

WAVERTON PRECINCT MEETING

5 September 2023

MINUTES

The meeting commenced at 7.35pm at the Waverton Uniting Church Community Hall.

Chair: Kevin Alker

Minutes: Deborah Lloyd

Attendance: 34

WELCOME AND APOLOGY

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting, and also welcomed Marcelo Occhiuzzi, Director of the Community, Planning and Environment Division and Neal McCarry, Acting Manager of Strategic Planning from North Sydney Council.

Apologies from Ian Grey, Chick Kirkand, Katie Richmond, John Bohane.

CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

The confirmation of August 2023 was moved by DA and seconded by VY

“That the August 2023 Minutes be accepted”.

Carried unanimously.

GUEST SPEAKERS

KA introduced our guest speakers, Mr Occhiuzzi and Mr McCarry.

Mr Occhiuzzi opened by letting the meeting know that he had been at NSC for 8 years. Five directors have been reduced to three under the new structure. He said he would provide a basic understanding of the council's obligations to the State government for housing targets. Targets are provided to councils by the State government, and since 2018, through the Greater Sydney Commission. There are district plans across 11 local government areas. There were 3,000 new dwellings directed to the council to provide between 2016-2021 so a new target will be provided in soon (expected October or November). Thereafter, the Council provides the Commission with a prepared statement on how they will deliver the targeted number of dwellings.

The council prefers to use “in fill” - using existing residential plots to provide these new dwellings. There is a State government sponsored plan to develop along the Pacific Highway with the Metro (taking commuters to Central Station) the focus.

There is also activity in the North Sydney CBD, but retaining a focus on commercial development is required over residential dwellings as jobs have to be delivered along with dwellings. Too much residential in the CBD removes potential space for jobs, said Mr Occhiuzzi.

Mr Occhiuzzi said that there were three aspects of residential development targets: 1) zoning controls, 2) the St Leonards and Crows Nest precinct and 3) Growth arising from planning studies. The challenges are infrastructure and population growth. These challenges

also need to be met with roads, open space and transport yet the Council are restricted in how they raise funds for these things. The Local Infrastructure Framework finds a way for developers to pay a contribution towards infrastructure.

Neal McCarry outlined to the residents that he had been with the Council for 6 years as a team leader and now Acting Strategic Planning Manager.

Mr Carry said that the North Sydney CBD has complex planning systems around it and developers can seek to vary aspects of the original design. In 2021 there were some height changes to some projects in order to meet the job criteria. However, there is no wholesale change to height.

St Leonards and Crows Nest remain priority precincts for development. Council is not the only stakeholder in this. The Voluntary Planning Agreement invites developers to provide amenity with their projects, above and beyond the minimum already required. This can include Heritage management. There is an effort by all parties to come to an acceptable plan. If Council rejects the plan then it can go to a rezoning review and things are not so clear cut.

A resident asked both Mr McCarry and Mr Occhiuzzi regarding complying developments. Mr McCarry confirmed that complying developments did not require comment by the community or wider notification but they do have to notify immediate neighbours and the Council as to what is happening on the site. Mr Occhiuzzi added that there is no merit assessment. If someone would like to make a complaint or comment then they first need to approach the Certifier. They need an opportunity to respond before the Council might get involved.

A resident asked the visitors a question in general regarding the height of dwellings on sloping blocks. Mr MCCarry took this question and said that this works along the lines of a minimised 'envelope' with a parallel line being the envelope. He said that Council takes the view that given the realities of designing for a sloping block that it is difficult not to breach it so variations are accepted if they are reasonable.

A question was asked of Mr Occhiuzzi if North Sydney delivered on the 3,000 new dwellings between 2016 and 2021 and he said that it came very close to a number that was accepted as having been met. Mr Occhiuzzi added that although we do not know how many new dwellings the Council will need to build in the next 5 year timeframe, he surmises that 'blue ribbon' north shore councils will probably be called upon to do more heavy lifting in this regard due to the existing infrastructure.

A resident asked if development applications have been lower or higher than usual. Mr Occhiuzzi said yes, they had been slowed and thought that there was a reduction possibly due to interest rates being higher. He hastened to add that these are short-term projects whereas planning proposals are more long-term and can take years to come to fruition. Housing supply has plummeted, particularly so since Covid, and we are now playing catch up.

A resident asked if paved areas were considered "open space". Mr McCarry thought that the Council may do a study on what they have now and what they need in the future. Both green and paved spaces have a valuable place in our area.

A question was raised on whether Crows Nest is or can be a conservation area. Mr McCarry said that the Holtermann Estate is already heritage listed but there were no known plans to make any other areas of Crows Nest a conservation area.

Mr Occhiuzzi then raised the Council's Public Domain Strategy which has identified some good projects to deliver to the community, including open space with CBD growth. This includes a project to close off Miller Street between the Pacific Highway and Berry Street. The Council has spent three years in consultation and collaboration with stakeholders. The project is called "Miller Place" and Mr Occhiuzzi told residents that he hoped it might get underway in about 2 years but at this point that is not certain. The last 6 months has made the project more complex due to the Western Harbour Tunnel using Berry Street and outer edges of this area and the project cannot go ahead without their input and involvement so there is some difficulty in getting this project started. This is an ongoing conversation with NSW Transport. Additional areas that the Council feel could be developed for amenity improvements include the Post Office Square, the Council car park around McLaren Street. The idea is to include a library, possibly a recital hall– a pedestrian spine running from Blue Street, up Miller and to St Leonards Park.

It was raised by a meeting attendee if buses may terminate in North Sydney. Mr Occhiuzzi replied that he was unsure of this situation but did not think this would be taking place.

A question was asked from a resident regarding the guest's understanding of the situation regarding the Waverton Bowling Club site. Mr McCarry replied that his information is that the title to the property was about to transfer to the Aboriginal Land Council but the matter is not with North Sydney Council and nobody from the ALC has met with them at this time, so they are unsure of the new owner's intentions with this site. Mr McCarry said he would seek any feedback he can regarding this and relay it back to the Precinct Committee. A resident stood to make a point regarding insurance liability - it has not been updated.

As a final question, it was asked by a resident to outline the recent activities to save cottages in Parraween St, Cremorne. Mr Occhiuzzi said that the developer wanted to build a nursing home and had acquired the homes progressively. The interim heritage order is important as the development proposal demolishes all the cottages.

Mr Alker thanked the guests for their time in addressing the questions from residents. He invited the guests to attend a "walk around" the neighbourhood with the Committee members and residents whenever convenient.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Mr BD raised the issue of the Noakes Shipyard Floating Dock (NSFD) appearing in Waverton. He informed the meeting that Noakes have a temporary licence to have it there until September 18 and residents said that they will be taking action if it is there one day longer than that.

It was pointed out by a resident that there had been a long campaign to prevent a more permanent mooring of the NSFD. Ours and other precinct groups fought this so there is a willingness by the owners to have it there longer.

DA's:

There were no advertised DAs but a resident alerted the meeting to the imminent demolition of 29 Balls Head Road occurring the week following the meeting, according to her conversation with the site foreman.

OTHER BUSINESS:

- Streets Alive requires more volunteers so if you can assist this group in maintaining beautiful and wildlife-friendly streetscapes in Waverton please get in touch with Hugh Goodman, Project Officer of Open Spaces and Environment at NSC 9936-8100.
- It was pointed out that in light of our guest's information that the State government will be demanding thousands more dwellings, particularly on the north shore where infrastructure and amenity already exists, then residents need to be aware that real pressure will be placed on our Council to deliver these.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 3 2023 at the Uniting Church Hall, 75 Bay Road, Waverton.

END.