concourse to platform 1. Sutherland has a four storey commuter car park on the western side of the railway line. Work has also begun on the design and planning approval for a new commuter car park at Sutherland with provision for 300 additional spaces. This is also expected to be constructed on the western side of the railway line behind the Sutherland United Services Club.

One of the main constraints to the ease of vehicular and pedestrian movement through Sutherland Centre is the physical barrier of the railway line. The main railway line crossing for vehicular traffic is the Sutherland overpass. This four lane road leads to the Woronora Bridge and is the main route to the western section of the Sutherland Shire and beyond. Within the commercial centre, vehicle access over the railway line via the narrow railway bridge conflicts with pedestrian access to the railway station. This leads to traffic congestion in the centre and delays at peak times. The upgrade by Transport NSW may

alleviate this traffic congestion to some extent, but the bridge is narrow and its use will remain shared between vehicles and pedestrians. To the south, Loftus has no railway vehicular bridge, which limits the accessibility of this small centre. Further south of Loftus there is no railway crossing point for 3 km.

Strategic context

Under SSLEP2006, Sutherland is an Urban Centre, which is the highest order centre under the Sutherland Shire centres hierarchy. Kirrawee Centre is zoned Zone 9 Local Centre and Loftus is zoned Zone 10 Neighbourhood Centre. Sutherland Centre is identified as a Potential Major Centre in the 2005 Metropolitan Strategy and the Southern Sydney Regional Action Plan (2012). The Draft South Subregional Strategy (2007) notes that “Sutherland Centre is well situated and serviced by road and rail infrastructure and has the capability and potential for further growth”. The Strategy (Part B Centres and Corridors p67) also notes that “Sutherland may prove to be a focus for employment growth in the long term and should be considered in any subregional centres planning work in the future”.

Kirrawee Centre is a small centre which is undergoing dramatic change. The Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) recently approved a mixed use development at the Kirrawee brick pit site adjacent to the centre. This development is expected to provide more than 500 additional jobs through a supermarket focused shopping centre and provide around 430 additional dwellings. The project also includes a new park that is one hectare in size. Kirrawee Centre is also adjacent to an area of Zone 11 Employment, which is a strategically important source of local employment in manufacturing and car sales.

Loftus is strategically important as the location of one of only two TAFE campuses in the Sutherland Shire, the Wollongong University Southern Sydney campus, and the Sutherland Shire Hub for Economic Development. Loftus commercial area beside the railway station is zoned as Neighbourhood Centre under SSLEP2006. The commercial area is small and occupied by one and two storey older style shops. Surrounding residential developments are mostly single dwellings with some townhouses.

Sutherland, Kirrawee and Loftus are well serviced with existing infrastructure, including schools and community facilities, with a wide residential catchment using the services of the centres. The population using the facilities of the Sutherland Centre is also expected to increase. The DP&I is currently reviewing an application to list West Menai as a State Significant Site, which may result in approximately 2,400 dwellings and 4,700 jobs. If this development proceeds, the need for Sutherland Centre to grow into a Major Centre increases.

Housing Strategy and Sutherland Shire Standard Instrument LEP2013

The draft Sutherland Shire Housing Strategy 2031 has been devised to meet the requirements for an increase in dwelling numbers within walking distance to centres. The Housing Strategy has informed changes to development standards in the Draft Sutherland Shire Local Environmental Plan 2013 (SSLEP2013), currently with the DP&I for Gateway determination. A Sutherland Centre Strategy was also prepared as part of the background work for the new LEP. This Strategy was publicly exhibited for two months in mid 2012. The Strategy was amended in response to public comment, and the resulting recommendations for changes in height and density were incorporated into the

the potential of the centre in terms of achievable height and density. This will result in the centre being a strong residential neighbourhood with a vibrant range of shops and services meeting resident and workers needs. Recent development has shown that future development is likely to maximise residential units and provide attractive spaces for shops, cafes and restaurants at street level. Coupled with council's investment in public domain works and street planting, Sutherland is likely to have a vibrant atmosphere. However, it does not have the potential to provide for large supermarket formats and will not have a retail function consistent with that of a major centre. However, the approval of the Kirrawee brick pit development will provide a supermarket focused shopping centre. This will be a major drawcard for residents in a wide catchment. Residents of Sutherland will use the Kirrawee shops. Similarly the future concentration of residents at Kirrawee will use some of the schools, specialty shops, restaurants and business services within Sutherland centre. It is also likely that future residents of Kirrawee will walk to Sutherland to access higher frequency train services. This tends to suggest that with the development of the brick pit site the two centres will begin to become more functionally linked over time.

The successful nomination of the area as an Urban Activation Precinct would allow for this potential to be fully explored and developed. Now that the Kirrawee brick pit development is a reality, the scale and density of potential building forms in and around Kirrawee needs to be reconsidered. With clever planning it is possible to turn Flora Street into a new pedestrian spine that is the visual and functional link between the two nodes of activity. The existing low scale industrial premises on Flora Street to the south and east of the brick pit could take on a new role where the new shopping centre spills onto a new high street. Through the development of appropriate development standards for the remaining developable sites along Flora Street, coupled with strong street tree planting, paving and cycle access, residents and visitors would begin to see Flora Street in a new light. It would take on a character more in keeping with that of a prime route in a major centre.

The role of Kirrawee could also be strengthened by reconsidering the role and function of the land on the northern side of the Princes Highway. In response to strong market demand, council has used the new LEP to widen the permissibility of land opposite the brick pit site. This land is used for motor showrooms and council has added bulky goods to the permissibility, along with a pub. However, this initiative could be taken further by exploring the merits of the block to the north which currently contains Bunnings. If the precinct has a dense urban context perhaps this block should have a stronger commercial/bulky goods focus. If this were pursued, it also seems logical to explore the block to the north east which is currently a low density residential precinct. This block is in very close proximity to the two centres and could provide a precinct of higher density housing in a very accessible location. Given that the existing three storey residential flat zones around Sutherland centre are virtually fully developed, a long term growth strategy is required to ensure a supply of new residential flats into the future. Not all residents will want to live in mixed use development in the centre. This precinct adds to housing choice, providing units in a quieter landscaped context.

The area to the south of the Cronulla railway line, bounded by Waratah Park and the bypass is another precinct with unrealised potential. This precinct provides gently sloping land and offers potential views into the Royal National Park and Waratah Park. The

precinct is within ready walking distance of both Sutherland and Loftus stations and offers residents the choice of a quiet neighbourhood with immediate access to leisure and sporting facilities and pleasant views. The planning of this precinct could build on the proximity of the National Park to visually extend the landscape setting to provide a strong network of native canopy trees in streets and within development sites.

If Sutherland is to grow into a major centre it also needs to reconsider the area to the west of the railway line. The railway currently forms a physical and psychological barrier and results in the western section being far less developed than the east. However, the western edge has tremendous potential because it offers ready access to the railway station and potential views across the cemetery, parks and bushland to the Woronora valley. In essence the western edge has the potential to provide residential units that could extend from Sutherland Park to Loftus. If this was combined with works in the public domain to create a strong, landscaped pedestrian and cycle link, this area could become a ready extension to the centre and offer a very pleasant housing choice.

Central to the growth of Sutherland is expanding its economic base. Facilitating the expansion of the TAFE and the University of Wollongong would be a strategic win for the centre. It would help grow the number of workers in the centre while increasing visitation as well. If Sutherland is to fulfil its potential as a regional centre, residential growth needs to be coupled with a strong government commitment to the growth of these two facilities.

The F6 reservation forms one edge to the southern part of the precinct. It is likely this transport corridor will be utilised in the future. When this occurs, the corridor will most likely include some form of public transport, even if this is limited to a priority bus service. Even if this was not included, a freeway would create capacity on the Princes Highway allowing a priority bus service to be introduced. Although the F6 is not a government priority at present, the long term commitment to the reservation suggests that the area will benefit from increased road and commuting capacity in the future. This will benefit Sutherland by making it more accessible to the city and Wollongong.

Conclusion

The integration of the Sutherland administrative centre, the Kirrawee Employment zone, strong commercial and residential growth at Kirrawee, and the educational facilities of Loftus, fit the criteria for an Urban Activation Precinct. The centres of Sutherland, Kirrawee and Loftus together provide a wide range of services and employment opportunities that can be built upon. The centres are also close to a range of recreational facilities and areas of public open space which could serve an increased population. The precinct benefits from three railway stations, with Sutherland being a main transport interchange location at the junction of two lines. The residential flat zones adjacent to Sutherland and Kirrawee centres are largely developed. There are few opportunities for new development. Yet Sutherland is highly accessible and a sensible place to concentrate high density housing. There are some areas of low density residential development between Sutherland and Kirrawee, and between Sutherland and Loftus, which could be considered for a higher density development as part of an Urban Activation Precinct. The aim would be to deliver both jobs and housing to this well serviced and accessible location. Through the Urban Activation Precinct program funding could be secured for infrastructure works to coincide with development. Opportunities to improve the public domain and public amenity of the precinct could involve:

- build new pedestrian concourse bridge access to Sutherland railway station, thereby separating pedestrian traffic from vehicle traffic;
- improve railway road crossing at Sutherland;
- investigate new railway bridge providing vehicle access across railway line at Loftus;
- improve public transport access to the Royal National Park from Loftus and Sutherland railway stations (such as weekend shuttle bus);
- improve cycle ways across the precinct and into the Royal National Park;
- improve commercial core public domain spaces with tree planting, and landscaping;
- improve accessibility within public spaces;
- increase provision of public transport;
- create potential for more evening activity leading to more leisure options, increased visitation and improved safety through informal surveillance; and
- upgrade stormwater infrastructure.

It is recommended that Council revise its nomination of Sutherland centre to focus on Sutherland, Kirrawee and Loftus as a potential major centre in Sutherland Shire.

▼ Report Recommendation:

That the area shown in Map 1 in this report, being Sutherland, Kirrawee and Loftus be nominated as an Urban Activation Precinct.



▼ Committee Recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION:

That the area shown in Map 1 in this report, being Sutherland, Kirrawee and Loftus be nominated as an Urban Activation Precinct.

In accordance with the Delegation granted to the Development Assessment and Planning Committee on 2 October 2012, the Delegated Decision below was rescinded by Councillors Towell, Blight and Scaysbrook and therefore replaced by the above Recommendation.

DECISION:

That in accordance with the delegation granted by the Council to this Committee, that it is resolved that the area shown in Map 1 in this report, being Sutherland, Kirrawee and Loftus be nominated as an Urban Activation Precinct.