

St Leonards and Crows Nest 2036 Draft Plan

1. Importance of coordinated planning for the St Leonards and Crows Nest Precinct

The development of the St Leonards and Crows Nest area has been uncoordinated because the area is controlled by three separate councils.

The decision to develop a coordinated plan for the area is supported and every effort should be made to ensure that it is finalised through a process of genuine community engagement.

In this regard, the Vision outlined in this draft does not align with the Guiding Principles of the draft Local Character Statement. A set of common guidelines and vision needs to be agreed with the NS Council and other Councils and the Plan reworked in cooperation with them to satisfy their and the community's expectations.

2. The Draft Plan fails to address the development and the associated infrastructure needs of the entire area in the Plan boundaries.

It is focussed on the portion along and adjacent to Pacific Highway from St Leonards Station to the proposed Crows Nest Metro Station.

It lacks detail required to inform the planning of the other areas in the plan and the management of infrastructure needs of these areas and impact on areas adjacent to the precinct.

The Draft Plan appears to have been developed largely in response to the draft Local Character Statement. The questions in the survey that informed the development of the draft Local Character Statement focussed almost entirely on the St Leonards/Crows Nest area. This narrow focus failed to capture comment on areas like the St Leonards South area and the Artarmon industrial area and they are now neglected in the Draft Plan, particularly in the identification of infrastructure to be developed through Special Infrastructure Contributions.

3. The Draft Plan fails to deliver on a key Land Use objective of the Plan, namely commercial premises to support the development of an employment hub.

The bulk of development that has been completed, has been approved or is under construction in the St Leonards and Crows Nest precinct recently has been high density residential. This trend is at odds with the fact that the St Leonards and Crows Nest precinct has been identified as an employment hub, not a residential one. Despite this, the Draft Plan includes inadequate controls to reverse the current loss of commercial office space, let alone enhance scope to meet the employment objective set by the North District Plan of 16,500 new jobs by 2036.

In the absence of a clear commitment to the development of commercial office accommodation, the precinct will be incapable of meeting the accommodation needs of the projected 16,500 workers.

Examples of this failure to drive commercial development include:-

- the re-zoning of the Crows Nest Metro Station site to include two tall residential towers, a hotel that could be easily converted to a residential development or could operate as such and a lower rise commercial development
- the proposed re-zoning of the Significant Sites in the Lane Cove LGA to mixed-use residential and commercial without scaling back of the density proposed in the St Leonards South Planning Proposal site
- the designation of Significant Sites in the North Sydney LGA that are currently zoned B3 Commercial with no provision to protect this zoning against changed zoning through the Planning Proposal process.

4. **The Draft Plan acknowledges the current infrastructure inadequacy in and adjacent to the precinct area. It fails to adequately address the delivery of required infrastructure, particularly green open space, and has neglected the areas beyond the St Leonards Station to Crows Nest Metro area.**

A separate submission will be made in respect of the SIC but I wish to comment on the following in terms of this submission:-

- the infrastructure projects listed in the SIC document are required now and do not include additional infrastructure needs that may become evident if residential development is permitted to expand with development of the Significant Sites and other areas
- the projects listed are focussed almost entirely around the area from St Leonards Station to the Crows Nest Metro site.

5. **The Draft Plan fails to deliver on a key Land Use objective of the Plan, namely the provision of a mix of housing.**

The focus of the Plan is only on high density residential development, rather than on a mix of housing styles as stated in the Vision for the Plan. It makes no recommendation as to designation of areas for additional R3 medium density development. The area bounded by Pacific Highway, Greenwich Road, River Road and the rail-line provides the opportunity to plan for R3 development.

6. **The proposed building heights (up to 50 storeys) along Pacific Highway between St Leonards and Crows Nest Station must be drastically reduced. There is no “expectation” of such height in the community and the impacts of development of such height along a ridge line on residents in the area and adjacent to it are not supportable.**

It is inaccurate to assert that there is a height expectation of 50 storeys around station sites. With the exception of the Forum tower which is set back from Pacific Highway, the community has not yet seen high rise of the scale proposed in the draft Plan and cannot be regarded as having such an expectation.

It is acknowledged that some development approvals have been granted by Lane Cove Council for high-rise developments between the rail-line and Oxley Street. The community has only just become aware of the potential impacts of these approved developments, with the partial construction of the Mirvac development. The impact of this development (only half its projected height at this stage) is deplored by many. The community is facing the construction of equally imposing developments on the Landmark and JQZ sites and potentially the site at 617-621 Pacific Highway (if DA approved).

Development of the scale envisaged by the Plan scale will not meet the objectives of “respecting and enhancing the existing local character of the area”. I refer in particular to :

- impacts on the village character of the Crows Nest Village and Willoughby Road
- inability to transition such high developments to preserve the amenity of adjacent areas.

Furthermore developments of such height will impact the amenity of residents and other users through:-

- erosion of solar access
- creation of wind tunnels (as is already evident in the North Sydney CBD and in the Mitchell/Aitchison Streets area)

- 7. The Draft Plan should specify building controls for designated Significant Sites**
As outlined in 6 above, heights should be reduced well below the 50 storeys foreshadowed in the draft Plan. Further, the so called “Triangle Site” at the southern end of the Precinct must be excluded as a Significant Site for obvious reasons. It is inconceivable that this site was even suggested as significant for taller buildings, given that it was a “thought bubble” dreamed up by a developer whose motives are diametrically opposed to the vision of the Plan.

Given that the 2036 Plan is intended to set parameters to inform future planning of the area, it is inappropriate to leave critical design features such as height and FSR of Significant Sites to a design excellence process. The location of these sites on the elevated ridge of the Pacific Highway, or, in the case of the one on the cnr Falcon/Pacific Highway, adjacent to an area defined by village character, requires that maximum heights be set in the Plan in consultation with the community.

- 8. The Draft Plan fails to address planning in the area bounded by Pacific Highway, Greenwich Road, River Road and the rail-line.**

It is regrettable that the draft Plan has made no attempt to outline what it regards as sound planning for the St Leonards South Planning Proposal area, nor has it done so for the balance of the area bounded by Pacific Highway, Greenwich Road, River Road and the rail-line.

The St Leonards South Planning Proposal will be the subject of review by the Independent Planning Commission. It is not clear that the public will be invited or entitled to make submissions to the IPC but it certainly should be.

It is noted that the Planning Proposal, if approved by Lane Cove Council after the review, will be amended by the Department in terms of Condition 8 of the relevant Gateway Determination to be consistent with:-

- the draft Plan Vision detailed on p 4
- Area Wide Design Principles outlined on p 11
- Design Criteria p 10
- St Leonards South Design Principles on p 63.

On this basis, the development proposed will require significant amendment as it clearly fails many of the principles outlined above.

It is also submitted that the planning for the balance of the area outlined in heading 8 above should be reviewed in consultation with the community when and if the Planning Proposal is finalised.

9. Planning Proposals must cease if 2036 Plan is finalised

If the current Draft Plan proceeds to finalisation, the Department must legislate to ensure that no Planning Proposals will be processed after LEP amendments for all three LGAs are gazetted. Failure to do this will undermine public confidence in the rigour and administration of the planning function of the NSW government, as was the case with Lane Cove Council's decision to explore a Planning Proposal for St Leonards South in 2012, barely two years after its LEP came into force.

10. Comments on the other documents on exhibition.

My submissions on other documents on exhibition, namely the Draft Local Character Statement, and the Draft Green Plan are included as part of the Planning Package. The Draft Special Infrastructure Contribution submission is separate.

Finally, I refer you to the North Sydney Council report on this plan that was accepted by Council at its scheduled meeting on 29 January. Council further resolved to write to the Department in relation to that report and to their resolution which included the request that the "Triangle Site" be excluded as a Significant Site because of its proximity to the fine grain nature of the Crows Nest village.

You should also be aware that almost 1,800 residents of the Precinct and nearby areas have signed a Petition objecting to the overdevelopment of the precinct as envisaged by this plan and in particular at point 7 it states:

***Exclude** the Triangle site bounded by Falcon Street, Alexander Street and the Pacific Highway as a Significant Site and reject planning proposals for separate rezoning and high rise development on this site.*

If 1800 signatures on a Petition is not enough to change your thinking about this site then please refer to the community's submissions and you will find in excess of 3,000 people are totally apposed to the site being declared Significant.

Yours sincerely,

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