



**Dear Community Member**

**The re-zoning of St Leonards South for high density development has been approved by the Department of Planning, almost exactly as approved by Council at its Extraordinary Meeting on 11 May.**

**The consequent amendments to Council's Local Environmental Plan have been gazetted and they will take effect from 1 November.**

**The amenity of our precinct and of those adjacent will be irrevocably compromised and we have every reason to be outraged.**

**Most of our Councillors have made it clear that they have little regard for the views of those who elected them.**

**And the Department of Planning (DPIE) has wasted its money and our time on "expert" advice that it has chosen to ignore.**

**Council's disregard for the Greenwich community in relation to SLS has a long history.**

**It is worth reminding the community of this, in the hope that we will never again allow Council to force through, without genuine community engagement, developments that have the potential to change our community forever.**

**2012 -2014 – exclusive consultation with East Ward Councillors and residents who ultimately benefitted from re-zoning**

Council's lack of commitment to real community engagement was clear from the start.

In October 2012 (immediately after Council elections) Councillors voted to explore the re-zoning of the area from Greenwich Road to the rail-line. Councillor Palmer voted against the motion.

Council was to receive a scoping paper that identified "*key stakeholders and a range of effective consultation methods which will be utilised to inform, involve and engage these stakeholders, neighbouring residents and the wider community*".

And what happened?

In November 2012 Council formed a Community Liaison Committee comprising Council officers, our East Ward Councillors Palmer, Brooks-Horn and Karpin and representatives of residents who ultimately sold to developers. Councillors Palmer, Brent and Strassberg voted against the motion.

The GCA and residents from outside the proposed re-zoned area were not included in the committee. The GCA received no reports on these meetings and minimal detail was available on Council's website as meetings were convened by an external facilitator.

**2015 -2017 – despite strong community concern about the impact of a re-zoning, SLS extended by nearly 40% in a surprise vote in an extraordinary meeting July**

**2015**

the SLS Master Plan was released in late 2014/early 2015.

The plan, as exhibited, showed high rise development to Berry Road East only.

The community response to this exhibition has a lot to say about Council's failure to engage all stakeholders in the 2012- 2014 period.

In reality, most people had no idea what had been going on in the Community Liaison Committee meetings. And many thought that SLS was over the rail-line, not the area between Berry Road and Canberra Avenue.

Is it any surprise that, according to Council's consultant's analysis of submissions, 157 submissions supporting the SLS proposal came from the ultimate property sale beneficiaries within the proposed re-zoned area and 49 submissions opposing the re-zoning came from outside the area proposed for re-zoning.

Surely Council officers should have been asking themselves about the effectiveness of Council's community engagement process?

And Council's report makes no mention of a 500 signature petition calling on Council to defer its decision until full consultation had taken place that captured the broader community.

Council held an extraordinary meeting in July 2015 and, not only did it vote to support the Master Plan, but it voted to extend the high density to Park Road East without any supporting technical detail – an increase of nearly 40%. Councillor Strassberg voted against the motion and Councillor Palmer could not attend.

The Master Plan then went through Department of Planning processes known as the

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Council officers and its consultants.

October 2017 – a new Council but same determination to push on with SLS

The September 2017 Council elections led to some new faces on Council and we hoped for a re-think on SLS, especially given the previously expressed views of some re-elected Councillors.

In October 2017 the Department of Planning authorised exhibition of the SLS Plan.

Given the history of poor community consultation to that point and the complexity of the SLS Plan, we expected Councillors to spend some time familiarising themselves with the detail of the plan before making a decision about exhibition.

But, no – there seemed to be a determination to push ahead with SLS and Councillors voted, just one month after their election, to put the SLS Plan on exhibition rather than voting to start the plan again. (Councillor Vissel voted against)

So, at the most stressful time of the year, the community was faced with making submissions on a plan for the increased site that lacked technical detail from government agencies and, for the 10 day Christmas/New Year vacation, lacked Council officers to answer queries.

January 2018 – despite the dreadful timing of SLS exhibition, community voice unequivocal but buried by Council

The exhibition timing was woeful but the community responded magnificently.

We had to fight through legal channels to get copies of the community submissions

We naively expected that Council would respond to these submissions and start talking with the community members, including the GCA, about how SLS could be amended to address community concerns.

But the community was shut out of the process and has been ever since.

July 2018 community excluded from Design Review Panel and no report issued

In July 2018 Council convened a Design Review Panel for SLS.

The Council nominated those who would appear before the Panel and no GCA observers were permitted to attend.

The GCA sought to secure a copy of the report after this workshop but we were told it had been misplaced in a consultant's office move.

In May this year we found that a report did not exist – just notes by a Council officer.

May to August 2019 – the IPC listens and finds flaws with SLS but Council makes the IPC advice the DPIE's problem

The Independent Planning Commission (IPC) was directed by the then Minister for Planning, Hon Anthony Roberts, to provide him with advice on the consistency of SLS with the DPIE's overall plans for St Leonards and Crows Nest.

Again, as it had done in 2015 and 2017, the community responded magnificently in May 2019 with hundreds of submissions and oral presentations to the IPC.

was inconsistent with many aspects of the DPIE's plans for the area and, most importantly, that it represented overdevelopment of the site.

And Council's response?

Council asked the DPIE to review the advice of the IPC – somewhat hard to understand when SLS was Council's Plan and the IPC advice was so clear.

November 2019 DPIE Design Charrette – expert group but recommendations dismissed by Council

The DPIE held a Design Charrette for SLS to assist Council to respond to the IPC advice.

The Charrette was attended by Council officers, a representative of the Government Architect and members of the State Design Review Panel.

Again, Councillors and community members were excluded as observers.

The Charrette recommendations were released in February 2019 and included centralisation and increase of open space.

Council dismissed the Charrette recommendations in its meeting of 11 May.

11 May 2020 Council votes to approve its amended plan for SLS when no public gatherings possible, no public forum available and community consultation refused with no legal basis

There was no imperative to do so but Council met to vote on its amended SLS plan

This was in the middle of COVID restrictions on public gatherings and Councillors met remotely.

The community and Councillors were given just one week to get their heads around the changes to the SLS plan recommended by Council officers.

We and community members asked at least three times for the modelling that Council had done to claim a 17% reduction in dwelling numbers – no response.

We (and many community members) asked for community consultation about the proposed changes to the SLS plan but were told that by the Mayor that consultation was illegal.

In the 11 May meeting, the Mayor refused to allow a motion for community consultation to be put by Councillor Morris on the grounds that it would have been illegal.

*We have seen the legal advice issued to Council and it does not support the assertion that community consultation about the SLS options would have been illegal.*

So, despite over a hundred emails to Councillors, we all watched a webcast in which we could not participate and in which the re-zoning we had battled against was approved by a vote of 5-3 ( only Councillors Vissel, Morris and Zbik voted against).

So, in summary –

**A message to most of our elected Councillors**

*developer interest is paramount.*

*Despite hundreds and hundreds of well-considered submissions from community members, written and in public forum, you have shown us clearly that, as far as SLS is concerned, the voice of your community counts for almost nothing.*

#### A message to Councillors Vissel, Morris and Zbik

*We thank you for standing up for the community voice.*

#### A message to the Department of Planning

*Why did you bother going to the expense of the Independent Planning Commission (IPC) review and the Design Charrette?*

*Contrary to what you have said, you have ignored the clear findings of the IPC.*

*Contrary to the Charette Recommendations, you have not addressed the need for more open space within the SLS site.*

*And, to add insult to injury, you have now designated two huge additional sites in the Lane Cove LGA on Pacific Highway as mixed commercial/ residential.*

*This new Pacific Highway designation will bring hundreds of additional units to East Ward, so why has the DPIE not reduced the number of dwellings in SLS?*

#### And a message to our community

*Thank you for all your support.*

*We have some other major issues ahead of us now.*

*And we have Council elections next year.*

#### And the major issues ahead of us?

#### SLS Development Control Plan

As outlined in our last community broadcast, the DPIE has made it clear that



Council approved on 11 May.

Council explains this extra height by saying that it has allowed for roof top plant and the slope of the SLS site.

So how is Council going to ensure that developers will be limited to the number of storeys Council voted for on 11 May?

And how is Council going to ensure that dwelling numbers are reduced by 17%?

Presumably these questions will be addressed in Council's SLS Development Control Plan (DCP).

The General Manager has said the DCP will go to the October Council meeting for approval and there is no plan to put it out for consultation.

Surely, after all rush of the 11 May meeting, it is appropriate for the community to have a chance to give feedback on Council's DCP?

Sport and Recreation Precinct at Golf Club Site

Consultation has now finished.

Council's next meeting is 21/9 – will this be on Council's next agenda?

And Bob Campbell Oval – the substitute for the lack of open space in SLS?

This is due to go out for community consultation but there is no sign of it yet.

And the Greenwich Hospital development has reached the assessment stage, so watch this space!

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**Thank you again for your support.**

Kind regards

Merri Southwood

President

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