



COMMISSION RECOMMENDS AGAINST CHANGING CASTLE HILL SHOWGROUND PLANNING CONTROLS

8 February 2019

The state's Independent Planning Commission has recommended against altering local planning controls to allow higher-density development at Castle Hill, in Sydney's northwest.

The Commission was asked by the Department of Planning & Environment to provide independent advice on proposed changes to The Hills Local Environment Plan 2012 (HLEP) which applies to multiple sites within the Showground Station Precinct.

Showground Corporation Pty Ltd (the proponent) had originally sought to amend HLEP to increase maximum building heights and floor space ratios (FSR) for two key sites within the Precinct; however, The Hills Shire Council rejected its proposal and a subsequent review by the Sydney Central City Planning Panel also found it did not demonstrate strategic merit and should not be submitted for Gateway Determination.

Chair of the Commission, Professor Mary O'Kane AC, appointed two Commissioners, Mr Peter Duncan AM and Ms Carol Austin, to provide advice to the Department on the matter after the proponent sought a further review.

The planning proposal, if approved, would facilitate higher density residential development within the two key sites with a potential yield of 3,040 dwellings – 837 more dwellings than what can be achieved under existing planning controls. The maximum building height would also rise from 12 to 18 storeys.

Commissioners Duncan and Austin met with the proponent and representatives of the Department and The Hills Shire Council. They also carried out an inspection of the site and surrounding Showground Station Precinct.

After carefully considering all the evidence, the Commission has today (Friday 8 February 2019) recommended against changing local planning controls.

In its advice to the Department, the Commission found:

- there has been no change in circumstances that would warrant further amendments to the recently amended planning controls under the Showground Station Precinct State Environmental Planning Policy Amendment

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- further amendments to the recently amended planning controls without any change in circumstance would undermine the integrity of the strategic planning process and the planning investigation work carried out by the Department in consultation with Council and State Government agencies
- the planning proposal does not provide sufficient strategic merit to support a contrary decision to that made by the Planning Panel, and
- the planning proposal has the potential to disadvantage other land owners in the precinct who have lodged development applications with Council that have been prepared in accordance with the development controls introduced under Showground Station Precinct SEPP Amendment.

“The Commission finds that the planning proposal should not proceed to a Gateway Determination,” its advice to the Department stated.

The Commission’s report to the Department is available here:

<https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/projects/2018/12/showground-station-precinct-castle-hill>

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