

## Project Scope - Loftus Street, Reiby Place and Customs House Lane Upgrade

File No: X084582

### Summary

This report provides the scope of work and concept design for the implementation of City North Public Domain Plan upgrade of Loftus Street, Reiby Place and Customs House Lane (Attachment A). This initiative originates from the permanent closure of Loftus Street at Alfred Street as a result of the CBD and South East Light Rail project (CSELR).

The aspiration for the project's scope is to provide additional space for people and activation at the northern end of Loftus Street where through traffic movements are no longer required. This space will be used on a timed basis as a dedicated service zone, improving servicing and loading to Customs House, businesses in the Gateway Building and surroundings. It will also address existing pedestrian safety issues in Reiby Place and Customs House Lane.

Loftus Street has already been closed and pedestrianised at Alfred Street, adjacent to Customs House Square. The intent is for the project to extend this pedestrian area south to the intersection with Reiby Place. This area will be paved and vehicular access controlled by timed retractable bollards, allowing it to be used for service access and loading in off-peak times. Customs House Lane will also be closed to vehicles and paved, with loading functions occurring from Loftus Street. The northern footpath along Reiby Place will be widened to allow safe pedestrian movement, and a continuous footway treatment (CFT) installed across Reiby Place at Macquarie Place and at Pitt Street. Lighting and existing footpaths in Loftus Street will be upgraded to meet the City's codes, and additional trees planted to address Greening Sydney targets. The streetscape improvement works will deliver approximately 1,500sqm of additional public space for pedestrians, including significant greening and canopy benefits, and deliver on the City's Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 City Space Improvement Program project idea.

The project's aim is to reimagine Loftus Street north as a space for people, improving its quality and accessibility in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and to support long-term permanent changes to the public domain as envisioned by the City's Sustainable Sydney 2030 and the Gehl Public Space Public Life 2020 update. Extension of the pedestrian area in Loftus Street and improvements to the adjoining laneways are part of the City North Public Domain Plan (endorsed by Council in 2015) to enable more space for people to walk, dwell and create opportunities for local business.

The process for permanent closure of the street to most vehicles under the Roads Act 1993 will commence upon completion of the concept design and additional community consultation. It will enable the permanent works to commence in January 2023. Some vehicular access (services and loading, emergency vehicles) will be preserved. These access arrangements will be managed on a time-limited basis and details are currently being finalised.

Consultation with landowners and businesses in the vicinity of the project has been undertaken and will continue through the design and approval phase. In particular, stakeholder issues relating to safety, loading, access, and desire for activation have informed the scope of the project. The proposed hours for loading access in Loftus Street will be the subject of further conversations with stakeholders. A scope of works and concept design has been prepared by the City for the pedestrianisation of Loftus Street north of Reiby Place, closure of Customs House Lane to vehicles and upgrade of Loftus Street (Bridge Street to Reiby Place) and footpath widening along Reiby Place. Permanent works include the conversion of redundant asphalt and concrete lanes to granite flexible space, upgrade of existing footpaths to granite, installation of additional street furniture, smart poles and tree planting.

## **Recommendation**

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) endorse the scope of works for the Loftus Street, Reiby Place and Customs House Lane Upgrade as described in the subject report for progression to detailed design, documentation and construction of works; and
- (B) note that the required traffic changes and permanent closure of the road to vehicular traffic (service and loading provided) will be consulted with the community and approvals obtained in accordance with the Roads Act 1993

## **Attachments**

- Attachment A.** Project Site Plan
- Attachment B.** Concept Design
- Attachment C.** Communications and Engagement Summary Report

## Background

1. In December 2015 Council endorsed the City North Public Domain Plan (the Plan). The Plan covers the precinct generally bound by George Street, Alfred Street, Macquarie Street and King Street, and recommends the scope, location and extent of public domain improvements over the short, medium and long term.
2. The Plan was prepared in coordination with the CBD and South East Light Rail (CSELR) transformation of George Street and Alfred Street, and the redevelopment of the AMP Quay Quarter Precinct and Gateway building (among others), which were in planning and design stages.
3. The Plan proposed additional space for people to move and gather in the public domain in response to the transport interchange nodes and growing worker, visitor and residential population in the northern central business district.
4. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision included the Loftus Street upgrade project as an example to illustrate Transformative Project Idea "City space improvement program". The Strategy is currently on public exhibition.
5. In June 2014 the City entered into a Voluntary Planning Agreement with AMP relating to the Development of the land bound by Loftus Street, Customs House Lane, Young Street and Loftus Lane - known as the Quay Quarter. The VPA included a monetary contribution of \$5,928,800 to the City for urban design upgrades within the precinct of the development. The VPA contribution was paid in February 2018.
6. The City North Public Domain Plan identified the upgrade of Loftus Street north of Bridge and Reiby Place as priority projects. Customs House Lane has also been included in the project scope to address pedestrian safety issues.
7. Loftus Street is an important connection between the northern central business district and Circular Quay. It's upgrade will provide a pedestrian priority, green canopy connection between Customs House Square, Jessie Street gardens, Macquarie Place Park and Farrer Place. It is a very wide one way street and has no further requirement for through traffic. Loftus Street north of Customs House Lane upgrade works were completed through CSELR scope, completed in December 2019.
8. Reiby Place is a narrow laneway connecting Loftus Street to Pitt Street. It currently has very narrow footpaths, and is well used by both pedestrians and vehicles accessing the northern block of Pitt Street. Existing conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles occur at the crossing point of Macquarie Place and Reiby Place.
9. Customs House Lane is a narrow lane with no footpath between Loftus Street and Young Street on the southern side of Customs House. It has recently been opened to through traffic creating significant risk for pedestrians exiting Customs House into the lane. The surrounding laneway precinct was upgraded as part of the AMP Young and Loftus Precinct development. Customs House Lane has been included in the scope of this project to address these safety concerns and improve the quality of the lane.
10. The AMP Quay Quarter construction project relied on a works zone in Loftus Street until its completion in 2021. Following completion of the Quay Quarter construction it is now possible to proceed to implementation of the upgrade of Loftus Street, Reiby Place and Customs House Square.

11. Survey, services, and flood management investigative work has been carried out to refine the scope of the streetscape upgrades, and the attached concept design at Attachment B has been developed to achieve the City North Public Domain Plan objectives.
12. In March and April 2022, stakeholder meetings were carried out with all business owners and managers adjacent to the subject streets to discuss the scope of the project and understand issues relating to pedestrian movement, servicing and access requirements. The concept design attached to this report and proposed closure of the road to vehicular traffic (service and loading provided) and traffic changes will be consulted with the community and stakeholders and feedback addressed as part of the detailed design development and approvals by the relevant authorities.

### **Scope of Works**

13. The scope of works include:

#### **Loftus Street**

- (a) removal of existing bollards at northern closure;
- (b) demolition of existing concrete / asphalt and base course in roadway;
- (c) installation of new granite paving in roadway north of Reiby Place (new paving will be trafficable);
- (d) mill and re-sheet existing roadway with asphalt south of Reiby Place;
- (e) installation of new granite paving along western footpath;
- (f) installation of new traffic control bollards across Loftus Street north of Reiby Place, including retractable bollards;
- (g) installation of CCTV to new pedestrian space and retractable bollards;
- (h) replacement of existing Ausgrid poles with Smartpoles;
- (i) installation of additional City of Sydney street furniture; and
- (j) tree planting;

#### **Reiby Place**

- (k) demolition and removal of existing kerb and gutters and construction of granite footpath widening along the northern side of Reiby Place;
- (l) construct footpath extensions across Reiby Place at Macquarie Place and Pitt Street, and new granite paving;
- (m) installation of stormwater drainage under new kerbs; and

#### **Customs House Lane**

- (n) installation traffic control bollards across Customs House Lane at Loftus Street; and

- (o) installation of new granite paving in roadway (new paving will be trafficable).
14. The scope of permanent pedestrianisation works does not require the following:
- (a) light rail shutdown;
  - (b) contamination and site remediation;
  - (c) existing service relocations (Minor service relocations allowed for on Reiby Place only);
  - (d) replacement of existing granite footpath slabs and pavers; nor
  - (e) smartpole replacement or relocation.

## Key Implications

### Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

15. Sustainable Sydney 2030 is a vision for the sustainable development of the City to 2030 and beyond. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the City, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This project is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
- (a) Direction 1 - A Globally Competitive and Innovative City - the project creates a high quality public domain that supports a city centre that is competitive, attracts investment and ensures ongoing liveability.
  - (b) Direction 2 provides a road map for the City to become A Leading Environmental Performer - the project implements environmental actions such as increasing tree canopy cover and utilising recycled water as part of its irrigation strategy.
  - (c) Direction 3 - Integrated Transport for a Connected City - the project compliments an efficient transport mode such as the CBD and South East Light Rail.
  - (d) Direction 4 - A City for Walking and Cycling - the project improves pedestrian amenity and safety through provision of enhanced high-quality footpath treatments, footpath widening, continuous footpath treatments and increased street furniture amenity, such as seats and bins.
  - (e) Direction 5 - A Lively and Engaging City Centre - The project delivers a welcoming public domain that encourages people to stay and enjoy and creates space to support a diverse 24-hour city economy.
  - (f) Direction 6 - Vibrant Local Communities and Economies - Vibrant Local Communities and Economies – the project will provide an improved public domain that meets the needs of a wide variety of user groups and creates more space for social interaction and business to trade out into (should they choose to).
  - (g) Direction 7 - A Cultural and Creative City - the project creates a variety of spaces could allow for diverse cultural offerings such as busking or creative pop-ups from adjacent venues, facilitating a city identity and encouraging people to come to the City for leisure beyond work and business activities.

- (h) Direction 9 - Sustainable Development, Renewal and Design - the project will potentially facilitate additional tree planting, increasing urban canopy in the city centre.
- (i) Direction 10 - Implementation through Effective Governance and Partnerships - the project builds on the NSW State Government SSLEP project and realises VPA outcomes for the AMP Quay Quarter Precinct.

### **Risks**

- 16. The scope of works pose minimal risks given that Loftus Street has already closed to through traffic and that the scope is similar to previous City of Sydney streetscape upgrades for which the City has experience in managing these works. The scope includes retention of Loftus Street existing kerbs and gutters, so that drainage and services will remain and not be disrupted.

### **Social / Cultural / Community**

- 17. The project will provide improved amenity for residents and visitors to Sydney.
- 18. Closure of road lanes to vehicular traffic (service and loading provided) and footpath widening will encourage active transport and social and community interaction.
- 19. The project will improve the material quality of the public domain, complementing the logical extension of the existing pedestrianised section.

### **Environmental**

- 20. A review of existing trees will be undertaken with the City's arborist during the design development stage of the project to establish a construction methodology to protect existing trees and maximise tree root health during construction.
- 21. Opportunities for tree planting in Loftus Street will be maximised to contribute to the City's Greening Sydney canopy targets. Investigations will be undertaken during the design development stage to finalise new tree locations .

### **Economic**

- 22. The new pedestrian space in Loftus Street will create a flexible area complementing the important role of Alfred Street and Circular Quay in hosting major events (New Year's Eve, Vivid), as well as day to day activation such as outdoor dining, public seating and temporary activations.
- 23. The closure of Loftus Street creates a dedicated area for loading and servicing vehicles, providing guaranteed efficient loading access within the loading hours. This improves the efficiency of loading and deliveries for businesses.
- 24. New streetscape upgrades are likely to attract more footfall for businesses over time and provide more space for people to congregate responsibly and practice social distancing. This will assist the viability of local businesses such as cafés and store owners, potentially allowing them to trade out onto the public domain in the short term, while attracting investment in the long term.

## Options

25. The project could proceed with an adjusted scope, removing the footpath widening along Reiby Place north. This is not recommended due to pedestrian safety concerns.
26. It is recommended to endorse the proposed scope including Reiby Place footpath widening.

## Financial Implications

27. There are sufficient funds within the 2022/23 capital works budget and future year's forward estimates to deliver the project. The funding is supported, in part, by the contribution resulting from the Voluntary Planning Agreement with AMP noted above.

## Relevant Legislation

28. Local Government Act 1993 for construction procurement.
29. Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EPA) (Part 4 and 5). A planner will review the scope of works and Review of Environmental Factors and assess consent requirements for the permanent works under the EPA Act.
30. Roads Act 1993 for permanent changes to traffic arrangements.

## Critical Dates / Time Frames

31. Key dates for the project are as follows:
  - (a) Review of Environmental Factors (REF) submission July 2022
  - (b) REF approval August 2022
  - (c) Appointment of Design and Construction Contractor October 2022
  - (d) Detail Design Commencement October 2022
  - (e) Traffic Changes – Local Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee / Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee / Council Endorsement September 2022
  - (f) Construction Commencement January 2023
  - (g) Construction Completion in Stages November 2023

## Public Consultation

32. During the concept design phase, the City had conversations with affected stakeholders. This consisted of consulting with 35 individuals and 10 key stakeholder briefings, including:
  - (a) AMP Quay Quarter;
  - (b) 7 Macquarie Place building management;
  - (c) Gateway (Dexus) building management;
  - (d) The Paragon Hotel;
  - (e) McDonalds Alfred Street;
  - (f) Café Sydney - Customs House;
  - (g) Customs House Library; and
  - (h) Customs House events team.
33. This process is documented in the Communications and Engagement Summary Report at Attachment C.
34. Key stakeholder issues include pedestrian safety in Customs House Lane and Reiby Place, property access, loading, and servicing access.
35. Key stakeholder interests are in outdoor dining, street activation and events and improvements to pedestrian access.
36. Stakeholders suggested investigating converting Loftus Street to a two way street, to reduce congestion in Reiby Place. This has been considered with advice from the City Access team, and has not been included in the project scope due to this resulting in loss of kerbside loading in Loftus Street south of Reiby Place, and changes to the signalised intersection and traffic network at Bridge Street being outside the City's scope and not likely to be supported by Transport for New South Wales. The project will reduce congestion in Reiby Place with the introduction of timed loading reducing the number of vehicles entering Loftus Street outside of loading times.
37. Ongoing conversations and consultation with affected stakeholders will continue as part of the planning approval process ahead of construction.
38. The City will work with the businesses and residents to minimise impacts during construction.

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