

NEUTRAL PRECINCT MINUTES
Tuesday 13 August 2024, commenced at 7:00 pm

Sara Kok: Presentation/Discussion: Local impact of the State Government's proposal to increase housing density through a new housing policy.

GC welcomed Sarah and advised the meeting that Sarah has been nominated to stand as a candidate for North Sydney Council at the upcoming Local Government elections.

Sarah (SK) introduced herself as a resident of Cremorne in the Brightmore Precinct and showed a set of slides to accompany her presentation. The presentation commenced with a slide showing an artist's impression of a markedly increased built height and density of Neutral Bay as depicted on a Warringah Freeway Upgrade poster displayed on Ernest Street. Sarah noted that this could be a view of the future if we don't protect our current built environment.

SK explained the State Government has two sets of proposals to increase density in the state:

1. Transport Oriented Development (TOD) which aims to increase density specifically around rail stations. The TOD significantly up zones areas within 400m of 37 identified train stations (already implemented), and will rezone 8 other precincts, including Crows Nest. The TOD does not apply to Neutral Bay and Cremorne (as we have no rail).
2. Low and Mid-Rise Housing which will potentially impact Neutral Bay and Cremorne. SK noted her presentation is specifically on the Low and Mid-Rise Housing Reforms.

SK identified the current Planning controls in the North Sydney Local Environment Plan which defines the permitted "land use" for each zone (R2, R3, R4, MU1) and their maximum building height and showed photos/artists impressions of current and proposed developments within Neutral Precinct and adjacent commercial area.

Zone	Shop top housing	Residential flat buildings	Boarding Houses	Multi - dwellings (i.e. Town Houses & terraces)	Semi - detached & detached houses	Height limit (metres)
Mixed Use (MU1)	Y	Y	Y			16m (5 storeys)
R4 High density	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	12m (4 storeys)
R3 Medium density		*	Y	Y	Y	8.5m (2 storeys + roof)
R2 Low density		*			Y	8.5m (2 storeys + roof)

* Although residential flat buildings are not a permissible use in the R2 and R3 zones, there exist many residential flat buildings in these zones that were built under older planning law and that will be able to lawfully redevelop using existing use rights.

SK indicated that the current North Sydney planning controls also facilitate orderly and sustainable development being: allocation of land to a range of uses; housing diversity; infrastructure planning; protecting environment & heritage; and providing green space.

SK pointed out that some dwellings within the Precinct, in zones R2 & R3, for example in Bydown St, Bennett St, Raymond Rd, Wycombe Rd, Phillip St, Yeo St, Barry St, Ben Boyd Rd and Laycock St provide character and amenity to the area (as lower scale dwellings allow visibility of sky from the street level, and room for gardens and canopy trees) and all this is enabled by the Council's planning controls.

The State Government changes proposed are:

Proximity to town centre/train station	Zone	Proposal to allow	Current height limit & permissibility
Within 400m	R4 & R3	Residential Flat Buildings of up to 22m (6-7 storeys)	R3: 8.5m, RFB's not permitted* R4: 12m, MU1: 16m
Within the next 400m to 800m	R4 & R3	Residential Flat Buildings of up to 17.5m (4-5 storeys)	
Within 800 m	R2	Multi-dwellings and manor houses (essentially 2-3 storey Residential Flat Buildings) of up to 9.5m	R2: 8.5m. Multi dwellings and RFB's not permitted*

* Exception being existing residential flat buildings built under an older planning law, that will be able to redevelop using "Existing Use Rights"

In addition, if 10-15% affordable housing is incorporated in a development then up to a 30% increase in height could be allowed. This is a massive increase in height for Neutral Bay and Cremorne.

SK identified the following issues and impacts of the State Government proposals:

- They override local planning controls
- There is an absence of genuine community consultation
- It is a one size fits all approach
- There will be reduced amenity with strained infrastructure and public services
- It ignores our green space shortage
- There would be bulkier larger buildings and less open space
- A further loss of tree canopy to our area
- Impacts on local character and potential impacts on our local heritage.
- Housing diversity would be diminished. The State Government claims the changes aim to increase housing diversity. The 2021 ABS census data, however, shows 76% of the dwellings in North Sydney LGA are already apartments; only 11% are detached houses, 13% are semi-detached/multi-dwellings and 76% of dwellings in Cremorne & Neutral Bay are also already apartments.

SK posed and answered the question - *Does Neutral Bay meet the criteria for inclusion as a "town centre precinct"?*

The Department of Planning, Housing & Infrastructure (DPHI)'s "Explanation of Intended Effect" (Dec 2023) provides guidance that a "town centre precinct" would have "*appropriate level of goods, services and amenities*" and that input from Councils would be sought on which areas in each of their LGAs would be suitable for inclusion in the policy as "town centre precincts", taking into account broader amenity considerations.

Neutral Bay has full line supermarkets, but it does not have a lot of other important amenities. There are no hardware stores; no garden centres; no electronics stores; no homewares stores; limited clothing & apparel; only 2 banks (Mosman has 6, Chatswood has 9); no rail; roads highly congested (NRMA rated Military Rd rated as 2nd worst road in Sydney for congestion) and it will get worse with completion of WFU with no relief due to cancellation of Beaches Link.

There are limited public facilities: only 1 public high school (in Mosman); no library; no swimming facilities; no village green; no town hall; no art gallery or museum; no hospital. There is a green space shortage and a sporting facilities shortage; schools are at capacity and low housing diversity (already 76% apartments based on ABS Census Data).

The State Government has issued housing targets to councils. The NS LGA has a target of 5,900 dwellings over a 5-year period. This is equivalent to 1180 new dwellings per year, which would be the equivalent of approximately 40, 30-unit new apartment buildings per year. We live in one of the highest density areas of Sydney with approx. 6865 persons per square km. The new 'one size fits all policy' does not take into account the existing level of density in North Sydney LGA or the differences in density between LGAs. The proposals are not accompanied by any plans to increase infrastructure and public services.

In summary, there are strong justifications for why Neutral Bay/Cremorne are not suitable for inclusion as a "town centre precinct" under the policy.

The Council passed a resolution on 12 February 2024 – strongly object to the "one size fits all" changes and to exclude town centre precincts triggered by MU1/E1 (like Cremorne and Neutral Bay). The Council lodged a submission to DPHI, reflecting Council's resolution.

The current status of the State Government's new housing policy is:

- Stage 1 (dual occupancies and semi-detached dwellings to be permitted in R2 zones) was implemented 1 July 2024 (which does not affect North Sydney LGA as these dwelling types are already permissible in our R2 zone).
- The remainder of the package (mid-rise controls) is understood to be deferred – likely to after Local Government elections in September

Discussion

Q: Has a document been produced by DPHI providing a list of proposed 'town centres'?

SK: The DPHI provided each Council with a list of proposed "town centre precincts" for inclusion in the policy, in May 2024. Each council was asked to provide feedback and there has been a workshop with council staff but no list exists following the consultation.

Q. Are we aware of the reasoning behind Council's response to the DPHI that included a "Yes" against Neutral Bay, for inclusion as a town centre in the policy?

GC: A form, identifying Neutral Bay as meeting the criteria for a "town centre precinct" with a "Yes" against Neutral Bay for inclusion in the policy, was provided to the DPHI staff by Council officers on 15 May 2024. This was contrary to the Council resolution of 12 February 2024. An extraordinary meeting of Council was held on 18 June 2024 to address this issue, and a resolution was made to rescind the 15 May response. The CEO of NSC tabled a paper with the Agenda for the 18 June meeting that explains the 15 May response as an error. The paper can be accessed through this link:
<https://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/ecm/download/document-11096721>

The full minutes of the EMC can be accessed through this link:
<https://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/ecm/download/document-11107994>

The recission was lodged with DPHI by Council on 21 June 2024, together with an updated submission that provided justifications for why Neutral Bay isn't suitable for inclusion, in accordance with the unanimous resolution of Council at the extraordinary Council meeting of 18 June 2024.

Q: My understanding is that the State Government wants to provide for lower paid workers to live closer to their work. Is there a better option that will enable affordable housing rather than allowing developers to build very expensive apartment blocks as is happening in this area?

SK: The State Government needs to either require developers to incorporate a minimum amount of affordable housing in their developments, or step in to fund affordable housing themselves. Either for the Government to build themselves or in partnership with builders. Without government intervention, the private sector will always choose to build what yields them the highest profit – this is rational commercial behaviour in a free market.

Q: Does the housing target for NSLGA include luxury apartment buildings?

SK: Yes. The housing target includes all types of dwellings. This target does not differentiate between low-cost housing or luxury apartments.

GC thanked Sarah for her informative presentation and encouraged everyone to write to local State MP Felicity Wilson regarding the provision of affordable housing.

MEETING

1. Apologies – EC, BH, KS
2. There were no additional items added to the Agenda
3. Business from minutes of meeting held 9 July 2024:
 - i. July minutes were confirmed as accurate proposed by CB and seconded by PG.
 - ii. Council responses to Precinct motions.

July motion: That the Traffic Committee of Council investigate improving the sightlines for vehicles exiting the Woolworths underground carpark in Yeo St. Neutral Precinct recommends: a. the removal of vehicle parking up to 10 metres each side of the Woolworths' driveway in Yeo St; b. the current motor bike

parking, on the corner of Military Lane and Yeo St., be relocated to either side of the Woolworths' driveway. c. The current motor bike parking space be allocated to vehicle parking.

Council response: This has been passed onto Council's Traffic & Transport Engineers to investigate the concerns. The outcome of their investigation will be provided and the matter will be referred to the Traffic Committee.

July motion: That the Traffic Committee of Council investigate traffic flow being impeded on the corner of Watson St. and Yeo St. The Neutral Precinct recommends: a. the removal of the single parking space on the eastern side of Watson St. at the corner of Yeo St. /or b. Disallowing parking in this space during the evening peak period.

Council response: This has been passed onto Council's Traffic & Transport Engineers to investigate the concerns. The outcome of their investigation will be provided and the matter will be referred to the Traffic Committee.

4. Update: Warringah Freeway Works Upgrade

- GC advised it is understood that 12 vehicle parking spaces will be made available between Rose Avenue and Wyagdon Street.
- It was agreed this is inadequate compensation for the loss of 100 parking spaces along North Alfred Street, Rose Ave and Wyagdon Street. The lane used for parking in North Alfred Street will drop to the Freeway level and become the new bus lane.
- PE asked about the status of creating permanent resident off-street parking in the Merlin Street Reserve. This area has been paved and provides parking 18 Freeway operation vehicles. GC advised his understanding is that Council proposes to return the area to green space when the Freeway works are completed. It was agreed residents need to continue to advocate to Council that the area remain a vehicle parking area for residents.
- GC advised that North Alfred Street will be closed to traffic from 10:00pm on a Friday to 10:00am on a Monday. Traffic controllers are in place at all times to allow residents to entrance/exit.

5. Precinct letter to Councillors

GC recommended the Precinct write to current councillors standing for election and other lead candidates seeking their opinion on key issues currently impacting Neutral Bay.

The meeting agreed to the following four questions:

- 1) What is your opinion about the Coles proposed supermarket/residential building development in Grosvenor Street and the creation of a Plaza, proposed to be built by Coles at their expense, to replace the Grosvenor Lane Council carpark?
- 2) What is your opinion on the proposal to create a permanent Young Street Plaza?
- 3) As a result of widening the Warringah Freeway, 100 vehicle parking spaces have been lost in North Alfred Street, Rose Avenue and Wyagdon Street Neutral Bay. These parking spaces were essential to residents without off-street parking. A fully paved 18 spot vehicle parking area has been created in Merlin Reserve for Freeway Upgrade workers. Why is this being removed and not given over to residents at the completion of the Freeway Upgrade?
- 4) Neutral Bay was historically a 'dormitory' for workers. Currently there is a critical lack of affordable housing for lower paid service providers e.g. bus drivers, nurses. The new State Government Housing policy is an opportunity to reinstate affordable housing in Neutral Bay. Would you support such an initiative?

6. Development Applications

- i. DA 125/2024: 10 Lindsay Street NB. Construction of a detached carport. No affected resident attended the meeting

7. Current & Ongoing Community consultations were noted and residents encouraged to have their say.

- i. Western Harbour Tunnel: Place, Design and Landscape Plan - closes 28 August.
<https://caportal.com.au/rms/wht/pdlp>

The Place, Design and Landscape Plan (PDLP) outlines the design and landscape objectives of the Western Harbour Tunnel (WHT) and sets the framework to deliver places for the community. The draft WHT PDLP is now open for feedback and consists of critical surface and in-tunnel infrastructure required to deliver the project. The key areas for feedback are: Ventilation facilities; Tunnel portals (entry and exits); Landscape design; & tunnel interiors.

- ii. Social Media Policy - closes 8 September.

<https://yoursay.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/social-media-policy>

The purpose of this policy is to articulate the framework under which Council engages on social media and has been developed to address the challenges and risks associated with its use.

The main objective of the Social Media Policy is to support Council in adhering to industry-best practice standards and ensuring social media engagement by Officers and Councillors encourages participation, is timely, accurate, inclusive, accessible, respectful, and transparent.

8. The following upcoming meetings were noted:

Neutral Precinct – 10 September www.neutralprecinct.com

Council – 26 August; 9 September www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au

Meeting concluded at 8:30pm.