

SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO SHOWGROUND STATION PRECINCT PROPOSAL

**(NSW PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT)
DECEMBER 2015**

Being Property Owners and Residents of Sexton Avenue for 11 and 18 years each we would like to submit the following for consideration in the finalisation of the Development Plan for the Showground Precinct.

The first and significant issue being that the densities outlined as being within the 400 metre radius of the Showground Station is flawed in that the original determination of the 400 metre radius has not been amended from the 2013 Draft Plan that was prepared yet the proposed Station was moved due to issues found during the initial excavations.

Given this movement and the redesignation of the 400 metre radius a greater portion of Sexton Avenue should be included and possibly into the area designated for higher density / higher building heights from 8 to 12 floors. This has been confirmed at Community Consultation held at the Castle Hill RSL during February 2016. Or alternatively a mixture of buildings of varying height to both maximise density and allow necessary green space and infrastructure.

The increased height and density would be consistent with the published intent of having a higher density of development within the designated area adjacent to the new railway station to take advantage of the new rail network and transport hub.

The process of determining the density and mix of structural heights is presented to planners in circumstances where currently developed areas have required infrastructure, although a need for increased capacity will be needed. This opportunity to maximise the density allowed will not present itself again in this precinct for another 2 decades. This would seem to be the logical timeframe as replacing structures in a shorter period would be restricted given building cost recovery and required returns on investment.

We would therefore respectfully request that the decision to increase the density within the Sexton Ave and Fishburn Crescent boarded area be considered in order to maximise the Showground Precinct Development and the number of potential users of the rail service accessible through the Showground Station.

ADDITIONAL NOTES – EXCERPTS FROM PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION REPORT and expert submissions

Where there are capacity constraints in some services, additional costs of replacing or augmenting infrastructure need to be weighed against the savings from greater utilisation of other infrastructure. The whole range of infrastructure services needs to be taken into account. An obstacle to appropriate decision-making is that existing information about the extent of urban services capacity is poor. There are savings in infrastructure outlays per dwelling associated with increases in density of housing developments in most locations.

External costs and benefits and the importance of environmental and other side effects of urban settlement depends on the particular characteristics of the locations and projects in question. For each of the main environmental components – air and water quality and urban land amenity – there are potential costs as well as benefits. In some cases the costs are unpredictable, because they depend upon the behaviour of those people who decide to live there. For example, the extent of automobile side effects such as congestion and air pollution arising from settlement in a particular location depends, among other influences, on the location of employment and the availability of, and preferences for, public transport.

Not much land area can be saved just by a move to medium density dwellings in new developments, given the relatively small share of the total urban area that dwellings occupy. A substantial impact would require the replacement of existing housing or the reduction of non-housing space, such as roads, green space and other major land uses.

Environmental effects - For any pattern of urban settlement, there are potential costs and benefits associated with the main environmental components of air, water and land.

Amenity implications are also important when noise, congestion and similar accompaniments to urban settlement impinge on activity.

Efficient land use

- The efficiency of urban land use depends both on the costs involved (including social and environmental impacts) and the community's preferences.
- The costs of infrastructure provision, including environmental side effects, vary greatly among locations in cities.
- Infrastructure costs per dwelling generally decline as on-site density of development increases.
- Air quality in an increased density within easy access to the railway and transport hub will not be negatively impacted as the expected residents will be less inclined to own a motor vehicle.
- The urban landscape will not be significantly impacted as there are adjacent developments of the height being asked for consideration and the fact that the area being referred to is not in direct conflict with any increased traffic capacity corridors.

Urban density is usually measured in terms of population density, that is, the number of persons per hectare, although a measure of dwellings per hectare is occasionally used. Given that large parts of urban areas are made up of roads, parks, industrial and commercial areas and other non-residential uses, or are undeveloped, there are several ways in which land area can be defined.

The common definitions of density are:

- gross density: population divided by gross area, defined as persons per hectare; and
- net density: population divided by built-up area, often including only residential land, and sometimes net of public land such as roads, recreation areas, etc. The CSIRO said that gross density is mostly used as a measure of urban density because it is a better measure of some

parameters and fits in better with most modelling approaches. Data deficiencies make net density hard to calculate and the lack of an accepted measure means that comparisons can be difficult.

Forster argued that: Gross population densities for SLAs [statistical local areas] have little real meaning. Such densities are the result of an unspecified mixture of the proportion of non-urban land in each SLA, the proportion of urban non-residential land, the density of housing and the occupancy rate ... Net densities are – it is true – laborious to calculate, but have much more genuine meaning .

However, the CSIRO observed that: From a behavioural point of view, in terms of moving decisions, individual perceptions of local amenity will be based on gross density. Private space will of course be measured as net density ... We appreciate of course that net densities are useful for some purposes, eg in calculating whole-city average densities, which can't be done really for gross densities.

Newman, Kenworthy and Vintila argued that land would be used more efficiently if the density of urban development could be increased. They said that 'sprawling development' at the fringe consumes land at a very high rate, and estimated that about 3800 square metres of land (almost an acre) is needed to accommodate each new fringe dwelling in Melbourne, including the block itself, roads, community facilities, commercial, retail and industrial land. A similar calculation for inner established areas was not given. The extent to which an increase in urban density can save land and reduce the extent of 'urban sprawl' has, however, been the subject of some debate.

McLoughlin stated that there is considerable literature available to demonstrate the limited effects of higher density urban development on reducing the spread of cities. He used some hypothetical models to examine the effects of changing densities on urban areas.

For example, he calculated that, in a city of one million situated on a featureless plain and with a circular form, a 'highly unlikely increase' in net residential density of from 30 to 40 persons per hectare would reduce the radius of the city from 14.6 kilometres to 13.6 kilometres, or about eight per cent.

The House of Representatives concluded that: The capacity of urban consolidation to save space and thus enhance economic, environmental and social benefits is limited ... The report quoted a submission by Berry which stated: As net residential densities rise, the demand for non-residential land usage also rises, unless the newly crowded residents are to enjoy less access to public open space, road space, shopping, educational and other community facilities. These technical limits to effective densification are especially strong in the built up areas where new developments are constrained by what already exists – often reinforced by the defensive regulatory controls of local government

The range of policies currently being considered by State and local governments – dual occupancy, small-lot subdivision, corridor development, developer levies, residential codes, demonstration projects and the like – will have a marginal impact on metropolitan spatial form.

At best they will achieve a slowing of outward urban development over the next 10 to 20 years.

About 90 per cent of urban population growth will be located near and beyond the existing fringe.

To achieve a significantly higher degree of containment in this time horizon would require truly radical policy interventions – eg, a ban on private motor vehicles within 25 kilometres of the GPO, nationalisation of land marked for new urban development or wholesale block resumption and clearance of built-up areas ... – the economic, social and (of course) electoral costs of which would be insupportable. ***The construction and operation of the North West Rail Corridor and the placement of the Showground Transport Hub presents the opportunity to increase the density immediately adjacent to the infrastructure to encourage higher utilisation of services and the incentive to minimise the need for motor vehicle ownership.***

The relationships between residential location, transport modes and journey to work times are of considerable interest in any study of urban settlement patterns. The Australian Automobile Association said: ... urban sprawl is already regarded as being a problem in some cities to the extent that it is associated with increased traffic volume, vehicle emissions, energy usage and congestion. It is also argued that the expansion in the spatial pattern of a city reduces the efficiency of public transport and that this too will exacerbate the environmental problems ...

Development in areas already serviced by infrastructure are generally supported by governments for policies to promote urban consolidation are assessments that higher density cities are more economical in their use of infrastructure.

‘Consolidation’ refers to a process of raising density of cities through redevelopment or infill – which can draw on existing infrastructure – as well as through higher density housing generally.

Where existing infrastructure can cope adequately with additional demands generated by redevelopment or infill, the apparent costs of adding new users to the network could be expected to be low compared with fringe development. For small projects involving only localised increases in density, there will generally be little need for major additional expenditures on roads, hydraulic infrastructure, public transport, and social infrastructure, which together comprise a large part of the cost of infrastructure in fringe areas.

However, existing capacity has clearly been produced and sustained at some cost; it is not free. Full utilisation of capacity is often planned but occurs some time after initial provision. As capacity is ‘consumed’ over time, the costs should be recognised and attributed.

There have been a number of studies attempting to quantify the relative merits of urban consolidation. Many have examined the comparative capital outlays of providing infrastructure and services to inner and fringe developments. Some have taken a broader view, looking at all the costs and benefits of different development options.

Studies that have taken a cost savings approach to urban consolidation proposals have generally examined the savings accruing from infrastructure provision alone. Often the main objective has been to assess savings in public sector outlays, because of concerns by authorities about the budgetary consequences of providing infrastructure to fringe developments.

Most studies have concluded that there are substantial savings to be had from urban consolidation and maximisation of the infrastructure, services and opportunity for increased population density that once ignored or deferred cannot be economically or practically achieved within a 20 year or more span.