

26 May 2019

Ms Mary O'Kane,
Chair, Independent Planning Commission of NSW
Level 3, 201 Elizabeth Street
SYDNEY, NSW, 2000

Dear Ms O'Kane

St Leonards South Planning Proposal

I have lived happily in Milray Avenue Wollstonecraft for 20 years and am a member of the Wollstonecraft Precinct Committee as, like many others, I care about retaining the character of this wonderful part of the lower North Shore.

I am horrified having learnt about this Planning Proposal from Lane Cove Council. How will 5,000 extra people be squeezed into a small site of less than 9 hectares which also result in those same 5,000 people relying on Crows Nest which, being uphill of that area, will see more cars on roads such as River Road, Shirley Road and the Pacific Highway that are already overloaded at peak times? We are already protesting the proposed SLCN 2036 Draft Plan which plans to add 1000's more and put pressure on already inadequate infrastructure.

It appears that the Planning Proposal has been prepared without mention of population density, open space ratio and their impact on public amenity and infrastructure. The result is further overcrowding, overshadowing, congestion, poor public amenity and no open space.

I list below comments in relation to the terms of reference of your inquiry requested by the Minister for Planning. I add comments about missed opportunities that a competent planner should have thought through ... which is a plan that sadly favours investors at the expense of the community.

Scale?

The scale and height of proposed buildings is excessive. Development needs to be appropriately scaled to reflect the existing Duntroon Avenue apartment buildings.

Place?

The Planning Proposal doesn't build community - it isolates people in high rise buildings without adding any nearby public amenities such as cafes, playgrounds, a local grocery store or significant new outdoor space. Newlands Park would be subject to unacceptable cumulative overshadowing in the afternoon, and therefore it does not meet one of the key design principles of the Draft Plan.

Built form?

With both Lane Cove and North Sydney Council doing an excellent job of meeting or exceeding their housing targets, why jump from a low-rise residential neighbourhood to a high-rise residential neighbourhood?

Land use?

Do we need 2000+ more units when 91.3% of St Leonards' residents live in apartments according to the 2016 Census – and when there are almost 2000 high rise apartments under construction in Lane Cove Council area near St Leonards station? Why not diversity of housing – affordable housing, social housing, 3 and 4 bedroom housing? In other parts of Sydney which have been overdeveloped, “ghost towers” are appearing as is there now a surplus of this kind of accommodation in Sydney. Please don't risk this happening here. If you must develop the land, make it world class with features which attract new residents and make long time residents proud to have it in our backyard.

The Planning Proposal fails to deliver diverse housing, variety of land use or support jobs growth. Given local councils are meeting housing targets could this land be more appropriately used to create new schools, new playing fields or an internationally competitive health, education, research and innovation precinct?

Topography?

The SLS precinct topography is steep. Consideration deration needs to be given to providing basic community services / local corner shops within the neighbourhood to take cars off the road as they drive uphill to existing shopping centres with already restrictive parking.

Liveability?

A mass of high-rise buildings without open space does not make for a healthy and liveable community. We are looking for a well-designed mix of open space to building, pocket parks for informal gathering and a suitable open spaces for leisure and children.

Traffic congestion?

River Road and the Pacific Highway are already congested (not to mention the ‘main streets’ through St Leonards, Crows Nest and Wollstonecraft). An additional 2400 apartments will exacerbate the already heavy congestion, as well as making access to Royal North Shore Hospital Emergency Department extremely difficult. There is insufficient existing social infrastructure in place to support what is in the pipeline. Schools, hospitals, roads, open spaces, sports fields and swimming pools are already overcrowded. Surely no further approval of residential units ought to be approved until we fully understand the implications of what is already in the pipeline?

Local health infrastructure?

Local GPs are closed to new clients. There are no close bulk billing departments. The RNS hospital is already stretched and overcrowded and traffic impedes easy access to the Emergency department.

In closing, the 2036 Plan directs that the area is to become an internationally competitive health, education, research and innovation precinct. It is time to revisit this Planning Proposal with the 2036 Guidelines in mind.

Is this land appropriate for a new school and playing fields? A world leading establishment for Dementia care? A research institute for medical nanotechnology? Could this land address the ‘missing middle’ problem?

With Newlands Park there is the opportunity to provide for more group and resident activities by building a grass amphitheatre on the south and east park slopes that would provide wonderful spaces with afternoon and evening sunshine coming through reduced height buildings.

In conclusion, please listen to those who live in the community and ignore the pleadings of investors who have at their own risk, purchased land at ridiculously high prices. They misjudged the market, but theirs is a self-inflicted financial predicament.

You might like to also censure Lane Cove Council who facilitated the proposal and their complete disregard for good urban planning and their failure to consult with the wider community. Also, the Department of Planning for approving a Gateway Determination in 2016. What were they thinking when planning was just beginning on the 2036 Draft Plan that they now set down as the marker when requesting your advice?

Please hear us and give thought to modifying this overcooked proposal and consider

- A lower population density
- More open and green space
- Removing the risk of overshadowing on the much in demand Newlands Park
- More consultation on those who chose to make this area our home
- Reducing the influence of developers who appear to only want to make money

Thank you for reading my submission.

Your sincerely,

Carolyn Hazell
Milray Avenue, Wollstonecraft.