

Dear Mayor and Councillors

We ask Councillors to initiate, as a matter of urgency, community consultation on the St Leonards South (SLS) Design Charrette recommendations and to defer consideration of amendments to the SLS Plan until this consultation has taken place and until the COVID 19 emergency has subsided.

We do this for the reasons outlined below.

In our email to you of 7 March 2020 (attached), we referred to the Mayoral Minute of 18 November 2019 – *“Once the review (the Charrette) is complete, depending on the scale of change, community consultation would then be undertaken. **At the conclusion of the consultation process Council will be in a position to consider such amendments in the finalisation of the SLS Planning Proposal**”*.

The changes to the SLS Plan recommended in the Charrette report are extensive – changes to building heights, relocation of open space, variation of setbacks, change in treatment of heritage items and altered traffic management, to name just a few.

These changes are, on any measure, significant.

The community assumed, therefore, that Council would undertake the community consultation foreshadowed in the Mayoral Minute – **community consultation first, then Council consideration of amendments to the SLS Plan.**

Recent emails from the Mayor suggest that it is not Council’s intention to adhere to the terms of the Mayoral Minute.

It now appears that Council will consider, at a forthcoming Council meeting, a report on the Charrette recommendations. This report will not reflect the community feedback that the Mayoral Minute contemplated, notwithstanding that there has been plenty of time to seek this feedback since the release of the Charrette recommendations on 7 February.

The Mayor has advised us that *“it will be up to Councillors to decide whether to consider the matter or to defer consideration. We’ll have to wait to see the resolution at the relevant Council Meeting.”*

It seems, therefore, that not only will Council consider a report on SLS amendments, but it may vote on these amendments.

These proposed actions are inconsistent with the process outlined in the Mayoral Minute.

If Council elects to proceed to consideration of the SLS Plan as foreshadowed by the Mayor, the action will seriously erode the community’s trust that Councillors will comply with courses of conduct that they have endorsed in general meeting.

Councillors are well aware of the serious concerns within the community about the circumstances leading to the approval of the current SLS Plan and the subsequent community consultation in late 2017.

The consultation proposed in the Mayoral Minute represents the first opportunity since late 2017 for the community to provide input on the future scale and design features of SLS.

We can see no imperative for Council to deny the community this feedback opportunity before it considers amendments to SLS.

The Department of Planning has already granted Council an extension on SLS finalisation to 2 December 2020. Furthermore, Mr Wrightson has been assured by Ms Amanda Harvey of the DPIE that the DPIE would not be rushing Council to consider the Charrette recommendations.

We find it hard to understand, therefore, how the Minister would intervene under Part 3 Div 4 Section 3.34(5) of the EP&A Act on the grounds of delay in finalisation of the SLS Plan.

Furthermore, in the absence of a clear imperative to do so, it is inappropriate to list amendments to the SLS Plan as an agenda item in the middle of the COVID 19 health emergency when Council meetings are to be conducted through AV links and community members cannot meet together or with their elected Councillors.

For the above reasons, we ask Councillors to initiate community consultation on the Charrette recommendations and to defer consideration of amendments to the SLS Plan until the COVID 19 emergency has subsided and until genuine dialogue with the community is completed.

We seek your urgent confirmation in respect of the above request.

This letter will be circulated to our community through email broadcast.

Regards

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