

Item 3.4

The Devastating Impacts of State Planning on the City of Sydney

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

I am very concerned about the escalation of NSW Government planning projects in our local area through State Significant Precincts, State Significant Developments and unsolicited proposals.

State planning now controls more than 274 hectares of land in our city, equivalent in size to the entire Green Square Urban Renewal Area. The projects effectively exclude our community from any say in the decision making process, lack transparency and undermine public faith in the planning system.

Their wasteful and unpopular plan to knock down the award winning Philip Cox designed Sydney Football Stadium is steamrolling ahead despite close to 220,000 signatures on a petition opposed to the plan, 700 submissions overwhelmingly against the plan and despite a NSW Parliamentary Inquiry that found that the community was shut out of the process, the Government undermined public confidence and the business case didn't meet the Government's own criteria for spending money on public infrastructure.

By bypassing their own planning processes, just as they did with WestConnex, the State Government is demonstrating that there is one rule for the State Government and its developers, and another for everyone else, with devastating impacts on our city and residents.

Waterloo Redevelopment

A key example is the proposed redevelopment of the Waterloo Housing Estate and the Waterloo Metro Project by the State Government on public land.

Last month, the Minister for Family and Community Pru Goward announced the Government's preferred redevelopment scheme for the Estate, confirming our fears about their plans for the future of the neighbourhood.

Their proposal seeks to massively overdevelop the site and will see the current density increase from 2,012 to 6,800 homes in towers up to 40 storeys high.

The size and scale of this proposed overdevelopment is unprecedented in Australia.

It is a planning experiment that will negatively impact on the lives of our most vulnerable communities and trample on the rich history of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the area.

Of the 4,788 additional dwellings proposed on the Waterloo Estate, the redevelopment will only deliver an extra 28 homes for social housing tenants and just 340 affordable rental units for essential city workers like nurses, teachers and emergency service responders.

The proposal also fails to consider the cumulative impact of other state-led developments located close by, including the Waterloo Metro development (also produced by Urban Growth). This site, located just next door, will swell the precinct by another 700 apartments in three towers up to 25, 27 and 29 storeys respectively.

Of these new dwellings, only 70 homes will be set aside for social housing and as low as 35 for affordable rental units. Worse still, UrbanGrowth will not secure these homes in perpetuity, instead only committing to affordable housing through discounted rents for just ten years.

The developments will also have broader impacts - almost 4,300 extra vehicles will be added to an already dense and congested area. Up to 3,850 car parking spaces are planned for Waterloo Estate and 427 spaces for the Metro Quarter despite it sitting directly over a new metro station.

The fact that both these developments are being pursued without the community informed about their combined impacts is grossly negligent.

Residents in Waterloo are deeply distressed and concerned. The Government's community 'consultation' has lacked detail and manipulated or ignored the impacts. I believe the City should hold a public meeting so residents can hear from our expert staff.

Star Casino development proposal

Also concerning is a proposal from the Star Casino. They have recently used a loophole in the now repealed State planning system to request a radically different change to an old development approval for a 10 storey tower and hotel.

The change would increase the existing height control of the Casino site from 28 metres to 237 metres.

This blatant disregard of the City's overall planning framework should be refused. The controls were developed by the City through extensive community consultation and represent the views of local residents, workers and visitors. Despite the operator being the Star Casino, the site is owned by the State government.

It is a scandalous abuse of the planning system and will have a significant impact on surrounding areas, affecting residential amenity, overshadowing the public domain and changing the identity of Pymont forever.

The applicant must return back to the drawing board.

I believe we should inform the local community about the proposal and encourage them to have their say.

Central Sydney Planning Strategy

In stark contrast to the ad hoc planning decisions from the State, in mid-2016 the City released the most comprehensive urban planning strategy for Central Sydney in 45 years.

Our draft *Central Sydney Planning Strategy* took three years to develop and aims to balance the city's residential property boom with the need to preserve and grow commercial, retail and cultural space.

The strategy identified opportunities to unlock almost 2.9 million square metres of additional floor space for retail, hotel, cultural and office needs to encourage economic and employment growth over the next two decades.

A key move was the identification of concentrated 'tower cluster' areas where there is potential for 300 metre tall commercial buildings, subject to federal airport approval and a planning proposal.

This allows the city centre to continue to grow while ensuring essential solar access to Hyde Park and other respected and valued public spaces such as the future Town Hall Square, Royal Botanic Gardens, Martin Place, Wynyard Park and Prince Alfred Park.

The 20-year strategy was the first comprehensive plan since the *City of Sydney Strategic Plan* in 1971 by George Clarke, which set the skyline and character of the Sydney we live in today.

But despite positive responses to the strategy from the then NSW Premier, the then Minister for Planning, and the Sydney Business Chamber, the State Government has sat on the plan for two and a half years and blocked the request by the City and CSPC to put it out on public exhibition.

Cockle Bay Wharf redevelopment

This delay has now reached a critical point - NSW Planning has supported a State Significant application for a proposed office tower at Cockle Bay Wharf that, if approved, will overshadow the future Town Hall Square.

The City began planning for Town Hall Square more than 30 years ago. It will be the most significant addition of public space in the heart of our city for over a century. The Square will be located opposite Town Hall, bounded by Pitt, Park and George Streets and involves the demolition of buildings and the creation of a new public space. It is featured as a centrepiece of the City's draft Central Sydney Planning Strategy.

Until now, developers have abided by the draft sun access to the future Square, recognising the importance of protecting this important public space.

It is one of the few locations in the central Sydney that enjoys sun until 6pm in summer due to the heritage precinct of the QVB, Town Hall and St Andrew's Cathedral, and the lower scale development of the east Darling Harbour precinct. The draft control put forward in our Central Sydney Planning Strategy was for no further overshadowing in the afternoon than what currently exists until sunset.

City staff have made multiple submissions and representations about the scale and height of the proposed planning envelope on surrounding buildings and current and future public spaces. Late last year, I also wrote to the Minister for Planning, the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Finance, Services and Property.

Last week, I was informed that NSW Planning considers it unreasonable to protect solar access to the future Square after 4pm.

It is a shocking admission about one of the most important future public spaces in the global city of Australia - especially in light of the NSW Government's recent announcement about the introduction of a 'Minister for Public Spaces'.

As the Department has prepared a report recommending approval of the project, the application has been referred to the Independent Planning Commission for determination.

We must ensure that the City is expertly represented at the hearing and encourage our local community to also have their say.

The contrast with how the City approaches Planning

This type of planning is the very opposite of good development – something the City has strived to achieve with careful and consultative planning, as well as with our approach to liveability and design excellence.

Despite obvious and significant issues, the NSW Government continues to promote development on land that it owns and that benefits the interests of the top-end-of-town disregarding community interest and the future liveability of our city. And as is the case with Waterloo, the Government benefits from being the developer *and* the decision maker.

It is clear that planning for the Government has become nothing more than a way to profit from the overdevelopment of our city.

For over 15 years, the City has demonstrated our ability to expertly plan, coordinate and assess large-scale development. In 2006, we assumed control of the planning and infrastructure delivery for Green Square. Thirteen years on, we have delivered award winning community facilities, affordable housing, a thriving town centre and worked with a vast array of developers to progress quality of place and housing supply.

Representatives on the Central Sydney Planning Committee have also expertly determined almost \$28 billion dollars of development since 2004. It is bewildering that a Committee, set up by the Coalition with a majority of state representatives including the Chief Planner of NSW and NSW Government Architect, would be denied the ability to review and consider these kinds of large-scale developments that directly impact on the liveability, vitality and amenity of our city.

The future of our city is too important to allow this abuse of planning to continue.

We must work with our community to demand that the NSW planning system is overhauled and reformed, that transparency and consistency are reintroduced as guiding principles, that the same rules apply to all and for an end to the rampant overdevelopment that has been allowed unchecked.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council call on the NSW Government to commit to overhauling and reforming the NSW planning system to ensure transparency, consistency and consultation are the guiding principles;
- (B) Council call for an end to State Significant Precincts, State Significant Developments and confidential unsolicited proposals that seek planning outcomes;
- (C) Council calls on the NSW Government to urgently allow the City's draft Central Sydney Planning Strategy to proceed to public consultation;
- (D) Council condemn the proposals for the Waterloo Housing Estate, the Waterloo Metro Quarter, the Star Casino redevelopment and the Cockle Bay redevelopment and urge them to be rejected;
- (E) the City of Sydney host a public meeting about the Waterloo redevelopment;
- (F) flyers be prepared informing the local community about the proposals for Star Casino and Cockle Bay Wharf with information about how they can have their say; and
- (G) the Lord Mayor write to the NSW Premier, the Minister for Planning, the Opposition Leader, the Shadow Minister for Planning and other Mayors in the Sydney metropolitan area informing them of the recommendations in this Lord Mayoral Minute and enclosing a copy of the Minute.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE

Lord Mayor