

# Cherrybrook Station Precinct Place Strategy

Dear Sir,

The Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust (Trust) has a number of serious concerns with the Place Strategy for Cherrybrook Station. While the Trust's support base is predominately residing in Beecroft and Cheltenham, the Cherrybrook Metro will have both a direct and indirect long term influence on our local residents. Hence this submission.

The Trust has also prepared a submission on the station precinct rezoning (SSP). Both Place Strategy and the SSP rezoning proposals have different time frames for implementation but they must be considered together to avoid conflicts. So a holistic approach should be taken when finalising both documents and also when assessing both submissions from the Trust, and not treat them in isolation. Both submissions will tend to focus on the area within Hornsby Shire LGA, as opposed to the Hills LGA.

Overall, the Trust is disappointed with the Place Strategy. Comments are outlined below.

The Trust acknowledges the State Government policy that there should be higher density uses around the Metro station. The extent of the increased density should be limited to people's ability to walk to the station. The Place Strategy has been limited the radius to 400 m which is acceptable.

## Provision of infrastructure

However, what is not supported is the blanket '5 storey' high density housing extending over the 400 metre catchment. The justification appears to be based on the financial modelling for the required infrastructure changes. Using such a methodology is considered poor planning practice. The need to adopt cost-prohibitive contribution rates or as suggested the need to consider increasing development yields to an undesirable extent in order to ensure development feasibility in light of high infrastructure costs is not good planning and should be avoided.

As stated in the Trust's SSP submission,

*The infrastructure delivery strategy, relating to planning agreements and developer contributions, simply highlights the dilemma of funding the necessary infrastructure changes required to redesign an existing suburb so the state metro can function. The burden to deliver the final stage of this visionary metro project should not now fall upon the two local councils. Both the SSP and the surrounding Place Strategy require massive changes to the suburbs' infrastructure, all ultimately driven by the metro project. This funding issue is inferred in the studies.*

*Being a state government initiated project, the state government should be contributing more. Otherwise there is no guarantee that the added value to the wider community of the Metro project will be achieved, even in the longer term. It is also worthwhile to point out that since the State Government's council amalgamation process Hornsby Council is not in as strong a financial position as it was prior to the amalgamation.*

*Therefore the State Government must continue to take an overarching responsibility for the delivery of the total metro project that includes appropriate infrastructure changes in the SSP and the surrounding catchment.*

The Place Strategy tends to be simplistic on how the redevelopment in the catchment will occur in both Hornsby and the Hills LGA. The majority of the housing stock is less than 20 years old. It is high quality and in some pockets consists of higher than average density with community title.

Kayla and Oliver Ways are good examples. Simply increasing the density controls to make redevelopment financially attractive is unlikely to achieve better planning, especially in the short term. And therefore is not supported. More thought should be given to what would be better development in specific areas, including considering what could be left as it is and not redeveloped.

There may be a need for a longer renewal time frame extending out to 50 years. Also in addition, the acquisition of existing high quality housing stock for roads and additional open space is likely to be a drawn out process as well as being expensive with community resistance. A huge challenge for the local council when some of the proposed infrastructure changes are primarily driven by the inclusion of additional high rise development.

The studies indicate that primary and secondary schools are highly likely to be required in the long term. Also there is a definite need for two playing fields. However with topographic constraints and even acceptable land availability in both council areas there will be a huge challenge to find suitable sites for the future schools and playing fields. These sites must be identified now at this strategic planning stage.

### Access

Vehicle, cycle and pedestrian networks require more long term visionary planning. Many of the roads like Roberts Road need serious widening, more than what is recommended. The proposed local road and pedestrian linkages, especially in Hornsby LGA are essential but may be too costly for the council to create, even through innovative contributions.

Castle Hill Rd, being on a ridge line, creates a clearly defined physical division in the metro catchment. Its functionality requires further investigation. While there have been historically two distinct and separate communities, one in the West Pennant Hills valley and the other in Cherrybrook, the Metro will encourage greater community mixing especially over time. So it is essential that the long term community needs are considered at this strategy stage.

Castle Hill Rd is shown as the standard 20 metre wide road. The public road should be widened or there should be an adjoining public reserve corridor that incorporates vegetation and separate pedestrian cycle paths with vistas to the south. A wider public corridor will also have the benefit of addressing noise attenuation along the busy main road.

There should be long term plans for north-south pedestrian and cycle linkages across Castle Hill Rd that are grade separated from vehicles. All efforts must be made in order to encourage walking and riding to and from the Metro centre. Thought should be given to a high increase in ebikes, especially with residents in West Pennant Hills having to commute to the metro up the very steep hill.

### Built form

The Place Strategy, in adopting a blanket statutory height and FSR controls, has tended to ignore significant site-specific constraints that exist across the catchment. While there is reference to using site specific controls these additional controls are likely to be minor and secondary with little influence. More thought must be given to achieve the optimum outcome for the Metro catchment.

There appears to be no housing mix and no transition from high to low density. At the same time the strategy should be taking into account physical constraints such as topography, drainage, views and road networks. This is not supported and is inconsistent with the original District Plan.

As stated above the FSR proposed for 5 storey high rise throughout the 'green village' is questioned. With a blanket FSR proposed of 1.4 to 1 this infers structures higher than 5 storeys, unless the setbacks are compromised and reduced.

The suggested road cross sections on pages 47-53 of the Strategy infer such a reduction in setbacks. But reduced setbacks will provide insufficient space for mature trees to grow and survive in a 'green village'. Also there should be a visual need to avoid simply planting trees in a narrow straight line but vary their positioning between kerb and building. So to achieve a green village with large trees, larger setbacks are required than those indicated.

The cross sections also indicate that many of the streets will be narrower than the traditional 20 metres. The cross section shown on page 53 for a gap between two residential towers appears way too narrow, creating the perception of a claustrophobic canyon with little sunlight penetration and an undesirable wind tunnel for pedestrians. Greater separation of the residential towers must be further investigated.

There is reference to minimum lot sizes however there is no mention of minimum side dimensions. Based on the existing historic street pattern some of the 5 storey development sites are likely to be long and narrow, with minimal depth for suitable setbacks. This needs to be investigated.

Another example of this lack of site specific detail is the interface between the Place Strategy and the SSP's northern boundary. The proposed redevelopment of the existing Kayla and Oliver Ways needs further analysis. The SSP precinct promotes the vision of northern vistas and vegetation links yet the Place Strategy focuses on 5 storey complexes with a high FSR located directly to the north in order to pay for the redevelopment costs. The conceptual vegetation corridors running along this transitional boundary is unlikely to achieve the vision described in the studies.

### The concept of a green village

The Place Strategy emphasises the importance of the Blue Gum High Forest describing the metro catchment as a 'green village'. The strategy refers to improving the natural connection to the nearby Cumberland State Forest but there are no details as to how this will be achieved or where it will be. The SSP provides minor reference to it. Indigenous vegetation like Blue Gums need wide corridors with minimal edge effect and biodiversity to be healthy and sustaining. The vegetation layers must be from the ground to the upper canopy. The SSP refers to the transmission line easement acting as the link but it does not explain where the link continues to the Cumberland State Forest.

Also, no trees are allowed to grow within the easement. So the integrity of the overall link to the Cumberland State Forest is likely to be poor and therefore its health may ultimately rely on the need

to create a wide healthy vegetation corridor along Castle Hill Rd to tie into the Cumberland State Forest.

The location and use of Castle Hill Rd, as a public road should not be overlooked. Because it is a public road, the public has access to it. Castle Hill Rd provides extensive views across Sydney to the south. This vista should be protected and enhanced with a wider open space corridor along the main road, and as described earlier, providing a vegetation linkage with lookouts along a separated pedestrian and bike path.

The transmission line and easement was also raised as a major constraint in the Trust's SSP submission. While the easement will have less of an impact away from the station precinct, it still is an issue that should not be ignored. Further investigation into its removal should be explored.

The studies emphasise the value of the Blue Gum High Forest in the SSP, however the interaction between the Place Strategy and the SSP glosses over how the forest's long term viability will be guaranteed. This needs serious investigation. In the Trust's SSP submission,

*The future viability of the Blue Gum reserve in the SSP is a concern. The long term viability of the biodiversity in the reserve's limited area and the impact of edge effects with continuing interaction from surrounding activities needs clarification. Perhaps greater connectivity or buffers may need to be explored in the Place Strategy that surrounds the reserve. This needs consideration*

The water catchment for the retention basin and the drainage pattern downstream of the basin may require additional investigation. The probability of severe and sudden changes to weather patterns in the future should be factored into the design.

### Conclusion

The Place Strategy for a 'green village' requires a serious rethink. The necessary restructuring of the existing Cherrybrook and West Pennant Hills catchment areas for the Metro precinct to work in an optimum way will be a challenge in terms of urban changes but also serious financial input.

The proposed controls are clearly not consistent with the Place Strategy's vision espoused with its 'big moves' outlined at the start of the document. The Trust supports the visionary elements of course but strongly believes the strategy requires a significant injection of State Government funds for the concept of a green village precinct to be successful in the longer term.

Yours faithfully,

Ross Walker OAM

Vice President

Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust

25 August 2022