



The Secretary
Department of Planning & Environment
320 Pitt Street
Sydney NSW 2000

4 September 2017

Dear Secretary

St Leonards & Crows Nest Station Precinct interim statement

I welcome the Minister's initiative in undertaking a strategic planning investigation for the St Leonards area. My feedback on the *St Leonards & Crows Nest Station Precinct interim statement* is as follows.

Nomenclature

The name 'St Leonards & Crows Nest Station Precinct' is a mouthful. I suggest that St Leonards is sufficient as a name, since this is both the major centre, and the historical name for the North Sydney area.

Governance

As you are aware, the St Leonards precinct is divided between three local government areas, none of which were found 'fit for the future' in a recent review. It would be bad enough that this strategically-important precinct be under the authority of one unfit council, let alone three. If the NSW Government cannot summon the courage to complete the merger of Willoughby and North Sydney councils, then it must redraw boundaries to incorporate the entire precinct into the City of North Sydney.

I would suggest that the Gore Hill Freeway; the vicinity of Cobden Avenue, Lane Cove; and Gore Creek would be ideal natural boundaries for the enlarged City.

Employment

I support the Department's conclusion that the Artarmon industrial area is of vital importance to the district, and note with concern the low vacancy rate. As demand for industrial land in this area can be expected to increase in line with the population of the district as a whole, it is vital that this land be protected from alternative land uses.

Plainly, there is little prospect of expanding this industrial area's boundaries. As such, ways must be found to exclude alternative land uses from the area. In addition to preventing Council from approving office and retail developments here, it would be appropriate for Government to explore options to compulsorily acquire properties for conversion to industrial uses. Potential targets for this approach might include:

- the vacant portion of the former ABC studios site on Broadcast Way
- large retail properties such as the Bunnings and HomeHQ sites on Reserve Road
- large office developments such as the SBS studios on Herbert Street.

Transport

The Pacific Highway forms a barrier to pedestrian and local traffic flow along the length of the precinct. This despite the fact that the road between North Sydney and Lane Cove does not form part of the strategic road network. (Through traffic should use the Warringah Expressway and Gore Hill Freeway.) Transport for NSW should explore opportunities to reunite north and south of the highway between Victoria Cross and Greenwich Road by:

- removing on-street parking in favour of more spaces in parking stations
- restoring right-hand turns
- providing signalled pedestrian crossings across all sides of each intersection
- widening footpaths and/or the median, and installing bus bays and street trees
- installing 24-hour bus lanes – or at least targeted bus priority measures – to improve connectivity along the precinct's main artery
- extending Metrobus M20 from its current terminus at Campbell Street to Lane Cove, providing connectivity from the two railway stations to the northern and southern extent of the precinct
- encouraging development in Crows Nest that incorporates a pedestrian bridge or tunnel to improve connectivity across the highway.

These measures may also provide an opportunity to rename the road (Cammeraygal Avenue, perhaps?) between the Gore Hill Freeway and the Harbour Bridge. This would eliminate today's confusing repetition of street numbers on the highway.

While the Pacific Highway will remain the precinct's major road artery, an increase in residential and commercial density between St Leonards and Crows Nest stations means that additional pedestrian capacity will be required. I would like to see a pedestrian spine with wide footpaths, raised pedestrian crossings and public domain enhancements linking Ernest Street pedestrian mall, along Clarke, Oxley and Chandos streets, terminating within the Royal North Shore hospital campus.

I note the Department's conclusion that the Precinct lacks a 'comprehensive' cycle network. Cycling is a niche activity in such hilly terrain and by no means a priority for the area. The existing cycle corridor beside the Gore Hill Freeway is sufficient. Other initiatives that benefit the precinct as a whole should be prioritised over further cycle infrastructure.

Social infrastructure and open space

The precinct is generally well-served for open space, with several large parks within the boundary or nearby. However, opportunities to extend pedestrianisation within the St Leonards and Crows Nest town centres should be embedded in planning. Opportunities to be explored include:

- extending the St Leonards Forum north via a podium development above the railway
- extending the Ernest Street pedestrian mall west to the vicinity of the future Crows Nest metro station
- providing level access between the centre of the Royal North Shore Hospital and Chandos Street.

The Northern Sydney Institute campus at Westbourne Street strikes me as an inappropriate use of prime land. The Department of Education should be encouraged to shift this facility to the former Ku-ring-gai College site at Lindfield, freeing up the Westbourne Street site for office development.

Guiding principles

I fully support an increase in residential and commercial density in the triangle bounded by Royal North Shore, Chandos Street & Willoughby Road, and Pacific Highway & Falcon Street. Opportunities to relocate low-density land uses within this triangle should be explored.

At the same time, the scale of the existing Willoughby Road shopfronts should be retained, even if the buildings themselves are replaced, and high-rise built behind them.

The indicative heights shown in the Interim Statement's cross-sections appear to get the balance right.

Heritage streets in Crows Nest and Naremburn should be protected, however such protection should be afforded only to streets independently assessed as having high heritage significance and being reasonably intact. Redevelopment, where it occurs, should not compromise sightlines in nearby 'heritage' streets.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Interim Statement.

Yours faithfully

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