

8 February 2019

## Submission For St Leonards/Crows Nest Draft Planning Package

I have lived in an apartment on Duntroon Avenue St Leonards for 10 years. I understand the need for development – as a Duntroon Avenue resident I enjoy the benefits of a high-quality liveable development every day. Put simply, I want my area to remain liveable and, if possible, for this liveability to be even better than it is now with a greater sense of community.

Kids live in apartments too. Over the last ten years I have seen a large increase in the number of kids living in apartments in our building alone. I expect that the new development in St Leonards and Crows Nest will bring many more kids to the area.

## My key concerns

### 1. **Building heights – no more than 7 to 8 storeys**

PLEASE. NO more high-rise in St Leonards/Crows Nest. Enough high-rise buildings have already been approved, we don't need any more.

Buildings of 7 to 8 storeys is high enough from now on. I don't want St Leonards/Crows Nest becoming like a high-rise CBD where too many high-rise towers create wind tunnels, prevent the sun from reaching the ground and make the whole place very impersonal and have no sense of community. I want to continue living here but I don't want it to turn into a dark, cold, impersonal place.

I would like to see more development in the style of the Duntroon Avenue development – 7 or 8 storeys with architectural interest.

### 2. **Green space**

We need enough green space to support a population largely living in apartments with no backyards of their own.

We need playgrounds for kids, including fenced areas for younger kids with interesting equipment (not like the boring static equipment at Newlands Park), and a range of other playground equipment to suit different ages.

There is not enough green space already. And access to existing green spaces is not always great, eg Gore Hill Park which is very separate from the residential areas.

Please set aside some additional land for decent-sized greenspace that allows for passive recreation – not just organised sports. Somewhere kids can just kick a ball casually.

### 3. **Schools**

Please make sure there are enough schools (and classrooms and playground space) to deal with the increase in children this development will bring – both primary and secondary.

Greenwich Public School is already overloaded. Hunters Hill High School is the 'local' high school for my

street. It's a 1 hour 25 minute walk away or 45 minutes by bus (most likely needing to change buses as well). That's just too far for a 'local' school.

#### 4. **Residences of different sizes and cost to cater for all**

Please make sure that developers provide housing for all demographics, from singles and couples to families with small children, families with teenagers, empty nesters and retirees.

Development needs to be mixed, with residences ranging from 1 bedroom to 3+ bedroom. Guidelines need to be set and developers must be made to abide by these guidelines so that they don't just build tiny 1- or 2-bedroom apartments for the greatest profit.

Given that RNSH is a major employer in the area, consideration needs to be given to making sure there is affordable housing available in the area for essential workers, such as a nurses.

#### 5. **Vehicle access into and out of St Leonards South**

I refer to the area bounded by Berry Road, Pacific Hwy, River Road and the rail line. There are only three road access points for this area, with one already limited to left turn only.

Getting out onto River Road in the morning peak is already difficult due to constant traffic on River Road and queues at Crows Nest. Getting out onto the Pacific Hwy at Berry Street lights is becoming increasingly difficult and this intersection only just copes with the traffic from the current population. The increase in the number of residences in St Leonards south is going to have a significant impact on vehicular access to this small area.

Suggestion: Reassess the sequence and timing of the lights at the Berry Road/Pacific Hwy/Reserve Road intersection.

Suggestion: install lights at intersection of Canberra Ave, River Road and Russell St. It would greatly improve vehicle access to/from St Leonards South, allowing a right turn into Canberra Avenue when travelling west along River Road and out into River Road from Canberra Ave. Lights would also greatly improve access to Wollstonecraft station and Smoothery Park for pedestrians as well, and make the whole area feel more connected.

#### 6. **Pedestrian access from St Leonards South to Wollstonecraft (crossing River Road)**

People living on the southern slopes of St Leonards south could make use of Wollstonecraft station if there was a safe place to cross River Road.

Pedestrian access from St Leonards South to the Wollstonecraft side of River Road is really difficult. Crossing River Road is dangerous, even using the pedestrian islands at the top of the hill near Lithgow St and at the bottom of the hill near Canberra Ave. The traffic travels too fast due to the hills and visibility is poor at the pedestrian island near Lithgow St as cars come up over the rail bridge.

Suggestion: install lights at intersection of Canberra Ave, River Road and Russell St. It would make the whole area feel more connected and improve safety for pedestrians crossing River Road.

#### 7. **Parking in St Leonards South**

Street parking in St Leonards South is already crowded due to residents, commuters and visitors to the medical facilities in the area.

There are also many cars that park for weeks without moving in the unrestricted parking on Canberra

Ave and Duntroon Avenue. Many of these cars belong to local residents who live in apartments without a parking space or with less parking spaces than they have cars.

Yes, in an ideal world, we'd all just use public transport or share cars. But we're not there yet.

Please make sure that developers include enough parking in new developments for residents AND their visitors, to prevent further overcrowding on our local streets.

#### **8. Improve access to Royal North Shore Hospital from St Leonards Station**

As a local, I frequently get stopped by bewildered people asking how to get to RNSH from St Leonards Station. There is no easy explanation. I know if I attempt to describe the 'back entrance shortcut' to the main hospital building (behind the community centre off Herbert St), they'll probably never find it. I know if I tell them to walk down Herbert St to Westbourne St between the hospital and the Australia Post Facility and then walk up that hill, that it's an unnecessarily long walk. If I tell them to go along the Pacific Hwy and then walk up Reserve Road it's a really steep hill and also a longer walk than it needs to be. And often these people are sick and coming for treatment.

There has to be a better way. Not just for employees of the hospital but for patients and their visitors. At the very least we need better signage from the station to RNSH as what is there now is clearly not adequate.

A long pedestrian underground walkway from the station directly to the hospital (eg like from Wynyard Station to Barangaroo) would be great. Otherwise, a long elevated walkway from the station to the hospital which means people don't have to traverse Herbert St.

The zebra crossing on Herbert St has caused traffic mayhem since the day it was installed and needs to be removed and either replaced with pedestrian lights or a decent usable pedestrian bridge across Herbert St from the station that people actually notice and want to use.

The current Herbert St pedestrian bridge just doesn't get used much. Instead of using the footbridge, people go down the wide stairs from the station on the eastern side of Herbert St and then cross Herbert St at the zebra crossing to get to the hospital. It is a shorter walk than using the footbridge. Even if only by a minute. It's still shorter and that's how people see it. The steady stream of pedestrians literally stops traffic at that zebra crossing. Often you get only one car over the crossing before the next pedestrian steps out and so on and so on.

In my opinion a big part of the problem is that the flow of foot traffic from the station to the current Herbert St footbridge is completely obscured by a massive building support near the Priceline Pharmacy and the natural flow of people goes around it to where the stairs on the eastern side of Herbert St are, and so they miss the footbridge. Plus the footbridge is too narrow for the volume of the people it should service. But the biggest problem is the stairs on the western side of Herbert St from the footbridge. Their position makes it a slightly longer walk to and from the hospital, so people don't use them – coming from the hospital on the western side of Herbert Street you have to go under the footbridge and then go back on yourself to go up those stairs onto the footbridge. And these stairs are just not easy to see from that side of the street. People see the zebra crossing first as they walk from the hospital and so they take that instead of going to the footbridge. But most importantly, the steepness and small tread-size of the stairs up onto the footbridge on the western side of Herbert St makes them difficult to use. Just too steep and too narrow a tread, especially if you're wearing heels. Suggestion: Install a new footbridge in a better location with stairs facing towards the back entrance of the hospital (ie north along Herbert St) and not away from it. And install better signage.

## Particular comments about specific things in the draft plan

### 1. Building heights should be no more than 7 to 8 storeys

- Please, no more approvals for buildings of more than 7 to 8 storeys. We need buildings that create a sense of community and are aesthetically pleasing. Enough high-rise buildings have already been built, are currently being built or are approved to be built in future, eg Freidlander place, Embassy. No more please.
- I knew development was going to happen when I moved here. I'm not opposed to it. But I don't want to live in an area of high-rise rectangular prisms. The Duntroon Ave development is the type of thing that is needed in St Leonards/Crows Nest.

### 2. Newlands Park in St Leonards South

- I am pleased to see that the written plan acknowledges the steep topography of Newlands Park and that a significant portion of the park is not suitable for play/recreational use.
  - Suggestion for the steep sides of the park (not the usable flat areas): terrace some of the steep terrain along River Road and Duntroon Avenue to make spaces where you could sit and relax. Similar to the ideas for the Lithgow Street Linear Park.
- The playground equipment at Newlands is boring. There is no playground fence. There's no bin or water tap near the playground equipment.
  - Suggestion: install new playground equipment that is more interactive and interesting than the current rather static equipment. Provide equipment suitable for different aged children. Fence the playground for smaller children. Include a bike path for older kids. Some water play would be excellent. Include a bin and a tap.

### 3. New open space (park) between Park Road and Berry Road in St Leonards South

- Totally agree with this – absolutely needed given the proposed increase in population living in apartments in St Leonards South. It needs to be large enough to kick a ball and have a playground. A coffee shop etc adjoining it would be great to create a sense of community.

### 4. Linear Park, Lithgow Street

- Agree in principle to make use of any available land for greenspace. Not sure how realistic it is that people will want to sit and relax beside a rail line...
- I do NOT agree with the idea of the amphitheatres overlooking the rail line. People using these amphitheatres would actually be looking directly into the Duntroon Avenue apartments due to the elevation of Lithgow St.

### 5. Gore Hill Park

- Access to Gore Hill Park is difficult from St Leonards South. The Pacific Hwy is a major barrier, not just physically but psychologically. The other side of the highway from St Leonards Station up to Westbourne St and beyond might as well be another planet coming from St Leonards South. It's not connected to the residential area on the south side of the highway in any way. I never think of going over there – it's a 'work'/'hospital' zone, separate to the residential area. Also, from the lights at Berry Road right up to Greenwich Road there is no way to safely cross the Pacific Hwy – that's a distance of about 400 metres. Something needs to be done to make Gore Hill Park feel connected to the residential areas around it, mainly in St Leonards South and Greenwich.
- I welcome the inclusion of a regional playground at Gore Hill Park. Desperately needed.
- I hope the new regional playground is something akin to Hallstrom Park in Willoughby or something even better. As a parent of a small child, the holy grail of children's playgrounds is

somewhere that is fenced, has awesome interactive equipment for a variety of ages, has toilets, has running water from a tap (not just a bubbler) to deal with life's little mishaps, and has a coffee shop very close or right there.

#### **6. Gore Hill Cemetery**

- From its Pacific Hwy boundary Gore Hill Cemetery looks very uninviting – it's so overgrown. If it looked halfway accessible and safe it could be quite a nice peaceful place to walk through, sit and relax or just enjoy some fresh air. At the moment it just looks like somewhere too unsafe to walk through. I walked through there once when I first moved here and never have again. It just feels too isolated and unsafe.
  - Suggestion: Tidy up Gore Hill Cemetery. Make it look more inviting and maintain it properly over time so that it looks less like an unsafe overgrown nightmare that you could only walk through with a security guard by your side.
  - Suggestion: There's some really significant local identities buried in the cemetery – why not make a feature of them and celebrate our local history while simultaneously tidying the place up?

#### **7. Hume St Park Extension**

- Great! The community needs this.

#### **8. Platform Park over rail line north of St Leonards station.**

- Great idea!