

Item 3.2

Redevelopment of Waterloo Precinct

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

On Thursday 2 August, Minister for Family and Community Pru Goward MP released three similar proposals for the future of the Waterloo Housing Estate. The announcement was made on Channel Nine news catching tenants, and indeed the City, by surprise.

The proposals see the Estate go from the current 2,012 homes up to 7,200 homes in a number of tall towers, some up to 40 storeys tall. What is proposed will see the existing density of the site increased by about three and a half times.

Once complete, it will be one of the highest density precincts in Australia.

In 2016, Urban Growth released a widely condemned and hastily prepared proposal for the site which also included 7,000 units. That proposal was also lacking in detail and also released without any proper consultation. The response was so overwhelming that the then Planning Minister, Rob Stokes MP, pulled the plan and ordered Urban Growth back to the drawing board. He promised that the City would be consulted and involved in a collaborative process to guide planning for Waterloo and the wider precinct.

This time around, the Department of Family and Community Services has released a brochure that has seemingly come out nowhere with no clear links to any community consultation. It contains proposals that have not been developed with the community or the City and once again there is very little detail.

What is clear though is that we've been given three alternative versions of the plan so roundly rejected just two years ago.

The City is alarmed that the scale of development the Government is proposing will condemn people to substandard conditions and massively impact surrounding housing, existing parks, streets and open space.

The City is also concerned about the substantial loss of the existing street tree canopy in Waterloo and the potential for extensive overshadowing of living and recreational spaces.

The Minister says the over-development will allow the Government to provide social and affordable housing but this is no excuse for cramming ever more development into such a small area. There is nothing in their brochure that shows that it won't just be rows of tall towers set in dark streets and overshadowing local parks.

And why should people on lower incomes be condemned to homes, parks and streets without sunlight and to living in rows of tall towers?

It seems the real focus is on maximising the financial returns from the sale of this public land rather than planning for the kind of area that people will want to live and work in over the coming decades.

It's tragic that this Government looks at a social housing site and sees dollar signs rather than homes for people who so desperately need them.

The three facetiously named alternatives in their brochure are Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Village Green and Waterloo Park:

- **Waterloo Estate** is proposed to have up to 6,800 dwellings and 3 hectares of public open space;
- **Waterloo Village Green** is proposed to have up to 6,900 total dwellings and 3.42 hectares of public open space; and
- **Waterloo Park** is proposed to have up to 7,200 total dwellings and 3.97 hectares of public open space.

Rather than real alternatives, these seem more like bargaining positions, with the 6,800 dwellings the Government's bottom line.

The building heights in all three options seem to be concentrated in the 11-20 and 21-30 storey range, with a number of huge towers for each option in the 31-40 range.

For comparison, the Victoria Park and Epsom Park precincts at Green Square have 6,800 dwellings in 44 hectares with almost 7 hectares of parkland – 1,000 fewer dwellings in more than twice the area with almost twice as much parkland.

At Harold Park, there are 1,500 dwellings in 11 hectares with over 3.5 hectares of parkland.

Put in context, all three proposals for Waterloo constitute a massive overdevelopment of the site, especially when you consider other significant developments nearby.

Adjacent to the Estate is the proposed **Waterloo Metro Quarter**, another State project, which will house 700 people in three tall towers ranging from 23 to 29 storeys. This development is being proposed to fund the new metro station planned for Waterloo.

Also, the **Australian Technology Park** will see more than ten thousand extra workers in the area and the Green Square development site will be home to 61,000 people and 22,000 workers.

As well as the infrastructure needed to support these developments, **traffic congestion**, already heavy in surrounding streets, will be compounded by traffic streaming off the **WestConnex St Peter's interchange** which is expected to bring 120,000 extra cars every day.

This lack of transparency, poor consultation and absence of real detail has all the makings of a looming planning disaster.

Each option identifies locations for possible community facilities, but there is no detail about the type or size of the facility and no information that suggests other social infrastructure has been thought about or included.

And at a time when social and affordable housing is at crisis point – these proposals on scarce inner city public land do shockingly little to address the urgent need for more.

Even though 30 per cent of the proposed development is slated for social housing, the three proposals show that, at best, the current number of social housing on the Estate will increase by only 148 homes. And with the affordable housing at just five per cent of the overall housing mix - there will only be a maximum of 360 affordable rental homes.

The Minister has said that tenants displaced by construction will be allowed to return but, despite this being a 20 year plan, no timetable has been given for building the social and affordable housing units.

The Minister says the process is at the 'masterplanning' stage which will take 12 months. She has said the Government is planning to consult the community between September and October this year but very few details about this consultation process have been released.

Lastly, a balanced and consultative plan is vital, not just for the City and our community, but for the State and Federal economies too - intensifying residential development to this extent risks displacing the high quality local and small businesses driving the new economy.

Since 2004, the City economy has grown by \$64 billion and our economy now totals around \$125 billion. It's 22 per cent of the NSW economy and contributes more than 10 per cent of Australia's current economic growth, and, together with Melbourne and Brisbane, is overtaking the mining sector **as the driver of the national economy**.

Our work at the City has contributed to this phenomenal growth which has made our area Australia's epicentre of jobs and job growth - in the ten years to 2016, job numbers grew by 110,000 to 498,000, or almost 30 per cent.

If the NSW Government proceeds with their plans to massively overdevelop Waterloo and adjacent sites in the way they are ramming through the monstrous WestConnex, they will put all this at risk. **A city where people want to live as well as a city where people want to do business.**

Our concerns here at the City are multiple. As the third tier of government responsible for the planning and servicing of the surrounding areas, we have an expectation and the right to be fully involved in the design process and not to find out about it on the evening news.

In terms of context, it is important that this proposal be developed taking into account other developments in the area, particularly in terms of traffic generation, infrastructure and facilities needed, open space and sports opportunities. This includes the impact WestConnex will have on the area.

As the body responsible for much of the welfare of our existing and new residents we have to ensure **continuation of city amenity and liveability**. We believe **our city should have a balanced social/economic mix provided by affordable and social housing types**.

We believe the proportion of affordable housing on this public inner city site is insufficient, and that just replacing the current social housing numbers, as the Government is proposing, fails to take into account the growing waiting list.

I believe **we must do all we can to protect the Waterloo community and work with them to have this massive overdevelopment and their dislocation scrapped.**

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council calls on the NSW Government:
- (i) to undertake a proper transparent planning process involving City input and engage in genuine public consultation;
 - (ii) as part of the planning process, to take into account adjacent densely populated sites both current and planned, traffic generation including the impact of WestConnex, residential amenity, a balance of uses including business, services, infrastructure and open space, sporting and community facilities;
 - (iii) to ensure that if there is to be any increase to development on the site, it should be only (or mostly) for social and affordable housing. Noting there is a high need for these dwellings and the best way to meet the shortfall is to utilise government owned sites as this reduces land costs which increases the viability of social and community housing projects; and
 - (iv) to produce a timetable outlining when the social housing component of the development will be completed so displaced tenants will know when they will be able to return to their home and community as promised by the State; and
- (B) Council notes that the State Government's brochure is inadequate for community, information and consultation, and requests the Chief Executive Officer prepare an urgent flyer for the Waterloo community outlining the City's response to the proposals and providing information about what actions they can take.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE

Lord Mayor