

INDEPENDENT PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING

Planning Proposal for the St Leonards South Precinct by Lane Cove Council

Penny Mabbutt 20th May 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning. My name is Penny Mabbutt. I am a local resident and am speaking in my own capacity.

At the outset I want to state I applaud the Government for initiating planning reform and the development of a coordinated, integrated system. Over the last few years I have attended several official meetings with various Government officers on planning issues and participated in workshops. I have been genuinely impressed with their professionalism, determination and resilience as we transition to a better planning system. We are now, unavoidably, in a lag period until plans and budgets are totally aligned. This transition will take several more years.

Before I address the key points I wish to present, I want to talk briefly about human behaviour and change given this is my professional expertise.

The changes surrounding the 2036 and 2056 Plan are likely to be the most significant change program any of us will ever have had involvement with. What we know of humans and their inherent decision-making capacities is that we are flawed. We aren't perfect and decisions made often need to be revised when more information becomes available or vested interests are brought to the light. We can do our best in aiming to make decisions rationally. However, our brains find the process very taxing and decisions taken will and can be strongly influenced by the limited time and resources, emotion, politics and financial gain. This is not a criticism of anyone involved in the decisions which have led us here today. Not at all.

So when we get the opportunity to reconsider something it is a rare opportunity that must be managed carefully.

I have been impressed with this current consultation process as it is clear that the Commission wants to provide as much time as is needed to hear submissions.

There is a lot riding on the recommendations you make in assessing St Leonards South compliance with the 2036 Plan. My view, however, is that there is a fundamental mistake that has not been put onto the table to be addressed which **MUST** be, if we are going to be thorough in ensuring that the final 2036 Plan is what it should be.

St Leonards South was effectively excised from the area available for planning and was presumptuous. Why presumptuous? It presumes that the proposal will proceed by ringfencing it from other possibilities. I cannot find what the Department's plans would be, if anything at all, if the proposal did not exist and if it is not approved. The community does not know whether the department would otherwise have left the area alone as it, protecting important character housing stock, or acquiring it for other critical services.

The **2036 Plan** directs that the area is to become an Internationally competitive health, education, research and innovation precinct. The parcel of land we are talking about is a stone's throw from three hospitals, medical and allied services, three railways and a bus route.

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So what would the Department have recommended for the site, if anything at all, if the zoning proposal was not already in train by Lane Cove Council?

Would it be to allow zoning but limited to addressing our 'missing middle' problem. This is a problem our Council is yet to address.

A little further along from the site, in the very same block bounded up to Greenwich Road, R4 zoning already exists. Would the Department have recommended the area for the location of a school? Or for a world-leading establishment for Dementia care? Or cancer research using in nanotechnology?

By excluding the site and allowing the Council's proposal to continue with its commercial rezoning proposal we have missed opportunity to consider alternative land-use to deliver ***Internationally competitive health, education, research and innovation precinct.***

Is the rezoning proposal related to building an internationally competitive health, education, research and innovation project? No.

It has caused confusion during the consultation process. Were we supposed to comment on the effectiveness of the land use proposed by the GSC in the draft plan excluding the LCC rezoning. Or were we supposed to assume it would be achieved and an additional 4800 people would move into an area that previously housed some 400 people?

COMMERCIAL GAIN vs 'GOOD PLANNING'

Council's proposal began in 2012, initiated by residents and developers with a shared financial interest. There's nothing wrong with that – we are a market economy. But be clear, at its genesis, and still today, it was and is a commercially-driven development. Its timing meant its design was not informed by the principles of the 2036 Plan.

So what's the big problem, you might be thinking? That's what we are here for, right? All the IPC needs to do is make a comparison and report on the gap to the Minister, which can then be fixed.? That sounds right?No.... Wrong. That is not right. That is a simplistic solution to a problem that has not been properly defined. The rezoning proposal is not designed to address a problem, or a need. It's a commercial venture that will bring high rise development with insufficient housing mix. As time has progressed, St Leonards South has turned into a false solution to a problem that doesn't exist.

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The 2036 Plan, however, is very different. It is one integral component of a plan for Greater Sydney with a Vision to take us to 2056. It considers a very broad range of elements to make the best living environment possible. It is a staged plan that considers employment, access.... The plan is seriously limited by the developments underway and old infrastructure. To deliver the Plan, councils are able to propose from many alternatives for the future development of land. Land Use and Infrastructure needs to be carefully assessed for the best outcome.

The 2036 Plan is driven by the need to provide Good Planning for the people of NSW. In doing so, if it had not excised the area from its planning area, it would have and should have been free to consider what the community needs – if in fact there was a need for any change in that area at all.

Trying to assess a venture that is driven by commercial gain against Good Planning precludes much broader opportunities the community could have benefited from.

So... the FUNDAMENTAL problems for the community could be considered and commented upon by you.

Whilst you have been given a brief, there is nothing to prevent you from commenting on what I have raised and recommending a broader review because I am sure that what follows me today will be a host of very well thought out submissions by professionals from across several disciplines, that have invested their time and money, on behalf of their communities, for the greater good.

This is NOT about 'Nimby', as many might glibly say.

As taxpayers we have limited resources and critically, we have little land here for a strategic use. Once we develop here, if at all, it can't be undone.

After reviewing technical submissions, I am sure you will find that the proposal does not comply with the design principles of the 2036 Plan.

My view is that the issues are deeper than this and the Department should reject the proposal in its entirety.

Thank You

Penny Mabbutt