



Lane Cove Bushland & Conservation Society Inc

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Greater Sydney Commission,
Draft North District Plan
PO Box 257,
Parramatta NSW 2124

28th March 2017,

Submission by the Lane Cove Bushland and Conservation Society Inc on the Draft North District Plan.

The Lane Cove Bushland and Conservation Society (LCB&CS) has been supportive of, and advocating for, the natural environment and conservation for over 46 years. Planning forms an integral part in preserving this and we have always been involved in planning issues in our local area such as our LEP and DCP.

Summary

We commend the approach to a strategic plan for the North District. However, the following comments must be addressed as part of our submission.

- The community must play a major role in formulating this Plan at both the strategic and local level and should continue to be involved in this process.
- Local councils should be the sole arbiter of land use based on the strategic plan.
- High quality design must be part of all planning and building works.
- North District's natural areas, from national parks to local green, spaces must be maintained and given enough protection to ensure their survival.
- While we commend the Green and Blue Grids we are still awaiting the detailed report as promised to be able to assess their effectiveness.
- Biodiversity offsets should be omitted from the built up urban areas.

General

The Draft Plan is lacking in detail and we hope that the final District Plan will furnish more concrete detail of strategic proposals for areas of concentrated development and a continuity of the characteristics of the many diverse communities in the District.

The Draft North Plan covers areas well outside of our detailed sphere of interest, so we will be confining our comments here to some overall premises of the Draft Plan and then on some specific concerns for our immediate area.

Our primary concern is that the natural environment must be an overarching principle governing the whole concept of planning.

To reinforce this principle the Draft Plan must include and accept the principle of Ecological Sustainable Development, including the precautionary principle, intergenerational equity, conservation of biodiversity and polluter pays.

The Plan must also address the issues arising from the many other changes to legislation being promoted by the Government at the moment such as:

- Amendments to the EP&A Act
- Complying Medium Density development
- Infrastructure and Education SEPPs
- Biodiversity conservation legislation and regulations
- Vegetation and Urban Tree SEPPs

There is a need for the Plan to acknowledge climate change and put in place actions leading to fulfilling the NSW Governments commitment to a zero emissions target by 2050. Definite actions must be included in the Plan to address emissions reduction as well as maintaining the environment to mitigate against global warming and consequent extreme weather events.

Commenting on the various sections of the Draft Plan.

Our Vision, Page 1

We commend the comment on page 1 that *“The diverse character and identity of the North District’s local areas will be respected and enhanced”* Our district is indeed diverse and there are many different characteristics that must be maintained and enhanced. We have many ridges and valleys, as well as ocean and waterway frontages, all contributing to the whole amenity of our liveable district.

Page 3 – Implementation and Monitoring Actions

Although these are admirable intentions we suggest there is a greater need than to just *“inform, enhance, or improve”* these actions. There is the immediate need to include more partners in the actions, the whole of Government and their agencies as well service providers, so that they are all up to speed on the need to deliver their services when it is needed and not sometime in the future.

Page 4 -8 – Priorities and Actions

The priorities listed for Productivity, Liveability and Sustainability are in principle commended and will be discussed in more detail further in this submission.

Introduction, Page 11

Page 15, section 1.1.2. These three planning principles are admirable so long as the community can be involved in expanding them into meaningful actions. Local communities cannot accept these being imposed on their areas without being involved in their implementation.

Page 16 section 1.1.3. Local Environmental Plans (LEPs) must be the only method of determining land use in collaboration with the communities and the overall Strategic plan for the area. This determination of land use must not be allowed to be overridden by gateway applications, VPAs, Planning Proposals or wholesale complying development (as proposed in the Medium Density Code which allows for this type of development in ALL residential areas other than high rise areas)

Page 17 section 1.2.2. The third dot point should require the primary focus to be on Liveability and not just housing. The GSC must be given greater power to require infrastructure and service providers to plan their contributions to coincide with the development and not lag many years later.

Page 19 section 1.2.4. Extent of tree canopy cover in Council areas should be considered as an additional environmental reporting indicator.

A Productive City, Page 31

Page 42 shows a baseline target of 7000 more jobs in St Leonards (14.8%) or a higher target of 16,400 (34.8%). There are no figures for Chatswood (Willoughby council) or for Ryde (other than the Macquarie Park) even though both of these areas have substantial employment areas. The increase in St Leonards appears to be very high given the limited area for development.

Page 51 lists St Leonards as a collaborative area and we request that until a fully considered detailed strategic plan is approved no further applications be allowed to be lodged for the area. There is a dearth of applications, primarily for residential, that have either been approved or are pending approval and there is no sign of any infrastructure or upgrading of services to cope with this increased development. Lane Cove Council's St Leonards South Master Plan has minimal open space allocated and provides only more residential with nothing towards schools, child-minding or aged care facilities.

A new public space with an indented bus bay is planned over the rail lines south of the Pacific Highway but is still awaiting acceptance by the State Rail and funding. This is not a green space.

Page 54 – 55. This seems to imply greater emphasis on District Centres for retail and other services on the premise that they reduce travel distance and time. Local and neighbourhood centres, such as Lane Cove, Crows Nest, Cammeray and Northbridge should be encouraged and not be bypassed for the larger centres. Their current role in the hierarchy of regional, district and neighbourhood centres that give the district its identity should be maintained and reinforced.

Page 67. The graph on page 36 indicates that car usage for commuting represents about 70% by mode. The District Plan should articulate strategies which not only "*Create better transport connections*" but expressly and significantly reduces car use as a priority commuter method of transport. Car usage for commuting should be adopted as an environmental reporting indicator.

A Liveable City, Page 73

This section is very vague in words with no detail as to how it will be achieved. All planning must be prepared with input from local communities and Councils on an area by area basis and not be imposed on the community from an ideological point of view. See views previously expressed about this necessary action in section 1.1.3 on page 16.

We understand that the strongest support under Liveability from recent District Dialogues was for high quality urban design respecting character (which includes the natural and built up environment) and transport.

High quality urban design must take into account not only the buildings and other material factors but also the neighbourhood character and the environment. It should include health, safety and amenity. Requirements for high quality urban design should be embodied in all SEPPs, LEPs, DCPs and related documents. They should all require appropriate expertise from the designers, and assessors of proposed developments, in a way similar to the requirements of SEPP 65

Page 76. The projected population growth does not reflect a true picture of what has happened in Lane Cove over the last few years. In 2010 in Lane Cove there were 12,600 dwellings and a population of 36,000 (2.8 persons per dwelling). In 2012 the government's *Growing Sydney* set a target of 3,900 new dwellings by the year 2031. In 2009 Lane Cove's new LEP rezoned large areas as R4, high density, and there has been inordinate development since that time.

By 2017 council has approved 3920 new dwellings with another 460 awaiting approval at St Leonards – a total of 4,380 well in excess of the 2031 target previously set. There are another 200 pending elsewhere in the LGA.

The St Leonards South Master Plan could deliver another 2,200 plus dwellings before 2036 giving a total of 6,600 since 2010. The figure in table 4.1 of nearly 15,000 more residents from 2016 – 2036 would be in excess of what the increase in dwellings would accommodate. There is grave community concerns therefore that the 20 year population targets (which will then have the second highest growth of all other North District councils) will completely destroy our suburban character and lead to over development. It is important therefore that the District Plan acknowledges the limited capacity for further housing in our area in light of the recent history outlined above.

We support the statement on page 83 that *“Councils will prepare local housing strategies and need to consider the local housing market including feasibility of development for different housing types”* as long as “feasibility” does not mean maximising profit. We support the *“need to improve choice together with opportunities for people to live locally”*

Page 89 section 4.3.3 and table 4.2 appear to omit the St Leonards area (although it is included elsewhere). There is already in excess of 1900 new dwellings already approved or waiting approval and which will all be completed before 2021, therefore the target has already been met. Comparison with other LGAs is not explained eg Ryde has an inordinately high number, Mosman very low in comparison. Further detail should be provided about how these targets have been met or whether they are likely to be met, or exceeded, based on market evidence

Page 93 section 4.3.4. We commend the statement that *“councils are in the best position to investigate opportunities for medium density in their areas Medium density housing is ideally located in transition area between urban renewal precincts and existing suburbs, particularly around local centres”*.

Medium density should not be left to the proposal for it to occur over the whole of the residential areas of any LGA as is proposed in the new Medium Density Code. Control must remain with Councils.

Page 94 section 4.3.5. The Lane Cove Village Structure Plan 2008 was not endorsed by the community (they comprehensively condemned it) and it only referred to the Village Centre not the whole municipality. It should not be given credence in planning for Lane Cove

Page 96. We are glad that the GSC recognises that *“there has been significant supply of apartments in the North District and this is expected to continue”* However we suggest that the supply of apartments has been accelerated by the Department of Planning overriding carefully considered lower density zonings in an LEP in favour of high density to the detriment of neighbourhoods even though the LEP zonings meet the set housing targets.

We doubt that there is any evidence that most of this housing is used *“(to) provide(s) transitional housing for seniors and affordable homes for young people”*. Rather it reflects the dearth of supply and affordability of different housing types. We are glad that it is acknowledged that *“More medium density row, terrace and villa homes are also required to provide greater diversity”* This must also include affordable housing for the aged population has not had the chance to acquire their own

home and are reliant on renting. However as noted previously the appropriate location of this form of housing should be identified in an LEP and not dispersed throughout the low density zone as intended in the Medium Density Code.

Page 106 Draft Policy on Urban Design and Architecture

These principles are applauded but there is still a need to mandate for precincts and buildings to be designed or reviewed by design experts and not left up to developers to provide only what is profitable for themselves. There is a need for a hierarchy for the appropriate location and density of development which should not be at the whim of spot re-zonings that provide windfall gains to a small number of residents at the expense of neighbourhood character and identity.

Pages 106 – 113 Sections 4.6 & 4.7. The descriptions and principles are again applauded but we consider that both the number and choice of actions will fall well short of being able to “*create great places in the North District*” and “*foster cohesive communities in the North District*”

A Sustainable City, Page 123

Admittedly the North District has access to large areas of natural landscape within national parks and native reserves. These areas are highly valued by the community, visitors and tourists.

Nevertheless there is growing concern about incursions into these and in particular into more local natural areas, both public and private.

Page 126, section 5.2 outlines a commendable approach to supporting our landscaping. Lane Cove does not have any Rural Area, but we do have extensive and, very valuable, bushland reserves and we border the Lane Cove National Park. These reserves must be maintained and have enhanced protection from the pressures of increased growth of buildings and population which will use the reserves.

There is danger that the new Urban Tree SEPP will adopt a “one size fits all “ approach and weaken protection for urban vegetation. The new SEPP should incorporate the strongest provisions currently available in SEPPs and other instruments, These should include identifying and recording the location of areas of native vegetation and significant trees.

Page 126 section 5.3. We commend the waterways priorities as they apply for our foreshores of the harbour and the Lane Cove River as well as commending the Blue and Green Grids.

Page 131 section 5.5. The statement “*(the GSC) will examine opportunities to strengthen the protection of bushland in urban areas as part of the review of a Plan for Growing Sydney in 2017*” should be an Action Item

Page 132 section 5.5. “*the use of local knowledge and expertise to identify fine grain opportunities to connect and enhance smaller pockets of biodiversity in the landscape*” should be contained in an Action Item.

Biodiversity Priority. This needs stronger wording and action – “*avoiding and minimising as far as practicable adverse impacts*” is just not good enough for this environmental imperative.

Page 133. Biodiversity Offsets

These should only be available on a “Like for Like” basis, which is basically impossible to achieve in the Northshore areas of the District. Blanket offsetting regulations must not be written into the final District Plan but must be tailored for the particular area. In addition endangered biodiversity sites and species should be identified where development or offsets should simply not occur.

Protection of bushland areas must also extend to now degraded areas that could be rehabilitated into viable bushland and must not be used for other purposes – such as waste depots, industrial parks. Some areas may be able to be used for open recreation such as ovals and playing fields. But they must remain as open space

Page 135 Section 5.6 Sydney's Green Grid.

This section states “*our detailed report which outlines the conceptual approach behind Sydney's Green Grid is available in our background material at www.greater.sydney”.* It is not available and never been available so how are we to comment on the approach taken.

The eight dot points in *Our Objectives* are much more oriented around social amenity and liveability than the environment and do not consider other benefits of green spaces such as reducing the risk of people suffering heat stress, mitigating heat island effects, assisting in climate change adaptation and reducing the costs of energy for cooling. Trees improve air quality through carbon sequestration and the interception of pollutants as well as reducing stormwater run-off and providing habitat for wildlife.

There is also a need to explicitly include the principles of maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and areas of high environmental value. Without adequate targets, key performance indicators and monitoring, direct action and sufficient resources, we are of the view that much of the content of the Draft District Plan will not be implemented. More than \$4 million currently available for the Metropolitan Greenspace Program will be needed.

The Green Grid must be more than just improving liveability and social amenity.

Conclusion

LCB&CS welcomes the opportunity to comment on this Draft North District Plan. We request that all of our comments be considered, and look forward to receiving feedback on our submission and the decisions leading up the final North District Plan.

Doug Stuart and Matt Fisher, for the committee,
Lane Cove Bushland and Conservation Society Inc