

April 29, 2013

Strategic Assessments
Department of Planning and Infrastructure
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2011
By Email: plan_comment@planning.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Submission - Cudgegong Road Station Draft Structure Plan (CRSDSP) as part of the North West Rail Link Corridor Strategy

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to this Draft Structure Plan of the Cudgegong Road Station, and my comments are as follows:

1. Generally, I agree in principle with much of the Cudgegong Road Station Draft Structure Plan (CRSDSP), and hope that it will be realised as efficiently and quickly as possible, to develop this lovely area to its maximum potential, without forfeiting the character and amenities we have long appreciated and to provide sustainable, healthy and livable communities so close to the railway station and village centre.

Given its proximity to these assets and the invaluable accessibility and amenity they afford, I understand this area is in an ideal position to make a great contribution to the housing crucially needed to accommodate Sydney's expected population growth and I hope these opportunities will be fulfilled.

I also understand plans are underway to provide the necessary infrastructure to support this housing expansion in a timely fashion and trust that these plans will proceed undeterred.

2. Although the CRSDSP is represented as a vision for the precinct surrounding the Cudgegong Rail Station, with respect to land in Riverstone East, it will no doubt be superseded (very soon, hopefully) by a detailed Precinct Plan for Riverstone East which will reveal the actual intentions are for this precinct. I look forward the opportunity to respond to this more concrete plan in due course.
3. On the current CRSDSP, I support the suggestion made by the Rouse Hill Heights Action Group (RHHAG) to relocate the centre of the 400m and 800m circles to the Local Centre rather than the Railway Station.
4. I would like to see the development of the area proceed as quickly as possible as the character and ambience of the area is already fast changing, with the quiet rural nature fading away and being overtaken by road works, building construction and the resultant greatly increased levels of traffic. This will only get worse.
5. CONCERN OF VERY LOW DENSITY ZONING AS INCLUDED IN THE AREA 20 ILP (included in the CRSDSP Study Area, though not specifically referred to):

As stated in the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Sydney Region Growth Centres) Amendment (Area 20 Precinct) 2011* Post-Exhibition Planning Report SEPTEMBER 2011, p15: "The Department maintains that the retention of a very low density zone in this area is the best way to conserve mature trees and preserve an important component of the existing landscape, while providing an alternative housing product to the market."

I do not agree that the current landowners should shoulder the responsibility for "conserving mature trees and preserving an important component of the existing landscape" as well as preserving irrelevant vistas from Rouse Hill House. The "alternative housing product" is untested, and is very likely to be unpopular surrounded as it is by Medium Density housing within 800 metres of a railway station. The government should acquire land that is to be conserved for whatever reason, and at a fair price. Balance must prevail and the stated planning principle of higher residential densities within 800 metres of the station should be take precedence. The very low density land should be reclassified and the anomaly rectified.

6. CONCERN OF NATIVE VEGETATION CONSIDERATIONS IN PRECINCT PLANNING FOR RIVERSTONE EAST:

I note that the CRSDSP (2.3) states: *"Detailed ecological studies will be required to identify impacts on native vegetation and threatened flora and fauna as part of any future rezoning investigations within the Study Area."* It (2.8) further states: *"The constraints mapping indicates there are large portions of the Study area that are constrained. The number of large vegetation tracks scattered across the Study Area are a considerable constraint to development. Bushfire constraints associated with this existing vegetation are also considered a major constraint for the Study Area"* and yet it also states (4.1): *"Those sites which are unconstrained present opportunities for renewal within the Study Area", and further (4.2) "As identified in Section 4.1 Opportunity Sites, the Study Area has large portions of unconstrained land. Given the current market demand for residential and employment land it is likely that the area currently zoned for rural residential could be reconsidered in terms of its use."* (Refer also to Figure 19: Opportunity Sites within the Study Area).

It is very unclear from the above what the Precinct Planning of Riverstone East will reveal, given these apparently competing statements, and I would hope that a sensible approach will be taken to utilizing these valuable lands in such a prime location.

For example, my land is ideally situated close to future transport systems, employment centres and regional open space areas. It has been mostly cleared for grazing and hobby farm purposes, accommodating cattle, horses, goats, dogs, cats and poultry of various kinds over my 18 years here, and also for many years previously. There are scattered native trees and small groups of trees, interspersed with ornamental exotic trees and pines. The understory consists of grasses and weeds, and has been heavily grazed.

This land was mapped previously by NPWS (2002) as approximately 50% cleared (adjacent to Tallawong Road) and 50% Cumberland Plain Woodland canopy cover <10% (at the rear, west, of the property).

However, field inspection of the property (in a Planning Report commissioned in 2005 in response to the NSW Government's Metropolitan Strategy - North West Growth Centre) revealed that the mapping exaggerated the quantity of native vegetation present. It is separated from corridor areas by clearing and Tallawong Road and is not of significant ecological quality. It has little connectivity or vegetation linkages to facilitate the movement of flora and fauna and thereby does not contribute substantially to available habitat.

The small stands of native trees would require appropriate maintenance and management to retain any ecological value, given their currently degraded condition and ongoing threats such as weed-invasion, canopy dieback, understory and regrowth suppression, replacement with exotic species, stock grazing, and fertiliser use, etc. Some parts would require re-vegetation works to maintain ecological value and it is extremely unlikely that any of the land on the property would return to a semblance of a natural vegetation community without considerable effort and resources, and without a long term management plan to control weeds.

I'm sure many other properties in the area are in a similar situation and I hope the important work of conserving remnant vegetation in the area will focus on using retained riparian zones and purchased land.

Many thanks in advance for the time you have taken to consider my comments. Please feel free to contact at any time if you require more information or would like to arrange a meeting.

Yours sincerely,



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