

St Leonards Crows Nest 2036 Draft Plan

Land Use and Built Environment

8 February 2019

1.0 St Leonards Crows Nest 2036 Draft Plan

1.1 Employment

The Draft Plan notes under Land Use that the GSC target is for 16,500 additional jobs in the next 20 years (ie 2019 -2039) in St Leonards Crows Nest. Based on 15 m² per person this gives a lettable space requirement of nearly 250,000 m² over the period. This is a very large requirement and equates to nearly 90% of the area of the three International Towers recently constructed at Barangaroo. This is additional space to accommodate the growth in jobs projected.

The Land Use section of the Plan outlines the upper employment targets for each of the employment areas of Artarmon (1840), Health and Education, adjacent to RNSH (5300), St Leonards (4570), Crows Nest (3020) and Mater Hospital (1440). These translate into additional areas of commercial space in Artarmon (27,600m²), Health and Education, adjacent to RNSH (79,500m²), St Leonards (68,500m²), Crows Nest (48,000m²) and Mater Hospital (21,600m²).

Section 8.6 *Distribution of Non-Residential Floor Space Ratio Controls* in the Urban Design Study document shows the increase proposed in FSRs to accommodate the median jobs growth targets. It is not possible to translate these FSRs into actual floor space provisions without further detail, but the maps indicate a very diverse, even piecemeal approach to achieving the targets. As such it is unlikely to succeed without some major commercial developments in the precinct especially in the Health and Education and St Leonards areas. The Department's target should be the upper jobs target not the median.

In the current climate in St Leonards Crows Nest, developers seem to have a strong preference for residential projects over commercial. Thus, it is unlikely that the market alone will drive the development of a large amount of commercial space in the precinct. The most likely outcome is that the available FSR in the precinct will be gradually taken up by residential development and the projected jobs which the commercial space supports will not be delivered.

The Department of Planning should take all steps to ensure the viability of the precinct as an employment hub. This means taking positive action to ensure that substantial landmark commercial developments are facilitated especially in the St Leonards and the Health and Education areas rather than leaving it to unfettered and uncontrolled market forces.

Summary:

It is essential the Precinct remain a major employment hub.

The piecemeal and hands-off approach to ensuring commercial space is delivered is unlikely to be successful.

Landmark major commercial developments are required to ensure the higher jobs targets are met.

1.2 Area to the West of Park Road St Leonards

This area is included in the Draft Plan but there is very little if any detail given. There appears to be no uplift in zoning or any other substantial changes. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that it is intended that this area remain unchanged for the life of the plan, that is until 2036. Indeed, if this is the case then the Department should make a clear statement about its future.

As stated below this area has very similar housing stock to that in Naremburn which is designated a Conservation Area. Therefore, it seems only reasonable that this area and the other adjoining areas on the southern side of River Road be also designated Conservation Areas.

Summary:

The area to the west of the SLS should be designated a Conservation Area and retained.

1.3 The Road Network

The road network around the precinct is largely fixed. No new major roads are planned or likely. The existing road network will undoubtedly be put under great pressure by the development envisaged in the plan.

River Road is a key arterial road and serves the precinct as a major east west link. It takes pressure off the Pacific Highway. The current configuration of the road provides poor service particularly in the morning and afternoon peaks. Key impediments to the performance of River Road are:

- The bridge over the railway is one lane in each direction
- One lane in each direction continues from the bridge to Canberra Avenue
- Two lanes reduce to one westbound at St Vincents Road and continues to the start of the Lane Cove Country Club

The opportunities for improvement to River Road would assist both through and local traffic and will go some way to absorb the additional traffic generated by the developments envisaged in the Plan. No major road improvements are included in the plan and it is incumbent on the Department of Planning and Lane Cove Council to take this initiative.

The improvements should include:

- Two lanes in each direction from Northwood shops to Crows Nest available in morning and afternoon peaks
- Two lane rail bridge near Duntroon Avenue
- A shared bike/pedestrian path to one side of the road from Northwood shops to Crows Nest

- A pedestrian refuge opposite the Lane Cove Country Club
- A pedestrian/bike overpass from Holdsworth Avenue across River Road landing in Russell Street

Traffic lights on River Road at Canberra Avenue are proposed in the Plan. These will cause severe disruption to traffic flows on River Road and add significantly to peak hour congestion. The approach to the intersection travelling west on River Road is a blind corner and will have a high risk of accidents. A better solution would be to upgrade the Duntroon Avenue/River Road intersection in conjunction with the improvement works outlined above with a set of traffic lights located at the improved intersection. Canberra Avenue from Duntroon Avenue to River Road should be closed and the pavements returned to landscaping to add to the usable area of Newlands Reserve.

Summary:

River Road should be upgraded to provide better service in the morning and afternoon peaks and to accommodate the growth in traffic from the increase in population in the Precinct.

The intersection of Duntroon Avenue and River Road should be improved and have traffic lights installed as a major access to the SLS area.

Traffic lights should not be installed at Canberra Avenue.

Canberra Avenue should be closed from Duntroon Avenue to River Road and the pavements returned to parkland.

1.4 Outcomes of the Draft Plan

From experience, the community is naturally wary of the progress of development from draft plans such as this one through LEP, DCP, DA and into the finished built form. In the past, many of the aspects that the community has commented on and expressed preferences for in a consultation process get lost or are watered down over time. This happens through a negotiation and appeals process between councils and developers. The community has little or no visibility of these activities and little weight has been given to its views when they are expressed.

To retain the confidence and support of the community it is incumbent on the Department of Planning and Environment and the Minister to review the existing processes so that the outcomes of the community consultation are in fact delivered in the finished project. Community confidence in the NSW planning system must be restored.

It is clear that many in the community in St Leonards Crows Nest and the surrounding areas are extremely concerned about the growth in population and the over development inherent in the St Leonards Crows Nest 2036 Plan and the Rezoning of the Crows Nest Sydney Metro Site as proposed. To demonstrate that the Department is listening to the community and is engaging in genuine community consultation, clear and demonstrable changes must be made to the St Leonards Crows Nest 2036 Draft Plan.

Summary:

The community needs to see that its views are heard and that changes are made as a result.

The community also needs confidence that what is included in the final LEP will be what is built and not changed (for the worse) over time.

The community has a right to have a NSW Planning Process in which it has confidence.

1.5 Pacific Highway from Berry Street to Greenwich Road (South side)

At the moment all the buildings in this area are zoned B3 Commercial Core. They could be changed to B4 Mixed Use provided that the commercial FSR remains the same. That might encourage redevelopment of the strip. One downside of this would be the buildings would invariably be higher and cast greater shadows over the residential areas down the hill.

Summary:

The south side of the Pacific Highway has unrealised potential for further development.

2.0 St Leonards South Planning Proposal

2.1 Density and Population

There is no detail provided as to how the number of housing units proposed in the St Leonards South (SLS) area was derived. The total number of units is given as 2400 and this would give a population of 4800. This number is excessive and should be substantially reduced as everything else flows from this.

The population of the Lane Cove LGA was 36,000 in 2016. The East Ward of the Lane Cove LGA has a population of about 12,000. The additional population proposed in St Leonards South is 4800 which represents a 40% increase in the local population. This will have an intolerable impact on the surrounding areas and infrastructure. It will substantially impact on the amenity of the area and on the quality of life of the existing and future residents. SLS is 4800 plus the populations of the Western Gateway and Eastern Precinct developments within the Lane Cove LGA of 3938 gives a total of 8738. This is an increase of over 70% in the population of the East Ward of the Lane Cove LGA. This is the wider community's greatest concern with its impact on facilities, the road system, services and infrastructure.

It seems that the population/density of the current SLS Draft Master Plan developed by Lane Cove Council was based on applying a blanket of eight storeys across the whole area. This generated a total area on which to base the Plan. This total area was then used in the design process and distributed over the site to give a pattern of building blocks of varying heights in the Draft Master Plan.

The basis of this starting concept appears to be the developments along Duntroon Avenue which are up to eight levels in height and were deemed to be the type of development acceptable to the Council and the community. Whilst these developments provide a reasonable standard solution in their location it does not follow that they can be simply transplanted to SLS.

Such an ad hoc approach to future development lacks rigour and is poor planning. At the very least densities should be based from the start on clear and transparent housing targets that have been well communicated to and largely accepted by the community. Following

that, design solutions can be investigated and tested against a series of measures including solar access, views, over shadowing, relationship to adjoining areas, adequacy of infrastructure to support the population etc, etc.

Where are the housing targets? The community needs to be able follow how the SLS plan develops from Greater Sydney Commission targets, to allocation to individual LGAs, to distribution within each LGA to application to precincts which affect individual sites. To set the overall areas/densities and then try to justify it is the opposite of prudent planning. The current population of the St Leonards South Master Plan is too high and should be significantly reduced.

Summary:

The population in the current SLS Plan is too high.

There are no housing targets that apply to the SCN 2036 Plan that support the SLS Plan population.

The SLS population must be clearly based on unambiguous growth targets that the community understands.

2.2 Building Heights

The interface of the SLS Master Plan scheme with the adjoining residential areas to the west, south and south west is at odds with the approach taken in the Urban Design Study to the transition to the Naremburn Conservation Area. Naremburn and the area to the west of Park Road St Leonards South are identical in their scale and housing types. There is an identical justification that the area to the west of Park Road should be considered a Conservation Area and preserved. Therefore, the same care should be taken with the western side of the SLS developments as is demonstrated in the transition to Naremburn. The interface should be “a two-storey interface with low scale detached dwellings...”. The configuration of the SLS development should “step envelope away from” Park Road towards Berry Road “up to the existing 20m height limit...”. The two-storey interface should be townhouses which would have a beneficial impact on the housing mix in the developments and provide a better housing option for families in the area.

The same approach should be applied to the River Road and Canberra Avenue edges of the development for the same reasons. The edge along Canberra Avenue also needs to take into account overshadowing of Newlands Park. This park is a precious piece of green open space and it must not be degraded by overshadowing from the SLS development. Green space is at an absolute premium in the SLS development and in the St Leonards Crows Nest precinct as a whole. It must be protected and enhanced if good quality outcomes are to be achieved.

Overall the high-rise high-density developments should be grouped closest to St Leonards Station and the Pacific Highway. The heights along Park Road should be reduced so as to not overpower the existing residential areas on the western side including the heritage properties. The heights along Canberra Avenue opposite Newlands Park should be reduced to reduce the overshadowing of the park. The heights along River Road should be reduced to allow some sun penetration into the residences in that part of the precinct. There should be medium density to all of the western, southern and south eastern boundaries of SLS. This would have the additional benefit of reducing the overall population of SLS as well.

Diversity of residential types is a requisite of good planning. We acknowledge that the current plans address essential worker housing and affordable housing requirements. However, there should be more medium density townhouses in the development, particularly along Park Road, River Road and Canberra Avenue. Two and three storey townhouses should be included to reduce densities, increase the diversity of housing types available and provide a better alternative long-term option for families than apartments.

These comments apply particularly to the southern end of Park Road, the whole of the River Road frontage and the Canberra Avenue frontage that abuts Newlands Park.

Summary:

SLS should be treated in the same way as Naremburn.

The building heights around the edge of the SLS area should be reduced to two storeys as a better transition to the adjoining residential areas, to be a reasonable scale on River Road and to minimise overpowering and excessive shading of Newlands Park along Canberra Avenue.

There should be more townhouses in SLS to better cater for families.

2.4 Overshadowing

The logic around the orientation of the blocks north south in the SLS Draft Master Plan is to allow sunlight to penetrate into the area. The shadow diagrams show that this only occurs in the middle of the day with the mornings and afternoons heavily affected by overshadowing.

The current proposal causes overshadowing of Newlands Reserve and the new Local Park at 3.00pm in mid-winter, just when school children may be using the park. Lower buildings on Park Road and Canberra Avenue would have the effect of improving this to something closer to an acceptable standard.

The approach generally of considering overshadowing between the hours of 9:00am and 3:00pm in midwinter is too narrow. Children return home from school after 3:00pm and given that there are going to be many children with families in this development the more consideration should be given to creating open space that has solar access after 3:00pm in winter. This is just the time that children should have sunny outdoor spaces in which to play.

Summary:

The overshadowing of the scarce open space in Newlands Park is excessive.

The hours when overshadowing is considered should be extended beyond 3:00pm to cater for children after school.

2.5 Open Space

The ratios of open space to population are inadequate and the attempts at justification weak.

Newlands Park is a vital asset to SLS and to the greater St Leonards Crow's Nest Precinct. It must be protected and enhanced as much as possible. A linkage/landscaped walking path should be considered from Newlands Park to the upgraded Hume Park in Crow's Nest.

The new Local Park in Park Road should be increased in area and the pedestrian links widened to create additional pocket parks as destinations in their own right rather than merely transit spaces. This will be vital to the mental health of the residents in this densely populated area and will become a real focus point for community activities and relaxation.

The southernmost two blocks between Holdsworth and Canberra Avenues should be a park at a level so there can be a pedestrian flyover of River Road. A barrier free way should be created to Berry Island Reserve. This overbridge, which is discussed previously in the Road Network section above, would link SLS effectively with Smoothey Park and the foreshore walking tracks. This would provide additional options for residents to access green open space within easy walking distance from their homes.

As discussed in 1.3 The Road Network there is an opportunity to add to the area of Newlands Park. This can be achieved by reconfiguring Duntroon Avenue as the main entry/exit to the SLS area and closing Canberra Avenue from Duntroon Avenue to River Road. In this way the existing road pavements can be landscaped, and the parkland increased.

Gore Hill Cemetery is heritage asset but also has the potential to add to the stock of open space available to SLS and the Precinct as a whole. The central walkway of the Cemetery is already a linear park and with appropriate improvements can add more value and encourage greater utilisation. In the medium term a treatment of the cemetery similar to that that done by North Sydney Council in St Thomas' Rest Park in West Street should be considered to convert progressively to public parkland to increase the Open Space available to the Precinct.

Summary:

There should be more open space in the SLS Plan, the green spaces included should be increased in size.

An overbridge across River Road would provide a link and easy access to more green space in Smoothey Park and the Harbour Foreshore walks.

Newlands Park can be extended by closing part of Canberra Avenue and directing all traffic through Duntroon Avenue.

Gore Hill Cemetery has accessible green open space which could be significantly enhanced over time.

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