

5 The Great River Walk - Nepean Avenue Pathway Community Consultation Results

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Outcome	<i>We manage and improve our built environment</i>
Strategy	<i>Plan for and maintain accessible, safe and high quality infrastructure</i>
Principal Activity	<i>Design and deliver Council's major capital projects</i>

Previous Items: Nepean Avenue, Penrith - Proposed Active Transport Infrastructure- Councillor Briefing- 01 Aug 2016
Nepean Avenue, Penrith - Proposed Active Transport Infrastructure- Access Committee- 10 Aug 2016
Nepean Avenue, Penrith - Pedestrian and Bike Route and assessment of Peachtree Creek Corridor as Alternative Route- Councillor Briefing- 07 Nov 2016
The Great River Walk - Nepean Avenue, Penrith - Emergency Pedestrian Safety Improvements- Councillor Briefing- 03 Aug 2020
Nepean Avenue, Penrith - Proposed Alternate Temporary Emergency Pedestrian Safety Measures- Councillor Briefing- 10 Aug 2020 the conclusion of the Policy Review Committee Meeting
Nepean Avenue, Penrith - Endorsement of Signage and Line Marking Plans for Pedestrian Safety Improvements- Local Traffic Committee- 07 Sep 2020
Great River Walk, Nepean Ave Shared Path- Ordinary Meeting- 28 Sep 2020
Acceptance of Grant Funding - Great River Walk, Nepean Avenue- Ordinary Meeting- 28 Jun 2021
Nepean Ave Shared Path Concept Design - Community Consultation- Councillor Briefing- 07 Feb 2022
Nepean Avenue Shared path - Update on Community Consultation Results- Councillor Briefing- 21 Mar 2022
Nepean Avenue Shared Path - Community Consultation Results- Ordinary Meeting- 28 Mar 2022
The Great River Walk - Nepean Avenue Shared Path- Councillor Briefing- 05 Jun 2023
The Great River Walk - Nepean Avenue Pathway Community Consultation Results- Councillor Briefing- 21 Aug 2023

Executive Summary

The Nepean Avenue Pathway aims to improve pedestrian safety and provide the critical missing link to one of the most popular recreational activities in the Penrith LGA, the 'Bridge-to-Bridge' loop of the Great River Walk. The revised draft design responds to this by creating a beautiful landscape that connects pedestrians to the Yandhai Nepean Crossing and elevates the area's amenity to enrich the experience of all users and residents.

A four-week consultation program from 17 July to 14 August 2023 sought feedback from Nepean Avenue residents and the broader community on the revised draft design for this project. This included early and ongoing engagement with Nepean Avenue resident spokespeople, with meetings held on 29 June, 27 July, 7 August and 19 September 2023. After the official consultation period concluded, Council officers have continued to engage directly with concerned residents via phone calls, emails and on-site meetings held on 15 and 31 August 2023.

While feedback received during the consultation program indicates broad community support for the project, many Nepean Avenue residents do not support the proposal. Formal objections cited the planting of new trees obstructing views of pedestrian traffic and the placement of bollards restricting driveway access as the primary concerns. Other issues raised by residents included ongoing consultation on alternative options and the road width to accommodate buses, large vehicles and overtaking vehicles. While large vehicles will have sufficient space to travel safely down Nepean Avenue, the proposed two-way quietway will require all motorists to reduce travelling speeds and discourage them from overtaking through effective design treatments that send visual and tactile cues about appropriate behaviours. Council will support this behaviour change by educating all users (motorists, cyclists and pedestrians) about the changed traffic environment on Nepean Avenue. Alternate design options, including the possibility of a behind the kerb solution have been explored.

To ensure the safety of pedestrians on Nepean Avenue, it is recommended to proceed with implementing the project as proposed. Additionally, it is recommended to address the primary concerns raised by residents through design amendments to the following:

- Number, type and placement of new trees on the verge
- Number and placement of bollards along the pathway
- Minor modifications to the travel lane dimensions

The amendments will ensure the path serves the needs of pedestrians whilst maintaining the flexibility of use for other occasional users such as trucks and deliveries.

Background

The Nepean River Precinct is one of Penrith's most loved recreational destinations, and the Great River Walk, specifically the Bridge-to-Bridge Loop, is one of its most popular attractions. The seven-kilometre route connects Emu Plains and Penrith across the Yandhai Nepean Crossing and M4 Bridge, with Nepean Avenue widely regarded as the 'missing link' as there is no formal pedestrian pathway along this section of the Great River Walk.

The need for a pathway on Nepean Avenue was first identified during the development of the 'Our River' Masterplan in 2013. Community consultation then revealed a strong desire to improve access and connectivity to the Great River Walk and destinations along the route, including a dedicated footpath and cycle path on Nepean Avenue.

Over the past ten years, pedestrian activity on the Great River Walk has steadily increased. The opening of the Yandhai Nepean Bridge in 2018, the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing investment in improvements around the Nepean River Precinct have all contributed to this increase. With no formal pedestrian infrastructure on Nepean Avenue and because the room on the western side road verge is limited, pedestrians typically walk directly on the road, representing a clear safety risk.

Temporary safety measures were implemented by Council in 2020 with a view to still pursuing a longer-term pathway solution for community safety. Reducing the speed limit to

40km/h, changing parking zones, and introducing new signage, speed humps and road markings were all important measures. However, a dedicated path for pedestrians is still needed to make Nepean Avenue and the Great River Walk comfortable for all users to navigate safely.

Council has considered and investigated many options for the Nepean Avenue pathway. Councillors have provided feedback and input on various design options at seven previous Councillor Briefings and three Ordinary Meetings. The community has been consulted since 2016, including direct consultation with a local community reference group. At the most recent Ordinary Meeting in March 2022, following representations from residents, Council resolved to defer a proposed sunken path along the western side of Nepean Avenue. Additionally, Council resolved that alternative options be reinvestigated.

Since that time, all feedback and suggestions received from the community, Councillors and staff since 2016 have been reinvestigated and explored in detail. These options include extending the kerb, a split pathway installed on both sides of Nepean Avenue, removing parking on both sides of the roadway, Klemmfix bollard separation, raised/lowered footpath and the alternative Peachtree Creek pathway. These options do not meet the required current term criteria and are not considered viable. The alternative Peachtree Creek pathway remains a long-term aspiration.

A traffic survey conducted in November 2022 recorded increasing car, pedestrian and cyclist movements on Nepean Avenue, and an independent Road Safety Audit conducted in February 2023 identified pedestrians on Nepean Avenue as being at high risk. The Audit provides guidance on permanent solutions to address these safety issues, including a physical separation between the pathway and the road to prevent serious accidents and injuries.

The Proposal

The new pedestrian pathway is designed to formalise how the existing route is enjoyed. It will be built on the western side of Nepean Avenue, between Tench Reserve and Memorial Avenue, at the road level and within the existing road verge. The pathway will feature a textured separation and bespoke lighting bollards to protect pedestrians from passing traffic. The bollards will be adequately spaced along the path to allow safe entry and exit from driveways.

The draft design proposes Nepean Avenue become a two-way quietway with a reduced speed limit to provide a safe integration of cyclists on the road and encourage active transport and calm traffic. The road will be resurfaced, and the three current speed humps will become permanent. New traffic-calming bands will send visual and tactile cues about appropriate speeds and behaviours. The speed humps and traffic calming paver bands will be designed with cyclists in mind so they can navigate comfortably along the road.

Other design features include planting and uplighting new trees to provide an inviting environment and enhanced atmosphere for residents and visitors and to create a green corridor that helps to provide shade and keep people cool.

Consultation Activities

A key focus of the consultation program was early and ongoing engagement of Nepean Avenue residents. An initial meeting was held with Nepean Avenue residents' spokespeople on 29 June before the official consultation period started. Subsequent meetings were held with residents' spokespeople on 27 July, 7 August and as recently as 19 September. On site

meetings with residents occurred on 15 and 31 August to discuss the proposed design and respond to questions and concerns.

One of these meetings involved an exercise to test reversing into and out of a driveway with a trailer with the proposed pathway dimensions marked out. This activity demonstrated that while space is limited (like many residential streets in the LGA), the design allows vehicles to enter and exit properties and the spacing of the bollards can be adjusted to create flexibility in manoeuvring. A photo of this exercise is provided directly below.



A comprehensive communication plan was implemented to inform all Nepean Avenue residents and the broader community about the project and encourage feedback. The consultation program included the following activities:

- Letters addressed to residents/property owners on Nepean Avenue
- Email to residents who made previous submissions
- Meetings with residents of Nepean Avenue and nearby Ladbury Avenue
- Your Say Penrith project webpage
- Online quick polls
- FAQs document

Activities to promote the project included:

- Media release
- Mayoral column
- Social media posts
- Flyer distribution to surrounding streets

- Street signage
- Our Place e-newsletter feature
- Penrith City Council website promotion
- Civic Centre foyer display
- Corporate News Page advertising

Key stakeholders have been engaged throughout the development of the draft design and consultation period. Transport for NSW has been engaged to ensure the draft design meets their safety requirements and design guidelines. Council has also engaged organisations servicing Nepean Avenue to identify potential impacts or issues to resolve in the detailed design.

An onsite meeting was held with Council's waste contractor Veolia to ensure the design allows sufficient spacing for bins placement and collection. Elgas and Busways have been engaged via emails, phone calls and online meetings to understand their requirements for serving Nepean Avenue.

Consultation Results

The Your Say Penrith webpage attracted 1,216 views from 910 unique visitors. There were 209 downloads, including:

- 114 downloads of the Masterplan
- 57 downloads of the Project Overview document
- 38 downloads of the Frequently Asked Questions.

Visitors to the webpage were invited to share feedback by completing two quick polls. A total of 609 responses were recorded: 312 answers to Q1 and 297 responses to Q2. The quick poll results highlight community support for project with more than 70% of respondents indicating that the new pathway will improve pedestrian safety and enhance the Great River Walk experience. The results are outlined below.

Q1 – Do you think the pathway will enhance the Great River Walk experience?

- Yes 72.44%
- No 27.56%

Q2 - Do you think the pathway will improve pedestrian safety on Nepean Avenue?

- Yes 71.72%
- No 28.28%

The community and Nepean Avenue residents were also invited to provide feedback via direct email, phone call or meeting with the project team. During the consultation period, the project team received:

- 71 formal objection letters from Nepean Avenue residents
- 35 email responses/submissions
- Five phone calls
- Five meetings with residents

An objection letter was signed by 71 residents from Nepean Avenue, Ladbury Avenue and other surrounding areas. The two primary concerns cited in the objection letter were:

1. Bollards being installed (creating more issues with access and egress)
2. Extra trees being planted (obstructing views of pedestrian traffic)

Of the emails received during the consultation period, 11 of the emails (31%) were supportive of the project and the positive benefits the new pathway would bring to regular users of the road and the wider community.

In the remaining 24 emails (69%), the main concerns raised include:

- The road width and concerns regarding buses and large vehicles travelling safely down the road and motorists' ability to overtake safely.
- Driveway access limited for residents, and safety concerns on entering and exiting properties for residents and pedestrians.
- Alternative footpath designs or routes must be explored further in consultation with residents.
- Illegal parking by patrons of nearby establishments.

A table summarising the comments received during the consultation and proposed responses is included as an attachment to this report.

Financial Implications

The construction of the shared path has been funded through the NSW Government's Metropolitan Greenspace Program and the Section 7.11 District Open Space Contributions Plan. Additional operational and maintenance costs associated with the path concept will be considered in future budgets.

The State Government funding has been approved and received by Council, with some funds having been expended toward the project. The grant funding deadline has been extended to June 2024.

Risk Implications

Pedestrian numbers are significant and increasing on the Great River Walk 'Bridge to Bridge' loop. With no formal footpath on Nepean Avenue, pedestrians are forced to walk on the road, resulting in unsafe conditions. Residents of Nepean Avenue have noted that no serious accidents have occurred yet, and thus, the path is not justified. However, the Road Safety Audit identified the risk to pedestrians as high based on the severity of a potential accident, not on the likelihood of the incident occurring. Council officers have taken the proactive approach to minimise risk in recommending path separation rather than await serious accidents or injuries.

Legal and Governance Comment

Changes were made in recent years to Section 377 of the Local Government Act which removed the restriction prohibiting a council to be able to delegate the acceptance of tenders. Prior to this all tenders had to be reported to Council to be accepted. Despite the amendment to the Act, the practice of Penrith City Council has been to report all tenders to Council. It is understood with this particular project that there are conditions in place with respect to grant funding from the Government that require the works to be completed by 30 June 2024. Accordingly, it is being recommended that the General Manager be delegated authority to accept the tender that best represents value to Council and the community.

Council's practice of reporting all tenders to a public meeting is valuable for public transparency, however it comes with associated time delays in fitting into a meeting cycle, these can typically be accommodated, but in this instance raise potential risks compromising

the funding from Government. Any tender not reported to Council for acceptance, will still go through the same rigorous process as occurs when reporting to a Council.

It is intended that the outcome of the tender process will be communicated to Councillors accordingly once determined and reported to the first meeting of Council in 2024.

Conclusion

Feedback received during consultation indicates that the broader community supports the project and would welcome safety improvements on Nepean Avenue and enhanced connections on the Great River Walk. Most Nepean Avenue residents are against the proposal, citing new trees, bollards and road width as primary concerns. Nepean Avenue residents would prefer the current arrangement to be retained or further consultation on a revised footpath design.

Council has considered and investigated many options to improve pedestrian safety on Nepean Avenue. Working within the constrained street environment, the current draft design represents the best option to deliver the much-needed pedestrian safety improvements and connection to the Great River Walk. The independent Road Safety Audit identified pedestrians at high risk on Nepean Avenue. The alternative option of not constructing the path or delaying the project further will continue to expose Council to increased risk.

RECOMMENDATION

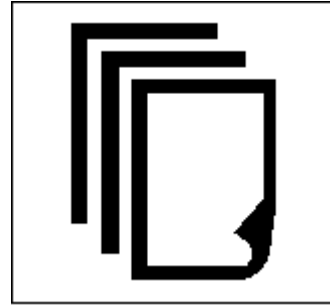
That:

1. The information contained in the report on The Great River Walk - Nepean Avenue Pathway Community Consultation Results be received
2. Council resolves to implement the Nepean Avenue Pedestrian Pathway with minor amendments to address residents' primary concerns.
3. The General Manager be delegated authority to accept the tender that represents the best value to Council.

ATTACHMENTS/APPENDICES

1. Nepean Avenue Pathway - Community Consultation Responses	6 Pages	Attachments Included
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ATTACHMENTS



Date of Meeting: Monday 25 September 2023

Report Title: The Great River Walk - Nepean Avenue
Pathway Community Consultation Results

Attachments: Nepean Avenue Pathway - Community
Consultation Responses

KEY TOPIC	COMMENT	WAY FORWARD
Bollards 80 comments (70 from formal objection letter)	<p>Concerns that bollards will create more issues with access and egress from driveways.</p> <p>Concerns about the lighting in the bollards will encourage night use along this residential street.</p>	<p>The introduction of bollards is in response to the independent Road Safety Audit, which revealed pedestrians are at high risk on Nepean Avenue, and physical separation is required to reduce the risk.</p> <p>The bollards will be adequately spaced to ensure sufficient room for vehicles' safe entry and exit around driveways.</p> <p>A specialist lighting designer will design any lighting proposed to ensure low light pollution and spill.</p>
Trees 74 comments (70 from formal objection letter)	<p>Concerns that planting new trees will restrict the visibility of pedestrians for residents entering and exiting driveways.</p> <p>Comments around the need for more trees to be planted and concerns about the type of trees selected.</p> <p>Concerns also for the number of leaves that will collect on the pathway.</p>	<p>Extensive tree planting is a requirement of the Metropolitan Greenspace grant funding however, the number, type and placement of trees planted can be adjusted as required in the detailed design process.</p>
Consultation 72 comments (70 from formal objection letter)	<p>Request for further consultation with residents about the project.</p>	<p>Council has consulted residents about this project for many years. The current concept design responds to feedback received during earlier consultations with residents.</p> <p>Council continues to consult in several ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters to residents/property owners on Nepean Avenue • Direct emails to people who make submissions • One-on-one meetings with residents as required • Your Say Penrith project webpage
Parking 16 comments	<p>Concerns that the number of on-street parking will decrease, and already there is little parking left on weekends due to the overflow from the Log Cabin patrons.</p>	<p>The proposal will not impact the parking capacity of Nepean Avenue.</p>

	On weekends, people park on the western side of Nepean Avenue with no consequences.	Council Rangers regularly patrol the area. Residents can contact Council's Rangers directly at (02) 4732 7543 if illegal parking is observed. If illegal parking is observed after hours, residents are advised to contact the local police if there is a safety concern.
Support for project 11 comments	There were positive responses in support of the concept design and the project overall to improve pedestrian safety and provide a connection to the Great River Walk loop.	This project will deliver the critical missing link on the Great River Walk by completing the Bridge-to-Bridge loop. The new pathway will eliminate the need for pedestrians to walk on the road along Nepean Avenue and addresses important road safety issues.
Lighting 11 comments	Concerns were raised about the increased light pollution on the street, compromising sleep.	Council will consider this feedback in the detailed design. A specialist lighting designer will design any lighting proposed to ensure low light pollution and spill.
Safety 11 comments	Comments were received questioning the pedestrian safety improvements of the proposal.	The proposal aims to improve pedestrian safety by providing a separate pathway. Bollards will create a physical barrier to protect pedestrians from traffic. The project will also see Nepean Avenue become a two-way quietway with reduced speed limit and traffic calming measures.
Standard footpath on the western side of the street 10 comments	Comments were received that standard footpaths be investigated for both sides of Nepean Avenue.	The standard footpath would require the removal of 47 trees (36 significant, 11 smaller) on the western side of Nepean Avenue. This would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce shade and increase the effects of heat for residents and pedestrians. • reduce the amenity and character of the street. • Utility relocations In addition, the footpath would lack useability due to the constantly varied path width and grade.
Standard footpath on the eastern side of the street	Comments were received that standard footpaths be investigated for both sides of Nepean Avenue.	The standard footpath would require the removal of 32 trees (9 significant, 23 smaller) on the eastern side of Nepean Avenue. This would:

10 comments		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce shade and increase the effects of heat for residents and pedestrians. • reduce the amenity and character of the street. • Utility relocations <p>In addition, the footpath would not be the desire line for pedestrians, and additional pedestrian crossings would be required.</p>
Road width/ lane width 10 comments	Concerns that with the road width, buses, cars, and cyclists will have trouble passing each other, causing accidents.	Travel lane dimensions will be resolved further in the detailed design process with the bus companies, Transport for NSW, and the independent Road Safety Audit. The road is designed to have a high-place function with a low-speed environment, enabling users to navigate space safely.
Driveway access 9 comments	Specific comments were received regarding limited driveway access due to increased pedestrian traffic and bollards.	<p>Vehicles can enter and exit from driveways on the western side of Nepean Avenue, ensuring they always give way to pedestrians in line with Transport for NSW road rules.</p> <p>The bollards will be adequately spaced to ensure sufficient room for vehicles' safe entry and exit around driveways, particularly when towing or backing out trailers or boats.</p>
Pathway width 8 comments	Concerns that the pathway width is actually 3.2 metres when considering the buffer and this is taking too much away from the road.	<p>The pathway width has been determined after carefully considering the constrained street environment and relevant industry guidelines.</p> <p>The proposed width aligns with the recommendations put forward in an independent Road Safety Audit.</p>
Buses 8 comments	Specific comments regarding the road width for buses to travel safely down the street and comment to ensure the local bus company is consulted.	<p>Travel lane dimensions will be resolved further in the detailed design process with the bus companies, Transport for NSW, and the independent road safety audit.</p> <p>Bus operator consultation has begun and will continue into the project's next phase.</p>
Alternative routes	Suggestions were received for an alternative route through Peachtree Creek or Ladbury	Alternative routes were considered and investigated. Issues with alternative routes include high

5 comments	Avenue or to build a walkway along the riverbank.	costs, flood liability, the route not being along the 'desired line' of pedestrians and the remote and unlit nature of the Peachtree Creek location.
Unnecessary 5 comments	Comments were received that the new pathway is unnecessary and pedestrians will still walk on the street.	Pedestrian activity is significant and growing along Nepean Avenue. An independent road safety audit assessed the pedestrians at high risk on Nepean Avenue and recommended a physical separation between pedestrians and vehicles. A new pathway will reduce the need for people to walk on the road.
Construction 5 comments	Comments were received about the construction plan and the likely impacts on residents and the traffic and pedestrian plan during construction.	Construction of the path will occur in stages to minimise disruptions for residents and the community. Council appreciates that residents will be inconvenienced during construction, but we will work to minimise impacts. The contractor will be responsible for a traffic management plan to ensure Nepean Avenue residents can still get where they need to. A dedicated community liaison officer will work closely with residents regarding traffic arrangements on the Avenue as the work progresses.
Maintenance 5 comments	Request regular/daily street sweeping and advance notice when the street sweeper is coming.	The new pathway will be inspected by Council once a month and cleaned as required. The pathway can also be cleaned on request if there is a build-up of fallen leaves to prevent slip hazards. The pathway has been designed to allow a small sweeper to fit through the bollards and access the path for sweeping and cleaning.
Road camber 5 comments	Concerns about the impacts the road camber will have on the pathway.	Details of the footpath crossfall will be resolved in the detailed design stage. The crossfall will be designed to be as comfortable for pedestrians as possible whilst maintaining requirements for drainage.
Pedestrian crossing 4 comments	Concerns regarding the pedestrian crossing needing to be closer to the Nepean Avenue and Memorial Avenue intersection.	Council will consider this feedback in the detailed design and ensure that adequate vision is provided.

Stormwater and drainage 4 comments	Comments and questions about the impacts on stormwater and the opportunity to improve drainage.	Significant works to drainage infrastructure are outside the scope of these works. However, if possible, drainage issues and subsequent resolution will be addressed in the detailed design.
Kerb and guttering 4 comments	Suggestion to upgrade the kerb and guttering.	There are no changes proposed to the existing kerb and guttering. Upgrading the kerb and guttering is unlikely due to the potential impact on residents, driveway access and the existing trees. However, localised replacement of damaged areas of the kerb may be possible. Council will consider this feedback in the detailed design.
Waste collections 2 comments	Concerns around changes to bin collections and bin placement, consultation with waste contractors and bins being used by pedestrians.	Bins on the western side of Nepean Avenue will need to be placed in the paved section between the road and the new pathway, in line with the bollards but leaving at least a one-metre gap between the bollard and the bin. This will ensure sufficient space for the side-arm waste collection vehicles to collect the bins easily. There will be no other changes to the waste collection service.
Elgas deliveries 3 comments	There were comments regarding the delivery of large items including gas cylinders to customers in the street and whether this would be impacted.	There are several options under discussion with stakeholders. These are relatively infrequent services that are unlikely to impact the day-to-day operation of the street. Accommodating this service will be resolved further during the detailed design stage.
Yellow line on road 3 comments	A suggestion was received for a 2.5-metre pathway with a yellow line on the road.	A paint-only solution does not address the risk to pedestrians identified in the independent Road Safety Audit.
Noise 2 comments	Comments were made regarding the likely increase in noise from pedestrians.	The public is encouraged to follow all regulations of public noise laws.
Parking permit 2 comments	Comments were raised about parking permits for Nepean Avenue to reduce traffic.	Parking permits can be considered, but other schemes proposed in higher-demand environments have yet to be adopted.

Traffic calming bands 3 comments	Concerns were raised around the impacts of traffic calming paver bands for cyclists.	The speed humps and traffic calming paver bands will be designed with cyclists in mind so they can navigate comfortably along the road.
Rubbish 1 comment	A comment regarding the likely increase in foot traffic and the likely increase in litter along the street.	The new pathway will be inspected by Council regularly and cleaned as required. The pathway can also be cleaned on request. The pathway has been designed to allow a small sweeper to fit through the bollards and access the path for sweeping and cleaning.
Privacy 1 comment	A comment regarding a reduction in privacy with increased pedestrian activity in front of houses.	The proposal will not impact the privacy of residents.
Property values 1 comment	A comment regarding the likely decrease of property value on Nepean Avenue and properties being less desirable due to the pathway and additional pedestrian traffic.	A wide variety of factors influence property values. Nepean Avenue's proposed pathway and safety improvements can also positively contribute to the property value.