

Resolution of Council

9 December 2019

Item 3.3

Commercialisation of Moore Park

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

Last week the NSW Government announced it is considering an unsolicited planning proposal for a \$1.2 billion redevelopment of the former Showground site at Moore Park with the aim of intensifying commercial uses in buildings up to 20 storeys in height.

Carsingha Investments, the same consortia that took up the leasehold of the site now known as the 'Entertainment Quarter' in 2014, have submitted the proposal. They are now seeking a 99-year lease as the current lease expires in 2046.

Any proposal that would result in the effective sale and alienation of public land exclusively for the benefit and profit of private interests is shocking, particularly because the explicit purpose of legislation I successfully introduced into the NSW Parliament in 1992 was to preserve the site in public ownership, managed by the Centennial and Moore Park Trust.

According to media reports, 'detailed master planning' has already progressed behind closed doors with the NSW Government giving the greenlight to the consortium to progress to Stage Two, making the proposal public. A Steering Committee including representatives from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, NSW Treasury, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and the Centennial and Moore Park Trust will consider those plans.

The NSW Government's failure to include community representation or invite City of Sydney involvement reveals its disregard for the community's wishes for the site.

There is a long and shameful history of successive NSW Governments carving off sections of Moore Park for private interests. This is another such proposal, and runs counter to the public interest and community needs, particularly given the growing population in the area.

Green Square will be Australia's densest residential suburb by 2030 with 61,000 residents, and the State Government has earmarked Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Metro and Elizabeth Street, Redfern, for significant residential uses. These four sites alone have the potential to accommodate 70,000 new residents.

As the population of the area continues to increase, so does community demand for parkland, sporting and recreational facilities. As it stands, twenty million people visit the Centennial and Moore Parklands annually and three out of every four City of Sydney residents live in an apartment – Moore Park is their backyard.

The City's Open Space, Sports and Recreation Needs Study 2016 identifies that by 2031 our area needs up to 20 more sports fields, an additional 17-18 multi-purpose courts, 21 full size indoor courts for basketball, netball, volleyball and other sports, and 11 indoor multi-purpose courts.

To meet these demands, the State should be working with the City to improve and expand open space, public sporting and recreational facilities, but the State seems determined to allow the use of public space for commercial activity.

Despite the legislation passed in 1992, the NSW Government approved a 50-year lease of the former Showgrounds to Fox Studios to develop a major film studio complex in 1996.

Under the State Environment Planning Policy (SEPP) No. 47, the zoning controls for the site were changed from open space to accommodate the film and TV production uses under the new lease.

Amendments in December 2018 to that State Environment Planning Policy allow private certifiers to disregard prohibited uses on the site and allow the heritage-listed Byron Kennedy Hall and other buildings within the 'Entertainment Quarter' to be used for elite sporting and commercial purposes until 2023 while the wasteful Sydney Football Stadium redevelopment is constructed.

Residents have long been concerned about the impacts of increased commercialisation of the site, which excludes the community from large sections of the park for prolonged periods to accommodate booked events by private entities.

The State Government must return the land to public use upon expiry of the current lease, amending the State Environment Planning Policy to ensure the Centennial and Moore Park Trust is unable to further commercialise public land into the future and mandating its use for community sport, recreation, and parkland.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note that:

- (i) Governor Macquarie dedicated the former Showgrounds site for public use in 1811;
- (ii) the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust (Macquarie Sydney Common) Amendment Bill in 1992 stopped plans to rezone the site for sale and development, confirming it as public land and placing it under the stewardship of the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust;
- (iii) successive NSW Governments have since failed to protect Moore Park by prioritising commercial interests over the public interest;
- (iv) twenty million people visit Centennial and Moore Parklands every year, and with over 70,000 new residents moving into the surrounding suburbs in the next 20 years, there is an increased demand for sports and recreation facilities and parkland;
- (v) the role of the Centennial and Moore Park Trust must be to protect the site for dedicated public uses, and to strongly argue against moves to further perpetuate commercial activity; and
- (vi) the State Government must return the land to public use upon expiry of the current lease, and amend the State Environment Planning Policy to ensure the Centennial and Moore Park Trust is unable to further commercialise public land into the future and mandating its use for community sport, recreation, and parkland; and

(B) the Lord Mayor be requested to write a joint letter with the Member for Sydney, Alex Greenwich to the Premier and the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces noting the items listed in (A) and requesting a meeting to discuss the future of the site.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE

Lord Mayor

Note – at the meeting of Council, the content of the original Lord Mayoral Minute was varied by the Lord Mayor. Subsequently, it was –

Moved by the Lord Mayor, seconded by Councillor Scott –

That the Minute by the Lord Mayor be endorsed and adopted, subject to the amendments as follows –

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note that:

- (i) the Showground was part of the Sydney Common dedicated by Governor Macquarie for public benefit in 1811;
- (ii) my private members bill, the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust (Macquarie Sydney Common) Amendment Bill in 1992 stopped plans to rezone the site for sale and development when the Royal Agricultural Society (RAS) moved to Homebush, confirming it as public land and placing it under the stewardship of the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust;
- (iii) successive NSW Governments have since failed to protect Moore Park by prioritising commercial interests over the public interest;
- (iv) twenty million people visit Centennial and Moore Parklands every year, while only two million people visit Allianz Stadium and the SCG, and with over 70,000 new residents moving into the surrounding suburbs in the next 20 years, there is an increased demand for sports and recreation facilities and parkland;
- (v) the role of the Centennial and Moore Park Trust must be to protect the site for dedicated public uses, and to strongly argue against moves to further allow commercial activity; and
- (vi) the State Government must return the land to public use upon expiry of the current lease, and amend the State Environment Planning Policy to ensure the Centennial and Moore Park Trust is unable to further commercialise public land into the future and mandating its use for community sport, recreation, and parkland; and

(B) the Lord Mayor be requested to write a joint letter with the Member for Sydney, Alex Greenwich to the Premier and the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces about the significance of the former Showground site and the need for community sport, recreation and parkland in Australia's most densely populated area, and requesting a meeting to discuss the future of the site.

Variation. At the request of Councillor Scott, and by consent, the Lord Mayoral Minute was again varied, such that it read as follows –

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note that:

- (i) the Showground was part of the Sydney Common dedicated by Governor Macquarie for public benefit in 1811;
- (ii) my private members bill, the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust (Macquarie Sydney Common) Amendment Bill in 1992 stopped plans to rezone the site for sale and development when the Royal Agricultural Society (RAS) moved to Homebush, confirming it as public land and placing it under the stewardship of the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust;
- (iii) successive NSW Governments have since failed to protect Moore Park by prioritising commercial interests over the public interest;
- (iv) twenty million people visit Centennial and Moore Parklands every year, while only two million people visit Allianz Stadium and the SCG, and with over 70,000 new residents moving into the surrounding suburbs in the next 20 years, there is an increased demand for sports and recreation facilities and parkland;
- (v) Moore Park provides critical parkland for sport and recreation in a Local Government Area where three of every four residents live in an apartment;
- (vi) the role of the Centennial and Moore Park Trust must be to protect the site for dedicated public uses, and to strongly argue against moves to further allow commercial activity;
- (vii) the State Government must return the land to public use upon expiry of the current lease, and amend the State Environment Planning Policy to ensure the Centennial and Moore Park Trust is unable to further commercialise public land into the future and mandating its use for community sport, recreation, and parkland; and
- (viii) the Kaldas Review of planning recommended the removal of developer led rezoning from NSW Planning laws, however, the NSW Government has yet to implement this;

(B) the Lord Mayor be requested to write a joint letter with the Member for Sydney, Alex Greenwich to the Premier and the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces about the significance of the former Showground site and the need for community sport, recreation and parkland in Australia's most densely populated area, and requesting a meeting to discuss the future of the site; and

(C) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to write to the Secretary of Premier and Cabinet noting Council's strong concern about the loss of public parkland and continued commercialisation of public land for private profit, with respect to this unsolicited proposal.

The Lord Mayoral Minute, as varied by consent, was carried on the following show of hands
—

Ayes (7) The Chair (the Lord Mayor), Councillors Kok, Miller, Scott, Scully, Thalís and Vithoukas

Noes (2) Councillors Chung and Forster.

Minute carried.

S051491