

ST LEONARDS SOUTH PLAN
Independent Planning Commission Submission

I wish to register my strong objection to the draft St Leonards South Master Plan.

1. The Council has not planned to adequately deal with the infrastructure demands that this proposal will place on the area. This includes the effects of an approximate doubling of the local population on schools, pre-school, childminding, retail and commercial outlets, and recreational areas (including playing fields, open areas and parks).
2. The proposal will create a marked loss of amenity to residents resulting from increased traffic congestion, terribly reduced parking (in an already heavily over-parked precinct) and crowding of public transport and retail outlets.
3. The superficial nature of Council's consideration of these factors is more than adequately illustrated by Council submission to the IPC. This submission notes that traffic and parking was one of the dominant concerns raised by residents, yet no action is planned to meet these considerations. Indeed, in an already heavily congested area parking problems will become unbearable. There will be a doubling in the population with little net increase in parking spaces. Council plans to further restrict on-street parking and there is very limited parking spaces to be provided within the new developments. Combined with the increased traffic influx and need for parking created by the new Metro station and the large-scale residential and commercial developments already underway in St Leonards, the proposed St Leonards South residential complex will place unbearable new burdens on parking.
4. Statements that the proposal will have only moderate impact on traffic is fanciful. River Road is currently a major arterial road and the section near the St Leonards South precinct is particularly dangerous. As just one example of the challenges, in recent years a pedestrian refuge was created near the Canberra Avenue - River Road intersection. In its original design the refuge had metal barriers to help protect pedestrians from River Road traffic. These barriers were destroyed on such a regular occasion by vehicle impact that they were eventually removed and never replaced! This contempt for the safety of our children by planning authorities is difficult to forgive. The laughable proposal by Council that doubling the local population would only have "moderate impact on traffic" is an example of the cavalier nature of the entire planning process.
5. The superficial consideration of the effects on community infrastructure is a further concern. The impact on local schools is again superficially considered with vague comments that the Department will consider future needs for a new school. There is no indication where this would be how it would be acquired or a timeline for its construction. Currently, there is redevelopment occurring at both the Greenwich Infants and Primary school. These will not meet the impacts of the proposed new development. The new development will rapidly utilise all the available new space with the schools still being overcrowded. History shows that the New South Wales Education Department's response to such overcrowding is to put in place demountable buildings on the existing playing area within the school, and typically this 'solution' persist for decades before a permanent solution is put in place. Thus, the proposed development will create a serious degradation to the quality of the local schools

and one can expect that this will be reflected in other critical infrastructure. As a former President of the local cricket club and past committee member of the Lane Cove rugby club I know from first-hand experience the incredible demands placed on current playing fields for training and competition. Doubling the local population without commensurate allocation of playing and training areas is unconscionable. If there were currently considerable access capacity in this area then one might be able to understand the proposal but this is demonstrably not the case. The recent redevelopment of Gore Hill oval (owned by a different Council) by converting the playing field from natural grass to synthetic actually makes no change to this problem it simply makes problem of maintaining the oval simpler and cheaper. Anytime such issues are raised with Council they have been simply ignored.

6. There is also no accessible information provided upon the impacts of sewerage, electricity and water infrastructure requirements of the proposed development will have on the surrounding region.
7. The Department of Planning's objectives require that such developments include our mix of residential style, mix of use and adequate infrastructure to create self-sustaining precincts. This plan fails on all counts and should be refused. Rather than create a more diverse mix of homes in the area it will create an area of homogeneity of ghetto-like proportions. When added to the already approved massive development along the Pacific Highway of St Leonards and Crows Nest, the St Leonards South development would permanently and irreversibly change and degrade the village nature of the local area.
8. While the sheer scale of the development is the major determinant of this degradation, another important contributing factor is the inappropriate consideration given to integrating the development into the surrounding neighbourhood. In particular, the transition between surrounding traditional bungalows and the new development will create a serious canyoning impact by the precinct. The current proposals for set-backs and transitioning is trivial considering the topology of the region. This will be particularly severe on the River Road and southern end of Canberra Avenue. At this site the land rapidly elevates from the road level and the proposed height levels immediately adjacent to low rise bungalows are, by any measure, excessive. While this has been a issue raised with Council numerous times they have consistently failed to take meaningful action in regard to these concerns.
9. The topology of the region also creates severe local weather events including destructive wind and flash flooding. Council's planning pays little regard to these issues and indeed it would appear that issues of wind impacts are yet to be considered, after seven years of planning. I have been unable to find any planning regarding water run-off impacts on flash flooding into the region surrounding Berrys Creek, including the low points at River Road.
10. Most concerning in considering this proposal has been the local Council's contemptuous disregard of community concerns. The processes of community consultation have been pro forma only and give every impression of being a considered a necessary evil to be deceptively executed to obtain the feedback desired by proponents of the plan. As noted in the Council's own submission to the IPC, once the plan became widely known the overwhelming majority of responding residents are opposed to the planning proposal in its current form. Importantly, a large proportion of these objections come from residents not immediately adjacent to the development. Thus, it can be argued that these objections

reflect the broader concerns by the local community rather than the immediate NIMBY concerns of those most adjacent to the postal. Council dismissively states that “approximately 90% of all submissions reject any development”, with the hidden ‘dog-whistle’ meaning that these can be dismissed because development is inevitable. This telling statement by Council is reflective of its seemingly disingenuous approach to the process.

- 11.** Council makes much of the fact that the planning proposal will allow it to meet its State government mandated requirement to provide for future dwelling growth. The most valued characteristic of the Lane Cove Council area is that it, by and large, consists of a number of regional villages. The Greenwich and St Leonards South area represents one of these villages. The Council’s plan is to effectively sacrifice one village in order to maintain the others. This lazy planning approach sheds no credit on any of the participants. It is clear to the most casual observer that the State government requirements for dwelling growth across the area can be readily met by strategically located consolidation across the Council area that would not greatly impact the village nature of any of the regions.
- 12.** The plan in its current form is inequitable and destructive to a highly valued community and should not be approved. It fails to meet good planning objectives, has been formulated in a disingenuous manner and fails to meet any of the broader community’s expectations. A new plan that incorporates an appropriate population density, a graceful transition from surrounding traditional suburban homes to the higher density new buildings, appropriate planning for infrastructure to support the new community, and a design that incorporates a diverse range of uses and dwelling types across the development would be most welcome by the local community.

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