

20 May 2013

Strategic Assessments
Department of Planning and Infrastructure
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Sir / Madam,

North West Rail Link Corridor Strategy – Castle Hill Station Draft Structure Plan

Introduction

This submission has been prepared on behalf of the Queensland Investment Corporation (QIC) in response to the exhibition of the above documents. Following from our recent meeting with officers of the Department to discuss the matter, I would like to thank you for the granting an extension in time to lodge this submission.

QIC is a major commercial stakeholder on the North West Rail Link (NWRL) and has actively contributed to the EIS process for that project, recognising not only the need for such a project to be planned and delivered in a manner that does not cause disruption, but also ensuring that longer term urban benefits that can be leveraged from such transport infrastructure being located in immediate proximity to major retail, commercial and residential uses. This submission considers the Draft Structure Plan in the context of the scale of QIC's landholdings within Castle Hill; the works approved under the Castle Towers Stage 3 development consent; and the willingness for QIC to further participate in more detailed planning for the centre so as to reinforce Castle Hill as the Major Centre for North West Sydney.

QIC Landholdings

QIC have two significant retail assets within the Castle Hill study area, being the Castle Towers Shopping Centre and the Castle Mall Shopping Centre, of which the former is immediately adjacent to the proposed Castle Hill Rail Station. Castle Towers is the major retail centre for North West Sydney and a key site within the NWRL Castle Hill study area. Castle Mall Shopping Centre is located south west of the Castle Hill NWRL station site and performs a complementary convenience based local retail function.

The aerial map below details QIC's assets in Castle Hill.



Site Ownership Plan
Castle Hill, NSW

Castle Towers Stage 3 Development Consent

The Hills Shire Council approved the Castle Towers Stage 3 development in 2011. The approval gave consent for the major expansion of the Shopping Centre to provide a significant increase in retail floor space and additional parking. A copy of the site plan that illustrates the overall expansion is included below



The Stage 3 development is to be delivered in stages over a number of years.

Castle Hill Station Draft Structure Plan – General Comments

Having regard to the above, the following general observations are made:

- The Government's vision to reinforce Castle Hill's status as the Major Centre for the North West by guiding growth on the principles of transit oriented development is broadly supported by QIC. The Draft Structure Plan proposes a mix of higher density retail and commercial and residential land uses on and around QICs landholdings and the intention to retain the existing mixed use land use zoning is central to achieving these outcomes. That said we acknowledge that the final Structure Plan will essentially be a policy / guidance document and that current planning controls in Castle Hill will not allow the growth envisaged by the Draft Plan. In order to improve certainty, we encourage the early adoption of the Structure Plan by Government but importantly with Council's clear endorsement.
- The Government's plans to strengthen the employment and retail capacity of Castle Hill, in conjunction with better land use integration and improvements to the public domain, are broadly aligned to QIC's planned growth of Castle Towers Shopping Centre. The proposed Structure Plan does however provide an opportunity to potentially review current approvals that were based around integration with a more "suburban" context. In essence the Structure Plan envisages a transformation of Castle Hill into a more "urban" context and accordingly QIC does not wish to prejudice any opportunity for further density uplift on its own properties in the short term.
- We note though that expectations created by the Draft Structure Plan to accommodate significant increases in commercial floor space in Castle Hill need to be tempered by the realisation that the provision and occupation of commercial floor space will be dependent on the supply of such at Norwest Business Park. Norwest is well established and provides a logical location for commercial operations in the region in the short to mid-term. The existing supply is expected to restrict the market's requirements for additional commercial office space in the region over the life of the plan and will need further analysis to ensure that plans for Castle Hill are not misguided or unrealistic, particularly given the time horizon stated.
- Based on the above, QIC is supportive and recommends that more detailed precinct planning be commenced in the immediate term to provide a more detailed vision for Castle Hill that aligns with the broad direction of the Structure Plan. The tools available to do this could be via the Governments Urban Activation Precincts Protocol. This could provide the necessary mechanism to engage Council, relevant Government agencies, the community and other key landholders to achieve the future vision for Castle Hill. As the major commercial landholder, QIC are willing to participate in the development of the next layer of planning detail.

QIC appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Structure Plan and look forward to ongoing engagement with the Department and Council. I can be contacted on 82339925 if you would like to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,



David Hoy
Director

CC Andrew Lannen: Queensland Investment Corporation