

Item 3.1

Pymont Peninsula Place Strategy

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

Last year, this Council stood together with the community against the Star Casino's proposed 237-metre luxury residential and hotel tower.

We objected to the proposal because it would have stood a full 200 metres above height controls for the area, and because of the negative impacts the building would have on the public domain, including overshadowing of parks and public places.

We supported the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's advice rejecting the proposal, and ultimately the Independent Planning Commission (IPC) agreed.

The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces promptly instructed the Greater Sydney Commission to immediately review the area's planning rules for Pymont.

In September 2019, the Greater Sydney Commission submitted its Pymont Planning Review to the Minister making three recommendations including:

- aligning the planning framework for the area with the district and regional plans to help achieve the wider objectives for the area,
- developing a Place Strategy supported by an economic strategy, master plan, planning framework and governance model; and
- implementing the Place Strategy within nine to 12 months.

I welcomed these recommendations to develop a place-based strategy. For too long, the NSW Government had taken an ad-hoc approach to the development of Pymont and the Western Harbour, proposing development of state-owned land with little consideration for context and transport needs, and with almost no consultation with residents who live in an area which already has high density.

Ten Early Directions

The Department has now released 10 'Early Directions' as a starting point for the Pymont Peninsula Place Strategy, and is seeking feedback on them.

In a comment to the Daily Telegraph regarding the release of the directions, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces Rob Stokes foreshadowed "larger scale development" in the area, yet we have not seen the detailed urban design research required to determine whether this is a desirable outcome.

These directions highlight some of the important work already underway by the City and opportunities for collaboration with the NSW Government that I have long campaigned for, but the rhetoric surrounding their announcement and the proposed process for development leave me with cause for concern.

The directions correctly point to the need to consolidate the myriad of state and local government planning controls that apply to the area, but this process must be driven by genuine research and consultation.

This includes mapping sun access planes and conducting an assessment of the entire precinct's character and heritage, including NSW Government controlled sites.

This must not become an exercise in simply retrofitting controls to justify a position that greater height and density is the best outcome for the area – or for the Star Casino to proceed with plans for an inappropriate tower.

The precinct needs to be linked to the broader area – its relationship to the Pyrmont village, the CBD and to the south and further west need to be properly understood.

The City of Sydney is an expert in this field and is well placed to lead this work, having developed the major strategic planning documents that will transform our City through evidenced-based studies and community consultation.

Pyrmont contains seven per cent of the city's employment and the City's Local Strategic Planning Statement outlines how having a highly skilled and diverse local resident population with existing educational, research and technology clusters, as well as the presence of major educational institutions will continue to enable jobs and economic growth.

While the directions refer to the need for investment and innovation to boost jobs, creativity, tourism and nightlife, along with the promotion of taller development in the area, they have failed to address the urgent need for mass transit to connect people to the city and surrounds.

Pyrmont must be included as part of the Sydney Metro West project, creating a continuous employment corridor linking Central Sydney, Pyrmont and The Bays.

In addition, the constraints of the landscape that make it difficult for people to move around should be seen as opportunities for bold ideas such as undergrounding the Western Distributor to open up new sites for development and remove the barriers to walkability and connectivity between the city and the harbour.

In light of unprecedented bushfires and drought conditions, the Department's lack of reference to climate change under these Directions is both surprising and disappointing. As the climate changes and the population grows, we must take the opportunity to build Pyrmont's resilience, and plan for net zero emissions by 2040 and best practice energy, water and waste performance.

The City supports a vibrant, mixed-use precinct that includes more diverse housing types, tenure mix and price points. If the Place Strategy finds that parts of Pyrmont are more suited to residential uses, then social and affordable housing should be mandated to encourage an inclusive and diverse community.

Community Engagement

The Department has indicated that these initial directions are expected to evolve during the planning process as more information and feedback from the community comes to light. I commend this approach and strongly encourage the local community to have their say.

During these difficult and uncertain times, the community is feeling increasingly anxious and overwhelmed by the COVID-19 health crisis. It is more important than ever that this project, which will shape the way residents, workers and visitors experience the area into the future, does not add to their existing stress and concern.

The Department must ensure that the community has sufficient time to fully consider the changes that are planned for the area, including these initial directions, and have the opportunity to respond.

I ask the Department to establish a Community Reference Group comprising a cross section of the community within the area covered by the Strategy, to ensure a diverse range of views. The Community Reference Group should be briefed regularly by the Steering Committee with opportunity to provide their input and feedback through a variety of consultation channels at key milestones as the strategy evolves.

The City of Sydney will continue to participate in the development of the directions and the Place Strategy. To ensure that the resulting planning controls respond to community expectations and reflect the best qualities of Pymont, we must ensure that they are based on thorough research and consultation.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) in September 2019, the Greater Sydney Commission submitted its Pymont Planning Review to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces making three recommendations including:
 - (a) aligning the planning framework for the area with the district and regional plans to help achieve the wider objectives for the area;
 - (b) developing a Place Strategy supported by an economic strategy, master plan, planning framework and governance model; and
 - (c) implementing the Place Strategy within nine to 12 months;
- (ii) the NSW Government established a Steering Committee to develop the Pymont Peninsula Place Strategy, led by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, and made up of local and state government representatives including the City of Sydney, NSW Treasury, Transport for New South Wales, and the NSW Government Architect; and
- (iii) the NSW Government has released ten 'Early Directions' as a starting point for the Pymont Peninsula Place Strategy, and is seeking feedback;

- (B) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces regarding the development of the Pymont Peninsula Place Strategy requesting that:
- (i) a Community Reference Group is established comprising a cross section of the community within the area of the Pymont Peninsula Place Strategy, and that the Community Reference Group be briefed regularly by the Steering Committee, with the opportunity to provide input and feedback through a variety of consultation channels as the strategy evolves;
 - (ii) social and affordable housing provision is mandated by the Pymont Peninsula Place Strategy and embedded into any new future planning controls for the area where any new residential development is proposed; and
 - (iii) any new development and growth areas identified as a result of the Pymont Peninsula Place Strategy or any new planning controls:
 - (a) are supported by sufficient transport;
 - (b) prioritise employment growth and economic development;
 - (c) are sensitive to Pymont's unique built form and heritage qualities; and
 - (d) create a high standard of amenity for public and private spaces through design excellence;
 - (iv) the community has sufficient time to fully consider the changes that are planned for the area, including these initial directions, and have the opportunity to respond.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE

Lord Mayor