



2 September 2015

**Submission in relation to the draft plan for Riverstone East Precinct**

***Re: the proposed zoning of 35 Oak Street Schofields, currently the site of the Lankarama Buddhist Temple.***

Dear sir / madam,

My submission is that the proposed zoning of this site as SP2 Drainage and RE 1 Public Recreation is inappropriate. In particular, zoning the developed portion of the site RE 1 would render the current land use unviable in the future.

In my view the current land use of a place of worship and associated facilities is not incompatible with the open space corridor proposed for land along First Ponds Creek. In fact this could be seen as a complementary use, given that Lankarama has a strong interest in maintaining an ambience conducive to reflection and meditation.

The Sri Lankan Buddhist Vihara has undertaken significant investment in the Lankarama site over many years. It is possible that the outcome of rezoning to Public Recreation would be that Lankarama would eventually be forced to leave the site in circumstances which would preclude recovery of the cost of improvements made over those years. This would represent an unreasonable and unjust outcome.

More significantly, the religious value of the site to the Buddhist community is very great. In keeping with Buddhist tradition, a "Bodhi Tree" was planted on the site when the Temple was established and has been carefully nurtured for 18 years. The Bodhi Tree at Schofields is a cutting from the ancient tree in Sri Lanka, which itself was propagated from the original Bodhi Tree under which Buddha sat and received enlightenment in India. It is Buddhist tradition never to disturb the site of this sacred tree, which is to remain in its planted location in perpetuity.

Similarly important to religious tradition is the Stupa, the religious monument constructed to commemorate the Buddha, which contains sacred relics. Around the world, these structures are never demolished but remain as permanent symbols of religious devotion.

I am advised that, whatever the outcome of the precinct planning process, the Lankarama community could never accept disturbance to either the Bodhi Tree or the Stupa.

The Lankarama community is passionately committed to continuing to use the site as a place of worship.

I am confident that it was never the intention of the Department of Planning to force this religious community out of the area, but that the proposed zoning has been suggested without adequate understanding of the current land use or the impact the proposed change would have on the community concerned.

It is my very strong contention that a more appropriate zone should be identified which would both allow the ongoing use of the site at 35 Oak Street Schofields for religious purposes and contribute to the strategic intent of the exhibited plan to preserve and enhance the riparian corridor along First Ponds Creek.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin Conolly". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial "K" and a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Kevin Conolly

**Member for Riverstone**