

Marian Pate,
Sutherland LEP Review,
NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure,
PO Box 39,
Sydney 2001

Friday 14 February 2014

Dear Madam,

Objection to Sutherland Draft LEP

I am writing to express my objection to the Sutherland Draft LEP. The reasons for my objection are outlined below.

Further strain on train commuters – particularly for Jannali and Como commuters

I live in Jannali with my husband and young children. My husband works in the city and commutes by train from Jannali train station.

The Jannali and Como train stations are the two stations closest to the city when travelling by train from the Sutherland Shire.

Jannali and Como don't get the fast express trains that other stations in the Sutherland Shire can get. My husband's train journey is relatively long – sometimes longer than for people who live further away on the train line. His journey is usually around 37-41 minutes depending on what train he catches.

One of the things my husband often mentions is how few seats are left on the train when he gets on, when travelling into the city. Of course, when you're spending that much time on the train it's preferable to get a seat.

If the Draft Sutherland LEP is approved, there is likely to be an increase in the number of people living in the area and therefore commuting into the city. Based on how busy the trains are already, a consequence may mean that people catching the train from Jannali or Como may no longer be able to get a seat at all – or potentially not even get on the train if it's really busy.

It is unlikely that this issue could be fixed easily by CityRail. Previous attempts by residents in Jannali and Como to have more trains put on or for express trains to stop at these stations have been unsuccessful. In fact, the number of trains stopping at Jannali and Como has been reduced over the past few years, in spite of the large number of people using these stations (in fact, people from further afield such as Menai and Sylvania use the Jannali train station).

I have not mentioned this in order to criticise CityRail, but rather, to highlight that there may not be a quick fix for train stations such as Jannali and Como if crowding becomes an even greater issue. Yet, these stations are most likely

to feel the effects of train overcrowding from additional development in the area, as these commuters live closer to the city and are less likely to get seats on the train in the morning.

Of course, these issues also apply to people coming home at the end of the day as well.

Further strain on resources

As lucky as we are to live in the Sutherland Shire, there is undoubtedly already a strain on resources.

Parking: In some parts of the area parking is already a problem. For example, my friends and I regularly talk about how bad the parking is in Sutherland itself. There have been occasions when we have been unable to find a park and have simply given up and gone home.

Although the 1 hour parking spaces set up by the Council has helped take off some of this pressure, it makes it difficult to get things done in the area. Indeed, Sutherland is unfortunately an area that I try to avoid.

Understandably, it can also be difficult to get a park at popular places such as Cronulla and at the Royal National Park during long weekends and holidays and at special times of the year – and sometimes just because it's a nice day.

The significant development allowed under the Draft LEP has the potential to make these issues worse.

Roads: Many of the roads in the Sutherland Shire are already under pressure from a lot of traffic. For example, I often have to drive through Sutherland and find that, even with the changes that have recently been made, the roads are still generally pretty bad during the day.

A big increase in development in the Sutherland Shire is also likely to put additional pressure on the roads going to and from the city. These roads are already extremely busy, during weekends as well as weekdays.

Childcare: I have often found it difficult to get childcare for my children in the Sutherland Shire (e.g. to get care for my children when they were young; to get the days I need; to get them into occasional care later on in the year).

Without a corresponding increase in the number of childcare centres this will become even more difficult if the number of people living in the area increases significantly.

More development does not necessarily mean cheaper housing

As I understand it, a number of people are arguing in favour of the Draft LEP on the belief that it will make property more affordable in the Sutherland Shire and help local families keep together in the area.

However, three of the biggest reasons why Sydney is having such a strong property boom at the moment are in fact unrelated to supply. They are:

1. Property investors can use negative gearing to write off tax losses and
2. Self Managed Super Funds can buy property
3. A large number of overseas investors are buying property.

While more development in the Sutherland Shire would increase supply, it would not affect any of the above three key factors.

I therefore think it's important not to overstate the impact that increased supply may have on property prices in the area.

Potential influx of overseas investors to the Sutherland Shire

There are a considerable number of overseas investors purchasing property in Sydney – and reports indicate that many more want to do so.

By law, non-resident foreigners can only buy new homes, with exceptions to buy existing properties granted on a case-by-case basis.

The Draft LEP opens the door for many more new properties to be built in the Sutherland Shire, thereby increasing opportunities for overseas investors to purchase property in the area. This means there is the potential for an influx of overseas investors purchasing property in the area, which would put pressure on property prices.

This re-emphasises the point that we need to be careful not to overstate the impact that increased supply may have on property prices in the Sutherland Shire.

Large homes already dominating blocks of land

My husband and I have been noticing an increase in large 'McMansion'-type properties being built that dominate their blocks of land in Sutherland Shire's residential areas.

We have also noticed new developments that seem to squeeze as many buildings onto land as possible. In one case for example, we noticed a block of land for sale on a street. We were expecting a single 'McMansion'-type home to be built on the land for consistency with the other properties on the street. In actual fact, three detached homes were built – all very close together.

It concerns me that the Draft LEP would make it possible for homes and other developments to take up even more space and to become even more imposing than what is already permitted.

The broader significance of the LEP in terms of combatting climate change and saving our oceans

As difficult as it is for some people to accept, our world is beginning to see the effects of climate change. Moreover, those impacts will become much greater unless we take urgent action.

The overwhelming majority of the world's scientists are now as certain that humans are causing climate change, as they are that smoking causes lung cancer. This was one of the key take-outs of the most comprehensive assessment of the science of climate change ever undertaken: the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, which was published on 27 September 2013.¹

In addition, according to a recent draft United Nations report, another 15 years of failure to limit carbon emissions could make the problem virtually impossible to solve with current technologies.²

Moreover, a study released in October 2013 from the International Programme on the State of the Ocean (IPSO) showed that our oceans are in such a bad way from all the fossil fuels we are burning that a mass extinction may already be under way due to a 'deadly trio' of acidification, ocean warming and deoxygenation.³

The fact of the matter is that we are now working within a very limited timeframe for dealing with these issues. We must act very quickly.

There are a growing number of municipal councils around the world that are focusing on managing greenhouse gas emissions, as well as developing a long-term and strategic approach to managing climate change hazards. I believe that this is an important path that the Sutherland Shire LEP should also take.

In this respect, I would like to refer you to The Zero Carbon Australia Buildings Plan, which was released by Beyond Zero Emissions in August 2013. I believe that the Sutherland LEP should be incorporating the content of this plan into its LEP. The Building Plan can be viewed at the following link - <http://bze.org.au/node/1440>

By way of example of what some other councils are doing around the world, I refer you to the Nova Scotia municipal planning resource page: <http://www.novascotia.ca/snsmr/municipal/planning/climate-change.asp>

Conclusion

The Draft LEP threatens to dampen the quality of life for people living within the Sutherland Shire by putting additional strain on resources such as the

¹ <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/sep/27/ipcc-climate-change-report-ar5-live-coverage>

² http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/17/science/earth/un-says-lag-in-confronting-climate-woes-will-be-costly.html?_r=0

³ <http://www.stateoftheocean.org>

train commute, parking, roads and childcare. Previous experience has shown that there is no quick-fix for these problems in the Sutherland Shire.

The Draft LEP also has the potential to change the tenor of the area through bigger homes and more imposing developments.

Meanwhile, it is debatable whether the Draft LEP will make housing in the area more affordable as three of the key drivers of property prices in Sydney are unrelated to supply/demand issues.

The Draft LEP presents an opportunity for the Sutherland Shire to lead the way in reducing emissions and managing the impacts of climate change. Simply put, it can help secure a better future for our children.

For these reasons I respectfully request that:

- The Draft LEP be struck down, and
- A new LEP be drafted by members of the Sutherland Shire Council using (i) the information they have gathered from the consultation process for the draft LEP and (ii) their own recommendations, and
- The new LEP incorporates provisions that focus on reducing emissions, creating a sustainable future and adapting to climate change, and
- The public be given the opportunity to provide submissions in respect of the proposed new LEP, and
- The public be given the opportunity to learn about the proposed new LEP in shopping centres, and
- Hard copy information about the new LEP be made available at places such as schools, childcare centres and community centres (it causes me great concern that mums and dads are so busy that they tend not to know about these matters, particularly given what's at stake for them and their kid's futures).

Please feel free to contact me for additional information.

Yours sincerely,

(Name withheld)