



Greenwich Community Association Inc

Director, Planned Precinct Infrastructure Delivery
Department of Planning and Environment
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001

St Leonards and Crows Nest Draft Local Character Statement
Submission by Greenwich Community Association Inc
Final date for submissions 8 February 2019

Status of Greenwich Community Association Inc

The Greenwich Community Association (GCA) is a non-profit incorporated community association dedicated to gathering and promoting the views and interests of the residents of Greenwich. It was established over 70 years ago and has extensive experience in the planning issues affecting the community – see our website: <http://www.greenwich.org.au/>

GCA Submission

Observations of draft Local Character Statement

It is acknowledged that the planning of the St Leonards and Crows Nest precinct had been in progress for about twenty months before the introduction of the local character statement requirement as a step preliminary to the planned precinct process.

The Department of Planning launched the local character statement process on 16 January 2018 in Circular PS 18-001 *Stepping up planning and designing for better places: respecting and enhancing local character*, explaining that “(g)ood planning should ensure all places have a future desired character and once this has been established the planning framework can be used to guide the degree of change needed to achieve that vision”.

This initiative was welcomed in the Lane Cove LGA as, to that point, the members of the Lane Cove community had had no opportunity for involvement in the precinct planning process.

The complexities of development in the precinct warranted extensive and well publicised community engagement. This did not happen. The scope of consultation undertaken in the development of the draft Local Character Statement was limited, with a focus on the input of Council staff and community members in small discussion groups.

Given the potentially irreversible changes foreshadowed for the precinct, the Department of Planning should have been far more pro-active than it was in promoting discussion about community aspirations for the area and how they could be blended with the objectives of the North District Plan.

In the case of Lane Cove LGA, there was no action taken by Council officers to elicit community views to inform the Local Character Statement. Despite many requests from the GCA for this to happen, Lane Cove Council officers did nothing to engage with the community, nor, as we understand, were elected Councillors offered the opportunity to provide input to the statement.

The only opportunity to gather a broader insight into views about the character of the area was through the survey conducted by the Department of Planning in February and March 2018. The questions in this survey were clearly focussed on the Willoughby Road and Crows Nest village precinct – respondents outside this precinct found several questions had little relevance to their local area.

It is disappointing that the Department of Planning has not provided a summary of the key findings of this survey, nor has there been an analysis of the demographics of the respondents. For this reason, it is not clear which area the respondent identified with and whether this interest derived from being a resident or from a direct financial interest in development or other activities.

The Statement may also have benefitted from targeted input from other stakeholders like young families and local business operators.

The Guiding Principles on pp 28-29 are a fair representation of the main views of community members who identify closely with Willoughby Road and Crows Nest but less so for those who reside outside these areas, namely Greenwich and the Artarmon business area.

What is of more immediate concern is that the 2036 Plan fails to incorporate many of the key principles of the Local Character Statement in spite of claims on p 6 that it is “informed by community aspirations identified in the draft Local Character Statement”. There is little correlation between the Guiding Principles in the Local Character Statement and the Area Wide Design Principles identified on p 11 of the 2036 Plan. And there is even less correlation when it comes to the implementation provisions in the 2036 Plan.

Rather than clarifying future planning benchmarks, the inconsistency between the principles of the Local Character Statement and the 2036 Plan has left the community confused as to the key design principles to be applied.

This apparent disconnect may stem from the fact that the 2036 plan was well advanced before the local character statement requirements were announced and it was difficult to undo what had already been incorporated in the plan.

However, local character statements are now an integral part of the planning framework. Good planning should ensure that all places have a future desired character and, once this has been established, the planning framework can be used to guide the degree of change needed to achieve that vision.

The draft 2036 Plan should be reworked to reflect this requirement.

In summary

The GCA requests the Department to:-

- undertake a new round of community consultation to develop a revised Local Character Statement through a process that is wider and more inclusive than was the case in 2018
- revise the Area Wide Design Principles of the 2036 Plan to ensure consistency with the Guiding Principles of the revised Local Character Statement
- place a moratorium on the lodgement of Planning Proposals in the precinct until finalisation of the revised 2036 Plan.

In the event that the Department declines to undertake community consultation with a view to informing a revised Local Character Statement, the GCA seeks inclusion by the Department of additional Guiding Principles in the current statement to reflect the following community priorities:-

- Stop 'spot rezoning' via unsolicited Planning Proposals and State Significant Sites
- Remove the Significant Site designation from the Triangle Site
- Contain high rise buildings and higher densities to St Leonards core
- Control heights and setbacks on Pacific Highway to minimise dark tunnel effects
- Retain and protect the village of Crows Nest, Willoughby Road, protecting the low rise nature of the area, ensuring sensitive and gradual transitions from high to low rise
- Create new and protect existing public open space
- Ensure that social infrastructure is in place to support the increased population (schools, daycare, aged care facilities, open space, parks, plazas, recreation facilities)
- Manage traffic congestion
- Update Utility services to ensure they can cope with the demands of increased density of both residents and workers
- Prioritise pedestrians by making the area as pedestrian friendly as possible.



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