

ITEM 3.2 REDFERN WATERLOO AUTHORITY - BUILT ENVIRONMENT PLAN

FILE NO:

MINUTE BY THE LORD MAYOR

To Council:

On 9 February 2006, the Redfern Waterloo Authority (RWA) placed Stage One of its Built Environment Plan on public exhibition. The draft Plan is the final component of the Authority's Redfern Waterloo Plan, with the other components being the Human Services Plan and the Employment and Enterprise Plan. The NSW Department of Planning subsequently placed *Draft State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Projects) Amendment (Redfern-Waterloo) Policy 2006* on public exhibition.

The public exhibition period for both the draft Built Environment Plan and the SEPP ends on 14 April 2006, and the RWA will hold a public forum on the plans from 1.00pm next Saturday 4 March at Redfern Town Hall, 73 Pitt Street.

I support in principle the stated aims of the draft Built Environment Plan, which promises "a strategic planning framework to facilitate the area's economic growth". However, I am very concerned that the proposals are very similar to the 2003 RED Strategy of the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project, which was widely condemned for promoting profit-driven development without supporting infrastructure and expanding community facilities.

The Plan proposes a new Redfern Town Centre based on redevelopment of the Railway Station, but does not provide clear strategies to achieve this. Similarly, strategies for public domain, infrastructure, heritage, transport and utility services lack detailed information, particularly about implementation.

The primary focus of the Plan is planning controls for the eight state significant sites in the RWA area. These are the North and South Eveleigh railway lands, the Australian Technology Park, the Eveleigh Street Precinct (including "The Block"), the Redfern Railway Station precinct (including Gibbons and Regent Streets), Redfern Public School, the Court House and old Police Station, and Rachel Forster Hospital.

The new planning controls will increase land values, notably in the Eveleigh Street and Gibbons Street/Redfern Railway Station precincts, by increasing the allowable heights and densities of new developments. The existing controls fix a maximum height of four storeys in the Gibbons Street/Redfern Railway Station precinct. The proposed new controls will allow buildings of up to 5 to 18 storeys along Gibbons street. The maximum Floor Space Ratio (FSR) in the precinct will increase to 7:1 from the current 2:1 to 3:1. These controls create the risk of a canyon of towers and wind tunnels near Redfern Station. The future role of Redfern Station as part of an integrated traffic and transport node has not been addressed and there is no information about plans for redevelopment above the Railway Station or railway lines.

The new controls proposed on the land owned by the Aboriginal Housing Company (AHC) in the Eveleigh Street precinct include a maximum FSR of 0.5:1 for residential development and 1.5:1 for non-residential development. Elsewhere in the precinct, the maximum FSR for residential development will be 1:1 compared to a maximum FSR of 3:1 for non-residential development. Maximum allowable building heights will be increased within the precinct, with heights of up to five storeys being allowed in some cases.

These proposals for the Eveleigh Street precinct do not have the support of the AHC and limit the number of dwellings on their site to around 30, rather than the 62 proposed in their Pemulwuy Project. This significant issue needs to be resolved in cooperation with the AHC if the community is to be assured that the RWA plans will retain Aboriginal people at the Block, with improved housing, services, facilities and employment opportunities.

I am also concerned that the RWA Plan sets the stage for the further sale of public assets and land in the Redfern area. There has been no reconciliation of high population and working densities with increased needs for open space and community facilities, nor is there any certainty that revenues will be used to fund needed services and infrastructure.

The Plan will enable the Rachel Forster site to be used for medium density residential. Developments of up to seven storeys will be allowed on part of the former Redfern Public School site, and up to six storeys on the former police station site. The Court House and Police Station are slated for business use, while serviced apartments and hotel, motel and hostel accommodation will be allowed on the school site.

The Eveleigh Railyards proposals involve a 16 storey tower for the northern end of the Eveleigh Railyards near Redfern Railway Station. There is no information about the preservation of important railway heritage or how nearby residents will be protected from traffic and other impacts. It appears that the former South Sydney Council's Darlingtong Village local plans will be overridden.

Despite glossy "artist's impression" images of Lawson Square without multiple lanes of traffic on Gibbons Street and Regent Streets, the plan has no strategies to achieve this. The RWA has a "vision" of returning Regent Street and Gibbons Streets to two-way traffic, but acknowledges that this "may not be imminent" because broader metropolitan and regional traffic issues need to be considered. This "vision" conflicts with Government plans since 2003 to extend the two-way pair further south to Green Square.

The Plan refers to strategies for public domain, infrastructure, heritage, transport and utility services, yet provides little detailed information on how they will be provided and funded. The redevelopment of Redfern Railway Station is the key element of the RWA's proposed Transport Strategy, yet there are no plans, no timetable and no funds identified for the upgrade.

Department of Housing properties are listed for consideration in Stage 2 of the plan, with a restatement of the commitment that there will be no loss of public housing, existing tenants will be re-housed, and existing tenancies are secure. Plans for affordable housing and development contributions are still to be developed.

I believe that it is vital Council undertake a detailed analysis of these plans to assess the impacts on the Redfern Waterloo area and whether local residents will benefit and not suffer a loss of amenity from increased development without any immediate improvements to infrastructure, open space, public domain, community facilities or transport.

RECOMMENDATION:

That:

- (A) a report on Stage One of the draft Redfern Waterloo Authority Built Environment Plan and Draft State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Projects) Amendment (Redfern-Waterloo) Policy 2006 be prepared for the Planning, Development and Transport Committee;
- (B) the report include draft submissions on the draft Built Environment Plan and the Draft State Environmental Planning Policy, addressing:
 - (i) any inconsistency between the City's planning controls and policy objectives, and the draft Built Environment Plan and draft State Environmental Planning Policy;
 - (ii) the likely impact on urban and residential amenity of the draft Built Environment Plan and the draft State Environmental Planning Policy;
 - (iii) the possible impact of the draft Built Environment Plan and the draft State Environmental Planning Policy on the implementation of the draft City of Sydney Social Plan and particularly the Action Plan for Aboriginal people;
 - (iv) the social, cultural and amenity impacts of the proposed land use controls for the Eveleigh Street precinct;
 - (v) factors that may inhibit the realisation of the Built Environment Plan, and in particular its public domain, transport, heritage, infrastructure, utilities and urban design strategies; and
 - (vi) recommendations for supporting positive aspects and for addressing identified limitations in the draft Built Environmental Plan and State Environmental Planning Policy.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE MP

Lord Mayor