

Helensburgh Town Centre Plan

2020 - 2045



Acknowledgements

Wollongong City Council would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the Traditional Custodians of the Land to which this Strategy applies. We pay respect to Elders past, present and those emerging and extend our acknowledgement and respect to all Aboriginal people who call our town home.

We recognise Aboriginal people as the first people to live in the area. We respect their living cultures and recognise the positive contribution their voices, traditions and histories make to our region.

In celebration of unity, culture, both traditional and contemporary, we acknowledge the rich history of our local Aboriginal heritage.

The Helensburgh Town Centre Plan was developed in partnership with interested community members, representatives of the Northern Illawarra Chamber of Commerce, Neighbourhood Forum 1, and local school children.

Wollongong City Council would like to thank everybody who contributed to shaping this Plan by providing feedback in engagement activities throughout 2019 - 2020.

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How to read this document

Community vision

This document reflects the community's Vision for the Helensburgh Town Centre. It identifies priorities for change and renewal to achieve this vision.

Its purpose is to outline clear strategies and actions to meet the current and future needs of the people who live, work, visit, play and belong here.

The Plan will guide change through actions related to infrastructure improvements, main street renewal and planning control amendments.

Future projects for the Helensburgh Town Centre, whether driven by Council, the State Government, businesses, or community groups, should align with the Vision and Strategies within this Plan.

Technical analysis

This Plan is supported by planning, urban design and traffic analysis.

To inform the analysis, a lot of data was collected about how people walk around and use the town centre. A quality assessment of streets and public places has also been carried out. An accessibility audit was carried out and safety observations made.

Community Feedback

Valuable input from the local community has shaped this document. Comments have been gathered from community workshops, student workshops, previous consultation processes and discussions with the Neighbourhood Forum and the local Business Chamber.

This Plan has been finalised following consultation with the community during May and June 2020. Refer to the accompanying Helensburgh Town Centre Plan Engagement Report and Streetscape Masterplan Engagement Report for detailed information regarding what we heard through this engagement process.

Understanding Helensburgh

This Plan has been prepared by bringing together technical analysis and community aspirations to create a Vision and Strategies for guiding the future of the Helensburgh Town Centre.

Helensburgh Town centre

Helensburgh is the northern-most settlement of the Wollongong local government area and a gateway to the region.

The Town Centre supports the northern suburbs, servicing the local population of more than 7,000 local people and has a ‘trade area’ defined by Otford, Lilyvale, Stanwell Tops, Stanwell Park, Coalcliff, Clifton and Helensburgh.

People come to the town centre to shop for food, visit the doctor and dentist, go to the butcher and the bottle shop. It’s a place to meet friends, go to the library or the pool, have a coffee or enjoy a bite to eat in a local café or restaurant.

Town centres generally have a primary focus on the provision of weekly and daily convenience goods and services but also provide a limited range of non-retail professional and personal services.

Resilience

Helensburgh’s seclusion within a bush setting means that the town centre performs many important functions for the community in a changing future climate.

Safety, the protection of land and water resources, and preparedness for emergency and natural disasters- particularly fires - are important to consider in parallel with this Plan.

Helensburgh is anchored by a Coles supermarket, and supports a successful hub of community services including the community centre, library, childcare and baby health care centre.

Helensburgh is a place that attracts many visitors, with regional destinations including Symbio Wildlife Park, the Sri Venkateswara Hindu Temple, Bald Hill, recreational and sporting facilities, and extensive nature adventure trails and coast on its doorstep.

Visitors come by car, train, foot and by bike.

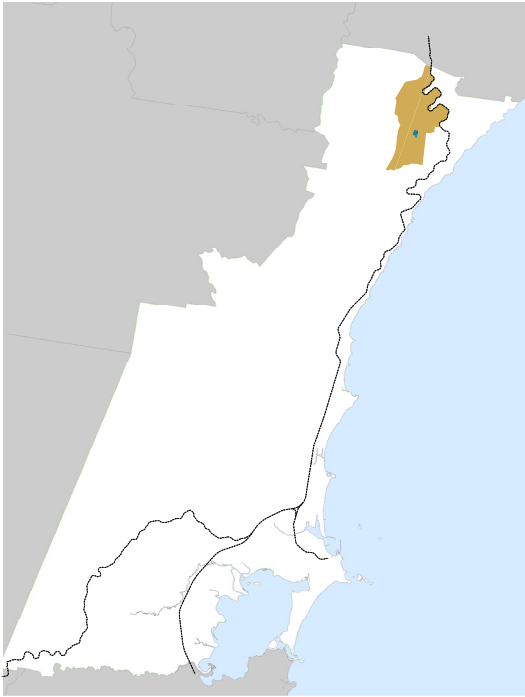
Successful town centres put people, and public life, at the forefront of planning

Housing

Helensburgh’s proximity to Sydney, lifestyle and relative affordability contributes to strong forecast median house price growth in the coming years.

There is a trend emerging of reduction in the number of single dwellings, and an increase in the number of flats and apartments within the town centre.

Future development driven by housing demand must meet the needs of a changing population whilst balancing protection of the area’s ecology, character and unique setting.



Context map - Helensburgh within Wollongong LGA

Key:

- Wollongong LGA
- Helensburgh - Suburb Boundary
- Study Area Boundary - Town Centre
- Train Line
- Surrounding LGAs



The Study Area

This Plan focuses on the Helensburgh Town Centre as defined as the land zoned as Local Centre (B2 Zone).

The Town Centre is focussed around the intersection of Walker and Parkes Streets.

Extending from Whitty and Lilyvale Streets at the southern boundary, to include the Parkes Street intersection, extending north toward Charles Harper Park.

The western boundary is Stuart Street and the eastern boundary is Walker Lane.

Key:

- Study Area Boundary
- Charles Harper Park
- Building Footprints
- Trees

Unique Village With a Point of Difference

Character is what makes a place special and unique. Every place has a physical and visual reflection of its history, natural environment and community.

Preserving and enhancing Helensburgh’s character will bring richness and authenticity to the town centre for future generations. It will set it apart as a place and make it a desirable place to visit and spend time.

Celebrating a rich history

Helensburgh is a place of many diverse stories which reflect its history and communities. It is a place of significant natural resources sustained by a network of creeks through a diverse landscape of tall eucalypts, heaths, waterfalls and rockpools.

The local Aboriginal community left lasting physical imprints on the local landscape. Recording of these imprints are documented in a range of archaeological records and Managment Plans for both the Metropolitan Coal Mine and Helensburg Public School. Evidence of First Nations people in Helensburgh exists in the form of shell middens, stone tools, the residue from the manufacture of stone tools, scarred trees, decoratively carved trees (that define ceremonial sites and burial sites), painted art in rock

shelters, symbolic engravings on sandstone outcrops and grinding groves on sandstone from sharpening stone tools and the hardwood tips, or stone tips, of spears.

There is an opportunity to connect with Country and tell the story of First Nations People in Helensburgh.

Coal was discovered in Helensburgh by Charles Harper in 1884 which triggered significant change. Helensburgh’s bushland had been undisturbed by colonists but for occasional grazing and the passing of travelers and settlers on the tracks from the west and to Bulli on the coast. The Metropolitan Coal Co. opened a mine in 1888, bringing miners and their families to the temporary, frontier camp town above the mine site before the current town centre was developed on the plateau.

By the late 1880’s, the Parkes and Walker Street junction comprised a shopping centre with a draper, butcher, baker and general store. As people moved to the land surrounding the town, the iconic double fronted timber Miners Cottages began to replace temporary tents and shacks.

Buildings from this period are important links to the past and some, like the Post Office and Police Station, are still in use today. As the settlement grew, so did its cultural life with the arrival of churches, the development of clubs and societies, bands, pubs, and one of Australia’s first workman’s clubs which remains one of the town’s main institutions.

Today, the Metropolitan mine still produces coal, the forests are protected and regenerating, and the township is transforming.

Helensburgh is the village-like home of Sydney commuters, a focus of Hindu cultural celebrations, a great base for bushwalking and mountain biking, a place of seclusion to be restful, retire, a place to breath, raise a family.

Understanding local community

The demographics of Helensburgh help us to understand and plan for the current and future needs of the community by age, occupation, income and lifestyle factors.

Helensburgh, Otford and Stanwell Park has a combined population of 7072 people (Census ERP 2018)

Helensburgh has a relatively high proportion of children (under 18) and a lower proportion of older people aged 60 or over than the rest of Wollongong.

The period 2011-16 has seen significant growth in the age groups of primary school aged children and older workers, retirees, and seniors. The majority of people currently live in a detached dwelling (separate house), with 15% of people living in

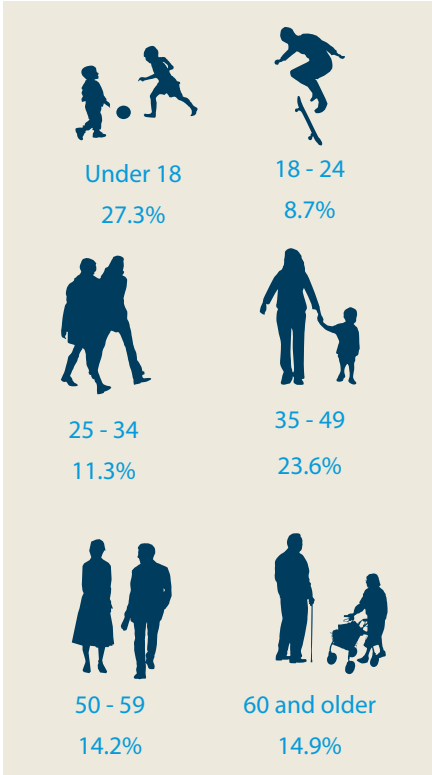
medium and high-density housing. There is a small trend away from the number of single dwellings, and an increase in the number of apartments. Population forecasts indicate that the population is anticipated to increase by 7.57% in the period 2020-36 (7,319), driven by the town’s strong appeal to families and commuters.



Dreaming Tracks at Bald Hill. Artist: Chris Edwards-Clarke



Subdivision Plan 1969 showing Town Centre layout



Demographic profile of Helensburgh 2016 Census

Unique Village With a Point of Difference

We're a village

There is a strong view within the community that, regardless of its formal classification as a town centre, Helensburgh's character is that of a village. This is reflected in community feedback that they most value Helensburgh's sense of community.

It is important to ensure that the way buildings and streets are designed respect this value. A village is typically defined as being smaller than a town centre and located within a rural setting.

People are connected, the place is laid back and the character is rustic and draws from its surrounding countryside.

A sense of a village character is evident across the town centre through a number of building styles and materials and streetscape landscaping, however, there is significant scope to build on this desired future character for the town centre.



Charming frontages welcome people to stop and spend time



Helensburgh Centenary - the community has always been connected

Hidden heritage needs to be revealed

The community told us that 'our heritage and history are not celebrated enough'.

Lasting physical imprints of the Traditional Custodian's use of the land and culture survive in the landscape, yet this ancient heritage is not celebrated or reflected in the town centre.

European heritage is evident in a small cluster of heritage listed buildings at the intersection of Parkes and Walker including the Helensburgh Hotel, the Post office as well as landscape features in Charles Harper Park and the old Police Station.

As these are the few remaining historical buildings, they need to be celebrated and protected as they offer an opportunity to influence future character.



Interesting historical artefacts are scattered about the town



The Helensburgh Hotel - an important heritage building and landmark in the town centre

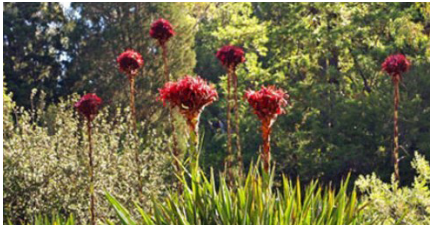
Connecting to the natural setting

Nestled in one of the most extraordinary natural landscapes, Helensburgh town centre sits on the cusp of the Garrawarra State Conservation Area and the Royal National Park. Connection to this amazing landscape setting is critical to defining the unique offer and character of place.

The physical connections linking people between the centre and nature are also very important. However, these are weak and not easy to navigate.

There is an opportunity to bring the local native landscape into the town centre, to bring character to the town centre itself. Interesting historic items are scattered in the main street, however, they lack context and not supported with interpretation.

Views across the town centre to natural areas are also important. These are not defined in local planning policy, and need to be identified to ensure their protection.



Iconic Angophoras, Gymea lilies and flannel flowers in surrounding bushland



View to the east to protect



Today the Brush Box trees make a statement in the mainstreet. Their story needs to be told.

A Memorial to fallen soldiers

The magnificent Brush Box trees lining the western side of Walker Street offer beauty, shade and character to the main street.

However, the importance of these trees extends beyond their beauty. The trees were planted as a memorial to those lost in WWI.

The story is told in the book 2508 Anzac, that on Arbor Day in 1934, 12 Sugar Gums were planted to honor fallen soldiers. Over time, the original trees that died were replaced with the Brush Box we enjoy today. This likely to have occurred during the 1940s/50s.

The intent to honour the lost friends of Helensburgh through these memorial plantings is a powerful story to tell. It is important that these memorial trees are protected and their story told to honour the past.



Helensburgh's memorial trees, Parkes St c.1950

Character to Inform Planning Controls

Guidelines for how buildings are designed are outlined in planning controls. Building heights, setbacks and design character are defined in the Wollongong Local Environmental Plan 2009 and Development Control Plan 2009. Helensburgh Town Centre has sound planning policy controls, however they lack clear guidance on the desired future character of the place.

Planning Controls need to better promote character

The town centre is zoned Local Centre (B2 Zone). Across the town centre, a mix of uses (retail, commercial, residential) are allowed. Residential development is only permitted above ground level.

More recent development across the town centre are predominantly residential, which is particularly evident along Stuart Street which has transitioned to residential.

Across the town centre, there is a generous supply of retail floor space available for development. This capacity (57,834m2 SGS) will more than meet forecast demand (9,000m2).

Consideration should be given to how the vibrancy of the town centre can be better managed through defining a concentrated main street/ town centre area. This would be achieved through adjustments to the town centre boundary to better guide investment.

Design quality needs to be improved

Building character and quality in Helensburgh town centre is varied.

Buildings should be designed to respond to their context, whether that be the scale of the building, materials and colours used, the way the building interacts with the street or how it is designed to ensure views to the surrounds are captured.

Buildings are currently a comfortable scale as they present as one and two storey buildings along Walker and Parkes Streets.

Recent development throughout the town centre is observed to be fairly generic. This means that the design does not have a clear relationship to the identity of Helensburgh as a place, but are simply a building that could be anywhere.

WDCP Chapter D1 – Character Statements is intended to guide the desired future character for Helensburgh. However, the look and feel of the town centre is not defined by the character statement.

Celebrating our point of difference

Helensburgh supports a wide diversity of businesses in and around the town centre.

There is a real opportunity to leverage from these commercial and natural offers to build the economic diversity of the town centre.

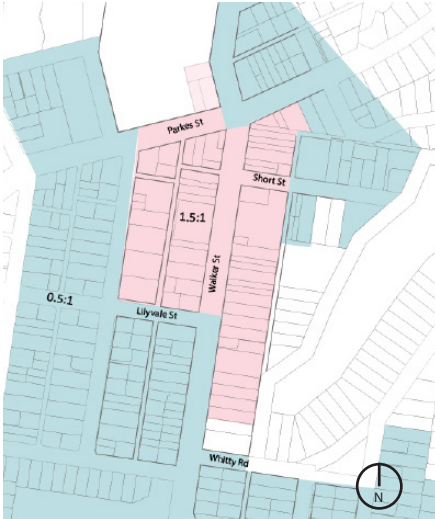
“a well maintained, historic streetscape”

“our heritage and history is not celebrated enough”

Quotes from community engagement



Building Heights defined in Wollongong LEP 2009



Floor Space Ratio defined in Wollongong LEP 2009



Heritage listings defined in Wollongong LEP 2009



Old Railway Tunnel home to Glow Worms



Link to Nature



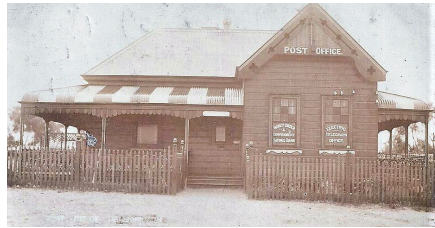
Helensburgh Pool



Rex Jackson and Helensburgh skate park



Sri Venkateswara Hindu Temple



Heritage Buildings such as the Post Office on Parkes Street



Connection to nature - rural/country charm



Connection to a coal history



Helensburgh Hotel



Symbio Wildlife Park

A Compromised Main Street Experience

The experience of a main street is critical to its success. A successful main street attracts people day and night with interesting things to do and see. It needs to offer more than a great retail mix to be successful. Mainstreets need to be a place people want to spend time, meet their friends and be part of the local community.

Public spaces are not attracting public life

The town centre has a great structure, with the main street (Walker Street) supported by a laneway network and a series of public spaces.

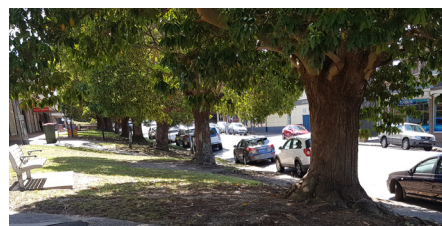
However, public spaces are poorly activated and are not designed with a clear purpose. Analysis identified that many public spaces are not 'comfortable'. A lack of sunlight, exposure to a windy southerly or poor seating means it is not a nice place to spend time.

Aligned with the town centre, Charles Harper Park offers an important play and recreation space for the community. However, this land is disconnected from the town centre by a car park area and Parkes Street itself.

Public spaces in and around the town centre brings an opportunity to support public life. Historically, markets have activated some of the town centre public spaces. Consideration needs to be given to how these types of activities can be encouraged and facilitated.



Highly valued recreation areas, including the new playground, pool and sportsfields



Memorial Brush Box trees line the western bank of Walker Street

Business offerings are limited, but could be diversified

There is strong support throughout the community to welcome continued diversity in the retail and business offer in the Walker Street.

Significant proportions of the community commute to Sydney. There is scope to explore the opportunity of expanding the commercial offer within the town centre to support changing work patterns of the commuting population. Co-working spaces and live-work opportunities should be explored and promoted.



Inactive and vacant shopfronts detract from the main street experience



Poor interface public space and adjacent shops

The town centre lacks energy day and night

Pedestrian audits undertaken in 2019 provided information about how the town centre was used. The data gathered tells us that few people are walking around the town centre, and there are only a few pockets along Walker Street that are 'active'.

The most successful places are where there is outdoor dining associated with cafes. Further consideration needs to be given to how retail uses can provide a high quality street experience, including an interesting and engaging shop front, and outdoor dining during the day and into the evening.

A large number of vacant or inactive shopfronts mean that the street lacks interest, and people were not recorded spending time in the town centre. Generally it was simple trips to undertake day to day shopping needs.

The town centre is much busier on weekends with people being home and families coming in to play sport.



Buildings do not bring life to laneways

54% of shopfronts surveyed are inactive or dull

Quality Community Facilities, but they are disconnected

The town centre is home to a range of community facilities and services. The Community Centre, Library, a pre school and health clinic are clustered near the Lilyvale and Walker Street intersection.

Although sitting close to each other, these important community buildings feel quite disconnected.

The community centre and library are separated by Walker Street. A combination of steep topography, lack of a pedestrian crossing and no accessible path of travel mean it is hard to move between these two important facilities.

While community facilities are located on the main street, they are not designed to interact with the street or integrate into the public space. Additionally the 'aged' facade and design makes these facilities less visible and less inviting.

Council is committed to upgrading the Library and Community Centre.

Functionality of the Community Centre is currently compromised by the flow of water running beneath the community hall's subfloor, limiting usage of this area.



A new library building presents a significant opportunity to create a community hub



Cluster of community facilities sit at the southern end of the town centre across State Government and Council land



The existing Community Centre, whilst purpose built at the time, is difficult to access due to land topography and doesn't meet the current community needs



The existing library has a lovely garden to the street

Key:
 Charles Harper Park Council Land
 Operational Land
 Community Land
 Crown Land - Appointed

The community told us that they wanted a combined Community Centre and Library facility with adequate parking



Helensburgh Library is a demountable building. While it is small and not purpose built, it is well utilised and brings many people to the town centre



An addition at the front of the community centre does not address Walker Street

A Difficult Place to Walk Around

Helensburgh’s success as a town centre is compromised by the dominance of traffic, and a lack of well-designed and accessible pedestrian connections. This makes it hard for people to get around, and discourages staying to explore and enliven the main street.

It’s hard to be a pedestrian

Core services and amenities like the Post Office and Charles Harper Park are within easy walking distance, yet separated by Parkes Street.

An accessibility audit revealed that crossings and kerb ramps often fail to meet appropriate standards. Steep cross falls, stepped entrances and awkward paths of travel hinder access to many of the shops and services.

Observations of pedestrian activity revealed that there are more people criss-crossing Walker St to and from their cars than there are walking down it during the week. Around half of people crossing Walker Street are not accessing the pedestrian crossing.

This contributes to additional vehicle movements, as people try to park as close as possible to their destination to avoid the hazards and inconvenience of moving around town.



Access for people with limited mobility is poor.

Great laneway structure that needs to be protected

Walker Street has ‘great bones’: wide proportions, a leafy aspect and north-south orientation. However at 500m, it is too long for a vibrant and active main street.

There is a great network of laneways, but they are not formed or activated. Large blocks limit pedestrian movement, particularly the east-west connections.

Parkes Street is acting as a pedestrian barrier, effectively bisecting the town centre. The current pedestrian crossing facilities fail to provide adequate safety and comfort for pedestrians from frequent traffic movements including heavy vehicles carrying coal from the Metropolitan mine.



Bush Pea Lane is a key pedestrian connection which is uninviting and underutilised

Lots of cars, issues with parking

The town centre is filled with more cars than people. There are conflicts between the people who are walking, and the speed and number of vehicles.

The relative convenience of travelling by car between nearby destinations is contributing to congestion on the main street. This creates a perception that there is inadequate parking in the town centre, however monitoring has shown that there is ample capacity off street and in the Coles carpark.

Cycling infrastructure in the town centre is lacking, despite its popularity with local children, and Helensburgh’s attraction as a road and mountain biking destination.



50% of people don’t use the Walker St pedestrian crossing

350 car parking spaces within 400m of the town centre

It’s not easy to connect to where you want to go

Helensburgh is surrounded by regional attractors and destinations but the town centre feels physically isolated and disconnected.

The sense of arrival is not defined and there is no cue to drivers that you have entered the town centre.

The area lacks signage connecting the town centre to key destinations including the train station.

The temple welcomes thousands of people every year. While some arrive by vehicle, many arrive by train and take the pilgrimage to the Temple via the town centre. This is a unique experience for Helensburgh. There is not sufficient signage to mark the way to the Temple.



Children on bikes crossing Parkes St



Complete footpath connections between the town centre and the Quarry Duck Ponds



Helensburgh supports many amazing attractions | Illustration by artist Lara McCabe www.thestudiocoledale.com.au | Extract from The South Coaster Magazine <http://thesouthcoaster.com.au>

“a shared zone or traffic calming between Lilyvale and Parkes Street”

“the pedestrian crossing is dangerous to use when cars, delivery vans are parked in the no stopping zone”

Quotes from community engagement

Town Centre Vision

Helensburgh is an inclusive and welcoming village of diverse communities and rich heritage set within an extraordinary natural landscape.

At its heart is a thriving main street which is connected to world-class local destinations, and alive with people and possibilities.

Unique, vibrant and community focussed

The town centre is safe and welcoming, embracing people from all walks of life. There is a strong sense of community with connections to a range of amazing natural assets and local attractions.

Our Indigenous, natural, service and mining heritage is celebrated. This heritage is interpreted and expressed in buildings, materials, landscaping, events and activities.

The historic village streetscape has a unique character which is preserved, and important views to surrounding areas are enhanced.

Thriving, sustainable and creative

The town centre is alive with people, offering a diversity of options for work, play, recreation, shopping, education, entertainment and community life.

Leveraging off the surrounding attractions and destinations, a diverse offer provides services for visitors and opportunities for growth.

A community hub supports the daily needs of the wider community, as it grows and changes. Our town celebrates its diversity and embraces the opportunities of a village-like setting.

An emerging gig and entrepreneurial economy is thriving. Sensitivity to the unique natural environment is reflected in sustainable technology and design features.

Active, natural and healthy

There are quality, active connections between the welcoming, pedestrian-friendly town centre and the parks, natural areas, sports fields, playgrounds, schools, transport nodes and other community places.

Recreation, sporting, natural and play spaces support a healthy active community. There is pride in being able to lose yourself in nature, and in sharing these experiences with visitors.

Appropriate infrastructure such as water bubblers, canopy trees for shade along key pathways, and bike racks support a healthy lifestyle.

Connected, accessible and pedestrian-friendly

People of all ages and abilities can move freely and easily around Helensburgh, accessing everything that this unique area has to offer.

Walking and cycling between places is easy. There are well developed pedestrian, cycling and public transport connections.

Traffic in the town centre is calm, and it is easy to park and walk where you need to go via a defined network of accessible paths of travel.

Strategies to deliver the Vision

A series of Strategies have been defined which seek to deliver change in the Town Centre aligned with the Community's vision. These strategies, as listed below are outlined in the next section.

- Updates to Planning and Policy
- Enhancing Connections
- Integrated Community Hub
- Mainstreet Renewal

Updates to Planning and Policy

A renewed focus on character and identity to reflect Helensburgh’s unique attributes will be reflected in planning policy, setting the tone for future development. Through the Development Control Plan, ensure building controls promote interesting shopfronts and high quality designs at the right scale for

A redefined the town centre boundary

The boundary of the town centre is redefined to focus on Walker and Parkes Streets. Stuart Street is transitioned to residential development in recognition of its established land use character.

The southern end of the Town Centre is contracted, transitioned to medium density residential. This will reduce the extent of the mainstreet to a more walkable catchment.

Building height and floor space controls transition to that of the surrounding R3 lands (0.5:1 and 11m height). To the north, the boundary is extended to include the Helensburgh Hotel (previously Centennial Hotel). The existing height and floor space should remain unchanged.

A renewed focus on character

Planning controls promote high quality design outcomes that contribute to what makes Helensburgh unique.

A revised Character Statement outlines how unique elements of Helensburgh’s character should be retained including key views, how the natural and cultural heritage will be celebrated and the Architectural styles, materials and colours that reflect local place.

Heritage buildings and places are clearly identified and documented to inform the look and feel of Helensburgh town centre.

Improved building interface with the street

All buildings along Walker Street and Parkes Street within the Town Centre boundary are required to have well maintained and attractive shopfronts that connect with, and activate the street.

The lands owned by State and local governments are identified as an opportunity precinct. These lands require planning controls to be reviewed as part of built form review.

Promote diversity in land uses with the introduction of co-working spaces to engage the local workforce within the town centre.



A redefined town centre and opportunity site

- Key:
- Transition to Residential (R3 Medium Density Residential)
 - Key opportunity site
 - Include Helensburgh Pub in town centre (B2 Local Centre)



Key views protected

- Key:
- A View east along Parkes Street to bushland
 - B View east down Lane 10 and Short Street to surrounding bushland
 - C View east through pedestrian link to surrounding bushland
 - D View north to historic Helensburgh Hotel



Active Frontages and defined street wall

- Key:
- Active frontage - 2 storey street wall with 4m setback above
 - Active laneways



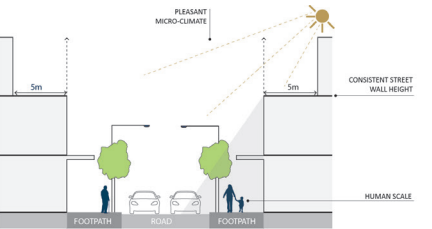
Well designed and proportioned medium density residential supports town centre



Views along Short Street to nature are preserved



Interesting facades open up and activate Walker Street



Shop top housing is well proportioned and set back to let sun into the street



Outdoor dining and an evening economy is encouraged



Buildings in the mainstreet reflect Helensburgh’s preferred scale and character

Recommendations

- Update Wollongong LEP 2009 to reflect changes to zoning boundaries
- Update Wollongong DCP 2009 Chapter B4 Development in Business Zones to set renewed planning controls for Helensburgh Town Centre, and progress the completion of the draft Helensburgh Character Statement for integration into the Wollongong DCP

Enhancing Connections

Helensburgh town centre is connected to its natural surroundings, linking to natural areas, surrounding destinations and is accessible by foot, bicycle and car. Wayfinding is clear and easy and it is a comfortable place to walk around.

Leverage and connect to surrounding destinations

The town centre remains at the heart of local destinations, connected via walk/ cycle loop trail.

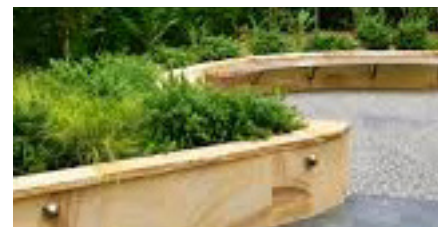
The pilgrimage trail from the train station to the Temple is defined and celebrated as a point of cultural difference.

The pedestrian environment between key destinations is upgraded with renewed lighting, greening, wayfinding and seating to invite people to experience all of what Helensburgh has to offer as a whole destination.

Major roads, including Parkes Street, integrate purpose designed pedestrian crossings to offer safe pedestrian connections.



Wayfinding signage helps people get around and link the town centre with key destinations



A series of open spaces link people through the town centre

Creating an important sense of arrival

Vehicle entry points are defined on Parkes Street and Walker Street. These entry points are narrowed to slow vehicle and provide a sense of arrival.

Native vegetation is characteristic of the town centre and denotes entry points.

Accessible paths of travel link Charles Harper Park and town centre parking areas to Walker and Parkes Streets, making it easier to move around and connect within the town centre.

An active laneway network connect people with safe pedestrian links through the town centre to surrounding residential streets. Long term, Walker Lane and Gibbons Lane are constructed as shared zones and building facades are activated.



Landscaped blisters signal town centre entry points



Renewed lighting invites evening activity

Public space is celebrated and highly active

Artistic, playful and enterprising strategies program the use of public spaces, including the formalisation of a generic Development Application for markets and events in Charles Harper Park.

The town centre will connect via linked public spaces to regional sporting and recreational facilities in Rex Jackson Park. Connected visually with improved sight lines from the town centre, and an enhanced interface of Charles Harper Park to Parkes Street.

Public art is visible in the Town Centre. Existing public art is appreciated and new art introduced to represent the local community and history of the area.



Charles Harper Park continues to support community events and markets

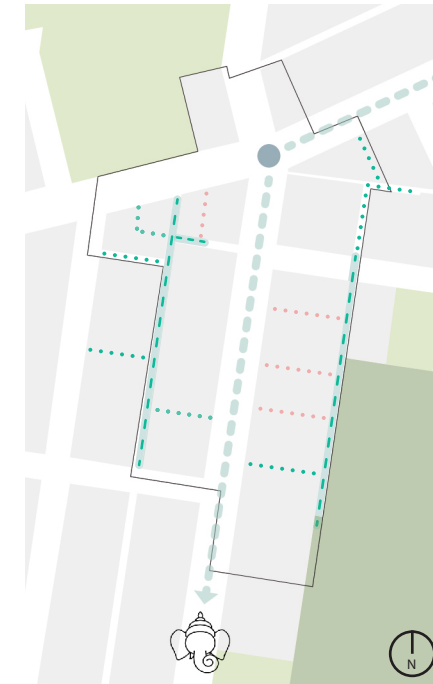


Laneways are active and are pleasant places to walk

Acknowledgement of Country

Helensburgh and its surrounding lands are the northern gateway of the Illawarra. This presents an opportunity work in partnership with First Nations people to understand how they would like to represent an Acknowledgement of Country.

The role of the project would be to acknowledge, and pay respect, to the Traditional Owners of the land, and the ongoing custodians of the land - the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



Laneways are active and new pedestrian links make it easier to connect within the Town Centre, to Station and to the Temple.

Key:
 Potential shared zones
 Retain existing pedestrian connections
 Proposed pedestrian connections
 Connection from Station to Temple



Open spaces connect through the town centre with pockets of space to stop and spend time

Key:
 Trees
 Green Spaces

Recommendations

- Lodge a generic Events Development Application for Rex Jackson Park
- Provide opportunities for Markets in Helensburgh Town Centre and surrounding open spaces.
- Helensburgh Key Walking Connections Project - Design concept for cycle/walking loop trail aligned with Urban Greening
- Develop and deliver a wayfinding Concept and Strategy including important links e.g. Temple to Station Trail Project
- Helensburgh Public Art Project

Integrated Community Hub

An integrated community centre and library facility will be at the heart of the community. This purpose built facility will be a centrepiece of the town, delivering a high quality, welcoming place. Council is investigating several site options for the new community facility; however further investigations are required to ensure feasibility.

A centrepiece of design

The integrated community centre and library will contribute to the quality and character of the town centre by showcasing design excellence.

The building will activate the town with a strong interface and interesting facade. The design will respond to the natural setting, connect to views and will integrate landscaping.

With a range of formal and informal meeting spaces to cater for a range of services and activities and a state of the art library, the new facility will be the heart of the community where people will come to meet, create, learn and spend time.

The facility will be multi-purpose and accessible, showcasing sustainable technologies.

Programming is community-focused, and engaging for all.



Example of an historic shopfront presented to the street: Junee Library

An integrated approach

A major investment in the town, the design of the integrated facility will extend to the surrounding pedestrian and road network.

A focal point for enhancing connections. Inclusive, inviting and accessible to provide a diverse range of experiences for all of the community.

Integrated into the landscape, strategically planned to enhance the functional relationships and character of the site's surrounding features.



Opportunity for community space extending from the library/community centre

Key site opportunity

Once retired, the current community centre will be decommissioned.

A master plan will be undertaken to test appropriate development opportunities for the site and adjacent lands owned by State and local government.

The master plan will test development capacity and public domain needs of the lands to provide direction for appropriate planning controls, and public space outcomes.

This work would be subject to ongoing consultation with the community.



Community facilities connecting with nature



Example of a library in a native setting: Fitzgibbon Library, QLD

Guiding Principles for a new facility

Artist sketch above shows an integrated Community Centre & Library.

An integrated Community Centre & Library will provide a hub which attracts and connects people to this place and each other. Reflecting the community and environment providing opportunities for socialising, learning, exploring and relaxing.

Principles guiding the future of the Integrated Community Centre & Library include:

1. Integrates into the landscape to provide opportunities for generations to come
2. Well-connected and accessible, with integrated parking
3. Community heart - integrating community meeting place
4. Exceptional design, unique to Helensburgh
5. Programmed to bring life to the town centre - day and night



Sketch : An integrated community facility to service diverse community needs

Recommendations

- Site options investigation for an Integrated Community Facility (community centre/ library)
- Key site urban design masterplan

Main Street Renewal

Walker Street is Helensburgh’s vibrant main street which is accessible and convenient for all. It invites people to visit and spend time. Street renewal will enhance the daily lived experience of residents, create a unique destination for visitors, and provide a catalyst for activation and investment.

A vibrant main street experience

Helensburgh delivers a welcoming, vibrant town centre experience.

Encourage land owners to activate vacant tenancies and invest in the upgrade of shopfronts to reflect the character of the local area. Shops are filled with interesting businesses, shops and community uses.

Outdoor dining is encouraged, and interesting ways to open up facades to better interact with the street is evident.

Evening ambiance is enhanced with curated lighting of the town centre. Deliver a lighting strategy that considers street lighting (including lanes), lighting of historic trees.

Connection with Charles Harper Park

Charles Harper Park continues to be an important place of recreation and leisure for the community, with the playground and the community pool continuing to be important meeting places.

Charles Harper Park supports community events and markets which brings diversity in what happens locally.

All edges of the park will be enhanced to improve visual and physical connections. Buildings facing onto the Park add visual interest and interface with the Park.

The interface of Charles Harper Park to Parkes Street is improved with the car parking edge transitioning to a place for people. In the meantime, car parking will be retained, realigned to improve pedestrian access and views into the Park itself.

Enhanced meeting places

Dispersed along the main street are a series of formal and informal spaces which invite people to relax, take in the ambiance, or meet friends.

Walker Street (west-bank) transforms to a lively, natural place where landscaping responds to the natural setting in species and materials palette. An interactive landscape to sit and eat lunch, or to capture the imagination of young children as they walk north to the playground in the Park.

Lighting is used to create atmosphere and increase visual prominence of public spaces and heritage buildings like the Helensburgh Pub.

Accessible and pedestrian friendly main street

Accessible paths of travel link the east and west side of Walker Street, and connect people to important community services.

A lower footpath is introduced along the western side of Walker Street to provide an accessible and safe walking path.

Parkes Street has new pedestrian crossing points to allow people to comfortably cross the road.

Walker and Parkes Streets are narrowed, and traffic calming elements introduced will create a low vehicle speed to enhance pedestrian and cycle safety.

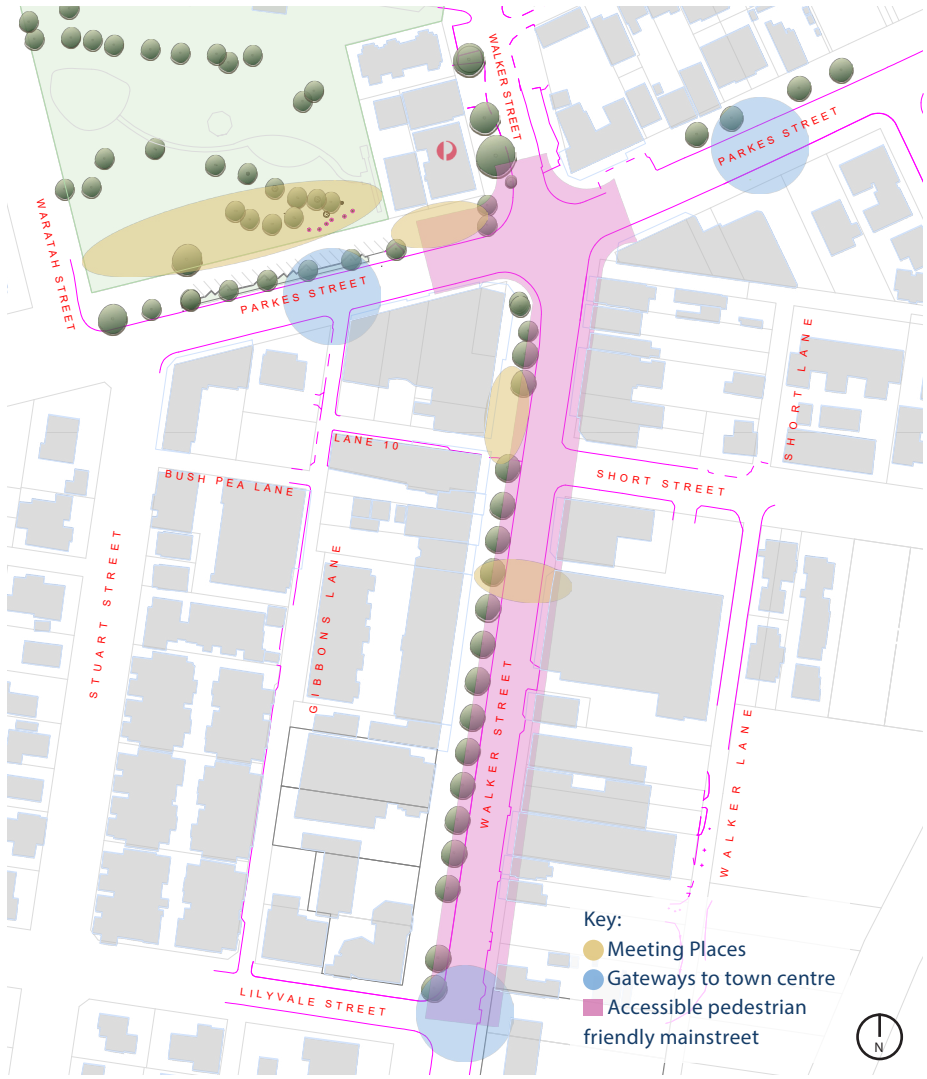
History is celebrated in the mainstreet

The design of the mainstreet renewal is an opportunity to connect with Country, and to develop ways to share knowledge about local Aboriginal culture. Working in partnership with the Traditional Custodians of the Land, determine how Aboriginal Heritage is identified and represented.

The story of the Memorial Trees along Walker Street are celebrated through heritage interpretive art and signage.

The street is designed and renewed around the opportunity and character the trees bring to place.

Conserve and celebrate the historic main street character, with Helensburgh Hotel and the post office remaining significant historic buildings.



A place for co-working space

Helensburgh is a place of innovation and business.

Co-working spaces are evident along the main street, bringing more energy and innovation to Helensburgh.

This new innovation in the main street provides an opportunity for people to stay local, and spend time immersed in their community rather than commuting to Sydney.

Recommendations

- Undertake main street renewal detailed design + construction as per the endorsed Streetscape Masterplan
- Deliver a heritage interpretation project aligned with streetscape upgrades
- Undertake a laneway activation project to enhance safety and usability of laneways
- Enhance bus stops with a focus to improve active transport



Sketch : Artists impression of a renewed Walker Street

Streetscape Masterplan

The Streetscape Masterplan is a more detailed design response to demonstrate how Walker Street can be designed to support its role as a vibrant main street which is accessible and convenient for all.

Objectives of the Masterplan

- Enhance connection both physical and visual to the natural environment and the unique character of Helensburgh
- Embrace and celebrate village-like setting by the introduction of human scale landscaping features to create a greater sense of place
- Establish equal access pathways and a pedestrian friendly environment
- Create a low vehicle speed environment to increase pedestrian and cycle safety
- Increase shade along key pathways by planting additional canopy trees
- Enhance pedestrian connections and experience through the development of the existing laneways
- Express the indigenous, natural, service and mining heritage of Helensburgh throughout the landscape and by incorporating public art and interpretive devices
- Acknowledge the Memorial planting of Brush Box on Walker and Parkes Streets through interpretive signage
- Provide improved infrastructure like recycling bins, seating , bike racks and bubblers



Street furniture to reflect village charm



Native planting brings in surrounding nature and connects with Country



Improved public transport facilities (bus)



Walker and Gibbons Lanes formalised, with active edges and shared



Wayfinding connects us to place and Country



Heritage interpretation - Aboriginal and European history is celebrated



Create a series of town squares; places to spend time and enjoy the Town Centre



Wide footpaths have high quality paving and allow space for outdoor dining



Lighting is a feature and creates ambience

Streetscape Masterplan

Parkes / Walker intersection is upgraded to allow safe pedestrian crossing points

Upgraded pedestrian crossing point

Improved interface with Charles Harper Park

Parkes Street narrows to signal entry to town centre

Accessible ramp connects street level footpath to shop level

Pedestrian crossing retained with new access stairs and seating area

Lanes upgraded as shared zones

Trees retained - canopy lifted and native planting introduced

Parking lanes retained

New footpath at street level

Road narrows to signal entry to town centre and upgraded pedestrian crossing point



LEGEND

- UPGRADED PEDESTRIAN PATHWAYS
- OUTDOOR COMMUNITY SPACES
- EXISTING TREES TO BE RETAINED
- PROPOSED ACCENT AND SHADE TREE PLANTING
- UNDERSTOREY OF FLOWERING SHRUBS
- POTENTIAL SHARED ZONE



Priority Staging

Delivering the streetscape masterplan will be staged. There is an initial budget set aside (\$1.8M), through Council budget and the State Government’s Resources for Regions Grant.

A staging plan has been developed, based on clear objectives to ensure best outcomes can be delivered aligned with the community’s Vision. Priorities have been identified and mapped for transparency. Over time, and as funding is made available, ongoing investment can be managed in a cohesive way, in accordance with the streetscape design.

Staging objectives

Staging priorities have been considered having regard to:

- 1. Alignment with the streetscape master plan objectives: pedestrian accessibility, comfort and safety
- 2. Value for money: ensuring that infrastructure delivery is coordinated . What infrastructure works will bring the highest impact to how the main street functions.
- 3. Design functionality: ensuring that infrastructure elements are delivered in a coordinated way. Sometimes there are partnering elements.
- 4. Relationship with future investment programs: ensuring that works don’t become redundant.

Parkes Street



Stage 1 construction priorities for Parkes Street

Prioritise safe crossing opportunities on Parkes Street

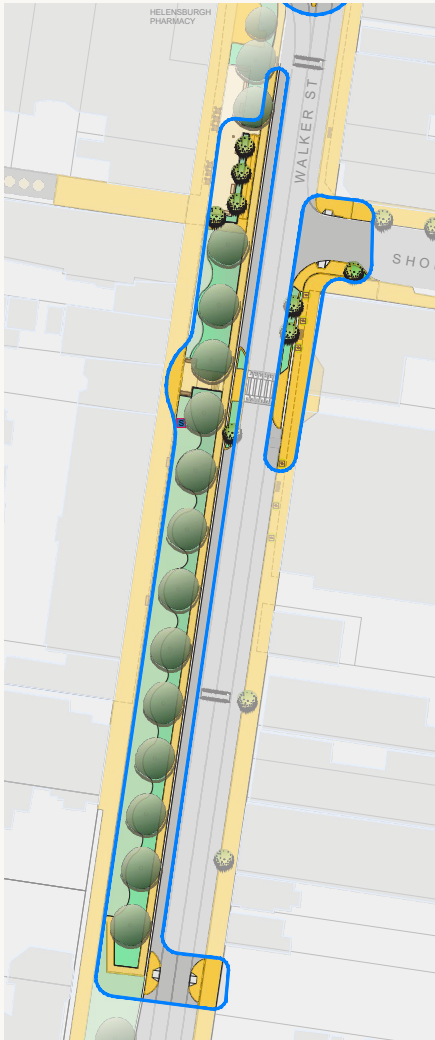
The urgent priority here is to create a safe environment for pedestrians to connect between the main street and the services and amenities to the north.

Design is intended to slow and calm traffic, ensure pedestrian safety, improve accessibility, and to instil within this intersection a sense of arrival and entry to the town centre.

Key elements:

- Upgraded accessible crossings at all four edges of the roundabout with kerb ramps, wider refuge islands and footpaths at each corner
- Pedestrian accessibility and safety achieved through upgraded pedestrian crossing on Parkes Street to link to Charles Harper Park and shops to the north
- Road narrowing to create a slower speed environment and improved safety with blisters introduced at the western entry/ exit
- Improved bus stop safety and upgraded shelter

Walker Street



Stage 2 construction priorities for Walker Street

Prioritise accessibility and main street experience along Walker Street

The overall intention for stage one works is to achieve maximum advantage from the beautifully proportioned main street by strategically investing in high impact changes.

New pathways and crossings will focus on improving the overall structure and functionality of the streetscape, with a focus on accessibility and safety. Existing footpaths will be maintained and repaired as required.

Upgrading the Lilyvale and Walker Street intersection and connections to pathways will be considered as part of the integrated design investigation for the new library and community centre.

Key elements:

- New continuous accessible pathway along the Western edge at street level
- Traffic calming at southern entry with blisters narrowing the road, and creating a pedestrian crossing point
- Improved connections to western shops from Walker Street (road level) with two new accessible ramps and one new set of feature stairs
- Improve safety with upgraded crossing facilities in Walker Street and Short Street
- Two newly defined public meeting places - outside Coles with a widened footpath area, and at the top of the new stairs linking with the western bank shopping area
- Tree canopy lifted and native landscaping featured along the western bank. Enhanced character through an interpretation project for the memorial trees, native landscaping, and expressing the heritage sandstone curb where possible
- Include lighting conduits, seating and human scale elements

Conclusion

Helensburgh Town Centre is a beautiful place, set in a tranquil setting, and supported by a committed and passionate community.

This Plan sets the Community's Vision for Helensburgh Town Centre, defining a series of Strategies and Actions to deliver the Vision.

Turning ideas into action requires collaboration and partnership between Council, the community, local business and Government Agencies. The accompanying Implementation Plan sets out the key actions for delivery against timeframes and budget needs.

Council would like to thank everyone who has contributed to informing this Plan. From early analysis through to the wording of the Vision and setting of priority actions. Only together can we successfully deliver change.



