Item 6.

Public Exhibition - Planning Proposal - King Street Special Entertainment Precinct - Sydney Local Environment Plan 2012, Sydney Development Control Plan 2012 Amendment and Precinct Management Plan

File No: X119331

Summary

This report seeks Central Sydney Planning Committee (CSPC) and Council approval to publicly exhibit a planning proposal, draft development control plan and precinct management plan to establish a Special Entertainment Precinct on King Street, Newtown and adjoining properties. The proposal has been prepared with Inner West Council to recognise King Street as a single, continuous precinct.

King Street is one of Sydney's most iconic high streets and a major contributor to the city's night-time economy and cultural life. Known for its diverse mix of hospitality, live music and independent businesses, it plays an important role in supporting community connection, creative expression and economic activity throughout the day and night.

Special entertainment precincts provide a coordinated framework to support later trading, simplify approvals and enable tailored sound management. They also unlock NSW Government incentives, including reduced liquor licensing fees and extended trading opportunities for venues putting on live music.

In summer 2024/25 we asked our community what they thought about our proposal to designate all our late night trading areas, including King Street Newtown, as special entertainment precincts. More than 350 submissions were made and there was strong support for the proposal. Our communities told us that they would like to see more nightlife, greater diversity of offer and cultural programming, and flexibility for businesses.

In March 2025, Council and the Central Sydney Planning Committee endorsed the establishment of special entertainment precincts across our late night trading areas, including King Street, and resolved to investigate extending trading hours on parts of King Street and 5 other locations.

In December 2025, City of Sydney and Inner West councils each resolved to work together on a coordinated approach to King Street. Since then, both councils have aligned key settings for King Street, including trading hours and sound criteria, to provide a precinct consistent framework for businesses.

Planning Proposal – King Street Special Entertainment Precinct (the planning proposal) at Attachment A seeks to amend the Sydney Local Environmental Plan to designate the precinct. Supporting this, Draft Sydney Development Control Plan 2012 – King Street Special Entertainment Precinct (the draft DCP) at Attachment B proposes changes to recognise and align with King Street as a special entertainment precinct.

The Special Entertainment Precincts Management Plan at Attachment C (the plan) establishes the sound plan and trading hours, ensuring businesses on opposite sides of

King Street operate under reasonably consistent controls despite the cross-council boundary. This approach provides localised clarity and fairness.

The proposed approach has 2 tiers of trading hours. Central King Street, around Newtown Station, supports higher-intensity activity with up to 2am or 4am trading hours, depending on business type and live music offering, without a development application. 24-hour trading is possible through a development application. North and south King Street sections have more moderate available trading hours but are still increased from existing controls. Trading hours are generally to midnight or 2am, depending on business type and live music offering, without a development application.

The framework includes incentives for live music, extended hours for low-impact venues such as small bars and restaurants, and provisions for unlicensed businesses to trade earlier in the morning and later at night. Outdoor trading hours are proposed to be consistent across the precinct and aligned with Inner West Council's approach.

The sound plan uses clear, fixed criteria based on local background noise levels and extensive acoustic testing to enable live music and activity while protecting residential amenity. It has bespoke sound categories to align with Inner West Council and introduces sound levels for a new midnight–2am period and weekends to reflect patterns of activity along King Street.

The plan also outlines governance arrangements and how the precinct's performance will be monitored, including measures to assess outcomes and identify and resolve any unintended impacts.

Subject to Council and CSPC approval, the proposal will be submitted for a Gateway determination and, if endorsed, publicly exhibited jointly with Inner West Council to obtain community and stakeholder feedback.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

(A) the Central Sydney Planning Committee approve Planning Proposal – King Street Special Entertainment Precinct, shown at Attachment A to the subject report, for submission to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure with a request for Gateway Determination;

(B) the Central Sydney Planning Committee approve Planning Proposal – King Street Special Entertainment Precinct, for public authority consultation and public exhibition in accordance with any conditions imposed under the Gateway Determination;

(C) the Central Sydney Planning Committee note the recommendation to Council's Transport, Heritage and Planning Committee on 22 June 2026, that Council approve Draft Sydney Development Control Plan 2012 – King Street Special Entertainment Precincts – shown at Attachment B to the subject report, for public authority consultation and public exhibition with the Planning Proposal;

(D) the Central Sydney Planning Committee note the recommendation to Council's Transport, Heritage and Planning Committee on 22 June 2026, that Council approve Draft King Street Special Entertainment Precinct Management Plan shown at Attachment C to the subject report, for public authority consultation and public exhibition with the Planning Proposal;

(E) the Central Sydney Planning Committee note the recommendation to Council's Transport, Heritage and Planning Committee on 22 June 2026, that Council seek authority from the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces to exercise the delegation of all the functions under section 3.36 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 to make the local environmental plan and to put into effect the Planning Proposal – King Street Special Entertainment Precinct; and

(F) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to make any minor variations to the draft King Street Special Entertainment Precinct Planning Proposal, Sydney Development Control Plan 2012 or Precincts Management Plan, to correct any drafting errors, inconsistencies, or omissions, or to ensure consistency with any condition of the Gateway Determination.

Attachments

Attachment A. Planning Proposal - King Street Special Entertainment Precinct

Attachment B. Draft Sydney Development Control Plan - King Street Special Entertainment Precinct

Attachment C. Draft King Street Special Entertainment Precinct Management Plan

Attachment D. Acoustic Technical Report Addendum

Background

Overview

1. In March 2026 a report to Council outlined the City's proposal for Special Entertainment Precincts across its late night trading areas. That report provides background to establishing more than 20 precincts across the council area: https://meetings.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/ieIssueDetails.aspx?IId=35458&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI21135

Special entertainment precincts

2. The special entertainment precinct framework was established under the Local Government Act 1993 and enables councils to set specific noise standards and trading hours to foster live music and nightlife.

3. NSW Government's Special Entertainment Precinct Guideline was finalised in November 2024 which sets the process by which Councils can establish and manage special entertainment precincts.

4. In special entertainment precincts, businesses benefit from:

   (a) simpler regulation and more flexibility, with no development application required for certain late trading hours

   (b) more operational certainty with a set of clear maximum sound levels across the precincts

   (c) access to certain incentives in the Liquor Act 2007, such as 80% off liquor licence fees for eligible businesses

   (d) unlocking incentives in the Liquor Act 2007 which provide extended trading and liquor licencing for live music and performance, including:

      (i) 2 extra hours on the night of a performance

      (ii) one extra hour every night, with at least 10 performances a month

5. As a result of special entertainment precincts, communities benefit from:

   (a) more nightlife

   (b) a diversity of businesses – from bookshops to hairdressers – able to stay open later

   (c) more live music, performance and cultural programming

   (d) a clear management plan which balances nightlife with residential amenity

City of Sydney process

6. City of Sydney has had late-night trading areas designated since 2007 under the Sydney DCP 2012, which included a major review in 2019 to support later trading and better manage nightlife.

7. Under a Lord Mayoral Minute on Supporting Sydney's Nightlife in October 2024, Council resolved to work with the NSW Government to implement special entertainment precincts and other measures to support Sydney's nightlife.

8. In summer 2024/25 we asked our community what they thought about our proposal to designate all our late-night trading areas as special entertainment precincts.

9. More than 350 submissions were received in response to the discussion paper, with strong overall support for the proposal. Community members told us that they would like to see more vibrant nightlife, a greater diversity of venues and cultural programming, and increased flexibility for businesses. We also heard that people were concerned about potential impacts of noise.

10. In March 2025, Council noted the findings from the public exhibition of the discussion paper and endorsed the establishment of special entertainment precincts in late night trading areas. Council also resolved to investigate upgrading the late-night trading tier of 6 areas including King Street, Newtown. In October 2025, a workshop was held with the Nightlife and Creative Industries Advisory Panel to consider these potential upgrades.

11. In March 2026, Council and the CSPC resolved to publicly exhibit a proposal to establish Special Entertainment Precincts across more than 20 late night trading areas, including Central Sydney, Oxford Street, North Alexandria and Erskineville. The proposal has been submitted to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure and is currently awaiting a Gateway determination prior to public exhibition.

King Street, Newtown - collaboration with Inner West Council

12. In December 2025, both City of Sydney and Inner West councils resolved to work together on a coordinated approach to the King Street, Newtown precinct, recognising that the street operates as a single, continuous destination across council boundaries.

13. King Street, Newtown was separated from the wider Special Entertainment Precincts proposal to allow for that collaboration and a bespoke response.

14. Staff from both councils have since collaborated to align key settings, including trading hours and sound, to provide greater clarity and certainty for businesses, residents and visitors. This work has resulted in a tailored approach for King Street that reflects its unique cross-boundary context, differing from the standard settings applied in each council’s other special entertainment precincts.

15. Work undertaken together includes:

    (a) review of existing area to inform an evidence-based, locally responsive approach

    (b) engagement with the Newtown-Enmore Business Community, and

    (c) joint technical discussions on trading hours, sound controls, and regulatory alignment

16. Consultation and implementation will also be coordinated to deliver a seamless experience for businesses and the wider community.

17. Feedback from the Newtown Enmore business community helped shape the key principles underpinning the approach to King Street special entertainment precinct:

    (a) ensure businesses on opposite sides of King Street operate under consistent controls, despite the council boundary

    (b) support early morning, daytime and late-night trading (not just night-time)

    (c) support a wide range of businesses, including small and unlicensed operators

    (d) encourage live music and performance

    (e) promote a safe and inclusive night-time environment, and

    (f) provide clarity for businesses and align with NSW Government liquor licensing where possible

King Street special entertainment precinct management plan (Attachment C)

18. The precinct management plan is built around 2 key controls: trading hours and sound management. Together, these settings balance activation with the protection of residential amenity.

19. While the settings are aligned to ensure businesses across the street operate under the same or similar rules, the Inner West and City of Sydney precinct management plans are separate documents, as they will progress through the planning processes independently, albeit in parallel.

Trading hours

20. The approach to trading hours:

    (a) includes incentive hours for live music and performance to increase the cultural offer

    (b) provides early morning and late-night trading hours for unlicensed businesses to help support a diverse offer and

    (c) provides later hours to small bars and restaurants in recognition that they are lower impact and less likely to be able to access bonus hours for live music and performance

21. There are 2 tiers of trading hours proposed for King Street. These align across the street ensuring businesses on opposite sides of King Street have the same trading hours available to them despite the cross-council boundary.

    (a) **Central King Street:** With established late-night activity near Newtown Station and adjacent to Enmore Road SEP this part of King Street supports higher intensity use. The 2 blocks around the station were already designated our latest late night trading tier under the DCP. This has been extended north to Missenden Road and south to Whitehorse Street, reinforcing Central King Street as the focus for late night activity. Special entertainment precinct trading hours are to 2am or 4am depending on business type, with 24-hour trading available through a DA.

    (b) **King Street south and north:** A new King Street-specific trading tier is introduced for the northern and southern sections, replacing the current 'local centre' classification. With a more sensitive residential context, these areas receive bespoke trading hours that are less than Central King Street but represent a clear increase on previous controls. The special entertainment precinct hours are to midnight or 2am depending on business type.

22. Outdoor trading hours (for example footway dining, balconies and courtyards) are consistent across the precinct:

    (a) 11pm on Sunday to Thursday

    (b) Midnight on Friday, Saturday or the night before a public holiday

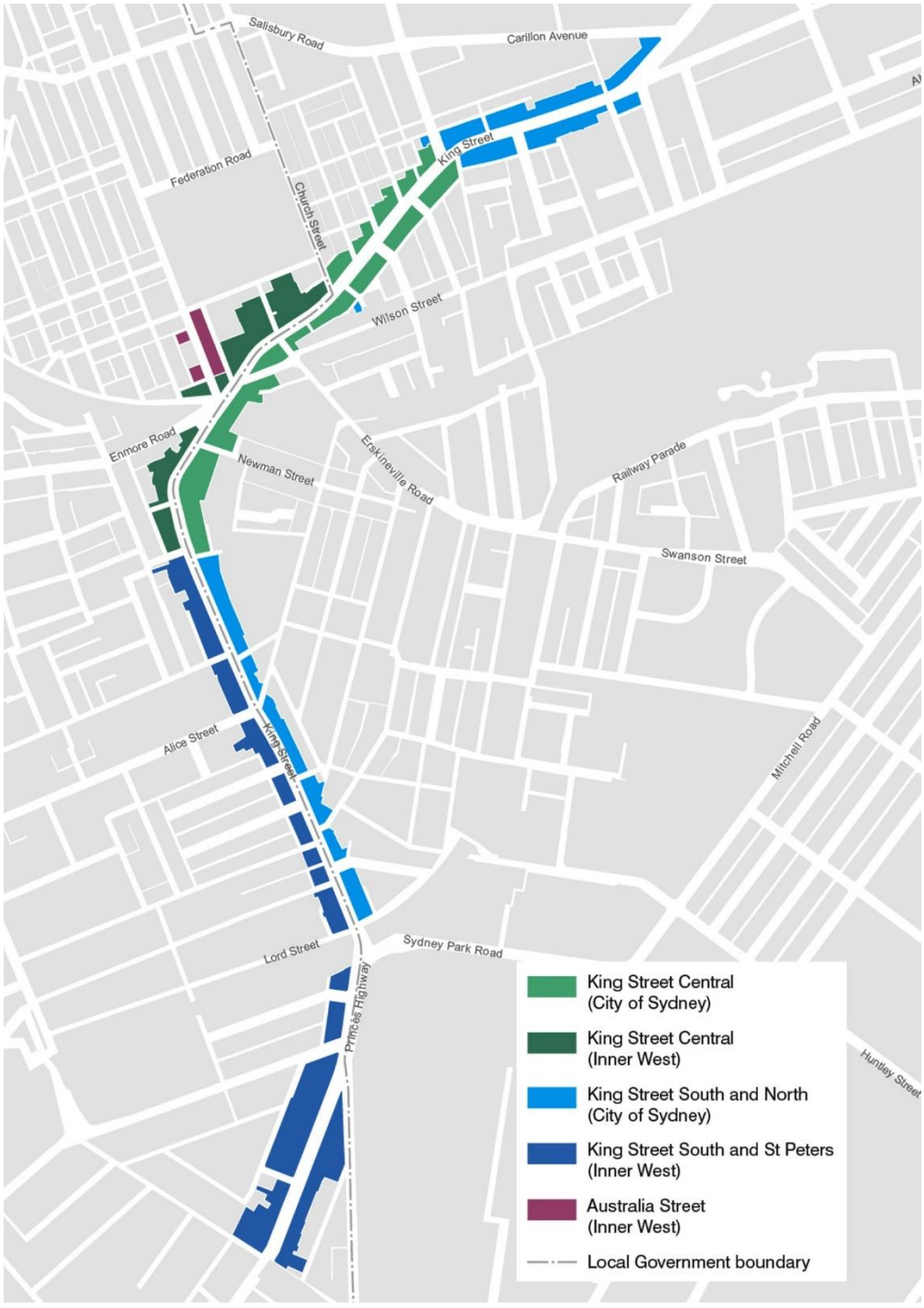

Figure 1: Proposed King Street special entertainment precinct trading hours map

Sound plan

23. The proposed sound plan builds on the City's broader special entertainment precinct program, while responding to King Street's specific acoustic environment and policy context.

24. Consistent with the City's wider approach, the sound plan sets clear, fixed criteria based on local background noise levels, enabling activity and live music while protecting residential amenity.

25. The criteria either maintain or increase sound allowances for venues. This is consistent with NSW Government's *Special Entertainment Precinct Guideline* which advises that the sound management framework should not disadvantage or restrict the sound conditions of existing venues.

26. Extensive sound testing was undertaken by Acoustic Studio (on behalf of City of Sydney) and Renzo Tonin Associates (Inner West Council).

27. A key aim is to align sound criteria with Inner West Council, recognising King Street crosses the local government boundary. The councils worked collaboratively to develop locally responsive criteria, ensuring alignment across the boundary while reflecting the City's objectives and acoustic conditions.

28. New key differences from the City's broader special entertainment precinct proposal include the introduction of bespoke sound categories with a weekend variation and an additional night-time period.

29. Testing identified variation in background sound levels along the length of King Street. In response, 2 bespoke sound categories are proposed:

    (a) **Sound Category KS1** applies to central King Street, where background and ambient sound levels are highest.

    (b) **Sound Category KS2** applies to the northern and southern sections, where background sound levels are comparatively lower (though still reasonably high).

30. This differentiation aligns with the proposed trading hours and future activity.

31. In contrast to the sound plan for special entertainment precincts elsewhere in the council area, the King Street framework introduces a weekend variation in the noise criteria. This responds to measured differences in background and ambient sound levels between the weekdays and weekends unlike acoustic patterns in other parts of our local area. This also helps with alignment with Inner West Council's approach which is based on differing patterns of activity and potential tolerance for sound on weekends.

32. The most substantive change is within the night-time period. To support alignment with Inner West Council and respond to trading patterns, a new time band from midnight to 2am has been introduced. This provides a more graduated transition from early-night activity to late-night quiet hours and supports extended trading, provided venues operate with doors and windows closed.

33. After 2am, stronger (lower) sound limits will apply. These align with periods when background noise levels are at their lowest and ensure the ongoing protection of residential amenity.

34. The sound framework for areas not fronting King Street recognises their different acoustic context and role within the precinct. These back street areas (SCA KS3, SCA3 and SCA4) do not require full cross-boundary alignment, as they are sheltered from the shared King Street noise environment and are not the primary limiting receivers. A bespoke SCA KS3 has been introduced to respond to provide a transition and some consistency with the King Street frontage categories, while SCA3 and SCA4 have been only lightly refined upwards to reflect measured background levels and maintain alignment with the City's broader SEP approach.

35. Further detail is provided in the Addendum to the Acoustic Report at Attachment D.

36. Overall, bespoke sound criteria have been established for King Street to reflect the local context and enable cross-boundary consistency. While they are different from the City's broader special entertainment precinct framework, they are evidence-based, place specific and have been tested to ensure they support the intended level of activity while protecting residential amenity.

We're amending planning controls to establish the King Street special entertainment precinct

Planning proposal (Attachment A)

37. Legislation requires that special entertainment precincts are established via a planning proposal and mapped in a local environmental plan.

38. Planning Proposal – King Street Special Entertainment Precinct (the planning proposal) at Attachment A proposes Sydney Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2012 be amended to designate the areas as special entertainment precincts.

39. This report recommends Council and the CSPC seek Gateway Determination for the planning proposal and approve it for public authority consultation and public exhibition.

Draft Development Control Plan (Attachment B)

40. The Draft Sydney Development Control Plan 2012 – King Street Special Entertainment Precinct (the draft DCP) at Attachment B proposes amendments to reflect and support the designation of King Street as a special entertainment precinct. This includes updating the DCP to:

    (a) extend the existing 24-hour late night management area in central King Street north to Missenden Road and south to Whitehorse Street

    (b) introduce 2 new King Street trading tiers (north and south), reclassifying the northern and southern sections from 'local centre' areas to bespoke King Street tiers. Both tiers have the same base hours, which are more generous than local centre hours. North King Street businesses can access later extended hours than south, including 24-hour trading for Category B venues (takeaway, restaurant and small bars) on the main street due to its proximity to the hospital.

41. The draft DCP includes changes to where residential development must demonstrate entertainment sound attenuation. It also extends acoustic design requirements to residential development in and within 50 metres of King Street, Newtown areas to support sustainable nightlife growth in mixed-use neighbourhoods.

Additional sites for inclusion

42. The LEP mapping and draft DCP also includes the proposed addition of venues and sites which sit on the boundary of our late night trading areas / special entertainment precincts. These sites have been assessed in terms of their suitability and potential impact and are recommended for inclusion:

    (a) 1-15 Wilson Street, Sushi Train, Egg Records, etc.

    (b) 2-8 O'Connell Street, Myra's Taverna and Brewtown

    (c) Corner of Wilson Street and Erskineville Road, Beantown café

    (d) 1C Whateley Street, Rising Sun Workshop

    (e) 189 - 199 Missenden Road, Cuckoo, Butterleaf, Campos Coffee

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

43. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision renews the communities' vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2050. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This proposal is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:

    (a) Direction 1 - Responsible governance and stewardship - The King Street special entertainment precinct proposal demonstrates responsible governance through a clear management plan, regular oversight by the City's Nightlife and Creative Industries Advisory Panel (working group), and an established monitoring and evaluation framework with defined indicators to track success, identify unintended impacts, and enable the Panel to recommend changes to Council if required.

    (b) Direction 7 - Resilient and diverse communities - The City's proposed special entertainment precincts support resilient and diverse communities by designating all late-night trading areas within the local area as entertainment precincts. This ensures a wide distribution of venues, promoting diversity in late night activities, entertainment offerings and locations all over the local area, rather than concentrating activity and benefits to a few areas to a select group of venues.

    (c) Direction 8 - A thriving cultural life - The proposed special entertainment precinct encourages more live music, performance and culture by unlocking access to NSW Government liquor licensing incentives which reward venues that bring cultural life to our city.

    (d) Direction 9 - A transformed and innovative economy - The proposed special entertainment precinct supports growth in the night-time economy by making it easier for businesses to trade later and providing more operational certainty.

Risks

44. The special entertainment precincts proposal has been informed by a risk assessment and aligns with the City's risk appetite by supporting innovation while putting strong safeguards in place.

45. Key risks relating to sound, safety and amenity - areas where the City has a low tolerance for harm - are managed through the precinct management plan and our monitoring and evaluation framework. The sound plan is supported by a robust study by qualified acoustic consultants to ensure residential amenity is safeguarded and environmental impact is managed.

46. Reputational risks have been mitigated through early engagement on the discussion paper, which demonstrated strong community support for the proposal. Further engagement has been undertaken with the Nightlife and Creative Industries Panel and key precinct groups to test proposed changes. If endorsed, the next step would be public consultation, giving a further opportunity for community feedback and refinement.

Relevant Legislation

47. Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

48. Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021.

49. Liquor Act 2007.

50. Liquor Regulation 2018.

51. Local Government Act 1993.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

52. The King Street Special Entertainment Precinct is being reported to both councils at their June 2026 meetings. Inner West Council meet on 16 June 2026.

53. If approved by Council and the CSPC, the implementation of special entertainment precincts will progress through the process in parallel with Inner West Council.

54. If approved, the planning proposal will be sent to Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure with a request for Gateway Determination to allow public exhibition. Time frames for the next steps (exhibition, reviewing of the feedback, reporting back to Council and CSPC, amending the local environment plan and commencing the trial) are dependent on the time it takes to receive Gateway Determination.

Public Consultation

55. The public consultation process for the planning proposal will be carried out jointly with Inner West Council.

56. We recognise the important role that businesses play in the success of special entertainment precincts. We plan to deliver targeted business engagement, including a business information session.

57. The planning proposal, draft DCP and draft precinct management plan will be exhibited together, in accordance with the City of Sydney Community Participation Plan. Feedback will be sought from businesses, landowners, residents and the wider community.

58. Further engagement will also be held with the Nightlife and Creative Industries Advisory Panel who act as the project working group for the City's proposed special entertainment precincts.

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